DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Foreword by Dr Giles Proctor, CEO

"I'm delighted to introduce The College of Legal Practice's second D&I annual report. It shows that we are progressing in some areas, particularly in supporting diverse students through their SQE training. However, as the external world is changing, we must more than ever commit to inclusivity and try our hardest to equip and support every individual to perform at their best in the workplace and in their study.

Something I'm particularly proud of this year is the improvement of our Reasonable Adjustments support for students. I'm also pleased with the development of our staff team culture within the College, having regular safe and open conversations about sometimes sensitive issues and a desire and open-mindedness to learn more about different cultures, disabilities, community experiences and backgrounds so we can improve our learning and support for our staff and students.

We have committed to monitoring our data, sharing it with our Board and Programme Committee and publishing a report annually to hold ourselves to account on our commitment to improving equity and inclusion. This report shares transparently with you how we are doing across the different areas of the organisation and where we can do more!"

PROGRESS AGAINST DI FRAMEWORK & PLAN

OUR PEOPLE

Staff Recruitment

1. The College continues to see a diverse range of applicants for roles at the College.

2. For the roles that we have recruited externally in 2023-24, the applicant's demographics were like those from previous years, with some shifts highlighted below. We are seeing more diversity in terms of ethnic origin in our applicants from two years ago, but it should be noted that the total number of applicants was much smaller in 2021-22 than in 2023-24.

3. Out of the applicants for staff roles in 2023-24:

Gender:
- 76% were female.

Disability:
- 10% considered that they had a disability or health condition, an increase from 6% in 2021-22.

Ethnicity:
- 49% were White, a reduction from 72% in 2021-22.

- 31% were Asian, an increase from 10% in 2021-22.
- 12% were Black, an increase from 5% in 2021-22.
- Applicants referenced 21 different ethnic origins.

Sexual Orientation:
- 82% identified as heterosexual, a reduction from 79% in 2021-22.
- 4% identified as gay/lesbian, a reduction from 10% in 2021-22.
- 4% identified as bisexual, a reduction from 6% in 2021-22.

Religion:
- 49% had no religion.
- 26% were Christian.
- 13% were Muslim.
- 6% were spiritual.

Main household earner's occupation:
- 30% were in modern professions and traditional roles.
- 22% were senior, middle, or junior managers or administrators.
- 12% were in routine, semi-routine manual, and service occupations.
- 16% of applicants did not wish to disclose this information (the highest non-response rate among all questions).

Education:
- 56% attended a state-run school in the UK.
- 33% attended school outside the UK.
- 6% attended a fee-paying school.

Socioeconomic Background:
- 20% were eligible for free school meals at any point during their school years.

4. When comparing the data for our applicants to our staff, we can see the applicant pool is much more diverse with respect to ethnic origin compared to our current staff team, The high numbers of applicants from a diverse ethnic origin may be partly due to a number of applicants from outside the UK, aiming to work remotely, that are not eligible for the roles advertised, which we will change in the recruitment specification for future roles to ensure these do not skew the data.

5. However, we feel that we need to ensure that the shortlisting and interviewing approaches are inclusive at the College. So, we will be piloting blind recruitment and share inclusive recruitment practices with line managers in 2025.

6. The EDI working group have also identified some improvements to the data captured that will help us compare this more closely to our staff demographics going forward, so we will align the equal opportunities form used in recruitment with our staff demographic survey which is consistent with Higher Education reporting for 2025 onwards.

Staff diversity

7. Appendix 2 shows the findings of the College's second demographics survey for staff. Findings suggest that the diversity of our staff team compared to national staff sets varies in several ways, particularly in relation to disability, age and ethnicity.

8. Summary of findings:
   - DISABILITY: COLP disclosed higher levels of disability
   - AGE: COLP reported significantly fewer staff in the 25 - 35 age bracket
   - SEX: COLP reported a much higher proportion of females to males, when compared to the national dataset
   - ETHNICITY: COLP reported broadly similar, but slightly higher levels of ethnic diversity than the national dataset
   - NATIONALITY: The majority of COLP staff reported UK nationality (87%), whereas there was more diversity in the national dataset (76% UK nationality)

9. Please note that the COLP data doesn't include our freelance supervisors this year, we will explore including them in next year's survey.

Staff Development and Culture

10. Each year, all College of Legal Practice staff respond to a college-wide survey on inclusion and wellbeing. The results in 2024 were positive, in line with 2023's results. 89% of staff feel valued by the team and 84% believe that they can bring their whole self to work.

11. The leadership team have facilitated several full team discussions on the survey findings and in particular some of the recommendations staff shared in the survey. Improvements include moving back to three full staff team meetings a year, giving more opportunities for people to buddy up and work across teams, encouraging quiet/do not disturb time and improving communication from leadership.

Increasing staff's EDI awareness and cultural competency

12. We have held 10 engagement sessions for staff throughout 2024 to help increase our cultural understanding and competency across a wide range of issues. These included Race Equality Week, LGBTQ+ History Month and a Pride Quiz, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, Autism Awareness week and Autism training from Man Met, East & Southeast Asian Month, National Inclusion Week, Islamophobia Awareness Month and Inclusive practice.

13. The feedback from staff has been very positive and nearly all staff completed the survey. Through the College's EDI activities in 2024 they feel much more conscious of how they engage with each other and students:
   - 79% of staff felt that they increased their knowledge and understanding of disability and neurodiversity across the year
   - 89% of staff felt that they increased knowledge and understanding of under-represented groups across the year
   - They have led 58% of staff to make changes to how they work or interact with others

- 89% of staff feel comfortable having conversations about EDI issues at work

14. Within the survey findings the staff also expressed interest in areas that they would like to hear more about in 2025, to guide the EDI working groups' activities. They included a range of religions, anxiety and depression, the lesser-known types of neurodiversity, visual and physical impairments, digital exclusion and accessibility, age related issues, gender related issues and caring responsibilities.

