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State of the Nation

Diversity in Public Appointments in Scotland

LEADING KIND LTD

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Diversity in Public Appointments

The State of the Nation Report 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *State of the Nation* report provides an independent assessment of diversity in Scotland's public appointments system. Commissioned by the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC), the research is intended to inform, not pre-determine, the development of the Commissioner's new diversity strategy for public appointments.

The report builds on the 2008 *Diversity Delivers* strategy, offering a comprehensive review of progress, examining how Scotland's landscape has changed since then, and identifying practices that have the potential to improve representation and governance. Its purpose is not to prescribe a single solution, but to provide an evidence base to stimulate further discussion and engagement.

PURPOSE

The Commissioner has a statutory obligation to publish and promote a refreshed strategy for increasing board diversity and to consult widely in preparing it. This report provides a foundation for that process by:

- Reviewing the progress achieved under *Diversity Delivers*.
- Examining shifts in Scottish society, law, policy, and workplace culture since 2008.
- Assessing the effectiveness of public appointment practices.
- Drawing on data analysis, literature review, and interviews to identify barriers and enablers to greater diversity.
- Offering prompts and perspectives to guide stakeholder consultation.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Progress and Continuing Gaps

- The number of women holding public appointments has improved significantly, with many boards now close to parity in terms of the proportion of men and women who sit on them.
- Incremental progress has been made in ethnic diversity, but boards still do not fully reflect Scotland's population.
- Disabled people, younger applicants, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds remain consistently underrepresented.
- Urban–rural disparities are evident, with greater diversity in city-based boards.

2. Recruitment and Appointment Practices

- The introduction of the 2022 *Code of Practice* has created opportunities for more flexible, outcome-focused approaches.
- However, implementation is inconsistent. Positive action strategies and innovative assessment methods are permitted, but they are not widely or confidently applied.
- The process is often seen as overly bureaucratic, time-consuming, and inaccessible, limiting applicant diversity.
- Feedback provided to unsuccessful candidates is limited, weakening the pipeline of potential future applicants.

3. Broader Cultural and Legal Context

- Scotland's demographic profile has changed markedly, with greater ethnic and religious diversity, higher disability prevalence, and shifts in immigration patterns.
- Legal developments, including the Equality Act 2010 and recent judicial clarifications, shape the boundaries within which diversity initiatives must operate.
- Public attitudes towards equality, diversity, and inclusion are evolving, but tokenistic, compliance-driven or ideological approaches risk undermining trust.

4. Implications for Governance

- Evidence suggests that cognitive diversity (differences in perspective, skills, and experience) has the strongest link to board performance, but it is often overlooked.
- Boards benefit from diversity of thought when there is strong integration and an

inclusive culture. Poorly managed diversity can lead to conflict or tokenism.

- Recruitment strategies must be merit based, requiring stakeholders to consider what 'good' means in the context of governance generally, but also to individual boards.

NEXT STEPS

The Commissioner intends this report to act as a **starting point for dialogue**. The findings will be tested and refined through consultation with stakeholders, including current and aspiring board members, public bodies, and communities. The goal is to co-create a refreshed diversity strategy that is evidence-informed, legally sound, and practically deliverable.

- The next phase of work will therefore:
- Invite feedback on the findings and recommendations.
- Seek additional insights on barriers and opportunities.
- Develop concrete, outcome-focused measures for Scotland's refreshed strategy on diversity in public appointments.



Statement from the Commissioner for Public Appointments

I have a statutory obligation to publish and promote a strategy to encourage increased board diversity and to consult widely in preparing it. The previous strategy was published in 2008, and I am now updating it, shaping Scotland's future approach to diversity in Public Appointments.

This "State of the Nation" report provides an external and independent view that:

- analyses the current Diversity Delivers strategy and any progress towards achievement*
- explains how the landscape has changed since it was introduced*
- assesses the practices in recruitment that lead to increased diversity, and analyses the extent to which these are currently reflected in the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments and the extent to which they are utilised in practice.*

The report provides prompts and new perspectives for me to consider as I develop my new strategy for public appointments. I ask that you too consider the findings of the independent researchers. The next phase of the work will seek your feedback on their findings. It will aim to gather additional insights so that the strategy is focused on the actions that will make a positive outcome for governance in Scotland.

I am keenly aware of the importance of diversity of thought, experience and perspective as a significant enabler for good governance on boards.

I believe that our focus should be on creating the conditions for effective governance by ensuring that boards benefit from a range of perspectives, experiences, and ways of thinking; because high-quality decision-making and public trust and confidence rely on diversity of thought. Differing viewpoints can challenge assumptions, increase innovation, give different insight to risk and strengthen scrutiny. This work is more important than ever, given the pressing need for public sector reform, which dictates that our public bodies must be well placed to innovate, collaborate and engage meaningfully with the communities that they serve. It will sit alongside and complement the important work of continuing to monitor and increase the opportunities of under-represented groups, while addressing barriers they face. It will also dovetail with the Scottish Government's work to develop Scotland's first equality strategy for women and girls. If our boards are not reflective of the communities that they serve, the huge array of talented people who could serve in these roles won't see themselves in these positions and will not, as a consequence, be encouraged to apply.

I hope that everyone who shares my ambitions for the best governance we can aspire to on public body boards in Scotland will engage with my office in the development of the strategy.

Ian Bruce,

Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Scotland



Section 1: Introduction

Overview

This State of the Nation report provides an informed overview of diversity in Scotland's public appointments landscape. It builds upon the Ethical Standards Commissioner's (ESC) Diversity Delivers strategy, first introduced in 2008, assessing the progress made towards achieving diverse, inclusive, and representative boards across Scotland's public bodies.

The landscape has shifted significantly since the publication of the original Diversity Strategy. Demographic, political, and social changes, alongside evolving international practices, have reshaped both the expectations of and opportunities for diversity in governance. This report reflects on these developments. It is intended primarily as a discussion document to inform a strategic consultation about the future direction of diversity and inclusion within public appointments.

APPROACH

A multi-method approach was adopted, comprising:

- **Data review:** analysis of published data on public appointments to assess trends and changes in applicant and appointee demographics between 2008 and 2024. Scottish census data was also reviewed to contextualise these trends within broader societal changes.
- **Policy review:** examination of published Equality Mainstreaming Reports from public bodies regulated by ESC to understand actions specifically targeting diversity in governance.
- **Literature review:** review of existing literature relating to board governance and diversity in the UK and internationally.
- **Surveys:** two online surveys, one targeting the general public and another aimed at special interest groups. While response rates were too low for confident statistical

conclusions, results are available for reference in the annexes to this report (provided separately).

- **Qualitative research:** fourteen in-depth interviews and a workshop with public appointment advisers. These were conducted in early 2025. Participants included chairs and chief executives of public body boards, as well as representatives from special interest groups. Interviews were carried out using semi-structured discussion guides and in line with the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. Participants' individual contributions to the research were anonymised to encourage open dialogue. Quotations have occasionally been lightly edited for clarity. Full details, including the names of those who contributed to this stage of the research, are provided in the annexes.

About this report

This report provides a foundation for discussions to inform the development of a future diversity strategy for public appointments. Detailed qualitative and quantitative findings have been summarised or included in the separate annexes to keep this main document focused and accessible.

Ultimately, our intention is that this State of the Nation report provides a structured and evidence-informed basis for further discussion, aimed at shaping a strategic approach to diversity and inclusion within Scotland's public appointments for years to come. The next phase of the research will include qualitative research that examines ways of enhancing governance and diversifying boards outwith Scotland to ensure that the refreshed strategy benefits from international good practice. It will also comprise a series of validation sessions. These will engage a broad range of people and organisations in co-creating the vision, actions and measures for the refreshed diversity strategy for public appointments.

LANGUAGE

Appointments to the boards of public bodies in Scotland are separate and distinct from appointments to boards in the rest of Great Britain or United Kingdom, reflecting devolved responsibilities. Reference to 'GB' appointments is a reference to appointments to the boards of bodies that primarily operate in England and Wales only. A small proportion of 'GB' boards, such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Health and Safety Executive, operate on a cross-border basis. The Ethical Standards Commissioner for Scotland regulates appointments to most of Scotland's public body boards. The regulation of appointments to GB boards is handled very differently under an Order in Council, which includes the list of appointments that are regulated.

The word 'Chair' in this report has two distinct meanings:

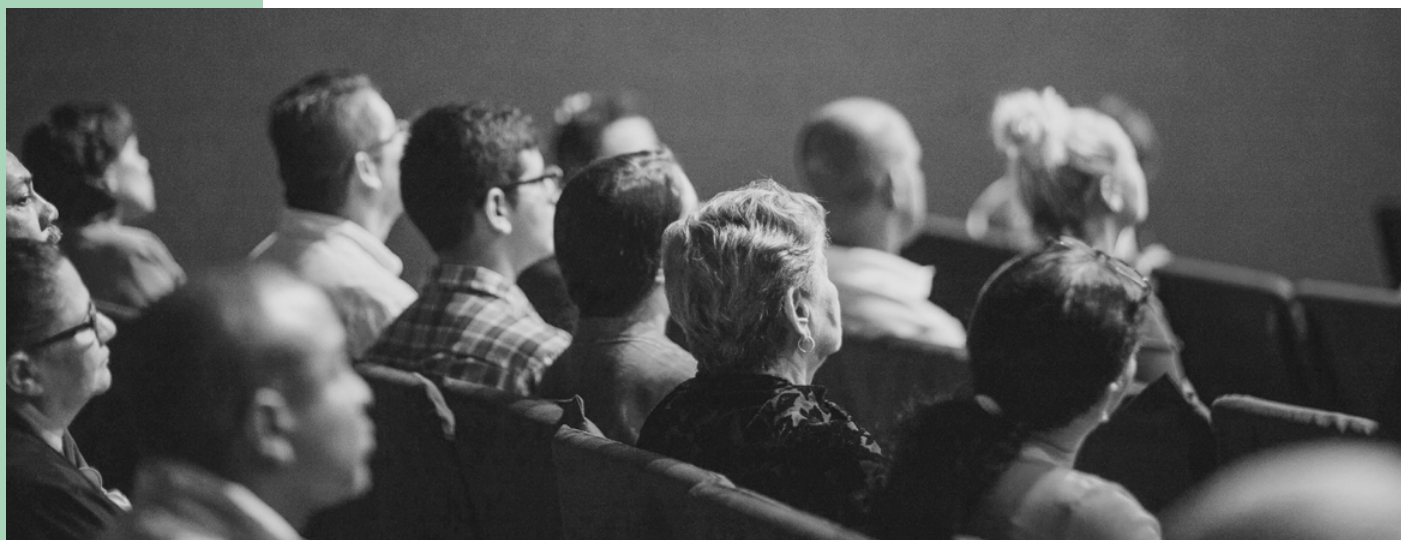
Panel chair: this means the individual with responsibility for identifying suitable candidates for public appointments and ensuring adherence to the ESC's Code of Practice.

