



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Social Security Scotland Equality Strategy Impact Assessment Summary Report

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

The Equality Impact Assessment process

As a Public Body we are required to assess the impact of our activity. This document shows how the information about our workforce and the communities we serve guided our approach and the focus of our equality outcomes for 2021-2022.

Our approach

The development of our equality strategy and set of equality outcomes was guided by:

- An online public consultation held between November 2019 and February 2020
- Nine workshops held with members of the public and stakeholders across Scotland.
- In response to feedback received we created two Networks:
- Internal - 20 people from across Social Security Scotland
- External - 19 representatives from organisations from across Scotland.



Data Sources

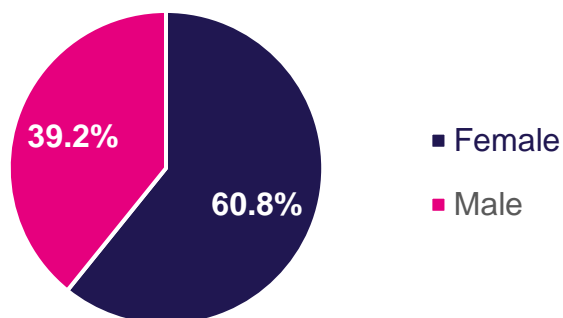
Data used to inform the focus of our outcomes comes from:

- Published quarterly workforce data. [Latest report](#) published December 2020
- [Social Security Scotland client diversity and equalities analysis published in September 2020](#),
- [Experience Panel feedback evidence](#)
- [Social Security Experience Panels: agency recruitment](#)
- Information collected from other Social Security Scotland Equality Impact Assessments and Recruitment data
- [The Number of Gender Variant People in the UK](#) - Gender Identity Research and Education Society
- Comparisons were also made to the national diversity statistics in the [Scottish survey core questions: 2018](#) and [Mid-2019 Population Estimates Scotland](#)

Our Workforce

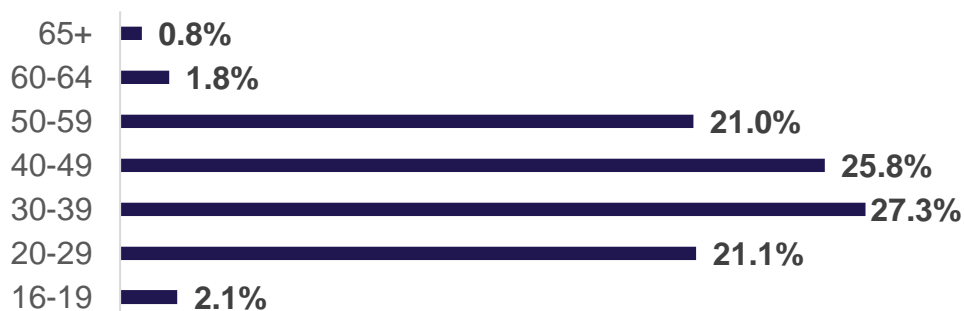
We publish [reports](#) on our workforce every three months. Age, date of birth and gender information are automatically collected for all directly employed colleagues. For other diversity information colleagues need to voluntarily update the on-line system. We regularly encourage our colleagues to provide their information or use the "prefer not to say" option but there are still some gaps in our data which are reported as "unknown".

Gender



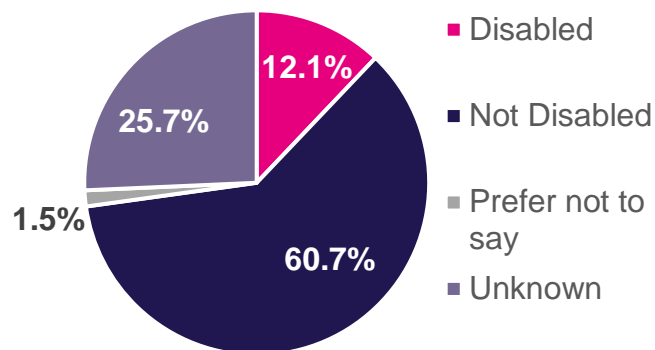
- We have a higher percentage of female staff at 60.8%.
- The mid 2019 population estimates shows 51.25% of the population as female.

