



Diversity in Sport Governance

Sport England & UK Sport
November 2024



Photo by Naomi Baker/GettyImages

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Joint Foreword

by Tim Hollingsworth, CEO at Sport England
and Sally Munday, CEO at UK Sport

There is a growing understanding of both the moral and business cases for creating more diverse and inclusive leadership teams in the sport and physical activity sector. Diversity and inclusion lead to stronger governance, increased innovation and better problem-solving capabilities that are essential to securing the future of sports organisations and ensuring that they better reflect the society they represent.

As our collective awareness of the barriers that some groups face in accessing sport and physical activity improves, it's more important than ever to ensure that there are people with lived experiences in decision-making positions who are championing underrepresented groups so that from grassroots to elite level, sport and physical activity is accessible and attainable for all.

This report provides a detailed breakdown of the diversity makeup of around 128 sports Boards in the UK, enabling a comparison to be made against the last audit in 2020. For the first time, data has also been gathered on the diversity of Senior Leadership Teams, allowing a benchmark to be established, against which we can track our progress more accurately in the future.

We welcome the notable progress reflected in the findings, particularly relating to the increased representation of disabled people and those from culturally or ethnically diverse backgrounds serving on Boards. However, the report also highlights some of the challenges that still exist, such as the decrease in the number of women holding Board positions over the past 4 years and the fact that Senior Leadership Teams are far from reflecting the diversity of UK society in all its forms.

We are determined to use our positions to drive continued progress. We will ensure that we, ourselves, are setting the standard for other organisations to follow.

The Code for Sports Governance is important in helping us to achieve our ambitions in this area. Developed with the aim of driving improvement across all areas of governance by setting out levels of transparency, diversity and inclusion, accountability and integrity, the Code has been applied to more than 4,000 organisations since its inception in 2016.

When we reviewed the Code in 2021, we introduced a mandatory requirement for our top-level (Tier 3) funded partners to create detailed, robust and ambitious Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans (DIAPs) to increase diversity on their Boards, Senior Leadership Teams and across their wider organisation. Boards are required to formally review the DIAPs at least, on an annual basis and publish them on their websites for transparency and to aid accountability.

Sport England and UK Sport commissioned a consortium to provide bespoke support to around 130 partners to meet the new diversity and inclusion requirements of the Code, and specifically, to help them develop meaningful DIAPs. The two-year project is just concluding. Our next steps will be to analyse the findings of both this report and the DIAP project to determine what role we can play in supporting meaningful and lasting change.

We're very aware that fundamental change of the kind we seek cannot happen overnight. But the data provides clarity about what more can and should be done in this space. By working with our partners, we can help make sport a more inclusive place to work in and engage with, for all.

Finally, we are grateful to the individuals who participated in the survey, by sharing their personal diversity data. Without this information, the future steps we take as a sector would be less assured, rather than tightly targeted to where change needs to happen most.



Tim Hollingsworth
Chief Executive of
Sport England

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Hollingsworth'.



Sally Munday
Chief Executive
of UK Sport

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Munday'.

01

Key Findings 2020-2024

The points below summarise the main changes since the last Board audit conducted in 2020. Additionally, in 2024, we surveyed Senior Leadership Teams for the first time. These findings can be found later in the report.

Compared to the result in 2020:

- Board representation of individuals from culturally or ethnically diverse backgrounds has increased from 7.9% to 15%. (18.3% England and Wales 2021 Census figure).¹
- The number of Board members identifying as having a physical or mental disability or long-term health condition has increased from 13% to c17%. (17.8% England and Wales 2021 Census figure).²
- State school attendees rose from 70% (2020) to 75% (2024).³
- Those identifying as heterosexual decreased by 2.52%.⁴
- Chair roles are predominantly held by those aged 55+, while younger age groups occupy other senior leadership roles.⁵
- Chair roles had more privately educated individuals compared to other roles.⁶

¹ Page 13 - Section 1

² Page 14 - Section 1

³ page 16 - section 1

⁴ page 18 - section 1

⁵ page 32 - section 3

⁶ page 33 - section 3

02

The Report

This report is intended to build upon the 2020 Board leadership audit of Sport England and UK Sport funded bodies. It allows an insight into the trends and progress that has been achieved with respect to Board diversity, as well as capturing, for the first time, similar insights relating to Senior Leadership Teams.

It is hoped that the information provided in this report will enable Sport England and UK Sport – and their funded bodies – to understand the current composition of Board and Senior Leadership Teams across National Governing Bodies, Active Partnerships and wider system partners as well as critical gaps. This will, in turn, help inform future support and prioritisation around equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work, and track progress and effectiveness of current and recent interventions to drive change.

Methodology

As with the 2020 report, approximately 140 Sport England and UK Sport funded partners were asked to nominate a representative who would be responsible for ensuring that the survey was forwarded to each of their Board members. Additionally, for the first time, the survey was sent to the Senior Leadership Teams, comprising those individuals who hold a position with delegated authority for executive decision-making on behalf of their organisation, such as the Chief Executive Officer, and Finance, Commercial or Performance Directors/Leads.

The survey was sent to all nominated individuals on 12 March 2024 and was open until 7 May 2024. It was available online as a link through Survey Monkey, as well as accessible via a word document and/or telephone interview. These three survey participation options were mentioned in an introductory email, alongside an invitation to contact Perrett Laver directly through a bespoke, confidential email address should any partner wish to discuss other alternatives to, or have further questions about the survey. The aim was to ensure that any individual with accessibility requirements was able and felt comfortable to participate.

Each question also had a “prefer not to say” option, and, where relevant and necessary, an “other” option to give people the opportunity and critical gaps to self-identify if their preferred term was not listed. At the end of the survey, there was also an opportunity to provide additional comments allowing broader feedback to be captured.



Photo by Brendan Moran/Sportfile via Getty Images

A total of 1,066 people, from 127 organisations (61 National Governing Bodies, 39 Active Partnerships, 27 Other Funded Partners) participated in the survey, though some omitted one or more questions or left the survey incomplete. All data which was provided has been included in this report. Nobody requested a telephone interview or to complete the survey by other means.

Despite expanding the number of individuals invited to respond, the numbers of actual respondents per question was in many cases lower than in 2020. It is worth considering whether 'survey fatigue' played a role in this, with this audit following the work conducted by Sport England and UK Sport as part of the development of Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans in line with the revised Code for Sports Governance, as well as other independent surveys.

03

Headlines

Total number of survey response was 1,066. The following are the headlines:

**Didn't agree to process data
(declined to allow responses
to be used)**

10%

**Respondents that identified
as female**

43.27%

**Respondents that identified as
culturally or ethnically diverse**

12.02%

**Respondents that declared a
physical or mental disability
or long-term health condition**

16.18%

**Respondents that identified
as LGBT+**

7.68%

**Respondents that attended a
state school**

78.4%

**Respondents that identified
from being low socio-economic
background**

22.41%

Headlines (Boards)

Figures include all responses across Board members.
Total responses received = 669 of which:

Respondents that identified as female
40.80%

Respondents that identified as culturally or ethnically diverse
15.11%

Respondents that declared a physical or mental disability or long-term health condition
16.04%

Respondents that identified as LGBT+
6.92%

Respondents that attended a state school
75.38%

Respondents that identified as being from a lower socio-economic background
23.32%

04

Section 1 - Comparative Analysis: Board 2020 & Board 2024



Total number of respondents 2020 = 925

Total number of respondents 2024 = 669

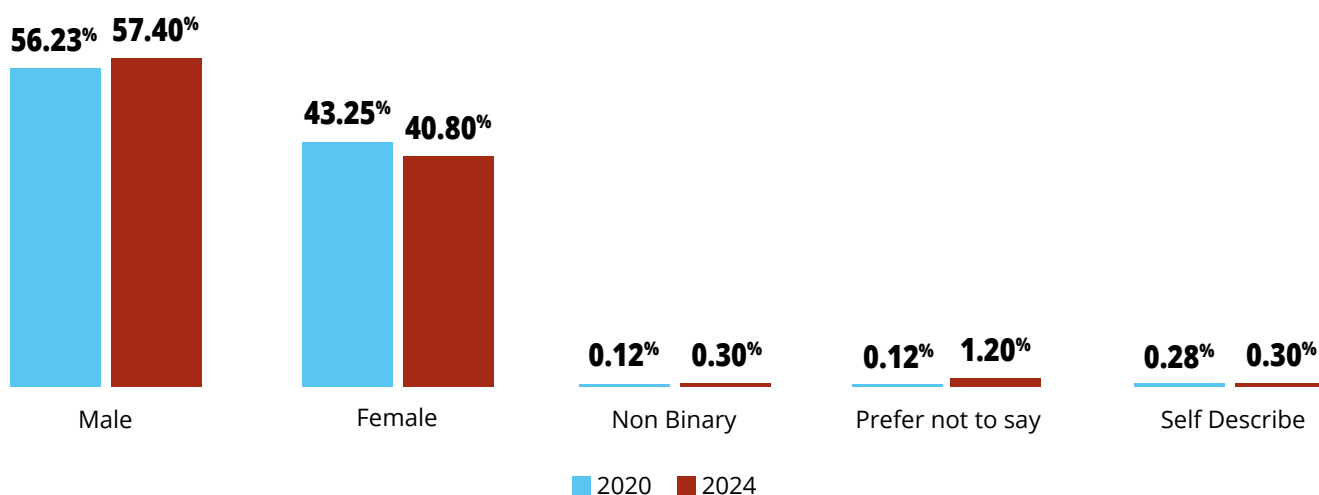
Gender

Please select which gender you best identify with

All respondents

Total respondents for this question in 2020: **818 out of 925**

Total respondents for this question in 2024: **669 out of 669**



Given the differing response rates there is no statistical significance in the difference across the four years. There continues to be more men than women represented at Board level across the partner organisations.

It is hard to judge whether the removal of the 30% minimum gender target from the Code for Sports Governance has had an impact, but the relative stasis of gender split over the period must also be considered against wider diversity goals and prioritisation.

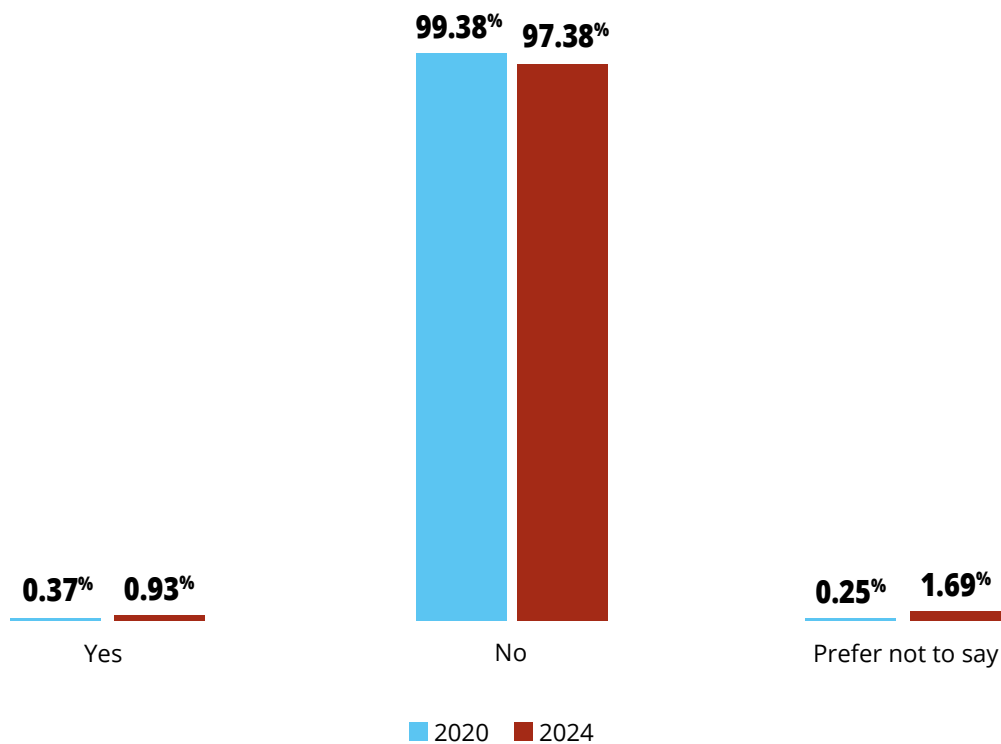
Transgender Identity

Do you identify as trans or now have a gender identity which differs to your gender assigned at birth?

