



Social Security Scotland Statistics

Social Security Scotland client diversity and equalities analysis - June to November 2020

Frequency of publications

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

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

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

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

Introduction

This publication provides information on diversity of clients applying to Social Security Scotland for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment and Scottish Child Payment. It also compares the outcomes of the applications by each of the equalities groups to assess if there is any variation in the rate of applications that are approved to receive the benefit payment. This publication does not cover Carer's Allowance Supplement or Child Winter Heating Assistance, as there are no applications for these payments. There was also no information about outcomes for Scottish Child Payment to November 2020, so this is not covered in this publication.

The data covers the period 1st June 2020 to 30th November 2020. The method for collecting this information was improved on 9th December 2019, see [How Equalities data is collected](#).

Data has been de-duplicated to retain only one equalities monitoring form per client that applied during the period 1st June to 30th November 2020 and completed a form. Where multiple outcomes were available on different applications for an individual client, only the most recent outcome has been retained. The data presented here therefore does not contain all outcomes information for all clients. More detailed information about the number of applications received for individual benefits is available here: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>.

The majority of responses in this publication were from applicants for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods (68%), as there are a greater number of applications for these benefits compared to other benefits.

All tables and charts relating to this publication can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#clientdiversityandequalitiesanalysis>

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

³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

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

Main findings

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

| Equalities group | | Number of clients | Approval rate – all clients | Approval rate – Scottish clients only | Percentage point difference in approval rate | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | | | | | All clients | Scottish clients only |
| Ethnicity | Asian | 2,015 | 64% | 68% | 8 | 5 |
| | White | 46,700 | 72% | 73% | | |
| Gender | Men | 5,915 | 64% | 65% | 9 | 9 |
| | Women | 44,765 | 73% | 74% | | |
| Sexual orientation | In another way* | 200 | 58% | 63% | 14 | 10 |
| | Heterosexual | 47,525 | 72% | 73% | | |
| Transgender | Yes | 300 | 55% | 62% | 17 | 11 |
| | No | 49,915 | 72% | 73% | | |
| Religion | Hindu | 110 | 47% | 50% | 26 | 24 |
| | No religion | 33,805 | 73% | 74% | | |

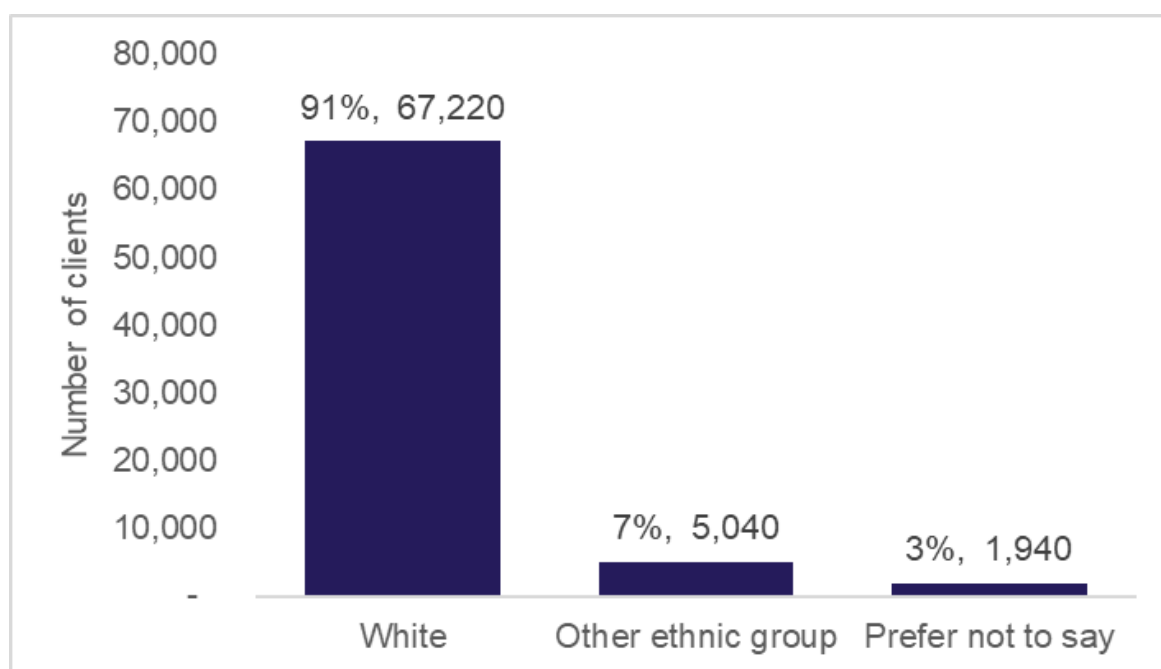
*Clients that specifically identified 'In another way' had the lowest approval rate. Additional groups not presented here include 'Gay & Lesbian', 'Bisexual' and 'Prefer not to say' – these are discussed in the [sexual orientation](#) section below.

- While some of this variation could be attributed to small numbers of clients for some groups, or when breaking down to individual benefits, some variation is present even when comparing very large groups (e.g. men and women).
- Differences are also still present when examining Scottish clients only. A smaller proportion of clients applying to Social Security Scotland lived outside Scotland in this release (2%) compared to the previous release (7%). This means that approval rates are less affected by non-Scottish applicants being likely to be denied.
- New analysis of specific types of physical or mental health condition or illness shows some variation in approval rates, from 72% approval for clients that identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness which was not listed as an option ('None of the above') to 79% for those with affected hearing.
- New analysis by geographical areas shows relatively little variation in approval rate in urban and rural areas, or islands compared to mainland. Approval rates tended to be higher for clients in more deprived areas based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), as expected given that the benefits being reported on (excluding Young Carer Grant) are to support people on low incomes.

Ethnicity

- More than nine in ten (91%) clients self-identified their ethnic group as 'White'⁴, with clients identifying as one of the other listed ethnic groups⁵ accounting for 7%. The remaining 3% choose the 'Prefer not to say' option. The second largest ethnic group was 'Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British', accounting for 4% of the total. In Scotland's 2011 census 96% of the total population of Scotland were 'White', with the remaining 4% being from the other listed ethnic groups⁶ (Chart 1, Table 1). For individual benefits, the proportion identifying as 'White' ranged from 90% for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods to 95% for Job Start Payment.

Chart 1: Client diversity by ethnic group



- Overall, the proportion of clients approved was highest for those identifying as 'White' (72%), and lowest for those identifying as 'Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British' (64%). This is similar to previous statistics covering December 2019 to May 2020. This difference in approval rates was slightly reduced when analysing only clients living in Scotland, because a higher proportion of Asian clients were non-Scottish, and therefore had a higher likelihood of being denied (Table 1). At individual benefit level, approval rates appear quite variable which is likely to be due to very small numbers for clients not identifying as 'White' by benefit, except for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods.

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

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

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

Chart 2: Application outcome by ethnic group – all applications

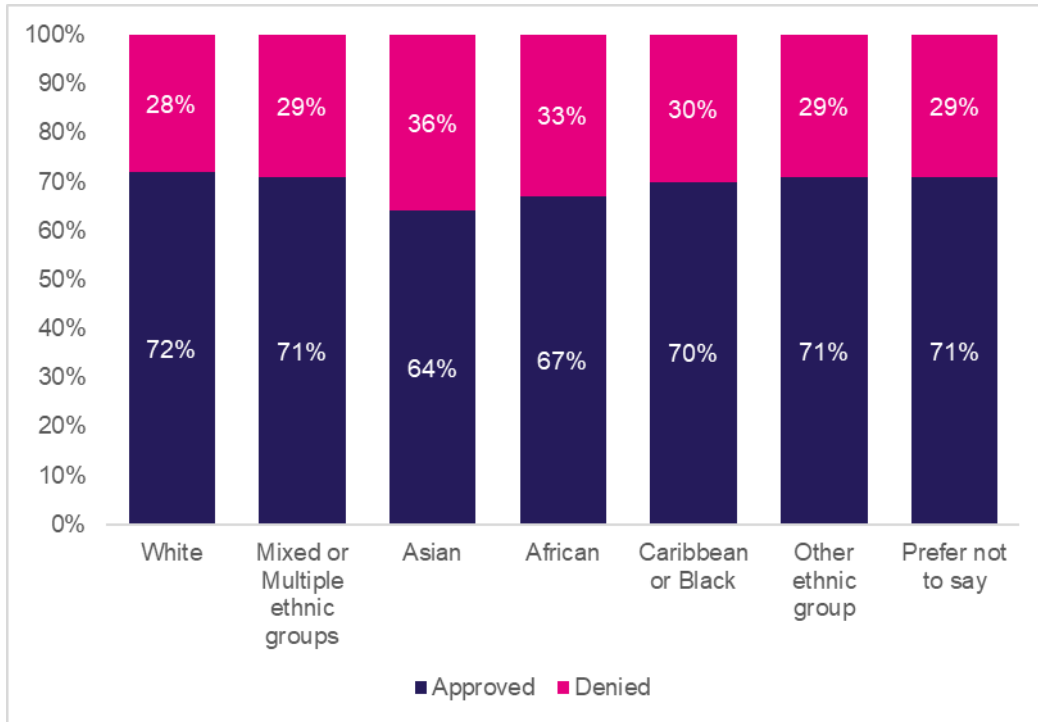
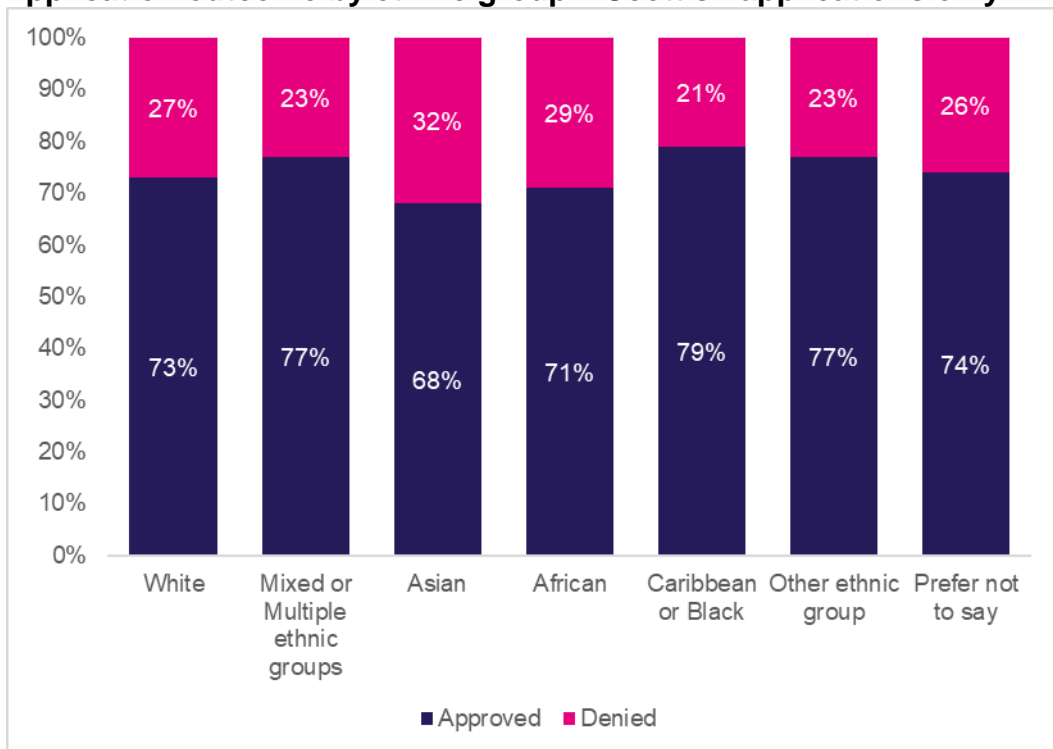


