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Ethical Standards Commissioner

Applicant Research

**AN ANALYSIS OF APPLICANT SURVEYS CONDUCTED FOR
APPOINTMENT ROUNDS DURING THE PERIOD 2023**

November 2025

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of 56 surveys¹ carried out with applicants for public appointments in Scotland covering the period 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023. A list of these appointment rounds can be found in Appendix 1 and mirrors the 2023 appointment rounds covered in our [Public Appointments Annual Report 2023/24](#). Applicant surveys have been conducted annually by the Ethical Standards Commissioner since 2016 although were paused during 2020-22. This was due to the impact of Covid-19 and limited resources available to provide regulatory oversight of public appointments. While this activity was paused, the applicant survey itself was refreshed during the latter half of 2022 and into 2023. This followed the introduction of a new Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland, and the survey refresh was designed to reflect the changes made to the Code. The survey was also shortened and some of the questions simplified, to encourage a higher response rate and improved experience for respondents. A copy of the questions asked during the applicant survey is included in Appendix 1. The survey was relaunched in early 2023 following the conclusion of the first appointment round under the new Code, and an interim applicant survey report covering 5 months was published in 2023.² This report aimed to offer a snapshot of applicant views during the initial period after the launch of the 2022 Code of Practice and was for information only.

Traditionally, the annual applicant survey report analysed appointment rounds concluded during the financial year. It was expected then that this report would cover the period 2023 / 2024. However, the Commissioner agreed that to better align with Scottish Government data, which covers a calendar year, the office will now produce reports covering the calendar year which will also align with appointment rounds covered by our annual reports. As a result, this applicant survey report reflects an analysis of a full year's worth of data for the first time since 2019. Analysis was carried out on the views expressed by those who reached interview stage and those who did not, first time applicants and people from under-reflected groups such as female applicants, disabled applicants, black and minority ethnic applicants, applicants under the age of 50 and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) applicants. Due to the small number of responses received we do not report on Trans figures separately. Where the views of these groups vary significantly from the view of the overall group, this is highlighted in the report.

Based on the findings of the surveys, recommendations have been made where the evidence suggests changes or improvements to current processes may be beneficial.

¹ A total of 59 applicant surveys were run, two of which received no responses (Boundaries Scotland (Chair) and Forth Valley Regional College (Chair). A further one appointment round was concluded during the period for NHS Fife (unsuccessful in appointing a Chair). An applicant survey was not run for this appointment round due to the length of time that passed between the appointment round and having the process in place to run a survey.

² [Applicant Research 2023 \(5 month report\) | Ethical Standards Commissioner](#)

Key Findings

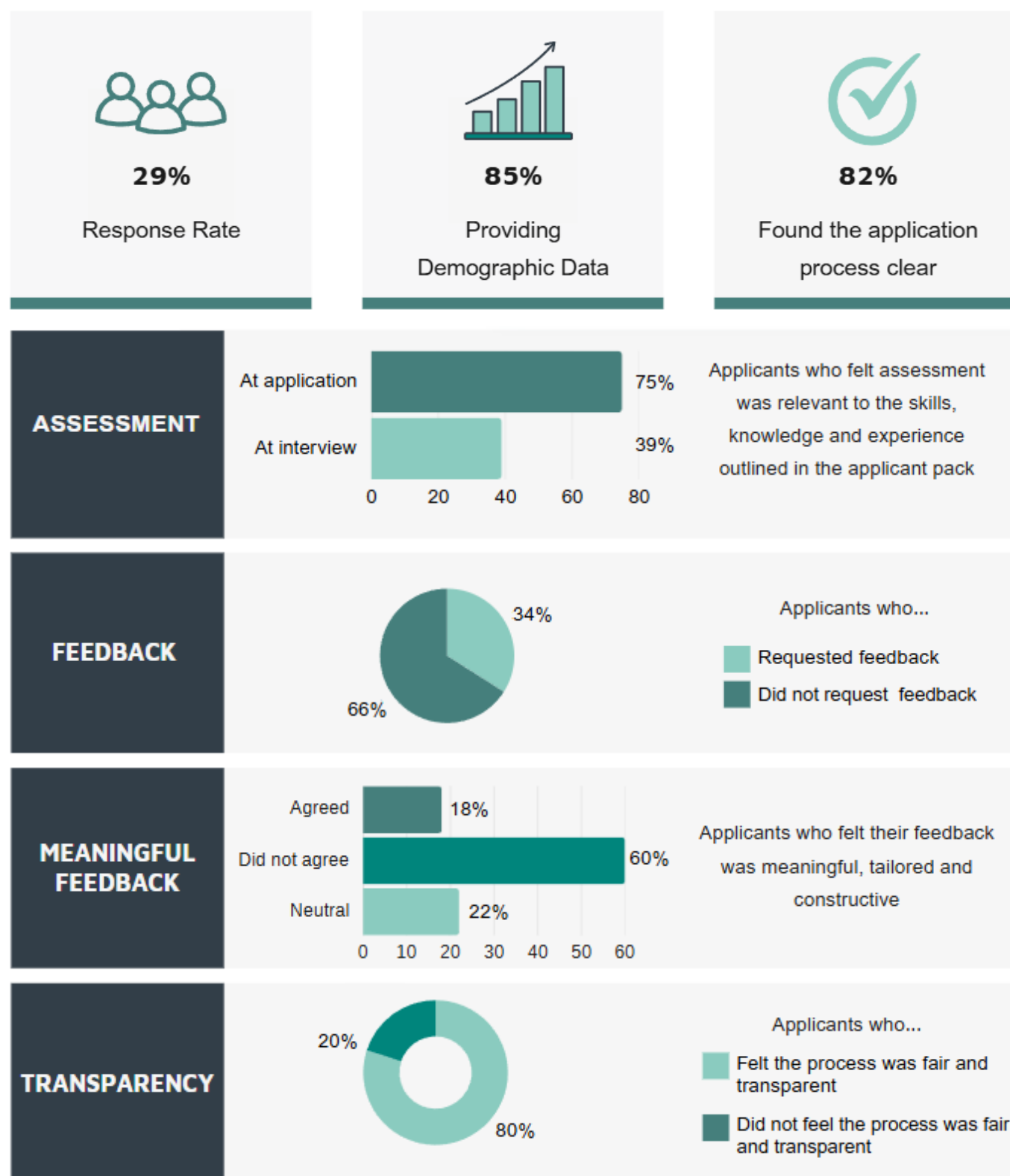


Figure 1 Overview of key findings from the survey analysis.

A summary of the key findings from the analysis is provided below. Each of these findings are explored and discussed fully within this report.

Respondent Data

In 2023, a total of 1983 applicants across 56 appointment rounds were invited to complete an applicant survey to provide their views on the process. Of those, 567 completed a survey giving an overall response rate of 29%. 482 applicants provided demographic data (85%). Research suggests that a response rate to surveys of around 30% is generally considered to be good.³ The number of applications received in each appointment round is detailed in the Public Appointments Annual Report, and it is encouraging that, for the rounds listed where the applicant survey has been analysed and reported on here, of 2050 applicants, 1983 of those agreed to share their contact details with the ESC (97%).

The process for running applicant surveys involves the ESC Public Appointments Team (PA Team) requesting participant information from the Scottish Government (SG) Public Appointments Team (PAT). This information is requested once an appointment round has concluded and its respective news release has been made.⁴ The timing of these requests and return of information by SG was variable during 2023; due to resourcing pressures in the SG, some applicant surveys were distributed up to three months following the news release announcing the successful candidate(s). The lower the percentage of applicants completing the survey, the lower the statistical validity of the survey findings and the higher the potential for sampling bias to occur. We believe that the length of time between the conclusion of an appointment round and its subsequent applicant survey being run may impact the response rate to some degree. As such, the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC) has tried to increase the overall response rate to surveys over the last twelve months. We have done this through working with the Scottish Government to request applicant information from SG within one month following the relevant news release and issuing a survey as quickly as possible thereafter.

To date, positive progress has been made in this area. Applicant surveys are now run on a monthly basis and as close to the announcement of the public appointment as practicable. The full year survey report covering appointment rounds during 2024 will show whether this has been an effective way of increasing the current survey response rate. To build on this, a general recommendation of this report is that the Scottish Government continue to consider whether and how they would like to increase the percentage of applicants giving their views about the public appointments process. Where possible, the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC) will provide resources to facilitate any suggestions made.

Recommendation

Scottish Government to consider how best to increase the percentage of applicants giving their views about the appointments process. Where the Ethical Standards Commissioner's (ESC) resources allow, recommended measures will be supported.



³ <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/blog/what-is-a-good-survey-response-rate>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/collections/public-appointments-announcements/>

As well as analysing all the responses received to applicant surveys, an analysis of demographic groups against the Scottish population published following the Census in 2022, has also been provided throughout this report; the Census figures have been set out below for reference.

Female	Disabled	Minority Ethnic	Under 50	LGBT
51.41%	24.10%	7.13%	49.00%	4.48%

Table 1; Scotland's demographics according to the 2022 census.

A comparison of the responses received, split by demographic group, against the current census data reveals the following (figure 2). This comparison shows that the percentages of female respondents, respondents under 50 and disabled respondents do not reflect the Scottish population to the same extent as the other groups do, while percentage responses within the LGBT group are more than double the census data. For this reason it is important to be mindful that the survey response figures do not represent all applicants for every public appointment round during 2023 and only provide a snapshot view at a point in time.

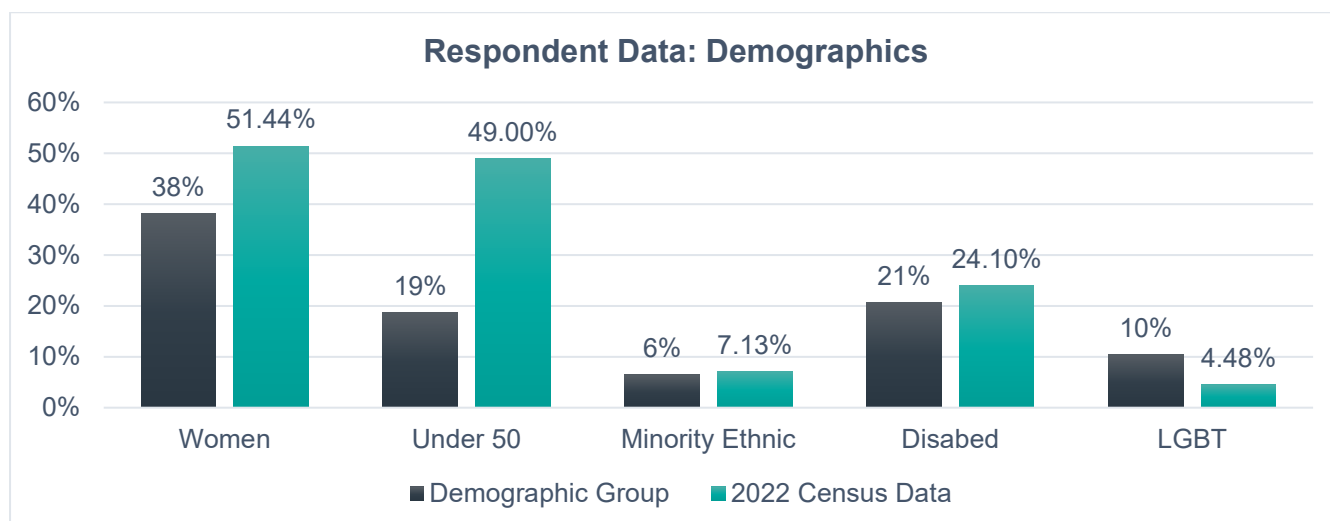


Figure 2 Respondent data: demographic group

A breakdown of the applicant outcomes (that is, those who responded to the surveys and have been offered appointment) for these demographic groups is shown in figure 3. It shows that only the LGBT group exceeds the Scottish population by proportion, although this is not a representative sample of actual board membership and is included for interest only and for comparison purposes in future reports.

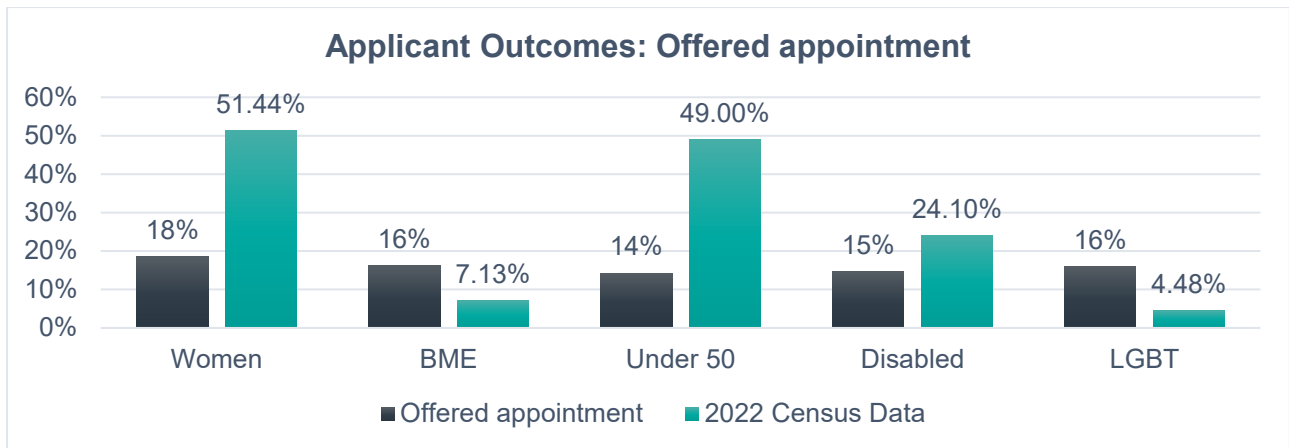


Figure 3 Applicant outcomes: demographic group

Of applicants who provided their views, 42% were applying for the first time. This information will provide insights into how those entering the process for the first time have found the experience.

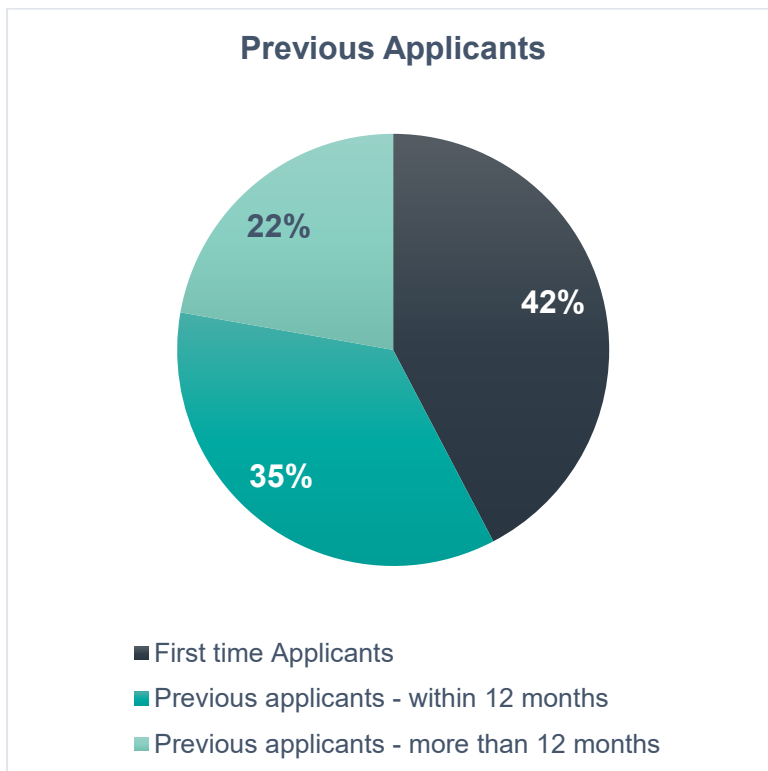
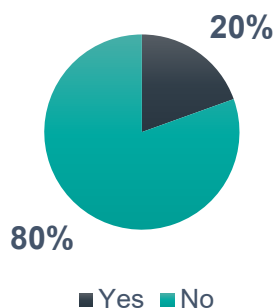


Figure 4 Previous applicants

57% of applicants had previously applied for a public appointment. Of these, 20% indicated that they experienced something new or innovative during the process. Comments on the subject suggest that being able to complete the process fully online (including interview) was a new experience for them, and that the online application platform was user friendly.. Many comments however noted that the appointments experience was similar to what individuals have experienced before.

Previous Applicants Who Experience Something New or Innovative During the Process



“
Shorter, crisper format in the application with very clear guidance on the nature and amount of information requested.
”

Figure 5 Previous applicants who experienced something new or innovative during the process.

One key element of the 2022 Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland is its focus on *enabling more creative and ambitious approaches to attracting and appointing the best new board members from the widest possible pool of applicants*. As such, another recommendation of this report is that the Scottish Government consider how innovation and creativity might be utilised more fully during appointment rounds.

“
The application process was more streamlined but I wonder if the resultant streamlined application enables the applicant to fully demonstrate their expertise and experience
The practical exercise was different as you would expect - but it was a practical exercise and all other appointment recruitment have included a practical exercise
”

Recommendation

Scottish Government to consider how innovation and creativity might be utilised during appointment rounds, and to consider how best to support selection panels with this.



Attraction

Applicants were asked about the advert for the roles they applied for and whether anything specific about the advert attracted them to the role. The highest response to this was that *it sounded like they were looking for people like me* followed by *it made the role sound attractive / interesting*. This might be of use to future panels as they consider their attraction strategies and the type of information that applicants feel is important. Although only 26% of respondents indicated that they applied because the advert made the body sound attractive / interesting, many comments provided in response to the question reflected that the work of the body itself was important and familiar to them, and was an important factor influencing their decision to apply. Although the majority of applicants found out about opportunities via the Scottish Government’s Public Appointments Website

(discussed in the next section), these comments suggest that existing knowledge of the body itself and its work was also a consideration for some individuals when applying for roles. Panels might therefore wish to consider how outreach from the body itself, both during the appointments process but also during any pre appointment period, may increase and generate interest. It is noteworthy that a significantly small number of applicants felt that the advert did not attract them at all, with only 4% indicating this. This suggests that the advert itself does play an important role in the attraction of applicants.

