

EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY**Social Security Experience Panels:
Who is in the Panels? Update 2020****Background**

The Scottish Government is becoming responsible for some of the benefits currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of work to prepare for this change, the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels.

**Department
for Work and
Pensions****Scottish
Government**

Over 2,400 people from across Scotland joined the Experience Panels when they started in 2017. They all have recent experience of the benefits that are coming to Scotland.



The Scottish Government is working with Experience Panel members to create Scotland's new social security system.

**2,400+
Experience Panel
members**

About the research

This report provides a summary of who is in the Experience Panels as of 2020. The summary includes a variety of information about the panel membership. This includes looking at panel membership by:



Demographics
(e.g. age,
gender,
ethnicity)



Disabilities or
long term health
conditions



Experience of
different
benefits



Caring responsibilities



Where they live

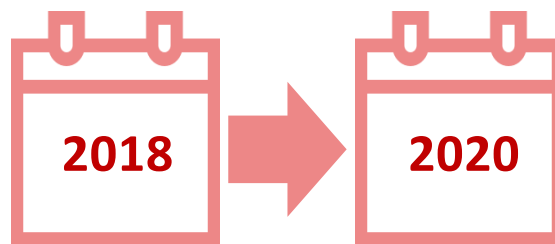


We also asked panel members to give feedback about how it has been taking part in the Experience Panels. Here, we ask for ways in which we would improve our research.



In 2018, we reported on who was in the Experience Panels.

Since then, between 2018 and 2020, we have continued to ask panel members to tell us about themselves. This has been done through a number of new '*About You*' surveys.



These '*About You*' surveys have asked existing panel members to update their information and make sure that our records are correct.

New panel members:



Between July 2019 and March 2020, we publicised the Experience Panels and recruited new panel members.



+ 572 people joined as new
Experience Panel members
between July 2019 and March
2020



We gave '*About You*' surveys to **new panel members** who joined the Experience Panels between July 2019 and March 2020.



Overall, this report combines all the available information – on demographics, disabilities and long term health conditions, benefit experience, caring responsibilities, geography - for every current panel member.

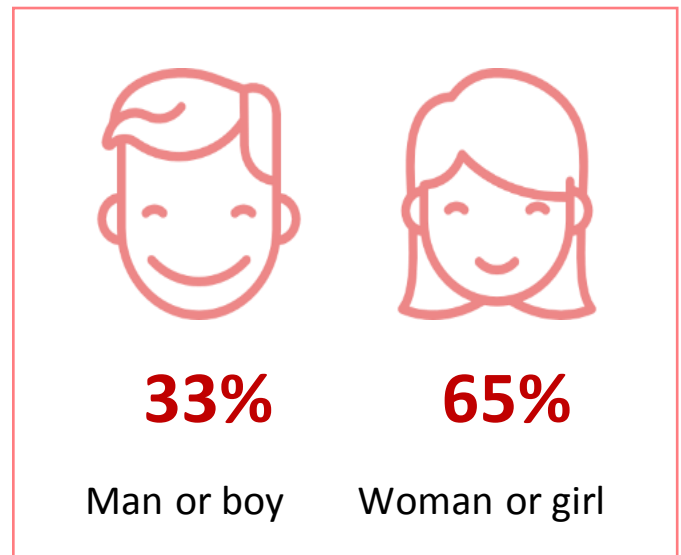
Age and Gender



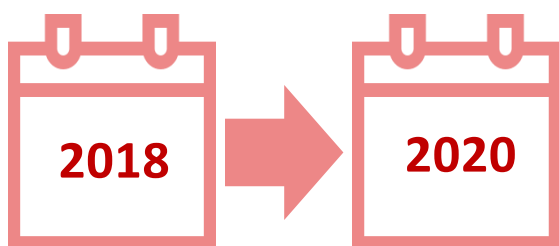
Across a number of different ‘*About You*’ surveys, we have asked panel members about their age and gender.

A third (33 per cent) of survey respondents identified as a ‘**Man or boy**’.

Just under two-thirds (65 per cent) identified as a ‘**Woman or Girl**.’



Around half (47 per cent) of respondents said that they were **aged between 45 and 59**. **Around a quarter** (23 per cent) were aged between 25 and 44. 1 per cent of respondents said they were **aged between 16 and 24**.



Compared to available responses from the 2018 findings, panel membership by age and gender has **stayed proportionately similar**.

