



NEXER

Historic England Workforce Diversity Survey

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Project background

Why we're doing this work?

Historic England, as part of their ongoing work on inclusion, diversity and equality, have identified a lack of consistent data collection in the heritage sector.

Although some areas of the sector have made individual progress, there is not a consistent and aligned method of data collection to measure diversity across the sector.

We need to have a more robust understanding of who is currently part of the sector, if we want to understand where improvements could be made.

To ensure the heritage sector is truly available to everyone in England, we need to first understand who is currently being represented in the sector and who is not.

We can then explore ways to encourage more diverse voices and people with lived experience to get involved in the sector.

In 2021 Historic England commissioned a research project to understand the diversity of the heritage sector workforce. Only 7 of the 40 heritage organisations who responded to our initial call already collected diversity data. We conducted a web survey to collect new data. Of the 62 completed responses, only a third were routinely collecting any diversity data, and only 22% shared it with us on the survey.

In 2024 we decided to pilot a different methodology where we invited individuals in the sector, rather than organisations, to complete the survey.

Limitations of the research

To encourage participation with the Historic England Workforce Diversity Survey across the sector it was introduced this year as 'anonymous' and therefore:

- We don't hold data on how many organisations have taken part in this survey.
- We don't hold data on how many individuals from the same organisation have taken part in this survey.

Digital Confidence:

- We did not provide a paper version or non-digital option for people to take part in the survey.

As this was a pilot approach, we recognise that there are biases in the data and that the results speak only to the sample we have collected, not necessarily the entire sector. For example, our survey showed that none of the respondents in higher managerial positions are Black. We know that there are very experienced Black people in higher managerial positions across the sector, albeit a low number, but this data still broadly highlights the underrepresentation.

We plan to run a similar survey in 2026, we are currently reviewing the methodology and will take into account any learnings from this pilot in future iterations.

Nexer's role

To support Historic England to enhance their understanding of workforce diversity and take concrete actions to improve inclusivity and equity by:

- Developing written resources and guidance to support the survey
- Completing the survey design and implementation
- Conducting in-depth interviews to explore the experience of completing the survey and identify areas for improvement

Guidance and support resources

Nexer developed a number of resources, with the involvement of Historic England to help communicate the survey and its objectives to the sector:

Advice for survey participants:

- [How do I complete the Historic England Workforce Diversity Survey?](#)
- [How do we stay GDPR compliant when conducting a workforce survey?](#)

Advice for organisations:

- [How do we communicate the value and importance of the diversity survey to our workforce?](#)

These materials were shared, and a webinar was hosted on the 7th May 2024 to provide an opportunity for organisations to meet the team at Nexer and ask questions.

Maintaining anonymity for those taking part

The advice shared for survey participants and organisations outlined the Historic England Workforce Diversity Survey as an important tool to establish representation in the workforce and enable organisations to develop strategies to tackle barriers to entry.

It is important to note that the survey was anonymous, with no personally identifying information collected. Neither Nexer Digital nor Historic England can identify individuals and organisations taking part.

The questions within the survey cover all protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, as well as general information about the organisation they work in.

Research Methodology



Online Survey

546 responses

The survey was open from the 29th April to 28th June 2024



Online 121 interviews

3 x interviews

Conducted on the 17th & 18th July 2024

Recruitment Considerations

Our recruitment approach relied on Historic England's existing channels and relationships with the sector. The research invitations that were shared for both the Historic England Workforce Diversity Survey and in-depth interviews were written by Nexer.

During the timelines of this research recruitment efforts may have been impacted by local and general elections and Historic England's ability to promote the survey.

We recognise there may be some bias within the sample as not every heritage organisation was communicated with directly and not all may be active on certain recruitment channels used such as LinkedIn.

A photograph of two women in a professional setting. One woman, with long curly hair and wearing a green top, is seated at a wooden table, looking at a laptop. The other woman, wearing glasses and a pink sweater, is seated in a wheelchair next to her, pointing at the laptop screen. The background shows a modern office environment with large windows and a staircase.

Executive Summary

What we learnt about our workforce in this survey

- Conservation, Researching and Engaging are the leading heritage domains within the sector.
- Most (77.6%) would say that 81 – 100% of their work is heritage related.
- Two thirds (67%) hold full time permanent contracts.
- More than half the workforce (56%) is aged between of 25 to 44 years of age.
- More than half (58%) hold higher or lower managerial roles within their organisation.
- Of the 546 respondents, none of those in higher managerial positions describe their ethnicity as Black.
- 90% describe their ethnicity as White (all options).
- Women (66%) make up two thirds of the workforce.

What we learnt (continued)

- 2% of our workforce identify as trans.
- More than two thirds describe their sexual orientation as heterosexual/straight.
- Most (63%) selected no religion. For those who did select a religion or belief, most selected Christianity.
- Over a half of our workforce do not have any caring responsibilities.
- More than a third have primary or shared caring responsibilities.
- Over two thirds have attended a state run or state funded school (selective and non-selective).
- Over a quarter had a parent or care giver who worked in a modern professional occupation.
- Less than 10% had a parent or care-giver who worked a routine or semi-routine manual and service occupation.

What we learnt about disability & neurodivergence within the workforce

- Almost one fifth answered yes to the Equality Act's definition of being disabled.
- Around a quarter of the workforce describe themselves as being neurodivergent. ADHD, Autism and Dyslexia account for more than two thirds of neurodivergence within our sample.
- People with a disability in the sample are more likely to work in full-time contracts:
 - 50% in this group have full-time permanent contract
 - 17% have a full-time fixed term contract

A photograph showing two women sitting at a wooden table. One woman, with long curly hair and wearing a green jacket, is seen from behind, looking at a laptop. The other woman, wearing glasses and a pink sweater, is sitting in a wheelchair and looking at the laptop screen. The background is a bright, modern interior with large windows and a staircase.

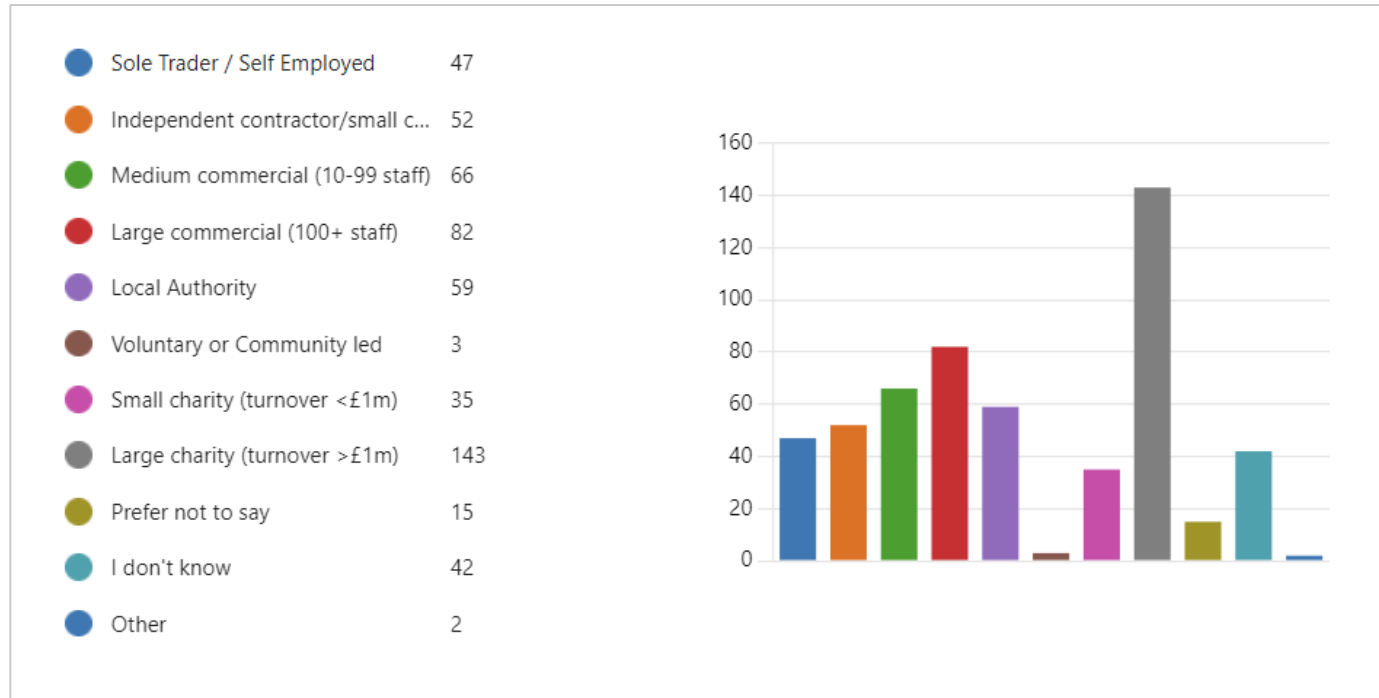
Historic England Workforce Diversity Survey Findings

Integrating our learnings from the survey and interviews

The following slides detail the findings of the survey and where relevant also detail feedback from the in-depth interviews.

The quotes within this section are taken from the in-depth interviews.

More than a third (41%) work in large charities or large commercial organisations



Sole Trader / Self Employed 8%

Independent contractor/small commercial (<10 staff) 9%

Medium commercial (10-99 staff) 12%

Large commercial (100+ staff) 15%

Local Authority 10%

Voluntary or Community led 0%

Small charity (turnover <£1m) 6%

Large charity (turnover >£1m) 26%

Prefer not to say 2%

I don't know 7%

Other 0%

Q1. What is your organisation type?

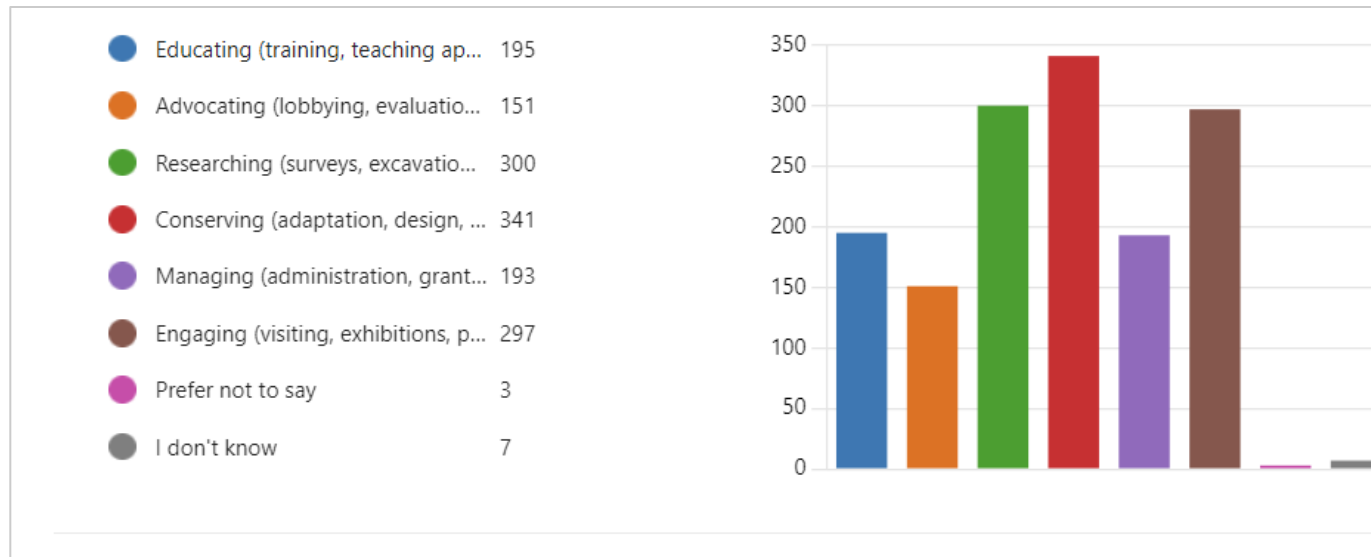
- The participants we interviewed described this questions as easy to answer.
- They were curious why some measures were in numbers of staff and others in turnover, and whether everyone completing this would know their company turnover.
- They also raised that there is no option to select a government body for this question e.g., National Archives



I'm quite aware of the number of staff and turnover because we have very transparent communications, but I've worked in other places where this may have been less transparent.

