

How diverse is the housing association workforce in the East Midlands?

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 East Midlands.

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

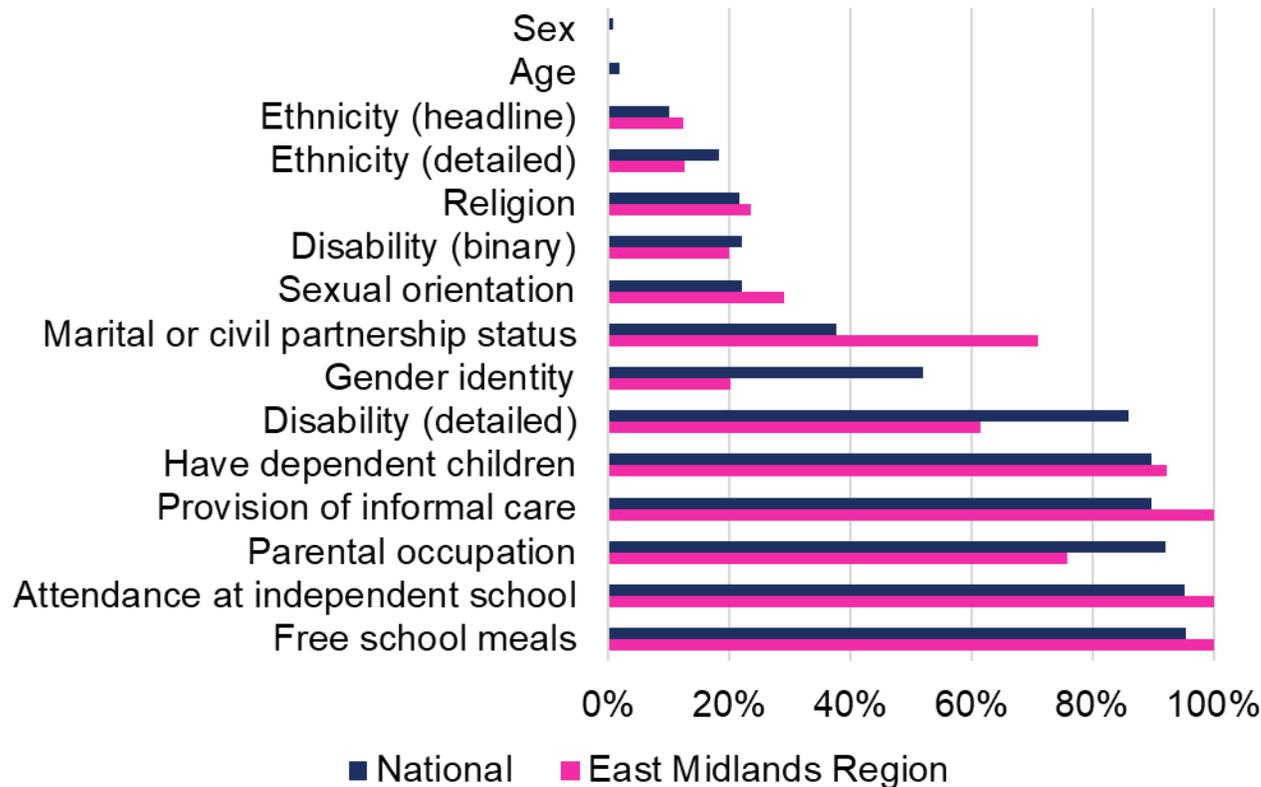
Region	Number of submissions	Response as % of member SDR stock in region
London	39	85%
North West	32	60%
East of England	19	84%
South East	18	63%
West Midlands	18	79%
Yorkshire and Humberside	18	92%
South West	17	92%
North East	11	99%
East Midlands	5	87%
Grand total (England)	177	79%

- 177 housing associations across England, representing 79% of members' homes and 76% of all housing association homes in England.
- 5 housing associations with headquarters in the East Midlands, representing 87% of members' homes.
- All 5 provided at least some data on their workforce, executives and board. 4 also provided data on their residents.
- Please note: Given the small number of responses, when compared with 2021 and national data, differences may be exaggerated.

East Midlands results

Where are the biggest gaps in data?

