



Social Security Scotland Statistics

Social Security Scotland client diversity and equalities analysis to December 2019

Frequency of publications

Under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics¹ we publish a timetable of statistical releases for the twelve months ahead².

This is an ad hoc publication. Future equalities analysis will appear in the timetable in due course.

¹ The Code of Practice is found online at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

² The forthcoming publication timetable is available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2005/03/18798>

Introduction

This publication provides information on client diversity and equality of application outcomes for clients applying to Social Security Scotland for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, and Young Carer Grant. It covers the period 10th December 2018 to 8th December 2019. The method for collecting this information was improved on 9th December 2019, therefore this is a one-off publication (see [How Equalities data is collected](#)). The majority of responses were from applicants for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods (95%), because Best Start Grant has been live for the longest period of time, and because there is a single combined form for the three Best Start Grant payments and Best Start Foods.

All tables and charts relating to this publication can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-client-diversity-and-equalities-analysis-to-december-2019>.

These statistics are being published as experimental statistics, which are defined in the Code of Practice for Statistics as "new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage." These statistics have not yet been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority, so have not been designated as National Statistics³.

Main findings

Age

- The highest proportion of clients are in the 25 – 34 age group (50%; Summary Panel, Table 1). In Scotland, this age group accounts for 16% of the Scottish Population that are 16 or over⁴. This difference is expected as the majority of applications (95%) are for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (Table 8), which are likely to be younger applicants who have a child under 6 years old.
- Approval levels were 82% for the 16 – 24 and 35 – 44 age group, 81% for the 25 – 34 age group and 71% for the 45 or over age group (Summary Panel, Table 1)⁵. This lower approval rate for the 45 or over age group may be because it could include grandparents who apply on behalf of a child. To be

³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/images-assessmentanddesignationofexperimentalstatistic_tcm97-44327-1.pdf

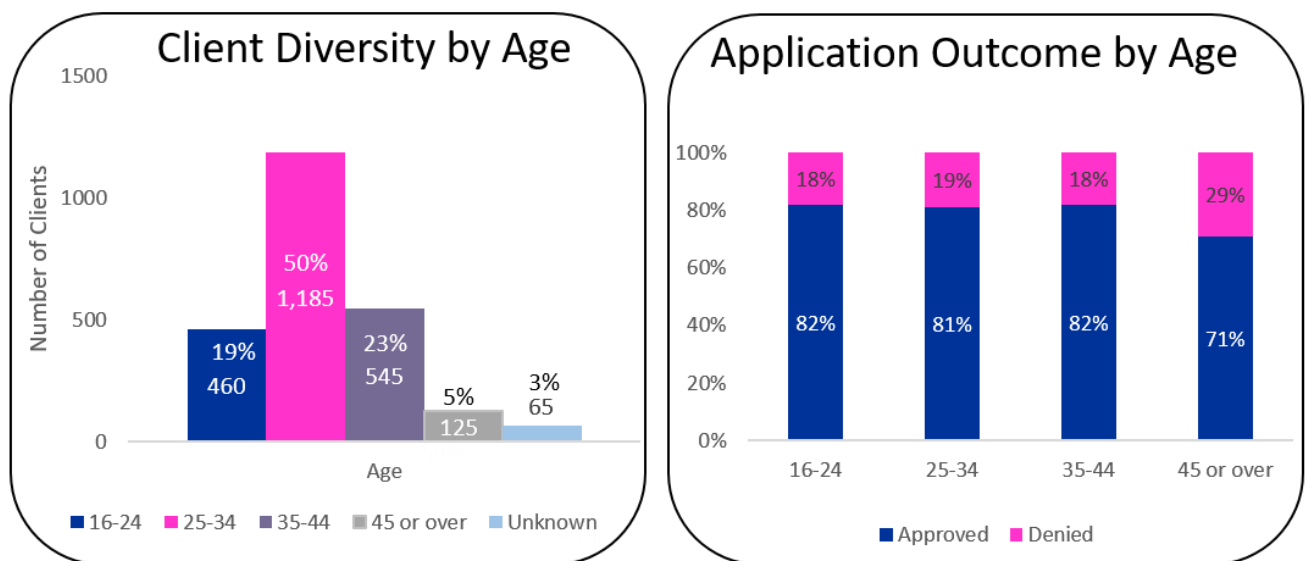
⁴ [Mid-2018 Population Estimates Scotland](#)

⁵ The 45 or over category covers ages 45 – 84 in this group.

eligible for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods you have to be the main carer of the child. Grandparents will not be eligible unless they are kinship carers⁶.

