

How diverse is the housing association workforce in London?

National Housing Federation regional analysis of sector-wide equality, diversity and inclusion data

Background

The social housing sector is grounded in a social purpose that places a responsibility on us to be a beacon for inclusion and diversity.

Alongside the powerful moral case for greater equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), there is a strong business case, which is detailed in our 2020 insight review:

- Talent can be found all around us and attracting it from the widest possible pool creates competitive advantage – don't miss out on available talent.
- Diverse teams (especially at board and executive levels) make better decisions.
- People trust those who reflect the diversity of the people they lead, the customers they service, and the communities in which they are rooted.

The insight review highlighted huge gaps in our knowledge and the importance of this knowledge to know where we are, where we want to be, and to be able to measure our progress.

In response we launched the EDI data tool.

The EDI data tool

The EDI data tool allows housing associations in England to compare the diversity of their workforce to the communities they serve, based on characteristics of the population where their stock is located.

We first launched in 2021 and asked NHF members to submit their completed tools, enabling us to build the first national profile of the workforce of housing associations in England.

Two years on we have repeated the data collection exercise to provide an updated picture of diversity and representation in the social housing sector and to begin to explore how this picture is changing over time, presented in our report [‘How diverse is England’s housing association workforce in 2023?’](#)

We have published regional breakdowns of the data we received through the EDI data tool collection.

The following slides presents the findings for housing associations with headquarters in London.

About the data

The data is for the housing association workforce (including executive level positions), executives (chief executives, managing directors, and any other senior leaders), and board members.

To understand representation, the characteristics of these workforce groups have been compared against the characteristics of the population where housing association homes are located and, where relevant, against data we received on their residents.

Please note:

- Data represents different time points for different organisations.
- Some data gaps are due to categories in the tool not matching categories in data collected by housing associations (for example, marital and civil partnership status).
- Where social housing is part of an organisations wider business, and where possible, organisations have separated staff responsible for housing from wider employee data.

Language and terminology

Phrasing of questions and categories within the EDI data tool follows recommendations from ONS harmonised standards, where available, and aligns with Census 2021.

This means we can be assured we are collecting the intended information and that we can compare sector data to Census data at population level.

Due to the specific questions and definitions, however, it limits the language we use in the data tool and this report (for example, sexual orientation instead of sexuality, and separating sex and gender identity).

This does not mean we think people can be put into boxes. The tool is not a replacement for talking to staff and understanding their views of themselves and equality, diversity, and inclusion within organisations.

Further notes on language are include within the national report.

Who submitted their data?

Housing associations/ALMOs that submitted their data by region as a proportion of membership of the NHF

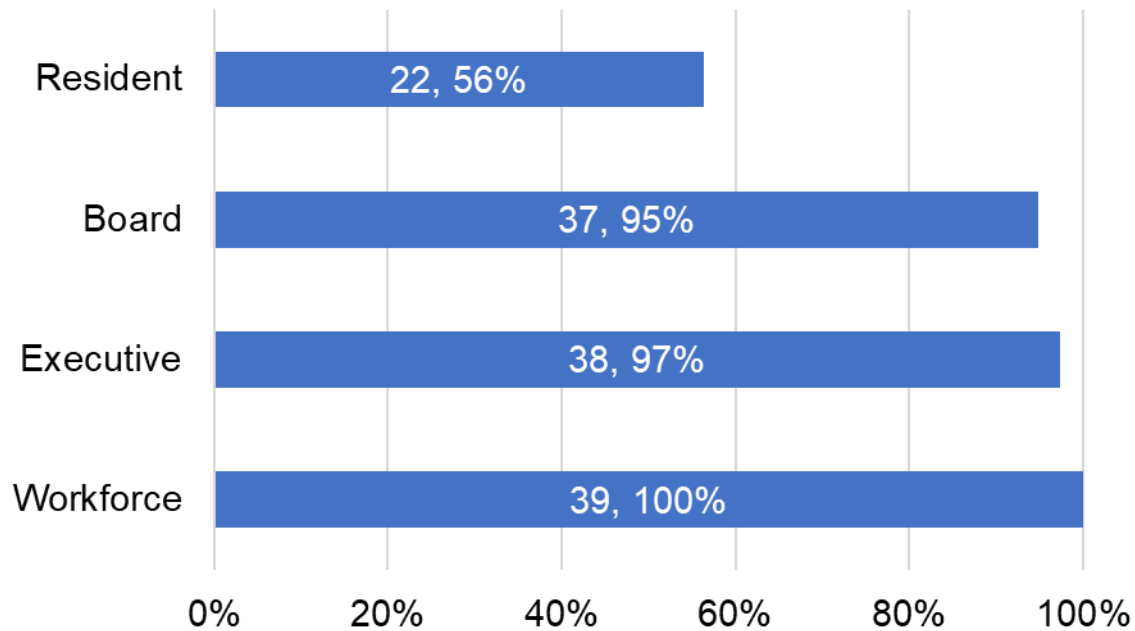
Region	Number of submissions	Response as % of member SDR stock in region
London	39	85%
North West	32	60%
East of England	19	84%
South East	18	63%
West Midlands	18	79%
Yorkshire and Humberside	18	92%
South West	17	92%
North East	11	99%
East Midlands	5	87%
Grand total (England)	177	79%

- 177 housing associations across England, representing 79% of members' homes and 76% of all housing association homes in England.
- 39 housing associations with headquarters in London, representing 85% of members' homes.