Body chair: this is a public appointment. It relates to the individual, identified through the public appointments process and appointed by the Minister, who chairs the board of the public body.

In this report, "underrepresentation" means that people from certain groups—such as those with disabilities—are not present across Scottish boards to the same extent as they are present in the population. This does not mean that board members with these characteristics are appointed to represent or speak for their entire group, nor that it is possible or desirable for individual boards to represent the broader population when it comes to group characteristics.

ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT

- AI Artificial intelligence
- EDI Equality, diversity, and inclusion
- ESC Ethical Standards Commissioner
- ESG Environmental, social and governance
- LGB Lesbian, gay and bisexual
- PAA Public appointments adviser
- PESTGEL Political, environmental, societal, technological, governance, economic, legal
- PSED Public Sector Equality Duty



Section 2: The Context – Culture and Policy

Scotland has undergone significant cultural, political, and demographic transformations since the publication of Diversity Delivers in 2008. Understanding these changes is essential to shape an effective diversity and inclusion strategy for current and future public appointments. This section of the report summarises key societal developments and their implications for public appointments. A fuller assessment is available in the annexes to this report.

CHANGING SCOTTISH SOCIETY

Key societal shifts since 2008 include greater religious diversity, rising levels of antisemitism and ongoing Islamophobia, and significant immigration changes post-Brexit. Structural barriers, such as occupational segregation by ethnicity and sex, under-employment of disabled people, and organisational culture, continue to limit career progression for minoritised individuals. Social changes and ongoing challenges have direct implications for the attraction of diverse candidates to public roles. They are also likely to affect public body boards' decisions about how to manage these changes.

- **Religion:** most of Scotland's population still identifies as Christian or agnostic. Since 2008, there has been a public shift of focus from sectarianism towards broader discussions of faith-based inclusion. There continues to be faith-based intolerance, however. Islamophobia is present in Scottish society and, in an issue that is also relevant to race, antisemitism in Scotland has been escalating. These issues highlight the need for ongoing work to promote understanding and challenge discrimination.
- **Immigration:** Brexit has significantly changed Scotland's immigration landscape, with EU immigration declining and non-EU immigration rising sharply. Net migration more than tripled between 2021 and 2023. A sharp rise in non-EU international students and the reintroduced Graduate Route have influenced the labour market, with many staying after graduation as skilled workers. Glasgow hosts most of Scotland's asylum seekers.

Around 14% of Scotland's population was born outside of the UK, which may affect their knowledge about opportunities to serve on public body boards.

- **Race:** urban centres such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen show significant ethnic diversity, with distinct ethnic communities shaping each city. Immigration trends have transformed Scotland's cities and communities, both demographically and culturally, but the prominent ethnicity in Scotland is still White Scottish. Regional variations imply that public body boards are likely to have different levels of access to racially diverse candidates.
- **Disability and illness:** according to Scotland's census, around one in four people has a disability. The rate of disability is even higher in places such as Dundee City, Argyll and Bute, and North Ayrshire, where around four in ten people are disabled. The high disability prevalence implies a need to ensure disabled people are represented in the decisions made by public bodies, especially those related to healthcare and employability (this is reflected in the Scottish Government's Delivery Plan for a Fairer Scotland for Disabled People)¹. Separately, concerns have grown about possible overdiagnosis of neurodevelopmental and mental health conditions, with experts warning that diagnoses may increasingly reflect normal human traits rather than clinical disorders. As more people seek healthcare and financial support, resources could become overly stretched, disadvantaging those with the greatest need. There are also implications for economic inactivity. Increased visibility of neurodevelopmental and mental health conditions has not necessarily led to better support or reduced bias for individuals with these conditions in leadership roles, and discussions about appropriate reasonable adjustments are only at an early stage.

THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

Employment patterns and workplace norms have evolved substantially in recent years, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and broader shifts towards hybrid working. These changes have influenced recruitment practices, job preferences, and board member engagement. Remote working may make participation easier for disabled and geographically distant board members, as well as those with caring responsibilities. However remote working may negatively affect board cohesiveness and the ability for new board members to connect with, and learn from experienced members.

- **Public-sector employment:** around 30% of Scotland's workforce is employed in the public sector. There is significant regional variation, from 18% in Dumfries and Galloway to 60% in the Shetland Islands. Women are twice as likely as men to work in the public sector, making up between 60% and 80% of the sector's workforce in most areas.
- **Industry employment patterns:** around a third of Scotland's population works in the public administration, education, and health sectors. While these sectors are predominantly female, men still hold most of the senior roles. Sectors such as banking, finance, insurance, distribution, hospitality, and food services have a more balanced workforce representation between men and women than more traditionally male-dominated sectors such as energy and agriculture. Public body boards may find their

¹ [A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: delivery plan - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/delivery-plan-2022-2026/pages/100-109-disability-and-mental-health-conditions/)

candidate pools map onto the proportions of men and women who work in the sectors they principally represent.

- **Leadership:** while leadership positions in Scotland are becoming more diverse, there is a relative² lack of leaders with a state school background. There is a commensurate lack of racial diversity. Women are under-represented, as are disabled people.
- **Ways of working:** boundaries between home and social life have blurred since the pandemic, with implications for public board recruitment as well as how people deliver their roles. Staff are often allowed to work from home for at least some of the time, where job roles allow them to do so. Board business is also increasingly carried out in a hybrid way. This requires careful balancing: while it may theoretically be more inclusive to have an element of hybrid working for public boards, feedback from interviews suggests that current in-person engagement is so limited that members can feel isolated, and they do not always have the opportunity to develop close working relationships with each other. The impact of hybrid working and the benefits of creating the conditions to foster connection between board members requires proactive consideration in any future diversity strategy.

THE CHANGING FACE OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)

Public bodies remain broadly committed to EDI principles, focusing increasingly on fairness, transparency, and merit-based appointments. Some stakeholders are concerned, however, that certain EDI initiatives have become overly tokenistic and divisive in the years since the original Diversity Delivers strategy was published.



² David Hume Institute, "Team Scotland: New Players in the Scottish Parliament", May 2021 20 % of MSPs attended fee-paying schools compared to 6 % of the population, just 5 % are BAME (versus 1 % among other leaders), 45 % are female (vs 32 % in other public sector leadership roles), and notable firsts include Scotland's first permanent wheelchair-using MSP and first women of colour MSPs.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

The introduction of the Equality Act 2010 marked a significant consolidation of equality protections, influencing Scottish policy through specific measures such as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the related Scottish Specific Duties, and the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018. The recent Supreme Court judgement further clarified the legal boundaries of diversity initiatives, and highlighted tensions between Scottish political ambitions and wider judicial interpretations.

- **Sex and gender identity**³: the term 'gender' has increasingly been used in Scottish public discourse. This is sometimes understood to refer to sex; sometimes to gender identity or the social roles ascribed to sex; and sometimes as an amalgam. Tensions have played out in both political and public spheres between those who believe that policy should be based on self-identification of gender, and those who believe it should be based on underlying sex categories. The recent Supreme Court ruling on the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) act has clarified that the words 'woman', 'man' and 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biology, not certification. This has broader implications for policy and Scottish public bodies, especially around data collection and the provision of single-sex services.
- **Divergence of policy and legislative frameworks**: some interviewees highlighted a tendency of policy-makers to seek to apply their own policies rather than following national law, and for organisations to attempt to go beyond the law. This tendency has resulted in actual legal cases and the risk of others to follow. Practice has diverged from legislation to a point at which there is perceived competition and resulting tension between equality groups. Public organisations frequently fail to act on the third part of the general equality duty: to 'foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'. These are live and important issues for public body boards, which need to appoint board members who are able to identify any potential tensions between policy and the law within their organisations, and to hold the executive to account when such tensions require it.
- **Understandings and misunderstandings of diversity**: political and institutional pressures have shaped how diversity is interpreted and applied in Scotland's public

³ Stakeholders often use different terms, with contradictory underlying meanings, to describe sex/gender. This has the potential to cause confusion, especially as '**gender**' has at least three possible definitions: what it means to be a man or woman, or girl or boy, in today's society (a social construct); gender identity (how people define themselves); or as a synonym for sex (being male or female). We want to use clear language to ensure that intended meanings are understood by readers. We have therefore chosen to use the following terminology relating to sex and gender identity in this report:

Sex: whether individuals are male or female – a protected characteristic in the Equality Act.

Gender identity: how people self-define when it comes to gender (this is not necessarily linked to sex, and not everyone has a gender identity). Individuals who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process to change physiological or other characteristics so that they align with their gender identity may have the protected characteristic of **gender reassignment** in the Equality Act.

Gender: we have used this term where it is in a direct quotation from interviewees or official documents. It is taken to mean sex, though some individuals may interpret it as gender identity.

We have also chosen to be as specific as possible when referring to groups that have particular attributes or needs. This is to avoid conflating the needs or representation of one group with those of another. We use 'LGB' rather than any broader acronym, for example, when referring to sexual orientation.

sector, sometimes leading to tokenistic practices (feeling compelled to recommend under-qualified female candidates, for example). Conflicting signals from different parts of government and the media can distort priorities, resulting in certain groups, such as disabled people, being overlooked. While the Diversity Delivers framework promoted a more nuanced view of diversity, government policy often emphasises single protected characteristics, and selection panels sometimes align with these narrower categories.