- A more detailed breakdown of age is available in the latest Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods publication (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-grant-and-best-start-foods-statistics-31-december-2019>)

Summary Panel: Client Diversity and Equalities by Application outcome by Age



Ethnicity

- The minority ethnic⁷ group accounted for 7% of the equalities data compared to the White group which accounted for 92% (Summary Panel, Table 2). In Scotland, 5% of the total population of Scotland were minority ethnic, whilst 95% were in the White ethnic group.⁸
- The minority ethnic group have a lower level of approved applications with 73% of their applications being approved compared to 82% for White ethnic group (Summary Panel, Table 2).

⁶ Kinship care is when a child is looked after by their extended family or close friends if they cannot remain with their birth parents

⁷ African, Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British, Caribbean or Black, Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, Other ethnic group

⁸ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2018](#)

Gender

- The proportion of men (7%) that applied for the benefits is much lower than women (91%) (Summary Panel, Table 3). This was particularly apparent in applications for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods, which more often tended to be filled out by women rather than men. In Scotland, 51% of the population are women and 49% are men⁹.
- Approval levels of applications for men are 84% and women are 81% (Summary Panel, Table 3).

Physical or mental health condition or illness

- The proportion of clients who have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more is 30% compared to 68% who don't (Summary Panel, Table 4). In 2017 in Scotland, 33% of adults had a long-term limiting mental or physical health condition or disability¹⁰.
- Clients that have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more have a approval level of 84% compared to 80% for applications from clients who don't (Summary Panel, Table 4).

Sexual Orientation

- Individuals who identified as heterosexual accounted for 92% compared to 6% who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (Summary Panel, Table 5). In Scotland around 3% of adults self identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other compared to 95% who self identified as heterosexual^{11,12}.
- Approval levels of applications for lesbian, gay, bisexual or other are 84% and Heterosexual are 81% (Summary Panel, Table 5).

Transgender

- One percent of the clients who responded to the Equalities Monitoring and Feedback form were transgender (Summary Panel, Table 6). The Gender Identity Research and Education Society estimates that between 0.6% and 1.0% of the UK population were transgender¹³.

⁹ [Mid-2018 Population Estimates Scotland](#)

¹⁰ [Scottish Health Survey 2018](#)

¹¹ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2018](#)

¹² It is likely this survey undercounts the number of adults self-identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other as respondents may not feel comfortable being open with a Household Survey interviewer, and some respondents might see this question as intrusive and personal

¹³ [Gender Identity Research and Education Society \(GIRES\) - The number of Gender Variant People in the UK \(update 2011\)](#)