London results

Where are the biggest gaps in data?

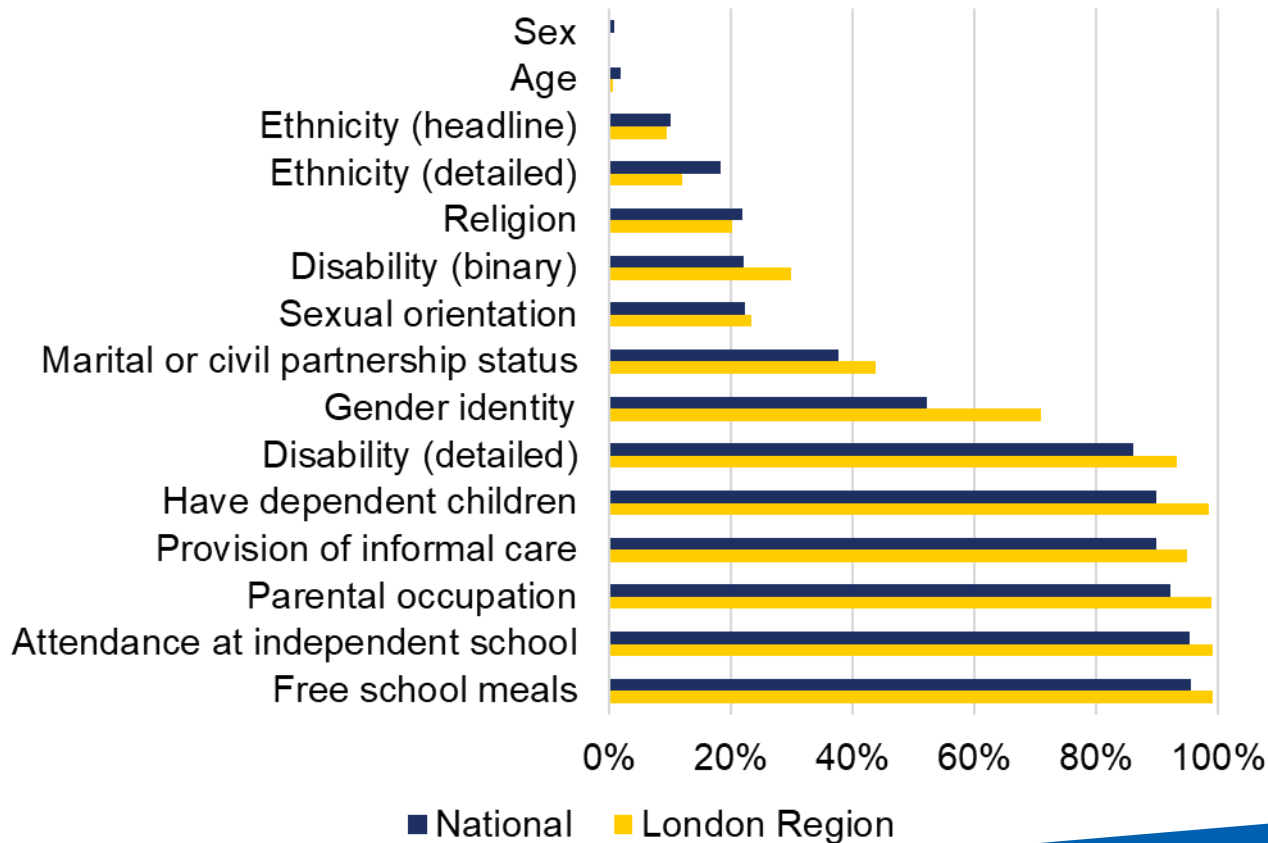
Proportion of responding housing associations that provided data on each group



- All 39 housing associations based in London provided data on their workforce.
- At least 95% provided executive and board data.
- Around half (56%) provided resident data.

Where are the biggest gaps in data?

