

How diverse is the housing association workforce in the North East of England?

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 the North East of England.

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

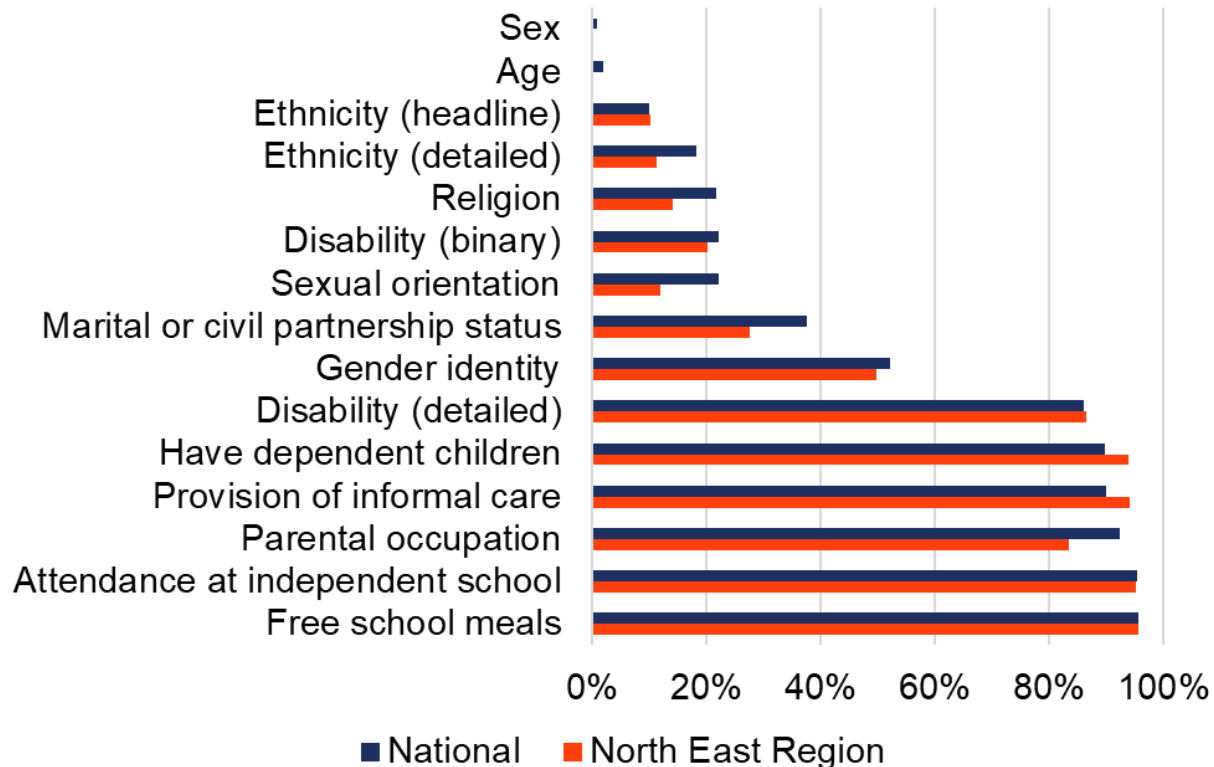
Region	Number of submissions	Response as % of member SDR stock in region
London	39	85%
North West	32	60%
East of England	19	84%
South East	18	63%
West Midlands	18	79%
Yorkshire and Humberside	18	92%
South West	17	92%
North East	11	99%
East Midlands	5	87%
Grand total (England)	177	79%

- 177 housing associations across England, representing 79% of members' homes and 76% of all housing association homes in England.
- 11 housing associations with headquarters in the North East of England, representing 99% of members' homes.
- All 11 provided data on their workforce, and 10 also provided data on their executives, board and residents.

North East of England results

Where are the biggest gaps in data?

