



Equality Mainstreaming Report

April 2025

WEST COLLEGE
SCOTLAND



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Introduction

West College Scotland is a leading provider of learning and vocational training, serving a diverse catchment of 1.2 million people—23% of Scotland’s population. With deep roots in Paisley, Clydebank, and Greenock, our influence extends from Loch Lomond in the north to Barrhead in the south. Operating across seven local authority areas, we are committed to addressing social and economic challenges.

As one of Scotland’s largest regional colleges, we educate over 20,000 students annually, manage £70m in total funds, and employ approximately 850 staff. As a major employer in the region, we contribute £13m to the local economy and invest £47m in salaries each year, playing a vital role in shaping the region’s educational and economic landscape.

This report outlines our equality objectives for 2023-2027 and reviews progress made from 2023-2025. It highlights our commitment to embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion through refreshed policies and initiatives. This report details our progress both in terms of the National Equality Outcomes and Equality Duty but also our own WCS specific outcomes which were selected by staff and students.

Our commitment to mainstreaming equality is alive in our newly published values:

- Student Centred
- Trust
- Respect
- Innovation



Foreword from the Principal

Welcome to West College Scotland's 2025 Equality Mainstreaming Report, which sets out our progress in embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion across the College. This report marks the next phase of our journey, focusing on our Equality Outcomes for 2023-2027, with a commitment to addressing disability, gender equality, gender-based violence, racial equality, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and socio-economic disadvantage.

We are proud of the progress we have made, particularly in tackling the gender pay gap and reinforcing our commitment to eliminating gender-based violence through initiatives such as the Emily Test Charter and the White Ribbon Campaign. We continue to create a culture where all individuals feel safe, valued, and supported.

Our work in racial equality remains a priority, ensuring that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students and staff experience equity in opportunities, representation, and outcomes. Similarly, we continue to champion LGBTQIA+ inclusion, fostering a college community where diversity is celebrated, and all individuals feel a true sense of belonging.

Recognising the impact of socio-economic disadvantage, particularly in the wake of the cost-of-living crisis, we remain focused on breaking down financial barriers that prevent students from accessing and thriving in education. We are committed to providing targeted support to ensure that economic hardship does not determine success.

Advancing equality is an ongoing responsibility. While we reflect with pride on our achievements, we recognise there is still work to do. Through collaboration, innovation, and unwavering commitment, we will continue to drive meaningful change; ensuring that West College Scotland remains a place where we unlock potential and enable success.



Liz Connolly, Principal and Chief Executive

Student-Centred

Trust

Respect

Innovation

National Equality Outcomes

In the [Tackling Persistent Inequalities Together](#) report, SFC and EHRC published the National Equality Outcomes (NEOs) alongside a series of commitments to support institutions in progressing with the NEOs and measuring impact. The following National Outcomes were adopted by West College Scotland in 2023 with a target of 2027 for completion.

Protected Characteristic	Outcome	KPI	Progress Update
Age	The success rates for students aged under 19 will improve.	67% (3% Annual Increase) Under 19s Completing Course 64% Under 19s Passing Course	WCS continue to develop the meta performance tracker, which enables students to reflect on progress with their academic and personal goals. We have also made improvements to the induction process, re-designed curriculum to include more project-based learning and partnership working with local authority to enhance the school curriculum offer.
Disability	Students with a disability report feeling satisfied with the overall support and reasonable adjustments received, including from teaching staff, while on their course. Staff and students with a disability report feeling safe at West. Increase the representation of staff with disabilities and on College Board of Management.	71% Students with a Disability Satisfied with Reasonable Adjustments (who responded to EDI Survey) 87% Students & Staff with a disability who feel safe at West (who responded to EDI Survey) 0% Board of Management declaring disability	Enabling Services is available for those who may benefit from extra help or support while at college – either on an on-going basis or at key times during their studies. Enabling Services provide bespoke, discreet, out of class support, and can help with areas such as equipment, training and assessment arrangements. WCS are monitoring the protected characteristics feeling safe through our bi-annual inclusion survey for staff and students and will soon be launching ‘Speak Up’ An anonymous and non-anonymous reporting tool for discrimination, bullying and bias. We are currently in the final stages of a recruitment project which has inclusion at the heart. We want to increase representation across the organisation by ensuring fair recruitment practices for all.
Gender Reassignment	Transgender staff and students report feeling safe to be themselves at West.	80% Transgender Students & Staff who feel safe at West (who responded to EDI Survey)	Transgender and Gender Non Conforming Guidance continues to be highlighted and updated based on experience of Trans Staff and Students.