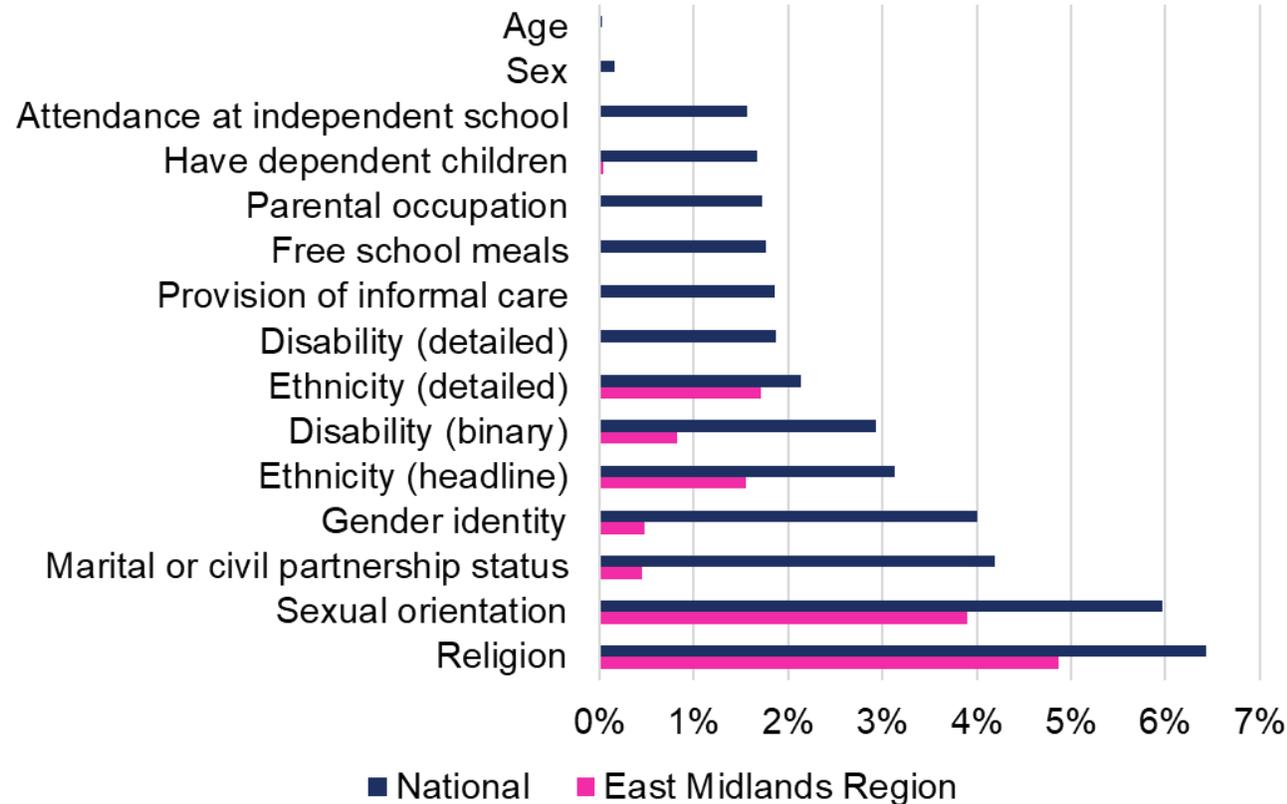
Proportion of workforce where we don't have data for each characteristic



- We received complete data for age and sex across all workforce groups.
- The largest data gaps are for socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities, where we're missing all data on provision of informal care, attendance at independent school and free school meal eligibility for each workforce group.
- We're missing more data on these characteristics compared to national data (missing 70-95% nationally) and compared to 2021 East Midlands data (82-100%).

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 (4.9% of the workforce responded 'prefer not to say') followed by sexual orientation (3.9%).
- We received fewer prefer not to say responses compared to the national data, across all workforce groups and for most characteristics.

