The Company of Biologists' 2025 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion report

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Introduction

The Company of Biologists proudly aims to support and inspire the biological communities that we serve, and it is therefore important that – as far as possible given our small size and UK base - we adequately represent our scientific communities across all facets of the Company. To demonstrate our commitment to this goal, we are a founding signatory of the Joint commitment for action on inclusion and diversity in publishing, through which we pledge to understand and reflect the diversity

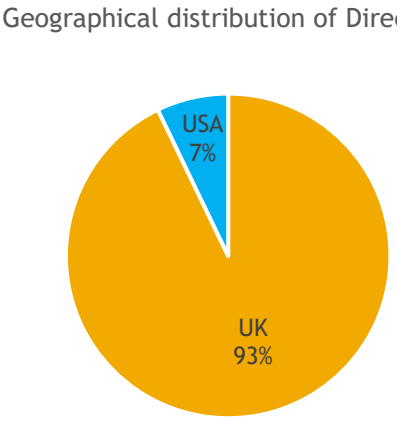
of our scientific community. We have also adopted the Joint Statement of Principles of the Coalition for Diversity & Inclusion in Scholarly Communications (C4DISC), which sets out our aim of demonstrating equitable and inclusive practices within the scholarly publishing environment.

With this in mind, we are working towards collecting data on the diversity of our scientific communities, so that we can reflect on how best to promote inclusivity and representation. This is the first formal annual report on equity, diversity and inclusion at The Company of Biologists, focusing on Company activities in 2025. In 2026, we have begun to implement further collection of diversity data (on gender, race and ethnicity). We therefore hope to be able to present additional data in 2027.

Directors

Geography of Directors

The Company of Biologists is governed by a Board of Directors made up primarily of distinguished practising scientists who volunteer their time to support the Company's mission and activities. Collectively, the Board represents a broad range of biomedical research expertise, representing the scientific scope across our five journals. The Company's Board of Directors is heavily UK based, reflecting our geographic base and the need for Directors to attend in-person meetings.



Gender, race and ethnicity of Directors

The Board of Directors received a slightly modified version of the questions set out by the Joint Commitment, which are posed to our authors/reviewers and have recently been implemented by the Grants and Meetings teams. The questions were as follows:

With which gender do you most identify? Please select one option:

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary or gender diverse
- Self describe* [opens text box]
- Prefer not to disclose

What are your ethnic origins or ancestry?
Please select ALL the geographic areas that apply:

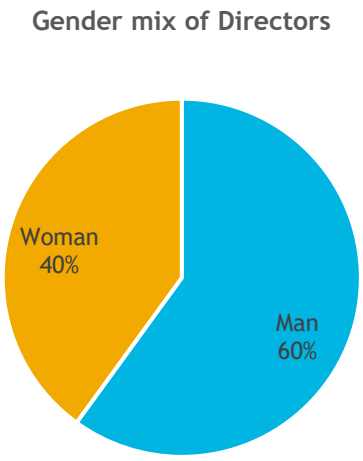
- Western Europe (e.g. Greece, Sweden, United Kingdom)
- Eastern Europe (e.g. Hungary, Poland, Russia)
- North Africa (e.g. Egypt, Morocco, Sudan)
- Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa)
- West Asia / Middle East (e.g. Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia,)
- South and Southeast Asia (e.g. India, Indonesia, Singapore)
- East and Central Asia (e.g. China, Japan, Uzbekistan)

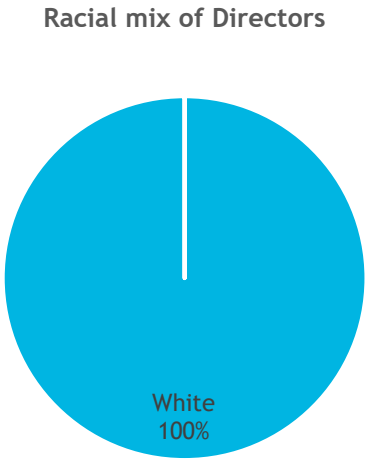
- Pacific / Oceania (e.g. Australia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji)
- North America (Canada, United States)
- Central America and Caribbean (e.g. Jamaica, Mexico, Panama)
- South America (e.g. Brazil, Chile, Colombia)
- Self describe* [open text box]
- Prefer not to disclose

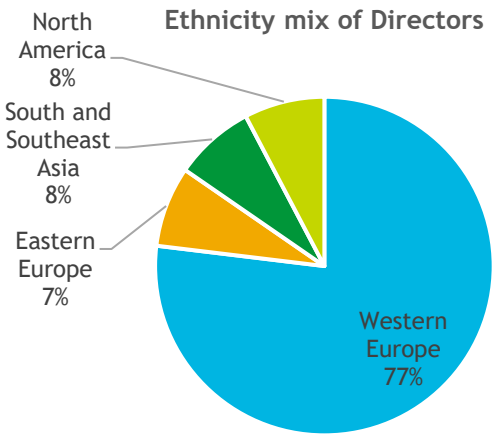
How would you identify yourself?
Please select ALL the groups that apply to you:

- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black
- Hispanic or Latino/a/x
- Indigenous (e.g. North American Indian Navajo, South American Indian Quechua, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White
- Self describe* [open text box]
- Prefer not to disclose

The response rate was ~71% (10 out of 14 Directors). All data are shown below.







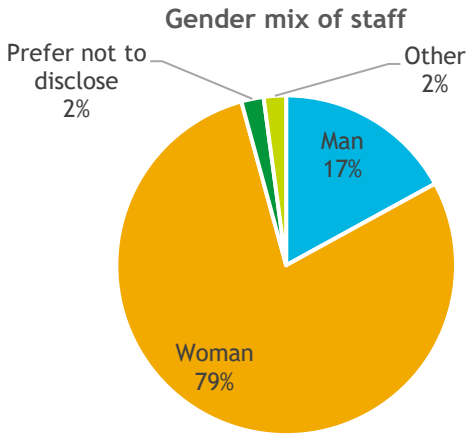
*There were several double answers for the ethnicity question, where respondents could select multiple answers; each answer is treated as an individual response.

