

Abstract

This EDI Audit Report provides valuable insights into the current state of inclusivity across the BioImagingUK and PoLNET membership; highlighting progress and areas requiring additional attention. While the survey reveals a foundation of engagement, it also uncovers some systemic disparities, hindering the full participation of individuals from underrepresented groups.

Key Findings

Demographic Disparities:

- Gender: Women constitute 38.0% of respondents, compared to 53.8% men, with notable underrepresentation of women at more senior levels and barriers engaging with conference opportunities (speaking and attendance).
- Ethnicity: Minoritised ethnic groups make up 20.1% of respondents, aligning with national workforce data but indicating room for improvement, specifically as qualitative responses indicate barriers to engagement.
- Disability and Neurodiversity: 11.4% of respondents declared a disability, and 10.8% identified as neurodiverse (ADHD, autism, dyslexia), verbatim comments highlight barriers to access or inclusion.
- Socioeconomic Background: Members predominantly originate from middle or upper-middle-class households, with a small proportion of individuals being from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This disparity underscores financial and structural barriers for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Participation Challenges:

- Caregiving Responsibilities: Parents and carers (34.8%) face difficulties attending professional events, although it is noted that the introduction of a carers' bursary scheme has been a positive step for this group.
- Geographical and Financial Barriers: Members outside major cities or elite institutions report marginalisation, which is heightened by limited hybrid event options and financial constraints.



Cultural Perceptions:

- **Belonging:** While 71.5% of respondents feel a strong sense of belonging, 25.3% are neutral, there is an indication of unmet needs among less engaged members.
- **EDI Dialogue:** Although 68.9% feel comfortable discussing EDI, 29.6% are neutral, and some verbatim comments reveal resistance to deeper engagement, suggesting a need for cultural shifts.
- **Leadership and Fair Treatment:** A majority (74%) believe the networks promote fairness, but neutral responses (24.1%) highlight inconsistencies in perceived treatment.

Event Accessibility and Representation:

- Hybrid meetings and inclusive language (e.g. pronoun usage) are praised, yet many call for broader adoption.
- Speaker diversity remains a concern, with calls for increased representation across gender, ethnicity, and career stages.

Recommendations

1. **Data-Driven Accountability (High Priority):** Develop an EDI dashboard with standardised metrics to monitor progress, assess intervention effectiveness, and ensure transparency.
2. **Targeted Outreach (Medium Priority):** Proactively engage underrepresented groups, such as women, minoritised ethnic members, and early-career researchers; to amplify their voices and address specific barriers.
3. **Behavioral Training (High Priority):** Implement mandatory EDI training to combat microaggressions, bullying, and unconscious bias, fostering a more inclusive culture.
4. **Remove Structural Barriers (Low Priority):** Expand financial support, including grants for caregivers and students from low-income backgrounds.
5. **Diversify Leadership and Speakers (Medium Priority):** Establish structured frameworks to ensure diverse representation in conferences, panels, and leadership roles, reflecting the networks' membership.
6. **Event accessibility (Medium Priority):** Mandate hybrid event formats with subtitles and recordings to improve accessibility.



BiolmagingUK & PoLNET have made commendable strides in EDI, evidenced by initiatives like carers' bursaries and some hybrid events. However, persistent disparities in gender representation, ethnicity representation, socioeconomic access, and cultural engagement demand a systematic, data-driven approach. By implementing the recommendations detailed in this report the networks can translate EDI commitments into tangible outcomes, ensuring all members feel valued and included. Sustained effort, leadership accountability, and member collaboration will be key to building a truly inclusive community where diversity is celebrated and equity embedded.