

National Diversity and Inclusion Report

2022



Association of Tree Officers Diversity and Inclusion Report 2022

In association with the London Tree Officers Association

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1. Introduction

The past few years have seen a noticeable increase in efforts to improve diversity and inclusion (D&I) within the workplace and society. In response to government initiatives and public expectations, many charities, companies and groups are forming their own strategies to ensure that their workforce reflects the society that they are serving. In 2018, the Landscape Institute carried out its Future State of Landscape members surveyⁱ, which included diversity and inclusion within its scope, and in 2020 the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) launched its 'Change' 10-year action plan to increase diversity and inclusionⁱⁱ.

Diversity refers to recognising, respecting and valuing differences in people. Inclusion refers to an individual's experience within their workplace and in society and the extent to which they feel valued and included.

The LTOA Diversity and Inclusion Working Party was formed in 2018 to investigate potential barriers into accessing the tree officer profession, to understand the current state of diversity and inclusion within the London tree officer community and make changes and recommendations to improve accessibility and outreach.

In 2019 full members of the LTOA were asked to complete a D&I survey, which identified areas in which diversity is low and provided details on challenges to diversity within the sector.

In 2020 the LTOA report on this survey was published, which provided a valuable insight into diversity within tree officers in London. However, the data for London does not give a complete picture of diversity within the UK tree officer profession.

An updated and expanded questionnaire was sent to all ATO members and the Tree Officer Forum (leads of all the tree officer groups across the country) in August 2021. The number of tree officers the survey reached is unknown, but 181 responses were received. The results (section 4) identify areas where diversity is low and provide details on barriers to entry to and progression in the industry. The findings inform suggested actions to address these barriers and improve diversity and inclusion in the tree officer profession.

Where possible, the August 2021 survey questions were designed to be directly comparable with available data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), including the national census, labour force surveys, and reports/research published by other organisations and institutions. Some comparisons have also been made to the previous 2019 LTOA survey results. The findings from this survey have been contrasted with the national figures for groups of respondents of similar working age, gender and ability wherever applicable. Where direct comparison with reference material has not been possible, the authors have sought the closest equivalent comparable data or used publicly available data to create a comparable figure. All reference material used is accurate and publicly available as of November 2022.

The survey and report are the results of a collaborative effort from the members of the Diversity and Inclusion Working Party. Each member shares a dedication to improving the arboricultural sector as a place to work for everyone, working towards a more diverse and inclusive environment and changing the face of arboriculture.

2. Executive summary

This report reveals some interesting findings, some of which expose positive elements of diversity and inclusion in the tree officer profession, and some of which indicate the need for improvement. The key findings are:

Gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion

Tree officers are not representative of the population that they serve in areas such as gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion:

- Gender: respondents are 75% male, 23% female vs UK employees 53% male and 47% femaleⁱⁱⁱ
- Ethnicity: respondents are 95% white and 5% were Asian or Asian British or other, in comparison to the UK population which is 87% white^{iv}
- Nationality: respondents are 92% British compared to the overall UK population which is 82% British^v
- Religion: respondents 85% either no religion, atheist or agnostic, compared to 29% UK population stating none or other.^{vi}

Neurodiversity, disability and mental health

The findings on neurodiversity, disability and mental health provide insight into possible benefits to the job role for some individuals and barriers for others:

- 23% of respondents consider themselves to be neurodiverse, compared to 12% of the wider workforce,^{vii} and that the role may be well suited to neurodiverse people.
- Conversely 6% of respondents consider themselves to be disabled compared to 14% of the UK Labour force, implying that the physicality of the sector may be a barrier to entry to people with a disability.^{viii ix}
- 17% of respondents have a mental health condition, which is the same percentage as the UK workforce.^x

Sexual orientation

Of the respondents, 93% identified as straight, which is roughly equivalent to the 94% of the UK population average.^{xi}

Entering the profession, training and qualifications

41.5% of respondents said they entered the profession from the fields of tree surgery, forestry or horticulture. Whilst this is not unexpected, it reveals a narrow range of entry points into the profession.

Only 6.1% of respondents identified their roles as assistant tree officers or other trainee role. This indicates a lack of entry level positions and suggests that vocational training opportunities for entry level officers are limited.

Fewer tree officers work in full time roles than the national average, but many more tree officers are able to work flexibly in comparison to the national average.^{xii}

Barriers:

71% of respondents considered there were barriers to becoming and progressing through a career as a tree officer. 38 barriers were identified with the most common being:

- Exclusionary industry culture, for example sexism and unconscious bias
- Lack of jobs and poor promotion of the industry, lack of training and cost of training
- Lack of career advice and opportunities to progress
- Poor public awareness of the role of tree officers
- Low profile of the industry

41% of respondents had experienced one of these barriers.

Respondents also provided views on how to overcome these barriers.

34% of respondents recommended more engagement with schools and colleges, and more industry focussed career advice (23%).

29% of respondents highlighted the need to promote the industry in general.

Other responses recommended the use of apprenticeships and in-house training (8.2%), improved career progression and salaries (7.5%) and more opportunities for training, including financial support (6.8%)

These findings indicate that further change is needed to improve diversity of tree officers and to remove barriers to entering and progressing through a career as a tree officer. The report suggests practical actions for individuals, organisations and employers within the arboricultural industry which are required in order to create a more diverse and inclusive profession, and ultimately, to ensure that tree officers can truly represent the society in which we work.



3. Aims and actions

Key



For organisations (for example ATO, LTOA, regional tree officer groups, Arboricultural Association and the Institute of Chartered Foresters.)



For individuals



For employers

Aim: to reduce and prevent exclusionary practices

Actions	
Provide equality, diversity and inclusion/anti-bullying/unconscious bias/active bystander training	 
Undertake and stay up to date with equality, diversity and inclusion/anti-bullying/unconscious bias/active bystander training	 
Investigate the barriers relating to finance, religion, education, working patterns, and exclusionary practices	

Aim: to improve the availability and accessibility of jobs

Actions	
Provide/increase the number of part-time roles	
Ensure job adverts are accurate and up to date	
Provide/increase the number of entry level jobs	
Provide/increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities	 
Target a range of applicants through job adverts and advertising (e.g. consider where to place adverts in the local community and further afield)	
Use the Tree Officer job profile created by the LTOA DIWP: Tree Officer Job Profile ltoa.org.uk	
Monitor jobs advertised on the LTOA websites for potential improvements	

Aim: to facilitate access to training/courses/qualifications

Actions	
Encourage and facilitate training (provide it/finance it/allow time)	 
Create/obtain a training budget	
Provide and promote work experience opportunities	

Key

For organisations (for example ATO, LTOA, regional tree officer groups, Arboricultural Association and the Institute of Chartered Foresters.)



For individuals



For employers

Aim: to reduce financial and resource constraints

Actions	
Provide learning support	
Facilitate healthy working habits	
Practice good working habits	 
Identify the specific needs of individuals disclosing neurodivergence or disability	 

Aim: to increase provision of career advice, progression and support

Actions	
Attend opportunities to promote the industry in educational establishments (open days/ career advice/events/class support)	  
Become an apprenticeship provider	

Aim: to increase public awareness and perception of the tree officer role

Actions	
Offer/participate in events such as tree walks and residents' meetings to engage with underrepresented groups in the local community	

Diversity and Inclusion Working Party Aims and Actions:

Since the publication of the 2020 report, the LTOA Diversity and Inclusion Working Party have achieved some of the aims set out in that report, including:

- Rolling out of the survey to Tree Officers nationally
- Widening the scope of the D&I Working Party to include neurodiversity

Following the completion of the national survey and report, the D&I Working Party will:

- Increase the reach of future surveys
- Use up-to-date and accepted terminology and phraseology in future surveys
- Present findings of current report to Tree Officers
- Compare the results of the current survey with the results of the 2021 Census when these are available



4. Survey results

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part one was intended to capture how people become tree officers, where barriers may exist to some groups entering the industry, and part two was based on Office for National Statistics principles, intended to capture a baseline of which sections of society are represented among tree officers.

The survey was emailed to ATO members and leads of regional tree officer groups for their distribution in September 2021. 181 responses were received.

Comparative statistics have been presented alongside applicable survey data, with a preference for the employed UK population figures when available. These figures were correct when the comparative analysis was undertaken.

Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number, except where small numbers of responses were received.



Question 1

How did you get into this industry (including reference to those who introduced you to or influenced you to get into the industry)?

There were 167 free text responses to this question which allowed people to fully describe their journey to becoming a tree officer. This made analysis of the answers more challenging as some responses detailed their practical journey into the role via specific training, while others described an emotional journey of finding their passion in arboriculture. Although there was no majority answer as to how people found their path into the field, the three most common ways into the field were through previous work in tree surgery (16.5%), forestry (12.5%) and horticulture (12.5%).

There were some who were encouraged to get into arboriculture by a school or teacher recommendation (5.7%) or work experience/apprenticeships (6.2%). Another small percentage came from conservation or countryside management organisations (6.3%). Some people found the field through family and friends (7.3%), others from a love of nature (7.4%) (fig. 1).

The answers show that people have found their way to work as a tree officer from a diverse range of educational and professional backgrounds, albeit largely from the environmental sector or interest in working outdoors. This analysis could be a starting point for looking at other environmental sectors future tree officers could be recruited from in the future. It also highlights the lack of diversity from other associated professional backgrounds, such as construction, highways engineering or planning, where additional recruitment efforts could be focused.

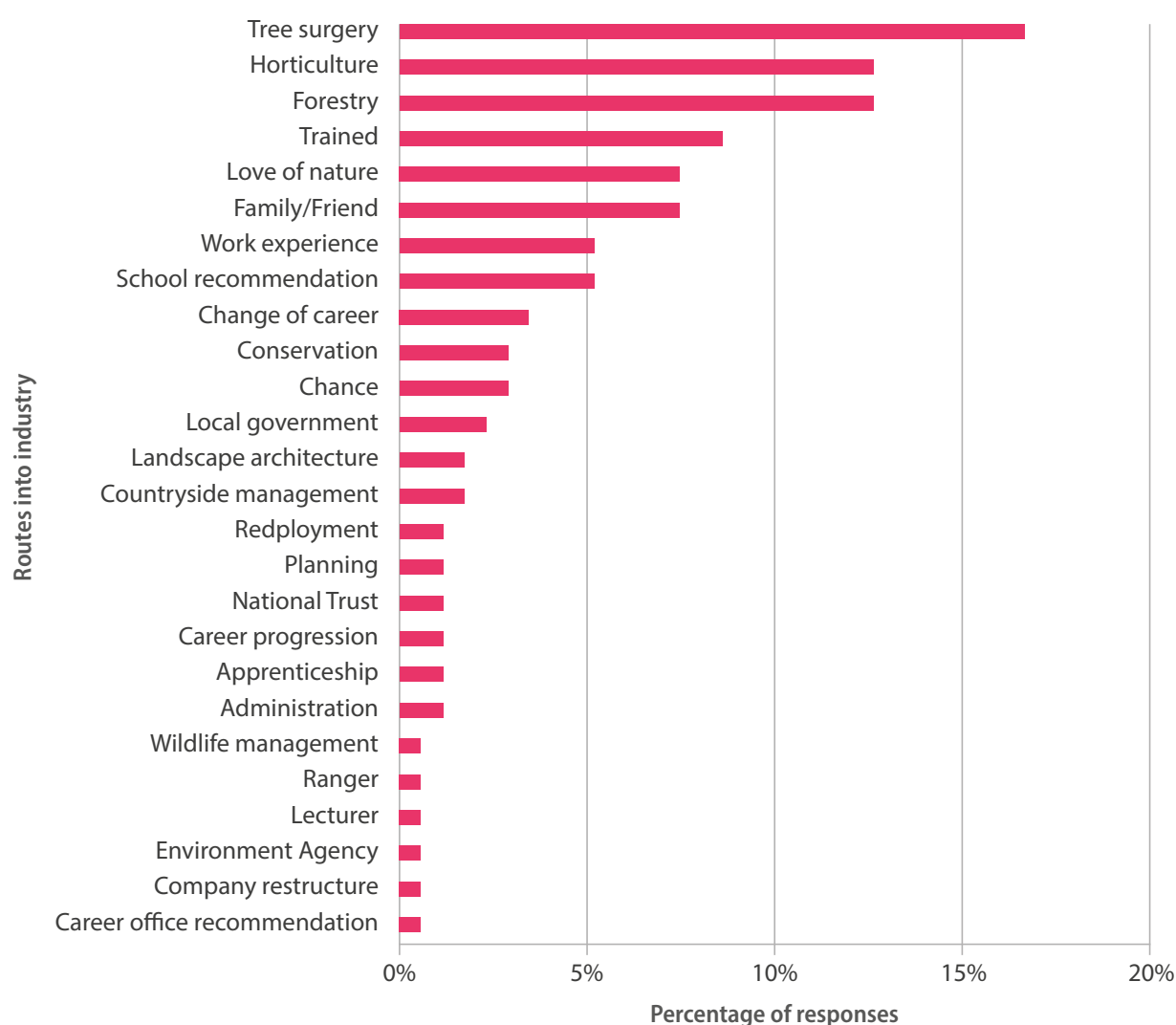


Figure 1: Bar graph depicting the percentage of responses that describe various routes of getting into the industry.

