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THE STATE OF THE PROFESSION

PRACTITIONERS' SURVEY 2017

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PRACTITIONERS' SURVEY 2017 – THE HIGHLIGHTS

Annual survey of IEMA members reveals modest pay growth but gender gap persists

Although uncertainty abounds as 2017 progresses, environment and sustainability professionals are expressing high levels of job satisfaction and optimism that they can meet the challenges of the year ahead. Almost seven in ten are satisfied or very satisfied with their current role, with just 6% dissatisfied, according to the latest IEMA practitioners' survey.

On their single biggest challenge or opportunity for 2017, IEMA members are focused mainly on understanding how changing laws and regulations will affect their work. Improving work-life balance, changing jobs, upgrading IEMA membership and increasing their overall impact are also high on the agenda. Despite the uncertainties around Brexit and a US president sceptical about anthropogenic climate change, just 17% feel demoralised about the global challenges and unpredictability ahead. They are outnumbered by the 43% who are optimistic, with 35% somewhere in the middle.

On reward, pay growth has been steady, with median earnings – the mid-point in the range – of £39,000, compared with £38,180 a year earlier. A stubbornly wide gender pay difference persists, however. For full-time employees it is 16.7%, much higher than the national figure of 9.4% and the same as we reported a year ago.

The survey reinforces the reputation of the profession for having a strong commitment to continuing professional development (CPD). Some 89% of IEMA practitioners engaged in CPD activities in 2016 to further their career goals. Filling skills gaps (56%), training or mentoring other staff (28%) and improving environmental performance (24%) were regarded as the biggest direct benefits of CPD.

This commitment to development appears to be paying off in terms of the career progression seen in the sector. More than half (56%) of practitioners reached management or leadership positions last year, while 17% moved to more senior roles.

THE TOP FINDINGS

- The median annual salary in the 12 months to January 2017 was £39,000, while the average or mean was £44,008.
- Median salaries for business and industry roles were higher at £41,000 than those in consultancies (£37,750) or the public sector (£35,547). Salaries were highest in the financial and legal services sector, where the median was £49,000.
- Some 62% received a pay increase in 2016, but this was down slightly from two-thirds in 2015 and much lower than in 2014, when 73.5% had an uplift. Self-employed members were less likely to benefit from a pay increase, with only 37% reporting a rise in earnings in 2016.
- By region, the highest median salary was found in eastern Scotland (£41,650), while Northern Ireland had the lowest (£30,558).
- The gender pay gap for the profession remained at 16.7%. However, full-time women in the 25–29 age bracket earned £2,000 more than their male colleagues at the median.
- An IEMA Graduate member can expect a starting salary of around £25,000 a year. The median for Practitioner members (PIEMA) is £38,000, while that for a Fellow is £70,900.
- Almost two-thirds (61%) of those surveyed had a form of postdoctoral qualification, with just 1% having no formal qualifications.
- Our survey found 3% to be entry-level members, 41% to be IEMA Practitioners and 56% in management or leadership roles. Across the sample, 17% moved into a more senior role in 2016 and 13% switched sideways.
- Continuing professional development activities were undertaken by 89% of members in 2016. The most popular pursuits were reading *the environmentalist* and other key materials, and participating in IEMA webinars.
- Job satisfaction rates are high, especially among 'career changers', of whom 80% are happy with the move they have made. Among all respondents, 69% are either satisfied or very satisfied with their current role; just 6% are not.

Salaries by

Industry and sector

The pay headline of the practitioners' survey this year is slow but steady earnings growth. The median annual salary for full-time environment and sustainability professionals stands at £39,000, up by around 2% on £38,180 one year ago. The average or mean salary is £44,008, also up from last year's figure of £43,812.

