



LTOA
London Tree Officers Association

London Tree Officers Association

Diversity and Inclusion Working Party Report 2020

London Tree Officers Association

Diversity and Inclusion Working Party Report 2020

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Key findings.....	4
3	Actions and aims	5
4	Survey results.....	7
5	Conclusions	25

This report has been produced by the London Tree Officers Association
Diversity and Inclusion Working Party:

Rosie Dobson (City of Westminster)

Elizabeth Doty (Bristol City Council)

Luke Fay (Treework Environmental Practice)

Barbara Milne (City of Westminster)

Colleen O'Sullivan (London Borough of Camden)

Becky Porter (London Tree Officers Association)

Jessica Stocks (Kensington and Chelsea Council)

Harry Thacker (London Borough of Hackney)

Acknowledgments

London Tree Officers Association

Survey respondents

Sponsors: Treework Environmental Practice and Street Tree Limited



Introduction

The past few years have seen a noticeable increase in efforts to improve diversity and inclusion (D&I) within the workplace. *Inclusive by Instinct* is the title of the Home Office's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2025, in which increasing support to the public, engaging with employees and searching for new methods of working are highlighted as the key drivers for greater diversity¹. 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.

The Diversity and Inclusion Working Party was formed in response to the London Tree Officers Association's (LTOA) Chair's call for an investigation into potential barriers to accessing the arboricultural profession. The D&I Working Party's mission is 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. This report presents the results of the first year of work of the working party – a D&I survey, a revised tree officer job profile and proposed measures to address the barriers around the industry.

The working party created a D&I survey that was sent to all fully paid members of the LTOA in May 2019. The response rate was 51%. The results (Section 4) bring into focus areas in which diversity is low and give detail on the challenges that exist within the sector. Suggestions on how to combat these barriers provide the roadmap for the next steps towards improving D&I. Jessica Stocks presented conclusions from this work at the National Tree Officers Conference in November 2019.

The working party has also published a new tree officer career profile, which is available on the [LTOA website](#). The profile is the first step in improving the marketing of the tree officer career. It has subsequently been shared with the National Careers Service, UCAS, LANTRA and the ICF in a bid to increase its availability.

The survey, profile and report are the results of a collaborative effort from the members of the LTOA 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.

¹ Home Office. (2018). *Inclusive by Instinct*. London, UK: Crown Copyright.

2 Key findings

What do the survey results tell us about the diversity of London tree officers and the actions we should be taking to increase diversity and inclusion?

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

- Gender: LTOA respondents (LTOA) 23% female vs. London employed population 46% female²
- Ethnicity: LTOA 6% 'non-white' vs. London population 36% employed population 'non-white'³
- Nationality: LTOA 10% non-British vs. London employed population 26% non-British⁴
- Religion: LTOA 0% Muslim, Hindu or Jewish vs. London population 19% Muslim, Hindu or Jewish⁵

While these figures indicate that some parts of society are impeded in becoming tree officers, the sexual orientation statistics provide confirmation that this is not the case for those identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB).

- Sexual orientation: LTOA 10% LGB vs. London population 3% LGB⁶

The survey revealed barriers to entry and possible solutions, offering the opportunity to improve the accessibility of the profession to groups that have historically been excluded. 82 individual barriers were highlighted, with 37% of respondents indicating that they had been personally affected by them. The barriers can be broken down into:

- Low profile of the industry: mentioned in 33 responses
- Lack of career opportunities: mentioned in 20 responses
- Limited financial incentive: mentioned in 19 responses
- Lack of training: mentioned in 12 responses
- Exclusionary industry culture: mentioned in 11 responses

The working party has structured its actions and aims around addressing these barriers using suggestions given in the survey.

² Labour force survey - national and regional - headline indicators (seasonally adjusted) ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 21 August 2019] Mar 2019-May 2019.

³ <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/london-population/#ethnicity>.

⁴ Office for National Statistics. (2019). *Annual population survey - Regional - Nationality*. London, UK: Crown Copyright.

⁵ London 2011 Census.

⁶ Office for National Statistics. (2019). *Sexual Orientation, UK: 2017*. London, UK: Crown Copyright.

3

Actions and aims

3.1 D&I Working Party Actions and Aims

Since forming in October 2018, the D&I Working Party has:

- Presented the findings of the survey at the National Tree Officers Conference in November 2019.
- Created a Tree Officer Career Profile, which is now available to download from the LTOA website.
- Provided the career profile to the National Careers Service, which has subsequently made some amendments to the tree officer profile on its website.
- Engaged with LANTRA regarding the career profile, which is now available on their website.
- Forwarded the career profile to recruitment companies targeting those commonly used by local authorities.

Moving forward we aim to:

- Roll out the questionnaire to tree officers across the UK.
- Re-survey London tree officers in the future to monitor changes in diversity and assess the impact of our actions.
- Widen the scope of the D&I Working Party to include neurodiversity.
- Consider widening the survey to underrepresented groups outside the industry, to further evaluate barriers to entering the industry.
- **'Promote the Actions and Aims listed in the following section/below to increase diversity and inclusion within the wider arboricultural industry'.**



3.2 Wider Industry Actions and Aims

The findings of the survey clearly indicate that change is required to improve diversity of London tree officers. It is almost certainly the case that the wider arboricultural industry is similarly lacking in diversity. The survey responses on barriers provide direction on actions which can be taken by organisations across the industry to improve diversity:

Profile

- Promote arboriculture more widely.
- Engage with schools and other education providers to promote arboriculture as an exciting and varied career and to provide educational resources such as lesson plans.
- Attend careers days and advice sessions.
- Undertake community engagement and outreach, engage with youth programmes and underrepresented groups.
- Promote the industry from an environmental perspective.
- Use social media influencers and role models.
- Change negative perceptions of arboriculture.

Career

- Create more entry level roles.
- Promote local recruitment.
- Develop more flexible career paths.
- Encourage employers to take up apprenticeships.
- Broaden recruitment processes to open opportunities for applicants from different educational backgrounds.
- Diversify the sources of new tree officers coming into the profession.
- Recognise and tackle unconscious bias in recruiting by providing training for recruiting managers.
- Provide mental health support.

Training

- Ensure that adequate training is available and affordable.
- Assess whether the provision of training is adequate to meet demand.
- Consider the provision of a professional 'career change' qualification.
- Provide clear guidance on historical changes to qualification levels.
- Promote apprenticeships.
- Develop training frameworks and mentoring networks within and between organisations.

Financial

- Promote the professionalism of the industry to support increases in salaries.
- Undertake salary benchmarking against other local authority officers.
- Undertake salary benchmarking for other industry roles.

Behaviour

- Ensure that the industry has a culture that does not accept sexism or discrimination.
- Encourage contractors to adopt diversity policies through contract tendering or Arboricultural Association approval.
- Include standards of behaviours within the Arboricultural Association approval assessment.
- Promote the inclusion of an equality statement in local authority job profiles and equality training for tree managers.



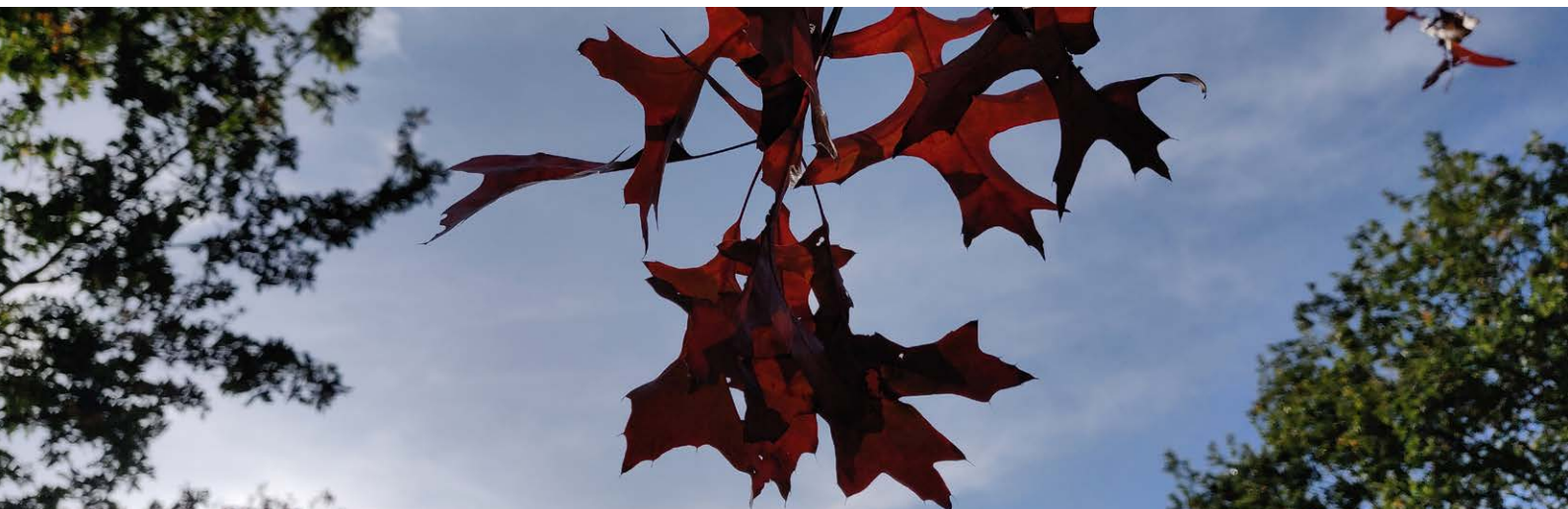
Survey results

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 London tree officers.

