

Diversity and inclusion within The Seabird Group: results from our 2022 membership survey

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Abstract

The Seabird Group is committed to improving equity, diversity and inclusion within our membership and the 'seabirding' community. To gather information on the status of diversity and inclusion within our membership, we gathered demographic and inclusion data from our members during early 2022. Here, we present the results from that survey. Key areas for us to improve are diversity and inclusion of people of the Global Majority, gender diversity and inclusion, and LGBTQIA+ and disability inclusion.

Introduction

Although the gender balance of The Seabird Group has improved since our early days, when women made up a very small proportion of the 'seabirding' community, we have made much poorer progress on other aspects of diversity and inclusion. In 2020, shortly following the Black Lives Matter protests, The Seabird Group published a statement committing ourselves to address matters of equity (initially equality but later revised), diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within our organisation. Since 2020, improving EDI has become a core focus of our committee. At our Annual General Meeting in 2020, our membership voted to add a new role of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer to our committee, which we filled in early 2021. We have held working groups to speak with people within our community from marginalised groups, including LGBTQIA+ (autumn 2020), ethnicity (spring 2021) and gender (summer 2021). The feedback from these meetings was used to build our EDI Action Plan (The Seabird Group, 2021), which we published at the 7th World Seabird Twitter Conference.

Methods

As part of our Action Plan, it was important to gather 'baseline' demographic and inclusion data from our members, which we will use to measure our progress with improving diversity and inclusion. Therefore, between 1 February and 31 May 2022, we opened an anonymous survey to gather information on diversity and inclusion from The Seabird Group members. Firstly, we aimed to compile a baseline understanding of diversity within The Seabird Group membership and assess representation of marginalised groups. Secondly, we aimed to investigate whether our membership felt included and determine which areas to best target our efforts to improve EDI within The Seabird Group over the coming years. We asked questions on age, country of residence, ethnicity, religion, gender, trans and intersex statuses, sexual orientation, and health (the full survey is in Appendix 1). In writing these questions, we drew upon the England and Wales census 2021 (Office for National Statistics, 2022) and guidance from Stonewall (Pasterny, 2019). Here, we present the results from that survey. Where a diversity category had <5% of the total responses, and individuals may be identifiable, we have represented such categories as '<5%'. Where there was only one category with <5% (and thus the true proportion of responses within this category could be calculated), we have pooled multiple categories together. As most respondents resided in the UK at the time of the survey, we compare the results of our findings to the results from the England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2022) and Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Statistics

and Research Agency, 2022) censuses from 2021. Unfortunately, results from the Scotland census 2022 were not available at the time of writing.

Results

We had 101 responses of a membership total (as of 29 April 2022) of 296, i.e., 34% of the membership. Most respondents answered all questions. One respondent answered ‘prefer not to say’ to all diversity questions, so has been excluded from the diversity section of the results.

Age

Ages were categorised into brackets (i.e., 20-29, 30-39, etc.). There were 97 responses to this question, and we pooled the age brackets 70-79 and 80-80 into one (70+). There was relatively even representation from each age bracket, with 30-39 being the most common response (22%; Figure 1). No respondents were below 20 or above 90.

We were pleased to see a range of diversity across our members and we aim to ensure that all members, regardless of age, feel included as part of the Group.

