

Wave Wahines CIC

SURFING & DIVERSITY

Yvette Curtis

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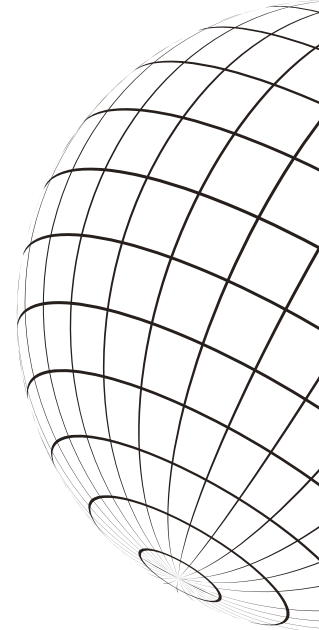
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Thanks.

INTRODUCTION

Perceptions of surfing in the UK

Contemporary surfing can be dated as far back as 12th century Polynesia but was not recorded on the shores of the UK until 1890 when two Hawaiian princes and their English tutor went stand up surfing in Bridlington in the North East of England.



This means that the first recorded stand up surfers in the UK, were people of colour, but over 130 years later, the image of surfing in the UK is a very different one. Today, images of blonde, white, athletic men have been dominant in surf media and marketing which has shaped the culture of the sport to the exclusion of other diverse genders, ethnicities, cultures, body types and abilities.

In the twenty-first century lifestyle sports such as surfing and skateboarding, parkour, wake boarding, paddleboarding, base jumping and kite surfing are attracting an ever-increasing number of participants. Mintel and Key Note statistics indicate that around 10% of the adult population is interested in participating in lifestyle sports, but that the majority of this 10% is drawn from a narrow age and socio-demographic grouping; (15-24 year olds, mainly men, from the higher socio-economic classifications). (see: <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/outdoors-participation-report-v2-lr-spreads.pdf>)

Inclusive Boards conducted research for 'The Diversity in Sport Governance' report for Sport England and UK Sport to provide a comprehensive picture of the diversity of board memberships up to the end of 2018. The report showed that board members from diverse ethnic communities account for just 5.2% of all board members identified across Sport England and UK Sport funded organisations.

This Surfing for Diversity report primarily is focused on England, as this is the area I am based in. However, the involvement of all UK federations and British Surfing is critical and how we would like them to help this movement towards greater inclusivity and diversity is detailed further in the report.

Given the important role that leadership and representation play in sport management and participation, Wave Wahines believes we should be looking more closely at why these exclusions and inequalities are an accepted norm in surfing - a sport and culture that views itself as progressive, inclusive and accessible.

*At the time of writing both Surfing England (last reviewed in 2016) and Scottish Surfing Federation (last reviewed 2019) have separate diversity and inclusion policies. The Welsh Surfing Federation and The Channel Islands Surfing Federation do not currently have a relevant easily visible on their websites.

FOREWORD FROM WAHINES FOUNDER - YVETTE

As a woman of mixed heritage and the founder of a surf club designed to provide an inclusive, affordable, accessible and supportive entry into surfing, I have seen the sport, it's culture and its governance from a unique perspective.

I was relatively new to surfing when I founded the club. This allowed me a perspective that was from both a beginner surfer, a feminist, a person of colour, and a non-surfing family. This intersectional lens provided the foundation of Wave Wahines and this survey..

The more I saw and experienced of surfing, the more I found an unconscious bias and a lack of willingness to discuss the issues surrounding ethnic diversity in UK surfing, in particular, relating to women from diverse ethnic communities.

Having worked at Surfing England for nearly two years (2017- 2019) and having my own experiences through this time within the structures surrounding English surfing, I wanted to take a closer look at what surfing in the UK is like, how it's perceived and how it's presented to us.

"Expensive, exclusive, male and white dominated."
Survey respondent



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Key focus areas for impact

Whilst all the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are important for global progress, Wave Wahines has prioritised the following three SDG's. These align with the vision, mission and values that form the basis of our club and its provision.

1

GENDER EQUALITY

Most recent reports showed only 20% of all UK surfers are women. We aim to ensure women and girls have equal access and opportunity in the sport and surrounding culture/industry

2

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

We promote physical, mental and social health and wellbeing through blue health experiences and relationships.

3

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

We ensure all women & girls feel welcome in the surf space we provide and work with a variety of culturally and ethnically diverse communities and lower socio-economic communities

METHODOLOGY

How has this research been put together?

This report was based on a short survey of 15 questions relating to respondents' gender and ethnicity to gain insight into perceptions of UK surfing, its culture and its organisational structures. The survey included a combination of open and closed questions to enable respondents the option to discuss any personal lived experiences and/or individual views. All responses were anonymised prior to evaluation processes.

Prior to developing the survey, discussions were held with Surfing England (the governing body for surfing in England), who were unable to provide any data surrounding cultural and ethnic diversity in surfing as they had not gathered this information at the time.

We then held conversations with members of the Institute for Women Surfers (Europe) to discuss the need for this research. They supported and shared the survey. Dr Rebecca Olive went through the format and questions, providing feedback as a researcher. Dr Olive also contributed to the analysis.