The survey was emailed to 140 LTOA members in May 2019. When the survey was closed in July 2019, 51% of members (71) had participated.

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

All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole figure.

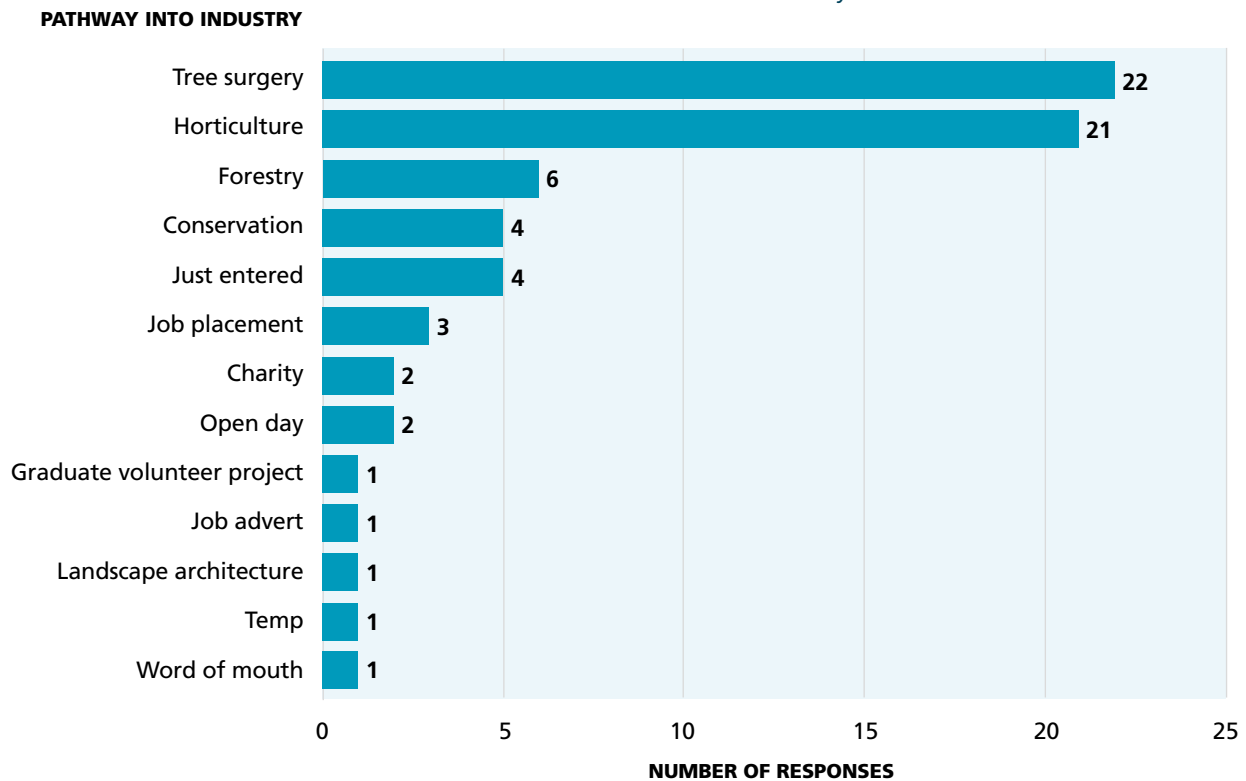


Question 1

How did you get into this industry?

The respondents have found their way into the industry through a plethora of pathways from job placements to conservation works. The two most common pathways were through tree surgery and horticulture/grounds maintenance work. There were also a number of respondents coming from the field of forestry.

FIGURE 1 *Graph of results from Question 1: How did you get into this industry?*



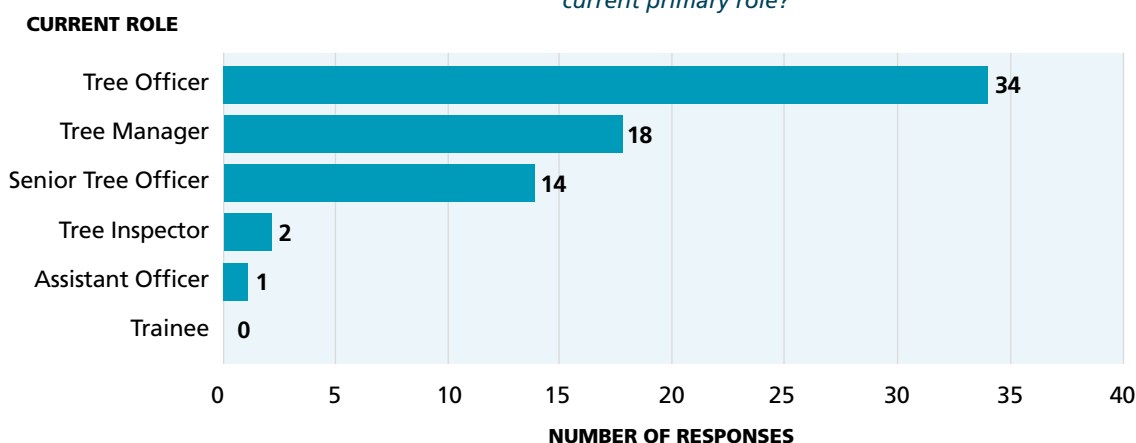
“Progression of individuals who do not fit the ‘normal’ image of a tree officer may be limited because they are seen as unusual, or an unknown quantity.”

Question 2

What is your current primary role?

The responses are mostly from tree officers, senior tree officers and tree managers with very few responses from more junior roles. This may indicate a lack of junior roles in general or just a lack of junior officers among the survey respondents.

FIGURE 2 *Graph of results from Question 2: What is your current primary role?*

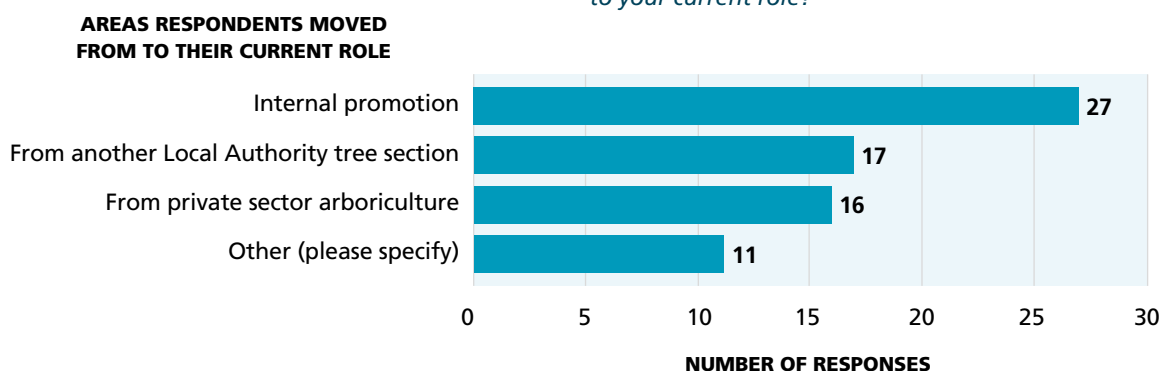


Question 3

How did you get to your current role?

