

The logo for Clerksroom, featuring the word "clerk" in white and "sroom" in orange, set against a dark blue square background.

clerk**sroom**

# Clerksroom Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Data Comparison Report

Survey prepared, data compiled and reported upon by Beyond Compliance

## Introduction

In accordance with the requirements set out by the BSB at rule c110 of the BSB Handbook, the Diversity Data Officer invited all members of the workforce to provide diversity data. This information was provided anonymously and is available to members of the public on our website.

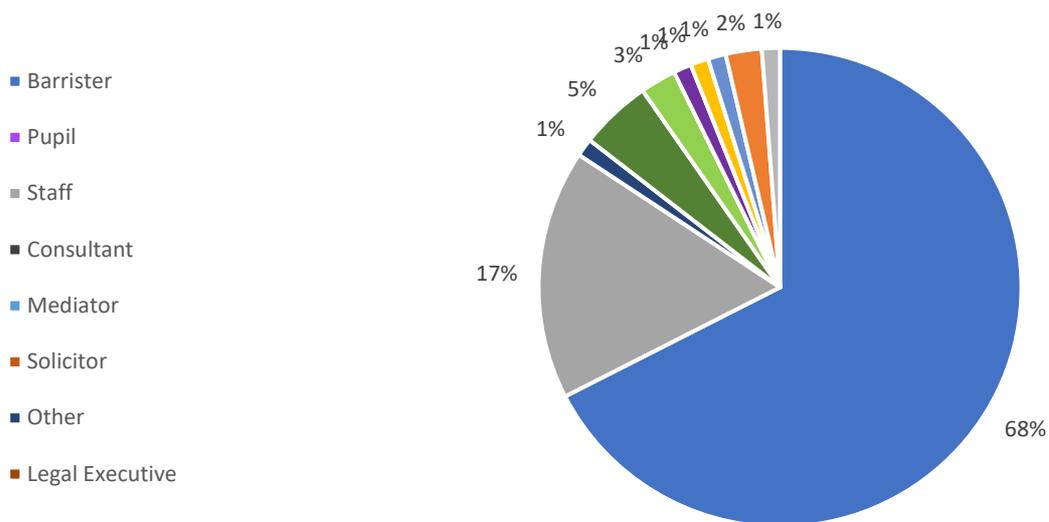
Whilst it is not required, we have also compared our diversity data to the most recent data published by the BSB. The BSB data is taken from the BSB’s report on ‘Diversity at the Bar 2021’<sup>1</sup> which was published in January 2022. The report provides a summary of the latest available diversity data for the Bar as a whole. Comparing our data with the data of the Bar allows Clerksroom to have a better idea of how we are doing in relation to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

The analysis of this data and the feedback we received from the Clerksroom staff and members will be used to help shape our approach and strategy towards EDI over the next 3–5 years. We are aware that, as a whole, the Bar has a long way to go in terms of EDI and this is something that will continue to evolve over time.

We regularly seek feedback and data from our members on EDI and topics closely linked to EDI; for example, in 2021 we conducted a survey looking at the members of Clerksroom who had been offered waivers by BSB and we analysed this information alongside our diversity data. This report can be viewed here <https://www.pupillageacademy.com/assets/CR-Waiver-and-Diversity-Study.pdf>.

As mentioned, our most recent collection of data was prompted by the requirements set out by the BSB. As such, we used the same questioning as the BSB to allow for comparison of the data. Overall, there were a total of 91 respondents, 83 of which consented to their data being published. 16 respondents were staff and the other 67 respondents were barristers.

## Role of Members in Chambers

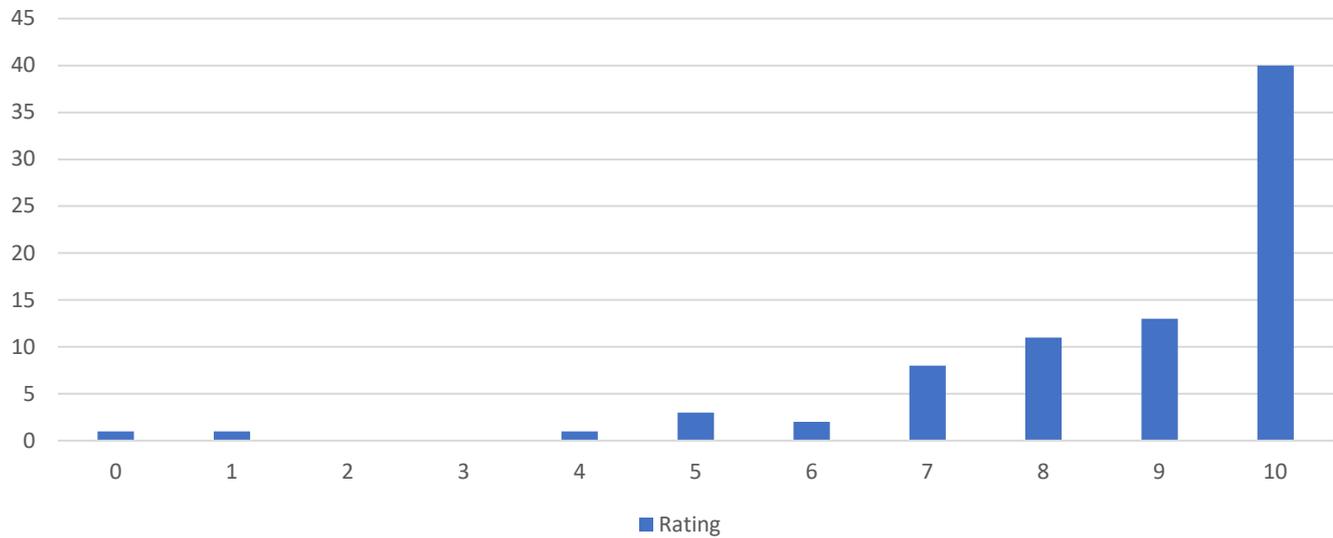


<sup>1</sup> The BSB, ‘Diversity at the Bar 2021’ (2022) <<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/uploads/assets/be522642-160b-433b-af03a910a5636233/BSB-Report-on-Diversity-at-the-Bar-2021.pdf>> accessed 21 February 2022

## EDI Rating

Average member rating: 8.7

**Clerksroom EDI Rating**  
On a scale of 1-10 with one being poor and 10 being good, how would you rate Clerksroom's standing on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?