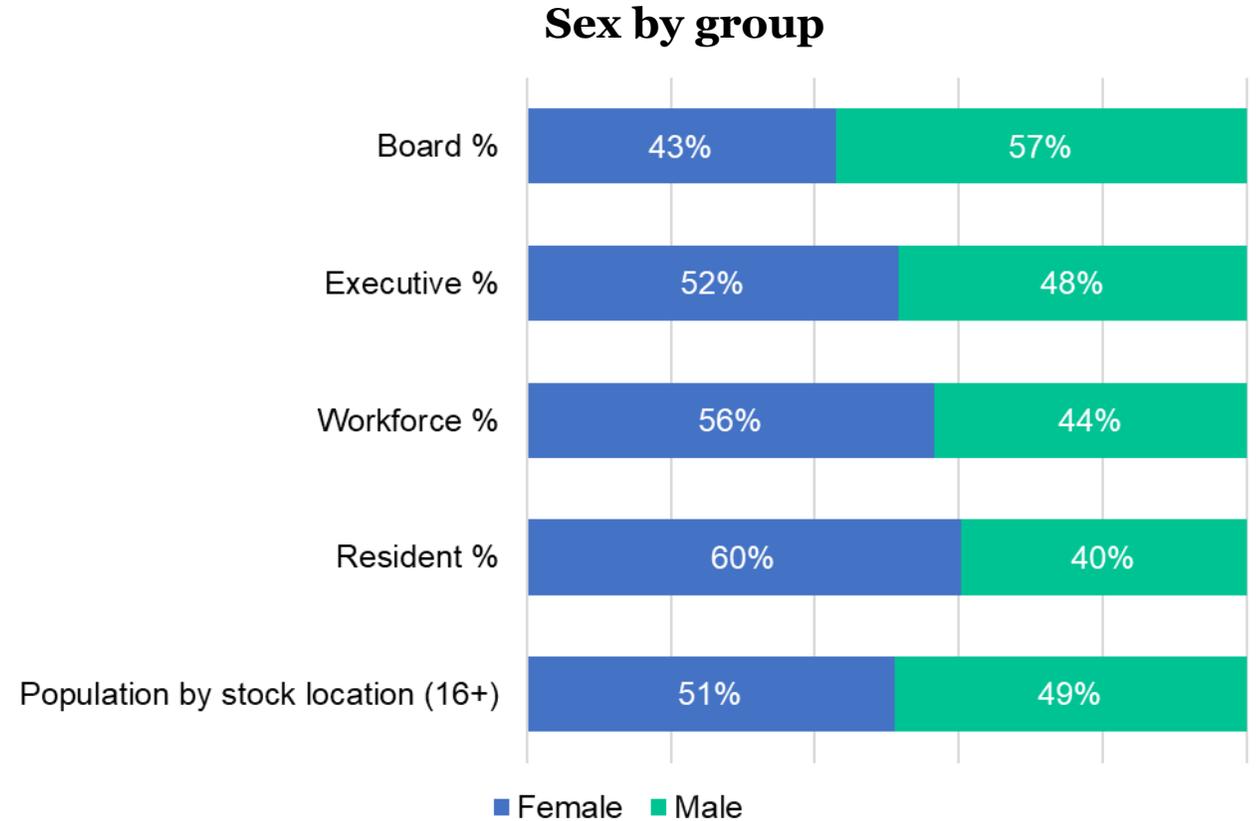
How representative is the workforce?

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

- There is good female representation within the workforce – 56% compared to 51% of the population and 60% of residents.
- While fewer executives are female compared to the workforce (52% compared to 56% of the workforce), this reflects the population (51%). This is similar to 2021 (50%).
- There is a lack of female representation on boards, where only 43% of board members are female, up from 35% in 2021.



Gender identity

- Reflecting the national data, transwomen and transmen are underrepresented across all workforce groups.
- At leadership level there is no representation of people who identify as trans*.