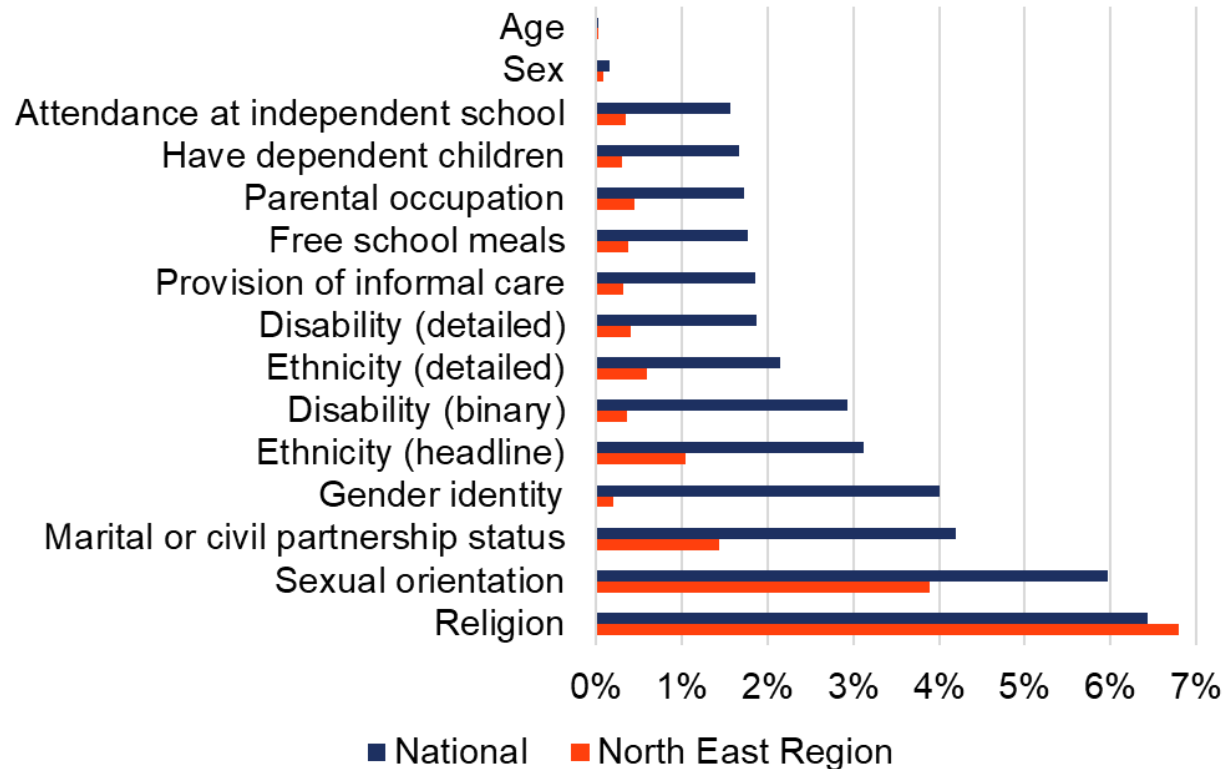
Proportion of workforce where we don't have data for each characteristic



- We received the most complete data for age and sex – missing 0% of workforce data on sex, although we're missing 10% of executive data.
- The largest gaps in data are for socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities, where we're missing 84%-96% of workforce data on these characteristics. However, the gaps are smaller for executive data where we're missing 33%-47% data for these characteristics.
- Across all workforce groups, we received more complete data for socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities compared to 2021 when we were missing 99%-100% of workforce data on these characteristics.

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 their religion with 6.8% of the workforce responding 'prefer not to say'.
- Compared to national data, the housing association workforce in the North East are more likely to share information about themselves (except their religion).
- Compared to the workforce, board members are less likely to disclose information about themselves, while executives are more likely to do so.