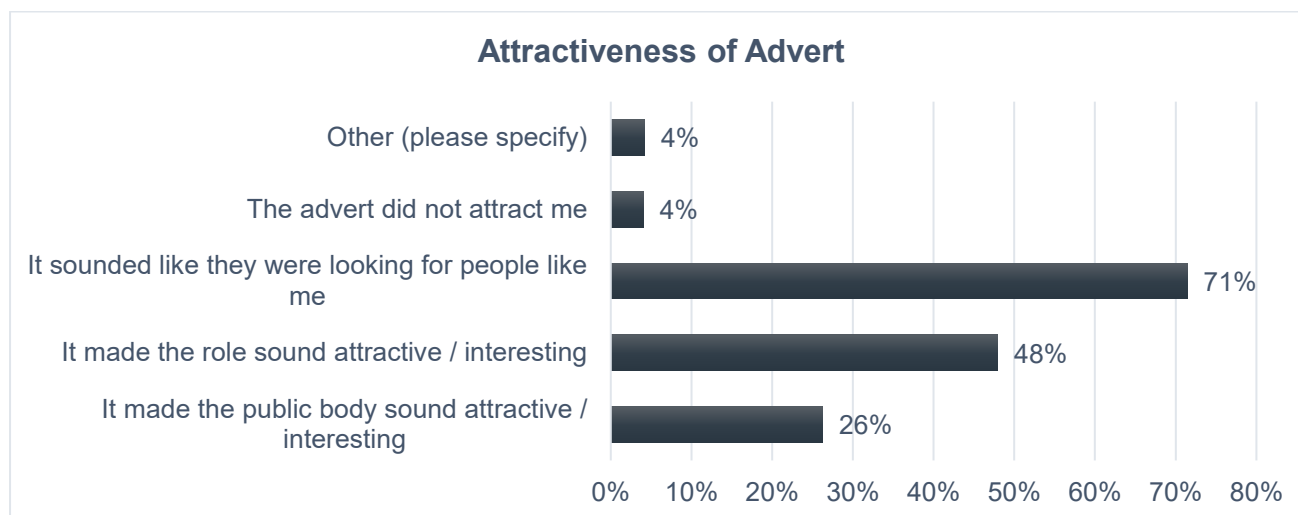


Figure 6 What attracted applicants to the advert.

“

I felt I have value to add to the challenge the public body was/is dealing with.

I was not specifically attracted by the advert. I was attracted by the work that [the body] does.

I wanted to give something back to my region

”

Publicising Opportunities

The top methods for finding out about opportunities was through the Scottish Government Public Appointments website (38%). Social media (including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and LinkedIn) played a significant role too as a combined 24% of applicants found out about an opportunity this way. Although this report does not seek to compare to previous years, it is particularly noteworthy that social media as an avenue for finding out about opportunities has increased significantly since we published our last full annual applicant survey report covering 2019 appointment rounds. In 2019, this figure stood at 18%.⁵ Personal contacts also played an important role in publicity as 17% of applicants found out about opportunities this way.

⁵ <https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/publication/applicant-research-2019>

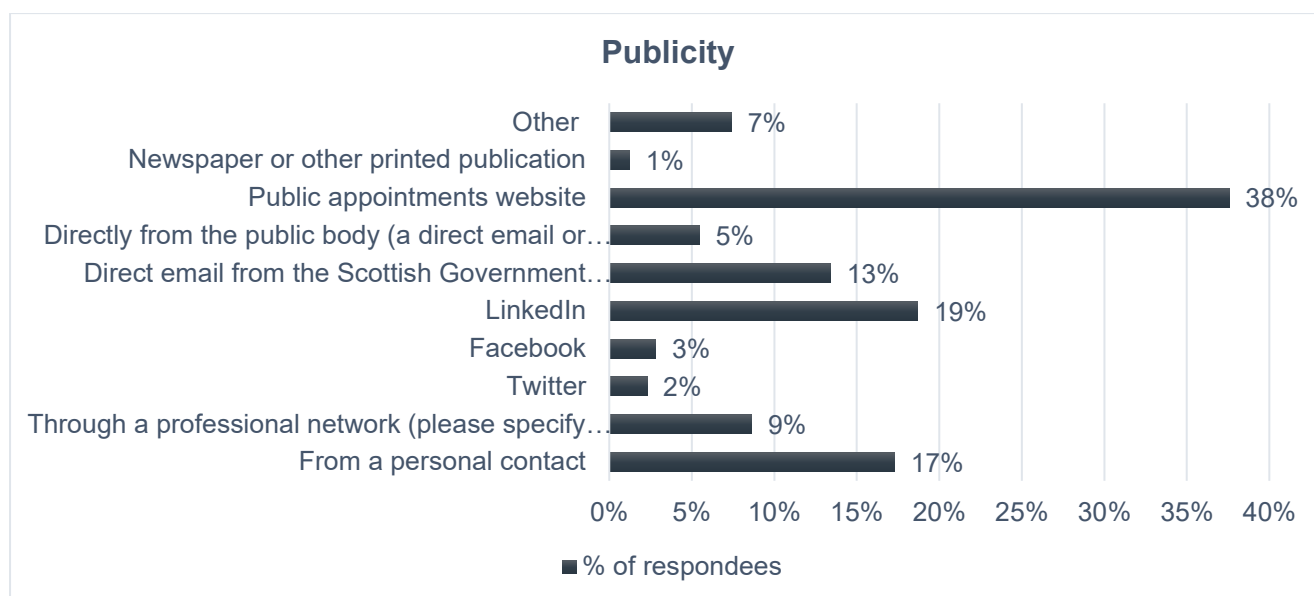


Figure 7 How applicants found out about public appointment opportunities

The publicity methods used is also of interest when broken down by demographic group, as noted in the table below.

Publicity	Female	Disabled	Minority Ethnic	Under 50	LGBT	All
Personal Contact	20%	3%	16%	17%	16%	17%
Professional network	11%	13%	12%	6%	6%	9%
Twitter	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	2%
Facebook	3%	0%	2%	6%	2%	3%
LinkedIn	18%	42%	30%	14%	12%	19%
Email from SG Public Appointments Team	10%	16%	4%	15%	24%	13%
Directly from the body (email or website)	7%	7%	9%	9%	6%	5%
Public Appointments Website	36%	26%	33%	37%	32%	38%
Newspaper or other printed publication	2%	0%	1%	3%	0%	1%
Other	8%	13%	7%	7%	6%	7%

Table 2 Publicity methods split by demographic group.

The prevalence of LinkedIn as an avenue for disabled and minority ethnic applicants finding out about opportunities is particularly high and its importance to these demographics in sourcing opportunities should be noted. Of greater importance to first time applicants was social media, with 34% of first time applicants finding opportunities this way.

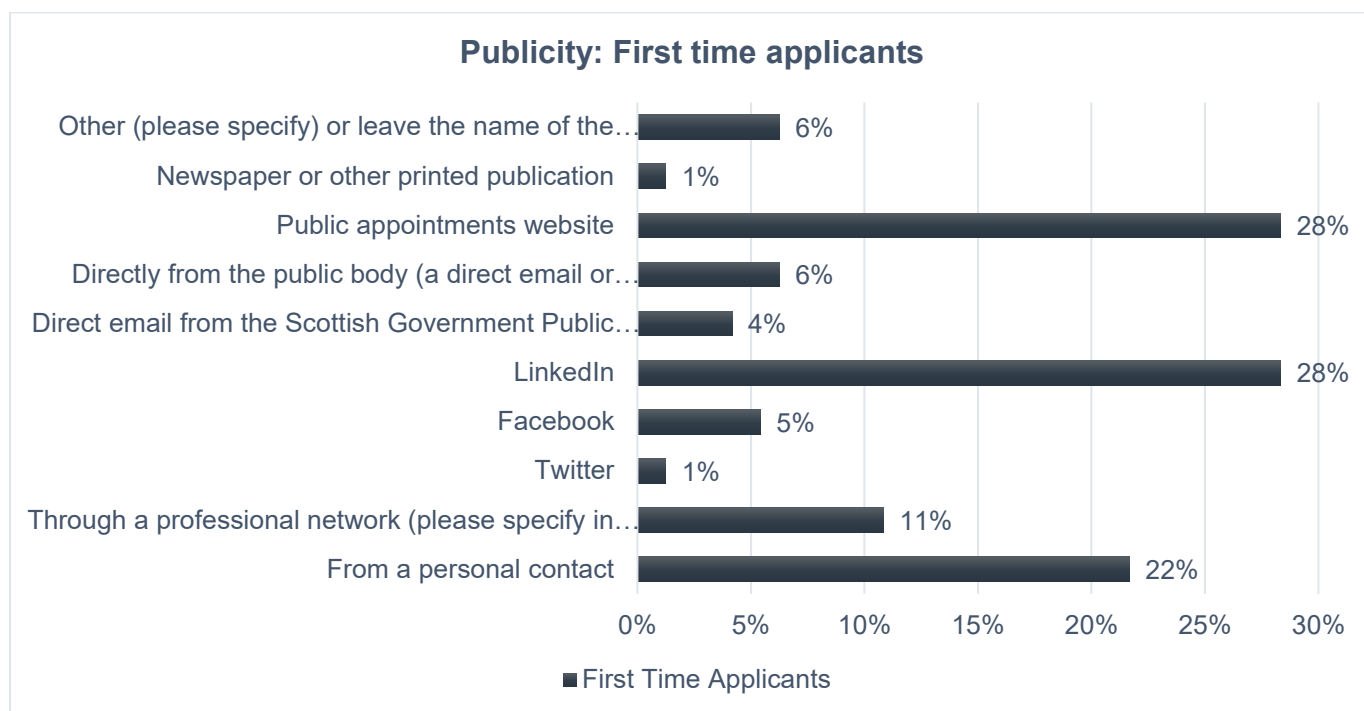


Figure 8 Where first-time applicants found out about public appointment opportunities.

Application Process

The section of the survey covering the application process intends to obtain an understanding of how clear applicants found the process, including clarity in the process of applying and of the requirements of the role. The findings show that 90% strongly agreed or agreed that the application pack contained all the details needed to apply, which is encouraging.

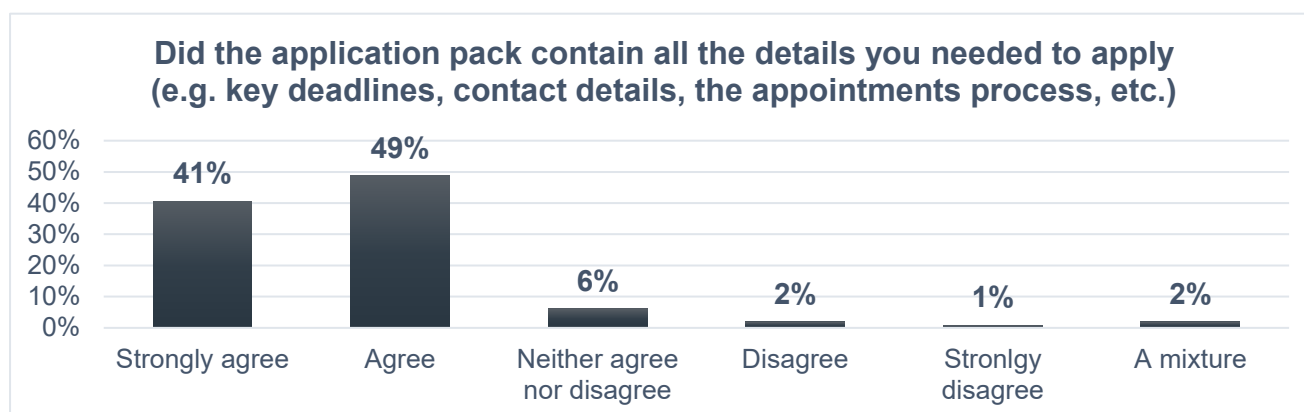


Figure 9 Applicant views on whether the applicant packs contained all the details needed to apply.

A strong majority of applicants responded positively to the question *Were the requirements of the role clearly outlined?* with 85% of applicants strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement. There is general consistency across demographic groups who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, although Under 50s were the outlier with 9% of applicants indicating disagreement compared to the general 5-6% across other groups.

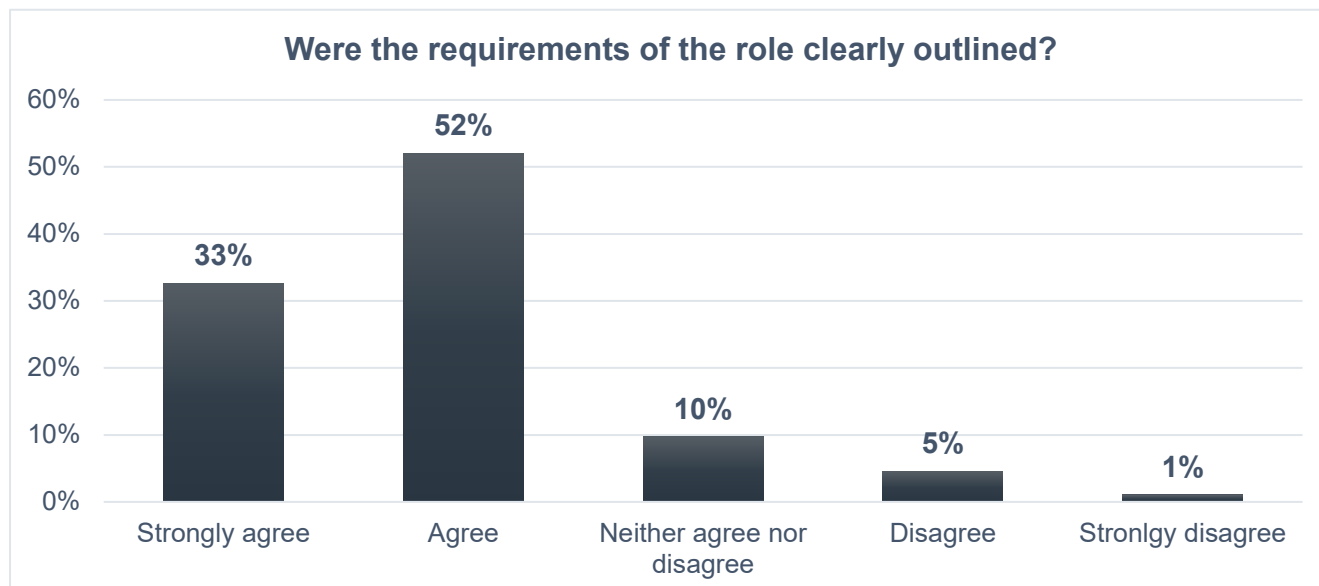


Figure 10 How clearly applicants felt the requirements were outlined.

Requirements	Female	Disabled	Minority Ethnic	Under 50	1 st time applicants	LGBT
Strongly Disagree or Disagree	5%	4%	6%	9%	4%	4%

Table 3 Applicant views on the requirements of the role split by demographic group.

Views were more mixed on the question *“Was the time and effort taken by you to complete the application form reasonable?”*, although still a majority indicated that they agreed with the statement (69% total).

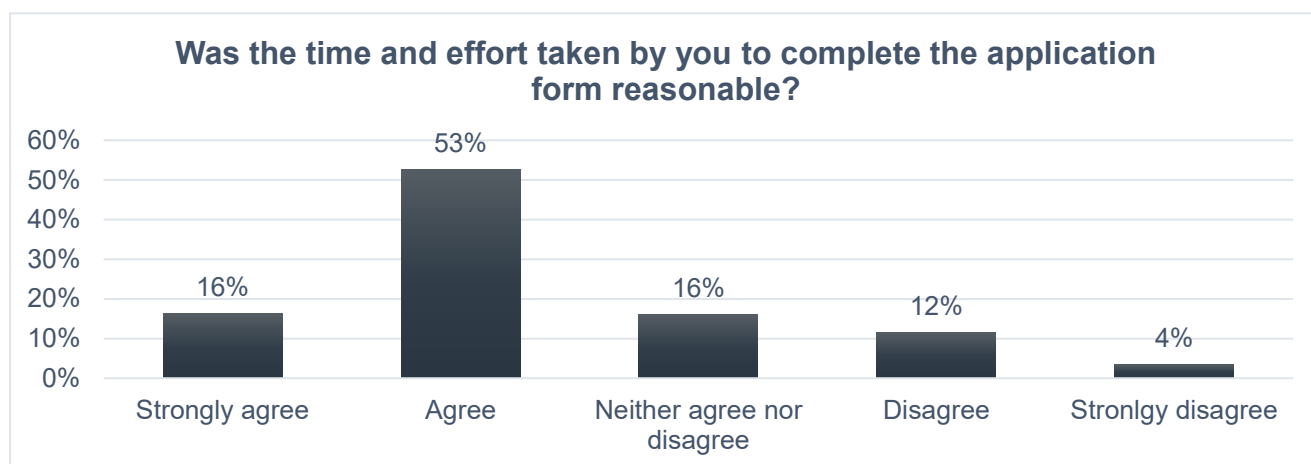


Figure 11 Views on time and effort to complete the application form.

For this question, female applicants, applicants under 50 and those applying for the first time had higher levels of disagreement to the question.

Time and Effort	Female	Disabled	Minority Ethnic	Under 50	1 st time applicants	LGBT
Strongly Disagree or Disagree	15%	16%	6%	16%	12%	10%

Table 4 Applicant views on the time and effort to apply split by demographic group.

Once more, the vast majority of applicants felt that the amount of information supplied in the applicant information pack was just right (84%).

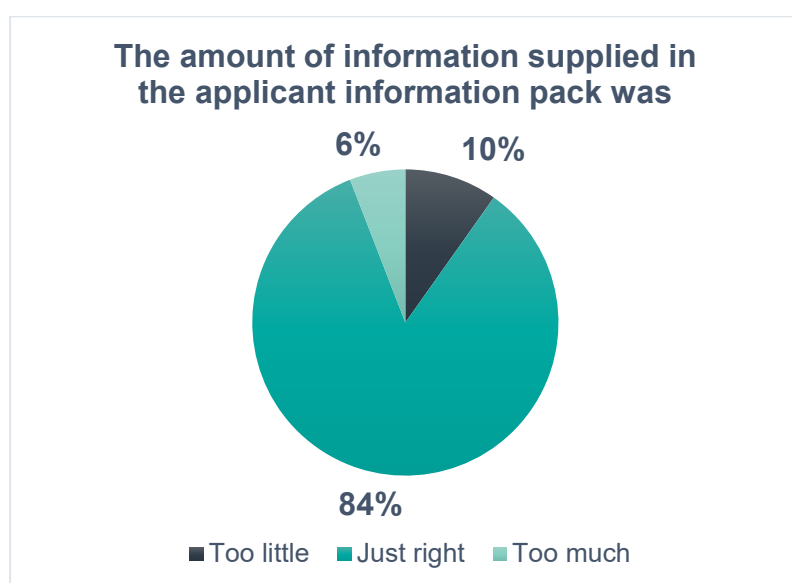


Figure 12 Whether applicants felt the amount of information supplied in the applicant pack was right.

