



Social Security Scotland Statistics

Social Security Scotland client diversity and equalities analysis – December 2020 to May 2021

Frequency of publications

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

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

¹ The Code of Practice is found online at: <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

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

Introduction

This publication provides information on the diversity of clients applying to Social Security Scotland for Best Start Grant and/or Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment 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. The publication does not yet cover Child Disability Payment, as applications for this benefit have only been received since July 2021.

The data covers the period 1st December 2020 to 31st May 2021. 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 December 2020 to 31st May 2021 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 Scottish Child Payment (53%), or Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (37%), as there are a greater number of applications for these benefits compared to other benefits.

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

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

³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

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

Main findings

- Comparing all client diversity data, there are differences in approval rates for some equalities groups. The equalities groups with the greatest variation in approval rate are summarised in the following table, 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	Highest approval rate		Lowest approval rate		Percentage point difference in approval rate
Ethnicity	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	78%	Other ethnic group	69%	9
Gender	Women	77%	Men	68%	9
Sexual orientation	Bisexual	78%	In another way*	69%	9
Religion	Pagan	82%	Hindu	51%	31
Age	65 and over	81%	35-44	74%	7
SIMD	Most deprived decile	79%	Least deprived decile	68%	11

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

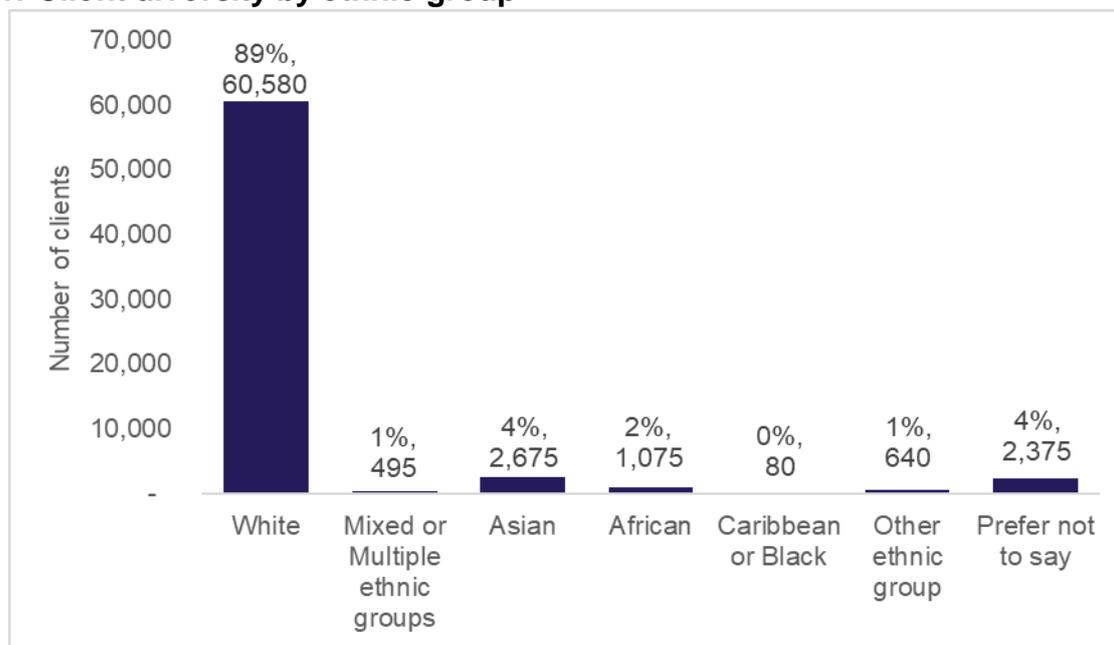
- While we have previously commented that small numbers for some groups of clients could contribute to differences in approval rates, all groups in the table above were relatively large, with the smallest group being 140 Hindu clients.
- In general, approval rates are no longer affected by clients living outside Scotland being denied payments. This is because a smaller proportion of those applying lived outside Scotland in this release (less than 1%) compared to previous publications covering June 2020 to November 2020 (2%) and December 2019 to May 2020 (7%). This is likely to be due to changes to the application process as described in the [data quality](#) section.
- This is the first equalities analysis to include approval rates for Scottish Child Payment. The approval rate for Scottish Child Payment is relatively high, and this has increased the approval rate for clients as a whole in the period December 2020 to May 2021, compared to previous publications. While the breakdown of clients applying for Scottish Child Payment tends to be similar to Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, patterns in approval rates are not always similar. For example, transgender clients have a similar approval rate for Scottish Child Payment as clients not identifying as transgender, whereas there is an 11 percentage point difference for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. Approval rates for Best Start Grant also decrease with age, whereas this was less pronounced for Scottish Child Payment.
- New analysis of applications by [application channel](#) shows that applications received by phone were more likely to be approved (90%) than online

applications (76%) or mail applications (70%). This applied across all benefits except for Job Start Payment, for which approval rates were similar for online and phone applications.

Ethnicity

- Around nine in ten (89%) clients self-identified their ethnic group as 'White'⁴, with clients identifying as one of the other listed ethnic groups accounting for 8% (Chart 1, Table 1). The remaining 4% chose 'Prefer not to say'. 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 groups⁵.
- For individual benefits, the proportion of clients identifying as 'White' was highest for Young Carer Grant (91%) and Job Start Payment (94%). The proportion of clients identifying as 'Asian' was lowest for Funeral Support Payment (1%) and Job Start Payment (2%). The proportion choosing to 'Prefer not to say' was highest for Funeral Support Payment (8%).

Chart 1: Client diversity by ethnic group



- Overall, the proportion of clients approved was highest for 'Mixed or multiple ethnic groups' (78%), followed by 'African' (77%), 'White' (76%) and 'Prefer not to say' (76%). Approval rate was lowest for clients identifying as 'Other ethnic group' (69%), followed by 'Asian' (71%) and 'Caribbean or Black' (74%). In previous publications 'White' clients have had the highest approval rates, with 'Asian' clients the having lowest approval rates.
- For most groups nearly all clients were living in Scotland, so clients not living in Scotland did not have a big impact on approval rates. The exception was for 'Caribbean and Black' clients, as a small percentage did not live in Scotland, and were therefore likely to be denied a payment. Removing these

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

⁵ [2011 Census: Release 2A](#) (Published: 2013, NRS)

clients from the analysis increased the approval rate for 'Caribbean and Black' clients from 74% to 77% (Table 1).

- At individual benefit level, approval rates appear quite variable which is likely to be due to small numbers of clients not identifying as 'White' by benefit, except for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, and Scottish Child Payment. 'Asian' and 'Other ethnic group' clients had the lowest approval rates for both of these benefits.