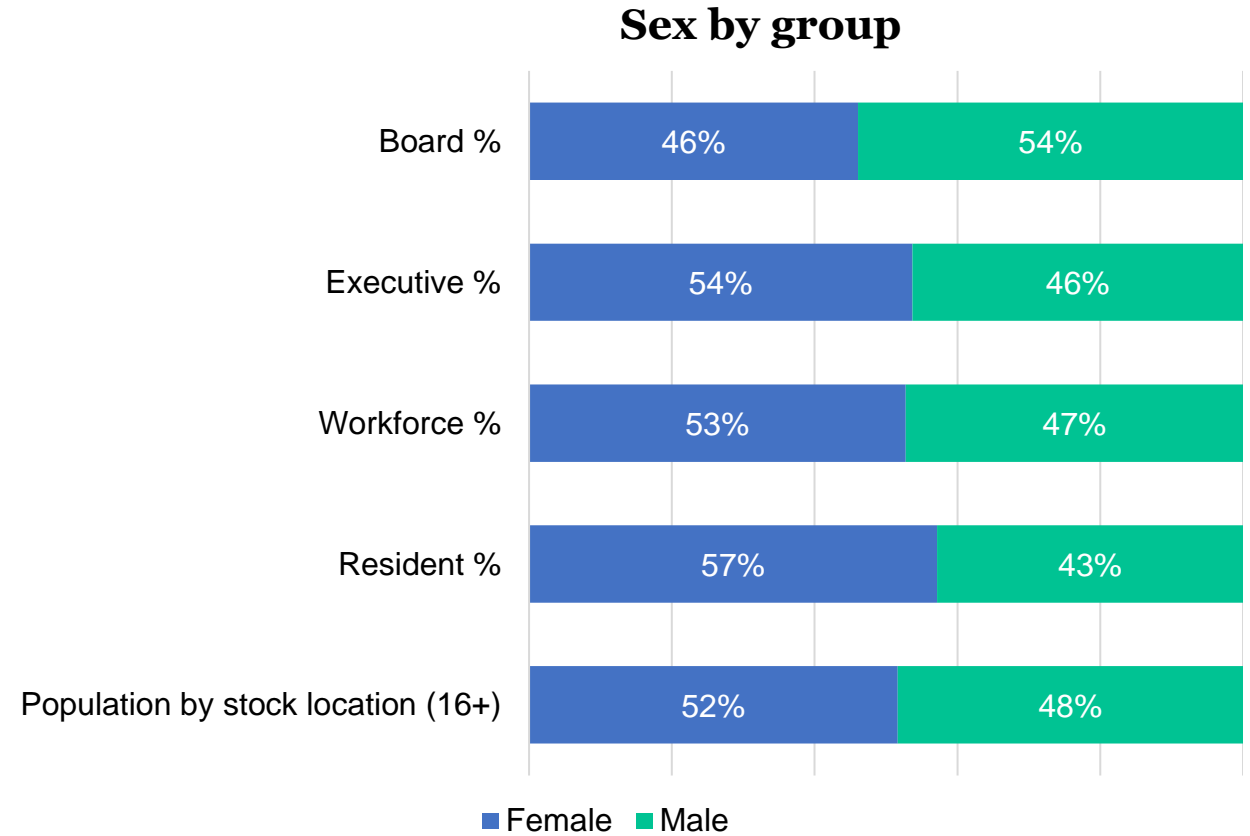
How representative is the workforce?

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

- Workforce and executives are representative of the population, although there is a higher proportion of female residents.
- Female representation at executive level is higher than in the national data (54% compared to 47%) and has increased since 2021, when exactly 50% of executives were female.
- However, there is a lack of female representation at a board level, which has not increased since 2021 – 46% of board members are female compared to 53% of the workforce.



Gender identity

- Trans women, trans men and non-binary people are represented within the workforce, although other gender identities different from sex at birth are not.
- As we have seen in the national data, there is no trans* representation at all at leadership level in the region.