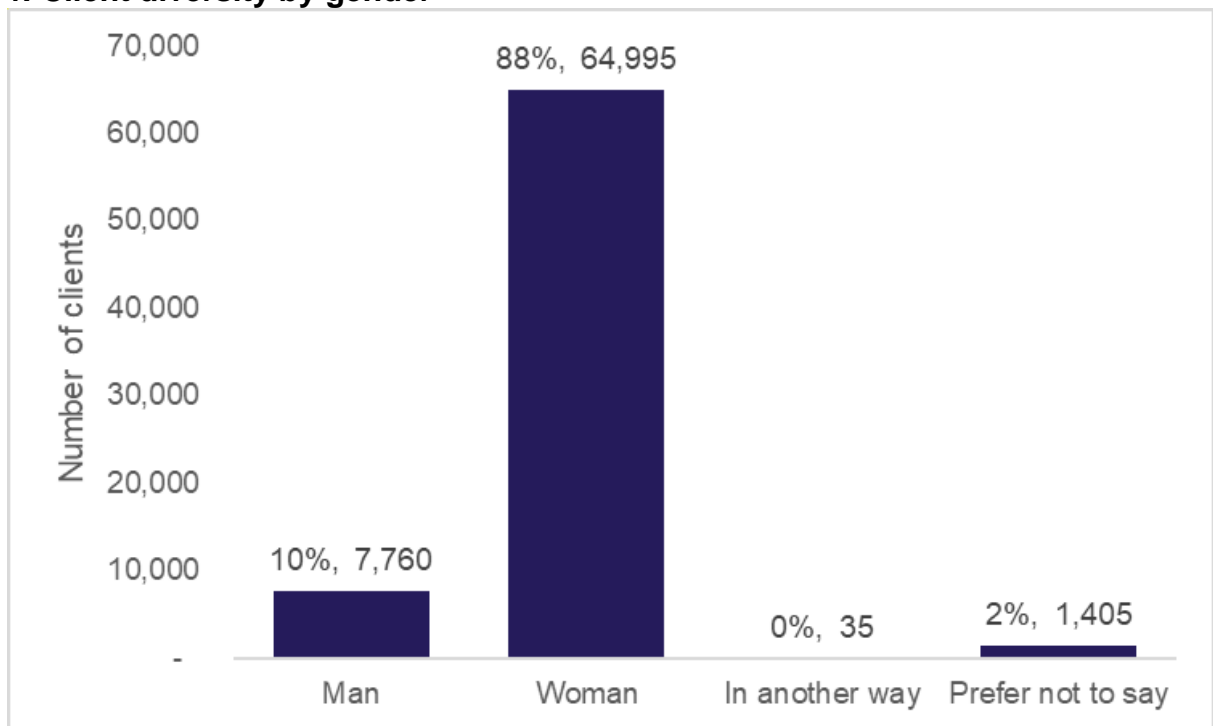
Chart 3: Application outcome by ethnic group – Scottish applications only



Gender

- The proportion of clients who self-identified as man (10%) was much lower than those who self-identified as woman (88%) (Chart 4, Table 2). In Scotland, 51% of the population are women and 49% are men.⁷ The proportion of women was higher than men for all benefits except Job Start Payment (45% women). The proportion of women was highest for Scottish Child Payment (93%), followed by Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (90%). Because the majority of equalities data were from applicants for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods, the high proportion of women applying for this benefit has a disproportionate impact on the gender breakdown for clients as a whole.

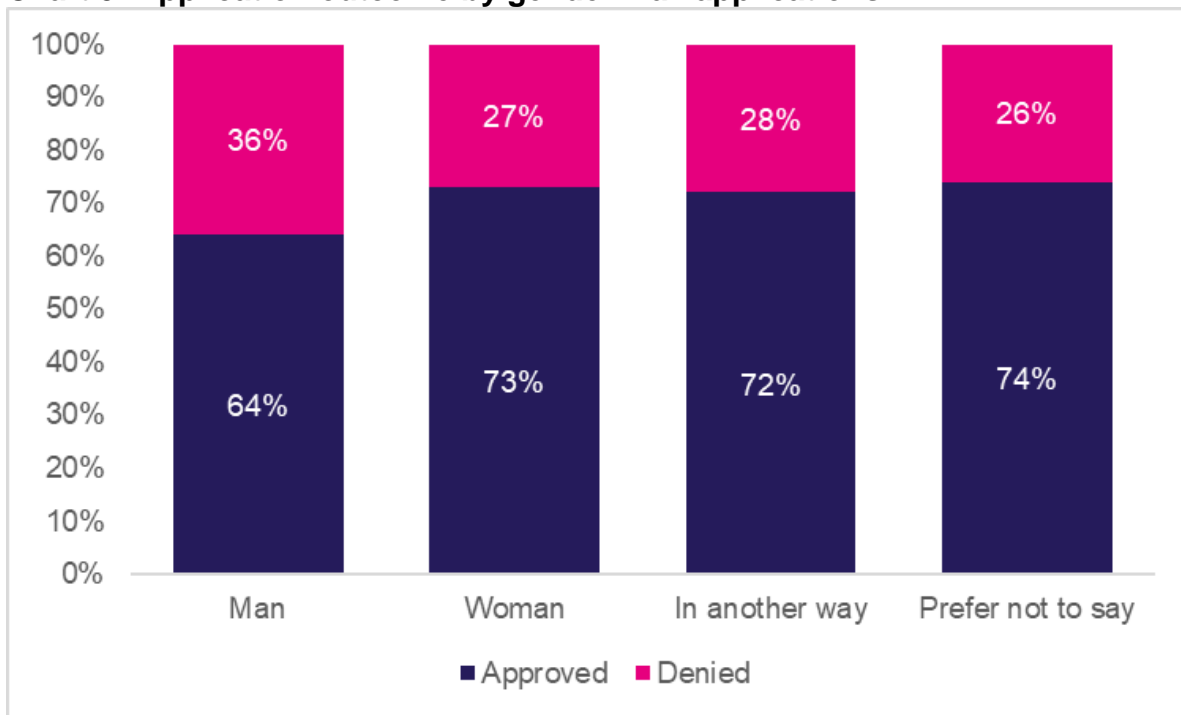
Chart 4: Client diversity by gender



- The proportion of clients approved was higher for women (73%) than men (64%), and this was similar when analysing Scottish clients only (Table 2). This is different to previous statistics covering to May 2020, where approval rates were more similar for men and women. Approval rates from June to November 2020 were higher for women across all benefits except Young Carer Grant, where 73% of women were approved compared to 76% of men.

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

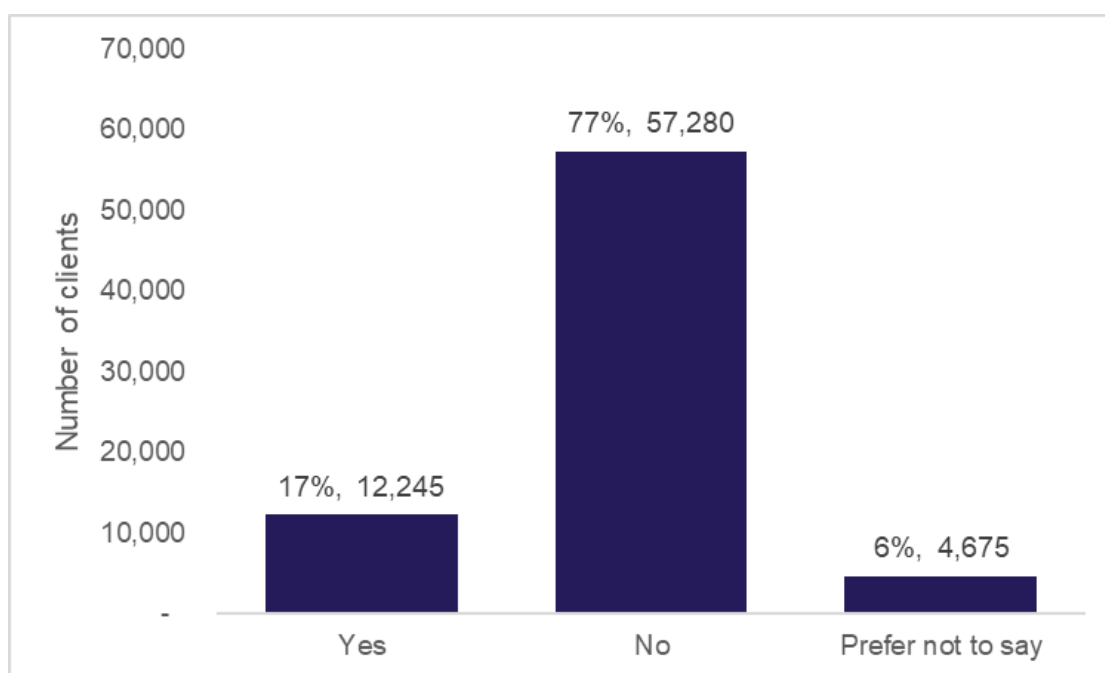
Chart 5: Application outcome by gender – all applications



Physical or mental health condition or illness

- The proportion of clients who self-identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more is 17% compared to 77% who don't (Chart 6, Table 3). There is no directly comparable data for Scotland as a whole, but 31% of adults had a long-term limiting mental or physical health condition or disability in Scotland in August/September 2020⁸.
- At individual benefit level, the proportions were similar for most benefits, except Funeral Support Payment where 34% of clients identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness. This may relate to the older ages of clients applying for Funeral Support Payment (Table 8b).

