



# **The Commissioner for Public Appointments**

## **Annual Report**

**2023|24**

**Diversity**



## At a glance

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### Diversity in public appointments in 2023-24

**441**

New regulated public appointments made in 2023-24

**48.3%**

New public appointees were female in 2023-24 compared with 53.1% in 2022-23

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**673**

Regulated public reappointments made in 2023-24

**3.8%**

New public appointees and reappointees declaring political activity in 2023-24

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**70**

regulated public appointments and reappointments made by the Welsh Government in 2023-24

**4.7%**

New public appointments made to disabled people compared with 4.9% in 2022-23

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**20.0%**

Welsh Government public appointments made to those from an ethnic minority background

**7.3%**

New public appointments made to LGB+ people compared with 3.2% in 2021 Census

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# Commissioner Foreword

Diversity is the sixth of the eight principles of Public Appointments. The Governance Code defines it thus:

Public appointments should reflect the diversity of the society in which we live and appointments should be made taking account of the need to appoint boards which include a balance of skills and backgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

In a later section, the Code explains the importance of diversity: ‘To be truly effective public bodies must bring together a mix of people with different skills, experience and backgrounds to serve on their boards’.<sup>2</sup> The role of the Commissioner is made clear in the Governance Code:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments should be an active advocate of diversity and work with departments as the Centre for Public Appointments in encouraging good candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds to consider applying for a public appointment.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, all appointments must be made on merit.

The data for this year’s analysis is collected in a new manner. Until now data was collected manually by departments and then collated by a team in the Cabinet Office. On 1 April 2023 the Public

Appointments Digital Service (PADS) was introduced online; data on campaigns run on the system will in future be collected automatically. This means that an application cannot be submitted unless all questions, including those regarding diversity, are answered. This is to ensure that there is no missing data and that all applicants answer the same questions.<sup>4</sup>

A large proportion of the diversity data provided to the Commissioner for this report was collected through the PADS and this proportion is expected to increase in future years. In 2023-24, 1,812 applicants provided data through the PADS or in the same format as on the PADS with the data for 2,687 applicants provided separately through departmental collection.

Changes to the number of regulated appointments and to methods of data collection, already mentioned, affect the confidence with which this report makes comparisons. NHS Trusts, which represented a significant number of regulated public appointments, were removed from regulation between 2022-23 and 2023-24; this report also considers appointments made by the Welsh Government separately from those made by the UK government. Comparisons between years are for illustrative purposes only, as in previous years. The report, as in previous years, considers only

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<sup>1</sup> Governance Code on Public Appointments, <[assets.publishing.service.gov.uk](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk)>, section 2.1; hereafter Governance Code.

<sup>2</sup> Governance Code, section 7.4.

<sup>3</sup> Governance Code, section 4.6.

<sup>4</sup> Applicants may still respond ‘prefer not to say’ to many questions.

those appointed to regulated roles in 2023-24, rather than the whole group of people who currently hold public appointments.

### **Key diversity findings from 2023-24**

In this year, people identifying as LGB+ continue to be strongly represented in public appointments; indeed, the data shows an increase in representation from 2021-22.

On the other hand, disabled representation among public appointees has not improved since the data collected on disability changed in 2020-21.<sup>5</sup> As such, the proportion of public appointments and reappointments made to disabled people in 2023-24 remains significantly below their representation in the wider population. The government should consider why it remains the case that disabled people have consistently been underrepresented among new public appointees and reappointees across several years.

People from an ethnic minority background also remain underrepresented among new appointees and reappointees.<sup>6</sup> Despite strong representation of individuals from an ethnic minority background at the

application stage, ethnic minority applicants did not progress through campaigns at the same rate as white applicants.<sup>7</sup>

The proportions of appointees declaring some religious beliefs are also lower than the respective proportions declaring those beliefs in the population as a whole. The 2021 Census found that 6.5% of the population described themselves as Muslim and 1.7% as Hindu; Muslims accounted for 2.3% of appointees in 2023-24 and Hindus accounted for 1.0%.

As the Public Appointments Digital Service continues to improve the reliability of diversity data, the government should set out how it will use this data to promote diversity in public appointments. I look forward to seeing the government's new Diversity Action Plan, which should be published by October of this year.<sup>8</sup> This should consider diversity in its broadest sense, including encouraging greater geographic diversity of applicants and greater diversity of thought, while ensuring that appointments are always made on merit.

### **William Shawcross CVO Commissioner for Public Appointments**

shortlisted, 13.8% of those found appointable, and 14.8% of those appointed. The 2021 Census found that 18.3% of people belong to a black, Asian, mixed or other ethnic group. Office for National Statistics (ONS), 'Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021' (29 November 2022), <[ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk)>. For analysis, please see this report's section on 'Ethnicity'.

<sup>8</sup> The Cabinet Office committed to publishing a new plan to improve diversity across the public appointments system by October 2025. HM Treasury, Treasury Minutes (October 2024) <[gov.uk](https://gov.uk)> p.14.

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<sup>5</sup> The change was from a single-stage question on disability to a two-stage question, in line with the Office for National Statistics (ONS). For more details on this change, see Commissioner for Public Appointments, *Annual Report: 2020-21*, <[publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk](https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk)>, pp. 46-50.

<sup>6</sup> This is not the case for Welsh Government appointments, where 20% were made to those from an ethnic minority background in 2023-24.

<sup>7</sup> Individuals from an ethnic minority background made up 22.3% of applicants for public appointments in 2023-24, 16.6% of those

# UK Government

## Ethnicity

Of the 438 new appointees in 2023-24, 345 (or 78.8%) provided information on their ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> Among reappointees, 77.6% provided information on their ethnicity.<sup>10</sup>

The overall proportion of appointments made to ethnic minority reappointees and new appointees was 11.9% in 2023-24 (**Figure 1**). This is a decline from 2022-23, driven primarily by a fall in reappointments made to those from an ethnic minority background.<sup>11</sup> In 2022-23, 11.1% of reappointees were from ethnic minority backgrounds. This has fallen to 9.6% in 2023-24, a comparable proportion to the 9.2% in 2021-22. The caveat raised in the introduction, of course, applies to any conclusions that can be drawn from this.

Of the new public appointees who provided information on their ethnicity, 14.8% were from an ethnic minority background in 2023-24. This is an improvement on last year, where 14.2% of new appointees were from an ethnic

minority background, though still a fall from 2021-22 when 16.6% of new appointees were from an ethnic minority background. It is also an underrepresentation relative to the wider population: the 2021 Census found that 18.3% belong to a black, Asian, mixed or other ethnic group.<sup>12</sup>

This underrepresentation is not due to lower application rates (**Figure 2**). Ethnic minority applicants comprise 22.3% of applicants for public appointments. However, individuals from an ethnic minority background make up 16.6% of those shortlisted, 13.8% of those found appointable, and 14.8% of those appointed.

White applicants are more likely than ethnic minority applicants to progress at 'Shortlisted' and 'Found appointable' stages. In 2023-24, 29.7% of white applicants were shortlisted, compared to 20.5% of ethnic minority applicants; and 46.8% of white applicants shortlisted were found appointable, compared to 37.6% for ethnic minority applicants shortlisted. Like last year, however, ethnic minority applicants found appointable were more likely to be appointed than white applicants found appointable – 86.4% compared to 79.7%.

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<sup>9</sup> Responding 'prefer not to say' were 90 appointees and three appointees are recorded as 'blank', meaning that the Cabinet Office either did not receive this data or did not receive this data in a usable format. Respondents recorded as 'blank' or 'data not provided' are included in the denominator for assessing the proportion providing information in relation to a question throughout this report.

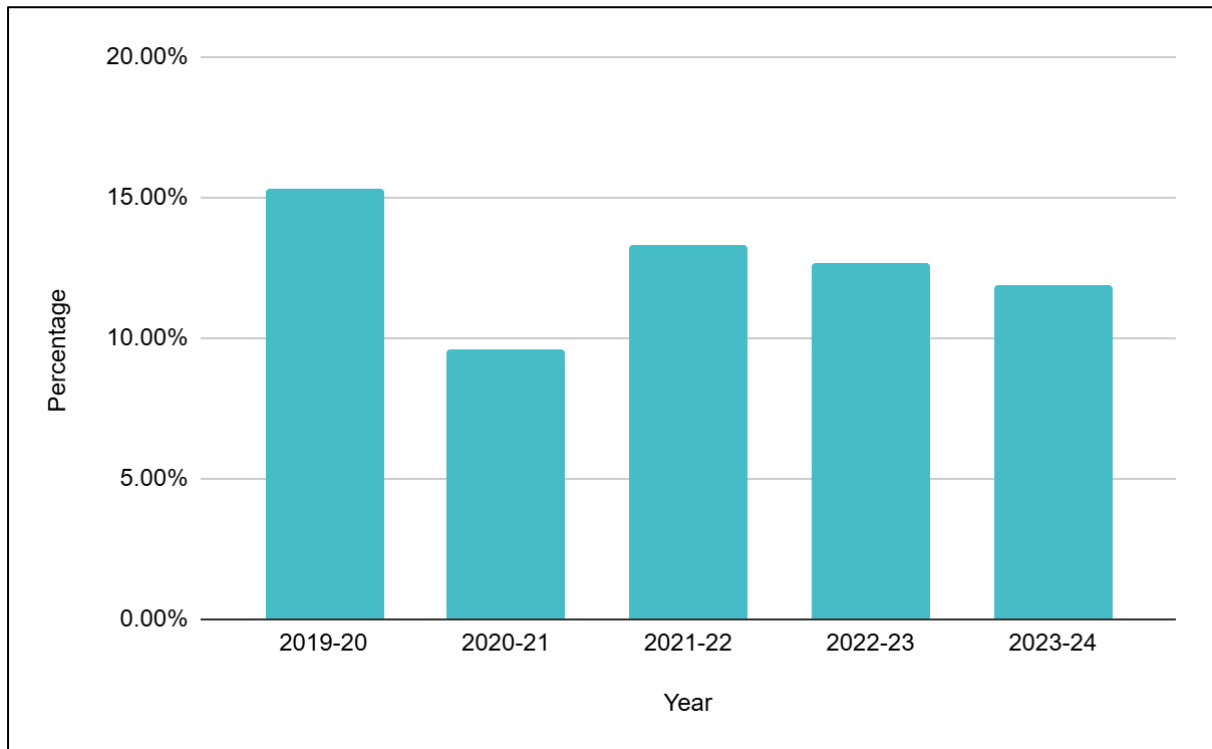
<sup>10</sup> Responding 'prefer not to say' were 103 reappointees; 20 did not provide data or left the question 'blank'.

<sup>11</sup> In 2022-23, 12.7% of appointees and reappointees described themselves as being from an ethnic minority background. See Commissioner for Public Appointments, *Annual Report: 2022-23*, <[publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk](https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk)>, p. 21.