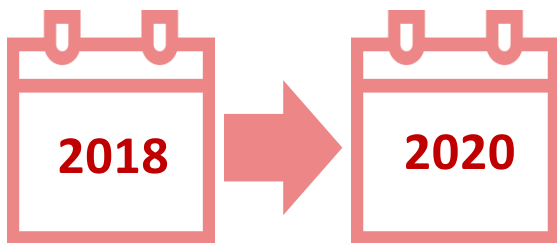
Ethnicity



Across a number of different ‘*About You*’ surveys, we have asked Experience Panel members about their ethnicity.



Over nine-tenths of respondents (97 per cent) identified as ‘White ethnic group’, compared to **less than one-tenth** (2 per cent) who identified as a ‘non-white minority ethnic group.’



Compared to available responses from the 2018 findings, panel membership by ethnicity has **stayed proportionately similar**.

Religion and Belief



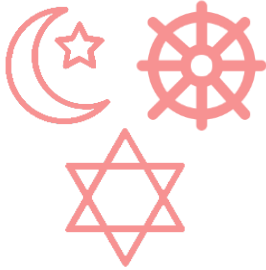
Across a number of different ‘*About You*’ surveys, we have asked the Experience Panels’ membership about their religion and beliefs.



Over half of respondents (52 per cent) said that they have no religion.

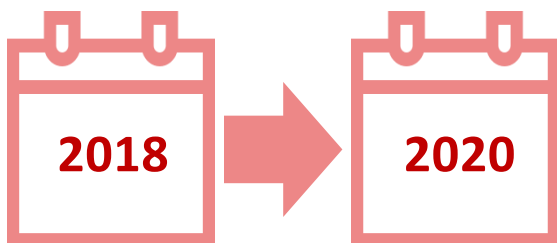


One in eight (15 per cent) said they were **Church of Scotland**. One in nine (12 per cent) said that they were **Roman Catholic**. One-tenth (9 per cent) identified as '**Other Christian**.'



Other respondents said that they identified with different religions or faiths. One per cent said they were **Muslim**. One per cent said that they were **Jewish**. And 1 per cent said that they were **Buddhist**.

Three per cent of respondents **preferred not to say** whether they had a religion or faith.



Compared to available responses from the 2018 findings, panel membership by religion and belief has **stayed proportionately similar**.

Sexual orientation and gender identity



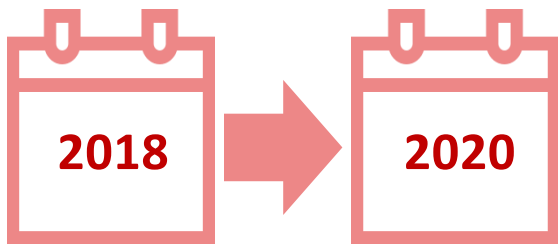
Across a number of different '*About You*' surveys, we have asked Experience Panel members about their sexual orientation and gender identity.



Over eight in ten respondents (85 per cent) identified as **‘heterosexual / straight’**. Just under one in ten (9 per cent) said that they were either **‘Bisexual’** or **‘Gay / Lesbian.’** Two per cent said that they **identify in another way.**



Almost all respondents (97 per cent) said that they do not identify as **transgender**. One per cent said that they do. Two per cent of respondents said that they would prefer not to say.



Compared to available responses from the 2018 findings, panel membership by sexual orientation and gender identity has **stayed proportionately similar.**

Disability and other long-term health conditions



Across a number of different *‘About You’* surveys, we have asked Experience Panel members about disabilities and other long-term health conditions.



Around half of respondents said that they had either a **physical disability** or **chronic pain lasting at least three months** or **another long-term condition** (50 per cent and 51 per cent and 57 per cent respectively).

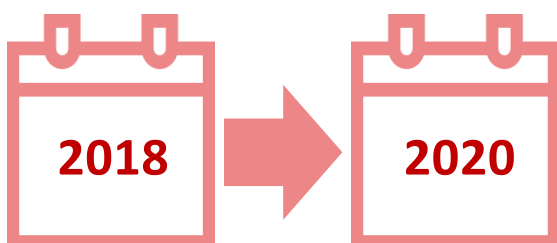


Over a third of respondents (33 per cent) said that they had a **mental health condition**.



Other respondents said that they had **severe hearing impairment** (8 per cent), a **severe vision impairment** (5 per cent), or a **learning disability** (7 per cent).

82% of respondents said they had either a **disability or long term health condition**



Compared to available responses from the 2018 findings, the levels of disability and long term health conditions reported by panel members **stayed proportionately similar**.



