

Staff at the Office for Students

Equality statistics 2023

Reference OfS 2023.50

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Key findings

The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator of higher education in England. We employ a workforce of approximately 430 people.

This report describes the makeup of our staff split by six protected characteristics:

- **Age.** The staff employed by the OfS have a median age of 39.
- **Disability.** 15 per cent of OfS staff have reported they have a disability.
- **Race.** Ten per cent of OfS staff have declared they are from an ethnic minority background (excluding white minorities).
- **Religion or belief.** A little under half of OfS staff (48 per cent) have declared that they do not have a religion or belief.
- **Sex.** Two-thirds of OfS staff are female and one-third are male.
- **Sexual orientation.** Seven per cent of OfS staff have declared they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or other.

This report also includes discussion of our progress against our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) targets.

Introduction

1. The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator of higher education in England. We are publishing this data in the interests of transparency, and to contribute to our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This data is used internally to understand the impact of our policy decisions, for example in relation to pay and benefits.
2. This report is an update to the version published in September 2022 (OfS 2022.44).¹ This data does not constitute Official Statistics but was produced following the principles of the Code of Practice for Statistics.²
3. The OfS employs around 430 staff and so is considerably smaller than the majority of Civil Service departments and many other public sector regulators.³
4. The OfS staff profile data in this report covers all those employed by the OfS including permanent staff, fixed term staff and sandwich year placement students. It does not include members of our board, our committees, our student panel or contractors/agency staff.
5. As part of our Public Sector Equality Duty, OfS staff profile data is presented by reference to the following six protected characteristics:
 - age
 - disability
 - race⁴
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation.
6. The numbers of staff reporting gender reassignment (that their sex is different from their sex registered at birth) does not meet our threshold⁵ for inclusion of this data.
7. We do not report on the protected characteristic of marriage/civil partnerships as we do not currently collect this data.
8. We do not report on the protected characteristic of pregnancy/maternity as this is variable during the reporting period.
9. OfS staff profile data is presented based on six annual census points to show the current composition of the OfS and how this has changed in the last five years. Figure 1 shows the total count of OfS staff at these census points, rounded to the nearest 10.

¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/staff-at-the-ofs-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-statistics-2022/.

² See <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-code/>.

³ Civil Service statistics: 2022, available at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2022.

⁴ Note that staff are asked the question 'What is your ethnic group?'. The Equality Act 2010 states that race includes 'ethnic or national origins'.

⁵ Data is suppressed where the group represents five or less responses.

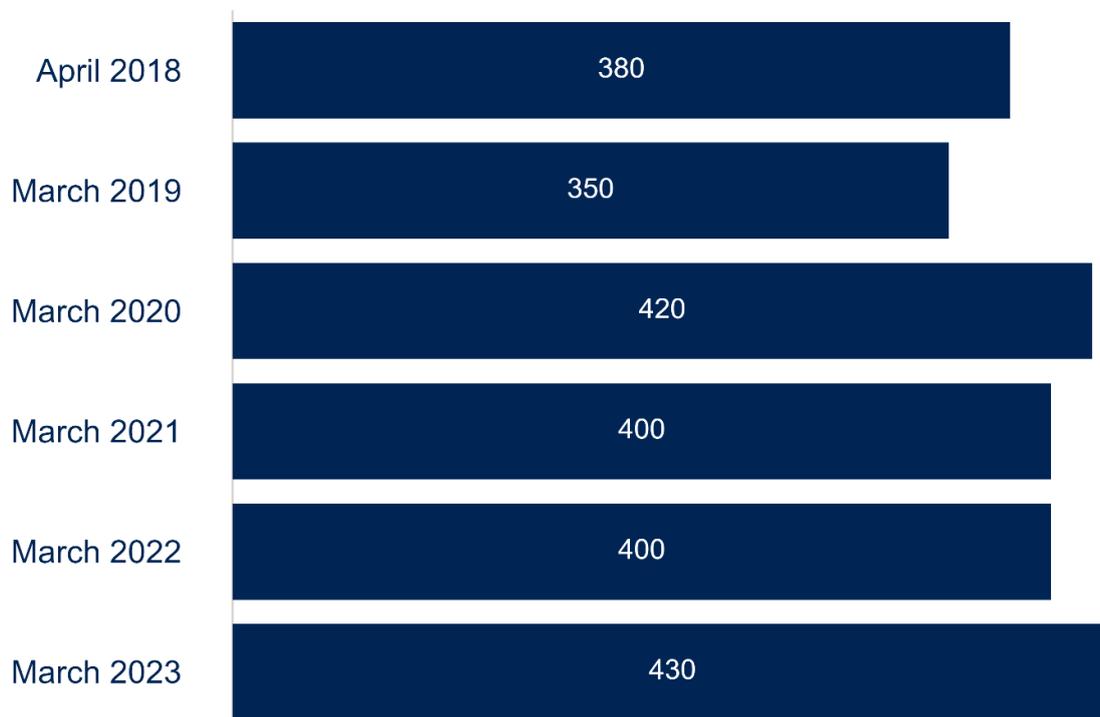
10. We include proportions for all characteristic categories, including 'prefer not to say' and non-completion. It is important to consider the size of 'prefer not to say' and non-completion when making comparisons between other categories.
11. This publication also includes data on the number of the appointments made to the OfS, and some high-level data related to the number of staff that have left the OfS in recent years. We also include progress against our six equality targets.⁶
12. To allow a consistent approach to visualisation, the staff profile charts present the categories for which the characteristic is known in alphabetical order. Where relevant, these are then followed by 'prefer not to say' and 'not completed'. The only exception to this is age group, which is presented in ascending order.
13. To protect individuals' data, we have rounded counts to the nearest 10 and proportions to the nearest one percentage point. Furthermore, counts and proportions for categories that apply to five or fewer staff are suppressed. For the data on appointments and leavers, counts are rounded to the nearest five. This is because the data is not split by personal characteristics so the disclosure risk is much lower.
14. The data associated with this report can be found in Annex A published alongside this report.⁷
15. In April 2021 we changed our collection of staff profile data so that it is more in line with the Government Statistical Service harmonisation standards. This updated recording and categorisation of staff characteristics has helped us to have a better understanding of our staff. However, this change led to a reduction in disclosure rates for several characteristics. As a result, interpreting time series trends by comparing data before and after March 2021 should be avoided.