Most work within Conservation, Researching and Engaging heritage domains

Participants could select more than one heritage domain



62% answered Conservation

55% Researching achieved the highest

54 % answered Engaging

35.7% answered Educating

35.3% answered Managing

27.6% answered Advocating

0.5% answered prefer not to say

1.3% answered I don't know

Q2. Which heritage domain is your organisation part of ?

Many selected more than one heritage domain when completing this question

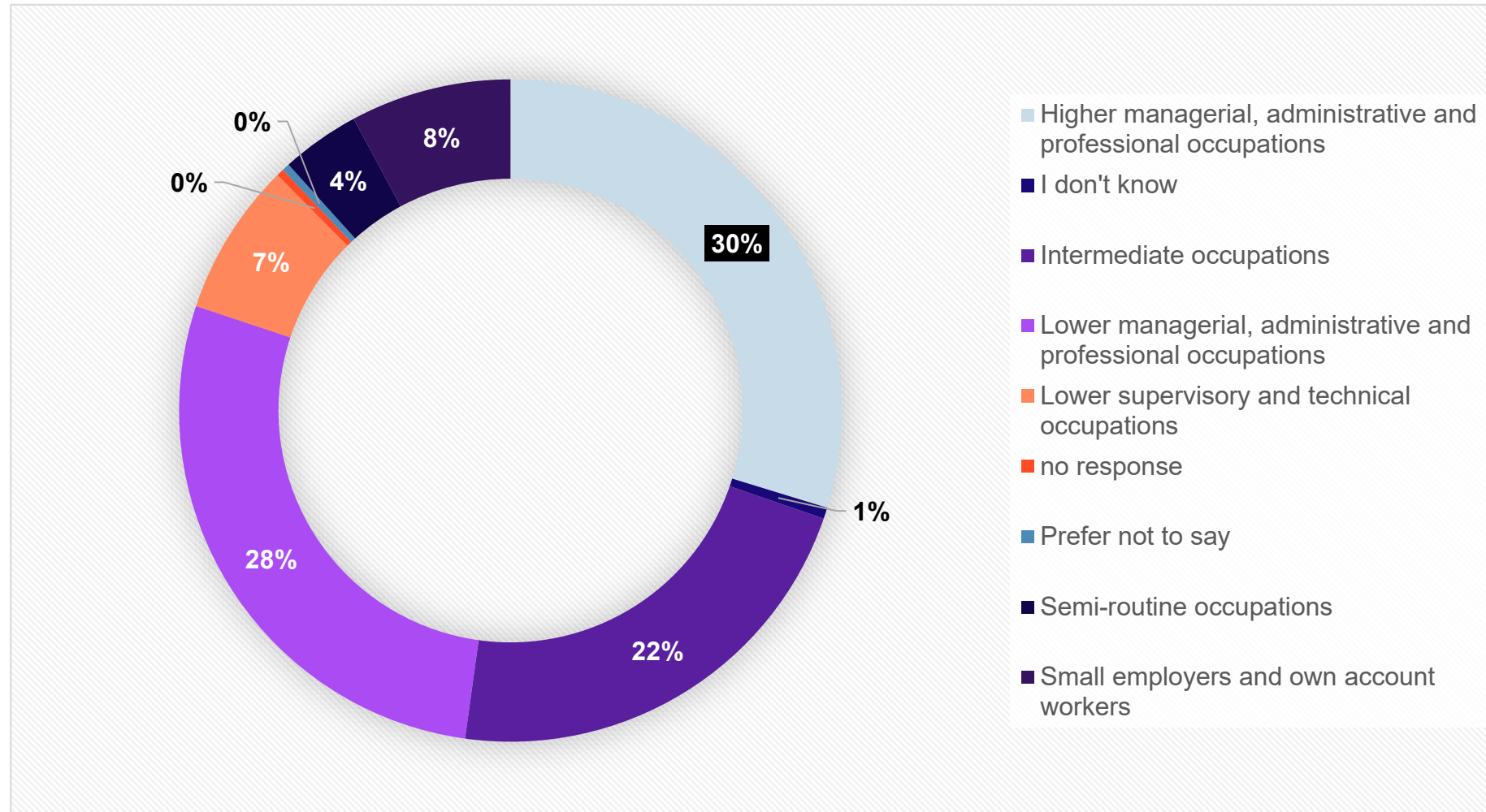
In at least one of our interview sessions a participant selected all options, as their organisation covers them at different levels. This raises the consideration of whether Historic England are interested in 'core' heritage domain[s] for future iterations of the survey.

We also had at least one participant who was unclear on how to complete this question as 'advice' was not an option on the list



We provide
advice at our
organisation and
that's not on the
list.

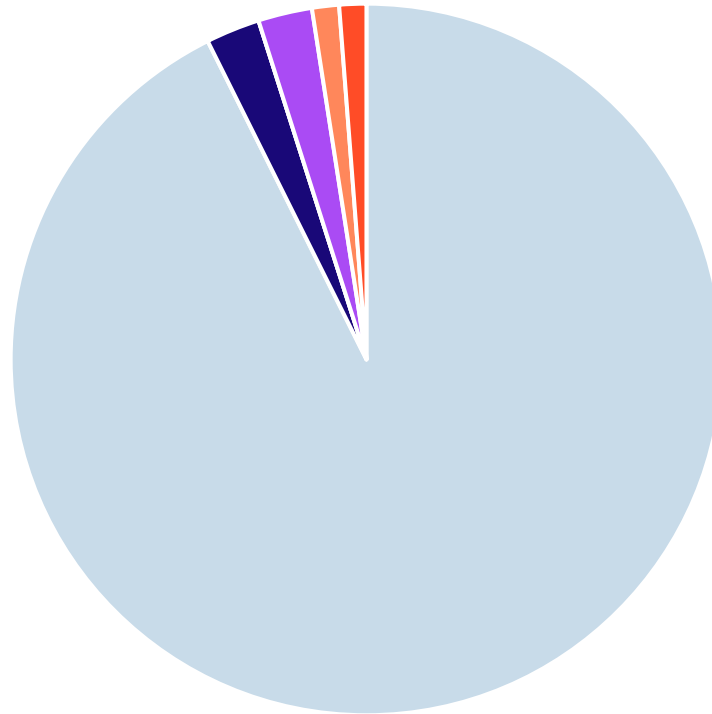
More than half (58%) hold higher or lower managerial roles within their organisation



None held routine roles e.g., cleaner

Over 90% of higher managerial positions are held by people who describe their ethnicity as 'White'

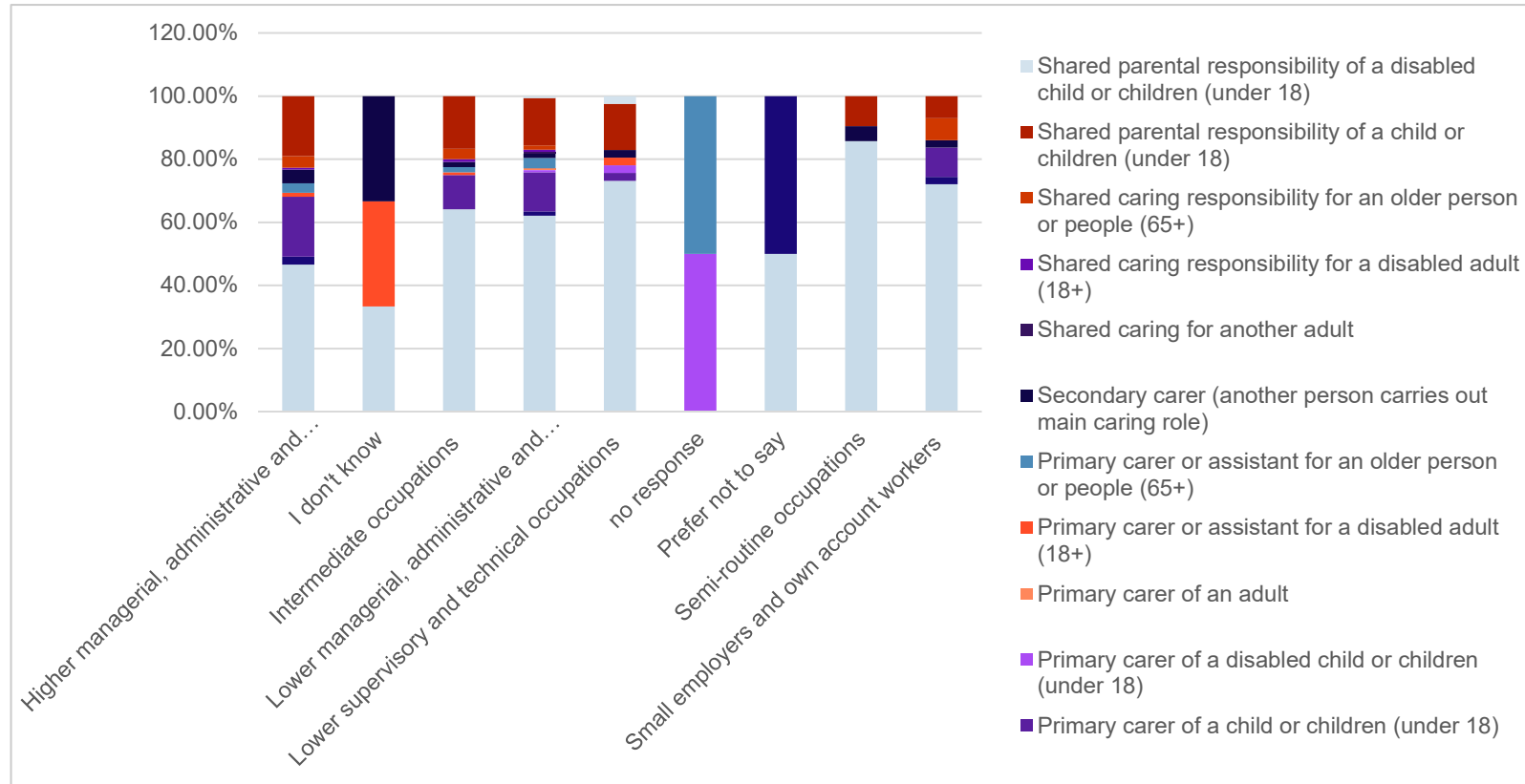
Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations



■ White (all) ■ Asian (all) ■ Black (all) ■ Mixed (all) ■ Other (all) ■ Prefer not to say
93% 3% 0% 2% 1% 1%