## Member comments and feedback

As part of our survey, we gave participating members the option to leave comments about Clerksroom EDI survey, EDI policies or anything else. These have been separated out into comments and feedback.

### Comments

*'This set of Chambers is multi-cultural, personal and family orientated. This is why I joined it'*

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*'Clerksroom do real diversity, not pretend diversity for show. They take people from all walks of life and backgrounds based on an ethos of personal responsibility for one's own legal practice and a superb online support structure - which is there to help everyone. Their commitment to flexible training and new forms of apprenticeship to combat the elitism of the pupillage system is unique and to be applauded. They understand the special flexibility that women and second career barristers may sometimes need as they juggle personal obligations with the particular kind of stressful workload experienced at the Bar. The approach I have witnessed at Clerksroom is evidenced in its clear results: an unusually diverse legal team built not on snobby ideas and ideologies, but rather on getting the best support to individuals - whatever they need - so they can get on with delivering excellent legal services.'*

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*'I think Clerksroom leads the field in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. It should just keep doing what it does.'*

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*'Stephen Ward [Managing Director of Clerksroom] has always been proactive, practical and ethical in all the years I have known him, which is how I came to join Clerksroom. The commitment of Clerksroom to EDI and to initiatives like this survey and the clarity around policies is a further example of this. My daughter is Asian-American and I feel passionately about ensuring a level playing field for all professionally and in life generally.'*

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*'As somebody from an ethnic minority, I have never felt anything by welcomed and a brilliant culture to be a part of'*

*'Clerksroom is clearly a very diverse and inclusive workplace'*

*'I was a solicitor who transferred to the Bar at the age of approx. 55; Clerksroom offered me tenancy after I was unhappy at my last traditional set. I was interviewed by Stephen Ward as only right due to equal opportunities, and to ensure that I was a 'good fit' for Chambers and for me. I was taken on as a tenant, and was invited to the HQ in Taunton to meet all the team. This was very helpful, and made me feel included in what is a 'remote' chambers. I have never been discriminated against because of my age. I am respected, as no doubt are all members of Chambers, and I am in no doubt that the work coming into Chambers is equally divided between Counsel, subject to their specialist areas of knowledge and expertise. There are 'no favourites' with the clerks. Everyone is treated equally. I have to take out days quite regularly as my parents are nearly in their nineties. This is never a problem and I have never been under pressure by the clerks to take on a case which clashes with the time needed to care for my parents. This is my 3rd set of Chambers after qualification. I am very happy here as the business and operational models are open, transparent and flexible to fit in with a diverse range of personal and family needs. In my view, and having spoken to a lot of barristers at other sets of Chambers, this is unusual. I was worried about working remotely from Chambers HQ in Taunton as I live in London. This has worked seamlessly. I cannot praise the clerks highly enough for their hard work, sending me papers well in time, and billing my cases expeditiously. Further, for Chambers arranging local Xmas dinners where barristers can meet up, and get to know each other. To sum up, this set of Chambers is multi-cultural, personal and family orientated. This is why I joined it'.*

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*'Clerksroom is extremely inclusive. As somebody from an ethnic minority, I have never felt anything but welcomed. A brilliant culture to be a part of'.*

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*'I have been with Clerksroom for over 17. Having been in three other Chambers prior to this as a pupil and a tenant, I would say that Clerksroom goes above and beyond to make sure that its barristers and mediators come from a diverse range of backgrounds. The only area where there does not appear to be much diversity is on staff. I had only noticed this recently and it may be that this has not been picked up by management'.*

## Feedback and review

In relation to the survey, members identified that there was no option to select 'White European' and that in the religion section, the option should be 'Islam' and not 'Muslim'. As detailed above, we use the questions and answer options that the BSB use to allow us to compare the data. We note that this uses religious identifiers as opposed to stating the religions themselves. This information will be fed back to the BSB and hopefully changed for future surveys.

From a workplace/recruitment perspective members wanted to see more ethnic minority hires at management and staff level. This feedback will be passed on to our recruitment team to brainstorm ways in which this can be achieved and how ethnic minority applicants can be encouraged to apply to Clerksroom in the future. We plan to develop our recruitment process in the coming months as we had identified it as an area for potential development. We hope to explore documenting the process and enhancing the current system. This will allow us to ensure it is robust enough and that there are no challenges with the current approach.

Furthermore, data monitoring should be enhanced within the recruitment process to allow us to review the process over time. Much of our future action plans will be reliant on data, so one of our main priorities, across the board, will be to develop and expand our data monitoring capabilities.

In recent years, there has been an increase in Subject Access Requests made following rejected applications across the Bar, particularly when it comes to pupillage. Whilst much of our pupillage process is under review as we hope to launch the Pupillage Academy in the near future, we will ensure that we maintain a robust record keeping system for the overall recruitment process. In doing so, we will keep in mind our obligations under UK GDPR.

One member suggested greater financial help to enable students from poorer backgrounds to enter the profession and increase pupillages. As mentioned, Clerksroom is currently in the process of setting up and Launching the Pupillage Academy<sup>2</sup>, a charitable AETO entity, which will improve accessibility, affordability, flexibility, whilst maintaining high standards. We hope that this new model will encourage and assist aspiring barristers from all backgrounds to apply and obtain pupillage.

Another member suggested that Clerksroom should take more action to implement and promote comprehensive EDI policies. As part of our ongoing work on EDI, we created an EDI Action Plan in July 2021. We invited all members and staff to participate in training and to join working groups. In this plan we explored all of the EDI related areas for consideration. Our action plan looks at: race, sex, disability, religion and age in line with the Equality Act 2010. We also explore other factors which put individuals at a disadvantage within the profession such as socio-economic grounds, as well as the intersectionality of these factors. This diversity data will now be used to update this action plan.

In July 2021, a handful of volunteer members of chambers, including staff, undertook the following Bar Council training: Combined Advanced Equality and Diversity and Tackling Harassment Training; and Fair Recruitment Refresher Training. This was an excellent opportunity for members to have a refresher, ask questions and to learn new information and skills. This will be something we can continue to provide and encourage members to attend.

In December 2021, the EDI working group was launched. The group has begun by re-drafting the practical procedures needed to support the Parental Leave Policy, particularly the return-to-work provisions.

