



Social Security Scotland Statistics

Social Security Scotland client diversity and equalities analysis to May 2020

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 diversity of clients applying to Social Security Scotland for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, and Young Carer Grant. It also compares the outcomes of the applications by each of the equalities groups to assess if there is any variation in the rate of applications that are approved to receive the benefit payment.

The data covers the period 9th December 2019 to 31st May 2020. The method for collecting this information was improved on 9th December 2019, see [How Equalities data is collected](#).

The majority of responses were from applicants for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods (89%), as there are a greater number of applications for these benefits compared to other benefits.

All tables and charts relating to this publication can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/>.

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

- Comparing all client diversity data, there are differences in approval rates for some equalities groups. However, there are a number of applications from people living outside Scotland. This accounts for around 7% of applications and as the majority of these are denied, this can have a large impact on approval rates for some of the equalities groups (Tables 1 to 8).
- The breakdown of ethnic group for applications from those living outside Scotland varies a lot compared to the Scottish breakdown. For certain ethnic groups that can mean that a large proportion of those applications are from people living outside Scotland, and are therefore much more likely to be denied, leading to a low approval rate.
- This does not apply to all equalities data. For Gender, breakdowns for applications from people living inside and outside Scotland are very similar, therefore there is limited impact on approval rates.

³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

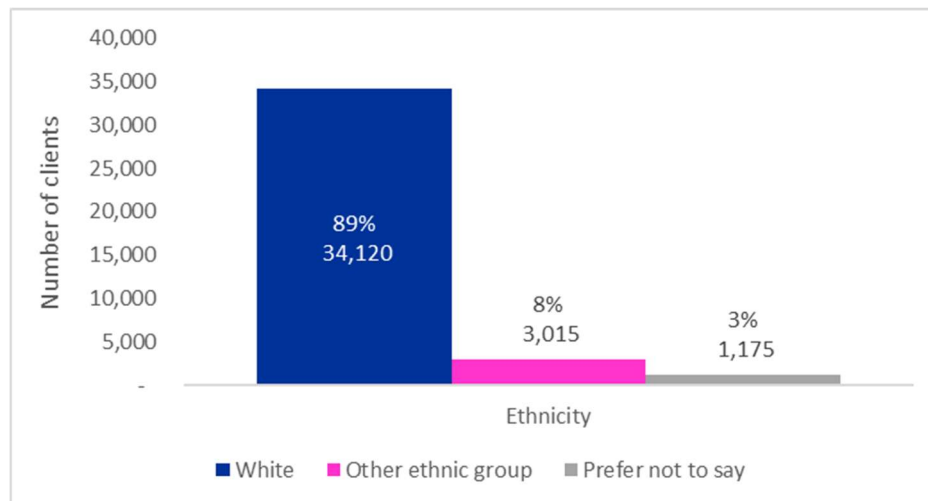
https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/images-assessmentanddesignationofexperimentalstatistic_tcm97-44327-1.pdf

- We have provided analysis throughout this bulletin and in tables showing outcomes from applications from people living within Scotland only, as well as analysis for all applications received to ensure that interpretation of the equalities features of these data is not confounded with the country of residence effect on eligibility.

Ethnicity

- Almost nine in ten (89%) clients self-identified their ethnic group as 'White'⁴, with clients identifying as one of the other listed ethnic groups⁵ accounting for 8%. The remaining 3% choose the 'Prefer not to say' option. The second largest ethnic group was 'Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British', accounting for 4% of the total. In Scotland's 2011 census 96% of the total population of Scotland were 'White', with the remaining 4% being from the other listed ethnic groups⁶ (Chart 1, Table 1).

Chart 1: Client diversity by ethnic group



- Based on all applications, 65% of the 'White' ethnic group had their application approved compared to between 29% and 56% for the other listed ethnic groups (Chart 2, Table 1). However, this variation in approval rates is mostly due to the different breakdowns of ethnic group in applications from people living in Scotland compared to those from outside Scotland. Applications from within Scotland only show much less variation, ranging from 64% for 'Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British' ethnic group to 73% for 'African' ethnic group (Chart 3, Table 1).

⁴ The categories included within white are 'Scottish', 'Other British', 'Irish', 'Gypsy/Traveller', 'Polish' and 'Other white ethnic group'

⁵ These ethnic groups include 'Mixed or multiple ethnic groups', 'Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British', 'African', 'Caribbean or Black', and 'Other ethnic group'

⁶ [2011 Census: Release 2A](#) (Published: 2013, NRS)