Chart 2: Application outcome by ethnic group – all applications

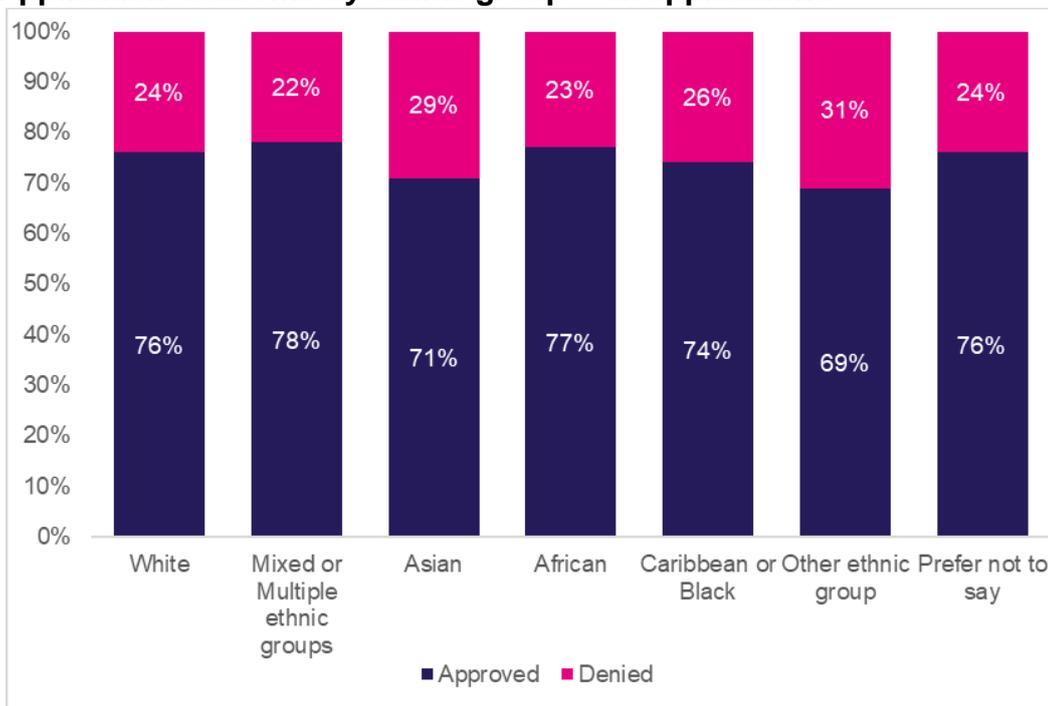
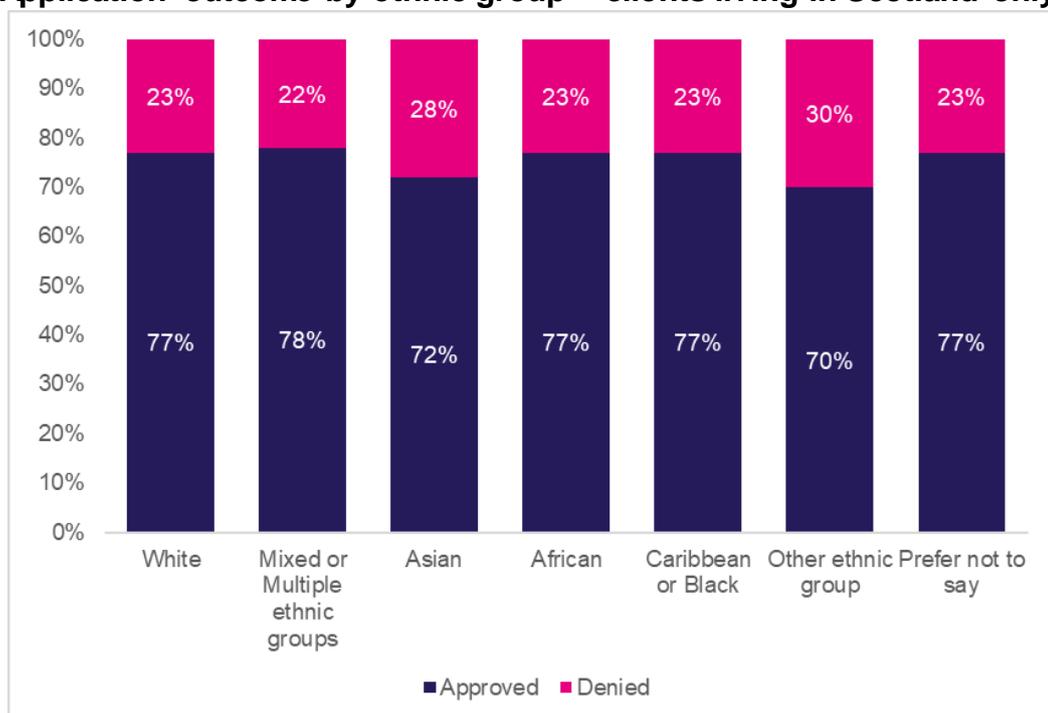


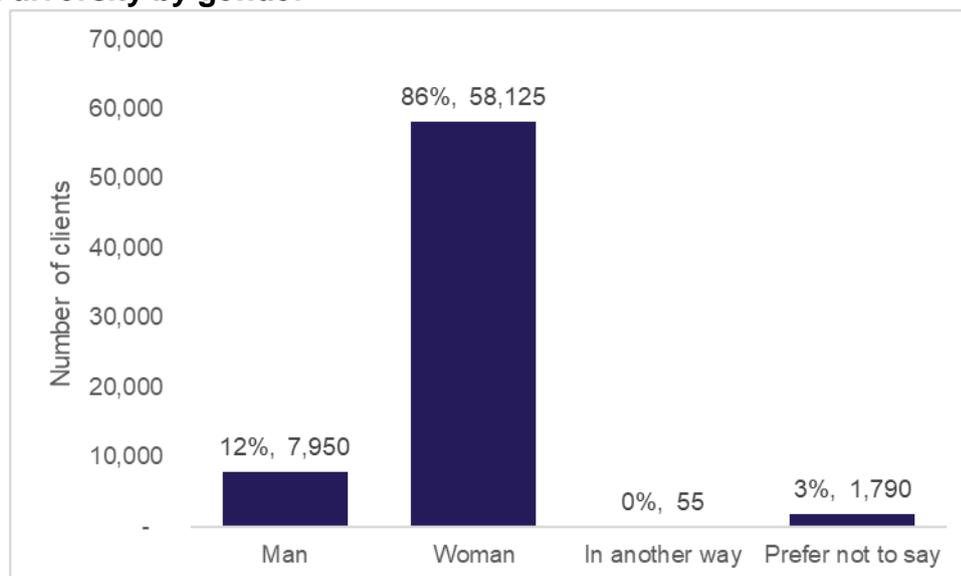
Chart 3: Application outcome by ethnic group – clients living in Scotland only



Gender

- The proportion of clients who self-identified as 'Man' (12%) remained lower than those who self-identified as 'Woman' (86%) (Chart 4, Table 2). In Scotland in 2020, 52% of the population aged 16 and over were female, and 48% were male.⁶
- Because the majority of equalities data were from applicants for Scottish Child Payment or Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods, the high proportion of women applying for these benefits (89% and 90% respectively) has a disproportionate impact on the gender breakdown for clients as a whole. For Young Carer Grant and Funeral Support Payment, there were more clients identifying as women but they accounted for 57% and 60% clients respectively. Job Start Payment remained the only benefit with a higher proportion of clients identifying as men (53%).

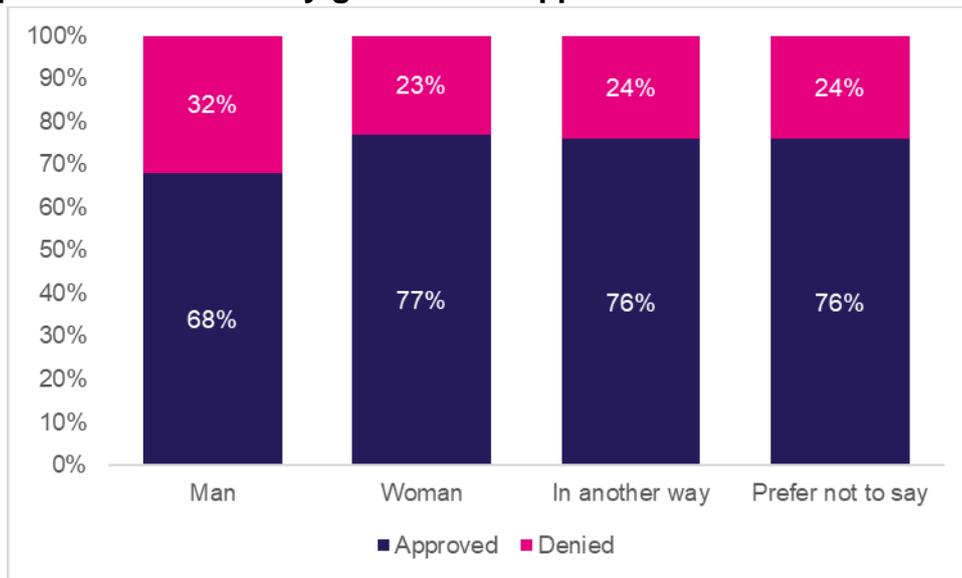
Chart 4: Client diversity by gender



- The proportion of clients approved was higher for women (77%) than men (68%), and this was the same when analysing clients living in Scotland only (Table 2). The difference in approval rates is similar to previous statistics covering to November 2020.
- Approval rates were higher for women across all benefits except Young Carer Grant, where 76% of women were approved compared to 80% of men. The benefits with the greatest difference in approval rates between men and women were Best Start Grant and Best Start foods (49% men approved, 62% women approved) and Scottish Child Payment (78% men approved, 88% women approved).
- The difference in approval rates between men and women widened for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, with less than half of men approved (49%) compared to 62% of women.

⁶ [Mid-2020 Population Estimates Scotland](#) (Last updated: June 2021, National Records of Scotland)

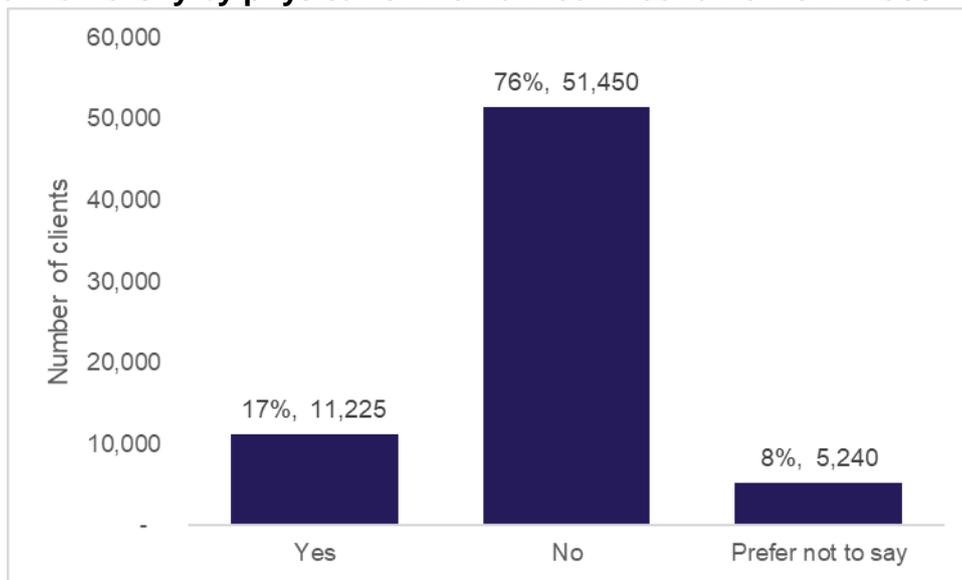
Chart 5: Application outcome by gender – all applications



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 76% 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 2020⁷.
- At individual benefit level, the proportions were similar for most benefits, except Funeral Support Payment where 33% 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).