15. The EDI working group has agreed that they will focus on these issues in 2025, and in particular digital exclusion and accessibility, which is likely to intersect with age related issues and some disabilities.

OUR STUDENTS

Student Recruitment

1. Diversity has continued to be a priority through the imagery we use in ads, testimonials, on the website and in articles. Based on feedback from our students we are looking to ensure that we represent a wider age of students in our imagery going forward.

2. We continue to highlight the demographic disparities within the SQE pass rates as each set of results are published in our socials, newsletters and articles. We produced a summary report for our client firms and stakeholders.

3. We have highlighted over 20 EDI and cultural issues and celebrations on our social channels over the year, supported by information, videos and articles.

4. We have created and published various social posts and articles highlighting varied experiences and backgrounds of our students and legal professionals including articles on dyslexia, autism, reflections for organisations to support ethnic colleagues and considerations for networking events, experiences of Muslim, neurodivergent, transgender, disabled, black and socially mobile student and junior lawyers. We also shared articles on how to stay well when studying for the SQE.

5. Throughout 2024, the team have sought to find speakers for our events programme from a wide range of backgrounds. They held several EDI specific events, including one looking at empowering and supporting ethnically diverse students and junior lawyers. You can watch some of the events here:

   - [Panel session: Empowering and supporting ethnically diverse law students and junior lawyers in February](#)
   - [Securing legal work experience panel event in partnership with Bristol Law Society](#).
   - [What does a solicitor do? Webinar](#).

6. In our B2B recruitment activity, we have been prioritising the Graduate Solicitor

Apprenticeship Programme which offers firms a way of increasing social mobility in their organisation.

Increasing access to the profession

7. In 2024, the College continued their scholarship programme, awarding [five scholarships directly](), one through the Law Society Diversity Access Scheme and one through Birmingham Law Society. We have also continued our partnership with Aspiring Solicitors Foundation.

8. We had 61 applicants for our scholarship scheme in 2024 and the diversity of applicants was very varied which is positive to see. For our 2024 scholarship round, out of the applications:

   - 28% considered that they had a disability or health condition
   - 73% were people of colour, an increase from 60% in 2023, with 37% with black backgrounds.
   - 72% identified as heterosexual, an increase of 10% from 2023.
   - 93% from state run schools with 56% eligible for free school meals.

Students' EDI awareness and cultural competency

9. Students receive weekly updates highlighting career opportunities, networking opportunities and specific EDI issues or celebrations. The team also continue to highlight the religious observance policy prior to major religious events.

10. We ran a quiz in Neurodiversity Celebration Week for students and continue to encourage students to join the career & EDI events run by the College.

Supporting our Students

11. The College gathered feedback from students on our Reasonable Adjustments process in 2024, and it was positive overall with some improvements cited. Taking on board their feedback, the College developed a new policy for Reasonable Adjustments and amended the student's Individual Adjustments form. We have created clear guidance for students and looked at the internal processes via a working group. We are now in the process of formally approving the policy and disseminating it across the supervisors and teams working with students.

12. The student services team continue to be trained in mental health first aid. They met with Spectrum in 2024 (our assistance programme provider) to understand how we can better promote the free wellbeing resources they have available for our students.

13. Law Care ran a webinar for our students on 24th October on their free resources and support for law students and legal professionals.

14. Pronouns have been added to Canvas' user profiles, so both staff and students can choose to add their pronouns. This will help supervisors view student's

preferred pronouns.

OUR PROGRAMMES

1. The launch of the Graduate Solicitor Apprenticeship at the College is starting to help a new group of both firms and students prepare for the SQE. We feel that the additional coaching and support is particularly helpful in giving apprentices confidence and reassurance in their progress through the training. In 2024, we had 7 GSAs and numbers are growing significantly in 2025.

2. The Graduate Diploma in Law is assisting a very wide range of students to access the foundations of law. We are seeing a wide range of ages, ethnicities and backgrounds within our GDL student cohort, many of whom hadn't been able to study law until they found the College's GDL programme.