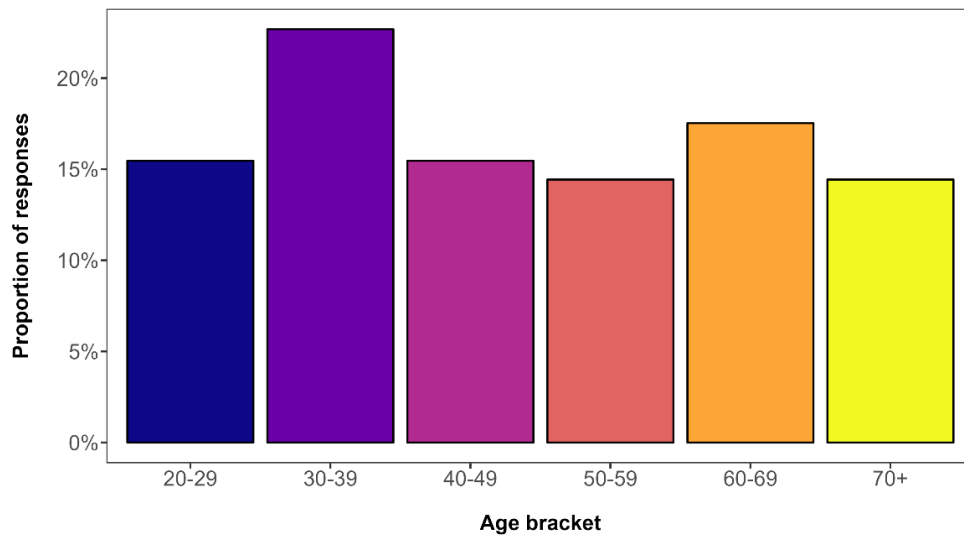


Figure 1. Age brackets of respondents.

Country of residence

Most respondents lived in the UK at the time of the survey (79%; Figure 2). We also had responses from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Faroe Islands, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain and USA (each <5%). One respondent did not specify their country within Europe, so has not been included in Figure 2.

The Seabird Group is a charity registered in the UK, so the high proportion of respondents residing in the UK is perhaps not surprising. However, due to our historically strong ties with Ireland, we had expected greater numbers of responses from people residing in Ireland. All respondents resided in high income countries.

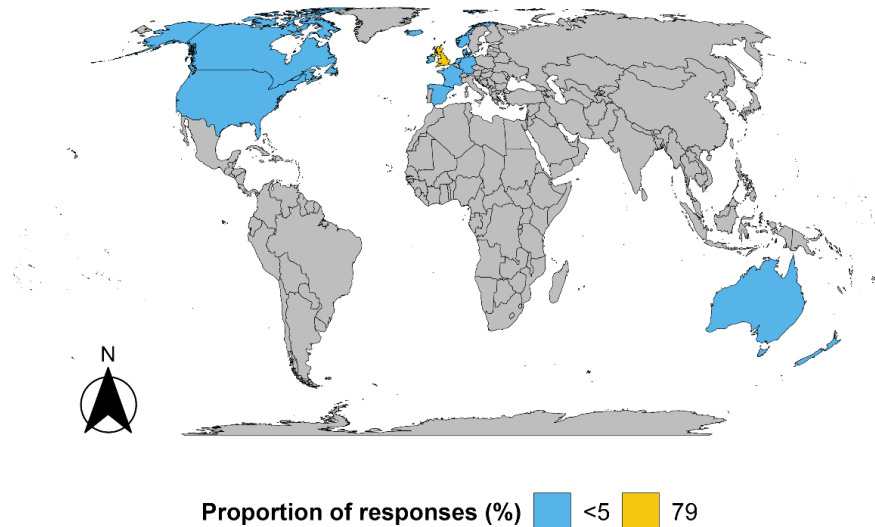


Figure 2. Map showing the countries that respondents lived in at the time of the survey. Fill colour indicates the number of responses for each country.

Ethnicity

The majority (>90%) of our respondents were white, with <5% 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian', and <5% did not specify a broad ethnical group (Table 1). 79% of our respondents were 'White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh' and <5% were 'White: Irish'. Other responses within the white category were mostly 'other European', and of these, most were northern European.

In comparison, 81.7% of people who responded to the England and Wales census 2021 (Office for National Statistics, 2022) and 96.6% of people who responded to the Northern Ireland census 2021 (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2022) were white (Table 2). Multiple other ethnic groups were represented in the England and Wales census 2021, where 9.3% of respondents were Asian; 4% were Black; and 2.2% were Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups. Ecology and environmental sciences are one of the least ethnically diverse industries within the UK (O'Brien et al., 2020; Wildlife & Countryside Link, 2022); yet our respondents were much less ethnically diverse than within other surveys in the ecology sector, such as the British Ecological Society's membership census 2021, where just under 70% of respondents who did not select 'Prefer not to say' were white (British Ecological Society, 2022; Table 2). Improved diversity and inclusion of people of the Global Majority is clearly a key area that we need to focus on improving within The Seabird Group.

Table 1. Ethnicity of respondents.

Broad ethnic group	Ethnic sub-group	Proportion of responses (%)
White	British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh	79
	Irish	<5
	French	<5
	German	<5
	Danish	<5
	Dutch	<5
	Iberian	<5
	Norse	<5
	Roma, French	<5
	Scandinavian	<5
	European	<5
	Not specified	<5
Mixed or Multiple	White and Asian	<5
Not specified	British/New Zealander	<5
	Dutch-Indonesian	<5

Table 2. Broad ethnic groups of respondents in comparison to the England and Wales Census 2021, the Northern Ireland Census 2021, and the British Ecological Society Membership Survey 2021.