The same is true when broken down by demographic group, with more than 75% of respondents within each group agreeing that the amount of information supplied was just right. Although it is encouraging that a high proportion of respondents found the amount of information just right, for disabled applicants and applicants under 50, 17% felt that the amount of information was not enough. This is nearly 1 in 5 of all respondents within these groups, and, as should always be the case, thoughtful consideration should be given by panels when designing their applicant packs to ensure they meet the needs of as many prospective applicants as possible.

Information Supplied	Female	Disabled	Minority Ethnic	Under 50	1 st time applicants	LGBT
Too little	13%	17%	7%	17%	12%	12%
Too much	4%	4%	10%	7%	7%	4%

Table 5 Applicant views on the amount of information supplied split by demographic group.

Applicants were also asked whether they were able to discuss any part of the application process with anyone involved in the recruitment process. Responses to this question indicated that the majority of applicants did not wish to speak with anyone regarding their application (45%). In total, 11% of applicants indicated that they either could not find details on how to make contact with someone (5%) or tried to make contact but were unsuccessful (6%).

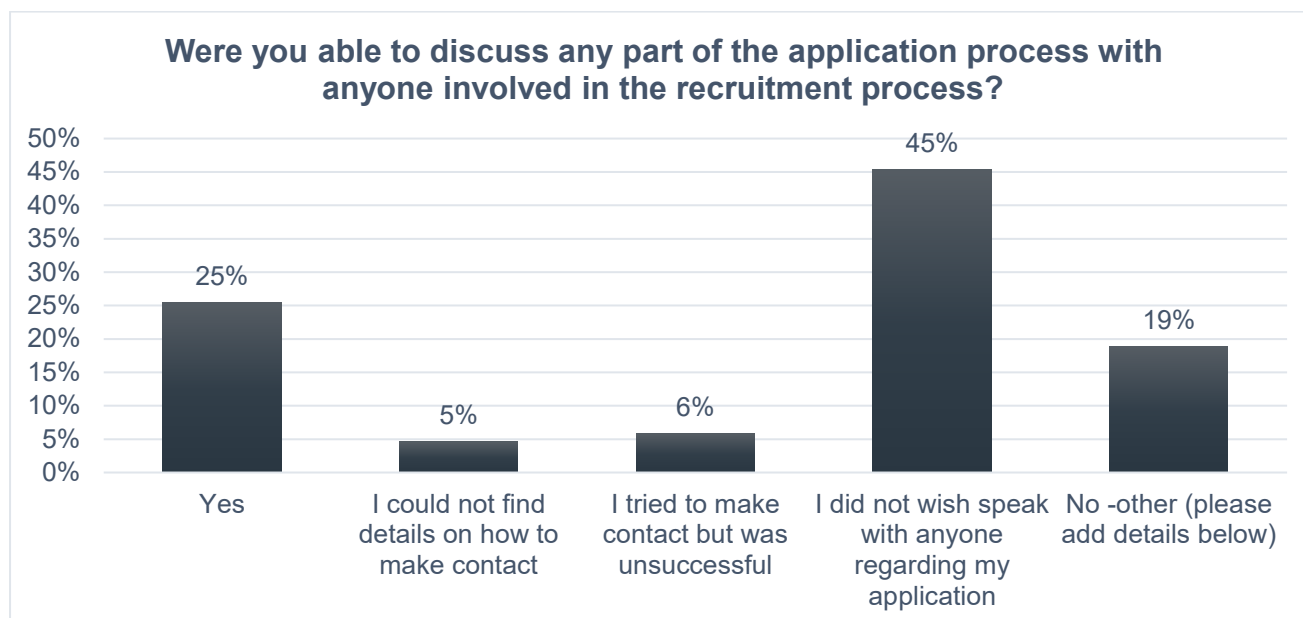


Figure 13 Applicant experience of contacting someone to discuss the application process.

19% of respondents indicated 'No – other' and left a variety of comments reflecting their experience. Many of these comments noted that individuals were not aware that they could contact someone regarding their application, or that they had become aware of the opportunity too late to make contact in time. Other comments reflected on positive experiences having had made contact or having gained sufficient information through online sessions regarding the opportunity.

“

I was not aware that I could discuss this, but I may have missed that in the application information.

Attended a call for all applicants

I contacted the named party, and we had a 'MS Teams' call, very pleasant and straightforward. I was directed to the pack for any questions I had.

”

When split by demographic group and first time applicants, under 15% of applicants across all groups indicated that they could not make contact with someone. When considered against some of the comments left under the field 'No – Other' indicating that applicants were not aware that they could discuss the process with someone, it is worth highlighting once more the importance of how applicants packs are designed and that panels should be carefully considering the content that goes into them during the planning phase of the appointments process.

Discussing application	Female	Disabled	Minority Ethnic	Under 50	1 st time applicants	LGBT
Could not make contact	10%	15%	9%	15%	14%	14%

Table 6 Applicant experience of contacting someone to discuss the application process split by demographic group.

Finally, applicants were asked how clear they found the process overall. Responses again were largely positive with 82% responding favourably to the question. When broken down by demographic group and first time applicants, responses indicating that applicants strongly disagreed or disagreed were 10% and under.

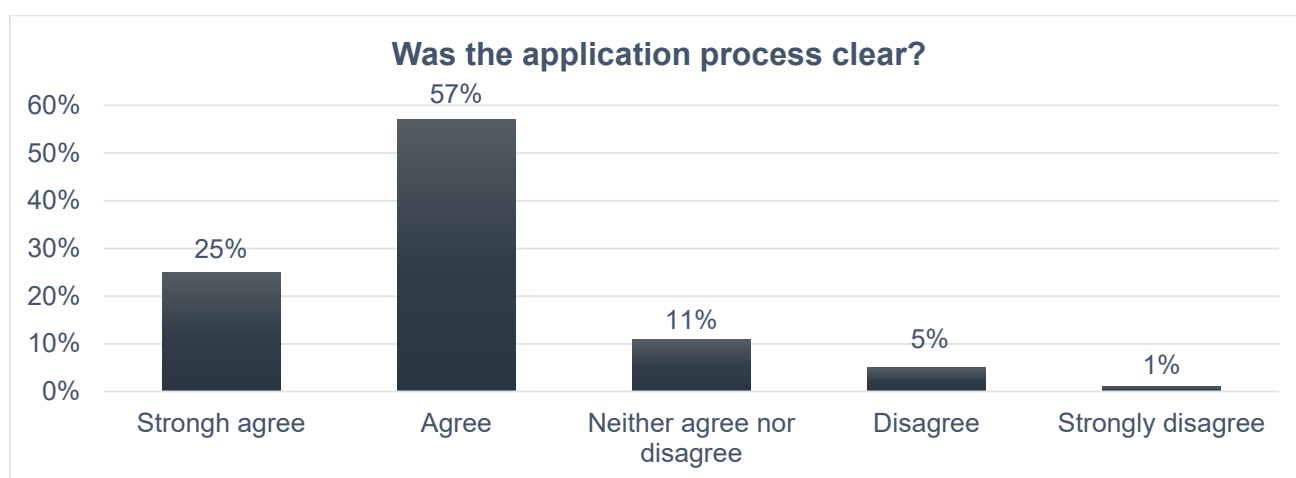


Figure 14 How clear applicants found the application process.

Clarity of application	Female	Disabled	Minority Ethnic	Under 50	1 st time applicants	LGBT
Strongly disagree or disagree	5%	9%	3%	8%	8%	10%

Table 7 How clear applicants found the process split by demographic group.

However, despite 82% of applicants indicating that they found the application process clear, interestingly only 48% of applicants felt that it was a comparatively easy exercise to submit their applications. This question relates to section C3 of the Code of Practice which states that *All materials to be made available to prospective applicants such as publicity or advertisements about posts, details about posts, the assessment criteria to be applied, and the application forms (or equivalent) should be clearly and plainly drafted using simple, easy to understand, language. The objective should be to encourage the optimum number of people to apply for positions and for people to find it a comparatively easy exercise to submit applications.* 26% of applicants expressed a neutral feeling toward the question and a further 26% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the question. Broken down by demographic group and first time applicants, we observe that disabled applicants in

particular strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement (32%). An extract of comments is also included below.

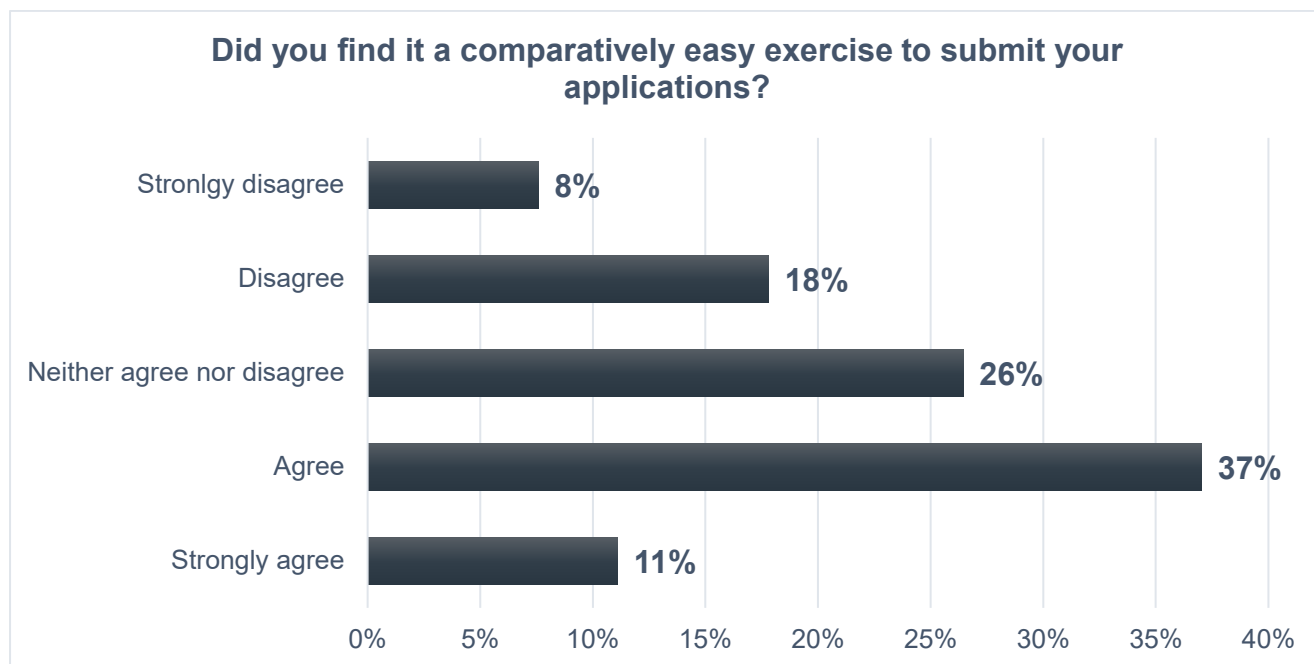


Figure 15 Whether applicants found it was a comparatively easy exercise to submit their application.

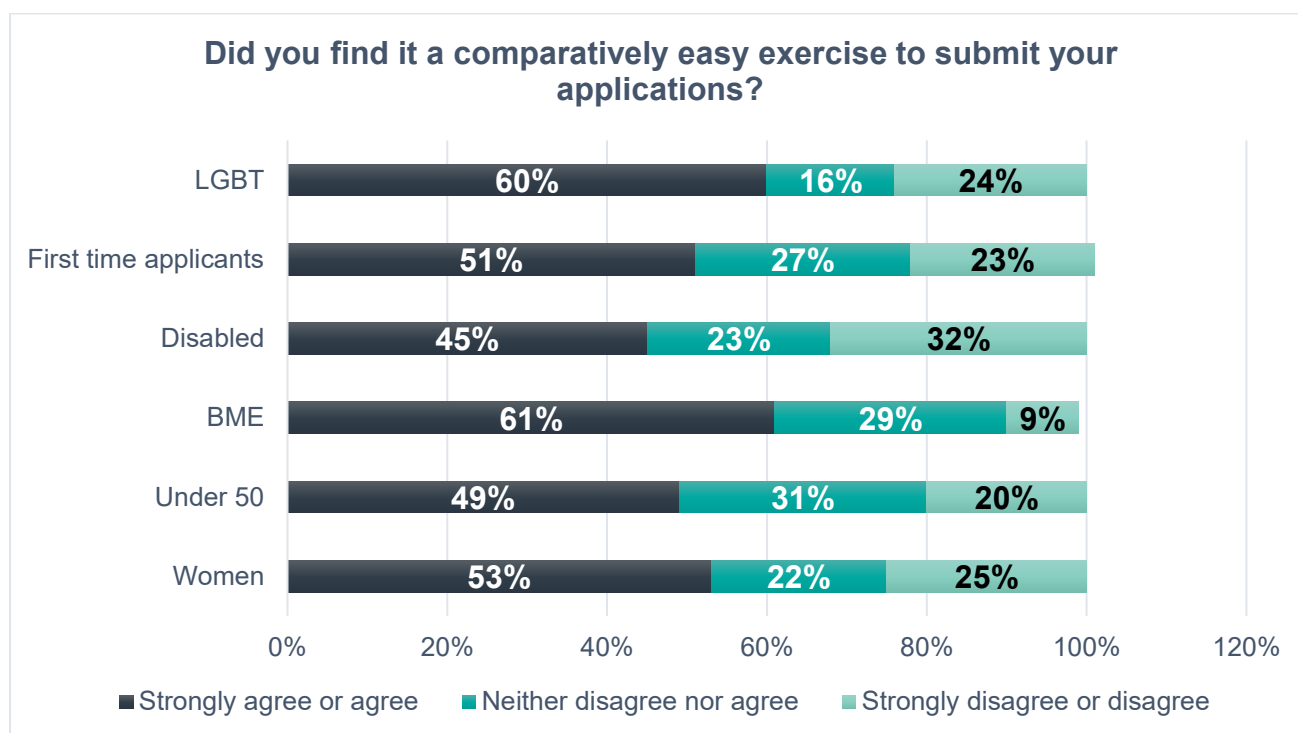


Figure 16 Whether applicants found it was a comparatively easy exercise to submit their application split by demographic group.

“

I don't consider it a "comparatively easy exercise" to submit an application: it's detailed and time-consuming, but it's do-able and relevant.

I had to read the questions repeatedly to try to get the gist of what was being asked.

What SG will get are people whose experience equips them to provide formulaic answers that fit to a public sector scoring matrix and hence the gene pool of NED's remains constant when the environment requires change and fresh insight.

”

Overall, responses to the section on the application process were largely positive and indicate that applicant packs, in general, are clear about what they are asking of applicants. However, the final question asking applicants whether applicants found it a comparatively easy exercise to submit their applications does not mirror the former positive responses – particularly for disabled applicants. Comments responding to the question suggest that applicants feel the process is time consuming, that it is designed for people who are familiar with the process and that a general lack of communication throughout the process impacted views on how straightforward the process itself was overall. The Scottish Government introduced a new applicant pack in July 2023; in light of this mixed view provided in the applicant surveys it will be helpful to compare responses to the 2023 appointment rounds to the results in 2024, when the new applicant pack has been fully embedded for some time.

Additionally, it is interesting to highlight that the responses of disabled applicants tend to differ from those from other demographic groups. To summarise, 17% of disabled respondents felt that the applicant pack contained too little information compared to 10% overall. 9% of disabled respondents did not agree that the application process was clear, compared to 6% overall, and 32% of disabled respondents disagreed that it was a comparatively easy exercise to submit their application, compared to 24% overall. It will be interesting to check, by reference to comparative year on year data, whether this is a trend or only applicable to the findings in this year. In meantime, the Scottish Government and panels will want to consider and ensure that the information and material provided or available to applicants during an appointment round is readily accessible, informative, encouraging, brief and plainly expressed, in line with the 2022 Code's focus on requiring a greater level of respect for applicants.⁶

⁶ <https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/code-practice-ministerial-appointments-public-bodies-scotland-march-2022-version>

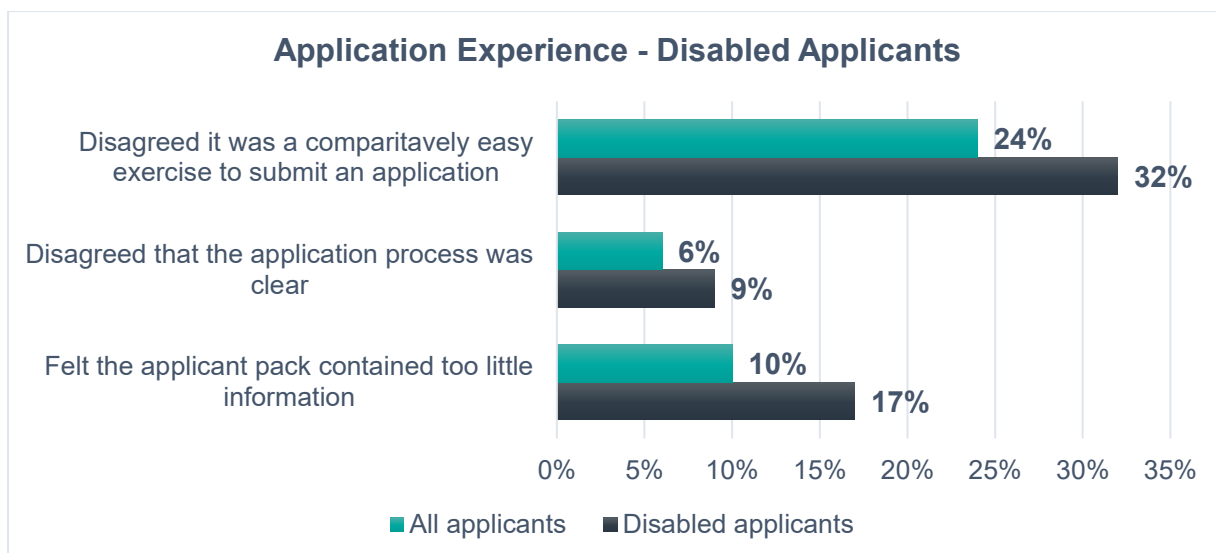


Figure 17 View on whether the first stage of assessment met the Code's requirements.