National Equality Outcomes

Protected Characteristic	Outcome	KPI	Progress Update
Race	<p>Staff and students feel supported and safe and are confident that complaints of harassment or bias on the grounds of race will be dealt with appropriately because complaints procedures are fit for purpose and offer effective redress.</p> <p>West also has regard to attainment levels by racial group and ensures that curriculum is diverse and anti-racist.</p> <p>Increase the racial diversity of in College Board of Management.</p> <p>Increase the racial diversity of teaching and non-teaching staff to align with student representation in the sector.</p>	<p>62.8% (Annual Decrease 0.3% - Numbers Rose by 7%) Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Completing Course</p> <p>15.8% Board of Management from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Background</p> <p>2.5% Staff from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Background</p>	<p>To support the chance of success, curriculum areas prioritised the issue of free digital devices for learning to assist learning for non-alphabet learners with specific focus on Arabic, Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese students.</p> <p>All teaching staff review materials used for learning, supplementing course resources with culturally appropriate learning activities that provide opportunities for sharing a range of individual cultural experiences.</p> <p>The college has a well-established student concerns and complaints processes, independent from curriculum areas, which all students are made aware of at enrolment. Feedback is monitored by protected characteristic and actions taken as required if there is any suggestion of inappropriate racially motivated activities. All students undertake a standard college induction which educates them on the college behaviours expected, including racially offensive behaviour, intended or not.</p>
Religion or Belief	<p>Students and staff report that they have confidence in West's report and support mechanisms because they are fit for purpose.</p>	<p>91% Students & Staff feel able to report concerns of bullying, harassment, and discrimination (who responded to EDI Survey)</p>	<p>WCS are committed to retaining sanctuary spaces on all campus and have a chaplaincy team on Paisley Campus but want to increase representation of religions and include other campuses.</p>

National Equality Outcomes

Protected Characteristic	Outcome	KPI	Progress Update
Sex	<p>Staff and students know how to access support about violence, harassment, and abuse, report their experience and feel properly supported in doing so because the services are fit for purpose. West can evidence approaches that prevent and respond to violence, harassment, and abuse.</p> <p>Men (staff and students) know how to access mental health support (recognising intersectionality within that group).</p> <p>West will have regard to significant imbalances on courses and take action to address it.</p>	<p>24.9% Male Students accessing Wellbeing Services 34% Male Staff accessing Wellbeing Services</p> <p>8.55 % Females in traditionally male courses 12.20 % Males in traditionally female courses</p>	<p>Our Student Wellbeing Service offers short-term practical and emotional support and guidance to students on any issues affecting their studies and/or mental health and wellbeing. Our Wellbeing Advisors offer one-to-one appointments, a drop-in service, as well as workshops and events. Each campus has a dedicated wellbeing area.</p> <p>Our Staff Wellbeing Services are proactive through initiatives and learning interventions to support staff with a wide range of wellbeing challenges from mental health to menopause. Our Wellbeing and Inclusion Adviser will also meet with individuals and groups on specific challenges.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual staff and students report that they feel safe being 'out' at West College Scotland.</p>	<p>88% LGB Students and Staff Safe feel safe to be 'out' at West (who responded to EDI Survey)</p>	<p>The Students have a LGBTQIA+ society and LGBTQIA events are marked throughout the year including WCS participating in Glasgow Mardi Gla Pride.</p>

As well as the National Equality Outcomes, West College Scotland asked Staff and Students as part of the 2023 Equality Survey what they would like the WCS Equality Outcomes to focus on between 2023 and 2027. An overwhelming majority picked socio-economic disadvantage, racial equality, gender equality and gender-based violence, disability and LGBTQIA+.

WCS Equality Outcomes

Disability

- Continue to encourage both staff and students in the disclosure of disabilities by reducing the stigma(s) than can be associated in order to fully understand the wide array of additional support needs and how better to support them.
- Improve representation of individuals with a disability in roles across the College including senior leadership roles, the board and in governance committees, so that representation is more in line with the diversity of the community and students we serve.
- Continue to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students through communication, awareness, learning, resources, and College service offers.
- Continue to promote and support our status as 'Disability Confident' and 'Carer Positive'.
- Review delivery methods and times in line with annual curriculum review plans in order to understand if there is more ways to support individuals with caring responsibilities to access courses.
- Establish and embed key accessibility standards when it comes to communications, digital platforms, and resources.
- Review all campuses to ensure that there are safe and accessible routes for staff and students with visible disabilities and designated quiet/sensory spaces.
- Through the establishment of a Disability (and Allies) Network systematically review staff/student policies, processes, and procedures through the lens of visible and non-visible disabilities and make continuous improvements.
- Review process for seeking reasonable adjustments or specialist equipment to ensure it is fair and easily accessible.
- Continue to reduce the Disability pay gap.

7% Staff disclosing Disability

0% Leadership disclosing Disability

5% (4.6% Annual Decrease) Disability Pay Gap

Gender Equality and Gender Based Violence

- Improve the student gender segregation, with improvement in sectors with the highest disparities.
- Improve representation of females in senior leadership roles and the board, so that representation better reflects the overall diversity of the College community.
- Through gaining GBV Charter in recognition of taking the Emily Test and through a partnership with White Ribbon, foster a culture where gender-based violence is actively challenged, robustly tackled and people experiencing gender-based violence are respected, supported, and empowered.
- Continue to reduce the gender pay gap and make further progress towards 5%.
- Review work and family policies and procedures to ensure they are in line with current best practice and national bargaining.
- Continue to support targeted wellbeing initiatives such baby loss, period poverty, endometriosis, breast cancer, prostate cancer, male mental health etc

60% Females in SMT and **47%** Females on Board of Management

6.8% (1.9% Annual Decrease) Gender Pay Gap

6 Number of Targeted Initiatives

WCS Equality Outcomes

Progress Update

WCS continues to meet the criteria to be a 'Disability Confident' and 'Carer Positive' organisation but a current recruitment project has inclusion at the heart and seeks to ensure fair recruitment at all levels.

The Disability pay gap is 5.4% and is a decrease from 2023 and well below the Scottish Average of 12.2%

Mental Health Awareness is marked at various points in the inclusion calendar including 'Time to Talk' Day. Student and Staff Wellbeing work in partnership to promote positive mental wellbeing. Mental Health First Aiders continue to grow across all campuses.