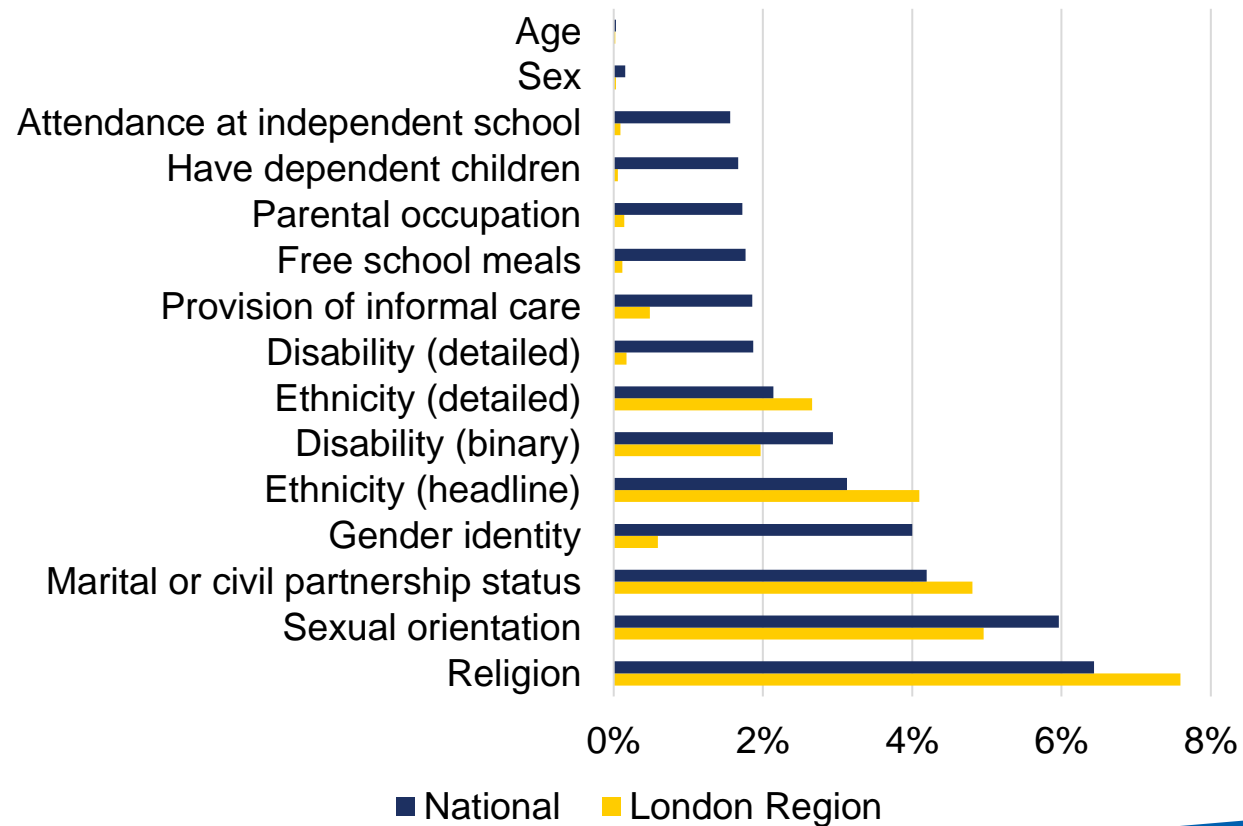
Proportion of workforce where we don't have data for each characteristic



- We received the most complete data for sex and age – missing less than 0.01% of workforce data on sex and 0.63% workforce data on age.
- There are larger gaps in board data compared to the workforce – for example, we're missing 31.5% of board age data, more than in 2021.
- The largest gaps in data are for socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities, where we're missing at least 95% of workforce data. This is less than in 2021 (more than 99% of workforce data was missing) and higher than in the national data (90-95% missing).

What are people choosing not to share?

Proportion of workforce where person selected 'prefer not to say' for a characteristic



- People were least likely to disclose religion, with 7.6% of the workforce responding 'prefer not to say'. This is fewer than in 2021 (8.7%) but higher than the national data (6.4%).
- Compared to those in leadership positions, the workforce are less likely to disclose their sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status or ethnicity – for example, 4.1% of the workforce chose 'prefer not to say' for ethnicity (headline), compared to 1.1% of executives and 2.4% of board members.

How representative is the workforce?

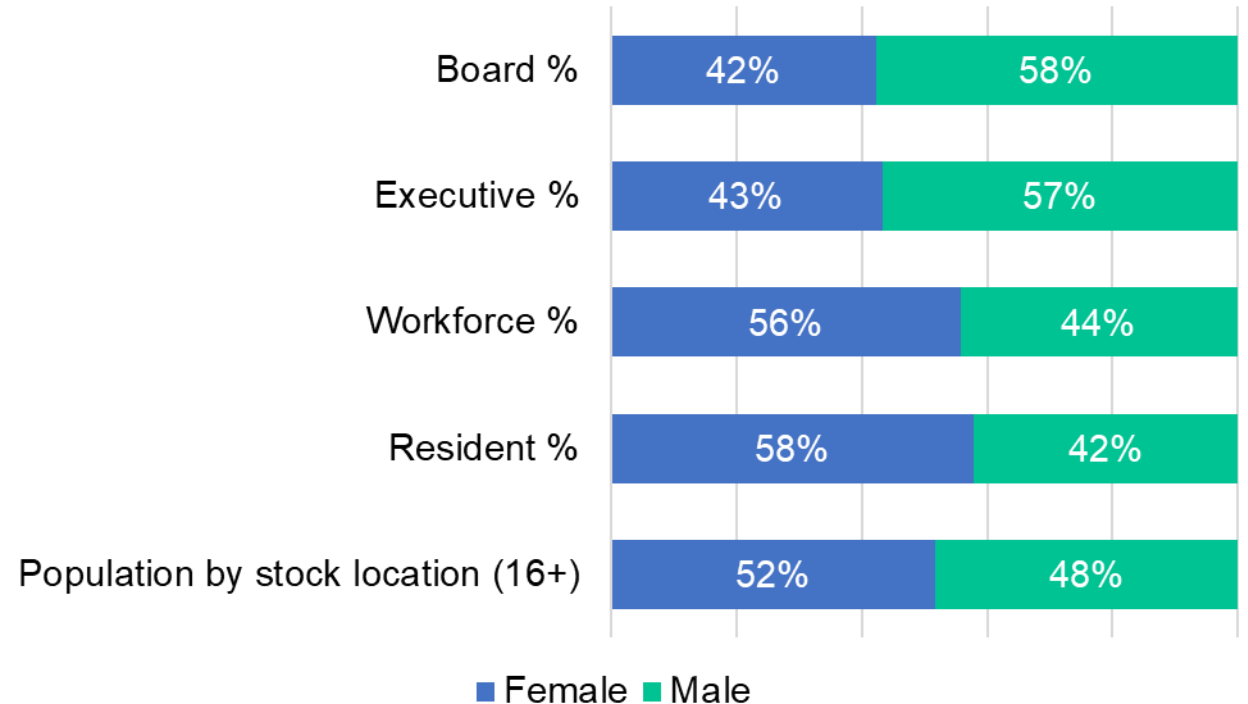
The following slides explore representation by characteristic. Please note:

- Due to gaps in data for socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities, these have not been included within the regional summaries.
- The data is presented without 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say' responses. This means the totals vary by characteristic.

Sex

- The workforce reflects communities they serve – 56% of the workforce are female, compared to 52% of the population and 58% of residents.
- As with the national data, there is a lack of female representation in leadership positions – only 43% of executives and 42% of boards are female.
- Compared to 2021, the sex of executives has stayed the same, while the proportion of female board members has fallen from 46%.

Sex by group



Gender identity

- The workforce is representative of the population, apart from people whose gender identity is different from sex registered at birth, but not listed (7.6% of the population compared to 2.1% of the workforce).
- Trans* people are not represented at all in leadership positions.
- We need to collect more data to improve the accuracy of the results – for example, we are missing over 70% of workforce and executive data on gender identity.

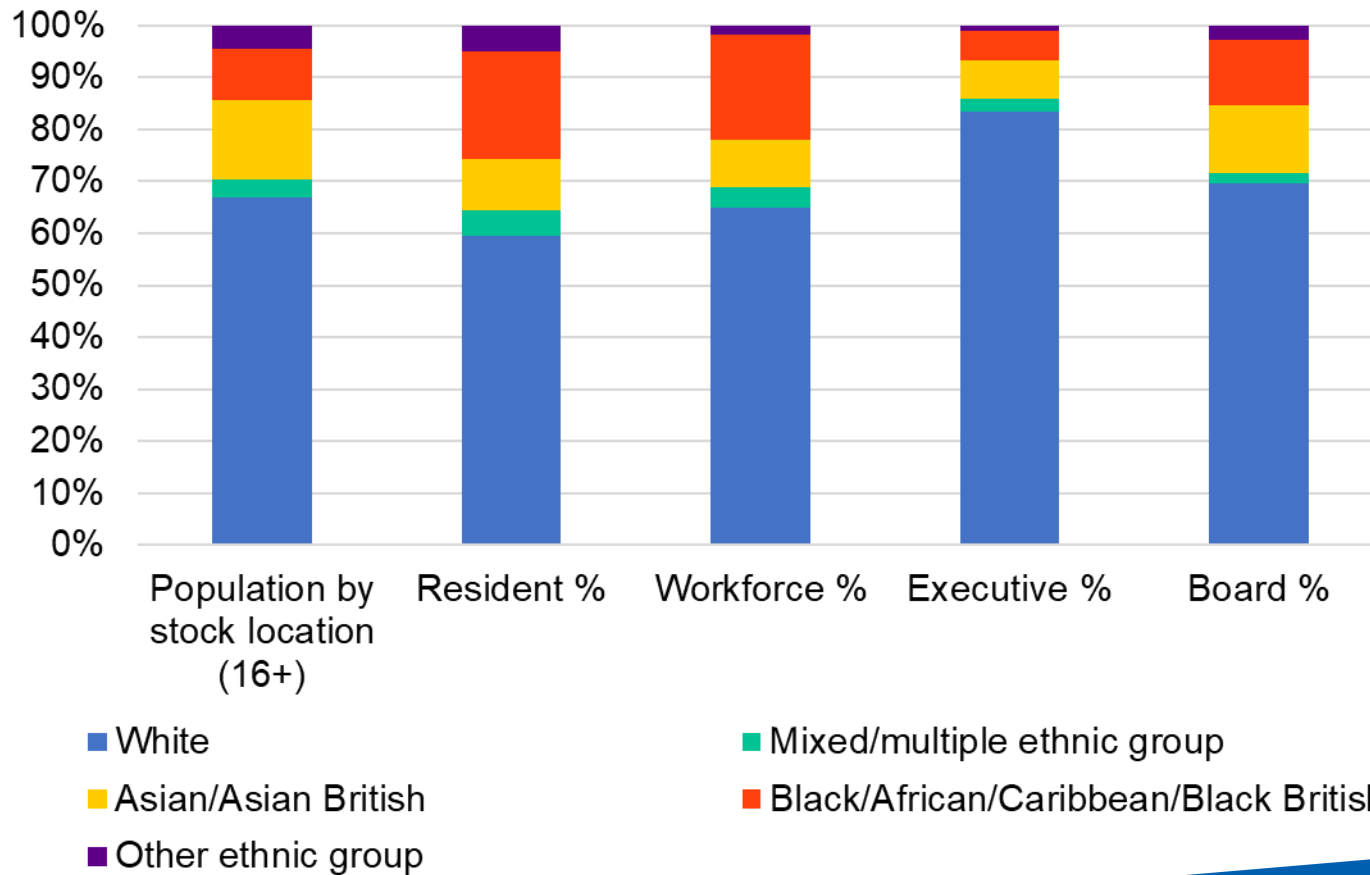
*We are using the term “trans” as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth, as defined by [Stonewall](#).

