



CIEEM

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Survey

May 2021

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INTRODUCTION

CIEEM's 2021 survey of member equality, diversity and inclusion, undertaken during March 2021, provides an important baseline for the Institute. The survey has been designed to standardise questions so that it can be repeated in future years, thereby providing us with data from which to measure progress against our ambition to create a profession that is more representative of society.

It is also important to acknowledge that the twelve months preceding the survey have been unusual and challenging in respect of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. This may have affected some of the responses.

Disappointingly, but not surprisingly, the small numbers of respondents identifying with some key characteristics has limited the depth of analysis that we can undertake and our ability to draw robust conclusions, especially in relation to looking at intersectional impacts (i.e. how multiple characteristics of an individual can combine to make someone more or less vulnerable to inequality, such as being disabled and from a poorer socio-economic background). This in itself highlights some areas where we know that a lack of diversity is an issue. Nevertheless, the data does provide insights into where we can focus action to create change.

As part of the survey we looked at six areas of diversity: gender identity, religion or faith, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socio-economic background. The results are presented under each of these headings. The final section discusses the next steps that the Institute is taking as part of this journey.

For the most part, unless where stated, we have been unable to compare responses to our membership profile as historically we have not consistently collected anonymised protected characteristic data as part of membership applications (although we do intend to do so going forwards). Where reference to wider UK or Ireland population data is made, this data is taken from either

a) The Office of National Statistics (ONS) (UK)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

or

b) Central Statistics Office (CSO) (Ireland)
<https://www.cso.ie/en/>

SUMMARY

The results from the survey highlight some important questions/issues that we need to explore further, including the complexity of intersectional issues. It is clear that, in a number of areas of identity covered by legislation as protected characteristics, our profession lacks diversity and/or inclusivity. Ethnic background, socio-economic background, disability, gender identity and religion or faith are five areas that are atypical of the population at large.

There are a number of drivers that may be associated with this picture. A profession that almost exclusively requires a relevant degree on entry and still expects graduates to be able to acquire additional practical experience on a voluntary or low-paid basis is not going to be accessible to those from a lower socio-economic background. Add in the evidence for links between socio-economic background, ethnic background and level of disability and it is clear that some people face multiple barriers to our profession.

The lack of role models within our sector for people of colour or those with disabilities perpetuates the belief that ecology and environmental management is not 'for them'. In practical terms there are few examples of how practitioners with disabilities have been encouraged and supported to become successful ecologists and environmental managers.

Whilst, at face value, gender diversity is reflective of societal data, it is clear from the respondents that the experience of women is very different from that of most men. Lack of attention to the physical needs of the different sexes, a lack of respect, reduced opportunities and an unwillingness to provide flexible employment options for those in care roles exacerbates the inequality.

The proportion of respondents following a religion or faith is lower than the population in general, although several respondents who had ticked the 'no religion' box did comment that they had a strongly developed sense of spirituality.

THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The survey was completed by 745 members, representing 12.5% of our current membership. Figure 1 shows the respondent profile by age whilst Figure 2a shows the respondent profile by membership grade. The majority of respondents were in the senior membership grades of Full or Fellow, including Chartered members. Figure 2b illustrates our membership profile by membership grade at the same time as the survey. It can be seen that Student respondents were underrepresented in the survey when compared to our membership profile.

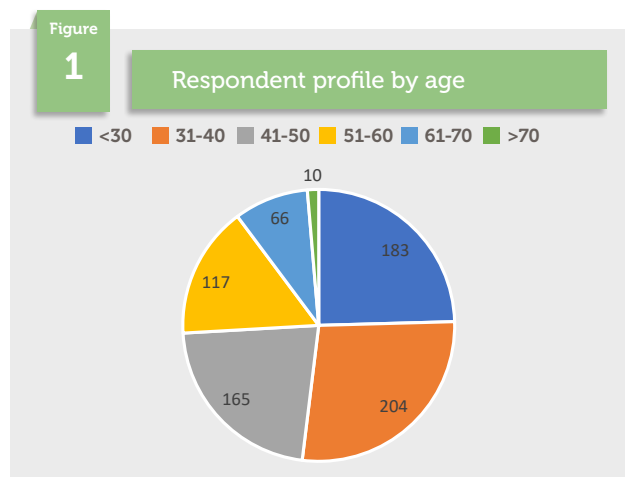
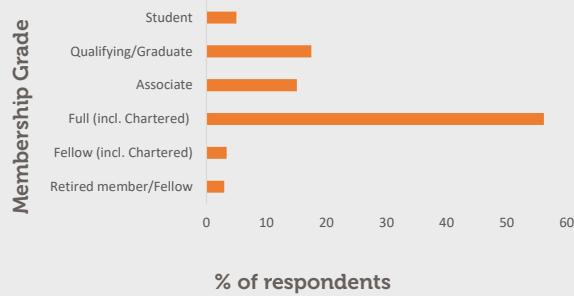
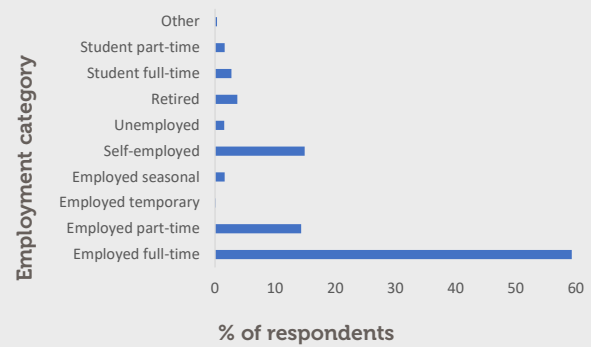


