



Far To Go:

Diversity and inclusion in UK social research

The Young Foundation

July 2021



Contents

About us	01
Foreword	02
Executive Summary	03
01 Introduction	05
1.1 Background to the research	05
1.2 Method summary	07
02 State of the Profession	11
2.1 Summary	11
2.2 Diversity and representation	11
2.3 Valuing diversity and inclusion	13
2.4 Research funding and design	13
03 The Lived Experience of Social Researchers	15
3.1 Summary	15
3.2 Workplace culture	16
3.3 Fairness at work	21
3.4 Workplace discrimination	27
3.5 Impact of poor diversity and inclusion practice	36
04 How is the Profession Responding?	43
4.1 Summary	43
4.2 Reacting to discrimination	44
4.3 Making adjustments	46
4.4 Diversity and inclusion initiatives	49
05 Action for Change	53
06 Conclusions and Recommendations	57
Technical appendix	59

About us

The Social Research Association –



The Social Research Association (SRA) is a membership body and registered charity that seeks to uphold high standards in social research.

We're the membership organisation for social researchers in the UK, Ireland and beyond.

Our training, events and guidance enable social researchers and users of social research to conduct their work to high methodological and ethical standards.

We have over 1200 members from across the social research field in central and local government, research agencies large and small, universities, research institutes, charities, and individual consultancies.

The Young Foundation –



The Young Foundation's mission is to develop better connected and more sustainable communities across the UK. As a UKRI accredited Independent Research Organisation, social investor and community development practitioner, we combine all our skills and expertise, to further that mission.

We amplify the stories and lived experiences of people in our communities, using this as a spur to drive locally-led community action and enterprise. And we use what we learn across different communities to spot national patterns of need and opportunity. Then we work with national partners to support new ideas to tackle those shared, national challenges.

Bringing together our own – and other people's – work, we are building a shared body of evidence, tools and insight about how communities are taking action on the issues that affect them.

Acknowledgements

The Social Research Association and The Young Foundation would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the following organisations:

- Power to Change and Kantar Public, for generously contributing to the cost of this study
- The Market Research Society, for sharing the questionnaire for their 2020 Diversity, Inclusion and Equality research, and Versiti and Kantar Public, who developed many of those questions
- Social Researchers of Colour, for their review and input into the qualitative discussion guide

Most importantly, this research would not have been possible without the participation of almost 1,000 social researchers from across the UK who completed the survey. We also thank those who shared the survey details with colleagues and networks. Finally, we extend particular thanks to the 21 individuals who shared further information about their experiences through in-depth interviews, and the representatives of five organisations who shared their perspectives on diversity and inclusion in the profession.

Authors: Victoria Boelman, Alice Bell & Liam Harney

Foreword

The SRA are very proud to be publishing the first ever research on diversity and inclusion across the social research profession. This study is both unique in its scope – engaging researchers across government, the private sector, charities and academia – and extremely timely, addressing a working environment which has been shaken to its foundations by both the Black Lives Matter movement and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research is both wide-ranging and robust. In early 2021 the social research profession responded enthusiastically to our request to participate, generating high-quality responses and a large and diverse sample for our survey. The Young Foundation team have also applied careful thought and rigorous analysis to the resulting dataset, generating a clear and powerful narrative.

The study findings are compelling, and present some profound challenges for our profession. In light of this, we want to help organisations and individuals reflect on how they can work collaboratively to ensure that diverse talents in research are included, recognised and rewarded, and that social research practice is as inclusive as it can be. To support in this, the SRA has committed extra resources for the dissemination of learnings from this report, and will be facilitating regional and national discussions exploring the findings throughout 2021.

Thankfully, this research does not exist in isolation, complementing and building on the [Market Research Society's survey](#) and wider inclusion work, the [Social Mobility Commission's research on the Civil Service](#), and other influential reviews of diversity and inclusion in UK workplaces such as the [DIALGlobal/ Mckenzie-Delis Packer Review](#). We hope that, alongside these studies, our report supports much needed profession-wide reflection, giving impetus to making impactful changes where they will matter most.

Finally, we offer many thanks to our sponsors, Power to Change and Kantar Public, for their funding of this important work; to Kantar Public (again), the MRS and Marie-Claude Gervais of Versiti for permission to use elements of their excellent survey; to Social Researchers of Colour for their input at critical stages of the research; to the SRA Board for their support of this initiative; to Victoria, Liam and Alice at Young Foundation for their enormous commitment to this project and, importantly, to the SRA CEO Graham Farrant who has kept every plate spinning to make this research happen.

SRA Board Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Lee Chan manages a team of researchers at the consumer group Which? She is a mixed methods researcher who enjoys employing deliberative and participatory approaches, and has an interest in making research inclusive for both researchers and research subjects.



Naomi Day is an independent qualitative researcher with fifteen years' experience in social research. She currently works in collaboration with research agencies and collectives of independent researchers on research for central government and other public sector bodies and agencies.



Beth Moon is the Head of Customer and Behavioural Insight at Ofgem. A social researcher by background she has over fifteen years' experience applying social research and behavioural science within the public sector.



Isabella Pereira is the Head of Qualitative Methodology in Ipsos MORI's Qualitative Research and Engagement Centre. She is a founding member of REACH, Ipsos MORI's ethnic minority staff network.



Executive Summary

This report sets out the findings from the first comprehensive survey of the views and experiences of UK social researchers on issues of diversity and inclusion within the sector. It captures, through a survey of almost 1,000 social research professionals, views on the overall state of diversity and inclusion in the profession, then perceptions and experiences of working in the sector and its responses to diversity and inclusion challenges. Interviews with social researchers from a range of backgrounds, and professionals from each sector have added depth of insight.

The social research profession is broad, and people who work in social research can be found in academia, commercial agencies, the public sector, think tanks and civil society organisations, as well as those working freelance. As such, it is hard to know exactly how many people work as a social researcher, or their profile in terms of demographic, socio-economic or educational background. We cannot therefore claim that this research is representative of all those working in social research, but it represents the most expansive attempt to date to explore these issues.

Key findings

- 1. There is a strong perception that the profession could do better in terms of how representative it is of wider society, the extent to which diversity and inclusion are valued, and how research is funded and designed.**

The profession itself is not felt to be particularly diverse; more needs to be done to improve access and retain talent as people progress in their careers. Routes to becoming a social researcher can be challenging, opaque and it is not always seen as a first destination profession. Exclusionary and discriminatory behaviour also limits the progression of researchers and a lack of diverse representation at senior levels is seen as both a reflection and cause of the problem.

Alongside this, there is the perception that the way in which social research is funded and designed must be made more inclusive. Inclusive practice gets squeezed out because of timing, money or other resourcing issues, and/or because not enough perspectives have been involved in the design of the brief or subsequent design of the research.

- 2. Social researchers from marginalised groups tend to have negative experiences of working in the profession. The profession struggles to include and accommodate for a diversity of identities, backgrounds and circumstances, despite good intentions.**

Those whose identities are formed of multiple minoritised characteristics report worse experiences than those with none or fewer. The intersection of multiple personal characteristics shapes peoples' experiences and compounds the complexity of challenging poor behaviours, practices and processes.

The impacts of this are felt in terms of fairness (e.g. of rewards and opportunities), inclusion (e.g. workplace belonging and voice), and in direct experiences of exclusion and discrimination; microaggressions are a particularly common feature of workplace life for many. While there are differences across sectors, there is broad scope for improvement.

Unfair and negative workplace experiences can have profound impacts on individuals, including damaging personal mental health and wellbeing. It also contributes to a decline in motivation, productivity and can shape decisions about career paths, including decisions to become self-employed or leave the profession altogether.

3. Organisations appear to value diversity and inclusion but, based on their experience, employees don't think efforts so far have made the difference needed. There is a strong feeling that the profession needs to do more to address diversity and inclusion effectively.

Minority groups and those who experience exclusion and discrimination feel burdened with the need to lead and create change. All too often this can exacerbate feelings of isolation or further damage wellbeing- HR and senior leadership support for addressing and following-up on problems is also considered to be poor.

The actions that organisations take in relation to diversity and inclusion in the workplace are often felt to be reactive or performative; unconscious bias training in particular is seen as only one necessary but far from transformative step in an organisation's transformation. There is a need for investment in actions which empower staff, particularly those most affected, to create change and hold the organisation to account.

Action for change

It is time for both reflection and action across the profession. The social research profession is an eco-system that cuts across sectors yet works in relatively siloed ways. If genuine change is to happen, then there is a need to work collaboratively, share best practice, and invest the time and resources that will support it. We set out at the end of this report a series of recommendations. We must all – individual researchers, senior leaders, funders and commissioners - commit to learning the lessons of this research and taking action in response.

01

Introduction

Key Terms

- **Diversity** is about ensuring the profession is representative of wide-ranging identities, backgrounds, experiences, circumstances and perspectives.
- **Inclusion** is about respecting and valuing people's differences to enable everyone to thrive and feel included at work, without having to conform.
- **Marginalised groups** are those that are systematically excluded and discriminated against due to unequal relations of power across society. Experiences resulting from marginalisation are not uniform, but complex and diverse, often involving an interplay between multiple characteristics or attributes.
- **Protected characteristics** are a set of characteristics that are protected by law in the UK. Under the 2010 Equalities Act, discriminating against people on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation is unlawful.

A range of terms (e.g. disadvantaged/ socially excluded/ under-represented/ minority/ minoritised) can be used to reflect a similar meaning. As all have imperfections, we will flexibly employ each as appropriate, but have chosen to primarily refer to 'marginalised' as it emphasises that experiences of these groups reflect their structural position in society, rather than perceived inadequacies in their specific characteristics, backgrounds, or circumstances. Moreover, it does not make any presumption about whether experiences resulting from marginalisation will be positive or negative, or relate to the size of a population.

1.1 Background to the research

Diversity and inclusion have long been important priorities for the social research profession, and this has been reinforced by events over the last 18 months. The upheaval of a global pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement and growing social action on issues from climate change to women's rights has drawn attention ever more tightly to the persistence of structural inequalities, bias and discrimination across society. Tasked with exploring and understanding these issues, this has been an immensely important period for social research, making the need to reflect on and improve the profession's own diversity and inclusivity more important than ever.

The Social Research Association (SRA) commissioned the Young Foundation to conduct this research as part of its commitment to improving and promoting the diversity and inclusivity of the social research profession across the UK. It aims to explore:

- **Perceptions of diversity and inclusion in the social research profession**
- **The experiences of social researchers from diverse backgrounds**
- **Perceptions and experiences of diversity and inclusion initiatives within the social research profession**
- **The barriers and enablers to improving diversity and inclusion in the social research profession**

After outlining the importance, context and methods of this research, the report tackles the overall state of diversity and inclusion in the profession, then perceptions and experiences of working in the profession and its responses to diversity and inclusion challenges. There are pull-outs which focus on minority and marginalised experiences, and the final chapter draws together what we need to do to enact change.

Rationale for Action

There is a clear rationale for action on diversity and inclusion in the social research profession. The 2010 Equalities Act sets out a legal duty and, beyond this, there is a broader 'moral' or 'social justice' case that everyone has the right to be treated fairly, regardless of identity, background or circumstance (Miller and Green, 2020). For the social research profession, this is likely to be closely related to a 'business case', as our work and *raison d'être* often revolves around advancing and addressing social justice issues through research and evidence.

The 'business case' for improving diversity and inclusion also includes the idea that organisations function better when they value the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working that a broader range of employees

can bring (ibid.). In social research, this is particularly important as our work seeks to represent the views and experiences of diverse groups across society. In accessing, analysing and presenting these views and experiences, it is widely accepted that researcher positionality and bias can play a role in influencing outcomes.

Yet, the benefits for individuals, organisations and society must also be held in balance with financial outcomes (Green et al., 2018). Data suggests that gender and ethnically diverse organisations are more likely to outperform competitors by 15% and 35% respectively (Hunt et al., 2015). Key aspects of this include talent attraction and retention, enhanced corporate reputation and the ability to provide better products or services (Miller and Green, 2020).

Context

Approaches to improving diversity and inclusion are highly dependent on the context, including sector, size, strategic orientation and location, as well as which groups are underrepresented (Gifford et al., 2019). This emphasises the importance of this research in providing an understanding of the specificity of the diversity and inclusion landscape for the social research sector in the UK.

There is limited existing evidence on diversity and inclusion in the UK's research sectors. Guyan and Oloyede's 2019 review of diversity and inclusion in the Research and Innovation (R&I) sector reveals several research-specific challenges. These include gendered differences in securing research grants (Bridge Group, 2017), a high prevalence of mental health and wellbeing issues in research environments (Guthrie et al., 2017) and barriers to progression from undergraduate study to postgraduate research degrees related to ethnic and socioeconomic inequalities (Wakling and Kyriacou, 2010). Since 2018, the Market Research Society (MRS) has also undertaken research to explore diversity and inclusion issues in the market research sector, which has been followed by action through a pledge which asks CEOs to make five commitments towards creating safer and more representative workplaces. The most recent report finds that key issues include improving workplace inclusion for ethnic minority researchers and addressing pay disparities related to gender, ethnicity and disability (Gervais, 2020).

This research attempts to fill an evidence gap by providing an understanding of diversity and inclusion specifically for researchers working on social issues. Nonetheless, the need to contextualise also poses a challenge because of the broad range of organisation types and sizes encompassed within the social research profession. Social research takes place across

the public sector, research agencies, charities, academia, research institutes and think tanks, and through independent researchers.

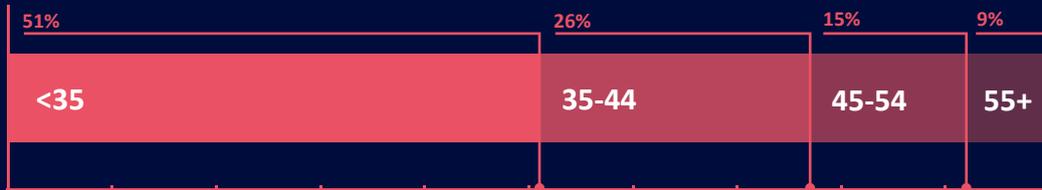
The particularities of each of these contexts will be further explored throughout the report. Previous studies have found that persistent diversity and inclusion issues in the charity sector are limited by a tendency to hide behind liberal values—with hidden biases, misunderstandings, and discomfort when talking about diversity and inclusion left unacknowledged, particularly in relation to ethnic diversity (Memon and Wyld, 2018; brap, 2018). In academia, research points to the exclusionary practices embedded in institutional cultures (Runnymede Trust, 2015), with evidence of gendered and racialised pay and progression gaps (UCU, 2012). Furthermore, across European Higher Education institutions, the INVITED project found that university communities lacked awareness about diversity and inclusion issues, with a holistic system-level approach needed to challenge these discourses (Claeys-Kulik et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, the Civil Service's ambition to become the UK's most inclusive employer intends to take a whole system approach (Civil Service, 2017). The latest analysis shows that its workforce exceeds the representation of women and ethnic minorities in the wider working population, but the diversity does not extend to more senior roles (Civil Service, 2019). New research also highlights a lack of socioeconomic diversity in the Senior Civil Service (SCS), describing barriers such as 'hidden' routes that can accelerate progression and dominant 'behavioural codes', which intersect with gender and ethnicity (Friedman, 2021). It is also accompanied by a detailed Action Plan which proposes several responses (Social Mobility Commission, 2021). Government Social Research (GSR) itself has also prioritised diversity and inclusion in its 2021-25 Strategy, intending to build and embed it in GSR culture through attracting a diverse profession; inclusive and fair recruitment and selection; embedding and retaining an inclusive culture; and accurate monitoring of GSR data (GSR, 2021).

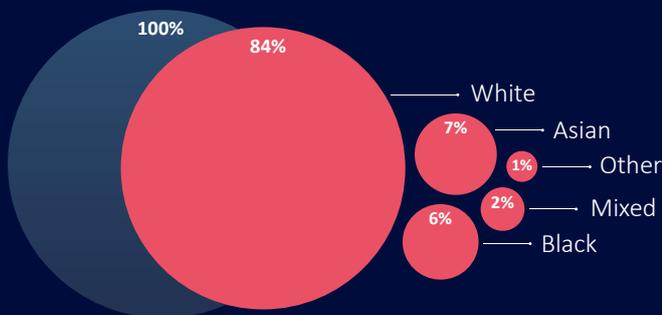
About the research

1.2 Method summary

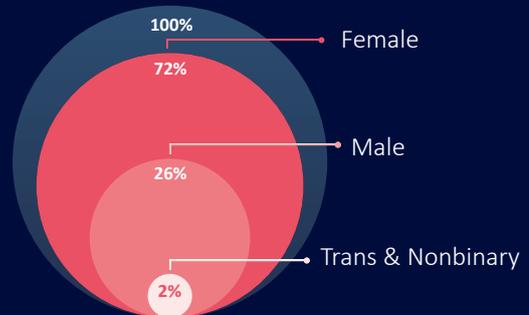
Age



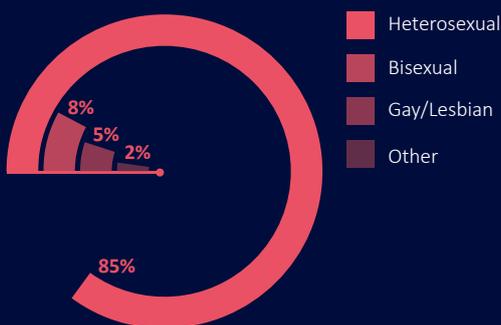
Ethnicity



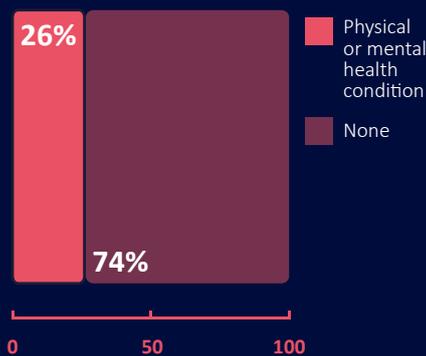
Gender



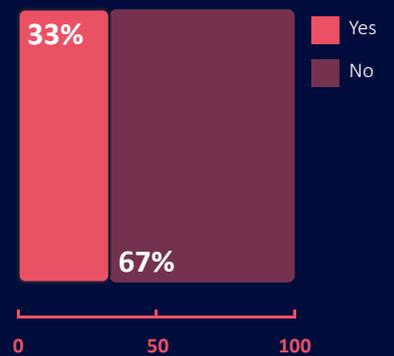
Sexual orientation



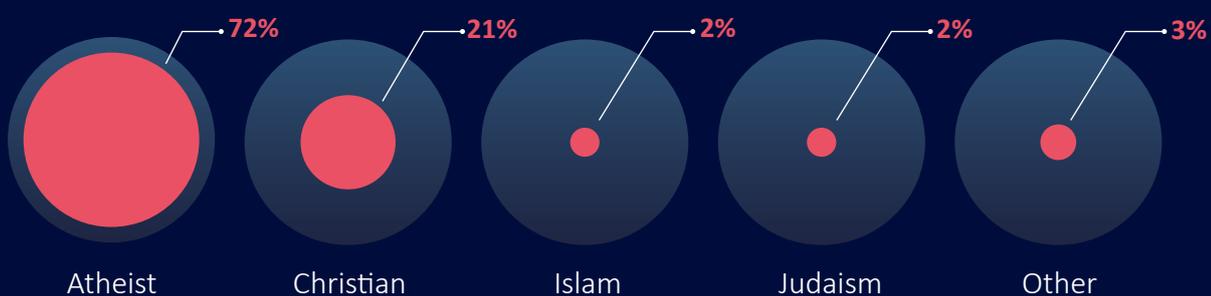
Health status



Caring responsibilities



Religion

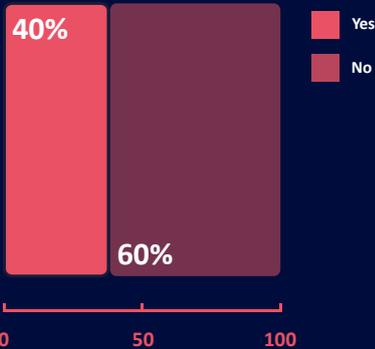


The study used an online survey to capture the views of 979 people who identify as working in social research across the UK. Charts display the profile of this sample. The survey link was circulated via the SRA membership, Young Foundation networks, the Government Social Research (GSR) Network, the Civic University Partnership, on social media and via personal contacts of YF and SRA staff and trustees. The survey was live for 6 weeks between January-February 2021. Since there is no sampling frame of social researchers, the research did not intend to identify a representative sample or measure the extent of diversity in the profession. Instead, it focussed on understanding the perceptions and experiences of diverse social researchers from across the profession. The survey was followed by 21 in-depth interviews with individuals who identified that their experiences had been shaped by marginalised characteristics, and five with organisational representatives. Full details of the methodology are in the technical appendix.

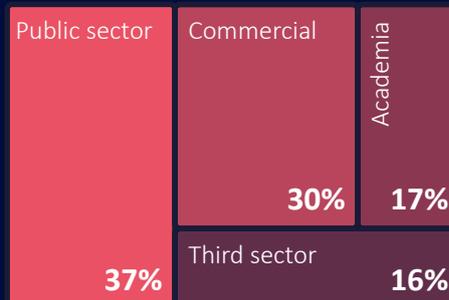
Number of years in social research



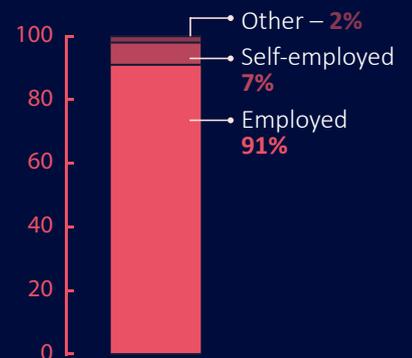
First generation higher education



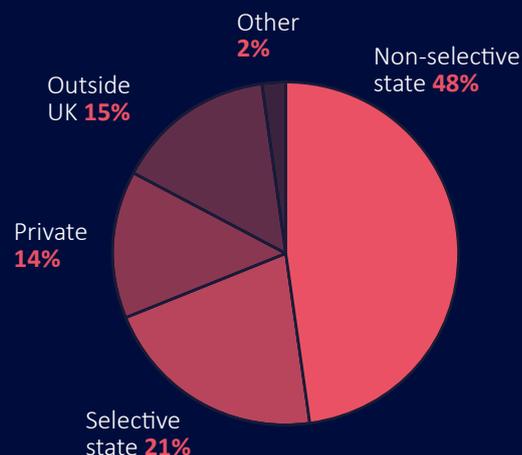
Sector



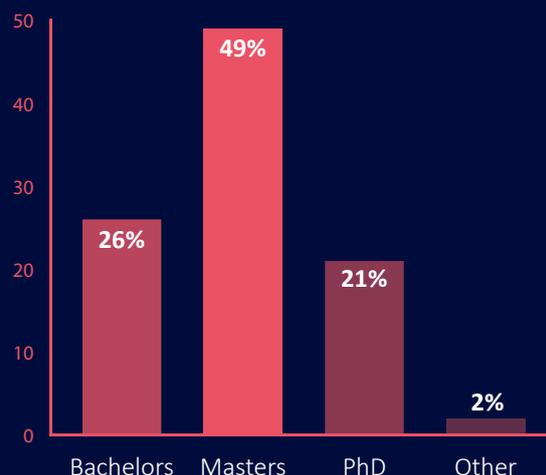
Employment status



Schooling



Highest qualification



The importance of intersectionality

"I think [my experiences of workplace culture are] to do with gender and with age and with ethnicity. So for me, you know, I feel like I'm not 'it'." (#1: public sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"Being mixed race is one thing for me. But I also know that I come from a very, very privileged background in terms of socio-economically ... So, I have that going for me." (#2: commercial sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

Social researchers tend to be well attuned to the rich complexity of human life. On a daily basis we are confronted with the multi-dimensional nature of people and the difficulties of categorising them into groups based on a reductive set of characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status.

Social research is also acutely alive to how relationships and power dynamics shape people's lived experience. Experience of different social processes (such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, or ageism) can vary over time and depending on the context in which someone finds themselves.

The researchers we spoke to through this research were keen to underscore these points. People told us they often struggle to know whether an experience is as a direct result of one aspect of their identity or another, or a combination. They also recognise that they can be both privileged and marginalised simultaneously, depending on which aspect of their identity is most salient in each given context.

