

Public Sector Equality Duty Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report

2025-2029



Contents



1	Foreword	3	8	Staff and student equality monitoring	39
2	Executive summary	4	9	New equality outcomes 2025 – 2029	60
3	University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)	5	10	Conclusion	61
4	Legislative context	8	11	Appendix 1 New equality outcome action plan	62
5	Governance and strategy at UHI	11	12	Appendix 2 Protected characteristics and national equality outcomes (Scottish Funding Council)	68
6	UHI mainstreaming update	14	13	Appendix 3 Glossary of terms	69
7	UHI outcome progress 2021–25	24			

1 Foreword



Vicki Nairn
UHI Principal and Vice-Chancellor

I am pleased to present the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report 2025–29, a reflection of our enduring commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment for everyone at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).

At UHI, we believe that every individual should feel valued, supported and empowered – regardless of their background or personal circumstances. Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is not only a matter of principle but also central to our mission of providing flexible, accessible learning opportunities for all.

We are focused on continually enhancing the student experience and ensuring that both students and staff feel safe, respected and free to express their authentic selves in every aspect of university life.

Key initiatives demonstrating our progress include the Red Button student feedback service, which enables students to share concerns and improve the learning experience, and the launch of our Online Disclosure Tool, offering a safe and accessible way to report incidents of gender-based violence, whether past or present. These tools help foster a secure and supportive environment across our campuses.

In the face of ongoing economic and societal challenges, our staff continue to build meaningful relationships that strengthen our community. One standout achievement is UHI and eight of our academic partners joining the Scottish LGBTI+ Rainbow Mark, a significant step in affirming our support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and other (LGBTQI+) individuals.

The UHI STEM Outreach Programme has also played a vital role in promoting equality of opportunity, reaching over 7,000 children and families through local networks and community-based activities – encouraging the next generation to engage with science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

With our newly established equality outcomes, we are better positioned to make informed, evidence-based decisions that enhance our services and provide robust support for all members of our community, particularly those with protected characteristics.

As we move forward with UHI Transformation – during a time of great change for both the sector and our institution – it is more important than ever to stay grounded in our core values: collaboration, openness, respect, and excellence. We must remain committed to meaningful progress, working together to build a truly inclusive and empowering environment for everyone at UHI.

We look forward to continuing this journey with our staff, students and partners – ensuring that everyone feels a genuine sense of belonging at UHI.

2 Executive summary

UHI's Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report 2025–29 provides a comprehensive overview of the progress we've made in meeting our legislative requirements and advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in relation to the outcomes set for 2021–25. The report also includes employee and student equality monitoring information and UHI's new equality outcomes 2025–29.

UHI is a dynamic and forward-thinking tertiary partnership dedicated to fostering an inclusive learning environment, enriching experiences, and working collaboratively with our communities, staff, and students to champion equality, diversity, and inclusion. We aim to embed equality into our structures and daily practices by eliminating discrimination, advancing equal opportunities, and strengthening relationships across our institution.

Since setting our EDI outcomes in 2021, we have made significant progress. Key achievements include the implementation of inclusive infrastructure, a better understanding of staff and student needs through data collection and disclosure, accessible learning and teaching, and promoting inclusive communication.

We believe that significant progress has been made in enhancing our approach by improving partnership alignment across our equality agenda. This collaborative effort creates a more unified and effective strategy for embedding EDI across our campuses and communities.

Our core values – collaboration, openness, respect, and excellence – are at the heart of this journey, reflecting our aspiration for every individual to feel a true sense of belonging. This report highlights our progress in becoming a more inclusive tertiary institution, underscoring our commitment to integrating equitable practices that benefit both staff and students across all aspects of our work.

The new equality outcomes for 2025–29 are outlined, with a focus on ensuring that disabled staff and students feel safe, LGBTQI+ individuals can be themselves, and all staff and students have access to mental health support. The report underscores UHI's commitment to creating a more inclusive learning environment and collaborating with communities to support and celebrate EDI.



Overall, this report demonstrates our continuing dedication to integrating equitable practices across all functions for our staff, students, and all those connected to UHI.

3 University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)

Who we are

UHI is an integrated university combining further and higher education — the only institution of its kind in Scotland, and, one of only a few in Europe’.

We are more than a college and more than a traditional university: a diverse, flexible partnership, rooted in our communities and driven by their needs.

Our network of colleges, specialist teaching centres,

and internationally recognised research institutes delivers supported, flexible learning from access level to PhD.

With our campus of over 40 teaching and learning centres across the Highlands and Islands, Moray, and Perthshire, we offer education that’s local in focus and global in reach.

Students are at the heart of everything we do. Their success is our measure.

Through world-class teaching, research and knowledge exchange, UHI connects our regions to the world — and brings the world to our regions.

Welcoming students from over

50 countries

Top 10

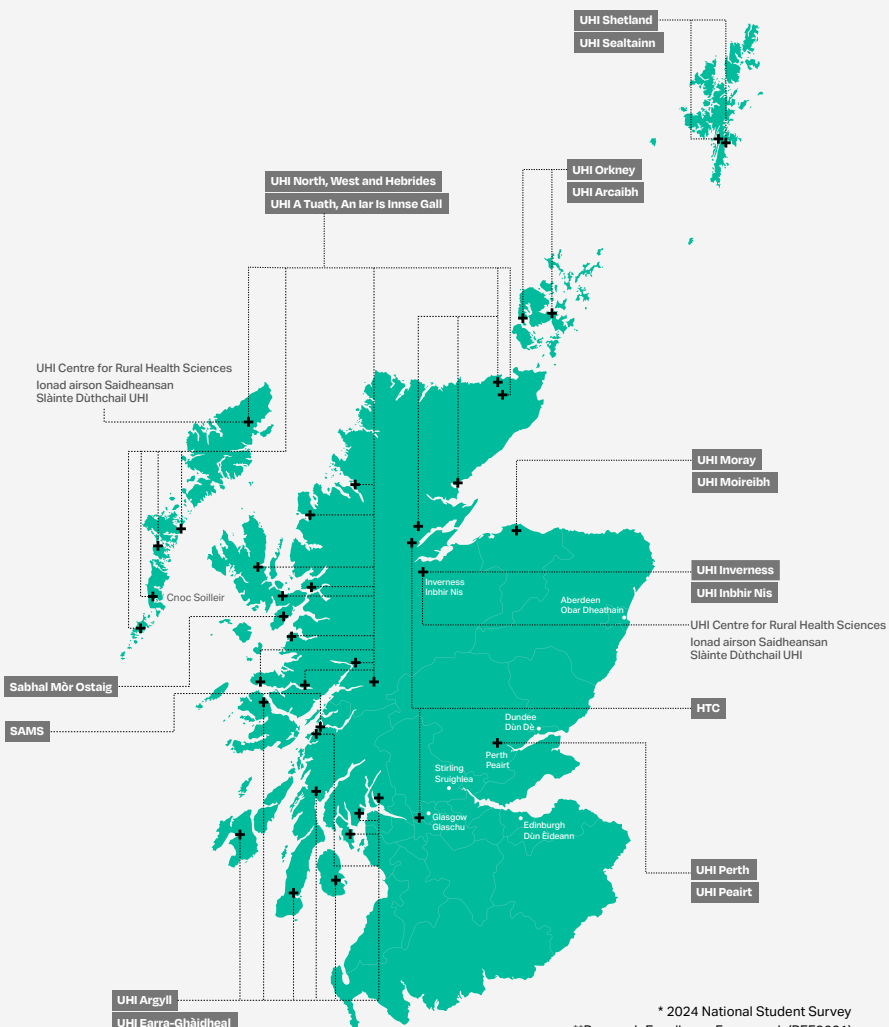
most affordable UK universities¹

Largest

student population in Scotland

81% student satisfaction*

Over **74%** of our research is ‘world leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’**



* 2024 National Student Survey
**Research Excellence Framework (REF2021)
1 Complete University Guide 2021

Core values

Collaboration

We value people working willingly and actively together on common tasks because we seek to be a more connected organisation.

Openness

We value an environment in which colleagues and students share ideas and communicate clearly. We aim to be approachable and encourage others to contribute and speak up and we ensure others feel their contribution is valued.

Respect

We value others in the workplace, are mindful of each other's capabilities, perspectives and backgrounds, and are thoughtful about our impact on others.

Excellence

We value a sense of purpose in our work by taking responsibility in our performance and behaviour, and we celebrate collectively in our achievements and those of our students and graduates.

Strategic Plan 2030

The UHI Strategic Plan 2030 is underpinned by operational excellence, with the UHI partnership committed to thinking, planning and acting as one in delivering on our mission and vision.

A fundamental part of our mission is to drive co-created education and research, enhanced by our unique landscapes, heritage and cultures. This energy and ambition will be channelled through five key strategic themes:

+ Teaching, learning, and student support
delivering a connected curriculum shaped by student needs and employer demands.

+ Research and innovation impact
leading world-class research rooted in our environment and heritage, with global reach.

+ Enterprise and growth
supporting regional economic transformation and entrepreneurial thinking.

+ Environmental sustainability
championing a just transition to net zero and safeguarding the ecosystems we call home.

+ Operational excellence
creating a streamlined, people-focused institution where every voice matters.

Central to the plan is our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). We believe that every individual has the right to feel valued, and EDI is not just a moral obligation, but it is also fundamental to our aim of providing flexible and supported learning opportunities.



4 Legislative context

General Equality Duty



The public sector equality duty (PSED), referred to as the 'General Equality Duty,' includes general and specific duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This legislation ensures that public authorities, including further and higher institutions, consider the impact of their decision-making on people with different protected characteristics.

The General Equality Duty requires UHI to have due regard to the need to:

- + eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other prohibited conduct.
- + advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- + foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not



The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination based on the following protected characteristics:

- + Age
- + Disability
- + Gender reassignment
- + Marriage and civil partnership
- + Pregnancy and maternity
- + Race
- + Religion or belief
- + Sex
- + Sexual orientation

General Equality Duty

The Scottish Specific Duties (2012) require UHI to:

- + Report progress on mainstreaming the General Equality Duty every two years
- + Publish and deliver equality outcomes every four years
- + Gather and publish employee protected characteristic information every two years
- + Publish gender pay gap information
- + Publish statements on equal pay
- + Publish board member diversity information gathered by the Scottish Ministers
- + Assess and review policies and practice
- + Ensure accessibility in published information



UHI partners and equality

The UHI partnership includes 10 colleges and research institutions, but not all are listed under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The following academic partners are required to publish equality information every two years and deliver equality outcomes every four years:

- + **UHI ARGYLL**
- + **UHI INVERNESS**
- + **UHI MORAY**
- + **UHI NORTH, WEST AND HEBRIDES**
- + **UHI ORKNEY**
reports employee information with Orkney Council
- + **UHI PERTH**
- + **UHI SHETLAND**
- + **SABHAL MÒR OSTAIG**



Athena Swan Bronze Charter Award



The Athena Swan Charter assists institutions in achieving gender equality objectives and promotes inclusive working practices that enhance the retention of esteemed academic, professional, and support staff. UHI are preparing an application for the Athena Swan Bronze Charter, which will affirm our dedication to fostering a positive and equitable work environment.

In 2023, the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), a partner of UHI, were awarded the Athena Swan Bronze Level Charter, recognising their dedication to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). This achievement demonstrates how institutions can effectively integrate EDI, not because it's legally required but because it's the right thing to do.

Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion



As of 2023, UHI has been a member of the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion, a UK-based organisation that supports employers in creating diverse teams and inclusive cultures through training and consultancy services. UHI has obtained essential level membership, which provides digital self-service access to various resources, including webinars, case studies, employer guides, toolkits, and quick guides. This membership is part of our ongoing efforts to become a more inclusive employer. It allows UHI to participate in TIDemark self-assessment, offering a roadmap to focus on impactful areas and measure UHI's standing compared to other members. The membership will be further promoted in May to encourage all UHI staff to access these resources.

5 Governance and strategy at UHI

5.1 Court

The UHI court is responsible for overall strategic direction and governance. Its powers and duties are detailed in the university's articles of association. The court can delegate some responsibilities to individuals, committees or groups and is also referred to as the board of governors.

Gender balance of UHI Court

There are currently 20 members on the court. Gender balance has improved with the appointment of more women. The current composition includes 10 women and 10 men.

Gender Representation Objective (GRO)

UHI is legally required to meet the Scottish Ministers' reporting obligations, set out under Regulation 2 of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 (Reports) Regulations 2020. Since 2020, UHI has successfully met the GRO.



5.2 Senior management

The principal and vice-chancellor and associated staff are responsible for the overall operations of UHI as well as relationships with our partners and research institutions throughout the Highlands and Islands, Moray, and Perthshire.

Each partner and research institution has its own principal or director with responsibilities to their board of management.

There are currently three women and three men in our senior executive team, and two women and nine men in our senior management team.

Senior Executive Team



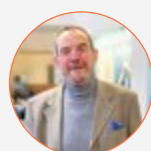
Professor Brian Williams
**Deputy Principal Academic
and Research**

Professor Jane Lewis
**Vice-Principal for
Strategic Projects**



Lorna Walker
**Chief Operating Officer and
University Secretary**

Mike Baxter
Chief Financial Officer



Professor Nick Owens
**Vice-Principal for
Research and Innovation**

Vicki Nairn
**Principal and
Vice-Chancellor**



Senior Management Team

- + Professor David Worthington,
**Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities,
Business and Education**
- + Professor Derek McGhee
Dean of Research and Innovation
- + John Maher
Director of Physical and Digital Infrastructure
- + Professor Keith Smyth
Dean of Learning and Teaching
- + Max Brown
Director of Transformation and Business Planning
- + Michael Boylan
Director of Strategy, People and Culture
- + Pamela Barrett
Interim Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
- + Roger Sendall
Deputy University Secretary
- + Scott Rhynas
Director of Finance
- + Stephen Sheridan
Director of Economic Development and Advancement
- + Dr Su Bryan
Dean of the Faculty of Science, Health and the Environment

5.3 UHI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Purpose

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee offers a strategically important platform for progressing our EDI agenda at multiple levels across our partnership. The committee is responsible for reviewing, monitoring, and implementing key priorities and actions, particularly those which advance equality of opportunity for all UHI students and staff. As well as this, the committee offers guidance and support to those fulfilling EDI responsibilities, while facilitating a supportive network to champion best practice and engagement across our complex organisation.

Membership

The EDI Committee consists of members from across the UHI partnership, including individuals who are not subject to Public Sector Equality Reporting Duties, and ensuring a diverse range of expertise. Its membership is representative of key business areas from both academic and professional services, including:



UHI SHETLAND

- + Human resources and organisational development lead



SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION FOR MARINE SCIENCE

- + Library and research administrator



UHI

- + Chair: chief operating officer and university secretary
- + Director of strategy, people and culture
- + Interim head of corporate communications
- + Governance and policy manager
- + Student support manager
- + Equality, diversity and inclusion manager



UHI MORAY

- + Head of curriculum



UHI INVERNESS

- + Vice principal student experience and quality
- + Head of human resources



UHI NORTH, WEST AND HEBRIDES

- + Director of human resources and organisational development
- + Senior human resources and organisational development manager
- + Senior records manager



HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS STUDENT ASSOCIATION (HISA)

- + Chief executive officer
- + Director of community and communications
- + HISA president

Currently, membership and the committees' terms of reference are under review as we aim to utilise our collective skills and expertise to further develop our EDI practices.



SABHAL MÒR OSTAIG

- + Head of human resources



UHI PERTH

- + Director of human resources and organisational development
- + Equality diversity and inclusion advisor



UHI ORKNEY

- + Assistant principal

Collaboration

The EDI Committee has collaborated on the review of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy for 2024. This policy is designed to benefit both students and staff within the UHI partnership. It has been updated to incorporate current legislation and clarify responsibilities. The policy articulates our commitment to ensuring that every member of the UHI community is treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. Under the Equality Act 2010, all individuals have a legal right to bring their authentic selves to work and study at UHI within a supportive and inclusive environment.

6 UHI mainstreaming update



Mainstreaming equality is when an organisation integrates equality into the day-to-day working across all functions. UHI is responsible for ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion is part of the structures, behaviour, and culture of all our services. This is achieved by having due regard to meet the need to:

- + eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other prohibited conduct.
- + advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- + foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

Evidence of effective practices in incorporating equality across UHI functions will be presented through examples which address various needs, highlighting key protected characteristics. Some examples cover multiple characteristics such as age, disability, and sexual orientation, referred to as intersectional. Each example aligns with the values of collaboration, openness, respect, and excellence.

Evidence of mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion at UHI

6.1 How UHI is eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act

Mainstreaming example: Red Button – student feedback service

Protected characteristic: Intersectional

UHI is committed to enhancing the student experience. Students can use the Red Button to share their feedback or suggest improvements.

This informal mechanism allows students to raise any issues, including those related to protected characteristics. Since 2024, students can also use the service in British Sign Language. Here's a glimpse of the Red Button's effectiveness in supporting UHI students.

56

Students used the service from November to January.

We now offer the option to contact us using British Sign Language.



Why did students use the red button?

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| + Facilities | + Learning and Teaching | + Exams and assessment |
| + Student Services | + Support | + Online resources |

You said, we did. A selection of actions this quarter:

Students reported a number of issues with cleanliness of rooms, heating issues and repair issue with toilets.

Estates teams investigated and resolved these issues providing a better learning environment.

Issues with content on a module were reported.

A standardised approach to content and layout will be provided on the course.

A class reported issues with lecturer availability.

Extra support was put in place to cover staff shortage and support students.

Some students were unable to reach the right member of staff with accommodation issues.

The accommodation team contacted the students and looked into their issues.

6.2 How UHI is eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act

Mainstreaming example: Online Disclosure Tool

Protected characteristic: Sex

One in seven women students in the UK has experienced serious physical or sexual assault, and 68% have faced sexual harassment during their studies. Therefore, it is crucial that UHI ensures the safety of our campuses for all students. To support this, we launched the Online Disclosure Tool on Monday 25 November 2024, aligning with the start of 16 Days of Action Against Violence.

What is the Online Disclosure Tool?

The tool will provide an alternative and more accessible way for students to disclose current or historical gender-based violence (GBV) incidents. At present, students can disclose incidents to any staff member, but face-to-face disclosure can be a barrier. An online system can provide students with a level of confidence to take the first step to talk about their experience.

The system is aimed at:

- + Current students only
- + Those who wish to disclose current or historical GBV incidents
- + Only the victim/survivor

The system should not be used by those:

- + Requiring an urgent response – the tool is not monitored 24/7 and should not be used in emergencies
- + Who have witnessed an incident or are worried about someone else
- + Who attend UHI while also attending secondary school
- + Who do not want their local GBV leads/deputies to know
- + Wanting to discuss a breach of the Student Code of Conduct that is not GBV related, for example, bullying

How do students use the tool?

