



Swimming Teachers Association:

Inclusion in the swimming industry



More people
More active
More often



INTRODUCTION

Swimming is a vital and potentially lifesaving skill for individuals, and once learnt the benefits can last a lifetime. The aquatic professionals in our society play an essential role in facilitating the teaching and transfer of this skill across all demographics.

This is now more pertinent than ever due to the impact of pool closures as a result of the pandemic, and the loss of swimming lessons over multiple lockdowns. In addition to its role in ensuring safety around water, the physical, mental, and social benefits of swimming are numerous and well understood. This makes it important to ensure the sector and swimming community provide a welcoming environment for all to participate – regardless of their characteristics and background.

The STA have partnered with the ukactive Research Institute to better understand inclusion and diversity in the teaching arm of the swimming industry. Through combined quantitative and qualitative methods of research, this report aims to provide insight into what the sector already knows about inclusion, and how we can continue to learn and grow to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to engage in swimming both as a learner and as an aquatic professional.

This report presents an analysis of survey data and the outcomes of a focus group, followed by a set of conclusions from this research.

About ukactive:



ukactive exists to improve the health of the nation by getting more people, more active, more often. ukactive provides services and facilitates partnerships for a broad range of organisations, all of which support our vision and have a role to play in achieving that goal.

We serve over 4,000 members and partners from across the public, private and third sectors, from multinational giants to local voluntary community groups. We do so by facilitating partnerships, campaigning and providing outstanding membership services.

About the STA:



The Swimming Teachers' Association is an international award-winning charity working towards the objective of preserving human life by the teaching of swimming, lifesaving and survival techniques. This objective underpins all that we do at STA, and since 1932 has driven our commitment to providing the highest quality qualifications and charitable services within leisure.

As a national governing body for swimming and lifesaving with over 12,000 members, we continue to develop qualifications in swimming teaching, lifesaving and leisure management to support the needs of the industry.

PROJECT OUTLINE

The research project began in July 2021 , and consisted of two main elements: a **survey** for aquatics professionals and a subsequent **focus group** (hosted virtually), which was guided by the preliminary findings of the survey results.

1. ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was created for **aquatics professionals** to explore attitudes towards a range of topics including:

- What we currently know about inclusion
- Challenges within inclusion
- Inclusion and swimming as a whole
- Inclusion and teaching
- Belonging and the swimming community
- The role of the STA
- Support for inclusion

2. FOCUS GROUP

Following the survey, a **virtual focus group** was conducted in early September 2021. This explored:

- Experiences in the industry and incidents relating to inclusion
- Views around getting inclusion 'right' and fears around offending others
- Understanding the swimming community's position on inclusion
- Understanding the future direction of inclusion in swimming

ONLINE SURVEY

The survey was open to both STA members as well as non-members in order to assess the views and attitudes of aquatics professionals from across the entire breadth of the sector. This helped to gauge the sectors current position and to inform the future direction of inclusion and diversity action. The survey helped to better understand what was currently being done, as well as to reflect on what more could be done to make swimming more inclusive for all.

The survey was hosted online and remained open for a total of 6 weeks from August 2021 to mid September 2021. It received a strong level of engagement from swimming teachers and other aquatics professionals (see page 7). The link for completing the survey was distributed through both ukactive and STA communications channels, including:

- › STA membership email distribution
- › Social media
- › LinkedIn
- › Newsletters

To drive responses, the survey was incentivised with a prize draw for a £50 Swim-Shop voucher. A total of 407 respondents engaged in the survey.

THEMES

To uncover a range of areas the survey was split up into sections, each focusing on a specific aspect across the industry. As well as uncovering general attitudes, it addressed what could be done to address inclusion from an individual approach as an aquatics professional, as well as from a sector wide approach. To do this, the following key themes were explored in the survey sections:

- › Your role within swimming
- › The role of the STA and inclusion
- › What do we know and understand about inclusion
- › Challenges with inclusion
- › Inclusion and my teaching
- › Swimming and inclusion
- › About me – belonging and swimming community
- › Support with inclusion

RESPONSE OVERVIEW: EQUALITY MONITORING

The following section provides a breakdown of respondent's demographics. Those who engaged in the survey represented a mix of age groups, with **most clustered within the middle four age groups, representing those aged 25–64. The majority of respondents were female (81.9%)**. In general, the demographics were in-line with the current STA membership breakdown (89% of survey respondents). Equality monitoring helps paint a snapshot of those who engaged in the survey which in turn, can be used to respond accordingly to specialised groups.

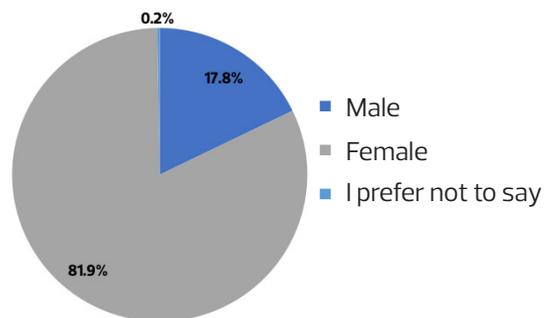
AGE

Question: What is your age? (n=404)

Under 18	0.5%
18–24	0.7%
25–34	9.4%
35–44	25.4%
45–54	33.7%
55–64	22.2%
65–74	7.1%
75+	0.7%

