

Bracknell Forest Council

Annual Workforce Equality Report 2023-2024



Inclusive
Ambitious
Always learning

Being Bracknell Forest

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Introduction

Bracknell Forest Council aspires to be an employer of choice and live its values of being inclusive, ambitious and always learning. This Equality in Employment Monitoring Report 2023-24 provides an annual analysis of equalities data for our workforce over the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

At Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) we are committed to eliminating discrimination and harassment whilst encouraging inclusivity and diversity amongst our workforce at all levels. We are also aware of our legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to do the same.

The Equality Act 2010 provides a single legal framework with clear streamlined legislation to tackle:

- disadvantage
- discrimination

Under the public sector equality duty, the council has a general duty to:

- advance equality of opportunity
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- foster good relations

Our aim is to ensure that we have a diverse and resilient workforce that is representative of our local population. We continue to work with relevant groups and staff to celebrate diversity, ensure fair and equitable treatment.

Strong, visible leadership is essential to effectively embed equality throughout the organisation and community at large. The council will ensure our leaders are not only supporting but also more importantly driving the change and championing equality.

From our Employee Experience 2022-23 survey, we know that our staff in general feel satisfied with BFC as a great place to work (76 per cent in 2022). However we know that over the past few years we have seen an increasing number of colleagues feeling in some way discriminated against whilst at work (17 per cent EE survey 2022-23). Often this is not being formally reported. We also recognise that our values and behaviours are not fully embedded in everything we do.

Our 2022- 2023 Employee Experience survey, helps understand what our employees think of us as an employer and their experience of working at the authority. Over the year we have focused our efforts in addressing results to positively improve the experience and outcomes of our staff. Some of the areas being addressed include:

- Reviewed and strengthened the priorities of our Equalities Group to demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion within our organisation.
- Our apprentice recruitment was successful in recruiting a diverse cohort of younger people to develop skills and experience for a successful future.
- We have extended the reach of recruitment advertising to attract a more diverse field of candidates.

- Developed workforce and EDI dashboards to support management insights and decision making, this includes quarterly DMTs analysis and actions planning.
- Following the 2023 local elections, we are providing EDI training and development for councillors, while also reinforcing and embedding the Nolan principles and the mayor's charter in political debates and discussions.
- We have developed 38 wellbeing champions who are all certified MHFAiders® across the organisation, run neurodiversity awareness online seminar, and expanded our EDI e-Learning modules offer.
- Reviewing our exit interview process, including additional opportunities to engage equality allies to provide the feedback.
- To build a more inclusive culture and foster a greater feeling of belonging, continuing to support and promote wellbeing and inclusion awareness days and months, such as Mental Health Awareness Week, Neurodiversity Week, Menopause Month, Black History Month, South Asian Heritage Month and Pride Month to name a few.
- Delivered Understanding Skills for High Performing Managers for training to managers.
- We delivered a well-being at work week offering support for mental well-being, menopause awareness, and health checks.



- Employee networks: Provide platforms for discussing relevant issues:
 - Disability and neurodiversity staff network: Newly developed to support employees with disabilities and neurodiversity.
 - LGBTQIA+ network: Established to support LGBTQIA+ employees.
 - Unison Black Members Group: focusing on providing a safe space for Black employees to discuss issues and raise concerns.
- Delivered ACAS equality allies training to help support the embedding of an inclusive culture.
- Held Culture and Community Day and Pride events to raise the council's profile with prospective employees from diverse background.
- Developing a pilot reciprocal mentoring scheme for Black and Asian colleagues.
- Delivering Leading a Culture of Wellbeing and Psychological Safety Training for managers to help gain the knowledge and skills to positively influence workplace culture.
- Developing and embedding managers EDI knowledge capability including the development of an EDI and wellbeing toolkit intranet hub.
- We are developing a new integrated impact assessments process which will incorporate health, equalities and climate change. To improve the way we address and respond to equality and inclusion in our work and service delivery.

This report will help us as an employer, to identify the areas where we are doing well, as well as address gaps and improve outcomes by:

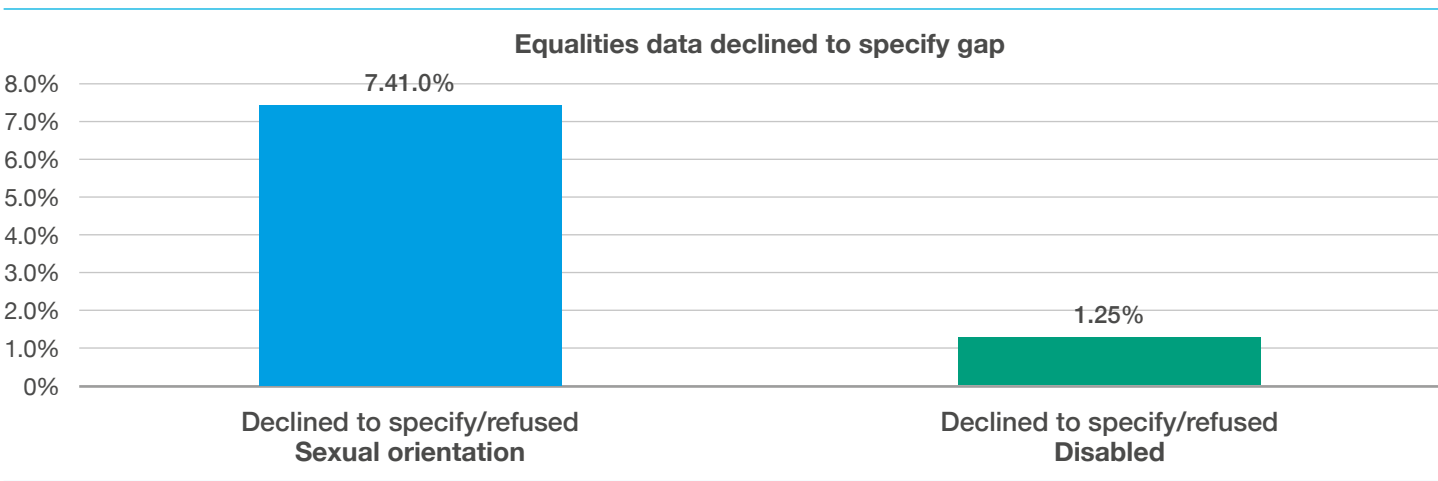
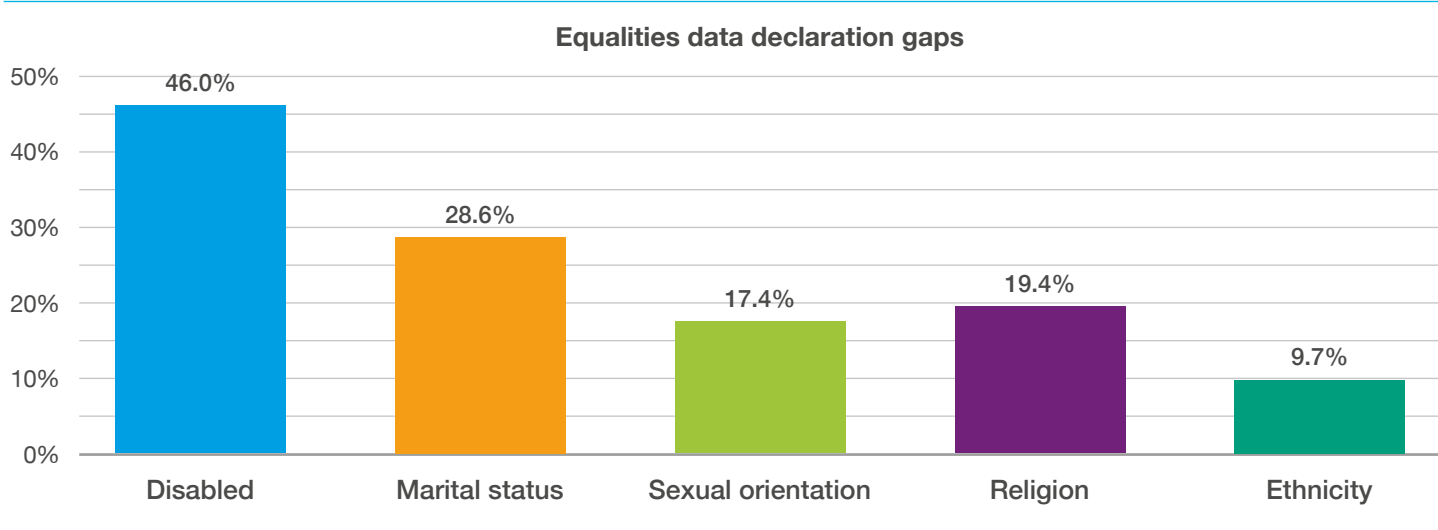
- Creating a positive culture, with clear leadership commitment to improving equality, diversity and inclusion both within the council, with our partners and the wider community.
- Foster a positive work environment with engaged employees and retain employees.
- Attract and hire high quality and diverse candidates that align with the organisation's values and objectives outlined in the Council Plan.
- Listen to, involve, and respond effectively.
- Develop a flexible and adaptive workforce.
- Ensure a diverse, inclusive, and healthy workplace that values differences and promotes equity.

Data monitoring

The workforce data used to compile this report covers the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

The statistics are primarily taken from the human resources and payroll information (HRIS) system, known as iWork. iWork provides us with comprehensive reporting allowing a full analysis of our workforce data to be undertaken.

Our reporting is dependent on employees choosing to disclose their personal data with us. The voluntary nature of these disclosures means that there are some areas where staff have chosen not to release their information, or have simply not known how to update it, creating gaps in our equalities data.



For some protected characteristics, the proportion of our people who declared they would ‘prefer not to say’ remains higher than for others as highlighted in the graph above.

The report highlights that a sizeable portion of the workforce prefers not to disclose certain protected characteristics. The reasons for this are unknown and it may be our people feel this is personal information that they do not wish to share with their employer. Most notably:

- 7.4 per cent of employees declined to specify their sexual orientation.
- The highest non-disclosure gap is for disability, initially at 45.9 per cent. On a positive note, there has been a noticeable narrowing of the disability data gap to 42.5 per cent after a recent disclosure exercise.
- The non-disclosure rate for religion is 19.4 per cent. The marital status non-disclosure rate is notably high at 28.6 per cent, primarily because this information was not previously requested.
- Only 1.25 per cent declined to specify their disability status.
- Ethnicity/race information has the highest positive disclosure rate at 91.4 per cent.

Actions:

- We are acutely aware that we need to improve declaration rates, and this is a key component of our equality strategy.
- We are actively working to improve data accuracy by encouraging staff to update their personal details. We will continue to monitor progress and aim to build trust and confidence in data sharing, through awareness raising campaigns and direct communication periodically throughout the year, while respecting that providing such information is voluntary.
- It should be noted whilst we have narrowed slightly the data gaps overall in the past year, these figures largely remain the same from last year.

Use of acronyms and terminology

Ethnicity reporting:

The acronym BAME – (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic), is often used to refer to all ethnic groups except White British ethnic group. The acronym, used as a word, however, can be problematic because it offers an assumption that all marginalised people exist as a homogeneous group without appreciation of the uniqueness of individual ethnicities.

‘BAME’: Black Asian Minority Ethnic became more frequently used than ‘BME’ to recognise the significant and distinct Asian population in the UK.

Both ‘BAME’ (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) and ‘BME’ (Black and minority ethnic) are often used when making comparisons with the white population in the UK and reflect a common way of collating statistics, and comparison for example, by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and in company diversity monitoring.

Similarly in some contexts, here at BFC, the use of ‘BAME’ or ‘Ethnic minorities’ is considered appropriate to use, when making statistical analysis comparisons or reporting. While acknowledging that this is not a single or homogenous group. We are also committed to provide a detailed breakdown where this is possible while ensuring anonymity.

The use of these terms provides acknowledgement of the harm caused and gives context in many instances where a collective term is sought. For example, given the changing demographic trends in the United States, and in the UK the word 'minority' no longer accurately reflects the four primary racial/ethnic groups. Other terms 'emerging/global majority', 'racialised', 'minoritised', 'people of colour' have also become popular substitutes, to challenge the perception that the dominant ethnicity is White.

It should be noted too that the 'Asian' category used by the ONS includes South Asian ethnicities (for example, Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani) and East Asian ethnicities (for example, Chinese).

While data reporting and analysis naturally involve some degree of generalisation, it's crucial to remember that each of us is a unique individual, not solely defined by our gender, race, sexuality, income, or other categories. However, making careless generalisations, especially about race, is unlikely to advance racial equality.



Sex terminology

The language around sex and gender identity is evolving constantly and it is important to understand the difference between them.

It is common for people to confuse sex, gender, and gender identity, though they are different things:

- **Sex, or biological sex**, is a label assigned by a doctor at birth based on attributes such as anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones.
- **Gender** is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender identity** is a person's innate sense of their own gender whether male, female or 'non-binary' which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.
- **Binary gender** terms (man/woman, girl/boy) have traditional associations with sex. However, we now recognise how some people identify with a gender opposite to that assigned to them as a child (trans), and others identify neither as men nor women (non-binary or genderfluid).

Throughout this report, based on the sensitive information completed by employees on the iWork system, and to align with the ONS 2021 census description, male and female will be categorised as under the heading of sex. However, we will be using the culturally determined term gender which is assumed from the sex assigned at birth.



Workforce and local population profile

The council continues to aim for its workforce to broadly reflect the local community's demographics.

Below is a summary of the workforce analysis and the council's actions to contribute to a more inclusive and representative workforce:

Workforce composition:

- The report covers the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- The council employed 1,277 employees (excluding school staff).
- Not all workforce sections have complete data due to staff privacy.

Actions:

- Continual review of employment policies and processes to address any disproportionate impact on specific employee groups using equality impact assessments.
- Compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010).
- Efforts to enhance equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace, ensuring all employees feel supported, that they belong and can reach their full potential.



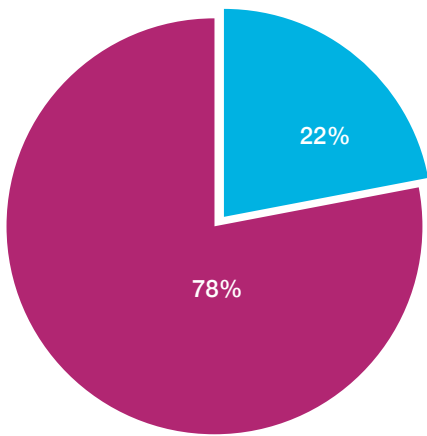
Sex (Gender)

Workforce composition:

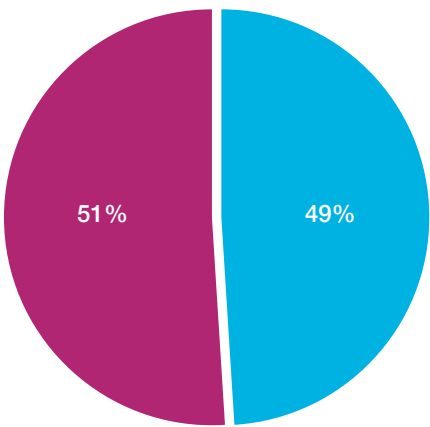
The council’s workforce breakdown by sex (gender) is being compared with the 2021 Local Population Census.

- In Bracknell Forest, males and females are roughly equal (49 per cent males, 51 per cent females).

Female
Male

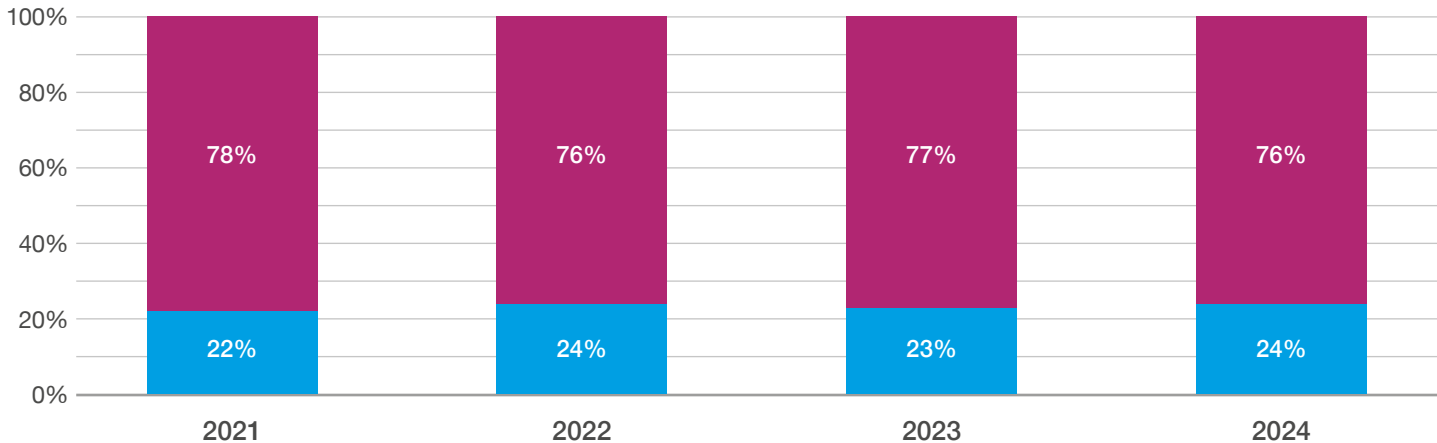


Bracknell Forest Council workforce
as at 31 March 2024



Local population census 2021

Workforce sex profile over past four years



Our data graph above shows that in line with traditional historical trends over the past four years, females continue to outnumber males by just under 4:1 (78 per cent females, 22 per cent males), There has been little change over time.

