

Background

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills agency. As the provider of Scotland's Career Service, SDS supports customers to develop the skills and habits they need to make decisions about learning and work.

SDS's strategic plan (2022-27) sets out our goal of ensuring that young people have improved participation in the labour market, smoother post-school transitions and are equipped with the skills they need, at every stage of their lives, to have rewarding careers¹.

It is therefore essential for SDS to fully understand the experiences of young people when making decisions about their future careers. This will enable SDS to deliver person-centred career services for young people and support them to build the skills, habits, and experiences required to negotiate the rapidly changing labour market.

The Young People in Scotland research

The Young People in Scotland research is a commissioned² study which gathers insight from secondary school pupils aged 11-18 years. This valuable research aimed to collect insight from S1-S6 pupils across Scotland on their **plans after school, preferred job sectors and key influencers on their career decisions**. The project also has a **strong equalities focus**, enabling SDS to explore the research findings by a variety of groups. The results from this research have been shared widely within SDS, and externally with our partners at the Scottish Government.

¹ [Skills Development Scotland Strategic Plan 2022-27 – Skills for a Changing World, 2022](#)

² The study is led by [Ipsos Scotland](#).

Approach

Ipsos Scotland recruited young people through engagement with secondary schools across Scotland. A representative sample of 1533 young people were recruited, all of whom completed an online questionnaire at school.

The fieldwork was carried out between September and December 2022. Results are available broken down by a variety of groups including gender identity, age, school year, ethnicity, disability status, SIMD³, and urban/rural locations.

Areas covered

The research questions were developed by SDS in collaboration with a project steering and reference group, and with guidance from Ipsos Scotland. The research covered the following areas:

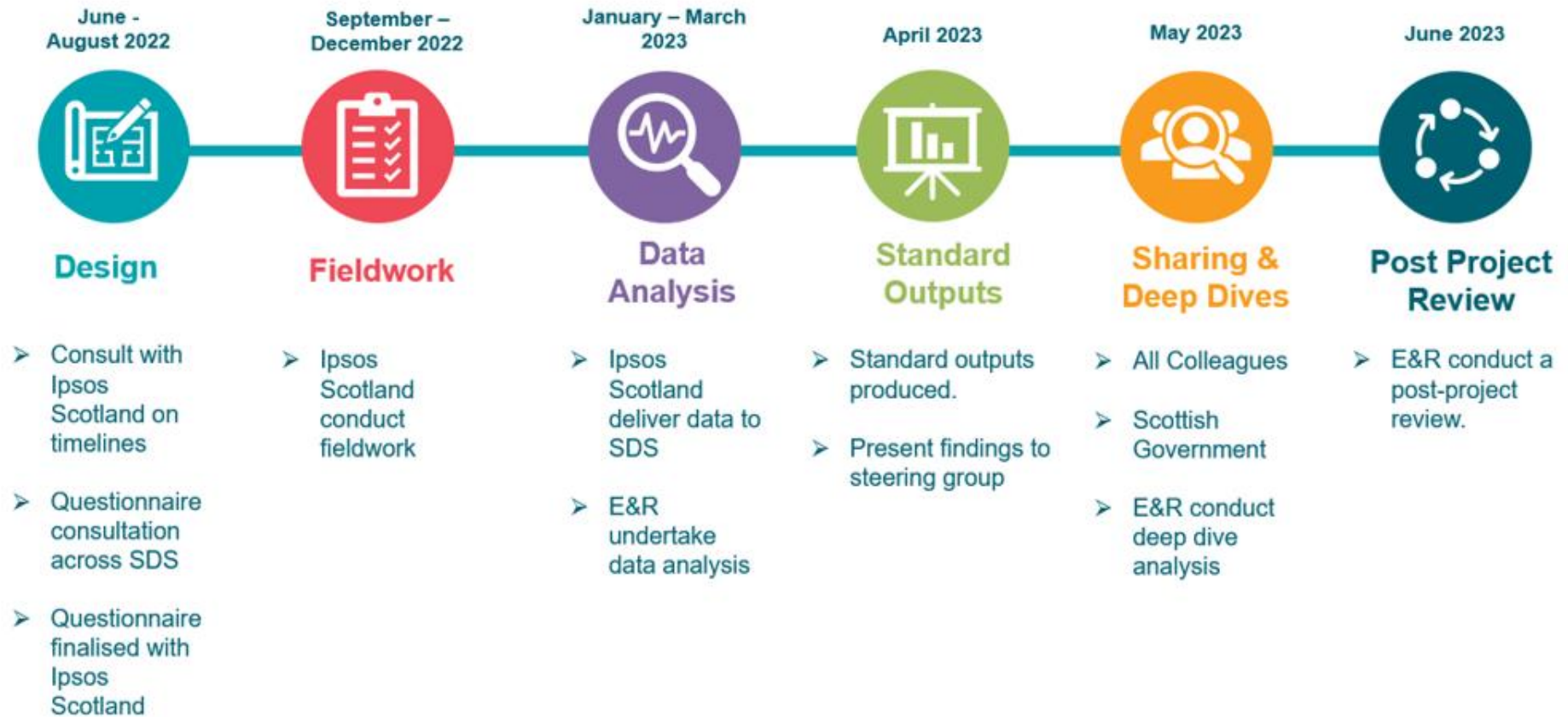
- **Plans after school**
- **Key influencers on decisions**
- **Preferred job sectors**
- **Subject choices**
- **Perceptions of STEM and Caring careers**
- **Awareness of Net Zero careers**
- **Perceptions of apprenticeships**
- **Desirable job attributes**
- **Perceived employer requirements**
- **Sources of information on careers**
- **Career management skills**
- **Use of the My World of Work⁴ website**
- **Resources on careers websites**