The tool utilises SharePoint and Microsoft Forms to manage disclosures safely and securely. Each partner has had a dedicated SharePoint area, which only their enrolled students can access.

Students are presented with information on the tool and how it operates, for example:

- + Signposts students in crisis to appropriate resources
- + The difference between disclosing and reporting
- + Who can see their details
- + What happens after a disclosure is made

After this information, students are directed to the Microsoft Form, which asks a series of closed-ended questions including what type of gender-based violence they experienced, who the perpetrator is/was, and where the abuse took place.

Students may choose to stay anonymous, limiting the university's response. However, the information can highlight trends for targeted support, such as prompting staff training and student awareness sessions.

If students provide their details, a member of the local Student Support team will contact them to offer the necessary support and help identify next steps.

The university has approximately 100 staff who have undertaken Rape Crisis Scotland training specifically created for the college and university sector, thereby ensuring staff have the appropriate skills to respond to such sensitive disclosures.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and records management compliance

Due to the sensitive nature of these disclosures, the university's data protection officer and Records Management team have both been closely involved in supporting the tool's development to ensure it meets GDPR and data management compliance.

With the support of the university's student support manager, the data protection officer has written the privacy notice and data protection impact assessment. Local data protection contacts have been consulted and were invited to a demonstration of the system. It has been agreed that data should only be contained within the tool for a short period, and a process for managing this has been created to support UHI partners to implement.

Conclusion

The Online Disclosure Tool has been many years in the making, and UHI is proud to be another step closer to ensuring the safety of its students. UHI treats any increase in disclosures as a way of demonstrating the university's commitment to tackling gender-based violence (GBV) and to make our campuses more secure.

We are thankful to the Student Support team, the Records Management team, our data protection officer and student support colleagues from across the partnership for their support in the tool's creation.

" The introduction of the online disclosure tool reinforces the university's commitment to student safety and tackling gender-based violence on our campuses, and most importantly, is an additional mechanism for students impacted by GBV to make a disclosure and get access to the support they require. "

Lyndsay Sutherland, Student Support Manager

6.3 How UHI is advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

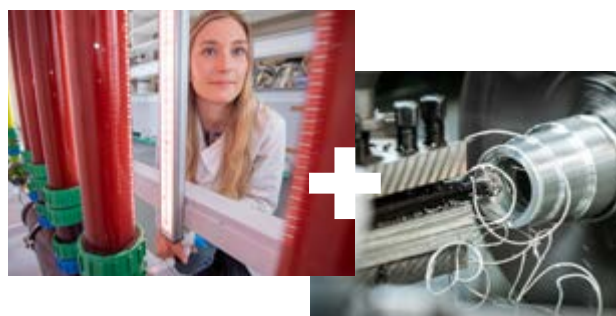
Mainstreaming example: UHI STEM Outreach Programme

Protected characteristic: Sex

STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) is a well-established area and focus for education. UHI recognises its importance and strives to embed this interdisciplinary approach in our curriculum – to inspire innovation through creativity via the arts, where STEM becomes STEAM.

Our UHI strategy identifies that a science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics approach to a multi-disciplinary curriculum produces the most professionally flexible graduates.

The UHI STEM Outreach Programme has evolved over the years to address skills gaps in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.



Programme overview

- + This is a three-year, funded programme focused on early years and primary school children while also building STEM confidence and capacity with primary school teachers.
- + A key aspect has been the facilitation of local STEM networks, geographically centred around UHI partners and within communities of interest.
- + This promotes information exchange and supports collaborative partnerships for planning local STEM activities throughout the education journey.
- + Local networks are a critical link enabling us to join up the national Scottish Government STEM Education and Training Strategy through the regional Highlands and Islands STEM partnerships (chaired by UHI).

Funding and support

- + This outreach programme is uniquely funded with a pooled budget where both UHI and industry partners contribute. This has enabled a three-year engagement programme (2023–26) covering the whole of the Highlands and Islands, and Argyll and Bute, Moray and Perthshire.
- + This programme has been supported with generous funding from offshore wind project developers: West of Orkney Windfarm, Buchan Offshore Wind, Thistle Wind Partners, Northland Power and Ossia – a joint venture project led by SSE Renewables, Marubeni and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners.

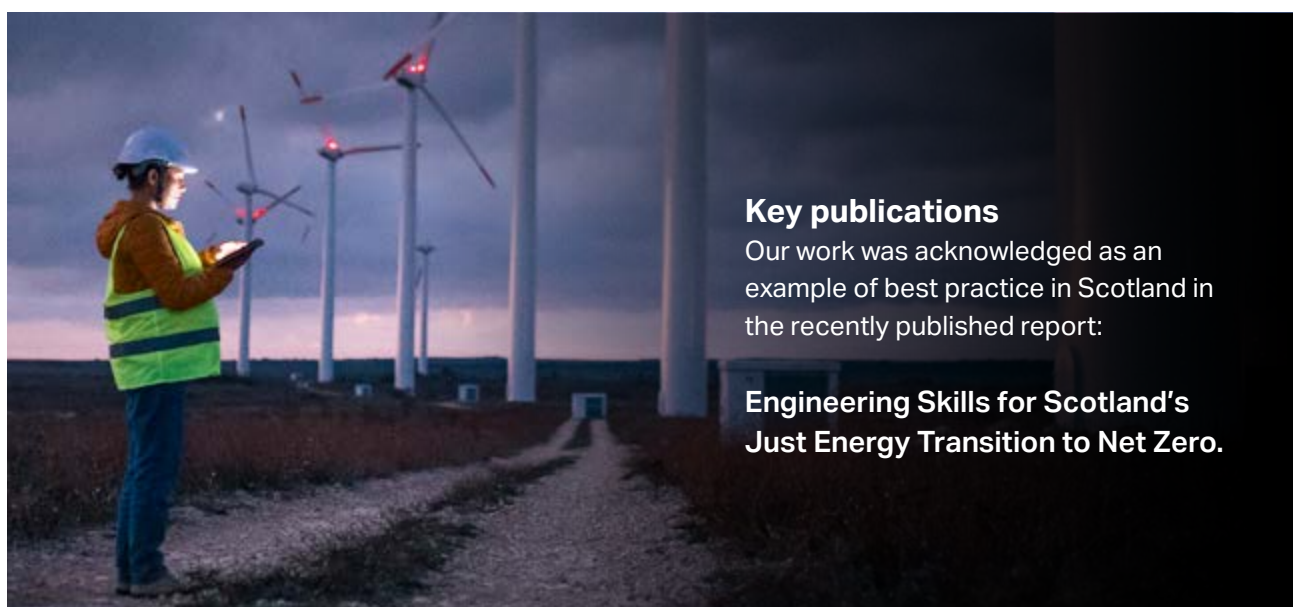
Programme goals

The STEM Outreach Programme has two main goals:

- + Inspiration – We aim to inspire future generations by influencing pathways into STEM from early years, through primary and secondary school, and into further education and training, to promote access into STEM careers. We achieve this by increasing confidence of both students and educators in engaging with STEM subjects. We provide schools with access to essential equipment and teaching resources, facilitate STEM learning, and offer on-site support to integrate STEM education within the school curriculum.
- + Collaboration and coordination – We work with STEM partners to inform and enhance our activities, providing experiences aimed at developing STEM skills and careers aligned with business needs and economic growth in the local area. We also continue to address equity of opportunity, focusing on rural areas and gender. The UHI team collaborates with other agencies involved in STEM outreach by supporting and coordinating local plans and activities.

Success

- + All materials are available in both English and Gaelic, and over the past academic year we have delivered inspiring engagement activities using our bespoke 'Lend-a-Lab' materials, developed based on feedback from teachers.
- + In the first full year of the programme (academic year 2023/24), approximately 7,800 children in primary schools across the UHI regions received a 'Lend a Lab' STEM engagement experience. Other community outreach activities reached more than 3,700 children and their families. The qualitative feedback from teachers and children has been excellent.
- + This crucial outreach programme promotes STEM subjects, skills and future careers at the earliest opportunity in the education journey. It effectively addresses inequalities of access to resources across the UHI region as well as builds STEM capacity with key influencers, including teachers and parents.



Key publications

Our work was acknowledged as an example of best practice in Scotland in the recently published report:

Engineering Skills for Scotland's Just Energy Transition to Net Zero.

6.4 How UHI is advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Mainstreaming example: Widening access

Protected characteristic: Intersectional and socio-economic background

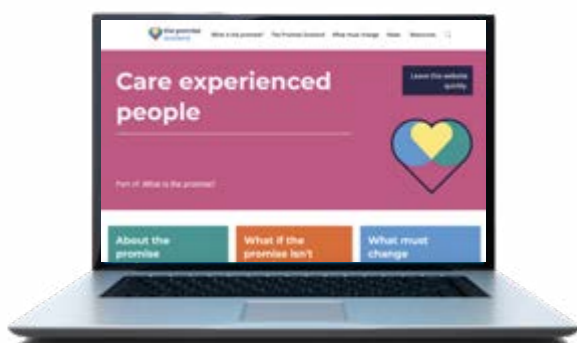
UHI is dedicated to promoting widening access and maintaining a fair representation of students entering higher education. Widening access means making sure that all individuals with the potential to benefit from higher education can do so, regardless of their background or financial circumstances.

UHI has progressively implemented various strategies aimed at supporting widening access and advancing equality of opportunity for priority groups. These efforts ensure that we accurately reflect the diverse regions we serve. The following are examples of commendable initiatives supporting care-experienced students, estranged students, and student carers.



Experienced students

Promise Scotland is a national promise to care-experienced children and young people that they will grow up loved, safe, and respected.



Progress

- + The Priority Groups Forum convenes two to three times per year to review support for care-experienced students. This forum allows academic partners to share information on student support, discuss challenges faced, and receive national updates.
- + Efforts have been made to ensure the institution's compliance with GDPR in the collection and use of data during the application and enrolment processes, particularly in providing support for care-experienced students.
- + Dedicated webpage is kept up to date with relevant information.
- + Participate in Care Day via social media promotion of the support available to students.
- + The Annual Care-Experienced student survey gives valuable feedback on students' experiences with us.

Challenges

- + Encouraging student engagement in seeking support or participating in activities remains a significant challenge.
- + Staff are occupied with other high-priority tasks, making it challenging to allocate sufficient time to this work.
- + There is a lack of confidence in certain data reports used to identify students, with some anomalies arising due to confusion over declarations made at application and enrolment.

Upcoming activities:

- + Who Cares? Scotland will provide up to date staff training.
- + Add student case studies to the webpage to show how support services helped students.
- + Explore methods for collecting more comprehensive data, beginning with a pilot of a reporting spreadsheet that UHI partners will complete.
- + Continue to raise awareness of the support services available to students.
- + Evaluate the effectiveness of the annual care-experienced survey and explore alternative methods for collecting feedback.
- + Determine if a shared method for creating transition plans can be implemented across the partnership.

What is necessary to ensure UHI can maintain its role in fulfilling the promise?

- + Improved access to staff training opportunities within Scotland, as external organisations no longer offer the same provision as before.

- + Improved access to national data, such as information from Student Awards Agency Scotland on the number of students accessing the Care-Experienced bursary at our institution.
- + Universities can create a local practitioner network. The North Forum once served this purpose but is no longer active.
- + Consistent feedback from Scottish Government on the outcomes of requests to organisations in relation to their Corporate Parenting plans.

Estranged students

Stand Alone commitment statement

UHI earned the Stand Alone pledge in 2019, showing our commitment to estranged students. We regret Stand Alone's closure but remain grateful for their support and guidance over the years. The university understands that entering further and higher education can be a daunting experience for any student but if you are estranged and without support structures at home to help you, this creates additional pressure.

We are keen to ensure that all our estranged students are fully supported, to allow them to have an enjoyable and enriching experience throughout their journey with us.

We pledge to continue the work of Stand Alone and ensure the needs of our estranged students are met.

Student Carers Policy

Our Student Carers Policy is currently under review and will shortly be going through UHI's committee structure for formal approval.

The Priority Group Forum is responsible for the review. This group includes members from across the university partnership, which ensures the policy provides a strategic response to our student carers and ensures a consistency in how they are supported, no matter where they are located.

6.5 How UHI is fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Mainstreaming example: LGBT+ History Month and Scottish LGBTI+ Rainbow Mark

Protected characteristic: Sexual orientation, gender



LGBT+ History Month

LGBT+ History Month is an annual observance held each February to recognise lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history, and the history of the gay rights and related civil rights movements.

The theme for LGBT+ History Month 2025 was 'Activism and Social Change'. This theme celebrates the work of LGBT+ people who have helped create social change.

Given the rising online tensions this year, heightened by recent political events and changes in the social media landscape, we prioritised LGBT+ History Month events and resources over highlighting individual stories of students, staff, or alumni. This approach is designed to safeguard and support our community during this time.

Sexual orientation, Sex and Gender Reassignment

Scottish LGBTI+ Rainbow Mark

At UHI, inclusivity is at the heart of everything we do. In February 2024, during LGBT+ History Month, UHI and eight of our partners proudly joined the Scottish LGBTI+ Rainbow Mark initiative. This milestone highlights our unwavering commitment to creating inclusive, supportive spaces across the Highlands and Islands, Moray, and Perthshire.

The Rainbow Mark, developed in collaboration with LGBTI+ communities, is a powerful tool designed to enhance visibility, promote inclusion, reduce isolation, and foster welcoming environments throughout Scotland. By embracing this initiative, UHI reinforces its dedication to ensuring that every campus and learning centre is a safe, affirming space where LGBTI+ students, staff, and the wider community feel empowered and valued.

Adding a pronouns option to Microsoft 365

Since February 2025, students and staff across the UHI partnership have had the option to include or exclude the pronouns field in their profile card at their discretion.

Displaying pronouns in Microsoft 365 profiles is a meaningful way to express one's identity while fostering a more inclusive and respectful environment. It also demonstrates an awareness and understanding of pronouns, contributing to a culture of inclusivity across UHI.

6.6 How UHI is fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Mainstreaming example: Decolonisation and Anti-Racism in the Classroom

Protected characteristic: Race

LTA Connect: Decolonisation and Anti-Racism in the Classroom

In February 2024, the Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) facilitated a webinar called Decolonisation and Anti-Racism in the Classroom. The session was presented by Kaushika Patel, Deputy Dean for the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at De Montfort University (DMU). Kaushika is also the Director for Decolonising DMU through which she has led the university work on race equity which, in April 2023, resulted in the awarding of the first ever sector Silver Race Equality Charter award.

The webinar outlined DMU's journey to building an anti-racist university and the embedding of decolonising practices into the infrastructure of the university. Kaushika discussed mindset changes in disrupting and decolonising teaching practices, spaces, and experiences. The session highlighted a culturally accessible curriculum and how students are represented within it. Tools used by DMU staff in their decolonising efforts were discussed, supported by case studies.

The session was well attended by colleagues in UHI and externally and was evaluated positively from UHI participants, feedback included:

" Begun to understand the concepts, language and actions required around decolonisation and anti-racism. Able to recognise steps that could be taken to review existing processes, and session gave access to other resources too. It added some confidence. "

" The session was a useful reminder of the importance of decolonising the curriculum."

Other events from LTA will cover inclusive practice in learning and teaching. This academic year our LTA Connect webinar series is focused on compassionate pedagogies.

7 UHI outcome progress 2021-25

In 2021, UHI set equality outcomes which would be progressed and achieved by 2025. This section of the report will provide evidence of best practice to date, and each outcome area will be supported by an example of best practice.

1. Increasing cross partnership activities and collaboration

- + Example: Student Partnership Agreement
- + Example: UHI British Sign Language Plan 2024–30

2. Inclusive infrastructure: leadership, governance, and management

- + Example: Learning and Teaching Academy – academic leadership
- + Example: UHI Mentoring Scheme

3. Increase stakeholder engagement and community partnership

- + Example: Highlands and Islands Students' Association

4. Better understand our staff and students: data and disclosure

- + Example: Human Resources and Organisational Development
- + Example: Staff development and training
- + Example: Mental Health Strategy

5. Increasing student support, representation, wellbeing, and voice

- + Example: Gender-based violence – 16 Days of Action

6. Inclusive processes: diversifying and developing our staff

- + Example: The Aurora Leadership Programme
- + Example: Learning and Teaching Academy

7. Inclusive communication: digital, Gaelic, British Sign Language, and culture

- + Example: Corporate Communications

Outcome 1

Increasing cross partnership activities and collaboration

Student Partnership Agreement

The Student Partnership Agreement 2024–26 aims to enhance the student experience through collaboration between students and staff. Agreed by the university's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) and Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA) it focuses on three themes:

Theme 1

Improved academic growth, engagement and quality

Theme 2

Active campaigning and community engagement

Theme 3

Celebrating success.

Themes 2 and 3 include aspects of student sport. With the area of sport, the strategy and action plan have included work towards equalities areas – LGBT+ sport and disability sport. More details are available on our student partnership agreement webpage.

Improved academic growth, engagement and quality

This theme includes improving the student experience, evidenced through survey results, improving the student voice rep system and other such initiatives. It also includes the active campaigning of elected association officers on their manifesto pledges.

Active campaigning and community engagement

This theme includes an annual general meeting / conference to which all students are invited, and other initiatives to build student community.

Celebrating success

This theme includes employability skills development, annual teaching awards, sporting blues, volunteer achievement and student voice rep reward and recognition.

UHI British Sign Language Plan 2024–30

Our British Sign Language Plan (BSLP) serves the UHI partnership as required by the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2014. It sets out the actions we will take over the next six years to promote the use and understanding of British Sign Language Plan (BSL) in Scotland. It also reflects the aims and priority areas of the BSL National Plan 2023–29, where these are relevant to the work of the partnership.

Our BSLP includes actions that are tailored to meet our partnership needs, based on themes identified within the sector and in consultation with the deaf community in the Highland region. This plan outlines our efforts to increase partnership activities and collaboration, showing how UHI engages with our communities, staff, and students to enhance the student experience. All actions, monitoring and progress details can be found in our [BSLP 2024–30](#).

Outcome 2

Inclusive infrastructure: leadership, governance, and management

Academic leadership

The Learning Teaching Academy (LTA) has supported three women colleagues to submit applications directly with Advance HE for Principal Fellowship, which recognises experienced colleagues working in Higher Education who can demonstrate a sustained record of strategic leadership and impact on high-quality learning. All were successful in gaining this important professional recognition on first submission.

