

# Public Participation at the Scottish Parliament

## Summary of Public Survey

The following is a summary of a public survey run as part of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee's inquiry into Public Participation in Scotland. The survey had 23 questions and focused on exploring whether people had or had not engaged with the Scottish Parliament, their experiences, beliefs about the types of people likely to engage, and the best ways to engage with a diverse range of people. The majority of questions were multiple choice, but also included the options for people to write in their own ideas and experiences. A series of demographic questions, based on those included in Scotland's Census, were also included to help us better understand the people who took part.

The activity ran from 09 May 2022 to 22 July 2022, on the Citizen Space consultation platform, at <https://yourviews.parliament.scot/cppp/3bb79c8a>

The survey was advertised using the Scottish Parliament's own social media platforms, and was circulated through our media relations and outreach offices.

There were **305** responses in total. In research terms, this is a relatively small sample, and, as participants were self-selecting, there is no certainty of the findings being representative of the wider population.

Descriptions of the charts contained are included in text - please note that percentages have been rounded and given in approximate terms, and in some cases, percentages will not add up to 100 because a proportion of people did not answer the question. Because of the sample size/method, these should be seen purely as an illustration of our findings.

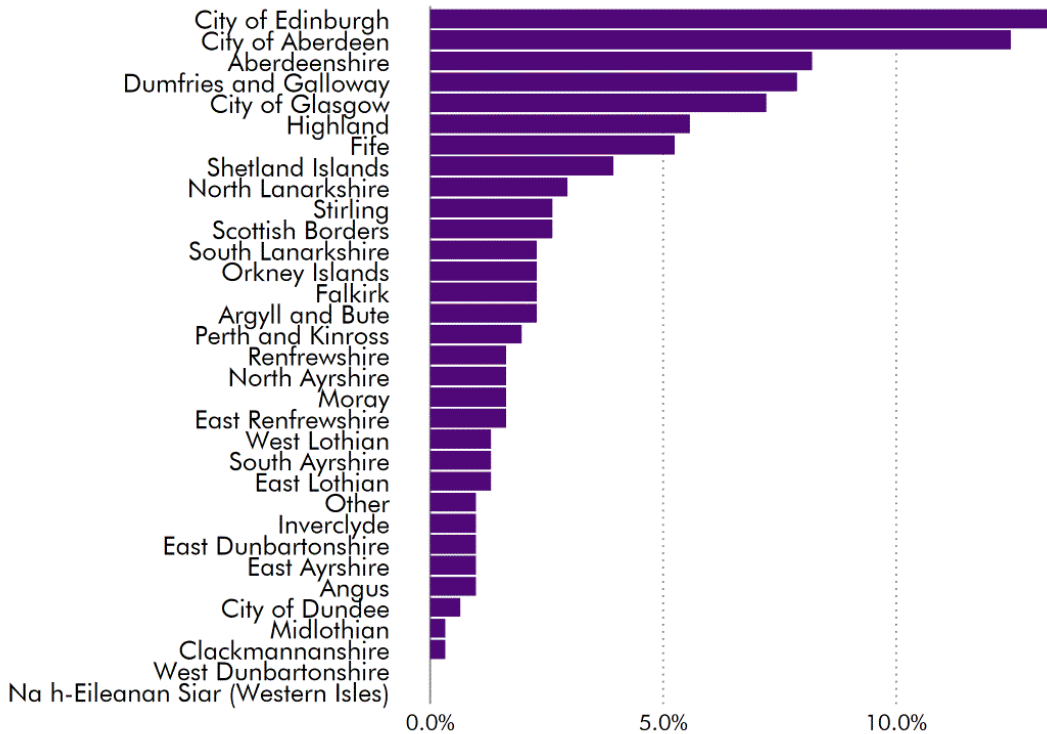
This summary has been collated by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) on behalf of the Committee, and findings have also been incorporated into a wider summary of evidence which also captures written evidence, findings from focus groups, and the results of a more detailed survey aimed primarily at community groups and organisations.

## Where respondents were from

Of the 305 people that responded, more people came from Edinburgh than anywhere else, around 13.5 percent. City of Aberdeen was next, at 12.5 percent, and after that, Aberdeenshire at 8.2 percent. There were less than 8 percent of people from all of the other local authorities. Around a third of participants live in city councils, but turnout in certain rural areas was high – Dumfries and Galloway, Highland, the Shetland Islands and the Scottish Borders all had a higher turnout than many suburban and central belt areas like Falkirk, West Lothian and Midlothian. This suggests that there was an even spread of participants across the country beyond Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The places where fewest people came from were Midlothian, Clackmannanshire, West Dunbartonshire, and Na h-Eileanan Siar (the Western Isles).

## Which local authority area do you currently live in?

Percentage of 305 responses



## Can you tell us how you've been involved, if at all, in the work of the Scottish Parliament before?

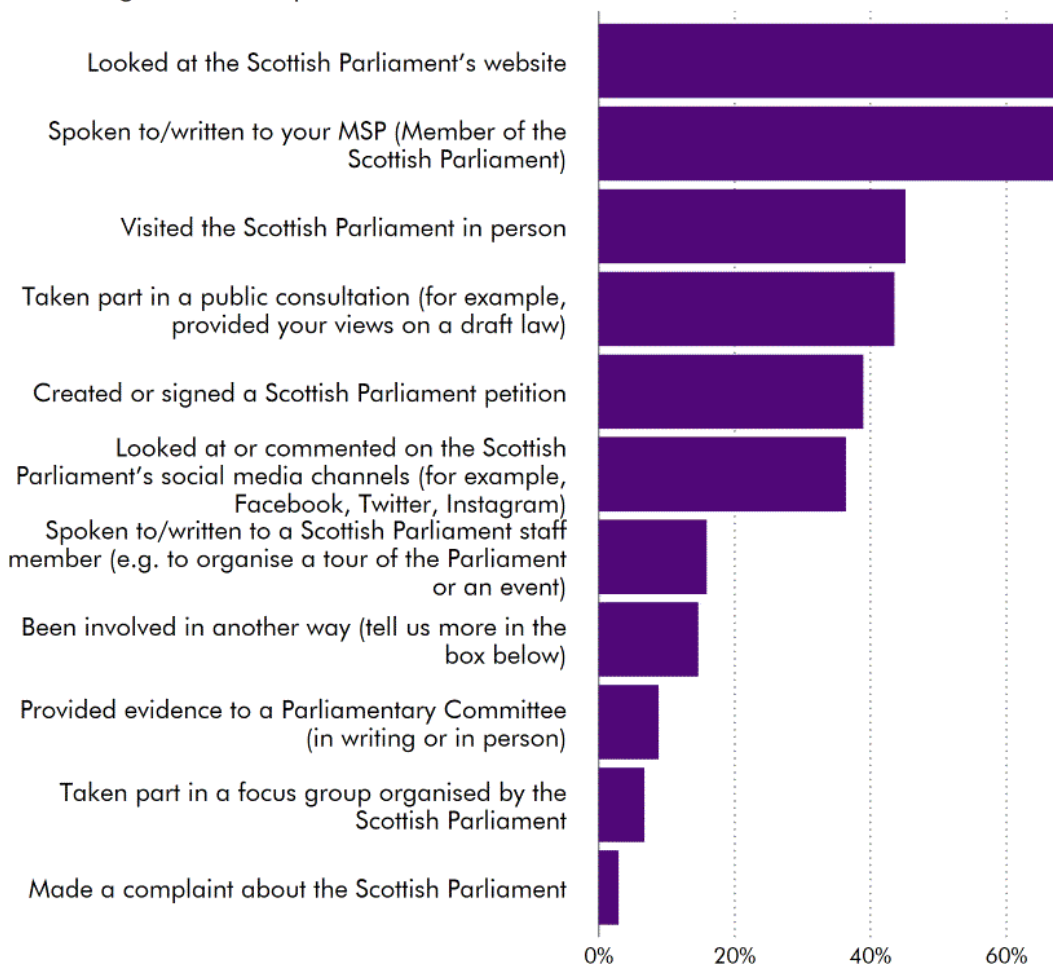
People were given the option to check a box if they had never been involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament before. 84 people ticked this box out of the 305 who answered this section.

### How have you been involved?

Over half of the people that took part had either looked at the Scottish Parliament's website or spoken to or written to their MSP. Around a third of people had visited the building in person, and/or taken part in a public consultation, and slightly fewer had either taken part in the petitions process or engaged with the Parliament's social media channels.

### How people have been involved in the Scottish Parliament's work

Percentage of 239 responses



### **If you have another way you have been involved, please share it here**

Many people gave further detail on the categories above. This ranged from giving further detail on the consultations they had contributed to, or the reasons they had for visiting the Parliament in the past. Many people mentioned regular events such as committee evidence sessions, school visits and cross-party groups, Scottish Futures Forum events, and the annual Festival of Politics. Less frequent special events such as session opening ceremonies and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations were also mentioned. People spoke about their involvement in community groups and councils, and special interest groups which had attended stakeholder events or been a part of working groups. Some people had protested or demonstrated outside the Parliament on a specific issue. Others had previously worked for either the parliamentary service, or for a party or MSP, or had interacted with the Parliament in a professional capacity. Some respondents had a long history with the Scottish Parliament – one had taken part in the pre-Parliament consultation, and another had worked for the Parliament in the early days. Finally, some people had been involved through the Scottish Youth Parliament.

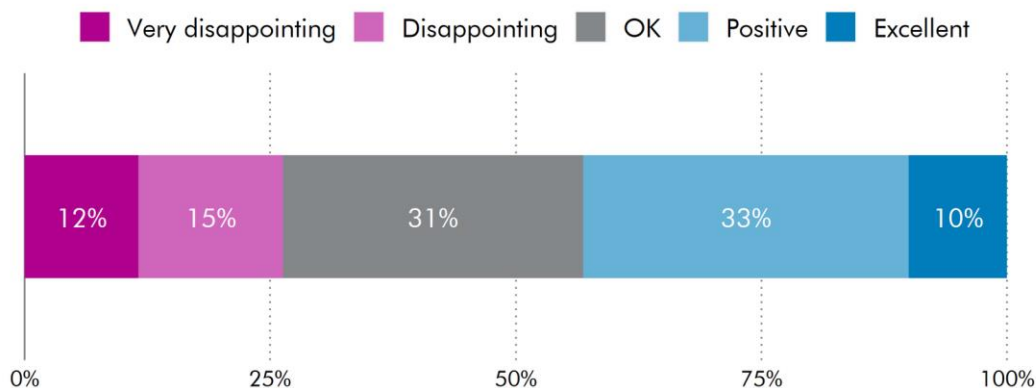
Some people mentioned wanting to visit Parliament, but not being able to because it was “too difficult and expensive”. A few people said they felt very distant geographically, and that they felt that the Scottish Parliament, MSPs and the Scottish Government had little interest in their area. There were also a couple of people who felt ignored, after inviting MSPs to their events or contacting the Parliament and not getting a response. One person said they had been totally unaware of any option to get involved beyond contacting their local MSP about issues.

### **What was your experience of being involved like?**

We asked people to rate their experience of being involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament, from ‘Very Disappointing’ to ‘Excellent’. 33 percent of people said they had a positive experience, and 10 percent said their experience had been excellent. The neutral option, ok, covered 31 percent of respondents. The remaining 27 percent of people who responded said their experience had been negative (15 percent disappointing, 12 percent very disappointing).