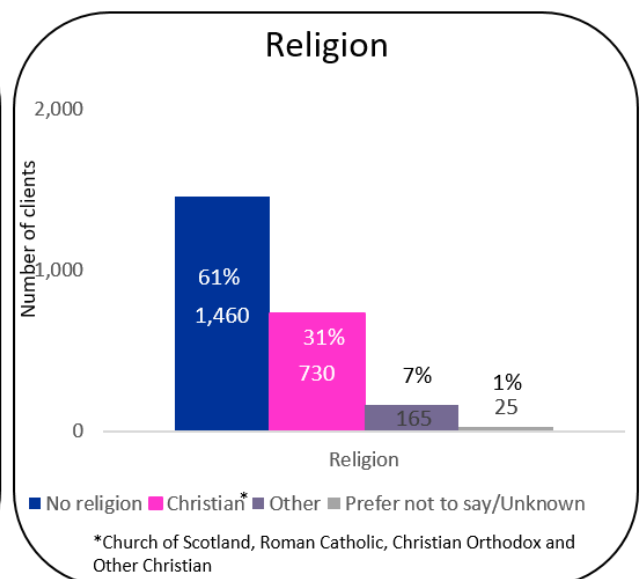
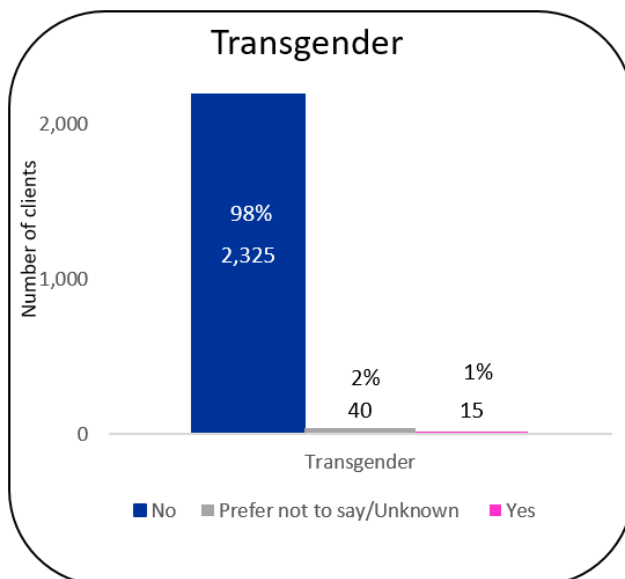
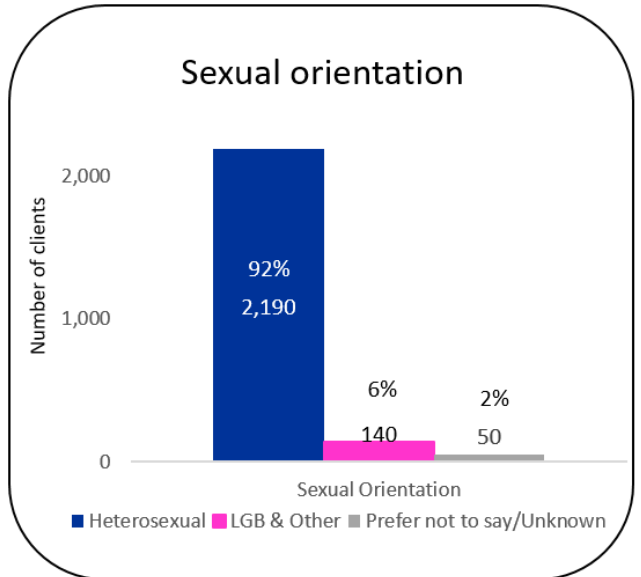
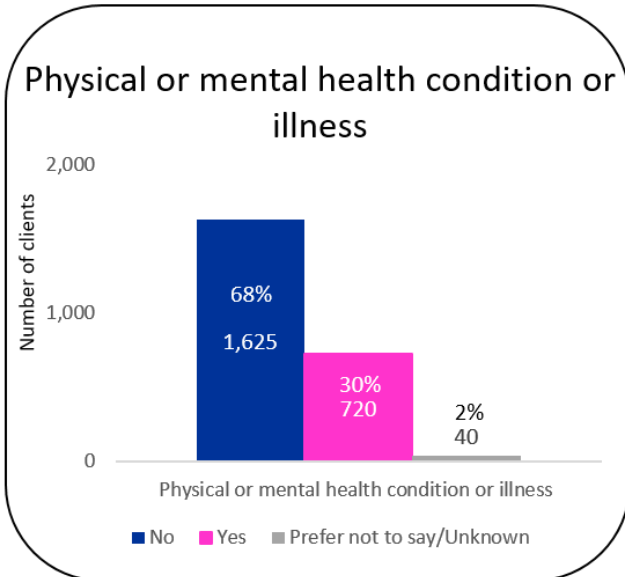
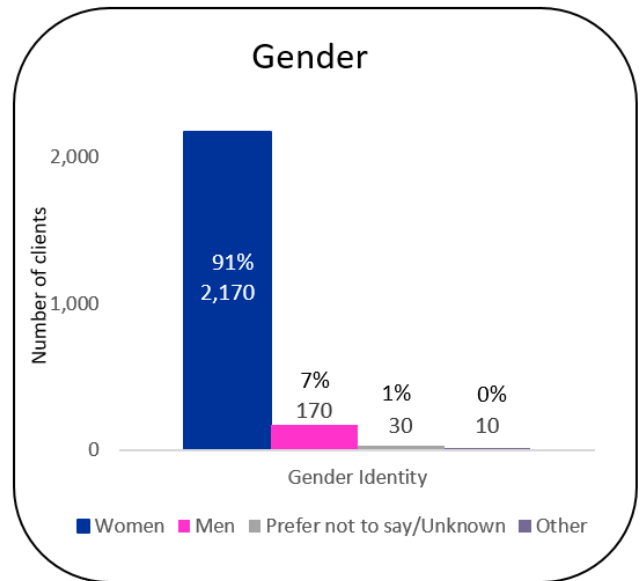
