DIVERSITY DATA IN OUR GRANT FUNDING

2017–2019

CANCER RESEARCH UK

Together we will beat cancer

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Diversity is integral to excellence. A diverse and inclusive research community ensures equality and equity for all and will help beat cancer sooner. We are committed to transparency about who we are funding and to identifying and addressing inequalities in research. In this report, we share diversity data for our funding schemes for the first time. We hope this opens up more conversations about diversity in research funding.

As the largest independent funder of cancer research in the world, funded by public donations, we want to be transparent about who is successfully awarded our research grants and how this relates to the characteristics of our applicants and awardees. If necessary, we can then understand inequalities and address them.

Having gathered data since 2017, we report for the first time on the diversity data for our response-mode funding schemes. We are publishing cumulative data for application rates, success rates and award numbers. We also provide data on the composition of our research funding committees.

Key findings:

- The profile of our grant applicants reflects trends across the biosciences sector: we see an underrepresentation of Black researchers across all applications, and we see fewer applications from female researchers at senior levels. Although the success rates are the same as male researchers (28%), this means we have fewer senior female researchers in our community than male researchers.
- Researchers aged 41 to 50 years form the largest share of our Lead Applicants, accounting for a third of our applications.
- Only 1% of our Lead Applicants declared a disability, lower than the proportion of biosciences academic staff who reported a disability at 3%.
- Across all applications, success rates for male and female researchers are the same at 28%.
- For fellowships, ethnic minority researchers have a lower chance of being successful when they apply to Cancer Research UK. White researchers have a success rate of 27%, which is 16 percentage points higher than their ethnic minority colleagues at 11%.
- Female and ethnic minority researchers hold fewer programme awards than their White and male colleagues. Female researchers received 28% of programme awards made since 2017 and 7% of programme awards were awarded to ethnic minority researchers.
- Overall, the number of female researchers on our funding committees has nearly doubled in five years to 39%. This is higher than the proportion of female professors in the biosciences sector at 22%. We have at least 40% female membership on seven of our 13 committees.
- The proportion of ethnic minority researchers on our funding committees stands at 14%, an increase from 12% in 2019. Three of our committees do not as yet have any members disclosing an ethnic minority background.

Overall, we find our data to be comparable with reports from other UK research funders such as UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Wellcome and the Royal Society. Together with these funders, there are clear differences in application and success rates by diversity characteristic that we need to address.

This report includes key actions we will take and is being published together with a more detailed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in research action plan.

Our aims are to:

- ensure more diverse researchers are attracted to, retained and working in, cancer research
- use our influence to ensure a diverse and inclusive research culture
- fund research of the highest quality that is relevant to, and where appropriate involves, a wide and diverse population of research participants.

This report and accompanying action plan are part of a broader EDI strategy to make Cancer Research UK the best charity it can be, which reflects the communities we serve, and that people are proud to work and volunteer for. Cancer Research UK exists to beat cancer, and beating cancer means beating it for everyone.

Our EDI strategy principles:

- We will become an anti-racist charity and challenge racism and discrimination in the scope of our work.
- We will work collaboratively across the charity and with other likeminded organisations to achieve our vision.
- We will become an accessible charity that treats people with dignity and respect in every interaction.
- We will use our influence to promote equality and inclusion internally and in our work with others.
- We will continuously improve, adopt best practices and learn from others.
- We will collect data where we do not have it, to deepen our understanding of our audiences and better inform our work.

FOREWORD

At Cancer Research UK, we believe your success as a researcher should be determined by the quality of your science. We are committed to creating a more diverse and inclusive research community who can accelerate progress against cancer. Understanding our diversity data is an important first step towards tackling inequalities.

Cancer Research UK is the largest independent funder of cancer research in the world. We fund around half of the UK's publicly funded cancer research, supporting around 4,000 scientists and clinicians. We rely on the sharpest minds to help us beat cancer sooner, and it is incumbent on us – together with other funders, research institutions and individual researchers – to create diverse and inclusive research environments which allow all brilliant minds to come together, thrive and progress.

As a major research funder, we want to lead by example, use our influence and work collaboratively to make cancer research funding available to all the best researchers. To date, we have focused our EDI efforts on collecting better diversity data, improving the systemic issue of gender imbalance in cancer research, preventing bullying and harassment and improving research culture for everyone.

Events in 2020 highlighted ongoing global issues of inequality and systemic racism. This prompted many Black researchers to openly share their experiences of racism and prejudice in research on social media with the hashtag #BlackintheIvory. We reaffirmed our commitment to help create a more diverse and inclusive research environment and to take actions to address systemic underrepresentation.

We know that diversity and inequity in the scientific workforce is a global problem. Using ethnicity as one example, in the US, grant applications submitted to the National Institutes of Health by White Principal Investigators (PIs) are 1.7 times more likely than those submitted by Black PIs to be funded[1]. In the UK, even though ethnic minority groups are relatively well represented among first degree undergraduates and taught postgraduates, at 23.9% and 22.0%, respectively, just 3% of the 15,560 UK PhD students in 2017/2018 were Black[2]. The statistics are even less encouraging for senior career stages, with figures from Advance HE[3] showing there are only 85 Black professors within UK higher education institutions (4.6% of all Black faculty, compared with 11.2% of White faculty who hold this position). The picture is worse when disaggregated by gender; only 25 UK Black professors are women[3],[4].

Despite these stark figures there has been slight improvement in some areas. UKRI reports a 10 percentage-point increase in the proportion of ethnic minority Co-Investigators (CIs) as applicants in the past five years, and an increase in the proportion of female applicants overall[5]. But the COVID-19 pandemic risks reversing the progress that has been made[6]. As funders and research organisations focus on managing the immediate threats of the pandemic, we want to see EDI be a priority. Despite the significant challenges we now face as a charity due to COVID-19, we are committed to keeping up momentum in our efforts to ensure EDI in research and more broadly across the charity.

We're learning more about underlying systemic issues such as the lack of people from diverse backgrounds from analyses of funding trends[1],[2],[3],[5],[7], research into first-hand

experiences of ethnic minority researchers[4] and from hosting conversations with our researchers on how to tackle bias and racial inequality.

Our ambitions in beating cancer rely on a healthy pipeline of budding researchers who are attracted to science, engage in scientific training through undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and ultimately become the next generation of researchers. Right now, we know that the pipeline is not as representative of the broader UK population as it could be. We also know that there are multiple systemic factors that contribute to this problem. We need to look at what's stopping more people from different backgrounds pursuing a career in science and we need to prioritise a more positive research culture so all brilliant minds can thrive and progress. Fixing the system will take time and a collaborative effort. But we'll listen, we'll learn, and we'll continue to work with others to create the systemic culture change we want to see.

