

The Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board

**DRAFT Public Sector Equality Duty
Mainstreaming and Equalities
Outcomes Progress Report April 2023**

22 June 2023

Document Control

Title	Public Sector Equality Duty Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcomes Progress Report April 2023
Who should use this	All HWIVJB Staff
Author	Office & Support Manager
Approved by Joint Board	
Reviewer	Office & Support Manager
Date of next planned review	Equalities Report by 30 April 2025
Drafted	18 April 2023

THE HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD
PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY MAINSTREAMING AND EQUALITIES
OUTCOMES PROGRESS REPORT APRIL 2023

Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
The Valuation Joint Board.....	3
Functions of the Assessor and ERO.....	3
The Legal Context – The Equality Act 2010 and the General Equality Duty	4
The Specific Equality Duties	5
What is Mainstreaming equality?.....	5
Highland & Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Equality Profiles	6
Pertinence and proportionality.....	7
Partnership and working with others	7
The strategic position.....	8
Training	9
Policy and Procedures.....	9
Recruitment and Selection.....	10
Service Plan.....	10
Scottish Assessors Association.....	10
Procurement	11
Equality Outcomes	11
The Board as an employer	16
Reporting	16
APPENDIX 1	17
APPENDIX 2	19
APPENDIX 3	28

INTRODUCTION

The Valuation Joint Board

The Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board is an independent local government body which was established by The Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995 which took legal operational effect on 1 April 1996. The Board comprises of 10 elected members, 8 from The Highland Council and 2 from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The Board is responsible for appointing the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) for the two councils.

The Board has full administrative oversight of the department but does not have operational responsibility for the determination of valuations, bands or electoral registration. These operational matters are for the Assessor and ERO to decide subject to the independent appeal procedures which exist for each area of activity.

The aim of the Board as an employer and a service provider is to ensure that all our stakeholders and employees are treated equally and fairly, and that discrimination, harassment and victimisation are avoided.

Functions of the Assessor and ERO

The Assessor is responsible for valuation for non-domestic rating (The Valuation Roll) and council tax banding (The Council Tax Valuation List), and in his role as ERO, the compilation of the Electoral Register, which is used at all elections.

The primary service functions are the compilation and maintenance of the Valuation Roll, the compilation and maintenance of the Council Tax Valuation List and the preparation and publication of the Register of Electors.

The overall aim of the Department is:

“To discharge fully the Office of Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer in a manner that is exemplary”

There are 209,135 registered electors as at 3 April 2023 in Highland and Western Isles, residing mainly in the 146,050 domestic subjects shown in the Council Tax List. The Valuation Roll has 23,534 entries with a total rateable value of £457,365,626. The Board currently employs 53 members of staff, 44 full and 9 part time however, there are some vacant posts to be filled, which have not been included in the overall figure of staff above.

The Legal Context – The Equality Act 2010 and the General Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new equality duty for the public sector which came into force on 5 April 2011. It replaces previous public sector equality duties, namely:

- The Race Equality Duty
- The Disability Equality Duty
- Gender Equality Duty

The Act provides protection from discrimination for people on the grounds of the following characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Marriage and civil partnerships are also covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty, with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.

The General Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities when carrying out their functions to have due regard to the three needs below to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The Equality Act 2010 highlights that advancing equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low

The Act also sets out that:

- Meeting different needs includes (among other things) taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities
- Fostering good relations means tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups
- Meeting the general equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

The Specific Equality Duties

In May 2012 the Scottish Government introduced the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 to support the better performance of the public sector equality duty by listed public bodies which includes Valuation Joint Boards. These legal duties include requirements to:

- Report on mainstreaming the equality duty every two years
- Publish equality outcomes and report progress every two years
- Assess and review policies and practices
- Gather and use employee information
- Publish gender pay gap information
- Publish statements on equal pay
- Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement
- Publish in a manner that is accessible

Analysis of the protected characteristics listed below can be found at the end of this report:

- Analysis of data by sex
- Analysis of data on gender reassignment
- Analysis of data by age
- Analysis of data by disability
- Analysis of data on workforce average salary
- Analysis of data by race
- Analysis of data by pregnancy and maternity
- Analysis of data by sexual orientation
- Analysis of data on religion or belief
- Analysis of data by marriage and civil partnership
- Analysis of data by carer responsibility

What is Mainstreaming equality?

The Board is required to report and publish on a cycle of either two or four years on the progress made to make the general equality duty integral to the exercise of its functions, so as to better perform that duty. In June 2019, the Board published its approved Public Sector Equality Duty Mainstreaming and Equalities Outcomes Progress Report (April 2021 – April 2025).

Mainstreaming simply means integrating equality into the day-to-day work of the Board – taking equality into everything we do as an employer, and when planning or providing services. In doing so equality becomes part of our structures, behaviours and culture

and contributes to continuous improvement and better performance. The three needs of the general equality duty should always be considered when exercising the business functions and processes of the Board, including budget setting and project planning.

Gathering and considering relevant equality data is central to mainstreaming equality. This could mean monitoring service users and service activity with respect to all the protected characteristics and then analysing outcomes and integrating equality into all of our engagement activities.

It is also important for the Board to take steps to gather annual information on its workforce and on the recruitment, development and retention of its employees with respect to relevant protected characteristics. The Board's mainstreaming report must include (if not published previously) an annual breakdown of the information it has gathered, and details of the progress it has made in gathering, and how this information is used to better perform the general equality duty. Analysis of this information will allow the Board as an employer to identify any gaps in its performance.

Mainstreaming the equality duty is an organisational responsibility, requiring leadership and staff awareness to both promote equality and challenge inappropriate behaviour and practices to achieve success.

Leadership plays an important part in the context of the mainstreaming duty. Senior managers should ensure that clear and consistent messaging about the importance of the public sector equality duty is emphasised to all staff employed by the Board.

Training and awareness raising of equality across the Board will help ensure that equality is considered routinely and that staff recognise the relevance of equality duties in their own roles.

The following equalities mainstreaming and equalities outcomes report can be found on our website:

- Equalities Mainstreaming Update 2019
- Equalities Mainstreaming Report 2021 – 2025

Highland & Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Equality Profiles

Key information in relation to some of the protected characteristics in both Highland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are as follows:

Highland	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
In mid 2021 the population of Highland was 238,060 - the 7 th largest of the 32 local council areas in Scotland. ¹ 51% of the population is female, 49% is male. Between 2001 and 2021, the population of Highland has increased by 13.9%.	49.5% of the population is male and 50.5% female which is comparable to 48.8% male and 51.2% female Scottish profile. (NRS, 2021 Population Estimates)

¹ https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/council-area-data-sheets/highland-council-profile.html#population_estimates

In terms of overall size, the 45 to 64 age group was the largest in 2021, with a population of 69,424. In contrast, the 16 to 24 age group was the smallest, with a population of 21,456. In 2021, more females than males lived in Highland in 4 out of 6 age groups.²

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has an aging population with 30.2% under 30 compared with 33.6% under 30 across Scotland. 28.2% of the population are over 60 compared with only 24.8% across Scotland (NRS, 2021 Population Estimates)

As at June 2021 the median age in the islands was estimated to be 50.3 years compared to the Scottish average of 42.2 yrs. According to the National Records of Scotland as at 2021 approximately one in four people (27%) living in the Outer Hebrides are aged 65 and over, in comparison to the Scottish average of 20%. The population continues to age with 15% of the population aged under 16 (17% nationally) and 58% of the population aged 16-64 (64% nationally) while 27% are aged 65 and over (20% nationally).

