

AUGUST 2022 . VOLUME 24

# SWSPCP SUMMER NEWSLETTER

## IN THIS ARTICLE

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FROM THE PRESIDENT, ROB  
MCINNES, PROFESSIONAL  
WETLAND SCIENTIST- PAGE 1 -4

---

DEI COMMITTEE REPORT-  
PAGE 5-4

---

WHY THE INTREST - PAGE 15 -16

---

SR. HAROLD JONES LIFETIME  
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - PAGE 17

---

NEW PWS'S P PAGE 18



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY ROB MCINNES,  
PROFESSIONAL WETLAND  
SCIENTIST

I start my first address as President of SWSPCP with a huge debt of gratitude to my predecessor Gillian Davies and former President Kim Ponzio. It has been an immense pleasure working with these dedicated and committed individuals during the eery period as we slowly emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic. I have also been amazed at the enthusiasm and energy shown by the relatively small number of individuals that contribute to the various bodies of our organization, and especially our various committees.



I would urge anyone out there that is looking for a new challenge to consider stepping up to the plate and approaching the leadership of SWS PCP to offer their services. You'll be engaging with a great team.

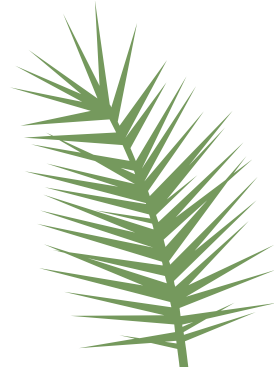
### **A glimpse of normality?**

Along with several other Professional Wetland Scientists, I was fortunate to represent SWS PCP at the 17th SWS Europe Chapter Meeting in Arles, France. Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, this was my first face-to-face international wetland meeting for more than two years and offered a glimpse of normality. Along with Past-Presidents Gillian Davies, Kim Ponzio and Matt Simpson, and President-Elect Ellen Hartig, it was great to engage with fellow wetland professionals from Europe and to promote the importance of certification through SWS PCP.

We received much positive feedback and interest and hopefully this will help to develop the program in Europe and beyond.

### **The need for Professional Wetland Scientists**

Attendance at the SWS Europe meeting brought into focus my role as President of the SWS PCP, but it also gave me the opportunity to reflect on our role as individuals and as a collective of Professional Wetland Scientists during a critical time of global change. My work as a wetland scientist regularly takes me from my home in England across Europe and frequently to countries in Asia and Africa (pandemics permitting). Everywhere I work, I see the insidious effects of the global climate crisis and the impact that wetland degradation and loss have on human well-being. Often it is the poorest and least represented in society that bear the brunt of environmental decline.





In recent weeks, the media has been peppered with stories of the global climate crisis. Articles in news media have brought into focus the reality of the situation including the fact that the risk of megafloods in California has doubled; the tragic impact of flash floods in Kentucky; the revelation that in 2021 the USA spent an alarming \$145bn on natural disasters – the third highest amount on record; flooding in Bangladesh that has left 4 million people stranded; almost unprecedented rainfall and flooding in South Korea; and drought and floods decimating crops in Latin America, leading to thousands of people falling victim to food insecurity.

Wetlands impact on all of these issues and Professional Wetland Scientists can play a critical role in increasing resilience and sustainability to lessen the impact on humans and wildlife of biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. As our vision states, we are the professionals who assess, protect and manage the world's wetland resources. Through a range of initiatives, such as the work of the Globalization, Outreach and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committees, SWSPCP is working hard to expand our reach and relevance. Critically, this is including extending certification to wetland professionals from a social science, arts or education background. And I extend a huge thank you to all the volunteers that drive these initiatives forward. In my mind, there has never been a time when the world has needed committed and professional wetland scientists to help human society navigate its way through the implications of such climatic extremes.



## SWS PCP and the Ramsar Convention

Wetlands are the only ecosystem on Earth that is represented through a global intergovernmental convention. The Convention of Wetlands (adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971, hence the 'Ramsar Convention') provides a framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. In November 2022, the representatives of the governments of each of the Contracting Parties will meet at the 14th Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14), to agree on a work programme and budgetary arrangements for the next triennium and consider guidance on a range of ongoing and emerging environmental issues. Representatives from the leadership of SWS PCP will be present at COP14. Building on previous discussions with representatives of the Convention's Secretariat as well as individual government representatives, we shall be setting out a strong case for the establishment of a formal relationship between SWS PCP and the Convention. This will generate mutual benefits. There will be national and international opportunities for PWSs and WPITs and also stronger support for the implementation of the obligations of the Convention through formal recognition of the importance of engaging with accredited Wetland Professional Scientists.

I hope that remainder of 2022 brings less extreme weather and fruitful and satisfying wetland-related work.

Rob McInnes  
SWS PCP President



Top picture featuring from the left: Gillian Davies - Immediate Past President, Rob McInnes - President, Ellen Hartig - President-Elect





## Society of Wetland Scientists – Professional Certification Program (SWSPCP)

### Baseline Demographics of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in SWSPCP

In September 2021, the SWSPCP Board of Directors established its very first Strategic Plan. This included forming a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee for the purpose of addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion issues that relate to professionals in our fields and to develop recommendations for supporting and developing greater global diversity in our membership and leadership. One of the DEI Committee's first actions was to conduct a survey to gain a better understanding of our current demographics and to assess member perspectives concerning DEI within our organization. The DEI Committee administered the optional survey through Google Forms to ensure anonymity and collected responses from SWSPCP members in February 2022. Most questions were multiple choice, with options to select 'prefer not to answer'. The DEI Committee intentionally allowed respondents to self-identify some answers, such as race/ethnicity, languages spoken, etc. so as not to limit respondents to a limited list of possible answers. This report presents baseline information, and it is the intention of SWSPCP to conduct this survey every few years to gauge our effectiveness in implementing actions to enhance DEI in SWSPCP.

WETLAND SCIENTISTS SHOULD BE AS DIVERSE AS THE WORLD'S WETLANDS!