Question 2

What is your current primary role?

A total of 163 respondents answered this question with the majority (52.8%) stating they were in a tree officer role. Of the senior roles, 22.1% of respondents said they were in a senior tree officer role and 16.0% respondents in a tree manager role (fig. 2).

Only 10 respondents were in assistant tree officer or trainee roles. This may be as a result of fewer roles at this level being offered in the industry.

In business, the traditional pyramid model recommends having fewer people in senior roles compared to those in junior roles. Therefore, the results of this survey indicate that improvements can be made in increasing the availability of junior roles in the arboriculture sector. This would also help with recruitment of applicants with a more diverse range of qualifications and experience.

The ratio of senior and junior roles reflected in the results of this survey is similar to that found in the survey of tree officers in London in 2019.

Of the 28 that responded as 'other', the free-text responses ranged from re-titled tree officer roles, arboricultural consultants, landscape architects and contractors which shows that the survey has reached more people in the industry than the target group (tree officers). This may suggest that there is an appetite for research to be undertaken in other areas of the environmental sector.

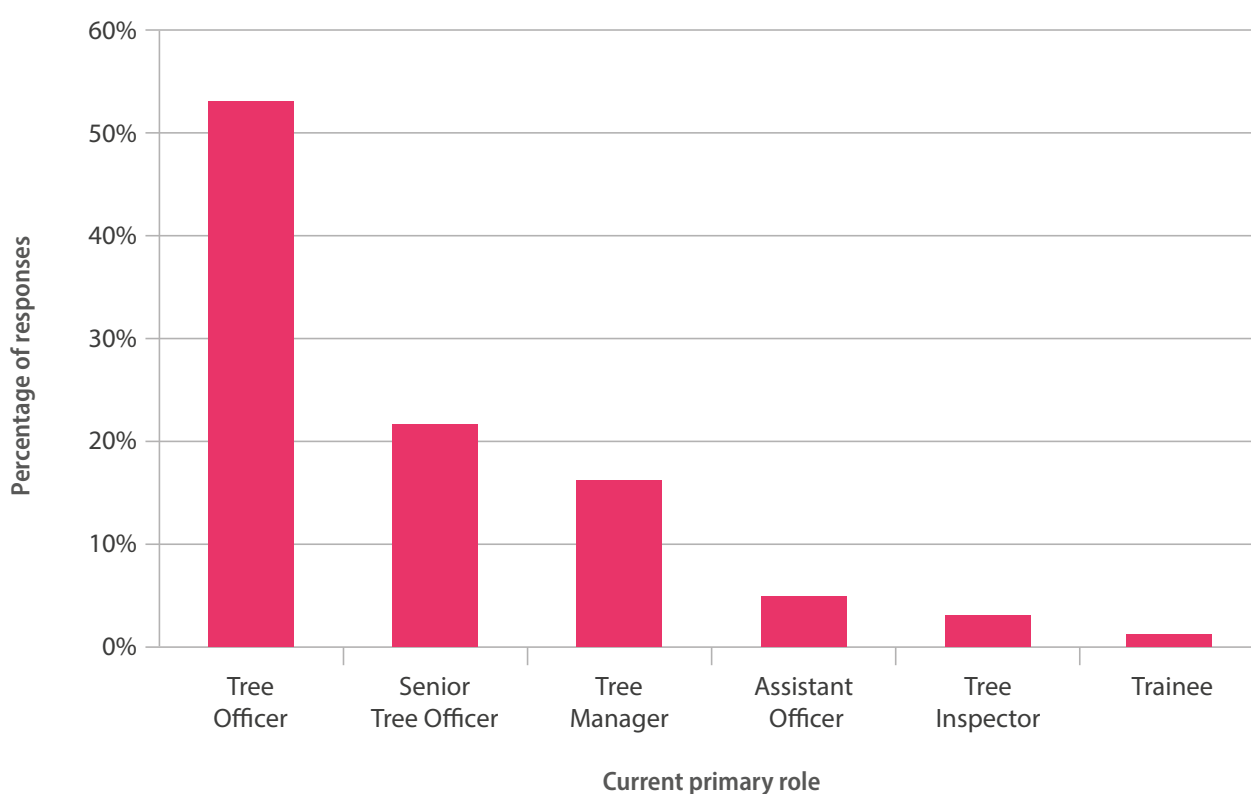


Figure 2: Bar graph depicting the percentage of responses listing trainee, tree officer, tree inspector, tree officer, senior tree officer and tree manager as the respondent's current primary role.

Question 3

How did you get to your current role?

A total of 170 respondents answered this question. The majority (34.1%) obtained their role by moving from a different local authority tree section. This was followed closely by the 32.4% of respondents who achieved their role through internal promotion (fig. 3).

21.8% of respondents came from private sector arboriculture and 8.8% from horticulture or land-based industries. Only 5 respondents (2.9%) came straight from education which suggests that greater promotion of a tree officer career is needed in educational institutions.

When compared to the 2019 survey of tree officers in London, this nationwide survey suggests there are a higher number of tree officers obtaining their current role through moving from a different local authority.

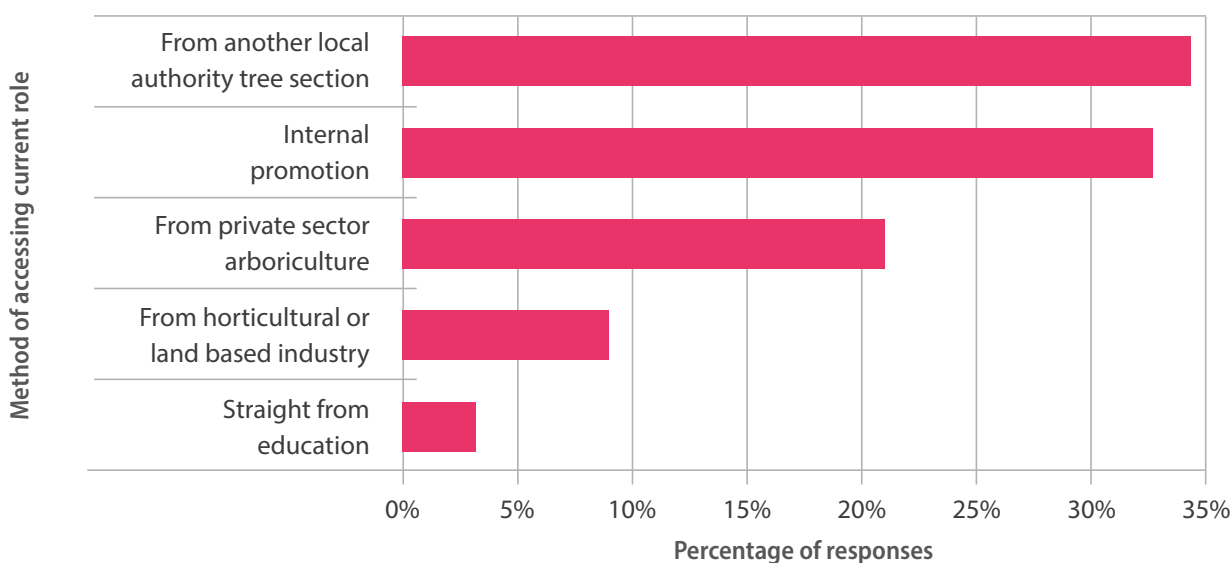


Figure 3: Bar graph depicting the percentage of responses that listed various methods that enabled the respondents to get into their current role.

Question 4

What hours do you work?

92% of respondents worked full time in comparison to 75% of working age employees in 2019 ^{xiii} (fig. 4). This may indicate a lack of part time employment opportunities which could act as a barrier to carers and could disproportionately affect women.

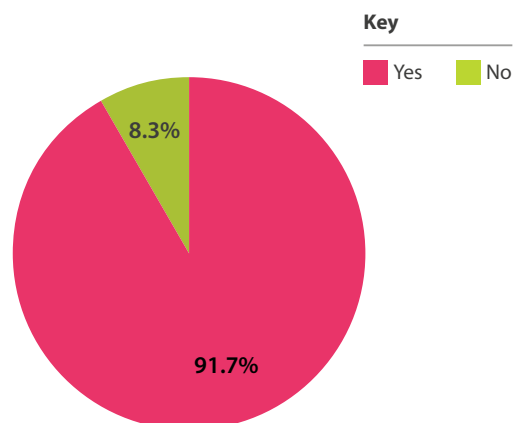


Figure 4: Pie chart depicting percentage of respondents that have full time or part time hours of work.

Question 5

Do you have a flexible working arrangement?

97% of respondents stated that they have a flexible working arrangement, for example, flexibility on hours or location or start and finish times (fig. 5). This figure is higher than the 79% of respondents to the 2019 LTOA survey who stated that they had a flexible working arrangement. This increase could reflect changes to working arrangements that occurred during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Only 11% of UK employees worked flexible hours in 2018 ^{xiv} whereas in the height of the first lockdown in 2020, 47% of the UK workforce was working from home. However, it is difficult to separate out statistics for home working versus other flexible working arrangements. The findings of this survey do appear to indicate that tree officers are supported in flexible working by employers and are more able to undertake work flexibly than some other professions.

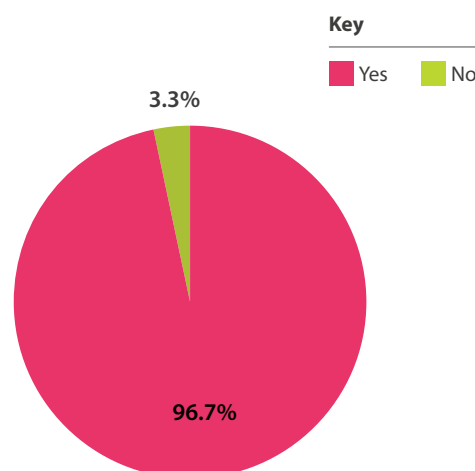


Figure 4: Pie chart depicting percentage of respondents that have a flexible working arrangement

Question 6

What is the highest level of arboricultural qualifications you have achieved?

35% of respondents were educated to a level 3-4 standard in arboriculture, which is currently the usual minimum standard for most tree officer job postings (fig. 6).

44% of respondents had a graduate or postgraduate degree in arboriculture, indicating a high level of educational attainment within the industry.

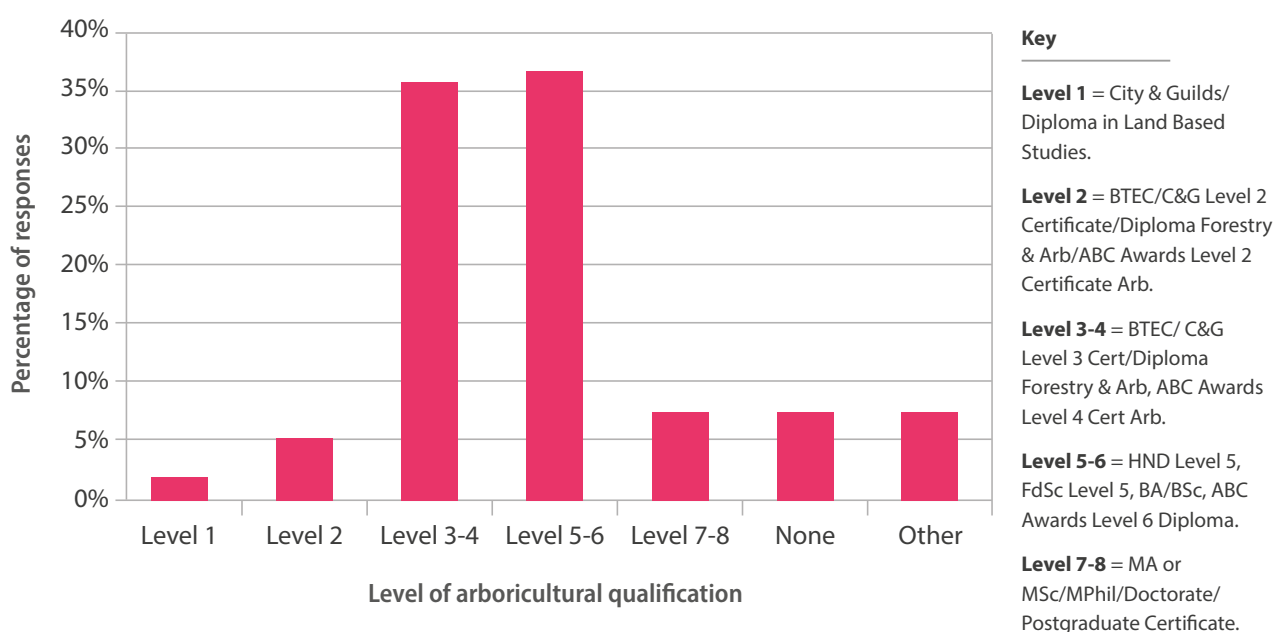


Figure 6: Bar graph depicting percentage of responses listing various levels of arboricultural qualification ranging from Level 1 to Level 8.

