

# How diverse is England's housing association workforce in 2023?



## Results from NHF analysis

September 2023



**NATIONAL  
HOUSING  
FEDERATION**

# Foreword from Kate Henderson, Chief Executive at the National Housing Federation

When we first launched our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data tool in 2021 to build the first national picture of diversity in housing association workforces and improve EDI across the sector, we knew that it was just the beginning of the journey. Since then, this work has been instrumental in holding ourselves as a sector to account and making sure that we remain committed to addressing the inequalities within our workforce and the wider sector, but we still have a long way to go.

We used EDI data from our members to better understand the housing association workforce, and in particular the leadership of the sector, compared with the communities they serve. It helped us to work out where we are and where we need to be if we're going to become the most equal, diverse and inclusive sector we can be.

Since we published our last EDI report, a lot has changed. The sector has been under intense scrutiny over quality, with coverage in the national media. We are facing a huge cost of living crisis, which is challenging for residents and housing associations. The National Housing Federation (NHF) and Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) published our action plan to tackle poor quality in housing in response to the Better Social Housing Review, and the EDI data tool was cited throughout as one of the ways to tackle structural inequalities.

Two years since we published our EDI report, I'm pleased to share this new report with you, presenting the findings from this year's data collection. I would like to thank all 177 of our members who submitted their EDI data. I'm incredibly pleased to say that this year we have more complete data for all workforce groups and characteristics compared to 2021. For the first time we're able to look at where we still need to improve, and look at how the national picture has changed since 2021.

## What does the data show us?

Data is the starting point for change, but better understanding of it needs to be followed up with action. If we continue to close the gaps in our data when we repeat the collection in 2026, then this will continue to drive improvement in EDI across the sector.

However, while this report shows that we've made some steps in the right direction, we still have a long way to go and progress has been slow.

We've seen particular improvement in our collection of data on gender identity, sexual orientation, and marital and civil partnership status. But we still have gaps in our data, and similarly to 2021, we have very little data on socioeconomic background and caring responsibilities.

## Lack of representation in the housing association workforce

Our report in 2021 showed a clear lack of representation for Disabled people across all levels within the sector and this remains the case. Almost a quarter of the population have a disability or long-term health condition and our sector supports Disabled people across the country, but the sector's workforces do not reflect this.

Female representation at leadership levels has improved, but is still not reflective of the workforce or the communities our sector serves. 54% of the workforce and social housing residents are female, yet only 47% of executives and 44% of board members are female.

There has been little change in the ethnic diversity of our executive positions or boards since 2021. We know that the communities we serve are diverse, the data tells us this, and yet our leadership is not. This report shows us the scale of the journey ahead.

## Where do we go from here?

There has been some invaluable work from the sector over the past two years and we remain committed to providing resources and tools to support you in this work.

Our members have provided best practice case studies, and have committed to sharing more examples of how they are creating initiatives and assessing their internal practices to make sure they are being as inclusive as possible. Earlier this year, we also launched our [Chairs' Challenge](#), developed in partnership with Altair, which over 50 chairs have already signed up to. The challenge is a public commitment to setting the right culture and behaviours for equality and diversity to thrive, with a range of tools to support this.

This work has helped us to show our sector's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion to the government and the media, drive change throughout the sector, and build trust with residents by demonstrating that we're committed to becoming representative of the communities we serve.

This report is the next milestone in this long-term programme of work, setting out recommendations to help us meet our ambition to drive change, close the gaps in our data, and become a more equal and diverse sector.

But we know there's still much more we need to do. There have been some improvements, but we are still a long way from where we want to get to. When we started this journey, we knew that change would take time, but we're still as committed to making meaningful change as I know the rest of the sector is too. This work is so important, and addressing the inequalities within the workforce and the wider sector must remain a priority.



# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
About	5
Background	6
About the EDI data tool	6
Language and terminology	7
Who submitted their data?	8
Key findings	9
<b>Diversity data</b>	<b>10</b>
Gaps in the data	10
By group	13
Inclusion	14
How representative is the sector of the communities we serve?	16
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Recommendations and next steps</b>	<b>33</b>
Recommendations	33
Next steps	35
<b>Appendix A:</b>	<b>36</b>
About the data	36
Characteristics:	36
Workforce groups:	37
Population data:	37
<b>Appendix B:</b>	<b>38</b>
Additional data tables comparing 2021 and 2023	38

# Summary

## About

Working together with our members, through our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in Housing member group, the NHF is committed to creating a more equal, diverse, and inclusive housing association sector.

This report presents findings from an updated picture of diversity and representation within the housing association workforce and how this has changed since we first began collecting EDI data from NHF members in 2021.

The data within this report is drawn from 177 organisations, representing 76% of homes owned by housing associations in England. 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.

The report should be read alongside the accompanying national dataset, which we have published in a completed NHF EDI data tool.



## Background

The sector is grounded in a social purpose that places a responsibility on us to be a beacon for inclusion and diversity. There is a powerful moral case for greater EDI. Alongside this, there is a strong business case.

Our [insight review of housing association staff in England](#), published in partnership with the Housing Diversity Network (HDN) in 2020, found that diversity within a workforce improves the performance and productivity of organisations. People trust leaders that reflect the diversity of the people they lead, the residents they serve, and the communities in which they are rooted. Talent can be found all around us and attracting it from the widest pool possible creates competitive advantage; as a sector, by not being as diverse as we could be, we are missing out on talent.

The review also highlighted the 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 designed and built the EDI data tool for housing associations, to support the sector to better understand the diverse characteristics of its communities, and how their workforces compare to them.

We first launched the tool in 2021, and it was used by almost 200 housing associations to help shape EDI action plans and strategies.

We asked NHF members to submit their completed tools, enabling us to build the first national profile of the workforce of housing associations in England. We analysed this in our 2021 report, [asking how diverse is the housing association workforce in England?](#)

This year, we have repeated our EDI data collection 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. It highlights an increased commitment from the sector, but also our collective areas for improvement, where some communities remain underrepresented within our sector's workforce and leadership teams, with little change since 2021.

By building on the progress so far and focusing our attention on those areas for improvement, we hope to see further progress and evidence of positive, long-term trends when we repeat the data collection exercise again in 2026.

## About the EDI data tool

The NHF's 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.

The Excel-based tool allows housing associations to compare their workforce characteristics to the population, executive to staff, and board to staff for all nine protected characteristics as well as socioeconomic background. The tool also enables housing associations to input resident data to compare the characteristics of their residents with their workforce or the population where their stock is located.

Data on the characteristics of the population is drawn primarily from the Census 2021, where possible, or other ONS data. Data on the number of homes a housing association owns and manages in each local authority is then used to calculate the characteristics of the population by stock location. Further information on the data used in the EDI data tool is in [Appendix A](#).

The NHF's  
**EDI data tool**  
allows **housing associations**  
in England to **compare the**  
**diversity** of their workforce





## Language and terminology

People choose to identify themselves in a myriad of ways, some of which may change over time. This can make it difficult to choose categories to define ourselves for the purpose of data collection.

The phrasing of questions and categories within the EDI data tool follows recommendations from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Government Statistical Service (GSS) harmonised standards, where available. This also aligns with Census 2021 to ensure we can compare against the most accurate and up-to-date population data.

This therefore defines how we refer to characteristics within the report (for example, sexual orientation instead of sexuality, and separating sex and gender identity) to ensure that we are accurately representing the data. It doesn't mean we think that people can be put into boxes, as we know there's much more nuance to people's identities. We encourage housing associations to complement the collection of EDI data with staff engagement to improve their understanding of people's experiences of equality and create an inclusive environment for their staff.

Further information about the data and language used is in [Appendix A](#) and explained throughout the report.

We **encourage** housing associations to complement the collection of EDI data with **staff engagement**

## Who submitted their data?

We received EDI data from 177 organisations (175 housing associations and two ALMOs), representing 76% of homes owned by housing associations in England. Table 1 provides a breakdown of responses by region and as a proportion of NHF member stock.

All 177 organisations provided data on their workforce, however, we received slightly fewer responses with data on their executive, board and residents. There is further detail and a breakdown of this in the section on gaps in the data.

**Table 1: 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%
<b>Grand total (England)</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>79%</b>

We have encouraged housing associations, regardless of size, to collect their EDI data to better understand the diversity of their workforce, to ensure we can measure progress over time and the impact of actions taken. Table 2 shows the range of different sized organisations who submitted data.

**Table 2: Housing association/ALMO responses by size of organisation**

Size band (units of stock)	Number of responses
<200	14
200-999	22
1,000-1,999	16
2,000-9,999	67
10,000-19,999	26
20,000-49,999	22
50k+	10
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>177</b>

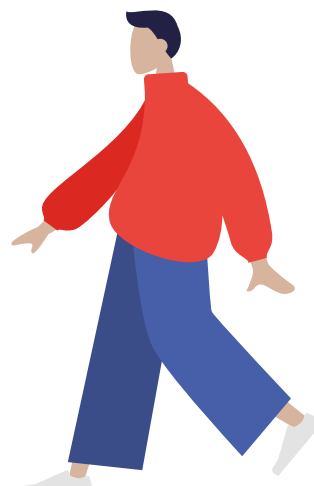
We received EDI data from

**177** organisations

representing

**76%**

of homes owned by housing associations in England





## Key findings

### We've started to close the gaps in data

Across all workforce groups and characteristics, we have more complete data than we did in 2021. We've seen a considerable reduction in the data we're missing on gender identity, with the gap in the data closing from 72% in 2021 to 44-53% this year. We've also seen a reduction in data gaps for sexual orientation, and marital and civil partnership status, but we're still missing a lot of data, particularly on caring responsibilities and socioeconomic characteristics. Despite people with caring responsibilities being protected under the Equality Act, we were missing 70-90% of data.

### There has been an increase in the proportion of younger executives

The proportion of executives aged 35-44 years old has risen from 16% to 25%. Our board members are still far more likely to be aged 55 and over compared to the workforce.

### Female representation in leadership positions has increased but is still not reflective of the workforce or social housing residents

54% of the workforce and social housing residents are female<sup>1</sup>. However, in leadership positions, only 47% of executives and 44% of board members are female.

### Housing association workforces are ethnically diverse and representative, but executive teams are not

10% of the workforce is Black/African/Caribbean/Black British compared to 3% of executives, and 5% of the workforce is Asian/Asian British, but only 1% are executives. There has been little change in the ethnic diversity of our executive positions or boards since 2021.

### Disabled people are still underrepresented within the workforce and leadership

Only 9% of our sector's workforce have a disability or long-term health condition compared to 24% of the population and 16% of people in employment in the UK. Moreover, there has been a small decline in the proportion of Disabled executives from 8% to 6%.

### We don't know a lot about people's religion, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, or gender identity

People were least likely to disclose their religion and sexual orientation, followed by marital or civil partnership status and gender identity. Across these characteristics, 4-6% of the workforce chose not to disclose this information about themselves – answering “prefer not to say”. The reluctance to share this information could indicate that people do not feel they can be their full self at work. This is particularly evident for gender identity as, across all workforce groups, more people chose not to disclose their gender identity than reported that they are trans.<sup>2</sup>

# 54%

of the workforce and social housing residents are female, but only

# 47%

of executives are female.



1. Census 2021, Customer Dataset: Data on all usual residents for the whole of England, comparing Sex (2 categories) and Tenure of household (7 categories)
2. 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.

# Diversity data

Analysis of the data submitted to us, at a national level, reveals a varied picture. There has been progress in terms of the completeness and amount of EDI data collected by housing associations, with fewer gaps in the data across all characteristics and all groups, including data on residents. The sector's workforce remains broadly representative of our communities, particularly regarding ethnicity, sex and sexual orientation. While we have seen some slow progress, overall, the data reveals that as a sector we need to do more to improve EDI in the workforce, particularly across leadership.

Before presenting the results for each characteristic in turn, we will explore the gaps in the data and how this has changed since we first undertook this data collection. The tool distinguishes between 'prefer not to say', where people have chosen not to share personal data, and 'do not know', where data was not submitted or otherwise unknown. We will look at each of these separately to understand, first, where data is missing and, secondly, where people may not feel safe or comfortable sharing this information about themselves, exploring each by characteristic and by workforce group.

## Gaps in the data

**The largest gaps in our data are still around socioeconomic background (parental occupation at 14, attendance at an independent school, and eligibility for free school meals) and caring responsibilities (dependent children and informal care).**

We are missing over 90% of data on all these characteristics for the workforce.

For example, we do not know the socioeconomic data for 92-95% of the sector's workforce, 86-91% of executive positions and 78-82% of board members. Knowing the socioeconomic background of our sector's workforce helps us to understand how well the sector supports social mobility and socioeconomic diversity, which is particularly important given our role in providing homes for people on lower incomes. The questions included within our collection are recommended by the Social Mobility Commission based on their accuracy, clarity and accessibility.<sup>3</sup>

We do not know the data on caring responsibilities for 90% of the workforce, 75-82% of executive positions and 70-77% of board members. Under the Equality Act 2010, people with caring responsibilities are protected against discrimination by association, for example, if they care for someone who is elderly (age discrimination) or Disabled. Without this data, employers cannot fully understand the effectiveness of flexible-working policies and if they are creating an inclusive workplace, with opportunities for progression for people with caring responsibilities.

The next largest gap is for the more detailed question around disability. This year we reworded the question on disability to include two separate questions – firstly, whether or not someone has a disability or long-term health condition and secondly, the extent to which their disability limits their day-to-day activities.<sup>4</sup> This information is crucial to understanding the extent to which policies and processes within the workplace are creating or removing barriers for people with a range of disabilities and long-term health conditions. However, we are missing data on the detailed disability question for 86% of the workforce, while we are only missing 22% of workforce data for the binary yes/no disability question.

Table 3 shows the proportion of data that is missing for each characteristic by workforce group. This does not include where we did not receive any data on any of the characteristics from a housing association for that workforce group. Figure 2, in the next section, provides a breakdown of how many responses we received for each workforce group.



We do not know the data on **caring responsibilities** for

**90%**  
of the workforce

3. Social Mobility Commission (May 2021) Simplifying how employers measure socioeconomic background.

4. They would be considered disabled under the Equality Act (2010) if their day-to-day activities are limited a little or a lot.