Of the 305 respondents, most self-identified their race and/or ethnicity. Many identified a mixed self-described background of their race, ethnicities, and ancestral origin, which we counted individually (hence the total number of designations exceeded the number of respondents). While this might result in an overcount in some minority areas, we felt that this would better represent the racial and ethnic background of our general membership. A substantial majority (76.2%) self-identified as Caucasian and/or White (Figure 1).

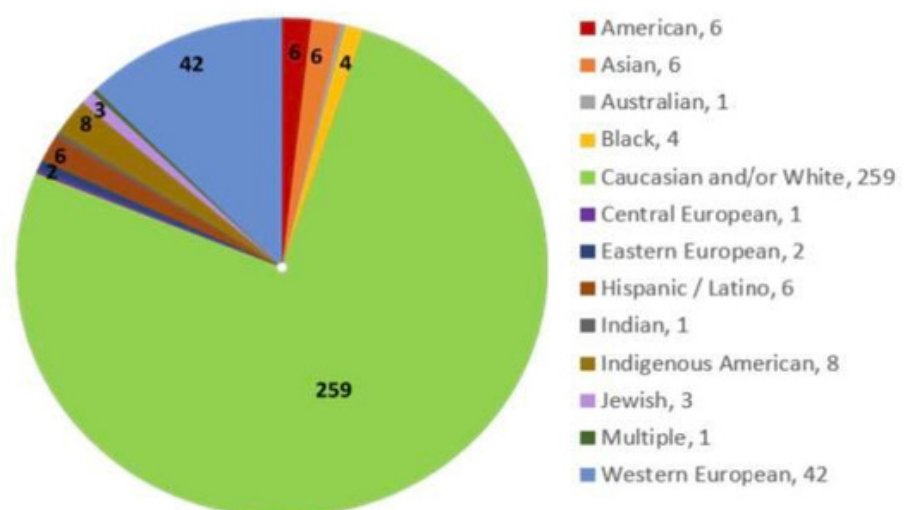


Figure 1. Self-identified race/ethnicity of survey respondents. Multiple designations per respondent were permitted.

Approximately 13.2% of respondents identified as European\* or descendants of that region. Other respondents who identified their background made up less than 1% of our survey, including, in descending abundance: Indigenous Americans (8), Asians\* (6), Hispanics (6), Americans\* (6), Blacks (4), Jews (3), Indians\* (1), and Australians\* (1).

The majority of respondents (98%) reside in the U.S., with only six being from other countries (Table 1). Using country of residence information from the SWSPCP certification database, as of October 2021, this compares to 2,579 (98.6%) certificants from the U.S. and 36 (1.4%) from 13 other countries. This is mainly due to the SWSPCP originating in the U.S. in 1994, which until recently, has been relatively inaccessible to wetland scientists outside the U.S.

**Table 1. Country of residence.**

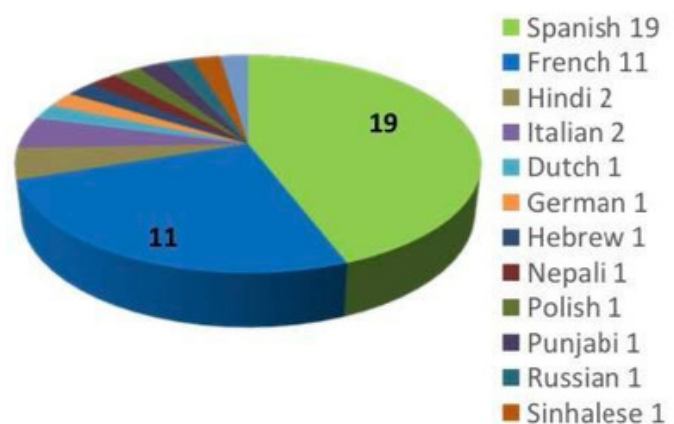
Country	No. of Respondents
Australia	2
Canada	1
Perú	1
Poland	1
UK	1
USA	299
Grand Total	305



With most respondents residing in the U.S., it is not surprising to learn that English or American English is the native language for 97% of respondents (Table 2). When asked about other languages that respondents spoke fluently, there were 12 other languages represented, with Spanish and French being the most common (Figure 2).

**Table 2. Native languages spoken.**

Language	No. of Respondents
Spanish	2
American English	10
Bengali	1
Chinese	1
English	284
German	1
Nepali	1
Polish	1
Sinhalese	1



*Figure 2. Other languages spoken fluently. Of the respondents, 284 also indicated that they speak English fluently.*

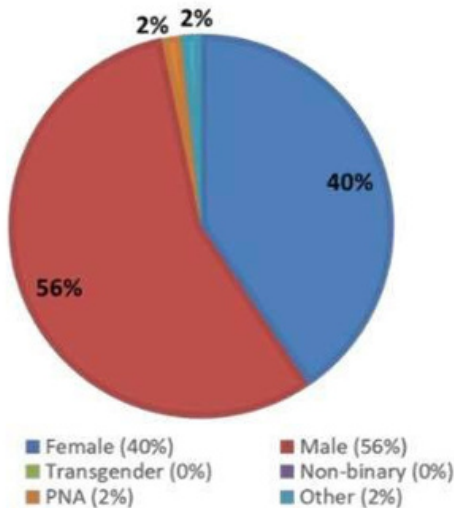
\* Region is not necessarily indicative of race and/or ethnicity.



