

Acas equality information report 2021 to 2022

17 March 2023

About this report

The Equality Act 2010 requires relevant public bodies, including Acas, to publish information to show how they comply with the public sector equality duty that ties in with the equality objectives we publish at least every 4 years.

To understand, produce, measure and ultimately achieve our objectives, we need to produce an Equality Information Report.

Although the Equality Act has 9 protected characteristics, for the purpose of measuring and confidentiality it is necessary at this time to limit our focus on age, disability, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

It is also important that we only measure data where there could reasonably be a clear plan that can make use of the data being collected against the likelihood of promoting equality between the protected characteristics.

The report covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

1. Equality objectives and Acas strategy

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities such as Acas must meet the public sector equality duty. We do this by looking at employees' needs across our services.

Our equality objectives are an integral part of our Acas strategy, which sets out to make working life better for everyone. We know that more diverse and inclusive workplaces are better workplaces, as illustrated in the landmark McKinsey studies of 2015 and 2017.

[Find out more about the McKinsey studies on the McKinsey and Company website](#)

We are experts in promoting diversity and inclusion outside our organisation through our training and advice. But we want to do more – more to promote diversity and inclusion, and more to make sure that our services are accessible for everyone who needs us. We will take steps to improve diversity and inclusion within our own organisation, so that we set the example we advocate others follow. To help us become better, we have taken steps to improve our inclusivity, but we know there is more we can do to reflect within Acas the full diversity of the economically active population.

Through our strategy, Ambition 4 – 'embracing difference, increasing inclusion, creating fairness' – sets out our equality objectives. These objectives are that, by 2025, we will:

- influence the state of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, through our services and in partnership with organisations across Britain
- provide services that are accessible and effective for those who need to use them, irrespective of place, sector, and individual circumstances

- be an organisation that fully reflects the diversity of the communities that we serve

During 2021 we undertook our first steps on this ambition.

In relation to influencing the state of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, we have:

- reviewed and extended online guidance on sexual harassment
- participated in flexible working initiatives, including a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) task force, and produced guidance on hybrid working
- undertaken research into staff networks, incorporating employee voice and engagement with a key focus on race
- supported the government's disability strategy with the creation of [new guidance on disability at work](#)
- migrated equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) guidance from the National Archives
- worked in collaboration with partners and stakeholders on equality, diversity and inclusion themes

To ensure our services are accessible and effective for those who need to use them, irrespective of place, sector, and individual circumstances, we have ensured Acas is compliant with the 2018 accessibility regulations. We have:

- audited our digital services
- created plans to deal with existing issues, and implemented fixes, across the [acas.org.uk](#), [e-learning](#) and [obs.acas.org.uk](#) websites
- published compliant accessibility statements for our public services
- designed a new intranet with accessibility in mind and tested it with our Disability Network

Finally, when ensuring we are an organisation that fully reflects the diversity of the communities that we serve, we have:

- refreshed our recruitment policy
- refreshed diversity hub and health and wellbeing pages on our intranet
- developed our Insights Pairs and Pathways positive action programmes
- started our declaration campaign, which has seen a 30% increase in disability declaration
- reviewed the allocation of network time and steering groups established
- reviewed the formal agreement, and time allocated, for health and wellbeing champions and fair treatment contacts
- delivered Let's Talk about Race workshops to staff and senior leaders
- held Let's Talk about Sexism sessions with staff

2. Our staff

The equality and diversity figures in this report are based on a headcount total of 1,028 members of staff on 31 March 2021 and are taken from Acas's ITRENT system, unless otherwise stated. Staff on loan and not paid directly by Acas are not included in the analysis, nor are agency staff or contractors.

Latest figures show that 59% of our staff are women, 11% are ethnic minorities, 17% are disabled, and 5% are gay, lesbian or bisexual. The representation of ethnic minority staff is slightly lower than the wider working population of 14%, while the representation of disabled staff is above the working population of 15%.