**Table 3: Proportion of workforce, executive, board and residents where we don't have data for a characteristic<sup>5</sup>**

Characteristic	Workforce (n=99,363)	Executive (n=1,753)	Board (n=2,006)	Resident (n=2,215,264)
Free school meals	95%	91%	82%	99.95%
Attendance at independent school	95%	90%	80%	99.96%
Parental occupation	92%	86%	78%	99.97%
Provision of informal care	90%	82%	77%	99.59%
Have dependent children	90%	75%	70%	91%
Disability (detailed)	86%	81%	69%	94%
Gender identity	52%	53%	44%	83%
Marital or civil partnership status	38%	39%	49%	76%
Sexual orientation	22%	17%	33%	60%
Disability (binary)	22%	16%	31%	57%
Religion	22%	23%	32%	62%
Ethnicity (detailed)	18%	17%	34%	40%
Ethnicity (headline)	10%	7%	23%	36%
Age	2%	3%	13%	6%
Sex	1%	1%	5%	2%

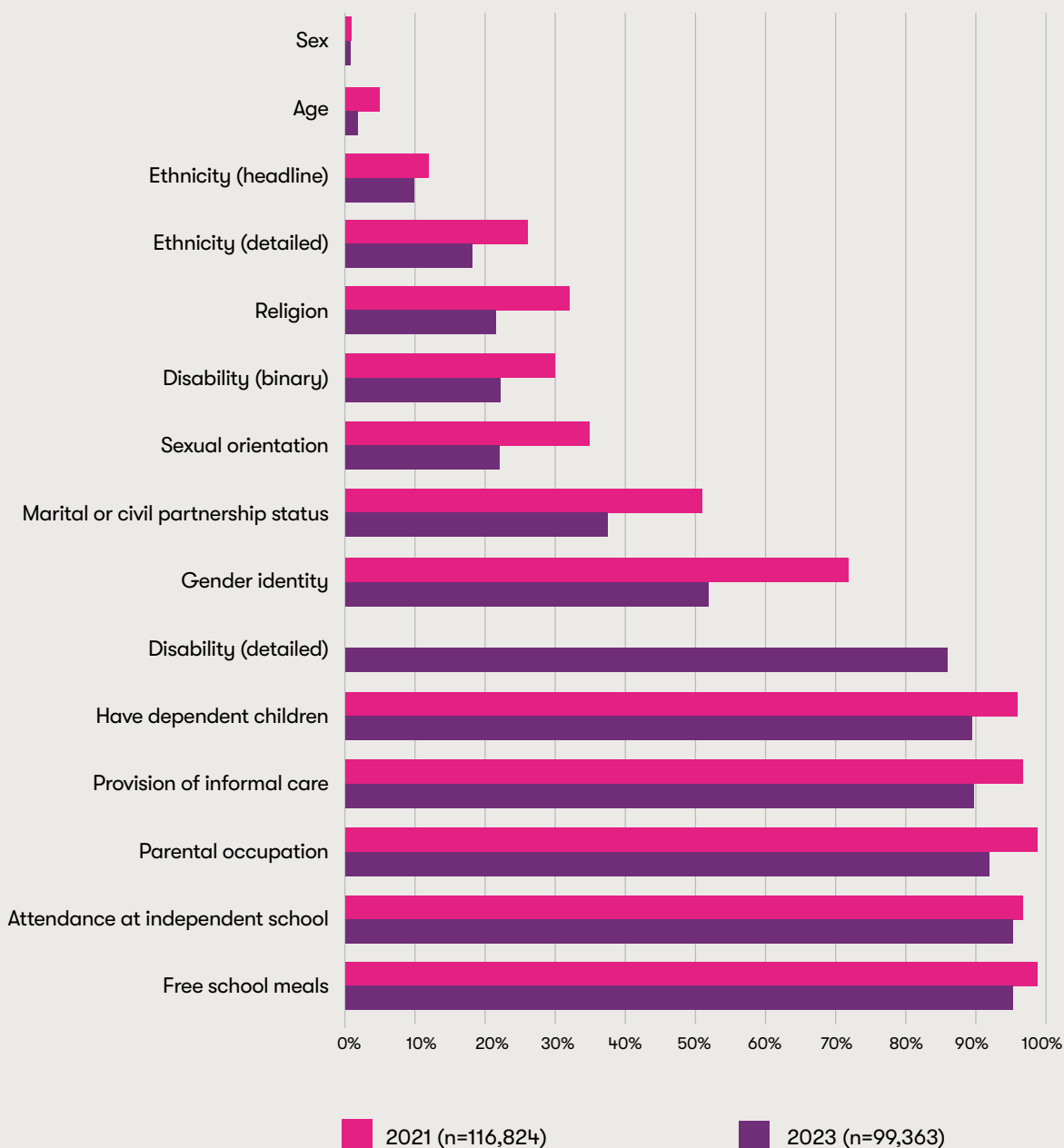
5. Don't know could include people who have selected 'Don't know' or have not provided a response, and where the employer has not collected data on that characteristic

Figure 1 compares the proportion of the workforce where we do not have the data for each characteristic in 2021 and 2023. The chart shows that **the gaps in our data have fallen, to varying degrees, across all characteristics**, where data has been collected for both years.

For example, while the largest gaps in our data are still for socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities, the data suggests more housing associations are starting to collect this information about their staff. While, in 2021, we only had 3% of data on whether members of the workforce provide informal care, we now have data on 10% of the workforce (the gap reduced from 97% to 90%).

We have seen particular improvement in the collection of data on gender identity, sexual orientation and marital and civil partnership status. For example, we are missing data on gender identity for just over half of our workforce (52%), compared to nearly three quarters in 2021 (72%).

**Figure 1: Proportion of workforce where we do not have data for a characteristic – comparison by year**

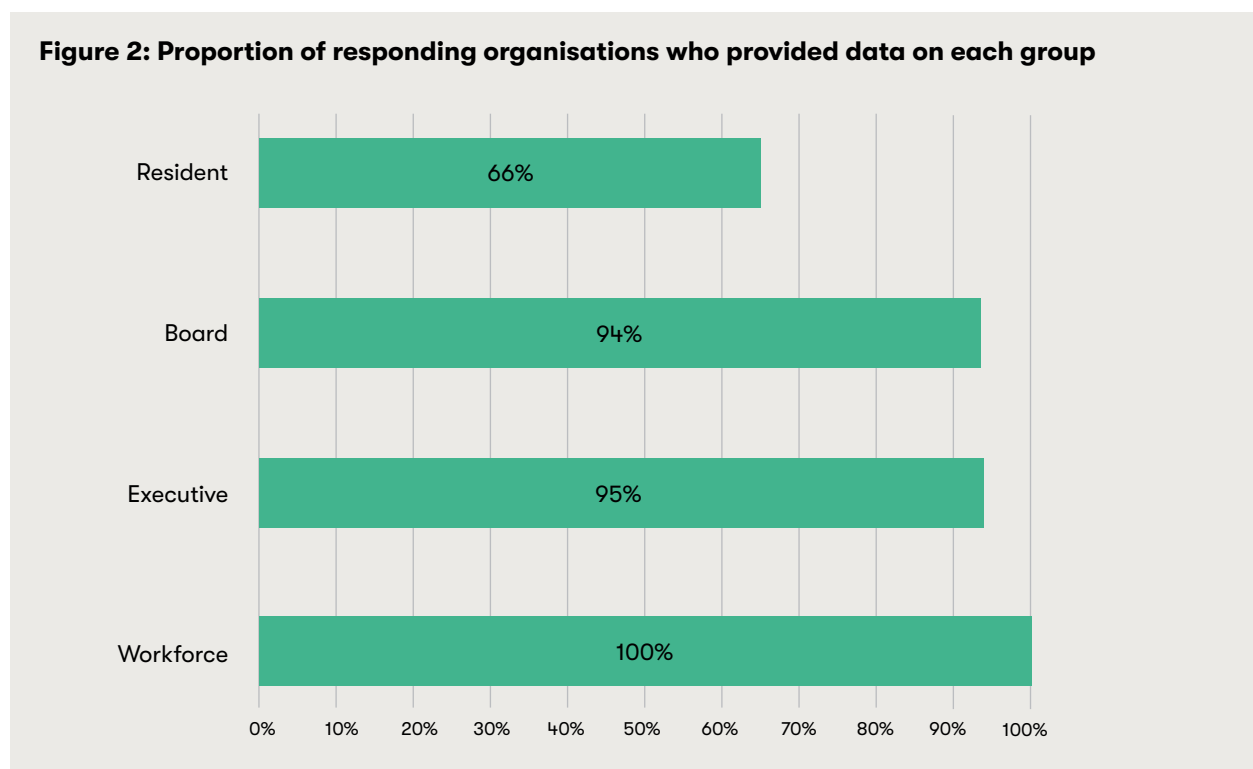


## By group

**While fewer organisations submitted data on their executive teams and boards, compared to workforce data, the data that we received on these groups had fewer gaps compared to the workforce.** This is particularly evident for the characteristics which had the largest gaps. For example, Table 3 (in the previous section) shows that we are missing 90% of data on whether members of the workforce have dependent children, compared to 75% of executive positions and 70% of board members. However, those housing associations that did not submit any data on their executives or boards are not included within these statistics.

Due to having smaller overall numbers of executives and board members, it is even more important to reduce these data gaps to ensure we can draw meaningful conclusions from the data. Having complete data on the characteristics of leadership teams demonstrates the organisation's commitment to EDI, confidence in the process and a culture of inclusion – illustrating where diversity and representation exists in positions of responsibility. Figure 2 below shows the response rate (whether we received any data at all from a housing association) for each of the workforce groups.

This is the first year that we have analysed resident data, as there were too many gaps within the resident data we received in 2021. Figure 2 (as well as table 3) shows that resident data is still, by far, the group we have the least data on. However, we have a good coverage of data on age, sex, ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, disability. This provides us with sufficient data to compare the workforce against our residents, where most relevant, alongside the population, to help us better understand how well the sector's workforce reflects the communities it serves.



A full comparison of the gaps in our data on all workforce groups by year can be found in [Appendix B](#).

## Inclusion

The characteristics that people were least likely to disclose were religion and sexual orientation – **6.4% of the workforce responded ‘prefer not to say’ when asked about their religion and 6.0% chose not to disclose their sexual orientation**. Table 4 shows the proportion of people within each workforce group who chose not to disclose each of the characteristics.

**Table 4: Proportion of workforce, executive and board where person selected ‘prefer not to say’ for a characteristic**

Characteristic	Workforce (n=99,363)	Executive (n=1,753)	Board (n=2,006)
Religion	6.4%	5.5%	6.1%
Sexual orientation	6.0%	5.3%	4.9%
Marital or civil partnership status	4.2%	1.3%	2.5%
Gender identity	4.0%	0.4%	2.2%
Ethnicity (headline)	3.1%	1.0%	2.8%
Disability (binary)	2.9%	2.7%	2.1%
Ethnicity (detailed)	2.1%	1.4%	2.7%
Disability (detailed)	1.9%	0.2%	2.0%
Provision of informal care	1.9%	0.7%	2.4%
Free school meals	1.8%	0.5%	2.2%
Parental occupation	1.7%	1.0%	1.4%
Have dependent children	1.7%	1.0%	1.8%
Attendance at independent school	1.6%	0.5%	1.9%
Sex	0.2%	0.5%	0.4%
Age	0.0%	0.2%	0.7%

There could be a variety of reasons why people have chosen not to disclose this information about themselves, ranging from concerns around the security of this data to uncertainty about how this information may be used by their employer, which could indicate that they do not feel their workplace is inclusive enough.

**Across almost all of the characteristics, there were proportionately fewer ‘prefer not to say’ responses for executives and board members.** This could indicate a higher level of assurance, or confidence in a culture of inclusivity. However, it could also reflect fewer people with certain protected characteristics in these positions who would, therefore, not feel uncomfortable or unsafe disclosing such information about themselves.

**When comparing with what we found in 2021, table 5 shows that, this year, for most of the characteristics, a higher proportion of the workforce selected ‘prefer not to say’.** The only characteristics where fewer selected ‘prefer not to say’ were religion and ethnicity (the detailed categories). When we have data from a third point in time, it will be interesting to see whether this reflects a trend towards greater inclusion for different ethnicities and religions.

**Table 5: Proportion of workforce (including don't know responses) who selected 'prefer not to say' for a characteristic, 2021 vs 2023**

Characteristic	2023 (n=99,363)	2021 (n=116,824)
Religion	6.4%	6.9%
Sexual orientation	6.0%	6.0%
Marital or civil partnership status	4.2%	3.2%
Gender identity	4.0%	1.2%
Ethnicity (headline)	3.1%	2.2%
Disability (binary)	2.9%	2.9%
Ethnicity (detailed)	2.1%	2.4%
Disability (detailed)	1.9%	n/a
Provision of informal care	1.9%	0.2%
Free school meals	1.8%	0.0%
Parental occupation	1.7%	0.0%
Have dependent children	1.7%	0.1%
Attendance at independent school	1.6%	2.4%
Sex	0.2%	0.1%
Age	0.03%	0.1%

The higher proportion of 'prefer not to say' responses could suggest that more housing associations are collecting data on a wider range of characteristics than they were before, and, therefore, a larger number of people have been asked to disclose information on these characteristics. However, it still highlights there are issues around inclusion, with people across all workforce groups who feel unable to be their full self at work or disclose this information about themselves.

**Crucial to addressing this hesitancy to disclose personal information, is building and demonstrating a culture of inclusivity, showing what is being done to improve equality and diversity, particularly regarding religion, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status and gender identity.**



## How representative is the sector of the communities we serve?

### Summary

All data in this section is presented with don't know and prefer not to say removed. This means the totals vary by characteristic. Based on available data:

- At a national level, and across most characteristics, the sector's workforce remains broadly representative of the population where housing association homes are located, with the exception of representation of disability. While there has been a marginal increase in the proportion of Disabled people within workforces, this is still not representative of the population, or of Disabled people in employment nationally.
- Executive positions are more likely to be held by male, older and White people, compared to the workforce, although there has been a slight increase in the proportion of female executives and those in the younger age categories. However, the same barriers to senior leadership for people from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and Asian/Asian British ethnic groups still exist.
- Our board members are also more male and older than the workforce. Compared to 2021, there is a higher proportion of female board members as well as Disabled board members, although these changes are small.

We cannot look at intersectionality using the tool as there is no way of combining characteristics or categories. This means we do not know how many characteristics associated with experiences of discrimination or inequality are shared by individuals in the workforce (e.g. someone who is female and from a Black ethnic group).

### Sex - Female representation is not reflected within leadership positions, but we're moving in the right direction.

We are missing only 1% of data on the sex of people in the sector's workforce and executives, making it the most accurate of all the characteristics. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of responses by workforce group, with resident and population data for comparison.<sup>6</sup> The chart tells us that **our workforce is more female than the population. 54% of the workforce are female compared to 52% of the population.**

However, the data we have received on housing association residents tells us that residents are also more female, with an even higher proportion compared to the sector's workforce (58%). This aligns with data from Census 2021 which also tells us that females are represented more within the social rented sector, as 54% of social renters are female.<sup>7</sup>

We are always working to make sure the data we are collecting and the way we are reporting on EDI data is as inclusive as possible. In developing our question wording and response options for the 2023 EDI data tool, we followed government [harmonised standards](#) and aligned with the questions and categories within Census 2021 data to ensure we can compare against the characteristics of the population. This required asking about sex and gender identity in two separate questions (details of these questions are explained in Appendix A).

For the purposes of this report, we have used language that is consistent to the way the data is collected. For example, where we are talking about sex we are referring to people as "male" or "female".

In the next section, where we are talking about gender identity, we are referring to whether someone's gender is different or the same as their sex registered at birth. We use the term "trans" to describe all 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.

We will continue to monitor best practice guidance and update our approach to ensure our data collection methods and publications promote equality and inclusion and we welcome feedback to help us achieve this.

