

October 2024

NHS COMMUNICATE

Taskforce for diversity in NHS communications

SURVEY OF ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNICATORS

INTRODUCTION



This report provides the outcomes of a survey conducted to explore the experiences and perspectives of ethnic minority communicators within the NHS and beyond. The primary objective was to identify and understand the barriers that impede progress for ethnic minority professionals in communications.

The survey was initiated by the [Taskforce for Diversity in NHS Communications](#), which aims to identify existing barriers and formulate practical solutions that will empower NHS communications professionals and their executive leaders to improve diversity across all levels of the communications workforce, particularly within senior roles.

Methodology

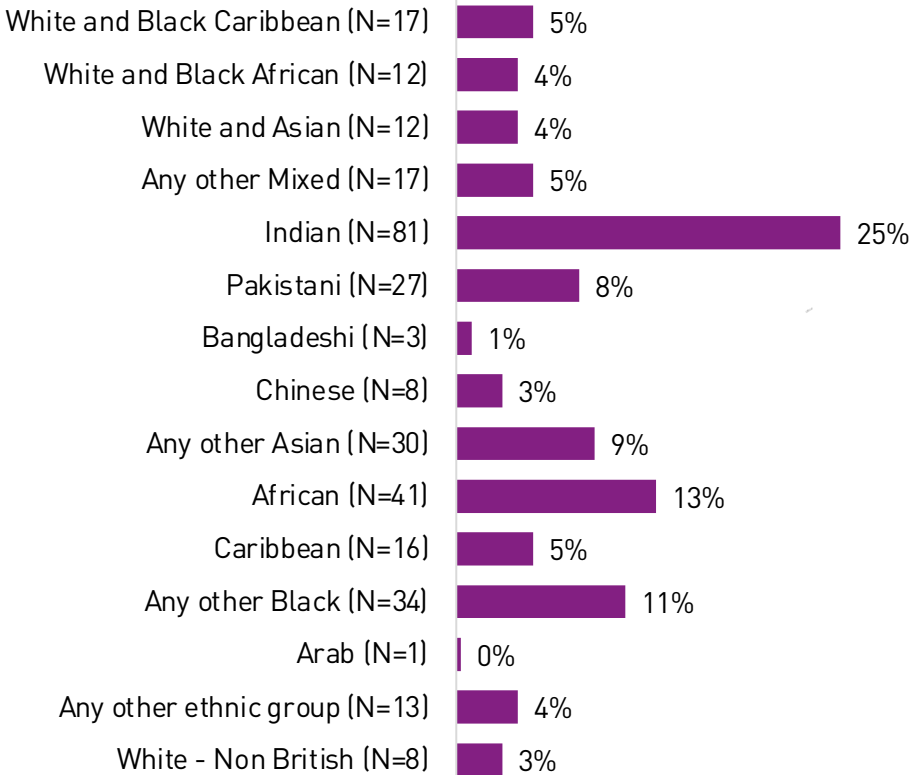
- The survey was launched on 30 September 2024 and remained open until 31 October 2024. To maximise outreach, Taskforce members were asked to disseminate the survey through their communication channels; NHS Confederation, NHS Provider and NHS England channels were also used.
- In parallel, a small ten-day paid social media campaign was delivered on LinkedIn, although this posed some challenges in targeting specifically ethnic minority respondents due to the platform's limitations.

Demographics

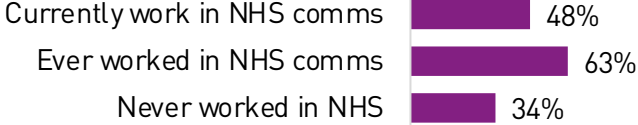
SAMPLE PROFILE



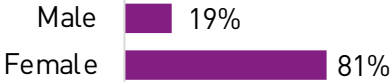
Ethnicity



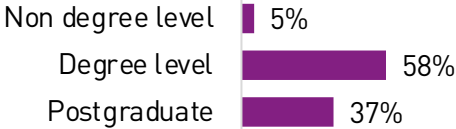
Work in NHS



Gender



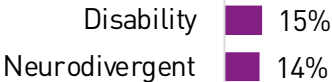
Education



Age



Challenges



Access

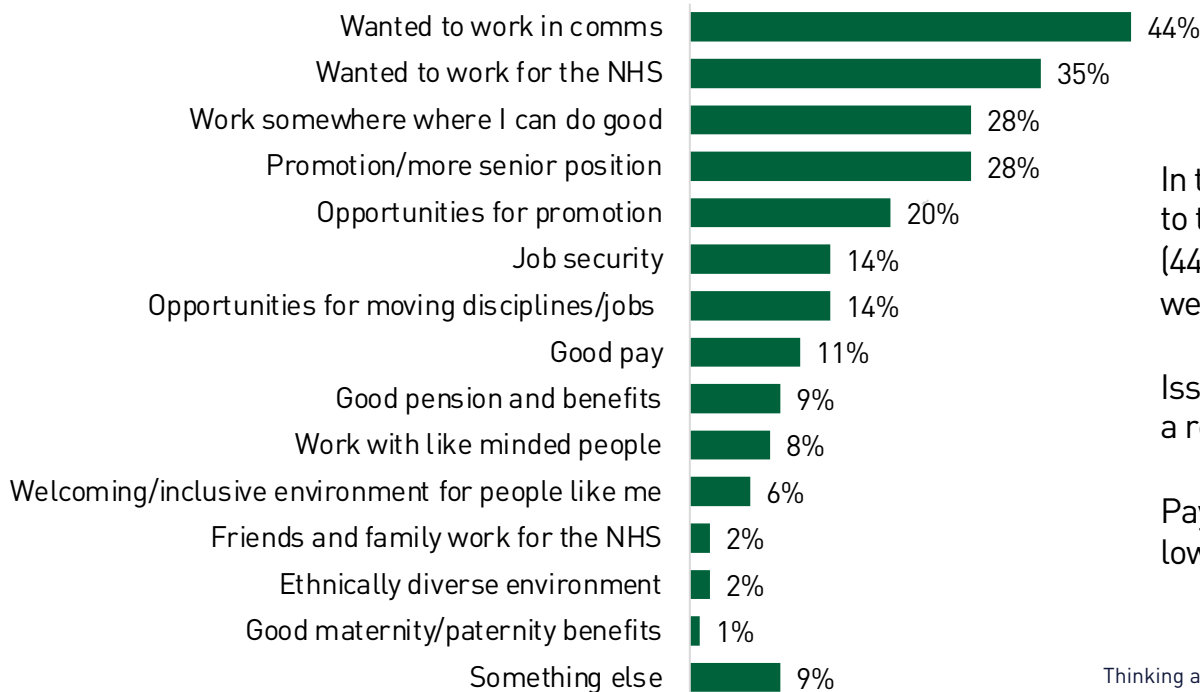


Key insight **1**

The institution of the NHS is a significant factor in attracting comms staff

The key drivers in choosing their current role in the NHS are the discipline (comms) and the institution (the NHS)

Reasons for being in comms – NHS



In terms of the attraction of NHS professionals to their current role, the **discipline of comms** (44%) and the **institution of the NHS** (35%) were the principal attractions.

