

## 2. Executive summary



**This report summarises findings from an online survey with close to 5,000 researchers as well as interviews with early career researchers (ECRs). It aims to examine how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are understood in the research community, identify barriers to achieving greater DEI, and highlight opportunities for change.**

DEI in the research community is a topic that has been explored in other surveys and resources. Our goal in undertaking this new enquiry was to better understand structural barriers and add to the available data, exploring a broad range of researcher groups, notably by career stage, gender, disability, race, and ethnic origin. Our report finds alarming perceptions of DEI among underrepresented groups of researchers, with high levels of discrimination, harassment, and bullying in the research community, and low levels of satisfaction with DEI programmes and initiatives, particularly among ECRs who represent a diverse demographic group.

### Key findings:

**The biggest barriers to DEI were perceived to be prejudice, inertia, and unconscious bias.**

- Lack of money and time were also prominent barriers.
- Bias in recruitment and career advancement were notable topics for ECRs.
- The peer review process was highlighted as a particular barrier within publishing.

**DEI initiatives are not meeting the needs of underrepresented researchers.**

- Although over half of respondents were aware of specific DEI initiatives or policies in their workplace, perspectives on the effectiveness of such initiatives differ significantly.
- Women, underrepresented ethnic or racial groups, and those with a non-visible disability were much less likely to think initiatives were sufficient, compared with all respondents.
- The majority of late-career researchers on the other hand believe at least to a moderate extent that current DEI initiatives are sufficient.

### **There is an alarmingly high rate of discrimination, harassment, or bullying in the research community, with the majority overwhelmingly uncomfortable with reporting such behaviours.**

- Over 60% of respondents reported experiencing some form of discrimination, harassment, or bullying in the research community at least once a year.
- Negative experiences were noticeably higher for underrepresented groups, with over 60% of underrepresented ethnic or racial groups reporting 'being treated with less courtesy or respect than other people' and 'people acting as if you were less competent, trustworthy, or capable than others' more than once a year.
- Age discrimination, gender discrimination, and verbal microaggressions were the most prevalent forms of discrimination.
- The majority of respondents (60%) felt comfortable to only a small or very small extent in reporting these behaviours or seeking resolution. This was even more the case for underrepresented groups.

### **Underrepresented groups including ECRs were less likely to consider the research community to be diverse, equitable or inclusive.**

- 73% of respondents said that the research community is diverse, equitable, and inclusive to at least a moderate extent; however, only 59% of underrepresented racial or ethnic groups felt the same way.
- Underrepresented groups, notably ECRs, women, non-binary or gender diverse respondents, and those with a non-visible disability were more likely to say the research community was diverse or inclusive to only a small or very small extent.

### **ECRs identify roles for every stakeholder in the research community to support and advance DEI.**

- Publishers can develop and communicate inclusive publishing practices, target underrepresented groups, tackle bias in peer review, publish a diverse range of voices, and support more authors to choose open access (OA).
- Institutions can support outreach and recruitment of a diverse cohort of ECRs, continue to build on training and workshops, ensure buy-in and action from academic leadership, and facilitate open dialogue on DEI.
- Individual researchers can provide peer networking and mentorship as part of supporting inclusive cultures.
- Funders and scholarly societies can provide targeted support for underrepresented groups and widen outreach programmes.