Through the UHI Scheme for Professional Recognition ALPINE (Accredited Learning, Professional development and Innovation in Education) the LTA has supported nine women colleagues in six different UHI partners to seek and successfully achieve Advance HE Senior Fellowship. Senior Fellowship acknowledges and recognises colleagues who have influenced learning and teaching practice at UHI. As part of the portfolio route for this scheme, an alternative mode of submission has been developed: a digital case study – a recorded presentation – as an alternative to a traditional written case study.

The UHI Mentoring Scheme

The UHI Mentoring Scheme offers UHI colleagues across the partnership the opportunity to engage in one-to-one confidential conversations. This includes support for all women colleagues participating in or beyond the Aurora Leadership Programme, and for colleagues seeking their Advance HE Fellowships.

The scheme is open to new, early career and more experienced colleagues as both mentees and mentors and is organised around four strands of mentoring:

- + Learning and teaching enhancement
- + Professional recognition
- + Research
- + Scholarship development

The scheme is important to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for staff to engage in confidential conversations that are free to explore challenges and explore goals that recognise the individuals' personal aspirations and aims.

Outcome 3

Increase stakeholder engagement and community partnership

Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA)

In 2024, HISA established an equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) Committee composed of students and staff to support, monitor and develop HISA's internal EDI work. This committee will oversee and develop activities, resources and campaigns for the student community.

Representatives of this committee will have the opportunity to attend training and network with local and national external organisations to enhance their knowledge, advice and support of best practice.

HISA have gathered student feedback on facilities access through visits, Student Voice Representatives and communication channels, and are working with UHI to remove barriers.

Our advice service assists with accommodation requests, access complaints, and provides info on disability bursaries and additional support. In 2023, officers campaigned for gender-neutral toilets at various academic partners.

HISA's key EDI events and initiatives

LGBT+ History Month 2024 and 2025

- + On-campus events featuring performances, games, and activities.
- + Online events such as trivia games and role-playing games.
- + Articles offering student advice, historical insights, personal stories, and profiles of significant LGBT+ figures.
- + Promotion of external events, support networks, and resources.

Islamophobia Awareness Month (November 2024)

- + Awareness-raising events, including an engagement stall at UHI Inverness and UHI House.
- + A dedicated awareness video by the HISA president.
- + Informative articles and promotion of relevant resources and external organisations.

Transgender Awareness Week (November 2023 and 2024)

- + Participation in vigils with students at UHI Inverness and UHI Perth.
- + Promotion of external resources and celebration of transgender icons.
- + Articles on inclusion, allyship, and UHI-specific guidance.
- + Collaboration with the Queerness+ club to host an awareness stall at UHI Inverness.
- + Development of an educational PowerPoint for online and classroom use.
- + A formal statement of support from student officers.

16 Days of Action against gender-based violence (November to December 2024)

- + Promotion of the new UHI Disclosure Tool and Scotland's first gender-based violence in education survey.
- + Collaboration with Rape Crisis Moray to provide training for HISA and UHI.
- + Support for Reclaim the Night marches in Moray and Perth.
- + White Ribbon Campaign initiatives and promotion of relevant media.

16 Days of Action against Gender-Based Violence (2023)

- + HISA staff became White Ribbon ambassadors.
- + Student officers led a White Ribbon campaign featuring blogs and videos.
- + Online consent workshop in partnership with Rape Crisis Moray and Rape and Sexual Abuse Service Highland.
- + Support and attendance at Reclaim the Night marches in Perth and Inverness.
- + Awareness activities with charities in Orkney and a sexual wellbeing workshop with UHI Moray and Rape Crisis Moray.

Student networks and societies

In 2023, HISA launched seven student networks based on protected characteristics:

- + International students
- + Neurodiversity
- + Pride
- + Accessibility/disability
- + Students of colour
- + Women
- + Online students

These networks serve as permanent student groups designed to provide safe spaces, foster community, and advocate for student needs. They also play an active role in planning awareness campaigns and sponsoring activities.

Clubs and societies

- + The QueernessPlus club was relaunched at UHI Inverness, and HISA has collaborated with them on awareness campaigns and activities.
- + Connection with external organisations such as Highland Pride, Inverness Kiki, and LEAP Sports Scotland to enhance engagement.
- + Formation of the UHI Furry Society, which fosters LGBTQ+ and neurodiverse community connections through anthropomorphic hobbies.
- + Various sports clubs have organised awareness-themed events, including Reclaim the Night, scuba dives, and inclusive sports sessions.

Inclusive sports initiatives

Since early 2023, HISA has launched multiple inclusive sporting events and activities:

- + One-off sessions, including LGBTQ+ and disability-inclusive pickleball, Project Forte fencing sessions for women, and LGBTQ+ sporting days.
- + Long-term projects such as boccia for students with support needs at UHI Perth, UHI Moray, UHI Inverness, and UHI North, West and Hebrides.
- + Launch of an accessible basketball club at UHI Perth in February 2025.
- + Inclusion of boccia in the UHI Varsity tournament 2025.

All HISA clubs and societies welcome participation from all students. These initiatives focus on promoting inclusion and accessibility, thereby fostering a more diverse and welcoming environment for everyone.



Outcome 4

Better understand our staff and students: data and disclosure

Human Resources (HR) and Organisation Development (OD) have proactively sought to better understand staff through data and disclosure. Activities and incentives which evidence recent developments have been highlighted below.

Employee wellbeing

- + A monthly wellbeing bulletin, provided by our employee assistance partner, focuses on personal wellbeing and is available to employees. This includes a wide range of topics and signposting to relevant websites, organisations for wellbeing and mental health support.
- + Employees and their partners/ spouses also have access to a confidential counselling service.
- + Employees and their partners/ spouses have access to a legal and financial helpline.



Employee experience

- + In 2024, focus groups were held to create an opportunity for employees to input into the development of our employee experience strategy.
- + The employee experience strategy was developed by an employee working group with input from the focus groups.
- + The Employee Experience Working Group exists to provide a platform for colleagues across the university to support the continued development of a positive experience. It aims to generate diverse ideas that support the ongoing development of the employee experience. By focusing on reward and recognition, development, leadership, communication and the work environment, the group strives to foster a more engaged and inclusive workplace environment.

Accessible documents

- + We seek to ensure that our documentation is accessible to all, and the HR team have participated in accessibility training.

Inclusion calendar and communications

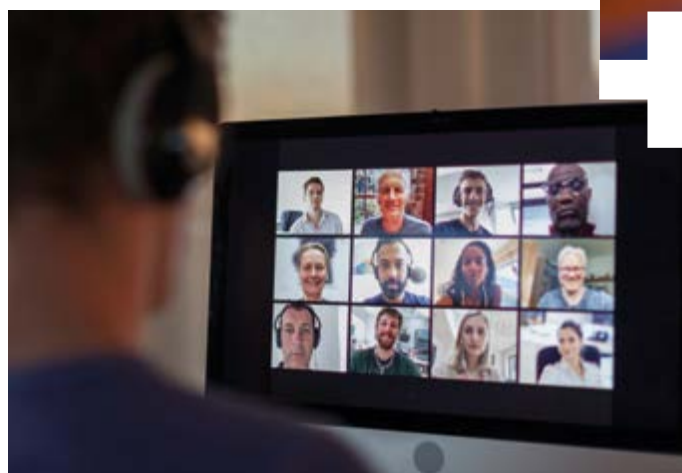
- + Working with equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and communications to promote EDI awareness towards building a more welcoming and inclusive culture.

HR policies

- + Policy reviews are undertaken to ensure employment legislation changes are reflected in our policies which are updated in accordance with our policy framework. In the last year, policy updates have included using more inclusive language to reflect our diverse workforce and our approach to equality and inclusion.
- + UHI's HR policies undergo equality impact assessments to ensure protection against discrimination.

Recruitment

- + Unconscious bias training is provided for key recruiting members to ensure fair and inclusive hiring practices.
- + A job description decoder ensures inclusive language, avoiding overly masculine wording to attract diverse candidates.
- + All shortlisting is conducted anonymously before being sent to hiring managers to ensure an unbiased selection process.



Staff training

Student Support team development days

The university's Student Support team coordinates several development days for staff across the UHI partnership. These sessions are conducted either via Microsoft Teams or in a hybrid format, with both online and in-person participation.

These valuable Continuous Professional Development days are developed in consultation with staff to ensure that the content is relevant and advantageous. The events typically run from 10am to 3pm and feature a combination of external speakers and internal presentations.

Feedback post-event has been consistently positive, with staff finding the sessions informative and beneficial in enhancing their knowledge of essential topics.

The scheduled development days include:

- + Inclusive Practice Development Day, generally held in April
- + Personal Academic Tutor Development Day, generally held in May/June
- + Student Support Development Day, generally held in June
- + Hardship Development Day, generally held in June

Further training was organised by the Mental Health and Counselling team, this demonstrates UHI's commitment to better understanding our staff through a range of training opportunities. for key recruiting members to ensure fair and inclusive hiring practices.

- + A job description decoder ensures inclusive language, avoiding overly masculine wording to attract diverse candidates.
- + All shortlisting is conducted anonymously before being sent to hiring managers to ensure an unbiased selection process.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for all partnership staff

- + UHI recognises the vital role of professional practice, and we are committed to ensuring that staff across the partnership are highly skilled and equipped to meet the evolving needs of our work. CPD is not just a requirement – it is a valuable investment that enhances our knowledge, skills, and personal qualities, all of which are essential to delivering the highest standard of support.
- + The Mental Health and Counselling team assess their learning needs regularly to identify gaps in knowledge and areas for improvement. Considering financial limitations, an online CPD event has been introduced, available to all partnership staff, primarily targeting student services teams. These sessions cover various topics and feature speakers from both in-house and external sources. This method allows the provision of high-quality, cost-free CPD opportunities that benefit all participants.
- + For counsellors within the partnership, CPD is also a fundamental principle of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework. As such, all BACP members are required to engage in a minimum of 30 hours of relevant professional development activities each year, ensuring ongoing learning and excellence in our field.
- + The team holds an annual online CPD event for student services staff. This year's focus was on neuro-affirmative practice, exploring

practical applications to support and validate individuals with neurological differences. Sessions aimed to understand how neurodivergent individuals perceive and interact with the world, and how to create inclusive, affirming environments.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

In alignment with the university's Suicide Intervention and Risk Management Strategy, ASIST training is being provided across the partnership. Last year, training was conducted at UHI Shetland, UHI Argyll, SAMS, and UHI Orkney. The aim is to equip staff with the skills needed to intervene when students are experiencing distress. In the academic year 2023/24, 53 members of staff were trained. So far, in the current academic year 2024/25, 55 members of staff have received ASIST training.

Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training

In 2018 and 2023, staff collaborated with Public Health Scotland to train trainers across the partnership, allowing the team to implement this training. In 2023–24, 161 staff members received training. Training is ongoing across the network within this academic year, and data collection is pending, which is expected to provide valuable insights.

Two Roads Suicide Prevention Training

This brief session focuses on raising awareness and providing intervention training for suicide prevention. The training is available online, and during the academic year 2023/24, 18 staff members have been trained. In the current academic year, we have already delivered training to 30 staff members, with additional sessions scheduled to take place.

UHI Partnership Student Mental Health Strategy 2024–27

Student Support have continuously strived to better understand students' data and disclosure. A positive example of this is the Mental Health Strategy.

Mental health impacts all aspects of student life and is considered essential for student success and wellbeing. The Student Mental Health Strategy 2024–27 prioritises mental health in decision-making and aims to treat physical and mental health equally. This approach intends to equip students to manage their mental health and wellbeing, aiding them in achieving their academic goals and qualifications for their future careers.

UHI's strategy highlights the need for comprehensive support for both students and staff, acknowledging the challenges in academic journeys and the importance of a supportive environment. The strategy includes promoting mental health, supporting staff wellbeing, and fostering an inclusive environment that encourages resilience and positive mental health practices.



Outcome 5

Increasing student support, representation, wellbeing, and voice

Gender-based violence (GBV): 16 Days of Action campaign 25 November to 10 December 2024

Since 2020, the UHI regional mental health and wellbeing co-ordinator has sat on the planning group of the Highland Violence Against Women (HVAWP) 16 Days of Action Committee, on behalf of the student support manager and the UHI partnership. This group is made up of representatives from organisations across the Highlands and Islands, including but not limited to, Social Work, Women's Aid, Rape and Sexual Abuse Service Highland, Police Scotland and more.

Each year the group plan events for across the Highlands and Islands region, to mark the United Nations 16 Days of Activism Campaign against gender-based violence (GBV) and encourages engagement from the community in helping to end GBV. Over the years these events have included joint social media awareness raising campaigns, Reclaim the Night marches and White Ribbon Pledge campaigns, as well as training events like Spider in the Glass GBV training from former HVAWP Training Officer, Myra Ross, and Safe and Together training. The group plan all activities and events based on the national theme for the year. The last two years, the theme has been 'Imagine a Scotland without Violence Against Women.' Myra Ross, member of the planning group, wrote a poem for 2023 based on the theme, which was central to our events and campaigns. This poem was picked up nationally and the decision was made that it would be used again as a national theme for 2024. The video of the poem can be viewed [here](#).

The focus of each year's campaign is the Reclaim the Night march, which takes place on the first day of the campaign, 25 November. The group are responsible for arranging all aspects of the march, from locating a pre and post march venue for presentations and discussions on the importance of taking a stand against gender-based violence against women and girls, as well as maintaining the safety of all participants throughout the march. This involves liaising with the police and local council authorities to ensure that roads are closed, and the march is policed to ensure the safety of all participants. The march details are shared across all partner organisations social media and communications channels to ensure that all staff and students are aware of events nearest to them, that they can participate in.

Planning for the 16 Days campaign begins each August, with the group meeting weekly to both plan and co-ordinate each year's campaigns, on behalf of HVAWP. We involve as many partner organisations as possible, to encourage engagement and open discussions about violence against women and girls and how we can drive change.

Outcome 6

Inclusive processes: diversifying and developing our staff

The Advance HE Aurora Leadership Programme

From 2018, the Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) has co-ordinated small cohorts of participants each year on the Advance HE's Aurora Leadership Development Programme for women. In 2023–24 six colleagues were supported through the programme:

- + **Dessislava Todorova**
UHI North, West and Hebrides
- + **Nicola Naismith**
UHI Shetland
- + **Robyn Tuerna**
Scottish Association for Marine Science
- + **Siún Carden**
UHI Shetland
- + **Stephanie Strother**
UHI North, West and Hebrides
- + **Tess Sadler**
UHI

In 2024–25 five colleagues are being supported through and beyond the programme:

- + **Catriona Mallows**
Research Associate,
UHI Perth
- + **Clara Hickey**
Work-based Learning Manager,
UHI
- + **Katy O'Connor**
Lecturer,
UHI Moray
- + **Nicola Martin**
Lecturer,
UHI Centre for History
- + **Zoe McIntosh**
Learning Support Worker,
UHI North, West and Hebrides

Funding covers the cost of the programme, which is delivered fully online by Advance HE, plus two face-to-face events. This academic year, to encourage cohort collaboration and rapport, the LTA organised an induction session at An Lòcrhan for all the participants.

UHI Women's Network

Although the LTA established a UHI Women's Network in 2018, post covid, numbers dropped and restructuring challenges meant meetings ceased. To reinvigorate the network the LTA have integrated it into the responsibilities of the UHI Aurorans and it is anticipated that the 24–25 cohort will chair and facilitate two UHI Women Meetings this academic year.

International Women's Day (IWD)

Further opportunities have evolved through celebrating IWD. In 2024, UHI Aurora alumni were supported to submit a short recording on their response to the theme 'Inspire Inclusion', three colleagues submitted videos that were shared across UHI social media to champion and mark the day.



Scholarship and publication

In 2023, the Learning Teaching Academy supported the publication of 'Breaking the Gender Bias in Academia and Academic Practice'. This was a special issue of the Journal of Perspective in Applied Academic Practice (JPAAP) and was inspired by the UHI International Women's Day event in 2022. The theme for 2022 was 'Break the Bias' and presenters for the conference were invited to submit contributions to this special issue to expand on the topics of their presentation and offer further perspectives on 'Breaking the Gender Bias in Academia and Academic Practice' that could be shared through open publication in JPAAP. UHI authors explored topics including:

- Biases and power: understanding of the experiences and perceptions of workplace EDI amongst digital leaders in higher education
- Battles for occupied academic space
- The role of women's reading groups
- Challenging male homophily and bias in academic research and practice
- Representation of women composers in the Whittaker Library
- Establishing a Corporate Mentor Partner Program (CMPP) focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – considering addressing gender bias and equality
- Supporting gender equality in learning: use of a sociomaterial lens to view the learning process
- Using developmental mentoring and coaching approaches in academic and professional development to address feelings of 'imposter syndrome'
- A critical exploration of approaches to professional and leadership development to break the gender bias in academic practice and progression
- Book review: Feminist Critical Digital Pedagogy: An Open Book

The special issue has had over 11,000 collective views across the articles.

The LTA Programme of Professional Development

The annual professional development program allows staff to participate in events related to learning, teaching, and educational research. Open to all UHI colleagues, it features various internal and external speakers. The program aims to raise awareness and improve practices in areas such as equality, diversity and inclusion, including an introductory course on Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

UDL is a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible, inclusive, and challenging for every learner. Facilitated by Kevin L. Merry, Associate Dean (Curriculum and Assessment) Global Banking School in the United Kingdom. This workshop which ran in September 2024 supported colleagues to explore the UDL principles and how they can apply to practice at UHI to make our learning environments inclusive for all students. This was well attended and included evaluation feedback:

" There are a few things I am looking to incorporate into my teaching, particularly I am going to take a UDL look at my learning objectives in my module. "

The session will be repeated in semester two of this academic year.

Outcome 7

Inclusive communication: digital, Gaelic, British Sign Language, and culture

The Corporate Communications team demonstrate how effective communication can foster an inclusive culture. The team have embedded the following to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is consciously embedded through:

Communications (including Gaelic): inclusive messaging and representation

- + Ensure all communications reflect diverse perspectives, cultures and identities.
- + Use inclusive language that avoids stereotypes and bias.
- + Strive to feature diverse voices in promotional materials, interviews and campaigns.
- + Ensure accessibility of all content, including alt text, captions and transcripts.

Diverse and accessible communication channels

- + Provide materials bilingually and in various formats for inclusivity.
- + Ensure accessibility compliance (for example, web content accessibility guidelines for websites and digital content).
- + Use multiple platforms (social media, print, video, in-person) to reach diverse audiences.

Staff awareness

- + Encourage staff to recognise and challenge unconscious bias in messaging.
- + Promote allyship and inclusive leadership within the communications team.

Inclusive event planning and promotion

- + Ensure events are inclusive of different cultural, religious and accessibility needs.
- + Use diverse speakers and panellists to reflect the broader community.
- + Provide accessible event materials, live captions and sign language interpretation.