Figure
2a

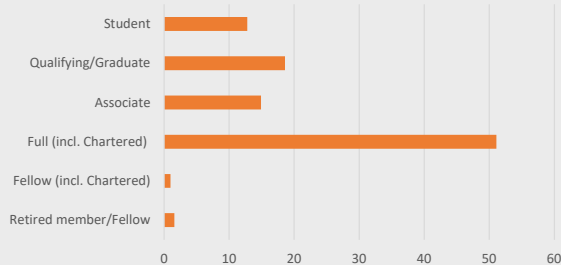
Respondent profile by membership grade

Figure
4

Respondents by employment status

Figure
2b

Membership profile by membership grade March 2021 (%)



GENDER IDENTITY

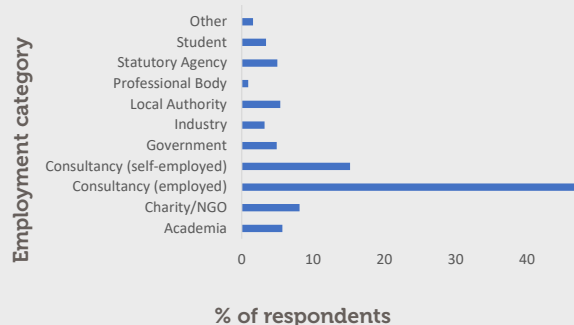
When asked about their gender identity, almost 56% of respondents identified as female and just under 42% as male (see Figure 5). Two respondents objected to the use of gender identity in the question and preferred the use of the term 'sex' to refer to characteristic body parts rather than people's perception of gender identity. However we felt that it was important to find out what individuals identified with, rather than their biological characteristics, in order to understand the concerns of those whose gender identity is different to the sex they were assigned at birth as well as those whose gender identity is the same as their biological sex.

The majority of respondents worked in the consultancy sector, whether employed or self-employed (see Figure 3).

Eight respondents have changed their sexual identity since birth or are transitioning.

Figure
3

Respondents by employment category

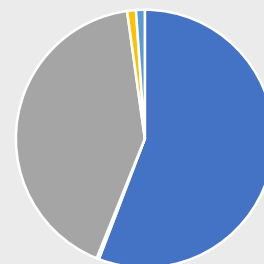


A clear majority of respondents were employed full-time (see Figure 4). Self-employed respondents included both part-time and full-time workers. Most of the student respondents were studying full-time. There were almost as many retired member respondents as students.

Figure
5

Gender identity of respondents

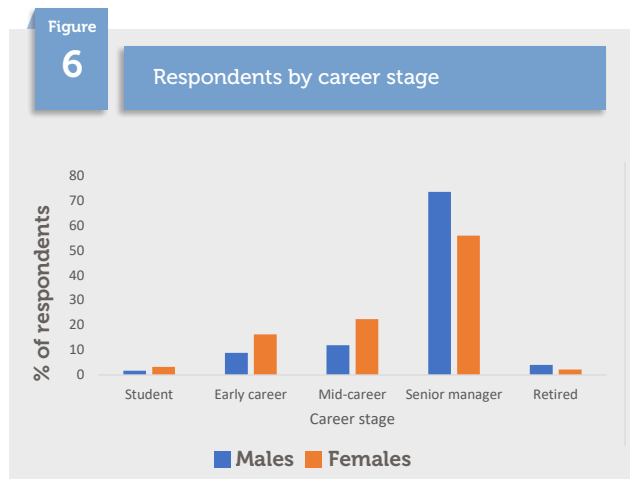
Female Male Prefer to self-describe
Intersex Non-binary / gender fluid



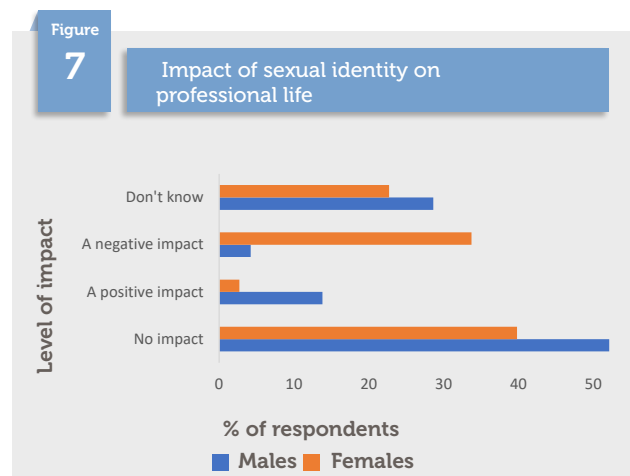
For those who did not identify as male or female, their gender identity had not had any discernible impact on their professional life.