The flexible working practices which the council offer, are likely to appeal to females who, as reasearch shows, are more likely to carry out caring responsibilities.

Targeted advertising:

- The organisation aims to attract more male applicants, especially in roles traditionally filled by females (e.g. social workers, care work, administration).
- Job descriptions (JDs) are being reviewed to make them more appealing to male candidates.
- Recruitment advertisements are strategically placed in areas with a male-oriented audience.

Data analysis:

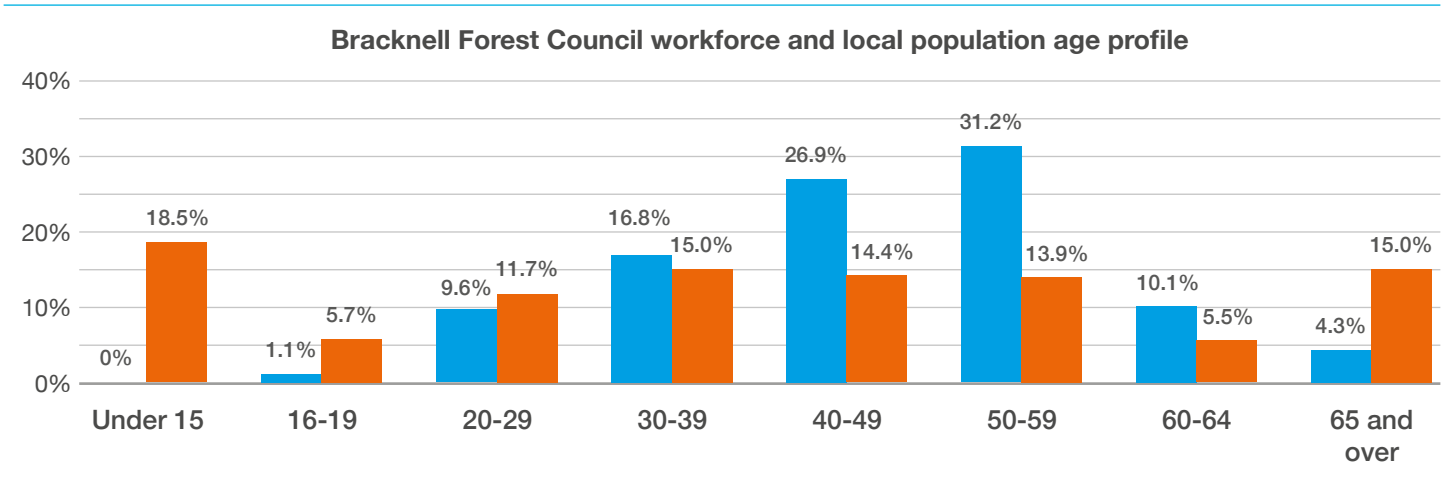
- Further analysis is needed to compare male and female application rates.
- The goal is to identify any gender-based differences in appointment likelihood for various roles.

Diverse interview panels:

- Interview panels should reflect diversity whenever possible.

Age versus local population profile

The chart below gives a workforce age profile against the local population 2021 Census information. Like other local government organisations, our workforce is ageing, with 60 per cent of our people aged 46 years and over.



Age workforce distribution:

- The average age of the workforce is 46.7.
- 57 per cent of the workforce falls between the ages of 40 and 59.
- Approximately 27 per cent of employees are between the ages of 20 to 39.
- An additional 14 per cent of the workforce is aged 60 and above.

Workforce %
LP Census 2021

Age comparison with local population:

- The number of employees aged 30-39 is broadly similar to the local population.
- Employees below 30 years old are fewer compared to other age groups in the local population.

Observations:

- Overall, the data indicates the council has aging workforce with a strong commitment to the council, indicated by their length of service with the council.
- The high percentage (57 per cent) in the 40-59 age group appears to suggest that many employees are content working at the council and do not actively seek careers elsewhere.
- The workforce's stability is positive, as people are willing to continue their careers within the organisation.

Actions:

Whilst we continue to support the needs of an ageing workforce, we are also taking steps to strengthen our approach to address the challenges of an ageing workforce. Actions being undertaken to address workforce disparities and attract young talent include:

Retention and recruitment

- The organisation is proactively seeking to retain and recruit young talent.
- Strategies include reviewing the recruitment process and making local government careers more appealing to young individuals.
- Continued participation in the National Graduates Development Programme (NGDP)

Specific initiatives

- Utilising targeted social media campaigns.
- Increasing presence at local job fairs and attending school careers events.
- Strengthening connections with local universities.
- Establishing a young careers network.

78 per cent of our workforce is female, of which 30 per cent are within the 46-55 age group. We know that this age group is most likely to be experiencing perimenopause or menopause and are more likely to have caring responsibilities.

In recognition of this, we have:

- The inclusive staff network group, 'Pause 4 Menopause', continuing to support staff with perimenopause, menopause, menstrual, and overall women's health. Additionally, there is a dedicated intranet Viva Engage knowledge hub offering resources and a forum for open discussion.
- A menopause related absence category for recording menopause-related absences.



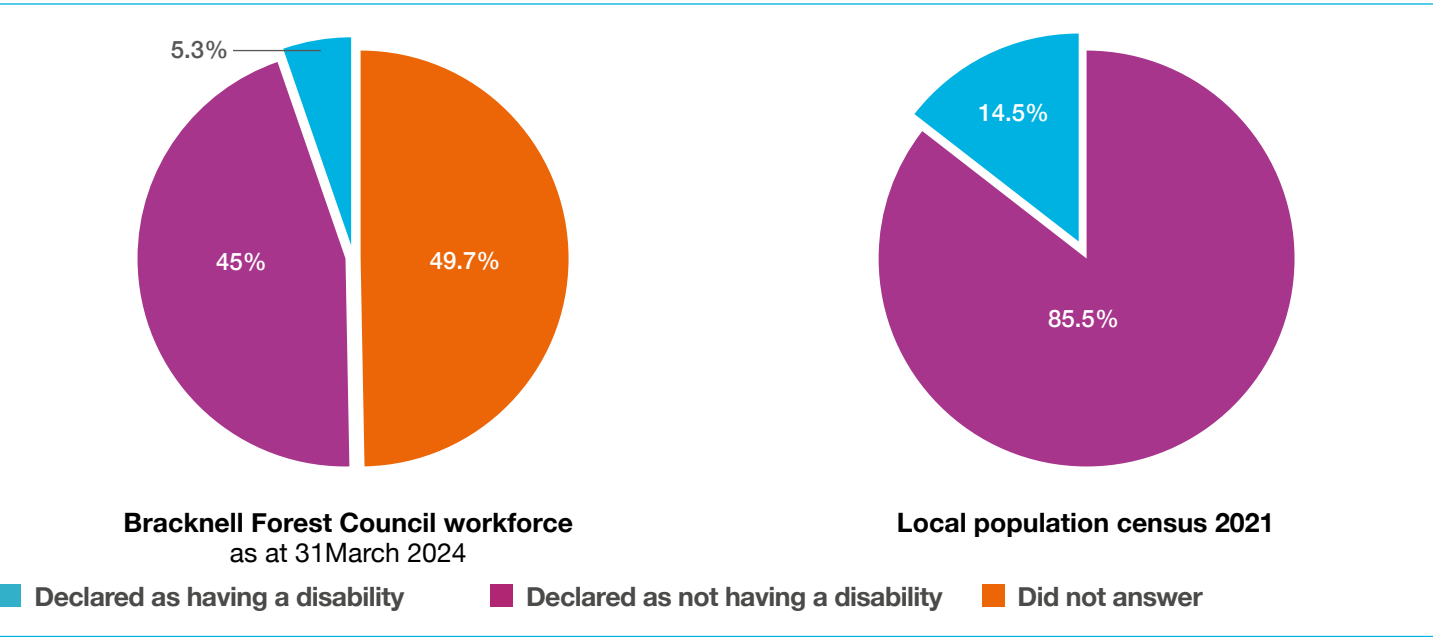
Disability profile

The Equality Act 2010 defines an individual as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

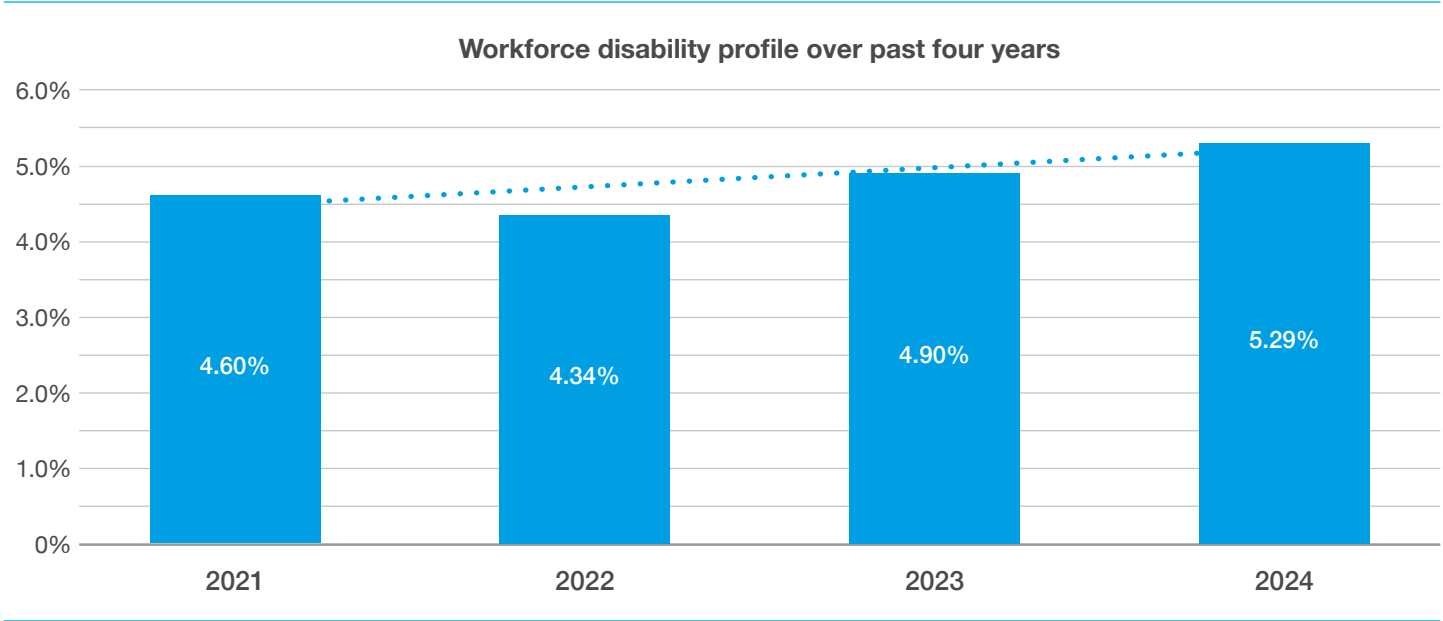
We are committed to disability inclusion by ensuring disability is no barrier to workplace progression. We are a Disability Confident Employer, guaranteeing interviews for people with disabilities who meet essential job criteria. We provide support for hiring managers, by providing guidance on job descriptions and person specifications to focus on output, preventing inadvertent discrimination.

Observations

The disability profile data remains unclear as only 45 per cent of staff declared not having a disability, though this is an improvement from 50 per cent last year. In contrast, only 9.2 per cent of staff did not disclose their ethnicity. Despite the incomplete data, the proportion of staff declaring a disability has slightly increased from last year but, this is still below the national average of 16.8 per cent and local population of 14.5 per cent of working-age adults having a disability, according to the 2021 Census.



The graph below shows the proportion of staff who have declared themselves as having a disability has been rising steadily over the last four years from 4.06 per cent to 5.29 per cent. Our 2022/23 Employee Experience Survey provides a more realistic picture of 13 per cent of the respondents (70 per cent completion rate) identified themselves as disabled.



Actions:

- Roll out ‘check your data’ twice a year to capture changes in disabilities during employment, using the HR (Human Resources) iWork system for updates.
- Continue to identify and address barriers to data collection.
- Develop and support managers to foster an inclusive environment.
- Provide “safe spaces” for open discussions on disability topics and encourage sharing of lived experiences to influence disability equality across the council.
- Raise awareness of the staff disability and neurodivergent forum. It is noted some people with disabilities may not recognise this as disability – especially with staff who are neurodivergent being diagnosed in adulthood.
- In response to the 2022/23 Employee Experience survey, where 10 per cent of respondents indicated they did not have reasonable adjustments in place, we will develop a wellbeing actions plan passport. This will support open 1:1/supervision discussions and review about reasonable adjustments.
- Line management development to support neurodivergent employees.
- Educating staff on accessibility best practice. This will improve standards of accessible communication around the organisation.

Wellbeing network development

Since last year, aligning with our values of being inclusive, ambitious, and always learning, we aim to foster a culture that promotes wellbeing. This allows our people to be themselves, feel their best, and perform optimally, ensuring exceptional service for our residents. We are proactively empowering our staff to prioritise their wellbeing and support others in doing the same.

With support from Public Health funding, we have developed 37 Wellbeing Champions across the organisation, all certified Mental Health First Aiders by Mental Health England. Over two-thirds are also equality allies. Their primary role is to promote, implement, support, and embed a wellbeing culture by raising awareness of wellbeing activities, promoting healthy lifestyles, and encouraging positive mental health.

Actions:

- Our wellbeing champions, disability and neurodiversity staff network, equality allies, and menopause networks continue to be crucial and provide staff the opportunity to talk openly and honestly about their current feelings and address any health difficulties without judgement and with support from colleagues.
- Development a wellbeing actions plan.
- Development of wellbeing toolkit to support managers and staff.
- Actively measure impact and progress.
- Developing a wellbeing space for staff to use for relaxation, socialisation, and for wellbeing team activities.

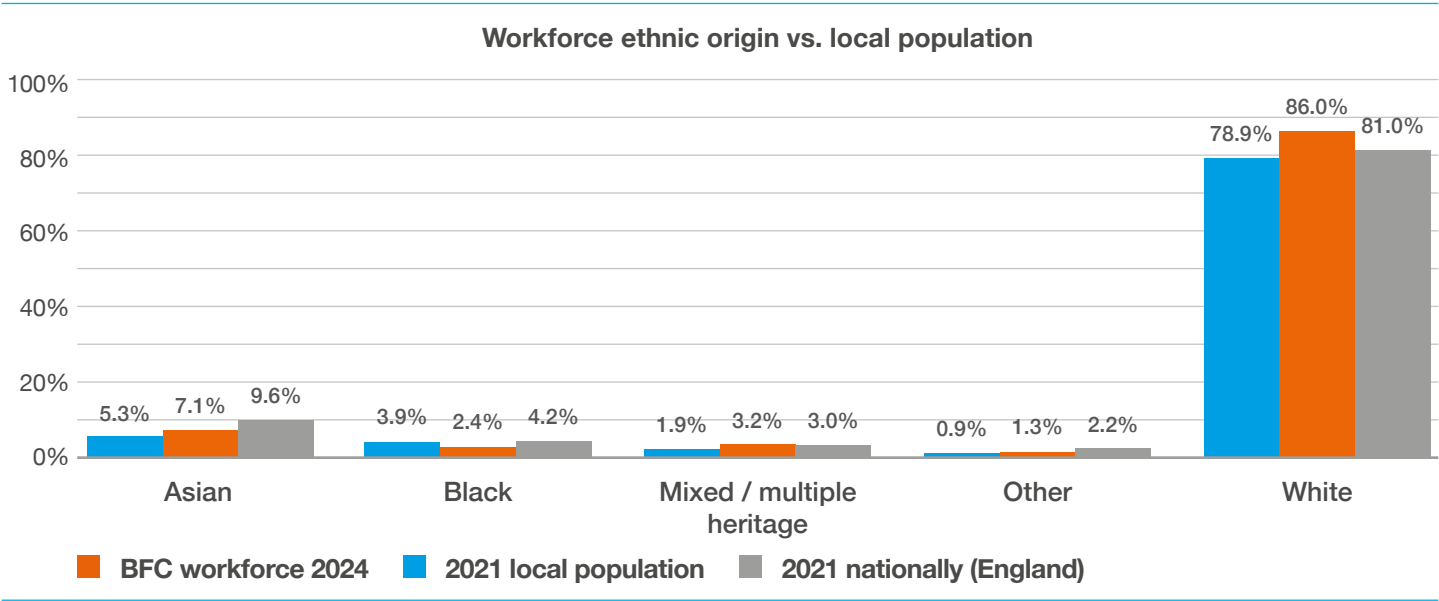
Workforce ethnic origin profile

The report uses the acronym BAME - Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic, for summary analysis, acknowledging it is not a single or homogenous group. For comparison, we use the ONS Census 2021 classification, categorising as Black, Asian, Mixed/Multiple Heritage, Other, and White.