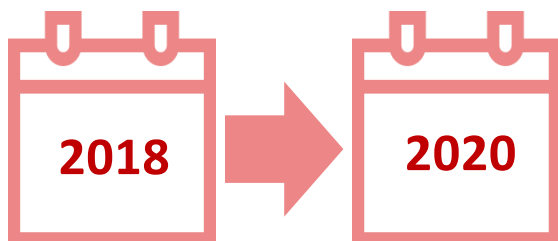
We also asked the Experience Panels' membership about how their disabilities and other long-term health conditions affect them.



Two thirds of respondents (67%) said they their disability or long term health condition affects their **mobility**. Over half (54 per cent) said that their health condition impacts their **stamina or breathing or fatigue**.



Around four in ten respondents said that their health condition affects either their **dexterity** or **memory** (45 per cent and 42 per cent respectively).



Compared to available responses from the 2018 findings, the levels of disability and long term health conditions reported by panel members. **stayed proportionately similar**.

Caring responsibilities



Across a number of different 'About You' surveys, we asked Experience Panel members about their caring responsibilities.

**52%
with**



**46%
without**

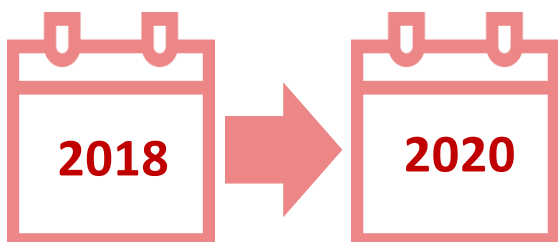
Over half of respondents (52 per cent) said that they **do have caring responsibilities**, compared to those who said that they did not (46 per cent).



Of those who said that they have caring responsibilities, one in four (25 per cent) said that they **care for a child or children with a long term condition**.



Three-quarters (74 per cent) said that they cared for an **adult or adults with a long-term condition**, and 31 per cent cared for an adult or adults who need **support due to old age**.



Compared to available responses from the 2018 findings, caring responsibilities among panel members **stayed proportionately similar**.

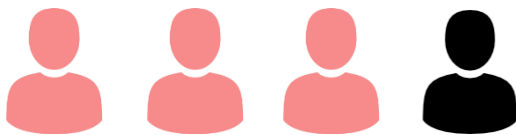
Experience of Benefits



Across a number of different 'About You' surveys, we asked Experience Panel members about their experience of different benefits.



Three in five respondents (61 per cent) said that they had experience of **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)**.



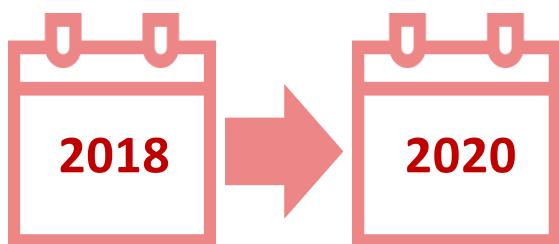
Almost three-quarters (70 per cent) had experience of **Personal Independence Payments (PIP)**.



Around a third said they had experience of either **Carer's Allowance** or **Winter Fuel Payments** or **Cold Weather Payments** (37 per cent and 31 per cent and 29 per cent respectively).



Around a fifth said they had experience of either **Discretionary Housing Payments** or **Attendance Allowance** (22 per cent and 18 per cent respectively).



Compared to available responses from the 2018 findings, experience of benefits among panel members **stayed proportionately similar**.



Among panel members that we hold information on about benefit experience, there was a slight decrease since 2018 in those saying they had experience of Disability Living Allowance.

Geography:



Across different '*Experience Panels Registration Forms*', we have asked panel members to provide their postcode.



Respondents provided postcodes for **all 32 local authority areas** in Scotland.

These included 13 per cent who live in **Glasgow City**, 12 per cent who live in **City in Edinburgh**, and 7 per cent who live in **Fife**.



One per cent of respondents said that they lived on **Na h-Eileanan Siar** (Western Isles). Less than ten per cent said they lived on the **Orkney Islands**. One per cent said they lived on the **Shetland Islands**.



Seven in ten respondents (72 per cent) live in **urban areas**.



One in six (16 per cent) live in **rural areas**.



One in eight (12 per cent) live in **small towns**.

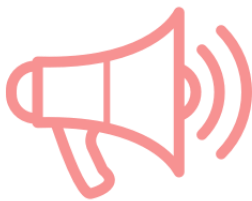
Feedback on the Experience Panels

Respondents to our ‘*About You survey*’ in 2019 were asked to provide feedback on their time as panel members. They were asked both what has worked well in relation to taking part in the Experience Panels, and what could be improved.


What has worked well?



The most common view from respondents was that they valued that **their voice was being listened to**. Some said that they felt like, by taking part in research, they were having a direct impact in designing a system that they would soon be using.