Chart 2: Application outcome by ethnic group – all applications

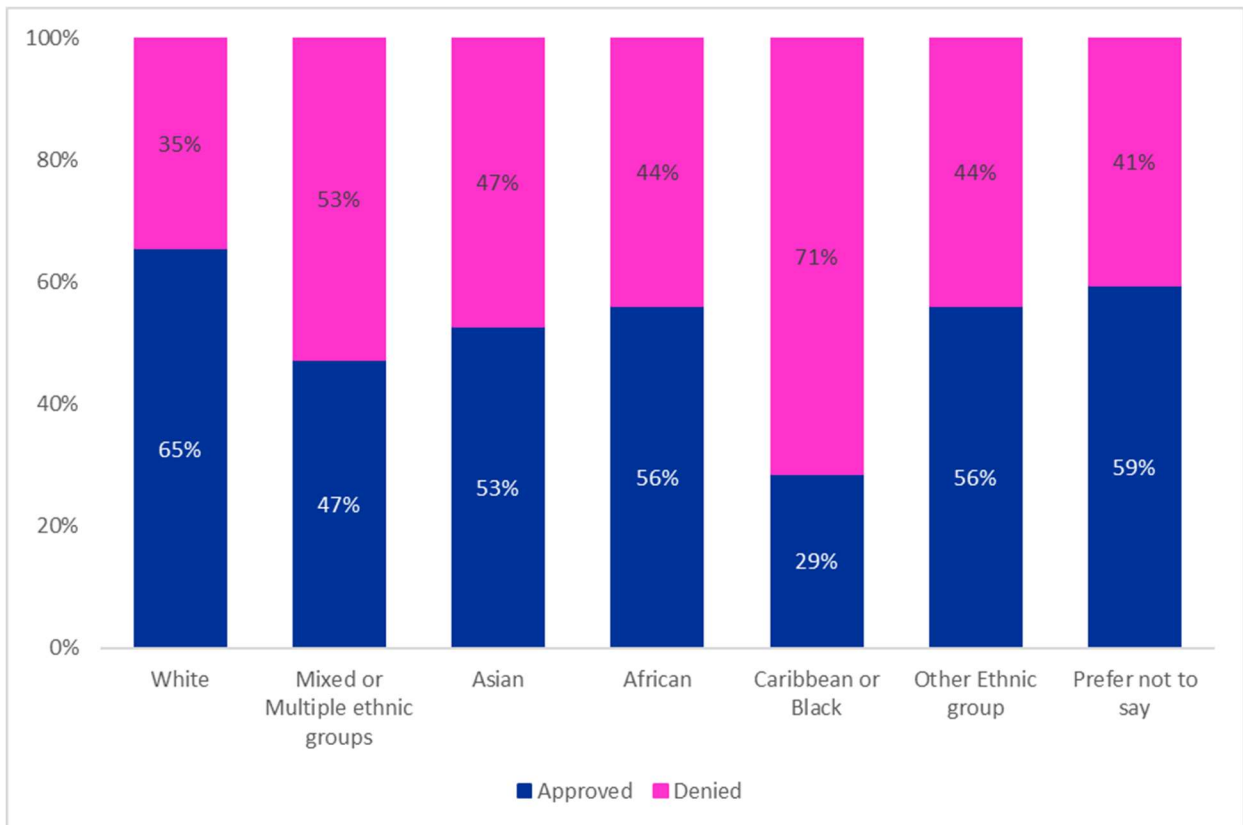
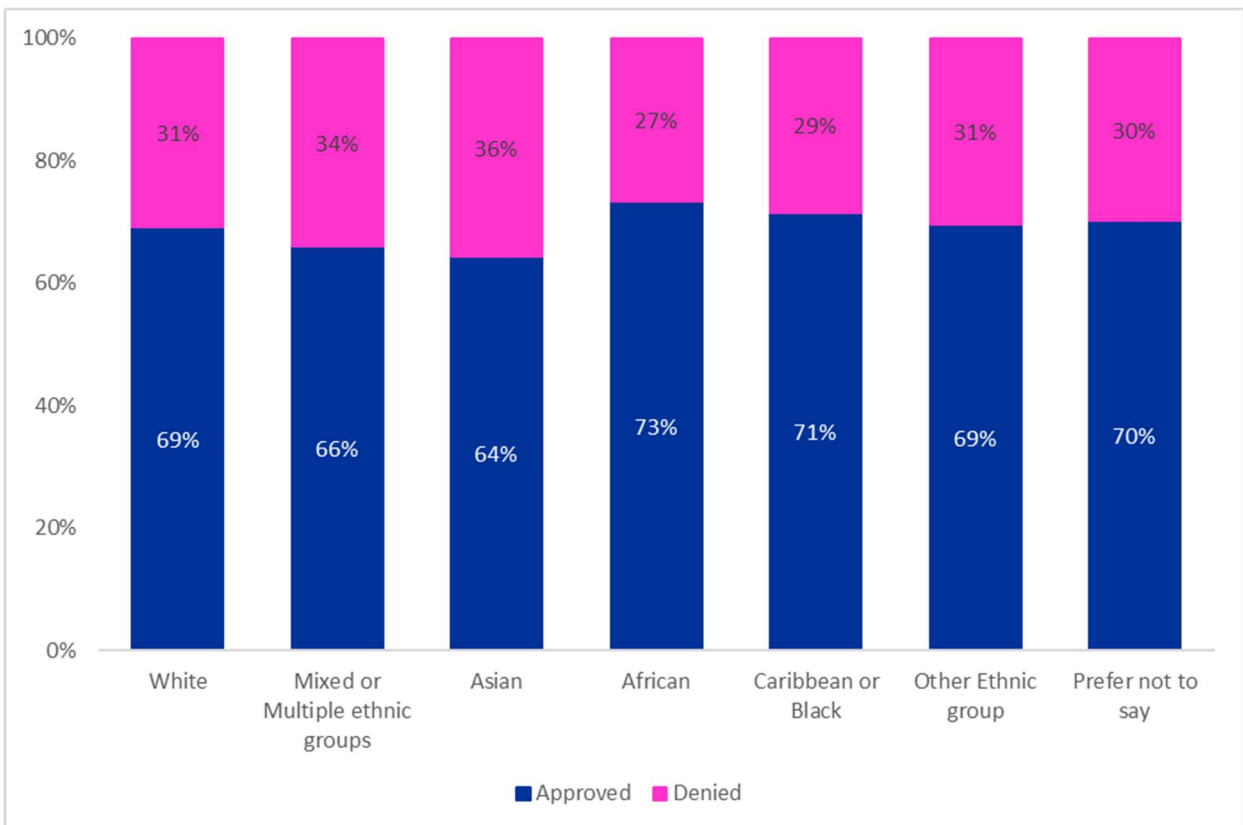


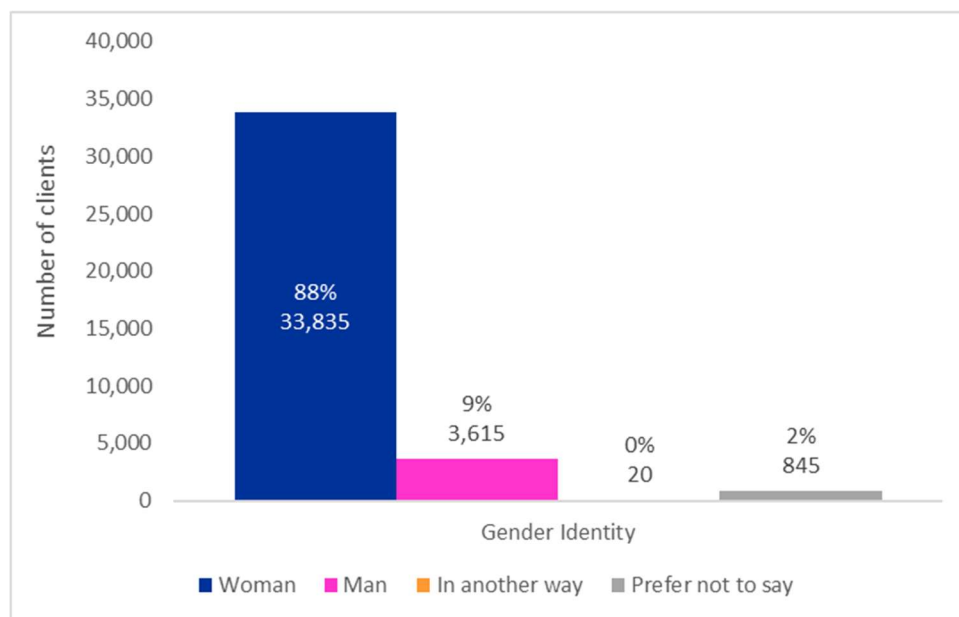
Chart 3: Application outcome by ethnic group – Scottish applications only



Gender

- The proportion of clients who self-identified as man (9%) is much lower than those who self-identified as woman (88%) (Chart 4, Table 2). In Scotland, 51% of the population are women and 49% are men.⁷ The majority of the equalities data were from applicants for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods, which may be more likely to be filled out by mothers rather than fathers.