- **Cultural barriers to greater diversity:** public sector policy is often shaped by prevailing ideologies or political will rather than objective data.⁴ In relation to equality priorities in Scotland, this manifests in neglect of certain groups, such as white, under-educated boys in areas such as Glasgow's East End, and an overuse of terms such as 'lived experience'. These may have limited meaning unless they are clearly defined. While the Scottish Government has a specific equality outcome about lived experience, for example, everyone has a lived or personal experience; in the absence of clear parameters, there is a danger that some personal experiences are elevated or taken as a shared experience.

Feedback from interviewees suggested that in Scotland, evidence is sometimes selectively gathered to align with existing views, rather than to inform them. Cultural issues also hinder progress, with some interviewees describing the Scottish Government as intolerant of dissent and fostering an environment in which critical voices are seen as disloyal. Further, some public bodies have elevated certain protected characteristics over others. As a result, they are likely to contravene the Equality Act 2010, creating legal risk. They have also experienced reputational damage.⁵ The success of any future strategy depends on creating a governance culture that (a) places greater weight on evidence than world views and (b) is tolerant of dissent.

⁴ [*The census as an information source in public policy-making - Lynn Killick, Hazel Hall, Alistair S Duff, Mark Deakin, 2016*](#)

⁵ [*E.g. Gender-critical book pulled from Scottish National Library display after staff complaints - Brussels Signal*](#)
<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25389155.sandie-peggie-nhs-fife-tells-watchdog-broke-law/>



Section 3: Diversity and its Implications (Mini Literature Review)

Introduction

This review summarises current research and insights into diversity's impact on governance effectiveness, considering demographic and cognitive diversity and board experience.

Overview

There has been a great deal of academic research published since the first Diversity Delivers strategy was published in 2008. This mini literature review gives a light-touch assessment of what we know and do not yet know about diversity on boards.

The theory underpinning a drive towards greater diversity on boards is a simple one: diversity of skills, characteristics and/or experiences contribute to board performance through their ability to provide effective governance and scrutiny.

'Decision making in groups may improve with diversity as creativity may increase and a broader set of alternatives may be considered. As they are less likely to be insiders or business experts, diverse directors can bring varied perspectives and non-traditional approaches to problems, enhancing complex problem solving and improving the quality of decision making... A more diverse board may also be a better monitor of managers because board diversity increases board independence.' (Adams et al, 2015)

This section looks at:

- Different interpretations of the meaning of diversity.
- The extent to which the theory outlined above stands up in practice and, where positive differences in performance are seen, the types of diversity that are most likely to contribute to this.
- What works when working to achieve greater diversity on boards.

It is a snapshot review of the literature. The purpose is not to provide a comprehensive assessment of evidence on board diversity, but to highlight some studies – prioritising high-quality research, where possible – that are likely to be relevant to the development of the next iteration of the strategy.

Limitations of this summary include the time available for the literature review; the fact that most of the literature focuses on diversity in corporate boards, so findings may not be directly transferrable to public body boards; and the international nature of the literature on board diversity, as local culture may make a significant difference to what is important when it comes to diversity and how it can best be achieved.

Breaking Down Diversity

DIVERSITY UMBRELLAS

Behlau, Wobst and Lueg (2024) define board diversity in terms of whether it is structural, demographic or cognitive:

- **Structural diversity** covers aspects such as independence, the extent to which separate structures are available for executive and non-executive boards, and board size.
- **Demographic diversity** covers aspects such as sex, age, nationality and ethnicity.
- **Cognitive diversity** refers to aspects such as skills, education, the length of time people have served on boards and the extent to which board members hold multiple directorships.

Another group of scholars (Adams et al, 2015) uses a similar structural diversity category but, in place of demographic and cognitive diversity, the other two groups are **task-related diversity** and **non-task-related diversity**. These are broadly cognitive and demographic diversity by another name: task-related diversity covers aspects such as educational and employment background, while non-task-related diversity covers characteristics such as sex, age and race. **Occupational diversity** and **social diversity** are further ways of understanding different ways in which board members may differ, which the former covering aspects such as education and work experience, and the latter demographic aspects – again, such as sex, age and race (Anderson et al, 2011).

IMPLICATIONS

The differences between these ways of breaking down diversity are, in some respects, semantic. Demographic diversity, whether it is termed this way or as social or non-task related diversity, seems to be a common way of grouping a sub-set of diversity

characteristics. It tends to map onto what we would understand as the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The protected characteristics were set out to ensure protection from unlawful discrimination, rather than as the basis upon which diversity should be characterised, but – as the interviews conducted for this research show elsewhere in the report – they have sometimes become wrapped into people’s understanding of what diversity means.



Structural diversity relates to how the board is organised. This is less relevant to Diversity Delivers than the other two forms of diversity outlined here, although the Ethical Standards Commissioner is not just concerned with individual appointments, but also how the combination of appointments and effective succession planning can improve board governance.

Cognitive diversity covers education, occupational background and ways of thinking. In the summaries outlined above, it includes tenure and multiple directorships, which seem quite different to skills and education. In the analysis that follows, these aspects will therefore be separated into board experience. Board tenure, according to Behlau, Wobst and Lueg, acts as a proxy for cognitive diversity as a whole, as a long tenure means that people gain a deeper understanding of the necessary processes and develop more of a commitment to the organisation. What this perspective omits, however, are the downsides of long tenure, which include loss of fresh perspectives and, through stronger interpersonal relationships with executive directors, less ability to challenge effectively.

There is an overlap between demographic diversity and diversity of experience. Women, for example, will generally have had different experiences to men. Diversity of characteristics, however, is potentially a blunt tool for measuring diversity of experience. Board members who represent a mix of sexes, religions and ethnicities, but who all went to the same type of school and who vote in a similar way, are unlikely to benefit from the deep diversity of

thought that comes from different life experiences.

It is worth noting that disability is rarely mentioned in the literature reviewed here when it comes to definitions of diversity. This mirrors the point made by some interviewees, which is that disability is often overlooked in place of more broadly visible forms of diversity. Visible and invisible diversity, in fact, are other potential ways of understanding diversity. Sex, age and race are generally visible. Socioeconomic status, employment history, education and ways of thinking can generally not be determined by looking at somebody. Disability is sometimes visible. Often, it is not.

A final point is that the meaning of diversity cannot be entirely determined by what works in terms of organisational performance. Some public body boards and appointing Ministers may want to prioritise community representation, for example, whether or not it matters to outcomes. Others may want particular forms of diversity because they believe it is important for them to do so.



What Does Diversity Achieve and In What Forms?

OVERVIEW

Despite efforts to increase diversity in boards, evidence of impact on performance is mixed. One study based on 30,000 interviews in the United States found that board diversity can have negative effects that include worse communication and less co-operation (Putnam,

2007, cited in Anderson et al, 2011). Another finds that organisational performance increases with more diverse boards, but that this is only true for complex organisations (Anderson et al, 2011).

Other research is more conclusive. A recent meta-analysis, which is a type of high-quality review that pools data from different studies, found a positive link between organisational innovation and certain aspects of board diversity. It also found that having a higher proportion of independent directors is linked to innovation (Sierra-Morán et al, 2024).

‘Board diversity make[s] up a phenomenon which is too complex to be fully understood from a single perspective and which requires deeper exploration including the consideration of cognitive and behavioural factors and the analysis of board dynamics.’ (Fernández-Temprano and Tejerion-Gaite, 2020)

It seems possible that success or otherwise of board diversity is highly context-specific.

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

The impact of demographic diversity tends to have been researched to a greater extent than other forms of diversity, probably because it is relatively easy to measure. Sex tends to receive the greatest attention, followed by age and then ethnicity (Behlau, Wobst and Leug, 2024).

Evidence that demographic diversity has a positive effect on organisational performance is limited, with much of the research either showing no impact or conflicting results. This suggests that one of the following is likely to be true: (a) diversity of board characteristics has no effect on performance; (b) researchers have not been assessing these links in the right way; or (c) effects are very much dependent on context (for example, the extent to which board members with under-represented characteristics are successfully integrated into the existing culture of the board).

Adams et al (2015) have reviewed literature suggesting that a social categorisation process may occur in boards that have groups of people who share observable characteristics. For example, women might start to form bonds with other women, or young board members might form bonds with others who share their youth, at the expense of relationships that cut across these groups. This, according to Adams et al, can increase conflict and make the board perform worse. This phenomenon may link to point (c) raised in the previous paragraph on context – diverse boards are likely to be more effective when they can ensure that members work together as a single group, learning from and integrating the best of each other’s experiences and insights rather than splintering into sub-groups of shared characteristics (which may risk an increased focus on narrow agendas or perspectives).

The evidence reviewed on different demographic characteristics and their links with outcomes are outlined as follows.

SEX

While some research shows no evidence that having more equal representation of men and women makes a difference to board outcomes (see, for example, Fernández-Temprano and Tejerion-Gaite, 2020), other research indicates a positive effect. A recent meta-analysis, for example, found that having women on boards is linked to greater boardroom diversity and organisational innovation (Sierra-Morán et al, 2024). An earlier meta-analysis found 'higher accounting returns but not necessarily stronger market performance' (Post and Byron, 2015).

One study has found a link between having more equal representation of women on boards, and having networking and mentoring opportunities, as well as more board development practices (Chalise et al, 2021). The presence of women may also contribute to less conflict in boards (Nielsen and Huse, 2014). Female directors are more likely than male ones to attend board meetings, and male directors are more likely to attend board meetings once there is a higher proportion of women on the board (Adams and Ferreira, 2009, cited in Johnson, Schnatterly and Hill, 2013). It may be that it is the level of integration that is important in determining whether there are positive links between women on boards and performance: one study found 10% higher stock returns in companies that had boards with 'well-integrated female directors' (Peterson and Gardner, 2022).

A number of studies refer to a 2014 paper that found a threshold level at which having female board directors makes a positive difference: boards that have at least three female directors tend to perform better (see, for example, Hakovera et al, 2020). The original study, however, analysed data from publicly listed Chinese firms (Liu, Wei and Xie, 2014), and it is not clear how applicable this finding would be to a different cultural context.

ETHNIC/RACIAL DIVERSITY

Findings from the published research are, again, mixed in this area. Some research (such as Viaravan and Zhang, 2020) finds no link between board racial diversity and organisational performance. Other research finds a link between what researchers have termed 'ancestral and genetic diversity' and performance outcomes (Sieweke et al, 2024).