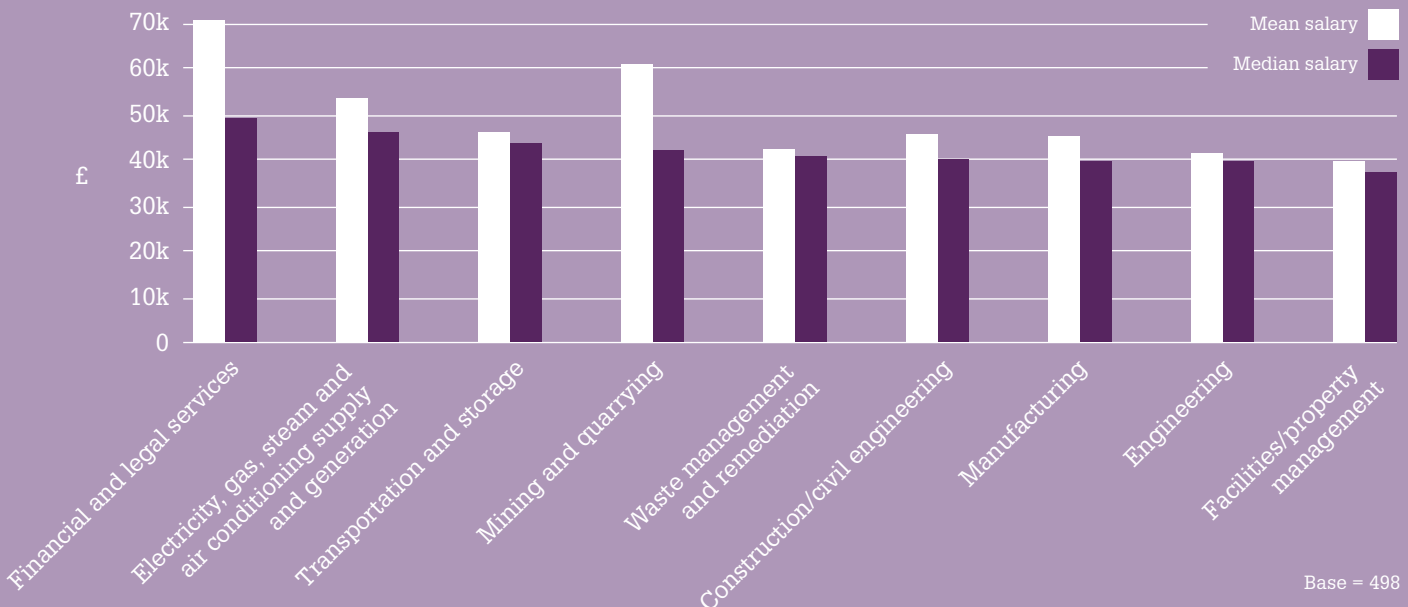
This headline figure compares favourably to the median of £37,675 recorded for professional occupations in the 2016 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – although it slightly lags behind the national median of £40,627 for science, research, engineering and technology professionals.

The 2017 survey finds that the median annual salary for professionals working in business and industry stands at £41,000 over the 2016 calendar year, compared with £37,750 for colleagues working in consultancy. Pay in the consultancy sector appears to have dipped, although this may be explained largely by sampling variations (see below).

The survey reveals a surprisingly high median salary for respondents from academia and research, which stands at £41,000, level-pegging with corporate roles.



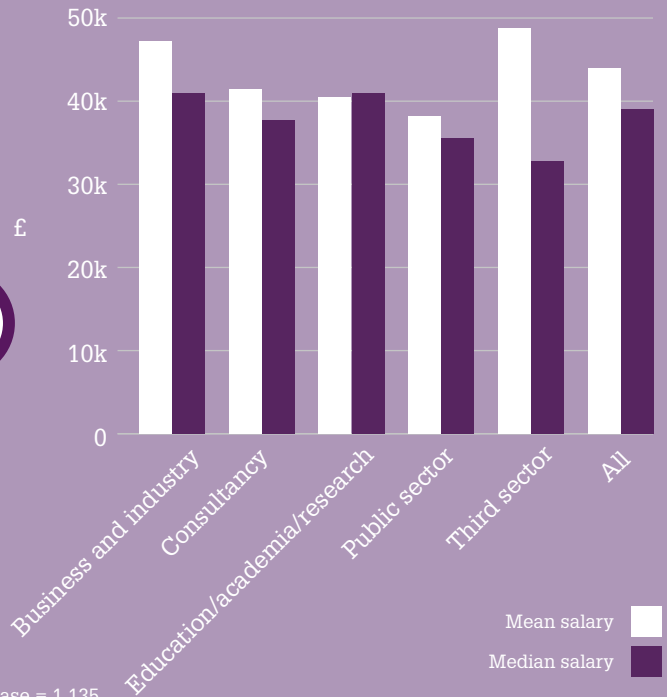
Salary by industry



Base = 498

2

Salary by broad industrial sector



1

It should be noted, however, that this figure is based on a smaller sample than other groups. Likewise, the findings for the third sector should be treated with caution due to the small sample size.

For business and industry roles, the mean salary of £47,207 illustrates the impact of some significantly higher salaries at the top end. By subsector, higher pay rates are most likely to be found in financial and legal services, which has a higher median salary (£49,000) than any other sector this year and a mean of £70,339. For the past few years the top spot has been occupied by the mining and quarrying sector, reflecting high salaries in oil and extraction. But this year the median in this sector has dipped to £42,000 from £52,500, although the mean is the second highest at £60,790.