Declaration

The following table shows the overall declaration rates for each reported characteristic as of 31 March 2022. This figure includes those staff who have selected 'prefer not to say' under each category.

Characteristics	Age	Disability	Ethnicity	Gender	Sexual orientation
-----------------	-----	------------	-----------	--------	--------------------

Employee numbers	1,028	641	897	1,028	886
Proportion %	100%	62%	87%	100%	86%

3. Representation by grade

The data presented here shows Acas's workforce by grade as proportions in relation to the protected characteristics and working patterns as at 31 March 2022.

There are various pay grades within Acas that are shown in the following table with the civil service equivalent grade.

The following table shows the representation of staff across grades.

Acas grades	Civil service grades	Proportion of staff in grade
Senior civil service (SCS)	Senior civil service	1%
Grade 6	Grade 6	1%
Grade 7	Grade 7	4%
Grade 8	Senior executive officer (SEO)	16%
Grade 9	Higher executive officer (HEO)	42%
Grade 10	Executive officer (EO)	31%
Grade 11	Administrative officer	5%

Age

The median age of our staff is 48. We have a small number of staff aged 65 or over (4%) and the majority are at Grade 6 level. At senior civil service level, the majority (43%) of employees are aged between 50 and 59. Acas's staff are mainly aged between 30 and 59.

Grade	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 64	65 and over
SCS	0%	0%	29%	43%	29%	0%
6	0%	10%	30%	10%	30%	20%
7	2%	13%	28%	43%	11%	2%
8	4%	18%	24%	36%	9%	10%
9	5%	23%	24%	36%	9%	3%
10	19%	24%	24%	24%	7%	2%
11	16%	20%	22%	27%	12%	2%

Grade	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 64	65 and over
Total	9%	22%	24%	32%	9%	4%

Disability

Sixty-two per cent of employees have declared their disability status. Of those who have declared, 17% of staff have told us they have a disability. Representation of our staff with disabilities is evenly spread across most grades. However, the majority of those staff are within Grades 9 and 10, which reflects where the majority of our workforce are employed.

The following table shows the representation of disabled staff by grade.

Grade	Proportion of disabled staff
SCS	14%
6	20%
7	17%
8	13%
9	18%
10	19%
11	8%
Total	17%

At Acas we acknowledge that disability declaration rates are low. We are focusing on this area to increase representation. As part of Ambition 4, we will continue with our declaration campaign aimed at raising awareness of the importance of declaring your disability status, as well as understanding the rationale for low disclosures.

Ethnicity grade distribution

Because of numbers and confidentiality reasons, we cannot break each grade down by ethnic group. However, of those who reported their ethnicity, 11% told us they are from an ethnic minority background. Of those, 5% told us they are from an Asian background, 3% from a black background, 1% from a mixed heritage background and 2% from other ethnic backgrounds. The majority of staff who have disclosed their ethnicity are within Grades 9 and 10.

The following table shows the representation of ethnic minorities by grade.

Grade	Ethnic minority
SCS	0%
6	0%
7	4%
8	15%

Grade	Ethnic minority
9	48%
10	28%
11	4%
Total	11%

At Acas we understand the benefits of having a diverse workforce. Part of Ambition 4 is to be an organisation that fully reflects the diversity of the communities that we serve. Therefore, increasing ethnic minority representation is one of the priority workstreams under Ambition 4. During the coming year we aim to carry out analysis with the recruitment teams, hiring managers and senior leaders. This is to understand and address the barriers faced by ethnic minority candidates in securing roles and in promotion to senior grades.

We will also continue to deliver our positive action programmes aimed at increasing representation at more senior grades within Acas.

Gender

Overall, 59% of our staff are women. The representation of women varies among the grades, with the highest representation being at grade 11 (84%) and the lowest at grade 6 (30%). At senior civil service level, the gender balance is slightly less than equal, with 43% women.

The following table shows the representation of women by grade.