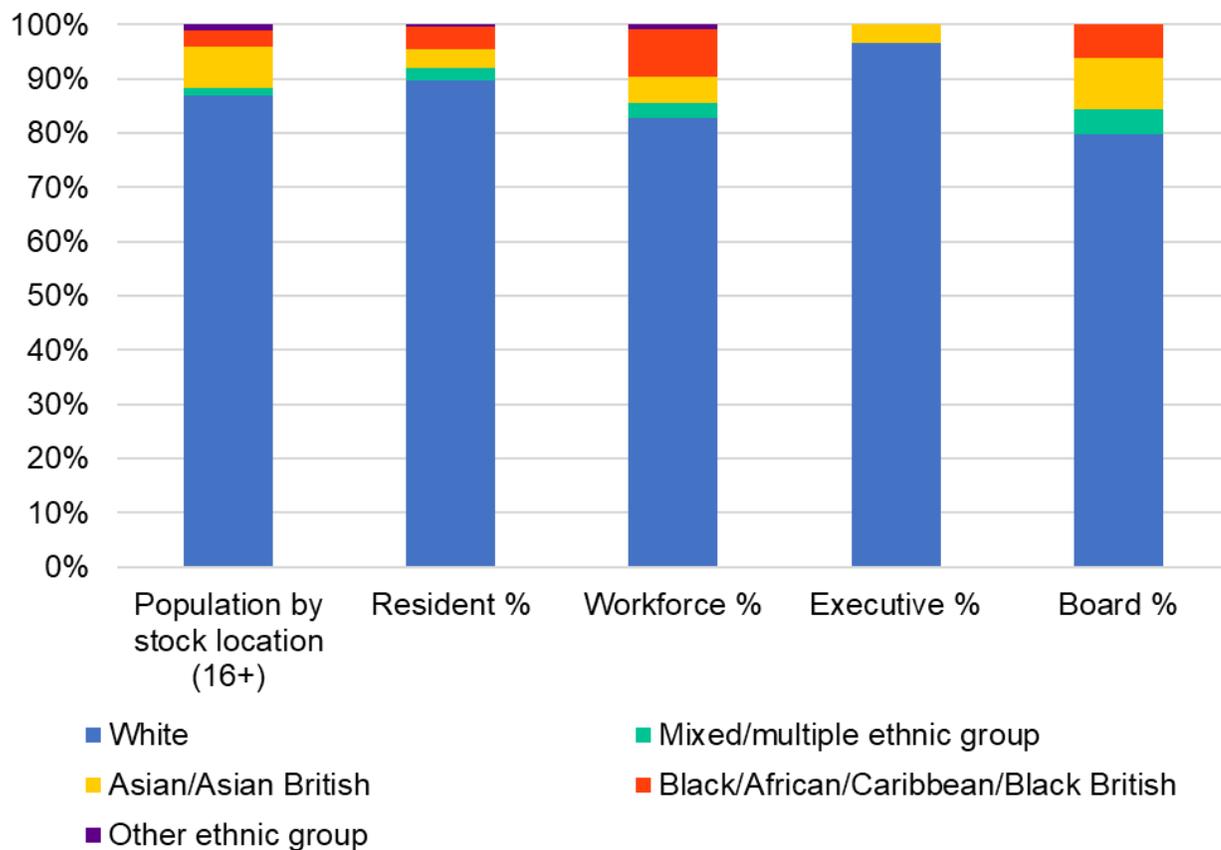
*We are using the term “trans” as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth, as defined by [Stonewall](#).

Gender identity by group

	Population by stock location (16+)	Workforce %	Executive %	Board %
Gender identity same as sex at birth	93.3%	99.6%	100.0%	100.0%
Identify as trans(gender) woman	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Identify as trans(gender) man	0.1%	0.0%	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	6.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%