Blackboard Ally is a new tool currently being rolled out that enables the organisation to track the accessibility of digital material. This is currently being rolled out to all teams and will form part of annual curriculum review.

At West College Scotland, we are dedicated to supporting students with caring responsibilities through tailored curriculum planning and support services. Our approach ensures that every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their personal commitments.

We continuously monitor each student's attendance, retention, and attainment levels, making necessary adjustments to maximise their chances of success. For those with specific needs, we have modified class timings—offering later start times and morning-only classes to accommodate childcare responsibilities. Additionally, we provide part-time learning options to cater to those who require greater flexibility.

Support does not stop at scheduling; we also refer students to enabling services to ensure that all assessment adjustments are met. From the point of application, caring responsibilities are recorded and communicated to relevant curriculum areas on a needs-led basis, enabling us to tailor support and facilitate attendance effectively.

Progress Update

SMT is 60% female, and the Board of Management has surpassed Scottish Government targets to achieve almost 50% gender split. Female Heads of Sector have also increased and are now at 33%.

WCS have been working in partnership with White Ribbon, to foster a culture where gender-based violence is actively challenged, robustly tackled and people experiencing gender-based violence are respected, supported, and empowered. There is a core speaker group with further events planned.

There was a 1.9% decrease in the gender pay gap in the last year, we are now 1.8% away from our 5% target. Gender Pay Gap is 6.8% compared to 1.7% Scottish Average.

All HR/OD policies and procedures including work and family policies and procedures have been or will be reviewed in the next year to ensure they are in line with current best practice and national bargaining.

As part of the Inclusion calendar, we continue to mark specific wellbeing initiatives such as baby loss, period poverty, endometriosis, breast cancer, prostate cancer, and male mental health.

At West College Scotland, we are committed to advancing gender equality through systematic monitoring and strategic initiatives. This involves a comprehensive review at the course level, with findings reported to the Board to ensure transparency and accountability.

Initiatives such as 'Girls into Construction' have shown positive impacts in attracting more females to traditionally male-dominated fields like engineering, particularly among younger age groups. Despite these efforts, some areas still show a gender imbalance due to deep-seated social and cultural factors. We are committed to addressing these challenges and continuing to refine our strategies for a more inclusive educational environment.

WCS Equality Outcomes

LGBTQIA+

- Through the establishment of a LGBTQIA+ (and Allies) Network systematically review staff/student policies, processes, and procedures through the lens of LGBTQIA+ equality and make continuous improvements.
- Review Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming guidance to ensure that staff and students who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming feel fully supported in living as their true selves.
- Review and improve the process in which staff and students should follow when transitioning in order to make it easily accessible and aligned to Gender Recognition Reforms.
- Complete the Foundation LGBT Youth Charter and continue to progress through the levels of Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

Foundation LGBT Youth Charter Status

Progress Update

To further the engagement with Inclusion at WCS we have merged the LGBTQIA+ (Pride), Disability and Racial Equality Networks to form the Inclusion Network with key 'speakers' on each of these issues to be the employee voice for these underrepresented groups.

Improvements have been made to the process for transitioning at WCS and key staff groups have had awareness sessions.

Proposed Gender Recognition Reforms did not take place, but WCS will continue to monitor changes to legislation .

Racial Equality

- Improve representation of people of colour in roles across the College including senior leadership roles, the board and in governance committees, so that representation is more in line with the diversity of the community and students we serve.
- Continue to foster an anti-racist culture in which racism and systemic racial inequalities are actively challenged, robustly tackled and people experiencing racial discrimination or harassment are respected, supported, and empowered.
- Encourage inter culturalism through our inclusion calendar celebrating the cultures of our staff and students to maintain a welcoming and inclusive culture.
- Through the establishment of a Racial Equality (and Allies) Network systematically review staff/student policies, processes, and procedures through the lens of racial equality and make continuous improvements.
- Participate in and work towards completing the Race Equality Charter.

2.5% (0.9% Annual Increase) Staff from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Background **Not Started** Race Equality Charter Level

11% BAME Pay Gap

Progress Update

Staff from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background increased by 0.9% in the last year. The board also increased by 26%. SMT and Heads of Sector continue to have no representation of those from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

Through the inclusion calendar we celebrate other cultures, and the inclusion team are working closely with the English as a Second Language (ESOL) to celebrate diversity and raise awareness of cultural days.

The B, A, M, E Pay gap has slightly increased to 11.8% but this is only 1.8% than Scottish Average.

We are still to initiate work on the Race Equality Charter.

Socio-Economic

- Continue to provide enhanced support to care experienced students to address residual barriers to success.
- Seek to support staff and students in financial wellbeing through awareness, education, signposting, and resources.
- Through the 'green room' initiative support staff and students with food and clothing during the cost-of-living crisis.
- Seek funding for initiatives to enhance and support the wellbeing service for students such as 'Free Breakfast' and food vouchers.
- Build partnerships with our partners and charities to support staff and students who may be facing financial challenges including those at risk of homelessness.
- Raising awareness of the College SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) and the impact that has on learning, teaching and community outreach.

Progress Update

West College Scotland offers tailored support for carers, care-experienced students, and veterans. Our application process includes specific questions to identify applicants from these groups, ensuring targeted support from both support services and curriculum teams. For carers, the curriculum is flexible, accommodating needs such as late arrivals or early departures. Veterans may be considered for course placements based on life experiences rather than traditional qualifications. We collaborate closely with the SAS Coordinator to provide additional support, including social work assistance when needed.