## If you have been involved in the work of the Parliament before, what was your experience like?

Percentage of 190 responses



### What were your reasons for your answer?

There were 129 responses to this part of the question.

When people gave further detail on what their experience had been like, there was mixed feedback. People spoke about their MSPs working hard for them on constituency matters, but there were also comments from people who had written to their MSPs and not heard back, or felt their issues were dismissed. One person said “In emailing my MSPs I have had a range of responses, from the helpful through the hostile to the none at all”. The knowledge and skill level of MSPs was mentioned, both positively and negatively, with some people feeling that when it came to Committee work MSPs were only interested in their own agendas. Some people spoke about their experiences engaging with MSPs in their ministerial capacity, and of attending CPGs, which emphasizes the broad range of activities which people see as ‘the work of the Parliament’.

The feedback on consultations was similar – some people felt welcomed and listened to, and glad to have the opportunity to contribute. Many, however, pointed out that any outcomes or change took a long time, and there were a number of people who either felt their views were ignored, or that they made no difference to the outcome. There were direct suggestions that the quality of consultations vary and that there is a general lack of consistency, and one person felt that the way they were written was not accessible. The overwhelming feedback on consultations was that, whether they were run well or poorly, people would have liked feedback about what happened to their views, and this did not happen. A couple of people were frustrated to have not been asked to attend committee meetings to speak about their petitions, or not being given sufficient time/opportunity to speak at meetings.

In general, people were positive about visiting the building and the welcome they had received. One did mention the distance between meeting rooms at an event in the

context of accessibility but was positive about the support given. Another person described the wheelchair access as excellent. One person had a negative experience during the security process and left the building rather than continue.

On the website and our social media channels, most people were complimentary and said that it helped them to have access to information. One person called them 'accessible and engaging'. Some people did feel, however, that the website is hard to navigate, especially in terms of finding consultations and petitions. The ability to stream meetings and debates was welcomed.

Some people said they felt their involvement had been 'tokenistic', 'superficial', and 'passive'. There were also comments from people who felt marginalized and not listened to, based on either their own characteristics (gender, ethnicity, or location), or because they were unhappy with the outcome of a consultation or legislation.

### **What would have made your experience better?**

There were 120 responses to this part of the question.

Overwhelmingly people wanted to have feedback on what their contribution had meant, and what their outcomes had been. They wanted to know that the time they had taken to participate had been worthwhile. Essentially, people expressed wanting to feel listened to, and that the Parliament and their MSPs work for them.

People wanted more opportunities to contribute, and better marketing of these opportunities. Wider formats for being involved, such as workshops, were also suggested, and one person said they wanted to be involved in the processes that led to decision making, suggesting there should be more activities like local focus groups and virtual discussion groups. There were suggestions that consultations should run for longer, and more weight should be given to individual voices (as opposed to organisations). And some people wanted more details on the analysis process after consultations, and transparency on how views were presented and considered.

There was a running theme suggesting that people wanted more from their elected officials – people spoke about wanting a “sense of action and conviction”, and of feeling like MSPs were ‘gatekeeping’ issues. They also wanted a more inclusive mindset, and for MSPs to have a better understanding of the lived experience and viewpoints of marginalised groups. There were demands for more empathetic and personalized responses, and MSPs looking at all parts of a Bill instead of only the aspects that interested them. In Committee work, people wanted MSPs to represent their constituents and not their political parties or their own interests. One person called for “bolder Ministerial decisions”.

On the website, some people felt a better design, from the perspective of a member of the public wishing to participate, was needed. One person said that simultaneous subtitles on live feeds would be useful. A couple of people mentioned that education and outreach could be better targeted at adults – one had tried to find some resources

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explaining the Parliament's functions but was frustrated to only find materials aimed at BSL users and children. There was a suggestion that there should be a better way of being notified about new consultations.

On attending meetings and using the building, people felt it was important for Committee rooms to allow more public attendance. They also felt that meetings should be less formal, and events should be longer. One person said that easier access to the building, or a different building would help, and improvements to the audio systems in meeting rooms was mentioned.

## **If you have never been involved, why?**

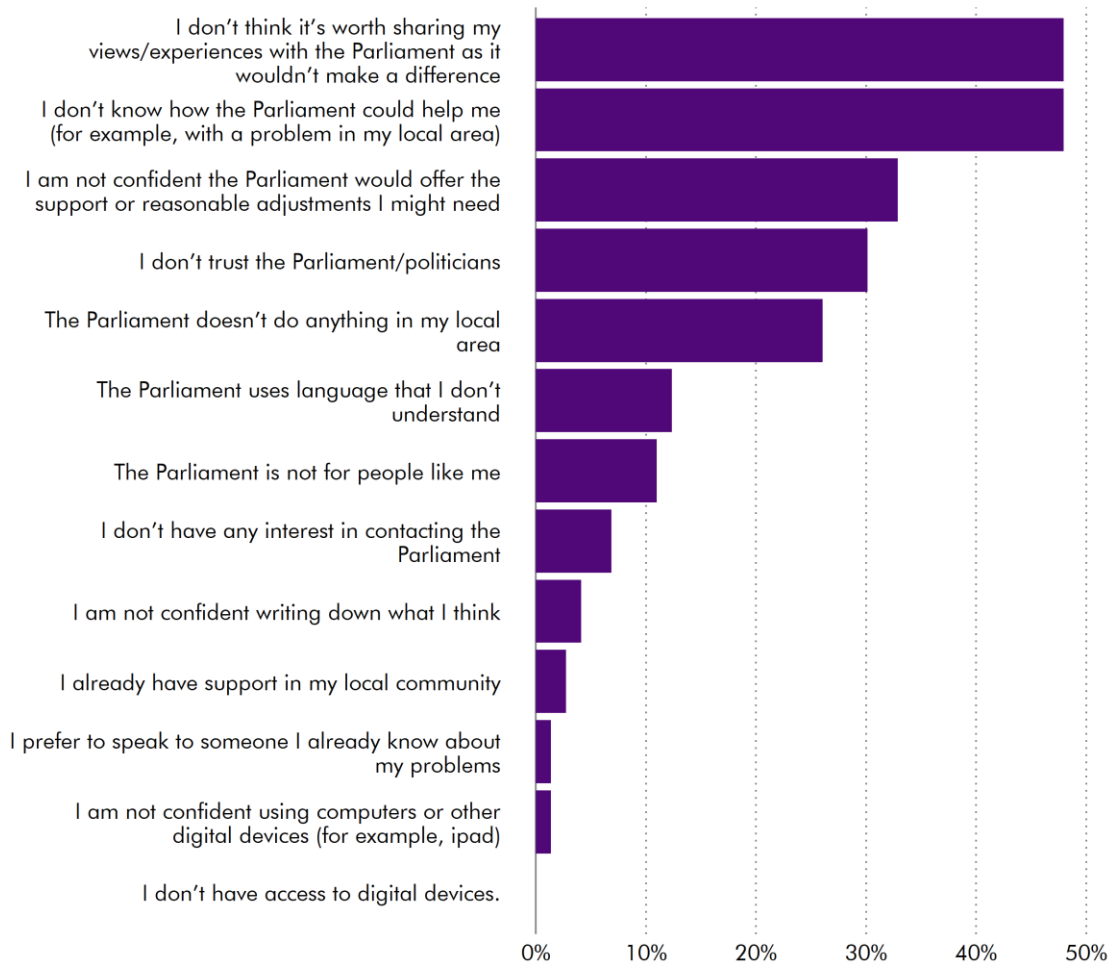
We asked people to explain, if they had never been involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament, what the reasons might be for this.

Reflecting that most people that took part in the survey had interacted with the Scottish Parliament before, there were only 73 responses to this question. The main reasons people gave for not having been involved were that they didn't think it was worth sharing their views/experiences, because it wouldn't make a difference, or that didn't know that the Scottish Parliament could help them (around 11.5 percent for both of these reasons). Some people weren't confident that the Parliament could offer the support they might need (around 8 percent), and others said that that didn't trust the Parliament or politicians (around 7 percent). Around 6 percent of people said that the Parliament doesn't do anything in their local area. All of the remaining options had less than 3 percent of people who responded (or 9 or fewer individuals) choosing them as a reason for not being involved.



## If you have never been involved in the work of the Parliament before, can you tell us why?

Percentage of 73 responses



## If you have another reason, please share it here

There were 11 responses to this part of the question.

Some people had not been involved because they were not living in Scotland or had been too busy. Others felt there had not been a specific issue they wanted to contribute to or had not been aware of any consultations (and said they'd never seen them advertised). Otherwise, people expressed that they felt the Parliament wouldn't be interested in their views (because it had a set agenda, or because they didn't feel they would be listened to). One person suggested:

"I would suggest promoting options like Better Reykjavik. It is an open source online direct democracy tool which Iceland has been using to revolutionise voting and participatory democracy on many more topics.

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This encourages more change, would be simple to implement, it would be free and has been running for over a decade. So it is well tested, due to this, Iceland has some of the happiest people in the world as their ideas are heard and put into action. Rather than relying on the decision making of a stranger every 5 years.”

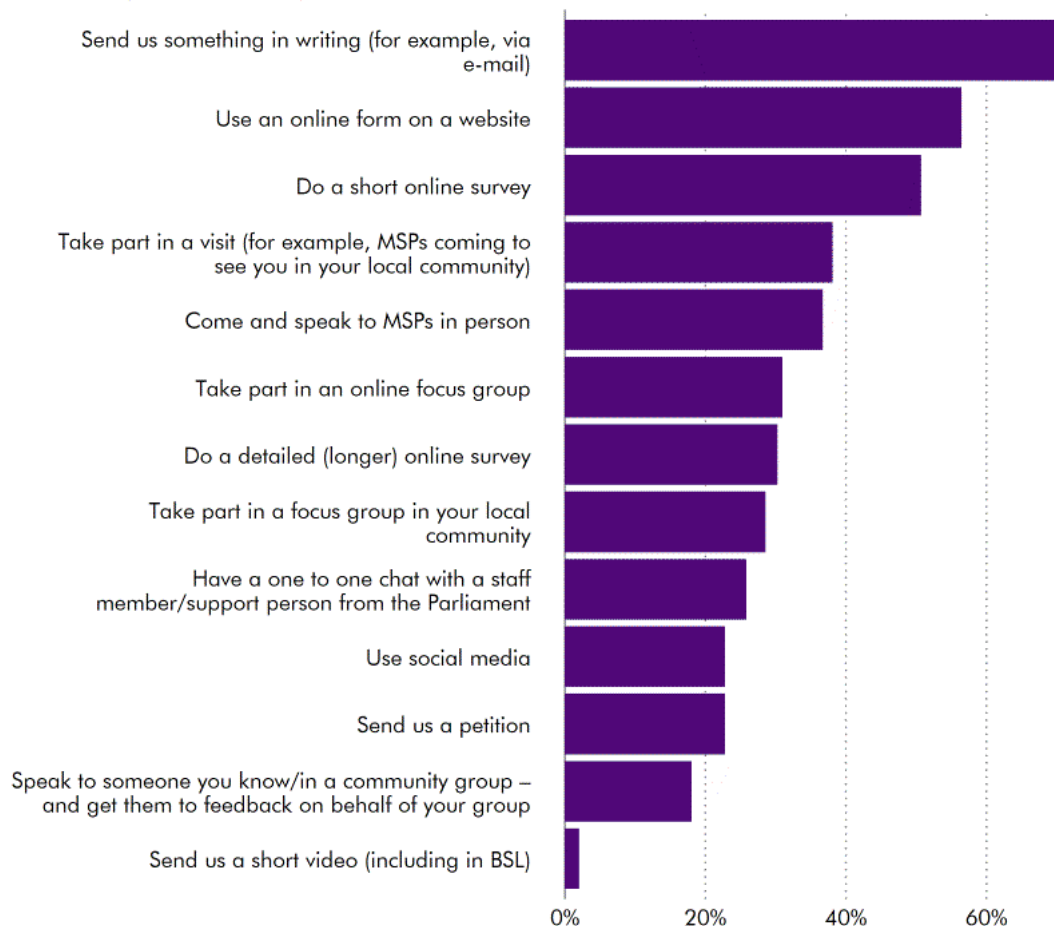
## **How would you like to tell us your views?**

When we asked people how they would like to tell us what they thought about an issue that mattered to them, 294 people responded to the list of options we gave.