Females comprised 56% of all respondents and 50% of Full member respondents, 66% of Associate members and 69% of Qualifying/Graduate members. They were also 62% of Student member respondents.

This picture is further illustrated in Figure 6, which shows the differences between male and female respondents' career stage. It is not clear the extent to which this is typical of the membership overall and, if so, whether this indicates that the profession is attracting more females than males or whether it indicates that females are less likely to progress as swiftly to the senior membership grades. This merits further consideration.



When asked whether they feel their sexual identity (i.e. whether they have female or male sexual characteristics) has had, or might have, an impact on their professional life, 45% of respondents felt that it had not had, or would not have, any impact. Almost 7.5% of members felt that it had, or would have, a positive impact. There were noticeable differences between the sexes (see Figure 7). In the majority of cases those feeling that their sexual identity had had, or might have had, a positive impact were male respondents who felt that they had benefited from being offered more opportunities and swifter career progression than female colleagues, and also from being taken more seriously by internal and external stakeholders. There were also a handful of comments from female respondents who felt that they had benefitted from 'positive discrimination', although there was also acknowledgement that this approach can reinforce stereotyping and negative attitudes.



Of the 20% of respondents who felt that their sexual identity had had, or would have, a negative impact on their professional life, over 90% were females (a third of all female respondents). This alone indicates a significant and continuing inequality in how men and women are treated. Whilst some female respondents acknowledged that there has been some improvement amongst enlightened employers, clients and co-workers, there is overwhelming evidence to indicate that there is still a very long way to go to achieve parity. Common issues that were cited include:

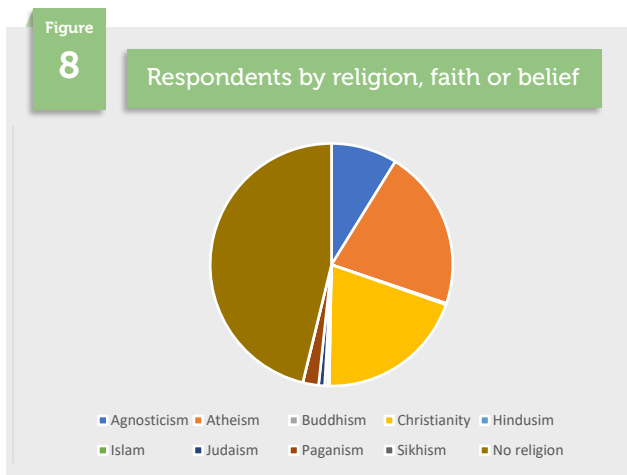
- Hostile, sexist and aggressive treatment towards women on construction sites.
- Lower pay than men for the same role/work.
- Not being listened to/treated with respect/ constantly interrupted by colleagues /clients / other professionals whilst male colleagues are listened to /treated with respect.
- Lack of work flexibility for those with care responsibilities (which can affect all but is more commonly affecting women at present).
- Effect of career breaks on career progression, especially when compared with male peers.
- Assumptions that women with care responsibilities are less focused/committed to their work.
- Attitudes of employers/managers towards women of child bearing age.
- Lack of female welfare facilities, including sanitary bins, on sites.
- Being overlooked for additional responsibilities/ opportunities despite having more experience than male colleagues.
- Assumptions about ability to undertake physical work effectively.

Some women noted that the picture is an improving one, and some also noted that male colleagues were often quick to support them if they noticed inappropriate behaviour on the part of others. Some male respondents reported feeling disadvantaged because of the positive actions and supportive behaviour of employers towards their female counterparts.

A number of female respondents commented that, having had children, they felt forced to become self-employed in order to give themselves the working hours flexibility that they and their family needed (it was noticeable the 84% of respondents working part-time were female). This often meant a lower pro rata income and income insecurity, but this was seen as a better option rather than trying to keep managers/employers satisfied. Although some then returned to employment/full time employment at a later stage (or expressed an intention to) it was noted that this usually meant returning to a more junior role than previously held.

RELIGION, FAITH OR BELIEF

Just under a quarter of respondents (23.8%) who answered the question indicated that they followed a particular deity-based religion or faith (see Figure 8) whilst a similar number (21.3%) identified as atheists and a further 8.8% of respondents as agnostics. Almost half of respondents (46.1%) did not follow a religion, faith or belief. There were no discernible differences between male and female respondents.



