

## **SMPS DEI FOCUS GROUP**

On December 5, 2023, SMPS HQ and the DEI Committee hosted a virtual focus group with interactive participation from members to weigh in on topics, share their challenges, and participate in discussions to help inform the direction of the Society's DEI efforts. With representation from all seven regions, as identified by our regional conference structure, participants joined some of members of the DEI Committee for smaller breakout room sessions where individuals could feel like they had a safe space and an intimate group to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

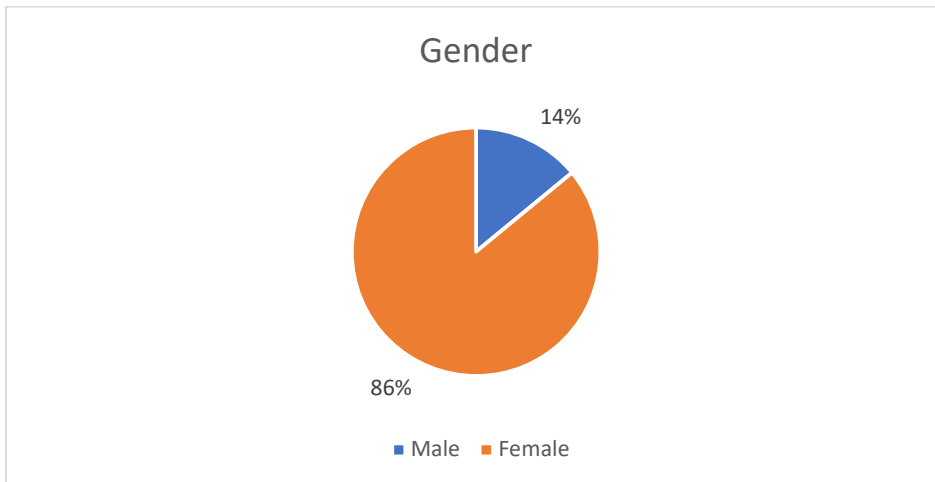
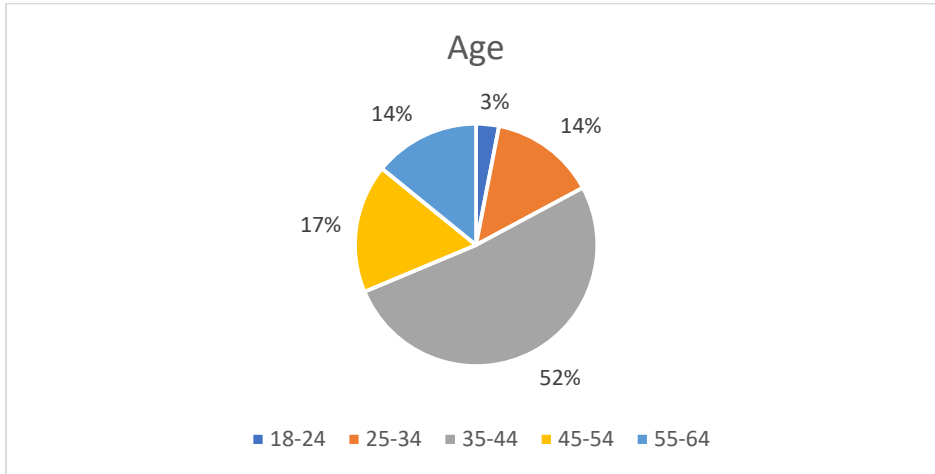
We started with several demographic poll questions that spoke volumes and shed some light on DEI programming and who was in the room. We gathered information on age, gender, race, geography, and membership tenure via poll questions.

