



# Growth with purpose: Building an inclusive community



WHITE PAPER

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**Over time, 2016 may well be seen as a defining period for CIEH. We face some of the biggest questions in our more than 130-year history and must make bold, decisive choices about what kind of organisation we want to be, our role in supporting our profession and how we will grow our value, influence and impact.**

These are not decisions we take lightly, nor ones we are willing to address in a vacuum. Over the last few months we have established a meaningful dialogue across our industry, from members to non-members, stakeholders to regulators. We've also undertaken one of the most far-reaching, independent research initiatives in our history to ensure our choices and our decisions are informed by facts, not supposition. Our intention is to share some of what we've learned from the research as we seek to ensure the survival of CIEH as a professional membership body.

**98**  
important  
questions

In August 2016, we partnered with leading independent research agency YouGov, to develop two important industry surveys. The first was addressed to our members, ensuring we gave the current community a voice on our future. We were delighted that almost 1,000 members took the time to take part, delivering a robust and above-average response rate of more than 13% of those invited. To those of you who took the time to share your views, thank you.

**935**  
member  
contributions

The second survey was addressed to another important audience – practitioners involved in all aspects of health, safety and environmental protection, who are part of our professional landscape but not currently members of CIEH. More than 1,000 practitioners contributed to this survey, sourced from YouGov's panel of over 650,000 people from across Britain.

**1,039**  
non-member  
perspectives

Through this research, we have sought to better understand the context in which our professional community operates; where we're delivering value today and what value looks like tomorrow; and practitioners' priorities and aspirations for the future.

The results of the surveys, combined with conversations with active CIEH members, have provided the insight and objectivity required to address the fundamental questions facing CIEH.

# A diverse profession

At its very core, our mission – protecting the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities – covers a multitude of professional areas. Food safety, quality and standards; Environmental quality, hazards and protection; Workplace safety and risk assessment; Lifestyle and public health; Housing, safer neighbourhoods and communities; Fire control, pest control and animal disease control.

**Figure one: Areas of practice of survey respondents**

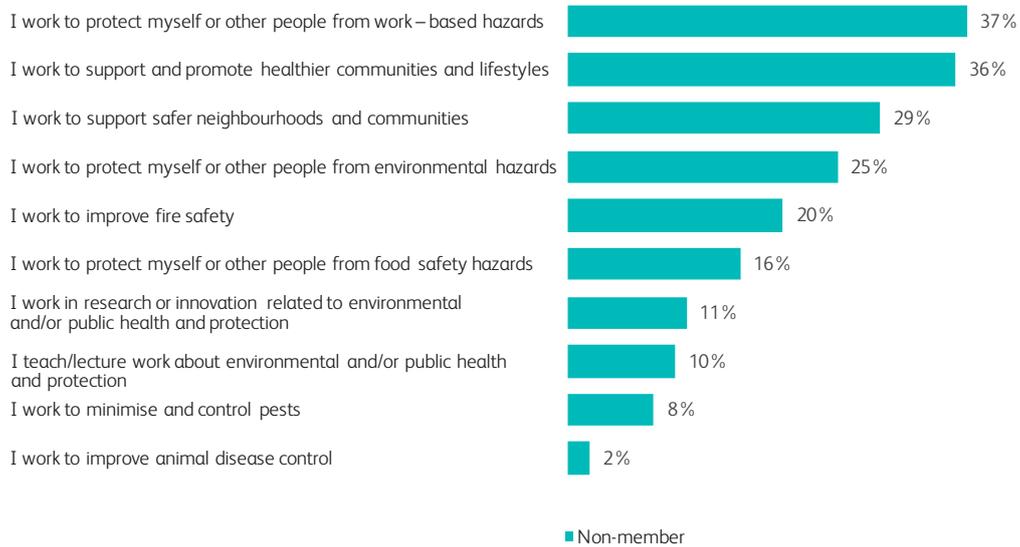


To which of the following Environmental Health areas of practice, if any, is your job role relevant? Please choose all that apply.  
n= 1,036 non-members, 935 CIEH members

People employed in the areas listed above work in a variety of roles from inspectors to assessors, line managers to policy advisors, EHOs to risk and compliance directors, researchers to educators, spanning the private, public and third sectors.

It's clear, therefore, that our mission puts us at the heart of a multi-layered and complex profession, one for which a narrow definition of our discipline, a practitioner or a future member simply won't suffice.

