

The Diversity of Our Network

Summary of findings of the Healthwatch People Diversity Survey 2023/24

Introduction

Our recent exploration of shared values highlighted equity as a core principle of Healthwatch. The trust of our communities, essential for people sharing their experiences of health and care with us, depends on our ability to mirror the diversity of those we serve, thus nurturing a sense of inclusion.

Our work and decision-making thrive on diverse perspectives. Over the past few years, we have embarked on a journey to embrace equality, diversity, equity and inclusion (EDEI) in our work. Key steps on this journey are set out below.

One of our commitments has been to understand the diversity among our staff, volunteers, and board members across our network and to assess whether our actions are driving positive change.

Thanks to everyone for completing the Healthwatch People Diversity Survey, which gives us a fuller picture of the network's diversity and indicates an emerging commitment to diversity - one element of our shared value of equity as a network.

Key findings

The figures below represent the combined data for Healthwatch boards, volunteers, and staff. We chose this approach because most Healthwatch have a small number of board members, volunteers, and staff.

We only have results for the network as a whole to preserve anonymity. Each Healthwatch needs to evaluate the diversity of their boards, staff, and volunteers individually.

The key findings are that the network broadly represents some protected characteristics, notably ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Ethnicity	Healthwatch %	2021 Census %
All White	67	82
All Asian	9	9
All Black	7	4
All Mixed	4	3
All Other	1	2
Prefer not to say	12%	NA

Sexual orientation	Healthwatch %	2021 Census %
Heterosexual/straight	62	93
Gay man	3	3
Lesbian/gay woman	1	1
Bisexual	1	1
Pansexual	0	0
Asexual	0	0
Prefer to self-describe	6	1
Prefer not to say	26	NA

Categories where Healthwatch are out of alignment include disproportionately more carers (19%) and women (65%) compared to the corresponding percentages for the UK population (c.9% and 51% respectively), with the latter in line with figures for the voluntary sector (NCVO, 2023).

Increase in response rates

The 2023/24 survey results are notable for the significantly higher response rate than the 2022/23 survey, with 146 (96%) Healthwatch participating. Of these, 124 provided some demographic data and supplied data for 690 staff, 699 Board members and 2209 volunteers, representing 82% of the people within those 146 Healthwatch.

Reasons given by Healthwatch for not providing data include 'we don't collect it; You can rely on us to reflect the diversity of our community; It's not worth it due to capacity or small numbers'. Although very small numbers, we hope all Healthwatch will collect this information.

Actions, not words

Diversity is an ongoing commitment, underscoring the importance of continuously reviewing and refining our processes. When creating our shared values, we said it was so easy for them to remain words on paper unless there were actions to bring them to life. Here are some suggested actions:

- Reflect on the results and how they apply to your Healthwatch.
- Support your teams to develop their understanding of diversity. There is a range of training and themed peer network meetings to help, including resources on volunteer and board recruitment.
- Consider what actions your Healthwatch can take to address equality, diversity, equity and inclusion and share these actions with us.
- Collect diversity information of your staff, volunteers and board members.

We will repeat the survey in the summer, requesting updated data on whether the composition of your staff, volunteers, and board has changed significantly. We are committed to conducting this survey annually as part of our commitment to EDEI.

Steps on our EDEI journey include:

2019 Healthwatch England committed to quarterly reporting on our actions to address EDEI across our work.

2020 Joy Beishon, seconded from Healthwatch Greenwich, led work on equity, diversity and inclusion across the network. This included holding conversations with Healthwatch, identifying positive examples of Healthwatch activity across protected characteristics and groups facing inequalities and the introduction of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Peer network, which continues to meet.

2021 We launched a pilot to collect Board diversity information, but we received a low response rate.

2022 The first national survey of Healthwatch diversity was conducted, but a low response rate hindered analysis. The board development organisation Getting on Board provided support to Healthwatch Boards on recruitment and diversity.

2024 The second national diversity survey was conducted on Healthwatch staff, Boards and volunteers.

Healthwatch People Diversity Survey Results

Overall response	2022	2023/24
	57 (37%) Healthwatch	138 (90%) responses representing 146 (95%) Healthwatch

- 126 Healthwatch (82% of all Healthwatch) provided some demographic data
- 83 (57% of respondents) said they could provide demographic data about their staff, volunteers and board members
- 22 (15% of respondents) said they couldn't provide any demographic data at all

The data below shows combined figures for Healthwatch boards, volunteers, and staff, with 2021 Census percentages in brackets where direct comparisons are possible.

Age

- 16-17 2% (2%)
- 18-24 6% (8%)
- 25-49 29% (35%)
- 50-64 23% (19%)
- 65-79 25% (14%)
- 80 years old and over 3% (5%)
- Prefer not to say 11%

Gender Identity

- Gender identity same as sex recorded at birth 84% (94%)
- Gender identity different from sex recorded at birth 3% (1%)
- Prefer not to say 14% (6%)

Ethnicity

- All Asian 9% (9%)
- All Black 7% (4%)
- All Mixed 4% (3%)
- All Other 1% (2%)
- All White 67% (82%)
- Prefer not to say 12%

Sexual orientation

- Asexual 0%
- Bisexual 1% (1%)
- Gay man 3% (3%)
- Heterosexual/straight 62% (93%)
- Lesbian/gay woman 1% (1%)
- Pansexual 0% (0%)
- Prefer to self-describe 6% (1%)
- Prefer not to say 26% (3%)

Gender

There is no detail about the 2021 census as it asked for sex registered at birth whereas our taxonomy asks for gender

- Men 28%
- Women 65%
- Non-binary 0%
- Prefer to self-describe 1%
- Prefer not to say 6%

Disability

- 19% stated they had a disability

Long term health condition

- 25% stated they had a long-term health condition

Carer

- 19% stated that they were a carer



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