The analytical approach to the survey data is therefore based on the principle of intersectionality, reflecting a hypothesis that people who have multiple aspects of their identity which tend to be marginalised or subject to discrimination have a different (more challenged) lived experience of the workplace than those who have none, or fewer.¹

For the purposes of this study, we grouped respondents based on the number of 'marginalised characteristics' that they identified. We included in this: people who identify as women; people from a Black or other ethnic minority background; those who practice a minority religion; members of the LGBTQ+ community; and people who have a physical disability/mental health condition/are neuro-divergent.² Although we recognise that this measure does not include all the possible characteristics that may be marginalised, for the purposes of this report we refer to the characteristics covered in this measure as '**marginalised characteristics**'.

We did not include the 'life-course' characteristics of age or caring responsibilities; people of all ages report being disadvantaged because of their age, and caring responsibilities cut across all demographic groups. We were also unable to analyse by social class because of the lack of suitable data proxies to accurately capture class identities.³

Alongside this intersectional lens, we have included short sections which focus in-depth on the experiences of people with specific characteristics: those from ethnic minority backgrounds; members of the LGBTQ+ community; and people with physical and mental health conditions or who are neuro-divergent. We also look in-depth at the way in which gender roles, age, and caring responsibilities shape professional experience, and look specifically at those who are self-employed. Qualitative insights, from interviews and open-ended survey responses, are combined with quantitative data throughout.

¹ Please refer to the technical appendix for further detail

² Please note that physical health, mental health, and neurodiversity are grouped together in one 'marginalised characteristic'. An individual within this category may have one or many types of condition, disability and/or be neuro-divergent, in any combination. We acknowledge that this does not reflect the differences and intersections within this category; these are explored further later in the report. Moreover, not all people who could be part of this category will identify in terms of having a 'health condition' or 'disability', thus some may not be counted. Please refer to the technical appendix for further details.

³ Please refer to the technical appendix for further details

Figure 1: Intersections of ‘marginalised characteristics’

Categorisation of participants by number of ‘marginalised characteristics’ that they identified

None – 14%	1 – 44%	2 – 29%	3+ – 13%
<i>n</i> = 130	<i>n</i> = 406	<i>n</i> = 245	<i>n</i> = 113
White, heterosexual men with no disability (atheist or Christian)	Predominantly white heterosexual women (80%) Also includes some white men who are either LGB or who have a disability or are from a minority religion, and a few heterosexual ethnic minority men with no disability or minority religion	Predominantly female (90%) Half of this group (48%) have a disability A third (32%) are from an ethnic minority background A fifth (20%) are LGB 7% practice a minority religion	Predominantly female (88%) Almost three-quarters (71%) have a disability Half (50%) are from an ethnic minority background Half (51%) are LGB Over a third (37%) practice a minority religion

Base: All participants providing profiling information (*n* = 894).

02

State of the Profession

2.1 Summary

Overall, researchers think that the profession could do better in terms of:

- How representative we are of wider UK society
- The extent to which diversity and inclusion are valued
- How research is funded and designed

The profession is not perceived as being diverse.

- Ethnic minority groups are not well represented in the profession, and concerns emerged regarding the extent of socioeconomic diversity
- The profession is seen as predominantly female, but this is not always reflected at senior levels

There is clear scope to take diversity and inclusion issues more seriously.

- Comments reflect that good intentions often do not (yet) equate to positive action or outcomes

We can improve the way research is funded and designed, for example:

- By supporting organisations to practice more inclusive research methods
- By involving those with lived experience in research commissioning, design, and delivery

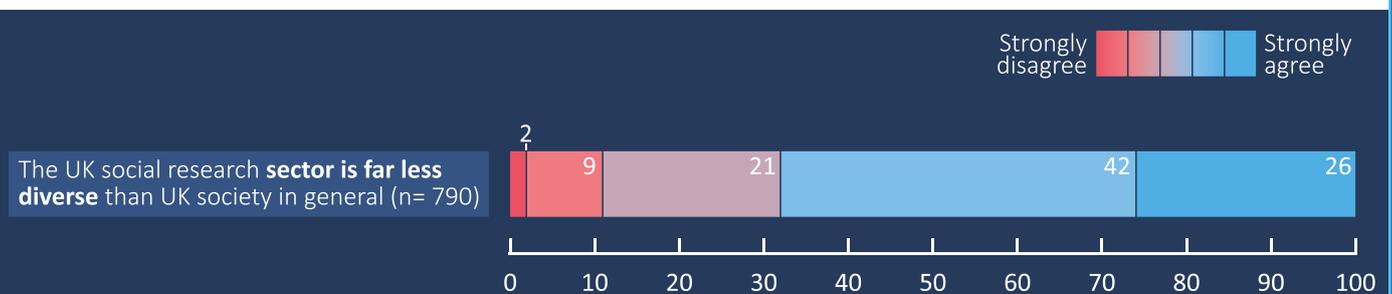
There are differences in how the profession is perceived across its sectors.

- Those in public sector roles are consistently more positive about diversity and inclusion issues than those in the third sector or academia

2.2 Diversity and representation

It is widely perceived that the social research profession lacks diversity, with over two-thirds (68%) of respondents agreeing that it is far less diverse than UK society in general.⁴

Figure 2: Perceptions of diversity in the profession



Base: All participants (n= 790). Q33) The following questions are about the social research sector in general, and its relation to wider society, rather than on your personal experiences in the workplace. We want to understand your thoughts on whether and how social research projects reflect and accommodate the diversity of society at large. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

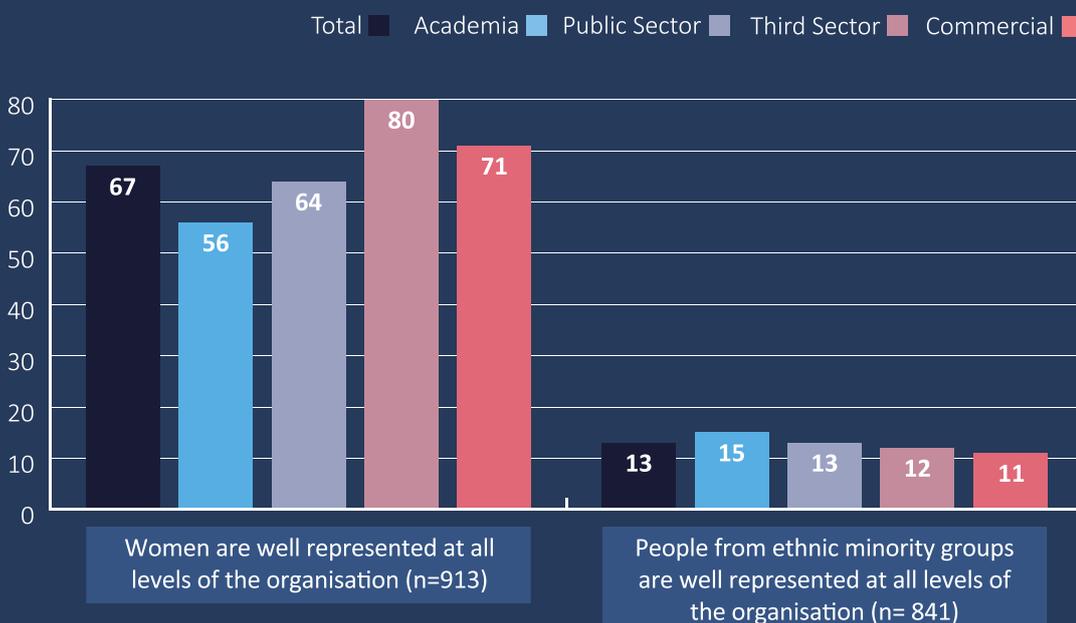
⁴ This is based on perceptions. Since there is no sampling frame of social researchers, the research did not intend to identify a representative sample or measure the extent of diversity in the profession. Please refer to the technical appendix for further details.

It is apparent that ethnic diversity is a particular concern. Only 13% of social researchers feel that people from ethnic minority groups are well represented at all levels of their current organisation, and this figure falls to just one-tenth (10%) among ethnic minority researchers. Interviews and open comments in the survey also reveal perceptions of a skew towards researchers from upper- and middle-class backgrounds.

Although the profession is seen as predominantly female, this does not appear to be reflected in the senior levels of some organisations. While around two-thirds (67%) of social researchers agree women are well represented at all levels of their current organisation, there is wide variation between the sectors, with 56% agreeing in academia compared to 80% in the third sector. Moreover, only 63% of female participants agree compared to 80% of males.

"I think there's a certain type of person that's very prevalent within the social research sphere, that are very middle class, very white ... they just come from a certain experience." (#2: commercial sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

Figure 3: Perceptions of the representation of women and ethnic minorities by sector



"It's not a sector where you get a lot of black or minority ethnic researchers progressing easily. It's also a sector where it's very highly female in terms of researcher level, and then very highly male in terms of senior management. And that's reflected across a lot of the organisations that I have or currently do work for." (#3: independent, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

Base: Employed social researchers. Q17) The following statements will allow us to gauge how you think your current company performs in relation to Diversity, Inclusion and Equality. For those that have recently left the sector, please answer referencing your most recent employer. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements? 'Women are well represented at all levels of the organisation' (n= 913): Academia (n= 157); Public sector (n= 341); Third Sector (n= 142); Commercial (n= 271); 'People from ethnic minority groups are well represented at all levels of the organisation' (n= 841): Academia (n= 149); Public sector (n= 302); Third Sector (n= 134); Commercial (n= 256).

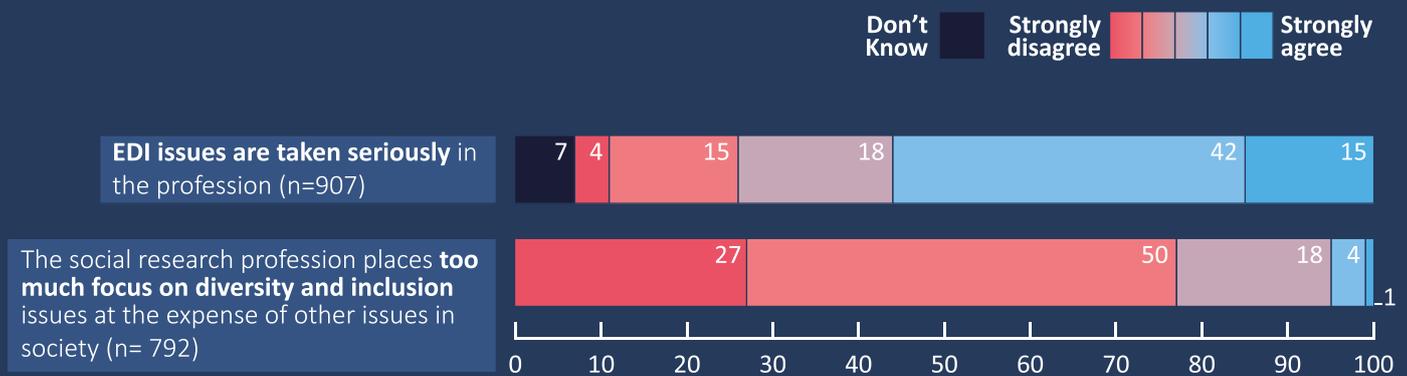
2.3 Valuing diversity and inclusion

“I do think government, certainly the department that I work in, does take diversity and inclusion seriously, and is doing a lot of things to try and improve that within the social research profession. But there are huge barriers to overcome.” (#1: public sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

There is clear scope to take diversity and inclusion issues more seriously in the profession, with broad consensus that people are comfortable with these being prioritised. Significant differences emerged between sectors, with greatest agreement that equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) issues are taken seriously in the profession among public sector (67%) and commercial (58%) researchers. Meanwhile, less than half of respondents from academia (43%) and the third sector (46%) agree.

Moreover, comments reflect that good intentions often do not (yet) equate to positive action or outcomes.

Figure 4: Focus on diversity and inclusion within the profession



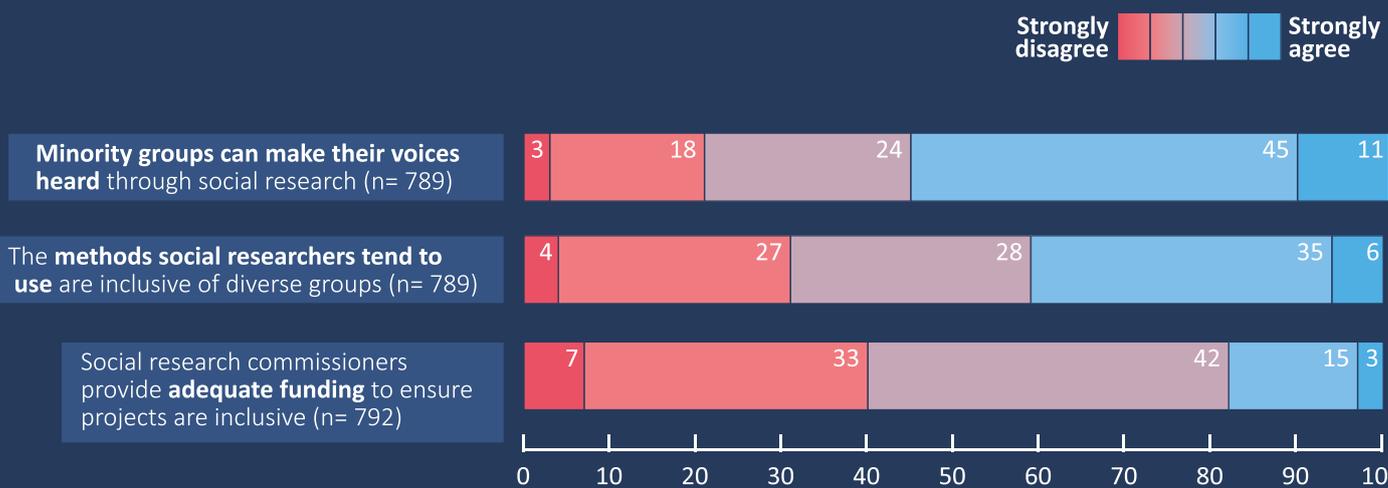
Base: All participants. Q28) To what extent do you agree that Equality, Diversity & Inclusion issues are taken seriously within the profession? (n=907). Q33) The following questions are about the social research sector in general, and its relation to wider society, rather than on your personal experiences in the workplace. We want to understand your thoughts on whether and how social research projects reflect and accommodate the diversity of society at large. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? ‘The social research profession places too much focus on diversity and inclusion issues at the expense of other issues in society’ (n= 792).

2.4 Research funding and design

Sizeable proportions have negative views about the way the profession funds and designs research. Only 56% of respondents feel minority groups are able to make their voices heard through social research, and just two-fifths (41%) agree that the methods social researchers tend to use are inclusive of diverse groups. This is a challenge which cuts across all types of research and manifests in different ways. For example, participants pointed to gaps in the availability of quantitative data on minority groups, and sampling and participant recruitment practices which marginalise the experiences of ethnic minorities. Others relate the perceived homogeneity of the sector’s workforce to bias in research topics, the types of questions asked, and methods used.

“There seems to be a lot of middle-class people looking into the lives of working class people. Sometimes participation happens, sometimes people are paid for this. Most of the time, the middle-class remain the gatekeepers of the research, funding and outputs.” (#4: independent, 0 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Figure 5: Inclusivity of research funding and design



Base: All participants. Base sizes for each statement shown in axis labels. Q33) The following questions are about the social research sector in general, and its relation to wider society, rather than on your personal experiences in the workplace. We want to understand your thoughts on whether and how social research projects reflect and accommodate the diversity of society at large. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

“Disabled people aren’t welcome in social research, because as researchers, we research them rather than them being a part of research ... you know, the have researching the have nots.” (#5: third sector, 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

There are significant differences in perceptions between different sectors. Public sector social researchers were most likely to feel positively (47%) or be ambivalent (29%) about the inclusivity of methods, while the third sector strongly disagreed (49%), with only 26% agreeing that they are inclusive. The public sector’s positivity about the inclusivity of social research projects extends to perceptions about the role of commissioners and funding.

Overall, less than one-fifth (18%) of respondents agree that social research commissioners provide adequate funding to ensure projects are inclusive. Again, public sector researchers were most likely to agree (22%) or be ambivalent (54%), while third sector and academic researchers were most likely to disagree (58% and 52% respectively).

It is possible that these sectoral differences in fact reflect a perception gap rather than a true difference in funding and practice. Those working in the public sector roles are more likely to be in commissioning roles (though by no means all) and hence optimistic that they provide sufficient resources to ensure inclusive research. In contrast, those more likely to be in research practitioner roles feel that the resources are insufficient. This genuine gap in perceptions may be exacerbated by the nervousness of those reliant on such funding to criticise or provide feedback to commissioners (see Chapter 5).

“I feel that tight timescales and budgets don’t allow the minority groups to be represented in the RIGHT way – instead, tokenism can apply especially regarding ethnicity.” (#6: commercial sector, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

“[With] a representative sample ... you’re always going to have a very small number of voices trying to break through who are who are likely to be the most impacted. So we’re starting to play around with things like can you sample by affectedness instead of by representativeness? But it’s quite difficult to say to a client, ‘No, you don’t need a representative group of the UK population’. That stuff makes people nervous.” (#7: commercial sector organisational representative)

Addressing the limitations in research design requires time, resources and a commitment to change among commissioners and funders, as well as from researchers themselves. Alongside increasing diversity in the profession, it is argued that, to achieve this, there needs to be broader recognition of the value lived experience can bring to the research process.

“I feel that I bring a lot of lived experience of disadvantage and there isn’t really a place for it in Government Social Research, which tends to be more quantitatively focused and working on much bigger analytic pieces. ... There’s no base to bring in or to consider what ethnic minority researchers might have to offer, drawing on their lived experiences.” (#1: public sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

“Involving people with lived experience of the issues being explored in the design and delivery of social research is an important way to ensure research is inclusive and involves/ can attract a diverse group of people.” (#8: third sector, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

03

The Lived Experience of Social Researchers

3.1 Summary

Overall, social researchers from marginalised groups tend to have negative experiences of working in the profession. It is clear that the profession struggles to include and accommodate for a diversity of identities, backgrounds and circumstances, despite good intentions.

Researchers' experiences are shaped by workplace cultures.

Important elements include:

- **Belonging and Difference:** in general, around three-quarters of social researchers feel a sense of belonging at their current employer, though qualitative descriptions reveal the complex, multifaceted and context-dependent ways in which this is felt. Those who have two or more 'marginalised characteristics' report experiencing a significantly less supportive and inclusive workplace culture on all indicators. This highlights how feelings of inclusion are closely tied to notions of difference, with those from marginalised backgrounds often reporting a sense of 'imposter syndrome' in the profession.
- **Work-life balance:** the culture of the profession is often typified as 'fast paced' or 'high pressure'. Whilst around two-thirds of social researchers are satisfied with their work-life balance, this falls to just over half in academia and the commercial sector, and intersects with marginalised characteristics in a variety of ways.

Opportunities and rewards are not perceived as being particularly fair.

- Marginalised groups have a greater sense of unfairness at work in the profession
- This is reflective of a sense that particular skills and types of work are favoured over others, rather than valuing a wide variety of contributions. This emerged through specific experiences of unfair promotion processes and allocation of tasks, which tend to reflect broader exclusionary cultures.

Discriminatory and exclusionary behaviours are widespread. The most common are incidents known as 'microaggressions'.

- Almost three-quarters of researchers have experienced at least one type of discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour. Of these, a quarter have experienced five or more.
- The range of different types of discriminatory or

exclusionary behaviour experienced increases significantly with the number of 'marginalised characteristics'

- A similar proportion has witnessed at least one type of discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour that has felt unfair/unequal. Overall, 83% have personally experienced or witnessed at least one of these behaviours in the workplace within the last three years.
- Whilst 16% report having experienced 'bullying, physical harassment or violence', and/or 'sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviours', the most common incidents are those that make people feel uncomfortable in the workplace but they tell us can be difficult to label as 'discrimination'
- Although microaggressions may not seem offensive to those doing them, they commonly make people feel uncomfortable, ill-at-ease, or offended. The impact has a cumulative effect, but the subtlety means that they can be extremely difficult to respond to or escalate. This can lead to self-doubt and, when met with ambivalence from colleagues, can undermine experiences.

Negative experiences can have profound impacts on individuals.

- They can chip away at individuals' self-esteem and self-confidence, and contribute to negative wellbeing outcomes
- This has broader impacts on motivation, productivity and abilities to contribute to the research process. Moreover, it shapes researchers' career paths and limits diversity in the profession.
- More than a quarter have considered leaving their jobs because of concerns related to diversity and inclusion. Diversity and inclusion issues also contributed to over half of decisions to become self-employed.

3.2 Workplace culture

In general, around three-quarters of social researchers feel that they belong and are supported and valued at work. Whilst this is broadly positive, qualitative descriptions reveal the complex, multifaceted and context-dependent ways in which these concepts are felt, which may not always be wholly positive or negative.

“In some ways, there’s quite a good sense of belonging. I think we’re all in it for similar reasons ... it feels like there’s a good atmosphere, and people are quite supportive of each other. But at the same time, sometimes I feel like I don’t quite belong in that I feel like there’s a certain kind of way of presenting oneself that you’re meant to do, which I’ve got feedback saying that I don’t.”
 (#9: commercial sector, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

There is some potential for workplaces to do more to recognise the unique attributes and experience that individuals bring to their work, with two-thirds (66%) feeling that these are currently valued. Moreover, those who have three or more ‘marginalised characteristics’ report experiencing a significantly less supportive and inclusive workplace culture on all indicators. This highlights how feelings of inclusion are closely tied to notions of difference, with those from marginalised backgrounds often reporting a sense of ‘imposter syndrome’⁵ in the profession.

“They were all lovely to me, but we didn’t have those shared experiences ... I just feel like they don’t maybe understand what it’s like [to be from an ethnic minority background], how isolating it is ... people don’t realise that there’s another dimension to feeling excluded, even if you aren’t being excluded.”
 (#10: public sector, 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Figure 6: Workplace culture, experiences by number of ‘marginalised characteristics’



Base: Employed social researchers. Bases sizes for each statement shown in axis labels. Q16) The following statements will allow us to gauge how you feel in your current role within your current (or most recent) company. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements?

⁵ ‘Imposter syndrome’ is defined as an internal feeling of fraudulence and incompetence, despite external evidence of achievements (Clance and Imes, 1978). It involves a constellation of behaviours and attitudes, including: a belief in one’s own inadequacy; a fear of being discovered and exposed as an ‘imposter’; and negative interpretations of success (Gadsby, 2021). Evidence suggests experiences intersect with a range of marginalised characteristics (Bravata et al., 2020).

Social class in social research

Social class and educational background were identified as important factors shaping people's experiences in the profession. People who consider themselves to have a working class background can feel uncomfortable and excluded at work. This is down to the perceived dominance of a 'certain type of person' within the profession from upper or middle class backgrounds.

"There was a real laddish 'bantery' atmosphere, which I think came from having a group of white middle class men who all went to very good schools and the same universities." (#11: commercial sector, 1 'marginalised characteristic')

"I felt much more aware of class markers and cultural capital than I have before, and because I don't come from the same kind of circles that other people do, I've always found it quite difficult because everyone's very eloquent and knows how to say things in a well put together way." (#12: 3 'marginalised characteristics')

"I have quite a strong South London accent and it's not exactly an accent that people think of when they think of professionalism and being intelligent. I remember when I was first starting, I actively tried to hide my voice. I definitely think that people will treat you a certain way if you have a certain accent, if you went to a certain school, based on where you live. There's still so much classism." (#5: third sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

"It's very London focussed, and you shouldn't really rely on getting grads that live within commuting distance at home that don't have to pay rent. My organisation is really lucky that they seem to be able to recruit people that can afford to live and work in London" (#13: commercial sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

Working class people often feel like outsiders, lacking the cultural capital and networks to navigate experiences in the profession. This largely relates to the way people communicate and articulate themselves at work, which is deemed to be a very 'middle class thing'.

There are also more practical challenges, regarding location and qualifications.

Key mechanisms driving these experiences:

- **Qualification requirements for jobs:** the requirement for a postgraduate degree for lots of jobs in the profession tends to indirectly favour those from wealthier backgrounds who could afford to take these qualifications. Moreover, there are very few routes into the profession for those without an undergraduate degree.
- **Networks:** the profession is not well known and work in social research is somewhat of a black box for those who don't have connections to people already working there. This results in working class people being excluded through having weaker social networks into and through the profession.
- **London-centrism:** the disproportionate number of social research jobs in London, coupled with relatively low pay for entry-level roles (including unpaid internships), favours people with enough wealth to subsidise expensive London rents
- **The Oxbridge effect:** it's perceived that senior positions in the profession are dominated by Oxbridge graduates, resulting in recruitment biases. This helps shape a particular type of culture within some organisations, influenced by pre-existing social networks developed around private schools and the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. Those who don't share this background can feel excluded and looked down upon.

