

The diversity challenge

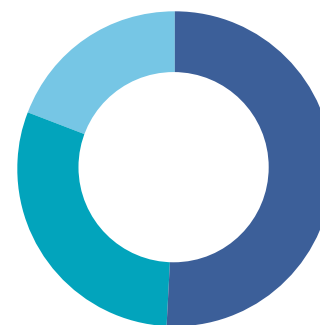
More than half of 16- to 21-year-olds surveyed believe there are gender and ethnicity barriers to a career in science or medicine¹, despite most of them thinking of pursuing one



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Career Barriers

Do you think that jobs involving science and medicine are equally accessible to people from all ethnic backgrounds and genders?



■ No: 51% ■ Yes: 30% ■ Don't know: 19%¹

Data based on 303 respondents aged 16- to 21-years old

Science and medicine are popular career choices that the UK government has identified as important drivers for the economy. Nevertheless, the government has also noted skills shortages in these areas and attempted to engage a wider range of young people in these careers.

To better understand the factors that influence young people's career aspirations, *New Scientist* and global biopharmaceutical company, Ipsen, ran a survey hosted on *New Scientist's* website among 797 respondents aged between 7 and 21 years.

The results¹ show considerable engagement with 83 per cent having considered becoming a scientist or doctor. Many (41%) said the Covid-19 pandemic had increased their interest in these careers.

Yet the survey also revealed that two in five respondents felt that jobs in science and medicine aren't equally accessible to those of different ethnic backgrounds or genders. This sentiment increases with age, jumping to 51 per cent for 16- to 21-year-olds, with the perception higher among females.

These perceived barriers are reflected in the wider workforce. For STEM (science,

technology, engineering and mathematics), less than 30 per cent of researchers worldwide are women, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics², and a recent analysis by the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group for Diversity and Inclusion in STEM revealed that in the UK, 65 per cent of those working in UK STEM industries are white men³.

The picture for ethnic diversity is more complex. Some 12 per cent of the STEM workforce have ethnic backgrounds³, about the same as the workforce as a whole. However, people of Indian ethnicity are over-represented³ while people from other ethnic minorities are under-represented. For example, only 2 per cent of STEM workers are black compared to 3 per cent of the rest of the workforce³.

The pharmaceutical industry is aware of these problems and of the potential to attract a more diverse workforce. "Over the last few years, this industry has made positive strides to improve gender and ethnic diversity in the workplace, yet there is still work to be done," says John Chaddock, VP Head of Research for External Innovation & Early Development Operations at Ipsen. "The UK is a world leader in STEM and as an industry we need to work

collaboratively to break down perceived barriers and empower more young people to consider STEM career opportunities."

But the fact young people don't believe these jobs are equally accessible is "sadly unsurprising," says Katherine Mathieson, chief executive of the British Science Association, secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Diversity and Inclusion in STEM. "Young people are more in tune with the world than ever and want to make a difference," she says. "We need to nurture this interest by encouraging their aspirations, continuing to actively improve accessibility to science and ensuring STEM is a path open to everyone." ■

Find out more about Ipsen careers at:
<https://www.ipсен.com/uk>

1. Ipsen Data on File ALL-UK-001361
2. UNESCO Institute for Statistics; Women in Science; <https://bit.ly/3iurOfU> Last accessed June 2021
3. All-Party Parliamentary Group for Diversity and Inclusion in STEM; The State of the Sector: Diversity and representation in STEM industries in the UK; <https://bit.ly/2TUNDEF> Last accessed June 2021