

Creating an Inclusive Environment in a Funded Fellowship Call



centre for postdoctoral development in
infrastructure cities and energy

Amy Beierholm, University of Birmingham, C-DICE
Sharon Henson, Loughborough University, C-DICE
Dr Lennie Foster, Loughborough University, C-DICE

1. C-DICE Fellowship

A 12-month Fellowship valued at up to £140k, aimed at supporting the transition of postdoc researchers to fully independent research leaders. Proposals aligned with C-DICE and progress towards net-zero. The application process was designed around other funding calls from similar organisations.

2. Observations from Call 1 (2022)

EDI data was gathered anonymously on the Inkpath platform, which included a one-time self-identification at registration.

Data collection was fully GDPR compliant with robust and secure data collection, storage, and use policies. Non-binary / third gender option was available, but not selected by applicants in this case study.

Two-stage process: 1) express interest in the Fellowship (EOI) and 2) complete the application. Clear trends were observed in the difference between female and male EOI, and in the drop off between EOI and applying.

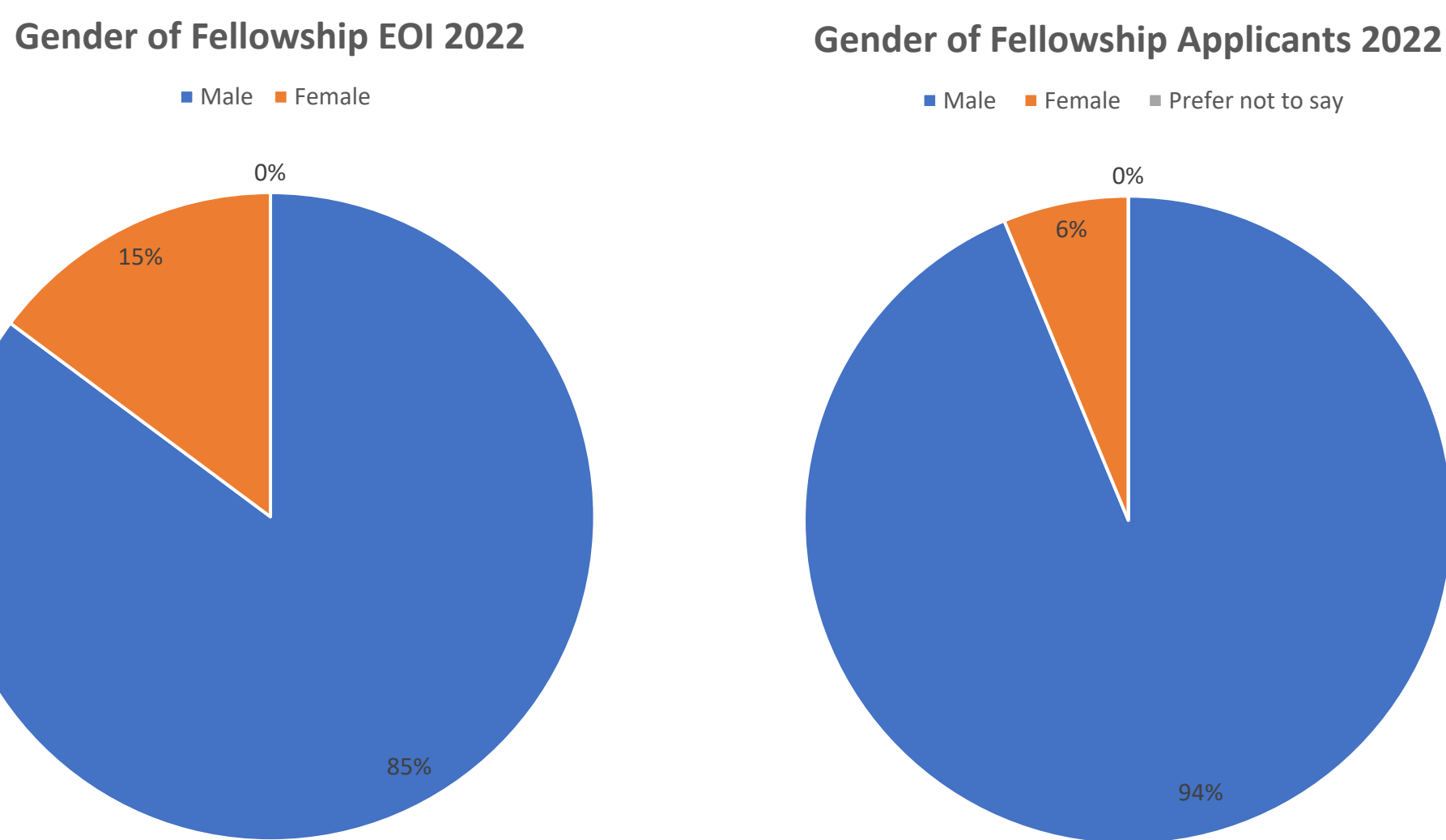


Figure 1: In Call 1 (2022), the ratio in the percentages of female to male (15% to 85%) at EOI stage dropped (6% to 94%) in the application stage.