We ensure all students are treated equitably, with additional representation through the Students' Association for those with protected characteristics. However, there is an opportunity to enhance visibility and awareness of these representative groups.

Our approach to supporting socio-economically disadvantaged students includes comprehensive funding application assistance, accommodation advice, and discretionary funding options. At induction, we promote available support services, emphasising the importance of full attendance for bursary eligibility. We also provide job boards at main reception areas, showcasing part-time work and apprenticeship opportunities, and offer on-campus career appointments.

Retention and Attainment measures form part of a bi-annual portfolio review with teaching staff and students included in meetings. Attainment rates for students from SIMD postcode areas are improving year on year – for SIMD 10 the attainment rate rose to 63.4% in 2023-24 from 61% the previous year.

This is due to enhanced, teacher led support measures for learning, including prioritising the issue of personal digital devices and skills sessions to support their use. We provide additional academic development sessions to support learning. Our Campus libraries are open, welcoming and accommodate individuals who would find it challenging to study elsewhere. Our campuses each have a 'Green Room' providing discrete access to free food, clothing and personal care items – signposted at student induction and teaching staff aware of this resource.

WCS Equality Outcomes

General Progress Update

Feedback through the 2025 EDI Survey indicates that many respondents feel West College Scotland is demonstrating significant commitment to its 2023-2027 Equality Outcomes, particularly in supporting students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ identities, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, however concerns were raised about awareness and visibility, with a strong call for more student-led support groups, particularly for LGBTQ+ and disadvantaged students, to foster peer networks and a sense of belonging. Initiatives such as the Green Room, Wellbeing Services, and the White Ribbon Initiative are seen as impactful.

Several comments express frustration over funding cuts to HN courses and IT resources, fearing they disproportionately impact disadvantaged students and restrict educational opportunities.

Concerns around inclusivity and balance in diversity initiatives were also raised, with some feeling that certain groups receive more attention than others, advocating for a more balanced approach where all views can be discussed respectfully. Some respondents also believe the college could do more to celebrate cultural diversity, highlighting Ramadan and the need for more cultural events.

A key theme throughout is communication and transparency. While many recognise the progress made, they feel the outcomes are not always visible. Suggestions include improving signposting to support services, increasing awareness of initiatives, and strengthening communication around commitments and actions.

While most respondents acknowledge the College's commitment to inclusion, some feel support for groups like veterans, carers, care-experienced students, and older learners is unclear. Concerns were raised about an imbalance in diversity efforts, with gender identity and LGBTQ+ issues perceived as receiving more focus than other protected characteristics.

A recurring issue is lack of communication and visibility, with requests for more public posts, signage, social media updates, emails, and on-campus events to highlight available support.

There is a strong push for diversity efforts to move beyond compliance and be meaningful and embedded in practice rather than a "tick-box" exercise. It is also felt that there is a need for more staff to support inclusion initiatives.

Overall, clearer communication, broader inclusivity, and practical improvements such as ensuring accessibility and more supportive networks were suggested to strengthen the College's commitment.

Mainstreaming Equality

We uphold several accreditations such as Disability Confident, Carer Positive, and the Armed Forces Covenant, which underline our commitment to diverse community segments. We are also committed to refreshed, role as a Corporate Parent, offering targeted support to those in care and care leavers.

Our collaborations with local and national bodies like Age Scotland, LGBT Youth Scotland, and Black Professionals Scotland, among others, ensure that our EDI initiatives are both comprehensive and effective. These partnerships help us address specific EDI challenges and promote best practices within the college.

The partnership between Staff and Student Wellbeing and Inclusion continues to be a driving force for wellbeing and inclusion initiatives.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee continues to provide strategic oversight. This committee Terms of reference and membership have been refreshed, and members have been receiving development in their strategic role within the College. The committee is instrumental in reviewing and steering the college's EDI strategies and outcomes. They ensure that our actions align with our overarching goals of enhancing inclusivity, celebrating diversity, and ensuring equitable opportunities for all. A refreshed approach to Equality Impact Assessments and focused task groups that address arising issues throughout the year have also been key improvements for the committee.

The new Inclusion Network will facilitate engagement and provide support, helping to advance specific EDI goals. This network will also serve as a platform for raising awareness and fostering dialogue around key issues.

Annual HR Reports detailing progress against our EDI KPIs and strategy are produced for review by the Senior Management Team and shared with the Board to ensure transparency and accountability.