The lower figures for consultancy salaries this year may be explained partly by the fact that the sample contains a very low proportion of respondents from planning or management consultancies, and these tend to offer higher salaries than engineering and environment/sustainability consultancies (both recording a median £37,000). For the very small group of professionals working for management consultancies, the median salary is £51,000 a year. Consultants fare better in pay terms than employees in the public sector (£35,547), where government-imposed pay restraint continues to bite. Although the public sector does not suffer the skills shortages of engineering or construction, reports of difficulties recruiting specialists or professionals to meet the numerous challenges the services face are increasing.

Overall, median salaries for environment and sustainability professionals have risen by just 2.5% over the past three years.

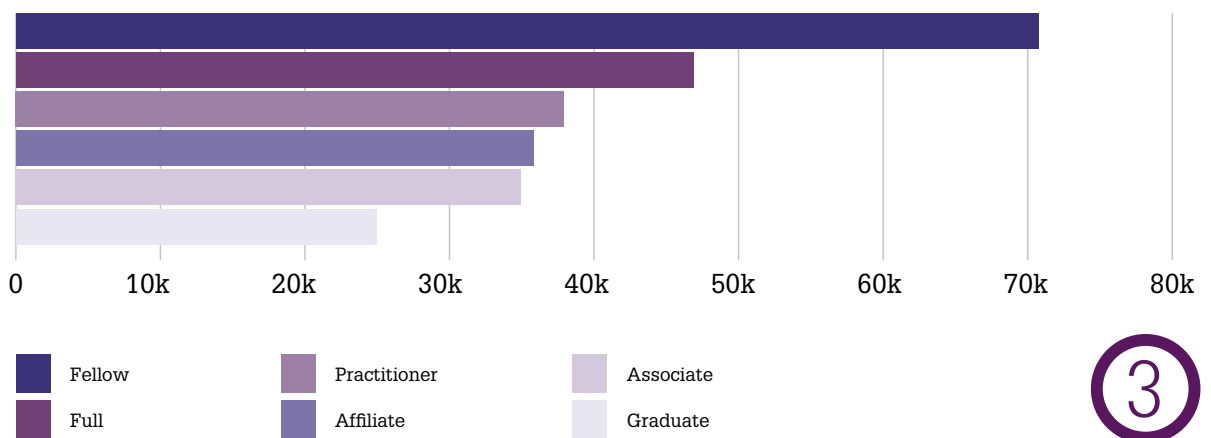


Salaries by

Level of IEMA membership

Median salary by membership level

Base = 1,126



3

Pay is influenced by a host of factors, but individual skills, knowledge and experience are among the most important in determining salary and potential for pay progression. As in previous years, the 2017 survey finds a clear route to pay progression through the IEMA membership levels.

The median for members who have achieved the status of Fellow (FIEMA), for example, is £70,900, which is around double that of Associate or Affiliate.

For Graduates, headline starting salaries have been static since the economic downturn that began in 2008. When the online HR service XpertHR published its annual survey of graduate starting salaries in August 2016 it found the median – £23,000 in 2016–17 – to have been frozen for the eighth successive year. Unlike XpertHR's benchmark, the median starting salary of £25,000 for IEMA Graduates has risen by £500 since the 2016 survey. Although the 2% increase in starting salaries for graduates between the 2016 and 2017 surveys mirrors the overall rise in median salaries for practitioners, the relatively small uplift also reflects less demand for university leavers. A survey last year by the Association of Graduate Recruiters revealed an 8% drop in vacancies since the 2015 poll. The number of vacancies had fallen most in construction, retail and engineering, and compared with 13% rise in demand for graduates the previous year.

The steps in salary between membership levels are significant, suggesting that the professional requirements members need to upgrade are well rewarded in salary terms as well as career progression. For those at graduate level, the findings suggest that

a pay premium of more than 50% can be achieved by upgrading to the new Practitioner (PIEMA) grade. Likewise, the median salary for those who achieve Full IEMA membership (MIEMA) is 34% higher than the going rate for those at Associate level.

The status of IEMA Fellow, intended to recognise the visionary leadership of the profession, commands a median salary 51% higher than that for Full members. At this level, the range of salaries is much wider depending on sector and individual role, with the mean reaching £85,925. The mean salary for MIEMAs is £53,585, while that for a PIEMA is £41,896.

