

MEDIA ARTICLE

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Transformation of the Built Environment sector is an integral part of professionalising the state



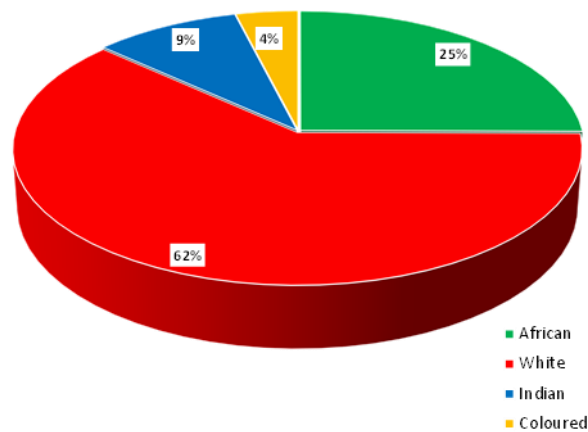
Msizi Myeza, Chief Executive Officer of the Council for the Built Environment

On 3 November 2022, President Ramaphosa speaking at the National Assembly said *“the spatial inequality in our country is one of the horrible legacies of apartheid and of our past... All over the world, and in many places in the world, poor people live inside and near the cities. We have just exacerbated the situation by moving them outside the city...Another problem of course is that skills such as town planning are short and far between. We just don’t have good town planners like the Romans did, the Romans were great town planners, and they were able to build cities.*

If you look at the development of cities, civilization was around building cities. That human was able to move forward ...”

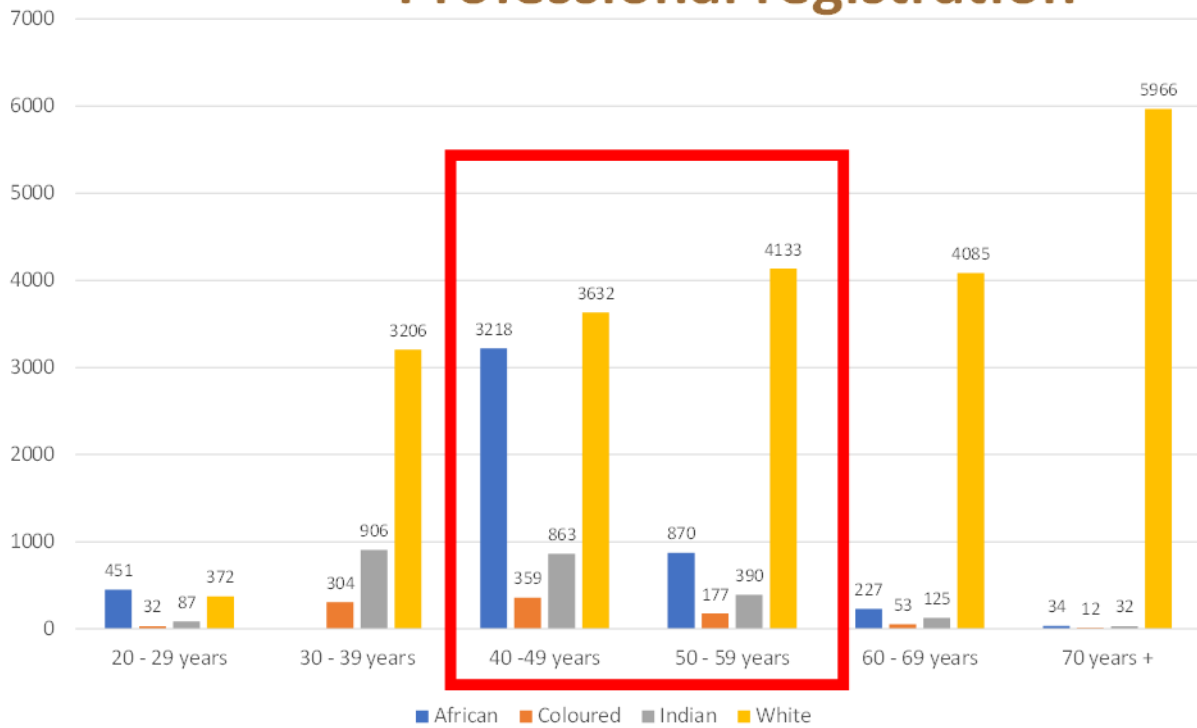
At the core of President Ramaphosa’s speech is the need for all of us to systematically and structurally implement programmes aimed at transforming the built environment, not just with bricks and mortar but evidencing transformation in its entirety in the sector. This is purely because the built environment impacts on people’s lives.