Appendix – EDI Staff Dashboard

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



Female
(41% Male)



Staff Identifying
as BME



Staff with a
Disability



42-57
Highest Age
Bracket

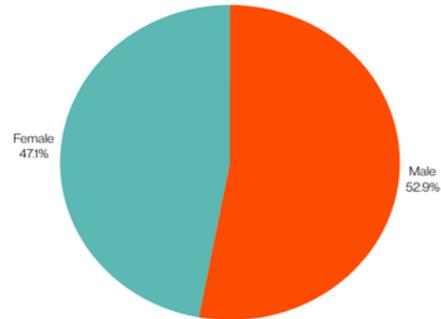


Pregnancy/
Maternity

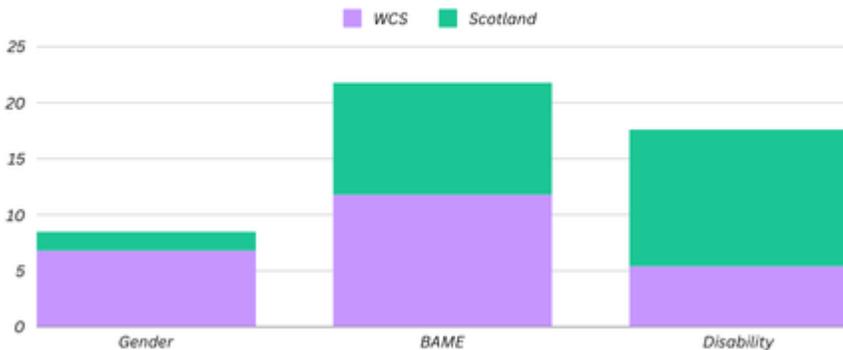


Gender Not the
Same As Birth