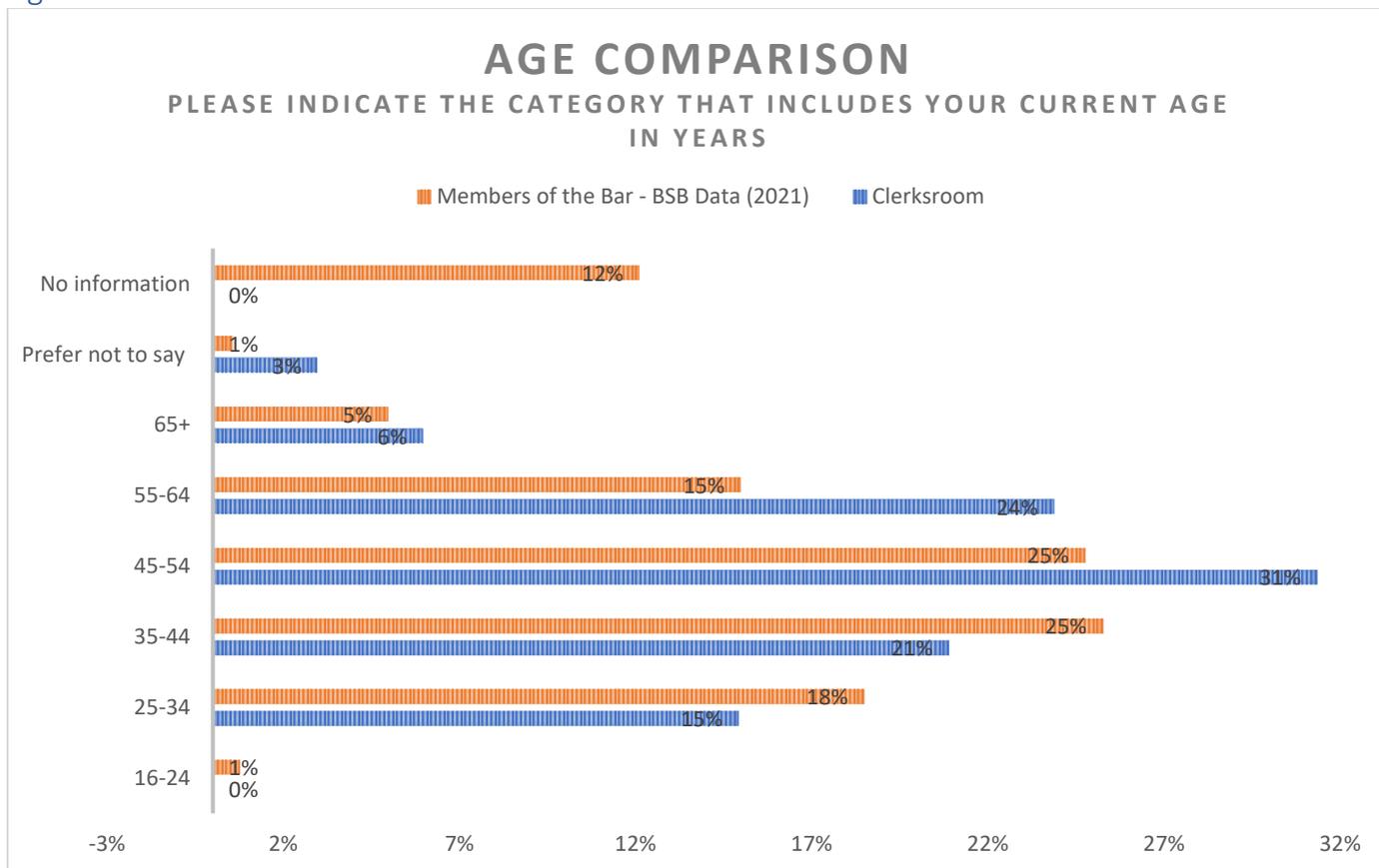
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<sup>2</sup> [www.pupillageacademy.com](http://www.pupillageacademy.com)

Furthermore, we will also be developing plans to increase the robustness of our data monitoring; allowing us to better understand our members and staff.

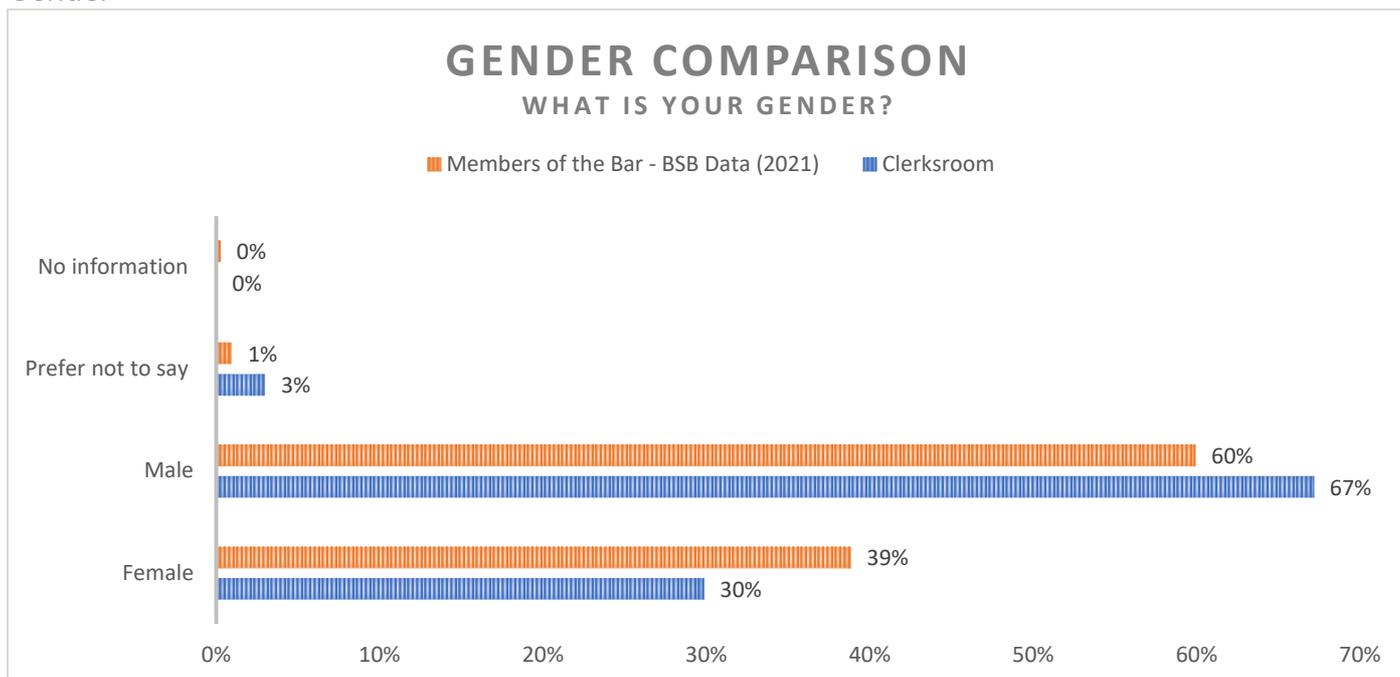
## Clerksroom Data compared with BSB data<sup>3</sup>