Observations

According to the 2021 Census, 19 per cent of England’s population and 14 per cent of the BFC local population identify as belonging to diverse ethnic backgrounds other than White. Currently, 12.1 per cent of the workforce is from a BAME- Black, Asian Minority Ethnic background, though this figure may be higher as the ethnicity of 9 per cent of staff is unknown.

The borough’s population is growing and becoming more diverse. Positively, the workforce is increasingly reflecting this diversity.



Ethnic Origin	BFC workforce 2024	2021 local population	2021 nationally (England)
Asian	5.3%	7.1%	9.6%
Black	3.9%	2.4%	4.2%
Mixed / multiple heritage	1.9%	3.2%	3.0%
Other	0.9%	1.3%	2.2%
White	78.9%	86.0%	81.0%

Actions:

- Consistent year on year improvements in the self-reporting of ethnicity and decrease of unknowns.
- Working with local faith and community groups to raise awareness of employment opportunities within the council.
- Raise awareness of our inclusion calendar, providing colleagues and teams with a resource for actively promoting and raising awareness and breaking down barriers and fosters an inclusive environment for colleagues.
- Continue use of EDI Dashboard reporting at DMTs on key workforce metrics relating to EDI, to inform decision making.
- Promote a culture of inclusivity which will ultimately support our aim to increase ethnic minority representation across the organisation.
- Evaluate the reciprocal mentoring pilot and extend its reach based on the learning.
- Develop an anti-racist programme on engagement, training, and development.












Religion and belief profile

Approximately 19.4 per cent of our employees have not declared their religion, separate from those who either did not hold a religion or preferred not to state. This figure is consistent with previous years, suggesting that religion is deeply personal and private for most employees.

Observations

The Bracknell Forest area is less diverse in terms of major declared faiths compared to the national picture, with a notably smaller Muslim population (1.8 per cent in the borough, 1.5 per cent among BFC staff, compared to 6.7 per cent nationally). However, the Hindu population in the borough is above the national average.

The 2021 Census data shows a significant increase in the number of people in the borough stating they have ‘no religion’, rising from 30.4 per cent in 2011 to 40.4 per cent in 2021. This increase corresponds with a similar reduction in those identifying as Christian. The shift is also reflected in the workforce demographic.

	No religion		Jewish		Buddhist
	Muslim		Christian		Sikh
	Hindu		Other religion		Not known

Religion	BFC workforce 2024	2021 % of local population	2021 nationally (England)
Not Known	19.4%	5.6%	6.0%
No religion	31.5%	40.4%*	36.7%*
Buddhist	0.2%	0.8%	0.5%
Christian	41.3%	47.5%	46.3%
Hindu	1.6%	2.4%	1.8%
Jewish	0.2%	0.2%	0.5%
Muslim	1.5%	1.8%	6.7%
Sikh	1.3%	0.8%	0.9%
Other	2.6%	0.6%	0.6%

As a Council, we aim to embrace diversity, tolerance, and mutual respect, promoting a balanced approach to religion or beliefs, including atheism. We support the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, in line with the Equality Act.

Our 2022/23 Employee Experience survey revealed that employees with religious beliefs, particularly Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, are less likely to believe that the council would handle bullying or harassment fairly. They also feel they have fewer career development opportunities. Therefore, we want to ensure that employees do not feel that their religion or protected beliefs could negatively impact them, by continued monitoring analysis.

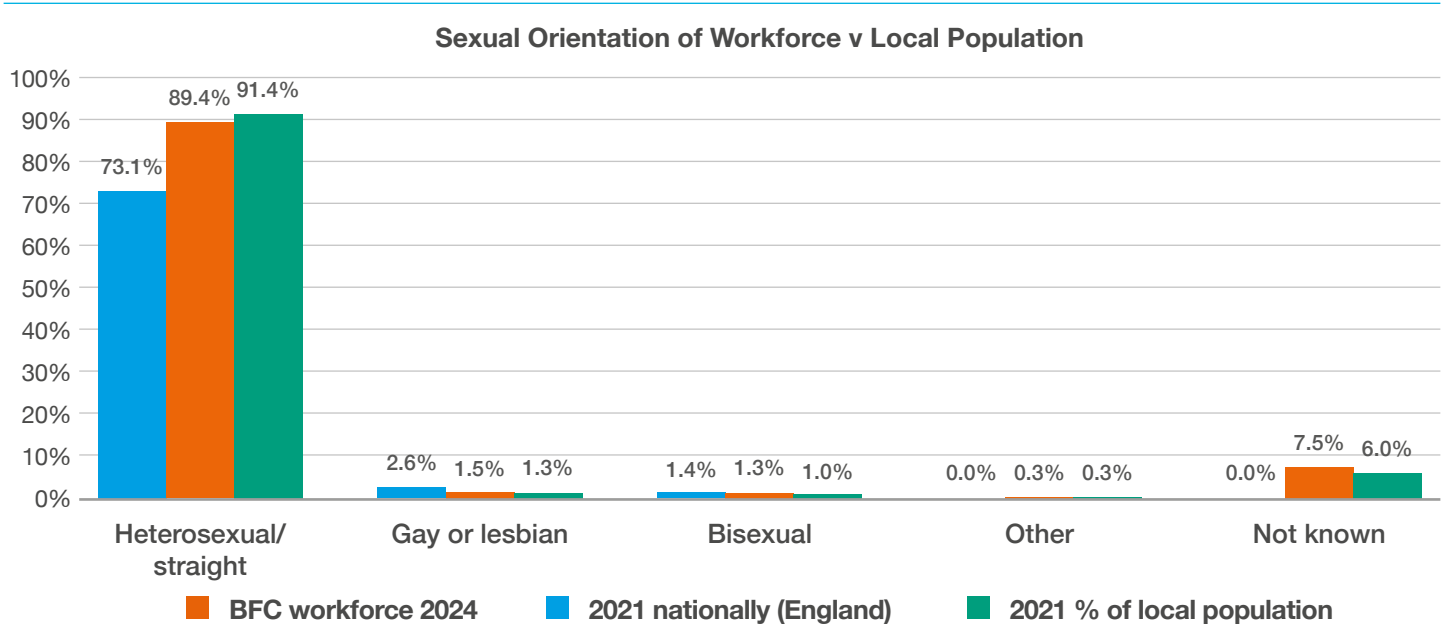
Actions:

- Continue to acknowledge and celebrate diverse cultures. This will include recognising religious festivals, national holidays, and other significant events.
- Promote inclusive safe spaces where employees can discuss their religious or cultural experiences without fear of judgment. Encourage open dialogue and active listening.
- Promote the use of the multi faith prayer room and wellbeing space.
- Increase cultural competency through sharing and increasing knowledge on different religions and beliefs.
- Continue to engage with the Bracknell Forest Inter-faith Forum and religious groups in the borough to ensure that our services are informed by their experience.
- Equality impact assessment focusses on the council's policies, services, process and procedures impact on religion and belief.

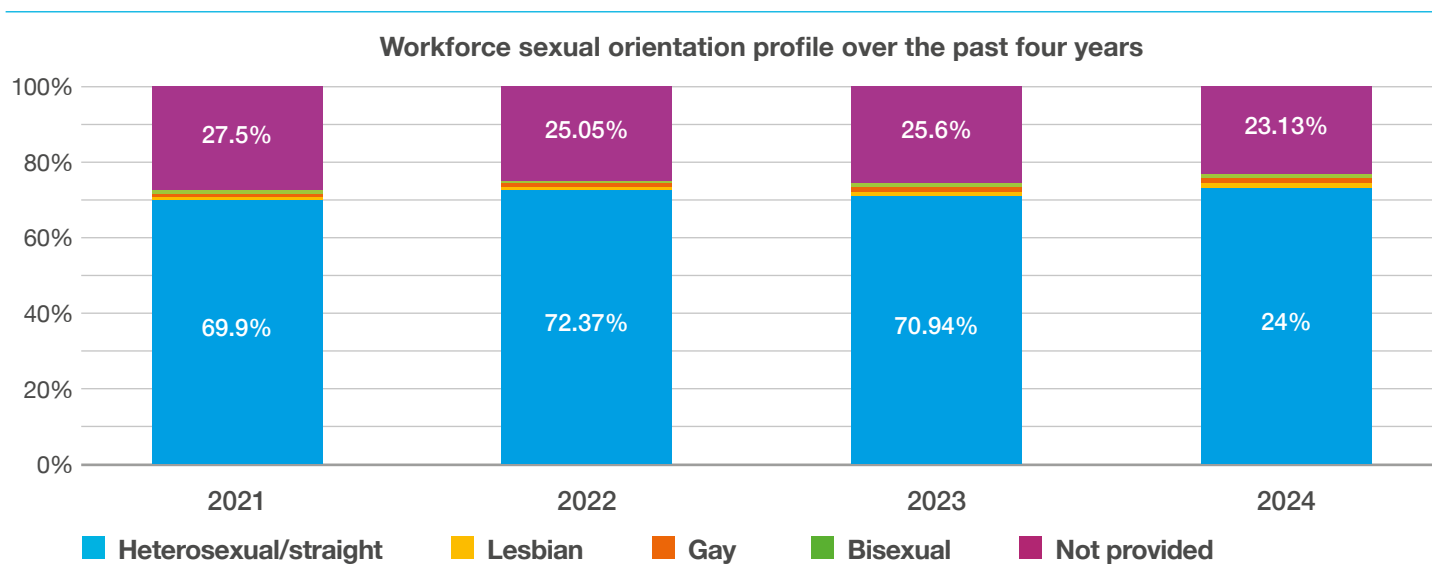
Sexual orientation

Our vision is for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, to be able to work in a safe, happy, and healthy environment where they can be their authentic selves without fear of discrimination.

The figures for BFC workforce in 2024 classify their sexual orientation as Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual as which is higher than both the local and national figures. 2021 Census Data shows that 2.6 per cent of people in the local area sexual orientation other than straight. Unfortunately, we still do not have data for 23.1 per cent of our staff which is slightly lower last year.



This year 23 per cent of our workforce have not provided this information. This compares to 25 per cent last year, which is not much improved.



	2021	2022	2023	2024
Heterosexual/ Straight	69.90%	72.37%	70.94%	73.01%
Lesbian	1.20%	0.96%	1.23%	1.66%
Gay	0.80%	0.81%	1.08%	0.79%
Bisexual	0.60%	0.81%	1.15%	1.42%
Not Provided	27.50%	25.05%	25.60%	23.13%

Actions:

- Develop and share best practice education and training to improve awareness and understanding of LGBT communities, across the council to improve experience for LGBT colleagues within the workforce.
- Supporting and strengthening the LGBTQIA+ Staff Network.
- Work in partnership with our integrated care system (ICS) to reduce LGBT inequalities and improve experience.
- Scale up the roll out of sexual orientation monitoring and begin developing a standard for inclusive gender and trans status monitoring, to improve our data capture on LGBT groups.
- Continue to celebrate Pride month with staff, communities, and partners.

Workforce activity

The following report section will cover permanent and temporary staff employed by BFC excluding schools (1277 employees), with focus:

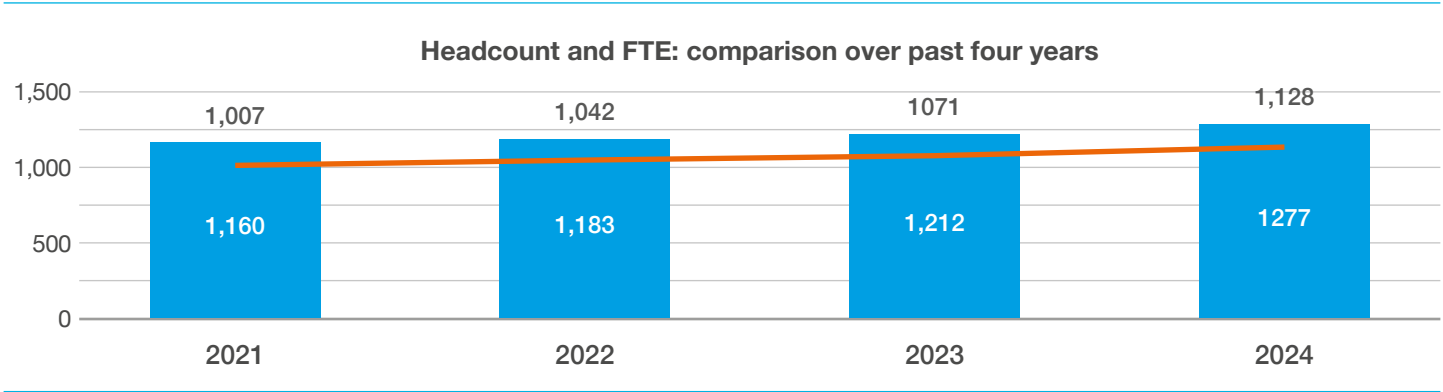
- Recruitment activity: New starters between 1st April 23 and 31st March 24.
- Turnover activity: Leavers between 1st April 23 and 31st March 24.
- Workforce pay analysis: Gender equality pay gap.
- Workforce pay analysis: Ethnicity equality pay gap.

Establishment overview

Headcount and FTE

The provided charts below illustrate the annual composition and trend over the past four years:

- Workforce establishment:
 - On April 1, 2024, the BFC workforce establishment was 1,277 headcount.
 - This represents an increase of 65 compared to April 1, 2023 (which had 1,212 headcount)
- Full-time equivalent (FTE):
 - The FTE count on April 1, 2024, was 1,128.00
 - This shows an increase of 56.28 from April 1, 2023 (which had an FTE of 1,071.73)
- Part-time staff proportion:
 - Part-time staff constitute 29 per cent of the workforce.



Part-time employees

Work-life balance measures:

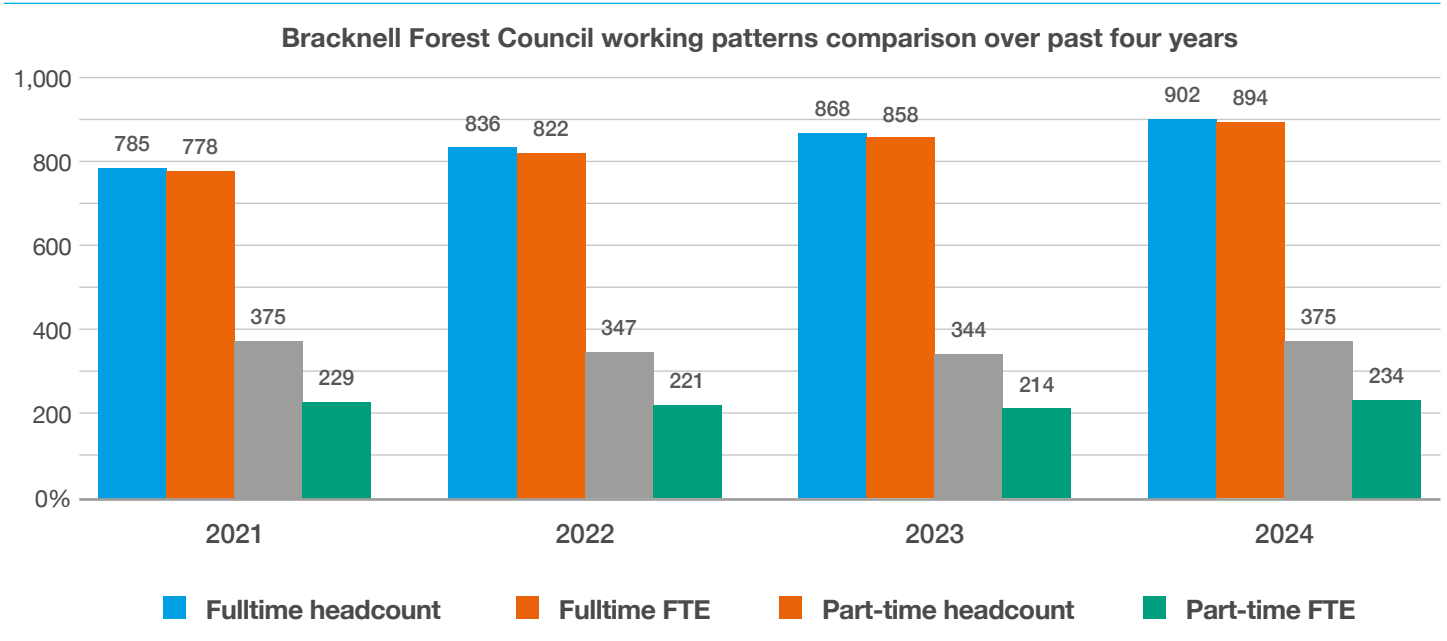
- The council offers various measures to enhance work-life balance, including:
 - Flexi-time scheme
 - Part-time working
 - Term-time only working
 - Nine-day fortnights
 - Remote working
 - Flexible retirement

