

# Exploring Fellowships at the Smithsonian Institution

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## Background

- The Smithsonian Office of Fellowships and Internships (OFI) is responsible for managing the academic appointments of Interns, Fellows, & Research Associates at the Smithsonian.
- Types of Academic Appointments:
  - Internships- Guided learning opportunities
  - Fellowships- Independent opportunity for research and study
  - Research Associates- Maintain a scholarly relationship with the Smithsonian
- For each fiscal year (FY), OFI compiles an annual report that focuses on Internships, Fellowships, and Research Associates.
- The annual report provides information relevant to OFI's purpose, such as information pertinent to the diversity, background, and successfulness of different academic appointments.
- I focused on the Fellowships section of the FY18 annual report.



Smithsonian Fellows engaged in a wide variety of activities, from studying fungi in Panama to protecting endangered elephants in Asia.

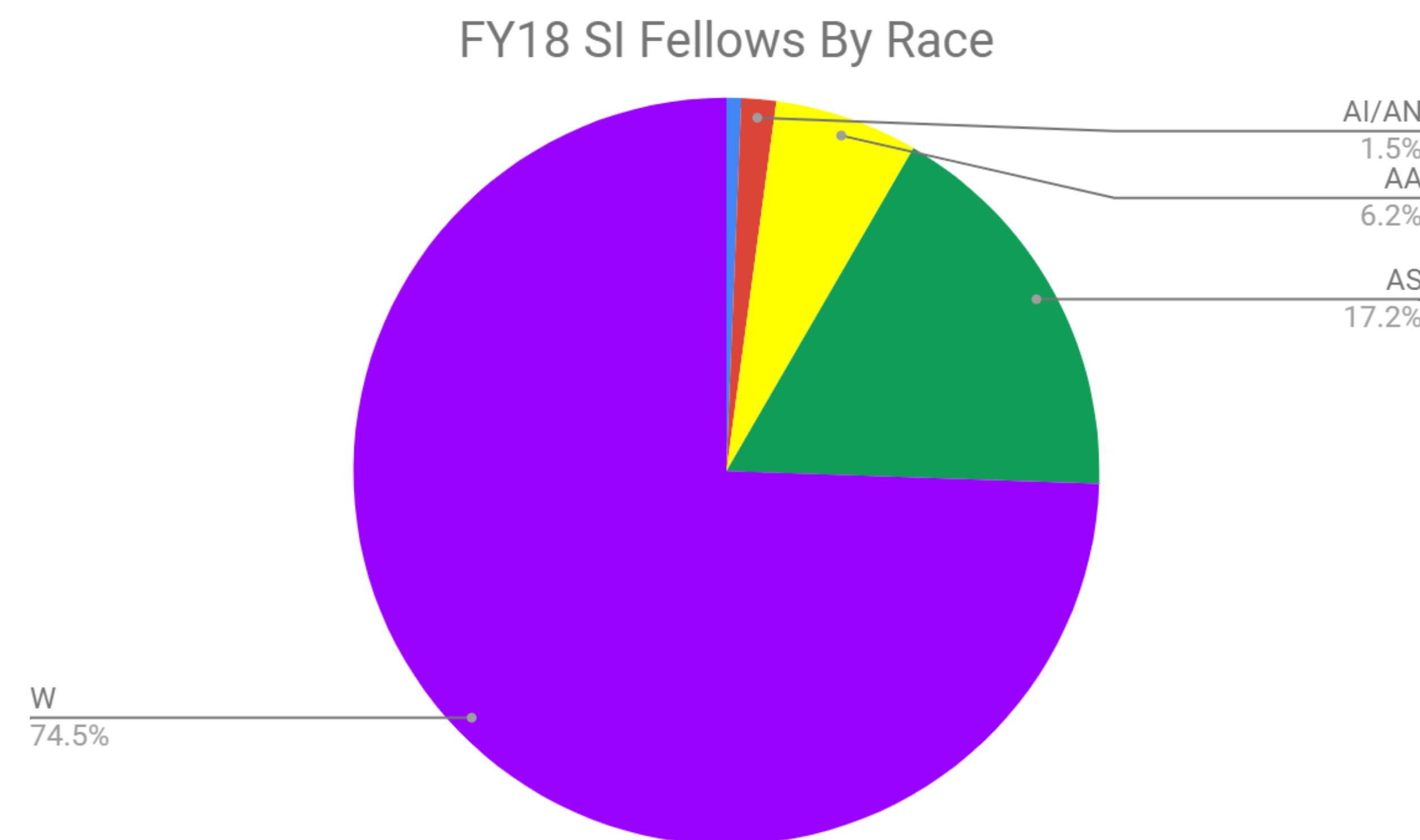
## Methods

- During the application process, prospective Fellows submitted information related to themselves, such as their race, academic level, and home place.
- The data for fiscal year 2018 (October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018) was sorted and analyzed to present it in informative and useful ways.

## How Does the Smithsonian Recruit Fellows?

- Opportunities and applications for Fellowships and programs are posted on websites of Smithsonian Institutions.
- Opportunities and applications are shared through social media such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Universities form partnerships with the Smithsonian to create Fellowship programs for students from those universities.