Assessment

Responses showed that a majority of applicants (75%) felt that the first stage of assessment, i.e. the application itself, was relevant to the skills, knowledge, experience and other attributes outlined in the applicant pack. Only 6% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement and a higher proportion of applicants neither agreed nor disagreed with the question.

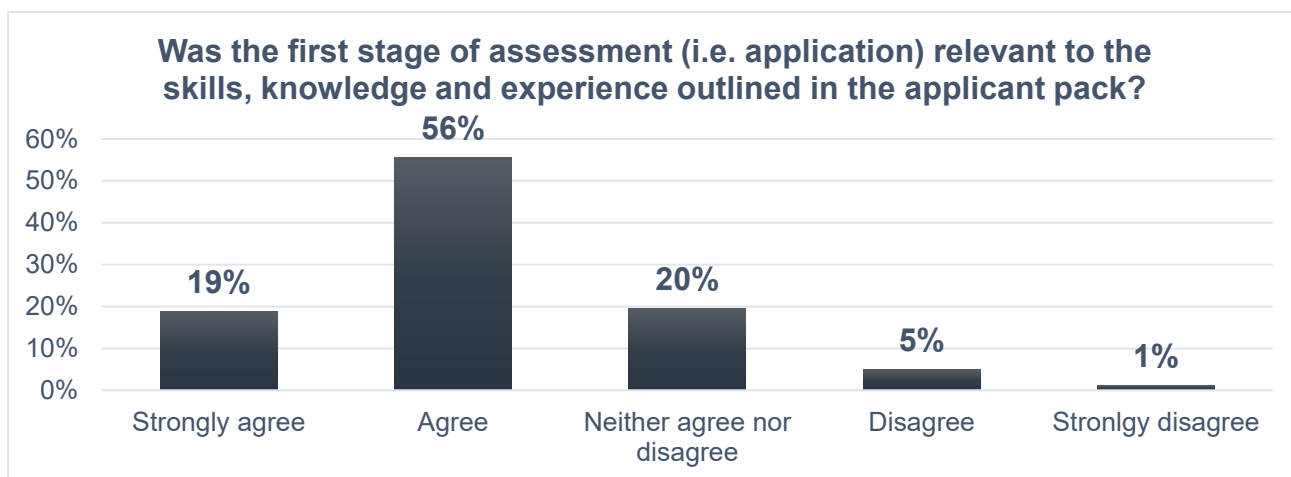


Figure 18 View on whether the first stage of assessment was relevant to the applicant pack.

The follow up question to this, about the second stage of assessment, produced a much more neutral response with 52% of all respondents indicating that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the question, *Was the second stage of assessment (i.e. interview and other assessment methods such as presentation, role play, board paper exercise or similar) relevant to the skills, knowledge and experience outlined in the applicant pack?*

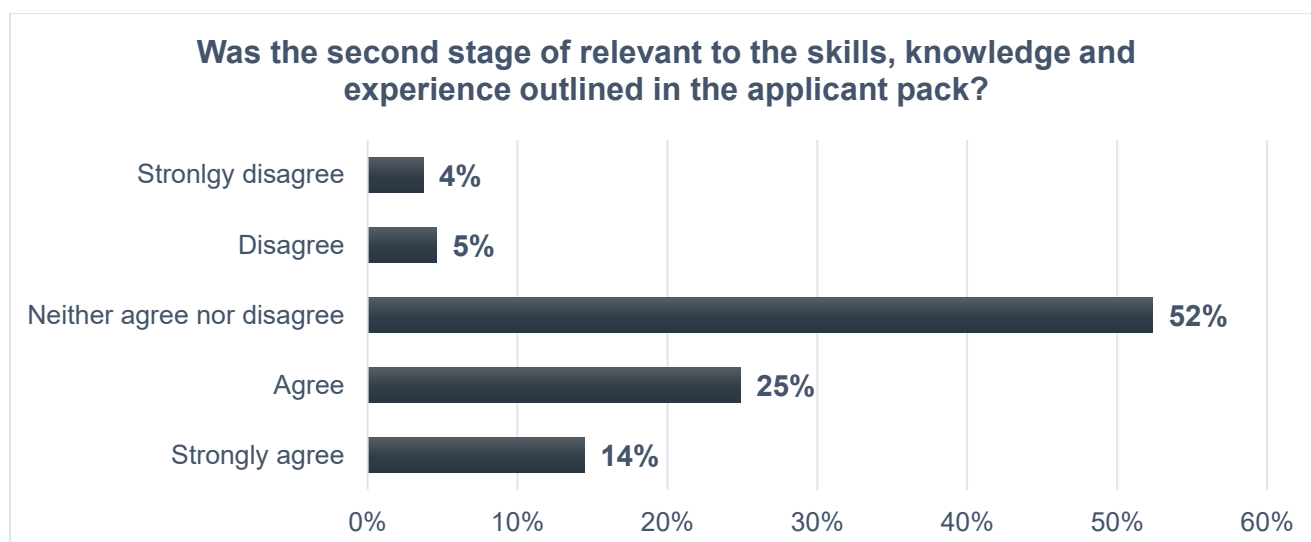


Figure 19 View on whether the second stage of assessment was relevant to the applicant pack.

This question is asked of every participant in the survey and asks those who did not progress to the second stage to leave comments on the proposed assessment methods in the applicant pack. However, the considerable number of applicants indicating that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement suggests that many felt unable to comment on the second stage of assessment. Indeed, a considerable proportion of the comments left indicated this. Only 9% of applicants strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement with the remaining 39% strongly agreeing or agreeing.

“

Difficult to say as I have never got to that stage but the likely format of any method of assessment was set out pretty well in the application packs I have seen

Yes, 4 questions, which I was able to answer using a mix of research and my own experience

Can't comment as I didn't experience it

”

In future, analysis of this question would be more effective if the survey only asked this question of those who progressed to and experienced the second stage of assessment. As such a recommendation of this report is that the ESC amends the applicant survey to only ask the second stage of assessment question of those applicants who went through this part of the process.

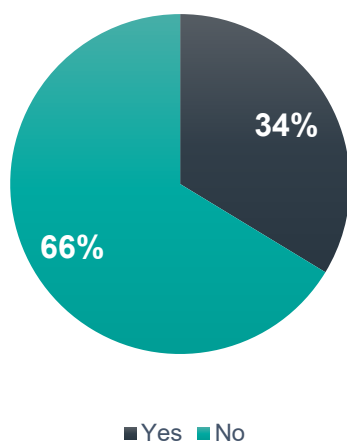
Recommendation

The ESC to update the applicant survey so that only applicants who experienced the second stage of assessment are asked questions about this stage, ensuring responses fully reflect the applicant experience.



Feedback

Did you request feedback on your application?



34% of applicants requested feedback. A breakdown of those who requested feedback split by demographic groups and first time applicants is also set out below. Of all the groups, disabled applicants were mostly likely to request feedback, followed by those under 50; although the other groups had high percentages of those not requesting feedback they closely match the total overall percentage of all applicants who did not request feedback (66%).

Figure 20 Applicants who requested feedback on their application.

Did you request feedback on your application? (Demographic data)

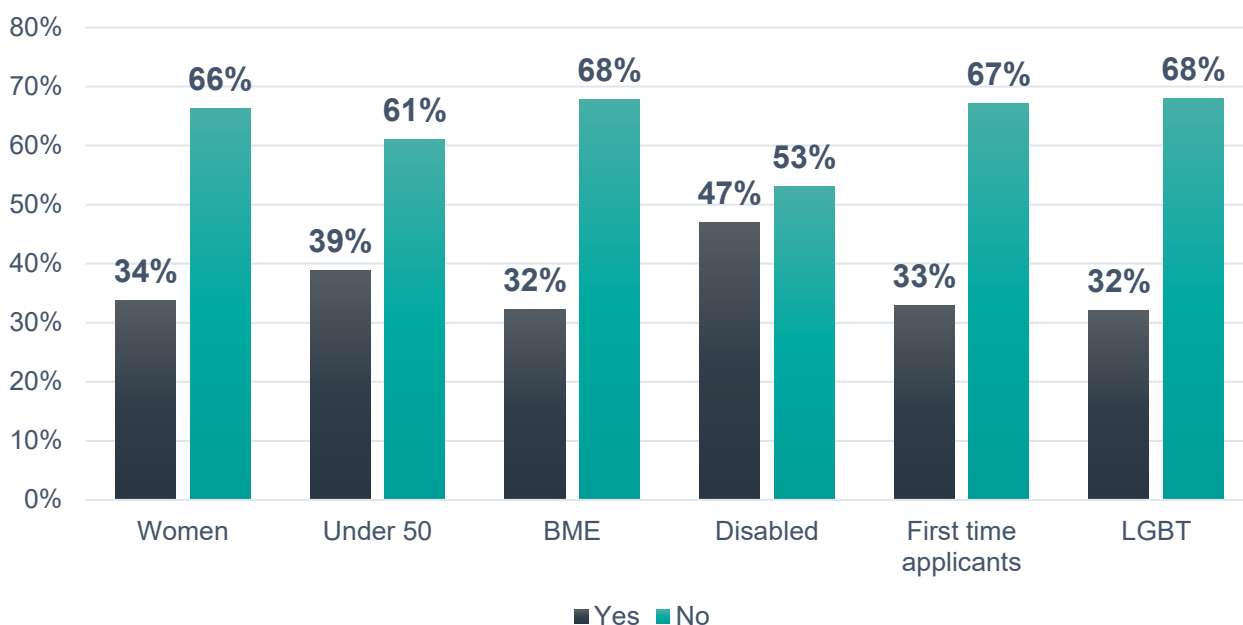


Figure 201 Applicants who requested feedback on their application split by demographic group.

The data also shows that those who were invited to interview were more likely to request feedback, but only marginally so.

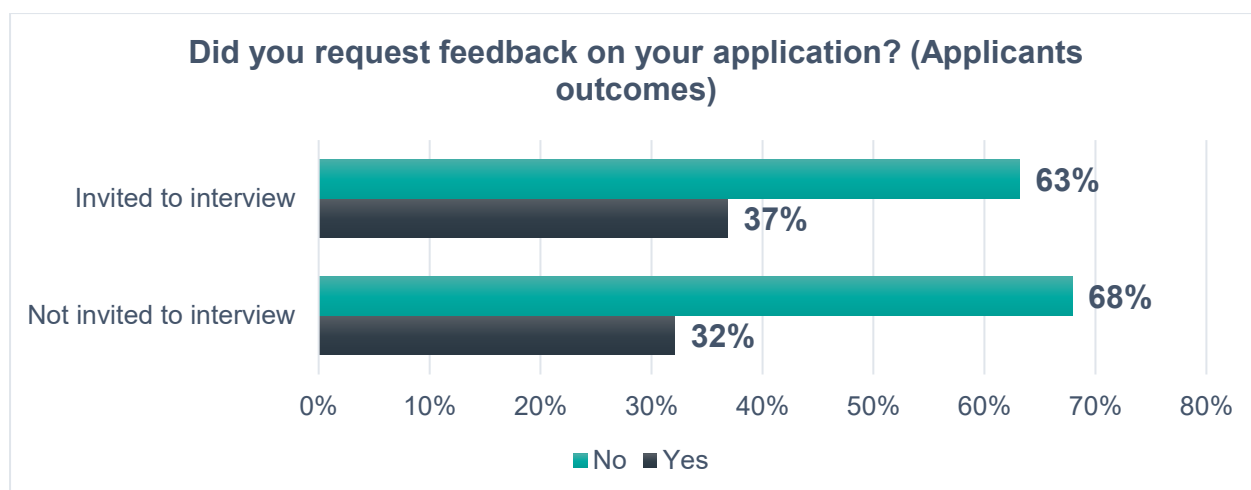


Figure 22 Applicants requesting feedback according to whether they progressed to the second stage of the process.

Applicants who requested feedback were also asked whether they found this feedback to be constructive, tailored and meaningful. This is a requirement under section 14 of the Code of Practice which states that *Constructive, tailored and meaningful feedback will be provided to all unsuccessful applicants who make a reasonable request for it*. Responses to this question are more concerning, with 60% of applicants strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with the statement. A further 22% of applicants neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 18% strongly agreed or agreed in response to this question.

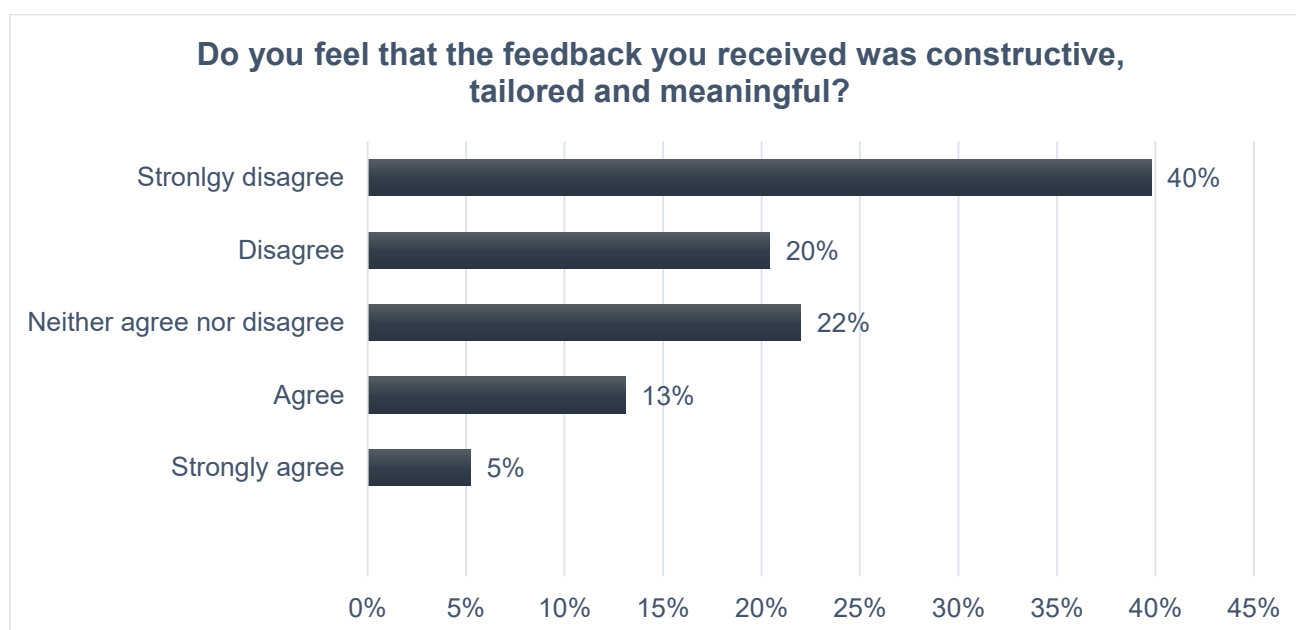


Figure 23 Applicant views on quality of feedback received.

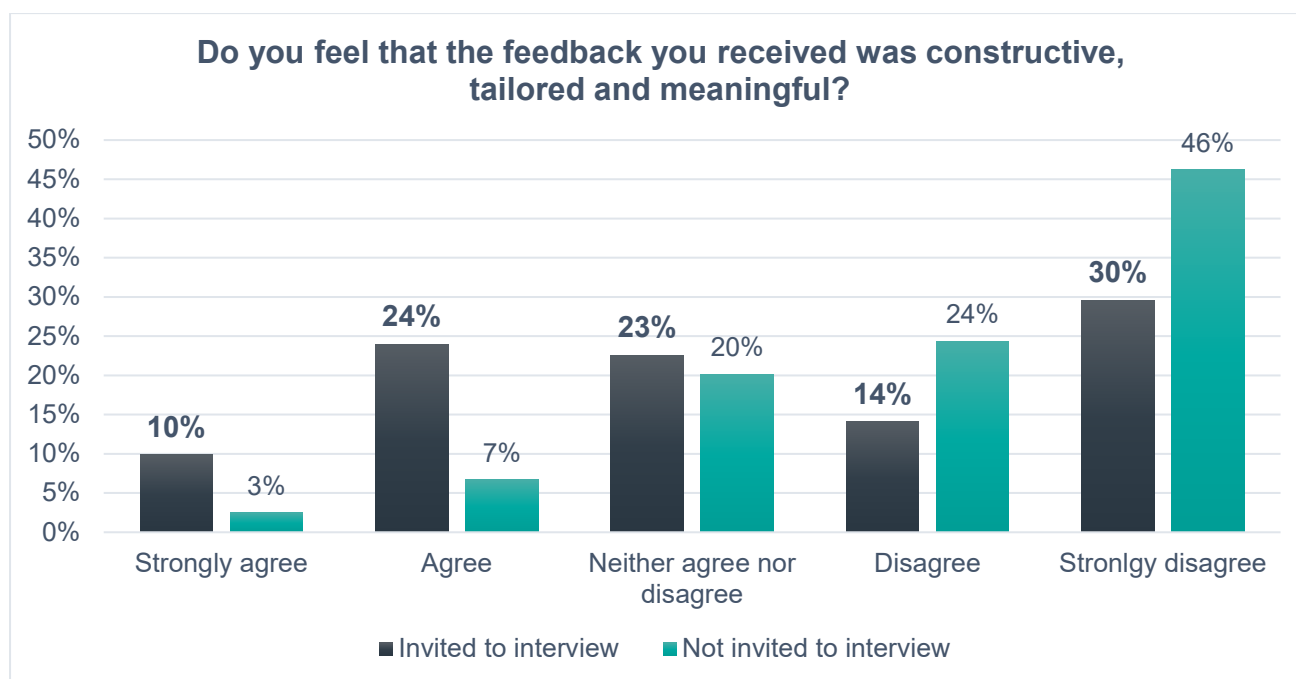


Figure 24 Applicant views on quality of feedback received.

There is also a clear difference in the feedback experience for applicants who were invited to interview and those who were not. Figure 23 shows that, generally, applicants who were invited to interview find the feedback of higher value than those who were not invited to interview, though the responses across all respondents were significantly negative leaning.