Pertinence and proportionality

The process of preparing equality outcomes requires to understand the most significant equality issues arising in the organisation and sector. Efforts and resources require to be targeted as effectively as possible to meet the equality duties. Setting outcomes should focus on the areas where the organisation can have the most impact taking a strategic overview of the organisation as a whole and its functions.

Partnership and working with others

The Joint Board does not operate in a vacuum albeit that its remit has a very narrow, wholly statutory nature. It is important to recognise that its functions are restricted but also that the impact of its functions are fundamental – the franchise and taxation.

Quite apart from the assistance gained in addressing the Board's equalities duties that is received by utilising specialist skills in the lead authority, the billing activities of the constituent councils are a continuation of the valuation and banding process and require close co-operation. This same holds true of the Returning Officer function where the year-round activity of registration forms the bedrock of the large but short-lived organisation that comes into existence when there is a major polling event.

The department is one of a number of Boards and liaison with other Assessors and EROs as to experiences and developments in the field is plainly pertinent. In the field of electoral registration, the involvement of the Electoral Commission through their research, monitoring and more specific duties is also of great importance.

The full realisation of equality outcomes requires that the wider environment be kept in mind and that the complex interactions that can arise are not permitted to act counter to individual initiatives.

² https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/council-area-data-sheets/highland-council-profile.html#population_estimates

The many organisations which seek to advance the interests of those with protected characteristics are also viewed as partners with a particularly important role to play in providing feedback as to performance.

A separate body of information particularly relevant to the department's functions is to be found in the work of the Electoral Commission which since its creation has engaged in much research in the electoral field. In particular there is research suggesting differential levels of registration and attitudes amongst ethnic groups, between age groups and other demographic and economic characteristics.

It is clear that even if the equalities legislation did not apply to electoral registration there would be many issues arising in registration that demand attention under the terms of the legislation that requires the ERO to engage in delivery of registration activities to maintain accurate and complete registers.

At a general level therefore, there is a confluence of issues arising out of equalities work and electoral registration duties that acts as a clear pointer as to actions that may be required.

The strategic position

On a broad canvass the Board's strategic position can be summed up as follows:

- So far as the electoral registration function is concerned the Scottish Parliamentary election was held on 6 May 2021 under Covid-19 restrictions, with staff working from home. Local government elections were held on 5 May 2022 again under some limited Covid-19 restrictions. Five by-elections were held throughout the reporting period with the Cairngorm National Park election taking place on 23 March 2023. The change from household to individual electoral registration is a fundamental one and has been a prime focus for attention in the equalities field since 2014 given the particular characteristics of the change of regime and the known difficulties affecting the under-registered or less-engaged groups. As at 3 April 2023, there were 209,135 registered electors in Highland and Western Isles.
- The Scottish Elections (Franchise & Representation) Act extended the legislation to allow those legally resident in Scotland and prisoners serving a sentence of 12 months or less the right to vote.
- The Voter ID element of the Elections Act 2022 was introduced on 16 January 2023. To date, the ERO has received approximately 35 applications for a Voter Authority Certificate.
- The 2023 rating revaluation was completed on time. There have been changes to the appeal regime and from 1 April 2023 ratepayers, or their agents, must submit a proposal. Cases will no longer make their way to a valuation appeal committee but to the newly formed local tax chamber of the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service. New regulations requiring operators of self-catering units to

annually declare whether they have met the thresholds of letting have been introduced and affect close to 6,000 entries on the Valuation Roll.

- The Council Tax regime is currently a stable function. There are no further changes identified at this time.
- So far as the Board's role as an employer is concerned, recent changes to the rating regime as a consequence of the Barclay review of non-domestic rates and the subsequent Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 have resulted in a small increase in staff numbers and this is likely to continue over the next year. Due to a small number of retirements together with Barclay Implementation, the Board has been able to recruitment more young people, namely trainee and graduate trainee valuers.
- Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board has seen a change in turnover of staff. It has become difficult to recruit staff at all levels within the organisation. This change from previous years, allows the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer the opportunity to affect change through recruitment channels which were not available before due to long service of employees.

Against that background and recognising that the council tax function is business as usual, there will be a dual focus over the next two years on the Valuation Roll and Electoral Registration.

This is not to suggest that when it comes to service delivery, there are no issues which can arise in council tax. These however are less likely, less obvious and plausibly may well be of a similar character as those that arise in the electoral field.

The Board's obligations as an employer must also assume a prominent position.

Training

The Board's lead constituent authority provides training through an online platform and offers an Equal Opportunities and Diversity training course. All new staff are asked to undertake this training course with permanent staff expected to complete the course by the end of July 2023.

Our induction document contains information on equalities and highlights that employees of the Board must make certain that they play their part in ensuring that equality becomes part of the Board's structure, behaviour and culture.

Policy and Procedures

The Board has a number of policies and procedures in place, many of which are aimed at eliminating discrimination and promoting equality, some of which are listed below:

- Bullying and Harassment
- Code of Conduct for employees
- Complaints Handling Procedure

- Disciplinary Procedure
- Employee Review and Development Policy
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Exit Interviews
- Flexi-time Scheme
- Flexible Retirement Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- General Statement of Health, Safety & Wellbeing
- Grievance Procedure
- Guidance on supporting staff going through the menopause
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Job Share Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- Managing Stress at Work Policy
- Maternity, Adoption and Parental Leave Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy
- Ordinary Parental Leave and time off for dependents
- Policy and Guidance for Preventing Violence at Work
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Special Leave Policy
- Travel and Subsistence Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

The Board is satisfied that the above Policies and Procedures are non-discriminatory and meet the Board's Equality Duties. These Policies and Procedures are regularly reviewed and updated with new policies developed as required, with support from the Highland Council.

Recruitment and Selection

The Board operates a policy to ensure that recruitment and selection is undertaken within a framework which is fair, consistent, avoids discriminatory practices and provides equal access to all jobs. Equalities questionnaire information is not made available to interview panels.

Service Plan

The Board has a 3-year strategic Service Plan, of which equalities forms an important part. Updates are carried out annually and a copy of the Service Plan is available to all staff via a shared electronic library.

Scottish Assessors Association

The Assessor chairs the Governance Committee of the Scottish Assessors' Association with the Office & Support Manager attending meetings. Equality issues is a standing item on the agenda of its regular meetings.

