

Scotland's Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 - Large Print



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Ministerial Foreword

As a strong advocate of the use of data to improve the quality and inclusivity of Scotland's services, strengthening the equality evidence base to ensure that services deliver for everyone is vital. The Scottish Government has a longstanding commitment to inclusive, evidence-based policy.

Scotland's Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 builds on our ambitious and wide-ranging Equality Data Improvement Programme (EDIP), which began in April 2021. Through the EDIP, we worked closely with partner organisations to undertake a range of actions to share good practice and make improvements to priority datasets.

This new strategy aims to deliver better equality evidence that will, in turn, enable policymakers to develop sound and inclusive policies to improve service delivery and improve outcomes across Scotland. Good quality equality evidence is essential to informing our understanding of what is happening in the lives of all of Scotland's people and in implementing effective solutions to tackle structural inequality, helping the people who need it most.

The Scottish Government and our partners already publish a wide range of robust equality evidence, and this new Equality Evidence Strategy adds to that. It

aims to improve and expand data already collected, explore new and innovative ways of improving Scotland's evidence base, and importantly has the primary aim of improving the lives of everyone in Scotland.



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Minister for Equalities and Older People

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1. Purpose

Robust and comprehensive equality evidence is vital for the design and delivery of inclusive policies and services. The people of Scotland have experienced unprecedented challenges since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. The pandemic exposed deep-rooted structural inequality in our society and exacerbated the disproportionate impact on individuals and groups who already experience disadvantage. Going forward, there is a clear collective need and a desire for better equality evidence.

This document presents Scotland's new Equality Evidence Strategy, covering the period March 2023 to December 2025. It sets out a range of actions to strengthen Scotland's equality evidence base that will be carried out by the end of 2025, along with a refreshed vision and direction that have been developed based on stakeholder views and feedback.

The strategy aims to enable policymakers to develop sound and inclusive evidence-based policies to improve service delivery and outcomes for Scotland's people. The publication of this strategy marks the completion of the first phase of the [Equality Data Improvement Programme \(EDIP\)](#), which laid the groundwork in strengthening Scotland's equality

evidence base following the continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The launch of this strategy marks the commencement of the second phase of the EDIP, which will be focused on implementing the actions set out in this strategy, alongside continued efforts to build capacity and share good practice.

Responsibility for successfully implementing the strategy has to be shared across a range of organisations and interests, and across all Scottish Government ministerial portfolios. The Scottish Government will support the collection and use of information by the public sector, academic institutions, the third sector and from within communities themselves. Certain listed authorities have responsibilities under the [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) and it is incumbent on all organisations to consider their role in funding, designing or undertaking data collection, research and analysis to fill equality evidence gaps. The Scottish Government will continue to learn from and work collaboratively with our partners to improve the equality evidence base for Scotland.

2. Vision

Below is our vision for equality evidence improvement for the lifespan of this strategy, from 2023 to the end of 2025. The vision was developed based on the range of stakeholder views and feedback gathered through our consultation and events.

To tackle structural and intersectional inequality of outcomes, Scotland's equality evidence base will become more accessible, wide-ranging and robust. A stronger evidence base will enable the development and delivery of sound, inclusive policies and services and enable the measurement of improvements in the lives of all of Scotland's people.

Vision principles

Our vision is made up of three core principles, which describe how the Scottish Government and its partners will achieve this vision together. Within the Scottish Government, these principles will be realised through the implementation of a range of improvement actions (see [Actions to Improve the Equality Evidence Base](#)) and the success of delivering on the vision will be assessed against these principles.

Principle 1: More robust and comprehensive data and evidence will be gathered on the intersecting¹ characteristics of people in Scotland across a range of outcomes.

The Scottish Government and its partners already publish a range of equality evidence, but significant gaps remain. Throughout the period of this strategy, organisations will be supported to gather and publish new robust intersectional equality evidence in accordance with best practice. Actions will also be undertaken to strengthen the equality evidence base through the publication of more robust and comprehensive equality data from existing datasets. Additional research and data gathering will be carried out where evidence broken down by equality variables cannot be produced from existing datasets. The evidence collected will be proportional and fit for purpose, with priorities guided by user need.

Principle 2: Equality evidence will be made more easily accessible so users will be able to access what they need, when they need it.

There already exists a wide range of robust equality evidence. It is important to make best use of existing equality evidence in order to ensure that the needs and lived experiences of groups are taken into

¹ The definition of intersectionality is discussed in the [glossary of key terms used in this strategy](#).

account in a fast-paced, resource constrained landscape. This ensures that efforts are not duplicated and groups are not overburdened.

Furthermore, there are a range of ‘users’ of equality evidence with differing needs, and purposes of accessing evidence and, as such, differing preferences in how evidence should be made available. This includes (but is not limited to): analysts; policymakers; project managers; academics and data experts; those involved in service design and delivery; campaigners; and those with lived experience of inequality.

Over the course of this strategy, a range of activities will be undertaken to improve access to equality evidence in a range of formats to meet known user needs. Improvement will be informed by known barriers to equality evidence access, including those communicated to the Scottish Government through [recent consultation and engagement events](#).

Throughout the lifespan of this strategy, work will be undertaken to further consult with users as improvements are implemented to monitor impacts on equality evidence access. The [Equality Evidence Finder](#) platform will be developed and further promoted to ensure that users, and potential users, have awareness of the site as a first port of call for identifying available equality evidence in Scotland.

Principle 3: Good practice will be shared and promoted to support increased confidence and competence in the production and use of robust equality evidence.

A key aim of the first phase of the [EDIP](#) was to share learning and good practice in the collection, analysis and presentation of equality evidence. The delivery of workshops and seminars and the sharing of good practice examples will continue through the lifespan of this strategy to build confidence and competence among data analysts and users. Recently updated [guidance on equality data question wording and response options](#) will be promoted to ensure it is used consistently by collectors of equality evidence.

Ensuring that equality evidence is used to inform the design and delivery of policies and services at the point of critical decision making is key to developing effective solutions to tackle structural inequality. Work will be undertaken to improve the understanding of the role of evidence on the nine protected characteristics in fulfilling organisations' obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (see the [Legal obligations section of this strategy](#) for details), alongside the sharing of examples of how equality evidence has been used effectively to improve service outcomes.

3. Background

What is equality evidence?

Where ‘equality evidence’ is used in this strategy, it refers to statistics and research across a range of characteristics, including “intersections” between characteristics (such as younger women; minority ethnic disabled people; older trans people etc.).

The equality evidence covered by this strategy goes beyond the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 to cover identity characteristics more generally.²

² The characteristics covered in this strategy are: sex, gender, age, disability, race (including ethnicity), gender reassignment (including trans status), sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.



The Scottish Government and its partners already collect and publish a range of quantitative and qualitative equality evidence. This includes evidence from the Census, population surveys, administrative datasets and social research. The Scottish Government also regularly identifies and uses equality evidence produced externally by the wider public sector, academic institutions and the third sector to ensure the latest evidence is used to inform our work.

Given that the purpose of equality evidence is often to identify differences among and between relatively small groups of the population, some datasets have more practical utility than others. The most

comprehensive source of equality statistics at national and local levels can be obtained from [Scotland's Census](#) as everyone in the population is required to submit a return, thus enabling the collection of a range of equality data from the vast majority of the population (although responding to some of the equality questions is voluntary). There are also strong subject-specific administrative data sources, such as data gathered through the delivery of education, health, transport and justice services. In most cases these data sources can be analysed at more localised geographic areas, as well as being available for whole Scotland statistics.

It is important to note that not all datasets are owned and managed by the Scottish Government. Some key datasets used by the Scottish Government are, for example, owned by departments of the UK Government, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs).

At a national level, the Scottish population surveys (Health; Household; Crime and Justice) all have a common core that allows their samples to be combined for a [limited number of questions](#) – this includes the equality questions. In addition, the Annual Population Survey (APS) provides equality breakdowns of key labour market statistics. Equality-focused sample boosts could help population surveys to provide more robust data for smaller sub-groups in

the population, although this practice has to be weighed against the robustness of a purely random sample and the significant cost implications of a boost. The Scottish Government already contributes to sample boosts of some surveys led by the UK Government and the ONS to ensure that there is sufficient data collected in Scotland to allow for the robust disaggregation of the Scottish sample by person and/or household characteristics.

Alongside statistical data, qualitative evidence forms a critical part of the equality evidence base. The Scottish Government and its partners regularly commission and support research to fill identified quantitative and qualitative evidence gaps across a range of domains, including undertaking recurring research to examine changes over time. Qualitative research allows for the collection of rich and detailed evidence into the lived experiences of groups with shared and intersecting characteristics. Alongside providing valuable insights to complement available statistics, qualitative evidence may be particularly useful in informing understanding of the experiences of smaller groups of people for whom robust statistics cannot be produced from population-level datasets.

The Scottish Government is increasingly using participatory methods to actively involve people with lived experience (see [Participation and engagement](#)

for details). Public involvement can be a strong way to ensure that marginalised communities, such as those with intersecting characteristics, are actively engaged in the whole research process from conceptualisation through to implementation and dissemination. Involving people with lived experience could take multiple forms, including co-production, panels, appointment of public advisors and user-led research. It is important to note, however, that when public involvement is attempted without equity between researcher and those with lived experience there is a risk that it could be seen as tokenistic and could perpetuate any pre-existing power imbalances.

The intersectional approach

Strengthening the equality evidence base is not just about filling data gaps via statistical collections, but also about understanding how an individual's experience of structural inequality arises across different contexts and designing research in ways that take into account inequality in power and privilege.

The term 'intersectionality' has its roots in Black feminist activism, and was originally coined by American critical legal race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw used the term intersectionality to refer to the double discrimination of racism and sexism faced by Black women, critiquing the "single-axis framework that is dominant in antidiscrimination law, feminist theory and anti-racist

politics” for its focus on the experiences of the most privileged members of subordinate groups.³ Specifically, Crenshaw highlighted legal cases wherein women were required to choose between bringing a claim of racism or sexism and could not say that they had been discriminated against due to the combined effects of race and sex. Since its original usage, the term ‘intersectionality’ has been increasingly used in reference to combinations between a range of characteristics, in addition to race and sex, such as disability, sexual orientation, occupation and socio-economic disadvantage, and wider life experiences.

If applied correctly, the ‘intersectional approach’ has the potential to advance efforts to identify, understand and tackle structural inequality in a given context in a way that focuses on the lived experience of people most affected. For example, intersectionality helps us to understand how people experience services, such as education and healthcare, differently as a result of their identity and unequal power dynamics.

Understanding these differences helps us to develop more effective and inclusive policies and services.

³ Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams (1989)

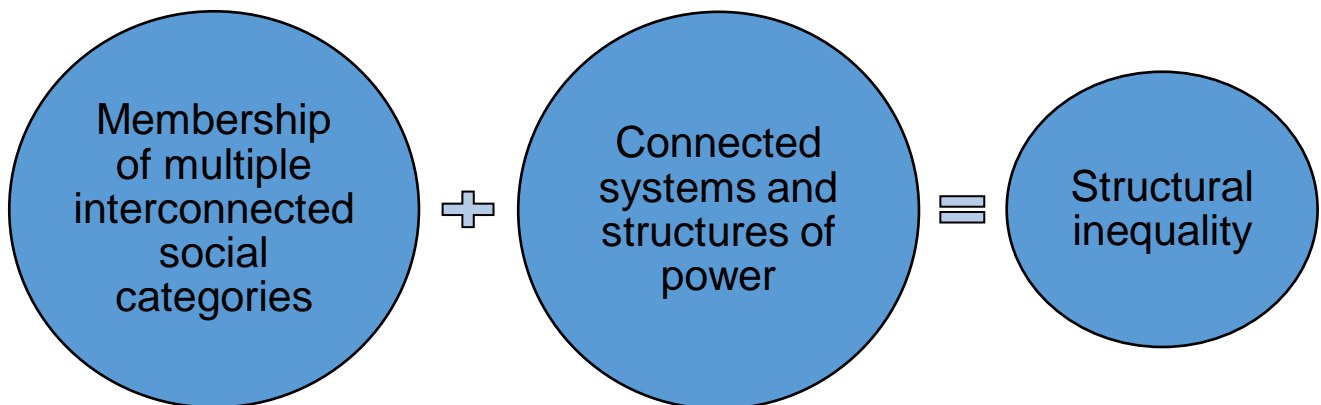
“Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989:139–67, p. 149

An [evidence synthesis](#) undertaken by the Scottish Government proposed the following as the foundational elements of intersectionality (represented visually in Figure 1 below):

- a recognition that people are shaped by their simultaneous membership of multiple interconnected social categories (including the characteristics covered by this strategy)
- the interaction between multiple social categories occurs within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g. laws, policies, governments). A recognition of inequality of power is key to intersectionality
- structural inequalities, reflected as relative disadvantage and privilege, are the outcomes of the interaction between social categories, power relations and contexts. As a result, an individual's experiences of inequality can be chronic or transitory, creating unique lived experiences

It should be noted that it is the interaction or “intersection” of two or more characteristics with power dynamics within a given context that gives rise to inequality, not just the presence of intersecting characteristics on their own.

Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the foundational elements of intersectionality.



The Scottish Government proposed five key considerations that policymakers and analysts should take into account when taking an intersectional approach:

1. contextualisation: structural inequality should be understood within existing systems and structures of power
2. reflexivity: policymakers and analysts should consider how their own power and lived experiences impacts on their ability to make decisions
3. public involvement: participatory approaches ensure that those with lived experience have a

central voice in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies

4. reaching marginalised groups: reducing barriers to participation is a critical consideration in the design and delivery of effective research

5. innovative statistical approaches: analysts should consider the full range of options for carrying out robust intersectional data analysis to make the best use of existing datasets

The role of equality evidence in the policy process

Equality evidence is critical to improving understanding of if and how services and outcomes differ. As shown in Figure 2, below, it is a cyclical process with several stages:

1. identifying the purpose or need for evidence collection

2. designing an approach to collect that evidence

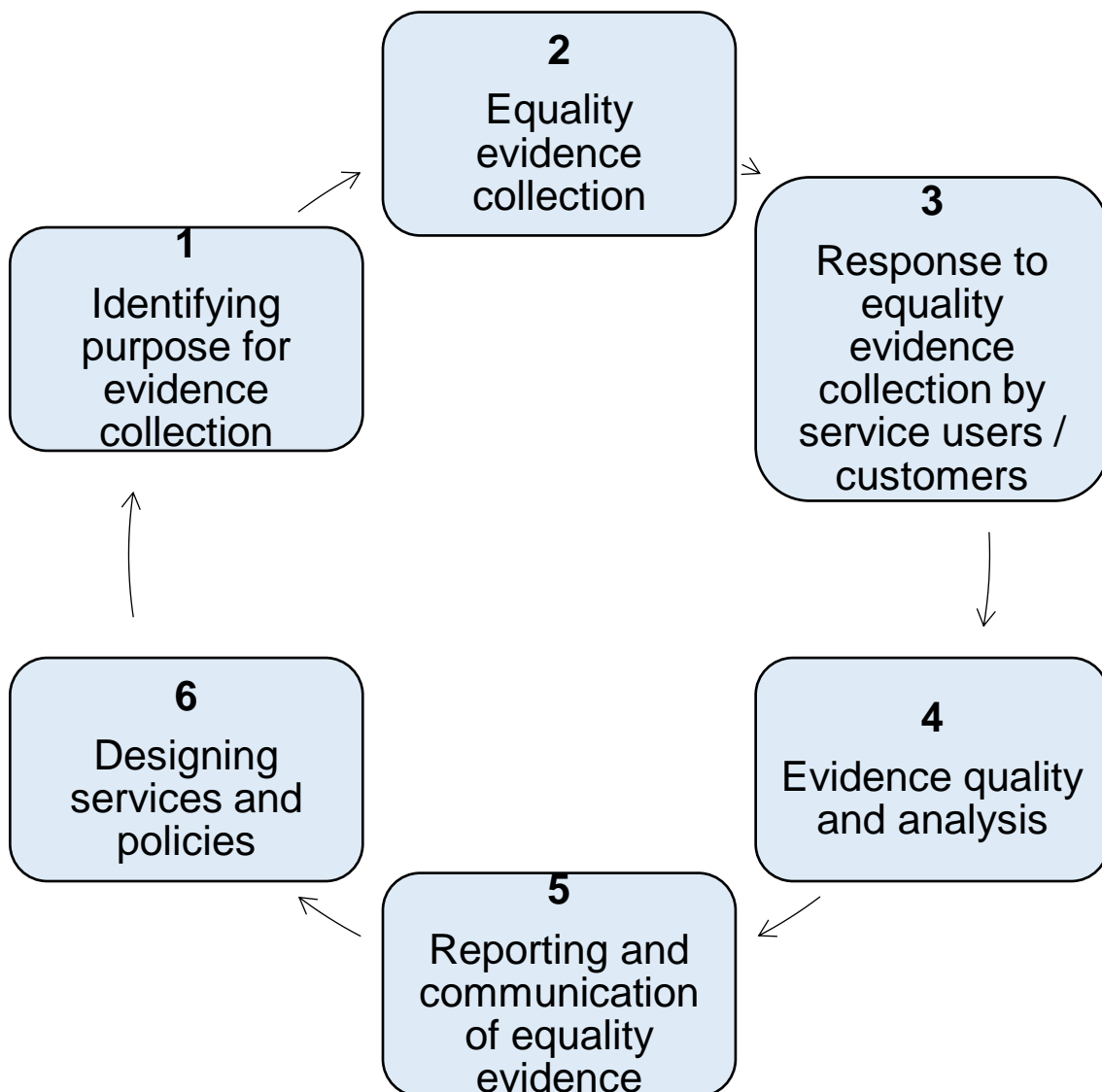
3. removing barriers to encourage a good response

4. ensuring the evidence is high quality and utilised as fully as possible

5. reporting according to useful categories that consider intersectionality and are relevant to services and outcomes

6. identifying the impact on outcomes and services

Figure 2: The cyclical process of using equality evidence in policy design and delivery.



There is always a need to be clear on what evidence is required – and why – to ensure that the right evidence is collected, using the most appropriate methods, to meet the specified purpose, and to balance costs and benefits.

It is important to ensure that existing evidence is used before deciding to collect new evidence. There already exists a range of equality evidence collected and published for a number of groups and outcomes in Scotland. The existing evidence base must be thoroughly reviewed to identify whether existing evidence can be adapted or utilised to help understand the policy or service. Making best use of available evidence means that groups are not overburdened or asked to answer the same questions multiple times, and that available resources are maximised. When considering the purpose of equality evidence collection, it is key to consider the likely limitations of making decisions based on the available evidence base.

There will be instances where the existing equality evidence base is insufficient to inform decision making. Where new evidence is required, it is usually much easier and cheaper to collect equality data if it is built into data collection systems from the start. As a new service is developed, the related IT system should be established to collect relevant equality evidence and, as services are redesigned to respond to equality data reporting, the data collection itself should be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Opportunities to involve and collaborate with groups most affected, particularly those with lived experience, must be sought throughout this process.

When reporting and communicating equality evidence, it is important to do so ethically in ways that ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants, that build trust and do not stigmatise groups for any inequality of outcomes identified (see [Reporting and communication of equality evidence](#)). There should always be clear communication with the groups affected to set out the findings and how the evidence has been used to inform policy design (see [Trust](#)).

How does the Scottish Government use equality evidence?

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that equality, human rights and children's rights are embedded into everything we do. In so doing, the Scottish Government uses equality evidence for a wide variety of purposes. This includes producing official or national statistics, updating National Performance Framework (NPF) indicators and commissioning social research to inform ministerial decision making around policy directions and budget allocations. Some of these purposes are detailed further below. The availability of robust equality evidence supports the Scottish Government in its ambition to develop and deliver inclusive, evidence-based policies and services.

Legal obligations

In order to meet the legal duties set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the Scottish Specific

Duties (SSDs) and to deliver good, fair outcomes, policymakers and practitioners need robust evidence on the nine protected characteristics (see Box 1). This data enables them to understand whether their services, policies and strategies are having differential impacts in terms of access, satisfaction and outcomes. This is as true for a locally delivered policy, strategy or service as it is for indicators in the NPF.

Box 1: The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The PSED was introduced by the Equality Act 2010 and came into force on 5 April 2011. The Equality Act applies in Scotland, England and Wales and covers age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership⁴ and sexual orientation. The PSED applies to specified public bodies and other bodies when carrying out public functions, who must have due regard to the need to:

1. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

⁴ Marriage and civil partnership are not a relevant protected characteristic for the purposes of limbs 2 and 3 of the PSED.

3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

In 2012, Scottish Ministers made regulations that placed specific duties on Scottish public bodies to help them meet the requirements of the PSED, known as the Scottish Specific Duties (SSDs). The SSDs are intended to provide a supporting framework to enable certain public authorities to better perform their PSED, through enhanced data collection and evaluation, and greater transparency and accountability. In this way, the specific duties help authorities to better perform their duty to have 'due regard' to all 3 needs of the PSED, and to mainstream equality in their everyday work.

Data protection law does not prevent specified public bodies and other bodies from processing personal data for the purposes of the general or specific duties, and should not be considered a barrier to equality evidence collection.⁵ However, it is important that any processing of personal data is in compliance with data protection legislation.

The Scottish Government is currently reviewing the effectiveness of the PSED in Scotland, and recently

⁵ [EHRC guidance on the public sector equality duty and data protection](#)

ran [a consultation](#) on proposals. The results of the consultation are available in [an analysis report](#). Through the [engagement carried out to date](#), substantial feedback has been received on the current implementation of the PSED, including that impact assessments are often carried out too late in the policy development process. Evidence should be used to inform a course of action, rather than just used to assess potential impacts once a policy direction has already been decided on. Furthermore, impact assessments can sometimes use little evidence or involve limited engagement with people with lived experience. The Scottish Government will seek to address the issues identified in our engagement to-date in the next stages of the review.

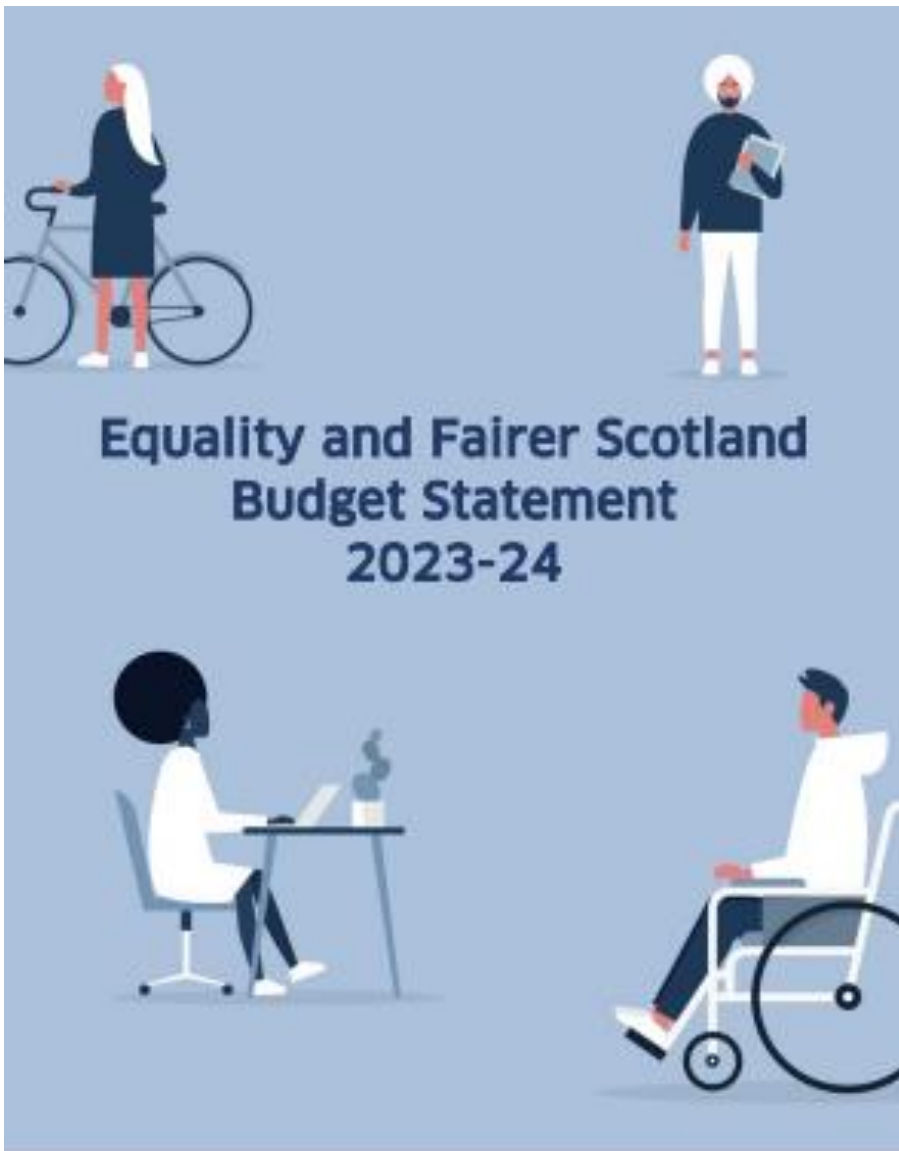
The SSDs requires listed authorities, including the Scottish Government, to assess and review the equality impact of their policies and practices. In making the assessment, listed authorities must consider relevant evidence relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and take account of the results when developing the policy. In practice, this requirement has given rise to the carrying out and publication of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) that help to identify and guard against potential risks of discrimination and human rights breaches.

EQIAs are of critical importance in tackling inequality and developing better policy and, in order to carry one out, a policymaker should gather evidence to consider the needs of different groups or individuals in advance of determining a proposed approach and, once a course of action is decided on, the potential impacts it will have across the nine protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010. Impact assessments should gather and use evidence to address all three needs of the PSED (see Box 1). The evidence could take the form of existing evidence, for example official or national statistics, or a policymaker may gather new evidence on the likely impact of a proposed policy on people with protected characteristics. In practice, most EQIAs usually summarise the information available to a policymaker when an action is proposed but will not usually create new evidence. Thus, ensuring that robust and comprehensive evidence on the nine protected characteristics is readily available to meet current and anticipated user needs is essential to the production of effective EQIAs.

Equality budgeting

The Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement (EFSBS) is a key document published alongside the main Scottish Budget every year. The EFSBS assesses how budget decisions impact people with protected characteristics and those experiencing

socio-economic disadvantage, supporting the Scottish Government to meet its legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010, the PSED and the Fairer Scotland Duty. The EFSBS includes a detailed analysis of the impact of each ministerial portfolio's spend against each protected characteristic and socio-economic disadvantage. The EFSBS relies on the availability of robust up-to-date evidence to identify what is known about existing inequality of outcomes and what contribution the portfolio's budget makes to addressing these issues.



National Performance Framework (NPF)

Scotland's [National Performance Framework \(NPF\)](#) is Scotland's wellbeing framework, setting out a vision for national wellbeing in Scotland. In order to achieve this purpose, it sets out 'National Outcomes' which describe the kind of Scotland we are working towards. These National Outcomes are that we:

- grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential
- live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- are creative and their vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely
- have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- value, enjoy, protect and enhance their environment
- have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- are healthy and active
- respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally
- tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally



Progress against these outcomes is measured using ‘National Indicators’. Each of the 11 National Outcomes have a set of indicators that underpin them and can be used to help understand if progress is being made. There are 81 indicators in total.