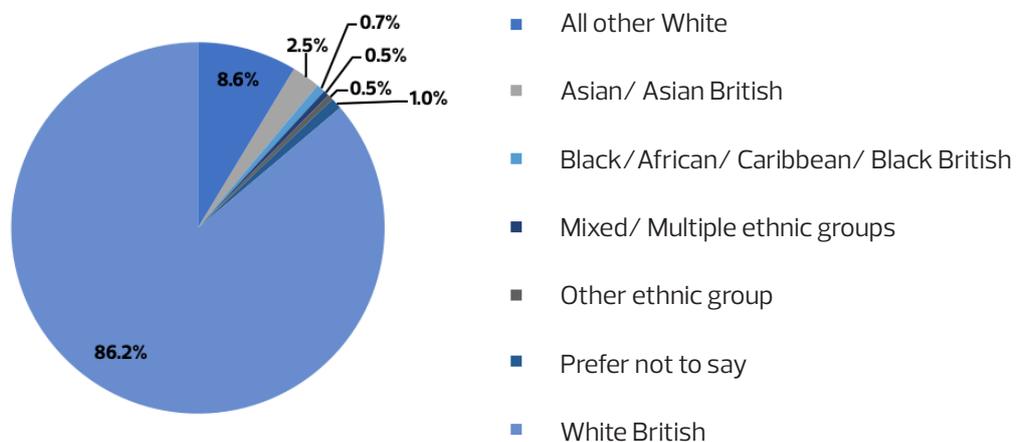
GENDER

Question: Please self-define your gender (n=404)



ETHNICITY

Question: What is your ethnic group? (n=406)



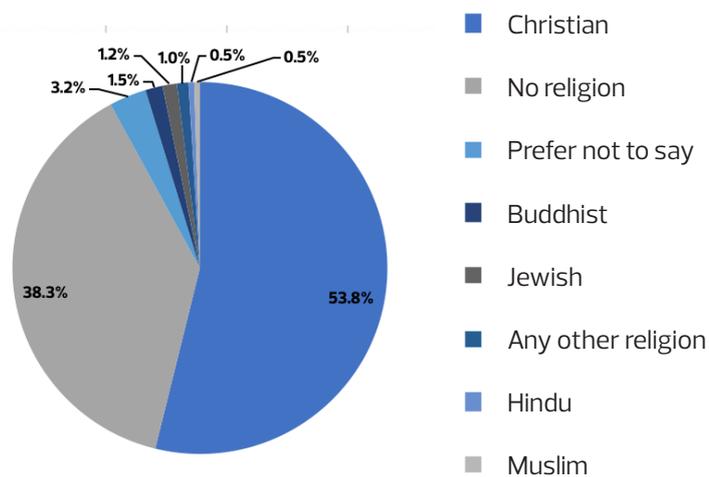
SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Question: What is your sexual orientation? (n=404)

Heterosexual / Straight	92.1%
Gay or Lesbian	3.2%
I prefer not to say	3.2%
Bisexual	1.2%
I use another term	0.2%

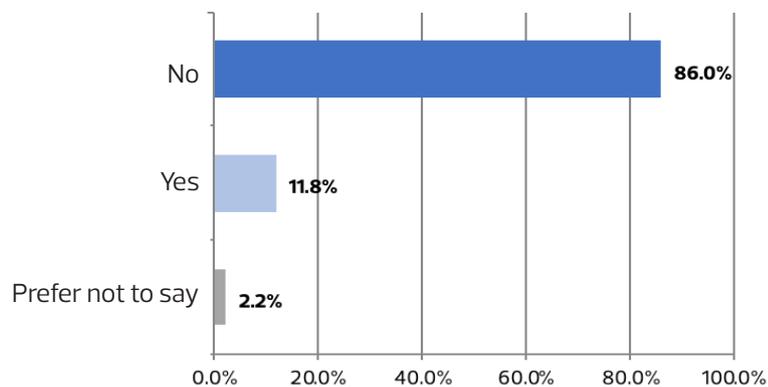
RELIGION

Question: What is your religion/ belief? (n=405)



DISABILITY

Question: Do you consider yourself to have a disability? (n=406)