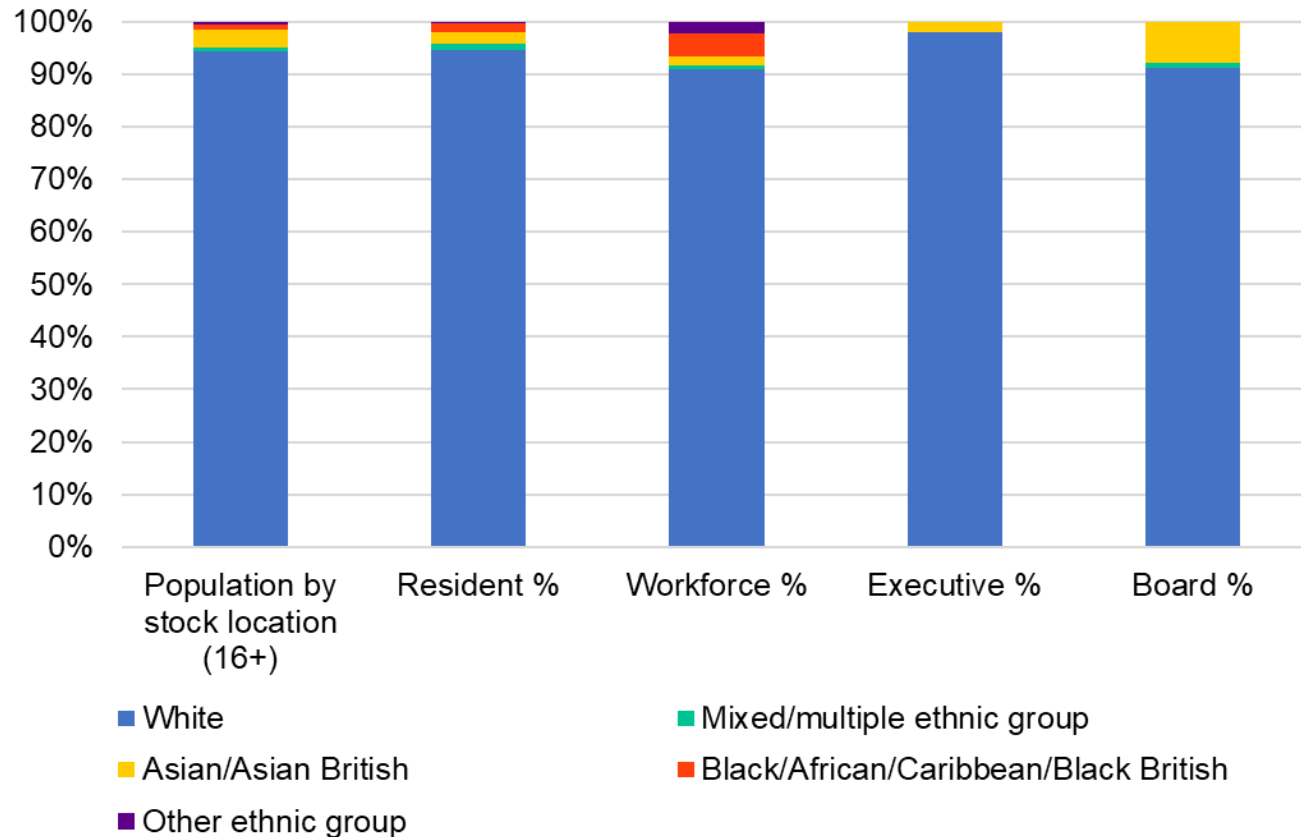
*We are using the term “trans” as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth, as defined by [Stonewall](#).

Gender identity by group

	Population by stock location (16+)	Workforce %	Executive %	Board %
Gender identity same as sex at birth	94.8%	99.6%	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%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth, but not listed	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Ethnicity