The Scottish Assessors Association was instituted in 1886 and is a voluntary organisation where all Assessors and senior staff are members. One of the functions of the Association is to facilitate consistency of approach in the administration of rating, council tax and electoral registration functions throughout Scotland.

Procurement

Regulation 9 of the Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 imposes a duty on public bodies when they consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement, to have due regard to whether the award criteria should include considerations which will help it meet its Equality Duty. Any award should be related to and proportionate to the subject matter of the proposed agreement.

The Board enters very few procurement contracts directly. Any contracts are procured through a joint framework with Councils, via the Public Contracts (Scotland) website or the Crown Commercial Services Framework. When awarding contracts, the Board would follow all procedures as set out in their Contract Standing Orders and the Procurement (Scotland) Regulations 2016.

Equality Outcomes

Outcome One

People feel involved and are able to participate in public life and influence decision-making

This will require a number of measures to track progress which are provisionally as follows:

- Number on the register relative to population estimates
- Number of responders to canvass communications and invitations to register throughout the year and during the annual canvass as a proportion of the total number of households
- Number of corrections and complaints
- The existence of a comprehensive publicity engagement strategy to ensure eligible people are able to participate in the electoral process
- Meeting the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards for EROs in terms of identification of those not registered, including hard to reach groups
- Ensure all properties that should be taxed are included in the Valuation Roll and Council Tax list.

Outcome progress to April 2023

The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) Amendment (Scotland) Order 2020 amended the provision in respect of the steps which a registration officer must take for the purposes of complying with his duty to maintain the register of local government electors. This change in legislation allows the ERO to carry out a more tailored annual canvass to consider local circumstances and to carry out household matches against local data sets. Electronic communications and telephone

canvassing are now an option which should allow the ERO to reach out to households more directly than sending a form to the current or present occupier.

Since the lifting of all Covid-19 restrictions, the ERO has been able to resume doorstep canvassing duties to encourage non-responders of invitations to register to complete application forms.

The ERO has relatively few clerical errors and handles a small number of complaints on an annual basis. In 2021 the Board approved the Model Complaints Procedure and staff have been issued with the relevant guidance documentation. Annual complaints reports are now published on the Board's website with monthly reports set to commence from May 2023.

Public engagement work is carried out throughout the year especially during the annual canvass of electors and in the lead up to elections. During the Scottish Local Government elections, the ERO worked alongside the Scottish Assessor's Association to send a household notification letter to households in February 2022 to encourage electors to take action to meet key deadline dates for registration or applying for a postal vote.

The Elections Act 2022 received Royal Assent on 28 April 2022 and introduces a number of changes. The Act seeks to:

- require voters to show photo ID at polling stations before a ballot paper is issued. This change will require Electoral Registration Officers to issue free voter authority certificates, temporary voter authority certificates or anonymous electors documents to those without a valid form of photo ID
- require postal voters to reapply for a postal vote every three years, replacing current rules of refreshing their signature every five years
- further limit the number of people someone may act as proxy for
- allow all British citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, regardless of when they left the UK.

These changes apply to UK Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain. Elections to the Scottish Parliament and all local elections in Scotland are devolved and will not be affected by these changes.

Voter ID was introduced on 16 January 2023 with all other changes expected in the 2023/24 financial year.

Outcome 1 priorities – April 2023 onwards

Work will continue on these outcomes throughout the next two years. The ERO will progress the following:

- Encourage young voters under 18 to register to vote, working alongside constituent authorities to obtain relevant data. This will be done with appropriate partners such as schools, local colleges and Highland Youth Parliament

- Working alongside partners and constituent authorities to encourage registration from newly enfranchised citizens
- Monitor local data sets to identify low levels of registration in particular areas
- Incorporate KPIs into the Performance Standards set by the Electoral Commission and continue work in public engagement throughout the year
- Raise awareness of the need for Voter ID at UK Parliamentary elections and any other changes brought in by the Elections Act 2022

Outcome 2

We will improve customer satisfaction rates in particular from people with protected characteristics

In order to track this outcome, the following will be required:

- We aim to establish a public performance survey via random sampling of transactions with the department
- We will monitor performance more generally via partners' survey work, such as Electoral Commission research, constituent authority research, close monitoring of complaints, and analysis of the electoral errors that come to light
- Focus on improved materials using plain English tested with relevant groups and in partnership with other EROs and the Electoral Commission
- Through continued use of interactive voter registration throughout the annual canvass of electors, giving the opportunity for household replies to be made via internet, SMS, telephone or by paper return where a response is required

Outcome progress to April 2023

The Covid-19 pandemic hampered efforts by the Assessor to incorporate public performance questionnaires. It is anticipated that work will commence in the coming months and that the Board will be in a position to report on progress in 2025.

The Board introduced tablets for doorstep canvassing within Highland which have proved popular with canvassing staff and electors. Information is in real time and allows for online registration via the UK Government's digital service to be made on the doorstep, reducing the need for a paper form to be completed. In 2021 the Board increased the number of tablets used by canvassers from 4 to 35. Real time information captured will be downloaded directly into the electoral management system (EMS).

Outcome 2 priorities – April 2023 onwards

The Board continually reviews standard template letters to ensure that they are in plain English. An evaluation of the Board's website is planned for this year to make it as user friendly as possible and Google Analytics reporting will be used to identify the average time that a user spends on each page. Any other useful information gathered will assist with web improvements.

The feedback survey from the 2022 annual canvass of electors through the interactive response service will be analysed prior to the 2023 canvass to see how the ERO can

improve the user experience. Any feedback on the use of the interactive solution will be provided to the electoral management software supplier who provides this service.

The ERO will continue to work with local partners to encourage registration from newly enfranchised electors and under 18s using resources from the Electoral Commission. This will be done as part of performance standards for EROs and monitored through KPIs.

Outcome 3

Increase the proportion of staff who feel they are treated fairly

In order to track this outcome, we shall require the following:

- Carry out annual employee review and development plans
- Introduce an improved induction programme in 2023 for new employees
- Carry out a systematic review of HR policies
- Introduce a number of Health & Safety policies and procedures
- Promote flexible working arrangements to support employees to achieve a balance between work and their life outside work
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates and employees
- Increase training in equalities matters for staff at each of the department's offices
- Attendance at a one-day training course on equality and diversity through Highland Council's People Development Team for senior management
- Increase commitment to training where there is an identified need for the organisation to improve the skills of staff
- Reduce occupational segregation where this contributes to an equal pay gap and generally seek to reduce the gender pay gap
- Gather more comprehensive employment data
- Continued commitment to the Scottish Living Wage
- Review recruitment channels
- Investigate sign up to become a Disability Confident employer
- Introduce a Salary Sacrifice Shared Cost AVC for employees

Adopting these outcomes will require that a revised Equalities Plan be prepared that sets out in greater detail the steps that will require to be taken to advance towards these outcomes. It may also be necessary to modify some of the measures that are proposed.