Additionally, comments received for this question suggest that a high proportion of applicants who requested feedback did not receive it. Other comments relate to the disappointing quality of feedback received, although there were several instances where applicants did note that when they did receive feedback it was helpful, particularly when provided by the body chair themselves.

“

I had a phone call with the Board Chair. It was really helpful and very useful. [The chair] was really pleasant and really approachable. I really appreciated the feedback and overall discussion.

The chair contacted me and dedicated a good length of time to providing the feedback. The chair gave good, constructive feedback, and also provided other advice relevant to pursuing similar roles in the future. He encouraged me to apply for similar roles.

”

Based on these results and the comments from applicants, a recommendation on this topic is for the Scottish Government to consider requests for feedback, to ensure these are provided in a timely manner once requested and to ensure, in alignment with the Code, that it is constructive, tailored and meaningful. Additionally, the applicant survey does not ask applicants whether or not they received

the feedback they have requested, and a second recommendation of this report is that the ESC amend the applicant survey to ask this question. This will mean that in future years an analysis can take place of those who requested feedback and whether or not they received it, and to ask of applicants who did receive feedback whether they found it constructive, tailored and meaningful as outlined by the Code.

“
It was not tailored - effectively a standard letter saying things along line of ...lots of applicants who better met criteria... specific tailored to my application would have been welcome and also more helpful for future applications so know what I might need to address for that.
”

“
Despite requesting feedback on 3 occasions I have not had any at all in relation to my application. This is not acceptable.

Whilst very helpful using the word 'disappointed' in feedback definitely was unhelpful and the better use of language could have been applied.

It was a standard response not tailored to my application
”

Recommendation

Scottish Government to consider the Principle of Respect and how this relates to experience of feedback for all applicants.



Recommendation

As part of wider survey development, ESC to consider the inclusion of a question for applicants on whether they received any feedback requested.



Respect for Applicants

The 2022 Code of Practice introduced the principle of Respect, stating that applicants and ultimately the people appointed to boards are integral to the good governance of Scotland's

public bodies. Applicants will be accorded the respect that they are due for their interest and their efforts and appointees for their contribution to public life. Respondents were asked during the survey to provide any comments in relation to how they experienced the principle of Respect during the appointments process. In total, 315 comments were left in response to this question but only 255 comments related to the question itself and were able to be analysed. The category 'offered no comment' relates to applicants who either indicated that they had no strong view on the question, or who left comments directly related to their own experience but who did not mention the principle of respect or how they felt they had experienced this during the process.

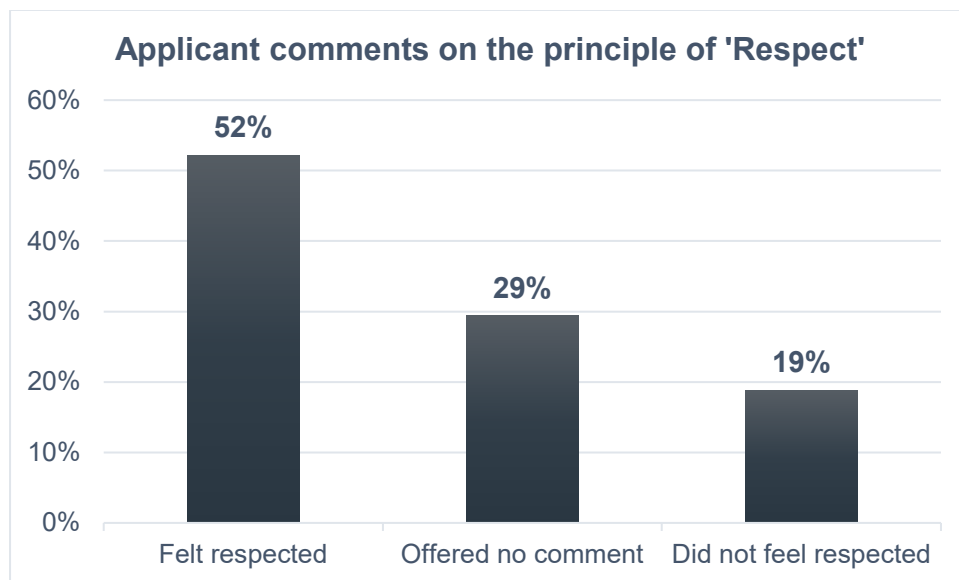


Figure 23 Applicant comments on the principle of respect.

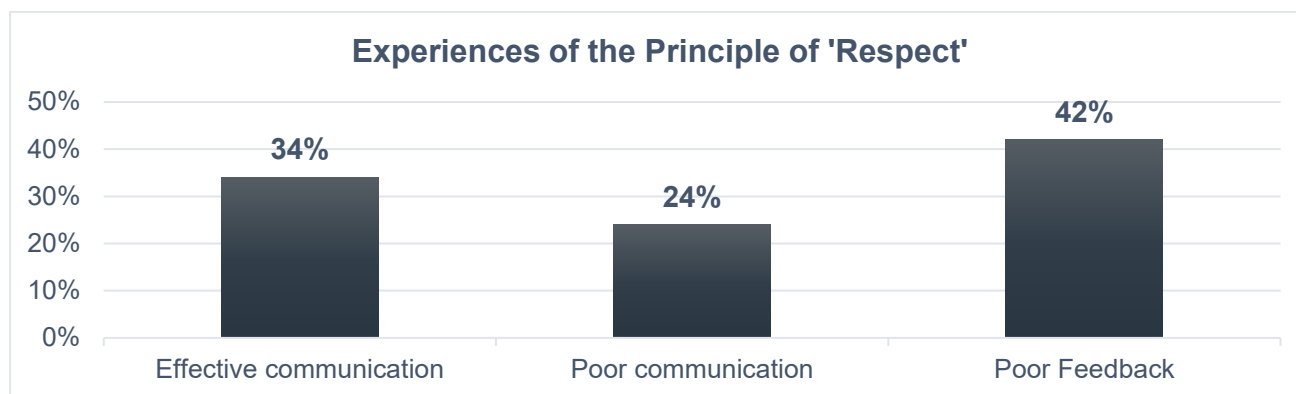


Figure 24 Applicant views on the principle of respect.

Of the 255 comments received, 37% offered comments on what it was specifically about the process that they felt contributed to or negatively impacted their experience of the principle of respect. Applicants commented particularly on positive interactions with those involved with the process and clear communication throughout. For those who did not feel respected or who did not indicate such a positive experience, many commented that the lack of feedback or not finding out about the result of their application, as contributing to whether or not they felt respected through the process.

These comments are helpful for learning about parts of the process which are important to applicants, and which should be given due attention by those involved in the process. Extracts from these responses are included in Appendix 3.

Fairness and Transparency

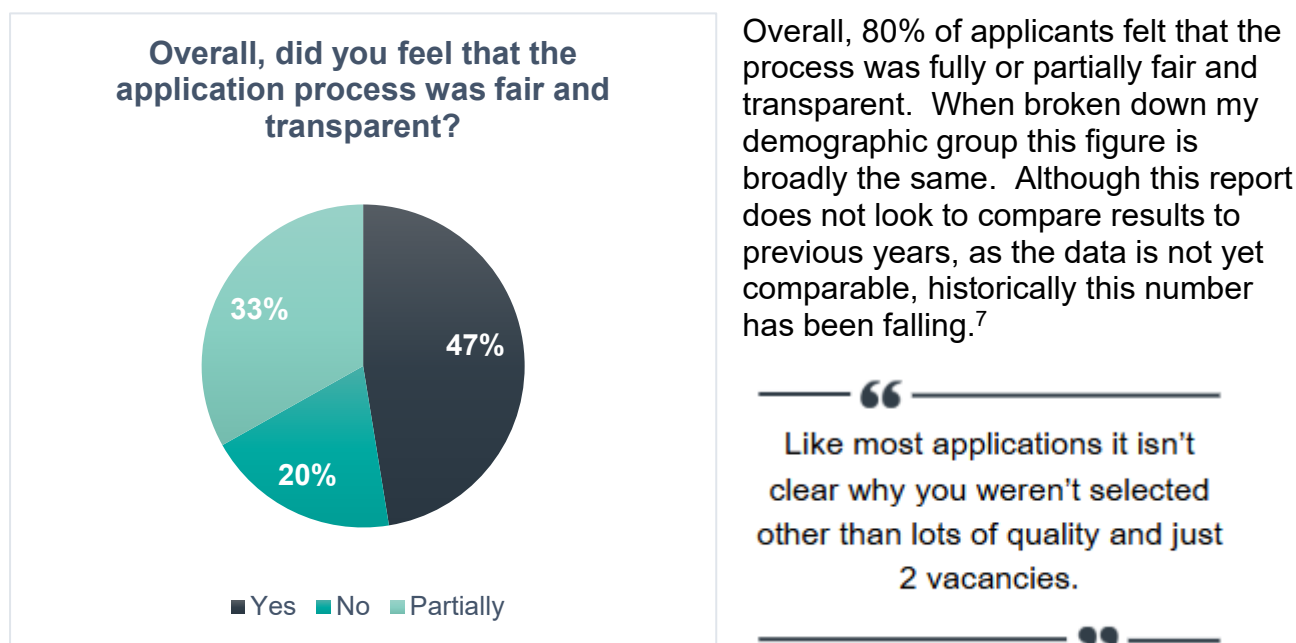


Figure 25 Applicant views on the transparency of the appointments process.

Those who did not feel that the application process was fair and transparent, or who felt it was only partially so, noted lack of feedback and feeling that they had the exact skills, knowledge, experience and values outlined in the applicant pack but were not appointed. 'Other' in figure 27 received a notable proportion of responses, and comments provided varied across surveys. Some respondents felt 'all of the above' was more appropriate, while others cited specific parts of the process that caused them to question its transparency. Extracted comments are included here and in Appendix 3.

⁷ See 2019 Applicant Research: <https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/publication/applicant-research-2019> and 2023 Applicant Research: <https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/publication/applicant-research-2023>

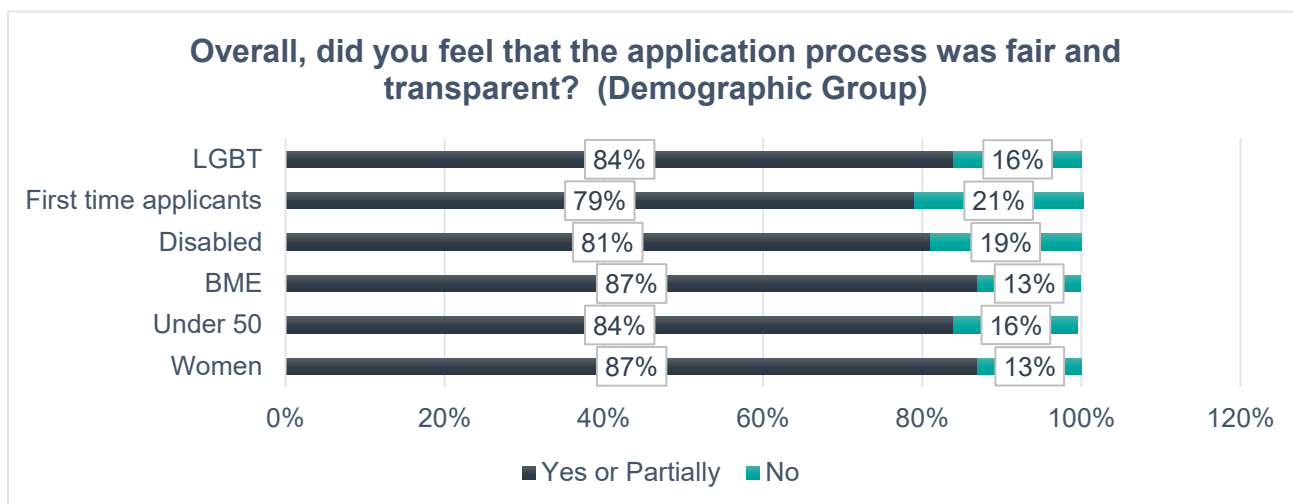


Figure 26 Applicant views on the transparency of the appointments process split by demographic group.

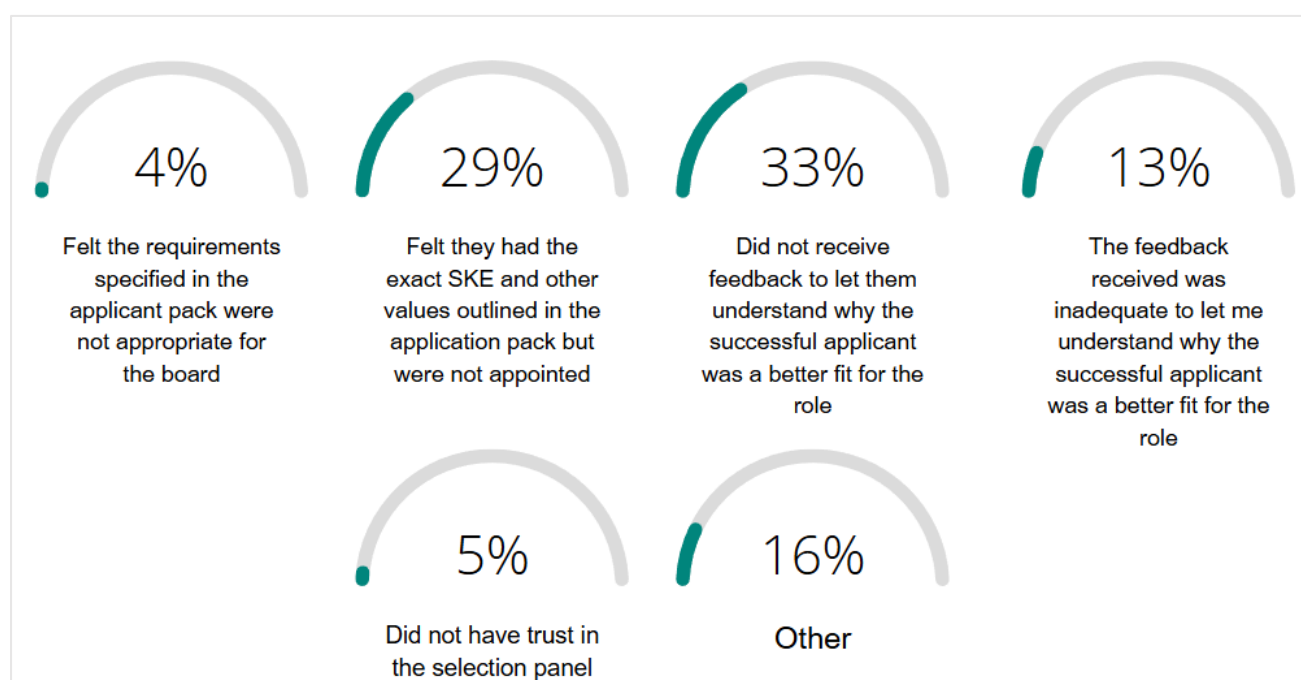


Figure 27 Applicant reasons for partially agreeing or disagreeing about transparency of process

“

Difficult to answer. I had all of the types of experience - personal and professional - that the board said they were looking for at that time. I referenced and evidenced this in the application, but I wasn't even interviewed. Hard to know why and puts me off applying for similar roles in the future.

”

Regulation

Applicants were asked whether they were aware that the appointments process was regulated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner and whether they believe that this regulation makes the process fairer and more transparent. 71% of respondents were aware of ESC regulation, and in total 80% felt that this regulation makes the process fully or partially fairer and more transparent than if it were not regulated.

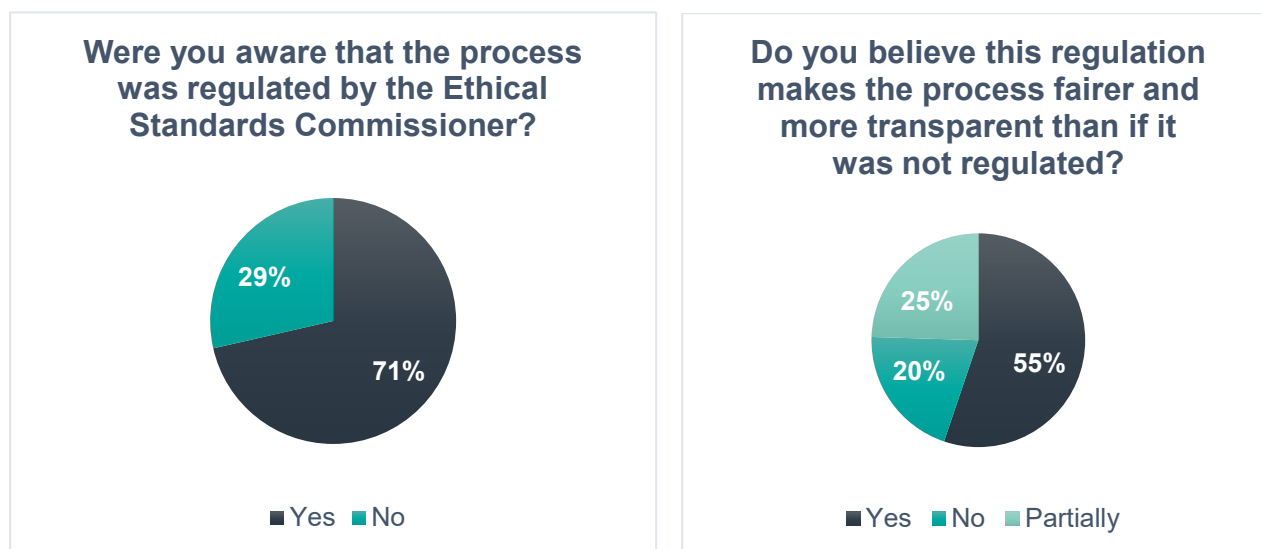


Figure 28 Applicant awareness of ESC regulation.

Figure 29 Applicant views on impact of ESC regulation.

