



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Diversity and Equality Report 2015-16

in response to the Equality Act 2010

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Foreword by Karen Pierce, Chief Operating Officer and FCO Board Diversity Champion

The FCO is a strong advocate of diversity and inclusion in Government. We want to look more like the country we serve. And we want to take advantage of the different insights and understanding that diversity brings. Diversity in our staff and an inclusive approach gives us an advantage in the way we consider and challenge issues. A diverse workforce and inclusive practices enhances the UK's reputation overseas and promotes our policy as well as our corporate goals. Promoting diversity and inclusion helps us attract, retain and motivate talented staff from every part of the UK and helps those staff develop in the best way that they can. This is critical to the success of the FCO as a branch of Government.

In 2008 we set ambitious targets for the Senior Management Structure (SMS) on Gender, Ethnicity and Disability. When the targets were reviewed in 2014 we were one of the first Whitehall Departments to set a target for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT). You will read of our progress against those targets in this report. Targets are a useful tool in increasing diversity, but this is not policy by numbers. Diversity also means removing the barriers to getting the right person into the right job, regardless of background.

I am proud of our achievements this year:

- > In 2008 our SMS was only 17.5% female; this year we passed 30%.
- > In 2008 we had 22 female Heads of Mission. We now have 50 female Heads of Mission and Posts.
- > We have appointed a number of first ever female Ambassadors to countries including Greece and Italy.
- > An FCO fine room has been renamed to celebrate Dame Anne Warburton, Britain's first serving female Ambassador.
- > The FCO LGBT Staff Association, FLAGG, was recognised in the Inclusive Networks Top 100 Awesome Networks for 2015.
- > The FCO was awarded the "Best New Flexible Working Initiative" from Working Families in 2015.
- > The FCO Disability Staff Association, Enable, successfully got hundreds of staff to change their font size and colour to make it more accessible to all staff; and we are making good progress towards fully accessible buildings in London and across the world.
- > We launched a bespoke development programme aimed at junior BME staff to diversify our talent pipeline.
- > Diversity data recording rates rose significantly over the past year, with LGBT and Disability rising over 30%.

There is still progress to be made but I am confident the FCO will continue moving in this positive direction.



Introduction

This report is part of the FCO's response to the Equality Act. It is intended to offer data on the equality impact of the FCO's employment practices and activities.

The *Equality Act 2010* creates a public sector equality duty to:

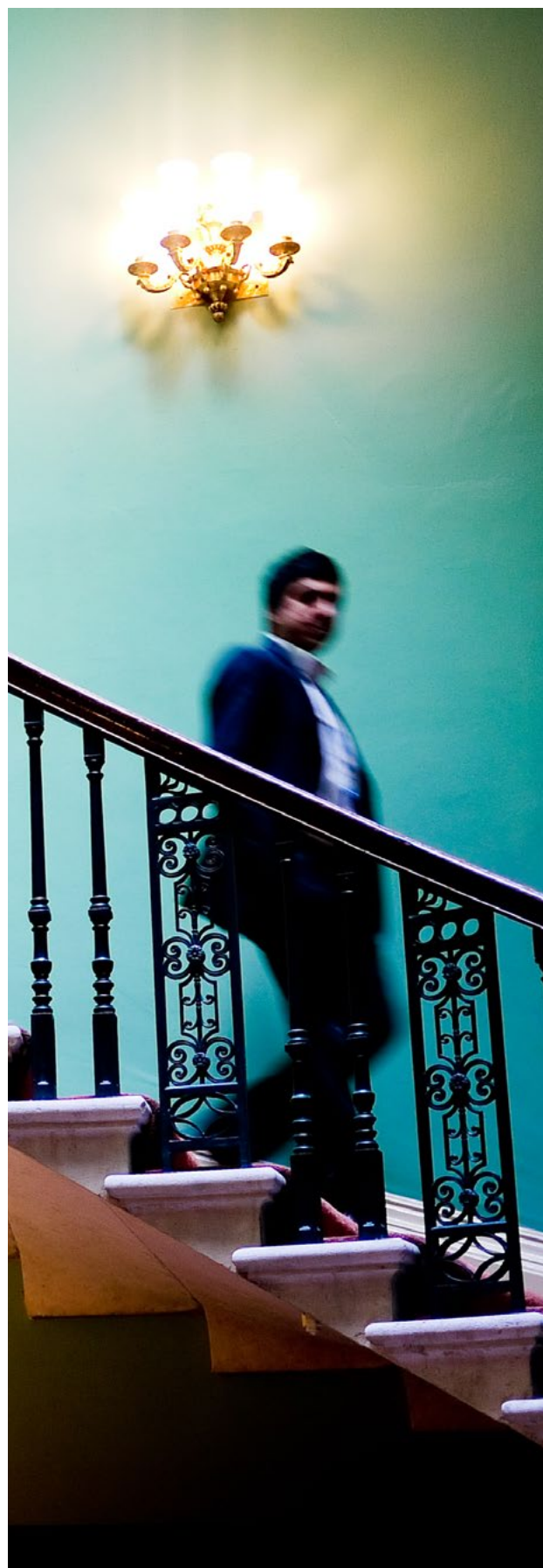
- > Consider how different people will be affected by our activities
- > Deliver services which, while efficient and effective, are accessible to all and meet diverse needs
- > Have **due regard** for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people (both employees and others) who share a **protected characteristic** and those who do not.

Protected characteristics covered by the equality duty are:

- > age
- > disability
- > gender reassignment
- > marriage and civil partnership
- > pregnancy and maternity
- > race (embracing ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality)
- > religion or belief
- > sex
- > sexual orientation

Note: The FCO has not incurred the expense of collecting data specifically for the purpose of this publication other than staff resource. These are online publications and therefore no additional printing costs have been incurred.

The majority of data presented represents a snapshot of the FCO as at 31 March 2016. Where data represents a different time period it is highlighted.



Section 1 – The FCO's employees

The FCO has two different categories of employees. The UK Diplomatic Service and other Home Civil Servants working for the FCO are known collectively as *UK-based staff*. These staff take a range of jobs during their careers both in the UK and at diplomatic posts abroad. But the majority of the FCO's employees are hired to perform specific functions at individual posts abroad and are known as *Local Staff*. It is unusual for these employees to transfer between diplomatic missions or to work in the UK.

The diversity data in this report does not include FCO Services or Wilton Park, Executive Agencies of the FCO, or staff working for the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

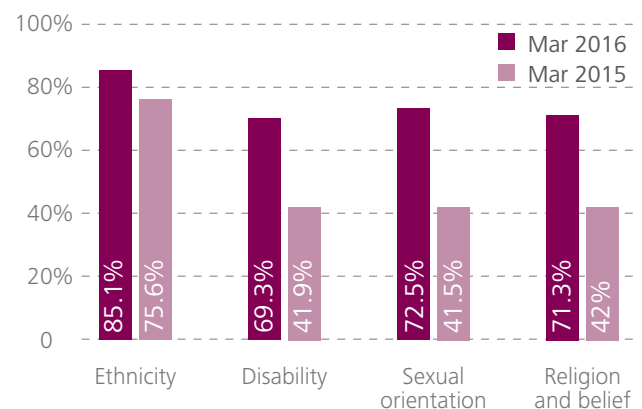
Both UK-based and Local Staff are graded into a hierarchy as follows:

Generic UK Civil Service Grade	Foreign Office Grades	
	<i>UK based Staff</i>	<i>Local staff</i>
Senior Civil Service (SCS)	Senior Management Structure (SMS)	SMS(L)
Grade 6	D7	D7(L)
Grade 7	D6	D6(L)
Senior Executive Officer	C5	C5(L)
Higher Executive Officer	C4	C4(L)
Executive Officer	B3	B3(L)
Administrative Officer	A2	A2(L)
Administrative Assistant	A1	A1(L)
Non-Professional functions	N/A	S1-S3

Local Staff are able to record their ethnicity, disability status, flexible working patterns and caring responsibilities but we do not require them to do so. This is due to sensitivities linked to the recording of some characteristics in a number of countries. Recording rates amongst Local Staff are therefore far too low to enable us to report on the representation of different groups. As a result, data on gender is included in this report, but not data on other diversity characteristics. However, the diversity of our Local Staff, who come from countries around the world, is something we celebrate.