⁶ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/equality-and-diversity/objectives-for-staff-equality.

⁷ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/staff-at-the-ofs-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-statistics-2022/.

Staff characteristics

Figure 1: OfS staff totals



Working pattern

16. Around three-quarters of OfS staff work full-time and a quarter work part-time.

Appointments

17. The OfS made 170 staff appointments between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. Of these, 110 were new starters who have joined the OfS, while 30 were internal appointments of staff already working at the OfS. The additional 30 appointments were temporary promotions. Due to small numbers we do not include data on appointments split by staff characteristics.

Leavers

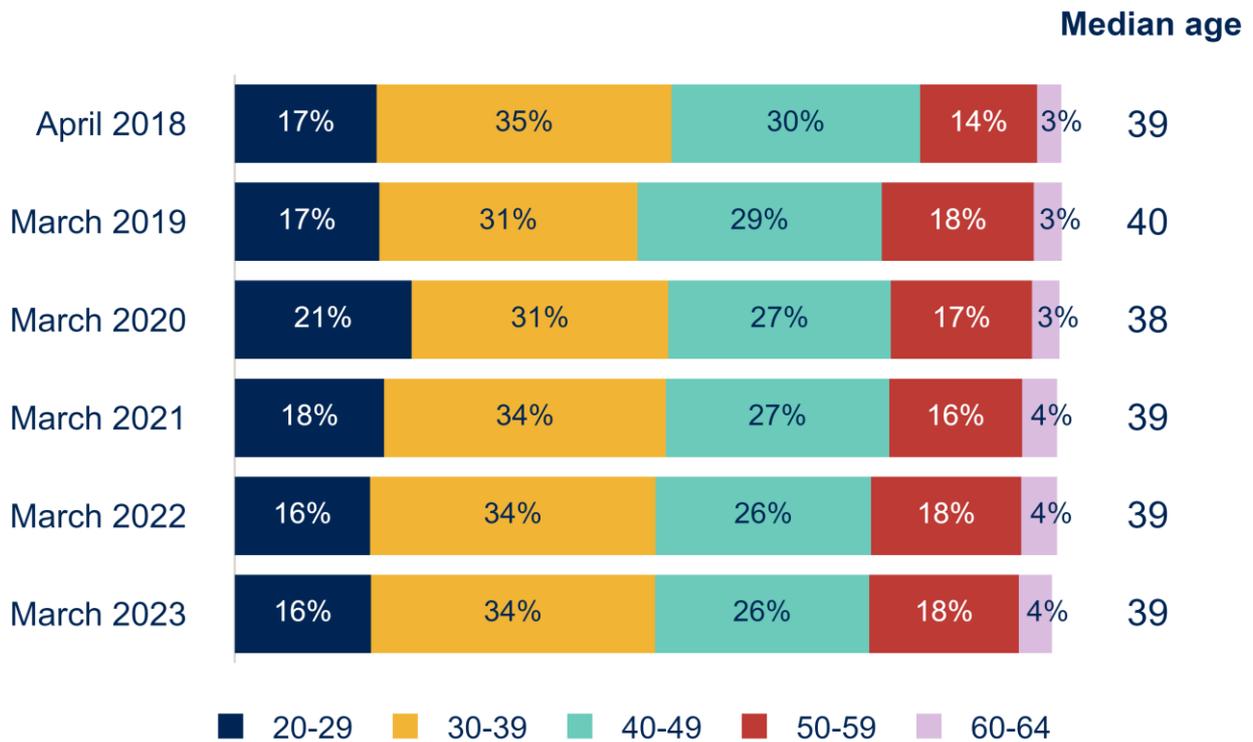
18. Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, 80 staff left the OfS. These leavers comprise 55 staff on permanent contracts and 25 who have reached the end of fixed term contracts (including our sandwich year placement students). Due to these small numbers we do not include data on staff that have left the OfS split by characteristic.