Work-life balance

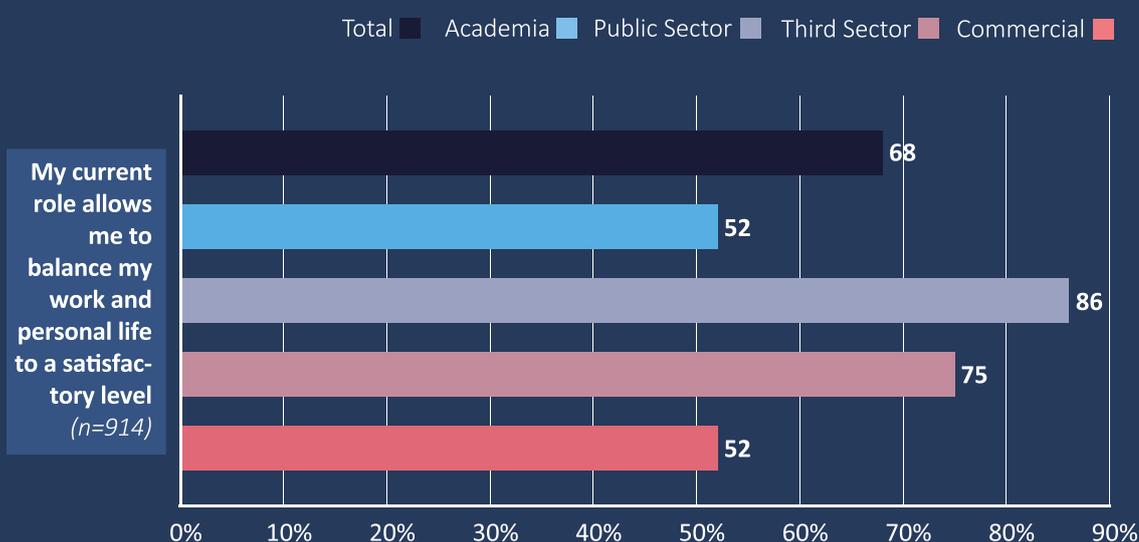
The culture of the profession is often typified as “fast paced” or “high pressure”, and the frequently large workloads are a source of challenge in terms of work-life balance. 68% of social researchers think that their role offers a satisfactory work-life balance. The most satisfied are those in the public and third sectors. In academia and the commercial sector, just over half (52%) of respondents feel satisfied with their work-life balance.

Experiences of work-life balance intersect with marginalised characteristics in a variety of ways. For example, these issues are felt particularly acutely by those who have caring responsibilities or health conditions which make out-of-hours work/events, travel and short-notice requirements harder to manage.

“My typical day would start around six in the morning, I would drop my daughter off Kids Club, at seven something in the morning, get into work for eight. And I would typically leave work around six something and miss my lunch breaks as well, because I was so overburdened with work. So, it’s been really, really difficult.” (#14: academia, 4 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Figure 7: Satisfaction with work-life balance, by sector

% Agreement



Base: Employed social researchers. (n= 914): Academia (n= 157); Public sector (n= 342); Third sector (n= 142); Commercial sector (n= 271). Q17) The following statements will allow us to gauge how you think your current company performs in relation to Diversity, Inclusion and Equality. For those that have recently left the sector, please answer referencing your most recent employer. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements?

Some see this culture as a consequence of resourcing challenges, while others feel it is linked to social researchers’ commitment and passion for their work. Two freelancers’ perceptions of how the profession operates reflect these views:

“What you find is that social research organisations are employing fewer staff, to take on a higher number of projects ... And I see it with every organisation I work with. I see people struggling every day to juggle the amount of work they’ve got ... It’s just the nature of trying to square the limited budgets with the needs of resources or workforce.” (#3: independent, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

“My experience of people in this sector is that everyone is really keen and motivated and excited and curious and smart. And, actually, it can feel quite hard to keep up with people. Like, I’m interested, but my whole life isn’t my work ... Everybody is constantly on Twitter, posting thought pieces ... I don’t understand how they have the energy to do that and do their job. It actually makes me feel a little bit like maybe I shouldn’t be in this sector, because maybe I don’t care as much as everybody else.” (#15: independent, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

Carers in social research

One-third of social researchers identified as having caring responsibilities. Juggling these (and other) personal responsibilities alongside professional commitments is often a source of stress and anxiety. A culture whereby a large emphasis is placed on working time (through presenteeism, fast paced work and expectations of long hours) is perceived to be in conflict with caring responsibilities. These issues are closely related to gendered norms and biases, and also intersect with age and experiences related to other protected characteristics.

The profession is experienced as exclusionary as a result – whether that be from an inability to participate in events and activities (a particular problem for parents), or more directly in terms of the opportunities provided for progression.

“I think there were definite pinch points for me. There was one point when, so my son was just starting reception at school, and my daughter was probably one and a half, not quite two. And I was just back from maternity leave and had a lot of high profile projects, and I didn’t feel like I had the support above me. And so, basically, it turned to be my expectation that I would work every evening, to be able to manage, and that’s just really not a healthy place to be, and it’s really not sustainable.” (#16: research institute, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

Key mechanisms driving these experiences:

- **Managing time:** Last minute and out-of-hours commitments which may require travel (e.g. funding pitches and fieldwork) are more difficult to arrange for those with caring responsibilities, often creating extra stress, or feelings that they have let others down if they can’t attend.
- **Limited opportunities:** Unable to take up opportunities such as networking and development opportunities, which often take place outside usual working hours/ require travel/ are not prioritised within time allocated for role.
- **Problems with flexible working:** Flexible working arrangements, particularly part-time working, is difficult to manage because of experiences where expectations do not change with hours. Also, many perceive that job shares/ part-time/ flexible working are not considered as compatible with responsibilities in more senior roles, limiting progression.
- **Quantity over quality:** Work seems to be valued, and ‘success’ measured, in relation to quantity over quality- i.e. number of publications, bids won etc. Those taking leave or working reduced or part-time hours due to caring responsibilities feel this has held them back in their careers.
- **Discrimination:** Experiences of maternity-related discrimination in recruitment and promotion

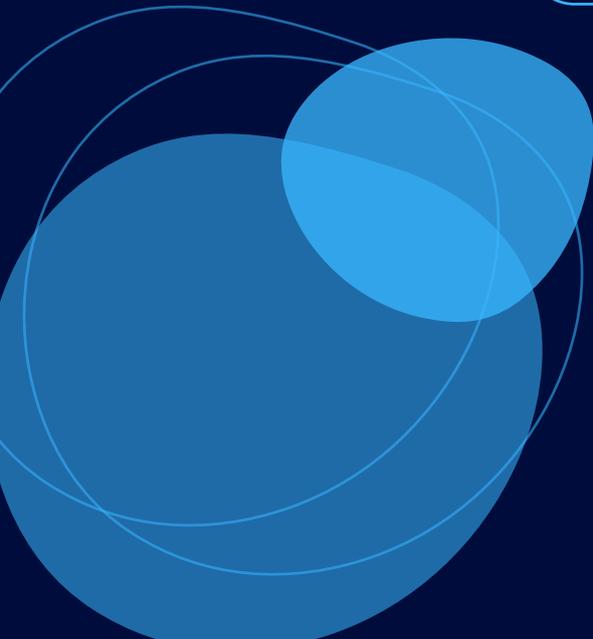
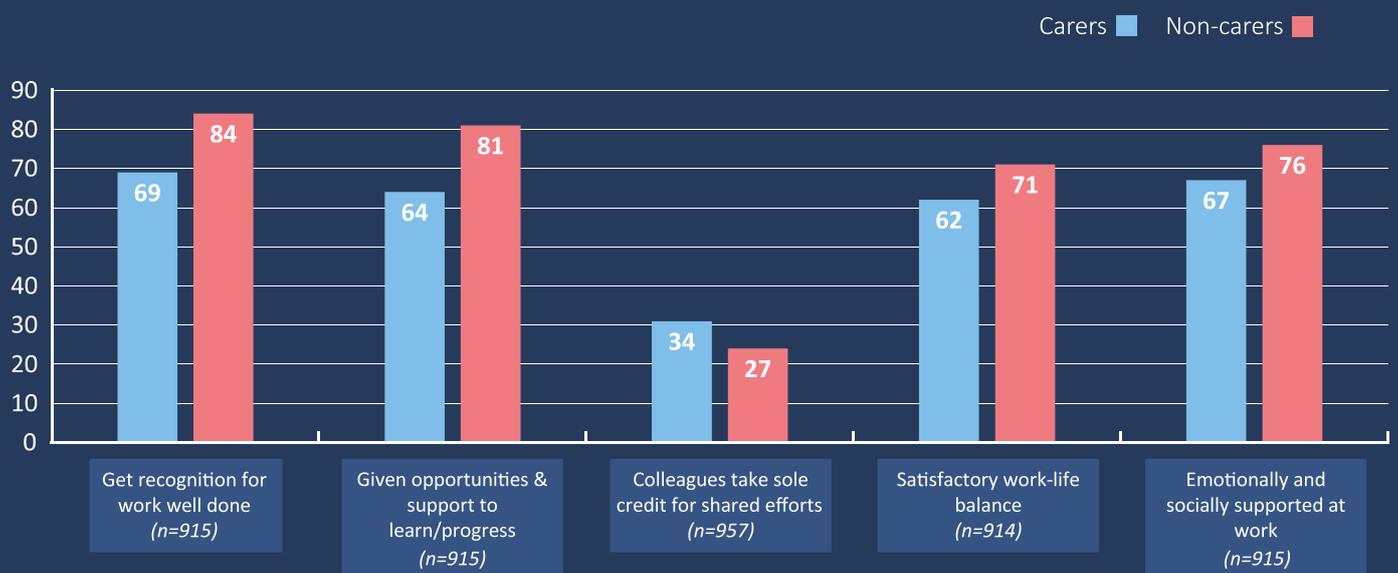


Figure 8: Significant differences between carers and non-carers

% Agreement



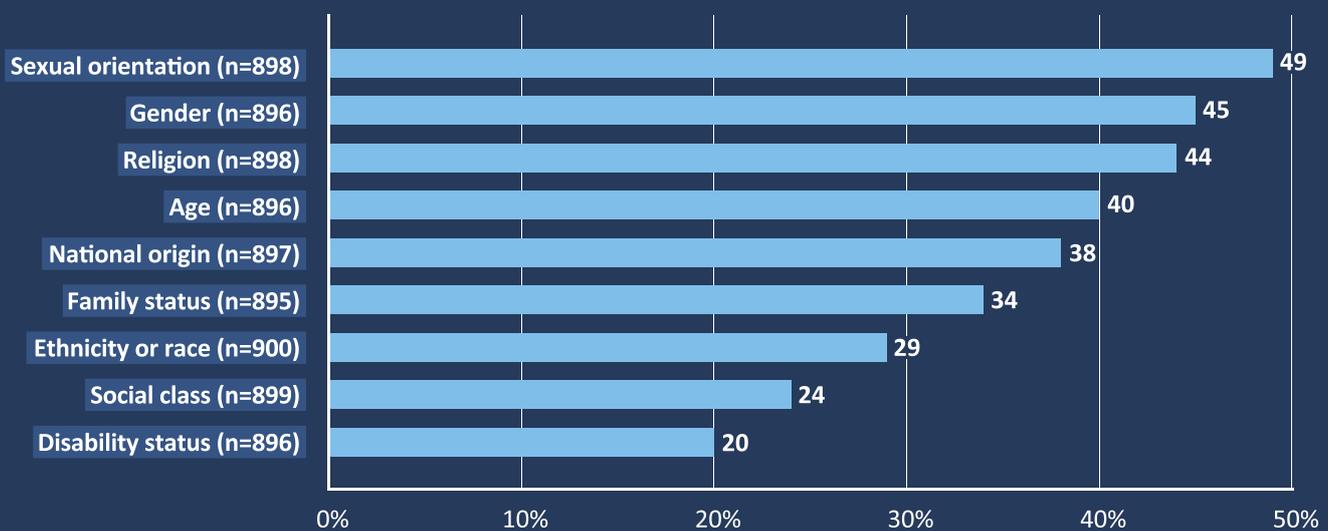
Base: Employed social researchers (n= 915): carers (n= 279), non-carers (n= 616). Q16) The following statements will allow us to gauge how you feel in your current role within your current (or most recent) company. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements? 'I get recognition for work well done'; 'I am given opportunities and support to learn and progress my career'; 'I am emotionally and socially supported at work'. All participants (n= 975): carers (n= 306), non-carers (n=631). Q22) Have you personally experienced any of the following within the last 3 years at work? If you have been working in the social research sector for less than three years, please restrict your answers to your experiences of the social research sector. If you have recently left the sector, please refer to your most recent employer. 'Colleagues taking sole credit for shared efforts'.

3.3 Fairness at work

Fair treatment is a key tenet of inclusion. When asked what enables a sense of belonging among employees, one researcher described how “so much of it is based on trust” rooted in whether “people feel like they’re being treated fairly” (#17: third sector, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’). Within the profession, perceptions of whether different marginalised groups are treated fairly vary significantly by characteristic- but fewer than half of social researchers agree that there are the same opportunities for people from any marginalised group. In the worst case, only one-fifth (20%) agreed that people were treated fairly regardless of their disability status. Moreover, 51% of those with a disability⁶ felt that there are not equal opportunities for researchers with disabilities, compared to 38% of those without.

Figure 9: Perceptions of fairness regardless of characteristics

% Agreement



Base: All participants. Base sizes for each factor shown in axis labels. Q28b) Do you believe that everyone in the social research sector has the same opportunities to progress and is rewarded fairly regardless of each of these factors?

Across all marginalised characteristics, there is a clear pattern that those who identify as part of the group report poorer perceptions of fairness than those who do not. For example:

- Researchers from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to agree that there are equal opportunities regardless of ethnicity or race, than white researchers (18% and 32% respectively)
- Fewer researchers with caring responsibilities, compared to those without, perceive experiences to be fair regardless of family status (28% and 36% respectively)
- Over half of men feel people are treated fairly regardless of gender, compared to two-fifths of women (58% and 41% respectively)

The effect of age on how fairly people are treated is more complex. The survey data revealed that older employees (aged 55+) are significantly less likely to agree that there are equal opportunities regardless of age than those aged under 35 (24% and 47% respectively). However, the interviews and comments shared through the survey reveal a more nuanced picture with people across all ages feeling that their current stage of life puts them at a disadvantage.

⁶ Please note that this includes people who have a physical disability/mental health condition and/or are neuro-divergent. Meanwhile, what was meant by ‘disability status’ was left open to interpretation in the question on perceptions of opportunities and rewards. We acknowledge the limitations of this approach, particularly that not all people who could be part of this category will identify in terms of having a ‘disability’. Please refer to the methods section and technical appendix for further details.

Intergenerational relationships in social research

Across the age spectrum, both younger and older social researchers suggest their age is a contributing factor to diversity and inclusion issues at work. This seems to reflect both the complex intergenerational relationships across society, as well as differences in organisational structure and ethos.

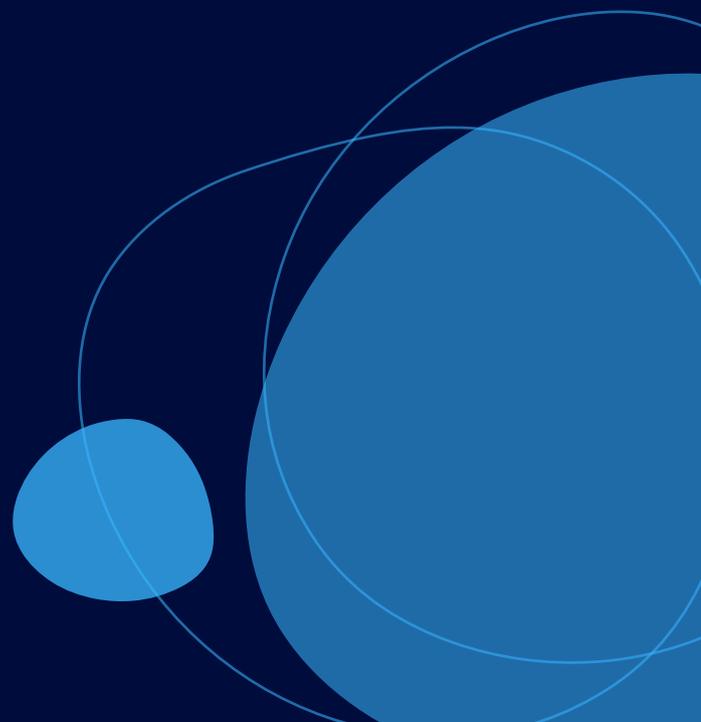
Key mechanisms driving these experiences:

- **'Ways of working':** Some organisations are described as if they are 'stuck in their ways' where (usually younger) researchers feel unable to bring new ideas to the table. In contrast, some older researchers feel like their views are marginalised and dismissed as representing old 'ways of working', particularly after a shift in management and culture.
- **Employment structures:** Certain social research organisations have large graduate schemes which bring in sizeable cohorts of younger graduates each year. Older researchers often find their organisation's culture reflects this skew towards younger researchers, meaning that they can feel alienated. Where other organisations have a very established staff team, it may feel difficult for younger researchers to 'break in' to the culture.
- **Finding a voice:** Both older and younger researchers reported feeling as though their views are not listened to or valued, diminishing their confidence. This often intersected with other characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, social class and disability status.

"[My organisation] take on about 80 trainees every year. It is lively and is challenging. They ask questions about, 'Why you do things like that? Is there a better way?' And at [the organisation], which is a bit of an old fuddy-duddy of an organisation, they are beginning to get some traction in new research methods ... So, it's great in some ways, it can be a bit lonely sometimes ... when you turn 50, the standing joke is that you suddenly become below average." (#18: public sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"I think there's a certain view of well, you're a bit over the hill to be much use in this young new world." (#19: public sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

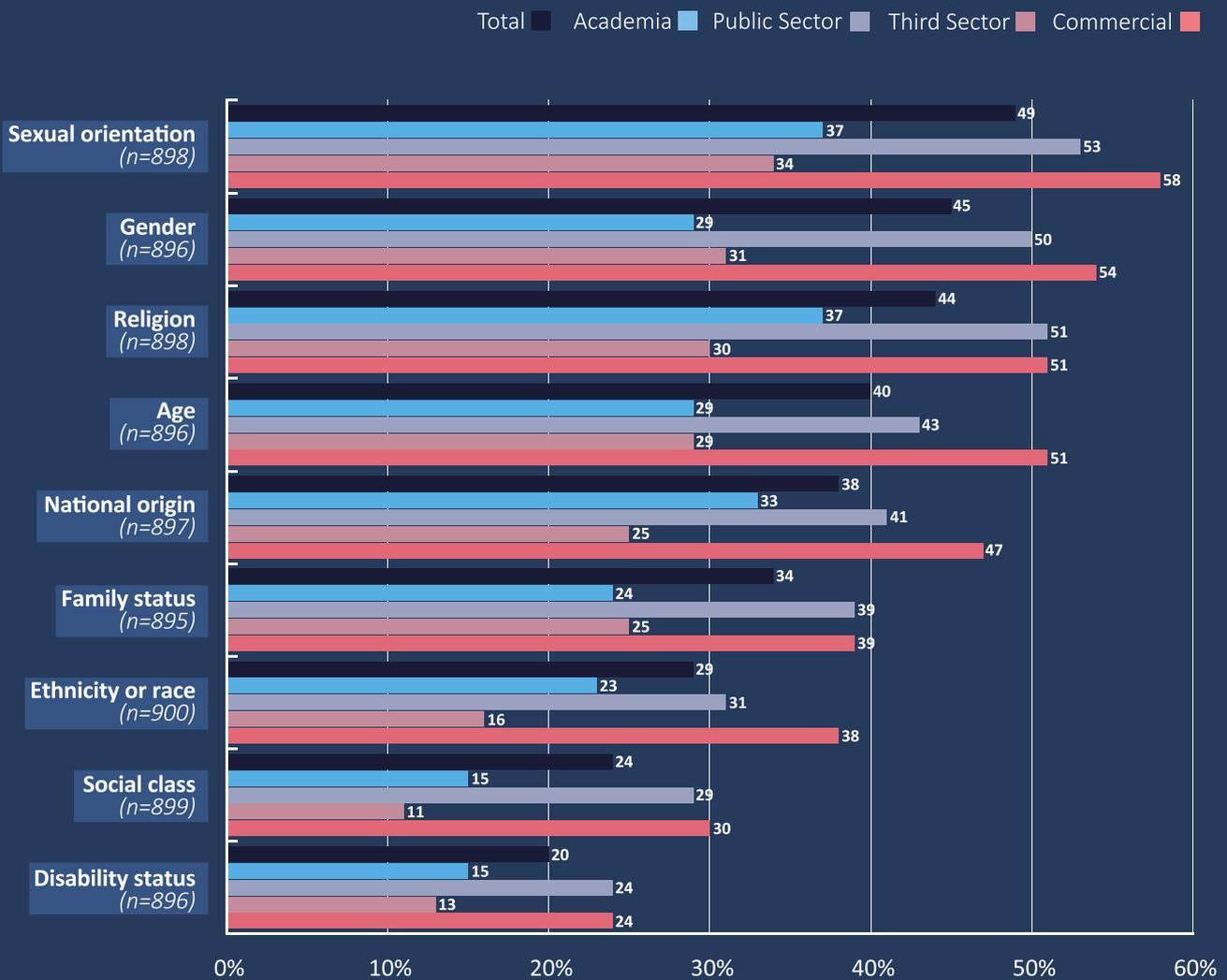
"I guess, being fairly young, I think you can sometimes feel that people are taking you less seriously ... some people assume you have less experience than you do." (#17: third sector, 1 'marginalised characteristic')



Perceptions of fairness also vary by sector, with those working in academia and the third sector significantly less confident about the fair treatment of many marginalised groups.

Figure 10: Perceptions of fairness regardless of characteristics, by sector

% Agreement



Base: All participants. Q28b) Do you believe that everyone in the social research sector has the same opportunities to progress and is rewarded fairly regardless of each of these factors? ‘Sexual orientation’ (n= 898): Academia (n= 132), Public sector (n= 321), Third sector (n= 134), Commercial sector (n= 252); ‘Gender’ (n= 896): Academia (n= 133), Public sector (n= 321), Third sector (n= 134), Commercial sector (n= 249); ‘Religion’ (n= 898): Academia (n= 133), Public sector (n= 322), Third sector (n= 134), Commercial sector (n= 251); ‘Age’ (n= 896): Academia (n= 133), Public sector (n= 321), Third sector (n= 134), Commercial sector (n= 249); ‘National origin’ (n= 897): Academia (n= 132), Public sector (n= 322), Third sector (n= 133), Commercial sector (n= 251); ‘Family status’ (n= 895): Academia (n= 132), Public sector (n= 320), Third sector (n= 133), Commercial sector (n= 251); ‘Ethnicity or race’ (n= 900): Academia (n= 132), Public sector (n= 322), Third sector (n= 134), Commercial sector (n= 252); ‘Social class’ (n= 899): Academia (n= 133), Public sector (n= 321), Third sector (n= 134), Commercial sector (n= 252); ‘Disability status’ (n= 896): Academia (n= 133), Public sector (n= 321), Third sector (n= 134), Commercial sector (n= 249).

The LGBTQ+ community in social research

One of the most positive findings of this study is that, on the whole, there is no significant difference in experiences of diversity and inclusion in the workplace between people who identify as LGBTQ+ and those who identify as heterosexual. Across most metrics of workplace culture and discrimination, the LGBTQ+ experience is the same as, if not better than, that of cis-gender heterosexuals. Indeed, 85% of LGBTQ+ researchers report getting recognition for work well done, compared to 78% of heterosexual researchers. In this sense our data reflects the findings of the 2020 MRS report on diversity and inclusion in market research, and supports the conclusions that, in general, lesbian, gay and bisexual researchers have positive experiences as a minority group (Gervais, 2020). This begs the question of what can we learn from this?

However, when asked whether everyone in the social research profession has equal opportunities to progress and is rewarded fairly regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, 27% of LGBTQ+ vs. 15% of heterosexual researchers say there are not equal opportunities.

The experiences of trans and gender non-binary people are hidden in our data due to their small numbers in our sample, but one trans researcher spoke to us in an interview. They told us about *“a trans-exclusionary incident, where I use they/them pronouns, and my pronouns in my email signature got changed incorrectly to [gender binary pronouns] and I didn’t notice, and they were on there for a while. I’d been sending lots of emails with those, and I wasn’t aware ... I was very worried that had it undone quite a lot of the work that I’d done myself to make my pronouns known and feel valid.”* (#12: 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

This researcher’s experience within a large organisation highlights the struggles for trans and nonbinary people to be recognised as such at work. Often, an understanding of the particular experiences and needs of trans and non-binary people is lacking and processes do not exist that cater to these. For example, not all organisations collect equality monitoring information on gender identity, which places a greater burden of disclosure on the individual and sets the tone of a wider trans-exclusionary workplace culture.