Capturing & reviewing equality data for students

3. Appendix 1 details the diversity of our students in 2023-24 and compared to HESA statistics our students are more likely to declare that they are part of an under-represented group than other postgraduate students.
4. Our students currently tend to have a broader spread of ages, and ethnic diversity than other postgraduate students.
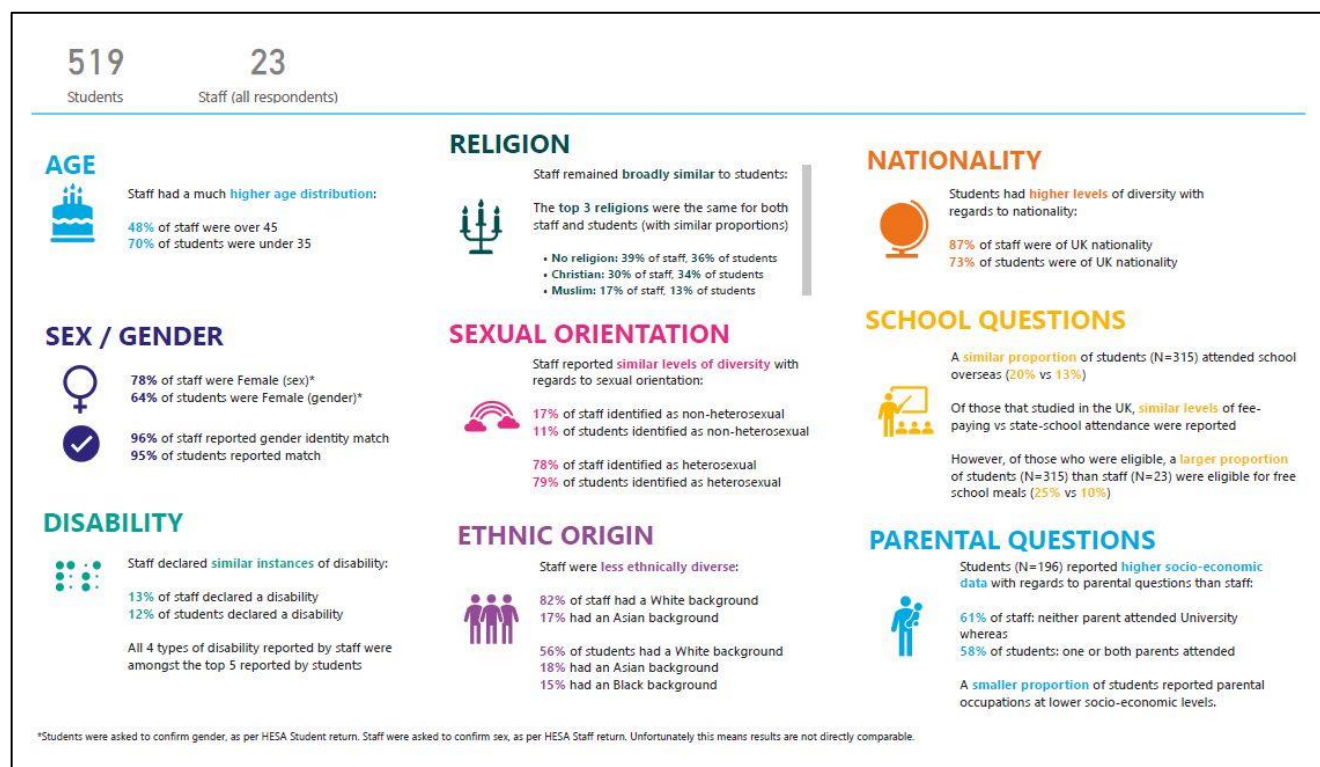
Learning Design & Delivery

5. The academic team are constantly reviewing and taking on board feedback from students. They have produced a number of videos and guides to give students clearer information about the courses, the SQE exams and revision tips.

6. The team held a couple of training events and discussions around inclusive practice, particularly looking at teaching and learning. There were many things that our courses already do well in terms of accessibility, however there are improvements that we will explore further in 2025.

OUR GOVERNANCE

1. Dr Giles Proctor, CEO, has attended several events with the SRA to look at the differential professional outcomes for ethnic minorities and is involved in feeding back on an action plan to implement key recommendations.

2. The Programme Committee and Board both receive EDI reports at every meeting

3. Our first published EDI report was well received in early 2024 and has been mentioned by applicants in recruitment processes and students.

Alice Payne & Daniel Furness Green
EDI Working Group

Appendix 1: Comparison of College's staff and student demographics

519 Students 23 Staff (all respondents)

AGE
Staff had a much **higher age distribution**:

48% of staff were over 45
70% of students were under 35

SEX / GENDER
78% of staff were Female (sex)*
64% of students were Female (gender)*

96% of staff reported gender identity match
95% of students reported match

DISABILITY
Staff declared **similar instances** of disability:

13% of staff declared a disability
12% of students declared a disability

All 4 types of disability reported by staff were amongst the top 5 reported by students

RELIGION
Staff remained **broadly similar** to students:

The top 3 religions were the same for both staff and students (with similar proportions)

• No religion: 39% of staff, 36% of students
• Christian: 30% of staff, 34% of students
• Muslim: 17% of staff, 13% of students

SEXUAL ORIENTATION
Staff reported **similar levels of diversity** with regards to sexual orientation:

17% of staff identified as non-heterosexual
11% of students identified as non-heterosexual

78% of staff identified as heterosexual
79% of students identified as heterosexual

ETHNIC ORIGIN
Staff were **less ethnically diverse**:

82% of staff had a White background
17% had an Asian background

56% of students had a White background
18% had an Asian background
15% had an Black background

NATIONALITY
Students had **higher levels** of diversity with regards to nationality:

87% of staff were of UK nationality
73% of students were of UK nationality

SCHOOL QUESTIONS
A **similar proportion** of students (N=315) attended school overseas (20% vs 13%)

Of those that studied in the UK, **similar levels** of fee-paying vs state-school attendance were reported

However, of those who were eligible, a **larger proportion** of students (N=315) than staff (N=23) were eligible for free school meals (25% vs 10%)

PARENTAL QUESTIONS
Students (N=196) reported **higher socio-economic data** with regards to parental questions than staff:

61% of staff: neither parent attended University whereas
58% of students: one or both parents attended

A **smaller proportion** of students reported parental occupations at lower socio-economic levels.

*Students were asked to confirm gender, as per HESA Student return. Staff were asked to confirm sex, as per HESA Staff return. Unfortunately this means results are not directly comparable.

Appendix 2: Student and Staff demographics, 23-24

1a: Staff

The graphs below show the demographics of COLP employed staff, compared to the data published by HESA in the Staff Return datasets.