A robust evidence base is an essential foundation for us to identify issues and potential barriers in our current research activities, to ensure our funding processes are fair and objective, and take more effective action in promoting diversity and inclusion. We are committed to transparency: this report marks the first publication of our diversity data, which we hope will stimulate debate and help inform our actions.

Beating cancer means beating it for everyone. Our vision is to create an organisation where everyone feels like they belong, benefits from, and participates in, the work we do. We've made progress, but this report highlights that we – and the broader sector – still have work to do.

We welcome your feedback on what we're doing and ideas about how we can work together to bring about systemic change and to improve cancer research for everyone.

Please do get in contact:
EDIinResearch@cancer.org.uk

Dr Iain Foulkes
Executive Director
Research & Innovation

INTRODUCTION

For the first time, we are publishing data on the diversity characteristics of our grant applicants. These include applicants for programmes, projects, bursaries, clinical trials and fellowships. We present diversity data by age, disability, ethnicity and gender identity for Lead Applicants and committee members.

To begin to address inequalities in research funding we need a robust evidence base with which to understand the issues and barriers that stand in the way of diversity and inclusion. Having gathered data on our applications since 2017, we are now in a position to publish our analyses.

We are publishing data on diversity characteristics of our response-mode grant applicants from 22 September 2017, when we made diversity reporting mandatory in our grants management system, to 31 December 2019. We are not including 2020 data because our committee meetings in spring 2020 were postponed due to COVID-19.

What are we reporting?

We currently collect diversity data on six characteristics for Lead Applicants and committee members: age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

We are sharing data for four diversity characteristics – age, disability, ethnicity and gender identity – and on three aspects of our funding:

- **Application rates** – who applies to us for funding.
- **Success rates** – who is likely to apply successfully.
- **Award numbers** – the number of people who received our awards.

We hope to report on religion or belief and sexual orientation in future.

We are also publishing diversity data on our funding committee membership from August 2020. These data outline the diversity characteristics of the experts who sit on our funding committees making decisions about what we fund. In 2018, we introduced self-reporting for committee members, which strongly encourages all funding committee members to complete a diversity monitoring form; however, the form is not mandatory.

Our diversity monitoring form questions include the option 'prefer not to say' as we understand some individuals may hesitate in disclosing personal details. We encourage respondents to fill it in fully, so we receive enough information for data analysis to inform our actions.

How are we presenting our data?

We are presenting cumulative diversity data since 2017. Where relevant, we compare our diversity data to the biosciences academic staff population based on Advance HE analysis using Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data from 2018–2019[8].

Where datasets are large enough, ethnicity is presented according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) list of ethnicity groups (Asian/Asian British, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, Other ethnic group, White). Where numbers of ethnic minority applicants or grantholders are small these are aggregated into a single 'ethnic minority' group. This means that we can't compare application data between individual ethnicity groups for some diversity characteristics because the numbers are too small. We plan to present disaggregated ethnicity group data in the future across all our analysis when we have a large enough dataset as we recognise ethnic groups have distinct identities and challenges.

What can these data tell us?

There are some important limitations to our current dataset. Our previous grant management system was not set up to capture diversity information for Joint Lead Applicants, CIs, or other grant staff and so we can only share diversity data for Lead Applicants at this time. This may not present a complete picture of all applicants where awards have multiple co-applicants. We moved to a new grants management system in 2020 and our diversity data collection will be improved for future reports to allow us to monitor all applicants.

We have stratified our data as far as possible where datasets are large enough to allow this, and without publishing personally identifiable information. In the future, we hope to include more granular analysis and intersectional data when we have a bigger cumulative dataset.

As our diversity data collection is linked to applications, we do not yet have complete award data for all awards before September 2017.

We also collect annual, anonymised staff and student diversity data from our core-funded CRUK institutes. Around half of our CRUK-funded students have so far self-reported their diversity data to us. Because of gaps in these data they are not included in this report, but we aim to report them in the future.

How often will we share these data?

We aim to publish our diversity analysis annually from now on. We are committed to improving our data collection going forwards to share a more complete picture of all our funding activities, liaising with other funders about the best ways to collect, align and present our information. We'll share what we learn with other funders.

Although these data describe patterns of grant applications, they cannot be used to explain all differences we see. This report is just the beginning of an ongoing dialogue with the research community and other funders to understand the complex factors that influence EDI across the research ecosystem.

APPLICATION RATES

What are the diversity characteristics of our applicants?

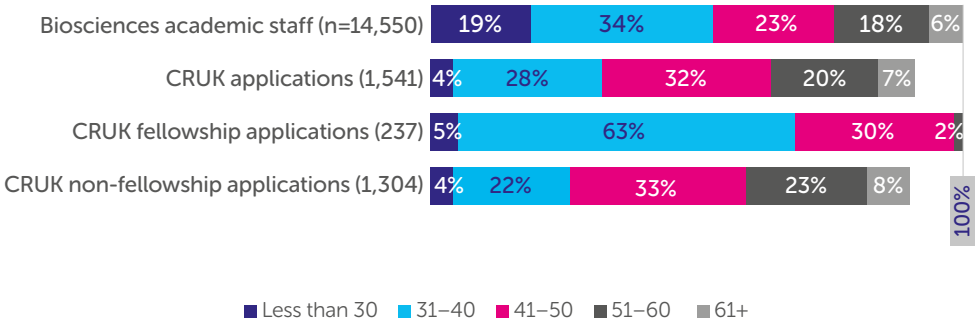
The profile of our applicants reflects trends across the biosciences sector: we see an underrepresentation of Black researchers across all applications, and we see fewer applications from female researchers at senior levels. Although the success rates are the same as male researchers (28%), this means we have fewer senior female researchers in our community than male researchers.

Between 22 September 2017 and 31 December 2019 we received 1,541 applications to our funding schemes. Here, we share how those applications break down by age, disability status, ethnicity and gender. Numbers may not add up to 100% due to 'prefer not to say' records not being shown.

Each chart also includes the proportion of biosciences academic staff at UK higher education institutions for each diversity characteristic, sourced from Advance HE[8]. This allows us to view our application rates in the context of the potential pool of applicants for different diversity characteristics.

Applications by age

Proportion of applications by age for all applications, fellowship applications and non-fellowship applications (2017–2019), compared with UK biosciences academic staff.