Outcome progress to April 2023

The Board has seen a high turnover of staff since the publication of the outcomes report in 2021. This has been partly due to retirements but also changes in priorities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Steps are being taken to work with our lead constituent authority to make jobs more attractive to candidates and to look at progression for staff within the organisation through training.

The timetable to update employment and Health & Safety policies and procedures has now been completed and is reviewed on a monthly basis with updated reports being presented to the Board as and when updated or required.

A new induction document has been created and will be rolled out from May 2023.

The Board is actively seeking to become a Disability Confident employer by the end of 2023.

There has been a reduction in the gender pay gap across the combined and full-time gap for male and female employees, however the Board is still working to reduce the ratio of male/female employees.

Vacancies continue to be advertised through Myjobscotland via The Highland Council's recruitment page with applicants directed to the Board's own website for application packs. Discussions are in place with The Highland Council to have a separate page for the Board so that we can move to an integrated system.

The senior management team have been unable to attend a one-day training course on equality and diversity through Highland Council's People Development Team for due to Covid-19 restrictions however, all staff will be asked to undertake the Equal Opportunities and Diversity training through the Highland Council's online training facility.

The Valuation Joint Board promotes career progression schemes and currently has seven members of staff on a career progression scheme.

The Board continues to be committed to paying the Scottish Living Wage.

The Covid-19 pandemic had seen staff largely working from home since March 2020. Staff welfare is a key concern for the Board and regular meetings are held between staff and line managers. Staff have now begun to return to the offices in significant numbers and it is envisaged that a process will be established to formalise hybrid working arrangements.

The Board has two members of staff trained to act as Mental Health Representatives (MHRs) for the organisation. MHRs are able to signpost staff to help and resources available to them or provide a listening ear when staff are facing any kind of work or personal difficulties.

Outcome 3 priorities – April 2023 onwards

The Board will review work experience opportunities and the under-representation of younger people particularly those under the age of 30.

The employee review and development plan process is being reviewed and will be fully implemented by the autumn of 2023. This has been delayed due to the retirement of the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer in January 2023 and proposed management restructure.

As previously advised in this report, Assessor's staff have now worked with colleagues from the lead constituent authority, the Highland Council to change the way all equalities data is collected, including other protected characteristics through staff questionnaires and recruitment monitoring. The Board are now able to report on data with more meaningful analysis. The data now requested from current employees match the Census 2022 categories. Our application form will be updated to expand equalities information collected from applicants and will be reported in 2025.

HR and Health & Safety policies will continue to be monitored and updated where necessary throughout the next two years.

The Board as an employer

As an employer, the Board is committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment. No job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Our working culture aims to promote dignity and to respect the contributions of all. Employees are expected to behave in a manner that reflects our commitment to fair treatment and respect.

Staff are supported to achieve these aims through policies, management guidance and a range of training and awareness activities. Relevant policies include, Flexible Working, Grievance and Harassment, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption, Attendance Management, Customer Contact – Unacceptable Actions and Recruitment and Selection.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2016 there is a requirement to publish an equal pay statement and to publish information as to the characteristics/demographics of the Board's employees and the gender pay gap which can be found in Appendices 1 to 3.

Reporting

The Board is required annually to report and publish information on equalities matters. It is intended to accommodate this requirement by including a section in the Board's website.

HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD**EQUAL PAY STATEMENT**

1. The Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board is committed to the principle of equal pay for all its employees and aims to identify and eliminate any bias in its pay systems relating to any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equalities Act 2017 (the Board recognises the specific duty relating to gender, disability and ethnicity).
2. It is in the interest of the Board to ensure that it has fair and just pay systems. It is important that employees have confidence in the process of eliminating bias and the Board is committed to achieving this through consultation with employees and the recognised trade unions.
3. The Board believes that in eliminating bias in its pay systems, it is sending a positive message to its employees and the Highland/Western Isles Communities. It makes good business sense to have fair and transparent reward systems and it also helps the Board to control costs.
4. The Board recognises that occupational segregation in the workforce may have a negative effect on equal pay gaps. The Board is committed to monitoring and analysing areas of occupational segregation and implementing actions to address these.
5. Previous analysis of pay data suggests that the greater availability of part time work in senior grades could have a positive impact on pay gaps. The Board is committed to taking action to achieve this.
6. The Board's objectives are to:
 - Monitor gender pay gaps, occupational segregation and the availability of part time and flexible working arrangements
 - Identify and eliminate any unfair, unjust or unlawful practices that impact on pay
 - Take appropriate remedial action
7. The Board will:
 - Operate a pay strategy for Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees that ensures equal pay for work of equal value and conditions of employment
 - Operate a Flexible Working Policy that opens opportunities to all employees through the pay grades

- Challenge expectations that employees in higher grades should work long or unpredictable hours
- Appoint on merit, properly assessing the abilities of candidates for recruitment and promotion
- Make reasonable adjustments to support employees to undertake work at higher grades
- Provide support and training to both female and male employees returning to work
- Maintain a culture that challenges stereotypes around an employee's ability to carry out work at higher grades
- Respond to grievances and complaints to the Board on equal pay
- Consult and plan actions in consultation with employees and Trade Unions
- Review progress every two years

Frank W Finlayson
Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer
Moray House
16-18 Bank Street
INVERNESS
IV1 1QY

18 April 2023

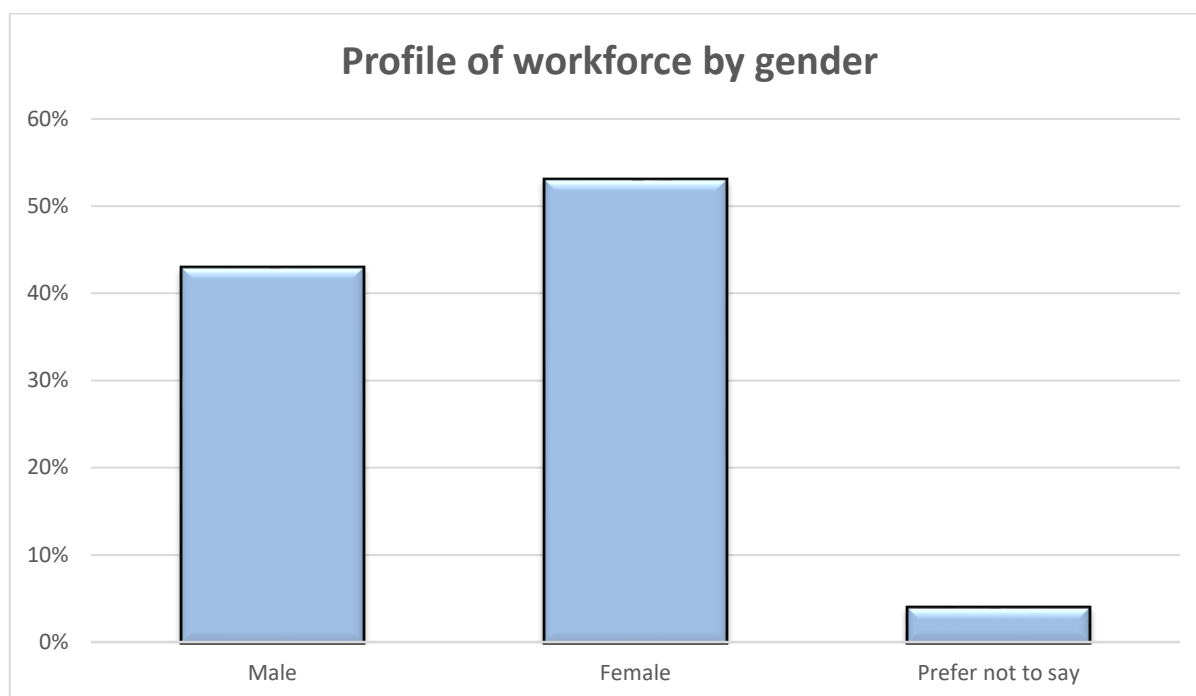
THE HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