Robust equality data allows us to analyse the indicators by protected characteristics, which helps us to understand if different groups of people in Scotland – such as women, disabled people, older people – are achieving the National Outcomes or not. Available

equality breakdowns for the NPF indicators are presented on the Scottish Government's [Equality Evidence Finder](#). In addition, the Scottish Government's [Wellbeing Economy Toolkit](#), designed to help local and regional decision makers solve problems in ways that support their area's transition to a wellbeing economy, was published in November 2022. The toolkit included useful sources of data and evidence that could help policymakers further explore evidence of place-based wellbeing outcomes, drivers, and the indicators in the local-level Wellbeing Economy Monitor.

4. Context

[Scotland's previous Equality Evidence Strategy](#) was launched in 2017 and important improvements were made to Scotland's equality evidence base throughout its life span (2017-2021). In late 2019, an interim [progress report](#) was published that detailed key improvements to the evidence base over the strategy's first two years.

The past few years, particularly during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, have seen extensive activity focused on the equality evidence base. This includes the convening of working groups to steer and inform the work of the Scottish Government and the undertaking of a range of projects to fill priority gaps and identify and promote good practice. This section summarises key developments undertaken and ongoing activity to set the scene in which this strategy has been developed. Annex A provides a more detailed overview of recent progress and the current equality evidence base.

Equality Data Improvement Programme (EDIP)

Since the launch of Scotland's previous Equality Evidence Strategy in 2017, progress has been made by the Scottish Government to strengthen the equality evidence base. This complements improvement work undertaken across the wider public sector.

Following the conclusion of the [Equality Evidence Strategy 2017-2021](#), the EDIP was launched in April 2021 to lay the groundwork for the development of an ambitious cross-professional data improvement plan for the future. The EDIP built on the work being taken forward by individual analytical areas to produce evidence, guidance, best practice and enhanced networks to improve equality data in the short term. The first phase of the EDIP was governed by a [project board](#), co-chaired by Scotland's Chief Social Researcher and Chief Statistician, which included representatives from a range of external public sector bodies with a key interest in mainstreaming equalities. Throughout the first phase of the EDIP, progress was made to strengthen Scotland's equality evidence base over a number of projects (see Annex A). Several EDIP projects that were taken forward by the Scottish Government sit within the [Inclusive Data Taskforce Implementation Plan](#), which sets out how data inclusivity will be improved across the UK statistical system.

Many areas of the public sector, including different parts of the Scottish Government, are already progressing work to improve their equality evidence. It is worth reinforcing that often the most effective equality data improvement work will be achieved where policymakers, analysts and stakeholders focus on specific subject domains and characteristics

(including the protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act 2010). This work allows active prioritisation of the key service outcome issues that can, in turn, help drive and prioritise the data to be collected.

It is important that the EDIP and this strategy be seen as part of a broader programme of mainstreaming equality and human rights activity within the public sector in Scotland. There needs to be good communication between data producers, policymakers and practitioners to ensure that improved data leads to improved outcomes. Service improvement can occur by motivated, trained and knowledgeable staff intervening and seeking best practice at any of the different points in the policy development process.

Equality mainstreaming

The Scottish Government seeks to promote and advance equality in all that it does, building on policies and legislation already in place.

The Scottish Government is currently developing an equality and human rights mainstreaming strategy. After engagement with both internal and external stakeholders during 2022, a draft framework has been prepared with four main sections: Strengthening Leadership and Accountability; Improving Policy Coherence; Building and Using Evidence and Experience; Capability, Capacity and Culture.

Further engagement with stakeholders will be carried out in 2023 to further develop the mainstreaming strategy. As we finalise this strategy, we are currently working on tools and protocols to support other organisations and the Scottish Government, to further strengthen mainstreaming activity including links to guidance, proformas and best practice examples. These are designed to deliver the aims and objectives of the mainstreaming strategy, and will be shared as part of the engagement with stakeholders which we are aiming to commence in spring 2023.

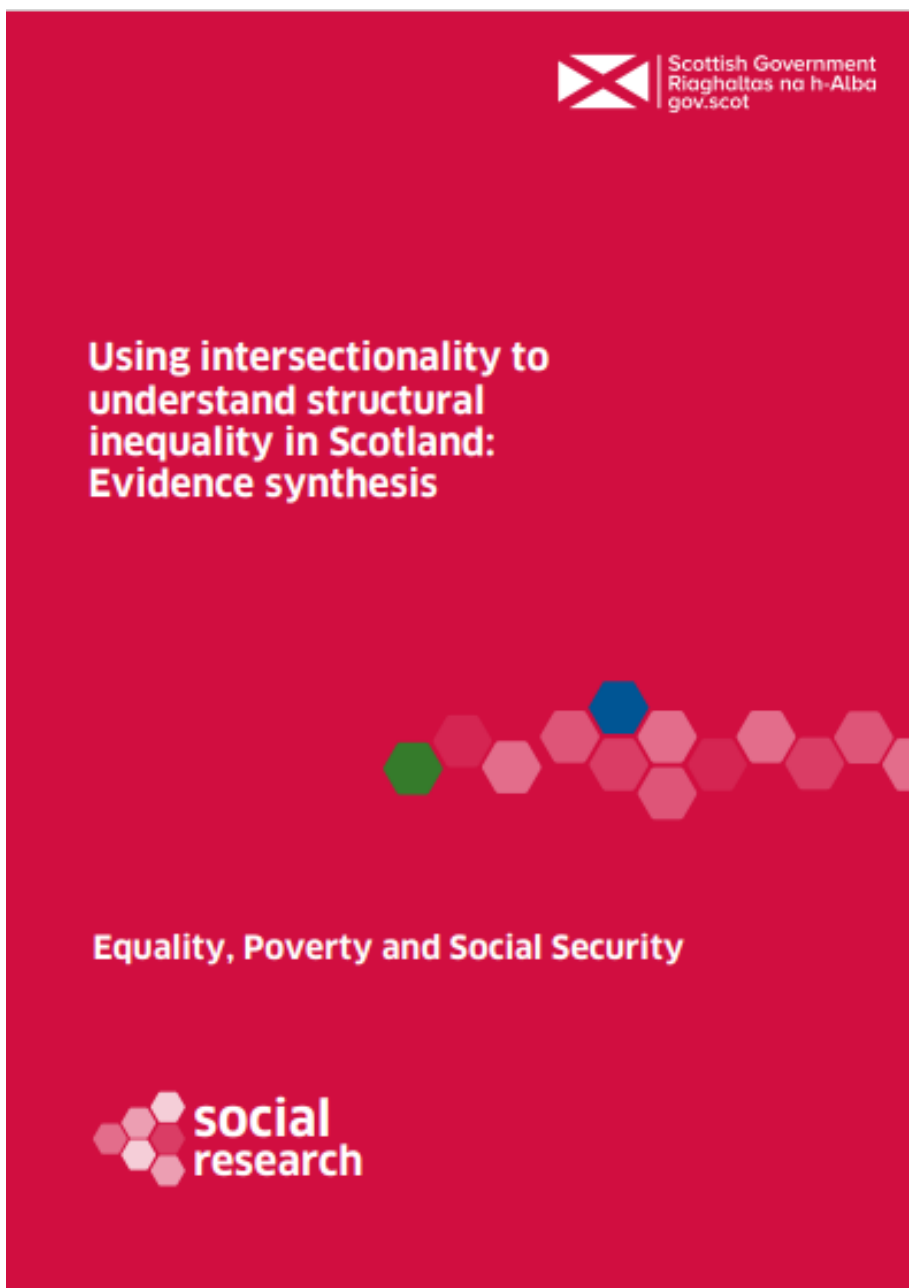
In addition to equality mainstreaming activity, there are also a number of advisory groups, frameworks and strategies that work with or within the Scottish Government with a focus on strengthening the equality evidence base. Details of these can be found in Annex B.

Intersectionality

Embedding an intersectional approach into policymaking in the Scottish Government is a wider ambition that will require whole system change. Key to achieving this ambition is ensuring alignment between different areas of improvement and recommendations, for example between data and the operation of the PSED in Scotland.

During 2022, the Scottish Government published an [evidence synthesis](#) of literature on the concept of intersectionality to improve confidence and

competence among analysts and policymakers. This report examined what the concept means, and how it can be applied to policymaking and analysis, as well as providing spotlight examples. In addition to this, the Scottish Government ran a seminar in July 2022 on applying the concept of intersectionality to analysis. This seminar was very well attended and received positive feedback.



Many of the national and official statistical datasets managed by the Scottish Government's Analytical Services Divisions (ASDs) and the National Records of Scotland (NRS) collect and publish equality data. As part of the EDIP, the Scottish Government carried out an [Equality Data Audit](#) in autumn 2021. Analysts were asked to assess all datasets used by their ASD to produce official or national statistics, update NPF indicators or inform significant ministerial decision making, and report on which equality variables were collected and published from each. The audit found that almost a third of datasets (29%) were being used to produce intersectional data breakdowns. The most common of these was age by sex, followed by race by sex, and disability by sex.

Where there is more than one characteristic collected from individuals in datasets held by the Scottish Government, intersectional breakdowns may be possible (though in practice often subject to limitations around small sample sizes and data disclosure). Although the analysis produced from these datasets is ultimately the decision of the ASDs who manage them, the Scottish Government Equality Analysis team will continue to promote good practice and coordinate robust intersectional analysis to build a strong evidence base.

Examples of intersectional analysis taking place within the Scottish Government includes:

- [Scottish Surveys Core Questions \(SSCQ\)](#)⁶ is an annual official statistics publication which publishes intersectional equality data by several characteristics in its [reporting](#)
- Social Security analysts publish [supplementary tables](#) that provide intersectional analysis of the data presented in Social Security Scotland client diversity and equalities official statistics
- intersectional analysis is undertaken as part of the Tackling Child Poverty annual progress updates, with analysis including focus reports on priority family groups ([Mothers aged 25 or under](#); [households with babies under one](#); [families with a disabled adult or child](#))

In some instances, statistical data collections may not be the best source of intersectional evidence, particularly where the subgroup sample size is relatively small. It is important to consider whether other sources of evidence would better inform understanding of the experiences of groups with intersecting characteristics, including through more focused qualitative research, and using methods that present opportunities for co-production of research

⁶ SSCQ is a result of a harmonised design across the three major Scottish Government household surveys: The Scottish Household Survey; The Scottish Health Survey and The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey.

with individuals and groups with lived experience of structural inequality.

Participation and engagement



While nearly all research involves participants and their participation of some sort, participatory research is distinct. It typically uses methods that offer people with lived experience greater decision making power and influence, for example taking a collaborative approach to developing a solution to an issue. This recognises that people have valuable expertise through lived experience, which is important to fully identify the causes of and solutions to an issue. Significant programmes of work across the Scottish Government have taken approaches that use participatory methods or draw on lived experience in research and policy development. In autumn 2022, a survey of Participation and Engagement work taking

place across Scottish Government was undertaken. The survey provides an initial overview of the extent and nature of Scottish Government's Participation and Engagement work. The survey included questions on the characteristics of participants and stakeholders involved in Scottish Government's Participation and Engagement work. Its findings note the large number of participatory engagements taking place across Scottish Government, and identify options for a coordinated approach to support the delivery of this work.

Examples of participation and engagement work which has taken place across the Scottish Government include the [Minimum Income Guarantee \(MIG\) 'Experts by Experience Panel'](#); the [Citizens' Assembly of Scotland](#) and [Scotland's Climate Assembly](#); the [Social Renewal Advisory Board](#) and The 'People's Panel on Wellbeing 2022 and beyond'.

Participative methods have been used by the Scottish Government to develop the social security system in Scotland through [Social Security Scotland's Experience Panels](#). These panels are made up of people who have experience of one or more of the relevant benefits (i.e. benefits due for devolution following the Scotland Act 2016), and more than 2,400 people registered as panel members when launched in 2017. An example of participative work carried out with the Experience Panels is presented in Box 2.

Box 2: Social Security Scotland – Co-designing the Social Security Charter and Measurement Framework

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 makes provision for the production of a Charter and Measurement Framework, to be made in consultation with people with lived experience of the social security system.⁷ A group of diverse people with a range of conditions and experiences (the Core Group) – made up mostly of Experience Panel members – have taken part in workshops with Scottish Government analysts to create the charter, based on the principles in The Act.

The co-design of the Charter Measurement Framework was undertaken between March and August 2019. Scottish Government officials held:

- seven full-day workshops with Core Group 2, including an advice and discussion session between the group and the Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS)
- two meetings with representatives from stakeholder groups
- two meetings with SCoSS

Crucial elements of the co-design process included:

⁷ [Social Security Charter measurement framework: co-design process - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-charter-measurement-framework-co-design-process/pages/12.aspx)

- enabling participation: breaking down barriers to participation through, for example, use of sign language interpreters and audio describers where necessary. All written materials used by the group were made available in accessible formats, for example, large print or different colour contrast, where needed
- power: group decision making and ownership about the process of producing the Charter Measurement Framework and the processes' outputs
- knowledge: capacity building with participants; guests, including policy colleagues and ministers, to inform group of latest developments/answer questions
- knowledge exchange: recognising lived experience as expertise

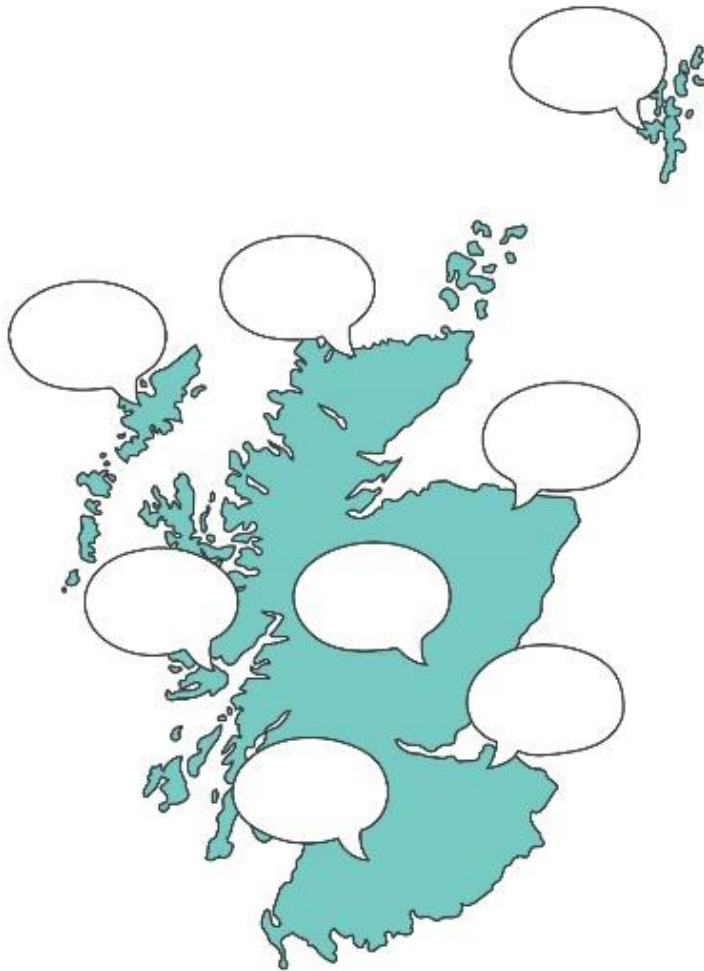
5. Engagement with stakeholders in developing this strategy

Between July and October 2022 the Scottish Government carried out a [public consultation](#) on Citizen Space on a draft plan to improve and strengthen Scotland's equality evidence base. The consultation received 116 responses from a range of equality advocacy organisations, public sector bodies and individuals. An analysis of the consultation was carried out by an independent research consultancy, Why Research. The full report can be found in Annex C.

The consultation asked 32 questions (including 6 questions in the Respondent Information Form), broken down as follows: 15 closed questions (e.g. inviting yes/no/don't know responses; with multiple choice options) and 17 open questions (inviting a free text response option: e.g. explain your answer, any other comments). The consultation had four sections:

- section 1: asked for views on the vision for equality data improvement over the period 2023-2025
- section 2: asked for views on the proposed improvement actions
- section 3: asked when and how equality evidence is used and any barriers faced
- section 4: asked who is producing equality evidence and any barriers faced

To promote and supplement the consultation the Scottish Government Equality Analysis team also ran a series of stakeholder engagement events in August and September 2022. There were around 200 attendees across the events from a number of public sector and equality advocacy organisations.



Alongside feedback on each action in the draft plan, key cross-cutting findings from the consultation and events included:

- there was general agreement on the need for a strong evidence base upon which services can be designed and decisions and policy can be made
- respondents welcomed opportunities to improve the equality evidence base and acknowledged the need for more data on specific groups. The need for intersectionality along with a capacity to disaggregate data were key for many respondents
- qualitative data was seen as providing valuable information in its own right, as well as helping to enhance understanding of quantitative data
- there were calls for help and guidance for data users to maximise their understanding of how to understand and analyse data, as well as how to use this effectively in decision-making
- there were some comments on the terminology used and the conflation of different terms
- the [Equality Evidence Finder](#) was seen to be a useful tool, although there were some comments on a need to improve its utility, for example, by improving upon its accessibility, and by ensuring that all data are up-to-date

6. Challenges

There are several challenges involved in improving Scotland's equality evidence base, including those raised by stakeholders in the EDIP consultation and stakeholder engagement events. We also share a number of challenges which are similarly experienced by the [Welsh Government](#) and the [ONS](#) in filling equality evidence gaps. These challenges provide important context against which improvement activity has been developed and will be implemented throughout the lifespan of this strategy.

Cost and feasibility challenges

The Equality Analysis team within the Scottish Government has a prominent role to play in promoting and coordinating robust analysis to build a strong evidence base. The team also plays a leading role in enabling others to lead effectively and develop good practice. However, most of the analysis has to be carried out within relevant policy areas across the Scottish Government, in line with our mainstreamed approach. As such, these policy areas determine priorities for equality evidence in their own area. In general, analysts work to support policy officials to ensure policies are developed in an inclusive way. Thus, priorities for filling equality evidence gaps will depend to some extent on policy priorities within each area. However, not every item of data that policymakers would like to know can be collected,

often because of technical, ethical or cost barriers. There is always a need be clear on what data are required and why to ensure that the right data are collected to meet the specified purpose, and to balance costs and benefits.

Trust

Trust is often a barrier to participation in research, especially among the most marginalised groups. Research by the [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#), which was established in October 2020 by the UK Statistics Authority to improve the UK's inclusive data holdings, found that there was a general sense of distrust in government and in government statistics among participants, particularly among under-represented groups (in the Inclusive Data Taskforce research these groups included those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, other minority ethnic groups and documented and undocumented migrants).

Equality questions can involve people divulging sensitive personal information so understandably some people are reluctant to provide answers. For example, people may be reluctant or feel particularly sensitive about sharing information about gender reassignment, sexual orientation, or religion or belief due to fears of discrimination or harassment or feelings that the information is irrelevant to the service. Many people will have a distrust of public bodies' ability to store their data securely. While there

may be public distrust of large data linkage systems, the lack of join-up nationally and locally between data sources and collections means that the same questions need to be asked and answered again and again, increasing respondent burden further.

It may be that if public bodies are sensitive to these concerns, seek to link collections safely and manage the response issues in a safe and supportive way, that sample sizes will increase along with the quality and validity of the data. Seeing data collections leading to specific improvement (i.e. policies) is also likely to increase response.

Over the term of this strategy, work will be undertaken with under-represented groups and relevant stakeholder organisations to increase trust in and understanding of government research and statistics. Collaboration with the ONS will be sought on relevant projects in this space.

Under-representation of certain groups

The previously discussed issues around trust suggest that certain groups are more likely to be under-represented in government statistics and research. This means that policy decisions may not adequately reflect their interests and experiences. Furthermore, where underrepresented groups do take part in research, they may make up a proportionately small percentage of the sample, limiting options for disaggregated data.

If sample sizes are small, alternative sources of data will be sought, where possible, utilising methods such as data pooling or through qualitative approaches.

Accessibility and usability of data collection tools

Data collectors should design appropriate methodologies and instruments for data collection, including question wording and setting (face-to-face, digital, self-completed or staff-completed).

Respondents should be able to recognise themselves and their circumstances within categorisations. The Scottish Government has produced [guidance on how to collect equality data](#). The recommended questions aim to be simple to understand and should be used consistently across data collection tools.

Data quality and analysis

While administrative data sources with a good response rate may be able to provide service-level information disaggregated by a variety of equality variables and, in some instances, intersections between characteristics, it will always be more difficult with population surveys which by nature have smaller samples sizes. There are, however, various analytical statistical techniques (for example combining years, imputing data, data linkage) that might allow data to be mined better than it is at present. It is also important to quality assure data and data should be checked for consistency and to ensure that individual cases are not disclosive.

Reporting and communication of equality evidence

Once data are clean, quality assured, analysed and ready for reporting, there can still be some issues to overcome. Included in this would be the categories that can or should be reported; the labelling used; acceptable confidence intervals, disclosure issues and presentation in a range of easy-to-understand accessible formats. The reporting and communication of equality evidence should always be done in ways that do not further stigmatise or blame individuals or groups.

The [Equality Evidence Finder](#) provides a central repository for equality data, but it is important to consider a range of accessible formats and presenting data and charts in a variety of formats.

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Population surveys are important sources of equality evidence and, as such, it is important to note when thinking about change over time. In March 2020, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, fieldwork for the Scottish Government's core surveys - the Scottish Household Survey (SHS), the Scottish Health Survey (SHeS), and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) - was suspended. A revised approach, which involved no interviewer travel and surveys conducted remotely by telephone or by video, was piloted and adopted for the remainder of the 2020 sample. This

change in method has the potential to change the accuracy of estimates and introduce discontinuity into data series'. As such, it has been recommended that when using core survey data 2020 data should not be compared with data that came before it.

Stakeholder differences

Different stakeholders have varying, and sometimes conflicting, views on which equality evidence gaps should be prioritised and how data should be gathered. This came through clearly in our consultation. Where time and resources are limited and it is not possible to meet all demands and views, there will need to be prioritisation of data development work and decisions made that do not meet all stakeholder and user needs. However, a range of stakeholder views will often be sought in order to guide our decision making.

7. Actions to improve the equality evidence base

The Scottish Government know that there are gaps in the equality evidence base. Recognising this, and in order to respond to user needs, an Equality Data Audit was undertaken within the Scottish Government. The purpose of this audit was to identify where evidence gaps existed across analytical areas (e.g. health, justice) and across a characteristics.

In October 2021 Equality Data Audit returns were received from across the 10 analytical areas of the Scottish Government and National Records of Scotland (NRS). Analysts were required to provide RAG (red, amber, green) ratings⁸, for each dataset in

⁸ For each dataset, analysts selected from a dropdown list to indicate whether data on each protected characteristic are (a) collected and (b) published. Definitions of each RAG rating are as follows:

- red - collected: no data collected on this protected characteristic; published: no published breakdowns for this protected characteristic
- amber - collected: data collected but not robust enough to produce reliable statistics for this protected characteristic (e.g. due to small sample size); published: breakdowns for this protected characteristic are not proactively published but are available on request

their area, on the collection and publication of data on nine characteristics⁹.

Additional information was also requested about each dataset on any barriers to equality data improvement, pressures for improvement, and any current work underway or plans to make equality data improvements.

Analysts were asked to include in their return all datasets used by their analytical area to:

- produce official or national statistics
- inform National Performance Framework (NPF) indicator progress
- produce statistics that have informed Scottish ministers' decision-making

A total of 199 datasets were included in returns across the 10 analytical areas, of these:

-
- green- collected: data collected that are robust enough to produce reliable statistics for this protected characteristic; published: breakdowns for this protected characteristic are proactively published (e.g. when new data become available or according to a publication schedule)

⁹ Sex or gender; age; race or ethnicity; disability; sexual orientation; gender reassignment or trans status; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; religion or belief.

- age and sex (or gender) were collected in over 6 in 10 datasets, and breakdowns by these characteristics published from around 5 in 10 datasets
- race (or ethnicity) and disability were collected in just under 3 in 10 datasets, and breakdowns by these characteristics published from around 2 in 10 datasets
- marriage and civil partnership and religion or belief were collected in just over 1 in 10 datasets, and breakdowns by these characteristics published from less than 1 in 10 datasets
- sexual orientation was collected in 1 in 10 datasets, and breakdowns by this characteristic published from less than 1 in 10 datasets
- pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment were collected and breakdowns by these characteristics published from less than 1 in 10 datasets

More detailed information on the findings of the Equality Data Audit by analytical area and RAG rating is available [this summary paper](#).

Improvement criteria

The actions outlined in the table below show a range of different types of planned analytical activity aimed at improving Scotland's equality evidence base. These datasets and improvement activities were

chosen by analysts following the internal equality data audit and were based on the following set of criteria. The Scottish Government and NRS sought to identify equality data improvement actions that are challenging but achievable (particularly taking into account available resources) and where there were:

- already known pressures to improve equality data within the portfolio area
- known evidence gaps, including those highlighted by external stakeholders or policymakers
- relevance and a clear user need for the data, i.e. consideration of which equality variables would be relevant to implementation or evaluation of policies or measuring service delivery
- likely to be the resources required to make improvements

Summary of improvement actions

Annex D sets out, in tabular form, the actions identified by the Scottish Government and NRS across a number of key themes. These actions cover improvements to the data on a range of equality variables, including all nine of the protected characteristics, and improvements are within a timeframe until the end of 2025.

Many of the actions focus on improvements to routinely-used datasets and statistical outputs to ensure investment in evidence sources known already to inform significant decision making. However, there

are also likely to be numerous social research questions that will arise over the course of the strategy which will be considered and prioritised locally based on policy needs, stakeholder input and available resources.

The list of actions that follow demonstrate the ambition of the Scottish Government and NRS to improve the equality evidence base across a range of themes.

These improvement actions are wide-ranging and cover all parts of the data cycle, from engaging with users about their needs around data collection right through to strengthening analysis and reporting. Some common themes have emerged from the actions, which are summarised below.

Implementation of the improvement actions will deliver on our vision. Across the actions, we are committing to:

- working with data providers to improve the completeness of the equality data they have access to for analysis. We have recognised the benefit of working with data suppliers to improve the breadth, quality, granularity and intersectionality of data held on systems. There is also commitment to improve consistency of the variables collected and bring them in line with the Census 2022. Some areas are planning on carry out scoping exercises to assess the quality of the

equality data collected by data suppliers and determine gaps

- improving data utility. Several methods were put forward that were designed to improve the quality of the data and increase sample sizes for better analysis. These included data pooling, i.e. combining multiple years' worth of data to gain a larger number of records so that analysis can be carried out and broken down by smaller equality groups. Data utility can also be improved by data linkage and some analytical areas intend to combine their own data with the population census
- producing more detailed analysis of data already collected. For example, expanding the range of characteristics in publications and including additional tables showing breakdowns by equality variables not previously collected
- carrying out new analysis of substantial data sources, such as the Census, where new data is expected to come on stream. Where the dataset has larger sample sizes, there is also scope for new intersectional equality analysis and some analytical areas intend to carry this out
- sharing good practice to increase the confidence and competence in the collection, analysis and use of equality evidence

8. Governance and collaborations

Governance

Within the Scottish Government, responsibility for taking forward activity to tackle inequality sits with the Minister for Equalities and Older People. However, in order to achieve the collective ambitions set out in this strategy, action is needed across all Scottish Government ministerial portfolios and beyond.