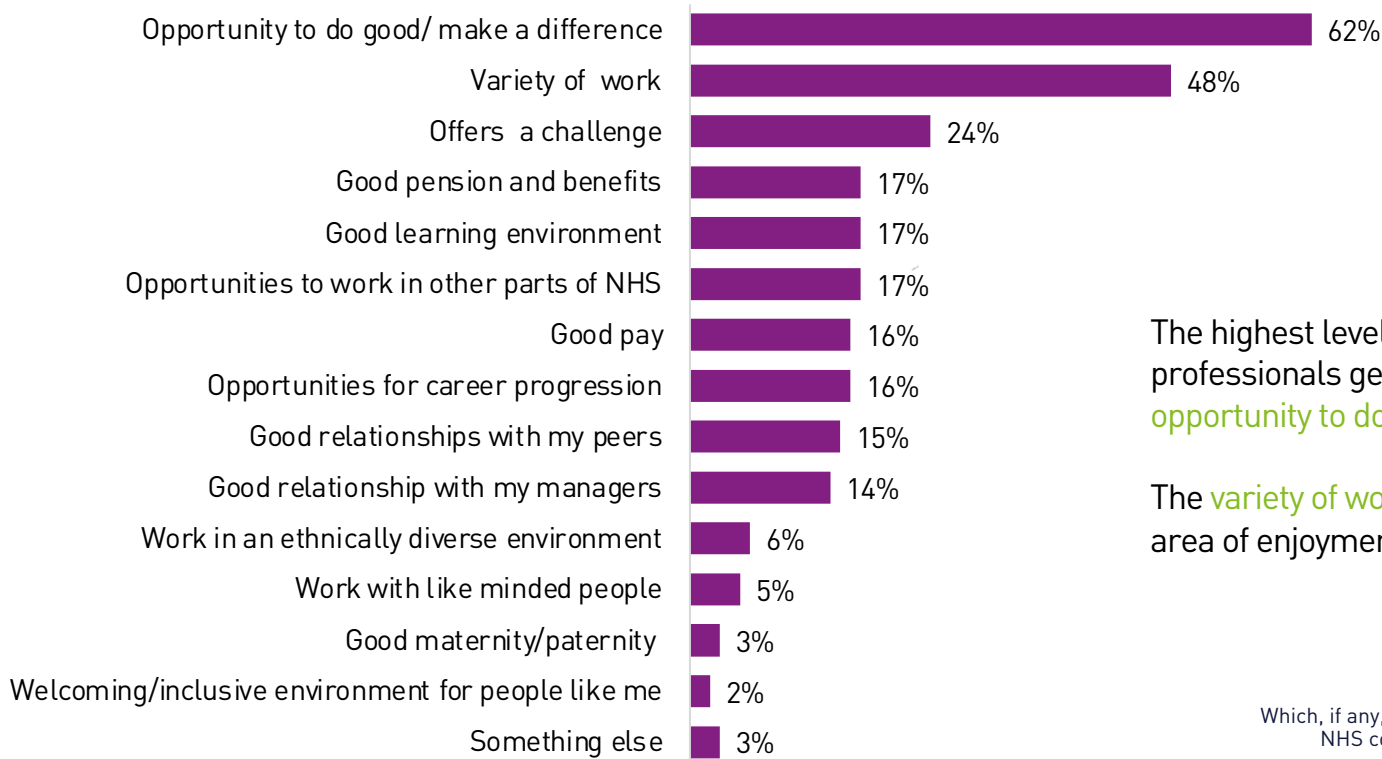
Issues around ethnicity were generally not a reason for being attracted to the role.

Pay and benefits also received relatively low levels of mentions.

Once in the job, NHS comms staff clearly enjoy the opportunity to do good



Enjoy about job – NHS staff



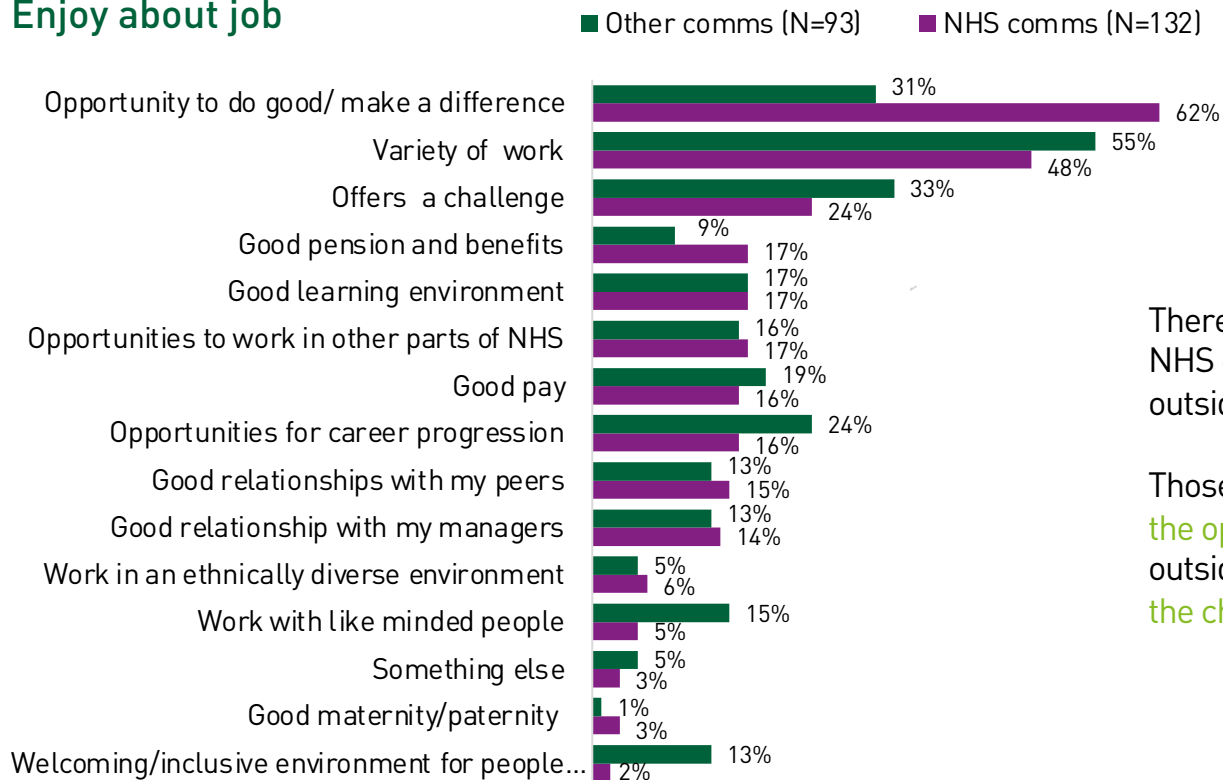
The highest level enjoyment that comms professionals get in their role is the **opportunity to do good** (62%).

The **variety of work** (48%) was also a major area of enjoyment.

Which, if any, of the following do you enjoy about working in a NHS communications, marketing or engagement role?
Base: all who work in NHS (N=132)

There were some clear differences between NHS professionals and professionals outside the NHS in terms of job enjoyment

Enjoy about job



There were some clear differences in what NHS comms professionals enjoy and those outside of the NHS.

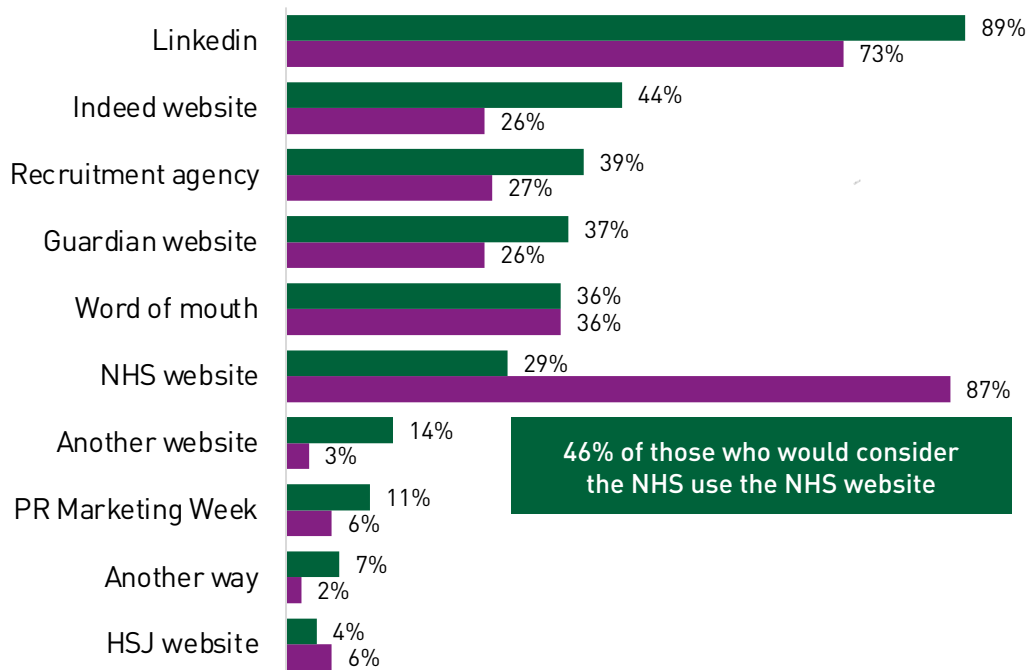
Those inside were more likely to enjoy **the opportunity to do good**, whereas those outside the NHS were more likely to enjoy **the challenge** and **variety of work**.