Age



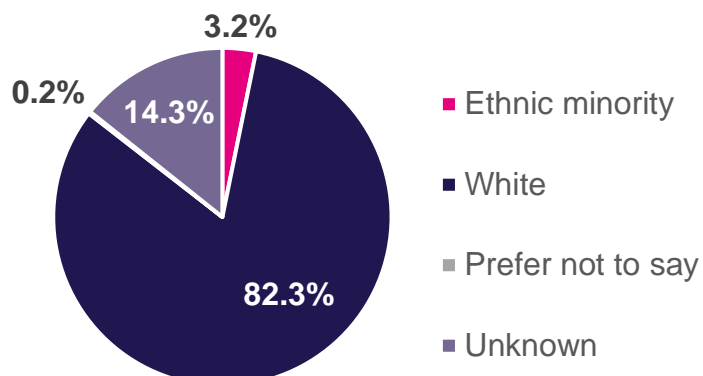
- Most of our workforce are between 30 and 49 years old.

Disability



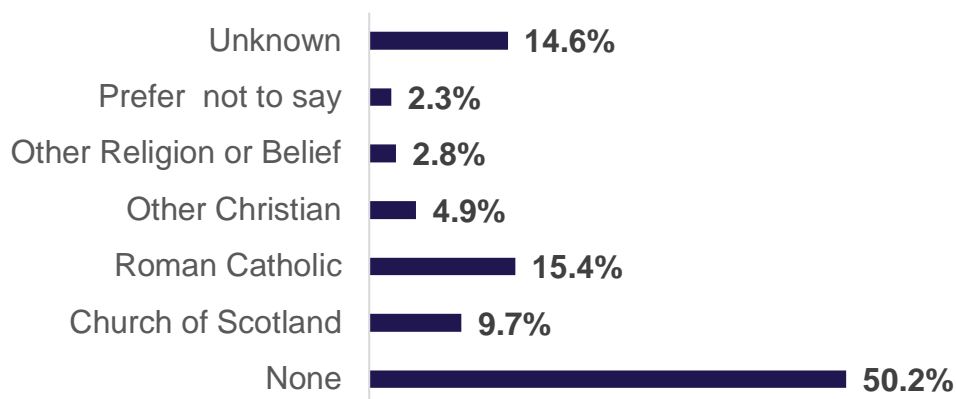
- 12.1% of staff declared they had a disability, a percentage that has increased each year from 6.3% in 2018 and 9.5% in 2019.
- The Scottish Core Survey Questions published in 2018 shows that 24.7% of the population of Scotland has a "Limiting long-term physical or mental health condition".
- 25.7% of staff have not declared whether they have a disability or not.

Race



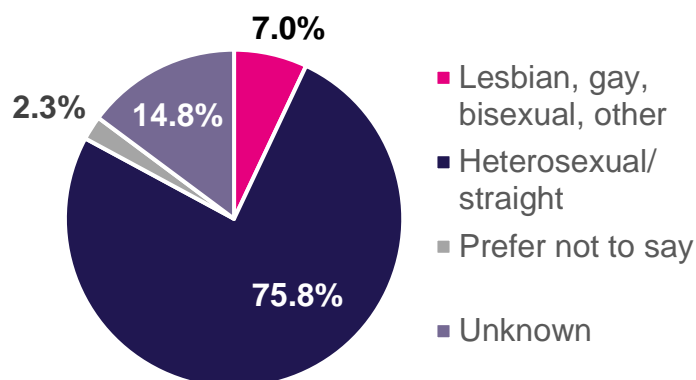
- 3.2% of staff declared their ethnicity as ethnic minority, this is an increase from 2.5 % in 2019.
- It is lower than the national average of 4.5% as shown in the Scottish Survey Core Questions.
- 14.3% of staff have not declared their racial identity.

