



Social Security Scotland Statistics

Social Security Scotland Client Diversity and Equalities Analysis for June 2021 to March 2023

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: <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

² The forthcoming publication timetable is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/official-statistics-forthcoming-publications/>

Introduction

This publication provides information on the diversity of clients applying to Social Security Scotland for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment, Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment, and Adult Disability Payment. 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. This publication does not cover Carer's Allowance Supplement, Child Winter Heating Assistance, or Winter Heating Payment as the majority of these clients receive automatic payments and equalities information is not captured within that process.

The data covers the period from 1 June 2021 to 31 March 2023. The method for collecting this information was improved on 9th December 2019, see [How Equalities data is collected](#).

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. Data has therefore been de-duplicated to retain only one equalities monitoring form per client that applied during the period 1 June 2021 to 31 March 2023. Where multiple outcomes were available on different applications for an individual client, only the most recent outcome has been retained. The data presented here therefore does not contain all outcomes information for all clients. The equalities information used in this report relates to the person who completed the form, whether that was the client or someone acting on their behalf, because the outcome of the application would relate to that person's ability to complete the form. More detailed information about the number of applications received for individual benefits is available here: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>.

The majority of responses in this publication were from applicants for Scottish Child Payment (48%), or Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (24%), 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/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#clientdiversityandequalitiesanalysis>

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.

³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/policies/official-and-national-statistics-policies/experimental-statistics/>

Main findings

- Comparing all client diversity data, there are differences in approval rates for some equalities groups. The equalities groups with the greatest variation in approval rate are summarised in the following table. This shows only the maximum and minimum approval rates within each of these groups⁴. Full results are discussed in detail by equalities group in the sections below and are presented in the accompanying tables.

Equalities group	Highest approval rates		Lowest approval rates		Percentage point difference in approval rate
Ethnicity	White	81%	Asian	73%	8
	Prefer not to say	81%	African	73%	8
Gender	Women	83%	Men	69%	14
Sexual orientation	Prefer not to say	82%	Gay & Lesbian	72%	10
	Heterosexual	81%			
	In another way	81%			
Religion	Jewish	83%	Hindu	48%	35
	Church of Scotland	82%			
	Pagan	82%			
	Prefer not to say	82%			
Age	45-64	86%	16-24	70%	16
SIMD	Two most deprived decile	83%	Least deprived decile	74%	9

- While we have previously commented that small numbers for some groups of clients could contribute to differences in approval rates, all groups in the table above were relatively large, with the smallest groups being 120 Jewish clients and 490 Hindu clients.
- This is the first equalities analysis to include approval rates for Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment, and the first since the expansion of Scottish Child Payment to children aged 6-16. Since Child Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment have the highest approval rates, at 91% and 90% respectively, and these two benefits account for just over half of equalities forms analysed, the overall approval rate for all benefits is higher than in May 2021.
- The inclusion of these benefits also has an impact on the age distribution of respondents. At the time of the last publication, nearly half (48%) of equalities forms were completed by individuals aged 25-34, but in the latest analysis this was down to a third (33%). This is largely due to the inclusion of Adult Disability Payment, Child Disability Payment and the expanded Scottish Child Payment, together accounting for 67% of respondents. Since these benefits relate to all adults, and parents of older children respectively, the age distribution is more evenly spread across age bands. There is also a higher proportion of clients self-identifying as having a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting

⁴ Excluding 'Unknown' Category

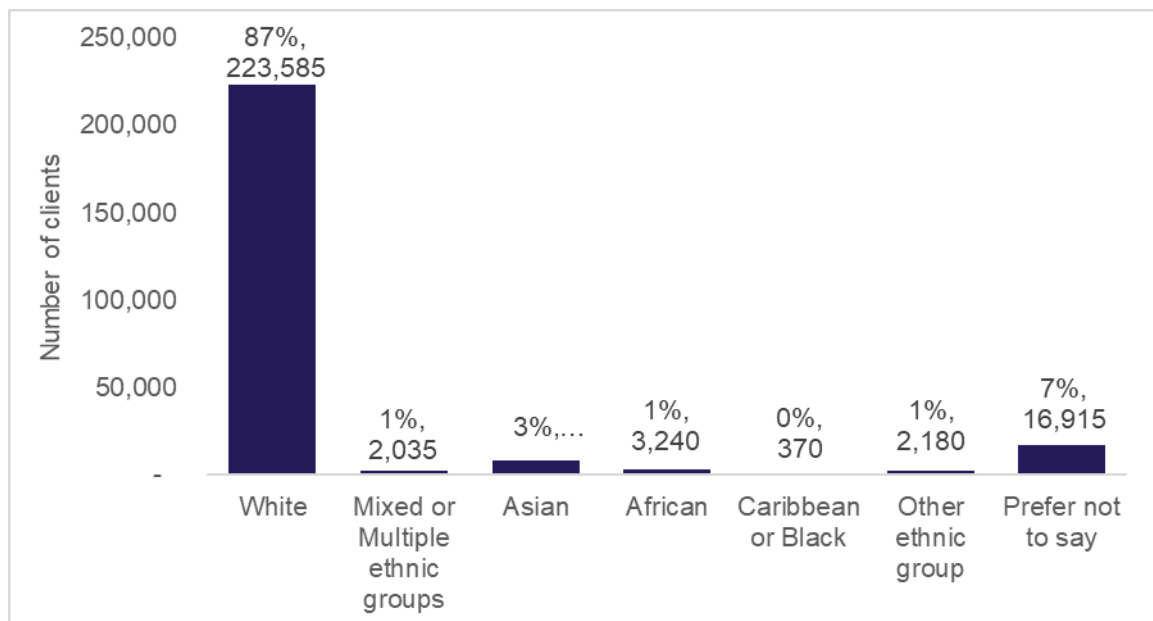
or expected to last 12 months or more (32%) than in May 2021 (17%), as would be expected given the launch of Adult Disability Payment.

- People who are eligible for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods are also eligible for Scottish Child Payment. Therefore the characteristics of clients on these benefits tends to be similar. However, patterns in approval rates are not always similar. For example, transgender clients had a slightly higher approval rate for Scottish Child Payment than clients not identifying as transgender, whereas for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods transgender clients approval rate was lower by 8% than clients not identifying as transgender.
- Analysis of applications by [application channel](#) shows that applications received by phone were more likely to be approved at 88% than either online or mail applications, which had similar approval rates of 80% and 79% respectively. The approval rate for most of the benefits was higher for applications received by phone than online or mail except for Scottish Child Payment and Job Start Payment. Scottish Child Payment had similar approval rates for online and phone applications, while Job Start Payment had the same approval rates for phone and mail applications.

Ethnicity

- 87% of our clients self-identified their ethnic group as ‘White’⁵, with 6% of clients identifying as one of the other listed ethnic groups (**Chart 1, Table 1**). The remaining 7% chose ‘Prefer not to say’. The second largest ethnic group was ‘Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British’, accounting for 3% of the total. According to the Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019, 95% of the total population of Scotland were ‘White’, with the remaining 5% being from the other listed ethnic groups⁶.
- For individual benefits, the proportion of clients identifying as ‘White’ was highest for Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment both at 94%, followed by Job Start Payment at 92%. The percentage of clients identifying as ‘Asian’ was lowest for Funeral Support Payment at 1% then Job Start Payment, Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment, all at 2%.
- The percentage choosing ‘Prefer not to say’ has increased from 4% in the previous publication, to 7%. Funeral Support Payment has the highest percentage of ‘Prefer not say’ responses, at 23%. This is an increase from 8% in the previous publication. This higher rate of ‘Prefer not to say’ responses likely relates to the fact that a higher proportion of applications are phone applications – 35% for Funeral Support Payment compared to 7% for all benefits – and the increase since the last publication is likely due to a change in process where client advisors are required to provide an answer. Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment have the lowest percentage of ‘Prefer not to say’ at 2%.

Chart 1: Client diversity by ethnic group

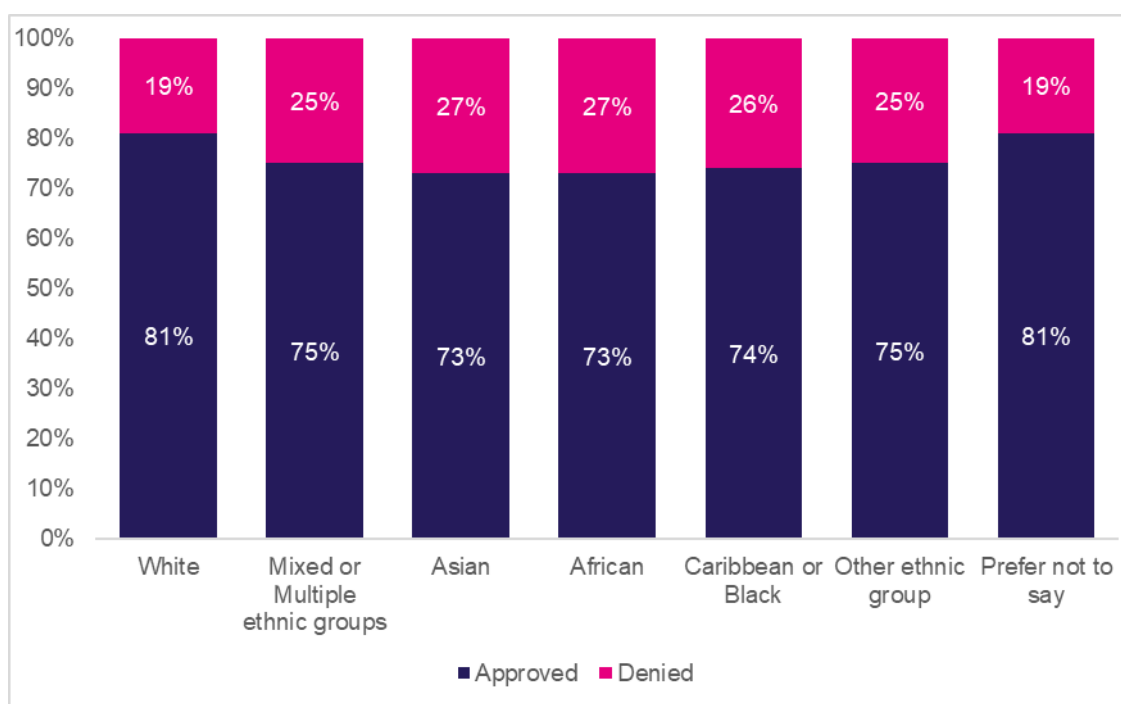


⁵ The categories included within white are ‘Scottish’, ‘Other British’, ‘Irish’, ‘Gypsy/Traveller’, ‘Polish’ and ‘Other white ethnic group’

