



Avon Fire & Rescue Service Workforce Diversity Profile June 2018

Introduction

As an employer and a public service provider we know that one of the best ways to promote an inclusive and cohesive working culture is to have a diverse workforce representative of the community it serves. The business case for diversity is clear – inclusive organisations foster innovation, loyalty, and high performance. Staff can make stronger connections with the community because they reflect it.

Being representative of the community is not solely about the ethnic or gender make-up of the local population; diversity covers a multitude of differences, attributes, skills, qualities and characteristics which extend far beyond the protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act. These characteristics, protected by law, are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Since January 2018, Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) has begun redeveloping its approach to what we now refer to as Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE). There is now a DICE team in place working on organisation-wide initiatives ranging from our recruitment processes to how we engage with community groups. The strategic responsibility for this work lies with the Service Management Board, and is undertaken with full support from Avon Fire Authority.

Monitoring our workforce diversity

As a public sector employer, we have a legal obligation under the Equality Act to publish information on the protected characteristics of our employees. While being a statutory requirement, it is also a useful exercise for us as an employer. Our approach to DICE work is evidence-based, and having a thorough understanding of who works for us helps help shape our policy and practice.

Information about the protected characteristics of our workforce is gathered using a computer system called FireWatch. Staff are able to complete their record in their own time, but are not obliged to do so. Consequently, declaration rates for some characteristics are lower than others. Where staff have not provided us with data, they will be registered as 'not stated' or 'prefer not to say'. The difference is that 'not stated' means someone has not filled in a question at all, whereas 'prefer not to say' means they have made a choice to answer but not provide information about the characteristic.

We currently collect information about our staff on the following six characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The data we collect on the protected characteristics is broken down across the staff role types. This enables us to monitor and highlight any inequalities between the following groups:

- Control (staff working in our control centre)
- Flexi-duty officers (wholetime senior staff working flexible hours to provide specialist cover)
- On-call firefighters (firefighters who provide cover part-time and respond when needed)
- Wholetime firefighters (full time firefighters, for whom being a firefighter is their main job)
- Support staff (staff working in non-operational roles)
- All appointees
- Leavers

We also look to compare our staff data to the population we serve and work within. Our 'service area', as it is termed, covers the four Unitary Authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Each has a very distinct diversity profile themselves, which is important to bear in mind when making large-scale comparisons.

This report is a snapshot of the profile of our workforce as it was recorded on FireWatch on 1 June 2018. Each of the sections in this report will look at the data for a characteristics in detail. For context, Table 1 below outlines the breakdown of the different staff roles within the organisation.

Table 1. Breakdown of all staff by role type

Staff role	Headcount	Percentage of workforce
Control	35	4.11%
Flexi-duty officers	37	4.34%
On call firefighters	174	20.42%
Wholetime firefighters	479	56.22%
Support staff	127	14.91%
Total	852	100%

Age

Definition: A person or persons belonging to a particular age or range of ages.

Table 2. Breakdown of all staff by age range

Age	Headcount	Percentage of workforce
16 - 24	26	2.63%
25 - 35	134	13.37%
36 - 45	252	26.25%
46 - 55	335	38.42%
56 - 65	72	8.47%
66+	3	0.36%

Comparing our age profile to that of the service area is not straightforward, as each of our four local authorities present the data in a different manner. However looking at Census data from 2011, and Office of National Statistics (ONS) population estimates from 2016, our workforce is skewed towards being older than the community we serve.

