

TRANSFORM

# THE IEMA STATE OF THE PROFESSION: SURVEY 2018

Narrowing gender pay gap and  
rising optimism: findings from  
IEMA's annual member survey

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# THE IEMA STATE OF THE PROFESSION: SURVEY 2018

IEMA's annual member survey reveals a narrowing gender pay gap and rising optimism

**M**ost environment and sustainability professionals describe their jobs as challenging, but they are more optimistic than a year ago about tackling the world's environmental challenges, findings from the latest IEMA survey reveal.

The survey – a comprehensive annual snapshot of the views and workplace experience of a diverse sample of IEMA members – also suggests that the profession's gender pay gap has

narrowed over the past 12 months to stand at 14.1% for full-time employees. However, the research shows women are under-represented at the top of the profession, despite making up the majority of entry-level employees.

There has been some steady growth in pay, with the median salary for all environment and sustainability professionals at £40,000 a year. Salaries in business and industry have risen, but the median salary for Practitioners in consultancy and the third sector looks to have fallen slightly over the past 12 months.

This edition of the survey contains insights into the achievements, challenges and motivations of IEMA members. The wealth of achievements listed – from regulatory compliance to employee engagement – show the breadth of the environment and sustainability Practitioner's role.

A large majority (68%) of respondents are satisfied with their job, citing the ability to make change happen and the variety of their responsibilities. Among the minority who are dissatisfied, many are frustrated with their organisation or its senior managers not taking environment and sustainability issues seriously.

## TOP FINDINGS



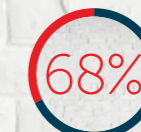
The **annual salary for a full-time** environment and sustainability professional stands at a median £40,000, up from £39,000 a year ago.



**One in three** environment and sustainability professionals made an upward or horizontal career move in 2017.

**£44k**

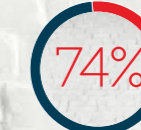
Practitioners in **business or industry** earn a median £44,000 (compared with £41,000 a year ago), while consultancy and third-sector salaries have dipped.



**A majority (68%) are satisfied or very satisfied with their current role.** Of those who have moved into environment and sustainability, 78% are satisfied.



Two-thirds (67%) of employed IEMA members got a **pay rise in 2017**, but only 29% of self-employed members reported an increase in earnings.



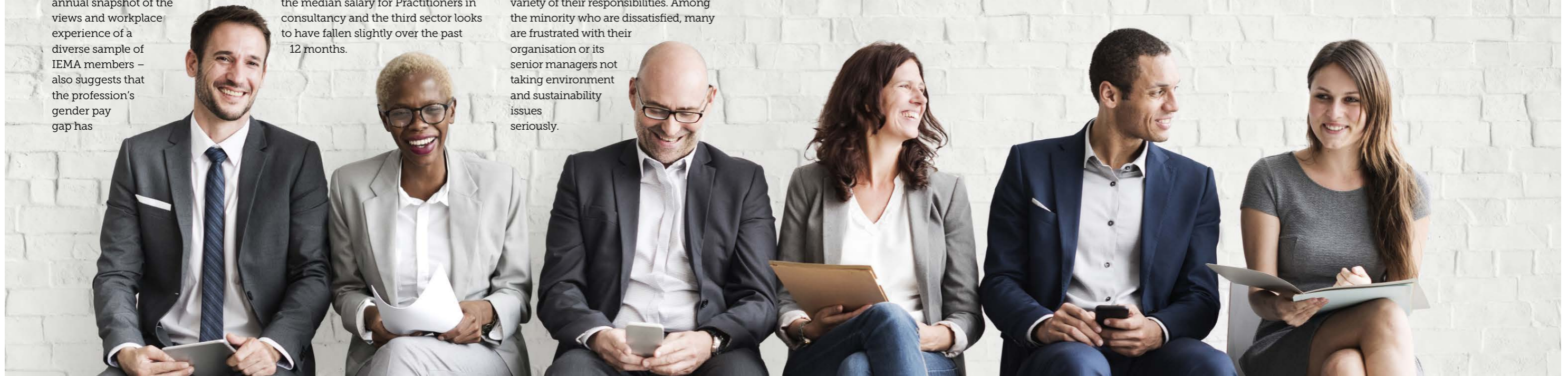
Only 8% of Practitioners describe their profession as "understood". In contrast, **74% describe it as "challenging"** while 54% describe it as "rewarding".