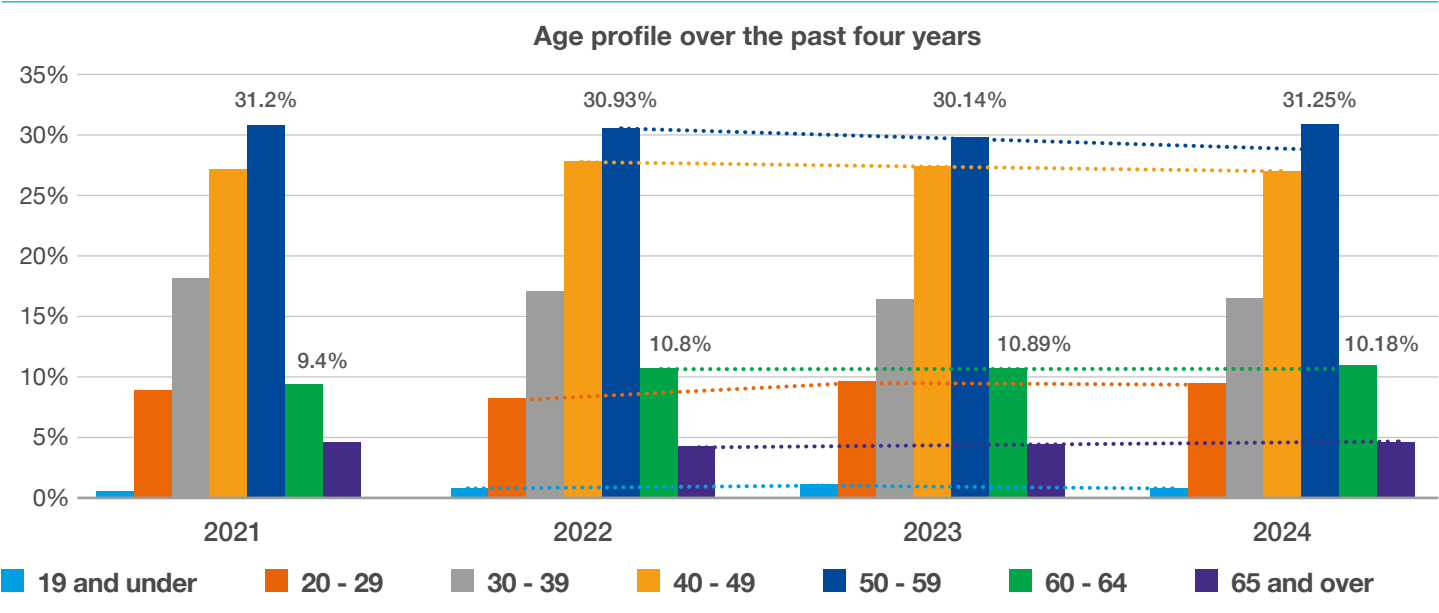
Workforce composition in BFC:

- 70.7 per cent of employees in Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) are full-time workers.
- 29.3 per cent are part-time employees. Part-time working is undertaken by more females than males. Within council currently 33.7 per cent of females work part-time compared to 13.2 per cent of males.
- This proportion has remained consistent over the last 4 years, ranging from 32 per cent in 2021 to 29 per cent in 2024.

Comparison with labour market survey:

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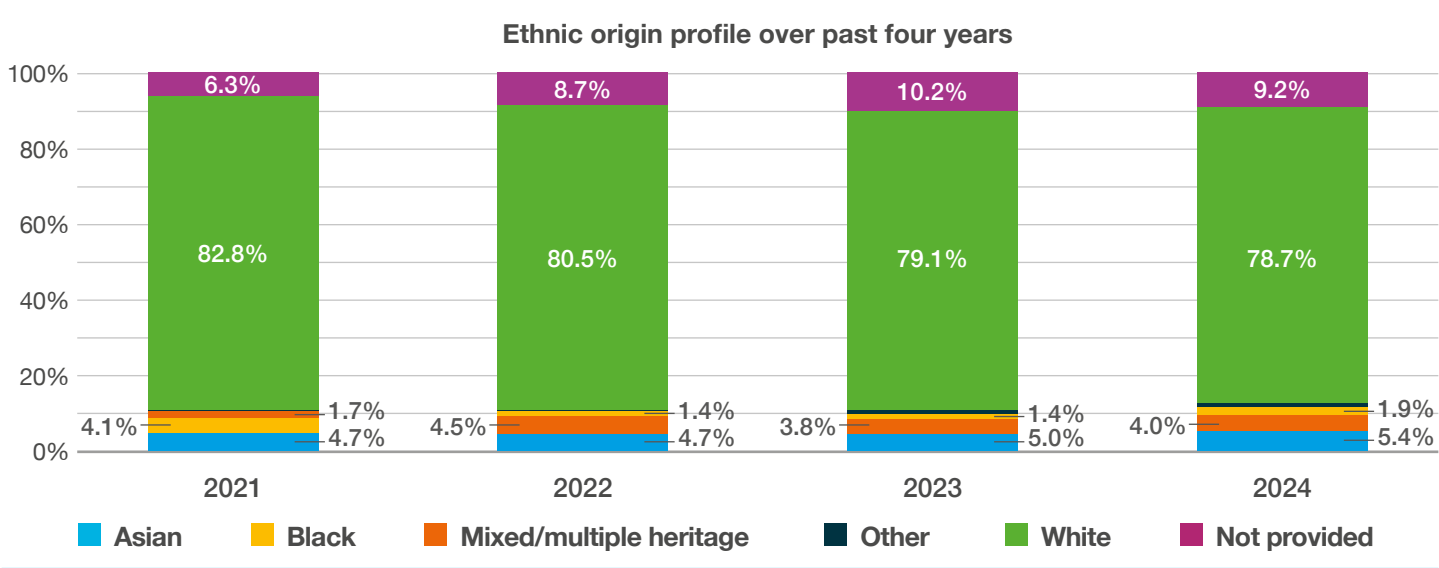




Ethnic origin workforce profile

As can be seen from the graph below the proportion of the staff population from an ethnic background has been slowly increasing over the past four years.

Our workforce’s ethnic origin breakdown is detailed. However, to maintain anonymity due to small numbers, we have not further analysed this ethnicity data by directorate for this report.



Ethnic Origin	BFC Ethnic Origin
Asian - Bangladeshi	0.23%
Asian - Indian	2.90%
Asian - Nepali	0.23%
Asian - Other	1.10%
Asian - Pakistani	0.86%
Black - African	2.97%
Black - Caribbean	0.94%
Declined to Specify	0.86%
Mixed - Other	0.94%
Mixed - White & Asian	0.31%
Mixed - White & Black African	0.08%
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	0.55%
Not Declared	8.22%
Other - Chinese	0.63%
Other - Filipino	0.16%
Other - Other Ethnic Groups	0.16%
White - British	73.79%
White - Gypsy/Traveller	0.08%
White - Irish	1.02%
White - Other	3.91%
White - Show people/Circus	0.08%

Actions:

To transform our culture, the key actions include:

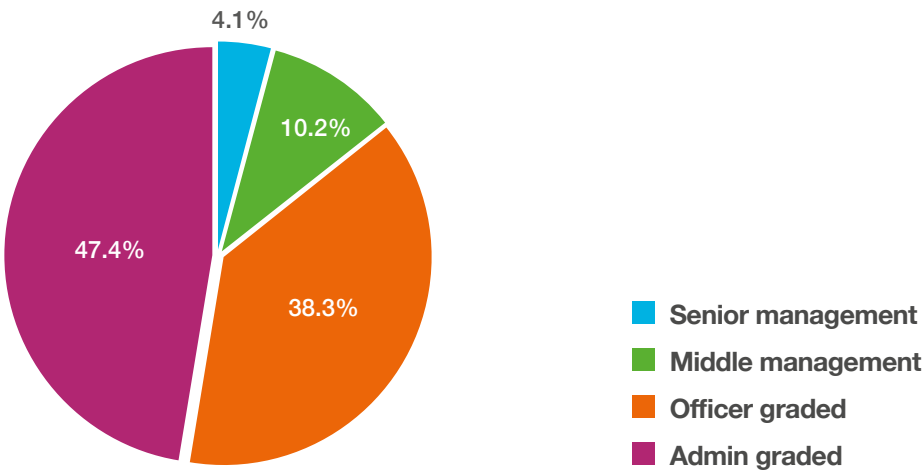
- Adopting an Anti-Racism Charter and maintaining zero tolerance for workplace discrimination.
- Developing an inclusive working culture that aligns with our values.
- Ongoing workforce development and awareness training for line management and staff.
- Role modelling the right behaviours.
- Developing a speak-up and accountability culture.
- Collaborating with staff networks, equality allies, and wellbeing champions to ensure inclusivity is embedded.
- Reciprocal mentoring programme.

Grade and pay bandings

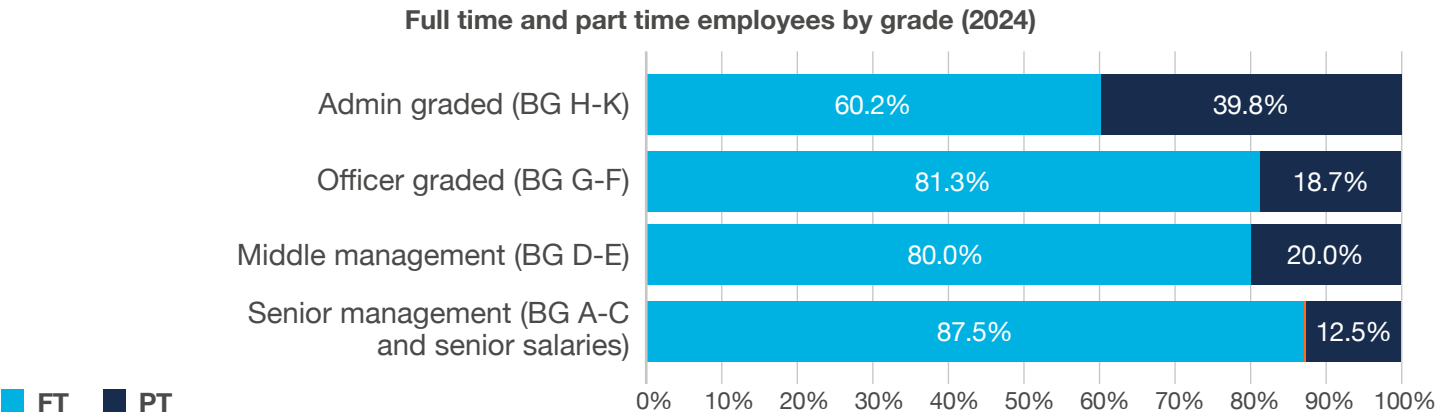
The council’s pay grading system ranges from apprentices to the chief executive. This report excludes minor professional grades like Soulbury and teachers grades. Bracknell Forest grades are categorised into four groups:

Senior management: BG A- C and senior salaries	£53,000 - £75,000 and above
Middle management: BG D -E	£41,000 - £52,999
Officer graded: BG G- F	£30,000 - £40,999
Admin grade: BG H - K	Below £20,000 - £29,0000

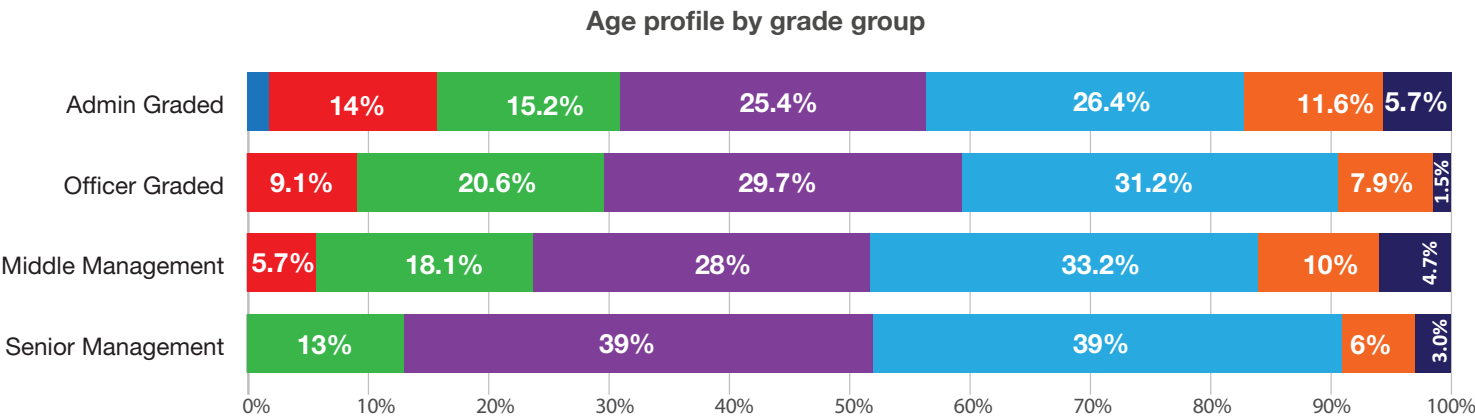
The graph below sets out the proportion of the workforce by grade-group.



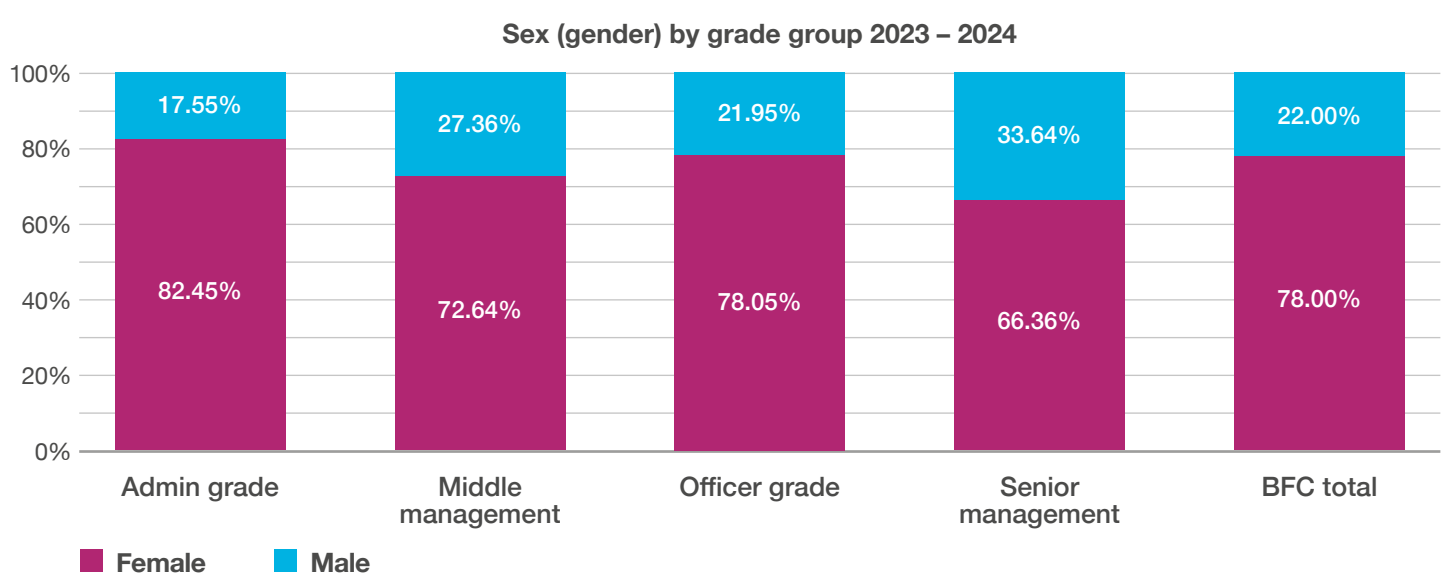
The graph below shows the breakdown of part-time employees by grade-group. Unsurprisingly most part-time staff can be found in the admin graded group.