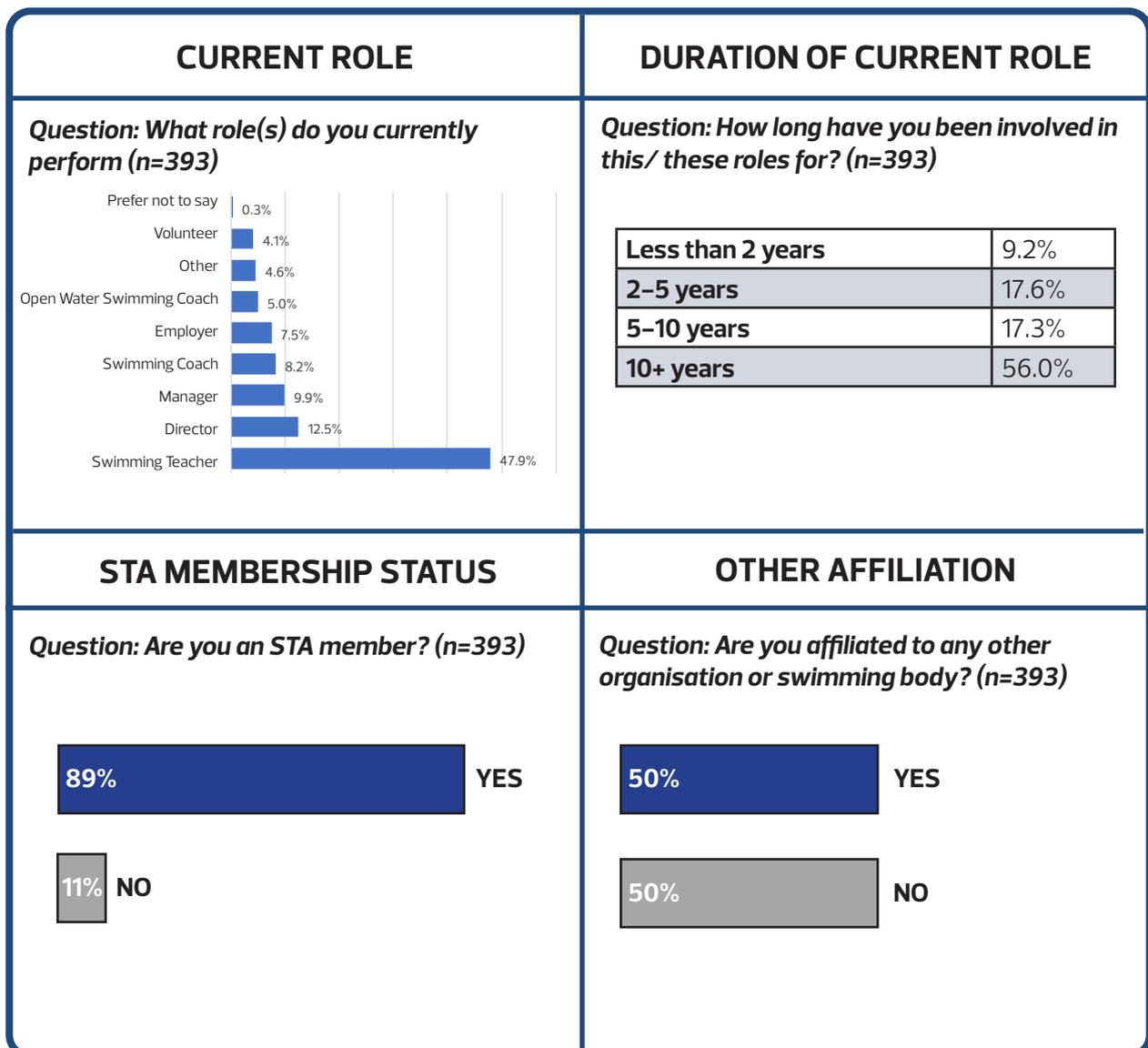
YOUR ROLE WITHIN SWIMMING

To gain a better understanding of the context behind the views and attitudes of those we surveyed, we asked some basic questions on respondents experience and background in the industry.

We asked respondents to select their current role(s) in the industry. Almost half (47.9%) were swimming teachers, whilst the remaining 52.1% ranged across seniority and type of role from volunteer to manager and director positions.

With 56% having been in their role for over 10 years, this shows the long-term commitment often made by those entering the industry.

In terms of membership status, most (89%) held memberships with the STA whilst half of respondents reported being affiliated with another swimming organisation.



THE ROLE OF THE STA AND INCLUSION

With inclusion being one of the STA's core values, we asked some key questions around respondents views on the STA's current role, giving the possibility to benchmark against future performance. **71.1% of STA members reported they had received information** from the STA relating to inclusion in the past year, which closely aligns with the **74.4% of total respondents who agreed that the STA communicates about inclusion** (both members and non-members).

Agreement levels for **'The STA supports me with inclusion'** were reported at **55%**. The qualitative responses on page 9 suggest that this is due to many aquatics professionals already feeling fully engaged and supported with inclusion already.

INCLUSION INFORMATION

Question: In the last year, I have received information from the STA relating to inclusion (n=322)



Question: Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements (n=325)

	NET: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	NET: Disagree
The STA care about inclusion	84.9%	14.2%	0.9%
The STA communicates about inclusion	74.4%	21.9%	3.7%
The STA celebrates inclusion	68.9%	27.6%	3.4%
The STA makes information about inclusion freely available	69.3%	27.6%	3.1%
The STA supports me with inclusion	55.0%	41.0%	4.0%
Inclusiveness is a stated aim of the STA	74.5%	23.9%	1.6%
Inclusion is a key part of what the STA does	70.8%	27.0%	2.2%
STA give me enough information about inclusion	60.6%	33.2%	6.2%
I feel comfortable approaching STA for support and help with inclusion	82.9%	14.3%	2.8%

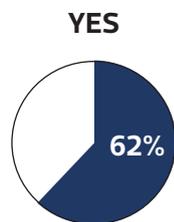
85% of STA members agree that "the STA cares about inclusion"

WHAT DO WE KNOW AND UNDERSTAND ABOUT INCLUSION

This section aimed to establish a general sense of understanding of respondent's current position, and the awareness levels of specialised groups within the sector. **Most (62.4%) reported they wanted to know more** about inclusion whilst **the remainder (37.6%) responded 'No'**. The reasons why have been explored further below.

INCLUSION KNOWLEDGE

Question: Do you want to know more about inclusion? (n=311)



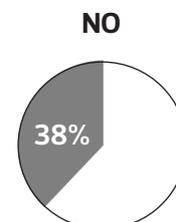
If yes, why?

"I did the UK Coaching Duty to Care badge and it made me realise how much I didn't know."

Many expressed a desire to improve what they already knew, which was driven by their passion to ensure everyone has the same opportunities to engage in swimming. This was seen as an essential part of professional development as a teacher.

Many acknowledged that learning in this area was continual, due to the ever-developing nature of the topic. In addition, some respondents identified that learning more about inclusion would have the knock-on effect of making others more aware too.

Whilst most respondents expressed the desire to keep "up-to-date" on their existing knowledge, there were some who wanted to know more due to their doubt over whether they were acting on inclusion in the correct way, and felt they did not know enough from the onset. An example given was the uncertainty over using the correct language.



If no, why?

"I feel there is plenty of support from my employer with regards to inclusion"

Respondents who selected 'No', did so primarily due to feeling fully engaged already, and said that they knew where to go for further information when they felt it was necessary. Some felt that from their personal experience, inclusion wasn't an issue within their own teaching remit due to their prior efforts to address this.

Many also cited the training they had previously done, and felt there was plenty of support already. The overall sentiment was positive, rather than respondents expressing a lack of interest.

INCLUSION EXPERIENCE

Question: Recently, have you seen, read or heard anything relating to swimming and...?

	No	Yes, it was positive	Yes, it was negative	Yes, it was neutral/both or I'm not sure
Disability	30.7%	52.0%	2.5%	14.8%
Pregnancy or Maternity	56.9%	36.5%	0.0%	6.5%
Black ethnic group	50.9%	27.5%	5.6%	16.1%
Other ethnic group	81.0%	12.5%	1.9%	4.6%
Sex (for example, single sex classes or sessions)	76.6%	12.5%	1.2%	9.6%
Asian ethnic group	80.1%	11.5%	1.6%	6.9%
LGBT+/Sexual orientation	82.9%	9.9%	0.0%	7.2%
Religious groups	83.2%	8.7%	0.9%	7.1%
Transgender community	85.4%	5.6%	0.0%	7.2%

In general, there were low levels of visibility of swimming information being seen across all groups apart from 'Disability', where **only 30.7% reported having not seeing anything recently**. This figure reached over 80% for five groups, suggesting there is a lack of information available on some of these groups.