Less research has been done on the impact of racial and/or ethnic diversity on boards than on the impact of women on boards or of age diversity, possibly because board ethnic diversity is so limited (Johnson, Schnatterly and Hill, 2013).

AGE

Evidence on the benefits or otherwise of age diversity is mixed. This could be due, in part, to the way the data are analysed. Studies sometimes treat age as an average figure, which may entirely miss how diverse a board is – a board with an average age of 56, for example, may be made up entirely of people in their mid-50s, or of people spanning a much more diverse age range. Some research finds that age diversity is linked positively to organisational performance; other studies find negative effects or none (Gardiner, 2024). One of the aspects of age diversity that may impede performance is that it can be harder to find consensus when boards consist of a wide span of ages (Knight et al, 1999, cited in Fernández-Temprano and Tejerion-Gaite, 2020).

Benefits to boards of older board members include greater knowledge, experience and connections, while the benefits of younger members can include new ideas (Gardiner, 2024). Older members tend to be more risk averse (Johnson, Schnatterly and Hill, 2013), which can be good and bad – it may impede innovation, for example, but companies with older board members may be less likely to experience bankruptcy (Platt and Platt, 2012, cited in Fernández-Temprano and Tejerion-Gaite, 2020).

OTHER ASPECTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

The papers reviewed for this snapshot summary had remarkably little to say beyond sex, age and ethnicity/ race. It would be interesting to see similar large-scale analyses on other, less visible areas of diversity such as socioeconomic status.

COGNITIVE DIVERSITY

Education: a cursory overview of the literature suggests that researchers look more at diversity of different types of degrees, and types of knowledge and skills developed over their careers, than they do at level of education or whether boards contain people who have taken vocational, rather than academic, routes. According to one set of researchers, 'Literature about the influence of educational diversity on firm performance is almost nonexistent' (Fernández-Temprano and Tejerion-Gaite, 2020), although a more recent systemic review of studies has concluded that most of them show a positive link between educational diversity and performance (Odero and Egessa, 2023).

Being highly educated may make a positive difference to outcomes through innovation (Hakovirta et al, 2020) – this suggests an aspect of homogeneity rather than diversity. While educational diversity can support better decision-making in boards, and more ability to solve problems (Miller and Triana, 2009, and Milliken and Martins, 1996, cited in Odero and

Egessa, 2023), it has also been linked to greater conflict in boards (Fernández-Temprano and Tejerion-Gaite, 2020).

‘There is no category of experience that has unequivocal benefits and even diversity of experiences has mixed effects... [But] it is clear that human capital affects the board’s activities since directors’ experiences and proficiencies affect their cognitions and decisions.’ (Johnson, Schnatterly and Hill, 2013)

Diversity of thought: this is what many stakeholders want when they highlight a need for greater diversity, but it is almost impossible to measure. As a result, there is limited research. As with other areas, it is likely that diversity of thought depends on context. Some research suggests that diversity of opinion in boards can harm performance (Talavera, Yin and Zhang, 2016), implying that boards need careful management to ensure diverse perspectives can best be harnessed to avoid the dangers of groupthink. Other research shows that different ways of thinking make more of a difference to organisational innovation than demographic diversity (Makkonen, 2022).

BOARD EXPERIENCE

Years on board: while a longer tenure on boards is linked to greater knowledge and skills, it is also linked to less independence, more routine decision-making and entrenched beliefs about sticking to existing processes (Fernández-Temprano and Tejerion-Gaite, 2020).

Multiple appointments: there is, as with so many other areas of this review, mixed evidence when it comes to links between directors sitting on multiple boards and organisational outcomes. These directors can cross-pollinate knowledge and ideas, linking to better organisational performance; they can also be less effective at fulfilling their responsibilities if they are spread too thinly between different boards (Fayad et al, 2025). The positive effects of multiple appointments seem most likely when boards are open to learning from other organisations, and these positive effects probably disappear when there are too many multiple directorships (Pye, Kaczmarek and Satomi, 2015).

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT?

While the evidence is clearly mixed and consideration of context is vital, it appears that cognitive diversity is more likely to affect organisational performance positively than demographic diversity. While it is possible that more successful organisations recruit more diverse boards, there is reasonably strong evidence that the causality runs the other way round (Anderson et al, 2011) – diverse boards, in certain contexts and with the right structures in place, can achieve better organisational performance through cognitive diversity and, to a lesser extent, demographic diversity.

It appears that successful, diverse boards will need to have processes in place to manage conflict and opposing perspectives in a way that achieves consensus, and to avoid sub-groups forming.

WHAT WORKS

This section outlines some brief ideas about how to attract diverse applicants and make diverse boards work. Some of what works in the literature is likely to be beyond the scope of this project and the ESC. For example, some of the barriers to recruiting women to boards are structural and systemic, relating to aspects such as culture and the availability of childcare (Adams et al, 2015).



Attracting and recruiting diverse applicants: evidence from corporate recruitment shows that stating in advertisements that organisations value diversity can increase the interest of under-represented candidates, make them more likely to apply, and (presumably as a result of having a wider candidate pool) increase their chance of selection (Flory et al, 2021). Candidates may need to be engaged at an early stage and, perhaps, given a mentor (Peterson and Gardner, 2022).

Tokenism should be avoided in appointment decisions (Makkonen, 2022), as should quotas – as well as generally being unlawful (see the Equality Act, 2010), mandated quotas on boards have been linked with worse performance (Adams et al, 2015).

‘Selections should be based on the interplay of the experience, expertise and background demographic characteristics of the potential candidates. Otherwise, the minority members might face a “token” status.’ (Makkonen, 2022)

Retaining diverse applicants and making diversity work: when supporting newly appointed board members who come from under-represented backgrounds, it is worth considering

the barriers they may face to inclusion. These include a recognition that integration will take some time, that people who do not have experience in previous high-status roles are likely to be perceived differently by other board members than those who do have this experience, and that it is easier for new directors to build trust and form bonds when they come from similar class backgrounds (Peterson and Gardner, 2022). This implies that people from working-class backgrounds will need support to integrate effectively, and that existing board members may benefit from cultural shifts that open their perspectives.

Diversity works best when the input of all board directors is 'heard, valued, and truly incorporated,' according to the Peterson and Gardner report. Resulting implications are that chairs need to be able to listen well; qualitative measures of inclusion need to be taken and acted upon; sub-committees are set up in a way that allows new directors to gain experience and understand board culture in a way that will help them on the main board; and that a committee is tasked with creating an inclusive board culture. Collaborative decision-making processes tend to be found in boards that are good at integrating directors from under-represented groups (Peterson and Gardner, 2022).

Demographic 'faultlines' – the phenomenon discussed earlier whereby boards can splinter into sub-groups of people who share a particular characteristic – can be avoided by focusing on what members of the board share. Finding areas of similarity can mean that those who are perceived as different to existing board members become redefined as part of the in-group (Adams et al, 2015). Perceiving in-groups and out-groups, and highlighting differences with other people, has the potential to cause bias and lead to poorer decision-making (Ben-Ner et al, 2009), further implying that commonalities should be emphasised in place of difference. Training given to board members should be reviewed carefully, as some forms of EDI training can lead people to perceive racism where it does not exist (Jagdeep et al, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

1. Definitions of board diversity broadly align around structural, demographic and cognitive dimensions.
2. Visible traits dominate discussions of and research about diversity, often at the expense of less observable characteristics such as socioeconomic background. Demographic diversity has been most studied, with a focus on sex, ethnicity and age. Superficial measurement of given characteristics through, for example, the measurement of average board age, may miss important nuances.
3. There are limitations to using surface-level traits as proxies for deeper diversity of thought and experience. Cognitive diversity – including diversity of thought, educational background and board experience – may have more impact on board performance than demographic diversity.
4. The impact of board diversity on performance is mixed and context dependent. Benefits are most likely in complex organisations and when efforts have been made to ensure members have been integrated into board culture. Poor integration can lead to conflict, as well as the formation of sub-groups around visible characteristics.
5. Recruitment panels should ensure that they proactively signal a commitment to diversity in recruitment materials, which can pique the interest of under-represented

candidates and increase their chances of selection. They should, where possible, engage under-represented candidates with the appropriate skills and experience at an early stage. Selection decisions must be based on merit, not tokenism.

6. Public body boards should ensure that the appropriate culture and structures are in place to retain any board members with different backgrounds to the majority, and to maximise the impact of diversity on board performance. This means emphasising shared goals and commonalities; recognising barriers to inclusion and working collaboratively to overcome them; putting in place appropriate structures for new members, such as membership of sub-committees to help them gain experience and understand board culture; and selecting evidence-based training programmes for board members.

Section summary

BREAKING DOWN DIVERSITY

This section clearly defines key diversity concepts used throughout this report, distinguishing demographic diversity (including protected characteristics) from cognitive diversity (diversity of thought, experience, and perspective).

IMPLICATIONS

Research indicates potential benefits of board diversity that include enhanced governance, improved decision-making, and broader stakeholder representation. Some areas require further investigation: the specific conditions under which diversity delivers maximum benefits, precisely which forms of diversity have the strongest correlation with effective governance outcomes, and potential cause-and-effect mechanisms.



Section 4: Progress Against Diversity Delivers

Introduction

Since the introduction of the ESC's first diversity strategy, Diversity Delivers in 2008, significant efforts have been made to increase the diversity of those applying for and being appointed to public appointments in Scotland. Central to these efforts have been periodic revisions of the ESC's **Code of Practice**, alongside targeted initiatives and thematic research reviews intended to embed diversity considerations into recruitment practices. This section summarises key milestones, developments, and practical outcomes of these activities, offering a foundation for discussion and future strategy.

MILESTONES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN DIVERSITY

2006-2008: Establishing a Foundation

The initial Diversity Delivers strategy was launched in 2008. It was underpinned by the 2006 Code of Practice, which largely mirrored UK-wide standards at the time. This early Code sought transparency and fairness, but it had limited specific provisions regarding diversity beyond compliance-based expectations.

2011-2013: Moving from Compliance to Guidance

The 2011 Code marked a shift towards more proactive diversity practices. It introduced compliance reporting by public appointment assessors, detailed in a handbook offering best-practice recruitment and selection techniques. This Code explicitly referenced the Diversity Strategy and encouraged panels to adopt more inclusive advertising and assessment methods.

