CIBSE Inclusivity Panel Survey Results

In 2019, the CIBSE Inclusivity Panel launched a survey to gain a better understanding of the views of those working and studying in the engineering or construction sector. The aim of the survey was to gain insight in a number of areas on how the Inclusivity Panel can better support CIBSE members and the wider community. The survey looked at education, careers & company polices, membership & chartership, career breaks and industry retention.

This was the first survey the Inclusivity Panel has conducted. Though this survey focussed on gender, the Panel is always looking to support those from other underrepresented backgrounds, and welcome views and suggestions on how they can do so.

922 people responded to the survey over the 4-week period the survey was open. Of those that responded approximately 75% were male and 25% were female. Most of the participants were based in the UK, though responses also came from other countries including Australia, Hong Kong, Ireland, New Zealand, UAE, Netherlands and Spain.

Published below are the key findings from the survey, including details of the initiatives the Panel are now looking into.

Education

The survey first focused on education and routes into the engineering profession.

The participants main reason for pursuing a career in engineering was because they had an interest in engineering. Other popular responses were being inspired/encouraged by a family member or friend, and that they felt they had an aptitude for engineering.

Most of those that responded to the survey had taken part in full time courses. It was noted that full time courses were the most popular route for females, whereas part time courses and apprenticeships where more popular amongst males.

A third of the participants said they had experienced barriers whilst studying. There were some common barriers for both male and female participants, though some notable differences too. The most common answers from all of the participants were finances, sexism and time pressures (particularly for those on part time courses).

The most common barriers faced by male participators were finances, time pressures, the course content not being relevant to the workplace and availability of courses in the local area.

The most common barriers faced by females were sexism, lack of role models, time pressures and inadequate careers advice at school.

Careers and company policies

80% of the responders said they were working full time with 49% working in large organisations (301+ staff). When asked if they had come across any barriers in their engineering career to date, 37% of the male and 67% of the female participants said they had either to some extent or to a great extent.

The survey looked to find what diversity and inclusion (D&I) programmes workplaces currently offer and what programs participants would like to see implemented. The most common D&I programmes that workplaces currently offered were:

1. creating a culture that supports diversity and inclusion

2. flexible working policies for all staff

3. access to mentoring schemes and active sponsorship

The most common D&I programmes that participants would like their workplace to offer were:

1. access to mentoring schemes and active sponsorship

2. flexible working policies for all staff

3. promotion of role models from under-represented groups.

When asked if their workplace had a diversity policy, 54% of the participants said they did, however 19% were unsure.

Though all employers must not discriminate against employees or job applicants under the Equality Act 2010, it is not a requirement to have a diversity policy. Many organisations have widened their equal opportunities polices to include diversity and inclusion. Having a diversity and inclusion policy can add valve to an organisation, contributing to employee engagement and well-being. However, it was noted in many of the negative comments received in the survey that the company needs to act on the policies and put the policies into practice.

Membership and Chartership

75% of the participants were CIBSE members and 43% were Chartered Engineers.

When asked what initiatives they thought Professional Engineering Institutes (like CIBSE) could offer to help improve diversity and inclusion in the construction sector. From all responses, the top three answers were:

1. promoting good practice in organisations.

2. role model profiles / talks etc.

3. mentoring schemes

17% of the participants said they had experienced barriers in gaining chartership or membership.
Common barriers to gaining chartership or membership included academic backgrounds and finding an application sponsor.

CIBSE currently offer report writing workshops, webinars and advice surgeries to help applicants and offer advice on the alternative routes available. The CIBSE Inclusivity Panel will be looking at further ways CIBSE can support applicants.

Career breaks

Career breaks could happen for several reasons which are not just limited to maternity and paternity leave. 76% of the respondents said they have had a career break, with career breaks being 18% more common amongst women. 52% said they felt it would be difficult to return to work afterwards

When asked what CIBSE or a workplace could do to make it easier to return to work following a career break, the top three responses were:

1. providing flexible workplaces (this includes staggered return to work programmes, part time work, job sharing)

2. offering training (often suggested as needing to be free or at a reduced rate)

3. support and commination during the processes

Other notable comments included guidance from CIBSE on best practice, a 12-month technical summary and mentoring.

Industry Retention

Men were 11% more likely to see themselves staying in the engineering profession than women.
55% of the female participants thought that the engineering sector does not retain women.

The top three initiatives that the participants thought would help encourage and retain women in engineering were:

1. flexible working

2. encourage school children to study engineering

3. having role models.