Many also said they had appreciated **being well-informed** about both the work of the Experience Panels and ongoing design of Social Security Scotland.



“It’s been really positive to feel that we are being heard, as the people who have first-hand experience of the system.”

“It’s been good to be kept informed of your work and the outcomes of your research.”

“It’s been good to have a say and put my points of view across. I feel my opinion has mattered and feel valued for contributing.”

“Getting feedback which confirms the new set-up is going to be more user friendly and less confrontational is very reassuring. “



Several said that they had particularly liked **meeting other panel members who had similar experiences** during Panel events. They felt that meeting other people gave them a chance to listen, learn, and sometimes be challenged.

“I’ve learnt a great deal from other Experience Panel members.”

“I’ve enjoyed being in a setting where my views can change, being challenged by what others say.”

“It’s been amazing to be able to sound off and speak with others who have been treated badly.”



There was positive feedback for how the Experience Panels offered **quick surveys** – particularly online surveys. Many respondents felt that surveys were easy to access and complete. Several said that they liked that surveys gave them the chance to respond in their own time without any pressure.

“I like the fact that I can choose which surveys I can take part in at my leisure and at my pace and hopefully my small part helps to shape a better and fairer system.”

“Taking part in the online surveys has been a piece of cake! The format of the surveys has been easy to understand and to complete using voice recognition technology.”



Several said they appreciated the **flexibility** of research opportunities and ways to communicate.

“I like the flexibility to participants in surveys or face to face sessions and other events depending on time availability.”



A number of respondents also felt that **communication** between panel members and the Experience Panels team had worked well. This included the **clear language** used as well as the **frequency of contact** with panel members.

“It’s easy to respond. I’ve never felt under pressure to take part, and emails don’t come too often.”

“When I’ve asked questions, you’ve always responded promptly.”



Many were also positive about the way that they had been **treated by the Experience Panels staff** at research events.

“The actual workers who have enabled this work to be done have been wonderful. They have listened and cared for everyone, changed things when suggested, and genuinely fostered confidence for the entire process. They ought to be commended for the things that might have been on the job description, but also for their authentic energy and positive regard for us all.”

“Very friendly staff and very helpful. Good workshop style events, and allowing everyone to have their say during the event.”

What could be improved?



Some described different reasons why they had been **unable to attend events**. These included being unable to **travel long distances** to the locations where events were being held.

“I appreciate there has been venues across Scotland to go to, but for individuals whom have physical disabilities and are unable to attend due to distance, it would be appreciated if possible to have venues within easier access. This would enable individuals to participate more. At present, I can only contribute online.”

“It is very difficult for me to attend as there is a limit as to the length of time I can physically sit on a bus and waiting times for buses can be long.”



Several respondents suggested streaming Experience Panels events **via video-link**, so that those who couldn't attend physically, could still tune in and take part.

“I have unfortunately not been able to attend any of the briefing sessions of focus groups. I can't imagine I'm alone in that and wonder if these events could be live streamed with the option of contributing by text.”



There were several suggestions to try and **improve the attendance** of panel members at events. This includes sending more reminders to panel members.



There was also a comment from several respondents that panel members could be given **more time to prepare for focus groups**. This included providing a clear indication of topics that were going to be discussed.

“Perhaps a little more information on the subject under discussion beforehand. Sometimes I find it difficult to contribute from cold. I sometimes think of things after I’ve left and gone home which I’d have liked to contribute.”

One respondent warned about being **over-consulted about smaller details** and how this could be overwhelming.

“There is such a thing as consultation fatigue. I feel that we are being consulted constantly about every tiny item which we don’t need to be consulted about. You can’t agonise over the minutiae.”

Several said that they would be interested in being **alerted about wider job opportunities** in Social Security Scotland.

“Email people involved in the panels with job opportunity within Social Security Scotland. We are all motivated and engaged people and nothing beats expertise from personal experience. I would love to work for the new social security system supporting people to apply and know their rights.”

What's next?



This report provides a valuable up-to-date picture about who is in the Experience Panels and what their experiences of taking part have been so far. It allows us to look at how the Panels are made up and how they have changed over time.



As the Experience Panels continues, the insights collected through our 'About You' surveys allow us to continually make improvements. In particular, we will take feedback on board to improve certain aspects of our approach.



Soon we will re-run our 'About You' survey and ask panel members to update their information again.



In the meantime, the Scottish Government will continue to work with the Experience Panels in the development of Scotland's new social security system. This will include further research on individual benefits in addition to work to assist in the development of Social Security Scotland



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The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

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