³ [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.](#)

⁴ [My World of Work website](#)

About this report

This report summarises the key findings from the Young People in Scotland research. A series of infographics focusing on equality characteristics have also been produced. The diagram below provides an overview of the research timeline. If you have any queries about this research, please contact SDS's Evaluation and Research Team at evaluation&research@sds.co.uk.



Plans after school

Young people are most likely to **plan on going to university**. This is especially true for females. Around a fifth of young people plan on going to college, and a fifth also have thought about it but don't know yet. A low number of young people plan on going straight into employment or starting an apprenticeship. Males are more likely to start an apprenticeship or go into employment.

Figure 1: Young people's plans after school

| Plans after School | All % | Male % | Female % |
|--|-------|--------|----------|
| Go to university | 42 | 36 | 50 |
| Go to college | 15 | 12 | 18 |
| I've thought about it but I don't know yet | 15 | 15 | 14 |
| Get a job | 8 | 11 | 5 |
| I haven't thought about it yet | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Start a modern or graduate apprenticeship | 4 | 7 | 1 |
| Other | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Start a Modern Apprenticeship | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| Take time out/gap year | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Prefer not to say | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Self-employment (start my own business) | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Start a Graduate Apprenticeship | 1 | 1 | NA |
| Other training course | 1 | NA | 1 |
| Volunteer | NA | NA | NA |
| Internship | NA | NA | NA |

Influence on plans

Young people are most likely to be influenced by **the type of job** that they want, their **interests** and their **strengths**. The **amount of money** young people think they will earn is also a key influencer on their plans, as well as **what they can afford to do**. Males are more influenced by what their **parents and carers do**, and what **their parents and carers think they should do**.

Figure 2: What young people say has influenced their plans after school

| Influence on Plans | All % | Male % | Female % |
|--|-------|--------|----------|
| The type of job I want | 76 | 76 | 77 |
| The subjects I am interested in | 74 | 72 | 76 |
| The subjects I am good at | 72 | 72 | 73 |
| The amount of money I think I will earn | 60 | 64 | 58 |
| What I can afford to do | 42 | 43 | 41 |
| What my parents/carers do | 40 | 45 | 36 |
| What my parents/carers think I should do | 40 | 42 | 38 |
| How easy I think it will be to find a job | 32 | 31 | 34 |
| What my teachers have said to me | 27 | 26 | 29 |
| The opportunities available in my local area | 23 | 25 | 21 |
| What people on social media are doing | 22 | 20 | 24 |
| What my careers adviser has said to me | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| What my friends are doing | 16 | 38 | 40 |
| Online careers websites | 14 | 16 | 13 |
| Foundation Apprenticeship experience | 12 | 15 | 9 |

Preferred job sectors

The sectors that young people consider for their future career vary considerably, particularly when broken down by gender. **Females** are most likely to consider a career in **Medicine and Health, Creative Industries, Teaching** or **Childcare**, whereas **males** are more likely to consider a career in **Sport, Engineering, Computing** and ICT or **Construction**.