Table 3. Breakdown of all staff age range by role type

Age	Control		On call		Wholetime		Support	
	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage
16 - 24	0	0.00%	14	8.05%	4	0.80%	8	6.15%
25 - 35	10	34.48%	43	24.71%	63	12.65%	17	13.08%
36 - 45	8	27.59%	47	27.01%	165	33.13%	27	20.77%
46 - 55	7	24.14%	56	32.18%	228	45.78%	43	33.08%
56 - 65	4	13.79%	14	8.05%	21	4.22%	33	25.38%
66+	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.20%	2	1.54%

As you can see in Table 3, the wholetime firefighter and support staff workforces are currently weighted towards the older age ranges. For wholetime in particular, this is a legacy of a recruitment freeze that lasted from 2008 until 2017. In the summer of 2017 we recruited wholetime firefighters again, and of the 20 who joined in that training school, 14 of them were below the age of 36. There are also a high number of wholetime firefighters approaching a return of service where they can retire, which will also have an effect on our workforce age profile.

For support staff, there were 19 appointees in the last 12 months, of whom nine were younger than 36. If these trends are reflected over the next year of recruitment and beyond, we should begin to see our workforce profile shift to become younger.

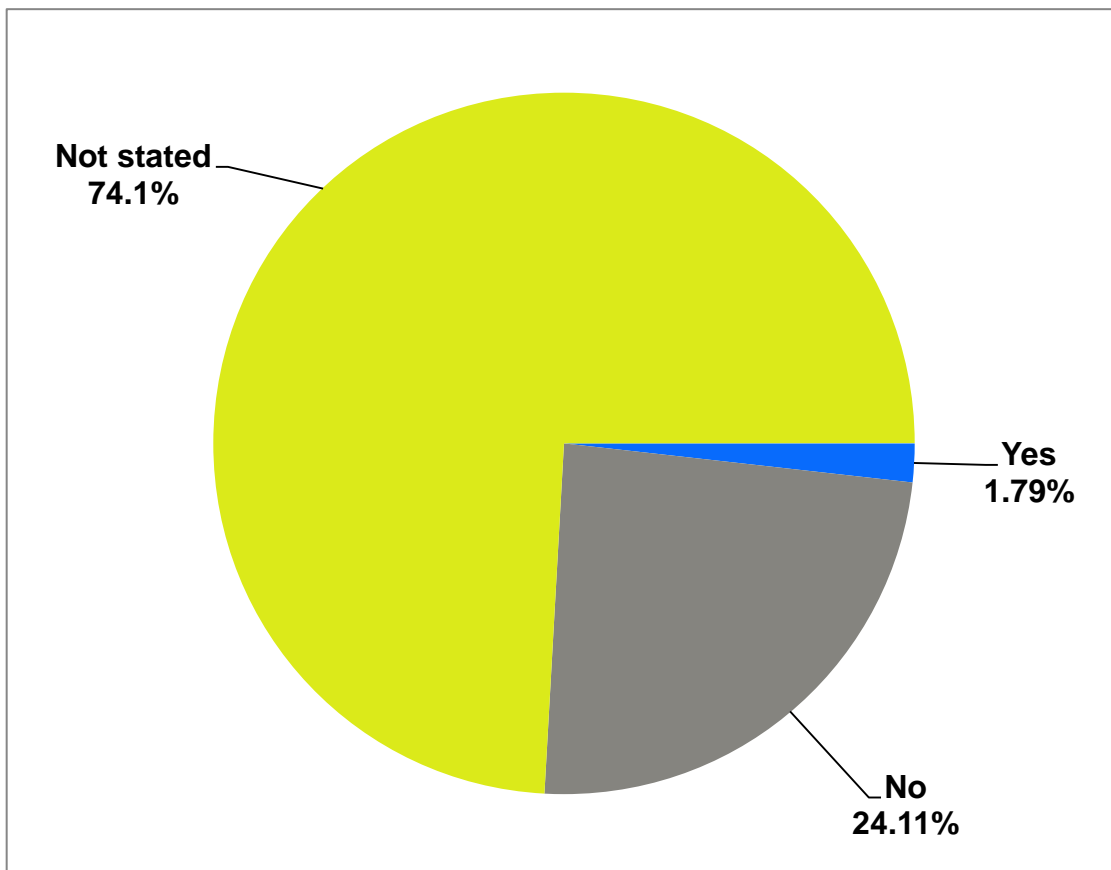
Disability

Definition: A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of monitoring, staff can only answer either 'yes' or 'no' to the question. However, employees with certain conditions including dyslexia are entitled in law to 'reasonable adjustments' to address their needs in the workplace. Any staff with a disability can contact the Health, Safety and Welfare Unit where they can have a risk assessment.

