Local Government Candidates Survey 2022

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Contents

1.   Executive Summary

The Scottish Government and partners recognise that gaining a better understanding of the demographic characteristics of electoral candidates and those who win elections is important in helping us assess the representativeness of our candidates and elected members and how that compares to the communities they serve.

The Scottish Government has therefore worked with the Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB), the Electoral Commission (EC), COSLA, the Improvement Service as well as a range of equality stakeholders to develop a survey collecting diversity data of candidates standing at the May 2022 Local Government elections.

All 2,548 candidates standing for election in the May 2022 Local Government elections in Scotland were invited to take part in the voluntary survey on candidate diversity characteristics.

720 responses were received to the survey, which represents an overall response rate of 28.2%. A summary of key findings against characteristics are detailed below.

Previous Political Experience

- 49% of respondents had never stood for election to a council previously, 33% had previously stood and were elected and 18% had previously stood and were not elected.

Sex

- 58% of respondents identified as male, 40% as female and 2% preferred not to answer

Age

- The largest age group of respondents were those between 55 and 64 (28%).
- Overall, 70% of respondents were over the age of 45.

Ethnicity

- The largest ethnic group were those identifying as White Scottish at 68%, with those identifying with any white group (including white Scottish, Other British, Polish and Other) totalling 92% of respondents overall.

Religion & Belief

- The largest group were those of no religion (48%), followed by followers of the Church of Scotland at 20%, Roman Catholics at 12% and Other Christians at 11%.
- Muslim respondents made up 2% while those belonging to another religion other than Christianity and Islam totalled 4%.
- Those who preferred not to say made up 3% of respondents.

Sexual Orientation

- 80% of respondents identified as straight/heterosexual, 15% as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other and 5% preferring not to say.

Education and Qualifications

- The majority of respondents (67%) had a qualification above SVQ level 4, which is equivalent to a degree level or above qualification, and only 3% of respondents had no qualifications at all.

Employment status

- The majority of respondents (66%) were employed at the time of the survey in some form of work (separate to being a councillor), with 33% being economically inactive and the remainder (approximately 1%) were unemployed, other or unknown.

Socio-Economic Category

- The largest group of respondents came from higher socio-economic backgrounds, with parents in a professional form of employment, making up 64% of all respondents.
- Those from an intermediate background amounted to 17% of respondents.
- 11% came from a working class or lower socio-economic background.
- 8% came from another background (including with parents who were retired).

Disability

- 67% of respondents did not have a limiting condition, 22% did have a limiting condition, 9% had a non-limiting condition and 2% preferred not to answer.

Trans Status

- 1% of respondents identified as Trans, 4% preferred not to answer.

Caring Responsibilities

- 28% of respondents provided care of some sort.
- The largest group were individuals who provided between 1 and 19 hours per week, representing 22% of the entire respondent group.

Parental Responsibility

- 22% of respondents stated that they had children under the age of 16 to whom they provided care.

Intersectionality

- Amongst 18 to 24 year olds there was a significantly higher proportion of males, both amongst those who stood for election, were elected (75% of those elected) or unelected (75% of those unelected), as compared to the overall population for that age group.
- This pattern also occurs for those aged 25 to 34 and those aged 65 or above.
- For age groups between 35 and 64 there is much less of a notable difference between males and females, both with regards to those who were successful at election and those that were unsuccessful, as compared to the overall population.
- This suggests that the gender imbalance for those standing for election is particularly acute at the younger and older age ranges amongst respondents.
- With regards to the interactions between sex and disability status the data suggests that females made up a higher percentage of elected candidate respondents with a limiting condition (54%).

Overall there is evidence to point towards the potential for over and under-representativeness of certain segments of the population amongst the candidate respondent group.

Specifically there appeared to be notable divergence between the profile of respondents as compared to the overall population with regards to sex, age, education, disability status and socio-economic background. Specifically, we saw evidence for fewer females, younger individuals, individuals with less than degree level qualifications, individuals with a limiting health condition and individuals from lower-socio economic groups as compared to the population as a whole.

Despite this there were also some results that ran contrary to this trend with there being a higher proportion of respondents who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or in some other way other than heterosexual as compared to the overall population.

2. Introduction

Data on who stands for election to Scotland's councils has historically tended to be very inconsistent. The Scottish Government and partners recognise that gaining a better understanding of who stands, and who is elected, is important so that we can understand how representative our candidates and elected members are of the communities they serve. This in turn will also help organisations working to increase access to elected office to work with accurate data. It will also assist organisations such as COSLA and the Improvement Service have a better picture of the characteristics and range of experiences and responsibilities of councillors to help them plan most effectively how to support them.

In response to this the Scottish Government worked with the Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB), the Electoral Commission (EC), COSLA and the Improvement Service as well as a range of equality stakeholders developed a survey designed to collect diversity data of candidates standing for election.

All candidates who stood for election in the May 2022 local council elections were invited to complete the brief voluntary questionnaire on their demographic characteristics, previous political experience and caring responsibilities. Where possible the questions were designed to mirror those in the 2022 Census and/or the Scottish Household Survey so that data could be compared with the national picture.

This report sets out the initial key findings from this survey as well as providing some background contextual information on the collection of equalities data for elected officials.

3.   Background Information

To date there has been limited information available on the demographics of candidates running for election in Scottish Local Government election. One area where there historically has been some evidence collected is in relation to the sex of candidates. Since 1999 data has been collected on the proportion of female candidates running for local government election however this has often relied on imperfect methods such as on names, knowledge of Returning Officers (RO's) and academic desk research. The data that is available shows that the proportion of female local government candidates rose by only four percentage points between 1999 and the 2017 election, from 26.8% to 30.5%.

With regards to protected characteristics beyond sex, it is recognized that such evidence is limited, or not available at all for some characteristics.

In terms of data that is available on these broader characteristics The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) produced a report on the diversity of candidates and elected officials in Great Britain[1]. This drew on data from surveys of candidates at the 2016 Scottish Parliament election and 2017 local government elections as part of the cross-country Comparative Candidates Survey[2]. The surveys ask standardised questions across a range of issues including campaigning and political views, but also collected data on age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Response rates to the surveys were 32% for Scottish Parliament candidates and 34% for local government candidates, so while valuable data was gathered, it is not known how representative the diversity data is of the national picture.

It should also be noted that the Welsh Government undertook a similar exercise to this survey with their own local government candidate survey at the time of the 2017 elections, achieving a response rate of 18%[3].

Further background information providing a summary of demographic data that is currently available on local government candidates in Scotland can be found in the proposal document for this survey: Supporting documents - Diversity in political representation in Scotland: data improvement project proposal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot).

---

[1] Diversity of candidates and elected officials in Great Britain
[2] The Comparative Candidate Survey
[3] Local Government Candidates Survey 2017

4.   Methodology

Questionnaire Design

The survey was designed to collect data on all protected characteristics, excluding marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity, reflecting the approach set out in Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010. This therefore includes:

- Age;
- Sex;
- Gender reassignment;
- Disability;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sexual orientation

In addition, a number of questions on socio-economic status in line with the Fairer Scotland Duty, and questions on previous experience as a candidate / elected representative and caring responsibilities have been included.

In designing the questionnaire a range of factors were considered including that the questions should allow comparison of the profile of election candidates with the Scottish population where possible.

Response rates for similar surveys have been low. In order to seek to maximise the likelihood of candidates responding, the questionnaire was designed to be as short and straightforward to complete as possible, as set out below:

- Candidates may find some questions more sensitive than others. Instructions were therefore provided to respondents making clear that questions are voluntary and if there are any questions they do not want to answer, they could just go on to the next one.
- Questions were designed to be proportionate and gather only as much detail as required to obtain a picture across the protected characteristics.
- Accessibility - ensuring the questionnaires were available in formats that meet the needs of respondents.

The questionnaire has been developed along the lines of equality monitoring forms and diversity monitoring forms that are commonly used in a range of settings. While diversity monitoring forms are commonly used in a range of settings, there is not a single existing suite of agreed questions to use for this purpose[4], and indeed one of the weaknesses noted in the EHRC's report about the currently available data on election candidates, was the lack of consistency in data collection, and the associated "fragmented picture across protected characteristics with many gaps" [5]. In response to this a review was undertaken on key sources of guidance for collecting diversity data, approaches taken by different surveys, and advice was sought from a number of equality and diversity stakeholders.

The full list of questions as well as the rationale for each question and the potential response options can be found at: 2022 Local Government Candidate Diversity Questionnaire (www.gov.scot).

---

[4] Scottish Government (2021) Public sector - understanding equality data collection
[5] Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019) Diversity of candidates and elected officials in Great Britain

Engagement with stakeholders indicated that an approach that provides both an electronic and a paper-based option for responding would best meet candidate's needs. Therefore the questionnaire was provided (alongside an information leaflet) in the following formats:

1. As an online survey, accessible via a QR code and hyperlink provided on the paper and printable questionnaire taking candidates to an electronic version of the survey to enable them to complete it on their phones or other electronic devices;
2. As a paper form, leaflet and return envelope given out with nomination papers by Returning Officers (marked as non-mandatory); and
3. As a printable form and leaflet available to download online and print (marked as non-mandatory) for those not travelling to collect nomination papers from their council office.

Responses and & Analysis Approach

The survey was launched in February 2022 and remained live until the end of June 2022. Overall 2,548 candidates stood for election and 720 responded to the survey therefore the final overall response rate received was 28.2% This compares favourably to other Local Government candidate surveys, nonetheless we should recognise that as not all candidates responded to the survey, the results presented here refer only to the candidates that did respond and not to all candidates that stood for election (Table 1).

Table 1: Response rates by Elected Status

Candidate Type	Number	Survey Responses	Response Rate (%)
Elected	1,223	375	30.6%
Unelected	1,325	342	25.8%
All	**2,548**	**720**	**28.2%**

Note: 3 candidates could not be identified by name and therefore their elected status is unknown. Additionally 3 candidates who stood in uncontested seats have been included under the elected status.

The table above demonstrates that elected candidates responded at a somewhat higher rate (30.6%) compared to unelected candidates (25.8%).

Analysing response rates by Local Authority response rates ranged from a low of 13.9% in Clackmannanshire to 71.4% in the Orkney Islands (Table 2).

Table 2: Response rates by Local Authority

Local Authority	Number of Candidates	Number of Responses	Response Rate (%)
Aberdeen City Council	99	16	16.2%
Aberdeenshire Council	135	28	20.7%
Angus Council	60	19	31.7%
Argyll & Bute Council	80	20	25.0%
Clackmannanshire Council	36	5	13.9%
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	50	24	48.0%
Dumfries & Galloway Council	74	22	29.7%
Dundee City Council	67	29	43.3%
East Ayrshire Council	54	15	27.8%
East Dunbartonshire Council	44	18	40.9%
East Lothian Council	50	13	26.0%
East Renfrewshire Council	42	9	21.4%
Falkirk Council	63	14	22.2%
Fife Council	179	45	25.1%
Glasgow City Council	204	48	23.5%
Inverclyde Council	42	16	38.1%
Midlothian Council	39	9	23.1%
North Ayrshire Council	74	13	17.6%
North Lanarkshire Council	143	37	25.9%
Orkney Islands Council	35	25	71.4%
Perth & Kinross Council	86	28	32.6%
Renfrewshire Council	80	26	32.5%
Scottish Borders Council	77	33	42.9%
Shetland Islands Council	36	17	47.2%
South Ayrshire Council	61	15	24.6%
South Lanarkshire Council	143	24	16.8%
Stirling Council	56	17	30.4%
The City of Edinburgh Council	143	52	36.4%
The Highland Council	142	34	23.9%
The Moray Council	42	14	33.3%
West Dunbartonshire Council	39	14	35.9%
West Lothian Council	73	20	27.4%

n = 719 as one unidentifiable candidate did not indicate which Local Authority they were running in

It should be noted that a number of duplicate responses were received due to candidates responding to the survey on more than one occasion. All duplicate responses have been deleted resulting in only one response per candidate. Where there were duplicates the most complete response was retained, if responses were equally complete then the most recent response was retained for analysis.

Unique identifiers were applied to each candidate. In addition, candidates were requested to provide their names to allow cross-referencing against published lists to determine who had been successfully elected. Names were deleted within 30 days of the final dataset being received as stated in the privacy document[6].

Some candidates chose not to answer all questions, the analysis therefore only includes valid responses for each question and therefore a different base number may exist per variable.

With regards to how the data has been analysed and presented within this report it should be noted that the findings have not been weighted or had confidence intervals applied nor has any statistical significance testing been conducted. There is therefore an unknown margin of error associated with each result.

It should be noted that a percentage may be quoted in the text that combines two or more of the percentages shown in tables or figures. Minor differences between figures shown in the tables and figures and text may occur due to rounding.

Throughout the report candidates that were elected are referred to as either successful or elected and candidates that were not elected are referred to as unsuccessful or unelected candidates. Candidates standing in uncontested seats are reported against overall demographic reports on the respondents as a whole but are removed when analysis compares demographic profiles of those who were successfully elected with those who were unsuccessful.

---

[6] LGCDS - Data project privacy notice (www.gov.scot)

4. Previous Political Experience

Candidates were asked whether they had stood for election to a council in the past. Of all who offered a valid response the largest group (49%) were those who had never stood for election to a council previously, followed by those who had previously stood and were elected (33%) and finally those who had previously stood and were not elected (18%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Have you stood for election to a council in the past?
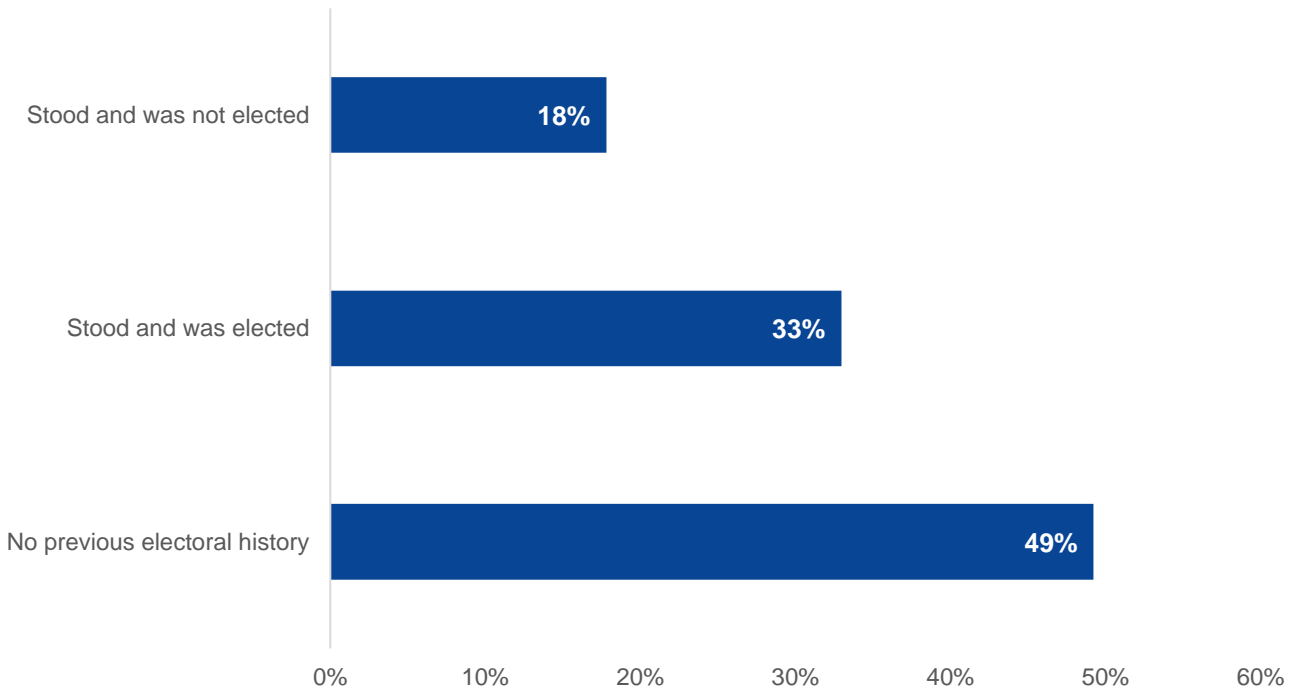
Of those who had previously stood and been elected the total number of years served ranged from less than six months (resulting from a by-election) to forty two years. The average number of years served was 9 years.

