

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF BIOSAFETY ASSOCIATIONS

Grounding Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Biosafety and Biosecurity





In April of 2021, the **IFBA's Equity-Focused Coordinating Committee** collected feedback regarding experiences and challenges in meeting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) across the global biosafety and biosecurity community. With a particular focus on age and gender, the results bring into focus the need for greater awareness and integration of DEI principles into global biosafety and biosecurity strategies.

Inclusion is when everyone's contribution to biosafety and biosecurity is heard and valued and when they are able to perform to their full potential.



INCLUSION



DIVERSITY



EQUITY

Defining DEI in Global Biosafety & Biosecurity

Reinforcing DEI helps strengthen an organization's culture of responsibility for the safe and secure handling of biological materials. DEI programs are an essential aspect of building motivated and engaged employees and fostering a positive working environment. Individuals whose contributions are valued are more innovative, more productive, and have higher levels of trust and accountability.

Diversity also drives problem-solving where a rich pool of skills and knowledge can lead to effective and sustainable risk-based approaches to biosafety and biosecurity. Capturing the value of a diverse biosafety workforce is the next step of inclusion, where each voice is welcomed, each person is listened to, and each idea is valued.

A working environment where many different identities are present, but only the perspectives of a few carry value in the way biosafety is implemented, may be diverse, but is not inclusive.

Overall, DEI has always been important, and there is a strong relationship between it and biosafety and biosecurity policy and programming. However, progress towards tangible outcomes remains a priority.

DIVERSITY ASKS

**WHO
IS IN THE
ROOM**

EQUITY ASKS

**WHO
IS TRYING TO
GET IN THE
ROOM
BUT CAN'T**

INCLUSION ASKS

**HAVE
EVERYONE'S
IDEAS BEEN
HEARD**



IFBA – Embracing our Diversity

The IFBA is a diverse network of regional and national associations working towards common biosafety and biosecurity goals. We recognize that each of our members has different experiences and needs to succeed and grow. Our IFBA's "**Vision of Tomorrow**" is one where we bridge the implementation gap between policymakers and front-line professionals and strengthen our biosafety profession, grounded in diversity, equity and inclusion.



EQUALITY



EQUITY

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of our global biosafety community where geographic location and culture intersect with gender and age

What our Members are Saying

The IFBA ECC's global survey was launched to provide a better understanding of the DEI issues facing our community and offer insight into DEI best practices in relation to biosafety and biosecurity. With a particular focus on age and gender, survey respondents were asked to provide their thoughts and experiences related to DEI in their workplaces.

368

Total Number of Responses

42

Countries who Participated

(several countries had a higher response rate including Canada, Mexico, Pakistan, and USA)

Gender

134

Male

228

Female

6

Prefer not to say

Age Distribution

21-35 years

14%

36-45 years

30%

46-55 years

29%

56-65 years

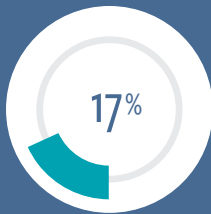
20%

> 65 years

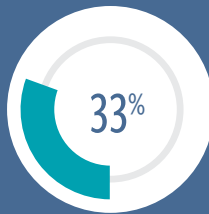
7%

Diversity is recognizing difference and acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives in biosafety and biosecurity decision-making.

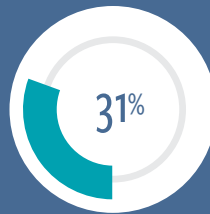
Sectoral Distribution



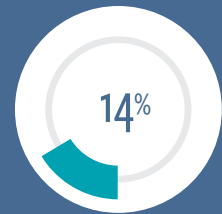
GOVERNMENT
BODY *



RESEARCH
INSTITUTE



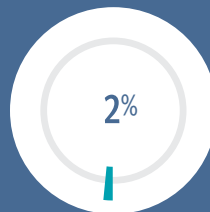
ACADEMIA



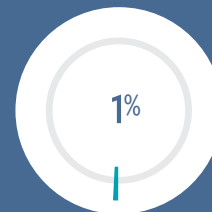
PRIVATE
INDUSTRY



CIVIL SOCIETY/
NGO



MULTILATERAL
ORGANIZATION



OTHER

29%

Said gender influenced the leadership positions assigned at their workplace
(more than 2/3 of those who answered yes to this question are women)

“Men are often given more leadership positions, opportunities and assignments”

37%

Both younger and older professionals encountered challenges in their profession due to their age

“Individuals older than me did not want to listen to what I had to say because they felt I was young and inexperienced although I have almost 15 years in biosafety”

“I feel that I am towards my end of my career and I am not considered for interesting projects or travel”

36%

Said they had not heard of the word intersectionality

*(women were more highly represented in this sector than in any other)

Major Theme Findings

01

The principles of DEI are generally familiar, yet its connection and relevance to biosafety and biosecurity in a tangible manner is not well understood

02

Many factors contributing to gender parity remain behind closed doors

03

Across genders, it was perceived that men are treated more favorably with regards to wages while women are treated slightly more favorably during the recruitment process

04

Many women respondents experienced difficulties in being heard and not being included in the decision-making process

05

Some young professionals voiced concerns that their technical expertise and experience were not being taken seriously and were overlooked for opportunities in the workplace

06

Older professionals expressed frustration that they were often excluded from projects including those involving the COVID-19 pandemic response

07

Age and gender intersect where younger and older women alike struggle to be taken seriously in leadership positions

“Survey results show that the lack of a degree program specifically in biosafety leads to skilled and experienced biosafety professionals being undervalued by those holding doctorate degrees”. Formalizing a biosafety career path within the higher education system is a priority for cultivating a diverse and inclusive future biosafety workforce.

Survey respondents also encountered challenges due to other aspects of their identity.

“Sometimes I feel that since I don’t have a PhD in my field, my opinion is not valued as much”

“Preference is given to doctorates despite my experience, credentials, and master’s degree”

“It is more about my language. At the professional level, I am fluent in English. But I have to work very hard in order to gain respect from people.”

“I have heard my current director refer to me as having a low ceiling career after I identified with a disability”

“Being Hispanic means, I need more degrees and certifications to achieve the same level that some of my colleagues achieve with less effort”

For further information on the survey and other selected resources, please visit the [**IFBA’s ECC’s project website**](#).

This work has been made possible in part by the Government of Canada.

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