Only 15 of our staff have declared a disability on FireWatch, but we know from the support we have provided to staff around dyslexia in particular that this number is in reality higher in our workforce. This is to be expected, as 7.6% of the population of our service area have a long-term condition that limits their day-to-day activities a lot. Almost three quarters of staff did not answer the question on disability (Chart 1), suggesting we have work to do in order to improve confidence in disclosing this information to us as an employer.

Chart 1. Percentage breakdown of all staff by disability



Race

Definition: Refers to a group of people defined by their colour and nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins.

When looking at the race of our workforce, we ask questions based on the ethnicity categories developed for the Census. This is because the majority of local authorities and organisations do the same and so allows us to compare our own data against other data sets. The table below shows the percentage breakdown of all our staff by ethnic group, and a percentage figure for our service area based on the 2011 Census.

Table 4. Breakdown of all staff by ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Headcount	Percentage of workforce	Percentage of service area
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	720	85.92%	88.50%
White: Irish	5	0.6%	0.64%
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0%	0.08%
White: Other White	14	1.67%	3.50%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	1	0.12%	0.79%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	0	0%	0.21%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	1	0.12%	0.51%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed	6	0.72%	0.41%
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	0%	0.89%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0	0%	0.52%
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0%	0.20%
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	1	0.12%	0.70%
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	0	0%	0.64%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	0	0%	0.93%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	5	0.6%	0.61%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	0	0%	0.45%
Other ethnic group: Arab	0	0%	0.18%
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	2	0.24%	0.28%
Prefer not to say	5	0.6%	N/A
Not stated	61	7.28%	N/A

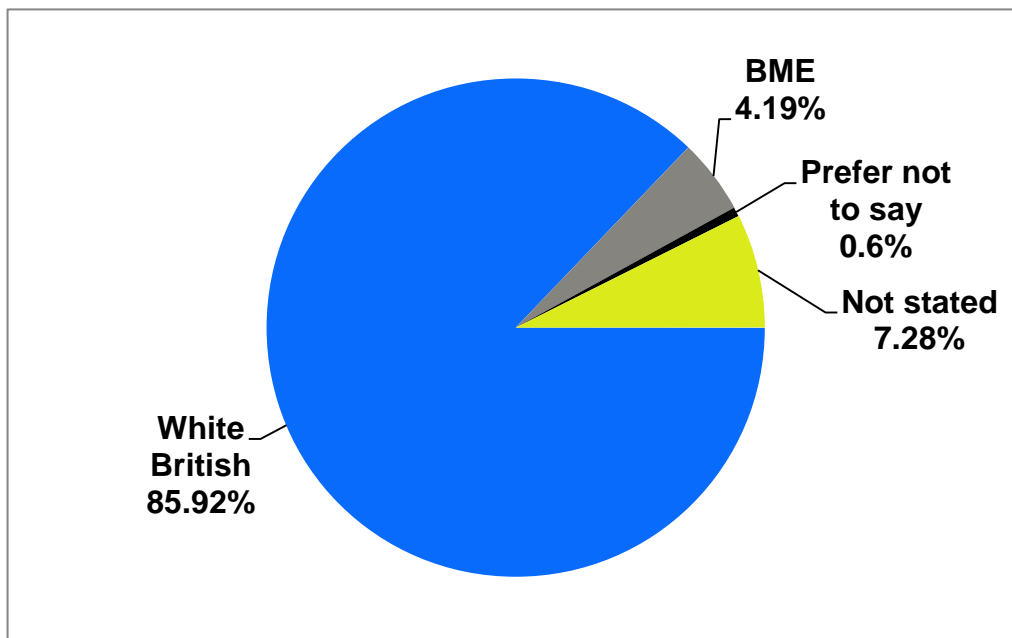
While the percentage of the organisation that is White British is actually lower than the percentage from across the whole of the service area; we still have work to do around better representing the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community in our workforce. At AF&RS, we use the term BME to refer to people from non-White British backgrounds – which includes White Europeans.