Most people, around 69 percent, would prefer to send us something in writing, for instance by email. Around 54.5 percent of people would like to use an online form on the website, and just under 49 percent of people would like to fill out a short online survey. The next most popular options were to take part in a visit (i.e. MSPs visiting the person's local community) (36.7 percent), or speak to an MSP in person (35.4 percent). Between 20 and 30 percent of people who responded said that, in order from most popular choice, that they would like to take part in an online focus group, do a longer online survey, take part in a focus group in their local community, have a one-to-one chat with someone from the Scottish Parliament, use social media, or send us a petition. The least popular/called for options were having someone in a community group speak to them and then give us feedback on their behalf or being able to send us a BSL video.

## If you wanted to tell us what you thought about an issue that was important to you, how would you prefer to do that?

Percentage of 294 responses



### If you have another way, please share it here

There were 49 responses to this part of the question.

Some responses to this question spoke about methods of communications, where others were more about the people being communicated with, or what people expected from communication.

On methods, a few people mentioned phone calls, email or Teams meeting. One person said they did not use social media and that they abhorred “the idea that conversations about serious issues are dealt with by such means”. Accessibility needs were welcomed, for instance some people said that phone calls were better for them because they were dyslexic and autistic and struggled with forms. Another said that email was better as their Fatigue Syndrome meant it was easier to write things down in moments of clarity.

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One person said they'd like to drop a note into a feedback box then be contacted by someone with the knowledge and capability of helping. Online options were spoken about as preferable by some because they allowed people to participate in their own time, though one person felt that questions in surveys could be restrictively framed. Local meetings and consultation groups were also mentioned, with the latter connected with the use of sortition (jury service-style recruitment) to get representative groups of people taking part.

Overwhelmingly people mentioned ways to speak to their MSPs specifically, with some hope of being able to speak in person, in a format that allowed open discussion. One person felt that MSPs should be spending more time in their communities than in Parliament. When people mentioned staff, they said they wanted to know that the person they were speaking to was sufficiently informed to be able to help them, and one said "I wouldn't trust talking to an unelected member of staff for anything important".

Outward information was spoken about. One person said there should be more radio and TV advertising of calls to participate, and another suggested that every constituency should have a website with links to information, and details on meetings and consultations. One person suggested newsletters on specific policy areas and topics.

A few people spoke of a need for meaningful engagement – direct democracy, getting a response, and feeling heard were all mentioned. One person said they'd like to be invited to speak, and another said they would like the First Minister to attend their local women's group. Some respondents said they felt safest contributing anonymously, but one felt that this meant their opinions would be given less weight.

Finally, the need to consider cultural differences was highlighted by one person, who said "Often issues are misunderstood, and organisations don't have proper systems and processes to address issues that affect people from ethnic minority communities."

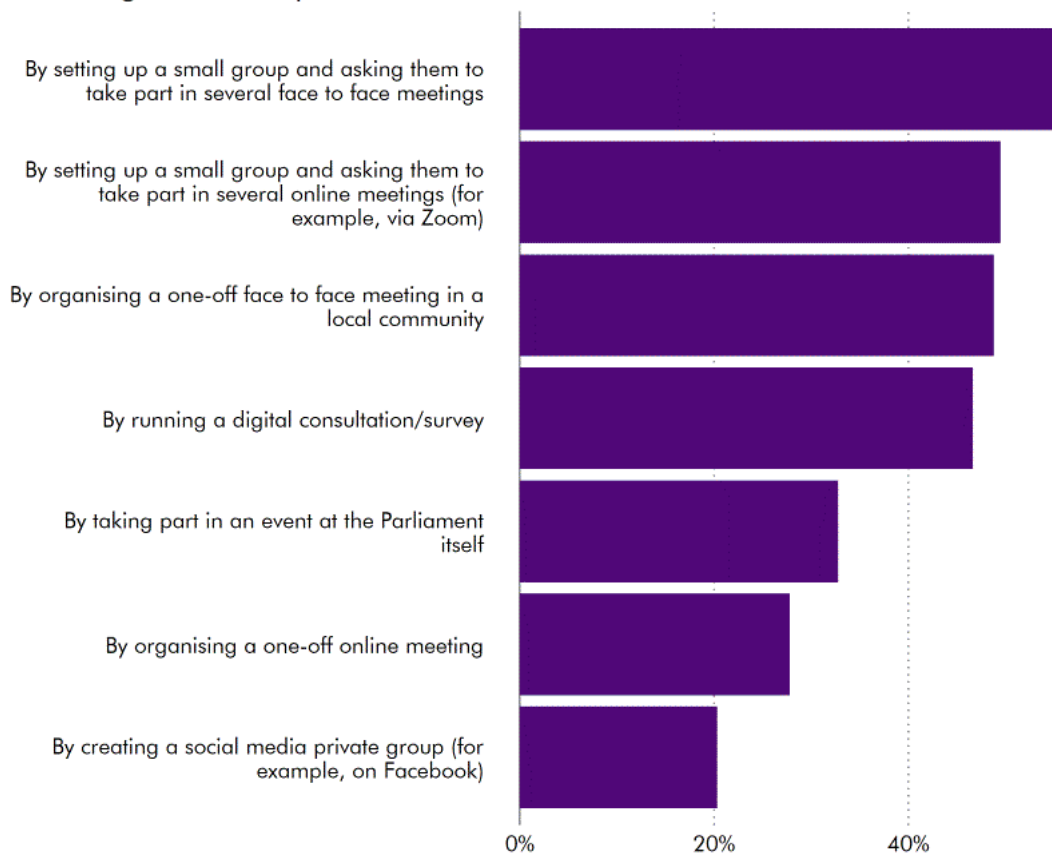
## How can we hear from a diverse range of people?

We wanted to understand how we could learn about the best way to hear from a diverse range of people from across Scotland, so we asked people to tell us what they thought was the best way to do this. 281 people answered this question, which included fixed suggestions and an option to give more detail.

Most people, slightly over half that responded, thought that setting up a small group and asking these people to take part in several face-to-face meetings was the best approach. The next most popular answers (around 45 percent) were doing the same thing, but online, or organising one-off face-to-face meetings within the community. Running a digital consultation or survey was the next most popular response. Around 30 per cent of people thought that a meeting in the Parliament building was a good idea. The least popular suggestions were having a one-off online meeting, and using private groups on social media.

### If we wanted to ask you and the people you know to share their ideas about how the Parliament could hear the views of a diverse range of people from across Scotland, what in your view would be the best way to do this?

Percentage of 281 responses



## **If you have another suggestion, please share it here**

There were 52 responses to this part of the question.

Much of what was said under this question echoed previous responses, but the overwhelming theme, both from comments, and from the range of comments, was that a diverse range of approaches was needed. Some people preferred face-to-face communication, others preferred online. Some people felt that giving as wide an audience as possible chance to contribute was important, and others said that people being consulted should be chosen more carefully. Some people spoke about the need for MSPs and Parliament staff to get out into local community groups, whereas others felt there should be more opportunities to contribute as an individual, and that less time should be given to lobbying groups.

It was clear that people thought that barriers to being involved needed to be explored and addressed, but that a barrier for one person (using an online forum), might enable another to take part (because they could do it in their own time). Specific groups mentioned that might need tailored approaches included ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, older people, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Many people spoke about consultation fatigue, and there were suggestions that certain groups, like ethnic minorities and people with disabilities, experienced this more than others. The need for well-designed consultation, “discretion, privacy and dignity”, and for people to know what the outcomes of their contribution would be were emphasized. People wanted to know what the benefits to them of taking part would be.

Some other suggestions included having a website which allows “ordinary people” to freely comment, going through community leaders (such as Imams within the Pakistani/Muslim community), making people aware of the creche service at the Parliament (for when they wish to attend meetings), making more use of deliberative democracy techniques, and advertising an online suggestion box in ‘unexpected places’, such as “pubs, nightclubs, football programmes, buses, trains, mosques, gurdwaras, synagogues, churches, parks, Metro newspaper, Glasgow Live, Sunny Govan radio etc”.

Finally, a few respondents said that people shouldn’t have their time wasted with consultation “when the preferred outcome has been predetermined”.

## What makes people most likely to engage with us?

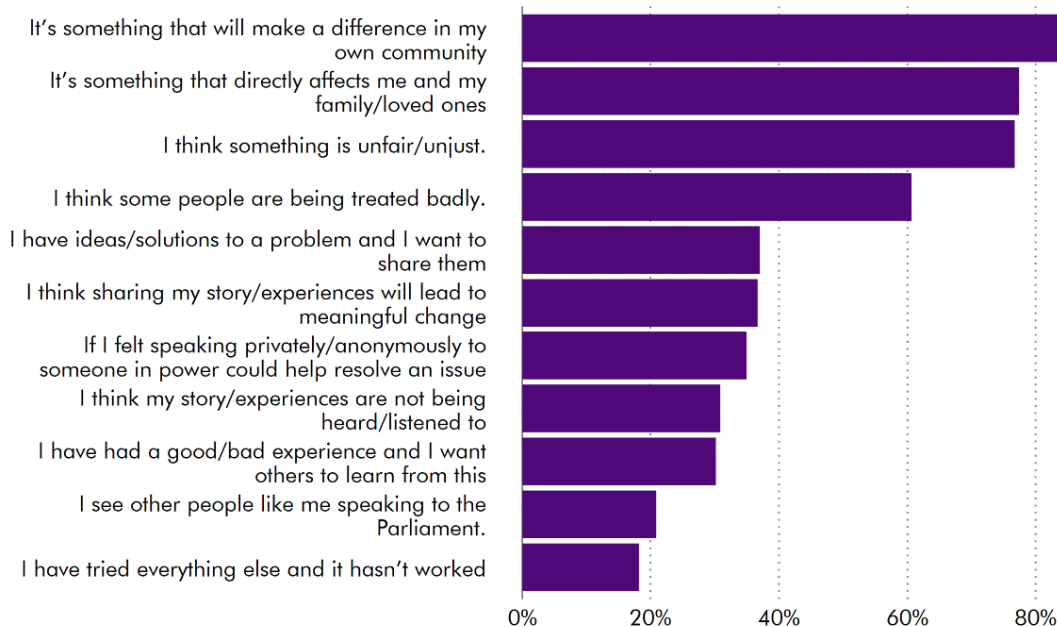
We asked people what would make them most likely to engage with us on an issue. 292 people selected from the choices we gave.