### Age



<sup>3</sup> The graphs represented in this section do not include data from Clerksroom respondents who selected 'Staff', 'Other' or provided no information as their role

## Gender



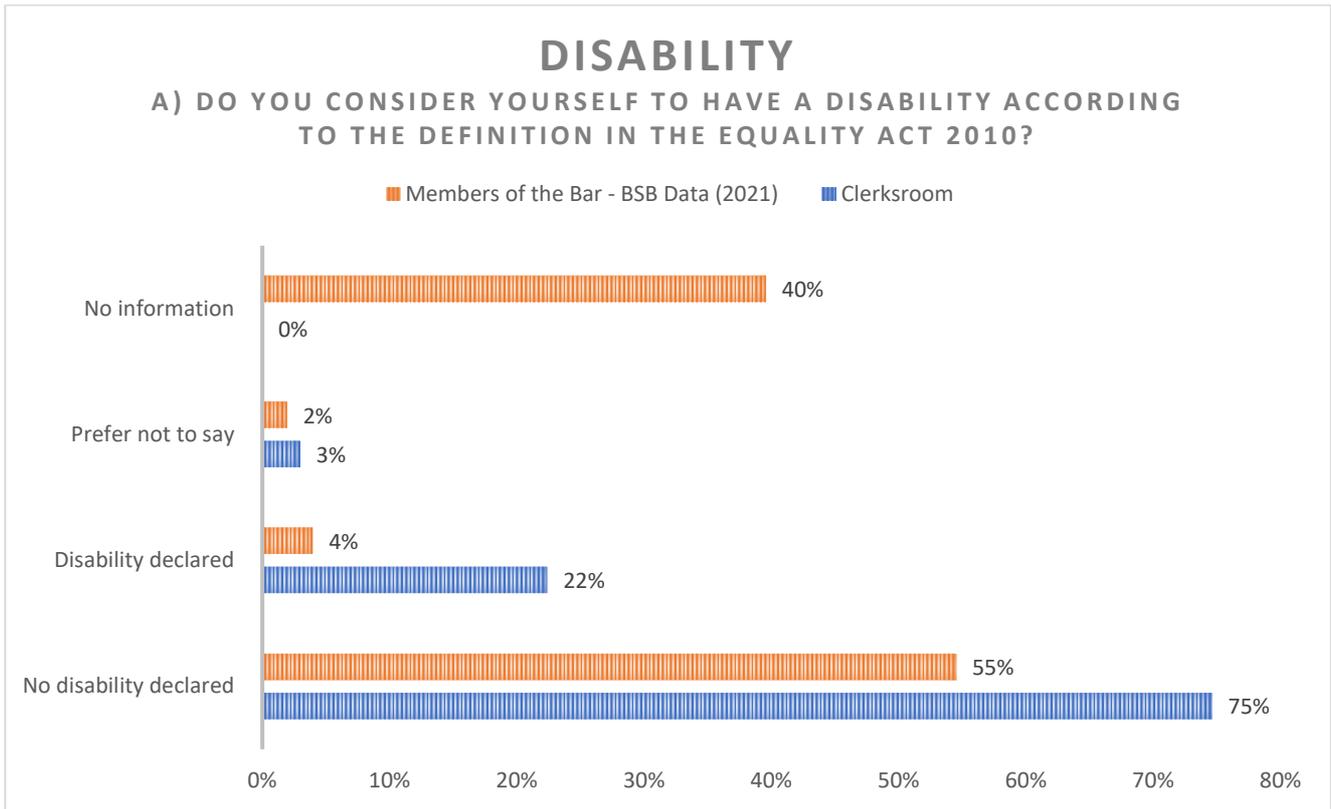
The data collected specifically on gender demonstrates that Clerksroom’s numbers are slightly lower than the BSB, and there is room for improvement when it comes to our members who are female. Although, it is also important to remember that not all members of Clerksroom are represented here as not all members completed the survey.

The information collected relating to age is particularly promising; not only does it show that Clerksroom members represent a range of ages from 25–65+, but Clerksroom members from 45–65+ represent a larger percentage than those at the Bar as a whole. These figures are in line with the BSB evidence that we have an ageing Bar. However, we believe that as Clerksroom is often a home for barristers coming to the Bar as a second career, that this helps to support diversity and to achieve the BSB’s objective of creating a Bar “which better reflects the society it represents”.

Looking at those figures for Clerksroom specifically, 41% from the 45 – 54 range were female, 29% from the 35–44 range and 38% from the 25–34 range were female. This is encouraging given that research by the Bar Council<sup>4</sup> has previously indicated that female barristers struggle to continue a career at the Bar, particularly once they decide to have a family and must deal with the demands of childcare and trying to find a work life balance (amongst other reasons).