Which, if any, of the following do you enjoy about working in a NHS communications, marketing or engagement role?
Base: all who work in comms (N=see base)

Those working outside of the NHS use a wider range of publications to find jobs

Publications used to find job

■ Other comms (N=93) ■ NHS comms (N=133)



A wide range of publications was used to look for jobs in comms.

Those working outside the NHS used a wider range, with LinkedIn and the Indeed website being the principal publications used.

Those working outside the NHS were also more likely to use recruitment agencies

Which, if any, of the following publications would you use to look for a job in communications, marketing or engagement?

Base: all respondents who work in NHS/non-NHS (N=see chart)

Retention

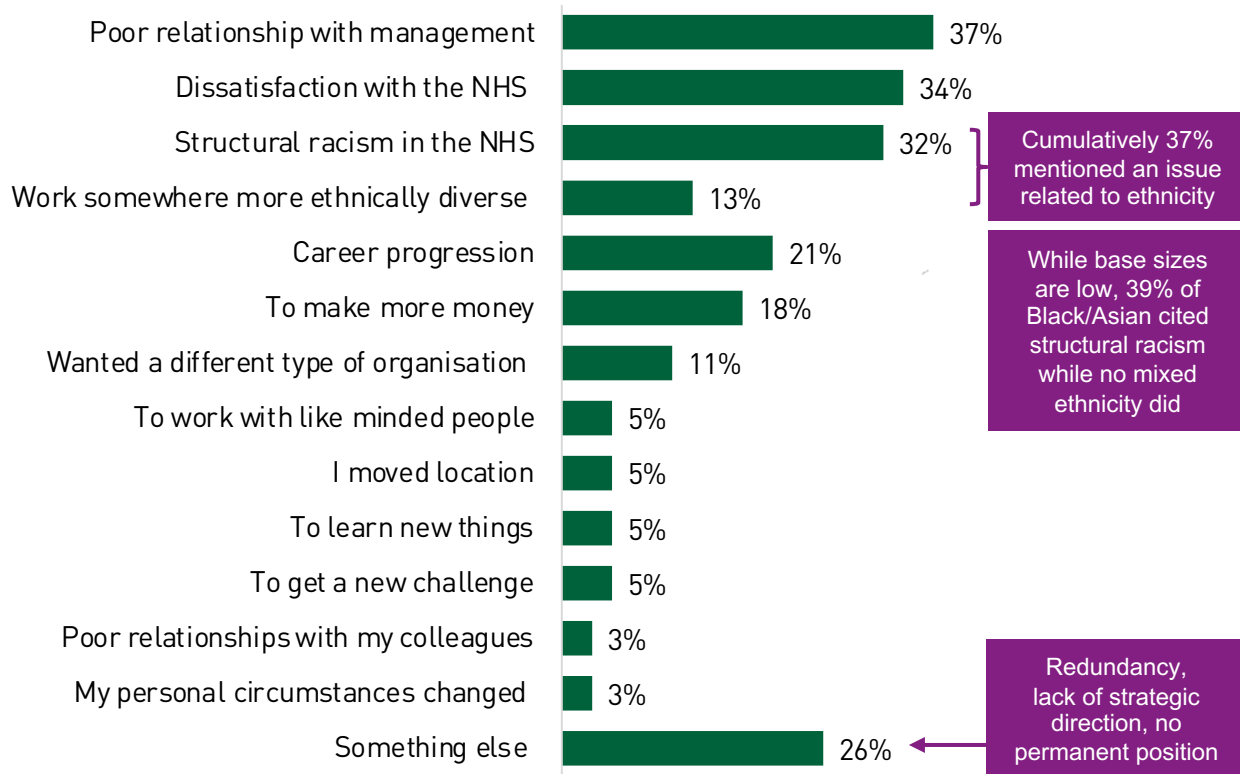


Key insight **2**

**Structural issues are key drivers of
professionals leaving the NHS**

Structural issues were key drivers of professionals leaving the NHS

Reasons for leaving NHS



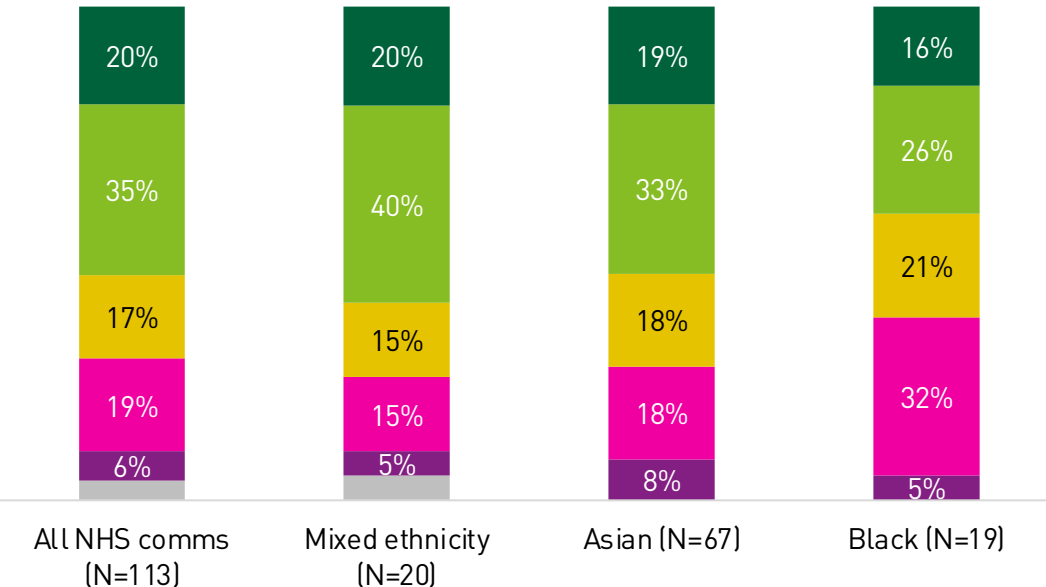
Comms professionals were less likely to leave the NHS for career progression or money than structural problems in the NHS.

The three top reasons for leaving were: **poor relationships with management** (37%), **dissatisfaction with the institution** (34%) and **structural racism** (32%).

A quarter of NHS comms professionals do not see themselves working in the NHS in three years

Likelihood of working in NHS in three years

■ Don't know ■ Not at all likely ■ Not very likely ■ Neither likely nor unlikely ■ Fairly likely ■ Very likely



In total a quarter (26%) of NHS comms professionals think that it is unlikely that they will be working for the NHS in three years.

While base sizes are low, those from black ethnicities were most likely to think that they would leave the NHS (37% not likely to be working in the NHS in three years).