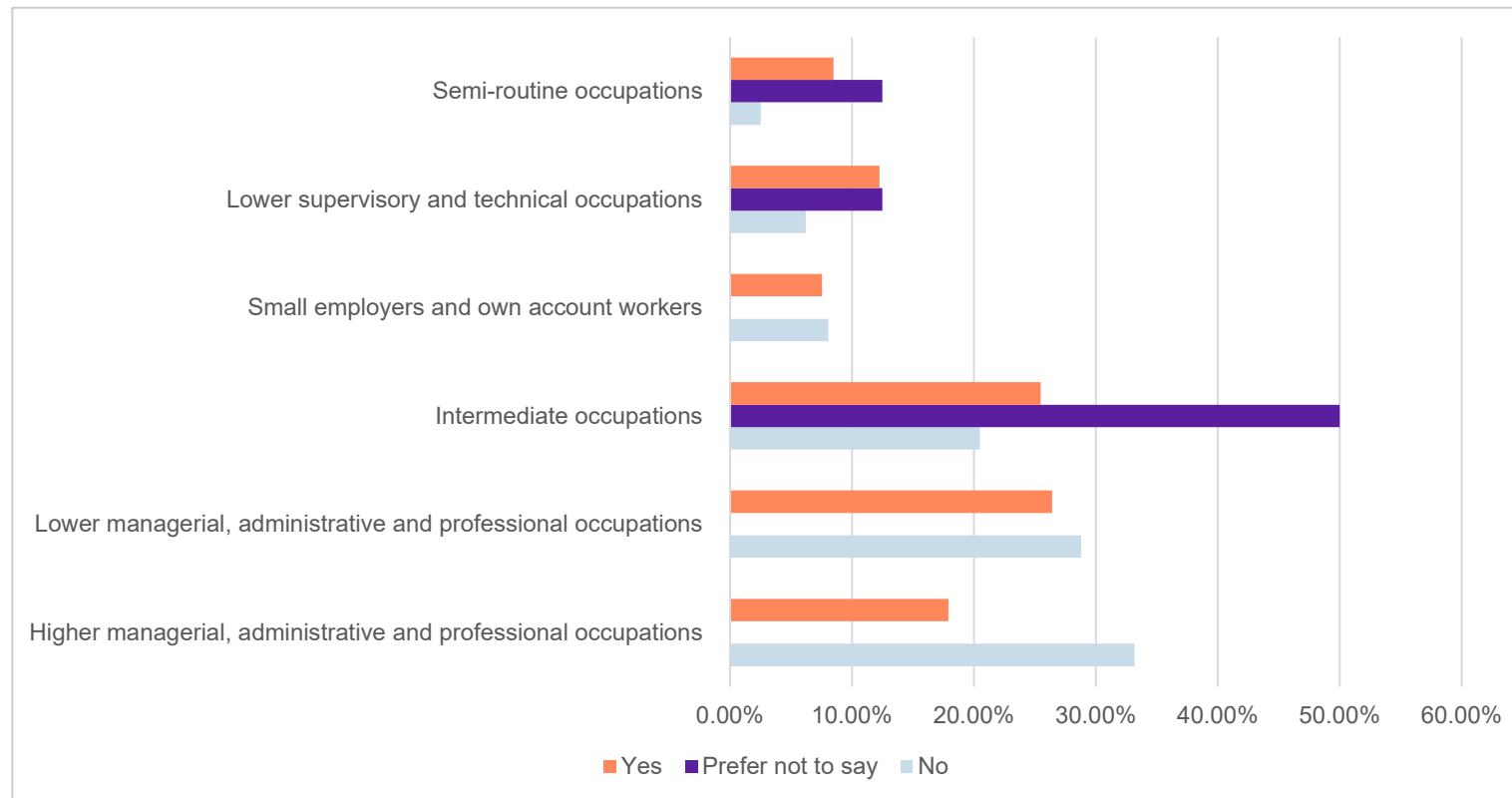
- Of the 546 respondents, none of those in higher managerial positions describe their ethnicity as Black
- One person in our sample who describes their ethnicity as Black held a lower managerial position
- Our sample numbers within the survey for ethnicities other than 'White' were very low which has made analysis of ethnicity and other variables difficult.

More than half (60%) have no caring responsibilities



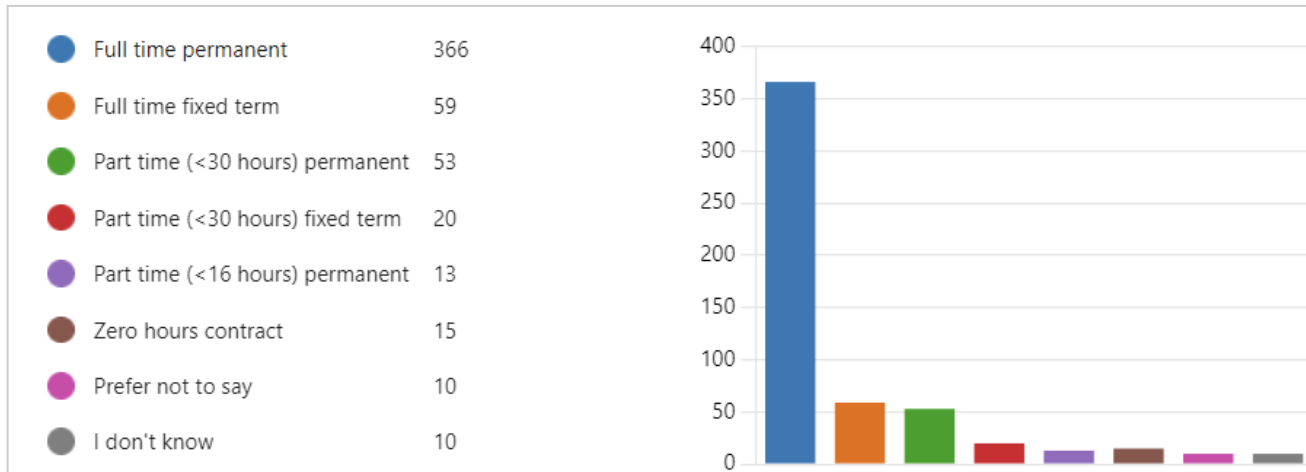
11% of Higher managerial roles have shared or sole caring responsibility for a child/children under 18

One tenth (11%) of the workforce who shared they have a disability, hold a higher or lower managerial role



4% of those who shared they have a disability hold intermediate occupations

Over two thirds (67%) are in full time permanent roles



67 % answered Full time permanent

10.8% answered Full time fixed term

9.7% answered part time (<30 hours) perm

3.7% answered part time (<30 hours) fixed term

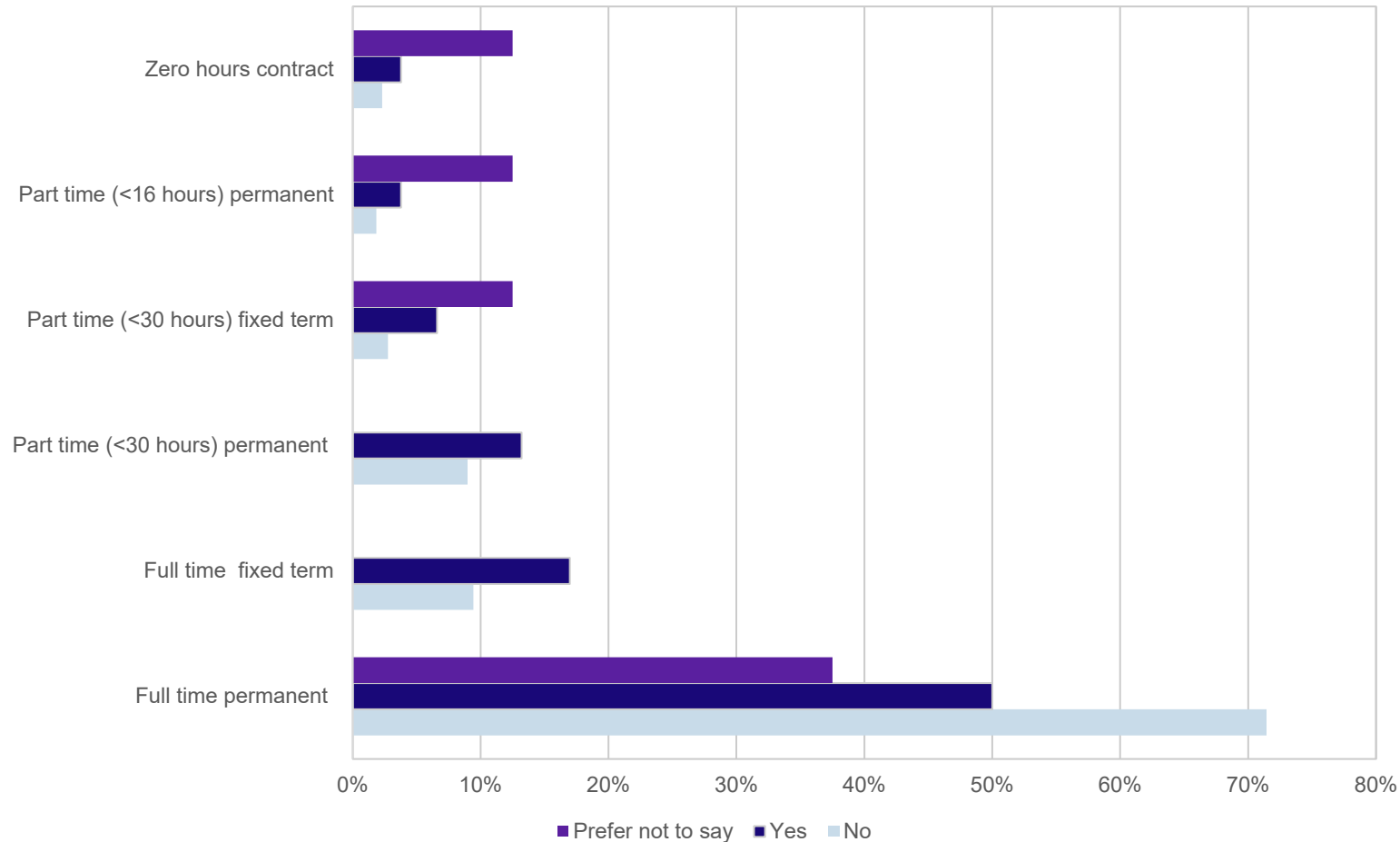
2.4% answered part time (<16 hours) perm