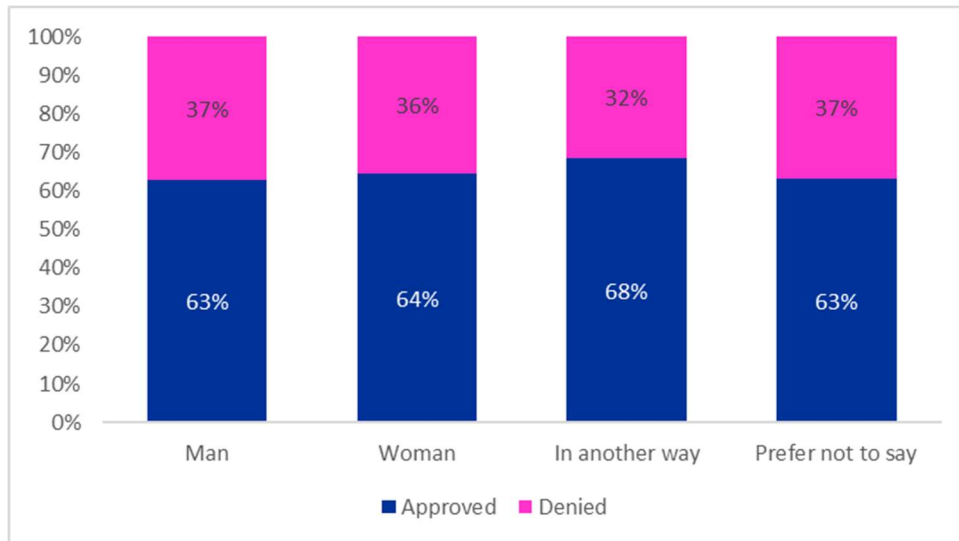
Chart 4: Client diversity by gender



- The proportion of women was higher than men for all benefits, but the difference is greatest in clients applying for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods, which had 91% women. This compares to 64% of Funeral Support Payment applicants who were women and 60% of Young Carer Grant applicants (Table 2).
- The proportion of all applications approved were similar by gender, at 64% for women and 63% for men (Chart 5, Table 2).

⁷ [Mid-2019 Population Estimates Scotland](#) (Last updated: April 2020, NRS)

Chart 5: Application outcome by gender – all applications



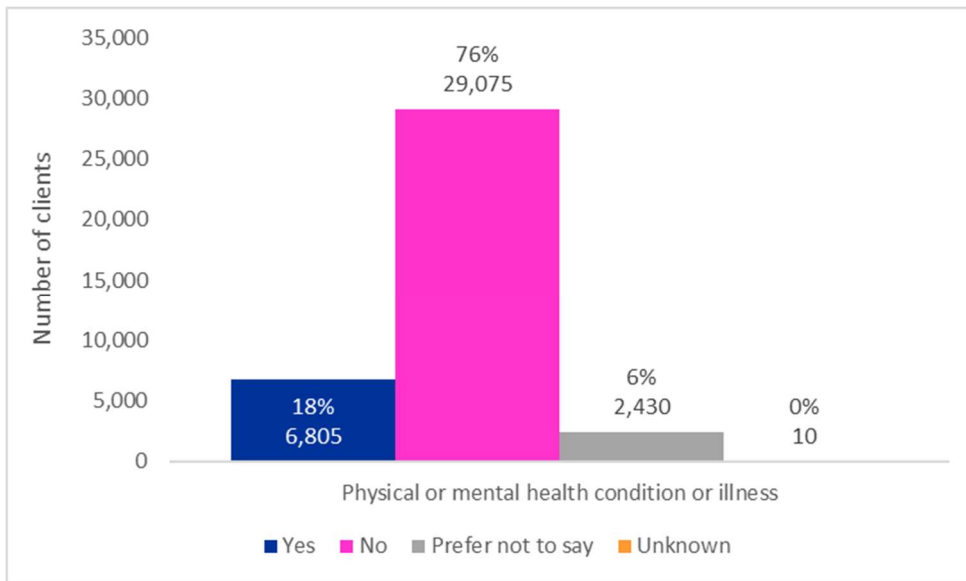
- Approval rates did show some variation by gender when broken down by benefit, particularly Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods where 63% of applications for women were approved, but only 53% for men. For Funeral Support Payment the approvals rates were very similar, at 81% for women and 82% for men, and for Young Carer Grant applications it was 70% for women and 75% for men (Table 2).
- Since the breakdown of gender was similar for applications from those living in Scotland and those outside Scotland, there is very little impact on approval rates when looking at applications from within Scotland only compared to all applications (Table 2).

Physical or mental health condition or illness

- The proportion of clients who self-identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more is 18% compared to 76% who don't (Chart 6, Table 3). There is no directly comparable data for Scotland as a whole, but 32% of adults had a long-term limiting mental or physical health condition or disability in Scotland in 2017.⁸

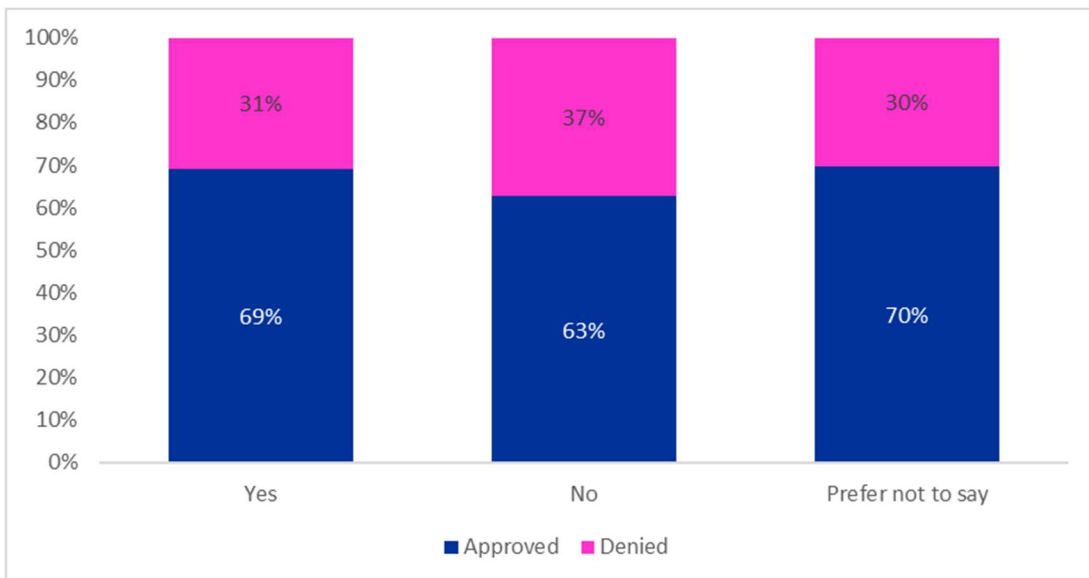
⁸ [Scottish Health Survey 2017](#) (Last updated: Sep 2018)

