



Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan

Annual Report 2018 - 2020



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

**Annual Strategic Equality Monitoring Report
2018 – 2020**

“A More Equal Wales!”

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Introduction

Putting fairness and equality at the heart of everything we do is central to maximising well-being outcomes for our residents, local communities, staff and visitors, now and in the future as outlined by the [Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015](#). We recognise as public service providers we have a key role to play in making a real difference to people's lives and will continue to strive to be a 'fair and equitable' organisation as outlined in our [Corporate Plan 2018-22](#) in order to strengthen and advance equality across Blaenau Gwent.

To drive forward meaningful change over the past 8 years we have demonstrated commitment towards this agenda through the delivery of our Strategic Equality Plan's. This report sets out the progress we've made towards achieving our equality objectives between **1st April 2018 to 31st March 2020**.

The report also highlights how we are meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty (the "general duty") by ensuring we are supporting a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations by recognising the value of diversity through our day-to-day activities and by continually reviewing our policy and service delivery as outlined below:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;

2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Finally, the report concludes by setting out our intended next steps for taking the equality agenda forward and explains how our current findings will inform the development of our new **Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-2024**, and, also references equality work which is currently underway in response to the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Our Progress

Equality Objective One - *Make equality vital in decision making and service provision*

This equality objective contributes to the Council delivering against the following of its specific duties:

- Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement Assessment of impact
- Equality information
- Employment Information, pay differences and staff training

What we did

- Strengthened our Equality Leadership across the council;
- Championed the Equality Agenda politically and professionally to raise the profile of equality. For example, the Council nominated an Equality Champion Member to promote equality at a political level across the Council and to support and champion work in this arena.
- We have carried out primary and secondary research and analysis to gain a better understanding of equality issues;
- Evaluated results of equality work, and other work which impacts equality outcomes;
- Supported Equality Impact Assessments processes for policy development and review, service review, corporate reporting and financial efficiency projects. This is something we are continuing to

strengthen in readiness for the commencement of the Socio Economic Duty in April 2021 to strengthen our strategic decision-making processes.

- We have continued to work in partnership with key stakeholders and interested parties on a local, regional and national level to maximise expertise and skills to support efficiency and to effectively add value;
- The Council continued its commitment to provide equality training to its workforce. We operate a Service Level Agreement with neighbouring Caerphilly County Borough Council's Equality Training Team to coordinate our equality and Welsh language courses. Courses are offered for any staff member to attend, or courses can be tailored as requested by departments when the need arises. We also work with national and regional partners to deliver training around specific subject matters such as LGBTQ+ and also work jointly on projects and any events to support this work.
- We have continued to engage people from across each of the protected characteristics in engagement events which help shape the Council's decision-making processes and proactively promoted the involvement of people from protected characteristics to participate in consultation and engagement activity.
- The gender pay gap is an equality measure that shows the difference in average earnings between women and men. In 2018, the UK gender pay gap was just over 18%. At Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, we are confident that men and women are

paid equally for doing equivalent jobs across the business. The gender pay gap at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council shows that the workforce is predominantly female with women occupying a high percentage of jobs across all four pay quartiles. The pay gap in Blaenau Gwent is significantly lower than the national average and has further improved reducing from 7.06% at the lower mean to 2.94% at the lower mean. The Gender Pay Gap information required under the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 is presented and published through the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2019/20. Further progress is being made and this will be updated in 2020.

- Designed and developed the Councils' new Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-2024 and used our learning and progress to date, along with information gathered from our annual report to inform the plan.
- Carried out pilot Community Impact Assessments to understand the key impacts of the Covid-19 global pandemic, on Children & Young People, Families with Young Children and those with a Learning Disability. The findings from this work are being used to help shape our response and will inform future decisions and delivery.
- Continued to attend the regional Equalities meetings as well as the National meetings to gain insight into progress, share best practice in order to take forward further work to support the agenda within Blaenau Gwent.

- We are an active Member of Proud Councils which brings together Local Authorities across Wales to deliver joint initiatives such as Pride & Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer+ (LGTBTQ+) History Month etc.
- We actively support the 50+ Network which is an engagement forum which brings older people together to discuss the issues and decisions which affect them. People involved in the 50+ Network continue to play role in strategic development and have been involved in the development of the Age Friendly Blaenau Gwent Strategy which will replace the previous Older People's Strategy

Equality Objective Two - *Be an equal opportunity employer, with a workforce that is aware of, and understands the equality agenda*

This equality objective contributes to the Council delivering against the following of its specific duties:

- Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plans
- Assessment of impact
- Equality information
- Employment information, pay differences and staff training
- Reporting and Publishing

What we did

- Continued to collect quality information in order to understand the needs of our staff and address workforce equality issues;
- Ongoing development and review of Organisational development policies and procedures which centre on promoting equality in the workplace. For example, we have updated our Pay Policy, Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Violence Policy; and introduced a new Trans Equality Policy and Armed Forces Recruitment Policy.
- Developed equality training for staff, in partnership with other Local Authority areas, such as Hate Crime Reporting, Mental Capacity Act, Alcohol Awareness, Dementia Friendly training and Champions Training.

- Actively encouraged staff in specific roles to undergo equality and diversity training;
- Continued to deliver and strengthen equality of opportunity in our recruitment process, training, discipline and grievance procedures to ensure equality of opportunity;
- Provided timely Occupational Health Services to staff where appropriate;
- Ensured that staff have the opportunity to share their views on equality issues;
- Published our organisations equality information via open source data;
- Provided weekly wellbeing staff updates and helpline to staff to support well-being in light of the changes to working practices due to the COVID 19 pandemic, which included counselling for staff.
- Identified risk assessments to support staff to work at home effectively during the pandemic

Equality Objective Three - *Do our best engage, protect and support those people in our community that need it the most*

This equality objective contributes to us delivering the following specific objectives:

- Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement
- Assessment of impact
- Equality information
- Procurement

- Reporting and Publishing

What we did

- Worked with partners to offer training on tackling hate crime such as disability, race, homophobic, gender, age etc. Worked with other LA's, Victim support and our Regional Hate Crime Officer to develop Hate Crime Awareness training. The training has now been developed and will be delivered to Members, Staff, Partners and Community
- As part of the PSB work a local community safety hub was set up for partners to come together and discuss issues and work together on tackling those issues, which allows for better working practices along with providing better support to tackle community safety issues.

- Supported the development of strategies, plans and services to tackle specific issues such as learning disability, mental health, frailty and dementia etc.
- Offered appropriate support to carers who play a vital role in looking after vulnerable people, by engaging in the Carers Forum. BG has an award winning carers service. There are two carers officers as well as a Senior Carers Officer, their role is to ensure carers are considered when working in partnership with Social Care, they also cover all GP surgeries in Blaenau Gwent and offer an appointment service where they can offer bespoke support to carers;
- We have a Gypsy/Traveller support officer whose role is to engage and work with this community, providing them with valuable information. Support and advice as well as supporting them with a voice to feed into decision making processes;
- Continued to work with partner organisations to provide a proactive service to vulnerable, under represented people or groups. In 2019, we worked in partnership with our community to develop Gwenu which is a social group for people to meet, talk and get support about dementia and receive Dementia Awareness Training;
- Working through the children's Grand Council we are able to work with schools on topics that support children and young people to understand the impacts of bullying;

- There is a Safeguarding Service in BG works closely with all departments should an issue be raised and they continue to provide support, advice and guidance across the organisation.
- Worked in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to identify gaps in support provision in order to support those in need. This included supporting other government funded projects such as Bridges into Work, Communities4work which are programmes dedicated to breaking down barriers into employment. Social Services also successfully worked closely with Elite Employment who support those into employment with additional needs;
- Provided home safety and fire safety services to vulnerable victims of crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic violence;
- We continue to protect, support and empower those who are vulnerable to exploitation by those involved in supporting violent extremism or terrorism as well as human trafficking and modern slavery;
- Provided training to public sector and third sector partners on Preventing Violent Extremism and Modern Slavery.

Equality Objective Four - *Promote understanding and acceptance of diversity within our communities*

This equality objective contributes to us delivering the following specific objectives:

- Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement
- Assessment of impact
- Equality information
- Procurement
- Reporting and Publishing

What we did

- Actively promoted the Council's equality plans and delivery programmes which centre on supporting those with protected characteristics who are covered by the Equality Act 2010;
- Raised awareness and understanding of relevant equality issues and various International and National Equality Campaigns by communicating with staff, the public, and stakeholders through available social networks and media;
- Identified best practice approaches to challenge issues, such as engaging hard-to-reach groups, gathering information on specific

protected characteristics e.g. Gender Reassignment; in order to support us with our work.

- Worked together with the Youth Forum and the Children's Grand Council to share information and increase learning opportunities around equality and diversity as well as improve awareness around the United Nations Conventions on the Right of the Child (UNCRC). Ensuring to support children and young people to deliver on priorities that are important to them, both locally, regionally and nationally;
- Developed projects which encourage people to get on together such as inter-generational work within care homes and schools. Provided opportunities for different people to come together from different backgrounds in order to inform change through the Integrated Wellbeing Networks and other partnership engagement events;
- Our Equality Network Access for All became the Voices of Our Valleys Forum and a celebratory event was held to recognise the excellent projects and equality work happening in Blaenau Gwent to recognise our achievements together. This brought a cross section of local people (including those with protected characteristics according to the Equality Act 2010), communities and organisations operating within the area to consider the most important equality issues to help co-design the new Single Equality Plan 2020-2024;
- Provided training to council employees to raise awareness on the differences between migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees through the delivery of Introduction to Modern Slavery seminars.

- Supported the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme;
- Raised awareness of citizenship and civil ceremonies carried out in Blaenau Gwent;
- Worked effectively with a range of local community groups to enable them to promote inclusion, as well increased awareness of further support and funding opportunities.

Next steps – Our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24

The report highlights many achievements towards supporting the equality agenda, however we recognise there is still much work to be done as an area towards achieving Welsh Government’s National Well-being Goals of ‘a more equal Wales’ and ‘a Wales of Cohesive communities’ - [Wellbeing of Wales: 2020 | GOV.WALES](#).

Our intention is to build on our current success and to continue raising the profile of equality through the delivery of an ambitious [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#) . The plan was designed and developed in 2019 with residents (including people with protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010), local communities, stakeholders and was due to be published on 1st April 2020, however the Equality and Human Rights Commission took the decision to pause its regulatory work across Wales due to the public sector needing to respond to the Covid-19 global pandemic.

In recognition that Covid-19 has had a massive impact on everyone’s lives, but particularly those already facing existing inequalities, we took the decision as a Council to undertake a pilot Community Impact Assessment for Children & Young People, Families with Young Children and those with a Learning Disability so we could better understand the impacts and use our findings to help inform our recovery planning. We are currently undertaking a Community Impact Assessment for Older People which will be used to support the development of an Age

Friendly Plan for Blaenau Gwent which is a partnership programme overseen by the Public Services Board.

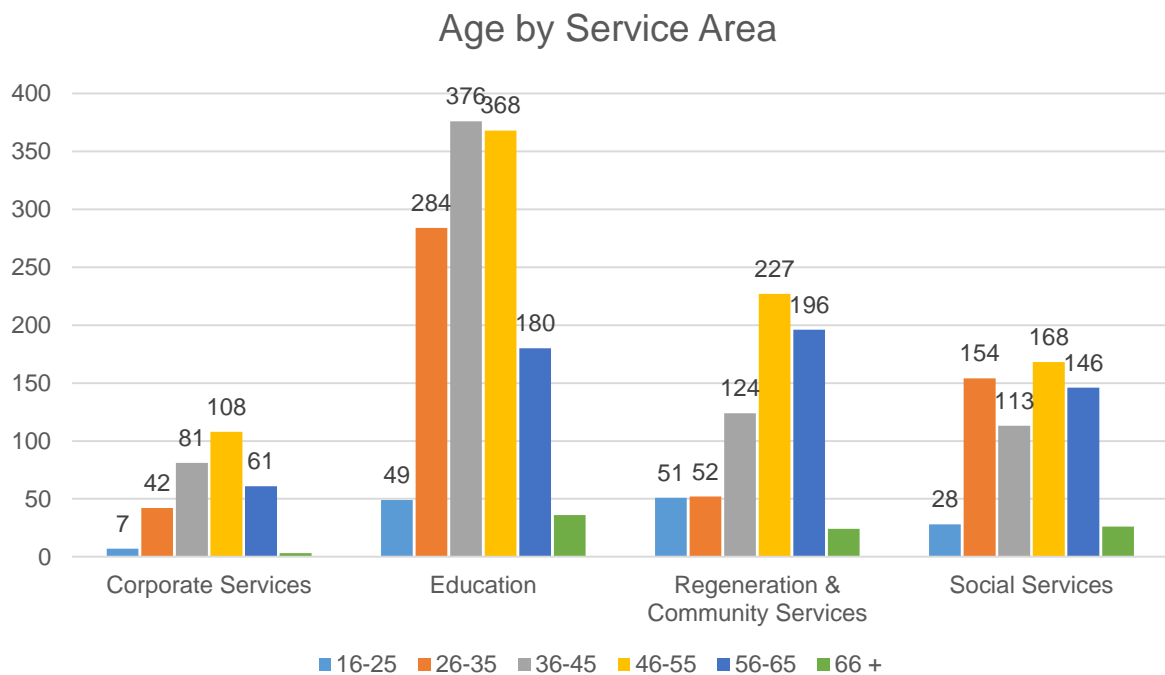
Working alongside other Local Authority's work has already begun to develop an equality training programme for staff, through a range of online learning opportunities, such as an Introduction to Equality as well as bespoke training such as Unconscious Bias and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ (LGBTQ+) etc. This training will be fundamental in enabling us to become an 'employer of choice' and allow us to better support the local people and communities we serve.

Preparations are also underway to support the commencement of Welsh Government's Socio-economic Duty on 31st March, 2021 which enacts Part 1, Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty places a legal responsibility on the Council for tackling inequality caused by poverty.

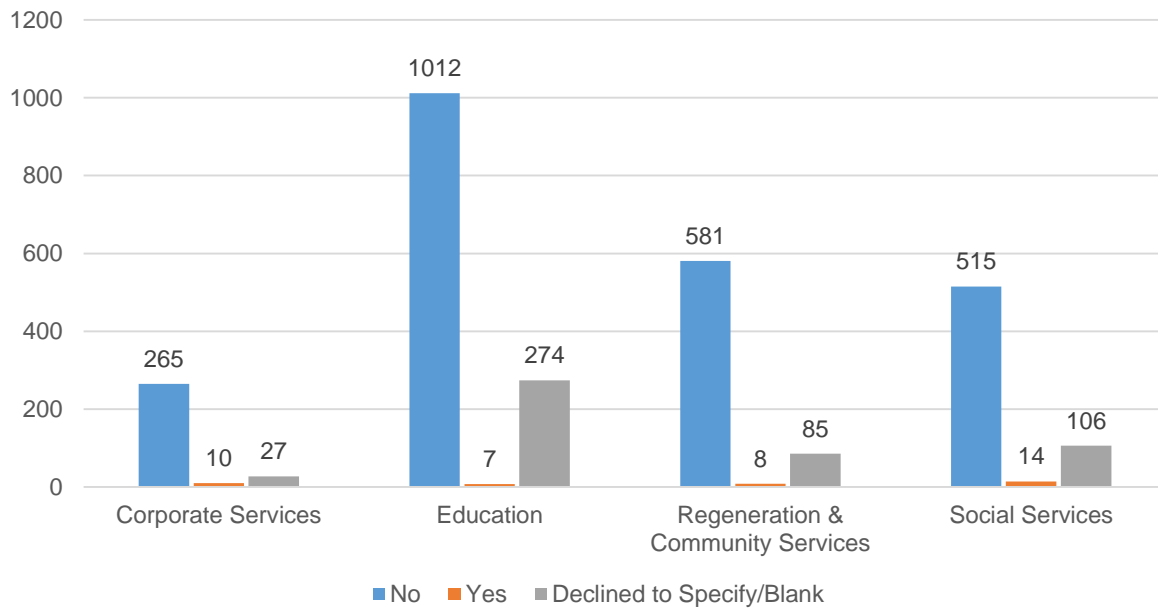
Appendix

Equality Monitoring Data: 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019

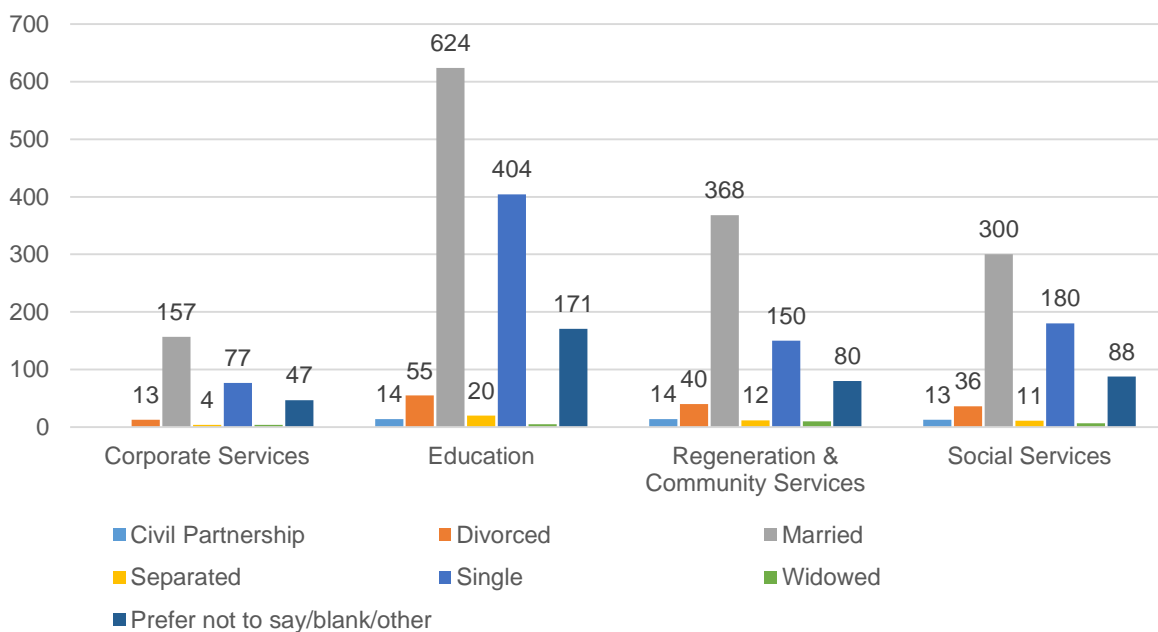
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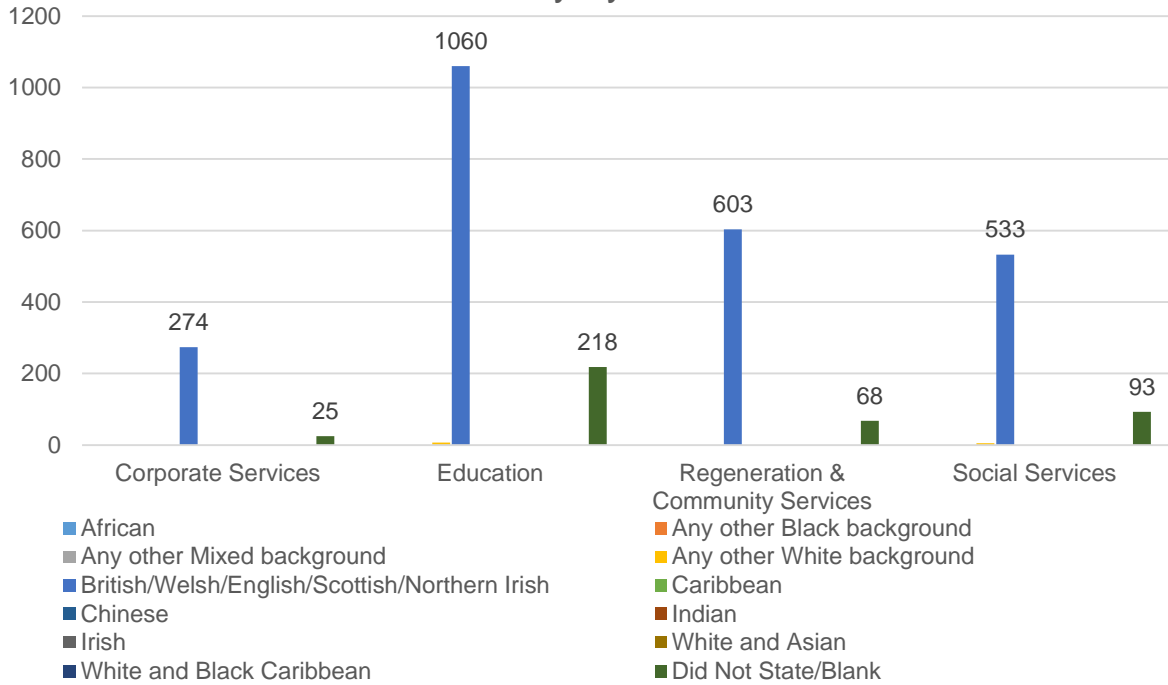
Disability by Service Area



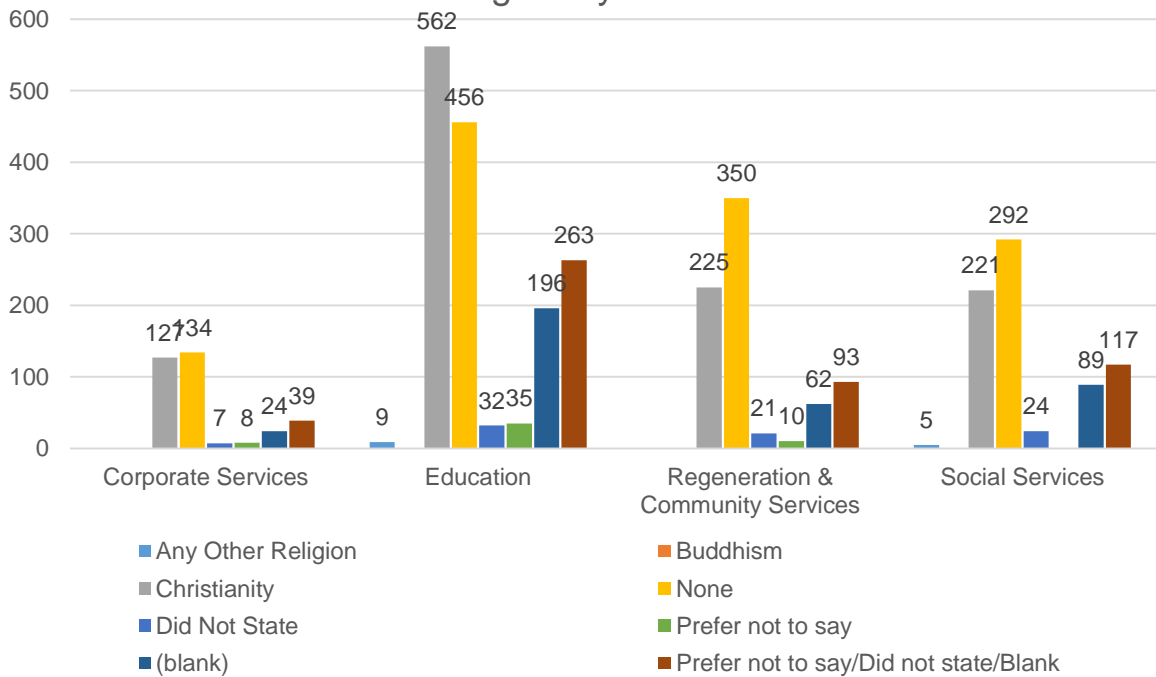
Marital Status by Service Area



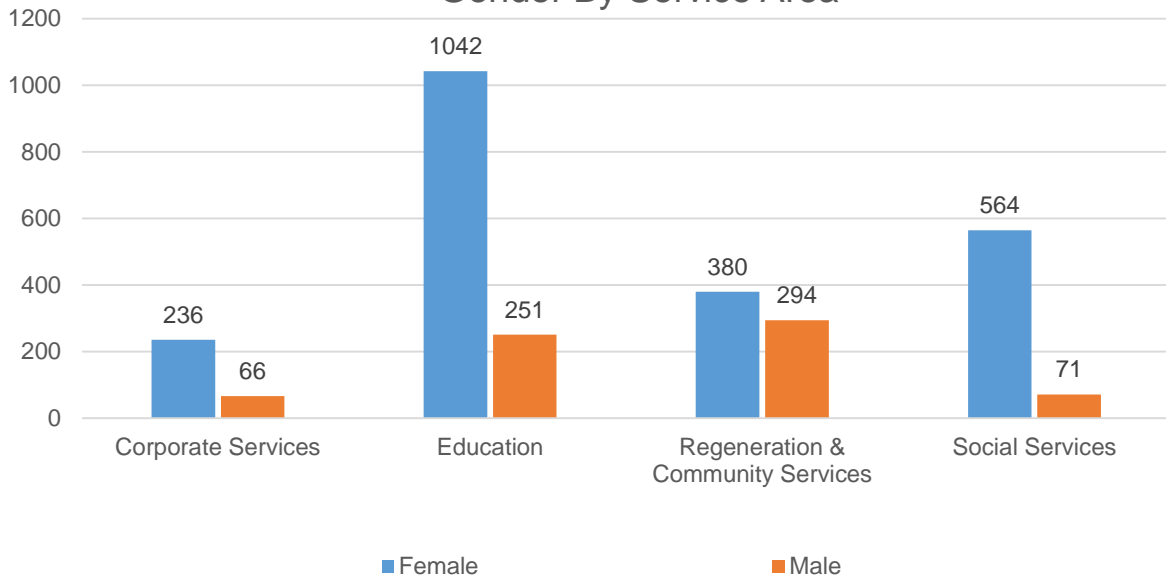
Ethnicity By Service Area



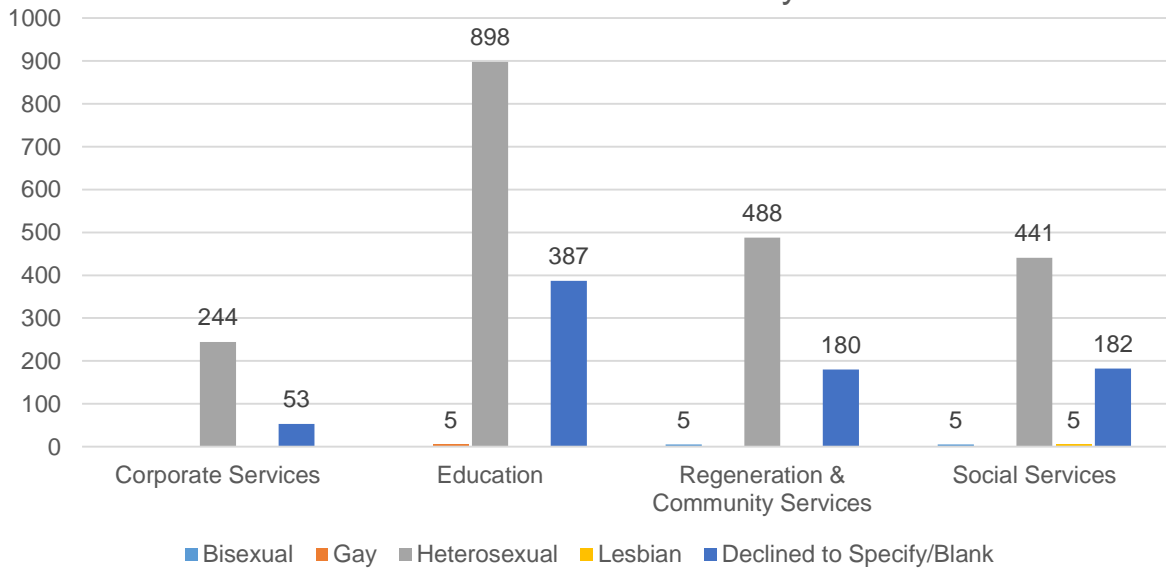
Religion By Service Area



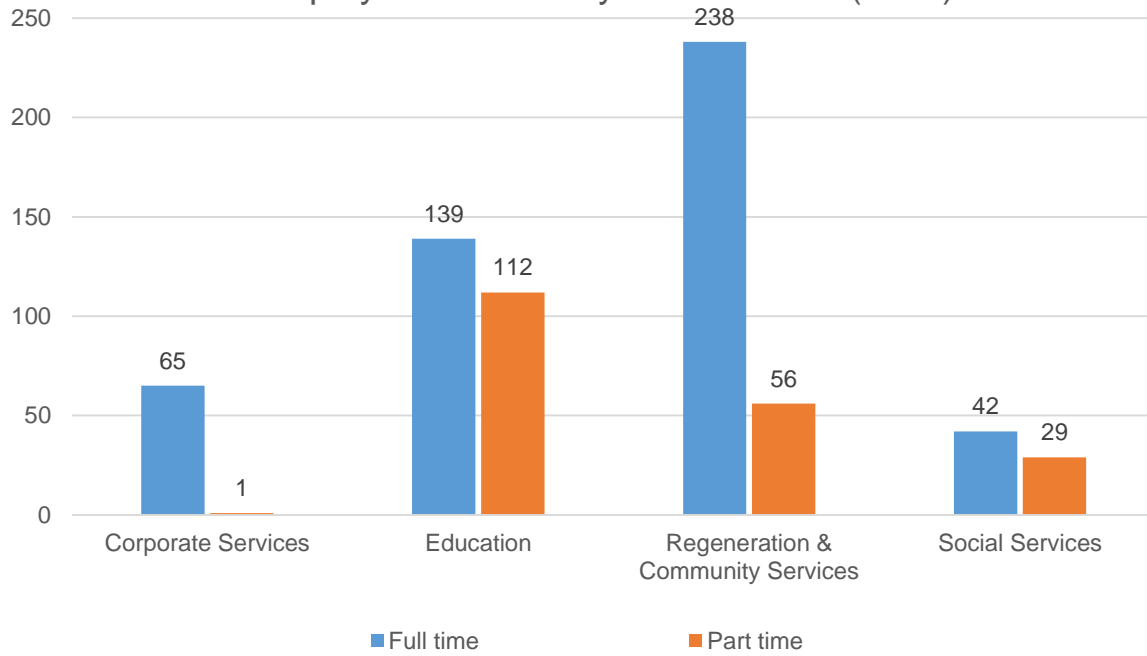
Gender By Service Area



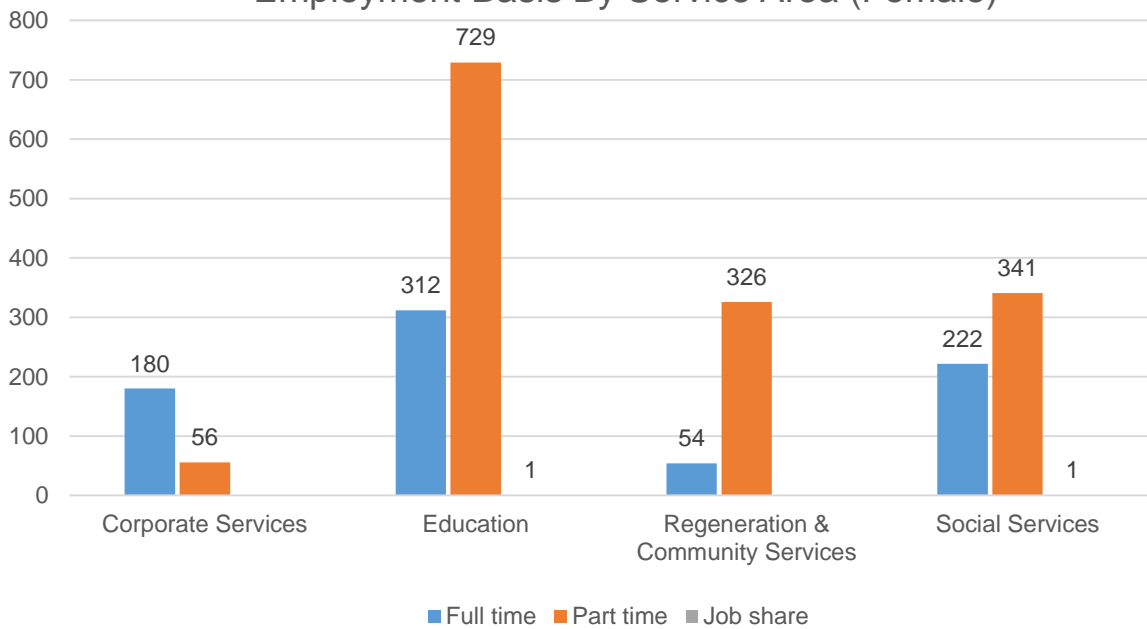
Sexual Orientation By Service Area



Employment Basis By Service Area (Male)



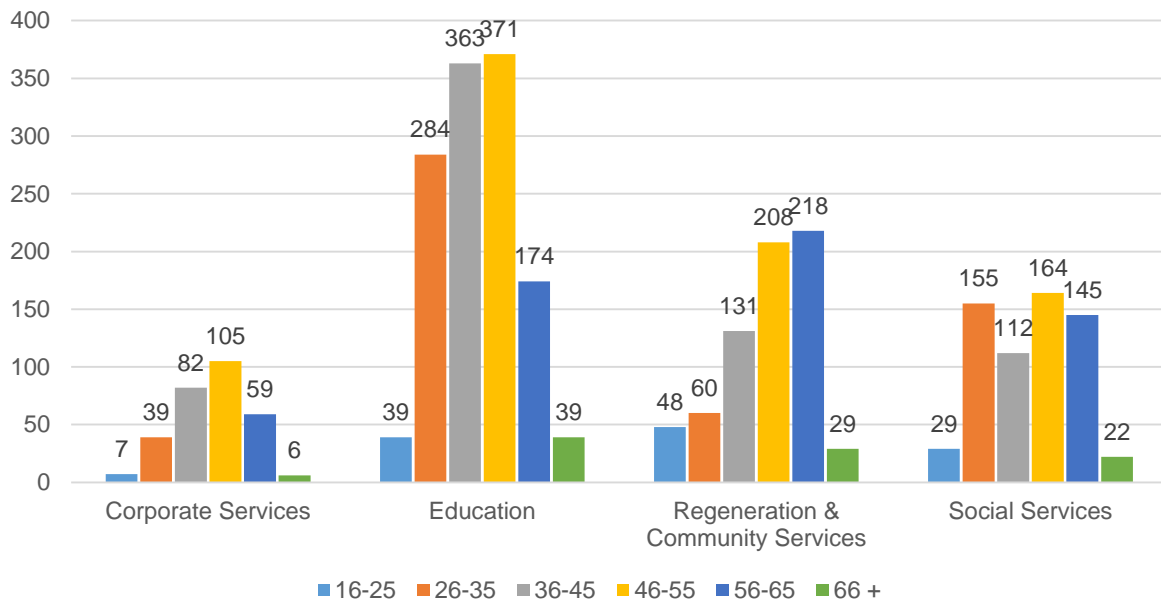
Employment Basis By Service Area (Female)



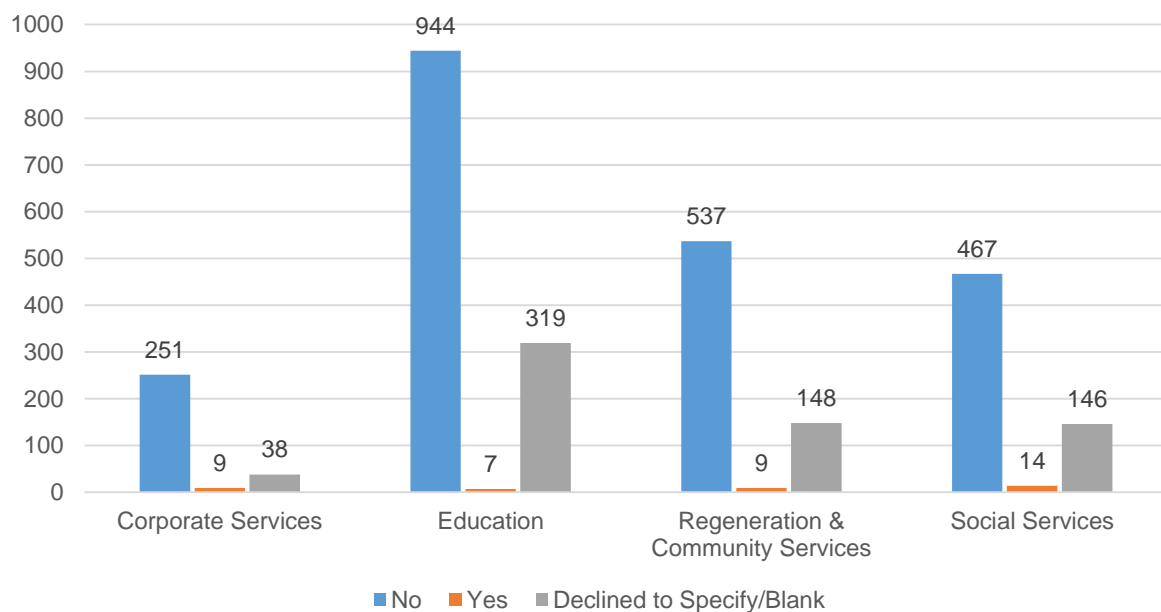
Equality Monitoring Data: 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

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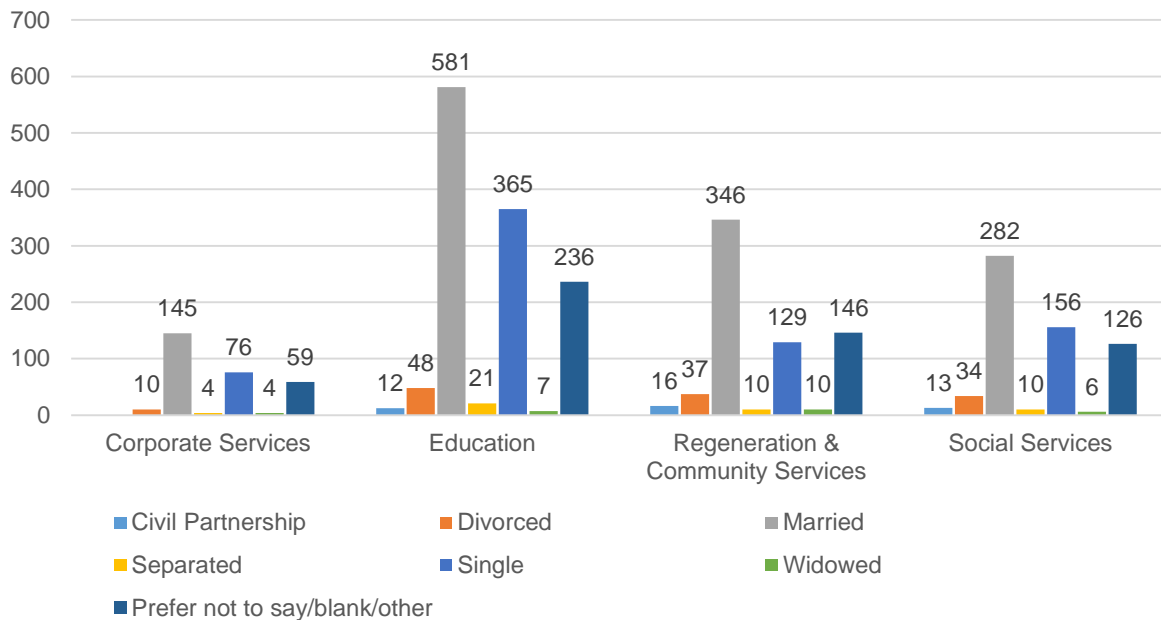
Age by Service Area



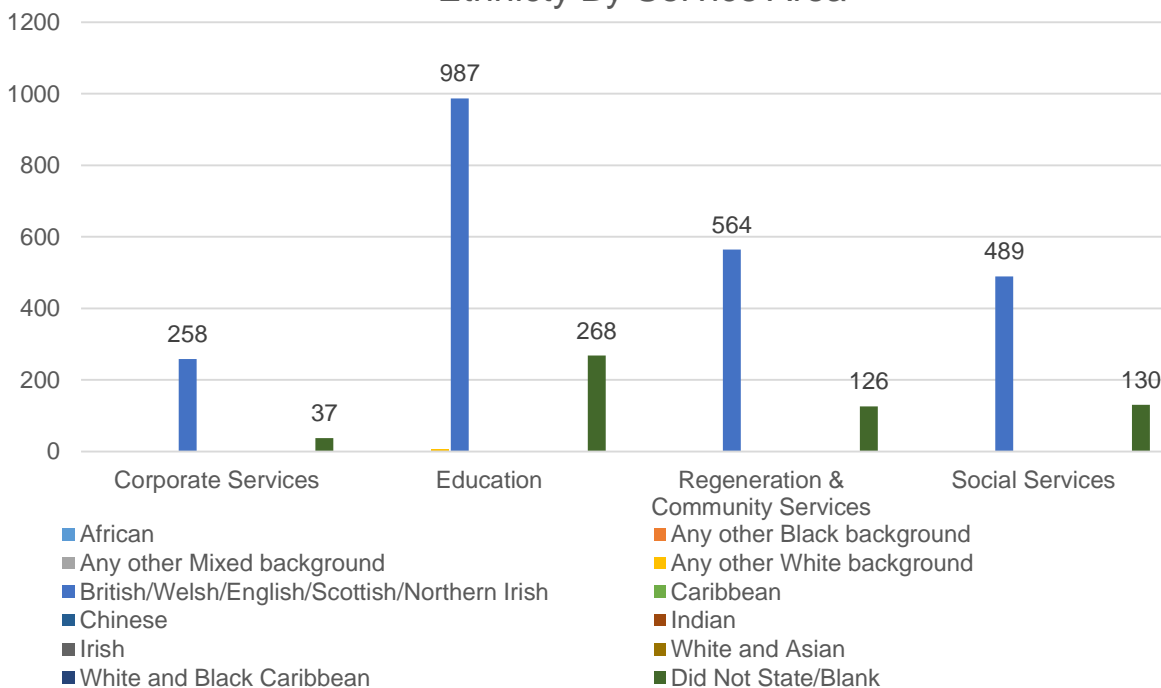
Disability by Service Area



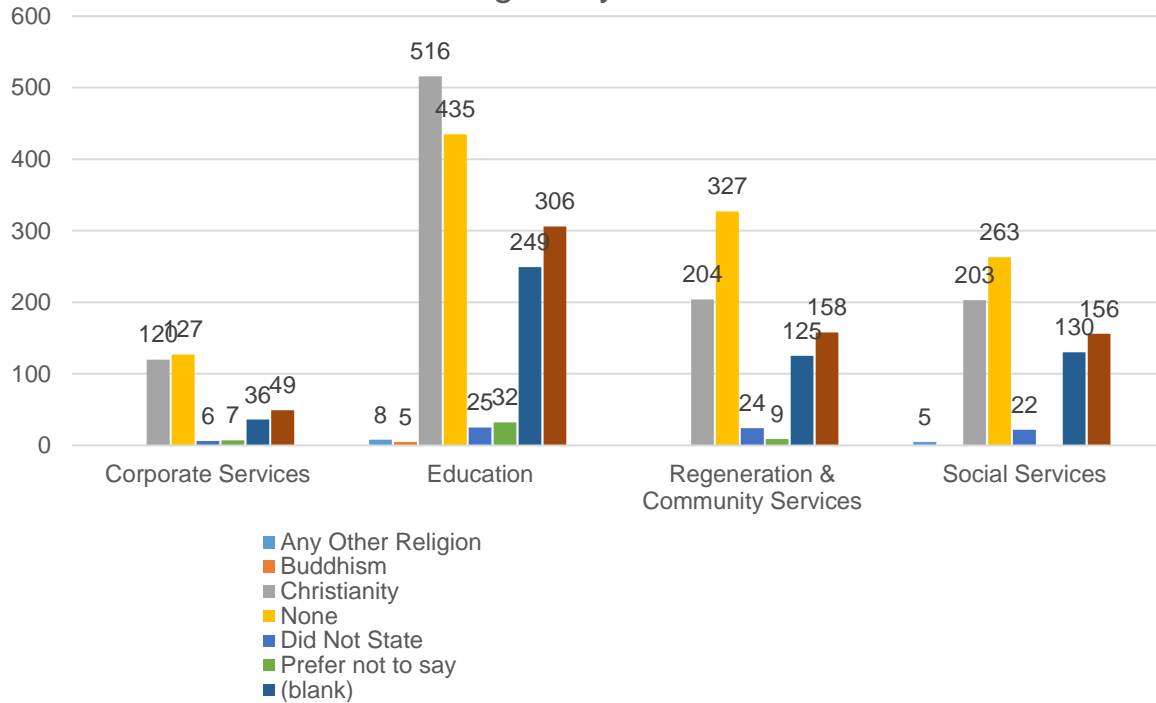
Marital Status by Service Area



Ethnicity By Service Area



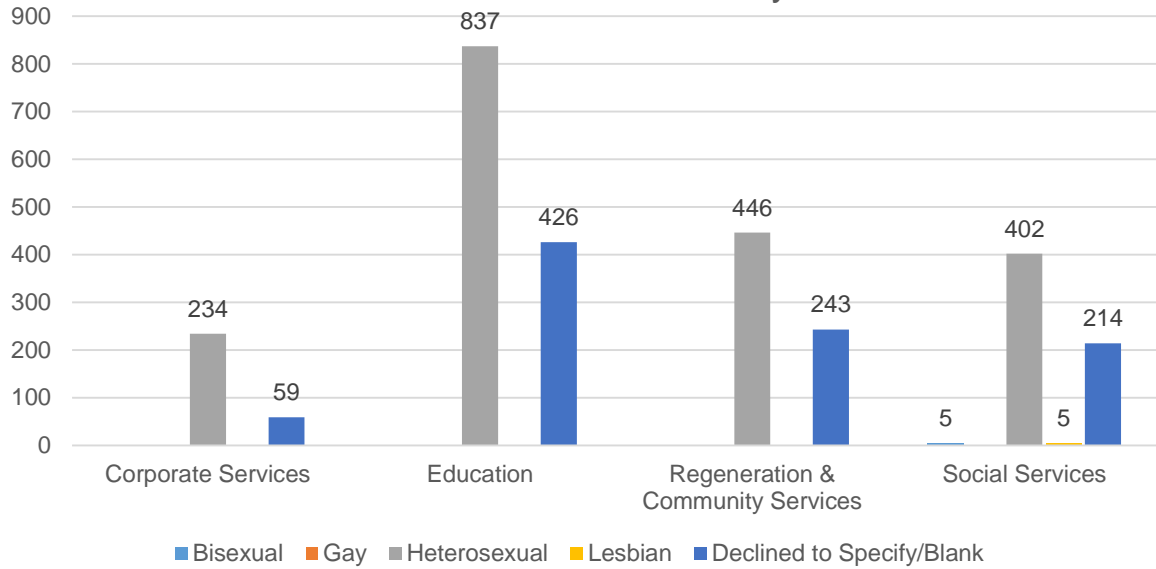
Religion By Service Area



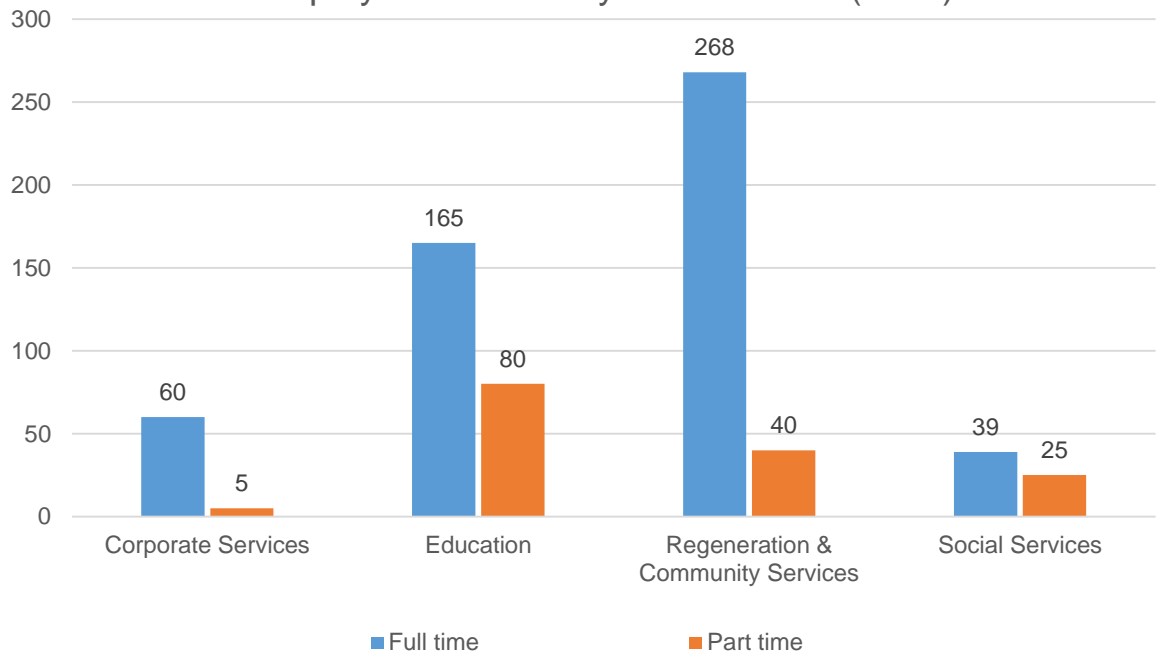
Gender By Service Area



Sexual Orientation By Service Area



Employment Basis By Service Area (Male)



Employment Basis By Service Area (Female)