Using current UK census data, we also took into account the demographic landscape of the country. If we compare surfing districts and to the demographics of a city, we would see a direct difference in those demographics. However, as Bristol is now host to England's first inland surf lake the current figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show nearly 30% of the population identify as non-white. *

In North Devon (where I am based) 94.3% of the population identify as white, leaving just over 5% that don't, and in Cornwall the figure is 93.6% identify as white. (Figures taken from the ONS website see:<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/ethnicgroupnationalidentitylanguageandreligioncensus2021englandandwales>)

As the statistics show, geography will have an impact but that is not the whole story. This is what we found out when we looked closer.

This survey was developed as a result of personal interest. The investigation and was not conducted by a professional research and insight company or provider but had the support of the above-mentioned persons.

RESULTS

Key Findings.

- **Intersectionality:** Respondents were clear about the multiple factors that make surfing inaccessible to a wide range of people. As well as race/ethnicity, they discussed gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and class.
- **Costs:** The high costs of surfing were mentioned frequently in relation accessibility of surfing. The cost of renting equipment, the costs of transport and parking, and the costs of wetsuits emerged as significant barriers to participation. The importance of accessible surf lessons was highlighted and entry costs for The Wave were mentioned consistently.
- **Geography:** Answers revealed consistent perceptions and experiences of surfing as only accessible to people living by the coast. This was linked to factors including transport options (mostly related to availability and costs of public transport) and localism.
- **Representation:** The lack of representation of diverse people in surfing is unsurprising. However, rather than talk only about a lack of representation of women, participants emphasised the high visibility of fit, White bodies, and Whiteness overall. This was both in the media and in the surf.
- **Male-dominated:** Respondents identified that the cultural dominance of men in the surf and in surf media remains a major barrier to inclusivity in surfing. This was clear in every response across the survey, including those from men.
- **Ocean skills:** This was a less prolific theme but a lack of established ocean familiarity, knowledge and skill stood out as a barrier to participation by respondents.

We received 181 responses to this survey.

85% Respondents currently surf

63% Respondents have experienced discrimination in the water

96% of respondents believe there is not enough representation in UK surfing governance organisations

comprised of Yes and don't know as not all respondents were unaware of any UK surfing governance.



SURVEY QUOTES

Being young / female / POC not being taken as serious

Personally I've had issues breaking into the surf community in the UK. Everyone seems to be wary of "outsiders" as if it's a very exclusive club which makes it hard for anyone who's not "in" to know how to get into surfing. In terms of ethnic diversity, I've seen a handful of events encouraging diverse participation but beyond an event there are very few avenues to accessible surfing. The activity itself requires a large time commitment (for most) and financial outlay

If governing bodies wanted to encourage new faces into surfing they could. Surfing is very protective of its waves and actively discouraged people from participating.

If you are not from the coast or don't fit in you are not made to feel welcome.

I would love to see a lady in a saree surfing someday

If the surfing community does genuinely want to encourage diversity and participation there needs to be a big collective shift in attitude not to marginalise outsiders

Really interesting survey topic, not something I thought about until today

I love being in the ocean it's my happy place.

The sport is designed for elites and companies that profit around it. The sport is at the cusp of either falling into blue washing or actually making a difference by involving more communities.

WHAT NEXT?

Where do we go from here?

Sustainability reports are not just about looking back, but also looking forward. This SDG Progress Report format, which we have adopted here, is a continuous work in progress - a way for our organisation to track our impact and improvements over time. This section outlines our strategy for continuing the good work done so far.

1

FUNDING FOR SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

Opening up the Outdoors have enabled funding for surf activities specifically for women and girls from diverse ethnic communities

2

DEDICATED COACHING

A commitment from surfing bodies to help fund and facilitate coach training for women and girls from all communities to become qualified coaches and lifeguards

3

FURTHER RESEARCH

Wahines will assist and lead further research on a larger scale to fully understand the relationship between surfing and diverse ethnic and cultural communities

4

OPEN INFORMATION

To have all UK Surfing bodies release data on their staff, board, support staff and surfing teams and support crew make up and how they are implementing and reviewing their policies.

Surfing for diversity

CONCLUSION

It has been an incredible year for women's surfing in the UK and we anticipate we will continue to see positive change.

To achieve this collaboration is key. We will be working closely with other organisations, including The Wave, to help progress inclusivity and representation of diversity across surfing



SYRIAN SURF SQUAD

- We have funding for a 3rd year
- Many returning participants
- Cultural diversity increased

WOMEN'S CLUB

- Surfing independently
- Reaching new participants
- Cross sport engagements in 2023



PROGRESSION

- First all female surf contest
- Advanced training for 2023
- Development squad

Do you want to be part of this journey? We want you to discuss what you've read, and to talk, share and question. We all have the responsibility to call out inequalities and the power to drive change in the sport we love

Surfing for Diversity

THANKS.....

Thank you so much to all of those who took the time to respond to this survey and those organisations who shared the survey with their teams and followers.

A special thanks to the support from Rebecca Olive for her review of this project at various stages - I wouldn't have made it this far without your support.

Huge thanks to all my friends and mentors who have given me the strength to see this through, knowing it would raise some tough questions and answers.

This is for our children - I hope the surfing community is one for all as they grow.

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to make surfing a more representative and inclusive space.

Contact

Wave Wahines CIC: Yvette Curtis

www.wavewahines.co.uk
info@wavewahines.co.uk