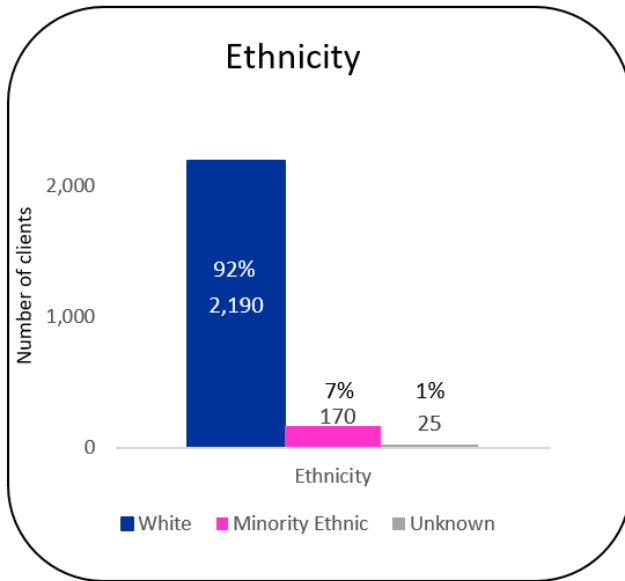
- The application outcome of transgender clients could not be presented due to the number of transgender clients being too small to make a reliable comparison.