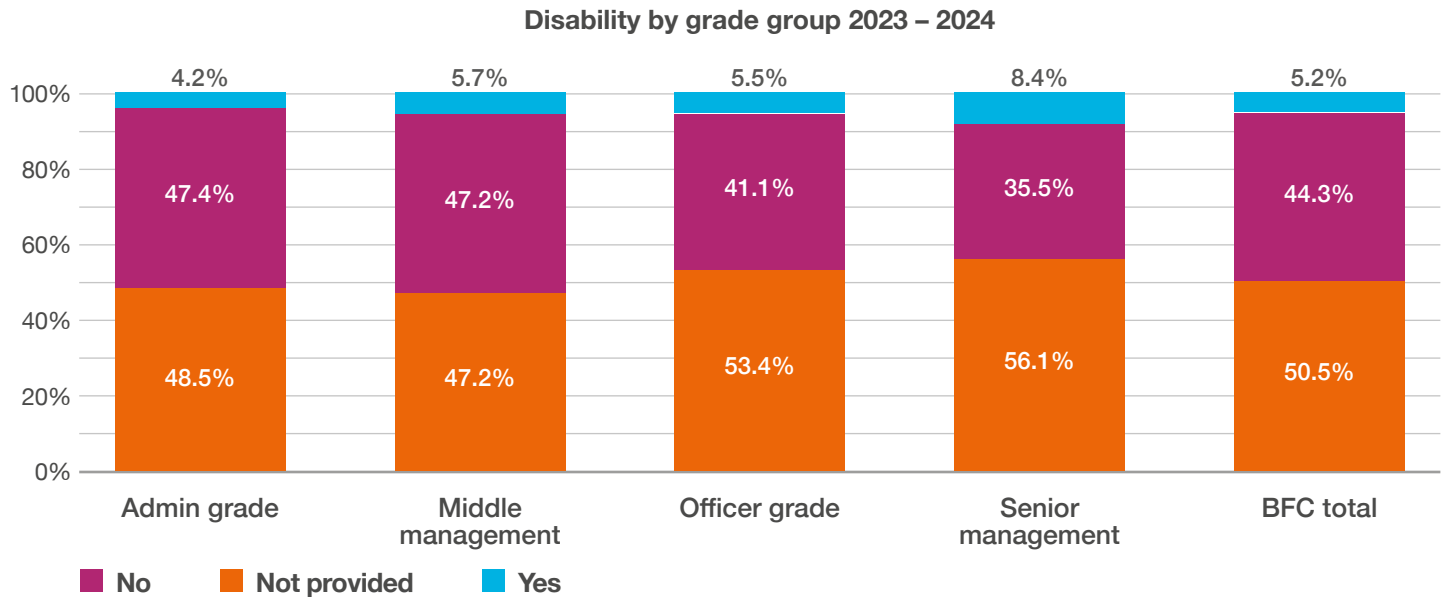
The graph below comparing age profiles by grade groupings shows a good mix of staff across all age bands and grades. Senior grades have a higher proportion of staff in the 40-49 and 50-59 age bands, which is expected as more experienced staff are typically paid at higher grades.



The graphs below illustrate the proportion of males and females across different grade groups. The analysis indicates that, despite a slight percentage change increase compared to two years ago, further efforts are needed to increase the representation of female employees in middle and senior management positions.

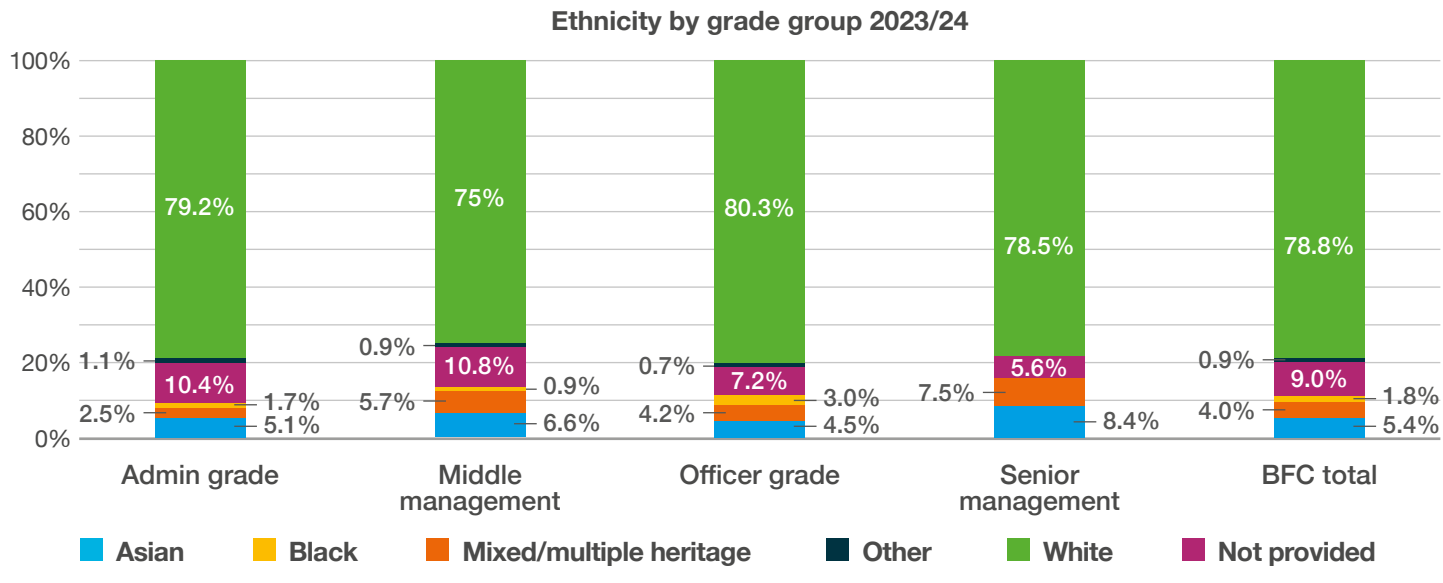


Our data chart below suggests that the proportion of staff with a disability is fairly well represented across the grades in particular at senior management level (8.4 per cent) although slightly lower in the admin grades (4.2 per cent).



The ethnic origin graph below depicts the ethnic distribution across various grade levels over the past four years. It reveals a positive trend with:

- Black and Asian employees are significantly represented in senior and middle management pay grades. Employees from mixed/multiple heritage backgrounds make up three per cent of officer-level grades, which is higher than their proportion in the overall workforce.



Grade level	Admin graded	Middle management	Officer graded	Senior management	BFC total
Asian	5.1%	6.6%	4.5%	8.4%	5.4%
Black	2.5%	5.7%	4.2%	7.5%	4.0%
Mixed/multiple heritage	1.7%	0.9%	3.0%		1.8%
Not provided	10.4%	10.8%	7.2%	5.6%	9.0%
Other	1.1%	0.9%	0.7%		0.9%
White	79.2%	75.0%	80.3%	78.5%	78.8%

Actions:

As well as ensuring that we continue to seek increase employee diversity representation across all grading levels, we will continue to monitor levels of representation at Middle management and senior management levels.



Workforce retention and recruitment

Our ambition is to be an employer of choice, ensuring all staff thrive, feel valued, and respected. We aim to make BFC a place where people are inspired to join and excited to be part of the 'one council,' with access to the best support, tools, opportunities, and development. We are committed to a diverse workforce that grows, develops, thrives, and remains resilient.

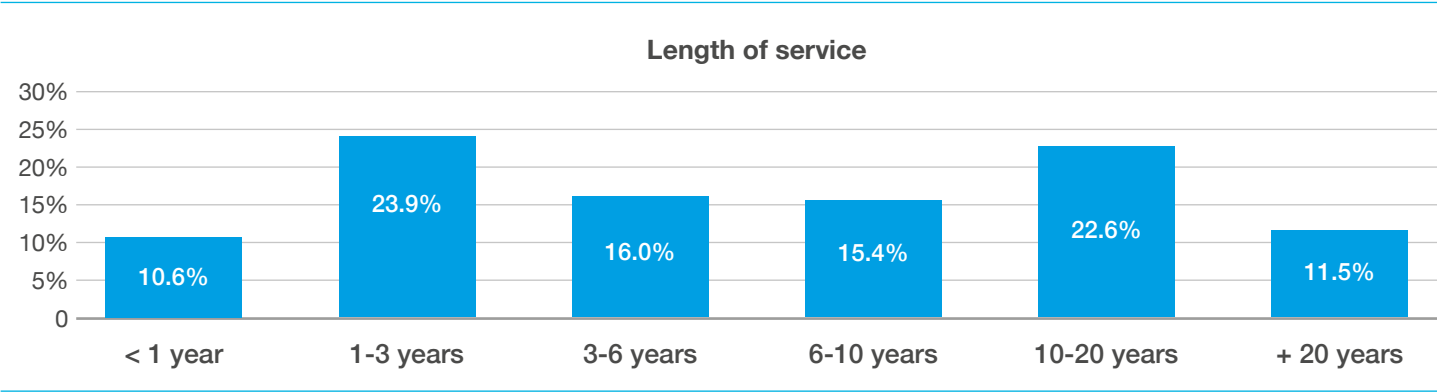
BFC faces challenges similar to the rest of the UK, with high demand for social care and difficulties in supply and retention. Hence why we this year we have decided to focus our attention on retaining our staff whilst welcoming new employees who bring the benefit of new insight and ideas.

Retaining and recruiting talented employees is crucial for maintaining our financial health, retaining knowledge and experience, employee engagement and morale, and productivity. High turnover rates lead to significant costs for agency hires, training, and onboarding. A stable workforce enhances workplace culture, boosts employee morale, and attracts talent. By focusing on these areas, we aim to create a more stable and engaged workforce, benefiting our organisation in the long run.



Retention – leavers

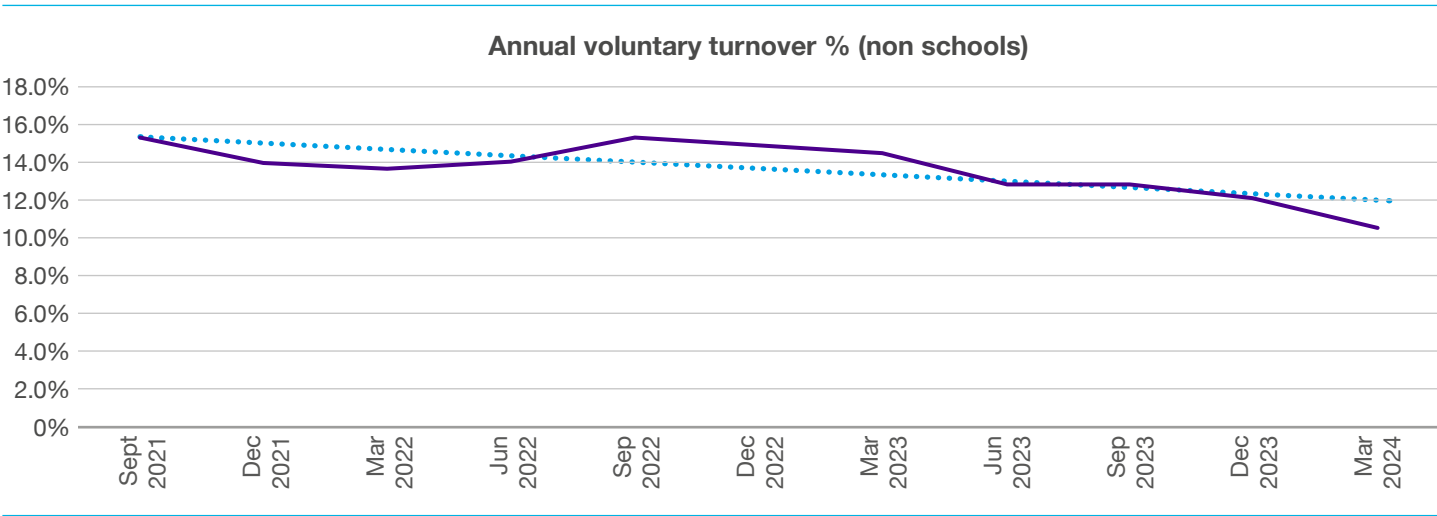
The length of service graph below shows we have even spread of employees staying on in the council. The graph below 34.5 per cent of our workforce has been in employment with the council less than 3 years. With a further one-third (35.1 per cent) of our workforce been in employment for over 10 years, of which 11.5 per cent been in employment over 20 years.



Voluntary turnover

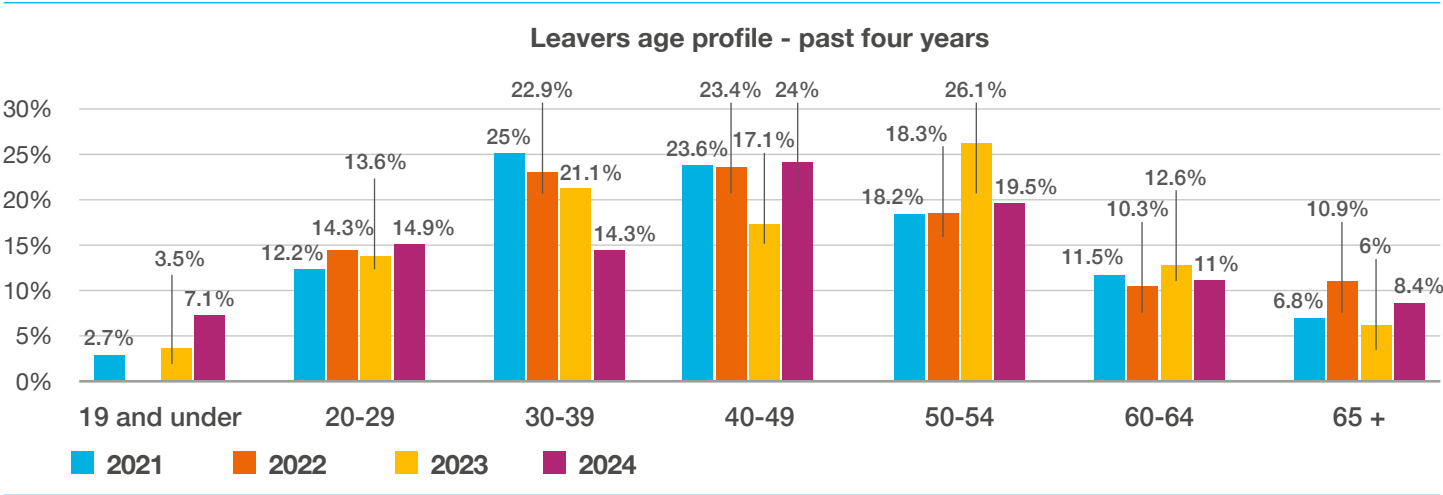
Voluntary turnover includes those who choose to resign or retire and excludes leavers who contracts have been ended by reason of redundancy, end of fixed-term contracts or other dismissals. Turnover is calculated by dividing the number of voluntary leavers by the average headcount over the period.

In 2023/24 voluntary turnover was 10.62 per cent, a decrease on 2022/23 (14.5 per cent) by 3.88 per cent. Voluntary turnover has been gradually decreasing over the past three years as can be seen from this figure below:



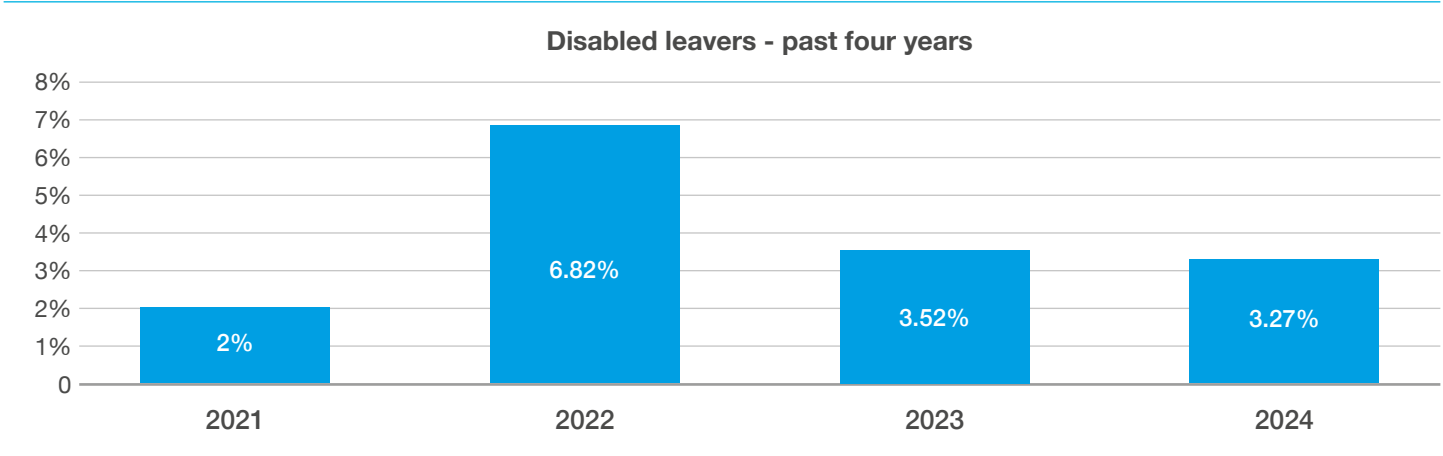
Turnover – age

The turnover rate for employees aged 19 to 29 is higher, primarily because they often leave for career advancement opportunities. Our data from the last 4 years shows a broadly similar pattern over the last 4 years however, the proportion of staff in the 30-39 age band is decreasing.



