

# Results of the British Society of Soil Science Member Survey

## What we wanted to find out and why



During Summer 2021, the British Society of Soil Science distributed a survey to members and non-members, collecting responses to help better understand members' needs and guide future strategy.

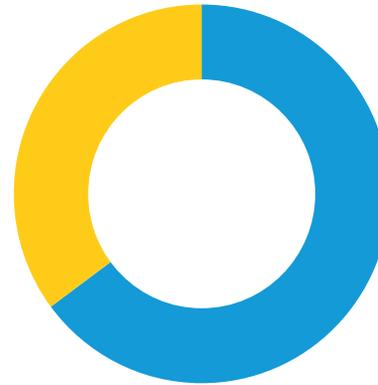
The purpose was to hear from respondents on the types of work they undertook with soils, and training which they felt would be helpful to enhance their or their employees' understanding of soil science.

The data collected and presented in this document will be used to guide future membership offerings and training courses to help deliver the training that those working with soils require.

## RESPONDENTS

### Members and non-members

65% members  
35% non-members



### Respondents worked in the following soil science areas:



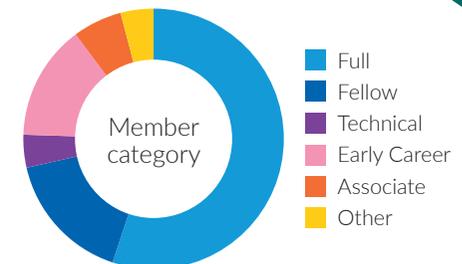
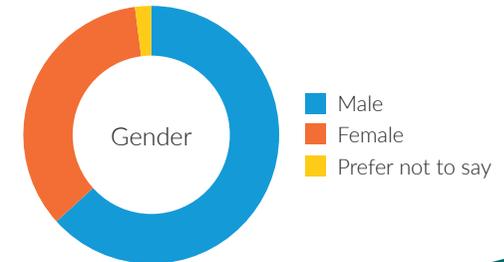
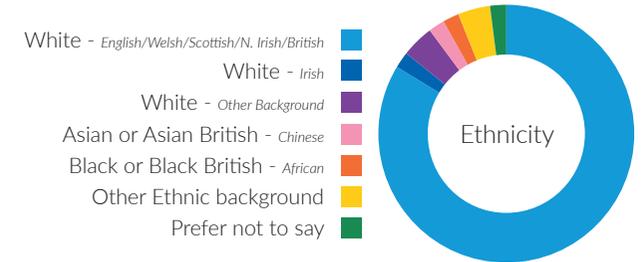
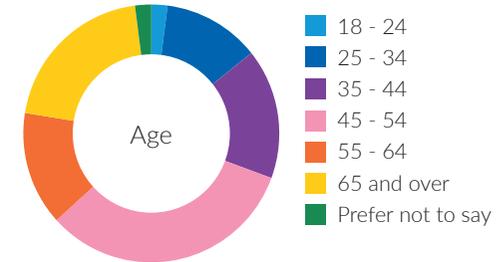
## “ In your words... ”

“The communication and materials have improved considerably so please keep going!”

“I’m enjoying my full membership of BSSS.”

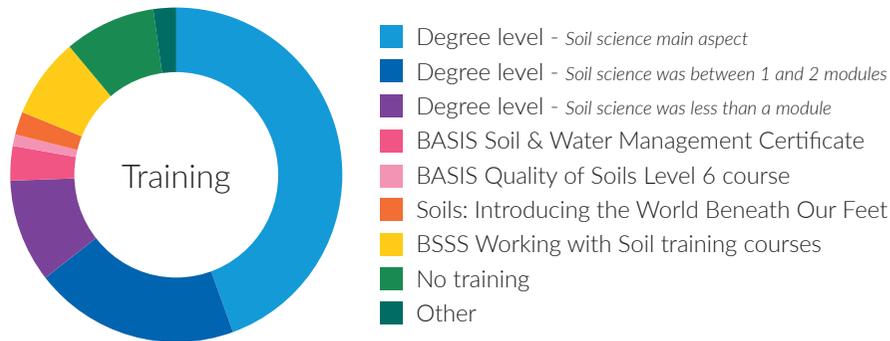
“Great organisation. BSSS needs good, practical high quality promotional merchandise.”