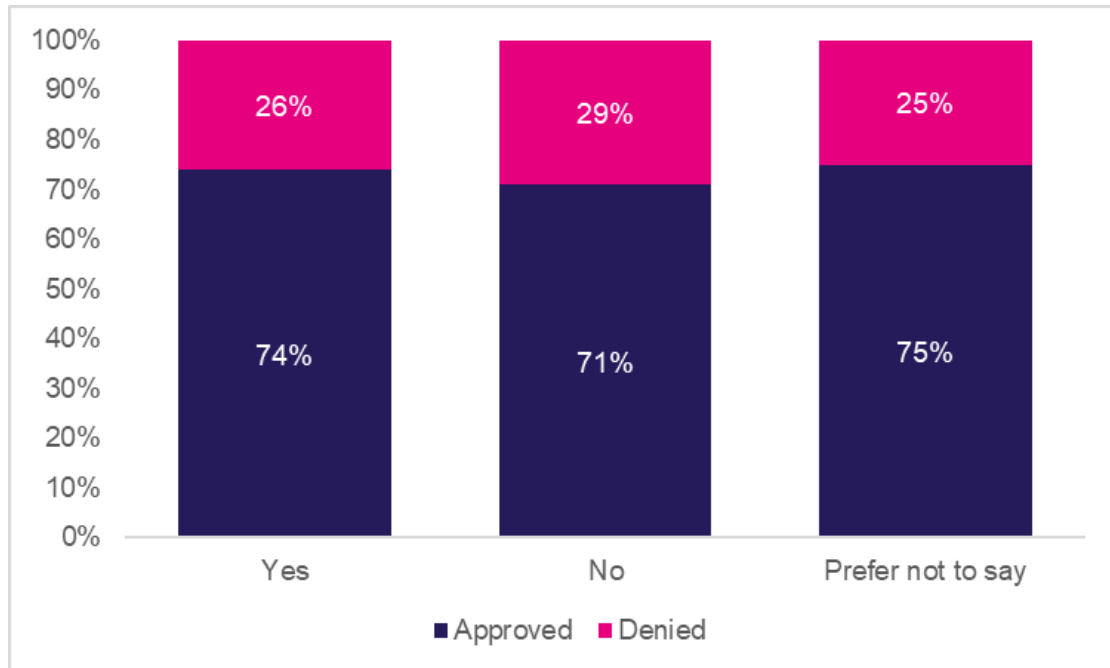
Chart 6: Client diversity by physical or mental health condition or illness



- Clients that have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more had a slightly higher approval rate (74%) than clients that did not (71%) (Table 3, Chart 7). This was similar when looking at clients from Scotland only (75% compared to 72%), and is similar to previous statistics covering to May 2020. At individual benefit level, in most cases the proportion approved was slightly higher for clients that identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness, except for Young Carer Grant where there was a slightly lower approval rate.

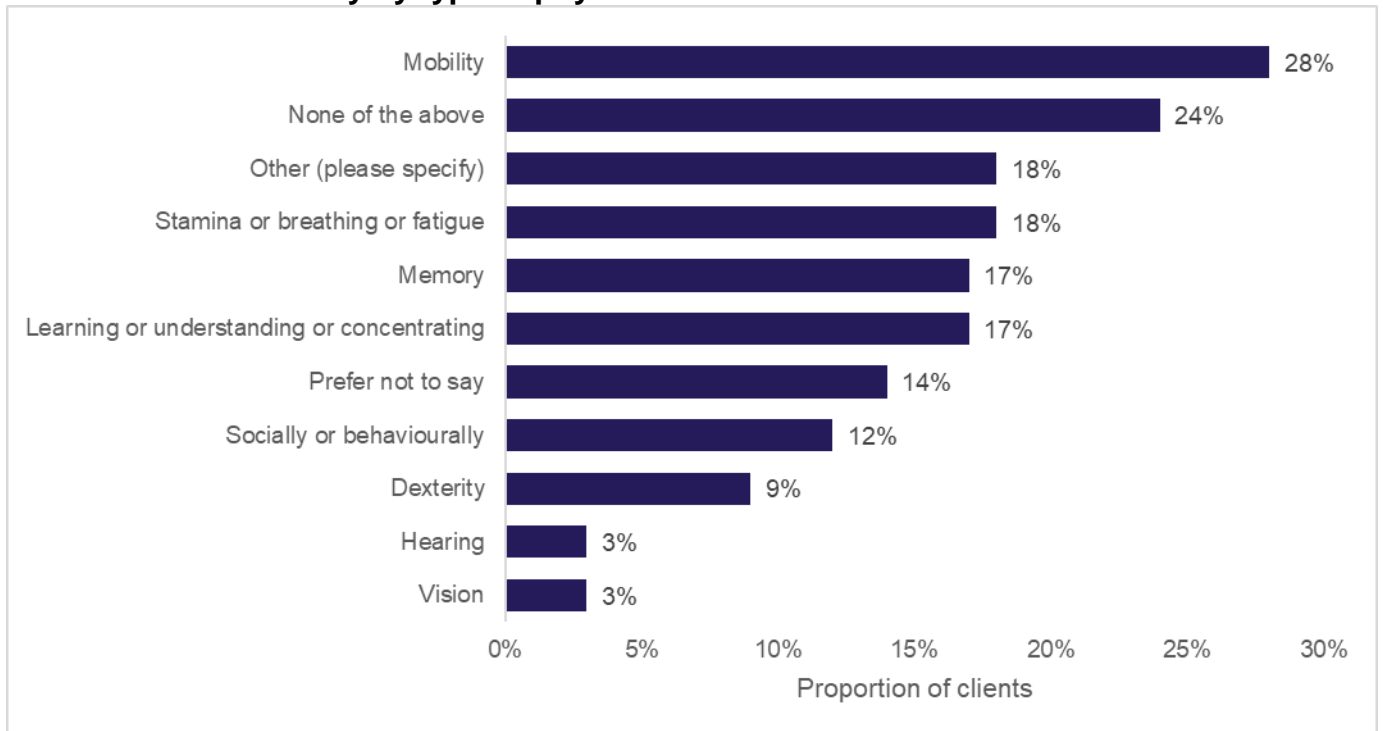
⁸ [Scottish Health Survey 2020](#), Table 1.2

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



- Of those clients that identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness, 28% identified as having a condition or illness affecting 'Mobility', 17-18% had a condition or illness affecting 'Learning or understanding or concentrating', 'Memory', and 'Stamina or breathing or fatigue', with smaller proportions with affected 'Vision', 'Hearing', 'Dexterity' or 'Socially or behaviourally' (Table 4, Chart 8). Types of condition or illness varied between benefits. For example, a higher proportion of Funeral Support Payment clients that identified as having a condition or illness specified that this affected 'Mobility' (54%). Approval rates ranged from 72% (for clients that identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness which was not listed as an option – 'None of the above') to 79% for those with affected 'Hearing'. Patterns were similar when excluding non-Scottish clients, and for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods and Funeral Support Payment. Numbers for other benefits were based on relatively small numbers of clients.

Chart 8: Client diversity by type of physical or mental health condition or illness

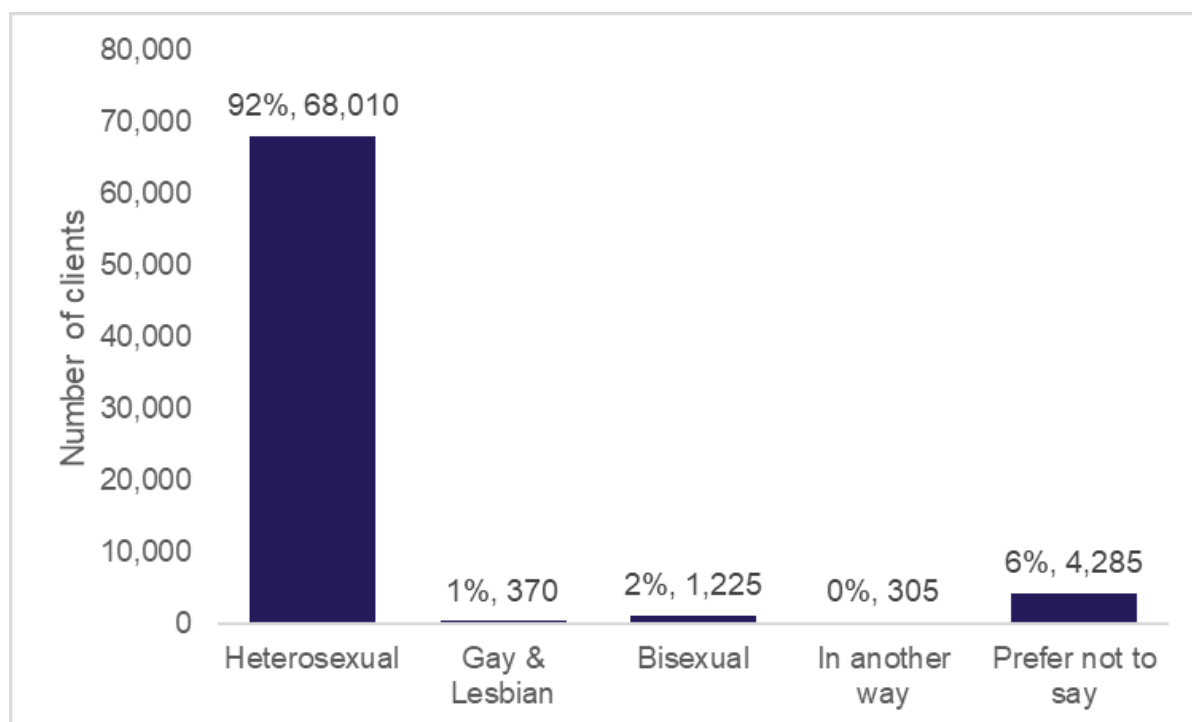


This chart only includes responses from clients that also reported they had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. Clients may have indicated that they had more than one physical or mental health condition or illness.

Sexual Orientation

- Individuals who self-identified as 'Heterosexual' accounted for 92% of clients compared to 1% who identified as 'Gay and Lesbian', 2% as 'Bisexual' and less than 1% as 'In another way'. 'Prefer not say' was chosen by 6% of clients. This is the highest proportion for this category of all the equalities groups (Chart 9, Table 5). Latest results from Scottish Surveys Core Questions show that in Scotland, 95% of adults self-identified as 'Heterosexual' compared to around 3% who self-identified as 'Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other' in 2018⁹.
- Looking at benefits individually, there were relatively fewer clients identifying as 'Heterosexual' for Funeral Support Payment, Job Start Payment and Young Carer Grant. For Funeral Support Payment, more clients chose 'Prefer not to say', while for Job Start Payment and Young Carer Grant more clients identified as 'Gay and Lesbian' or 'Bisexual'.