Broad ethnic group	Proportion of respondents (%)			
	The Seabird Group	England & Wales	Northern Ireland	British Ecological Society
Asian	0	9.3	1.7	8
Black	0	4.0	0.6	6
Mixed or Multiple	1	2.9	0.8	3
White	97	81.7	96.6	47
Other	0	2.1	0.19	1
Not specified/did not respond	2	NA	NA	32
Latino/Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	3

Gender

Across our respondents, 64% were a man and 36% were a woman (Figure 3a). No respondents were non-binary or any other gender and 100% of respondents answered ‘no’ to the question: ‘Are you Trans, or do you have Trans history?’. Over 95% of respondents said they were not intersex, with <5% unsure or declining to answer. Comparatively, 0.5% of people in the England and Wales census said they that their gender is not the same as the sex they were registered with at birth (Office for National Statistics, 2022). There were no questions pertaining to trans status within the Northern Ireland census (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2022) and no questions about intersex status on either of the England and Wales or Northern Ireland 2021 censuses. Our results were lower than those recorded by the British Ecological Society’s membership census 2021, where 2% of respondents were non-binary or another gender (British Ecological Society, 2022). Trans and non-binary people face high levels of discrimination and exclusion in science (Cech & Waidzunus, 2021; Maloy et al., 2022) and there are examples of such instances within the wider seabirding community. The lack of diversity of trans and non-binary people within our membership therefore indicates that trans inclusion is a key area for improvement for The Seabird Group as well as the wider seabirding community.

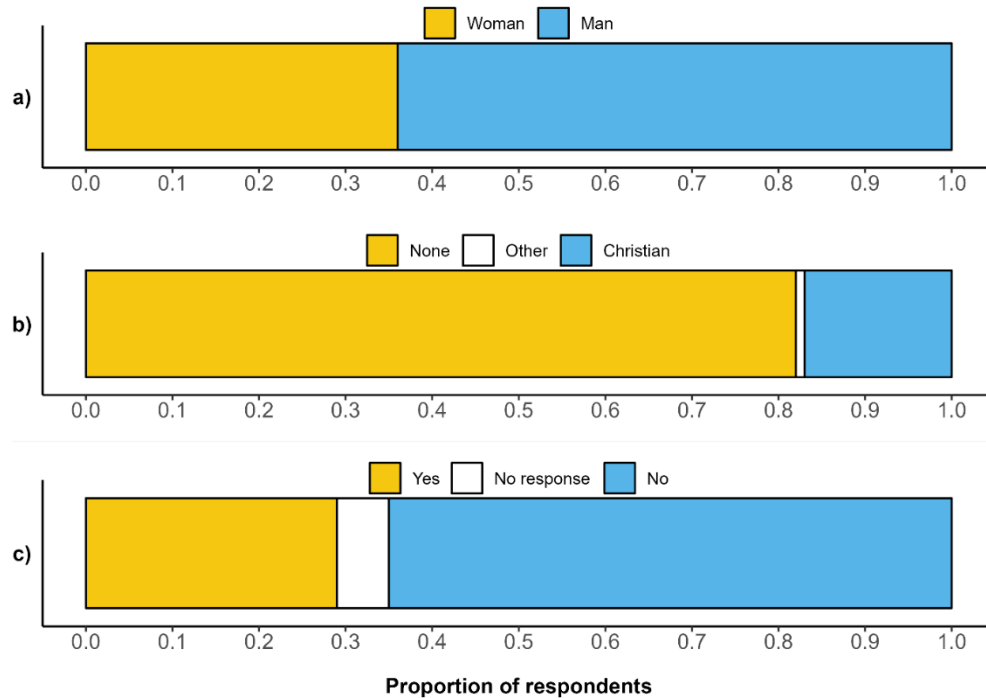


Figure 3. a) Gender of respondents; b) religion of respondents; and c) responses given to the question ‘Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?’.