Although visibility was reasonably low, those who had seen, read or heard anything relating to swimming and these groups generally reported this being positive, with negative depictions low.



CHALLENGES WITH INCLUSION

In order to better understand some of the challenges associated with inclusion, we asked respondents a series of questions which were divided into three sections. The first five statements in the table below represent positive sentiment towards inclusion, whilst the remainder represented more neutral and then more negative sentiment. From this, we can see that respondents are firmly aligned with the positive statements. **Only 2.3% were in agreement with each of the two negative statements.**

Question: Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements (n=309)

	NET: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	NET: Disagree
I find it easy to talk about inclusion and diversity	79.8%	17.3%	2.9%
I feel fully informed about inclusion	56.5%	31.7%	11.8%
I feel positive about inclusion	85.2%	11.2%	3.6%
I am committed to learning more about inclusion	85.3%	12.1%	2.6%
I feel confident in my ability and knowledge to embed inclusion into my swimming role	75.5%	21.9%	2.6%
I am unsure about inclusion and need to know more	22.1%	29.5%	48.4%
I am unsure about how to be more inclusive	19.3%	35.3%	45.4%
I am afraid of getting inclusion 'right'	51.0%	32.6%	16.4%
I fear offending people with words or actions	56.7%	28.7%	14.7%
Inclusion worries me	7.6%	23.4%	69.1%
I am against inclusion	2.3%	8.1%	89.6%
Inclusion is someone else's responsibility	2.3%	6.2%	91.5%

85%

of all respondents agree that they
"feel positive about inclusion"

91%

of all respondents disagree that
"inclusion is someone else's responsibility"

INCLUSION AND MY TEACHING

The following section explores sentiment of how teachers as individuals impact inclusion in the sector, and their motivations to act on inclusion. It also looks at some of the ways action towards inclusion was initiated, if at all.

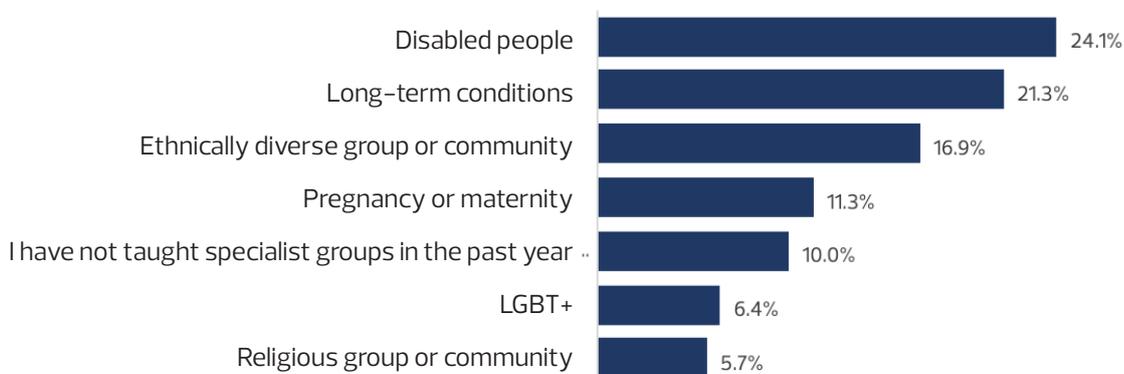
Most respondents expressed a strong level of awareness of how their teaching had an impact on diversity and inclusion already. **72.7% reported already factoring inclusion into their decision making**, and **69.2% agreed inclusion is a priority for their teaching**.

Question: Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

	NET: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	NET: Disagree
I factor inclusion into my decision making	72.7%	24.6%	2.7%
I feel capable of embedding inclusion into my teaching role	82.7%	15.4%	1.9%
I feel like I can adapt my teaching for a diverse or specialist group	86.9%	12.3%	0.8%
I want to learn more about inclusion and applying it into my teaching	74.3%	23.0%	2.7%
Inclusion is a priority for my teaching	69.2%	26.5%	4.2%
Inclusion matters to those who I teach	76.4%	22.4%	1.2%
I play an active part in embedding and promoting inclusion	68.5%	28.5%	3.1%

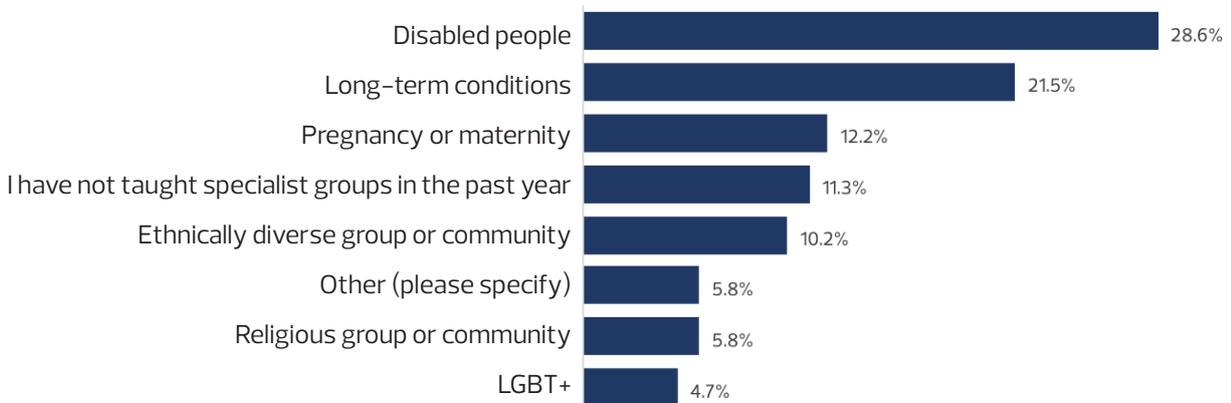
SPECIALIST GROUPS

Question: In the last year I have taught specialist or diverse groups including.... (n=259)