2.7 % answered zero hours contract

1.8 % answered prefer not to say

1.8 % answered I don't know

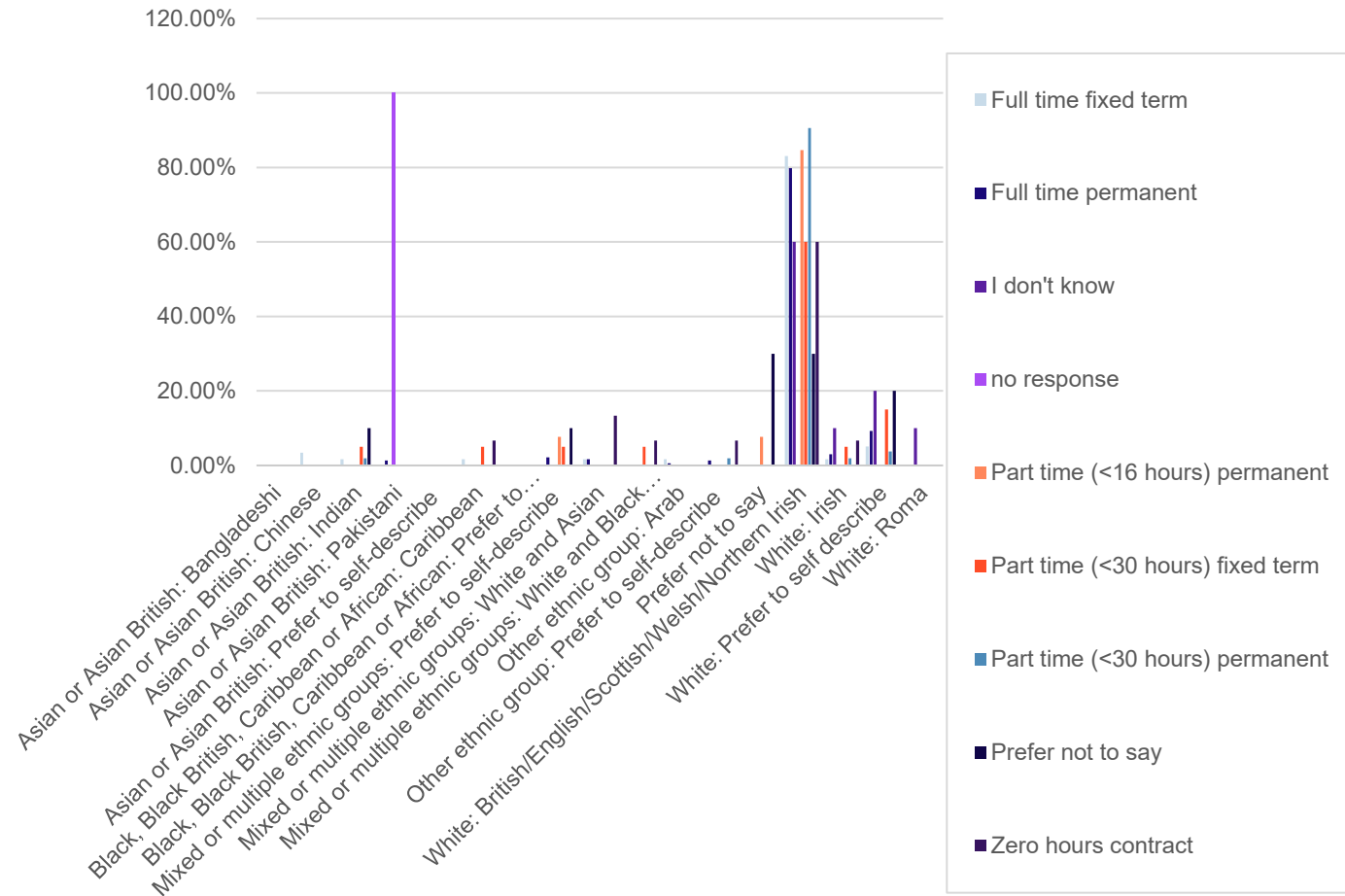
Half of employees who shared they have a disability are in full-time permanent roles



Of those who selected they had a disability:

- 17% have a full-time fixed term
- 13% have a part time <30hours permanent contract

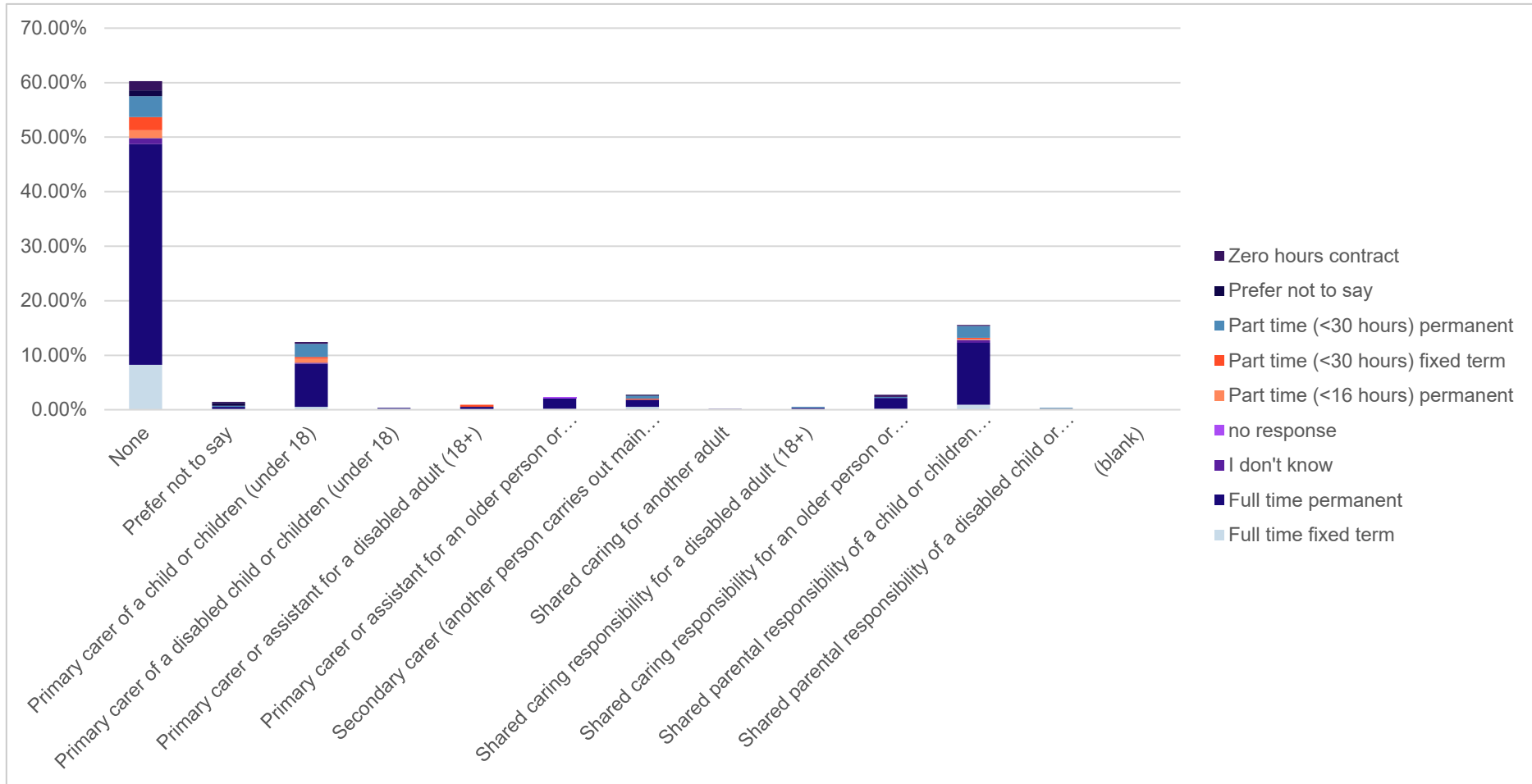
Half of the workforce who describe their ethnicity as White are in full time permanent employment



9% of those who selected 'White' as their ethnicity are on a fixed term contract

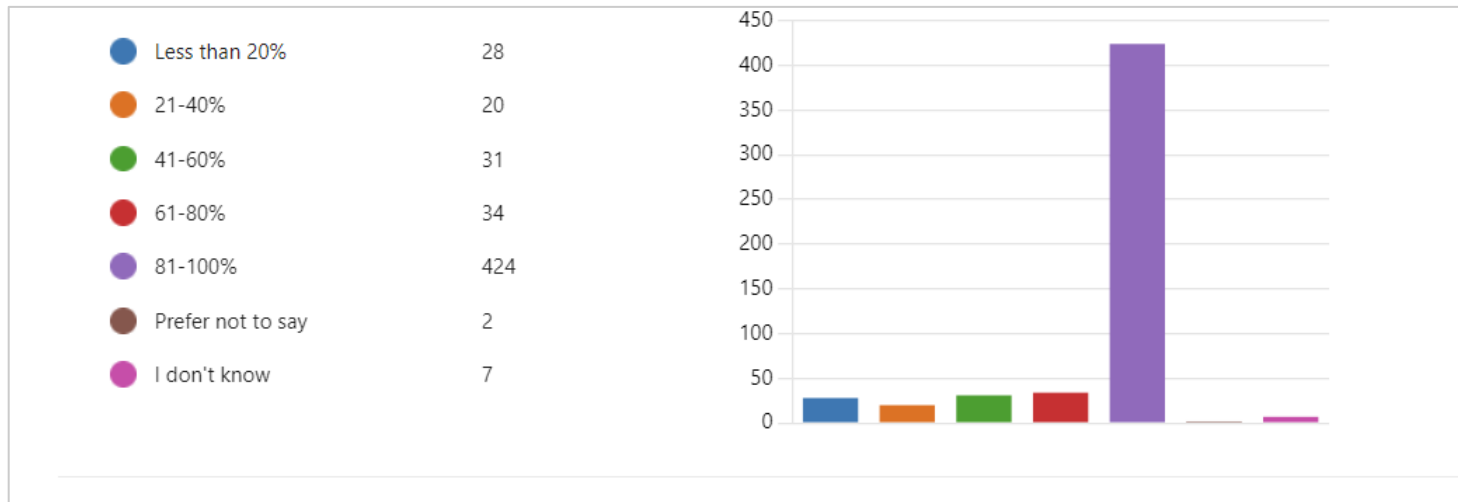
The numbers for other ethnic backgrounds were too small to compare, even when aggregated into groups

Over a third (40%) of full time permanent employees have no caring responsibilities



11% of full time permanent contractors have shared caring responsibility of a child/children under 18.