The high level of internal promotion indicates a low number of new entrants to the profession. However, these figures would be expected if it is the case that a greater proportion of more senior staff responded to the survey.

FIGURE 3 *Graph of results from Question 3: How did you get to your current role?*



Questions 4 and 5

What hours do you work? Do you have a flexible working arrangement?

99% of respondents work full-time as opposed to part time. This figure is high in comparison to statistics for all employees in the UK at 74% full-time⁷ or civil servants at 77% full-time⁸. The results seem to indicate a lack of part-time employment opportunities, which could potentially exclude carers and disproportionately affect women².

FIGURE 4 *Table of results from Question 4: What hours do you work?*

	SURVEY RESPONDENTS	CIVIL SERVICE (2019) ⁸	UK (2019) ⁷
Full-time	99%	77%	74%
Part-time	1%	23%	26%

Nearly 80% of respondents have a flexible working arrangement compared to 11% of London and UK employees⁹. Whilst flexible working is recognised as a benefit of working for a local authority, the difference with the average London figure is pronounced, suggesting that flexible working should be promoted as a positive aspect of the profession.

FIGURE 5 *Table of results from Question 5: Do you have a flexible working arrangement?*

	SURVEY RESPONDENTS	LONDON 18-65 (2018) ⁹	UK 18-65 (2018) ⁹
Yes	79%	11%	11%
No	21%	89%	89%

⁷ Office for National Statistics. (2019). Table EMP01: Full time, part time and temporary workers: *People by Full time, Part Time and temporary works (seasonally adjusted)*. London, UK: Crown Copyright.

⁸ Cabinet Office National Statistics. (2019). *Civil Service Statistics*. London, UK: Crown Copyright.

⁹ Office for National Statistics. (2019). *Flexible hours working by region and broad age groups, 1998, 2008 and 2018*. London, UK: Crown Copyright.

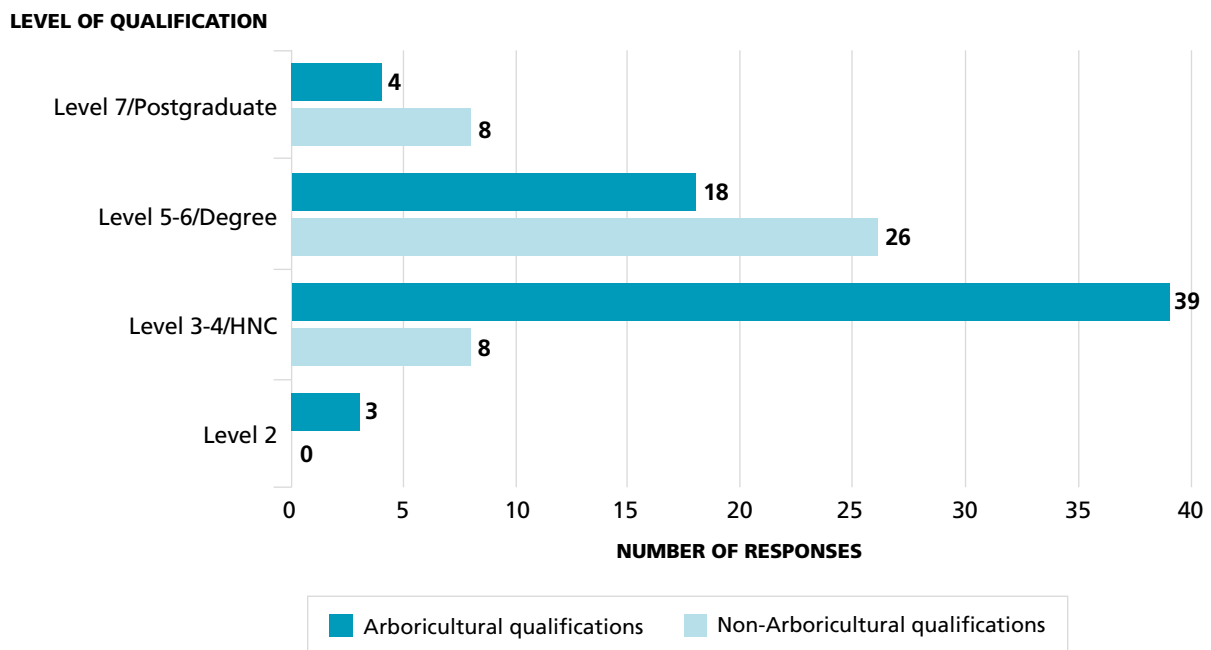
Questions 6 and 7

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

55% of respondents were educated to a level 3-4 standard in arboriculture, which is currently the usual minimum standard for tree officer job postings. 31% of respondents have a graduate or post-graduate degree, indicating a reasonable level of professionalism within the industry.

59% of respondents had non-arboricultural qualifications, overwhelmingly bachelor or master's degrees in alternative subjects. These figures indicate that tree officers come from a broad range of educational backgrounds and that there are a high number of career changers. This potentially challenges the assumption that most tree officers came from a tree surgery background, although many career changers progress into tree surgery before becoming tree officers.

FIGURE 6 *Graph comparing results from Question 6: What is the highest level of arboricultural qualifications you have achieved? and Question 7: If you have any non-arboricultural qualifications, what is the highest level you have achieved?*



Question 8

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

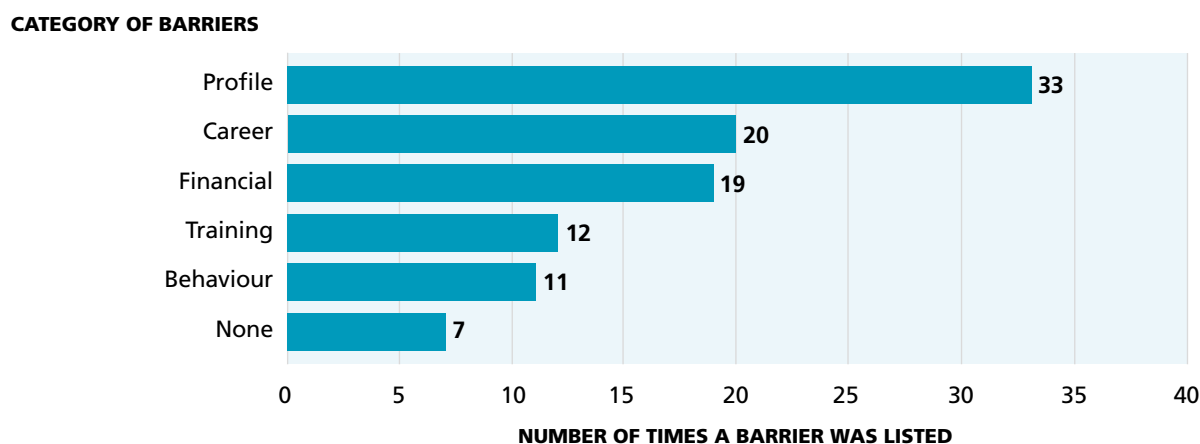
The majority of respondents who answered this question listed multiple barriers which were then categorised into five separate groups.

The 71 responses contained 95 individually listed barriers of which 33 related to the profile of the industry, including lack of diversity among the work force and how the industry is marketed.

Barriers relating to career such as lack of support transitioning from other career areas and limited career progression are the next most frequently listed, with 20 occurrences. Other barriers related to financial (19 occurrences), training (12 occurrences) and behaviour (11 occurrences).

11 of the 71 respondents chose not to answer. 7 respondents answered that there were no barriers.

FIGURE 7 Graph showing the number of times a barrier in each category was listed among all responses to Question 8: What barriers do you think exist to entering and progressing in the profession?



Question 9

Have you experienced any of these barriers?

37% of responders had experienced one or more of these barriers while 62% had not. This indicates that the barriers do not only apply to women (23% of respondents) and those from a minority ethnic background (6% of respondents).

FIGURE 8 Table of results from Question 9: Have you experienced any of these barriers?