Analysts across Scottish Government who report to Scotland's Chief Social Researcher and Chief Statistician will be responsible for achieving actions set out in Annex D.

The first phase of the EDIP, which ran from April 2021 to March 2023, was governed by a [project board](#), co-chaired by Scotland's Chief Social Researcher and Chief Statistician. The board included representatives from a range of public sector bodies with a key interest in mainstreaming equalities, including Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the Improvement Service (IS), and Public Health Scotland (PHS). The project board supported the design and delivery of projects during the first phase of the programme and provided strategic input into the development of this strategy.

Moving forward, the project board will continue to provide oversight and governance of the improvement work during the three year lifetime of the strategy. It

will continue to meet quarterly and an update on progress on the improvement actions will be a standing agenda item on project board meetings.

An interim report, detailing progress towards the completion of the improvement actions, will be produced by the Scottish Government Equality Analysis team and published half way through the lifetime of the strategy – this interim report will be informed by analysts taking forward the improvement actions set out in the strategy. There will also be a progress report at the end of the strategy’s lifespan and completion of the improvement actions will be key to the success of the programme.

Collaborations

The Scottish Government will work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to improve the equality evidence base for Scotland. Throughout the period of the strategy, the Scottish Government will proactively seek the input of a number of groups including:

People with lived experience

The input of people with lived experience of intersecting characteristics and experiences structural inequality will be sought on a project-specific basis to ensure their experiences are used to inform and shape our work, and to ensure the same groups and individuals are not overburdened.

Equality advocacy organisations and networks

Equality advocacy organisations and networks may wish to express their views and ensure these are taken into account with respect to the characteristic they represent, and we welcome their involvement. Input from stakeholder organisations will be sought on a project-specific basis.

Public sector bodies

As collectors and users of equality data, collaboration with these bodies is vital to achieving the vision set out in this strategy. The Scottish Government often relies on data collected by local authorities and other public sector bodies to inform policy design and delivery, including a number of routinely used subject-specific administrative datasets.

To facilitate the sharing of data, the platform [ProcXed](#) is already used by local authorities, public bodies, health boards, alongside private companies and third sector groups. The purpose of ProcXed is to ensure data transferred from data providers to the Scottish Government is done so securely, and also provides quality assurance feedback on the data.

A number of actions to improve the equality evidence set out in Annex D rely on collaboration between the Scottish Government and other public sector bodies. As set out above, representatives of these group will be invited to join the Project Board for the strategy to ensure they have opportunities to input into the

improvement actions being taken forward by the Scottish Government and share learning and good practice.

The general public

We recognise that the general public may want to express their views and ensure that these are taken into account in terms of the progress being made by the Scottish Government in improving the equality evidence base and the approaches taken to gathering new evidence. Groups most impacted by equality evidence collection will be engaged with, including those reluctant to provide data, to ensure their voices are heard. Regular posts on the [Scottish Government Statistics blog](#) will be published to update members of the public on this ongoing work.

Scottish Government analysts

A network of lead analysts from each analytical area was established during the first phase of the EDIP to support communications and engagement across the Scottish Government and ensure progress is made across the Scottish Government in delivering on this strategy. This network will continue throughout the lifespan of this strategy. The network includes a representative from each analytical area of the Scottish Government, and membership will be continually reviewed to ensure progress is made. The network will be required to provide updates on progress every six months. However, we will seek to

ensure the process of providing progress is streamlined to ensure this does not detract from delivery.

Scottish Government policy professionals

Scottish Government policy professionals use equality data to inform policy and delivery. Officials will undertake engagement with and provide resources for policy professionals through events and materials produced as part of the Mainstreaming Strategy.

UK Government, ONS, and devolved administrations

Collaboration with the UK Government, ONS and other devolved administrations will be sought where possible and helpful. For example, we are aware that the [Welsh Government have launched their Equality Evidence Strategy](#) last year. We are keen to learn from the approaches taken to tackle shared challenges involved in improving the equality evidence base by the UK Government, ONS and devolved administrations. Likewise, the UK Government and ONS are the owners of a number of datasets used by the Scottish Government so their input will be sought on a project-specific basis as actions are implemented.

Academics and data experts

Academics and data experts hold valuable expertise on data collection, analysis and presentation. We are keen to learn from and showcase this good practice

across the public sector. Additionally, input from academics and data experts be sought on a project-specific basis, including through the commissioning of research.

Regulatory and scrutiny bodies

Regulatory and scrutiny bodies will be contacted, where a need for input would be helpful. We will learn from and take on board their input to shape our approaches and actions throughout the lifespan of this strategy.

Local and national politicians

As users of equality evidence local and national politicians, we recognise that politicians may wish to provide their views on equality data gaps. We will take on board these views, consider actions to address these and provide updates on our progress.

9. Glossary

Equality evidence – see the [What is equality evidence? section of the strategy](#)

Protected characteristic – as set out in the Equality Act 2010 it is illegal to discriminate against someone based on these characteristics. They are: age, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion of belief, marriage and civil partnership, disability and pregnancy and maternity.

Intersectionality – is shaped by 3 key tenets: (1) people are shaped by their simultaneous membership of multiple interconnected social categories; (2) the interaction between multiple social categories occurs within a context of connected systems and structures of power; (3) structural inequalities are the outcomes of the interaction between social categories, power relations and contexts.¹⁰

Intersectional data – data that takes into account two or more combinations of individual, social/cultural and environmental characteristics and, where the dataset allows, the context in which these combinations of characteristics give rise to relative advantage and disadvantage.

Structural inequality – inequality that is embedded in social structures, based on institutionalised

¹⁰ [Report on using intersectionality to understand structural inequality in Scotland](#)

conceptions of differences based on, for example, sex, race, sexual orientation or disability.

Lived experience – knowledge and expertise gained through direct involvement, such as experience of inequality or discrimination, or through group membership.

Annex A: Recent Progress and the Current Equality Evidence Base

Since the launch of Scotland's previous Equality Evidence Strategy in 2017, progress has been made by the Scottish Government to strengthen the equality evidence base. This complements improvement work undertaken across the wider public sector.

A major development in this time was the modernisation of the Scottish Government's [Equality Evidence Finder](#) platform. Following engagement with users, the platform was refreshed in 2018. The modernised website has a range of improved features, including better navigation and interactive graphics. In addition to being the first port of call for equality data, the site also includes information on socio-economic status and a National Performance Framework (NPF) Data Explorer. Further user feedback was received in 2022 as part of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 consultation work and the site will continue to evolve to meet user requirements.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 affected equality data collection and highlighted important gaps in Scotland's equality evidence base. In response to the pandemic, and to inform key decision making,

Scottish Government analysts produced a series of reports examining the impacts on equality.¹¹

In addition to the work carried out to inform COVID-19 decision making, the past couple of years have seen Scottish Government analysts gather new evidence and produce a number of outputs to make best use of existing equality data. This includes projects where they:

- worked together with expert partners in women's organisations to produce Scotland's first [Gender Equality Index](#) which will measure progress through time towards gender equality in Scotland. Gender equality is measured across a range of indicators, covering Work, Money, Time, Knowledge, Power and Health. The first release, showing baseline data, was published in 2020
- used ONS online time use data to produce a report [Time Use in Scotland 2020](#) describing the way that women and men spent their time in Scotland in 2020
- used data collected from the Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) 2019 survey module to look at how couples organise their income and financial

¹¹ These include [COVID-19: impact on equality](#); [COVID-19: health and social impact assessment](#); [COVID-19: economic impact of labour market effects](#); [COVID-19 - disabled people: health, social and economic harms - research report](#); [COVID-19: at risk groups - estimates](#).

responsibilities and how they conduct financial decision-making and produced a [report of the findings](#)

- used data collected from the SSA 2019 survey module to examine attitudes of the Scottish public to the following forms of violence against women: sexual violence, domestic abuse (physical, verbal, mental and emotional), sexual harassment and commercial sexual exploitation and produced a [report of the findings](#)
- commissioned research into different approaches to redress the [undervaluation of women's work and assess their applicability to the Scottish employment context](#)
- commissioned an evidence review and case-study [research to explore effective ways of bring about greater gender equality within Scottish agriculture businesses](#)
- carried out a [review of evidence related to equality in adult social care in Scotland](#) focussed on groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as well as those with socio-economic disadvantage
- carried out evidence reviews of available literature on the [housing needs and experiences of minority ethnic groups](#) in Scotland and the [accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers](#)
- carried out a [survey of candidates standing](#) in the 2022 local government elections to gather data on their demographic characteristics, previous

experience and any caring responsibilities they may have

- produced a series of briefings which present a summary of current evidence on the spotlight topics chosen by the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG): [Poverty](#); [Enterprise](#); [Masculinity and Femininity](#); [STEM](#); [Participation](#); [Education](#); [Justice](#); [Health](#); [Older Women](#); [Early Years](#); [Sport](#); [Carers](#); [Disability](#); [Race equality](#); [Fair work](#); [Body image](#); [Mental health](#); [Digital spaces and industries](#); [Creative industries](#); [Climate change](#); [Poverty update](#)

Equality Data Improvement Programme (EDIP) Projects

A number of improvement actions have been taken forward within the EDIP since its launch in April 2021. Many of these actions have helped lay the foundations for this Equality Evidence Strategy. The projects were framed by the two broad programme aims of sharing good practice and priority data development.

1. Sharing good practice

This aim was achieved through actions (a) to understand the barriers to data collection, analysis and reporting and (b) build immediate capacity through the sharing of evidence-based learning and good practice. Key achievements are detailed below.

In 2021, the Scottish Government's Equality Analysis team organised a series of 'analytical gatherings' and the audience for these events comprised of analysts across the Scottish Government. At these workshops analysts presented good practice in the collection, analysis and presentation of equality data. This included boosting the size of small subsets by pooling data and data linkage.

Scottish Government analysts refreshed their [guidance on the collection of equality data](#). This refreshed guidance for data collectors in the public sector utilised Scotland's Census 2022 questions and the ONS harmonised questions. It also recommended use of the [Scottish Government's guidance on the collection of data on sex, gender identity and trans status](#).

The Scottish Government commissioned case studies (of [Highland Council](#), [Skills Development Scotland](#), [The Open University](#), [Social Security Scotland](#), [Sports Scotland](#), [Scottish Children's Reporter Administration](#)) looking at how public bodies have implemented good practice in the collection and use of equality data.

2. Priority data development

This aim was achieved through actions to (a) improve the accessibility, robustness and use of existing equality data, (b) establish new equality datasets to fill

gaps and (c) undertake domain-specific equality data improvements. Key achievements are detailed below.

A large-scale equality data linkage project is currently underway in Scotland, led by [Research Data Scotland \(RDS\)](#) under the Scottish Government's former Chief Statistician, linking Population Census data to administrative data in order to improve the equality data breakdowns available from these sources.

The Population Census remains the gold standard for producing granular equality data and the upcoming results of the 2022 edition will provide analysts with a range of new data for intersectional equality analysis. National Records of Scotland (NRS) carried out an [outputs consultation](#), which closed on 10 February 2023, to give users an opportunity to contribute their views on what they need from the new Census. As part of the consultation, NRS published a [spreadsheet containing details on the content they plan to publish as part of Census outputs](#), which includes equality variables.

As part of the consultation and stakeholder engagement events carried out to inform the development of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025, we received feedback from users that the [Equality Evidence Finder](#) should present data in a more intersectional manner and this will be something

that the Scottish Government will progress as part of the new Equality Evidence Strategy (see Action 19 in Annex D for details).

The [Scottish Surveys Core Questions \(SSCQ\)](#) is an annual official statistics publication. SSCQ is a result of a harmonised design across the three major Scottish Government household surveys. The SSCQ publishes intersectional equality data by several characteristics in its reporting.

Scottish Government analysts are currently collaborating with the ONS on their [Inclusive Data Taskforce Implementation Plan](#), particularly on Data Principle 1 which seeks to create an environment of trust and trustworthiness which allows and encourages everyone to count and be counted in UK data and evidence.

Where actions within the [original EDIP project plan](#) have not been achieved in full during phase one, and there is still a user requirement, these are now reflected in the list of actions contained within Annex D, to be progressed throughout the lifetime of the this strategy.

Annex B: Advisory Groups, Frameworks and Strategies

This Annex provides a list of advisory groups, frameworks and strategies with, at least in part, a focus on strengthening the equality evidence base. Each group, framework and strategy has specific aims and objectives and informs a range of actions across the policy making process, including:

- gathering and sharing lived experiences to ensure evidence-informed policy
- making recommendations to Scottish Government
- setting out the Scottish Government's approach
- steering implementation of Scottish Government action
- building knowledge and skills
- reporting on process made

First Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG)

[First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls](#) (NACWG) was established in 2017 to play a leading role in raising awareness of gender inequality in Scotland, drawing attention to the wide range of issues this creates for women and girls in Scotland today. It was set up to act as a champion for positive progress and policies that are making a meaningful difference to the lives of women and girls, encouraging Scotland to become a beacon for gender

equality around the world. Phase One NACWG delivered a set of recommendations, while Phase Two (launched in March 2022) focus on their implementation.

Scottish Government Race Equality Framework

The [Race Equality Framework](#) sets out the Scottish Government's approach to promoting race equality and tackling racism and inequality between 2016 and 2030.

Scotland has a wonderfully diverse society and we are all, each and every one of us, equal citizens and stakeholders of Scotland. Our vision is that Scotland in 2030 is a

Scotland where people are healthier, happier and treated with respect, and where opportunities, wealth, and power are spread more equally. The Scottish Government is determined to show leadership in advancing race equality, tackling racism and addressing the barriers that prevent people from minority ethnic communities from realising their potential. The Race Equality Framework for Scotland sets out how the Scottish Government aims to progress this ambition over a 15-year period from 2016 to 2030.

There are a number of groups with a focus on advancing race equality across the Scottish Government arising from the high profile of racial inequality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The groups have been formed by different policy and analytical areas, and each group has different areas of focus and approaches to suit their aims and the needs of the area in which they sit. Not all of the groups have been formed as a direct result of the REF.

Interim Governance Group to Develop National Anti-Racist Infrastructure (AIGG)

On 14 September 2021 the Scottish Government published an [Immediate Priorities Plan \(IPP\)](#) which focused on delivering an equal and anti-racist recovery from COVID-19 for minority ethnic people in Scotland. This includes several actions geared towards improving and strengthening ethnicity data collection and use across policy areas.

A short-term [Interim Governance Group to Develop National Anti-Racist Infrastructure](#) (IGG) was established in April 2022 and will conclude in May 2023 with the establishment of an Observatory to provide a range of functions, including oversight and governance. The Observatory will bring together quantitative and qualitative data on ethnic and racial inequalities in Scotland. This should not only include

epidemiological data but also cultural, historical and other socio political and economic factors. It will also act as a repository holding historical and current evidence from a range of different sources to maintain awareness and inform actions. The establishment of the Observatory will represent a significant step in our collective ambition to bring about meaningful system change for minority ethnic communities that will result in equity.

Racialised Health Inequalities Steering Group

Minority ethnic groups in Scotland and the UK experience some of the worst outcomes on almost all health measures. The Scottish Government acknowledges the impact of racism on health and on the social determinants of health and are committed to pursuing equity of access to and experience of health and social care services. The Race Equality Immediate Priorities Plan commitments are being implemented across the Scottish Government to address racialised health inequalities.

As part of this commitment, the Racialised Inequalities in Health & Social Care in Scotland Steering Group has been established to address structural racism and actively pursue equity of access, experiences and outcomes within health and social care for minority ethnic people, both staff and patients. One of the priorities of the group is ensure effective delivery of

Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity (ERG) recommendations and IPP commitments including improved collection and use of ethnicity data to monitor and address inequities in access, experience and outcomes.

Cross Justice Working Group on Race Data and Evidence

The Cross Justice Working Group on Race Data and Evidence was set up following concerns raised by the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as the differential impacts of COVID-19 on people from minority ethnic backgrounds. It first met in October 2020. Its membership includes representatives from the Scottish Government, all the main justice organisations, community groups and academia.

The aims of the Cross Justice Working Group on Race Data and Evidence are to:

- I. identify what is currently known about the experience of different ethnic groups within Scotland's justice system
- II. help improve the collection and reporting of evidence on race, and
- III. in particular, increase the value of statistics on hate crime reported to the police, by including information on the ethnic backgrounds of those targeted

Cross Justice Working Group on Race and Workforce

[The Cross Justice Working Group on Race and Workforce](#), was established in October 2020 to provide a strategic and cohesive approach to tackling barriers to employment across the justice system. The group includes representatives from all main justice organisations, community groups and academia and is working to ensure equity of access in recruitment, retention, promotion and leadership processes across the justice sector.

In October 2021, the group published its progress report which included a baseline audit of initiatives in relation to race and workforce, with the intention of understanding the effectiveness of past and current initiatives undertaken within the justice sector, in order to build on this learning. The group agreed that one of the main challenges has been to develop and deliver a coherent programme of work. This has been mainly due to the lack of available evidence.

The group has agreed to address the lack of evidence by aligning its work with that of the Data and Evidence Group, and by becoming an Expert Reference Group that commissions and reviews evidence to help shape how to address the challenges across the justice sector.

The group is set up to meet three times a year, and met in early 2023 to discuss research proposals in relation to recruitment and workforce experiences

Anti-Racist Employment Strategy

The Scottish Government's new [Anti-Racist Employment Strategy](#) was published in December 2022. The aim of this strategy is to support employers through practical guidance, advice and case studies, to take an anti-racist and intersectional approach to improving practices across the employment journey, from recruitment to retention to progression. As part of this strategy, the Scottish Government are looking at how the data and evidence base available to policy makers and employers can be increased to help identify and respond better to specific issues. This will help employers to ensure workforces are representative and identify gaps in representation in their organisations.

A key statistical measure used is the ethnicity pay gap which represents the difference between the average hourly earnings of white workers and minority ethnic workers as a proportion of white workers' average hourly pay. Organisations that measure the pay gap use their analysis to understand workforce inequalities; demonstrate their commitment to equitable employment outcomes and understand the extent of occupational segregation in their workforce.

However, it must also be noted, the pay gap does not show who is most affected by the gap and a small or negative gap can be misleading if representation is low and falls within higher paid positions in an organisation. There are also gaps and limitations with existing data. Scotland's minority ethnic population is a relatively small group. This means that sample sizes are small, leading to a high degree of variability in national-level estimates over time.

In the development of the Anti-Racist Employment Strategy, data collected by employers and government shows the issues racialised minorities are facing in the labour market in Scotland. For example, ethnicity profiles of organisations show low numbers of or no racialised minority staff, racialised minorities are not applying for certain posts or getting interviewed/appointed, there is a low percentage of racialised minorities in senior positions, racialised minority people's career progression is slower than that of white people, and that there is a disparity in pay according to ethnicity. The Anti-Racist Employment Strategy shows how data is and can be used. Using data gathered from one-to-one conversations, focus groups, staff surveys, and exit interviews helps to gain insight and identify barriers to career progression, review recruitment actions, monitor career progression, understand the level of representation in certain roles, and ensures fair and

inclusive access to training and development opportunities. Data are also being used to monitor the level of bullying and harassment complaints from employees.

Non-Binary Working Group

The [Scottish Government Non-Binary Working Group](#), a 2019-20 and 2020-21 Programme for Government (PfG) commitment, was convened to consider and inform the Scottish Government's approach to non-binary equality. The group was independently chaired and was composed of key stakeholder organisations, academics and a number of non-binary people. It worked to contribute to the Scottish Government's emerging approach, and to recommend actions to improve, protect and promote equality for non-binary people. The group published its report in July 2022 and included recommendations which fell into three categories: healthcare; data and law; access to services. The Scottish Government has accepted the group's recommendation to support research and improve data and evidence on non-binary people. Further detail will be published in spring 2023 as part of the Non-Binary Equality Action Plan, as set out in the 2021-22 Programme for Government and Bute House Agreement.

Centre of Expertise in Equality and Human Rights

The National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET), published on 1 March 2022, sets a vision for Scotland to be a wellbeing economy that serves people and the planet first and foremost, for current and future generations. The strategy's ambition is that Scotland's economy will significantly outperform the last decade, both in terms of economic performance and tackling structural economic inequalities.

In line with a commitment in NSET, a Centre of Expertise in Equality and Human Rights has been established within the Scottish Government, to advance our understanding and embed equality and human rights within the economic policy-making process. This builds on a commitment in the Scottish Government's [Economic Recovery Implementation Plan](#), in response to the report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) published in June 2020, 'Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland', that: "Throughout all of our actions and across the themes, we will strengthen our focus on tackling inequalities and wellbeing to create a socially just economy."

The Centre of Expertise will work with partners, including stakeholders and academic experts, to build capacity, skills and knowledge in equality and human rights among economic policy officials. The Centre of

Expertise was involved in the development of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) for NSET as a whole and for each of its six programmes, which were published alongside the strategy's delivery plans on 31 October 2022.¹² The EQIAs identified certain limitations in the available data and evidence, for example in relation to:

- limited evidence across all of the strategy's programmes for the protected characteristics of sexual orientation, religion or belief and gender reassignment
- insufficient intersectional data across all protected characteristics and all areas, such as entrepreneurial activity, skills, and experience of the labour market
- lack of reliable data on a regional basis
- a need to better understand the range of experiences of the labour market of people with mental health conditions

The involvement of external experts in the work of the Centre of Expertise is intended to help inform policy development and also contribute to strengthening our evidence base.

¹² [Scottish Government Economy strategy](#)

Annex C : Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025: Analysis of Responses to Consultation

Executive Summary

In April 2021, the Scottish Government launched the first phase of its Equality Data Improvement Programme (EDIP). This aims to put in place a stronger and more complete equality evidence base that will enable more inclusive policy making and support the collective effort across the public sector to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

The publication of the next Equality Evidence Strategy, covering the period 2023-2025, will mark the end of the first phase of the EDIP. On 1 July 2022, the Scottish Government launched a consultation on a draft plan to improve and strengthen Scotland's equality evidence base. Responses received will be used to develop the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025.

There were a total of 116 responses to this consultation, of which 87 were from organisations and 29 from individuals.

Key themes

A number of key themes were evident across consultation questions and consultation events as well as across respondent groups.

Overall, there was general agreement on the need for a strong equality evidence base upon which services can be designed and decisions and policy can be made. At present, there are concerns over the robustness of much of the existing evidence due to small sample sizes and gaps in the evidence base.

Respondents welcomed opportunities to improve the equality evidence base and acknowledged the need for more data across a wide range of different groups. There were some requests for consistency in the data collected across all datasets as this would allow for more robust sample sizes as well as offering an option to combine different datasets. The need for intersectional data along with a capacity to disaggregate data by sub-groups are key for many respondents.

While robust quantitative data is perceived to be a key requirement, there were also some requests for qualitative data as this can provide valuable information in its own right and also help to enhance understanding of quantitative data.

There were some calls for help and guidance for data users to maximise their understanding of how to work with and analyse data and how to use this effectively in decision-making.

The Equality Evidence Finder (EEF) was seen to be a useful tool, although there were some comments on a need to improve its utility, for example, by improving

upon its accessibility, by ensuring that all data is up-to-date and offering a capacity to easily link into other datasets.

Summary of main findings

The vision (Q1)

While there is general support for various aspects of the vision, just under half (47%) of the respondents felt the Scottish Government should revise the vision developed in 2017. Key issues were requests for:

- more robust data which would allow for intersectionality and a capacity to disaggregate data
- help and guidance for data users, with information provided on how equality data can be used
- recognition of the impact of COVID-19 and the current cost of living crisis
- alignment with a range of other policies
- the introduction of outcomes, actions and monitoring to ensure the vision is adopted by all relevant organisations
- clarity in terminology used throughout the vision

Proposed actions (Qs2-7)

Over half (59%) of respondents thought the proposed actions would adequately deliver on the ambition for a robust and wide-ranging quality evidence base, to a partial extent (Q2). Reasons for this included perceived gaps in the evidence base among the

proposed actions and a desire to improve the equality evidence base in general amid concerns regarding the robustness of evidence caused by small sample sizes in relation to some characteristics as well as the quality of some datasets. There were some requests for guidance on the collection, procurement, handling, analysis and representation of equality data.

When asked to say which were the five most important actions outlined in the draft improvement plan (Q3), a number of respondents commented on the difficulties of making this choice, on the basis that all actions are important. From the respondents who were able to make a choice, the most popular actions were 33 (Scotland's Census 2022) (cited by 25% of respondents), 15 (Scotland's Gender Equality Index) (cited by 21% of respondents), 16 (Scottish Social Attitudes Survey) (cited by 18% of respondents) and 1 (Looked after children) (cited by 18% of respondents). Regardless of the action(s) chosen by respondents, a number of general themes emerged, including the need for:

- more robust equality evidence
- more consistency in the way equality data is collected
- granular/disaggregated equality data
- intersectionality

Just over half (51%) of the respondents felt that there should be revisions to the proposed actions (Q4). The actions with the highest numbers of respondents

suggesting a need for revisions were Actions 33, 15, 16, 13, 3, 12, 19, 21, 28 and 2. Across all actions it was felt there was a need for more complete data to be collected on all equality characteristics across all datasets, so as to achieve larger sample sizes. There were requests for more consistency in the way data on equality variables is collected by different datasets.

When asked whether there were any additional improvement actions that should be considered that are achievable within the 2023-2025 timescale (Q5), just under half (43%) felt there were. Most of the points raised echoed those made at previous questions and very few comments were made on any additional actions; comments tended to be based on enhancing the existing actions.

The potential for collaboration (Qs 6-7)

Just under half (43%) of respondents would like to collaborate with the Scottish Government (Q6). Only small numbers of respondents specified particular actions they would like to collaborate on.

Just under half (45%) of respondents noted that they were aware of other organisations, networks or individuals the Scottish Government should collaborate with to improve the equality evidence base (Q7). The most prevalent mentions were for sex-based campaigning groups for women although there were also references to equalities organisations, councils, networks and stakeholder groups. A wide

range of other organisation types were cited by relatively small numbers of respondents.

Use of equality evidence (Qs 8-10)

Just under half (46%) of respondents claimed to often use equality evidence and just under a quarter (24%) were using equality evidence occasionally (Q8). Most of these respondents used a combination of several different sources, with the most popular data sources being Population Census data or outputs and the Scottish Household Survey. The most popular platforms were the Scottish Government EEF and the Scottish Government website. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) was cited as a key organisation providing data. A wide range of subject-specific sources were mentioned. A range of generic tools for collecting data were also cited by respondents, and there were a few mentions of academic or third sector sources.

In terms of usage of equality evidence, a key use was to shape decision-making, for strategic planning or informing policy. Some respondents reported using equality evidence in reports or for Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). Other uses were to ensure representation of groups, to monitor trends, for tracking and benchmarking, to improve services, assess service delivery or improve ways of working.

Online access is a popular means of accessing equality evidence. Again, the Scottish Government

website was noted as a source of accessing equality evidence.

Almost two thirds (65%) of respondents said they faced barriers in using equality evidence (Q9). The most often cited difficulties were inconsistency of approach and non-standardised equality evidence, particularly regarding data collection. A minority of respondents also noted difficulties in finding the required data, information or evidence, with resource limitations also playing a part for some respondents. There were references to gaps in the equality evidence base as well as an insufficiency of disaggregated data.