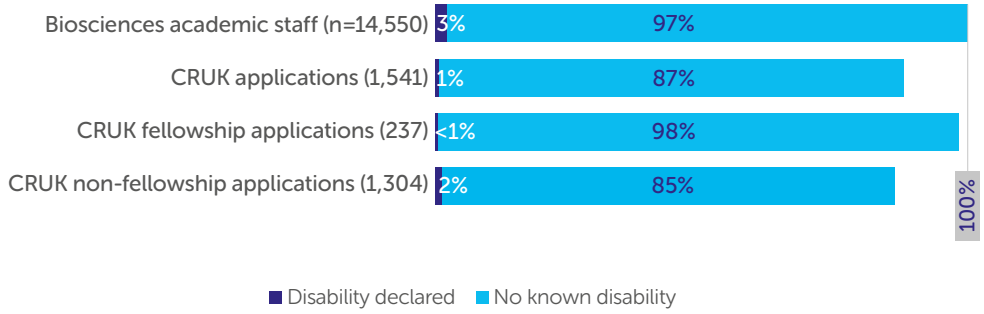


Researchers aged 41 to 50 years form the largest share of our Lead Applicants, accounting for 32% of applications. This exceeds the proportion of those aged 41 to 50 in the academic community (23%), most likely because our project and programme awards are aimed at more established researchers. This is also consistent with UKRI data where the largest share of PIs and CIs are 40 to 49 years old[5].

Our next largest applicant age groups are those aged 31 to 40 and 51 to 60, at 28% and 20%, respectively. This is also comparable to UKRI data[5]. More than half of the 31 to 40 age group are fellowship applicants, reflecting that some of our fellowships are aimed at early career researchers who have not yet taken up their first academic position.

Applications by disability status

Proportion of applications by disability status for all applications, fellowship applications and non-fellowship applications (2017–2019), compared with UK biosciences academic staff.



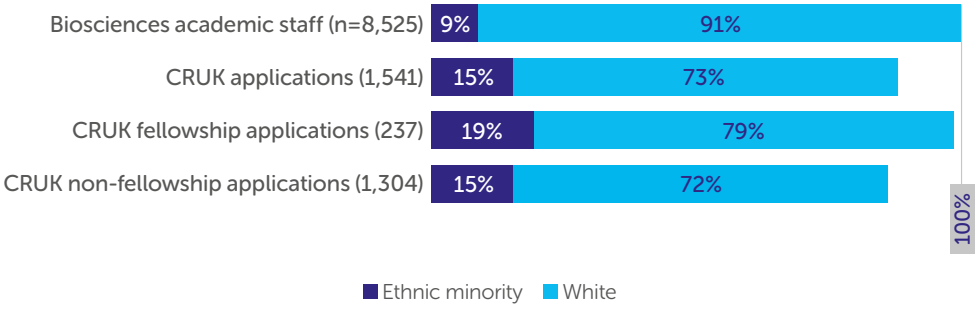
Totals may not reach 100% due to 'Prefer not to say' numbers not being shown.

Between 2017 and 2019, 1% of our Lead Applicants declared a disability. This is lower than the proportion of academic staff with a disability reported by Advance HE[8] (3%), but consistent with data reported by UKRI (1% applicants identified as disabled[5]) and Wellcome (2% applicants identified as disabled[7]).

Around 12% of our Lead Applicants choose not to disclose their disability status by selecting 'prefer not to say'. HE Advance reports that disability disclosure rates remain persistently lower among academic staff than professional and support staff and among professors compared with other academics[8].

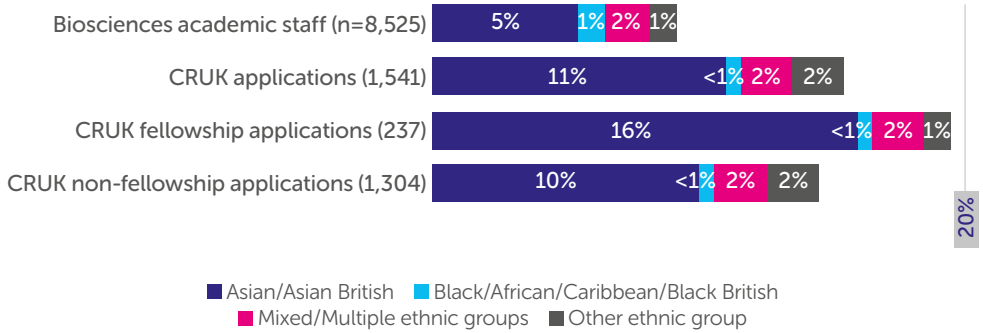
Applications by ethnicity

Proportion of applications by ethnicity for all applications, fellowship applications and non-fellowship applications (2017–2019), compared with UK biosciences academic staff.



Applications by ethnic minority groups

Proportion of applications by ethnic minority groups for all applications, fellowship applications and non-fellowship applications (2017–2019), compared with UK biosciences academic staff.



Overall, 15% of our applications between 2017 and 2019 were received from researchers from an ethnic minority background. The proportion of fellowship applicants from an ethnic minority background was higher at 19%. These figures are higher than the proportion of researchers from an ethnic minority background working across the biosciences academic sector (9%)[8]. Around 12% of our applicants preferred not to disclose their ethnic background.

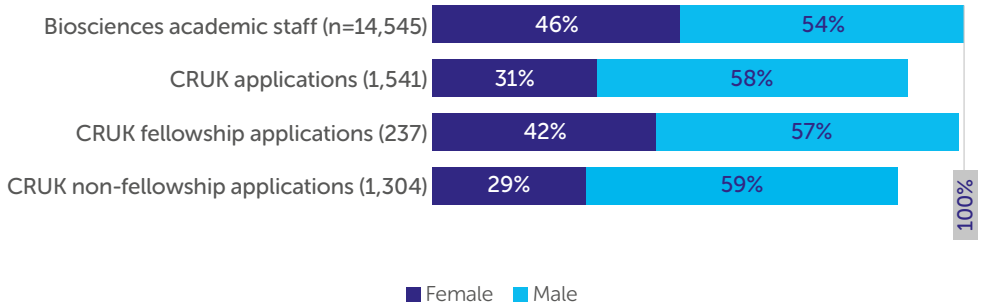
These figures are slightly higher than those reported by UKRI[5], which received 13% of its applications from ethnic minority applicants between 2014 and 2019.

When we break down our data into distinct ethnic groups, we see some variation in application rates of researchers from different ethnic minority backgrounds. Nearly three-quarters of our applications from ethnic minority researchers came from applicants who identify as Asian/Asian British. Moreover, across all applications, 11% came from Asian/Asian British applicants, whereas we received fewer than 1% of all applications from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British researchers.

The proportion of applications from researchers who identify as Asian/Asian British exceeds the 6% of Asian/Asian British staff (data includes Asian and Chinese) in the overall academic biosciences community. However, the lower proportion of applications we see from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British researchers is the same as reported by Wellcome[7] and reflects the much lower Black academic staff population at 1%[8]. We are committed to working with others in the sector to understand the reasons for this group's low numbers and participation in biomedical science.