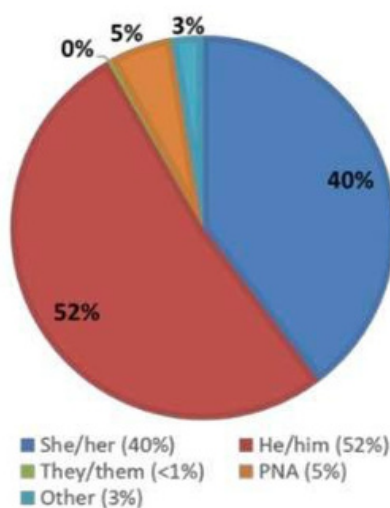


More respondents identified as male (56%) than female (40%); 4% of respondents identified as other; no respondents identified as transgender or non-binary; and 5% preferred not to answer (PNA; Figure 3a). The percentage of people preferring the pronouns of she/her was equal to the number of females at 40%; 52% prefer he/him pronouns; and about 4% of respondents prefer they/them pronouns or other pronouns (Figure 3b). However, pronoun preference does not necessarily correlate with gender identity. Approximately 4% of respondents identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, which may include lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, etc. (Figure 3c).

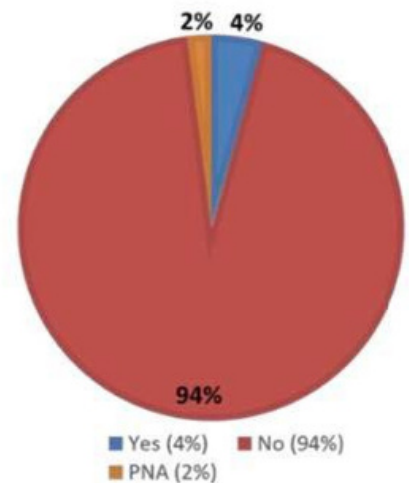
a. Gender Identity



b. Preferred Pronouns



c. LGBTQIA+



Figures 3 a, b, c. Gender identity, personal pronouns, and sexual orientation of survey respondents.

Approximately half the survey respondents denoted that they do not follow any religious faith (47%, including 1% agnostic or atheist) or did follow a religious faith (49%), with 5% preferring not to answer (Figure 4). Of the 49% that do follow a religious faith, 17% preferred not to specify, while the other 32% were mainly from Christian (11%), Protestant (6%) or Catholic (7%) denominations. All others (1-2% each) were from Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, or spiritualistic faiths.

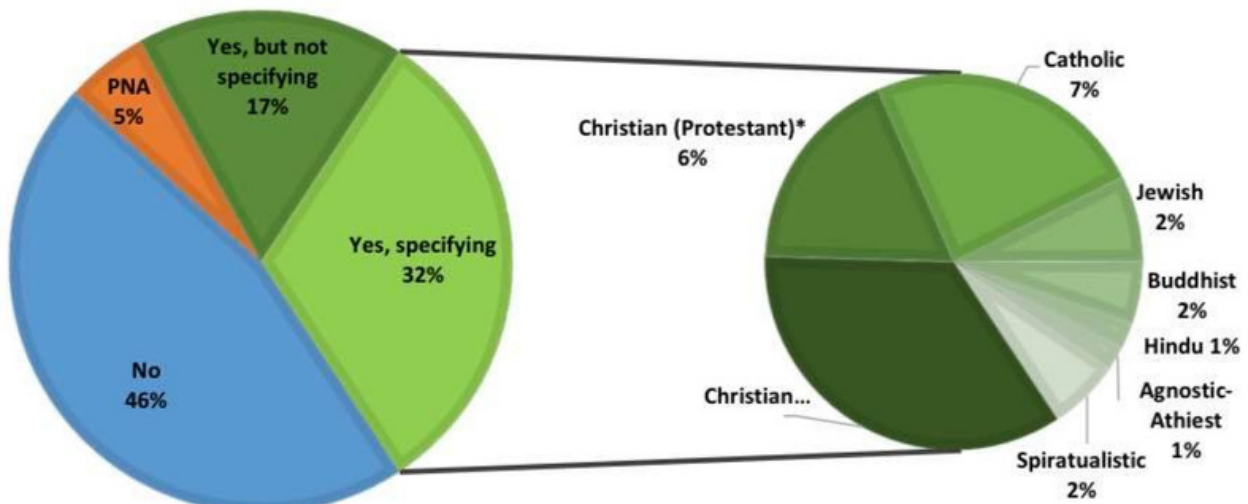
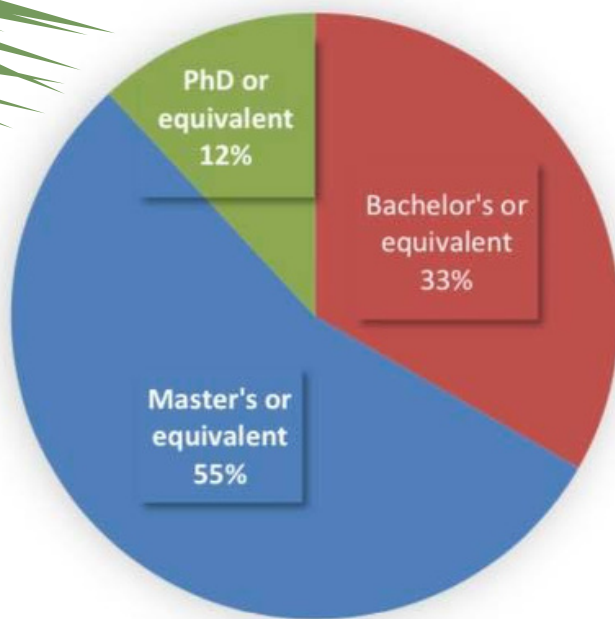


Figure 4. Respondents' answers as to whether they practice a religious faith. \*Christian (Protestant) includes specification of Protestant, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, or Methodist.



Respondents were asked to select the highest educational degree they have obtained. Over half of the survey respondents indicated that they had the qualifications of a master's degree or equivalent (55%). About 33% identified as having attained a bachelor's degree or equivalent, and fewer (12%) reported earning a PhD or equivalent (Figure 5).

*'Merit based decision making! Stop playing politics with a professional association.'*  
– A quote from a respondent

Figure 5. Highest educational degree attained by respondents.