Gender identity by group

	Population by stock location (16+)	Workforce %	Executive %	Board %
Gender identity same as sex at birth	92.0%	96.9%	100.0%	100.0%
Identify as trans(gender) woman	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Identify as trans(gender) man	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Identify as non-binary	0.1%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth, but not listed	7.6%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Ethnicity

Ethnicity by group

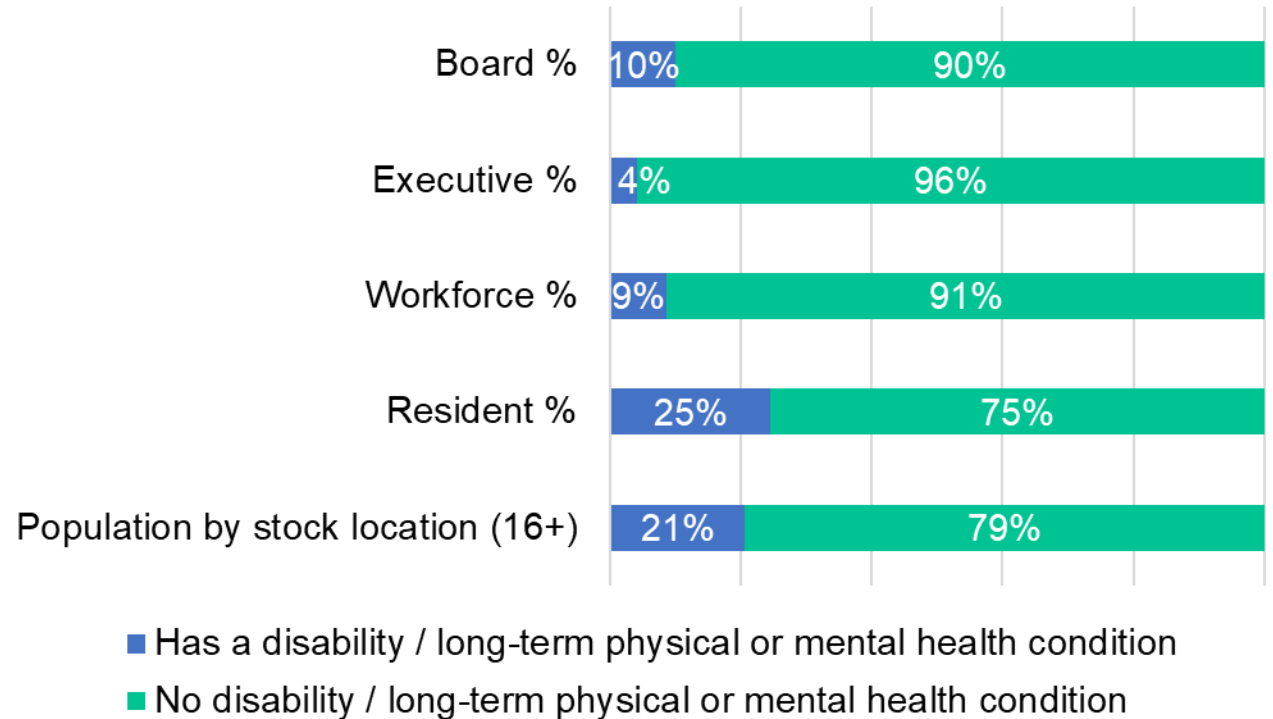


- The workforce is largely representative – 65% of the workforce is White, compared to 67% of the population and 60% of residents.
- As with the national data, leadership is less ethnically diverse, particularly executive teams.
- 6% of executives are Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, compared to 20% of the workforce. This has fallen from 8% in 2021.