Applications by gender

Proportion of applications by gender for all applications, fellowship applications and non-fellowship applications (2017–2019), compared with UK biosciences academic staff.



Further gender identity categories are available to select in our diversity form; only female/male/prefer not to say were selected in the above data set.

At 31%, the overall proportion of all grant applications from female researchers is considerably lower than the female academic biosciences population (46%). However, we have a slightly higher proportion of female researchers applying to our fellowship schemes (42%), which are aimed at early- to mid-career researchers. This is consistent with data from UKRI, where the proportion of female applicants ranges from 28% (applications as PIs) to 36% (fellowship applications)[7]. We see that fewer female researchers apply for awards aimed at more senior researchers – such as programme grants. This mirrors trends seen across biosciences, where there is an attrition of female academics through the pipeline of career progression resulting in a lower proportion of female researchers in senior academic roles[8].

Our next steps: Identifying and removing barriers to applicants

Our immediate priority is to focus on, understand and remove the barriers for researchers applying to us, and to boost applications from underrepresented groups.

We will:

- Monitor application rates to ensure they reflect the broader academic pool of biosciences researchers, as a minimum.
- Work to increase applications from ethnic minority and female applicants, especially to our grants aimed at more established, senior researchers.
- Work with our Training Centres to understand and implement initiatives to increase the diversity of PhD students, particularly Black and other ethnic minority background students, to increase the diversity of people entering the pipeline of researchers.
- Partner with organisations to support young people from diverse backgrounds to progress to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degrees and careers.
- Continue to remove barriers to researchers applying to us. For example, in 2018 we removed the post-PhD time restrictions for fellowship applicants, increasing flexibility for applicants such as those who have taken time out for caring responsibilities or for health reasons.
- Review our accessibility statement and processes to remove barriers to accessing our research funding and events for disabled applicants.
- Continue to help tackle barriers that prevent female researchers from progressing to senior positions by promoting policies that enable flexible research careers and providing support through our Women of Influence mentorship programme, which pairs female scientists with leading businesswomen outside academia.
- Offer leadership coaching to our fellows to ensure all talented researchers develop the skills they need to flourish as leaders in the cancer research field.
- Closely monitor the impact of COVID-19 on application rates, ensuring that our processes are inclusive. We know that those with caring responsibilities or health conditions may face additional barriers returning to work as normal. A new section on all grant application forms asks about the impact of COVID-19 on the applicant and their research.

APPLICATION SUCCESS RATES

Who is likely to apply successfully for our awards?

For overall applications, success rates for male and female researchers are the same at 28%, but differ by ethnicity (28% for White applicants; 25% for ethnic minority applicants, although this is not statistically significant). However, for fellowships, White researchers have a success rate of 27%, which is 16 percentage points higher than their ethnic minority colleagues at 11%.

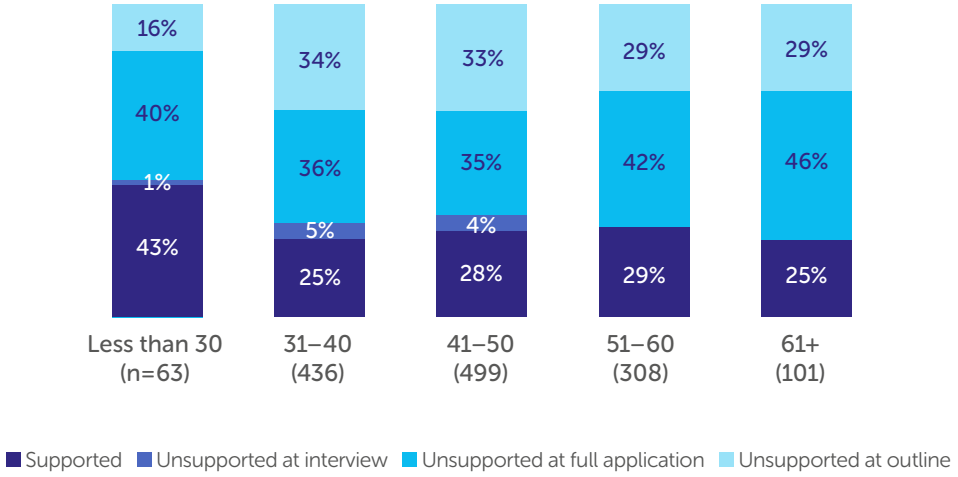
Applying for funding is competitive by nature, but we want to ensure that when people apply to us they have an equal opportunity of winning funding regardless of diversity characteristics. Applications to our funding schemes go through a rigorous review process, which may have different review stages, culminating in a review by the relevant funding committee.

To look at whether diversity characteristics have any impact on the likelihood of securing funding, we have collated data showing success rates for our different response-mode funding schemes. We present success rates at different stages of application and grouped by age, disability, ethnicity and gender.

Note that only fellowship awards have a separate and defined interview stage recorded in our grants management system. Some non-fellowship awards might also have an interview stage but this is not recorded separately, and so would be included in the data as supported or unsupported at full application.

Success rates by age

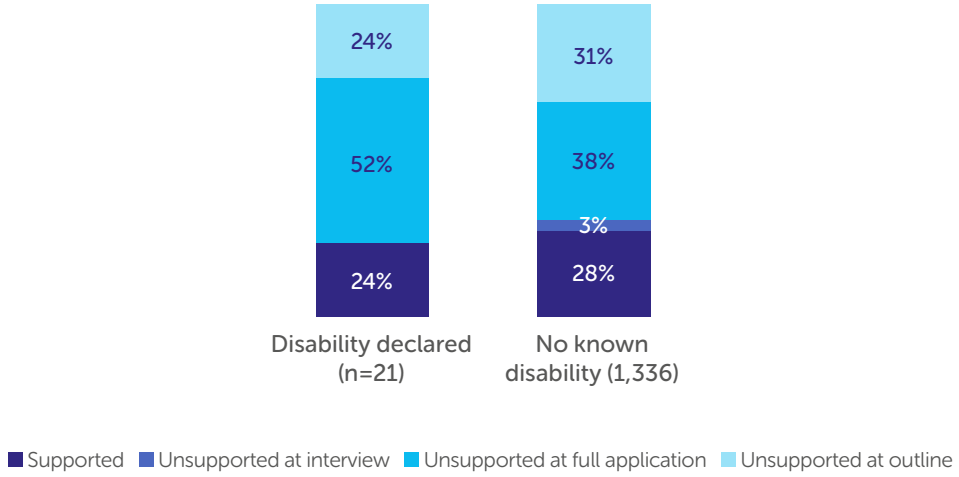
Application success rates shown by age range for all applications (2017–2019), stratified by application stage.