Figure 2: 2022 Electoral Outcome by Previous Electoral History
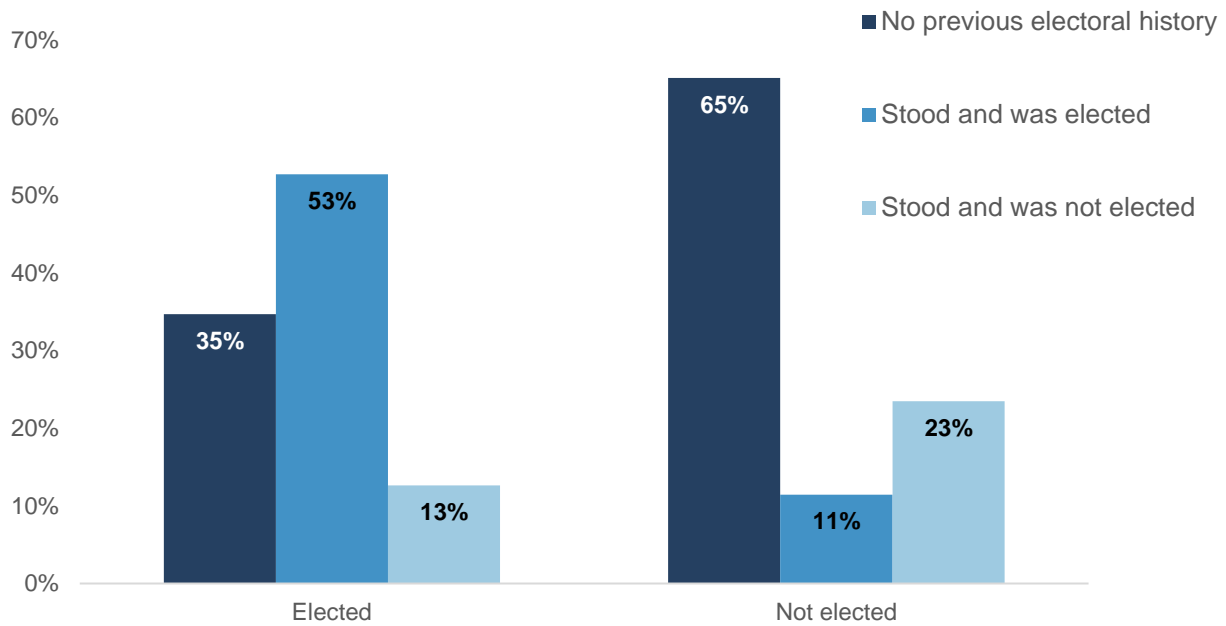
As can be seen in figure 2 above, of those that were not elected in this election the majority (65%) had never stood for election in the past, whereas of those that were successfully elected the majority (53%) had previously stood and been elected in the past.

All candidates were also asked a question regarding their broader political experience, results of which can be seen in the table below (Table 3). Please note that candidates could select more than one option.

Table 3: Most Frequently Cited Previous Political Experience

Previous Political Experience	Responses
Been a Community Councillor	18%
Been a Member of the Scottish, UK or European Parliament	1%
Worked as a paid or unpaid party/campaign worker or MSP/MP employee or held party office	48%
Been a public appointee, such as a board member of a public body	10%
None of the above	23%

The results suggest that the largest responses were that individuals had worked as a paid or unpaid party/campaign worker, MSP/MP employee or held party office (48%), had none of the noted previous political experience (23%) and having been a Community Councillor (18%).

Figure 3: percentage Prior Political History by Outcome of 2022 Election
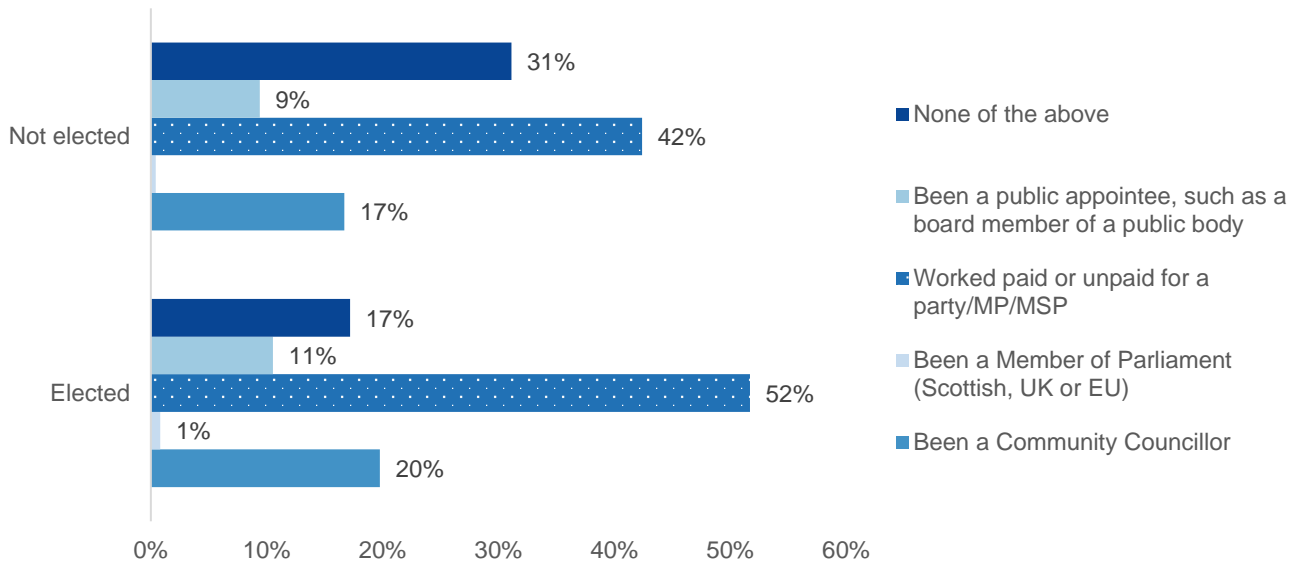
Figure 3 above displays how previous political history was distributed by those who were elected and those who were not. The largest group across both outcomes was having worked paid or unpaid for a party, MP or MSP.

5. Sex

Candidates were asked what their sex was. As can be seen in figure 4 below, 58% identified as male, 40% as female and 2% preferred not to answer.

Figure 4: Sex of survey respondents
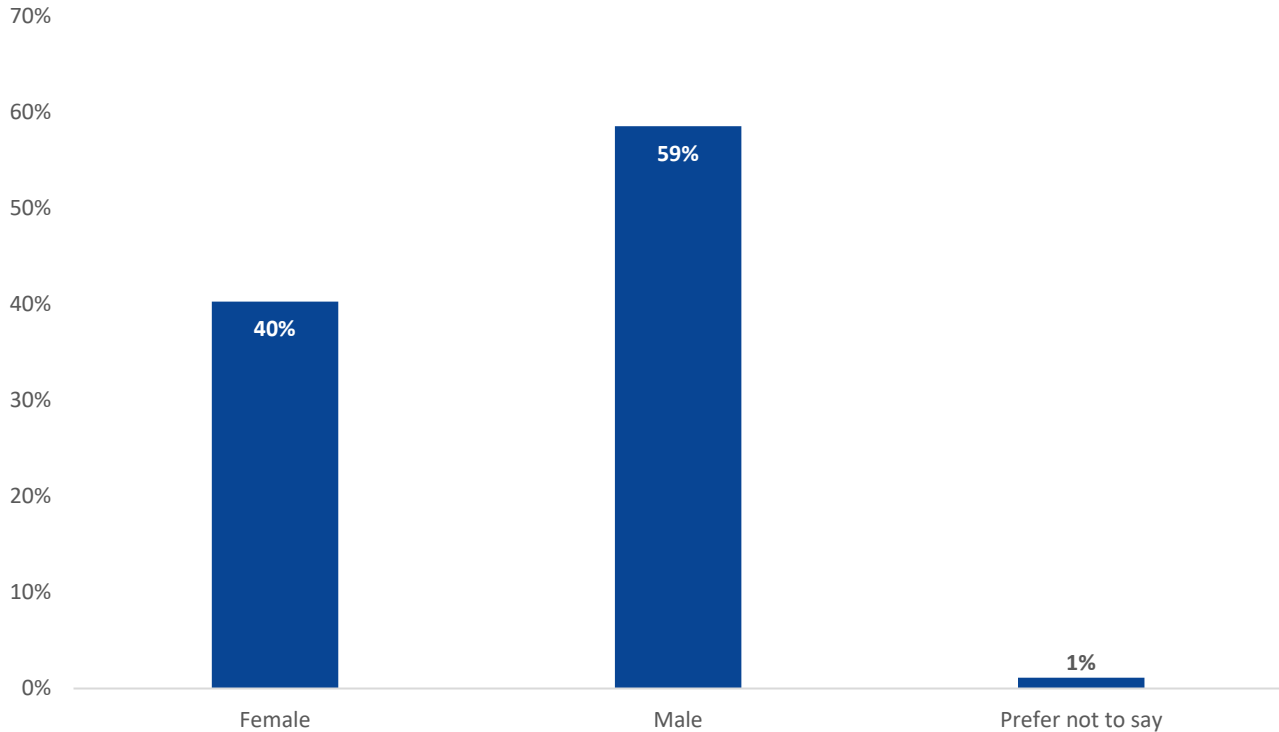
Comparing these results to National Records of Scotland data for the entire Scottish population[7] (52% of the population being female and 48% male), we can see that males are overrepresented amongst respondents with females being underrepresented as compared to the population of the country overall.

---

[7] https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2021

Figure 5: Electoral Outcome by Sex
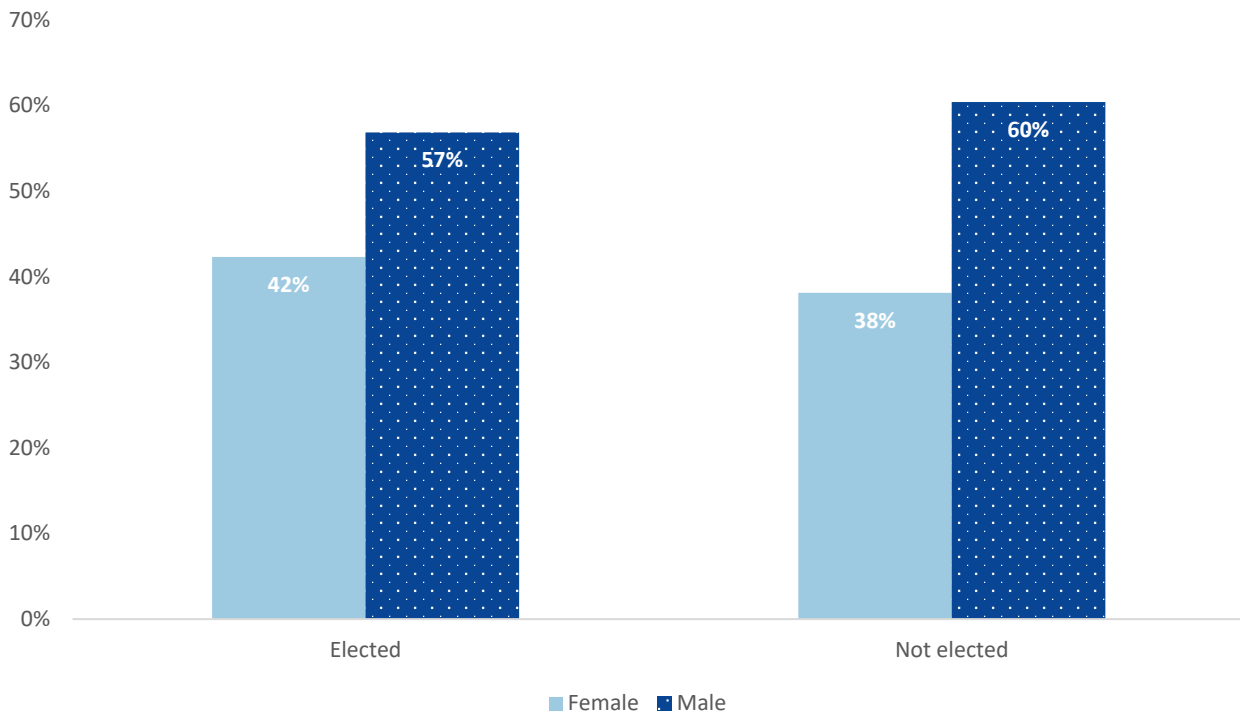
We can see in figure 5 above, that of the successfully elected candidates who responded to this survey 57% were male and 42% were female. For unelected respondents the split was 60% male and 38% female, with the remainder preferring not to say.

6. Age

Candidates were asked for their age at their last birthday, with the largest proportion of respondents being aged between 55 and 64 (28%). Overall, 70% of respondents were over the age of 45.

Figure 6: Age at last birthday
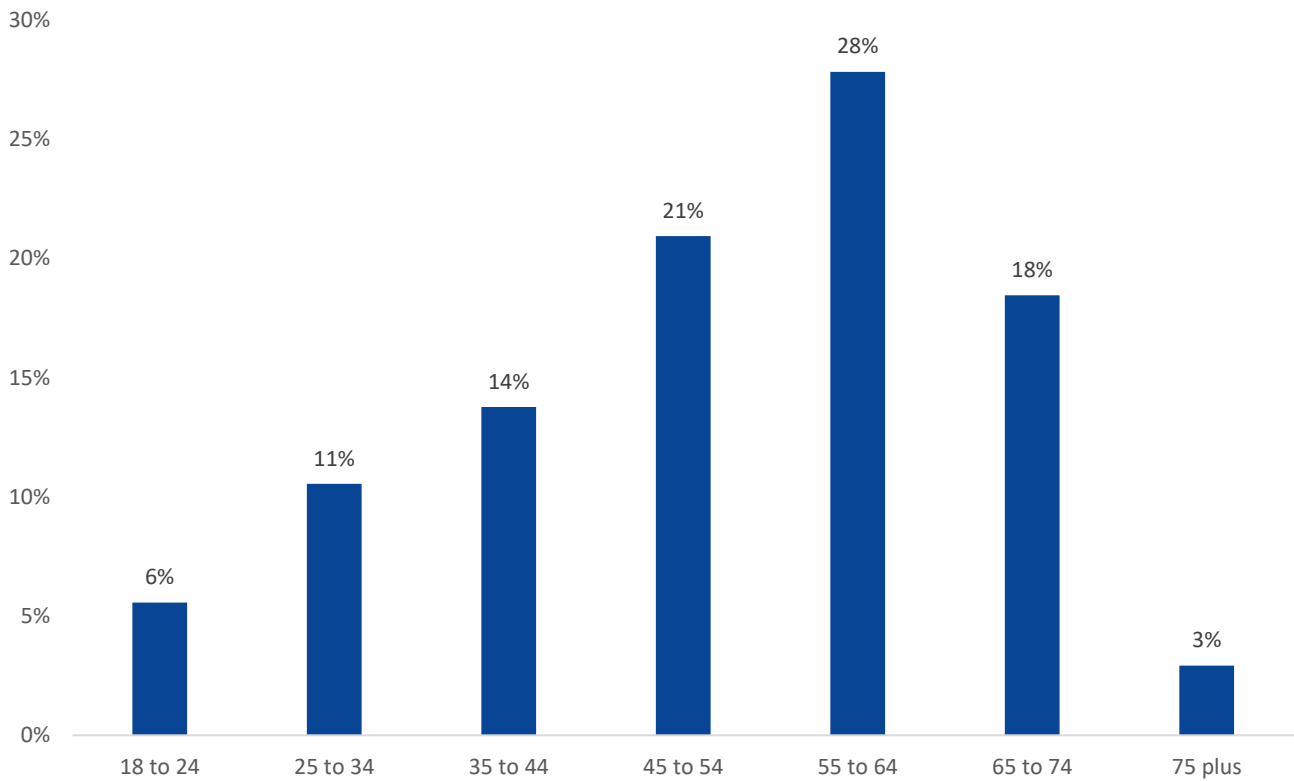
Comparing the survey data with the wider Scottish population we can see, as per figure 7 below, that the largest discrepancy exists in the overrepresentation of those aged 55-64 amongst respondents (difference of 12 percentage points) followed by equal levels of underrepresentation amongst those aged 18 to 24 (7 percentage points) and those aged 75 and over (also 7 percentage points).

