

Attrition of minority groups in the UK geochemistry workforce across the academic career ladder

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Geochemistry is applied across earth, environmental and planetary sciences research and is essential to fundamental discoveries and many strategies to develop a sustainable future. For such a diverse subject, an equally diverse community should be expected and aspired to, to fully benefit from all available talent and perspectives. In a first national effort in the UK, through a voluntary survey, we aimed to understand (and scrutinise) detailed and intersectional diversity data at different career stages within the UK academic community (e.g., ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age categories) for geochemists in ‘Evaluating Diversity and Inclusion within the (geochemistry) Academic Ladder (E-DIAL)’. A project funded by the UK’s Natural Environmental Research Council.

We will present key findings using our project survey data linked to the composition and diversity of geochemistry workforce across the academic career ladder, from PhD students to Professors I, and including laboratory support staff. The responses to our survey provide a snapshot of the demographics and intersectional representation. The responses suggest that geochemists that do not identify within the gender binary, women from racially minoritised communities, neurodiverse, and those that do not identify as straight are currently absent (or significantly underrepresented) at the top of the academic ladder. We intend that evidence such as that collected from our project survey will shape approaches and mobilise academic institutions to ensure that sustained progress to improve representation, career experiences, and progression of all geochemists. We will suggest simple actions, policies and cultural shifts that we can help people of all identities to realise equitable career progression in the short and long-term in order to make geochemistry truly inclusive. These are critical to improving diversity and inclusion not only within the UK, but for the global academic geochemistry community.