## FY18 Fellows by Race

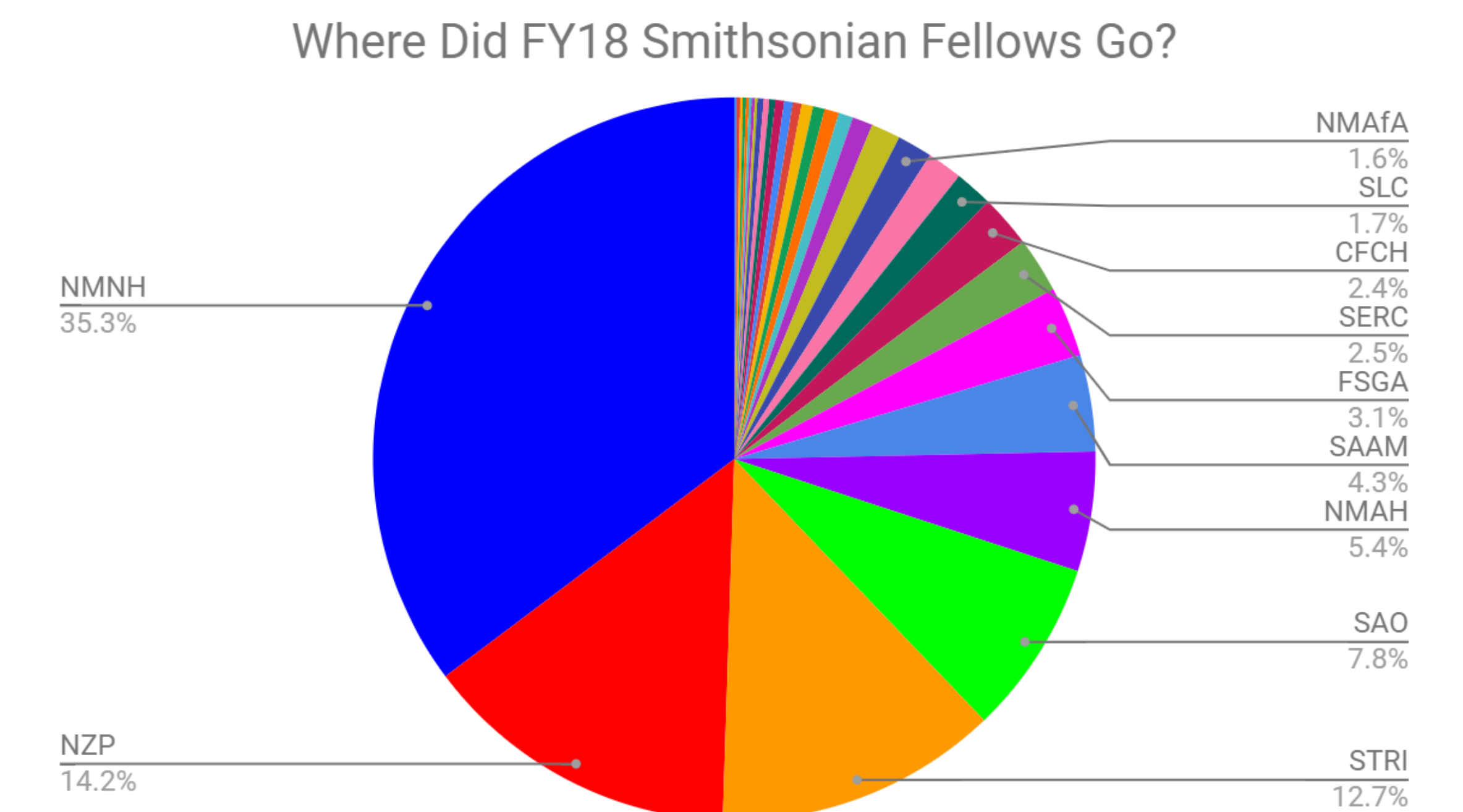


- FY18 Fellows as a group are largely white and not very racially diverse.
- Museums and academic institutions that do not have diverse staffs and students compromise the ability to thoughtfully gather and interpret the cultures, opinions, and experiences of diverse communities. These institutions risk alienating minorities as a result (Eid).
- The Smithsonian has created programs to increase diversity among Fellows. Some examples are:
  - Internship to Fellowship (I2F) Program
    - Aims to introduce recent college graduates who are Latino or Asian/Pacific Islander to the variety of careers associated with museums and academia
  - Smithsonian Latino Center Museum Studies Program

% of Fellows	FY17	FY18
White	83.0%	74.5%
Asian	11.8%	17.2%
African American	4.1%	6.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.9%	1.5%
Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.6%

- Programs such as the I2F and SLC Museum Studies programs have aided the increase in diversity of Smithsonian Fellows
- Increased diversity allows for a greater range of opinions, perspectives, and ideas. This allows museums a greater capability to invent and address challenges more effectively.
- Museums with more diverse staffs and students are also more likely to present displays that represent a greater range of peoples. When a variety of groups see their histories and cultures displayed in museums, it strengthens public trust, enhances the perception of museum institutions, and attracts a greater number of people to museums (Eid).

## Where Did FY18 Fellows Work?



- NMNH- National Museum of Natural History
- NZP- National Zoological Park