Religion or Belief



- The majority of staff recorded their religion or belief as "None" (50.2%) this is the same as the national average as declared in the Scottish Survey Core Questions.
- We do not know the religious or belief status for 14.6% of staff.

Sexual Orientation



- 7% of staff declared their sexual orientation as Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other, up from 6.3% in 2019.
- The unknown category is 14.8%.

Our current clients

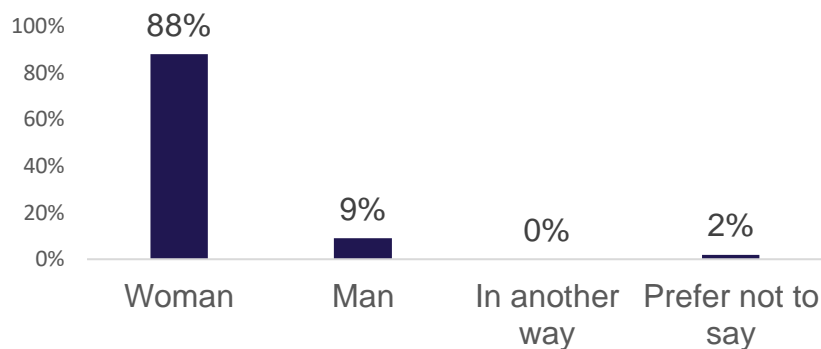
We have published two equality and diversity reports about our current clients. The first [report](#) was a one-off as completion of the equality information is now mandatory. The second [report](#) – summarised in the charts below - covers December 2019 to May 2020, when completion of equality information was mandatory. During this period, 89% of all applications were for [Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods](#). The information collected is used to understand who is using the service and to investigate how our processes work for different groups of people. We analyse the data by outcome of application to assess if there is any variation.

There is a difference in the terminology for workforce data, client diversity data and protected characteristics. This reflects differences in how the information is collected. We are exploring how to improve consistency and understanding.

Our future clients

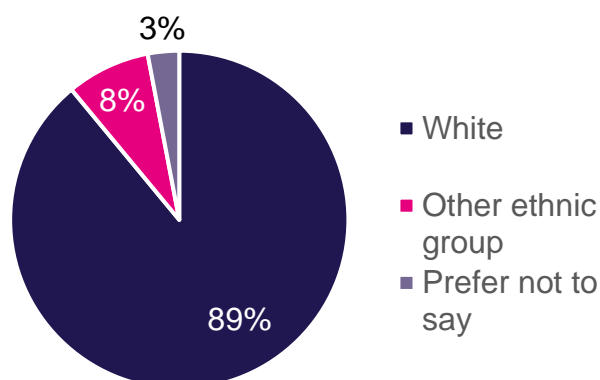
Over the next two years the demographics of the people who are our clients will change as new benefits are launched. This means we need to continue to develop how we work with stakeholders to support our workforce to deliver our service.

Gender



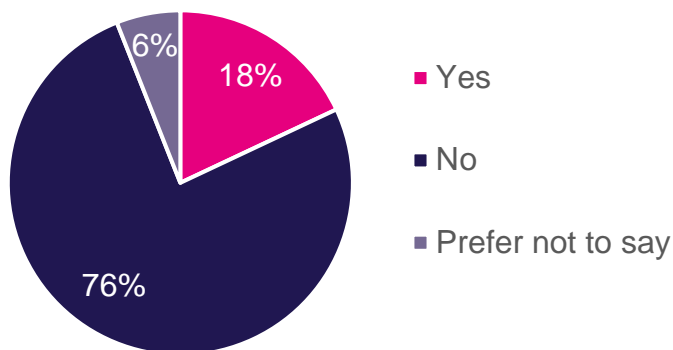
- 88% of clients self-identified as women. The majority of the data was from applicants for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods which may be more likely to be filled out by mothers rather than fathers.