The subsequent 2013 Code further evolved the framework, replacing compliance-based

oversight with supportive guidance. Public appointment assessors became advisers, explicitly guiding panels towards diversity-enhancing practices, thus establishing a more advisory approach.

KEY INITIATIVES (2014-2021): TARGETING DIVERSITY

Several strategic projects and thematic reviews reinforced diversity initiatives:

50:50 by 2020 Initiative (2014-2016):

This Scottish Government project aimed to achieve parity between men and women on public- and private-sector boards. Although focused on sex, it heightened overall awareness and accountability around board diversity, achieving notable progress during its active period. Interview feedback suggested that it would have been positive to add recognition that boards may be more effective when they are not dominated by either sex.

Competency Framework (2015):

Developed in collaboration with the Commissioner, this framework encouraged Ministers to prioritise essential skills rather than extensive previous board experience, opening roles to a wider and more diverse applicant pool.

Lord Holmes Review (2018):

This review brought attention to barriers experienced by disabled applicants, significantly raising awareness among Ministers and panels about the need for inclusive recruitment practices.

Inclusion Scotland Project (2020-2021):

This initiative provided disabled applicants with direct experience of board roles, offering recommendations to reduce barriers and enhance access to appointments for disabled people.

Thematic reviews undertaken between 2015 and 2021 provided additional important insights into recruitment practices such as succession planning, use of data to enhance attraction strategies, and more accurate representation of time commitments required by board roles. These reviews consistently recommended improvements to support more diverse and inclusive public appointments.

2022: A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT – OUTCOME-FOCUSED CODE OF PRACTICE

The introduction of the 2022 Code marked a significant evolution in public appointments. Developed through extensive stakeholder consultation, this new Code explicitly prioritises outcomes rather than detailed compliance-based rules, empowering Ministers and appointment panels to innovate and embed diversity into recruitment processes. Key features of this Code include:

Greater Ministerial Accountability:

Ministers must clearly define what outcomes they seek from each recruitment round. Panel chairs must report explicitly on whether these diversity outcomes were met and provide analysis if not.

Flexible Recruitment Criteria:

Ministers are no longer restricted to traditional skills, knowledge, and experience criteria. They can now specify additional aspects such as geographic location, values, or specific 'lived experiences', broadening the pool of suitable candidates.

Positive Action Initiatives:

These involve explicit encouragement of targeted outreach strategies to attract underrepresented groups based on clear evidence of demographic underrepresentation.

Transparency and Candidate-Focused Processes:

These imply increased emphasis on ensuring recruitment processes are transparent, accessible, and clearly communicated to applicants.

Practical Outcomes and Ongoing Challenges

Evidence from the qualitative research conducted for this report indicates that, while these changes have provided the foundation for improved practice, implementation remains uneven.

Interviewees welcomed the flexibility and outcome-based focus of the 2022 Code, acknowledging it offers genuine potential for more diverse appointments. However, there remains significant variability in how effectively this flexibility is understood or utilised by appointment panels.

Positive action strategies, while permitted and encouraged, are reportedly not routinely or confidently implemented. Interviewees identified practical uncertainty about how to undertake targeted recruitment effectively and lawfully, resulting in limited real-world adoption.

Although clear accountability measures have been introduced, interviewees noted that panels and Ministers often lack clarity on effectively measuring outcomes, particularly regarding diversity of thought or non-traditional candidate experiences.

There are missing elements that may benefit from greater attention, including board apprenticeships and the creation of a talent pool during appointment rounds that can be drawn on in future.

POINTS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Building on the above findings, consultation discussions might consider:

Implementation and Guidance:

What additional support or resources might help appointment panels and Ministers

confidently use the flexibility introduced in the 2022 Code?

Positive Action Attraction Strategies and Inclusive Appointment

Processes:

How can ESC and the Scottish Government practically encourage and support the routine adoption of positive action initiatives to attract a broader range of talent and ensure that appointments are made on merit?

Measurement and Accountability:

What clearer frameworks or tools could be developed to measure and report diversity outcomes consistently and effectively?

How can improvements in the public appointments system address and be seen to address inequality more widely?





Section 5: The Public Appointments Process – Approaches and Practices

Introduction

Effective recruitment and selection processes are central to achieving capable boards that value and welcome individuals with different approaches to solving important challenges. This section highlights key stages in the public appointments process, summarising what the ESC's **Code of Practice** currently sets out as good practice, complemented by insights from contemporary research into effective diversity recruitment. Where evidence from our qualitative research indicates gaps between intended and actual practices, these are highlighted. They provide points for further discussion to inform the development of the future diversity strategy.

1. Succession Planning

CODE OF PRACTICE

The ESC Code of Practice (2022) clearly states that succession planning should be proactive, ensuring continuity and maintaining a diverse range of skills, experiences, and perspectives. Ministers, supported by panels, are expected to define clear, realistic objectives for succession planning, enabling appointments to anticipate future governance needs.

BEST PRACTICE INSIGHTS

Contemporary recruitment research highlights succession planning as vital for maintaining diverse boards. Effective practice includes proactively identifying current and future skills gaps by scenario planning for new and imagined opportunities and challenges that might face the board and wider organisation; regularly auditing current board composition against strategic priorities; and actively engaging with diverse networks to identify potential candidates early, rather than reacting to vacancies as they occur.⁶

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Our research identified inconsistencies in how succession planning is implemented across public body boards. Interviewees highlighted a reactive approach to vacancies. There has been limited proactive consideration of future diversity and skill needs, for example by scenario planning for future needs about AI or sustainability. Boards and appointing Ministers may sometimes lack clear guidance on succession planning, resulting in missed opportunities to attract a broader, talented candidate pool. Key considerations for succession planning, as well as ensuring the balance of skills, knowledge and experience works for public body boards in the short-term, are outlined below:

- **Gaps in characteristics and experience:** socioeconomic diversity is an important gap across many boards. Other areas of perceived underrepresentation include disability, racial diversity and private-sector experience. One area of tension is workplace experience – while there is an eagerness to move away from retirees, board members need to have sufficient seniority in a workplace context to be able to perform effectively.

‘The issue with not having a diverse board is that you don’t know if your services are meeting the needs of the community.’

- **Skills needs:** specific gaps mentioned by interviewees include technical, management, strategic planning and digital skills, including the ability to work with AI. Board members need the ability to manage upwards. Not every board member needs a full skill set: succession planning should ensure that members’ skills are balanced out across the board. Being able to think critically is vital for all members, though, as is an ability to approach issues from different perspectives.

‘It’s... bringing diversity across members’ skills sets.’

- **Knowledge needs:** the interests, needs and rights of all groups and individuals cannot

⁶ Better Hiring Institute. (2025). *It’s Time to Rethink Recruitment to Make it Faster and Fairer*, CIPD. (2024). *Resourcing and Talent Planning Report*

be represented by a single board, so boards require members with knowledge of other people's interests, needs and rights to ensure organisational remits are being met effectively. At least some board members should be familiar with the services being provided so that they can support organisations to set the right direction, effectively engages with the communities they serve, and ensure that the right measures of progress are in place. Current perceived knowledge gaps in boards include strategy, effective governance, politics and transformational change.

'I have... supported numerous people to fill out public appointments applications who have [experience of services relevant to the board's operations]... and none of them have made it to interview, despite all the help we've given them.'

- **Other priorities:** boards need members with enough available time to fulfil their roles effectively. Members also need to be willing to prepare thoroughly for meetings, and to say things – when necessary – that might be uncomfortable: an ability to provide effective challenge is critical. In the context of public sector reform, the Scottish Ministers have also identified the need for boards to be more innovative and collaborative, working across boundaries and silos to maximise their impact.

'There should be an ambition to not have boards populated by people who toe the line.'



2. Attraction Strategies (Advertising and Publicity)

CODE OF PRACTICE

The Code requires appointments to be widely publicised, using channels likely to attract a diverse range of suitable applicants. Positive action is explicitly encouraged, allowing targeted outreach to underrepresented groups where there is clear evidence of underrepresentation.

BEST PRACTICE INSIGHTS

Attraction strategies are most effective when using tailored advertising and targeted outreach via diverse channels, networks, and community groups. Clearly communicated role requirements, remuneration, time commitment, and values-based language in advertisements have been shown to enhance applicant diversity significantly.⁷

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Although the Code encourages targeted advertising, interview evidence suggests this approach is not routinely employed. Some participants noted a reliance on traditional, uniform methods that attract similar profiles of applicants, reflecting insufficient awareness or confidence in positive action initiatives. There were indications that advertisements often lacked clear or compelling communication of values, benefits, and practical details of board roles.

- **Barriers:** interviewees highlighted a range of barriers that limit the effectiveness of attraction strategies. Pay is one: levels are not high enough or, in comparison with private sector board roles, sufficiently competitive to attract a broad range of candidates, meaning that positions are often taken by retirees. Public body board roles also tend to lack pensions, compensation for travel costs, maternity leave, childcare cover and support with other caring responsibilities. Some individuals have unavoidable time constraints, especially when they have caring responsibilities and/or are in full-time employment. A belief that Ministers are biased towards certain candidates, or towards certain types of candidates, can put others off applying.

'It's a public service. It's an honour. For other people it's a huge sacrifice and relatively unrewarded. The only way around that is to increase budget and time allocations, but I can see that would be politically contentious... I don't see an easy answer.'

⁷ Better Hiring Institute. (2025). *It's Time to Rethink Recruitment to Make it Faster and Fairer*, CIPD. (2023). *Fair Selection: An Evidence Review*

Public body board roles are challenging and complex, they entail high levels of responsibility, and things can go wrong. These factors can put off some potential candidates from applying. The nature of the process itself can also undermine attraction strategies. The bureaucracy and length of the process can be off-putting to potential candidates. Concerns have also been raised that only people who know how to fill in forms correctly will apply successfully for public appointments, and that this undermines diversity. In many cases, people simply do not know about public appointments. In others, people do not recognise themselves in public body boards and so do not consider it as an option. There seems to be less active campaigning and targeting of candidates than there used to be, possibly due to limited resources.

'It is highly unattractive and bureaucratic. You have to fill in forms, understand the Civil Service code and tick boxes before you even apply.'