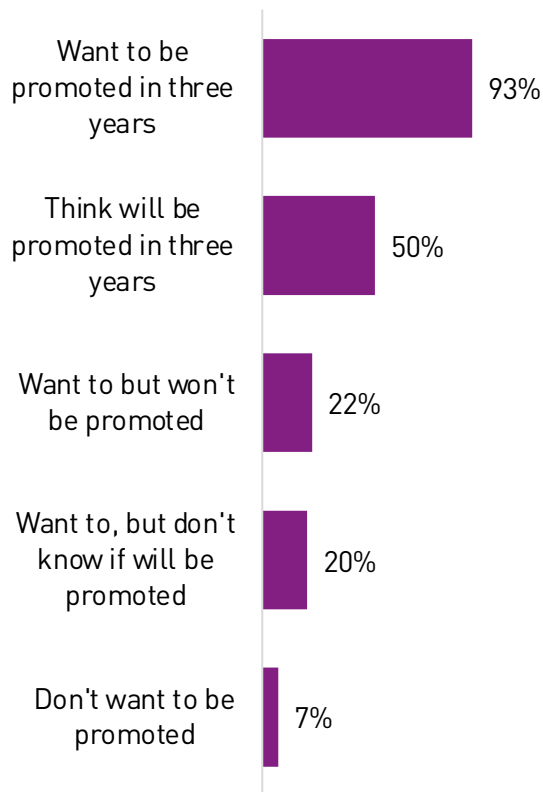
****Caution low base sizes by sub-groups**

How likely or unlikely is it that you will be working for the NHS three years from now?

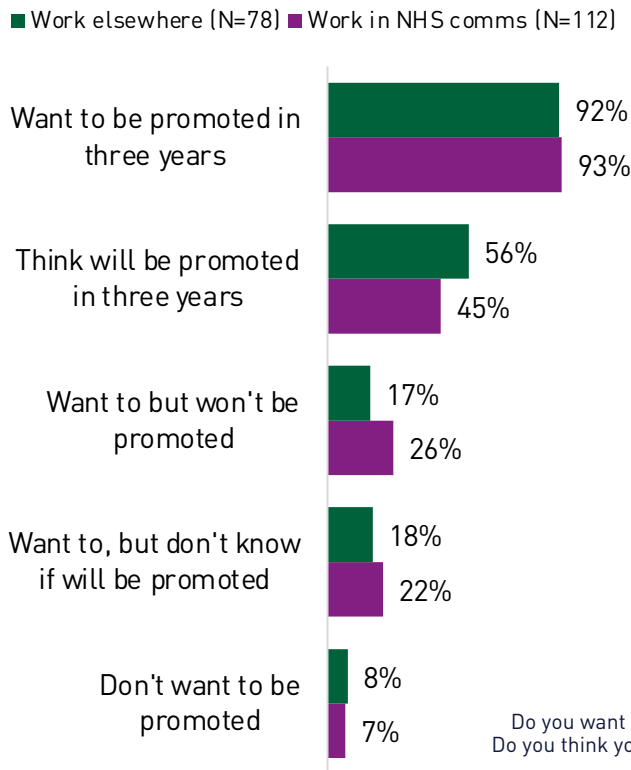
Base: all comms professionals who work in NHS (N=113)

There are more opportunities for promotion outside of the NHS

Desire for promotion



Desire for promotion



Those working in the NHS have the same desire for promotion as those working outside the NHS.

However, NHS comms staff are much less likely to think that they will be promoted (45%) than comms staff working outside of the NHS (56%).

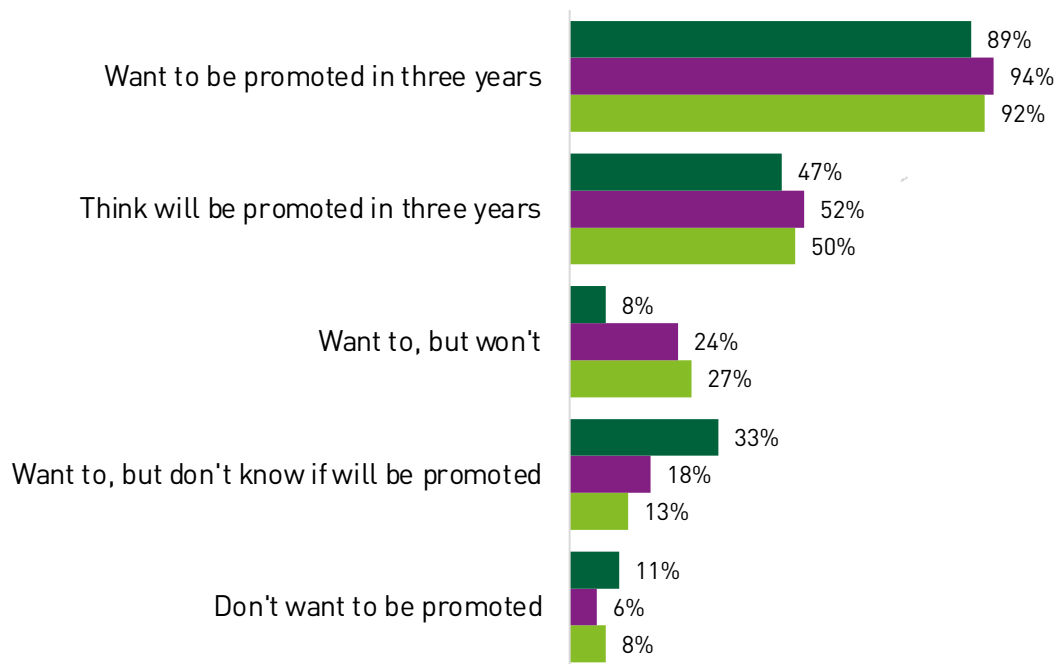
Do you want to be promoted or be in a more senior role three years from now?
Do you think you will be promoted or in a more senior role three years from now?

Base: all who work in comms (N=191)

Black and Asian respondents are much more likely to think that they will not get promoted in three years

Desire for promotion

■ Mixed (N=36) ■ Asian (N=100) ■ Black (N=48)



All ethnicities have a similar desire for promotion.

Those from a mixed ethnicity are more likely to state 'don't know' whether they will or won't.

However, black and Asian respondents are much more likely to think that they will not get promoted. Are they more fatalistic about their chances?

Do you want to be promoted or be in a more senior role three years from now?
Do you think you will be promoted or in a more senior role three years from now?
Base: all who work in comms (N=191)

Experience



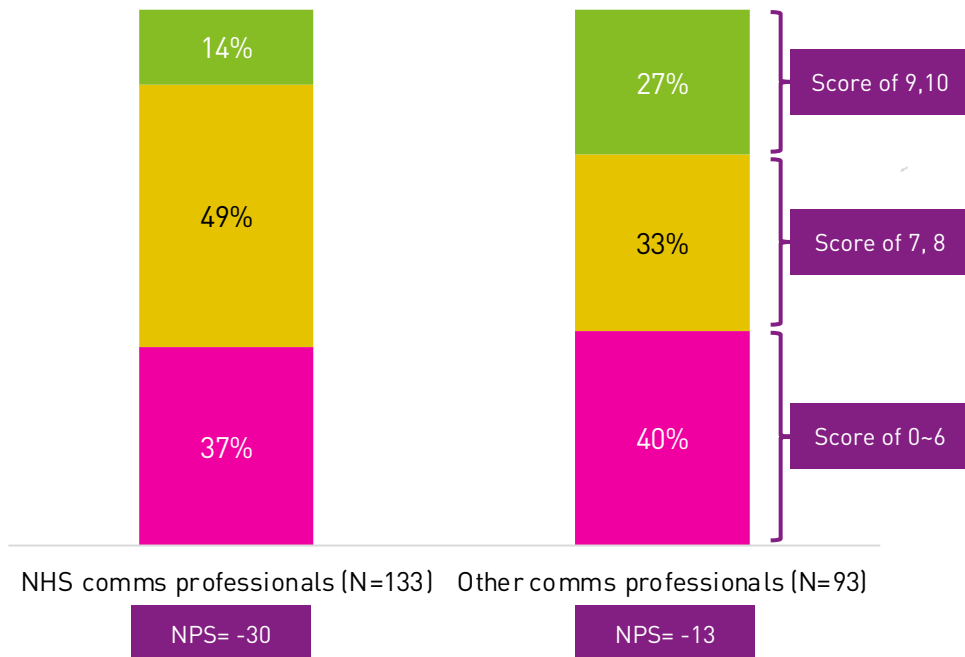
Key insight **3**

**The NHS as a place to work compared
poorly with other employers**

NHS comms professionals are less likely recommend their workplace than those working outside the NHS

Net Promoter Score

■ Detractors ■ Passive ■ Promoters



Using NPS as a metric, ethnic minority comms professionals are generally less satisfied with their workplace.