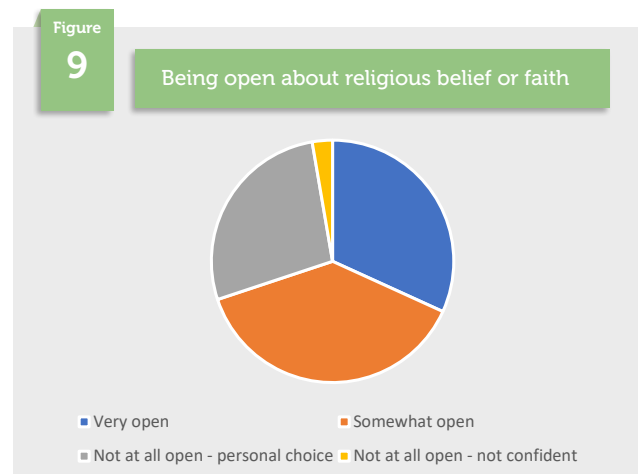
The Office for National Statistics is currently due to publish an updated report on religion, faith and belief in the UK. The latest data set available (2011) indicated that whilst 25.1% of the UK population did not follow a religion or faith, 59.3% of people identified as Christian, 4.8% as Muslim (adherents of Islam) and 1.5% as Hindu. In Ireland (2016 data), 82.3% of the population identify as Christian (including 78.3% as Roman Catholic, 2.7% as Church of Ireland, 1.3% as Orthodox Christians, others included Quaker, Methodist and Presbyterian). Muslims comprised 1.3% of the population whilst 10% of people living in Ireland did not follow religion, faith or belief. Data on agnosticism, atheism and paganism was not collected at that time. There are recognised relationships between religion or faith and ethnic background which are undoubtedly reflected in this data.

Our survey did not collect data on country of residence/origin so we cannot make comparisons regarding the proportion of respondents who follow any particular religion or faith and their nationality other than for the Republic of Ireland. Irish respondents to our survey identified as 37.5% Christian, 12.5% agnostic, 8.3% as atheist and 37.5% with no religious belief or faith, although the number of respondents was low (24).

There is a wealth of debate and literature as to the extent to which scientists (and presumably a largely science-based profession) can believe in gods or other deities without 'proof' that they exist. However, there are also many examples of eminent and highly respected scientists, both living and dead, who have or had a strong faith. It is also interesting to note the alignment of many religions and faiths of the world with an acknowledgement of environmental responsibility (e.g. The Assisi Declaration¹) and it is not uncommon to find environmental stewardship initiatives as core commitments within religion or faith governance structures.

Of perhaps greater significance is the extent to which those who do follow a particular religion or faith feel able to be open about this, should they choose to be, and whether or not those that are open feel that it has had, or would have, an impact on their career.

The significant majority of respondents who expressed a view (see Figure 9) felt able to be open or somewhat open about their religion or faith, or absence of faith, in the workplace but noted that the subject rarely, if ever, comes up and is not something they would normally raise or discuss.



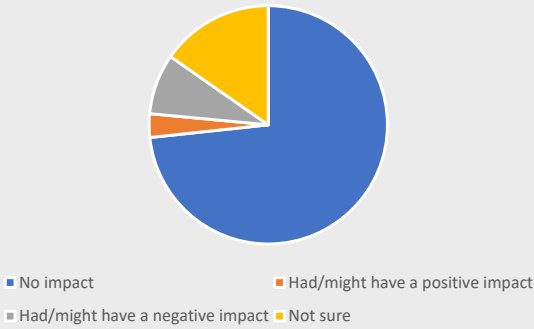
A further 27% viewed it as a personal matter with no bearing on their professional lives and would not expect to discuss it. Just under 3% would not be comfortable in discussing it with colleagues/others in the workplace and there were some comments noting negative attitudes/inappropriate comments towards those who did discuss religion or faith (or having experienced such comments in the past). A lack of consideration for religious festivals/practices of those from non-Christian faiths was also noted by some respondents.

Again the majority of respondents (73%) felt that their openness about their religion or faith, or absence of religion or faith, had not had any impact on their professional lives (see Figure 10). Of those that reported a negative impact, this was higher in respondents following a deity-based religion or faith.

¹ See <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/THE%20ASSISI%20DECLARATIONS.pdf>

Figure 10

Impact of openness re religion or faith on professional life



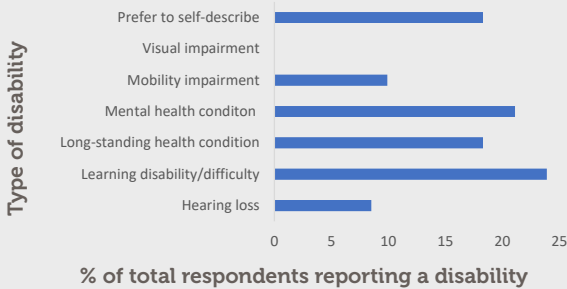
DISABILITY

Our survey asked respondents to state whether they regard themselves as having a disability - i.e. a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on the ability to do normal day-to-day activities. Respondents may or may not be registered as disabled. Of the respondents that answered this question, 7.5% did consider that they have a disability and a further 2.5% were not sure. According to UK ONS data (2019), 15% of the working population have a disability, whilst in Ireland (CSO 2016) it is 6.5%.

Figure 11 shows how respondents with disabilities categorised their health issue. With hindsight, it would have been useful to differentiate more clearly between those with learning disabilities and those who are not disabled but are neurodiverse.

Figure 11

Types of disability experienced by respondents



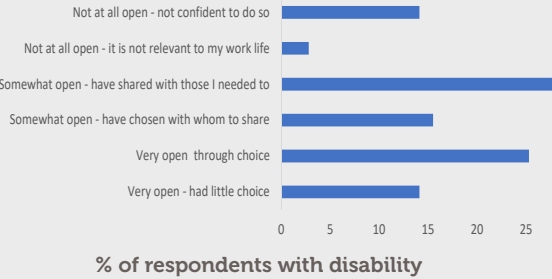
The % of those respondents reporting a disability for whom a learning difficulty was the issue (22.7%) was much higher than the average for the working population in the UK (1.7% according to ONS data, 2020). Data in relation to the working population was not available for Ireland. Mobility impairment was, perhaps unsurprisingly for a profession where physical activity is routine, lower than the national UK average (9.3% compared to 30.7%). Other figures were comparable with the national averages.