Chart 6: Client diversity by physical or mental health condition or illness



- Clients that have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more had an approval level of 69%. The approval rate was 63% for applicants that did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness (Chart 7, Table 3).

Chart 7: Application outcome by physical or mental health condition or illness – all applications

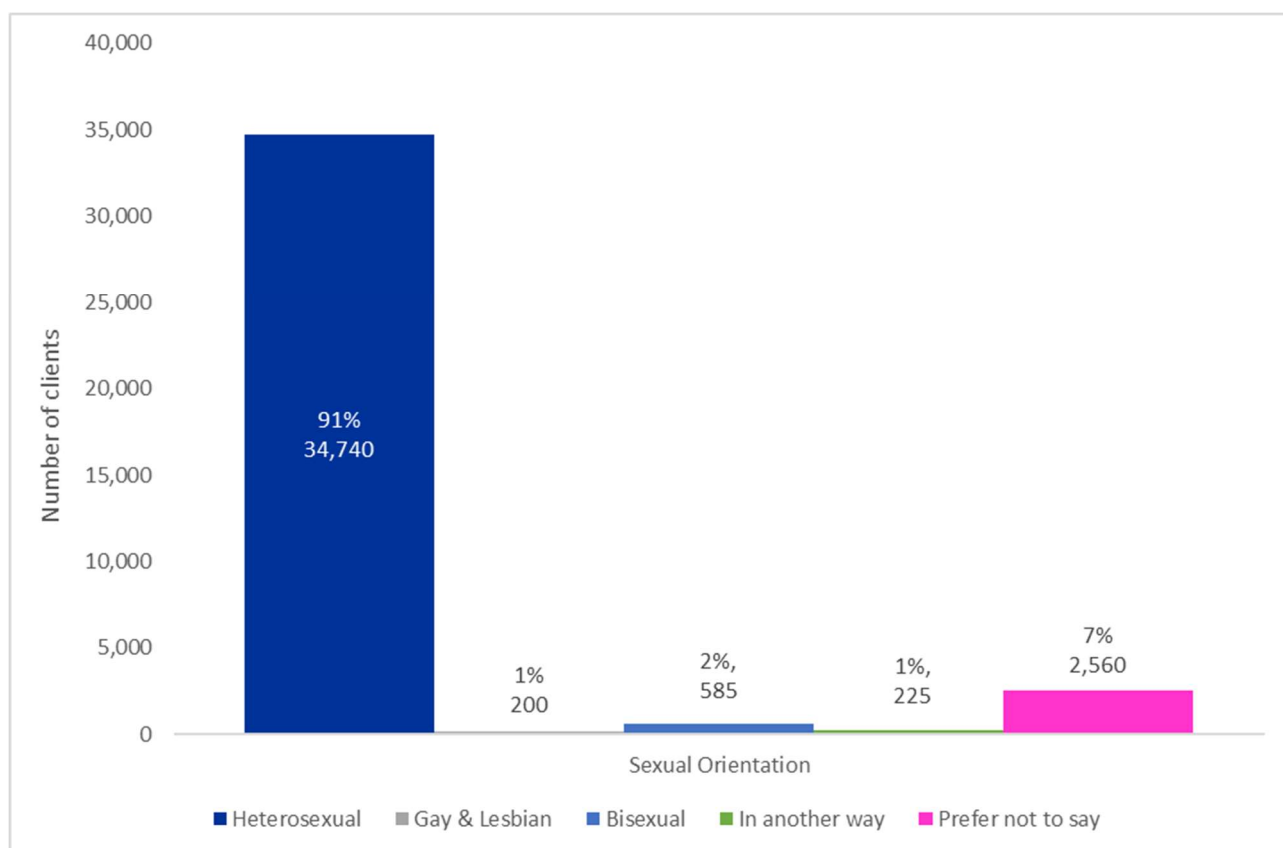


- Since the breakdown of those with a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more was similar for applications from those living in Scotland and those outside Scotland, there is very little impact on approval rates when looking at applications from within Scotland only compared to all applications (Table 3).

Sexual Orientation

- Individuals who self-identified as 'Heterosexual' accounted for 91% of clients compared to 1% who identified as 'Lesbian or Gay', 2% as 'Bisexual' and 1% as 'In another way'. 'Prefer not say' was chosen by 7% of clients. This is the highest proportion for this category of all the equalities groups (Chart 8, Table 4). In Scotland, 95% of adults self-identified as 'Heterosexual' compared to around 3% who self-identified as 'Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other'⁹.

Chart 8: Client diversity by sexual orientation



- Looking at all applications, approval levels were similar for most categories, with 65% for 'Heterosexual' clients, 68% for 'Gay or Lesbian' clients, and 64% for 'Bisexual' clients, but approval was lower for those who self-identified as 'In another way' at 50% (Chart 9, Table 4). For applications within Scotland only, the approval rate for 'In another way' is more similar to the other categories, at 66%, although it is still lower than the other groups, which range from 67% to 73% (Chart 10, Table 4).