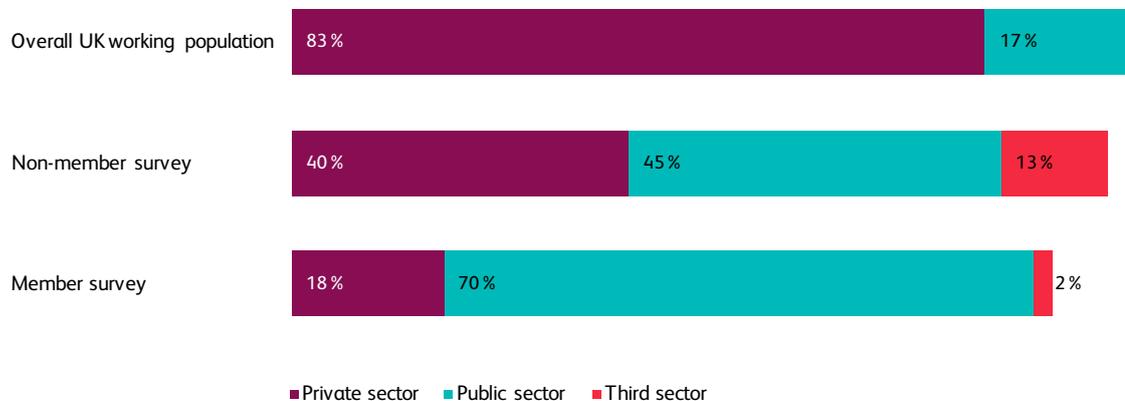
**Figure two: Role focus of non-member participants**



Which of the following, if any, best apply to what you do in your day-to-day job role? Please choose all that apply.  
n= 1,036 non-members

Today, our membership – as shown by the participation in our member survey – is heavily populated by practitioners from the public sector (71% versus 18% in the private sector), while responses to our non-member survey were more evenly balanced, with 45% of contributors working in the public sector, compared to 40% in the private sector. This is set against the UK’s overall working population, where 83% of employees are in the private sector. CIEH does not represent the wider community of practitioners that works across the full portfolio of environmental health disciplines and specialisms.

**Figure three: Contrasting CIEH’s sector mix with non-member research participants and the overall UK workforce**



Comparing sector breakdown of survey respondents, in contrast to overall UK working population  
Note: public sector and third sector are combined for UK overall figures (source: ONS)

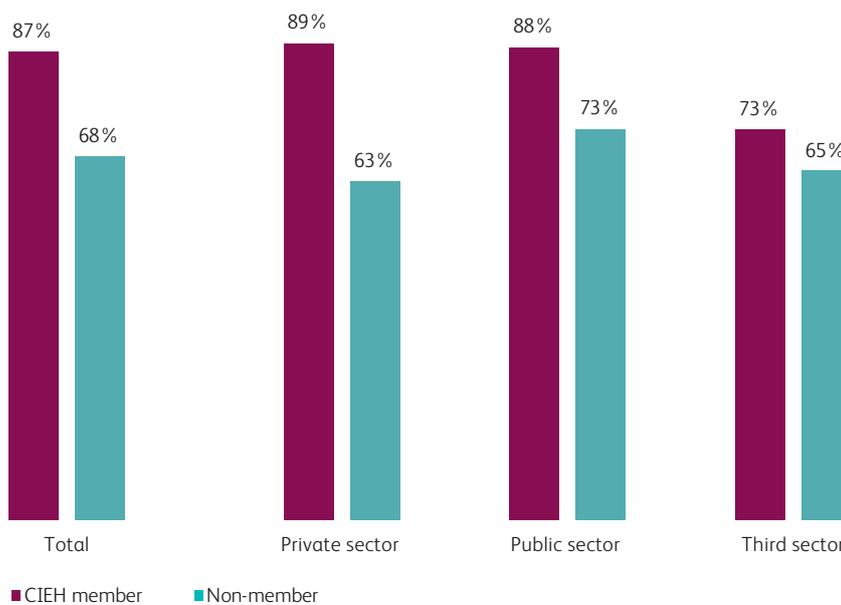
In order to unlock growth from this diverse professional community, it’s imperative that we ensure diversity in our membership population, to avoid relegating CIEH to a narrow role, rather than an impactful, profession-wide one.

# A common professional identity

While a diverse profession can end up a divided one, we see much in common amongst both members and non-members.