Changes to salaries by IEMA membership status between 2016 and 2017 reveal that the median salary for a Fellow increased by 4%, from £68,000 to £70,900. Median salaries for Full members have also risen, by just over 3%, from £45,000 to £47,000. In contrast, median salaries for Associate members have declined by 5% since last year's poll, from £37,000 to £35,000.

However, over the past few months many former Associates have upgraded to Practitioner level, which IEMA introduced in June 2016. PIEMA level is described by IEMA as a new stop on the membership journey, and is designed to bridge a perceived gap between Associate and Full membership. IEMA says it demonstrates to employers that the individual is equipped, connected, fully up to date and in touch with learning opportunities that will help them deliver their sustainability programmes. PIEMA is aimed mostly at those working across organisations at an operational level. The 2017 practitioners' poll shows that a PIEMA earns around 8% more than an Associate.

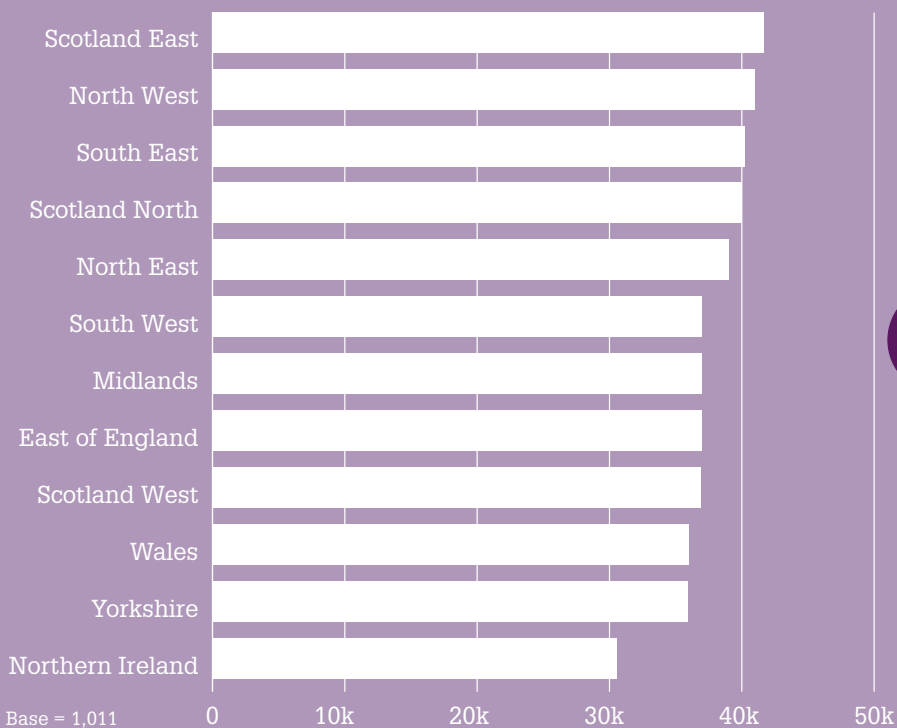
Salaries by Region

Most professional occupations tend to command significantly higher wages in London and the South East than in any other area of the UK, but this does not hold true in the environment and sustainability professional jobs market. Instead, Scotland often occupies some of the top spots in the salary league tables, and this year is no exception.

Although at £40,250 the median salary for practitioners in the South East is slightly above that for the sector as a whole, chart 4 shows that the highest medians by region can be found in Eastern Scotland (£41,650) and the North West (£41,000). With the cost of living so much higher in the South East, however, this does raise questions about affordability for environment and sustainability professionals working in London, for example.

The South West, Midlands and East of England all show a median annual salary that is below the national figure (£39,000). Meanwhile Northern Ireland, which has among the lowest pay levels in the UK according to the 2016 ASHE survey, sits at the bottom of the earnings table this year, with a median annual salary of £30,558.

