

## Gender, diversity and careers in soil science: what do our members think?

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Women currently make up more than 50% of bachelor degree completions in the physical and natural sciences, however, workforce census data shows that this has not translated to equal proportions of women and men in senior positions in the science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) disciplines. To address this imbalance, the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) initiative was launched in 2015 by the Australian Academy of Science and Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering.

In 2014, a survey was sent out to financial members of Soil Science Australia with the aim to i) understand the current situation with respect to equity and diversity in Soil Science Australia, ii) understand the perspectives and experiences of society members on key equity and diversity issues, and iii) identify key actions for Soil Science Australia to pursue.

169 members responded to the survey (~18% response rate), of which 40% were female, 59% were male and 1% identified as neither gender. When asked about the Society's culture with regard to inclusivity at Society events, award nominations, recognition in the Society and nomination for Branch and Federal Council positions, responses were overwhelmingly positive. 59% of respondents supported the formation of an equity and diversity group in the society and the comments provided were either positive or not negative. Conversely, the comments provided by the respondents who did not support the formation of an equity diversity group were mixed.

Respondents identified sub-conscious gender bias and family responsibilities as potential barriers to career progression in soil science. Members of Soil Science Australia generally wanted to continue in their careers as soil scientists and enjoyed their work but also identified a number of barriers that may prevent them from doing so, such as a lack of job security.