Figure 3: Young people's preferred job sectors

| Preferred Job Sectors | All % | Male % | Female % |
|--|-------|--------|----------|
| Sport | 36 | 44 | 29 |
| Creative industries (e.g. Art & Design, Music, Acting) | 30 | 20 | 38 |
| Other | 30 | 26 | 35 |
| Medicine and Health | 28 | 17 | 41 |
| Engineering | 26 | 42 | 12 |
| Science | 26 | 29 | 25 |
| Hospitality (working in hotels, bars, restaurants) | 26 | 18 | 34 |
| Teaching | 25 | 14 | 37 |
| Caring (e.g. childcare, social care) | 23 | 10 | 37 |
| Computing and ICT | 23 | 36 | 11 |
| Banking and Finance | 19 | 21 | 18 |
| Construction | 18 | 30 | 5 |
| Tourism | 14 | 10 | 18 |

Subject choices

Young people tend to base their subject choices on their **interests and strengths** but also what they think would be **most useful for their future career**.

Males are more likely to choose subjects based on their **strengths and interests**, whereas **females** are slightly more likely to consider **course requirements**.

Figure 4: Subject choice influencers

| Subject Choices | All % | Male % | Female % |
|---|-------|--------|----------|
| I chose the subjects I was interested in | 79 | 82 | 77 |
| I chose the subjects I thought I would do well in | 71 | 74 | 69 |
| I chose subjects that I thought would be useful for my future career | 71 | 72 | 71 |
| I like the teacher who teaches the subjects | 47 | 51 | 43 |
| I needed the subjects to get onto a particular college or university course | 46 | 44 | 50 |
| My parent/carer advised me to take the subjects | 38 | 39 | 37 |
| A teacher advised me to take the subjects | 24 | 23 | 25 |
| My friends were taking the same subjects | 21 | 23 | 20 |
| A careers adviser helped me to decide which subjects to take | 15 | 16 | 14 |

Perceptions of STEM and Caring careers

Young people tend to have **gendered views on STEM and Caring careers**. This is particularly the case for Caring careers, where males are much less likely to be interested in a caring career. Females are much more likely overall to be interested in Caring careers, recognising that it would be rewarding and that there are a wide range of careers available. Males are more likely to be interested in STEM careers. Females are more likely to have challenging perceptions of STEM careers than males, such as thinking that STEM careers are hard to get into and are not suited to them.

Figure 5: % agreement with statements on STEM careers

| Perceptions of STEM Careers | All % | Male % | Female % |
|---|-------|--------|----------|
| There are a wide range of STEM-related careers | 54 | 56 | 53 |
| STEM-related careers are well paid | 46 | 47 | 46 |
| STEM-related careers or jobs are hard to get into | 36 | 34 | 38 |
| I am interested in a STEM-related career or job | 34 | 43 | 26 |
| STEM-related careers or jobs are not suited to me | 27 | 23 | 32 |

Figure 6: % agreement with statements on Caring careers

| Perceptions of Caring Careers | All % | Male % | Female % |
|---|-------|--------|----------|
| Careers in caring are not suited to me | 40 | 48 | 31 |
| A career in caring would be rewarding | 39 | 28 | 52 |
| There are a wide range of careers in caring | 36 | 29 | 43 |
| I am interested in a career in caring | 21 | 11 | 31 |
| Careers in caring are well paid | 15 | 14 | 16 |