All respondents

Total respondents for this question in 2020: **795 out of 925**

Total respondents for this question in 2024: **649 out of 669**



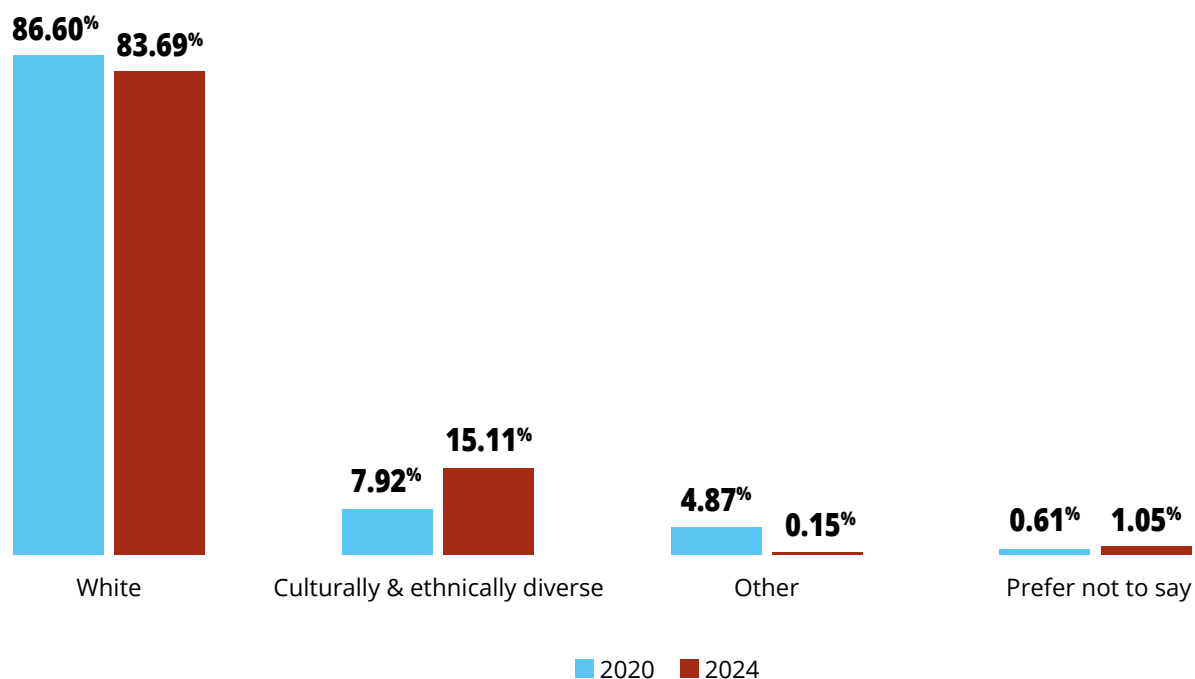
Ethnicity

Please select your ethnicity

All respondents

Total respondents for this question in 2020: **821 out of 925**

Total respondents for this question in 2024: **668 out of 669**



The number of respondents identifying as White has fallen slightly, while those from a culturally or ethnically diverse background has increased by ~7%, moving the overall representation more in line with national demographics (Census 2021).

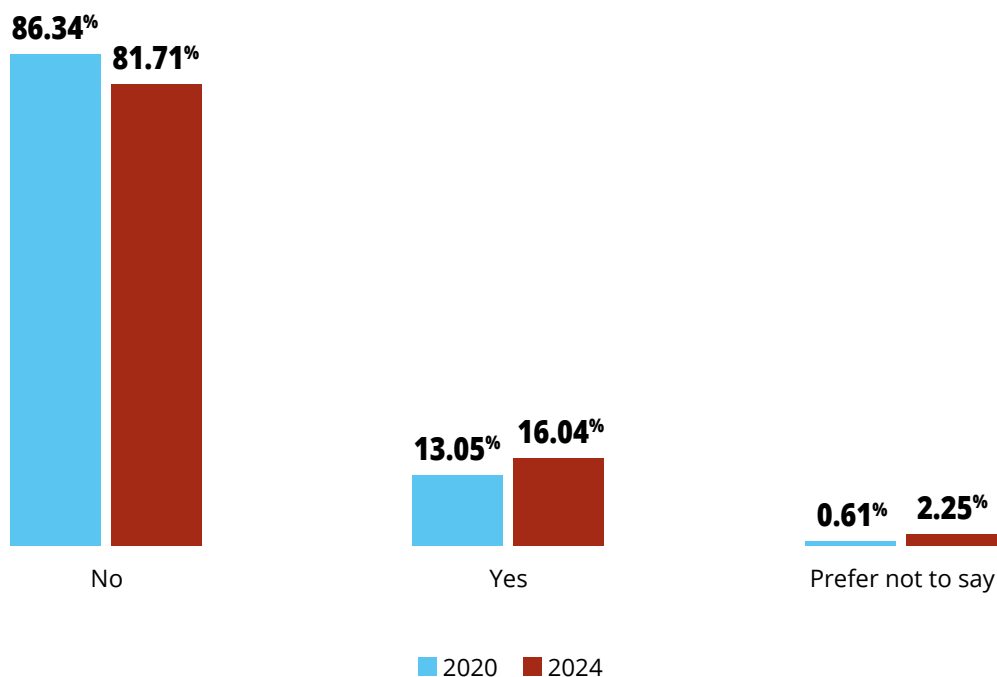
Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a physical or mental disability or long-term health condition?

All respondents

Total respondents for this question in 2020: **820 out of 925**

Total respondents for this question in 2024: **667 out of 669**



There has been a 3% increase in the number of Board members who have declared a physical or mental disability or long-term health condition since 2020.

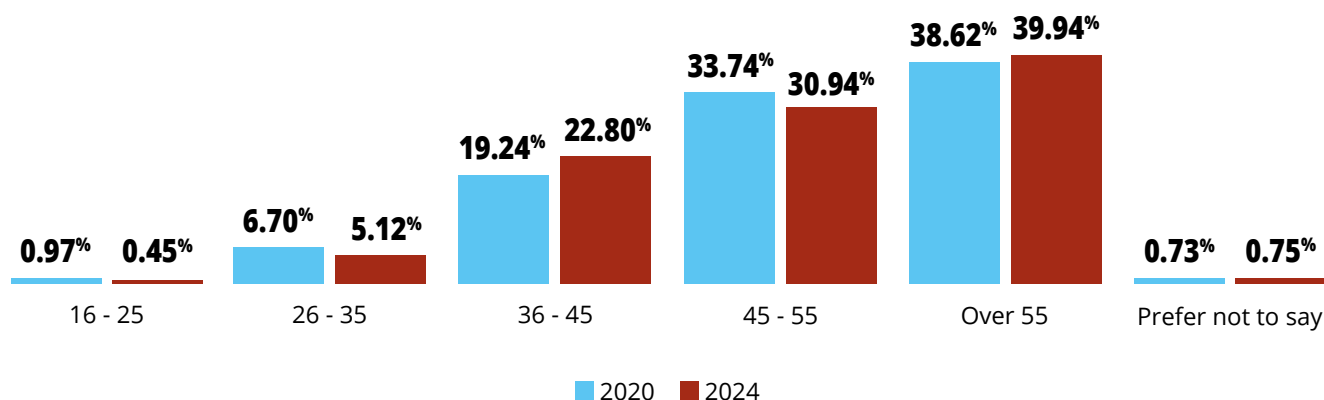
Age

Please select your age bracket

All respondents

Total respondents for this question in 2020: **821 out of 925**

Total respondents for this question in 2024: **666 out of 669**



It is interesting to note that the highest proportion of Board members are in the over 55 age category and this has remained unchanged since 2020.

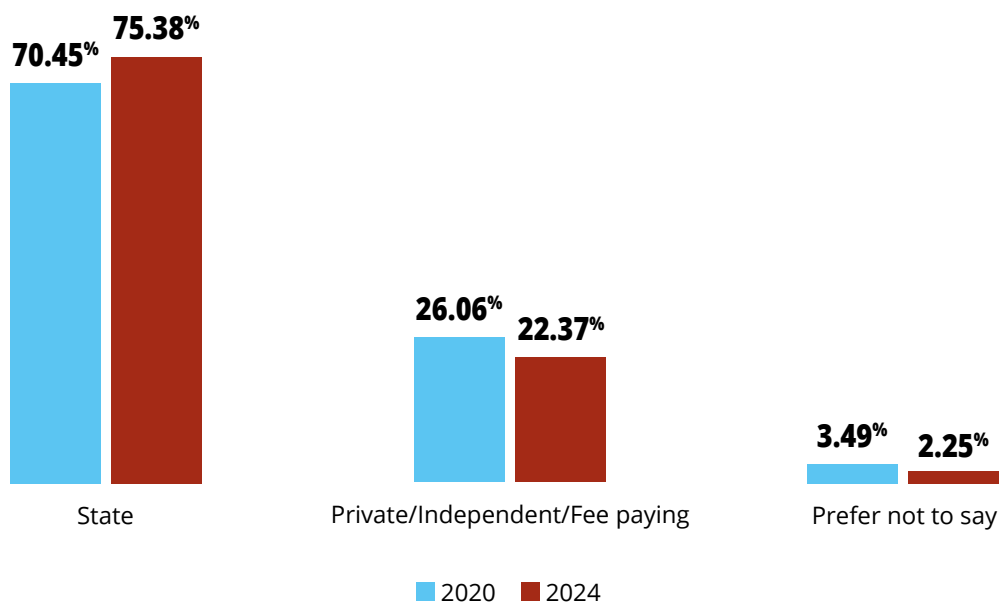
Education

Please select your educational background (secondary)

All respondents

Total respondents for this question in 2020: **802 out of 925**

Total respondents for this question in 2024: **666 out of 669**



The percentage of respondents who attended state-maintained schools increased from 70% in 2020 to 75% in 2024, moving towards alignment with national statistics relating to education. (18% of 16-18 year olds in private education*)

*Fact Finder tool on private education | PEPF

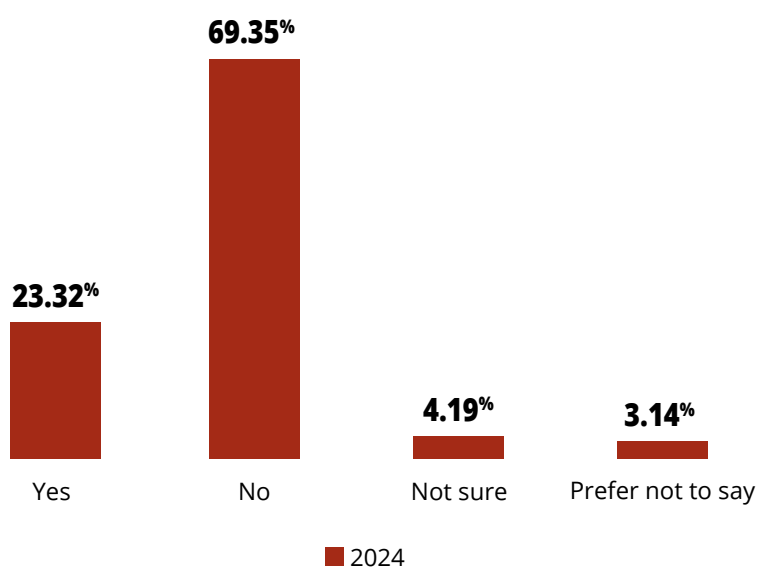
In 2024, we asked Board members a question on University attendance. 82.04% have been to University while 16.17% declared they have not. 1.8% selected 'prefer not to say'.

Socio-Economic Background

Do you consider yourself to be from a lower socio-economic background?

All respondents

Total respondents in 2024: **669**



The data for socio-economic background was not reported in 2020, so a comparison with the 2024 data is not possible.