Figure 7: Percentage point difference in age compared to Scottish population
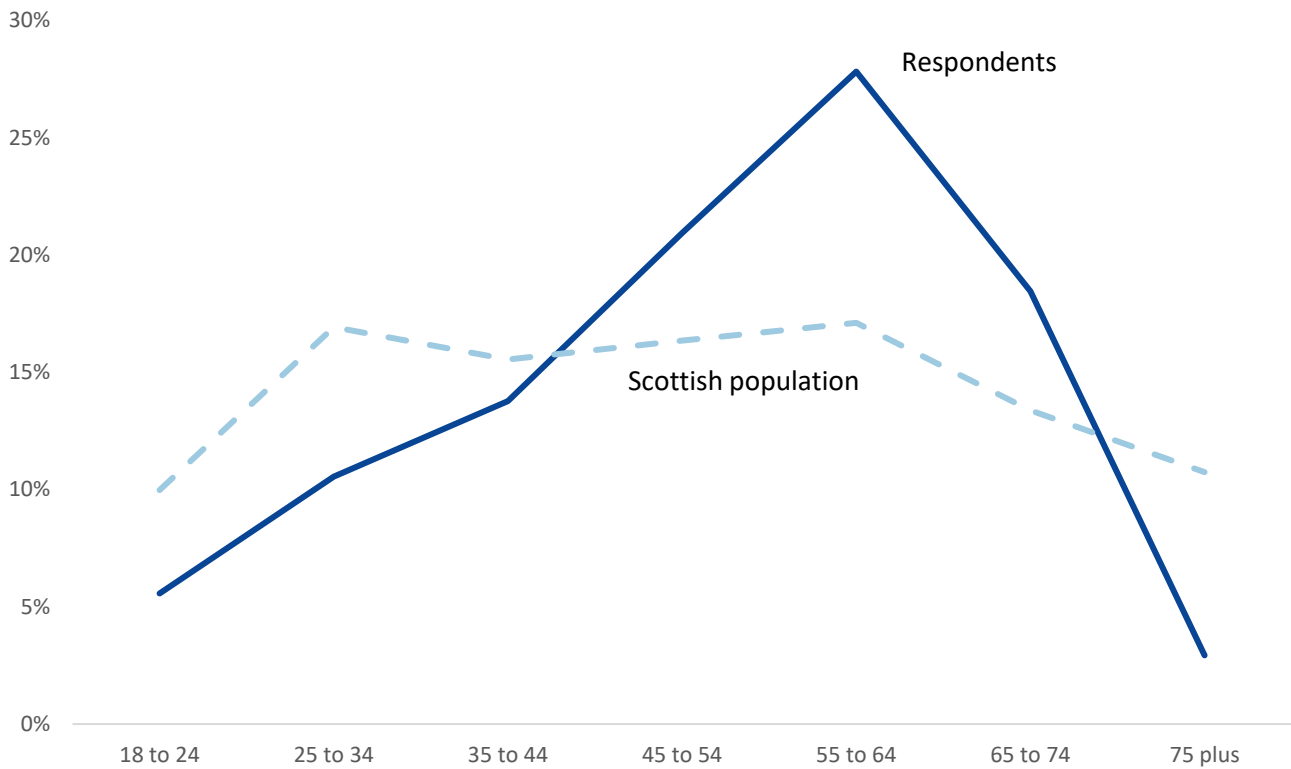
Figure 8 below displays the age ranges of those that were successfully elected compared to those who were not. Again we can see that amongst the elected candidates the majority (72%) were aged 45 or over.

Figure 8: Percentage distribution of age ranges of elected and unelected candidates

Legend: 18 to 24 | 25 to 34 | 35 to 44 | 45 to 54 | 55 to 64 | 65 to 74 | 75 plus
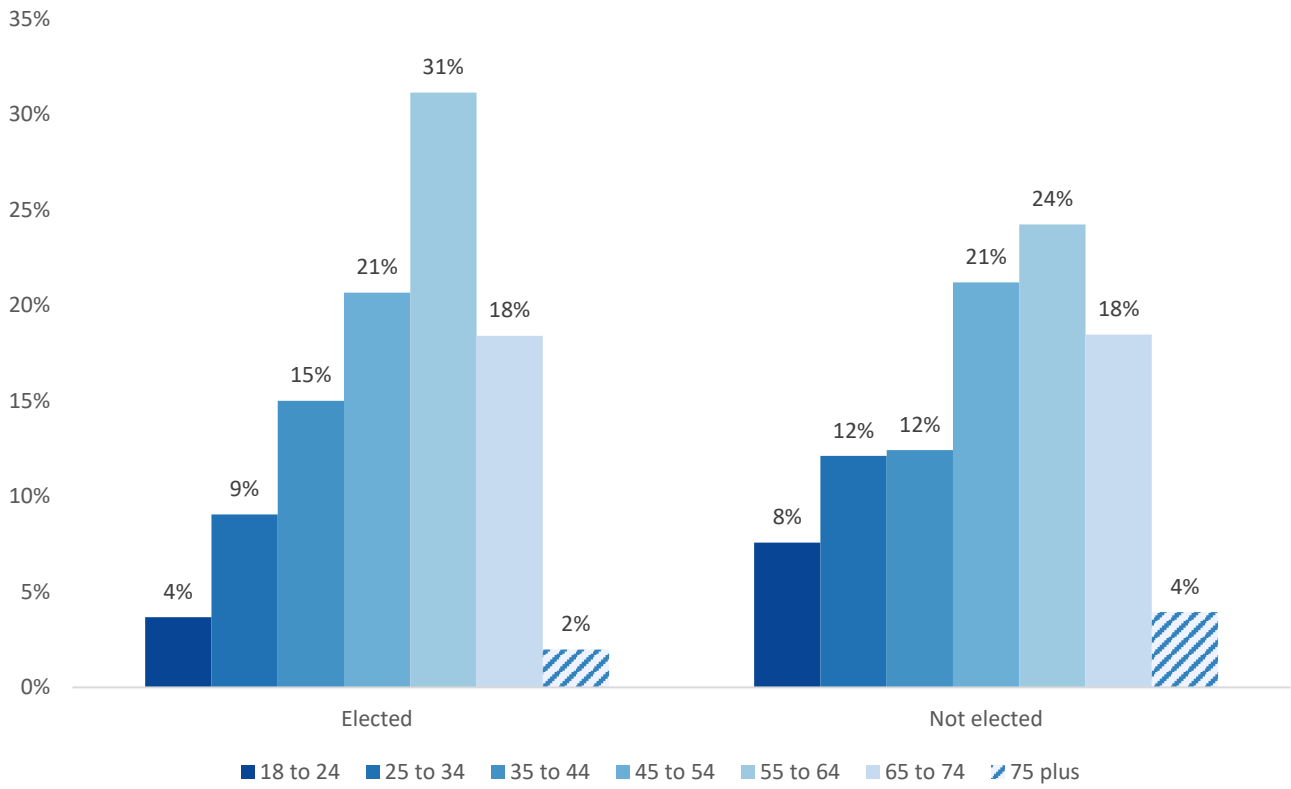
7. Ethnicity

Candidates were asked to identify their ethnicity, with the aggregated results detailed below in table 4.

Table 4: What is your ethnic group?

Ethnicity	% of Respondents
White: Scottish	67.8%
White: Other British	17.5%
White: Other	6.6%
Asian	1.9%
All other ethnic groups	4.9%
Prefer not to say	1.3%

*White: Other includes those identifying as White: Polish due to concerns around disclosure control

The largest group were those identifying as White Scottish at 68%, with those identifying with any white group (including Other British, Polish and Other) totalling 92% of respondents overall.

A comparison of the respondents ethnic identification to the overall population has been made using data from the Scottish Surveys Core Questions dataset[8], the results of which can be found in figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Ethnic identification of respondents with overall Scottish population

The results of this comparison suggest some variance between the respondent group of candidates and the overall population, notably with White Scottish and Asians being underrepresented, whilst White Other British, White Other, and All Other Ethnic Groups being overrepresented.
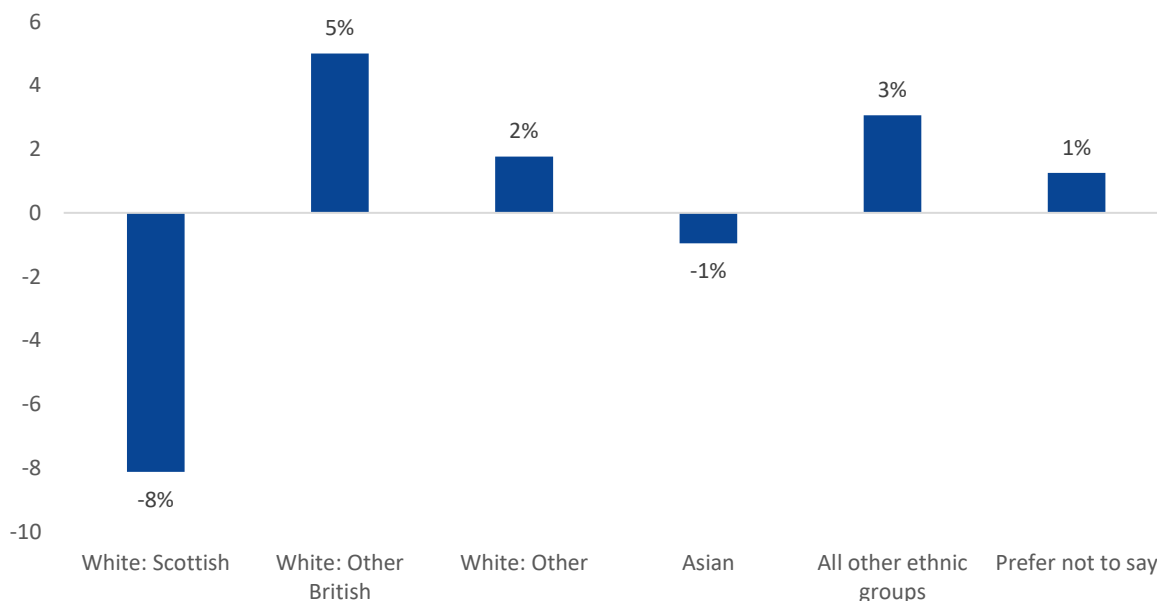
[8] Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ) - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

With regards to electoral outcome figure 10 highlights the proportions of each ethnic group by whether they were elected or unelected. The data demonstrates that individuals who identify as white Scottish made up 75% of successfully elected candidates. Non-white individuals made up 4% of elected candidates and 9% of unelected candidates

**Figure 10: Electoral outcome by ethnicity**
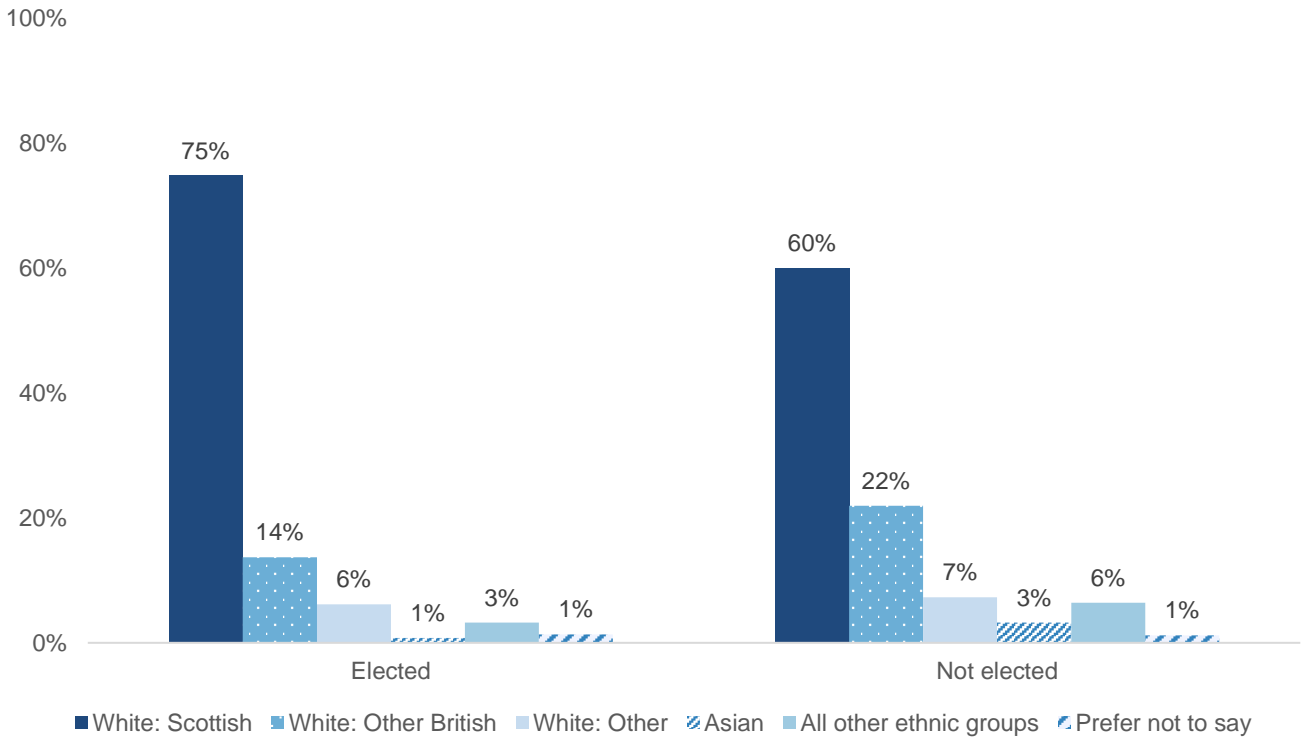
8. Religion

Candidates were asked to indicate which if any religion, religious denomination or body they belonged to with responses indicating that the largest group were those of no religion (48%), followed by various Christian affiliated beliefs, including followers of the Church of Scotland at 20% and Roman Catholics at 12% and Other Christians at 11%. Muslim respondents made up 2% while those belonging to another religion other than Christianity and Islam totalled 4% and those who preferred not to say made up 3% of respondents.

Table 5: What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?

Religion or belief	% of Respondents
None	48%
Church of Scotland	20%
Roman Catholic	12%
Other Christian	11%
Another Religion	4%
Prefer not to say	3%
Muslim	2%

Again by comparing the results of the survey with data from the SSCQ, detailed in figure 11 below, we can see that those of no religion were the largest group underrepresented amongst respondents at 6 percentage point variance. Those of an Other Christian group affiliation were the most over represented at 4% variance.