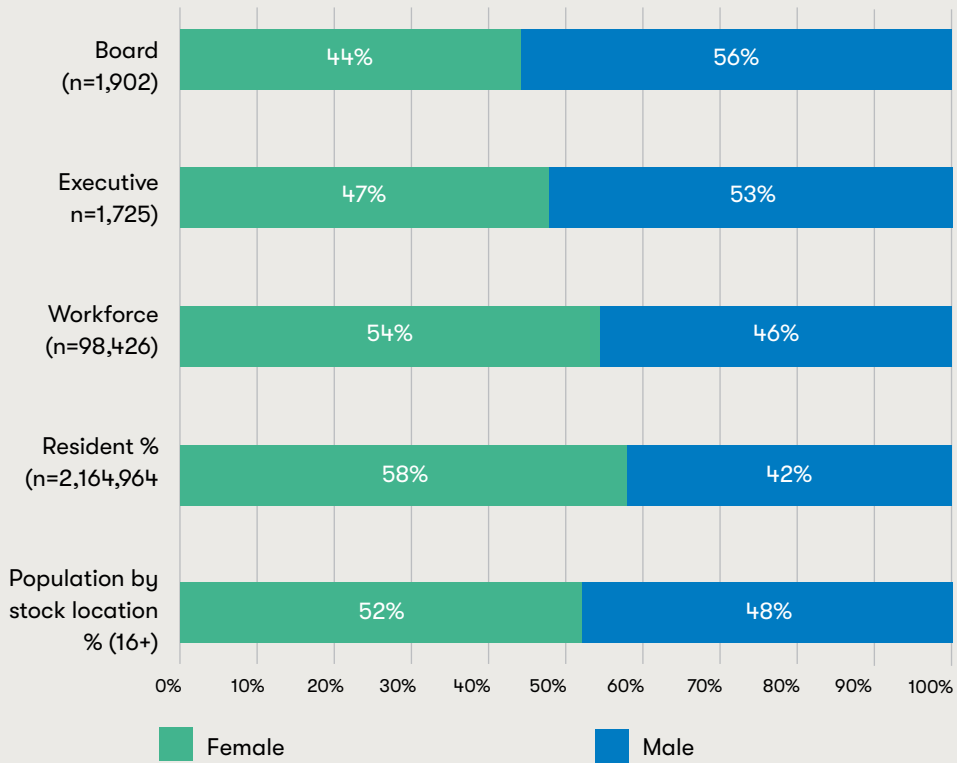
Across the sector, we are currently missing around half of data on gender identity. We encourage all housing associations to make the collection of data on the gender identity of their workforce, executives and boards a priority. With more of this data, we can better measure and promote gender equality and inclusion as a sector and within our individual organisations.

6. As we do not have 'prefer not to say' and 'don't know' response options for the majority of population data, these responses have been excluded from comparison charts, unless otherwise stated.

7. Office for National Statistics (2021) Census 2021. Custom table builder: all usual residents, sex and household tenure.



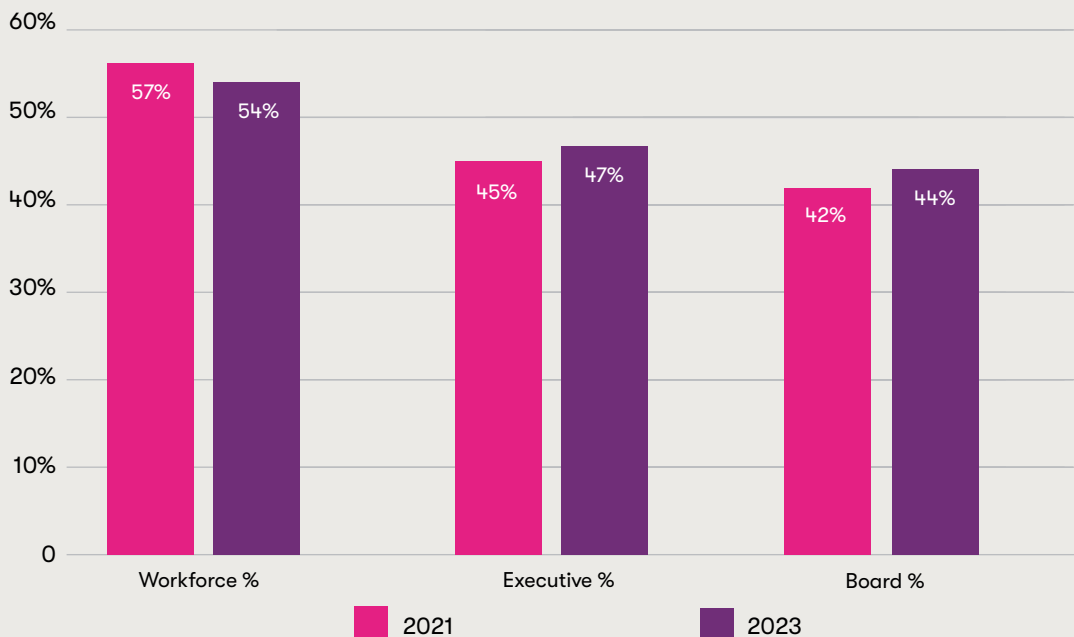
**Figure 3: Sex by group, excluding prefer not to say and don't know**



Unfortunately, **female representation within the workforce is not reflected within positions of leadership, 47% of executives and 44% of board members are female.**

Figure 4 compares the proportion of the workforce, executives and board members that are female this year, compared to when we first collected this data in 2021. The chart shows that there has been an increase in the proportion executives and board members that are female and, therefore, that the gap between the workforce and leadership is closing. This is a small step in the right direction and, with training and development opportunities and inclusive recruitment strategies, we hope to see further change.

**Figure 4: Proportion of workforce, executive and board who are female, excluding don't know and prefer not to say, comparison by year**



## Gender identity

**Across all workforce groups, there is little to no representation of people who identify as transgender, non-binary or another gender identity different from their sex registered at birth.**

However, this is based on the data we have available to us from members and we are missing around half (44%-53%) of data on gender identity. Table 6 tells us that, within the workforce, the proportion of transgender women and non-binary people reflects the population where our stock is located. However, all together, people who identify as trans (who responded that their gender identity is different from sex at birth) make up less than 1% of the workforce, but nearly 7% of the population where our stock is located.

The picture is even more stark when we look at leadership positions. Within our executive teams, there is no representation of trans people. Within our boards, we have no one who is either transgender or non-binary, and very low representation of people with a gender identity different from sex at birth but not listed as a response option.

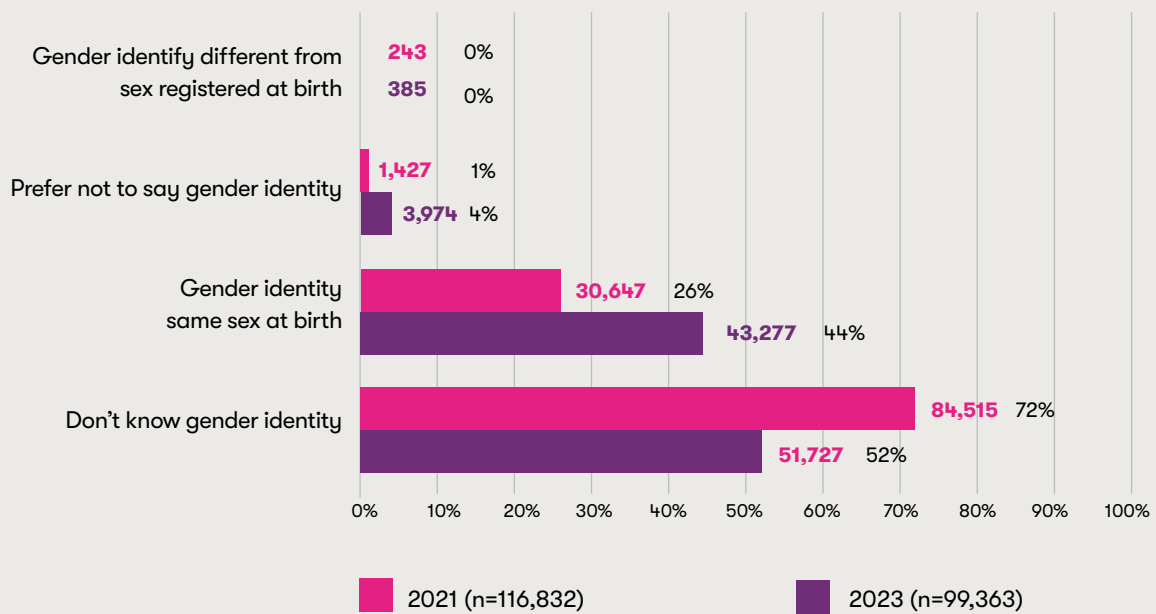
**Table 6: Gender identity by group, excluding don't know and prefer not to say**

Gender identity	Workforce % (n=43,662)	Executive % (n=819)	Board % (n= 1,076)	Population by stock location % (16+)
Gender identity same as sex at birth	99.1%	100.0%	99.9%	93.1%
Trans(gender) woman	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Trans(gender) man	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Non-binary	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth, but not listed	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	6.6%

We are missing around half the data on gender identity across all workforce groups which affects the accuracy of this data. However, the data also indicates a potential issue regarding inclusion. Across all workforce groups, **there is a higher proportion of people who have chosen not to disclose their gender identity, than report that they are trans.**

In figure 5, we have compared workforce gender identity in 2021 and 2023, including those who chose not to disclose their gender identity as well as where we do not have data on this. The chart shows that, while we have improved the completeness of the data, there is a greater increase in the proportion of the workforce who have not disclosed their gender identity (from 1.2% in 2021 to 4% in 2023) than reported that they are trans (0.2% to 0.4%).

**Figure 5: Workforce gender identity by year, including don't know and prefer not to say**



Research commissioned by HouseProud in 2018 found that 60% of trans residents did not feel their neighbourhood was a safe place to live as an LGBTQ+ person.<sup>8</sup> The report highlights that many residents felt that housing provider staff had a poor understanding of LGBTQ+ lives and, in some cases, experienced discrimination from staff.<sup>9</sup> To ensure housing associations are meeting the needs of trans residents, they need to be represented within the workforce, not only as resident-facing staff, but throughout all levels of the organisation, including where organisational policies and strategic decisions are made.



8. LGBTQ+ is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace. Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Ace is an umbrella term used specifically to describe a lack of, varying, or occasional experiences of sexual attraction. For more definitions, see Stonewall's [List of LGBTQ+ terms \(stonewall.org.uk\)](https://www.stonewall.org.uk).
9. University of Surrey (2018) No place like home? [www.houseproud-lgbt.com/\\_files/ugd/b509b4\\_e816cfc9973e49bb8c32d0b30338cd16.pdf](https://www.houseproud-lgbt.com/_files/ugd/b509b4_e816cfc9973e49bb8c32d0b30338cd16.pdf)

## Ethnicity – the workforce is ethnically diverse and representative, but executive teams are not

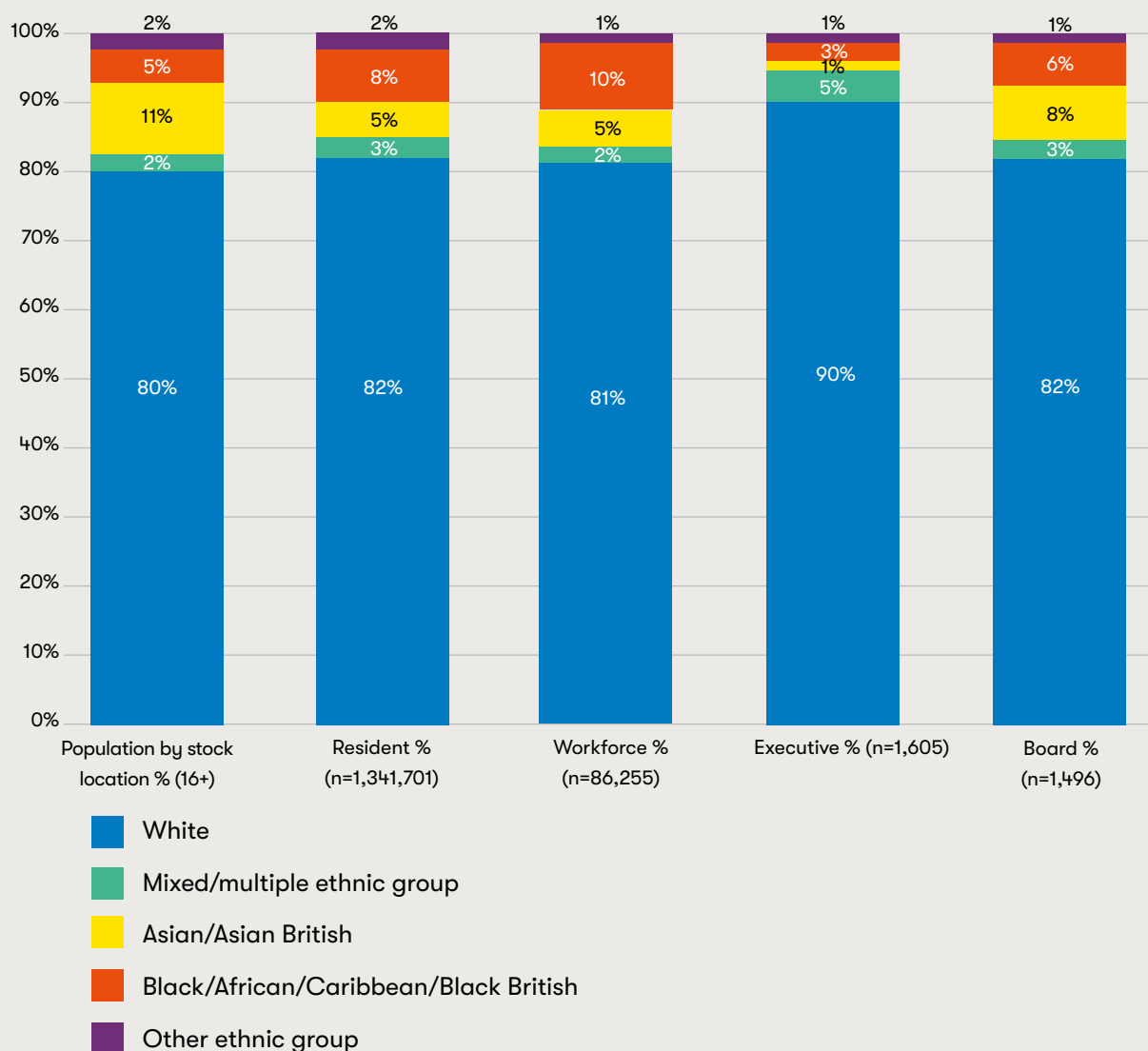
The language used to refer to ethnicity within this report reflects the categories used to collect the data within the EDI data, which align with Census 2021 data.

The report presents grouped ethnicity data, the “ethnicity (headline totals)”, of the “ethnicity (detailed)” categories which were also collected through the EDI data tool. However, it is important for housing associations to collect data using the detailed categories, as there may be differences in experiences and outcomes for people with different ethnicities within the same headline group.

**At a national level, our sector’s workforce is ethnically diverse and representative of the communities we serve.** Figure 7 shows that, for example, 10% of the workforce are from a Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnic group, compared to 8% of residents and 5% of the population where our stock is located. This ethnic diversity is somewhat mirrored by our boards, 82% of board members are White, compared to 81% of the workforce.

However, as we found when we first undertook this exercise in 2021, **our executive teams are significantly less ethnically diverse. Only 4% of executives are either Black/African/Caribbean/Black British or Asian/Asian British compared to 16% of the population.**

**Figure 6: Ethnicity (headline totals) by group, excluding prefer not to say and don’t know**



**These findings are similar to those we reported in 2021.** For example, 90% of executive positions were still White, and 8% of board members were Asian/Asian British, as they are in 2023. The only notable difference is that there has been a decrease from 8% to 6% in the proportion of board members who are Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, and a corresponding increase in the proportion of board members who are White.