Question 7

If you have any non-arboricultural qualifications, what is the highest level you have achieved?

81% of respondents had non-arboricultural qualifications, including 25% with Level 3-4 (National Diploma or equivalent), 27% Level 5-6 (Foundation Degree or equivalent) and 14% level 7-8 (Master's Degree or equivalent) (fig. 7). These results suggest that tree officers take other qualifications before entering a career as a tree officer. Arboricultural qualifications are highly specialised, so it is perhaps not surprising that individuals enter the profession from other educational backgrounds and having a wider educational background before entering arboriculture may well be an advantage to the profession. However, the results may also indicate a lack of awareness about arboriculture as a profession.

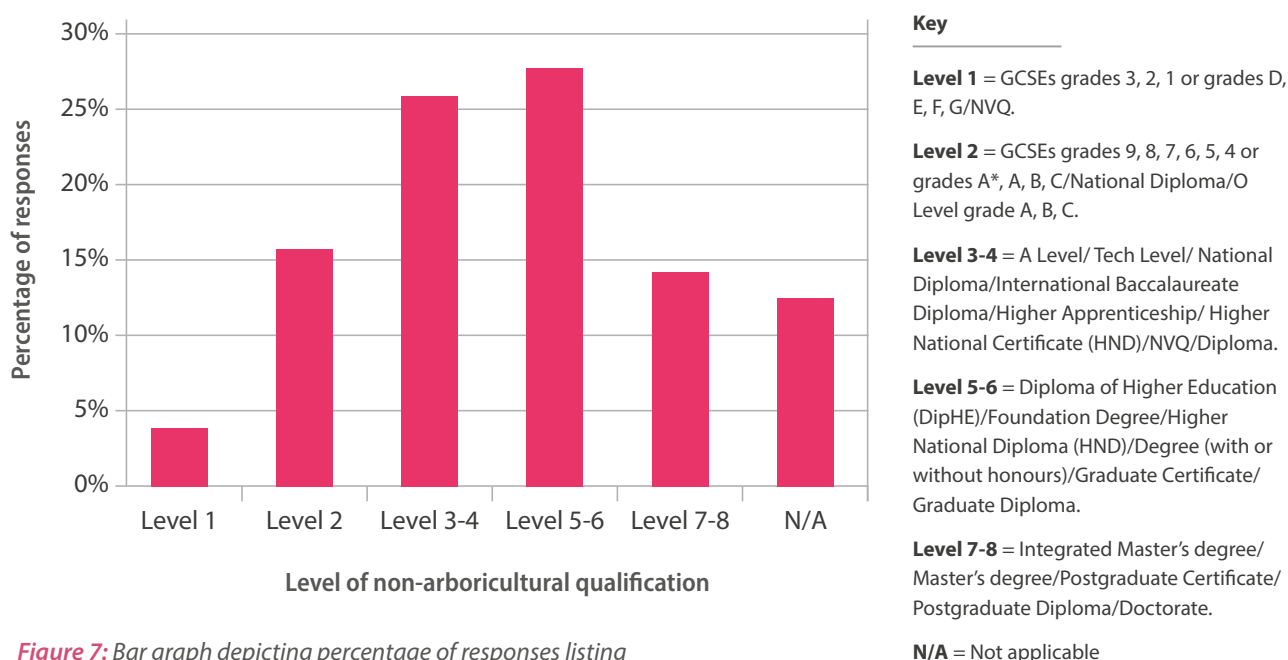
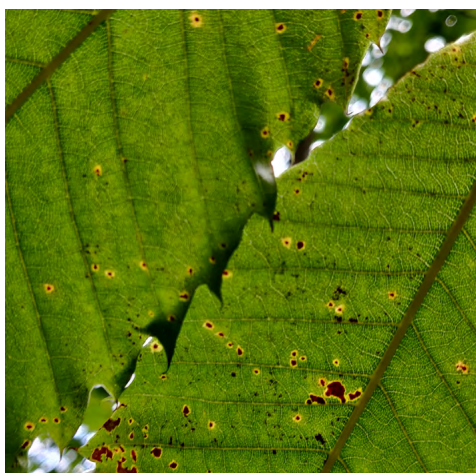


Figure 7: Bar graph depicting percentage of responses listing various non-arboricultural qualifications ranging from Level 1 to Level 8.



Question 8

What barriers do you think exist to entering and progressing in the profession? If none, please write 'none'.

This question allowed respondents to describe the barriers they think exist, in their own words. 175 responses were received: 50 responses said there are no barriers, and the remaining 125 responses included a total of 38 individual barriers occurring 203 times within the responses (fig. 8). This shows that many respondents described more than 1 barrier in their answer and that the same barriers were thought of by many individual respondents.

The individual barriers that were of a similar nature were grouped together to identify the recurrence of barriers within a particular theme. These themes, along with the number of occurrences within the responses are as follows:

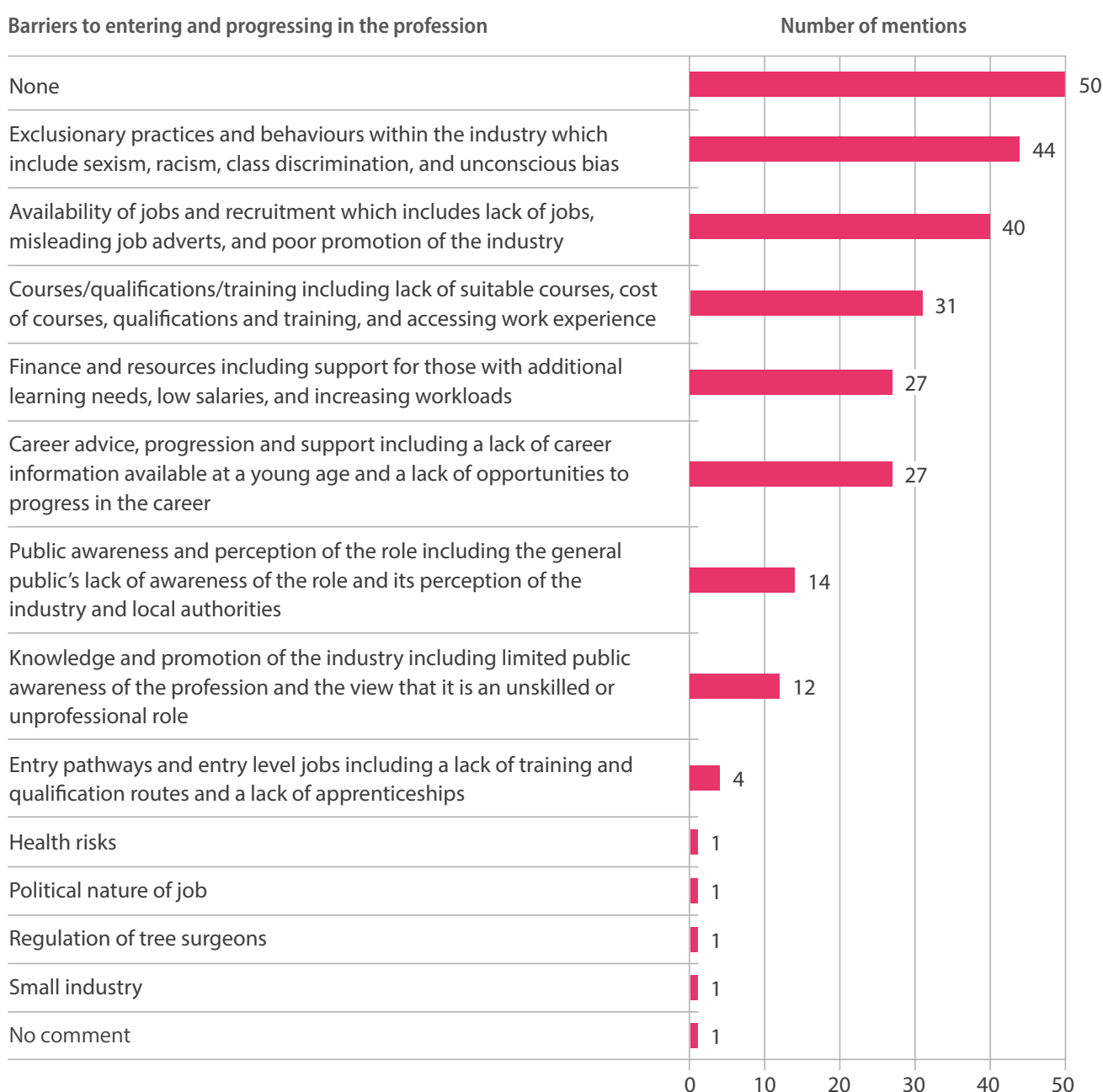


Figure 8: Bar graph depicting the number of times particular barriers were mentioned as inhibiting access and progression in the tree officer profession.

Question 9

Have you experienced any of these barriers?

59% of respondents answered 'no', indicating that they had not personally experienced barriers. 41% of respondents answered 'yes' which equates to 2 in 5 survey respondents experiencing barriers to entering and progressing in the profession (fig. 9).

Key

Yes No

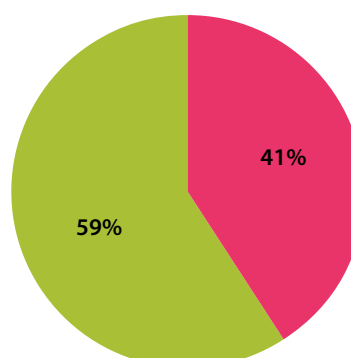
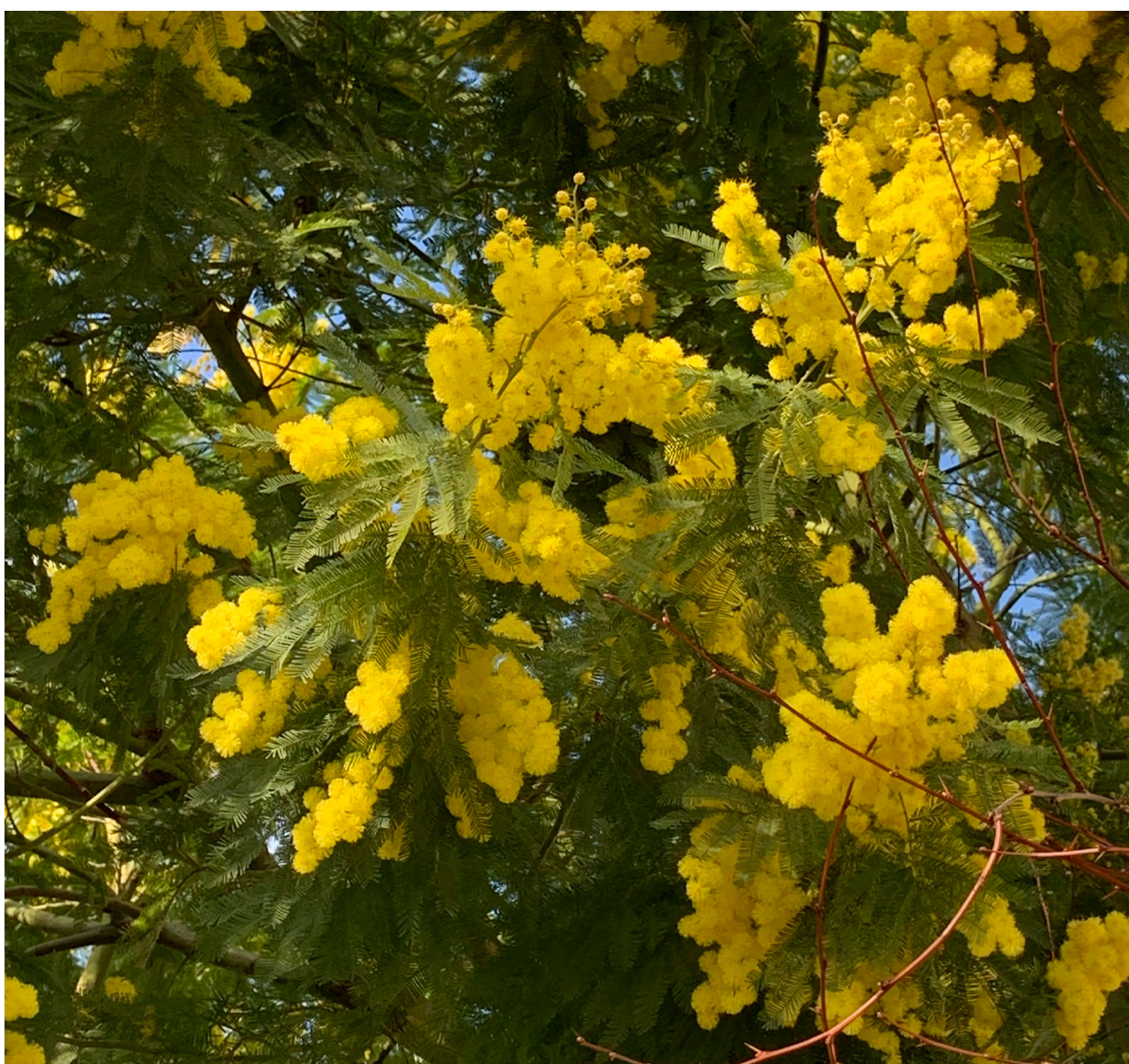


Figure 9: Percentage of respondents who have or have not experienced barriers to entering and progressing in the tree officer profession.