ANSWER	SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Yes	37%
No	62%
Blank	1%

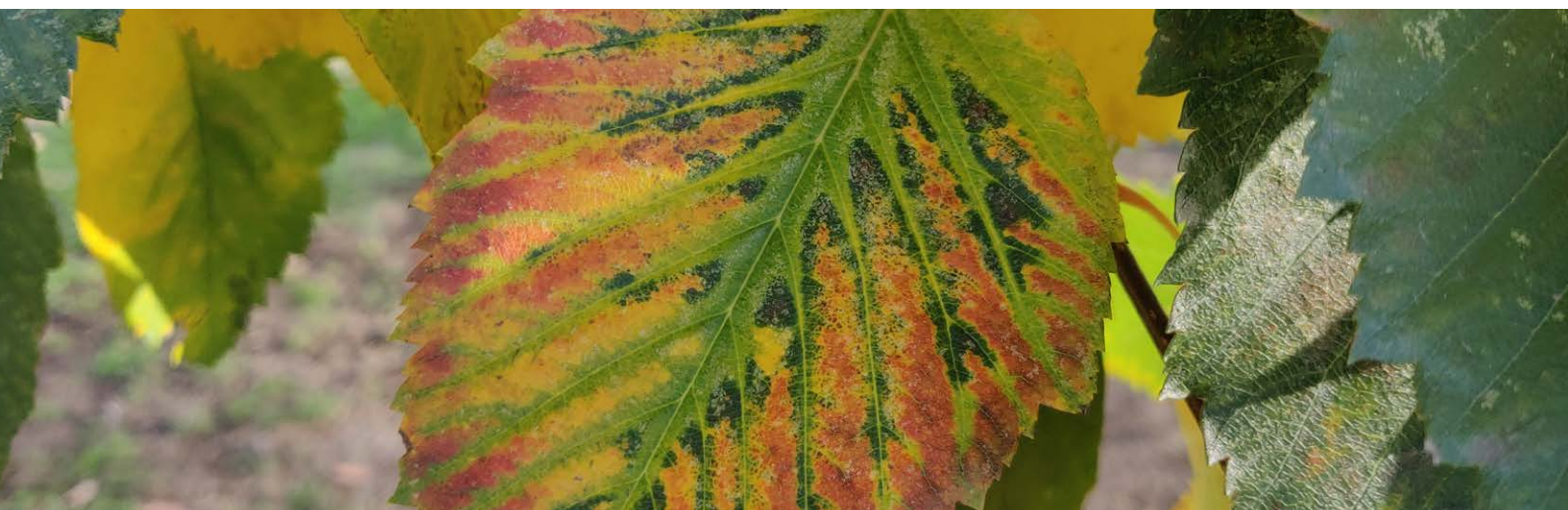
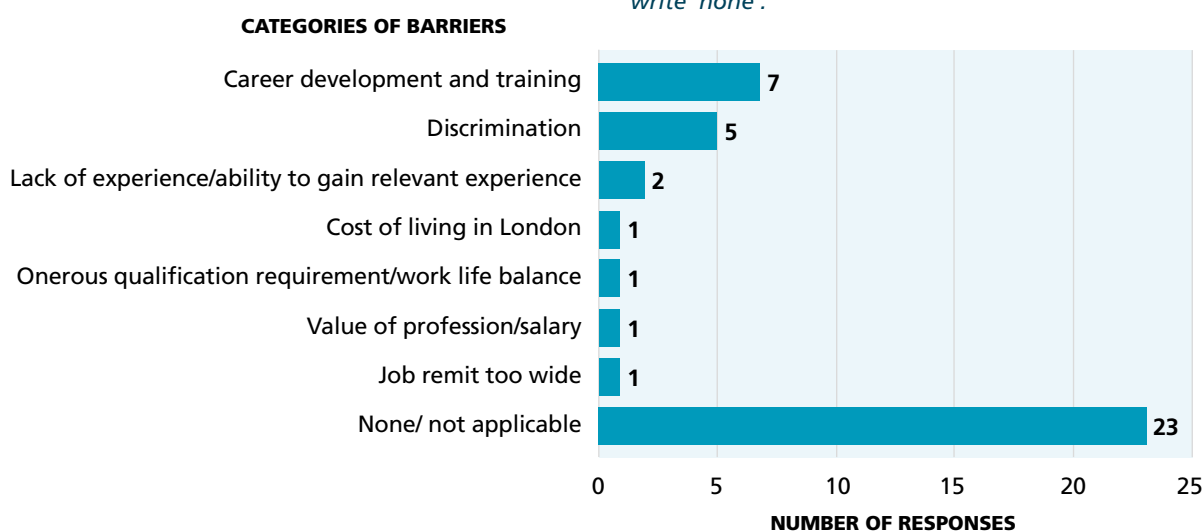
Question 10

If you have experienced barriers and you wish to comment please do so below. If not, please write 'none'.

The response rate to this question was low with 30 out of 71 respondents choosing not to answer. 23 of the 41 respondents to this question said they had not experienced any barriers to entering and progressing in the profession, in contrast with only 8 respondents to question 8 saying they did not think that there were any barriers. It suggests that more tree officers recognise there are barriers, than have experienced them. This in turn might suggest that the people experiencing barriers are simply not in the industry because of those barriers, or it could reflect the gender or other imbalance amongst tree officers in London.

Of those who responded about particular barriers faced, most (7) cited obstacles to career development and training, including difficulty in the transition from being an arborist to a tree officer, and cost and availability of training. 5 respondents referred to discrimination based on either gender, race or favouritism.

FIGURE 9 Graph showing the number of times a barrier in each category was listed among all responses to Question 10: If you have experienced barriers and wish to comment please do so below. If not, please write 'none'.



Question 11

What could be done to increase diversity amongst tree officers?

It is clear that while many respondents have not directly experienced barriers to entering the profession, they are aware that barriers exist and have provided a wide range of suggestions in response to this question.

Respondents overwhelmingly highlighted the need to increase awareness of the arboricultural industry in order to improve diversity (mentioned in 45 responses). The most common specific recommendation to achieve this aim was to engage with educational institutions (22). Other suggestions included emphasising the environmental contribution of the industry (6) and reaching out to underrepresented communities through a variety of means (e.g. youth programmes, social media, industry bodies).

Also reflected in the responses was the need for the industry to do more internally to increase diversity (mentioned in 21 responses). There was an emphasis on improving how candidates enter the industry generally (8), possibly via developing apprenticeships and internships (3), increasing the availability of training (2) and recruiting from underrepresented groups or adjacent fields (2 and 2). Additionally, improving career progression and salaries (3), providing diversity training (1), improving the culture (1) and introducing mentoring (1) were suggested.