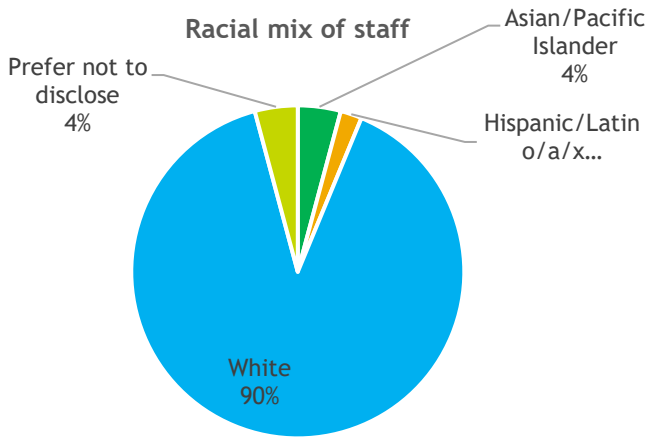
Staff

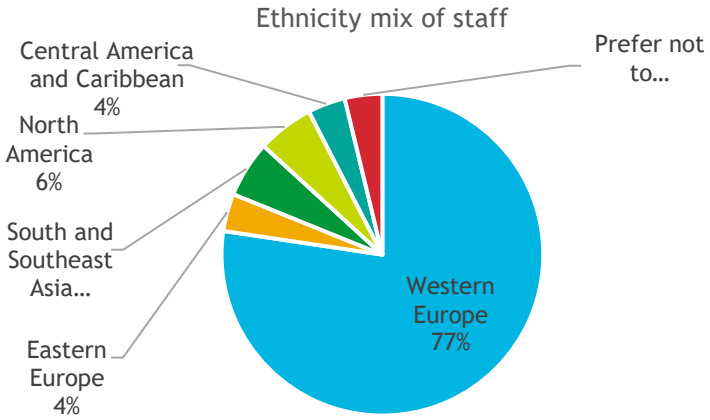
Gender, race and ethnicity of in-house staff

The day-to-day running of the Company is supported by a team of in-house staff based close to our office in Cambridge, UK. At the time of the survey, we had 64 staff, and the response rate was 76.5%. The same questionnaire that was sent to the Directors was also sent to in-house staff. There was a response rate of 73% for this survey. For comparison with the broader publishing industry, the results are compared to the results of the 2024 Publishing Workforce Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Survey by the Publisher's Association. This survey assessed demographics of the publishing workforce from across the UK, and received responses from 9707 employees across 52 businesses.

The Company's staff is strongly female biased; this is similar to results from the Publisher's Association 2024 report, in which 68% of respondents identified as female. The PA 2024 report recorded 15% of respondents as being from ethnic minority groups (Black, Black British, Caribbean, African, Asian, Asian British, Mixed or 'Other' ethnic group). At The Company of Biologists, less than 10% of respondents fall into these categories.







*There were several double answers for the ethnicity question, where respondents could select multiple answers; each answer is treated as an individual response.

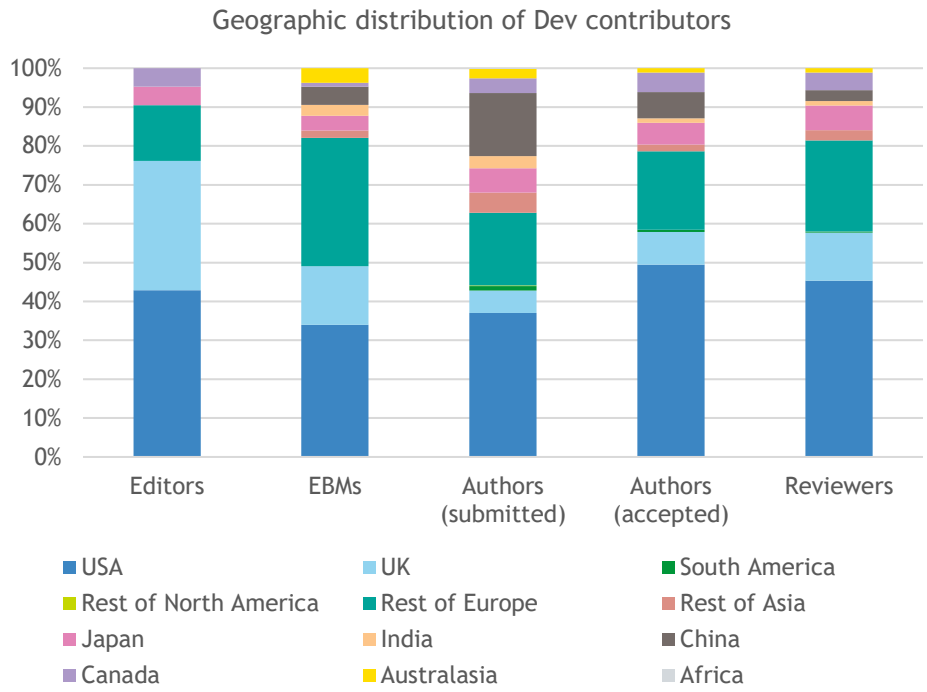
Publishing

Geography of Editors, EBMs, authors and reviewers in 2025

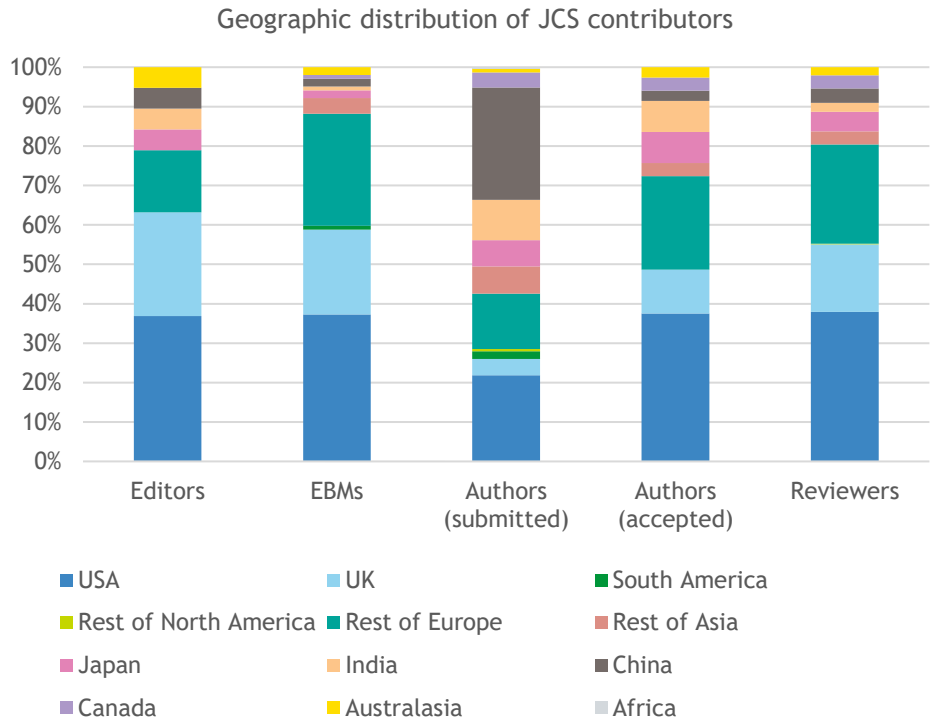
Across our five journals we have strong teams of academic Editors who handle our research articles and help to guide the direction of the journal. Each journal also has a larger Editorial Advisory Board, who advise the journal from even more expansive areas of expertise. For Development (Dev), Journal of Cell Science (JCS), Disease Models & Mechanisms (DMM) and Biology Open (BiO), around 80% or more of the Editorial Board Members and academic Editors are located in the USA, UK and Rest of Europe. Journal of Experimental Biology has a broader distribution of EBMs and Editors, with ~45% located in other geographic regions. For Dev, JCS, DMM and BiO, the strong representation of the USA, UK and Rest of Europe is reflected in the high percentage of papers published from these regions. The USA and Rest of Europe make up the majority of published papers on JEB, with a smaller contribution from the UK relative to the other journals. For all journals, submissions from China make up a much higher percentage of submitted papers relative to accepted papers.

