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Where We Stand: Inclusion, Diversity and Equality (IDE) Industry Report

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In 2017, MRS and Lightspeed conducted two unprecedented pieces of research that looked at Inclusion, Diversity and Equality (IDE) across the market research industry. A key finding of that research showed a lack of diversity and equality across our sector within senior management.

Since the release of the IDE studies, MRS made a commitment to do all that it can to understand and proactively encourage change. In order to track how the industry is evolving, Lightspeed conducted a third piece of research to gauge how behaviours have changed in the last 12 months.

Sample Overview:
In 2017, the sample came from two main sources, the MRS members and a mixture of Kantar UK employees.
In 2018, the sample primarily came from the MRS members and it was topped up with our UK online panel who work in the market research sector.
The number of Senior managers in both samples is similar (64% in 2017 and 65% in 2018), but the number of smaller companies answering the survey (10 and fewer employees) increased in 2018 from 12% to 19%, which may contribute to the smaller number of Senior Female leaders in 2018.
In 2018 we have more respondents with a longer career in the research & insights field than in 2017, 59% compared with 48% in 2017.

Of the Market Researchers we spoke to in 2018:

58% identify as women
8% identify as gay/lesbian/bisexual
78% identify as White British
71% are based in an office
36% live in the London region
38% work at companies with more than 250 employees

Highlight Overview:

According to the survey, women account for 58% of those employed full-time in the research sector. However, it is disappointing to see that only 38% of women in the sample reached senior management compared to 50% of men.

The research shows 10% of those employed full-time in the research sector identified as BAME with 29% of those identifying as BAME reaching senior management roles. In contrast, the percentage of those identifying as White British in senior management roles was 43%.

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20% of the men working full-time earned £70,000 or more; this fell to 14% for women. We also looked at those working full time earning £80,000 or more, and although gender continues to play a theme, it was less extreme with 16% being male and 11% being female.

18% of those working full-time who identified as White British were earning £70,000 or more; this fell to 11% for those who identified as BAME, here the discrepancy grows with wage as when we look at those working full time earning £80,000 or more, 86% are White British and only 4% identified themselves as BAME.

In Depth:

Gender:
Of the women asked about the impact of their gender on their career in the last 12 months, 14% said they had felt 'negatively discriminated' in their current company due to their gender. Although this looks to be an improvement to the survey conducted in 2017 in which 47% of women felt negatively impacted due to their gender, we need to take into consideration, that in 2017 we asked about their career lifespan, therefore, it remains relatively high, especially when compared to the 4% of men who felt the same in the last 12 months.

Compared to the 2017 report, 'Positive Discrimination' remains at 4% for women, but has shown a significant drop for men, from 39% to 4%, which is interesting as this seems to indicate that men are being less positively discriminated for, whilst women have arguably increased in the last 12 months (4% career vs 4% in the last 12 months).

15% of women asked, believe that their company is not actively adopting policies to help the organisation be in line with inclusion and diversity goals. For men, this figure was 13%. As to whether the IDE goals of their company were clear and understandable to employees, 24% of women 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree,' while 19% neither agree nor disagree. In contrast, 50% of men appear to 'agree' or strongly agree' that their company has a clear IDE strategy.

When assessing discriminatory behaviours in the working environment, 25% of women and 16% of men reported having been 'unfairly spoken over and not listened to in meetings'. 15% of women and 11% of men felt that 'learning opportunities or progress were restricted by senior colleagues'.

More importantly, 10% of women and 5% of men have experienced bullying or harassment of some kind.

Sexual Orientation:
Compared to the 2017 report, there has been a significant decrease of 41% in the percentage of LGBT+ respondents that have been 'Negatively Discriminated' against due to their sexual orientation, although this is a Career vs last 12 months comparison it shows the improvements in this area in 2018. 6% of those who identified as LGBT+ said they had felt 'Negatively

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Discriminated' against due to their sexual orientation in 2018, while the figure was 55% in 2017 (over their career).

None (0.3%) of those who identified as heterosexual said they had felt 'Negatively Discriminated' against, but there has been a decrease in the heterosexual respondents who felt 'Positively Discriminated' towards from 17% in 2017 (over their career) to 1% in 2018 (in the last 12 months).

When asked whether they believe their company is taking action to be in line with inclusion and diversity guidelines, 22% of the LGBT+ community said 'No, but I would like them to' compared to 13% of those identified as heterosexual.