Question 10

If you wish to provide comments on your experience of barriers including how it has affected you personally then please do so below.

This question allowed respondents to comment, in their own words, on their personal experience of barriers to accessing the industry. 67 responses were received, and 114 respondents skipped the question. Of the 67 responses, 3 had not experienced barrier (fig. 10).

Consistent with the analysis of the answers to Question 8, the individual experiences that were of a similar nature were grouped together to identify the recurrence of experiences within a particular theme. These themes, along with the number of occurrences within the responses are as follows:



Figure 10: Bar graph depicting the number of times particular barriers were mentioned as inhibiting access and progression in the tree officer profession.

Question 11

What could be done to increase diversity amongst tree officers?

Respondents have suggested a wide range of ways to increase diversity within the industry. The most frequent suggestions were to engage with schools and colleges (mentioned in 50 responses), promote the industry profile in general (43 responses) and to ensure that the profession is included within career advice (34 responses) (fig.11).

Responses also highlighted the need to undertake community engagement, particularly with minority groups (28 responses), and to promote the benefits of trees (11 responses).

In terms of specific industry improvements, respondents suggested increasing the use of apprenticeships and in house training (12 responses), improving career progression and salaries (11 responses) and increasing opportunities and reducing costs of training (10 responses).

Other suggestions included ensuring D&I best practice in recruitment and employment (8 responses), the use of media/social media (5 responses) and increased professional collaboration within the industry (4 responses) and with other industries (1 response).

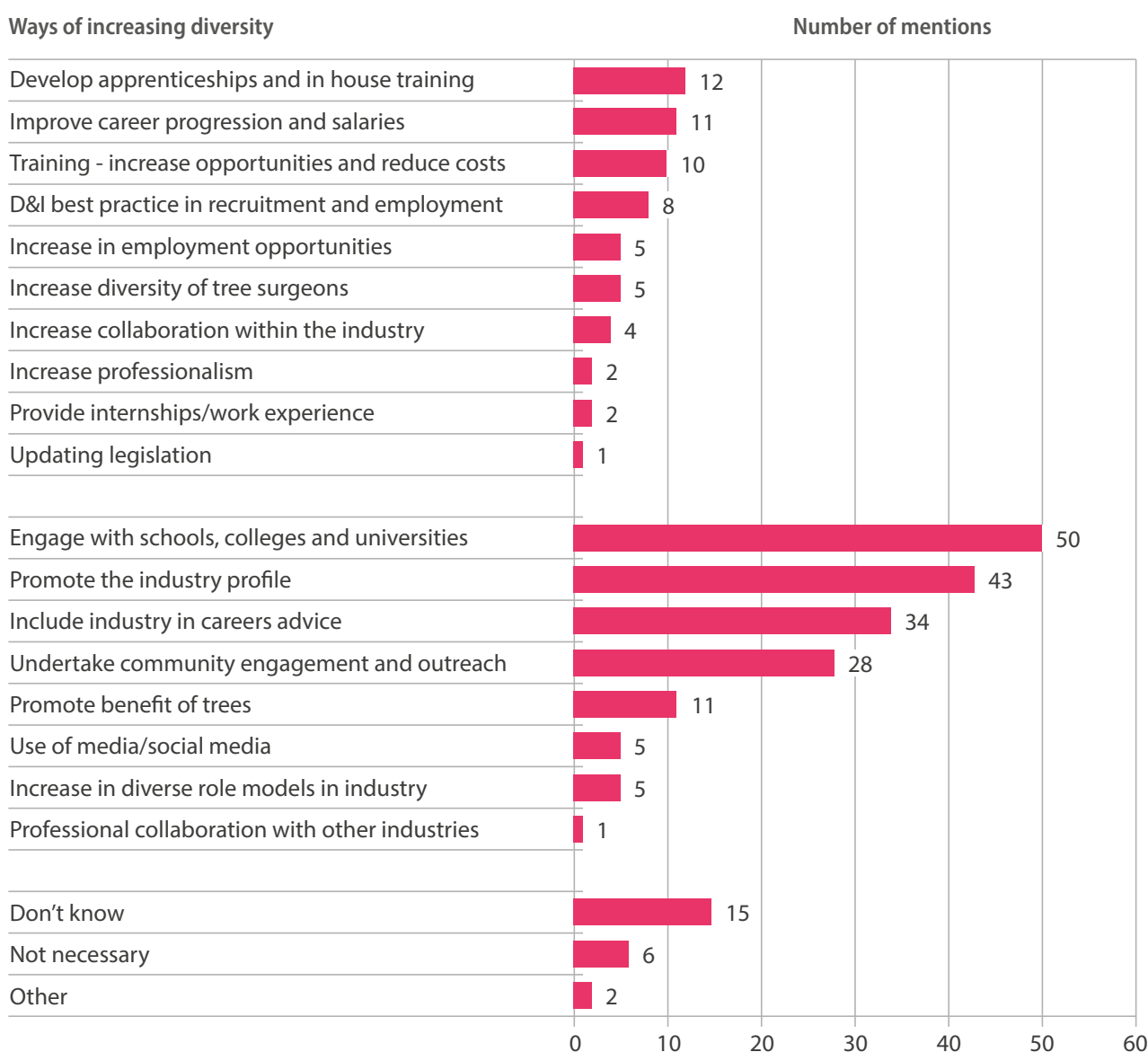


Figure 11: Bar graph depicting the number of times certain ways of increasing diversity were mentioned, grouped into responses relating to industry (upper block) or marketing (lower block).

Question 12

What is your nationality?

92% of respondents were British in comparison to 82% of the population overall.^{xv} There were fewer tree officers from the EU and Africa in comparison to the overall employed population and significantly more respondents from the USA. There were no respondents from Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

Question 13

What is your ethnic identity?

95% respondents were white, 2% were Asian or Asian British, 2% were mixed and 1% were another ethnic group. This contrasts with the 2011 census data which found that 87% of the population of the UK was white, 7% was Asian or Asian British, 3 % was Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, 1% was Mixed or multiple ethnic groups and 2% was another ethnic group^{xvi} (fig. 12).

These responses are slightly more closely aligned with the 2019/2020 Local Authority Employee Ethnicity figures which found that 90% of employees were white, however those figures also showed 4.3% of local authority employees were black, 3.8% were Asian, 1.4% were Mixed ethnicity, and 0.6% were an other ethnicity^{xvii}, showing a greater disparity with the responses to this survey.

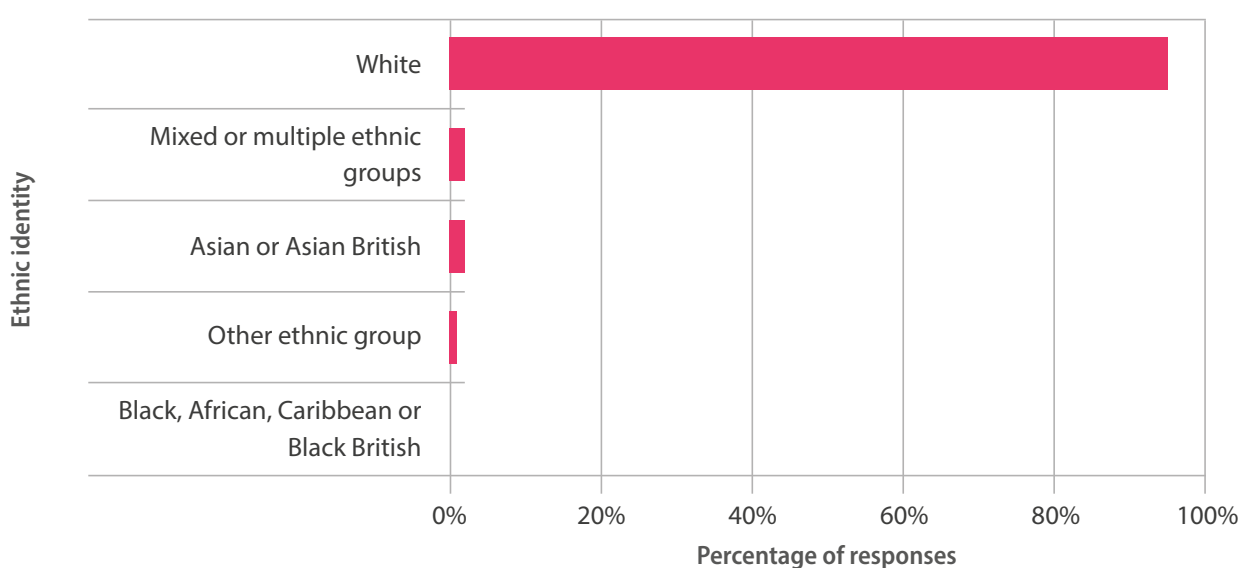


Figure 12: Bar graph depicting the number of respondents of particular ethnic identities.

Question 14

What is your gender?

75% of respondents to this question were male, 23% were female, 1% preferred not to say, and 1% responded 'other' (fig. 13).

The Office for National Statistics provides data from December 2021 on UK workforce jobs by industry and sex (limited to male and female). Of the most closely related industry to arboricultural officers; the professional, scientific and technical industries, the percentages of the workforce were recorded as 53% male and 47% female. The responses to the current survey show that the arboricultural industry is perhaps closer to the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry which has a workforce balance of 71% male and 29% female.^{xviii}

This comparison shows that there is a greater gender imbalance within the tree officer workforce, according to this survey, than other related industries. This survey finds that the main career route into being an arboricultural officer is from working in tree surgery and forestry, and the comparative data suggests that there is a greater gender imbalance found in the more practical based industries.^{xix} This suggests that diversifying the routes into the arboricultural profession and encouraging applicants to apply from a wider range of employment backgrounds may help to improve the gender balance within the workforce.

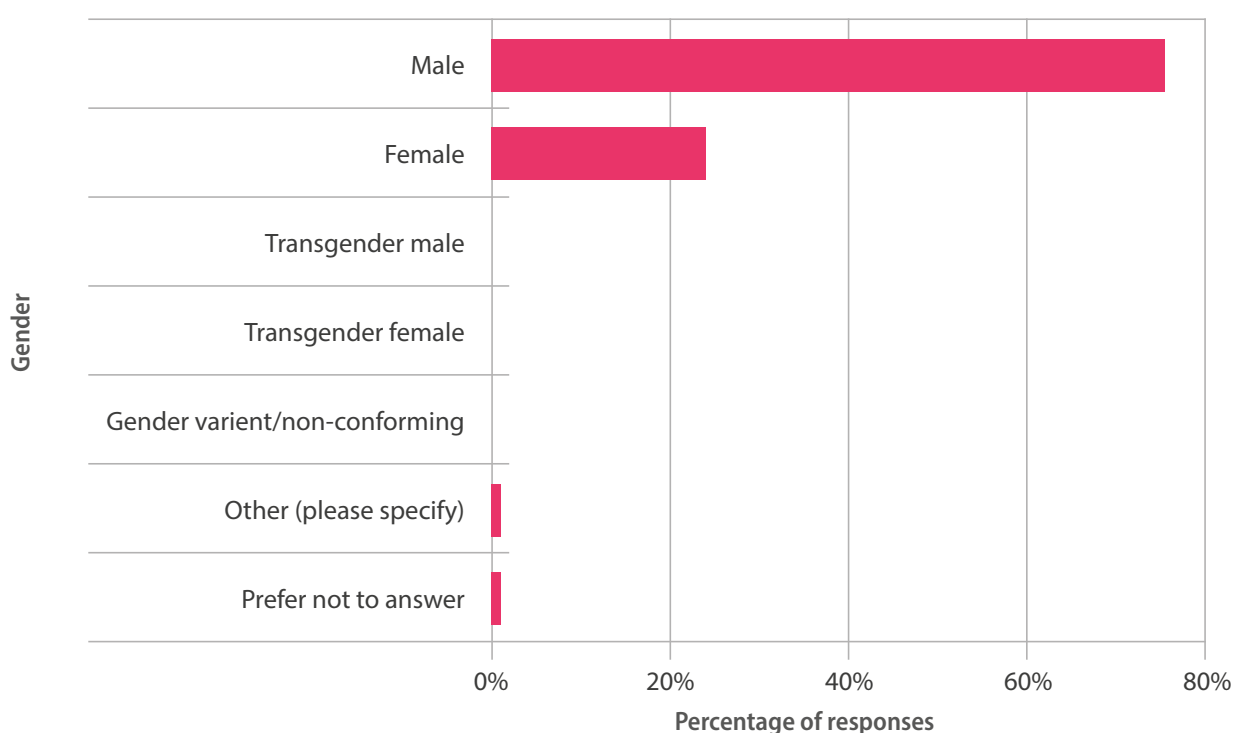


Figure 13: Bar graph depicting the number of respondents who are of a particular gender.