⁶ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019 \(Published: 2021, Scottish Government\)](#)

- Overall, the proportion of clients approved was highest for ‘White’ and ‘Prefer not to say’ at 81%. The other listed ethnic groups had similar approval rates, ranging from 73-75%.
- At individual benefit level, approval rates can appear quite variable due to small numbers of clients for certain groups within some of the benefits. For Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, ‘Asian’ and ‘Caribbean or Black’ had the lowest approval rates at 58% compared to the total rate of 69%, while for Funeral Support Payment, ‘Asian’ had the lowest approval rate at 57% compared to the total rate of 80%.

Chart 2: Application outcome by ethnic group – all applications



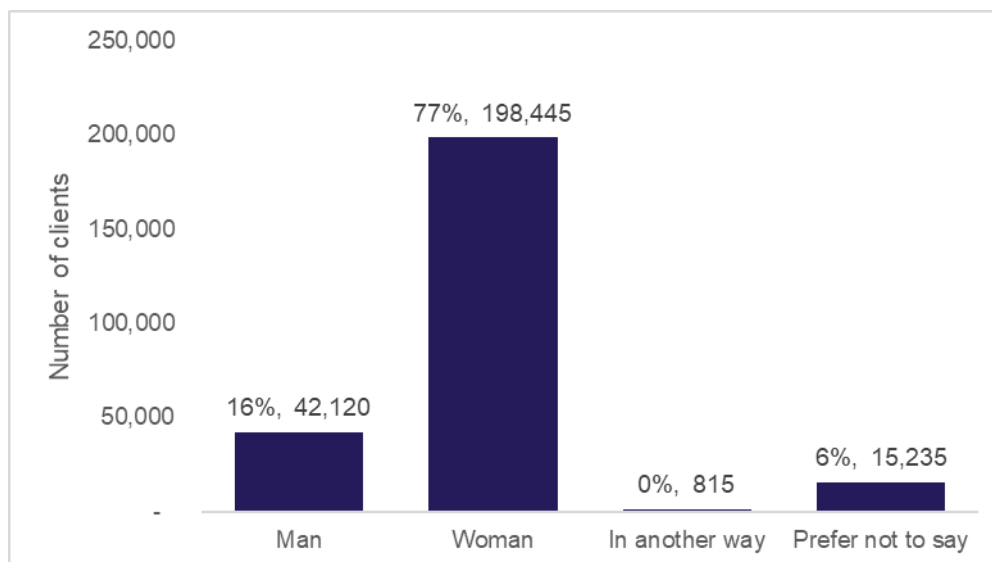
Gender

- The proportion of clients who self-identified as ‘Man’ (16%) remained lower than those who self-identified as ‘Woman’ (77%) (**Chart 3, Table 2**). In Scotland in 2021, 52% of the population aged 16 and over were female, and 48% were male.⁷
- Benefits related to children have a much higher percentage of women applying – Scottish Child Payment (85%), Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (86%) and Child Disability Payment (84%). Since these benefits account for around three quarters of equalities forms analysed, this has a significant impact on the total.

⁷ [Mid-2021 Population Estimates Scotland](#) (Last updated: July 2022, National Records of Scotland)

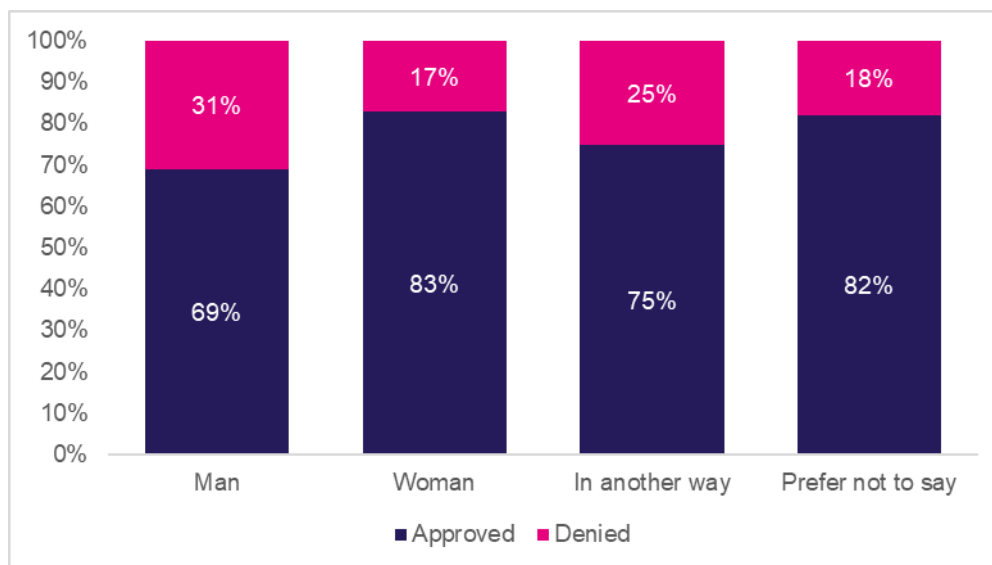
- The remaining benefits have a higher percentage of women applying than men but to a lesser extent than the benefits relating to children, with the exception of Job Start Payment, where 38% were women and 58% were men.

Chart 3: Client diversity by gender



- The proportion of clients approved was higher for women at 83% than men at 69%. **(Chart 4, Table 2)**. The difference in approval rates is slightly higher than previous statistics covering to May 2021.
- Approval rates were higher for women for Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, and Adult Disability Payment, while men and women had similar approval rates for the other four benefits. The benefit with the greatest difference in approval rates between men and women was Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods with 58% of men approved and 70% of women – a difference of 12 percentage points. Scottish Child Payment and Adult Disability Payment also showed relatively large differences between percentage of men and women approved, at 8 and 9 percentage point difference respectively.

Chart 4: Application outcome by gender – all applications

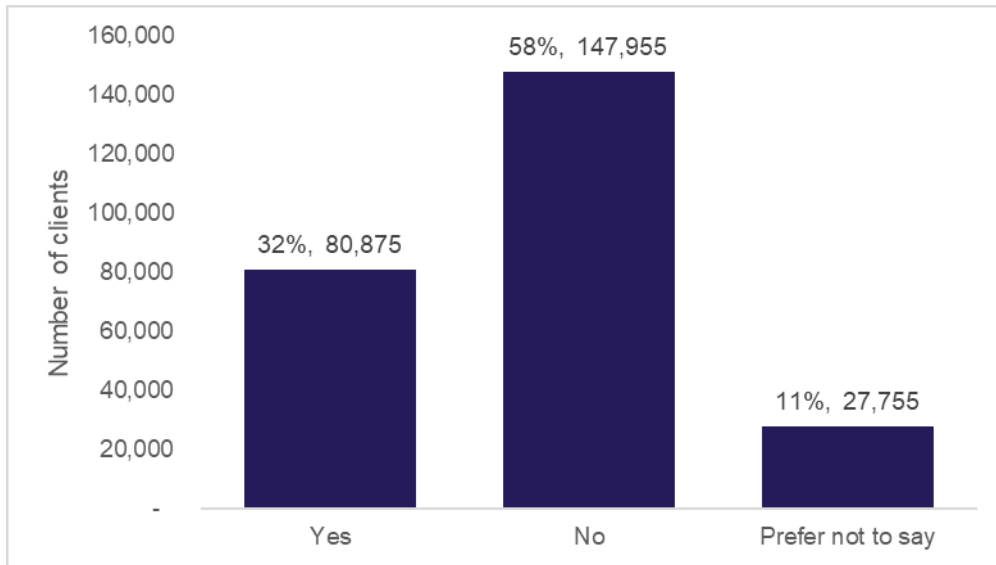


Physical or mental health condition or illness

- 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 32% compared to 58% who don't (**Chart 5, Table 3**). This is a significant increase from the 17% reported to May 2021 – likely due to the launch of Adult Disability Payment in that time. There is no directly comparable data for Scotland as a whole, but 34% of adults in Scotland had a limiting long-term mental or physical health condition or disability in 2021⁸.
- At individual benefit level, for most benefits less than a quarter of clients identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness. The main exception was Adult Disability Payment where it was 91% of clients. This is because Adult Disability Payment is designed to help people with extra costs associated with living with a disability or long term health condition. Child Disability Payment and Funeral Support Payment had slightly higher proportions of people applying identified as having a physical or mental health condition than most of the benefits, at 31% and 30% respectively. For Funeral Support Payment, there was also a high proportion of clients saying 'Prefer not to say' (30%), and 39% saying they did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness. So the percentage saying they had a condition was only 9 percentage points lower than the percentage saying they did not. This may relate to the older ages of clients applying for Funeral Support Payment, making them more likely to have a health condition or illness (**Table 8c**).