EQUALITIES MONITORING AS AT 1 APRIL 2023

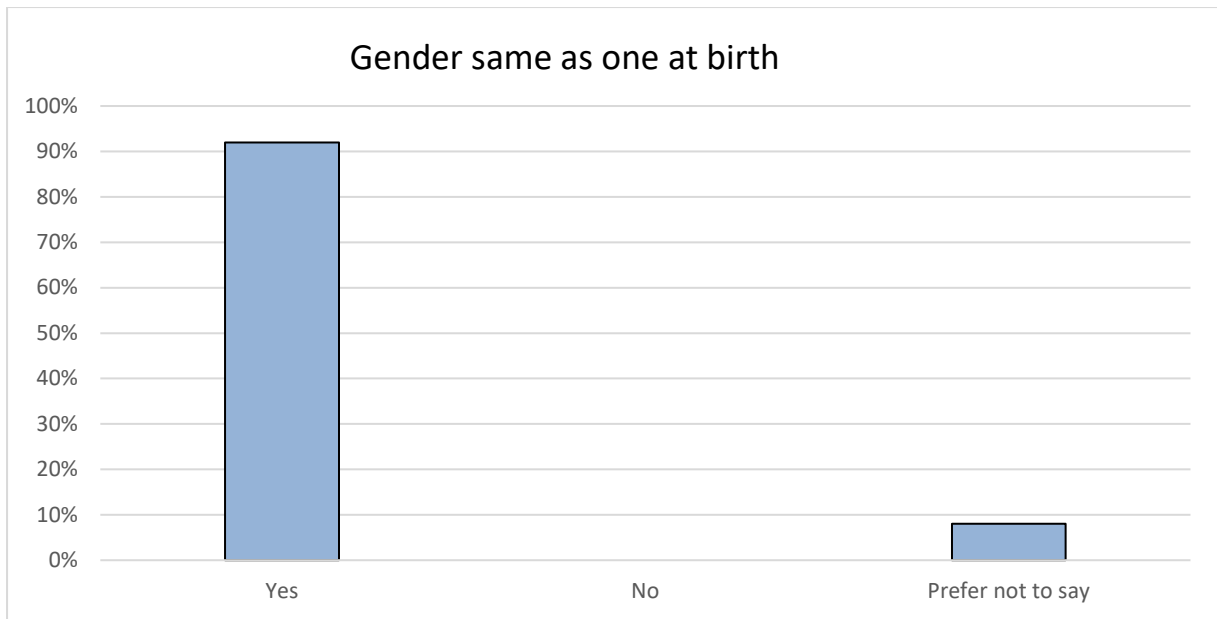
Data collected from our monitoring survey form which was circulated to staff in March 2023 was used to populate information in the following pages. All members of staff were asked to complete the monitoring survey however there was no requirement to complete all or any of the sections of the survey form. The workforce composition stats (with the exception of average salary and gender pay gap information) does not include information from those who did not wish to disclose information.