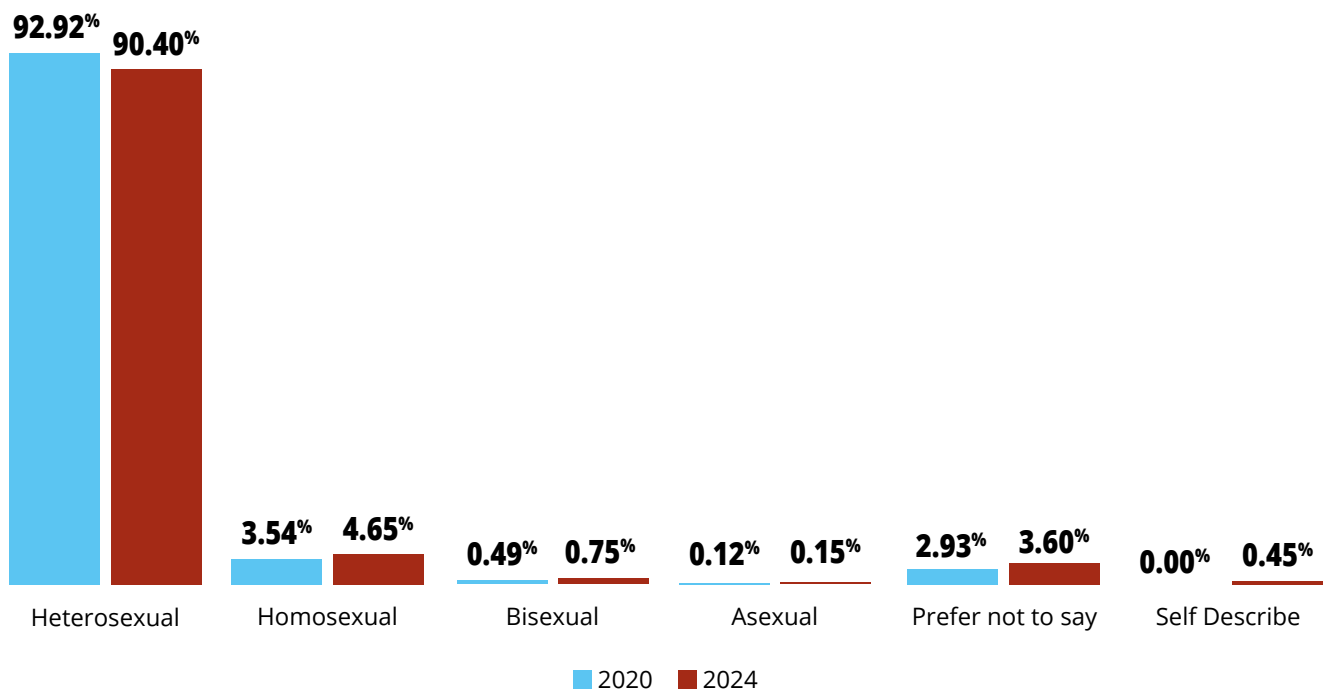
Sexual Orientation

How would you describe your sexual/romantic orientation?

All respondents

Total respondents for this question in 2020: **819 out of 925**

Total respondents for this question in 2024: **667 out of 669**



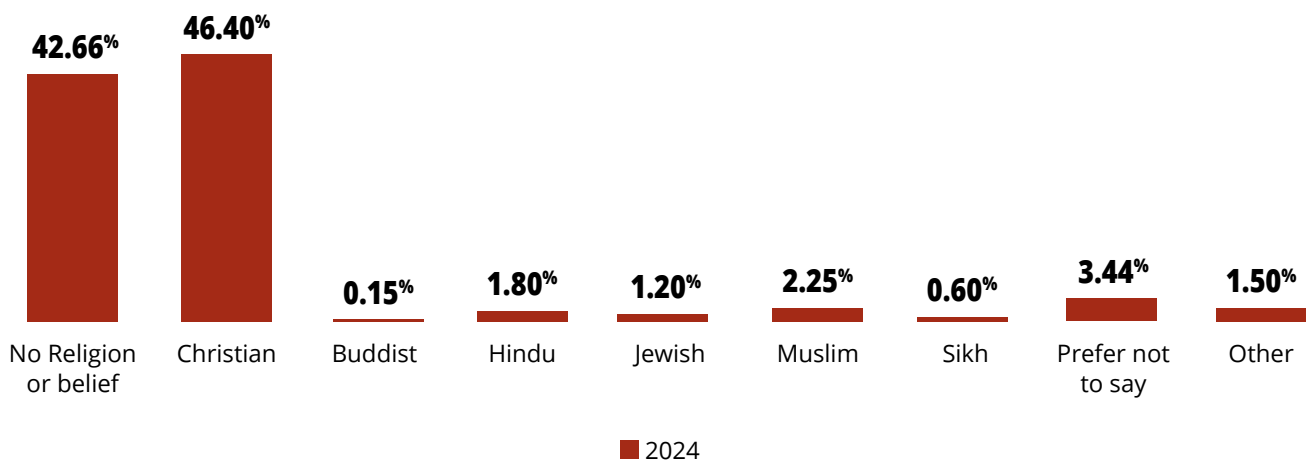
There is a 2.52% decrease in those reporting that they are heterosexual since 2020.

Religion

What religion or belief do you identify with?

All respondents

Total respondents in 2024: **668 out of 669**



The data for Religion was not reported in 2020, so a comparison with the 2024 data is not possible.

As part of the survey Board participants were asked to indicate:

What most accurately describes your role on the Board?

Elected Leader	114
Nominated Director	56
Independent Appointed Director	313
Non-Independent Appointed Director	27
Executive Director	65
Prefer not to say	9
Not applicable	114
Other (please specify)	73

For "other" we received responses such as CEO, Trustee, Observer of the Board, Company Secretary, Interim Director, Independent Chair / Non – Executive Director.

05

Section 2 - Data for Senior Leadership Teams

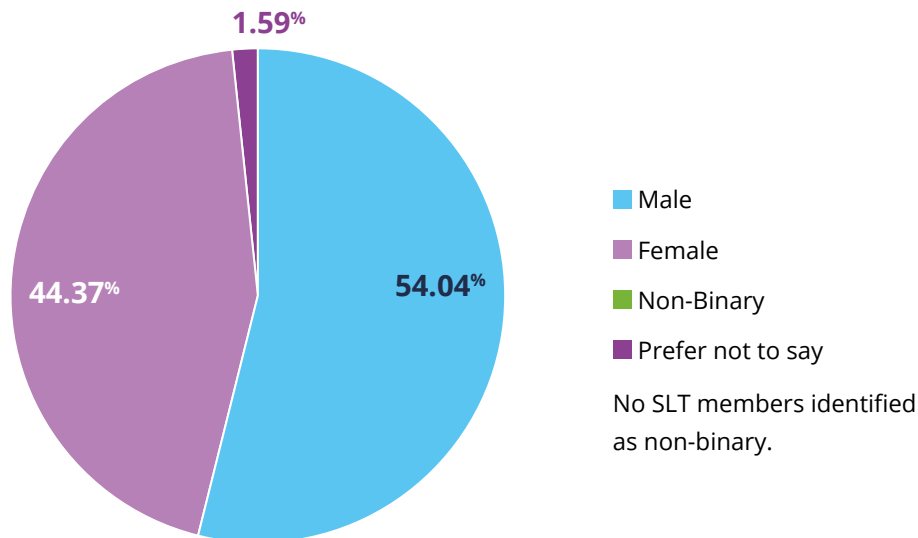


This section shows the key data regarding the Senior Leadership Team responses. 36% of overall respondents were SLT members.

Gender

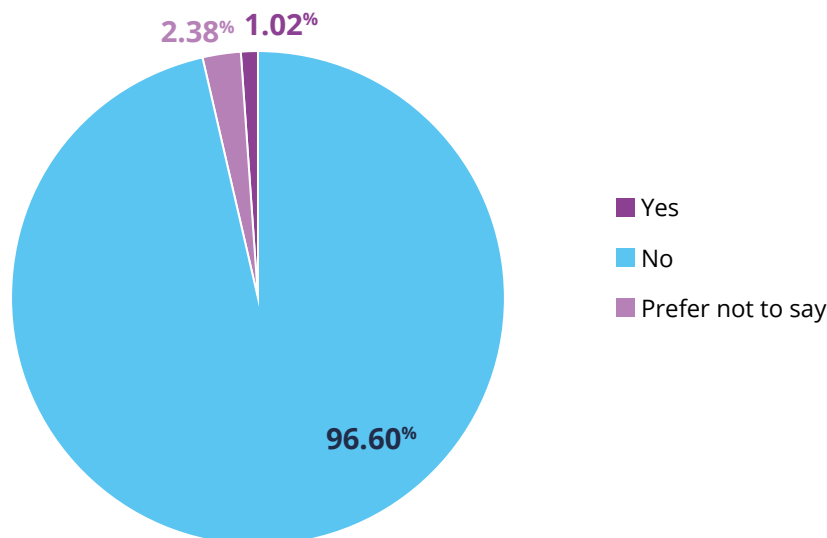
Please select which gender you best identify with

Total number of respondents = 385



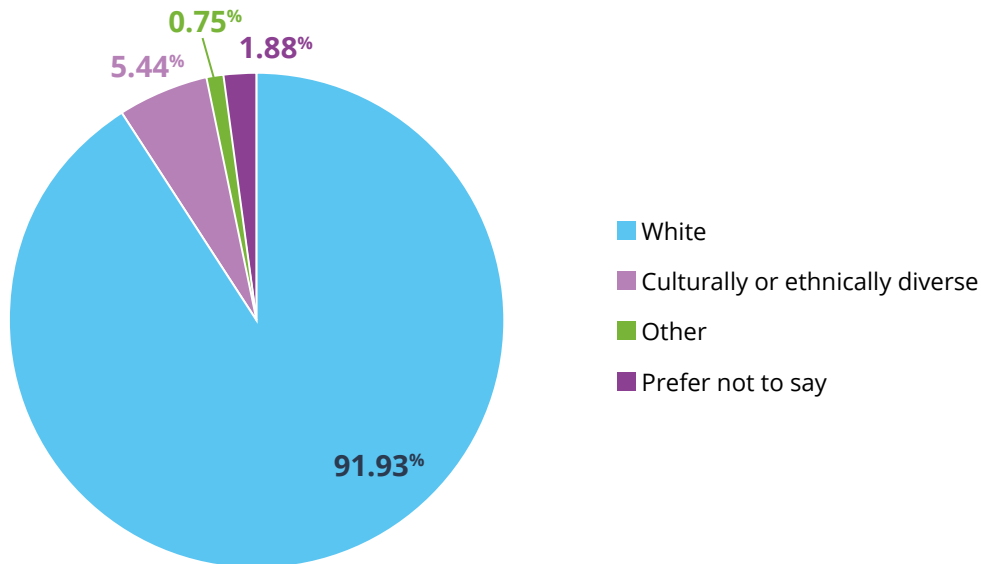
Transgender Identity

Do you identify as trans or now have a gender identity which differs to your gender assigned at birth?