Disability

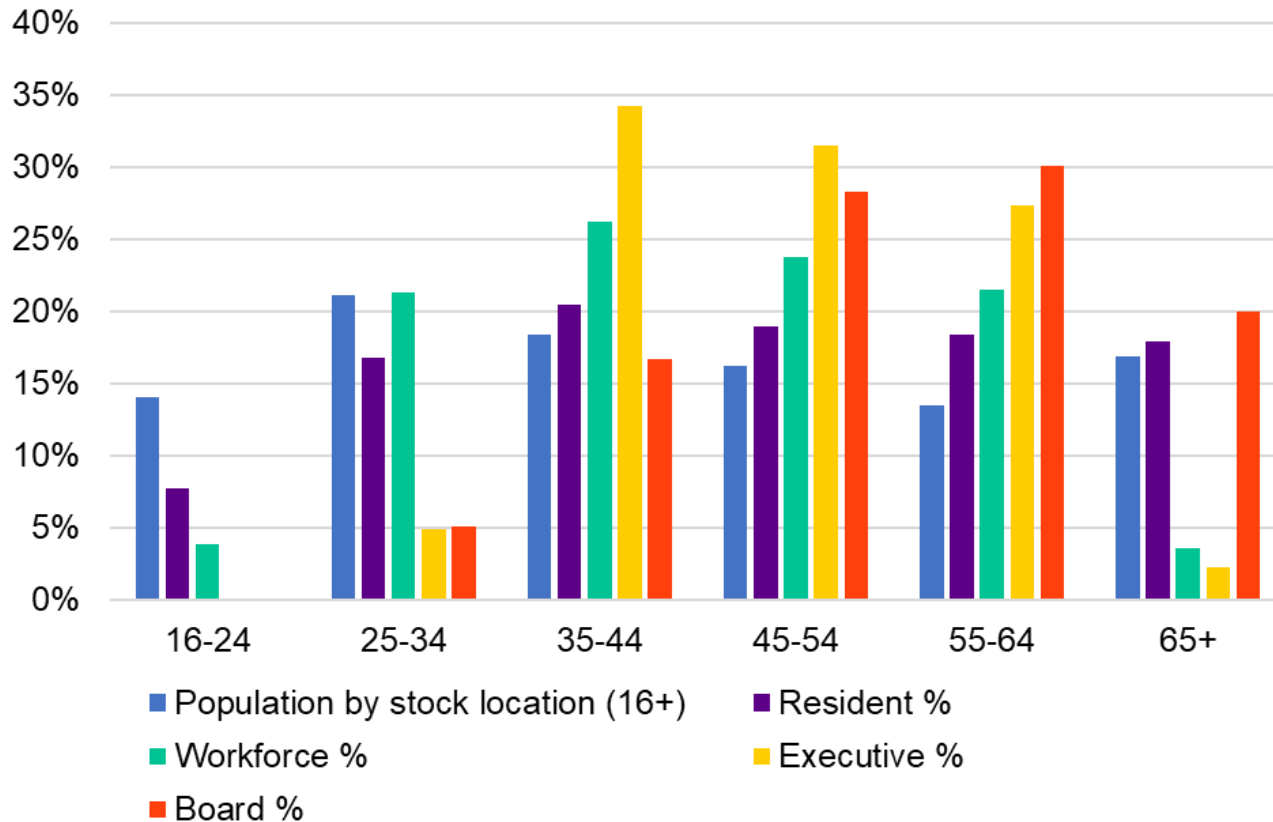
- As with the national data, Disabled people are underrepresented across all workforce groups – for example, 9% of the workforce have a disability or long-term condition, compared to 21% of the population and 25% of residents.
- Only 4% of executives have a disability or long-term condition, a decrease from 7% in 2021.

Disability (Yes / No) by group



Age

Age by group

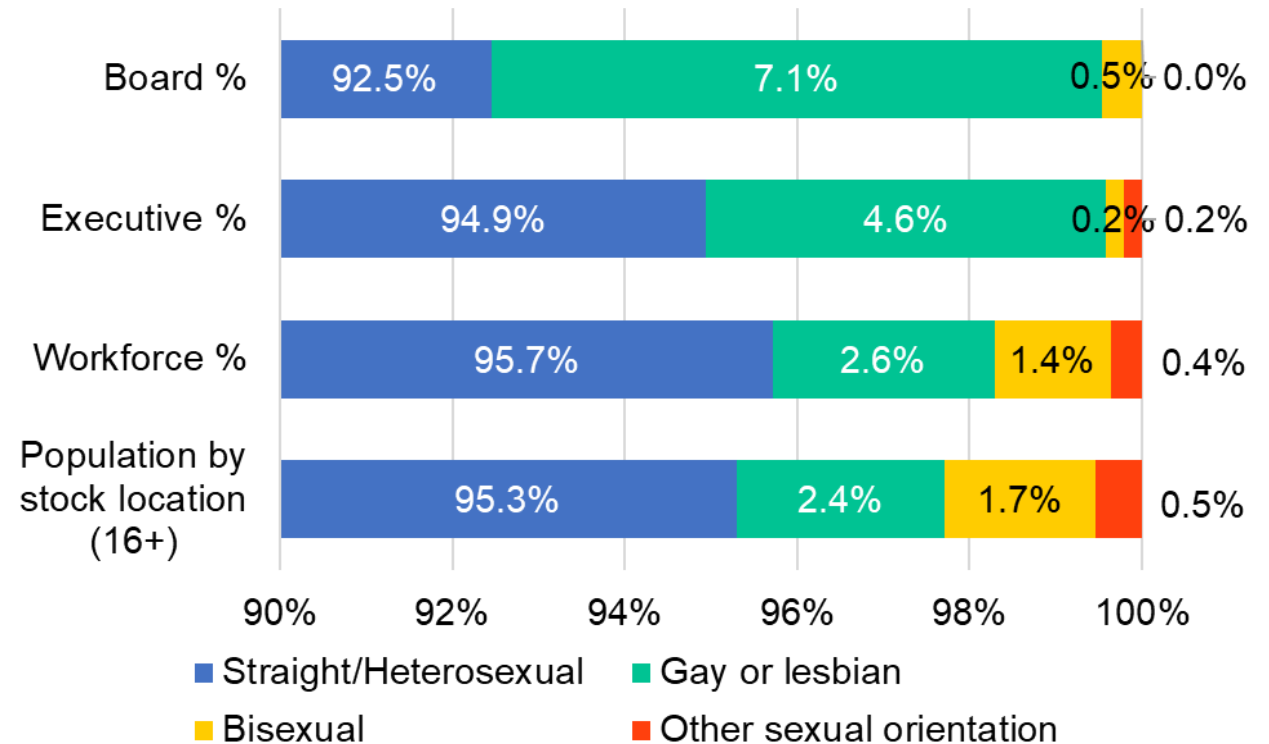


- The age of the workforce is largely representative of the population and of residents, although there are fewer people aged 16–24 and 65+ within the workforce.
- Executives and board members are more likely to be older, compared to the workforce.
- However, as with the national data, executives are younger compared to 2021 – the proportion aged 44 and under has risen from 21% in 2021 to 39% in 2023.