Figure 11: Religious identification of respondents compared to overall Scottish population
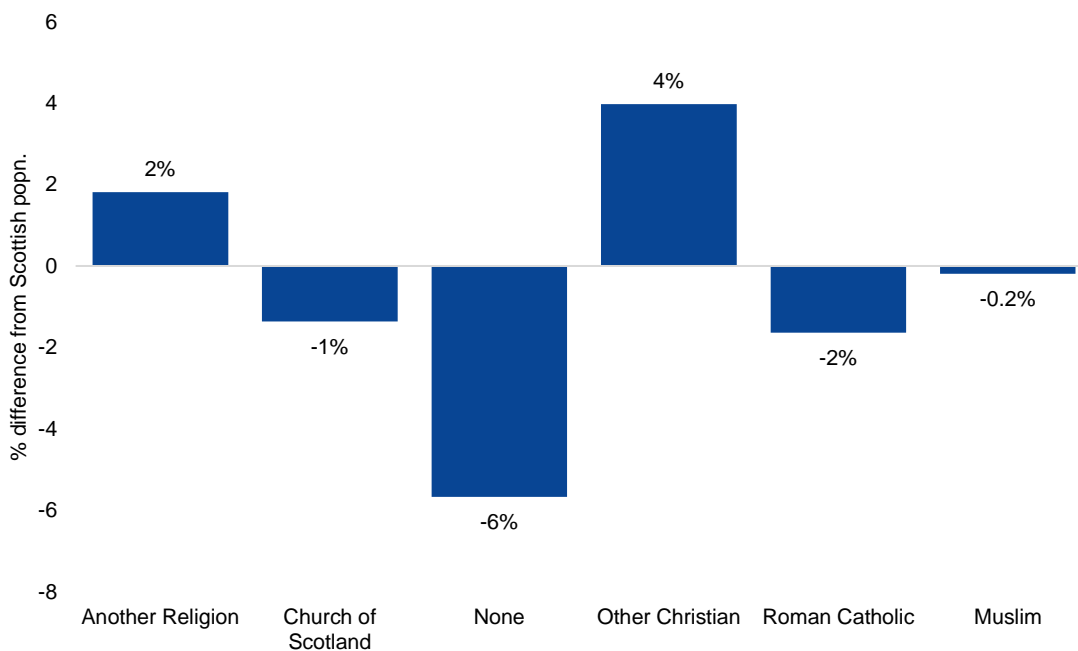
With regards to electoral outcome, figure 12 sets out the proportions of elected candidates and unelected candidates by which religious group they identify with.

Figure 12: Electoral outcome by religion
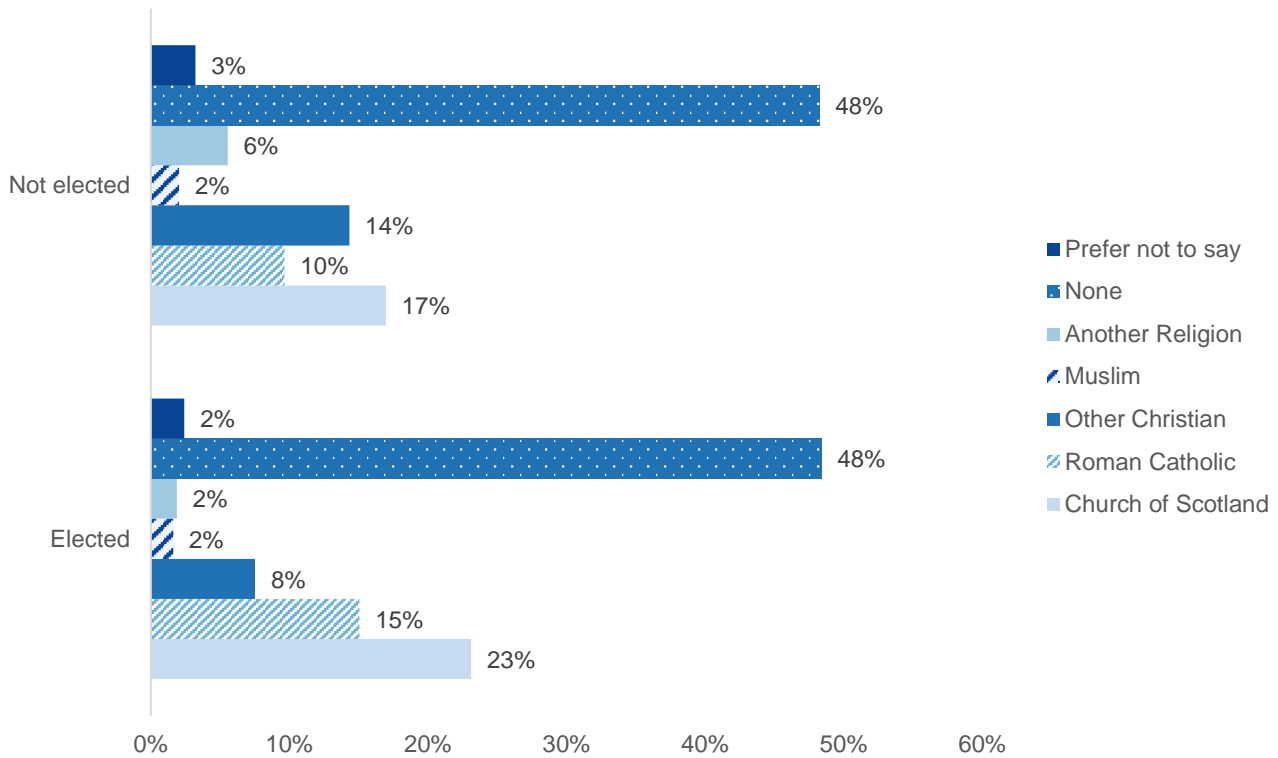
This data indicates that those of no religion made up the largest group of both elected (48%) and non-elected (48%) respondents, followed by members of the Church of Scotland who represented 23% of all elected respondents and 17% of unelected respondents. Those of a religion other than Christianity made up approximately 3.5% of the elected group.

9. Sexual Orientation

Candidates were asked to describe their sexual orientation with 80% identifying as straight/heterosexual, 15% as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other and 5% preferring not to say.

Figure 13: Sexual Orientation of respondents
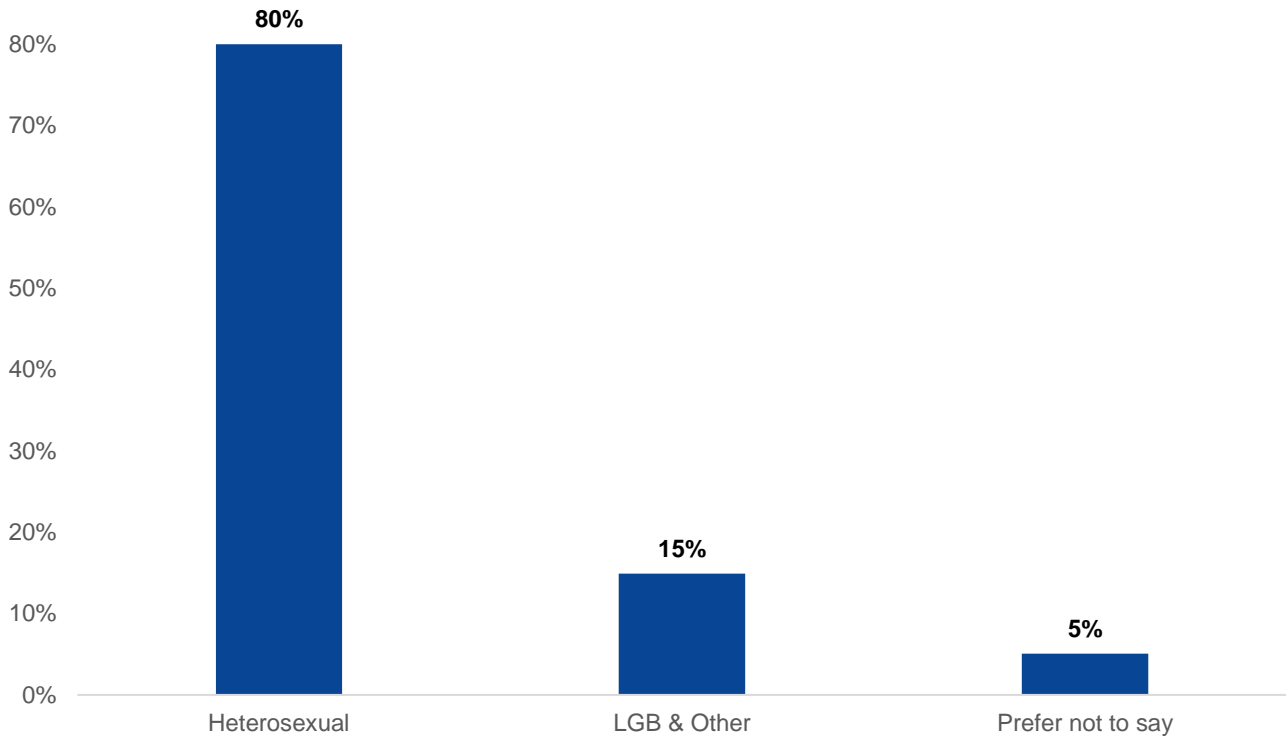
Comparing this to the national picture as identified by the SSCQ dataset we can see that, as per figure 14 below that there was a difference of 12 percentage points compared to the overall population.

Figure 14: Sexual orientation of respondents compared to overall Scottish population
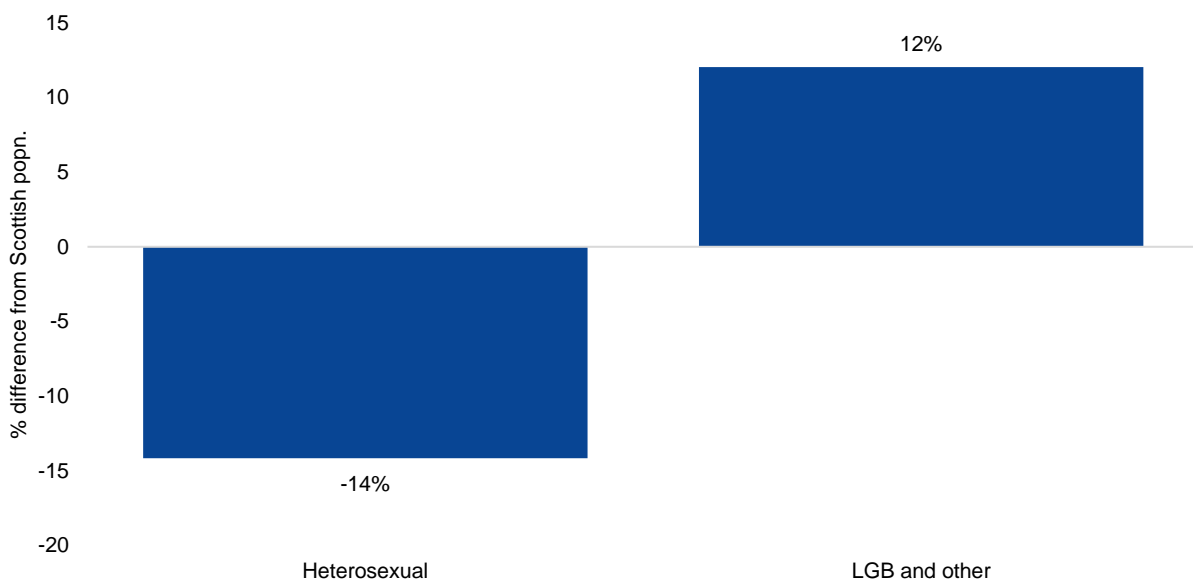
When comparing the profile of elected versus unelected candidates we can see that individuals identifying as heterosexual made up 83% of the elected group, followed by individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or in some other away at 13%. For the unelected group individuals identifying as heterosexual made up 77% of the group, followed by individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or in some other away at 17%.

Figure 15: Electoral outcome by sexual orientation

Legend: Heterosexual ■ LGB & Other ■ Prefer not to say ▨

Elected: Heterosexual 83%, LGB & Other 13%, Prefer not to say 4%

Not elected: Heterosexual 77%, LGB & Other 17%, Prefer not to say 6%
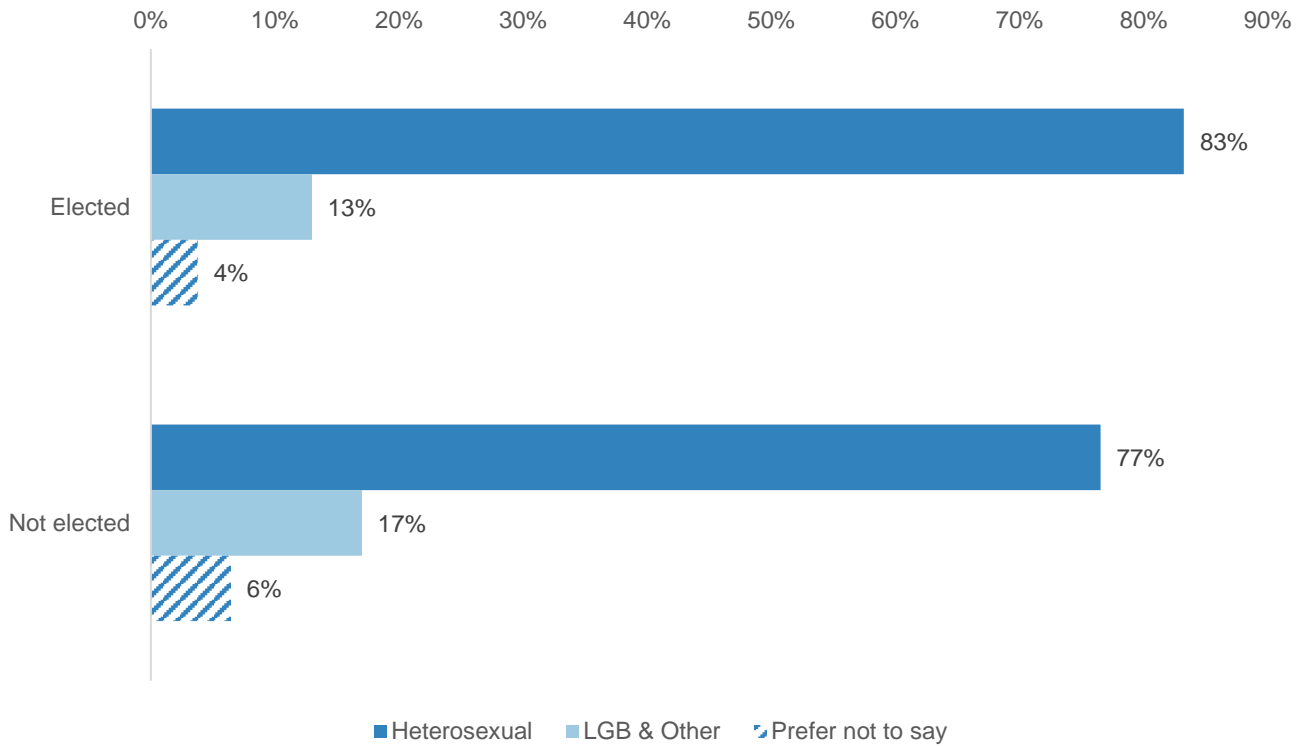
10. Education and Qualifications

Candidates were asked to state the highest level of educational qualification they had achieved, selecting from a pre-defined list which adheres to the Scottish Vocational Qualification descriptors[9]. Analysis was then undertaken to identify the distribution of qualifications which is presented below in figure 16.