**Samples sizes:** COLP staff data = 23, 5-year average of national staff data = 394365

Summary of findings:

DISABILITY	COLP disclosed higher levels of disability
AGE	COLP reported significantly fewer staff in the 25 - 35 age bracket
SEX	COLP reported a much higher proportion of females to males, when compared to the national dataset
ETHNICITY	COLP reported broadly similar, but slightly higher levels of ethnic diversity than the national dataset (both datasets are less diverse than their student population counterparts)
NATIONALITY	The majority of COLP staff reported UK nationality (87%), whereas there was more diversity in the national dataset (76% UK nationality)

DISABILITY
COLP staff reported higher levels of disability compared to the national dataset (with 13% and 6.2% respectively)

As a small and well-connected organisation, COLP staff may feel more invested in contributing to the anonymised EDI analysis and therefore be more likely to disclose certain information
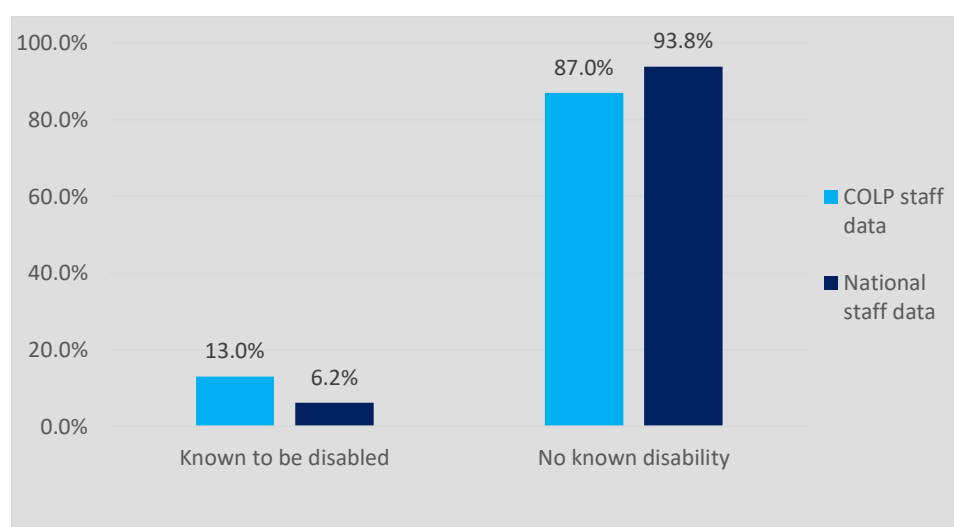
AGE
COLP reported a narrower distribution of staff age compared to the national dataset, with a slight skew towards more mature age brackets
Age categories for national data vs COLP data were not quite aligned (1 year difference in each bracket), but similar enough to make approximate comparisons
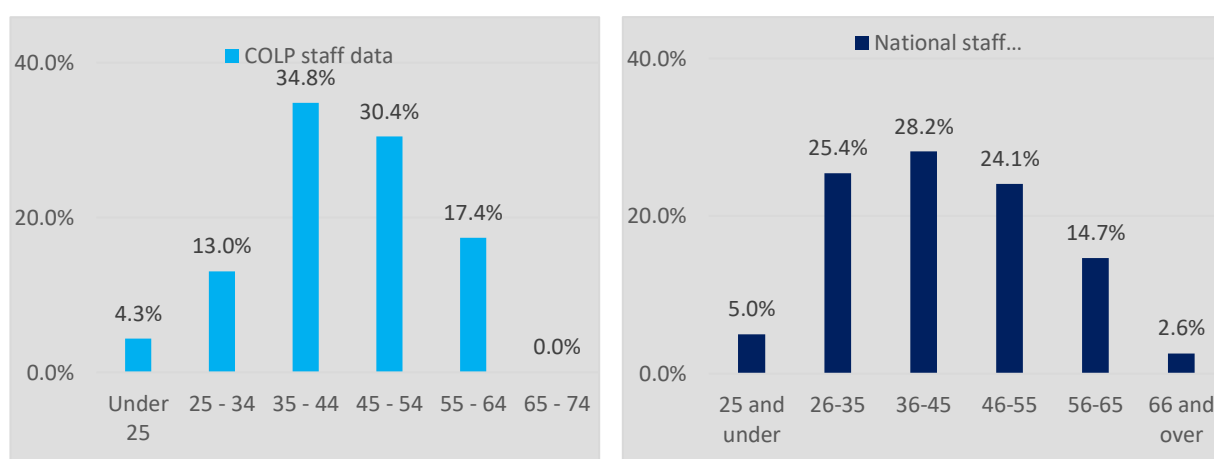
SEX
COLP had a much higher proportion of females to males, when compared to the national dataset (COLP females: 78.3%, national females: 54.9%)

The small change in COLP female:male ratio compared to last EDI report is most likely due to differences in sample size (eg inclusion/exclusion of supervisors)
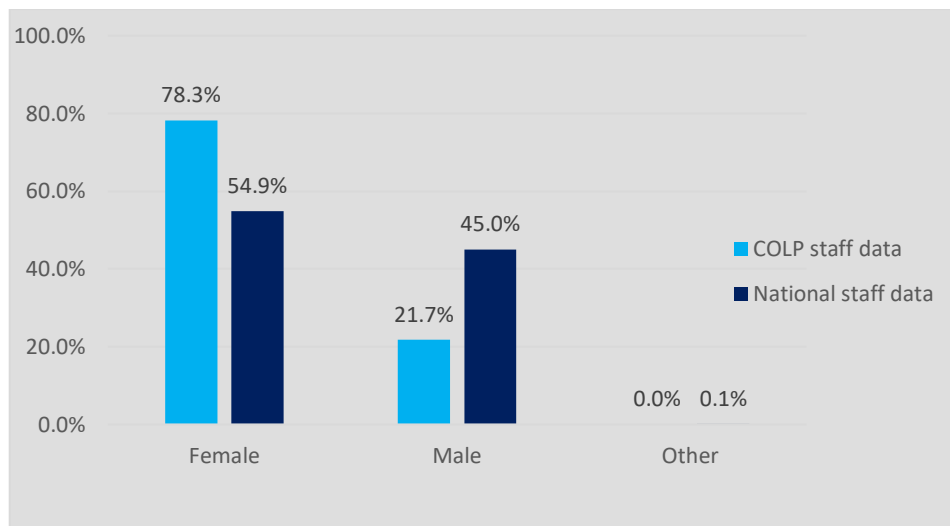
ETHNICITY