A sizeable majority of the practitioners surveyed consider themselves part of a profession, something bigger than their individual position. CIEH has a role to play in uniting the profession around a set of common professional standards and shared values.

**Figure four: How practitioners feel part of a wider profession**

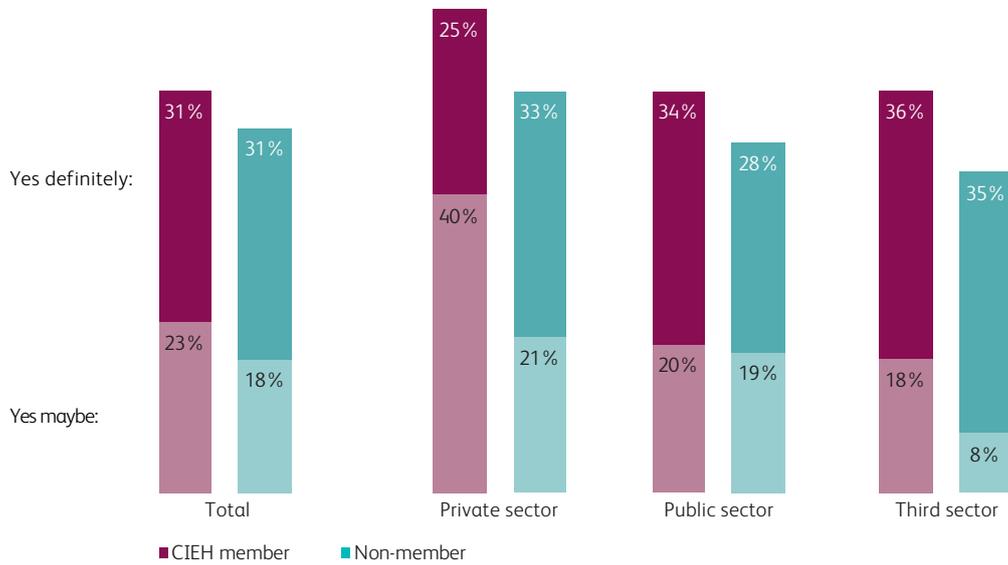


Do you see yourself as a member of a wider profession? This may not be an official member, but a sense of feeling part of a wider profession. Percentage in agreement.  
n= 1,039 non-members, 935 CIEH members

87% of our members and 70% of our non-members reported they feel part of a wider profession. This difference isn't a surprise as it is common for those who are members of a professional body to have a stronger sense of belonging than those who aren't. Of note, and of great encouragement, is the opportunity to engage and encourage non-members to formalise their affiliation with their profession by joining CIEH.

What's more, structured progression towards Chartered status, despite relative low awareness of CIEH and competitor organisations, is of high appeal to both members and non-members alike.

**Figure five: Aspiration to work towards Chartered status**



Is having Chartered professional status something you would like to work towards?  
 n= 1.039 non-members. 935 CIEH members

It is incredibly positive that almost as many non-members (49%) as members (54%) expressed an interest in securing independent accreditation for their ongoing professional development. It suggests there is significant potential for a future membership proposition that provides professional accreditation.

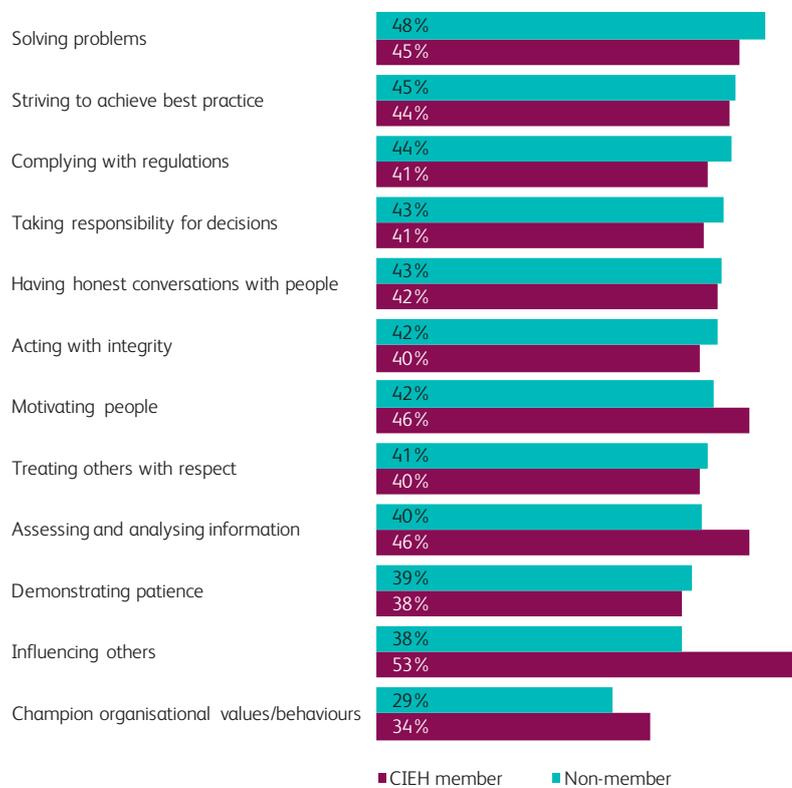
Our challenge, however, is not to take this for granted. Differences in specialisms and roles among the wider community will have to be recognised and accommodated in a new accreditation framework. We need to ensure that our professional pathways are flexible, without compromising standards.