Another trans researcher, commenting through the survey, reflects on the importance of understanding these issues when conducting research with such marginalised and minority groups:

“More training is needed around conducting research with minority groups when the researcher does not belong to that group. As a person who has taken part in lots of research on transgender issues, cis researchers often lack knowledge and sometimes do not use respectful terminology. In terms of survey questions, they do not necessarily cover the correct options ... This survey, for example, asks about gender identity giving the options male/female/identify with neither/prefer not to say, presumably to cover non-binary (a thoughtful and important inclusion). However, whilst some non-binary people identify with no gender, a large proportion identify with male and female genders. I would suggest reading Stonewall guidance on gender identity questions to improve this for future inclusion questions.” (#20: public sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

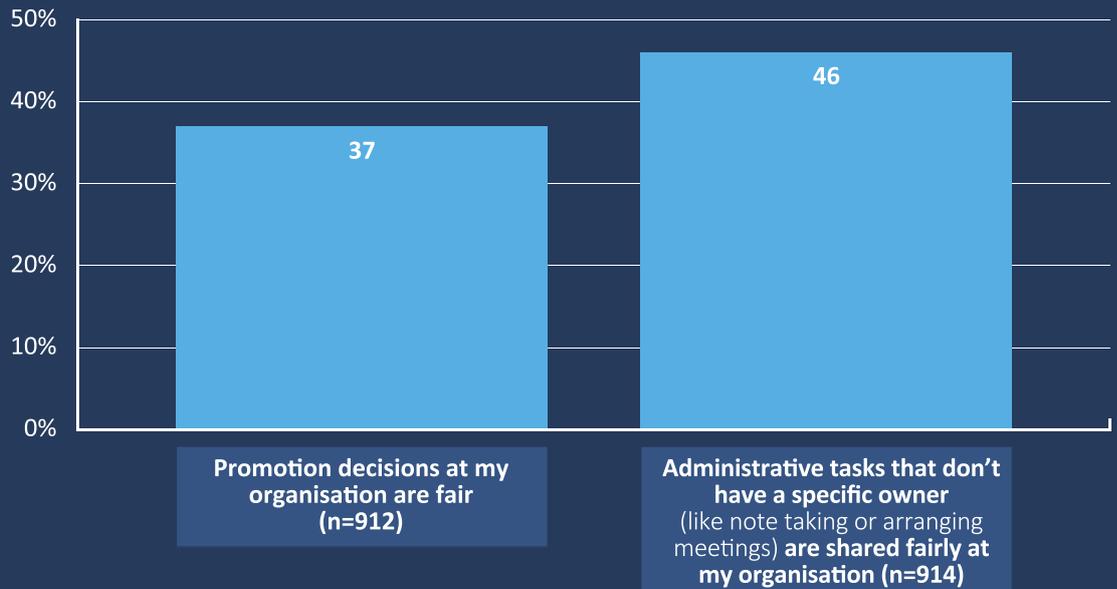


Valuing diverse skills and contributions

Issues of workplace fairness are also reflected in how people's skills and time are valued. In particular, there is a sense that administrative tasks could be more fairly shared, and only around one-third (37%) consider promotion processes to be fair.

Figure 11: Fairness of promotions and sharing administrative tasks

% Agreement



Base: Employed social researchers. Base sizes for each statement shown in axis labels. Q17) The following statements will allow us to gauge how you think your current company performs in relation to Diversity, Inclusion and Equality. For those that have recently left the sector, please answer referencing your most recent employer. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements?

"I've had some absolutely ghastly [managers], real boys clubs, where, you know, they all have their idea of going to the pub and talking about football, and I was the female who was given all the admin work ... 'You take the notes and do the emails, and we'll all do all the programming.' Well, you know, I do programming! ... That was really frustrating." (#19: public sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

In an environment of casual assumptions and stereotyping, individuals perceive these experiences to be related to their identity, background, or circumstances. An academic researcher describes how *"because of [my] ethnic background, ... so many assumptions are made about what kind of work I will do ... some of the really tedious, mundane work."* For instance, they are frequently tasked with translating interviews into English, leading them to question: *"Why should I be expected to do that kind of work? That's not what I've subscribed to as a qualitative researcher."* (#14: academia, 4 'marginalised characteristics')

They further explain how this is related to wider cultures around the skills and types of work which are valued in the profession. While loving their work engaging with people from marginalised backgrounds, and recognising that as a strength, it is not a skill that is valued or rewarded but rather downgraded as a *"data collector"*.

This bias about what is valued is just one way in which some people are disadvantaged in terms of career progression. Situations vary between organisations but there is a general sense that certain types of people are favoured or have an unfair advantage when it comes to progression within the profession. It is often felt that there is a certain

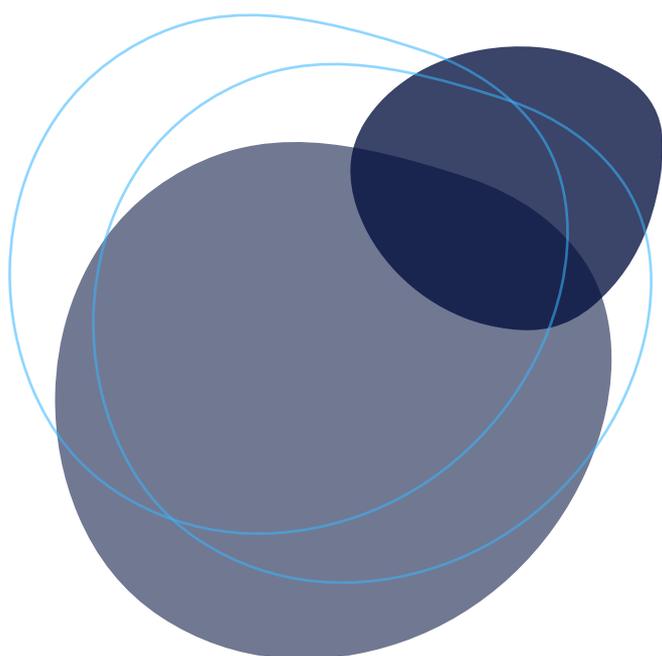
type of 'mould' that one must fit into, with recruitment and promotion processes described as like a "sausage machine" or "cookie cutter". This 'mould' seems to favour a particular style of communication, which reflects more self-confidence and advantages those who are most articulate and who perform well in interview situations. Those who fit this image may also have greater access to 'networks' which could help advance their career.

This mould is associated with a range of factors, including gender, ethnicity, age and neurodiversity, and seems to imply an overarching bias against those from lower middle-class and working-class backgrounds. Benefitting from private education and/or attendance at one of the top universities are often identified as routes through which people develop the skills, confidence and networks that facilitate career progression.

Rather than embracing what can be gained by valuing diverse contributions, this reinforces how the profession values a limited set of skills. This is also reflected in progression pathways, whereby senior roles tend to prioritise strong communication, organisational/team leadership, and management skills - without providing routes to reflect more advanced technical research skills among those who wish to remain more hands-on with research.

"I think it's about not being able to perform in interviews, the way that younger and more confident colleagues who are more kind of institutionalised into what the organisation values. I think it's harder for people who haven't necessarily had the same kind of education ... and that overlaps with ethnicity and economic background. So, I didn't go to the kind of school where you learn how to perform in this way, I didn't get to the kind of university where you learn how to perform in this way."
(#1: public sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"ADHD made the project management element of research difficult ... I developed strategies over time but I think my 'disorganisation' held me back a bit at first. Now ... I find negotiating office politics bewildering and often excruciating. I think I'm held back from ever progressing beyond middle management as I am not 'smooth' enough. I also think there are some class and gender issues bound up in there. In many ways though my neurodiversity has helped me be a better researcher so its swings and roundabouts."
(#21: public sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')



3.4 Workplace discrimination

Personal experiences of discrimination

Almost three-quarters (72%) of social researchers have personally experienced at least one negative, exclusionary or discriminatory behaviour in the workplace over the last three years. These people are significantly more likely to be women (75% vs. 63% of men), disabled (85% vs. 68% of non-disabled people), from an ethnic minority background (83% vs. 70% of white people) and/or younger (76% of 24-35s vs. 61% of over 55s).

Figure 12: Proportion experiencing at least one negative or discriminatory incident in last 3 years, by number of 'marginalised characteristics'

% Experiencing at least one incident



Base: All participants (n= 969): 0 'marginalised characteristic' (n= 78); 1 'marginalised characteristic' (n= 299); 2 'marginalised characteristics' (n= 223); 3+ 'marginalised characteristics' (n= 108). Q22) Have you personally experienced any of the following within the last 3 years at work? If you have been working in the social research sector for less than three years, please restrict your answers to your experiences of the social research sector. If you have recently left the sector, please refer to

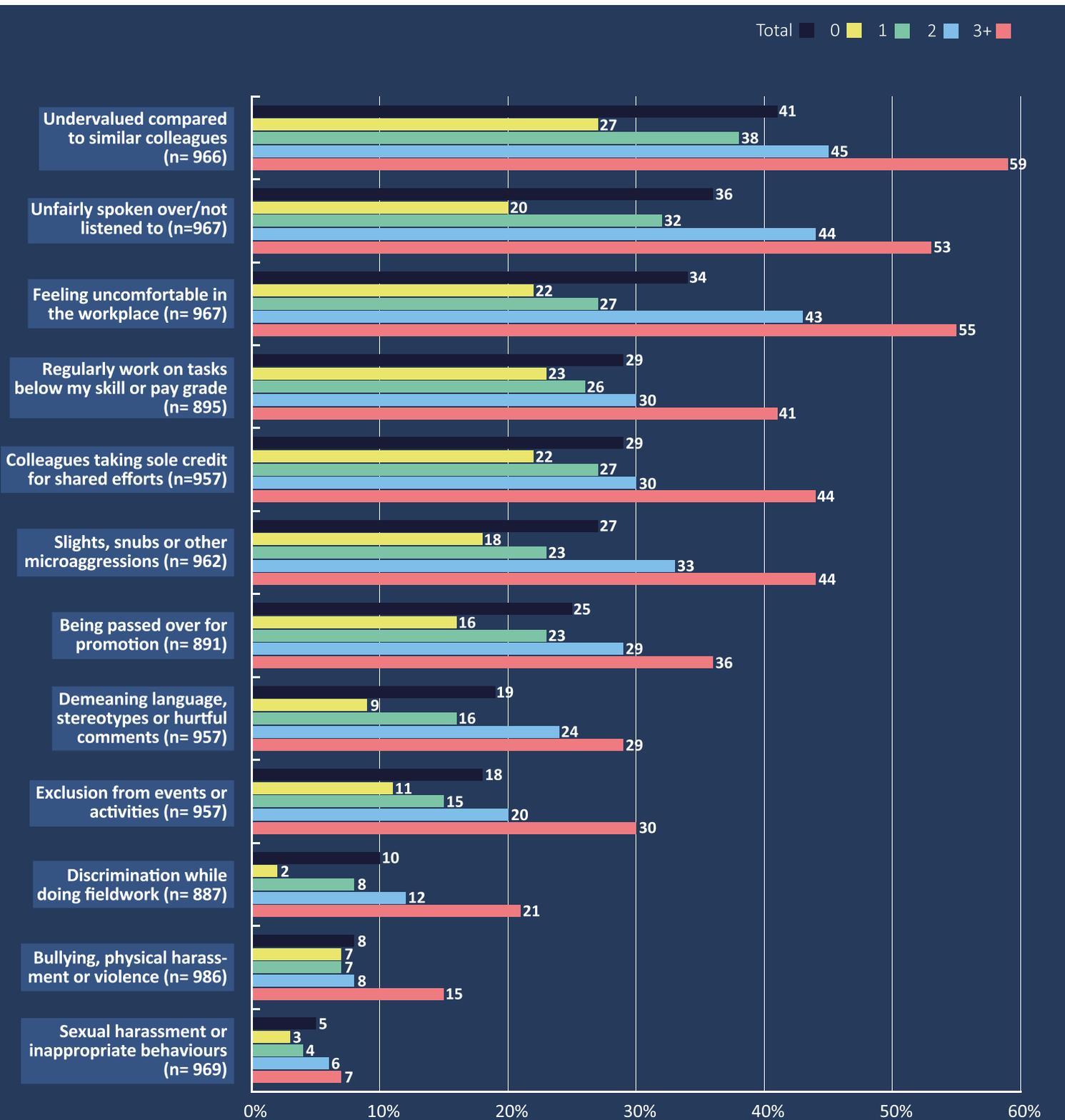
Of those that have experienced these behaviours, a quarter have experienced five or more. The number of different types of discrimination experienced also increases significantly with number of 'marginalised characteristics'. Those with 0, or 1 'marginalised characteristics' report an average of 3.1 and 3.4 over the last three years, significantly fewer than the 4.0 by those with two characteristics, and the 4.8 by those with three or more characteristics.⁷

Overall, 16% report having experienced 'bullying, physical harassment or violence', and/or 'sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviours'. However, the most common forms of experiences are incidents that make people feel uncomfortable, but which they tell us are often difficult to label as discrimination. These are often termed as 'microaggressions'.

⁷ 0 + 1 are significantly different from 2 and 3+; the difference between 2 and 3+ is also significant.

Figure 13: Types of discrimination experienced personally in last 3 years, by number of 'marginalised characteristics'

% who have experienced each type



Base: All participants. Base sizes for each statement shown in axis labels. Q22) Have you personally experienced any of the following within the last 3 years at work? If you have been working in the social research sector for less than three years, please restrict your answers to your experiences of the social research sector.

Women in social research

The social research profession is widely perceived as having a disproportionate representation of women overall, but with under-representation in senior roles. The likely influence of this is reflected in how many women do not feel comfortable in the workplace, despite being in the majority, and in descriptions of workplaces as masculine environments. Some researchers describe “bullish” and “laddy” cultures with “toxic masculinity” or feeling like they needed to break through an “old boys club”.

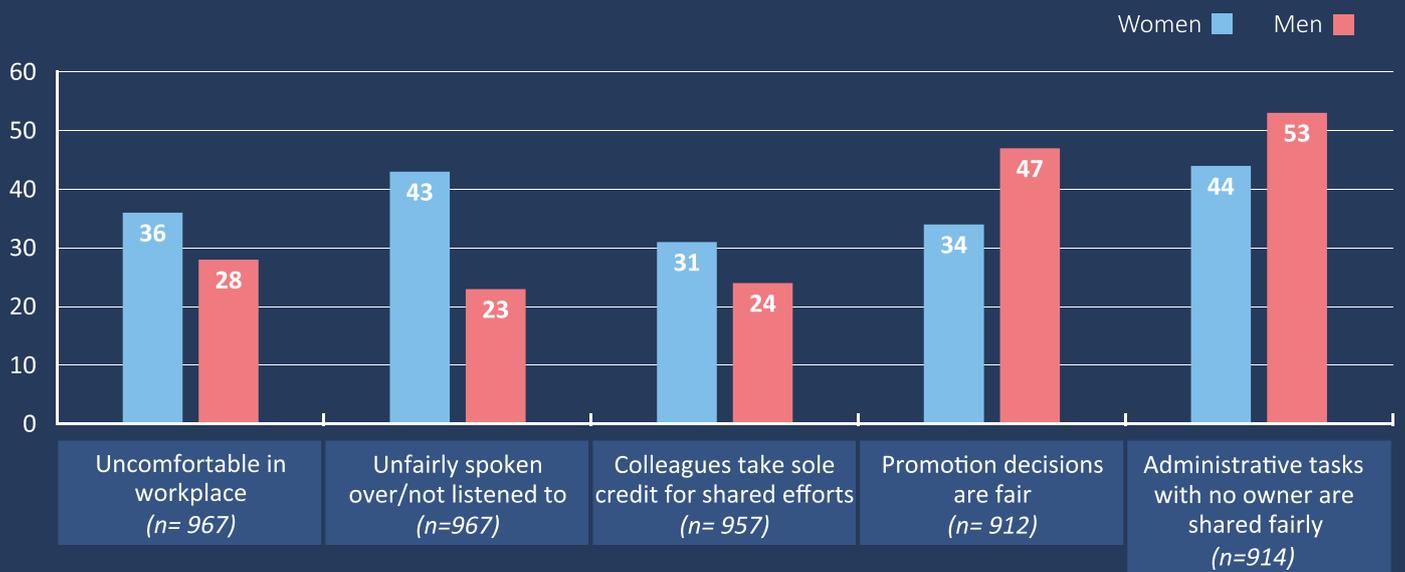
Women are also significantly more likely to have experienced instances of discrimination: 75% of women have experienced at least one in the last three years, compared to 63% of men.

Key mechanisms driving these experiences:

- **Finding a voice:** Many noted difficulties in making women’s voices heard and valued. This often revolves around a lack of confidence to speak up and share opinions, compounded by situations where they are spoken over or not listened to; or colleagues taking credit for ideas.
- **Gendered stereotypes:** Stereotypes around femininity mean that women have been told they are not suitable for leadership roles, or that their communication style needed to change. In tandem, there is a perception that stereotypically ‘male’ characteristics are valued more in recruitment and promotion (e.g. self-confidence, assertiveness etc.).
- **‘Women’s work’:** In some organisations, gendered power relations are also linked to the status of social research work. Often, where other types of analytical work take place (for example economic research), there are constant battles to demonstrate the value of knowledge derived from social research. This seems to be particularly true of qualitative work. Essentialism was highlighted as an issue whereby women were disproportionately given jobs in which stereotypically female characteristics were deemed as advantageous (e.g. caring characteristics when interviewing vulnerable groups, or admin work).

Figure 14: Significant differences between women and men

% Agreement/ Experiencing in last 3 years



Base: All participants. Q22) Have you personally experienced any of the following within the last 3 years at work? If you have been working in the social research sector for less than three years, please restrict your answers to your experiences of the social research sector. If you have recently left the sector, please refer to your most recent employer. 'Feeling uncomfortable in the workplace' (n= 967): women (n= 698), men (n= 250); 'Being unfairly spoken over or not listened to in meetings (n=967): women (n= 697), men (n=251); 'Colleagues taking sole credit for shared efforts' (n=957): women (n=688), men (n=250). Employed social researchers. Q17) The following statements will allow us to gauge how you think your current company performs in relation to Diversity, Inclusion and Equality. For those that have recently left the sector, please answer referencing your most recent employer. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements? 'Promotion decisions at my organisation are fair' (n=912): women (n= 663), men (n=232); 'Administrative tasks that don't have a specific owner (like note-taking or arranging meetings) are shared fairly at my organisation' (n=914): women (n= 665), men (n= 232).

Microaggressions

“When they’re sitting there talking about, ‘oh, I’m nearly as tanned as you,’ they don’t realise that they’re making a racist remark, because they’re not trying to be offensive ... ‘It’s a harmless comment, it’s a bit of banter’. Except that when it happens a lot, it becomes niggling.”
(#22: public sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

*“They would normally do that kind of bull**** apology where it’s like, ‘I’m so sorry if you were offended by what I said’. They’re very left wing, so ‘would never say anything racist’. So, like gaslighting, a lot of like denying your experiences, but never done in a way that was outwardly aggressive, so you can’t really... it’s very like manipulative.”*
(#5: third sector, 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Microaggressions are understood as subtle or indirect forms of discrimination involving verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults towards people from marginalised groups (Sue, 2010). Although these incidents may not seem offensive to those doing them, they commonly make people feel uncomfortable, ill-at-ease, or offended. When they are commonplace within a workplace’s culture, the impact has a cumulative effect and can profoundly affect an individual’s wellbeing and sense of self.

The subtlety means that microaggressions can be extremely difficult to respond to or escalate by reporting to senior managers, HR or colleagues. Those at the receiving end described experiencing phases of self-doubt, where they begin to question their intuition and interpretation of events, deeming their feelings as “silly” or “over the top”. Incidents are often met with ambivalence from those who do not necessarily understand the impact. Reactions like these serve to undermine the experiences of marginalised groups and further reinforce feelings of exclusion.

They go on to describe how, when such remarks or actions are brushed off by those making them, it can become easy for people on the receiving end to change their behaviour to conform to norms: “I think definitely earlier on in my career, ... I just kind of internalised it.” For example, when told to behave more ‘professionally’, they never questioned “What exactly do you mean by that? What are you trying to imply?”. They feel this had broader implications for their career:

“I think I looked different and sounded different to everyone else. So, you know, I can be quite loud, but so can other people and they’re not put down for it in the way that I [was] ... I was like, ‘Oh, I just need to be more professional, I need to make sure that I’m not speaking out of turn’. And then I realised that that is a very behaviour that’s going to stop me from progressing, because all the people that progress are the people that do speak up in meetings when they have good ideas ... So it did put me back in my career actually quite a bit.”

Social researchers from minority ethnic groups

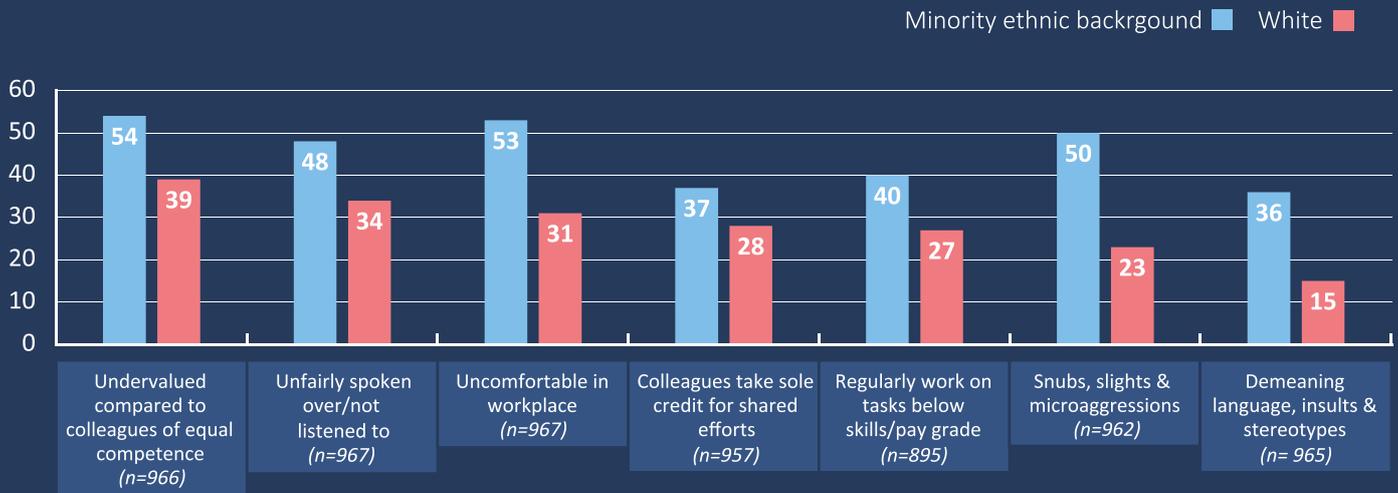
Social researchers from minority ethnic backgrounds report poorer experiences than white researchers on almost every indicator of diversity and inclusion. In particular, they have lower sense of belonging at work and are less likely to feel emotionally and socially supported at work. They are also less likely to feel comfortable at work, and more likely to have experienced most forms of discriminatory and exclusionary behaviour.

The insidious nature of microaggressions is something experienced by 50% of all researchers from a minority ethnic background over the last three years, compared to 23% of their white colleagues. This takes its toll on researchers, affecting their sense of identity at work and in their personal lives, harming self-esteem and mental health.

People find it almost impossible to address these microaggressions at work. They are hard to pin-down as the instances are by definition small-scale and attempts to escalate issues are hampered by self-doubt and the downplaying of them by colleagues. Many find themselves ‘self-policing’ their behaviour and not being their full-self at work for fear of being judged by colleagues

Figure 15: Significant differences between researchers from minority ethnic and white backgrounds

% Experiencing in last 3 years



Base: All participants. Q22) Have you personally experienced any of the following within the last 3 years at work? If you have been working in the social research sector for less than three years, please restrict your answers to your experiences of the social research sector. If you have recently left the sector, please refer to your most recent employer. ‘Feeling undervalued compared to colleagues of equal competence’ (n= 966): ethnic minorities (n= 159), white (n= 792); ‘Being unfairly spoken over or not listened to in meetings (n=967): ethnic minorities (n= 159); white (n= 793); ‘Feeling uncomfortable in the workplace’ (n= 967): ethnic minorities (n= 157), white (n= 795); ‘Colleagues taking sole credit for shared efforts’ (n=957): ethnic minorities (n= 155), white (n= 787); ‘Being regularly made to work on tasks below my skills or pay grade’ (n= 895): ethnic minorities (n= 147), white (n= 735); ‘Slight, snubs or other ‘microaggressions’ (n= 962): ethnic minorities (n= 159), white (n=789); ‘Demeaning language, stereotypes, insults or other hurtful comments’ (n= 957): ethnic minorities (n= 156), white (n= 795).