Both NHS staff and those working outside the NHS had negative NPSs.

While levels of dissatisfaction were broadly similar inside and outside the NHS there are twice as many comms professionals satisfied outside of the NHS (14% to 27%).

How likely is it that you would recommend working for the NHS/ your current employer to a friend or colleague?
Base: all comms professionals (N=see base)

Black comms professionals are the least satisfied with their employer

Net Promoter Score – by ethnicity

■ Detractors ■ Passive ■ Promoters



Levels of dissatisfaction were higher among black comms professionals.

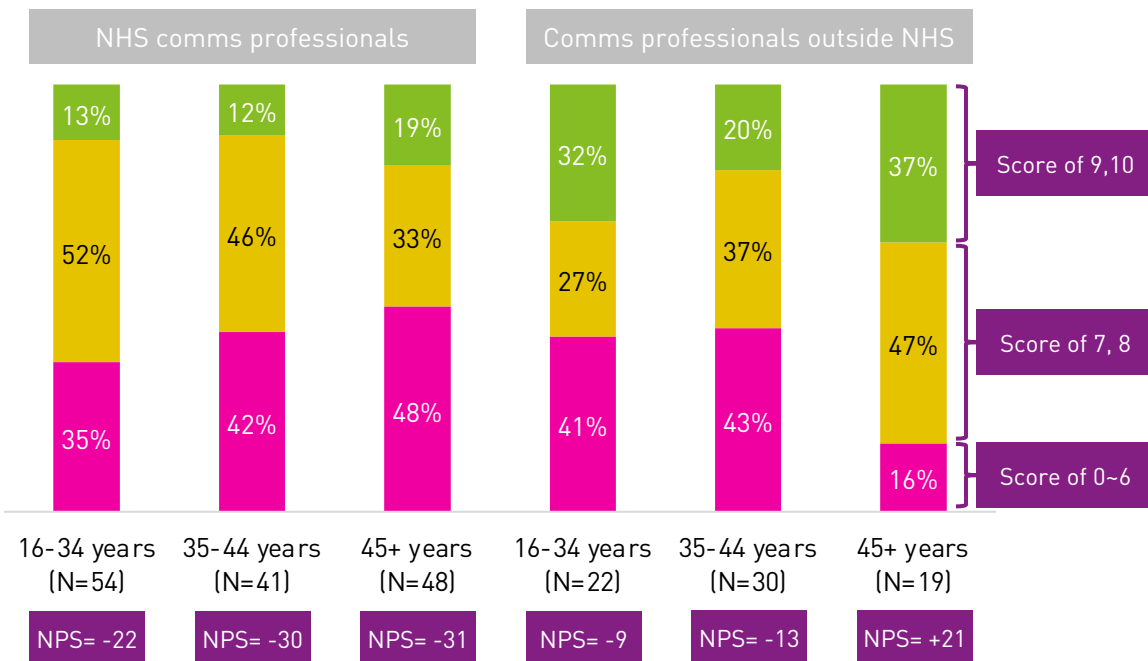
Over half (52%) of black professionals were detractors compared to just over four in ten of mixed ethnicity and Asian professionals.

How likely is it that you would recommend working for the NHS/ your current employer to a friend or colleague?
Base: all comms professionals (N=see base)

Older professionals in the NHS are markedly less satisfied than older professionals outside of the NHS

Net Promoter Score – by age

■ Detractors ■ Passive ■ Promoters



Within the NHS, satisfaction among comms professionals declines with age, with those aged 45+ years being the least satisfied.

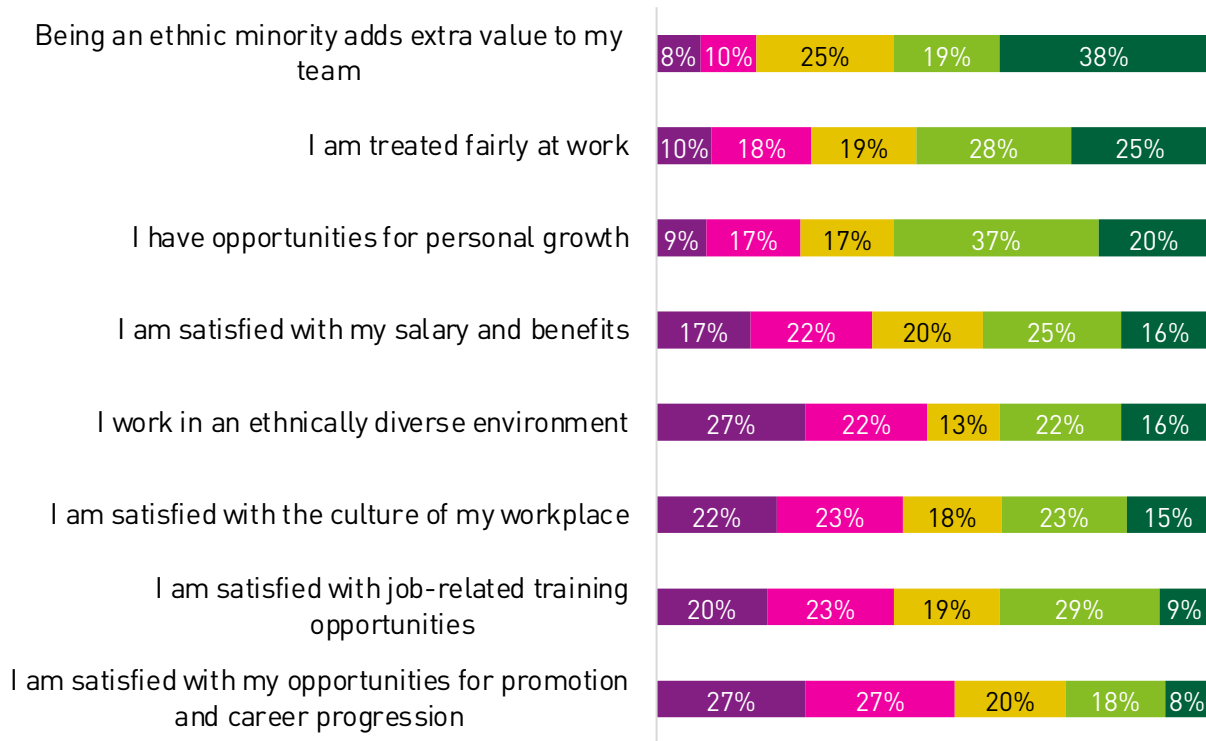
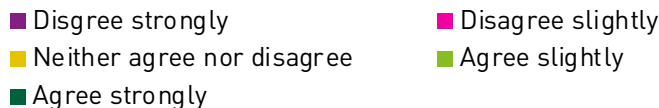
Outside of the NHS, the reverse is true with older professionals being the most satisfied.

In both groups, professionals aged 35-44 years have relatively low levels of satisfaction.