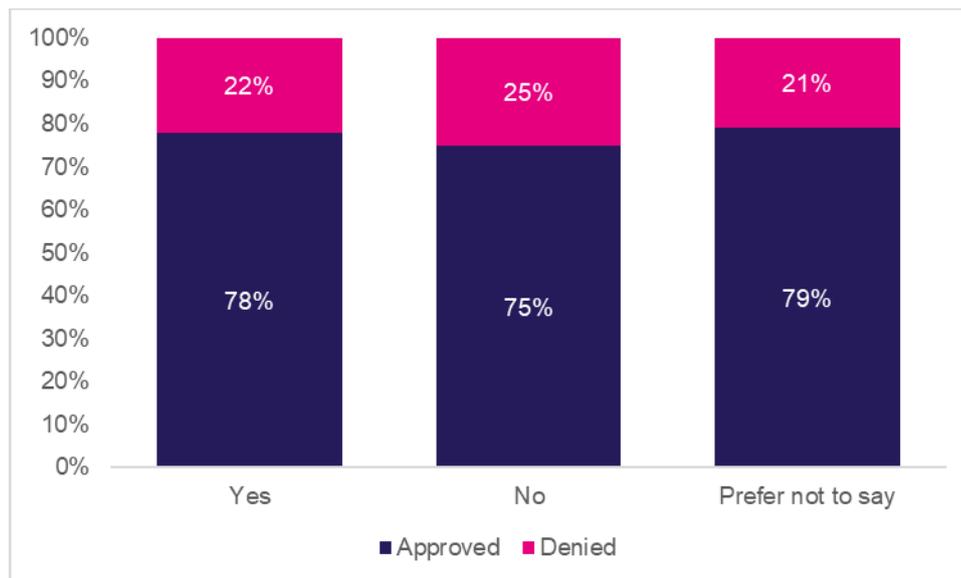
Chart 6: Client diversity by physical or mental health condition or illness



- 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 (78%) than clients that did not (75%) (Table 3, Chart 7). This was similar when looking at clients from Scotland only (78% compared to 76%), and is similar to statistics covering previous time periods. All individual benefits followed this pattern except for Young Carer Grant, where there was slightly lower approval rate for clients who identified as having a physical or mental health condition or illness (74% compared to 78%).

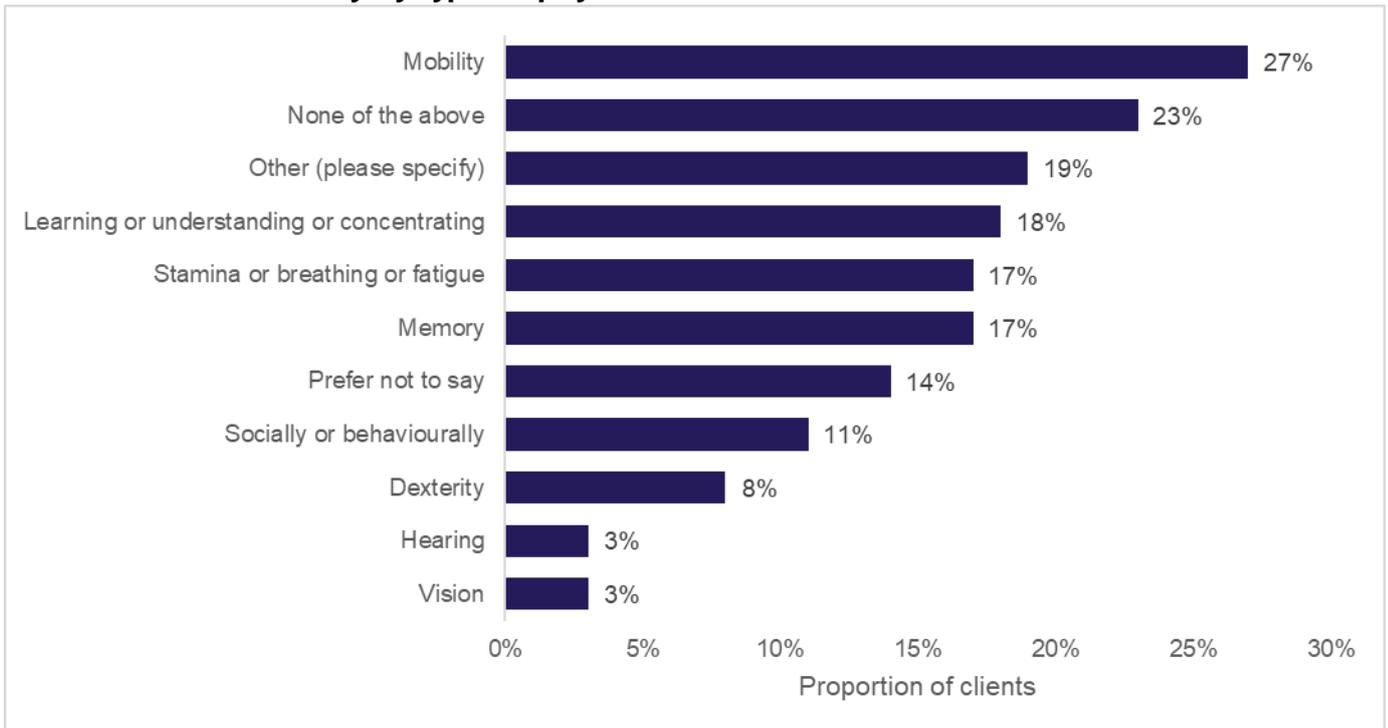
⁷ [Scottish Health Survey 2020](#), Table 1.2

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, 27% 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' (50%) or 'Stamina or breathing or fatigue' (31%).
- Approval rates ranged from 76% (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 82% for those with affected 'Vision'.

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

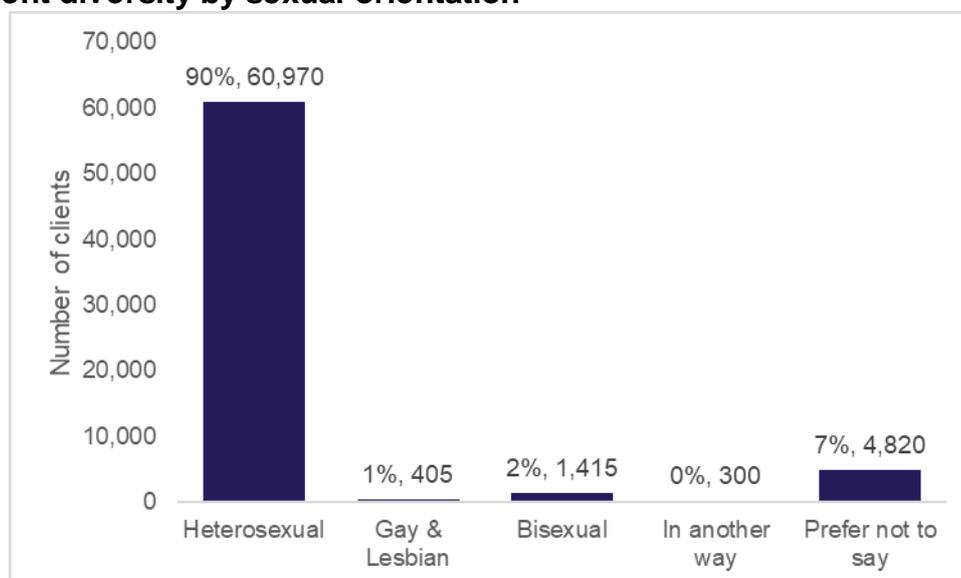


This chart only includes responses from clients that also reported they had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. Clients may have indicated that they had more than one physical or mental health condition or illness.

Sexual Orientation

- Individuals who self-identified as 'Heterosexual' accounted for 90% of clients compared to 1% who identified as 'Gay and Lesbian', 2% as 'Bisexual' and less than 1% as 'In another way'. 'Prefer not to say' was chosen by 7% of clients (Chart 9, Table 5). Latest results from Scottish Surveys Core Questions show that in Scotland, 94% of adults self-identified as 'Heterosexual' compared to around 3% who self-identified as 'Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other' in 2019⁸.
- Looking at benefits individually, there were relatively fewer clients identifying as 'Heterosexual' for Funeral Support Payment (85%), Job Start Payment (83%) and Young Carer Grant (81%). For Funeral Support Payment, more clients chose 'Prefer not to say' (13%), while for Job Start Payment and Young Carer Grant more clients identified as 'Gay and Lesbian', 'Bisexual' or 'In another way'.