Over 80 percent of people would be most likely to speak to us about issues that affected their own community. The next most popular reasons given, both around 74 percent, would be if an issue directly affected them or their loved ones, or because they thought something was unfair or unjust. 58 percent of people would speak to us about an issue if they thought some people were being treated badly.

Around 34-35 percent of people said that they would speak to us because they had ideas or solutions to a problem that they wanted to share, because they thought sharing their experiences would lead to meaningful change, or because they thought that speaking privately or anonymously to someone in power could resolve an issue. Slightly fewer people would share their experience if they thought their story or experiences were not being listened to, or because they wanted other people to be able to learn from the experiences they had had. 20 percent of people would speak to us because they had seen other people like them doing the same. Finally, around 17 percent of people would speak to the Parliament because they had tried everything else and it hadn't worked.

## What would make you more likely to speak to us about an issue?

Percentage of 292 responses



## If you have another idea, please share it here

There were 37 responses to this part of the question.



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Most people gave responses along the same theme here, and were in agreement that hearing from more individuals, and being able to see how people's voices had made a difference, would help. People wanted to feel their views were valid, and to believe that they would be listened to.

Desperation was a word and theme that appeared in a few responses. People would engage with the Parliament because they felt they had no other choice, they felt very strongly about an issue, or they had exhausted all other means for support. Trust was mentioned – some people said they had lost it, with statements like “I genuinely believe that nobody in any parliament really gives a shit”.

Practically speaking, people suggested that MSPs speaking more about the importance of access and inclusion would help, and ensuring that all views/submissions were published, would increase people's willingness to participate.

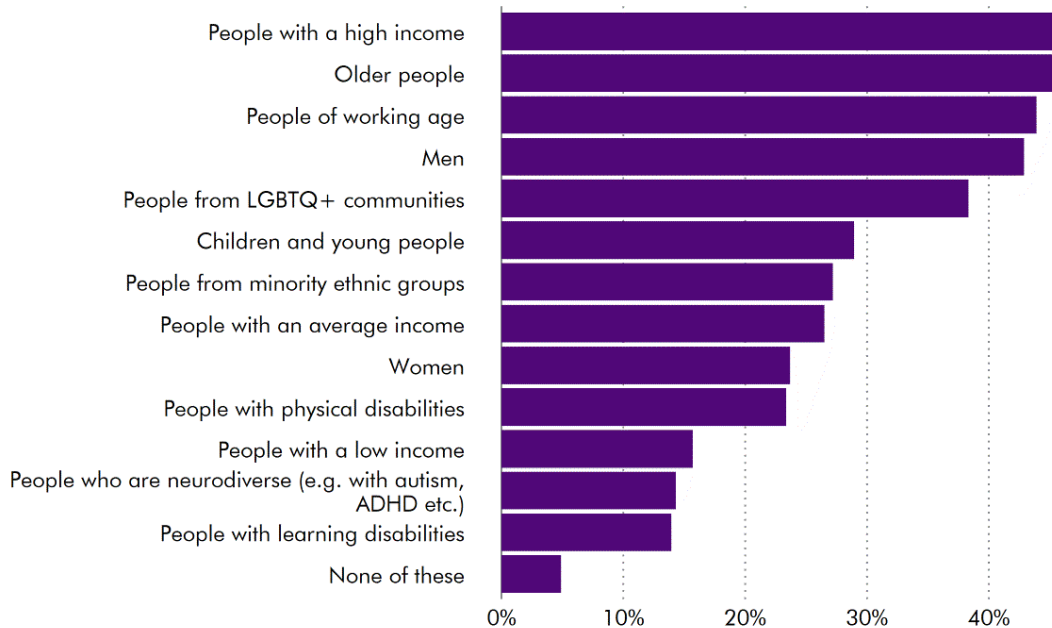
## Who is most likely to be involved in our work?

We asked people to select who they thought would be most likely to be involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament. 287 made selections.

The three most popular responses were, in order, people with a high income, older people, and people of working age (all around 41-43 percent of responses). 40 percent of people said men would be most likely to be involved (compared to 22 percent saying women). The next three most chosen groups, in order, were people from LGBTQ+ communities (36 percent), children and young people (27 percent), and people from minority ethnic groups (25.5 percent). The groups that were selected by the fewest number of people were people with learning disabilities, and people who are neurodiverse (both around 13 percent), and people on a low income were the next least selected (around 15 percent). People with physical disabilities were chosen more (around 22 percent), as were people on average incomes (25 percent).

## Which people do you think are currently more likely to become involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament?

Percentage of 287 responses



## If you have another category of people, please share it here

There were 74 responses to this part of the question.

The main types of people mentioned that weren't on the survey list were people from political backgrounds, and people with high education levels and more privileged socio-economic backgrounds. People with specific interests, be they from the third sector, working in specialist fields, or involved in social justice work were also mentioned.

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People felt that those who had reason to benefit, such as those interested in a political career, or those from high-profile lobbying groups or campaigns, got involved more. Having a specific cause or personal issue was also a reason given for more participation – people with various types of disability or caring responsibilities were mentioned.

There were suggestions that those who had more time, such as those who were able to not work by choice, retirees and young people, might be more involved. There were also a number of comments that could be described as cynical – “business owners disguised as industry groups”, “Those that seem amenable to global corporations and their agendas”, “Family members of SNP politicians- almost everyone’s partner or a member of family stands in future elections”, “No one cares any more. There is no care in care homes only foreign mostly Nigerian fast tracked supposedly care workers. Same goes for parliament who in their right minds would apply for a job in parliament knowing full well you would have to lie every day. Only lying cheating people who do not care or have no soul could be a politician”, “Useful idiots and people who are naive enough to think their participation will count if their views don’t fit the preferred narrative. Policy based evidence making has become the norm so the courts are increasingly required to stop delinquent legislation.”.

Perhaps more positively, other comments included “People who have confidence in the Parliament”, “Anyone given the opportunity to”, and “People who care about issues the parliament is discussing.”.

### **Please provide reasons for your answer/s**

There were 146 responses to this part of the question.

The reasons for why certain people were more involved varied. Many people thought that it was because a certain type of person had more time, or more time to gain (those mentioned were older people, white people, men, and wealthy people, and specifically individuals who met all of those characteristics). People whose characteristics meant that they might have more free time, especially older people, were also mentioned. Conversely, people said that those with caring responsibilities would be less likely to be heard from because they didn’t have time.

There seemed a belief amongst some that certain interest groups might be actively sought out for consultation and might also be actively pursuing opportunities to engage. Having an organized network or interest group was seen to support this. A few people specifically mentioned that minority ethnic groups and LGBTQ+ groups would be more likely to be involved for these reasons, along with people with disabilities and neurodivergences, who were used to having to ‘shout to be heard’.

Many people thought that young people may be more likely to engage because they had been taught about the Scottish Parliament from a young age and were more politically engaged because of social issues like climate change.

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People explained their answers to the check-box categories in this section as well, saying that they made their choices because that was who they saw represented in the Parliament's work. Similarly, they mentioned not choosing people with their own characteristics because they felt they were ignored or underrepresented.

## Who is least likely to be involved in our work?

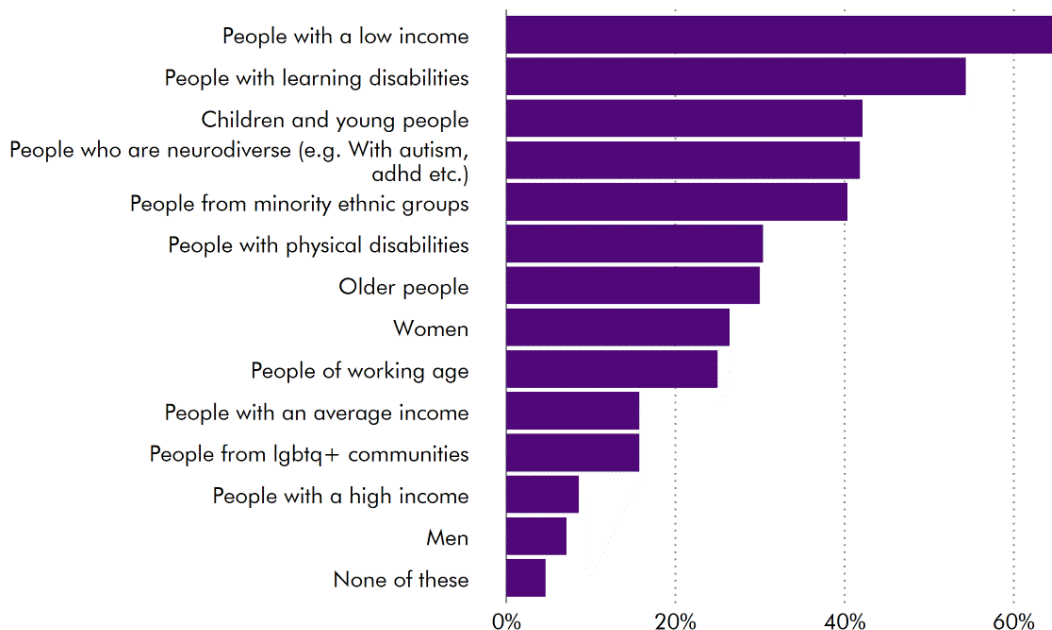
We asked the reverse of the last question, to explore who people thought was least likely to get involved. 280 people made selections. In some cases the answers were the opposite of the last question, but not always.

Around 60 percent of people thought that the group least likely to engage were people on a low income. Next was people with learning disabilities (50 percent). A similar number of people thought that children and young people, people who are neurodiverse, and people from minority ethnic backgrounds were least likely to engage (all 37-39 percent). People with physical disabilities, older people, women, and people of working age all fell in the middle when it came to the number of people choosing these groups.

The least chosen group of people selected was men, at 7 percent, followed by people on a high income (8 percent), and people from LGBTQ+ communities or on an average income (14.5 percent).

## Which people do you think are currently least likely to become involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament?

Percentage of 280 responses



## If you have another category of people, please share it here

There were 49 responses to this part of the question.

There were very diverse responses to this question, but for the most part the people identified were those who may face bigger barriers to being involved – not having time, being geographically distant from the Parliament, financial barriers (either to attending,

or to having time to attend, not having knowledge or education, being digitally excluded, and not having trust in the establishment.

Specific groups mentioned were people's whose first language is not English, parents and carers of disabled children, those with mental health and/or addiction issues, religious groups, people holding gender-critical views, Travellers, people in prison, and single parents. A few people also suggested that it was the people who make up the larger groups of the population – “white straight men”, “taxpayers”, “full time workers”, and “women”. One person said “Most groups are not represented, current systems don't work well enough and people have disengaged.”

### **Please provide reasons for your answer/s**

There were 130 responses to this part of the question.