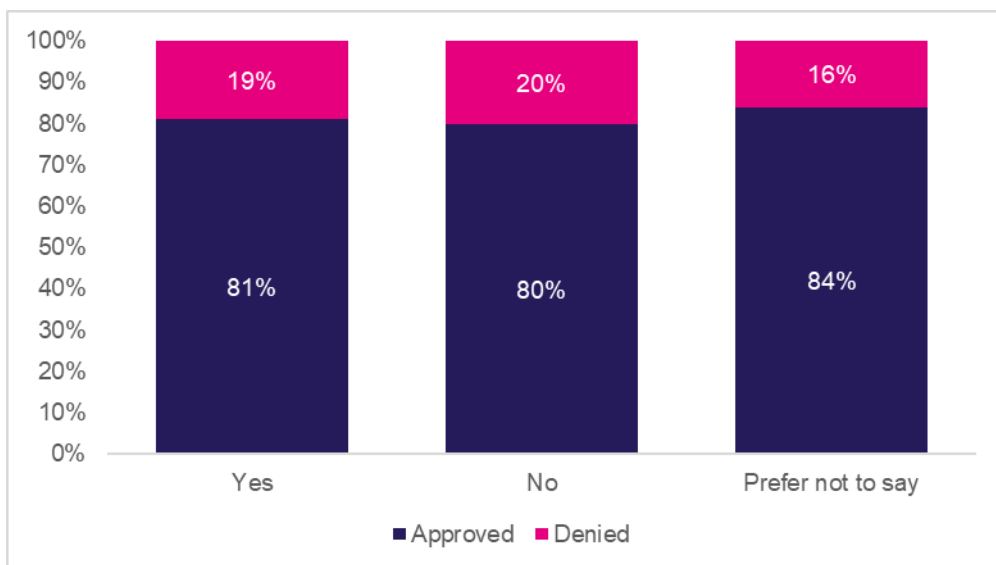
⁸ [Scottish Health Survey 2021 \(Published: 2022, Scottish Government\)](#)

Chart 5: 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 a slightly higher approval rate at 81% than clients who did not at 80% (**Table 3, Chart 6**). This remains similar to statistics covering previous time periods. All individual benefits followed this pattern except for Young Carer Grant, where there was slightly lower approval rate for clients who identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness at 73%, compared to 77%. The biggest difference in approval rates was for Adult Disability Payment, where there was an approval rate of 68% for those who identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness, compared to 49% - as would be expected, given the nature of the benefit.

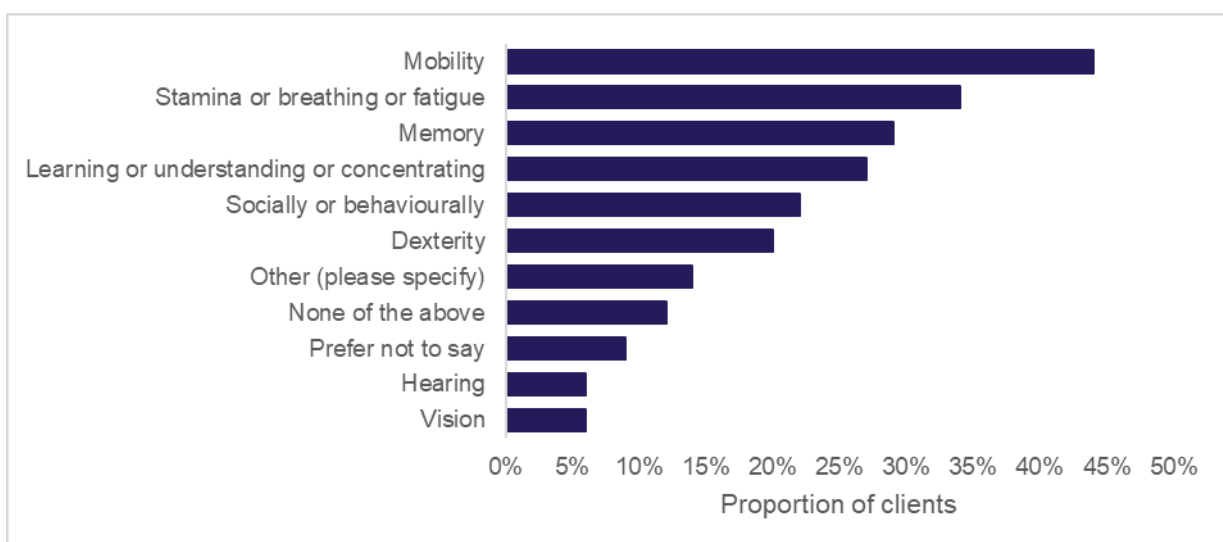
Chart 6: Application outcome by physical or mental health condition or illness – all applications



- Of those clients that identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness, the areas they reported were affected were⁹: 44% 'Mobility', 34% 'Stamina or breathing or fatigue', 29% 'Memory', and 27% 'Learning or understanding or concentrating'. There were smaller proportions with affected 'Vision', 'Hearing', 'Dexterity' or 'Socially or behaviourally' (**Table 4, Chart 7**).
- The types of condition or illness varied between benefits. For example, a higher proportion of Adult Disability Payment clients that identified as having a condition or illness specified that this affected 'Mobility' at 57% or 'Stamina or breathing or fatigue' at 52%. This compares to Young Carer Grant clients, where the most common area affected was 'Socially or behaviourally' at 43%.
- Approval rates ranged from 77% for clients that identified as having affected 'Vision' to 85% for those who chose 'Prefer not to say'.

Chart 7: Client diversity by type of physical or mental health condition or illness

This chart only includes responses from clients that also reported they had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. Clients may have indicated that they had more than one physical or mental health condition or illness.

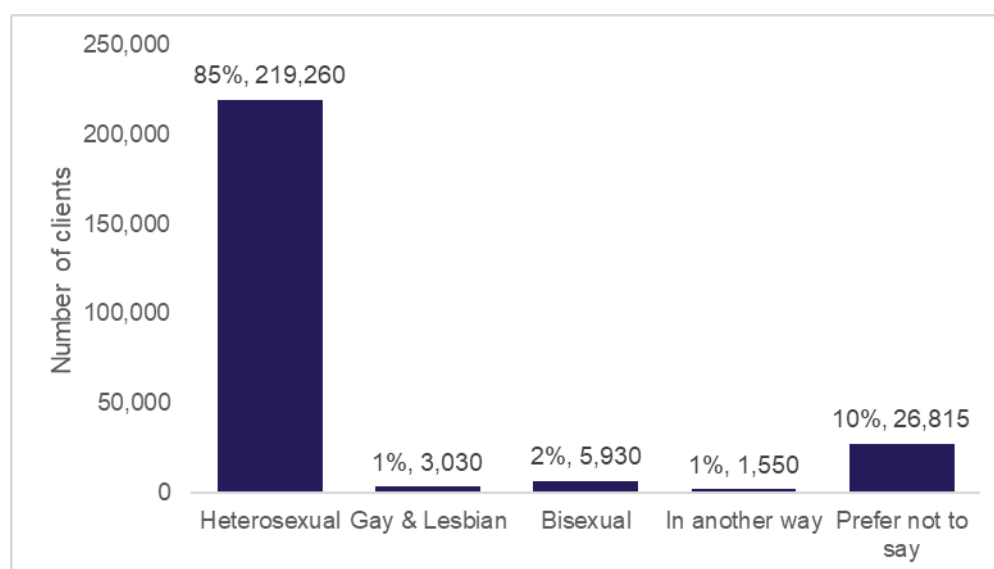


⁹ Clients may have indicated they had more than one physical or mental health condition or illness.

Sexual Orientation

- Individuals who self-identified as ‘Heterosexual’ accounted for 85% of clients compared to 2% who identified as ‘Bisexual’ and 1% as ‘Gay and Lesbian’ and ‘In another way’. ‘Prefer not to say’ was chosen by 10% of clients (**Chart 8, Table 5**). The latest results from Scottish Surveys Core Questions show that in Scotland, 94% of adults self-identified as ‘Heterosexual’ compared to around 3% who self-identified as ‘Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other’ in 2019¹⁰.
- Looking at benefits individually, benefits relating to children (Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods and Child Disability Payment) had the lowest percentages of clients identifying as ‘Gay & Lesbian’, ‘Bisexual’, or ‘In another way’. Funeral Support Payment also had low percentages in these categories, but with a much higher ‘Prefer not to say’ as with other equalities characteristics for that benefit.

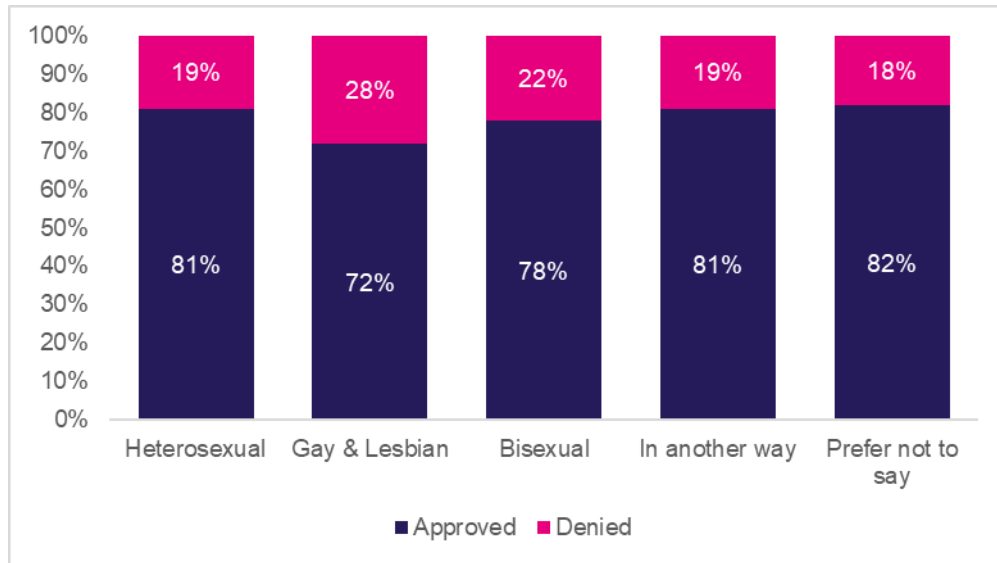
Chart 8: Client diversity by sexual orientation



- Looking at all applications, approval levels were higher at 82% for clients who selected ‘Prefer not to say’ and 81% for ‘Heterosexual’ clients and clients who identified ‘In another way’. Approval levels were lowest for ‘Gay and Lesbian’ clients at 72% (**Table 5, Chart 9**). This is similar to statistics from previous publications.