CIEH must commit to raising awareness and understanding of Chartered status amongst members and non-members and also in the wider community where members operate to ensure it has currency and a positive reputational impact.

# Unmet needs and ambitions

The picture forming from our research is of a complex profession which shares a common professional identity, places value on Chartered status and has shared professional development priorities.

**Figure six: Skills and development priorities for the environmental health profession**



Which of these behaviours or capabilities do you think you need to develop most working in your role?  
Please choose all that apply.  
n= 1,039 non-members, 935 CIEH members

Of the skills and capabilities we put to participants, the majority were highlighted as development priorities by 40% or more of those surveyed. This is a sizeable figure, demonstrating that in spite of the diverse make-up of our profession, there's a lot in common in terms of the professional development support needed.

**Figure seven: Appetite for professional recognition**

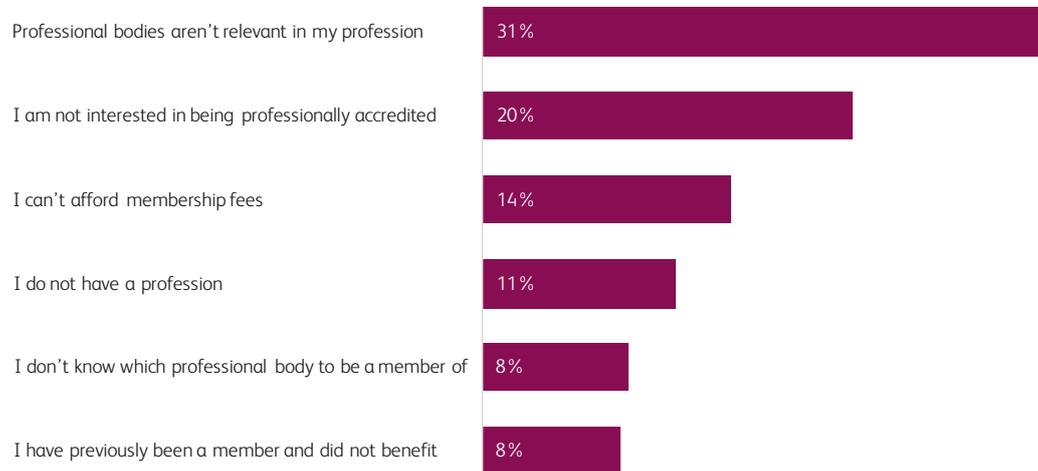


We found that members and non-members have a robust appetite for professional recognition, status amongst peers and career development. These findings reinforce the potential value which a refocused proposition from CIEH can bring to this community.

Yet in the last three years, only 8% of non-members surveyed had come into contact with CIEH and a significant 68% had no contact with our competitor bodies over the same period. At present, 80% of non-members surveyed have no membership affiliation with any competing professional organisation, leading to the conclusion that while our professional community shares ambitions, priorities and aspirations, these are not being suitably addressed, either by CIEH or alternatives.

We also found that despite a significant proportion of non-members feeling part of a distinct profession, less than 30% held any awareness of CIEH prior to taking our survey.