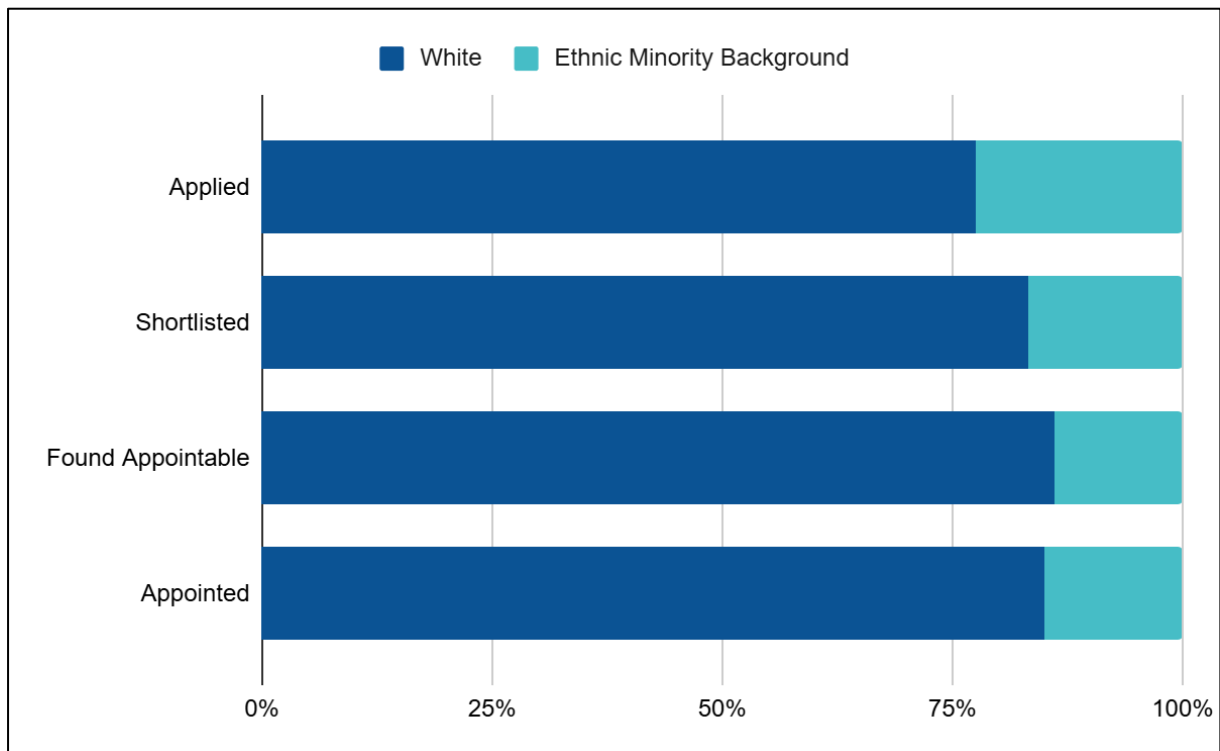
<sup>12</sup> Office for National Statistics (ONS), 'Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021' (29 November 2022), <[ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk)>.



**Figure 1: Percentage of ethnic minority appointees and reappointees, 2019-24**



**Figure 2: Applicants by ethnic background at each application stage, 2023-24.**



*Note: data for 2023-24 does not include NHS Trusts or Welsh Government appointments.*

Among chair roles, the underrepresentation of ethnic minority applicants persists (**Figure 3**). Although 19.4% of applicants for chair roles were from an ethnic minority background, just 7.7% of those shortlisted were ethnic minorities, improving to 11.1% of those found appointable, and 14.8% of those appointed to chair roles. For reappointed chairs, 14.3% were from an ethnic minority background. Overall, 14.6% of chair reappointees and appointees were from an ethnic minority background in 2023-24.

## Disability

In 2023-24 408 appointees out of 419 provided data about their disability status.<sup>13</sup> A total of 19 (4.7%) declared physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more, a decline on 2022-23, where 4.9% of those appointed declared a disability (**Figure 4**). At each stage in 2023-24, representation of disabled candidates worsened relative to last year (**Figure 5**). Just 4.0% of applicants declared a disability in 2023-24 against 6.2% in 2022-23, 5.3% of those shortlisted against 5.4% last year, and only 4.7% of those found appointable against 5.2% last year. This remains a significant underrepresentation relative to the wider population: the 2021 Census found that 17.8% of the population declared a disability.<sup>14</sup> Among reappointees, 368 out of 409 (90.0%)

provided data on their disability status with a further 16 providing a response of prefer not to say.<sup>15</sup> Disabled public appointees made up 4.1% of reappointments.

Among reappointed chairs 90.9% provided information on their disability status. Within the group of reappointed chairs responding to the question on disability, 5% declared a disability. Last year, the percentage of chair-level appointments and reappointments made to those declaring a disability was 4%. This year it is 4.3% (**Figure 6**). At chair-level, appointees declaring a disability are vastly underrepresented relative to the wider population.

The lack of progress in improving the representation of disabled applicants among public appointees is concerning. In 2019 the government published its Diversity Action Plan, incorporating some recommendations from the 2018 Lord Holmes Review into barriers for disabled applicants to public appointments.<sup>16</sup> The government has not produced a new plan in the six years since, a period where progress in improving the presence of disabled people among the appointees and reappointees in a given year has been limited. Thus, the Commissioner looks forward to seeing the government's new Action Plan, promised by October 2025, and how this will seek to improve the representation of disabled people among those appointed to public bodies.

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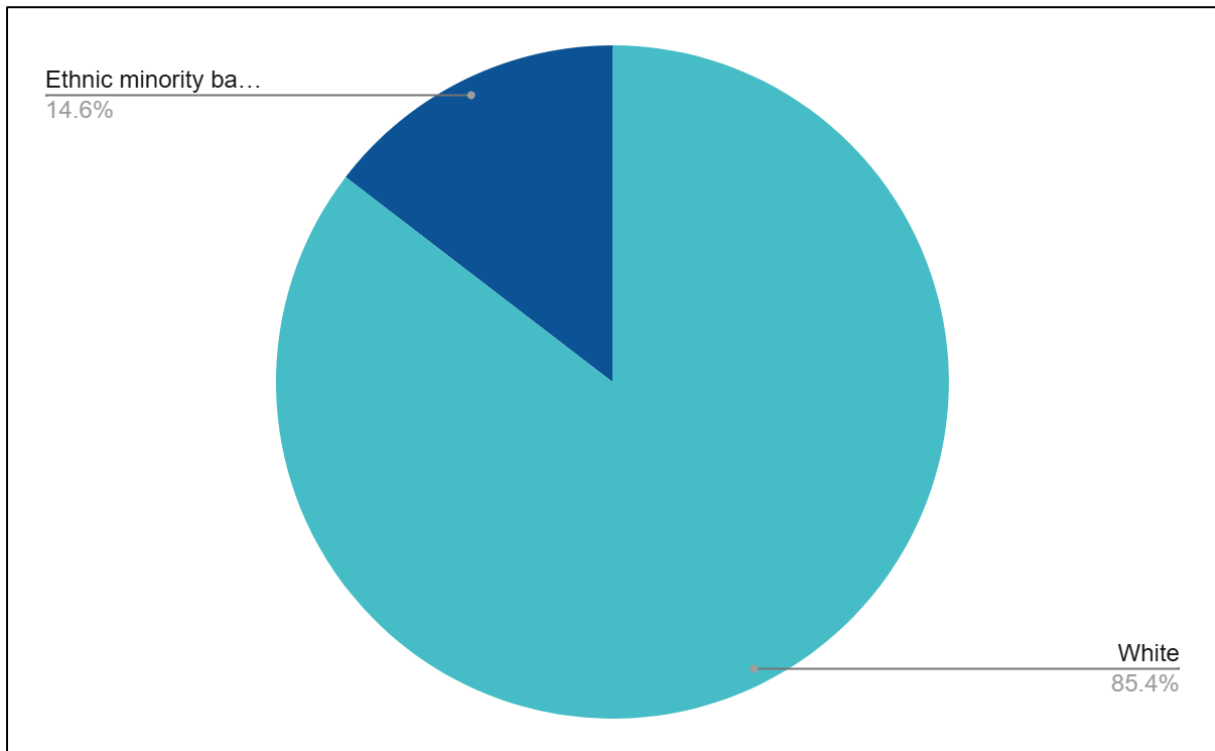
<sup>13</sup> Responding 'prefer not to say' were eight appointees or reappointees and three did not provide data.

<sup>14</sup> ONS, 'Disability, England and Wales: Census 2021' (19 January 2023), <[ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk)>; hereafter 'Disability: Census 2021'.

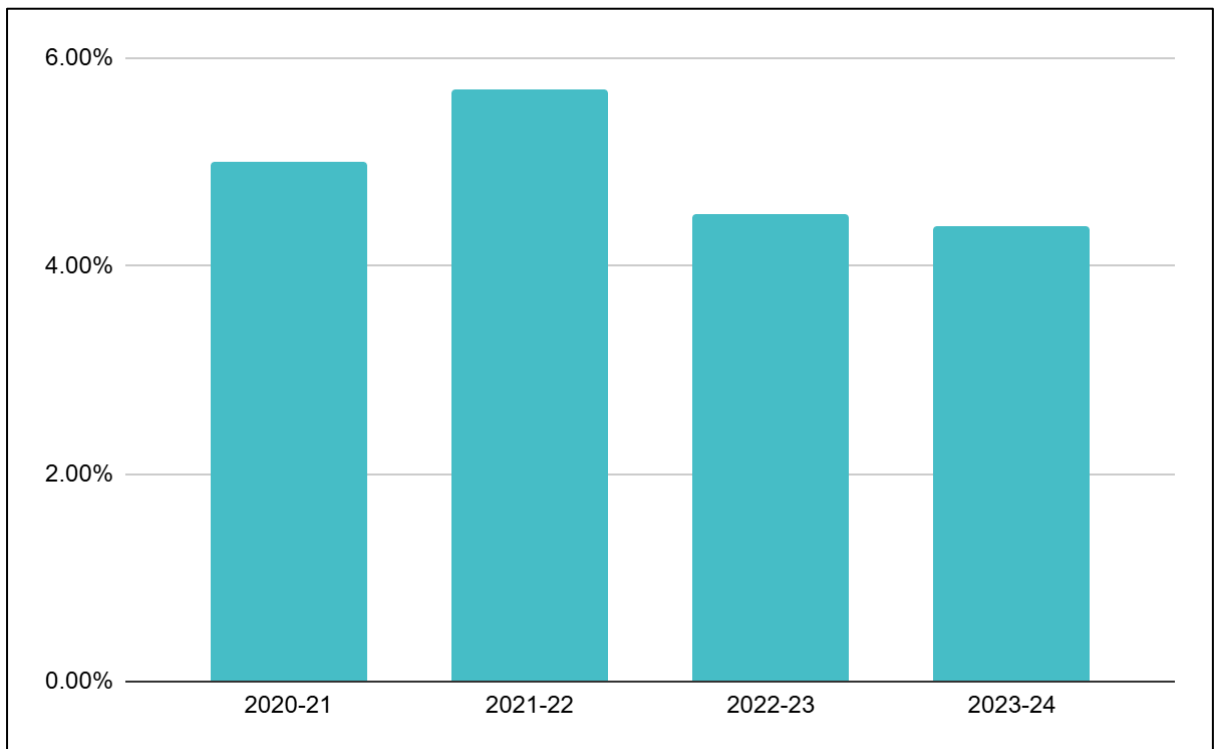
<sup>15</sup> For 25 reappointees, the Cabinet Office either did not receive this data or did not receive this data in a usable format.

<sup>16</sup> *Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan: 2019*, <[assets.publishing.service.gov.uk](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk)>.