Perceptions of Net Zero jobs

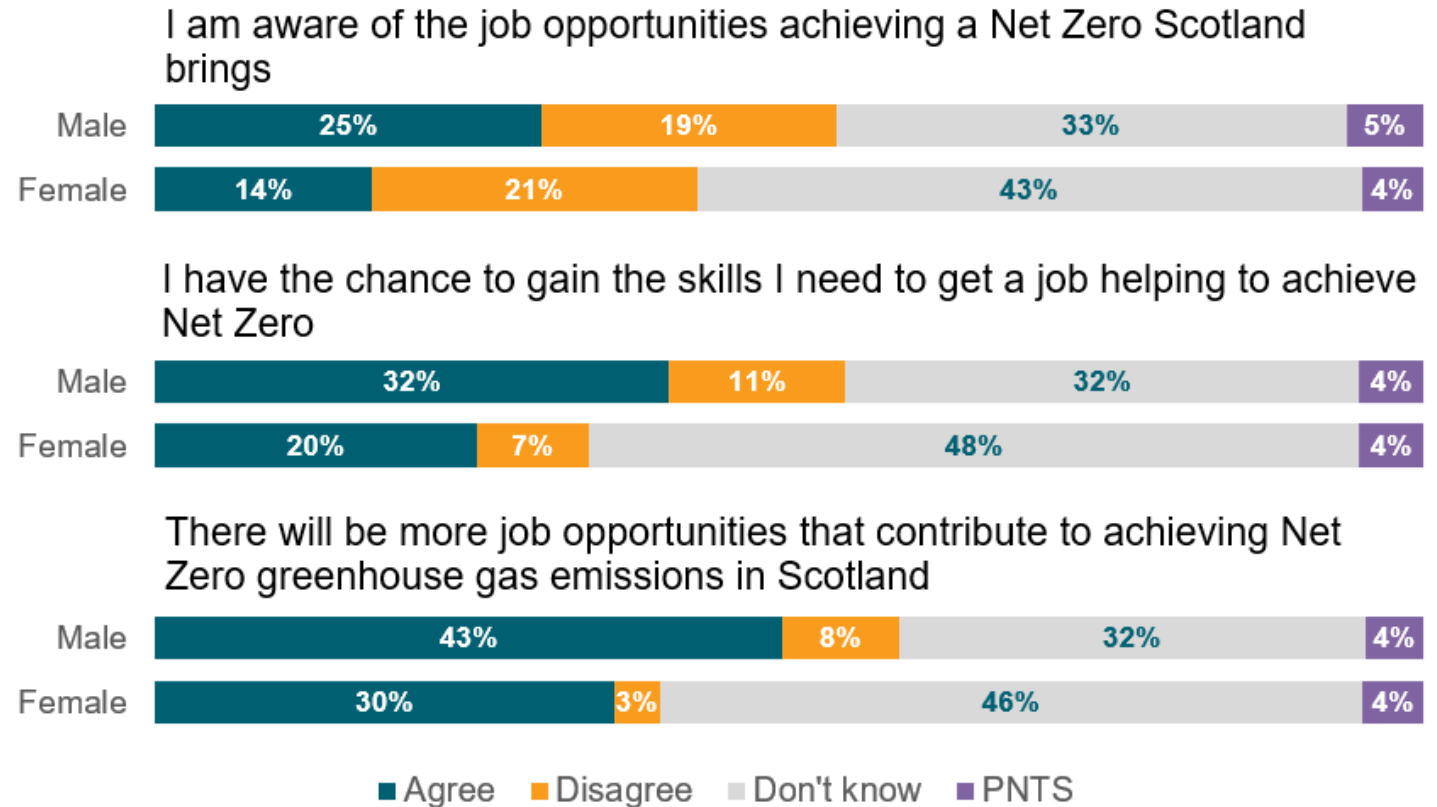
Overall, young people have **little knowledge of Net Zero job opportunities**.

Females are more likely to answer '**don't know**' to these questions compared to males, indicating that there is a **gap in knowledge for females on NetZero jobs, skills and opportunities**.

Males are more likely to agree with all of these statements when compared to females.

Young people living in SIMD 5 areas (least deprived) are also more likely to have an understanding of Net Zero opportunities than those living in SIMD 1 areas (most deprived).

Figure 7: % agreement with statements on Net Zero jobs, by gender



Sources of information on apprenticeships

Young people are most likely to have received information on apprenticeships from **parents/carers** and **teachers**. Around a quarter of young people have **not received any information on apprenticeships**.

Males are more likely to have received information on apprenticeships than females, particularly from parents/carers.

Figure 8: % of young people who selected each source of information on apprenticeships

| Sources of Information on Apprenticeships | All % | Male % | Female % |
|--|-------|--------|----------|
| Parents/carers | 31 | 36 | 27 |
| Teacher | 30 | 31 | 30 |
| I have not received information on apprenticeships | 26 | 24 | 28 |
| Don't know | 18 | 14 | 21 |
| Friends | 15 | 16 | 14 |
| Careers adviser | 14 | 15 | 14 |
| My World of Work (online service/website) | 12 | 13 | 11 |
| Other | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| School parents/carers meeting or information meeting | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| College/Learning provider | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| An employer providing an apprenticeship | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Prefer not to say | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Apprenticeship.scot (online service/website) | 2 | 3 | 2 |

Perceptions of apprenticeships

Young people recognise the benefits of undertaking an apprenticeship, with around two thirds suggesting that they like the idea of being able to work while getting qualifications. However, almost **half of young people** say that they **don't know very much about apprenticeships**. Although females like the idea of getting qualifications while working, they are less likely to see apprenticeships as useful for their future career.