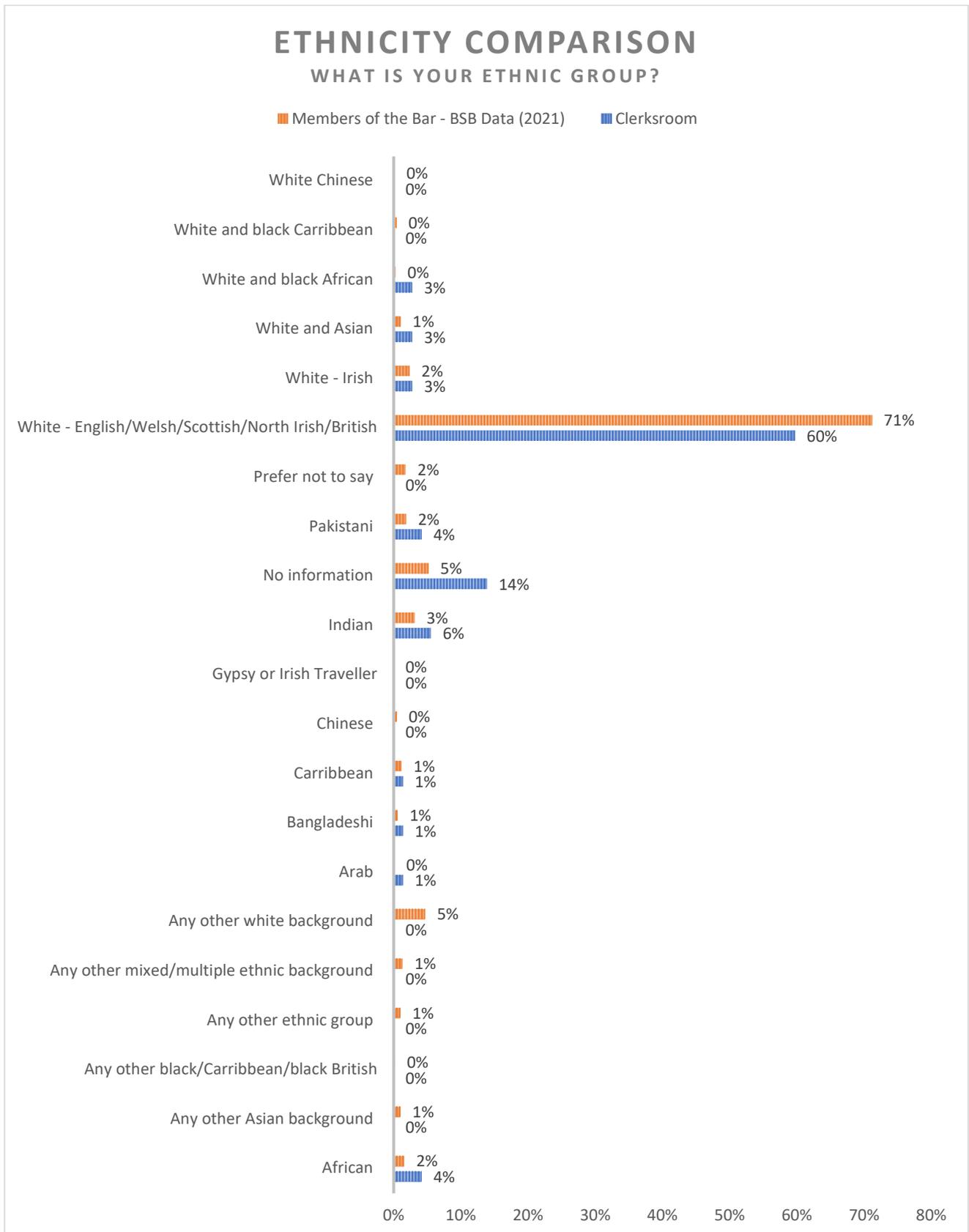
<sup>4</sup> The Bar Council, ‘Snapshot: The experience of Self-Employed Women at the Bar’ (2015)

<<https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/resource/snapshot-the-experience-of-self-employed-women-at-the-bar.html>> accessed 16 February 2022



Clerksroom’s data on disability, demonstrates that 22% of our members who responded to the survey have a disability within the definition provided by the Equality Act 2010. This is a large representation, given that only 3% of the Bar, as a whole, has declared they had a disability in the 2021 data provided by the BSB. Although it is worth noting that the BSB did not hold disability information on 43%.

These figures are promising and suggest that Clerksroom’s set up, culture and or policies are attractive to the members of the Bar that have disabilities. Moving forward, it would be helpful to speak with any members who are happy to discuss their circumstances to find out what it is that they feel we are doing well and to find any potential room for improvement or share our experiences and success with the Bar as whole. By continuing to work with our members and staff on policies aimed at those with disabilities we can ensure our approach and systems are as tailored as possible to the needs of our members.



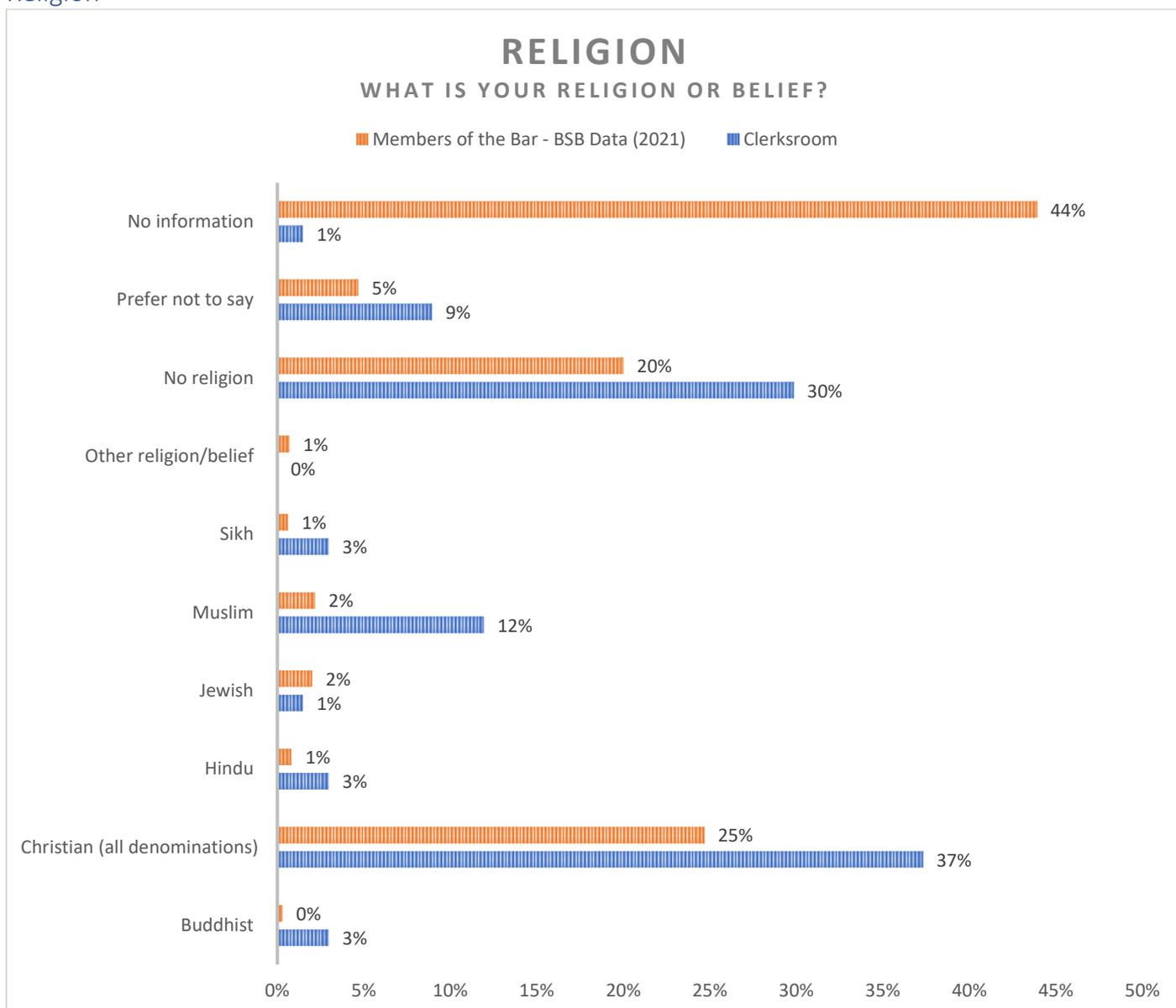
In line with the BSB’s results, the make-up of members is weighted with members who identify as ‘white – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British’, these results are to be expected given that there is a higher proportion of individuals at the Bar that identify with this category.