**Figure eight: Primary reasons for not joining a professional body**



You said that you are not a member of a professional body. Why is this? Please choose all that apply.  
n= 563 non-members

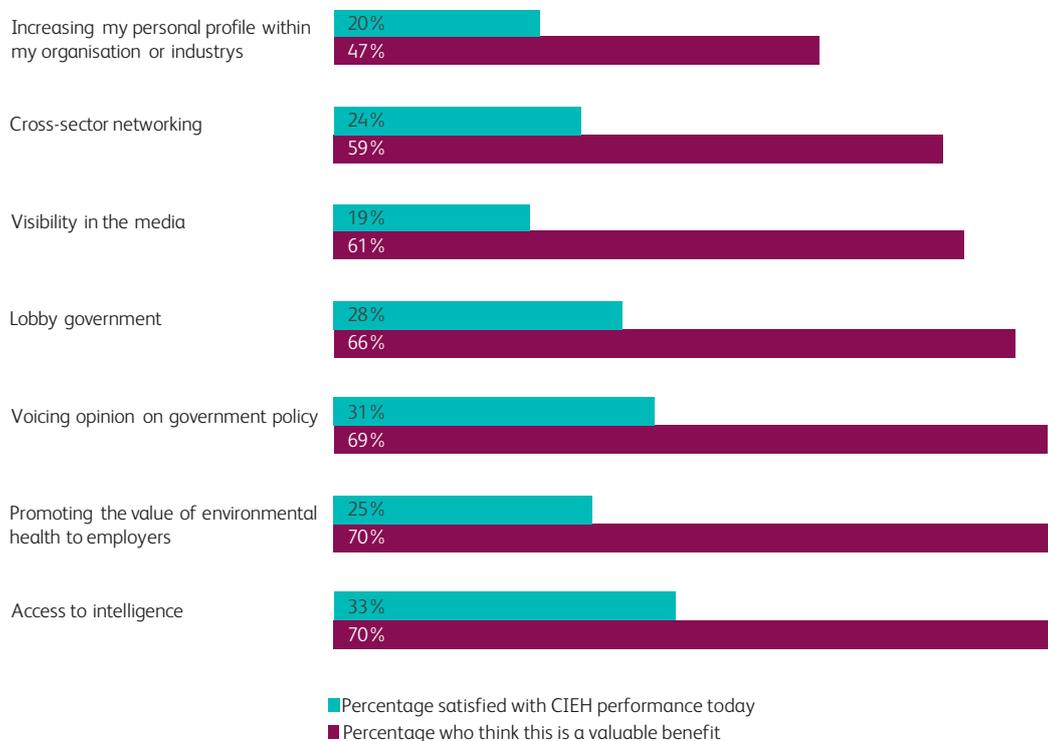
The main reasons non-members gave for not joining CIEH or a competing organisation centre around a perceived lack of relevance and apathy towards the concept of membership. 'Relevance' and 'apathy' are two words that lie at the very heart of CIEH's renewal. We're confident that better stakeholder insight and stronger propositions will give lapsed and potential members pause to reconsider.

The findings described above support the conclusion that if our organisation is willing to adapt, to step up to the leadership role our profession demands and to be bold in our position and our voice, we will be talking to a receptive audience who know what they want but haven't yet been able to find it.

# The case for change

Before looking to extend our appeal and grow our member community, we need to understand how we're performing today. The CIEH member survey revealed that we can't simply continue to do more of the same.

**Figure nine: Contrasting perceived value of CIEH member benefits with current satisfaction**

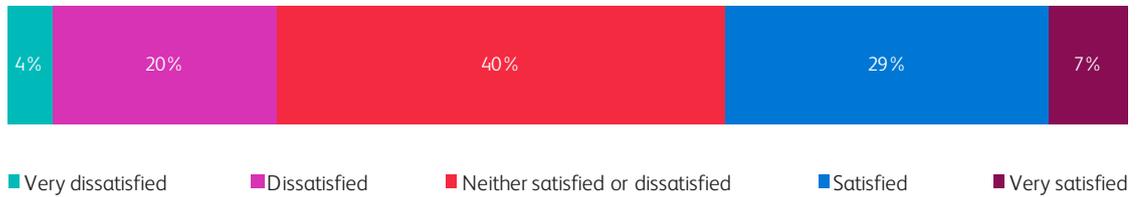


How valuable are these aspects of your membership, and how satisfied are you with them today?  
n= 935 CIEH members

The majority of members, 60-70% in most cases, believe that there is value in many of the core features of their CIEH membership.