The recording rates amongst UK-based staff, including those who have stated that they do not wish to declare are as follows:

FCO UK staff diversity reporting rates



Recorded data

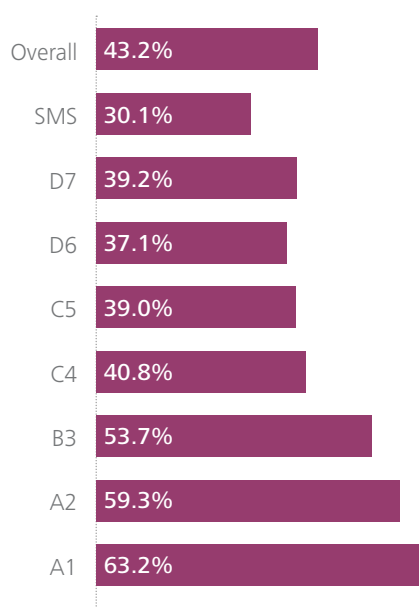
The FCO collects and holds human resources data on a centralised Management Information (MI) system. The gender and age of all staff is automatically recorded on this database, as is maternity leave when taken. UK-based staff are asked to add information about their ethnicity, disability status, flexible working patterns, sexual orientation and religion or belief. In 2015, staff were asked also to report their caring responsibilities. Supplying this data is voluntary. Although the FCO encourages staff to supply it, declaration rates vary by characteristic. To protect the privacy of staff who do not wish to record any of this personal information, it is possible for individuals to record on the database that they do not wish to declare.

Profile of the workforce

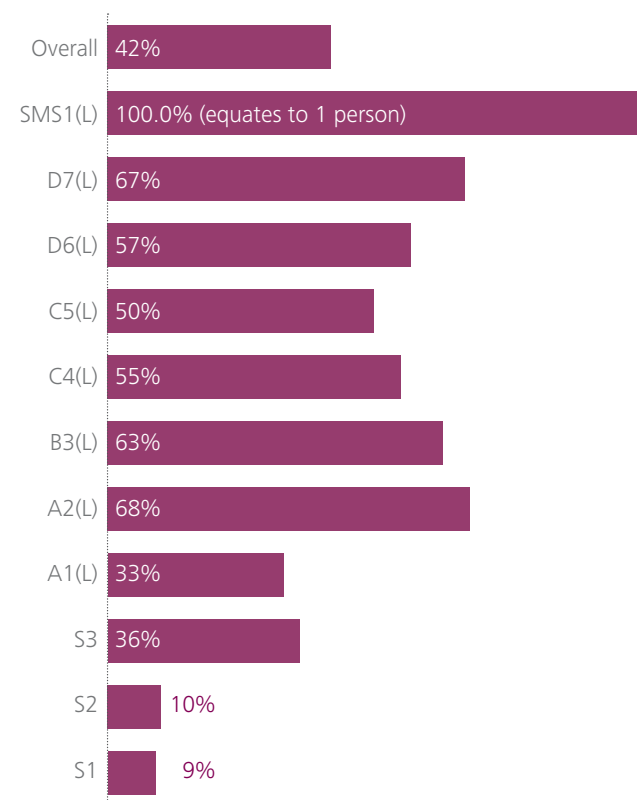
Gender profile of the workforce

The FCO employs almost 12,500 people, a third of whom are UK based and two thirds Local staff.