3. Pre-application Interventions

Call 2 (2023) saw a focus on flexibility in the Fellowship design, increased application support, structured support (training workshops) to demystify the application process, and targeted marketing.

These interventions included information webinars, additional guidance for the neurodiverse, using inclusive and supportive language, allowing narrative CVs, and funded Networking Grants to promote collaboration.

4. Post-application Interventions

Anonymised reviewing was implemented to mitigate against unconscious bias. This was difficult to completely ensure, as letters of support (LoS) usually referred to the applicant's name or used gendered pronouns.

Review panels were mixed gender (barring any conflicts of interest) and included postdoc peer reviewers. Shortlisted applicants were guaranteed a gender mix on interview panel.

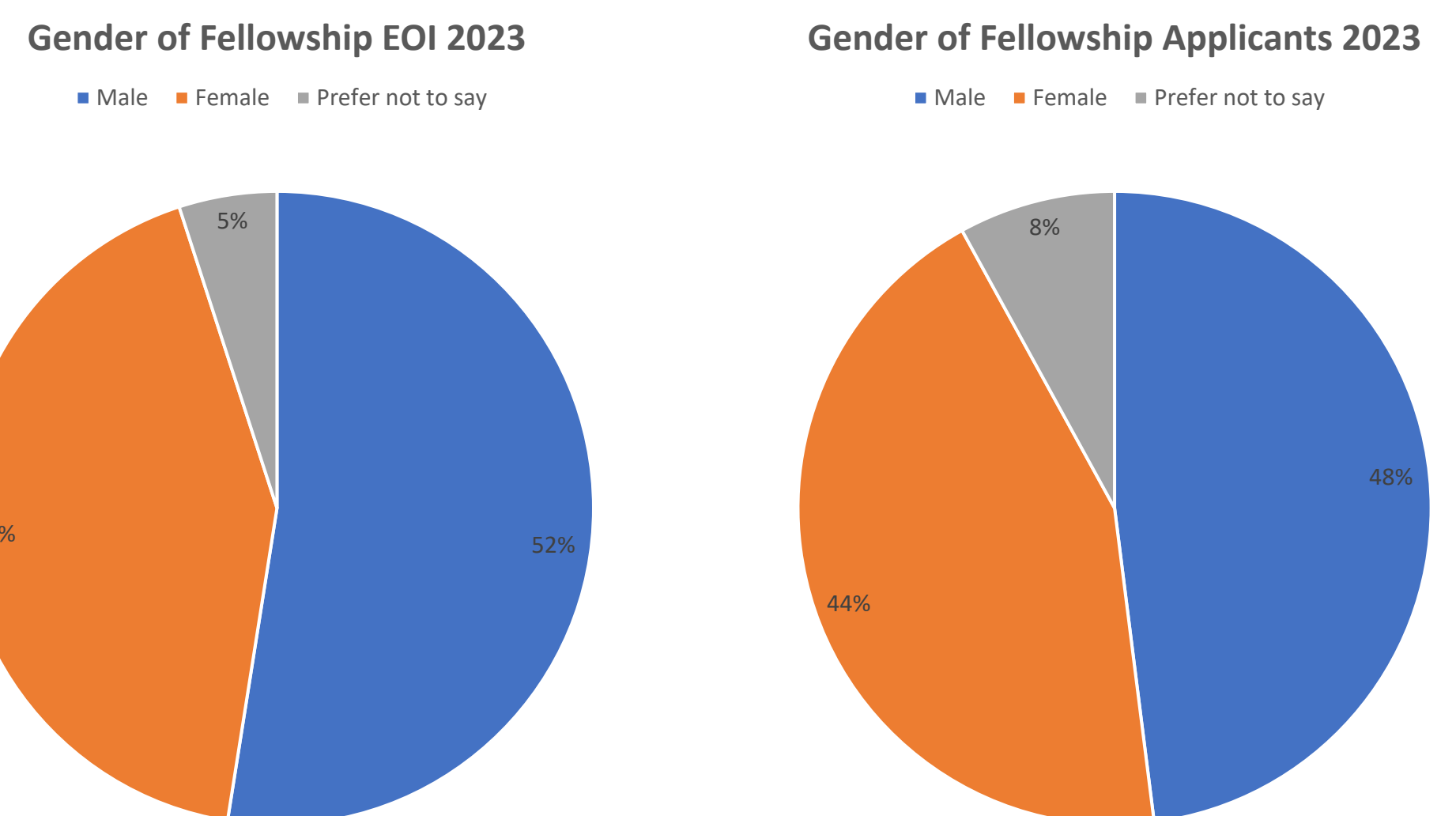


Figure 2: After interventions, Call 2 (2023) had a more balanced ratio of female to male EOI 43:52, which improved to 44:48 in the application stage.