The success rate for researchers aged between 31 and 61+ ranges from 25% to 29%, with those between 51 and 60 having a 28% success rate. Success rates are higher for those under 30 (43%) – although most applications submitted by researchers under 30 are for bursaries. Researchers aged 51 to 60 years and 61+ years are more likely to have their outline accepted and proceed through to full application than the 31–40 and 41–50 age groups. We are not able to draw any further insights at this stage in our reporting because when we break down the data by type of award, the number of applications within each age group is too small for statistical analysis. In future years with more cumulative data we hope to be able to show success rates by age and award type.

Success rates by disability status

Application success rates shown by disability for all applications (2017–2019), stratified by application stage.

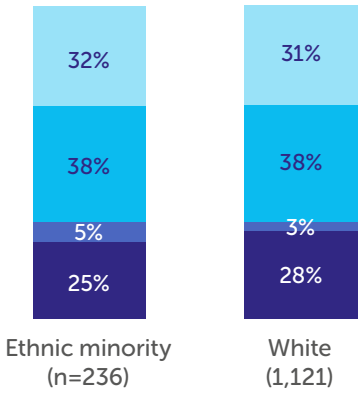


The chart shows that the success rate for applicants who declared a disability is slightly lower than for applicants who reported no known disability, at 24% and 28% respectively. These data do not include researchers who preferred not to say whether they had a disability. This is similar to data reported by UKRI which showed that between 2014 and 2019, the award success rate for researchers who declared a disability was 22% compared with 26% for those who did not. The only exception was for UKRI fellowships, where those with a disability had higher award rates for most years[5].

We are unable to break these data down further by award type because the number of overall applicants is too low for statistical analysis.

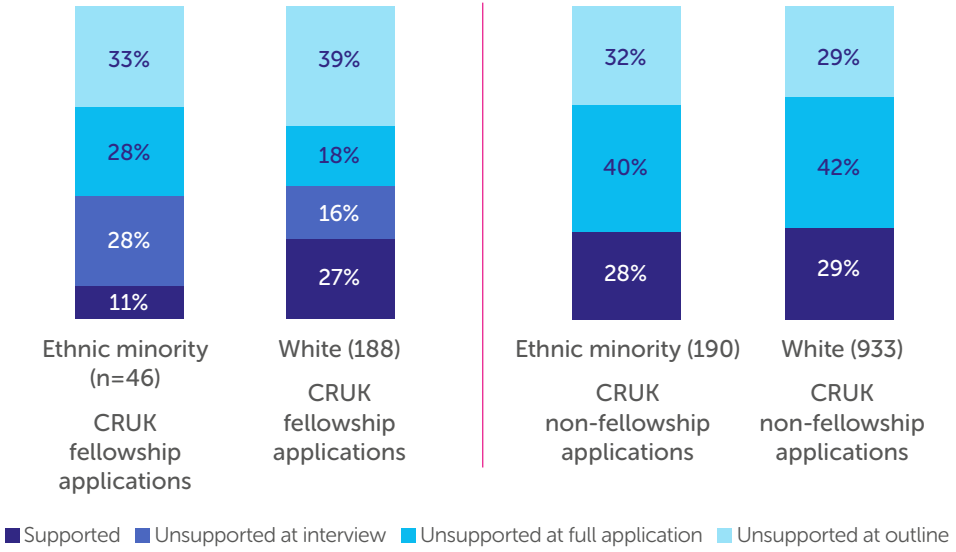
Success rates by ethnicity

Application success rates shown by ethnicity for all applications (2017–2019), stratified by application stage.



The adjacent chart shows success rates for ethnic minority and White researchers for all award types. The difference in success rates for White applicants (28%) and applicants from ethnic minority groups (25%) is not statistically significant, however it is a trend we will monitor as we collate more data. The equivalent data from Wellcome[7] reports an overall award rate of 15% for ethnic minority researchers, slightly lower than that of White applicants (18%). This trend persists when Wellcome's data is disaggregated into ethnic groups, and when analysing by year, funding division and award scheme. Similarly, UKRI finds that, across all councils and award types, White CIs and PIs have consistently higher award rates than ethnic minority CIs and PIs – a difference of four and nine percentage points, respectively[5].

Application success rates for fellowship and non-fellowship awards by ethnicity (2017–2019), stratified by application stage.



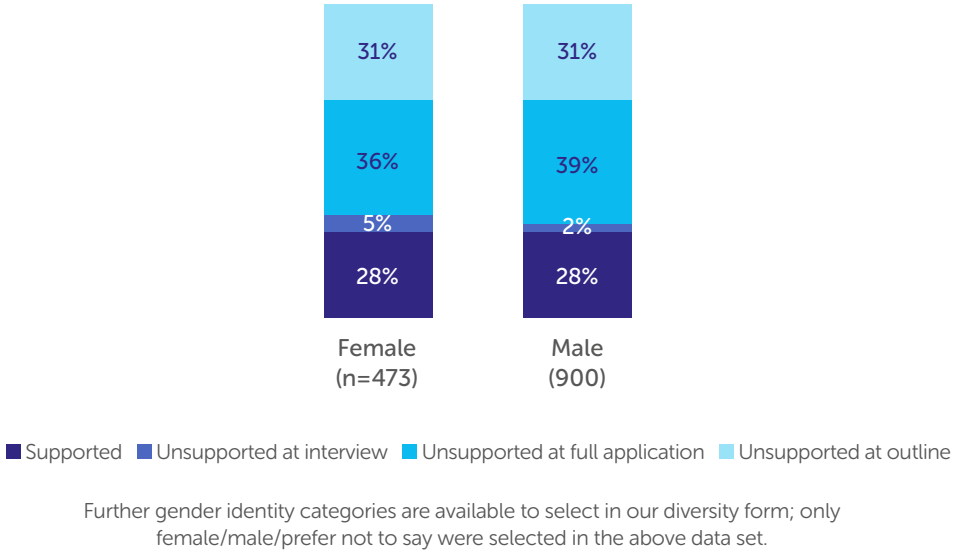
When we look at the breakdown between fellowships and non-fellowships, we find that White researchers who apply for a fellowship have a success rate of 27%, which is 16 percentage points higher than their ethnic minority colleagues at 11% – a statistically significant difference. This contrasts with the most recent data reported by UKRI, where fellowship applicants from an ethnic minority background had a higher award rate than White applicants in 2018/19 (21% versus 19%) – a reverse from previous years[5].

This suggests that when researchers from ethnic minority groups apply to us for a fellowship, they are less likely to be funded. This difference appears to be most apparent at the interview stage of the review process, where 28% of fellowship applicants from ethnic minority groups are unsuccessful compared to 16% of their White counterparts.