Chart 9: Client diversity by sexual orientation

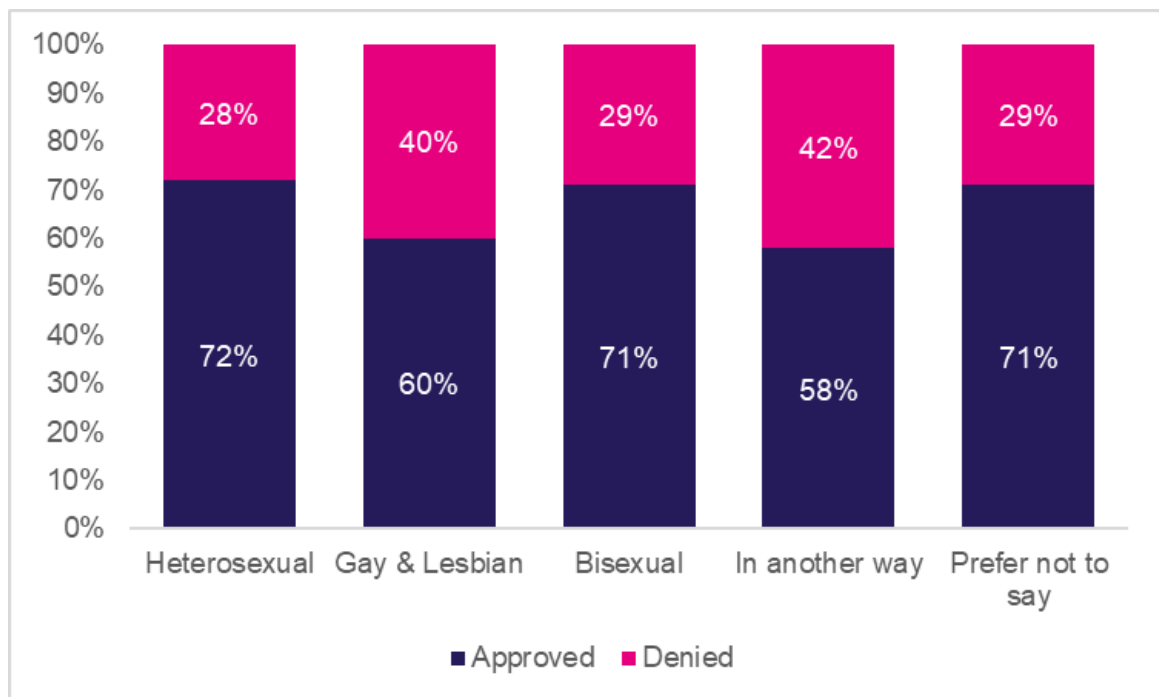


- Looking at all applications, approval levels were higher for 'Heterosexual' (72%) and 'Bisexual' clients (71%), and lower for 'Gay and Lesbian' clients (60%) and clients that identified 'In another way' (58%) (Table 5, Chart 10). This is different to previous statistics to May 2020, which showed a higher approval rate for 'Gay and Lesbian' clients. In the current time period, differences in approval rate were also evident when only analysing clients from Scotland, and only looking at Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods clients, who account for a relatively large proportion of clients overall. Numbers for other individual benefits are relatively small for clients that did

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

not identify as 'Heterosexual', and proportions approved or denied may be affected by small numbers of clients.

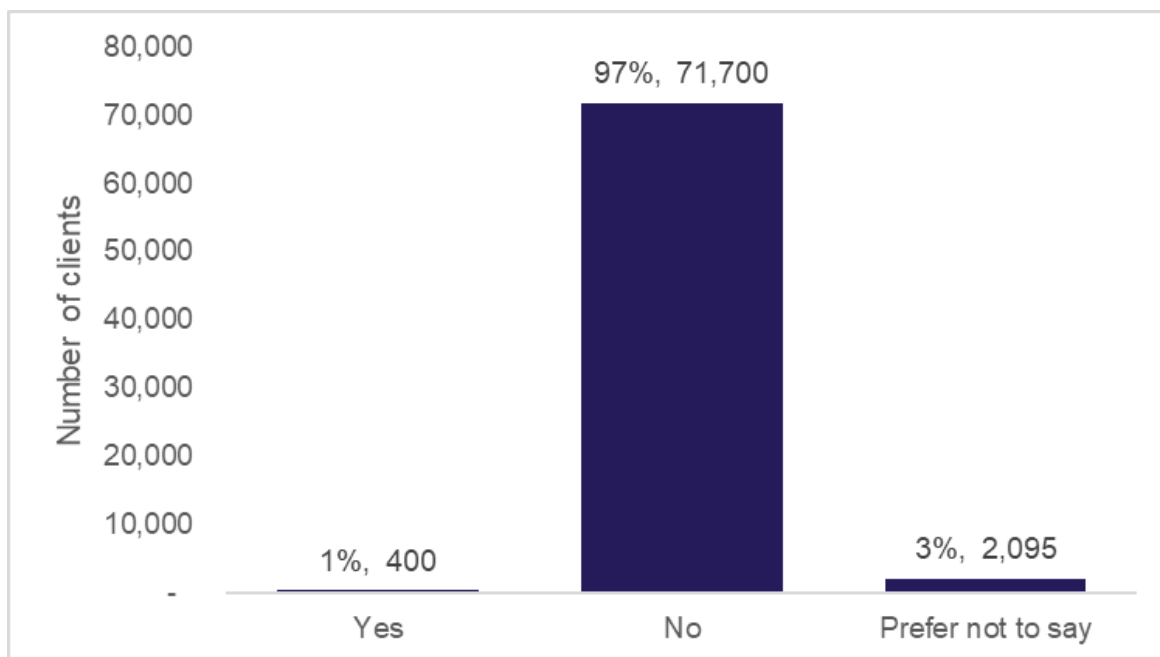
Chart 10: Application outcome by sexual orientation – all applications



Transgender

- One percent of the clients who responded to the Equalities Monitoring and feedback form self-identified as transgender, and 3% chose 'Prefer not to say' (Chart 11, Table 6). The Gender Identity Research and Education Society estimates that between 0.6% and 1.0% of the UK population were transgender¹⁰. Proportions were similar across benefits, with slightly more clients choosing 'Prefer not to say' for Funeral Support Payment (7%).

Chart 11: Client diversity by transgender



- Overall a lower proportion of transgender clients were approved (55%) in comparison to clients that did not identify as transgender (72%) or those that chose 'Prefer not to say' (70%) (Table 6). Around 11% of transgender clients were from outside Scotland, and therefore were likely to be denied. Accounting for this by looking only at transgender clients from Scotland, the approval rate was slightly higher at 62%, although this is still lower than for clients that did not identify as transgender (73%) or those that chose 'Prefer not to say' (74%). This continues a pattern of lower approval rates for clients self-identifying as transgender also seen in the previous statistics to May 2020.
- The number of transgender clients for specific benefits where outcomes were available was generally very low except for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, making comparisons of approval rates by benefit less reliable. For Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, there was a lower approval rate for transgender clients (56%) than clients that did not self-identify as transgender (72%).

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

Chart 12: Application outcome by transgender – all applications

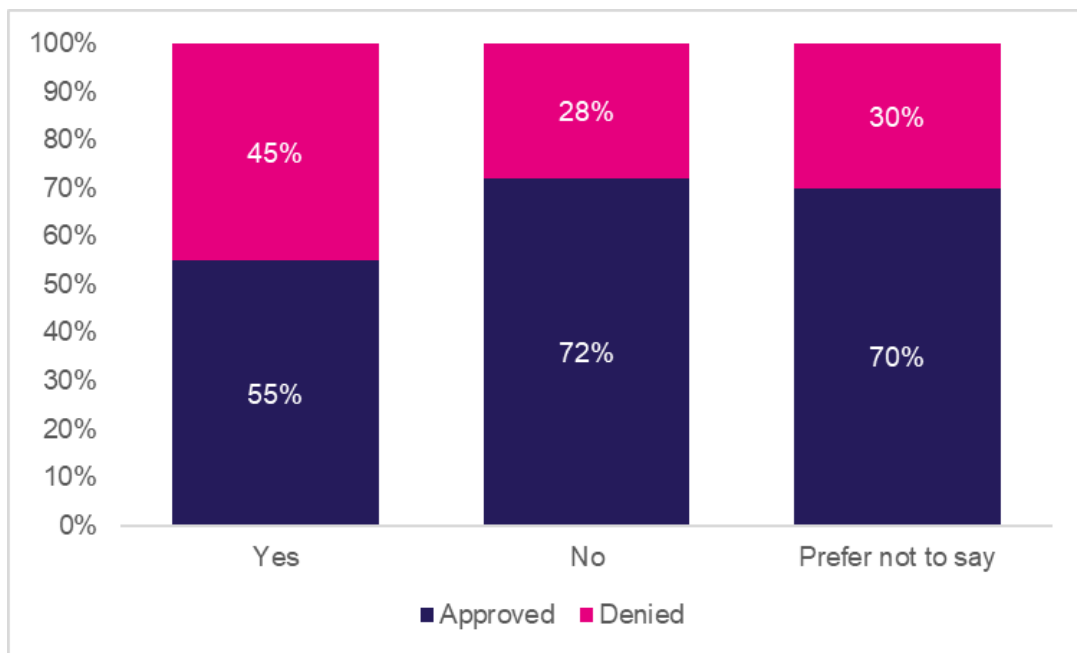
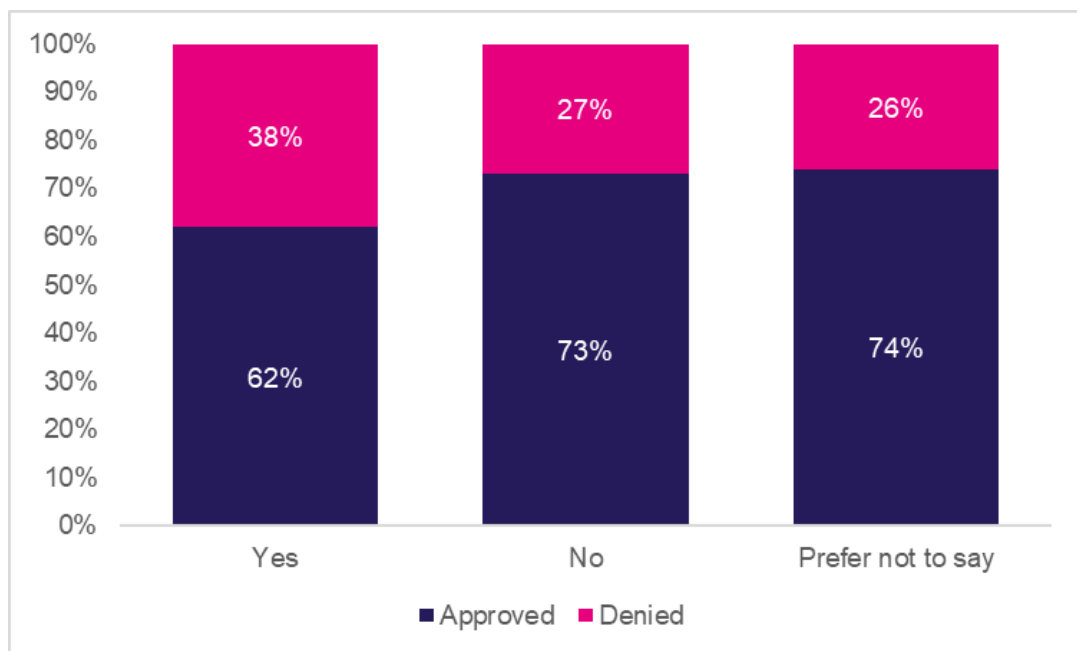