Figure 9: % agreement with statements about apprenticeships

| Perceptions of Apprenticeships | All % | Male % | Female % |
|---|-------|--------|----------|
| I like the idea of being able to work while getting qualifications | 66 | 68 | 67 |
| I don't know very much about apprenticeships | 49 | 48 | 52 |
| An apprenticeship would be a useful way to start my chosen career | 48 | 55 | 42 |
| An apprenticeship would give me useful skills I can't get at university or college | 48 | 52 | 45 |
| A university or college degree is more useful for my career than an apprenticeship | 33 | 31 | 36 |
| I would like to start an apprenticeship while I'm still at school (also known as a Foundation Apprenticeship) | 28 | 32 | 25 |
| I can get a degree level qualification by doing an apprenticeship | 22 | 27 | 17 |
| Apprenticeships are only available in a small number of jobs or industries | 22 | 22 | 23 |
| Apprenticeships are not available in the career in which I am interested | 20 | 20 | 22 |
| Apprenticeships are mostly for boys | 9 | 12 | 7 |
| My parent (s)/carer(s) do not want me to do an apprenticeship | 6 | 8 | 5 |

Foundation Apprenticeships

Awareness and understanding of Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) is low amongst young people. Around **a quarter are interested in doing an FA** and see it as helpful for their future career plans. Males are more likely to be aware and have positive perceptions of FAs than females.

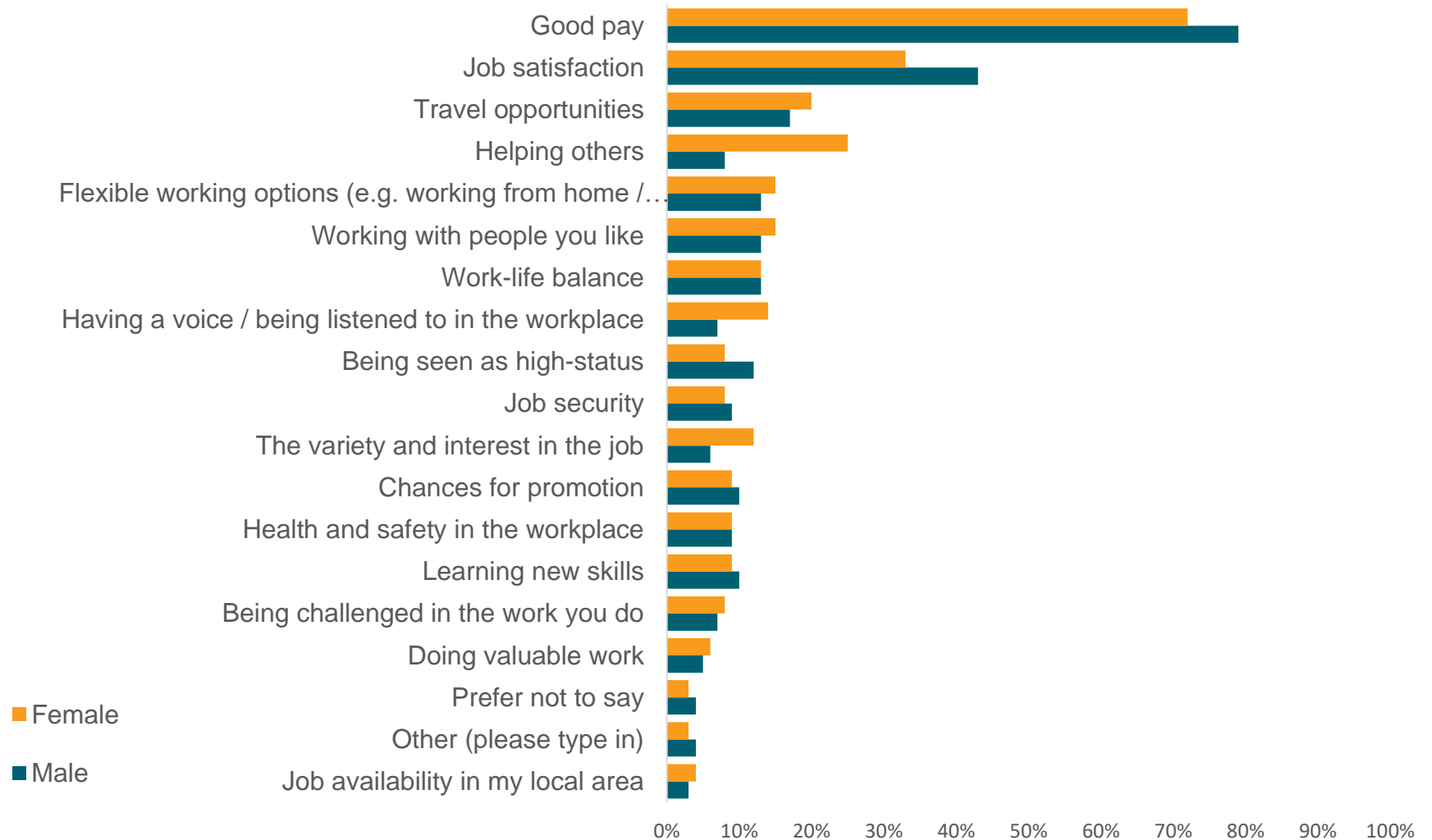
Figure 10: % agreement with statements about Foundation apprenticeships