Yet only one third or less of members are satisfied with core CIEH membership benefits. It is concerning that more than two thirds of members are either dissatisfied or indifferent with the benefits offered by CIEH membership.

**Figure ten: Members’ overall satisfaction with their CIEH relationship**



How valuable are these aspects of your membership, and how satisfied are you with them today?  
 n= 935 CIEH members

Beyond the performance of individual membership features, the survey revealed a general level of disquiet and apathy towards CIEH membership. This is a business critical vulnerability for us and underlines the clear need to change what the organisation offers its members.

It is clear from the research that CIEH’s approach to offering value to members, the core proposition of any professional body, is unfit for purpose.

It’s imperative that we refocus our proposition to ensure that our core, loyal community are in no doubt as to the value that membership of CIEH provides and that we empower them to advocate our mission and the benefits of being a part of our network. Moreover, our growth aspirations will only succeed if they are based on robust membership propositions and tailored, flexible professional development pathways. Promoting or repackaging an ineffective and generic membership offer today will only fail when evaluated by prospective new members.

# Professional development with flexibility at the core

There is significant demand for endorsement and validation amongst our professional community:

- 52% of professionals said Chartered status is something they'd like to work towards
- The majority of professionals (76% members, 54% non-members) see certification of their skills and expertise by a professional body as important
- 81% of those surveyed said peer and colleague recognition of their skills and expertise is important to them

To respond to this demand, our flagship Chartered status and the professional pathway through which members can reach it, must be reviewed. Faced with a diverse profession and with an aspiration to grow both our scale and our impact, we need to ensure that our pathways are tailored to the different types of people that operate in our space.

Ultimately, what's required is balance. Balance between inclusive and exclusive, attainable and aspirational. A balance between growing the volume of Chartered environmental health professionals to ensure that the Chartered 'badge' has industry-wide recognition through its scale, without it becoming so easy to achieve that its value is diminished. Preserving this balance will be at the forefront of our thinking as we respond to market demand with flexible, tailored development opportunities for different audiences.

# Value = Impact x Scale

This issue of balance applies not just to our Chartered status but to our membership proposition as a whole.

**81%**  
of members  
believe the  
professional  
status of CIEH  
membership is  
important

Across our community, from members to non-members, our surveys revealed significant importance placed on intangible value, such as status and reputation, not just the more tangible membership benefits such as research, content and training programmes, although still important.

Indeed, the overwhelming majority of members surveyed said that the professional standing of being a CIEH member is important to them.

Yet here we face a conundrum. The intangible value sought by our member community, and the expectations of CIEH in terms of external influence and impact, require scale.

In order for our campaigning efforts to catch industry attention, for lobbying to be heard by regulators and the government, for thought leadership to be covered by national media, and for our accreditations to carry currency, we need to grow our member community. Put simply, size matters.

Since 2010 our member community has declined by 16% from its peak of more than 10,600 to approximately 8,850 today. When combined with the dissatisfaction and indifference we've seen reported in our member survey, this requires a two-pronged approach: improving our proposition for existing members to improve engagement and satisfaction (and thus improve retention and loyalty), while concurrently developing propositions to bring in new members to deliver growth.

Neither of these approaches are more or less important than the other. We cannot argue that retention of existing members is more important than acquisition of new members, because the two are so closely interrelated, in that member satisfaction is tied to external impact, which requires us to grow our overall community.