COLP has a less diverse dataset but, given the very small sample size, proportions may be considered broadly similar - but with higher Asian backgrounds reported than the national dataset

As COLP increases in size, we would expect to see diversification in this area
Staff with a Black ethnic background made up between 0% and 2.5% of both the COLP and national datasets, however students with a Black ethnic background made up between 8.8% (national) and 14.5% (COLP) of the student datasets - the third highest reported category
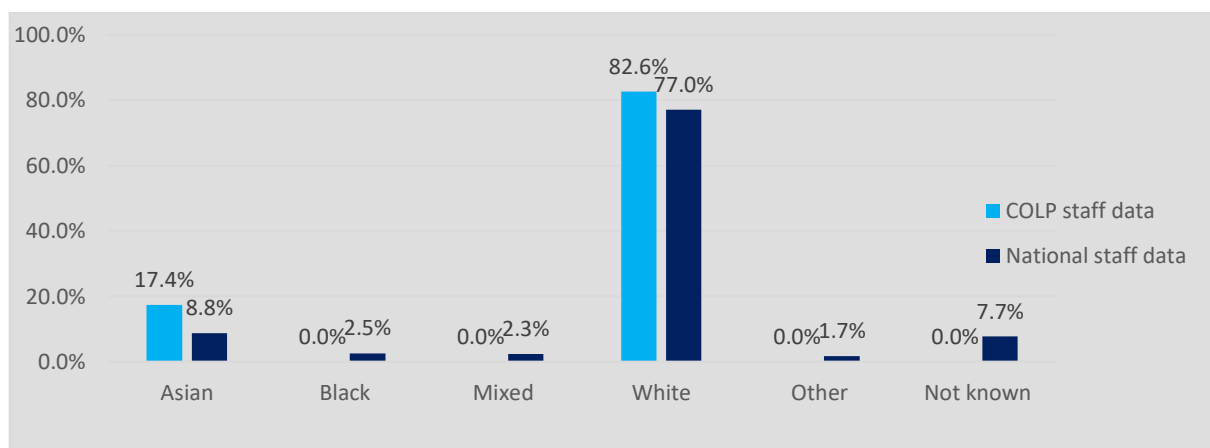
NATIONALITY
The majority of COLP staff reported UK nationality (87%), whereas there was more diversity in the national dataset (76% UK nationality)

UK nationality from the previous EDI comparison: COLP=95%, National=77%
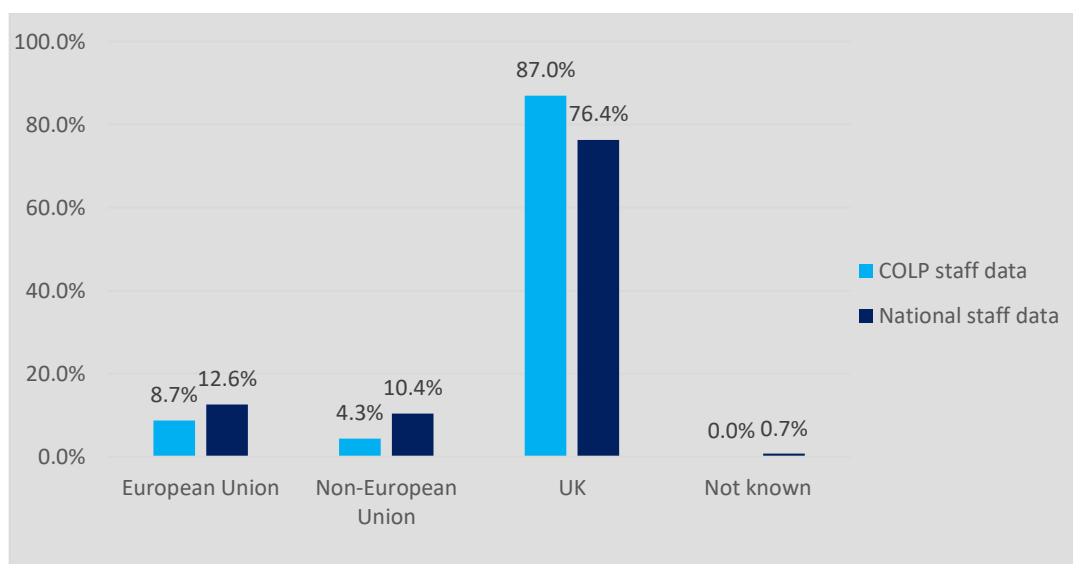
1b: Student

The graphs below show a comparison of COLP student demographics and the publicly available student data published by HESA.