It is interesting to note that Clerksroom is ahead of the BSB when we look at the data on ethnicity as a whole. Our members represent a larger percentage of individuals who identify as: African; Arab; Bangladeshi; Indian; Pakistani; White and Asian; White -Irish; and, White and Black African.

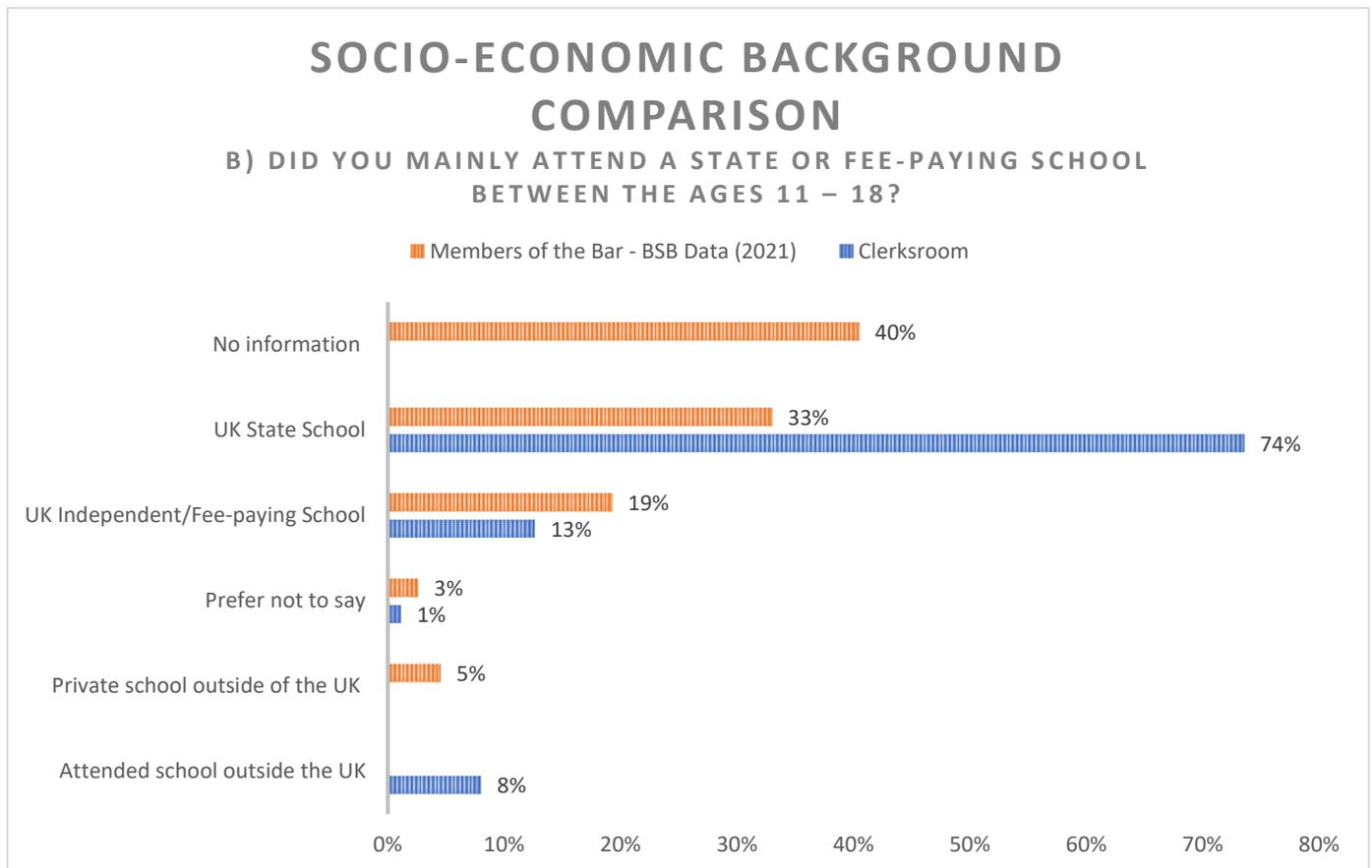
Whilst it is important to identify steps that can be taken to support barristers from ethnic minority groups, it is also important to help encourage individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds to undertake a career at the Bar; thereby increasing the overall numbers of barristers from ethnic minorities.

As detailed above, the Pupillage Academy, will hopefully address accessibility at an early stage. Once this is set up and running efficiently, it is envisioned that outreach plans can be made for individuals at the earlier stage, for example: secondary school and university.