Respondents were invited to comment on what more the ESC could be doing by way of regulation to improve the appointments process. A selection of comments is noted below with more in Appendix 2. Once more the issue of feedback arises with applicants noting that a lack of feedback results in feeling that the process is not as fair and transparent as it could be. Furthermore, some suggestions related to work already being undertaken by the ESC, such as having a representative sit on panels or having appropriate sight of applicant packs and adverts and working more closely with the Scottish Government Public Appointments Team. These comments indicate a lack of understanding about the role of the ESC and the work that we do. When broken down by demographic group, the results are broadly aligned with all responses with some notable exceptions. In particular, only 58% of applicants under 50 were aware of the ESC's regulation, while only 61% of minority ethnic applicants were aware. The figure for first time applicants is also relatively low with only 63% indicating that they were aware of ESC regulation.

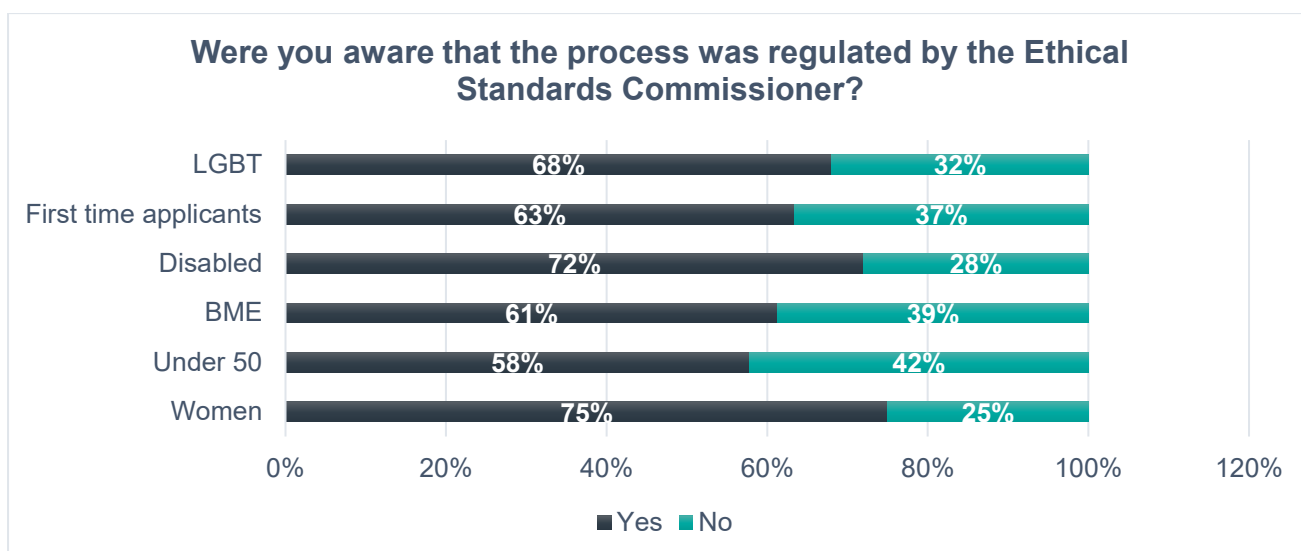


Figure 32 Applicant awareness of ESC regulation split by demographic group.

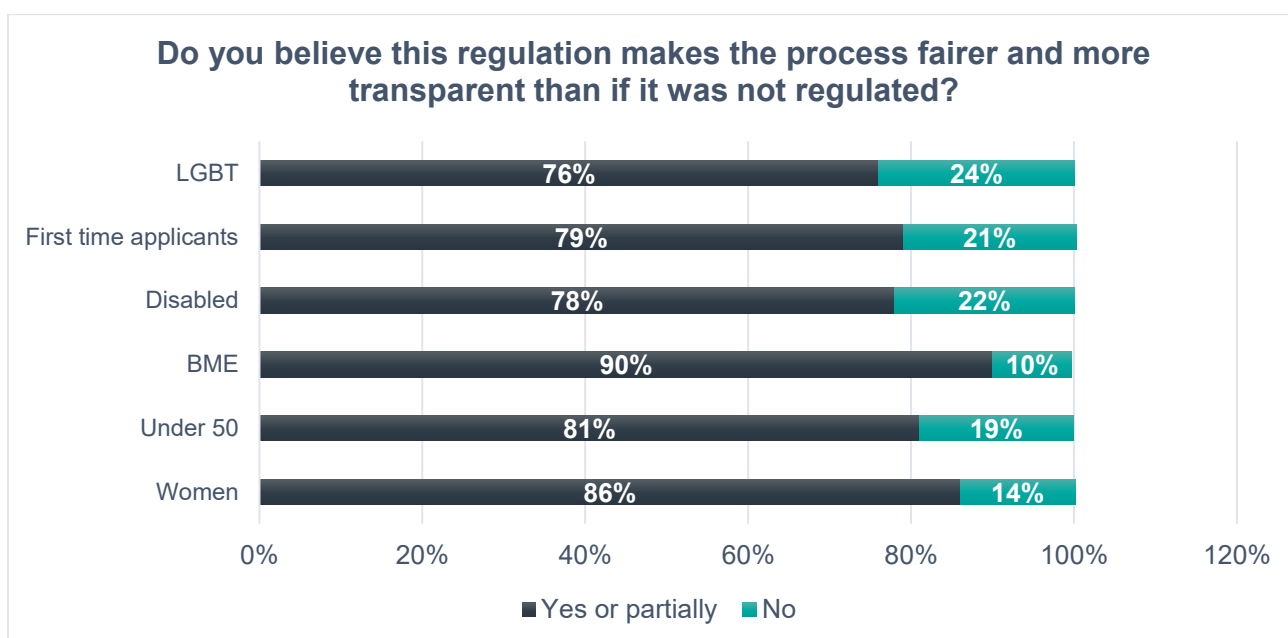


Figure 33 Applicant view on the effectiveness of ESC regulation split by demographic group.

Despite the lower figures indicating awareness of ESC regulation, when broken down by demographic group, those who fully or partially believe that regulation makes the process fairer and more transparent than if it was not regulated are consistently high and trend higher than all responses, which is encouraging.

The ESC has committed to helping the public and our stakeholders more readily understand what we do, how and why we do it and how well we do it during the period 2024 – 2028.⁸ As such, it will be useful to compare results on this section of the survey year on year, to assess whether there is any change in understanding of the ESC's regulation.

⁸ <https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/publication/communications-strategy>

“

Not sure - regular audits perhaps, or presence on shortlisting panels?

I have worked in highly regulated roles my whole career and always found this helped improve work and outcomes. I'm a bit unsure how regulation can help this sort of process though. Most application processes feel very impersonal and anything but transparent - this felt no different

Outcomes of such appointments should be given to applicants

Insist on feedback being given to all serious applicants. It was obvious (I believe) that I had spent a lot of time and effort on the application so to not get any feedback felt to me that the successful applicant was probably pre-decided.

More use of anonymised applications

Work closely with SG Public Appointments, not just in an audit capacity, but to improve processes.

”

Conclusion

It is positive progress to have the first full year's worth of data from public appointment rounds run under the 2022 Code of Practice. This first full year dataset will be used during the analysis of the 2024 public appointment rounds, where it will be possible and beneficial to compare the results. This in turn will allow us to identify aspects of the process that appear to be particularly helpful to, or present barriers for, applicants within currently under-reflected groups.

Following the 2023 interim applicant survey report where the response rate was 26%; we hoped to build on this during 2023 / 2024, and as a result started inviting feedback from applicants with increased frequency and closer to the date at which the appointment round was concluded. The upward trend in response rate to 29% is therefore encouraging and we hope to continue improving in this area.

As in previous years, respondent comments are invaluable in helping us and the Scottish Government to understand and learn from viewpoints on all the various aspects of the process. It is clear from the comments received that, although there are areas for improvement, applicants appreciate the opportunity to feedback on the process and that the ESC undertaking the applicant surveys continues to be an important and effective element of the appointments process – both for applicants having the opportunity to share their views, and for continuous learning and improvement as we work alongside the Scottish Government.

“

I appreciate your reviewing processes for improvement.

Its good to know that the ESC has oversight of this process

Thank you for the time taken to assess and interview me. It has given me confidence to apply for other government appointed roles in future and I will better know what to expect at interview should I get that far in future!

In general I think the process is a good one an fair and robust.

I answered honestly, confidentially and was pleased to be asked for my views. My responses were sincere and designed to add constructive and perspective based opinions on the process, I hope you find them thought provoking and useful.

”

Appendix 1 – Applicant Surveys run 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023

Body	Type
Accounts Commission for Scotland (members)	Member
Accounts Commission for Scotland (Chair)	Chair
Accounts Commission for Scotland (chair)	Chair (rerun)
Bòrd na Gàidhlig	Member
Boundaries Scotland	Member
Cairngorms National Park Authority	Member
Cairngorms National Park Authority	Member
Care Inspectorate	Member
Consumer Scotland	Member
Creative Scotland	Member
Crown Estate Scotland (Chair)	Chair
David MacBrayne Limited	Member
Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Member
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	Member
Independent Living Fund (one survey both)	Chair and Member
Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland	Member
Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority	Member
NHS Lothian	Member
MACS	Member
National Museums Scotland	Member
NatureScot (Chair)	Chair
NHS 24	Member
Ayrshire and Arran NHS	Member
NHS Ayrshire and Arran	Member
NHS Borders & NHS D&G	Whistleblowing member
Dumfries and Galloway NHS	Member
NHS Education for Scotland	Member
NHS Golden Jubilee	Member
NHS Grampian	Member
Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS	Member
Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS	Chair
Highland NHS	Chair
NHS Highland	Member
NHS National Services Scotland	Member
NHS Shetland	Member
NHS Western Isles	Member
NHS Western Isles	Member
Police Negotiating Board for Scotland	Chair
Quality Meat Scotland	Member
School Closure Review Panels - Convener	Convener
Scottish Ambulance Service	Member
Scottish Enterprise	Member

SEPA	Chair
SEPA	Member
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	Member
Scottish Land Commission (Commissioners)	Commissioners
Scottish Land Commission (Chair)	Chair
Scottish Legal Aid Board	Member
Scottish Legal Complaints Commission (chair)	Chair
Scottish National Investment Bank	Member
Scottish Qualifications Authority	Member
Scottish Social Services Council	Member
Scottish Water (Chair)	Chair
Scottish Water	Member
South of Scotland Enterprise	Member
NHS Tayside	Member
Visit Scotland	Member

Appendix 2 – Applicant Survey Questions

1. Have you applied for a regulated appointment to a public body before this application?

Yes - in the last 12 months	Yes – longer the 12 months ago	No
-----------------------------	--------------------------------	----

2. Did you experience anything new or innovative during the process compared to your previous experience? Please provide any additional comments.

Yes	No
-----	----

3. What statement best describes the outcome of your application?

I submitted an application but was not invited to interview
I was invited to interview but was not appointed
I was offered the appointment
Other (please specify):

4. How did you first find out about this particular public appointment opportunity? *

From a personal contact	Through a professional network (please specify in the box below)
Twitter	Facebook
LinkedIn	Direct email from the Scottish Government Public Appointments Team
Directly from the Public Body (a direct email or from the website)	Public Appointments Website (www.appointed-for-scotland.org)
Newspaper or other printed publication	Other (please specify below)

5. What about the advert attracted you? *

It made the public body sound interesting
It made the role sound interesting
It sounded like they were looking for people like me
That advert was not attraction

6. Did the application pack contain all the details you needed to apply (e.g. key deadlines, contact details, the appointments process, etc.) Please provide additional comments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	A mixture
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------

7. Were the requirements of the role (skills, knowledge, experience and other relevant attributes) clearly outlined in the applicant pack?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

8. Was the time and effort taken by you to complete the application form reasonable?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

9. The amount of information supplied in the applicant information pack was:

Too little	Just right	Too much
------------	------------	----------

10. Were you able to discuss any part of the application process with anyone involved in the recruitment process?

Yes
I could not find details on how to make contact
I tried to make contact but was unsuccessful
I did not wish to speak with anyone regarding my application
No – other (please add details below)

11. Was the application process clear?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

12. Please provide any comments on the previous six questions

13. Was the first stage of assessment (i.e. application) relevant to the skills, knowledge and experience outlined in the applicant pack? Please provide any additional comments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

14. Was the second stage of assessment (i.e. interview and other assessment methods such as presentation, role play, board paper exercise or similar) relevant to the skills, knowledge and experience outlined in the applicant pack?

If you were not invited to interview, please feel free to leave your thoughts on the proposed assessment in the applicant pack. Please provide any additional comments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

15. The Code of Practice states that, in relation to materials provided to applicants and the assessment process for appointments, *The objective should be to encourage the optimum number of people to apply for positions and for people to find it a comparatively easy exercise to submit applications.* * Do you feel this reflects your experience?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

16. Did you request feedback on your application?

Yes	No
-----	----

17. Do you feel that the feedback you received was constructive, tailored and meaningful?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

18. Since 2022 the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland includes the principle of Respect to applicants. Please provide any comments in relation to how you experienced the principle of Respect during the appointments process.

19. Please describe one (or more) positive aspect of the process for you.

20. Overall, did you feel the process was fair and transparent? Please provide any additional comments

Yes	No	Partially
-----	----	-----------

21. What makes you believe that the process was not fair and transparent? *

I believe that the requirements specified in the applicant pack were not appropriate for the board
I felt that I had the skills, knowledge, experience and other relevant attributes as outlined in the applicant pack but was not appointed
I did not receive feedback to help me understand why I was not the best fit for the role
The feedback that I received was inadequate to help me understand why I was not the best fit for the role
I did not have trust in the selection panel
Other (please specify)

22. Were you aware that the process was regulated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner?

Yes	No
-----	----

23. Do you believe this regulation makes the process fairer and more transparent than if it was not regulated?

Yes	No	Partially
-----	----	-----------

24. What more should the ESC be doing by way of regulation to improve the appointments process?

25. Please provide any other comments you may have on regulation. We would be particularly keen to receive more detail if you consider that the regulation does NOT make the process fairer and more transparent.

26. If you are happy to be included in further qualitative research following completion of this survey, please enter your email address below.

27. Thank you for taking the time to provide this feedback on the appointments process. If you have any final comments, please leave these in the box below.

Appendix 3 – Additional Applicant Comments

Did you experience anything new or innovative during the process compared to your previous experience? Please provide any additional comments.

It was my first experience, no previous experience.

It was a lot more open ended than other applications which seemed appropriate

The option of an online open evening.

It got even harder to apply

The application format was different.

The positive is that the form is less onerous to complete courtesy of the ICIMS system because that system holds much of the detail that previously needed to be either copied and pasted or (worst case scenario) rekeyed The negative is that you only have 400 words to state your case; last time around you got 500 !!

No - The case study appeared to be reasonably straightforward and the video interview was adequately delivered. However I do not think video interviewing is suitable for these types of appointments due to the lack of chemistry that is possible on screen.

Yes - I think this is the first time I have been in an exclusively on line interview option

It was a simultaneous application to two boards - which felt good to me as it meant I only had to complete 1 form and 1 interview for two roles

This was the first time I had been shortlisted for interview so that process was new

I was shortlisted for interview.

Online interview, very well done, with good follow up between panel members

Simplified application form

I thought the recent application form was better and easier to complete

Previously when I applied it was all on paper - it was a long time ago!

This process felt very disengaging if I'm honest; better experiences from multiple other public bodies across the UK in terms of communications. It didn't give me confidence in the process.

The process was somewhat similar to that experienced before. Discussion with the Chair and associated engagements did follow a pattern.

I have noticed new and innovative aspect during the process, which was user-friendly online platform used for this survey. The survey was easier to use than others I've done before because the questions were clear, and it was simple to move around. This made the whole process better for participants like me.

I was not particularly alert to changes in the process.

What about the advert attracted you?

The advert per se is not the main factor that drives me to apply. I apply for the roles where I think there is a significant connection between my skill set and experience and the entity in question. I am not seeking to secure a public appointment because I want one come what may; I am applying to particular roles because I think I have something very specific to offer to that organisation.

It sounded like a challenging but interesting role. They were looking for people with different characteristics and on first reading I wasn't sure I had the skills required. A colleague then discussed it with me and encouraged me to read it again.

I feel that the criteria for selection has the bar set very high and it doesn't give a layman in society with lots of experience in the role advertised to be successful. For that reason, I won't be applying again.

I had a prior interest in the role and was watching for a vacancy to be advertised

I was really motivated and even excited about the role based on the advert. I can't quite remember at what point that invitation to apply by candidates under the age of 50 and from ethnic minorities were especially encouraged to apply. Once I realised how detailed the application was, I initially decided to give up as I met neither of these criteria. I was encouraged by ex-colleagues to proceed with the application before the deadline based on my skills and extensive experience.

I was interested in finding a post with a territorial health board.

I felt and still feel I was exceptionally well qualified for the post, having been deeply involved in whistleblowing, partnership and employee support over many years. There may have been better qualified candidates, but I felt the reasons were other than given

I felt I would have been an excellent fit for the position and my conversation with the Chair confirmed this.

It sounded like they MIGHT be looking for people like me.

Having recently completed a long period of working in senior academic management, I was looking for a new challenge and the role seemed directly aligned with my personal interests and my expertise, as well as involving the kinds of activity that I enjoy.

I felt I could really contribute to the role using my lived experience.

The application stated lived experience essential and this appealed to me.

I was interested in the body in any case and looking out for vacancies.

An appointment like this is something I have always had an interest in.

Did the application pack contain all the details you needed to apply (e.g. key deadlines, contact details, the appointments process, etc.)

The information wasn't particularly clear. I had to look in multiple documents to find relevant guidance.

All good except attempt to join info webinar which I didn't seem able to access at the time stated.

I thought the pack was excellent.

The application pack stated that the assessment would be in 2 stages but in the event, both were covered in 1 interview. I had to seek clarification that this was going to apply to all candidates, and I was not informed of the change prior to interview

The pack was comprehensive in terms of what was wanted, key dates, how the process worked etc. However, I was less impressed with the application form, lack of support or examples on how it might be filled and that it appeared NHS centric, which could disadvantage those outside the NHS applying for such positions and undermine the diversity desired on NHS boards. It also took me the best part of 20 hours to complete the forms to ensure the language was to the best of my ability.

It was extremely difficult to understand the process and the different parts of things you required to complete.

It contained much of the information. However, I found out later there were parts of the application which I'd missed. So, I had feedback I had responded correctly and confirmation it was received. Where in fact part of the process had been missed

The application pack had far too much information, most of which was useless and all about what the employer required and nothing about what the job would offer me - i.e. why should I apply for this position.

The initial stage did not make clear what metrics that the recruitment team would focus on.

