



**Science
Societies**

Assessing diversity, equity, and inclusion in ASA, CSSA, and SSSA

August 25, 2021



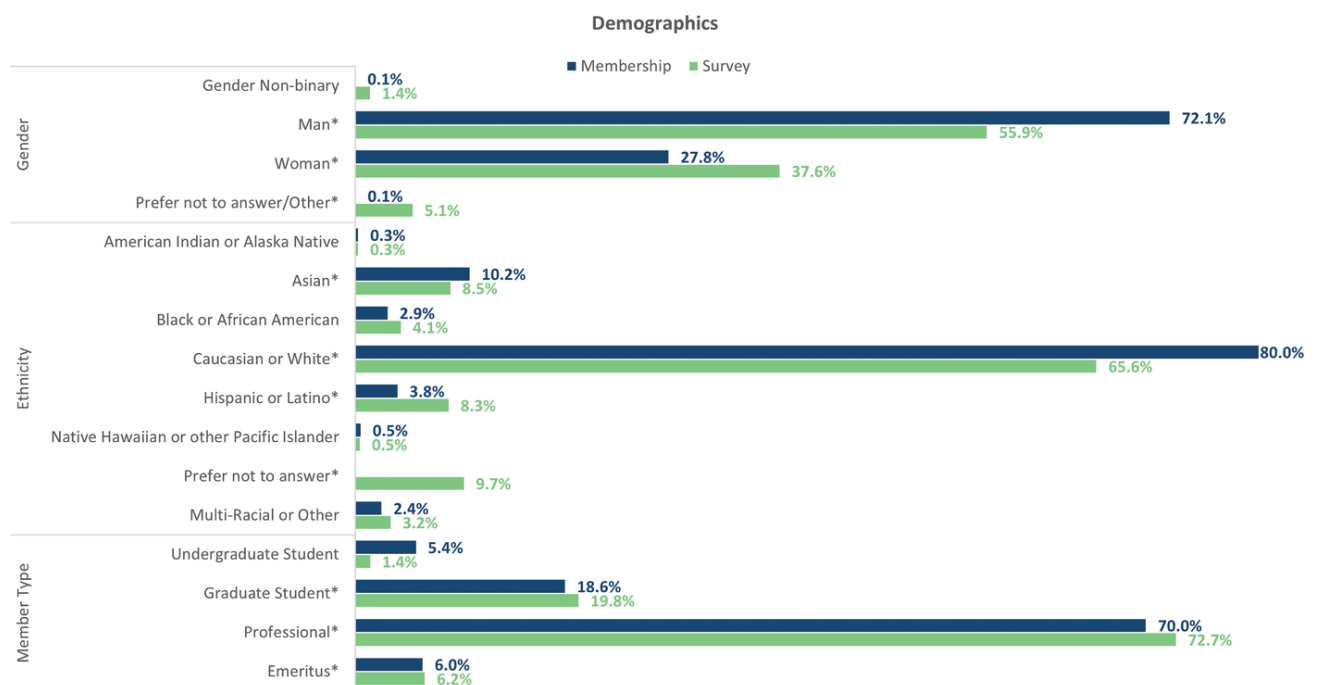
ASA, CSSA, and SSSA have all made promoting a climate of diversity and inclusivity a number one priority in their 2020–2022 Strategic Plans, which has led to a series of initiatives and efforts that assess the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our Societies and provide actions forward. Staff worked with leadership and members to develop and conduct a cross-Society DEI survey in the spring of this year. This survey is in response to part of the phasing of the new DEI Cross-Society Initiative for the Societies, and data results will be the roadmap for the next phase of the initiative to bring long-term actions to support DEI in our science community.