The age of respondents shows nearly a bell-shaped distribution, with the exception of the youngest age group (Figure 6). The <25 years age group is necessarily small due to the nature of the certification requiring WPITs to have the prerequisite of educational background to become certified. Respondents in the 51-60 years age group were the most numerous; together with those older (61-70 years) and younger (41-50 years), these groups made up the majority (71%) of all respondents. There were much fewer people who were over 70 years of age (7%).

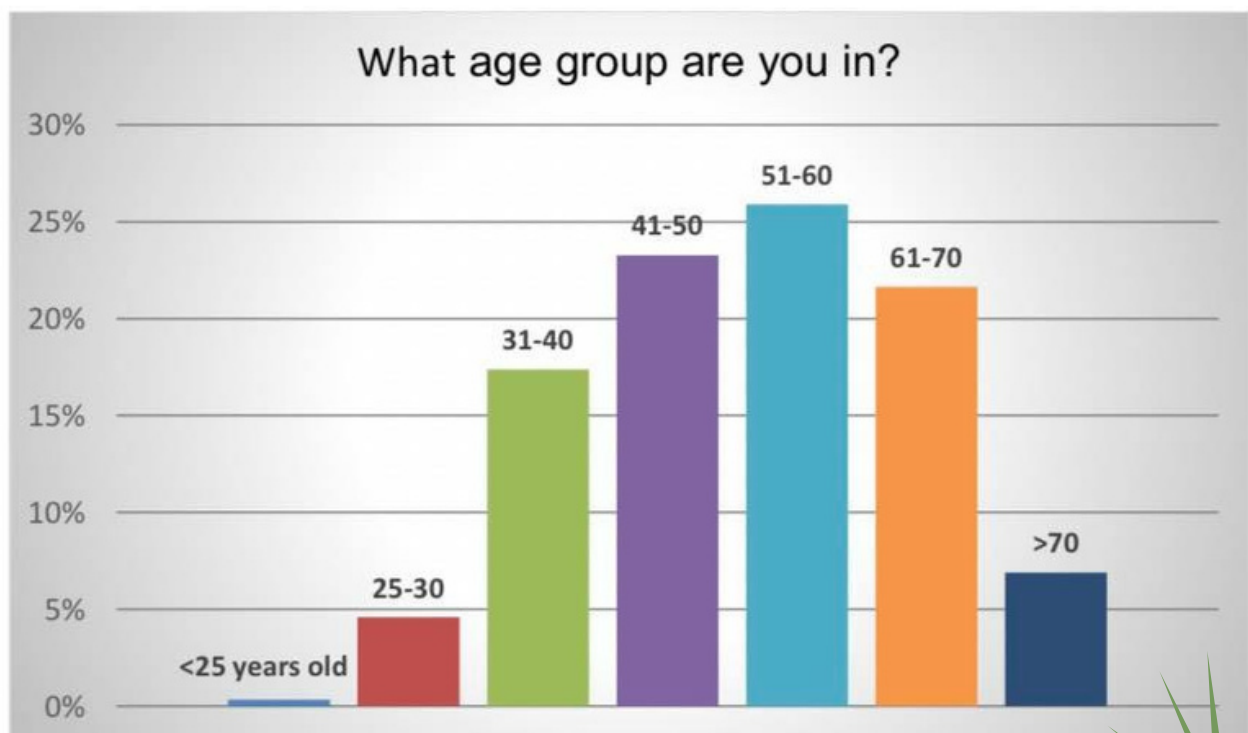


Figure 6. Age distribution of respondents.



The respondents (305) have a collective of nearly 8,000 years working in wetland science, with average years of individual experience of 26+ years. The highest proportion (32%) of individuals reported working 21-30 years in wetland science, with equal proportions of respondents (23%) in both the 11-20 years and 31-40 years categories. If considered with the largest age group in Figure 6 (51–60-year-olds), it appears that the majority of the respondents have been working in the field of wetland science from the age of 30 (Figure 7).