**Figure 3: Chairs appointees and reappointees by ethnic background, 2023-24.**

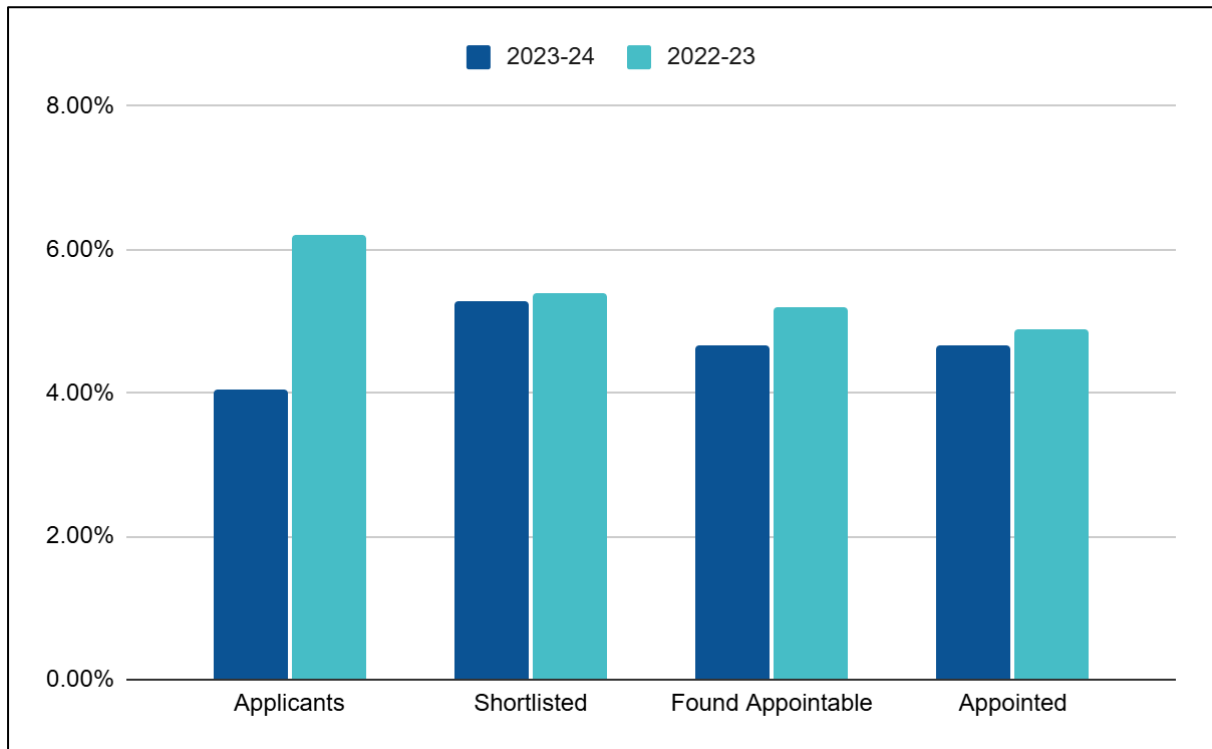


**Figure 4: Disabled appointments and reappointments, 2020-2024**

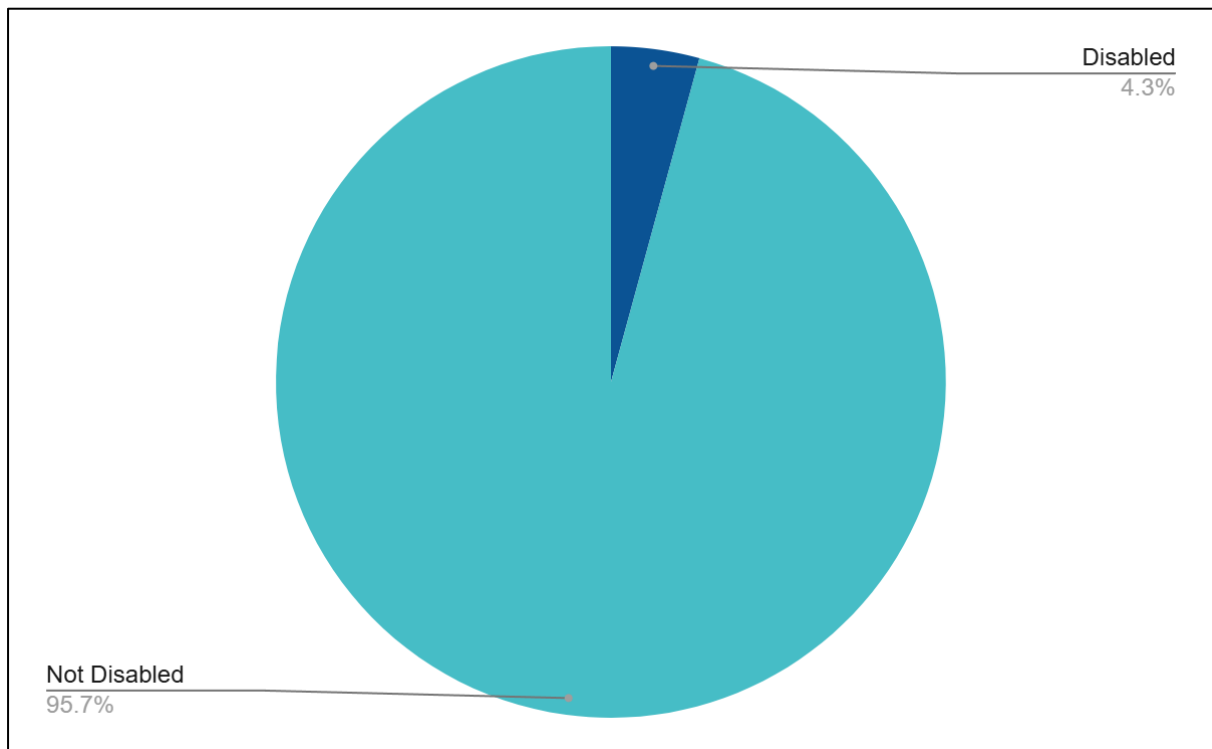


*Note: data for 2023-24 does not include NHS Trusts or Welsh Government appointments.*

**Figure 5: Disabled people by stage in appointments' process, 2022-23 vs 2023-24.**



**Figure 6: Chair appointments and reappointments made to disabled people, 2023-24.**



*Note: data for 2023-24 does not include NHS Trusts or Welsh Government appointments.*

## Sex and Gender

### Sex

Unlike in previous annual reports, and in line with the ONS, this year the Cabinet Office has gathered data both on the sex of applicants in addition to a second question - 'is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?'

As in 2022-23, responses to questions on sex registered at birth remain high with 99.5% of new appointees providing information on their sex registered at birth and 94.0% of reappointees providing this information.<sup>17</sup>

In 2023-24, 48.3% of new public appointees were female with 51.7% male (**Figure 7**). As in previous years, female applicants are more likely to progress through competitions relative to male applicants (**Figure 8**). Those declaring as female made up 41.6% of applicants, 45.1% of shortlisted applicants, 47.1% of appointable applicants, and, ultimately, 48.3% of new appointees.

Female reappointees remain underrepresented relative to male reappointees, though this is a large improvement from 2022-23. In 2023-24, 48.2% of reappointees were female against 28.6% in 2022-23. This is more in

line with the trend seen before 2022-23: from 28.0% in 2017-18 to 29.7% in 2018-19 to 35.3% in 2019-20 to 40.7% in 2020-21 to 51.0% in 2021-22.<sup>18</sup>

At the chair level, female applicants made-up just 29.6% of new chair appointments and 33.3% of chair reappointments (**Figure 9**).<sup>19</sup> This is a substantial drop relative to last year, where 49.2% of chair appointments were made to female applicants. Considering the small numbers involved, the Commissioner does not wish to pre-empt what may be an aberration rather than a new trend. However, it is an area worth departments monitoring.

### Gender

Applicants are now asked, as in the 2021 Census, 'is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?'

Out of 438 appointees, 248 (56.6%) provided data on their gender identity. Nearly all appointees that provided information declared their gender identity as the same as their sex registered at birth.<sup>20</sup> For the 550 reappointees in 2023-24, 122 (22.2%) provided data on their gender identity.<sup>21</sup> Again, nearly all who provided information declared their gender identity as the same as their sex registered at birth.

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<sup>17</sup> Among appointees, one person responded 'prefer not to say' and one person responded 'blank'. 14 reappointees responded 'prefer not to say' and 19 responded 'blank'.

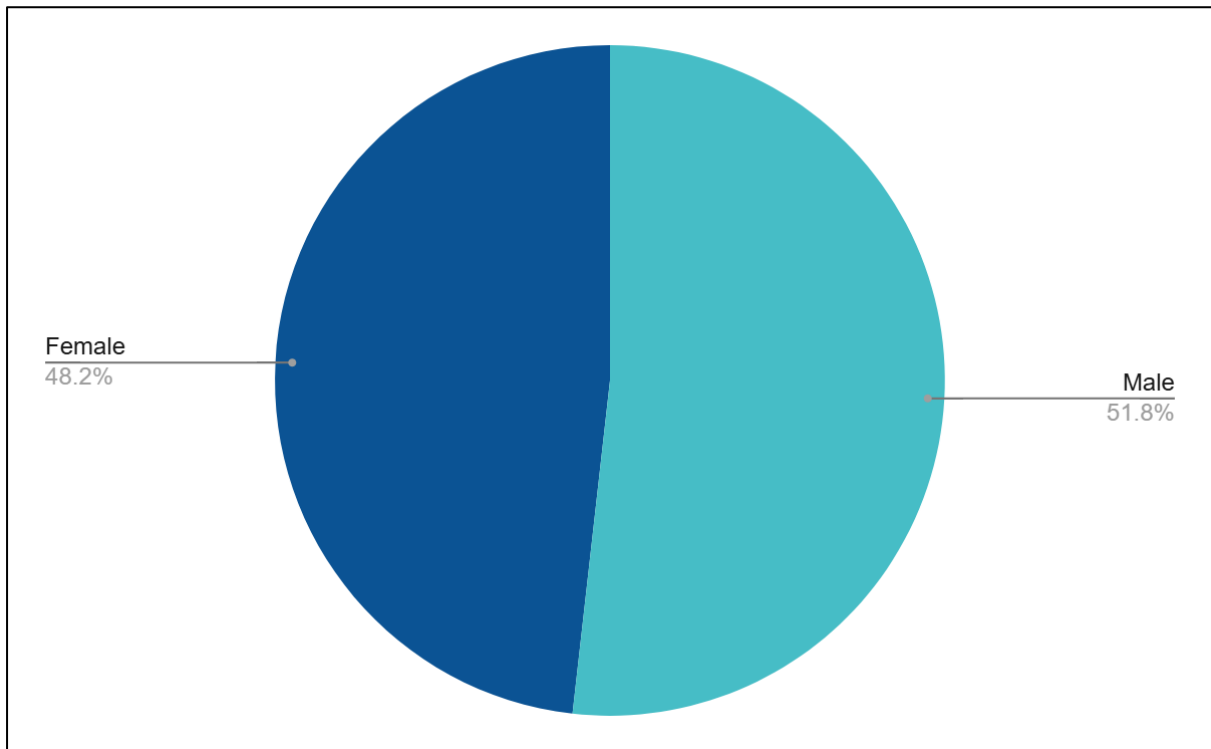
<sup>18</sup> Commissioner for Public Appointments, *Annual Report: 2022-23* <[publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk](https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk)>, p.26. Please note that the data for 2023-24 does not include NHS Trusts or Welsh Government appointments.

<sup>19</sup> Among chair appointees 100% provided information. Among reappointees, one person responded 'prefer not to say' and 95.5% provided information.

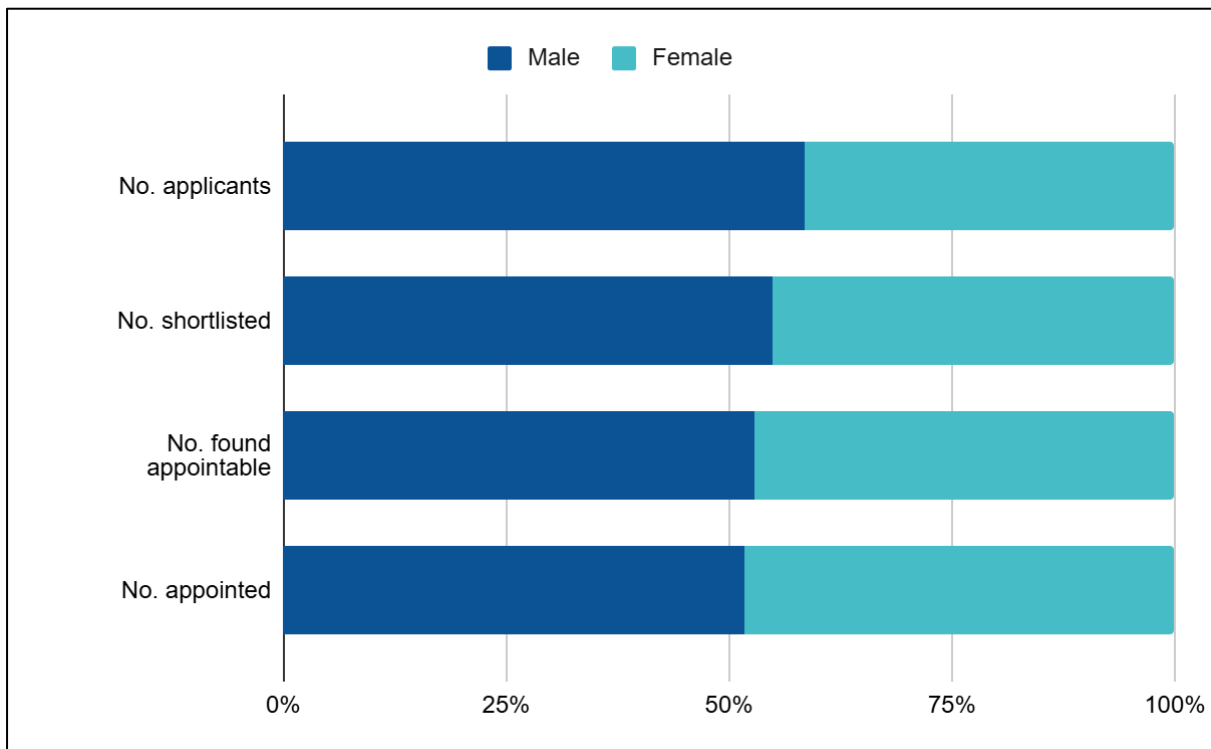
<sup>20</sup> A further 13 'prefer not to say', 10 were recorded as 'blank' and 167 were recorded as 'no data provided'.