Question 15

Do you identify with your gender from birth?

The survey results found that 98.8% of respondents do identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, 0.6% do not, and 0.6% preferred not to say (fig. 14).

There is a noticeable lack of data on gender identification of people in the UK.^{xx} Related data include the results of the UK Government's 2017 National LGBT Survey which shows that 13% of the LGBT respondents identified as trans. In addition, the UK Government Equalities Office estimates that there are 200,000-500,000 trans people in the UK.^{xxi} At present there is no fully representative UK data on the number of people who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.

Following the inclusion of questions relating to gender identification in the Census 2021, we can expect to have more reliable comparative data when these results are released.^{xxii}

We acknowledge that the wording of our question should be updated to reflect contemporary understandings of the word gender and should be re-worded as 'Do you identify with the gender assigned to you at birth?'

Future surveys will reflect the current understandings of the terms used in the survey questions.

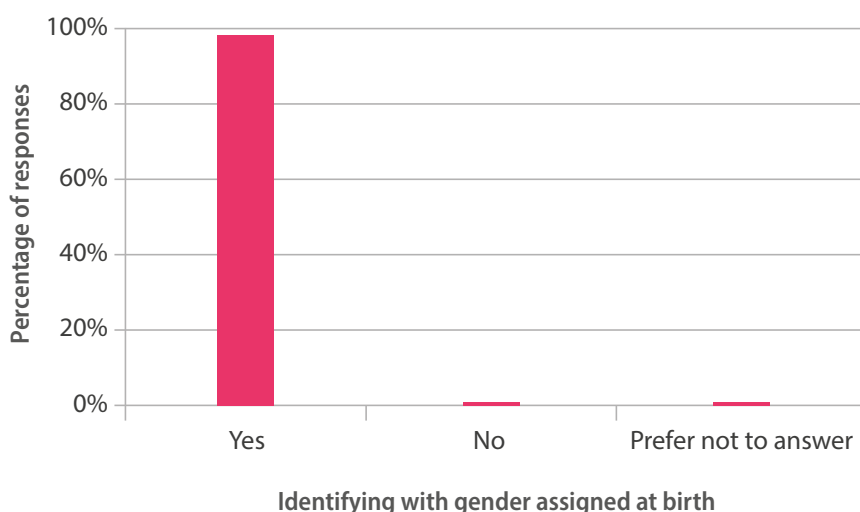


Figure 14: Bar graph depicting number of respondents who identify with the gender assigned to them at birth



Question 16

What is your age?

Of those who responded to this question, 15% were between 25-34, 55% of respondents were between 35-54, 28% were between 55, and 64 and 3% were older than 64. No respondents were under 25 (fig. 15).

The 2019 survey of London tree officers showed a similar distribution of age, 60% of respondents were between 35-54 years old, 20% were between 25-34 years old, and 1 respondent was under 25.

UK statistics for 'Professional Occupations' and 'Associate Professional and Technical Occupations' are arranged with slightly different age ranges but are sufficiently similar to be comparable. These show 6% are 24 or younger, 24% are 25-33, 52% are 34-54, 14% are 55-64 and 3% are older than 64.

The lack of tree officers under 25 may indicate a lack of entry level positions and young people coming into the profession or could be affected by a bias in the responses. It may also be an early warning of a looming succession crisis.

The relatively high percentage of tree officers over 54, appears to reflect a valuable retention of knowledge within councils. Such knowledge would be vulnerable to being lost over time, if it is not valued, sustained, and shared throughout the organisation.

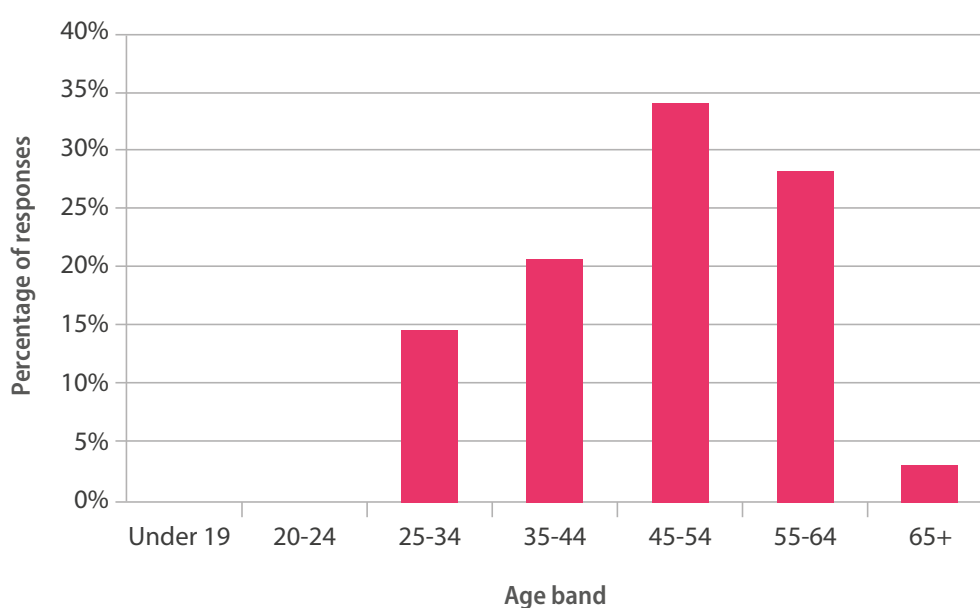


Figure 15: Bar graph depicting the percentage of respondents that fall into specific age bands.

Question 17

What is your sexual orientation?

This question was designed in line with the Census 2019 data so that a direct comparison could be made with the results of this survey. Therefore, the optional answers were limited to straight, bisexual, gay/lesbian and other which asked for the respondents to specify their sexual orientation in their own words (fig. 16).

The results show that 92.7% of respondents were straight/heterosexual, 3.6% preferred not to say, 1.8% were gay/lesbian, 1.2% were bisexual, and 0.6% identified as semi-sexual.

The 2019 Annual Population Survey found that 94% of the UK population identified as straight/heterosexual and 6% identified as lesbian/gay/bisexual.^{xxiii} Other related data come from the Office for National Statistics and looks at Civil Service by sexual orientation in 2017. This data shows that 96% of the workforce identifies as straight/heterosexual, 3% gay/lesbian, 1% bisexual and 0.5% other.^{xxiv}

The results indicate that the sexual orientation of tree officers is broadly the same as the general population.

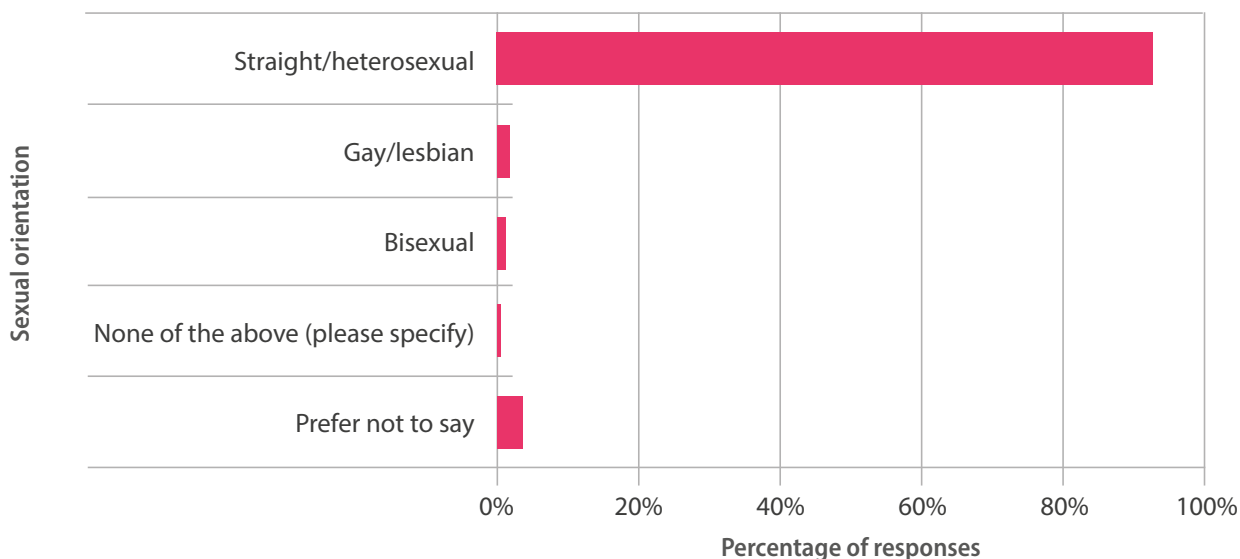


Figure 16: Bar graph depicting the percentage of respondents of a particular sexual orientation.



Question 18

What is your current religion, if any?

21.6% of respondents were Christian, 0.6% Buddhist, 0.6% Sikh and 3% 'other'. 59.3% of respondents stated that they had no religion, 12.6% were atheist, and 2.4% were agnostic. This is in significant contrast to the 2011 census data which gives the UK population as 48% Christian, 12% Muslim, 5% Hindu, 2% Jewish, 1.5% Sikh and 1 % Buddhist, with 29% giving their religion as 'none', 'not stated' or 'other' (fig. 17).^{xxv} By religion, tree officers are clearly not representative of the general population.

It is notable that there are no respondents who are Muslim, Hindu or Sikh. The results indicate that there are barriers preventing people belonging to certain religions from entering the profession.

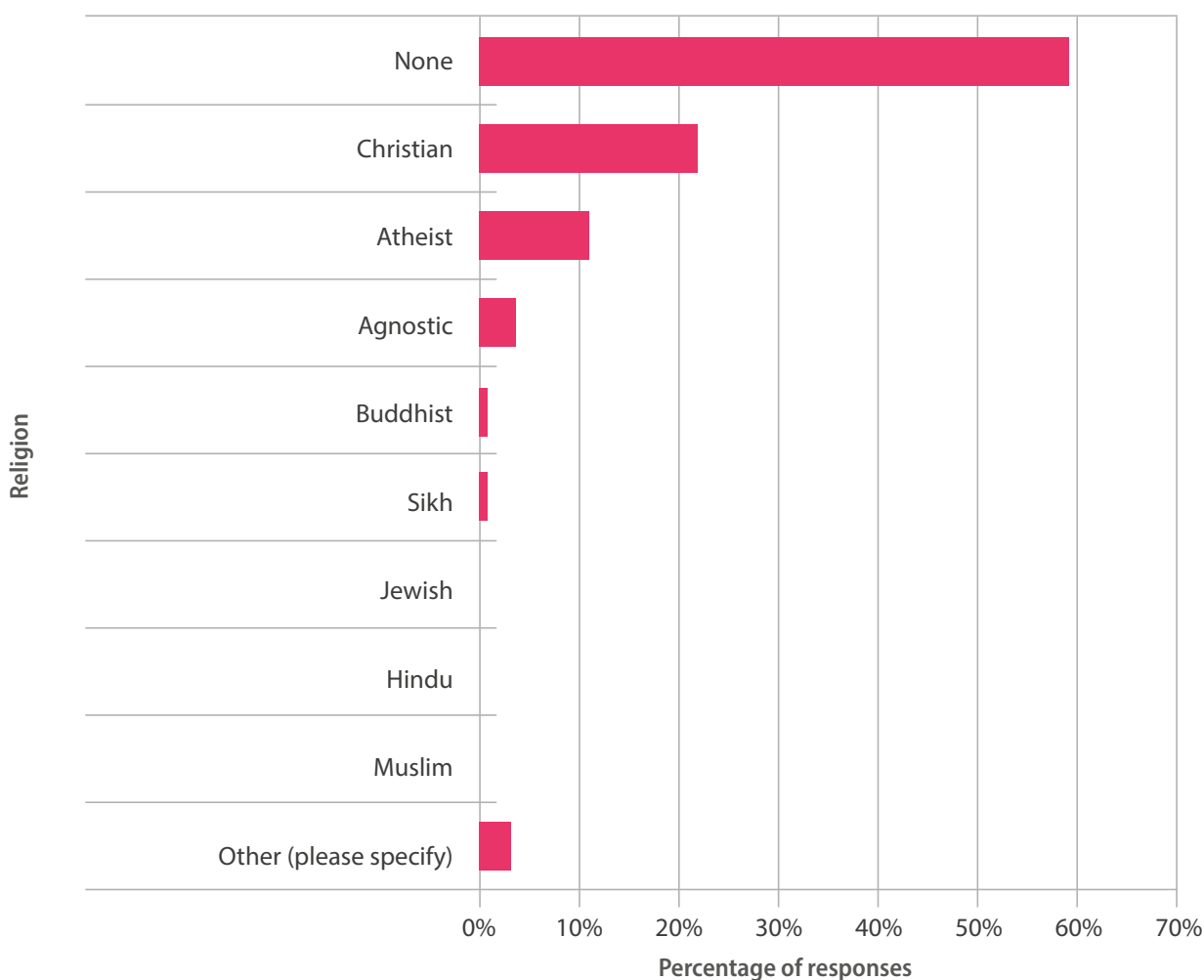


Figure 17: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents identifying as a particular religion.