Figure 16: Highest qualification of respondents

Qualification	Percentage
No Quals	3%
SVQ Level 1 or 2	7%
SVQ Level 3	10%
SVQ Level 4	12%
Above SVQ Level 4	67%
Other Qualification	1%
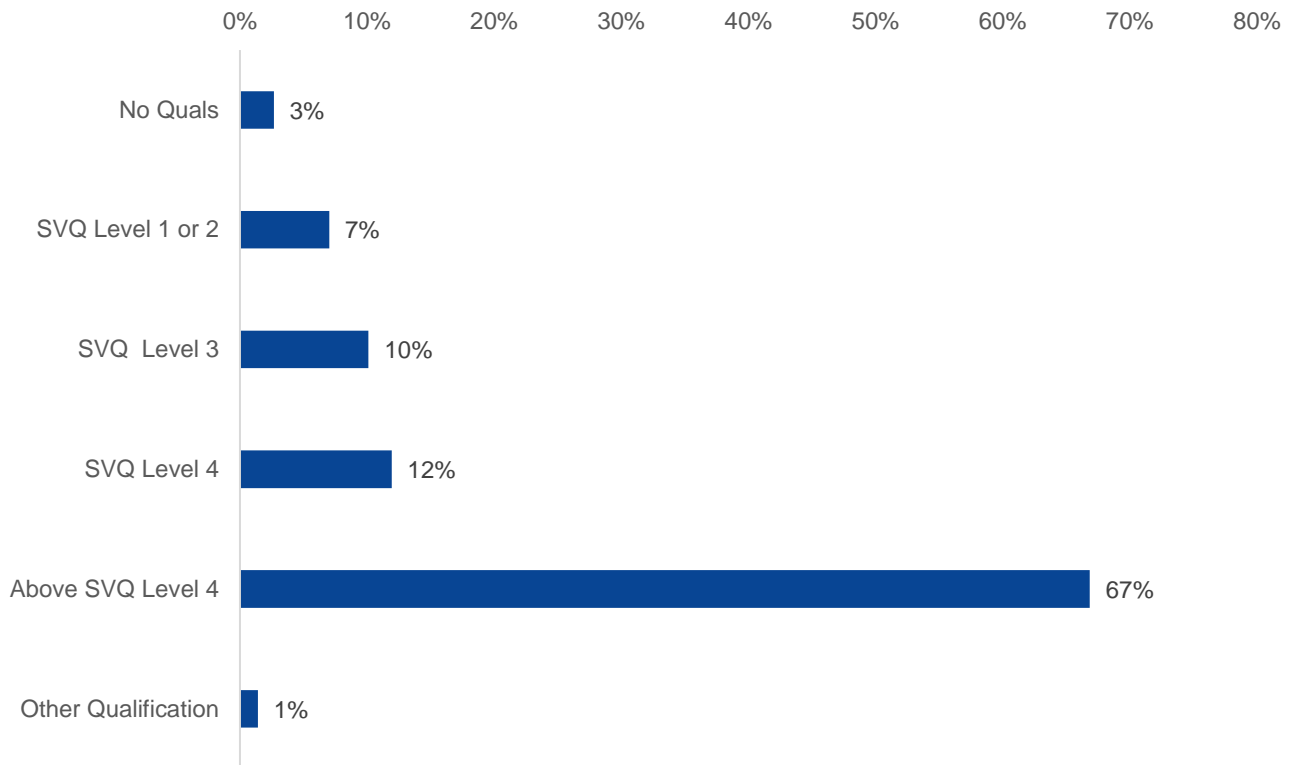
As we can see from the above, the majority of respondents (67%) had a qualification above SVQ level 4 which is equivalent to a degree level or above qualification and only 3% of respondents having no qualifications at all.

---

[9] See GuideToSVQs.pdf (sqa.org.uk) for more details

Figure 17: Highest qualification of respondents compared to overall Scottish population
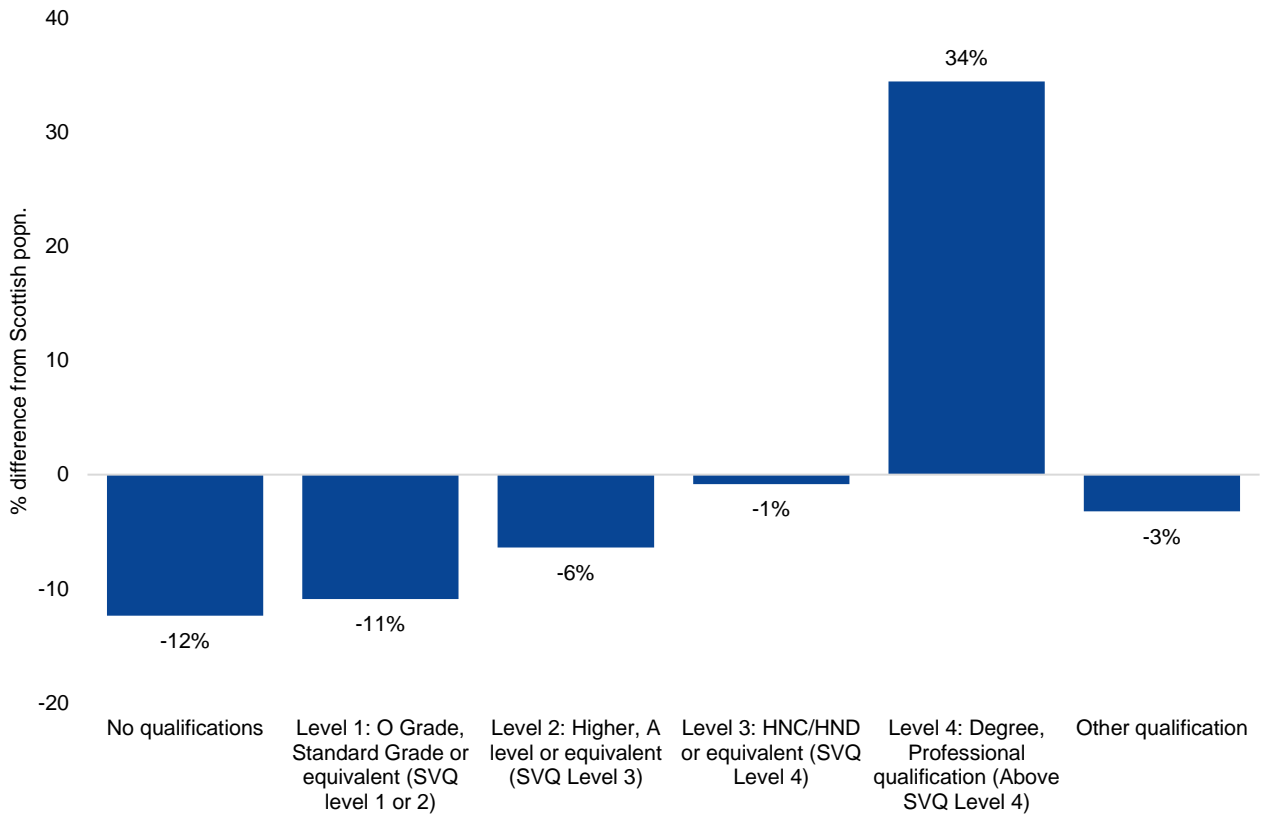
Comparing this to the Scottish population as in figure 17 we can see that there were a far greater number of respondents with degree level qualifications compared to the Scottish population in total (34% percentage point difference) and far lower numbers with lower level qualifications or no qualifications at all.

Figure 18: Electoral outcome by highest qualification
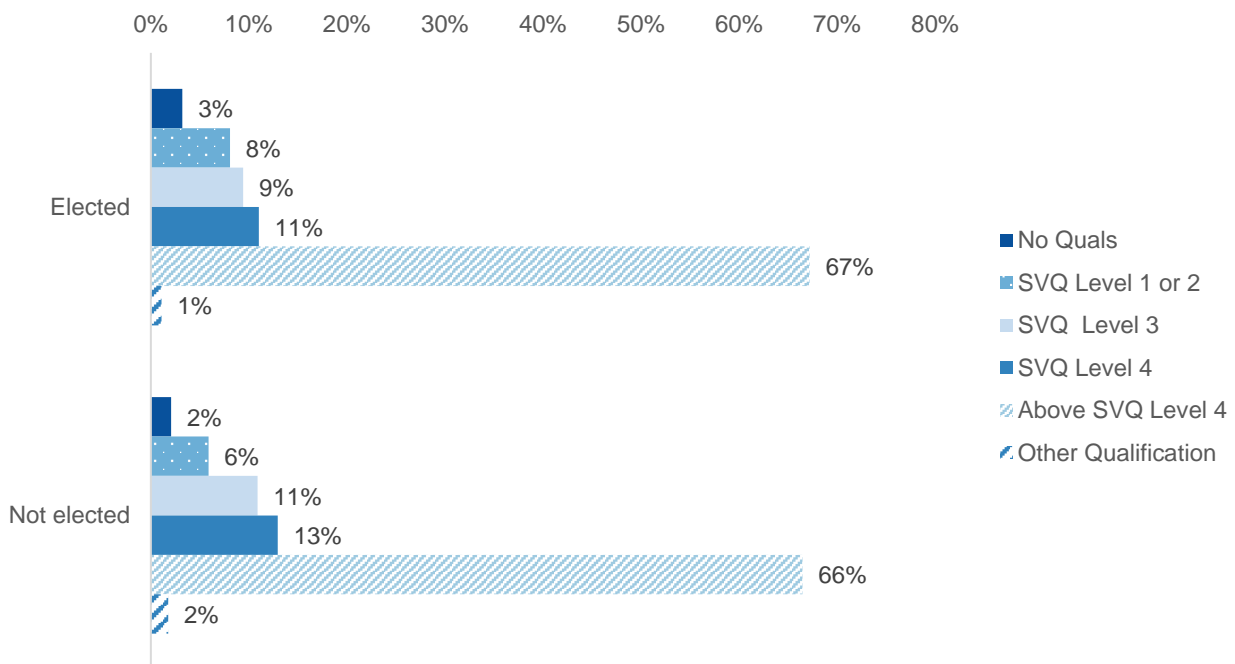
Nonetheless there did not appear to be a notable difference in the qualification distributions of those candidates who were successfully elected and those who were not, with only minor differences in the educational profile of both groups as set out in figure 18 above.

11. Employment status

Candidates were asked to describe their current employment situation apart from or in addition to any work they may currently do as a councillor. These results were then aggregated into three categories following conventions set by the International Labour Organisation[10], namely ILO employed, unemployed and inactive.

The results in figure 19 below suggest that the majority of respondents (66%) were employed at the time of the survey in some form of work (separate to being a councillor), with 33% inactive (reasons for inactivity include being retired, a student, full-time carers amongst others) and the remainder (approximately 1%) were unemployed, other or unknown.

Figure 19: ILO employment status of respondents
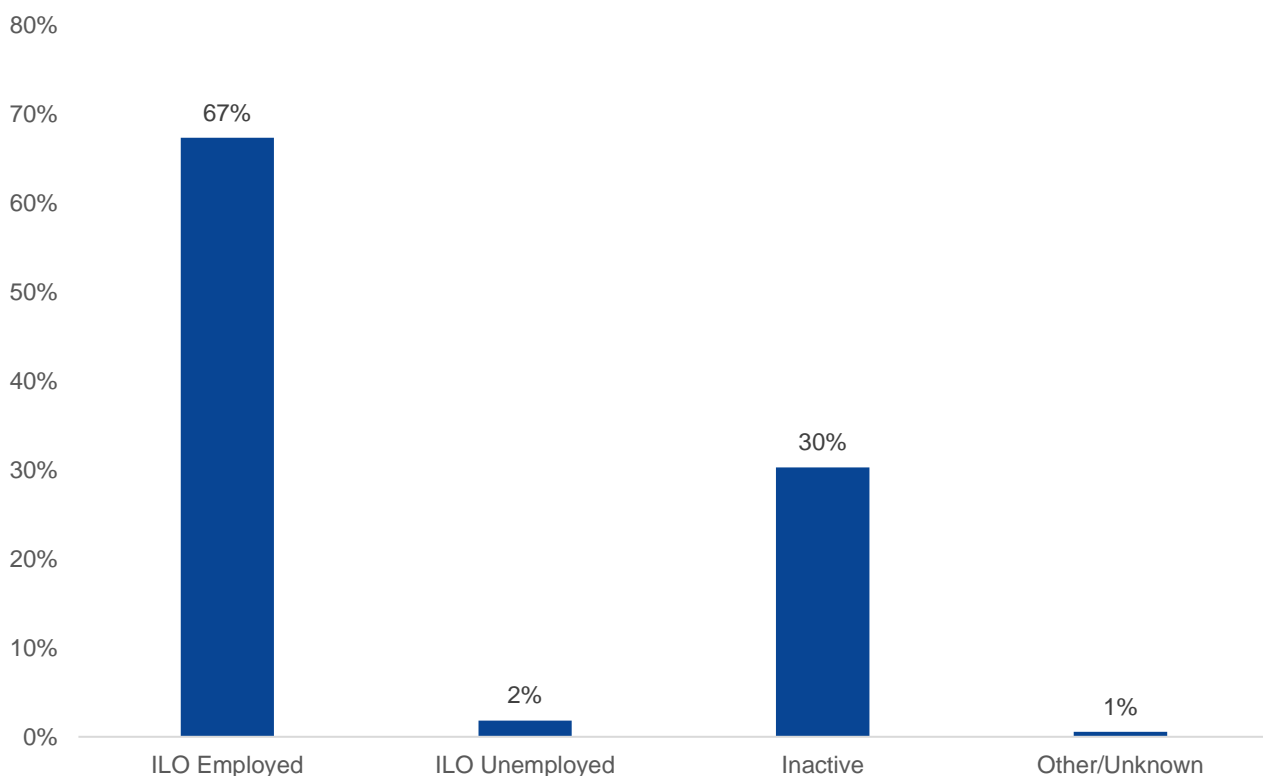
Compared to the population as a whole, the survey respondents were less likely to be inactive (by 7 percentage points) or unemployed (by 1 percentage point) and more likely to be in employment (8 percentage points) (Figure 20).

---

[10] See Glossary: People outside the labour force - Statistics Explained (europa.eu) for more details.

Figure 20: ILO employment status of respondents compared to overall Scottish population
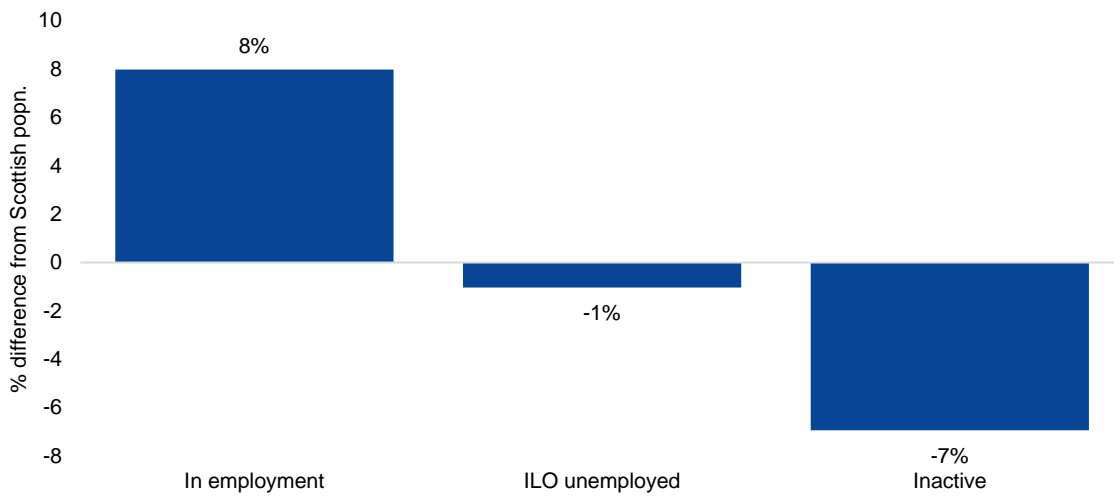
Comparing the employment profiles of successfully elected candidates as a group versus those who were not elected suggests that there is not a significant difference, with approximately similar numbers being employed, inactive or unemployed between both groups (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Electoral outcome by ILO employment status
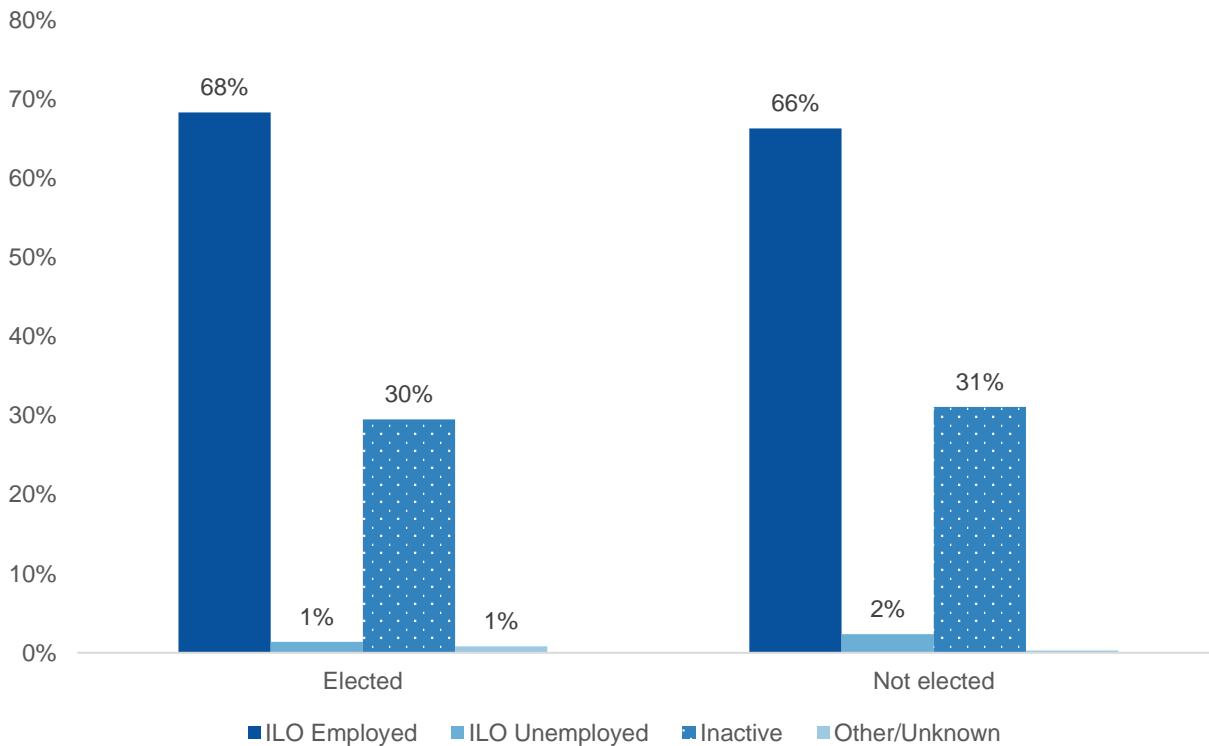
12. Socio-Economic Category

In order to obtain a measure of candidates socio-economic backgrounds respondents were asked to identify the occupation of their main household earner when they were aged 14 years of age.