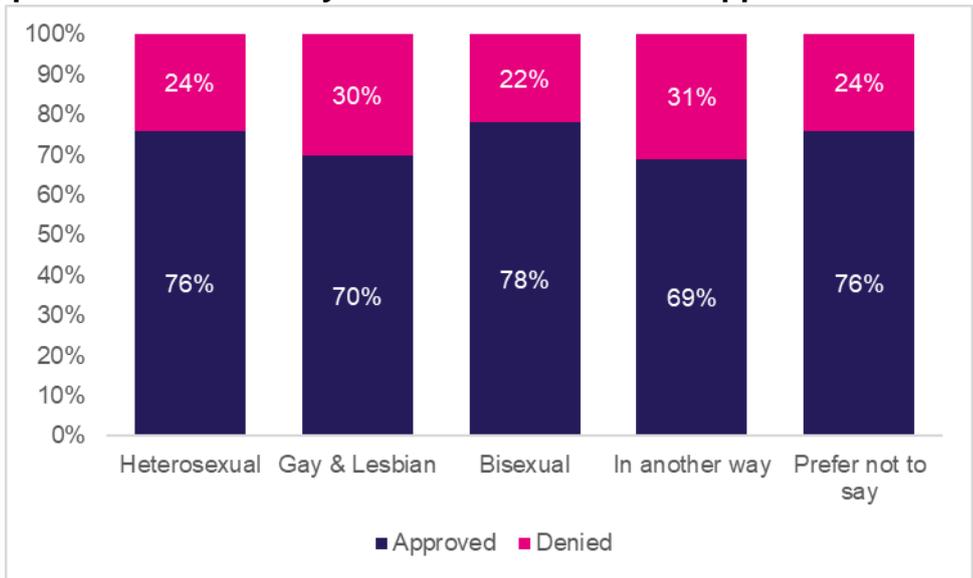
Chart 9: Client diversity by sexual orientation



- Looking at all applications, approval levels were higher for 'Heterosexual' (76%) and 'Bisexual' clients (78%), and lower for 'Gay and Lesbian' clients (70%) and clients that identified 'In another way' (69%) (Table 5, Chart 10). This is similar to previous statistics covering June to November 2020, and is not explained by the proportion of clients living in Scotland. This pattern is similar for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment. Approval rate patterns were different for Job Start Payment and Young Carer Grant, with relatively low approval rates for 'Heterosexual' clients and 'Bisexual' clients respectively for these benefits. Numbers not identifying as 'Heterosexual' were relatively small for Funeral Support Payment, and approval rates may be affected by small numbers of clients.

⁸ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019 - Supplementary Tables](#) (Last updated: January 2021)

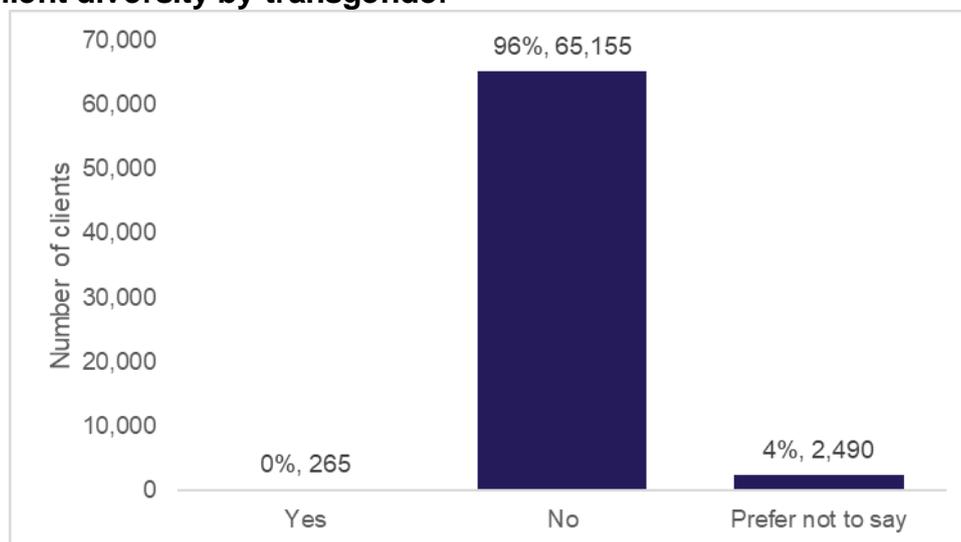
Chart 10: Application outcome by sexual orientation – all applications



Transgender

- Less than one percent of the clients who responded to the Equalities Monitoring and feedback form self-identified as transgender, and 4% 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 transgender⁹. Proportions were similar across benefits, with slightly more clients choosing 'Prefer not to say' for Funeral Support Payment (9%).

Chart 11: Client diversity by transgender



- Overall a lower proportion of transgender clients were approved (72%) in comparison to clients that did not identify as transgender (76%) or those that chose 'Prefer not to say' (75%) (Table 6). The difference in approval rates has decreased since June to November 2020. This appears to be due to two factors:
 - Firstly, a smaller percentage of transgender clients were from outside Scotland (3%) compared to the previous period (11%). Transgender clients were therefore less likely to be rejected based on not living in Scotland. Accounting for the 3% clients living outside Scotland, who were likely to be denied a payment, the approval rate for transgender clients was 74% compared to 76% for clients not identifying as transgender.
 - Secondly, in the current reporting period Scottish Child Payment clients account for a large proportion of overall client numbers. The approval rate for transgender Scottish Child Payment clients was higher (88%) than for clients not identifying as transgender (87%).
- The number of transgender clients for other specific benefits 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

⁹ [Gender Identity Research and Education Society \(GIRES\) - The number of Gender Variant People in the UK \(update 2011\)](#) (Published: 2011, GIRES)

and Best Start Foods, there was a lower approval rate for transgender clients (50%) than clients that did not self-identify as transgender (61%). The difference in approval rates has decreased since the previous reporting period.

Chart 12: Application outcome by transgender – all applications

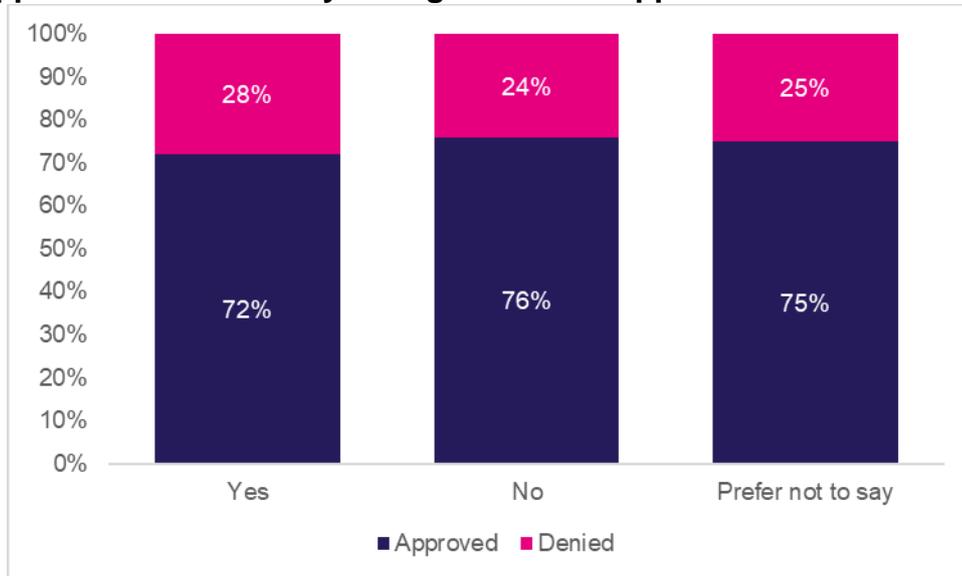
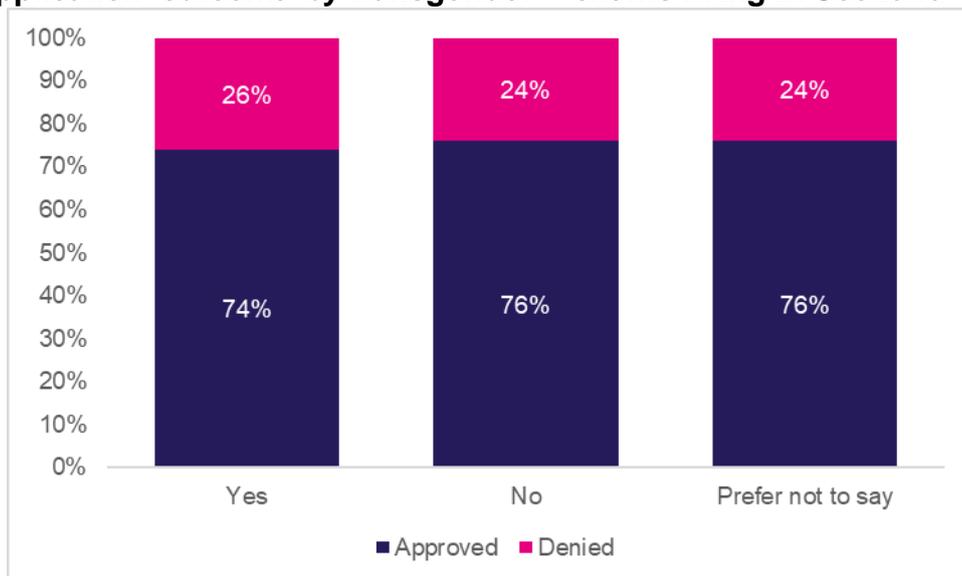