Collaboration with diverse communities

- + Partner with student and staff diversity networks to shape communications.
- + Seek feedback from underrepresented groups to improve messaging.
- + Celebrate cultural awareness days, heritage months and key diversity events authentically.

Monitoring and continuous improvement

- + Regularly review and update messaging to ensure inclusivity.
- + Seek feedback through surveys and focus groups to identify areas for improvement.

Brand (including design)

- + Prioritise understanding the diverse experiences of various groups, actively challenge assumptions and biases in our work, and incorporate a range of perspectives to ensure inclusive design.
- + Collaborate with staff on their projects and campaigns to ensure external messaging is accessible in design and incorporates Gaelic.
- + Visual elements, including imagery and videos, reflect diversity in gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, geography and social class.
- + Ensure that merchandise artwork for the UHI Shop fairly represents individuals with protected characteristics.
- + Design frameworks, Microsoft templates, and principles integrate inclusive design approaches and tools throughout, supporting bilingual content.
- + Responsive to requests for artwork in large print, easy-read formats, or braille.

- + Updated brand guidelines prioritise diverse representation across geography, ethnicity, gender, and disability, while ensuring consistency through accessible fonts and colour palettes for both print and digital applications.

Web

- + Committed to making our materials bilingual and accessible for both print and web use.
- + Accommodate requests for artwork in accessible formats, including PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording, or braille.
- + UHI OneWeb websites do not discriminate on the grounds of shared protected characteristics.
- + Images used across the site promote diversity and representation.
- + Have made the website text as simple as possible to understand and ensure that users can:
 - Change colours, contrast levels and fonts using tools of their choice.
 - Zoom in up to 300% without text spilling off the screen.
 - Navigate most of the website using only a keyboard.
 - Navigate most of the website using speech recognition software.
 - Listen to most of the website using a screen reader, including the latest versions of JAWS, NVDA, and VoiceOver.
- + Meet accessibility compliance standards as audited by the UK Government Digital Services.
- + Conduct weekly accessibility compliance checks using both manual and automated tools.
- + Web content editors are trained to follow best practices for accessibility and inclusive design.

Significant initiatives led by Corporate Communications:

Annual EDI calendar

The Communications team works with our Student Services team to create an annual EDI calendar for students and staff and use these key dates as a strategic tool to ensure that our messaging, campaigns and content reflect and support diverse communities, important cultural events, and awareness days.

Redesigned student support webpages

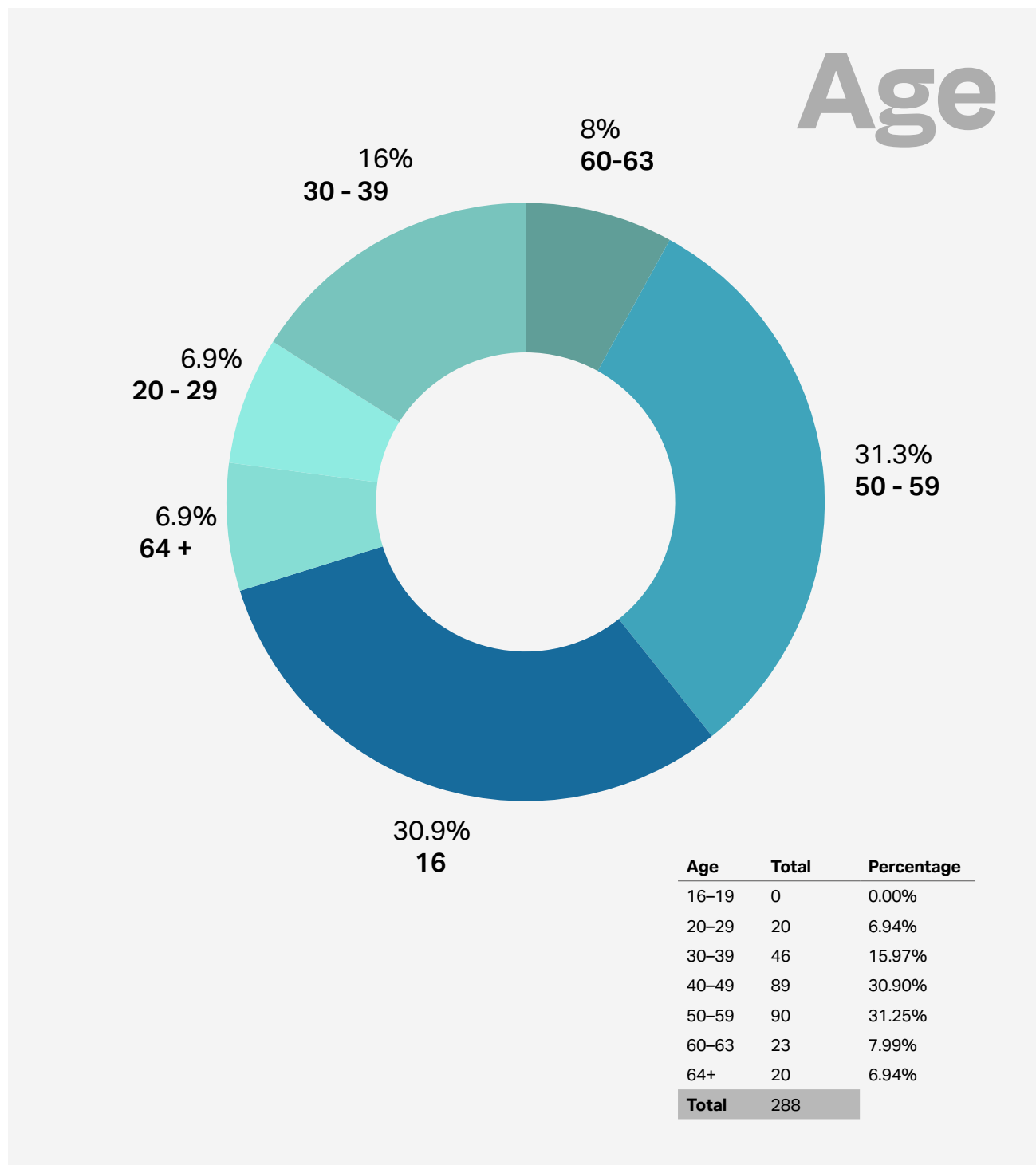
In 2024, the student support webpages were redesigned to enhance the user experience, providing more inclusive resources and improved learning support for students.

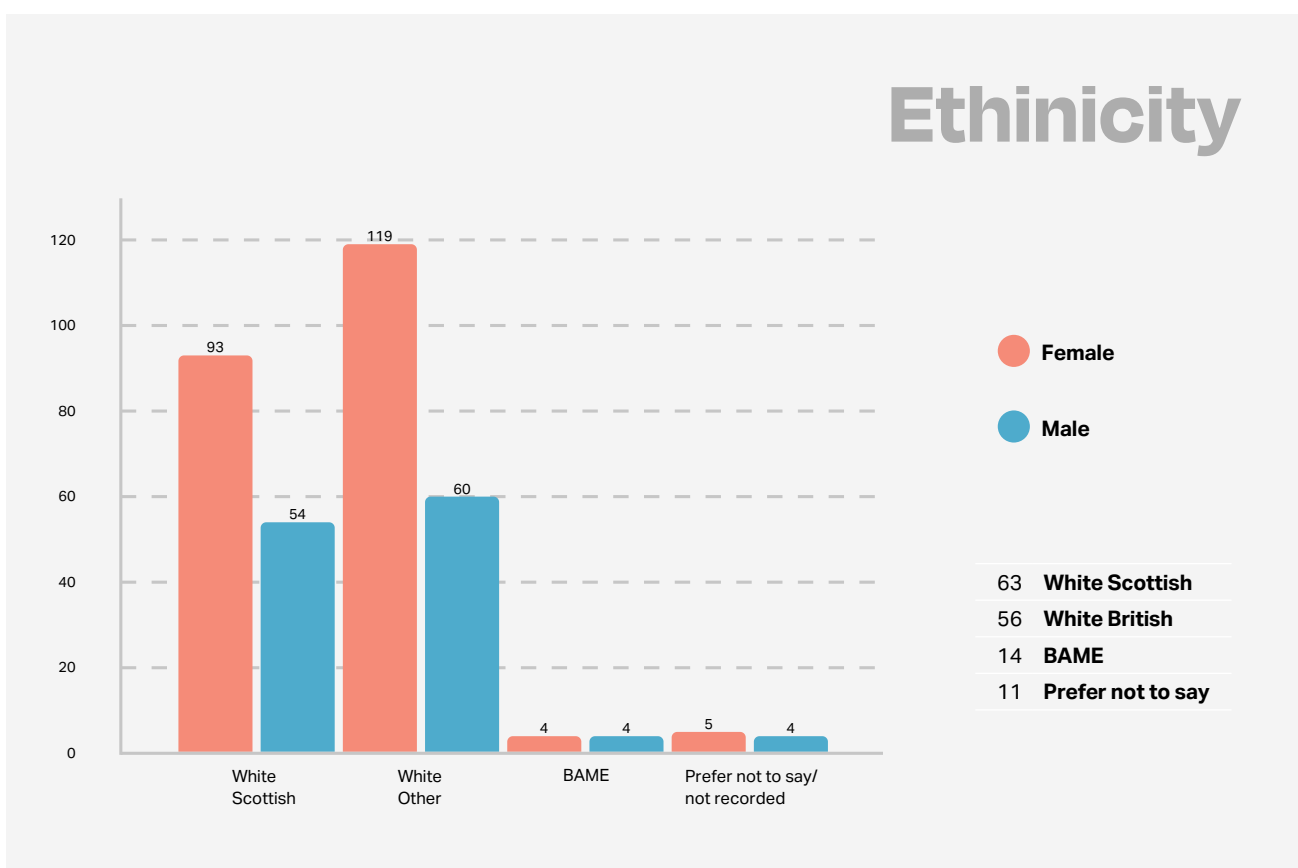
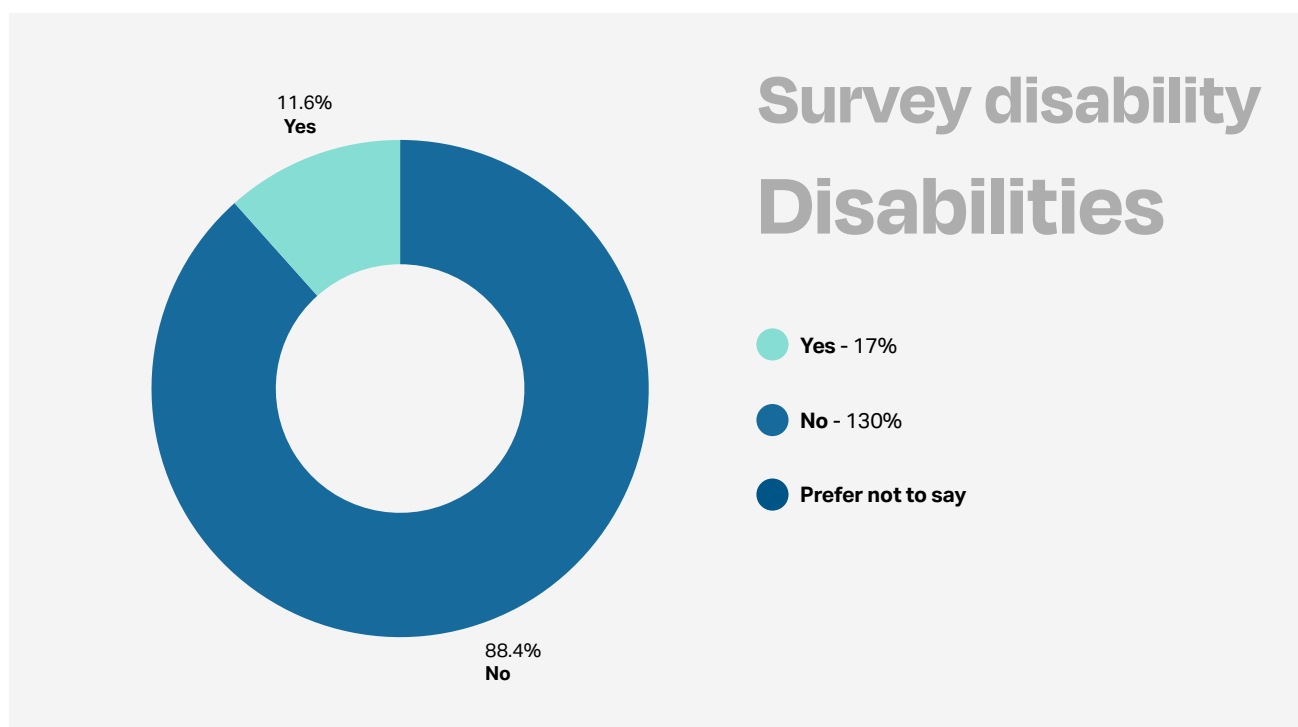
Updated style guide for staff

In January 2025, a new style guide was launched to support staff in creating clear, concise, consistent and accessible communications. The guide provides practical guidance along with examples of best practices to enhance the quality and inclusivity of written and digital content.