<sup>21</sup> A further 15 responded 'prefer not to say' and 413 were recorded as 'blank'.

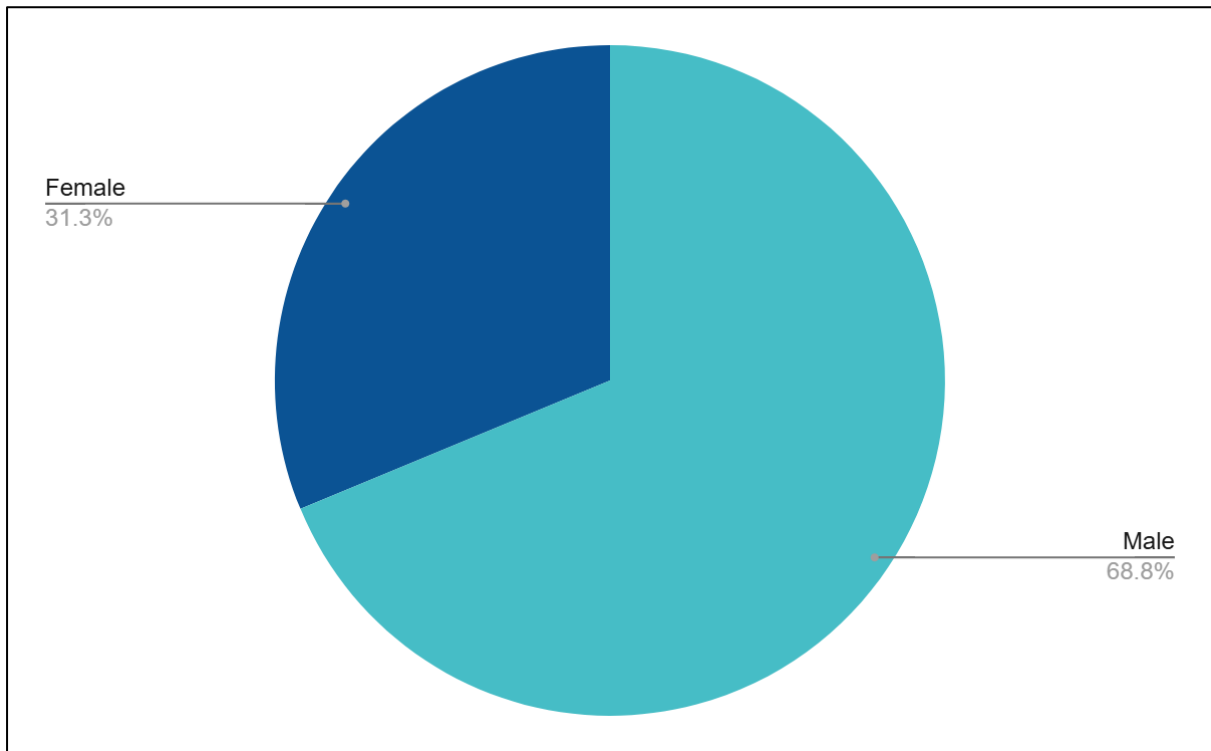
**Figure 7: Appointees and reappointees by sex registered at birth, 2023-24**



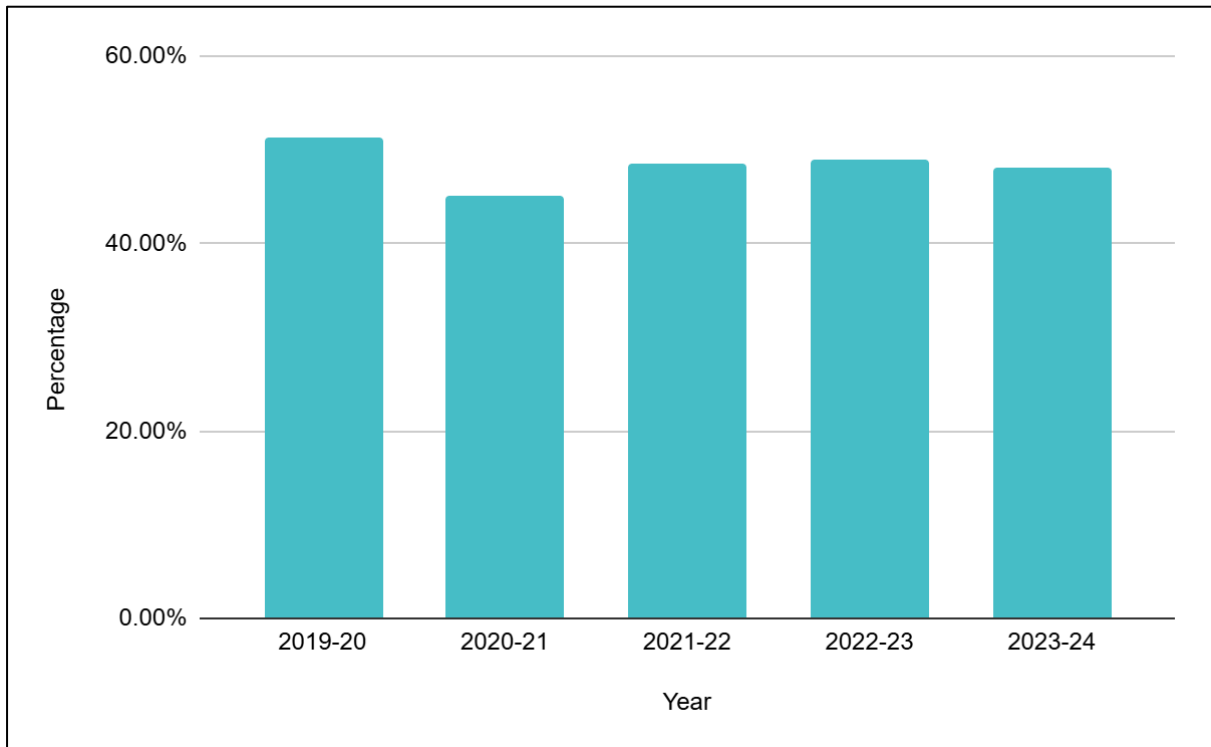
**Figure 8: Applicants by sex registered at birth at each stage, 2023-24.**



**Figure 9: Male and female chair appointees and reappointees, 2023-24.**



**Figure 10: Appointments and reappointments made to those declaring female, 2019-2024.**



*Note: data for 2023-24 does not include NHS Trusts or Welsh Government appointments.*

## Age

Reporting rates for the ages of appointees held at a very similar level to 2022-23, with 94.7% of new appointees providing data. This followed two years of significant increases.<sup>22</sup>

The overall age of new appointees followed a familiar distribution – roughly pyramidal, with the peak being late-career years (**Figure 11**). The largest proportion was those between 55 and 64 years of age (making up 35.2% of respondents), followed by those between 45 and 54 (21.0%). Smaller proportions were aged between 65 and 74 (19.5%) and 35 and 44 (12.3%), with 6.3% aged between 25 and 34, 3.4% between 16 and 24 and 2.4% between 75 and 84.

The age distribution of reappointees in 2023-24 was similar. Of those who provided information, 31.6% were aged between 55 and 64, 30.8% between 65 and 74, 18.5% between 45 and 54, 8.1% between 35 and 44, 4.6% between 75 and 84, 4.2% between 25 and 34 and 2.3% between 16 and 24.<sup>23</sup>

Of new chair appointees who provided information about their age, 46.2% were between 65 and 74, 30.8% between 55 and 64, 19.2% between 45 and 54 and 3.8% between 75 and 84.<sup>24</sup> Among reappointed chairs who provided information about their age, 77.8% were aged between 55 and 64, 16.7% between

65 and 74 and 5.6% were between 45 and 54.<sup>25</sup>

In 2022-23, 9.4% of chairs placed themselves in the 35 and 44 age group last year and 3.1% in the 25 and 34 age group. This year, no newly appointed chair or reappointed chair placed themselves in these groups (**Figure 12**).

Although the varied nature of chair appointments and reappointments across different years and the small numbers involved should caution against broad conclusions, this still represents a regression relative to last year in expanding diversity across age groups.

## Sexual orientation

A combined 86.7% of appointees and reappointees provided data about their sexual orientation in 2023-24, compared to 79.6% in 2022-23.

In 2023-24, 437 new public appointees were asked about their sexual orientation, 399 (91.3%) of whom provided data. Of these 399 appointees, 374 (or 93.7%) answered that they were heterosexual or straight, 16 (4.0%) that they were gay or lesbian and eight (2.0%) bisexual (**Figure 13**).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The equivalent figures were 92.6% in 2022-23, 88% in 2021-22 and 78% 2020-21.

<sup>23</sup> Of reappointees, 87.8% provided information, while 33 reappointees responded 'prefer not to say' and 34 left the question 'blank'.

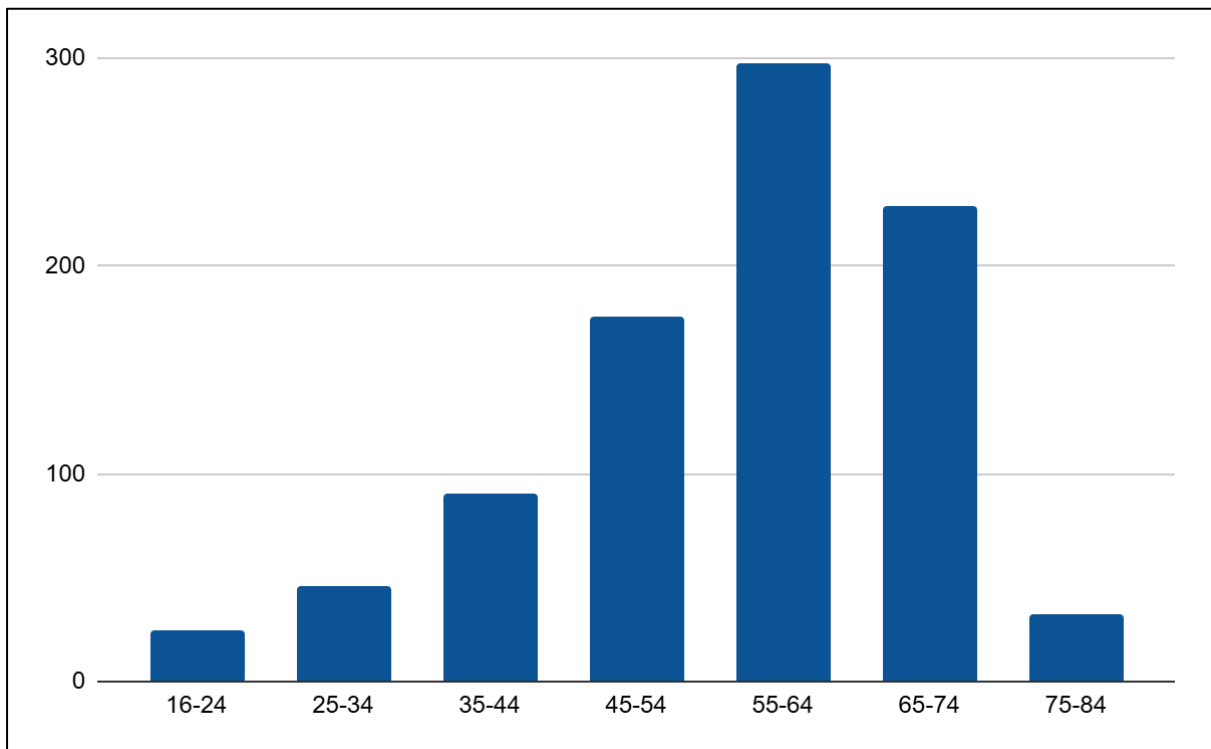
<sup>24</sup> Among chair appointees 96.3% provided information, with one person leaving the question 'blank'.

