

Religion, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Non-Response Rate and Assessment Performance

Authors: Abigail Tara Scott CPsychol – Pearson Assessment. Helen Baron CPsychol – Independent Consultant.

Sample

2006-7 national recruitment for a government department.

- 2321 mostly graduate job applicants
- 81% external to organisation
- 56% female
- 72% White, 14% Asian, 11% Black
- Age ranged from 16 to 55+, 87% were under 45 years.

Analysis and Findings

A single factor explained score variance in each exercise so the average score, across all competencies, was used for further analysis. Average exercise scores were standardised on a scale with a mean of 3 and a standard deviation of 1.

Non-Response Rate – Figures 1 and 2

The non-response rates indicate candidates' comfort responding to equal opportunities monitoring categories.

Figure 1 shows non-response rate for newer categories (religion, sexuality, gender identity) is around double that for more familiar categories. The smaller effect for gender identity is likely to be an underestimate as this category was less well defined.

There is a trend toward increased reticence with age (figure 2), particularly with respect to sexual orientation, although even in the eldest group 89% still respond to this question. Those aged under 45 are significantly more likely to report their sex ($\chi^2 = 8.24$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$), gender identity ($\chi^2 = 4.27$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$) and sexual orientation ($\chi^2 = 5.23$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). In contrast, the trend for religion and ethnic origin show increased response rate with age, though differences are not significant ($\chi^2 = 2.38$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$, and, $\chi^2 = 1.44$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$, accordingly).

Base Rate

While distributions of applicants by age, sex and ethnic origin are common, little data is available regarding other groups. The current group had a higher proportion of people of no religion than the 2001 census (34% compared with 16%), 3% described themselves as not heterosexual. A recent study found

Conclusions

This study shows that questions on religion, sexual orientation and gender identity can be asked on an equal opportunities monitoring form with response rates a little lower than for more established questions such as sex, ethnicity and age. It is therefore important to include an option not to respond. Response rates may increase over time with greater familiarity with these questions. Younger applicants are already more likely to respond.

Some group differences in performance at assessment were found for religion, sexual orientation and gender identity. Median differences were around 0.30sd, ranging from 0.18 to 0.44. Where differences do occur these are confounded with ethnic origin and sex and are difficult to interpret.

Further studies into the area of religion, sexual orientation and gender identity are required to replicate these findings and show the range of likely findings. The current sample consisted of graduate applicants to the public sector and has a high proportion of ethnic minorities. Other groups and sectors may show different response trends.

Appendix A – Equal Opportunities Monitoring Categories

Sex	Ethnic Origin	Age	Gender Identity	Religion	Sexual Orientation
Male	White	16-24	Intersex	Buddhist	Bisexual
Female	– British	25-34	Transsexual	Christian	Gay man
Prefer not to say	– Irish	35-44	Transgender	Hindu	Gay woman / lesbian
	– Any other	45-54	Not relevant	Jain	Heterosexual / straight
	Black or Black British	55+		Jewish	Prefer not to say
	– Caribbean			Muslim	
	– African			No religion	
	– Other			Sikh	
	Asian or Asian British			Other	
	– Indian			Prefer not to say	
	– Pakistani				
	– Bangladeshi				
	– Other				
	Mixed				
	– White and Black Caribbean				
	– White and Black African				
	– White and Asian				
	– Any Other				
	Chinese				
	Other				

Assessment Process

Shortlisting

- Pre-sift via application form with optional equal opportunities monitoring section.
- Situational Judgement Exercise (external candidates only).

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Candidates self-described using given options (see appendix A). All questions, with the exception of ethnic origin and gender identity, included a 'prefer not to say' option.

Assessment Centre

Four exercises assessing 9 competencies (see appendix B).

- Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Skills Appraisal UK (W-GCTA^{UK})
- Written exercise (Written Ex)
- Management exercise (Management Ex)
- Interview

Figure 1

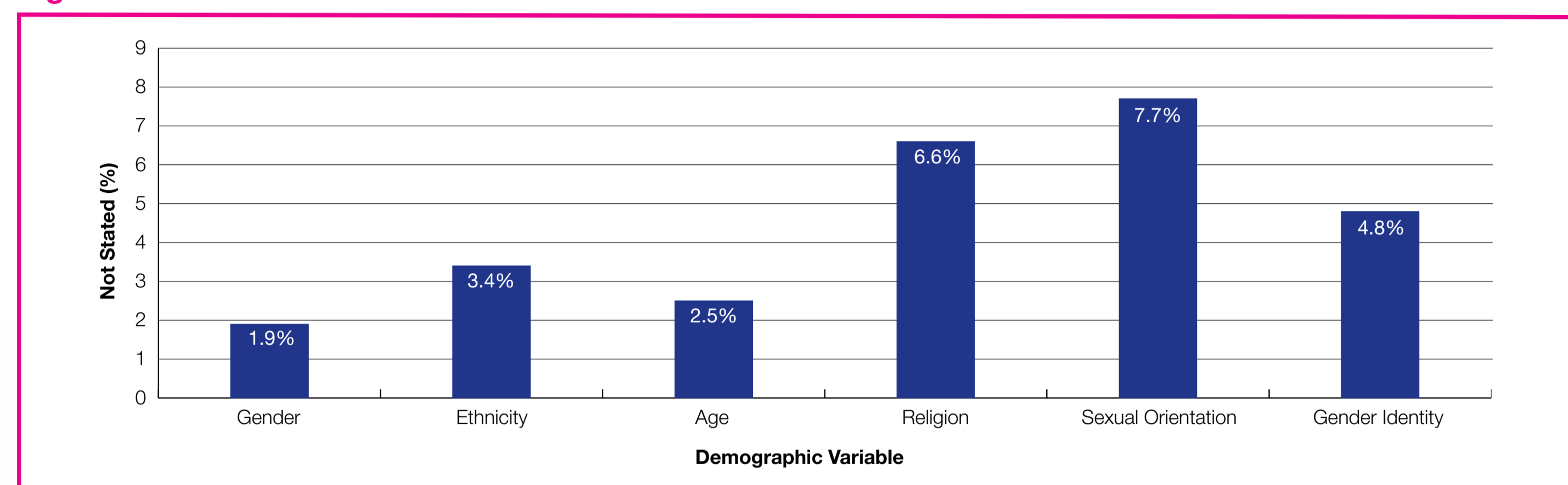


Figure 2

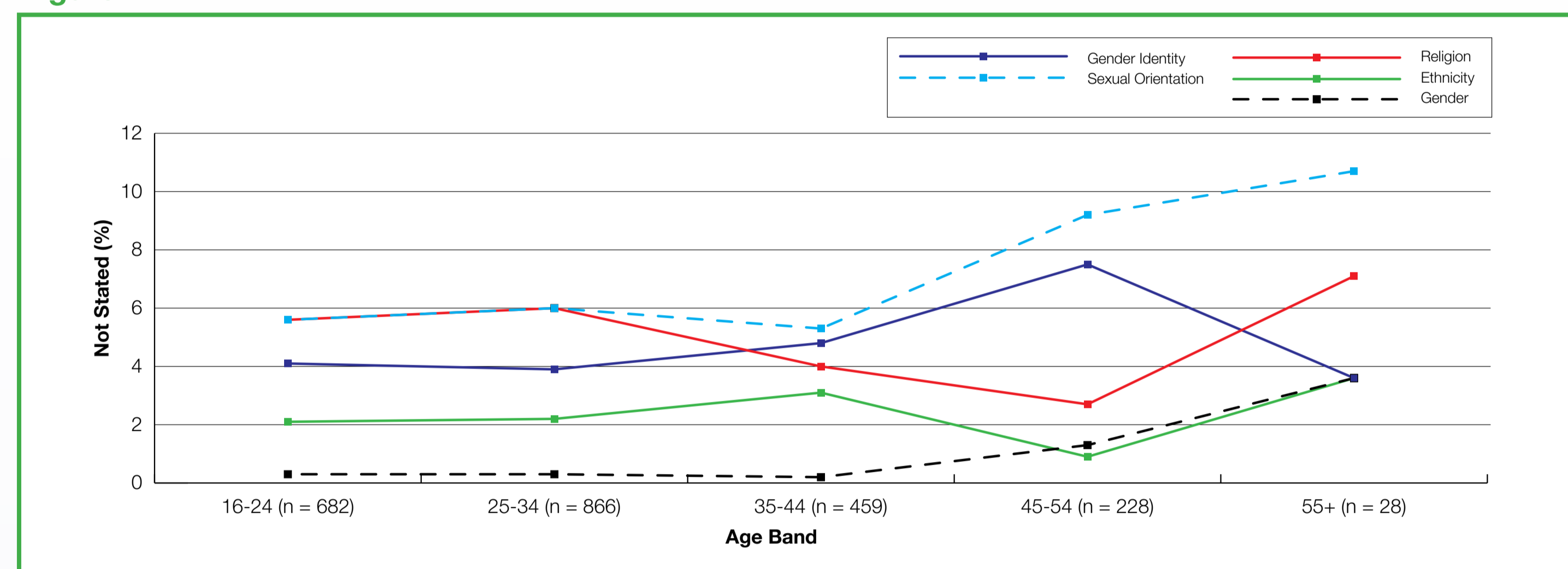


Figure 3

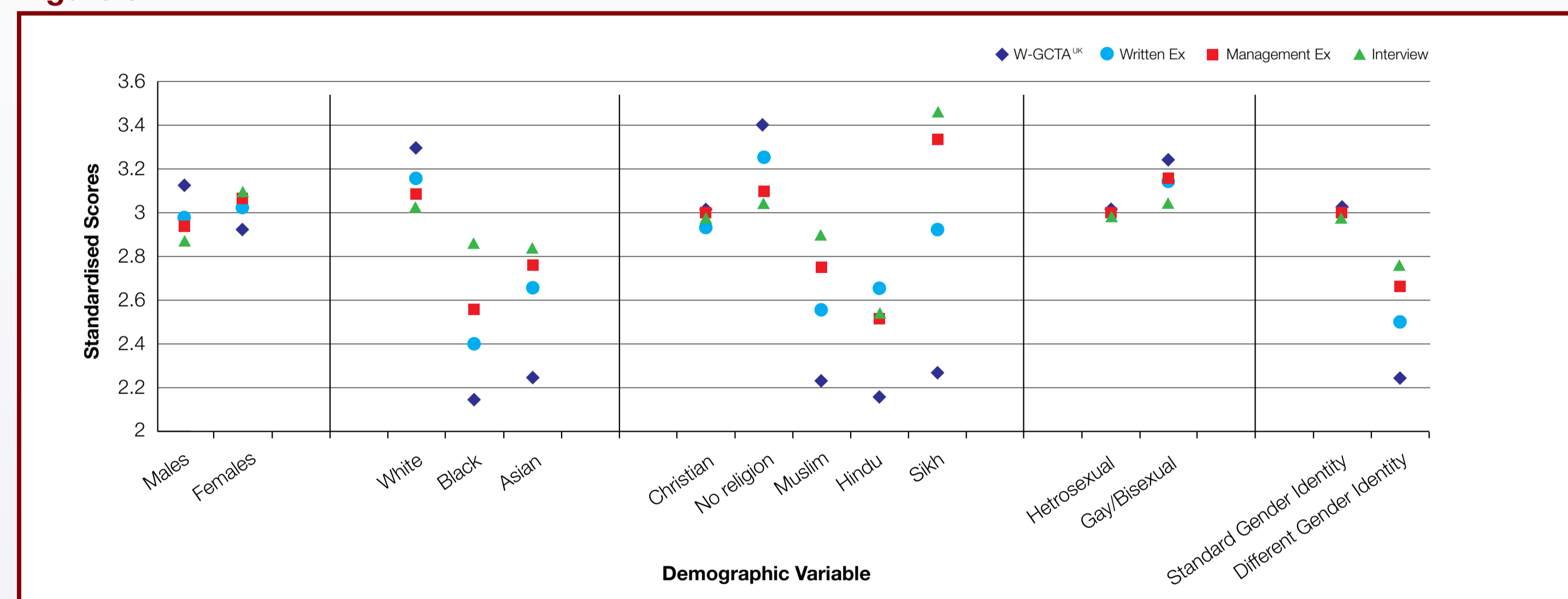