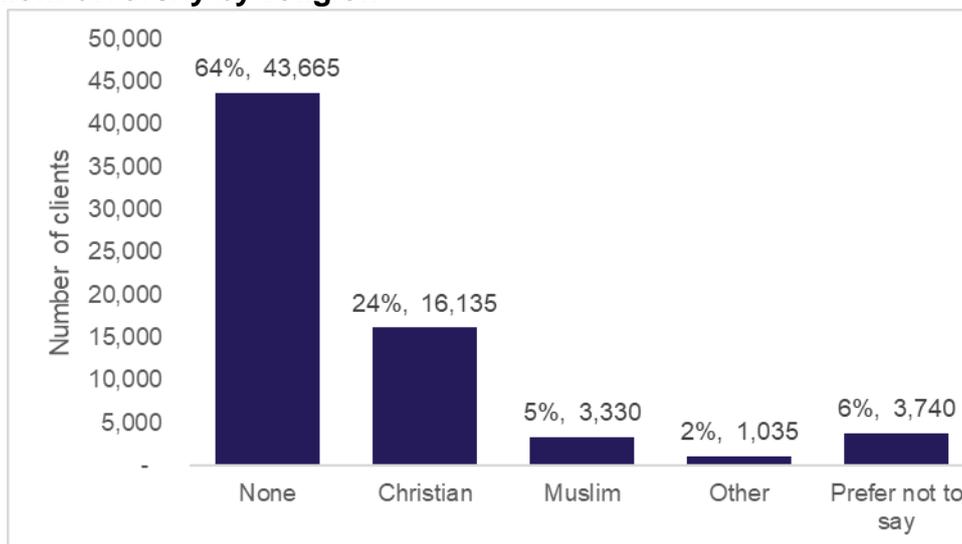
Chart 13: Application outcome by transgender – clients living in Scotland only



Religion

- The proportion of clients that have no religion is 64% compared to 12% 'Roman Catholic', 7% 'Church of Scotland', 5% 'Muslim' and 5% 'Other Christian'. There were also 6% 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% Muslim¹⁰. 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 increases¹⁰.
- At individual benefit level, the proportion with no religion was lower for Funeral Support Payment (44%), with Roman Catholic (18%) and Church of Scotland (19%) accounting for more clients. 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

- Approval rate varies among religions, but among the most represented groups there was less variation in December 2020 to May 2021 than in the previous reporting period. Among the most well represented groups, approval rate was highest for those with no religion (77%), followed by Roman Catholic (75%), Muslim (75%), Church of Scotland (74%), and Other Christian (74%). These groups had relatively similar approval rates when looking at Scottish Child Payment individually (83-87%), but approval rates

¹⁰ [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2019](#)

varied more for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (55% for Church of Scotland compared to 66% for no religion). 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.

- Overall approval rates remained particularly low for Hindu clients (51%), with Jewish clients (61%), Sikh clients (68%) and Buddhist clients (70%) also having relatively low approval rates. These low approval rates are not explained by the proportion of clients living in Scotland (Table 7). The difference in approval rates between clients with no religion and Hindu clients was larger for Scottish Child Payment (30 percentage points) than for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (23 percentage points).

Chart 15: Application outcome by religion – all applications

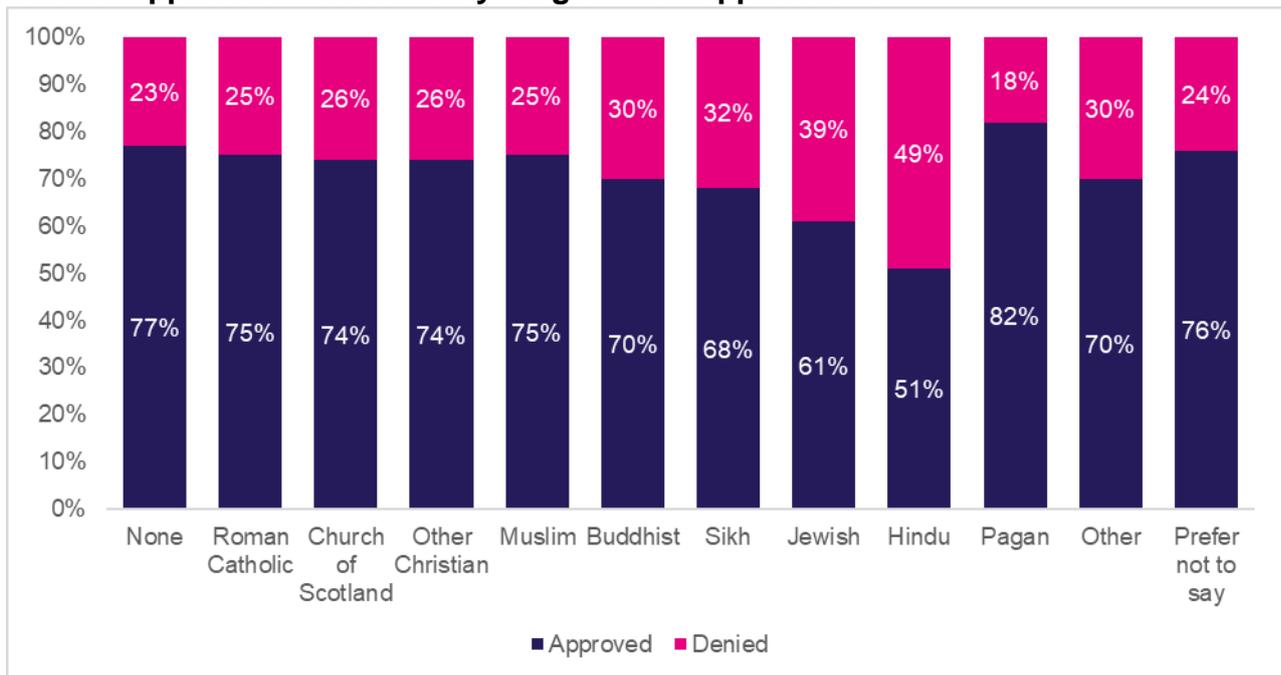
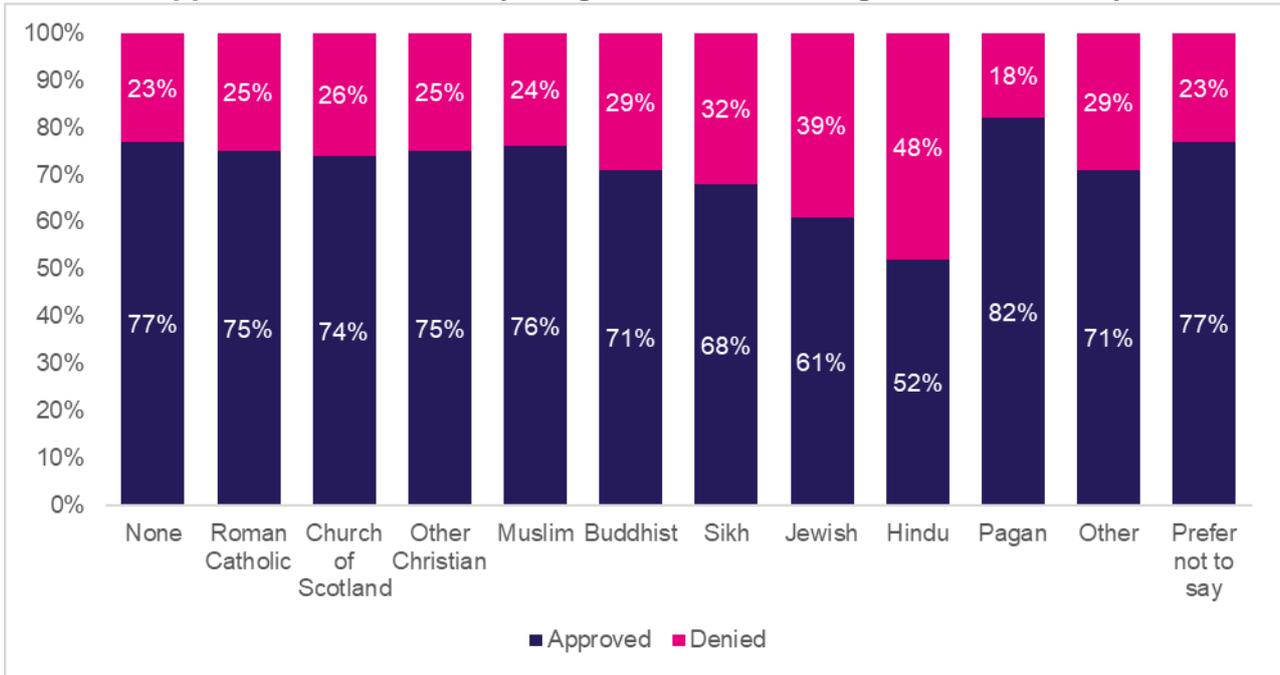