Ethnicity

Ethnicity by group

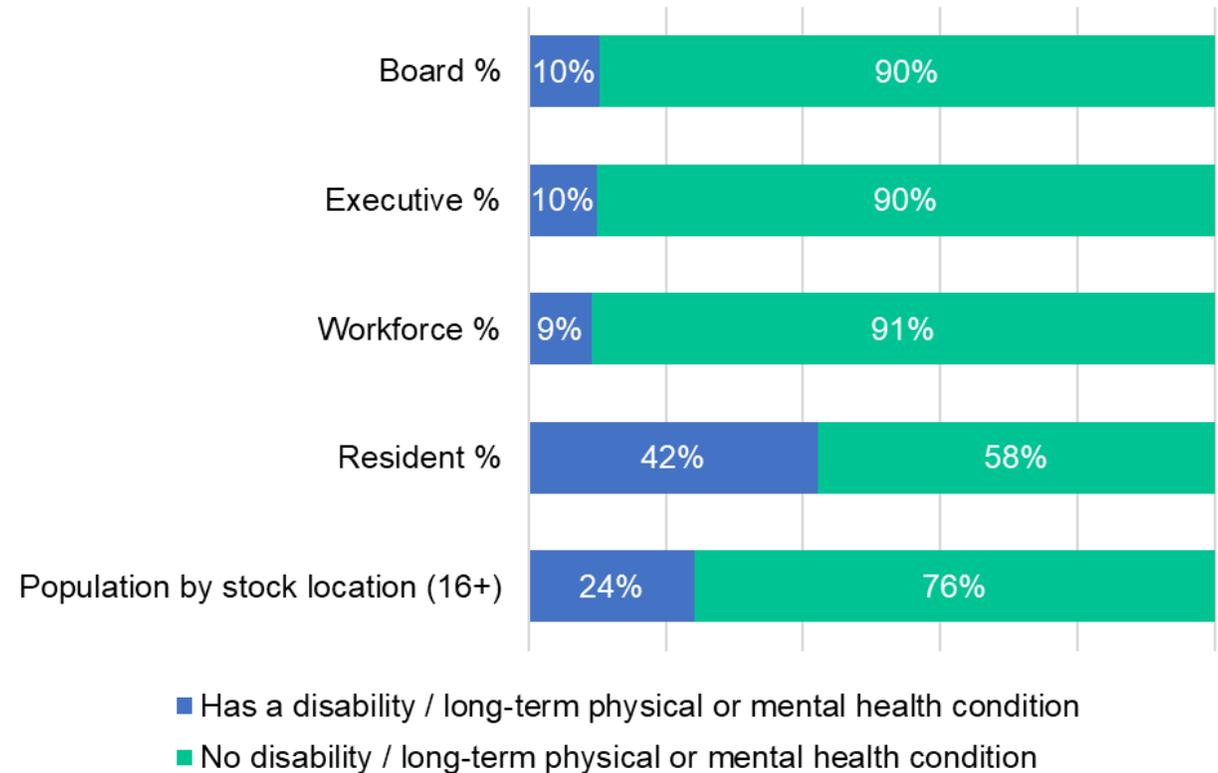


- Compared to the population and to residents, the workforce and boards are more ethnically diverse, with good representation of all ethnic groups (except for 'other ethnic groups' on boards).
- However, there is a huge lack of representation at executive level – 3% of executives are Asian or Asian British and the rest are White.
- There has been no change to the ethnic diversity of East Midlands executives since 2021.

Disability

- As we've seen in the national data, Disabled people are underrepresented across all workforce groups, yet a high proportion of residents have a disability or long-term health condition.
- Compared to 2021, there has been a small decrease in the proportion of Disabled board members (from 14% to 10%). This is due to an increase in the number of board members without a disability or long-term health condition (from 37 board members in 2021 to 52 in 2023).