The survey was designed by DEI Project Consultant, Elizabeth Gillispie, Ph.D., and staff members Susan Chapman, Director of Member Services, and Beth Jacques, Manager of Membership and Data Analytics. Extensive thought and collaboration went into survey preparation, such as reaching out to members of the Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee, Women in Science Committee, Early Career Members Committee, the Graduate Student Committee, undergraduate officers/advisers, the SSSA Recognition and Representation Task Force, and Specialty Group leaders. Additionally, Society Presidents Jeff Volenec (ASA), Vara Prasad (CSSA), and April Ulery (SSSA) reviewed and provided feedback to shape the survey. The compiled results are a solid draft that staff and leadership will analyze and pull from for the months to follow as we work strongly to enhance our DEI efforts. The full report, background of survey preparation and methods, and analyses can be found on each Society's DEI webpage: www.agronomy.org/diversity, www.crops.org/diversity, and www.soils.org/diversity.

Demographics

The survey compares participant demographics to overall ASA, CSSA, and SSSA membership demographics and highlights the differences between the two. Overall,

the survey received a 10% response rate, and the sample size (survey participants) was large enough to extrapolate to membership data at a 95% confidence level $\pm 4\%$. Additionally, at least 30 participants were needed for a category's results to be reliable enough to extrapolate to the population. If a category had more than 30 participants, results can be confidently compared to members (confidence level $> 99\%$). For example, there were not enough gender non-binary or undergraduate survey participants in those categories for their results to be statistically significant when compared to those in membership. More detailed comparisons can be found in the survey report. Overall, all gender categories, except "men," participated at a higher rate than they are present in membership. According to survey analyses, the two largest ethnicity categories in membership are Caucasian/White and Asian. Both of these ethnic groups participated at lower rates than membership while minority groups, such as Hispanic/Latino, participated at higher rates. Lastly, undergraduate students were the only member category to participate at a lower rate than their membership composition.



Survey participant demographics (gender, ethnicity, and member type) are compared with the total ASA, CSSA, and SSSA membership demographics, highlighting the differences between membership and survey participants.

DEI and Members

The survey was broken down into several sections, one of which was focused specifically on members and their DEI experiences inside and outside of the Societies. One of the first questions asked was *“What does success look like for you upon completion of any specific DEI education and training,”* which received 129 responses and a broad spectrum of viewpoints. The 129 open-ended responses were categorized, and the top category was *“Thinking that DEI training is not needed.”* The second category was that success would give them actionable goals (to execute DEI plans and activities), and the third is a better understanding of DEI concepts (which includes topics such as implicit and gender bias, microaggressions, racism, and allyship).

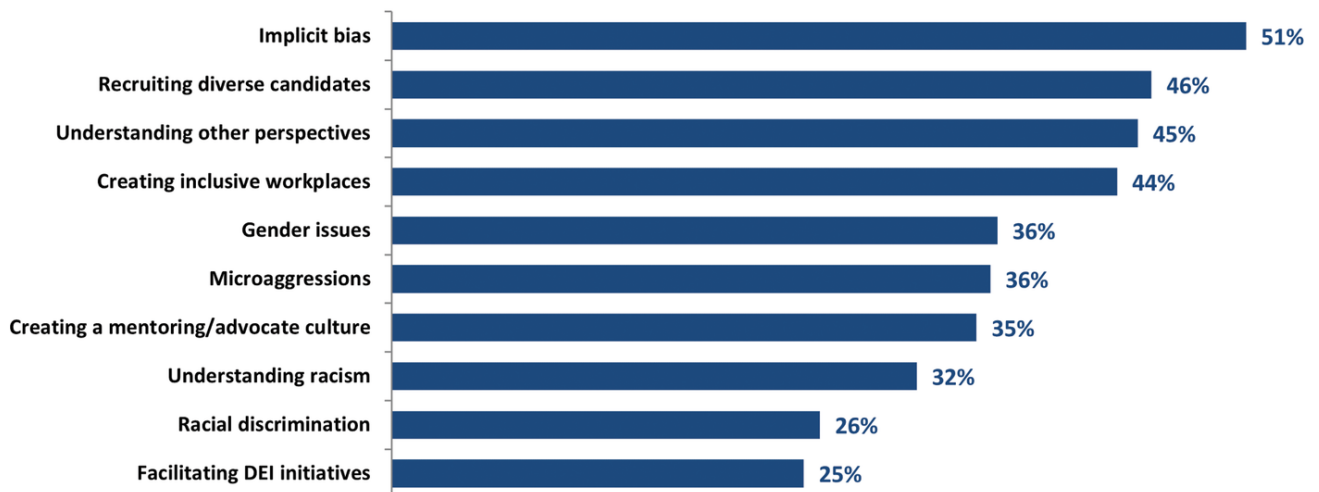
When asked *“How confident are you in your ability to facilitate DEI conversations,”* it was almost an even distribution in confidence level among all members in ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. In general, the survey results showed that men tended to be more confident than women and that as participants moved through their career stages, their confidence increased. Next, the question was asked *“How comfortable do you feel in your understanding of the following DEI-related concepts”* to find out how widely understood the concepts around DEI were with participants and where there might be room for education. Overall, there is a broad understanding of all concepts across the participants, and even though the level of understanding varied, very few participants were completely unfamiliar or had no understanding with any of the DEI concepts.