When considering whether there are decisions that cannot be made because of a lack of equality evidence (Q10), views were broadly split with around a third (31%) saying decisions cannot be made because of a lack of equality evidence and around a third (34%) claiming that decisions can be made. Barriers noted by respondents included a lack of equality information which can limit intersectional analysis and disaggregated analysis.

Equality evidence collection (Q11)

Almost two thirds (61%) of respondents reported producing equality evidence sources, with a number noting they generate their own data. A range of different methods are used in collecting this data.

Half the respondents claimed their organisation faces barriers in collecting more equality evidence. These barriers include internal resource constraints, problems with the disclosure of sensitive information, insufficient sample numbers and a lack of consistency and coherence within a fragmented data landscape.

Introduction

Background

The [Equality Evidence Strategy 2017-2021](#) set out the Scottish Government's vision that "Scotland's equality evidence becomes more wide-ranging and robust, enabling national and local policy makers to develop sound, inclusive policy and measure the impact on all of Scotland's equality groups".

Listed authorities have responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, and all organisations should consider what information is needed when designing and undertaking any form of equality data collection, research and analysis to fill known evidence gaps. The [Equality Evidence Strategy 2017-2021](#) set out a four-year plan outlining the equality evidence gaps that had been identified across partner and academic organisations and detailing a strategic approach to strengthening Scotland's equality evidence base. This noted there are a number of opportunities for data and information to be collected by public sector organisations, academic institutions, the third sector and within communities as well as a number of challenges to collecting, analysing and reporting intersectional equality data.

In April 2021, the Scottish Government launched the first phase of its [Equality Data Improvement Programme \(EDIP\)](#). This aims to put in place a

stronger and more complete equality evidence base that will enable more inclusive policy making and support the collective effort across the public sector to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The publication of the next Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 will mark the end of the first phase of the EDIP. This new Equality Evidence Strategy will re-examine key aspects of the 2017-2021 Strategy and be accompanied by an equality data improvement plan that sets out key milestones and priorities to filling equality evidence gaps across a range of equality variables.

The consultation

On 1 July 2022, the Scottish Government launched a consultation on a draft plan to improve and strengthen Scotland's equality evidence base. Responses received to this consultation will be used to develop the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025, which will be published in March 2023. It is intended that the strategy will further enable policymakers to develop sound and inclusive policies to improve service delivery and outcomes for the people of Scotland.

The consultation ran until 7 October 2022. This asked 32 questions, of which 15 were closed inviting yes/no/don't know responses and 17 were open inviting a free text response option.

Alongside this consultation, the Scottish Government also undertook six engagement events.

Respondent profile

In total, there were 116 responses to the consultation, of which 87 were from organisations and 29 from individuals. A list of all those organisations that submitted a response to the consultation is included in Appendix 1. Respondents were assigned to groupings to allow analysis of any differences or commonalities across or within the various different types of organisations and individuals that responded. The following table provides the profile of those who responded to this consultation.

Table 1: Respondent profile

	Respondent sub-group
Equalities/advocacy groups	31
Public sector	47
Other organisations	9
Total organisations	87
Individuals	29
Total respondents	116

Methodology

Responses to the consultation were submitted using the Scottish Government consultation platform Citizen Space or by email. A small number of respondents

submitted a response which did not answer the specific questions. These responses were analysed and incorporated into the report at the relevant sections.

All responses were downloaded into an excel database which formed the basis for analysis of responses.

Those attending stakeholder events represented the range of equality characteristics covered by the strategy. The questions posed at these events did not follow the structure of the consultation questions but focused on how to improve access to equality evidence, how to improve the use of equality evidence and the vision for equality data improvement by 2025. Mural boards from each event were provided to the researchers and the findings were included in analysis at the relevant questions. By and large, the same issues were raised in responses to the consultation and at consultation events. Where different issues were raised at the stakeholder events, these are highlighted in this report.

It should be borne in mind that the number responding at each question is not always the same as the number presented in the respondent group table. This is because not all respondents addressed all questions. This report indicates the number of respondents who commented at each question. When referring to respondents who made particular comments, the terms 'a small number', 'a few' and so on have been used. While the analysis was qualitative

in nature, with the consultation containing only a limited number of quantifiable questions, as a very general rule of thumb it can be assumed that:

‘a small number’ indicates up to 5 respondents

‘a few’ indicates around 6-9 respondents

‘a small minority’ indicates around more than 9 respondents but less than 10%

‘a significant minority’ indicates between around 10-24% of respondents

‘a large minority’ indicates more than a quarter of respondents but less than half

‘a majority’ indicates more than 50% of those who commented at any question

Some of the consultation questions were composed of closed tick-boxes with specific options to choose from. Where respondents did not follow the questions but mentioned clearly within their text that they supported one of the options, these have been included in the relevant counts.

The researchers examined all comments made by respondents and noted the range of issues mentioned in responses, including reasons for opinions, specific examples or explanations, alternative suggestions or other comments. Grouping these issues together into similar themes allowed the researchers to identify whether any particular theme was specific to any particular respondent group or groups. Where any

specific sub-group(s) held a particular viewpoint, this is commented on at each relevant question.

When considering group differences, however, it must also be recognised that where a specific opinion has been identified in relation to a particular group or groups, this does not indicate that other groups did not share this opinion, but rather that they simply did not comment on that particular point.

While the consultation gave all who wished to comment an opportunity to do so, given the self-selecting nature of this type of exercise, any figures quoted here cannot be extrapolated to a wider population outwith the respondent sample.

The Vision

The consultation paper noted that the Scottish Government had set out the vision in the [Equality Evidence Strategy 2017-2021](#) that "Scotland's equality evidence base becomes more wide-ranging and robust, enabling national and local policymakers to develop sound, inclusive policy and measure the impact on all of Scotland's equality groups". This consultation revisited this vision and respondents were asked for their views on whether the vision should be revised for the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025. The first question asked:

Q1.1: Do you think the Scottish Government should revise the vision developed in 2017?

As demonstrated in Table 2, just under half (48%) of the respondents felt that the Scottish Government should revise the vision developed in 2017 compared to just over a quarter (28%) who felt the vision did not need revising.

Table 2: Level of agreement on whether the Scottish Government should revise the vision developed in 2017

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	16 (51%)	9 (29%)	2 (6%)	4 (13%)

Public sector (47)	23 (49%)	13 (28%)	3 (6%)	8 (17%)
Other organisations (9)	3 (33%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	2 (22%)
Total organisations (87)	42 (48%)	25 (29%)	6 (7%)	14 (16%)
Individuals (29)	14 (48%)	7 (24%)	8 (28%)	-
Total respondents (116)	56 (48%)	32 (28%)	14 (12%)	14 (12%)

All respondents who provided an answer of ‘yes’ to this question, were then asked to say how the Scottish Government should revise the vision. A total of 60 respondents commented.

A few respondents noted their support for various aspects of the vision, albeit some of these referred to the need to enhance the vision, for example, by ensuring that robust data is captured. There was general agreement from a few respondents of the need to have access to better evidence and data so as to make better evidence-informed decisions which in turn will lead to greater transparency and accountability. This would also help listed authorities under their commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and lead to improved outcomes for marginalised groups.

The need for a greater emphasis and understanding of intersectionality was highlighted by a significant minority of the respondents answering this question. There was a recognition of the need for robust data that can allow organisations to measure the impact on all equality groups and have high-quality disaggregated data to allow for intersectional analysis. Furthermore, there should be the ability to combine different datasets to make full use of all information gathered so that this can be used effectively to inform policy making and resource allocation.

There was a recognition that data users may need some help and guidance on how to work with data that is collected. Linked to this, there were a small number of comments that there is a need for clarity over analysis of data when it has been collected. One organisation in the equalities/advocacy sub-group noted the need for training and building capacity to understand how to work with data and how to apply this to the policy making process.

Allied to this last point, a small minority of respondents felt the vision should provide information on how data can, and should, be used. For example, an equalities/advocacy organisation felt the vision should set out expectations that any data gathered will be used to inform the work of listed authorities if they are to meet their duties under PSED. A public sector organisation suggested the vision should incorporate how policy is enacted and how those responsible for delivering public services should be making use of

robust equality evidence to inform their decision-making, planning their services and understanding the impact of these services on all equality groups. Another equalities/advocacy organisation felt an explanation of how data will feed into policy would help to build trust with the Scottish public on the collection and use of equality data. As noted by a public sector organisation:

“Public bodies need to have access to better evidence/ data to make better evidence informed decision making which will lead to increased transparency and accountability. The better use of equality evidence and data will help public bodies to better perform the Public Sector Equality Duty. If achieved, this will lead to improved outcomes (experiences) for marginalised groups (including, but not limited to people with protected characteristics, there are other disadvantaged groups).”

Another key theme emerging, albeit only cited by a small minority of those answering this question, was of a need to recognise changes that impact upon data collected and how this is used. Two key examples provided by respondents were of the need to take into account the impact of COVID-19 and the equality issues it raised as well as considering the context and opportunity of pandemic recovery; and the current cost of living crisis which is perceived to be impacting on large numbers of people across Scotland. For

example, one organisation noted that the impacts of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis have altered Scotland's data collection requirements and there is now a need for consistency in data collection to reflect changes in society. A public sector organisation noted that any plans need to evolve over time to reflect the changing data and informational needs of organisations.

A need to align with other policies was highlighted by a small minority of respondents. This included a closer alignment between the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 and the [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26](#). Other references included the need to review the vision and ensure it is aligned and integrated with other Scottish Government areas such as Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the forthcoming Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Strategy, the Programme for Government and the National Performance Framework. It was felt this alignment would demonstrate part of a wider strategy for embedding equality, inclusion and human rights across the public sector as a whole.

While respondents on the whole were supportive of the vision, there were suggestions from a small minority of the need for outcomes, actions and monitoring to ensure that the vision is being adopted by all relevant organisations. There were comments that there is a need to refer to measurement and understanding of the impact on equality groups so as

to measure progress of the revised vision and ensure it is having the required impact.

A significant minority of respondents commented on the terminology used. Many of these respondents focused on the need for greater clarity about the terms 'sex' and 'gender' and what is meant by each, with some noting a preference for data on 'biological sex'. A public sector organisation noted that the vision needs to be jargon-free.

In revising this vision, there were a few requests for consultation and engagement with stakeholder organisations so as to gather a wider understanding of what changes are needed to ensure all people receive equal access to services and that these services are designed to meet the needs of service users in line with equality variables.

Other comments made by small numbers of respondents included:

- a request for recognition of socio-economic disadvantage, given its links with protected groups
- there is no mention of single parents in the vision which will lead to evidence gaps that are fundamental to achieving the Scottish Government's own child poverty targets
- the existing PSED to gather and use employee data is not delivering on its intended outcome

- the standard of EQIAs across local authorities and public bodies is very mixed
- a clear funding strategy should accompany any requests for more data collection
- a need to be more ambitious in the vision

Proposed actions

The consultation paper set out a number of actions identified by the Scottish Government and National Records of Scotland (NRS) across a number of key themes. It noted that these actions cover improvements to the data on a range of equality variables, including all nine of the protected characteristics. These improvements are set within a timeframe until the end of 2025.

The consultation paper highlighted various datasets that are currently used across a range of analytical areas within the Scottish Government including: education; justice; social security; poverty; equality; housing and homelessness; health and social care; transport; local government; labour market and the economy; constitution, international and migration; rural and environment; plus NRS. For each dataset, actions were outlined that are required to fill data gaps that have been identified, along with a timeline and the equality variables that will be covered by each dataset. Question 2 asked:

Q2.1: To what extent do you think that the proposed actions would adequately deliver on our ambition for a robust and wide-ranging equality evidence base?

As shown in Table 3, just under two-thirds of respondents (59%) thought the proposed actions would adequately deliver on the ambition for a robust and wide-ranging quality evidence base to a partial

extent. Only a small number believed these actions would deliver fully. Just under one in five (16%), almost all of them individuals, believed the proposed actions would not deliver at all on the ambition for a robust and wide-ranging equality evidence base.

Table 3: Extent to which the proposed actions would adequately deliver on the ambition for a robust and wide-ranging equality evidence base

	Fully	Partially	Not at all	Don't know	No response
Equalities/ advocacy groups (31)	1 (3%)	17 (55%)	2 (6%)	4 (13%)	7 (23%)
Public sector (47)	3 (6%)	31 (66%)	-	7 (15%)	6 (13%)
Other organisations (9)	-	8 (89%)	-	-	1 (11%)
Total organisations (87)	4 (5%)	56 (64%)	2 (2%)	11 (13%)	14 (16%)
Individuals (29)	-	13 (45%)	16 (55%)	-	-
Total respondents (116)	4 (3%)	69 (59%)	18 (16%)	11 (9%)	14 (12%)

Respondents were then asked to provide reasons for their answer and a total of 93 respondents did so. The largest numbers – a large minority overall mainly consisting of public sector and equalities/advocacy organisations – pointed out perceived gaps in the evidence base among the proposed actions. A wide variety of instances were given, each by single or very small numbers of respondents, including:

- more data usage from pre-hospital and ambulance service sources
- improved data collection on ethnicity, with comments that the Equality Act 2010 includes the need to monitor outcomes by colour and nationality (i.e. not solely using colour-coded categories) or national origins
- more data relating to the work of different types of public sector bodies such as museums and galleries
- more localised data regarding regional or remoter geographical areas
- a requirement for adult social care and social work indicators regarding development of the national care service and the social security system
- more data from the education sector (e.g. on sexual orientation as well as transgender identity)
- a linkage between hospital Medical Records and GP records

- improved data relating to those living in poverty (e.g. for single mother families, by gender identity, better collection of income data for identifying those in poverty, employment structure in minority ethnic households)
- more nuanced older age/65+ age categories

In addition, a small number of respondents advocated for the inclusion of other specific datasets including the Pupil Census, the Early Learning and Childcare Census, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration statistics and the Scottish Health Survey, without specifying actions for which they should be used.

A large minority of respondents expressed a desire to improve the equality evidence base generally, citing the collection and completeness of data within the actions as being limited in scope. There were requests for more disaggregated statistics, intersectional data, and greater amounts of data on all the protected characteristic groups to give a more detailed picture. Recommendations were also made to join together datasets to give added evidential value as opposed to using compartmentalised data. A few respondents advocated for a strategic approach to evidence improvements, such as having a clear rationale or focus on the optimal usage of statistics towards areas where the data can have the greatest impacts on decision-making, given limited resource availability. One example is given below:

“For instance, under looked after children (LAC) there is a proposal to collect improved data on disability but it is unclear if this is in relation to the parents of LAC or if it is in relation to the children who are looked after and therefore the purpose and use of the data is unclear. If it is in relation to parents is the purpose to be able to see if there is any impact on how parents disabilities are viewed by social workers and how it is taken into account in the decisions they make. Providing a clearer rationale will work to build data use, rather than just data collection, into the system.”
(Equalities/Advocacy)

Similar numbers of respondents did, however, comment positively on the actions, welcoming them as a step in the right direction as well as remarking positively about the increased availability of equality datasets. A few respondents saw the actions as broad and providing adequate coverage of a wide range of areas.

Guidance on the collection, procurement, handling, analysis and representation of data was requested by a significant minority. Common standards and data harmonisation were suggested to help ensure consistency of reporting, along with a human rights-based approach with attention to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) duties and accountability and transparency of activities.

Issues were raised by a significant minority regarding the robustness of evidence caused by small sample sizes in relation to some of the protected characteristics, in particular ethnicity and trans status data. Associated problems included data protection requirements regarding the identification of individuals and insufficient data being available to provide quantifiably analysable results. A need for increased sample sizes was advocated, with two organisations considering combining data from different years in order to get a robust sample.

A significant minority raised other concerns about the quality of datasets. Mention was made of difficulties obtaining equality data in areas such as justice, social security and poverty, as well as problems with data collection for the Population Census and a perceived lack of validation checks on data entry generally; prompts about missing data were put forward as a solution for the latter. Most concerns were over 'missing' sensitive equality-related data skewing the analysis. Members of the public were seen to be reluctant to provide such information, with work needed to encourage them to provide this data by persuading them of the benefits of doing so.

A few organisations thought there should be a role for qualitative data, citing the usefulness of lived experience as part of the equality evidence base.

A significant minority, mostly individual respondents, centred their answers on confusion and concerns over

the definitions of sex and gender. The language used in the actions was regarded as being confused and unclear, with discrepancies in the use of the terms between the different actions, particularly over which of these is a protected characteristic (sex). It was also affirmed that sex and gender should be two discrete characteristics, and that the actions should distinguish sex as biologically defined. Further concerns were voiced by a small minority perceiving that sex and gender definitions impacted negatively on women, allied to a lack of attention being paid to women regarding equality issues, in particular safety and the protection of women's spaces.

Concerns over statistics and policies regarding transgender **people** were also mentioned by a significant minority (mainly individuals). These respondents noted that a clear definition was needed, that this wasn't an equality variable listed as a protected characteristic under some actions, that there was a need to ask for information on both sex and gender, that there was a lack of evidence was available on the EEF and that biological health needs must not be based on self-identification of gender.

A few respondents mentioned other issues with terminology, citing examples with accuracy, the erratic use of terms and incoherent terms used for the nine protected characteristics (e.g. conflation of race and ethnicity).

Further points were made by small or very small numbers of respondents as follows:

a need to widen the scope of the range of characteristics under consideration in the actions beyond the equality characteristics already covered (extra categories suggested included neurodivergence, care experience and single parents)

a need to find out more about the proposed actions (e.g. through further engagement)

negative comments generally about the actions doing more harm than good or there being too much focus on the diversity agenda

Question 3 then asked respondents:

Q3.1: From your perspective, what are the most important actions outlined in the draft improvement plan? Please select up to five.

A number of respondents noted difficulties in choosing up to five specific actions, with some noting that all actions were important or worthwhile. Often, the actions chosen by respondents reflected the sector in which they operate. The following table outlines the number of respondents choosing each of the actions. As this demonstrates, the actions cited by the highest numbers of respondents were:

Action 33 (Scotland's Census 2022) (cited by 25% of respondents)

Action 15 (Scotland’s Gender Equality Index) (21% of respondents)

Action 16 (Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS) – Attitudes to Discrimination Model) and Action 1 (Looked after children); each of which was cited by more than 20 respondents (both mentioned by 18%).

Table 4: Actions perceived to be the most important

	Number choosing each action
Action 33 (NRS – Scotland’s Census 2022)	29 (25%)
Action 15 (Equality – Scotland’s Gender Equality Index)	24 (21%)
Action 1 (Education – Looked after children)	21 (18%)
Action 16 (Equality – Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS) – Attitudes to Discrimination module)	21 (18%)
Action 13 (Poverty – various)	18 (16%)
Action 3 (Education – Growing Up in Scotland)	15 (13%)

Action 12 (Poverty – Family Resources Survey (FRS): Food security data)	15 (13%)
Action 19 (Health and Social Care – Health and Care Experience Survey)	14 (12%)
Action 21 (Health and Social Care – various data relating to women’s health)	14 (12%)
Action 2 (Education – Child protection)	13 (11%)
Action 28 (Labour Market and the Economy – ONS Annual Population Survey (APS))	13 (11%)
Action 5 (Justice – various)	10 (9%)
Action 14 (Equality – ONS Time Use Survey (OTUS))	11 (9%)
Action 17 (Housing and Homelessness – Homelessness data collections HL1 and PREVENT1)	10 (9%)
Action 18 (Housing and Homelessness – Scotland’s Census 2022 equality results: housing analysis)	11 (9%)
Action 4 (Justice – various)	8 (7%)

Action 10 (Social Security – Social Security Scotland Client Survey)	8 (7%)
Action 11 (Social Security – Scottish Welfare Fund)	8 (7%)
Action 6 (Justice – Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS))	7 (6%)
Action 9 (Social Security – Social Security official statistics)	7 (6%)
Action 7 (Justice – various)	6 (5%)
Action 24 (Health and Social Care – Mental Health Inpatients Census (MHIC))	6 (5%)
Action 25 (Transport – Scottish Household Survey (SHS) Transport Components)	6 (5%)
Action 23 (Health and Social Care – Core Dataset for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Weight Management Services for Children/Young People and Adults in Scotland)	4 (3%)
Action 8 (Justice – Police Scotland Homicide data)	3 (3%)
Action 22 (Health and Social Care – Primary Care (General	3 (3%)

Practice Workforce Survey Scotland))	
Action 27 (Local Government – Scottish Household Survey (SHS) – Trust in Public Organisations – National Performance Framework Indicator)	3 (3%)
Action 31 (Constitution, International and Migration – Diversity in Political Representation in Scotland: Data Improvement Project)	3 (3%)
Action 35 (NRS – Small Area Statistics)	3 (3%)
Action 20 (Health and Social Care – Primary Care Out of Hours Workforce Survey)	2 (2%)
Action 26 (Transport – STATS 19 – Reported Road Casualties)	2 (2%)
Action 29 (Constitution, International and Migration – Scottish Household Survey (SHS) – Importance of Voting in Local Elections questions)	2 (2%)
Action 30 (Constitution, International and Migration –	1 (1%)

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey:
Attitudes to Government and
Political Engagement)

Action 32 (Rural and Environment
– June Agricultural Census) 1 (1%)

Action 34 (NRS – Vital Events –
Deaths) 1 (1%)

Regardless of which actions were chosen by respondents, similar comments were made for each. These included:

- the action will help to provide robust evidence or more equality data
- it can help to inform interventions early on and inform work with partners to deliver programmes aimed at providing better opportunities
- there is a need for more consistency in the way some protected characteristic data is collected
- there is a need for intersectional data
- there is a general need for granular/disaggregated data
- various groups with protected characteristics are underrepresented
- the specified action(s) ties in with corporate priorities or equalities outcomes.
- the action is a priority indicator for inequalities
- there is a need for more equality data

Of the 14 respondents who did not select any of the actions outlined, the key comment was that it was not possible to prioritise any of these given that they cover a wide range of important issues. There were a small number of general comments that there is a general lack of equality data in Scotland and that more needs to be done to try to improve the data robustness of equality evidence across all actions.

Having ascertained which of the actions were considered to be most important, the next question asked:

Q4.1: Are there any proposed actions that you think should be revised?

As shown in Table 5, just over half (51%) the respondents felt that any of the proposed actions should be revised compared to less than a quarter (18%) who felt no revisions were needed.

Table 5: Whether there are any proposed actions that should be revised

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	16 (52%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	9 (29%)
Public sector (47)	12 (26%)	16 (34%)	9 (19%)	10 (21%)

Other organisations (9)	5 (56%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	2 (22%)
Total organisations (87)	33 (38%)	20 (23%)	13 (15%)	21 (24%)
Individuals (29)	26 (90%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Total respondents	59 (51%)	21 (18%)	14 (12%)	22 (19%)

All those respondents who answered ‘yes’ to Q4.1 were then asked to say which actions they felt needed to be revised. Some of these respondents provided general comments although some referred to specific actions. The actions with the highest numbers of respondents suggesting a need for revisions were Action 33 (cited by 25% of respondents), Action 15 (21%), Action 16 (18%), Action 13 (16%), Actions 3 and 12 (both 13%), Actions 19 and 21 (12%), and Actions 28 and 2 (11%).

Key themes across all actions

A number of key themes emerged across all these actions. There was agreement of an overall need for more complete data to be collected on all priority groups across all datasets, to obtain larger sample sizes and a commitment to producing this analysis as standard. This includes full data across all equality characteristics to ensure there is access to support for all people. There were also some requests for equality

data to be provided at more localised geographies, including local authority level and regional and local levels; or for a capacity to be able to add socio-economic filters to different datasets, albeit there were also acknowledgements of the difficulties of obtaining robust data across a number of the protected characteristics because of small sample sizes. A small number of respondents also suggested it would be useful to collect data on other characteristics such as neurodivergence or care experience.

There were also requests for consistency in the way data is collected across different datasets across Scotland. One example given was of a need for harmonised age bands or categories. A number of respondents also agreed on the need for an intersectional approach to data collection and analysis as well as having robust sample sizes that allow for the disaggregation of data.

While there was an acknowledgement of the need for robust quantitative data on which to base decision-making, there were also some calls for more qualitative data as this can enhance understanding of the issues impacting upon specific groups of people. There were also a small number of suggestions of the need to ensure all data collected is accessible to users and for training or guidance to be provided on how to work with, use, analyse and interpret data.

Some organisations also noted the need for a commitment to co-design and co-production work,

rather than just engagement and consultation, as lived experience can provide data collectors with valuable information in terms of question development.

Other points raised throughout responses included requests to replace 'gender' with 'sex' or 'sex/gender' with 'sex'; and to remove the terms 'trans status' and 'transgender identity' as they are not protected characteristics and to replace them with 'gender reassignment'.

The following paragraphs provide comments on each of the specific actions.

Education

This incorporates Actions 1-3, which are Looked after children, Child protection and Growing Up in Scotland (GUS).

Key changes suggested by respondents included:

- removal of the option 'prefer not to say' for questions on sex as this could lose vital data (all 3 actions)
- collect data on care experience (Action 1 specifically)
- there is potential for further data collection to identify differences among a range of white ethnicities, in line with Scotland's Census 2022 (Action 2 specifically)
- there should be more granular data on disability (all 3 actions)

- there should be questions on sexual harassment in schools and other educational settings (Action 3)

Justice

This incorporates Actions 4-8, which include the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS), Police Scotland homicide data and various other datasets.

Key changes suggested by respondents included:

- provision of data on sentencing and profiles (all 5 actions)
- provision of data on characteristics of victims as well as perpetrators of crime (all 5 actions)
- need to consider gender, sexual orientation and disability (Action 6)
- include minority ethnic peoples' experiences of policing, access to legal advice and support and experiences in the justice system (Action 5)
- more granular categories (currently there are no harmonised age bands or categories across different datasets in Scotland) (all 5 actions)
- collect data on sexual orientation and gender reassignment (all 5 actions)
- there is a need to understand the intentions behind this action, for example, to provide clarification over what policies or practices this data would inform (Action 8)

Social Security

This incorporates Actions 9-11, which include Social Security official statistics, Social Security Scotland Client Survey and the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF).

Key changes suggested by respondents included:

- provision of data on single parents and families with babies under the age of one as this would help to identify if people in these groups are applying for and getting the benefits to which they are entitled, and allow for targeted action (Actions 9 and 10)
- data should reflect the six priority groups in the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (Actions 9 and 10)
- there is a need for data to be provided at a city/regional/local authority level (Actions 9 and 10)
- provision of data on pregnancy and maternity (Actions 9 and 10)
- more granular categories (currently there are no harmonised age bands or categories across different datasets in Scotland) (Action 11)
- inclusion of data on sexual orientation and disability for those applying for SWF (to include numbers awarded, refused grants, reasons for applying, items awarded, reasons for rejection) (Action 11)
- need for data on impairment categories for Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment

as this will help to understand differences in those with experience of the social security system (Actions 9, 10 and 11)

- data on clients for whom English is an additional language (Action 10)

Poverty

This incorporates Actions 12-13, which include the Family Resources Survey (FRS): Food Security Data and various other poverty related surveys/associated analytical resources.