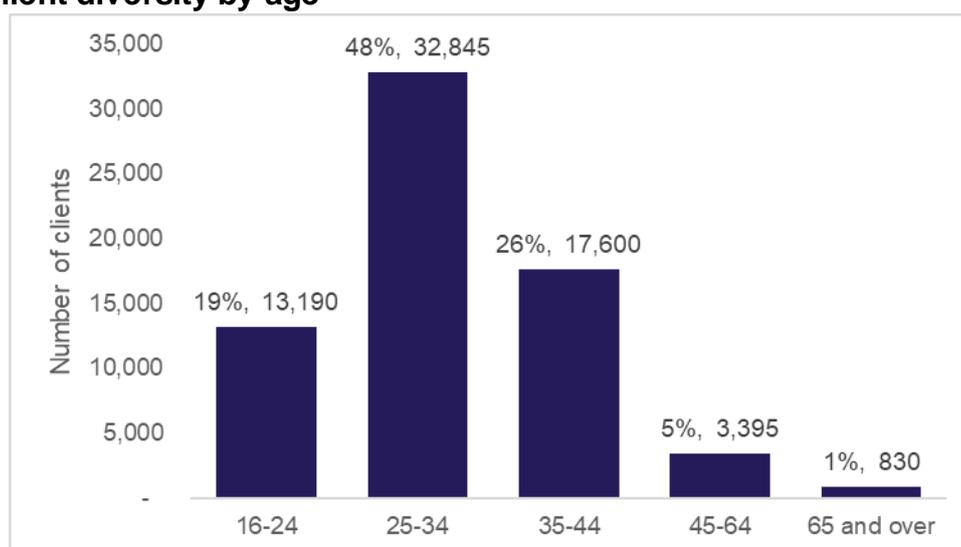
Chart 16: Application outcome by religion – clients living in Scotland only



Age

- 93% of clients are under 45 years old. The highest proportion of clients are in the 25–34 age group (48%) 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 17% of people aged 16 or over fall into the 25-34 age group and 23% are aged 65 or over¹¹. This difference is expected as 90% of equalities forms analysed were for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods or Scottish Child Payment, 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



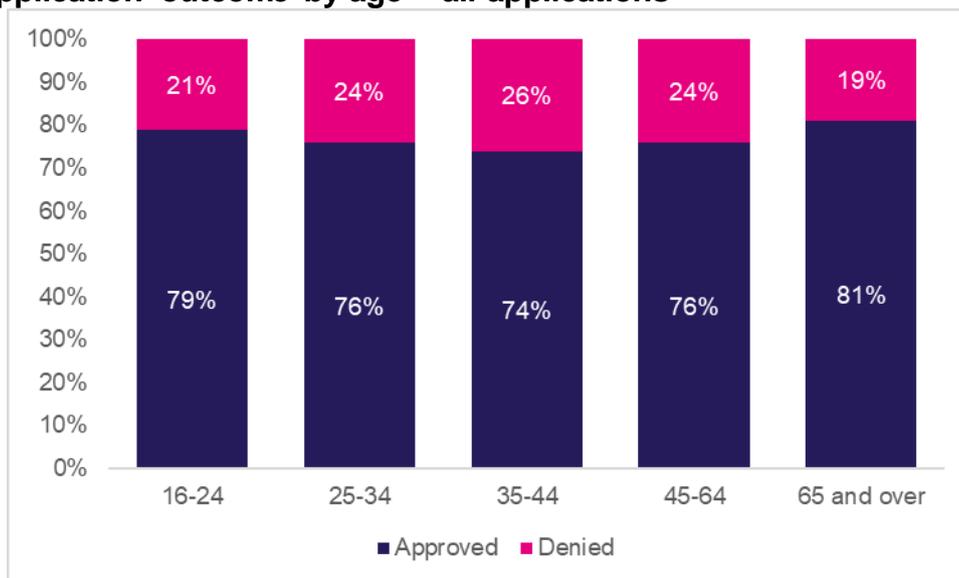
- Approval rate was highest in the 65 and over age group (81%), followed by the 16-24 age group (79%), and was lowest in the 34-44 age group (74%). This is different to the previous publication covering June to November 2020 where we reported increasing approval rate with age. Overall approval rates are influenced by approval rates and client age groups for specific benefits. For example, 96% of clients aged 65 and over were applying for Funeral Support Payment (Table 8f), which has a relatively high approval rate (85%), and this will increase the overall approval rate for clients in this age group.
- Looking benefits individually, 16-24 year olds had a higher approval rate than other age groups for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, and a lower approval rate than other age groups for Funeral Support Payment. However, because only 1% of 16-24 year olds were applying for Funeral Support Payment (Table 8f), this lower approval rate had relatively little impact on the overall approval rate for 16-24 year olds.
- Age is the only characteristic analysed here which also forms part of the eligibility rules for a benefit. For Job Start Payment, clients must be aged 16 to 24 (or 25 if they are care leavers), while for Young Carer Grant, clients

¹¹ [Mid-2020 Population Estimates Scotland](#)

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.

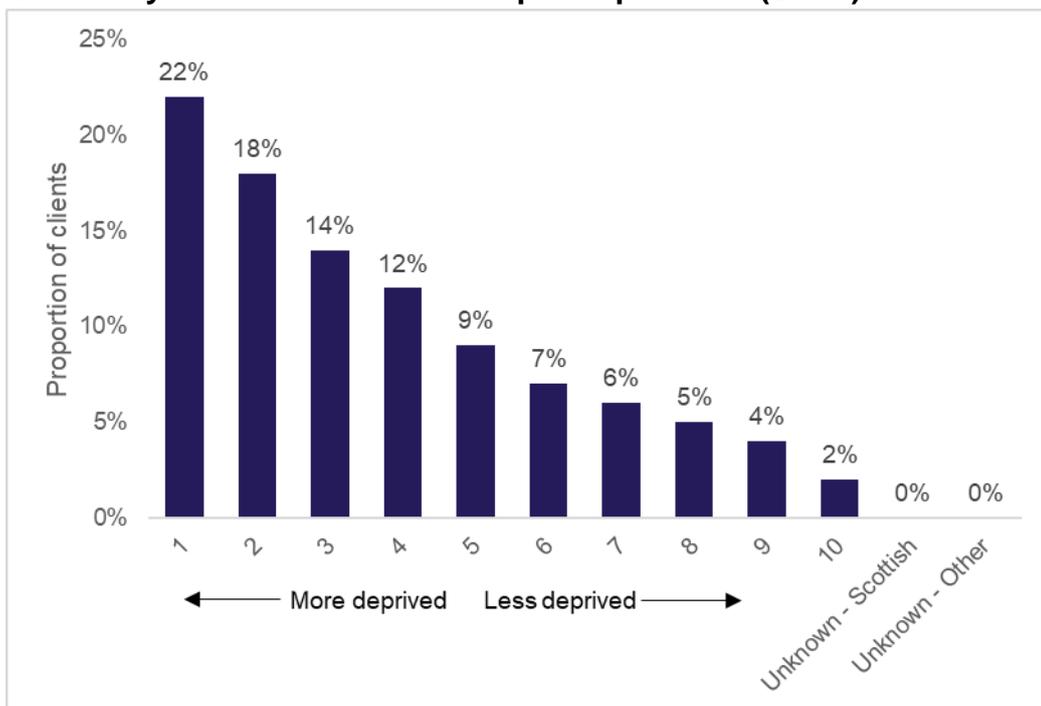
Chart 18: Application outcome by age – all applications



