

# Report of IP Inclusive diversity benchmarking survey November 2019

---



## Executive summary

### *The survey*

In November 2019, to mark IP Inclusive Week, we conducted our first ever diversity survey. The aim was to gather some basic benchmarking data for the IP sector as a whole, against which to measure IP Inclusive's progress in promoting diversity and also to inform our future work.

The survey was run online using IP Inclusive's SurveyMonkey® account. It was open for three weeks; participation was voluntary and open to all professionals working in the IP sector. Responses were collected and analysed anonymously.

The questions captured basic data on the respondents' roles, career levels and working environments, and also on the following aspects of their diversity: age, gender, ethnicity, religion and faith, sexuality, background (in particular from educational and socio-economic perspectives), disabilities, and caring responsibilities.

### *The respondents*

We were encouraged by the level of engagement. The survey attracted 1,085 responses, with a completion rate of 92%; these came from a range of sectors and working environments, representing a good spread of professional roles and career levels. There was a higher proportion of respondents from the private sector, and from the patent and trade mark professions, which is probably to be expected in view of IP Inclusive's origins, but the level of this imbalance indicated that our reach across the IP sector has greatly improved since our inception.

We cannot be sure what proportion the 1,085 respondents represent of the IP sector as a whole because it is hard to define the size of a constituency embracing so many different IP-related roles. We do however know that among CIPA and CITMA members, uptake rates were between 10 and 16% depending on the membership category.

The relative response levels for female and male IP professionals (gender balance being a criterion for which there is already some publicly available data) suggest that people from so-called "minority" groups (for example women, BAME and/or LGBT+ professionals) were more likely to have responded to the survey than their counterparts in "majority" groups; this could have distorted the results somewhat.

We believe, however, that the main value of this survey is in identifying overall trends rather than precise quantitative data; providing an approximate benchmark against which to gauge our future progress; and giving us a feel for the relative levels of different types of diversity in the IP sector.

### *Key outcomes*

The “bigger picture” points that we can draw out from the survey results are these:

- The IP professions as a whole include a reasonable proportion of women.
  - However, the proportion is significantly lower in senior private sector roles, and among IP barristers, IP Office employees and patent attorneys, and higher among trade mark attorneys and in so-called “supporting” roles such as IP paralegals, secretaries and business support professionals.
- We have very low levels of ethnic diversity, being at present mainly white.
  - This does, however, appear to be improving among newer recruits.
- We have a reasonable level of diversity in terms of sexuality, compared to the overall UK population.
  - Many non-heterosexuals are, however, unable to be “out” in the workplace, and free text comments suggest that there are still improvements to be made in our sector’s understanding and acceptance of less “conventional” forms of sexuality and gender identity.
- In terms of social mobility, the IP professions do not appear to be as bad as we might have feared. The responses show that it is – or at least has been – possible to access the sector from less privileged backgrounds.
  - The percentage of Oxbridge and other Russell Group graduates appears to be higher in the private sector, and among more senior respondents, and also – perhaps worryingly – among newer recruits, than it is for the overall survey cohort.
- We have very low proportions of disabled people and of carers for disabled people.
  - Moreover, many of our disabled professionals feel unable to tell their employers about their conditions.
- IP professionals who are not currently members of one of the so-called “minority” groups appear less likely to engage with a diversity assessment exercise.
  - This highlights one of the most difficult – but also the most important – aspects of persuading more people on board: that those who enjoy the most privileges do not always appreciate the importance of levelling the playing field.

### *Recommendations*

We suggest that the survey results be used as a benchmark against which to evaluate future changes in diversity levels (not only in the IP sector as a whole but also within specific sectors and organisations); as an indication of areas in need of improvement or support; and as an incentive to strive for greater diversity throughout the IP community.

In response, we recommend that IP Inclusive:

- Continue to try to persuade more people (particularly those in senior positions, and those who are not part of a minority group) of the value of diversity and inclusion, and the importance of gathering credible diversity data for the sector.
- Work with our five communities (IP & ME, IP Ability, IP Futures, IP Out and Women in IP) to provide better targeted support and resources in the areas identified as most in need.
- Share relevant information with other key IP sector organisations such as membership bodies and regulators, and work with them to understand and address the problems with current diversity levels.
- Encourage and support our Charter signatories' efforts in gathering and using their own diversity data; provide guidance and other resources to help them overcome challenges and adopt best practices in this context.
- Encourage IP sector employers to assess and develop their recruitment practices, and their appraisal and career development programmes, in light of the survey results.
- Conduct similar surveys annually from now on, as a means to evaluate progress towards a more diverse and inclusive IP sector.
- In designing future surveys, take account of feedback received from the work outlined above, and aim to attract more, and more diverse, respondents year on year.

Andrea Brewster OBE CPA EPA  
Lead Executive Officer, IP Inclusive