The **gender pay gap** for full-time employees has fallen to 14.1% from 16.7% last year – but this is still wider than the gender pay gap.



More than half (56%) of IEMA members are optimistic about tackling challenges in 2018, but **one in 10** are "demoralised" about the challenges and uncertainty.



## SALARIES BY INDUSTRY AND SECTOR

The median annual salary for a full-time environment and sustainability professional stands at £40,000, up 2.6% on the 2017 figure of £39,000. This is comfortably above that for UK employees nationally, which was £28,758 in April 2017, according to the latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It compares favourably to the ASHE full-time salary of an “environment professional” (£33,273 a year), but is lower than the salary published for “professionals in the science, research, engineering and technology sector” which stands at £41,508.

Overall, the highest salaries go to members working in business and industry, who can expect to earn a median salary of £44,000 a year – a considerable increase on the £41,000 median salary reported in 2017. This year, the highest-paid sectors are the mining and quarrying sector (where the median is £57,000 a year) followed by finance and legal services (£52,730); although finance and legal services has the highest pay (£66,196) using the mean average.

In last year’s survey we reported that consultancy pay had dipped somewhat and suspected that this might have partly been down to sampling variations. But this trend continues this year, with consultancy salaries dipping from a median £37,750 last year to £37,000 in 2018. While public sector salaries have crept up slightly on last year to stand at £36,000, those in the third sector looked to have decreased a little to stand at a median £31,250 a year.



### SALARIES BY BROAD SECTOR

	MEAN SALARY (£)	MEDIAN SALARY (£)
Business and industry	47,404	44,000
Consultancy	41,192	37,000
Education/academia/research	40,903	38,000
Public sector	40,512	36,000
Third sector	39,568	31,250
All	44,439	40,000
Base = 816		

### SALARIES BY INDUSTRY (EXAMPLES)

	MEAN	MEDIAN
Mining and quarrying	58,626	57,000
Financial and legal services	66,196	52,730
Electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning supply and generation	49,014	48,875
Transportation and storage	44,861	46,000
Engineering	47,411	45,500
Construction/civil engineering	46,474	44,512
Facilities/property management	48,676	42,000
Manufacturing	45,714	41,250
Wholesale and retail trade	54,091	40,000
Waste management and remediation	36,052	35,000
Base = 379		

## SALARIES BY IEMA MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

When asked about their greatest achievement over 2017 (see page 43), many members said that it was achieving an upgrade of their IEMA membership status by demonstrating the knowledge and skills they had gained.

While the professional rewards of doing so stretch well beyond pay, the chart below illustrates that this progression is well rewarded in pay terms, with significant differences in salary between each grade. For example, the findings suggest that a pay premium of around 60% can be gained through progression from Graduate membership to the Practitioner grade, while this salary can be enhanced by almost another 20% via progression to Full IEMA membership.

The salaries of IEMA Fellows, leaders in the environment and sustainability field, appear to have seen a boost this year. The median salary has reached £86,500, which is 3.5 times higher than the median £25,000 salary for a graduate member.

### MEDIAN SALARY BY MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

	SALARY (£)
Fellow	86,500
Full	47,500
Practitioner	40,000
Affiliate	38,295
Associate	35,000
Graduate	25,000
Base = 816	

## SALARIES BY UK REGION

For those based in the UK, professionals in the South East and the West of Scotland top the regional pay table this year with annual median salaries of around £42,000, while those in Wales see the lowest median salary at £35,000.