Proportion of female UK based staff by grade

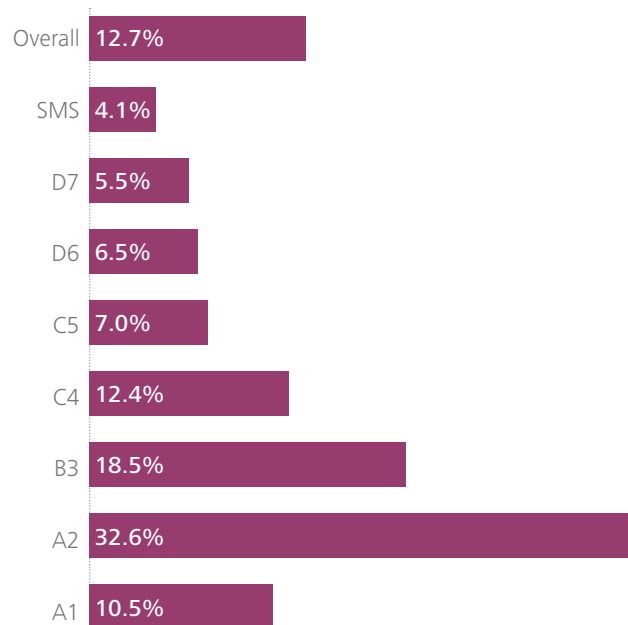


Proportion of female Local staff by grade



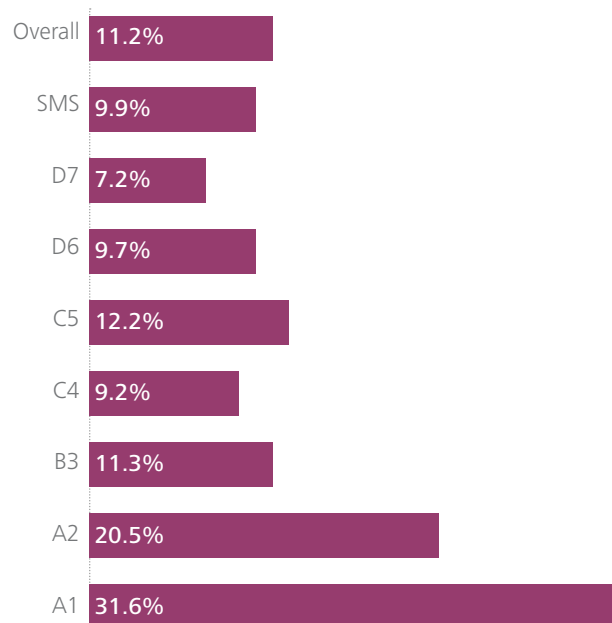
Ethnic profile of the workforce

Proportion of BME UK based staff by grade



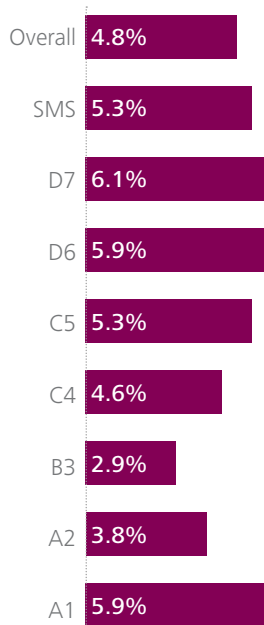
Disability profile of the workforce

Proportion of disabled UK based staff by grade



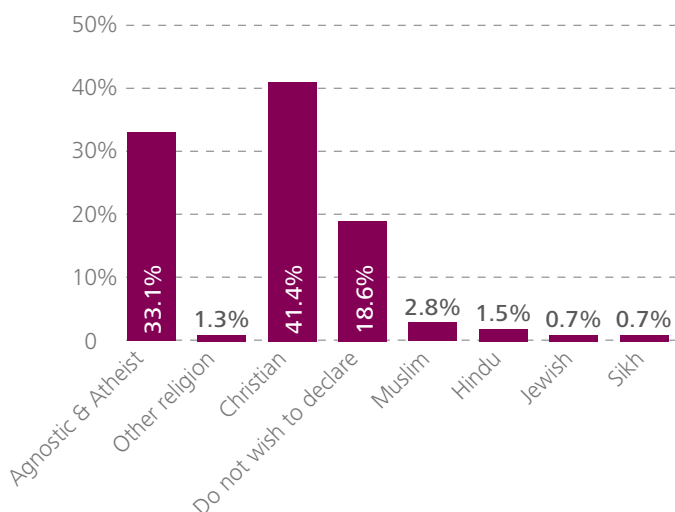
Sexual orientation profile of the workforce

Proportion of LGB UK based staff by grade



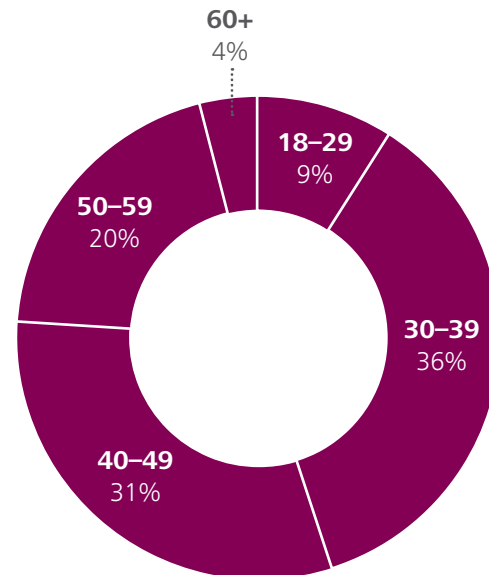
Religion and belief profile of the workforce