Figure 12 illustrates how open those with a disability feel able to be regarding their condition. Respondents noted in the comments that, where openness is a choice, their decision to be open was largely dictated by the culture within the team/organisation and/or with clients/other stakeholders. In some instances respondents had moved from a company or organisation where they experienced a lack of tolerance towards the impacts of their condition (from managers or other colleagues) to an employer that was more supportive. A higher proportion of respondents with a mental health condition chose not to be open with colleagues because of a lack of confidence regarding the reaction/support compared with respondents with other disabilities.

Figure 12

Degree of openness about disability in professional life

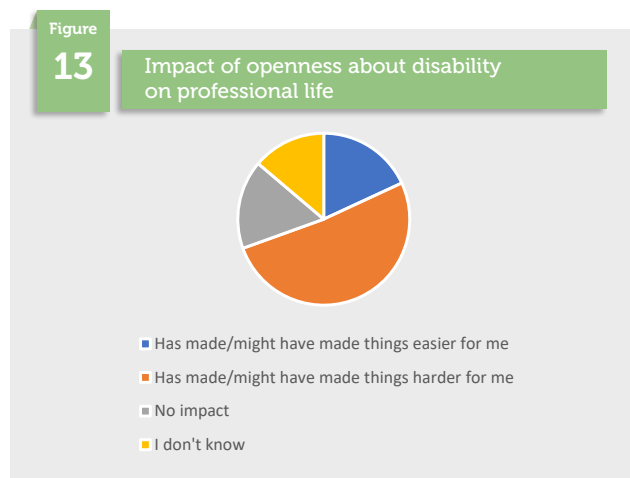
Degree of openness



Several respondents with mental health conditions noted that, whilst there was an increasing and welcoming recognition of the importance of mental wellbeing and how commonly people can experience periods of short-term or long-term ill health, there is still a stigma associated with having a mental health condition which effectively creates barriers to openness, to accessing support from colleagues/peers and can exacerbate the illness and its impacts.

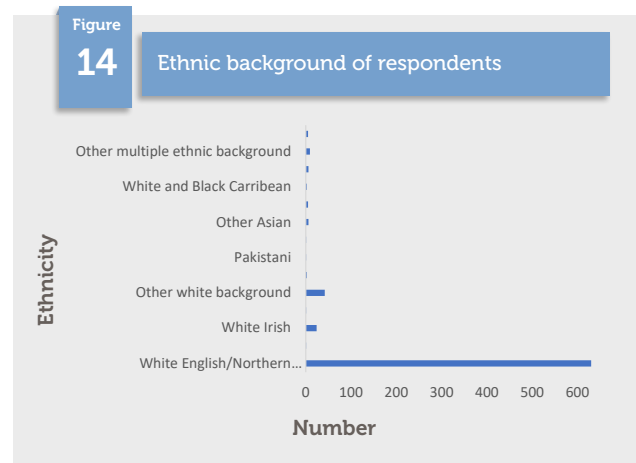
For those without a choice this was because of the need for additional support/reasonable adjustments, the need to explain sickness absences/time off for medical appointments and/or because the disability was visible to others.

Where respondents have been open, whether through choice or not, over half have found that this has had a negative effect on their professional life (see Figure 13). In a number of instances this was because others made (incorrect) assumptions about what they could or could not do and people have had to fight to be treated equally. For others, the focus from managers and employers has often been on what they cannot do, rather than what they can do and working to their strengths. Several respondents noted that they have had to put a lot more effort in to succeed in their careers, which has been achievable but exhausting.



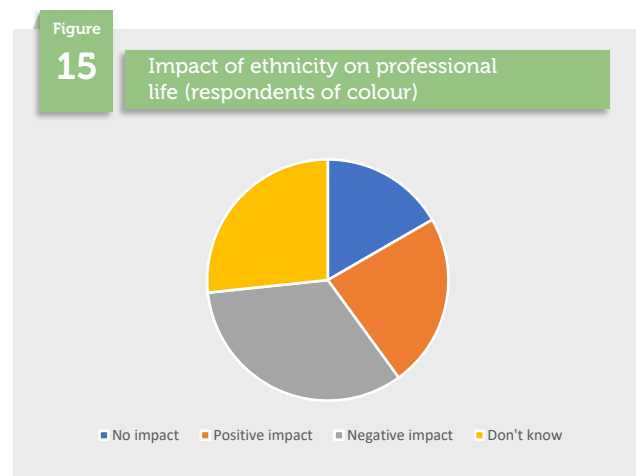
ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Figure 14 shows the ethnic background of respondents. Unsurprisingly for a profession that is known for its lack of diversity² (identified as the second least diverse out of 202 professions) the proportion of respondents who are people of colour is low (2.2% Black British, Asian British, Black or Asian, 2.32% mixed or multiple ethnic background). White English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh/British respondents comprised 86.5% of the total. This is in the context of 80% of the UK population identifying as White, 10.3% as Black British, Asian British, Black or Asian and 2.0% as Multiple Ethnic background (ONS data, 2018). In Ireland 82.2% of the population identify as White Irish, 0.7% as Irish Traveller, 2.0% as Black Irish, Asian Irish, Black or Asian, 1.5% as Multiple Ethnic background and 9.5% White non-Irish (CSO data, 2016).