Many of the responses to this question focused on confidence and knowledge. People may not know that there are opportunities to engage, and people may not feel confident (either in their own skills, in the process, or in the benefits of participating). There was a suggestion across a few responses that people had become disenfranchised and disinterested, because of a lack of change or ability to have an influence. Many people suggested that certain groups, particularly those on low incomes, people of working age and women, were too focused on ‘keeping their heads above water’ to have time to participate. And some people suggested that political institutions were seen as intimidating and not welcoming to certain groups. This connected to representation – a few people said that people with their characteristics had been underrepresented, or ignored, which would lead to less engagement. Finally, a couple of people mentioned people facing language barriers or migrants unaware of their right to participate might feel unable to participate.

**We want to work in a way that more accessible and includes people from different communities and interest groups from across Scotland.**

**What is the first thing we should do to make sure we do that?**

There were 230 responses to this part of the question.

There were a very wide range of suggestions in response to this question, so they have been grouped by theme:

- Outreach
  - Knock on doors, and visit people in their homes
  - Set up groups for communicating with certain communities, or community hubs, and maintain a clear line of contact with those groups, and proactively work with groups that are under-represented
  - Work with TSIs and community councils to understand the areas/groups that are underrepresented
  - Weekend voxpop's in city centres
  - Organise more events outside of Edinburgh and online
  - Have a physical presence in constituencies, perhaps in conjunction with local authorities
  - Use paper surveys delivered through mailboxes
  - Roadshows visiting small communities
- Communication/marketing
  - A communication strategy
  - Posters in places like GP surgeries and community centres
  - Be more proactive about telling people about opportunities to participate
  - Broadcast info on all of the work of the Scottish Parliament on TV and on the radio, and run newspaper adverts
  - Reach out to people whose first language is not English in their native language
- Education
  - Work closely with schools
  - Explain the status quo and give more detail on statistics etc when presenting an issue
  - Provide more education on the Parliament/MSPs and their role for audiences of all ages
- Online resources
  - A specific Facebook page where people can debate issues (closely moderated)
  - Have every engagement opportunity online as well as in person
  - Improve the website

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- Use direct online democracy, and have younger staff working on these approaches
- Cultural change
  - Ensure engagement has impact
  - Listen instead of just using surveys
  - Be less formal – fewer people in suits, and less jargon
  - Give participants more agency and control over how they engage
  - Ensure MSPs are more visible, open and accessible
  - Treat people with dignity and respect, and don't be dismissive of people's views
  - Ask for feedback more often
  - Rely less on single issue groups and organisations.

Wider changes, such as Scotland becoming independent, councils being smaller, and improvements to digital infrastructure, were also mentioned.



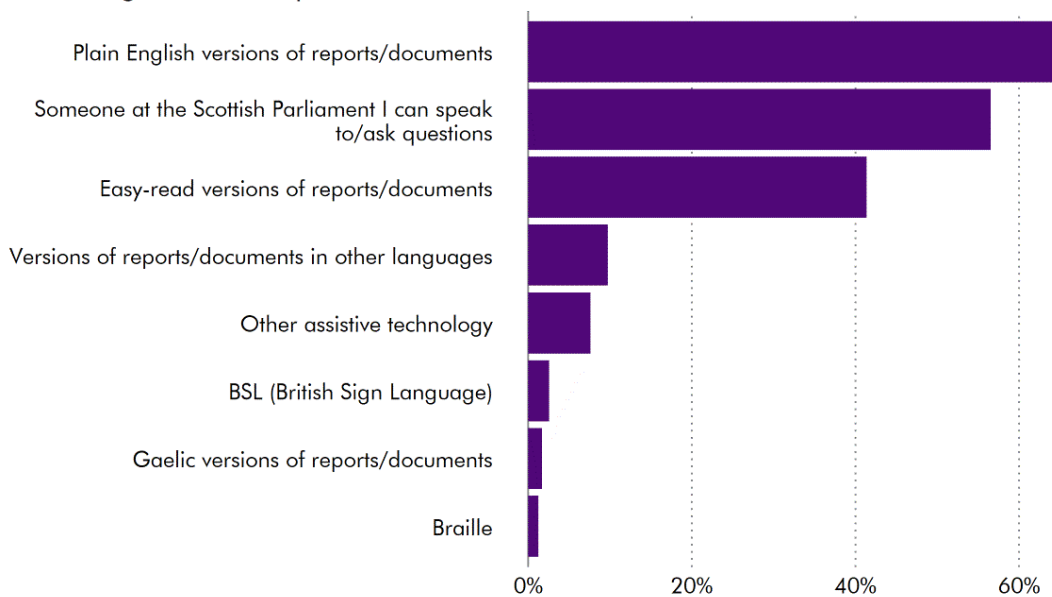
## How can we improve our communications to help more people become involved?

We wanted to look at how improving our communication would make it easier for people to become involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament, so we asked people to select from a series of choices. 237 people did this.

The most popular option, with over half of people selecting this, was to have Plain English versions of reports and documents (32 percent of people said Easy Read versions would be good). 44 percent of people said it would be good to have someone at the Parliament they could speak to or who could answer questions. Around 8 percent of people asked for reports and documents to be available in other languages. The other options all had relatively few people selecting them – offering options in BSL, Braille or using other assistive technology, or offering Gaelic versions of reports/documents.

## Thinking about your own communication needs, what support would make it easier for you to become involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament?

Percentage of 237 responses



## If other languages or communication support methods are helpful, please specify them here

There were 27 responses to this part of the question.

In this section, many people emphasized the need for plain English, accessible language and having a lay person to speak to.

## Scottish Parliament

There were several accessibility options suggested. One person said a telephone helpline would be good, and another explained that text-to-speech and speech-to-text options were useful (mentioned in reference to people with Dyslexia). Clear audio systems (for digital and hybrid meetings) and effective use of hearing loops was also mentioned, as was Sub-titling, “both instantaneous and to be edited and verified after live sessions”. One person said that any colours used should be suitable for colour-blind people. Another said that newsletters with ‘bite-sized’ amounts of information would be good. Infographics were mentioned, and one person emphasised the need to allow people time to process questions before responding during discussions. One person said that it was important to use “sexed language where appropriate”.

Otherwise, people suggested languages which we should use in our communications. The additional languages that people listed were:

- Gaelic
- Arabic
- Luganda
- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Polish
- Scots
- Urdu
- Other languages from communities who are “fully present in Scotland”

## What else could we do?

There were 75 responses to this part of the question.

Many of the responses to this part of the questions have already been covered – measures such as going out and knocking on doors, roadshows, newsletters, and seeking more feedback from people after engagement for instance.

‘New’ suggestions which hadn’t come up in response to earlier questions included:

- Less emphasis on Gaelic – a couple of people noted that there are more Polish speakers in Scotland than Gaelic speakers.
- Raising the profile of and making better use of the SPICe Twitter feed.
- Make easy to watch explainer videos on how the Scottish Parliament works, and to engage with the Parliament etc, and make these available on YouTube and TikTok. One person suggested using a cartoon format.
- Having all documents available in all languages.
- More joint working with other public sector organisations.
- Sending paper copies of information to people who are ‘not able to use technology’.
- Funding more local groups to support participation.
- Help with transport and internet access to address financial barriers.

## Scottish Parliament

- More infographics and Twitter tile cards.
- Shorter briefing papers and more summary documents.

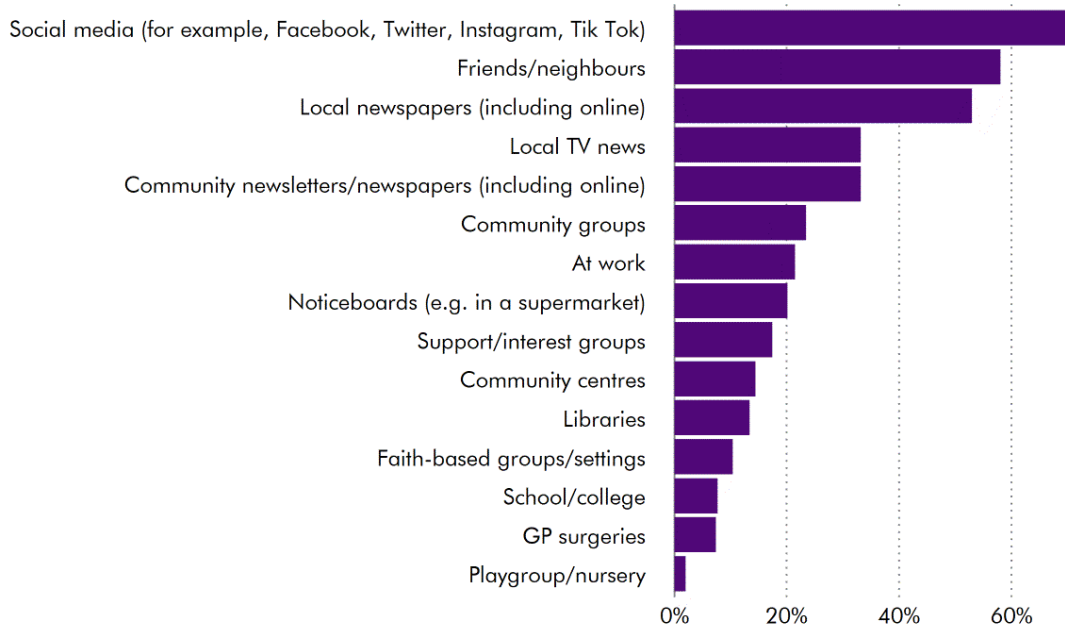
## Where do people find out what is happening in their community?

We asked people where they normally found out what was happening in their community. 298 people made selections.

The most popular choice, with around 69 percent of people choosing it, was social media. Next was through friends and neighbours, which 57 percent of people selected. The third most popular choice, selected by 52 percent of people, was local newspapers (including the online versions). Local TV news and community newsletters were both chosen by 32.5 percent of people. Community groups, through work and noticeboards in supermarkets were all selected by 20-23 percent of people. Less than a fifth of people said they got their local community news through support/interest groups, community centres, libraries and faith-based settings. The least-selected options were school/college (7.5 percent), GP surgeries (7 percent) and playgroup/nursery (2 percent).

## Where do you normally find out what is happening in your community?

Percentage of 298 responses



## If you have another way of finding out what is happening, please share it here

There were 42 responses to this part of the question.

The most common response to how people found out what was happening in their community, not listed above, was either through local radio and independent media, through family/friends, or through local grassroots and community networks.

## Scottish Parliament

Some people used political parties and public body (including Council) sources and newsletters, including proactive approaches like making FOI requests. Other ways people stayed informed included:

- Apps like NextDoor or the BBC News app
- Google
- Academia
- Leaflets received through the door, and
- “Gossip, and this must always be taken with a pinch of salt.”

