

At the end of 2004, the Society sent all Fellows a questionnaire. This was the first full survey of the Fellowship for over seven years. The data we gathered in 1997 have been invaluable, but as they became ever more out of date, they became less useful and reliable. Council felt it was important to carry out a new survey for several reasons. Firstly, it gave Fellows the opportunity to update the information the Society holds about them (such as email addresses, membership of Specialist and Regional Groups, areas of expertise, and employment status and sector). We also asked Chartered Geologists whether they would be willing to act as scrutineers and mentors. Finally, we wanted your feedback on the Society and its products and services. Council is committed to ensuring that long-term planning reflects the changing needs and wants of the Fellowship.

We received 3386 responses – a fantastic return rate of 36%. Among Chartered Geologists, the response rate was even higher, at 63%. The results are already paying dividends. We now know the email addresses of over two thirds of Fellows, having gathered more than 800 new ones. The list of those willing to act as scrutineers now numbers around 550 - 25% more than previously. The feedback you provided on Specialist and Regional Groups and their activities will be passed on to their committees.

What did we find out?

Eighteen percent of Fellows in employment work in education and academia (15% in universities), and 12% in government and non-profit organisations – almost exactly the same as seven years ago. Thirteen percent of you are retired, but of these, over two thirds are still active in the Earth sciences.

We now have some very detailed data on your views about Society services, particularly those now provided online. This resource will be used over the coming months and years in planning new services and products, and in ensuring that existing ones continue to meet your needs. Because the questionnaires were personalised, the data can be cross-referenced against age, geographical location, employment status and sector. The analysis continues, but here is a taste of what we have found out so far.

The email newsletter has proved a very popular new service. The overwhelming majority think length of entries and frequency are about right. Seventy-four percent of those who receive it rate it highly or very highly. All the Web-based services we asked you about were popular with those who knew about them - for instance, 80% of those who were aware of it rated the online library catalogue highly or very highly - but in some cases, quite a number of Fellows did not know of these services. For example, only 55% knew that the library catalogue was available on the Web site. Sixty-five percent were aware of the Society's CPD scheme, and 60% knew that they could access their journal of choice online. Clearly the Society needs to work harder to keep the Fellowship informed about the services it offers.

It is clear that some services are used more by those working in certain sectors – for example, a disproportionate number of those working in academia, oil and gas, and scientific and technical consultancy use the online library catalogue. There is also evidence of the ‘silver surfer’ phenomenon, in that the highest levels of awareness of online services are to be found either among those aged under 35, or over 60. No doubt those in their 40s and 50s will soon catch up...

What do you value?

We also asked about your general impressions of the Society – which services are most important to you, and how you think the Society is perceived, both in the UK and overseas. The range of services you particularly value is wide, and there is considerable variation between sectors and age groups. The provision of a free journal was rated highest most often, followed by Geoscientist, the opportunity to become chartered, and library services. Website facilities and the Fellows’ discount on publications were popular second and third choices.

Of Fellows who returned a questionnaire, 90% agreed with the statement that the Geological Society is respected overseas as an important learned and professional body, 52% “strongly”. Sixty-eight percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the Society is a strong influence within the profession in Europe; 62% that it is a significant voice for the Earth sciences to the UK media; 69% that it plays an important role in representing the science and profession to government, and 77% that it provides effective professional support to UK geologists.

Salary survey

The Society also ran a salary survey late in 2004, in conjunction with the Institute of Physics, who administered the project. This was conducted anonymously, and only online. There were 859 responses. As with the main Fellowship questionnaire, we now have an extensive and detailed data resource, which will be of great value in planning the Society’s work in support of professional geologists working in industry, academia, government and elsewhere.

Of those who took part in the survey 26% work more than 45 hours a week - although only 5% are contracted to do so – while 10% work more than 50 hours. There is considerable variation between sectors, with 65% of those employed in mining and quarrying putting in more than 45 hours per week, and 45% of those in academia.

Respondents’ average basic salary was £33,757. With bonuses and payments from other employers, average total income was £36,701. Average income for those on full-time permanent contracts in the UK was £34,996 – tables 1 and 2 show analyses

of this group by age and sector of employment – increasing to £43,370 for Chartered Geologists. Incomes in London were considerably higher than in the rest of the country (£45,632) – otherwise, regional averages ranged from £30,786 (Wales) to £37,033 (Scotland).

Many thanks to all those who participated in either survey.