Age

The staff employed by the OfS have a median age of 39.

19. Figure 2 shows the current age profile of OfS staff and how it compares with earlier years. Age is known for all members of staff given that birth date must be provided as part of the application process to our pension scheme.

Figure 2: OfS staff by age group

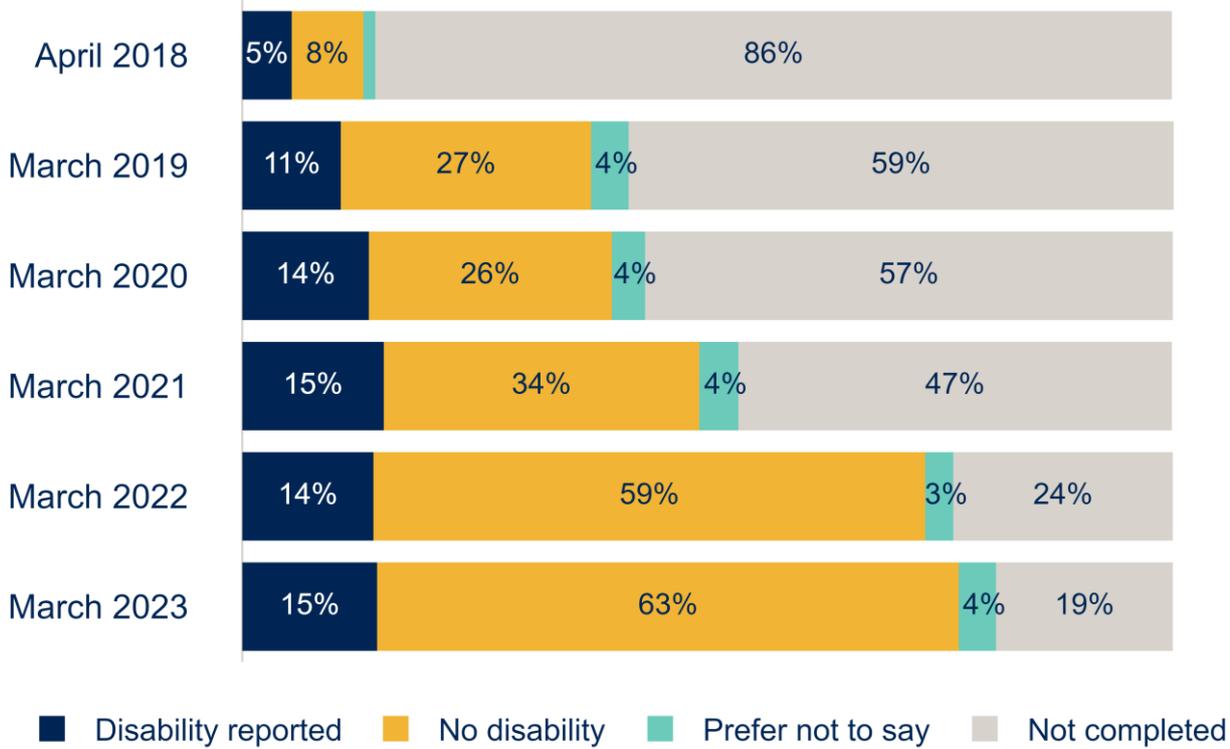


Note: Ages have been grouped in the same way as the Civil Service National Statistics. Bar labels show proportions rounded to the nearest 1 per cent. As a result of this rounding and our suppression criteria, bar labels will sometimes sum to less or more than 100.