At the moment, we have insufficient data for an analysis of success rate by different ethnic minority groups, but this is something we plan to do when we have accumulated more data.

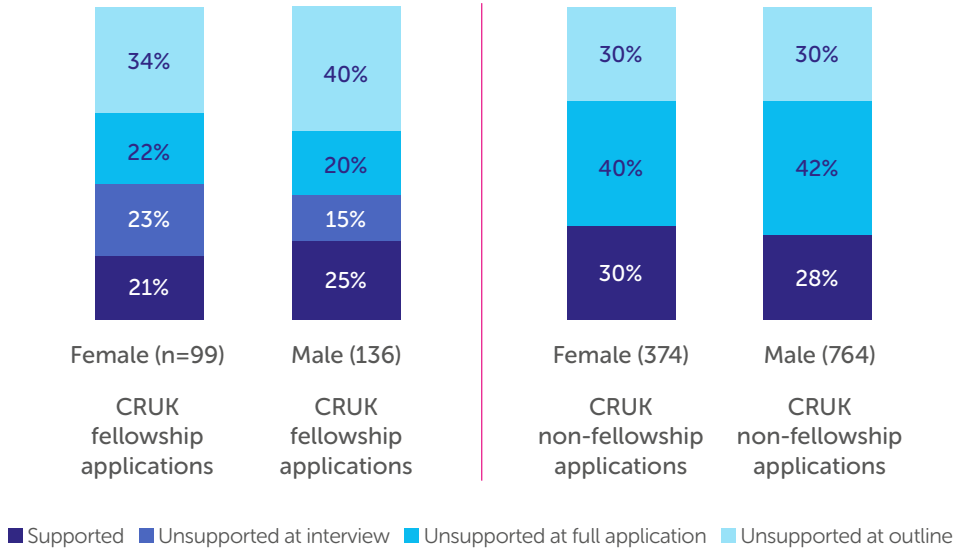
Success rates by gender

Application success rates shown by gender for all applications (2017-2019), stratified by application stage.



Further gender identity categories are available to select in our diversity form; only female/male/prefer not to say were selected in the above data set.

Application success rates shown by gender for fellowship and non-fellowship applications (2017–2019), stratified by application stage.



For gender, we can provide success rates overall and by fellowships and non-fellowships. Looking at all awards, the success rates of male and female researchers is the same at 28%. This is different to data reported by UKRI, where PI applicants who identified as male had higher award rates compared to females, a difference of two to three percentage points[5], although this varied between councils. By contrast, data from Wellcome showed that women had a slightly higher overall award rate than their male counterparts (18% versus 17%) and had higher award rates in their Science division[7].

When we look at success rates for fellowships versus non-fellowships, the only difference is a small and not statistically significant variation between success rates for fellowships, with 21% of female researchers successfully applying, compared with 25% of male researchers. This was different to UKRI data which showed that female UKRI fellowship applicants had higher award rates than male applicants in the past four years[5].

More female researchers are unsuccessful at the interview stage of a fellowship application than their male counterparts (23% compared with 15%). Success rates for CRUK non-fellowship awards are similar irrespective of gender, at 30% for female researchers and 28% for male researchers.

Our next steps: Setting people up for success

We want to see the same success rates for all researchers irrespective of their background.

We will:

- Work with other funders and sector organisations to continue to promote inclusive research environments free from bullying, harassment and racial bias.
- Further investigate the discrepancy in success rates for ethnic minority researchers who apply to our fellowship schemes. Collaborate with others to understand why there are lower sector-wide success rates for researchers from ethnic minority backgrounds. We will prioritise initiatives that can help close the gap in success rates, looking particularly at the interview stage of the review process.
- Roll out our new guide to accessing grant applications to our funding committees, alongside briefings for committee chairs, with guidance on mitigating unconscious bias. We expect all our expert reviewers to help ensure we operate an objective review process.
- Reach our minimum diversity targets for membership of our funding committees (see Funding committees section).
- Provide dedicated career support initiatives to underrepresented groups, including mentoring and leadership programmes.
- Ensure we remove barriers for grant applicants who are disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Researchers can continue to provide information in their application how COVID-19 has affected their research, themselves and their team, which our committees will review.

AWARDS MADE

How many people were awarded different Cancer Research UK grants?

Project grants are the largest proportion of all awards made. 18% of project grants are awarded to researchers from ethnic minority groups. Only 7% of programme awards were to ethnic minority researchers. 37% of project awards and only 28% of programme awards go to female researchers compared to male researchers.

In this section, we share the number of awards we have made since 2017 broken down by gender and ethnicity. We share data for five award types:

- Bursaries – small, short-term funding, either pre- or postdoctoral, to support clinical researchers or trainees to get involved in or undertake a research project.
- Fellowships – up to six years of funding to support the work of a particular early career researcher or clinician establishing a career in cancer research or developing an independent cancer research group.
- Projects – typically provide up to three years of funding for a specifically designed research project.
- Programmes – long-term support for broad, multidisciplinary research where the aim is to answer an interrelated set of questions. These programmes are typically awarded to established, independent researchers.
- Clinical trials – grants supporting investigator-led clinical trials of cancer treatment.

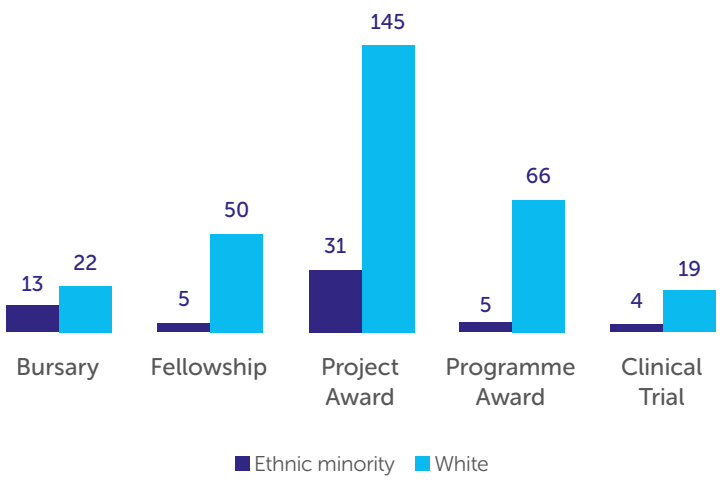
This provides a snapshot of the diversity of our grant-funded research community during the reporting period and whether there are inequities to be addressed.

The UKRI and Wellcome have both reported data on the proportion of awards made by different diversity characteristics[5],[7]. Both funders have shown that there are disparities between the number of awards received by gender, and UKRI also shows inequity in both number and value of awards by age, disability, ethnicity and gender.