Ethnicity:
2018 has seen a decrease in the percentage of White British respondents who felt 'positively' or 'negatively discriminated' due to their ethnicity. Only 2% of those who identified as White British felt 'positively discriminated' due to their ethnicity in 2018 (in the last 12 months) while the figure in 2017 was 13% (career). Similarly, in 2017, 5% of those who identified as White British felt 'negatively discriminated' due to their ethnicity (career), but only 1% felt the same in 2018 (in the last 12 months).

17% of respondents of 'Other White background' have experienced 'negative discrimination' while 1% have experienced 'positive discrimination' within the last 12 months.

Of those who identified as BAME, 7% said they had been 'positively discriminated' for, compared to 0% in 2017. 20% of BAME respondents had felt 'negatively discriminated' against in 2018. That figure was 52% in 2017.

Age:
There has been a decrease of 24% in those who have felt 'negatively discriminated' against due to their age (this is a career figure in 2017, and in the last 12 months in 2018). It is interesting to note, however, that respondents in the 16-24 and 25-34 years brackets reported the highest percentages of negative experiences in 2018, with 21% and 15% of those having felt 'negatively discriminated' against due to their age respectively.

Health and Wellness:
12% felt 'negatively discriminated' against because of their health conditions. When asked what health conditions they had:

- 27% of respondents facing mobility issues
- 46% of respondents with visual impairments
- 33% of respondents with breathing concerns
- 38% of respondents with cognitive/learning issues

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The alarming note is that 40% and 44% of respondents have reported that they suffer from mental health or anxiety respectively.

For those facing mental health issues, 77% of cases, amongst those asked, have been diagnosed by a medical professional. Compared to 2017, the percentage of diagnosed mental health issues has seen a rise of 63%. However, only 57% of diagnosed respondents have made their manager/HR departments aware and 47% feel that their company is not supportive of their condition.

For those suffering from anxiety, 69% of cases have been diagnosed by a medical professional, only 57% of those have made their manager/HR department aware. Of those,48% feel that their company is not supportive of their condition.

It is interesting to note that of the respondents facing mental health and anxiety issues, the vast majority are under 44 years old. More specifically, 52% of men under the age of 44 suffer from mental health conditions and 52% of the same demographic suffers from anxiety. Similarly, 52% of women under the age of 44 suffer from mental health conditions and 48% from anxiety. Women in 2018 are feeling the strain though with 42% saying they suffer from Mental health issues – up from 16% in 2017. What is interesting to note is that this looks to be even higher amongst BAME respondents.

The Views and Current Status:

Currently 45% of those asked said they are aware of their companies IDE goals and policies. 52% of respondents believe that diversity in the workforce is an important issue for senior leadership in their company, while 37% believe that the equal treatment of employees in terms of pay and opportunities should also be a high priority for their senior leadership.

When it comes to equality in the workplace, 71% of respondents believe that people with the same skills but from different social classes are treated the same in their company. However, 30% of respondents believe that jobs should not be given purely based on professional skills but other factors should play a role in recruitment decision-making, of which 62% are in senior leadership roles.

Having run three research pieces and an in-depth focus group on this subject, it has become clear that the issues at play are complicated and highly sensitive; therefore, it is hard to give broad brush recommendations as to possible solutions. It is clear, however, that companies need to review, identify and audit areas where employees are being let down or discriminated against

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Although we have seen an improvement in various key IDE targets compared to 2017, many organisations do not realise that there are issues of inclusion and diversity endemic in their structure. It must be highlighted that inclusion and diversity should not translate behaviour favourable to minorities. Instead, IDE policies should be adopted and implemented to ensure equal treatment for all employees and potential employees. We need to ensure that any changes are structural and meaningful.

In turn, organisations should engage in conversations with their staff in an open and safe environment that will allow employees to voice their concerns and identify places where more can be done to ensure that nobody experiences discrimination.

The ultimate goal of IDE policies should be to establish a working environment that can accommodate people no matter their background or needs, and to ensure that recruitment is carried out purely on merit and in a balanced and unbiased way. This is harder than it sounds, as many of the biases and issues may go unannounced or may be hidden by structures and unconscious issues that ultimately result in unfair practice towards certain groups.

Unlike 2017, there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents suggesting that MRS should have an active role in pioneering the way forward. It is therefore, suggested that individual organisations should take an in-depth look at their own IDE policies before MRS can step in to encourage better practices, give advice and implement training in respect of the issues identified.