The Council for the Built Environment’s (CBE) Quarter 2 report indicates that of all professionally registered persons, 62 % are still white and mostly male, followed by 25 % Africans, 9% Indians, and 4% coloureds.

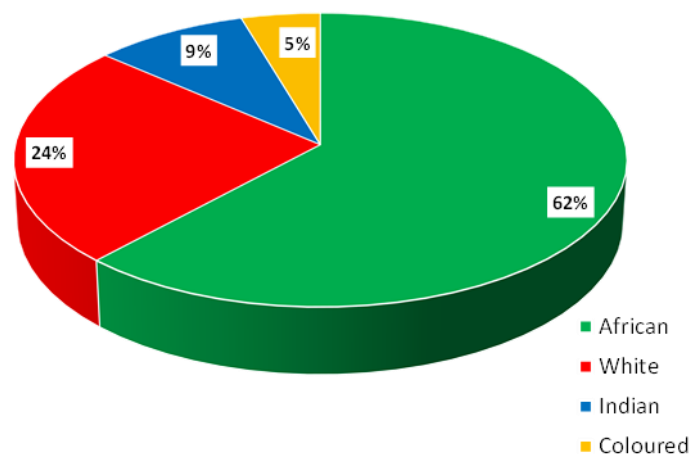


Most of these professionals are between the ages of 39 and 59 years which points to the fact that the built environment sector is aging, for which something must be done.

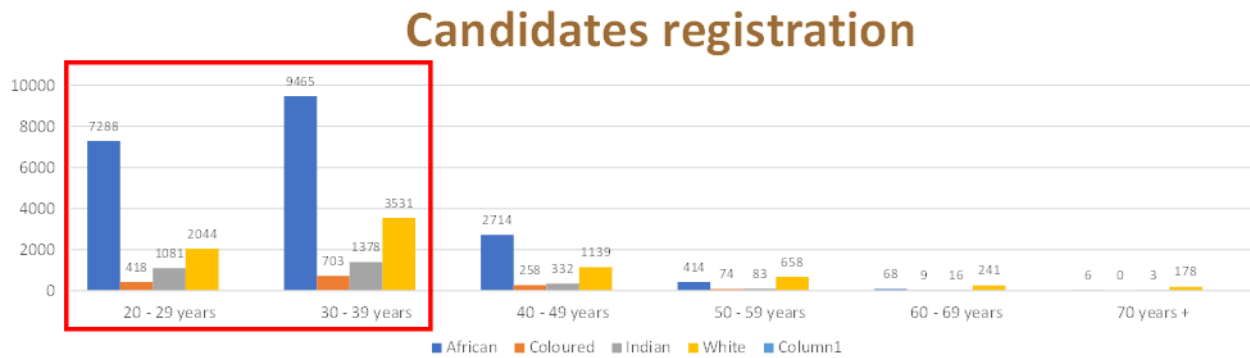
Professional registration



However, when we look at the quarter 2 report on registered candidates in the built environment, there is positive picture emerging, with 62% Africans, 24% whites, 5% coloureds and 9% Indians. Sadly though, registered candidates' numbers are also still dominated by males.



Another worrying trend is that there is a huge blockage in the skills pipeline where candidates are stuck between the candidacy level and the professional levels.