Religion

Most respondents reported having no religion (82%), 17% of respondents were Christian and 1% had another religion (Figure 3b). In comparison, within the England and Wales census 2021, 46.2% of respondents were Christian, 37.2% as no religion, 6.5% as Muslim, and 1.7% as Hindu (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Within the Northern Ireland census 2021, 42% of respondents were Catholic, 37% of respondents were another Christian religion, and 17% of respondents had no religion (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2022). Although there tends to be lower proportions of religious people in scientific industries (Ecklund et al., 2016), we had much lower diversity of religions compared to the England and Wales census 2021, which may be linked to our low ethnic diversity.

Health

During the survey, 29% of respondents reported having at least one long-term physical or mental health condition or illness; 65% reported having no long-term conditions; and 6% were unsure or declined to answer (Figure 3c). Comparatively, 17.8% of respondents to the England and Wales census 2021 and 34.7% of respondents to the Northern Ireland census 2021 reported having at least one long-term physical or mental health condition or illness.

Of the people who gave further details about their conditions, there was a wide range represented, with some of the most common including depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions, heart conditions, cancers and arthritis. Of the 28 people who answered the question ‘In which spaces are you open about your condition(s) and/or illness(es)?’, 93% were open at home, 68% at work, 32% during seabird-related fieldwork and 18% at seabird conferences or meetings (Figure 4). Some people were only open about some of their conditions at work and some were only open with some people at work or during fieldwork. We will be running a disability and health working group during November 2023 to investigate why fewer people feel able to be open about their health status at seabird conferences, meetings and fieldwork compared to other aspects of their work or home life. We hope these meetings will also help us to determine how we can better support people with health conditions.

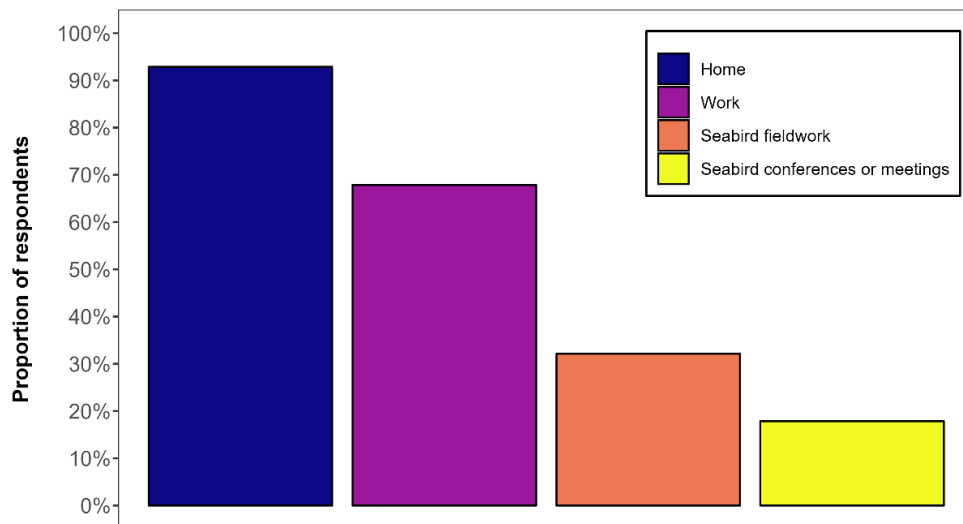


Figure 4. Responses given to the question ‘In which spaces are you open about your condition(s) and/or illness(es)?’ for those respondents who had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more.

Sexuality

Across our survey participants, 82% were 'Straight/Heterosexual' and 17% were part of the LGB+ spectrum, with the remaining declining to respond. We had a higher proportion of LGB+ respondents compared to either the England and Wales or Northern Ireland censuses 2021, where 3.2% and 2% of respondents, respectively, were LGB+.

Of the 18 respondents who were LGB+, 67% were open about their sexuality at home, 56% at work, 50% at seabird conferences or meetings, and 44% during seabird fieldwork (Figure 5). A small proportion of people stated that they were either not open in any context or only in certain circumstances when they felt comfortable or safe. The Seabird Group has been particularly focussing on inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people, thus we are pleased to see a relatively high diversity of sexualities within our membership. However, we would like to continue to tackle why fewer people feel able to be out at seabird conferences, meetings and fieldwork compared to other aspects of their work or home life.