Disability

15 per cent of OfS staff have reported they have a disability.

Figure 3: OfS staff by disability



Note: Bar labels show proportions rounded to the nearest 1 per cent. As a result of this rounding and our suppression criteria, bar labels will sometimes sum to less or more than 100.

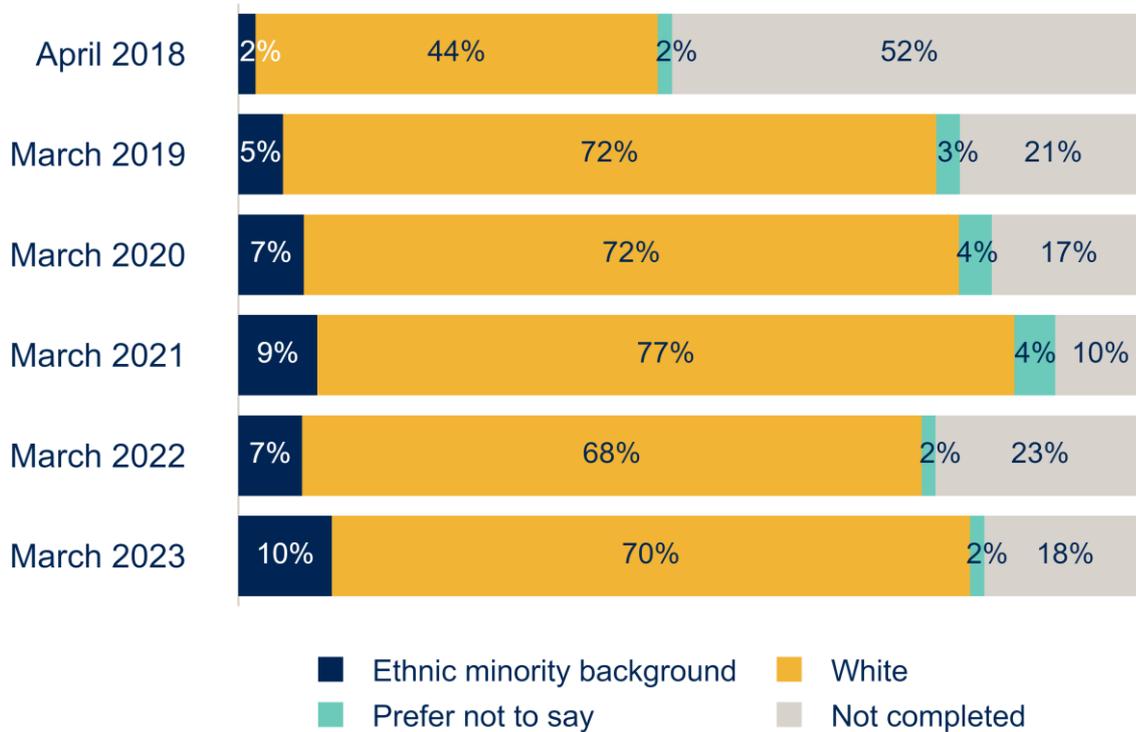
20. As noted in paragraph 15, in April 2021 we changed our data collection processes, leading to an increase in completion in March 2022 when compared with March 2021. Differences between the disability groups when comparing these two years will likely in part reflect this change in data collection. For example, the large increase in the proportion of staff declaring 'No disability' between March 2021 and March 2022 will primarily have been driven by this change in collection.

Race

Ten per cent of OfS staff have declared they are from an ethnic minority background (excluding white minorities).

- 21. This data is collected using the question ‘What is your ethnic group?’ and is related to the protected characteristic of race.
- 22. Figure 4 shows the ethnicities of OfS staff. Ten per cent of staff have said they are from an ethnic minority background (excluding white minorities). In this report, any member of staff who has identified as any ethnicity other than white is considered to be from an ethnic minority background. Staff who have selected any white ethnicity, including white minority groups, are part of the white group. As such, throughout this report, where we refer to staff from an ethnic minority background this excludes white minorities.
- 23. The proportion of staff declaring they are from an ethnic minority background has increased from two per cent in April 2018. However, given the proportion of staff answering the question has increased considerably since 2018, much of this increase is likely related to the increase in reporting. As noted in paragraph 15, in April 2021 we changed our data collection processes, leading to a decrease in completion in March 2022 when compared with March 2021. Differences between the ethnicity groups when comparing these two years will likely in part reflect this change in data collection.