Samples sizes: COLP student data = 519 (unless otherwise indicated), compared against a 5-year average of national student data = 32840 (unless otherwise indicated)

National students dataset: studying Law, at Postgraduate Taught Masters level or Other Postgraduate level, any domicile (unless indicated otherwise)

Summary of findings:

|	
DISABILITY	Reported similar proportions
AGE	Distribution of national data was narrower and heavily weighted in favour of the 21 to 25 age bracket, whereas COLP age distribution was broader and weighted in favour of the 26 to 30 age bracket
GENDER/SEX	Reported broadly similar proportions, COLP had a slightly higher female:male ratio
GENDER IDENTITY	Reported similar proportions (where information was disclosed), though COLP students were much more likely to disclose this information (95.8% disclosure rate, vs 57.8% disclosure rate)
RELIGION	Where disclosed, COLP reported similar levels of religious beliefs generally, and were broadly similar is terms of distribution across religions (top three: no religion, Christian, Muslim)
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Reported similar proportions (where data was disclosed)
PARENTAL EDUCATION	Reported similar proportions (where data was disclosed)
ETHNICITY	COLP showed slightly higher levels of ethnic diversity, particularly with regards to students with a Black background (ethnicity data was only available in the national dataset for UK domiciled students)

DISABILITY

COLP students reported similar levels of disability compared to the national dataset, with 87% and 86% reporting no disability respectively.

An increased proportion of COLP students reported multiple disabilities compared to last year
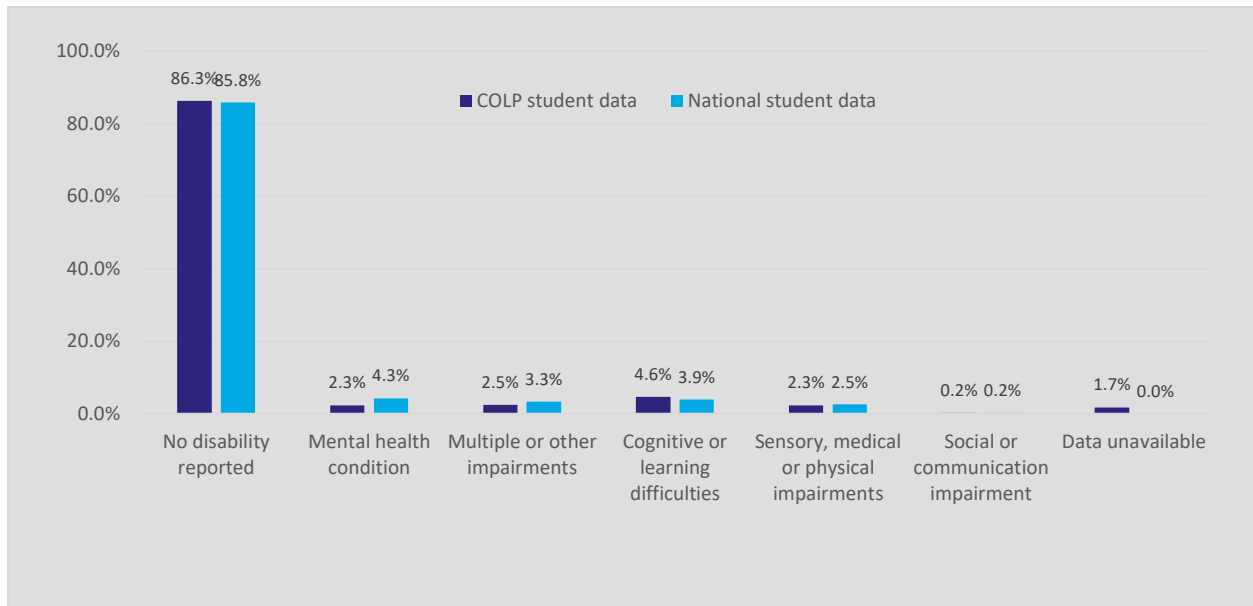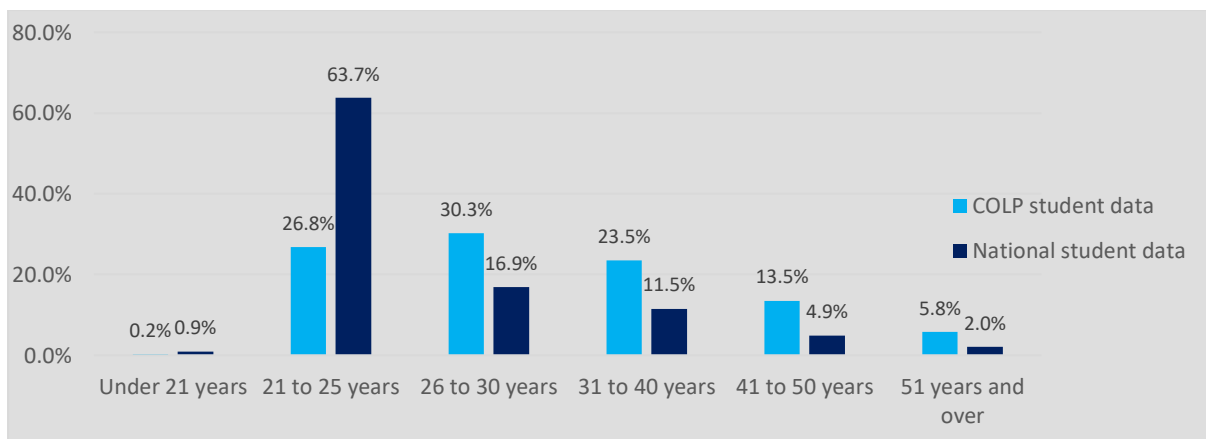

AGE

Similarly to last year, students at COLP had a much broader distribution across age categories compared to the national dataset

43% of COLP students were over the age of 31, compared with only 18% of the national dataset

Average and median student age cannot be compared, as national data is aggregated

GENDER/SEX

Very similar proportions were reported in each category last year, for both COLP and the national datasets

It is important to note that national datasets report on sex, whereas the Salesforce field name states gender - therefore fields may not comparing like with like.