We do not have sufficient data to provide award breakdown for the characteristics of age and disability as yet, but we hope to do so in future.

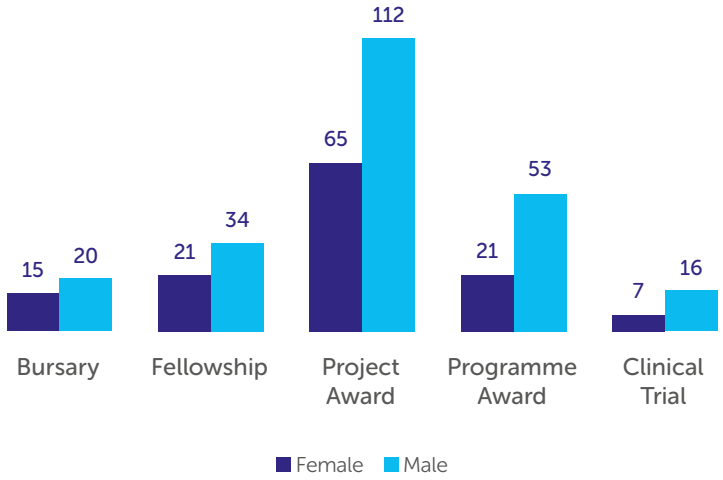
Awards made by ethnicity

Number of awards made by ethnicity (2017–2019).



Awards made by gender

Number of awards made by gender (2017–2019).



Further gender identity categories are available to select in our diversity form; only female/male/prefer not to say were selected in the above data set.

Ethnic minority researchers received 31 project awards between 2017 and 2019 compared with 145 for White researchers. This equates to 18% of project grants being awarded to ethnic minority researchers, which is in keeping with overall proportion of ethnic minority applicants we see (currently 15%).

The second most frequent awards received by researchers from an ethnic minority background are bursaries, which are smaller value awards. Ethnic minority researchers were awarded 9% of fellowships, totalling five, which is lower than the proportion of ethnic minority fellowship applicants we see. Just 7% of programme awards, totalling five, were to ethnic minority researchers, compared to 66 awards made to White researchers, reflecting the lower proportion of ethnic minority researchers who apply for awards aimed at senior, established researchers.

Female researchers received 65 project grants compared to 112 for male researchers which is 37% of all project awards. Female researchers received 38% of fellowship awards, receiving 21 awards compared to 34 received by male researchers. The proportion of female applicants receiving programme awards is lower at 28%, which reflects the number of applications we see from female researchers.

Our data shows that a similar proportion of our awards go to female researchers compared with Wellcome: 38% of all science division awards go to women. Similarly, Wellcome also report that women are more likely to be successful in schemes aimed at early and mid-career researchers[7].

Our next steps: Towards a more diverse workforce beating cancer

We want to ensure that the best researchers can progress in their careers and have equal chances of success at securing the next level of funding irrespective of their background.

In addition to the actions outlined in previous sections we will:

- Discuss application, success and award data with our funding committees to highlight findings and seek ways to redress imbalances.
- Continue to identify and help tackle some of the barriers underrepresented groups face staying in cancer research and progressing to senior positions. This includes implementing initiatives to prevent bullying and harassment, promoting positive research culture, and offering part-time and flexible working policies. We want to see an increase in programme awards held by female and ethnic minority researchers.
- Ask institutions that apply for funding to demonstrate their commitment to EDI and a positive research culture more generally.
- Help build support networks to connect researchers who have similar experiences and find potential mentors. For example, in 2020 we sponsored Black in Cancer Week, which aims to strengthen networks and highlight Black excellence in cancer research and medicine.
- Provide funding for CRUK fellows from ethnic minority backgrounds to attend leadership courses such as the StellarHE diverse leaders course.

FUNDING COMMITTEES

Who sits on our funding committees?

The number of female researchers on our funding committees has nearly doubled in five years. Our efforts to increase the number of researchers from ethnic minority backgrounds who sit on our committees has led to a two percentage-point increase in just over a year.

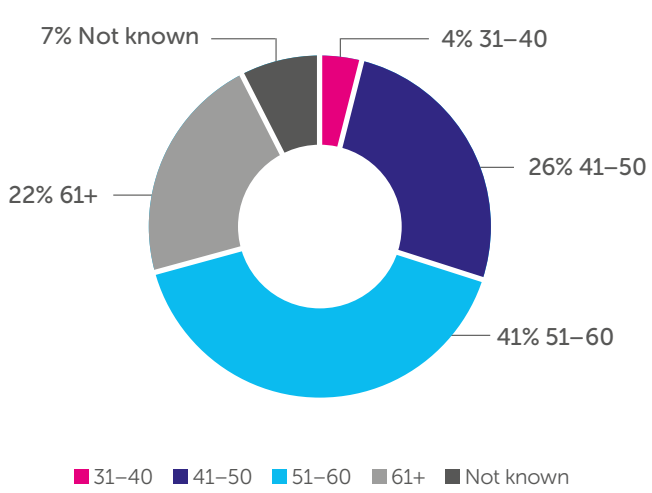
To fund the best cancer research, we must ensure that the experts we listen to – the world-leading scientists, clinicians, health policy specialists and patient representatives who sit on our review committees and panels – bring the most diverse perspectives possible. This is not only important for ensuring that the work we fund, where appropriate, includes and involves participants from all backgrounds, be they patients or research teams, but it also provides role models for the future generations of scientists who will sit on our funding committees, shaping our work for the future.

We are making good progress already in improving the number of female members and people from ethnic backgrounds who sit on our committees. However, to achieve the change we want to see will take time and system-level changes that foster the progression of more female and ethnic minority researchers into science and into senior positions. We can only achieve this together with our partners and allies.

Here we report data for age, disability, ethnicity and gender identity disclosed by members, totalling 149, who sat on our funding committees as of August 2020.

Age range of committee members

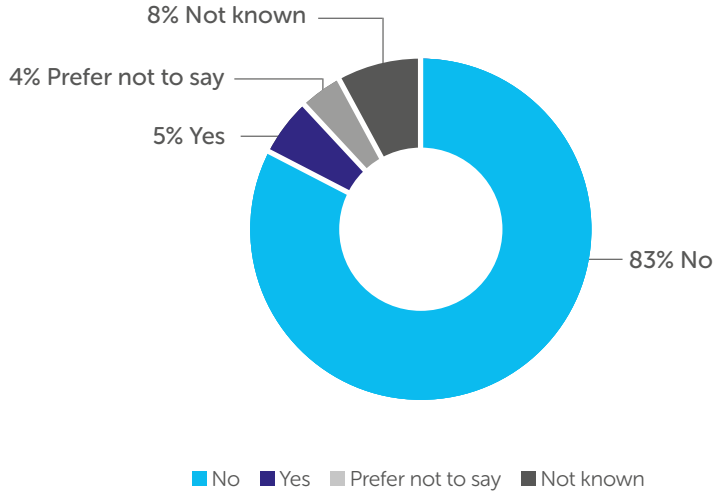
Age range disclosed by members who sit on our funding committees.