This sense of being a minority harms self-confidence and can make ethnic minority researchers feel they have to work harder than their colleagues to fit in and prove themselves. The combined pressures can lead to low self-confidence which in turn results in researchers from ethnic minority backgrounds not putting themselves forward for opportunities, hampering career progression. It also affects researchers’ motivation at work, trust in colleagues (even new colleagues), and overall wellbeing.

Researchers from minority ethnic backgrounds also observe the impacts of this particularly in relation to progression opportunities. For example, they are less likely than white researchers to feel they are given opportunities and support to learn and progress (65% vs. 77%), or that they get recognition for work well done (71% vs. 81%). Just 28% think promotion decisions in their organisation are fair, compared to 39% of white researchers.

“A colleague said to me, ‘Your wife must be really good at cooking curry’ And I said, ‘Well, she’s terrible’, and they replied ‘What do you mean?’, I said, ‘Because she’s [not from Asia]’ why would you make that assumption? I wouldn’t say your wife’s great at cooking roast beef, but I wouldn’t even make a comment”.
 (#23: academia, 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Social researchers from minority ethnic groups cont.

“When I first started working, I was, I think, the only, or at least a very small handful of non-white people. And I think at the time, I didn’t know how much it affected me until like, I look back, and I’m like, ‘Oh, wow. No wonder I didn’t feel like I could really be myself. There was no one else I could really relate to.’ ... I feel like for ethnic minorities in particular, you have so much to prove. You know, for white people, they don’t have that worry, they can be mediocre, and it’ll be fine. People that look like me, you have to go above and beyond to get any ounce of recognition. And when you’re constantly put down, it really does grate on you. For ages, I just thought I was really bad at my job because of how I was essentially bullied by my boss. I did nothing to deserve that, and that took me ages to realise.” (#5: third sector, 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Key mechanisms driving these experiences:

- **Lack of ethnic minority representation:** An overall lack of representation leaves people feeling isolated and lacking peer support. This is particularly acute in organisations where there is a lack of representation at senior levels, which compounds feelings of being an ‘outsider’.
- **The influence of wider societal racism:** Researchers from minority ethnic backgrounds feel conscious of being visibly different and are subject to assumptions based on stereotypes by their colleagues.
- **Structural inequalities:** The intersections between race, socio-economic and educational background, and other factors can complicate both routes into the profession, and progression within it.

While sample sizes do not allow us to disaggregate the experiences of researchers from different ethnic backgrounds in statistical terms, interviews and comments in the survey highlight some important differences between experiences. For example, several social researchers from South Asian backgrounds highlight that one of the challenges they face is that the profession itself is not seen as prestigious or well-paid enough in their communities; this limits the number of peers who consider it as a career and entrenches under-representation.

“Huge chunks of the ethnic minority population in this country- everyone will know what an engineer is, and what doctor is, that those jobs exist, and that those are ‘proper jobs’, quote, unquote. But they won’t appreciate that so much for this kind of job. If you’re a professional social researcher, loads of people don’t know that exists, and then when you tell them, I feel like my community kind of look down on that job, because they think, ‘Oh, it’s not really a proper job, is it?’ Or like, maybe ‘your degree just wasn’t good enough to get into a proper job’.” (#24: commercial sector, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

For Black social researchers, the flurry of activity and discussions following recent Black Lives Matter events made for a difficult time. Many found it hard to discuss and re-live traumatic experiences in workplaces with colleagues who could not relate, particularly when little action followed. This highlights the issues of placing the onus on those affected by an issue to drive change.

“When the George Floyd thing happened, not really having anyone to talk to ... it had a major impact. [A colleague] brought it up and that’s when I opened up and shared my experiences. And even when I shared my experiences, you know, my supervisor didn’t kind of check in with me after that, like, nothing was said it was just kind of swept under the carpet. The whole meeting was basically me and my other colleagues from an ethnic minority background discussing our experiences. No one else said anything, which was quite an invalidating experience.” (#10: public sector, 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

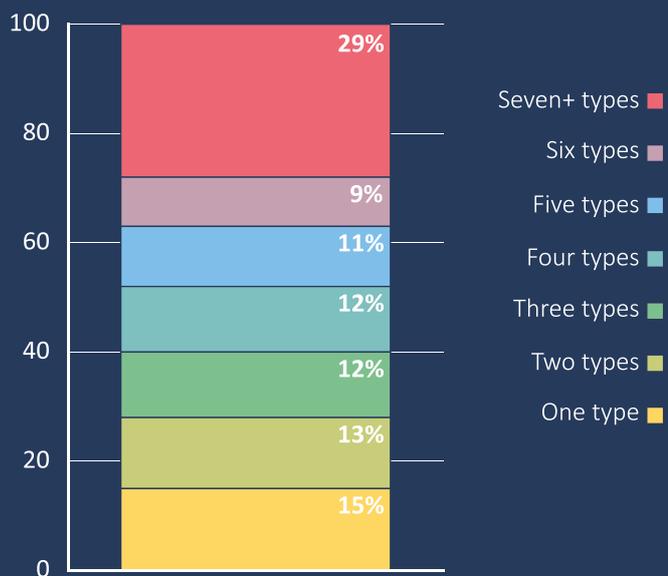
Witnessing discrimination

Almost three-quarters (73%) of people have witnessed some forms of discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour amongst colleagues in recent years, and over half of these have witnessed five or more of these behaviours. Overall, 83% have personally experienced or witnessed at least one of these behaviours in the workplace within the last three years.

15% report having witnessed 'bullying, physical harassment or violence', and/or 'sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviours', but again, the most common incidents are those 'microaggressions' that make people feel uncomfortable. This underlines their prevalence.

Figure 16: Proportion witnessing one or more types of discrimination

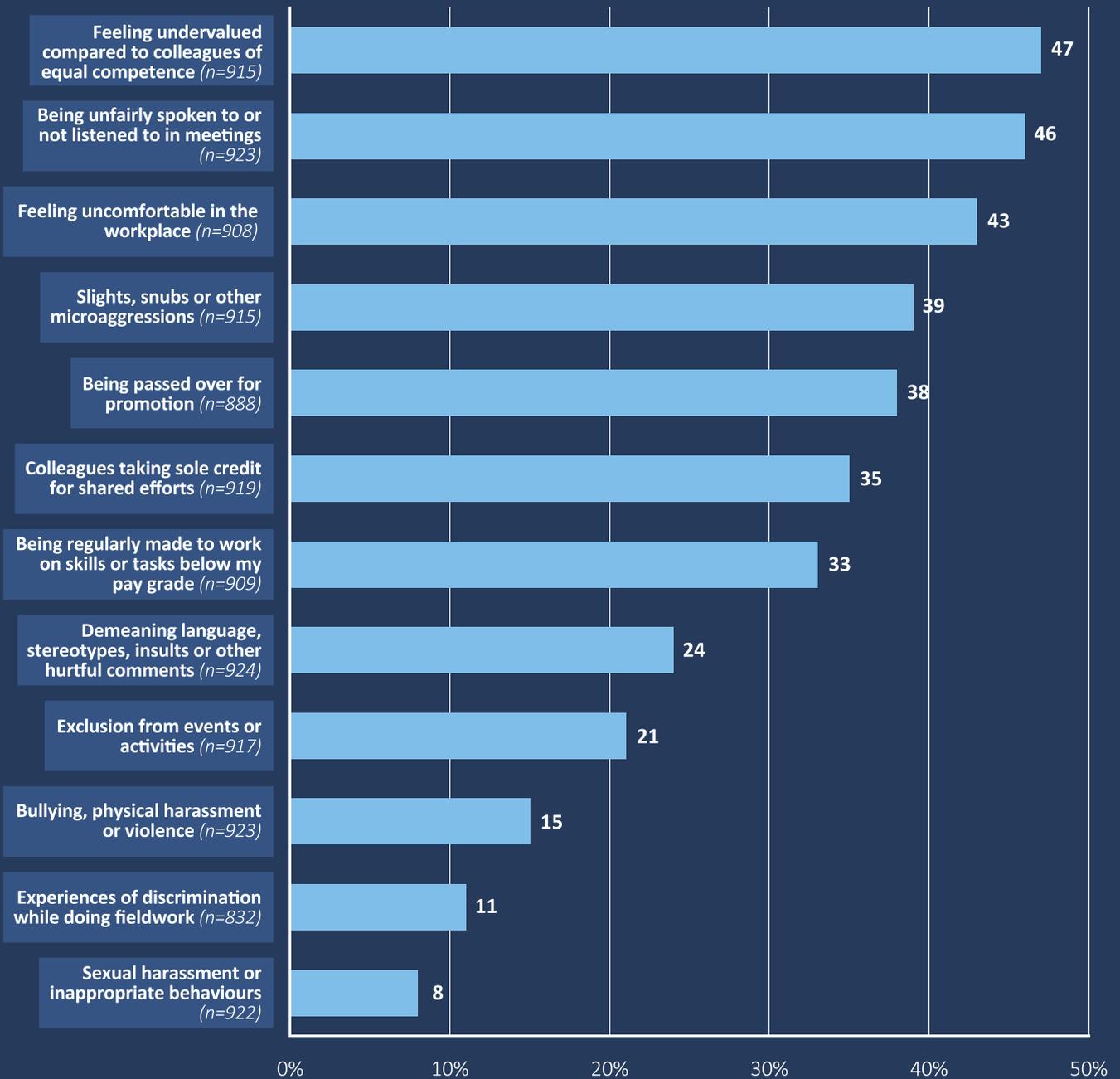
Of those who have witnessed at least one type of discrimination, % who have witnessed one or more types



Base: Participants who have witnessed at least one type of discrimination (n= 687). Q24) Have you directly witnessed others in your organisation being subjected to any of the following within the last 3 years work? For freelance/self-employed, please refer to the main organisations you have worked with. If you have recently left the sector, please refer to your most recent employer.

Figure 17: Types of discrimination witnessed in last 3 years

% Witnessing



Base: All participants. Bases sizes for each statement shown in axis labels. Q24) Have you directly witnessed others in your organisation being subjected to any of the following within the last 3 years work? For freelance/self-employed, please refer to the main organisations you have worked with. If you have recently left the sector, please refer to your most recent employer.

3.5 Impact of poor diversity and inclusion practice

Self-esteem, confidence, and motivation

Experiences of discrimination and feeling excluded and undervalued at work can have profound impacts on individuals. People highlight how these exclusionary cultures and discriminatory incidents can chip away at individuals' self-esteem and self-confidence, so that they are left doubting themselves and their behaviours and abilities, rather than the environment in which they are working.

Moreover, social researchers' motivation may be undermined, reducing productivity and capacities to contribute to the research process. Not only is this damaging for the individuals themselves, it can be detrimental for the inclusivity of social research and its methods, as it limits the ability of researchers to contribute a wide diversity of perspectives gained through lived experience.

"In meetings, I remember ... the Head of the department I was in would constantly talk over me to the point that it just became so frustrating. I just completely withdrew. So, any meetings I was in, I just didn't say anything. Because I was like, well, there's no point." (#5: third sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

Wellbeing

The importance of mental wellbeing and the need for everyone to be able to manage their mental health has been reinforced throughout the pandemic.

Struggles with mental health are widespread in the profession, with 54% of people reporting having struggled with mental health problems whilst working in social research.⁸ Many mental health difficulties are not a direct consequence of working in the profession, but people don't feel adequately supported to manage the consequences of their condition in the workplace. For others, it is their experiences in the profession itself which have led to a deterioration in mental health, or a combination of both.

Cultures in which researchers are regularly overworked is one of the main factors identified as contributing to negative wellbeing outcomes. As well as the mental health implications of these stressful environments, a few researchers pointed to a deterioration in physical health because of their work in the profession.

Discriminatory and exclusionary cultures also impact on wellbeing. Participants described an exhaustion associated with keeping up pretences and conforming to cultures in which they feel excluded and undervalued. Moreover, others spoke of the pressure they put themselves under in order to prove themselves in such environments.

"I know that I'm going to need to prove myself so hard in order to get to the place that other people might get to with just doing the bare minimum, but I need to like go above and beyond to tick all those boxes that for other people are like maybe automatically ticked already." (#2: commercial sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

⁸ Base: All participants (n= 908). Q27) Have you struggled with mental health problems whilst working in the social research sector?

"They all smiled and nodded and everybody got the message, I think. And then the director came in, and ... repeated everything I just said. So, I'm just thinking, why would you do that? Was I so inarticulate that nobody understood me? Is it because I'm a lower grade? Is it because I'm working class? Is it because I'm female? I don't know why you felt the need to do that. But it left me feeling like shit, really. I was just thinking I'm a hopeless speaker." (#18: public sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"The hours are genuinely quite hard, I have a lot of different sort of things going on at once. ... I get a lot of guilt around not being able to deliver and I think I've definitely felt much more anxious." (#13: commercial sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"It's quite exhausting because I feel like I can't 100% be myself, I have to be very mindful about how I say things ... So it leads to stress, it leads to burnout. questioning whether you can kind of continue in this role, because you're tired of like, being the only one." (#10: public sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

Physical and mental health, and neurodiversity

The way in which physical or mental health conditions, or being neurodiverse, affect people in the workplace naturally vary according to each individual's needs. There are some common experiences across these three groups but it is important to note that many experience more than one of these and mental ill health can often occur alongside neurodiversity and physical illness.

People who live with one or more of these are less likely than colleagues who do not face these challenges to feel valued when raising an idea (74% vs. 81%); to get recognition for work well done (74% vs. 81%); or to be given opportunities and support to learn and progress (68% vs. 77%). They are more likely to feel they have been passed over for promotion (31% vs. 23%).

Social researchers who are neurodivergent and/or have physical and/or mental health conditions tend to have these kinds of negative experiences when it is perceived that:

- Their particular challenges aren't considered and acknowledged by colleagues
- Their unique contributions aren't valued by their workplace's culture and/or in measurements of 'success' in the social research profession

In contrast, positive experiences revolve around supportive and enabling cultures that accommodate to and complement the coping strategies individuals develop to manage their condition, disability or neurodiversity.

Rates of almost all types of exclusionary and discriminatory behaviour over the last three years are higher among these groups, with the associated knock-on impacts on emotional and mental wellbeing.

"I suffer from quite severe anxiety and episodes of depression. This often limits me as I don't put myself out there (i.e. apply for promotion), so I have stayed in a grade that I know I shouldn't be in because I find the civil service recruitment process really stressful as it doesn't provide a way to help me demonstrate my strengths at all." (#25: public sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"Disability and health issues are not taken into account for team events, which leads to isolation and being excluded from the team. It then becomes harder to become 'a part of the team'" (#26: commercial sector, 1 'marginalised characteristic')

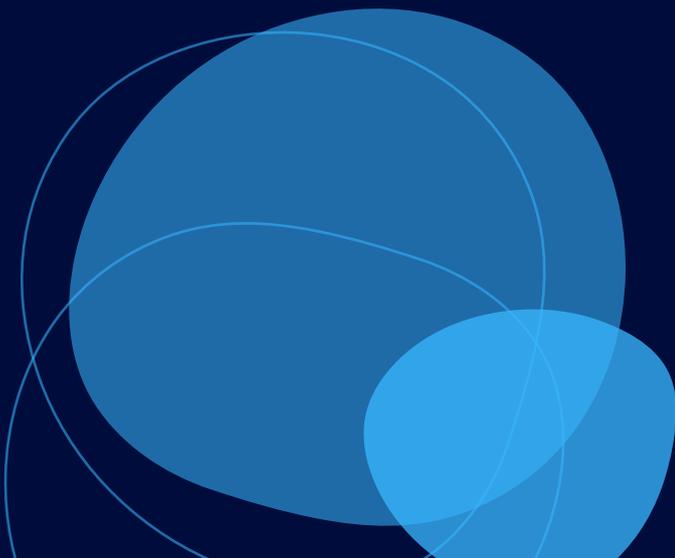
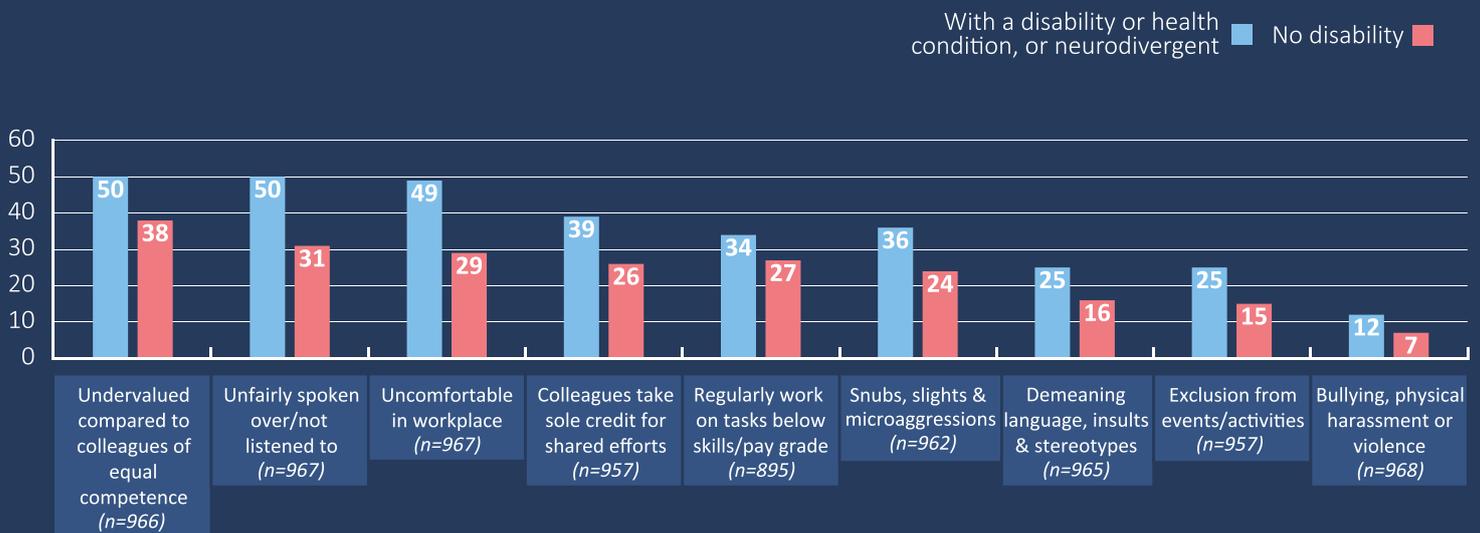


Figure 18: Significant differences between those with and without a disability, health condition or neurodiversity

% Experiencing in last 3 years



Base: All participants. Q22) Have you personally experienced any of the following within the last 3 years at work? If you have been working in the social research sector for less than three years, please restrict your answers to your experiences of the social research sector. 'Feeling undervalued compared to colleagues of equal competence' (n= 966): disabled (n= 248), non-disabled (n= 703); 'Being unfairly spoken over or not listened to in meetings' (n=967): disabled (n= 249), non-disabled (n= 703); 'Feeling uncomfortable in the workplace' (n= 967): disabled (n= 250), non-disabled (n= 704); 'Colleagues taking sole credit for shared efforts' (n=957): disabled (n= 246), non-disabled (n= 696); 'Being regularly made to work on tasks below my skills or pay grade' (n= 895): disabled (n= 241), non-disabled (n= 649); 'Slights, snubs or other 'microaggressions'' (n= 962): disabled (n= 245), non-disabled (n= 703); 'Demeaning language, stereotypes, insults or other hurtful comments' (n= 957): disabled (n=249), non-disabled (n= 701); 'Exclusion from events or activities' (n= 957): disabled (n= 244), non-disabled (n= 698); 'Being passed over for promotion' (n= 891): disabled (n= 229), non-disabled (n= 649); 'Bullying, physical harassment or violence' (n= 986): disabled (n= 249), non-disabled (n= 703).

Physical and mental health, and neurodiversity cont.



Key mechanisms driving these experiences:

- **What skills are valued?:** Many feel that more value is placed on organisational management and communication skills than research skills – in both recruitment/ progression/ promotion, and day-to-day experiences of workplace cultures (related to the diverse ways of relating to and communicating with each other, processing information, responding to pressure situations). Some also feel that the contributions of lived experience are not valued in the research process.
- **Issues around (in)visibility:** Colleagues seemingly unaware of needs or perceived to be able to ignore these. This is compounded by a lack of understanding about disability issues and/or a lack of empathy.
- **Issues around disclosure:** Disclosing a condition can enable colleagues to make the necessary adjustments, but many are concerned about (or have experience of) being treated as an ‘other’ or differently by colleagues.

Neurodiversity

“I’m dyslexic - which is an advantage seeing the bigger picture. I’m also ADHD which is also an advantage too - seeing the possibilities and the solutions. The downside is that real innovation and neurodiversity is not catered for ... So being ND has brought me here, but it’s also held me back.” (#27: public sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

“I have found that a number of line managers unwilling to make reasonable adjustments for my dyslexia because I am clever and have a PhD. In reality, I work very, very hard and have developed excellent coping skills, but organisational change, inconsistent application of reasonable adjustments and unsympathetic managers have resulted in periods of absence due to stress.” (#28: public sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Neurodivergent researchers in particular identify that they can often bring different perspectives and skills to the research process, but feel these aren’t always valued. They report a lack of understanding and/or empathy amongst colleagues which negatively affects working relationships. Its invisible nature also means that there is an additional burden of disclosure on the individual.

Physical Health Conditions

People living with chronic physical health conditions speak about being made to feel like an ‘other’. They can struggle with fatigue or ‘flare-ups’ of illness which impacts on their working time. Again, this is too often met with a lack of understanding and/or empathy for colleagues. Being unable to participate fully in work life is also a significant factor which undermines self-confidence.

“It has led to me being far less confident than colleagues and it can be difficult at times to function as a person would without the disability. ... It leads to people making judgements about me, I’ve even been shouted at and called stupid when I can’t hear people. ... I’m constantly harassed about being quiet too, however some deaf people are quieter.” (#29: research institute, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

“Time, everything takes me a little longer. I get it done and I’m mindful of other’s needs which clearly aren’t thought about by some. I’m in a constant battle with myself that I should be able to do more, and give more, but my body physically can’t. It’s very frustrating.” (#30: public sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Mental Health Conditions

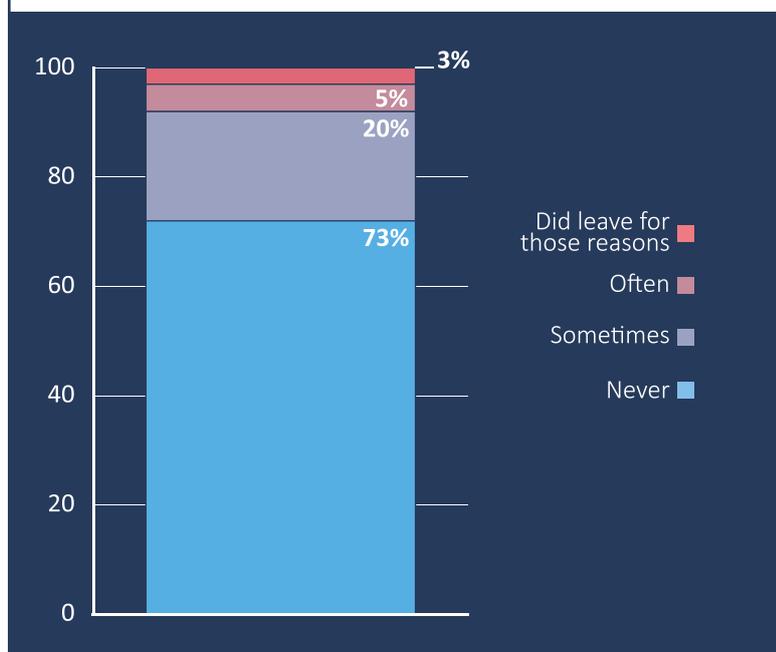
One of the main challenges people living with mental health conditions experience is how they are able to manage pressured situations in the workplace. A lack of understanding can result in a failure to provide reasonable adjustments or colleagues can overcompensate by taking away opportunities, which is felt to be patronising. Both outcomes undermine individuals' confidence and can lead to a further deterioration in mental wellbeing.

"High stress and anxiety mean that I'm cautious about what and how much I take on. This hasn't always gone down well with management when I've been offered more responsibilities. I'm sure they see it as a limitation, when all I'm trying to do is manage my condition." (#31: research institute, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

Career paths

Combined, the impacts on wellbeing and self-esteem from negative, exclusionary and discriminatory experiences in the workplace can shape the career paths of social researchers. Researchers report lacking the confidence and capacity to put themselves forward for progression opportunities, including promotions, and learning and development opportunities. Moreover, a quarter (25%) of social researchers have considered leaving their current (or most recent) organisation or role because of concerns related to discrimination or to the lack of equality, diversity and inclusion. This has clear implications for the diversity of the profession and contributes to limiting the representation of marginalised groups at senior levels of organisations.