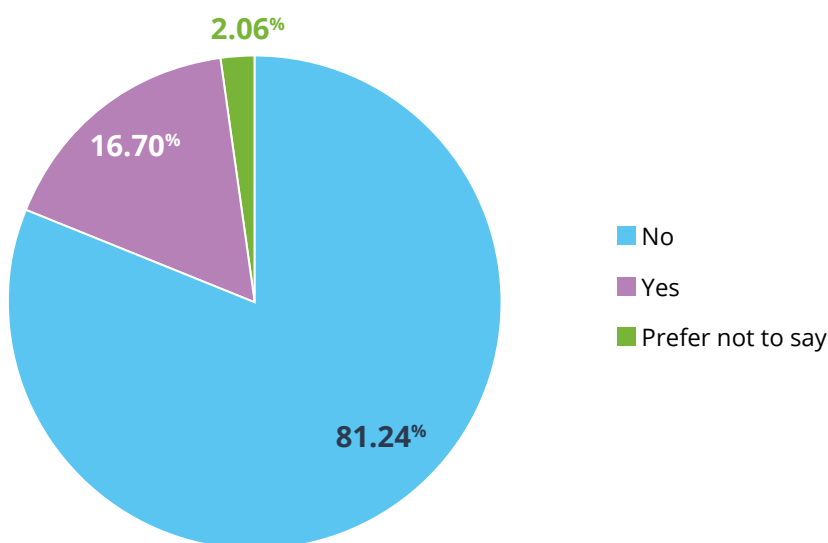
Ethnicity

Please select your ethnicity



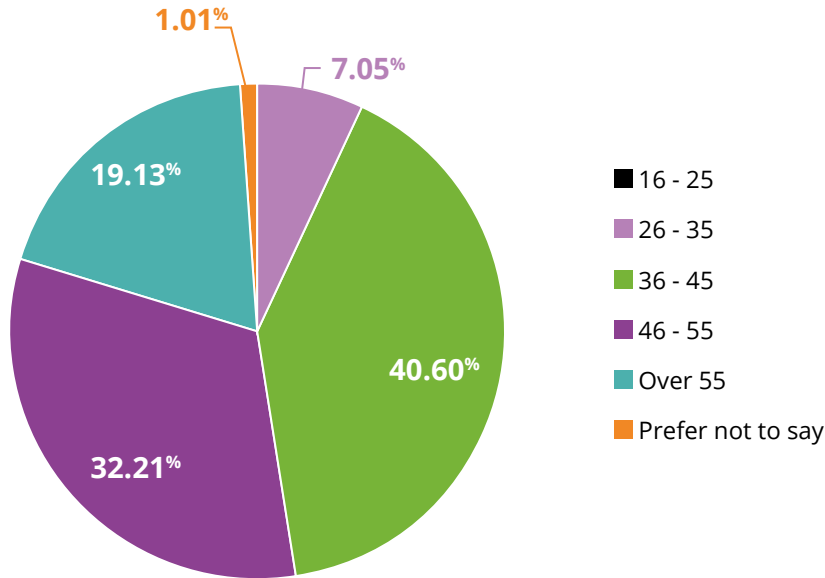
Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a physical or mental disability or long-term health condition?



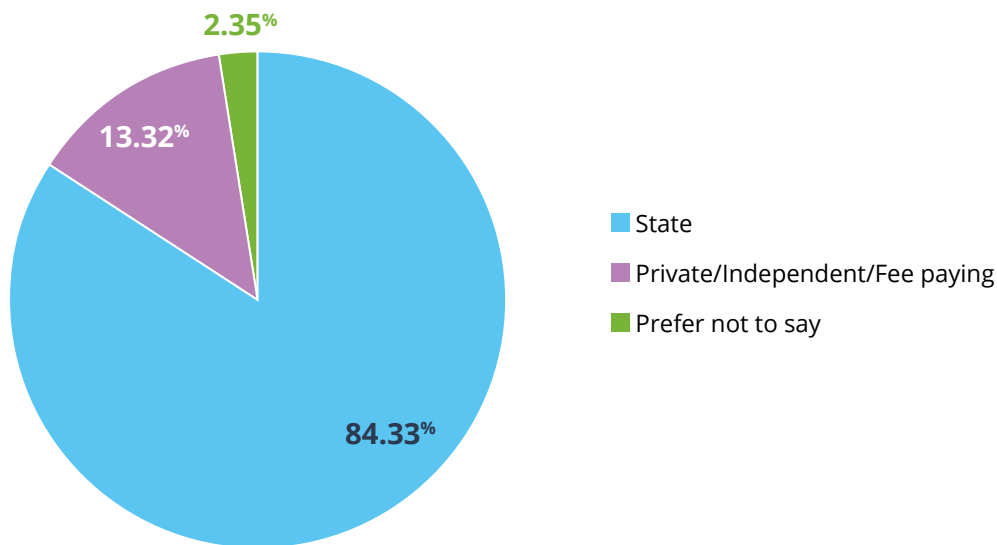
Age

Please select your age bracket



Education

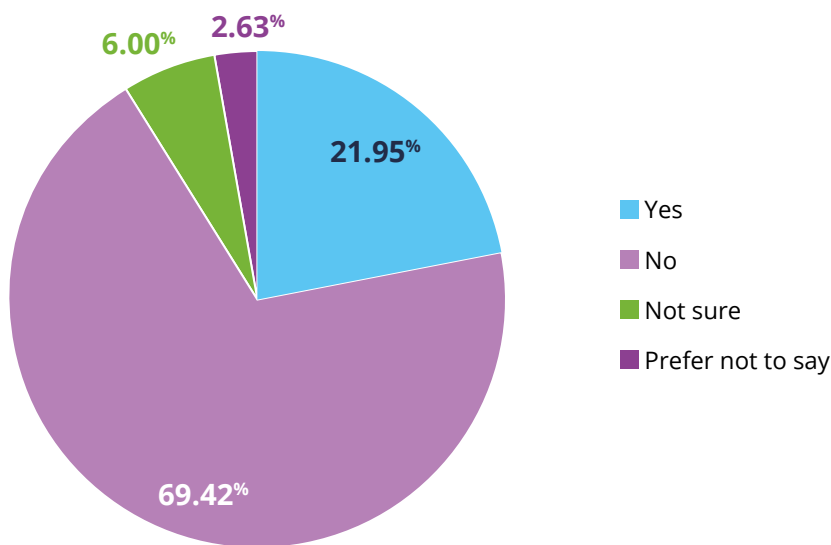
Please select your educational background (secondary)



In 2024, we asked Senior Leadership Teams a question on University attendance. 81.88% indicated they have been to University and 16.11% declared they have not. 2.01% selected prefer not to say.

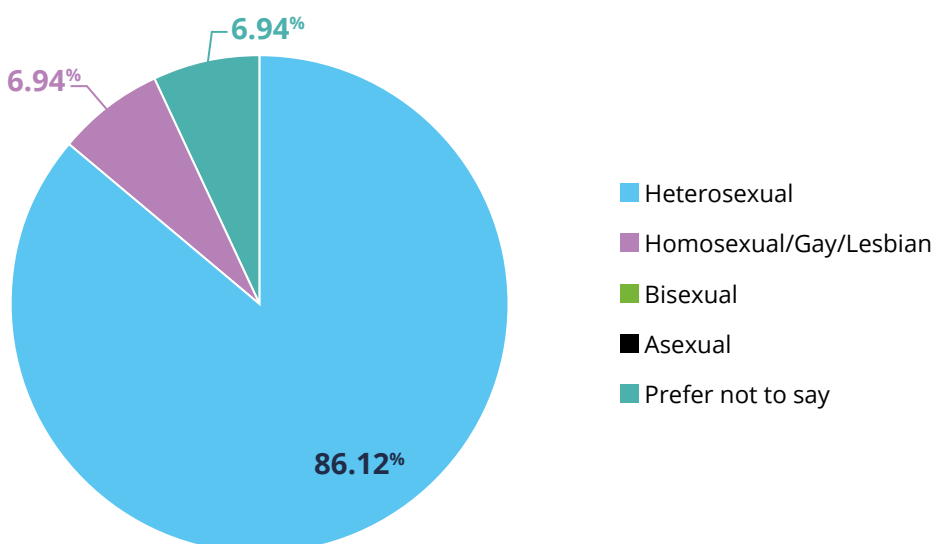
Socio-Economic Background

Do you consider yourself to be from a lower socio-economic background?



Sexual Orientation

How would you describe your sexual/romantic orientation?



Religion

What religion or belief do you identify with?

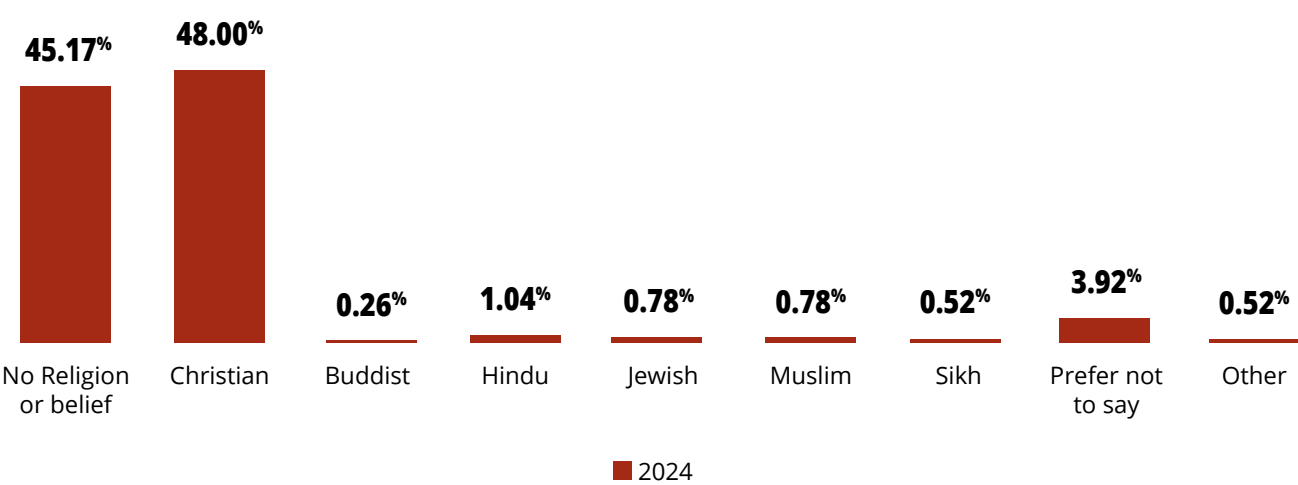


Photo by Adam Pretty/Getty Images

06

Section 3 - Data for Specific Roles

This section takes all the data gathered and cuts it across the different roles of those participating in the survey and formed a significant number. As this was not gathered in previous audits, it is non-comparative but forms a benchmark for future audits or assessment.