<sup>25</sup> Among chair reappointees 81.8% provided information, with one person responding 'prefer not to say' and three leaving the question 'blank'.

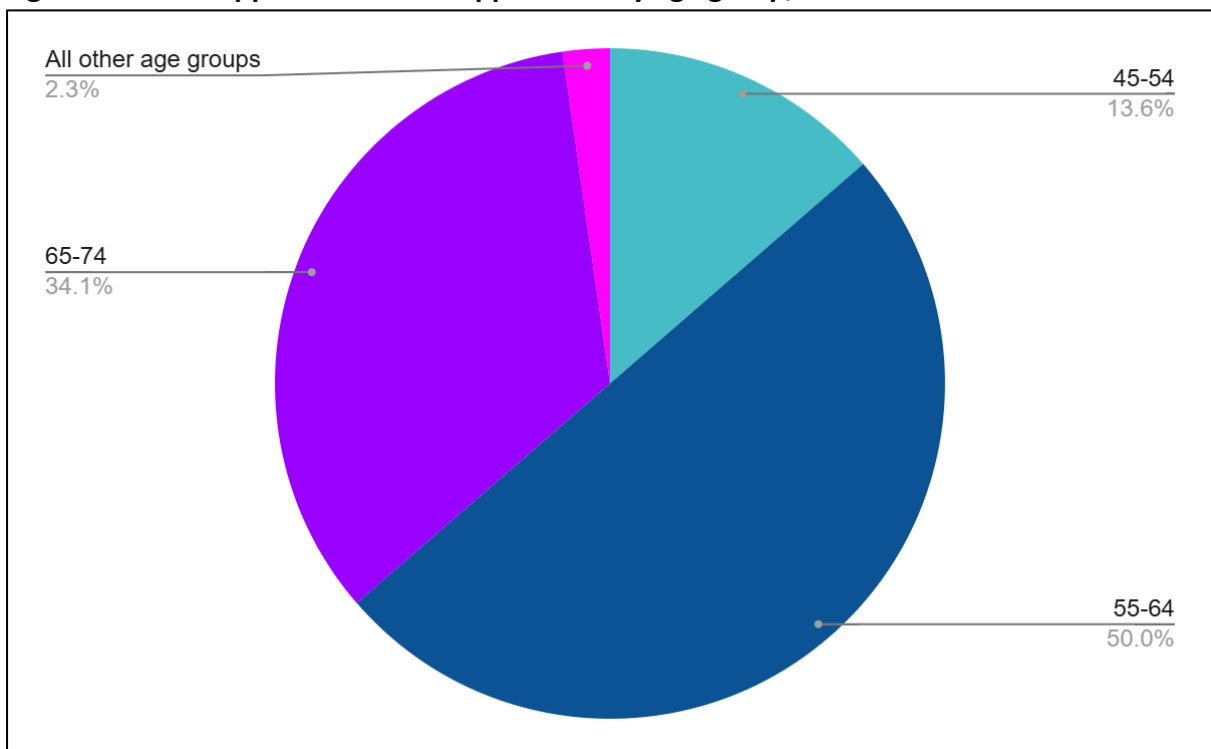
<sup>26</sup> This 'other' represented 0.3% of responses.



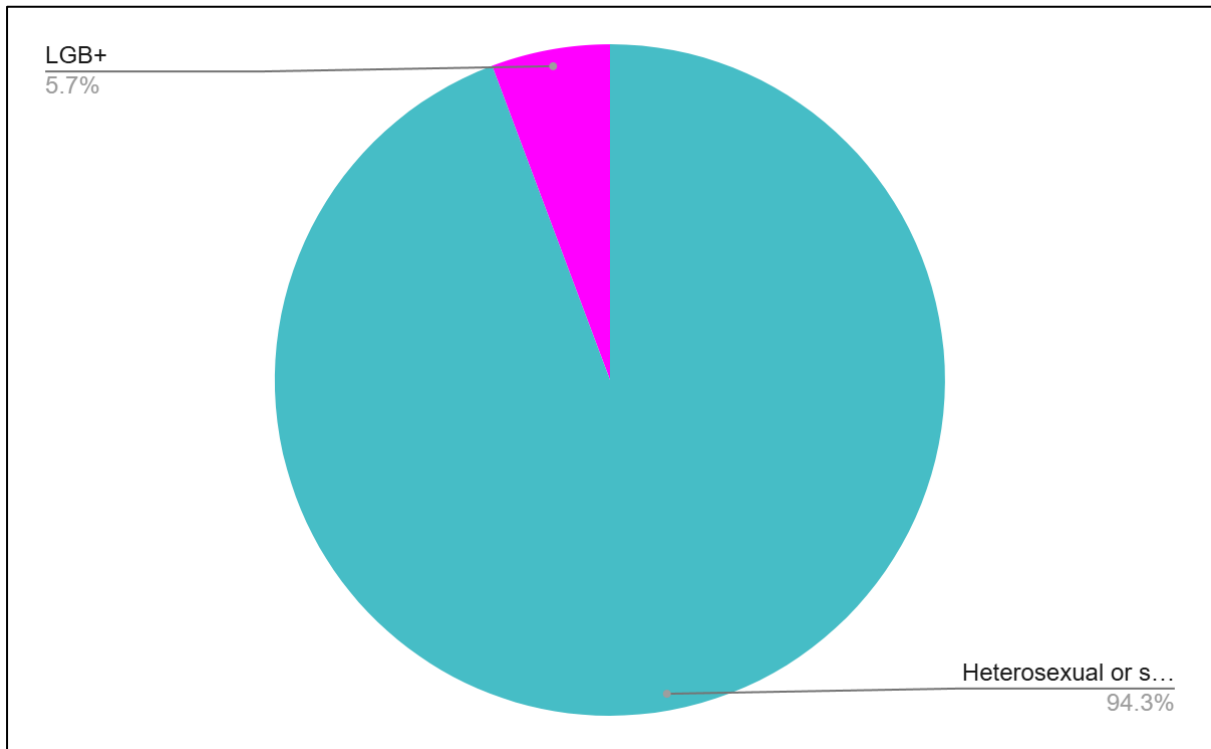
**Figure 11: Number of appointees and reappointees by age group, 2023-24.**



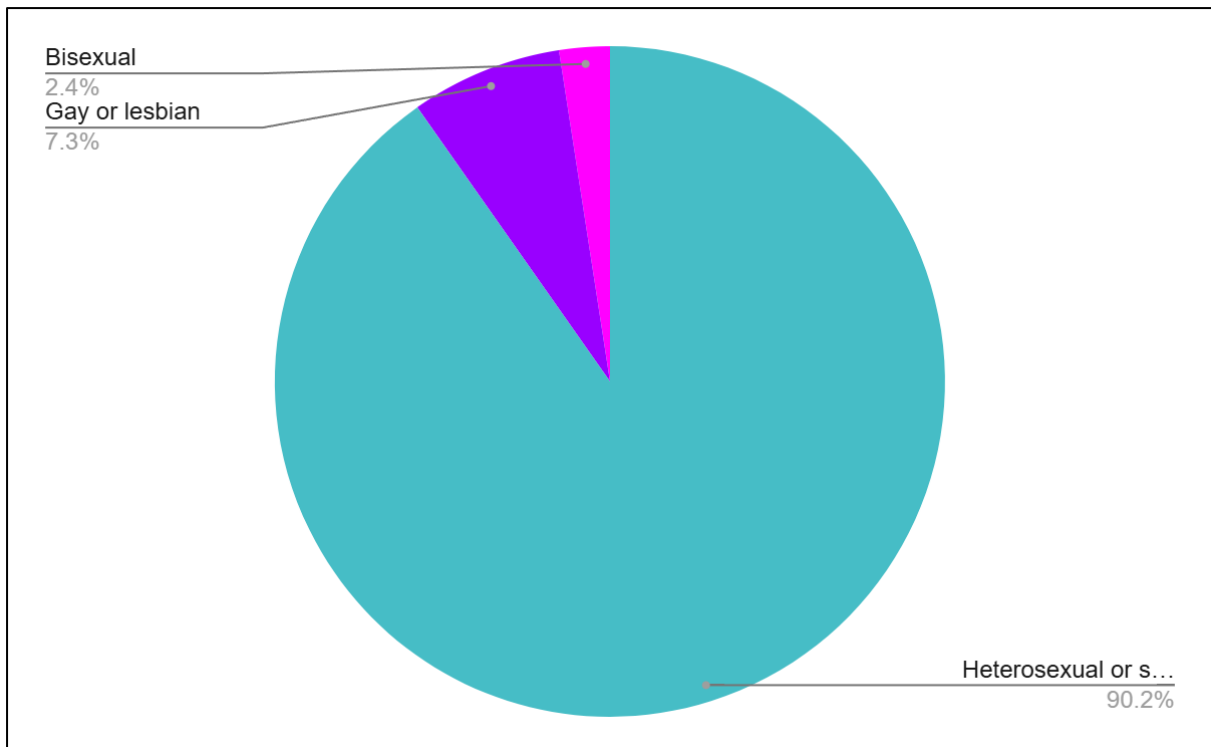
**Figure 12: Chair appointees and reappointees by age group, 2023-24**



**Figure 13: Sexual orientation of new appointees and reappointees, 2023-24**



**Figure 14: Sexual orientation of chair appointments and reappointments, 2023-24**



Of 550 reappointees who were asked the question on sexual orientation, 457 (83.1%) responded. These 457 responses fell into proportions similar to those of reappointees: 433 (94.7%) said they were heterosexual or straight, 16 (3.5%) gay or lesbian and seven (1.5%) bisexual.

There were slight falls in the proportions of LGB+ appointees and reappointees. While 7.3% of appointees and 5.9% of reappointees declared themselves to be LGB+ in 2022-23, the equivalent figures for 2023-24 were 6.3% and 5.3%. The combined figure fell to 5.7%, from 6.7% in both 2022-23 and 2021-22, though this still represents an increase from 5.0% in 2020-21. The proportions of LGB+ appointees and reappointees also remain greater than in the public at large. In the 2021 Census, 3.2% of people described themselves as LGB+.<sup>27</sup>

Among new chair appointments, 84.0% were made to applicants describing themselves as heterosexual, 12.0% to those describing themselves as gay or lesbian and 4.0% to those describing themselves as bisexual (**Figure 14**).<sup>28</sup>

## Religion and belief

Of people either appointed or reappointed to public boards and bodies

in 2023-24, 86.5% responded to the question regarding their religion and beliefs.<sup>29</sup>

Christianity represented the religion most commonly declared among appointees and reappointees: 51.1% of new appointees stated their religion as Christianity and 55.1% of reappointees. This is an overrepresentation relative to the wider population, in which 46.2% of the population described themselves as 'Christian' in the most recent Census.<sup>30</sup>

Like in 2022-23, those declaring no religion represented the second largest category of appointees and reappointees: 42.6% of appointees and 39.7% of reappointees. This was a slight overrepresentation relative to the wider population: in the 2021 Census, 37.2% of the population declared 'no religion'.<sup>31</sup>

This is followed by much smaller numbers declaring themselves Muslim (2.3% of appointees and 1.6% of reappointees), Hindu (1.0% of appointees and 1.1% of reappointees), Jewish (1.3% of appointees and 2.2% of reappointees) and Sikh (1.3% of appointees and no reappointees). Muslims are significantly underrepresented among the public appointees appointed in 2023-24. The 2021 Census found that 6.5% of the population described themselves as

<sup>27</sup> In the Census, LGB+ includes the categories Gay or lesbian (1.54%), Bisexual (1.28%), Pansexual (0.10%), Asexual (0.06%), Queer (0.03%) and All other sexual orientations (0.15%). ONS, 'Sexual orientation, England and Wales: Census 2021' (6 January 2023), <[ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk)>.