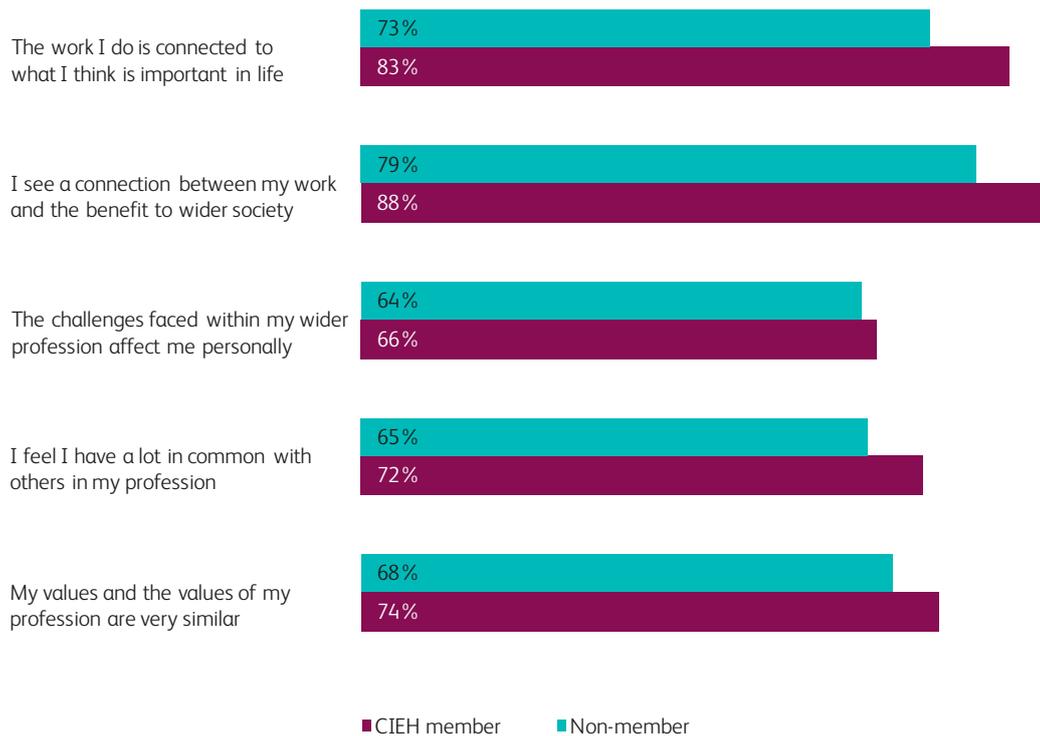
Together, however, we believe that these efforts will make a material impact on our ability to deliver the intangible, reputational benefits of membership, as well as the tangible.

# A strong uniting idea

We have learned much from this research as to the priorities and ambitions of the community we support and represent. Underlying the evidence to help us build stronger membership propositions and a more flexible professional development pathway, has emerged a much bigger question – one of purpose.

So far we’ve learned that our profession is united by a strong sense of shared belonging and intent, despite being complex, fragmented and multi-faceted. We’ve seen a common appetite for professional accreditation and Chartered status and have heard the development priorities and support needs of our community.

**Figure 11: How practitioners feel connected to the environmental health profession**



To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Percentage in agreement.  
n= 1,039 non-members, 935 CIEH members

The overwhelming majority of both members and non-members told us that their values are aligned to that of their profession and that the wider challenges across the health, safety and environmental community affect them, even if outside the day-to-day nature of their role. They place value on the impact that their professional contribution has to wider society and are motivated to do so because it's connected to what they think is important in life.

Much like other professions with a societal impact, such as teaching or nursing, environmental health is seen as something of a calling, not just a career.

Yet in spite of this, engagement with CIEH and competing organisations hasn't been forthcoming and our research points to notable differences in how we're perceived by members and non-members alike. This raises the possibility that despite our more than 130-year heritage, we lack a coherent *raison d'être* or clearly articulated purpose and role in our profession.

As we seek to grow our community and our impact, it's clear that we need to be more than just a membership body. More than just a training company, a provider of CPD, a source of technical advice and network of individuals. We need to tap into the innate sense of 'something bigger' that our members and non-members recognise in their profession and to articulate a coherent purpose and mission that permeates everything we do and shapes everything from our propositions to our media output. Something which will galvanise our diverse community and help to better position CIEH as an essential professional partner.

## In Summary

**We're part of a dynamic, wide-ranging and diverse community.** The environmental health profession is full of practitioners hungry for support, recognition and validation, looking for an organisation to step into the leadership vacuum which exists in our industry today.

**The opportunity for CIEH is real.** We have an enviable heritage and are seen positively in the external community, even if not yet known for what we want to be. As an organisation, we have assets and hidden strengths which need nurturing and some clear pointers from our member community about where we can improve.

**We need to change but the reward will be a stronger CIEH.** If we're willing to change as an organisation, to step up to the profession-wide role that stakeholders want, with a clear sense of our purpose and mission, we can build a stronger, more impactful organisation. By embracing practitioners from across the health, safety and environment sector and building flexibility into our professional pathways, we can deliver an organisation with leadership, influence and impact. This can be done without compromising standards and quality.

We've learned a lot from this research. There's even more insight from the surveys we've not been able to share in this paper but are using to help build a stronger and more impactful member community and deliver a purposeful professional development pathway.

We encourage you to share your thoughts and join the conversation about creating a better CIEH.



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