Total number of Chairs

76

Total number of CEOs

98

Total number of Financial Directors/Leads

35

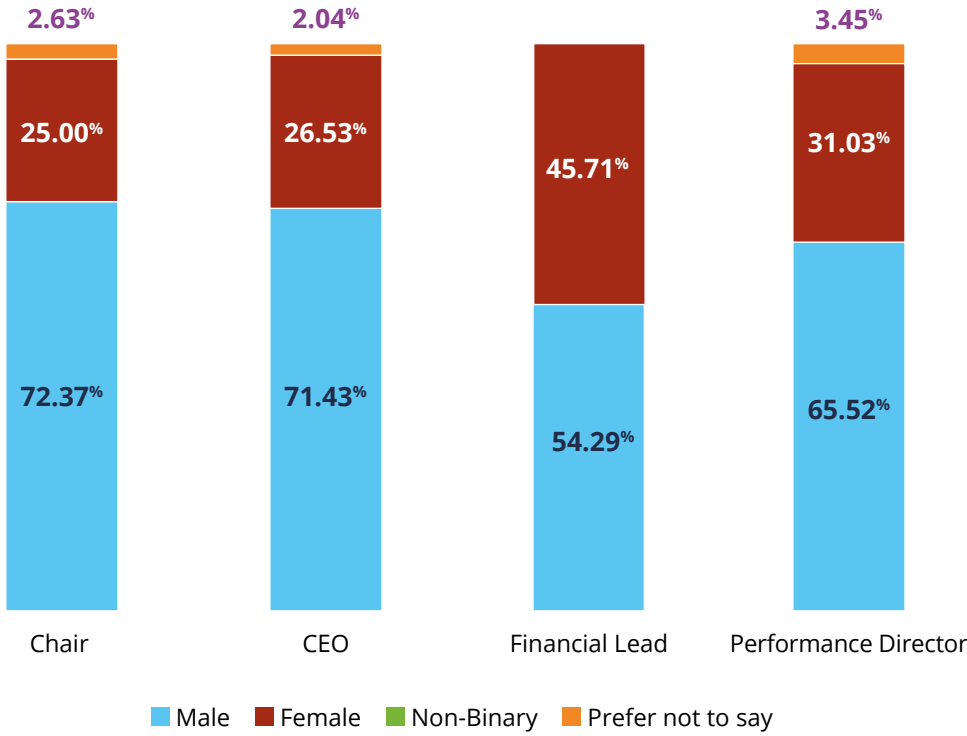
Total number of Performance Directors

29



Gender

Please select which gender you identify best with



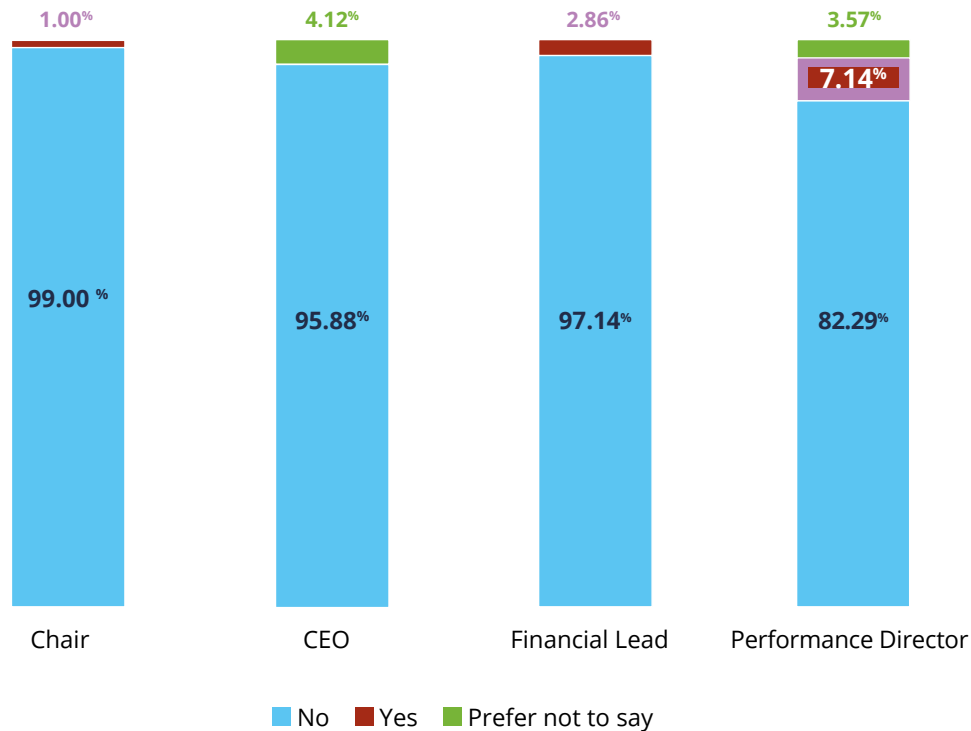
As with the overall data, men over-index, particularly in CEO and Chair roles. None of the respondents identified as non-binary.



Photo by Igor Kralj/Pixsell/MB Media/Getty Images

Transgender Identity

Do you identify as trans or now have a gender identity which differs to your gender assigned at birth?

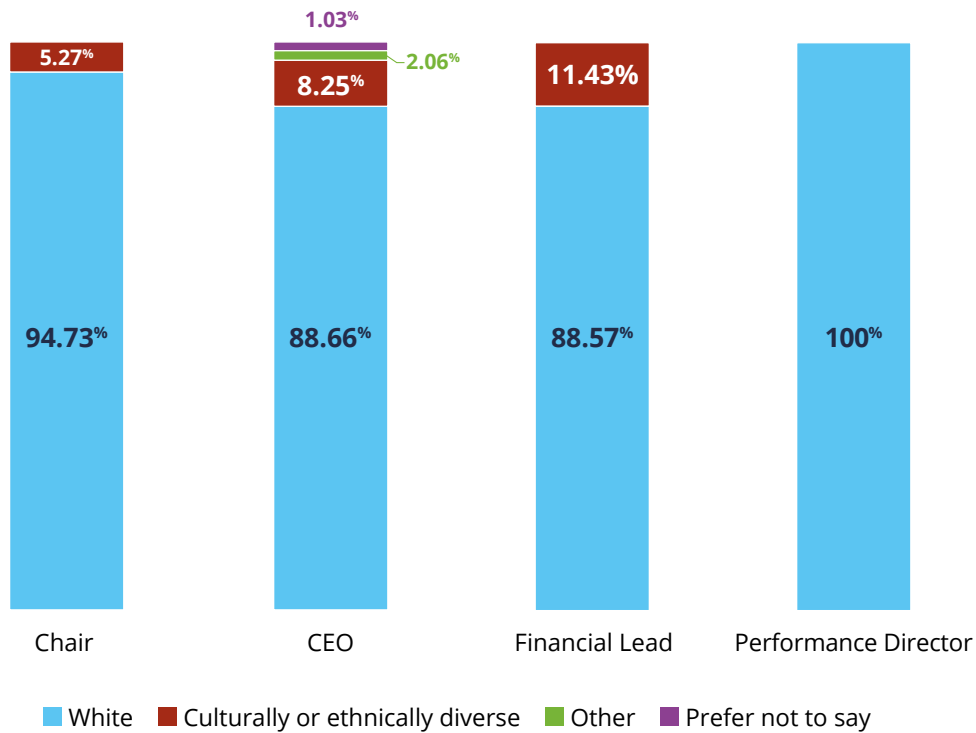


Most respondents in all roles answered “No” with the Performance Director role having the highest proportion of “Yes” responses (7.14%).



Ethnicity

Please select your ethnicity



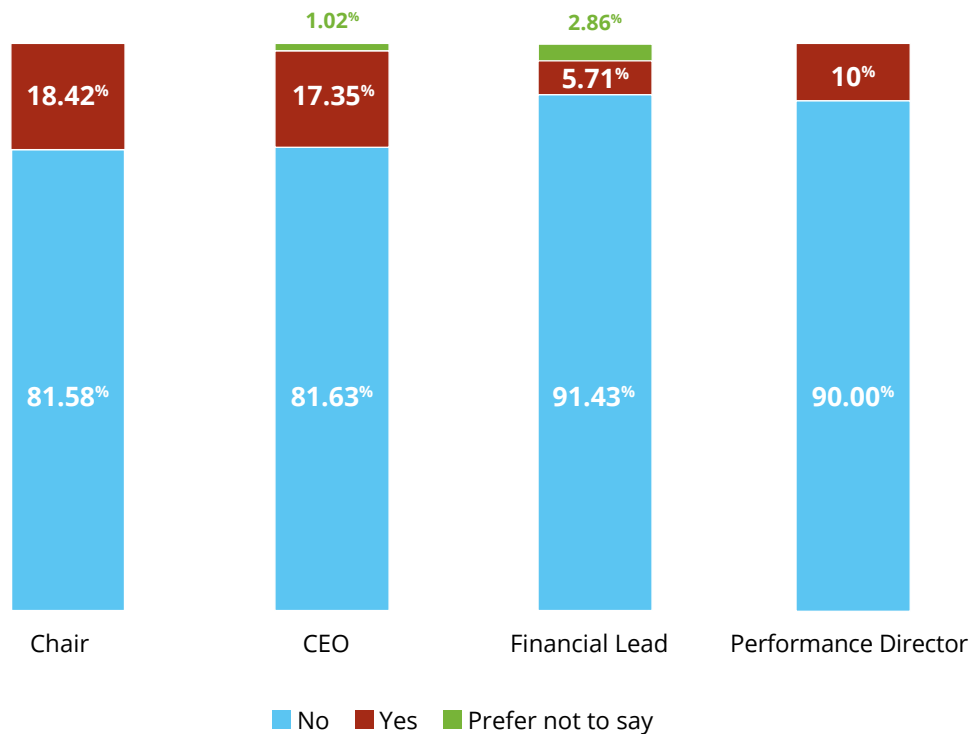
The numbers above highlight the lack of ethnic diversity in all four leadership roles relative to the ethnicity data from the England and Wales 2021 Census. It is interesting to note that on average Board composition is more diverse than senior leadership.

Raw numbers:

- Chair – Out of 76 that responded to this question, 72 were from a White background and 4 from a culturally or ethnically diverse background.
- CEO – Out of the 97 that responded to this question, 86 were from a White background, 8 from a culturally or ethnically diverse background, 1 from other and 2 preferred not to say.
- Financial Lead / Director - Out of the 35 that responded to this question, 31 were from a White background and 4 from other.
- Performance Director – Out of the 29 that responded to this question, all 29 were from a White background.

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a physical or mental disability or long-term health condition?



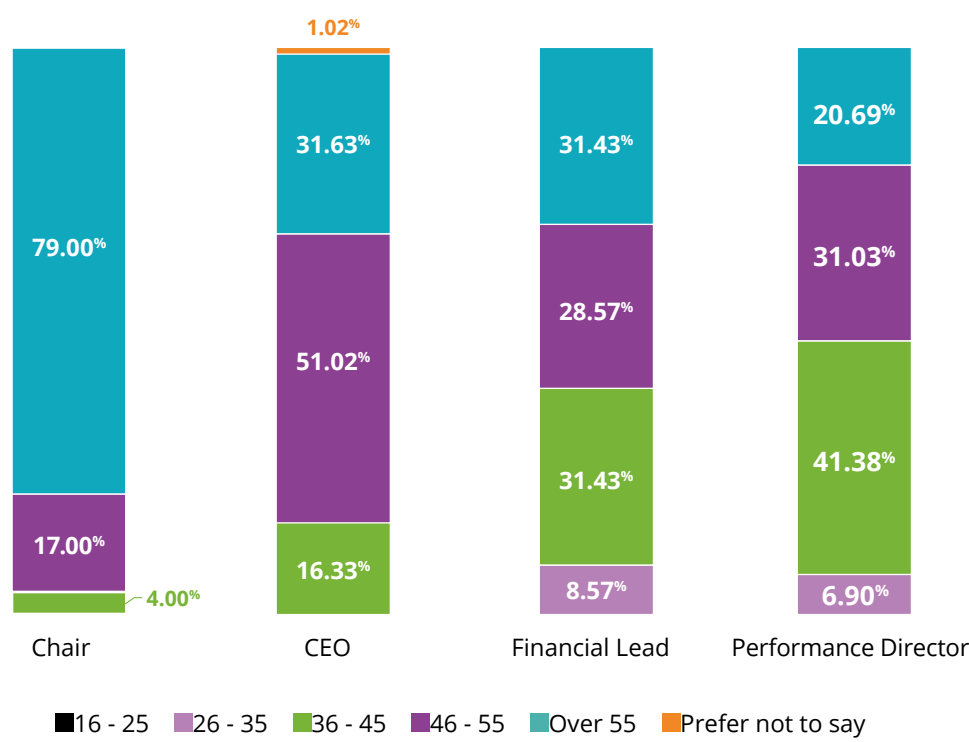
It is notable that almost a fifth of CEOs and Chairs reported having a physical or mental disability or long-term health condition, which is in line with the wider population figure for the England and Wales Census 2021.

Raw numbers:

- Chair – Out of 76 that responded to this question, 14 said “Yes” and 62 said “No”.
- CEO – Out of the 98 that responded to this question, 17 said “Yes”, 80 said “No” and 1 said “Prefer not to say”.
- Financial Lead/Director – Out of the 35 that responded to this question, 2 said “Yes”, 32 said “No” and 1 said “Prefer not to say”.
- Performance Directors – Out of the 29 that responded to this question, 3 said “Yes” and 26 said “No”.