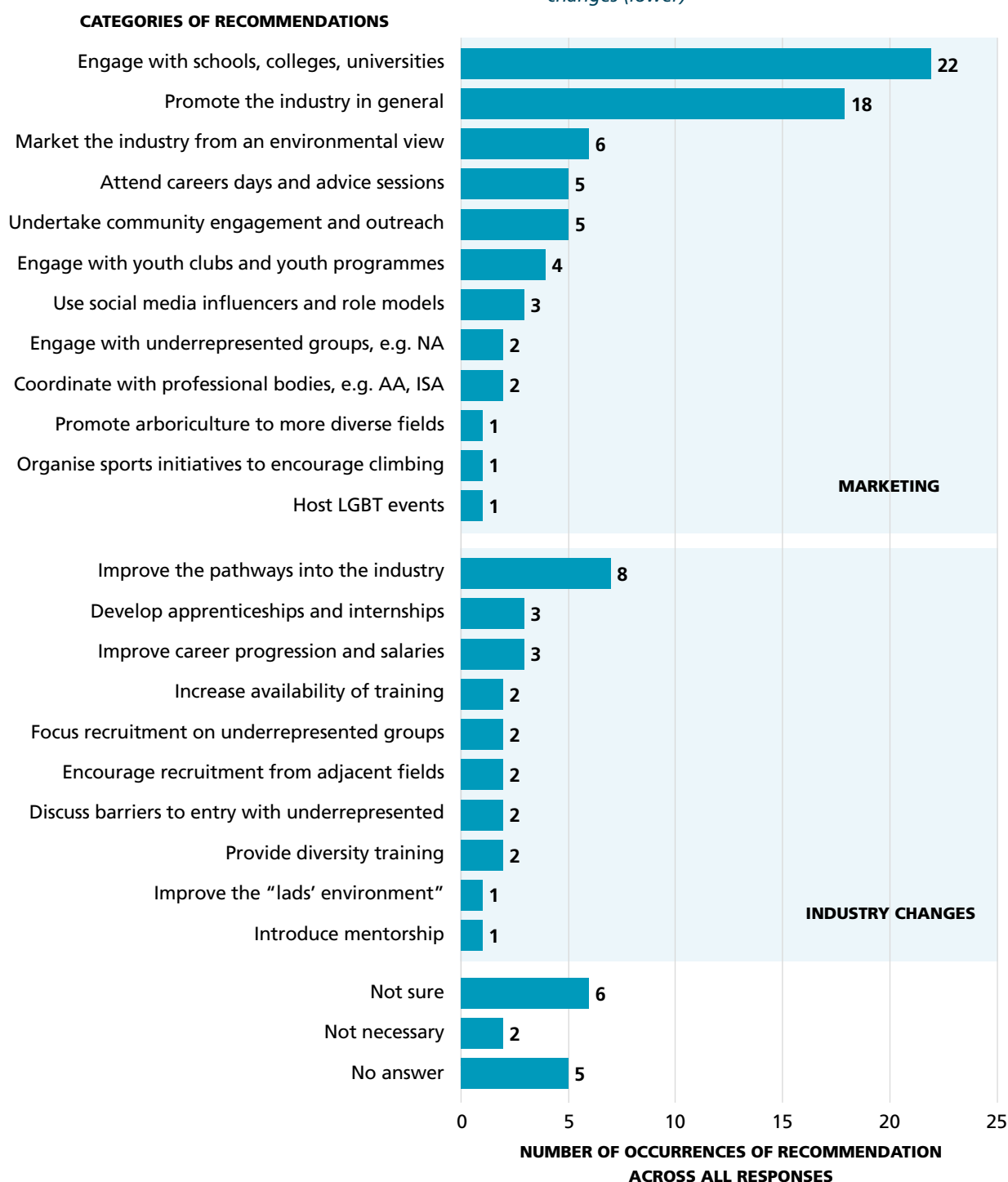


“

I do not know if my career progression has been slowed or hindered by unknown discrimination, for example unconscious bias by managers or employers.

”

FIGURE 10 Graph showing responses to Question 11: What could be done to increase diversity amongst tree officers? The graph shows the categories in two groups: marketing (upper) and industry changes (lower)



Question 12

Your Nationality

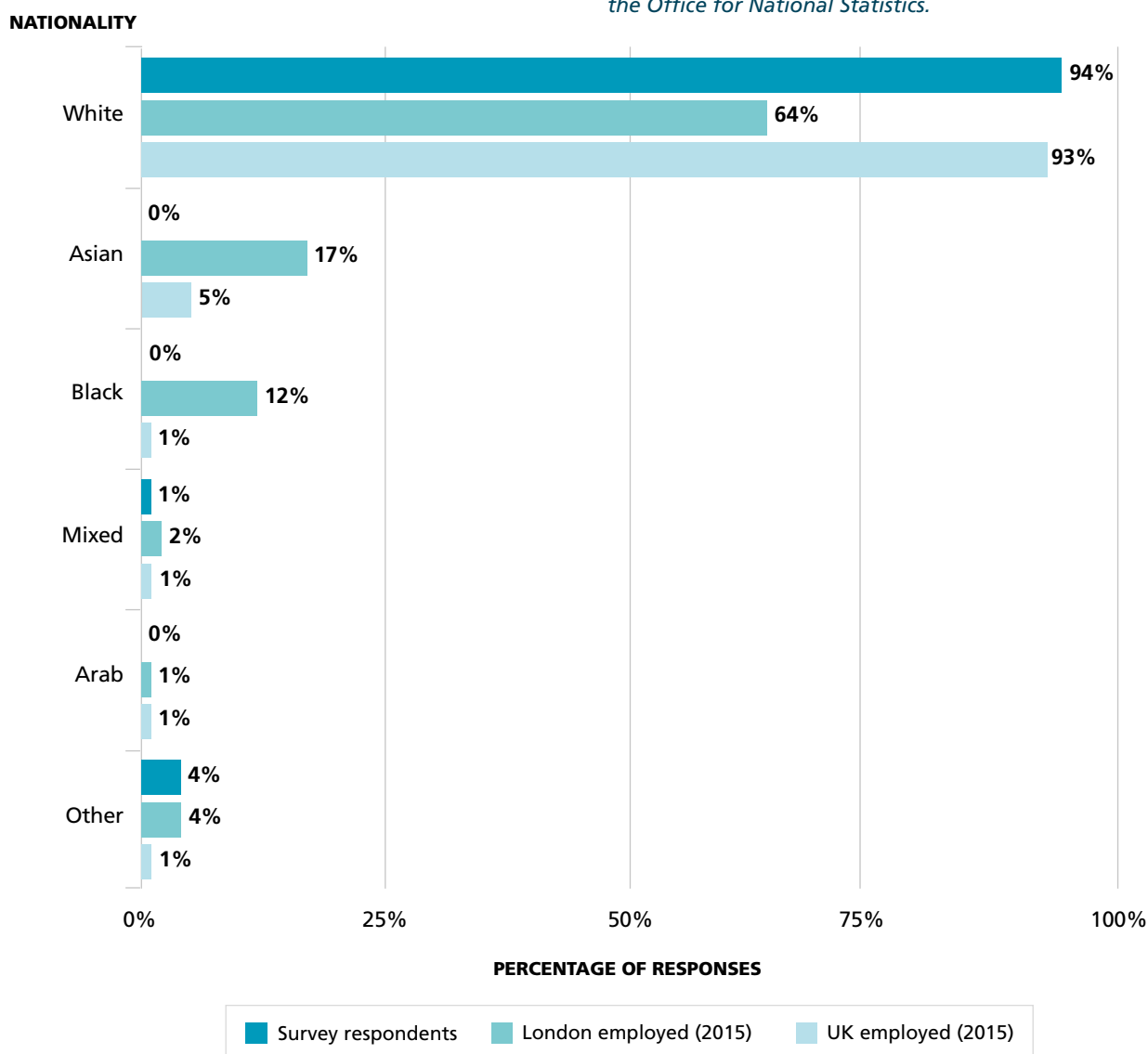
90% of respondents are British. Comparative statistics for London show 74% of residents in employment to be British.¹⁰ Tree officers do not represent the diversity of the London population in this respect.

Question 13

What is your ethnic identity?

94% of respondents are white. This shows a clear difference from London statistics from 2015 which recorded that 64% of London employees were white, with 12% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 8% Indian and 14% in other individual ethnic groups.¹¹ The profession is not representative of the ethnic diversity of employees in London.

FIGURE 11 Graph showing responses to Question 13: What is your ethnic identity? Compared with results from the Office for National Statistics.



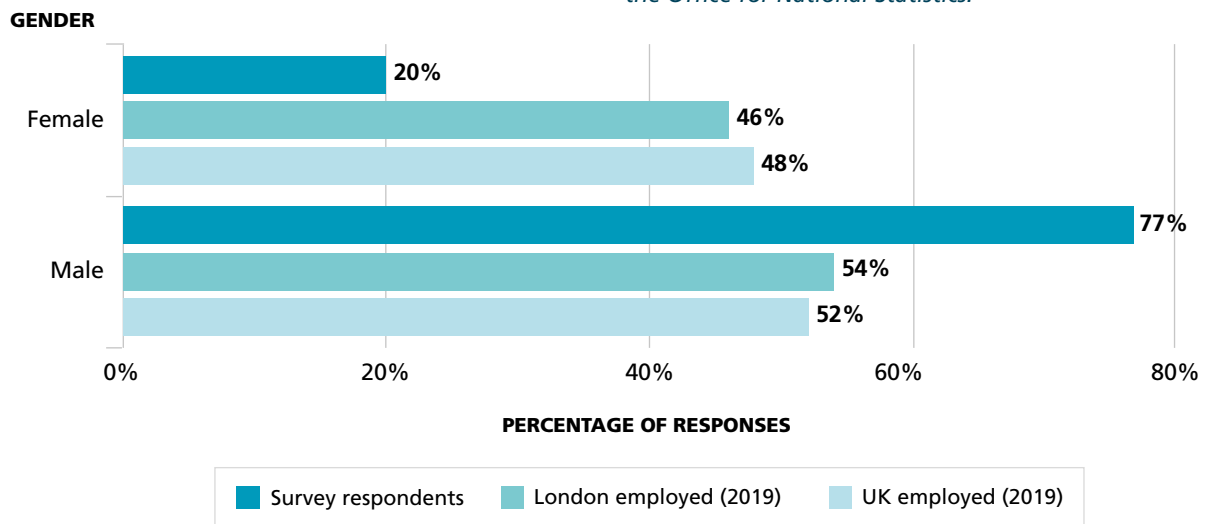
¹¹ <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/london-population/#ethnicity>

Question 14

What is your Gender?