According to a multiple-choice survey question, the most prevalent DEI-related issue people face in their position is *“implicit bias,”* noting that implicit bias tends to suggest that people act and make decisions on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes without

intending to do so. Issues that closely followed were “recruiting diverse candidates” and “understanding other perspectives,” respectively. Graduate students, however, felt the most prevalent issue is “understanding other perspectives.” Other findings were that women are twice as likely as men to consider microaggressions and gender issues an issue and Asian and Hispanic members are more likely to consider “racial discrimination” as the most prevalent issue people in their position face when compared with Caucasian or White members.

From the open-ended option of this question, it was noted that implicit bias is one of the most prevalent issues people face, yet a large portion of members feel unprepared to address it. Additionally, another large portion of responses were centered around awareness: whether that was (i) needing more awareness of DEI, (ii) not being aware of any DEI issues going on around them at all, or (iii) believing there is an over-emphasis on DEI. It is highly encouraged that you read through the open-ended responses for all survey questions as they provide insights and common themes to address.

What would you describe as the most prevalent DEI-related issues people in your position face?



Survey participants were asked to choose all prevalent DEI-related issues people in their position face and then asked to provide additional thoughts as open-ended responses on these issues (Survey Questions 4 and 5).

DEI in the Societies

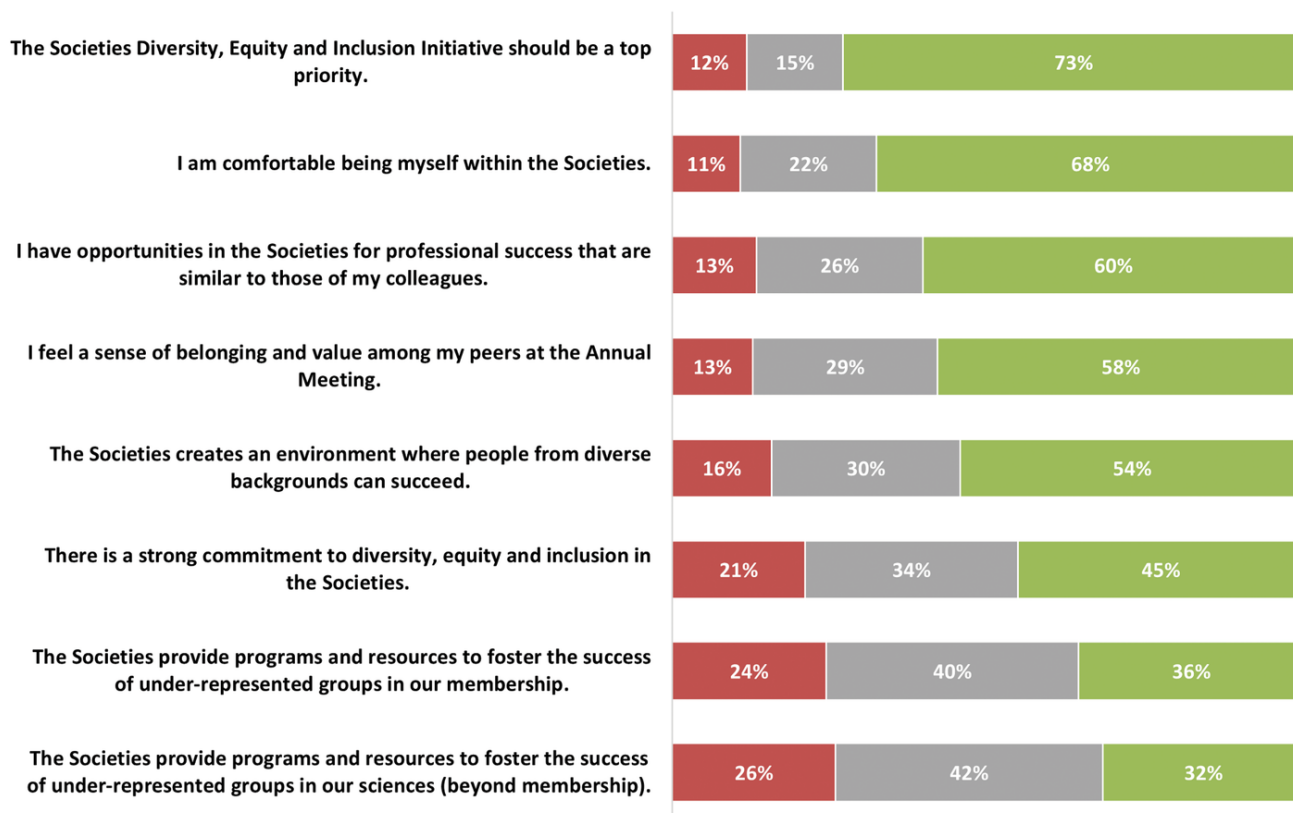
The next section of the survey asked two types of questions—one centered around member input on “Society-focused” statements and the other with “Members-in-Society-Focused” statements, which are generally the “I-statements” seen in the “*Rate your agreement with the following statements.