Leavers – disability

An analysis of leaver reasons above shows that out of five leavers that stated they had a disability, four of these left voluntarily. The one who left involuntarily was due to health matters. More work is needed to encourage staff to register their disability status

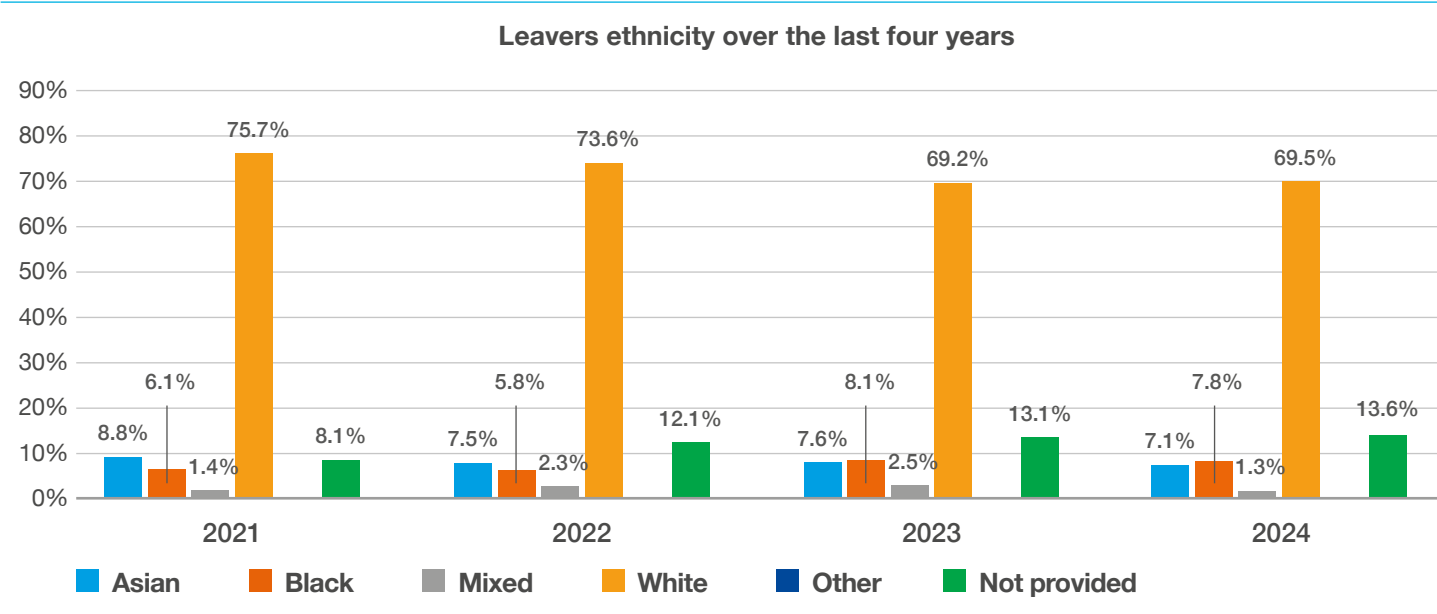


The turnover rate for staff with a disability is lower than the overall council turnover rate, which is positive. However, caution is needed due to many undeclared statuses.

Leavers – ethnic origin

The analysis below confirms that the turnover rates during year 2023-2024 for staff identifying as Asian (16 per cent) and Black (25 per cent) is significantly higher than for other ethnic groups.

	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Not Known
Leavers	7.14%	7.79%	1.3%	0%	69.48%	13.64%

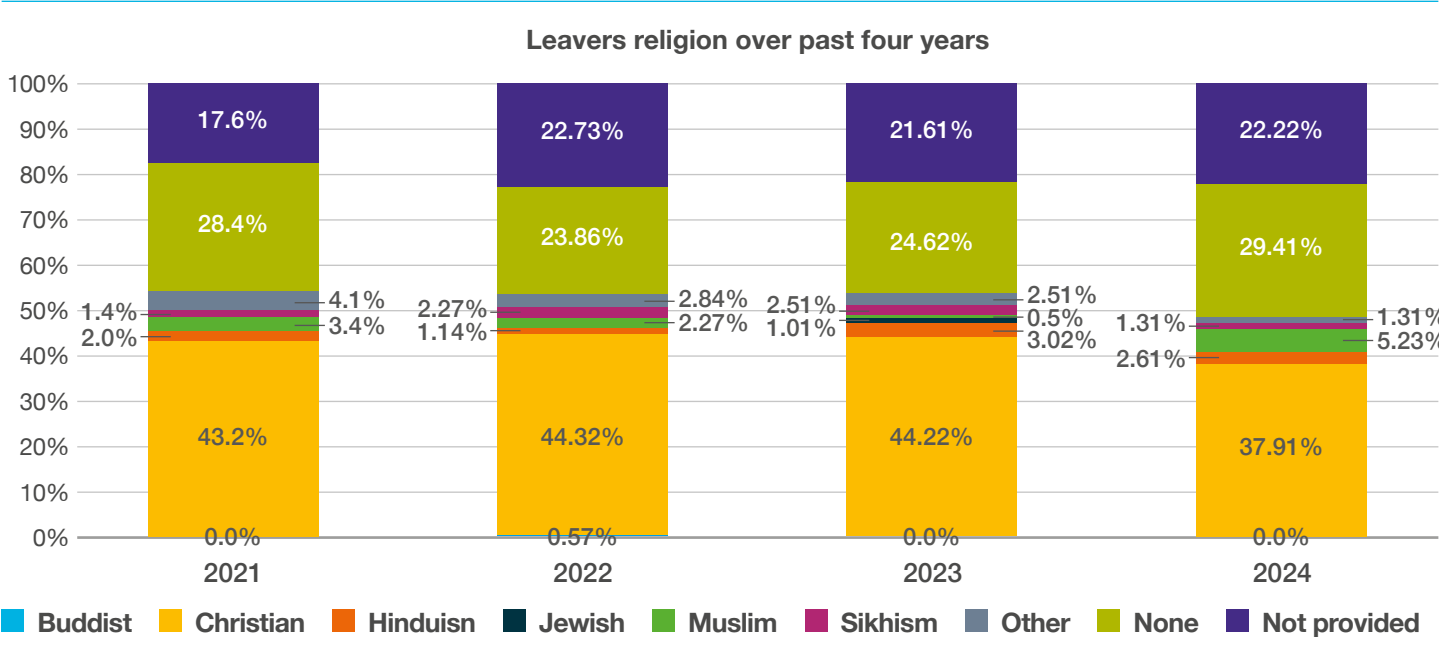


Leavers – religion and belief

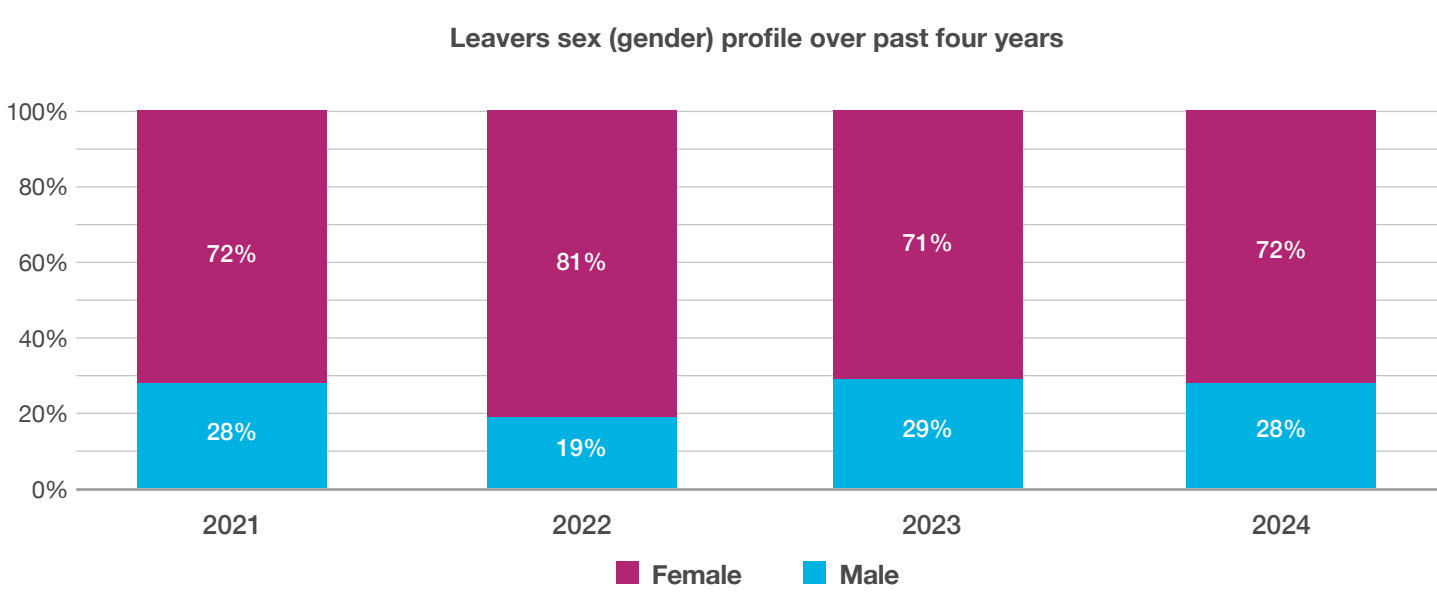
The graph below shows that while the overall number of staff with a religious belief has been decreasing, the number of Muslim staff leaving this year is slightly higher compared to previous years.

	Christian	Hindu	Muslim	Sikhism	Other	None	Not Known
New Leavers %	37.91	2.61	5.23	1.31	1.31	29.41	22.22

The graph below shows that while the overall number of staff with a religious belief has been decreasing, the number of Muslim staff leaving this year is slightly higher compared to previous years.

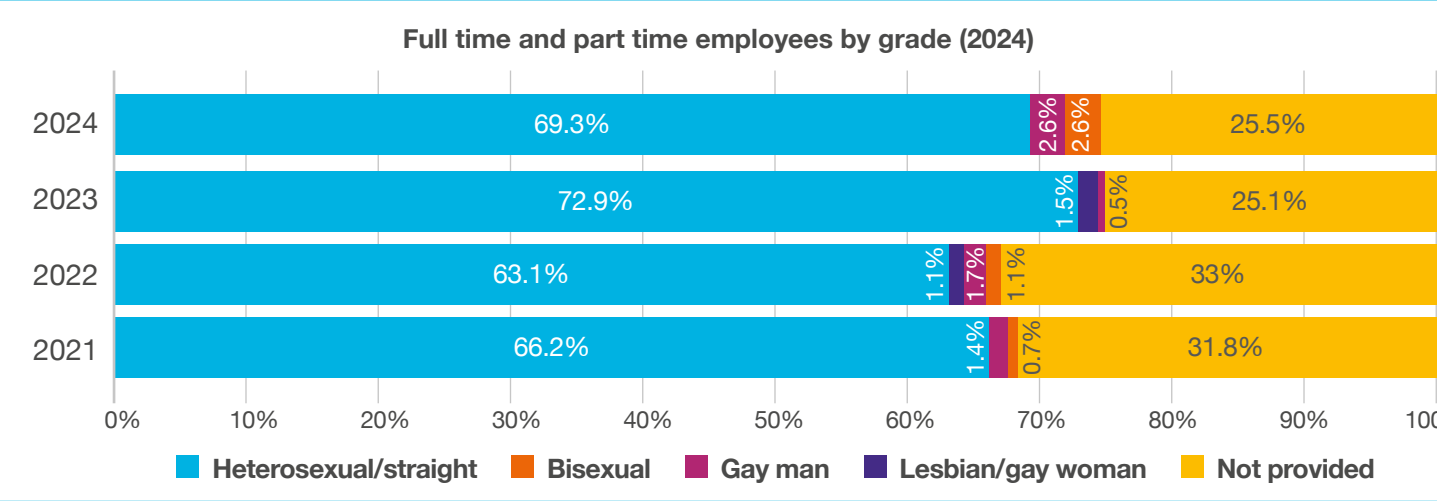


Leavers – sex (gender)



Leavers – sexual orientation

	Heterosexual	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Not Known
Leavers %	69.28	0	2.61	2.61	25.49



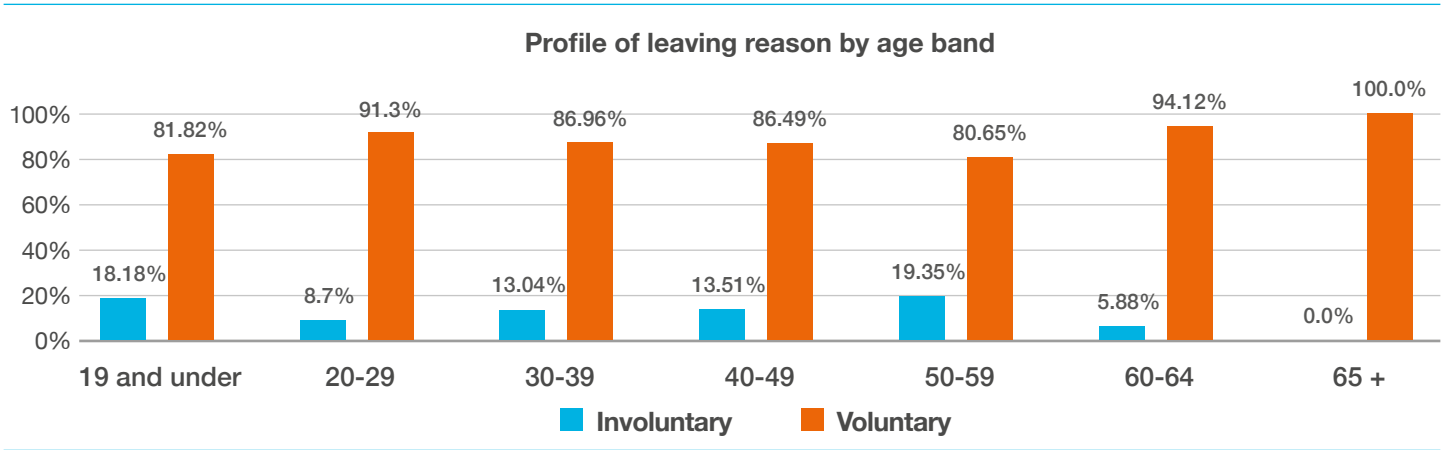
Voluntary and involuntary leavers

Leaving reasons

In terms of staff leaving with under one years’ service, 60 per cent of staff left due to “personal reasons”, we cannot identify further what were the reasons, but we hope to get more detailed information as part of our review of the leavers process. Staff with over one years’ service 43 per cent record “personal reasons”.

Involuntary leavers across the council were for the majority due to end of fixed term contract.

The profile of voluntary and involuntary leavers across the age bands is shown below. There is a skew towards the lower age bands for voluntary leavers, which could be attributed to career progression. Career progression has been identified for the Employment Experience as being one of the areas that needs addressing.



Actions to address leavers:

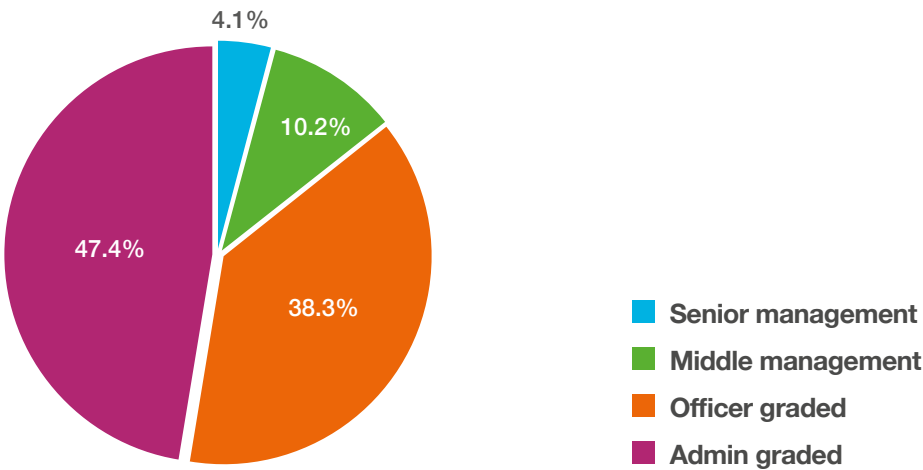
Research into understanding the underlying data trends by developing a new approach that aims to gather more honest and comprehensive feedback from departing employees through:

- **Real-time auto-capture:** automatically collects reasons for leaving, reducing reliance on managers once resignations process has been initiated.
- **Three-month follow-up:** additional questionnaire sent after three months.
- **Increased openness:** ex-employees may feel more comfortable sharing their reasons for leaving after securing new roles and references.
- **Continue to strengthen** our engagement approaches with Unison Led Black Members group, equality allies and other staff networks via co-design and development groups to further understand the reasons for leaving.
- **Promoting training and development:** (using the apprenticeship levy wherever possible) to develop our existing staff and promote career progression from within,
- **Workforce planning** via talent management, career pathways via academy model being developed, to address the challenges of an aging workforce, retention, hard to fill roles, skills gaps, which supports improving our diversity and talent progression with the council.
- Implement specific learning development for managers to promote the value of good people management and EDI practices.