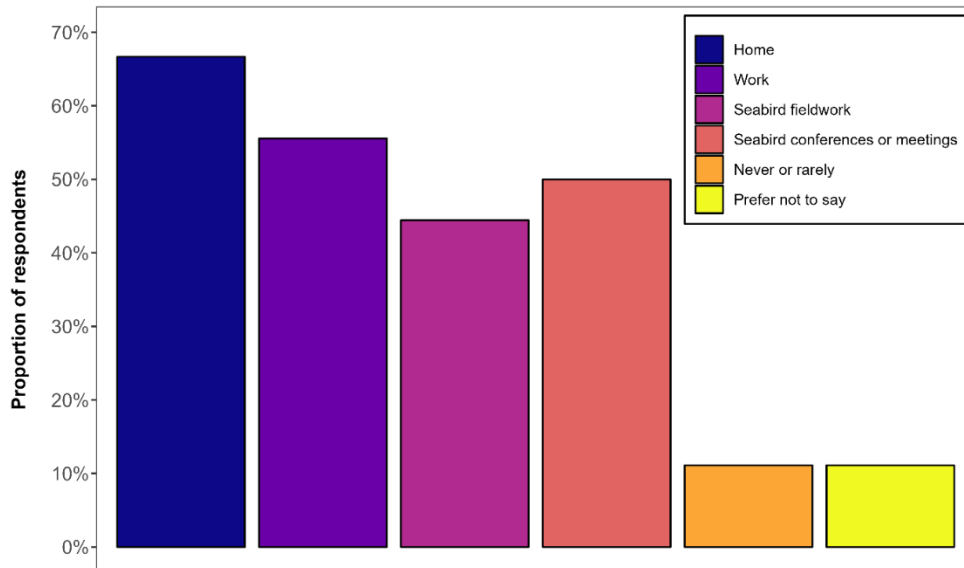


Figure 5. Responses given to the question 'In which spaces are you open about your sexuality?' for those respondents who were not 'Straight/Heterosexual'.

Inclusion

Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all statements of inclusion, with ‘agree’ being the most common response for all questions (Figure 6). Respondents most strongly agreed with the statements: ‘I feel a sense of belonging within The Seabird Group and the seabirding community’ (Figure 6a) and ‘People within the seabirding community are respectful to one another’ (Figure 6c). People least strongly agreed with the statement ‘I feel comfortable discussing my background, beliefs and cultural experiences with other people in the seabirding community’ (Figure 6b). As around 13% of respondents responded ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ to one or more inclusion questions, a key area for The Seabird Group to focus on is improving inclusion of all people.