Geography

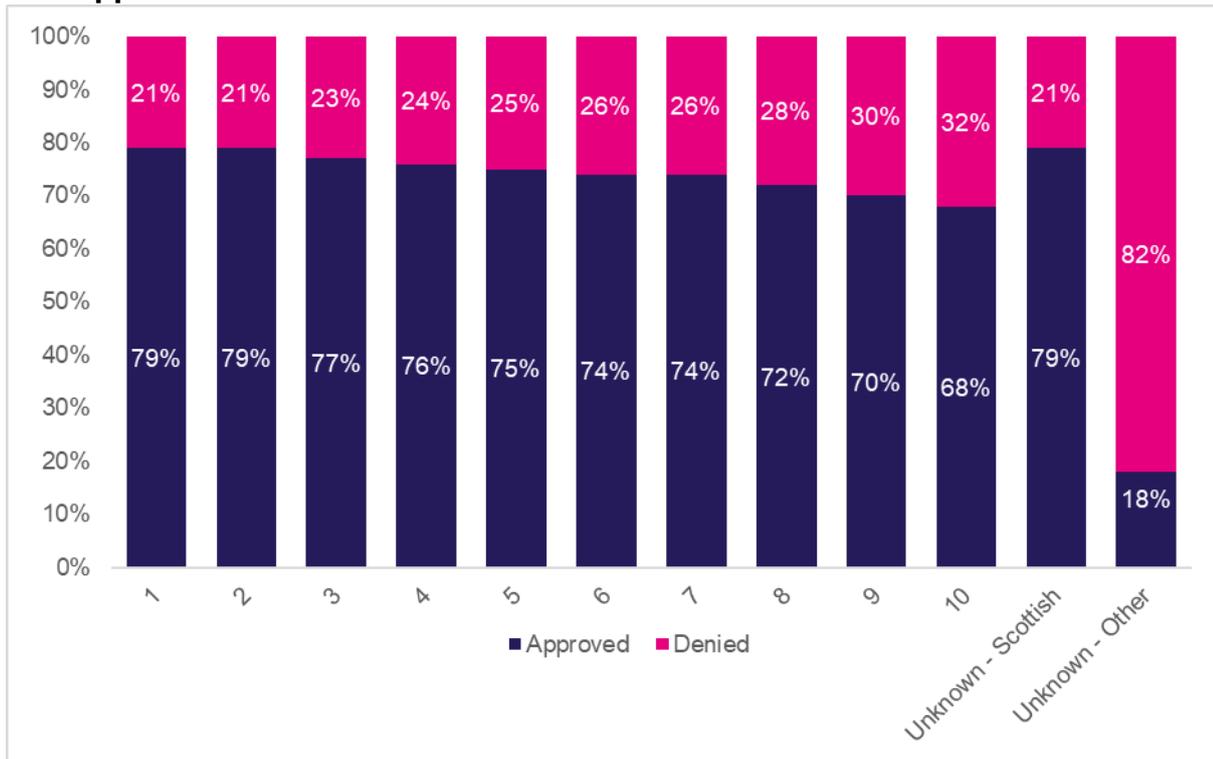
- Approximately 10% of the population of Scotland live in each decile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), which can be used to rank areas from decile 1 (the most deprived areas) to 10 (the least deprived areas). Social Security Scotland clients lived across all deciles of the SIMD, including the least deprived (2% clients), but a disproportionate number lived in the more deprived deciles (Table 9, Chart 16). For example, around one in five clients (22%) lived in the most deprived decile, and more than half (54%) of clients lived in the three most deprived deciles, compared to 28% of the population aged 16 and over in 2020¹². 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 Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Scottish Child Payment and Funeral Support Payment. For Young Carer Grant, approval rates generally decreased in more deprived areas. This benefit may not follow the same pattern because eligibility is based on being a carer rather than income. For Job Start Payment, approval rate was similar for most SIMD deciles, except for the two least deprived deciles where approval rate was higher.

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



¹² [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 2020¹³. Overall approval rates are relatively similar across different urban and rural areas, with highest approval rates in Large Urban Areas (77%), Other Urban Areas (77%) and Very Remote Small towns (78%), and lowest approval rates in Remote Small Towns (74%), Accessible Rural Areas (74%) and Very Remote Rural Areas (74%). At individual benefit level approval rates appear to vary more by urban and rural classification, however, some of this variation may be due to small numbers of clients. For the two benefits with larger numbers of clients, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment, approval rates were lowest in Very Remote Rural Areas.

¹³ [Population Estimates by Urban Rural Classification \(2011 Data Zone based\)](#)

Chart 21: Clients by Urban Rural 2016 8-fold

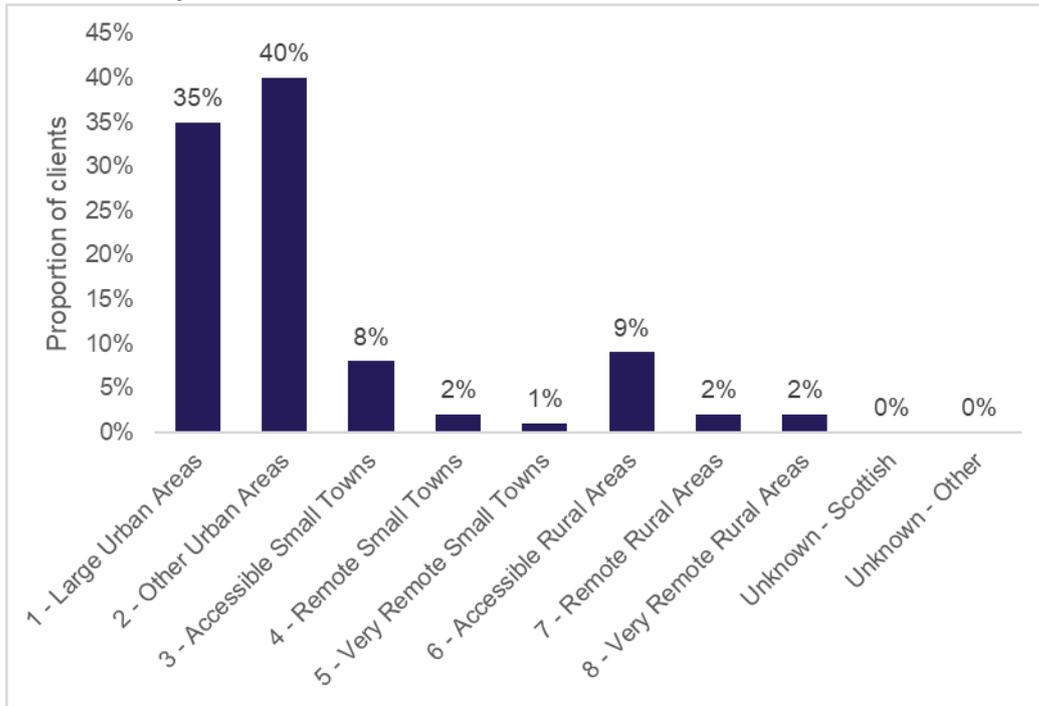
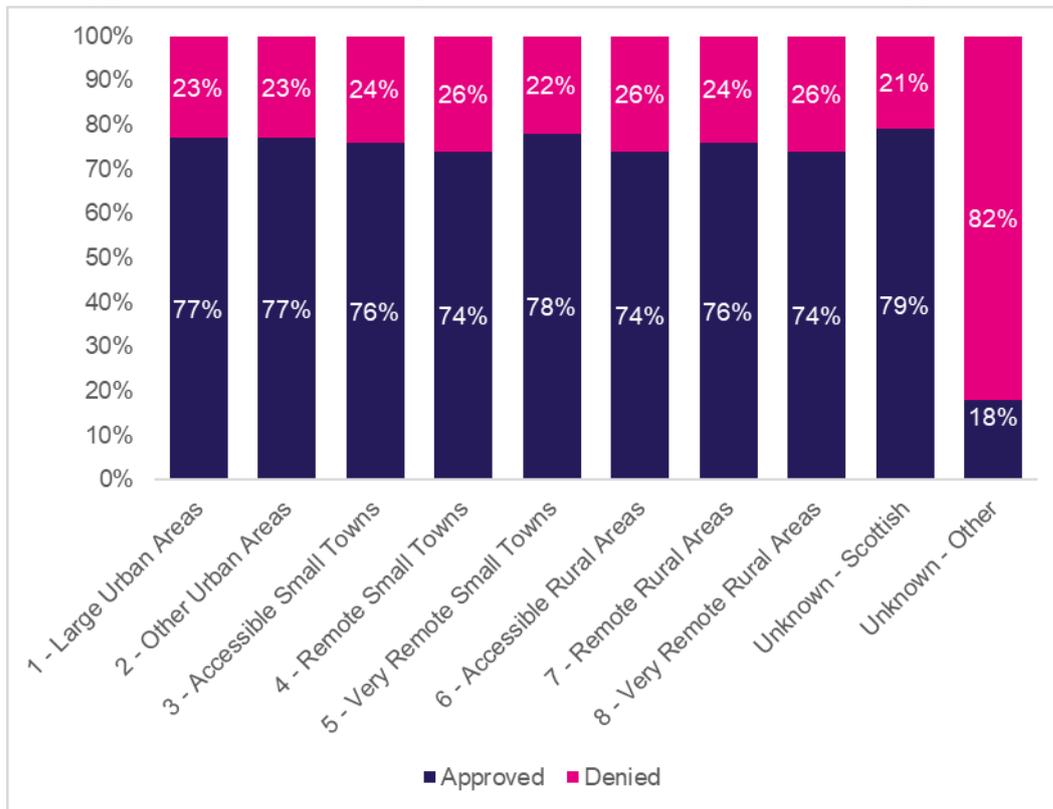


Chart 22: Application outcome by Urban Rural 2016 8-fold – all applications



- Around 1% of applications came from clients living on Scottish islands (Table 11), compared with 98% on the Scottish mainland. This was similar across all benefits. In comparison 2% of the Scottish population lived on islands according to the 2011 Census, with numbers having increased since

2001¹⁴. Overall the approval rate was similar but slightly lower for islands (74%) and the mainland (76%), and this was similar for the two benefits with larger numbers of clients, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (58% versus 61%), and Scottish Child Payment (83% versus 87%). 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 [Inhabited Islands analytical report](#)

Application channel

- Most clients who completed equalities monitoring forms had applied online (95%), compared to 4% by phone and 1% by mail. The percentage applying online was slightly higher for Young Carer Grant (97%), Job Start Payment (97%) and Scottish Child Payment (98%). Clients applying for Funeral Support Payment were more likely to use phone applications (33%), and less likely to use online applications (65%). Overall, these patterns are similar to official statistics on applications received for each benefit. However, as not all clients applying by mail or phone completed equalities monitoring forms (as described in the [background note](#)), the equalities data includes a higher proportion of online applications and lower proportion of mail and phone applications than the official statistics by benefit.
- Applications received by phone were more likely to be approved (90%) than online applications (76%) or mail (70%). This applied across all benefits except for Job Start Payment, for which approval rates were similar for online and phone applications. It is unclear why approval rates are higher for phone applications.