Religion and belief profile of UK based workforce

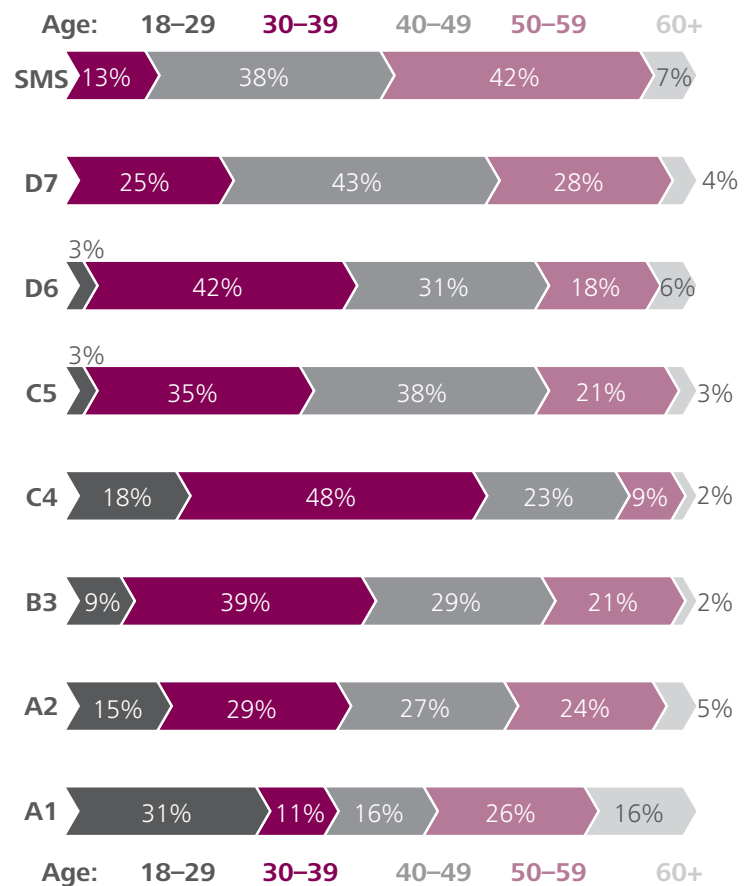


Age profile of the workforce

UK based staff profile by age

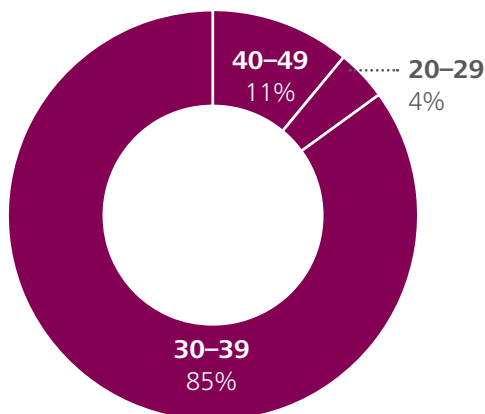


UK based staff profile by age and grade

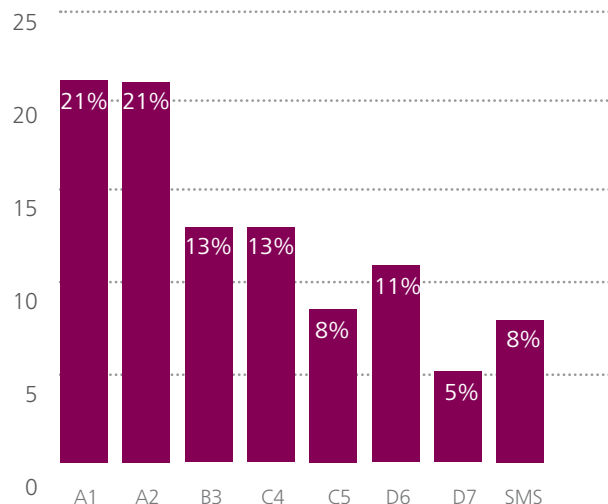


Maternity Leave profile

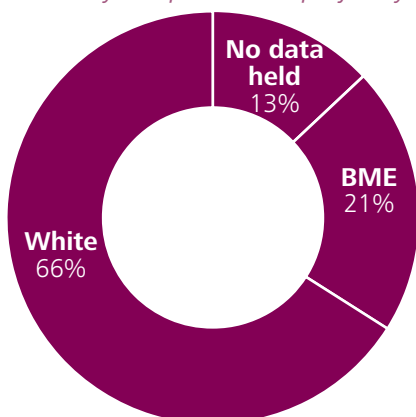
Maternity/Adoption leave profile by age



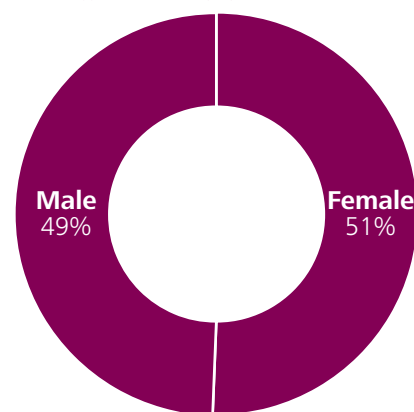
UK based staff leavers by grade



Maternity/Adoption leave profile by ethnicity



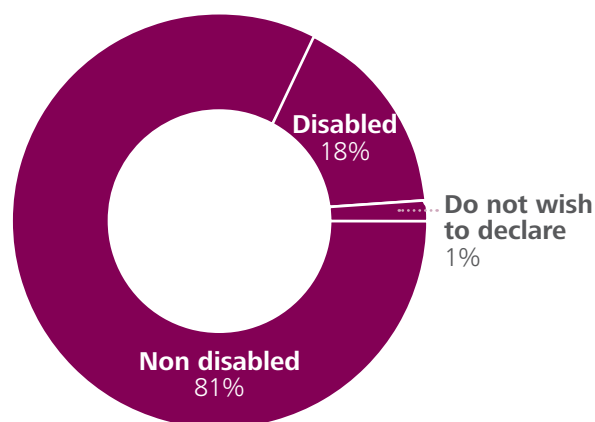
UK staff leavers by gender

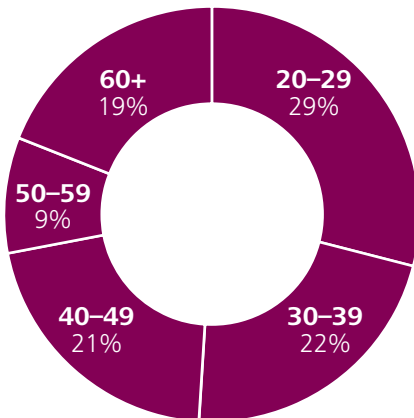
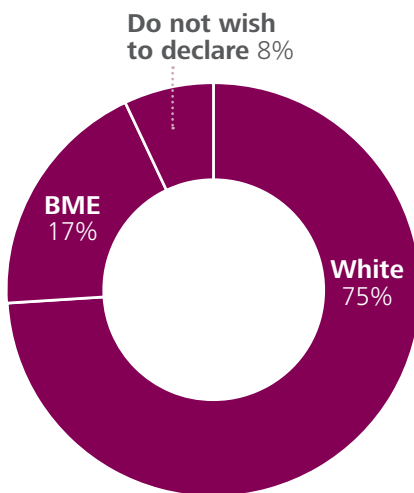


Staff Retention

The figures below show the grade, gender, ethnicity, disability and age percentage breakdown of staff that left the organisation due to retirement, resignation, termination of employment, or through career breaks, permanent transfers to other departments or due to death in service. Overall 3.5% of the FCO's UK-based staff left the FCO between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016.

UK staff leavers by disability, based on a 55% reporting rate



UK staff leavers by age*UK staff leavers by ethnicity, based on 79% reporting rate*

Recruitment

The FCO seeks to recruit talented British nationals from all backgrounds and from across the UK. We want to ensure that we are the best Diplomatic Service we can be and to represent more effectively the country we serve. In line with the Civil Service recruitment freeze, we only recruit to the Diplomatic Fast Stream and other business critical roles. We are following and implementing the Civil Service Recruitment Principles of fair and open competition.

Progress in 2015–16

Fast Stream and other specialist recruitment

- > 30 Fast Stream Band C entrants and 36 specialists (including two Fast Track Commercial Apprentices) recruited at various grades in 2015-16.
- > 42% of Fast Stream entrants were female, 35% declared a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background, and 10% declared a disability. Of the 2014 intake, 39% were female, 12% were BME, and 6% disabled.
- > Our university roadshow sought to enhance the diversity of our Fast Stream recruitment, supported by a digital campaign: #beforeignoffice. This targeted universities with a high proportion of students from BME and low socio-economic backgrounds.

Band A (Administrative Officer) and B (Executive Officer) recruitment

- > Exceptionally recruited 44 staff at Band A, including two apprentices, and eight staff at B3. This recruitment - the first at these grades since 2010 and 2006 respectively - aimed to fill gaps and to maintain the diversity of the talent pipeline.
- > Worked with community and faith-based organisations and schools and colleges in areas of social economic disadvantage to attract people from diverse backgrounds.
- > Piloted a relocation allowance to encourage more applicants from outside Greater London.
- > Of the new recruits, 44% were women, 17% declared as BME and 10% declared a disability.

Interns

- > Our work experience scheme encourages people of all backgrounds to consider the FCO as an employer. 52 interns were employed. 33 interns worked for between 7 and 12 months with a further 19 working between 2 and 12 weeks.
- > 57% of interns were female, 30% declared as BME, and 6% declared a disability. Future recruitment activities will see us recruit further apprentices as part of the Government's goal of 3 million apprenticeships by 2020.

Experience of working in the FCO as a Summer Intern

“The summer placement gave me a truly valuable, in depth and realistic experience of the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Working in the Human Rights and Democracy Department, I worked on real projects. I saw the things I had been studying in action, and was able to gain a greater understanding of the way our government works to fulfil its aims through international institutions. The placement gave me a great sense of the realities of working in the public sector, and enhanced my understanding of how British foreign policy is created and implemented, as well as cementing my intention of devoting my career to it! I wholeheartedly recommend you apply.”

—Rebecca Viney, University of York:
Social and Political Sciences

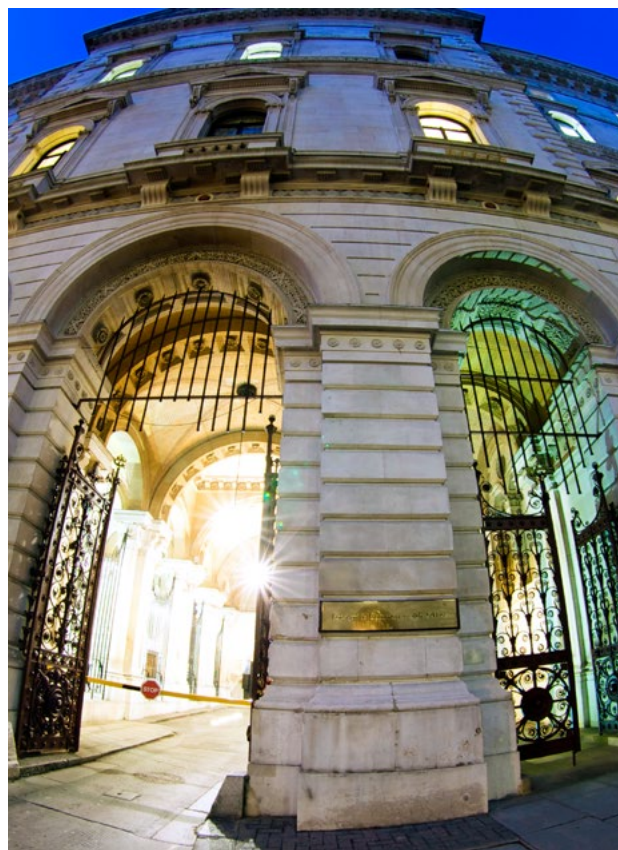
Equality of Pay

FCO pay is determined by a range of factors including grade, performance and length of time in employment. As part of the FCO’s commitment to putting equal pay into practice, regular monitoring of the impact of pay practices is carried out, including Annual Equal Pay Audits.