All author geography data relates to corresponding authors. All reviewer geography data relates to reviewers who completed their reports – the geographic mix of all invited reviewers was very similar, and so is not shown.

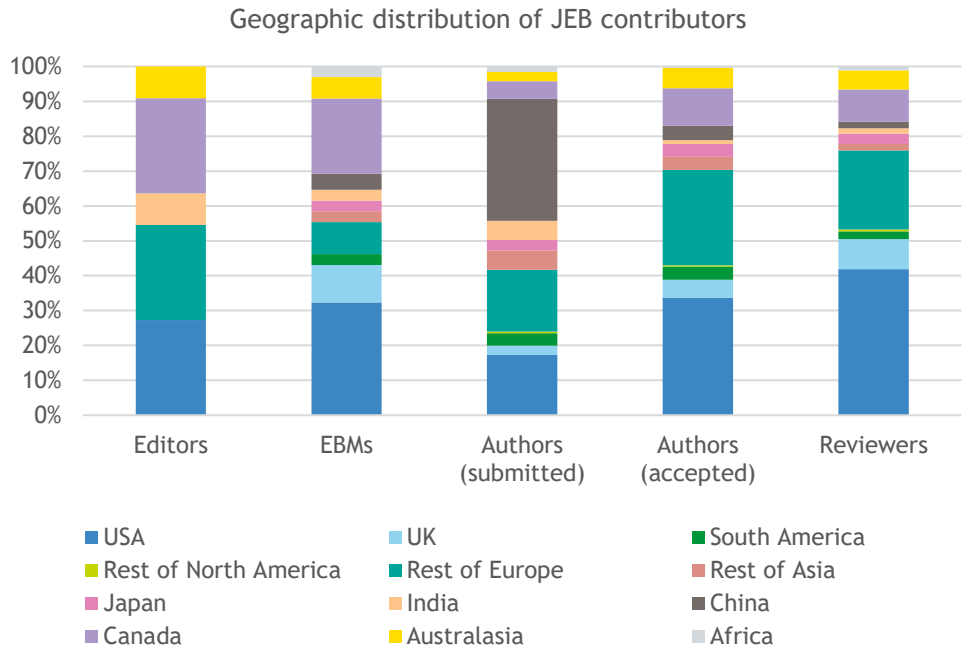
Development



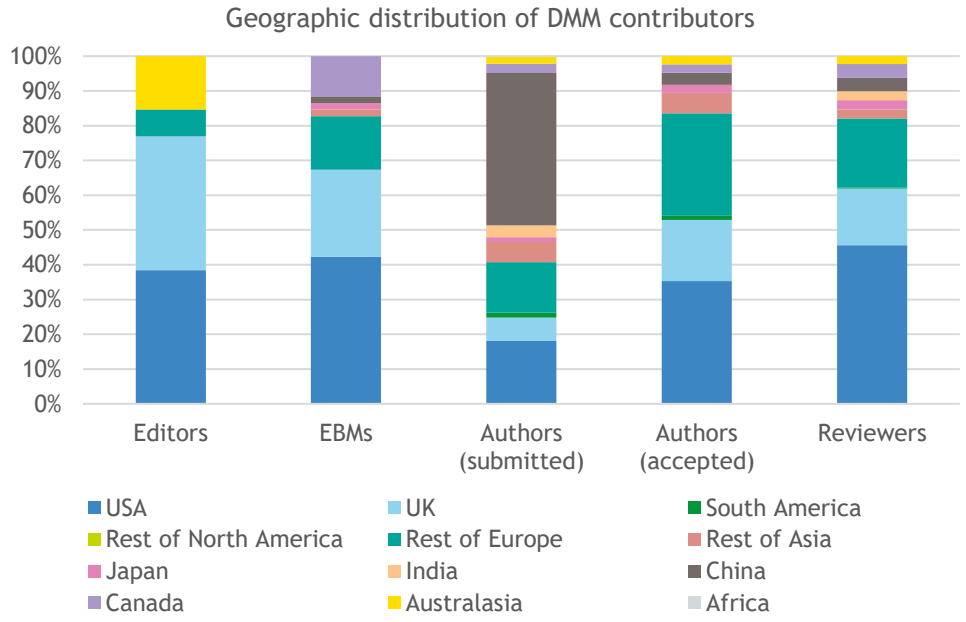
Journal of Cell Science



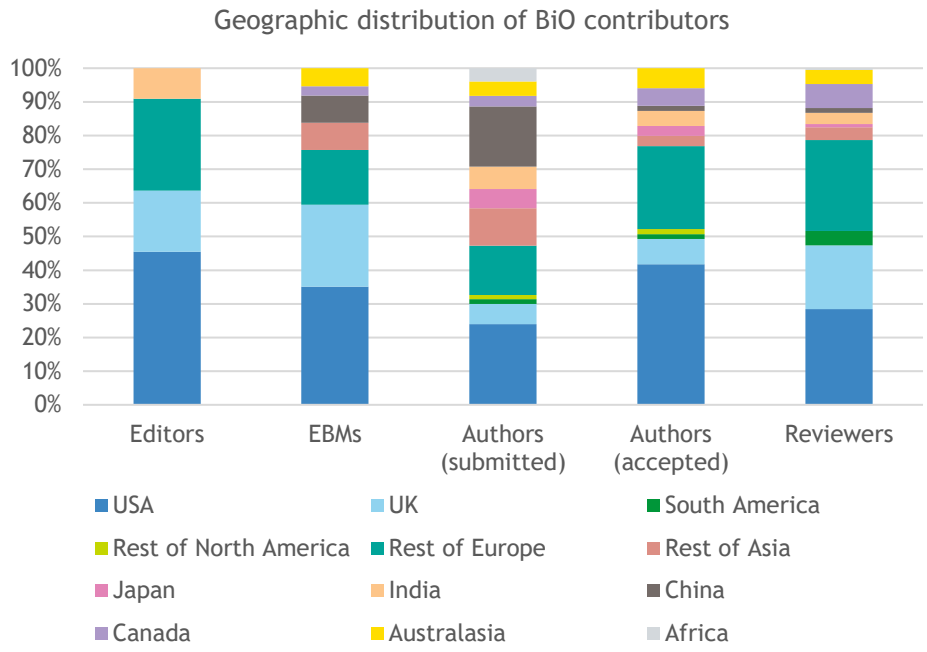
Journal of Experimental Biology



Disease Models and Mechanisms



Biology Open



Gender, race and ethnicity of authors and reviewers in 2025

Our submission system allows us to collect anonymous data on gender, race and ethnicity for all users of the system, using the questions formulated by the Joint Commitment. Unfortunately, the data collected cannot be reliably filtered to properly inform our annual EDI reporting.

We are currently working both with the provider of our submission system and other publishers to find a solution to this.

Grants

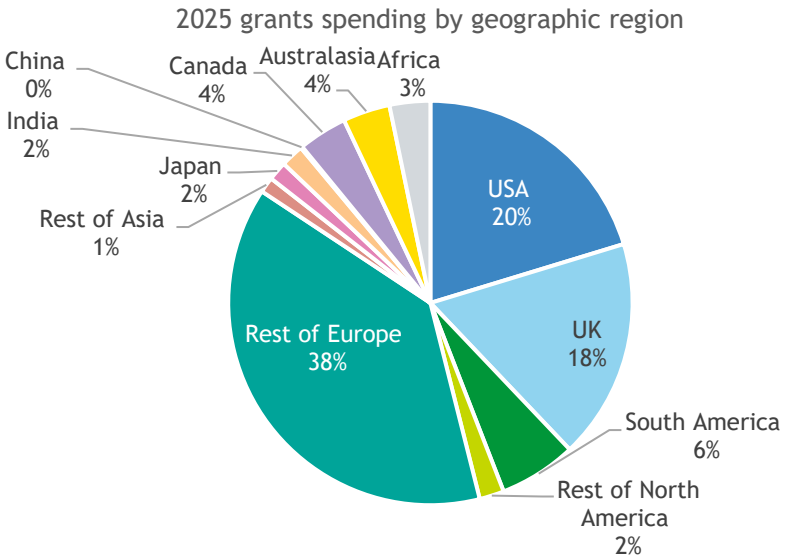
As a not-for-profit publisher, The Company of Biologists offers various grants to support the biological community by facilitating international collaboration and sharing of knowledge. Some grants are awarded to individuals travelling for training or conference attendance and for journal-specific programmes. We also provide grants to support conferences, including The Company of Biologists' Sustainability Initiative, which can support meeting