Profile of workforce by gender

Male	Female	Prefer not to say
43%	53%	4%

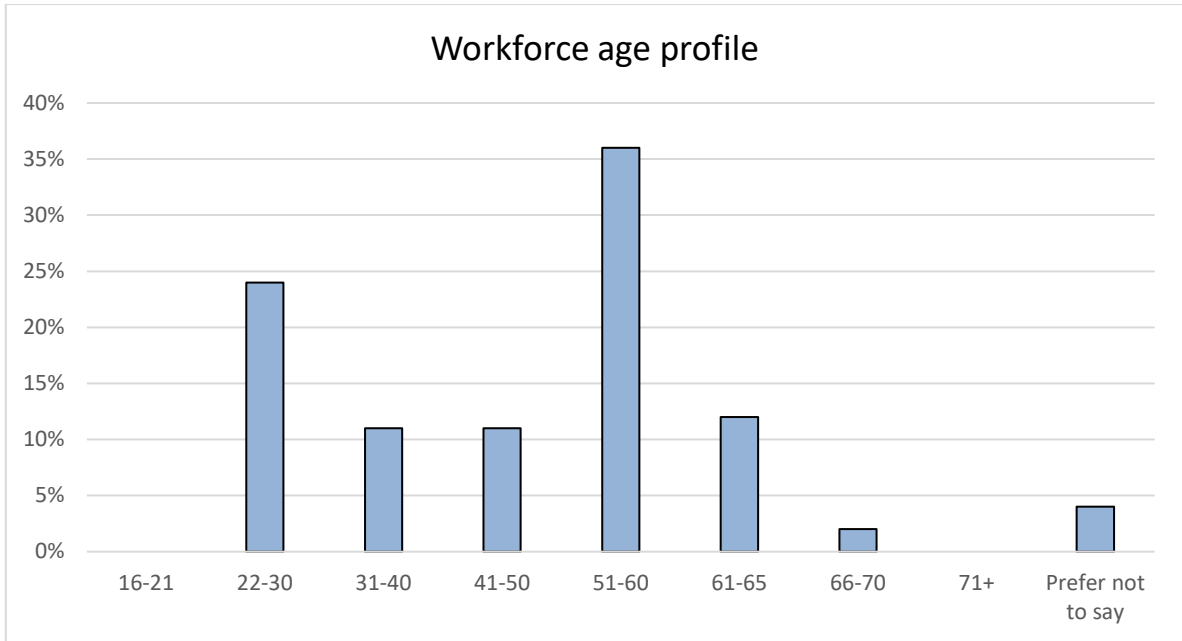


Is gender same as one at birth?	Employees
Yes	92%
No	0%
Prefer not to say	8%



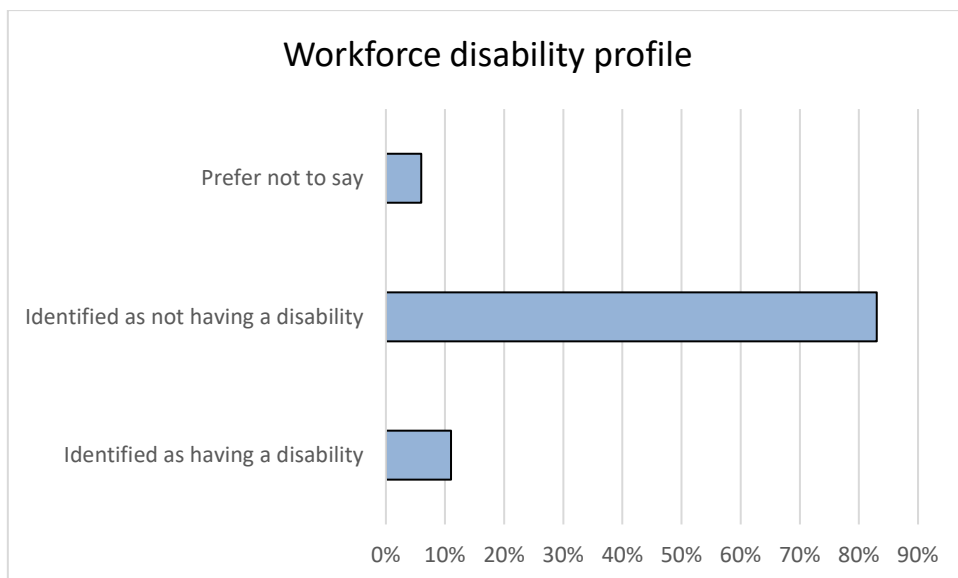
Workforce age profile

Age Range	Employees
16-21	0%
22-30	24%
31-40	11%
41-50	11%
51-60	36%
61-65	12%
66-70	2%
71+	0%
Prefer not to say	4%



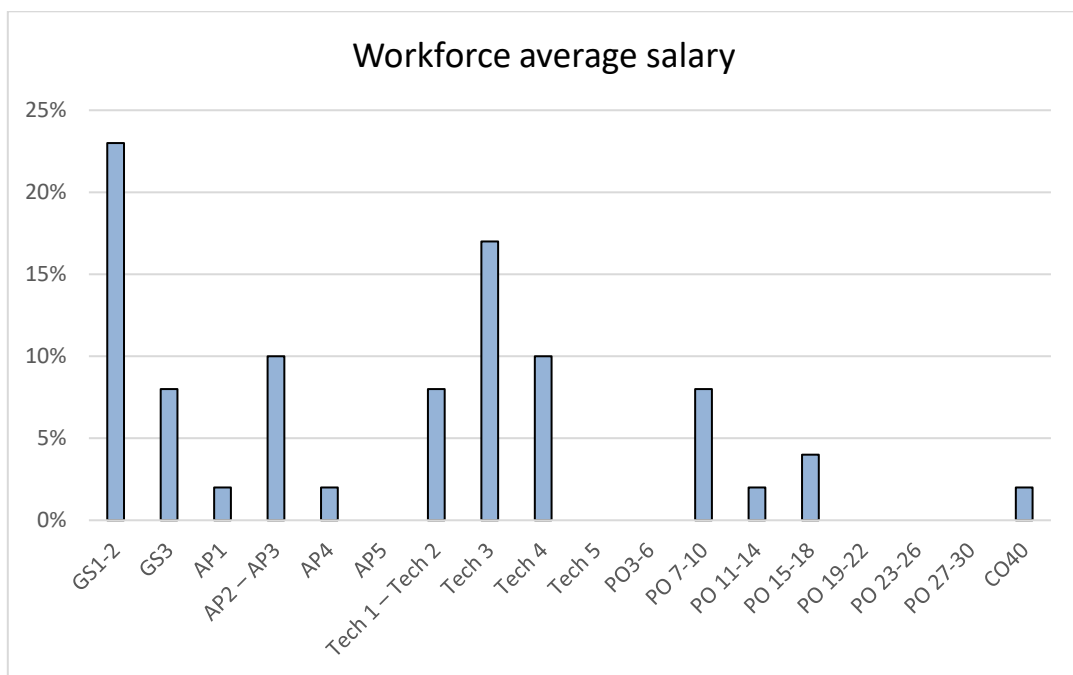
Profile of workforce with disability

Workforce disability profile	Employees
Identified as having a disability	11%
Identified as not having a disability	83%
Prefer not to say	6%



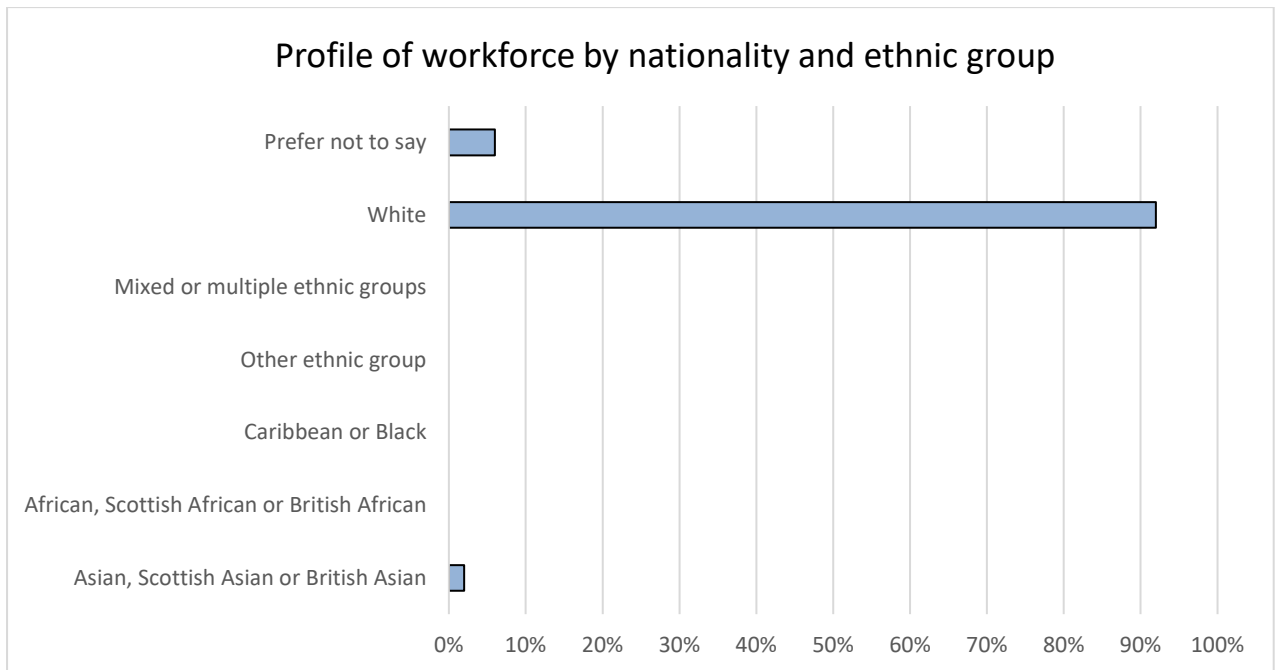
Workforce average salary

Salary Grade	Employees
GS1-2	23%
GS3	8%
AP1	2%
AP2 – AP3	10%
AP4	2%
AP5	0%
Tech 1 – Tech 2	8%
Tech 3	17%
Tech 4	10%
Tech 5	0%
PO3-6	0%
PO 7-10	8%
PO 11-14	2%
PO 15-18	4%
PO 19-22	0%
PO 23-26	0%
PO 27-30	0%
CO40	2%