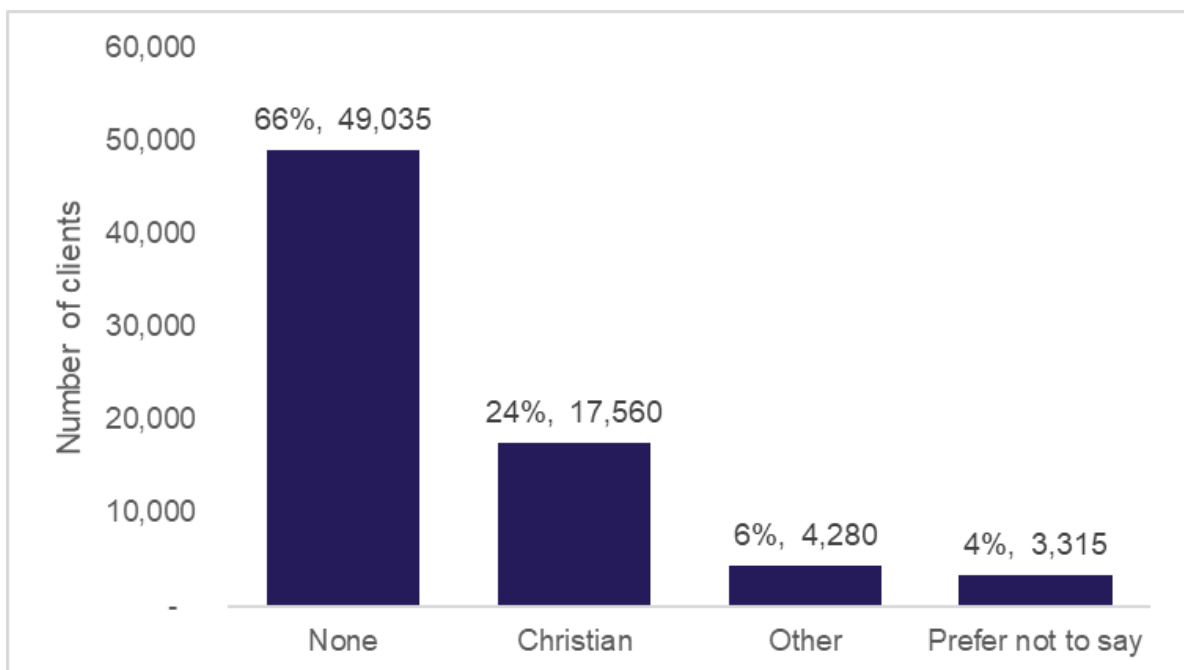
Chart 13: Application outcome by transgender – Scottish applications only



Religion

- The proportion of clients that have no religion is 66% compared to 13% 'Roman Catholic', 7% 'Church of Scotland', 5% 'Muslim' and 4% 'Other Christian'. There were also 4% who chose 'Prefer not to say'. Other religions accounted for small numbers of clients (Chart 14, Table 7). This breakdown is different to Scotland as a whole, where 54% Scottish surveys respondents reported having no religion in 2019, with 22% Church of Scotland, 14% Roman Catholic, 7% Other Christian and 2% Muslim¹¹. The higher percentage of clients with no religion compared to the general population could be related to many clients being from younger [age groups](#). Many clients are young parents applying for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods or Scottish Child Payment, with some additional young clients applying for Job Start Payment or Young Carer Grant. In Scotland, there is a higher level of adults with no religion in the 16-24 age group and this declines as age increases¹¹.
- At individual benefit level, the proportion with no religion was lower for Funeral Support Payment (46%), with Roman Catholic and Church of Scotland accounting for more clients (both 18%). The proportion with no religion was highest for Job Start Payment (78%). Again these differences may relate to the age of clients applying for different benefits.

Chart 14: Client diversity by religion



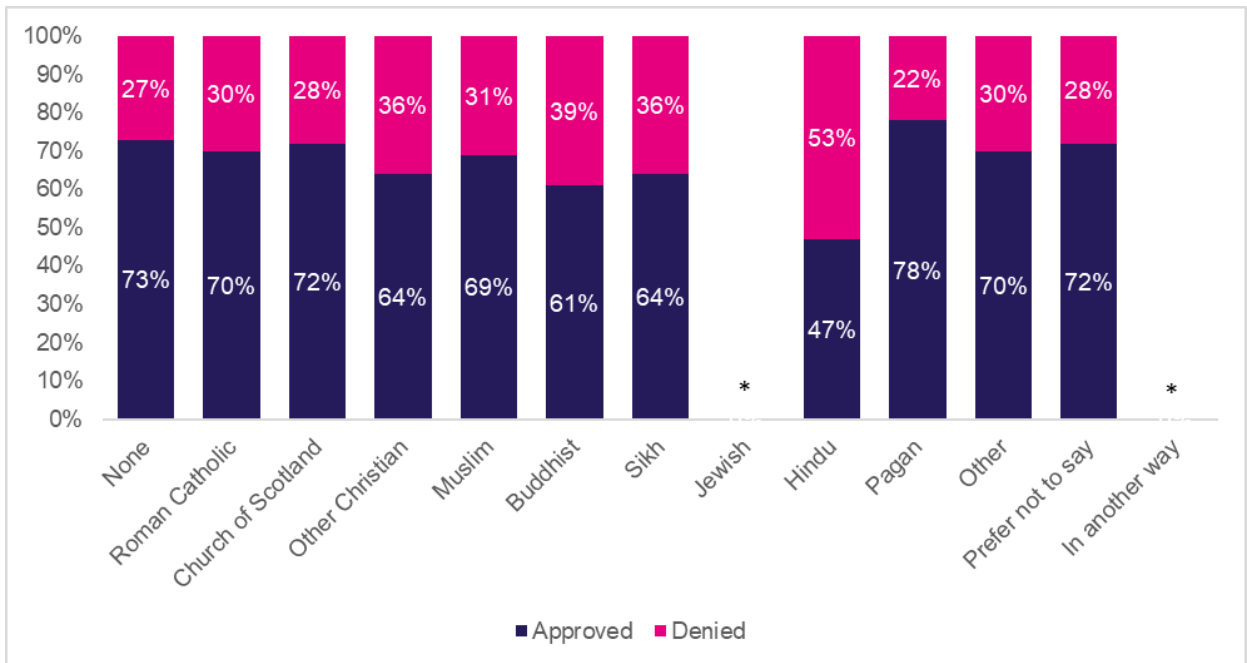
*Christian includes Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and Other Christian

- As in previous publications, approval rate is relatively variable among different religions. Among the most represented groups, approval rate was highest for those with no religion (73%), followed by Church of

¹¹ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019](#)

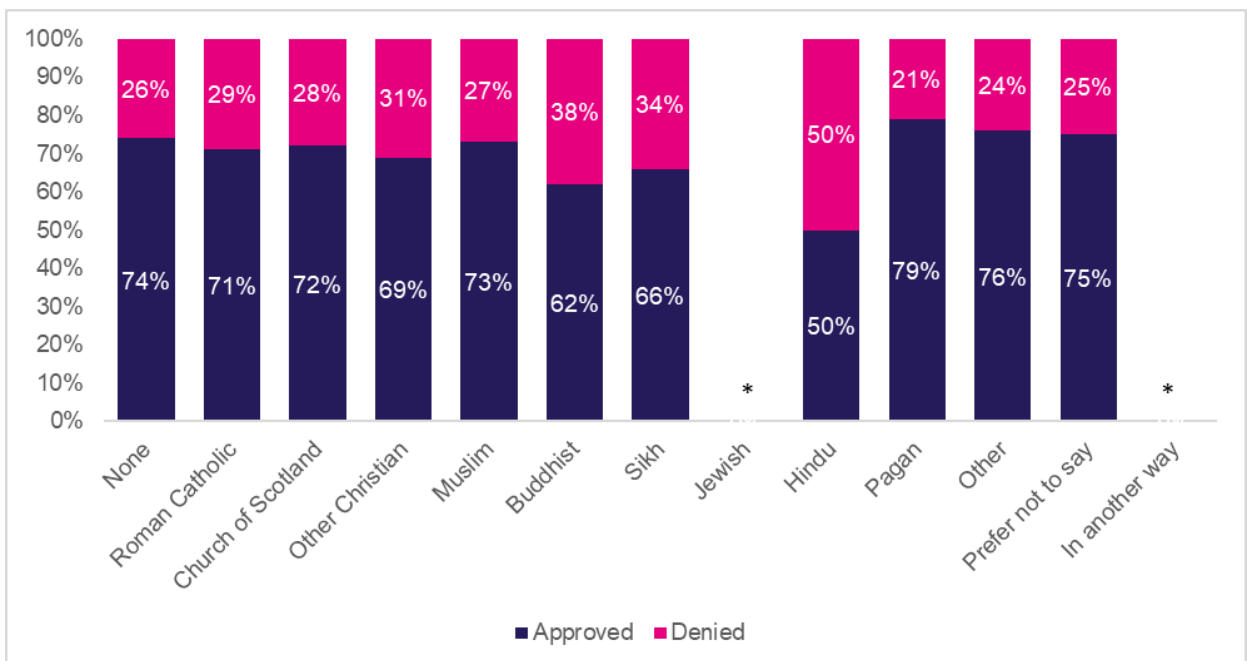
Scotland (72%), Roman Catholic (70%), Muslim (69%) and Other Christian (64%). Approval rates were particularly low for Hindu clients (47%), as in the publication covering to May 2020. This was still the case when analysing only Scottish clients (Table 7), and when looking at Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods specifically. For other individual benefits, approval rates were very variable among religions but this is likely to be related to very small numbers of clients for some groups.