| Foundation Apprenticeships | All % | Male % | Female % |
|--|-------|--------|----------|
| Before completing this survey, I was aware of Foundation Apprenticeships | 33 | 35 | 31 |
| A Foundation Apprenticeship provides a recognised qualification the same level as a Higher | 31 | 29 | 33 |
| A Foundation Apprenticeship would be helpful for my future career plans | 26 | 28 | 25 |
| A Foundation Apprenticeship would help me get into University or College | 26 | 30 | 23 |
| I would be interested in doing a Foundation Apprenticeship | 24 | 29 | 20 |
| A Foundation Apprenticeship would help me get a Modern or Graduate Apprenticeship | 22 | 28 | 18 |

Desirable job attributes

Good pay tops the list of what young people see as important in their future job or career. **Job satisfaction** is also important to young people. Males are more likely than females to say that good pay, job satisfaction and being seen as high-status are important job factors, whereas females are more likely than males to say that helping others, having a voice and variety in the job are important.

Figure 11: % of young people who selected each job attribute, by gender

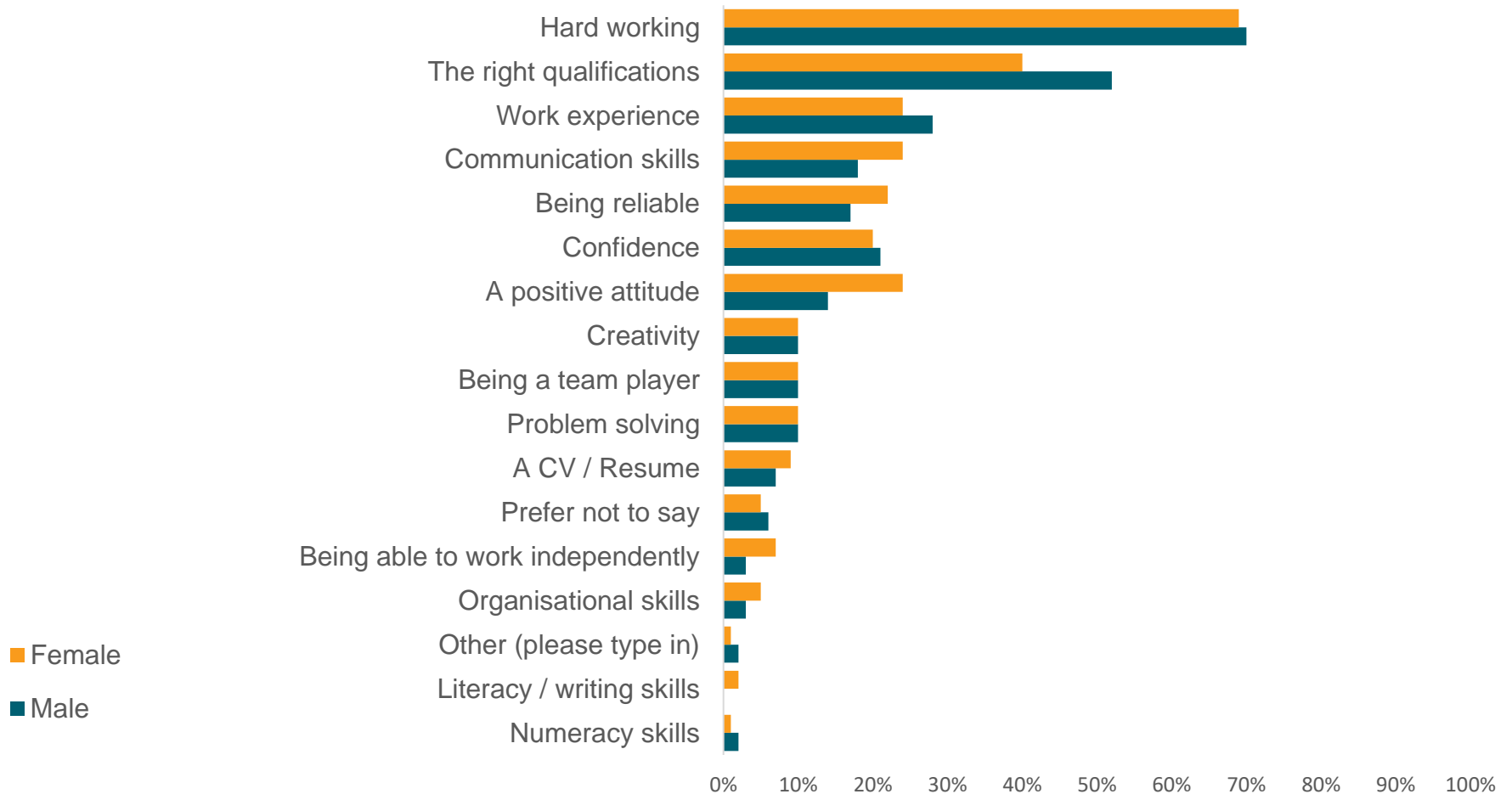


Perceived employer requirements

Being **hard working** and having **the right qualifications** are the main qualities/attributes that young people think employers are looking for, followed by work experience. Young people are least likely to think that employers are looking for literacy or numeracy skills.

Males are more likely to think that having the right qualifications is important, whereas females are more likely than males to think that having a positive attitude is important to employers.