⁹ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2018 - Supplementary Tables](#) (Last updated: Jun 2020)

Chart 9: Application outcome by sexual orientation – all applications

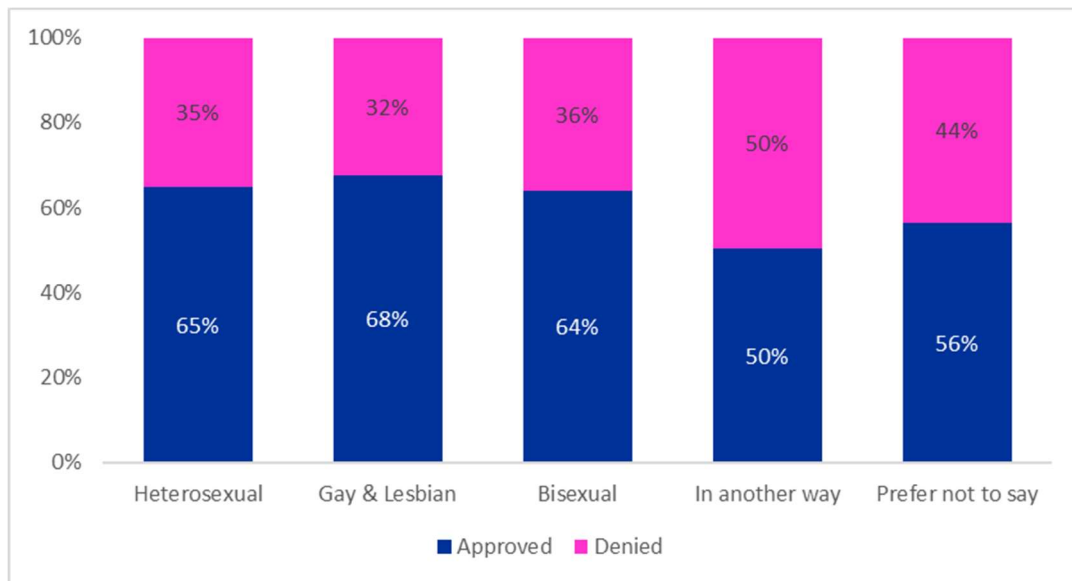
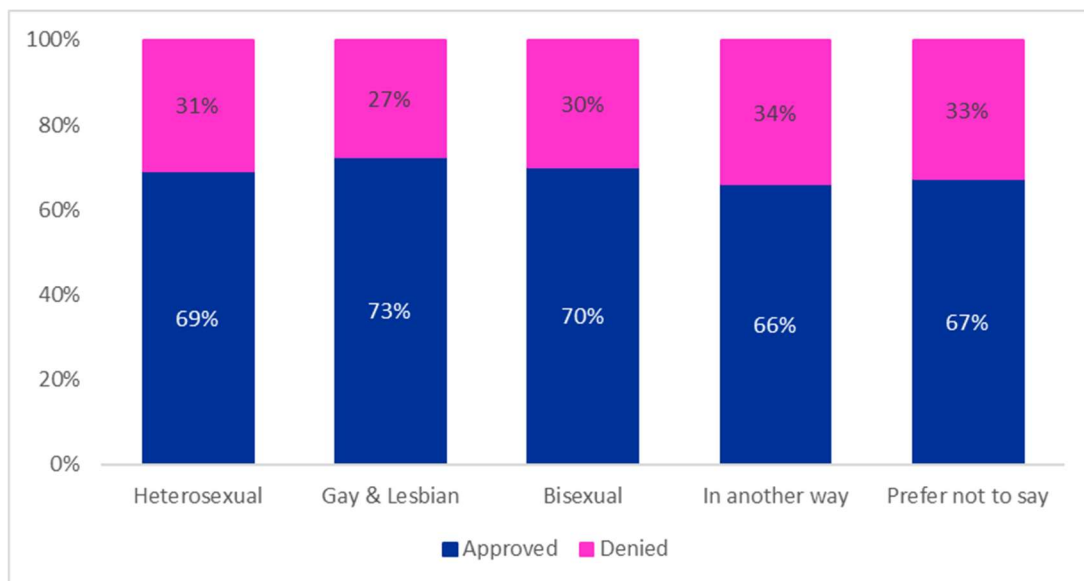


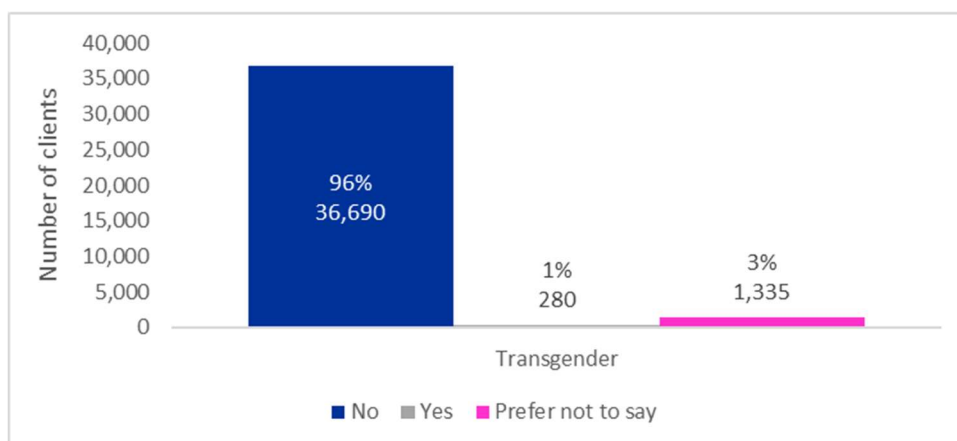
Chart 10: Application outcome by sexual orientation – Scottish applications only



Transgender

- One percent of the clients who responded to the Equalities Monitoring and feedback form self-identified as transgender, and 3% chose 'Prefer not to say' (Chart 11, Table 5). The Gender Identity Research and Education Society estimates that between 0.6% and 1.0% of the UK population were transgender¹⁰.

Chart 11: Client diversity by transgender



- Looking at all applications, 43% of those from transgender clients were approved. This is lower than clients who did not identify as transgender, who had an approval rate of 65% (Chart 11, Table 5). However, a large proportion of those in the transgender group were from outside Scotland, and were therefore much more likely to be denied. When applications from outside Scotland are removed, approval rate for the Transgender group was 61%. This is still lower than for those who are not in the Transgender group, which has an approval rate of 69% (Chart 12, Table 5).