This year’s findings broadly mirror regional earnings differentials across the economy as a whole, with the ONS reporting the highest earnings in London, the South East and Scotland and the lowest earnings in Wales.

### MEDIAN SALARY BY UK REGION

South East	42,035
Scotland West	42,000
Scotland North	41,000
North East	40,000
South West	40,000
Yorkshire and the Humber	40,000
North West	39,300
East of England	38,000
Northern Ireland	38,000
Scotland East	38,000
Midlands	37,000
Wales	35,000
Base = 739	



## PAY TRENDS AND PROSPECTS FOR 2017

The latest figures from pay analysts XpertHR reveal that pay rises effective in January 2018 were worth a median 2.5%, their highest level for almost four years.

This is still lower than the going rate for pay rises before the 2008/09 recession, and both Brexit-related uncertainty and the continuing issue of low UK productivity growth are likely to continue to restrain pay over 2018. On the other hand, however, there is high demand for skilled, qualified candidates in many professional occupations.

Looking back over 2017, the IEMA members' survey reveals that a comfortable two-thirds (64%) of environment and sustainability professionals got a pay rise in 2017, while only 6% saw their pay decrease. Among employed professionals, 67% saw their pay increase, but among the smaller sample of self-employed members this figure shrinks dramatically to 29%.

For those reporting that their pay increased in 2017, the median increase was a healthy 3%, although the most common pay increase reported was 2%.

### CHANGES IN ANNUAL SALARY OVER 2017

	EMPLOYED (%)	SELF-EMPLOYED (%)	ALL (%)
Salary has decreased	5	24	6
Salary has not changed	28	47	30
Salary has increased	67	29	64
Number	929	72	1,001

## THE GENDER PAY GAP

The new obligation for UK companies with 250 or more employees to publish their gender pay gap by 4 April 2018 (30 March for public sector employers) is focusing many corporate minds on gender pay differentials this year. Many organisations have yet to publish their data, but the reports released so far on the UK government's gender reporting website illustrate just how difficult it is to interpret the meaning of these snapshot statistics, which are highly influenced by the proportion of women employed at both the bottom and the top of the pay scale.

### SALARY BY GENDER

	MEDIAN	MEAN
Women	36,500	40,076
Men	42,500	47,387

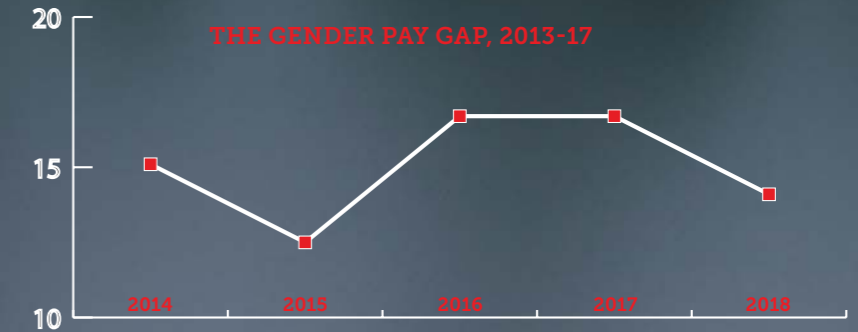
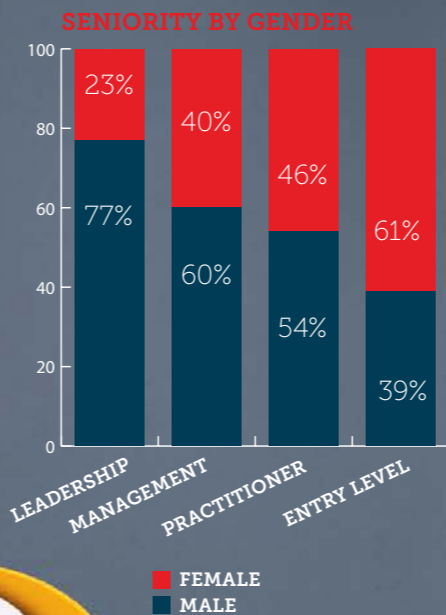
Base = 800

There is some welcome news in the practitioners' survey this year, which shows the gender gap for full-time employees falling to 14.1%, down from 16.7% in 2016 and 2017. As a

benchmark, the full-time gender pay gap nationally for professional occupations is around 11%, although this is calculated using hourly earnings so is not directly comparable to the annual salary figures in the IEMA practitioners' survey. Neither figure includes part-time workers, which tend to see a wider pay gap between their pay and that

of full-time male employees.