Sexual orientation

- The workforce closely reflects the population.
- At executive and board level there is good representation of people who are gay or lesbian – for example, 7.1% of boards compared to 2.6% of the workforce.
- However, people who are bisexual are underrepresented at leadership level – 0.2% of executives and 0.5% of boards, compared to 1.4% of the workforce.

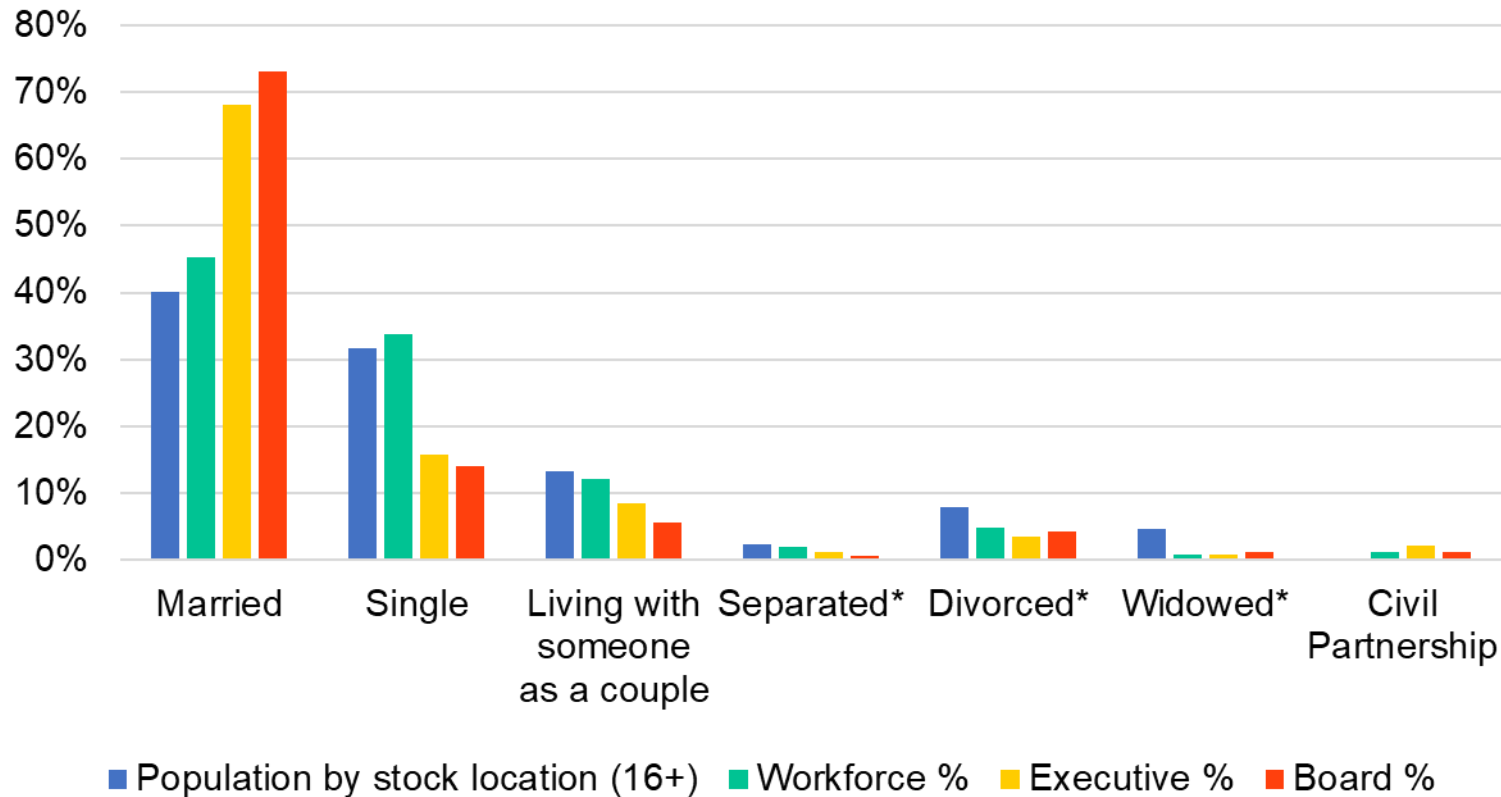
Sexual orientation by group



Please note, axis starts at 90%

Marital and civil partnership status

Marital and civil partnership status by group

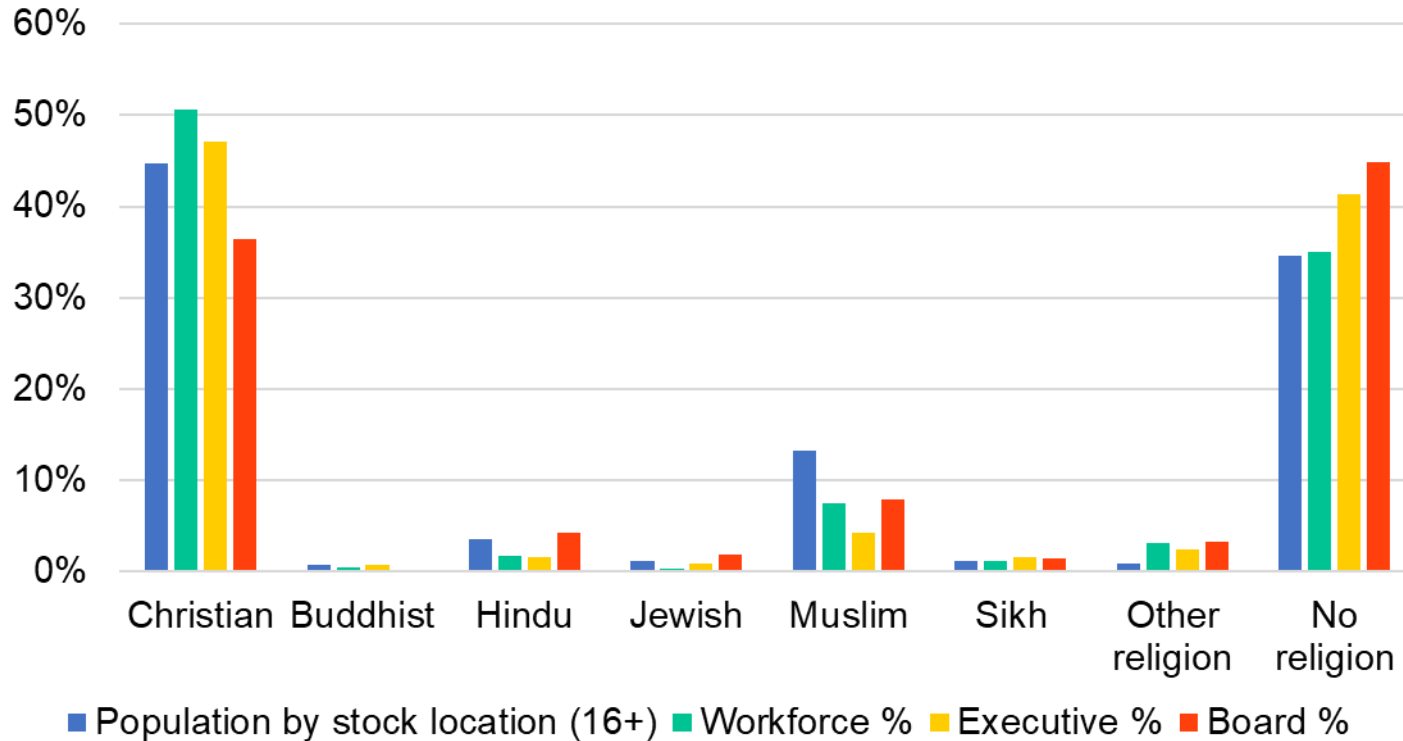


*Includes (former) civil partnerships

- The workforce is largely representative of the population.
- People in leadership positions are more likely to be married – 68% of executive and 73% of board members are married, compared to 45% of the workforce.

Religion

Religion by group



- The workforce is largely representative of the population, although all workforce groups are less likely to be Muslim compared to the population.
- Board members are less likely to be Christian and more likely to have no religion, compared to the workforce.
- This contrasts with 2021 data for London housing associations, as well as the national data, where board members were more likely to be Christian.

Areas for future focus

Housing associations in London should aim to:

- Increase female representation across leadership positions.
- Increase ethnic diversity across leadership positions, particularly representation of people who are Black, African, Caribbean or Black British.
- Increase representation of Disabled people across all workforce groups.