Key changes suggested by respondents included:

- provision of data on the cost of living crisis and fuel insecurity; data is needed quickly given this current context (both actions)
- focus on improving access to gendered poverty data (Action 13)
- the Scottish Government should deliver the recommendations outlined in Commission on Widening Access (COWA) on free school meals and other indicators on poverty (both actions)
- the Scottish Government should deliver the recommendations outlined in the Learning Journey on implementing a unique learning number (both actions)
- the Wealth and Assets data should offer geographical cover across Scotland (Action 13)
- data should reflect the six priority groups in the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (both actions)

- there should be the same equality variables as Action 23 (Core Dataset for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Weight Management Services for Children/Young People and Adults in Scotland) as these can influence food insecurity (Action 12)

Equality

This incorporates Actions 14-16, which include the ONS Time Use Survey (OTUS), Scotland's Gender Equality Index and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS) – Attitudes to Discrimination module.

Key changes suggested by respondents included:

- harm reduction and safeguarding are crucial in this action but the consultation paper does not indicate how findings will be presented (Action 16)
- SSAS – Attitudes to Discrimination module should be included in the survey at regular intervals to track progress over time; particular attention should be paid towards disability and long-term conditions in the 2025 report (Action 16)

Housing and Homelessness

This incorporates Actions 17-18, which include Homelessness data collections (HL1 and PREVENT 1) and Scotland's Census 2022 equality results: housing analysis.

Key changes suggested by respondents included:

- a less vague commitment to the data that will be collected and clear motivations for an equality characteristic not being relevant (Action 17)
- provision of data on exclusion, mental health, substance misuse and offending (Action 17)
- timeframes need to be quicker and take account of advisory guidance, Collecting Equality information: National Guidance for Scottish Landlords (Action 17)
- there is a need to measure disability in a consistent manner (Action 17)
- there is a need to provide data on types of impairment and medical conditions (Action 17)
- there needs to be data on undeclared housing residents (Action 18)

Health and Social Care

This incorporates Actions 19-24, which include the Health and Care Experience Survey, Primary Care Out of Hours Workforce Survey, various data relating to women's health, Primary Care (General Practice) Workforce Survey Scotland, the Core Dataset for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Weight Management Services for Children/Young People and Adults in Scotland and Mental Health Inpatients Census (MHIC).

Key changes suggested by respondents included:

- the actions are weighted towards health and there needs to be reference to sources of data about social care as well as information on who provides care (all actions)

- equity of access for all to clinical trials (all actions)
- sex should be added to the equality variables as it is relevant (Actions 23 and 24)
- align with the priority actions under the women's health plan (Action 21)
- the timelines under sub-actions A-E are too ambitious (Action 23)
- the Health and Care Experience Survey is biased as it is distributed via GP surgeries and only completed by a small group of patients; there should be a larger sample size and more questions in relation to social care. This does not account for groups of patients such as those in minority ethnic groups who are unlikely to self-report (Action 19)
- provision of data on ethnicity, long-term conditions and pregnancy/maternity, women's experiences of menopause and its impact on health and employment, to obtain a more representative breakdown or population experience (Actions 19, 21 and 24)
- the proposal to 'investigate' should be strengthened to be a key priority (Action 20)
- there is no linkage between hospital medical records and GP medical records (all actions)

Transport

This incorporates Actions 25-26, which include the SHS: Transport components and STATS 19 – Reported Road Casualties.

Key changes suggested by respondents included:

- provision of data on protected characteristics for neighbourhoods, communities, access to and confidence in using digital /online resources, welfare applications etc. (Action 25)
- provision of data on walking; there is a need for a strategic monitoring system across Scotland to provide this data (Action 25)
- the detail provided is too vague and more information is needed on what breakdowns are envisaged (Action 25)
- there is a need for data on the ethnicity of casualties (Action 26)

Local Government

This incorporates Action 27, which is the SHS – Trust in Public Organisations – National Performance Framework (NPF) Indicator.

The key change for Action 27 suggested by respondents was:

- provision of data on protected characteristics for neighbourhoods, communities, access to and confidence in using digital/online resources, welfare applications etc

Labour Market and the Economy

This incorporates Action 28, which is the ONS Annual Population Survey (APS).

The key changes for Action 28 suggested by respondents included:

- provision of data on disabled people in the labour market
- this is too narrow in scope and needs to include additional data such as disability, age and sex
- the Scottish Government should work with ONS and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to improve the sample design to allow greater access to intersectional data, and allocate resources for boosting sample size

Constitution, International and Migration

This incorporates Actions 29-31, which are the SHS – Importance of Voting in Local Elections questions, SHS – Attitudes to Government, and Political Engagement and Diversity in Political Representation in Scotland: Data Improvement Project.

The key changes suggested by respondents included:

- provision of data on protected characteristics for neighbourhoods, communities, access to and confidence in using digital/online resources, welfare applications etc (Action 29)
- provision of data on “marginalised or minoritised groups” (Action 30)
- provision of additional data on disability (Action 30)
- inclusion of questions on income as per SSAS (Action 31)

- diversity in Political Representation in Scotland needs to be rolled out for other elections (Action 31)

Rural and Environment

This incorporates Action 32, which is the June Agricultural Census.

The key change to Action 32 suggested by respondents was for further breakdowns of data in terms of geography.

National Records of Scotland (NRS)

This incorporates Actions 33-35 which are Scotland's Census 2022, Vital Events – Deaths and Small Area Statistics.

The key changes suggested by respondents included:

- ensure the time period between gathering the data and publication of the data is as minimal as possible (Action 33)
- harmonise the data with existing national statistics (Action 33)
- disability status data should be collected for death registrations (Action 34)
- many disabled adults do not qualify for council tax exemption as disregarded adults, so data on the reduction scheme for disabled people would be useful (Action 35)

The consultation paper then noted that there are many costs and challenges to collecting, analysing

and reporting equality data. While the benefits of equality data are clear, data collection is expensive and every question that is added to a survey or to an administrative data collection will have a cost. The consultation paper went onto say the proposed actions in the draft improvement plan are achievable within existing resource constraints.

The next question went onto ask:

Q5.1: Are there any additional improvement actions that you think should be considered that are achievable within the 2023-2025 time period?

As shown in Table 6, just under half (43%) the respondents felt there are additional improvement actions that should be considered.

Table 6: Whether there are any additional improvement actions that should be considered

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	15 (48%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	10 (32%)
Public sector (47)	20 (43%)	10 (21%)	9 (19%)	8 (17%)
Other organisations (9)	5 (56%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	2 (22%)
Total organisations (87)	40 (46%)	14 (16%)	13 (15%)	20 (23%)

Individuals (29)	10 (34%)	6 (21%)	10 (34%)	3 (10%)
Total respondents	50 (43%)	20 (17%)	23 (20%)	23 (20%)

Respondents who felt that additional improvement actions should be considered were then asked to say which ones should be considered, along with reasons as to why. A total of 50 respondents provided comments.

To an extent, many of the comments echoed points made in the previous questions and very few comments were provided on any additional actions that were needed. Many of the comments were about enhancing the existing actions, rather than creating new ones. The key issues raised included:

- agreement on the importance of having a strong evidence base on which decisions and policy can be made, including having robust sample sizes across all data collection mechanisms for all the equality characteristics
- the need for intersectional data to help reveal sub-groups within the population who will have different needs and challenges. There were also some comments that data and statistics gathered tend to treat groups with protected characteristics as being homogenous when this is not the case and there can be many sub-

group differences across each of the protected characteristics

- the need for national data to be segmented at a regional, local and local authority level. A need was also identified for improved data collection across rural and urban areas so that, for example, issues specific to the Island communities can be highlighted
- the need for disaggregated data across a range of protected characteristics and by socio-economic, cultural or geographical sub-groups. Again this requires sufficiently robust sample sizes
- there were requests for consistency across population surveys so the same information is collected. This would help to extend the robustness of data gathered and enable different datasets to be combined. Examples included the need for harmonised age bands, disability information and sex
- the accessibility of data was cited by a few respondents and there were suggestions for guidance to be provided in order to help promote good practice on the collection, analysis and interpretation of data, and support for stakeholders so they can understand how to maximise the use of datasets in developing services and making policy
- while quantitative data is perceived to be fundamental to decision making, there were also calls for qualitative data to sit alongside this as it

can help to enhance understanding and interpretation of quantitative data

- greater collaboration between the Scottish Government and other public bodies

Additional improvement actions noted by respondents included data capture and analysis on:

- gypsy/travellers
- children and young people with long term COVID-19
- asylum seekers and refugees
- the inclusion of other non-protected characteristics such as neurodivergence or care experience
- lived experience (across all actions)
- hospital discharges
- human rights
- children's rights
- sports participation
- socio-economic disadvantage
- white minority ethnic groupings
- care experience

Finally, a few comments were made regarding the EEF and the need to improve its utility, for example, in creating ways to present and make it easy to find intersectional data or to create links between the drivers of poverty and poverty themes on the EEF. At some of the consultation events there were comments of a need to increase the utility of the EEF by including more data that is up-to-date and that can link

easily to other datasets. One example given of out-of-date data was the 'healthcare experiences' section for GPs which had a link to the Health and Care Experience Survey in 2013, although the survey from 2021 had been published. A few respondents also felt the EEF needs to be more accessible to users and offer a good search function. There were also a few calls to increase awareness of the EEF and how it can be used to maximum benefit. A small number of individuals at the consultation events also noted the usefulness of a one-stop-shop which could be used to access relevant data, with one of these noting that there is a lot of reinventing the wheel across different organisations, rather than the pooling of information and data.

The potential for collaboration

The consultation paper noted the Scottish Government cannot take sole responsibility for providing information to address everything stakeholders would like to know. The range of interests, perspectives and expertise require different ways of collecting and accessing data and information by the public sector, academic institutions, the third sector and from within the involved communities themselves. It then noted the Scottish Government welcomes collaboration with stakeholders to improve the equality evidence base.

The next question asked:

Q6.1: Would you or your organisation like to collaborate with the Scottish Government on any of the proposed actions?

As shown in Table 7, just under half (43%) the respondents noted they would like to collaborate with the Scottish Government.

Table 7: Whether respondent or their organisation would like to collaborate with the Scottish Government on any of the proposed actions

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Equalities/ advocacy groups (31)	17 (55%)	3 (10%)	2 (6%)	9 (29%)
Public sector (47)	22 (47%)	3 (6%)	13 (28%)	9 (19%)
Other organisations (9)	5 (56%)	-	1 (11%)	3 (33%)
Total organisations (87)	44 (51%)	6 (7%)	16 (18%)	21 (24%)
Individuals (29)	6 (21%)	12 (41%)	6 (21%)	5 (17%)
Total respondents	50 (43%)	18 (16%)	22 (19%)	26 (22%)

The second part of this question then asked respondents which actions they would like to collaborate with the Scottish Government on, and how.

A total of 61 respondents made comments in response to the second part of Q6. Responses were very diffuse in nature, with (in the main) only a few or smaller numbers of replies nominating each of the particular actions or groups of actions on which they would like to collaborate. Smaller numbers still gave details about how they would like to collaborate on these.

Regarding the education-related actions (1, 2 and 3), a small number of respondents expressed a desire to collaborate on any of these, with an equalities/advocacy organisation looking forward to “continuing to work ... on the development of the CLAS and Child Protection data returns”. Additionally, a few respondents specified either Action 1 (e.g. a public sector organisation wished to work on “how a Looked After Child is defined and how we can ensure we identify them in our data sets to evidence the impact of our interventions”) or Action 3, for instance regarding the provision of support or advice.

A few respondents mentioned collaborating on justice-related actions (4, 5, 6, 7 and 8). Support or advice provision, and community engagement and capacity building were stated in relation to Actions 5, 6 or 8 by

a small number of respondents, but without giving further details.

Social security-related actions (9, 10 and 11) were only mentioned a small number of times, almost all in terms of general support or advice. An equalities/advocacy organisation wished “to discuss how we could work together to ensure necessary data is being collected to identify and ensure the right actions are taken to reduce child poverty, particularly amongst the priority family groups identified in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan”. This was also stated in relation to the poverty-related actions.

Larger numbers of responses – a significant minority - discussed collaboration on poverty-related actions (12 and 13). Two equalities/advocacy organisations were keen to take a role “to ensure necessary data is being collected to identify and ensure the right actions are taken to reduce child poverty, particularly amongst the priority family groups identified in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan”. One other equalities/advocacy group stated they would be happy to provide women’s lived experience data surrounding the cost of living. A couple of respondents stated collaboration on Action 12 specifically, with one offering support with food security data. A few focused on Action 13, with suggestions from single public sector respondents involving work with the Scottish Government to assess poverty with a wider set of measures to complement the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), and improving poverty measures to include a

rural perspective (perceiving that SIMD has limitations in rural contexts).

Equality-related actions (14, 15 and 16) elicited offers of collaboration from a few respondents, mainly to all or any of these, with few details provided. A public sector organisation expressed interest in working with the EEF “to develop a measurement framework to ascertain how we will recognise our success and impact” regarding a shortly to be published set of National Equality Outcomes. A very small number of respondents specified collaboration on particular actions, with one offering to provide their own organisational data in relation to Action 15.

Only a small number offered help with housing and homelessness-related actions (17 and 18), with almost no details given. A public sector organisation suggested collaboration regarding Action 17 relating to HL1 and PREVENT1 data as required.

Larger numbers – a significant minority – specified collaboration in relation to the health and social care-related actions (19 to 24). Apart from general comments about provision of support or advice regarding community engagement, consultations and other evidence provision, there were two mentions by public sector bodies of already working with the Scottish Government on social care workforce statistics and workforce planning, and another comment expressing interest in collaborating on actions relating to Health and Social Care Partnership

(HSCP) business particularly to understand intersectionality in a small local HSCP area. Regarding responses about specific actions, an ‘other’ organisation offered to support, with respect to Action 21, evidence-gathering exercises with a focus on the mental health support needs for victims and survivors of domestic violence and gaps in the current service provision, while two organisations were keen to help provide data relating to women’s health. On Action 23, a public sector body would be happy to collaborate with a “Core Dataset for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Weight Management Services for Children/Young People and Adults in Scotland”, while for Action 24 an equalities/advocacy respondent advocated a possible role in the Mental Health Inpatient Census review, most applicably in part 3.

Only a small number mentioned transport-related actions (25 and 26), with only one of these giving any details. An ‘other’ organisation stated they were already collaborating with Transport Scotland, Public Health Scotland (PHS) and the Public Health and Sustainable Transport Partnership. This respondent noted “There are insights from the 16 year period we have been engaged in research in Scotland and from the recent needs assessment work we have undertaken that we would be willing to share”.

Small numbers again mentioned the local government-related action (27) and none of these gave any details.

A few respondents mentioned collaboration on the labour market and economy-related action (28). An equalities/advocacy body offered to share information from their own work on the area “...as well as challenges in doing analysis on employment and ethnicity. We would like to see analysis go beyond simple breakdowns of employment rates, inactivity and unemployment”. No other respondent gave any details.

Constitutional, international and migration-related actions (29 to 31) were only mentioned a small number of times, without respondents expanding upon this.

The rural and environment-related action (32) only elicited one response. A public sector body said they could be involved in any extension of the scope of the June Agricultural Census to cover gaps in equality data.

Collaboration around the NRS-related actions (33 to 35) was mentioned by small numbers of respondents, although no details beyond generally improving the evidence base were offered. All but one mention cited collaboration on Action 33 specifically.

A significant number of respondents focused their comments on improving the evidence base without mentioning the actions. Single suggestions included:

- collaboration on recommendations impacting on local authority datasets

- defining a national dataset to support any proposed National Equality Outcomes that may arise from the current review of the Scottish Specific Duties that support the PSED
- data gathering discussions regarding the Tackling Child Poverty priority families
- collaborating with ongoing work being progressed through Research Data Scotland (RDS) and PHS on developing and piloting protected characteristics reference datasets through data linkage
- more use to be made of qualitative or lived experience data

A few organisations also mentioned other equality-related data aspects, such as helping improve data quality, reducing the administrative costs of data capture, collaboration to make a more coherent data landscape and making health data more inclusive. A few individuals and equalities/advocacy organisations offered help around gender and/or sex sensitive data collection and usage. Very small numbers offered similar help related to the improvement of disabled or ethnicities-related data (e.g. providing lists of missing data sources from the EEF).

A small number of organisations stated that they were open to suggestions for collaboration or happy to help in any way. However, two public sector bodies queried whether there was resource availability in terms of costs and staff to help with improving evidence at the present time. An individual attending a consultation

event suggested the Scottish Government should provide support for other organisations – such as those in the third sector – to enable them to collect data that could then be shared with other organisations.

The next question asked:

Q7.1: Are you aware of any other organisations, networks or individuals the Scottish Government should collaborate with to improve the equality evidence base?

As shown in Table 8, just under half (45%) of respondents noted they were aware of other organisations, networks or individuals the Scottish Government should collaborate with to improve the equality evidence base.

Table 8: Whether respondent is aware of others the Scottish Government should collaborate with to improve the equality evidence base

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	8 (26%)	7 (23%)	4 (13%)	12 (39%)
Public sector (47)	19 (40%)	13 (28%)	6 (13%)	9 (19%)
Other organisations (9)	4 (44%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	3 (33%)

Total organisations (87)	31 (36%)	21 (24%)	11 (13%)	24 (28%)
Individuals (29)	21 (72%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)
Total respondents	52 (45%)	24 (21%)	14 (12%)	26 (22%)

The second part of this question then asked respondents to say who the Scottish Government should collaborate with and a total of 53 respondents commented.

Most recommended bodies or groups with whom to collaborate, but there were relatively few mentions of particular actions. The most prevalent groupings discussed by a large minority, consisting almost entirely of individuals, were sex-based campaigning groups supporting women, both in general and specifically concerning various issues. By far the most frequently mentioned group – by a significant minority of respondents overall – was For Women Scotland. It was suggested collaboration should be on work to protect women’s sex-based rights (regarding health issues, for example), on involvement in legislation relating to how women are defined in law, and on actions that impact on the protected characteristic of sex. Other sex-based campaigning groups supporting women recommended for collaboration by very small numbers of respondents included Sex Matters, Fair Play for Women, The Women’s Rights Network, FiLiA

and Forth Valley Feminists. Single mentions were made of individual specialists to help with advice on the gathering of all sex-related data. In this context, there were also a small number of mentions of policy group Murray Blackburn MacKenzie in connection with their expertise in policy-making and equalities, with one respondent citing Actions 1 and 2 as suitable for their involvement.

Equalities organisations, councils, networks and stakeholder groups were advocated by a significant minority of mainly public sector respondents. Very small numbers of mentions were made of each of the following:

- The Scottish Council Equality Network (SCEN), in connection with Action 27 (local government)
- Grampian Regional Equality Council
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), in connection with research and data gathering regarding the Equality actions (14 to 16)
- Fairer Scotland Duty Network

A few mainly public sector respondents advocated centres of expertise in the academic field. Specific single mentions were made of the Universities of Glasgow and Dundee, as well as the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences, the latter for linking up with researchers researching equality data. In general these sources were recommended for their

expertise in research and understanding of equality data.

Similar numbers suggested collaboration with health organisations, with a very small number of mentions for PHS (e.g. for CAMHS data) and single mentions for the NHS and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health. An equalities/advocacy organisation recommended LGBT Health and Wellbeing in connection with Action 19. Health and Social Care data strategy teams and Public Health Intelligence teams also received single mentions.

Small numbers advocated collaboration with the following:

- local authorities/councils (e.g. COSLA, Social Work Departments, Local Government Benchmarking Framework), for data collection capacity. There were also single mentions for the UK Government and the Welsh Government, noting the latter is currently developing a series of equality evidence units
- social care organisations (SSSC for social care workforce statistics, CELSIS, Who Cares Scotland, Care Experience Group – all in relation to Action 1 - and the Care Inspectorate for collecting data directly from care providers)
- education-related bodies (SQA, GTCS or other professional registration bodies, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), and Northern

Alliance and/or other regional variations for the education and child-related actions)

- children and young people-related organisations (Young Scot, the Children's Care and Protection Data Community Scotland (for a range of expertise on families and children and approaches to data collection), the Disabled Children Child Protection Network and the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (the official statistics provider relating to the Children's Hearing System)

Smaller numbers of respondents recommended collaboration with a variety of equalities-related organisations as follows:

- ethnicity-related (Black Professionals Scotland, CEMVO Scotland (for contact referrals and networks of contacts), the Ethnic Minority National Resilience Network and Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS)). The Scottish Refugee Council was also mentioned by one respondent
- disability-related (more data through lived experience and an improved evidence base generally through encouraged participation for disabled people; the British Deaf Association and the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) were each mentioned once)
- LGBT-related (LGBT Youth Scotland, Stonewall Scotland and LGBT Health and Wellbeing)

A small number of respondents advocated more use of qualitative and lived experience data generally, recommending third sector sources.

Finally, single mentions were made (mostly without referring to actions) of the following broad range of organisations:

- Office of Communications (OFCOM) (for surveys or data on internet use)
- Carnegie UK Trust (on the subject of the need for digital inclusion)
- Public Health and Sustainable Transport Partnership (for improvements to equality data)
- ONS - for statistical harmonisation work being undertaken and administrative data research, together with expertise on data linkage
- Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK) – again for expertise on data linkage which may present significant benefits to the equality evidence base
- NRS - regarding equity of access in relation to cancer trials
- Scottish Policy and Research Exchange (SPRE)
- The Police Scotland Equality Diversity and Inclusion Independent Review Group and National Independent Strategic Advisory Group
- The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations, Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers and the

Scottish Housing Regulator, who collectively developed “Collecting Equality Information: National Guidance for Scottish Social Landlords”

- Scotland’s Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP) – regarding Action 13

Use of Equality Evidence

The consultation paper noted that ‘equality evidence’ refers to statistics and research across different themes for age, disability, race/ethnicity, sex/gender, religion, sexual orientation, transgender status, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership, plus ‘intersections’ between these characteristics (e.g. younger women, minority ethnic disabled people, older trans people etc.).

Question 8 asked:

Q8.1: How often do you or your organisation use equality evidence?

As demonstrated in Table 9, just under half (46%) of respondents are often using equality evidence and just under a quarter (24%) are using this occasionally. Only small numbers of respondents claimed to rarely or never use equality evidence.

Table 9: Frequency of using equality evidence

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't know	No response
Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	12 (39%)	10 (32%)	1 (3%)	-	2 (6%)	6 (19%)
Public sector (47)	29 (62%)	12 (26%)	-	-	-	6 (13%)
Other (9)	5 (56%)	2 (22%)	-	-	-	2 (22%)
Total organisations (87)	46 (53%)	24 (28%)	1 (1%)	-	2 (2%)	14 (16%)
Individuals (29)	7 (24%)	4 (14%)	2 (7%)	6 (21%)	7 (24%)	3 (10%)
Total respondents	53 (46%)	28 (24%)	3 (3%)	6 (5%)	9 (8%)	17 (15%)

Respondents who answered 'often', 'occasionally' or 'rarely' were then asked a series of questions, the first

of which related to which equality evidence sources they or their organisation use, and 80 respondents provided sources.

Most of these used a combination of several different sources. The largest numbers (a large minority consisting predominately of public sector organisations) said they used Census data or Census outputs, occasionally specifying Scotland's Census data from 2011. Slightly smaller numbers, though still a large minority almost entirely consisting of public sector or 'other' organisations, used the Scottish Government's EEF. Similar numbers, though this time consisting of roughly equal numbers of public sector and equalities/advocacy organisations, used publications, reports, data and statistics published on the Scottish Government website.

A significant minority from the range of organisation types sourced evidence from the SHS. Smaller numbers (a few respondents each) mentioned information usage from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS), Scottish Health Survey (SHeS) and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS).

Among other large-scale data sources, data produced by the ONS was mentioned by a significant minority, with the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the OTUS specifically mentioned. A few organisations quoted SIMD, and similar numbers other NRS data such as population projections and publications.

A large number of respondents mentioned a wide range of subject-specific sources. A few respondents each referred to the following:

- employment data (equal opportunities surveys, employee surveys, My Job Scotland website, Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC's) workforce data site). Very small numbers mentioned Skills Development Scotland statistics (e.g. Datahub, apprenticeship statistics, Regional Skills Assessment)
- NHS sources (NHS 24, services, workforce reports, Scottish Workforce Information Strategic System (SWISS) system for staff, Electronic Employee Support System (eESS) reports, national health board reports, health indexes). Additionally, a few respondents mentioned PHS sources (Observatory (ScotPHO), PHS publications and reports)
- child-related (CLAS, Child Protection returns, Looked after Children, Together (Children's Rights), United Nations data relating to children's rights)
- education-related (Scottish Education Management Information System (SEEMiS), attainment data, qualification uptake data, Pupil Census, Teacher Census, Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS))
- social security-related (Social Security Scotland: stats, client diversity and equalities

analysis, and Department of Work and Pensions: Stat-Xplore (benefits statistics)).

A small number of responses mentioned housing-related sources (e.g. Homelessness in Scotland statistics and housing waiting list information).

Among other organisations quoted as evidence sources, Close the Gap was mentioned for its research reports by a few respondents, mainly public sector bodies. Small or very small numbers of mentions were also made of the following:

- Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (for research reports)
- EHRC (e.g. reports “Is Britain Fairer?” and “Is Scotland Fairer?”)

A large minority of respondents stated generic tools by which they obtained information, as well as specific sources for evidence. Mentions were made of focus groups, interviews, surveys, lived experience data, statistical analysis, and sources for local and regional data. Additionally, a large minority of organisations said they generated their own internal information and data by using the aforesaid tools, as well as employee surveys and forms, for understanding their diversity and equalities situation with respect to their employees and service users.

A few respondents stated academic (journals, research, etc.) or third sector sources (reports, literature, etc.) for evidence without giving further

details. Engaging with equality groups was mentioned by two respondents.

Finally, single respondents noted evidence from UK Government data, the Public Bodies Equality Evidence Toolkit, and Scotland's Gender Equality Index.

Following on, the next question asked:

Q8.3: How do you or your organisation use equality evidence?

A total of 77 respondents (almost all of them organisations) replied to this question. Most of these stated several different uses. The main use, given by nearly half of respondents, was to shape decision-making, strategic planning or inform policy for their own organisation or sector of interest. A few respondents said the evidence was used specifically to shape equalities policies and plans, and a small number noted its value in prioritising action areas. A large minority used equality evidence in reports (e.g. equality monitoring, mainstreaming reports or case studies), papers, consultation responses or annual or statistical publications. Slightly smaller numbers of mostly public sector organisations used the evidence to inform EQIAs or to structure their EQIA process. Similar numbers (almost all public sector organisations) used the evidence to monitor, identify, develop, set or review Equality Outcomes, as exemplified below:

“The data tells us where we are lacking, for example in our 2021 Report we noted that our Ethnic minority rep..., is low in comparison to the population in Central belt, hence our EQ Outcome to increase our rep by 4% by 2025. We have already achieved an increase since our last EQ report in April 2021 from 1.5% to 2.5%” (Public sector)

A large minority of mainly public sector organisations said equality evidence was used to ensure fairness regarding diversity and inclusion or to ensure no groups (e.g. women, LGBT) were underrepresented in their sector or organisations. Further points were made about identifying access barriers and eliminating discrimination. A few organisations pinpointed its use for recruitment purposes (e.g. advertising job opportunities to underrepresented groups or reviewing recruitment processes).

A large minority of organisations said they use the evidence to monitor trends or for tracking and benchmarking purposes; for instance, comparing local or organisational trends to national or whole population trends, tailoring internal or service user demographics to regional demographics, or measuring changes over time. Slightly smaller numbers said the evidence was used to gain insights or inform understanding of particular groups or to identify their needs. Similar proportions noted its use for academic or analytical research purposes, without

going into much detail. Two equalities/advocacy groups used it for understanding gaps in data.