This question is asked in line with advice published by the UK Government's Social Mobility Commission as a valid and robust way to determine the socio-economic background of individuals[11].

The results suggest the majority of respondents came from higher socio-economic backgrounds, with parents in a professional form of employment making up 64% of all respondents, those from an intermediate background making up 17% of respondents, 11% coming from a working class or lower socio-economic background, and 8% coming from another background (including with parents who were retired).

Figure 22: Socio-economic background of respondents
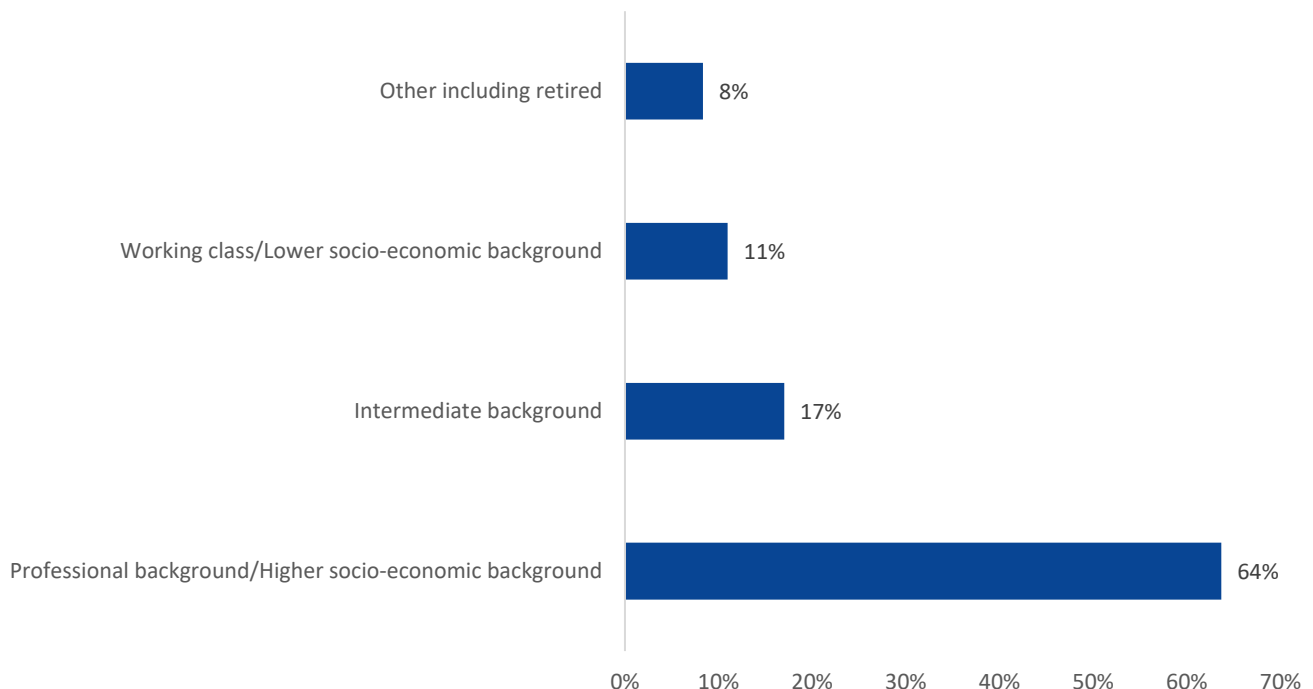
Unfortunately Scotland level data is not available to compare these figures to however data available at the UK level suggests that of the overall UK workforce aged 16 and above in May 2021, 37% had parents from a professional background, 24% from an intermediate background, and 39% from a working class background. Overall this suggests that amongst candidates who responded to the survey there was a notably higher proportion of individuals from more advantaged socio-economic backgrounds as compared to the population at a UK level.

---

[11] See Simplifying how employers measure socio-economic background: An accompanying report to new guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) for more details.

**Figure 23: Electoral outcome by socio-economic background**
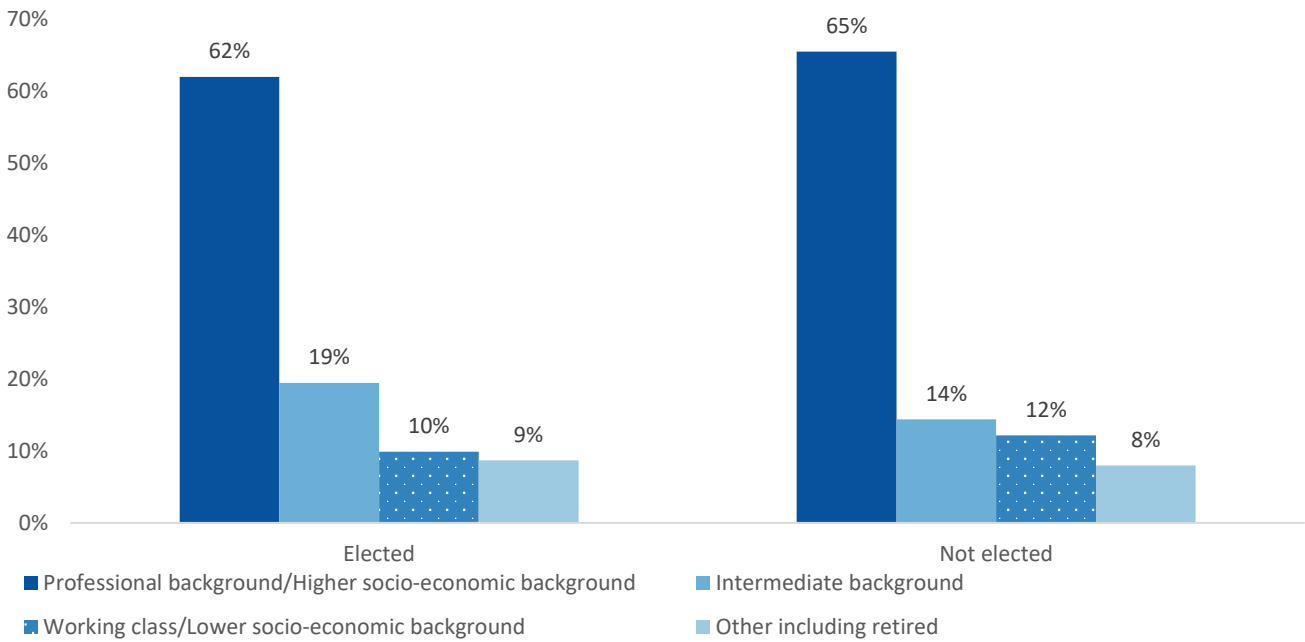
When comparing the profile of elected and unelected candidates we see that 62% of elected candidates were from a professional or higher socio-economic background, 19% from an intermediate background, and 10% from a working class background (Figure 23). These findings were broadly similar for unelected candidates however with a slightly higher percentage of working class individuals (12%) amongst the unelected group, and a lower percentage of intermediate background individuals (19%).

13. Disability

Candidates were asked a set of questions regarding their health in order to determine the proportions who live with a disability. Candidates were firstly asked whether they had a physical or mental health condition or illness that was expected to last twelve months or more, and if they answered yes were asked whether their condition or illness limited their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. The combined responses to both of these questions provides a measure of the proportion of individuals living with a limiting condition and is in keeping with the Equalities Act definitions[12]

The data in figure 24 below indicates that 67% of respondents did not have a limiting condition, 22% did have a limiting condition, 9% had a non-limiting condition and 2% preferred not to answer.

Figure 24: Limiting health condition of respondents
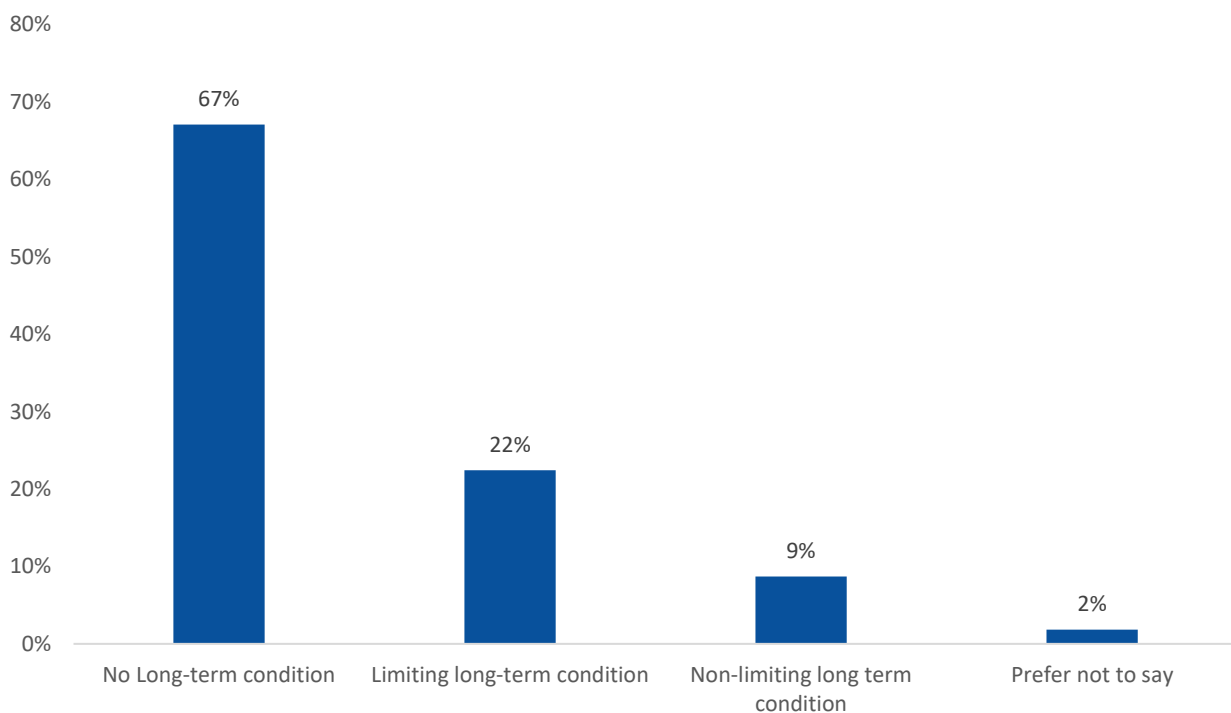
Comparing this to national data obtained from the Scottish Health Survey[13] 2019 we can see that there was a lower proportion of people with a limiting condition amongst survey respondents as compared to the overall Scottish population, with the difference amounting to 13 percentage points (Figure 25). To a lesser degree there was also a lower percentage of individuals with a non-limiting compared to the population, with the difference amounting to 4 percentage points.

---

[12] See Equality Act 2010 (legislation.gov.uk) and Measuring disability: comparing approaches - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) for more details.
[13] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2019-supplementary-tables/

Figure 25: Limiting health condition of respondents compared to overall Scottish population
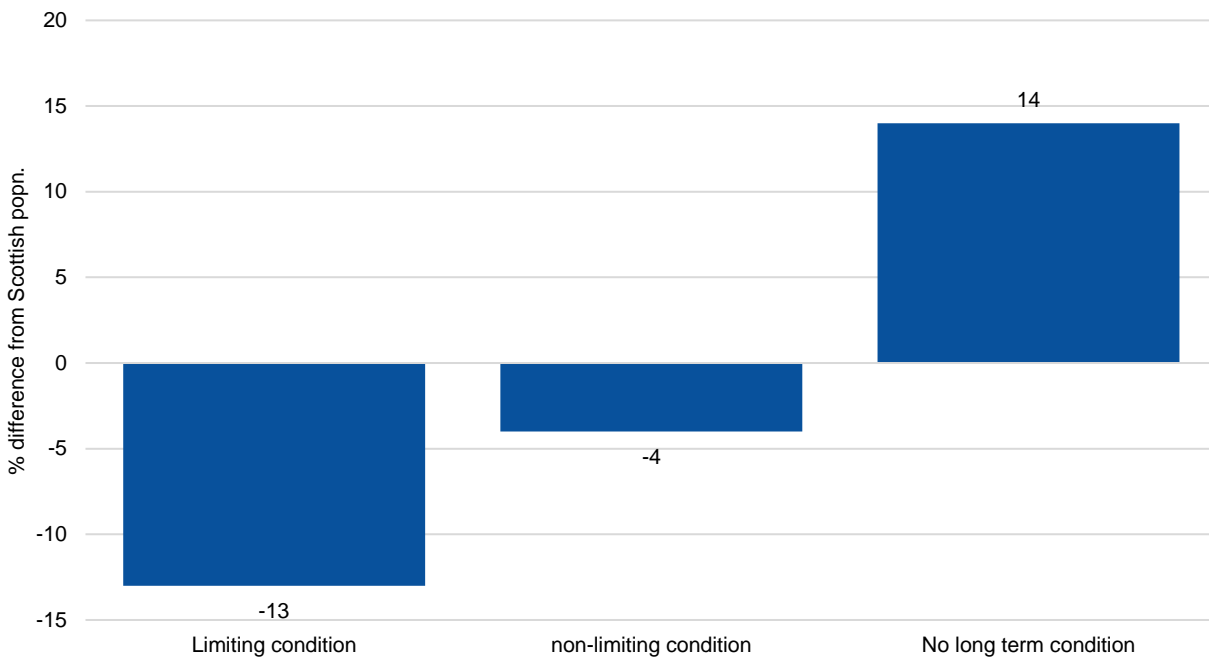
When analysing electoral outcome by disability status we see that there was a relatively even split in the proportions of individuals with no limiting condition who were either elected or not elected. However there was a slightly larger percentage of elected individuals with a non-limiting condition (10%) as opposed to amongst those who were not elected (8%), and similarly a lower percentage of those with a limiting condition elected (21% of those elected overall) compared to those not elected (24%).