¹⁰ Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019 - Supplementary Tables (Last updated: January 2021)

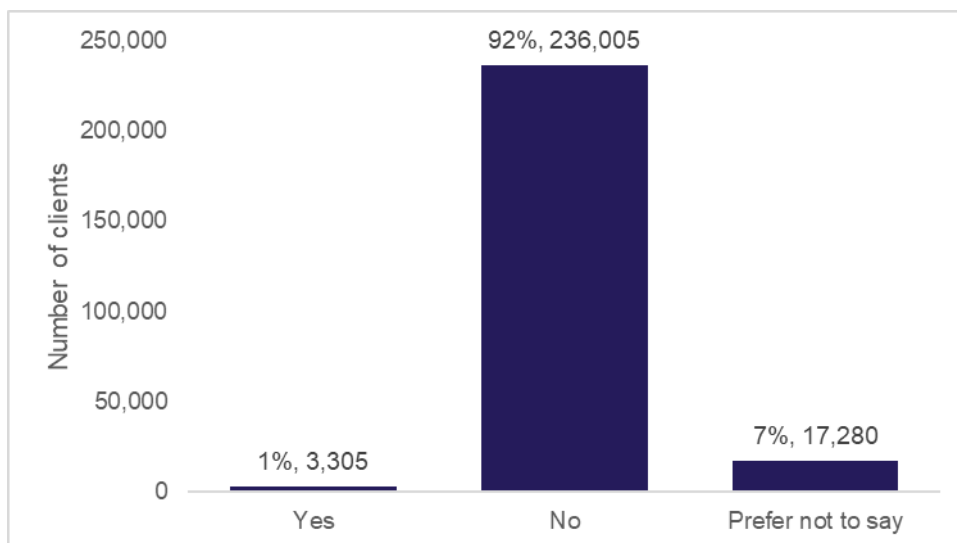
Chart 9: Application outcome by sexual orientation – all applications



Transgender

- Less than 1% of the clients who responded to the Equalities Monitoring and feedback form self-identified as transgender, and 4% chose ‘Prefer not to say’ (**Chart 10, Table 6**). The Gender Identity Research and Education Society estimates that between 0.6% and 1.0% of the UK population were transgender¹¹. The benefits showing the highest percentage of transgender clients were Job Start Payment, Young Carer Grant, and Adult Disability Payment, at 2% each.

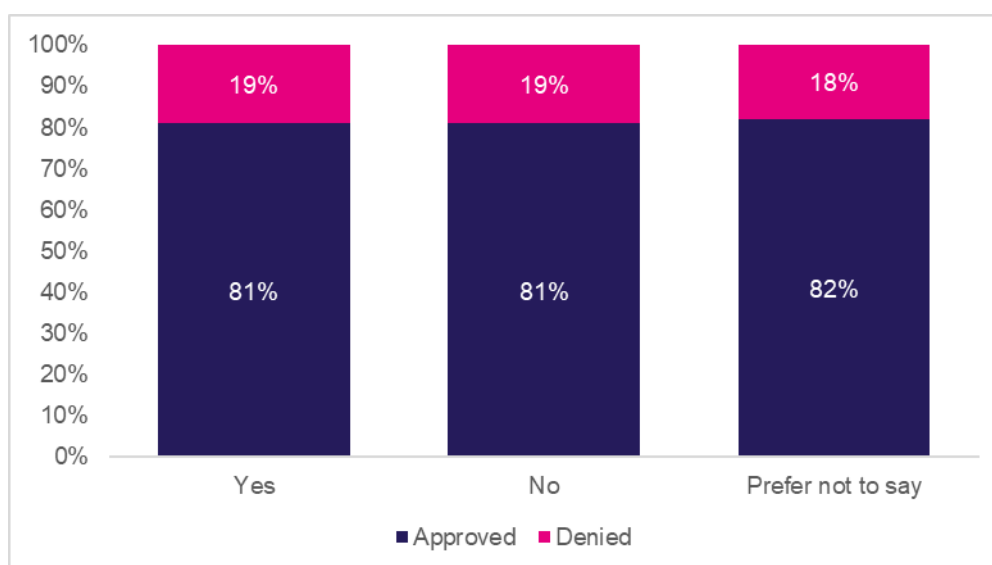
Chart 10: Client diversity by transgender



¹¹ Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) - The number of Gender Variant People in the UK (update 2011) (Published: 2011, GIRES)

- Overall the same proportion of transgender clients were approved (81%) in comparison to clients that did not identify as transgender (81%). There was a marginally higher approval rate (82%) for clients who chose ‘Prefer not to say’ (**Chart 11, Table 6**).
- The number of transgender clients for other specific benefits was generally very low except for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Scottish Child Payment and Adult Disability Payment, making comparisons of approval rates by benefit less reliable. For Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, there was a lower approval rate for transgender clients (61%) than clients that did not self-identify as transgender (69%). For Scottish Child Payment there was a higher approval rate for transgender clients (92%) than clients who did not identify as transgender (90%). Adult Disability Payment also had a higher approval rate for transgender clients (73%) compared to clients who did not identify as transgender (66%).

Chart 11: Application outcome by transgender – all applications



Religion

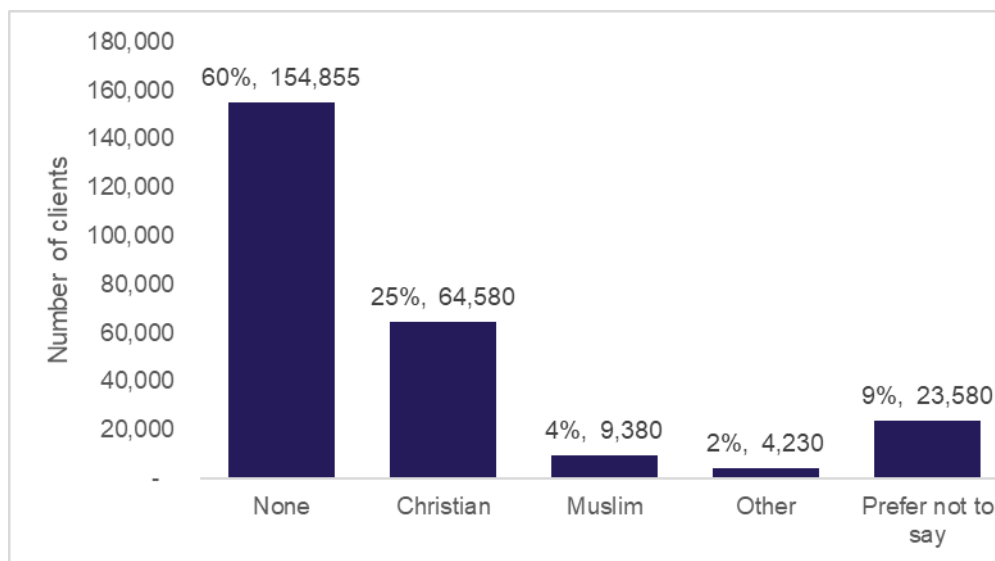
- The proportion of clients that have no religion is 60% compared to 12% ‘Roman Catholic’, 9% ‘Church of Scotland’, 5% ‘Other Christian’ and 4% ‘Muslim’. There were also 9% who chose ‘Prefer not to say’. Other religions accounted for small numbers of clients (**Chart 12, Table 7**). This breakdown is different to Scotland as a whole, where 54% Scottish surveys respondents reported having no religion in 2019, with 22% Church of Scotland, 14% Roman Catholic, 7% Other Christian and 2% Muslim¹². The higher percentage of clients with no religion compared to the general population could be related to the different age profile of clients, with a higher proportion being from younger age groups (see [section](#)

¹² [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019 \(Published: 2021, Scottish Government\)](#)

[on Age](#)). In Scotland, there is a higher level of adults with no religion in the 16-24 age group and this declines as age increases¹⁰.

- At individual benefit level, the proportion with no religion was lower for Funeral Support Payment (40%), with Roman Catholic (14%) and Church of Scotland (15%) accounting for a higher proportion of clients than the total for Scotland. This is despite having a higher proportion of 'Prefer not to say' at 26%. The proportion with no religion was highest for Job Start Payment (78%). Again, these differences may relate to the age of clients applying for different benefits.