For instance, Bristol City Council recently estimated there are 10,000 Somalis living in Bristol¹. However, we have no-one in the whole organisation with a Black African background. When you total the number of people classified in the Census as being from non-White backgrounds, it is 96,868 – or just over nine percent of our service area. Our workforce is only 1.8% non-White, which shows we have work to do in encouraging people from non-White backgrounds to apply for careers in the organisation.

People from other White backgrounds are better represented within the organisation, but we still have just over half as many as a percentage of the workforce as live in the service area. This is another area of focus for us, as we know that there is an increasing population of people moving to the service area from countries who joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007².

There are no significant differences when comparing between staff roles – staff of non-White British ethnicity seem to spread evenly around the organisation. However, the ‘not stated’ rate is between four and 14 percent depending on the staff role. As with other characteristics in FireWatch, it is clear work needs to be done to improve this declaration rate.

Chart 2. Percentage breakdown of all staff by ethnicity



¹ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33904/Population+of+Bristol+June+2018/53020277-05de-a153-2052-aa080338bb57> , Page 26.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-insurance-number-allocations-to-adult-overseas-nationals-to-march-2018>

Religion or belief

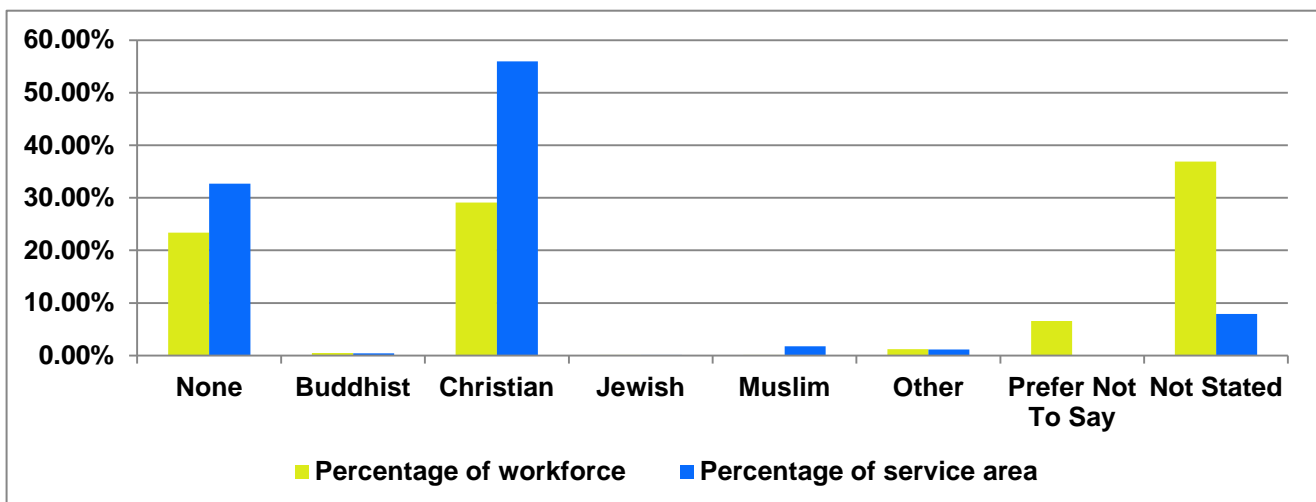
Definition: Religion refers to having a religious or philosophical belief, including lack of religion or belief (such as Atheism). Generally, a belief will affect your life choices or the way you live for it to apply as a protected characteristic.