Most (77.6%) would say that the majority of their work is heritage related



77.6 % answered 81-100%

6.2% answered 61-80%

5.7% answered 41-60%

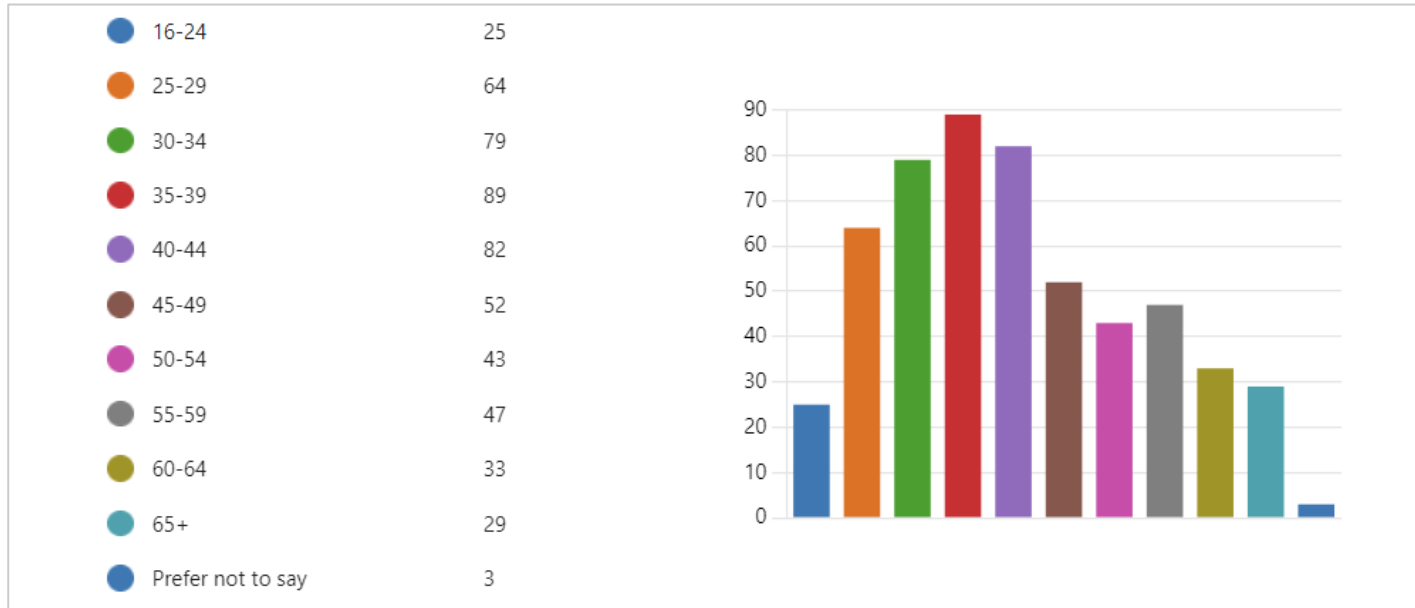
3.7% answered 21-40%

5.12 % less than 20%

0.37 % answered prefer not to say

1.3 % answered I don't know

More than half the workforce (56%) is aged between 25 to 44 years of age



4% answered 16-24

11% answered 25-29

14% answered 30-34

16% answered 35-39

15% answered 40-44

9% answered 45-49

7% answered 50-54

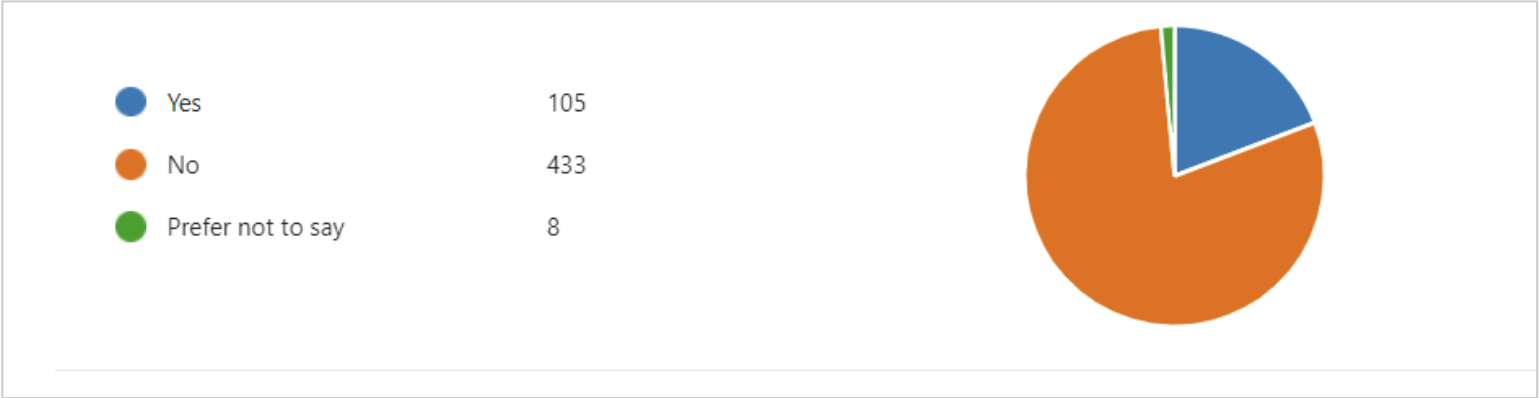
8% answered 55-59

6% answered 60-64

5% answered 65+

Prefer not to say 0%

Almost one fifth answered yes to the Equality Act's definition of being disabled



19.2% answered Yes

79% answered No

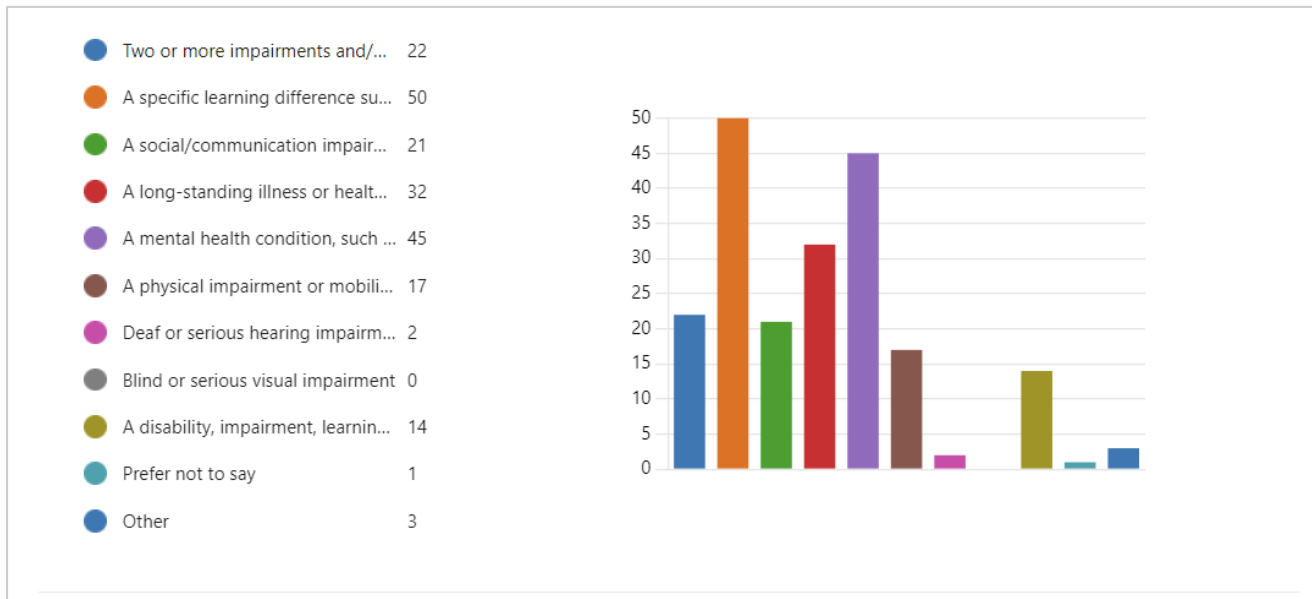
1.5 % answered Prefer not to say

We have 2 no responses



I don't have any disabilities as defined by law, but I do have conditions that impact me, so I would usually select 'no' but then elaborate.

Almost half have a specific learning difference or mental health condition



Two or more impairments and/or long-term conditions – 10%

A specific learning difference such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D - 24%

A social/communication impairment, such as Autism - 10%

A long-standing illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy - 15%

A mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder - 21%

Physical impairment or mobility issue, such as difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair or crutches - 8%

Deaf or serious hearing impairment - 0%

Blind or serious visual impairment - 0%

A disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition that is not listed above - 6%

Prefer not to say - 0%

Other – 1%

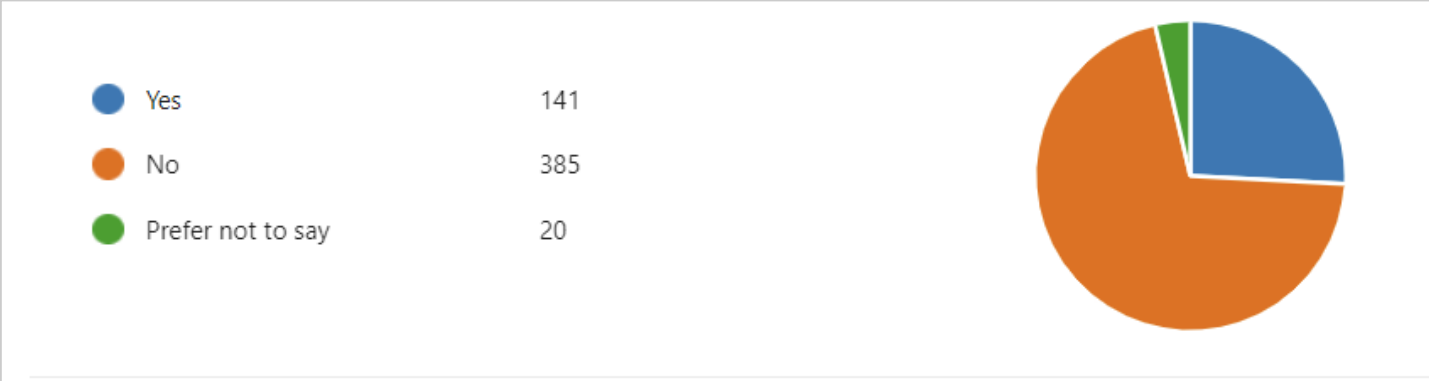
Feedback on describing one's disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition

- Important to share a definition of disability with people as they complete the survey as some select 'No' based on the Disability Equality Act but then share long term conditions, learning impairments or disabilities later on.
- In one of our interviews a participant was surprised to discover dyslexia on this list as they do not consider this a disability. Had they seen this list prior they would have selected 'Yes' to question 7.
- Consider whether we add more information to question 7 to support participants in their understanding of what the Disability Act covers.



I think it's really useful that there are examples like HIV and cancer in there, it highlights that disabilities can also be acquired or temporary.

A quarter of the workforce consider themselves neurodivergent



25.8% answered Yes

71% answered No

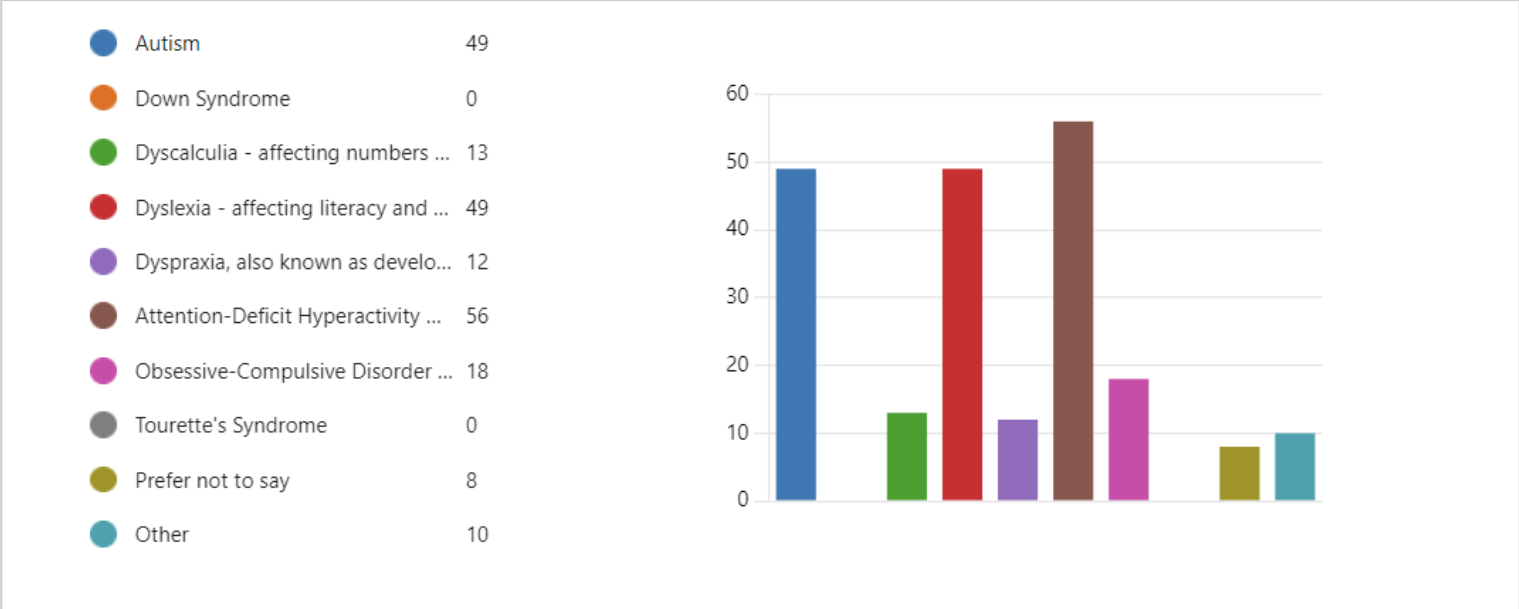
3.66% answered Prefer not to say



Some neurodivergence is underdiagnosed and not easy to recognise, some people may not have a formal diagnosis. There is something around people who suspect they may have something but haven't been diagnosed.