Median salary by region



4



Changes in annual salary in 2015

Salary has decreased
Salary has not changed
Salary has increased

Base = 1,371

Changes to salaries

Rises and prospects

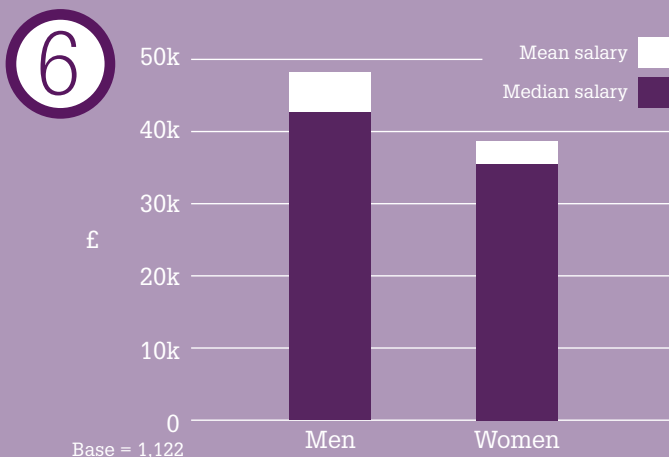
Pay levels and increases generally across the economy are still suffering the effects of the 2008 downturn, although 2016 was slightly more positive in pay terms due to low inflation and modest pay growth. The economy has been resilient since the EU referendum, with the UK posting the fastest growth rate in the G7 economies last year. Improved global economic conditions have led the Bank of England to upgrade its 2017 growth forecast to 2%, while EEF, the manufacturers' body, described the outlook for the sector as 'upbeat' in its February 2017 monthly briefing. Yet high levels of uncertainty and rising inflation led the Resolution Foundation and others to speculate that rising prices and low productivity will plunge the UK into a further phase of falling earnings in real terms.

The 2017 IEMA survey reveals that 62% of environment and sustainability professionals received an increase to their base pay in 2016 compared with 2015. Pay for 7% decreased, while base salary for a further 31% was unchanged.

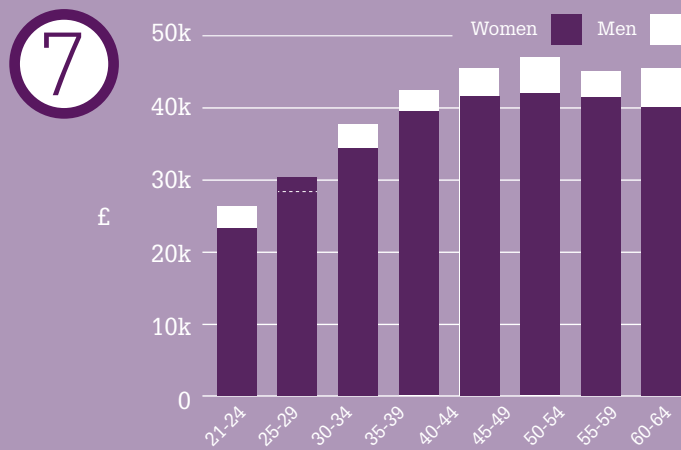
Figures for self-employed professionals tell a different story. Almost one in three (30%) were paid less in 2016 than in the previous year, while more saw their base pay stand still (41%) than increase (37%). Becoming self-employed holds many benefits for environmental professionals, such as greater flexibility and work fulfilment, but the findings suggest that it is far tougher for this group to secure yearly pay increases.



Salary by gender



Salary by age and gender



Diversity

Age and gender

The gender pay gap 2013–16

	2013		2014		2015	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Men	£45,368	£39,000	£47,970	£41,200	£45,211	£40,000
Women	£37,358	£33,050	£38,432	£35,000	£36,938	£35,000
Pay gap (£)	£8,010	£5,950	£9,538	£6,200	£8,273	£5,000
Pay gap (%)		15.3		15.1		12.5

	2016		2017	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Male	£50,278	£42,000	£47,503	£42,000
Female	£37,797	£35,000	£38,091	£35,000
Pay gap (£)	£12,481	£7,000	£9,412	£7,000
Pay gap (%)		16.7		16.7



On a national, whole-economy basis, the gender pay gap continues to narrow slowly for full-time employees and was 9.4% in April 2016 for median hourly earnings, the ONS reports. Although this was the smallest since the survey began in 1997, it has shifted relatively little over the past six years.

In contrast, this year's IEMA survey reveals that the gender pay gap for environment and sustainability professionals is 16.7%, unchanged from last year. The mean gap (based on average earnings of £38,091 for women and £47,503 for men) has narrowed slightly to 20% from 25% in the previous year, however. As table 8 illustrates, the gap is much wider than that recorded between 2013 and 2015, when it had been narrowing – as small as 12.5% in 2015.

Some caution should be exercised in making comparisons between the national statistics and the practitioners' survey because the former are calculated using hourly earnings, not annual salaries. It is also worth noting that neither the official statistics nor the practitioners' survey results include salaries for part-time workers. Whereas women make up 41% of the overall IEMA survey sample this year, they account for 78% of the part-time workers responding to the poll.