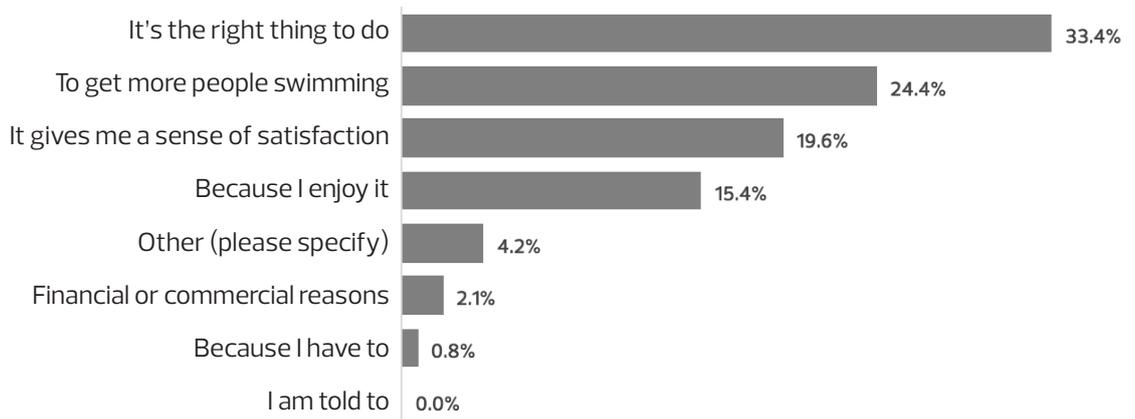


Those with a **disability or long-term condition were most likely to have been taught as a specialist group, with 24.1% and 21.3%** of respondents having taught these groups in the past year. 10% of respondents had not taught a specialist or diverse group in the past year.

Question: In the last year I have adapted or adjusted my teaching and method to cater for... (n=242)



Question: What are your motivations to activate on inclusion – why do you do it? (n=260)



ADAPTATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE

Respondents listed the many adaptations they had made, which were analysed and categorised into the following areas:

- > Increasing awareness
- > Research (including seeking resources)
- > Taking a person-centred approach (focusing on the person, and what they can do rather than their condition, circumstance or disability)
- > Reassuring, confidence boosting coaching methodology
- > Health and risk assessments (specifically or with particular audiences or requirements in mind)
- > Adapting communication methods & language:
 - > Makaton
 - > British sign-language
 - > Use of white boards
 - > Use of pronouns and understanding how to address individuals

SWIMMING AND INCLUSION

The previous section looked at inclusion from an individual teaching perspective. This section considers inclusion in relation to swimming as a whole. 85.5% felt that inclusion was a priority for swimming from this perspective.

Question: Do you feel that inclusion is a priority for swimming? (n=242)



Question: Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to the following statements (n=245)

	NET: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	NET: Disagree
Swimming is an activity that everyone should engage in	99.2%	0.8%	0%
Swimming is an activity that everyone can engage in	90.9%	4.6%	4.6%
Swimming is an activity that everyone is engaging in	18.1%	23.0%	58.8%
I feel swimming is inclusive	57.9%	27.1%	15.0%
I feel there is diversity across swimming	51.0%	32.8%	16.2%

Whilst almost all respondents (99.2%) felt that swimming was an activity that everyone should engage in, this highlighted a big disparity in that only 18.1% felt this was an activity everyone was engaging in. Just over half (51%) agreed that there was diversity across swimming.

99% of all respondents agree that “swimming is an activity that everyone *should* engage in”

91% of all respondents agree that “swimming is an activity that everyone *can* engage in”

GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

Question: I feel that swimming excludes some groups and communities (n=238)

YES 45% **55% NO**

WHICH GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES ARE EXCLUDED?

- > Low socio-economic, deprivation (with 'cost' being a barrier)
- > Some Religious groups (Muslim women were frequently noted)
- > Ethnically diverse groups (Black and Asian communities were regularly noted)
- > Disability/ Disabled People

WHY DO YOU THINK SOME GROUPS DO NOT TAKE PART IN SWIMMING?

- > Access (pools difficult to get to/ travel to, costs associated with transport, physical facilities not catering or accommodating to those with particular needs)
- > Affordability/ Cost/ Finance
- > Religious and cultural beliefs (related to clothing, modesty, sensitivities related to male/female segregation)
- > "Fear" (a word featuring on eight occasions) – related to naivety or lack of knowledge and understanding of the activity, of dressing modestly, 'of feeling different' and not knowing how to behave

Question: I feel that small changes to swimming can make the activity more inclusive (n=230)

YES 71% **29% NO**

WHAT ARE THE SMALL CHANGES THAT COULD HAPPEN?

- > Increasing and improving the prominence of role models
- > Inclusive marketing and use of diverse imagery
- > Embedding D+I (diversity + inclusion) into elementary training
- > Increasing research and insight into diverse and specialist groups (at consumer level)
- > Increasing the number of facilities and re-opening sites

Question: I feel that small changes to my teaching and approach can make the activity more inclusive (n=225)

YES 62% **38% NO**

WHAT ARE THE SMALL CHANGES TO TEACHING THAT COULD HAPPEN?

- > Listening and understanding, being more aware
- > Researching and gaining insight / being more knowledgeable
- > Maintaining an open mind
- > Using appropriate language and terminology
- > Ongoing training



ABOUT ME – SWIMMING AND COMMUNITY

The personal experiences of aquatics professionals and the community in which these experiences present themselves was explored.