- Collect more complete data to close the data gaps, particularly workforce and executive data on socioeconomic characteristics, caring responsibilities and gender identity.

Recommendations for the sector

1. Review your organisation's processes for collecting equality, diversity and inclusion data.
2. Use the data to set targets and shape plans and strategies to meet those targets, together with the expertise of those with lived experience



Next steps for the NHF

- The [EDI data tool](#) and [suggested questions to ask your workforce](#) are still available for members.
- We will continue to share [best practice resources on equality, diversity and inclusion and case studies](#) highlighting ways that housing associations can use the EDI data tool to address specific EDI needs.
- We'll use your feedback when building the next iteration of the EDI data tool.
- Work with our member steering group to develop an action plan for driving improvement.
- Repeat the data collection in 2026 to measure progress across the sector.

We want to hear from you

We're looking for examples of how members have used their data tool to inform EDI strategies and action plans to add to our bank of case studies on the NHF website. For example:

- Have you improved the way you have collected your EDI data?
- Have you used your EDI data tool to identify areas for improvement, set targets and taken measures to meet those targets?
- Have you engaged with staff to explore and overcome barriers to sharing EDI information?
- Have you engaged with staff to explore and overcome barriers to recruitment, retention and progression within the organisation for some groups of people?

We'd also welcome any feedback on the EDI data tool and the data collection process

Please get in touch via Katie.Hipkiss@housing.org.uk