Some of these young people had to transition out of the sector and find work totally unrelated to their studies, while some remain candidates for ten or more years with no hope of becoming professionally registered.

The impact of this current scenario is that behind each statistic is a living, breathing person with their own hopes, dreams, and desires; a person who wants nothing more than to live in a country that is economically sound, that offers a range of opportunities and that leads the continent in human capital development; and behind each of these young people are families and communities who depend on this individual. These are human beings, mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, cousins, sisters, nephews, and nieces who chose a career in the built environment to better their lives and that of their families. They chose a career in the built environment because they strongly believe former President Nelson Mandela when he said: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

These young professionals are role models in their villages; they come from villages where they had to walk up to sixteen kilometres or more on gravel roads, through rivers and forests, to school to be the first in their family with a matric certificate and tertiary qualification.

But after all these sacrifices and having a built environment qualification they find themselves on the margins, with no employment opportunities, and no internship training opportunities which will allow them to become professionals. This new cadre of young professionals is ready and willing to assist the country in addressing some of the infrastructure challenges highlighted in the South African Institute of Civil Engineering (SAICE) 2022 Infrastructure Report Card.

While the CBE and the professional councils are statutory bodies, the levels of professionalisation in the sector remains an area of concern across the three spheres of government. This results in poor workmanship, project over-expenditure and inefficiencies in infrastructure planning, design, implementation, and maintenance, which, in turn, results in shortcomings in the realisation of government priorities to respond to socio-economic challenges.

It is for this reason that as the CBE, we are concerned about the pace and scale of transformation of the built environment sector. What is CBE doing to address transformation challenges facing the built environment –

1. We are working with the professional councils and National School of Government in implementing the National Implementation Framework towards the Professionalisation of the Public Service.
2. We are in the process of institutionalising Training and Learning Pathways in the built environment to assist in the professionalisation of certain categories of employees. These categories of employees need to be professionalised and gain certification with professional bodies. The focus will be on public sector institutions responsible for project implementation to promote an environment conducive for built environment personnel to thrive as professionals.
3. Girl-Child Built Environment Career Awareness Campaigns framed around the District Development Model. The intention is to attract young people (and females) into a career in the built environment because the sector is dominated by people between the ages of

39 and 59 years old. If something is not done in the next 10 years we might have to consider importing built environment professionals.

4. Together with professional councils, CBE is currently in the process of establishing a National Logbook which will be used to support and monitor the entire value chain of a built environment professional from graduation, candidacy up until professional registration. This will be compulsory registration for all three spheres of government, SOEs and the private sector. In the main, the National Logbook will provide accurate statistical data of the number of built environment professionals in each category and discipline in the country. Importantly, it will assist with data cleansing, address issues of dual registrations and clearly reconcile the number of retired professionals who can assist with mentorship programmes. Importantly, this will assist in systematically unclogging possible bottlenecks and addressing challenges in candidacy and mentorship programmes across the three spheres of government.

As CBE, when we succeed in implementing our programmes, it will go a long way in responding to President Ramaphosa's call for a concept of mandatory inclusivity of spatial planning. Therefore, we commit ourselves to working with all stakeholders, including the academic institutions, towards effectively cutting the umbilical cord from apartheid spatial geography and the creation of sustainable, integrated human settlements for all as enshrined in our Constitution.

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About the CBE:

The Council for the Built Environment (CBE) is a Schedule 3A Public Entity that reports to the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. It is a regulatory body established under the Council for the Built Environment Act 43 of 2000 (the CBE Act) that coordinates the following six Councils for the Built Environment Professions - Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Engineering, Property Valuation, Project and Construction Management, and Quantity Surveying – and through memoranda of understanding these include Town and Regional Planning, Land Surveying, and Environmental Assessment Practitioners.

The CBE was established for the purpose of instilling good conduct within the Built Environment Professions, mobilising transformation in the Built Environment Professions, protecting the interest of the public and advising the South African Government on Built Environment related issues.

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