Figure 12: % of young people who selected each attribute, by gender



Where young people learn about jobs and careers (other than the SDS careers service)

Young people were asked which organisations, other than the careers advice they receive in school, they are most likely to use to help them learn about jobs and careers. Young people are **likely to use a variety of sources** but are most likely to use **universities and colleges** to learn about jobs and careers. Those from the least deprived areas in Scotland are more likely to use a range of organisations to help them learn about careers.

Figure 13: % of young people who selected each organisation

| Where Young People Learn about Jobs and Careers | All % | Least Deprived % | Most Deprived % |
|--|-------|------------------|-----------------|
| University | 63 | 57 | 70 |
| College | 54 | 55 | 54 |
| Sports club | 32 | 23 | 34 |
| Clubs or organisations related to your hobbies | 32 | 28 | 35 |
| Library | 23 | 22 | 27 |
| A charity that supports you or other members of your household | 14 | 12 | 16 |
| Other | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Youth club | 11 | 14 | 11 |
| Religious groups (e.g. at Church, Mosque, Synagogue etc.) | 6 | 4 | 11 |

Career Management Skills

Young people’s views of their career management skills vary. Young people are most confident in **understanding how their experiences and learning can help them to make career choices** and **using their initiative to work things out for themselves**. However, young people are less confident in getting the information they need to make informed career decisions.

Those in the most deprived areas in Scotland are less confident across all career management skills.