The responses in the table below indicate that a strong sense of community exists, with all responding in agreement to the positive statements. Levels of agreement ranged from **65.7% (I feel like I can raise an issue relating to my background, culture or ability in a swimming environment)** to **95.1% (I feel like I belong and at ease in swimming)**.

Question: Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements (n=235)

	NET: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	NET: Disagree
I feel like I belong and at ease in swimming	95.3%	3.8%	0.9%
I feel valued within the swimming community	80.3%	16.2%	3.4%
I am treated fairly and with respect in the swimming community	80.3%	16.7%	3.0%
I have lots in common with my fellow swimming community	72.2%	24.8%	3.0%
I feel there are people like me in the swimming community	82.9%	13.2%	3.8%
I feel like I can be myself in a swimming environment	91.0%	7.7%	1.3%
Swimming is a key part of my identity	85.4%	11.2%	3.4%
I feel like I can raise an issue relating to my background, culture or ability in a swimming environment	65.7%	30.0%	4.3%
I feel like I can raise an issue relating to abuse or discrimination in a swimming environment	79.3%	15.9%	4.7%

95%

of all respondents agree that they
“feel like I belong and at ease in swimming”

91%

of all respondents agree that
“I can be myself in a swimming environment”

SUPPORT WITH INCLUSION

The final section of the online survey focused on the perceived level of support available to act on inclusion, and looked into the different ways of advancing work on inclusion in the sector in the future.

Question: Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements (n=225)

	NET: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	NET: Disagree
Information and resources relating to inclusion and swimming are readily available	45.7%	42.6%	11.7%
I feel like I have someone to talk to about inclusion	51.1%	36.8%	12.1%
I feel like I have someone (or a network) to get advice about inclusion	61.2%	29.9%	8.9%
I receive communications and news about inclusion	40.4%	41.7%	17.9%

Question: To learn more about inclusion, would you benefit from the following (n=205)



Other:

“Opportunity to connect with other aquatic professionals who have my level of disability and benefit from mutual support, sharing strategies and helpful techniques.”

SURVEY SUMMARY

- » The survey was completed by 407 respondents from a range of age groups – 89% of which were members of the STA. Whilst those with a variety of different roles within aquatics engaged in the survey, most were swimming teachers and most had been in their current role for 10+ years.
- » There was a positive perception towards the role of the STA within inclusion. 84.9% agreed that the STA cared about inclusion, and 71.7% of STA members having received information relating to inclusion from the STA within the past year.
- » 62.4% of respondents reported wanting to know more about inclusion. The 37.6% who selected 'No' mostly selected this option due to already feeling fully engaged and informed on the subject. There was a significantly higher level of awareness relating to the 'Black ethnic group' and swimming compared with the 'Asian' and 'Other' ethnic groups.
- » The biggest challenges presented were 'I fear offending people with words or actions' (56.7% agreed) and 'I worry about getting inclusion 'right'' (51.0% agreed). Of the positive statements, the lowest scoring in terms of agreement was 'I feel fully informed about inclusion' (56.5%).
- » From an individual teaching aspect, most respondents were already making the link between inclusion and their teaching. 72.7% said they factor inclusion into their decision making and 68.5% said they play an active part in promoting and embedding inclusion. The two strongest motivations for this were because 'it's the right thing to do' and 'to get more people swimming'.
- » From a broader perspective of swimming as a whole, 85.5% felt inclusion was a priority for swimming and 44.7% felt it excludes some groups and communities. There was a disparity between those who felt everyone should engage in swimming (99.2%) and those who felt that people are engaged in swimming (18.1%).
- » There was a strong sense of belonging and community within the aquatics professionals community with 95.3% feeling they belong and are at ease, and 91% feeling they can be themselves in a swimming environment.
- » There was no clear preference over which resources respondents would find most useful to help engage with inclusion. The top three were 'Resources and guides', 'Webinars' and 'Formal training'.

FOCUS GROUP

To supplement the information obtained from the survey, a virtual focus group was conducted in order to obtain more in-depth insight on the views, attitudes and experiences of aquatics professionals.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Focus group participants were recruited through completing the survey and indicating they would like to engage in further research. There were six participants in total who ranged in background and experience. This included their role seniority, type of coaching (both indoor and open water), as well as their representing characteristics in terms of gender, LGBT identity, disability, length of experience, and those who had experiences of witnessing something uncomfortable within the sector. The focus group was conducted virtually lasting just over an hour.

THEMES

Participants were encouraged to share their opinions and experiences on a range of topics through **guided conversation** led by a focus group facilitator. This enabled organic discussion to develop naturally which allowed a range of areas to be explored.

The broad themes that were explored through targeted questions were:

- » Experiences in the industry and of any incidents relating to inclusion
- » Views around getting inclusion 'right' and fears around offending others
- » Understanding the swimming community's position on inclusion
- » Understanding the future direction of inclusion in swimming

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

We found that the results of the focus group reinforced the findings of the survey, suggesting a level of consistency in views across those who engaged in this research. There was a consistently strong level of passion expressed from all participants to get more people involved in swimming, with an agreement that there was more work needed in this space.

The focus group was successful in illustrating participant's in-depth views through the specific anecdotal experiences shared in the session relating to engagement with specialist groups. Looking forwards, this exercise provided helpful in informing the conclusions and recommendations of the report (page 26 and 27).

After the focus group, a thematic analysis of the transcript was carried out and the key outcomes identified. These have been grouped into key areas.

Motivations to act on inclusion

“Equality and inclusion should just happen. It shouldn’t need to be an add on. It stops people drowning and is a life sport – who knows where these people may end up... in a career or the Olympics etc.”

- Participants identified that personal health and wellbeing is of paramount importance from the day we are born, and swimming fulfils this in both the physical and mental aspects which should be accessible for all.
- Participants felt inclusion was an issue that had been ignored for too long in the industry.
- The commercial aspect was a motivator to act on inclusion. This was perceived to bring in more people, and more funding, which felt especially pertinent due to the expense of costs such as pool hire and other teaching costs.