Chart 15: Application outcome by religion – all applications



*Suppressed for disclosure control

Chart 16: Application outcome by religion – Scottish applications only

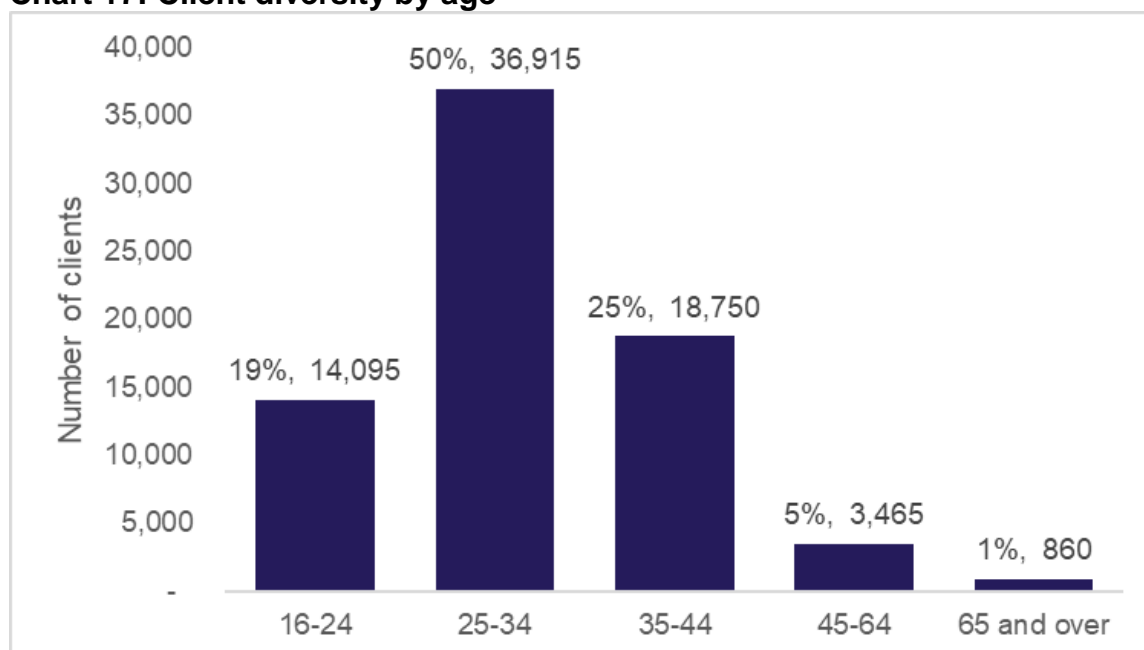


*Suppressed for disclosure control

Age

- 94% of clients are under 45 years old. The highest proportion of clients are in the 25–34 age group (50%) with only 1% aged 65 and over (Chart 14, Table 8). The breakdown of clients by age group differs to the population in Scotland as a whole, where for example 14% of people that are 16 or over fall into the 65 and over age group¹². This difference is expected as over 90% of equalities forms analysed were for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods or Scottish Child Payment (23%), and applicants for these benefits are likely to be younger and have children under 6 years old (Table 8). Tables 8a and 8d show that for each of these two benefits, over half of clients were aged 25-34.

Chart 17: Client diversity by age



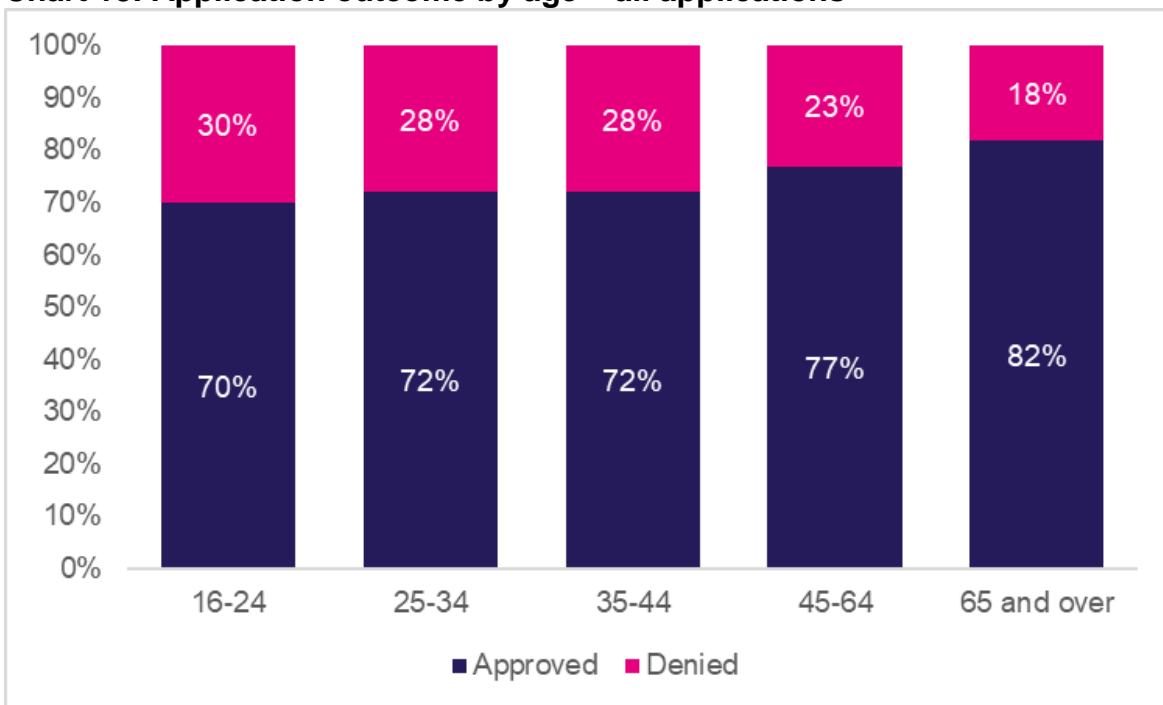
- Approval levels increased with age group, from 70% approval in the 16-24 age group, to 82% in the 65 and over age group (Table 8). This is different to previous statistics to May 2020 which showed lowest approval rates in the 35-44 ag group. There was little effect on this pattern when excluding non-Scottish clients. This overall pattern may relate to approval rates for specific benefits. For example, the overall approval rate for Funeral Support Payment was relatively high (85%), and 95% of clients in the 65 and over age group were applying for Funeral Support Payment (Table 8f). On the other hand, the approval rate for Job Start Payment is relatively low overall (33%), 12% of clients in the youngest age group were applying for this benefit, whereas 0% of each of the other age groups applied for this benefit (Table 8f).
- Age is the only characteristic analysed here which also forms part of the eligibility rules for a benefit. For Job Start Payment, clients must be aged

¹² [Mid-2019 Population Estimates Scotland](#)

16 to 24 (or 25 if they are care leavers), while for Young Carer Grant, clients must be aged 16 to 18 (or older if the delay in applying was due to COVID-19). These criteria impact the age profile and approval rates by age group for these benefits, with most applicants being in the youngest age group, and most applicants in other age groups being denied.

- Age information presented here is for clients who completed equalities monitoring forms, de-duplicated to one outcome for each client. A more detailed breakdown of age for all clients applying since each benefit launched is available in the latest official statistics publications for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Job Start Payment, Scottish Child Payment and Young Carer Grant at <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>. Information for Funeral Support Payment is not currently available.

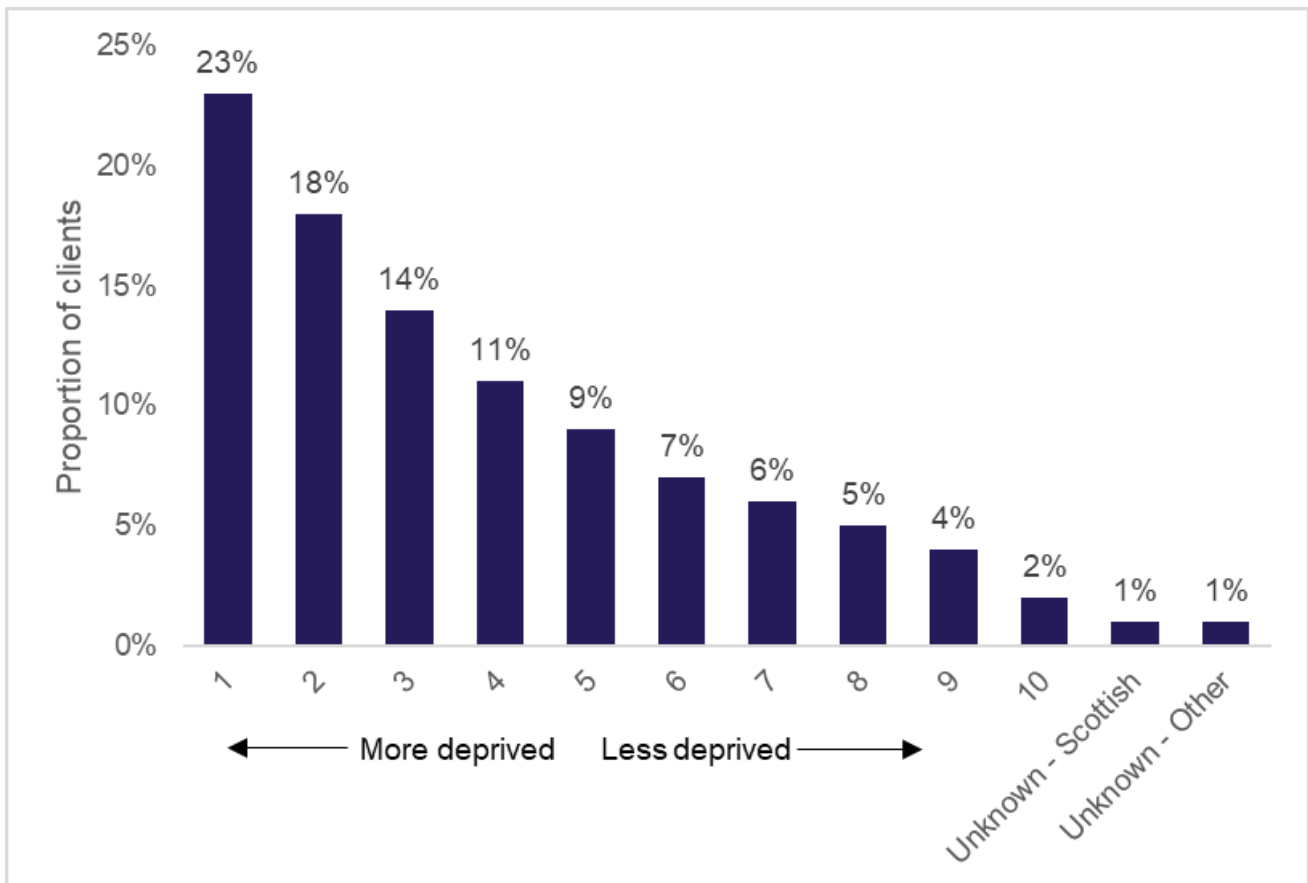
Chart 18: Application outcome by age – all applications