How likely is it that you would recommend working for the NHS/ your current employer to a friend or colleague?
Base: all comms NHS professionals (N=see base)

Almost half disagree that they work in an ethnically diverse environment

Opinion of workplace

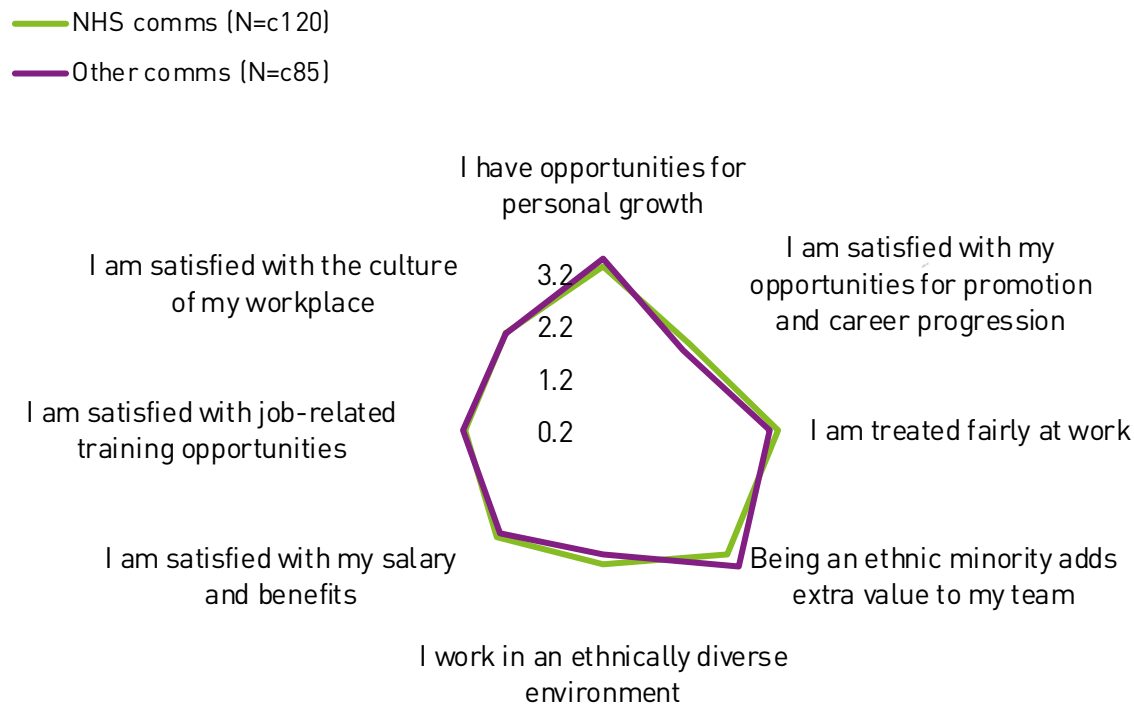


Attitudes towards work were ambivalent, with a large proportion of professionals being dissatisfied.

Half disagreed that they **work in an ethnically diverse environment** (49% disagree) and almost half (45%) disagreed that they were **satisfied with the culture of their workplace**.

How much do you agree or disagree about the following statements about your role in communications, marketing or engagement?
Base: all comms professionals (N=c250)

NHS comms staff and non-NHS comms staff had similar views suggesting that opinions are industry-wide



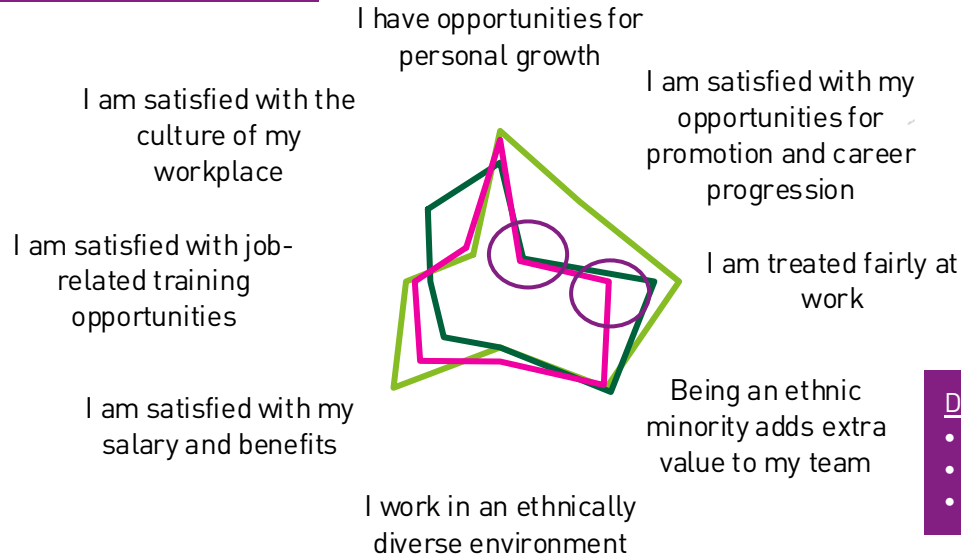
The views of NHS comms staff and non-NHS comms staff were very similar, suggesting that issues around culture and ethnic diversity are industry-wide.

How much do you agree or disagree about the following statements about your role in communications, marketing or engagement?
Base: all comms professionals (N=see chart)

NHS black comms professionals are much less likely to feel that they are treated fairly at work

— Mixed (N=21) — Asian (N=70) — Black (N=21)

NHS Professionals



Black NHS comms professionals were much less likely to agree that they are **treated fairly at work**.

Asian and black professionals are much less likely to be satisfied with **opportunities for career progression (and salary)**.

Those from mixed race ethnicities were the most positive.

Do NOT agree that they are treated fairly at work:

- 62% of Black professionals
- 41% of Asian professionals
- 24% of mixed ethnicity professionals

How much do you agree or disagree about the following statements about your role in communications, marketing or engagement?
Base: all NHS comms professionals (N=see chart)

Outcomes



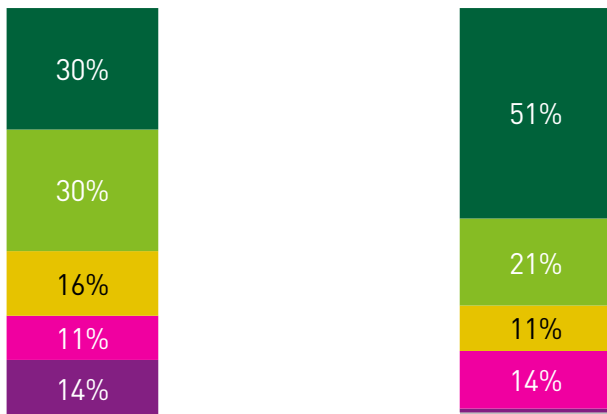
Key insight **4**

**Those who previously worked for the NHS
are less likely to consider the NHS
as an employer**

Those who previously worked for the NHS are less likely to consider the NHS as an employer

Consideration of working in NHS

- Don't know
- Probably not consider
- Probably would consider
- Definitely not consider
- Might or might not
- Definitely would consider



Have worked in NHS before (N=37)

Have not worked in NHS before (N=72)

The results were generally positive and indicate that the NHS is perceived to be an attractive employer.

Three-quarters (72% consider, 51% definitely consider) of those who have never worked for the NHS before would consider the NHS.