<sup>28</sup> Among new chair appointees, 92.6% provided information while two people responded 'prefer not to say'

<sup>29</sup> Among appointees, 91.9% provided information for this question, 33 people gave a response of 'prefer not to say' 2 were recorded as 'blank'. For reappointees, 82.2% provided information. 65 people gave a response of 'prefer not to say' and for 32 people the response was 'blank.'

<sup>30</sup> ONS, 'Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021' (29 November 2022), <[ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk)>; hereafter 'Religion: Census 2021'.

<sup>31</sup> 'Religion: Census 2021'.

Muslim, but Muslims represented just 2.3% of those appointed in 2023-24.<sup>32</sup>

The greatest drop occurred at shortlisting (**Figure 16**): Muslims represented 5.6% of applicants declaring their religion or belief this year, falling to 3.1% of those shortlisted and then to 2.0% of applicants deemed appointable. Hindus are also slightly underrepresented relative to the wider population: 1.7% in the 2021 Census described themselves as Hindu.<sup>33</sup> As with Muslims, this is not only related to underrepresentation among applicants, with 3.2% of applicants describing themselves as Hindu.

Among new chair appointments, 60.0% were made to Christians and 28.0% to those declaring no religion.<sup>34</sup> Among reappointed chairs, 62.5% described themselves as Christians and 31.3% as having no religion.<sup>35</sup> Despite the small numbers involved and the fact that this is only data for a specific year, it is notable, in light of the wider data on member-level appointments and reappointments, that Muslim applicants are not represented at all among chair appointments and reappointments this year.

### Area of principal residence

The Governance Code on Public Appointments emphasises that diversity should be ‘considered in its broadest sense’ and should ‘go beyond gender, disability or race, to include wider

characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity and social background’.<sup>36</sup> In this spirit, applicants to regulated public bodies are asked a number of questions about their background. Candidates are now asked to provide their postcode and address, with their region now identified using their postcode via the PADS.

In 2023-24, the question was changed to give greater clarity. England was still divided into North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, East Midlands, West Midlands, East, London, South East and South West; Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were not further subdivided, as in previous years. The option ‘other’, used by some departments, has been replaced across the board with ‘Outside of the UK’.

In 2022-23 a large proportion, 88.9%, provided information on their area of principal residence. This proportion remained high in 2023-24: of the 988 appointees or reappointees asked about the area of their principal residence where we have received data, 930 (94.1%) provided an answer.

It continues to be the case that individuals whose principal residence is in London or the South East are over-represented in public appointments probably due to the proportion of public bodies based in these regions (**Figure 17**).

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<sup>32</sup> ‘Religion: Census 2021’.

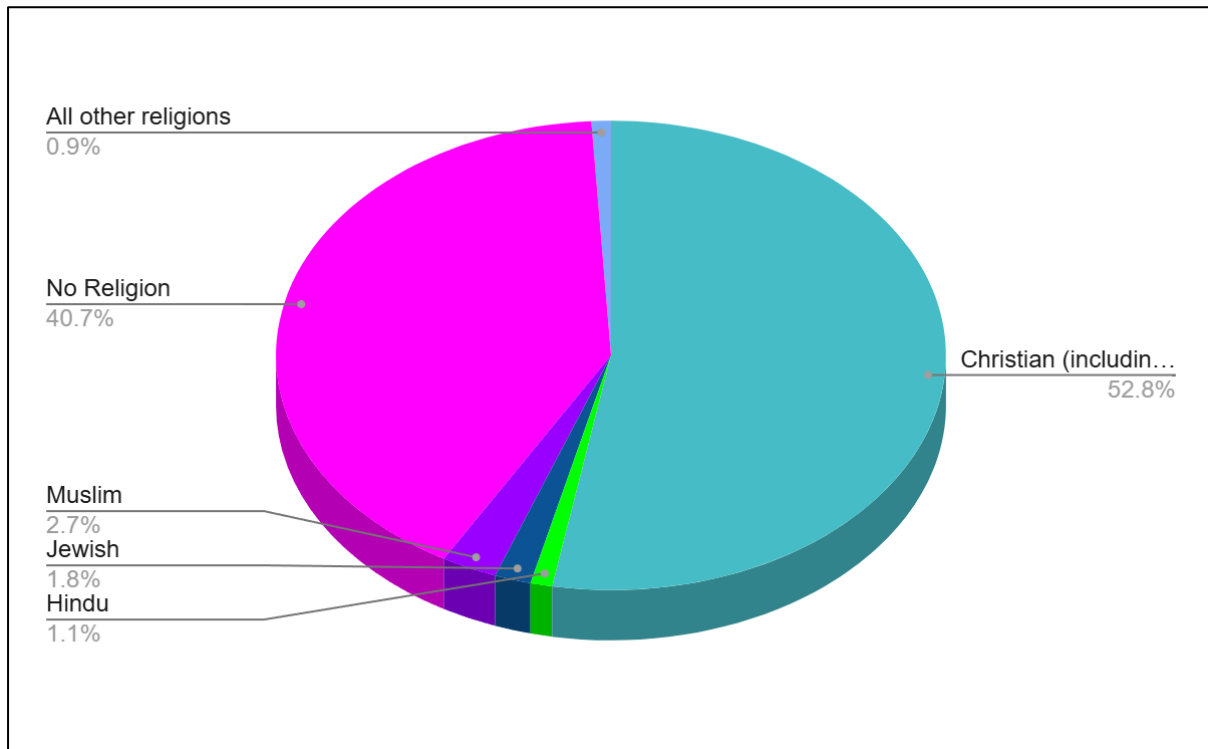
<sup>33</sup> ‘Religion: Census 2021’.

<sup>34</sup> Of chairs, 92.6% provided information while one chair appointee left this question ‘blank’ and one chair responded ‘prefer not to say.’

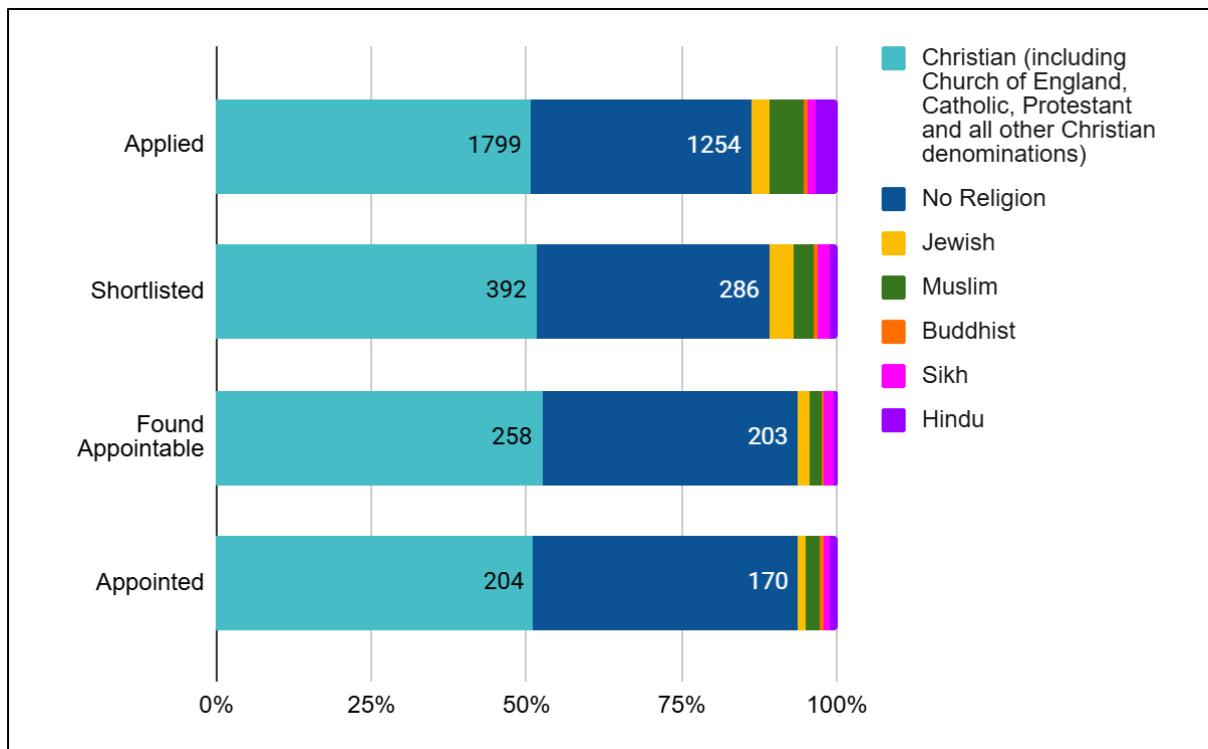
<sup>35</sup> Of reappointees, 72.7% provided information while four chair reappointees responded ‘prefer not to say’, with two leaving the question ‘blank.’

<sup>36</sup> Governance Code, section 7.4, n. 6.