Geography

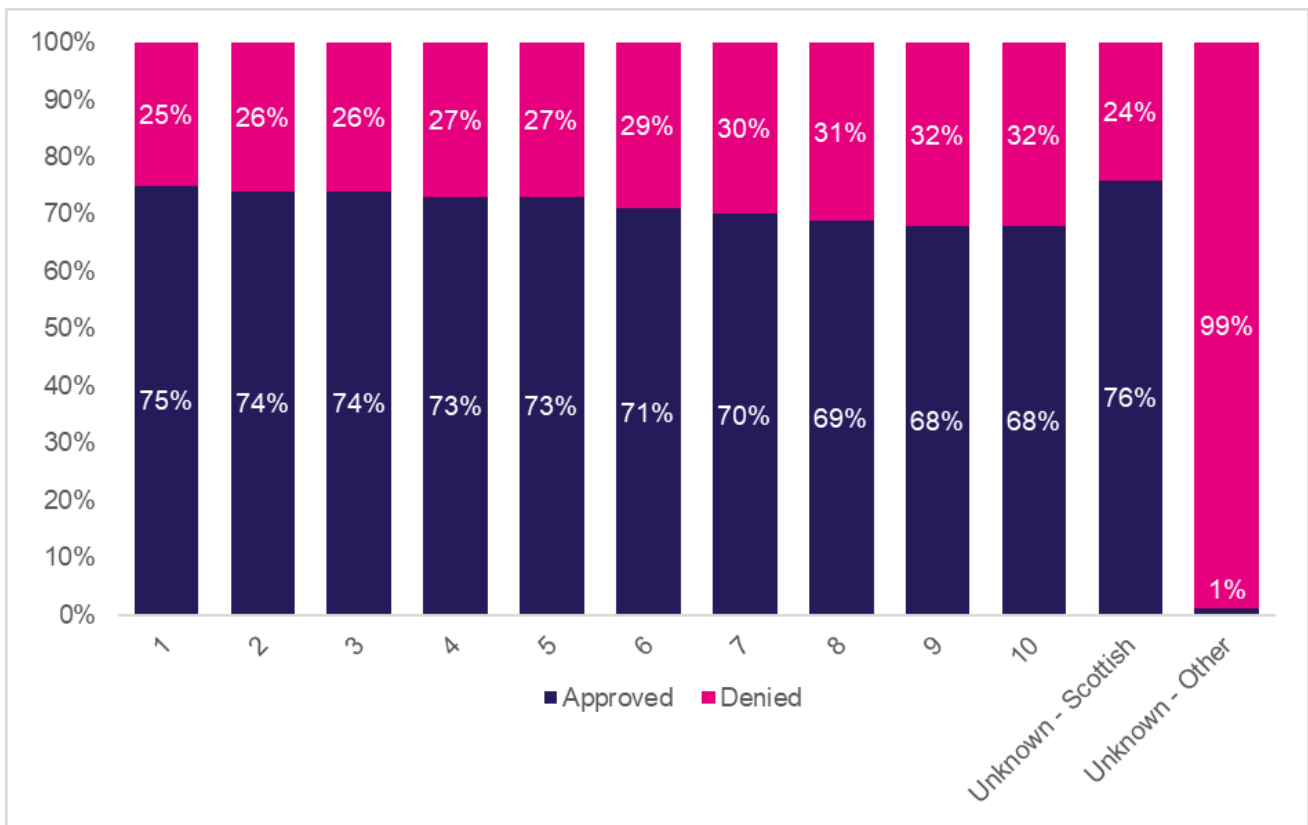
- Approximately 10% of the population of Scotland live in each decile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), which can be used to rank areas from decile 1 (the most deprived areas) to 10 (the least deprived areas). Social Security Scotland clients lived across all deciles of the SIMD, including the least deprived (2% clients), but a disproportionate number lived in the more deprived deciles (Table 9, Chart 16). For example, nearly a quarter of clients (23%) lived in the most deprived decile, and more than half (55%) of clients lived in the three most deprived deciles, compared to 29% of the population aged 16 and over in 2019¹³. This pattern was similar across all benefits, and is expected given that the benefits being reported on (excluding Young Carer Grant) are to support people on low incomes. Approval rates were also higher in the most deprived deciles, and lower in the least deprived deciles (Table 9, Chart 17). This was similar across all benefits, except for Young Carer Grant where approval rates were higher in the least deprived deciles, although this may be due to small numbers in these areas for this benefit.

Chart 19: Clients by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile



¹³ [Population Estimates by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation \(SIMD\)](#)

Chart 20: Application outcome by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile – all applications



- Three quarters (75%) of clients lived in ‘Large Urban’ or ‘Other Urban’ areas, and this was similar across benefits (Table 10). This is similar to the population as a whole, where it is estimated that 71% of people aged 16 or over lived in ‘Large Urban’ or ‘Other Urban’ areas in 2019¹⁴. Overall, approval rates were similar across urban and rural areas, and this was also true when looking only at Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. Approval rates for other benefits appear to vary in urban and rural areas, although much of this variation may be due to small numbers.
- Around 1% of applications came from clients living on Scottish islands (Table 11), compared with 97% on the Scottish mainland. This was similar across all benefits. In comparison 2% of the Scottish population lived on islands according to the 2011 Census, with numbers having increased since 2001¹⁵. Approval rates were similar for islands (71%) and the mainland (73%) overall, and for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (72% versus 73%). Approval rates for other benefits appear to vary for islands compared to the mainland, although this is likely to be due to very small numbers for islands at individual benefit level.

¹⁴ [Population Estimates by Urban Rural Classification \(2011 Data Zone based\)](#)

¹⁵ [Inhabited Islands analytical report](#)

Chart 21: Clients by Urban Rural 2016 8-fold

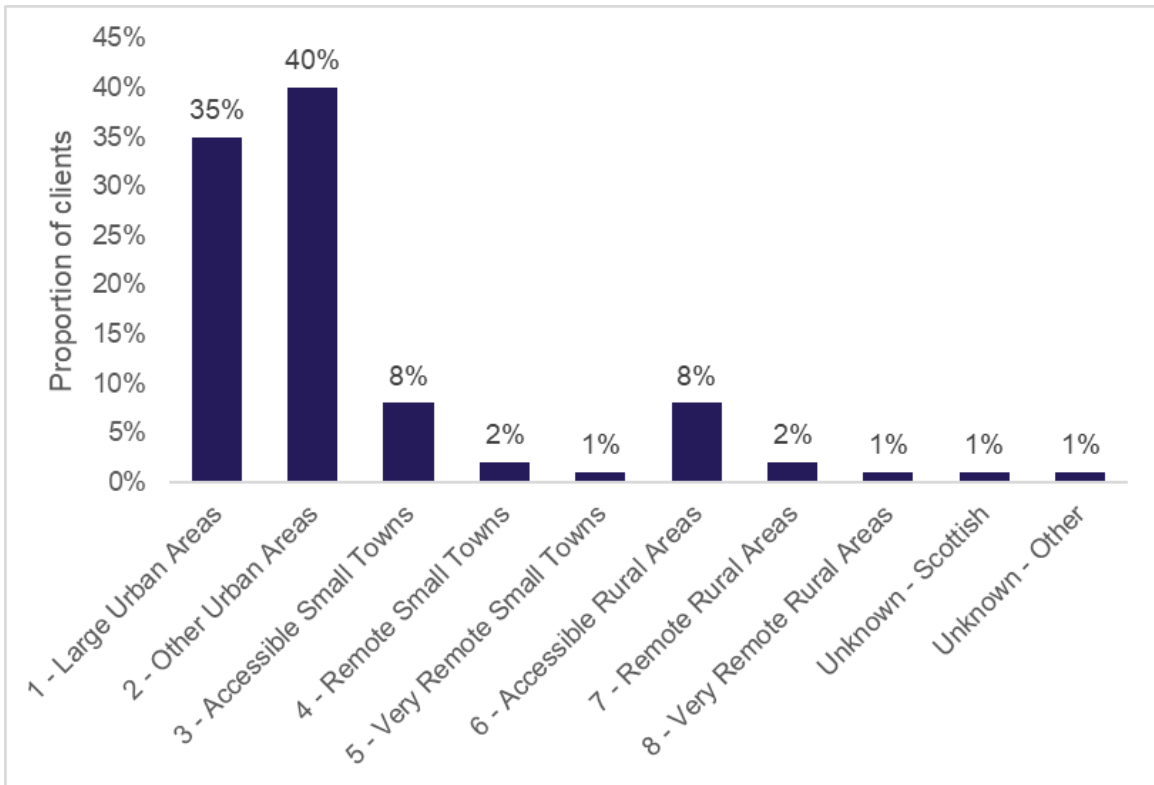
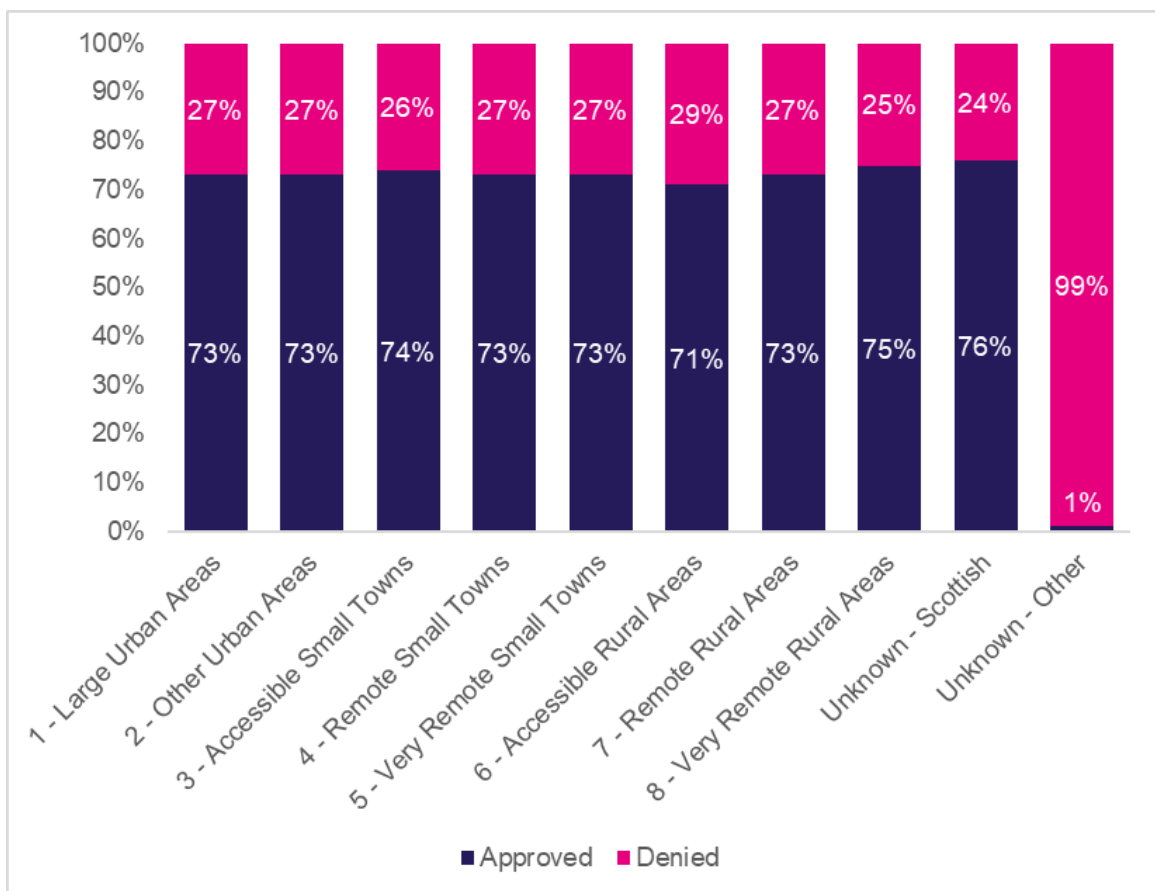