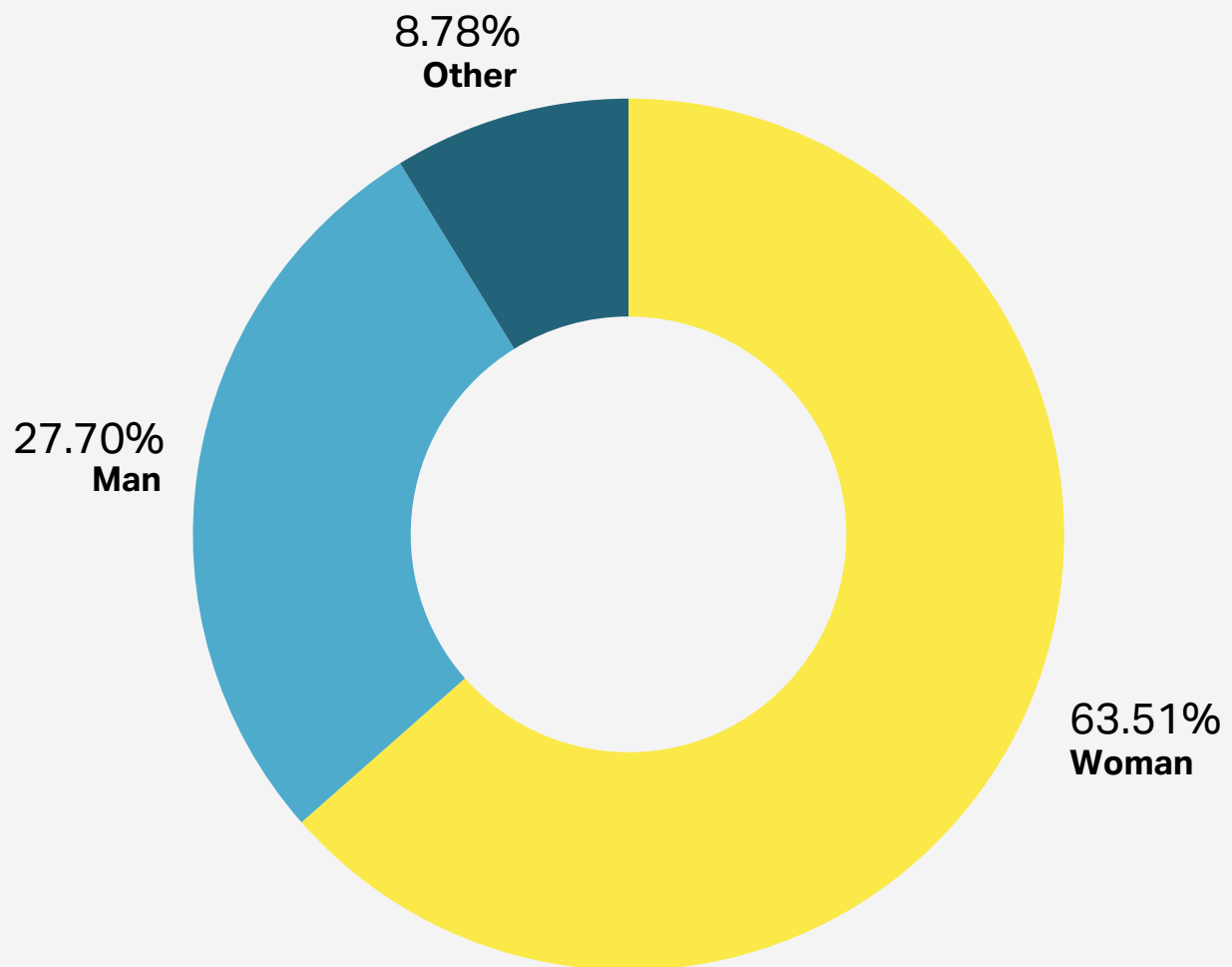


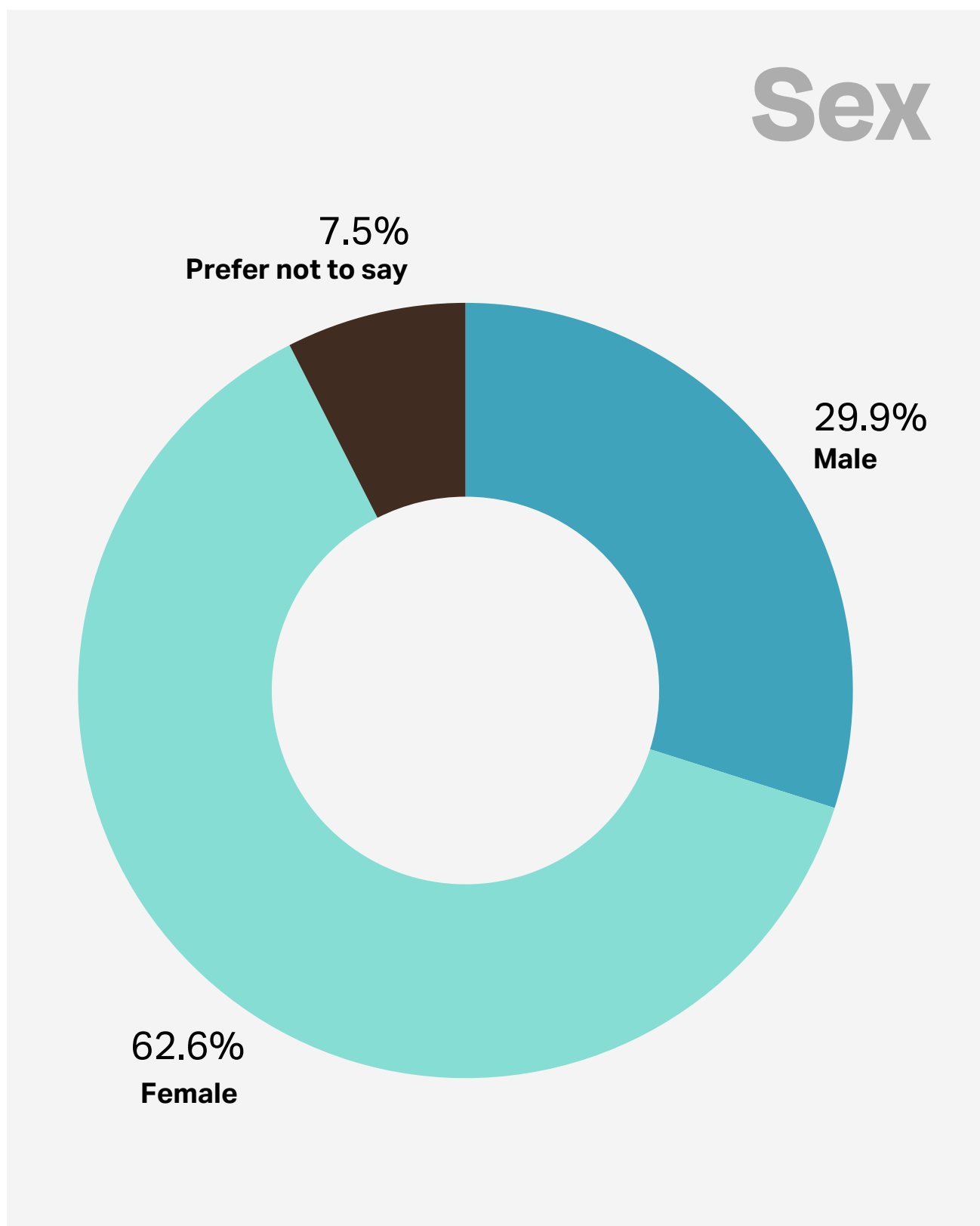
8.1 Staff Survey Results 2024



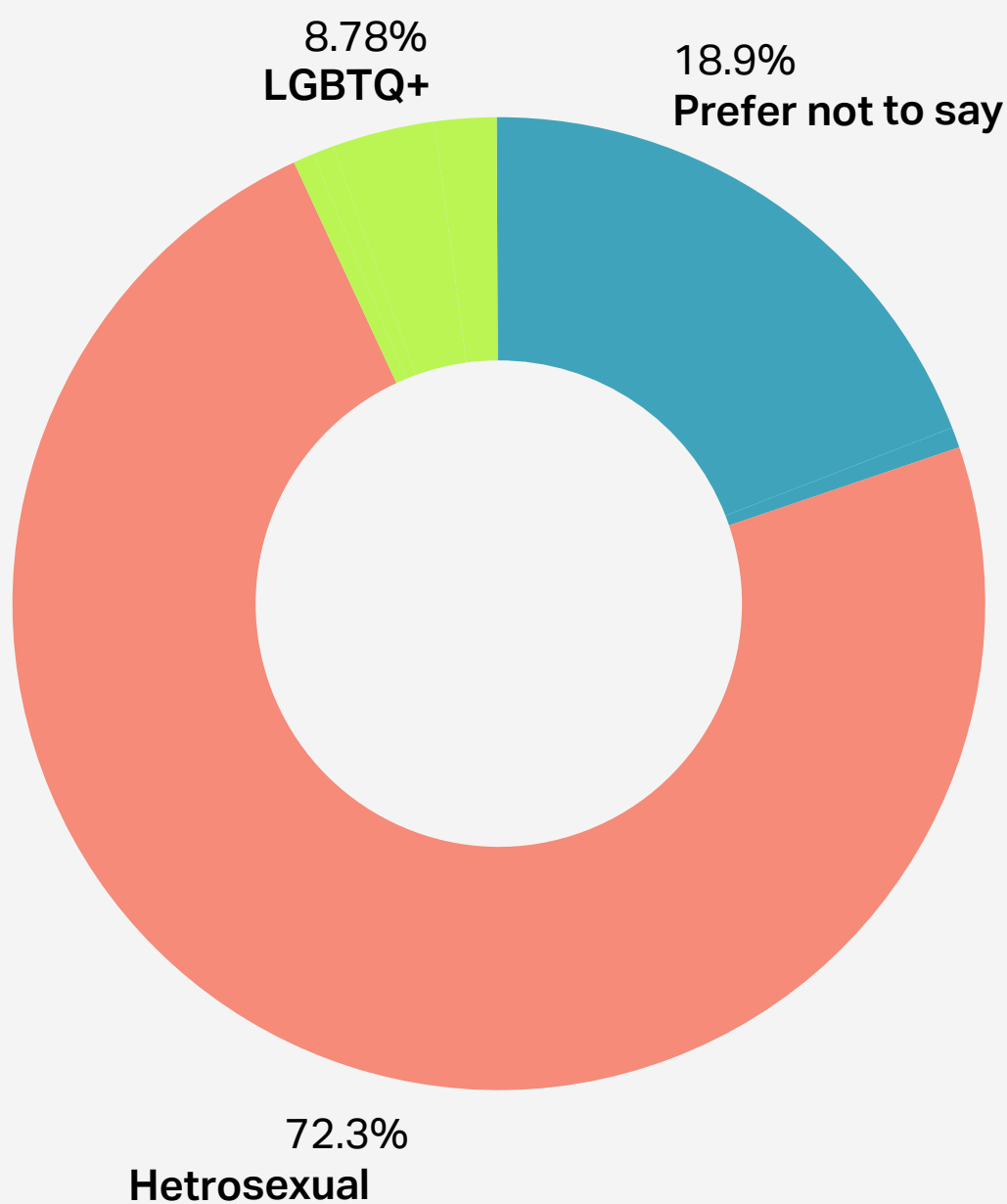


Gender reassignment

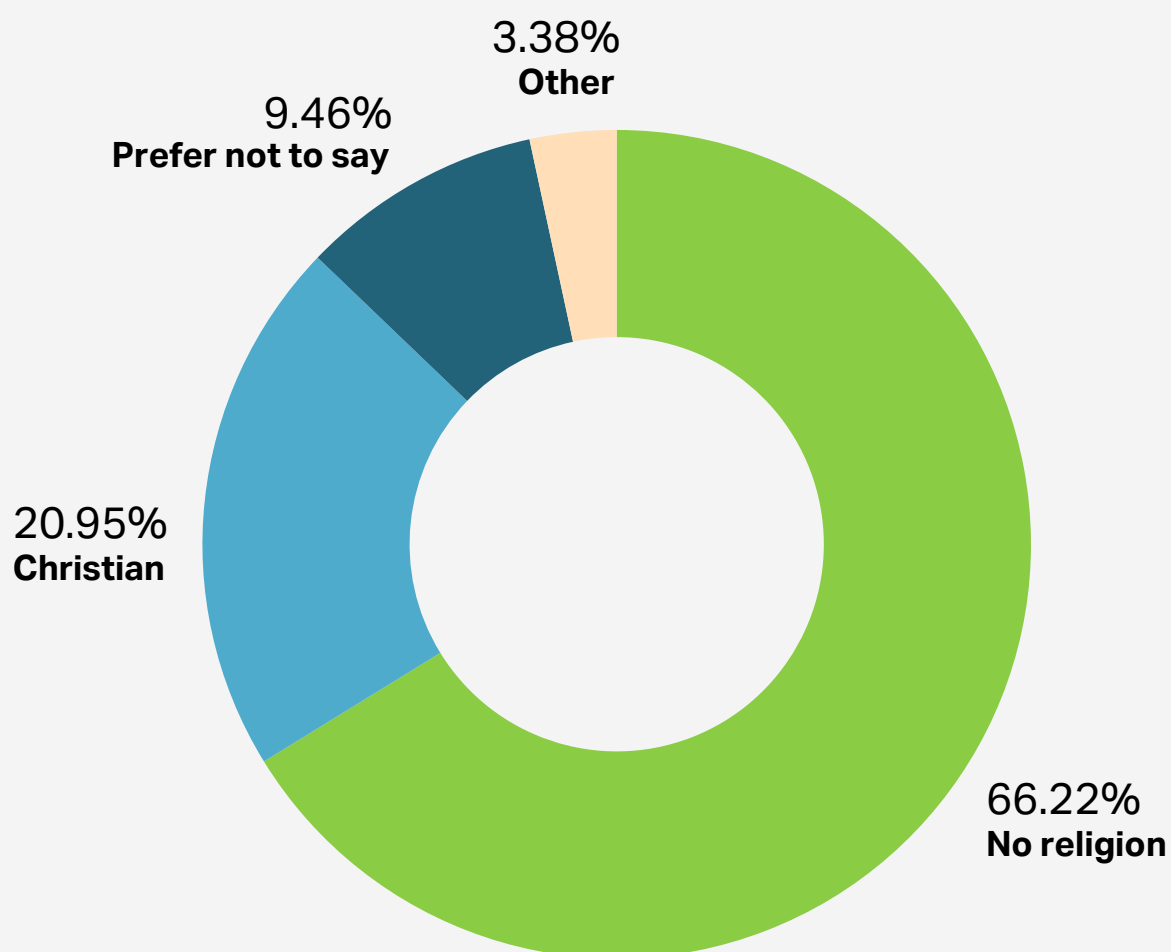




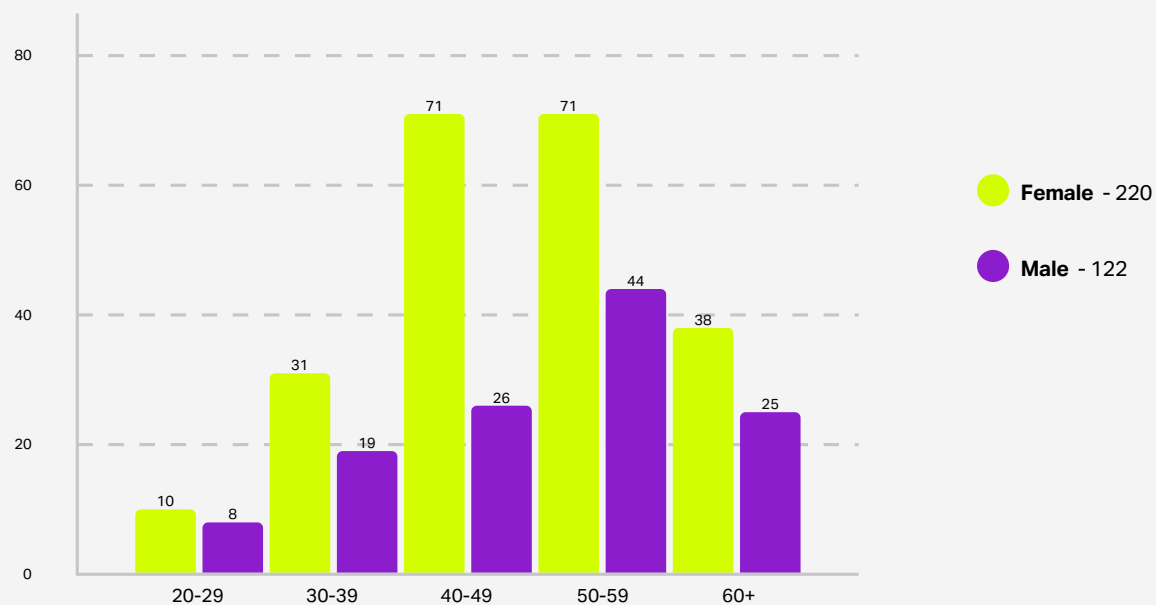
Sexual orientation



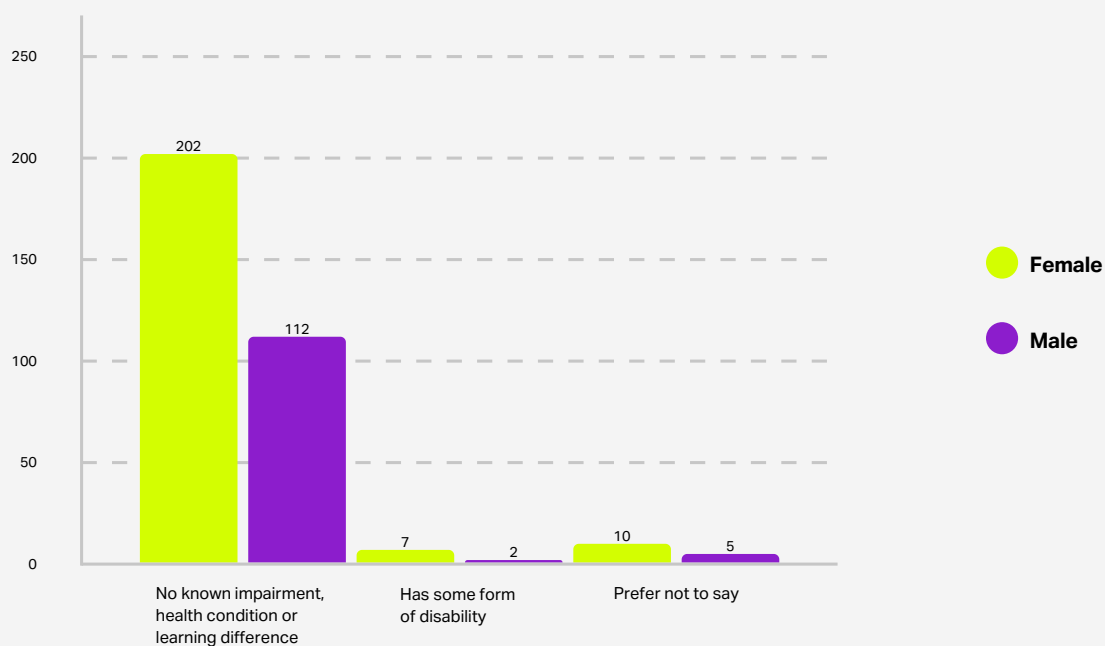
Religion

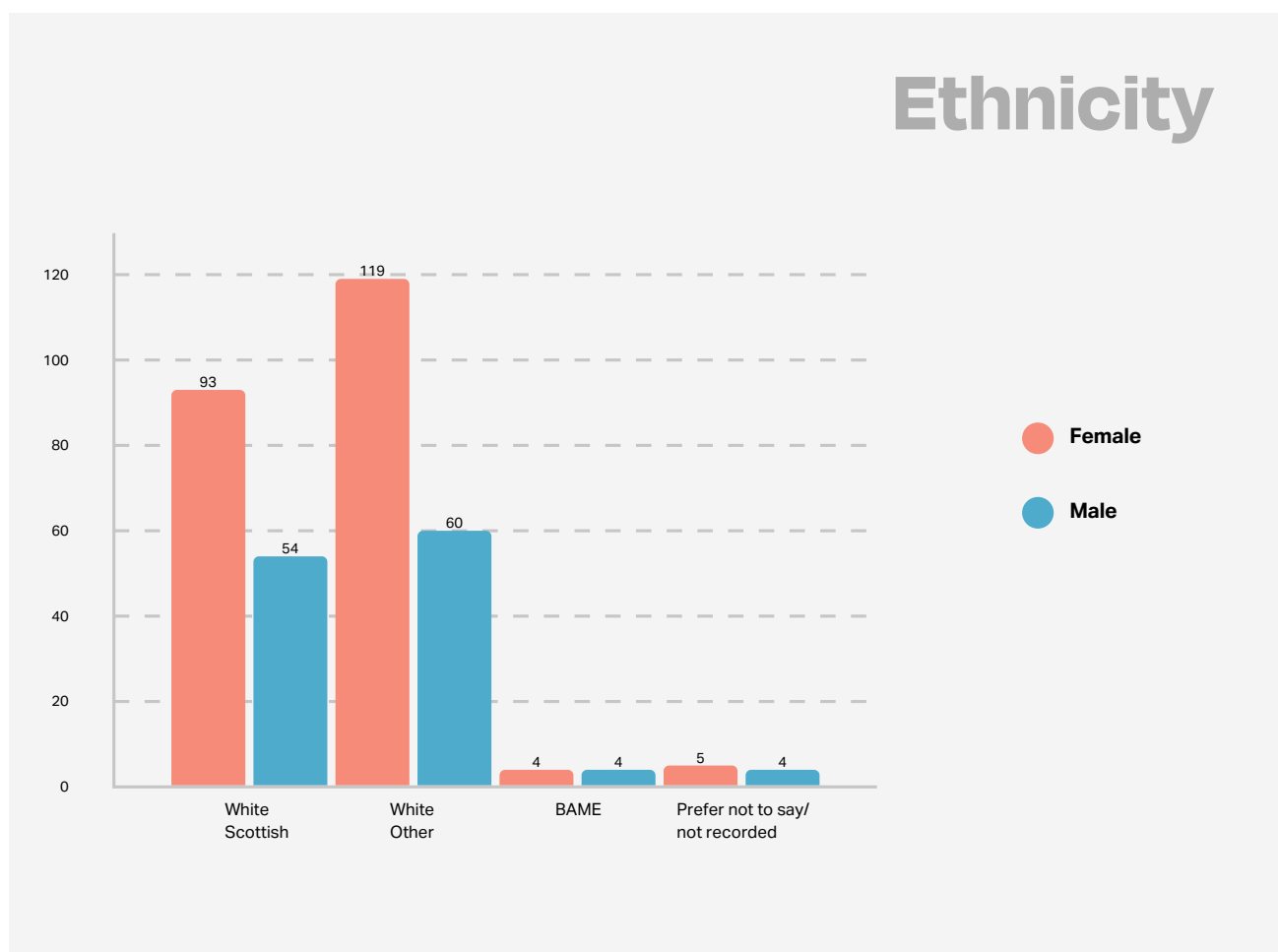
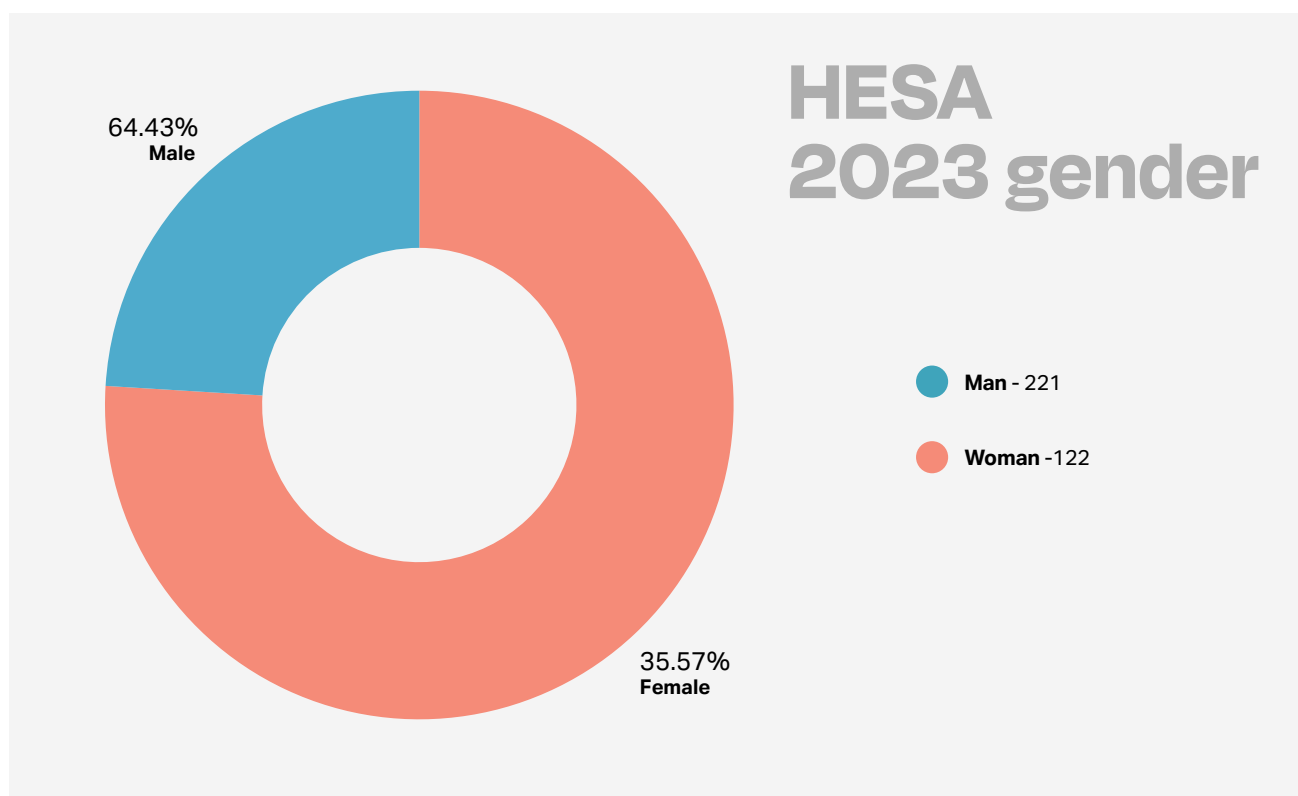