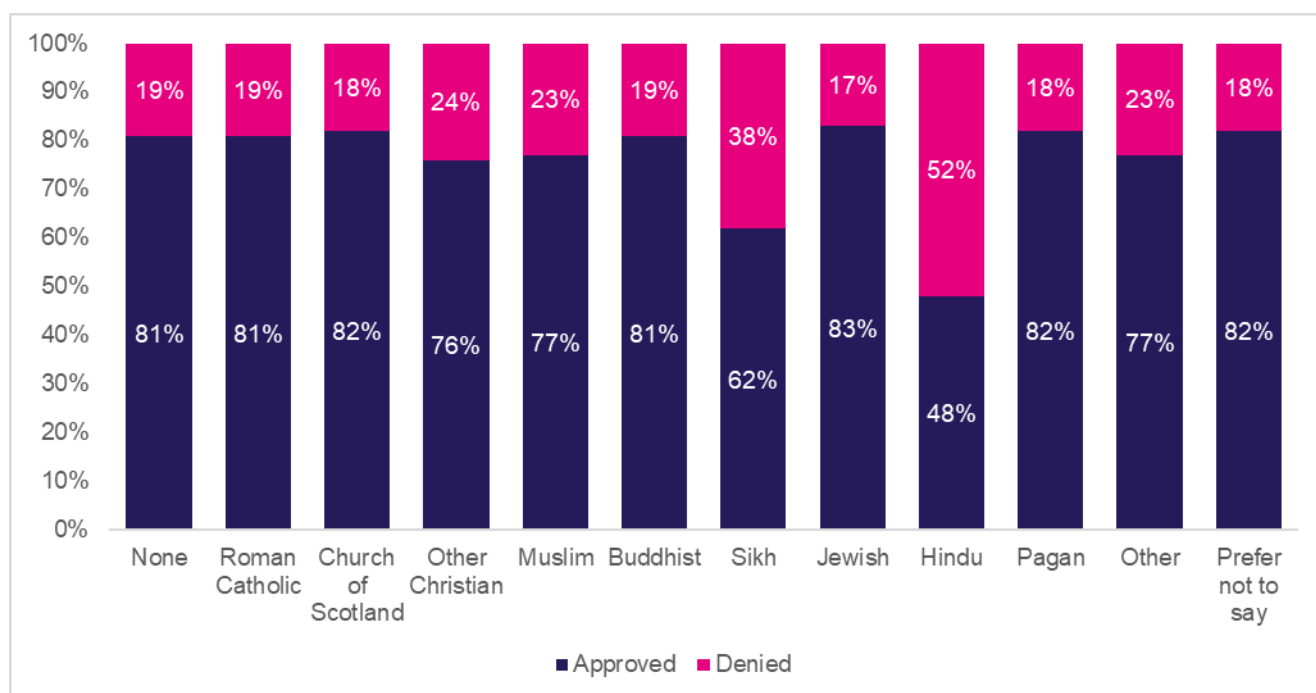
Chart 12: Client diversity by religion



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

- Among the most well represented groups, approval rates were reasonably similar, with the highest for Church of Scotland (82%), followed by Roman Catholic (81%), those with no religion (81%), and then slightly lower for Muslim (77%), and Other Christian (76%). These groups also had relatively similar approval rates when looking at individual benefits. For instance, Scottish Child Payment approval rates varied between 87-91% for these groups. There was slightly more variation between approvals rates for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (from 59% for Other Christian to 72% for no religion) and Funeral Support Payment (from 58% for Muslim to 81% for Roman Catholic). For other religions with smaller client numbers, approval rates were very variable for different benefits but this is likely to be related to very small numbers of clients for some groups.
- Overall approval rates remained particularly low for Hindu clients (48%) and relatively low for Sikh clients (62%). These two religions show the lowest approval rates across all benefits where data is available, except for Adult Disability Payment, where approval rate for Muslim (61%) are slightly lower than Sikh (62%). Since the previous reporting period, approval rates for Buddhist and Jewish clients increased to 81% and 83% respectively, bringing them in line with the highest approval rates.

Chart 13: Application outcome by religion – all applications

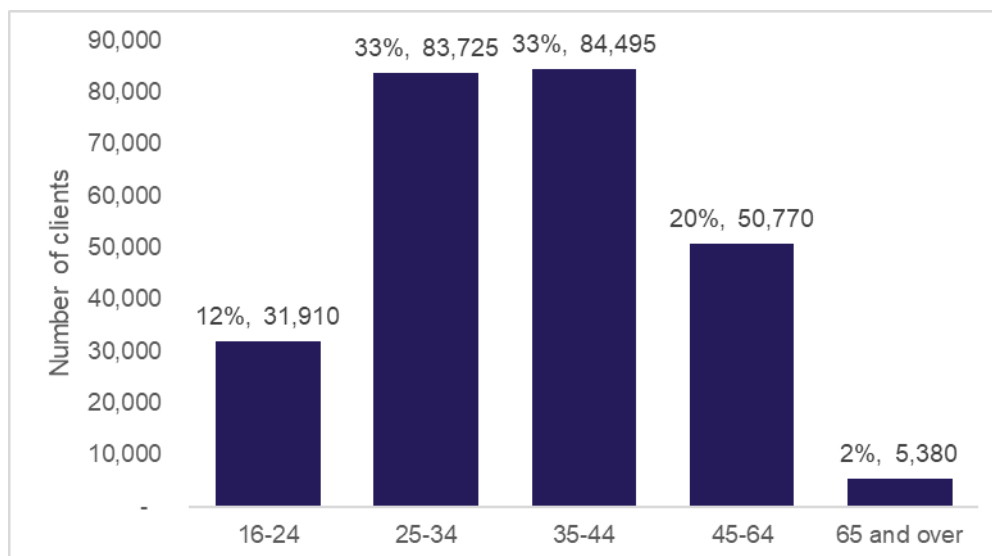


Age

- 78% of clients are under 45 years old. The highest proportion of clients are in the 25–34 and 35-44 age groups, with each accounting for 33% of the caseload. Only 2% of clients are aged 65 and over (**Chart 14, Table 8**). The breakdown of clients by age group differs to the population in Scotland as a whole, where for example 17% of people aged 16 or over fall into the 25-34 age group and 24% are aged 65 or over¹³. This difference is expected as 80% of equalities forms analysed were for benefits for young people, children or families with children (**Table 13**). Since the previous reporting period, the proportion of clients in all age groups from 35-44 upwards has increased. This change is partly due to including Adult Disability Payment in this publication for the first time as two thirds of applications were received from those 35 or over, with 43% within the 45-64 age band.

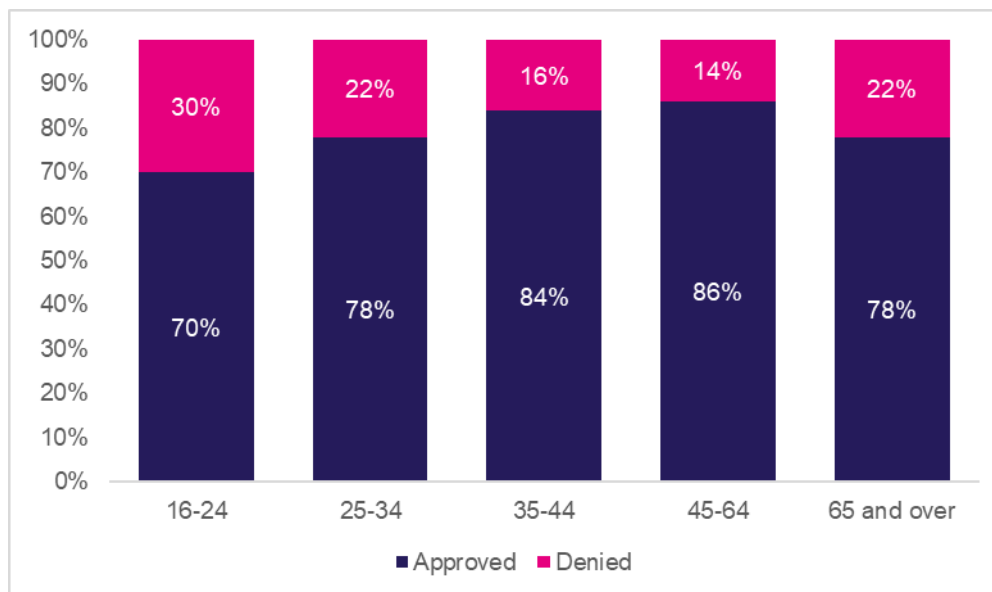
¹³ [Mid-2021 Population Estimates Scotland](#) (Last updated: July 2022, National Records of Scotland)

Chart 14: Client diversity by age



- Approval rate was highest in the 45-64 age group (86%), followed by the 35-44 age group (84%), and was lowest in the 16-24 age group (70%). Approval rates in different age bands are heavily influenced by the type of benefits those age groups typically apply for. For example, 64% of clients aged 65 and over were applying for Funeral Support Payment (**Table 8c**), which has a relatively high approval rate (80%) (**Table 13**). The overall approval rate for clients in this age group is 78%, mostly due to the approval rates for Funeral Support Payment.
- Looking at benefits individually, 16-24 year olds had a higher approval rate than other age groups for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, and a lower approval rate than other age groups for Funeral Support Payment. However, because only 1% of 16-24 year olds were applying for Funeral Support Payment (**Table 8c**), this lower approval rate had relatively little impact on the overall approval rate for 16-24 year olds. Approval rates for Adult Disability Payment increase with age: 72% for 45-64 year olds compared with 60% for 16-24 year olds.
- Age is the only characteristic analysed here which also forms part of the eligibility rules for a benefit. For Job Start Payment, clients must be aged 16 to 24 (or 25 if they are care leavers), while for Young Carer Grant, clients must be aged 16 to 18 (or older if the delay in applying was due to COVID-19). These criteria impact the age profile and approval rates by age group for these benefits, with most applicants being in the youngest age group, and most applicants in other age groups being denied.
- Age information presented here is for clients who completed equalities monitoring forms, de-duplicated to one outcome for each client. A more detailed breakdown of age for all clients applying since each benefit launched is available in the latest official statistics publications for all benefits except for Funeral Support Payment at <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>.