Ethnic group



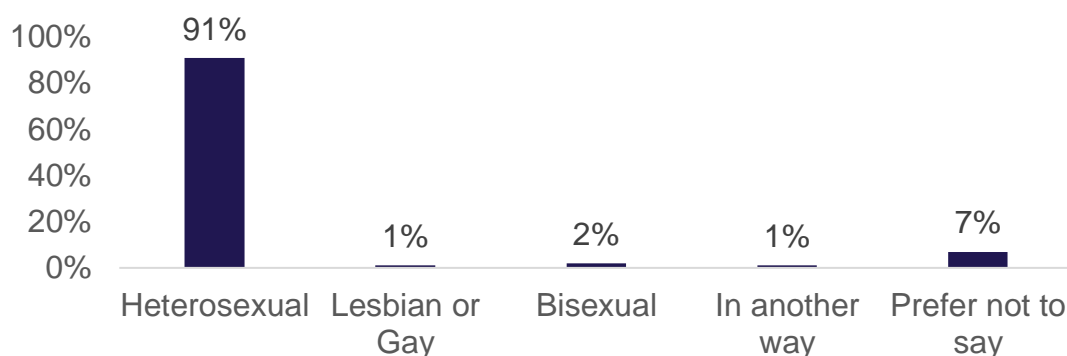
- 8% of clients were classed as "other ethnic group". This includes 4% who described their ethnic group as "Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British". In Scotland's 2011 census 96% of the total population of Scotland were "White".

Physical or mental health condition or illness



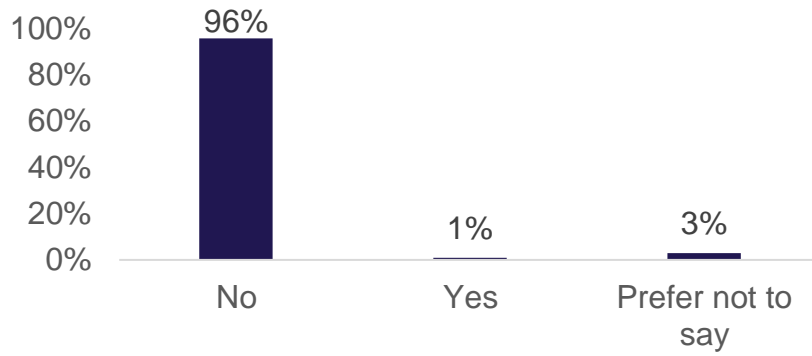
- 18% of clients declared they had a physical or mental health condition or illness. There is no directly comparable data for Scotland as a whole, but 24.7% of adults had a limiting long-term physical or mental health condition in Scotland in 2018, according to the Scottish Health Survey.

Sexual orientation



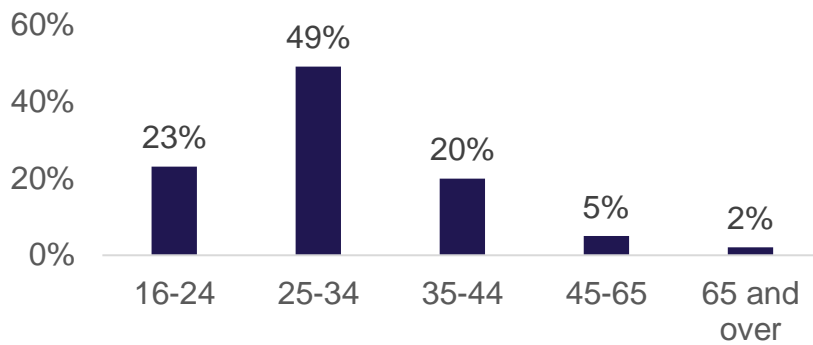
- 1% of clients identified as Lesbian or Gay and 2% as Bisexual. 7% of clients prefer not to say, the highest proportion selecting this option out of all of the equalities questions. Scottish Survey Core Questions estimates that 2.6% of respondents identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Other.