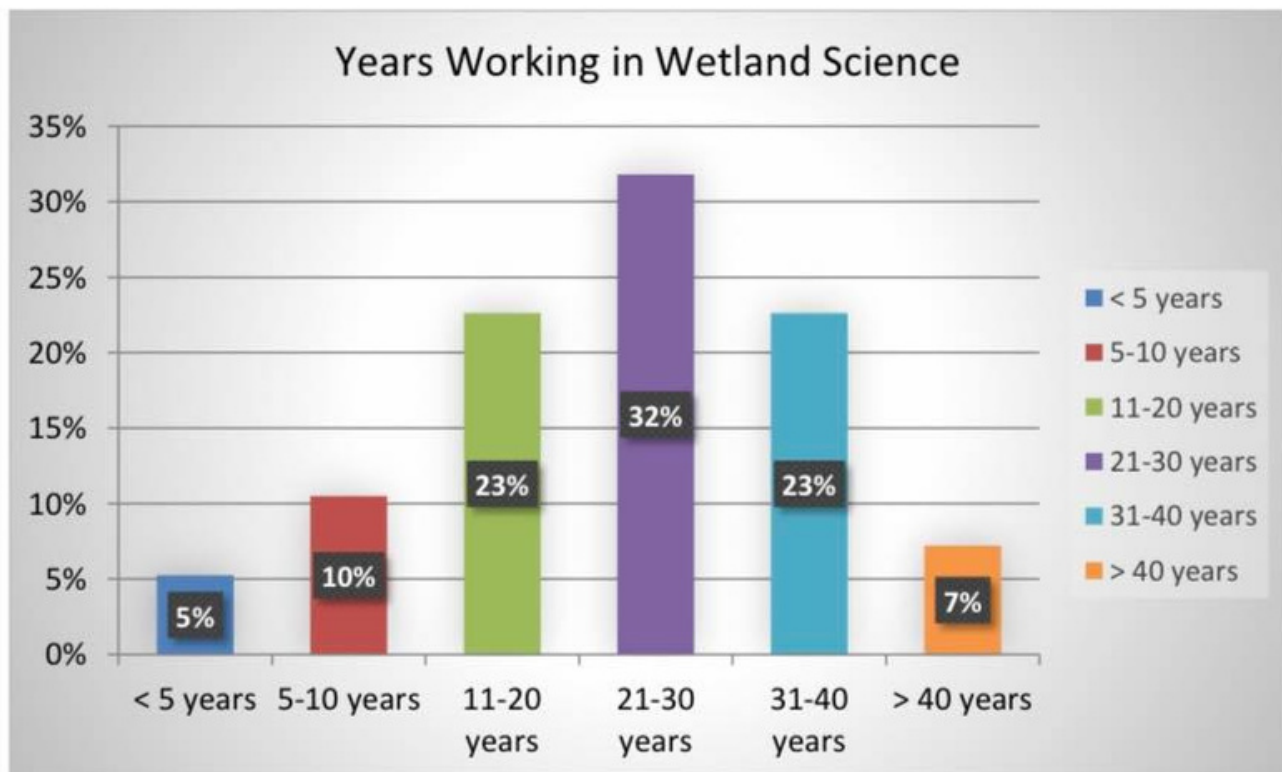


Figure 7. Number of years respondents have been working in the field of wetland science.

Most PWSs have been certified for 15+ years, meaning there is a large cohort that were certified prior to 2007 (Figure 8). For the WPITs, since this is the

entry level certification, it is not surprising that most have been certified for 5 years or less. However, it is interesting that we have several people that have been certified as a WPIT for 15+ years and there may be opportunity to investigate why those WPITs are not progressing into PWSs. Since 2019, those PWSs that have been certified 15+ years are now designated as a Senior PWS. This means the length of time for those indicating they are SPWS should be around 3 years or shorter. However, there may have been confusion about the question. There were relatively few respondents (17 out of 305; ~6%) that have progressed to the Emeriti PWS status.

*'This exercise has been a learning opportunity for me - I did not know SWSPCP was doing all these things to enhance DEI. I do not have additional ideas, the current ideas sound good to me.'*

- A quote from a respondent



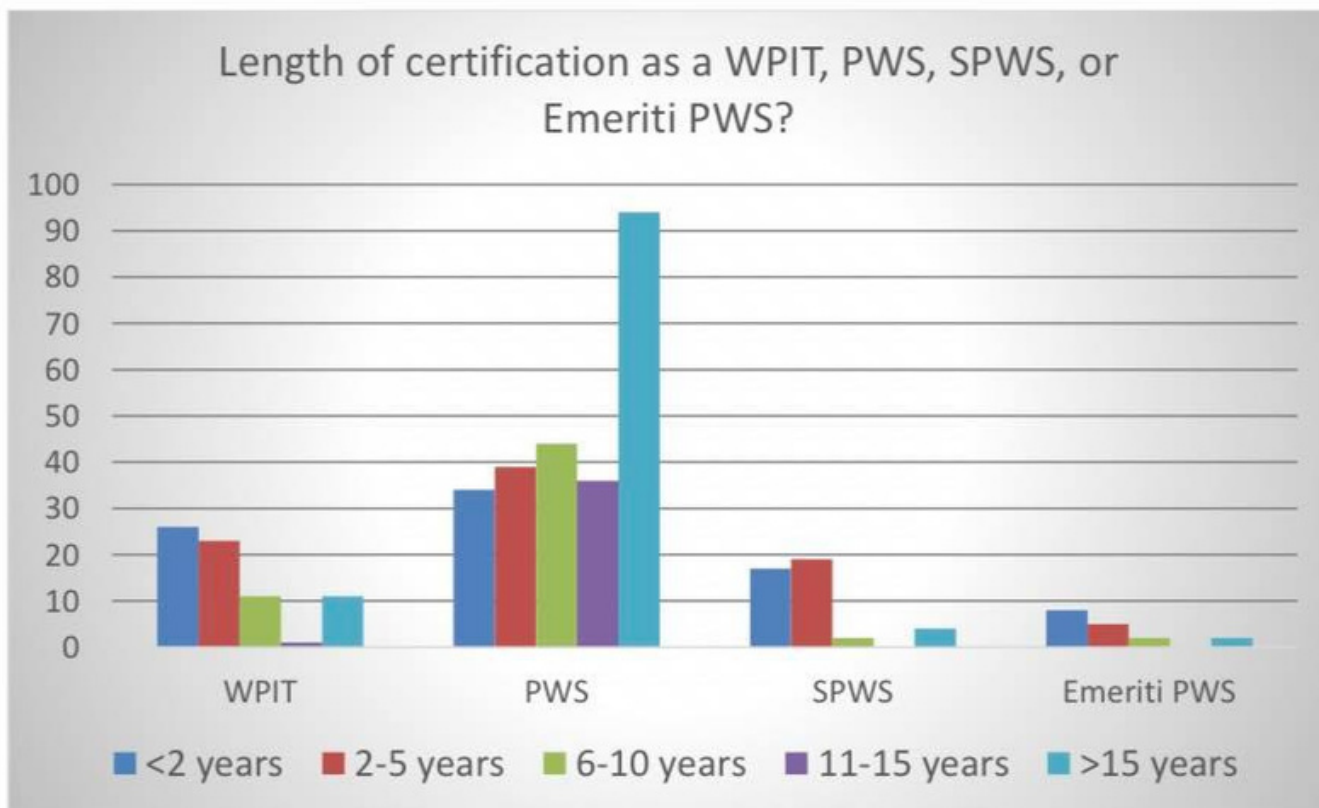


Figure 8. Length of certification as a WPIT, PWS, SPWS, or Emeriti PWS.

A majority of the respondents, that specified their salaries (39 preferred not to answer), indicated that they were earning \$71-100K per year (Figure 9). Those earning the highest (6%) and lowest (8%) annual salaries were in the minority. \$71-100K per year is also the median earned salary.