Personal Experiences

- Participants were in agreement that there was a current lack of diversity in swimming, and regional affluence was referenced as a factor impacting this. Other recent experiences discussed included the lack of adult beach chairs for the disabled, as well as the small amount of child beach chairs available. The impact of recent media coverage on swimming cap regulations at the Olympics had also brought inclusivity to light in the industry.
- Recent media coverage on inclusivity has had the effect of highlighting to teachers (some of whom initially felt they had a strong awareness of inclusivity) that there were many aspects they knew little about, which was seen as a shock.
- Conversely, it also highlighted the number of industry professionals who simply did not want to understand and learn more about the issues presented.

Teaching Challenges

“I would like to be so much more inclusive, but I’m not always sure about the best way of approaching it.”

- Issues around inclusion and safety require a two-sided understanding. Swimming staff need an understanding of cultural aspects (for example, why some swimmers may require a female lifeguard), and swimmers need an understanding of the safety aspects (for example, why wearing long or heavy clothing in the water may be compromise safety).

- Despite having a wealth of experience and strong passion for swimming, participants expressed that there was still an element of nervousness in engaging and approaching those new to swimming who they had not engaged with previously.
- Specific worries included being perceived as "bullying" when approaching particular groups, self-doubt over whether teachers are doing the "right" thing, and internal debate over whether they can reach out to individuals or not.
- Some expressed sentiment that something was 'holding them back' in consideration to engaging others. A finely trod line was described in reference to not wanting to offend or come across as though they are trying to discourage individuals from swimming, whilst expressing their concerns over the safety of swimmers.
- Use of terminology was also highlighted as a challenge in the industry. It was acknowledged that terminology around BME, LGBT and SEND groups can differ regionally, and that there was variation within groups around what was considered offensive and what wasn't.
- Funding was discussed as a challenge to inclusion since this was cited to be a reason for specialist swimming sessions coming to an end.

What Works

“We do have lots of off shoots in swimming which help us be inclusive, (aqua sensory, aquaphobia, Autism swim etc.) but so many people don't want to or can't access them.”

- Partnering with charities that specialise in helping certain demographics to swim was seen as playing a vital role for improving inclusion. For example, accreditation schemes that show swim schools have adhered to key inclusion standards for different specialist groups were seen as helpful in improving services, increasing engagement, as well as providing a sense of reassurance for parents. However, it was acknowledged that not all swim schools had the means of accessing these initiatives. Sponsorships were also discussed as an effective option where swim schools sponsor local organisations as a way to market specific demographics.
- Maintaining an open dialogue with parents was seen as another vital aspect to breaking inclusion barriers. Creating space and time to listen to parent's individual situations and finding ways around problems was essential. This helped overcome barriers relating to parents working shift patterns, separated parents, foster parents, parents on a low-income, and non-binary parents/ parents with non-binary children.
- There was a significant emphasis on the social aspect of the swimming community, for example the time before and after swim sessions being used as a way of increasing sense of belonging, introducing new participants and making them feel welcome. It was discussed how this can be utilised as a potential avenue for encouraging participation and diversity. Creating opportunities to socialise without necessarily getting into the water can help those who may be anxious to air their concerns but want to learn more. The aftermath of lockdowns was seen as a prime opportunity for this since many have missed out on socialising opportunities that were previously taken for granted.

- There was acknowledgement of the differences between grassroots and large franchise swimming organisations. With this in mind, approaches towards inclusion need to be tailored to the capacity of what smaller or larger organisations can achieve. For example, smaller independent swim schools were perceived to have more flexibility to act on inclusion whereas this is something lacking at larger swim school franchises due to having to deliver within previously established delivery frameworks.

- In a broader sense, it was agreed that action towards inclusion needed a holistic approach that considered the whole experience of swimming rather than focusing on solely on the in-water experience. From an open water swimming perspective, this would include support finding the right kit, packing up, travel, getting changed, walking, potentially navigating steps, and wading through the sand into the water.

Support

“The STA wellbeing booklet is AMAZING, and has made my small swim school more inclusive in the way we now market lessons... focusing on wellbeing, rather than learning to swim....”

- Helpful avenues for support discussed included webinars, workshops, educational booklets for children, formal training (CPDs), and hearing first person perspectives of real-life experiences to learn how other people from diverse backgrounds experience swimming. It was noted that swimming staff experienced inclusion issues as they taught first-hand, rather than learning about these issues from the onset of their training, which would enable them to be pre-armed with the knowledge on how to respond to or prevent incidents.

- The importance of collaboration in tackling inclusivity issues collectively rather than as individual organisations was discussed. Participants felt that collaboration between local swim schools could provide learning opportunities around issues affecting the demographics specific to the local area, and give others the chance to hear how certain challenges can be overcome by those who have managed this. This can help dispel passive attitudes and perceptions around inclusion work being too arduous to achieve.

- Participants felt more support and guidance was needed on how to initiate conversations around sensitive topics to minimise the risk of offending, and to help boost swimming staff's confidence to conduct these conversations.

- It was discussed that support from organisations such as the STA in facilitating partnerships with organisations that specialise in inclusion would be highly valued. In addition they could help with identifying swim schools which may struggle to access initiatives such as accreditation schemes.

- Efforts in distinguishing between the elite/competition side of swimming and the learning to swim side were welcomed. Support in ensuring swimming can be marketed from a health and wellbeing perspective, rather than through an elitist competition lens was encouraged. The group felt that the rules and regulations associated with elite competition swimming was one of the reasons for the drop off in participation when children reach a certain age.

CONCLUSIONS

1. STA members display attitudes and behaviours that are firmly within the 'supportive' and 'committed' personas of inclusive change*.