The table below illustrates that when comparisons are made within roles of the same grade (of equal work) when broken down by grade the average pay gaps in the Delegated Grades of the FCO are between 0% and 2.71%. The overall average (mean) pay gap across the FCO is 13.61%. This is mainly the result of the composition of the FCO workforce, with more male staff in more senior grades whose salaries are therefore higher. The overall mean gender pay gap in the Civil Service is 12.8%.

FCO Average Base Pay for UK-based staff by gender

Grade	Average Female Pay	Average Male Pay	% Average Pay gap
SMS 3&4	£120,512	£134,707	-10.54%
SMS 2	£87,754	£90,198	-2.71%
SMS 1	£68,837	£68,783	+0.08%
D7	£57,931	£58,878	-1.61%
D6	£49,114	£49,031	+0.17%
C5	£35,535	£36,317	-2.15%
C4	£29,364	£29,525	-0.55%
B3	£24,796	£24,759	+0.15%
A2	£21,138	£20,849	+1.39%
A1	£18,520	£18,520	0%



FCO Average Base Pay for UK-based staff by Ethnicity

The table below is using the data based on those who have reported their ethnicity. The comparison by delegated grade shows pay gaps of between 0% and 2.2%. The average salary pay gap is 24.49%. The workforce comparison data shows that this is because of the smaller proportion of disclosed BME staff at more senior grades.

Grade	Average Minority Ethnic Pay	Average White Pay	% Average Pay gap
SMS 3&4	£114,515	£130,724	-12.4%
SMS 2	£88,545	£89,486	-1.05%
SMS 1	£68,602	£68,975	-0.54%
D7	£57,492	£58,557	-1.82%
D6	£49,982	£48,905	+2.2%
C5	£35,374	£35,984	-1.7%
C4	£29,073	£29,460	-1.31%
B3	£24,546	£24,834	-1.16%
A2	£21,105	£20,997	+0.51%
A1	£18,520	£18,520	0%

FCO 2015 Staff Engagement Survey

Alongside the Civil Service, all FCO staff can take part in a Staff Engagement Survey (SES) in October each year. The 2015 SES had a 79% response rate. The FCO's overall engagement score (based on five questions which show how positive, attached and motivated staff feel) increased one percent from 67% to 68%. This engagement score is 10% above the Civil Service average.

As part of the survey, staff are also asked if they have been subjected to bullying/harassment or discrimination

(BHD), at work, in the previous year. Reports of bullying and harassment across the FCO have remained flat at 12% since 2011. The discrimination figure increased from 13% to 14%. Very few demographic groups appear to be more vulnerable to BHD than others, with the notable exception of staff with a disability. 2015 saw a positive drop in staff with a disability reporting BHD from 2014. But the LGBT discrimination scores disappointingly rose by 4%.

The results shown below are broken down by age, gender, disability status, sexual orientation and ethnicity. However, some staff did not supply this demographic data, which means that the disaggregate data can appear in some cases to be incompatible with the overall results.

	Discriminated against			Bullied or Harassed		
	2015	2014	2013	2015	2014	2013
Overall	14%	13%	13%	12%	12%	12%
Gender						
Male	11%	12%	11%	9%	10%	10%
Female	14%	13%	13%	12%	12%	13%
Disability						
No	13%	12%	12%	11%	11%	12%
Yes	21%	27%	29%	18%	23%	23%
Black or Minority Ethnic						
Non BME	11%	11%	11%	9%	11%	11%
BME	14%	14%	14%	12%	11%	12%
Sexual Orientation						
Straight	12%	12%	12%	11%	11%	11%
LGBT	17%	13%	16%	14%	14%	13%
Age						
20-24	11%	13%	11%	13%	12%	10%
25-29	13%	12%	12%	12%	11%	12%
30-34	13%	14%	12%	12%	12%	12%
35-39	13%	13%	13%	11%	10%	12%
40-44	12%	12%	12%	9%	10%	12%
45-49	11%	11%	11%	9%	10%	11%
50-54	12%	11%	12%	10%	12%	10%
55-59	9%	9%	10%	8%	7%	9%
60-64	7%	10%	10%	4%	10%	7%
65+	2%	6%	10%	8%	8%	6%

The scores on BHD continue to be above the Civil Service average. We take complaints of BHD seriously and recognise that we have a specific set of challenges not common to the wider civil service.

The FCO is a global organisation and our workforce reflects this. Adapting to differing cultures is a fundamental part of our work, but operating on a worldwide platform can create barriers to effectively addressing BHD.

Encouraging Posts to adopt a best practice approach in supporting all staff, also means expecting all staff to appreciate and understand our values. In some countries there is a difference between our values and those of the society we are working in. Protecting our staff and ensuring that they continue to feel supported can be difficult. We are committed to proactively supporting staff by providing clear information about the situation in-country and through our 24-hour Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Underpinning this, we have internal guidance and a global network of BHD “points of contact” in place to respond to staff concerns. In 2016 the FCO Management Board appointed a Board Champion to reduce BHD and lead work on creating a more inclusive culture within the organisation.

FCO Diversity Policy and Engagement

The FCO continues to increase the diversity of our workforce in the UK and of our representation overseas. This includes visible diversity but also promoting diversity of thought, skills and background.

We have targets for the diversity of our Senior Management Structure (SMS) to be achieved by October 2019. Progress made towards these targets can be seen below:

Target	2019 target (% SMS)	31 March 2015	31 March 2016
Female	39%	27%	30.1%
BME	7%	4.1% (based on 86.9% SMS recording rate)	4.1% (based on 92.6% SMS recording rate)
Disabled	7%	4.7% (of total SMS due to low reporting rates)	9.9% (based on 63.6% SMS recording rate)
LGBT	6%	3.4% (of total SMS due to low reporting rates)	5.3% (based on 72.1% recording rate)

In April 2015 the FCO Board agreed five new diversity priorities. Strong progress was made against all:

- Driving a step change in leadership and line manager capability and behaviour on diversity including diversity of thought:** Over 85% of SMS staff completed face-to-face unconscious bias by 31 March 2016; the Board and senior leaders made specific #iwill pledges to support diversity and inclusion; in the Staff Engagement Survey, our leadership scores increased by 7% and Leadership Statement scores were in the top three across the Civil Service.
- Providing further support for talent from under-represented groups:** 27 FCO staff secured places on targeted Learning & Development schemes, including a new talent development programme for BME staff. Successful university outreach roadshow (see case study below) and digital campaign reached out to diverse potential applicants.
- Improving the experience of, and support for, staff with disabilities:** The FCO has taken forward a number of initiatives to improve the support available to disabled staff (see Disability Policy section below).

Case study

#beforeignoffice: attracting a talented and diverse workforce and representing today's Britain



Photo: Belinda Lewis, then Deputy Head of Mission in Baghdad (now Deputy High of Mission in Karachi and Director of UK Trade and Investment in Pakistan) participating in the 2015–16 #beforeignoffice campaign

4. **Improving the FCO's diversity data to inform future actions:** A campaign to improve Diversity Data Recording rates led to significant voluntary increases of 9% on ethnicity, 26% on disability, and 29% on sexual orientation, giving a much more accurate basis on which to target interventions.
5. **Agreeing a new 'business deal' with staff associations:** This helped provide better support for our 11 Staff Associations.