### Member Analysis



INDIVIDUAL TRAINING & SKILLS

Soil Training



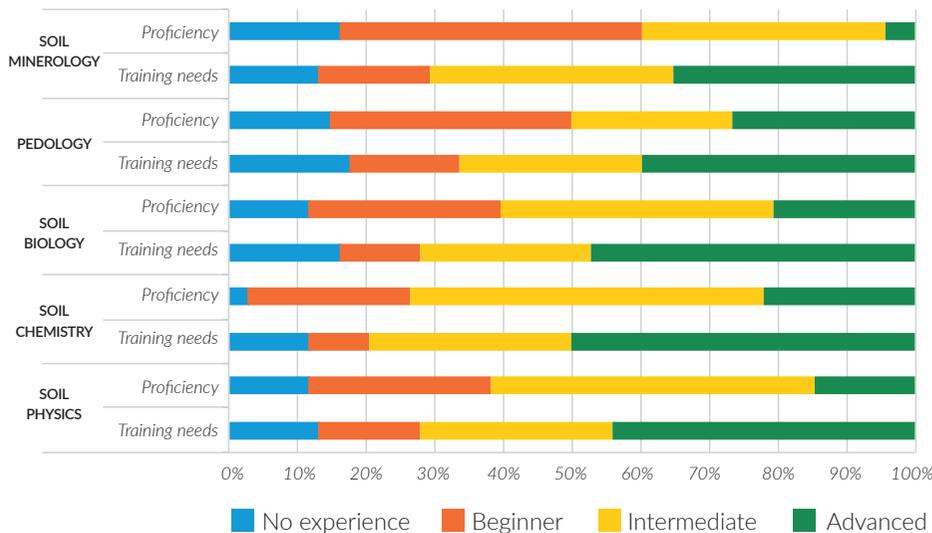
Respondents whose training included a field trip to view soil profiles:



Training with a field trip to view soil profiles

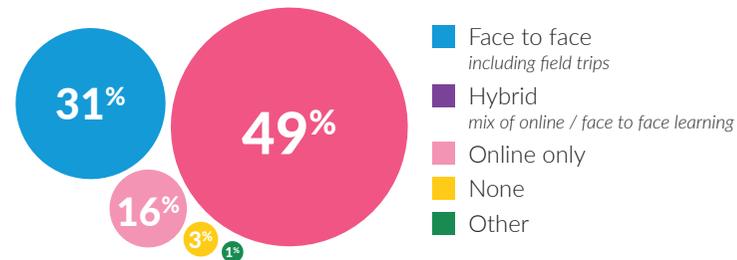
Training without a field trip to view soil profiles

Individual Proficiency v Training Needs



The data collected shows that Soil Chemistry is the aspect of soil science with the most individual proficiency with over 70% of respondents at an intermediate or advanced level, whilst Soil Mineralogy is the least proficient area.

Format of Future Training



Interest in Further Soil-Related Qualifications

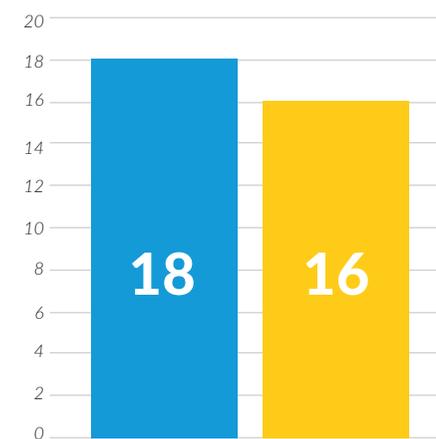
All respondents under the age of 35 expressed interest in obtaining a further soil-related qualification, with a formal qualification such as a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma proving the most popular. For respondents over the age of 35 who would be interested in a further qualification, a 1 - 2 day training course was most preferred.

**In your words...**  
 "I think BSSS has done particularly well with adapting virtual technology to enable workshops, conferences and other events to be beamed to the far corners of the world. Keep this up!"



**In your words...**  
 "It would be great if there were either more resources, signposts to resources or more training and events to continually develop practical soil science within industry. Especially for members who have transferred from academia to industry."