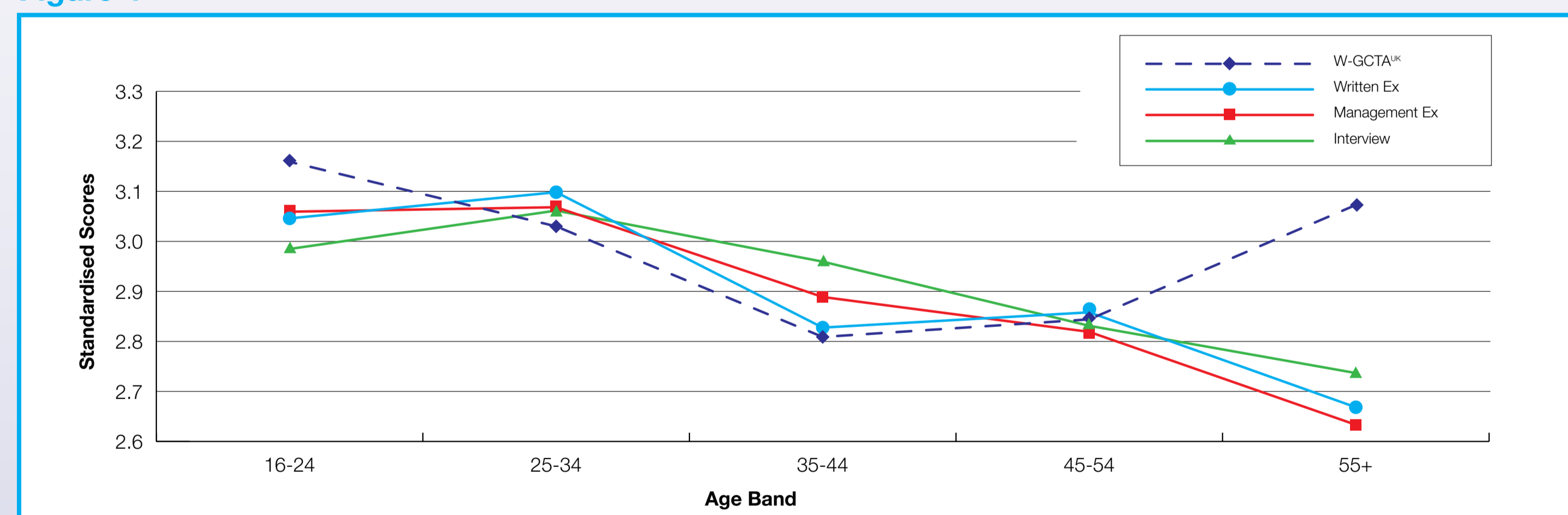


Figure 4



Appendix B – Assessment Centre Exercises

- **Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Skills Appraisal UK (W-GCTA^{UK})** – a multiple-choice critical thinking measure which assesses a candidate's ability to reason logically with verbal passages e.g. identify assumptions, draw correct inferences
- A **written exercise (Written Ex)** – 2 equivalent forms each assessing 6 competencies
- A **management exercise (Management Ex)** – 2 equivalent forms each assessing 5 competencies
- An **interview** – covering 6 competencies with a panel of 2 trained interviewers