Figure 4: OfS staff by ethnicity



Note: Bar labels show proportions rounded to the nearest 1 per cent. As a result of this rounding, bar labels will sometimes sum to less or more than 100.

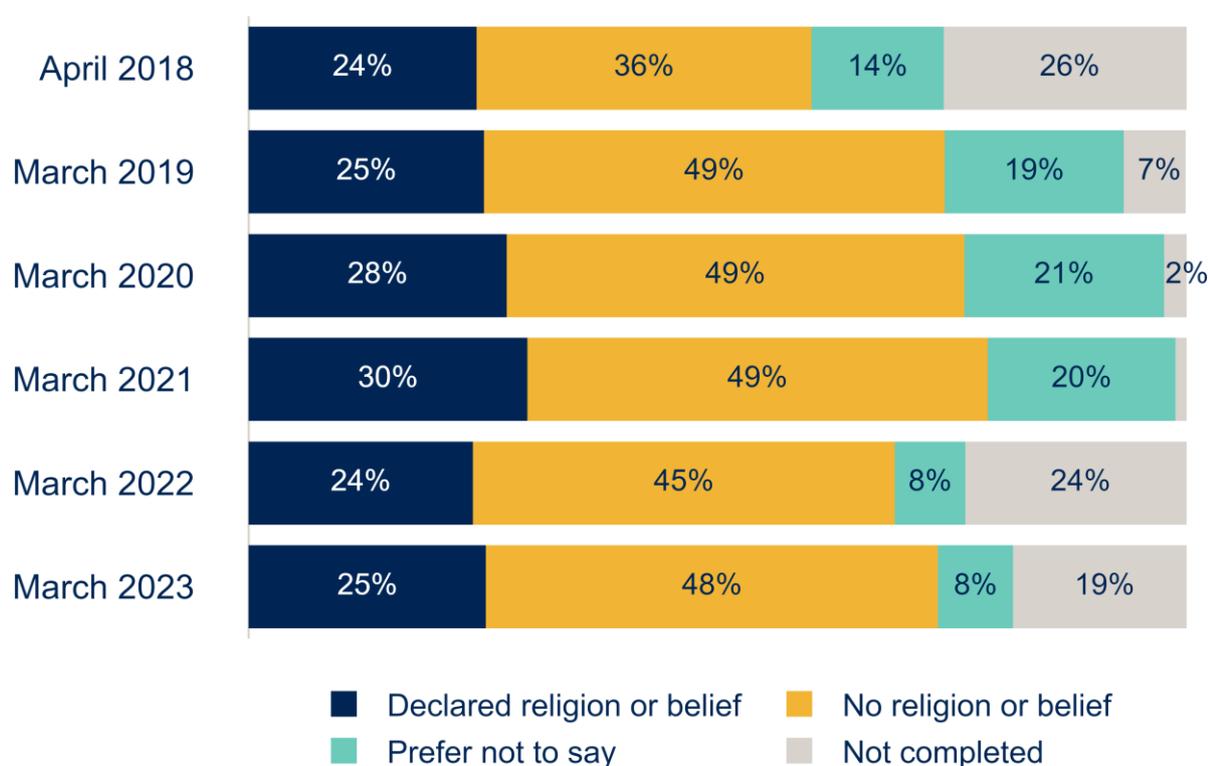
Religion or belief

A little under half of OfS staff (48 per cent) have declared that they do not have a religion or belief.

24. While this category relates to the protected characteristic of 'religion or belief', the question from which we draw the data asks specifically about 'religious belief'.

25. Figure 5 shows the religion or beliefs of OfS staff. 48% of OfS staff have declared that they do not have a religion or belief.

Figure 5: OfS staff by religion or belief



Note: Bar labels show proportions rounded to the nearest 1 per cent. As a result of this rounding and our suppression criteria, bar labels will sometimes sum to less or more than 100.