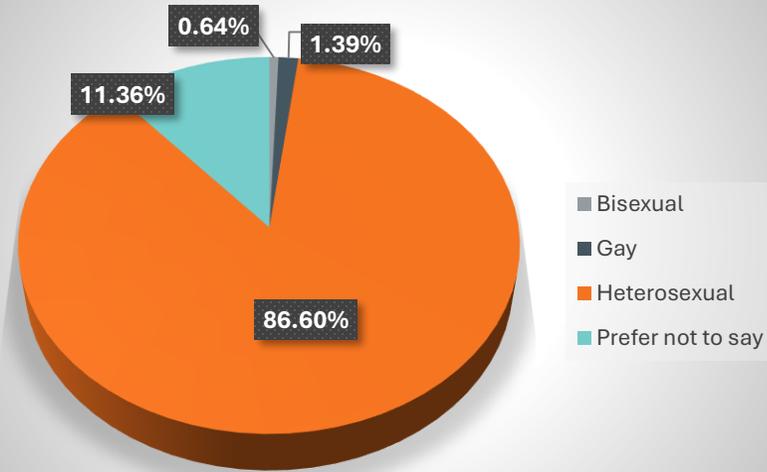
Board Gender Diversity



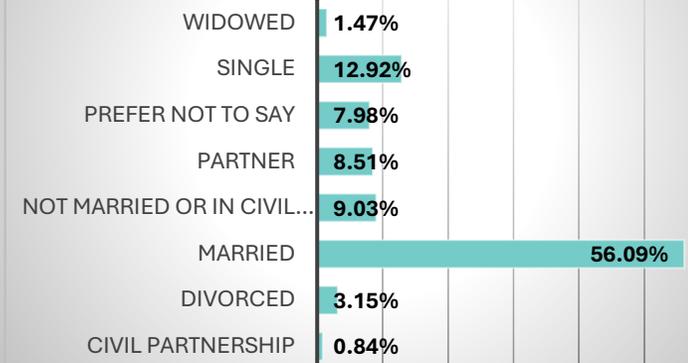
% Pay Gaps



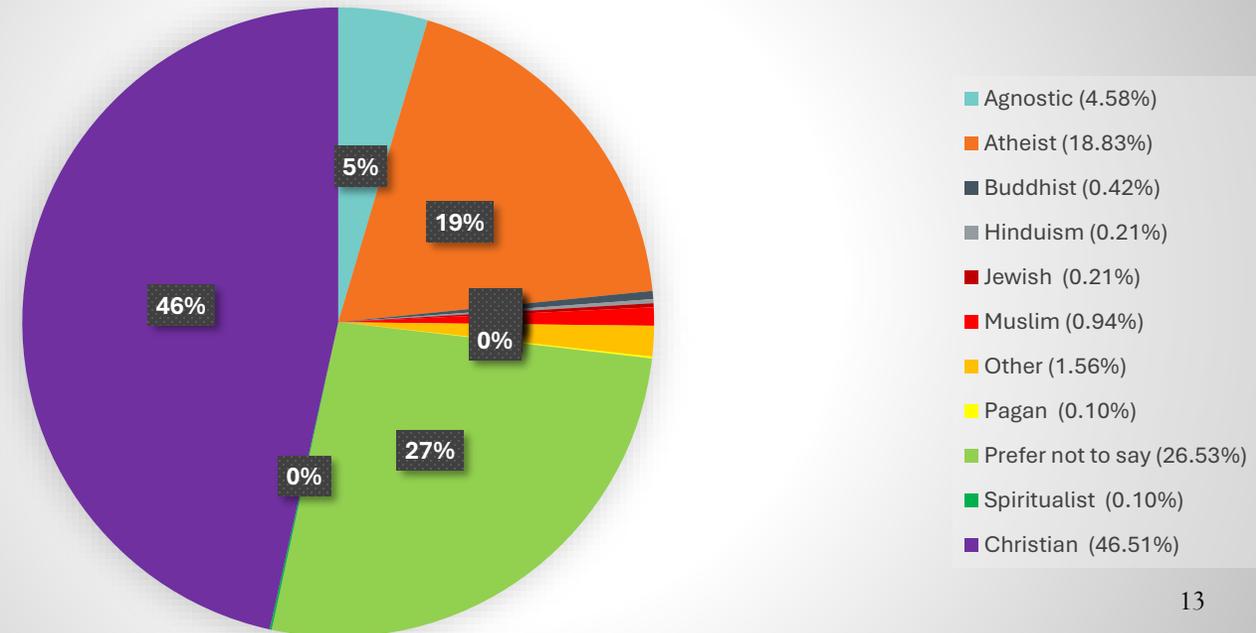
Staff 2024/5 Sexual Orientation



Staff 2024/5 Marriage/ Civil Partnership

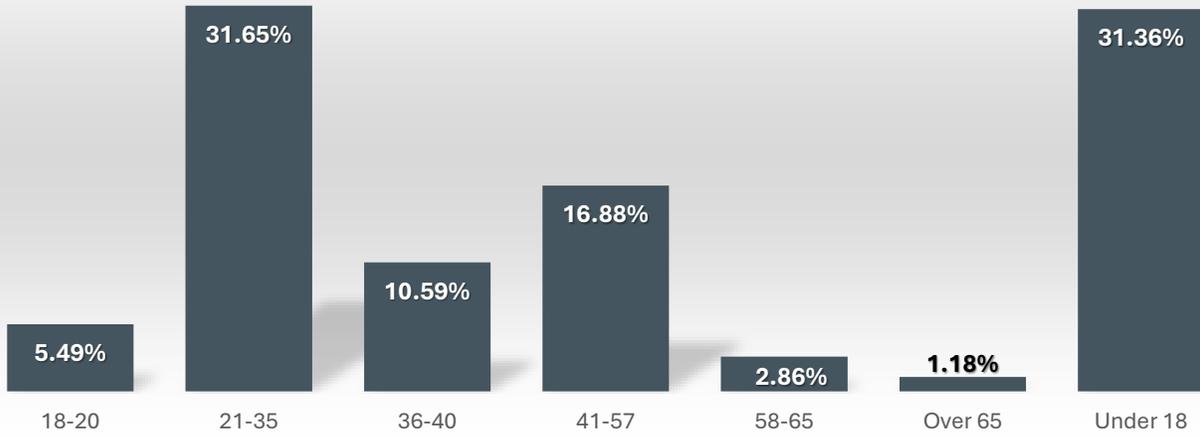


Staff 2024/5 Religion