Age

Please select your age bracket



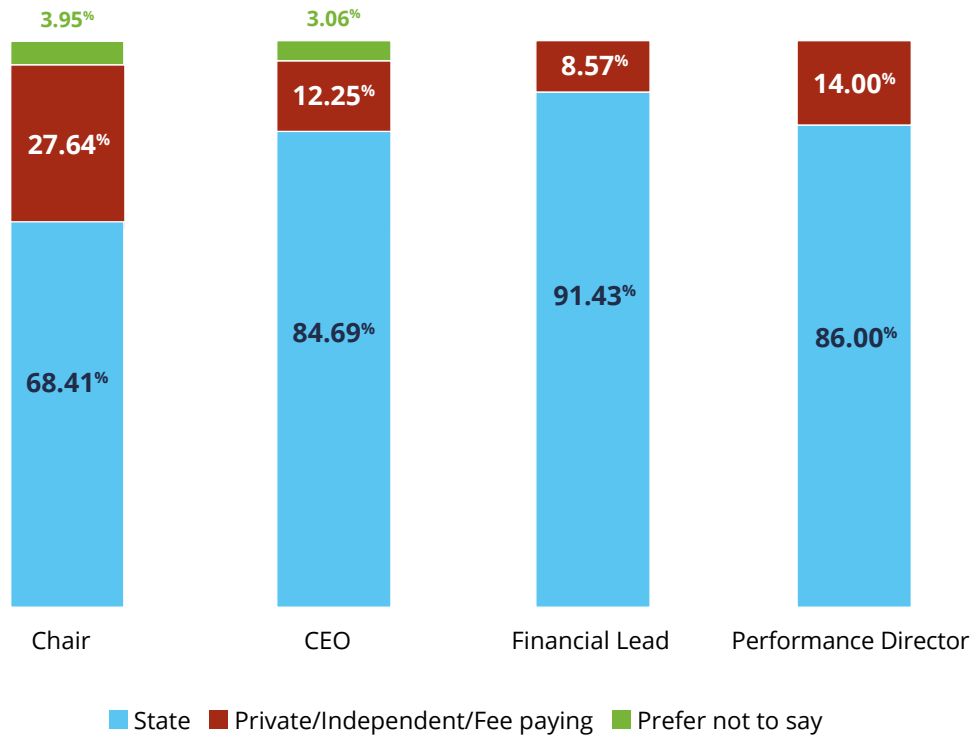
The Chair role is predominantly occupied by those over the age of 55, whereas other senior leadership roles have greater representation from younger age groups.



Photo by Lintao Zhang/Getty Images

Education

Please select your educational background (secondary)

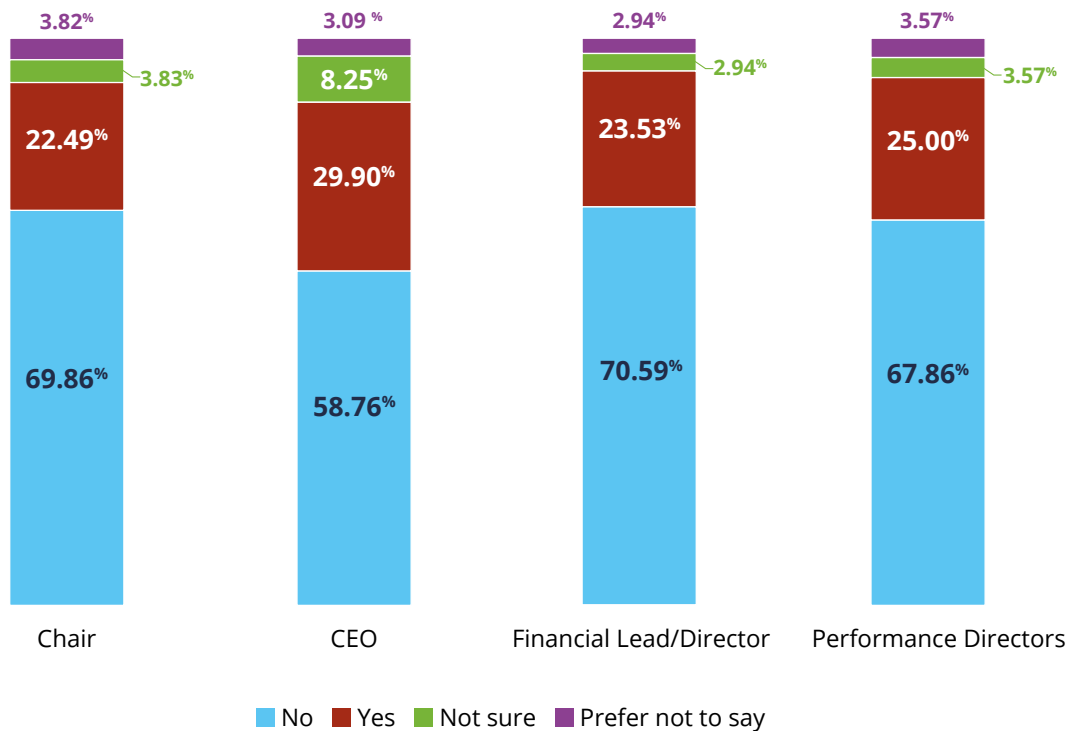


SLT respondents attended a state school at a level close to the national average. However, it is interesting to note that Board members, especially those holding Chair roles, were more likely to have been privately educated.

[*https://www.civitas.org.uk/2023/02/24/private-schooling-in-britain-a-snapshot/#_ftn1](https://www.civitas.org.uk/2023/02/24/private-schooling-in-britain-a-snapshot/#_ftn1)

Socio-Economic background

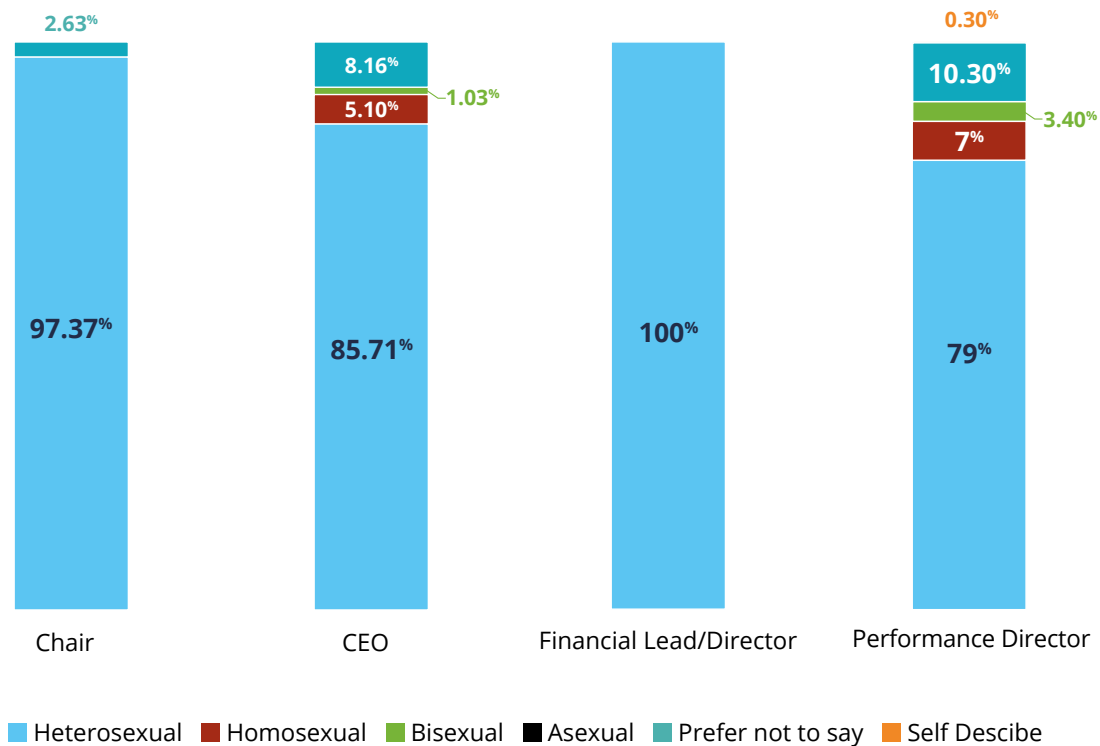
Do you consider yourself to be from a lower socio-economic background?



There seems to be an even spread of those reporting to be from a lower socio-economic background across all roles, suggesting some socio-economic diversity, particularly among the CEOs. Interestingly, 8.25% of CEOs marked their status as not sure, potentially indicating the challenges in the subjective and binary phrasing of the question.

Sexual Orientation

How would you describe your sexual/romantic orientation?

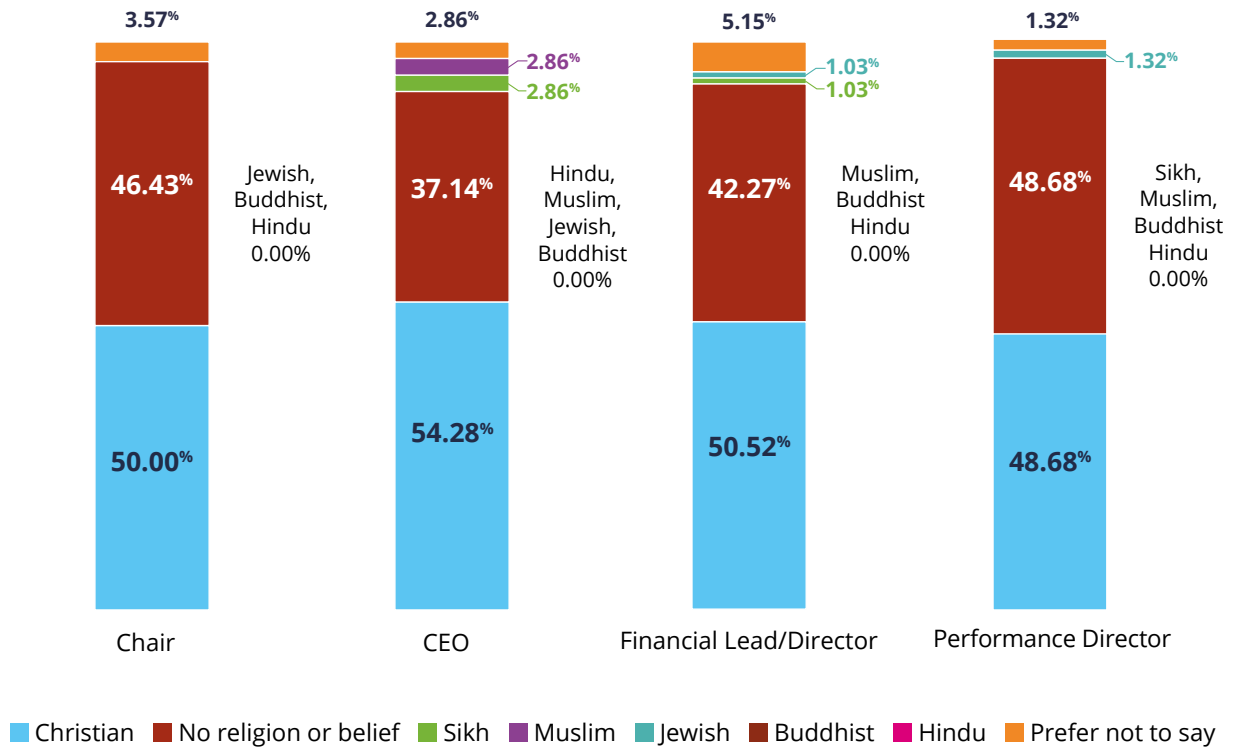


Across all roles, heterosexuality is the predominant sexual orientation. However, it is notable that the CEO and Performance Director roles have the highest declared representation of non-heterosexual identities, over indexing against the England and Wales Census 2021 figure of 3.2%.

2021 census: What do we know about the LGBT+ population?

Religion

What religion or belief do you identify with?