Given the proportion people in the most recent national Census who reported gender identity not matching sex assigned at birth (around 0.5%), it may be reasonable to compare approximate proportions.
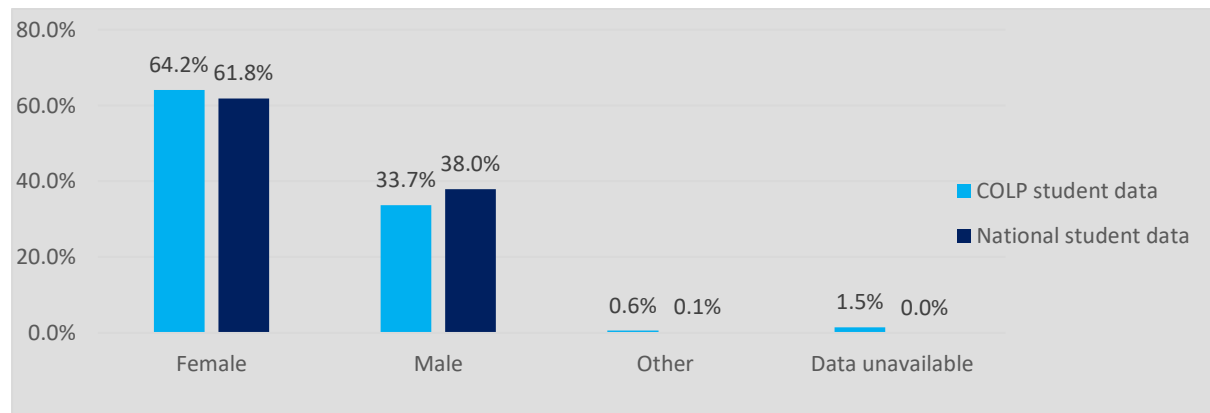

GENDER IDENTITY

COLP students were much more likely to provide an answer for the gender identity question, with 42% of the national data choosing not to respond compared with just under 2% of COLP students.

Of those that disclosed gender identity status, students reported similar proportions across categories (not the same gender: COLP dataset 1.0%, national dataset 0.9%)

COLP N=497 / National N=35034 (disclosures)
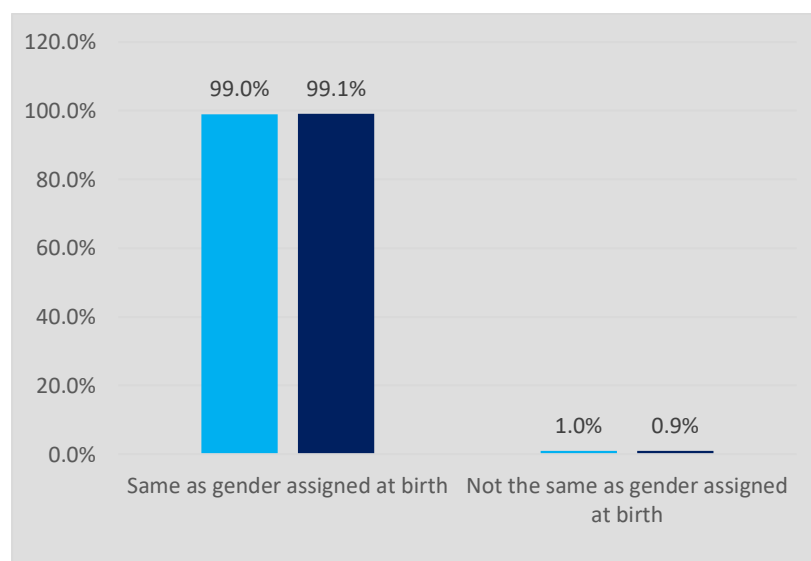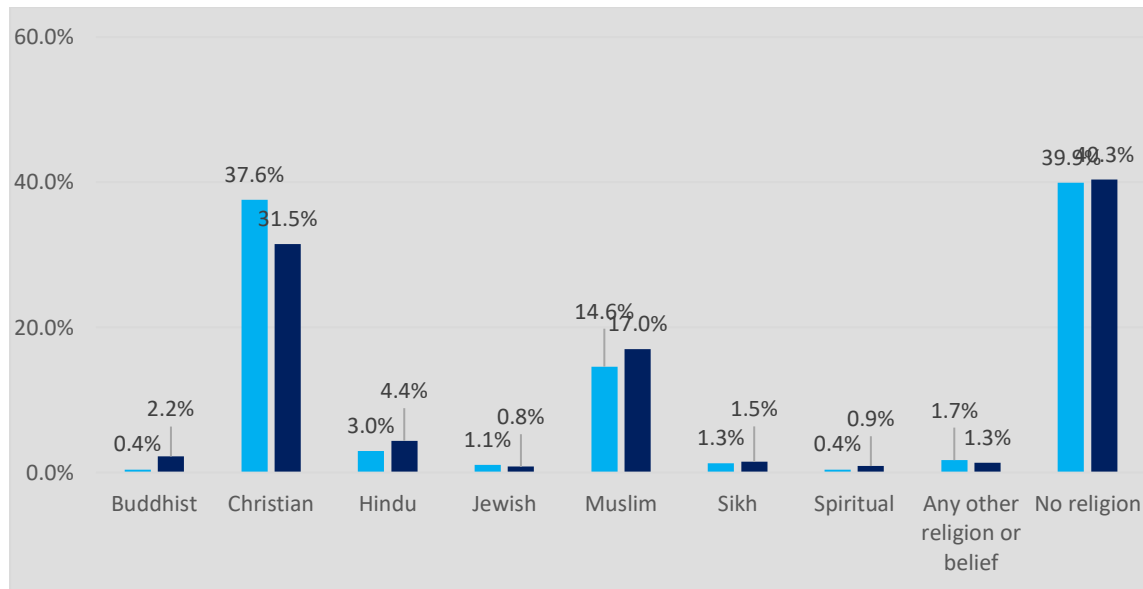