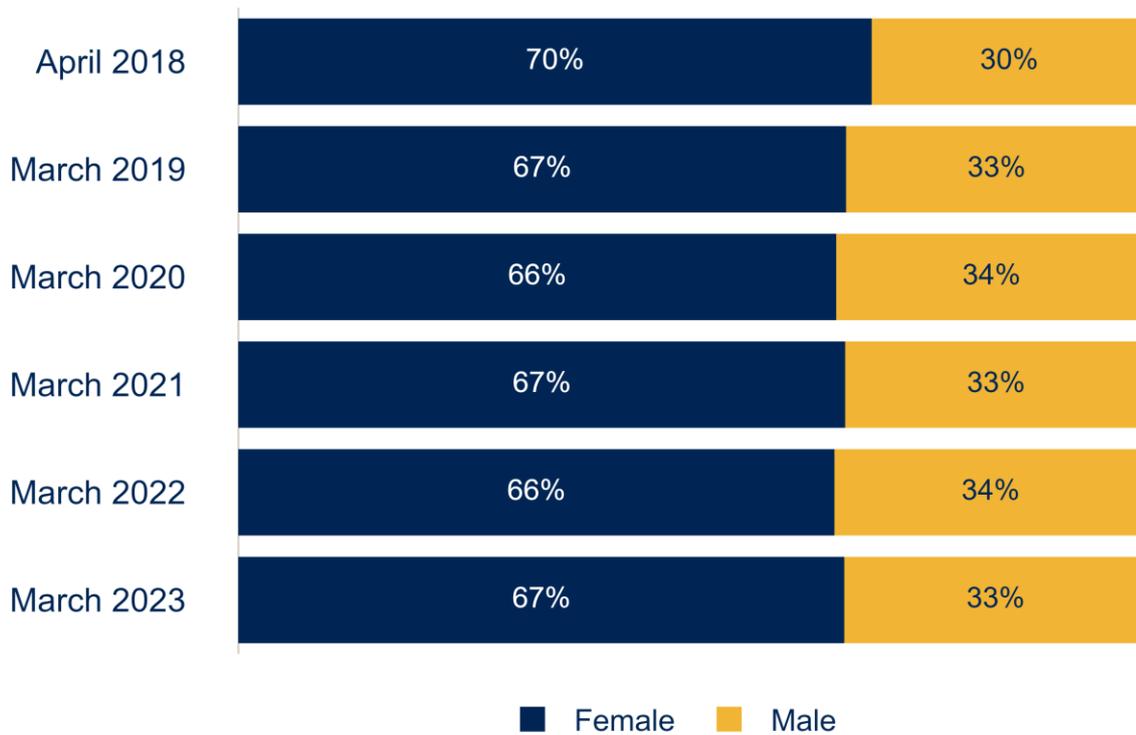
26. As noted in paragraph 15, in April 2021 we changed our data collection processes, leading to a decrease in completion in March 2022 when compared with March 2021. Differences between the groups when comparing these two years will likely in part reflect this change in data collection.

Sex

Two-thirds of OfS staff are female and one-third are male.

- 27. Figure 6 shows the sex of OfS staff. Two-thirds are female (67 per cent) and one-third are male (33 per cent). We have sex data for all members of staff as it must be provided as part of the application process to our pension scheme.
- 28. The proportion of female staff at the OfS is over ten percentage points higher than the proportion of female staff working at the Civil Service (55 per cent on 31 March 2023).