- STRI- Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
- SAO- Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory
- NMAH- National Museum of American History
- SAAM- Smithsonian American Art Museum
- FSGA- Freer Sackler Gallery of Art
- SERC- Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
- CFCH- Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
- SLC- Smithsonian Latino Center
- NMAfA- National Museum of African Art
- Most Fellows worked in institutions related to STEM subjects. This could be due to differences in research funding between STEM and the humanities, as is present throughout academia, that creates disparities in opportunities based on discipline. The data draws attention to this discrepancy and highlights the need for increased support and opportunities for the arts and other humanities.

## Conclusion

- Data of FY18 Smithsonian Fellows reveals that a lack of diversity among Fellows could impede the work the Smithsonian does to present diverse perspectives.
- Some programs have helped to increase diversity among Fellows but more needs to be done, such as creating partnerships with universities with large minority populations.
- The data also highlights the need for increased opportunities and support for arts and humanities Fellowships.

## Works Cited

Eid, Haitham. "Connecting the dots: The impact of diversity in the museum workforce on innovation, relevance, and audience Engagement." *MW18: MW 2018*. Published January 9, 2018. Consulted February 22, 2020.  
<https://mw18.mwconf.org/paper/connecting-the-dots-the-impact-of-diversity-in-the-museum-workforce-on-innovation-relevance-and-audience-engagement/>

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