**Figure 15: Religious background of appointees and reappointees, 2023-24**

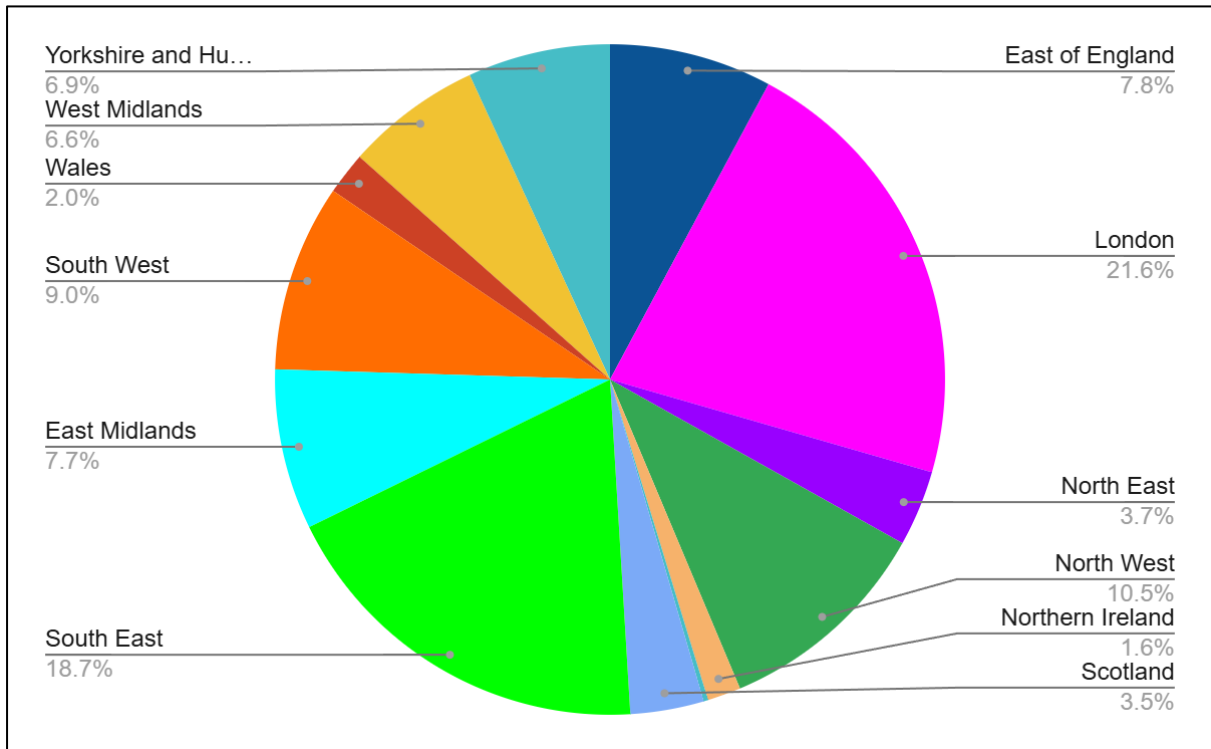


**Figure 16: Applicants by declared religion at each stage, 2023-24**

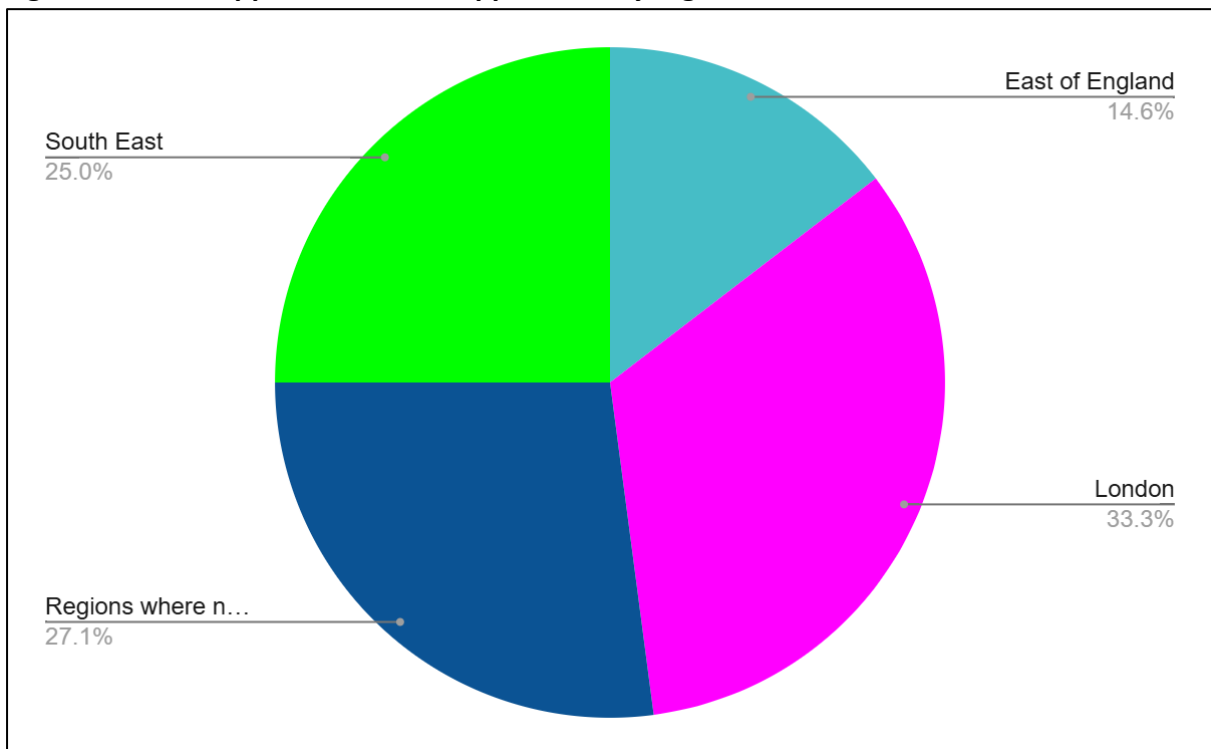


*Note: 'all other religions' is not a category used by the PADS or departments. It is used here where those declaring certain religious beliefs were less than five.*

**Figure 17: Appointees and reappointees by principal residence, 2023-24.**



**Figure 18: Chair appointees and reappointees by region, 2023-24.**



Of the 930 respondents, 201 (21.6%) listed their principal residence in London and 174 (18.7%) in the South East. This total of 40.3% marks a slight increase from 2022-23, when the figure was 37.4%.

Among new chair appointments, 33.3% listed their principal residence in London and 18.5% in the South East (**Figure 18**).<sup>37</sup> Among reappointed chairs and 33.3% as London and 33.3% as the South East.<sup>38</sup>

### Additional appointments

Just 33.3% of appointees provided data on additional appointments held in 2023-24, meaning that we must treat these results with caution. Among those who responded the majority of appointees held another public appointment already – 43.0% said they held one other public appointment, 15.1% that they held two others, 5.2% three others (**Figure 19**). For only 35.5% of appointees in 2023-24 was it the sole public appointment they then held.

Among newly appointed chairs, 50.0% stated that they had one further appointment, 33.3% no further appointments, 11.1% three further appointments, and 5.6% two further appointments (**Figure 20**).<sup>39</sup> Among reappointed chairs, 52.6% stated that they had one further appointment, 26.3%

stated that they had none; 10.5% stated that they had two further appointments and another 10.5% that they had three.<sup>40</sup>

### Political activity

Under the Governance Code, political activity 'should not affect any judgement nor be a bar to appointment or being a member of an Advisory Assessment Panel.' The exception is for Senior Independent Panel Members, where political independence is essential. If a successful candidate is politically active, this must be publicly disclosed. As such, appointees and reappointees are asked about their political activity.

In 2022-23, appointees and reappointees were asked a two-pronged question: first, whether they have undertaken any political activity; second, if they answer affirmatively, for which party it was undertaken. Due to changes with the PADS, the Commissioner only has data for one question: have you undertaken any political activity? The Cabinet Office states that this is because the quality of information provided on political activity has not allowed for a reliable breakdown of the type of activity declared. The Cabinet Office has amended the collection of this information on the digital service to improve its usability in future years.

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<sup>37</sup> Among new chair appointees, 100% provided information for this question. Regions where the number of appointees declaring were less than five have not been included here.

<sup>38</sup> Of reappointed chairs 95.5% provided information while one reappointed chair responded 'prefer not to say'. Regions where the

number of appointees declaring were less than five have not been included here

<sup>39</sup> Among new chair appointees, 66.7% provided information while nine left this question 'blank'.

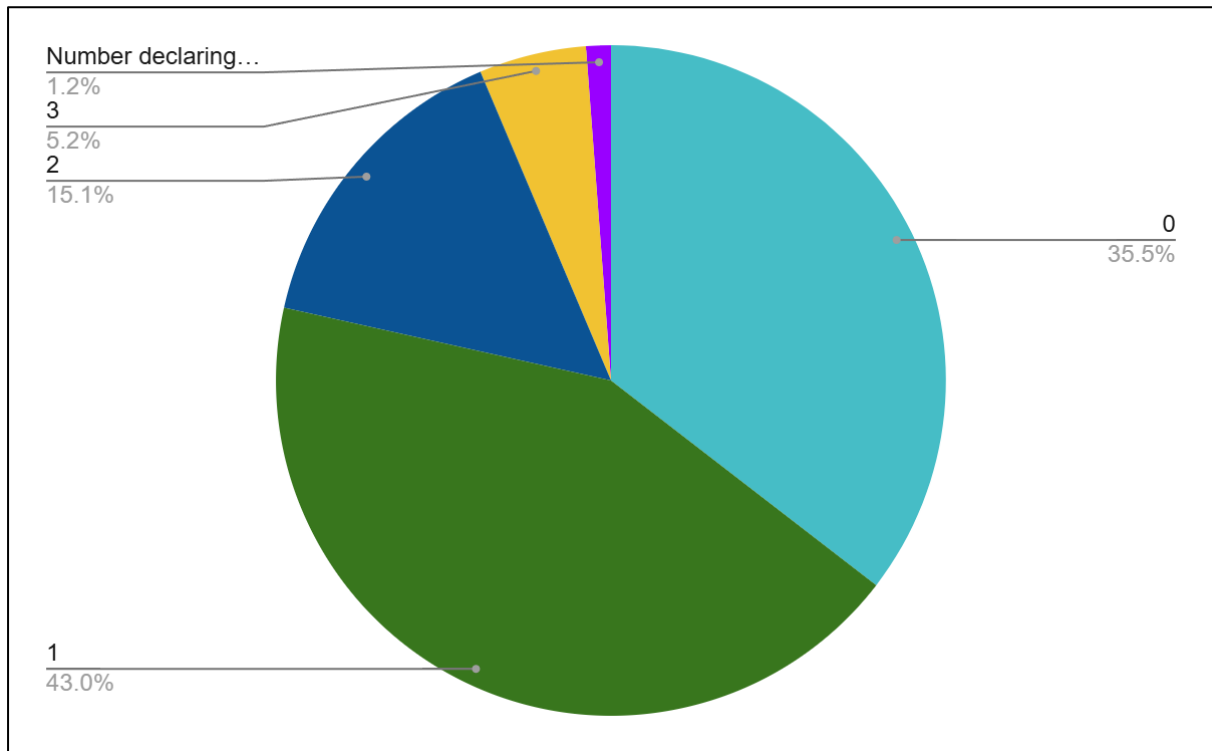
<sup>40</sup> Among chair reappointees, 86.4% provided information while one person provided a response of 'prefer not to say' and two people left the question 'blank'.

Those declaring political activity were a small minority of appointees and reappointees. Only 35 appointees or reappointees – representing 3.8% of appointees and reappointees – declared political activity appointees or reappointees. There were an additional 46 appointees and reappointees (4.1% of the total) who left this question blank (**Figure 21**).

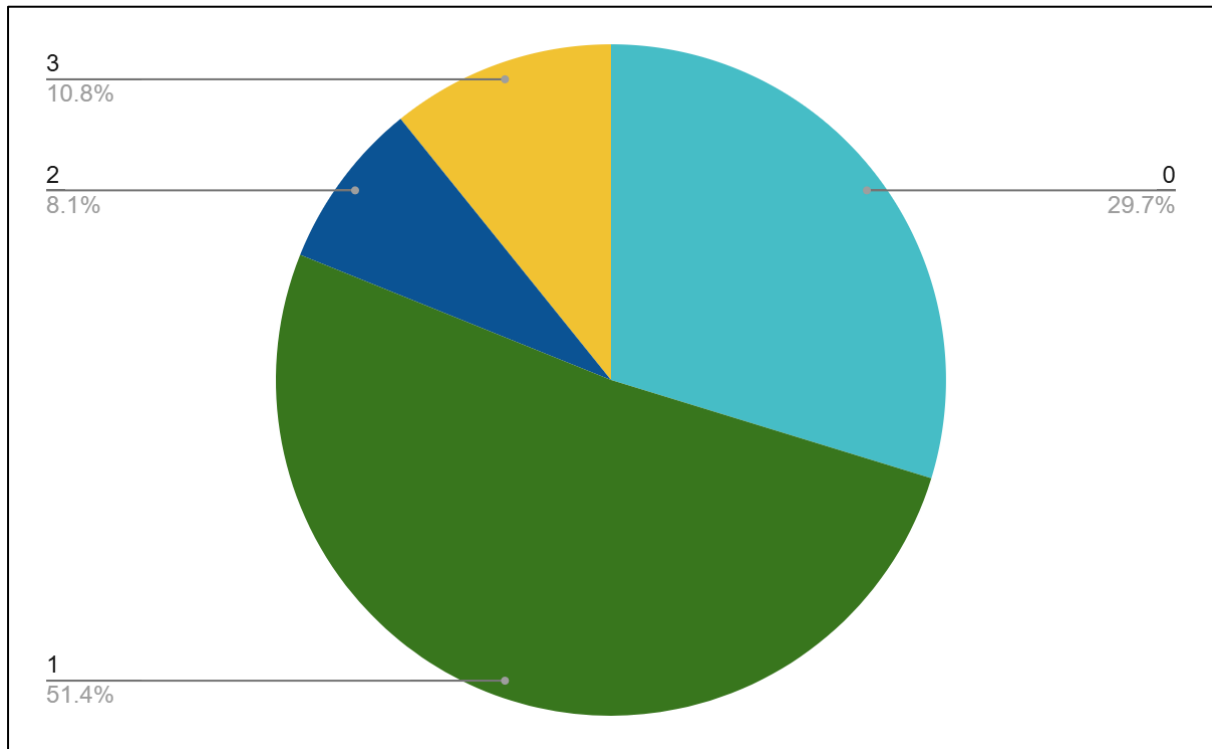
Of those candidates declaring political activity, 7.3% received a public appointment: 15 out of 205 applicants declared political activity. This compares with 13.3% of applicants who do not declare political activity (402 out of 3,020 applicants). It is important to note that, as in previous years, concerns about widespread politicisation of appointments processes are unfounded (**Figure 22**).