Figure 6: OfS staff by sex



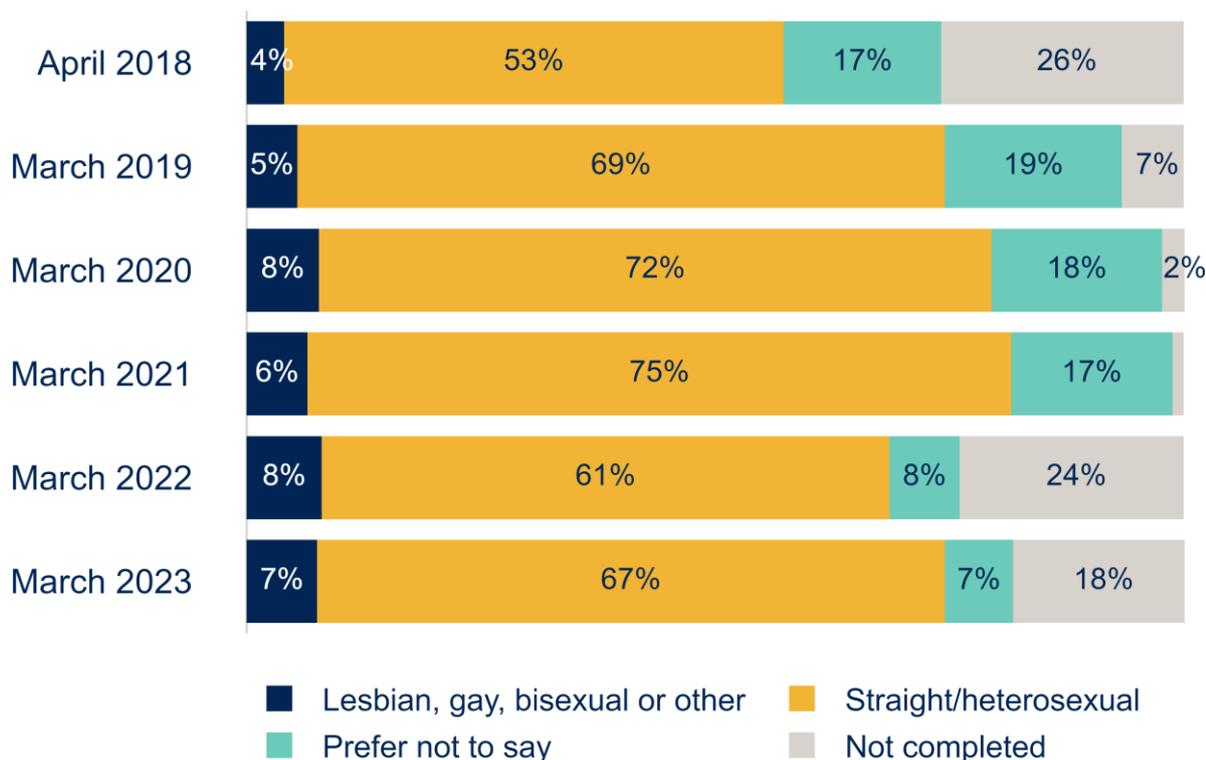
Note: Bar labels show proportions rounded to the nearest 1 per cent. As a result of this rounding, bar labels will sometimes sum to less or more than 100.

Sexual orientation

Seven per cent of OfS staff have declared they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or other.

29. Figure 7 shows the sexual orientation of OfS staff. Seven per cent of staff have declared they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or other.

Figure 7: OfS staff by sexual orientation



Note: Bar labels show proportions rounded to the nearest 1 per cent. As a result of this rounding and our suppression criteria, bar labels will sometimes sum to less or more than 100.

30. As noted in paragraph 15, in April 2021 we changed our data collection processes, leading to a decrease in completion in March 2022 when compared with March 2021. Differences between the sexual orientation groups when comparing these two years will likely in part reflect this change in data collection.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) targets

31. In 2020 the OfS put in place six EDI targets to help diversify the workforce at the OfS and lead to a step change in the way we work and ultimately lead to better outcomes.⁸ These targets are outlined in Table 8. Staff turnover has substantially increased between 2021-22 and 2022-23, which has given opportunity for improvements across these targets. Some of the characteristics considered in our EDI targets have low proportions in the general population. As a result, targets for these characteristics are lower and detecting a change in the staff population will take time. For these reasons, Targets 2 to 6 were set for rolling periods of various lengths (see Table 8) and were put in place to allow a gradual change in the OfS workforce. Success against these rolling targets is being recorded for appointments made after 31 March 2019. As of 31 March 2023, all targets have reached their minimum rolling periods.
32. Roles in the OfS are assigned to pay bands, which relate to levels of responsibility and salary. EDI Target 2 concerns appointments at the level of pay bands 11 and above, while Targets 4 and 6 concern appointments to pay bands 10 and above. These pay bands were chosen to increase representation, in the most senior roles at the OfS, of female staff, staff from ethnic minority backgrounds, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender staff or those of other minority sexualities and gender identities (LGBT+). Staff at pay band 10 and above have the most responsibility at the OfS and, as per our scheme of delegation, are the only staff who are authorised to make decisions regarding functions and to act as the Relevant Director where needed.⁹ OfS pay band 10 is roughly equivalent to Civil Service pay grade 6, while pay band 11 and above is roughly equivalent to the members of the Senior Civil Service (SCS). As of 31 March 2023, eleven per cent of staff were in pay band 10, six per cent were in pay band 11 and four per cent were pay band 12 and above.

Table 1: OfS EDI recruitment targets

Target	Description	Rolling period	Minimum rolling period reached?
1	80 per cent disclosure rate for all protected characteristics by March 2022	N/A	N/A
2	Approximately two-thirds of appointments at pay band 11 and above should be women	Three-year	Yes
3	Approximately 55 per cent of appointments should be men	Three-year	Yes
4	Approximately 20 per cent of appointments at pay band 10 and above should be people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds	Three-year	Yes

⁸ See 'Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2019-20' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/board-papers/ofs-board-meeting-2-july-2020/.

⁹ The Office for Students Scheme of delegation (22 September 2020) is available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/who-we-are/our-board-and-committees/.