Figure 19: Considering leaving the profession for reasons related to diversity and inclusion



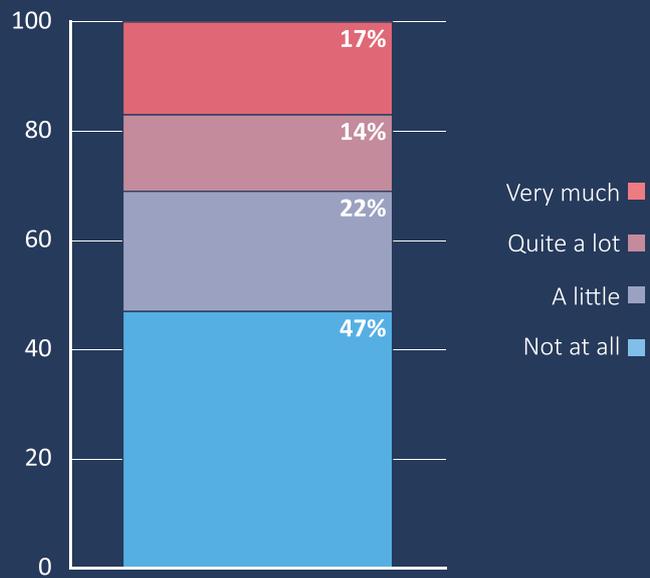
Base: All participants (n=883). Q.28c Have you ever considered leaving your current (or most recent) organisation or role because of concerns related to discrimination or to the lack of diversity, inclusion and equality?

"I think, partly, the confidence hasn't helped with career progression, the confidence to go from new roles, like higher roles. And also the confidence to engage with senior colleagues and staff ... to like, go for those roles or to push further in the role that you're in." (#32: public sector, 4 'marginalised characteristics')

"If I look around my organisation, a lot of people who've been in my similar position have left ... They had a young family, and at that point, they've just left the organisation. If I look above me ... people who have children are men, and no one works part-time. ... So, a lot of people that have been in my shoes have gone freelance, for example ... or they've just gone into do something totally different. Just because it's really, you know, the sort of work that we do ... it's high-profile projects, and you've got clients who need stuff, and ... it's stressful." (#16: research institute, 1 'marginalised characteristic')

It seems some can find an alternative route by becoming independent researchers. Self-employment gives researchers greater autonomy over their working patterns, particularly useful for those with caring responsibilities or certain health conditions. Others also become self-employed to escape exclusionary workplace cultures. Overall, equality, diversity and inclusion issues were a factor in over half (53%) of decisions to become self-employed.

Figure 20: Influence of diversity and inclusion on decisions to become self-employed



Base: Self-employed social researchers (n= 66). Q19) Did issues of Diversity, Inclusion & Equality factor in your decision to become self-employed?

Independent social researchers

Since many become self-employed in response to diversity and inclusion issues, independent researchers often report positive experiences in the profession in their current position. This generally relates to greater autonomy over how to manage their time, the types of work they do, and the people work with and for.

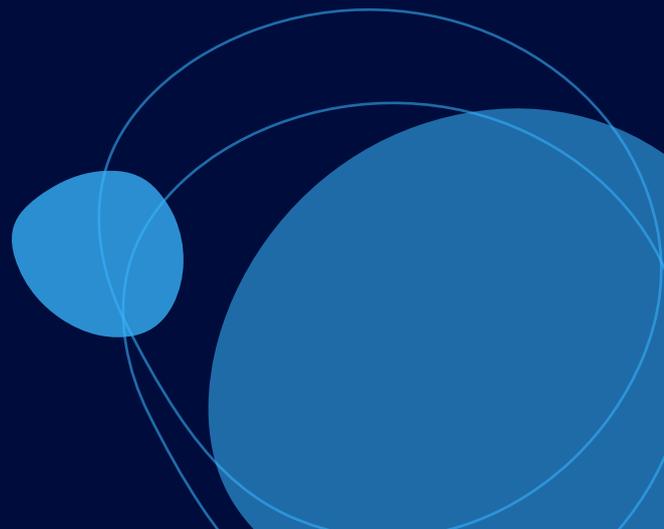
Careers in social research are deemed to be less accommodating of carers' time commitments, especially in more senior positions and within organisations driven by client-funded work: *"Few agencies would allow people at my career stage - Research Director - to balance work and parenting in a way that was sustainable"* (#33: independent, 0 'marginalised characteristics'). Going freelance allows people to achieve a better work-life balance.

Becoming self-employed also allows people to accommodate specific needs linked to their physical or mental health, as one researcher explains, *"it is much easier to balance illness and work when you are self-employed ... employers/ managers are generally too inexperienced or untrained and too nervous to allow people to flex their time around their illness"*. (#34: independent, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

In addition to this, people chose to become self-employed to remove themselves from workplace cultures that excluded them and made them feel uncomfortable. This varies based on personal circumstances, but one researcher explains they became self-employed after *"feeling like the odd one out when fasting Ramadan, taking Eid holidays. Not able to socialise much as this was often based around drinking alcohol after work"*. (#35: independent, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

Nonetheless, freelance work does not come without its own challenges. Independent researchers often report feeling like 'outsiders' in the profession. When working alongside other organisations and clients, they have to contend with the same exclusionary cultures employees might face on a day-to-day basis. It might also feel that their differences based on marginalised characteristics are amplified because they are not part of the internal team.

"I had some meetings with some people at [another organisation] ... there was a little bit of a feeling that I didn't fit in; I didn't feel like part of the gang ... I think there's definitely been times in my career ... where I've been in meetings and I don't feel like I've been taken seriously." (#4: independent, 0 'marginalised characteristics')



04

How is the Profession Responding?

4.1 Summary

The profession needs to do more to address diversity and inclusion issues more effectively.

Escalation processes are inadequate, especially for dealing with the most common types of discrimination in the form of subtle and indirect 'microaggressions'.

- Only one-third of those who have experienced or witnessed inappropriate behaviour at work raised it with senior leaders or HR
- Of those who did raise concerns, only around one-quarter felt it was resolved to their satisfaction
- People are fearful of how reporting incidents will be responded to within their organisation, and do not trust HR or senior leaders to deal with the situation appropriately
- For those that take it upon themselves to make change within their organisation, this process can be very burdensome and undermining. This highlights wider questions about where the responsibility should lie.

Employers generally provide a range of common adjustments to accommodate different needs.

- Almost all researchers (95%) report that their employer made (pre-Covid) adjustments, although the main form of this is flexible working arrangements (85%), and a third or fewer report initiatives like contemplation/prayer spaces or 'mental health days'
- Although experiences of flexible working arrangements are generally positive, they must be supported by wider changes to organisational cultures around work-life balance

- Employers are generally deemed as supportive of mental health needs, but more needs to be done to reduce the stigma around mental health within the profession, and create working cultures that support good mental health

Researchers' experiences of diversity and inclusion initiatives are mixed.

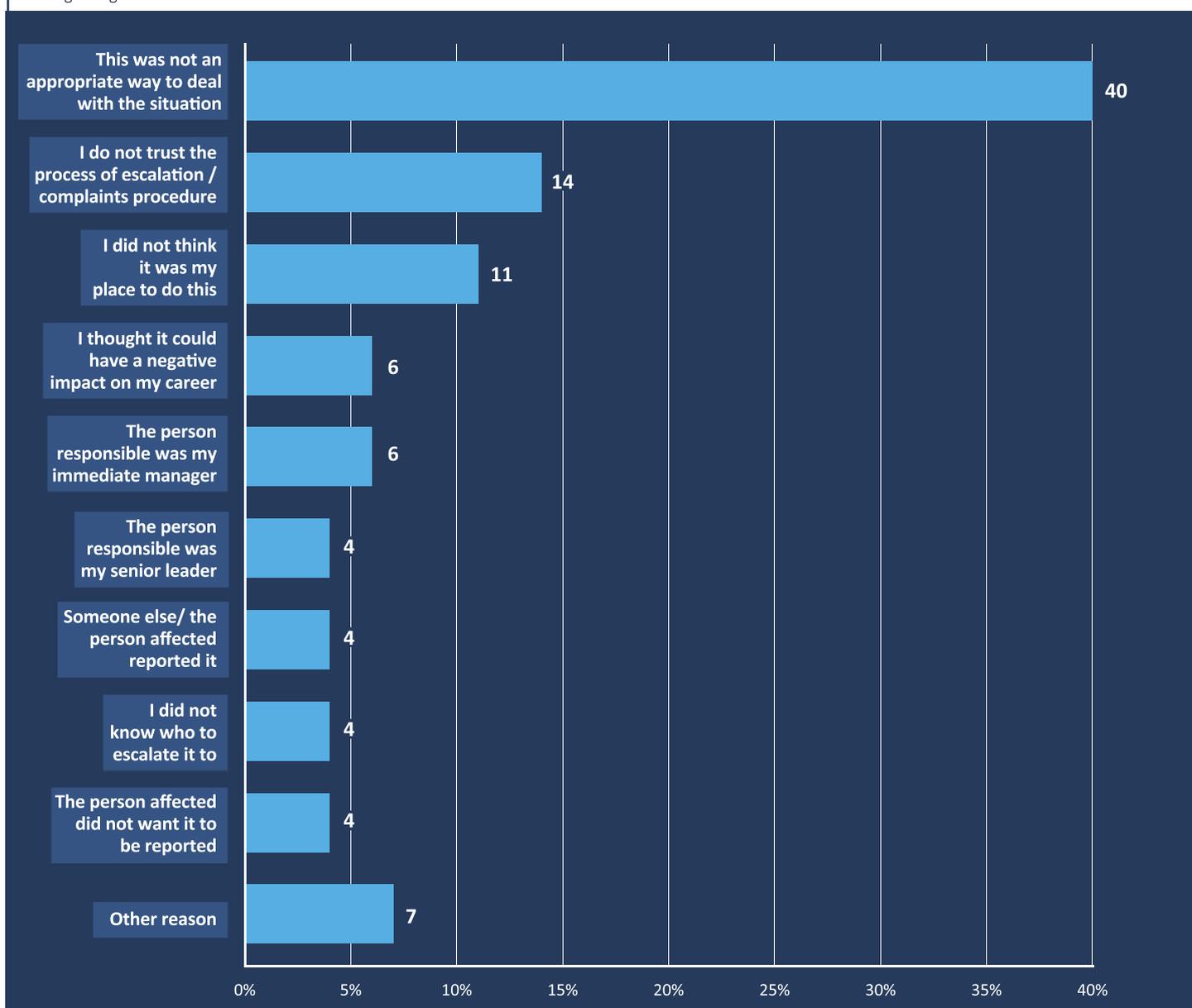
- The most effective initiatives are those which empower marginalised groups (e.g. mentoring, coaching and leadership programmes) and/or cater for their specific needs (e.g. flexible working and reasonable adjustments)
- The least effective initiatives feel like 'tick-box exercises' or 'quick wins', and are criticised as insincere attempts to be seen to be doing the right thing, rather than genuine attempts to affect change (e.g. unconscious bias training and gender pay gap reviews can form important starting points, but are widely felt to be insufficient to generate real change on their own)
- Initiatives work best when organisational cultures transform to enable wholesale change. They must also authentically reflect and account for the lived experiences of marginalised groups.
- This highlights the importance of giving staff power to influence an organisation's diversity and inclusion activity (e.g. through staff networks and internal working groups/ taskforces). Nonetheless, it is also recognised that commitment and buy-in from senior leaders must drive this change.
- Mechanisms should be in place to hold leadership to account. Targets should be used to regularly review and monitor progress, fostering an iterative approach whereby diversity and inclusion strategies evolve based on feedback from staff.

4.2 Reacting to discrimination

Only one-third (33%) of those who have experienced or witnessed inappropriate behaviour at work raised it with senior leaders or HR.⁹ Reasons for this were diverse, reflecting perceptions of the best way to respond to such issues, the organisation's likely response, and concerns about the impact it would have on them personally.

Figure 21: Reasons for not escalating discriminatory incidents

% Agreeing



Base: Participants who have experienced/ witnessed discrimination but did not escalate it (n= 375) If you have personally experienced or witnessed inappropriate behaviour at work did you raise this with senior leaders or HR? If you have experienced or witnessed more than one incident, please refer to the most recent situation. ASK IF Q25 = 'No'. Q25b. Why not?

⁹ Base: Participants who have experienced or witnessed discrimination at work in the last 3 years (n= 633).

“Microaggressions are difficult to report as they seem small. They do accumulate though over time. Also, there is a cohesion within the organisation that is positive but also non-confrontational. Escalating things formally is a big step ... my experience both personally and professionally is that you are always viewed as ‘blowing things out of proportion’ or ‘it was just a joke’ or ‘I don’t think they meant it the way you see it’ or ‘you just have to suck it up and take it.’” (#36: third sector, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

“I wouldn’t have felt comfortable to be vocal about how disrespected I felt, in some of those times in those comments, probably because I was the only Black girl and I didn’t come across as the loud, aggressive, Black girl.” (#22: public sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

“[There were] a couple of really racist things said, very openly, which I called people up on. And it pretty much went nowhere. Kind of, ‘Thank you so much for educating us. We’ll try and do our best.’... Nothing was ever done. No lessons were learned. Nothing really changed.” (#5: third sector, 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

“I’ve been trying to change that [HR process] for like three years, I still haven’t managed to and that’s really frustrating. And I think that’s where a lot of the exhaustion of emotional labour and burnout kind of come from because you’re banging your head against a brick wall.” (#12: 3 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

Of those who did raise an issue, only around one-quarter (26%) felt it was resolved to their satisfaction. Over half (53%) said it was not resolved to their satisfaction and the remainder (22%) were unsure. It is clear that escalation processes are inadequate, especially for dealing with the most common types of discrimination in the form of subtle and indirect microaggressions.

Moreover, people are fearful of how reporting incidents will play out within their organisation, and often do not trust HR or senior leaders to deal with the situation appropriately. This is reflective of a range of issues. For individuals with invisible or less visible forms of marginalisation, issues around disclosure mean incidents may be left unaddressed due to fear of further stigmatisation. Additionally, participants highlight a fear of perpetuating negative stereotypes about marginalised groups, such as being perceived as *“playing the race card”* or having a *“chip on [their] shoulder”*. More generally, people do not want to be labelled as a *“troublemaker”* as they may feel that the risks of reporting an incident (for their career and working relationships) are greater than the possible gains.

At an organisational level, there are issues around accountability- especially when managers or senior leaders are at fault. In some instances, it is perceived that the ‘liberal values’ of social research organisations mean that people fail to recognise that discriminatory behaviours can and do happen within their own workplace. This may be because they view themselves as *“too woke”* for issues to apply to them, or because difficult conversations are deflected by a prevailing *“left wing echo chamber group think”*. In any instance, when concerns are not taken seriously enough by those who should be taking responsibility, it can feel incredibly undermining.

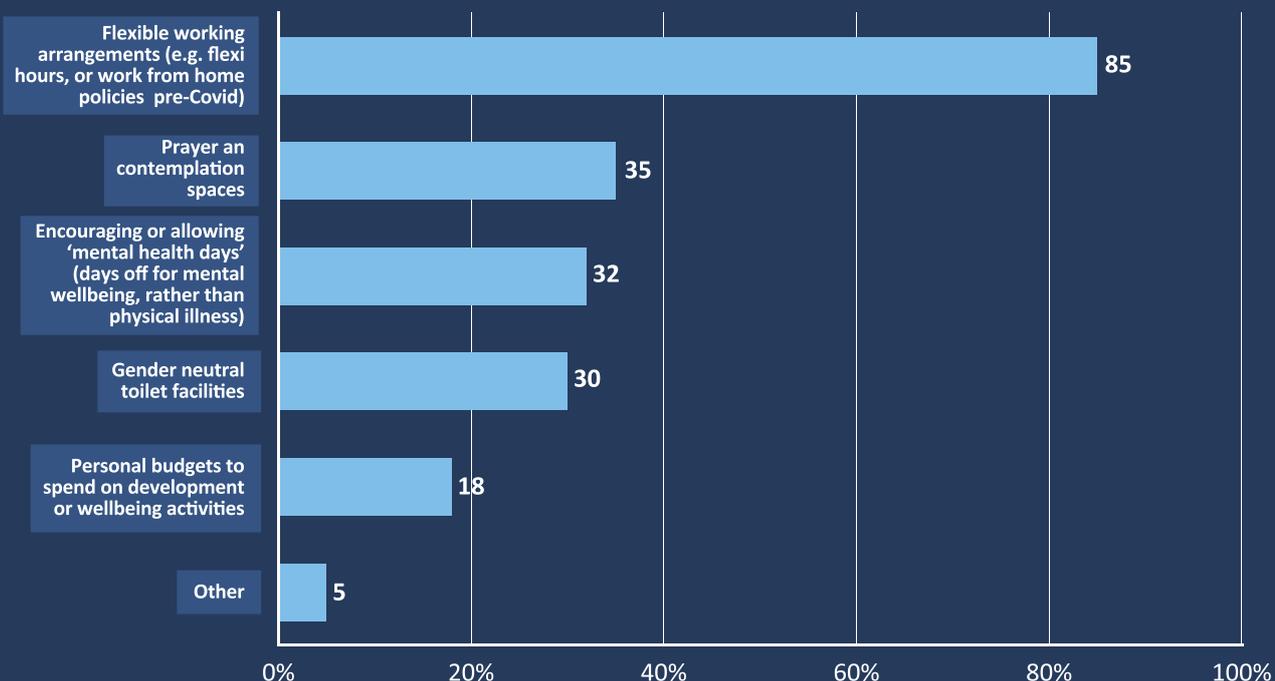
For those that take it upon themselves to make change within their organisation, this process can be very burdensome. There are particular issues about placing the burden of change on the ‘victims’ of discrimination, highlighting wider questions about where the responsibility should lie.

4.3 Making adjustments

Employers generally provide a range of common adjustments to accommodate different needs. 95% of researchers report provision of at least one of the following by their current/ most recent/ main employer, although this is mainly in the form of flexible working. A third or fewer report initiatives like the provision of contemplation/prayer spaces or being offered ‘mental health days.’

Figure 22: Provision of Adjustments

% participants whose employer provides these adjustments

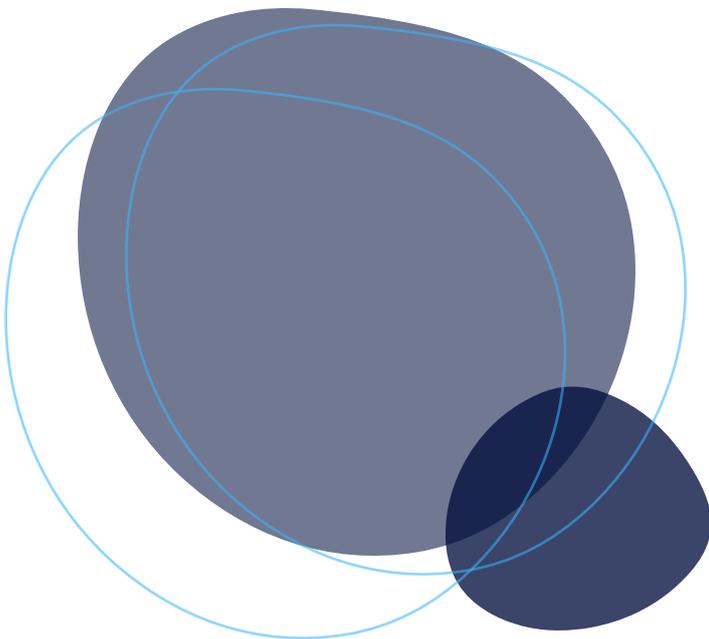


Base: All participants (n= 979). The following section focusses on whether your current organisation has made any adjustments to accommodate different needs and requirements amongst employees. Q26) Thinking about your current employer, do they provide any of the following to support employees with different needs? If you are self-employed, please refer to the main organisation you work with. If you have recently left the sector, please refer to your most recent employer.

Flexible working arrangements

Flexible working arrangements are the most common adjustment provided by employers in the profession. In general people are welcoming of greater control over their working hours, recognising how this allows them to balance competing priorities around childcare, health, leisure, and other commitments, as well as suiting a range of preferences around working patterns. The pandemic has also substantially increased access to flexible working and the variety of ways in which that can be achieved, with the crisis allowing for more honest dialogue with employers about the need for flexibility.

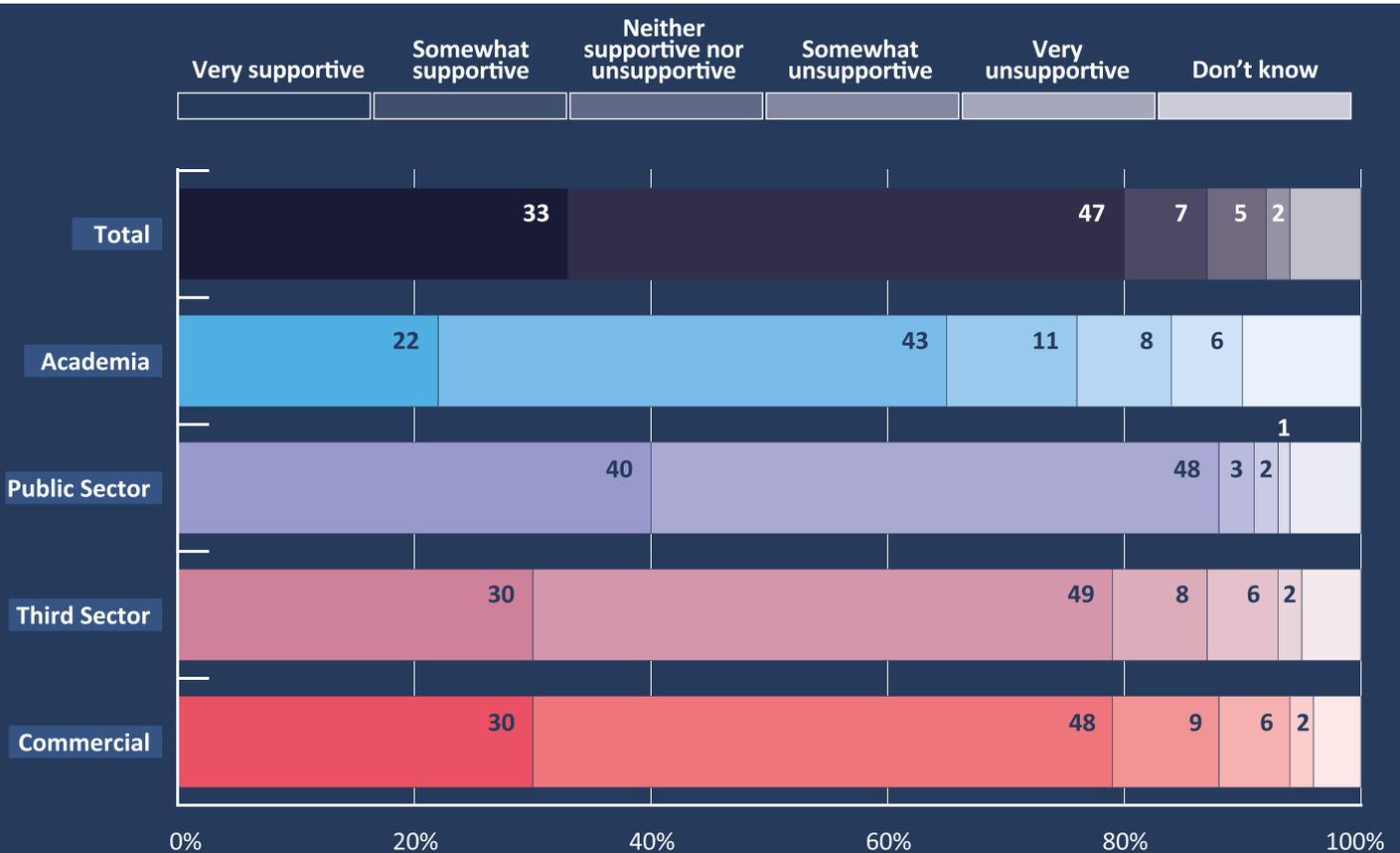
However, people also raised concerns that flexible working arrangements do not always result in flexible working in practice. They must be supported by wider changes to organisational cultures around work-life balance. For instance, a researcher explains how they came back from parental leave on a part-time contract to accommodate their childcare responsibilities but in reality *“was working every evening to be able to manage [the workload], and that’s just really not a healthy place to be”*. When asked whether she raised this issue with her employers, she explained *“I never vocalised how much [I was working] and if I tried to, I felt their response would be, ‘Well, that’s what we all do, that’s just the way of this job.’”* (#16: research institute, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’). It’s recognised that it isn’t enough for employers to offer flexible working arrangements to employees, but to still expect them to do the same amount of work in the time they have available.