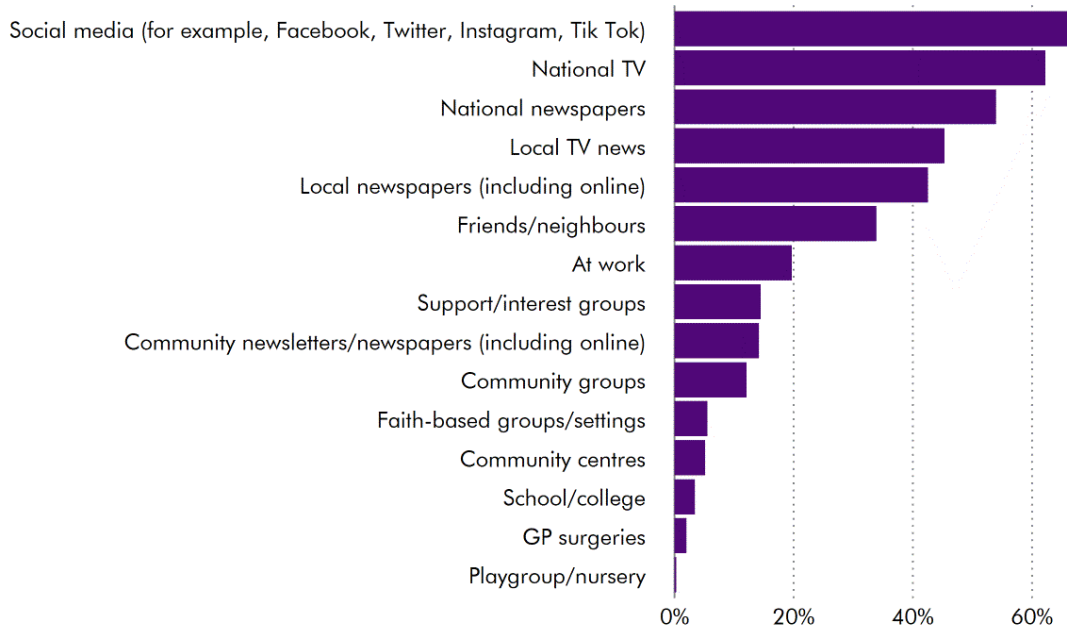
## Where do people find out about news from across Scotland?

We asked people the same question, but in relation to national Scottish news. 289 people responded.

Again, social media was the most popular choice, selected by 63 percent of people. Formal news outlets made up the next few most-selected sources – national TV (59 percent, national newspapers (51 percent), local TV news (43 percent), and local newspapers (40 percent). 32 percent of people said they got national news from friends and neighbours, and around 19 percent got information at work. Around 14 percent of people said they got national news from support/interest groups or community newsletter, and slightly fewer said they got this through community groups. The least selected options were faith-based setting, community centres, GP surgeries and playgroup/nursery.

## Where do you normally find out about news/issues affecting the whole of Scotland?

Percentage of 289 responses



## If you have another way of finding out what is happening, please share it here

There were 39 responses to this part of the question.

Again, most people mentioned radio and other local and/or independent news sources, or organisations.

Answers not given to other questions included:

## Scottish Parliament

- Mumsnet
- Podcasts
- Scottish-based YouTube news feeds
- WhatsApp groups
- The Scots in China group, and
- Libraries

## Who are people most likely to speak to about issues?

We asked who people were most likely to speak to about a problem or issue in their local community, and we asked them to rank this to give an idea of their first, second and third choices.

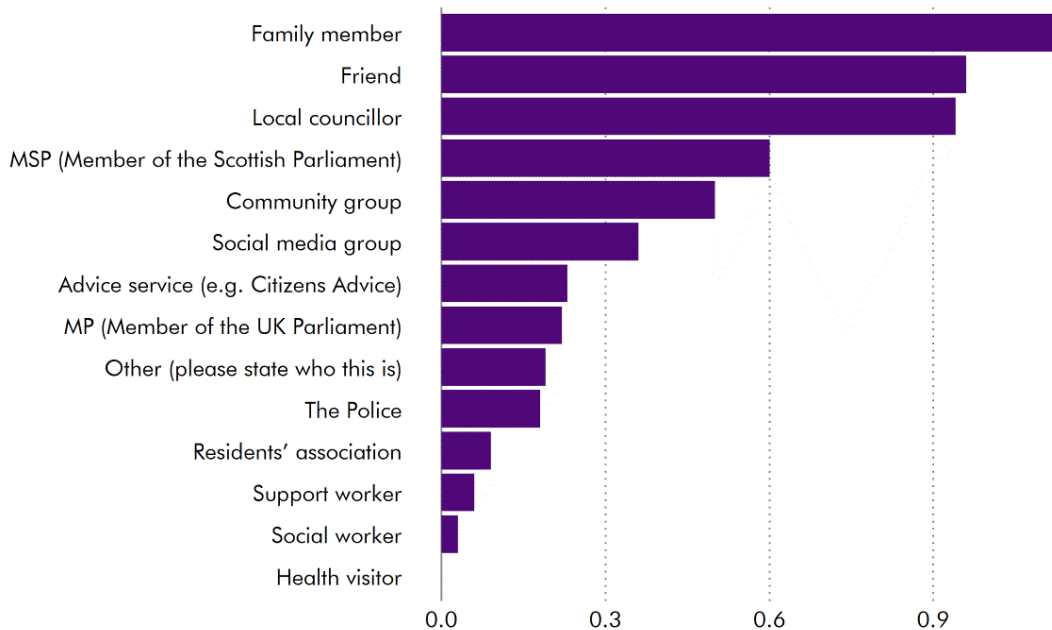
Most people said they were most likely to speak a family member first, or a friend. The second choice most people chose was a friend, or a local councillor. An MSP was also a popular choice. The selections people made for their third choice were more spread out, but local councillor or MSP were the most popular options. Community groups and social media groups were also an option chosen by people in their 'top three', but not most commonly.

The most unlikely people for people to approach first were professional and support services, including Citizens' Advice, and MPs (Westminster). Across all orders of priority, residents' associations, support workers and social workers were unlikely to be who people would go to, and health visitor was the least chosen option overall.

We visualised this in two ways – to show the most popular results (by overall ranking), and how they were spread across people's first, second and third choices (with the number of people that made these choices).

## If you have a problem/issue in your local community, who are you most likely to speak to about this?

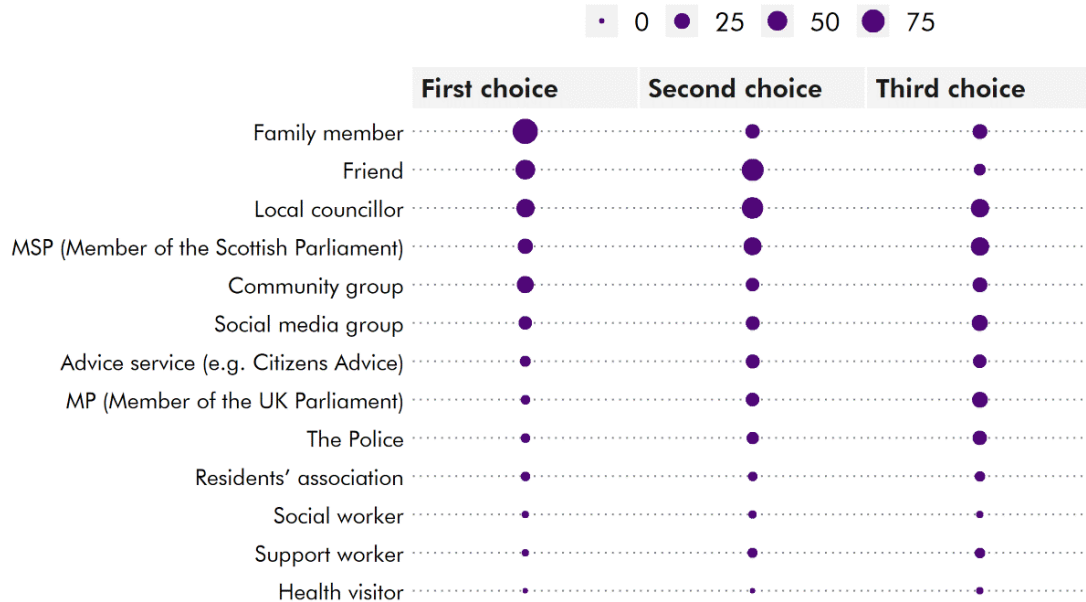
Ranking of 'who I speak to about a problem'





## If you have a problem/issue in your local community, who are you most likely to speak to about this?

Based on users top 3 choices



## If you selected 'Other', please share who else you would speak to here

There were 45 responses to this part of the question.

Some people used this space to clarify that who they would talk to would differ depending on what the issue was. Some people expressed their reasons for their ranking – one said they had more success talking to their MP than their MSP. A few people said there was no one they would talk to, or that they would handle matters themselves. Finally, a few people expressed frustration at the wording of the question (“too variable”, “a daft question”, “This is one of those impossible questions which put you of SG surveys. It so depends what the issue is!”), or at certain types of person/organisations (i.e. the police, and the Scottish Parliament) for not being able to help them.

Other types of person/organisations mentioned were:

- Neighbour
- Local TSI
- Campaign group
- Local Authorities (as opposed to a Councillor)
- Faith groups and the church
- The organisation or business responsible for the issue

## Scottish Parliament

- Lawyer
- Local news outlets
- Housing association
- Workmates (also ex-workmates and ex-school friends, and “any other acquaintance I meet out and about.”)
- The Nextdoor website/forum for local area
- Child/children’s school
- Opposition politicians/party
- Ward officers

## **How did you hear about this survey?**

There were 278 responses to this part of the question.

The majority of people had heard about the survey online, either through Facebook or Twitter, or through email. Of those that heard about it through email, there were a variety of sources, including through their work, through the Scottish Parliament (and Youth Parliament) and Government's e-bulletins, and through community, voluntary sector, or single-issue organisation newsletters. On social media, many people did not specify details, but some mentioned that the survey was shared through non-SP feeds/pages (such as Place Edinburgh, One Parent Scotland, Shetland News or by local Councillors). One person suggested that certain organisations had been prolific in sharing the survey or asking people to respond – "Told you - the feminists sent it out. Bet you have more of these than you were expecting too?".

Some people had found the consultation through browsing either the Scottish Government or Scottish Parliament website, and others through news websites (The Orkney News, Third Force News, BBC News, Press & Journal), or Mumsnet. There were a couple of comments that it had been hard to find, or was a 'well kept secret'.

Offline, a few people had been told by friends and family members, or by support workers (Quarriers, Kairos Women+). Some had been told by their MSP, or by employers, or by Citizens' Advice. A few people had read articles in their local newspapers – those mentioned were The Fraserburgh Herald, The Moffatt News, the Dumfries Chronicle, The Courier, The Berwickshire News, Aberdeen Evening Express, and the Press & Journal. One person said that they had been made aware by "a Government official at a shopping centre".

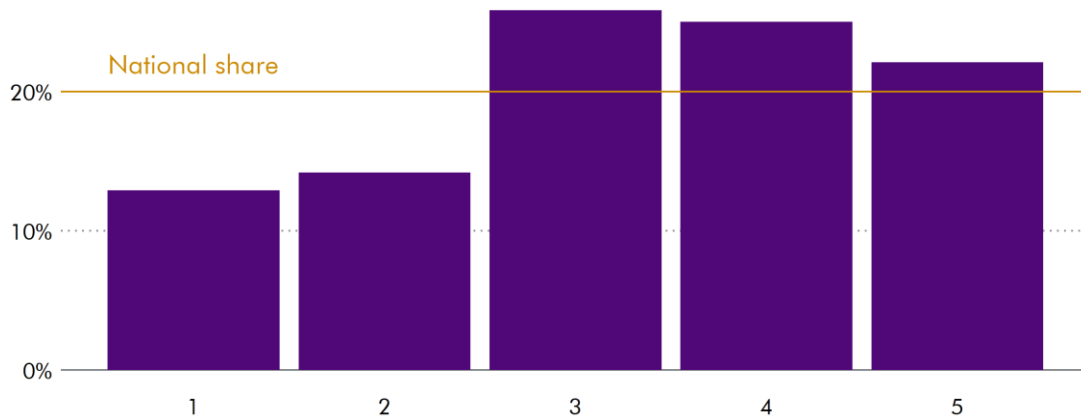
**So that we know we are reaching people from across Scotland, please tell us your postcode. If you would prefer not to answer this question, please move to the next question.**

There were 255 responses to this part of the question. Because we have already shown which local authority people were from, we used this information to look at whether people came from areas of high deprivation, or low deprivation, based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). This is a scale of 5, with 1 being the most deprived, and 5 being the least deprived.