Grade	Women
SCS	43%
6	30%
7	54%
8	47%
9	63%
10	59%
11	84%
Total	59%

Sexual orientation by grade distribution

Because of numbers and for reasons of confidentiality, data for sexual orientation in some areas cannot be reported, and data at different grades has been amalgamated for the following table.

The following table shows the representation of staff who identify as either gay, lesbian, bisexual or other by grade.

Grade	Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other
-------	---------------------------------

SCS / Grades 6 and 7	2%
Grades 8 and 9	5%
Grades 10 and 11	6%
Total	5%

4. Recruitment

From 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, there were 3,937 applicants for Acas vacancies. Of this total, 725 applicants came from across government, 3,020 were external and 192 were internal. 477 candidates were successful at sift (the stage when applications are initially assessed) and 172 successful at interview.

Age

In terms of age categories, the largest number of applications were from candidates between the ages of 30 and 39 (949 applications). This was closely followed by those aged between 16 and 24 (930 applications). Forty-nine applications were received by candidates over 60 and 35 of those applications were from external sources.

Applications were then sifted before progressing to interview. While we received 930 applications from 16 to 24 year-olds, the sift success is very low – only 66 candidates passed the sift and went on to interview. Insights indicate that applications from younger age groups tend to be incomplete and are less familiar with the civil service recruitment framework, leading to lower success rates at sift stage. Applicants between the ages of 30 and 39 had the highest sift success.

In total, 172 candidates were successful at interview and were either offered a role or went onto a reserve list. The majority of the successful candidates (59) were between the ages of 30 and 39, 15 were between 16 and 24, and 3 were over 60.

Disability

For the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, of the 3937 applications received:

- 486 candidates declared they had a disability
- 3,260 declared they did not have a disability
- 191 preferred not to disclose

The sift data showed that 477 candidates were successful at sift stage and of those 78 (16%) declared a disability. Out of these 78 candidates, 25 were successful at interview and went on to secure a role or were placed on a reserve list.

Ethnicity

The data shows that:

- 61% of applications were from white ethnicity groups
- 19% were from an Asian or Asian British background
- 10% were from a black, African, Caribbean or black British background
- 5% were from mixed, multiple ethnic groups
- 5% preferred not to disclose

In total there were 1,352 applications from people from ethnic minorities, compared with 2,396 from people from a white background.

From the total 477 candidates that passed the sift, 24% were from an ethnic minority background and 4% preferred not to disclose. At interview stage, there were 172 successful candidates, of which 20% were from an ethnic minority background compared with 77% from a white background.

We are:

- determined to understand the barriers faced by ethnic minority candidates
- committed in breaking these down to become an organisation that fully reflects the diversity of the communities that we serve

Gender

56% of the applications received were from candidates who declared themselves to be women, 40% from men and 4% of candidates preferred not to say. The sift and interview stages show similar percentages. Out of those who were successful in securing a role or being placed on a reserve list, 56% were women and 41% were men.

Sexual orientation

Out of the 3,237 applications, 82% were from candidates who declared themselves heterosexual or straight, 5% were from bisexual candidates, 5% from gay or lesbian candidates, and 9% preferred not to disclose.

12% of the total who passed the sift stage and 14% of total candidates who secured a role declared themselves as bisexual, gay or lesbian.

5. Leavers

The data analysis presented here shows the reasons why employees left Acas in the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The overall data tells us that:

- 'transfer to other government department' was the main reason for leaving and this made up 42% of leavers, which was the same for the previous year (2020 to 2021)
- resignation made up 34% of leavers, an increase of 5% from the previous year
- retirement made up 14% of leavers
- dismissal made up 5% of leavers
- there were more leavers who were women (58%) compared to men, which was similar to the previous year where we had 53% of leavers who were women
- leavers from a white ethnicity made up 58% of total leavers and colleagues who declared themselves from an ethnic minority made up 10% of leavers
- the proportion of leavers who declared themselves as disabled made up 8%
- reasons for leaving by gender were evenly split across the leaving reasons
- the age groups 20 to 29 and 30 to 39 had the most leavers

The data also tells us there were very few dismissals. The majority of those dismissed were men and in full-time employment. The dismissals were across all races and sexual orientations. Only 1 colleague who declared as being disabled was dismissed.