Religion

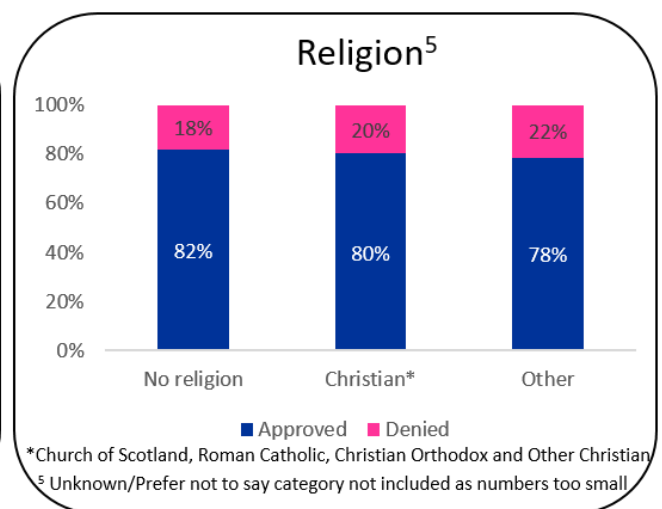
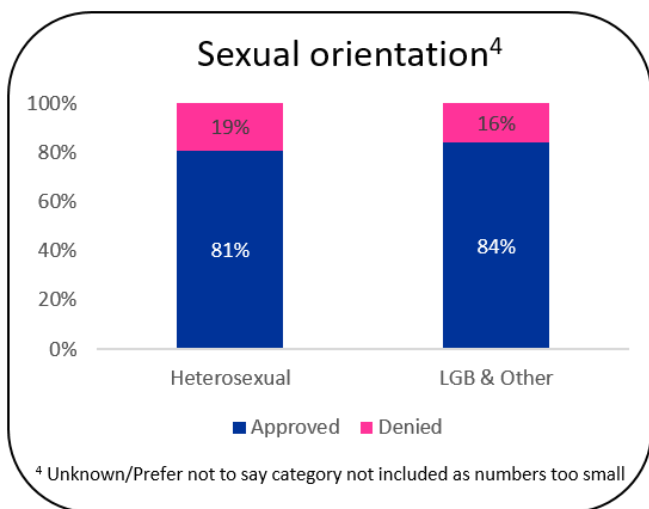
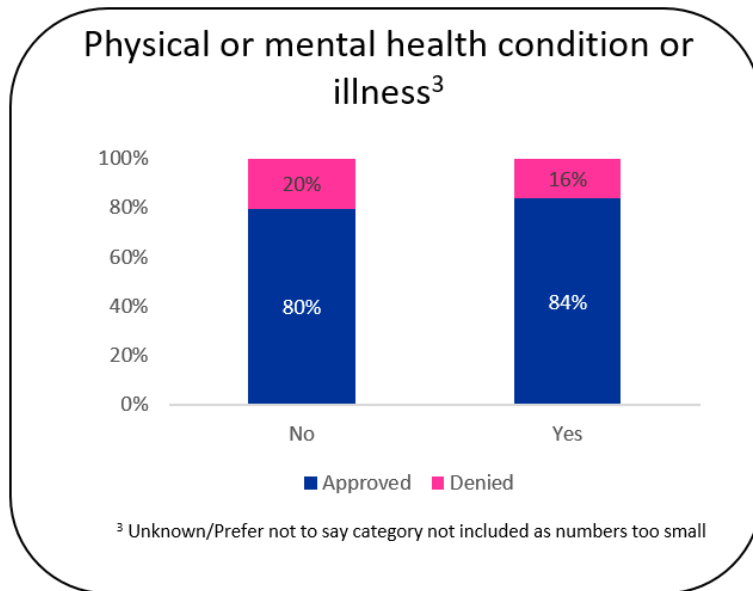
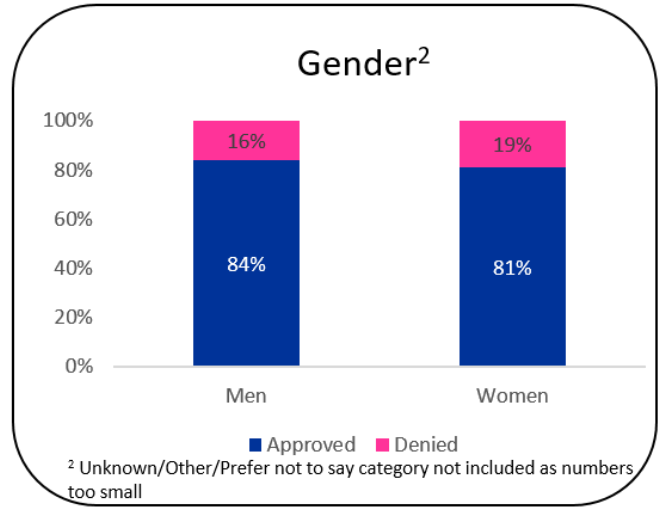
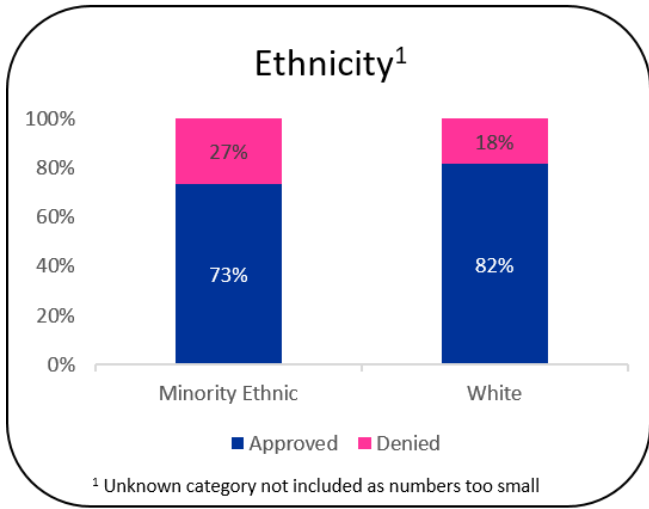
- The proportion of clients that have no religion is 61% compared to 31% that are Christian (Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic, Christian Orthodox and Other Christian; Summary Panel, Table 7) and 7% that are other religions. In 2018 in Scotland, 50% of adults had no religion and 46% were Christian¹⁴. The higher percentage of clients with no religion could be due to the age group of applicants. 92% of the respondents to the Equality Monitoring and Feedback form are aged between 16 – 44. In Scotland, in the 16 – 44 age group 63% of adults had no religion¹⁴.
- Approval levels of applications for clients with no religion are 82%, Christian 80% and other religions 78% (Summary Panel, Table 7).