A significant minority (mainly consisting of public sector bodies) highlighted the use of evidence in improving services, assessing service delivery or improving ways of working, for instance in building capacity. A small minority alluded to its use in informing particular projects and programmes, such as in creating educational resources, performing engagement activities and doing due diligence on potential projects.

Similar numbers (largely a mix of public sector and equalities/advocacy organisations) cited awareness-raising uses of equality evidence. Instances were given of disseminating information to stakeholders, community partners and elected members via talks or seminars, with a couple of mentions of uses for Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. A few stated promotional purposes, such as public education work and identifying target audiences.

A few organisations stated a role in complying with regulations, such as those supporting the PSED or the provision of statutory assessments. Very small numbers mentioned uses for training and educational purposes (e.g. diversity and inclusion training) or to support funding or grant applications.

The next question asked:

Q8.4: How do you or your organisation usually access equality evidence?

A total of 66 responses were received to this question. Most answers were general in nature. Many responses reflected those given earlier at Q8.2. The highest numbers – a large minority - cited web or online access. Slightly smaller numbers of mostly public sector bodies claimed to use their own internal sources in the form of research, reports, data, publications, equality monitoring forms and employee and recruitment statistics.

A significant minority of public sector and equalities/advocacy organisations cited access via the Scottish Government website. The EEF was quoted by a few respondents. The Scottish Government was also mentioned a few times in connection with publications, databases and specific requests.

A significant minority of respondents stated access through other public bodies, including local authorities, the NHS, PHS, the UK Government, the police, Social Security Scotland and the SQA.

Accessing equality evidence via Census information was stated a few times, although a respondent attending a consultation event noted that Census 2011 data is considered too old by some people. There were a small number of mentions for other specified datasets including SIMD, the Scottish Longitudinal Study, the SHS and the SCJS. Other

specific sources were the ONS (small numbers), NRS, MyJob Scotland for public and third sector job information and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (all very small numbers).

Additionally, there were a significant number of mentions of external research, without giving much detail; the third sector and policy organisations were quoted as sources for this.

Similar numbers cited direct or face-to-face engagement with stakeholders such as equality groups, visitors and membership organisations. A few respondents gave general mentions of published information, sources, reports or research, and of academic sources such as journals. A small number cited access through direct contact, networking or collaboration with other organisations.

The next question went onto ask:

Q9.1: Do you face any barriers to using equality evidence?

As shown in Table 10, almost two thirds of respondents (65%) said they experienced barriers to using equality evidence.

Table 10: Whether barriers are faced in using equality evidence

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
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Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	18 (58%)	4 (13%)	2 (6%)	7 (23%)
Public sector (47)	36 (77%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	7 (15%)
Other organisations (9)	5 (56%)	1 (11%)	- (0%)	3 (33%)
Total organisations (87)	59 (68%)	8 (9%)	3 (3%)	17 (20%)
Individuals (29)	16 (55%)	5 (17%)	4 (14%)	4 (14%)
Total respondents	75 (65%)	13 (11%)	7 (6%)	21 (18%)

Respondents who claimed to experience barriers to using equality evidence were then asked to provide information on the barriers faced, and 83 respondents provided a response. Most comments alluded to concerns about available equality evidence not being relevant to needs.

The most often quoted difficulties given in accessing the required equality evidence (quoted by a significant minority of respondents across all organisation types) were inconsistency of approach and non-standardised equality evidence, particularly regarding data collection. Examples of issues encountered were the variety and inconsistency of data collection methods used by organisations, differing data formats resulting in data incompatibility, and inconsistencies in

language and categorisation, making it difficult to know which of the choices to use. There were a few calls for standardisation of data reporting.

A smaller but still significant minority reported difficulties finding the required data, information or evidence, or in finding the required breakdowns. Similar numbers pointed to resource limitations in terms of time needed to analyse data and to identify and interpret evidence.

A few respondents each alluded to the following access difficulties:

- problems with the EEF (e.g. lack of user friendliness, difficulties accessing the required evidence, the website displaying as not secure, search tools bringing up unnecessary links or documents, acting at too high a level to reliably inform impact assessments and not having the data needed)
- having to access multiple sources to obtain the required information (e.g. multiple requests being needed to obtain similar information) with suggestions advocating a one stop shop or centralised system
- permissibility barriers to accessing evidence (e.g. GDPR, data protection and confidentiality issues, and data not being made available by public organisations)

An equalities/advocacy group pinpointed the following issue:

“...some public bodies have incorrectly interpreted the introduction of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as prohibiting them from asking service users their sex or gathering wider equalities data relating to their employees. Similarly, within the context of skills and training programmes, GDPR has been used as a reason for why public bodies or providers are unable to gather data on participants. In implementing this strategy, the Scottish Government should provide clear guidance to Government departments and public bodies around what is relevant and possible when gathering equalities data.”

The largest numbers of respondents overall (a large minority) pointed out general gaps in equality data. Issues raised included data not existing, not being up to date, a need for qualitative data, a need for more research by academia and the third sector and a lack of longitudinal data. Similar numbers of organisations pinpointed gaps in or limitations to data in relation to certain equality characteristics. These included LGBTIQ people, older age groups, disabilities (e.g. whether people with fluctuating impairments consider themselves disabled), gender-sensitive data and Polish ethnicity.

A large minority perceived an insufficiency of disaggregated data in that breakdowns were too broad and not specific enough for their needs.

Examples included a lack of disaggregation by ethnicity (e.g. white vs minority ethnic not being deemed as useful categories), disability (learning disabilities) and sex. A significant minority pointed to a lack of intersectional data or limitations in exploring intersectionality, with a lack of sample and data recording limitations blamed. A further significant minority of mainly public sector organisations perceived a lack of data specific to regional, local or rural areas (e.g. at local authority level). Similar numbers pointed out a lack of data linking to non-protected characteristics or across sectors, datasets and policy areas. Many sectors were exemplified as follows: lone parents, Gaelic speakers, large families, those with babies, service users and non-users (e.g. NHS), participation in sport, neurodiversity, impact of changes (such as free eye examinations by equality group), housing, welfare recipients, social care, digital exclusion, poverty-related areas and modal travel.

A high degree of non-response was also highlighted as an issue by a significant minority of mainly public sector respondents. Public or staff reluctance to provide personal information was cited as leading to incomplete or non-returns of equality monitoring forms. This was perceived as being a result of a lack of understanding over how the information would be used and nervousness about individuals being identified. The result was either only a partial understanding of issues or unreliable findings.

Slightly smaller numbers of respondents cited problems caused by definitional issues making evidence unreliable. Examples were: different categories being used for ethnicity and disability classifications (the latter owing to differing medical and social models), male sex respondents being able to answer questions about women's health because they are based on gender, and 'care experienced' vs 'in care' definitions leading to incomplete datasets. Similar numbers pinpointed sex and gender conflation problems preventing the proper monitoring of sex; inconsistencies were perceived with the Equality Act 2010, and an individual perceived that the Census encouraged respondents to include gender in place of sex rather than in addition to it.

An equalities/advocacy organisation summed up many of the aforementioned points as follows:

“A recent example of some of the routine barriers faced comes from attempts to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) of the Scottish Government's Towards Transformation plan, published in 2021. The intention of the EQIA was to identify areas of multiple discrimination, and understand how Towards Transformation might help or hinder equality of opportunity for different groups. However, within this process it became clear that it was not possible to look in any detail at the experiences of people with the majority of

the protected characteristics for numerous reasons:

- Lack of systematically collected equalities data; Lack of disaggregation of learning disability status within data;
- Lack of academic studies looking at the experience of people with learning disabilities and other protected characteristics;
- People with learning disabilities, and organisations working with people with learning disabilities are tired of telling their stories repeatedly when nothing changes for them in the short term.”

A couple of equalities/advocacy respondents perceived an issue with incorrect data recording and gathering. One of these disclosed the following example:

“HBAI codes everyone in the household as the same ethnicity as the head of household and does not make clear the amount of financial autonomy individuals have within a household” (Equalities/Advocacy)

A significant minority (mainly public sector organisations) saw problems relating to insufficient sample size, with a few recommendations for conducting sample boosts or pooling data over different years to compensate. Particular issues noted

were not enough minority group representation, sample sizes being too small for robust reporting or meaningful analysis, and disaggregated analysis being challenging. Characteristics identified as being particularly vulnerable in this respect included transgender status, sexual orientation, religion and disability.

The next question then asked:

Q10.1: Are there any decisions you are unable to make because of a lack of equality evidence? (For example, Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), policy development, service delivery)

As shown in Table 11, views were broadly split between those able (34%) and unable (31%) to make decisions because of a lack of equality evidence.

Table 11: Whether decisions cannot be made because of a lack of equality evidence

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	12 (39%)	7 (23%)	3 (10%)	9 (29%)
Public sector (47)	13 (28%)	21 (45%)	7 (15%)	6 (13%)
Other organisations (9)	3 (33%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	2 (22%)

Total organisations (87)	28 (32%)	31 (36%)	11 (13%)	17 (20%)
Individuals (29)	8 (28%)	8 (28%)	6 (21%)	7 (24%)
Total respondents	36 (31%)	39 (34%)	17 (15%)	24 (21%)

Respondents who claimed to experience barriers to using equality evidence, were then asked to provide information on which questions they are unable to answer and why those questions are important to answer. A total of 51 respondents provided commentary.

The most frequently stated mentions (a large minority) were general comments about decisions being able to be taken while recognising some equality information may be missing in doing so, resulting in a lack of optimal decision-making. Points were made about enhancing evidence to improve this state of affairs (i.e. to enable decision-making to be more reliable and transparent). A significant minority reported that service and activity planning, development and delivery were more challenging: targeting of resources and approving expenditure towards diversity issues or those in greatest need, along with making or demonstrating changes was deemed to be more difficult.

The following data-related restrictions were each raised by a few respondents:

- lack of ability to do intersectional analysis (e.g. between differing equality groups)
- a lack of baseline data making it difficult to measure reductions or exacerbations in inequalities or have a sense of how diverse an organisation or community is
- negative impacts on the quality of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), with a lack of data on all protected characteristics resulting in a lack of robustness. A very small number of organisations went on to say that this would have knock-on effects on credibility and policy development

A small number of organisations talked of having to gather their own data which does not exist elsewhere, in order to feed into their own specific strategies, policy development and EQIAs. There were further comments about the resulting expense in terms of time and resources.

Very small numbers of respondents raised issues about outdated data and evidence (e.g. Scotland's Census 2011, EHRC document 'Is Scotland Fairer?') and missing data (lack of provision of sensitive data, consultation fatigue of minority groups).

A large number of specific areas in which decision-making was deemed to be difficult or not possible were discussed, albeit by only a few respondents in

each case, with examples of where evidence is perceived to be lacking. These are detailed below:

- sex vs gender conflagration issues (e.g. problems with ambiguity in the use of the word 'gender', self-identification of sex meaning the impact of sex on pay or service provision cannot be assessed adequately)
- race or ethnicity, mainly through a lack of data breakdowns or consistent data collection (e.g. comparing white with non-white ethnicity not being sufficient to tell which ethnic groups face the greatest barriers; access to – and utilisation of – legal and welfare benefits advice by minority ethnicities compared with the general population; rates of application for citizenship by minority ethnic groups and refugees; housing and homelessness linkage; morbidity and mortality rates; immunisation; antenatal care; cervical and breast screening; data on earnings, under-employment and job satisfaction not being available by region and ethnicity)
- local or regional areas (e.g. for the Highlands and Islands)
- disabilities (e.g. general lack of data breakdowns; costs of disabilities; disparities in travel modes between disabled and non-disabled)
- representativeness of workforces, applicants and the labour market (e.g. ability to attract

people from all backgrounds; job type breakdowns; full time vs. part time work)

- health (e.g. mental health access; COVID-19)

Small numbers of respondents perceived the following other areas where decision-making was described as impacted:

- poverty (e.g. child poverty priority groups; SIMD not accurately reflecting poverty in rural communities; perceived lack of a free school meal dataset; equality analysis not being available for all priority groups generally)
- sex (e.g. reasons for a disproportionate number of females accessing parent support services; split of household resources in mixed sex relationships)
- care/social care (e.g. assessing which children are most in need of care and support; assessing the difficulties people have in accessing social care services; evidence on carers support and analysis of uptake of carer benefits)

Finally, very small numbers pinpointed decision-making being impaired in the areas of gender (e.g. in discussions of work, ethnicity and disability), age (e.g. for funding applications), education and sexual orientation.

Equality evidence collection

The next question in the consultation paper asked:

Q11.1: Do you or your organisation produce any equality evidence sources? For example, do your organisation involve stakeholders in finding out what issues they think are important through surveys or focus groups, pull together or carry out your own analysis of existing information, or commission independent research and analysis?

As Table 12 shows, almost two thirds (61%) of respondents produce equality evidence sources.

Table 12: Whether organisation produces any equality evidence sources

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	19 (61%)	4 (13%)	-	8 (26%)
Public sector (47)	39 (83%)	-	1 (2%)	7 (15%)
Other organisations (9)	7 (78%)	-	-	2 (22%)
Total organisations (87)	65 (75%)	4 (5%)	1 (1%)	17 (20%)
Individuals (29)	6 (21%)	13 (45%)	5 (17%)	5 (17%)

Total respondents	71	17	6	22
	(61%)	(15%)	(5%)	(19%)

Respondents whose organisations produce any equality evidence sources were then asked to say which sources they or their organisation produce.

A total of 71 respondents answered this part of the question. Almost all of these intimated that they generated their own data as evidence. A significant minority of mainly public sector organisations indicated that they produced or generated data on their own workforces or recruitment data (e.g. on NHS staff). A large minority said they generated data on other stakeholders such as communities, service users, patients and tenants.

Respondents also in some cases detailed the equality characteristics for which they generated evidence. The largest numbers (a significant minority overall) said they produced data on sex and gender, with a small number generating this in the context of women specifically. Similar numbers claimed to generate evidence on ethnicity, while a few respondents each specified age or disability-related data; others said they produced data on some or all of the protected characteristics without specifying which ones. A few public sector and equalities/advocacy respondents specified other types of data produced (e.g. postcode/geographical/urban/rural location data,

deprivation data, health data and data on single parent families).

A few respondents noted that they produced their own data as a legal or statutory obligation (e.g. evidence on compliance with the PSED). Similar numbers cited producing or sharing Equality Mainstreaming Reports (e.g. to help with the Equality Data Improvement Programme or internal equality data improvement programmes).

Many respondents chose to detail the methods by which they gathered their equality evidence. The greatest numbers – a large minority – conducted surveys with their stakeholders, such as criminal and civil legal applicants, patients (e.g. for generation of long COVID evidence) and tenants. Smaller but still significant numbers of mostly equalities/advocacy and ‘other’ organisations reported generating data from qualitative or lived experience sources. Focus groups (e.g. to help develop equality commitments) were mentioned by similar numbers, as well as more general engagement with equalities and community groups. A few respondents conducted consultations. There were very small numbers of mentions of events, workshops, and roadshows as a means of generating evidence, of using face to face or telephone interviews, and of using panels.

A large minority of respondents from all organisation types said they produce or publish their own research,

reports and papers¹³. A few published specific data (e.g. on gender pay gaps).

A similarly large minority of mostly public sector organisations said they develop their own equality strategies, plans, policies and recommendations, at least in part from their own research and internally-generated evidence.

A significant minority of mainly public sector organisations conducted their own analysis of existing information or evidence. Examples included overarching views of existing sources, deep dives of aggregated equality data, and interpreting Scottish Government evidence and statistical analysis.

Slightly smaller numbers said they commissioned independent research and analysis, with a few stating

¹³ As well as annual equality reports, some examples included:

“My Life in the Highlands and Islands” (Oct 2022),

“How Fair is North East Scotland” (2021, 2018),

“How Brexit Impacts EU Citizens’ Mental Health And Wellbeing” Research Findings (2019),

“Mental health and suicides amongst Polish men in Scotland” (2020),

“An Unequal Burden: How Covid-19 has affected women’s employment, financial security and unpaid work” (2022),

“Equality and Sport Research” 2020 (independent research to update, refresh and grow equality evidence of who participates in sport)

they engage in research collaborations with other bodies.

The final question in the consultation paper asked:

Q11.3: Are there any barriers to you or your organisation collecting more equality evidence?

As Table 13 shows, half (50%) the respondents noted they or their organisation face barriers in collecting more equality evidence.

Table 13: Whether organisation faces barriers in collecting more equality evidence

	Yes	No	Don't know	No response
Equalities/advocacy groups (31)	9 (29%)	6 (19%)	4 (13%)	12 (39%)
Public sector (47)	36 (77%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	7 (15%)
Other organisations (9)	6 (67%)	1 (11%)	-	2 (22%)
Total organisations (87)	51 (59%)	10 (11%)	5 (6%)	21 (24%)
Individuals (29)	7 (24%)	7 (24%)	6 (21%)	9 (31%)
Total respondents	58 (50%)	17 (15%)	11 (9%)	30 (26%)

All those respondents who claimed they or their organisation face barriers in collecting more equality evidence were asked to provide more information about these; and 65 respondents answered.

A wide variety of barriers were described, though a minority of these appeared to be related to problems with equality evidence as a whole rather than barriers to collection faced by organisations that produce their own data.

An assortment of internal resource constraints were pinpointed by a majority of respondents. There were widespread complaints about a lack of capacity to gather representative quantitative data and therefore having to rely on secondary or existing data sources, or data collection and analysis being too resource intensive, particularly for small or third sector organisations.

Significant minorities (of mostly public sector respondents) each focused on the following issues:

- costs and funding constraints (e.g. limited research budgets, costs of data capture, storage and analysis)
- lack of internal expertise (e.g. guidance needed on analysis methods, what needs to be collected, standard questions to use, how to boost sample, data format training and knowledge about best practice)
- lack of systems or ability to invest in information systems or technology support (e.g. costs of

software tool updates (SEEMiS, Insight), analysis software requirements and incompatibility of data formats with internal software)

Time constraints were also mentioned by a few respondents, with an equalities/advocacy organisation viewing deadlines as being too tight to complete meaningful data collection.

Many organisations alluded to the nature of the evidence itself as being a barrier. Problems relating to a lack of sensitive information disclosure were cited by a large minority of mostly public sector respondents. As in earlier questions, a lack of trust or awareness of the value of data were each alluded to as significant barriers to disclosing information on topics like ethnicity and disability. Low survey or form completion rates were also mentioned by a small number of respondents, as well as challenges in reaching the groups that need to be heard the most.

Slightly smaller numbers pointed to insufficient sample numbers preventing the carrying out of robust, intersectional, regional or local data analysis. Category breakdown issues (e.g. in measuring variations between minority ethnic groups, and disability breakdowns being based on the medical model rather than the social model) were noted in a small number of comments. A lack of equality data concerning specific sectors was also described by a significant minority: financial services, sports

participation, poverty statistics, and transport and travel behaviour were all stated as lacking in data for some characteristics, amid general accusations that not enough data was being produced by public sector.

A lack of consistency and coherence amid a fragmented data landscape was cited as a barrier by a large minority. Problems arose from attempting to join up data, reporting processes, from the use of multiple data sources and formats, issues relating to the same data being collected from individuals at different times, benchmarking difficulties and the use of non-standard definitions or terminology. One example is given below:

“There is an inconsistency in guidance we have been advised to follow - Collecting Equality Information: National Guidance for Scottish Social Landlords developed in partnership by the SFHA, GWSFHA, ALACHO and the SHR – and the data we must collate via the HL1/HL3/Prevent 1. ...We have started to collate data in some service areas in accordance with the Collecting Equality Information: National Guidance for Scottish Social Landlords. However we have not been able to extend this to other service areas since we must be able to complete the necessary Scottish Government returns which don't have the same level of detail. We are currently

having to use resources to manually change errors which this creates.” (Public Sector)

Recommendations were made for aligning systems for datasets (e.g. health and social care systems) and introducing shared information platforms.

A few respondents also noted issues with the reliability and quality of data. When discussing a need for staff training in data recording of protected characteristics, a public sector organisation said:

“These characteristics may be ‘administratively assigned’ rather than self-assigned and if these data are not collected sensitively and appropriately, it becomes very difficult to measure discrimination and uptake (or not) of services by key populations” (Public Sector)

Similar numbers perceived that barriers can be created by GDPR or governance concerns, exemplified by needs to obtain consents where pupils are involved and consideration requirements for the collation, storage and use of data.

Finally, a small number of respondents made reference to data accessibility problems, including language barriers in accessing questionnaires or surveys.

Additional comments

Some organisations (13) provided additional information as part of their response. Most of these gave a general outline of their functions and commitment to equality and diversity (e.g. the establishment of an Equality Advisory Group).

General support for progressing the Scottish Government's Equality Evidence Strategy was also voiced without specifying either the 2023-25 strategy or the old 2017-2021 strategy, along with requests for investment in analytical capacity, to increase the availability of intersectional data and data disaggregation, and to address data deficiencies in some of the protected characteristics. A few respondents also urged the alignment or streamlining of all research and data in terms of terminology, indicator consistency and the general coherence of the evidence base.

A small number of respondents advocated the importance of equality having a role in the protection of human rights, for example robust data collection enabling monitoring for evidence of discrimination. Very small numbers were in favour of early engagement in processes such as sharing data and embedding good practice in data gathering. Two equalities/advocacy organisations noted that care should be taken to comply with international and UK agreements on data collection and use, one of these mentioning commitments made under the newly ratified Istanbul Convention. There were also a couple

of further comments about sex and gender being conflated throughout the proposal.

There were a couple of single requests as follows:

- to consider Gaelic speakers as an equality variable
- to raise the profile of the EEF

Finally, a public sector respondent observed that appropriate use of the existing Freedom of Information statutory framework would help strengthen the Equality Evidence Strategy, perceiving that this would enable timely access to equality data in the public interest.

Appendix 1: Organisations responding to the consultation

Equalities/Advocacy organisations

- Generations Working Together
- Bridges Programmes
- Long Covid Kids
- Redress Scotland
- Equality Here, Now
- Scottish Women's Convention
- Inclusion Scotland
- VOX Scotland
- Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Age Scotland
- Scottish Women's Budget Group
- CEMVO Scotland
- Close the Gap
- Paths for All
- Zero Tolerance
- LEAP Sports Scotland
- CFINE
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland
- Scottish Feminist Network
- Living Streets Scotland
- Scottish Prison Service
- The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities
- For Women Scotland

- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- CELCIS
- Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland
- Scottish Women's Aid
- One Parent Families Scotland
- Engender

Public sector

- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- NHS Grampian
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Stirling Council
- Registers of Scotland
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran
- Aberdeenshire Council
- NHS 24
- Food Standards Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Public Health Scotland
- Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
- Scottish Borders Council
- VisitScotland
- Scottish Funding Council
- Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- Audit Scotland
- Scottish Ambulance Service
- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
- National Library of Scotland

- Scottish National Investment Bank
- Historic Environment Scotland
- NatureScot
- Transport Scotland
- NHS Education for Scotland (NES)
- SPA
- Poverty and Inequality Commission
- Sportscotland
- Scottish Water
- Children's hearings Scotland
- Inverclyde Council
- Skills Development Scotland
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- West Dunbartonshire Health and Social care partnership
- Education Scotland
- Scottish Information Commissioner
- Care Inspectorate
- The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
- The Scottish Legal Aid Board
- Bòrd Na Gàidhlig
- Moray Council
- Independent Living Fund Scotland
- Leadership and Talent Management, Health Workforce, Scottish Government
- Moray Council
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- The City of Edinburgh Council
- Police Scotland

Other organisations

- The Glasgow Centre for Population Health
- Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh
- National Galleries of Scotland
- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
- Feniks. Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services Ltd
- Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC)
- The Law Society of Scotland
- The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)
- Scottish Human Rights Commission

Annex D: Tables of Actions to Improve the Equality Evidence Base

This Annex sets out, in tabular form, the actions identified by the Scottish Government and NRS across a number of key themes. These actions cover improvements to the data on a range of equality variables, including data on all nine of the protected characteristics, and improvements are to be completed within a timeframe until the end of 2025.

Many of the actions focus on improvements to routinely-used datasets and statistical outputs to ensure investment in evidence sources known already to inform significant decision making. However, there are also likely to be numerous social research questions that will arise over the course of the strategy which will be considered and prioritised locally based on policy needs, stakeholder input and available resources. These social research projects are likely to result in the collection of new evidence. We will report on progress made towards achieving these actions in an interim progress report in 2024 and again following the conclusion of the strategy. In the interim progress report we will also include a summary of additional action taken by the Scottish Government to strengthen the equality, including social research commissions and capacity building activity, not represented in these tables. We will also consider whether additional actions should be added to the plan in light of emerging priorities.

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Education

Many statistical outputs in the education domain are based on data collected from large-scale data collections, such as the teacher, school staff and pupil censuses. These data collections rely on local authorities and there is currently no resource available for expansion. Some data collections have been redeveloped recently and so there is insufficient resource to make further changes, whilst others are based on small populations, which limits the scope for data disaggregation. There has been progress on some improvements to equality data availability over the past year, including the presentation of subgroup analyses by gender and disability in the [Life at age 14: initial findings from the Growing Up in Scotland study](#), published in February 2022.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
1	Looked after children	Publish statistics for the 'Prefer not to say' option for data on sex, in line with recent Scottish	These are all longer-term actions, started in late 2022.	Religion Race Disability Sex

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p><u>Government guidance.</u></p> <p>Improve the completeness of data collected on ethnicity and provide more disaggregated data by ethnicity.</p> <p>Explore the development of more granular disability data.</p> <p>Explore the development of data to be collected on trans status for</p>	<p>Specific milestones for the development of disability data and possible data on sex and trans status:</p> <p>October 2022 (complete): Engagement event to begin consultation on user need for each action.</p> <p>Spring 2023: Draft specification of</p>	<p>Gender reassignment</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		looked after children aged 16+.	<p>future data collection.</p> <p>End July 2023: Final data specifications agreed by the Scottish Government and each local authority.</p> <p>August 2024: Recording of new data begins in local authority social work management information (MI) systems.</p>	

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
			August 2025: Data collection begins.	
2	Child protection	<p>Work directly with data providers to improve the completeness of data collected on religion and provide more disaggregated statistics.</p> <p>Improve the completeness of data collected on ethnicity and provide more disaggregated statistics in published tables and any future</p>	<p>These are all long-term actions, starting in late 2022.</p> <p>Specific milestones for the development of disability data and possible data on sex and trans status:</p> <p>October 2022 (complete): Engagement event</p>	<p>Race Disability Sex Gender reassignment</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>dashboard presentation of statistics, where currently only some headline statistics at a national level are disaggregated by ethnicity.</p> <p>Explore the development of more granular disability data, to identify specific types of disability/specific health conditions.</p>	<p>to begin consultation on user need for each action.</p> <p>Spring 2023: Draft specification of future data collection.</p> <p>End July 2023: Final data specifications agreed by the Scottish Government and each local authority.</p>	

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>Explore the development of data to be collected on trans status for older children, and ‘Prefer not to say’ option for data on sex, in line with recent Scottish Government guidance.</p>	<p>August 2024: Recording of new data begins in local authority social work MI systems.</p> <p>August 2025: Data collection begins.</p> <p>Milestones for the improvement of completeness of religion and ethnicity data:</p> <p>May 2022: (complete) Liaise with local authority data providers to understand any</p>	

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
			<p>recording issues and highlight uses made of this data.</p> <p>August 2022 (complete): Data collection period for 2022-23 statistics begins, and any improvements to recoding introduced.</p> <p>August 2023: Data collection begins.</p>	
3	Growing Up in Scotland (GUS)	A: Include analysis of equality variables in reports produced	A: Spring 2024 (estimated) for the	Will consider a range of variables, but

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>by the Scottish Government where sample sizes allow for this without risking disclosure.</p> <p>B: Ensure that analysis of equality variables is conducted in any reports commissioned by the Scottish Government that use GUS data through inclusion in the specification of requirements used in any procurement exercises where</p>	<p>Life at Age 17 report.</p> <p>B: Ongoing.</p> <p>C: Sweep 12 questionnaire design is scheduled for 2023/24.</p>	<p>gender and disability in particular as they can be included in the Life at Age 17 report.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>sample sizes allow for this without risking disclosure.</p> <p>C: Ensure that future data collections continue to include questions collecting data on equality variables, including adding a question about marriage to the Sweep 12 questionnaire – this will now be appropriate as the participants will be aged 20.</p>		

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
4	<u>School leaver attainment</u>	Based on feedback from the consultation respondents, we will investigate the addition of a supplementary table covering the attainment of school leavers who have been assessed or declared as disabled. This will bring the tables into line with other associated education statistics by providing data for disabled school leavers in addition to	These statistics are published annually. The latest release of these statistics was 28 February 2023.	Disability

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		data on school leavers with Additional Support Needs.		