Mental health support

Employers are generally perceived to be supportive (80%) of mental health needs, but significantly more likely to be “very supportive” in the public sector than elsewhere, particularly academia. It is recognised that mental health support has improved in

Figure 23: Organisational support for mental health by sector



Base: Employed social researchers (n= 864): Academia (n= 143), Public sector (n= 329), Third sector (n= 135), Commercial sector (n= 257). Q27a) How supportive would you say your current organisation is around mental health issues for staff? If you are self-employed, please answer referring to the main organisation you work with.

recent years. Employers are becoming more understanding of mental health issues and increasingly provide more adequate support. However, stigma around mental health still exists and it is difficult for people to talk about it openly at work.

Support can sometimes feel surface-level or like a ‘tick-box exercise’. Some of the wider contributors to poor mental health are not well-addressed by the profession, and indeed the profession can contribute to poor mental health amongst researchers (as discussed in Chapter 3.5).

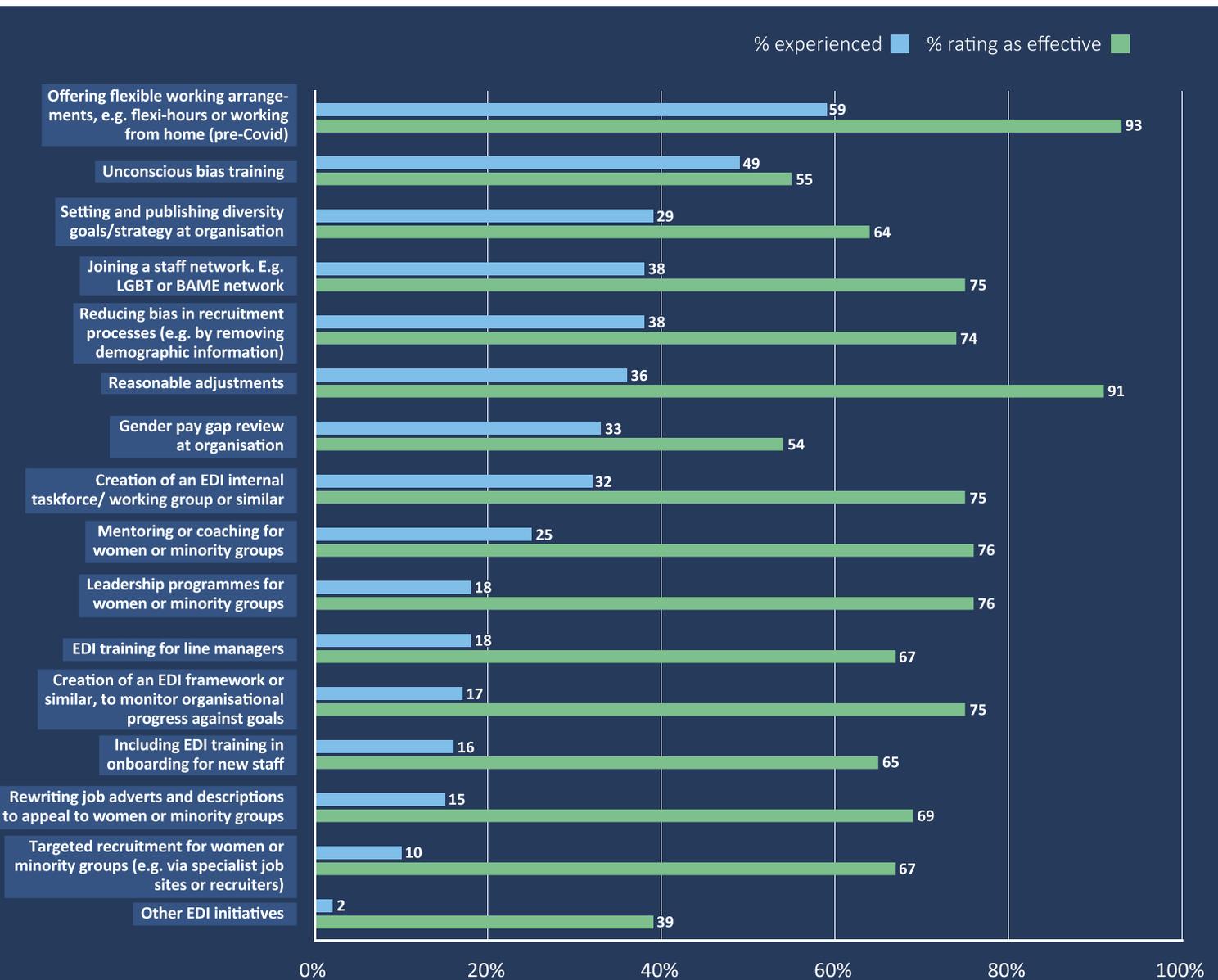
“In my last job, I told the people [about my mental illness], in the hope that that would improve things, but it didn’t. And I think people either just ignored it, or they kind of trod on eggshells around me and didn’t give me any responsibility as a result. So in my new job, I’ve not mentioned it to anyone, because I’m scared of that happening again. But as a result, I feel like, you know, they think that is all just me being a horrible person ... and I probably need support.” (#9: commercial sector, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

4.4 Diversity and inclusion initiatives

Over two-thirds of people working the profession (70%) have had experience of at least one diversity and inclusion initiative.

People have mixed experiences of diversity and inclusion initiatives. There is not a strong relationship between the prevalence of initiatives and their perceived effectiveness. In particular, one of the most common initiatives is unconscious bias training,¹⁰ yet only just over half of those who have undergone this considered it to be effective.

Figure 24: Experiences and perceptions of diversity and inclusion initiatives



Base: All participants (n= 979). Q29) Have you had experience of any of the following Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives (EDI) within the social research sector? Tick all that apply. Q29a. How would you rate the following initiatives [piped in from previous answer] in terms of their effectiveness in achieving a more diverse, inclusive and equal workplace?

¹⁰ Unconscious biases are the deep-seated prejudices and stereotypes which can shape your judgement without you being aware. Unconscious bias training aims to increase your awareness of these biases in order to reduce their negative impacts in the workplace (and beyond). Over the last 18 months, its effectiveness has been debated widely in the media (recent examples include: Robson, 2021; Ro, 2021; Herbert, 2021). In particular, it was announced in December 2020 that the Civil Service would stop its unconscious bias training, after research from the Behavioural Insights Unit (2020) suggested that short term increases in awareness do not result in long term changes behaviour, or improvements to workplace equality. The proximity of this to the period in which our survey was live may have influenced the perceptions we recorded.

The initiatives perceived as most effective are those which directly empower marginalised groups (mentoring, coaching and leadership programmes) and/or cater for their specific needs (flexible working and reasonable adjustments). These are perceived to represent genuine commitments to effect change, rather than 'quick wins' which are criticised as insincere attempts to be *seen* to be doing the right thing. Unconscious bias training, for example, can form an important starting point for an organisation but is widely felt to be insufficient to generate real change on its own.

Initiatives work best when organisational cultures transform to enable wholesale change. For example, when reasonable adjustments become assumed, rather than the burden being placed on those in need to ask for them at different stages. They must also authentically reflect and account for the complex and varied lived experiences of marginalised groups, otherwise the experience of initiatives themselves can be undermining.

"[My employer] had a women in leadership event ... and it was just talking about, you know, being a working mum, there was loads of reference to people with partners ... But a lot of the topics were basically just people that didn't look like me, [it] wasn't very representative of my experiences, or other people's experience ... it was kind of like a one size fits all approach to women, which was really disappointing ... So, I basically sent an angry email saying, there was no talk about intersectionality, and the role that plays ... then they made a point of, oh, but there's a separate event for BAME into leadership ... This is the very problem, the very problem is that you're considered an 'other', and you have to go to another event." (#10: public sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

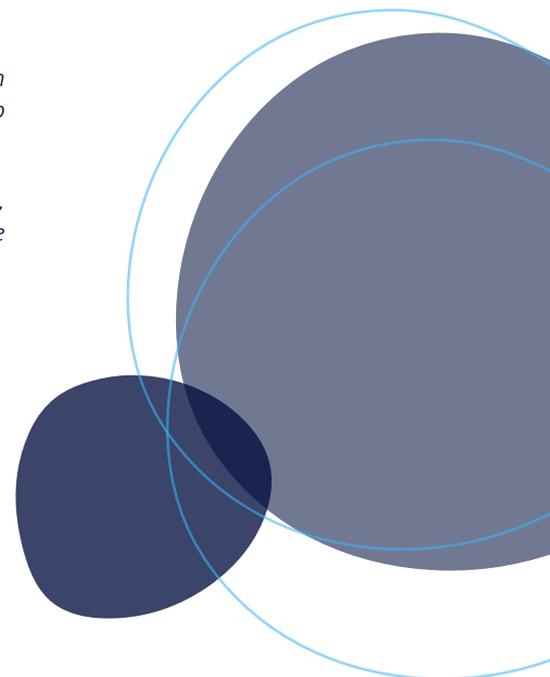
This highlights the importance of giving staff power to influence an organisation's diversity and inclusion activity, with internal taskforces and staff networks both highlighted as relatively effective initiatives. Nonetheless, it is also recognised that commitment and buy-in from senior leaders must drive this change, as they typically hold the power and resources necessary to implement new policies and practices, and set the tone for an organisation's culture.

"I think what works well is when all these policies are available and staff are able, through networks and things like that, to be involved in leadership decisions and discussions to inform those initiatives." (#32: public sector, 4 'marginalised characteristics')

"If it's a genuine aspiration from the Chief Exec down, that the workplace is inclusive, and there's a genuine understanding of why that's important, then it's going to be more successful." (#3: independent, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"Mentoring is a good opportunity for more junior members of staff from underrepresented groups to get exposure, ... understand the sector ... [and] be involved in networks they otherwise may be excluded from." (#37: commercial sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"My experiences of unconscious bias training is that a lot of organisations hype it up. And they're like, 'we're so great, we're doing unconscious bias training', but it's literally the bare minimum that you would need." (#5: third sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')



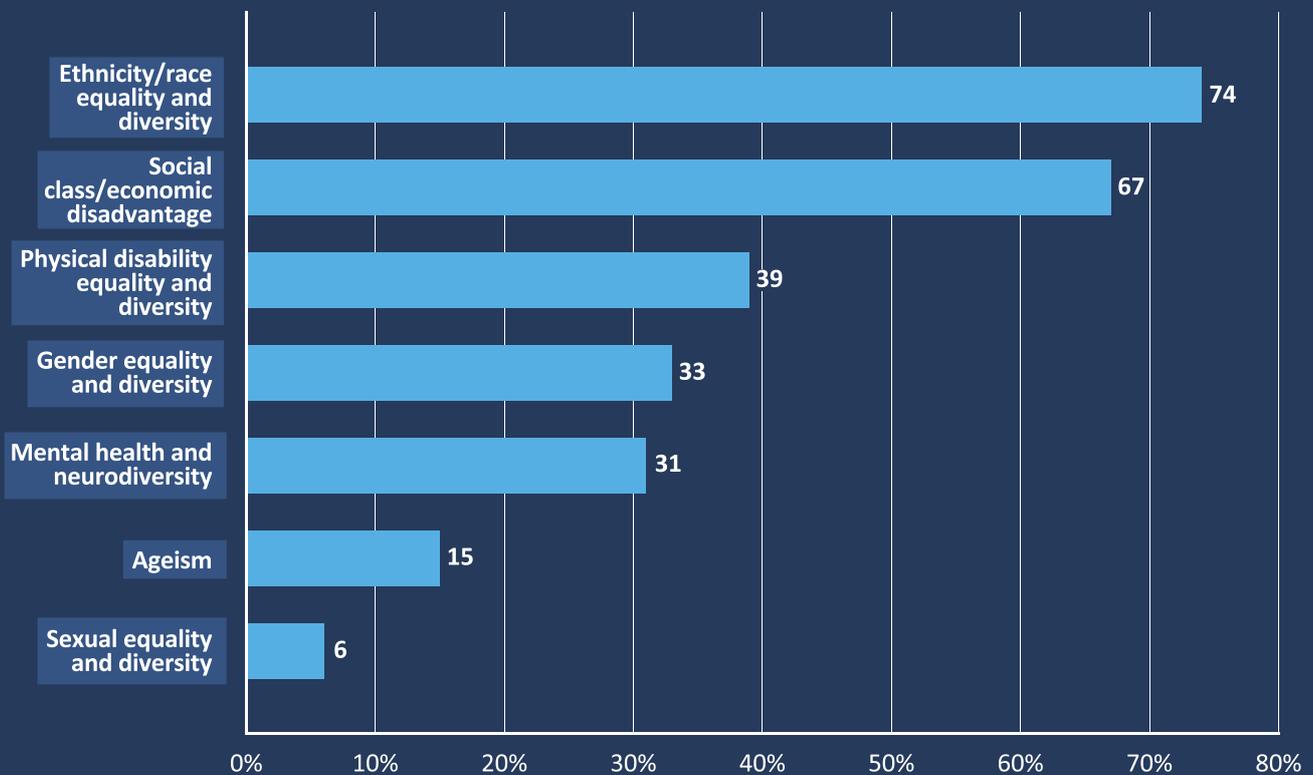
“The ‘target’ word is something that we’ve been talking a lot about recently. I think, increasingly feeling like that is something that we ought to be doing in order to kind of really, not just force the issue, but make sure that we are getting the change that we want to see. I mean, it obviously can’t just be about targets, but they do help as part of a wider pool of measurement techniques.” (#38: commercial sector organisational representative)

Mechanisms to hold leadership to account, such as frameworks to monitor organisational progress against goals, are therefore deemed as effective initiatives. Interestingly, publishing these goals and strategies was perceived as less effective. This highlights the need for commitments to be about genuine change, rather than outward recognition. Targets should also be used to regularly review and monitor progress, fostering an iterative approach whereby diversity and inclusion strategies evolve based on feedback from staff.

Looking to the future, people have a clear set of priorities that they feel diversity and inclusion initiatives should be dealing with. Ethnic and racial equality is the number one priority, with the issues of social class and economic disadvantage also firmly in the top three for two-thirds of researchers.

Figure 25: Prioritisation of diversity and inclusion issues

% putting in top 3



Base: All participants (n= 979). Q32) What Equality, Diversity and Inclusion questions/issues should be prioritised for attention within the social research sector? Please select your top three.

05

Action for Change

Good Practice

There are many examples of good practice initiatives in social research, some of which are more widely adopted than others.

Investing for inclusion

[UKRI](#) and the [Wellcome Trust](#) are two leading funders who cover the additional costs for carers incurred by researchers in the course of fieldwork, training or conference attendance.

Collective accountability

There are a range of commitments that an organisation can sign up to. Some cover a range of organisations (e.g. the [Stonewall](#)

[Workplace Equality Index](#)) while others are specific to research organisations: the [Athena Swan award](#) is a framework to guide gender equality in higher education institutions, and the [MRS Inclusion Pledge](#) asks CEOs of market research firms to make five commitments towards creating safer and more representative workplaces.

Responsibility across the board

Many organisations have taken a fresh look at their inclusion and diversity work over the last 18 months. [Shelter](#) provides a good example of how that thinking translates into action organisation-wide and is made public for accountability.

“Obviously, it’s not just an issue in social research, it’s not just an issue of working ... It’s the entire culture of the whole of Britain really.” (#2: commercial sector, 2 ‘marginalised characteristics’)

“It’s not just [a problem] within your organisation, the ecosystem that’s surrounding you is protecting the status quo ... and structural inequality protects itself.” (#7: commercial sector organisational representative).

“It’s not just an individual company. It’s the industry as a whole ... maybe we need to think of things as problems to address collectively.” (#24: commercial sector, 1 ‘marginalised characteristic’)

“When you’re trying to create shifts within the sector, you don’t get very far if you just try and do it on your own. Problems are bigger than that.” (#7: commercial sector organisational representative)

The systemic nature of the challenges makes them complex and difficult to overcome. Experiences in the social research profession do not happen in isolation, often reflecting wider structural inequalities, and social and cultural attitudes across society. Within the profession too, a whole ‘ecosystem’ of organisations and actors influence experiences of social researchers themselves, and the inclusivity and resulting quality of the research they conduct.

When reflecting on what needs to change, researchers and representatives of research organisations identify a shared set of challenges and opportunities. These can be summarised as four main areas for action:

- 1. A time for reflection and reset**
- 2. Focused investment**
- 3. Taking responsibility across the board**
- 4. Collective accountability**

Inherent within each of these is the need for profession-wide collaboration. The shared challenges are so large and entrenched that a collective voice and unified action has the potential to have far greater impact than piecemeal efforts.

In particular, funding and commissioning processes introduce a significant element of risk if organisations attempt to challenge the status quo. When pressure to win and retain funding can be acute, there is little incentive for individual organisations to ‘lead the charge’. A collective voice spreads the risk and has much greater power to influence funders and commissioners

1: A time for reflection and reset

Social research is a profession which cuts across sectors that have very different ways of working, and separate over-arching bodies and institutions which guide them. Nonetheless, individual researchers regularly move across these sectoral boundaries throughout their career, and in and out of freelance roles. Likewise, one commissioner will often fund work from different types of institutions.

Yet, despite this symbiosis, there is no organised collaboration as a 'social research profession' beyond professional associations and groups, with no common understanding of what it means to do 'social research' and be a 'social researcher'.

"I feel like it's not clear that there is a profession called social research. I think that lack of clarity means that the people from backgrounds like mine, where you haven't necessarily kind of had a lot of careers advice, or you don't know people that work in this profession, you're just not very likely to know that this profession exists. And if you had come across it, you wouldn't necessarily know how to apply for it, because there aren't very clear entry routes." (#1: public sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

The profession must collectively reflect on its identity. Externally, there are very limited 'points of contact' for many people outside the profession - particularly for young people. This limits diversity as it is not a career that lots of people know about or aspire towards. We must work together to modernise and craft an external image which is aspirational, inclusive and attractive to diverse talent.

Challenging what it means to be a social researcher will also help to retain more diverse researchers, enabling them to progress to senior positions. For example, people identified many aspects of our working practices which are considered to be exclusionary, yet are traditional and embedded ways of recruiting, promoting and rewarding staff. This includes:

- Requirements for specific qualifications, with a rising bar
- 'Success' judged by quantity over quality (e.g. publications/ bids won)
- Cultures of presenteeism, with limited capacity for flexible working arrangements in senior roles
- Progression pathways based on a limited set of talents, focussed on project management and leadership rather than advanced research skills
- An emphasis on networks and networking
- A privileging of quantitative research over qualitative in some contexts
- A failure to value the 'lived experience' of researchers

Moreover, the design and application of traditional research methods is often not particularly inclusive, and despite lots of innovative practice, this fails to become default. We must challenge what it means to do social research. This provides a particular imperative for commissioners and funders to reconsider their expectations and procurement processes.

"As well as being competitors, for work and for clients, ultimately, as organisations trying to thrive in the same sector, we all have a vested interest. I think it's probably safe to assume we have similar goals in terms of inclusion and diversity, and then ultimately, things will happen more quickly if we do collaborate. ... While we are competitors, it feels like this should be a shared goal." (#38: commercial sector organisational representative)

"I would say that we are perhaps a bit better able to recruit more diverse talent to market research teams than social research teams. I think a lot of it relates to sort of legacy issues. I don't think the industry does a particularly good job of selling the industry more broadly, it's always drawn ... a particular profile of person. And I think that's quite a difficult thing to break down." (#38: commercial sector organisational representative)

"We could sit there and say, 'It's not our fault. The pool that we're fishing in is not diverse.' I don't think that's good enough. I don't buy that. There are good candidates out there. We have to work further upstream ... There's no reason why we can't have entry level posts where we're developing people, giving them that critical experience." (#39: third sector organisational representative)

"One of the key barriers is commissioning and funding. So, there's a power balance between research participants and the researchers, but then also the researchers and the people that are paying them to do a certain job ... Can you really do co-production if you're being funded to do something specific? Often, you're funded to do something for a certain amount of money within a certain timeframe, which is completely understandable. But if you want to be really inclusive, it often takes longer than what commissioners and funders realise." (#40: commercial sector organisational representative)

2: Focused investment

"[Improving diversity and inclusion is] seen as like an extracurricular activity, you know, just like a fun little thing that we get to do on the side after we do projects. And it makes me really angry because I don't want to do this. ... And it's a struggle because I have a lot of work to do." (#2: commercial sector, 2 'marginalised characteristics')

"It's well intentioned, but they aren't willing to put their money where their mouth is." (#9: commercial sector, 1 'marginalised characteristic')

"The resources are not available unless you have your senior buy-in.... There's only so much money to go around and I think, recently our D&I team's been quite well resourced, so it's been a lot better in helping overcome external influences." (#41: academic organisational representative)

"[Tenders] tend to give you two weeks... Your time is squashed already so it makes things much more difficult. From a commissioners' point of view, whilst I recognise it's not always possible, just think about giving contractors more time to respond to bids or commissions." (#16: research institute, 1 'marginalised characteristic')

"We want to convince people that it is worth investing more time and money into it. But I feel that is a big culture change, ... which I think it's just going to involve a change in how commissioners and funders think." (#40: commercial sector organisational representative)

Change can only happen when the conditions are in place to enable it. Impact will be limited without focussed commitment of time and resources, enabled through buy-in from senior leaders across the profession.

Individuals and organisations need to make time and prioritise diversity and inclusion actions. Time is needed within organisations to put in place actions that can transform workplace cultures and open-up space for important, yet difficult, conversations about the experiences of staff from marginalised backgrounds. Particularly in the commercial and academic sectors, where poor work-life balance shows that time is at a premium, more needs to be done to create the capacity for change.

It must also be recognised that many of the most impactful and effective diversity and inclusion initiatives are those which require longer term commitment (such as mentoring and leadership schemes), rather than 'quick fix' interventions alone. Whilst the outcomes may take time to emerge, action on implementing such initiatives does not need to be delayed.

This necessitates greater resourcing for diversity and inclusion work. Funding is needed to support genuinely effective diversity and inclusion initiatives, and inclusive working practices and research processes. This includes investing in expertise and evaluating what works and what isn't working.

However, this investment will only happen if there is buy-in from senior leaders who can truly commit to and drive change. Senior managers are key to making decisions within organisations, but the lack of diversity at senior levels is a clear barrier, and senior leaders can sometimes be blockers to change if dedicated time and resources are not prioritised.

Beyond organisational settings, rushed commissioning and project timescales can hamper efforts to be truly inclusive in project design and delivery. These processes place high demands on research staff in ways that are not always inclusive.

This also has implications for the inclusivity of research practice. Many recruitment and research methods with marginalised groups are necessarily more time-consuming and resource-intensive, yet competitive procurement processes do not always provide space for this.

In a context whereby resources are highly limited within some organisations in the profession, wholesale change will require collaborative efforts that provide resources to implement inclusive practices as standard.

"I suspect that some of the smaller organisations in the industry, will be looking to large organisations to be funding some of these things and throwing their weight behind it. Because, obviously, we have more resources to be able to do that." (#38: commercial sector organisational representative)

3: Taking responsibility across the board

As a profession we have at our disposal a plethora of skills to help us understand each other, to facilitate difficult conversations in appropriate ways, and to determine the specific needs and priorities that need to be addressed to drive change. The value that can be gained from understanding and taking seriously lived experience is also inherent within most social research.

We need to turn that lens on ourselves, our partners and colleagues and ask what we can be doing differently. That includes questioning our own assumptions and beliefs, however liberal they are felt to be.

Everyone has a role to play as working cultures will not change unless everyone is on board. In order to minimise the burden placed on those with lived experience, allyship can play an important role in calling out poor behaviours and practice.

Senior leaders play a key role as they often set the tone for workplace cultures. Without a genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion principles and action at the top levels of organisations, efforts will be half-hearted and turn off those who could help drive change from the grassroots.

With discrimination happening primarily in the form of microaggressions, organisations have the challenge of developing safe spaces and processes to enable appropriate responses. Staff must be listened to, and their views and experiences taken seriously.

"[The organisation] ran an internal consultation. ... And I think that taught us quite hard lessons about how people feel they have been treated in the past or are being treated now. And how hard it is to say, 'Its not okay what happened to me.' That is something that we're grappling with quite hard, is creating that sense of psychological safety where people don't feel like they will be, you know, inviting any negative consequences on themselves by speaking up." (#39: third sector organisational representative)

Yet, again, it must be recognised that organisations are often beholden to the demands of funders and commissioners. If organisations are to be expected to invest in changing their practices, clients must take responsibility for changing their expectations too.