In terms of the impact of ethnic background on professional lives, a third of respondents of colour (noting the small number of respondents in total) felt that it had had or might have a negative impact (see Figure 15). Just under a quarter (23.5%) felt that it had or might have a positive impact.

A high proportion of respondents from multiple ethnic backgrounds felt that their ethnicity had a negative impact on their professional life compared to those from Black or Asian monoethnic backgrounds.



A positive impact was largely attributed to conscious or unconscious positive discrimination on the part of employers, 'standing out in the crowd' or feeling more accepted by the communities within which they largely worked. Conversely some respondents of colour noted the difficulties of working in predominantly white, often rural, communities and feeling that they were less likely to be respected by clients, visitors or other stakeholders. Being of colour and a female was felt to be a double disadvantage in terms of being taken seriously. Very few respondents reported any hostile or discriminatory behaviour on the part of colleagues or managers.

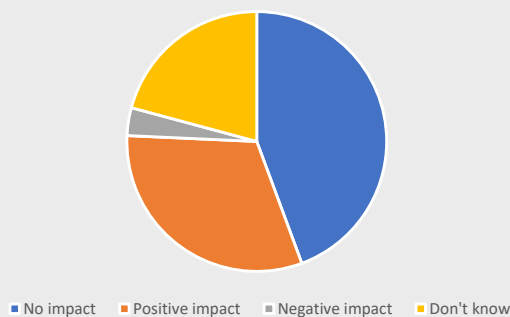
Many respondents of colour noted the importance of being role models for future generations who should be encouraged to enter the profession.

² Norrie, R (2017) *The Two Sides of Diversity: Which are the most ethnically diverse professions?* Policy Exchange Report

Respondents from a white background generally regarded their ethnicity as having had no impact or a positive impact on their professional lives (see Figure 16), with several noting that being white and male was to be unfairly privileged in terms of career progression and being taken seriously. Whilst the percentage that felt their ethnic background had or would have a positive impact on their professional lives was higher than respondents of colour (31.4%), a much lower percentage (3.5%) felt that it had had or would have a negative impact. The fact that almost half of white respondents (44.4%) did not think that their ethnic background would have had any impact on their professional life does raise a concern in terms of the overall level of awareness/recognition amongst respondents of the potential for white privilege to unfairly impact professional lives within our industry.

Figure
16

Impact of ethnicity on professional life (white respondents)



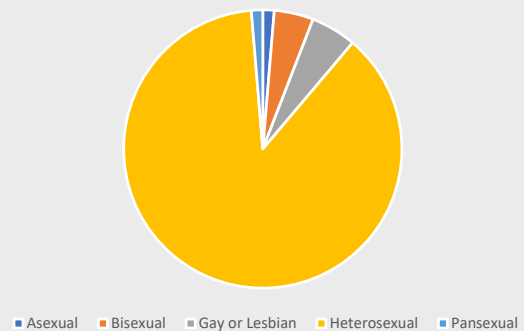
Those white respondents that did feel that their ethnic background was having or would have a negative impact on their professional lives generally referred to hostile behaviour, unwelcome banter/ridicule or discrimination from others with a white ethnic background, whether colleagues or other people that they came into contact with through their work. A number of respondents from Eastern Europe, for example, reported that people made negative presumptions about their ability to do their job based on their name or accent. Also of note was the hostility faced by some UK respondents when working in a country of the UK other than that of their home nation or in Ireland. Conversely, some Irish respondents reported discriminatory and/or inappropriate behaviour towards them when working in the UK.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The majority of respondents (87.5%) identified as heterosexual and just under 12% identified as asexual, bisexual, pansexual, gay or lesbian (see Figure 17). This is higher than the national UK average of 5.4% for orientations other than heterosexual (ONS 2018 data). Census data is not yet available for Ireland. Several of the heterosexual respondents noted that, whilst all of their relationships had been heterosexual ones, they were still attracted to members of the same sex and regarded sexual orientation as a continuum on which they were more heterosexual than bisexual, but not 100% heterosexual.

Figure
17

Sexual orientation of respondents

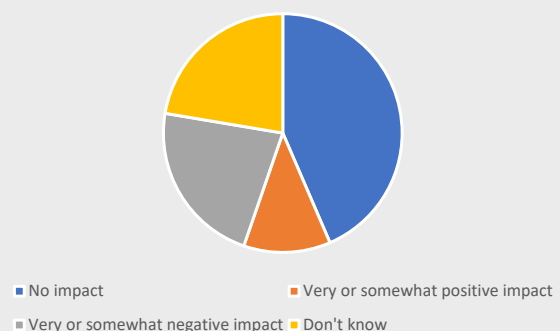


Of those who expressed a view and who are not heterosexual (85 respondents), just under a quarter (24.7%) choose to keep their sexual orientation private as it is a purely personal matter, a similar proportion (28.2%) choose to be very open in their professional lives and a further 31.8% are somewhat open with colleagues. Of the remainder, 5 respondents (5.9%) felt unable to be open about their sexual orientation because they were unsure of the reaction they would receive.