- **Candidate development:** one way to improve the pipeline of diverse candidates into the applicant pool is to provide early-stage development for talented individuals who may not possess the right capabilities or have the confidence to apply for public body board roles. While positive action is supported by the Code, interviewees implied panels need to seek out more talented people within communities who might otherwise be unaware of the roles available, believe they are suitable for the positions or have the knowledge needed to tick the required boxes in the first stage of an application.

'It's the outreach and dissemination – knowing there is something to apply for, and it will take people like you.'

- **Advertisement of roles:** roles are not currently being advertised in places that open them up to a more diverse range of candidates. The Holyrood press is likely to get the same types of people applying. Instead, panels can open up applications by considering where people who might be missing are to be found – colleges and universities, job recruitment fairs, local newspapers, religious groups, waiting rooms in hospitals or doctors' surgeries, and industry. This can be done by creating links with the organisations in question and then getting them to help disseminate information among their networks. The Scottish Government may be able to support this exercise by using links with community organisations held by its various directorates. Social media is still relatively untapped: X, LinkedIn and TikTok. Videos are an important part of social media advertising.

'We have to reach out to the maximum number of organisations that we think could touch a candidate and pique their interest. We sent information to more than 100 organisations, plus boards, LinkedIn, et cetera to advertise our information sessions.'

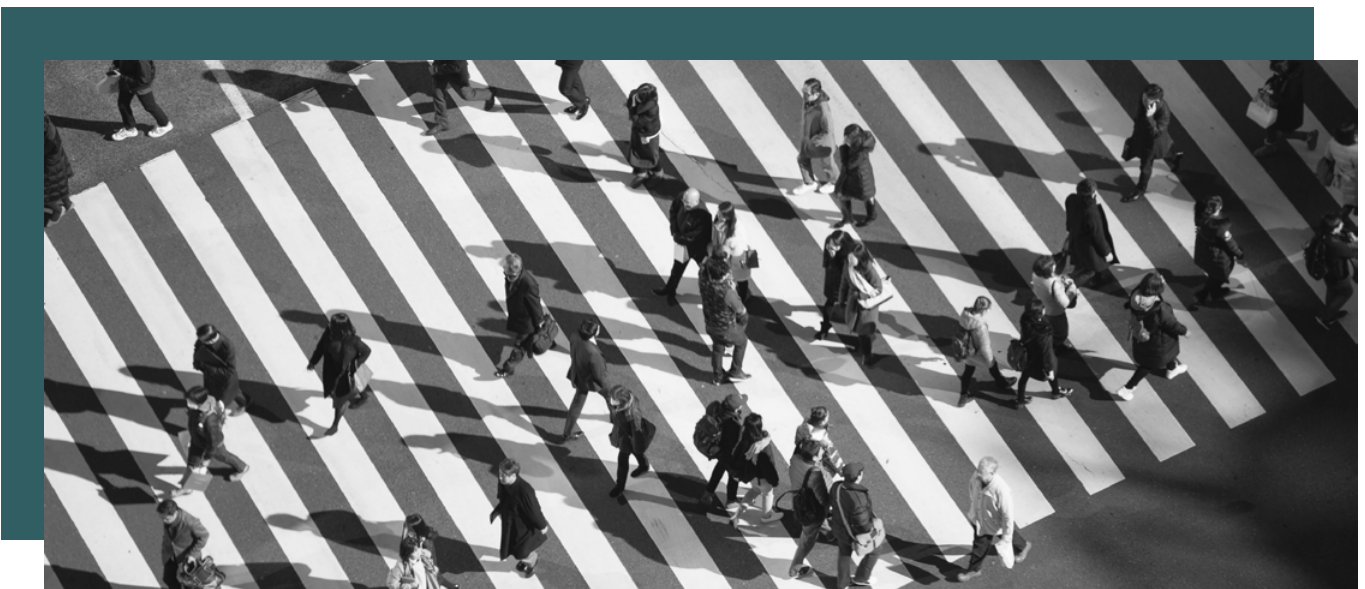
Role advertisements should make it clear what is expected from candidates, as well as what they can get from and contribute to a public body role. They should also be clear that diversity is sought.

'If you want to attract people, you have to visibly and vocally say you want a wide range of people to build the pipeline.'

There are a number of follow-on considerations for the future strategy in terms of whether public appointments can be made more attractive to potential candidates. Some individuals need more support at an earlier stage. The application process needs, if possible, to be simplified and sped up. Communication about potential roles needs improving. One interviewee suggested creating a brand around public appointments linked to public service that can be done alongside other professional commitments, as part of people's broader career paths. Once a brand had been developed, it could be advertised in a wide variety of places, including in spaces in which people access public services, with careful positioning – for example, asking people, 'Would you like to make a difference to NHS services in your area?'

'What could be done to make it a more attractive proposition? Some of that is about communication and branding: connecting with people's sense of public duty and giving back. A majority of people have a desire to give back in some way.'

There are also some questions. Can anything be done to improve the reputation of public body boards and to downgrade perceptions of risk? Can pay levels be improved and other financial supports, such as pensions, travel costs and childcare, be offered to candidates that might need them? Can perceptions of political bias be overcome? Can boards' working patterns be made more flexible?



3. Application and Shortlisting

CODE OF PRACTICE

Applications and shortlisting processes should be transparent, objective, and clearly aligned with the competencies, skills, and experience identified by Ministers. Shortlisting panels are responsible for ensuring selection criteria are directly relevant to the role, not overly restrictive, and allow for recognition of insights gained through life experience as well as professional experience.

BEST PRACTICE INSIGHTS

Research emphasises anonymised, skills-based approaches to shortlisting to reduce unconscious bias and enhance diversity.⁸ The findings of Schmidt & Hunter in their meta-analysis published in 1998 strongly supports shifting from experience-based shortlisting towards competency and values-based approaches. Anonymous recruitment processes, i.e. removing names and other identifiable characteristics, have also proven effective in improving diversity at shortlisting stages. Our own research and experience show that anonymised, future-focussed skills-based assessment – in other words, questions that ask how people would respond to a situation rather than reflecting on how they have done something in the past – is a better predictor of success in role. Further findings by Schmidt and Hunter (1998)⁹ suggested that anonymisation (i.e. redacting personal details) is not enough to combat bias and identify non-traditional talent.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Our findings from the research underpinning this project suggest variability in shortlisting practices, with some panels effectively applying the Code's principles and others using overly restrictive criteria focused on previous board experience or formal qualifications. In many cases, it appeared that practice was constrained by what had been done before with either little appetite for, or awareness of, the scope of the options available to panels under the Code: for example, the Code does not require a shortlisting process to take place. On occasions upon which small numbers of applicants are anticipated, it is open to the panel to request a note of interest and then interview everyone who applies. Participants described limited use of anonymised shortlisting and concerns about implicit biases, potentially limiting the diversity of shortlisted candidates.

- **Candidate packs, planning and language:** the process needs to be designed carefully to ensure a wide range of individuals are encouraged to apply. This means simplifying what is requested of candidates, wherever possible, and ensuring that both candidate packs and diversity statements are tailored according to what is needed for the role and

⁸ Schmidt & Hunter (1998) *The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings*

⁹ Schmidt & Hunter (1998), *The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings*.

by the board in question. Standardisation of the diversity statement may have caused it to lose its power, as potential applicants are put off by seeing the same wording across roles. Inclusive language in role advertisements means going beyond the use of gender-neutral terms and removing meta-stereotypes to encourage applications. It also means using non-technical terms and ensuring that descriptions are not written using preconceptions of the people who are going to apply for a role.

'We need lay language. If we are going to be trying to attract a broader range of applicants, we need to give people a fair shot.'

- **Specifications:** the skills and experience requested of candidates need equally careful planning. There is an argument to be made for being highly specific in terms of what is required: specificity reduces the number of candidates and, as a result, saves people from applying who have no chance of being awarded the role, as well as the panel's time (potentially, as discussed elsewhere, making more time available to offer candidates constructive feedback). This needs to be balanced with a pragmatic assessment of what is essential: some current specifications, such as a track record of working at a strategic level, are not necessarily essential and can exclude people with non-standard professional backgrounds from the process automatically. Requiring a degree might similarly exclude candidates with lots of potential.

'You want to attract range of folk, but without attracting those who don't have the skills, and ending up by demoralising them.'

- **Templates:** more thought may be needed in template development, ensuring they capture the excitement and challenge offered by public body roles. Templates should be designed in a way that makes them easy to tailor for the role in question. Asking for the same things in the same way each time is unlikely to achieve diversity.
- **Shortlisting:** there were different views among interviewees about the value of anonymised applications in the public appointments process. In one perspective, these are a useful, under-used tool given research that shows ongoing presence of bias, and it is important to share with panels the evidence that supports anonymised applications. In another, they may not make a significant difference to outcomes given people's ability to use available information to fill in supposed gaps, especially when the method of anonymisation is simply redaction of personal details rather than built-in anonymisation. Unlawful discrimination and other forms of bias sometimes appear to be present in the public appointments process. Protected characteristics data can also be used as a tick-box exercise. There are risks attached to the use of artificial intelligence in shortlisting decisions. Bias may be built into it and, should AI be proposed in decision making, there needs to be careful consideration of ethics.

‘There is political interference. There is unspoken interference. There is an unspoken view that someone is not the kind of person we would want on our board. It’s insidious and hard to explain.’

Interviewee feedback suggested that it would be useful to have flexibility in the shortlisting process. While flexibility has been more possible recently, it has not always been available in the past, with high-quality candidates vetoed when forms had been completed imperfectly. Some felt that it would be useful for panels to have the ability to shortlist wild-card candidates who do not meet all the criteria, but who are interesting in other ways. There is also a need to broaden thinking beyond skills, experience and diversity in the shortlisting process. One such area is people’s long-term interest in the role. In reality, panels can invite as many people as they wish to interview, as long as the decision-making process is demonstrably fair to all applicants.

‘It would be useful to have an independent ability of the board to call forward candidates who don’t necessarily meet all the exact scores.’



4. Assessment Methods (Including Interviews)

CODE OF PRACTICE

Assessment methods must objectively evaluate candidates against clearly defined criteria. The Code explicitly allows flexibility in methods, including the use of competency-based assessments, psychometric tests, and consideration of personal experiences, encouraging innovation in recruitment practices.