Now in its third year, the 2015-16 FCO university roadshow aimed to encourage students to apply for the Diplomatic Fast Stream by explaining the FCO's work in the UK and overseas. We targeted universities across all English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a high proportion of Black Minority Ethnic and low socio-economic background students. FCO participants included the Permanent Under Secretary, Board members, Heads of Mission and recent entrants. The FCO Open House Weekend in September 2015 and a recruitment event in January 2016 opened the doors of King Charles Street to prospective applicants.

To reach out to a broader audience ahead of the Fast Stream application deadline, we engaged via social media with a live one hour Q&A reaching 54,709 accounts followed by a Fast Stream Q&A reaching 25,097 accounts together with videos on Snapchat and vlogs. Our #beforeignoffice "whiteboard" campaign highlighted the diversity of our current staff. In 2016-17, we will implement the Bridge Group's recommendations to engage further with students, schools and applicants from diverse backgrounds.

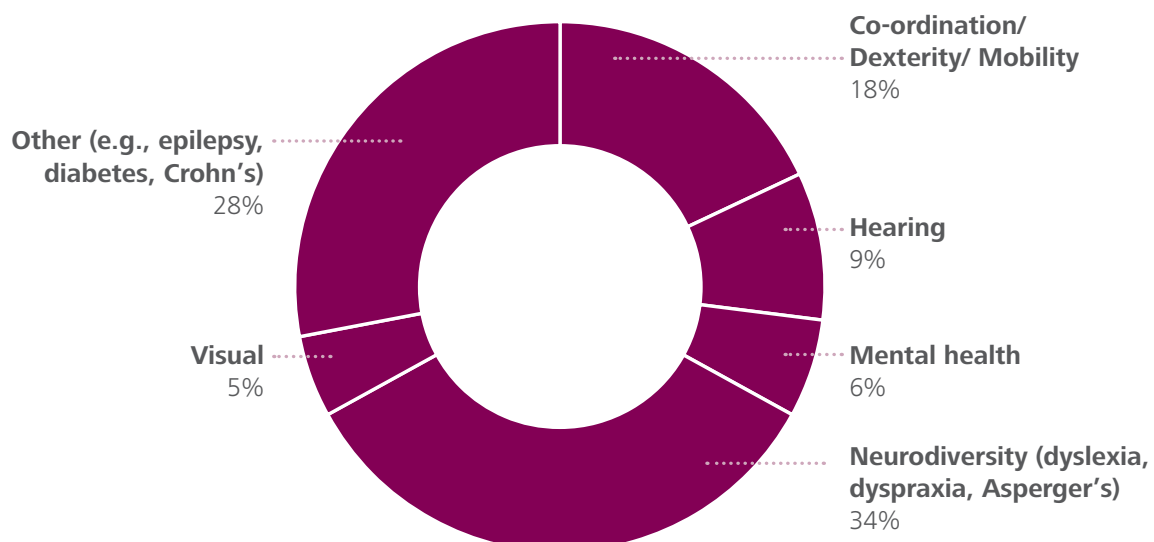
Disability Policy and Support in the FCO

Disability support for UK based staff is provided by the Disability Policy & Support Team (DPST) based in our Human Resources Directorate (HRD). The DPST work closely with the (DWP-led) Civil Service Workplace Adjustment Service (CWAS), in parallel, DPST also use the contracted DWP disability provider OH Assist for the provision of expert advice and support for staff in line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Terms and conditions for Local Staff working at FCO Posts abroad are governed by local law but the FCO encourages Posts to adopt a best practice approach in terms of support for their Local Staff, with advice and support on disability issues available to them on a request basis.

Disabilities disclosed by UK-based staff cover a broad range of conditions, including neuro-diverse conditions (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia & Asperger's), mobility issues and hearing or visual impairments. Further details of the workforce who have disclosed disabilities are provided below. The provision of workplace adjustments for disabled staff can include an expert disability assessment; the supply of specialised office equipment or provision of IT software and appropriate training. More general awareness training and support is also available to disabled staff, their managers and (where appropriate) their team colleagues. Staff who are profoundly deaf or with a significant hearing impairment can additionally request the support of qualified British

Breakdown of disclosed disabilities of FCO UK Based staff



Sign Language (BSL) interpreters & Lip speakers

The FCO is also a member of the Business Disability Forum (BDF), a not-for-profit member organisation that makes it easier and more rewarding to do business with and employ disabled people in the UK. In September 2015 the FCO again hosted the Business Disability Forum roundtable meeting designed to get disability support teams from across Whitehall departments together to hear about the latest developments on disability issues and to network and share best practice.

FCO Staff Associations

The FCO's Diversity and Inclusion team and senior management work closely with staff networks and with the Diplomatic Service Families Association (DSFA) to understand and address issues faced by staff. As part of this we support a group of senior Champions who provide staff networks with coaching, strategic direction and champion the issues they represent with senior leadership.

Our staff networks are:

FCO Women: has seen a 30% increase in membership. Over 1000 votes were cast from the FCO in elections to select a new chairperson and steering group. It has run master-classes bringing together senior staff and women from across the FCO. It has run internal speaker series including with women who have served in challenging posts and external speaker events including an International Women's Day reception marking the 70th anniversary of the first female entrants to the Diplomatic Service, a panel discussion with female members of the House of Lords and events with British Olympian and Paralympian medallists. FCO Women has increased engagement across the FCO network through more regular communications and new local associations opening-up in the Asia Pacific Region and Brazil and built links across Whitehall and outside to share best practice and do joint events.

FLAGG: was awarded the overall FCO Staff Award for Excellence (voted for by staff) and shortlisted for Employee Network of the Year at the European Diversity Awards and the British LGBT Awards; organised a high-profile first gathering of UK LGBT Heads of Mission; set up a learning set providing LGBT staff an opportunity and safe space to share experiences, interact and develop; engaged in internal and external

communication through blogs and Twitter (@FCOflagg); promoted LGBT issues through events (eg Mark Gatiss, LGBT History Month); and developed LGBT role models through an in-house Stonewall training course.

Enable: has changed the profile of people with disabilities in the FCO, helping raise diversity recording rates. It's given greater visibility on disability issues across the whole organisation. Activity includes a review of the Spain network (with the Business Disability Forum), disability learning sets, a global community site with 200+ members, guest speaker events and blogs. Increasing awareness of topics like stammering, mental health and UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities has helped the FCO turn a corner with influence and support from the FCO Board.

Minority Ethnic Action Group: is a forum for FCO staff primarily from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. We are passionate about enhancing diversity across the organisation to make it look and feel ethnically inclusive to everyone who works in it and with it. MEAG works with its members, the FCO Board, HR and across Whitehall to: support the development and progression of BAME staff; celebrate our cultural diversity; provide a safe space for all staff to talk about race, inclusion and cultural diversity; and offer practical support to help the FCO find real solutions to overcome barriers for BAME staff development.

Flexible Working Network: provides advice and support to individuals and departments on Flexible Working options; supports the job-share register and coffee mornings; and runs events promoting FW including during National Work-Life week in September 2015.