The largest group of respondents came from areas which sit in the middle of the SIMD scale, but those from areas which fall on levels 4 and 5 were not much lower, showing that most of the people who responded to our survey came from less deprived areas. Far fewer people came from most deprived areas, with the lowest share coming from postcodes falling at level 1 on the SIMD scale. As this was an online survey, this may be a result of differing levels of internet access.

### **Where respondents live by level of deprivation.**

Percentage of 255 responses | 1 = Most deprived, 5 = Least deprived



The [Scottish Household Survey](#) for context shows that whilst the 'digital divide' between the least deprived and most deprived areas in Scotland has narrowed, there are still higher numbers of households in the most deprived areas that do not have internet access. In 2019, 82 percent of households in the most deprived areas of Scotland had internet, compared to 96 percent in the least deprived areas. This divide is much greater for older people than younger people, with only 49 percent of people aged over 60 in the most deprived areas having internet access.

## About the people that responded

We asked people questions, based on the questions used in the most recent Census, so we could understand who our survey had reached.

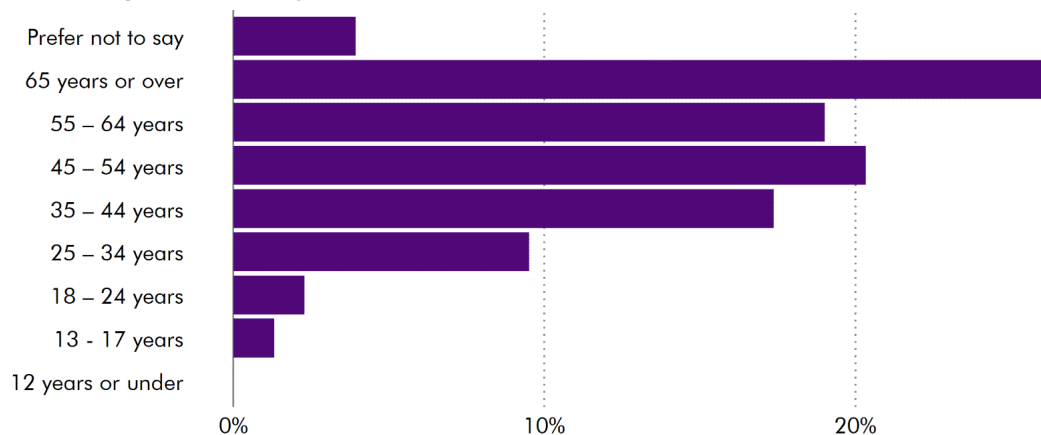
### Age

The largest group of people who responded were over 65, over 26 percent of the participants. 19 percent were 55-64 years of age, and over 20 percent were 45-54. This means that around two thirds of the people that filled out the survey were 45 or over.

Of the remaining third, most were between 25-44. Fewer than 4 percent of people who took part were aged 24 or younger.

### What is your age?

Percentage of 305 responses



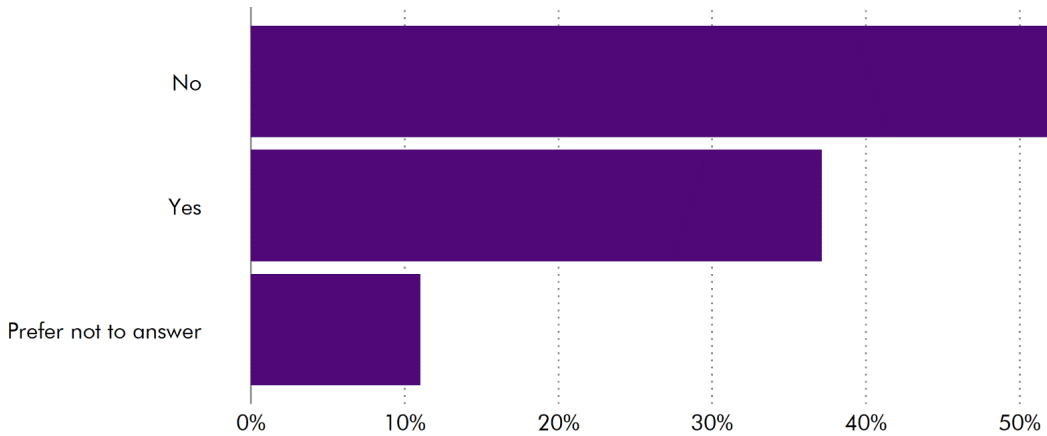
### Income

We asked people whether they considered themselves to be living on a low income, giving them the choice not to share this information. 299 people answered.

Around 36.5 percent said that they considered themselves to be on a low income, and 51 percent said they did not. Roughly 11 percent said they preferred not to answer.

## Do you consider yourself to be living on a low income?

Percentage of 299 responses



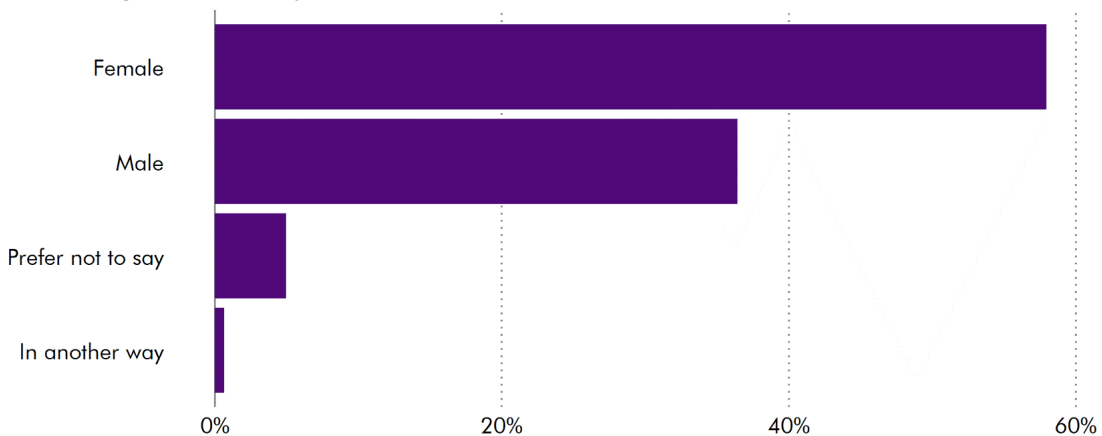
## Sex

We asked people how they would describe what their sex was, giving people the option of saying 'male', 'female', 'in another way' or 'prefer not to say'. 302 people responded.

Over half of people who took part, around 57.5 people, said they were female. 36 percent of people said they were male. 5 percent of people said they would prefer not to say, and under 1 percent said they would describe their sex in another way.

## What is your sex?

Percentage of 302 responses



## If you selected "in another way" please describe:

There were 13 responses to this part of the question.

## Scottish Parliament

All of the responses expressed an annoyance at this question, and/or assertion that sex is binary.

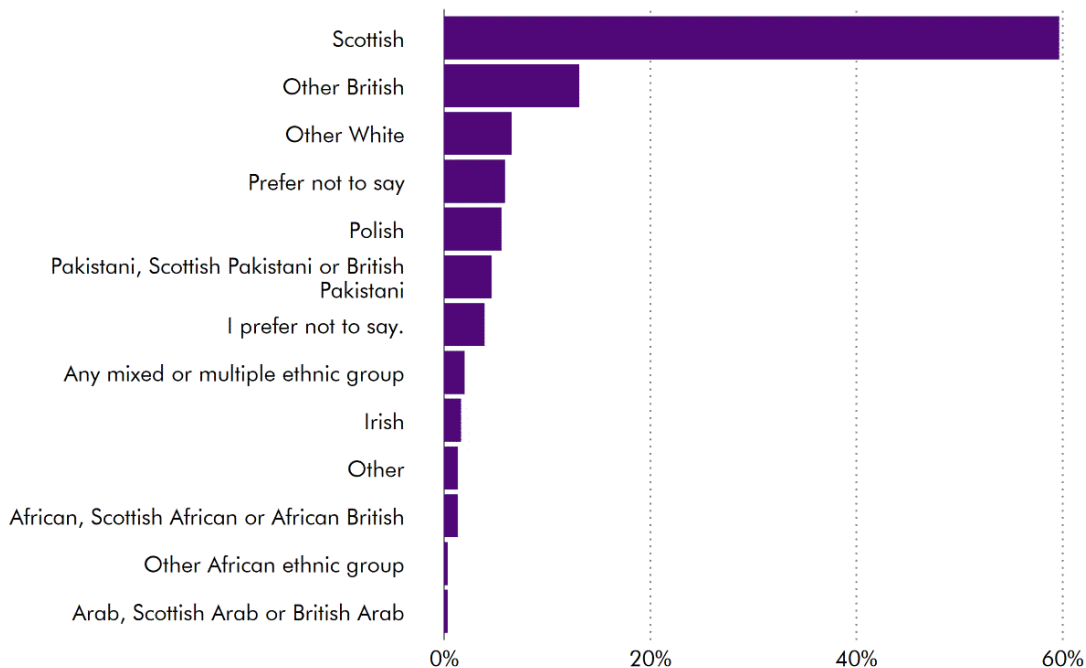
### Ethnicity

We asked people to describe their ethnic background, using the same categories from the recent Census. 305 people responded.

Close to 60 percent of people described themselves as Scottish, and 13 percent said they were 'other British'. Around 5.5 percent of people said they were Polish, and fewer than 2 percent were Irish. Roughly 5.6 percent of people said they were from another ethnic group, and 6 percent of people preferred not to say. Nobody responding to the survey said they were from a Gypsy/Traveller, Roma, or Showman/Showwoman background.

### What is your ethnic group?

Percentage of 305 responses



### Mixed or multiple ethnic group

People were asked if they were from a mixed or multiple ethnic groups. Six people used this to describe themselves as British, or mixed British/Scottish (there were a couple of objections to these not being options). The other mixed/other ethnicities mentioned here were:

- Scottish-Irish
- British-Latin American
- Latin American

## Scottish Parliament

- French-Scottish
- Polish-Channel Islands
- North Eastern Ethnic Person, and
- Canadian

## Other ethnic groups

Additional detail is below on respondents' ethnic background.