One clue as to the persistence of this pay gap – albeit a smaller one than last year – can be found in the gender composition of the workforce as seniority rises. As the chart below shows, men occupy 77% of leadership roles, whereas women make up a majority (61%) of lower-paid entry-level roles. Analysis of IEMA membership grades shows

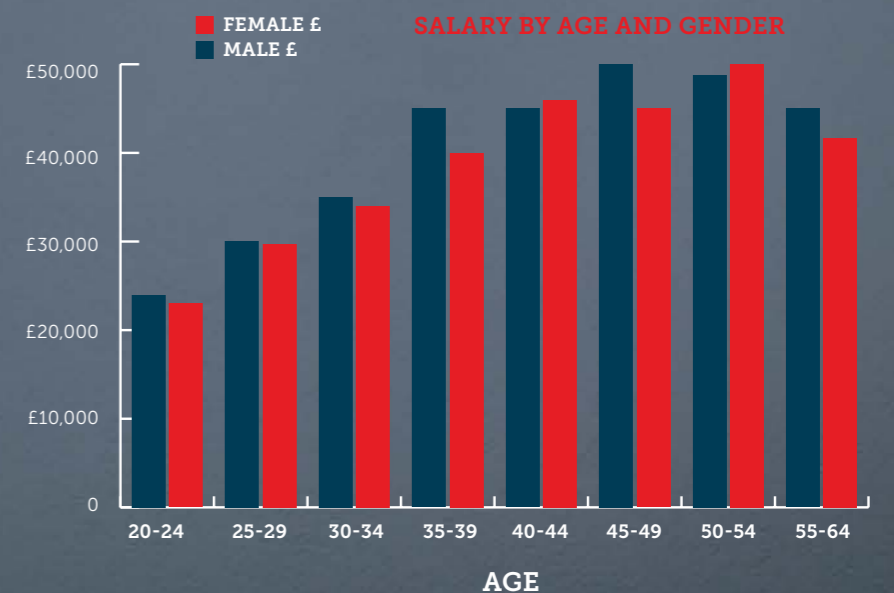


the same pattern. For example, 84% of survey respondents with IEMA Fellow status are male. If the profession is to shift its gender pay gap, then more women entering management and leadership levels is clearly crucial.

There are some intriguing findings by age and gender too, although these tend to be affected by the composition of the survey sample from year to year. There is a pay gap in favour of men that widens to £5,000 a year by the ages of 35 to 39. However, in two age groups – 40

to 45 and 50 to 54 – women appear to be earning slightly more than men. It is unusual to find pay gaps in favour of women in these age groups, and we may see them reversed in next year's survey.

However, it is notable that there is a substantial group of women in the survey in their 40s and 50s earning in the region of £50,000 to £70,000 – which illustrates the potential for both genders to progress and enhance their earnings power as sustainability and environment professionals.



## A FULFILLING CAREER PATH

“It’s too important to work in anything else!” was the answer one respondent gave when asked why they chose to work in the environment and sustainability profession. People enter the profession for a wide variety of reasons, but having a long-standing interest in the environment or sustainability (35%) and wanting to make a difference (22%) came top of the list when respondents gave their original motivation for doing so.

A solid foundation of academic qualifications is a hallmark of the profession. Six in 10 have a postgraduate qualification of some kind, including 44% with a masters degree and 5% with a doctorate.