77% of respondents are male in comparison to 54% of London employees.¹² Again this shows that we are not representative of London employees in this respect.

FIGURE 12 Graph showing the results from Question 14: What is your gender? Compared with results from the Office for National Statistics.

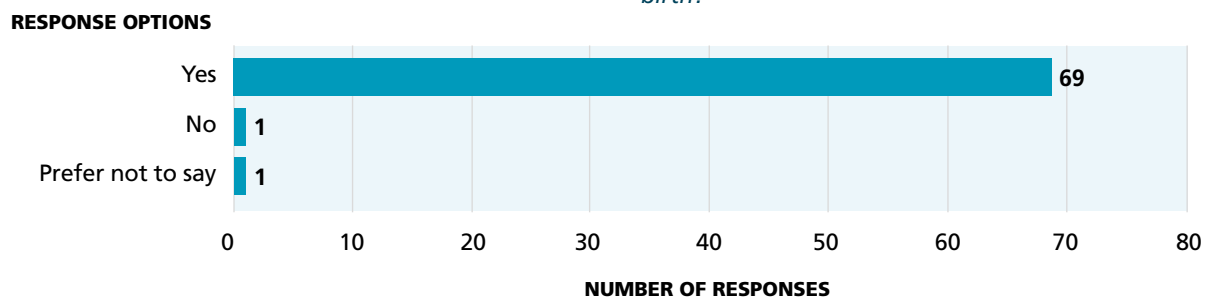


Question 15

Do you identify with your gender as assigned at birth?

There is insufficient information to draw any conclusions or make a statistical analysis of the results to this question.

FIGURE 13 Graph showing the results from Question 15: Do you identify with your gender assigned at birth?



¹² Labour force survey - national and regional - headline indicators (seasonally adjusted)
ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 21 August 2019] Mar 2019-May 2019

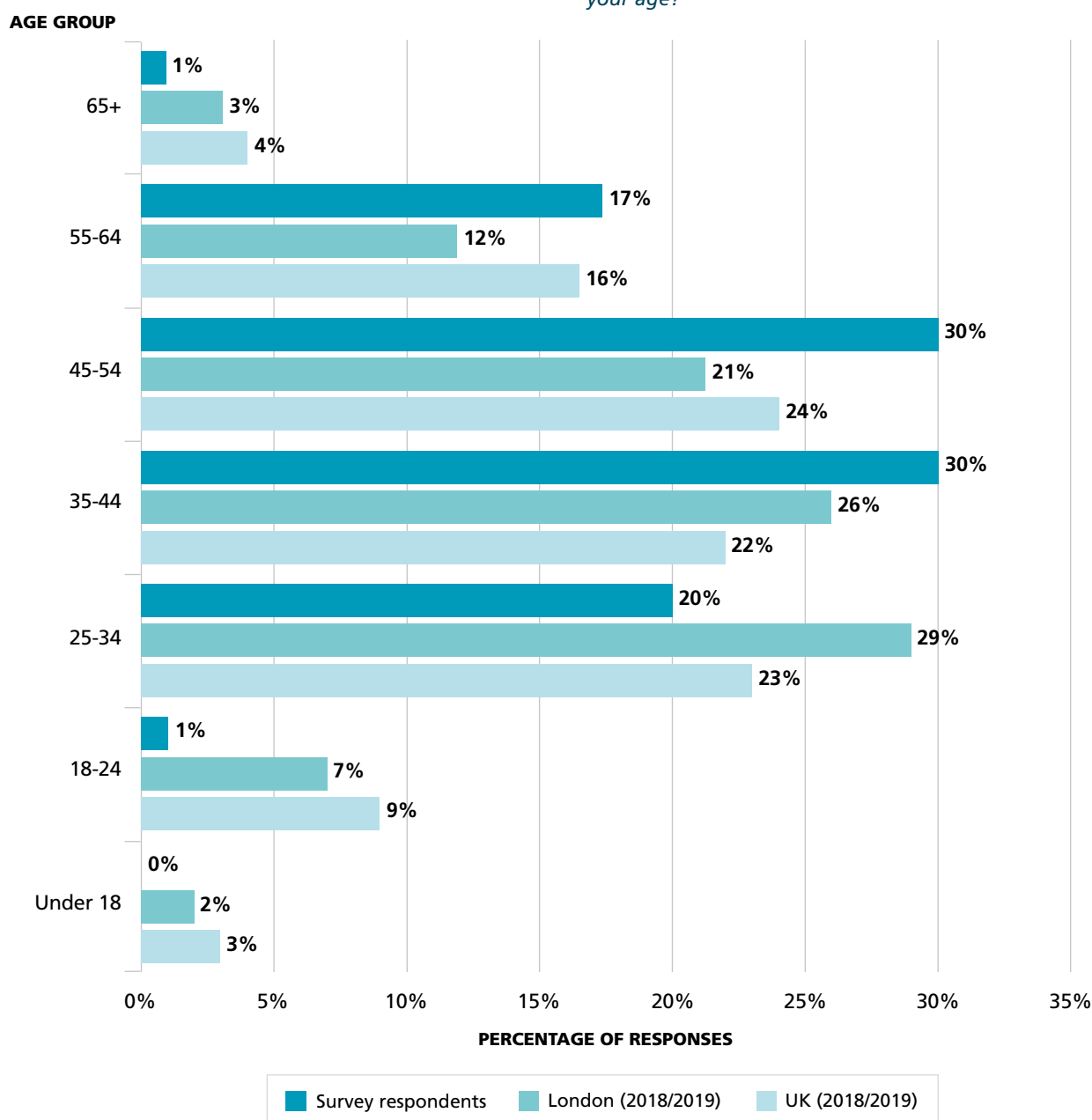
Question 16

What is your age?

60% of respondents are between 35-54 years old, 20% are between 25-34 years old. Only one respondent is under 25.

UK and London statistics show slightly higher percentages of employees in younger age brackets.¹³ In London 29% of employees are 25-34 years old and 47% are 35-54 years old. Again, this 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.

FIGURE 14 Graph showing results from Question 16: What is your age?



¹³ Annual population survey - regional - labour market status by age ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 21 August 2019]

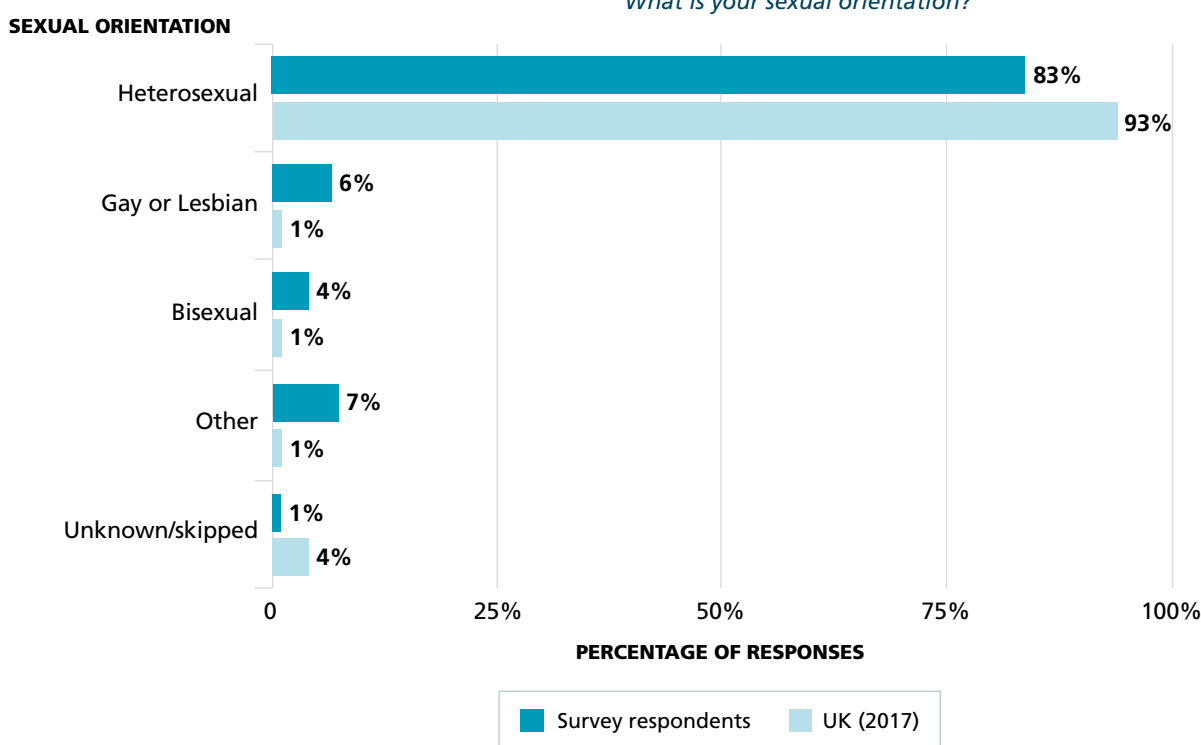
Question 17

What is your sexual orientation?