Chart 15: Application outcome by age – all applications

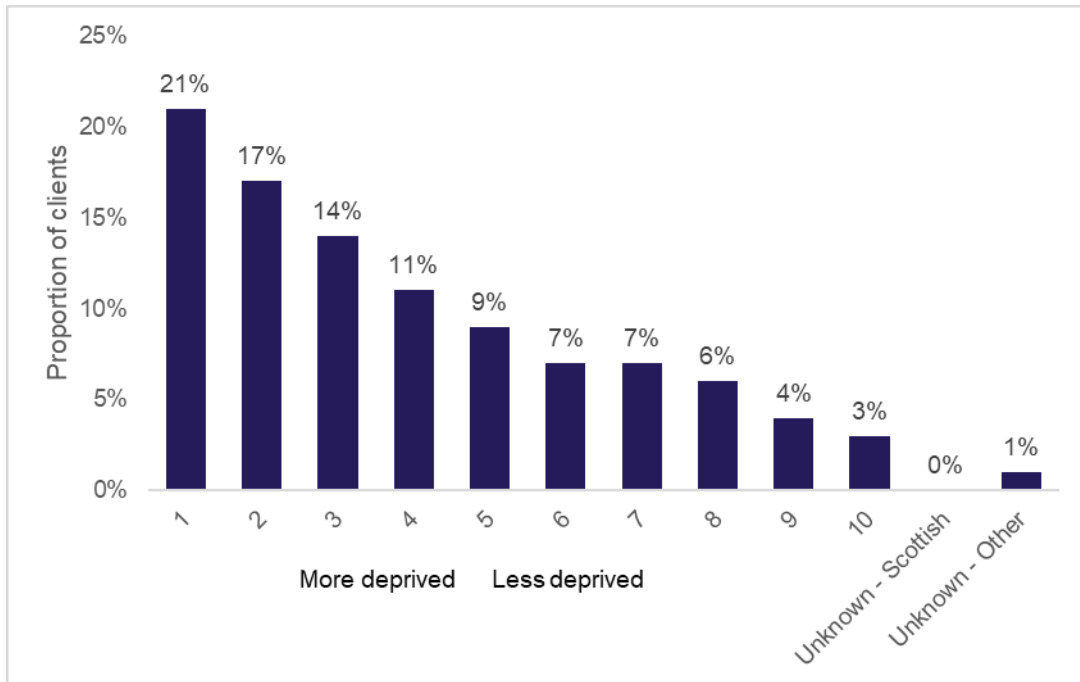


Geography

- Approximately 10% of the population of Scotland live in each decile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), which can be used to rank areas from decile 1 (the most deprived areas) to 10 (the least deprived areas). Social Security Scotland clients lived across all deciles of the SIMD, including the least deprived (3% clients), but a disproportionate number lived in the more deprived deciles (**Table 9, Chart 16**). For example, around one in five clients (21%) lived in the most deprived decile, and more than half (52%) of clients lived in the three most deprived deciles, compared to 28% of the population aged 16 and over in 2021¹⁴. This pattern was similar across all benefits, with the exception of Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability payment, where the pattern was closer to overall population trends, although there were still higher proportions in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived. This is expected given that Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment are to support people with the additional costs of living with a disability while other benefits being reported on (excluding Young Carer Grant) are to support people on low incomes.

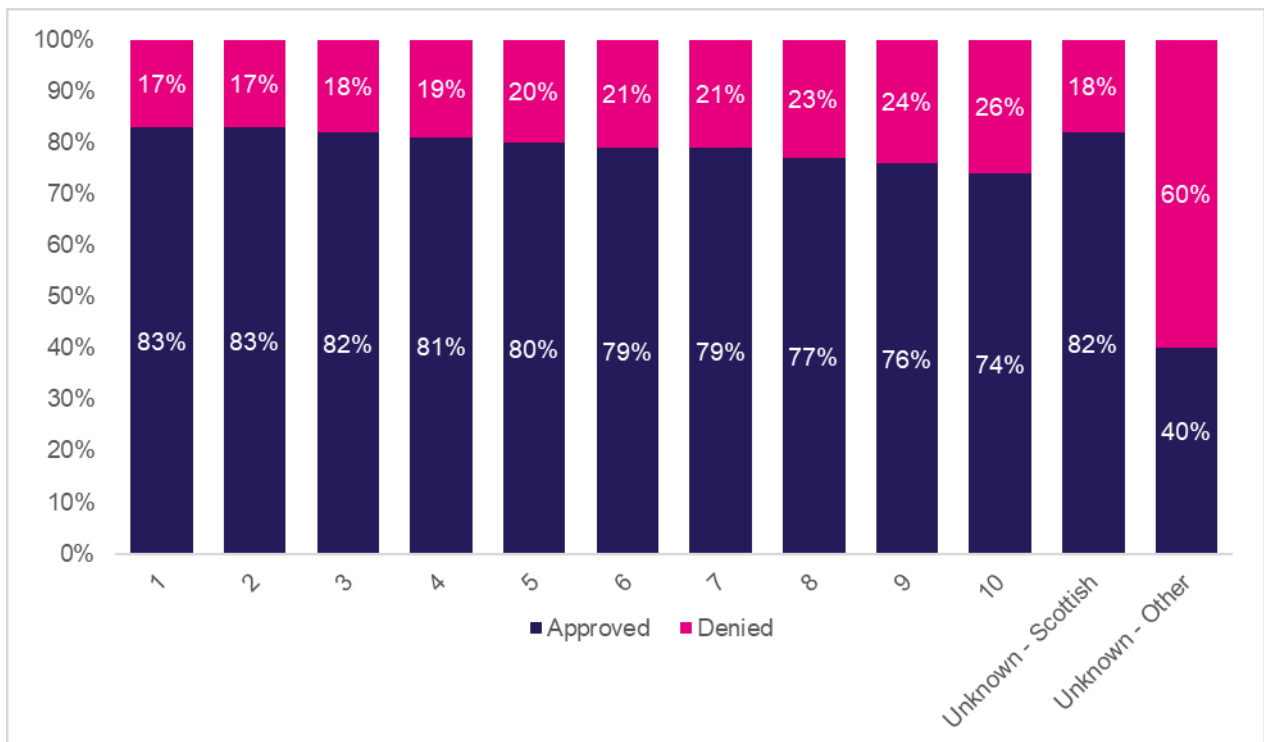
¹⁴ Population Estimates by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) (Last updated: July 2022, National Records of Scotland)

Chart 16: Clients by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile



- Approval rates were also higher in the most deprived deciles, and lower in the least deprived deciles (**Table 9, Chart 17**). This was similar across Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Scottish Child Payment and Funeral Support Payment. For Young Carer Grant, approval rates generally decreased in more deprived areas. This benefit may not follow the same pattern because eligibility is based on being a carer rather than low income. Similarly, for Child Disability Payment, approval rates were slightly lower in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas, and this different pattern may be because eligibility is based on disability rather than income. However, Adult Disability Payment eligibility is also based on disability, but showed a different pattern to Child Disability Payment, with approval rates being broadly similar for all SIMD deciles, ranging between 65%-68%. For Job Start Payment, approval rate was similar for most SIMD deciles, except for the four least deprived deciles where approval rate was higher.

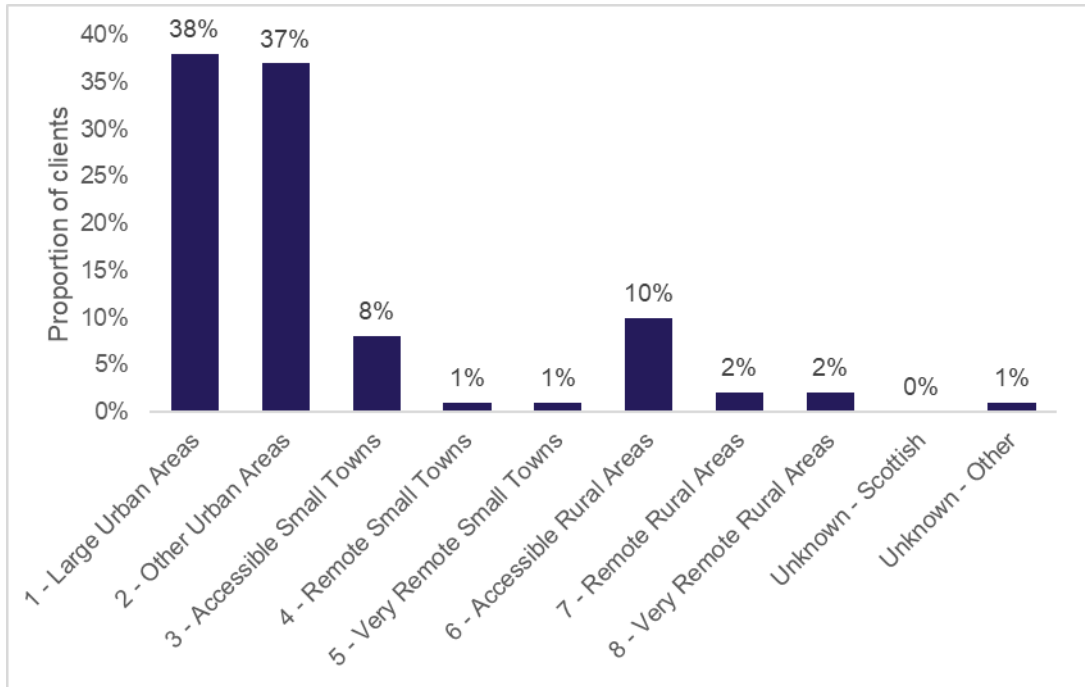
Chart 17: Application outcome by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile – all applications



- Three quarters (75%) of clients lived in ‘Large Urban’ or ‘Other Urban’ areas, and this was similar across benefits (**Table 10**). This is similar to the population as a whole, where it is estimated that 71% of people aged 16 or over lived in ‘Large Urban’ or ‘Other Urban’ areas in 2021¹⁵.