¹⁰ [Gender Identity Research and Education Society \(GIRES\) - The number of Gender Variant People in the UK \(update 2011\)](#) (Published: 2011, GIRES)

Chart 12: Application outcome by transgender – all applications

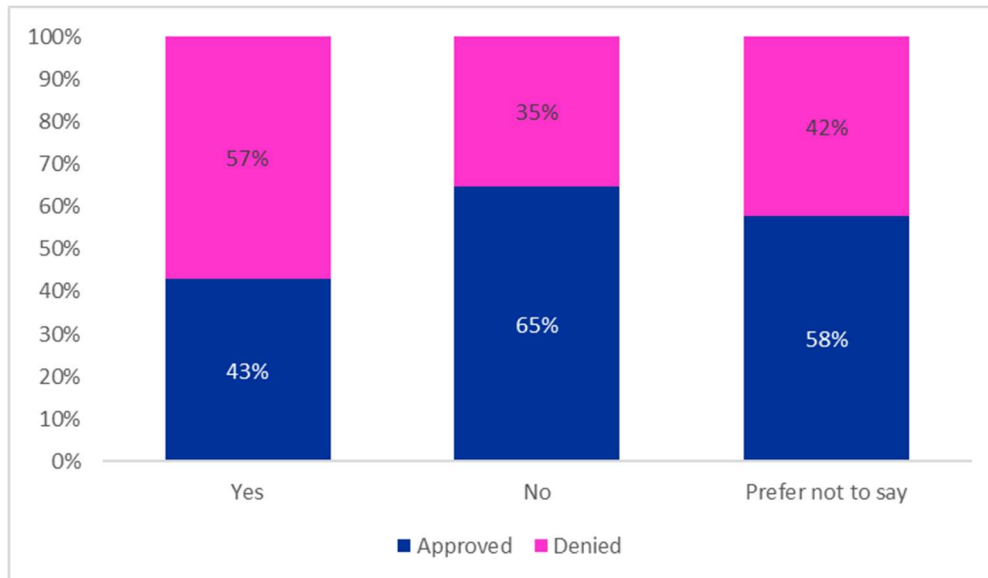
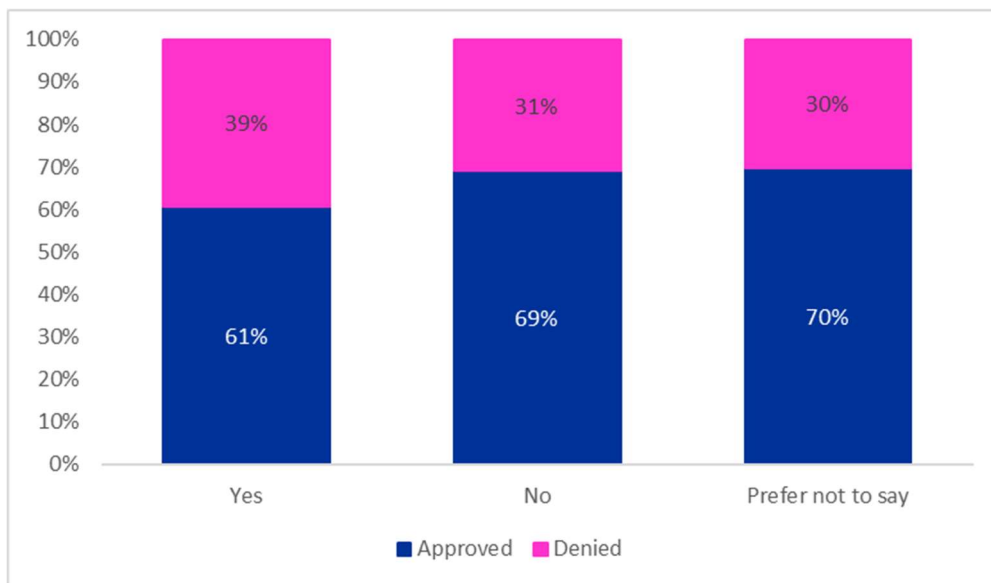


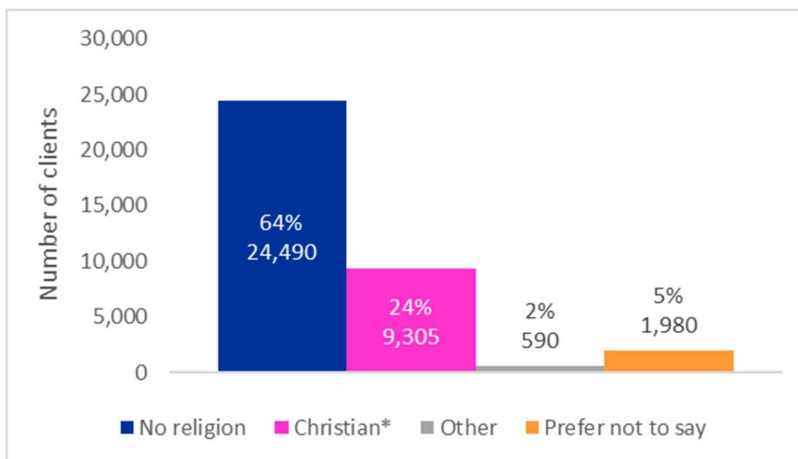
Chart 13: Application outcome by transgender – Scottish applications only



Religion

- The proportion of clients that have no religion is 64% compared to 12% 'Roman Catholic', 7% 'Church of Scotland', and 5% for both 'Other Christian' and 'Muslim'. There were also 5% who chose 'Prefer not to say'. Other religions accounted for small numbers of clients (Chart 14, Table 6). The higher percentage of clients with no religion could be based on the age group of applicants as these are mostly new parents who are likely to be in lower age groups. In Scotland, there is a higher level of adults with no religion in the 16-24 age group and this declines as age increases¹⁰.

Chart 11: Client diversity by religion



*Christian includes Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and Other Christian

- 66% of all applications for clients with no religion were approved. This is similar to Roman Catholic (64%), Church of Scotland (67%) and Pagan (69%). The approval rate was lower for other groups, such as 'Other Christian' and 'Sikh' which were both 48%, and 'Muslim' at 57%. The lowest approval rate was for 'Hindu' at 25% (Chart 12, Table 6). Breakdowns by religion vary for Scottish clients compared to applications from clients living outside Scotland. When looking at applications from those living in Scotland only, the variation in the approval rates by religion is reduced, with almost all groups ranging from 65% to 72%. The exception is 'Hindu' which only has an approval rate of 36%. The group is very small (70), which may have an impact on the reliability of this figure. This also applies for other small religion groups (Chart 13, Table 6).