However, at a national level, **our boards are still broadly representative of the ethnic diversity within the population.**

These figures will vary significantly between different regions, local areas and for organisations. To explore regional variation, across all characteristics, we will publish the data at a regional level, alongside a summary of the results. National organisations could also complete data tools for their regional workforce and leadership teams to explore variation in results and, therefore, whether targeted action may be needed. However, when exploring representation it is important to consider representation as more than reflecting the characteristics of the local population, but also as ensuring a diverse range of characteristics and backgrounds are represented at all levels of the organisation.

Research commissioned by Lara Oyedele, President of the Chartered Institute of Housing, looked at representation of people of colour in key parts of the social housing sector. The research identified variation in representation on the boards within different groups of housing associations. For example, 15% of board members in the top 20 housing associations in England were people of colour, compared to 65% of BME National members' boards.

In 2021, we recommended that housing associations reviewed their workplaces and recruitment practices to identify barriers to progression and recruitment for people from Black, Asian, Mixed and Other ethnic groups. It can take time to see change as a result of any measures taken. While we do not know the turnover rate for executive positions within the social housing sector, across all companies, research suggests that the average tenure for chief executives is 5.4 years and 7.8 years for other executive directors.<sup>10</sup>

**We encourage housing associations to keep up the momentum and review the actions they have taken, alongside both the data and staff engagement, to identify learning and to shape more ambitious plans and strategies to increase the diversity of their leadership. One way to demonstrate commitment is to become a Leadership Diversity Champion by following [Leadership 2025's five-point plan to a more ethnically diverse leadership](#).**

**Housing associations can also work with Black on Board which works to improve representation on boards by providing training, development, and mentoring for people from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and Asian/Asian British ethnic groups.**

### **NHF's work on Knowing our Homes**

Ethnic diversity and representation at all levels of the workforce should be a priority for housing associations. The [Better Social Housing Review's report](#), published in 2022, emphasised the fact that residents from Black, Asian and Minority backgrounds are more likely to live in homes with issues like damp and mould.

As part of our response to the review, the NHF has launched [Knowing our Homes](#), which will consider how social landlords can use data to identify if and where residents from certain groups, including residents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds, are more likely to live in poorer quality homes. Better data in this area will allow social landlords to take informed actions to address and improve inequities experienced by their residents in their homes. This would help social landlords to meet forthcoming regulatory requirements in the new [Consumer Standards](#), which state that social landlords must use relevant data to assess whether all tenants have equitable outcomes of housing and landlord services.

We're currently in the first stage of this work, which is to develop a baseline understanding of current practice across the sector, asking housing associations about how they are currently collecting and using data about their homes and residents, and sharing examples of good practice.

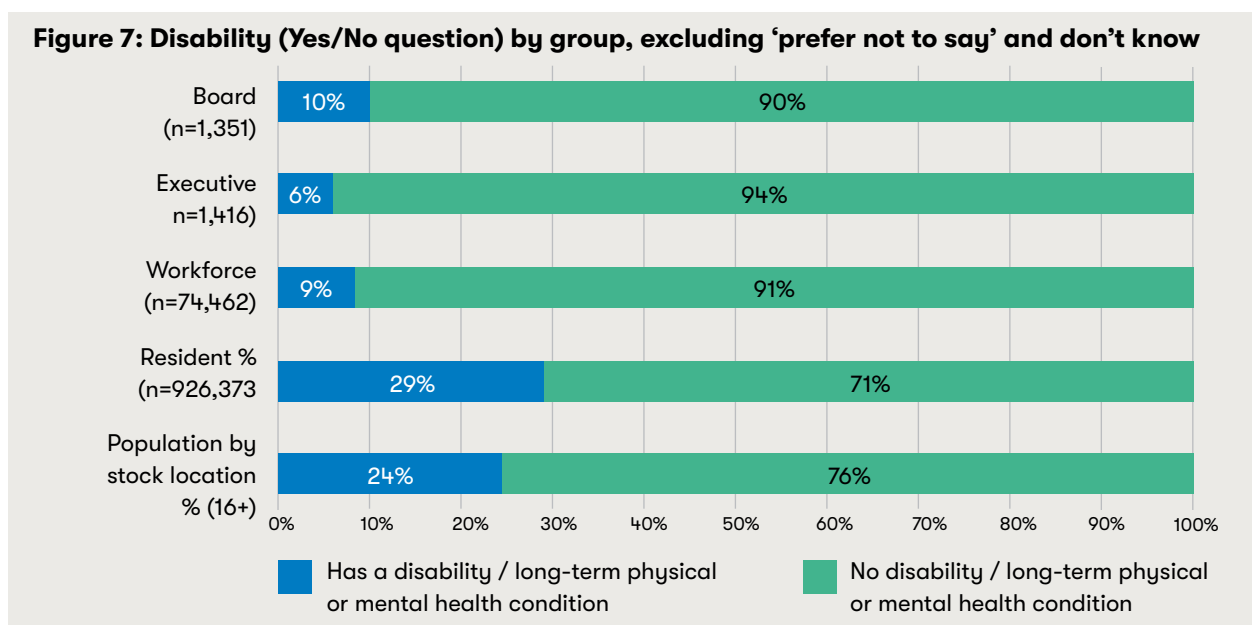
10. 2022 UK Spencer Stuart Board Index - Board Composition | Spencer Stuart

## Disability – Disabled people were represented poorly across all workforce groups

For the purposes of this report, we have used ‘Disabled’ as an umbrella term for someone who is Disabled or someone living with a long-term physical or mental health condition. While we recognise that there are differences in opinion regarding the use of a capital D for the word Disabled, we are using this to demonstrate our alignment with the social model of disability, which describes people as being Disabled by barriers in society rather than their impairment or difference.

Figure 7 shows responses to the Yes/No question on whether people have a disability or long-term physical or mental health condition. It reveals that there are far fewer Disabled people and people living with a long-term health condition within the workforce, executive teams and boards compared to the population and to residents. While 24% of the population are Disabled and 16% of people in employment,<sup>11</sup> only 9% of the sector’s workforce are Disabled. This is even lower for executive positions (6%) and of boards (10%).

The chart also highlights how we have a higher proportion of Disabled residents compared to the population (29% of residents compared to 24% of the population) which aligns with Census 2021 data that tells us 29% of people living in social rented accommodation in England are Disabled.<sup>12</sup> This demonstrates how crucial disability representation is within our sector.



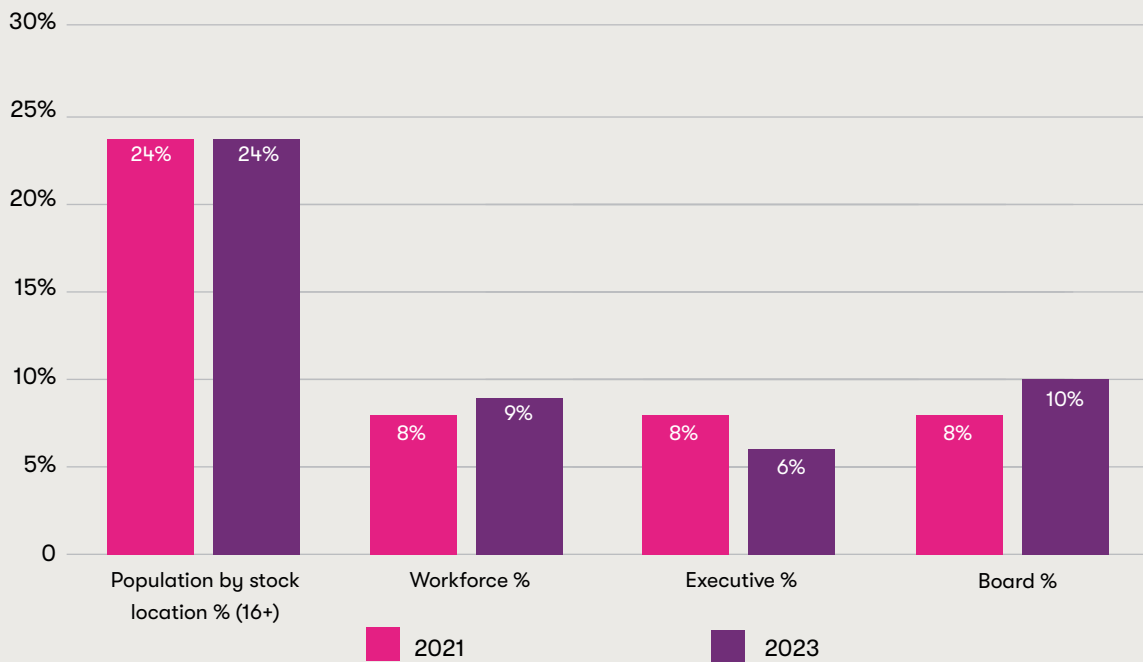
The lack of disability representation was a key finding from our 2021 report. Figure 8 compares the results from 2021 and 2023 by workforce group, showing **that the proportion of Disabled people within the workforce and boards has increased since 2021, from 8% to 9% in the workforce and 8% to 10% in our boards**. While this is a positive step, we cannot be certain that small changes like these reflect progress. This could also be influenced by an increase in long-term health and mental health conditions within the population or the working population.

Data from the Department for Work and Pensions reveals that the proportion of England’s working population that are Disabled has risen from 14% in 2020/21 to 16% in 2021/22.<sup>13</sup> The increasing number of Disabled people in employment has been, in part, driven by increasing prevalence of disability, which is associated with an increase in people reporting mental health conditions.<sup>14</sup> This tells us that there needs to be more progress to bring the representation of Disabled people within our sector’s workforce in line with the working population.

The chart also shows that **we have fewer Disabled people in executive positions, falling from 8% in 2021 to 6% in 2023**. This could relate to changes in the age of people in executive positions, as there are more executives within the younger age categories compared to 2021 – see the section on Age.

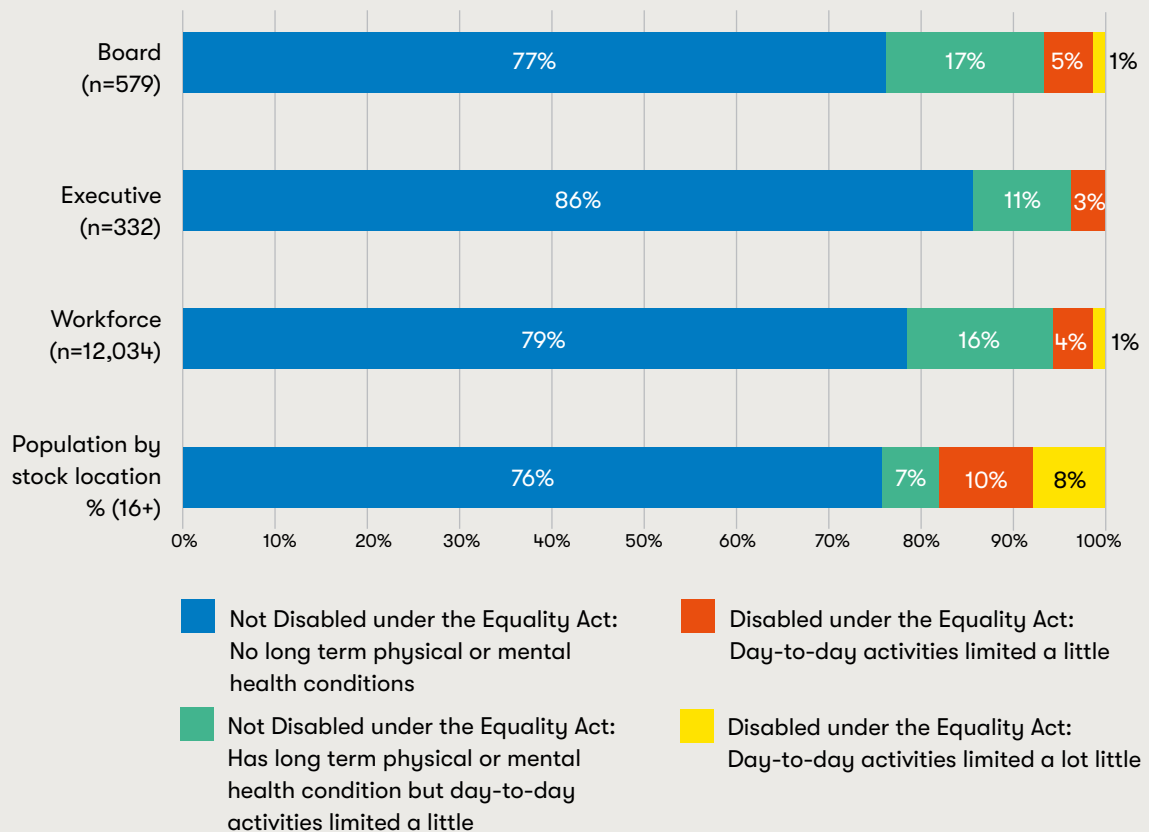
11. Department for Work and Pensions (2023) The Employment of Disabled People 2022, Table LMS001: Number and proportion of people by disability and employment status, age and year.
12. Census 2021, Customer Dataset: Data on all usual residents for the whole of England, comparing Disability (3 categories) and Tenure of household (7 categories)
13. Department for Work and Pensions, The Employment of Disabled People 2022, Table LMS001: Number and proportion of people by disability and employment status, age and year.
14. Department for Work and Pensions (2022) Employment of disabled people 2022.

**Figure 8: Proportion of people with a disability / long-term physical or mental health condition by group and year, excluding prefer not to say and don't know<sup>15</sup>**



We are missing a lot of data on the detailed disability question, affecting the reliability of these results, however, Figure 9 tells us that 18% of the population has a disability that affects their day-to-day activities a little or a lot compared to only 5% of the workforce.

**Figure 9: Disability (detailed question) for workforce and population, excluding don't know and prefer not to say**



15. Population data is from two difference datasets: 2021 data on disability based on Annual Population Survey 2019/20, 2023 data based on 2021 Census.