*” According to these results, approximately three-fourths of our members agree that the Societies’ DEI Initiative should be the top priority! However, less than 50% believe that there is actually a strong commitment to DEI, and even less than that believe the Societies have programs and services to foster the success of under-represented groups in the Societies or the sciences. While 68% of participants are comfortable being themselves in the Societies, 32% are not. In general, agreement with all the statements increased with age, member type, and career level. The only exception was that the Societies DEI initiative should be a top priority, which had the highest agreement in younger age groups and career levels. Furthermore, 17% of members have personally experienced discrimination within the Societies and/or in their positions where implicit bias, gender bias, and “having no experience” were the top responses as to what type of discrimination or challenges they face.

Next, participants were asked to rate how well diversity, equity, and inclusion is integrated into various activities, programs, and leadership within the Societies. These responses received the highest “do not know” responses. Publications and Communications activities were believed by 46% of participants to be well/very well integrated while Activities and Programs were at 45% and Leadership at 35%. With less than half of survey participants providing positive feedback, there is great opportunity in these areas for improvement.

The survey also provided an open-ended question asking participants to describe the most prevalent DEI-related issue facing our organizations (ASA, CSSA, and SSSA). This open-ended question received 354 responses. The responses were reviewed and categorized into broader areas. In summary, participants noted that there is racism in agriculture in general, and that is one of the causes of the lack of students entering the profession (and research directed to white farms, systemic racism). Other general comments included the perception that the Societies are still an “old-boys club of white males” and that there is still a bias to scientific focus areas and those who do not have a Ph.D. Conversely, more than 30 participants commented that there isn’t a problem and/or the Societies should move their focus back to science.

Rate your agreement with the following statements:

■ Strongly or slightly disagree ■ Neutral ■ Strongly or slightly agree



Survey participants rated their agreement with eight statements in Survey Question 7 on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Red bars represent combined Scales 1 and 2, grey represents Scale 3, and green represents Scales 4 and 5. Percentages are the

total number of participants that selected each category.