Age and sex

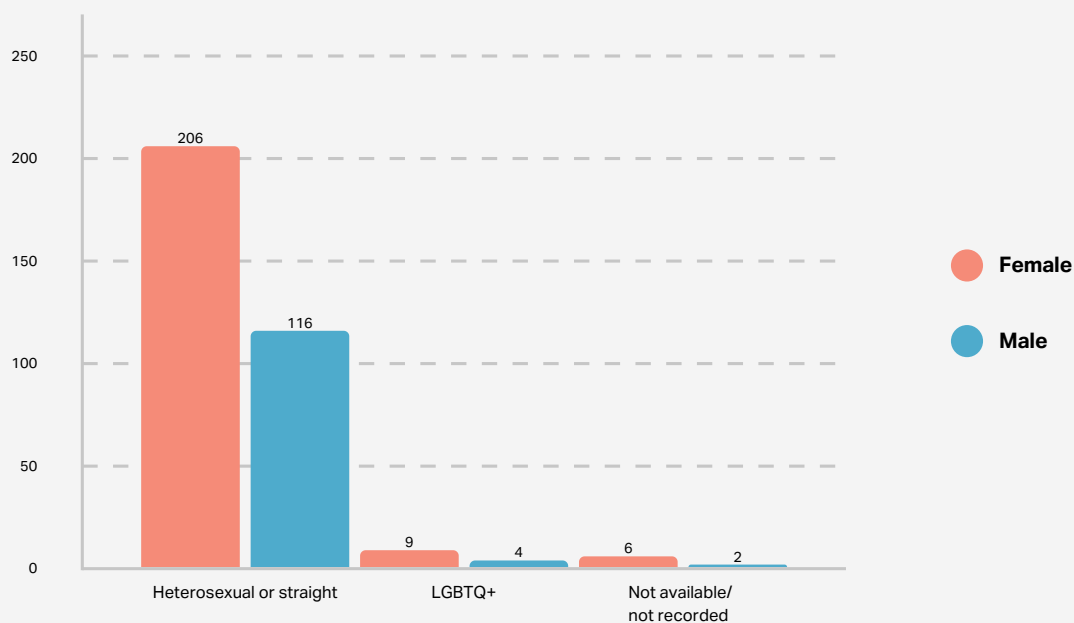


Disability

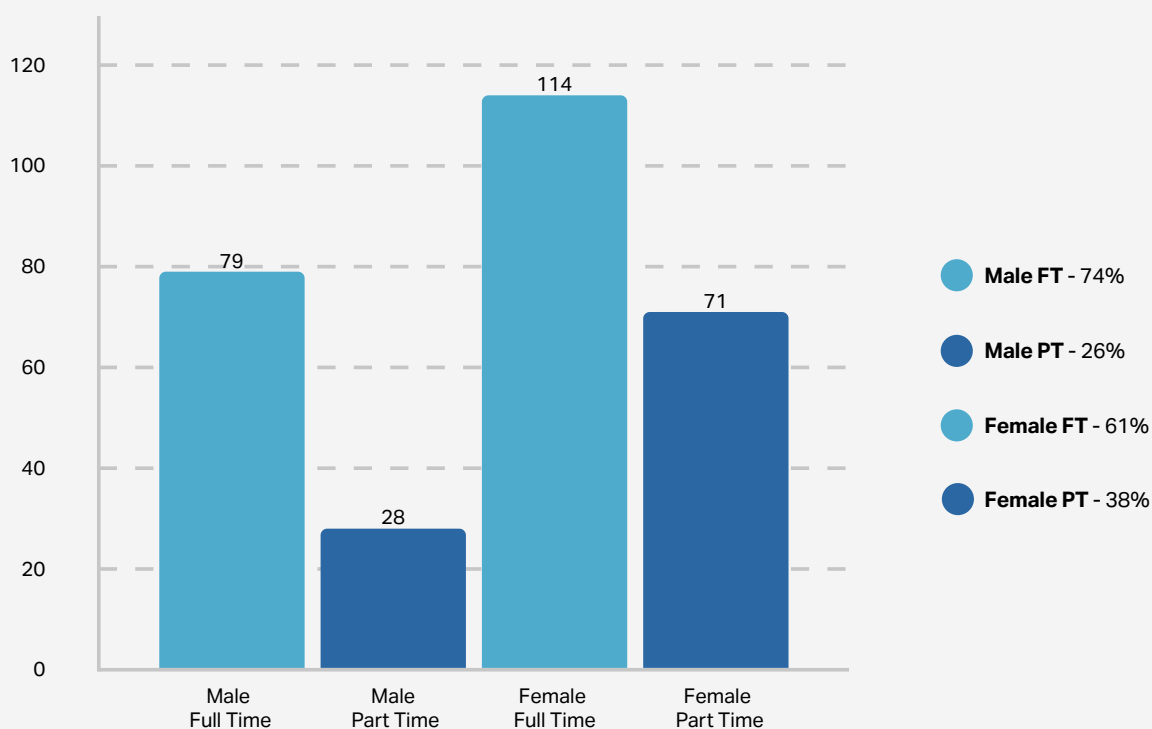




HESA 2023 Sexual orientation



Work patterns



Staff data analysis

In 2024, staff were encouraged to complete a short survey and equality monitoring form. This is a requirement for our Athena Swan Bronze Charter submission. The equality monitoring form was completed by 159 staff members at the time when there were 281 employees in total. In addition, further sights can be gained from the university's HESA 2023 data.

Data collection challenges and opportunities

Due to limitations within the current HR system, there are difficulties in gathering data on all protected characteristics. Although efforts have been made to address this by encouraging staff to complete a new equality monitoring form alongside the survey, not all staff feel comfortable disclosing information about their protected characteristics. By implementing our new equality outcomes, it is anticipated that more individuals at UHI will feel comfortable sharing this valuable information.

2024 survey and HESA 2023 trends

Age

- + The age range of staff has remained largely static since the 2023 report.
- + The survey identifies that the largest age group is 50–59 years at 31.3%, followed by 40–49 years at 30.9%.
- + Mid-career representation is notably smaller with 16% aged 30–39.
- + Younger staff are underrepresented with only 6.9% aged 20–29.
- + Staff aged 60–63 represent 8%, and those aged 64 and over represent 6.9%.

Disability

- + The majority of staff (88.4%) from both the Staff Survey 2024 and HESA 2023 indicated no known disability.
- + Of the 17 staff members (11.6%) who disclosed a disability, there were more women than men.
- + Disclosed disabilities include specific learning disabilities, long term conditions, and physical disabilities.

Ethnicity

- + Ethnicity declarations remain at the highest point for white ethnic groups, with the largest group being white Scottish, followed by white British, English, Irish, and Welsh.
- The trend of low ethnic diversity aligns with previous data sets.

Gender

- + According to the Staff Survey, 62.15% of the workforce identifies as women, while men make up 27.78%.
- 29.73% of the workforce prefer not to disclose, highlighting the importance of respecting privacy and the need for an inclusive environment.

Sexual orientation

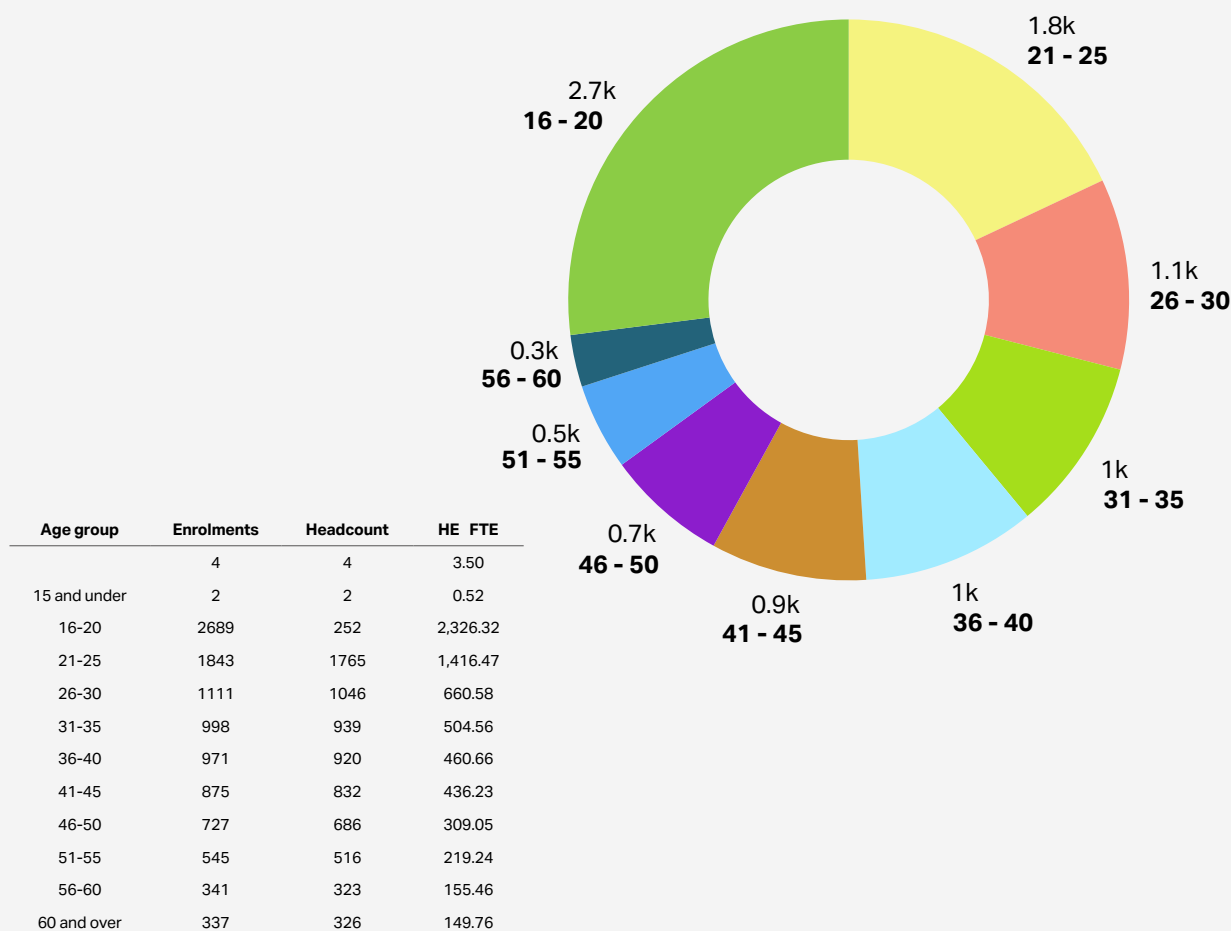
- + From the survey, the majority of staff identify as heterosexual, making up 72.30% of the workforce.
- + Although the number of staff identifying as bisexual, gay man, gay woman/lesbian, or other orientation is smaller, up a combined total of 7%.
- + 18.92% prefer not to say. This may decrease over time as staff feel more comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation.

Religion and belief

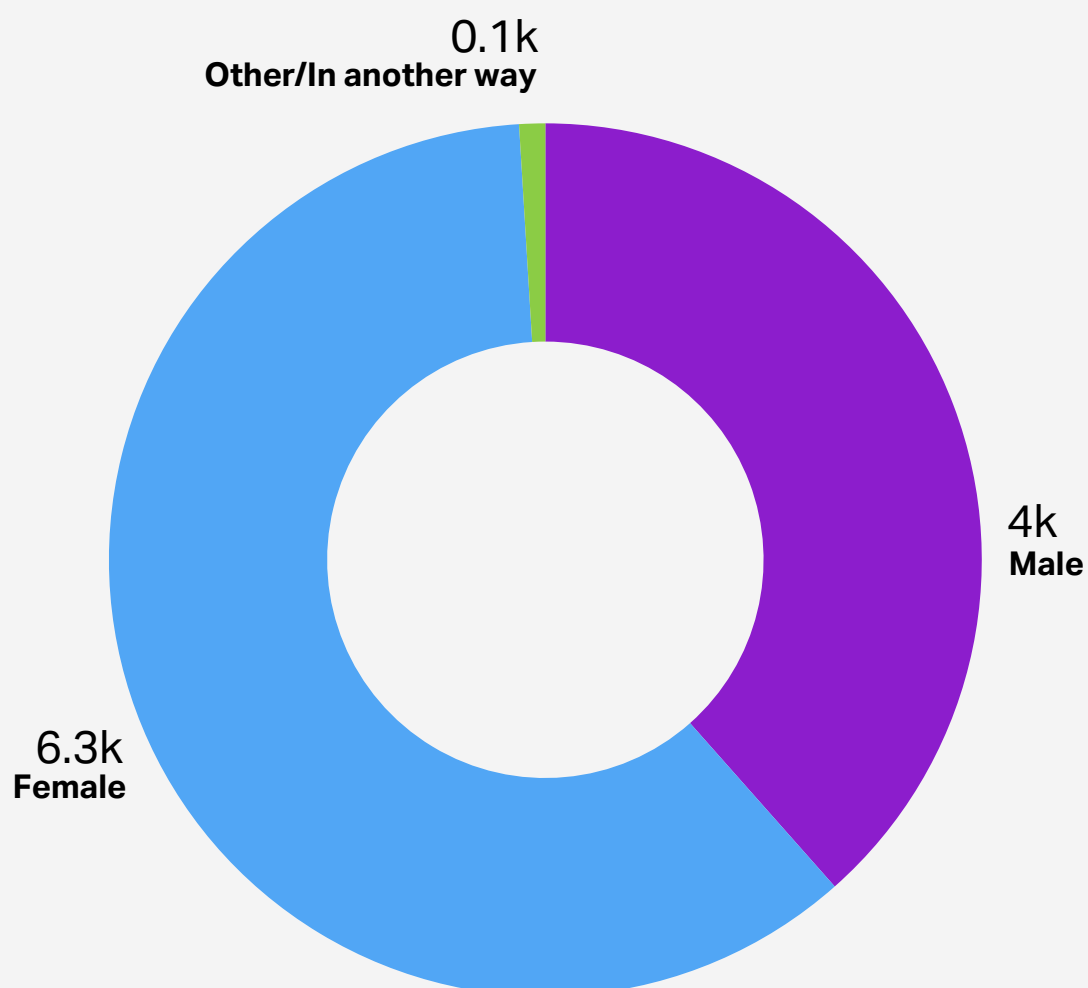
- + The majority of staff (66.32%) who responded to the survey identify as having no religion.
- + Smaller percentages of staff identify with other religions, while 9% prefer not to say.
- + The highest percentage is Christianity, with no denominations being recorded.

Work patterns

- + A higher percentage of men (74%) are employed full time compared to women (61%).
- + A higher percentages of women (38%) work part time compared to men (26%).