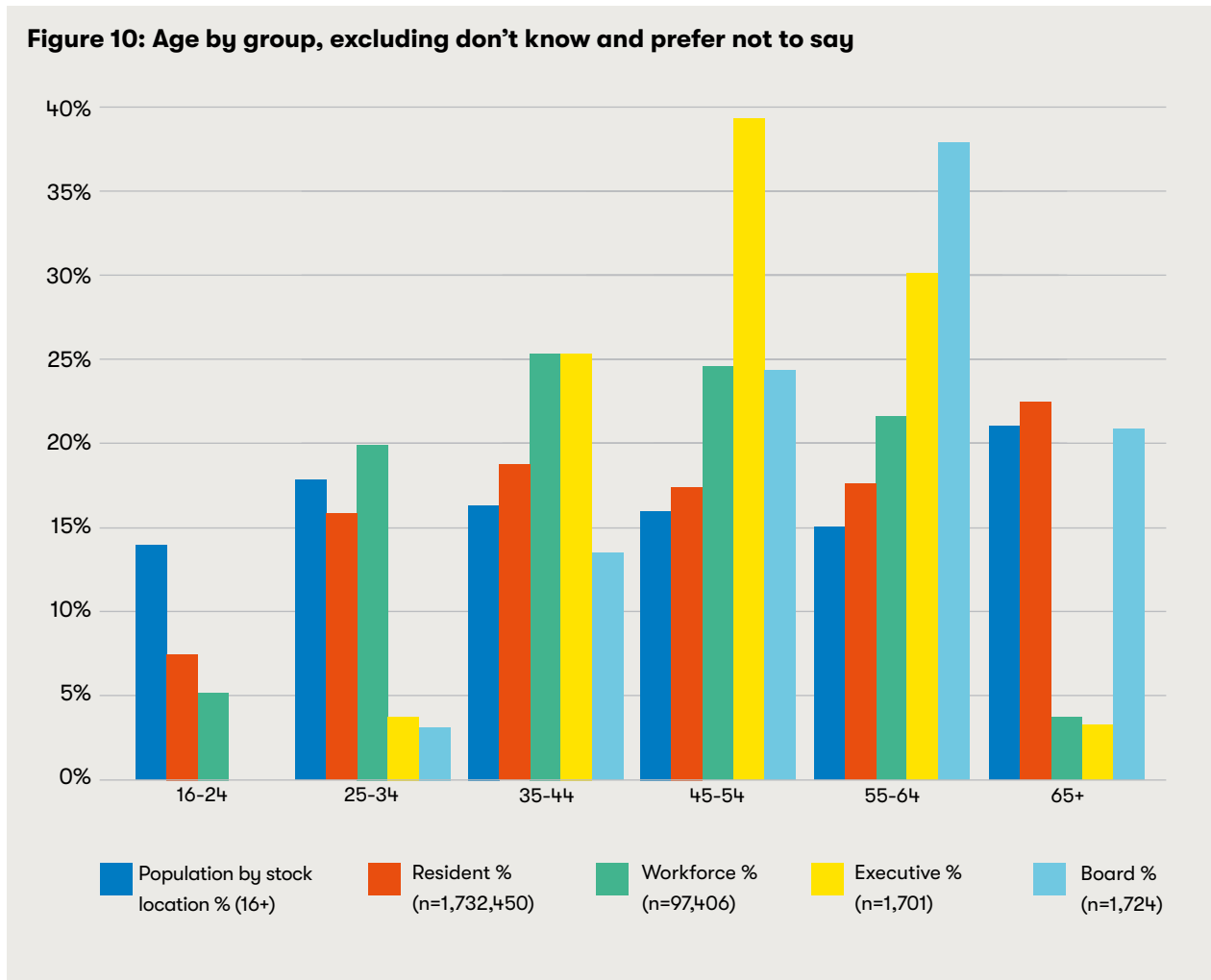
To increase disability representation across all levels of the workforce, housing associations could start by reviewing flexible-working and reasonable adjustment policies, together with Disabled staff, to see how barriers to entering and progressing in the workplace could be addressed. Demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity by becoming a [Disability Confident employer](#) and take a look at our resources on [Disability Confident best practice for housing associations](#).

### Age – there are more younger people in executive positions compared to 2021

Across all workforce groups, our sector has fewer people aged 16-24 compared to the population. With the exception of our boards, we also have fewer adults aged 65 and over compared to the population.

Figure 10 compares the age groups of the workforce, executives, and board members, with the population where our stock is located and with the data we have on our residents. We have more data on age compared to many of the other categories, which increases the accuracy of these results (where we received resident data, only 16% of resident age data is missing).

The chart shows that the majority of the workforce is aged between 25 and 64 and evenly spread across these ages. **Housing association executives and board members are more likely to be in the older age groups – 71% of executives and 83% of board members are aged 45 or over, compared to 49% of the workforce.**

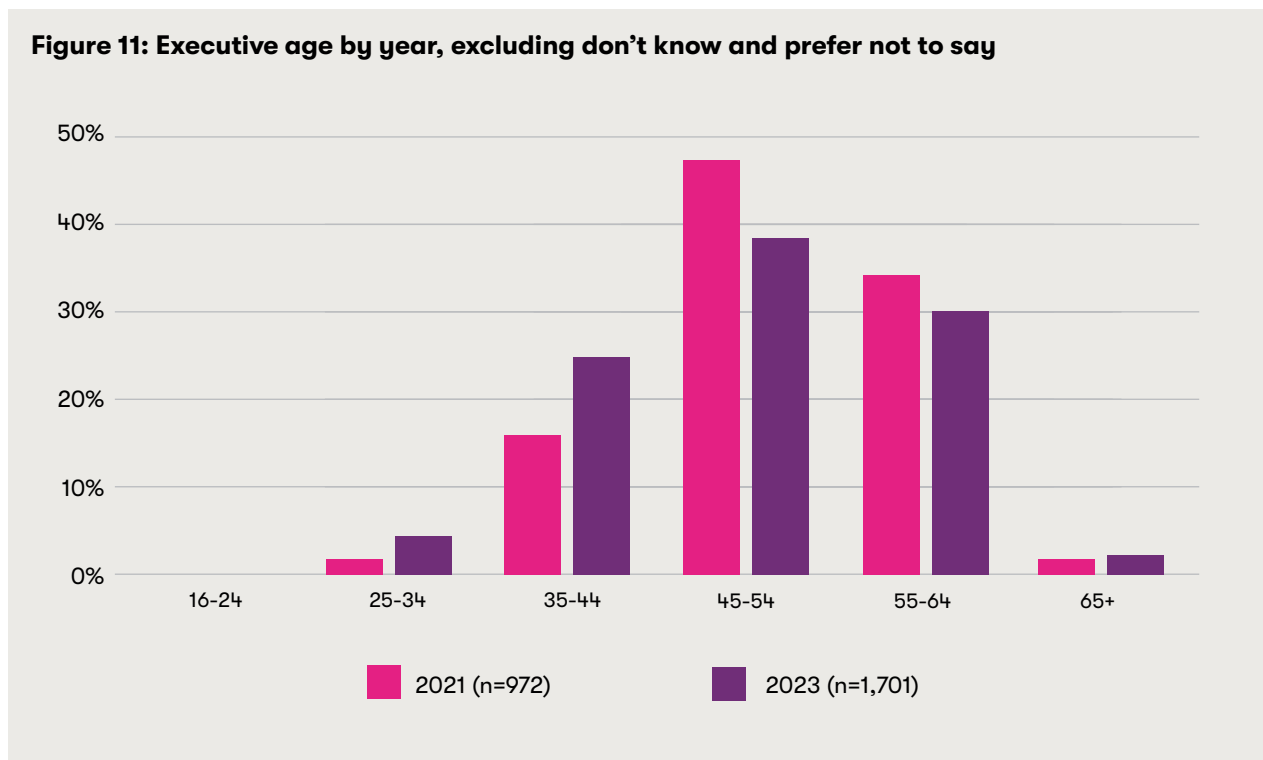




While some organisations may require board members to be at least 18 years old, it is important for housing association boards to reflect the range of ages within their workforce and communities they serve. Younger board members can help ensure a diverse range of experiences and perspectives are represented when making key strategic decisions for the organisation.

**The NHF’s Chairs’ Challenge, developed in partnership with Altair, is a way to demonstrate the boards commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, providing resources to help housing association boards on their EDI journey, such as our [Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit](#).**

**Compared to 2021, this year there are more younger people in executive positions within our sector.** For example, Figure 11 shows that, between 2021 and 2023, the proportion of executives aged 25-34 and under has doubled from 2% to 4% and the proportion aged 35-44 years old has also risen from 16% to 25%. The proportion of executives aged 45-64 years old has fallen slightly, while those aged 65 and over has remained the same. We do not know yet whether this is a trend or an isolated shift.



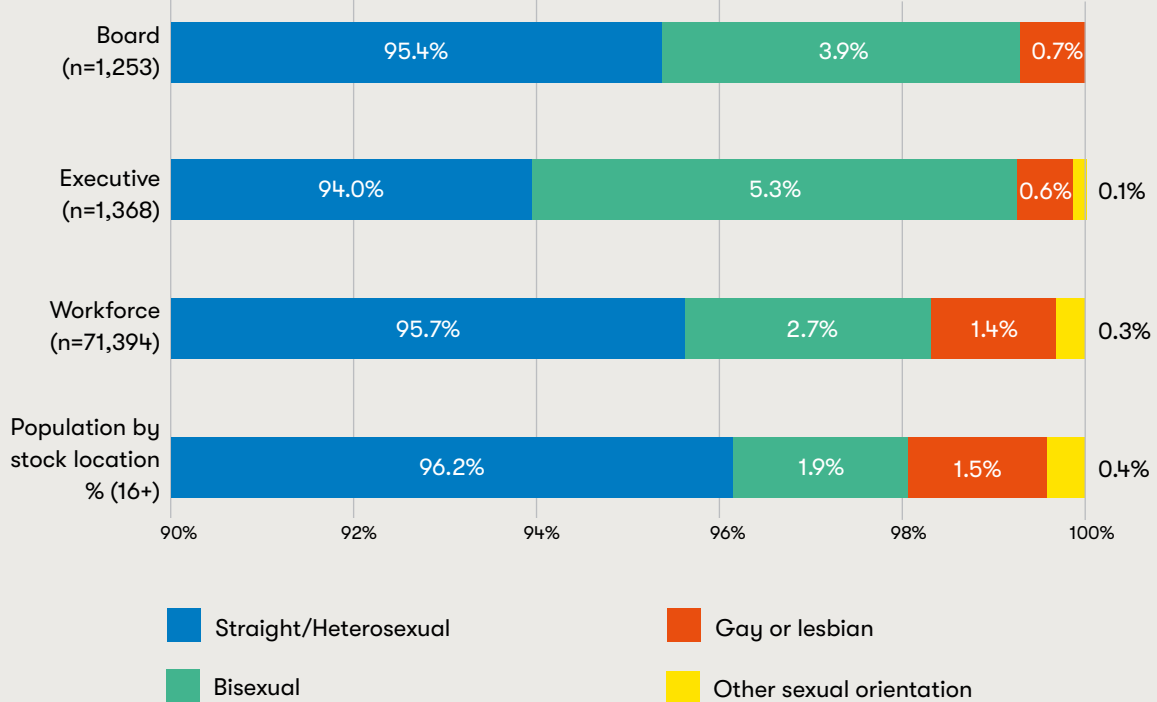
## Sexual orientation – people who are gay or lesbian are well represented within the workforce and leadership positions

Sexual orientation is an umbrella concept which encompasses sexual identity, attraction and behaviour. We have used this term in our data collection and reporting to align with GSS [Sexual orientation data harmonised standard](#) and Census 2021.

5.3% of executives are gay or lesbian compared to 1.9% of the population. Nevertheless, executives and board members are slightly less likely to be bisexual compared to the population (0.6% of executives and 0.7% of board members are bisexual, compared to 1.5% of the population).

Some of this difference may be explained by the fact that 6% of the workforce, and 5% of executives and board members, have chosen not to disclose their sexual orientation. Although, underreporting may also be a factor in data on the sexual orientation of the population as 7.8% did not respond to the question on the 2021 Census. We do not know the reasons why people did not respond, but this may include some who preferred not to disclose that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or any other sexual orientation.

**Figure 12: Sexual orientation by group, excluding don't know and prefer not to say**



**Despite having more complete data on sexual orientation this year, these findings are very similar to our 2021 findings,** for example, 2.7% of the workforce reported that they are gay or lesbian in 2021 which is the same this year. The largest difference was a slight reduction in the proportion of gay or lesbian executives from 6.4% in 2021 to 5.3% in 2023. See all comparison figures in [Appendix B](#).

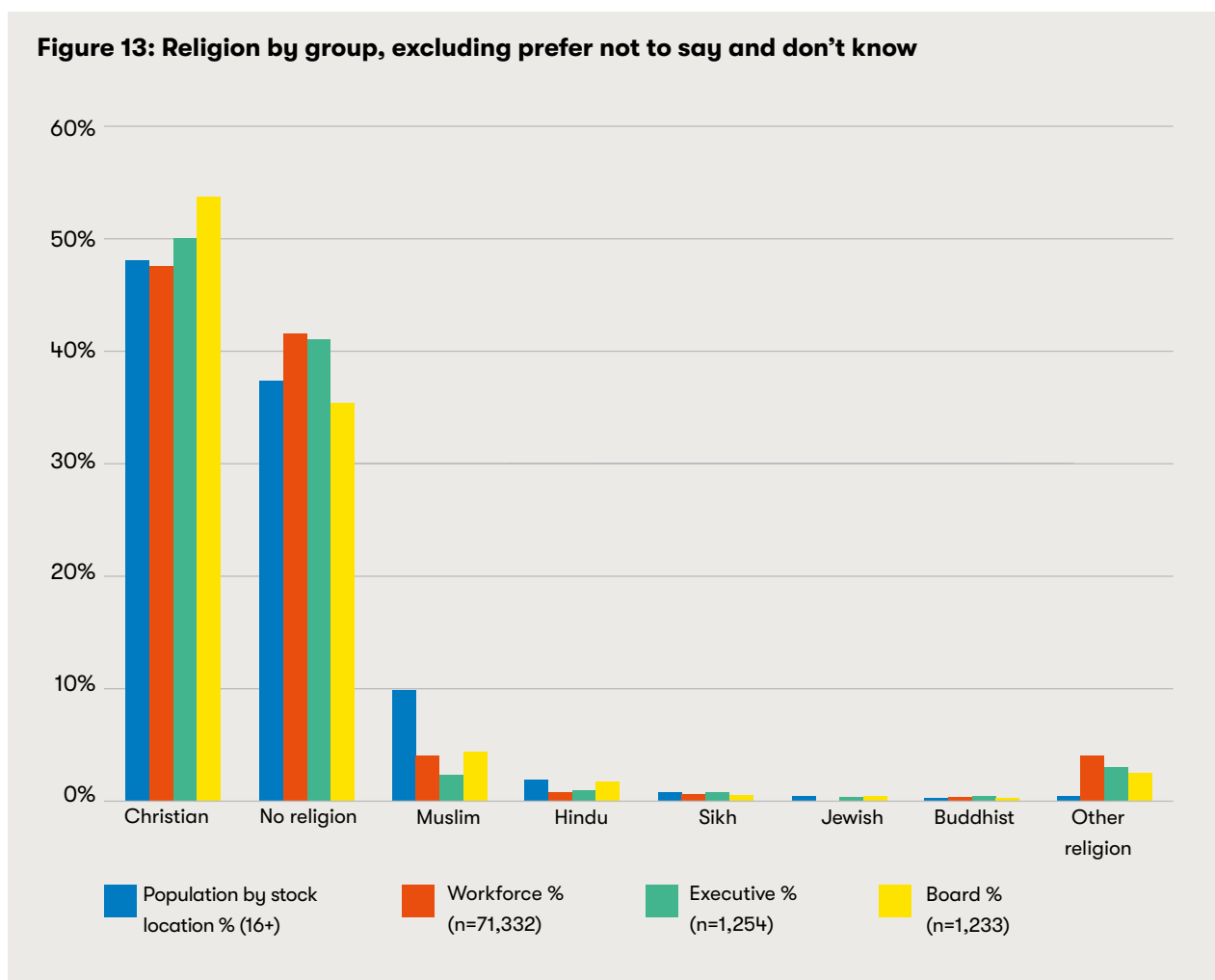
## Religion – more people have suggested that they have no religion

Figure 13 shows that the **most prevalent religion across all groups is Christianity, followed by no religion**. Around half of the sector’s executives (50%) and boards (54%) are Christian, which is higher than the proportion in the population and the workforce (both 48%).