- 14 people described themselves as Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani from the categories provided. No other Asian ethnicities were selected from the options given (which matched the Census), but one person clarified that they were Pakistani Muslim under a question about ethnicities not covered. There were no people who identified as belonging to other Asian ethnicities (i.e. Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese etc).
- 4 People said that they were of African, Scottish African or African British origin, and in the free text box two people clarified that they were Nigerian (one person specified Yoruba).
- No respondents said that they were Caribbean.
- When people were asked if they belonged to another ethnic group, one person said that they were of Arabic heritage, and the following responses were written in:
  - British-Scot
  - Italian
  - German
  - Latina
- 12 people said that they preferred not to share details of their ethnicity

## Religion

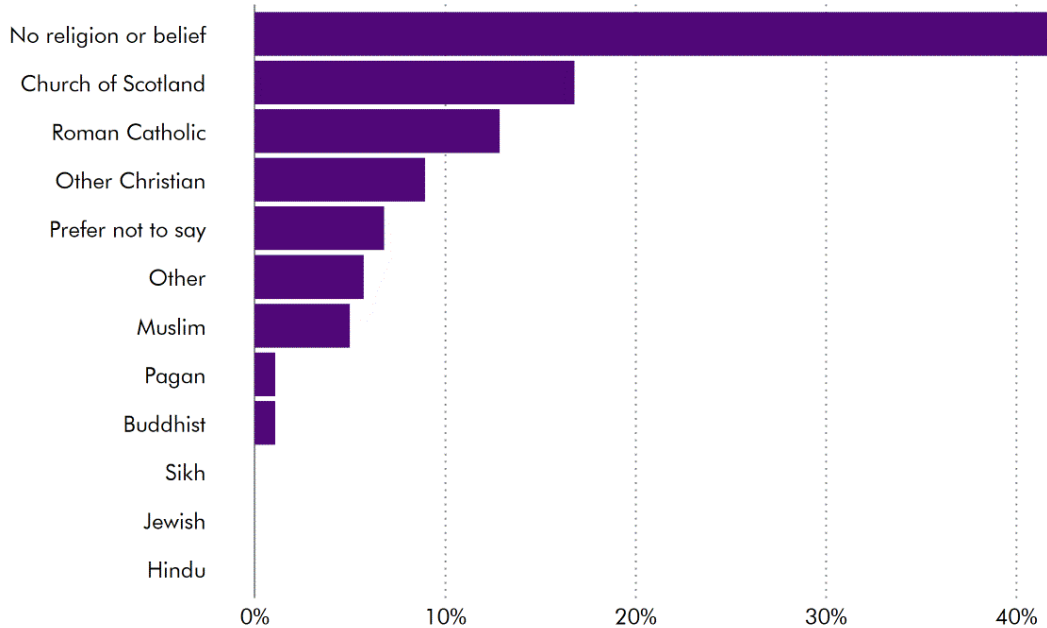
We asked people to give details of their religious beliefs, again using the Census question format. 282 people responded.

The largest group of responses, around 38.5 percent of people, said they had no religion or belief. The next largest groups belonged to the different Christian denominations – Church of Scotland (15.4 percent), Roman Catholic (11.8 percent), or 'other Christian' (8.2 percent). Around 5 percent said they were Muslim, and the same number of respondents said they belonged to unspecified other faiths. A small number of people identified as Buddhist or Pagan. Nobody identified as Sikh, Hindu or Jewish. Around 6 percent of people preferred not to say.



## What, if any, religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?

Percentage of 282 responses



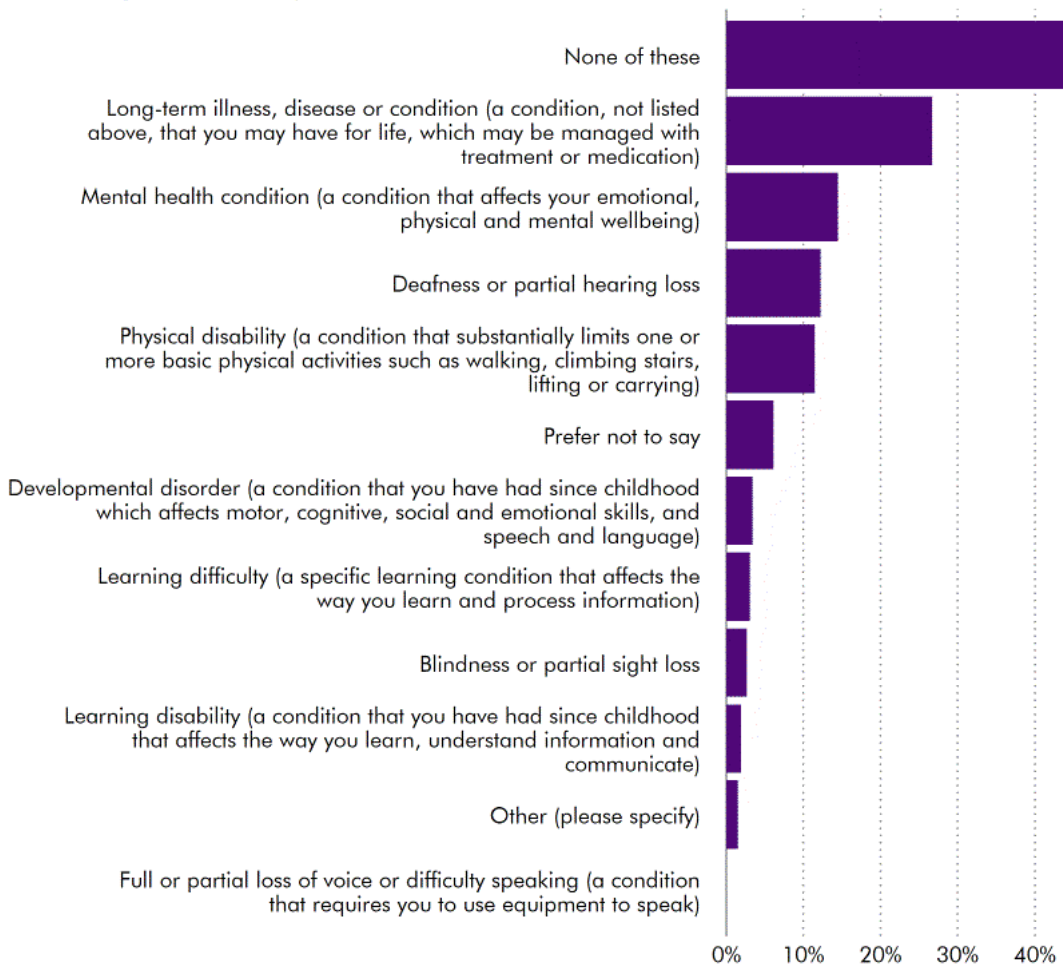
## Long-term health conditions and disabilities

We asked people about their long-term health concerns and conditions. 262 people chose to answer, of whom around 38 percent confirmed they had no long-term health issues.

Around 12.5 percent of people taking part had a mental health condition, and 10.5 percent had deafness or partial hearing loss. A similar number had a physical disability. Small numbers of respondents (below 3 percent for each), had a learning difficulty, learning disability, or developmental disorder, or suffered with blindness or sight loss. 23 percent of people said they had a long-term illness, disease or condition that wasn't specified in any of the categories we gave. Around 5 percent of people said they preferred not to say. Nobody identified themselves as having voice loss.

## Do you have any of the following, which have lasted, or are expected to last, at least 12 months?

Percentage of 262 responses



### If you selected 'Other' please specify in box provided.

There were 6 responses to this part of the question.

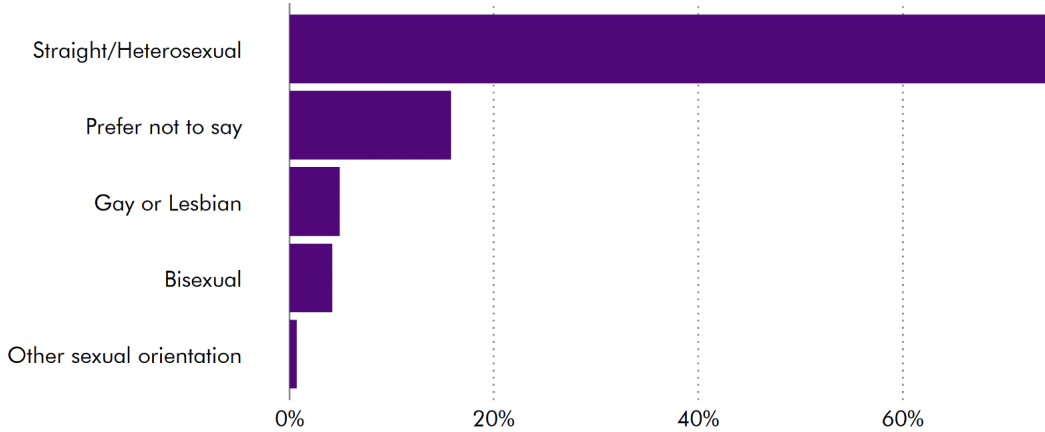
One person said they had cancer, and two people said they were neurodivergent. One person had long Covid. One person explained that they suffered cognitive issues emanating from pain control medication, and one person explained that they did not have a condition, but they were a carer of someone who did.

### Sexual orientation

When we asked people their sexual orientation, 285 people responded. Around 70 percent of people described themselves as straight/heterosexual, and 15 percent said they preferred not to say. 4.6 percent of people said they were gay/lesbian, and around 4 percent said they were bisexual. Fewer than 1 percent of people who responded said they would describe their sexual orientation in another way.

## How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Percentage of 285 responses



**If you selected 'Other sexual orientation' please specify in the box provided.**

There were 5 responses to this part of the question.

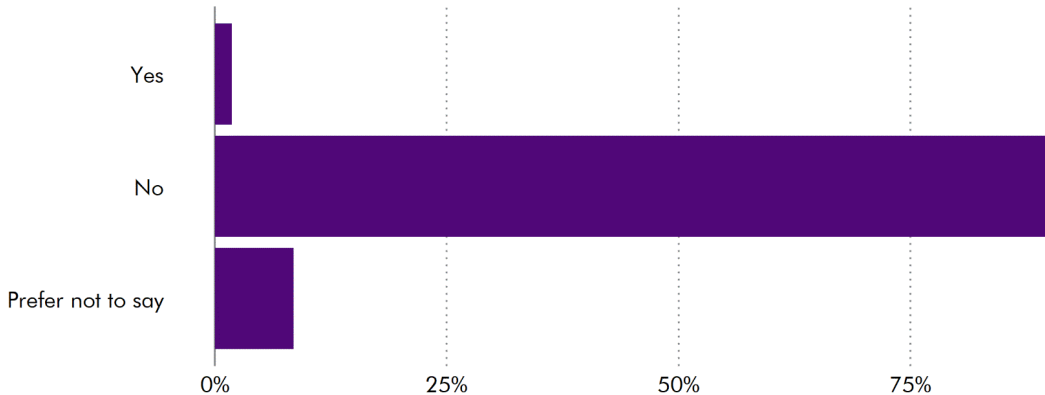
One person described themselves as queer, and another as asexual. The other three responses expressed that the question was 'not our business', or not relevant.

## Transgender status

We asked people whether they considered themselves to be trans, or have a trans history. Of the 271 people who completed this question, just under 80 percent of people said no. Roughly 1.6 percent of people said yes. The remaining people said they preferred not to say (7.5 per cent), or did not answer.

## Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?

Percentage of 271 responses



**If yes, please describe if you wish.**

There were 13 responses to this part of the question.

One person identified themselves as a trans woman, and one person said they were agender (not having a gender). The rest of the responses were people objecting to the question, expressing that gender should be defined, or making gender-critical comments, such as “Trans does not exist, as neither does gender”, and “Trans is not a reality. Please stop coercing children.”.