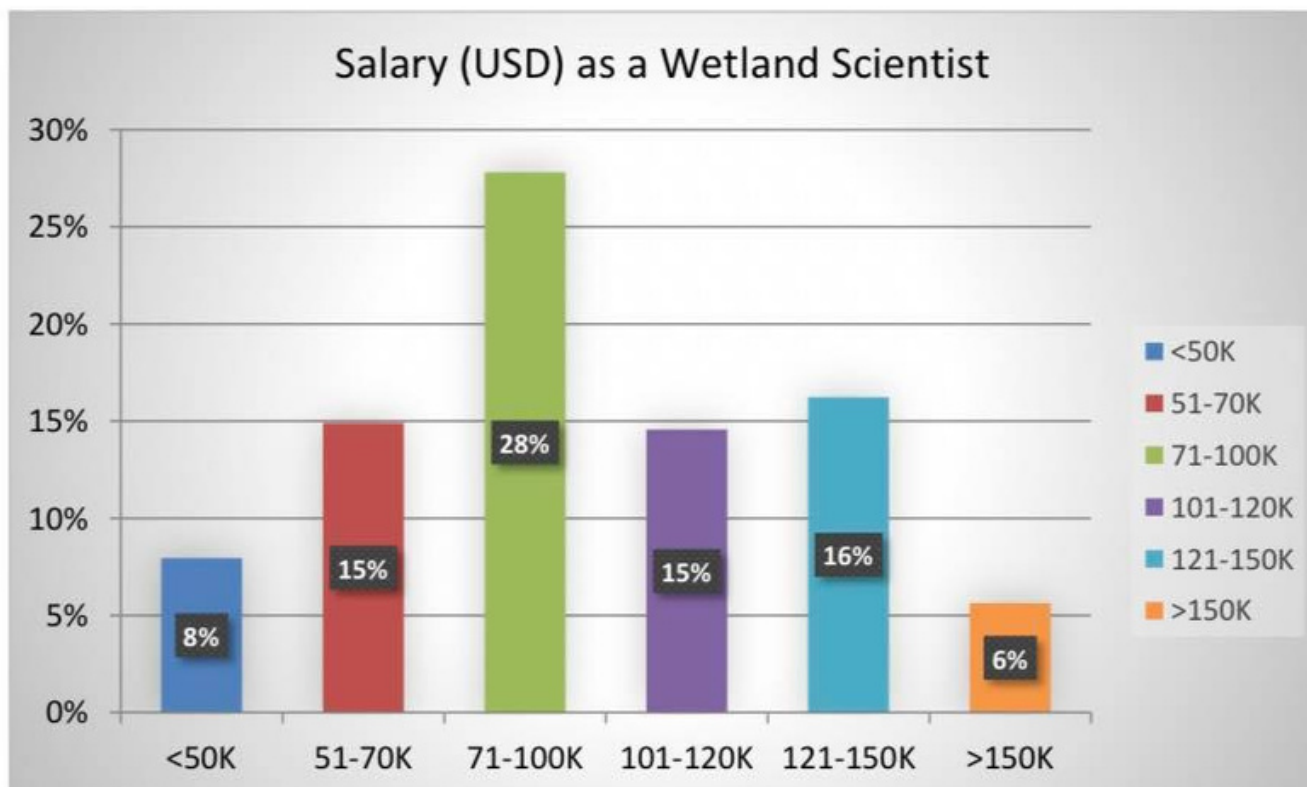


Figure 9. Salary in USD earned solely as a practicing Wetland Scientist.





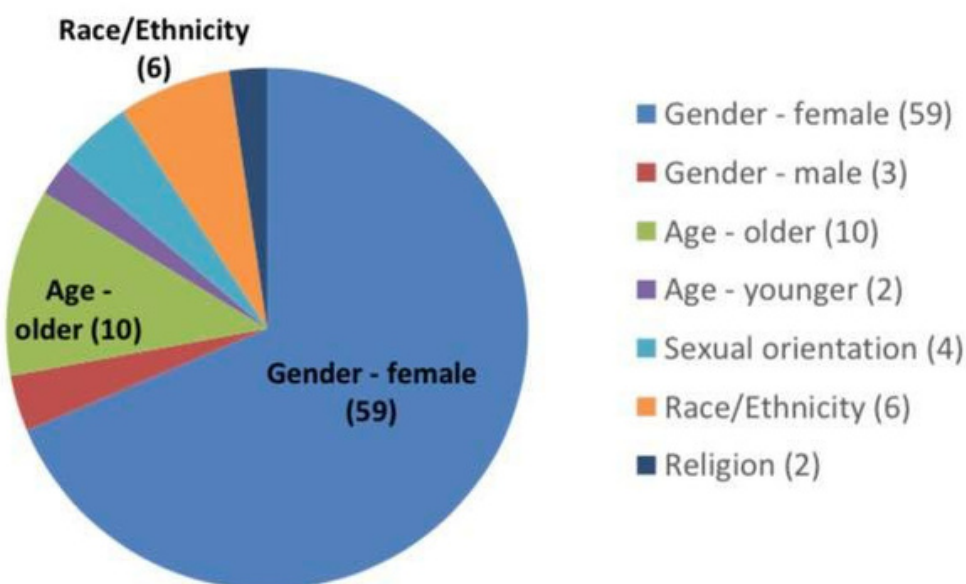
Most respondents have never experienced discrimination (61%), but a large portion are currently and/or previously have experienced discrimination (35%) (Table 3). Those that said they have experienced discrimination, indicated that it had occurred in the past (81%). Of those experiencing discrimination, most specified that it was gender discrimination for being female (69%), followed by discrimination for being older (12%), and for their race-ethnicity (7%) (Figure 10). Since more of our respondents identified as males, it is instructive to note that, of the number of females responding to the survey (122), nearly 48% have experienced discrimination for their gender, in contrast to only 3 of 169 of males experiencing discrimination for their gender.