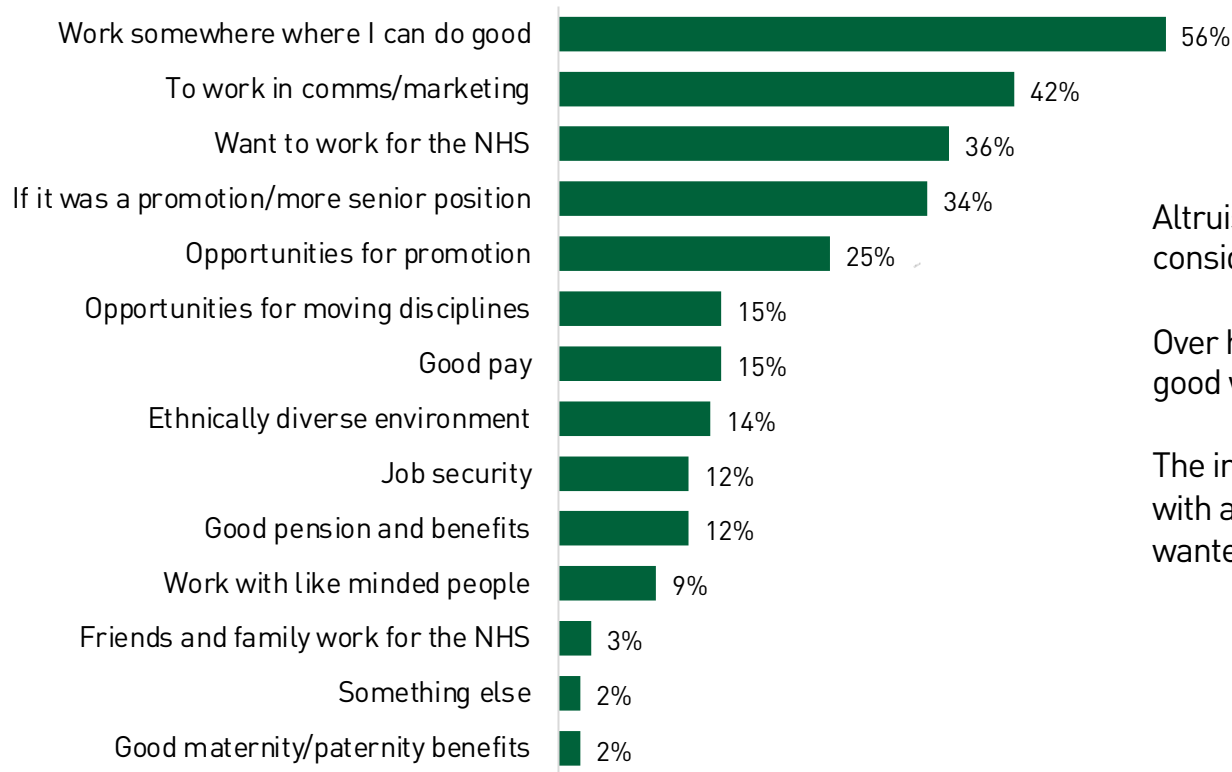
While there was high rejection (25%) of the NHS among those who had worked there before, six in ten (60%) would consider returning.

7 respondents were asked why they would not consider working in the NHS: 6 out of 7 mentioned structural racism.

Would you consider working again for the NHS in a communications, marketing or engagement role?
 Would you consider working for the NHS in a communications, marketing or engagement role?
 Base: all comms professionals (N=109)

Reason for considering the NHS centre on altruistic reasons

Reasons for considering NHS



Altruistic reasons are a key driver of considering the NHS as an employer.

Over half (56%) stated that wanting to do good was a driver of working for the NHS.

The institution of the NHS is also a draw, with a third (36%) stating that they specifically wanted to work for the NHS.

Those who left the NHS currently have a higher salary than those who stayed

	Professionals currently at NHS	Professionals who left the NHS
Starting salary at NHS	£37,940	£44,560
Leaving salary at NHS	NA	£48,620
Current salary	£50,970	£59,580

The data on salary suggests that those who left the NHS did not stay at the NHS for a long time.

In the time that they stayed at the NHS their salary only increased by c£4,000.

On leaving the NHS their salary has increased markedly to almost £60,000.

Improvements

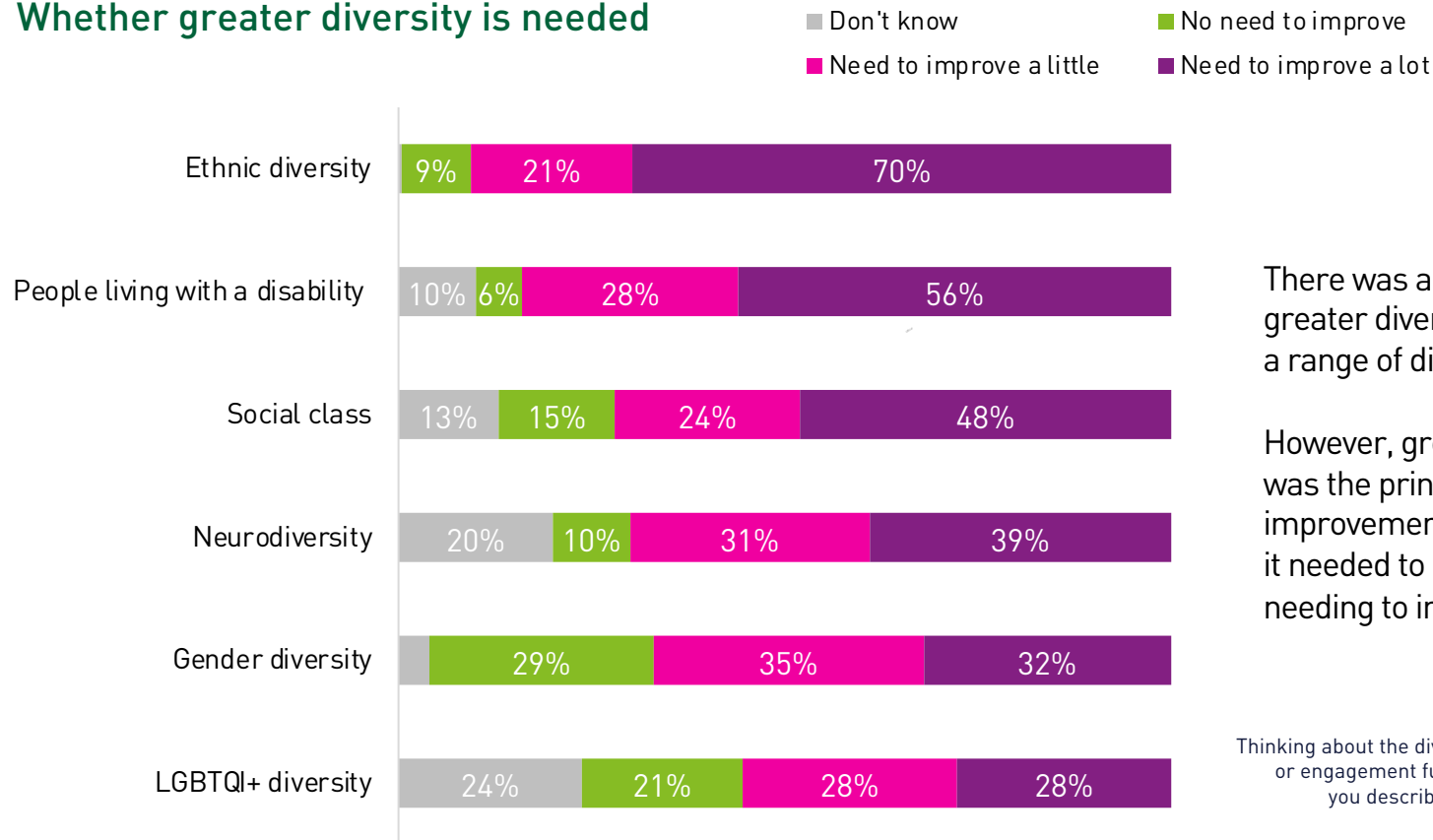


Key insight **5**

There is a strong sense that greater diversity is required across a range of different areas

Diversity needs to be improved across a range of different areas

Whether greater diversity is needed



There was a strong sense that greater diversity is required across a range of different areas.