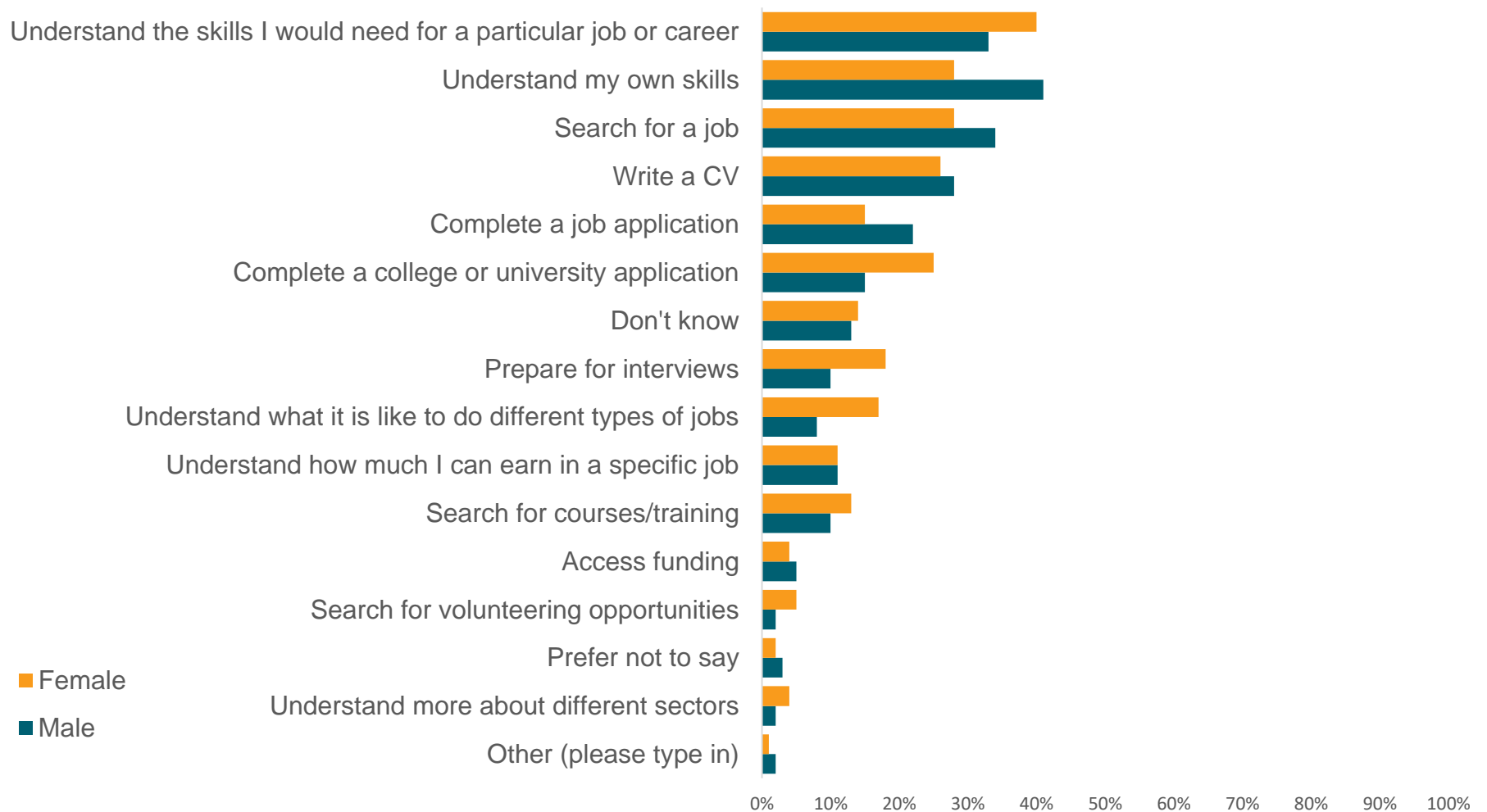
Figure 14: % agreement with statements about Career Management Skills

| Career Management Skills | All % | Most Deprived % | Least Deprived % |
|--|-------|-----------------|------------------|
| I understand how my experiences and learning can help me make career choices | 59 | 58 | 64 |
| I am able to use my initiative to work things out myself | 51 | 44 | 56 |
| I can make informed career decisions | 49 | 38 | 51 |
| I am able to identify and build relationships with people who can help me in my career | 49 | 43 | 54 |
| I am able to manage change in my life and career | 48 | 46 | 53 |
| I am creative and imaginative when it comes to my career development | 44 | 43 | 46 |
| I can find and use career information easily | 43 | 43 | 55 |
| I know how to maintain the right balance between my personal life, learning and work | 43 | 42 | 45 |
| I know about all the learning, work, and career options open to me | 38 | 33 | 46 |

Useful career website resources

Young people were asked what resources they would find most helpful on a careers website. Young people would like to see **a range of resources on a careers website**. Resources that would help young people to **understand skills** would be most helpful, as well as resources that help with job related tasks such as job searching, CV writing and job applications.

Figure 15: % of young people who selected each option, by gender



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