Nevertheless, the findings should be concerning for the profession in terms of the barriers to women's progression both in career and pay terms. *the*

environmentalist reported in October (pp20–23) on some of the reasons why women seem to be under-represented in parts of the environment and sustainability profession and are generally paid less. The oft-cited reason is that women leave to raise children, and if they return it is to part-time or non-management jobs. Women respondents to the annual IEMA practitioners' survey tend to be younger, when earnings are lowest. This would depress the overall median for women.

The IEMA survey findings corroborate the national picture of a gender pay gap that increases with employee age (chart 8). One key survey finding is that female, full-time IEMA professionals in the 25–29 age bracket tend to earn more than their male colleagues – with a median annual salary of £30,000 compared with the median of £28,000 for men in the same age group. Yet, from age 30 this gap reverses and widens, with earnings for men in the 55–64 band more than £5,000 a year higher than their female counterparts'.

The gender pay gap is likely to be increasingly in the spotlight from 6 April 2017 when employers with more than 250 staff will be obliged to report their gender pay gap publicly in the form of six specific calculations (there is no obligation to report by occupational group or grade). It is hoped that this transparency will clarify what organisations are doing – or not doing – to remove barriers to progression of women through the pay scale.

Qualifications, roles and job satisfaction

Snapshot of a profession

Given the mix of specialist knowledge and transferable skills required of environment and sustainability professionals, members tend to be highly qualified and have careers that are rich in their diversity, while being supported by the IEMA skills map.

Almost two-thirds (61%) have gained a postgraduate qualification, most commonly a master's degree, while 4% have completed a doctorate. Those working in environment and sustainability have studied a variety of subjects, from theology to metallurgy, although the most common area is environment or earth sciences. Geography and engineering or architecture are also very popular. Of those who studied for a second academic qualification (such as a master's), 33% did not take a break after their first degree. At the other end of the scale, 21% returned to study at least seven years after their initial qualification. Understandably, second qualifications tend to be more specific to the environmental and sustainability discipline, with 66% either studying environmental management/assessment or another related subject. Some undertake a qualification in business studies or law at this stage.

The survey reveals that 41% perform a practitioner role; 56% have reached management or leadership positions; and 3% are starting out in an entry-level role.

IEMA members are likely to have significant work experience, with a median ten years spent in an environment or sustainability role. Although the majority of participants remained in their current job role during 2016, 17%, switched to a more senior position, either as an internal promotion or by moving to a different employer. A further 13% moved sideways.

This job mobility is also demonstrated by the fact that almost one-third of respondents consider themselves to be 'career changers', having moved into environment and sustainability as a second career. Fully 80% of these practitioners are satisfied or very satisfied with their move. The main reason given for the change is a personal interest in environment and sustainability issues, which may explain the high levels of motivation among this group.

More generally, job satisfaction is high, with 69% either satisfied or very satisfied with their role, with just 6% expressing dissatisfaction.

When asked what advice they might give to someone wanting to move into an environment or sustainability career, the number one tip is to volunteer or undertake an industry internship. Having a relevant degree was important, as well as thinking about how to make the most of transferable skills and seeking mentoring opportunities.

Details of the 2017 survey

The results of the 2017 IEMA practitioners' survey are based on data provided by 1,451 individual members. The online survey was carried out between the end of December 2016 and 20 January 2017 and asked members about their pay and career experience over the 2016 calendar year.

The sample broadly reflects the spectrum of IEMA membership type, with 4% Graduates, 17% Affiliates and 9% Associate members. The largest group is in the new operational grade of Practitioner, while one in five has gained full membership status (MIEMA) and 2% are IEMA Fellows. Members also hold a range of additional licences or accreditations, such as membership of GACSO, the Global Association of Corporate Sustainability Officers (3%), which is part of IEMA, or Chartered Environmentalist (6%) status.

By sector, almost half of the respondents work in business or industry roles. Some 31% work in consultancy, usually environmental or sustainability organisations, but also engineering, health and safety or management consultancies. A further

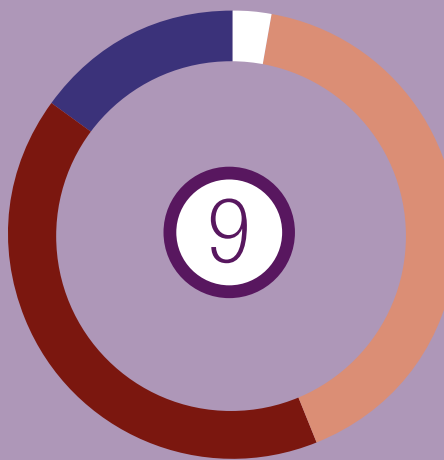
16% work in public services, while much smaller proportions are in academia or research (3%) or the third sector (2%).