organisers with innovative ideas to improve accessibility and inclusivity in their meetings. Scientific meetings are an integral part of the research ecosystem, therefore, fostering inclusivity at these events is vital in promoting EDI in science as a whole.

The data available on diversity aspects of grants activities has previously been limited to geographical information on the location where funds have been spent and the institution of the applicant. However, as of February 2026, we initiated collection of gender, race and ethnicity data (using the question format recommended by the Joint Commitment) through the SmartSimple system used by grants applicants. Collection of this data is in its early stages, and we hope to be able to report on this in 2027.

Geography of spending in 2025

In 2025, the Company awarded a total of £1,165,261 in grant funding across all grant types (Scientific Meetings Grants, Small Meetings Grants, Sustainability Grants, Travelling Fellowships and journal-

specific grants). These funds were spent across a total of 61 countries, with spending concentrated in the UK, Rest of Europe and the USA. The chart below shows where the money was spent (i.e. money awarded to a researcher in China for a conference in the UK counts as spending in the UK).

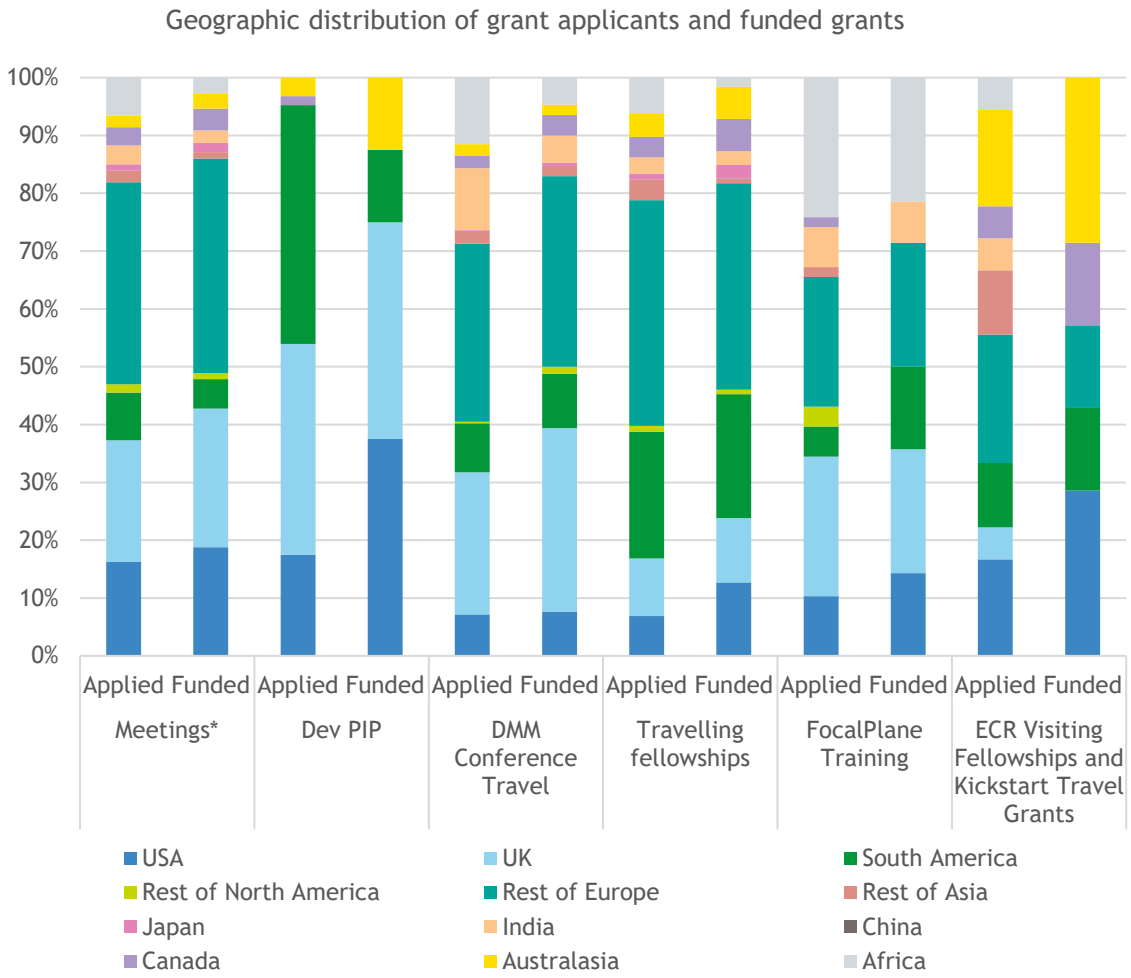


NB. Spending in China represents just over 0.1% of total spend, and isn't visible on the chart