Target	Description	Rolling period	Minimum rolling period reached?
5	Approximately 20 per cent of appointments throughout the organisation should be people from BAME backgrounds	Yearly	Yes
6	Approximately 7 per cent of appointments at pay band 10 and above should be LGBT+	Four-year	Yes

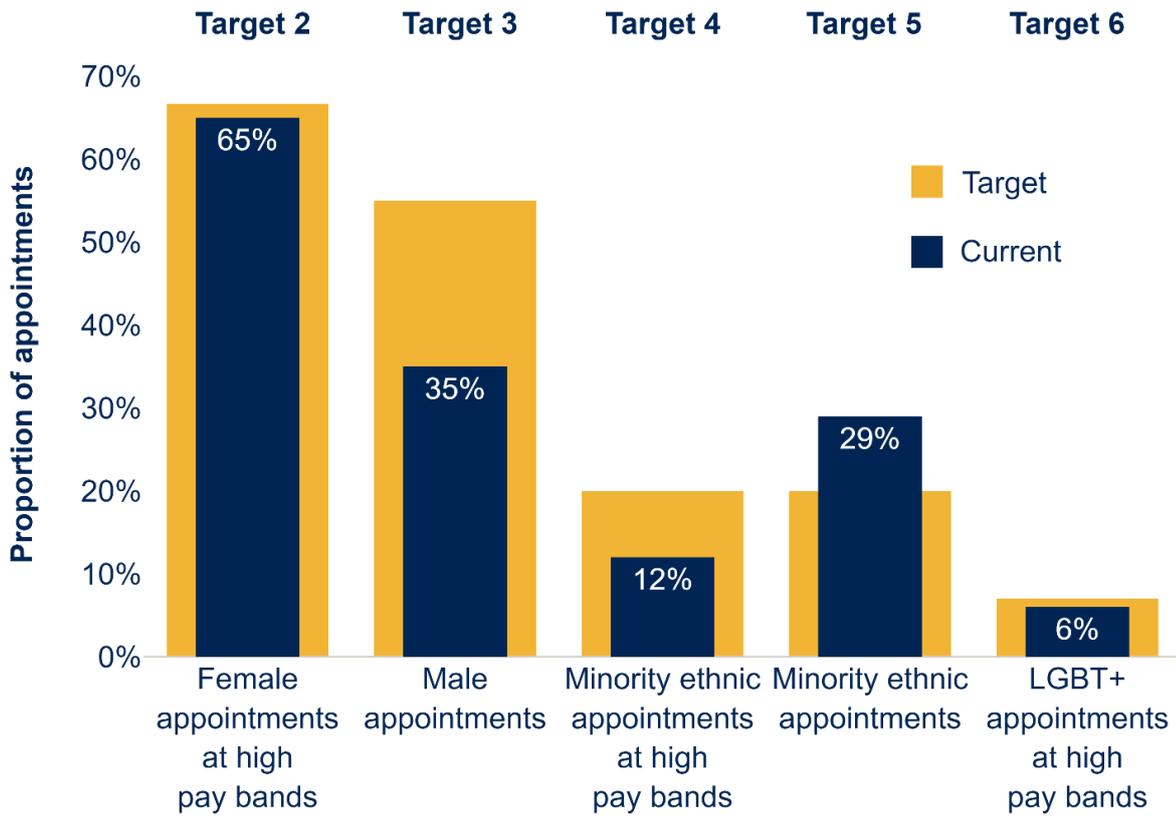
33. As of March 2022, Target 1 was close to being achieved, standing at over 75 per cent for all the protected characteristics for which we collect data. Our change to the collection of OfS staff profile data (see paragraph 15) led to a drop in disclosure for some characteristics but an increase for others and disclosure is now consistent across characteristics. Table 9 shows that, as of March 2023, this target has been met with over 80 per cent declaration for all protected characteristics.

Table 2: Disclosure rate for protected characteristics as of March 2023

Characteristic	Disclosure rate March 2023
Disability	81%
Gender reassignment	82%
Race	82%
Religion or belief	81%
Sex	82%
Sexual orientation	82%

34. Our current progress against Targets 2 to 5 is visualised in Figure 9. Note that Target 1 is not included in this chart as it relies on reporting of the disclosure rate for each individual characteristics, rather than being a single number than can be plotted alongside the other targets.

Figure 8: Progress against EDI targets



Note: the proportion of new appointees whose response relating to Targets 4 to 6 was 'not responded' is higher than in the whole staff population.



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