Our sector’s workforce and executive teams are also more likely to have no religion compared to the population. 42% of the workforce and 41% of executives reported that they have no religion, compared to 37% of the population where our stock is located.

Across all workforce groups, there is slightly higher representation of ‘Other religions’ and lower representation of people who are Muslim. Only 4% of the workforce and boards are Muslim and 3% of executives, compared to 10% of the population where our stock is located.

The question on religion had the highest proportion of ‘prefer not to say’ responses (6% of the workforce), which may have some effect on the results. However, there might have been a similar effect on our comparison data as 6% of the population where our stock is located also did not respond to this question within the Census 2021.

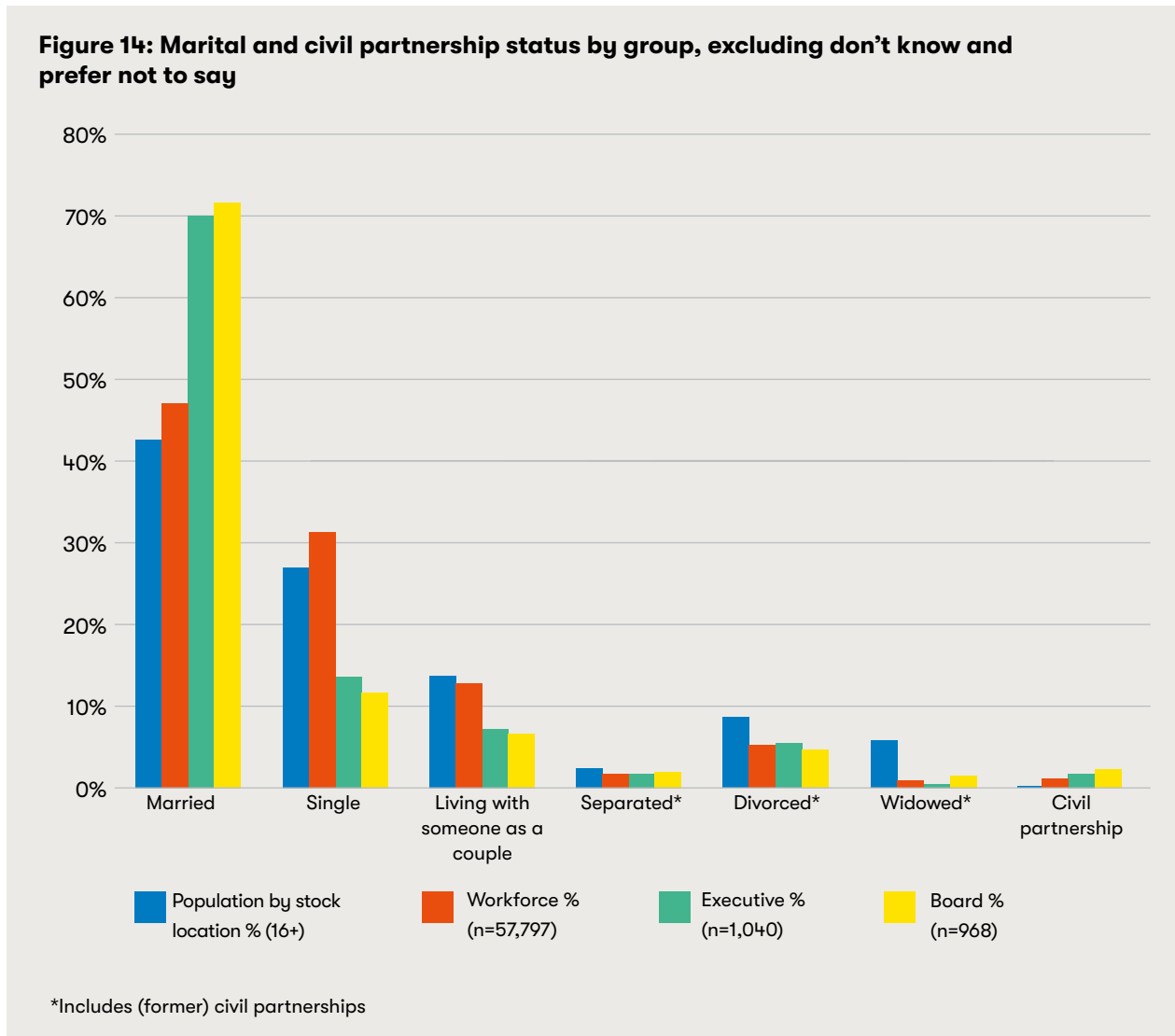


**Compared to our findings from 2021, the proportion of people who reported that they have no religion has risen across the workforce, executive positions and board members.**

The proportion of the population with no religion is also higher, however, the 2021 report used data on religion from the 2011 Census, so this represents change over ten years rather than two.

## Marital and civil partnership status closely represents the population

Figure 14 shows the marital and civil partnership status of each workforce group, compared to the population. It shows that the **workforce quite closely represents the population in terms of marital and civil partnership status**. Although, across all workforce groups, there are marginally fewer people who are divorced or widowed compared to the population where our stock is located. For example, 5% of all workforce groups are divorced (or legally dissolved Civil Partnership), compared to 9% of the population.



**The sector's executives and boards have a higher proportion of people who are married or in a Civil Partnership, compared to the population. At least 70% of both groups are married, compared to 42% of the population where our stock is located.** This may relate to differences in the ages of these groups; we found that executives and boards tended to be older than the population, as well as the workforce. So, efforts to increase the diversity in ages in executive positions and on boards may also see an increase in people who are single or cohabiting.

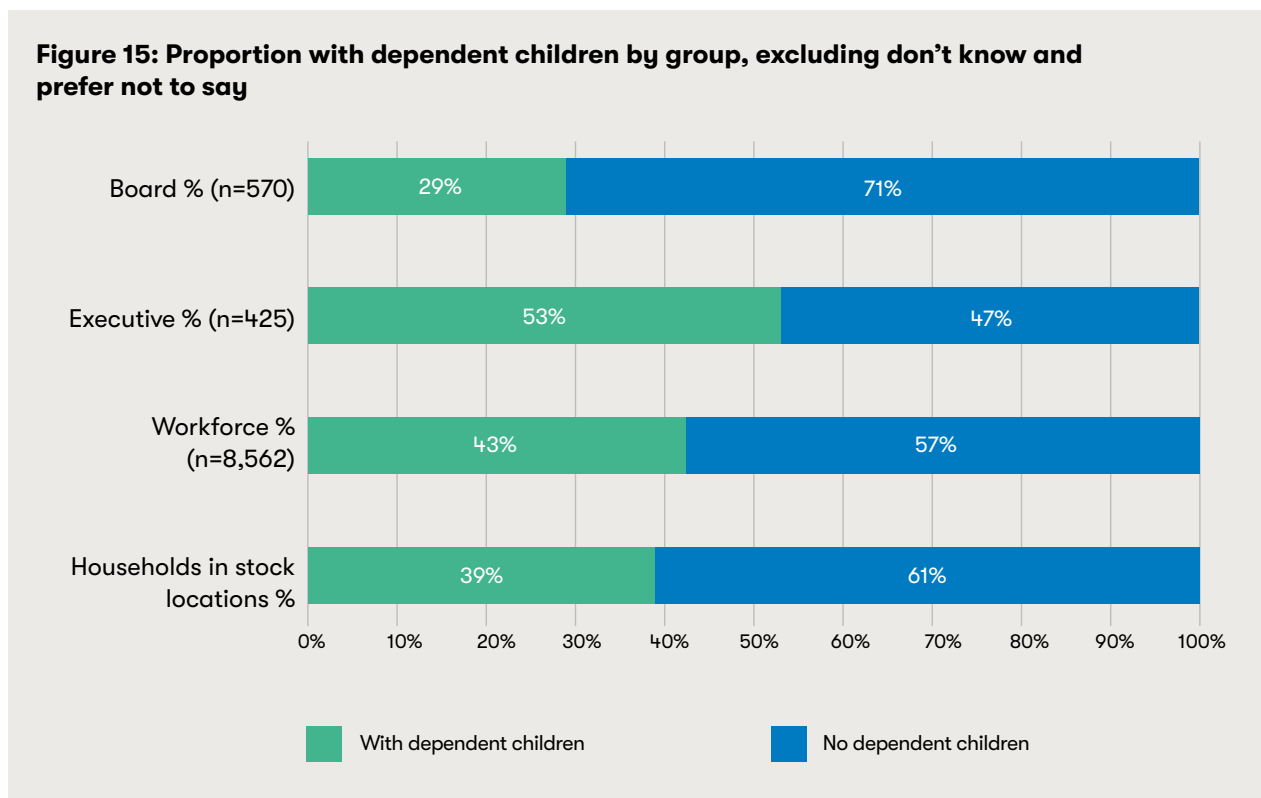
We can already start to see this when we compare data on the marital and civil partnership status of executives this year, with data from 2021, as the proportion of executives who are married decreased from 74% in 2021 compared to 70% in 2023 while the proportion of people who are single increased from 0% to 14%.

Although we have collected more data on marital status this year compared to 2021 (we have data for 62% of the workforce, compared to 51%), we still need a more complete dataset to draw any conclusions.

## Caring responsibilities – we still have very little data

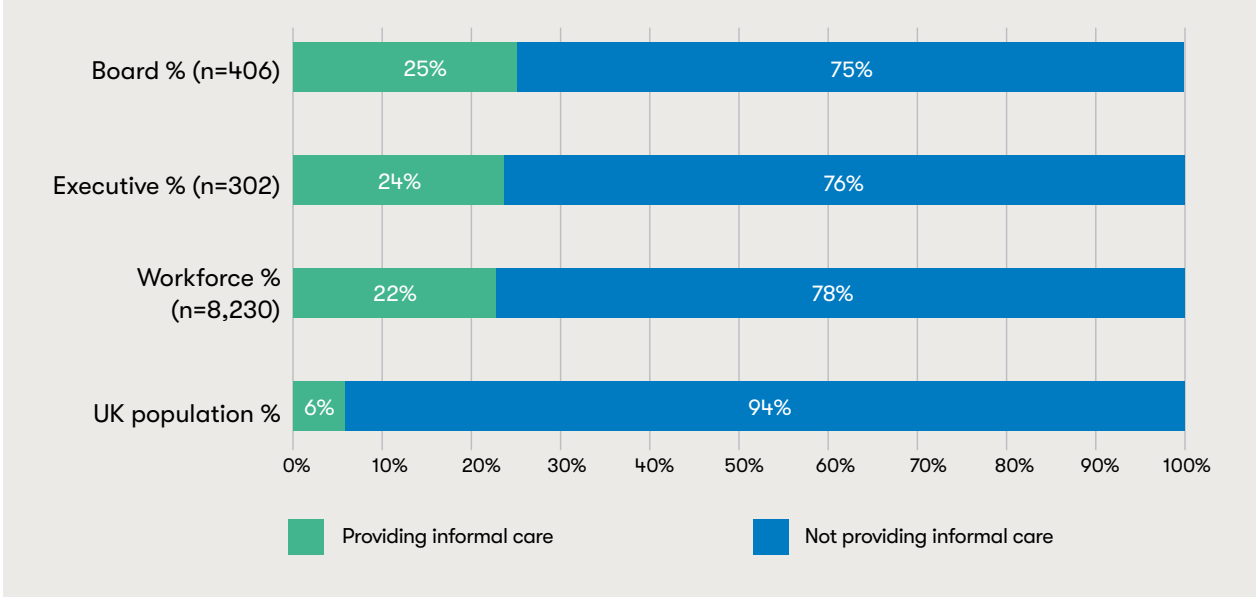
We still have very limited data on the caring responsibilities of the sector's workforce, with less than 10% of data on whether people have dependent children or informal caring responsibilities, which limits any conclusions we can draw. This is a key area where, as a sector, we need to increase our understanding of the workforce, given the impact caring responsibilities can have on people's experience of work and that this is a characteristic with protections against discrimination under the Equality Act. Collecting this data is an important first step to ensure employers are considering the needs of people with caring responsibilities and providing an inclusive workforce with equal opportunities for learning, development and progression.

Figure 15 shows that, for those that we do have data for, there tends to be more people within the workforce (43%) and within executive teams (53%) who have dependent children compared to households in the population (39%). Board members, however, are less likely to have dependent children (29%). These findings reflect what we found when we first collected this data in 2021, although the proportion of board members with dependent children has decreased from 35% in 2021.



The limited data that we have about the provision of informal care tells us that a higher proportion of the workforce are providing informal care compared to the population. Figure 16 shows that, across the different workforce groups, between 20% and 25% of people provide informal care, compared to 6% of the people in the UK (aged 16 and over). We need to improve our collection on this data to understand the potential implications for equality, diversity and inclusion within our sector.

**Figure 16: Provision of informal care by group, excluding don't know and prefer not to say<sup>16</sup>**

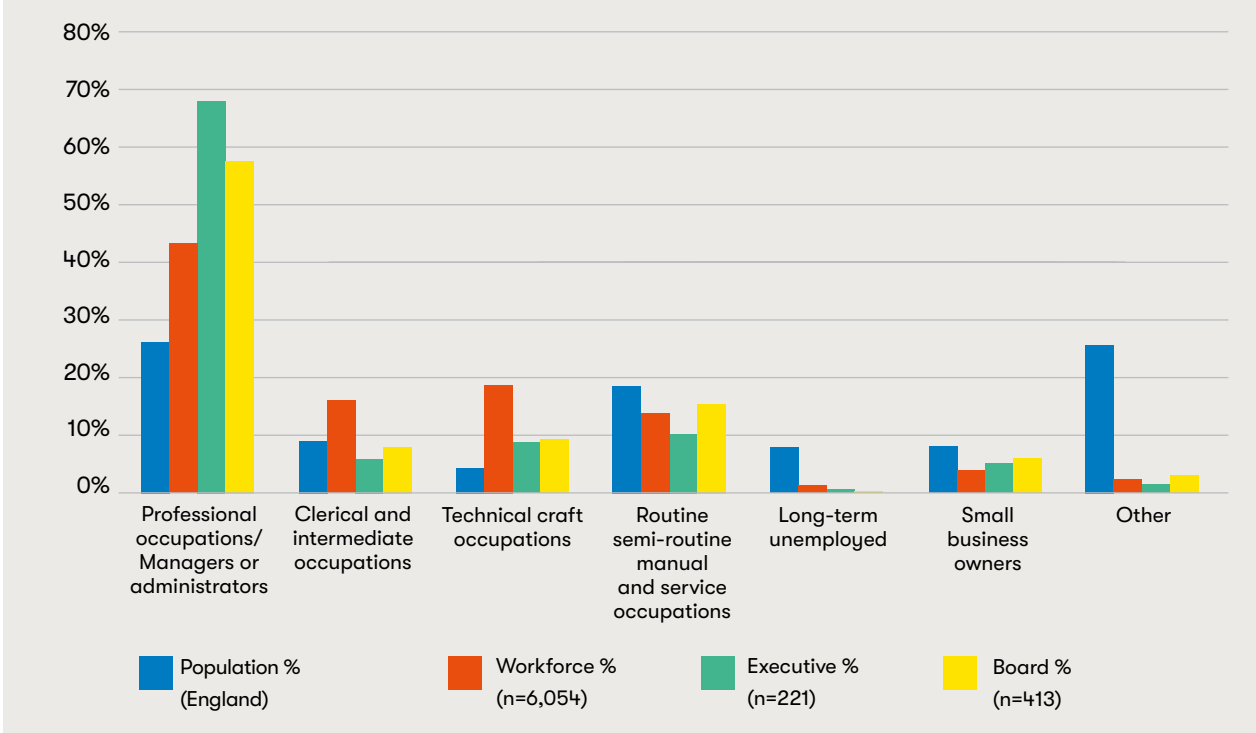


**Socioeconomic characteristics – we have the least amount of data**

Of all the characteristics, we have the least data on all three of the socioeconomic characteristics, ranging from 12% of data on the parental occupation of board members to 5% of data on whether members of the workforce were eligible for free school meals or attended an independent school. This limits the conclusions we can come to at this point in time.