Question 19

Do you consider yourself neurodiverse? Neurodiversity is the idea that neurological variations are known and valued as any other human variation. These variations can include: developmental coordination disorder (DCD or dyspraxia)- dyslexia- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)- dyscalculia- autistic spectrum (ASD)- Tourette syndrome (TS), and others.

23% of respondents to this question said they were neurodivergent (fig. 18). Verifiable, comparable statistics are difficult to find. An article in the British Medical Bulletin^{xxvi} estimates that 15-20% of the global population are neurodiverse, and a widely quoted but unattributed estimate is that 15% of the UK's population is neurodivergent, but these are whole population estimates, rather than specific to those in employment. Within the workplace, a 2020 survey^{xxvii} by the Adecco Group found that 12% of workers in the United Kingdom identified as neurodivergent. This statistic suggests that tree officers exhibit a greater prevalence of neurodiversity than the wider workforce.

This result may suggest that the barriers to employment as a tree officer may be less than those experienced by neurodivergent individuals in the wider workforce. Alternatively, it could be an indication that the role of a tree officer is comparatively more attractive to neurodivergent individuals than other careers or professions.

Question 20

Have you disclosed this to your employer?

Of the respondents who said they were neurodivergent, 45% had disclosed their condition to their employer (fig. 19). Comparison to other workforce statistics provides a mixed picture. The 2020 survey by the Adecco Group^{xxviii} found that 65% of employees would feel comfortable telling their employers they are neurodivergent, which suggests a lower rate of disclosure may be prevalent amongst tree officers than in the wider workforce. However, other research amongst neurodivergent employees, published in 2018 by the charity AchieveAbility^{xxix} found that only 20% of respondents always disclosed their condition during the selection processes for employment, so tree officers demonstrate a higher disclosure rate than the results of the AchieveAbility survey.

53% of respondents to this survey had not disclosed their condition to their employer. This is a better figure than the research published by AchieveAbility which found that 73% of respondents did not disclose their condition during selection, in order to avoid discrimination. Whilst there may be many reasons for non-disclosure, the survey results suggest that there are still barriers to disclosure of neurodiverse conditions which the arboricultural industry should examine and act upon in order to be more inclusive.

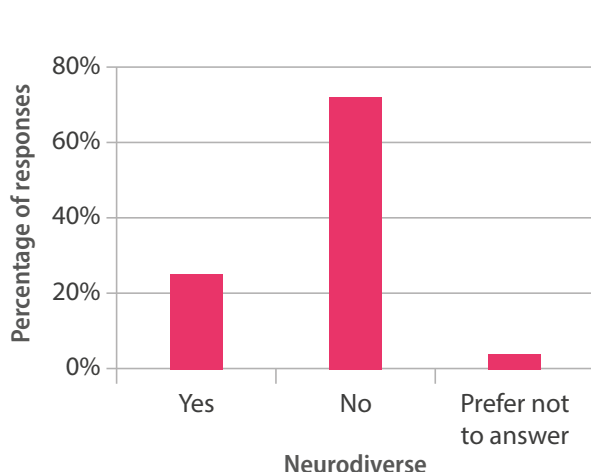


Figure 18: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents who consider themselves to be neurodiverse.

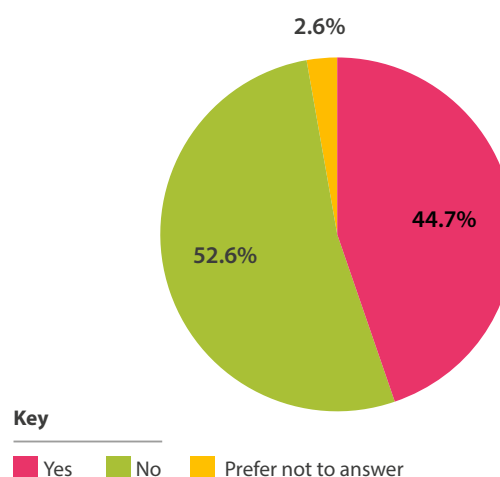


Figure 19: Pie chart depicting percentage of respondents who have disclosed that they are neurodiverse to their employer.

Question 21

Is your workplace suited to your needs relating to your neurodivergence?

Of the respondents who said they were neurodivergent, 76% of respondents felt that their workplace was suited to their needs, and 13% did not (fig. 20). Research^{xxx} by The Institute of Leadership & Management found that over 50% of autistic, dyspraxic and dyscalculic people reported that people in their workplace behaved in a way that excluded neurodivergent colleagues.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out that employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to support people with disabilities in the workplace, so the response to this survey raises concern that 13% of neurodivergent tree officers are not being supported.

However, there is a recognition^{xxxi} amongst some employers that neurodivergent individuals greatly benefit their organisations, and that recruitment processes, and management policies and practices require review and change to support more neurodivergent people to be successful at work.

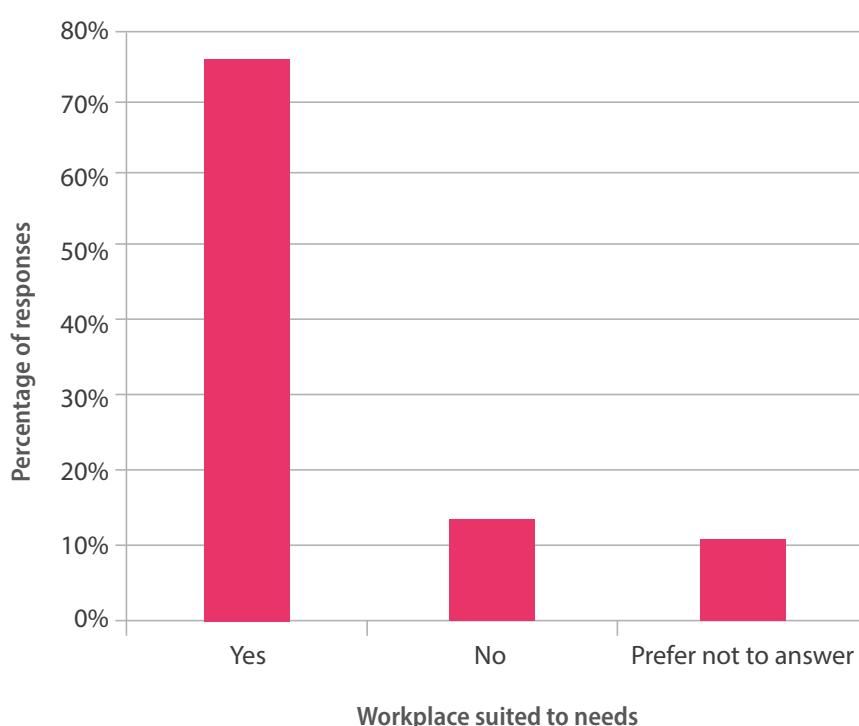


Figure 14: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents who feel their workplace is suited to their needs relating to their neurodivergence.

Question 22

Are you disabled (i.e. Do you have a long-standing illness, condition or impairment which reduces your ability to carry out day-to-day activities)?

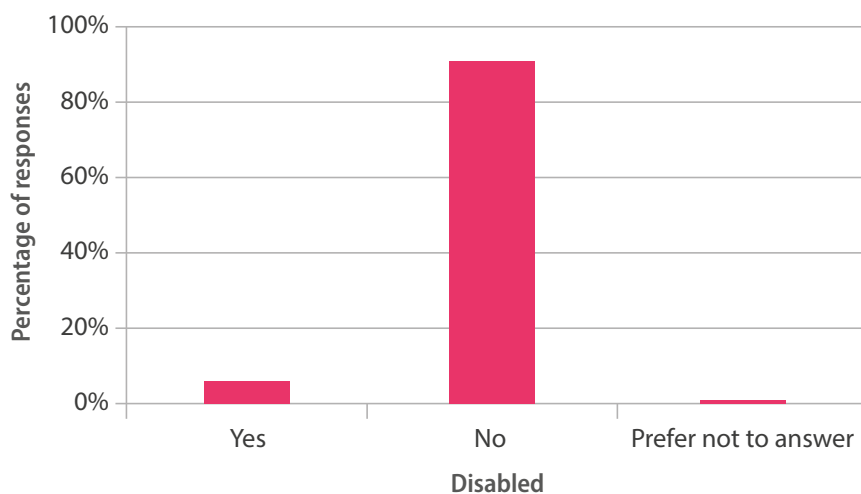
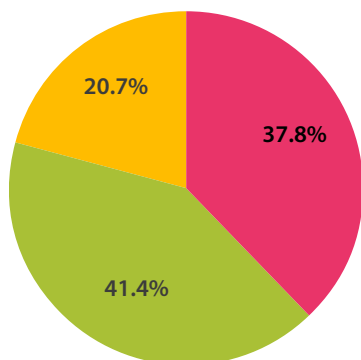


Figure 21: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents who are or are not disabled.

Question 23

Have you disclosed this to your employer?



Key

Yes No Prefer not to answer

Figure 22: Pie chart depicting the percentage of respondents who have or have not disclosed to their employer that they are disabled.

Question 24

Is your workplace suited to your needs relating to your illness, condition or impairment?

6% of respondents considered themselves disabled, while 2% preferred not to state their disability status (fig. 21). Compared to the 14% of the UK labour force that report having a disability,^{xxxii xxxiii} figures from this survey show that disabled employees are underrepresented in the sector. The physicality of many roles in the arb sector may be the main barrier to increasing the number of people entering with a disability.

Of the respondents stating they had a disability, 100% of them had disclosed this to their employer, while 80% felt their workplace was suited to their specific needs (fig. 22). This is a cautiously positive finding, as it suggests that disabled employees entering the sector are likely to find employers that are receptive to their needs and accommodating. Further investigation is required to clarify the obstacles faced by the remaining 20% of employees who do not find their workplace is suited to their needs (fig. 23)

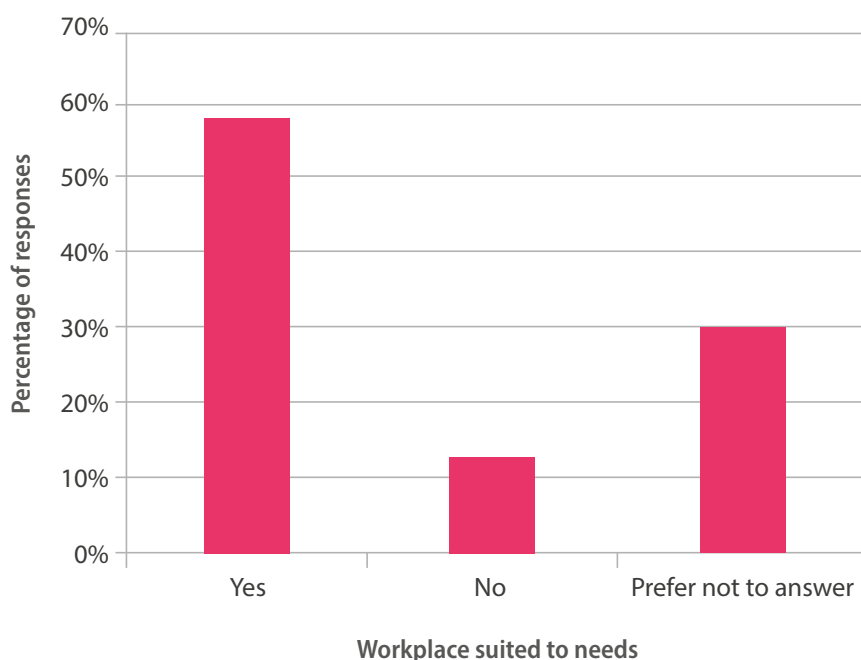
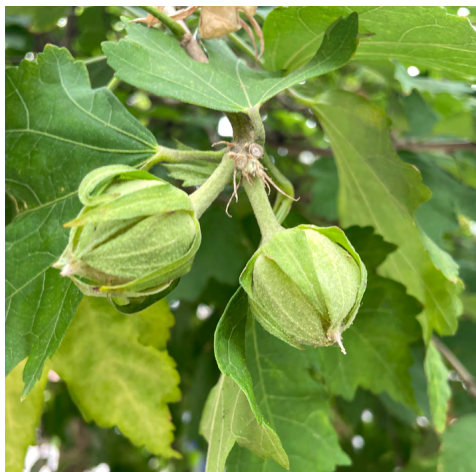


Figure 14: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents who feel that their workplace is suited to their needs relating to their illness, condition or impairment.