- STA members feel a strong sense of belonging within the swimming community. They feel valued and supported in respect to their role as teachers, and this theme extends to inclusion.
- They are able to adapt their sessions and their communication, and indicate willingness to continue their development and awareness of matters relating to diversity and inclusion.
- A clear sense of personal responsibility is shown, and a willingness to learn more and do more to activate on inclusion and for individuals to play their own part in progressing their own teaching and the activity of swimming in the realm of inclusion.
- STA members have also demonstrated an ability to reveal insecurities or vulnerabilities relating to diverse or specialist groups and communities, and in their approaches and understanding of diversity and inclusion.

2. STA members play a key role in fostering a sense of inclusion, embracing and celebrating diversity, making adaptations to the sport and welcoming diverse and under-represented groups and individuals into the activity.

- The key persona traits ('supportive', and 'committed') are admirable, and coupled with a clear and strong belief in the benefits of swimming as an activity and a skill 'for all', teachers have a clear awareness of some of the barriers and challenges faced by those that swimming may exclude, including the attitudes, perceptions and myths about the activity.
- Teachers are ready and willing to learn more and activate on inclusion from a personal perspective to ensure welcoming sport for all through inclusion, diversity and accessibility.

3. STA have inclusion as a key aim and have successfully embedded this into their strategy, communications and function as a trade/association body. This is noticed by the membership, and reflected in their own knowledge, understanding and application of inclusion.

- This is reflected amongst the membership, with a significant majority of respondents (71.7%) indicating that they had received information relating to inclusion from the STA over the course of the last year. The sentiment relayed to STA members is clear – with communications being 'celebratory'. Information is 'freely available' and that the STA 'care' about inclusion (page 8).
- The STA's commitment to inclusion is recognised amongst its membership and the STA have built a track record of raising awareness and making a clear case for inclusion (page 8).
- A very significant number of respondents 'feel comfortable' approaching the STA for support and help with inclusion (page 8). The STA are trusted and respected amongst their membership.

4. The STA have established their key and clear role in supporting and resourcing their membership to progress on this agenda, and to benefit swimming at large.

- Having built up a track record the STA are seen as a credible and reliable source of information amongst their membership, and with the ability to directly communicate to thousands of aquatic professionals, the STA are uniquely placed to advance the inclusion agenda across the activity of swimming.
- STA members have indicated their support needs and the key areas of support they would benefit from (page 20). These include further resources and guides, webinars, formal training, links to specialist groups (e.g. awareness or campaigning organisations), case studies and first-person perspectives, and the ability to hear from and connect with those who are from a particular background / from diverse backgrounds.

5. The qualities and benefits of swimming as an activity are not being realised by all, and there is doubt over diversity across swimming.

- STA members have a strong and resolute belief in swimming as an activity that everyone 'should' and 'can' engage in. However, this highlights a disparity since many disagree that it is an activity that everyone is (in practice) engaging in, is inclusive and that there is diversity across swimming (page 15).

6. Disparities exist in the communication and raising of awareness of certain specialist, diverse and under-represented groups / communities and their relationship with swimming.

- Whilst there was general awareness and recent observation of 'disability' and swimming, a very significant majority of respondents had not heard or seen anything related to diverse ethnic groups, religion, or LGBT+ in the context of swimming (page 10).
- Across ethnically diverse groups, there was a disparity between the 'black ethnic group' (49.2% aware of this in the context of inclusion & swimming) with 'other ethnic group' and 'Asian ethnic group' scoring much lower awareness levels (19% and 20% respectively).

**Deloitte's 2018 research on inclusion and strategic change identified 6 key and archetypal 'personas' that are typical across a set of individuals and their approach and attitude towards inclusion. The personas range from those who are against inclusion and may obstruct efforts towards D+, through to those who are committed and take personal responsibility (the latter trait and attitude, being the key distinguishing feature between those who are 'supportive' and those who are 'committed'). Full report: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/4209_Diversity-and-inclusion-revolution/DI_Diversity-and-inclusion-revolution.pdf*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from the survey and focus group, along with expertise from ukactive's head of inclusion, have been drawn together to make the following recommendations. These next steps aim to help improve diversity and inclusion in the swimming sector to ensure swimming is an accessible activity for all.



1. FURTHER ESTABLISH THE STA'S ROLE AS A TRADE/ASSOCIATION BODY IN ENCOURAGING AND FOSTERING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- ▶ Share the insight and themes from the STA / ukactive inclusion study with stakeholders across the swimming sector.
- ▶ Explore a set of criteria or minimum standard for diversity and inclusion across the STA membership.
- ▶ Explore the embedding of diversity, inclusion and equality / equity into basic, fundamental qualifications issued and administered by the STA.
- ▶ Explore the establishment of 'affinity networks' (groups with a shared background, interest or goal) or inclusion 'best practice' forums.
- ▶ Explore the establishment of key role models and ambassadors across the STA membership (and from within the STA) to continue to promote the inclusion agenda.



2. UTILISE DATA AND INSIGHT

- ▶ Explore a programme of insight gathering and data collection to furnish the STA membership with up to date and relevant information relating to diversity and inclusion.
- ▶ Begin to collect equality monitoring information amongst STA members to understand the demographic backgrounds of those across the membership.
- ▶ Continue insight gathering relating to perceptions, attitudes, motivations across the STA membership (with regards to inclusion and diversity).



3. DISTRIBUTE INFORMATION AND DIVERSIFY COMMUNICATION

- ▶ Actively seek to uprate and address the level of communication and raise awareness of specific under represented and diverse groups – notably ethnically diverse communities, religious groups and LGBT+ individuals.
- ▶ Continue to ensure visibility of inclusion across all STA events and communication channels.
- ▶ Continue to celebrate diversity and inclusion, and role model inclusive behaviours and attitudes, as figureheads and influencers across the swimming landscape.
- ▶ Actively seek examples of good practice across the STA membership.
- ▶ Recognise and utilise the unique platform and communication channels that the STA maintains.
- ▶ Actively seek and provide a platform for role models across swimming (from under-represented groups).



4. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

- ▶ Establish links with representative and campaign organisations for each protected characteristic / specialist group.
- ▶ Convene specialist groups and the STA membership to raise awareness and continue to progress the inclusion agenda.