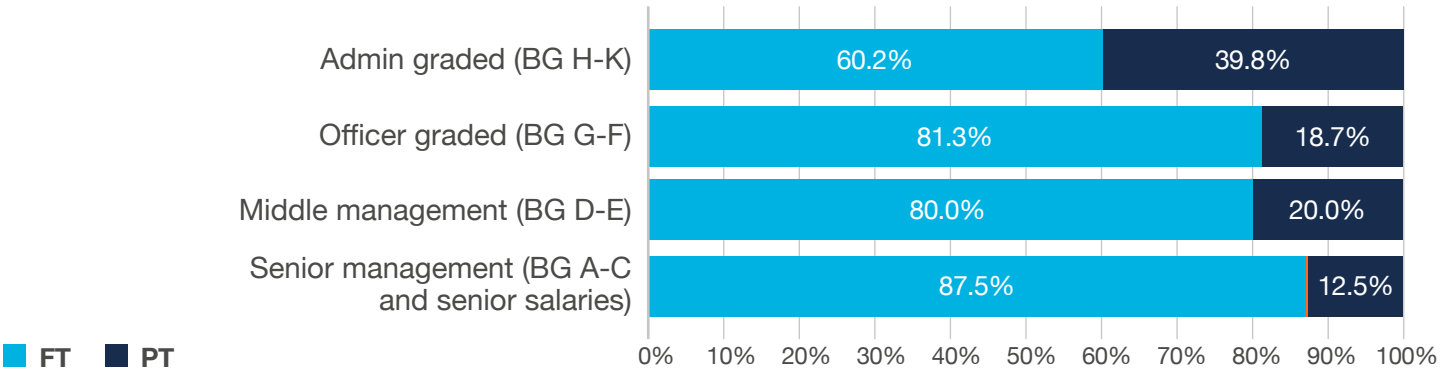


Recruitment – new starters

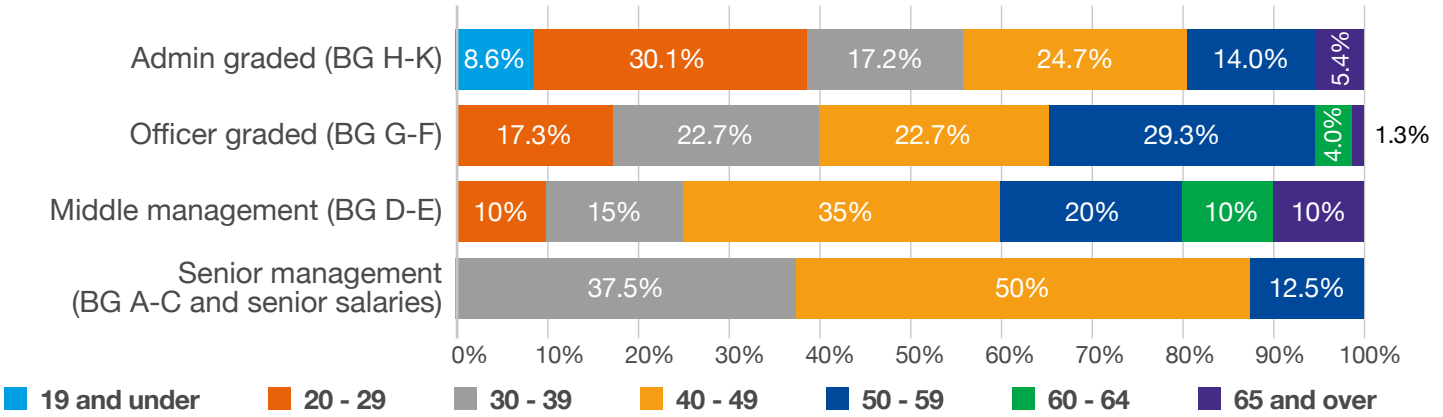
2023/24 saw a total of 202 starters (209 starters 2022/23).
The average length of service currently stands at 8.2 years.



Full time and part time starters by grade (2024)

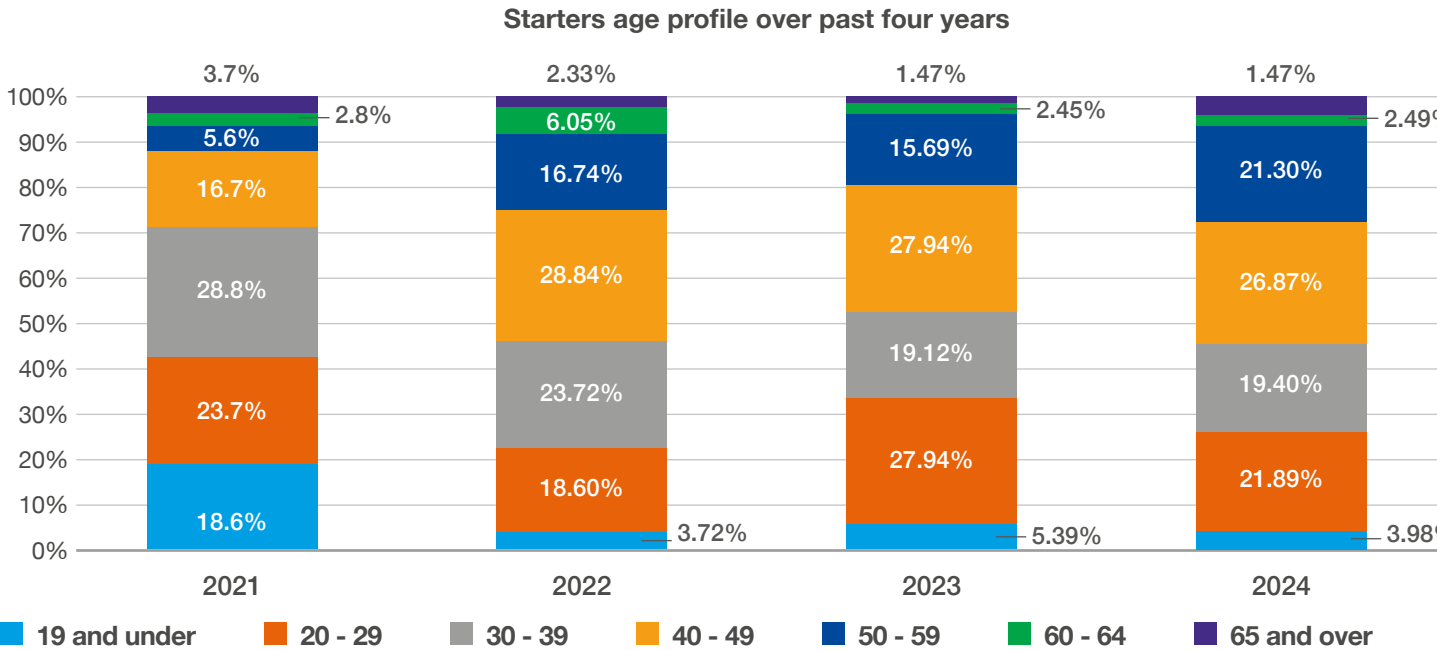


Starters age profile by grade group



New starters – age

	Under 19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-64	65+
New starters	3.98%	21.89%	19.40%	26.87%	21.39%	2.49%	3.98%

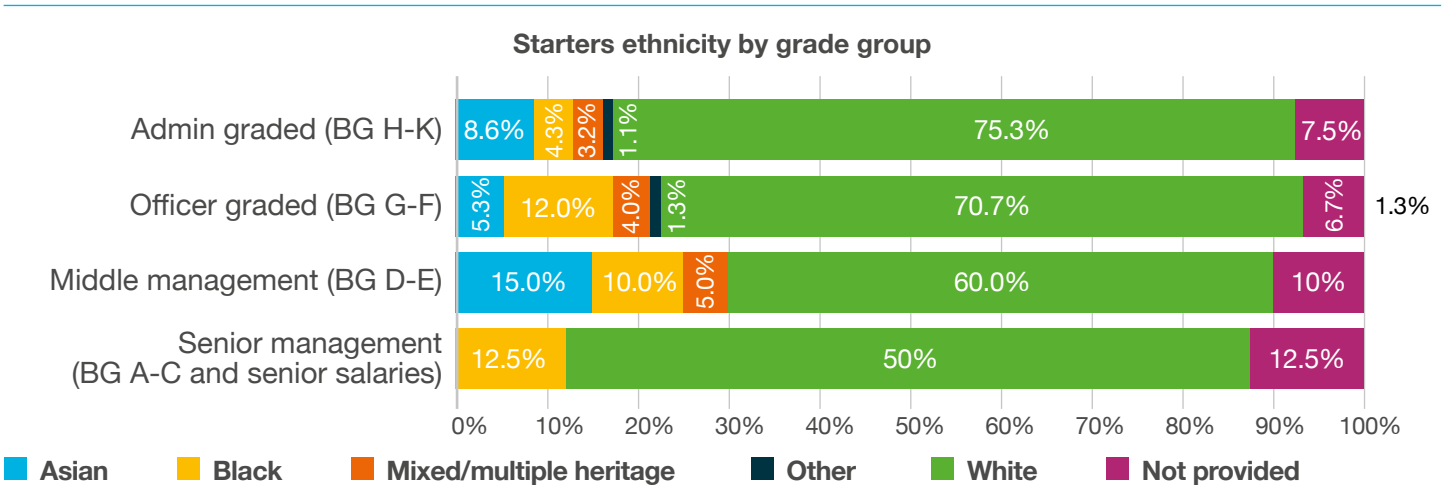
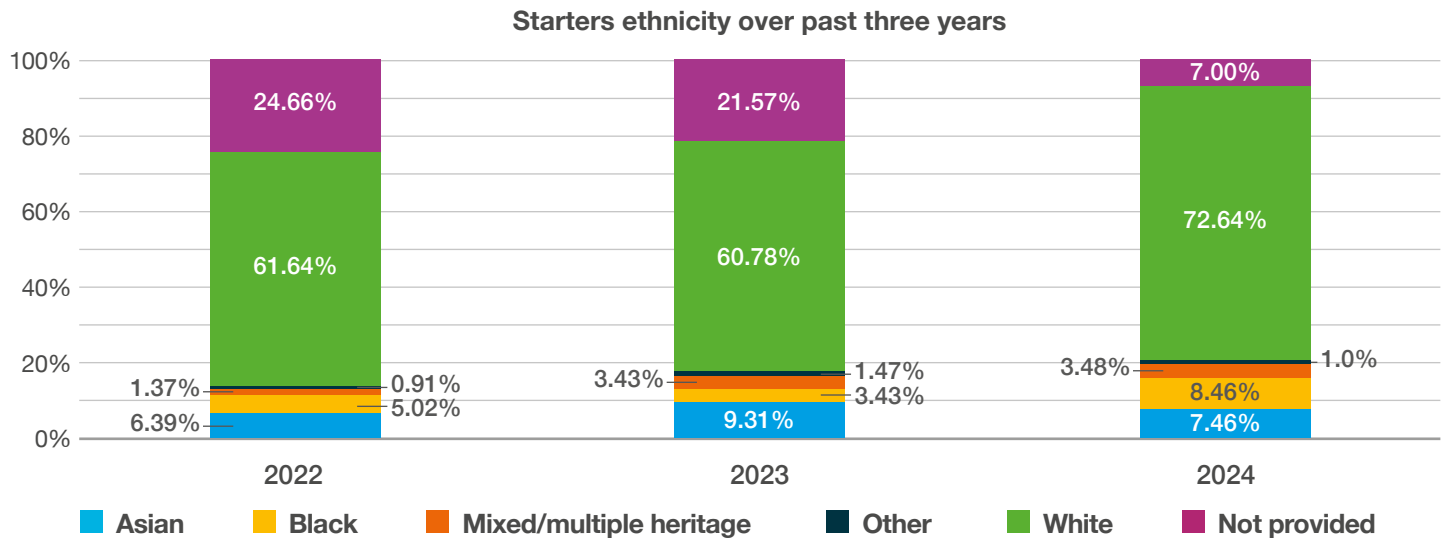


New starters – ethnicity

It is positive to see that our targeted recruitment efforts are attracting a diverse pool of applicants. Achieving 50 per cent of applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds is a significant milestone. Also, on a positive note the quality of data has improved significantly with “Not provided data” gap narrowing from 21 per cent to seven per cent over the year. However, there is a concern about the drop in diversity at the shortlisting and appointment stages.

There could be several factors contributing to this disparity. To understand this disparity, we are committed to reviewing our selection criteria and processes to ensure they are as inclusive as possible. In addition, providing training for hiring managers on inclusive hiring practices could make a difference.

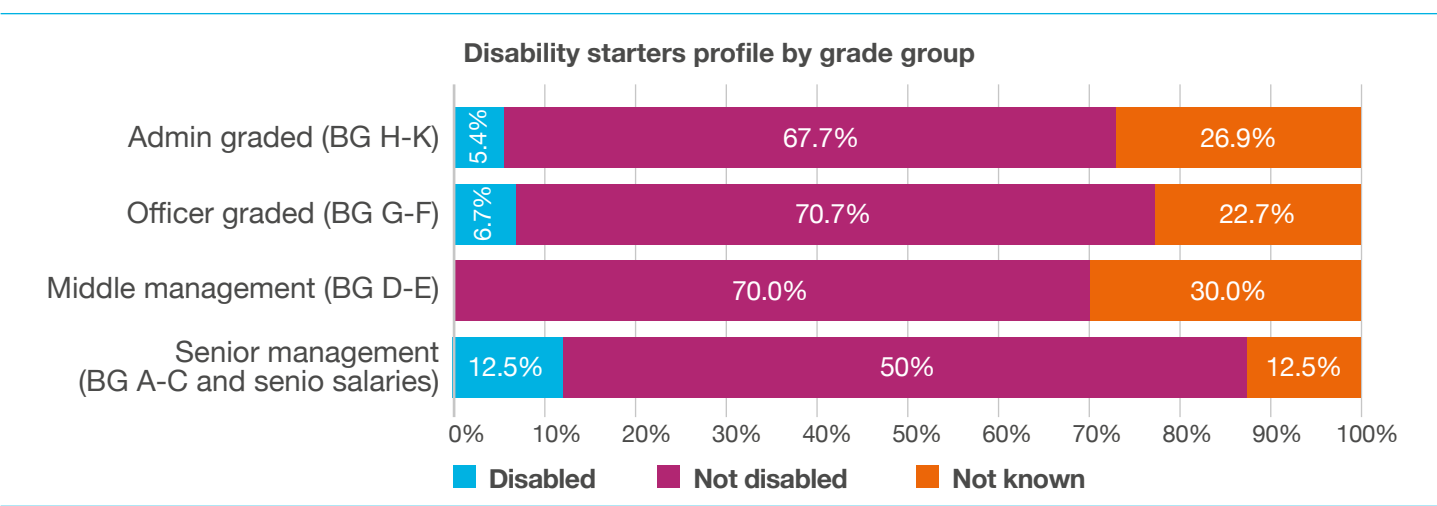
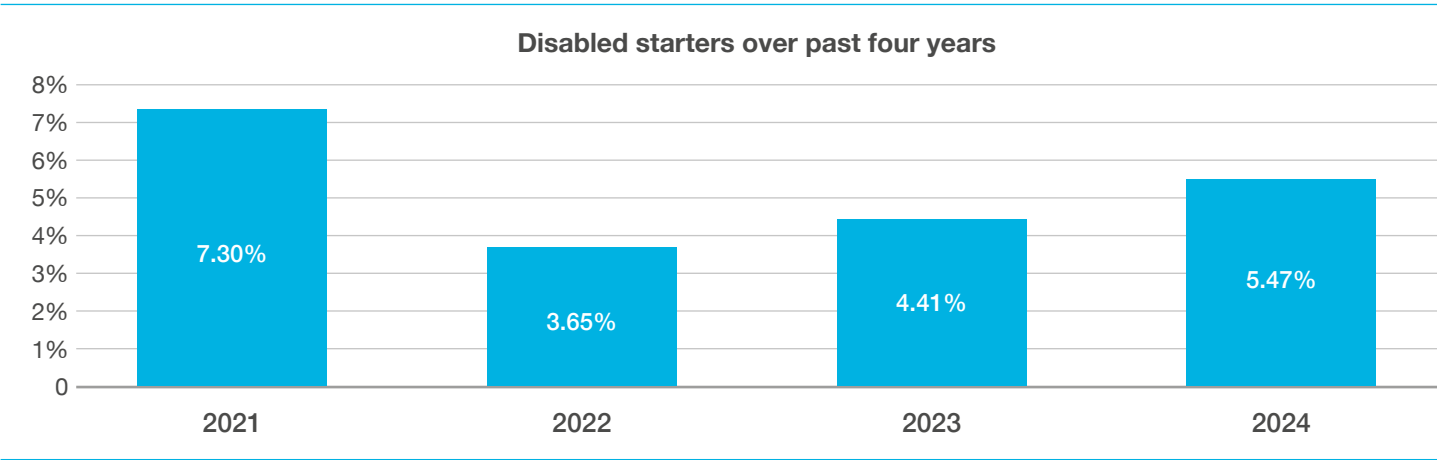
	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Not Known
New starters	7.46%	8.46%	3.48%	1%	72.64%	7%