Ethnicity by group

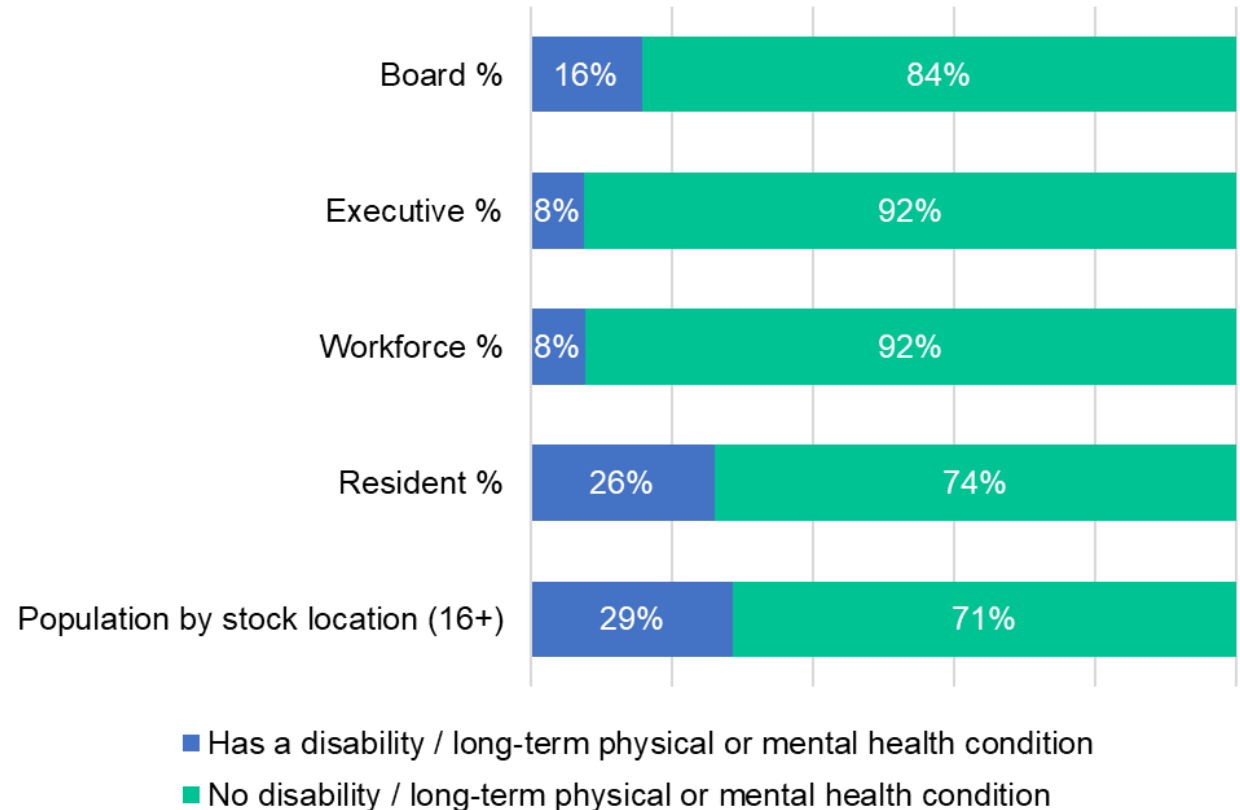


- The workforce is more ethnically diverse than the population and residents – 91% of the workforce are White compared to 94% of the population and 95% of residents.
- Leadership positions are not diverse – for example, 2% of those in executive positions are Asian or Asian British, reflecting the workforce, but the remaining 98% are White.
- 4% of the workforce are Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, but there is no representation at executive or board level.
- The workforce is more diverse compared to 2021 when 94% were White, but little has changed at leadership level.

Disability

- As we've seen in the national data, Disabled people underrepresented at all levels.
- Only 8% of the workforce and executives have a disability or long-term health condition, compared to 29% of the population.
- Compared to 2021, representation of Disabled has decreased within the workforce (from 10%) but increased in executive positions (from 7%) and on boards (from 12%).