Chart 12: Application outcome by religion – all applications

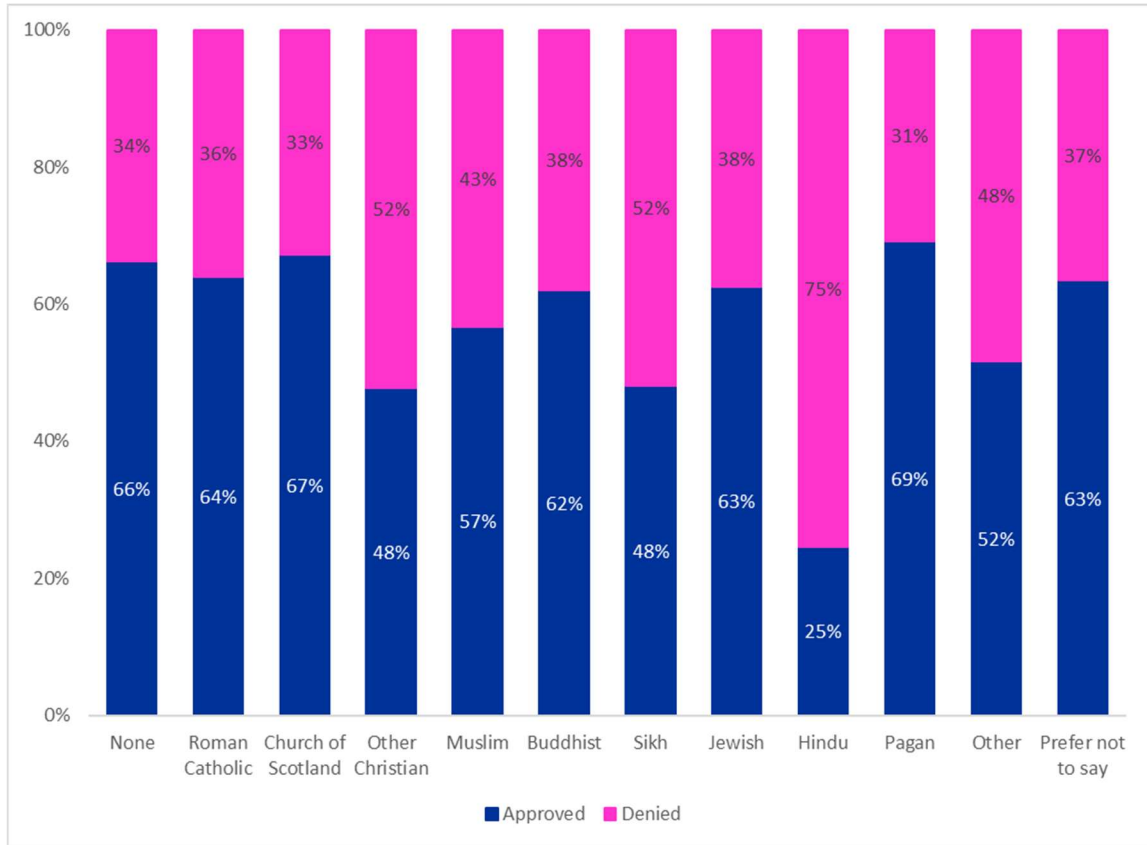
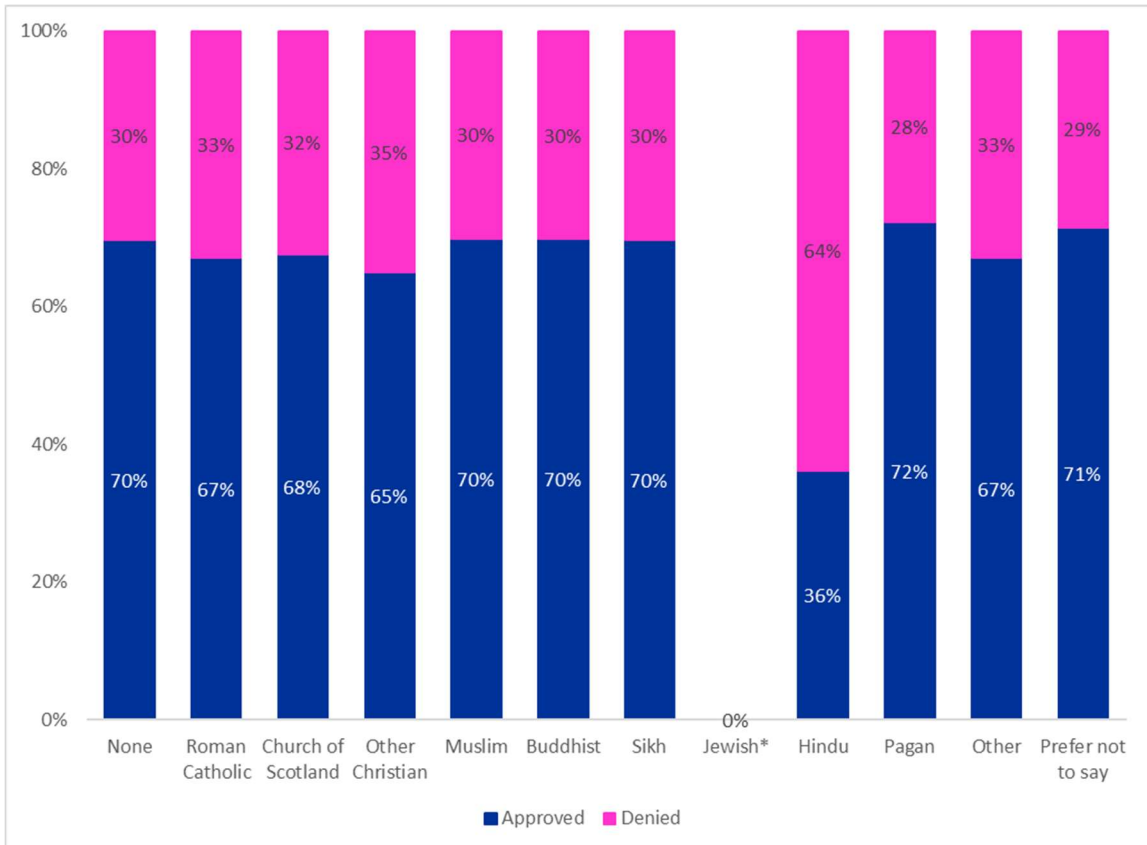