ADHD, Autism and Dyslexia account for more than two thirds of neurodivergence

Respondents could select more than one response (215 responses)



26% answered ADHD

22.7% answered Autism

22.7% answered Dyslexia

8.4% answered OCD

6% answered Dyscalculia

5.6% answered Dyspraxia

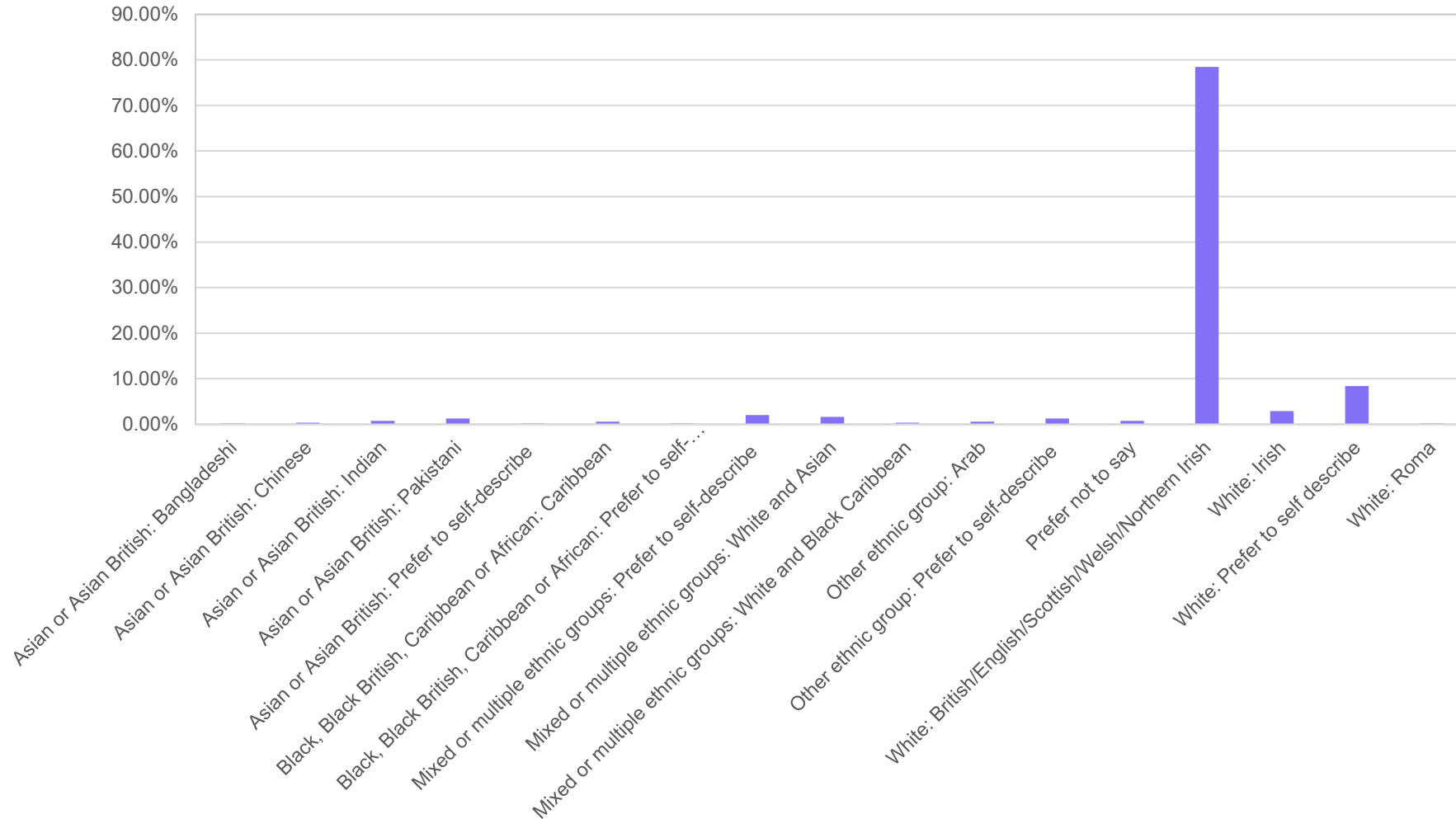
4.7% answered Other

3.7 % answered Prefer Not to say

0% answered Tourette's Syndrome

0% answered Down Syndrome

90% of the workforce describe their ethnicity as White



2.3% in total answered Asian or Asian British

0.7% in total answered Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

4% in total answered Multiple or mixed ethnic groups

0.5% answered Arab

The self describe option within the ethnicity question was mostly used by 'White Europeans'

- During one of our in-depth interviews we heard how it can be challenging to answer questions on ethnicity. We had one interviewee express how there was no option for 'White European' for them.
- This also extended to 'White European' not being included within the mixed heritage options.
- There were mixed feelings towards the option 'other' and how this could be interpreted by those completing the survey as somewhat alienating.



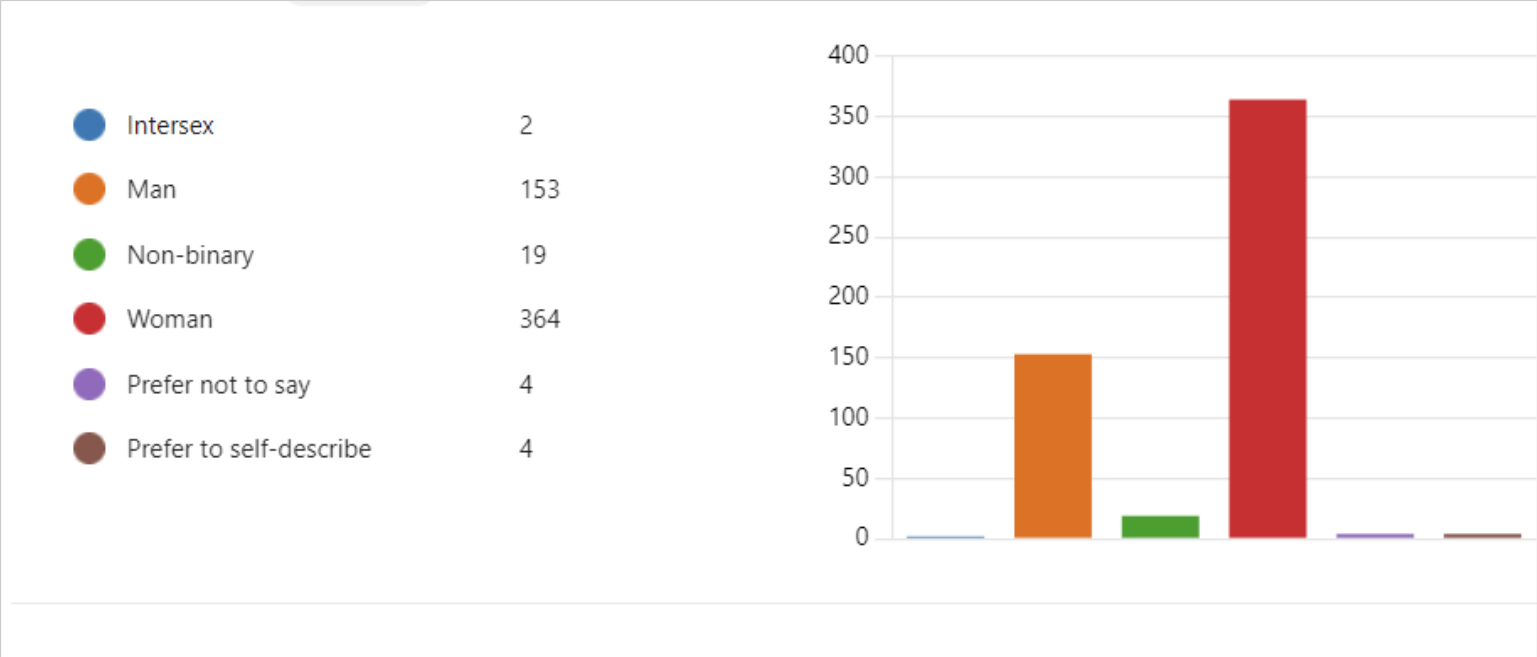
We've had conversations internally about the word 'other' when used in surveys. It may be helpful to add a note explaining why you're using these definitions.

Many self-described their ethnicity in the survey as 'White European'

29 respondents (41%) answered **white** for this question. ...



Women account for two thirds (66%) of the workforce



66.6% answered woman
28% answered man
3.4% non-binary
0.36% intersex

Feedback on 'which best describes your gender?'

- This was well received by our participants in interviews and they valued the 'self-describe' option.
- We heard comments that there are often questions around gender and sexual identity which can raise curiosity as to why this is being asked however we also heard 'I found it easy to understand why this was'.
- We received four self describe responses which included asexual (3) and demi-male (1)



I have a relative that is non-binary, so it's really nice to see this list is really inclusive.

I recognise I'm [white, woman] in a privileged position to be able to talk about identity easily.

Two percent of the workforce identify as trans

Do you identify as trans?