The data we have collected on the parental occupation of the sector’s workforce is shown in Figure 17. The chart shows that those in leadership positions (executives and board members) are more likely to have parents who were professionals, managers or administrators compared to the workforce. However, across all workforce groups, the proportion in this category is higher than the proportion of people in the UK population with occupations in that category.

**Figure 17: Parental occupation at age 14 by group, excluding don't know and prefer not to say**



16. Informal care means caring that is not a paid job. This could be for a friend or family member on a voluntary basis.

Data on attendance at independent school, shown in Figure 18, tells us that a similar proportion of people within the workforce and in executive positions attended an independent school as in the population (although we do not have comparable population data regarding whether people received a bursary or attended school outside of the UK). However, board members are more likely to have attended an independent school compared to the workforce and to the population.

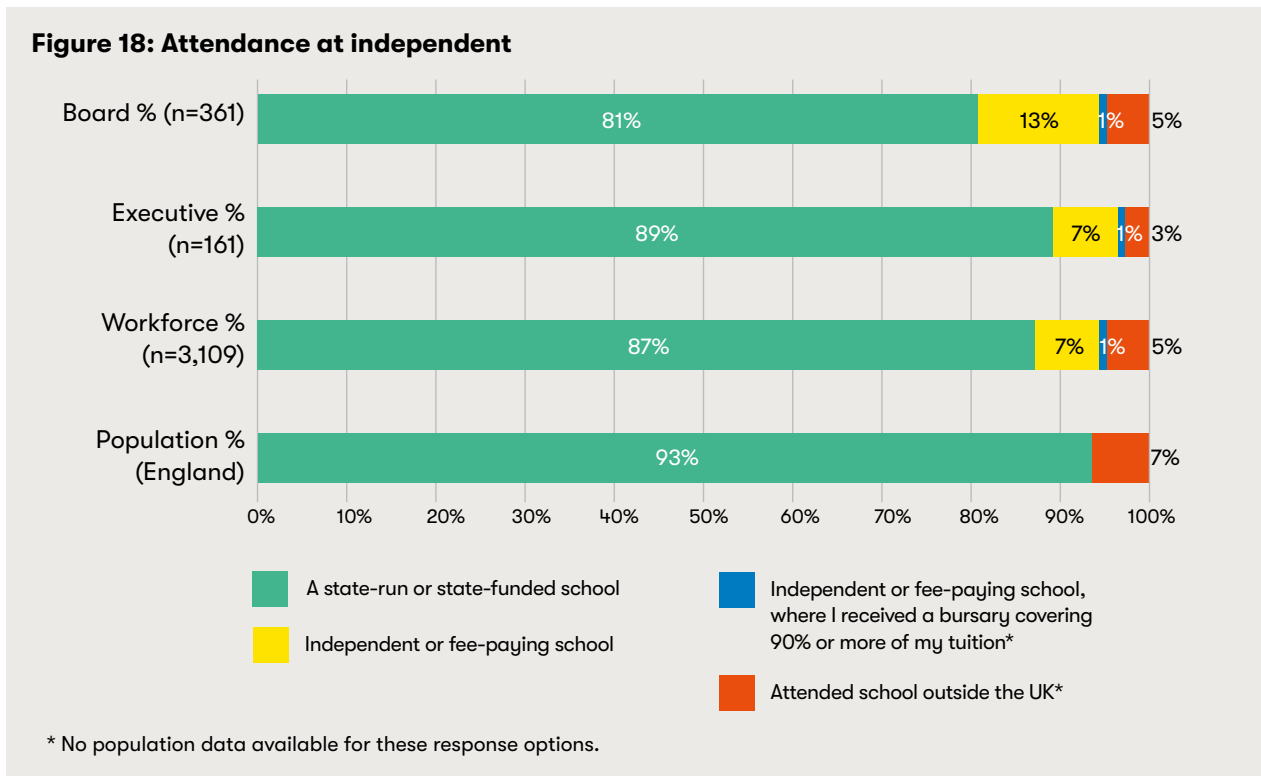
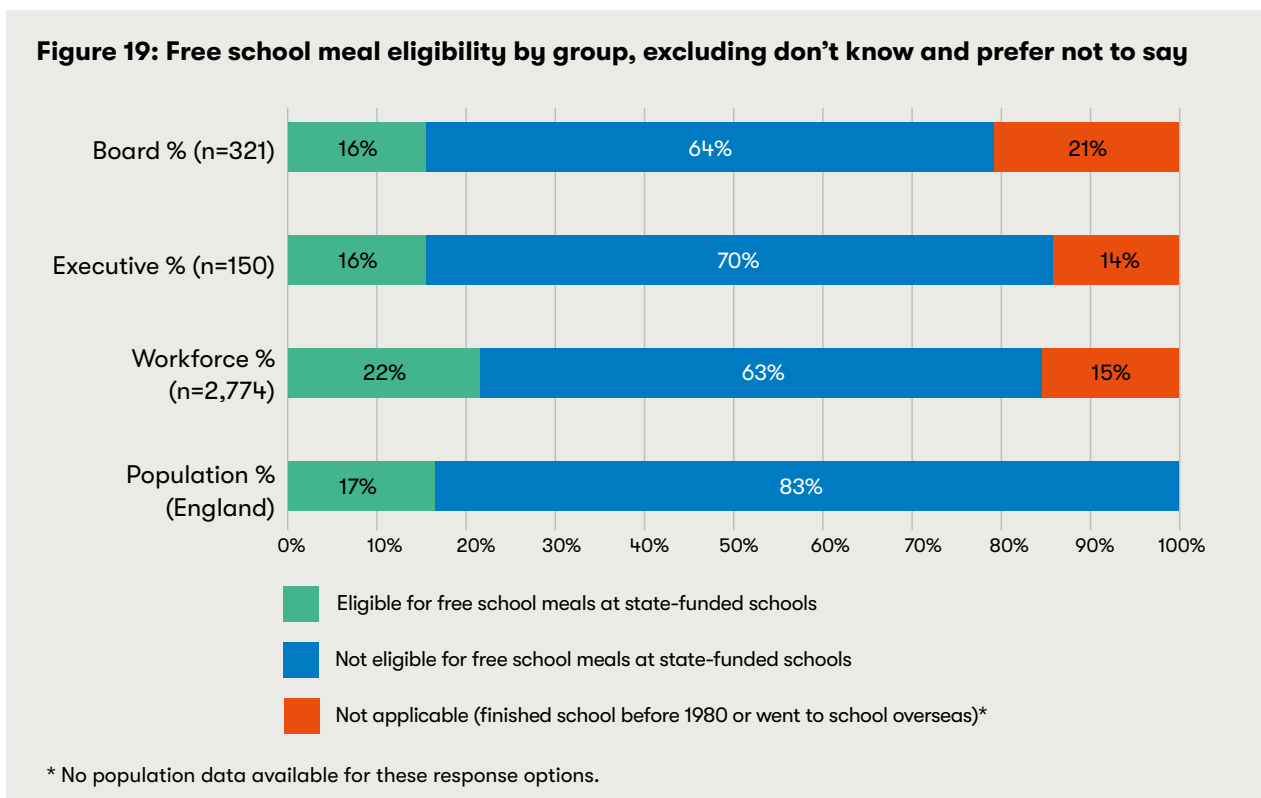


Figure 19 shows that, across all workforce groups, a similar proportion were eligible for free school meals compared to the population. When focusing on the workforce only, there is a slightly higher likelihood of having free school meals.



# Conclusion

Our second picture of diversity and representation across the social housing sector reveals that whilst there is a commitment from the sector to hold itself to account, progress is slow. The results also demonstrate the scale of the collective action that is required to drive progress and long-term change. We are still a long way from our goal, but we always knew this journey would take time.

While the housing association workforce remains broadly representative of the population where our stock is located, there has been little change since 2021 to address underrepresentation of disability across all workforce groups. And there are clear barriers to progression for some communities. Our sector's leadership is no more ethnically diverse; still only 4% of executives are either Black or Asian compared to 14% of the population.

The sector has demonstrated commitment to this by investing time and resources to adapting their data collection processes, enabling more accurate and complete data on equality, diversity and inclusion. We must continue to build on this, continuing to close the remaining gaps in the data and creating inclusive cultures where the workforce feel they can share their identity and be their full self at work. Crucially, we must turn this data into action, to identify where we need to improve and to reflect on what has worked well, and come together to share this learning across the sector.

We would like to thank all the housing associations who have supported this work by providing their data for this report. This data has enabled us to explore how the national picture of diversity and representation in the housing association workforce has changed since 2021. This has revealed areas where we need to do better. To address this, we have set out our recommendations to help us to become a truly equal and diverse sector.





# Recommendations and next steps

## Recommendations

This data reveals a continued and growing commitment from the sector to hold itself to account in improving EDI. However, the results also demonstrate the scale of the collective action that is required to drive progress and long-term change. Based on our findings, our recommendations are that housing associations in England should:

### 1. Review your processes for collecting equality, diversity and inclusion data.

While the sector has collected more data in 2023, there are still some significant gaps to address. These data gaps currently limit our understanding of how well we represent some communities. More housing associations are collecting data on socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities, but we still do not have enough data to begin to measure how well we represent those communities. We are missing 70-90% of data on caring responsibilities, a characteristic that has protections under the Equality Act and which can have huge implications for people's experience of work.

We have significantly reduced the gaps in our data on gender identity, sexual orientation and marital and civil partnership status, but there has also been an increase in the proportion of people choosing not to disclose this information about themselves. This indicates that these are key areas, alongside religion, where staff may not feel they can truly be themselves at work.

For example, while the data currently indicates that we underrepresent trans communities across the workforce and, particularly, leadership, we only know this for around half of the workforce. And there are more people who have chosen not to disclose their gender identity than have reported that they are trans.

We have more data on residents in 2023, enabling us to use this data to compare against the workforce for some characteristics. However, we still only received resident data from 66% of responding organisations and there were huge gaps in this data. In our action plan in response to the [Better Social Housing Review](#), alongside CIH, we have stressed the importance of having data on, for example, residents' ethnicities and disabilities or health conditions in order to understand potential inequity in outcomes regarding quality and safety risks.

We understand that there are barriers to collecting some of the information in the way the EDI data tool requires, due to the limitations of some existing IT systems. We acknowledge that change takes time and resources and that this will be unique to each organisation. **We will support the sector to share learning and find solutions to ensure we are collecting the data needed to measure the diversity and representation of our sector.**

We have provided a list of [suggested questions](#) for housing associations to ask their workforce. These questions have been developed to align with best practice guidance and data from Census 2021 to ensure we can compare against the most accurate and up-to-date population data.

Housing associations may want to consider collecting and storing EDI data separately and anonymously, particularly, if the data indicates issues around inclusion and disclosure of information. This enables organisations to continue to collect accurate data while engaging with staff to build trust and confidence in the process. Key to building trust is demonstrating a commitment to equality and inclusivity through action, including sharing how the data has already been used to this end.

We will also continue to share learning from the sector, through case studies showcasing how fellow organisations have transformed the way they collect data. Please [get in touch](#) if you would like to share your EDI journey.

## 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

We now need to use the data to identify areas for improvement, for example, where there has been little or no progress, and consider setting targets in those areas. It can be more effective to focus on seeing progress on a few key characteristics or workforce groups, such as your leadership team or board.

**Housing associations should review their recruitment processes to ensure these are not creating barriers for ethnic minorities and Disabled people.** An important factor is, for example, if an interview panel for a senior post is only made up of people from a White background, then this may create an immediate barrier for candidates from a different ethnic group. Housing associations should be encouraged to be as inclusive as possible, and if necessary work in partnership with third parties (so that panels are ethnically diverse), to ensure recruitment is not a barrier.

This report identifies representation of disability as a collective area for improvement. Progress requires both internal engagement with Disabled members of staff, to understand barriers and the effectiveness of any actions already in place, and external engagement, seeking advice and support from experts and sharing learning as a sector. Housing associations should also be encouraged to work with disability charities and organisations who provide support and advice on removing barriers for Disabled people. For example, [housing associations could sign up to be a Disability Confident employer and view our resources on Disability Confident best practice for housing associations.](#)

Those in leadership positions are not representative of the workforce or communities in terms of ethnicity, with no progress over the past two years. It can take time to see change, given the relatively slow turnover of executive positions. However, given the inequity in tenant experience for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents, highlighted in the [Better Social Housing Review](#), it is important that we continue to seek both ethnic diversity and representation in executive and board positions within our organisations.

We recommend that housing associations use their data to identify what changes need to be made to increase ethnic diversity, for example, through recruitment practices and training and development opportunities. [For evidence-based advice, housing associations could sign up to and implement Leadership 2025's Five Point Plan, which starts with reporting annually on diversity statistics.](#)

Boards can play an integral role in establishing a strong culture of inclusivity and in shaping effective EDI strategies. [To support chairs to work with their boards to create their own vision and roadmaps to success, we have developed the Chairs' Challenge, in partnership with Altair. Join the 54 chairs who have signed up and use our resources to increase board diversity.](#)

The data, and high rate of “prefer not to say” responses, could suggest that some people do not feel safe or comfortable disclosing their gender identity or sexuality. [To demonstrate a commitment to equality for LGBTQ+ communities within the workforce and learn more about how to become LGBTQ+ inclusive leaders, housing associations could join Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme. And to extend this commitment to residents, join the HouseProud pledge.](#)

There are also benefits to looking at what has worked well, by using the data to identify where diversity and representation have improved and identifying lessons to shape future action plans.

**Crucial to this process is engaging members of staff with lived experience,** for example through establishing staff groups, providing a richer understanding of the barriers people experience and how to overcome them. Continuous feedback on existing actions and strategies can also highlight what is working well and any issues in advance of measuring progress through the EDI data tool, enabling revisions or adjustments to plans to improve the likelihood of success.



## Next steps

We will repeat the data collection again in 2026, enabling us to see whether we have made progress in new areas and whether any of the changes seen this year become longer-term trends. However, we encourage NHF members to regularly review and update the EDI data tool to assess progress against their action plans.

The [EDI data tool](#) and [suggested questions to ask your workforce](#) are still available on the website for members to access and use to collect and collate your EDI data, and to compare your workforce against the population where your stock is located.

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. Please [get in touch](#) if your organisation has a piece of work that you think others within the sector could learn from.

We will publish regional breakdowns of the data for housing associations to review and act on, due to the regional variation of some characteristics.

As part of our [Knowing our Homes](#) project, we aim to develop with our members a more consistent approach to what information landlords collect about their residents and how they use this to assess equity in service delivery. We're currently in the first stage of this work, which is to develop a baseline understanding of current practice across the sector, i.e. how housing associations are currently collecting and using data about their homes and residents. We will share more information on this work in the coming months, which is part of our [Better Social Housing Review action plan](#).