¹⁴ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2018](#) (supplementary tables)

Summary Panel: Client Diversity



Summary Panel: Equalities by Application Outcome



About the Equalities data

How Equalities data is collected

Social Security Scotland is the executive agency of Scottish Government which is responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland. Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby payment on 10 December 2018, followed by Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment on 29 April 2019, School Age Payment on 3 June 2019, Best Start Foods on 12 August 2019, Funeral Support Payment on 16 September 2019 and Young Carer's Grant on 21 October 2019. All Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications are taken through the same joint application form.

All clients are asked to complete an Equality Monitoring and Feedback form along with the application form for each benefit delivered by Social Security Scotland. The data collected is used to identify who is using the service and to investigate how Social Security Scotland processes work for different groups of people. We analyse the equalities data by outcome of application to assess if there is any variation. Analysis of the feedback section of the forms is published separately as part of Social Security Scotland's Insights Research Findings publication series – most recently covering the period to 30th September 2019: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-insights-research-findings-30-september-2019/> .

Clients applying for benefits online, by telephone or mail between the 10th December 2018 and the 8th December 2019 were asked to fill out a separate non-mandatory Equality Monitoring and Feedback form following on from their benefits application form. As this was non-mandatory the response rate was very low (<5%) and therefore any results in this publication should be treated with caution due to the small sample size. The results of the analysis is based on the small proportion of clients that responded to the Equalities Monitoring and Feedback form, and it is not known if this is representative of all the clients that applied. The majority of responses were from applicants for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods (95%), because Best Start Grant has been live for the longest period of time, and because there is a single combined form for the three Best Start Grant payments and Best Start Foods.

The clients equality information was collected separately to the outcome of a clients application. Application outcome data is sourced from Social Security Scotland's case management system. The system holds information on all applications received, decisions and payments. In order to link the two data sets together a clients postcode and date of birth was used.

The method for collecting equalities information was improved on 9th December 2019 by making the questions mandatory, with a 'prefer not to say' option for those that don't want to disclose this information. This new methodology should provide more robust data. We aim to publish this on a regular basis, as official statistics as soon as is practical.

Equalities data quality

Duplicates in records from Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms

Clients are able to make multiple applications to Social Security Scotland. For example, clients might apply for the same payment multiple times (e.g. they may have applied for each Best Start Grant payment separately as they launched over time, or may have been denied a payment then re-applied at a later date), or clients might apply for more than one of the different payments.

If a client applied multiple times and also chose to complete an Equality Monitoring and Feedback form each time they applied, then there could be duplicates for the same client in the equalities dataset used for this analysis. The equalities dataset did not include any unique identifiers that could be used to identify duplicates, however, postcode and date of birth information were used as an alternative.