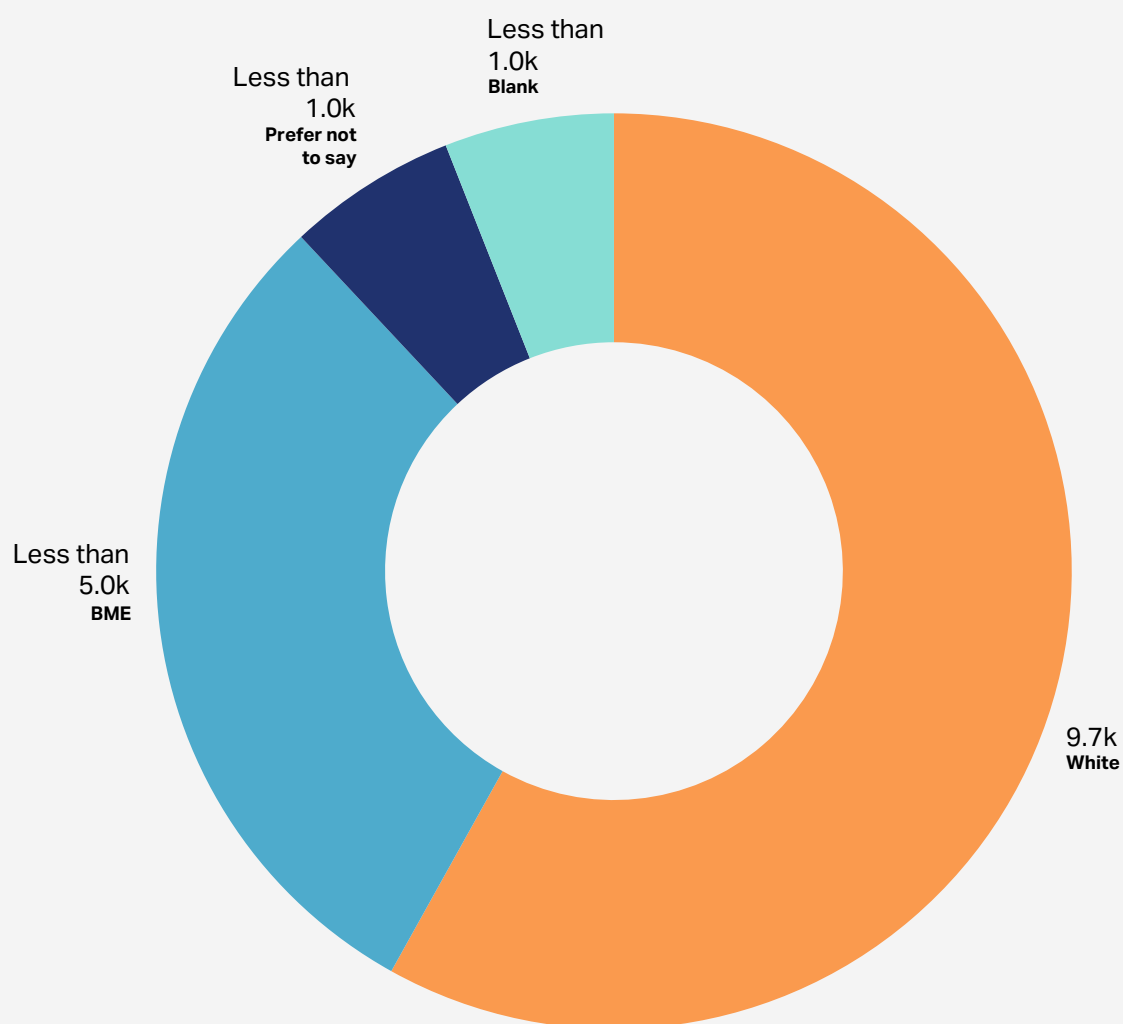
Student data 2024/25**Higher Education enrolments by age group**

Higher Education enrolments by sex



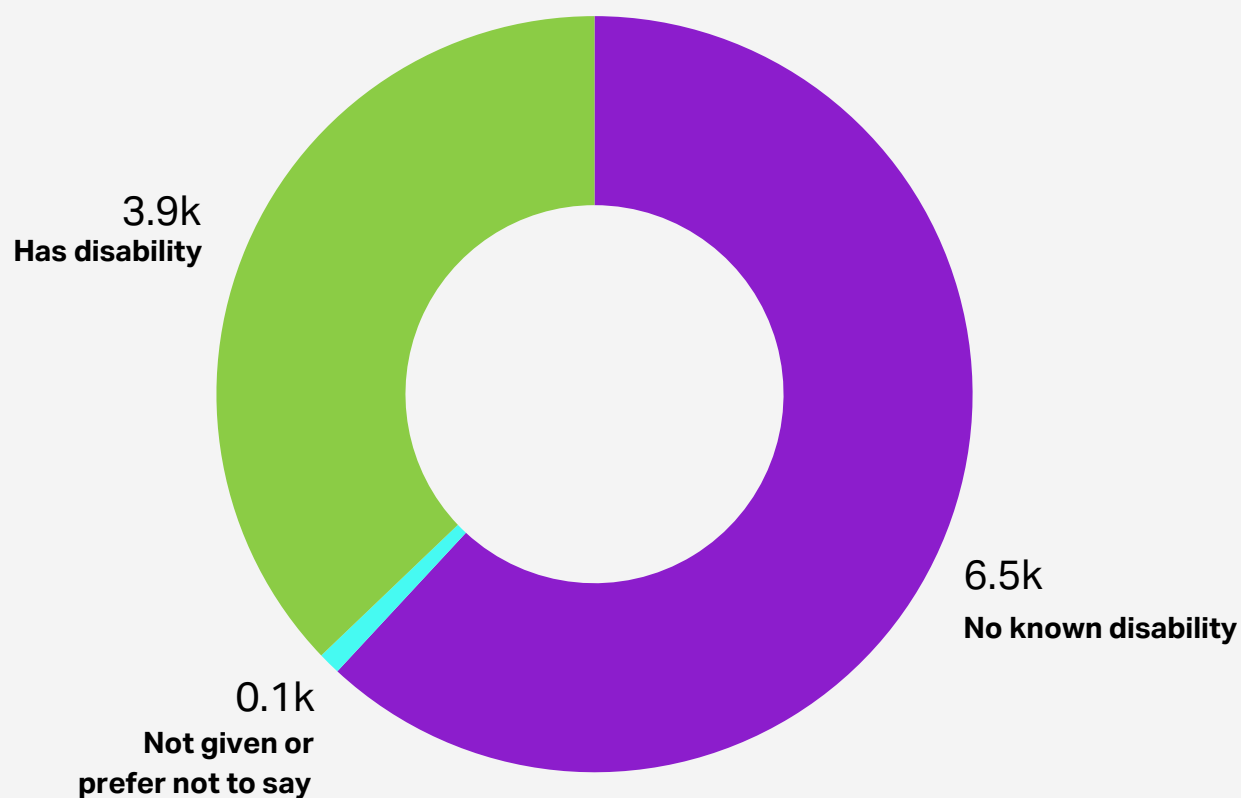
Sex	Enrolments	Headcount	HE FTE
	8	7	4.43
Female	6308	5967	3,726.73
Male	4003	3794	2,824.16
Other/in another way	80	75	57.19
Prefer not to say/info refused	44	41	29.84

Higher Education enrolments by ethnicity



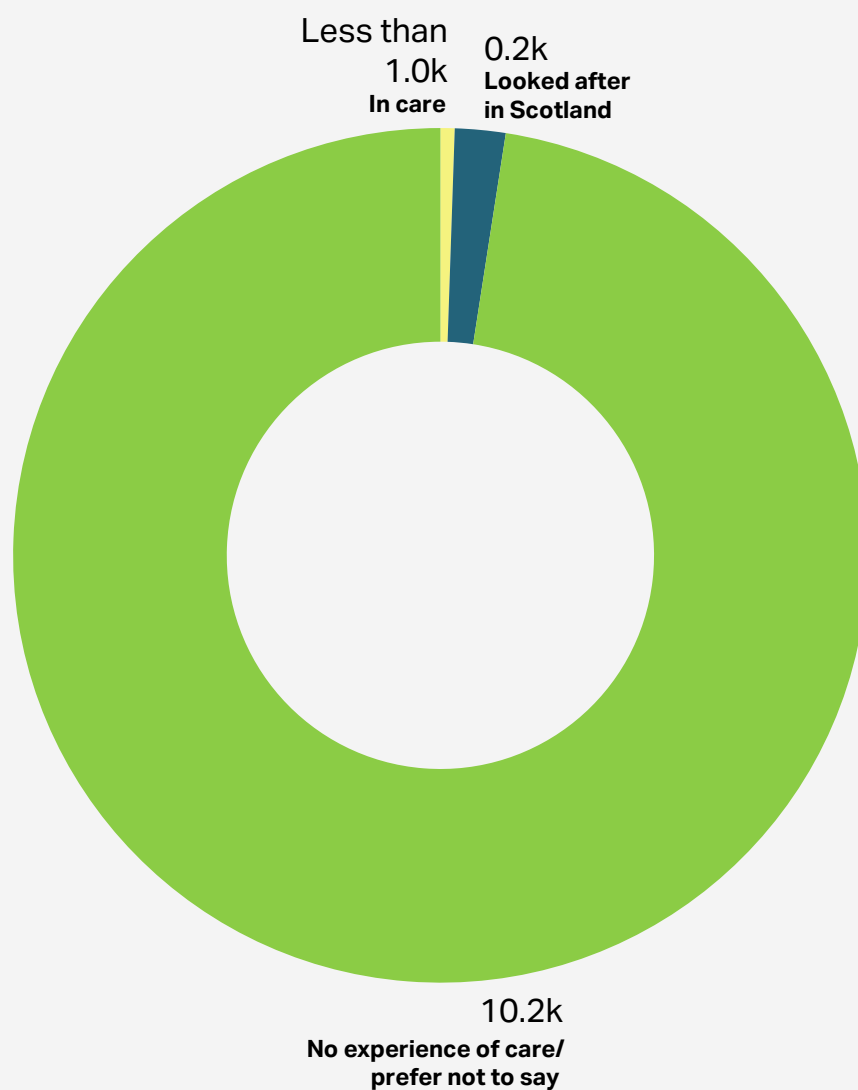
Ethnic group	Enrolments	Count of student code	HE FTE
White	24066	21407	88,405.61
Not known/prefer not to say	202	26	334.38
BME	690	590	3,630.55
	2326	2118	6,501.98

Higher Education enrolments by disability



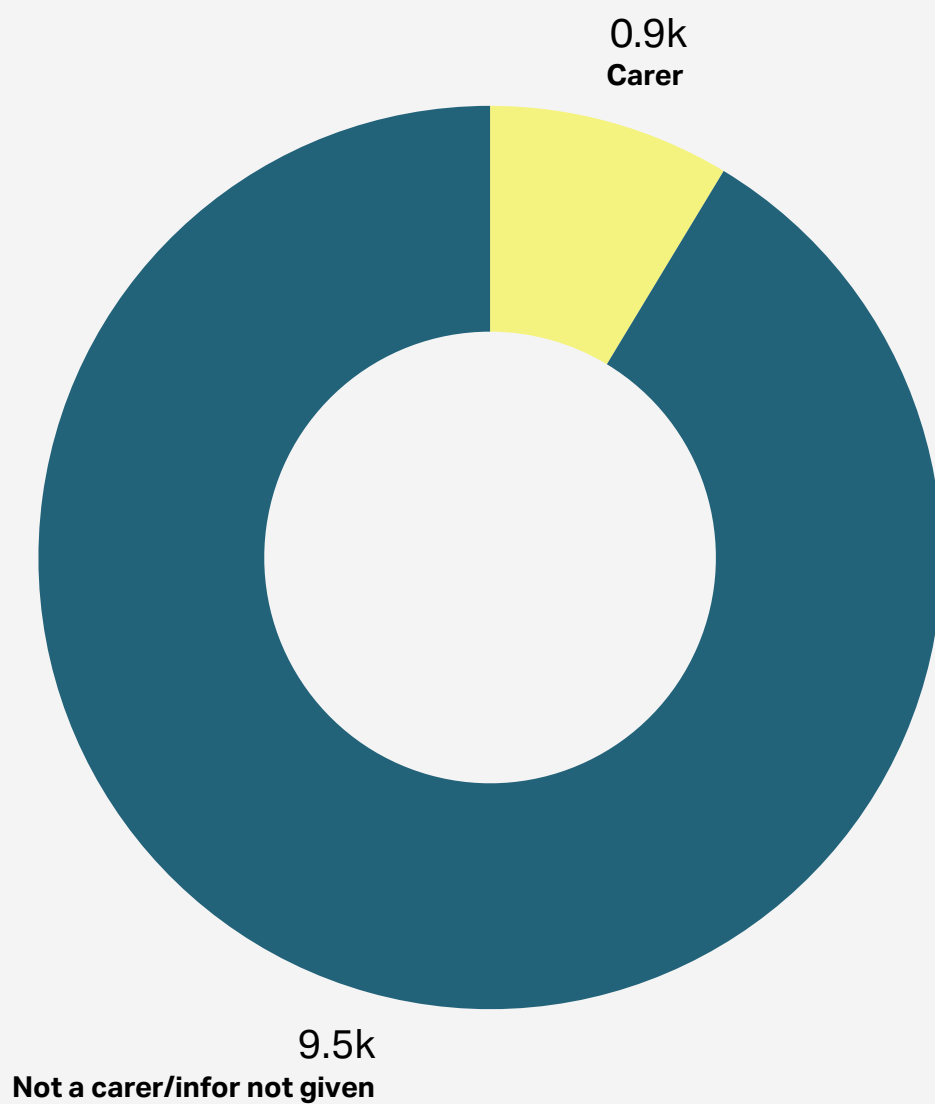
Disability	Enrolments	Count of student code	HE FTE
Not given/prefer not to say	50	48	43.15
No known disability	6499	6173	4,110.232
Has disability	3894	3663	2,488.98

Higher Education enrolments by care-experienced



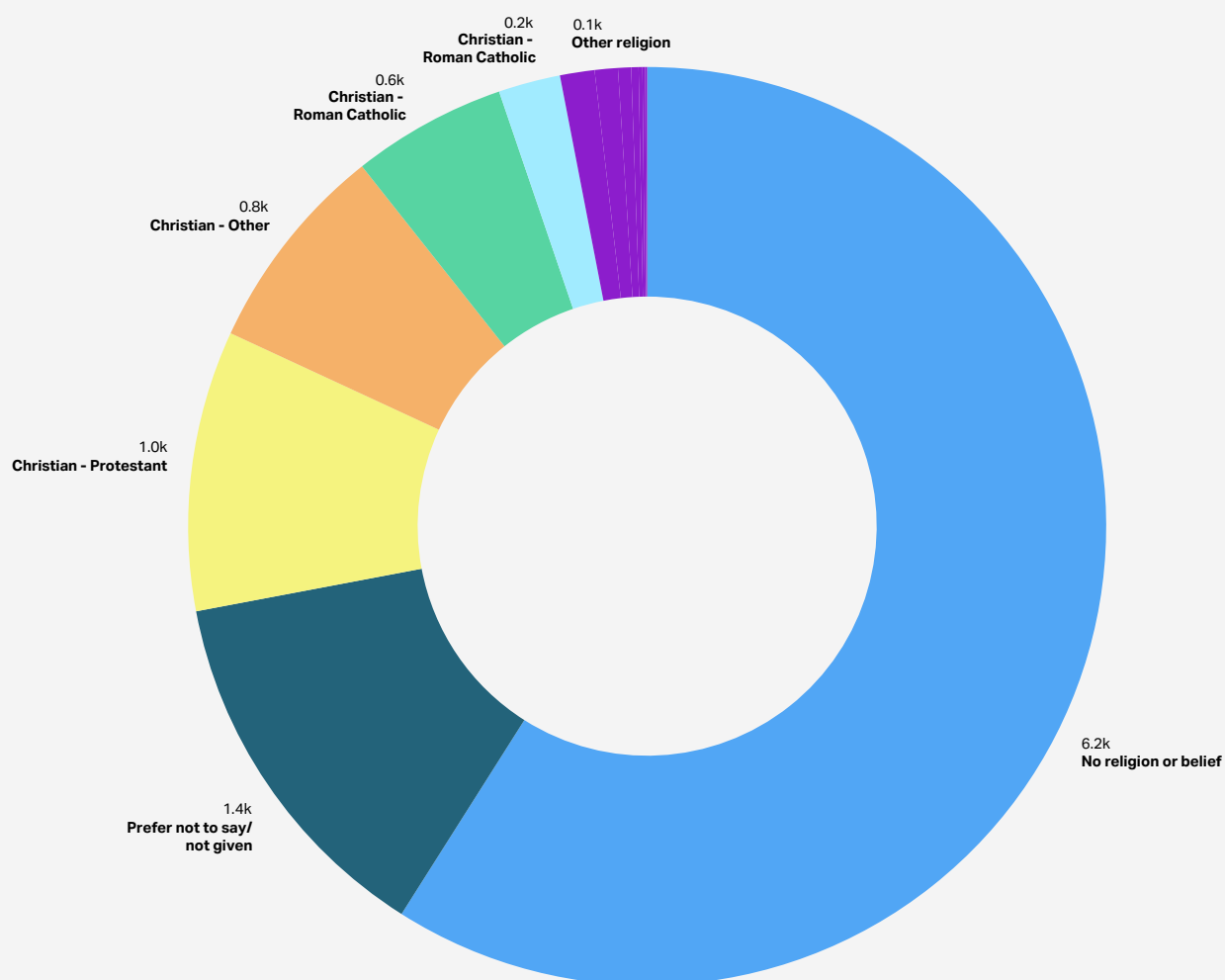
Care experienced	Enrolments	Headcount	HE FTE
Not experience of care/prefer not to say	10238	9697	6,498.07
Looked after in Scotland	166	150	115.09
In care in the rest of the UK	23	23	15.24
UCAS defined care leaver	16	14	13.95

Higher Education enrolments by care responsibilities



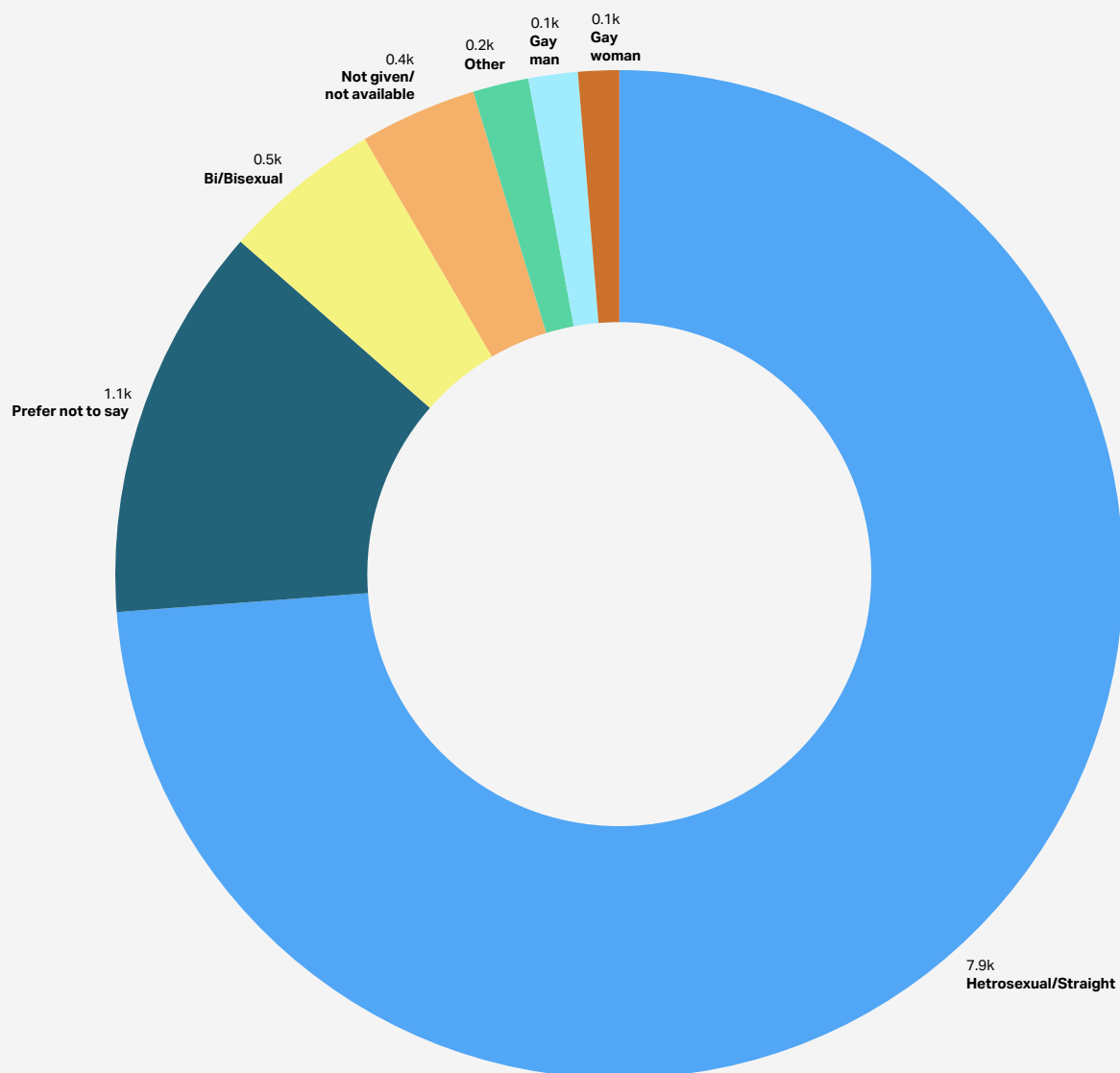
Care responsibilities	Enrolments	Count of student code	HE FTE
Not a carer/infor not given	9535	9031	6,123.53
Carer	908	853	518.82