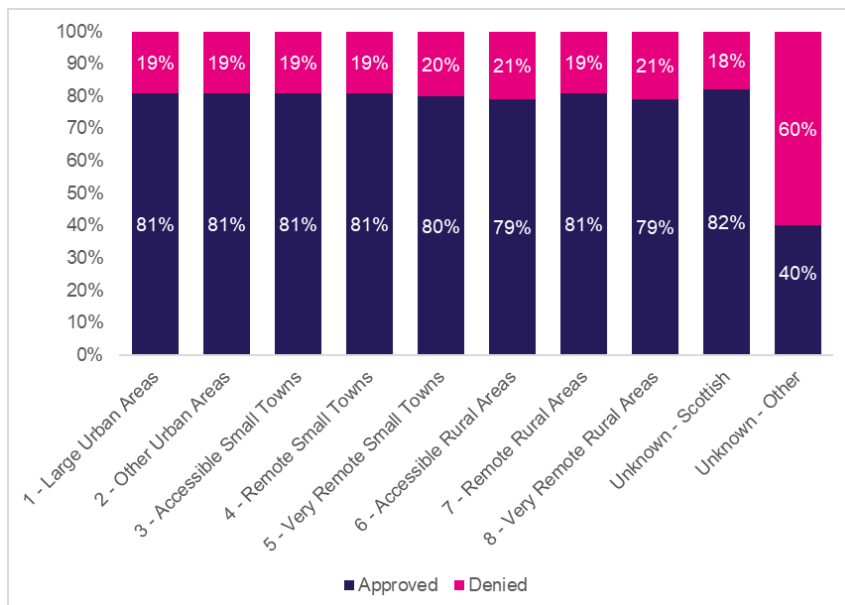
¹⁵ Population Estimates by Urban Rural Classification (2011 Data Zone based) (Last updated: July 2022, National Records of Scotland)

Chart 18: Clients by Urban Rural 2016 8-fold



- Overall approval rates are relatively similar across different urban and rural areas, with highest approval rates in Large Urban Areas (81%), Other Urban Areas (81%), Accessible Small Towns (81%), Remote Small Towns (81%) and Remote Rural Areas (81%) and lowest approval rates in Accessible Rural Areas (79%) and Very Remote Rural Areas (79%). At individual benefit level approval rates appear to vary slightly more by urban and rural classification, however, some of this variation may be due to small numbers of clients. For the two benefits with larger numbers of clients, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment, approval rates were lowest in Very Remote Rural Areas.

Chart 19: Application outcome by Urban Rural 2016 8-fold – all applications

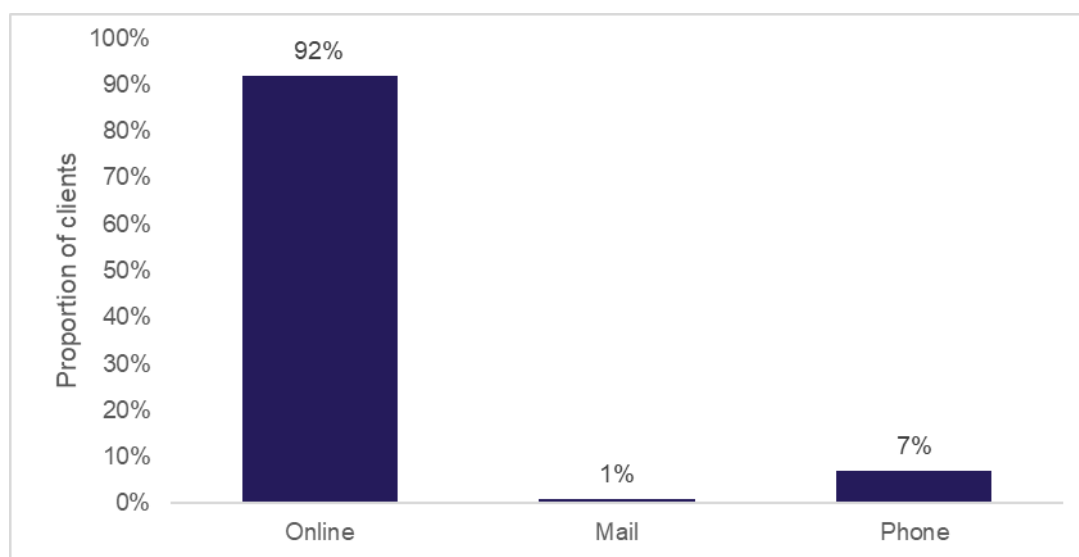


- Around 1% of applications came from clients living on Scottish islands (**Table 11**), compared with 98% on the Scottish mainland. This was similar across all benefits apart from Job Start Payment, where 2% of applications came from islands. In comparison, 2% of the Scottish population lived on islands according to the 2021 Mid-Year Population Estimates, with numbers having stayed similar since 2011¹⁶. Overall the approval rate was similar but slightly lower for islands (78%) compared to the mainland (81%), and this was similar for the two benefits with larger numbers of clients, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (66% versus 70%), and Scottish Child Payment (85% versus 90%). Approval rates for other benefits appear to vary for islands compared to the mainland, although this is likely to be due to very small numbers for islands at individual benefit level.

Application channel

- Most clients who completed equalities monitoring forms had applied online (92%), compared to 7% by phone and 1% by mail. The percentage applying online was 88% or higher for all benefits, with the exception of Funeral Support Payment. Clients applying for Funeral Support Payment were more likely to use phone applications (35%), and less likely to use online applications (62%). Overall, these patterns are similar to official statistics on applications received for each benefit.

Chart 20: Clients by application channel

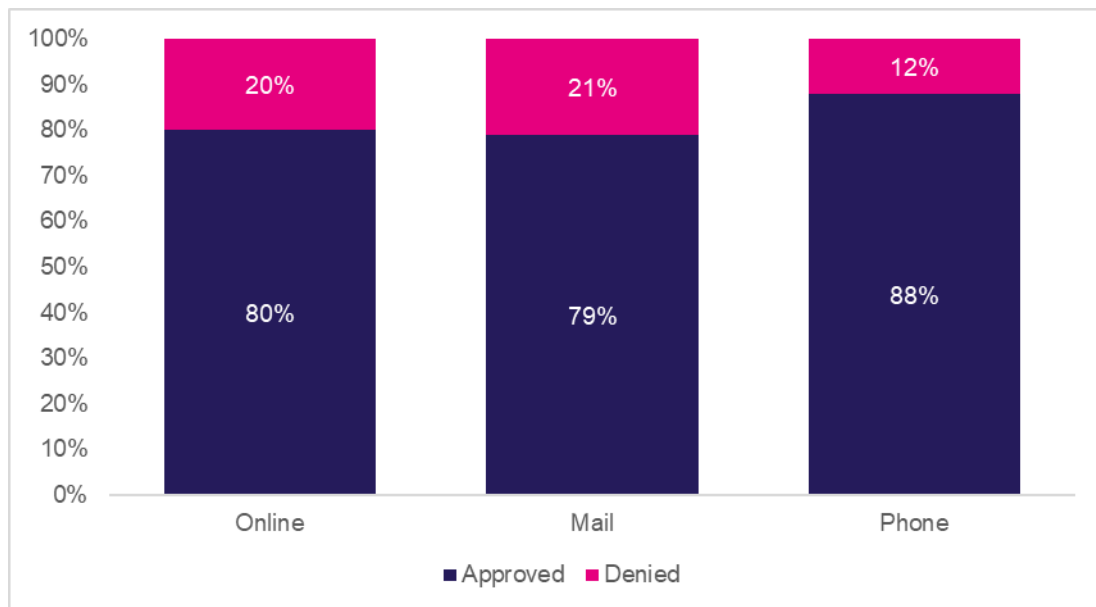


- Applications received by phone were more likely to be approved (88%) than Online applications (80%) or Mail (79%). This applied across most benefits with some exceptions. Approval rates for Scottish Child Payment were similar for Online (90%) and Phone (92%) applications. For Young Carer Grant, Phone had the highest approval rate (86%) compared to Online (76%). For Child

¹⁶ Population Estimates of Scottish Island Regions (2011 Data Zone based) (Last updated: July 2022, National Records of Scotland)

Disability Payment, Mail applications also had the highest approval rate (96%) compared to Online (91%) and Phone (87%).

Chart 21: Application outcome by channel – all applications



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. The following table shows the launch dates of benefits currently delivered by Social Security Scotland that are included within this publication and the breakdown of applications received during June 2021 to March 2023 based on official statistics published at

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>:

Benefit and link to latest statistics	Launch	Applications Jun-21 to Mar-23
Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods		159,730
Pregnancy and Baby Payment	10-Dec-18	
Early Learning Payment	29-Apr-19	
School Age Payment	3-Jun-19	
Best Start Foods	12-Aug-19	
Funeral Support Payment	16-Sep-19	16,275
Young Carer Grant	21-Oct-19	7,870
Job Start Payment	17-Aug-20	8,115
Scottish Child Payment	9-Nov-20 (applications opened) 15-Feb-21 (official launch) 14-Nov-22 (extended eligibility)	205,825
Child Disability Payment	26-Jul-21 (pilot) 22-Nov-21 (national)	30,975 (24,225*)
Adult Disability Payment	21-Mar-22 (pilot) 29-Aug-22 (national)	86,455 (48,620*)

*Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment applications are split into Part 1 and Part 2. Figures in brackets refer to the number of Part 2 applications.

All clients submitting an application form for a benefit delivered by Social Security Scotland are asked to complete an Equality Monitoring and Feedback form along with the application. All benefits application forms have one part, except for Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment, which are in two parts. Once a client has filled out part 1 they have six or eight weeks, respectively, to complete part 2 of the application, which includes the questions on equalities characteristics. For the purpose of this publication, date of part 1 of applications for disability benefits was used as an inclusion criterion.

Adult Disability Payment applications can be completed by a person on behalf of the client. In this publication, the person completing the form on behalf of the client will be referred to as the 'applicant'. In such cases, two Equality Monitoring forms are completed to gather information about the applicant and about the client.