Table 5. Breakdown of all staff by religion

	Headcount	Percentage of workforce	Percentage of service area
None	196	23.39%	32.71%
Buddhist	4	0.48%	0.43%
Christian	244	29.12%	55.97%
Jewish	1	0.12%	0.13%
Muslim	1	0.12%	1.75%
Other	10	1.19%	1.12
Prefer Not To Say	55	6.56%	N/A
Not Stated	309	36.87%	7.88%

We have a significant underrepresentation of Christians in the organisation, but the data we are using for the service area is from the Census in 2011. The British Social Attitudes survey in 2017 found that over half of people in the UK now described themselves as having ‘no religion’, with the greatest fall in religious identification being amongst Anglicans³. As such, it is likely the percentage of people in service now identifying as Christian will be lower than in 2011. We also have only one Muslim member of staff, which is unrepresentative of the service area. All of our staff who have a religion which is not Christianity are either wholetime or on call firefighters.

Chart 3. Percentage breakdown of all staff by religion



³ <http://natcen.ac.uk/news-media/press-releases/2017/september/british-social-attitudes-record-number-of-brits-with-no-religion/>

Sex

Definition: Whether a person is a man or a woman. This characteristic is commonly referred to as ‘gender’, which is the term we ask our staff about for monitoring purposes.

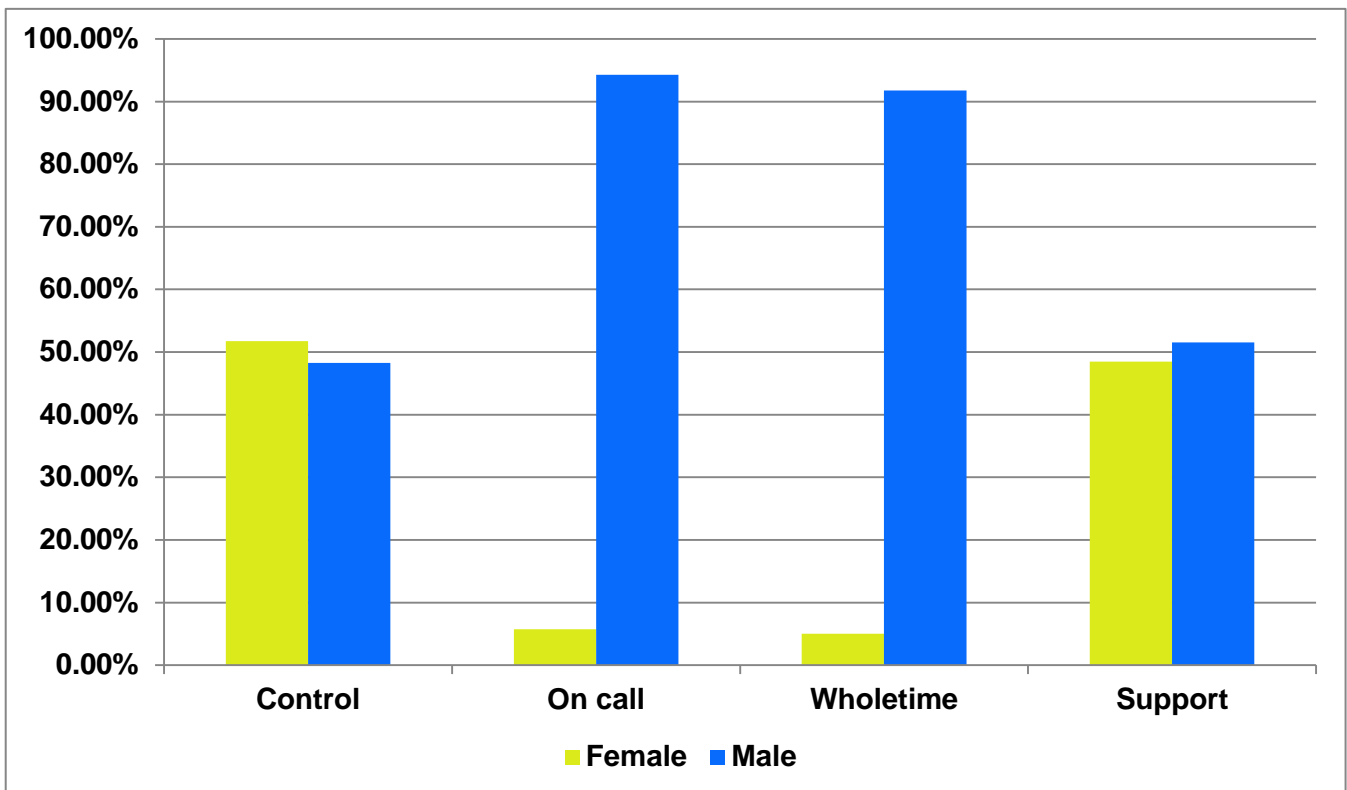
The population of our service area is and 50.8% female and 49.2% male, but our workforce is a long way off reflecting this; our current workforce profile is 13.96% female and 84.13% male.