Figure 26: Electoral outcome by limiting condition
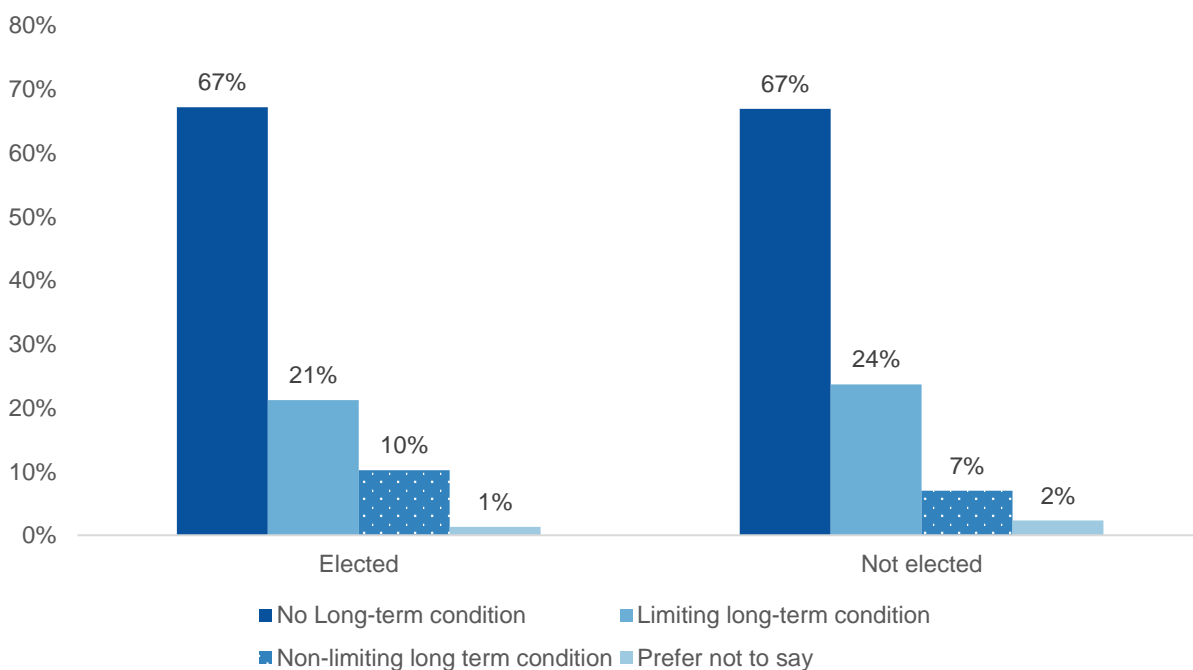
14. Trans Status

In keeping with Scotland's 2022 Census[14], a question was incorporated into the survey asking respondents of their Trans status. The question wording was formulated in accordance with the voluntary question contained within the census, namely asking respondents "Do you consider yourself to be Trans, or have a Trans history?", to those who answered yes respondents were asked for a follow up descriptor.

Responses, demonstrate that 1% of respondents identified as Trans, 4% preferred not to answer and 96% did not identify as Trans.

It should be noted that as this question was not asked as part of the census until 2022 and results have yet to be released it has not been possible to undertake any comparisons with the overall Scottish population at this time.

Figure 27: Electoral outcome by Trans status
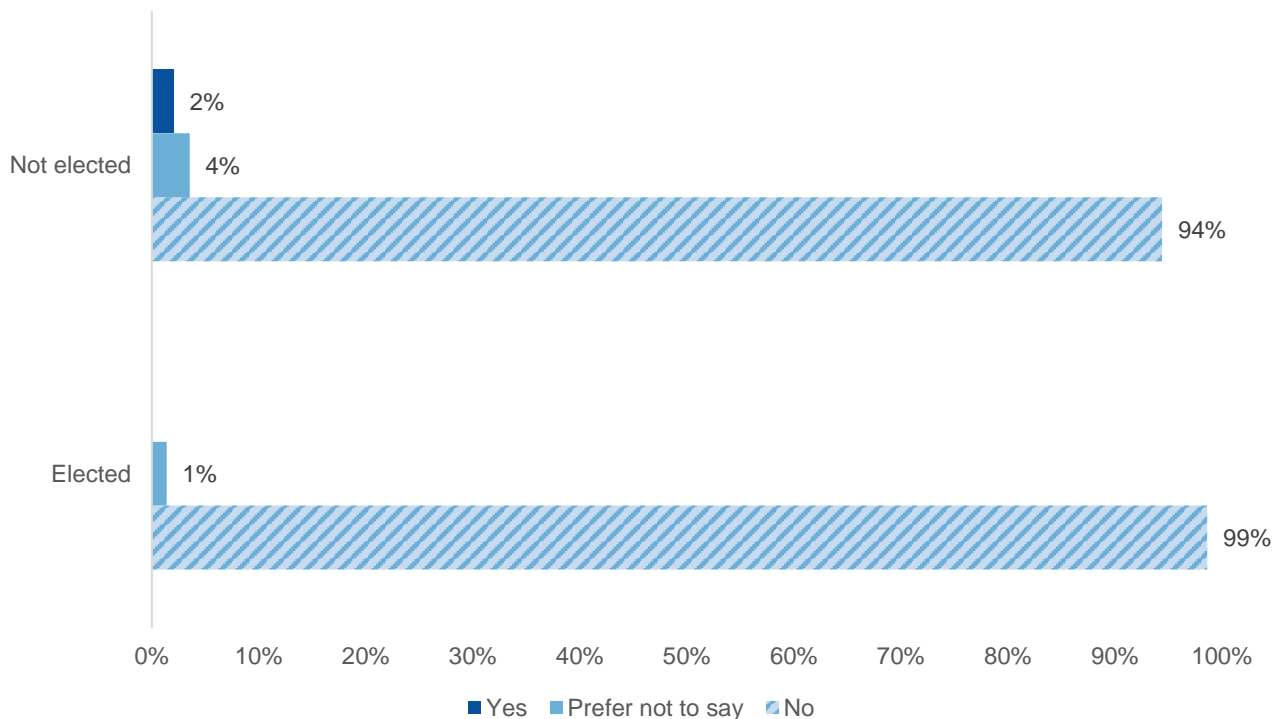
Disaggregating results by candidates who were successfully elected and those who were not highlights that no respondents to the survey who identified as Trans were elected (Figure 27).

---

[14] Changes for 2022 | Scotland's Census (scotlandscensus.gov.uk)

15. Caring Responsibilities

Candidates were asked whether they provided care to support family members, friends, neighbours or others due to health conditions, disabilities or old age.
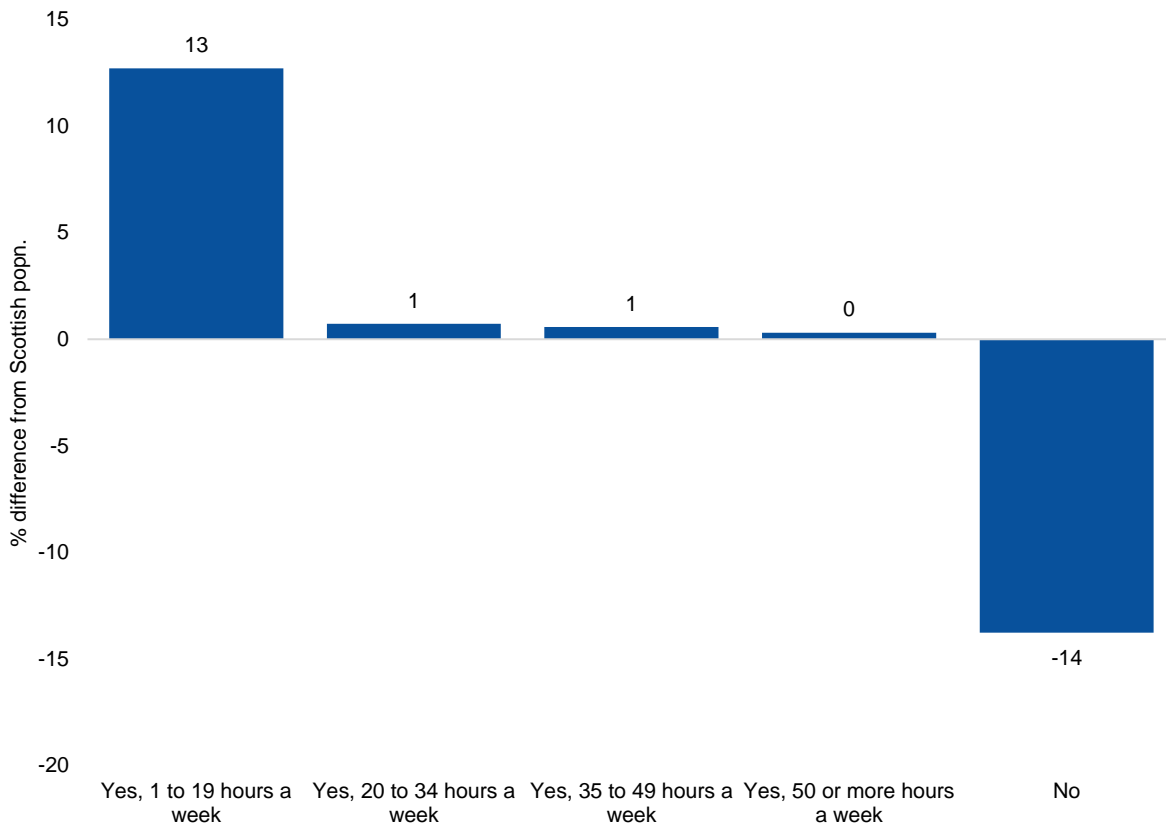
In total 28% of respondents provided care of some sort, with a further breakdown provided in figure 28 below. We can see from the chart that the largest group were individuals who provided care between 1 and 19 hours per week, representing 22% of the entire respondent group.

Figure 28: Caring responsibilities of respondents
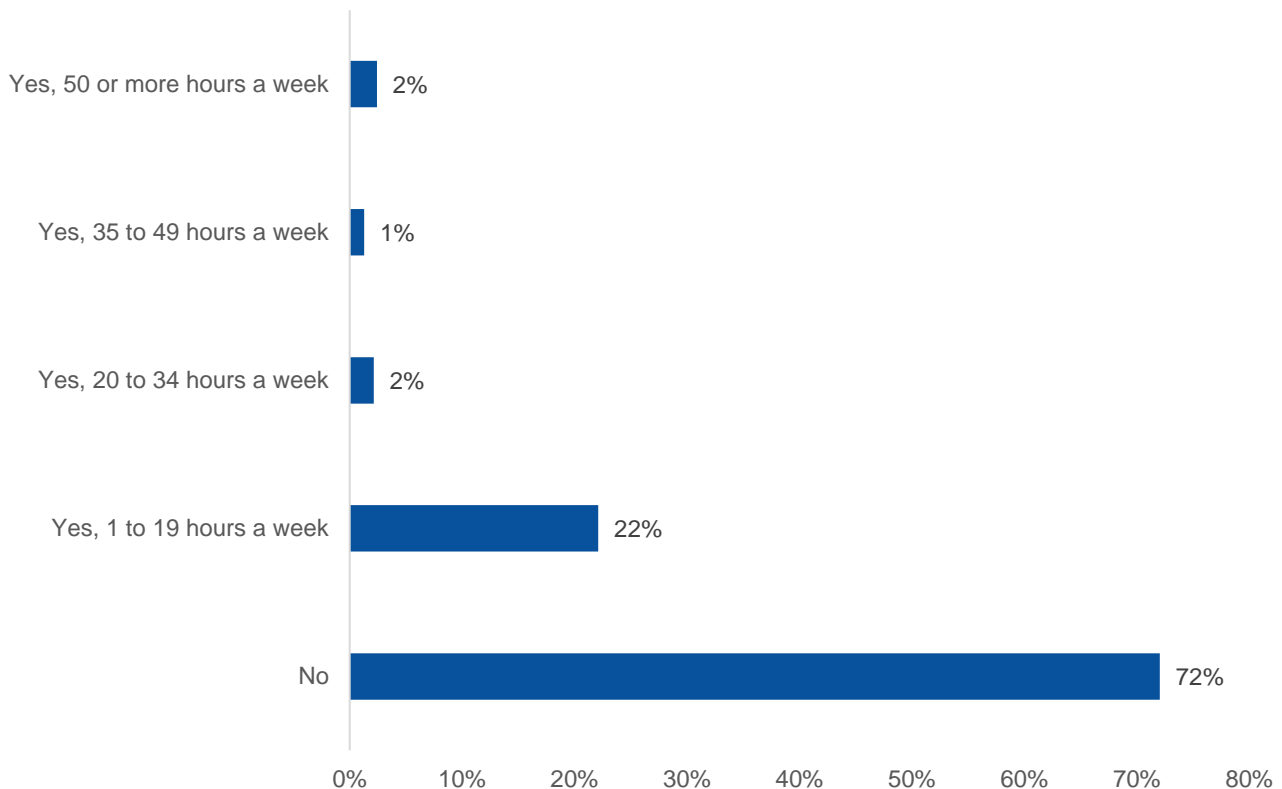
By comparing to data from the 2019 Scottish Health Survey, we find that the proportion of individuals providing care within the Diversity Survey was much larger (Figure 29). This amounted to an overall difference of 14 percentage points. In particular there were a much larger percentage of respondents who reported providing care of between 1 and 19 hours per week (22%) as compared to the overall population (9%). Differences between the respondent group and the overall population were less striking or almost absent for hours of care provided above this number.

Figure 29: Caring responsibilities of respondents compared to overall Scottish population

With regards to elected respondents, we can see that 30% of the elected cohort provided care of some sort, whereas this figure was only 26% for those who were not successfully elected (Figure 30).

**Figure 30: Electoral outcome by caring responsibilities**
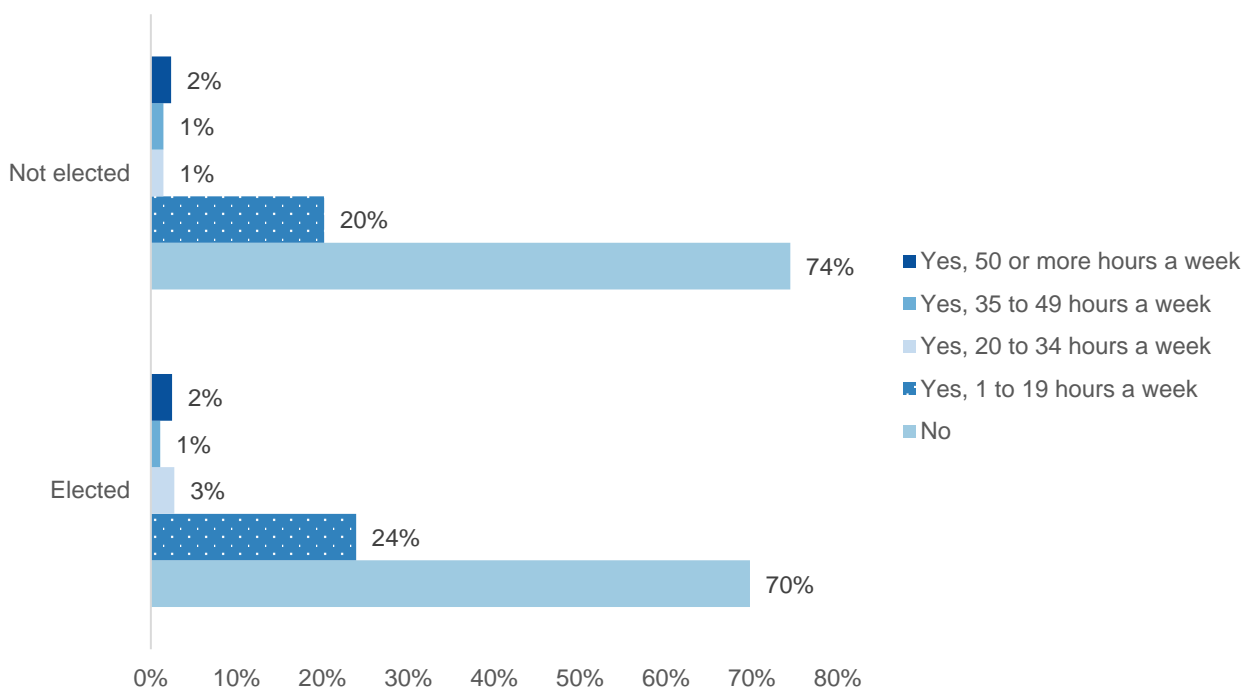
16. Parental Responsibility

In addition to caring responsibilities, candidates were also asked if they had parental responsibilities to any children under the age of 16.