BEST PRACTICE INSIGHTS

Effective assessment approaches include structured, competency-based interviews, combined with methods such as psychometric tests, task-based assessments, and consideration of personal experience. Research advocates clearly defined, evidence-based scoring frameworks to enhance objectivity, minimise bias, and reliably predict candidate performance (CIPD, 2023; Better Hiring Institute, 2025). As previously highlighted, anonymised and randomised assessment that goes beyond redaction of details significantly reduces panel bias from influencing shortlisting decisions.¹⁰

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Interviewees indicated that panel implementation of competency-based assessment is inconsistent. Some felt that assessment processes overly favoured traditional experiences, disadvantaging those from non-traditional career backgrounds and those not familiar with public-sector employment practice.

- **Panel design and culture:** panels need to be structured in a way that enables an effective public appointments process. This means ensuring that the panel itself is diverse, and not just in characteristics, but in ways of thinking; having more of a pool of trained, independent panel members; upskilling existing panel members, where necessary; and building a culture that is supportive of challenge. There is also a need to avoid the extremes of a culture of minimal compliance, on the one hand, and going beyond the law (and inadvertently acting unlawfully) on the other. Sometimes panels are told that their actions are unlawful by PAAs, but they continue regardless and the Commissioner then has to intervene.

‘The challenge – “That person has the skills set, but don’t they have the same skills set as the person you appointed last month?” It’s not just about due process, but about bringing an extra dimension to that process.’

¹⁰ Schmidt & Hunter (1998), *The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings*. | Be Applied. (2024). *Hiring for Diversity in 2024*.

- **Interview delivery:** interviews work best when candidates' abilities are tested in the round. Good practices in question design, according to interviewees, include testing people's ability to understand strategy and their ability to challenge groupthink, perhaps by asking them to highlight instances in which they sought to persuade people to their way of thinking when the general consensus was different. Panel members should avoid hostility, as well as being neutral to the point that candidates perceive a lack of humanity.

'You don't get the best out of people with aggressive questioning and a lack of being prepared to make reasonable adjustments.'

- **Feedback:** giving more feedback to unsuccessful candidates is vital. It ensures talented people who were not quite right for one position are not put off from applying for other appointments in future. Feedback also gives them an opportunity to improve their future applications. Surveys of applicants carried out by the Ethical Standards Commissioner have consistently shown the quality of feedback received by applicants to be a significant area of concern.

'It is hard to get people to apply, then they get no feedback... It takes time, but there is a good ROI. You have people halfway there, and then you lose them at the first hurdle.'



5. Other Qualitative Findings

Other insights offered by interviewees relevant to the development of the new strategy include the following:

1. Public body boards exist to provide governance, strategy, effective decision-making, scrutiny and challenge for public benefit. Fulfilling their remit in this way requires separation of functions and relationships, and board members trained to understand – more than many do currently – that their role is more about governance and challenge than it is about friendship.

‘The culture of challenge is people who are challenging. That is a character type. We are recruiting people who are unchallenging.’

2. The public appointments process is currently overly bureaucratic. Issues include the number of steps and meetings required; the length of time from first discussion to an appointment (which is up to a year); and the level of involvement required from everyone involved, including chairs (some of whom can use up all their allocated days on the appointments process) and candidates. Bureaucracy makes public appointments difficult for boards to manage, and it can put candidates off from applying or from seeing their applications through to completion.

‘There are too many steps. Everyone will argue that each step is necessary, but I am not convinced. What can be lost? How long does it take to pull together a job ad? It should take a week. They give themselves a month... Five or six people feel that they have a right to input, amend or adjust. How many fingers need to be on the creation of a document?’

3. There are other areas in which process improvements may be beneficial. These include ensuring greater preparedness in public body boards. Board members do not appear to be fully appraised of board strategy and operational circumstances ahead of new public appointments. Public bodies are sometimes felt to lack a strategic approach when it comes to diversity, and related activities tend to be piecemeal. Other ideas for improvements include considering the timing of appointments (to avoid several board members needing replacement at the same time); greater transparency to candidates about what the process involves; greater panel standardisation; paying greater attention to background policies and having named contacts to aid communication throughout the process; limiting the number of public boards on which people can sit and the maximum number of terms they can spend on an individual board; and ensuring that candidates have every opportunity to convey what they may be able to contribute to a role.

‘Someone totted up someone else’s allocation across boards and there were not enough days during the year.’

4. Political barriers are likely to need some attention in order to secure the success of any future strategy. Barriers mentioned by interviewees include ministerial delays in public appointment decisions; a lack of clarity and transparency in the links between boards and the Scottish Government, with a mix of overly and insufficiently close connections; the allocation and communication of resources; ministerial influence on candidate selection; and having civil servants on public body boards who may find it hard to challenge the government of the day.

‘I’m not sure you can get round the fact that Ministers have a [role to] play, but there could be more transparency in that process... There is a fine line of not interfering in the day-to-day running of an arms-length organisation.’

5. The public appointments system must be supported by board inclusion efforts. As highlighted in the literature review, diversity on boards works when an inclusive culture allows all board members to work together effectively towards a common purpose. Such a culture entails tailoring conversations, activities and support according to the needs of individuals. The chairs’ role in fostering this is vital. New board members require induction and ongoing support; more experienced board members also require development opportunities and may need to learn to work differently with a greater diversity of colleagues. Ideas to support board inclusion comprise ensuring that inclusive practices are part of board members’ ongoing appraisals; setting up forums that allow chairs and chief executives from different public bodies to connect; and adding vice chairs to board committees to support ongoing member development.

‘If there were more comprehensive and adequate induction programmes for new board members, boards would be more likely to take on [people with different backgrounds], as they would get more support and training.’

6. Greater attention to data and impact measurement is needed. Neither boards nor Scottish Government officials currently collect a lot of the information that would be needed to track changes in diversity profiles. There is no obvious formal mechanism to measure the success of individual schemes and other approaches in terms of their contribution to greater diversity on public boards. Lessons learned are often not captured and reflected into future decisions, and corporate memory gets eroded through the turnover of individuals. The reality of timeframes also needs to be recognised: it takes time to effect change, and to understand the impact of different campaigns and initiatives.



'A strategy could be to look at current or recent board appointments – how many are middle class, how many are university graduates – and to try to work out why that is and how you would expand beyond it. You'd keep asking yourself process points. How are you recruiting? Where are you recruiting?'

It would be particularly useful to develop a metric that tracks challenge and dissent within boards. Diversity of thought could be measured through the absence of legal challenges or Section 22 reports; or through the balance between positive and negative press coverage across public bodies.

'If there were people who weren't inputting, or if everyone agreed on everything, that would be a red flag, and if you weren't getting things from different stakeholder perspectives.'

According to interviewees, a new vision for Scotland's public appointments system should be underpinned by merit, reflected in the message that we need the best people on boards. The strategy will need to be clear about the relationship between merit and diversity. It should also, ideally, enable freedom and encourage creativity and curiosity, moving away from ideas of compliance towards a focus on impact. It should consider what success looks like. While a focus on diversity of thought and experience is critical, the new strategy should recognise the barriers faced by under-represented groups and consider how these can be overcome.

The vision should recognise systemic complexity. Actions suggested by the new strategy, on the other hand, must be accessible and deliverable, and linked to clear measures. The current system precludes some talented individuals from getting appointed due to a lack of built-in flexibility, and it would be good to foster alternative entry routes. The strategy must be based on a solid understanding of legal underpinnings, including the Equality

Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty, so that Ministers and boards can make lawful decisions. Reference to standards in public life would be helpful. The new strategy might be supported by highlighting stories that show how taking an inclusive approach can support organisational success. These need to be combined with the communication of a positive vision of what it means to undertake public service in the form of public appointments.

Other relevant points brought up within interviews are as follows:

- Diversity requires buy-in at all levels, from Ministers through to executive teams, for outcomes to be effective.
- Evidence of good outcomes is likely to support public investment in the public appointments process.
- The public appointments system could make better use of existing networks, including business links and organisations such as Women On Boards and Changing the Chemistry.
- Service-user panels or subject-matter experts could help to fill board-level gaps where board members lack knowledge and/or experience of service-user needs.
- There is limited awareness of the original strategy in public appointment circles. Concerted efforts will need to be made to communicate the new one.
- Not everybody understands the Equality Act 2010 when it comes to appointments to public body boards; legal training is needed for panel members and board chairs.
- There is a need for pragmatism in diversity considerations – recognising, for example, that public boards in urban areas are better able to achieve certain types of diversity than their rural counterparts.
- Distrust of institutions and politicians is prevalent. Any actions taken linked to the public appointments system need to support the rebuilding of this trust.
- The Scottish Government will need to buy into the new diversity strategy. This will require engaging with Members of the Scottish Parliament; officials are likely to fall behind the general direction of political will. It also means considering whether and how to link to equality and diversity leads in the Scottish Government to build consistency.

6. Key Points for Consultation

Drawing from the above observations, we propose the following discussion points for consultation:

SUCCESSION PLANNING

How can public bodies move from reactive to proactive succession planning practices? How can ESC and Ministers support boards to embed diversity¹¹ considerations into long-term succession planning?

¹¹ Diversity of thought and experience

ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

What practical barriers currently prevent broader use of targeted advertising and positive action initiatives? How might these be overcome through clearer guidance, evaluation of current practice, training, or resource redirection?

APPLICATION AND SHORTLISTING

Should anonymised shortlisting and skills-based assessment methods become standard practice? What support would those involved require to implement these changes effectively? Could the Scottish Government change the online application system to accommodate these points?

ASSESSMENT METHODS

What scope exists for expanding the use of innovative assessment methods, such as structured task-based assessments or psychometric testing?¹² Could enhanced training for panel members facilitate wider adoption?