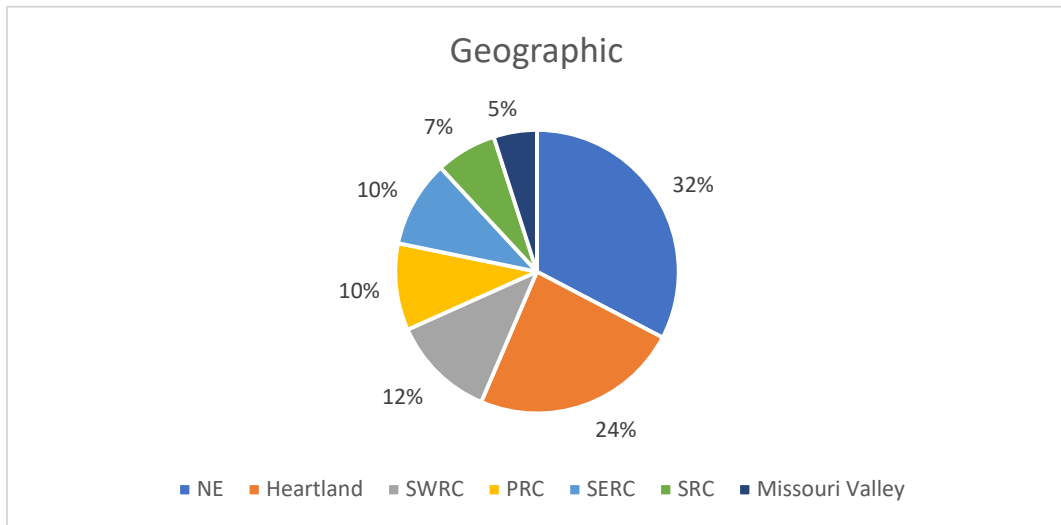
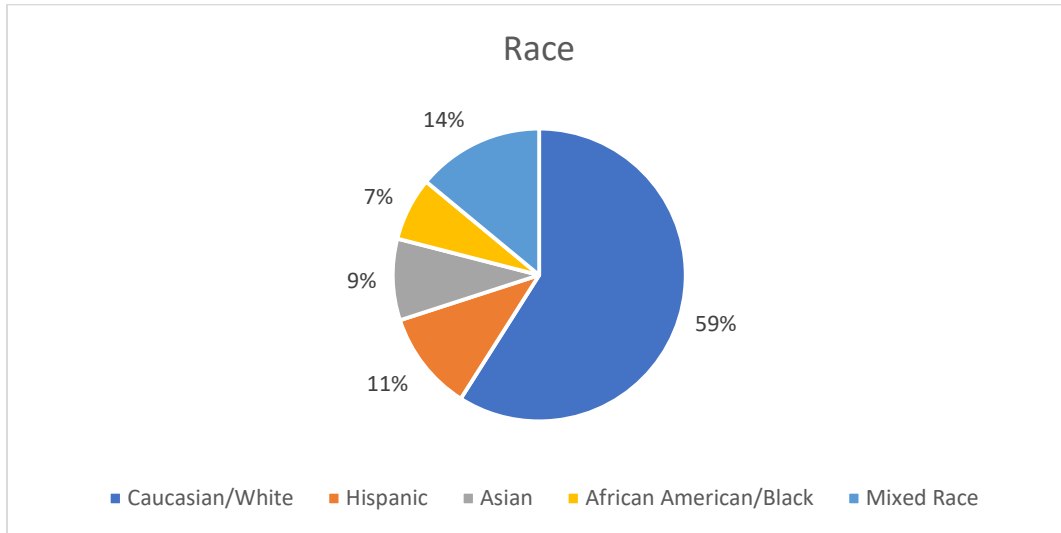
### **Here are some key takeaways:**

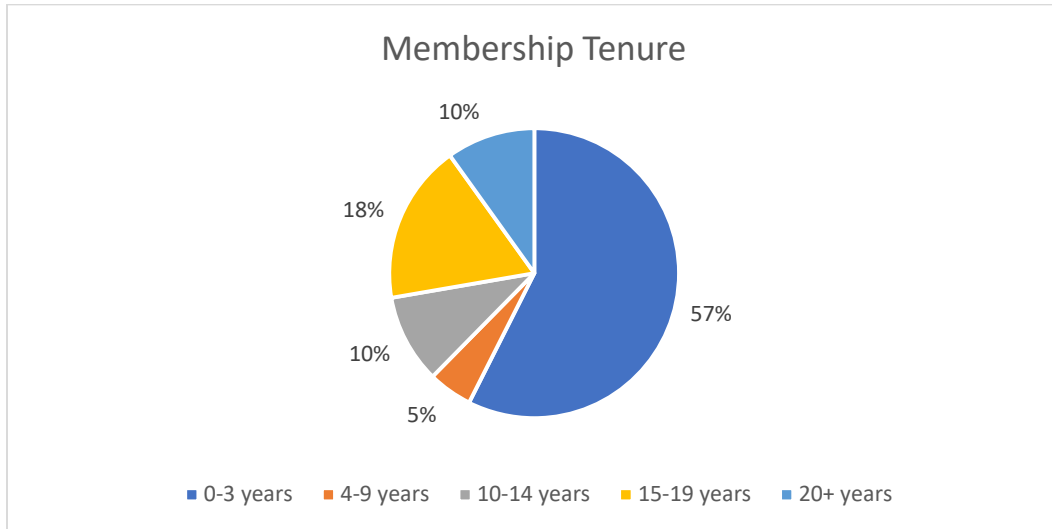
- **TENURE IS IMPORTANT:** Fifty-seven percent of attendees were 0–3-year members of SMPS. As we continue to attract, recruit, and retain members, it is important that this group feels not only seen, but included at SMPS. This demographic consists of potential emerging chapter and firm leaders, which are essential to SMPS growth.
- **ENGAGEMENT, TRANSPARENCY, CLARITY, COMMITMENT AND CONSISTENCY!** Sixty-three percent of participants were not aware of their chapter's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. There needs to be clarity and synergy about the importance of DEI between SMPS headquarters, chapters, and regional conferences. SMPS needs ensure consistent messaging is communicated to chapters. Chapters can activate around DEI commitment in tangible ways. This can include higher quality, and more frequent engagement with new members, and local initiatives targeting specific underrepresented membership groups, like men, people of color, and women in executive leadership roles.
- **GEOGRAPHY HAS AN IMPACT.** Attitudes and perceptions can vary based on geography. Some chapters are further along in their DEI journey than others. Based on our discussions, some of this can be attributable in part to the socio-political climates in their respective states/regions. SMPS can work with chapter leaders to support DEI initiatives.