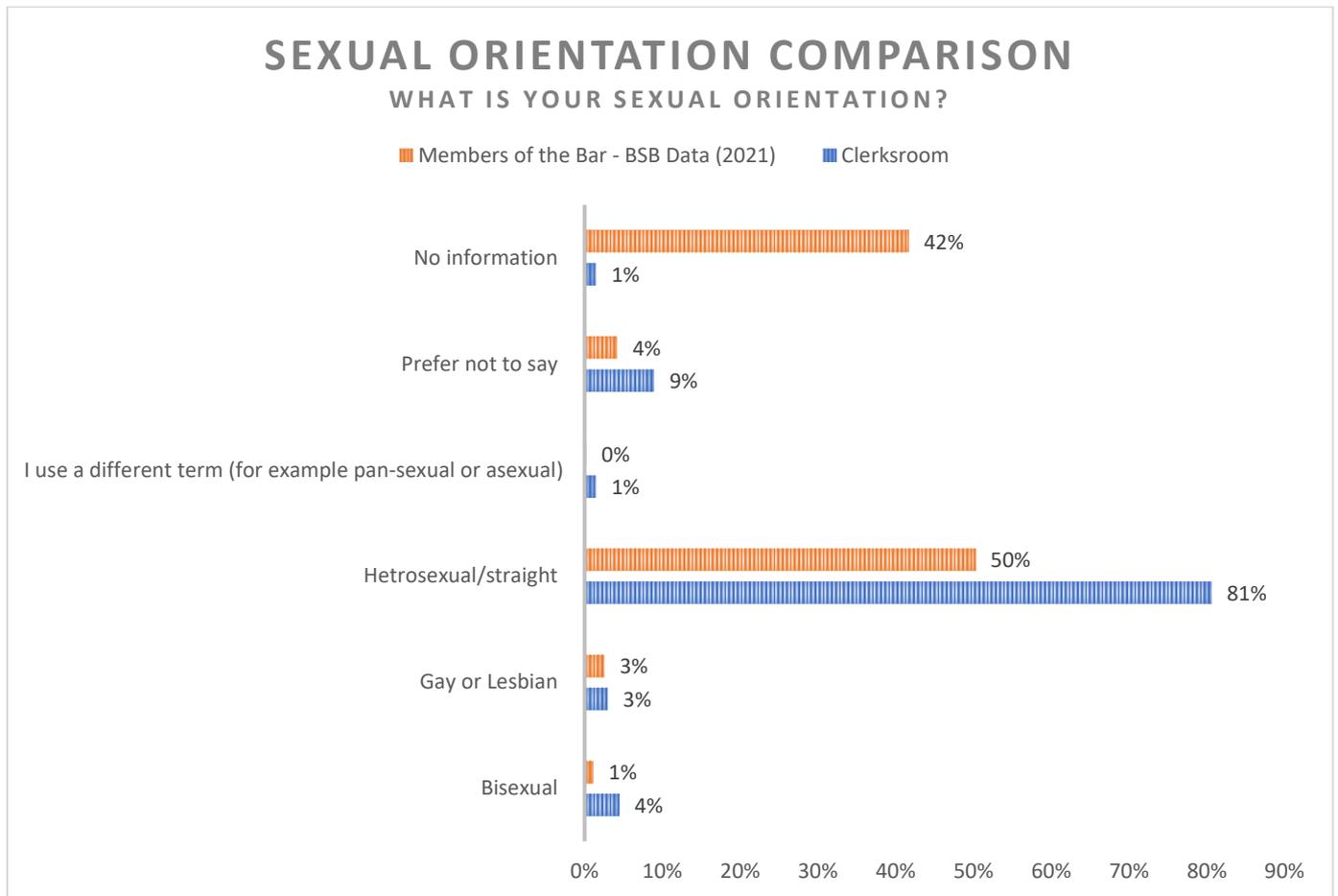
## Religion



As can be seen from the data, Clerksroom is home to members who have a wide variety of religious beliefs. Clerksroom is outperforming the Bar as a whole and it is interesting to note that 12% of Clerksroom members are Muslim, compared with 2% of the Bar. This supports Clerksroom’s aims and objectives of being a welcoming and friendly set of Chambers.