07

Section 4 - Comparative Analysis Between Active Partnerships, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) & Other Funded Partners

**Total number of respondents
from Active Partnerships**

288

**Total number of respondents
from Other Funded Partners**

187

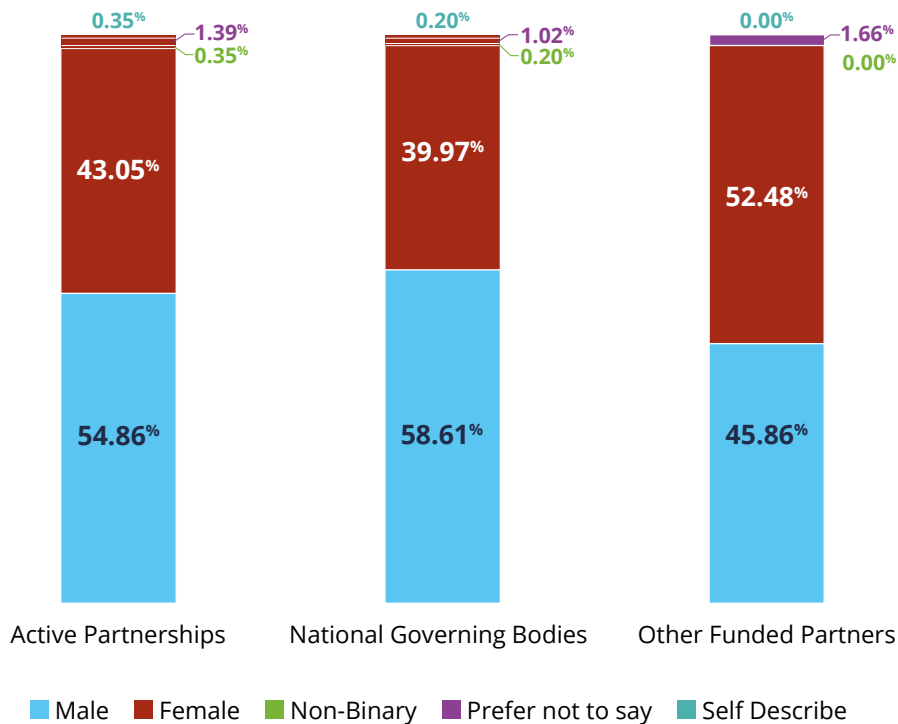
**Total number of respondents
from National Governing
Bodies (NGBs)**

488



Gender

Please select which gender you identify best with



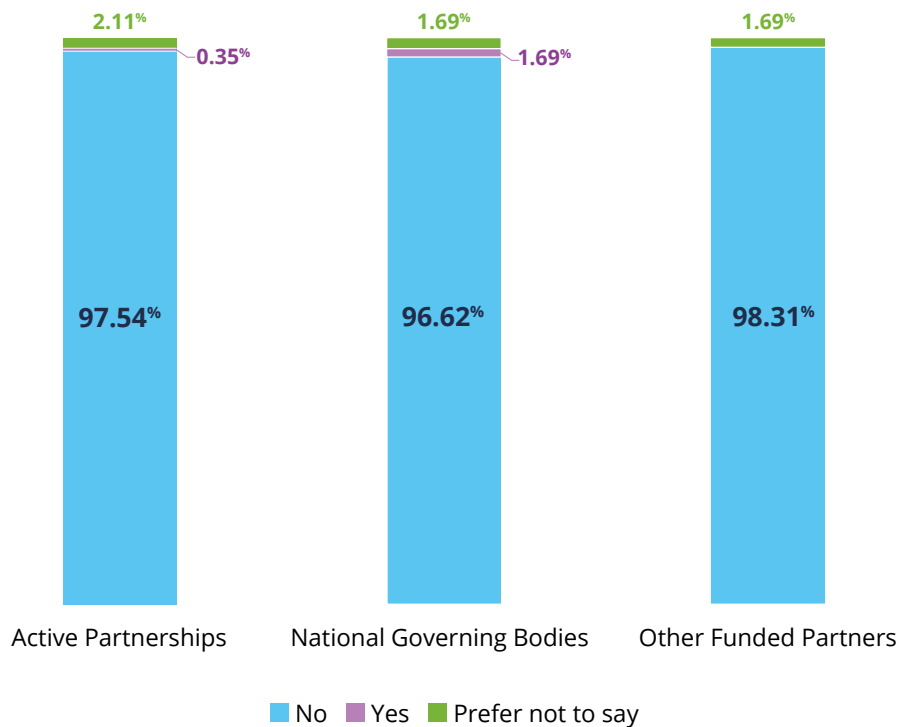
Male representation is similar across Active Partnerships and NGBs. On the other hand, there is greater female representation in Other Funded Partners.

Photo By Ramsey Cardy/Sportsfile via Getty Images



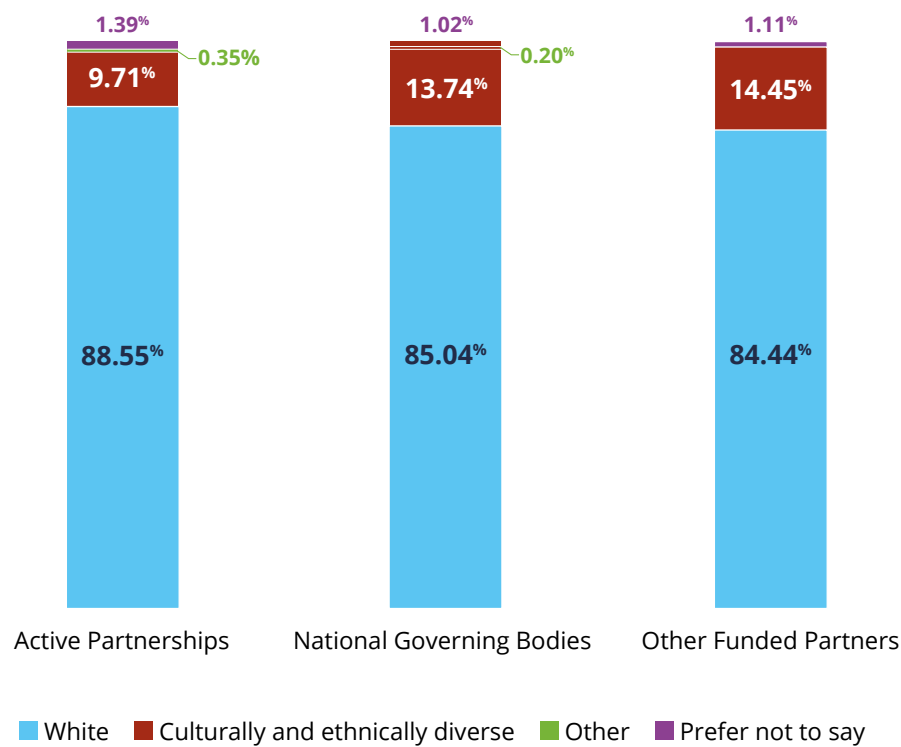
Transgender Identity

Do you identify as trans or now have a gender identity which differs to your gender assigned at birth?



Ethnicity

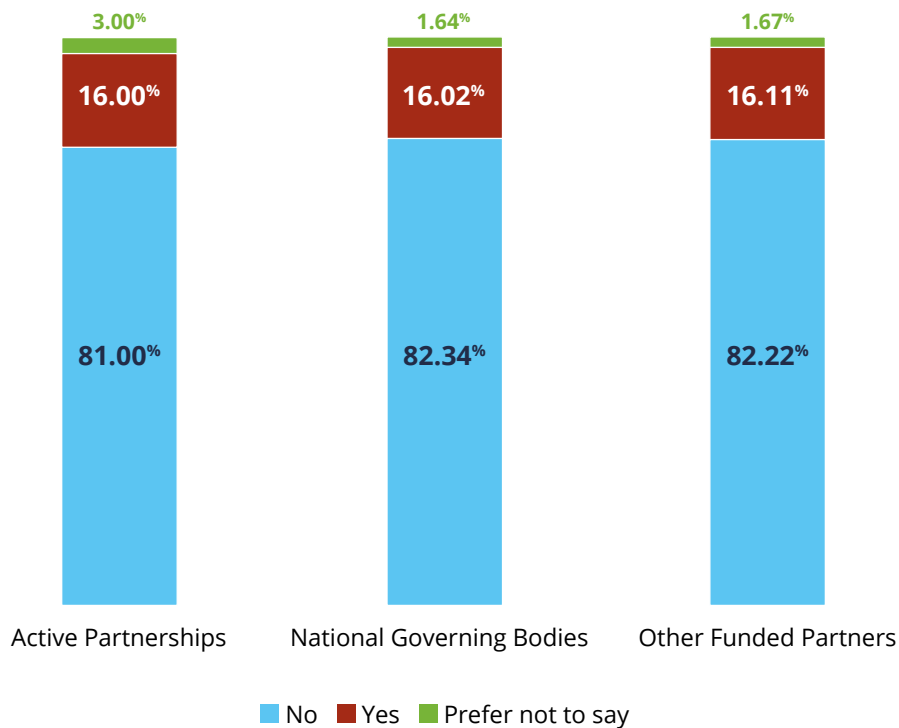
Please select your ethnicity



We found a similar composition of ethnicities across all three groups, with a slightly larger proportion of culturally and ethnically diverse respondents within Other Funded Partners.

Disability

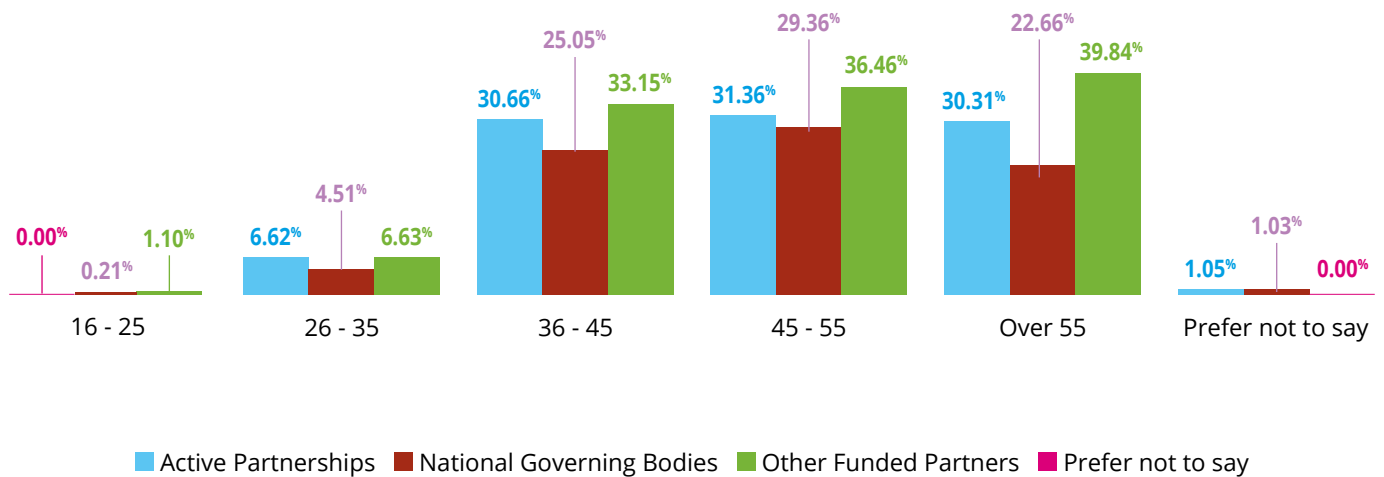
Do you consider yourself to have a physical or mental disability or long-term health condition?



Reporting of disabilities remains consistent at 16-17% across all three groups of respondents.

Age

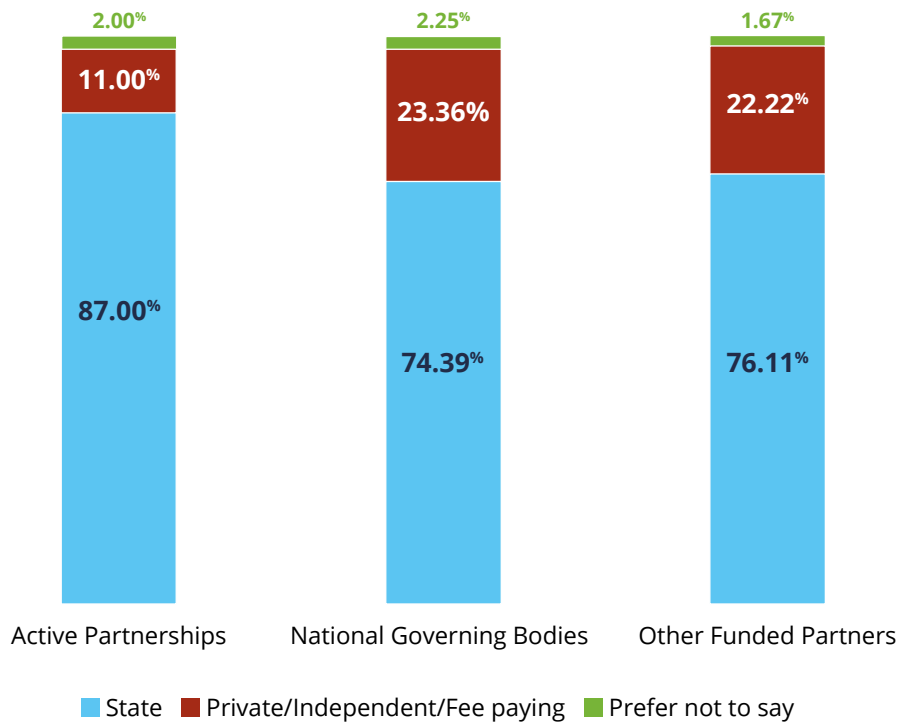
Please select your age bracket



Respondents from Other Funded Partners are typically older, and representation increases with age. Within Active Partnerships, respondents are fairly evenly distributed between the age brackets, whereas within NGBs most respondents are in the 45-55 age bracket, with numbers dropping off in the over 55 age bracket. Overall, fewer than 20% of all respondents are aged 35 or under.