The results indicate that tree officers are more diverse in this respect than the general population. 10% of respondents are lesbian, gay or bisexual in comparison to 3% of the London population and 2% of the UK population according to a 2017 survey by the Office of National Statistics.¹⁴ The same survey found that people in London and those in professional occupations are more likely to identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, but did not provide London-specific figures. However, this seems to correspond with the higher results for these categories in our survey.

These results make a positive contrast to the results to the gender and ethnicity questions.

FIGURE 15 Graph showing responses from Question 17:
What is your sexual orientation?



Question 18

What is your current religion, if any?

A total of 70% of the respondents gave their religion as either 'Atheist or Agnostic' or 'Nothing in particular', followed by 23% Christian or Catholic, 3% Buddhist and 4% Other.

This is in strong contrast to 2011 survey data for London which found that nearly 50% of Londoners were Christian whereas only 20% recorded their religion as 'None'.¹⁵ The London Census recorded 12% of the population as Muslim, and it is notable that none of our respondents gave their religion as Muslim.

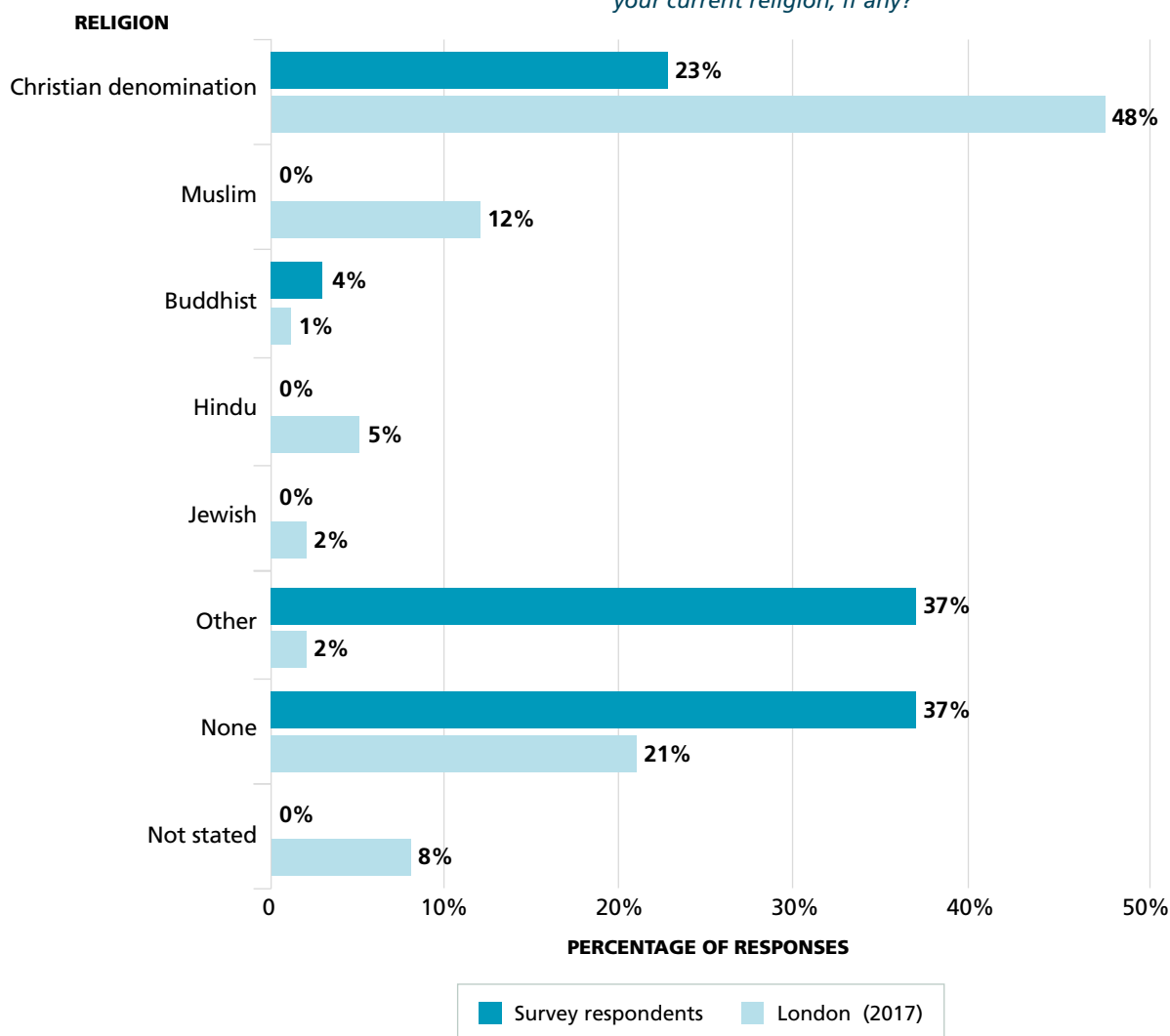
¹⁴ Office for National Statistics. (2019). *Sexual Orientation, UK: 2017*. London, UK: Crown Copyright

¹⁵ London 2011 Census

Other religions recorded in the Census, including Hindu, Jewish and Sikh, are totally absent in our responses.

The results indicate that there are barriers preventing people belonging to certain religions from entering the profession.

FIGURE 16 Graph showing results of Question 18: What is your current religion, if any?



Questions 19 and 20

Do you consider yourself disabled? If yes, please rate the impact of your disability on your ability to work on the scale below. 0 being no impact and 100 being most severe.

7% of respondents considered themselves to be disabled, compared to 10% of employees in the UK¹⁶. However, 1.5% of responses 'Preferred not to answer' so the figures are very similar.

The responses to Question 20 found that on average respondents with a disability rated the impact on their work at point 7 on the scale of 1 to 100.

¹⁶ Table A08: Economic activity of people with disabilities aged 16-64: levels, UK 13th August 2019

It is possible that the physicality of the job presents a barrier to those with disabilities from entering the profession, but on the basis of the similarity of the statistics between tree officers and employees in the UK, then this would not necessarily appear to be the case.

FIGURE 17 Table showing responses to Question 19: Do you consider yourself disabled? Compared to results from the Office for National Statistics.

	SURVEY RESPONDENTS	UK (2019)
Yes	10%	7%
No	89%	91%

Questions 21 and 22

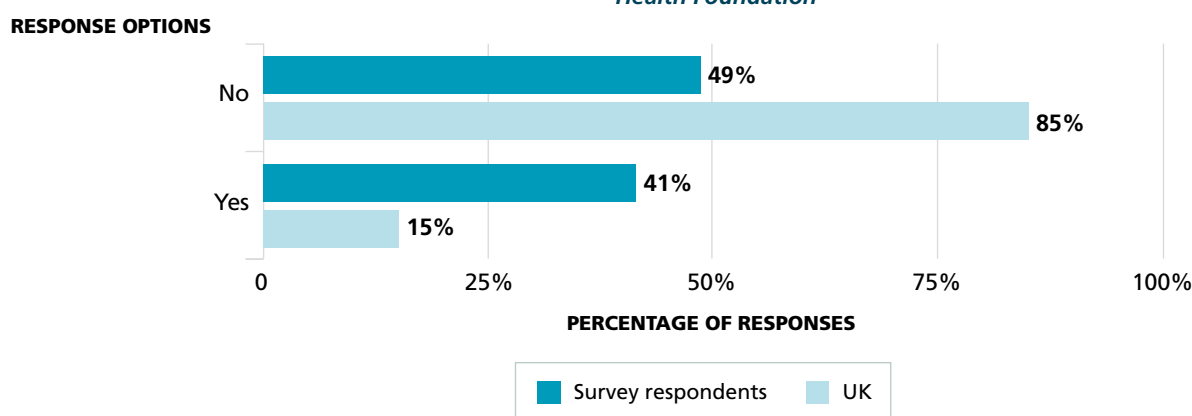
Would you describe yourself as someone who is experiencing or has experienced mental health issues? If yes, please rate the impact of your mental health issues on your ability to work on the scale below. 0 being no impact and 100 being most severe.