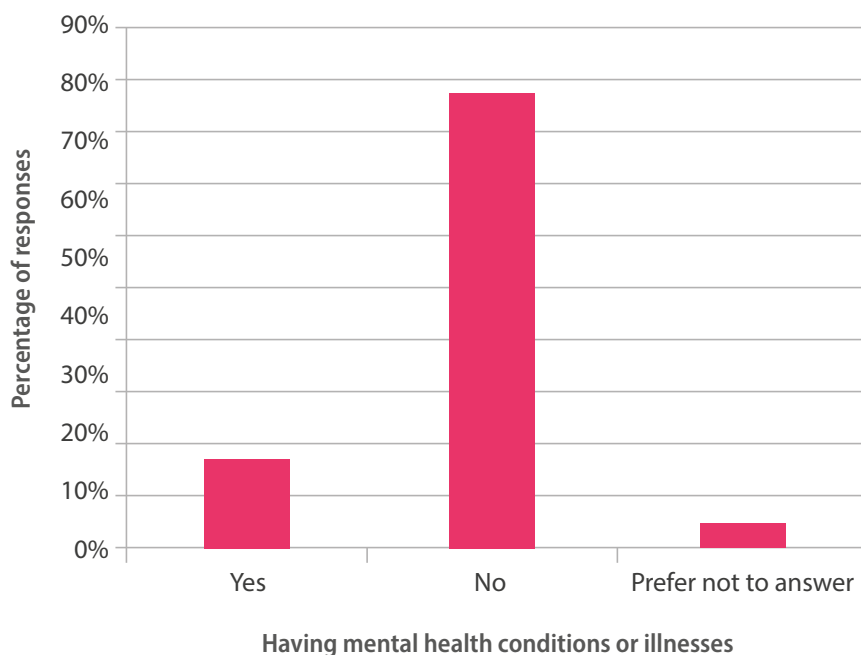
Question 25**Do you have any mental health conditions or illnesses?**

Figure 24: Bar graph depicting the percentage of respondents who have mental health conditions or illnesses.

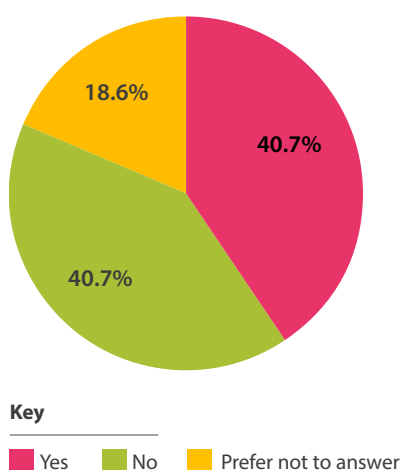
Question 26**Have you disclosed this to your employer?**

Figure 25: Pie chart depicting percentage of respondents who have disclosed to their employer that they have mental health illnesses or conditions.

Question 27

Is your workplace suited to your needs relating to your mental health condition or illness?

17% of respondents stated they had a mental health condition or illness (fig. 24). This is consistent with the national average, as 17% of the UK report a common mental health condition, decreasing to 16% and 14% for those in part-time and full-time employment respectively.^{xxxiv}

Almost 6% of respondents preferred not to state their mental health status, so it is possible that the figure is even higher and mental health conditions and illnesses are more prevalent in tree officers than the national average. This is worthy of further monitoring.

Of the respondents that stated they had a mental health condition, 75% had disclosed this to their employer (fig. 25), and 63% felt that their workplace was suited to their needs (fig. 26). These figures are noticeably lower than for those stating they had a disability. This is possibly because applicants are not obliged to disclose any mental health or medical issues, and these may be intensely personal. 92% of the British public believe disclosing a mental health problem would damage their career.^{xxxv}

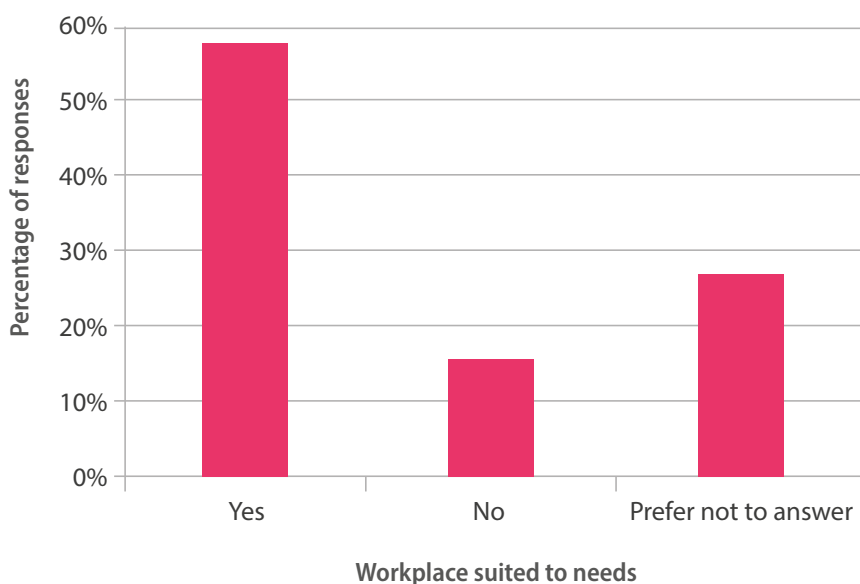


Figure 26: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents who feel that their workplace is suited to their needs relating to their mental health illnesses or conditions.

Question 28

Do you look after or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either long-term physical or mental health issues, disability or related to old age (i.e. are a carer)?

22% of respondents were carers (fig. 27). This is a higher percentage than the estimated 5 million or 14% percent of employed people in the UK who have caring responsibilities.^{xxxvi}

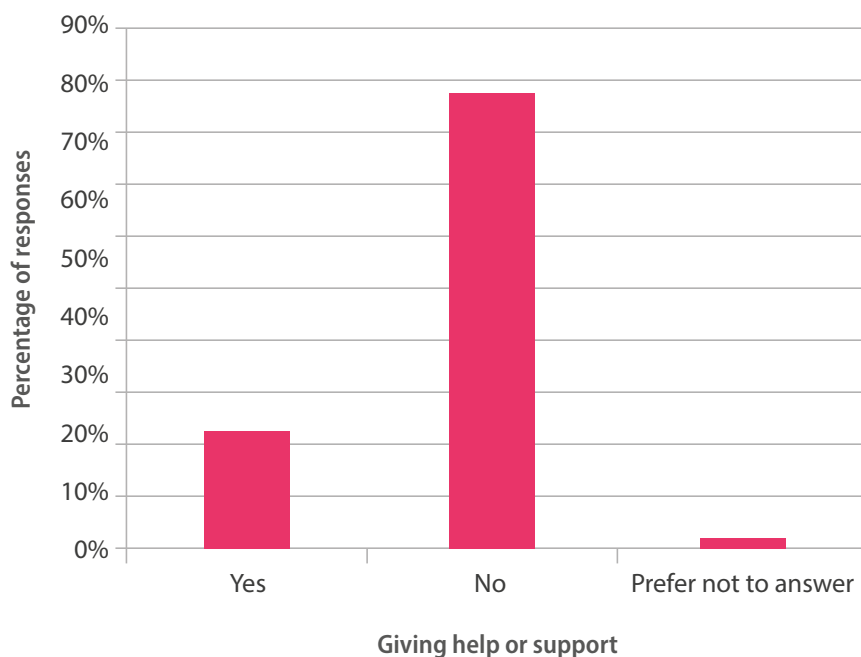
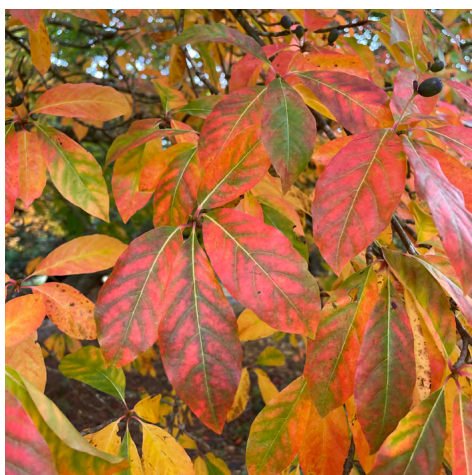


Figure 27: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents that give help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either long-term physical or mental health issues, disability or related to old age.



Question 29**Do you have any children under 18?**

For this question 38% of respondents answered yes (fig. 28). Comparable national statistics were not available, but an increase in part time jobs would enable tree officers to have a better work life balance.

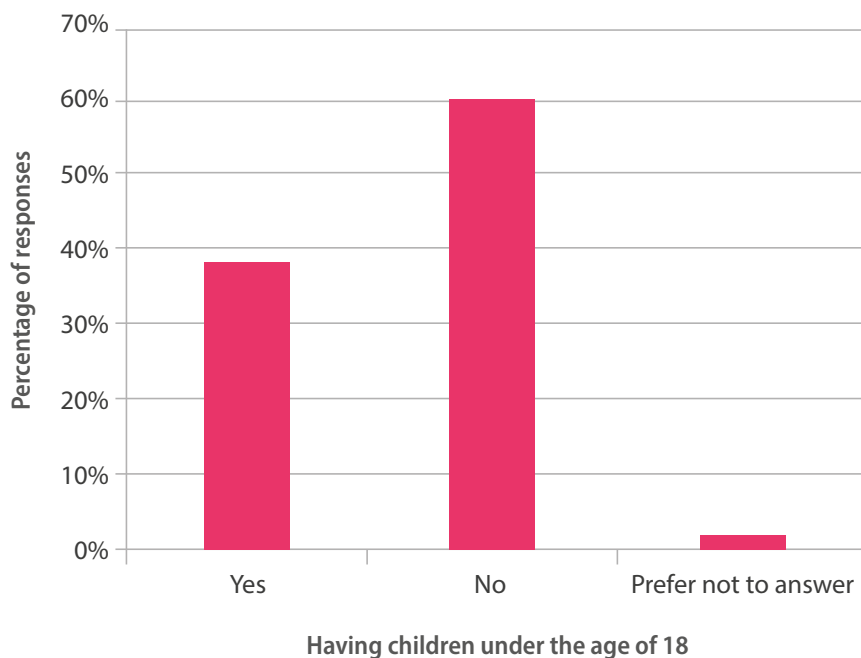
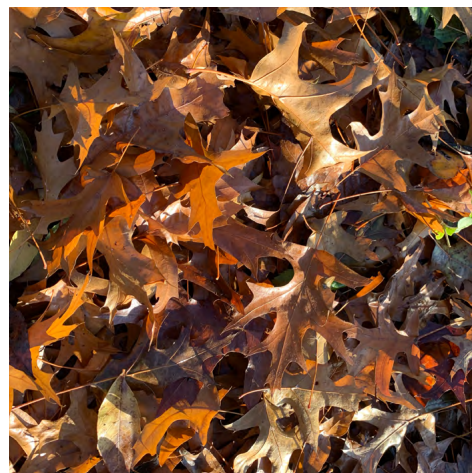


Figure 28: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents who have children under the age of 18.



Question 30

What region do you work in?

Over 57% of respondents worked in London and the South East. The next highest regional percentage was for Scotland at 15%, followed by 7% for the South West, 5% for Wales, 5% for the East, 4% for Yorkshire and The Humber, 3% for the North West, 2 % for the West Midlands, 1% for the East midlands and 1% Other (fig. 29). Two areas, the North East and Northern Ireland, did not have any respondents.

Over 57% of respondents work in London and the South East, indicating that the questionnaire may not have reached tree officers in some other regions. The results also could indicate that there are more employment opportunities for tree officers in different regions.