Unsure if the position has been filled - no appointment was made.

Although the application pack contained the details needed, the dates and procedures outlined in the pack were not adhered to in my experience, which was intensely frustrating.

I discovered the role needed greater experience in the creative industry than I was expecting.

I found the text documents sufficient to be able to apply but that they did not outline what specifically was being looked for- i.e. 'screen experience' but not actually explaining what elements of working in that industry was of interest to the board and this hindered the interview process

If I recall correctly, the language of the online form and the advert did not match with regards to what was required.

Email for the chairperson was included but I received no reply to my enquiry.

Timings if the non- face to face interview elements were not clearly identified nor the associated process.

The pack was clear, detailed and easy to understand.

A good range of information was provided as well as a detailed outline of the process itself.

Were you able to discuss any part of the application process with anyone involved in the recruitment process?

I had to speak to some to understand the process as there was not enough clear info about the two different forms I had to include. The person on the phone was forthright and said I had missed the deadline until I told him I had sent the form days before the deadline. He went quiet as if he were

disappointed.

I had useful discussions with chair and vice chair.

The number provided explained that the person named was not available with no alternative offered.

I felt that trying to speak to someone might have been seen as an attempt to "jump the queue" so I didn't try. It might have been helpful to have at least a video if not an actual information session where real people could give real feedback on exactly what skillset was being sought and what the role entailed.

It was too late to attempt contact I felt.

I didn't want my application to be informed or influenced by anyone.

It felt like a shot in the dark and there was no feedback.

I normally would but the application had to be completed quickly after a holiday.

I did want feedback afterwards - and did not receive it.

I did however speak to existing employee.

I did not have the time because of the deadline on the application.

I needed clarity on the application information requirement.

No return contact from the recruiters.

I was not aware that I could discuss this, but I may have missed that in the application information.

If there was a contact available to discuss the application then I was not aware of it.

I made a few attempts at contact over email but responses were not followed up or were responded to in short detail.

Attended a call for all applicants.

I attended an online webinar.

I came away from the experience entirely disenchanted.

Please provide any comments on the previous six questions (all 6 questions related to the application part of the process)

The application form was well worded and contained less jargon or professional acronyms. Virtual workshop on roles and responsibilities of appointed members in my opinion were too vague.

As I note, it was not clear how those skills were going to be judged nor where they fitted in the bigger picture.

There was no contact from the institution except by website and email. No contact details were obvious in the pack.

Still waiting to hear

I think it's a shame that candidates who do not have experience in a similar role are not invited for interview-how do you get the experience?

The amount of effort & complexity to complete the application risks putting off candidates from outside the 'usual suspects'. If Scottish Government is serious about widening diversity on public boards, the process needs to be reviewed & simplified.

Useful to speak with chair.

I found no difficulty with the process.

This was the first application I had made and found the process a bit difficult to understand. I attended an open information session with the Chair and some of the Board which I found useful.

Nothing to add.

The task question was miss leading.

There was an issue with the system generating an automatic email. that I had done the online form but not emailed the application form (on this and another process), but this has not happened with ore recent applications. The time and effort involved is considerable, but I do expect this for a senior post.

I was disappointed I was not selected to progress in this appointment application, although I understand that not all can be successful. IT certainly will not put me off applying again in the future for this post and other similar ones.

While the application pack clearly identified the attributes required of each of the NED roles, my impression from the interview and identification of the subsequent appointments of the successful applicants, was that these specific requirements were subordinate to having primarily worked in the public/third sector.

I don't think that the role is offered to lay people with a multitude of experience in life and the role that was advertised.

It was a very detailed and time consuming process for a first pass. I was very disappointed that I didn't get the opportunity to proceed beyond this stage although I wasn't surprised.

The recruitment process was clear and easy to follow.

The approach to background information from the 2 boards was markedly different which I did not think was ideal. One of the boards in particular seemed very unfocused.

All information provided was clear and appropriate to gather the information required for both the role and the application process. It did alert the applicant to a further exercise but details were not provided at this point.

Was the first stage of assessment (i.e. application) relevant to the skills, knowledge and experience outlined in the applicant pack? Please provide any additional comments.

As before, the why and how need a lot greater clarity.

Yes . However there was not much opportunity to capture other skills and attributes relevant to the application.

Although, harder to use it to demonstrate life skills & diverse perspectives that should be of interest to a Board.

I felt that my experience and skills did match, in part, the role description of the Board vacancies - I think the skills and experience I have in the social rented housing sector could have been useful and transferable to a health education role.

The first stage was a written application form. The information with the application stated that people with no experience of this type of role were welcome to apply, however when feedback was provided it became clear that board experience was an important criteria.

I matched the requested skillset but was not taken forward. I fully appreciate that there might be many applicants, but I am at a loss to know why I didn't get further.

I assume so as I completed the application and wouldn't have applied had I not met the base criteria.

It isn't entirely clear the level of detail wanted, or how 'evidenced' it needs to be.

It's been a while since I applied for this role and I do not have a clear recollection of the information provided.

I can't really remember, sorry.

I think so, but as I did not get an interview I may be mistaken.

Unfortunately, I didn't progress beyond the first stage of assessment.

I was surprised to not be invited for an interview. Looking back on this, it feels like there was a specific type that was required for this role and I did not fit that demographic.

However this was a very static assessment method. It looked like a competency based method which isn't always the best approach. I think this excludes certain people from being successful.

I sort of see the point of the questions, but a simple CV would also have sufficed.

In my opinion the stated skill and experience requirements were a good match with the information I provided. However there was no transparency on how the filtering process would take place and no feedback other than a standard email saying my application had not been successful.

The detailed descriptions were much narrower in scope than the headline advert suggested.

In general yes, but not clear on what the key elements of experience that the Company valued and was truly seeking.

No experience of first the stage assessment.

The applicant pack indicated that the panel were looking for three specific board roles with specific skills, knowledge and experience in each. I was able to bring a breadth of skills, knowledge and experience across all roles, but had to specify which role I was specifically applying for - this made responding a challenge.

If the application process had been fairer it would have asked for relevant 'skills' and 'knowledge' then streamed the application to the appropriate role.

Yeah it was fine.

I think the applicant pack was focused more on passion "I.e. why are you interested" and therefore did not allow you to make sure your actual experience was an appropriate fit.

Although the questions posed are straightforward it is not at all clear how to construct the sort of the response the application team are looking for. There is no structure to base answers around. It is deeply frustrating.

See my comment above - the onerous nature of the assessment is likely to discourage or rule out people from a wider background than the professional classes.

Only comment I would make is that, whilst looking for a range of skills, you were only required to focus on one aspect.

Was the second stage of assessment (i.e. interview and other assessment methods such as presentation, role play, board paper exercise or similar) relevant to the skills, knowledge and experience outlined in the applicant pack?

As before, the why and how need a lot greater clarity, as also why certain things are used for screening and others for final selection.

I think it would be helpful if there was a more formal feedback process.

Some questions were not as expected, e.g. there were questions based on Scottish audit knowledge rather than non-executive competency in scrutinising audit.

Reliance almost exclusively on questions asking to 'describe a situation in which' not entirely inclusive i.e. challenging for those removed from employment.

Yes but obviously the details of the practical exercise were issued one week prior to the process. This information was also clear and well explained.

I thought the chair was the worst chair I have had in an interview. Patronising!

It would have helped to have been told prior to interview that the process had been changed so each candidate was only getting 1 interview rather than 2.

Presentation was fine. Questions were odd and seemed to imply, indeed one of the panel confirmed, that they were looking for more (unpaid) time commitment than that which had been advertised. This was unhelpful to me and the process. I am retired and have a range of things I am pursuing but I could give 100% for the advertised time but not double that as implied. I may have indicated this which may have influenced the decision not to appoint.

The interview process was appropriate. Review of the first draft of the Board Work Force planning seemed to be straightforward. However for me this was not the case.

Situational interview given to much focus.

Board paper exercise was confusing and didn't get a response from support - very disappointing first experience before interview.

The idea that candidates were provided with one piece of the question to comment on and critique and then they themselves are criticised for providing fair and honest feedback is just totally wrong.

There were scant details regarding the assessment stage.

The assessment was fair, but I felt that my private sector experience counted against me in this particular instance.

The assessment exercises were relevant and interesting to complete.

I found the interview quite strange. The main purpose of the role, as I understood it, was recruitment, however, this was barely covered in the interview. I did say this at the end of the interview. In general the interview went well, but there was one member who did not engage (and who I assumed had already decided I was not an appropriate candidate).

I interviewed well - extremely well according to the feedback I received - but did not get the role and it was not clear at all how the successful candidate's skills and experiences were better than mine other than that she was an 'inside' candidate. I don't really appreciate going through hoops just to make the process look legitimate.

As there was a 300 word-count limit I felt that there was inadequate opportunity to express myself adequately. I found some questions to be difficult to interpret and was unsure what the questioner expected as an answer. The wording of the questions seemed to have been lifted from the HR Handbook and as such gave inadequate opportunity for proper expression. The process is more suited to those skilled in making such applications but does not suit applicants, like me, who, having started successful businesses from scratch, have not had the need or opportunity to submit such applications.

The questions asked were not really relevant to the position and were too theoretical i.e. how do you handle conflict in workplace etc. As an experienced director the issues raised were issues that any Director with experience would know

Process appeared standard.

As I have said I just felt at the interview that the panel was looking for something/someone else. It was an odd interview - I felt that though I answered everything positively (I couldn't have done differently on reflection) I just wasn't what they were looking for.

Feedback is really important I would have liked to understand what I would have needed to demonstrate to get to the next stage of the process.

Sadly despite possessing all the necessary elements and experience for role I was not successful...this suggests the process is flawed and no useful feedback offered.

The [Code of Practice](#) states that, in relation to materials provided to applicants and the assessment process for appointments, *The objective should be to encourage the optimum number of people to apply for positions and for people to find it a comparatively easy exercise to submit applications. Do you feel this reflects your experience?*

I agree with this but I think in order to continually encourage applicants it would be useful to address the feedback issue.

The process is complex, time consuming and tends to favour 'the usual suspects'.

I won't comment on the 'optimum number' angle of the question but in terms it being easy to submit application I afraid that isn't my experience.

I'm not sure it should be an expectation for it to be 'relatively easy'. There was effort required to consider what was required and then I put a lot of effort into getting the application right. This is an important part of the shortlisting process so I feel that this was appropriate.

Having to write a lengthy and wordy application form for these types of roles is not an appropriate route to finding the best senior candidates for senior roles. It is almost impossible to satisfy the word limit criteria & provide sufficient detail of achievements over a 30+ year career in these boxes.

Yes the exercise was fine - but as mentioned above - it was easy to get assistance to comment on the board paper.

The application form was very prescriptive. I was disappointed not to have been called for interview after the effort expended.

I felt that anyone suitably qualified for the role should be encouraged. Specifying a particular person profile unrelated to skills and/or relevant experience was discouraging. I was mindful of this throughout the process. I checked with others looking to challenge my understanding. While others concurred with my understanding, I was encouraged to exercise my right to apply based only on my skills, knowledge and experience.

I should have felt comforted to know that I would be invited to an interview because of my disabilities. This did not happen. This is clearly bad practice.

It's a lot of work but that's reasonable. It helps to have done an application before.

Reasoning why I was not taken further not clear and left feeling that it could be a waste of time applying for any future roles.

As a process the application was fine but to say that compiling the application and preparing for and undertaking the interview was easy would belie the time, effort and thought required.

I met the stated criteria and exceeded in many areas. I wasn't invited to interview. The communications were disengaging and no real feedback was provided. It wasn't a positive experience and I would be unlikely to reapply based on this experience. I don't feel that way about other organisations where I have been unsuccessful in my applications so something went wrong in this process.

I agree for applying but feel the process needed to be clearer for the type of candidate selected - their were clear criteria for the position (disabled, LGBT and under 50) that I met but the selected candidate did not.

It's a lot of work, but that's reasonable. It's easier when you have done an application before, which I have.

The process quite clearly favours friends of friends and is not interested in obtaining the relevant qualified persons for these roles what they seek are patsy's who will tow the party line and accept substandard scrutiny.

The pack was quite off-putting in suggesting a fairly limited range of applicants would be considered for the vacant role(s)

Being ignored for feedback and feeling like my disability was a factor in this does not encourage me to apply.

I felt as a disabled candidate who amply met the eligibility criteria, I was actively discriminated against.

I think that it came across that if you were young and were in some sort of minority category you might be at an advantage. I'm sure that wasn't the case but I think people are trying to be so politically correct it comes over as a negative for some applications.

I think there was clear age discrimination present in the process. The panel also lacked racial diversity and the materials shared in advanced were not as accessible as they could have been- both in terms of the word doc formats but also in the opaque link between what was being asked and what was being measured.

I am unlikely to apply for any future public appointments.

I cannot make that judgement as applicant.

Most of the applications emphasise either lived experience, or belonging to a minority group. If you are white, male and don't have a disability many applications seem to suggest that it is not worth applying. It has become a form of inverted discrimination.

Process involved more time than expected with calls to and from to ensure accessibility at venue etc was appropriate. Staff dealt with this helpfully but it felt rather longwinded to confirm. All initial steps were clearly outlined. However technical difficulties arose when trying to submit the first part

Again it is difficult to comment. The priority criteria narrowed the range of assessment criteria to four very specific kinds of skills. That presumably resulted from a very deliberate decision of the Board to limit applications in this way. If that is the case then I think that the application process may, by limited the number who applied, have successfully encouraged the "optimum" number to apply. But the process did narrow the criteria right down at the outset so if the intention was to attract a wider field then it would not have done that. As it happened I made an application recognising that the priority skills were not my core skills - because I am enthusiastic about the national park. But I suspect that others would not have done that.

This most recent process has merely reinforced my views that appointed officers think they know best and are not wishing to test the wider market place to get the best fit and most beneficial candidates for the job

See my answer to question 13. I think this confusion will have put off a considerable number of people from applying.

See previous comments on the ability to appropriately cover all criteria, given the word limitations expected.

Do you feel that the feedback you received was constructive, tailored and meaningful?

It was a lot of waffle and very unclear. It did not explain how I didn't meet the criteria they were looking for beyond "there was stronger candidates"

I was told there were lots of applicants but whether there had been any specific shortcomings in terms of my application

It was fairly formulaic and limited, but it did give a modicum of meaningful and constructive information.

Never received any.

Not sure the reasons given were the whole story. I think the obvious gap in time commitment between advertisement and expectation played a part.

It was helpful to a point, and after reading it, I wondered why I had not got an interview (I appreciate there were many strong candidates, but I felt I was stronger than the appointed candidate unless I was missing something like living in the area all one's life for example). I also felt the feedback could have been a bit more succinct.

I am yet to receive any details

I didn't receive a response to the request.

I have not yet received feedback.

I was informed of the change of the rules after I had submitted my application

Never received any which was disappointing.

Feedback was not relevant to my application

I didn't get any feedback although I asked for it.

I have yet to receive any feedback whatsoever

No feedback was given

None was provided

Please forgive me, this was quite some time ago. However I believe I was told that feedback wasn't available at the stage my application had reached.

I did not receive feedback.

The Chair... provided useful and relevant feedback

I did not get a response

Feedback was constructive - but it was all positive. It did not say what the successful candidate had that I didn't. Based on that feedback I should have been appointed - the only difference was that the successful candidate was already on the board (but I was on several other relevant boards, and had much more academic and chairing experience).

I thought I had requested feedback but all I received was an unsuccessful application notice/ email

No feedback offered

It was much as I expected and confirmed what I felt during the application process about the limited opportunity to properly demonstrate my experience and skills.

I can't recall receiving feedback.

Extremely opaque. Left me with the belief the process was 'fixed'. I felt they simply did not want any challenge to their current approach.

I did not receive the requested feedback.

Main point was that I had not brought out all my experience and skills in application or interview but that was around specific detail which maybe I had expected to focus on higher level skills

I did not receive feedback

None was forthcoming after two emails. My first email was in mid-May it is now the end of September. It is devaluing and I think unfortunately underlines Creative Scotland's irresponsible handling of appointments. Deeply disappointing

The feedback I got was questionable in quality and detail, but also revealed ignorance of the organisation's own disability confident policies.

No feedback was given whatsoever.

Useless and slightly insulting given the effort to apply

Feedback was the minimum with no reasoning provided.

Not provided

I did not receive any feedback and therefore was not given the chance to assess its quality.

I did not receive feedback, although I had requested it

I asked for feedback but never received any which was very disappointing
No feedback received

I have not been offered any feedback.

I didn't receive feedback, which would have been helpful in deciding whether to apply for the same role in another national park that is now advertised. I'm not willing to waste my time so will not apply.

I did not receive feedback. To be fair, as I was not short listed, I don't think that the shortlisting panel was required to provide feedback, but can't find anything since being told that my request had been passed onto the shortlisting panel. I don't want to reopen it now. I have however been in touch directly with the [body] since then.

I did not receive any feedback although I requested it

No feedback at all, I asked on 2 occasions.

Sadly the weakest aspect and I understand the challenge but was methodical and generic in my view.

I did appreciate the fact that I was given feedback on request even though I hadn't been selected for interview. However, it is difficult to know quite how to interpret or what to do with the feedback provided.

Since 2022 the [Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland](#) includes the principle of Respect to applicants. Please provide any comments in relation to how you experienced the principle of Respect during the appointments process.

See previous comments about not being told I had been unsuccessful.

Yes I feel I was treated respectfully.

The process was respectful. I did not like the answer, but I'm fine if my qualifications did not match what the board was looking for.

I felt this was applied. I was very well treated

In the email being provided I did not feel that I could ask for feedback on my application.

I genuinely felt there was age bias present even though I am still in full employment in a highly skilled Technology and quality assurance role

Given that this was a board appointment, for which I was fully qualified, I would have expected constructive feedback rather than a generic style email.

It was a good experience overall.

The quality and tone of written and in-person communication was clear and patient. Questions I raised during interview were answered thoroughly, to help me understand.

All communication was courteous

Didn't feel respected when no-one could take the time to provide meaningful feedback.

My previous comments about feedback align in my view with the Respect principle. In my view Respect for unsuccessful applicants is diminished when feedback (which has had to be solicited) is then not provided in a timely manner

All panel members and Public Appointments team were very respectful and helpful

There was a positive ethos in the interview but there was a lack of continuing contact with regard to the process as it went forward after interview.

