

Extract from: BBSRC EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP (EDI EAG):

MINUTES FROM 2nd MAY 2023

ITEM 2: BBSRC EDI Action Plan

20. A member noted that the EDI Action Plan does not cite any evidence, which is expected of Action Plans. They added that citing others' approaches is standard practice and shows that the actions proposed are evidence based. They suggested the diversity in stem EDI data recently used within the House of Commons as an example of this.

Extract from STC Diversity in STEM Inquiry – Anticipated Questions

Building UKRI's diversity data: Evidence base and publishing diversity data on panels/committees

Key Messages

- UKRI continues to be driven by evidence and data and have significant work underway to enhance our data collection.
- UKRI has led the way in publishing comprehensive data on UKRI's grant portfolio in a range of formats to allow people to easily access its diversity data.
- Improving the evidence base for equality, diversity and inclusion is one of the strategic objectives of the draft EDI strategy.
- There are varying practices on data collection for peer review, panels and committees across UKRI. Improving the consistency of these activities across UKRI is part of our Simpler and Better Funding programme
- UKRI is reviewing diversity data of peer reviewers across UKRI, with the aim of publishing summary data, if definitions are consistent across Councils.

Background

- We are committed to building our EDI data collection and analytical capabilities and using our data to support inclusive decision making about, the people and projects that we support, the infrastructures that we invest in and the stakeholders and partners with whom we engage, and in our role as an employer
- Through the new Funding Service, we are expanding the diversity data that UKRI collects on its grants, going beyond gender, ethnicity, disability, and age. This is being driven by user-research which is informing how we ask the questions and the categories that are provided.
- In our forthcoming report for 2020-21 we will be incorporating the data on the detailed ethnicity breakdowns into the main report in line with best practice and improve accessibility of this data. We will also be setting out for the first-time analysis of outcomes using

intersectionality analysis. This analysis is giving UKRI a greater understanding of how characteristics combine which will inform development of our strategy.

FOIs on UKRI panel data – What is UKRI’s response to this and subsequently what has UKRI done since this information came out?

Professor Narender Ramnani made an FOI request which sought to understand:

- the ethnicity breakdown of committee members in research councils aggregated over the period 2015-2020.
- any written guidance issued to UKRI staff about the process of selecting and inviting individuals to committee meetings.

Ethnicity data for UKRI committee members (note that this data was published via an FOI request in 2021¹ and data for STFC, Innovate UK and Research England were not included):

- Across UKRI’s councils in 2019/20, the percentage of ethnic minority panel members ranged from 6% at NERC to 13% at AHRC.
- The percentage of panel meetings with no ethnic minority panel member present in 2019/20 was highest at NERC (63% of meetings) and lowest at MRC (13% of meetings).
- Representation of Black panel members was particularly low across the five-year period (2015/16 to 2019/20) in all councils.
- At BBSRC there were no Black panel members at any meeting during the five-year period. (**To note:** in the previous evidence session Professor Ramnani mentioned “that the second finding of the FOI was that the inclusion of Black participants was low. There were no Committee attendees who disclosed their ethnicity as Black over the entire five-year period” **however this is not correct** as there were no Black BBSRC committee members. There were Black committee members at the other councils.)
- The highest percentage of Black panel members during this five-year period was at ESRC where 2% (60/2835) of panel members reported their ethnicity as black.
- All FLF panel meetings in 2018/19 and 2019/20 had at least one ethnic minority panel member present. 8% of FLF panel members declared an ethnic minority in 2019/20.
- Over the two years combined, between 1 and 4 FLF panel members (out of approximately 780) declared their ethnicity as Black.

Analysis of the second part of the FOI revealed that ESRC is the only council to explicitly mention the requirement to consider ethnic balance in their written guidance.

How is UKRI addressing under-representation in its assessment processes?

- There is a need to address wider participation across the whole system, for example those involved in decision-making such as advisory groups, panels and boards.
- UKRI is exploring these issues further as it is a priority area for UKRI.

¹ [FOI2021/00376: Committee Members - Research Councils - UK Research and Innovation Disclosure Log](#)

- However, there are a large range of different panels and committees across UKRI, and data is not centrally collected. When resources allow, we will consider what is possible for panels and committees.

Wider consideration around targets and positive action

Key Messages

- **Actions such as targets and positive action are not silver bullet solutions.** They are one of many tools and interventions necessary to tackle structural and systemic challenges.
- We **need to understand what works to tackle these issues** and whether interventions we put in place are achieving the intended aims and outcomes.
- **UKRI's draft EDI strategy has a key objective to develop approaches to monitor, measure and evaluate change,** working with the sector
- UKRI is exploring targets and positive action where appropriate to increase the diversity of people represented in its advisory groups, panels, targeted programmes, and investments for underrepresented groups. **Examples are outlined below:**

EPSRC

Use of positive action and targets

- EPSRC is using positive action in recruitment of its Strategic Advisory Network (SAN) and Strategic Advisory Team (SAT) – for both gender and ethnicity, in membership of peer review panels by gender and peer review college for both gender and ethnicity.
- It has targets of 20 % minority ethnicity and 40 % under-represented gender (women) for SAN and 30 % for SAT and our college.