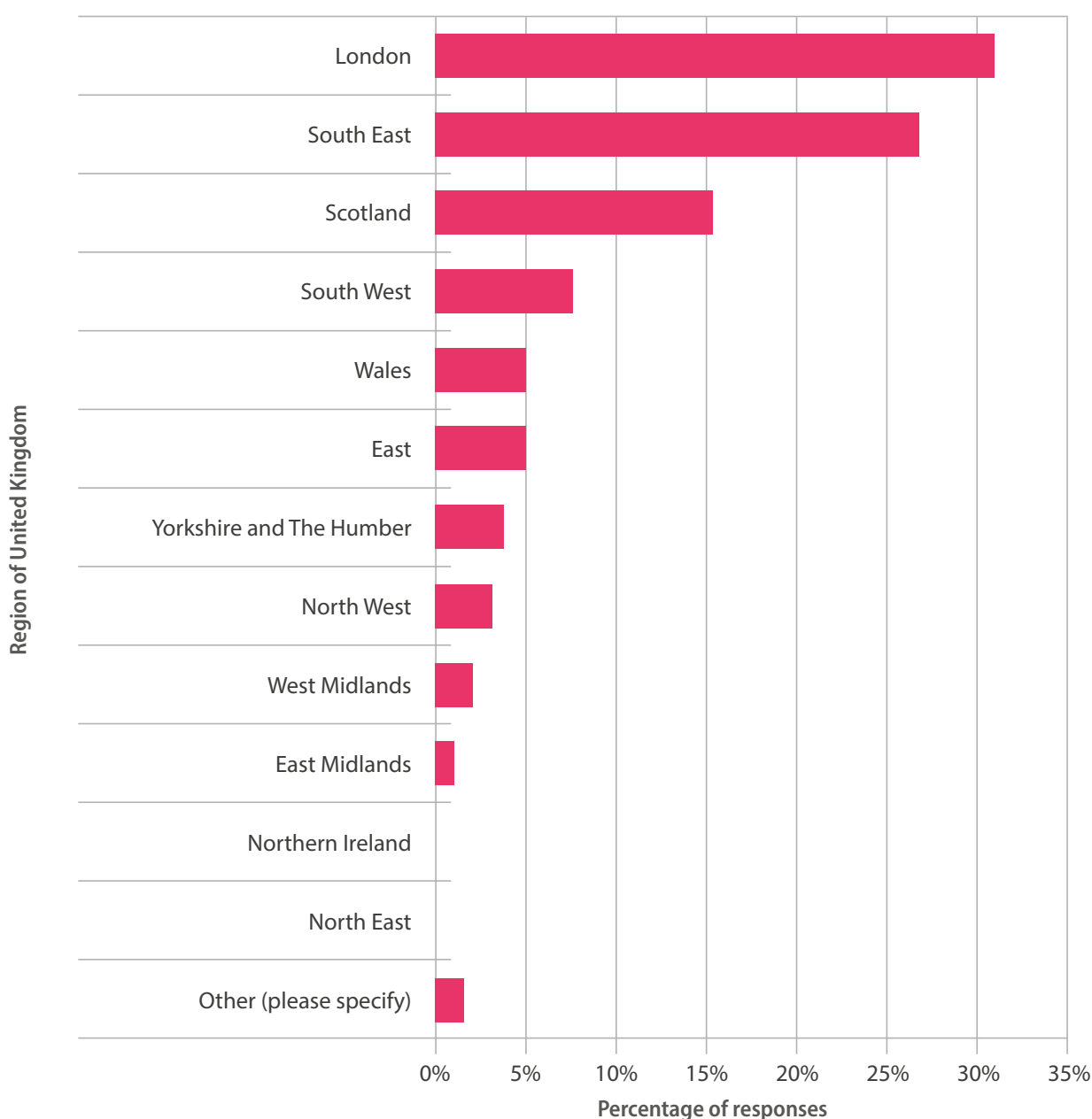


Figure 29: Bar graph depicting percentage of respondents from different regions of the United Kingdom.

Question 31

Which type of local authority do you work for?

The highest number of respondents (33%) worked for London boroughs, followed by 27% District, 15% Unitary, 14% County, 9% Metropolitan and 1% Housing Association (fig. 30). 22 respondents skipped the question, which may indicate that some non-tree officers have contributed responses to the questionnaire.

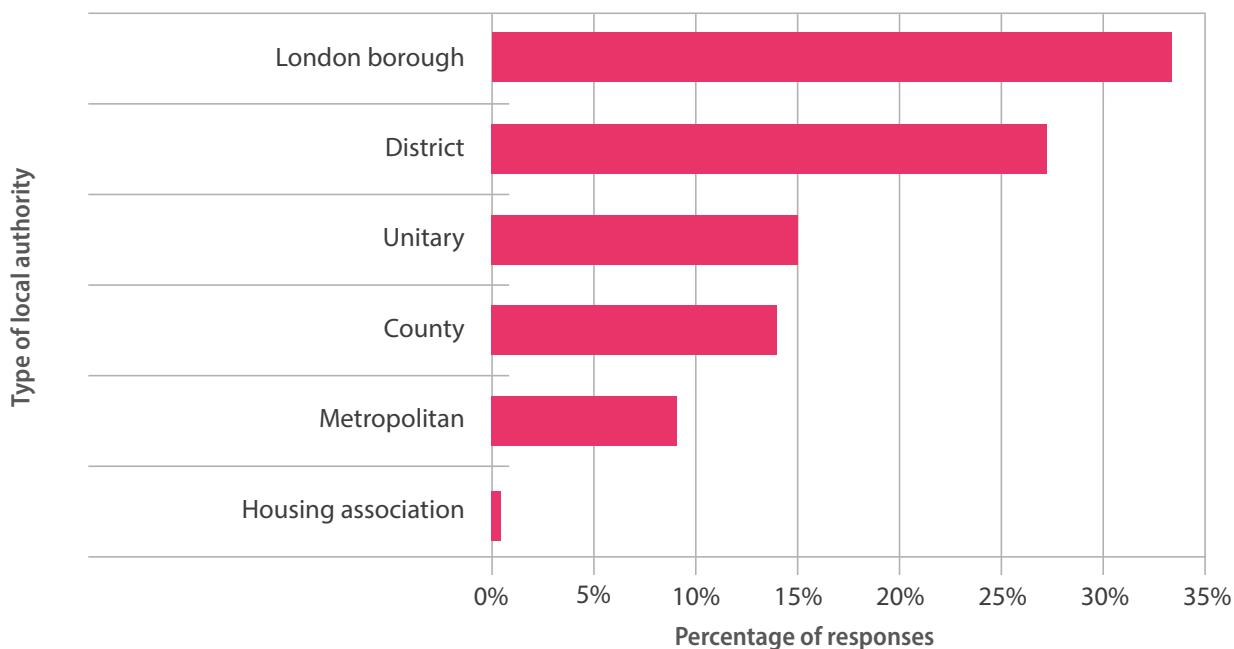
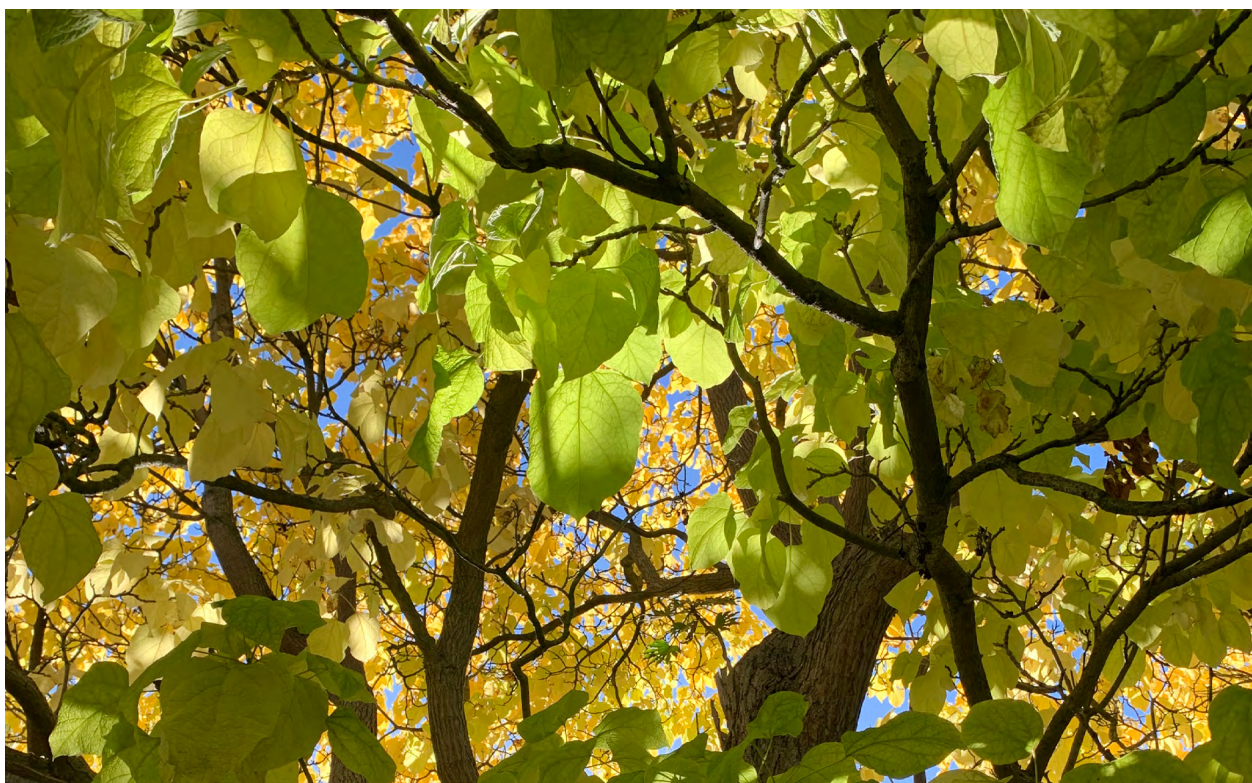


Figure 30: Bar graph depicting the percentage of respondents who work for different types of local authority.



5. Conclusion

Tree officers fall below national average diversity indices in areas of gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion. These results mirror the findings of the previous survey of tree officers in London undertaken in 2019.

Tree officers seem to be more neurodivergent than the wider workforce but there are fewer tree officers with disabilities than the norm.

There were no respondents below the age of 25.

With regard to mental health issues and sexual orientation, percentages were broadly equivalent to current UK workforce statistics.

The results of this survey underline the need for change to improve the diversity of tree officers. The barriers to entering the profession and progressing through a career as a tree officer are varied, but common threads such as industry culture and the limited number of entry level positions, combined with a low industry profile clearly need to be addressed if the profession is to grow and thrive. These issues need to be addressed not just by individuals and local authority employers, but by the wider industry and our professional bodies, as set out in detail in the aims and actions section of the report.

The importance of diversity and inclusion is clear. Tree officers from a range of different backgrounds and experiences generate more ideas, creativity and innovation, which in turn improves problem solving and decision making, and so brings strength and resilience to our profession. Ultimately, greater diversity and inclusion make us better able to represent our own communities and address the shared challenges that we face.



6. Resources list

Neurodiversity

AchieveAbility > Resources

<https://www.achieveability.org.uk/main/resources>

Best practice and training

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/best-practice>

Workplace - Mind

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/>

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion in the Workplace | Factsheets | CIPD

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/diversity/factsheet#gref>

Equality, diversity and inclusion in the workforce | Local Government Association

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-workforce>

The power of inclusive workplaces | Stonewall

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/power-inclusive-workplaces>

Recruitment

Tree Officer Job Profile (London Tree Officer Association)

<https://www.ltoa.org.uk/resources/job-profile>

Resources list last accessed on 27 December 2022

Endnotes

- i <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2018/05/Future-State-of-Landscape-May-2018.pdf>
- ii <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/new/our-strategic-priorities/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/change-action-plan/>
- iii <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/aps168/reports/employment-by-occupation?compare=K02000001>
- iv <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest#by-ethnicity>
- v <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/populationoftheunitedkingdombycountryofbirthandnationality>
- vi <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS209EW/view/2092957703?cols=measures>
- vii <https://www.badenochandclark.com/~media/uk/bac%20uk%2006%202021%20-%20neurodiversity%20report.pdf/>

- viii Calculated by authors using ONS Data Sheet A08, Labour market status of disabled people, November 2021, and ONS Labour Force Survey, October 2021
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08/current>
- ix <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/uklabourmarketoctober2021>
- x <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey-mental-health-and-wellbeing-england-2014>
- xi Sexual orientation, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2019>
- xii <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/adhocs/009902flexiblehoursworkingbyregionandbroadagegroups19982008and2018>
- xiii <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/full-time-and-part-time-employment/latest>
- xiv <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/adhocs/009902flexiblehoursworkingbyregionandbroadagegroups19982008and2018>
- xv <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/populationoftheunitedkingdombycountryofbirthandnationality>
- xvi <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest#by-ethnicity>
- xvii <https://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-workforce-summary-data-november-2021>
- xviii <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/aps168/reports/employment-by-occupation?compare=K02000001>
- xix ATO survey question 1
- xx https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721642/GEO-LGBT-factsheet.pdf
- xxi https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721704/LGBT-survey-research-report.pdf
- xxii <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/genderidentity>
- xxiii <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2019>
- xxiv <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/adhocs/007432civilserviceemploymentbygovernmentdepartmentsexualorientationreligionorbeliefandage>
- xxv <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS209EW/view/2092957703?cols=measures>
- xxvi <https://academic.oup.com/bmb/article/135/1/108/5913187>
- xxvii <https://www.badenochandclark.com/~media/uk/bac%20uk%2006%202021%20-%20neurodiversity%20report.pdf/>
- xxviii <https://www.badenochandclark.com/~media/uk/bac%20uk%2006%202021%20-%20neurodiversity%20report.pdf/>

- xxix https://www.achieveability.org.uk/files/1516612947/wac-neurodiverse-voices-opening-doors-to-employment-report_2018_interactive.pdf
- xxx <https://www.institutelm.com/resourceLibrary/workplace-neurodiversity-the-power-of-difference.html>
- xxxi <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/diversity/neurodiversity-work#gref>
- xxxii Calculated by authors using ONS Data Sheet A08, Labour market status of disabled people, November 2021, and ONS Labour Force Survey, October 2021
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08/current>
- xxxiii <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/uklabourmarketoctober2021>
- xxxiv https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/556596/apms-2014-full-rpt.pdf
- xxxv https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5823/managing_and_supporting_mh_at_work.pdf
- xxxvi <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/facts-and-figures>

Endnotes last accessed 6 January 2023



This report has been produced by the London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) Diversity and Inclusion Working Party, working jointly for the LTOA and the Association of Tree Officers (ATO)

March 2023