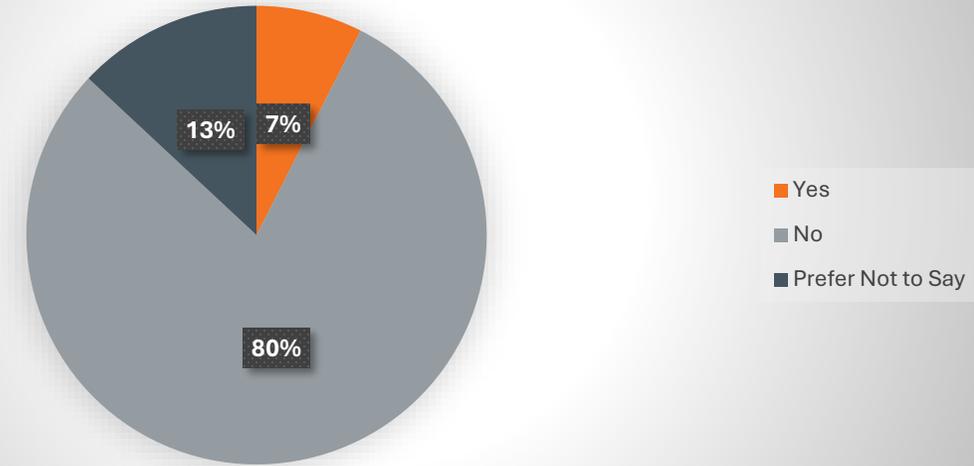


Appendix – EDI Student Dashboard

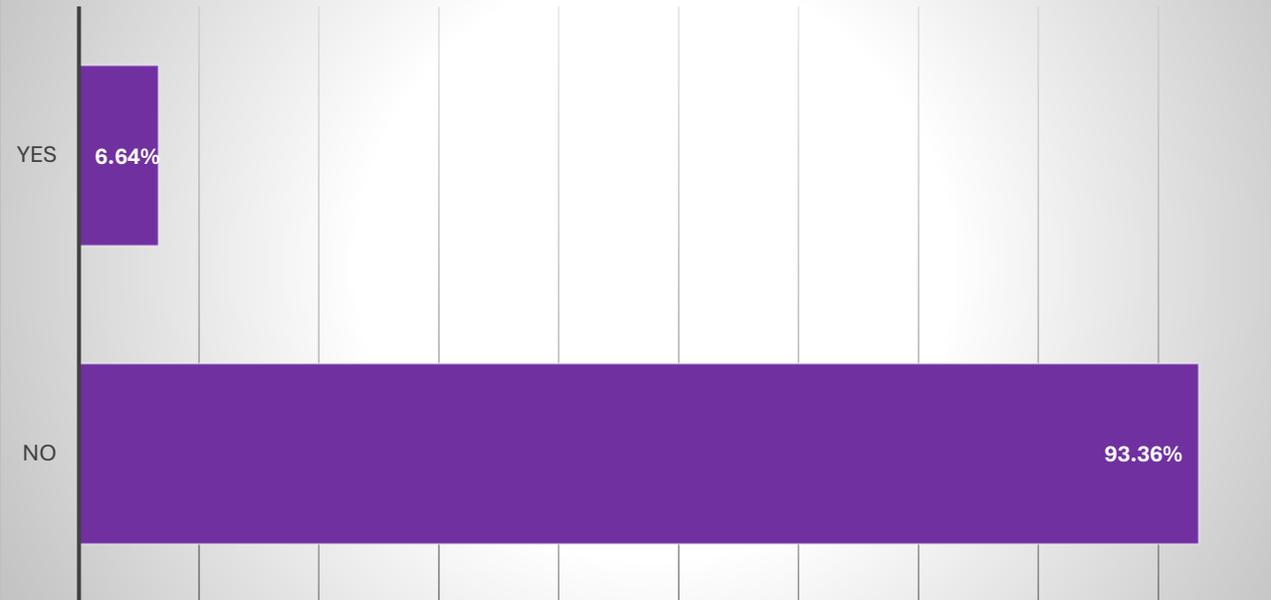
Student 2024/25 Age Bracket



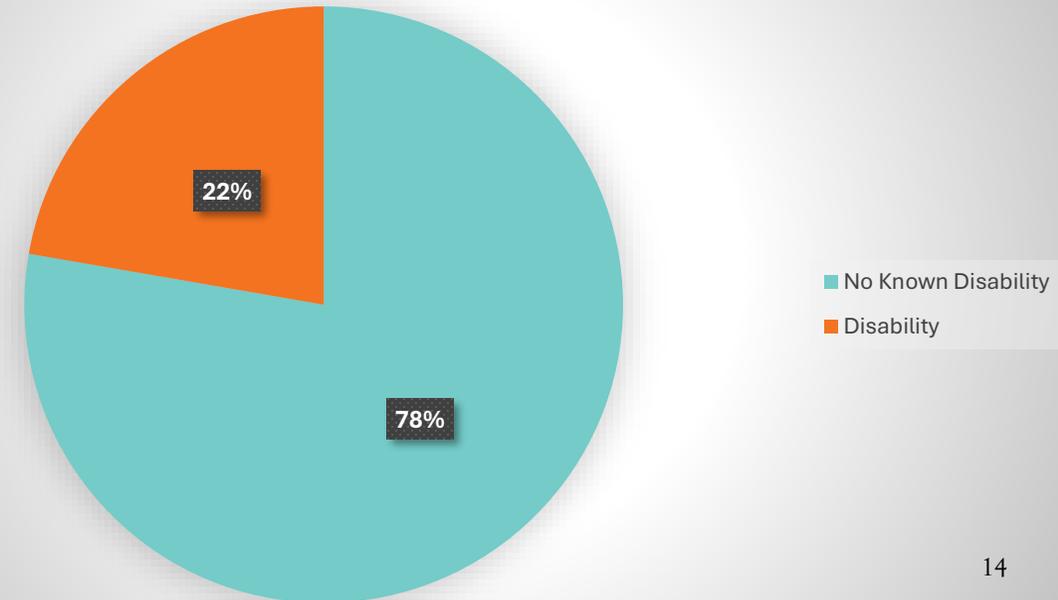
Student 2024/5 Care Experience



Student 2024/5 Caring Responsibilities

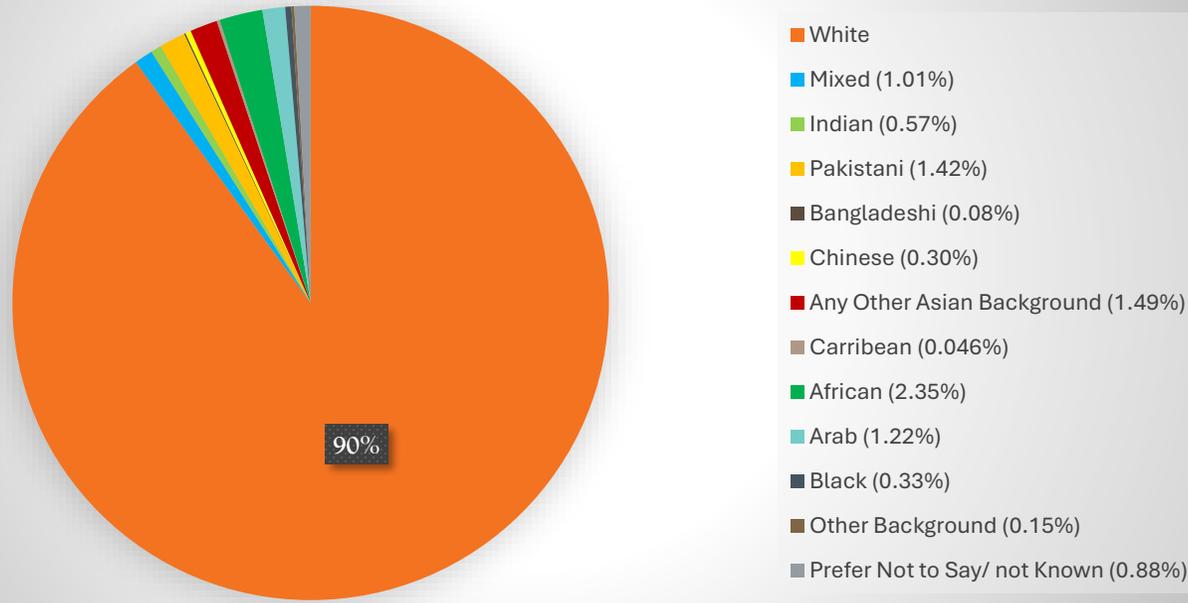


Student 2024/5 Disability