Moving Forward with DEI in the Societies

The survey culminates with a series of questions that will aid in informing the future direction of the DEI Initiative and form the backbone of the recommendations to be presented to the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Boards of Directors. The questions are based on what participants believe to be the future focus areas for the Societies' DEI efforts. In general, participants appreciate that the Societies are embarking on the DEI Initiative and state that there is a need to increase efforts and actions.

The top three activities participants believe the Societies should focus on moving forward are support, mentoring, and education/training, which demonstrate the desire to see more "action" vs. research. Note, these definitions are broad and can be further described in the report. "None of the Above" responses tended to be from White, Male, and Late-Career Members. Participants also noted wanting to see a better reflection of diversity within Leadership.

When it comes to education/training, participants believe the Societies should focus on "Developing Inclusive Workplace Practices" as a top priority, followed by "Understanding Power Dynamics," "Facilitating Conversations," and "Transforming Implicit Bias," respectively. We can combine results from this survey to approach education, training, and overall DEI efforts.

Conclusion and Next Steps

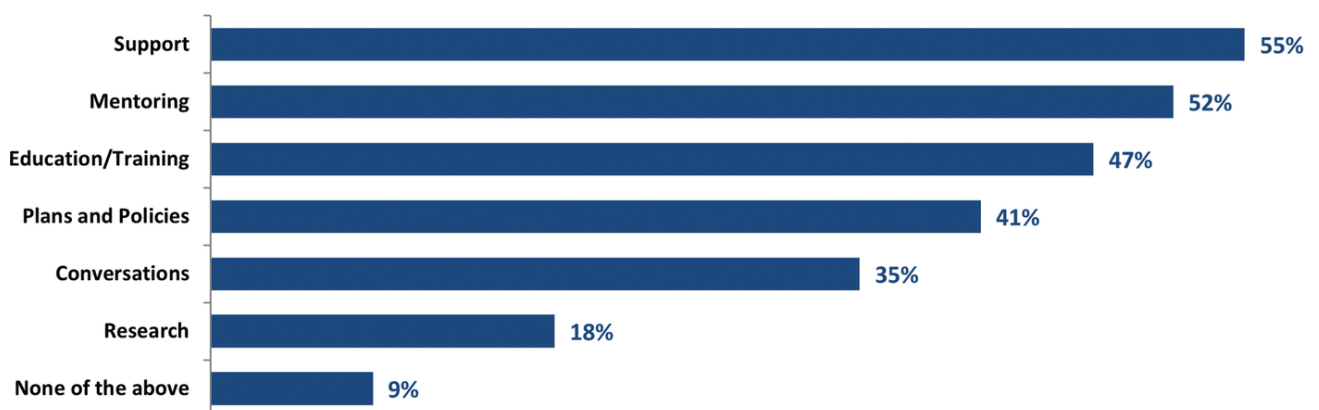
- 73% agree that the DEI initiative should be a top priority
- The Societies are not strongly viewed as providing programs/resources to foster the success of under-represented groups in our membership and our sciences

- Of the Societies' programs and activities, there is no one category with a ranking of 46% or greater in which the Societies are doing well or very well in integrating DEI
- Implicit and gender bias was most prevalent for those experiencing discrimination within the Societies
- There is strong support for more action and support in program development and less on conversations/research
- There are both proponents and detractors for the DEI Initiative within the Societies along with a group that believe there are no DEI-related concerns within the Societies

Here we presented conclusions (rather than recommendations and heavy interpretations) of the survey. We will provide an overall DEI Initiative Report within the next couple of months to address recommendations based on this survey and other efforts we have been working on for board members as a pathway moving forward. Additionally, we have developed a communication plan this spring that we are moving forward with implementing as new information is prepared around the initiative.

Join the discussion on the DEI Discussion Board at www.agronomy.org/diversity, www.crops.org/diversity, and www.soils.org/diversity.

Of the following activities, select up to three in which you believe the Societies should focus specific to our diversity, equity and inclusion priorities.



Survey participants chose up to three areas in which they believed the Societies should focus specifically on in DEI efforts (Survey Question 11).

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