Almost one in three (32%) of environment and sustainability professionals consider themselves as career changers. Most commonly, they moved from roles in engineering, construction or manufacturing. Interestingly, as many as 34% of IEMA Fellows describe themselves as such, suggesting those who come later to an environment and sustainability career can reach the top.

For some career changers, the rationale was that the sustainability field became essential to an existing role, but for more it was a personal interest in environment and sustainability issues that led them to change paths. Fewer than 3% express dissatisfaction with the move – a tiny proportion compared with the 78% who say that they are satisfied or very satisfied.

Overall, the environment and sustainability profession is one where job flexibility and mobility are important to career success. Levels of job mobility during

### LEVEL OF HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION GAINED

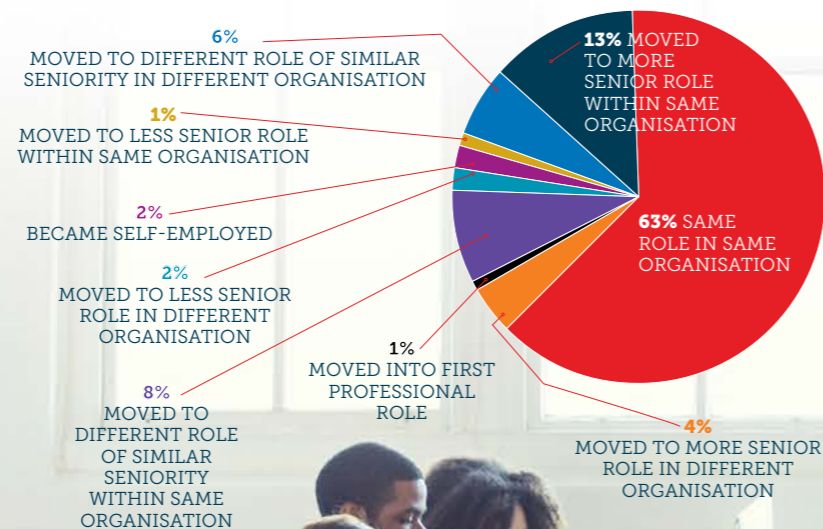
	% OF RESPONDENTS
A-level or equivalent	4
Bachelors degree	25
PhD	5
MA or MSc	44
HNC or HND	8
No formal qualifications	1
GCSE or equivalent	2
Postgraduate diploma	11

Base = 1,053

2017 were very slightly up on 2016, but showed a similar pattern, with most (63%) staying in both the same role and same organisation over the year. However, a significant 17%

moved to a more senior role either through promotion or moving organisation, showing a healthy level of progression, while 14% made a horizontal move.

### CHANGE IN ROLE IN 2017



## ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This year’s survey takes a closer look at how environment and sustainability professionals feel about both their individual role and their profession as a whole. Levels of job satisfaction remain high, with 68% satisfied or very satisfied with their current role, just 6% dissatisfied and 26% neutral. This compares well with national measures such as the CIPD’s Employee Outlook report, which in spring 2017 reported 64% of employees as satisfied and 16% dissatisfied.

We asked members to select phrases to describe how they felt about being an environmental and sustainability professional and have illustrated their responses in the word cloud on the next page. The responses illustrate some of the reasons for the job satisfaction reported above: more than half (54%) say that it is rewarding while 38% describe it as “full of

opportunity”. An even bigger proportion (74%) say that it is “challenging” and more than one in three (34%) describe what they do as “complex”. Strikingly, only 8% believe that their profession is “understood” by others.

*“It’s often hard, but I am motivated to make a difference and my role lets me do that”*

For the first time, this year’s survey asked respondents to tell us about their greatest professional achievement over the past 12 months. Implementing significant systems changes or delivering a successful project at work were by far the most popular achievements, although building up a greater

professional profile at work or upgrading IEMA membership were also selected by many. Making progress on their organisation’s journey to implementing various environmental standards was understandably a frequently cited achievement, but others included:

- Delivering an award-winning employee engagement programme

- Completing various academic, assessment or IEMA qualifications
- Delivering a project to create natural play and learning opportunities in a primary school
- Influencing the design or managing the impact of a major infrastructure project
- Getting a first job, or a new one
- Implementing LED lighting upgrades
- Making specific cost savings, energy savings, waste or carbon reductions or generally improved performance against key performance indicators
- Mentoring and seeing the progression of junior staff
- Improving their organisation’s reporting, such as publishing a first corporate sustainability report.