Women are significantly under-represented in both operational staff role types, but in support and control staff the gender split of employees almost matches that of the service area. Increasing the amount of applications from women to operational firefighting roles has been a long-term priority for the organisation, and will continue to be over the coming year.

Table 6. Breakdown of all staff by sex

	Control		On call		Wholetime		Support	
Female	15	51.72%	10	5.75%	25	5.02%	63	48.46%
Male	12	48.28%	164	94.25%	457	91.77%	67	51.54%

Chart 4. Percentage breakdown of staff role type by sex



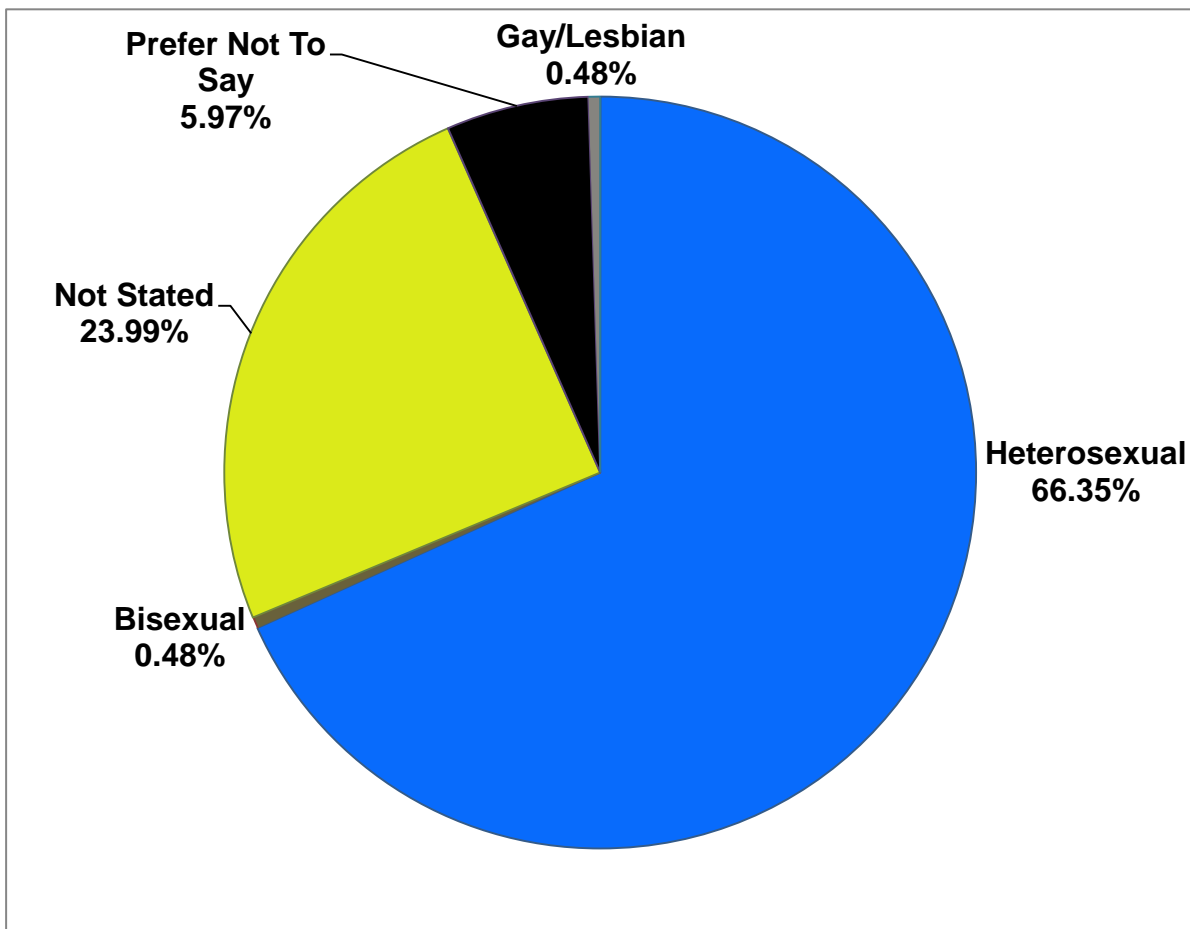
Sexual orientation

Definition: Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Currently, there are fewer than 10 staff who have disclosed that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual. There are no detailed statistics for the sexual orientation of residents within our service area; but LGBT (Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Trans) rights charity Stonewall estimates 5-10% of the UK population are not heterosexual.

This suggests we either are an organisation which is not attractive for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people to work for, or we have LGB staff who are not comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation at work. Consequently we should be making efforts to engage with the LGBT community to raise our profile as an inclusive employer, and take steps to foster an environment in the workplace which is accepting of those staff who are not heterosexual.

Chart 5. Percentage breakdown of all staff by sexual orientation



Other protected characteristics

In addition to the six characteristics we collect workforce information on, there are three we have not presented data on here – gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