Transgender



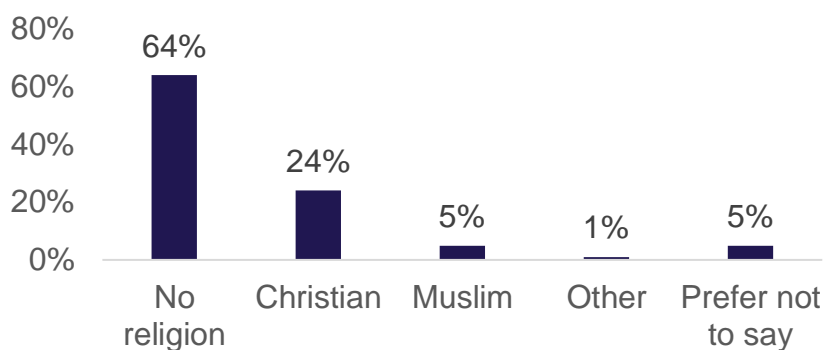
- 1% of clients identified as transgender. The Gender Identity Research and Education Society estimates that between 0.6% and 1% of the UK population identify as transgender.

Age



- 93% of clients are under 45 years old. The highest proportion of clients are in the 25-34 age group. This is expected as the majority of applicants are for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods and are likely to be younger applicants with a child under 6 years old.

Religion



- The majority of clients recorded their religion or belief as "None" (64%). This could be based on the age group of applicants as these are mostly new parents who are likely to be in the lower age groups.

What we found

Key findings

Race

- Staff from an ethnic minority background are underrepresented compared to Scottish national average.
- Scottish Government's [Race Recruitment and Retention Action Plan](#) has set a target of 5% of people from an ethnic minority at each level of the Scottish Government workforce by 2025.
- Anecdotal evidence gathered by the Internal Equalities Network highlighted the current lack of representation was potentially off putting off potential applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly from 2nd and 3rd generation.
- Concerns were raised about slow response for translation service and need to add to the bank of commonly requested information.
- Further work is needed with local equality groups to better understand needs of specific communities in applying for benefits.
- Feedback received stressed the need for greater tolerance when English is not the first or only language of a colleague. It is essential that all colleagues feel valued and have the confidence to raise any issues with their line manager.
- The diversity of staff in senior leadership roles in Social Security Scotland is another area we recognise we need to make improvements in. We are early stages of developing our talent management practises.
- We have worked with various race equality groups in to review the wording and promotion of job vacancies. We recognise the need to revisit and review our approach.

Disability

- Workplace Adjustment requirements are identified as part of the pre-employment checks and induction stage for all new members of staff. Anecdotal evidence on the workplace adjustment passport been positive. Staff members confirmed they feel they have control over the content, can review it regularly and adjustments are taken on board.
- Improvements are need in the consistency in the application of the process. Conversations need to focus on need for the adjustments and not the cause and that justification is not needed when the requirements have been confirmed by occupational health.
- Results from the Scottish Government Workplace Adjustments Pilot propose need for more proactive support for colleagues with undiagnosed disabilities and the advantages of centralising the budget to support all members of staff.
 - Overall feedback emphasised that further awareness raising and guidance on the adjustments process would be beneficial for all staff and line managers.
 - Experience Panel feedback emphasised the need for Social Security Scotland staff to be well trained in disability awareness particularly from people with lived experience.

Religion

- Anecdotal evidence emphasised the need to accommodate faith spaces within Social Security Scotland buildings. Too often such spaces in buildings are multi-use which presents barriers.
- We received evidence that staff need greater awareness of religious festivals, particularly when engaging with clients. Feedback provided suggested more knowledge and understanding would build trust and improve relationships.