There were a small number of records in the Equality Monitoring and Feedback form information which had the same postcode and date of birth. In these cases, where responses to the equalities questions were the same, we have assumed that they are duplicate responses from the same person, and one of the records was kept whilst the other was removed. Where answers to the questions were not the same, all of the duplicate records were removed from the data set because we cannot tell if these records are the same client who has applied for different benefits or if they are a different client. The duplicate records that were removed accounted for 3% of the original data set.

Clients that chose not to answer equalities questions

A number of clients that completed an Equality Monitoring and Feedback form selected that they did not want to answer equalities questions. These clients were removed and accounted for 14% of the original data set. This includes clients who only wanted to provide feedback on the application process.

Additionally, some clients did answer at least one equalities question but did not complete all of the equalities questions. These clients were retained in the dataset, but where an answer was missing they were counted in the 'Unknown' category for that question.

Missing identification information

Equalities information was linked to application outcome data using the postcode and date of birth of the client. Clients that didn't have a postcode and/or date of birth recorded were identified and removed from the data set as there was no other variable that could identify them in the application outcome information. This accounted for 2% of the original data set.

Linkage to application outcome information

Following the removal of the duplicate clients, those who did not want to answer equalities questions and those missing identification records, the equalities information was linked to the application outcome data using a clients postcode and date of birth. 84% of the client records matched to the application outcome data. The remaining 16% did not match as there wasn't a record in the application outcome data that had a matching postcode and date of birth.

Duplicate applications

There is no limit to the number of times a client can apply for a benefit, therefore a client's equalities information can be linked to more than one application outcome. 39% of the matched clients had more than one application. The majority of these clients were applying for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods. Clients can make multiple applications for different components of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods over time, or may make repeated applications for the same component, for example if their first application is denied or for different children. This means that there can be several applications in the data cut from the same client. All the applications could not be used as it would result in duplicate equalities information being used in the analysis which would be inaccurate.

The method used to decide which outcome to select when there were duplicate applications was to firstly remove pending and withdrawn applications. This resulted in the removal of 5% of the matched applications. A decision was made to use the most recent application for a client based on application decision date, regardless of whether it was approved or denied. This method was selected as it was a way to select one of the applications that was not based on outcome and also selected the most recent information about a client.

There are issues with this method, for example, a client could have three applications recorded and it could be that the most recent application is more likely to be denied as the client is already in receipt of the benefit. Alternatively, the most recent application could be more likely to be approved if a client has improved their method of completing the application form following on from a denial. However, due to limitations in data collection a more adequate method for dealing with duplicate applications is not available at present. This resulted in a client with equalities information having one application recorded.

Application Outcome

Funeral Support Payment and Young Carer Grant applications have a single application outcome associated with each application. However, applications for Best Start Foods are automatically assessed for Best Start Grant payments and therefore have an outcome for both grants associated with them. To handle this an application was given an approved outcome if either were approved (or both). An application was given a denied outcome if it was denied for both grants.

Data sets

The number of responses by benefit is shown in Table 8.

The breakdown of the data used for the 'Clients responding to equality forms' and 'All Equalities with Application Outcome' data referred to in the publication and associated tables is shown in Table 9.

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, the data cut from March 2020 has been used to produce statistics on Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms received, and application outcomes up to 11.59 pm on 8th December 2019. Later data cuts may include additional retrospective changes to application details, including corrections to details in the case management system, and changes that have resulted from redeterminations and appeals.

Age of the Client

Age was calculated for clients by using the date on the Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms and calculating the difference between this and the clients date of birth.

Background to Benefit Types

Background on the types of benefits that clients applied for in the client diversity and equality of application outcomes analysis is available in separate publications for each of the grant types published here <https://www.gov.scot/publications/>.

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot

are available via an alternative route. Summary tables are available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-client-diversity-and-equalities-analysis-to-december-2019>

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact SocialSecurityStats@gov.scot for further information.

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