**Table 3. Discrimination experience of respondents.**

Discrimination	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
No	180	61.4%
Yes, currently experiencing	7	2.4%
Yes, currently and in past	12	28.0%
Yes, in past	82	4.1%
Prefer not to answer	12	4.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>100%</b>

*'From my own experience, I do not believe there is active discrimination in the field of wetland science/ environmental consulting. I think the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the field has much more to do with culture (i.e., exposure to role models, exposure to natural sciences in the field through such organizations as scouting and other non-profits, cultural norms, etc.'*

– A quote from a respondent



*Figure 10. Type of discrimination experienced by respondents that specified details (97 respondents).*

When asked about disabilities that might hinder the respondents' work in the wetland science field, an overwhelming majority (93%) said they did not have any physical or cognitive disabilities that are barriers to fully practicing wetland science. Those who indicated that they have a disability, denoted that it was a physical disability (4





respondents), illness (3), or learning disability (1). Over 90% of the respondents were aware of the section in the [SWSPCP Code of Ethics](#) that details the way in which a PWS is expected to handle discrimination. We have since added a few details to the code, which now reads:

**2.0 To promote the well-being of the profession, a PWS or WPIT shall:**

2.4 Practice professional behavior that is free from sexual harassment or discrimination with respect to race, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, economic status, country of origin and citizenship, ethnic background, disability, education, career stage, and professional status.

Figure 11 suggests that over half of the respondents had less than 10% of the people employed in their organizations as people of underrepresented and indigenous backgrounds. In the future, it would be interesting to compare this to the proportion of these groups in the physical and earth sciences, as well as regional populations as a whole.

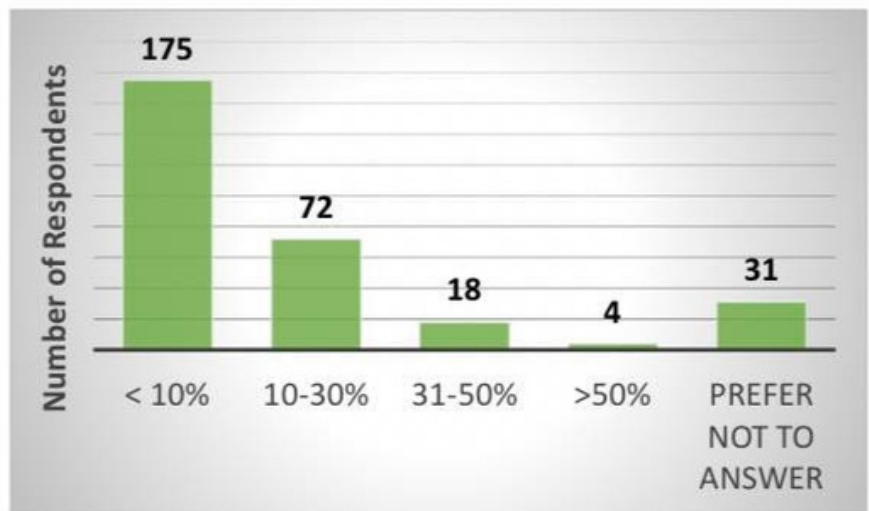


Figure 11. Percentage of underrepresented and indigenous people employed at respondents' workplaces.

In response to the question on the respondent's workplace, as a PWS/WPIT, what percent of the time over the last 3 years has the respondent spent interacting with underrepresented and indigenous colleagues and clients, more than half responded by saying that it was 10% or less (Figure 12). The proportions of underrepresented and indigenous people who were co-workers versus those who were clients or colleagues was similar with a majority (82%) having 30% or less of those groups in their work and professional environments.

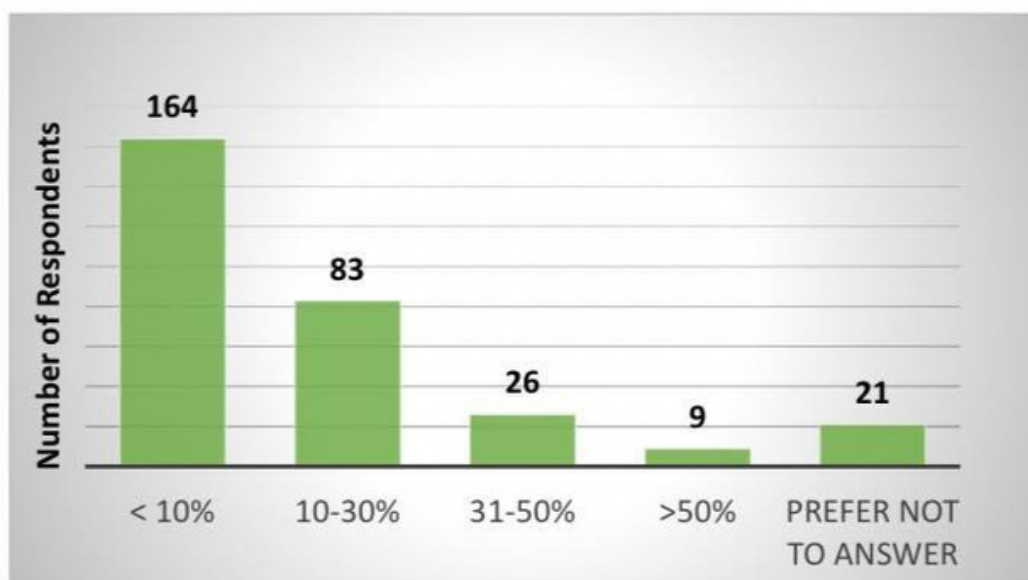


Figure 12. Percent of time respondents interact with underrepresented and indigenous colleagues and clients.



*'I think the work [in DEI] being done is a great step in the right direction!  
Keep up the great work!!'*

*– A quote from a respondent*

When asked to rate the importance of recent and proposed actions taken by SWSPCP to enhance DEI, the respondents overwhelmingly rated several actions SWSPCP has already taken as very important or somewhat important (Table 4). Actions that address globalization of the program were rated highly, such as translating SWSPCP informational materials into other languages and lowering application and maintenance fees for developing countries. Although some actions were rated as less important, all had support from over half the respondents.