Age

- We have further analysis to do by age to understand impact. Particularly grade breakdown and performance appraisal.

Sexual Orientation

- We need to review language and images used in all communications, guidance and learning materials as feedback received states it is not inclusive.
- Clarity of why we ask for diversity information at application stage. Is the form clear that it is not seen by short-listing panel.

Sex

- We identified a number of issues but require further information to identify impacts and actions. These include:
 - Understanding of gender-based violence and guidance of referrals
 - Lone working policy and use of an app.
 - Requests to speak to/meet with only a male or female client advisor.

Gender reassignment

- Need to clarify issue of using gender markers/pronouns on client records and training provided at induction.
- On-going training for Operations and Local Delivery staff – acknowledging differences in working face to face as oppose to telephone or webchat.

Care Experience

- We have no workforce data on staff with Care Experience.
- 103 people with Care Experience replied to our Client Survey.

Recruitment Process – all characteristics

- Social Security Scotland aims to recruit a workforce which is representative of the people we serve. As stated below the characteristics of our clients are likely to significantly change over the next few years.
- Recent data indicates that the number of people who apply to work with Social Security Scotland with a disability or from an ethnic minority background is increasing. However, the drop-off from application to interview, to job offer is greater for people from an ethnic minority background or with a disability than for people who are white or not disabled.
- We need to do more work, internally and with our stakeholders to understand reasons for this gap and identify actions to reduce it.
- Engagement and feedback from Experience Panels and other stakeholders has helped inform our recruitment processes. We removed the minimum qualification for entry level posts and introduced candidate workshops to provide guidance on the application process. In February we moved the workshops on-line.
- In response to Covid-19 we also implemented new virtual interviews to replace face to face interviews. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out to identify potential barriers and alternatives that could be provided.

- Experience Panel feedback on recruitment highlighted the barriers faced by disabled people when applying for a job and emphasised the need to maintain a range of ways to apply, with strong diversity and inclusion messaging in job adverts to encourage application.
- Anecdotal evidence from the Internal Equalities Network highlights the need to progress work on anonymising job applications to ensure applicants with non-regular British names are not subject to any form of discrimination.

Gaps in equality data

- Our data history is limited which has affected our ability to accurately establish benchmarks in areas such as Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity and Care Experienced.
- Information on probation levels, staff retention, appraisal markings, temporary and permanent promotion and working pattern data by gender, disability, ethnicity and grade was not available for this impact assessment. We are working on how to gain this information.
- With over 14% of staff recorded as "Unknown" for Race, Sexual Orientation and Religion and an even higher level of "Unknown" for Disability at 25.7% we need to improve the declaration rates on our internal recording database. Written guidance and reminders have been issued to managers for discussion in team meetings. An e-learning course was developed and guidance included in Induction Sessions but further action is needed.
- Regular analysis of recruitment campaigns will be critical to identifying issues in our process and whether actions taken are having an impact.
- We recognise further work is also required to develop our understanding of intersectionality in our data gathering, analysis and decision-making.

Our Equality outcomes and example actions for 2021-2022



Implement the recommendations of the [Scottish Government Race Recruitment and Retention Action Plan](#)



Recruitment analysis breakdown



Work with Equality groups to promote vacancies



Our Workforce



Raise awareness of workplace adjustment process



Review the language and images used in recruitment campaigns



Increase diversity of non-executive members



Improve diversity recording



Introduce Fairness Advocates to offer support



Our Culture



Analysis of probation, training, appraisal and promotion data



Increase learning from lived experience of our clients



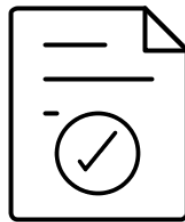
Calculate gender, race and disability pay gaps



Improve analysis of diversity information



Promote benefits to all communities



Delivering and improving our service



Increase availability of translated material



Increase frequency of updates on application



Increase understanding of needs of seldom heard communities