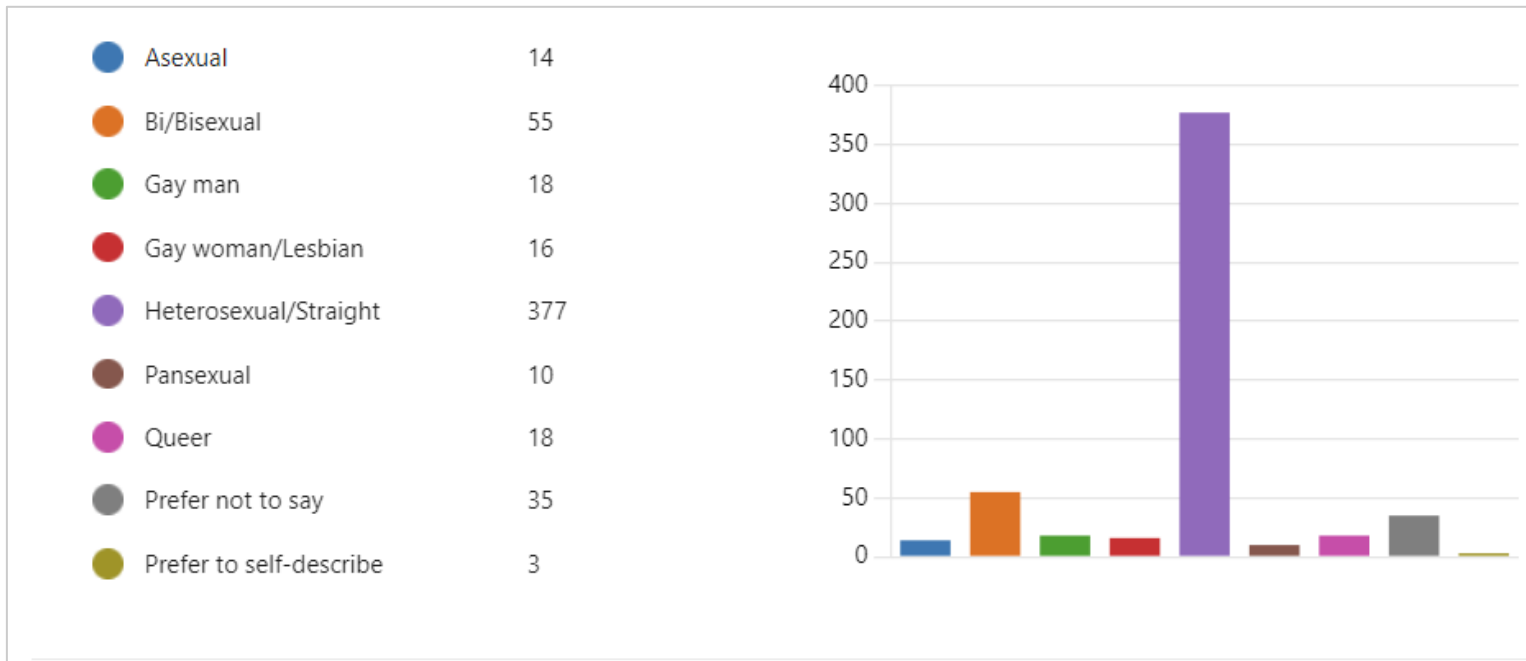
96% answered No

2% answered Yes

0.5% prefer to self-describe

Those who prefer to self-describe included non-binary (1), non gender conforming (1) and gender fluid (1)

More than two thirds describe their sexual orientation as heterosexual/straight



69% answered Heterosexual/Straight

10% answered Bi/Bisexual

6% answered Prefer not to say

3% answered Gay man

3% answered Queer

2.9% answered Gay woman/lesbian

2.6 % answered Asexual

1.8% answered Pansexual

0% answered Prefer to self describe



Really happy with the list, it has a lot of options on there. I can't remember if there was any information on there about definitions so that people can understand what they are being asked. I would have expected to see a little information box next to each word e.g., what is the dictionary definition of pansexual. Also means that some people might click on these if they've never heard of some of these words for an education piece.

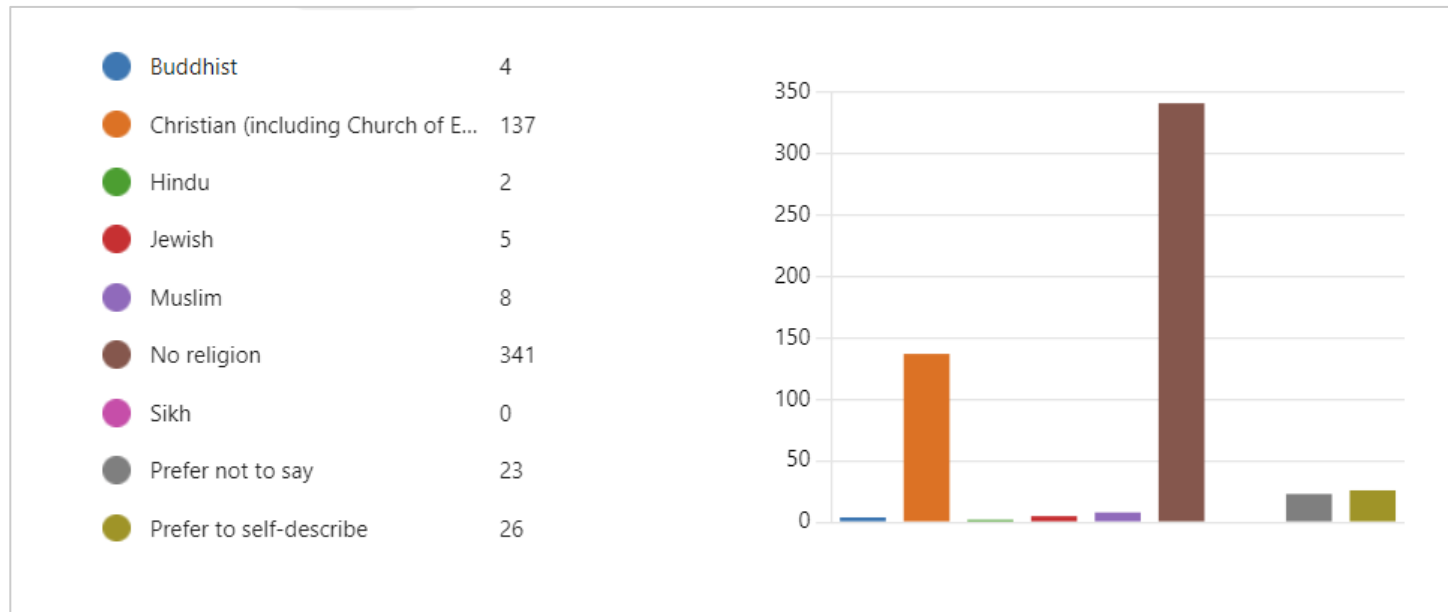
Most (63%) answered they have no religion, and a quarter of the workforce are Christian

63% answered No religion for this question

25% answered Christian

4% prefer not to say

0% selected Sikh as their faith or belief



The number of 'prefer not to say (4%) is higher than the total number of other faiths combined (excluding Christianity) within the workforce.

19. Which of the following best describes your religion or belief?

- In the interviews the conversation of feeling culturally associated with a religion was raised. One participant how describes themselves as Christian as they were brought up in this faith, but are now non-practicing. This touched on faith and belief being a part of their identity but not something they currently practice.
- We found this was echoed in the 'prefer to self-describe' where 3 x participants stated they were raised Christian and non practising and one participant described themselves as 'culturally Jewish'.



Really easy to fill out, there could be little information boxes next to these again.

20. If you selected 'prefer to self-describe' for the previous question, please do so here

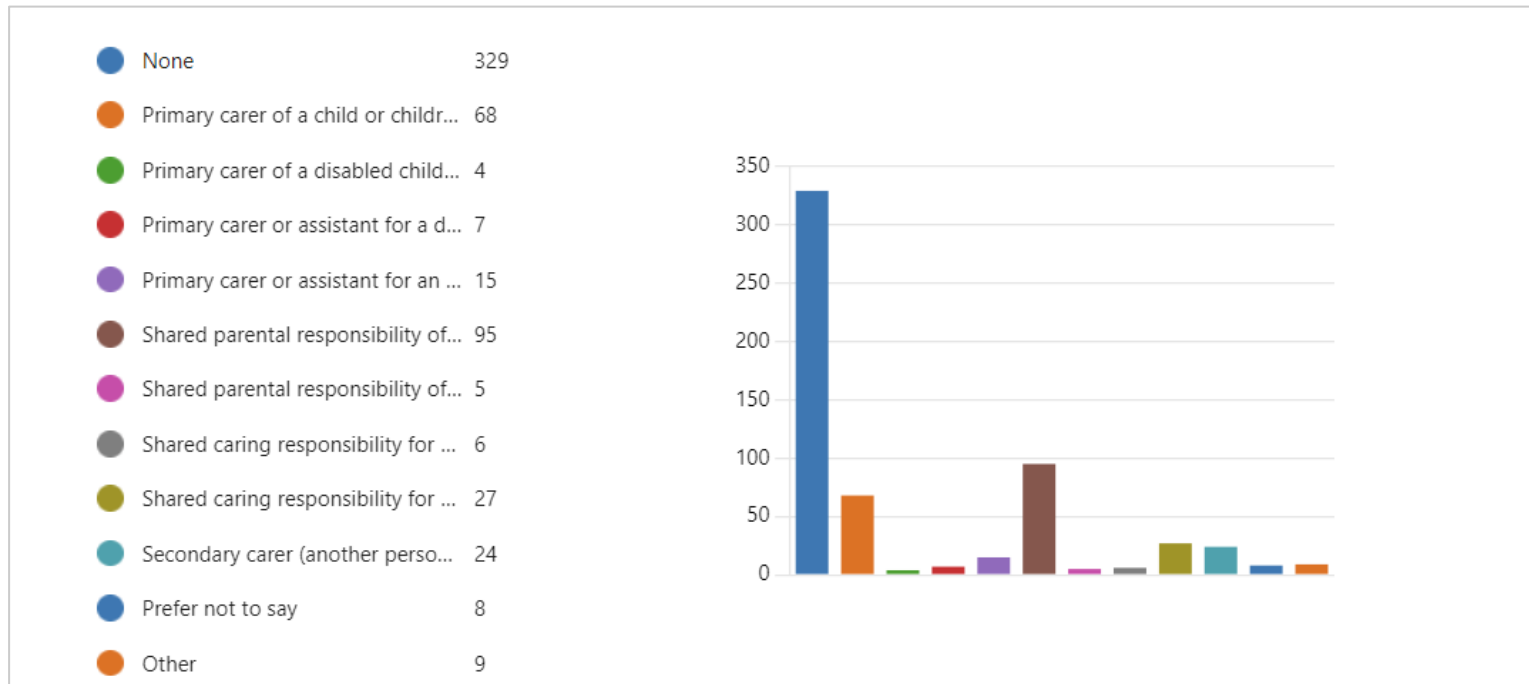
5% (26) of our sample selected 'prefer to self describe':



Responses included Quaker (2), Pagan (4), Agnostic (2), Atheist (2), Humanist (2), Taoist (1), Culturally Jewish (1), spiritual (2), raised Christian but non practising (3), Wiccan (2, Christian with Buddhist leanings (1), Mixed (2), witch (1), faith but not to organised religions (1)

More than half (60%) do not have any caring responsibilities

Participants could select more than one response to the Q21. Do you have caring responsibilities?