Justice

Justice officials have recently taken several initiatives to support equality analysis and evidence. Principal among these is an investment in analytical capacity to support improvements to equality data and evidence through the creation of a new Equality and Justice Research team. This team will ensure a coordinated approach to identifying and progressing priority areas for equality analysis within justice including qualitative and quantitative research and statistics. The team will work with policy teams, partners and stakeholders across the justice system to ensure a broad range of people input into our equality research. The team will also engage in ongoing dialogue with the Scottish Government Equality Analysis team, ensuring a joined up approach to equality analysis across the Scottish Government.

Justice analysts have recently been supporting a number of working groups with remits to improve equality data, including the aforementioned [Cross Justice Working Group on Race Data and Evidence](#). Recent initiatives have been focused on race and sex.

Justice analysts often use data collected by other organisations as the basis for publication of Official Statistics and other analyses, but they do not control the content of the datasets. Any improvements will largely be achieved through working with and supporting other organisations. As such, justice analysts' equality work relates less to the improvement of specific datasets, and instead focuses on working holistically with justice partners to drive improvements in the collection, reporting and analysis of equality data, supporting relevant working groups, and exploring the potential of qualitative and lived experience research, to better understand the experiences which lie behind the numbers.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
5	Various	We will improve the consistency of ethnicity recording across Justice Organisations through	The Justice Board endorsed adopting the 2022 categories and organisations	Race

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		adopting the 2022 Scottish Census Ethnicity Classifications.	are working towards implementing as soon as practicable.	
6	Various	We will publish a compendium of ethnicity information as it relates to individuals who have been in contact with the justice system. It is intended this will also include ethnicity analysis from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) using a pooled sample of data from 2008/09 to 2019/20.	We will co-ordinate and publish the final compendium on the Scottish Government website in 2023.	Race
7	Scottish Crime and Justice	We will undertake analysis of the SCJS by ethnicity using a pooled sample of SCJS data (from 2008/09 to 2019/20) to investigate how experiences	We plan to publish the final ethnicity analysis as part of the ethnicity compendium	Race

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
	Survey (SCJS)	and perceptions of crime may vary for people of different ethnicities in Scotland.	mentioned above, in 2023.	
8	Various	We will undertake a series of equality “deep dive” research projects into specific aspects of criminal activity including on police recorded crime, cyber-crime and drugs analysis.	<p>Ongoing throughout the strategy period.</p> <p>Second hate crime deep dive was published January 2023 in the Police recorded hate crime - characteristics: updated study publication.</p> <p>Cyber crime analysis was published in 2022 in the Police recorded cyber-crime in</p>	<p>Disability</p> <p>Race</p> <p>Religion or belief</p> <p>Sexual orientation</p> <p>Gender reassignment</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
			<p data-bbox="1227 225 1711 459"><u>Scotland - Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2021-2022 publication.</u></p> <p data-bbox="1227 555 1666 730">Drugs analysis will be published in spring 2023.</p>	
9	<u>Police Scotland homicide data</u>	We plan to request ethnicity data on crimes of homicide from Police Scotland from 2021/22 onwards for inclusion in the Homicide in Scotland publication.	<p data-bbox="1227 762 1711 1177">We will explore the possibility of collecting historic ethnicity data (for the years prior to 2021/22) with Police Scotland.</p> <p data-bbox="1227 1257 1608 1358">Note: due to the relatively small</p>	Race

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
			<p>number of homicide cases recorded each year, many of the published breakdowns use the preceding ten years' worth of data. It therefore may not be possible to publish this data until the 2030/31 bulletin.</p>	
10	Various	<p>We will promote an intersectional approach to justice data and evidence, including through aiming to better understand intersectionality in the justice system by reviewing existing</p>	<p>By end 2025 (ongoing action throughout the period of the strategy).</p>	<p>Sex Gender Disability Race Age Religion or belief</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		evidence and undertaking a feasibility study across our publications to explore the practicability of developing more intersectional analysis.		Sexual orientation Gender reassignment Marriage and civil partnership Pregnancy and maternity
11	Various	We will promote best practice and support justice organisations with their data collection and reporting, including workforce data, through mutual support and sharing of good practice.	By end 2025 (ongoing action throughout the period of the strategy).	Sex Gender Disability Race Age Religion or belief Sexual orientation

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
				Gender reassignment Marriage and civil partnership Pregnancy and maternity
12	Various	We will aim to better understand what available evidence exists on experiences of people with different characteristics in the justice system. We will consider the feasibility of collating and publishing this for more characteristics (e.g. disability) as has already been done with ethnicity and gender and consider the	By end 2025 (ongoing action throughout the period of the strategy).	Disability Race Gender

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		feasibility of updating these existing compendiums.		

Social Security

Statistics on devolved benefits produced by Social Security Scotland provide information on the applications and payments for benefits in Scotland. While equality statistics are published for all current benefits where Social Security Scotland received an application, the likely volume of information will increase for disability and carer benefits, which are being launched in the next few years. The good practice in the collection and use of equality data undertaken by Social Security Scotland was set out in a [recent case study](#). The need for increased intersectional breakdowns, and the interaction of disability status with other equality characteristics and variables relating to the application process and outcome, will result in a significant analytical requirement.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
13	Social Security	Seven of the nine protected characteristics are currently	This will be undertaken in the	All nine protected

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
	Official Statistics (Social Security Scotland benefits)	<p>collected (no data collected on pregnancy and maternity or on marriage and civil partnership).</p> <p>By 2025, we will publish equality analysis of outcomes, and key process variables by disability category. This will be additional to existing high-level equality breakdowns of benefit outcomes currently published. An assessment will be undertaken during 2023 of the quality of data collected on Adult Disability Payment (benefit launched late in 2022), including the equality data, and the appropriate time to publish</p>	<p>longer time-scale – to end 2025 – due to the launch of Adult Disability Payment during 2022, the need to accumulate caseload on low-income benefits, and the need to assess the quality of data which is being collected.</p>	<p>characteristics, except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>breakdowns for various category of disability.</p> <p>An assessment will take place during 2023 of possible new intersectional analysis of low-income benefit award outcomes on the basis of cumulative data since benefit launch, leading to a revised intersectional analysis for publication by the end of 2024.</p>		
14	Social Security Scotland Client Survey	<p>The Analysis and Insight team will set out their plans for benefit-specific client surveys, and the initial round of related fieldwork. This will include surveys dedicated to Child</p>	<p>Delivery of increased analysis will take place by 2025.</p>	<p>All nine protected characteristics, except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p data-bbox="481 225 1167 336">Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment.</p> <p data-bbox="481 411 1227 1385">During 2023, a review will take place on the quality of the survey data that has been gathered in the above surveys, and to scope the possibility of producing equality breakdowns of new variables, breakdowns by impairment categories for those with disabilities and a projection for intersectional analysis from client survey data. At present, it is considered that there will be only a small likelihood of further breakdowns by refugee, trans status, and sexual orientation,</p>		<p data-bbox="1792 225 2072 336">civil partnership.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>and intersectional breakdowns where base sizes allow.</p> <p>By 2025, a cycle of reporting will be established that delivers this additional analysis. This is likely to include amendments to the annual report, and some benefit-specific reports on a less frequent basis.</p>		
15	Scottish Welfare Fund	<p>In July 2023, a client diversity report will be published that breaks down high-level indicators by equality characteristics already collected: age, disability, sex, religion and race. This will be part of the July 2023 annual update and will establish a</p>	<p>To commence in January 2023 with a view to conclude the improvement process by June 2024.</p>	<p>Age Disability Sex Religion or belief Race Others tbc</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>yearly cycle of equality data on the Scottish Welfare Fund. Some analysis may take place in 2022, but the 2023 report will be pending any observations by the Review of the Scottish Welfare Fund reporting in 2023 and subsequent discussions with local authorities around possible improvements to data collection.</p> <p>During 2023, consideration of the relevant aforementioned review recommendations for equality data for new data collections will take place, with a view to implement ahead of the 2024 annual update.</p>		

Poverty

The Family Resources Survey (FRS) is the data source for the official poverty and household income statistics in Scotland. Data is collected for a broad range of household and individual characteristics, including all protected characteristics apart from gender reassignment. The Scottish Government will continue to provide additional equality analysis in response to user needs.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
16	Family Resources Survey (FRS): Food security data	We will publish further analysis of the food security data collected in the FRS.	By 2025.	Age Disability Sex Sexual orientation Race Religion or belief Marital status
17	Various: poverty related	The following actions are not solely focused on	These scoping exercises will	Equality variables

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
	<u>surveys/associated analytical resources</u>	<p>statistical data improvements. To improve the broader evidence base on poverty and disadvantage we will carry out a:</p> <p>Scoping exercise to assess key gaps in users' awareness of existing information (both statistical and broader), and development of a minimum viable product to address this.</p> <p>Scoping exercise to assess potential for further evidence synthesis/primary</p>	<p>initially be informed by responses to the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 consultation with further validation as required, milestones to be confirmed dependent on scope, delivery by 2025.</p>	<p>affected by this action will depend on the outcome of the scoping exercises.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		research and appropriate dissemination for diverse range of stakeholders.		

Equality

Equality analysts often carry out cross-cutting projects using data and evidence sources from across a range of ministerial portfolio areas to improve the collection, analysis and use of equality data, including through the [EDIP](#).

Equality analysts are also working with colleagues on the [Public Sector Equality Duty Review](#), which may have implications for equality data collection in the public sector.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
18	ONS Time Use Survey (OTUS)	Analyse gender breakdowns of the 2023 OTUS data and analyse all OTUS data by a range of equality variables (age, disability, socio-	This is a short-term action as the 2020 data has already been collected and the	Dependent on a review of available sample size for sub-groups

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>economic disadvantage) and, where possible, intersectional breakdowns.</p> <p>Publish the OTUS analysis in Scottish Government reports. This will add to the gender analysis of this data already published in December 2020 and feed into the 2023 Gender Equality Index (see Action 19).</p>	<p>dataset is available to the Scottish Government, and the 2023 data will be collected in March 2023 and should be available by June 2023.</p> <p>The key deliverable will be reports published on the Scottish Government website by end of 2023.</p>	<p>in the OTUS 2020 and 2023 datasets but breakdowns by the following equality variables (and intersections between them) would be produced: gender, age, disability, race.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
19	Scotland's Gender Equality Index	<p>Publish an updated version of Scotland's Gender Equality Index.</p> <p>This action will be supported by an expert working group comprised of gender stakeholders and data analysts to support the next iteration of Scotland's Gender Equality Index.</p>	The next iteration of Scotland's Gender Equality Index will be published in December 2023.	Primarily sex and gender, but where available and relevant, intersections with other equality variables will be highlighted.
20	Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS) – Attitudes to Discrimination module	<p>Gather data on public attitudes to discrimination in the SSAS.</p> <p>Publish findings from the SSAS module on attitudes to</p>	A report presenting findings from the SSAS module on attitudes to discrimination will be published by December 2025.	This module will gather data on attitudes towards the following equality variables: age,

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		discrimination in a Scottish Government report.		disability, sex, race, religion, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.
21	Various datasets	Undertake research to synthesise available evidence on key structural intersectionalities, identify gaps and suggest ways in which evidence gaps can be captured through both qualitative and quantitative research.	By end 2024	It is expected that this research will cover a number of characteristics, but the intersections focussed on will depend on available data and evidence in the first

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
				instance. Additionally, priority intersections of focus will depend on user needs.
22	Various	We will undertake work to strengthen the evidence base on the experiences of non-binary people in Scotland: By the end of 2023, we will carry out and publish a review of available quantitative and qualitative evidence on the experiences of non-binary people in Scotland.	Action complete in full by end of 2025	Gender reassignment

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>Throughout the period of the strategy, we will expand the range of evidence on non-binary people's experiences presented on the Equality Evidence Finder to include third sector and academic research.</p> <p>By the end of 2024, we will engage with stakeholders to identify and agree priorities for filling evidence gaps.</p> <p>By the end of 2024, we will work with key stakeholders to co-design research to fill priority gaps, working within</p>		

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>available budget and other resource constraints.</p> <p>By the end of 2025, we will publish a report of findings from the commissioned research.</p>		
23	Equality Evidence Finder Platform	<p>While we are aware of other dashboard tools, the nature of the Equality Evidence Finder means that R shiny is still the best tool for the job, however this continues to be monitored. The following areas will be improved in the EEF:</p> <p>Accessibility. The main areas of inaccessibility on</p>	By end 2025	Age Disability Race Sex Gender Religion Sexual orientation Gender reassignment

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>the EEF are charts. We will research and implement the most accessible way to produce charts using R shiny.</p> <p>Usability. We have received constructive feedback on the user interface. Work is ongoing to create a shiny template for the EEF that follows the principles of the Scottish Government Design System which will render the EEF more familiar to users of SG websites, as well as more generally user friendly.</p>		

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>Automation. As part of the above redesign, work to automate more of the EEF's data acquisition will be prioritised. This will include working with analysts to provide data via statistics.gov.scot, to improve the efficiency of uploading data onto the platform and improve the transparency of equality data held by the Scottish Government.</p> <p>Presenting intersectional data. We are aware of user demand for intersectional breakdowns of data. We will</p>		

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		improve the presentation of intersectional data that is already collected. The redesign will attempt to take this into account such that, as more intersectional breakdowns become available they can be added to the EEF without significant further work.		
24	No specific dataset	Run workshops and seminars for public sector attendees to showcase best practice in collecting, analysing and presenting equality evidence.	Ongoing throughout the period of the strategy.	Sex Gender Disability Race Age Religion or belief Sexual orientation

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
				Gender reassignment Marriage and civil partnership Pregnancy and maternity

Housing and Homelessness

Housing and homelessness analysts have identified the following actions to include in this improvement plan. It should be noted that many of their datasets do not include data about individuals or households and sometimes the scope for improvement is limited due to the dataset being owned outwith the Scottish Government. It should also be noted that some improvement activities are expected to take place beyond 2025. In addition, there have already been some recent improvements made to existing housing datasets. For example, the Housing Revenue Account Statistics recently included two new questions on the annual

survey to ask about council income and expenditure on Gypsy/Traveller sites, with data published in January 2023.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
25	<u>Homelessness data collections (HL1 and PREVENT1)</u>	<p>By 2025, work to consider the appropriateness and feasibility of gathering equality data via the HL1 and PREVENT1 collections will have concluded.</p> <p>Agreement will be reached with data providers (i.e. local authorities) on the changes to be made, and there may be some progress made as to implementing these.</p>	<p>A full review of the homelessness data collections aimed at bringing these up to date, improve consistency and better meet user needs is ongoing, estimated to conclude by 2025. As part of this, the appropriateness and feasibility of gathering protected characteristic information will be</p>	<p>All protected characteristics will be considered as part of the data review work, although the extent of this will depend on demand for, relevance and feasibility of collection.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
			<p>fully and carefully considered.</p> <p>It may be possible to implement changes sooner, including those surrounding protected characteristics, however, only where there are well-defined collection requirements and where this can be agreed upon with data providers (i.e. local authorities).</p>	

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
			To add further value, consideration will also be given to the feasibility of enabling homelessness data to be readily linked to other sources.	
26	Scotland's Census 2022 equality results: housing analysis	During 2023, Scottish Government housing analysts will work with NRS to establish the range of equalities-based output tables that are already planned to be published as part of the Census 2022 output tables. We will also	Publication of results by 2025.	Age Sex Gender reassignment Marriage/civil partnership Sexual orientation

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>assess the additional analysis that would need to be produced, along with establishing an appropriate mechanism for analysis of the data, for example by obtaining secure access to the source data, or for additional output tables to be produced by NRS.</p> <p>Subject to the feasibility of undertaking this approach, during 2024 to carry out the analysis of the Census equality data, focussing on a cross-tab/intersectionality approach looking at how dimensions of equality relate</p>		<p>Country of birth Long-term conditions Long-term health problem or disability Religion Ethnic group</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		to results from other Census questions, focusing on those on housing. It is intended that the analysis will include reporting on detailed equalities output classifications where possible, such as on detailed age bandings, as well as looking at regional dimensions to results, although this will depend on statistical disclosure control limitations.		

Health and Social Care

The data sources utilised by Health and Social Care officials within the Scottish Government have a mixture of ownership. Data owners include Public Health

Scotland (PHS), the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland/NHS Scotland Education for Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and a further mix of public bodies, universities and private companies.

The Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland continue to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and ethnicity (ERG). They also support a range of further equality-related activity, including a Racialised Health Inequality in Health and Social Care Steering Group, the Women’s Health Plan, NHS Gender Identity Services Strategic Action Framework and a Primary Care Data and Intelligence oversight group.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
27	Health and Care Experience Survey	By the end of spring 2023, produce cross-tabulations of headline survey results by equalities variables and publish them as additional analysis where disclosure rules allow.	By end of spring 2023.	Age Disability Race Sex Gender Religion or belief

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>Carry out and publish a 'Variations in Experience' analysis using a generalised linear mixed model (GLMM) model to control for confounding factors within the data.</p> <p>This analysis will examine the relationship between self-reported experiences of patients and a range of patient, GP practice and regional level characteristics.</p> <p>We will use a statistical modelling technique to allow us to take into account all the</p>		Sexual orientation

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		available factors that have an effect on the likelihood of a patient reporting a positive experience.		
28	<u>Primary Care Out of Hours Workforce Survey</u>	<p>A: Improve the data collected on age and gender identity by improving the completeness of responses, response numbers from ‘opted-in’ services and the introduction of age and gender identity collection for all staff groups who are employed/ directly managed by out of hours services.</p> <p>B: Investigate the potential introduction of new fields in dataset on race and</p>	<p>A: December 2024 to allow time for introduction to new survey.</p> <p>B: December 2025 to allow time for engagement and exploration and information governance of data linkage.</p>	<p>A: Age and gender identity.</p> <p>B: Race and disability.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		disability, including exploration of linking data from other sources such as the GP In-hours survey and NHS Scotland Workforce data.		
29	Various (data relating to women's health)	<p>Review of existing data landscape to understand the current data available and identify gaps in data provision (complete).</p> <p>Consultation with Scottish Government stakeholders to ascertain women's health data needs (ongoing).</p> <p>Engagement with dataset owners to understand the</p>	Estimated end date – December 2025.	Sex and gender identity – ideally with ability to gather intersectional data on other characteristics as required.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>availability of further Management Information and barriers to publication (ongoing).</p> <p>Engagement with stakeholders and dataset owners to discuss possible data collection reforms to improve the quality and availability of data on women's health.</p> <p>Negotiate and agree a data reform action plan with stakeholders and dataset owners.</p>		

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		Support implementation of the data reform action plan and track progress.		
30	<u>Primary Care (General Practice) Workforce Survey Scotland</u>	<p>A: Improve the quality of data collected on age and sex by improving response rates and exploring linkage to National Primary Care Clinician Database (NPCCD).</p> <p>B: Investigate the quality of data collected on maternity leave.</p> <p>C: Investigate the potential introduction of new fields in this dataset on race and disability.</p>	<p>A: December 2025 to allow time for data governance processes around linkage of datasets, if appropriate.</p> <p>B: December 2023 so this can be explored both on existing datasets and for a new collection period.</p>	<p>A: Age and sex.</p> <p>B: Pregnancy and maternity.</p> <p>C: Race and disability.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
			C: December 2025 to allow time for engagement, first collection (expected poor quality) and then collection for second time.	
31	Core Dataset for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Weight Management Services for Children/Young People and Adults in Scotland	<p>A: Review existing dataset to identify: (1) where additional fields are required; (2) where options/values/guidance for existing fields needs to be revised and updated.</p> <p>B: For each field identified in (1) above consult with</p>	Start date 2023, estimated end date 2025 to allow for engagement with stakeholders, IT development and established data collection and reporting timelines.	Age Disability Race Religion or belief Pregnancy and maternity

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>stakeholders and subject matter experts to develop a proposal. Stakeholders include Scottish Government officials (Equalities, Diet & Health Weight Policy, Type 2 Diabetes / Weight Management Professional Advisers), PHS (data processor responsible for dataset analysis and reporting of national statistics) and expert reference group with representatives from NHS boards (data owner).</p> <p>C: Consultation to allow mechanism for gathering</p>		

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>feedback from data owners in NHS boards (Healthy Weight Leads).</p> <p>D: Final revised dataset agreed (between the Scottish Government and PHS).</p> <p>E: Specification of changes required to data collection system (IT system changes required).</p> <p>F: IT system changes made.</p> <p>G: Dataset completion guidance updated and communicated to NHS boards.</p>		

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>H: NHS boards begin collecting improved equalities data using updated dataset.</p> <p>I: Improved equalities data forms part of annual data collection, analysis and publication going forwards.</p>		
32	Mental Health Inpatients Census (MHIC)	<p>The MHIC is split into 3 parts:</p> <p>Part 1 covers Mental Health and Learning Disability Inpatient Beds.</p> <p>Part 2 covers Mental Health, Addiction and Learning</p>	<p>Improvement work to be completed by December 2025.</p> <p>Work has already begun on reviewing and improving the MHIC. This will</p>	<p>For parts 1 and 2, gender reassignment, religion/belief, sexual orientation.</p> <p>For part 3, disability,</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>Disability Patients: Out of NHS Scotland Placements Census.</p> <p>Part 3 of the MHIC covers Hospital Based Complex Clinical Care and Long Stay patients.</p> <p>The MHIC is in the process of being reviewed. The MHIC was paused in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for health boards to prioritise critical activities. The MHIC will run in its current form in April 2022. The Scottish Government is exploring new</p>	<p>inform options ahead of the 2022/23 census to be run in 2023.</p> <p>Any improvements on data and survey content and the associated priorities for implementation will be in line with any stakeholder feedback and in parallel with any changes to data collection options that are available.</p>	<p>gender reassignment, religion/belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>ways of collecting the information for the MHIC primarily to reduce the burden on health boards and to also examine what other data sources might be available to complement or replace parts of the MHIC. Alongside this, the content of the MHIC is also being reviewed to ensure that we are collecting the right data for users to meet their needs. As part of this work, we intend to expand the range of data that is collected to cover all nine of the protected characteristics if possible.</p>		

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
33	Various	<p>Improve availability of social care equalities data by:</p> <p>a) completing the Care Home Data Review and associated actions to streamline and improve data</p> <p>b) working with PHS to examine options for developing Source data and related data collections, including utilisation of an ethnicity reference file currently being developed</p> <p>c) completing work to help facilitate the transition to</p>	By end 2025	Race

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		an Integrated Health and Social Care Record for the National Care Service (NCS)		

Transport

Transport Scotland have identified two relevant data collections through the internal Equality Data Audit for improvement, the transport components of the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and Reported Road Casualties.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
34	Scottish Household Survey (SHS): Transport Components	We will consider whether we can include combined years analysis in our annual statistics publications (latest publication) to provide breakdowns of data by equality variables where year-	We will consider this improvement for the next publication of Travel and Transport in Scotland which is scheduled for	Those for which we lack robust year on year data or data at all on. This includes some

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		on-year analysis is not supported.	publication in April 2023.	categories of ethnicity and religion/belief data; sexual orientation; and gender reassignment.
35	<u>STATS 19 – Reported Road Casualties</u>	Transport Scotland to liaise with PHS to establish the viability of publishing ethnicity information collected by hospitals for those receiving hospital care as a result of road traffic accidents, whether by Transport Scotland as part of their Reported Road Casualties publications, or through PHS.	May 2023: Publication of ethnicity analysis.	Race

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
36	Scottish Household Survey (SHS): Transport Components	We will continue to publish our Disability and Transport report on an annual basis, alongside Transport and Travel in Scotland which also includes analysis of disabled people's travel behaviour.	Annual publication. The next publication of Travel and Transport in Scotland which is scheduled for publication in April 2023.	Disability

Local Government

The majority of datasets used by local government analysts in the Scottish Government are either aggregated at local authority level or have individual level records with only financial/non-person data.

The datasets used to inform the National Performance Framework Indicators (NPI) 'Quality of Public Services' and 'Influence Over Local Decisions' collect and currently publish a range of equality variables. The NPI Trust in Public

Organisations dataset is currently in development and more information about planned equality data disaggregation can be found in the proposed action below.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Equality Variables
37	Scottish Household Survey (SHS) - Trust in Public Organisations – National Performance Framework Indicator	Publish the range of breakdowns as part of the next SHS data release (SHS 2021 data).	This will be undertaken in 2023, when the 2022 SHS report and data is published.	Age Disability Race Gender identity Religion or belief

Labour Market and the Economy

Several of the datasets used by officials working on the economy, employability and the labour market capture statistical information about businesses in Scotland or the UK as a whole, including economic performance or outlook, rather than about

individuals or households. As such, it is often not possible or appropriate to record sensitive equality information. For example, survey responses can be provided on behalf of a company by a representative who is not the business owner or a senior board member. In addition, the availability of equality data for these datasets must be considered in the round rather than individually. Given that the same equality data can be obtained from different sources or surveys, it is often not necessary or cost-effective to try and capture equality information in every dataset.

Several of the economy and labour market datasets identified in the equality data audit are owned and maintained by UK Government departments or agencies, or by external organisations. The Scottish Government is working with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other partners to support existing improvement activity for some of the datasets, including in relation to the collection, analysis and publication of equality data.

As well as the ongoing work the Scottish Government participates in to support and improve the equality data in collections, including in relation to No One Left Behind, Fair Start Scotland and the Small Business Survey Scotland, the following actions have-been identified to enhance the analysis of the ONS Annual Population Survey (APS).