Interest in Becoming a Chartered Scientist (CSci) or Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv)

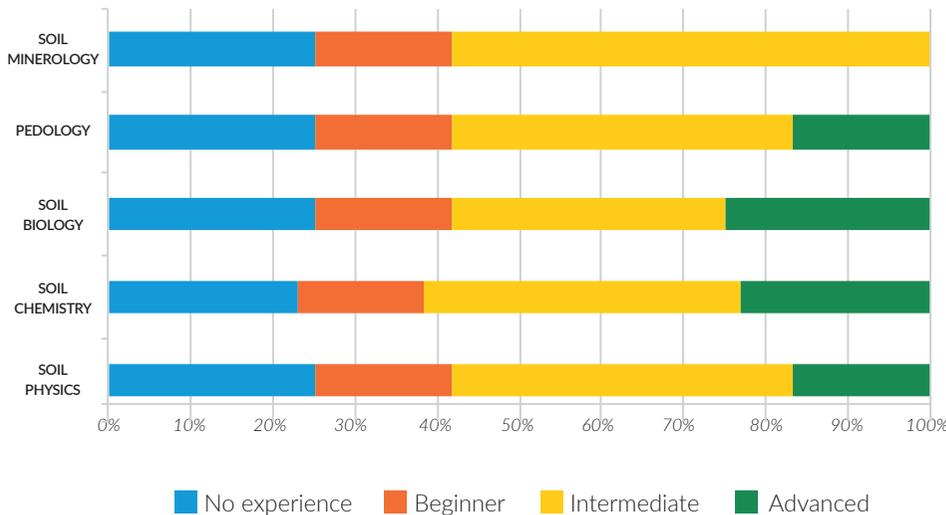


**In your words...**  
 "No interest in CSci or CEnv as it is not really valued or relevant in academia."

**BSSS RESPONSE:** The Society has 42 Chartered Scientist (CSci) members and it is interesting to see that members responding to this survey are interested in becoming a CSci. We are working more closely with the Science Council to help existing members, particularly those who work for CSci Employer Champions, to provide them with the tools they need to become CSci accredited. Our Professional Practice Committee is reviewing the opportunity to offer Chartered Environmentalist based on members' feedback.

EMPLOYEES' TRAINING & SKILLS

Staff Training Requirements



- Of the respondents who recruited staff, 79% found it very or somewhat difficult to recruit suitably trained staff for working with soil
- Of the respondents who recruited staff, 75% felt their staff required some level of training in Soil Physics, Soil Chemistry, Soil Biology, Pedology and Soil Mineralogy
- Intermediate Soil Mineralogy training was the most popular skill requirement

“ In your words...

“As a professional soil scientist, a lot of the training is focused on academia but it would be useful to add some for professionals.”

“It would be good to build more explicit links with those working on soil erosion and on other topics where soil science meets geomorphology.”

**BSSS RESPONSE:** There has been a major shift in the way members want to access training and education post-pandemic, and a clear divide in the type of training wanted, dependent on factors such as age and career stage.

Our Education and Professional Practice Committees will be considering the responses received and agreeing the next steps to ensure the Society is able to provide courses which meet our members, and the wider industry's needs.

INSURANCE

Insurance

**41%**  
interested in a Society-backed insurance scheme

**18%**  
spend in excess of £1,500 on commercial insurances

- Of those members who purchase commercial insurance, 41% were interested in a Society-backed insurance scheme
- Of those members who purchase commercial insurance, 18% spend in excess of £1,500 on combined commercial insurances

**BSSS RESPONSE:** We will shortly launch a non-investment insurance mediation service with Absolute Insurance Brokers Ltd which will provide members with access to specialist advice and support for their business insurances.

Journals

- Respondents' most read journals were the **European Journal of Soil Science**, **Nature**, and **Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment**
- Respondents were most likely to publish in **Soil Use and Management**, **Soil Biology and Biochemistry**, and **Geoderma**
- The journals respondents were most likely to subscribe to were the **European Journal of Soil Science** and **Soil Use and Management**

“ In your words...

“I live and work in Indonesia and I find the [Society] journals very useful and informative.”

“Now that Soil Matters [The Auger] has gone electronic, I don't really look at it. I used to flick through it and read things of interest but you can't really do that with an electronic format.”

**BSSS RESPONSE:** It's no surprise that respondents were most likely to subscribe to EJSS and SUM as these are the Society journals and a subscription is a benefit of membership. We will share the responses with our journal Editors and will carry out more research on our members' magazine, Soil Matters (formerly The Auger), to assess whether it is providing value for members in its current format.