Peer review participation

- EPSRC have recently published data on peer review participation².

STFC

- STFC is looking to improve the [diversity of its panels](#).
- It has a target of 30% for the underrepresented gender and wants to encourage diversity of all types on our panels.
- STFC are also looking to improve our data collection system going forwards. **For awareness: This work is likely to feature in its EDI action plan when published.**

BBSRC

- Aggregating ethnicity data (into white vs. non-white) in committee memberships, which BBSRC previously used hid the issue raised by Prof Ramnani.
- 13% of BBSRC committee/panel members declared they were from ethnic minorities, but 0% were Black. BBSRC has now improved its analyses to further disaggregate populations so we can better identify and focus on areas of concern.

² <https://epsrc.ukri.org/files/funding/edi/epsrc-peer-review-participation-diversity-data-to-2020/>

- BBSRC has completed this year's recruitment round to BBSRC's pool of experts, with assessments taking place in November. This year, we targeted marketing to Black academic networks to explore whether this increases interest and applications from the groups we know to be under-represented. Should this targeting have been unsuccessful (data not yet available), then direct action will be taken
- A sub-group of the BBSRC EDI Expert Advisory Group will be looking at under-representation of ethnic minorities as one of our top priorities over the coming months.

MRC

MRC has done extensive work in relation to diversifying its board and panel recruitment:

- Added R4RI questions to application form.
- Updated diversity questions and included more robust justification for why we are asking for the information (led to reduction from 14% in 2020 to 1% in 2021 unknown).
- Set ethnicity target in October 2021.
- MRC are exploring a board diversity scheme for individuals from under-represented groups.
- Expanded advertising streams to try and target a broader range of applicants.

Wider work

Research England

- Research England published data on the EDI characteristics of the REF panels in 2020³ which demonstrated progress in increasing the representativeness of the expert panels for REF, in comparison with previous exercises.

EPSRC

Double blind peer review experiment (*lines in response to [REDACTED] request on preliminary outcome of EPSRC their double-blind peer review experiment*)

- The outcome of the first round of EPSRC New Horizons, where in the review process neither the identity of the applicants or the reviewers were shared, was to fund a higher proportion of early career researchers compared to that seen in EPSRC standard mode proposals in the same research domains (Physical Sciences and Mathematical Sciences) over the last 5 years.
- Longer systematic trials are needed before we can draw firm conclusions on the benefits of anonymising applicants in the review stage.
- **For awareness only:** We are unable to say there was no real impact on other protected characteristics. There was a hint of some impact, but there is not enough data to draw conclusions at this stage.

³ [Analysis of full REF 2021 panel membership \(REF 2021/01\) - REF 2021](#)

Extract from Email

From: [REDACTED] - UKRI

Sent: 13 June 2022 11:19

Subject: Input by COP TODAY 13th June - CEO briefing for STC diversity in STEM inquiry

1. Prof Narender Ramnani and his recent FOI relating to panel data – What is UKRI’s response to this and subsequently what has UKRI done since this info came out?

[REDACTED]: I really need to know what his specific FOI request revealed and what we have done about it. The current information seems to be something rather general on all FOI requests

We are also picking this up from a central analysis point of view but specific lines on the suggested examples below would be helpful to strengthen the brief:

- AHRC Peer review college announcement [REDACTED]
- EPSRC positive action
- NERC action plan
- BBSRC have been looking at improving membership [REDACTED] / [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Any questions, please do let me or [REDACTED] know.

Thanks in advance,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Strategy, Performance and Engagement Directorate

UK Research and Innovation

Extract from: HoC Science and Tech Committee Inquiry – Diversity in STEM

Additional EPSRC input related to Q4

7 January 2022

Participation in EPSRC governance

- Increased diversity in participation in advisory groups using positive action and targets of 30 % women and 20 % ethnic minority for Strategic Advisory Teams and 40 % women and 20 % ethnic minority for our Strategic Advisory Network and Science and Technology Board. (Gender targets are met, ethnicity targets newly introduced.)

- EPSRC convenes an EDI Strategic Advisory Group, chaired by a Council member and including members from Council and our Strategic Advisory Teams and Network
- EDI is embedded into the strategic and delivery work of EPSRC themes including being a standing item on Strategic Advisory Team agendas. Some themes have external EDI champions.