The Scottish Government [published detailed analysis of minority ethnic groups in the labour market in Scotland](#) from the APS in December 2022. This analysis included intersectional breakdowns of ethnicity by age, sex and disability. We are currently seeking feedback on this publication.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
38	ONS Annual Population Survey (APS)	<p>Further analysis and publication of equality data already collected.</p> <p>The Scottish Government plans to publish detailed analysis on disability in the labour market in Scotland from the APS by the end of 2023. This analysis would include intersectional breakdowns of disability by age, sex and ethnicity etc.</p>	End of 2023	Intersectional breakdowns of disability by age, sex and race.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
39	<p>Fair Start Scotland Employability Provider Return</p> <p>No One Left Behind Local Authority Return</p>	<p>Analysis and publication of equality data collected through new No One Left Behind data template including on trans status and disability.</p> <p>The Scottish Government plans to publish more detailed analysis on different characteristics for its devolved employability services including intersectional breakdowns of disability, age, sex and ethnicity.</p>	End of 2023	<p>Gender reassignment</p> <p>Intersectional breakdowns of disability, age, sex and race.</p>

Constitution, International and Migration

Constitution, International and Migration analysts cover a number of areas such as organisational readiness, governance and elections, the constitution, Open Government and Freedom of Information, European Union / Brexit, population and migration, international relations and development.

A significant recent achievement was the completion of the [Diversity in Political Representation in Scotland: Data Improvement Project](#). The 2022 local government candidate diversity survey (2022 LGCDS) was carried out during the nomination period of the 2022 local government elections (March – April 2022). All candidates standing for the election were asked to complete a non-mandatory survey asking questions on their demographic characteristics, previous experience and any caring responsibilities they may have. The [report and tables](#) were published in November 2022, along with [conclusions and recommendations](#).

Two data collections for improvement are listed in the table below. Other data-sets in this area were not selected for improvement due to a variety of reasons, including data not collected at an individual level and very small sample sizes.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
40	Scottish Household Survey (SHS) - Importance of Voting in Local Elections questions	<p>The 2020 ‘importance of voting in local elections’ data was published for the first time in January 2021. Due to the impact of the move from a face-to-face to a telephone survey in 2020 due to COVID-19, no comparisons were made with previous years in the 2020 report and the data was not broken down by equality variables.</p> <p>When the 2022 data is available in 2023 an assessment will be made as to what is possible to publish given the sample sizes. The Scottish Government elections</p>	This will be undertaken in 2023, when the 2022 SHS report and data is published.	Age Sex Disability Race Sexual orientation Religion or belief

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
		<p>policy team will be consulted to see what would be useful. It should be possible to provide breakdowns by age, sex, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion. The general rule of thumb is that we don't publish breakdowns if the base is smaller than 50. However, even with bases of 50 or larger, the confidence intervals can be quite wide, and so the results need to be interpreted carefully.</p>		
41	<p>Scottish Social Attitudes Survey: Attitudes to</p>	<p>We will review what equality data is collected and published before the next core module runs. If the core module runs in 2022/2023 data would be</p>	<p>This will be undertaken in the longer time-scale – in 2023 or 2024 – when the 2022 or</p>	<p>Assess whether data on disability, race and gender</p>

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
	<u>Government and Political Engagement</u>	published around autumn 2023.	2023 report and data is published.	reassignment could be published. Investigate whether we could collect and publish data on sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership.

Rural and Environment

The Agricultural Census team are aware that improvements need to be made to the equality data collected. Hence, they are reviewing all statistical publications within the team as part of a Transformation Programme and a component of this will be to address equalities issues. Any short-term improvements will be featured within the

next iteration of the publication which is due to come out in 2023. They are also looking at alternative longer-term options such as data linkage to the population census to help provide context around the farming community and inform policy and support provisions for farmers.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
42	<u>June Agricultural Census</u>	As part of the Scottish Government’s agricultural statistics group’s Transformation Programme, we are building a new product to replace the June Agricultural Census. Within this work we will improve timeliness, relevance and accuracy of data we will also improve how we report on equality data. The current route to these improvements are unknown however are	The new product which will replace the June agricultural census will need to be delivered summer 2023. The census team will not be producing any publications prior to this time. Longer-term plan of data linkage we would hope to achieve by	Full scope unclear yet but will include age, and marriage and civil partnership.

		likely to involve redesigning of questions and/or in the future looking to data linkage with the Population Census.	2025 if initial feasibility testing suggests this is possible.	
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National Records of Scotland (NRS)

NRS is a Non-Ministerial Department of the Scottish Government. Its purpose is to collect, preserve and produce information about Scotland's people and history and make it available to inform current and future generations. It publishes statistics on – vital events (births, deaths and marriages), population & migration, households, and the Census.

In June 2022, NRS added a table on civil partnerships by country of birth of parties to the [Vital Events Reference Tables 2021](#) and added an additional table on age of mother and/or father for stillbirths

In addition it has identified the following key areas where it can improve the collection and publication of equality data.

No.	Dataset	Action	Timeline	Variables
43	Scotland's Census 2022	<p>Scotland's 2022 Census included questions on all characteristics previously included. Additionally, new census questions gathered information on the characteristics of sexual orientation and trans status/history.</p> <p>The planning and delivery of the 2022 Census predates the development of this plan, including actions that we know will improve equality data, but is ongoing through the period of the next Equality Evidence Strategy so is presented in this improvement plan.</p>	<p>2022 census outputs to be released over 2023-25.</p> <p>Information on the Census release schedule can be found in the Scotland's Census 2022 Outputs Strategy.</p>	<p>Age Disability Race Sex Gender Religion or belief Marriage and civil partnership Sexual orientation Gender reassignment</p>

		<p>Actions include:</p> <p>Consultation and planning – gather feedback and review, then finalise plans.</p> <p>Live Census collection.</p> <p>Processing and quality assurance for the Census.</p> <p>Producing outputs – National Stats Accreditation and UK Harmonisation.</p>		
44	Vital Events - Deaths	We will issue a revised version of the laminated card which Registrars show to the next of kin when asking about ethnicity of the deceased. This	We are seeking confirmation from NRS Registration on details. Likely to be 2023 or later.	Race

		<p>would provide a clearer explanation of the need for the question and how it should be answered.</p> <p>We will reorder the sequence of questions to ask about ethnicity before country of birth to avoid the two answers being conflated.</p> <p>Revise guidance to Registrars.</p>		
45	Small Area Statistics on Households and Dwellings	<p>2022-23: We will consult local authorities on the feasibility and cost of providing more granular data from their council tax billing systems on households with ‘disregarded adults’, in particular so that data on households with</p>	<p>Timeline is detailed within the actions.</p>	<p>Disability</p>

		<p>disabled adults can be separately identified within the statistics.</p> <p>2023-24: Subject to confirmation from local authorities of the feasibility of providing data from their council tax billing systems on households with disabled adults, and the availability of funding for them to pay for any software upgrades necessary, trial and evaluate the extended data collection.</p> <p>2024-25: Commence routine collection of data on households with disabled adults within the annual collection of data for the small area household estimates.</p>		
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Annex E: Equality and Fairer Scotland Statement

Scope of the statement

This document summarises what we know about the current equality evidence base and how evidence has been used in the development of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025. Individual impact assessments will be carried out, as required, for actions set out in the strategy as they are further developed and to inform their implementation. Additionally, it is envisaged that the improvement actions set out in the strategy will provide a sound and robust evidence base for the development of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) for a range of policies across the Scottish Government and beyond.

This document sets out the evidence considered across the characteristics covered by the strategy, including new evidence gathered by the Scottish Government through:

- a Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) carried out in autumn 2021
- public consultation, which ran between 1 July and 7 October 2022, and received 116 responses (Annex C)

- a series of stakeholder engagement events that were carried out in August and September 2022 (Annex C)

This statement also draws on relevant recent evidence, including [research published by the Scottish Government](#) in March 2021 that explored the range of equality data collected by 27 public sector organisations. We also draw on the findings of [consultation and engagement](#) carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on behalf of The Inclusive Data Taskforce (IDTF), which included people and organisations from all four countries of the UK.

It should be noted that while we report on evidence gathered on people with protected characteristics in turn in this document, in line with the requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and common practice in carrying out impact assessments, we recognise that people's experiences of relative privilege and disadvantage often do not arise from single characteristics in isolation.¹⁴ Each one of us has a combination of multiple characteristics that determines our lived

¹⁴ [Scottish Government report on Using intersectionality to understand structural inequality in Scotland](#)

experience of inequality in different contexts. The Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 does not cover evidence on socio-economic disadvantage, although it is acknowledged that socio-economic background and household income will intersect with the characteristics covered to shape lived experiences.

Who will be affected?

Equality evidence impacts all of Scotland's people. Evidence is key to developing inclusive policies that are effective in tackling the inequality across our society. Some groups, however, are less likely to be captured in existing datasets making evidence-based policy making challenging.

The Scottish Government is mindful of its obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a general duty (Public Sector Equality Duty) on public authorities to have due regard to: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Fairer Scotland Duty (FSD) is set out in legislation in Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010 and came into force in Scotland from April 2018. It requires Scottish Ministers and named public

bodies to actively consider what more can be done to reduce the 'inequalities of outcome' caused by 'socio-economic disadvantage' when making 'strategic decisions. We must consider how the decisions we make will meet these three needs.

Where any negative impacts are identified, we will seek to address and mitigate these. We are also mindful that the PSED is not just about negating or mitigating negative impacts, as we also have a positive duty to promote equality.

To address those needs and requirements and fulfil our legal duties, in this Equality Statement we set out the equality evidence which has informed the development of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 vision and action plan across the range of protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010. This evidence gathering exercise brings together what we know about the existing equality evidence base and barriers to the provision of equality evidence, and identifies gaps in our knowledge base. We also present a summary of considerations in relation to the Fairer Scotland Duty and Children's Rights and Wellbeing.

What does evidence tell us?

Age

Research commissioned by the Scottish Government showed that, of 55 datasets held by 27 public sector organisations in Scotland, data on age was very commonly collected - in 53 of the 55 datasets.

On the whole, the collection of information on age was seen as relatively uncontentious by the organisations that took part, with some noting that people were very used to providing information on their age in different contexts.

Information was gathered in four different ways across the datasets examined: either by asking for age, age group, data of birth or year of birth. Most commonly individuals were asked to provide their date of birth. The second most common way of gathering age information was by asking people to indicate an age range to which they belonged. There was variation in the age range options offered between and within organisations. However, it was often clear that the options offered were linked to the focus of the relevant service – for example, in the case of age-related eligibility for services.

Of all the equality variables covered by the strategy, age is the most commonly collected and published from significant datasets used by the Scottish Government. Of the 199 datasets included in [Equality Data Audit returns](#) received in autumn 2021, data on age were collected in almost two-thirds of datasets (65%) and data disaggregated by age published from just over half (54%). The audit also found that age by sex was the most commonly produced intersectional data breakdown.

Through the public consultation and engagement events carried out by the Scottish Government in summer 2022, stakeholders requested greater consistency in the way data is collected across different datasets in Scotland, particularly highlighting a need for harmonised age bands or categories. This request was made again with respect to several proposed actions for inclusion in the strategy action plan. In addition, a small number of respondents noted a need for more nuanced older age / 65+ age categories.

Research carried out by the [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) identified children as a group that is often missing from available data across the UK. Where data was available, this was often collected from people other than the children themselves –

such as their parents, carers, teachers, or others who are responsible for the children. There was a specific lack of data for looked after children and children who have experienced abuse or neglect. The practice of aggregating data into age categories was seen to be disadvantageous by their consultation respondents.

The Scottish Government has produced [guidance on collecting data on age](#).

Sex

The [research commissioned by the Scottish Government](#) showed that, of the 55 datasets examined, 48 data collections contained data on sex. In all the cases where a specific question was provided to the researchers, the term 'gender' rather than 'sex' was used. In more than a third of cases, respondents were (as with the 2011 Population Census question) offered a binary response choice of Male / Female, with or without a 'prefer not to say' option. Again, there was widespread awareness that this was not appropriate, or did not reflect current thinking on this issue.

The Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) showed that, of the 199 datasets identified, data on sex or gender was collected in just under two-

thirds of datasets (62%) and data disaggregated by sex or gender published from half of datasets (50%). The three most commonly produced intersectional breakdowns included sex or gender plus another variable – age, race or disability.

A significant minority of respondents to the Scottish Government consultation, mostly individuals, highlighted confusion and concerns over the definitions of sex and gender, with a small minority of respondents perceiving that sex and gender definitions impacted negatively on women.

The [Chief Statistician published guidance for public bodies on the collection and publication of data on sex and gender identity](#) in September 2021.¹⁵ It is hoped that this will improve consistency in the collection of data on sex over the lifespan of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025. The guidance was developed in

¹⁵ The guidance recommends that that public bodies collect data on both sex and trans status/history. This recognises the importance of collecting high quality data on both sex and the trans population for driving changes and improvements for the benefit of society, and will allow a more harmonised approach to data collection across Scotland.

consultation with members of a working group of experts on collection and use of data. The work of the Sex and Gender working group was carried out in line with the principle of Open Government, and the Chief Statistician consulted widely in the development of the guidance. More than 20 meetings were held with important external stakeholders, public facing events were held in early 2020, and more than 80 organisations and individuals responded to a public consultation on draft guidance published in December 2020. The Chief Statistician also published a number of public blogs and papers throughout the development process.

The research carried out by [the Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) similarly highlighted conceptual issues around the use of sex and gender. While the research found that data on sex (in some form) is collected in most administrative and survey datasets across the UK (echoing the findings of the Scottish Government's Equality Data Audit), there was a desire among those they consulted with for more intersectional data, with neurodivergent women and pregnant women given as particular examples.

Disability

The research commissioned by the Scottish Government showed that data on disability were collected in a large majority of cases – 42 out of the 55 public sector data collections studied. The information gathered on disability was wide ranging and often reflected the needs and practicalities of different services. As such, the question and response options were also very varied with some organisations simply aiming to determine if an individual had a disability or long-term condition, and others gathering very detailed information on the nature of a person's physical and mental health and the impact on their daily functioning. Whilst some of the variation reflects the requirements of a specific data collection, the research found that in many cases there was no obvious rationale for the differences.

There was also a view among participants that individuals are less likely to disclose personal and sensitive information if they did not trust (i) the organisation asking for the information, or (ii) the rationale presented to them. In some cases (particularly where the collection of the item(s) was mandatory, and when the data collection was an ongoing, administrative collection), discussion focused on the 'best moment' or the 'right time' to collect the equality data. A particular example was

provided in relation to the collection of data on disability, in which the public sector data collectors who took part in the research noted that people can be reluctant to disclose a disability for fear of discrimination and may only disclose at a later point.

The Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) showed that, of the 199 datasets identified, data on disability was collected in just over a quarter of datasets (28%) and data disaggregated by disability published from under a quarter (20%).

When asked about how draft actions for inclusion in the strategy could be improved, some Scottish Government consultation respondents suggested that more granular data on disability should be collected and noted a need to measure disability in a consistent way. The collection of data on disability based on the medical model (rather than social model) was seen as a barrier to the collection of good quality data on disability.

While the [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) research found that the UK collects, reports and produces ‘considerable analyses of data on disability’, it was noted that there is a lack of consistency in the use of disability definitions across the UK resulting in disability information being captured in different

ways. It also found that disabled people are among the groups at greatest risk of exclusion from research. As in the Scottish Government consultation, those the taskforce engaged with also noted that questions on disability are often based on outdated concepts that do not capture the experiences of disabled people. There were likewise calls for disability data collection to shift from a focus on the medical model to the social model of disability.

The Scottish Government has published [guidance on collecting data on disability](#).

Race

The [research commissioned by the Scottish Government](#) showed that data on race/ethnicity were collected in a large majority of cases – 43 out of the 55 public sector data collections studied. The research found that there was variation in the questions and response options used within and between organisations, and most asked about ‘ethnicity’ rather than ‘race’ (following the example of Scotland’s Census). There was some limited use of multi-part questions, e.g. asking about ethnic origin and national identity. There was also some limited use of separate observed and self-identified ethnicity.

The Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) showed that, of the 199 datasets identified, data on race was collected in in just over a quarter of datasets (29%) and data disaggregated by race published from under a quarter (22%).

When asked whether there were any decisions that cannot be made because of a lack of equality evidence, a few respondents to the Scottish Government consultation and attendees at the events highlighted race as an example of where they perceived evidence to be lacking. This was mainly due to a lack of data breakdowns or inconsistent data collection, including the following perceived evidence gaps: comparing white with non-white ethnicity not being sufficient to tell which ethnic groups face the greatest barriers; access to – and utilisation of – legal and welfare benefits advice by minority ethnic groups compared with the general population; rates of application for citizenship by minority ethnic groups and refugees; data on earnings, under-employment and job satisfaction not being available by region and ethnicity.

The [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) research found that civil society organisations and individuals with lived experience they consulted with considered the current approaches to collecting data on race

to be outdated due to the conflation of race, ethnicity and nationality and due to the use of response categories that cover a range of ethnic groups and nationalities. The practice of aggregating personal characteristics into ethnicity categories was seen to misrepresent issues of smaller communities. The taskforce also noted relatively high levels of non-response from some ethnic groups in some administrative data sources in the UK, and highlighted Gypsy/Traveller communities as being a particular group that is largely missing from the available data.

The Scottish Government has published [guidance on collecting data on ethnic group](#).

Sexual orientation

The [research commissioned by the Scottish Government](#) showed that data on sexual orientation were collected in more than a third of cases – 24 out of the 55 public sector data collections studied. Questions on sexual orientation were formulated in a variety of ways but most commonly asked people how they would ‘describe’ their sexual orientation: for example: which of the following best describes your sexual orientation / how you think of yourself / how you think of your sexuality. Questions generally used

the term 'sexual orientation', although there was occasional use of the word 'sexuality'.

The gathering of data on sexual orientation was highlighted by some public sector data collectors who took part in the research as being particularly sensitive, reflected in lower response rates and reports of their staff members feeling uncomfortable in gathering the information due to its personal and sensitive nature.

The Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) showed that, of the 199 datasets identified, data on sexual orientation was collected in a tenth of datasets (10%) and data disaggregated by sexual orientation rarely published (4%). When asked to consider how draft actions for inclusion in the strategy could be improved, small numbers of respondents suggested the collection or publication of data on sexual orientation for a few different actions, and a lack of data on LGBTIQ people was pinpointed as a gap in or limitation of the existing evidence base.

Likewise, the [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) research highlighted a scarcity of information on the differing experiences of people in terms of their sexual orientation, and aggregating into categories

was seen to misrepresent the issues and needs experienced by individuals and communities.

The Scottish Government has produced [guidance on collecting data on sexual orientation](#).

Gender reassignment

The [research commissioned by the Scottish Government](#) showed that data on gender reassignment were collected in around a quarter of cases – 14 out of the 55 public sector data collections studied. Generally speaking, questions asked about ‘identity’, asking if individuals identified (or had ever identified) as trans / transgender / a transgender person.

The Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) showed that, of the 199 datasets identified, data on gender reassignment was very rarely collected or published (3% of datasets).

As mentioned above (see [section on Sex](#)), the [Chief Statistician in Scotland published guidance for public bodies on the collection and publication of data on trans status](#) in September 2021, which was developed in consultation with a range of external stakeholders.

When asked to consider how draft actions could be improved in the Scottish Government consultation, there were some requests for the collection of data on gender reassignment from respondents and the lack of robust data available on trans status was considered to be a barrier to achieving our ambition of a robust and wide-ranging equality evidence base.

Across the [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) consultation activities, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people were repeatedly identified as groups missing from the data and for whom even basic demographic information is missing.

Religion or belief

The [research commissioned by the Scottish Government](#) showed that data on religion or belief were collected in more than a third of cases – 22 out of the 55 public sector data collections studied. Most often data was gathered by asking questions about ‘religion’, with no reference to ‘belief’. Of the 22 organisations that took part, one asked two separate questions – one about religion and one on belief. Questions asked were often similar to those used in Scotland’s Census. Where information on response rates was available from the public sector bodies who took part in the

research, religion or belief had the lowest response rates of all the characteristics studied.

The Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) showed that, of the 199 datasets identified, data on religion or belief was collected in just over a tenth of datasets (10%) and data disaggregated by religion or belief published from under a tenth (8%).

Religion or belief was highlighted by consultation respondents as being a characteristic being particularly vulnerable to issues around insufficient sample size, but was not otherwise mentioned with respect to the draft actions.

Academics and respondents to the [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) consultation noted gaps in the data on religion, particularly that religion is not often collected and, where it is collected, it is not routinely reported or is often conflated with beliefs and practices.

The Scottish Government has published [guidance on how to collect data on religion/belief](#).

Pregnancy and maternity

The [research commissioned by the Scottish Government](#) showed that data on pregnancy and

maternity were collected in a small minority of cases – 7 out of the 55 public sector data collections studied. Where data was collected, the information gathered was mainly focused on ‘pregnancy’ rather than ‘maternity’ (i.e. the 26 weeks following birth).

The Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) showed that, of the 199 datasets identified, data on pregnancy and maternity was collected rarely (6% of datasets) and data disaggregated by pregnancy and maternity rarely published (4% of datasets).

Scottish Government consultation respondents suggested that pregnancy and maternity data could be considered in the context of Social Security and Health and Social Care actions but was not otherwise mentioned.

On the basis of their research, the [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) concluded that information on inequality in pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes is partial. Consistent with the findings of the Scottish Government research and audit, the taskforce highlighted missing data on those whose characteristics or circumstances are temporary, such as the number of pregnant people in employment.

Marriage and civil partnership¹⁶

The [research commissioned by the Scottish Government](#) showed that data on gender reassignment were collected in around a quarter of cases – 12 out of the 55 public sector data collections studied. Questions varied in terms of whether they asked about an individual's 'legal status' or asked how an individual 'thinks about themselves'. Some questions referred to marital status only while others referred to marital or civil partnership status. However, all offered civil partnership response options.

The Scottish Government [Equality Data Audit](#) showed that, of the 199 datasets identified, data on marriage and civil partnership was collected in just under a sixth of datasets (15%) and data disaggregated by marriage and civil partnership published from under a tenth (8%).

There were no comments made regarding marriage and civil partnership data in the consultation or in the [Inclusive Data Taskforce](#) research.

¹⁶ 'Marriage and civil partnership' is covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) only in relation to unlawful conduct in employment.

How will the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 address these issues?

The Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 presents a refreshed vision, and set of accompanying vision principles, that sets out the ambition of the Scottish Government in strengthening the equality evidence base over the next three years. This vision was developed based on the issues highlighted in the aforementioned evidence. It does not single out any individual characteristics but works to identify common themes for improvement.

The strategy also sets out a route map for improvement in the form of a specific plan that sets out 45 actions that will be taken forward by analysts across the Scottish Government and NRS over the next three years. These actions were developed as a direct result of the gaps highlighted by the Scottish Government Equality Data Audit and the broader evidence on the challenges around equality evidence collection, analysis and use. The plan was refined and improved based on stakeholder views gathered through the Scottish Government's engagement activity. There are actions within the plan across the full range of the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010.

Many of the actions focus on improvements to routinely-used datasets and statistical outputs to ensure investment in evidence sources known already to inform significant decision making. However, it is important to note that there is likely to be numerous social research questions that will arise over the course of the strategy which will be considered and prioritised locally based on policy needs, stakeholder input and available resources. These social research projects are likely to result in the collection of new evidence and will supplement the actions presented in the plan.

We anticipate that the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 will result in improvements to the equality evidence base across a range of protected characteristics, and a range of policy areas. Based on the available evidence, we have not identified any negative or adverse impacts on any groups with protected characteristics for the strategy as a whole. As actions are taken forward, these should be implemented in ways that are mindful of potential negative impacts, including ensuring the same individuals or groups with protected characteristics are not overburdened. Through the strengthening of the equality evidence base, the actions set out in the strategy are expected to have positive indirect impacts on the

development of inclusive policies that tackle inequality.

The Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 and socio-economic disadvantage

The FSD is set out in legislation in Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010. It came into force in Scotland from April 2018. It requires Scottish Ministers and named public bodies to actively consider what more can be done to reduce the 'inequalities of outcome' caused by 'socio-economic disadvantage' when making 'strategic decisions'.

Data on socio-economic disadvantage is outwith the scope of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025.

In line with the FSD, we have assessed impacts of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 on socio-economic disadvantage. We have not identified any direct impacts, positive or negative, of the strategy as a whole on socio-economic disadvantage (but see indirect impacts via intersectionality below). We would expect full FSD assessments to be carried out for actions, as appropriate, as they are taken forward and for the new and improved equality evidence generated

through the actions to be used to inform FSD assessments going forward.

We are aware that experiences of socio-economic disadvantage, such as living in a lower income household or deprived area, can intersect with the characteristics covered by the strategy in ways that exacerbate inequality of outcomes. In addition, there is evidence that rates of socio-economic disadvantage are higher among most protected characteristic groups (see [Equality Evidence Finder](#) for details). There are actions in the strategy that are relevant to improving understanding of the experiences of socio-economic disadvantage for groups with the characteristics covered by the strategy, particularly:

- Action 13: Social Security Official Statistics
- Action 14: Social Security Scotland Client Survey
- Action 15: Scottish Welfare Fund
- Action 16: Family Resources Survey (FRS): Food security data
- Action 17: Various: poverty-related surveys/associated analytical resources
- Action 25: Homelessness data collections (HL1 and PREVENT1)

These actions are expected to have some indirect positive impacts on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage through the strengthening of the equality evidence base available for inclusive policy making in these domains. Having a more comprehensive and robust equality evidence base may help us to better understand differences in socio-economic outcomes within groups with the characteristics covered by the strategy. For example, two of the priority groups in the [Tacking Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#) are defined by the protected characteristics of disability and race.

We also recognise that some of the barriers to equality evidence collection and data quality likewise affect the collection of data on socio-economic disadvantage. Sharing learning and good practice is a vision principle of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2020-2025 and it is a reasonable expectation that the approaches showcased through this activity with regard to the collection, analysis and use of data on the characteristics covered will likewise apply to evidence on socio-economic disadvantage, such as issues around trust.

The Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 and child rights and wellbeing

The Scottish Government is mindful of its obligations under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)¹⁷ to undertake a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) on all new legislation and policies that impact children. This is to ensure that the rights of children in Scotland are advanced and that the wellbeing of children and young people is protected and promoted.

Evidence considered in relation to age is highlighted above, particularly data quality issues highlighted by the research of the Inclusive Data Taskforce in relation to children and young people. Within the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025, there are a number of actions designed to strengthen the available equality evidence on children's experiences, particularly:

¹⁷ The Articles of the UNCRC and the child wellbeing indicators under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 apply to all children and young people up to the age of 18, including non-citizen and undocumented children and young people.

- Action 1: Looked after children
- Action 2: Child protection
- Action 3: Growing up in Scotland
- Action 4: School leaver attainment
- Action 17: Various: poverty related surveys/associated analytical resources
- Action 31: Core Data for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Weight Management Services for Children/Young People and Adults in Scotland

While some potential impacts of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 were identified in the CRWIA Screening Form, these should be further explored as specific actions are taken forward and new potential approaches to strengthening the evidence base are developed. We are therefore not undertaking a full CRWIA for the strategy. The CRWIA Screening Form (published separately on the [Scottish Government publications page](#)) provides a rationale for this decision.

Conclusion

The Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 has tackling inequality at its heart. Its core aim is to produce a more accessible, wide-ranging and robust equality evidence base to enable the development and delivery of sound, inclusive

policies and services and enable the measurement of improvements in the lives of all of Scotland's people.

The evidence presented in this statement has informed the development of the Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-2025 vision, principles and action plan and will continue to inform implementation as we progress the actions and review progress. Importantly, the strategy is designed to address gaps in the equality evidence base and design effective solutions to tackle known barriers to the provision of equality information and data quality. This statement and improvements to the equality evidence base will support the development of impact assessments for a range of policies taken forward in the future.



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