We appreciate the participation of all members who attended this event and shared their authentic and real perspectives. The 2024 DEI Committee plans on using this dialogue as a springboard to enhance and improve our communication with members; and to create content, resources, and programming that will support the needs of our membership.

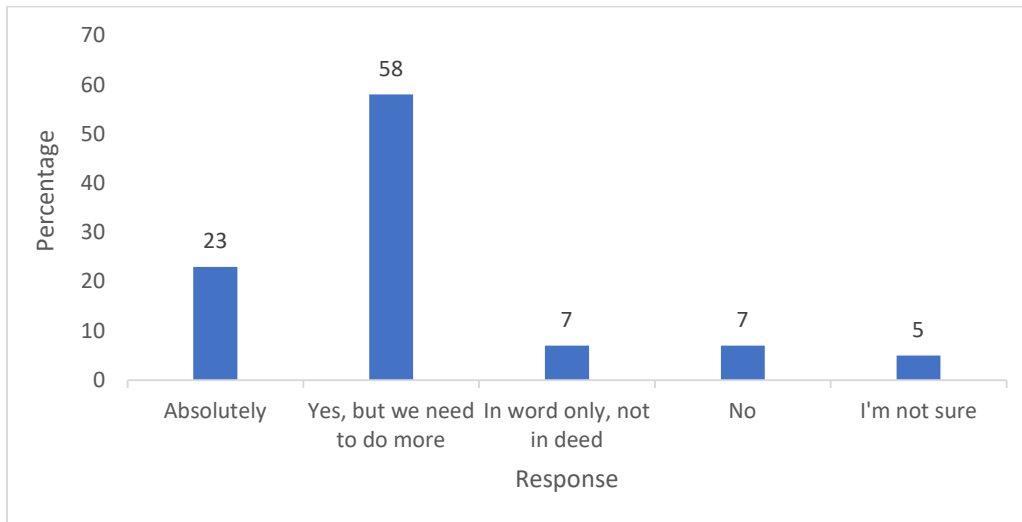
**DEMOGRAPHIC/POLLING DATA**





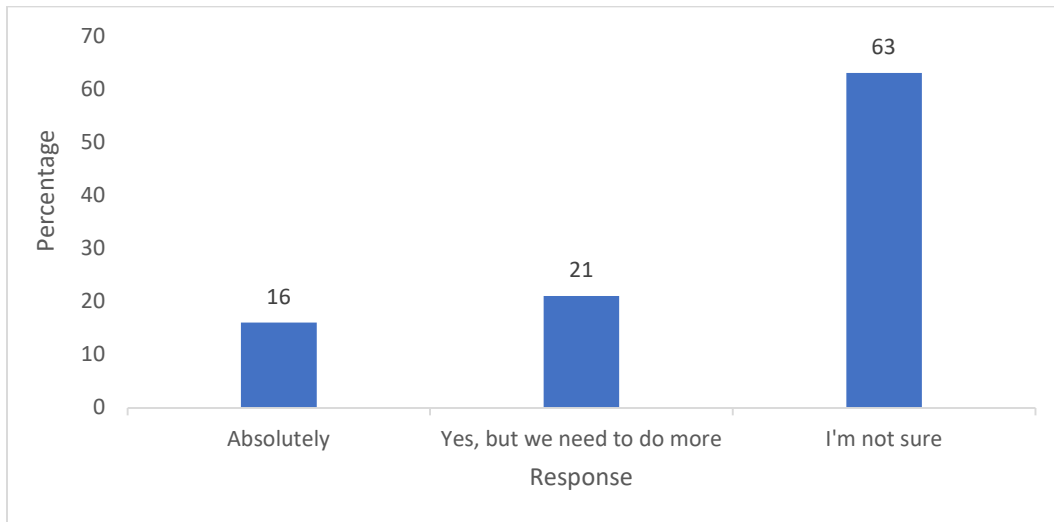


Is DEI a focus for your company/firm?