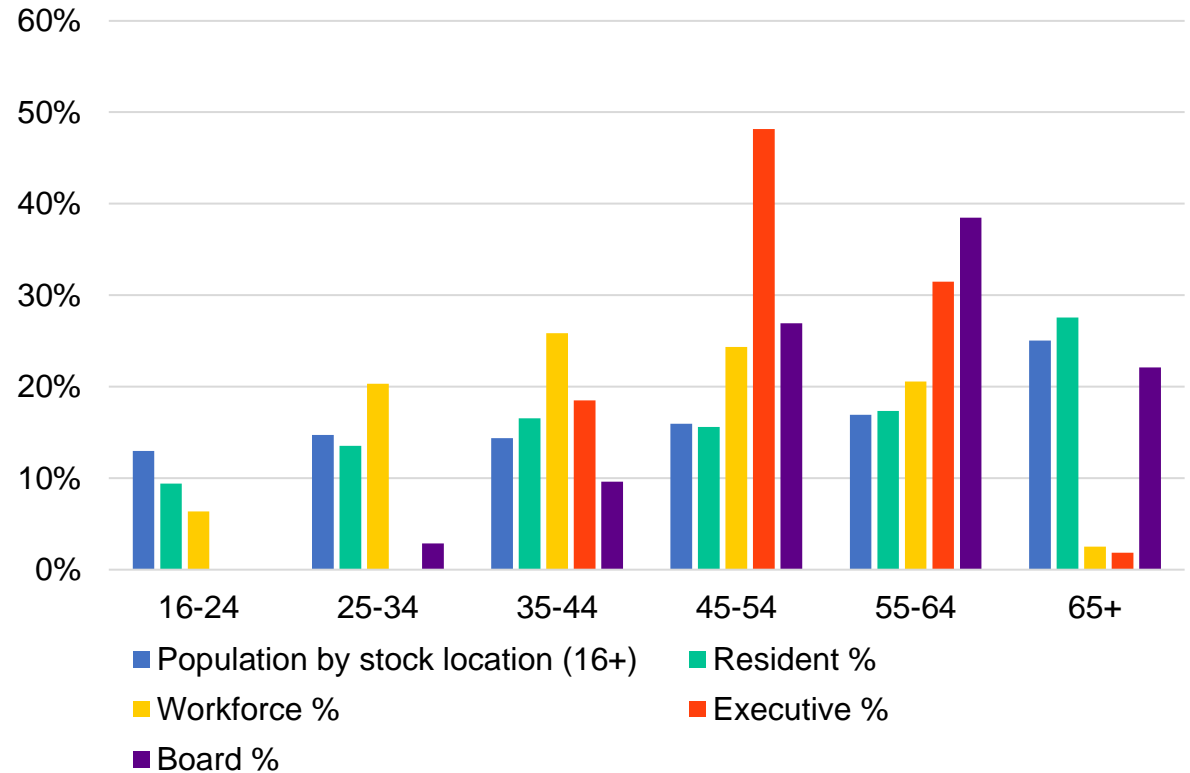
Disability (Yes / No) by group



Age

- The workforce largely represents the population and residents when it comes to age.
- Board members are more likely to be older – 61% are aged 55 and over, compared to 23% of the workforce.
- This is higher than in the national data, where executives are younger than they were in 2021. Nationally, the proportion aged 35-44 increased from 16% to 25%, while in the North East, the figure remained consistent at 19%.

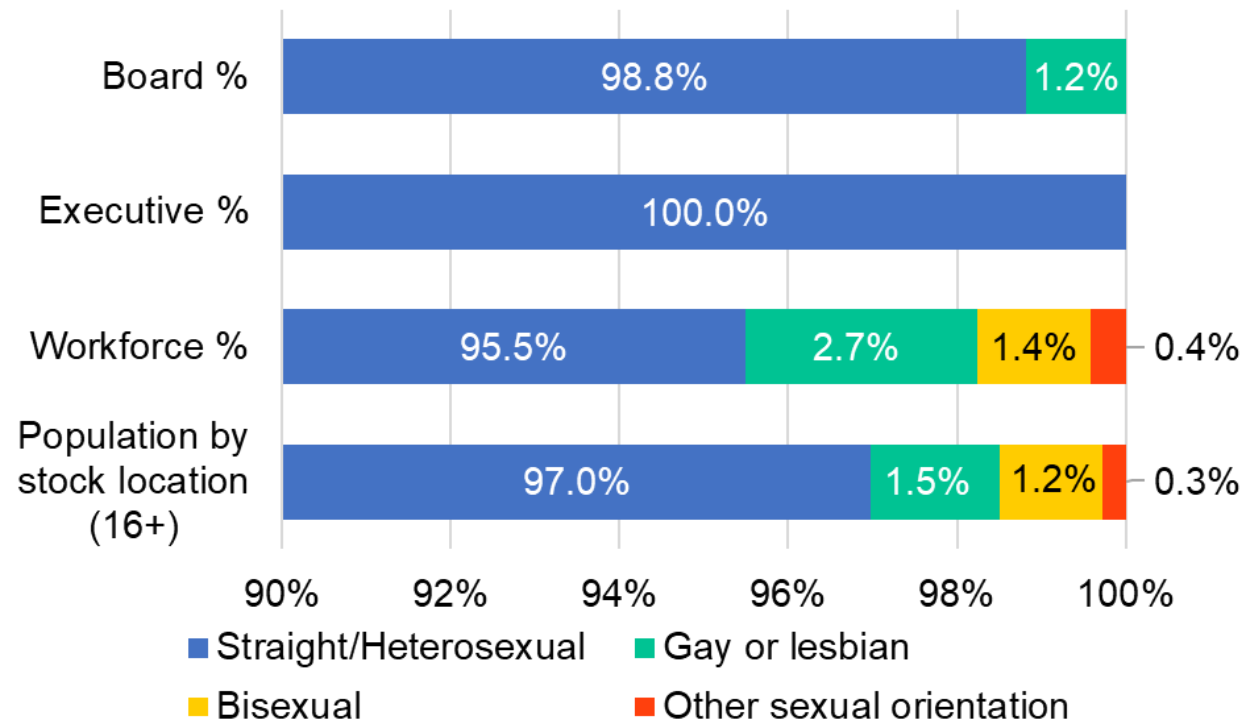
Age by group



Sexual orientation

- The workforce reflects the population where stock is located.
- However, there is no representation of any sexual orientation other than straight/heterosexual amongst executives and very little representation at board level.
- This contrasts to the national data, which shows that 5.3% of executives and 3.9% of boards are gay or lesbian.
- Little has changed since 2021 when 100% of North East executives were straight/heterosexual.