FCO/DSFA (Diplomatic Service Families Association)

Carers' Network: raising awareness in the FCO of the issues faced by those with caring responsibilities, providing advice on how to manage a work/care balance situation including when overseas e.g. with elderly parents at home. A Carer's Charter setting out the FCO's commitment as an employer to supporting carers in the workplace was being agreed for 2016.

Single Parents Network: pursues casework, supports and advocates for staff members and monitors other areas - accommodation, travel package, post reports - to level the playing field and remove barriers to single parents working for the FCO.

Mothers' Support Network (MSN): a peer support group offering advice from personal experience on some of the challenges that parenthood can bring.

Religion and Belief Group: manages the FCO's Multi-Faith Prayer Room and undertakes a programme of events to raise awareness of the way in which religion impacts the life of staff.

Wellbeing Network: The Wellbeing Network was launched in June 2015 and offers support, guidance and advice on any issues which affect FCO staff wellbeing. The Network regularly runs events in the UK to promote good mental health in the workplace and help staff recognise and address personal or organisational pressures which can cause undue stress. The Network also acts as a point of contact and source of information, advising colleagues of the various paths available to them for professional support within and outside the organisation. The Network also arranged for the opening of staff wellbeing rooms in all FCO buildings in the UK.



Section 2 – Regard for Equality within the FCO's Activities

Foreign Policy

The promotion of human rights, including equalities issues, is at the heart of British foreign policy. This means all FCO Posts have a responsibility to monitor and raise human rights in their host countries. Government Ministers and FCO staff raise our concerns with host governments and where possible take action on individual cases and lobby for changes in discriminatory practices and laws.

The FCO publishes an [Annual Human Rights Report](#) each spring which covers our global work on human rights issues over the preceding year.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Worldwide, we have continued to promote the right to freedom of religion or belief in four ways. We have: acted through multilateral organisations and with a wide range of international partners; raised issues bilaterally; funded targeted project work; and continued to improve the religious literacy of our own staff, to equip them better to engage with faith groups and to appreciate the many ways in which the right to freedom of religion or belief may be violated.

In the multilateral system we have worked to ensure that the two resolutions on this subject—the EU-sponsored text on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the parallel text led by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on combating religious intolerance—were again adopted by consensus at the March session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and then at the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

Over the course of the year, every FCO minister has raised individual cases where individuals' freedom of religion or belief has been violated and discriminatory legislation and practices in the countries for which they are responsible.

Despite the intrinsic difficulty of designing effective projects on this topic, we increased the number of

good quality bids to our Human Rights and Democracy Programme Fund. Amongst other projects, we funded a programme in the **Middle East/ North Africa** region to help teachers develop lesson plans including the concept of freedom of religion or belief, and worked to improve dialogue between religious groups in **Sri Lanka**. We also continued our contribution to the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). This is a new global fund, which aims to draw on resources from both public and private sectors, dedicated to building resilience against violent extremist agendas through local community based projects.

We continued to run a programme of religious literacy training for our staff, holding a training course three times in the year and continuing our regular series of lunchtime seminars. Topics covered this year have included Sikhism and a presentation from the US government's first ever Special Representative to Muslim communities. A prominent speaker in this series was the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar.

Women's rights

The promotion and protection of women's rights is enshrined in international human rights law, and we believe that it is essential for stable and prosperous societies that women fully participate in political, economic and social life. Women's rights are at the centre of our human rights work globally. Whether by supporting projects that tackle violence against women and girls; promoting the equal representation of women in political and public life; or lobbying to challenge discriminatory laws and practices, we are making a difference for women and girls the world over.

The recently agreed UN Sustainable Development Goals demonstrate a clear commitment to ending discrimination and to ensuring women's full and active participation in decision-making (SDG5). Gender equality is also vital to the realisation of all development goals and to poverty reduction. Without the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace-building, there

can be no sustainable and equitable peace. Tackling those issues is a priority for the UK and central to our work to advance gender equality and empower women.

2015 marked the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which set out an agenda for women's empowerment as well as the 15th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which underlined that women's rights had to be at the heart of any successful search for peace and security.

FCO officials attend regular meetings with other UK government departments to ensure that all our efforts are consistent and complementary, including meetings chaired by the Home Office to chart progress against the government's Violence Against Women Action Plan. Within this plan, the FCO has specific commitments, which include raising awareness of forced marriage, supporting the ratification of and carrying out lobbying in support of the full implementation of the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

We are committed to supporting innovative new projects in the poorest countries and working with international organisations and governments overseas to promote women's rights globally and reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls. In 2015 the Human Rights and Democracy Programme fund spent over £550,000 on projects aimed at promoting women's rights including political participation in the peace process in the Philippines and engaging male leaders and community members as active promoters of women's rights in Afghanistan. In 2016 we will continue to support women's rights projects through the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy.

The FCO has also supported the "Week of Women" initiative which aims to identify and bring together future women leaders and promote women's economic and political leadership. Over 60 international delegates, nominated by our Embassies and High Commissions, attended "Week of Women" events including the Women of the Future Summit and Awards ceremony. We will also be supporting the Week of Women again this year from 14-18 November.

The FCO marked International Women's Day on 8 March with Missions in all regions staging a number of innovative events designed to further women's political and economic empowerment.

As part of an FCO-funded project run by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, women

MPs from across the Middle East and North Africa met at the Moroccan Parliament to discuss issues of gender equality and how, as parliamentarians, they can best support efforts to tackle violence against women and girls across the region.

Our High Commission in New Delhi launched further local language versions of a manual, developed alongside local women's rights NGOs, academics, and legal-practitioners, which sets out local best practice on confronting sexual violence against women and girls. In London we ran a social media campaign inviting men and women from around the world to share their views of what gender equality meant to them through posting a video or message of their own using #inmywords. Over 70 videos were uploaded to social media.

For the whole month of March, FCO officials in China ran the #Be Yourself Campaign aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women to be able to achieve whatever they want to achieve. The launch event, hosted by British Ambassador to China Barbara Woodward, brought together a panel of women and men to discuss how everyone can participate in furthering progress towards a more equal society. Over twenty events took place in cities around China throughout in support of the #Be Yourself Campaign.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights

The authorities in many countries actively persecute LGBT people. In 73 countries consensual same-sex relations remains criminalised, and even where homosexuality is legal people still face discrimination and violence. We believe that the international community must stand firm against all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and that we should all accept, respect and value diversity. This is why we and like-minded countries work through the UN to address discrimination and violence against LGBT people, and why we work with individual countries to encourage them to review, revise and abolish discriminatory laws and policies.

We continue to support civil society activists through soft-diplomacy and project work. In 2015 FCO supported a number of projects, including improving the

prosecution of homophobic hate crimes in Montenegro and supporting an online platform for LGBT people to access various services, including legal and health advice, across the Caribbean region. This year we will continue to support LGBT rights projects through the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy.

UK diplomats have raised concerns about legislation in Belize, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria and Uganda. A positive example of UK influence is that lobbying by the British High Commission led to changes to Mozambique's Penal Code, decriminalising "acts against nature", widely interpreted as referring to homosexuality.

In 2015, UK Posts around the world marked Pride in a number of ways including a "Love is Great" campaign led by the British Embassy in Vienna to coincide with Eurovision week, a "Love is Great" banner and Facebook postings from by our Embassy in Bucharest and a speech by the UK's Ambassador to the Dominican Republic stressing the fact that tolerance, non-discrimination and a respect for LGBT people are UK values.