The mean average age of members on our funding committees is 50, with the largest proportion of members in the 51 to 60 age at 41%. This is perhaps not surprising given that we aim to appoint committee members who are leaders in their field with extensive experience and expertise. If we compare the mean average age of our committee members to the age of professors in science, engineering, technology, we see that the largest proportion of professors is in the 51 to 56 age category[8].

Disability status of committee members

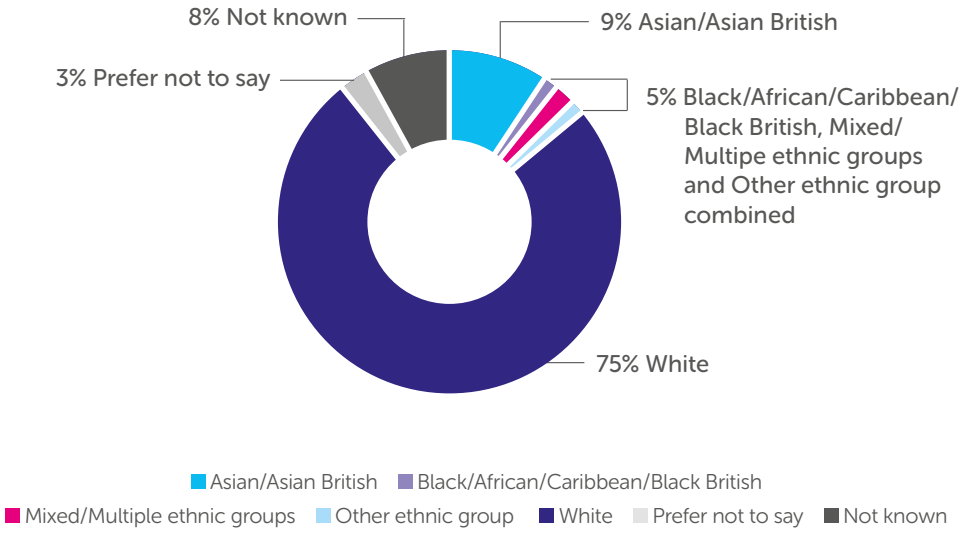
Proportion of members on our funding committees who disclosed a disability.



As of August 2020, 5% of researchers on our funding committees had disclosed a disability. This is slightly higher than the proportion of biosciences academic staff population who disclosed a disability, at 4%[8].

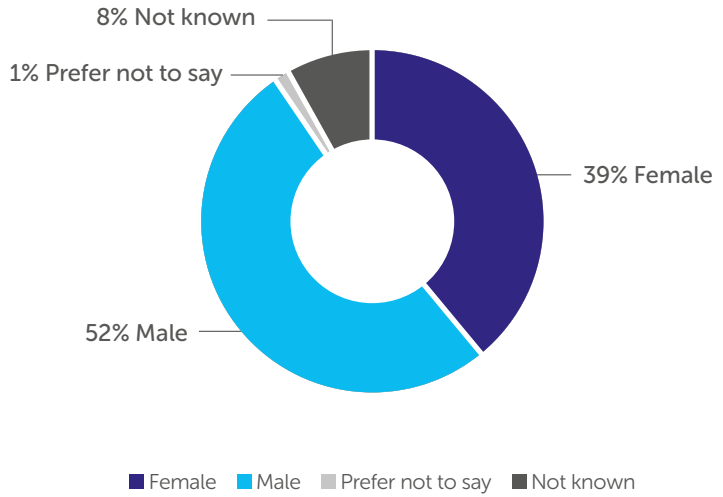
Ethnicity of committee members

Ethnicities disclosed by members who sit on our funding committees.



Gender of committee members

Gender identities disclosed by researchers who sit on our funding committees.



Further gender identity categories are available to select in our diversity form; only female/male/prefer not to say were selected in the above data set.

Given the success with setting targets for female membership on our funding committees, we have already introduced a stipulation for each committee to increase the proportion of its members from ethnic minority backgrounds. At the moment, the proportion of ethnic minority researchers stands at 14%, an increase from 12% in 2019. This is higher than the proportion of ethnic minority researchers in the biosciences community (9%)[8]. Three of our committees do not as yet have any members disclosing an ethnic minority background, and for 8% of our member records, we do not have this information.

In the past five years, we have increased the proportion of female researchers across our funding committees from 21% in 2016 to 39% in 2020. This is higher than the proportion of female professors in the biosciences sector at 22%[8]. In 2017, we set a target that female members should ideally comprise at least 40% of each funding committee and this has helped to increase the proportion of female members in subsequent years. We currently have at least 40% female membership on seven of our 13 committees, and we're making progress towards meeting the targets on those that do not reach our target.

Our next steps: Bringing more diversity into our decision-making

We want our funding committees to bring a diversity of experiences and perspectives.

We will:

- Continue to work towards our targets for gender and set a more specific target for increasing the proportion of researchers from ethnic minority groups, recognising the additional workload pressure this may put on some researchers. We will engage with those researchers to understand how we can support them and recognise their contribution.
- Prioritise improving the membership of committees with a low proportion of ethnic minority researchers to proactively increase diversity on those committees.
- Provide more opportunities for our early- to mid-career researchers to join our expert review panels to gain experience. Invite them to observe committee meetings as a learning opportunity.
- Promote opportunities to join our community of committee members via open calls on our website.

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[3] Equality in higher education: staff statistical 2019 report. Advance HE 2019 (accessed January 2021).

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[5] Diversity results for UKRI funding data 2014–15 to 2018–19. UK Research and Innovation (accessed January 2021).

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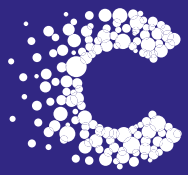
[7] Grant funding data 2018–2019. Wellcome (accessed January 2021).

[8] Equality in higher education: staff statistical report 2020. Advance HE 2020 (accessed January 2021).

If you have any questions or feedback about this report, get in touch by emailing EDIinresearch@cancer.org.uk



CANCER RESEARCH UK

Together we will beat cancer

Cancer Research UK
2 Redman Place
London
E20 1JQ, UK
T: +44 (0)20 7242 0200

Date developed: February 2021