Is DEI a focus for your chapter?





We also asked if DEI was a focus for their firm and if DEI was a focus for their SMPS chapter. We followed these quick poll questions with our main topics of discussion in our individual breakout rooms. The conversation went something like this:

**Q1 What does DEI mean in the context of SMPS?**

- Members want there to be inclusion of everyone, including all categories of historically marginalized, underrepresented groups, and even desire to have religion included in demographic poll questions in the future.
- Members believe that all organizations should have a focus on DEI and it should have been a focus well before 2020.
- Members want diverse programming and representation.
- Members recognize that some geographic areas are not as diverse as others but want their chapters to continue to work on diversifying membership.
- Members want there to be more synergy between SMPS HQ and the local chapters, and members are noticing that DEI doesn't show up on their board meetings at the chapter level.
- Members recognize that we are in a female-dominated marketing industry, but we need to recruit and reach out to all genders.
- Through DEI, members are learning how to effectively communicate with technical and regional folks from all backgrounds.
- Members need to feel seen, respected, and able to be their authentic selves.
- Members know that there is a stereotype of what an SMPS Member looks like, and some chapters don't make newcomers feel welcome which deters them from coming back.
- Conferences are sometimes the only times members know about DEI.
- Members have heard people demonstrate interest but haven't heard anything since then. If there are meetings, they haven't been made public to the membership. They are closed

meetings. I think this meeting (asking for interest) was in September. In the absence of transparency, and then not hearing anything feels like words without action.

- SMPS has the ability to be a model of change in DEI for the industry.
- At SMPS, we make sure we give space to diverse voices, especially at conferences and other programming. That we hear from all different perspectives and be inclusive. SMPS has been a safe space for trying out new things. Through conferences, programming, and chapter-level initiatives, we want to create a place where people can feel safe.
- Members think there is a large population in this community who are underrepresented in the workplace, and challenges are underrepresented.

Q2 What do you think about the current state of DE&I in SMPS? Can you share any specific examples, both positive and negative?

- Members have some awareness about HQ DEI initiatives but aren't quite as sure about what the initiatives are at the local level.
- Some members have recognized the great work of HQ and the DEI Committee and want to hear more from them/us.
- Some chapters have robust DEI programming and strong leadership with dedicated DEI committees, and some chapters may not even feel included in DEI efforts.
- Many of our members are focused on how DEI is being incorporated in their firms and with clients on projects or pursuits.
- Tenure of SMPS membership may be an impact on focus and impact of DEI.
- The political climate has made for an uphill climb for DEI. In the face of pushback, we need resources to help change the narrative.
- Chapters are seeking more diverse speakers for events.
- Women historically have entered the industries as admin staff and moved into marketing. Are we going to be an inclusive, truly demographic society?
- HQ is modeling the way with the diversity of its staff.
- The use of live captions at Amplify was a great touch and shows proof of accessibility and inclusion.
- The neurodiversity town hall was great! Members learned a lot and felt very engaged in the chat.
- Members enjoy the message boards on mySMPS
- We could benefit from reaching out to the younger generations more and even working with high schoolers to allow them to see the opportunities available in our industry.

Q3 What topics would you like to see in an upcoming DE&I + AEC town hall?

Members want to hear and learn about the following:

- How to put DEI language into messaging
- Best Practices: Compare how other firms incorporate DEI processes

- Supplier diversity training
- Accessibility
- College recruitment and outreach
- How can we attract men to SMPS
- Tips in writing job descriptions
- Sustainability and how the human race can thrive responsibly (can we shorten this by saying something like Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability?)
- Implicit bias
- Corporate culture
- DEI resources
- Place/location-based education (i.e., understanding the history of a place, land acknowledgments, native/indigenous recognition and understanding)
- What we are doing day in and day out from the marketing perspective – photography/digital marketing, etc – how we are meeting/looking at things – close captioned videos/ADA compliant website, etc. (i.e., accommodations for someone who is color blind in a proposal)
- Allyship

Q4 What DE&I tools/resources would you find valuable for you and your company's DE&I journey?

- Some members might not be aware of the DEI tools and resources that are readily available on the SMPS DEI website.
- Some members want more focus groups to gain information to share with their individual firms
- We need to continue these conversations and educate each other.
- We recognize that it is going to take generations for DEI not to be a supercharged issue.