RELIGION
Again, COLP students were more likely to disclose information around religious beliefs - with

COLP non-response rate at 5.0% and national non-response rate at 20.8%

For COLP, "No religion" has now surpassed "Christian" as the most commonly reported belief, with proportions reported more in line with those of the national dataset

For both datasets, the three most commonly reported categories were (in order): No religion, Christian, and Muslim

COLP N=466 / National N=27764 (disclosures)


SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Again, COLP students were more likely to disclose information around sexual orientation - with COLP non-response rate at 8.3% and national non-response rate at 35.8%
When looking at data subsets, where students had disclosed a sexual orientation, students reported comparable proportions across categories (categories other than heterosexual: COLP dataset 12.6%, national dataset 9.3%)

COLP N=468 / National N=20386 (disclosures)
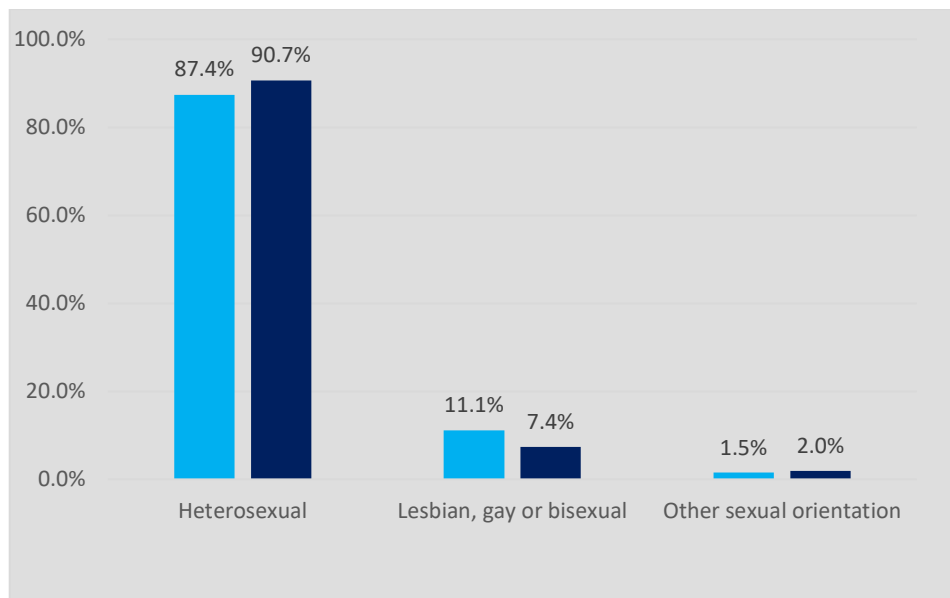
PARENTAL EDUCATION

When looking at data subsets, where education was disclosed, students reported broadly similar proportions of education

This information is a relatively recent data item collection at COLP, so data is not available for the majority of the student population
Changes to national dataset collections, the below shows a 3yr average of data from 2017/18 - 2019/20 only

COLP N=183 / National N=8033 (disclosures)
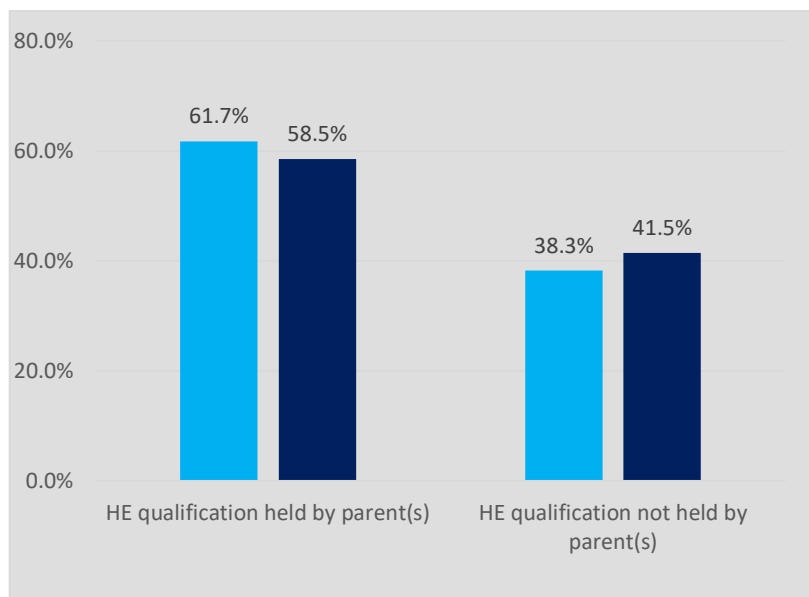
ETHNICITY
Ethnicity data in the national dataset was in relation to UK-domiciled students only (N=24700)

COLP students reported a generally slightly higher level of ethnic diversity than the counterpart national dataset, most notably with regards to students with a Black background