British Embassies and High Commissions in over 70 countries worked with the British Council and British Film Institute as part of the "fiveFilms4Freedom" social media campaign which promoted awareness and tolerance of LGBT rights. Over 5 million people in 135 countries watched the films, with a footprint of 75 million posts on social media.

The UK government offers a consular same-sex marriage service in 26 countries and a conversion service in 11 countries. By offering these services we have drawn attention to the lack of local legislation for same-sex marriages and prompted wider debate on LGBT issues, helping to inform public opinion in countries where the national authorities – and many in wider society – are not yet ready to countenance same-sex marriage.

Disability rights

The FCO supports international initiatives which help realise the vision of disabled people able to achieve their potential as fully participating members of society, whilst removing barriers which impede this, for all disabled people around the world.

We consistently advocate special consideration of the rights of persons with disabilities in all relevant UN intergovernmental negotiations.

The UK has co-sponsored resolutions supporting the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals and

other internationally-agreed development goals for persons with disabilities, and to mainstream disability in the UN development agenda beyond 2015. We are also strong advocates for better evidence-based policy formulation and service delivery for persons with disabilities including through national and international data collection systems that disaggregate relevant data by age, sex, and disability.

Racism

The UK government remains committed to tackling all forms of racial intolerance and discrimination, and to standing up for victims of racism around the world. The UK plays an active part in the key international institutions fighting racism, and supports the role of the UN in tackling racism.

During 2015 we sought to ensure the international community focused on strengthening national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination, and ensuring their full and effective implementation.

Our priority in international discussions is to focus on the real and pressing problems faced by racial minorities in all parts of the world. In 2015, along with our EU partners, we sought to ensure that the UN addressed racism through its various processes and mechanisms. We will continue to remain vigilant to any manifestations of racism, and work actively with international partners to ensure that the aims of equality and non-discrimination are advanced through the multilateral system and bilaterally.

Consular services

The FCO's Consular Service offers assistance to British nationals in difficulty abroad.

The customer charter of the Consular Service commits to:

"Be professional, non-judgemental, polite and helpful to you whatever your gender, race, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religion or belief."

Our travel advice and information for travellers is available online, and is aimed at helping all British nationals travel safely. It includes tailored advice

for disabled travellers; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender travellers; and those with mental health needs. We take advantage of opportunities such as the Pride parade in London, and world mental health day to highlight the advice available.

Over the last year, Consular staff have handled over 400,000 enquiries and over 18,000 consular cases. The FCO does not collect data on the diversity (gender, ethnicity or other protected attributes) of those to whom it provides services, except in the case of Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs), for which we do collect data on gender:

Age	Gender	Number of ETDs issued
0–15	Male	1,715
	Female	1,539
16–30	Male	5,765
	Female	3,819
31–50	Male	6,503
	Female	3,367
51+	Male	4,839
	Female	3,297

Consular staff are trained to provide high quality assistance to British nationals overseas, tailored to the need of the individual. This includes dedicated training and support consular staff worldwide to support customers with mental health needs. In 2015, the FCO dealt with 521 cases where British Nationals required assistance when experiencing mental health needs abroad, an increase of 4% on 2014. In 2015, these cases covered 171 countries/territories, with the highest number of cases in Spain, USA and Thailand.

Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender travellers

We introduced consular same sex marriage services in June 2014. We have performed over 280 consular same sex marriages across a network of 26 countries where the service is available. We received 1,855 notices of intended marriage, civil partnership or overseas relationship.

Specific cases have highlighted that some same sex couples may face challenges when foreign authorities do not recognise their status as next of kin because they are in a civil partnership or same sex marriage. In response, if necessary, our embassies are now able to

issue a document confirming that the UK will normally view a same sex spouse or civil partner as next of kin in the same way that we would view opposite sex couples as next of kin. While there is no guarantee that a foreign authority will take the same view if it does not recognise same sex marriage, it will make clear to those authorities the UK position. Where the local authorities will not recognise same-sex partners or spouses on death certificates, we will also now accept applications for consular death registrations from the spouse/partner as the Informant and record that relationship, even in foreign countries where we do not routinely make consular registrations.

The British Government can consider approaching the local authorities if LGBT prisoners are not treated in line with internationally accepted human rights standards. This may include lobbying against discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexuality, requesting appropriate medical treatment and raising concerns about the safety of any prisoner.

Forced Marriage Unit

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is a joint Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Unit that provides assistance in cases of forced marriage in the UK and consular cases involving British nationals overseas, including dual nationals. Forced marriage is a crime (it became a criminal offence on the 14th June 2014); is a serious abuse of human rights and a form of domestic abuse. Where children are involved, it is child abuse. Staff are also trained in the specific issues relating to victims who are LGBT or who have a disability and provide tailored assistance in these cases.

The FMU also runs an extensive outreach programme, which raises awareness of forced marriage and related issues among potential victims and statutory agencies including police, social services and health professionals. Statistics from the FMU suggest young people aged between 16 and 25 are most at risk of being forced into marriage.

In 2015 the FMU gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,220 cases¹:

¹ This statistic includes contact made to the FMU via the helpline or by email in relation to a new case.

- > Where the age was known, 14% of cases involved victims below 16 years, 13% involved victims aged 16-17, 20% involved victims¹ aged 18-21, 15% involved victims aged 22-25, 9% involved victims aged 26-30, 6% involved victims aged 31-40, and 2% involved victims aged 41 or over. 20% involved an adult whose age was not known.
- > 80% of cases involved female victims and 20% involved male victims.
- > The FMU has handled cases involving a total of over 90 different countries². In 2015 this included: Pakistan (44%), India (6%), Bangladesh (7%), Afghanistan (2%), Somalia (3%), Turkey (1%), Iraq (1%), and Sri Lanka (1%). The origin was unknown in 7% of cases.
- > 14% of the cases handled by the FMU were domestic and had no overseas element.
- > Within the UK the regional distribution was: London 22%, West Midlands 14%, South East 9%, Yorkshire and Humberside 9%, North West 10%, East 7%, East Midlands 4%, Scotland 2%, South West 3%, Wales 2%, North East 1%. The region was unknown in 18% of cases.
- > 141 cases involved victims with disabilities.
- > 29 involved victims who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)..

¹ Victim includes people thought to be at potential risk of future forced marriage, those currently going through a forced marriage and those who have already been forced to marry.

² This includes countries to which a victim is at risk of being taken or has already been taken to in connection with a forced marriage.

Digital transformation of consular services making them more accessible

Since 2014, the FCO has worked hard on the services it offers the public, transforming them from paper forms to digital services which we have made as accessible as possible. We test the words we use to make sure they are easy to understand. We test the forms with people with different levels of computer skills and disabilities: with the FCO's disability community Enable, and in specialist testing centres around the country. Finally, our contact centre staff are always at the end of a telephone to assist people filling in the digital forms, either by helping them with specific issues or in some cases, asking people the questions on the form and filling it on their behalf. The services are significantly simpler and quicker to use than the old paper forms, making consular services easier to access for everyone.



A partially sighted user tests the new digital service to legalise a document using magnifying software at the Digital Accessibility Centre in Neath



A member of the FCO's Enable community tests the digital application for an Emergency travel document using both high contrast text and a screenreader.





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King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

[gov.uk/fco](https://www.gov.uk/fco)