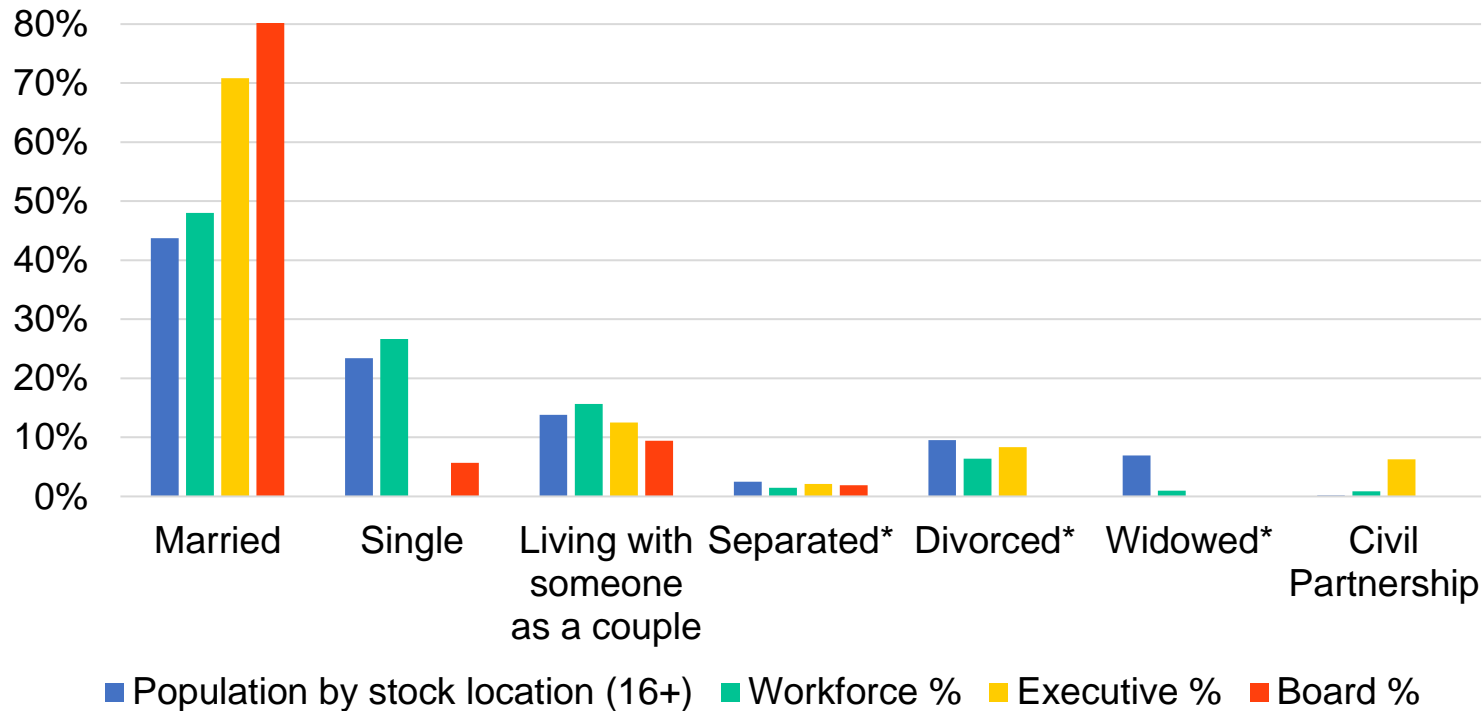
Sexual orientation by group



Please note, axis starts at 90%

Marital and civil partnership status

Marital and civil partnership status by group

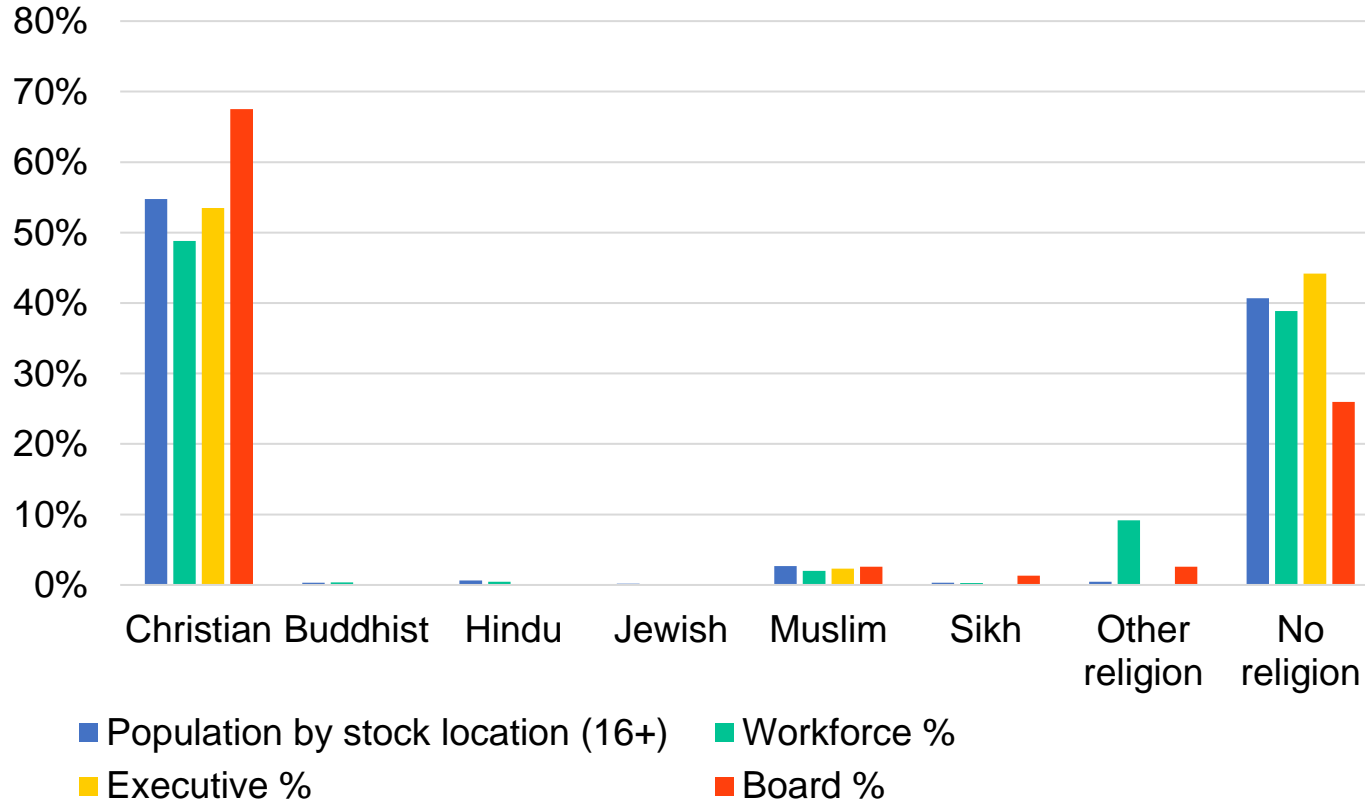


- The workforce reflects the population.
- Those in leadership positions are more likely to be married and less likely to be single.
- No executives and 6% of board members reported that they were single, compared to 27% of the workforce.

*Includes (former) civil partnerships

Religion

Religion by group



- The workforce and executives reflect the population, although a higher proportion of the workforce reported having an 'other religion' (9% compared to 0.4% of the population).
- Boards are more likely to be Christian and less likely to have no religion compared to the other groups – for example, 68% of boards are Christian compared to 49% of the workforce.

Areas for future focus

Housing associations in the North East of England should aim to:

- Increase female representation at board level.
- Increase ethnic diversity within the leadership positions (executives and boards).
- Increase the representation of Disabled people, particularly within the workforce and executive positions.
- Increase the representation of people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual at leadership level.

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