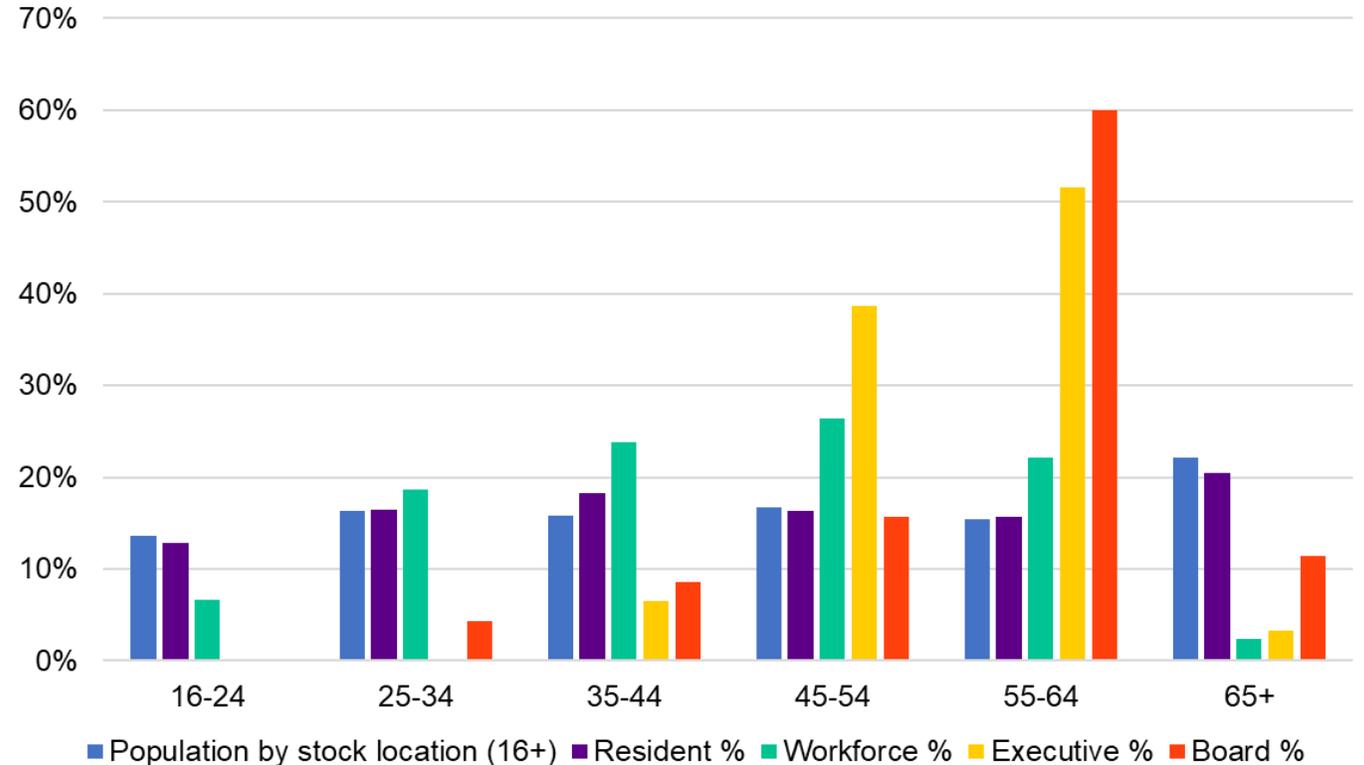
Disability (yes/no) by group



Age

- The workforce largely represents the population and residents.
- People in leadership positions (executives and board members) are more likely to be older – for example, 55% of executives and 71% of board members are aged 55 and over, compared to 24% of the workforce.
- While nationally there are more younger people in executive positions compared to 2021, we've seen the opposite in the East Midlands (32% of executives were aged 55 and over in 2021 compared to 55% in 2023).

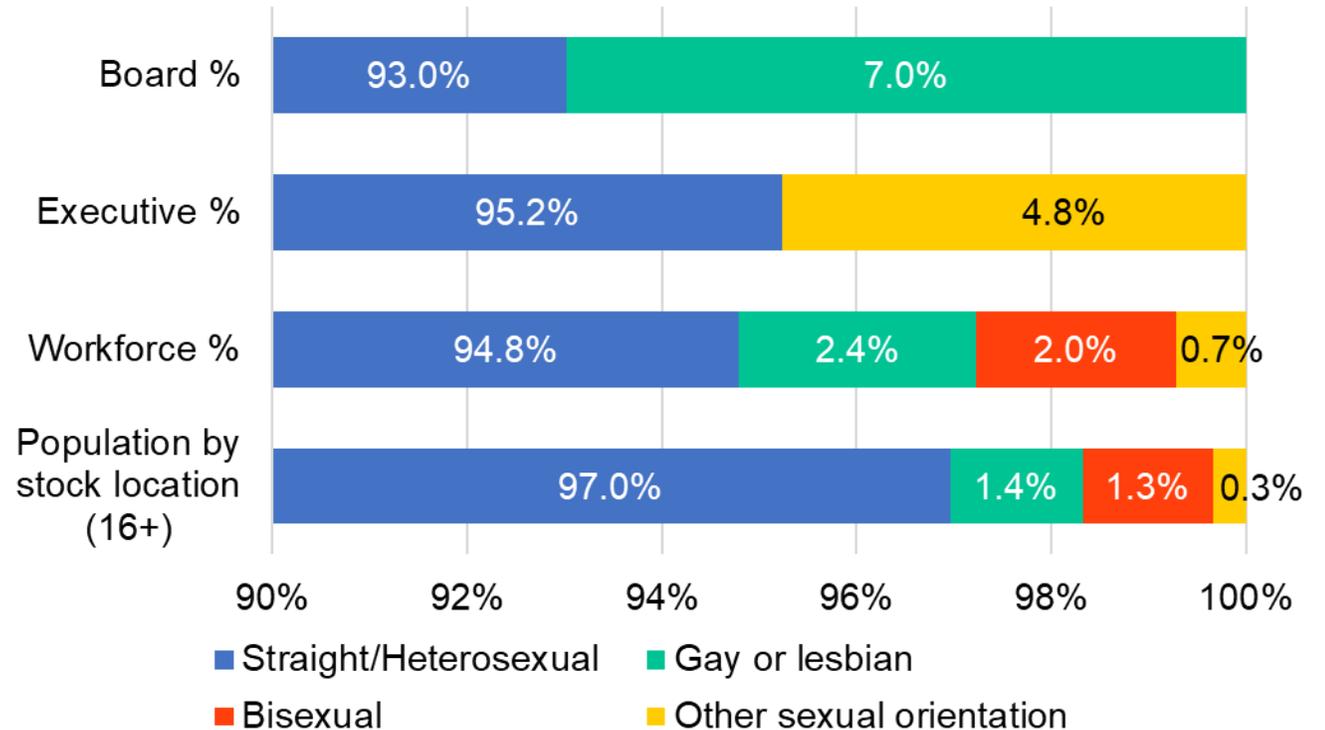
Age by group



Sexual orientation

- The workforce reflects the population in terms of sexual orientation.
- While the proportion of people who are straight/heterosexual reflects the workforce, people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual are not represented at executive level and people who are bisexual are not represented at board level.
- However, these figures represent a small number of positions at leadership level (21 executives and 43 board members), partly due to missing 29% of executive data and 39% of board data on sexual orientation.