Chart 22: Application outcome by Urban Rural 2016 8-fold – all applications



About the Equalities data

How Equalities data is collected

Social Security Scotland is the executive agency of Scottish Government which is responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland. Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby payment on 10 December 2018, followed by Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment on 29 April 2019, School Age Payment on 3 June 2019, Best Start Foods on 12 August 2019, Funeral Support Payment on 16 September 2019, Young Carer's Grant on 21 October 2019, and Job Start Payment on 17 August 2020. Social Security Scotland invited clients to apply for Scottish Child Payment from 9 November 2020, in advance of the benefit being launched on 15 February 2021 to help manage the expected demand. Applicants will receive a decision from 15 February onwards, with the first payments due to be made to clients from the end of February 2021. All Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications are taken through the same joint application form. Clients can also apply for Scottish Child Payment in a joint application with Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, or as a separate application.

| Benefit and link to latest statistics | Launch | Applications Jun-Nov 2020 | Decisions Jun-Nov 2020 |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods (BSG) Pregnancy and Baby Payment Early Learning Payment School Age Payment Best Start Foods | Dec-19 Apr-19 Jun-19 Aug-19 | 70,460 | 48,700 |
| Funeral Support Payment (FSP) | Sep-19 | 4,230 | 4,330 |
| Young Carer Grant (YCG) | Oct-19 | 1,605 | 1,415 |
| Job Start Payment (JSP) | Aug-20 | 2,205 | 1,785 |
| Scottish Child Payment (SCP) | Nov-20 | 44,665 | n/a |

Clients can apply to Social Security Scotland through different channels, including mail, telephony, and online. Different channels are used more frequently for different benefits. The following table summarises the breakdown of channels used by clients analysed in this publication. Detailed statistics by channel are also published for each individual benefit here: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>.

| Benefit | Proportion of clients using each channel | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------|--------|
| | Mail | Telephone | Online |
| Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods | 2% | 3% | 95% |
| Funeral Support Payment | 5% | 27% | 68% |
| Young Carer Grant | 1% | 1% | 98% |
| Job Start Payment | 0% | 3% | 97% |
| Scottish Child Payment | 0% | 2% | 98% |
| Total | 2% | 4% | 95% |

All clients applying through any channel are asked to complete an Equality Monitoring and Feedback form along with the application form for each benefit delivered by Social Security Scotland. The data collected is used to identify who is using the

service and to investigate how Social Security Scotland processes work for different groups of people. We analyse the equalities data by outcome of application to assess if there is any variation. Applications will either be 'approved' if clients are found to be eligible, or 'denied' if clients are found not to be eligible. Possible reasons for denials vary between different benefits, but include factors such as not being resident in Scotland, not being in receipt of necessary qualifying benefits, or not applying during specified windows of time. Analysis of outcome data highlights groups of clients that are being found to be ineligible, which in turn suggests areas where Social Security Scotland can improve the information available around eligibility. Analysis of the feedback section of the forms is published separately as part of [Social Security Scotland's Insights Research Findings publication series – most recently covering the period to March 2020.](#)

Clients' equality information is collected and stored separately to the outcome of a client's application. Clients applying by mail complete a paper equalities form and return it with their application. Equalities data is then input into Questback¹⁶ separately from application information, which is stored on Social Security Scotland's case management system. Similarly, clients applying by telephone answer equalities questions over the phone, and equalities data is also input into Questback by client advisors. Clients applying online complete a mandatory Equality Monitoring and Feedback form prior to submitting their application. Once submitted, application data is stored in a separate dataset to equalities data. Psuedoanonymised¹⁷ equalities responses and application details are later linked together for statistical analysis. Online equalities responses are linked to outcomes data using a unique identifier, and mail and telephone equalities response are linked to outcomes using postcode and date of birth.

Response rates

As of 9th December 2019, clients applying for benefits online are required to complete a mandatory Equality Monitoring and Feedback form following their benefits application form. Prior to this, the Equality Monitoring and Feedback form was completed on a voluntary basis. All online applications have an Equality Monitoring and Feedback form because clients cannot submit their application until it is completed. The response rate for mail and telephone applications is lower because of the different process for collecting data, as described above. However, this accounts for relatively few applications, as shown in the table breaking down applications by channel above.

From 9th December 2019 the form includes a 'prefer not to say' option for all questions for clients who wish not to disclose this information. The number of clients choosing 'prefer not to say' varied by question and by benefit. The question with the highest proportion of 'prefer not to say' was sexual orientation (6%). A higher proportion of

¹⁶ An online platform used for secure data collection <https://www.questback.com/uk/>

¹⁷ Client names are replaced with reference numbers so that analysts cannot identify individuals, but can still link monitoring forms with application details. Full addresses are also removed and only postcode retained.

Funeral Support Payment clients chose 'prefer not to say' for all questions, compared to other clients. This may be related to more Funeral Support Payment clients applying by telephone compared to other benefits.

The majority of responses were from applicants for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods (68%) as there are a greater number of applications for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods compared to other benefits (Table 12).

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

Cleaning mail and telephone equalities data

Mail and telephone Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms are collected through Questback. Data is entered manually and can therefore contain some typographical errors. For some clients postcode and date of birth data were entered in incorrect columns, this has been corrected manually.

Missing identification information (mail and telephone responses)

Mail and telephone equalities information was linked to application outcome data using the postcode and date of birth of the client. Clients that didn't have a postcode and/or date of birth recorded were identified and removed from the dataset as there was no other variable that could identify them in the application outcome information. This accounted for 5% of the original mail and telephone responses. All online equalities responses included a unique application reference, so no online responses were removed.

Duplicates in records from Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms

Clients are able to make multiple applications to Social Security Scotland. For example:

- clients might apply for the same payment multiple times (e.g. they may have been denied a payment then re-applied at a later date),
- clients might apply for more than one of the different payments on different dates
- clients might make a joint application for BSG, BSF and SCP.

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

The equalities data collected by mail and telephone did not include any unique identifiers that could be used to identify duplicates, however, postcode and date of birth information were used as an alternative. There were a small number of records in the Equality Monitoring and Feedback form information which had the same postcode and date of birth. In these cases, where responses to the equalities questions were the same, we have assumed that they are duplicate responses from

the same person, and one of the records was kept whilst the other was removed. Where answers to the questions were not the same, all of the duplicate records were removed from the data set because we cannot tell if these records are the same client who has applied for different benefits or if they are a different client. The duplicate records that were removed accounted for 1% of the mail and 2% of telephone responses that had postcode and date of birth information.

The equalities data collected online did not contain any information unique to the client, therefore duplicate clients could only be determined after linking to the application details data (see section below), at which point the data was de-duplicated by client National Insurance Number. National Insurance Number is 'hashed', or turned into a string of letters and numbers which analysts cannot use to identify people, but can be used as a unique anonymous reference for clients. Similar to the mail and telephone responses, where it was not possible to distinguish accurate equalities information for a single client as the response were different, all duplicates were removed. Where the equalities information provided was consistent across applications, a single response was kept.

Linkage to application details and outcome information

Mail and telephone equalities information was linked to application details using postcode and date of birth. 62% mail and 75% telephone equalities records were matched to application details.

Online equalities information was linked to application details using unique application reference. Around 2% online application details were missing a unique application reference, and these could not therefore be linked to equalities information. However, for all other cases online application details and equalities information could be linked together.

Duplicate application details

Duplicates were created when equalities forms were linked to application details, because an individual client may have applied multiple times (as described above). The data was therefore de-duplicated again after linking. Where at least one of the duplicate application details for a client had an application outcome date, the most recent date was retained. This effectively excluded a large number of pending cases from the dataset. Where all the duplicate application details for a client had a missing application outcome date (e.g. because all duplicate applications were pending, or had missing application dates), only one record was retained. For joint Best Start Grant and Scottish Child Payment applications, the Best Start Grant element of the application has been retained in the dataset for analysis and the Scottish Child Payment element dropped. This is because Scottish Child Payment data did not have outcomes until 15 February 2021, which is after the time period considered in this publication. De-duplication of application details resulted in the removal of 38% online, 3% mail and 9% telephone linked records.

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

Single and joint application outcomes

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

Scottish Child Payment can be applied for as a single benefit, or jointly with Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. Any joint applications for Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant were split into two separate parts, and treated as two applications during the process above. There are currently no application outcomes for Scottish Child Payment. Therefore at the de-duplication stage, only the Best Start Grant part of joint applications was retained, and a large proportion of Scottish Child Payment records were removed. Fewer Scottish Child Payment equalities records will be removed in future publications, when outcome information is available.

Data quality

Approval rate

Approval rate figures are calculated as the proportion of applications approved out of the total approved or denied. In this publication, figures are based on the date of application rather than the date of decision. There were not outcomes for Scottish Child Payment as of the end of November 2020, with all applications having a 'pending' or missing outcome. Therefore there is no breakdown of approved and denied applications for Scottish Child Payment.

Approval rate figures differ slightly from those in benefit specific publications (see links at the start of this section). The main reason for this is that the approval rate in this publication excludes withdrawn applications, whereas benefit specific publications include them. This is a particular issue for Funeral Support Payment, where around 10% or more of applications are withdrawn each month. Additionally, the approval rate in this publication is calculated for applications where equalities forms were completed, which may be more likely to be approved. Finally, in benefit specific publications approval rate is calculated from decisions taken within a time period, whereas here they are calculated for applications received within the same time

period. This is less likely to have an affect on approval rates as they are relatively stable over time.

Weighting of equalities data by benefit

After cleaning and de-duplication, a larger proportion of Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms were related to applications for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods than other benefits (Table 12). This is due to this being the benefit for which Social Security Scotland receives the most applications, and also because for any joint Best Start Grant and Scottish Child Payment applications, the Best Start Grant part of the application has been kept because it was more likely to have an outcome. The equalities characteristics of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods clients therefore have a greater impact on overall figures for Social Security Scotland than the equalities characteristics of other clients.

Backdating

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, the data cuts covering to 31 December 2020 have been used for online Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms, and application details for all benefits, and data cuts from 14 January 2021 have been used for mail and telephone Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms. Later data cuts may include additional retrospective changes to application details, including corrections to details in the case management system, and changes that have resulted from redeterminations and appeals.

'Unknown' equalities information

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

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

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

Future developments

We are exploring combinations of different protected characteristics and plan to publish supplementary tables covering the period June to November 2020 in due course.

Whilst the publication currently reports the proportion of clients that have been denied, in future we aim to provide further information on the reasons that applications are denied.

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

Background to Benefit Types

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

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot

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

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

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

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