Education

Please select your educational background (secondary)

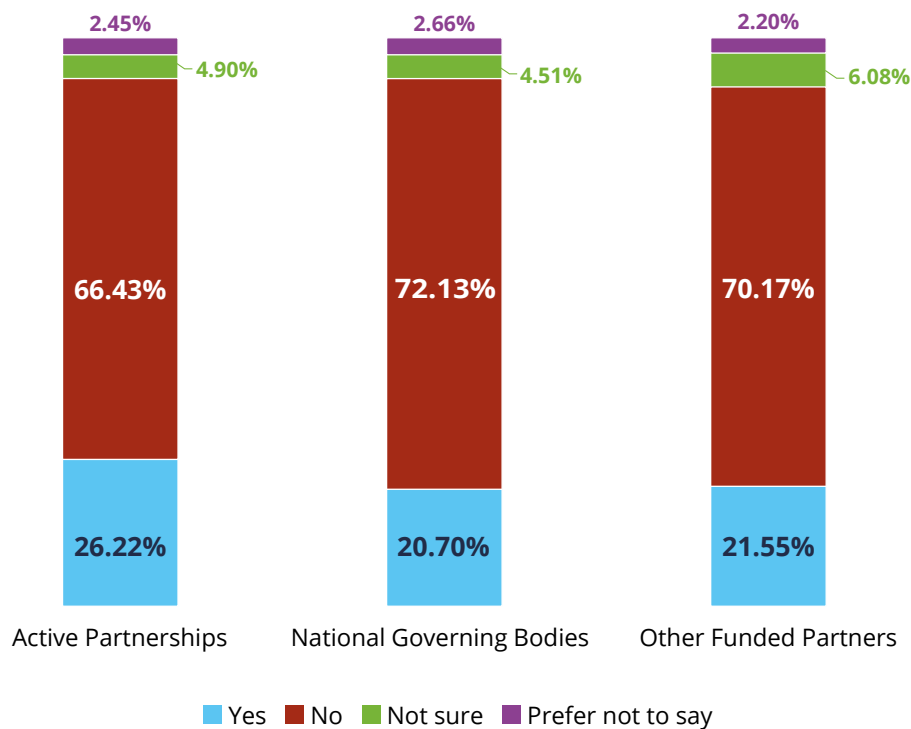


Active Partnerships have the fewest number of respondents that have attended private/independent/fee paying schools and are most closely in line with national statistics.*

*https://www.civitas.org.uk/2023/02/24/private-schooling-in-britain-a-snapshot/#_ftn1

Socio-Economic Background

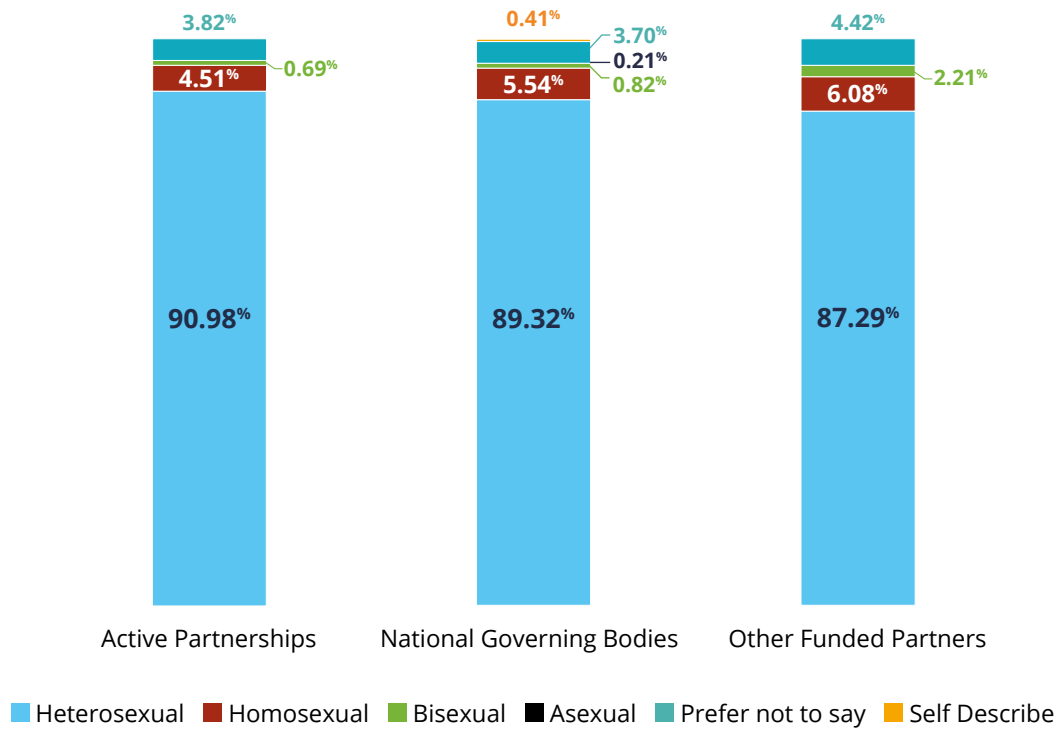
Do you consider yourself to be from a lower socio-economic background?



The socio-economic figures are relatively similar across NGBs and Other Funded Partners. However, there is a notably higher percentage of respondents in Active Partnerships who considered themselves to be from a lower socio-economic background.

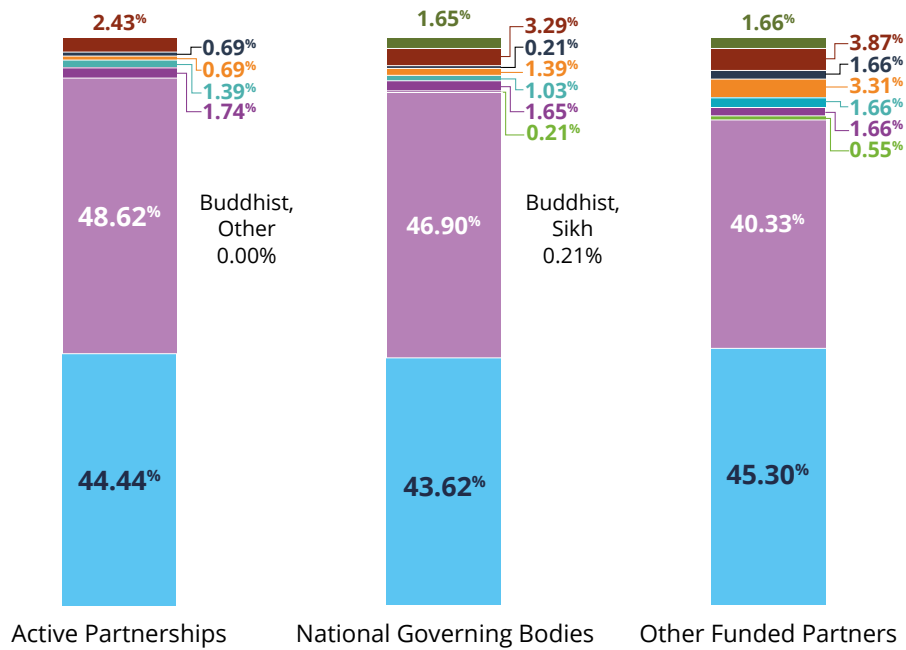
Sexual Orientation

How would you describe your sexual/romantic orientation?



Religion

What religion or belief do you identify with?



■ No religion or belief
 ■ Christian
 ■ Buddhist
 ■ Hindu
 ■ Jewish
 ■ Muslim
 ■ Sikh
 ■ Prefer not to say
 ■ Other





Photo by Harry Murphy/Sportsfile via Getty Images

08 — Respondents

Survey responses were received from members of the following organisations:

Active Partnerships

1. Active Black Country
2. Active Cheshire
3. Active Cornwall
4. Active Cumbria
5. Active Devon
6. Active Dorset
7. Active Gloucestershire
8. Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire
9. Active Humber
10. Active Kent and Medway
11. Active Lancashire
12. Active Lincolnshire
13. Active Oxfordshire
14. Active Partners Trust
15. Active Partnerships
16. Active Suffolk
17. Active Surrey
18. Active Sussex
19. Energise Me
20. Energize Shropshire Telford and Wrekin
21. Get Berkshire Active
22. Greater Sport - (Greater Manchester)
23. Herts Sports Partnership
24. Kent Sport
25. Leap (Buckinghamshire)
26. Living Sport (Cambridge & Peterborough)
27. London Sport
28. MSP - Merseyside Sports Partnership
29. North Yorkshire Sport
30. Northamptonshire Sport

31. Rise North East
32. Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership
33. Sport Birmingham
34. Team Beds & Luton
35. Tees Valley Sport
36. Think Active (Coventry Solihull & Warwickshire)
37. Wesport (West of England)
38. Wiltshire and Swindon Sport CIC
39. Yorkshire Sport Foundation

National Governing Bodies

1. Angling Trust
2. Archery GB
3. BaseballSoftballUK
4. Basketball England
5. Boccia England
6. Boccia UK
7. Bowls Development Alliance
8. British Basketball Federation
9. British Bobsleigh Skeleton Association
10. Paddle UK
11. British Curling
12. British Cycling
13. British Equestrian Federation
14. British Fencing
15. British Gymnastics
16. British Ice Skating
17. British Judo
18. British Mountaineering Council
19. British Orienteering
20. British Para Table Tennis

21. British Rowing
22. British Shooting
23. Aquatics GB
24. British Taekwondo
25. British Taekwondo Council
26. British Triathlon
27. British Waterski and Wakeboard
28. British Weightlifting
29. British Wheelchair Basketball
30. British Wrestling
31. England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)
32. England Athletics
33. England Boxing
34. England Handball
35. England Hockey
36. England Lacrosse
37. England Netball
38. England Squash
39. England Triathlon
40. English Golf Union Limited
41. Exercise Move Dance UK
42. GB Boxing
43. GB Hockey
44. GB Taekwondo
45. Goalball UK
46. Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby
47. Ice Hockey UK
48. Lawn Tennis Association
49. Pentathlon GB
50. Rounders England
51. Royal Yachting Association
52. Rugby Football League
53. Skateboard GB
54. Snowsport England
55. Swim England
56. Table Tennis England
57. The GB Luge Association
58. The Football Association

59. The Rugby Football Union

60. UK Athletics

61. Volleyball England

Other Funded Partners

1. Association of Colleges
2. British Blind Sport
3. British Elite Athletes Association
4. British Paralympic Association
5. British Universities and Colleges Sport
6. Chance to Shine Foundation Ltd
7. CIMSPA
8. Commonwealth Games England
9. Dwarf Sports
10. English Federation of Disability Sport (Activity Alliance)
11. Football Foundation
12. Limb Power
13. London Youth Rowing
14. Sport and Recreation Alliance
15. Sport England
16. Sported
17. Sporting Equals
18. SportsAid
19. StreetGames UK
20. UK Coaching
21. UK Sport
22. UK Sports Institute
23. UKActive
24. UK Deaf Sport
25. WheelPower
26. Women in Sport
27. Youth Sport Trust