Social Security Scotland also deliver further benefits of Carer's Allowance Supplement, Child Winter Heating Payment and Winter Heating Payment. These payments are automatic for the majority of clients and equalities information is not captured within the automated processes so these benefits are not included in this report. Also, some clients of the disability benefits have been transferred from equivalent benefits which were previously administered by Department for Work and Pensions (Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment). Social Security Scotland does not hold equalities data on these transferred clients.

Clients can apply to Social Security Scotland directly through different channels. These include being able to apply online, by telephone, by mail or through support from local delivery. The only exception to this is for the disability benefits, where telephone cannot be used to return part 2 of the form, which contains the equalities questions.

Purpose of analysis

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. For all benefits included in this report, the information used relates to the applicant because the outcome of the application would relate to their ability to complete the form.

We analyse the equalities data by outcome of application to assess if there is any variation. Applications will either be 'approved' if clients are found to be eligible, or 'denied' if clients are found not to be eligible. Possible reasons for denials vary between different benefits, but include factors such as not being resident in Scotland, not being in receipt of necessary qualifying benefits, or not applying during specified windows of time. Analysis of outcome data highlights groups of clients that are being found to be ineligible, which in turn suggests areas where Social Security Scotland can improve the information available around eligibility. 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 2022.](#)

Storage of data

Equalities information is collected and stored separately to the outcome of a client's application. Clients applying online complete a mandatory Equality Monitoring and Feedback form prior to submitting their application. Once submitted, application data is stored in a dataset on Social Security Scotland case management system, separately from application information.

Clients applying by telephone are asked the equalities questions by the client advisor. Since November 2021, this data has been collected in the case management system, and stored separately to the application outcome, in the same way as equalities data for online applications. Prior to that the telephone equalities data was collected in a separate online tool called Questback¹⁷. For the disability benefits, where a telephone application is received under Special Rules for Terminal Illness, the data continues to be collected through Questback. For paper applications and those completed via local

¹⁷ An online platform used for secure data collection <https://www.questback.com/uk/>

delivery, equalities data is collected and stored in Questback, separate to the application information.

Pseudoanonymised¹⁸ equalities responses and application data are later linked together for statistical analysis. Equalities data stored in Questback are linked to application outcome using postcode and date of birth, and equalities data that is input directly into the case management system are linked to application outcome using a unique identifier.

Response rates

All online applications have an Equality Monitoring and Feedback form because clients cannot submit their application until it is completed. From November 2021, this is also the case for telephone applications, except for disability benefits where telephone cannot be used to return part 2 of the form, which contains the equalities questions. The response rate for telephone applications received prior to November 2021, along with mail and local delivery applications, is lower because of the different process for collecting data, as described above. However, these channels account for relatively few applications for all benefits, with the exception of Funeral Support Payment, as shown in Table 12.

The form includes a 'Prefer not to say' option for all questions for clients who wish not to disclose this information. The number of clients choosing 'Prefer not to say' varied by question and by benefit. However, 'Prefer not to say' responses have increased for all equality characteristics since the last publication. This may be due to a change in process for telephone applications, where client advisors are now unable to submit an application form without first completing an equalities form, even when a response has not been provided by the client. The increase in 'Prefer not to say' responses is therefore likely to reflect an increase in response rates, since client advisors will now provide a 'Prefer not to say' response where previously an equalities form would not have been completed.

The question with the highest proportion of 'Prefer not to say' was "Physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more" (11%). For all questions, a higher proportion of Funeral Support Payment clients chose 'Prefer not to say' compared to other benefits. This may be related to more Funeral Support Payment clients applying by telephone compared to other benefits.

Data cleaning, de-duplication and linkage to application data steps

Cleaning equalities data collected in Questback

Mail, telephone and local delivery Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms that are collected through Questback are entered manually and can therefore contain some

¹⁸ Client names are replaced with reference numbers so that analysts cannot identify individuals, but can still link monitoring forms with application details. Full addresses are also removed and only postcode retained.

typographical errors. For some clients, postcode and date of birth data were entered in incorrect columns. This has been corrected manually.

Missing identification information

Equalities received through mail, telephone or local delivery and stored in Questback were linked to application outcome data using the postcode and date of birth. For Adult Disability Payment applications received via mail there was no data on postcode and date of birth of the applicant therefore the client's data was used to link to the application outcome data. For all equalities data collected via Questback, if the date of birth and/or postcode were missing, records were removed from the dataset as there was no other variable that could identify them in the application outcome information. This accounted for 9% of the original Questback telephone responses, 5% of the original Questback mail responses, and 4% of the original Questback local delivery responses. All equalities responses which were input directly into the case management system included a unique application reference, so no responses were removed.

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),
- clients might apply for more than one of the different payments on different dates
- clients might make a joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment.

Clients complete an Equality Monitoring and Feedback form each time they apply, which means there can be duplicates for the same client in the equalities dataset. These were de-duplicated so that analysis was carried out based on the latest outcome for each client.

The equalities data collected in Questback 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 less than 1% of Questback mail, 2% of Questback telephone, and less than 1% of Questback local delivery responses that had postcode and date of birth information. For Adult Disability Payment mail applications that were

completed by applicants, the applicant's postcode and date of birth were not available, so the client's postcode and date of birth were used to identify duplicates.

The equalities data which was input directly into the case management system did not contain any information unique to the client or applicant, therefore duplicates could only be determined after linking to the application data (see section below), at which point the data was de-duplicated by National Insurance Number. National Insurance Number is 'hashed', or turned into a string of letters and numbers which analysts cannot use to identify people, but can be used as a unique anonymous reference for clients.

Linkage to application data and outcome information

Questback equalities information was linked to application data using postcode and date of birth. Equalities information that was input straight into the case management system was linked to application data using a unique application reference.

For Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment we do not hold information on the channel that was used to complete the equalities form. It is therefore not possible to identify the proportion of equalities data that were matched with the application data by channel for these benefits. For the remaining benefits, 51% of mail and 74% of Questback telephone equalities were matched to application data. Nearly all (over 99%) of the equalities data that were input straight into the case management system were matched with application data.

Duplicate application data

Where at least one of the duplicate applications had an application outcome date, the most recent date was retained. This effectively excluded a large number of pending cases from the dataset. Where there were multiple applications for the same client with the same outcome date, one record was randomly kept. Where all the duplicate applications for a client had a missing application outcome date (e.g. because all duplicate applications were pending, or had missing application dates), only one record was retained. De-duplication of application data resulted in the removal of linked records for 27% of Questback mail, 18% of Questback telephony, 0% of Questback local delivery and 43% of data that was input straight into the case management system (most of which was from online applications).

There are limitations with this de-duplication method, for example, a client could have three applications recorded and it could be that the most recent outcome is more likely to be denied as the client is already in receipt of the benefit. Alternatively, the most recent outcome could be more likely to be approved if a client has better understood how to complete the form following on from a denial. However, de-duplication has been used so that the data represents the overall breakdown of Social Security Scotland applicants, rather than the breakdown of all applications received or all outcomes.

Single and joint application outcomes

Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment, Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment 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 vice versa, 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.

Scottish Child Payment can be applied for as a single benefit, or jointly with Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. Any joint applications for Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant were split into two separate parts, and treated as two applications during the process above.

Data quality

Approval rate

Approval rate figures are calculated as the proportion of applications approved out of the total approved or denied. In this publication, figures are based on the date of application rather than the date of decision.

Approval rate figures differ slightly from those in benefit specific publications (see links at the start of this section). The main reason for this is that the approval rate in this publication excludes withdrawn applications, whereas benefit specific publications include them. This is a particular issue for Funeral Support Payment, where around 10% or more of applications are withdrawn each month.

Additionally, the approval rate in this publication is calculated for applications where equalities forms were completed, which may be more likely to be approved. Finally, in benefit specific publications approval rate is calculated from decisions taken within a time period, whereas here they are calculated for applications received within the same time period. This is less likely to have an effect on approval rates as they are relatively stable over time.

Weighting of equalities data by benefit

After cleaning and de-duplication, a larger proportion of Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms were related to applications for Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods than other benefits (Table 13). The equalities characteristics of these clients therefore have a greater impact on overall figures for Social Security Scotland than the equalities characteristics of other clients.

Backdating

To take into account backdating, delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, a data cut to 29 May 2023 has been used for all equalities data and for application data for all benefits. Later data cuts may include additional retrospective changes to application data, including corrections in the case management system, and changes that have resulted from re-determinations and appeals.

‘Unknown’ equalities information

Some clients did not answer some equalities questions, either choosing ‘Prefer not to say’ (all channels) or missing a question entirely (mail, telephone and local delivery). Where clients missed a question, they are counted in the ‘Unknown’ category in publication tables 1-7. This accounts for 1% or less of clients in each table.

‘Unknowns’ in age tables are the result of clients with missing date of birth or errors in date of birth.

‘Unknowns’ in geography tables are the result of missing postcode, errors in postcode, or because the postcode has recently been introduced and is not yet included on the lookup file used to match to higher geographies.

Future developments

We previously published supplementary intersectional tables covering the period June to November 2020 at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-client-diversity-and-equalities-analysis-to-november-2020/>. Due to the resource required to produce these intersectional analysis tables we update them less frequently than the main analysis.

Estimates of take-up for different benefits are produced by Scottish Government. The Scottish Government’s latest estimates of take-up of devolved benefits in the [Take-up rates for Scottish Benefits](#), which was published in October 2022.

We are seeking users’ views on the content of this publication to ensure it best meets their requirements. If you have any comments or suggestions that you would like to provide us please email MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot.

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/>.

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The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through www.statistics.gov.scot

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

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/statistics/social-security-scotland-statistics-publications

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