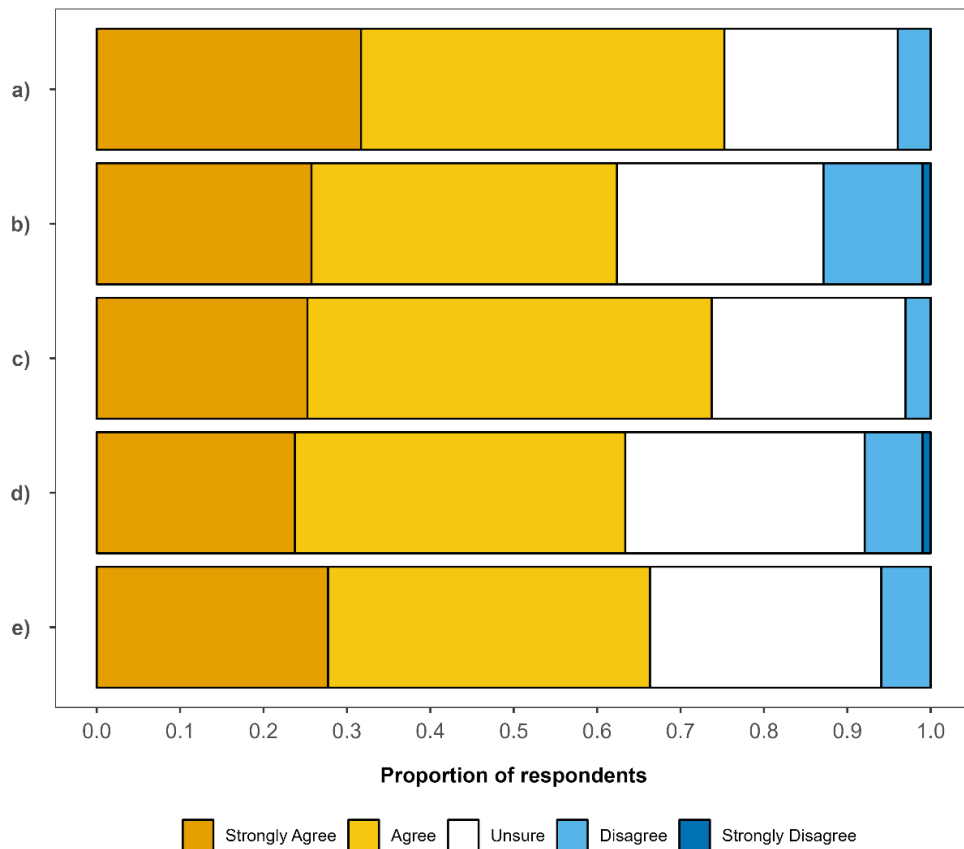


Figure 6. Responses to the statements: a) ‘I feel a sense of belonging within The Seabird Group and the seabirding community’; b) ‘I feel comfortable discussing my background, beliefs and cultural experiences with other people in the seabirding community’; c) ‘People within the seabirding community are respectful to one another’; d) ‘I believe the seabirding community is a safe space for all people’; and e) ‘People of all cultures and backgrounds are valued within the seabirding community’.

One quarter of respondents (24%) said they had experienced or observed unwelcome comments or misconduct at some point whilst engaging in seabird-related activities (Figure 7a); 56% said they had not;

and 20% gave no response. 16% of respondents said they had experienced discrimination whilst engaging in, or attempting to engage in, seabird-related activities based on their background or identity; 63% said they had not; and 21% did not respond (Figure 7b). Most examples of unwelcome comments, misconduct and discrimination were on a basis of gender and directed towards women. There were also examples of ageism (towards younger people), racism, classism, and prejudice towards people with mental ill health or children.

Our members felt that there was a lot that The Seabird Group was doing well to improve EDI within the seabirding community, with examples of what we are getting right including opening discussions around EDI issues, improved gender and age diversity, implementing training grants to upskill people, amplifying diverse voices through our social media channels and newsletter, and amplifying LGBTQIA+ role models and inclusion. Areas where our members thought we could improve included ethnic diversity, better integration and inclusion across professional and non-professional seabirders, disability inclusion, and improved support for parents at conferences, e.g., by providing free childcare.

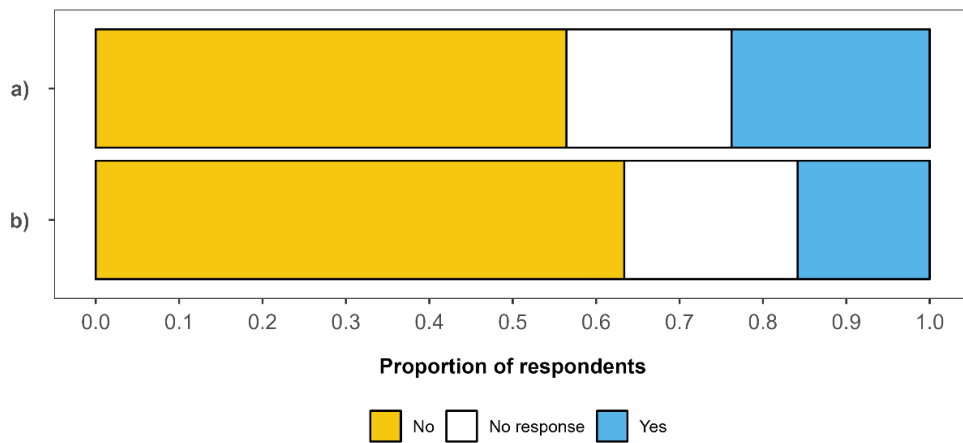


Figure 7. Responses to the statements: a) 'Have you experienced any unwelcome comments or conduct whilst engaging in seabird-related activities?'; and b) 'Have you experienced any discrimination whilst engaging in, or attempting to engage in, seabird-related activities based on one or more aspects of your background or identity?'.