The breadth of IEMA member achievements illustrates the uniquely cross-cutting nature of the role and the importance of communication and interpersonal skills in persuading others, implementing projects and making change happen.

Of course, doing all this brings huge challenges. For the minority reporting dissatisfaction with their job role, the most common complaint is the difficulty of working in an organisation where environment and sustainability issues are not taken seriously, or even worse, there is antipathy to them.

One respondent reports: “Leadership is strong, but middle management is ineffective and does not understand environmental management.”

Another says: “Sustainability is not taken seriously – I was told by senior management that I am too passionate



about the environment and that not everyone believes in climate change.”

Yet most feel that they are both making a difference and are supported by their organisations in doing so. One member describes the reasons for their satisfaction as follows: “I work for a brilliant company that are extremely supportive of any training I want to do or changes I want to make. I am constantly learning and experiencing new things.” Another writes: “I get to work with a variety of people and within a team who want to make a positive impact on the construction industry and improve sustainability.”

So as 2018 begins, are environment and sustainability professionals fundamentally optimistic or pessimistic about what the future holds? Despite political uncertainty in the UK and globally, 56% of IEMA members say they are optimistic about tackling

future challenges – significantly higher than the 43% who felt optimistic in last year’s survey. Around 31% are indifferent, while 10% feel demoralised about the challenges facing the profession.

Asked what the profession needs in 2018, respondents put the following factors in their top three requirements:

- Stronger national political leadership on environment and sustainability (64%)
- Stronger corporate leadership on environment and sustainability (51%)
- More cross professional/industry co-operation on the big issues (35%).

One thing is for certain: neither the scale of global environment and sustainability challenges, nor the complexity and variety of the practitioner’s role in seeking to tackle them, look set to reduce over the course of 2018.

“There is a good mix of desk-based and hands-on work”

HOW SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT PROFESSIONALS DESCRIBE THEIR PROFESSION

FULL OF OPPORTUNITY  
**CHALLENGING**  
 WELL PAID **BUREAUCRATIC**  
**COMPLEX** POORLY PAID  
 UNDERSTOOD **REWARDING** DEMORALISING  
 HAVING A GLOBAL IMPACT



## DETAILS OF THE 2017 SURVEY

A total of 1,053 members responded to the IEMA practitioners' survey, which was carried out online between 20 December 2017 and 12 January 2018. Of the 1,028 who gave their gender, 43% were women and 57% were men.

The sample broadly reflects the composition of IEMA membership. Around 4% are graduate members, 12% are affiliates and 12% associate members. More than one in five (22%) have full membership status (MIEMA), 43% have the operational membership grade of PIEMA and 3% have achieved fellow or FIEMA status. The table below shows the sector, size and seniority of respondents.

Our analysis of pay rates uses base pay data, excluding overtime, bonuses or other elements of variable pay. Headline statistics mainly use the median, which is considered the best guide to typical earnings by the ONS as it reduces the impact of very high or very low figures.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	%
<b>SECTOR</b>	
Business and industry	50
Consultancy	30
Public sector	14
Education/academia/research	4
Third sector	3
<b>SIZE OF EMPLOYER</b>	
Sole trader	4
A small start-up	1
Micro (10 employees or fewer)	5
Small (between 10 and 50 employees)	5
Medium (between 50 and 250 employees)	12
Large (between 251 and 1,000 employees)	17
Very large (more than 1,000 employees)	56
<b>SENIORITY OF RESPONDENT'S ROLE</b>	
Entry-level	4
Practitioner	39
Management	39
Leadership	19
Base = 1,001 (excludes students and retired members)	