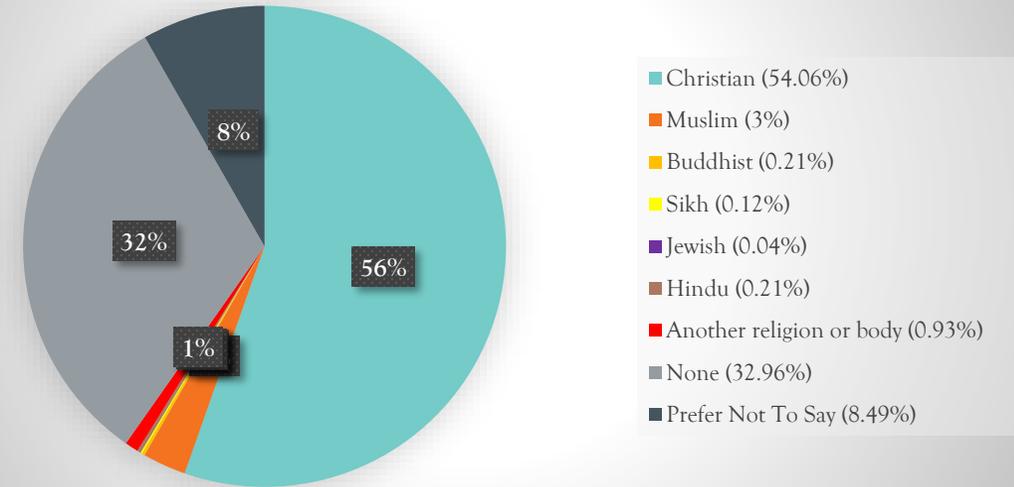


Appendix – EDI Student Dashboard

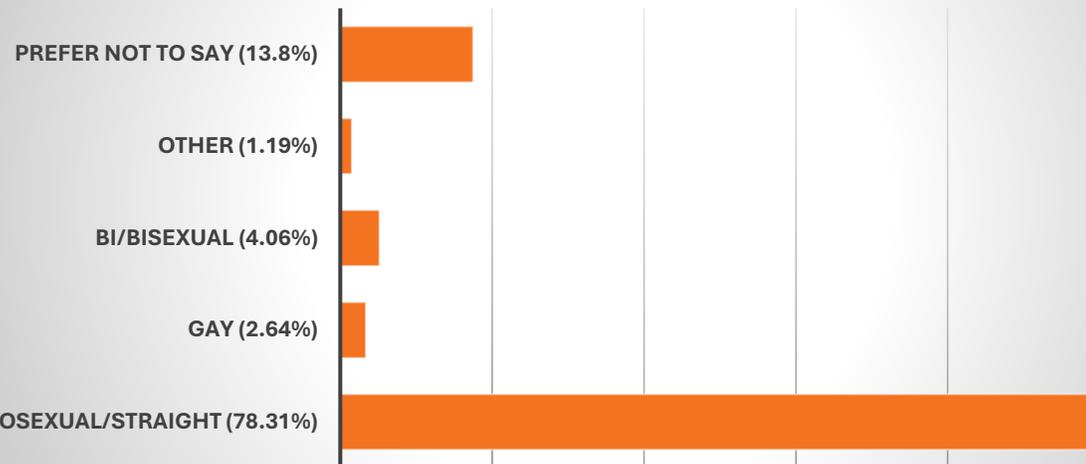
Student 2024/5 Race



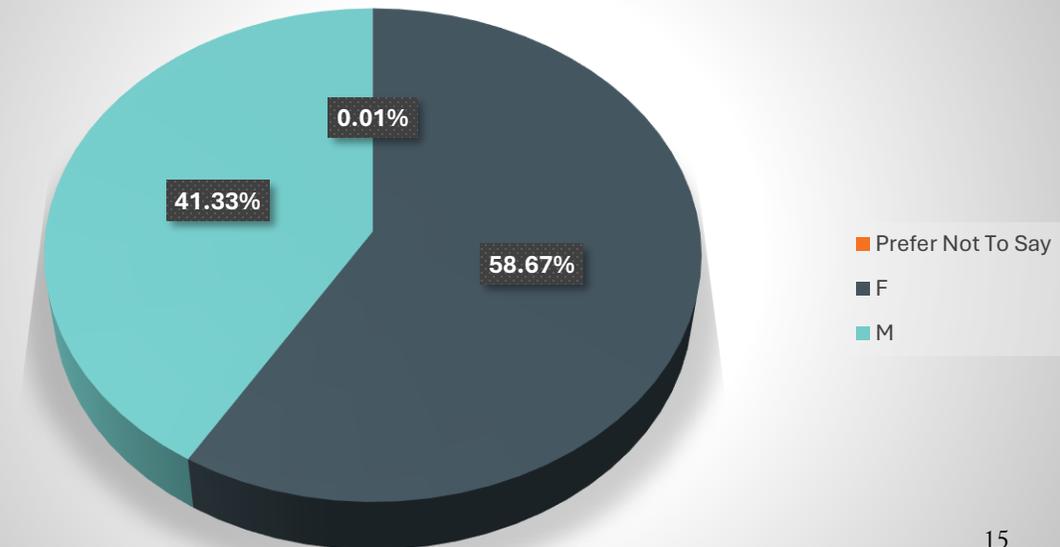
Student 2024/5 Religion



Student 2024/5 Sexual Orientation



Student 2024/5 Sex





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