41% of respondents answered yes, in comparison to 14.7% of employees in the UK.¹⁷ However, other research found that nearly half (43.4%) of adults think that they have had a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their life, which corresponds more closely with our results.

It is difficult to make statistical comparisons on this basis. However, 41% is a significant figure, and the industry should be taking action to provide the necessary support to tree officers.

The responses to Question 22 found that on average respondents with mental health issues rated the impact on their work at point 19 on the scale of 1 to 100.

FIGURE 18 Graph showing results from Question 21: Would you describe yourself as someone who is experiencing or has experienced mental health issues? Compared with statistics from The Mental Health Foundation



¹⁷ Source: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-mental-health-work>

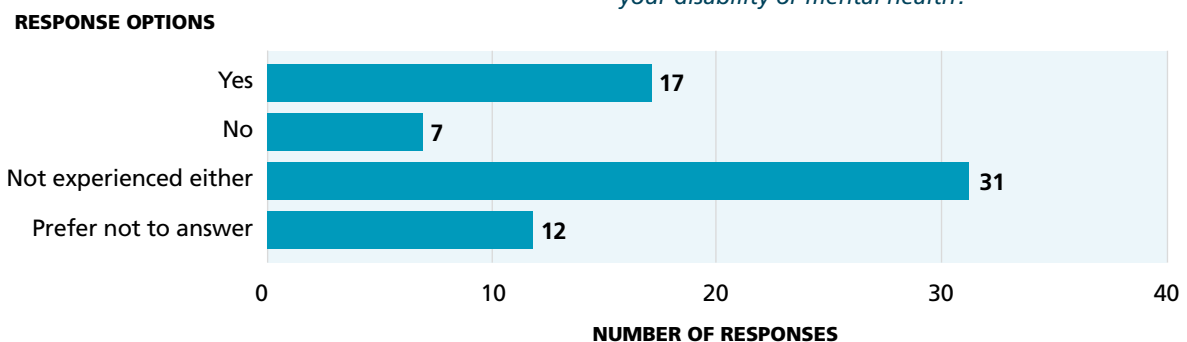
Question 23

Has your current employer offered support for either your disability or mental health?

46% of respondents stated that they had not experienced either disability or mental health issues, although a further 18% 'Preferred not to answer' and one respondent skipped the question.

Of the 36% who had experienced either disability or mental health issues, 25% had received support from their employer and 11% had not.

FIGURE 19 *Graph showing responses to Question 23: Has your current employer offered support for either your disability or mental health?*



“The profession still has a narrow field from which the majority of tree officers come, and that creates a barrier to a more diverse range of people entering the profession.”

Questions 24 and 25

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)? Please specify the number of hours a week providing care (including time spent travelling to be a carer).

13% of respondents responded positively to Question 24, but 27% of respondents gave details of numbers of hours spent providing care. Of the 27%, 17% provided less than 5 hours' care a week, 8% provided 5-10 hours' care a week and 2% provided more than 20 hours of care a week.

FIGURE 20 Graph showing results of Question 24: 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)?

RESPONSE OPTIONS

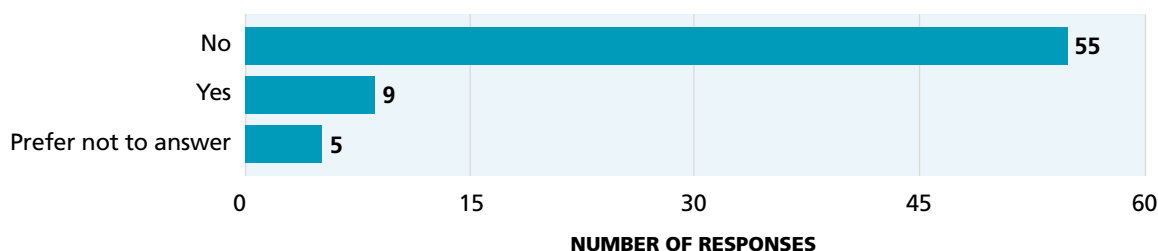
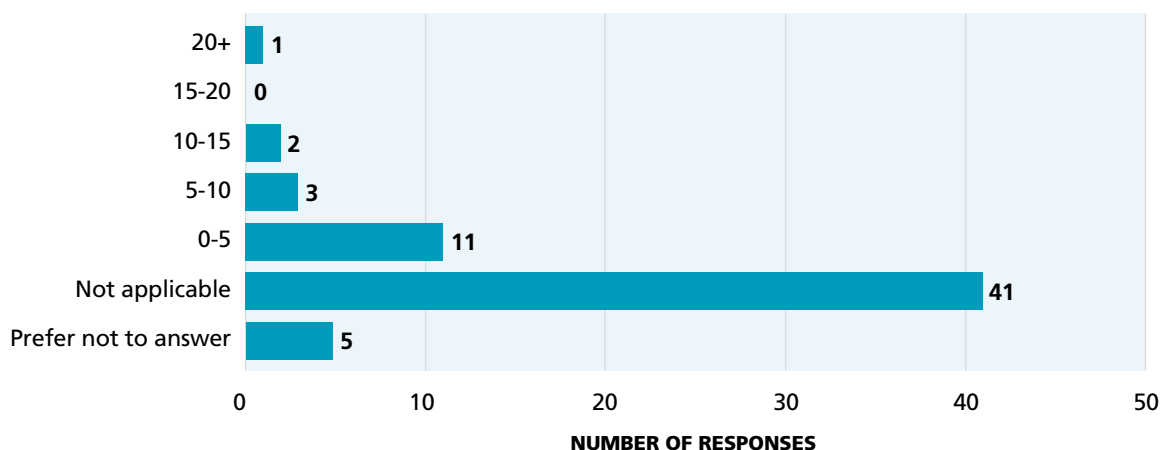


FIGURE 21 Graph showing results from Question 25: Please specify the number of hours a week providing care (including time spent travelling to be a carer).

RESPONSE OPTIONS



Question 26

Do you have any children under 18?

43% of respondents have children under 18.

We do not have the data to compare these figures with the London or National statistics. However, if more part time jobs were available it would enable tree officers to have a better work life balance.

FIGURE 22 Table showing results of Question 26: Do you have any children under 18?

ANSWER	SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Yes	30
No	39
Prefer not to answer	1



5 Conclusion

Not all of the question responses lend themselves to detailed analysis, but many of the results provide us with baseline figures against which to reference any changes in the future, both to assess the diversity of tree officers, to monitor change and to determine if any of our actions are having a direct impact.

Tree officers are clearly not representative of the London population as a whole or London employees specifically, in areas such as gender, ethnicity, nationality or religion.

The lack of diversity can be attributed to various barriers to entering the industry, some of which have been directly experienced by respondents. Whilst the majority of tree officers have not experienced barriers to entering the industry, it is recognised that a wide range of barriers exist. Respondents have put forward many suggestions for increasing diversity, with raising the industry profile being the most frequent.

The results indicate that change is required to improve diversity of London tree officers, and the responses on barriers provide clear guidance on actions which may improve diversity. The D&I Working Party has already taken some initial steps with further actions planned and wider objectives proposed, both for the working party and for the consideration of the arboricultural industry as a whole.



“A broader range of ways to enter and progress through the profession is needed with diversity and inclusion training in recruitment.”

London Tree Officers Association

**Diversity and Inclusion
Working Party Report 2020**

Kindly sponsored by:
Treework Environmental Practice
and Street Tree Limited



street
street tree ltd

December 2020

For further enquiries about any
information in this report,
please contact:

Becky Porter
Executive Officer
London Tree Officers Association
Arboricultural Services
Sustainability and Green Space
Camden Town Hall
Judd Street
London, WC1H 9JE

Phone/ Fax: 020 7974 4124
Mobile: 07771 976238
Email: executive.officer@ltoa.org.uk
Website: www.ltoa.org.uk

 @LTOA33