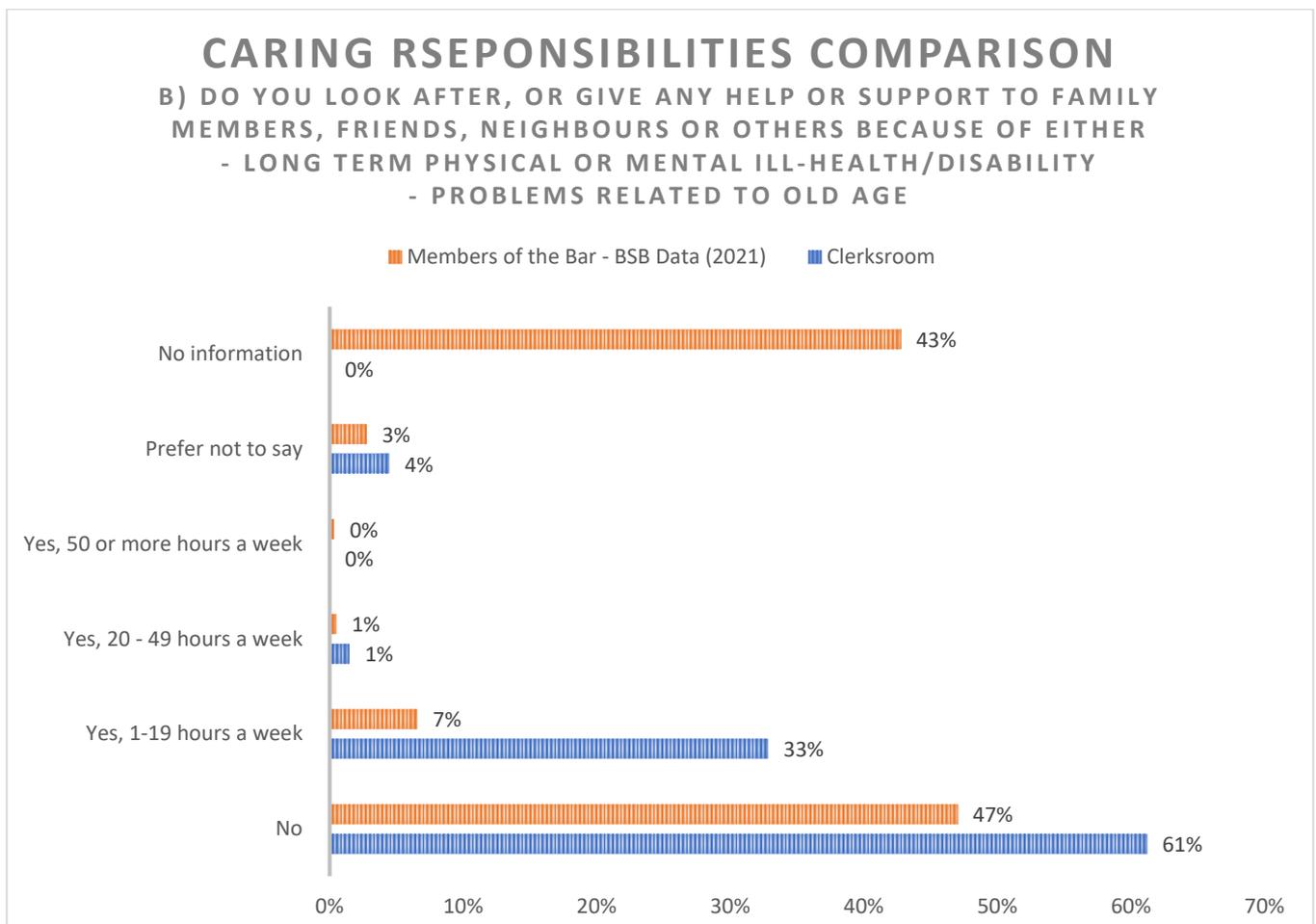
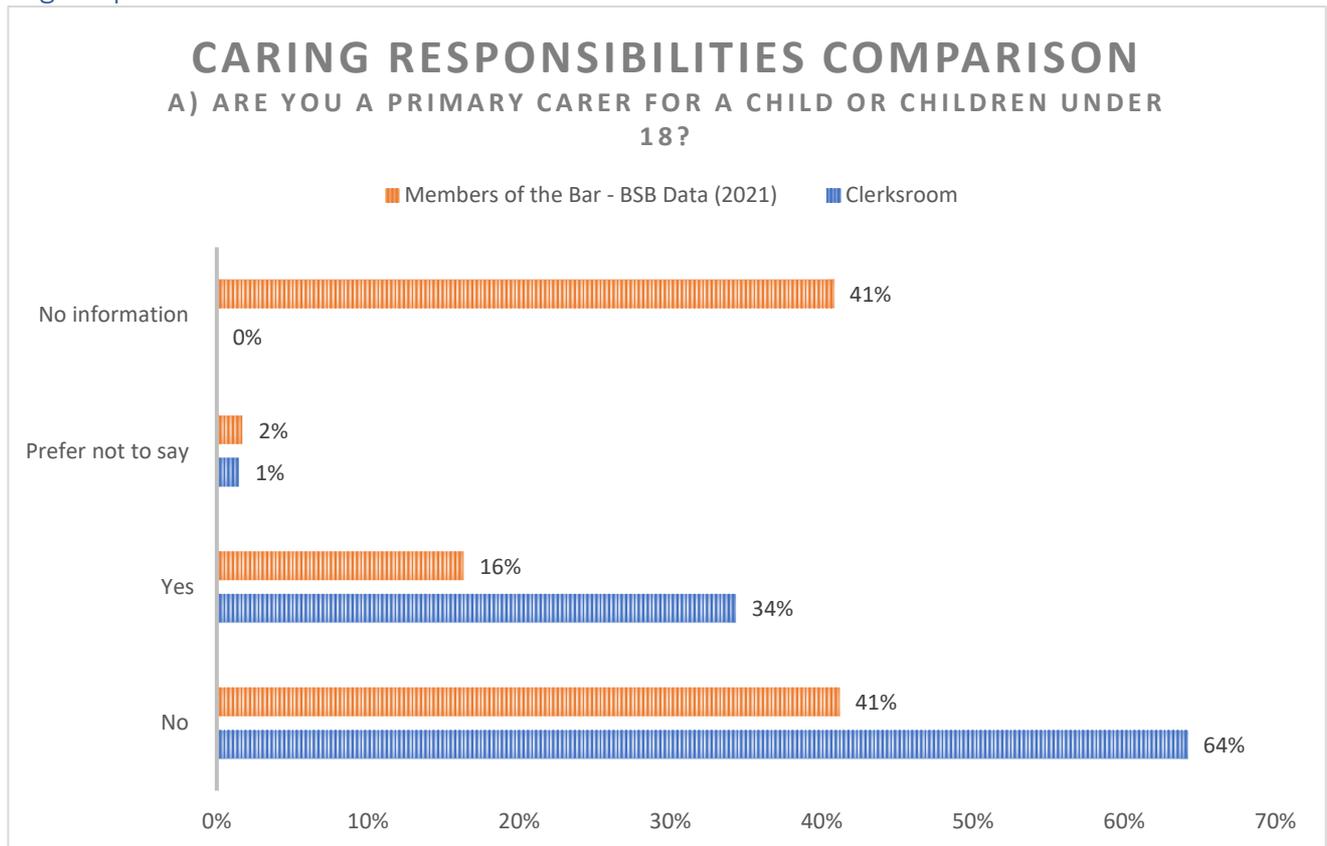


An exceptionally large proportion of Clerksroom barristers were educated at UK state school, 74% to be exact. This is much larger than the BSB data which shows only 31% of barristers were educated at UK state school. This is in keeping with our aim to be open and inclusive regardless of background. Furthermore, given that the Bar has issues in relation to accessibility Clerksroom is proud to have a group of barristers coming from a mixture of backgrounds. We believe that this is supported by the fact that Clerksroom is seen as a very accessible and inclusive Chambers.



When compared with the BSB data, Clerksroom members have a variety of sexual orientations; further supporting our position above that Clerksroom is inclusive and welcoming of all members. These are positive figures and will hopefully improve as our EDI policies are further developed.

## Caring Responsibilities



A large proportion of members are primary carers for a child under the age of 18 and/or have caring responsibilities between 1 – 19 hours per week. Whilst there has been a shift towards flexible and remote working in the last two years in a response to the Covid-19 pandemic; Clerksroom’s business model for the last 20 years has always been flexible, remote, and adaptable. It may be that a large proportion of barristers with caring responsibilities are attracted to Clerksroom for this reason.

Clerksroom has spent years developing the legal technology and systems which allows them to clerk and run the practice of over 200 barristers 24/7. Ahead of the pandemic the processes and systems in place already facilitated online diary management, video conferencing, electronic billing, processing papers and much more.

For barristers who have children and/or caring responsibilities it is thought this model and approach is a great aid and attraction.