More than a third have primary or shared caring responsibilities:

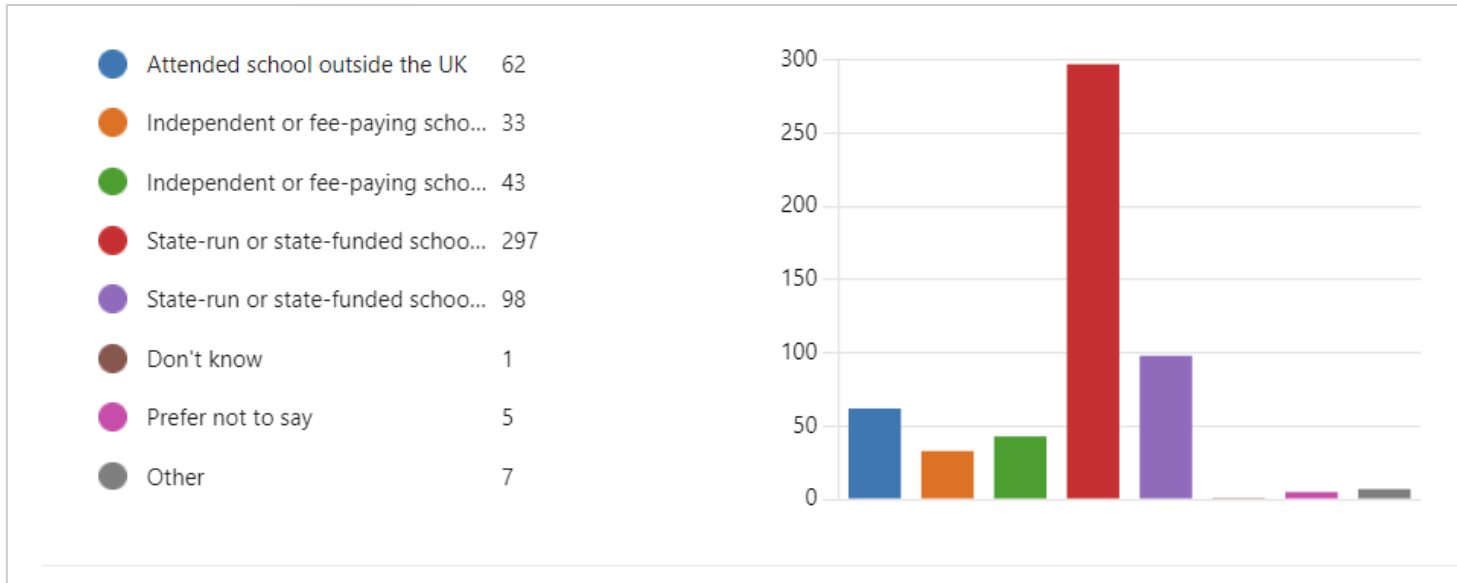
- 17% answered shared responsibility of a child or children (under 18)
- 12.5% answered primary carer of a child or children under 18
- 5% answered shared caring responsibility for an older person or people (65+)
- 4% answered secondary carer (another person carries out main caring role)



Having the full range of caring responsibilities on there is really important.

I like how this is split into primary and shared responsibility and split out into who you are caring for as this will lead to having different needs from a workplace.

Over two thirds attended a state run or state funded school



54% answered state run or state funded school

17% answered state run or state funded school (selective)

11% attended school outside the UK

6% attended Independent or fee-paying school – bursary

7% Independent or fee-paying school - no bursary

0% Don't know

0% Prefer not to say

1% Other

22. What type of school did you mainly attend between the ages of 11 and 16 ?

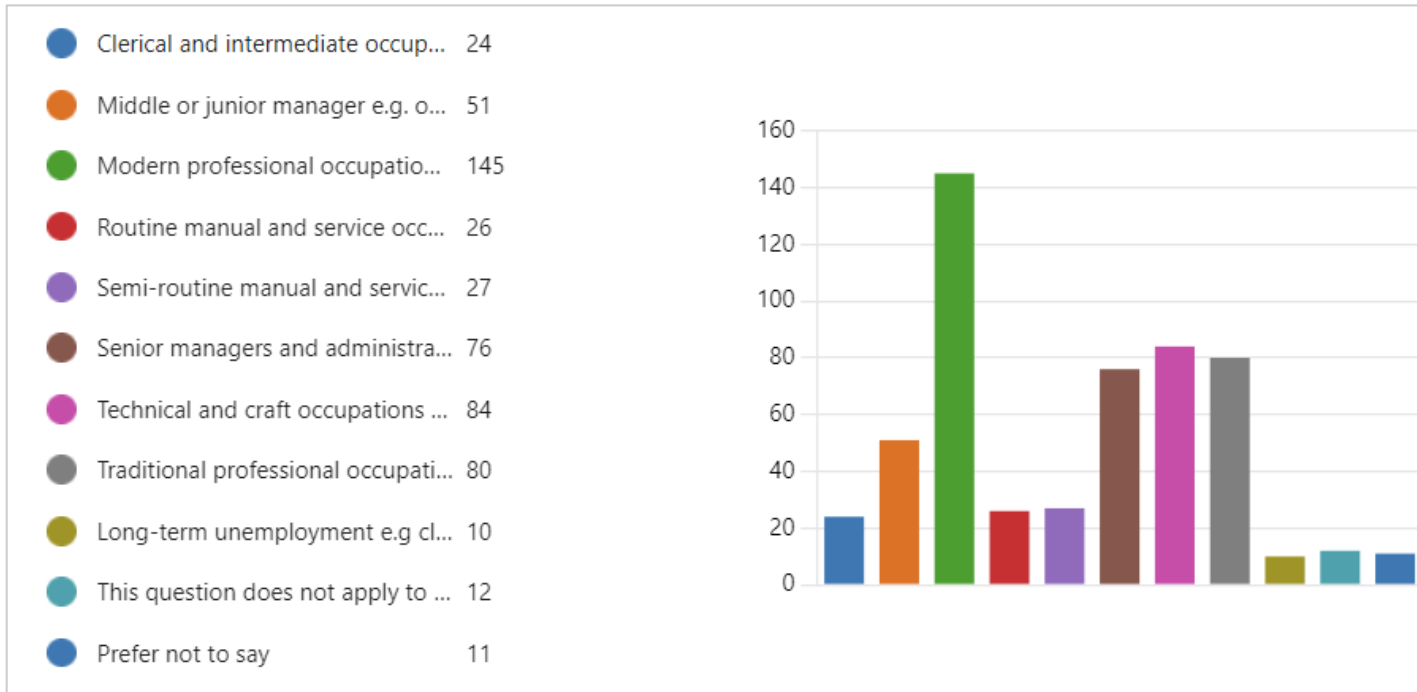
- During the in-depth interviews participants noted that the list does not contain:
 - Homeschooled children
 - Boarding schools



"There are a rising number of people who are being homeschooled so may be worth adding in. "

"I had to google whether going to a single sex comprehensive counted as being a selective school. "

Over 25% had a parent or care giver who worked in a modern professional occupation when they were 14 years old



26.5% answered modern professional occupations

15% Technical and craft occupations

14.7% traditional professional occupation

14% senior managers and administrators

4% Clerical and intermediate occupations

9% Middle or junior manager e.g.

4% Routine manual and service occupations

5% Semi-routine manual and service occupations

1.8% Long-term unemployment

2% This question does not apply to me

2% Prefer not to say

Less than 10% had a parent or care-giver who worked a routine or semi-routine manual and service occupation.

Feedback on 'Who was the highest income earner in your household when you were around 14 years old. What kind of work did they do?'

- Well received and considered important to capture in our in-depth interviews.
- List of modern professionals doesn't really reflect actual modern professions.
- One participant raised the limitations of this question, as it doesn't reflect whether this is a single or dual income household.



If my husband was filling this out he'd struggle to answer this as there isn't an option for manual labour, it doesn't really fit with technical or craft.[later considers that it may fit in with routine manual but is unsure]

A photograph showing two women in a meeting. One woman, with long curly hair and wearing a green jacket, is seated at a wooden table, looking at a laptop. The other woman, wearing glasses and a pink sweater, is seated in a wheelchair, leaning over the table and pointing at the laptop screen. The background shows a modern office or meeting space with large windows and a white wall.

In-depth interviews

Perceptions of Historic England

- Overall, participants held positive perceptions of Historic England and welcomed the intentions and ethos of the Historic England Workforce Diversity survey.
- There was consensus that it is important to encourage a greater understanding of diversity within the sector
- They were keen to understand 'what happens next?', and what actions, if any may come from this piece of research.



I would describe them as a really big government body but not, something that isn't a government body but kind of it.

They are focussed on the preservation of buildings and conservation of buildings.

NEXER



This is brilliant and should be ‘bread and butter’. I hope this becomes normal for the heritage sector and is the start of a very good ball that gets rolling.

Awareness of the survey

- Discovery of the survey was a mix of LinkedIn and internal organisational communication/meetings.
- One participant consider themselves fairly active in this area and was surprised they weren't made aware of this within their own organisation.
- There doesn't appear to have been much word of mouth of the survey across the industry.
- Expectations that they would receive communications through ALVA (Association of Leading Visitor Attractions), Museums association letters and HR leads within their organization.



"I saw a post on LinkedIn, someone in my network posted it...it wasn't introduced in the usual channels. Didn't go out through our internal comms, EDI networks or from the CEO. I'm involved in other sector wide organisations and I didn't see it going through those either. "

"I remember seeing a link on the Historic England home page. I also received information on the survey from colleagues. "

Questions within the survey were well received

- All were able to complete most of the questions in the survey comfortably
- Our participants described the questions as 'standard'. They were not particularly surprised by any of them.



"Surveys like this are very normal (in my previous role...strange I haven't been asked these questions before."

"This felt like a very standard survey to me "

”

The tone of the email was apologetic.
In my previous role, this sort of thing
[survey] was very natural.



Didn't find any of this sensitive information, it's good and progressive, and could actually uncover what diversity in the sector is.

Opportunities to make the survey more accessible

- Most of the questions were easily understood
- However, P2 who is dyslexic did raise that the survey may benefit from the use of an 'age checker'.
- They explained that they would skip past words such as 'effectively' and 'demographic' and found some of the language in the introduction of the survey challenging
- Also, explained that it is difficult to use assistive technology if documents are in PDF format.



Some of these sentences are quite difficult to read because they are wordy.

Suggestions to broaden the survey sample

- Participants raised that the survey appeared to be targeted at employees specifically, and that this therefore does not reflect the whole workforce.
- Suggestions that both volunteers and trustees (those in voluntary governance positions) should also be included.
- We note that Historic England is covering these groups in other projects and therefore it may be useful to share this in communications in the future.



The real issue with diversity is within governance, the trustees pick the staff.

What could be improved?

- Language and vocabulary - age reader, content designer
- Consider the timing of the survey to avoid peak seasons for staff, particularly site staff
- Include a question on whether individuals are office, site based or a mix to ensure we are capturing a representative picture of the workforce



The survey went live during peak season which can make it difficult for people to complete. Less of a take-up from site colleagues during these [summer] months as they are busy periods for heritage sites.

A photograph showing two women in a meeting. One woman, with long curly hair and wearing a green top, is seated at a wooden table, looking at a laptop. The other woman, wearing glasses and a pink sweater, is seated in a wheelchair, leaning over the table and pointing at the laptop screen. The background shows a modern office or meeting space with large windows and a white wall.

Recommendations

Review anonymity at an organisational level

Maintaining the anonymity of individuals taking part in diversity & inclusion workforce surveys is important and best practice. A key consideration for Historic England moving forward is whether they wish to maintain anonymity at organisational levels in future rounds.

This is important as it has implications on both the potential bias of the sample, robustness of the results and impacts the ability to pinpoint where improvements are most needed.

Within the survey there is a 'prefer not to say' option for all questions. This was utilised by several participants in the current survey.



Further Recommendations

- Historic England to map out the sector to support future targeting and mitigate bias in sample.
- Review recruitment channels for next iteration to ensure greater reach. includes continuing to develop relationships across the sector with DEI and HR groups.
- Review our definition of workforce and whether to include volunteers and trustees in the future (we're aware Historic England are running these already separately).
- Reduce barriers to participation by:
 - Providing alternatives to an online survey to encourage those with low digital skills to take part.
 - Avoid peak periods for the sector when people are likely to be too busy to support organisational communications on the survey and complete the survey
- Review questions based on feedback in this report and consider including the following in the next iteration:
 - Highest level of education
 - Geographic location
 - Office or site based



THANK YOU



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Appendix A: In-depth interviews sample breakdown

Online remote interviews

	Accessibility Needs	Digital Inclusion Scale	Completed the online survey
P1	DLD – development learning disorder	2 - confident	No
P2	Dyslexia, Long Covid	2 - confident	Yes
P3	None	1 - very confident	Yes

In order to maintain the anonymity of our participants we are unable to share information on their role, ethnicity and type of heritage organisation.