# Appendix A:

## About the data

We made every effort to ensure that each organisation's EDI data is comparable; however, there are some points to note in terms of the data and analysis presented:

- We did not ask organisations to submit their data at a certain date. This means that the data represents different time points for different organisations.
- Where there are data gaps, some of these (particularly marital and civil partnership status) are due to categories in the tool not matching categories in information collected by housing associations.
- For some organisations, social housing is one part of a larger business, which might include (non-residential) support and care or non-social housing. Where possible, organisations separated staff responsible for housing from wider employee data.

## Characteristics:

### Sex and gender identity

Following ONS definitions and best practice guidance, the tool captures data on sex and gender as two separate questions. As set out in our suggested questions, the question on sex refers to someone's sex described on their birth certificate or gender recognition certificate. This is followed up with a question on whether their gender identity is the same as their sex registered at birth and, if not, to choose which option best describes their gender identity or to describe it if not listed as an option.

The gender identity response options within the tool match those reported on by ONS for Census 2021, to enable us to make comparisons with the population. We understand that there is much more nuance to people's identities and encourage housing associations to add additional response options when collecting this data, if other responses are described in the free text space.

### Ethnicity

Headline ethnicity, calculated from grouping more detailed ethnicity categories, provides a more complete picture on ethnicity of workforce, executives and boards than detailed ethnicity. Many housing associations who provided a headline breakdown of ethnic groups could not provide a more detailed picture. Therefore, we have not presented detailed ethnicity data in this report, though it is available in the accompanying data tool showing the national picture.

### Disability

This year we changed our wording for the question on disability to include two separate questions. Firstly, whether or not someone has a disability or long-term health condition and secondly, the extent to which their disability limits their day-to-day activities.

The second question distinguishes between when someone's disability or long-term condition means they are considered Disabled under the Equality Act (2010). People are considered Disabled under the Equality Act if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.



## Marital and civil partnership status

Marital and civil partnership status is one characteristic where multiple categories are available at a population level to enable comparison. Some of these categories, however, do not match the categories recorded by organisations. As such, the ‘don’t know’ figure is higher than reality.

We have grouped some of the categories when presenting the results in this report. As well as providing a clear picture, through combining some of the smaller categories, this also addresses discrepancies where housing associations have not provided separate categories, such as whether people are ‘separated’ from a marriage or civil partnership. The full results are available in the accompanying data tool showing the national picture.

## Workforce groups:

### Workforce

Workforce figures are for all staff, including executives. The EDI data tool also calculates staff numbers, excluding executives, to compare the characteristics of executives and boards with the characteristics of staff. The national figures for staff are available in the accompanying EDI data tool on the website.

### Executive

Although we did not provide a strict definition of ‘executive’, we provided guidance which suggested that executives should include the executive management team who take decisions for the organisation. They will likely hold responsibilities for setting the strategic direction and overseeing management of resources to ensure the organisational objectives are met.

We would expect this to include chief executives, managing directors and senior leaders. However, the exact roles that are included may differ between organisations of different sizes and structures.

## Board

We asked housing associations to include all members of their board, including any executive directors who sit on the board. This means that some people will be captured in the executive and board figures.

We expect that some organisations have included all their committees within the board figures as for 11 organisations the board total included 20 or more people.

## Resident

While we suggested that resident data should include any tenant on the tenancy contract, to be flexible to alternative reporting systems, we accepted other definitions such as the lead tenant or any person living in the household.

There are several terms which can be used to refer to people who live in social housing, including “customers”, “tenants” and “residents”. While the EDI data tool collects data on the characteristics of members’ customers, we have used the term “residents” within this report to refer to the same group of people.

## Population data:

For the majority of characteristics, the population by stock location was calculated using Census 2021 data, except for the following characteristics:

- **Caring responsibilities – dependent children:** figures are households by sock location, from the Annual Population Survey Oct 21 – Sept 22 (ONS).
- **Caring responsibilities – informal care:** figures are for the UK population, from the Family Resources Survey 2020/21 (ONS).
- **Socioeconomic background – attendance at independent school:** figures are for the population of England, from Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2021 (Department for Education)

For further notes on comparison data sources, see the ‘Notes’ tab of the completed EDI tool that accompanies this report.

# Appendix B:

## Additional data tables comparing 2021 and 2023

**Appendix Table 1: Proportion of workforce, executive, board and residents where we don't have data for each characteristic, comparison by year with percentage point difference**

Characteristic	Workforce			Executive			Board		
	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)
Free school meals	99%	95%	-4.03	93%	91%	-2.18	92%	82%	-10.09
Attendance at independent school	97%	95%	-1.33	91%	90%	-0.96	90%	80%	-9.80
Parental occupation	99%	92%	-7.28	93%	86%	-6.79	93%	78%	-14.55
Provision of informal care	97%	90%	-6.82	87%	82%	-5.29	89%	77%	-11.23
Have dependent children	96%	90%	-6.73	84%	75%	-9.00	84%	70%	-14.57
Disability (detailed)	n/a	86%	n/a	n/a	81%	n/a	n/a	69%	n/a
Gender identity	72%	52%	-20.28	67%	53%	-13.79	77%	44%	-32.45
Marital or civil partnership status	51%	38%	-13.39	42%	39%	-2.60	56%	49%	-6.45
Sexual orientation	35%	22%	-12.54	21%	17%	-4.70	42%	33%	-9.71
Disability (binary)	30%	22%	-7.61	18%	16%	-1.18	37%	31%	-6.05
Religion	32%	22%	-9.90	25%	23%	-1.92	46%	32%	-13.99
Ethnicity (detailed)	26%	18%	-7.60	21%	17%	-4.70	36%	34%	-1.90
Ethnicity (headline)	12%	10%	-1.79	6%	7%	1.03	26%	23%	-3.05
Age	5%	2%	-3.00	3%	3%	-0.20	15%	13%	-2.07
Sex	1%	1%	-0.25	0%	1%	0.64	7%	5%	-2.48

**Appendix Table 2: Proportion of workforce, executive, board and customers where person selected ‘prefer not to say’ for each characteristic, comparison by year with percentage point difference**

Characteristic	Workforce			Executive			Board		
	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)
Religion	7%	6%	-0.44	6%	6%	-0.06	4%	6%	2.42
Sexual orientation	6%	6%	-0.08	4%	5%	1.51	4%	5%	1.38
Marital or civil partnership status	3%	4%	1.01	1%	1%	0.06	2%	2%	0.56
Gender identity	1%	4%	2.78	0%	0%	0.00	0%	2%	1.82
Ethnicity (headline)	2%	3%	0.95	1%	1%	-0.47	2%	3%	0.33
Disability (binary)	3%	3%	0.08	2%	3%	0.84	2%	2%	0.05
Ethnicity (detailed)	2%	2%	-0.29	2%	1%	-0.43	2%	3%	0.75
Disability (detailed)	n/a	2%	n/a	n/a	0%	n/a	n/a	2%	n/a
Provision of informal care	0%	2%	1.63	0%	1%	0.44	1%	2%	1.71
Free school meals	0%	2%	1.74	1%	1%	-0.28	1%	2%	1.67
Parental occupation	0%	2%	1.70	1%	1%	0.07	0%	1%	0.97
Have dependent children	0%	2%	1.61	0%	1%	1.03	0%	2%	1.74
Attendance at independent school	2%	2%	-0.81	1%	0%	-0.14	0%	2%	1.63
Sex	0%	0%	0.05	0%	0%	0.46	0%	0%	-0.07
Age	0%	0%	-0.06	0%	0%	0.17	0%	1%	0.49

**Appendix Table 3: Proportion of workforce, executive and board by characteristic, excluding prefer not to say and don't know, comparison by year with percentage point difference (where there is sufficient data to compare)**

Characteristic	Workforce			Executive			Board		
	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)
<b>Sex</b>									
Female	57.1%	54.5%	-2.68	44.8%	46.9%	2.06	42.3%	43.7%	1.40
Male	42.9%	45.5%	2.68	55.2%	53.1%	-2.06	57.7%	56.3%	-1.40
<b>Gender identity</b>									
Gender identity same as sex at birth	99.2%	99.1%	-0.10	100.0%	100.0%	0.00	100.0%	99.9%	-0.09
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth <sup>1</sup>	0.8%	0.9%	0.10	0.0%	0.0%	0.00	0.0%	0.1%	0.09
<b>Ethnicity (headline totals)</b>									
White	82.7%	81.4%	-1.36	90.1%	90.1%	-0.05	80.2%	81.8%	1.61
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	2.5%	2.5%	0.00	1.7%	1.4%	-0.36	2.5%	2.7%	0.13
Asian/Asian British	5.0%	5.4%	0.37	4.3%	4.5%	0.21	8.0%	8.2%	0.15
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	8.6%	9.5%	0.92	3.1%	3.2%	0.10	8.2%	6.1%	-2.07
Other ethnic group	1.2%	1.3%	0.08	0.7%	0.7%	0.10	1.0%	1.2%	0.18
<b>Disability (binary question)</b>									
Has a disability / long-term physical or mental health condition	7.6%	8.8%	1.19	8.2%	6.3%	-1.90	7.7%	10.3%	2.62
No disability / long-term physical or mental health condition	92.4%	91.2%	-1.19	91.8%	93.7%	1.90	92.3%	89.7%	-2.62
<b>Sexual orientation</b>									
Straight/Heterosexual	95.6%	95.7%	0.00	93.1%	94.0%	0.94	96.0%	95.4%	-0.67
Gay or lesbian	2.7%	2.7%	-0.08	6.4%	5.3%	-1.14	3.0%	3.9%	0.92
Bisexual	1.3%	1.4%	0.11	0.5%	0.6%	0.05	1.0%	0.7%	-0.25
Other sexual orientation	0.3%	0.3%	-0.03	0.0%	0.1%	0.15	0.0%	0.0%	0.00



Characteristic	Workforce			Executive			Board		
	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	Difference (pp)
<b>Religion</b>									
Christian	49.0%	47.6%	-1.41	52.4%	50.3%	-2.05	56.9%	53.7%	-3.23
Buddhist	0.4%	0.5%	0.02	0.3%	0.6%	0.27	0.1%	0.5%	0.38
Hindu	1.0%	0.9%	-0.13	1.0%	1.0%	0.03	2.0%	1.9%	-0.13
Jewish	0.2%	0.2%	-0.06	1.0%	0.5%	-0.53	1.0%	0.6%	-0.40
Muslim	4.2%	4.2%	0.04	3.0%	2.6%	-0.46	5.2%	4.5%	-0.78
Sikh	0.9%	0.8%	-0.08	1.0%	0.9%	-0.13	1.0%	0.6%	-0.40
Other religion	4.4%	4.2%	-0.22	3.6%	3.2%	-0.40	3.1%	2.7%	-0.47
No religion	39.9%	41.7%	1.83	37.7%	41.0%	3.26	30.5%	35.5%	5.02
<b>Age</b>									
16-24	7.2%	5.3%	-1.93	0.0%	0.0%	0.00	0.1%	0.1%	0.05
25-34	20.2%	20.1%	-0.07	1.9%	3.6%	1.79	3.9%	3.2%	-0.66
35-44	23.8%	25.3%	1.48	15.7%	25.3%	9.54	11.8%	13.6%	1.73
45-54	25.2%	24.5%	-0.65	46.7%	39.3%	-7.38	25.5%	24.4%	-1.12
55-64	20.7%	21.5%	0.88	33.8%	29.9%	-3.98	37.4%	37.8%	0.32
65+	2.9%	3.2%	0.30	1.9%	1.9%	0.03	21.2%	20.9%	-0.32
<b>Marital and civil partnership status</b>									
Married	46.1%	46.8%	0.65	74.2%	69.9%	-4.26	74.1%	71.4%	-2.69
Single	33.2%	31.5%	-1.71	10.2%	13.6%	3.36	12.0%	11.8%	-0.20
Living with someone as a couple	11.8%	12.8%	0.98	8.1%	7.2%	-0.87	5.9%	6.6%	0.69
Separated <sup>2</sup>	1.6%	1.7%	0.10	1.2%	1.7%	0.50	0.4%	2.0%	1.59
Divorced <sup>2</sup>	5.2%	5.2%	0.01	4.7%	5.5%	0.74	5.4%	4.5%	-0.89
Widowed <sup>2</sup>	0.8%	0.8%	0.02	0.2%	0.5%	0.31	1.5%	1.5%	0.07
Civil Partnership	1.2%	1.2%	0.00	1.1%	1.6%	0.58	0.7%	2.2%	1.43
Same sex couple <sup>3</sup>	0.0%	n/a		0.4%	n/a		0.0%	n/a	

Characteristic	Workforce		Executive		Board	
	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)
<b>Caring responsibilities - children</b>						
With dependent children	47.9%	43.3%	49.7%	52.7%	34.6%	28.6%
No dependent children	52.1%	56.7%	50.3%	47.3%	65.4%	71.4%
<b>Caring responsibilities - informal care</b>						
Providing informal care	20.8%	22.3%	23.4%	23.8%	27.3%	24.9%
Not providing informal care	79.2%	77.7%	76.6%	76.2%	72.7%	75.1%
<b>Parental occupation at 14</b>						
Professional occupations / Managers or administrators	32.6%	43.6%	42.4%	68.3%	47.0%	57.4%
Clerical and intermediate occupations; and Technical and craft occupations <sup>4</sup>	36.3%	34.8%	28.8%	14.5%	24.6%	17.7%
Routine, semi-routine manual and service occupations	31.1%	13.9%	28.8%	10.4%	28.4%	15.5%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	8.6%	9.5%	3.1%	3.2%	8.2%	6.1%
Other ethnic group	1.2%	1.3%	0.7%	0.7%	1.0%	1.2%
Long-term unemployed	n/a	1.2%	n/a	0.5%	n/a	0.2%
Small business owners	n/a	3.9%	n/a	5.0%	n/a	6.1%
Other	n/a	2.5%	n/a	1.4%	n/a	3.1%

Characteristic	Workforce		Executive		Board	
	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)	2021 (%)	2023 (%)
<b>Attendance at independent school</b>						
A state-run or state-funded school	54.1%	87.5%	85.2%	89.4%	73.9%	81.2%
Independent or fee-paying school	45.9%	6.9%	14.8%	6.8%	26.1%	13.3%
Independent or fee-paying school, where I received a bursary covering 90% or more of my tuition <sup>5</sup>	n/a	0.5%	n/a	0.6%	n/a	0.6%
Attended school outside the UK <sup>5</sup>	n/a	5.0%	n/a	3.1%	n/a	5.0%
<b>Free school meal eligibility</b>						
Eligible for free school meals at state-funded schools	24.7%	21.8%	27.9%	16.0%	14.5%	15.6%
Not eligible for free school meals at state-funded schools	75.3%	62.9%	72.1%	70.0%	85.5%	63.6%
Not applicable (finished school before 1980 or went to school overseas) <sup>5</sup>	n/a	15.2%	n/a	14.0%	n/a	20.9%

- 1 Categories have been grouped due to change in question wording between 2021 and 2023 data collections.
- 2 Includes (former) civil partnerships.
- 3 No corresponding category in 2023 data collection, kept separate as does not specify whether cohabiting or not.
- 4 Combines two 2023 response categories due to change in question wording.
- 5 No data for these categories due to change in question wording