Higher Education enrolments by religion



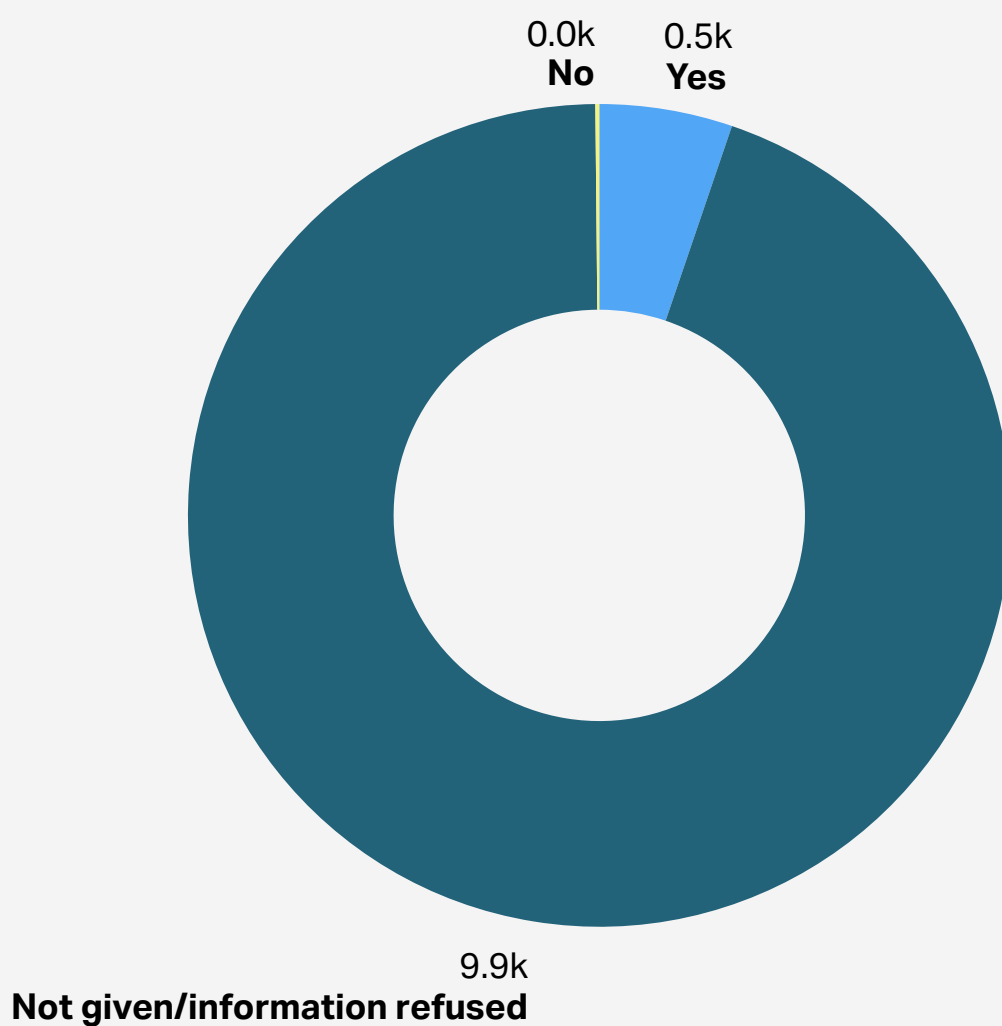
Religion	Enrolments	Count of student code	HE FTE
No religion or belief	6160	5833	3,956.33
Prefer not to say/not given	1362	1306	1,014.03
Christian - Protestant	1031	981	637.39
Christian - Other	776	728	381.62
Christian - Roman Catholic	568	537	321.80
Other religion or belief	228	209	139.43
Muslim	127	118	83.50
Pagan	85	77	44.99
Buddhist	48	43	24.87
Hindu	27	23	17.10
Sikh	14	14	10.10
Jewish	10	9	5.00
Spiritual	7	6	6.20

Higher Education enrolments by sexual orientation



Religion	Enrolments	Count of student code	HE FTE
Heterosexual/straight	7935	7500	4,854.65
I prefer not to say	1053	990	687.48
Bi/Bisexual	549	513	383.96
Not given/not available	403	403	390.12
Other	192	185	132.40
Gay man	170	158	100.54
Gay woman/lesbian	141	135	93.20

Higher Education enrolments by gender identity



Gender identity	Enrolments	Count of student code	HE FTE
Yes	546	525	240.38
Not given/information refused	9881	9344	6,397.93
No	16	15	4.03

Student data analysis: 2024/25 trends

Enrolment by age

- + The largest age group of students is currently 16–20 years, accounting for 36.28% of enrolments. This indicates a significant proportion of students are likely to be school leavers entering tertiary education.
- + Data suggests that enrolment decreases progressively with age but there is still a steady presence of mature students up to the age of 40 years.

Enrolment by sex

- + There are more women enrolments with 51.3% (6,300) compared to men at 46.44% (4,000).
- + A small number of students identified as 'other/in another way'.

Enrolment by ethnicity

- + The majority of student enrolments are predominantly white with 88.21%. (9,7000). Only a small proportion of students are from other ethnic backgrounds for example, black minority ethnic is 2.53%.
- + Diversity and inclusion initiatives will continue to support students from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds.

Enrolment by disability

- + 34.76% of students have declared a disability, and 64.71% of students have declared no known disability.
- + The number of students with disabilities highlights the importance of student support services, accessible measures and reasonable adjustments.
- + Additional data on disclosed disabilities, including specific learning disabilities, visual impairment, mental health conditions, long-term illnesses, and more, will be enabled through a new equalities dashboard. This will highlight UHI's recognition that students may experience multiple disabilities at different stages of their academic journey.

Enrolment by care-experienced and enrolment by care responsibilities

- + A small proportion of care-experienced students were looked after in care, only 200 students.
- + Although the majority of students have declared they do not have care responsibilities, 900 students have reported that they do.

Enrolment by religion

- + The chart illustrates various religious beliefs among students, the largest group with 59.8% of individuals disclosing no religion or belief.
- + There is a notable representation of Christian denominations with 7.39% of students identifying as Protestant, 6.19% as other Christian, and 4.24% as Roman Catholic.
- + 19.8% (1,400) prefer not to disclose.

Enrolment by sexual orientation

- + The largest group of students identify as heterosexual/straight with 74.34% and a notable proportion of 11.96% of students prefer not to say.
- + Although the numbers identifying as bisexual, gay men, gay women/lesbians, or other orientations are smaller, the overall percentage is an estimated 8%, this indicates that UHI reflects a diverse and inclusive environment.

Enrolment by gender identity

(Is your gender identity the same as you were registered at birth?)

- + 43.09% confirmed yes, their gender identity is the same as registered at birth.
- + A large number of students 56.19% (9,900) did not provide information on their gender identity, suggesting a strong preference for privacy or neutrality on this topic.
- + A smaller group of students identified with a specific gender identity which reflects some level of diversity and inclusivity within the university.



9 New Equality Outcomes 2025–29

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) published 'Tackling Persistent Inequalities Together,' which details how the Scottish tertiary system can address persistent inequalities through national equality outcomes. The National Equality Outcomes, outlined in Appendix 2, were agreed upon by the SFC and Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). UHI will adopt seven of the sixteen proposed outcomes until 2029, ensuring adequate time and resources for successful implementation.

9.1 UHI Equality Outcomes 2025-29

Each outcome will meet the three needs of the General Equality duty as set out in the Equality Act (2010).

- + **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct.
- + **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.

UHI Equality Outcomes

- + Disabled staff and students report feeling safe in the tertiary system.
- + Disabled students report feeling satisfied with overall support and reasonable adjustments received, including from teaching staff, while on their course.
- + LGBTQ+ staff and students report feeling safe to be themselves, including being 'out' at university and in the workplace.
- + Staff and students feel supported and safe and are confident that complaints of harassment or bias on the grounds of ace.
- + UHI can evidence approaches that prevent and respond to violence, harassment and abuse.
- + Staff and students at UHI know how to access mental health support.

Full details of our outcomes including responsibility, evidence and actions can be found in Appendix 1.

10 Conclusion

The Public Sector Equality Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report 2025–29 demonstrates UHI's ongoing commitment to an inclusive and diverse environment for staff and students. It details significant progress in equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), including inclusive infrastructure, better understanding of needs, and accessible learning and teaching practices.



As we look to the future, UHI remains dedicated to advancing EDI by setting new equality outcomes for 2025–29. This will focus on ensuring safety, support, and satisfaction for disabled staff and students, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those seeking mental health support. Our core values of collaboration, openness, respect, and excellence will continue to guide our efforts in creating a welcoming and supportive environment where everyone feels a true sense of belonging.

Overall, this report outlines UHI's efforts to integrate equitable and inclusive practices across all functions, supporting our mission to offer flexible and accessible learning opportunities. The institution aims to continue progressing toward becoming a more inclusive and diverse tertiary institution by collaborating with staff, students, and partners to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Appendix 1: New equality outcome action plan

Outcome 1

Protected characteristic	Disability				
Outcome	Disabled staff and students report feeling safe in the tertiary system.				
Evidence	Scottish hate crime statistics evidence increased harassment to people with disability.				
Action	Improve data collection for staff to disclose and update protected characteristic information.	Improve the visibility and accessibility of reporting mechanisms for safety concerns for both staff and students.	Establish and promote peer support networks for staff and students.	Maintaining accessible estates and facilities (via Health and Safety Committee	Review of key policies, such as the Recruitment Policy and Dignity and Respect at Work Policy. Update to ensure that protected characteristics are fully incorporated.
Measure	Invest in resource to maximise access to industry funds and other opportunities from the energy sector and Green Freeport, including commercial options to secure additional training demand	Increased income generation and recruitment from significant regional investment potential	Participation in training and sharing and promotion of knowledge and awareness of disability.	Annual staff and student surveys on perceptions of safety.	Policy agreed and implemented
Time scale	Year 2 and 4	Year 3	Year 2	Year 2	Year 2

Outcome 2

Protected characteristic	Disability		
Outcome	Disabled students report feeling satisfied with overall support and reasonable adjustments received, including from teaching staff, while on their course.		
Evidence	Persistent inequalities related to student support review outlines issues relating to access and implementation of reasonable adjustments. Feedback from students to Lead Scotland, input from students into the SG/SAAS Disability – Neurodiversity focus.		
Action	Support the integration of the universities BSL Plan across all services, fostering inclusive practices for teaching, support, and professional staff.	Enhance staff training on disability awareness, with a particular focus on Neurodiversity and accessibility of learning materials and course materials.	Establish and promote peer support networks for staff and students.
Measure	Progress made on BSL actions. Policy implementation Staff engagement Staff training and awareness	Progress made on BSL actions. Policy implementation Staff engagement Staff training and awareness Staff training completion and feedback	Student satisfaction survey Feedback and complaints analysis
Time scale	Year 2 and 4	Year 3	Year 2

Outcome 3

Protected characteristic	Gender reassignment and sexual orientation		
Outcome	LGBTQ+ staff and students report feeling safe to be themselves including being 'out' at university and in the workplace.		
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stonewall Research suggests some LGB students hide their identities in universities and that staff experience barriers that prevent them from being out at work. There is limited quantitative Assignment data about the outcomes for transgender staff and students. Research from Stonewall and TransEdu suggests that transgender people face harassment on account of their transgender status. 		
Action	Review or develop policies to ensure inclusive practice for LGBTQ+ staff and students.	Source and deliver training on LGBTQ+ awareness and allyship.	Promote and embed the aims of the LGBTI+ Rainbow Mark. Establish visible LGBTQ+ networks, spaces and celebration of events for staff and students.
Measure	Reports of discrimination addressed promptly.	Staff participation and feedback on experiences.	Increase in disclosure of sexual orientation. Increased event attendance and positive feedback.
Time scale	Year 2 and 4	Year 1–4	Year 1

Outcome 4

Protected characteristic	Race			
Outcome	Staff and students feel supported and safe and are confident that complaints of harassment or bias on the grounds of race			
Evidence	As outlined in the EHRC Racial Harassment Inquiry : Staff data and student data from both sectors and on data representation at Court level outlines underrepresentation issues.			
Action	Foster inclusive recruitment processes.	Source and deliver training related to anti-racism, unconscious bias and racial harassment.	Review and strengthen Dignity and Respect at work policy.	Review and strengthen Dignity and Respect at work policy. Increase understanding of racism and anti-racism in curriculum and promote and celebrate BHM through resources.
Measure	Positive action statement for all recruitment.	Participation rate and feedback.	Policy agreed and implemented.	Increase in staff and student confidence through survey and feedback.
Time scale	Year 4	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2

Outcome 5

Protected characteristic	Sex			
Outcome	UHI can evidence approaches that prevent and respond to violence, harassment and abuse			
Evidence	Evidence from the Scottish Governments Equally Safe strategy including issues, predominately from women relating to accessing support and reporting issues.			
Action	Promote and raise awareness of the gender-based violence reporting tool.	Continue to promote training sessions on gender-based violence.	Campaign for 16 days of Action.	Update Dignity and Respect at Work Policy and promote guidance on sexual harassment and harassment at work.
Measure	Number of reported incidents.	Participation rate and feedback.	Policy agreed and implemented.	Policy agreed and implemented. Staff experience survey.
Time scale	2 years	Yearly	Yearly	Year 2

Outcome 6

Protected characteristic	Sex			
Outcome	Staff and students at UHI know how to access mental health support.			
Evidence	Statistically data outlines that men in society are three times more likely than women to die by suicide. Men are less likely to access mental health support.			
Action	Promote and provide Mental Health and Suicide Awareness training.	Improve visibility and signposting of mental health resources for staff and students with a focus on men across campus, local community and online.	Review and develop provision for staff mental health support.	Promote and incorporate UHI Mental Health Strategy aims across university services.
Measure	Participation rates and experience of training sessions.	Increased number of staff and students by protected characteristic accessing mental health support.	Staff experience survey and feedback.	Awareness of mental health increased via survey and access to support.
Time scale	Yearly	Year 2	Year 2	Year 4

Appendix 2

Protected characteristics and national equality outcomes (Scottish Funding Council)

Protected characteristic	National equality outcome
Age	<p>The retention outcomes for university students aged 25 and over will improve.</p> <p>The success rates for college students aged under 19 will improve.</p>
Disability	<p>The success and retention rates of college and university students who declare a mental health condition will improve.</p> <p>Disabled students report feeling satisfied with the overall support and reasonable adjustments received, including from teaching staff, while on their course.</p> <p>Disabled staff and students report feeling safe in the tertiary system.</p> <p>Where representation is not proportionate to the relevant population, increase the representation of disabled staff in the workforce and on college boards and university courts.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>Transgender staff and students report feeling safe to be themselves in the tertiary system.</p>
Race	<p>Staff and students feel supported and safe and are confident that complaints of harassment or bias on the grounds of race will be dealt with appropriately because complaints procedures are fit for purpose and offer effective redress.</p> <p>Institutions should also have regard to attainment levels by racial group and ensure that their curriculum is diverse and anti-racist.</p> <p>Where representation is not proportionate to the relevant population, increase the racial diversity of court members and address any racial diversity issues in college boards.</p> <p>Where representation is not proportionate to the relevant population, increase the racial diversity of teaching and non-teaching staff to align with student representation in the sector.</p>
Religion or belief	<p>Students and staff report that they have confidence in institutional report and support mechanisms because they are fit for purpose.</p>
Sex	<p>Staff and students know how to access support about violence, harassment and abuse, report their experience and feel properly supported in doing so because the services are fit for purpose.</p> <p>Men (staff and students) know how to access mental health support (recognising intersectionality within that group).</p> <p>Institutions will have regard to significant imbalances on courses and take action to address it.</p>
Sexual orientation	<p>Lesbian, gay, and bisexual staff and students report that they feel safe being 'out' at university and college.</p>

Appendix 3

(Glossary of terms)

Age

Refers to a person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30-year-olds).

Disability

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Religion and belief

Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief, including the lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the nonwork context, protection against maternity discrimination lasts for 26 weeks after giving birth and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race

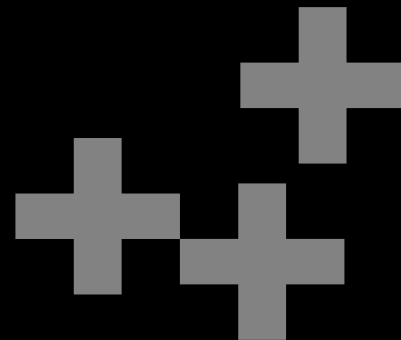
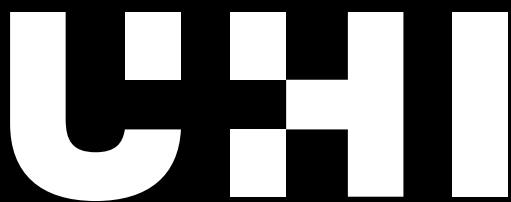
Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins.

Sex

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that differentiate men and women.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both sexes.



UHI partnership

UHI Argyll

UHI Inverness

UHI Moray

UHI North, West and Hebrides

UHI Orkney

UHI Perth

UHI Shetland

HTC

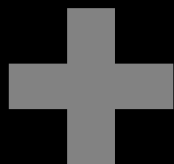
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Scottish Association for Marine Science

Public Sector Equality Duty Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report 2025-2029

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