"[My organisation] started loads to help me personally because I have a really bad work-life balance and work long hours. ... But one of the issues that it can't get away from ... are client-facing men. So it's only therefore as good as the demands that the clients make. ... it's almost like it's an inherent difficulty of this profession, addressing work-life balance, because one of the constraints is what the clients demand a fee." (#24: commercial sector, 1 'marginalised characteristic')

4: Collective accountability

To fulfil these ambitions, we must hold ourselves and each other to account. As a profession, we have a strong understanding of the importance of evaluating and monitoring the progress of diversity and inclusion initiatives, and can deploy effective tools and methods for this purpose. Within organisations, this research has shown the value of working with staff to create accountability frameworks and mechanisms. There are also clear opportunities for learning from good practice and better knowledge sharing across organisations.

"We ran quite a few learning events about what inclusive practice means, and we brought together people across different sectors. And what came across is that there's like a real desire for people to be more inclusive, but no one had actually done it. We had also published a few things on our website promoting inclusive practice, about steps you can take and so on. But we kind of felt like we should basically, you know, put our money where our mouth is, and actually do it." (#40: commercial sector organisational representative)

A collective approach could help to build common standards for diversity and inclusion across the profession. Organisations explained the utility of external standards which allow for scrutiny and provoke action. This speaks to the approach the MRS has taken with its CEO pledge.

"One of the other drivers is that the grant bodies, they were not awarding grants to researchers unless the university was part of the Athena SWAN, or unless the department in which the grant was going to had an Athena SWAN award." (#41: academic organisational representative)

"It's no good to laying it at the feet of the people at the top where are individuals who persist in some very unfair views. ... I do tend to be a bit of a person who can't keep quiet about these things ... To me, it's got to be down to every person, to stop passing these people around and somebody to be brave and address it." (#19: public sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

"It was kind of like, 'Oh, well, what's your thoughts, like, as the spokesperson of your community?' And it's like, well, I'm not. But then it was nice because I had, I'd say like an ally, who was very aware of the issues. So, she was raising it and it wasn't coming from me because she understood that it's very tiring to be the minority that's always bringing up this topic." (#10: public sector, 3 'marginalised characteristics')

"Trustees are supposed to be holding the leadership of the charity to account. And if they're behaving badly, then those kind of lines of accountability aren't necessarily super clear ... I guess from my experience ... the CEOs or a few people that have been around for a long time, maybe are in senior positions, have quite a lot of influence over the culture and the way things were." (#17: third sector, 1 'marginalised characteristic')

"The sense is that it's a very grassroots thing. And I do think that there are some aspects where that's true, but I think also it has required quite a top down, almost kind of permission to do this. There's not just an organic group of people have kind of just sprung up and started asking senior management for more representation. I think that really, there had to be the licence to do it." (#38: commercial sector organisational representative)

"[The organisation] submitted to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, and we didn't do great on it- but we knew we wouldn't. We needed that external scrutiny to say, 'You're doing a bad job on X, Y and Z, this is where you need to pick up.' And I think that that's a really good lever. You need put yourself out there, open ourselves up to scrutiny." (#39: third sector organisational representative)

06

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research provides the first detailed evidence on how issues of diversity and inclusion are experienced within the social research profession. It has highlighted the need for substantial and meaningful change in many areas.

- Diversity within the profession is poor: access/entry to the profession needs to be addressed, as does retention of talent from marginalised groups
- Research and procurement practices are not sufficiently inclusive
- Experiences of inclusion are poor among marginalised groups and negative experiences of working in the research profession are common

Encouragingly, it also shows that there is a strong appetite for change and that many organisations are starting to take steps in the right direction. The relatively positive experiences of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community within social research point to this; but clearly not enough progress has been achieved as of yet to ensure that all minority and marginalised groups experience an inclusive and equal work environment.

- Organisations appear to value diversity and inclusion – but employees don't feel that many of these efforts are actually making a difference
- Activities are often (perceived to be) reactive and superficial, not reflecting and accounting for the lived experiences of marginalised groups

These challenges are systemic, and the research poses several important questions for the profession:

1. How can the research profession collaborate more effectively across sectors, and learn from other industries to:

- Improve access to social research careers?
- Ensure there are inclusive pathways for professional development for people from all backgrounds?
- Test, learn and implement more effective actions which improve diversity and inclusion – in ways which reflect and respond to people's intersecting identities, rather than piecemeal solutions which treat each protected characteristic as siloed?

2. How can the research profession become more reflective and transparent so that funders, commissioners, research practitioners and participants are able to improve practice so that research is more truly inclusive, and that inclusive practice becomes the default?

3. How can the profession use its expertise in understanding 'what works' and evaluating and measuring progress to develop and champion the frameworks, tools and processes that will allow organisations to hold themselves and each other to account?

Recommendations

We make here five over-arching recommendations that all organisations and individuals working in the social research profession should actively engage with and respond to in a way which is appropriate to their sector and context.

1. Build a culture of reflection, support and transparency

- Organisations should continue on the journey that most have begun of scrutinising their own work and practice
- Care must be taken to ensure that staff are closely involved with this process, but that the burden of leading and creating change does not fall on those already most negatively affected

2. Develop meaningful action plans that:

- Actively involve staff in their design and implementation
- Builds on best practice within the profession and from other industries
- Are explicitly endorsed by senior leadership
- Can be embedded in organisational policies, processes and practice
- Have a linked framework for measuring and reporting progress, to ensure collective accountability

3. Commit the necessary resources

- Ensure that the organisation provides the necessary financial, practical and human resources to implement the actions identified as necessary
- Provide the training and specialist support that will allow staff to adapt to new ways of working
- Ensure the mechanisms are in place to respond appropriately and supportively if/when staff feel that the organisations or individuals within it are continuing to behave in ways which are exclusionary or discriminatory
- Funders and commissioners should also ensure that research budgets and timelines reflect the views of research practitioners and people with lived experience on what is required to ensure practice is truly inclusive

4. Welcome challenge

- Invite feedback (and respond to it) on how inclusive your research or commissioning practices are and what can be done to improve them (from participants and research practitioners)
- Ensure there are safe and supportive forums and avenues for staff who experience workplace exclusion or discrimination to come together for support and/or change-making – and that there opportunities for genuine (rather than performative) allyship

5. Be willing to collaborate

- Contribute to efforts within and across sectors in social research to share best practice and approaches to improving diversity and inclusion – ideally in line with the principles of 'open access' and the 'creative commons'
- Where possible, provide financial and in-kind support to initiatives which are working to improve the profession as a whole

Technical appendix

Survey methodology

Design and implementation

The data presented in this report are based on an online survey which was live for six weeks during January and February 2021.

The survey was designed by the Young Foundation in collaboration with the Social Research Association. The intention was to ensure a high level of comparability with other similar surveys, both nationally and of other researchers and we gratefully acknowledge the *MRS Diversity, Inclusion and Equality in the Market Research Sector, 2020* study as a source of many questions.

Survey respondents were recruited through multiple channels with the ambition to reach social researchers across all sectors and in organisations large and small:

- **A mail-out to Social Research Association members**
- **Via professional channels including the Government Social Research Network and the Civic University Partnership**
- **Via Young Foundation networks**
- **Social media activity by the SRA and The Young Foundation**
- **Through the personal and professional networks of the Young Foundation team and the SRA's staff and trustees**

Sample profile

This section shows the demographic, educational and professional profile of survey respondents. The data is based on those who answered each question, excluding those who declined to respond. For comparison purposes, it is presented alongside the best available nationally representative (Nat Rep) or other suitable comparative data.

In 2016, PwC estimated that around 73,000 people work in research and evidence in the UK.¹¹ What is not known, however, is what proportion of these work in *social* research, how those roles are distributed across sectors, or the demographic profile of those researchers.

While the nature of the recruitment means that this survey can make no claims to be statistically representative of the universe of social researchers in the UK, the data does support the commonly held view that the profession skews heavily female. Likewise, survey respondents came from all 12 regions of the UK but with the expected skew to London and the South East.

¹¹ <https://www.pwc.co.uk/assets/pdf/business-of-evidence-report.pdf>

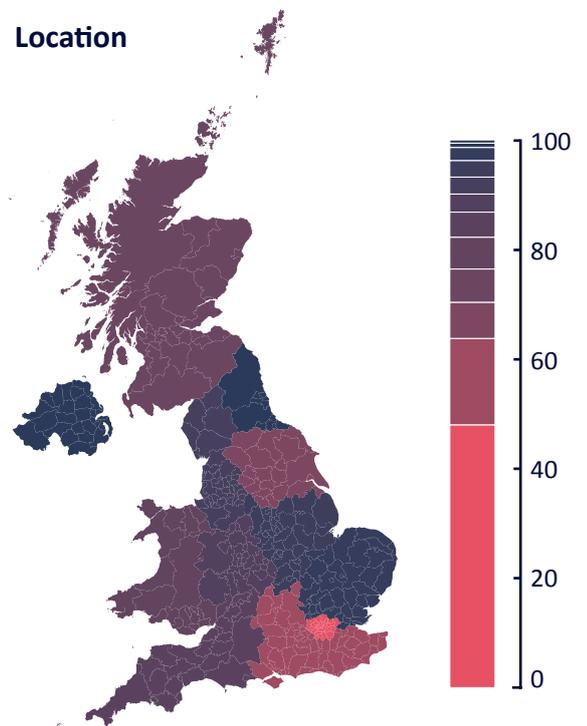


Figure 26: Geographical distribution of survey respondents

Demographic profile

Gender				
	Survey	Nat Rep	Survey sample	Notes
Male	26%	49%	974	
Female	72%	51%		
Trans and non-binary	2%			Not collected for Nat Rep ¹²
Age				
<35	51%	20%	977	Nat Rep ¹³ age 20-34
35-44	26%	13%		
45-54	15%	14%		
55+	9%	12%		Nat Rep age 55-64
Ethnicity				
White	84%	86%	964	Nat Rep ¹⁴ for England and Wales only
British	66%	80.5%		
Irish	3%	0.9%		
Other	15%	4.5%		
Asian/Asian British	7%	7.5%		
Indian	4%	2.5%		
Pakistani	1%	2%		
Bangladeshi	<1%	0.8%		
Other	2%	2.2%		
Black/Black British	2%	3.3%		
African	2%	1.8%		
Caribbean	<1%	1.1%		
Other	<1%	0.5%		
Mixed/multiple ethnic background	6%	2.2%		
Other	1%	1%		
Sexual orientation				
Heterosexual	85%	94.6%	951	Nat Rep ¹⁵ reported together
Bisexual	8%	0.9%		
Gay	3%	1.4%		
Lesbian	2%			
Other	2%	0.6%		

12 ONS Mid-2019 UK Population Estimates. Retrieved from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

13 ibid

14 2011 Census (England and Wales only). Retrieved from: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest>

15 ONS 2018 UK Annual Population Survey. Retrieved from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexual-identityuk/2018>

Religion				
Atheist	72%	25%	894	Nat Rep ¹⁶ for England and Wales only
Christianity	21%	59%		
Islam	2%	4.8%		
Judaism	2%	0.5%		
Other	3%	3.1%		
Health status				
Physical health condition	10%	47.8%	979	Nat Rep ¹⁷ refers to population aged 16+ in employment with health condition lasting 12+ months
Mental health condition	15% ¹⁸			
Neuro-divergent	6%			
Caring responsibilities				
Any responsibility	33%	958	Nat Rep data unavailable	
<i>For children</i>	6%			
<i>For adults</i>	24%			
<i>Both</i>	4%			
No caring responsibility	67%			

Educational profile

Secondary education				
	Survey	Nat Rep	Survey sample	Notes
Non-selective state school	48%	88%	976	Best available Nat Rep ¹⁹ data for Great Britain
Selective state school - academic	15%	5%		
Selective state school - faith	6%			
Private/fee-paying school	14%	7%		
School outside the UK	15%			
First generation higher education				
Yes	40%		962	No appropriate comparator data set available
No	60%			
Highest qualification obtained				
PhD	21%		979	No appropriate comparator data set available
Masters	49%			
Bachelors	26%			
Other post-secondary	1%			
Secondary education	1%			

¹⁶ 2011 Census (England and Wales only). Retrieved from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religion-in-englandandwales2011/2012-12-11>

¹⁷ ONS Oct 2019- Sep 2020 Annual Population Survey. Retrieved from: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/select/getdatasetbytheme.asp?>

¹⁸ NB: 54% of researchers report having struggled with mental health problems while working in the profession, vs. 15% who are currently living with a mental health condition

¹⁹ Elitist Britain 2019 (Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811045/Elitist_Britain_2019.pdf

Professional profile

Sector				
	Survey	Nat Rep	Survey sample	Notes
Public sector – Central/NDPB	29%		913	ONS data ²⁰ indicates that 83% of the working population is employed in the private sector and 17% in the public sector. Third sector/ civil society employees are not identified separately.
Public sector – Other (local government, NHS etc.)	9%			
Academia	12%			
Social/market research agency	27%			
Charity/Trust/Foundation	15%			
Research Institute	5%			
Other	3%			
Employment status				
Employed	91%	86%	979	Nat Rep ²¹ refers to % population aged 16-64 in employment
Self-employed	7%	13.7%		
Other	2%			Includes recently retired, made redundant, on furlough
Working Time				
Full-time Employment	92%	75.7%		Nat Rep ²² refers to % population aged 16-64 in employment
Part-time Employment	8%	24.2%		
Salary bracket				
< £20,000 p/a	6%		935	No appropriate comparator data set available
£20-29,999 p/a	18%			
£30-39,999 p/a	34%			
£40-49,999 p/a	20%			
£50-69,999 p/a	16%			
£70,000 +	6%			

²⁰ Employment and Labour Market statistics, ONS, March 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/public-sectorpersonnel/datasets/publicsectoremploymentreferencetable>

²¹ Employment Status and Working time: ONS Oct 2019- Sep 2020 Annual Population Survey. Retrieved from: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/select/getdatasetbytheme.asp>

²² ibid

Analysis

The analytical approach to is based on the principle of intersectionality. The survey analysis grouped participants based on the *number*, rather than *type*, of characteristics which tend to be marginalised. This approach deconstructs typical analytical categories, like gender or ethnicity, in order to reflect the ‘anticategorical complexity’ of intersectionality (McCall, 2005). However, this ‘multiple’ approach portrays ‘intersectionality-as-testable’, thus assumes fixed and uniform influences of characteristics (Hancock, 2012).

Further analysis, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data, adopted these characteristics as analytical categories in order to explore the ‘intercategorical’ and ‘intracategorical’ complexities of relationships of inequality across and within multiple and conflicting dimensions (McCall, 2005). This moves towards an ‘intersectionality-as-paradigm’ approach (Hancock, 2012).

Limitations

There are several important limitations to this research which it is important to recognise.

First, it is impossible to assess the extent to which the survey participants represent the wider universe of social researchers in the UK. The profession cuts across multiple sectors and a wide variety of roles – and ultimately whether or not someone considers themselves to work in the ‘social research’ profession is one of personal identity, not an objectively defined classification. This complexity means that there is no robust data available on how many people work in the profession in total, or by sector, or what the profile of those individuals is.

Second, while the overall sample size for the study is robust, some sub-groups of interest are too small to allow statistical analysis of the data. This primarily affects those groups who are a minority within the population as a whole and which, anecdotally, are further under-represented within the profession. In particular this includes people who identify as Black/Black British (n= 22) or ‘other’ ethnic background (n= 11) and transgender individuals (n= 6). Self-employed/freelance researchers are also under-represented in our data (n= 64) as there are fewer networks through which to reach these individuals directly.

Third, social class was one of the most important issues which emerged through the open-ended comments in the survey, people’s prioritisation of issues for the future, and in the qualitative interviews. It is clear many people who identify as working class and even some from the middle class feel disadvantaged in comparison with colleagues who are perceived to benefit from having a higher socio-economic and/or elite educational background. Furthermore, class is a very subjective and personal construct. While we captured

indicators of educational background, including whether or not someone was privately educated and/or in the first generation to attend university from their family, we believe the latter is more truly a reflection of social *mobility* and is also heavily correlated with age; the rapid growth in participation in higher education means that being in the first generation to attend university is much more common in older age groups but does not necessarily reflect social class. We therefore have not included statistical analysis using a proxy for social class.

Fourth, as with all research, compromises were necessary in terms of the breadth and depth of information we could capture through a survey questionnaire. We also appreciate the feedback we received from participants with regard to how we could improve the wording of specific items in the future, and on best practice in removing the filter question about whether or not someone identifies as having a physical or mental health condition before capturing the detail of those. Some questions also refer to EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion), while others refer to D&I (Diversity and Inclusion) we would recommend that future users of these questions choose one for consistency.

Finally, we recognise that this report highlights numerous issues related to diversity and inclusion in the social research profession, and the Young Foundation is no exception in needing to address many of these. Moreover, whilst the authors are diverse in many ways, they do not represent the full range of identities, backgrounds and circumstances explored through this research. These positionalities are important to acknowledge as, like all social research, the practice of diversity and inclusion research is not value-free, and thus invites some degree of bias and subjectivity (Guyan and Oloyede, 2019). As far as possible, we attempted to mitigate this impact by consulting with other researchers and stakeholders who represent diverse identities and positions within the social research profession. This included working closely with the SRA and its board’s diversity and inclusion sub-committee. We also adapted tried and tested materials for researching diversity and inclusion and sought feedback on new materials.

In-depth interviews

Interviews with social researchers

We conducted 21 interviews with social researchers who had opted-in to be recontacted at the end of the survey. The aim was to explore in greater depth the experiences of people from marginalised backgrounds, with over-sampling of those from groups such as the self-employed whose numbers were small within the quantitative data.

The final profile of the interviewees was:

Sector	Academia: 2 Commercial sector: 5 Public sector: 7 Third sector: 3 Independent: 3 Research institute: 1
Employment Type	Full-time employee: 15 Part-time employee: 3 Self-employed: 3
Gender	Female: 15 Male: 4 Non-binary: 2 <i>Of these, 1 interviewee identified as transgender</i>
Age	Under 35: 11 35-54: 6 55+: 4
Ethnicity	Asian/ Asian British – Indian: 1 Asian/ Asian British – Pakistani: 2 Black/ Black British – African: 1 Black/ Black British – Caribbean: 2 Multiple ethnic groups – White and Asian: 1 Multiple ethnic groups – White and Caribbean: 2 White – English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British: 11 White – Irish: 1

Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual: 18 Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual: 3
Religion	Atheist/ No religion: 17 Christianity: 1 Islam: 1 Other religion: 2
Health Status	Physical health condition or disability: 2 Mental health condition: 6 Both: 2 Neither: 11
Neurodiversity	Neuro-divergent: 4 Neuro-typical: 17
Caring Responsibilities	For child(ren): 4 For adult(s): 1 For child(ren) + adult(s): 1 None: 15
Secondary Education	Non-selective state school: 12 Selective state school: 7 School outside the UK: 2
First Generation Higher Education	Yes: 8 No: 12 N/A: 1
Highest Qualification Obtained	Bachelor's degree: 6 Master's degree: 10 Doctoral degree: 3 Professional qualification: 1 No qualification: 1

The interviews focussed on:

- **Personal experiences of working in the profession, particularly in relation to their marginalised characteristics**
- **Experiences and perceptions of diversity and inclusion initiatives**
- **Perceptions of diversity and inclusion in the social research profession in general, particularly in relation to barriers and enablers to improving experiences**

Interviews were conducted over video-calls and lasted around 45 minutes. Participants were sent a list of useful organisations alongside the information and consent process. The interviewing team included both male and female researchers, a researcher of colour, and come from diverse socio-economic, educational, and professional backgrounds.

Interviews with organisational representatives

We conducted five interviews with representatives of social research organisations. These were selected based on examples of interest provided by survey participants and were recruited directly. The aim was to understand experiences of developing diversity and inclusion initiatives within social research organisations.

Interviewees were selected to represent the main social research sectors covering academia, the public sector, commercial sector, and third sector, with a mix of organisational sizes. Their roles included research directors and dedicated diversity and inclusion coordinators, as well as members of staff-led diversity and inclusion initiatives and working groups

The interviews focused on:

- **Steps taken to improve diversity and inclusion at their organisation**
- **Reflections of their organisation's approach to diversity and inclusion, including what worked and challenges**
- **Perceptions of diversity and inclusion in the social research profession in general, particularly in relation to barriers and enablers to improving experiences**

Interviews were conducted over video-calls and lasted around 45 minutes.

Qualitative analysis

Detailed fieldnotes and transcripts from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis and interrogated from two perspectives:

- **a deductive perspective, with an aim to address the specific research questions, and**
- **an inductive perspective, with an aim of surfacing other themes and aspects of the participants' experiences which may have been unanticipated but nonetheless reveal important insights about experiences diversity and inclusivity in the profession**

We developed and applied a code frame which covered: Characteristics; Intersectionality; Sector factors; Workplace culture; Discrimination in the workplace; Responses to diversity and inclusion issues; Diversity and inclusion initiatives; Organisational performance in relation to diversity and inclusion; Change in the profession.

Bibliography

Behavioural Insights Team (2020). Unconscious bias and diversity training – what the evidence says. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/944431/20-12-14_UBT_BIT_report.pdf

brap (2018). Let's talk about race: Civil society and race equality, Civil Society Futures Enquiry.

Bravata D.M., Madhusudhan D.K., Boroff M. and Cokley K.O. (2020). Commentary: Prevalence, predictors, and treatment of imposter syndrome: A systematic review. *Journal of Mental Health & Clinical Psychology*, 4(3).

Bridge Group (2017). Diversity in Grant Awarding and Recruitment at Wellcome. The Wellcome Trust.

Civil Service (2017). A Brilliant Civil Service: Becoming the UK's most inclusive employer.

Civil Service (2019). Guidance: Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-diversity-inclusion-dashboard/civil-service-diversity-and-inclusion-dashboard>

Claeys-Kulik A., Jørgensen T.E. and Stöber H. (2019). Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions: Results from the INVITED project. EUCEN; ESU; EUA.

Clance P.R. and Imes S.A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention, *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 15(3): 241.

Friedman S. (2021). Navigating the Labyrinth: Socio-economic Background and Career Progression within the Civil Service. Social Mobility Commission.

Gadsby S. (2021). Imposter syndrome and self-deception, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 1-15.

Gervais M.-C. (2020). Diversity, Inclusion and Equality in the Market Research Sector, 2020. MRS.

Gifford J., Green M., Young J. and Urwin P. (2019). Diversity Management That Works: An Evidence-based Review. CIPD.

Government Social Research (2021). Government Social Research Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025: Growing and embedding a diverse and inclusive GSR culture.

Green M., Bond H., Miller J. and Gifford J. (2018). Diversity and Inclusion at Work: Facing up to the business case. CIPD.

Guthrie S., Lichten C., van Belle J., Ball S., Knack A. and Hofman J. (2017). Understanding Mental Health in the Research Environment: A Rapid Evidence Assessment. RAND Europe; The Wellcome Trust.

Guyan K. and Oloyede F.D. (2019). Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Research and Innovation: UK Review. UKRI; Advance HE.

Hancock A.M. (2013). Empirical intersectionality: a tale of two approaches, *UC Irvine Law Review*, 3(2): 259-296.

Herbert F. (2021). Is unconscious bias training still worthwhile?, *LSE Business Review*. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2021/03/24/is-unconscious-bias-training-still-worthwhile/>

Hunt V., Layton D. and Prince S. (2015). Why Diversity Matters. McKinsey & Co. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters#>

McCall L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3): 1771–1800.

Memon A. and Wyld G. (2018). Walking the Talk on Diversity: What is holding the charity sector back from putting words into action. New Philanthropy Capital.

Miller J. and Green M. (2020). Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace: Factsheet. CIPD. Available at: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/diversity/factsheet>

PwC (2016). Business of Evidence 2016.

Ro C. (2021). Helping workers understand their implicit biases is helpful, in theory – but these programmes are controversial. Who's right?, BBC Equality Matters. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210326-the-complicated-battle-over-unconscious-bias-training>

Robson D. (2021). What unconscious bias training gets wrong... and how to fix it, The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/apr/25/what-unconscious-bias-training-gets-wrong-and-how-to-fix-it>

Runnymede Trust (2015). Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy.

Social Mobility Commission (2021). Action Plan: How to Improve Socio-economic Progression within the Civil Service.

Sue D.W. (2010). Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation. John Wiley and Sons: New Jersey.

University and College Union (UCU) (2012). The Position of Women and BME Staff in Professorial Roles in UK HEIs.

Wakling P. and Kyriacou C. (2010). Widening Participation from Undergraduate to Postgraduate Research Degrees. University of York; ESRC.