Chart 23: Clients by application channel

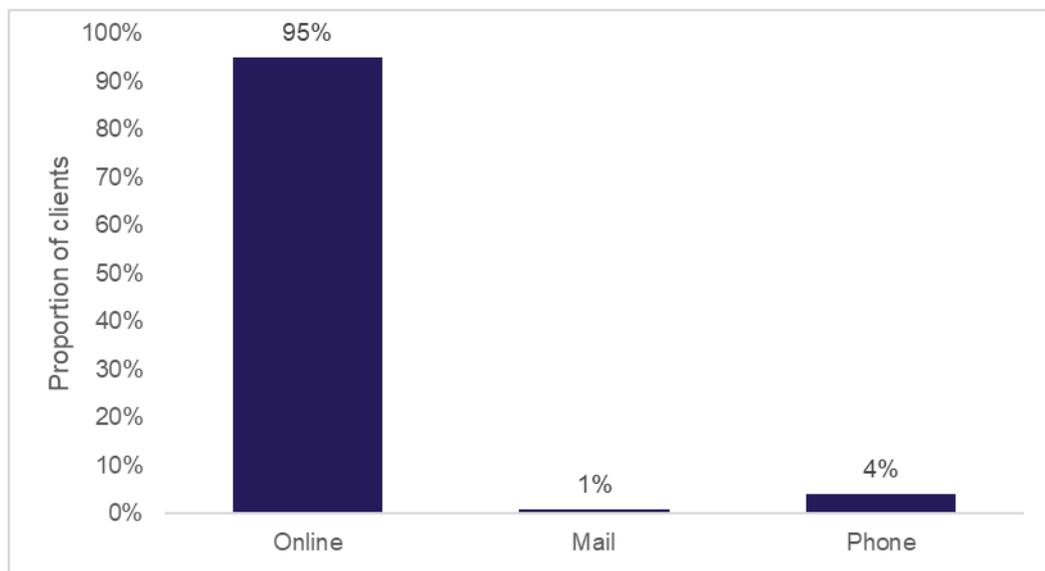
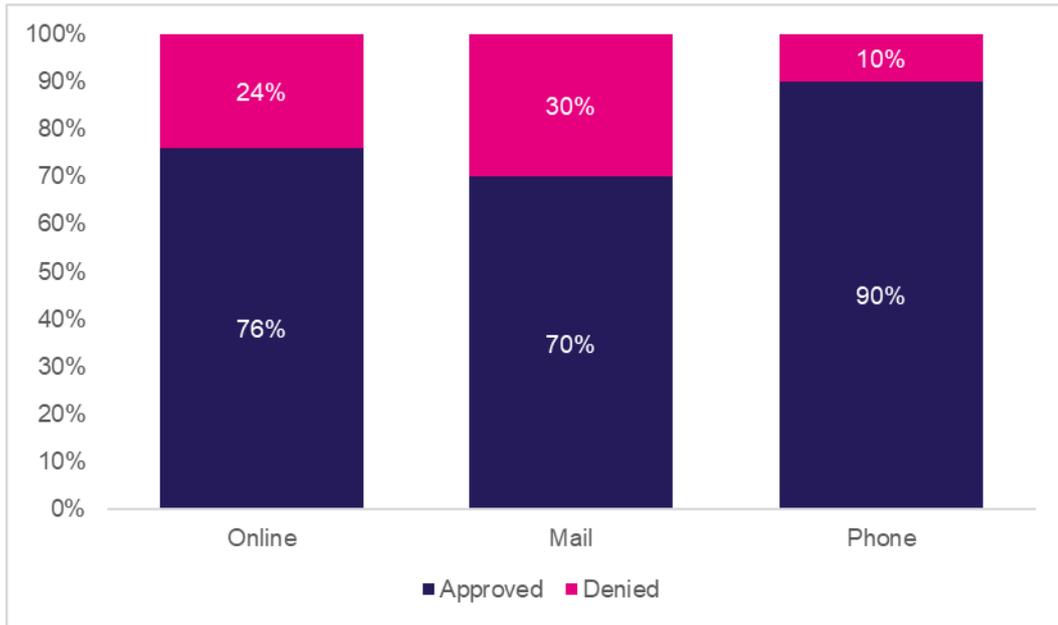


Chart 22: Application outcome by channel – all application



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. Applicants received decisions from 15 February onwards, with the first payments made from the end of February 2021.

During December 2020 to May 2021, clients could apply through each of the following application forms online, by telephone, and by mail:

- Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods only
- Scottish Child Payment only
- Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment joint form
- Funeral Support Payment
- Young Carer Grant
- Job Start Payment

The following table shows the breakdown of applications received by Social Security Scotland during December 2020 to May 2021 based on official statistics published at <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>:

Benefit and link to latest statistics	Launch	Applications Dec-20 to May-21
Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods Pregnancy and Baby Payment Early Learning Payment School Age Payment Best Start Foods	Dec-19 Apr-19 Jun-19 Aug-19	45,215
Funeral Support Payment	Sep-19	4,380
Young Carer Grant	Oct-19	1,965
Job Start Payment	Aug-20	2,080
Scottish Child Payment	Nov-20	66,735

Clients can apply to Social Security Scotland through different channels, including mail, telephony, and online. Different channels are used more frequently for different benefits, and this is summarised in the [Application Channel](#) section above and in Table 12 in the accompanying tables.

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 Questback¹⁵ 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. Pseudonymised¹⁶ 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 Table 12.

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 "Physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more" (8%). A higher proportion of Funeral

¹⁵ An online platform used for secure data collection <https://www.questback.com/uk/>

¹⁶ 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.

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 overall proportions of clients choosing 'Prefer not to say' has increased slightly since the previous reporting period.

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 3% of the original phone responses and 4% of the original mail 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 Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment.

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

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

removed from the data set because we cannot tell if these records are the same client who has applied for different benefits or if they are a different client. The duplicate records that were removed accounted for 1% of the mail and telephone responses 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. 61% mail and 70% 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 there were multiple applications for the same client with the same outcome date, one record was randomly kept. 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. De-duplication of application details resulted in the removal of 40% online, 37% mail and 15% telephone linked records. The proportion of mail and telephone duplicates removed has increased due to more joint applications for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment being received.

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.

Data quality

Approval rate

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

Approval rate figures differ slightly from those in benefit specific publications (see links at the start of this section). The main reason for this is that the approval rate in this publication excludes withdrawn applications, whereas benefit specific publications include them. This is a particular issue for Funeral Support Payment, where around 10% or more of applications are withdrawn each month. Additionally, the approval rate in this publication is calculated for applications where equalities forms were completed, which may be more likely to be approved. Finally, in benefit specific publications approval rate is calculated from decisions taken within a time period, whereas here they are calculated for applications received within the same time period. This is less likely to have an 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 Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods than other benefits (Table 13). The equalities characteristics of these clients therefore have a greater impact on overall figures for Social Security Scotland than the equalities characteristics of other clients.

Backdating

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, data cuts covering to 30 June 2020 have been used for online Equality Monitoring and Feedback forms, Questback data for mail and telephone equalities and application details for all benefits. 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.

Clients living outside Scotland

In this analysis clients have been classed as living in Scotland if their postcode matched to a Scottish local authority, or based on their postcode area. Other clients are assumed to be living outside Scotland. The number of these clients was lower in December 2020 to May 2021 than in previous statistics (less than 1% of clients overall). This may be because the application process for Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (separate and joint applications) was amended in November 2020, so that clients that say they live outside Scotland are not able to submit an application online. The online applications for Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment and Child Disability Payment were also amended in July 2021, which may affect future statistics publications. Currently there is no similar process for Funeral Support Payment.

A higher proportion of clients with 'Unknown' addresses from outside Scotland were approved for a payment than in June to November 2020 than previously (18% of 'Unknown – other' clients overall, Tables 9-11). This may be due to the introduction of Scottish Child Payment, which has a relatively high number of clients with addresses outside Scotland that are approved (43%). This is in line with Scottish Child Payment official statistics¹⁷, and is likely to occur where the client originally lived in Scotland and was approved, but later moved address. Scottish Child Payment is an ongoing payment, unlike most other benefits except Best Start Foods. This means that client's

¹⁷ [Scottish Child Payment official statistics](#)

details, including address, are regularly checked and updated on the case management system. This can lead to clients with an initial outcome of 'approved', but addresses currently outside Scotland.

Future developments

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

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.

Estimates of take-up for different benefits are produced by Scottish Government. The Scottish Government will include its initial estimates of take-up of devolved, low-income benefits in the second Benefit Take-Up Strategy, which is due to be published by 21 October 2021.

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

Background to Benefit Types

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

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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/>

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