In terms of impact on professional lives, 44% of non-heterosexual respondents felt that their sexual orientation had had, or would have, no impact on their professional lives (see Figure 18). Of those that felt their sexual orientation had or might have a negative impact on their professional life (19 respondents), this was largely to do with organisational culture or the known views of a colleague or manager with whom the respondents worked closely. A small number of respondents noted that they felt that they had benefitted from 'assumed straight privilege' which then subsequently made it a bit harder to be open about their non-heterosexual orientation. A similarly small number of respondents noted that whilst they were comfortable being open with colleagues, they did, at times, work in environments where they had experienced, or felt they were likely to experience, homophobic behaviour from others outside of their work colleagues.

Figure
18

Impact of non-heterosexual sexual orientation on professional life



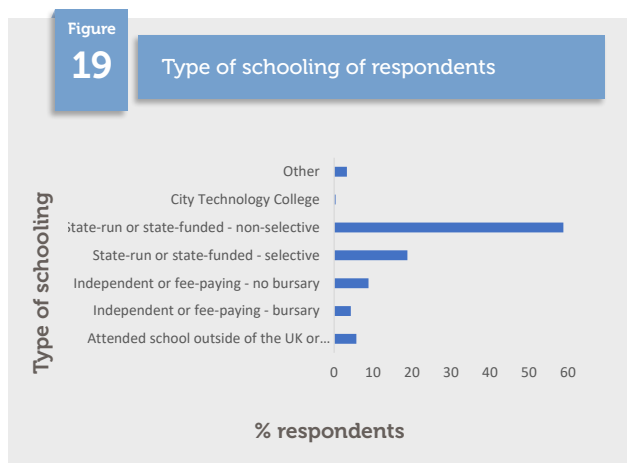
Ten respondents felt that their non-heterosexual orientation had had a positive impact on their professional lives. The reasons given included: because it allowed potential employers to 'tick a box' regarding the diversity of their employees, to feeling empowered to be authentic in all aspects of their personal and professional lives and therefore, not having negative feelings of suppression impacting on their working lives.

It was interesting to note that several respondents who have been in the profession for many years commented that it has become easier for non-heterosexual practitioners to be open about their sexual orientation as society has become more aware and more accepting of sexual diversity in general.

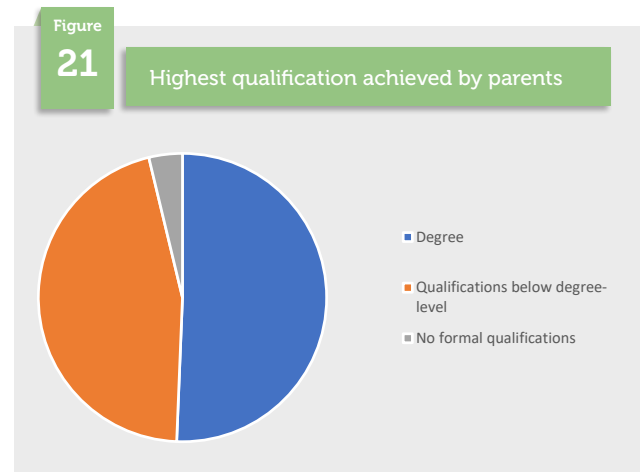
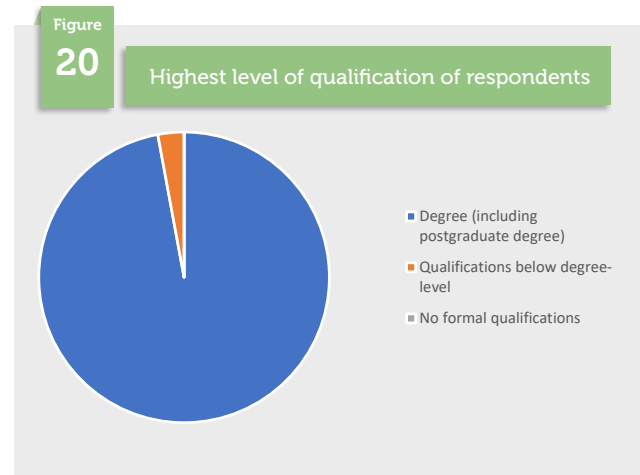
SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Despite the perceptions of a small number of respondents that ecology and environmental management is dominated by privately-educated Oxbridge graduates, state-run or state-funded education was attended by the majority (see Figure 19). A small number of respondents reported feeling discriminated against or being the subject of inappropriate comments/banter because they had attended a private school.

Access to free school meals, if available in the country in which an adult undertook their schooling, is often used as an indicator of socio-economic background. Of those eligible for free school meals 13.8% of respondents recalled being in receipt of these at some stage during their school years.