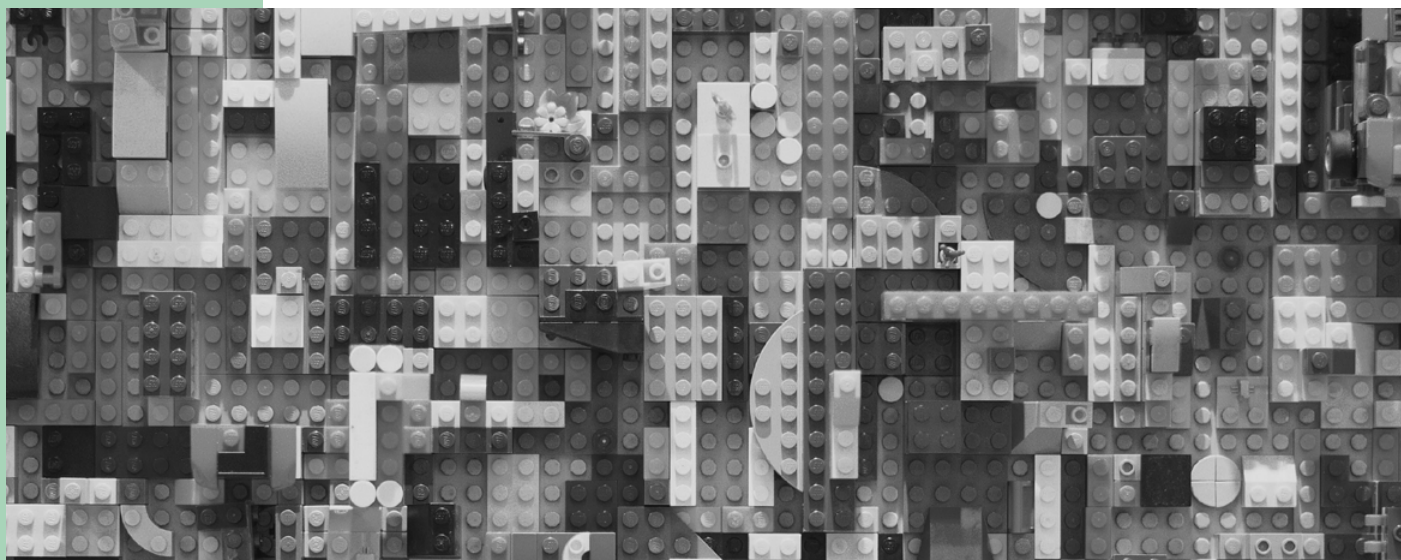
OTHER

What types of metrics would be useful for boards, ESC and the Scottish Government, how should these best be collected, and how should the impact of the new strategy be measured?

7. Implications for Strategy Development

In the next phase of the project – the validation phase – stakeholders can collaboratively identify solutions and provide suggestions to improve alignment with the Code of Practice, with the aim of enhancing diversity in public appointments.

¹² Ensuring the chosen tests do not disadvantage people sharing a particular protected characteristic.



Section 6: Interpretation of Data, Critical Trends and Implications

Introduction

Understanding demographic trends in applications and appointments to Scotland's public bodies allows assessment of the impact of the first Diversity Strategy for public appointments. Analysing these trends identifies progress, highlights persistent gaps, and enables identification of areas for future focus to improve governance outcomes.

Key Trends Identified

1. SLOW BUT STEADY PROGRESS

Analysis indicates a gradual increase in the diversity of appointments. The balance between male and female board members has improved most significantly, with most public bodies now approaching parity. A lack of intersectional analysis has nevertheless meant that there is less certainty about the diversity of the now over 50% of women who hold board roles. Incremental progress has been made towards improving ethnic diversity, although boards still do not fully reflect Scotland's changing demographics, and figures can be misleading if individuals hold multiple appointments.

2. PERSISTENT UNDERREPRESENTATION

Significant underrepresentation remains among disabled individuals and applicants from

lower socio-economic backgrounds. Further, limited or inconsistent data collection¹³ and analysis of sexual orientation, religion and sex data are barriers to effective change; certainty and meaningful analysis is needed to effect positive change.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL DISPARITIES

Urban areas display greater demographic diversity among board appointees than rural communities. This trend may indicate potential disparities in awareness, access, and attractiveness of public appointments outside Scotland's major cities; it may simply represent more diverse candidate pools in urban areas.

4. AGE AND EXPERIENCE BIAS

Appointments predominantly favour older candidates, most likely from traditional professional backgrounds. Younger candidates remain underrepresented. Further, insights from participants in our research suggest that people from non-traditional – specifically non-public sector backgrounds and lower socio-economic backgrounds – are unlikely to succeed through traditional approaches to public appointments.

Implications for Strategy Development

The identified trends imply specific areas for future focus:

- **Targeted outreach:**

Recruitment should make good use of targeted, evidence-based attraction strategies, specifically addressing underrepresentation among disabled people, younger individuals, and candidates from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, such targeted outreach must be accompanied by changed selection practices, in order to avoid eroding candidates' initial interest and enthusiasm.

- **Improved data collection:**

Strengthening data accuracy and consistency, particularly around religion and belief, sexual orientation, sex, trans identities, and socio-economic status, is essential if future decisions are to be made on the basis of these categories.

- **Geographical inclusivity:**

Enhanced geographically inclusive recruitment approaches are required, particularly targeting rural or remote areas to enhance insights from beyond the central belt and urban areas in decision-making spaces, and opening up more public appointments from people outside of Scotland.

¹³ Information about applicant's sex has historically been collected using the terminology of 'gender'. As highlighted on page 15, in footnote 3, the word 'gender' can be interpreted in at least three ways. Applicants may have answered on the basis of their chosen gender identity, not their sex; while the numbers involved are unlikely to have had a sizeable effect on overall percentages, there is no way to establish how applicants with a different gender identity to their sex have answered this question.

- **Valuing diverse experiences:**

Recruitment practices must place greater value on diverse forms of professional and personal experience, reducing dependence on traditional career trajectories and formal qualifications as primary indicators of suitability.

- **Clarity on what is being sought (merit)**

Those involved in appointment round planning should be clear about the skills required to add value and meet the needs of the board. In many instances, there is an opportunity to assess potential from transferrable skills rather than prior board or executive-level experience.



Section 7: Conclusions - A Prompt for Strategic Conversation

Summary of Report Purpose

This report and its conclusions serve as a starting point for strategic consultation on the future of diversity within Scotland's public appointments system. Boards that genuinely understand Scotland's diverse society benefit from enhanced decision-making, increased public trust, and better strategic insight. These attributes underpin the successful delivery of public sector reforms, ensuring improved public services and outcomes for all citizens.

Issues for Consideration

To inform Scotland's updated Diversity Strategy, we propose the following key questions for consultation:

1. Adapting to Scotland's Changing Demographics and Societal Context

- How should recruitment strategies adapt to reflect demographic changes in Scotland's population?
- How can public appointments proactively respond to societal shifts in attitudes towards inclusion, equality, and diversity?
- How will we ensure that our recommendations dovetail with broader Scottish Government work and national legal frameworks?

2. Effective Recruitment and Appointment Processes

- What support, guidance, or training do Ministers and appointment panels need to implement with confidence the flexible, outcome-focused recruitment approaches encouraged by the ESC's 2022 Code of Practice?
- Should positive action initiatives be more consistently and robustly implemented?
- How can appointing Ministers be encouraged to consider carefully the skills, knowledge and experience needed for each opportunity so that everyone involved in the process is confident that appointments are made on merit?

3. Measuring Success and Ensuring Accountability

- What clearer outcome-focused frameworks or measures could be developed to evaluate effectively the impact of diversity initiatives on governance quality?
- How should boards and/or the Scottish Government transparently report their progress on diversity and inclusion, and what accountability mechanisms could support continuous improvement?
- What measurements might assist in supporting achievement of the Scottish Ministers' ambitions for public sector reform?
- How can we ensure that other governments look to Scotland as the model for ways to improve board diversity effectively and transparently?

4. Addressing Persistent Diversity Gaps

- What specific targeted interventions could address ongoing underrepresentation, particularly among disabled individuals,¹⁴ younger people, and candidates from lower socio-economic backgrounds?
- How can we ensure a better understanding of the intersections of different characteristics of applicants and appointees and how people progress through the system?
- How can recruitment processes better recognise and value understanding of the needs of Scotland's diverse population, non-traditional career pathways, and careers outside of the public sector?

5. Enhancing Board Capability through Diversity

- How can the revised strategy ensure increased transparency around, and better data on, the relationship between board appointments and succession planning, and how to incorporate effective horizon scanning?
- Beyond aims to reflect Scottish society in decision-making spaces, how can boards better harness cognitive diversity, diversity of thought, perspective, and experience to improve governance capability and outcomes?
- What training, induction, or support frameworks might boards need to maximise the benefits of having a broader range of board members than they do presently?

¹⁴ As disability covers around a quarter of the Scottish population, and health boards represent a significant proportion of public body boards, it seems particularly important that this demographic is represented.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The strategic considerations outlined above represent a starting point for a conversation with the public and interested parties. Responses to these questions will directly shape the development of Scotland's updated diversity strategy for public appointments.

We believe that through effective governance, supported by genuine diversity and inclusion, Scotland's public bodies will be better positioned to achieve the ambitious goals set out in the Government's public sector reform agenda, delivering improved services, accountability, and outcomes that meet the needs of Scotland's diverse and ever-evolving society.

We look forward to working collaboratively with stakeholders to inform and refine the strategic approach, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of governance across Scotland's public sector.

Feedback to the questions can be provided on our online response form. A series of validation sessions are planned for September and October. Details are available on the website of the Ethical Standards Commissioner.

Appendix

1. INTERVIEWEES

- Aiden O'Carroll, Revenue Scotland and Institute of Directors
- Brian Moore, State Hospitals Board
- Ian Bruce, Ethical Standards Commissioner
- Julie-Anne Jamieson and Anna Davis, Changing the Chemistry
- Karyn McCluskey, Community Justice Scotland
- Katie Adams, Katie Adams Coaching
- Kirsty Darwent, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Lisa Tennant, Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Lisa Mackenzie and Lucy Hunter Blackburn, Murray Blackburn Mackenzie
- Michael Cameron, Scottish Housing Regulator
- Moi Ali, Independent Examiner of Complaints
- Patricia Kilpatrick, NHS Fife
- Pippa Hamilton, Scottish Ambulance Service
- Stephen Sinclair, Poverty & Inequality Commission

Public Appointment Adviser Group Session Attendees

- Di Airey
- Neelam Bakshi
- Jill Burgess
- Jayam Dalal
- Matt Drynan
- Catriona Maclean
- Paul Matheson
- Bill Smith
- Duncan Wallace
- Heidi Winser
- Sue Young

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