Conclusions

The Seabird Group is committed to improving EDI and the data that we have collected in this survey comprise a useful baseline on which we can measure our future progress. Based on the results from this survey, there are a wide range of issues that are impacting current members of The Seabird Group and that are likely preventing people from multiple marginalised groups from participating in the seabirding community. Our main priorities over the coming years will be to improve diversity and inclusion of people of the Global Majority; to improve gender diversity and inclusion, particularly for trans and non-binary people; to improve disability and LGBTQIA+ inclusion; and to reduce the instances of misconduct and discrimination during seabird-related activities. We pledge to continue to implement and improve our EDI Action Plan to address and counter these issues and will report back on our progress with transparency. If you have any feedback on this document or suggestions for how we can improve EDI, please contact us on edi@seabirdgroup.org.uk.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to The Seabird Group members who took the time to respond to our survey and the participants of the working groups who gave their time and input so freely. We thank members of The Seabird Group Committee 2021 – 2023 (particularly Ruth Dunn) and Alex Bond for commenting on the survey methodology and/or this report.

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Appendix 1. Diversity and Inclusion survey as it appeared on Google Forms.

The Seabird Group Diversity and Inclusion questionnaire

The Seabird Group is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within the seabirding community. Summary statistics on these data will be used to monitor our progress on increasing diversity within The Seabird Group's membership, as well as help us identify areas where we can do more to promote inclusion within The Seabird Group and the seabirding community. All questions are optional. Please answer honestly, with as much information as you are willing to share. All results are anonymous and we have no way of linking answers to individuals. Responses will only be visible to The Seabird Group's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Office (Lila Buckingham). We suggest that when you fill out this form, you sign out of your Google account or open a new tab in incognito mode, in order to ensure your data cannot be accessed by Google.

Section 1. Diversity

1) What is your age?

- Below 16
- 16-19
- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90+
- Prefer not to say

2) Where do you live?

- UK
- Ireland

- Another European country (please specify under 'Other')
- Non-European country (please specify under 'Other')
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

3) What is your ethnic group?

- White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh
- White: Irish
- White: Gypsy or Traveller
- White: Roma
- Any other White background, please specify under 'Other'
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean
- Any other Mixed or Multiple background, please specify under 'Other'
- Asian: Bangladeshi
- Asian: Chinese
- Asian: Indian
- Asian: Pakistani
- Any other Asian background, please specify under 'Other'
- Black: African
- Black: Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please specify under 'Other'
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

4) Do you have a religion?

- No
- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu

- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Spiritual
- Any other religion or belief (please specify under 'Other')
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

5) Which term best describes your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify under 'Other')
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

6) Are you Trans, or do you have Trans history?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

7) If you ticked 'yes' to Question 6, or identify as Non-binary, in which spaces are you open about your Trans/Non-binary status? (tick all that apply)

- At home
- At work
- Whilst attending seabird-related conferences and/or meetings
- During seabird-related fieldwork
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

8) Are you Intersex?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

9) If you ticked 'yes' to Question 8, in which spaces are you open about your Intersex status? (tick all that apply)

- At home
- At work
- Whilst attending seabird-related conferences and/or meetings
- During seabird-related fieldwork
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

10) How would you describe your sexual orientation? (tick all that apply)

- Ace (e.g. Asexual, Aromantic)
- Bi
- Gay man
- Gay woman/Lesbian
- Straight/Heterosexual
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify under 'Other')
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

11) If you selected anything other than 'Straight/Heterosexual' in Question 10, in which spaces are you open about your sexuality? (tick all that apply)

- At home
- At work
- Whilst attending seabird-related conferences and/or meetings

- During seabird-related fieldwork
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

12) Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

13) If you ticked 'yes' to Question 12, in which spaces are you open about your condition(s) and/or illness(es)? (tick all that apply)

- At home
- At work
- Whilst attending seabird-related conferences and/or meetings
- During seabird-related fieldwork
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

Section 2. Inclusion

For Questions 14-18, please rate how well you agree with the statement scaling from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

14) I believe the seabirding community is a safe space for all people

15) I feel a sense of belonging within The Seabird Group and the seabirding community

16) I feel comfortable discussing my background, beliefs, and cultural experiences with other people in the seabirding community

17) People of all cultures and backgrounds are valued within the seabirding community

18) People within the seabirding community are respectful to one another

For Questions 19-22 you are welcome to provide any comments you wish to.

19) Have you experienced any unwelcome comments or conduct whilst engaging in seabird-related activities?

20) Have you experienced any discrimination whilst engaging in, or attempting to engage in, seabird-related activities based on one or more aspects of your background or identity?

21) What (if anything) is The Seabird Group doing well to improve diversity, equality and inclusion within the seabirding community?

22) How might The Seabird Group improve diversity, equality and/or inclusion within the seabirding community?