As per figure 31 below, only 22% of respondents stated that they had children under the age of 16 to whom they provided care. This may be in part reflective of the older age profile of respondents.

Figure 31: Parental responsibilities of respondents
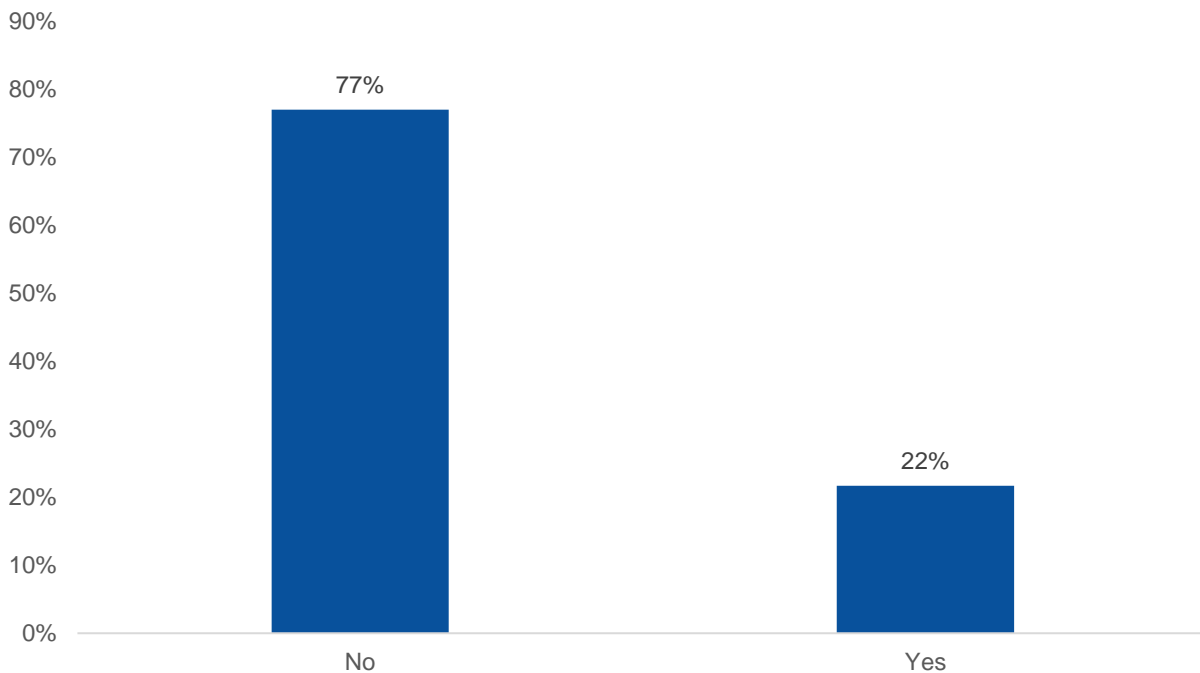
In terms of electoral outcomes, we can see that as per figure 32 below, that there was no meaningful difference in the profile of candidates with children versus those without with regards to those were elected and those who were not.

Figure 32: Electoral outcome by parenting responsibilities
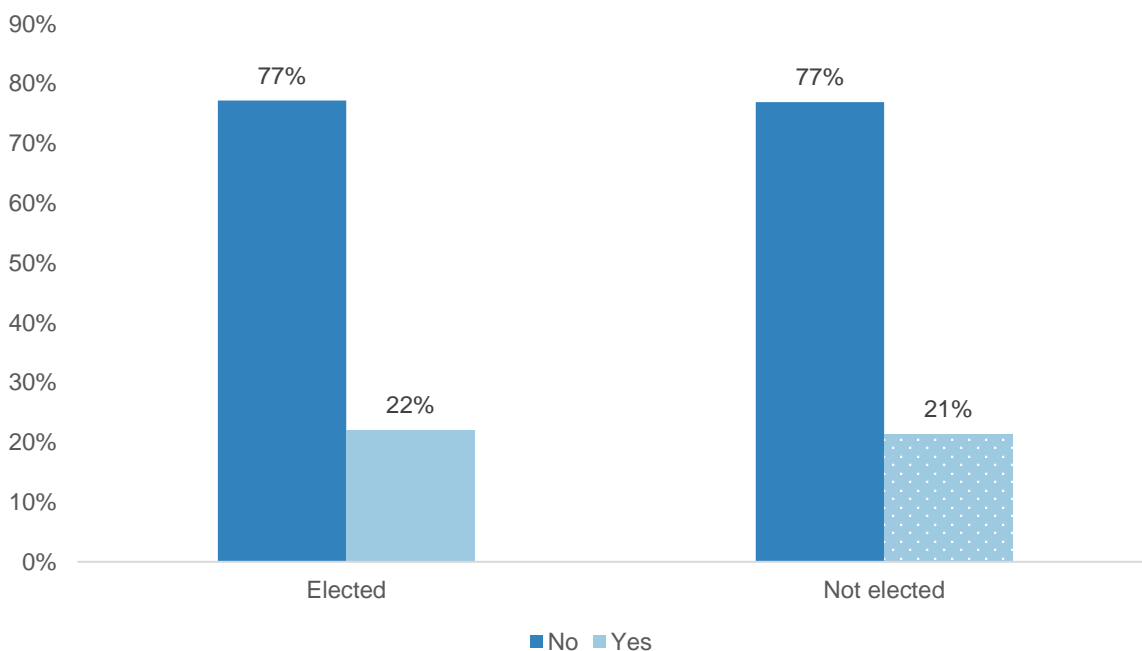
17. Intersectionality

A stated goal of this project was to consider the issue of intersectionality in relation to the profile of candidates who stand for election at a Local Government level. Intersectionality has been defined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission as the combination of multiple specific demographic characteristics, which when combined can result in distinct forms of disadvantage or discrimination[15].

Due to constraints resulting from sample sizes we have opted to restrict our intersectional analysis here to only combinations of age and sex as one category, and sex and disability as a second discrete category.

With regards to age and sex, we can see in the figure 33 below a breakdown of how age and sex combine in relation to both electoral outcomes for candidates, compared to the overall population matched by age and sex.

The data suggests several important findings. Firstly we can see that amongst 18 to 24 year olds that a significantly higher proportion of males both stood for election overall, were elected (75%) or unelected (75%) as compared to the overall population for that age group (51% being male). This pattern also persists for those aged 25 to 34 but is less prominent for older age groups until we get to those aged 65 or above, where again this discrepancy reasserts itself. For age groups between 35 and 64 there is much less of a notable difference between males and females, both with regards to those who were successful at election and those that were unsuccessful, as compared to the overall population. This suggests that the gender imbalance is particularly acute at the younger and older age ranges amongst respondents.

**Figure 33: Respondents by age, sex and electoral outcome as compared to the population**

---
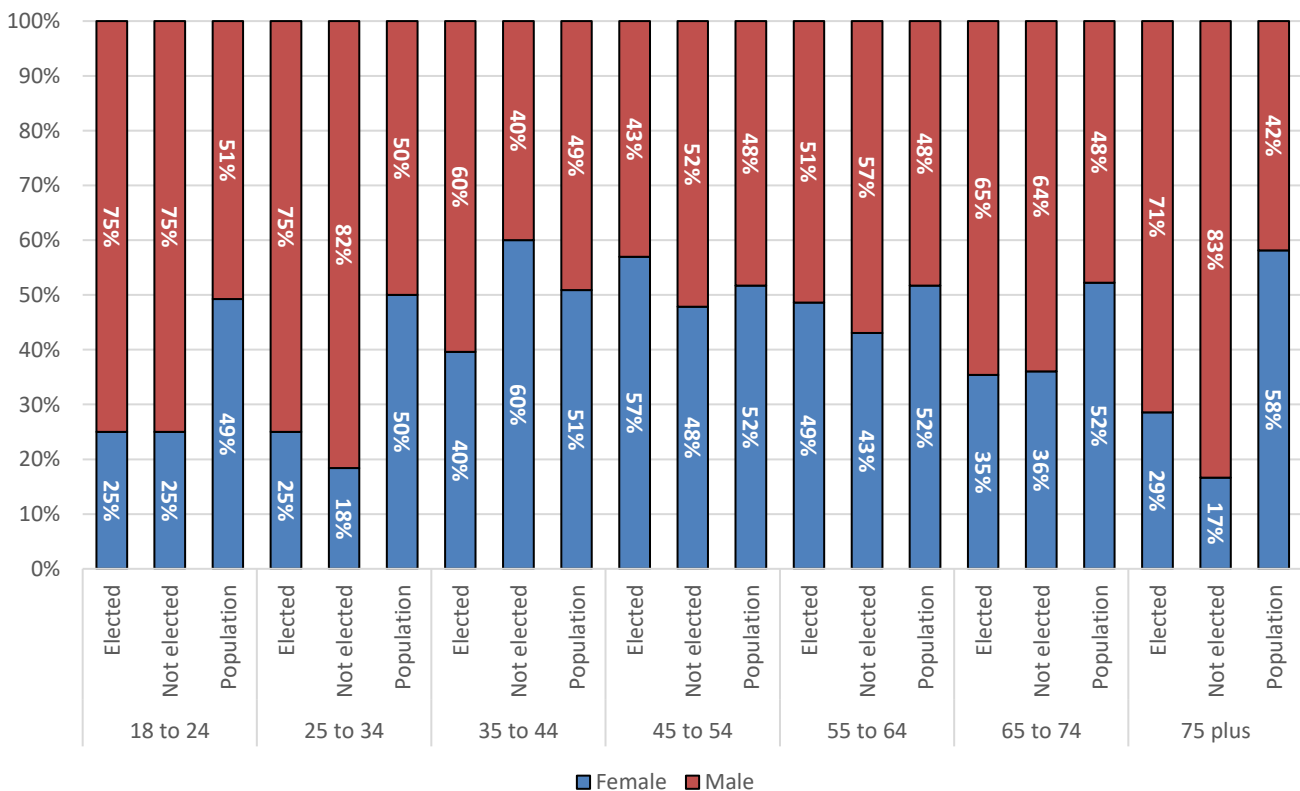
[15] measurement-framework-interactive_pdf.pdf (equalityhumanrights.com)

With regards to the interactions between sex and disability status the data suggests that females made up a higher percentage of elected candidate respondents with a limiting condition (54%), as compared to both the non-elected group (46%) and the overall population (49%). This was the inverse when it came to non-limiting conditions with elected males (58%) and unelected males (58%) making up the majority at a higher rate than the overall population of this group (49%). Similarly amongst those with no limiting conditions there were more males both elected (62%), and unelected (64%) compared to the overall population (51%).

These results suggest that there is a greater prevalence of limiting conditions amongst successful female respondents in particular as compared to males and the overall population.

Figure 34: Respondents by sex, limiting condition status and outcome as compared to the population
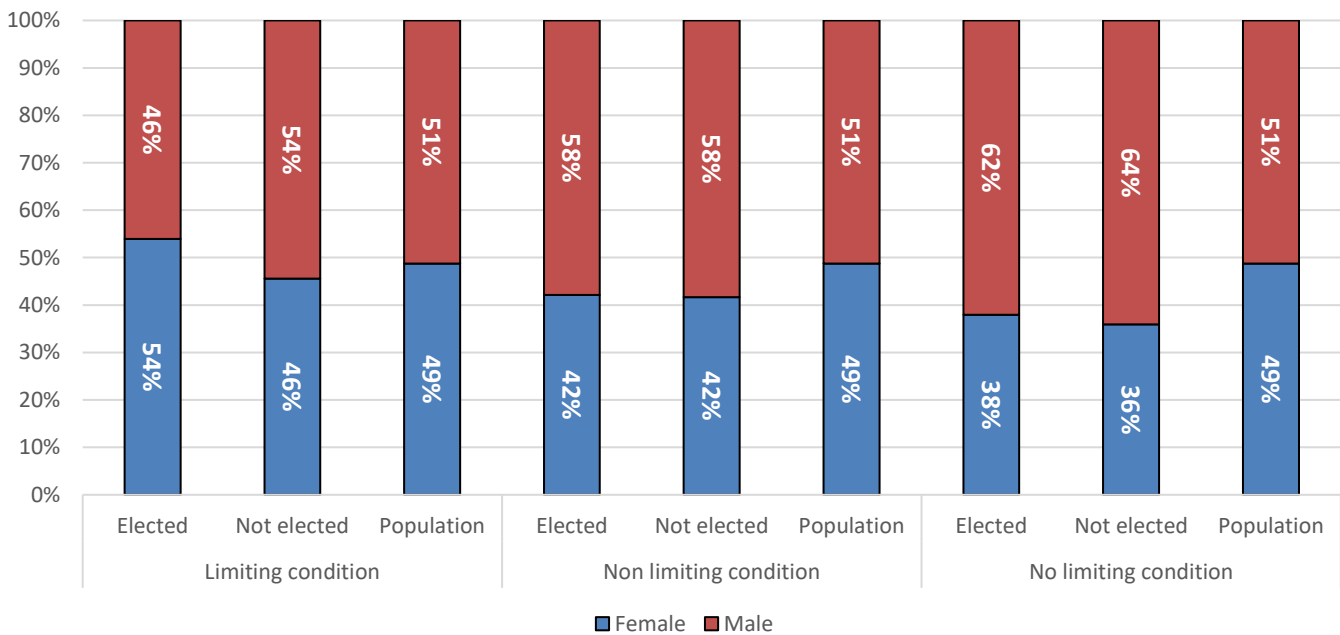
18. Conclusion & Recommendations

The survey represents a key milestone in the collection of diversity data for candidates running for election to Local Government in Scotland by providing evidence which can be considered in relation to issues of representativeness of candidates as compared to the Scottish population.

Considering the data as a whole we can see that there are areas where there is evidence to point towards the potential for over and under-representativeness of certain segments of the population amongst the candidate respondent group. For instance, with regards to sex, age, education, disability status and socio-economic background there appeared to be notable divergence between the profile of respondents as compared to the overall population. Specifically, we saw evidence for less females, younger individuals, individuals with less than degree level qualifications, individuals with a limiting health condition and individuals from lower-socio economic groups as compared to the population as a whole. Despite this there were also some results that ran contrary to this trend with there being a higher proportion of respondents who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or in some other way other than heterosexual as compared to the overall population.

Further analysis which incorporated consideration of intersectionality uncovered a more complex picture with regards to representativeness. Notably that gender imbalance, in the form of over-representativeness of males amongst respondents was particularly high in the younger (18 to 34) and older age groups (65 plus) and lower amongst those in the middle age group (35 o 64).

While this data is useful we should still exercise caution in the interpretation of results given that the response rate was below 30% and that it is not possible to determine how representative the respondents are, as compared to the total population of individuals who stood as candidates. As a result it is also not possible to draw firm conclusions regarding the representativeness of candidates, both elected and unelected, as compared to the overall Scottish population.

Further consideration will be given to how this project can be built upon and how a more representative set of data can be gathered in future years. We will work with partner organisations and stakeholder groups to both disseminate and discuss findings as well as consider next steps for further improvement of data collected on the demographics and representativeness of candidates standing for election in Scotland.

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

This publication is available at **www.gov.scot**

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG