

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

CENSUS (AMENDMENT) (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

Glasgow City Council is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute views to this consultation. For successful implementation of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), reliable information about people with protected characteristics is essential and needs to reflect societal change. In particular, we need to improve the evidence we currently have about the experiences of transgender people in Scotland.

We recognise the importance and sensitivity of these questions and we understand that placing the questions on a voluntary basis seeks to mitigate concerns about intrusion into private life. However, this needs to be balanced with the reliability of the data that will then be collected. We would submit that it is possible that the approach suggested by the legislation may be over-cautious and that questions about sexual orientation may now be more acceptable and routinely recognised as part of survey practice. Recent research published by Ipsos Mori shows changing views amongst young people, with only 66% of Generation Z considering themselves to be exclusively heterosexual.

To further illustrate that, we would like to share our own experience. Glasgow City Council conducts an annual survey of residents (around 1000) on an annual basis. The sample is weighted to reflect the demographics of Glasgow. In 2010, we introduced a question on sexual orientation as part of the demographics and have included it every year since. The question included a prefer not to say option. In 2010, 9% of respondents chose/prefer not to say, with 91% choosing heterosexual. By contrast, in the most recent survey, 2018, while 91% chose heterosexual, 6% chose lesbian, gay or bisexual and only 3% chose/prefer not to say.

In summary, we very much welcome the decision to include questions on aspects of gender identity and sexual orientation in Census 2021 as playing an important part in improving the evidence of the lives of transgender and LGBT people in Scotland and supporting the PSED.