Recommendations

At the end of 2019, the Panel launched the Inclusivity Guidelines document for CIBSE staff and members. The guide covers a range of issues, from events and accessibility to language and communications, giving actions that are clear and easy to implement. The guidelines are available to all and can be found at https://www.cibse.org/inclusivity.
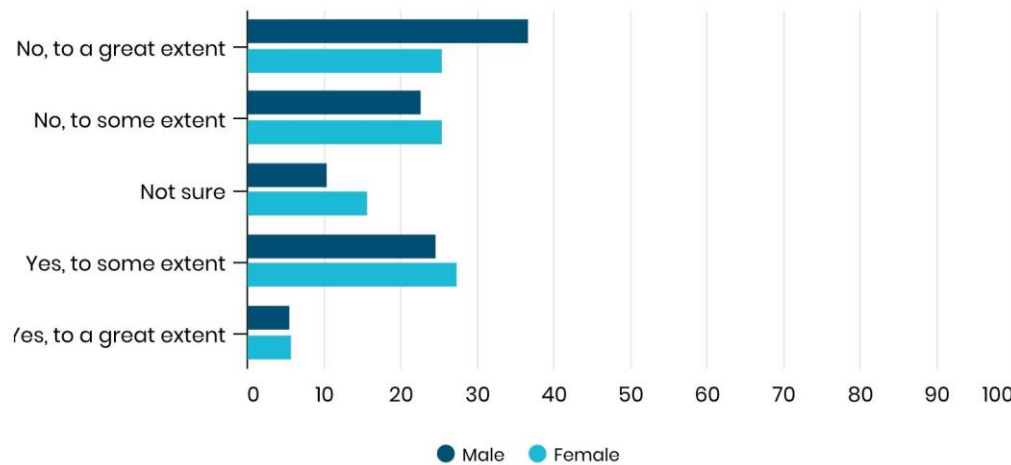
Building on the guide and reviewing the survey results, the panel will also be looking at ensuing a diverse range of speakers at events, build upon role models profiles, provide a 12-month technical update and liaise with external groups. Some of this work has currently been started or in the pipeline for the future.

A common thread through the survey was the need for flexible working arrangements and role models. These two things were mentioned in both education, careers and helping with retention. Businesses may want to consider how they can implement these initiatives into their companies. The Inclusivity Panel would like to share best practices currently being implemented in companies in the industry and share external resources to help organisations.

The Inclusivity Panel welcome suggestions from anyone who has ideas on how to push their work forward, and to improve inclusivity and diversity in the building services profession. Please contact the Inclusivity Panel at inclusvity@cibse.org.

Education

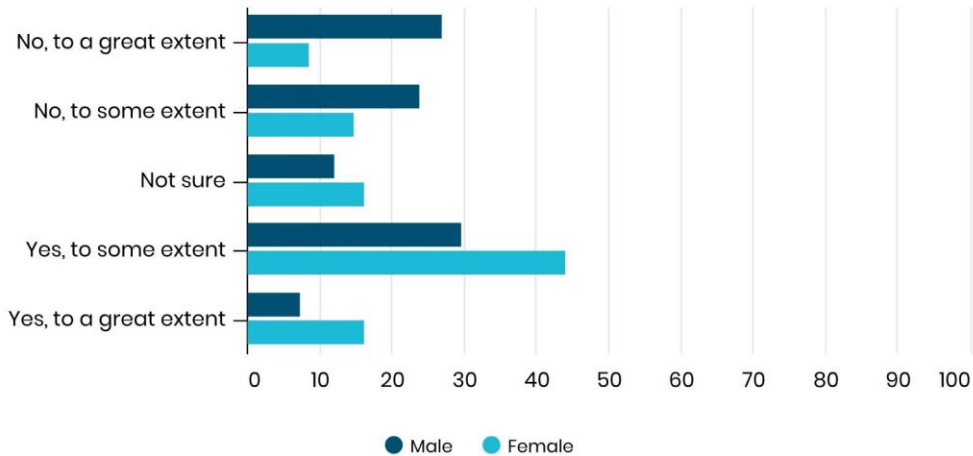## Did you experience any barriers whilst studying engineering?

What barriers did you face whilst studying engineering?

Course content not reflecting work

Availability of local course   Finances   Course entry requirements

Lack or role models   Discrimination   Dyselxia

Inadequate careers advice   Time pressure (part time courses)

Poor quality teaching/course   Attitudes from outside profession

Support from emplyers

Careers

Did you experience any barriers whilst studying engineering?

Top 3 workplace practices

1. EDI positive work culture
2. Better flexible / part time / remote working
3. Training and opportunites

1. Trainign and opportunities
2. Mentorship
3. Better flexible / part time / remote working

Other practices mentioned included:

team working   sharing culture   networking   well-being

Career breaks

How many responders said
they have had a career break

37%

19%

47% of respondees said they
though it was **quite difficult** for
people to return to work
following a career break

9% of respondees said they
though it was **very difficult** to
return to work following a
career break

What could CIBSE or a workplace do to make it easier to
return to work following a career break

Best practice summary
Technical summary
Better support
Part time work
Training
Stagger return to work
Mentoring
Job sharing
Flexible working
Communication