Chart 13: Application outcome by religion – Scottish applications only

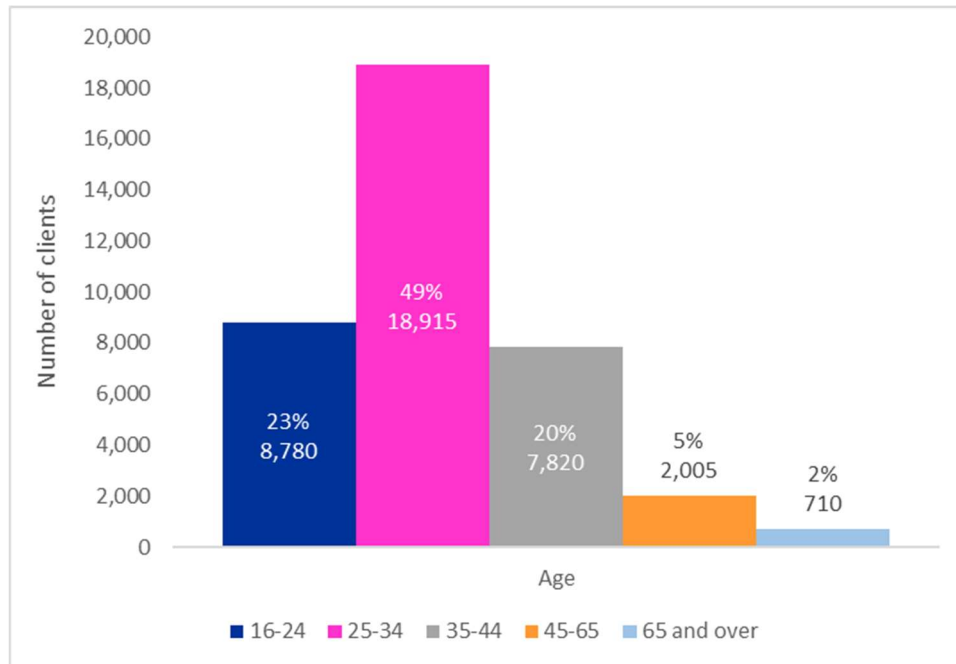


*Suppressed for disclosure control

Age

- 93% of clients are under 45 years old. The highest proportion of clients are in the 25–34 age group (49%) with only 2% aged 65 and over (Chart 14, Table 7). In Scotland, this age group accounts for 14% of the Scottish Population that are 16 or over¹¹. This difference is expected as the majority of applications (89%) are for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods, which are likely to be younger applicants who have a child under 6 years old (Table 8).

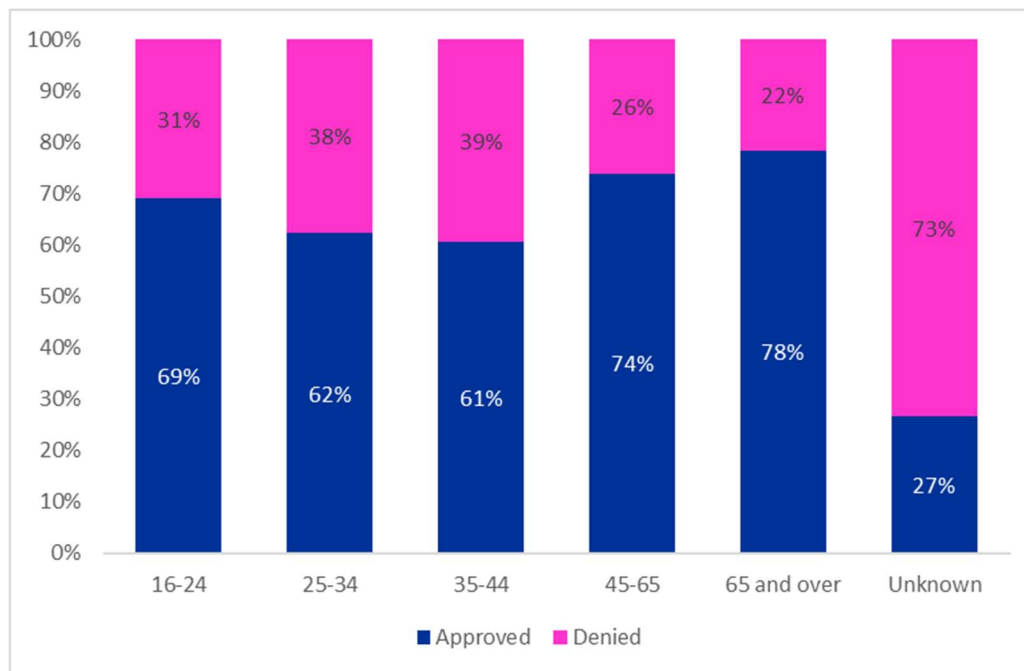
Chart 14: Client diversity by age



- Approval levels were highest for 65 and over age group at 78%, and the lowest age group was 35-44 at 61%. The approval rate for those whose age is unknown was only 27% (Chart 15, Table 7). This is likely to be due to accurate information on date of birth being an important factor in the approval process.

¹¹ [Mid-2019 Population Estimates Scotland](#)

Chart 15: Application outcome by age – all applications



- 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-high-level-statistics-to-31-may-2020/>)

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 March 2020](#).

As of 9th December 2019, clients applying for benefits online were required to complete a mandatory Equality Monitoring and Feedback form following their benefits application form. Prior to this, the Equality Monitoring and Feedback form was completed on a voluntary basis. The form includes a 'prefer not to say' option for all questions for clients who wish not to disclose this information. The majority of responses were from applicants for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods (89%) as there are a greater number of applications for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods compared to other benefits.

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. Online response are linked to outcomes using a unique identifier, mail and telephone response are linked to outcomes using postcode and date of birth.

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 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 data collected by mail and telephone 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 1% of the mail and telephone responses.

The equalities data collected online did not contain any information unique to the client, therefore duplicate clients could only be determined after linking to the outcomes data. Similar to the mail and telephone responses, where it was not possible to distinguish accurate equalities information for a single client as the response were different, all duplicates were removed. Where the equalities information provided was consistent across applications, a single response was kept.

Clients that chose not to answer equalities questions

Some clients did not answer some equalities questions, these are counted in the Unknown category.

Missing identification information

Mail and telephone equalities information was linked to application outcome data using the post code 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 mail and telephone responses. None of the online responses has missing unique identifiers

Linkage to application outcome information

Following the removal of the duplicate clients (from mail and telephone responses) and those with missing identification records, the equalities information was linked to the application outcome data using a clients postcode and date of birth (for mail and telephone responses) and unique identifier (for online responses). 77% of the mail and telephone client records matched to the application outcome data and 100% of the online records matched to an application outcome.

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.. The majority of these clients were applying for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods. Clients 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.

To remove duplicate client equalities information, first pending and withdrawn applications were removed. This resulted in the removal of 9% of the matched applications. For any duplicates that remained, the most recent application for a client based on application decision date, regardless of whether it was approved or denied, was used. This resulted in the removal of a further 15% of linked applications. 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 better understood how to complete the 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.

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, the data cuts from July 2020 have been used to produce statistics on Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms received from 9th December 2019, and application outcomes up to 11.59 pm on 31st May 2020. 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.

Background to Benefit Types

Background on the types of benefits that clients in the Diversity and Equalities analysis are applying for is available in separate publications for each of the grant types published here <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-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/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>

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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