Profile of workforce by nationality and ethnic group

Ethnic Group		Employees
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, any other	2%
African, Scottish African or British African	African, Scottish African or British African	0%
Caribbean or Black	Caribbean or Black	0%
Other ethnic group	Arab, any other	0%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	Mixed or multiple ethnic	0%
White	Scottish, Other British, Irish, Polish, Gypsy/Traveller, Showman/Show woman, Roma, any other	92%
Prefer not to say		6%

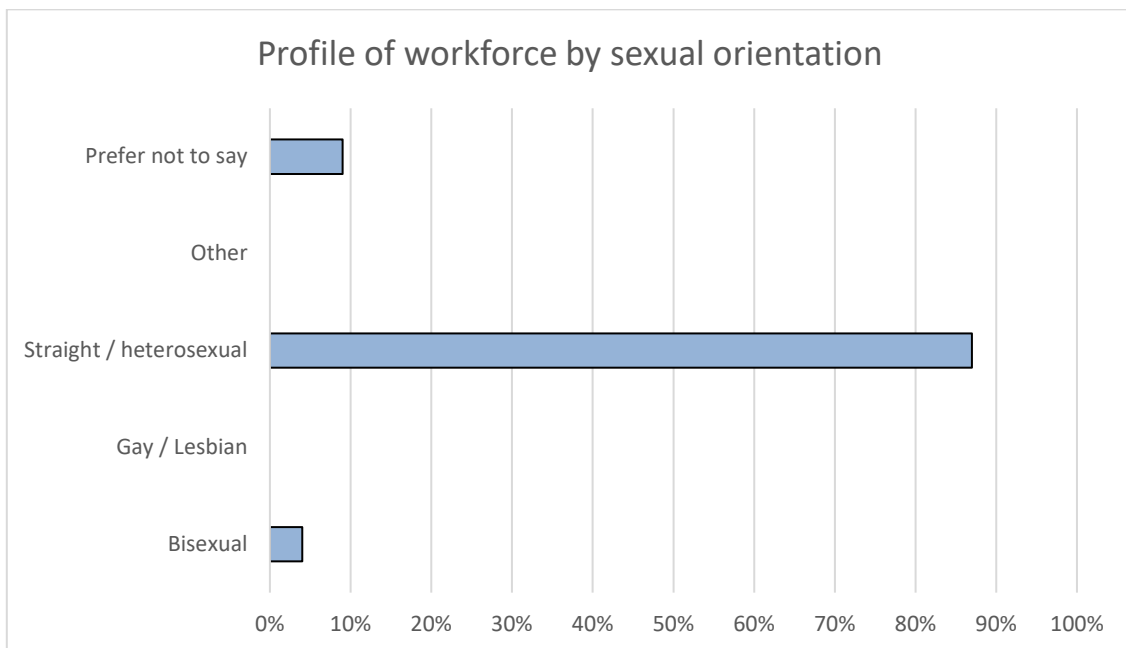


Profile of workforce by pregnancy and maternity

There was one member of staff on maternity leave as at 1 April 2023.

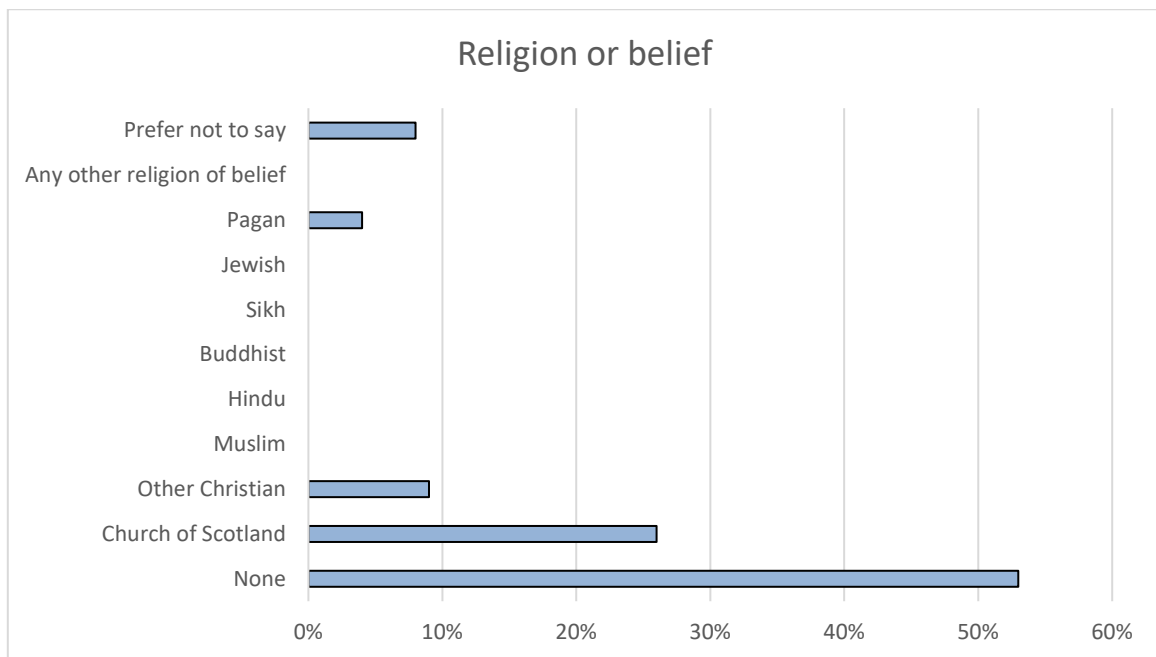
Profile of workforce by sexual orientation

Sexual orientation	Employees
Bisexual	4%
Gay / Lesbian	0%
Straight / heterosexual	87%
Other	0%
Prefer not to say	9%