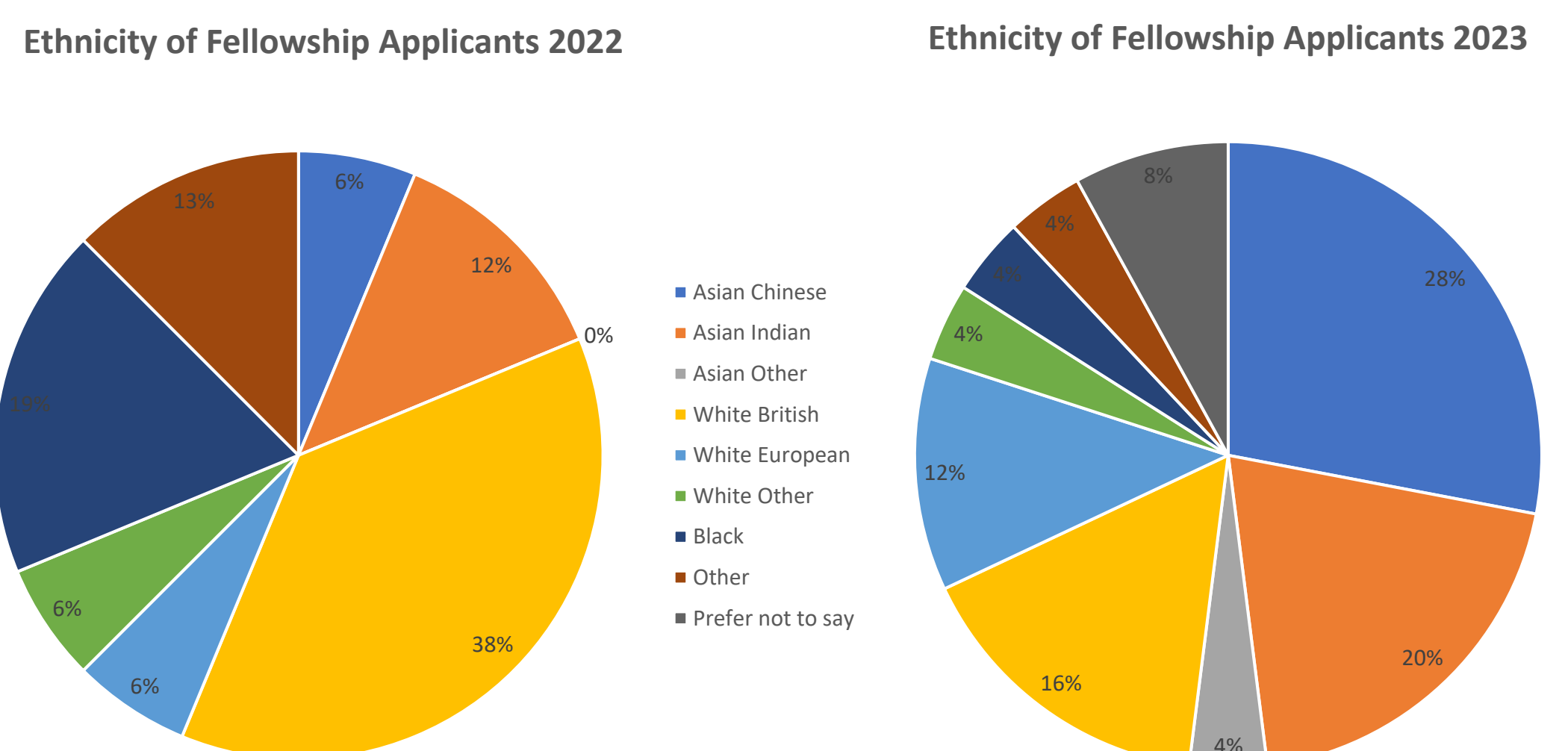


Figure 3: In Call 1 (2022), the largest ethnic groups of applicants were White British (38%), Black (19%) and Asian Indian (13%). In Call 2 (2023) the largest ethnic groups were Asian Chinese (28%), Asian Indian (20%), and White British (16%).

5. Observations from 2023

While it is unclear which intervention had the greatest impact, the trends in 2023 clearly improved from 2022. Greater gender balance presented in EOI (43% female, 52% male) and in the application stage (44% female, 48%). There was no drop off in percentage of female applicants between EOI and application. Ethnicity was also more balanced in the 2023 applicants, with no ethnic group over 28%.



@CentreDICE
@AmyBeier



www.cdice.ac.uk
www.bham.ac.uk



a.beierholm@cdice.ac.uk
a.k.beierholm@bham.ac.uk



C-DICE
amy-beierholm-960b221

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