Any doubts that ours is a predominantly graduate-entry profession are dispelled by the fact that 97.1% of respondents attended university. For just over half of respondents (52%), they were part of the first generation in their family to do so. This is borne out by comparing the highest level of qualification achieved by respondents (Figure 20) and their parents (Figure 21).

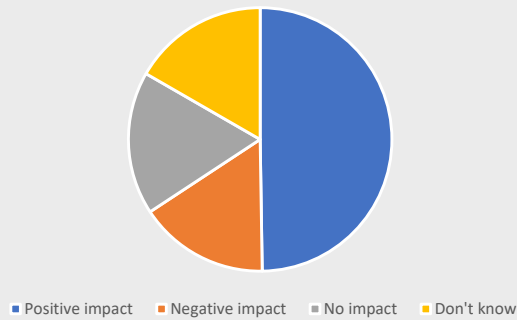


Almost half of respondents who expressed a view felt that their socio-economic background, of whatever category, has had, or might have had, a positive impact on their professional life (see Figure 22). There were a number of reasons given but the most commonly cited in terms of importance were:

- The support (including financial support at or immediately post-university) and encouragement of parents regardless of class background.
- Opportunities provided because money was less of an issue.
- Having a strong work ethic instilled because you have to earn your money and 'better yourself'.
- Strong emphasis on the importance of education and working hard at school to provide career choices.

Figure
22

Impact of socio-economic background on professional life



For those respondents who felt that their socio-economic background has had, or might have had, a negative impact on their professional life, a strong majority of those who provided an explanation cited the difficulties of accessing the profession post-degree, when a period of voluntary or low-paid work was expected in order to acquire further practical experience. Many expressed the hope that this was changing although there is little evidence to support this at present. The financial need for many to get a part-time job whilst at university was also highlighted, as this meant that there was less opportunity to take advantage of any opportunities to gain practical experience outside of the scheduled student-academic contact time.

There is strong evidence of a link between socio-economic status and ethnic background (e.g. see <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/socioeconomic-status/latest>). As the number of non-white respondents in our survey is low, any patterns must be viewed with caution but, from the small numbers involved, we did see that four out of 18 respondents of colour were in receipt of free school meals (22%) compared with 12% of white respondents.

Exactly half of respondents of colour felt that their socio-economic background had had or might have had a positive effect on their professional life and half felt that it had had or might have had a negative impact. Reasons given for positive effects included having parents/peers who gave them opportunities to connect with and be engaged by nature and strong encouragement from parents to go to university. The negative effect was primarily felt to be the difficulties of financing attendance at university.



WHAT NEXT?

The scale of the challenge in restoring biodiversity and supporting resilient ecosystems is not diminishing, nor is the need for skilled and competent practitioners of all backgrounds and identities to be able to deliver the solutions required. At CIEEM we want to represent an inclusive profession, one that is welcoming and representative of our society. We need to be an inclusive profession in order to engage effectively with all stakeholders, understand different perspectives and to be reflective of the society we serve. That means our profession needs to change and CIEEM needs to contribute to that change.

This survey provides important data from which to measure change. We recognise that, in some aspects of diversifying the profession, change will take time but we do need to be taking action now.

CIEEM has established a new Diversity and Inclusion Working Group to advise the Secretariat and Governing Board on priorities for action, both for our inclusiveness as an organisation and or work to champion change within the wider profession.

We have adopted the Royal Academy of Engineering/ Science Council's Diversity and Inclusion Progression Framework for Professional Bodies³, having undertaken a baseline assessment of our activities and agreed a Year One Action Plan and Targets with the Governing Board. We will be collecting anonymised data as part of our application and assessment processes, both to build a more accurate picture of our membership over time but also to guard against any conscious or unconscious bias in decision-making.

We are collaborating with stakeholder engagement consultants Dialogue Matters to work with people of colour within the profession, to hear their experiences and ideas for change to remove barriers to the profession. Also, we are developing and implementing a communications plan to raise the visibility of ecologists and environmental managers from under-represented backgrounds or identities and to give them a voice.

We are collaborating with other environmental organisations and employers, including professional bodies and NGOs, to challenge and support each other to take action, working together where that adds value through the Diverse Sustainability Initiative⁴.

In short, at CIEEM we aim to create momentum for change through concerted and sustainable action to create a more diverse, inclusive and stronger profession. You can help by taking action too.

Be aware of, and value difference. It will help to create an inclusive and supportive work culture for all. Reflect on whether you can be a role model for others and, if so, how you can share your stories and increase the visibility of diversity within our profession. Challenge inappropriate behaviour – step forward, don't step back. Share your ideas with us on actions we can take as an organisation or actions our members can take. Try to see the world and the profession through a different lens and make sure you are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

At its best, ecology and environmental management can be a wonderfully rewarding vocation and anyone, regardless of background, gender, faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability, has the potential to contribute if only we let them in. Together let us start opening doors and creating the opportunities for everyone to join in.



³ See <https://www.raeng.org.uk/publications/other/diversity-progression-framework>

⁴ See www.diversesustainability.net



Raising the profile of professional ecological and environmental management and promoting the highest standards of practice for the benefit of nature and society.



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