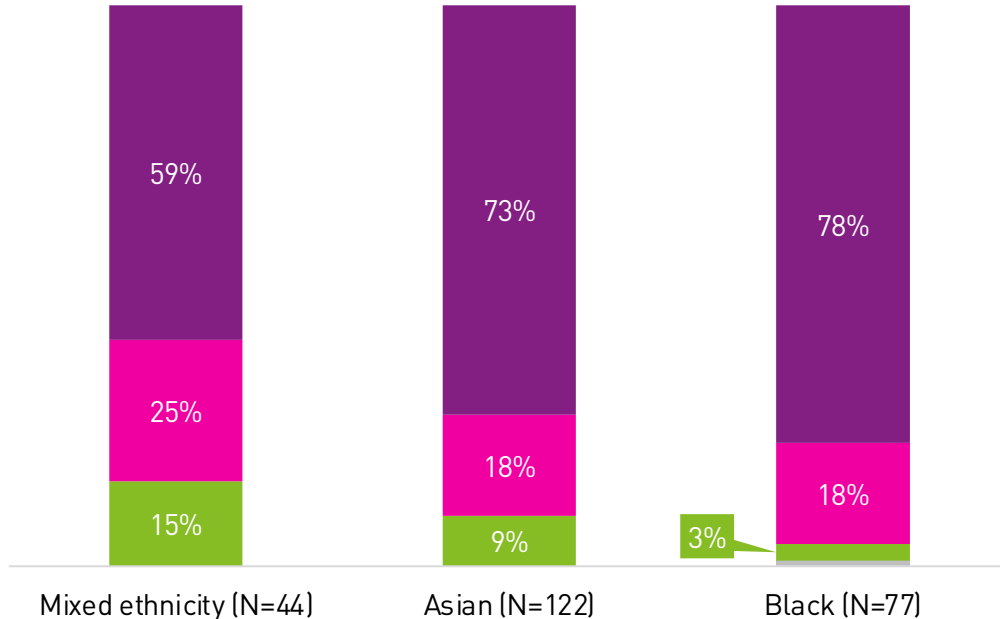
However, greater ethnic diversity was the principal area requiring improvement, with 91% stating that it needed to be improved (70% needing to improve a lot).

Thinking about the diversity of the communications, marketing or engagement function within your workplace, how would you describe the need to improve the following.....?
Base: all comms professionals (N=c250)

The need for greater ethnic diversity was felt by black and Asian comms professional the most

Need to improve ethnic diversity

■ Need to improve a lot
■ Need to improve a little
■ No need to improve
■ Don't know



There was a strong sense that ethnic diversity needed to improve across all ethnic groups.

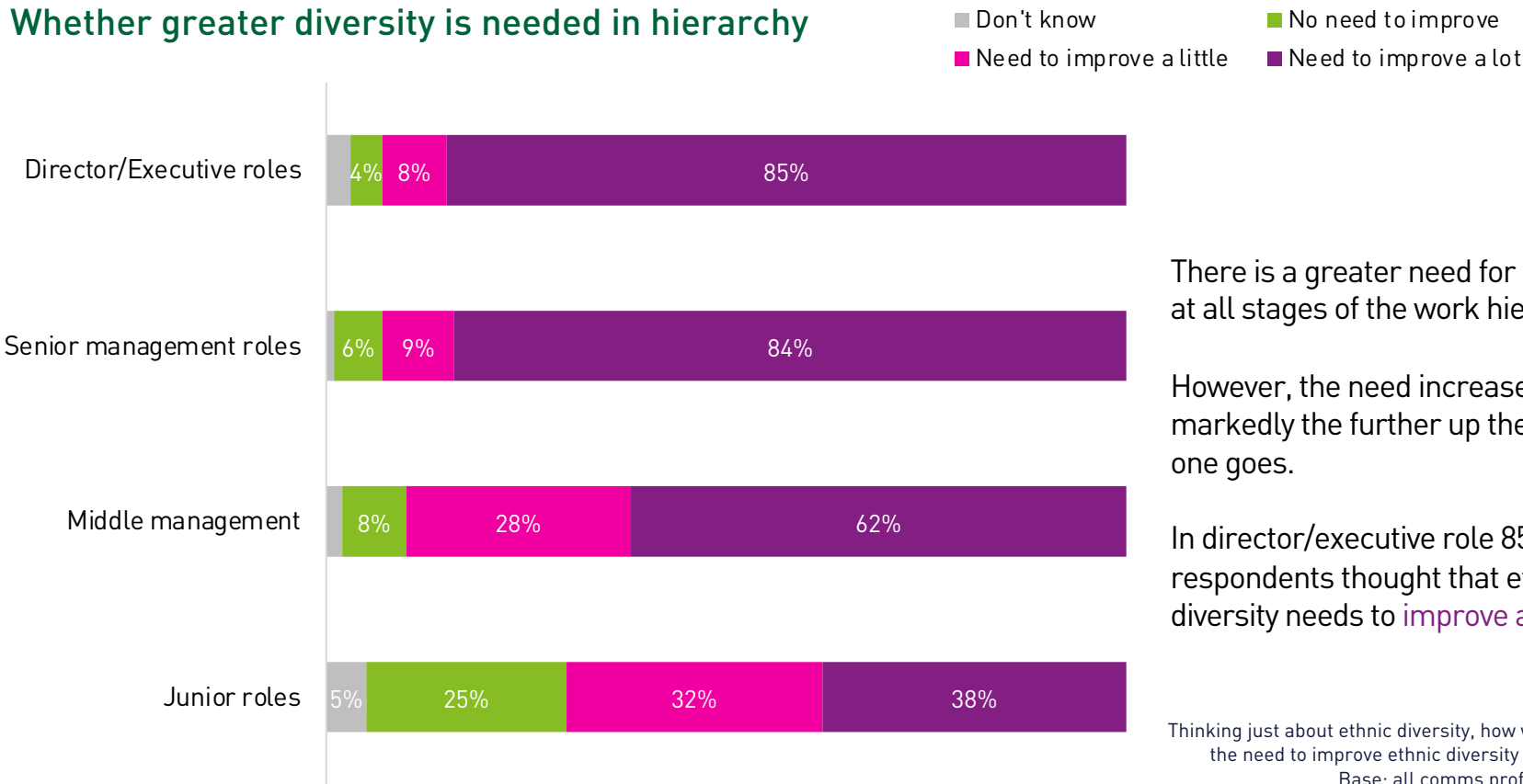
However, it was felt most by black comms professionals (78% felt that ethnic diversity needs to **improve a lot**).

Thinking about the diversity of the communications, marketing or engagement function within your workplace, how would you describe the need to improve the following.....?
 Base: all comms professionals (N=c250)

More ethnic diversity is required the further up the hierarchy one goes



Whether greater diversity is needed in hierarchy



There is a greater need for diversity at all stages of the work hierarchy.

However, the need increases markedly the further up the hierarchy one goes.

In director/executive role 85% of respondents thought that ethnic diversity needs to **improve a lot**.

Thinking just about ethnic diversity, how would you describe the need to improve ethnic diversity in the following....?
Base: all comms professionals (N=c250)

Improvements suggested by comms professionals

Recruitment practices	Senior representation	Professional development
“‘Affirmative action’, as the Americans call it. A more targeted effort from line managers to support people of minority ethnic background.”	“Allow those who are from an ethnic minority to have better access to more senior roles, e.g. senior comms officer or manager, or even above these.”	“More diversity workshops. Not just one event for Black History Month per year and call it a day...”
“Better diversity in hiring panels. More promotion of comms colleagues from an ethnically diverse background.”	“Employ more ethnically diverse people in senior roles and don’t undermine them; give them full support like you would anyone else. The few senior black people I was lucky to work with, it was disappointing to see their contributions devalued and undermined.”	“Further training, mentoring and access to people who are working in more advanced roles. Clear professional development opportunities – networking opportunities to learn new skills.”
“By having more people recruited from ethnically diverse backgrounds.”		“More career sponsors and mentors from an ethnic minority at higher levels to support ethnic and culturally diverse staff.”
“I think blind recruitment is important and creating ways for people to get into comms.”		“There needs to be more placement type roles for people of colour into senior positions where they get on-the-job training and support.”

For more information, please contact

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