Gender reassignment is the term used in the Equality Act, but at AF&RS we use the broader term ‘gender identity’ to refer to someone’s sense of their own gender; whether male, female or something else. Currently, we do not collect any information on the gender identity of staff. However we are aware of the challenges faced by trans and non-binary people in all areas of society, and are taking steps to make sure our policies are trans-inclusive and we foster a culture which is accepting of people of all gender identities.

FireWatch has a category to record information on marriage and civil partnership, but very few staff have provided this information to date. In future, we will try to encourage staff to provide this information to us.

AF&RS has a generous provision of maternity leave, and pregnant staff are supported throughout and after their pregnancy. We do not currently collect information on pregnancy and maternity through FireWatch, but the HR team are aware of all staff who have informed them of a pregnancy.

Conclusion

From our workforce data, it is clear that in comparison to our service area, younger people, those with BME backgrounds, some religious faiths, women and LGB people are currently under-represented in our organisation. We also have issues around staff disclosing diversity information to us, particularly in relation to disability and sexual orientation.

In order to provide the best service possible to the public, our aim is to increase the number of applications for employment that we receive from people within those groups. During our last wholetime recruitment campaign we undertook a series of targeted initiatives to try and help with this – including fitness workshops specifically for potential female applicants. As part of the organisations new approach to DICE, we are working to develop ongoing relationships with community organisations and charities who can help us to achieve this.

We will also continue to seek out best practice on inclusive recruitment, promotion and retention – and use this to inform our decision making over the coming years. In addition, we have a DICE action plan covering the next twelve months which includes actions to address some of the areas of under-representation highlighted in this report.