6. Performance management data

We do not currently hold digital information on performance management. For this operational year, the reward and recognition payment was distributed equally amongst all staff.

7. Grievances and disciplinaries

During the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, there were 18 formal grievances raised.

Informal grievances are dealt with by management at a local level and are therefore not recorded centrally or included in the data in this report. There were 12 disciplinaries during the period.

Grievance data

Formal grievances by disability

	Percentage of grievances
Disabled	44%
Not disabled	6%
Unknown	50%

Formal grievances by ethnicity

	Percentage of grievances
White	56%
Asian, black and other ethnic minority group	22%
Prefer not to say	22%

Formal grievances by gender

	Percentage of grievances
Women	44%
Men	56%

Formal grievances by sexual orientation

	Percentage of grievances
Heterosexual	61%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other	0%

	Percentage of grievances
Unknown	11%
Prefer not to say	28%

Formal grievances by work type

	Percentage of grievances
Full time	94%
Part time	6%

Reasons for grievance

Because of the need to ensure confidentiality, grievance reasons have been grouped together.

Grievance reasons	Percentage of grievances
Benefits including pay and time off	5%
Bullying and harassment	22%
Reasonable adjustments and recruitment	0%
Multiple issues	34%
Discrimination	11%
Unacceptable behaviour of a colleague	28%

Disciplinary data

Disciplinaries by disability

	Percentage of disciplinaries
Disabled	25%
Not disabled	25%
Prefer not to say	0%
Unknown	50%

Disciplinaries by ethnicity

	Percentage of disciplinaries
Asian, black, other ethnic minority group	25%

	Percentage of disciplinarys
White	67%
Prefer not to say	0%
Unknown	8%

Disciplinarys by gender

	Percentage of disciplinarys
Women	8%
Men	92%

Disciplinarys by sexual orientation

	Percentage of disciplinarys
Heterosexual	58%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other	8%
Prefer not to say	0%
Unknown	34%

Disciplinarys by work type

	Percentage of disciplinarys
Full time	92%
Part time	8%

Because of the need to ensure confidentiality, disciplinary reasons have been grouped together.

Disciplinarys by reason

	Percentage of disciplinarys
Inappropriate behaviour	33%
Breach of rules, absence, GDPR, performance and fraudulent activity	67%

8. Employee engagement

The results are taken from the Civil Service People Survey, which is conducted each October.

At the end of the survey, staff are asked to complete a diversity monitoring form, which is voluntary. Because of this fact, not all staff who completed the survey completed the diversity monitoring information collected.

Of those that did complete this section, the fact that not everyone filled in all categories should be taken into account. From the data available, the table on engagement indicators shows the engagement index scores.

The overall engagement rate (the percentage of people surveyed who filled in the monitoring form) is 67%. Disabled staff and ethnic minority engagement is slightly lower at 66%. Women are more positively engaged at 69% and gay, lesbian or bisexual staff are more positively engaged at 68%.

Figures on bullying and harassment from the 2019 survey have remained the same.

The overall average for those who felt they had been discriminated against has fallen by 3% to 7%, compared with the 2020 People Survey.

Engagement is below the overall average in the 2021 survey for ethnicity and disability, while above average for women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or other groups.

Engagement indicators

	Response rate	Engagement rate
Acas	834	67%
Disability	266	66%
Ethnicity	92	66%
Women	455	68%
Gay, lesbian or bisexual	45	68%

Tables: inclusion, discrimination, and bullying or harassment – Acas average in all areas

Inclusion rate

Inclusion rate	Differential on previous year
80%	+1%

Discriminated against

Discriminated against – yes	Differential on previous year
7%	-3%

Bullied or harassed

Bullied or harassed – yes	Differential on previous year
6%	-2%

9. Gender pay gap

[Read the Acas gender pay gap report 2022](#)