New starters – disability

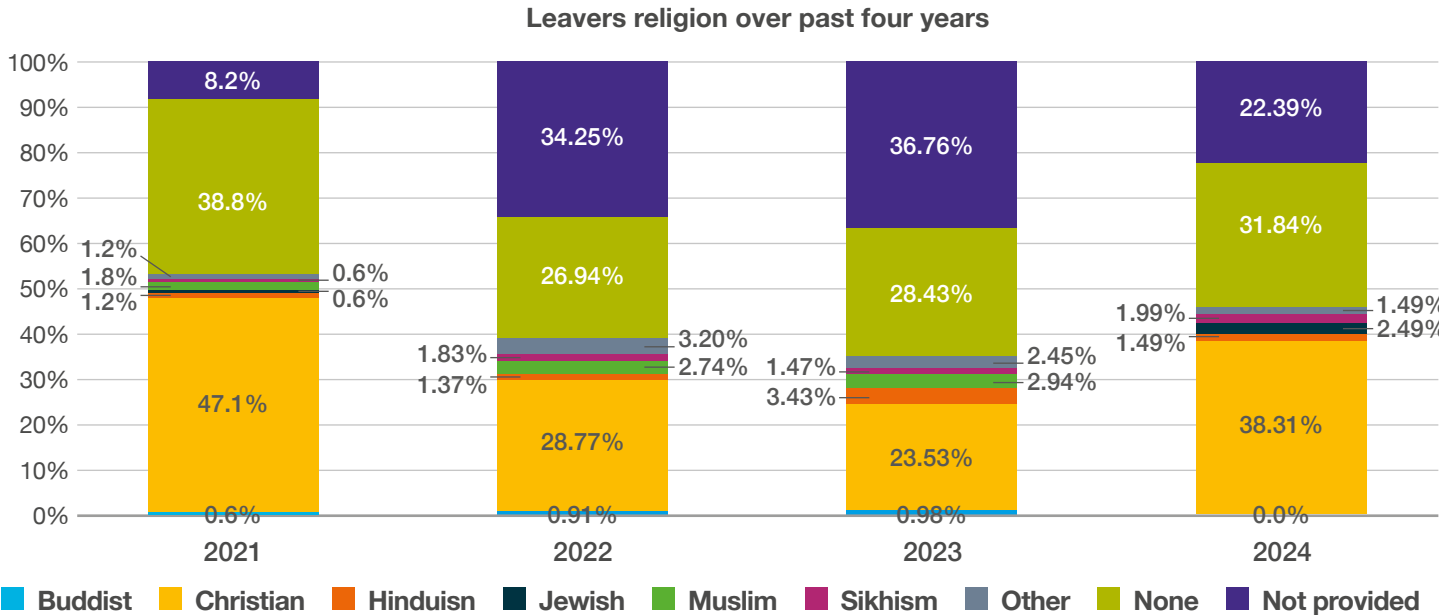
It is encouraging to see that our targeted recruitment efforts are attracting disabled applicants. We will continue to concentrate our efforts to ensure our recruitment practices are inclusive to increase this number at appointment stage.

	Yes	No	Not provided
New starters	5.47%	70.15%	24.38%



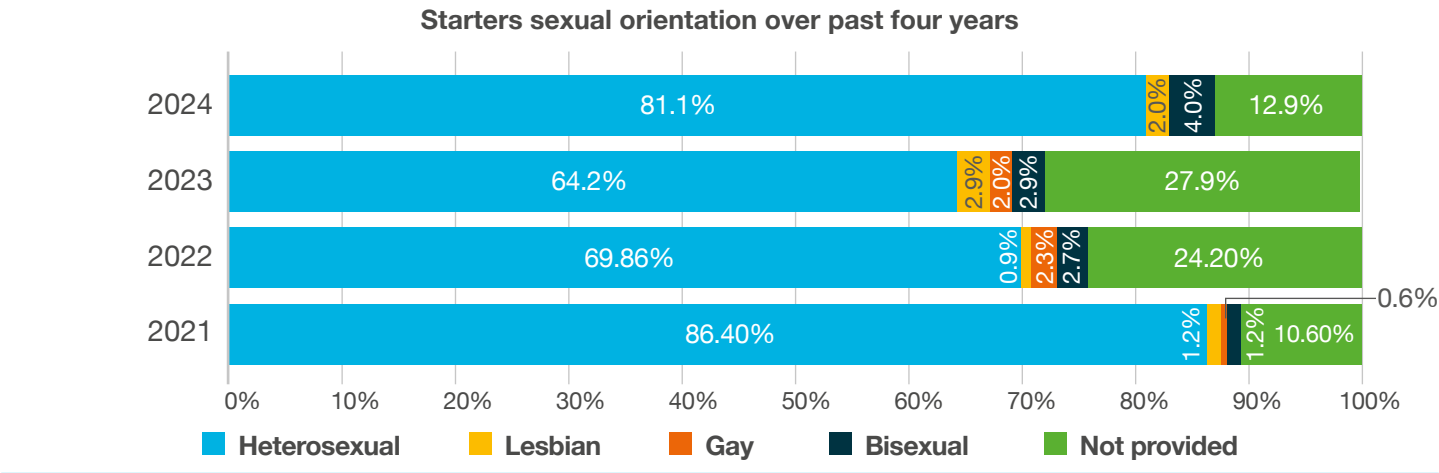
New starters – religion

	Christian	Hindu	Muslim	Sikhism	Other	None	Not Known
New starters	38.31%	1.49%	2.49%	1.99%	1.49%	31.84%	22.39%



New starters – sexual orientation

	Heterosexual	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Not Known
New starters	81.09%	1.99%	0%	3.98%	12.94%



Gender and ethnicity pay gap

Reporting requirements

- The government introduced mandatory gender gap reporting for all organisations with 250 or more employees in 2017. Organisations are required to publish the following statistics:
- the difference in the mean and median hourly rates of pay between male and female employees.
 - the difference in the mean and median bonus payments between male and female employees.
 - the proportion of male and female employees who received bonus pay during the twelve-month period preceding the snapshot date.
 - the proportion of people in each quartile of the organisation’s pay distribution.

The mean, or arithmetic mean, is the average of a set of numbers, calculated by adding all the numbers together and then dividing by how many numbers there are. The median is another type of average and is the middle value of a list of numbers. The pay quartiles are calculated by listing all rates of pay in order of value and then dividing into four equal sections (quartiles), with each quartile containing the same number of individuals.

Gender pay gap

The table below shows the mean and median gender pay gap based on hourly rates of pay as of 31 March 2023 for all non-schools staff. The table compares the figures for this year with those of the last three years. It is encouraging to note that there has been a narrowing in the mean and median pay gap over the last three years.

	Difference between men and women	
	Mean hourly rate	Median hourly rate
2021	15.90%	11.70%
2022	13.50%	11.70%
2023	11.02%	10.04%
2024	10.57%	8.48%

Gender bonus gap

The bonus pay gap has been calculated in line with the definition of bonus pay contained within the regulations. For Bracknell Forest this includes retention payments, honoraria payments and merit awards.

The table below shows the figures for the past three years:

	Difference between men and women	
	Mean hourly rate	Median hourly rate
2022	3.60%	-21.40%
2023	38.30%	40.1%
2024	11.17%	1.35%

These figures show there is no trend in the bonus pay paid across the Authority with figures from this year being quite different from last year. This will continue to be reviewed to ensure no negative trend is present.

The bonus gap figures can be misleading due to the small numbers of staff in receipt of the payments during the year, which will skew the results. Male staff had 21 total bonus payments, female staff 92 payments.

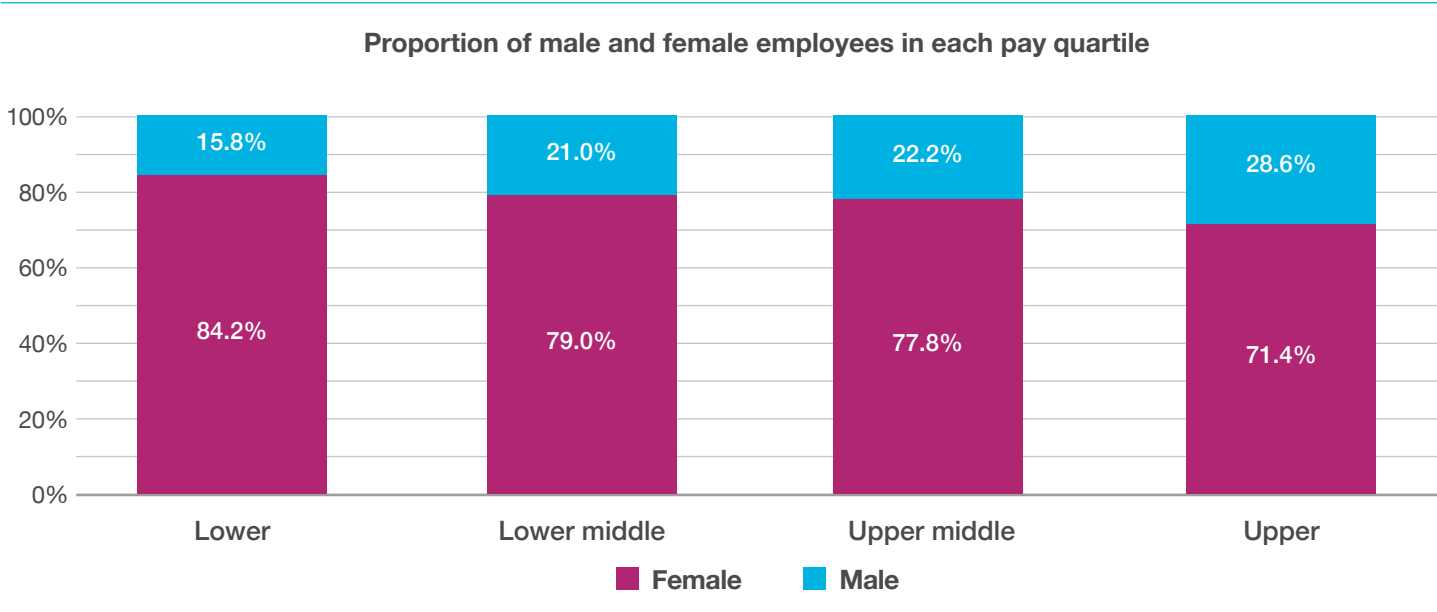
Proportion of Female and Male employees who receive bonus pay

	Female	Male
2022	10.10%	6.40%
2023	12.58%	9.65%
2024	9.37%	7.80%

More female employees get a bonus payment than men proportionally to their gender although the gap is narrowing. The principal areas within the council that receive bonus pay as per the definition are within social care in the people directorate. We have a higher proportion of females (86 per cent) within this directorate compared to the whole workforce (79 per cent) which will in some way explain the figures above.

Pay quartiles

The chart below illustrates the distribution of people across the quartiles of the council’s pay range and shows that the pay gap is largely because of occupational segregation. Local authorities have a wide range of services and professions, however many of the lower paid roles tend to be dominated by women e.g. administration, care, customer services etc.



The proportion of Female employees in the bottom quartile is slightly higher than the proportion in the Authority, however as explained above this is expected due to the nature of the jobs in the lower quartiles. These include Library Assistants, Administrative Roles and Customer Services Roles which traditionally are more attractive to females.

Whilst female employees are strongly represented in the upper and middle quartile, over half (52.2 per cent) of females are within the lower two quartiles. There are more men in the upper quartiles.

Ethnicity pay gap

As part of the Actions Plan over the last three years, we have calculated our ethnicity pay gap again. We have used the same assumptions as last year to provide a comparison.

Ethnicity pay gap reporting is not a specified requirement under the Equality Act 2010 like the gender pay gap.

The ethnicity pay gap is not the same as unequal pay. The ethnicity pay gap is the difference between the average pay of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff (BAME) and white employees in an organisation.

Among those who have declared their ethnicity, 79 per cent are from a white background, while 12 per cent are from an ethnic minority background.

	Difference between minority ethnic background and white ethnicity background	
	Mean hourly rate	Median hourly rate
2022	-3.20%	-10.60%
2023	-2.71%	-3.30%
2024	-5.63%	-8.90%

In terms of both mean and median calculations ethnic minorities are paid more.

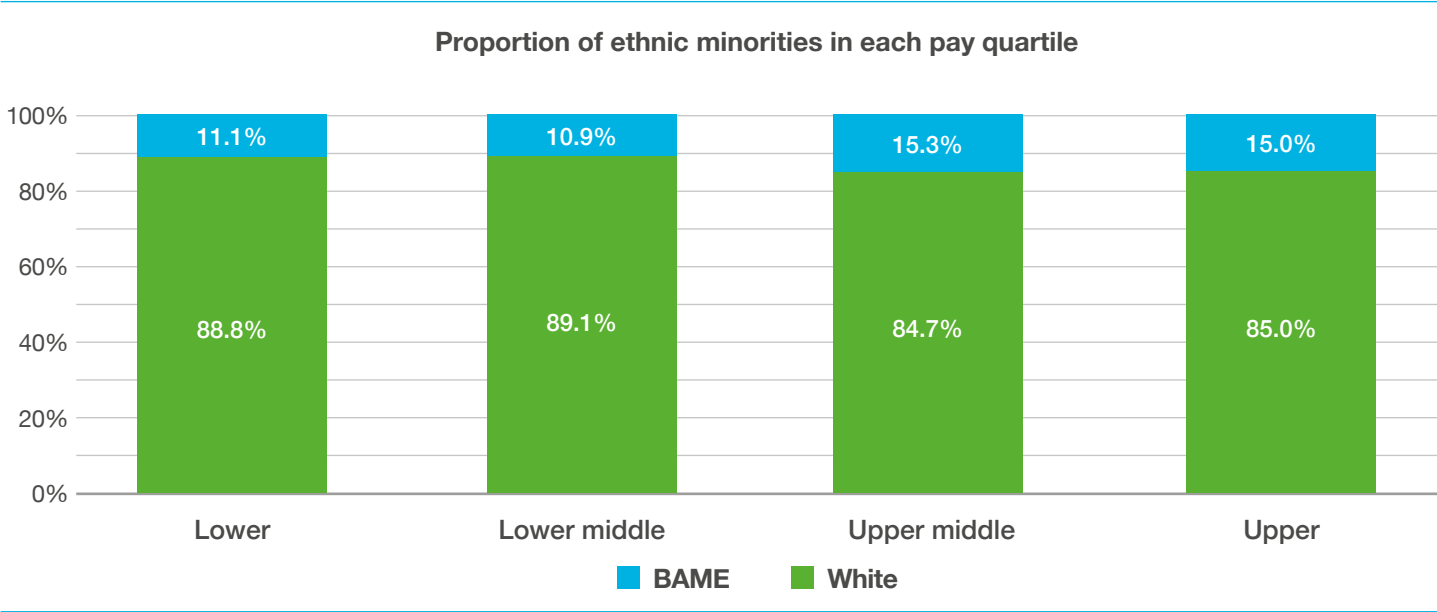
Proportion of Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minorities (BAME) and white ethnic origin who received bonus pay.

	Black, Asian Minority Ethnic Backgrounds (BAME)	White Ethnic Origin
2022	10.10%	12.40%
2023	18.60%	12.89%
2024	7.14%	8.02%

Showing seven per cent of staff from ethnic backgrounds other than white background receive a bonus which is less than staff that identify as white at eight per cent.

Ethnicity pay quartiles

The chart below illustrates the distribution of ethnic minority employees across the quartiles of the Council’s pay ranges. This shows a uniform distribution across the four quartiles. Over half of our ethnic minority employees are in the upper quartiles.



These results on ethnicity pay gap are positive and show that BFC does not appear to have an issue in this area, although we will continue develop further analysis within the different ethnic groups.

Summary

As a council, we recognise that achieving and embedding a culture of true inclusivity, ambition, and always learning is an ongoing journey. We are therefore committed to demonstrating our dedication to equality by:

- Having a zero-tolerance approach by actively challenging discrimination and harassment in the workplace and community, including reporting hate crimes.
- Championing equality, diversity and inclusion in the Borough through our work.
- Making informed decisions and proposals that consider the impact on people with protected characteristics and key community groups.
- Understanding, complying with, and contributing to equity and diversity processes in our services.