More than half (54%) work for large organisations with more than 1,000 employees, while 17% work for employers with between 251 and 1,000 staff. A further 14% work for medium-sized employers (with between 50 and 250 staff) and the remaining 15% are at small organisations (fewer than 50 staff) or start-ups or operate as sole traders.

Our analysis of pay rates uses base pay data, excluding overtime, bonuses or other elements of variable pay. Most headline findings use both the mean, or average, and the median, or midpoint in the range of values. Where only one figure is shown the median is used. The Office for National Statistics considers this to be the more accurate measure of average earnings because it reduces the impact of very high or very low figures.

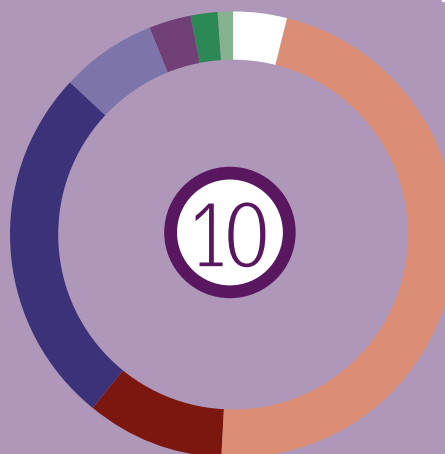
Because the questionnaire was broadened from looking solely at the salaries of working professionals, this year all members of all grades, including Students, were invited to participate.

Seniority of role



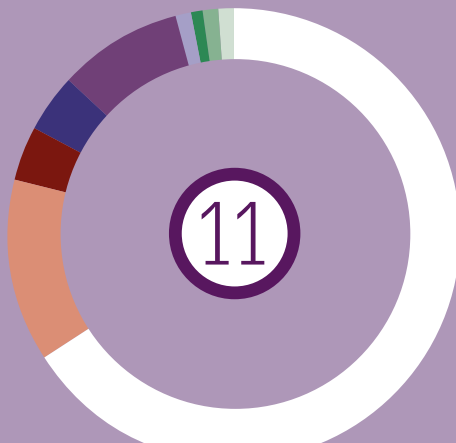
Base = 1,364

Level of highest academic qualification gained



Base = 1,388

Change in role in 2016



Base = 1,364

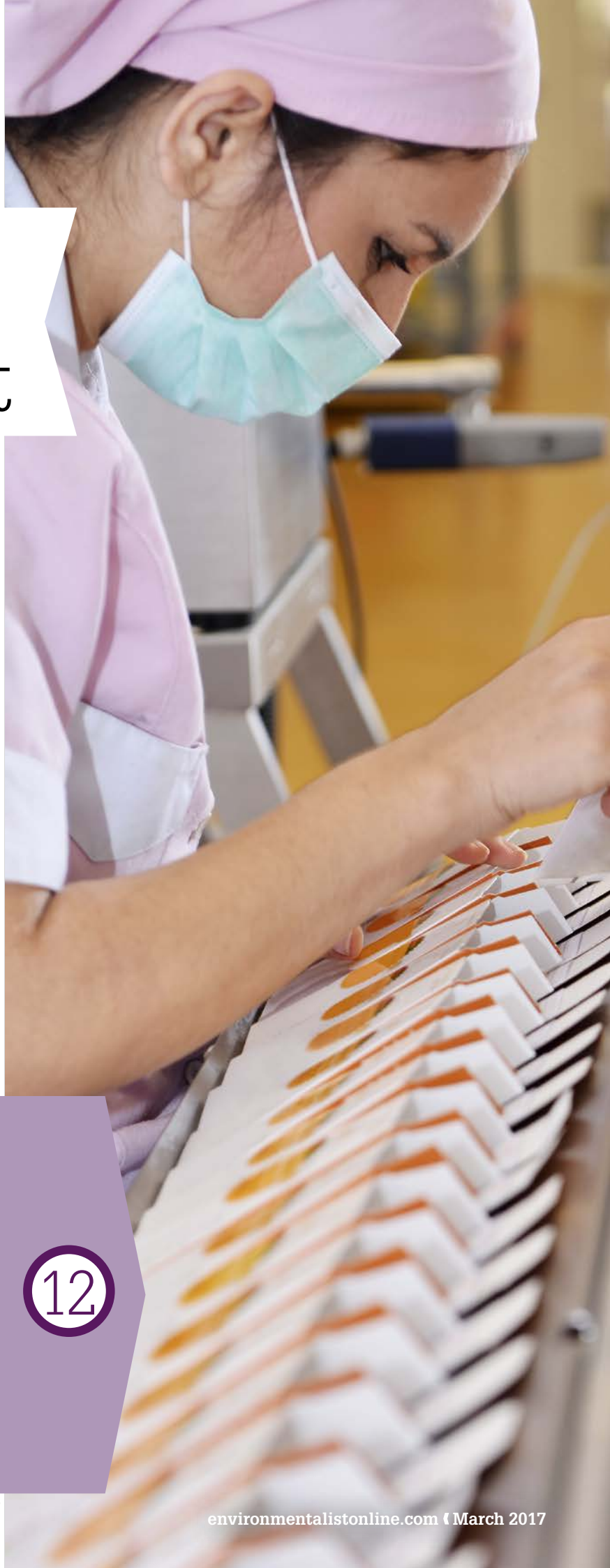
Skills, knowledge and experience

Professional development

Continuing professional development (CPD) is crucial in keeping environment and sustainability professionals up to date with good best practice and enabling them to thrive as they adapt to changing circumstances. The majority (89%) of IEMA members undertook CPD activities in 2016. Moreover, only 1% reported that their main reason for doing so was because their employer required them to. The most common motivation (cited by 48% of respondents) was to develop knowledge and skills for their role.

One group of professionals that can find it difficult to prioritise CPD is the self-employed. Nevertheless, 81% of respondents undertook some during 2016. Unlike employees, they usually pay the costs themselves, although 22% of self-employed members said an employer had paid. Overall, around half of all respondents undertaking CPD said their employer had funded it, while for 27% it was free. A further 15% said they had paid, while 8% had shared the cost with their employer.

One development that has made CPD more accessible for self-employed and part-time workers has been the growth in online learning, such as webinars. Although reading *the environmentalist* (86%) and other key materials (68%) top the list of the CPD undertaken by respondents, the popularity of IEMA webinars is close behind (62%). There is also a relatively high level of access to in-house training. Whereas most surveys, such as Cardiff University's Skills and Employment Survey, show the volume of workplace training declining in



Professional development activities



Base = 955

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Reading the environmentalist |  Other webinar(s) |
|  Reading key materials |  A CPD Workshop |
|  IEMA webinar(s) |  Attending IEMA events or conferences |
|  In-house training |  Mentoring |
|  Another training course |  IEMA-approved /certified training course |
|  Attending other events/conferences |  An academic course |

12



13

Organisational benefits of CPD



Base = 1,265

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Fill skills gaps |  Save money |
|  Train/mentor other staff |  Strengthen business case for investment |
|  Boost environmental performance |  Reduce emissions |
|  Improve organisational reputation |  Reduce pollution |
|  Upgrade IEMA membership |  Save carbon |
|  No perceived benefits |  Gain promotion |
|  Save energy |  Save water |

recent years, the IEMA practitioners' survey found that 47% had taken part in in-house training in 2016, while 37% had attended another type of training course.

CPD benefits both the individual and their organisation, a factor to bear in mind as skills shortages look to loom large in 2017. The Recruitment and Employment Confederation's JobsOutlook survey in December 2016 found that half of employers were anticipating a shortage of suitable candidates for at least some permanent roles this year. More positively, the practitioners' survey reports that 56% of respondents agree that CPD helps their organisation to fill skills gaps. The ability to train or mentor other staff (28%) is also reported as a direct benefit, while other organisational impacts include boosting environmental performance (24%) and improving organisational reputation (22%).

The benefits of CPD are not always straightforward to quantify, however, with 13% of individuals unable to report a specific advantage. This supports the case for ensuring that members use the IEMA skills and benefits maps, and CPD tools to the full to ensure that their learning is targeted to support their career and role objectives. Lastly, there are thought to be some tangible financial benefits for employers that invest in CPD. Of the one in ten practitioners who reported saving their organisation money, 76% reported success in reducing their employer's overheads, while 15% enabled taxation reduction.

In June 2016, IEMA unveiled its revised skills map. It embeds sustainability into all members' career paths and covers three key areas: **core knowledge** – fundamental knowledge and understanding of sustainability and how it translate in a business context; **depth of knowledge in a technical discipline** – including understanding of key policy and legislation and knowledge of tools, techniques and systems; and **working in environment and sustainability** – including communication, leadership for change, and project and programme management skills.

Sarah Welfare is an HR writer.