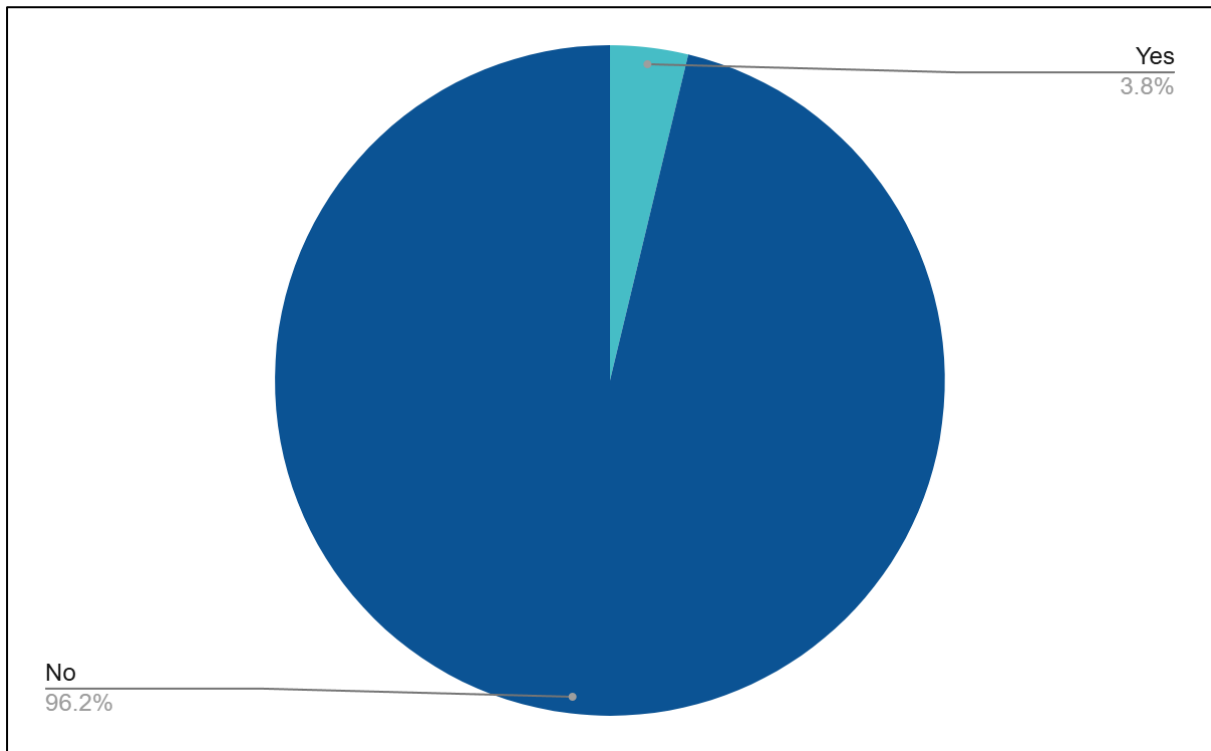
**Figure 19: Appointees and reappointees holding additional appointments, 2023-24.**



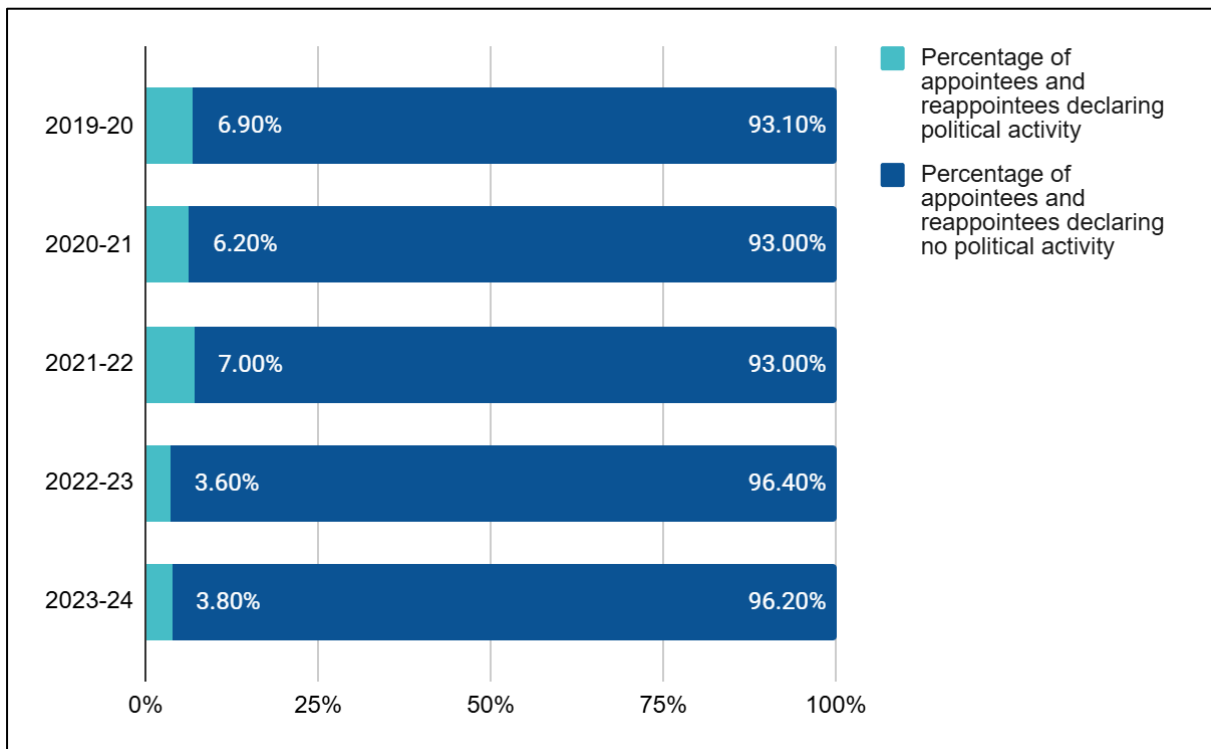
**Figure 20: Chair appointees and reappointees holding additional appointments, 2023-24.**



**Figure 21: Declaration of political activity by appointees and reappointees, 2023-24.**



**Figure 22: Declaration of political activity, 2019-2024.**



# Diversity: Welsh Government

The Welsh Government run their public appointments independently of the Cabinet Office and have their own separate systems. Data for most UK government campaigns in 2023-24 was collected automatically by the Public Appointments Digital Service (PADS); Welsh Government data was collected through manual methods, as in previous years. Data on the bodies and offices regulated by the Commissioner therefore fall under two distinct collection methods.

These differences are likely to grow over the next few years. The Cabinet Office, who run the PADS, does not extend to the Welsh Government. Moreover, Cabinet Office efforts to align diversity questions with those of the Office for National Statistics are not matched by equivalent efforts in the Welsh Government. This is most obvious in the collection of data on disability: where UK government departments have increasingly asked applicants a two-stage question about disability, the Welsh Government has maintained use of the previous one-stage question.

As a result, the Commissioner will continue to receive and analyse data on Welsh Government public appointments, but the analysis will be separate from that on UK government appointments. This is,

at root, for reasons of assurance and data integrity.

Data provided by the Welsh Government showed a total of 480 applicants across the campaigns run in 2023-24, with 219 of these applicants shortlisted, 69 found appointable and 53 appointed. The data also shows 17 reappointees in the same period.<sup>41</sup> One should always remember that sample sizes for Welsh Government diversity are much smaller than for the UK government.

Response rates for **ethnicity** remained high, as they were across most of the tracked categories of diversity: 437 (or 91.0%) of the 480 applicants answered a question about their ethnicity, rising to 50 (94.3%) out of 53 appointees. Of the 50 appointees who responded, 40 (or 80.0%) said they were white, four (8.0%) that they were Asian or Asian British and another four (8.0%) that they were Black or Black British. A further two (4.0%) responded 'mixed or multiple ethnic groups.'<sup>42</sup> This marked a sharp increase in ethnic diversity among Welsh Government appointees – to 20.0%, up from 9.8% in 2022-23 and 12.7% in 2021-22.

As noted above, the Welsh Government continues to use the one-stage **disability** question. Applicants simply do or do not

question about their ethnicity, 331 (or 75.7%) said they were white, 38 (8.7%) that they were Asian or Asian British and 35 (8.0%) that they were Black or Black British.

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<sup>41</sup> Of these 17 reappointees, no more than five provided data in response to any single diversity question. This response rate (29.4%) is too low to provide confidence in the robustness of the data.

<sup>42</sup> This was largely in line with the ethnicity of applicants. Of the 437 applicants to respond to a

declare a disability. For appointees, 51 (96.2%) of 53 answered the disability question. Of these, two (3.9%) declared a disability and 49 (96.1%) did not. While this proportion is low relative to the wider Welsh population (21.1%) and the proportion of applicants declaring a disability (14.8%), it should also be noted that due to the small number of appointments the timing of the reporting window can have a significant impact on this data.<sup>43</sup>

The **gender** split among Welsh Government appointees was perfectly balanced: of 53 appointees, 50 (94.3%) provided data; and of these 50, 25 (50.0%) were female and 25 (50.0%) were male. Female applicants remain a large minority of applicants (43.5%), but progress well through competitions. The 25 female appointees were drawn from 37 female candidates found appointable, a success rate of 67.6% whilst the success rate for male candidates was 83.3% – 25 of 30 candidates found appointable.

Among the 50 appointees who provided data about their **age** – a response rate of 94.3% – the distribution was familiar. The majority of appointments were made to those between 55 and 64 (44.0%) or between 45 and 54 (22.0%); 14% of appointments were made to candidates between 65 and 74. There were, though, some younger successful candidates. Three appointees (6.0%) were between the ages of 25 and 34 and a further seven

(14.0%) were between the ages of 34 and 45.

Response rates to the question on **sexual orientation** were also relatively high, with 90.4% of applicants and 88.7% of appointees providing data. In 2023-24, 8.5% of Welsh Government appointees declared themselves LGB+. This is more than double the figures of the 2021 Census, in which 3.0% of usual residents in Wales identified with an LGB+ sexual orientation.<sup>44</sup>

In total, 48 Welsh Government appointees (94.1%) provided data in response to the **religion and belief** question in 2023-24. The majority of those who provided data – 52.1% – said they were Christian. A third of respondents described themselves as atheist or as having no religion. Finally, 8.3% of responding appointees described themselves as Muslim, 4.2% as Buddhist and one as ‘other’. Christians were therefore slightly over-represented and atheists slightly under-represented, compared to the Welsh population as a whole.<sup>45</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of applicants and appointees listed Wales as their **area of principal residence**. This was the case for 380 of the 461 applicants who provided data (82.4%) and 42 of the 53 appointees who provided data (79.2%).

Candidates with backgrounds in the private sector seemed to struggle in campaigns for Welsh Government public appointments in 2023-24. The proportions

were 43.6% and 46.5% respectively. Welsh Government (2022), ‘Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion in Wales (Census 2021)’ (29 November 2022), <[gov.wales](https://gov.wales)>.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Disability: Census 2021’.

<sup>44</sup> Welsh Government, ‘Sexual orientation and gender identity in Wales (Census 2021) (revised)’ (29 November 2022), <[gov.wales](https://gov.wales)>.

<sup>45</sup> In 2021, the proportions of people in Wales identifying as Christian and reporting ‘No religion’

of respondents giving their **principal employment** as ‘mostly private sector’ (26.8% of applicants), ‘mostly wider public sector’ (29.4%) and ‘mixed’ (28.9%) were quite balanced. However, while 31.3% and 22.9% of appointees went to those with public sector or mixed backgrounds, respectively, the equivalent figure for those from the private sector was 16.7%. It is vital that those with a private sector background feel welcomed to contribute their valuable skills and experience to public bodies.

The lowest response rate – by a very substantial margin – was to the question about **additional appointments** currently held. Among 480 applicants, just 126 (26.3%) provided data; among 53 appointees, just 11 (20.8%). The overwhelming majority of respondents said they held no other public appointment – 79.4% of applicants, 81.8% of appointees.

Finally, of the 53 applicants in 2023-24, 51 chose to provide data on their **political activity**: of these 51, 48 (94.1%) said they were not politically active. Of the three who said they were politically active, two chose to provide data on their party affiliation: one said the activity had been on behalf of the Labour Party and one ticked ‘other’.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The options were Conservative, Green, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, Scottish National Party, Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Fein, Social

Democratic and Labour Party and ‘Any other parties’.

## Contact the Commissioner

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