The official who telephoned me to say that my application was unsuccessful was respectful.

All correspondence was positive and constructive as was and the way in which the interview was conducted.

A question in this survey was whether I sought feedback however there was no opportunity to do so nor any feedback given. This I believe is essential for first time applicants seeking a public body appointment or their first directorship

Respect shown throughout, but interview panel was not diverse.

All was fine, no comments

I was not invited for interview and not was not given a credible explanation for this. So on that basis I did not feel the principle of Respect was applied properly to me. Others may have had a different experience.

The process didn't explain about to ask for feedback if unsuccessful.

I was treated politely and fairly with the level of friendly courtesy that the process and circumstances required.

Not really apparent, whole process felt like it was designed to deal with volume rather than individual applicants

Having not been invited for interview, I don't think I can really answer this question

I found out I didn't get the job when a post on Twitter was made congratulating the winning candidate. Considering the effort undertaken and that I had made the final interview to have received no indication ahead of time is plain rude and suggests no value was attributed to those candidate who didn't get appointed. I took this up at the time and discovered a very short note was send to me an hour ahead of the publication which sadly went to SPAM. Whilst I accept the process did intend to get in touch, an hour notice with an process that may or may not work seems poor and more like an afterthought than a deliberate step to value those who apply.

I felt respected during the appointments process. They communicated clearly, stuck to the schedule, and were polite. This made me feel good about the process and helped me feel more comfortable. I'm glad they follow the Code of Practice to treat applicants with respect and professionalism.

No respect, no acknowledgement of application

I did not experience this.

Respect in my knowledge of accessibility was not taken on board

The information provided made it very clear that certain groups were required to assist in the balance of representation on the board - i.e. women's, people with disabilities, people under 50 etc.

I cannot say how my experience was. Despite making it clear that you welcomed applications from ethnic minorities there was no additional support or information to ensure inclusive recruitment practices were being followed

I received an acknowledgment of my application being received. I did not receive information about my application witching the stated timeframe. I had to email for information about my application

The follow up letter was appreciated.

This post was withdrawn from advertisement, with indication that applicants would be contacted subsequently. No further contact was received.

I felt very comfortable throughout the process

See my previous comment regarding another vacancy. There was absolutely no respect shown and this was heightened when the request for feedback (that had been offered) was simply ignored.

No problem experienced

On the single issue of respectful engagement/contact with authorities and institutions I made applications to, this was no issue for me.

No apparent Respect for suitably qualified individuals who fall outwith an identifiable minority group

The panel that interviewed me were courteous. The long gaps before and after the interview were an issue.

I liked being able to watch a video with Changing the Chemistry talking with existing board members

Please describe one (or more) positive aspect of the process for you.

Clear documents. Good discussion with board secretary.

Frequent communication

Online interview was very relaxed.

It was nice to get a letter confirming that I wasn't selected for interview though there was nothing personal about it other than using my name. I assumed from the wording that the letters were the same for everyone that was rejected

No real positive impact of an application which did not result in an interview.

Communication was good and timely (albeit that outcome announcement was driven/ constrained by ministerial timings)

Timescales for application were generous

Contact with arrangements prior to interview very positive

It was well described, easy and I was offered my interview preference date.

This was my first application for this type of post - and so a learning experience. Should have asked for feedback! Missed that bit.

I really thought the approach taken by the panel and the tone that was set during the interview was fantastic. It is a challenging process but they made me feel supported and welcomed throughout.

I learned a number of lessons (albeit of the 'what not to do in future' sort) that ought be useful for subsequent applications

The interview indicated which criterion was being considered before the questions relating to that criterion, which helped to bring to mind relevant examples to cite.

The automated response of applications, the interview was well managed and I liked Nicholas from the outset.

I respected that the interview exposed the frailty of my expertise on the essential criterion

Having the opportunity to learn more about the function of the board. Also gaining constructive feedback which could help me with future applications.

Efficient

I enjoyed the discussion, and felt I was facilitated to offer the evidence I had wished to put across.

It encouraged me to revise my CV and focus on my future.

The recruitment process was smooth and the interview conducted well.

I made me reflect on my career and what made it successful and fulfilling for me. I also realised I could give a lot back to an organisation which has been very important to me and to my family.

TEAMS - The interview on Teams was positive despite my reservations. I found the panel members (except one) to be encouraging and helpful throughout my interview.

The interview was challenging in a positive way

Thought the scope to present in a meaningful way was good, and helpful

A well written advert that stimulated interest and enthusiasm.

Reasonably rapid turn about.

Interview process was well planned and executed, thorough

Engaging interview discussion

Kept me informed. Interview process conducted well

Obviously using social media generates far more interest.

Responses from the administrator, the chair and his staff were all prompt and polite, and sought to provide the information requested. The chair was very positive and helpful when providing feedback.

I was most grateful for the opportunity to be interviewed on a date other than the one proposed in the initial paperwork

Hope to be able to contribute to an organisation that I respect at the start of the process

Public Appointments Team admin consistently timely, clear and supportive

One positive aspect of the appointments process was the clear and timely communication. This made it much easier for applicants like me to understand what was expected and to follow the process effectively. Clear communication helped reduce uncertainty and allowed me to engage confidently in the process.

Communication and deadlines were very clear.

The initial application on-line was quick and straightforward to use

The original video briefing was very good.

A positive aspect is this form requesting comments on the process

I felt taken seriously, that my application was valued, and the position was respected and important.

The interview was local - 20 minutes walk from my house so I didn't feel too much time was wasted.

Getting to interview was encouraging.

The eventbrite session was well intentioned

The communication after my application was good, clear and timely

The materials portrayed the organisation in an attractive light including video

A positive aspect for me was, to be able to evaluate myself. Appreciate my strengths in different areas I had worked and made differences in both paid and volunteering aspects of my working life.

Clear process and timescales.

I liked the thoroughness of the process. I felt I had good experience which was relevant for the post and was pleased that I got the opportunity to show this in detail.

Overall, did you feel the process was fair and transparent? Please provide any additional comments

I think it's good the questions are open ended, but it's not clear what they are looking for. From what I could gather from their feedback (and I am not clear if I've interpreted it correctly) they wanted to know more about my experiences. I think this is slightly misguided in itself, since we are representing patients. We should have experiences that reflect broad patient experience, not our own gripes with healthcare.

I understand the need to target board members with particular skills and experience based on what the recruiting board are looking for. On reflection it may be even more helpful for the weighting of this to be as clear as possible to avoid unnecessary or inappropriate applications.

The nature of questions which focused on recalling and recounting incidents/examples a little challenging for those not in a work situation or for whom a work situation was some years previous

This question implies that the ultimate aim of the process is that it is fair & transparent. To me the key aim of the process is to ensure that the individuals with the greatest ability to contribute in a non-executive capacity to the better performance of the body in question are a) minded to apply and b) subsequently selected. The process for doing that clearly needs to be fair and transparent but it is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

Hopefully I will be clearer on the process if I decide to make another application, but it would be useful to be able to have an informal chat prior to completing the application form, e.g. if only social care/health skills and experience were required.

Perhaps a little weakness regarding the board paper exercise given the assistance that could be found - although perhaps those setting the process would be content that a person could research and get a steer as that shows some initiative and insight - although this was easier to do for people who are aware of the availability of info on the internet and have access to it.

I feel mine was a strong application and I should have been called for interview. If the Board are making the decision on who to call for interview then this may be relevant.

I have no understanding of why I was not successful so cannot comment on the transparency

As stated above the evident gap between advertised time commitment and expectation of (some of the) panel was unhelpful. Some of them seemed ill prepared as well.

I'd like to apply for roles that encourage everyone with appropriate capability to apply.

Don't know as do not have any info on which to assess this.

I do not feel my expectations were managed its a lot of time and effort to put in without any feedback

There seem to be a significant proportion of posts which are filled by individuals who already have experience of public bodies.

As a standard/normal process it was fair, but as Interviews are recognised as a very limited way of assessing applicants suitability for jobs, and tend to favour those of an extrovert and strongly self-confident nature, the process disadvantages/excludes some potentially excellent candidates.

Not clear who got the job and why

Unknown. I would have valued feedback but none was offered.

Generic feedback is not a good way to go and it should not be down to a candidate to request better feedback, it should be automatic that candidates are respected enough for it to be supplied

I can't really comment on that - feedback was limited and have not yet has any additional feedback.

I feel now I should definitely have spoken to someone before I started the process.

In truth, I cannot recall if I asked for feedback. I should have. I believe I had a great deal to offer this role and considerable relevant experience. I found the rejection email bland and impersonal. I may be wrong, but I strongly suspect my age had something to do with it.

It did not make it clear that a person could only serve one complete term of office in a lifetime

It can only be transparent if you can see the end result

The application process was transparent and although there was a degree of anonymity, the responses on the application form would reveal age, gender and other characteristics which may unintentionally impact on fairness of the progression to interview and subsequent appointment.

I'm sure it was fair, but it was out of my line of sight

It was fair in as much as the selection process was clearly articulated- but, as previously mentioned, I feel that some suitably qualified aren't taken seriously.

Nothing further heard after email apologising for delay in response to application.

Was not sure during the process whether or not to attach CV and know I did not give sufficient information as not good at selling myself.

the candidate appointed had less experience and fewer qualifications than I did. She was already on the board, so she was an 'inside' candidate. This felt unfair - I was approached and asked to apply and genuinely thought the board wanted my considerable academic and lived experience for this role (academically I have been researching this area for over 30 years and have advised governments internationally on my research). I was at a loss as to why this academic experience

was not valued when it was specifically noted when I was approached.

It isn't clear for applicants why they are rejected unless they specifically request feedback. In my case I felt I had genuine lived experience as well as other professional skills which would have been ideally suited to the position.

Although fair the process should be about attracting good candidates like me rather than a process where all possible boxes must be ticked.

I got the feeling (rightly or wrongly) that priority would be given to minority applicants and those with disabilities. I come across this a lot and whilst I can appreciate the need for diversity - I feel that if you are white, healthy and educated you are at a disadvantage.

I did not find the actual application process unfair, but the fact that I did not receive a response makes me feel like my application was not fully considered.

Despite meeting (exceeding) the role requirements for 2 areas of interest I was rejected at application stage without any feedback. This is certainly not transparent

I feel like there had already been a decision made on a potential applicant and they were going through the motion to meet governance requirements rather than actually look for someone outside of the traditional candidate. It is a shame as would be good to see someone who is actually in touch with reality get a role on the board.

I was not aware that I could request feedback I feel that it should be given for all applications

I wasn't notified if result until after the date had passed and I contacted them to find out if I was being progressed. I was not offered feedback on why I wasn't progressed to the interview stage Mostly so but was not quite clear how weighted some aspects of essential/desirable skill/abilities /experience were in relation to others.

It is very nerve racking for interviewees but I was made to feel very welcome.. however I did underestimate the process and maybe some direction should be considered in relaying to the applicant the importance of it being a formal interview

I think the process is fair in theory but it is so heavily weighted around completing rather nebulous questions in 400 words that I am not sure it really necessarily explores the applicants suitability.

I have answered partially simply because of the comments above. Otherwise the process was very transparent and I think was a good assessment, The interview questions were outstanding and testing....and I think will have resulted in good appointments being made.

Reservations about the interview itself in practice.

I had a quick look at the successful appointees and it didn't really look like the diversity that appeared to have been sought was reflected. The successful candidates did appear to have a wealth of applicable experience though.

My experience of this application process is that the application form is a blunt instrument for identifying potential candidates.

I don't think it was fair since I was not invited for an interview which questions if there was someone lined up to take on the role

What makes you believe that the process was not fair and transparent? *

I feel that in only allowing someone to serve one term of office in a lifetime can exclude some very knowledgeable people from submitting valuable contributions

Ensuring better tailored feedback.

I've no idea how fair and transparent it would have been without the regulation, but generally I'd say being encouraged (by regulation) to think about how you can do something better, helps you do it better.

Consider sampling of applications to assess consistency in decision making. Consider developing a clear inclusive recruitment policy. Consider specifically targeting sectors that are under represented.

I did not trust the Minister's judgement on this as it seemed at odds with the feedback I received

Feedback was not adequate but I do not believe that the process was not fair and transparent - it just seemed that my application "disappeared" although it was likely that that there were many excellent applications received and just some better than others.

I have no information to say that the process was or was not fair and transparent

There was a disparity between the skills and experience sought and what was then reflected in the application form. The use of standard e-mails is disappointing.

The tailored CV lacks guidance on its format and excludes important contextual information.

There was simply no contact beyond the initial application.

As the Board is the body that places emphasis on the varied but 'defined' 'Roles' required by the Board, then perhaps the Board should assess the applicants attributes and decide which role fits them best, rather than applicants having to gamble one of three choices.

I believe the application pack did not make clear that the panel were looking for people like them- i.e. of their age and shared professional experience. If it had made that clear from the beginning it would have made things more honest (even if disheartening- given these kinds of bodies should be more reflective of our society and current industry). As previously indicated I also did not receive personal feedback so cannot comment on its merit.

I had no response despite chasing

I felt the interviewers were not very interested in what I might have to offer.

The process was overly focussed on exec rather than non-exec skills in my view

The questions were very limited and without a CV I felt it didn't allow the panel a fair insight into who I am and what I would bring.

The application process was good. The interview process wasn't good. It was an older style competency interview, and this approach doesn't accurately test relevant skills. From what was stated in the application pack, I was expecting very different questions and also expecting some form of test/activity.

Positive discrimination sees me lodge complaint

I have no problem not being appointed, but hard to see why I wasn't short listed.

Unacceptable delay

What more should the ESC be doing by way of regulation to improve the appointments process?

Be more specific as to what type of board member ESC are looking for either a professional person or someone with a wide based experience

I sincerely hope the ESC should be more opened in their appointments. More diversity should be involved as the Scottish population is becoming more cosmopolitan.

Simplifying things!

Feedback would be good

I don't see an issue with regulation of the process but more a question of developing a better methodology within the process - Note; I see this as an issue for any appointment, having been part of many assessment and interview panels myself.

Have a pre interview stage for reasonable adjustments.

Give feedback.

By monitoring the category of applicants appointment to boards ... No harm in having a few community movers and shakers

"The process is simple to make and maintain as fair and transparent. It is the appointment process that needs to be challenged and changed. If the process and appointment only appoints individuals whose experience matches pre-determined criteria - this should be stated as an explicit requirement which would avoid a great deal of wasted time and effort.

Regulate before not after the event.

Be more inclusive.

Vet vacancy adverts before they go public.

I don't think there is any need for further regulation, as the normal HR appointment conditions should be enough.

I am not sure if data is available to demonstrate facts like # people applied, their background, ethnicity, gender, age, previous history with [body] (I think you need a diverse team) which would demonstrate fairness.

There were a number of board vacancies advertised at the same time which can mean that an applicant may feel the need to prioritise and do so in a way that is unhelpful to the bodies seeking applicants, and similarly an applicant may find that they are applying for a vacancy knowing they would want not to accept it if another in-process application is successful.

Make better feedback a standard

I didn't ask for feedback this time because when I applied previously and asked for feedback I was told that (paraphrasing) the other applicants were better. I was quite prepared to believe that but it would have been useful to know in what way. Perhaps they could be required to be a little more specific.

Supporting less represented groups (young people, disabled, LGBT etc) through additional support in interview process

Unable to comment.

Cannot speak highly enough of the ESC

Be more inclusive - select the best candidates based on ability rather what minority group they represent

May be ask applicant to supply personal references to back up application

If the Minister disagrees with the feedback and the decision of the panel then a statement should be made to that effect and made available to the candidates. This was not clear and transparent decision making at all. What I was told in the feedback did not match with the candidate who was appointed over me.

Have less people and more action.

An easier application process, to enable more diversity of applications.

This feels box ticking and I am not convinced that skinning an application process across different organisations and roles is the most effective in recruitment and selection processes like this.

This would be better as the subject of a discussion, rather than a paraphrased paragraph.

Ensure that the questions allow the applicant sufficient opportunity to express themselves properly taking into account their business and professional background and experience of making such applications to public bodies.

Randomly check appointments and criterion match.

I think just seeing people as fellow humans goes a long way. Understanding that most people are working full time, caring for family etc, applying for a public body appointment takes time, energy and a huge amount of passion and drive.

By actively understanding the applicants

An indication of the selection scoring

Ask more about what a role at this level must deliver.... OUTPUT not the INPUT.

From my point of view I think the regulation is just right, visible but not intrusive.

It would be useful if required to have a named contact from the ESC to advise and communicate during the process.

Fail to understand the outcome of this process, there needs to be improved transparency and communication. For a public appointment this should be a given.

Please provide any other comments you may have on regulation. We would be particularly keen to receive more detail if you consider that the regulation does NOT make the process fairer and more transparent.

I'm a big fan of regulation and it is good that such a detailed questionnaire has been undertaken. However, when all you have is a generic rejection letter with your name at the top it is hard to comment on transparency. I didn't expect anything more having said that and it's probably too much effort to do anything else which makes me wonder a bit as to whether this labour intensive process is worthwhile and will lead to any tangible change.

At least let people know why they were not considered

It's difficult to consider this without knowing more detail about the ESC and the types of sanctions available.

Well it will make the process fair and transparent up to a point. I'm not sure that interviews are easy to regulate

ESC conducting a vital role

A focus of fairness can unfortunately sometimes have the opposite effect, where individuals, such as those with disabilities or from less fortunate backgrounds, are put at an unfair disadvantage. The answer, in my eyes, is a recruitment process which most closely reflects the actual role. The interview process didn't.

I think everyone getting feedback would add more transparency. Also if you are a disabled candidate with a learning disability or autism etc, more transparency that you did have equal opportunity in the process through things like spelling and clumsy sentences construction being discounted etc, slightly longer interview time allowance etc.

Regulation could help scrutinise this potential scenario to ensure that public appointees can give the public body the time required.

Regulation probably makes it more transparent but I'm not entirely sure it makes it fairer (if you take fairer being about widening representation).

Glad that the ESC exists at all

Thank you for taking the time to provide this feedback on the appointments process. If I welcome this questionnaire as a follow up to the process of appointing people to Scottish public bodies.

Some feedback would be appreciated although how valuable it would be do long after the process I am unsure.

Thank you for asking.

I am heartened to be asked by ESC to outline my impressions.