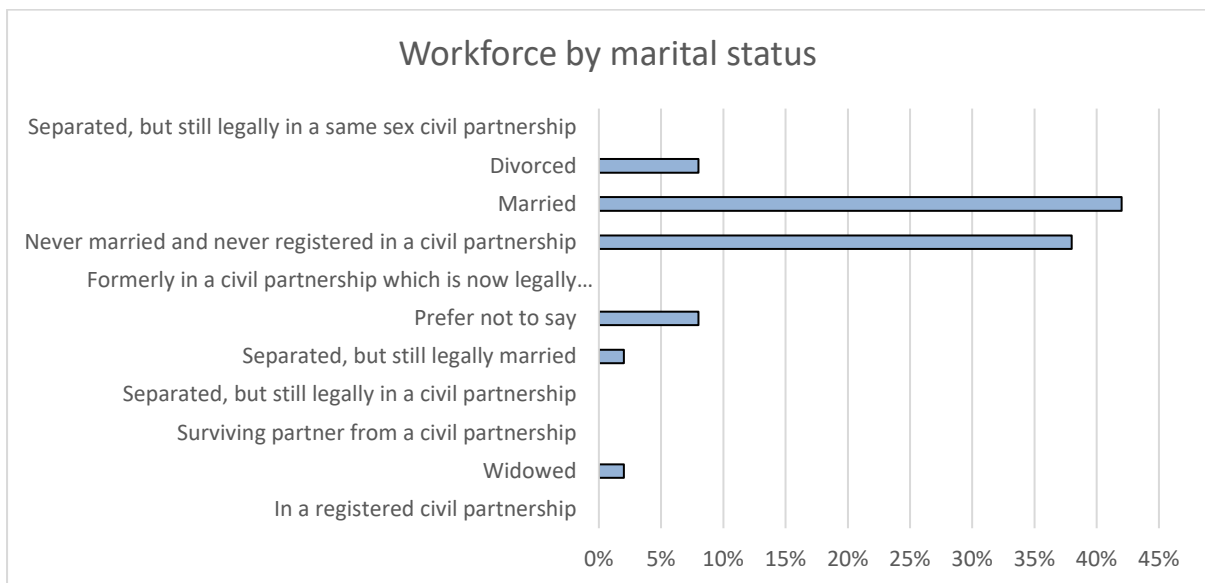
Profile of workforce by religion or belief

Religion or belief	Employees
None	53%
Church of Scotland	26%
Other Christian	9%
Muslim	0%
Hindu	0%
Buddhist	0%
Sikh	0%
Jewish	0%
Pagan	4%
Any other religion of belief	0%
Prefer not to say	8%



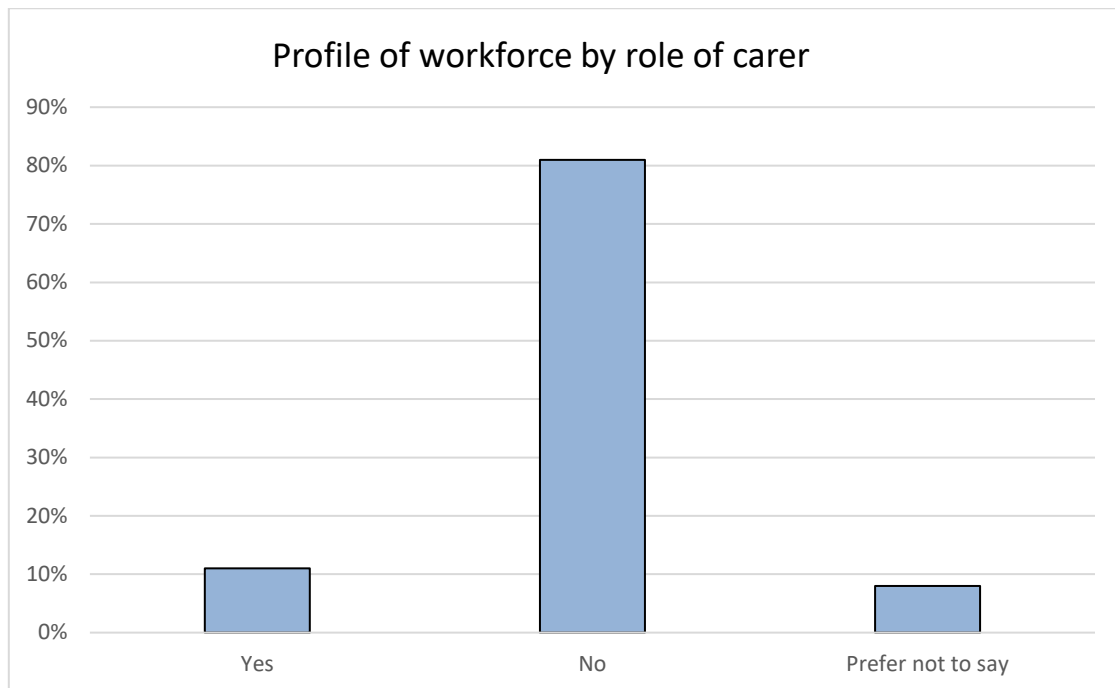
Profile of workforce by marital status

Marital status	Employees
In a registered civil partnership	0%
Widowed	2%
Surviving partner from a civil partnership	0%
Separated, but still legally in a civil partnership	0%
Separated, but still legally married	2%
Prefer not to say	8%
Formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	0%
Never married and never registered in a civil partnership	38%
Married	42%
Divorced	8%
Separated, but still legally in a same sex civil partnership	0%



Profile of workforce by role as carer

Role as carer	Employees
Yes	11%
No	81%
Prefer not to say	8%



THE HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

GENDER PAY GAP DATA AS AT 1 APRIL 2023

Combined Gap

Male	Female
£744,018.20 – combined salary for all 23 male employees with hourly rate total of £420.03	£753,632.97 – combined salary for all 28 female employees with hourly rate total of £455.20
Average hourly rate = £18.26 per hour	Average hourly rate = £16.26 per hour

Gender pay gap – difference between the average male and female pay rates. It is calculated by dividing the average female hourly pay rate by the average male hourly pay rate.

$$£16.26 / £18.26 \text{ per hour} \times 100/1 - 100 = -11\%$$

Full Time Gap

Male	Female
£690,316.03 – combined salary for all 21 full time male employees with hourly rate total of £390.52	£544,671.44 – combined salary for all 21 full time female employees with hourly rate total of £332.53
Average hourly rate = £18.60 per hour	Average hourly rate = £15.83

Full time gender pay gap is the gap between the average hourly rate of female employees who work full time and male employees who work full time.

$$£15.83 / £18.60 \text{ per hour} \times 100/1 - 100 = -15\%$$

Part Time Gap

Male	Female
£53,702.17 – combined salary for 2 part time male employees with hourly rate total of £14.75	£208,961.53 – combined salary for all 7 part time female employees with hourly rate total of £17.52
Average hourly rate = £14.75 per hour	Average hourly rate = £17.52

Part time gender pay gap is the gap between the average hourly pay rate of female employees who work part time and male employees who work part time.

$$£17.52 / £14.75 \text{ per hour} \times 100/1 - 100 = 19\%$$

	Combined Gap	Full Time Gap	Part Time Gap
All employees	- 11%	-15%	19%

Positive figures indicate a pay gap to the detriment of male employees while negative figures indicate a pay gap to the detriment of female employees.