Geography of applicant and awardee institutions in 2025

As well as information on where grant money is spent, we can report on the geography of the institution of applicants and awardees. In general, the geographic distributions of applicants and awardees was reasonably similar in 2025 (with the exception of grants with low numbers of applicants and awardees; i.e. Dev PIP and Visiting Fellowships/Kickstart Grants), although applicants from the USA and UK were slightly more likely to be funded than those from elsewhere. The majority of our applications came from the USA, the UK and the Rest of Europe, and most of our awardees were also from these regions. We also saw a reasonable number of applications from South America (particularly for Travelling Fellowships), and these had a good rate of success. The JCS Focal Plane Grant had more applicants from Africa than the other grant types, and these applicants also had a strong success rate.

Grant type	Number of applicants	Number of awardees
Scientific/Small Meetings	547	342
Dev PIP	63	8
DMM Conference Travel	627	170
Travelling Fellowships	392	126
JCS FocalPlane Training	58	14
ECR Visiting/Kickstart Travel	18	7



*Includes Scientific Meeting Grants and Small Meeting Grants
Note the geographical data for Sustainability Grants cannot easily be extracted from the application form for these grants.

Meetings and Workshops

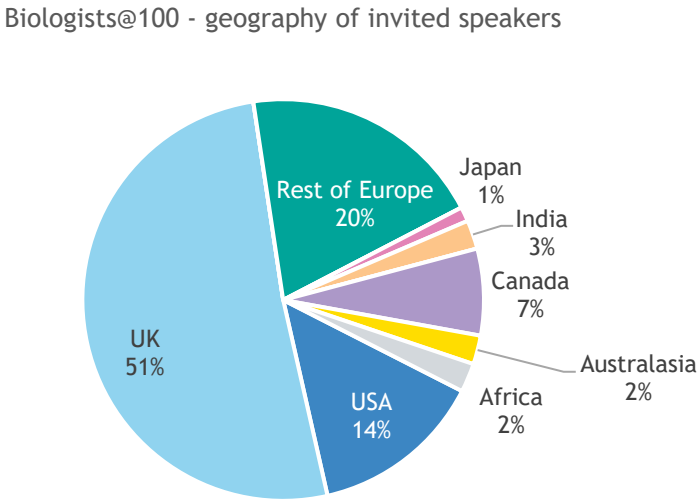
As well as providing funds to support external conferences and societies, The Company of Biologists also organises its own Journal Meetings and Workshops in collaboration with scientific organisers from relevant fields. We work closely with these academic organisers to promote EDI in our speaker and delegate lists and we carefully choose our venues with accessibility in mind.

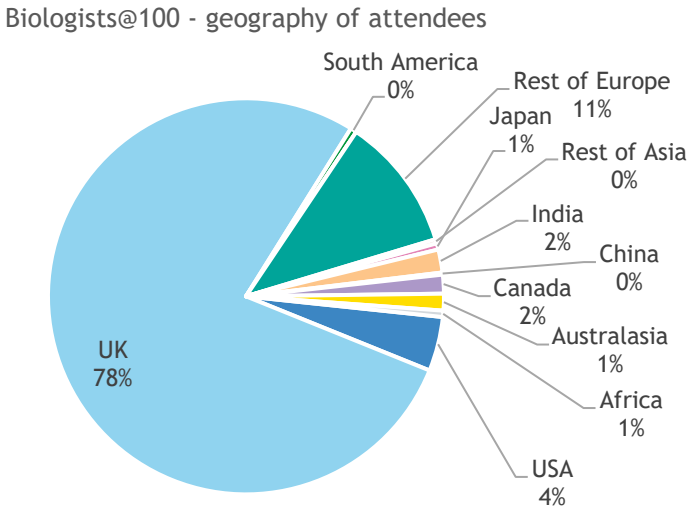
The information available for us to report on Meetings and Workshops includes geography of attendees and invited speakers, and citizenship and gender of ECRs for Workshops. Earlier in 2026, we instigated collection of gender, race and ethnicity data for those attending Meetings and Workshops. In 2027, we will be able to report on this additional data for all Meetings held in 2026 and for a subset of the 2026 Workshops.

Biologists@100

The Company of Biologists runs Journal Meetings for Development, JEB, JCS and DMM that cover timely topics within the journal's scope. Because of our 100 anniversary celebrations, 2025 was unusual in that we held a single large meeting, rather than smaller, journal-specific meetings. This meeting was held in Liverpool, UK, and had 585 attendees (of which 86 were invited speakers). Attendance at the meeting was UK-heavy compared to previous Company Meetings, but the UK isn't

as dominant in the mix of invited speakers, which includes greater representation of non-European countries. Geography data relates to the location of the individual's institution.



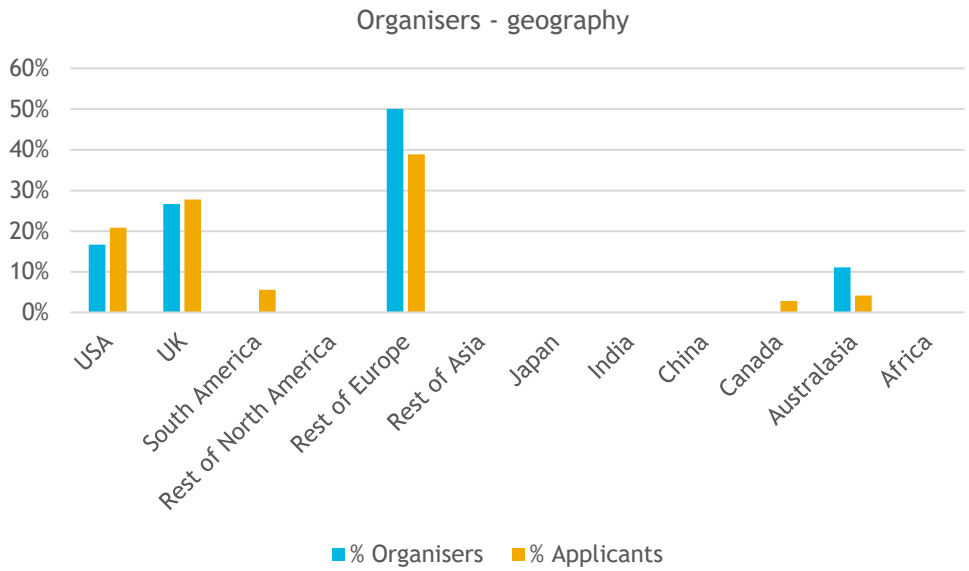


NB. There were 3 attendees from South America (0.5%), 2 from the rest of Asia (0.3%) and 1 from China (0.2%).

Workshops

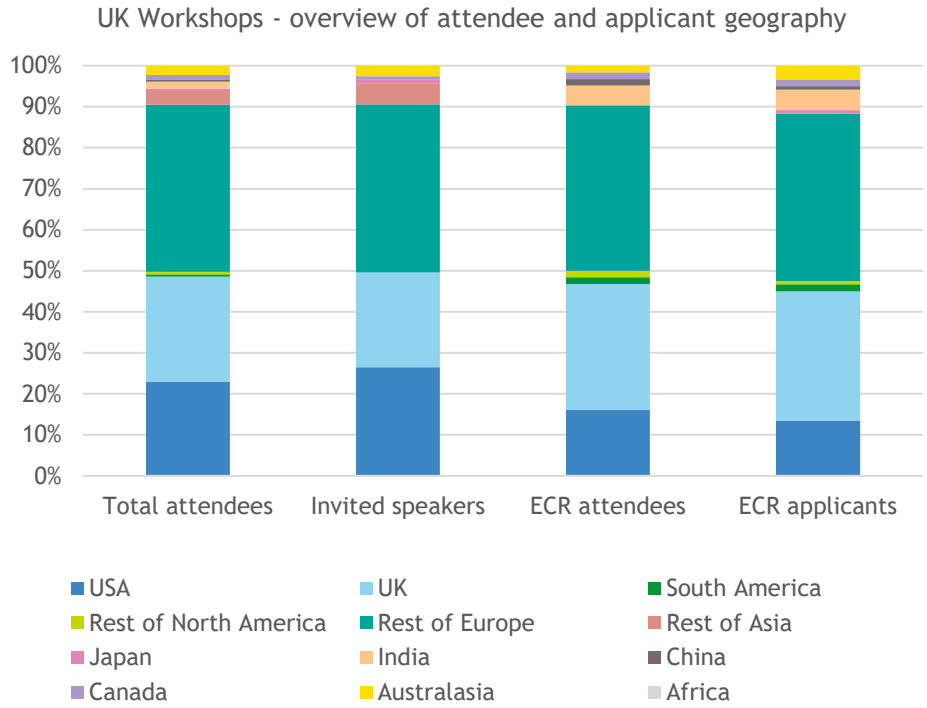
UK-based Workshops - geography

The Company also organises Workshops: intimate meetings specifically designed to bring together researchers from different scientific backgrounds to tackle a common goal. Each of our Workshops offers ten funded places for ECRs, whilst giving ECRs the same amount of time to present their work as senior scientists. The 18 organisers of the 5 UK-based Workshops in 2025 were predominantly based in the UK, USA and the rest of Europe, reflecting the distribution of Workshop proposals received by the Company. We received 23 applications to run a UK-based Workshop in 2025, with a total of 72 potential organisers (applicants).



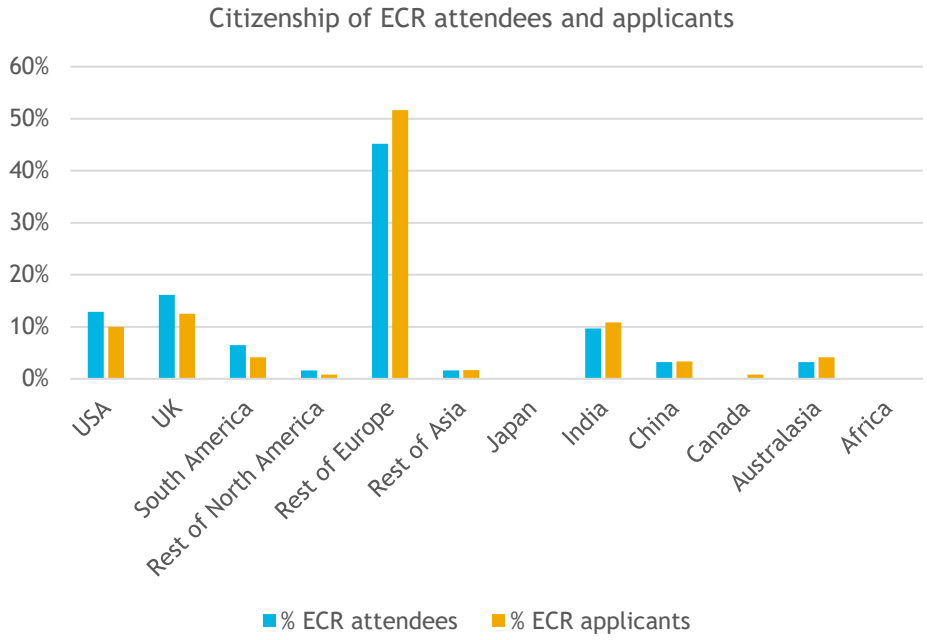
The UK-based workshops in 2025 were attended by 179 researchers representing institutions from 26 different countries. Of the attendees, 117 were invited speakers, and 62 were early-career researchers (ECRs) (chosen from a total of 120 ECR applicants). Geography data relates to the location of the individual's institution.

Attendance at the Company's UK-based workshops in 2025 was dominated by researchers from the US, UK and the Rest of Europe, as were ECR applications to the meeting. Only ~10% of attendees were based in other regions. This was also reflected in the distribution of ECRs who applied to attend the meeting, although the ECRs who applied showed a stronger representation of the UK and weaker representation of the US than the invited speaker group.



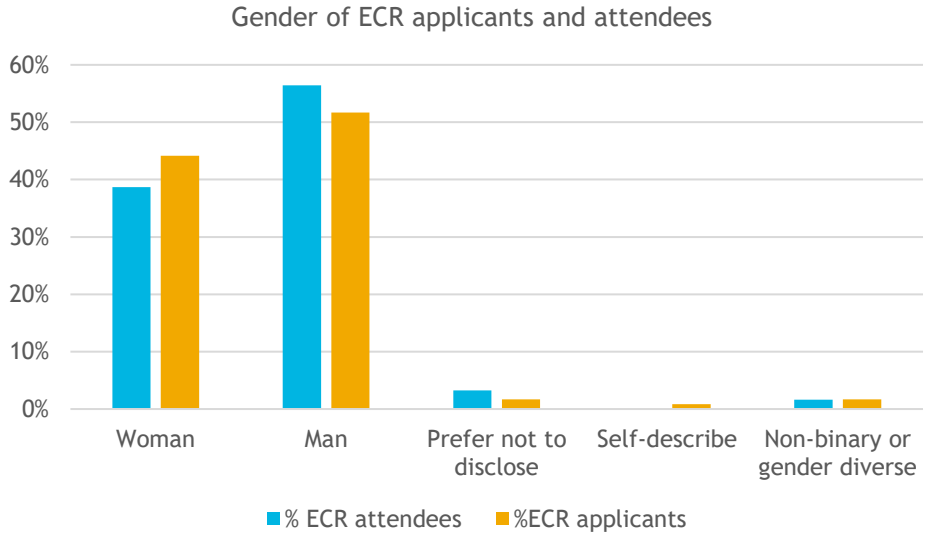
UK-based Workshops – ECR citizenship

For the Workshops, we collected additional information on ECRs when they apply to attend. This information is not available for invited speakers. Among ECRs applying to attend our Workshops, were citizens of 28 countries. Successful applicants represented 25 countries.



UK-based Workshops – gender

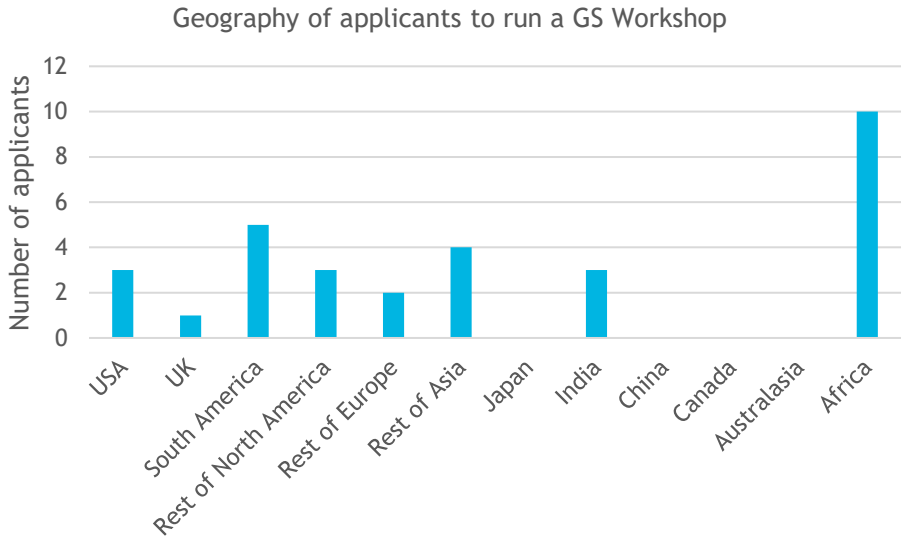
For Workshops held in 2025, we also have data on the gender of ECRs who attended and applied to attend the events. Applications for men were slightly more successful than those from women.



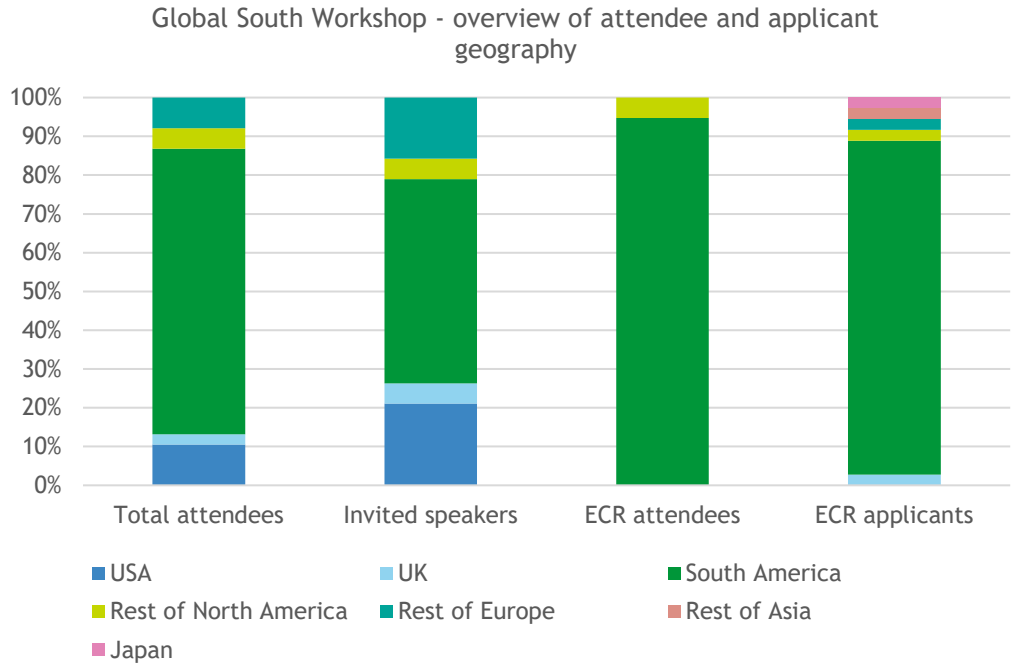
Global South Workshop – geography

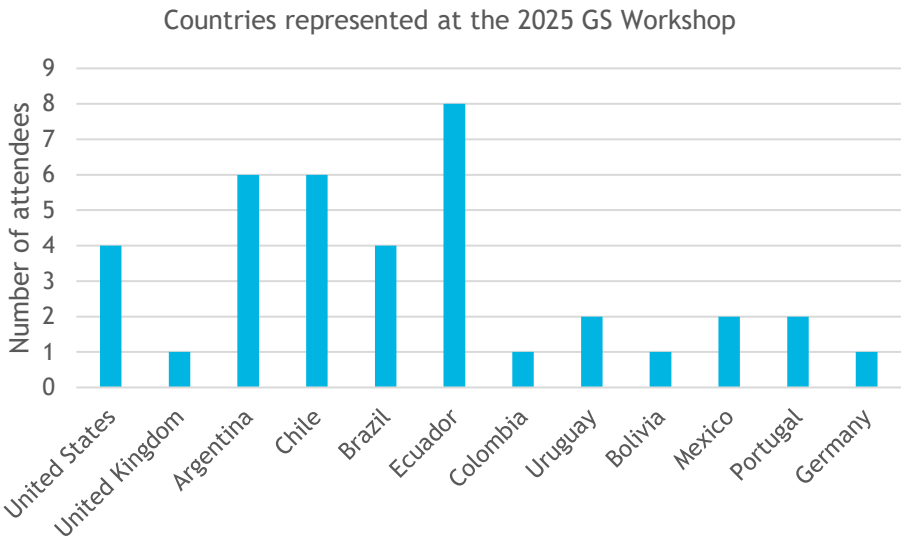
In 2024, the Company introduced an annual Global South (GS) Workshop to be held in these regions. There were ten applications to run the 2025 GS Workshop, involving 31 organisers. We received

applications from across GS regions as well as Global North countries. (Note that geography relates to that of the individual's institution.) The six organisers of the Workshop that was accepted were based in the UK (1), US (2), Rest of Europe (1) and South America (2).



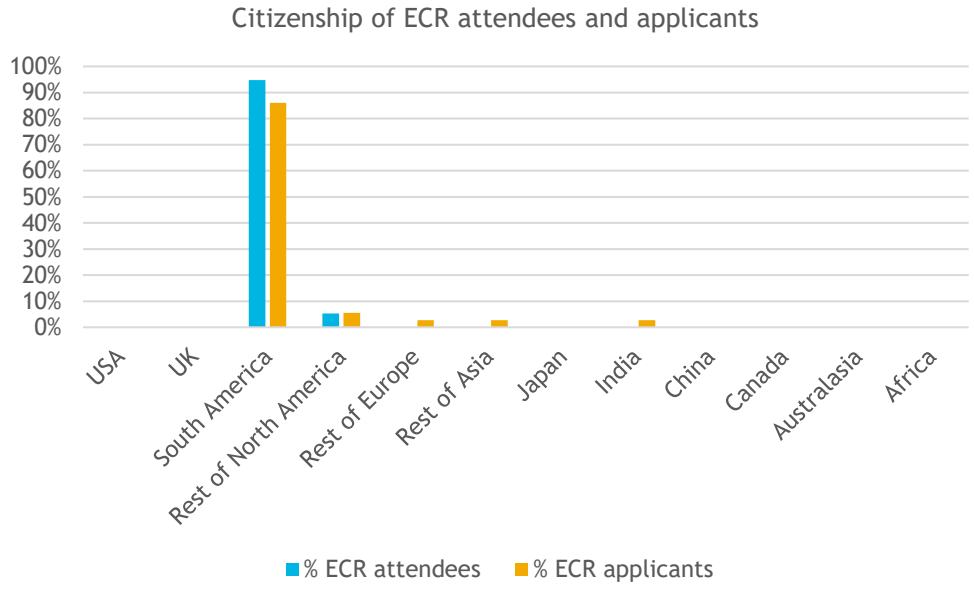
The 2025 Global South Workshop was 'Democratising Microscopy in Latin America: Imaging Across Scales and Regions', and it was held in Ecuador. The composition of attendees at this Workshop was very different from that of the UK-based workshops, reflecting the success of this initiative in bringing the Workshop format to a broader audience. The majority of the invited speakers and ECRs attending were located in South America, and attendees represented institutions from 12 countries, including 7 South American countries.





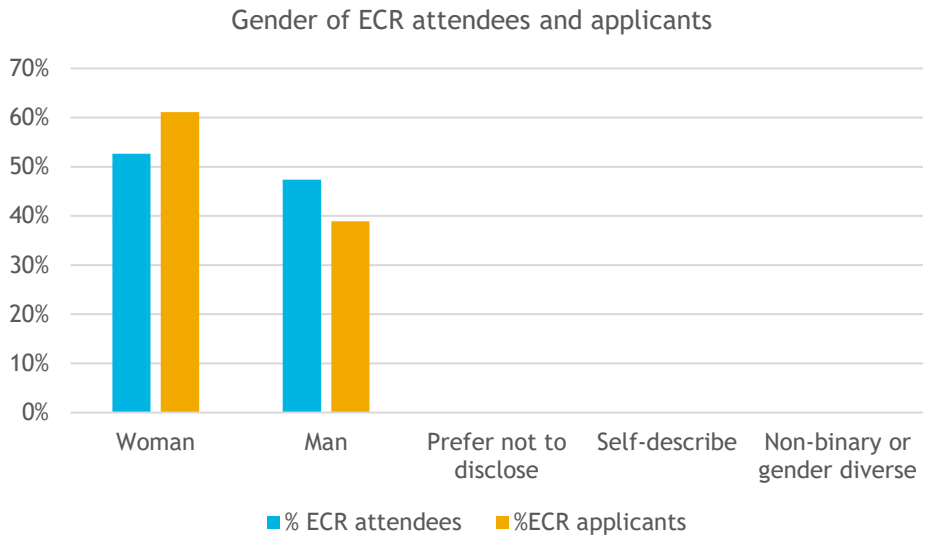
Global South Workshop – ECR citizenship

Citizenship of applicants and attendees at the Global South workshop shows a very different distribution from that of the UK-based workshops, reflecting the success of this initiative in broadening the reach of our Company Workshops.



Global South Workshop – ECR gender

Women were more highly represented among the ECR applicants for the GS Workshop than among the ECR attendees of the meeting. More than 60% of the applicants were women, versus just over 50% of the ECR attendees.



Enhancing accessibility in our article, figure and website formats

Alongside these activities, we have been assessing and improving the format of our websites, articles and figures to enhance accessibility. We have introduced accessible article PDFs, which make it easier for everyone to view, read or interact with the document and support assistive technology, such as screen readers. Some of the key differences are improvements to the structure and organization, the addition of alternative text for images, and improved navigation and logical reading order. We have also modified the colour and contrast of headings and watermarks to meet WCAG 2.2 AA and EAA standards and aid users with low vision or colour perception differences.

To make maths content accessible, we are introducing MathML (Mathematical Markup Language), a web standard for encoding maths equations in a way that preserves their structure and meaning and allows assistive technologies to interpret them accurately.

Across our websites, we have improved keyboard navigation and interaction to support keyboard-only users and added proper landmark regions, allowing screen-reader users to navigate through the page efficiently.

Subject Collection: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research

The articles in this cross-journal collection demonstrate how the diversity of our global society can be better represented in the lab, in research and in our communities.

Future Directions

The 2025 EDI report is a stepping stone in our commitment to strengthening EDI in scientific publishing. We will continue to improve our data collection in future reports so that we can obtain a more holistic view of the diversity in the communities that we endeavour to support and their representation across the Company of Biologists. We will also continue to assess our policies and practices to ensure we are actively responding to this information.