**Table 4. Importance of recent and proposed actions taken by SWSPCP to enhance DEI as rated by the survey respondents. Those with a check have already been accomplished or are on-going (e.g., view the DEI Statement on our website: [SWSPCP DEI Statement 4-22.pdf](https://www.wetlandcert.org/SWSPCP_DEI_Statement_4-22.pdf) ([wetlandcert.org](https://www.wetlandcert.org))).**

	Actions	Very Important or Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Unimportant
✓	Offering SWSPCP Informational flyers in different languages	88%	52%	36%	9%	2%	1%
✓	Lowering application, maintenance, and renewal fees for developing countries	83%	57%	26%	10%	3%	4%
✓	Holding Connect Sessions over Zoom to increase access that is not bound geographically or financially	83%	50%	33%	12%	3%	2%
✓	Giving promotional presentations in other countries/venues	77%	33%	44%	18%	3%	3%
✓	Identifying Global Champions in countries outside the U.S.	74%	40%	34%	18%	3%	5%
✓	Offering waivers for annual fees and renewal deferral due to pandemic impacts	72%	38%	34%	17%	4%	7%
✓	Approving a Strategic Plan that formalized standing committees on Globalization and DEI	71%	41%	30%	17%	3%	9%
✓	Adding a Student Representative on the SWSPCP Board of Directors	68%	30%	38%	20%	7%	6%
	Updating the website with member profiles highlighting diversity of existing membership	66%	29%	37%	17%	7%	10%
✓	Placing a SWSPCP DEI statement on the website	64%	35%	29%	21%	5%	10%
	Offering DEI training sessions for SWSPCP members	58%	27%	31%	24%	6%	12%
	Establishing Employee Resource Groups within SWSPCP	56%	23%	34%	30%	7%	7%
	Implementing a Social Media Internship	53%	17%	36%	34%	6%	7%

## Summary

In February 2022, the DEI Committee of the SWSPCP conducted a survey within the SWSPCP membership. Out of 2,579 certificants, 305 responded, which is approximately 12% and it is assumed a good sample size that is representative of the total. The responses were analyzed and presented in this article; however, a full report is being written, that will include all the data and information. These data and information will form a valuable baseline for future surveys. However, it was a great opportunity to gauge the level of awareness and acceptance of the SWSPCP's existing policy initiatives in DEI. As a bonus, many suggestions have been offered by the respondents that will help formulate future priorities for the DEI





committee. The DEI Committee thanks all participants for completing the survey and we hope for further engagement and collaboration in our future initiatives.

Respectfully, your SWSPCP DEI Committee (as pictured below),

Rob McInnes PWS, Swapan Paul PWS, Sara Kreisel PWS, Joanne Ling PWS, Jim Perry PWS Emeritus, Kimberli Ponzio SPWS, Alani Taylor PWS, Anna Weaver WPIT, Gillian Davies PWS

## The SWSPCP DEI Committee





# SHARE THE NEWS

## WHY THE INTEREST ?

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Growing up in the coastal State of Connecticut, I was always fascinated by the tidal marshes and their ecology. This has led to a career working for State Government as an Environmental Scientist. Over the years I have worked with numerous Professional Wetland Scientists and becoming a PWS was something that I always wanted to complete. PWS certification has become more important to me now as many peers that I have worked with are retiring or changing employers. As this turnover continues it is important to have accreditation so as you meet new people in your field, they know your ability. Overall, achieving the level of PWS is a great achievement and it sets a positive example and informs others of your expertise, experience, and knowledge in the field.

Chris Samorajczyk, CWB, PWS



Achieving PWS certification embodies my lifelong pursuit of knowledge. By developing and leveraging these technical skills, I am better prepared to take ownership of my career growth. Of equal importance, these professional aspirations have also established meaningful friendships with passionate, esteemed wetland scientists around the globe. My heartfelt thanks to the many individuals who inspired and supported me in my journey toward PWS certification. A candle loses none of its light by lighting another candle – and we have a radiant wetland community to show for it. The past few years have not been easy but achieving this long-term career goal is certainly a bright spot!

Laura Duffie, AWB, PWS



I wanted to obtain my PWS so that I could belong to a group of professionals in the natural resource field who strive to protect our wetland and streams. Having the PWS certification also helps me identify as a natural resource professional who adheres to the standards of the SWS to potential clients and employers.

Alex Morley, PWS

# PWS MISSION & VISION

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## Mission

The SWSPCP mission is to certify wetland professionals who meet the highest standards for education, experience, and ethics in the practice of wetland science.

## Vision

The SWSPCP vision is to be THE globally recognized authority on certification of wetland professionals, requiring adherence to the highest standards in education, experience, and ethics in protecting and managing wetland resources and elevating the profession of wetland science.

## R. HAROLD JONES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD PRESENTED TO...

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The 2021 R. Harold Jones Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Mary Landin by Charles Newling on 7/27/22 in Huntsville, AL.

She was surprised and delighted when Charlie presented her the SWSPCP R. Harold Jones Lifetime Achievement Award. She expressed gratitude for those who remembered her and were so kind as to honor her with the award.





# Welcome!

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***SWSPCP proudly welcomes the following people who have become members in the last 30 days.***

Sydni Redmond as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Jean-Charles Weaver as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Jennifer Lawrence as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Sheri Lieffring as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Torren Hoyord as a Upgrade from WPIT to PWS.  
Michael Marra as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Levi Keszey as a Upgrade from WPIT to PWS.  
Tina Farrelly as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Janelle Bernosky as a Upgrade from WPIT to PWS.  
Nick Chiaro as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Robert McNown as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Kayla Theilig as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
Jazmen Yoder as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
Taylor Kiker as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Kaylee Moser as a Upgrade from WPIT to PWS.  
Scott Taylor as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Laura Duffie as a Upgrade from WPIT to PWS.  
Nicholas Bartish as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
Zachary Triplett as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
Carlton Folz as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
Christopher Samorajczyk as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Alexander Morley as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Robert Wiwi as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
James Hearsey as a Wetland Professional In Training.