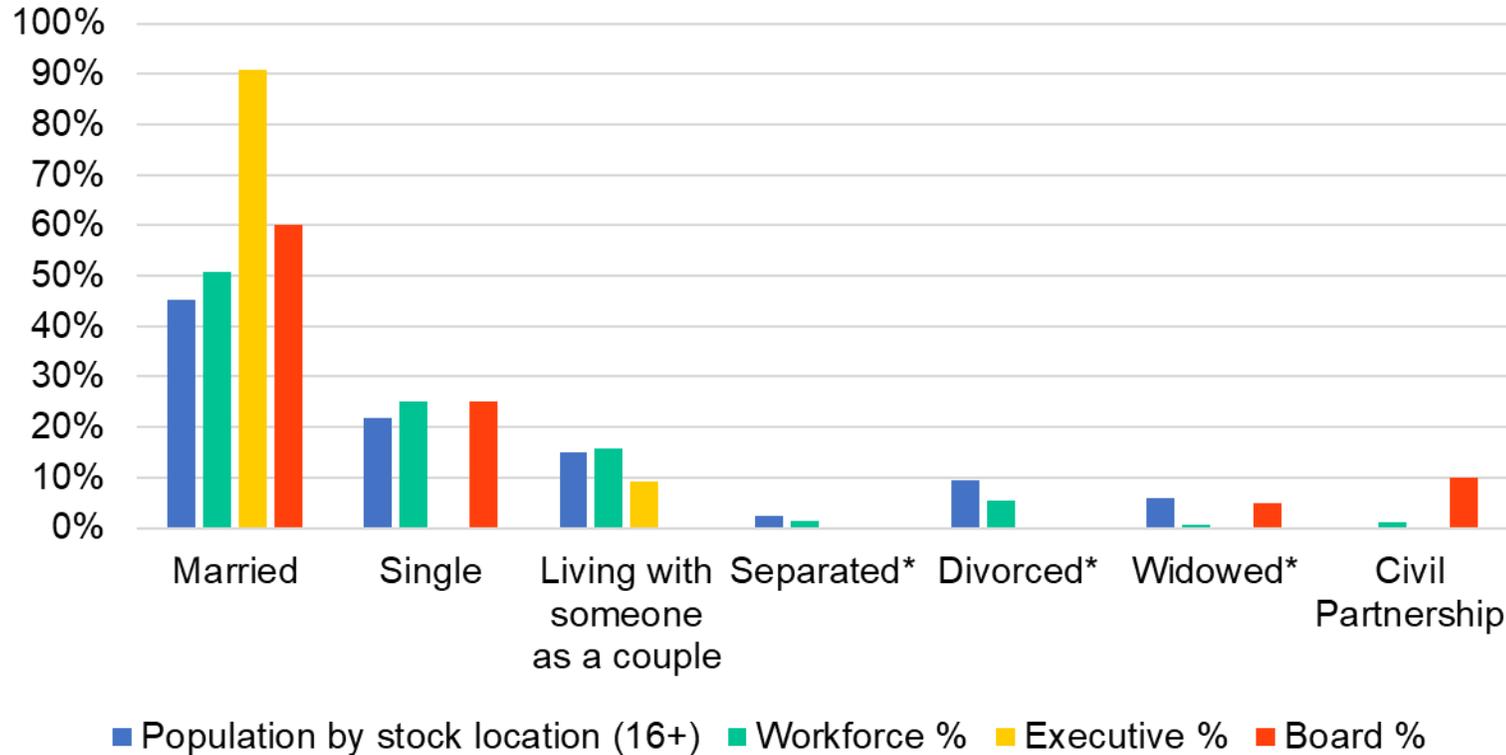
Sexual orientation by group



Please note, axis starts at 90%

Marital and civil partnership status

Marital and civil partnership status by group

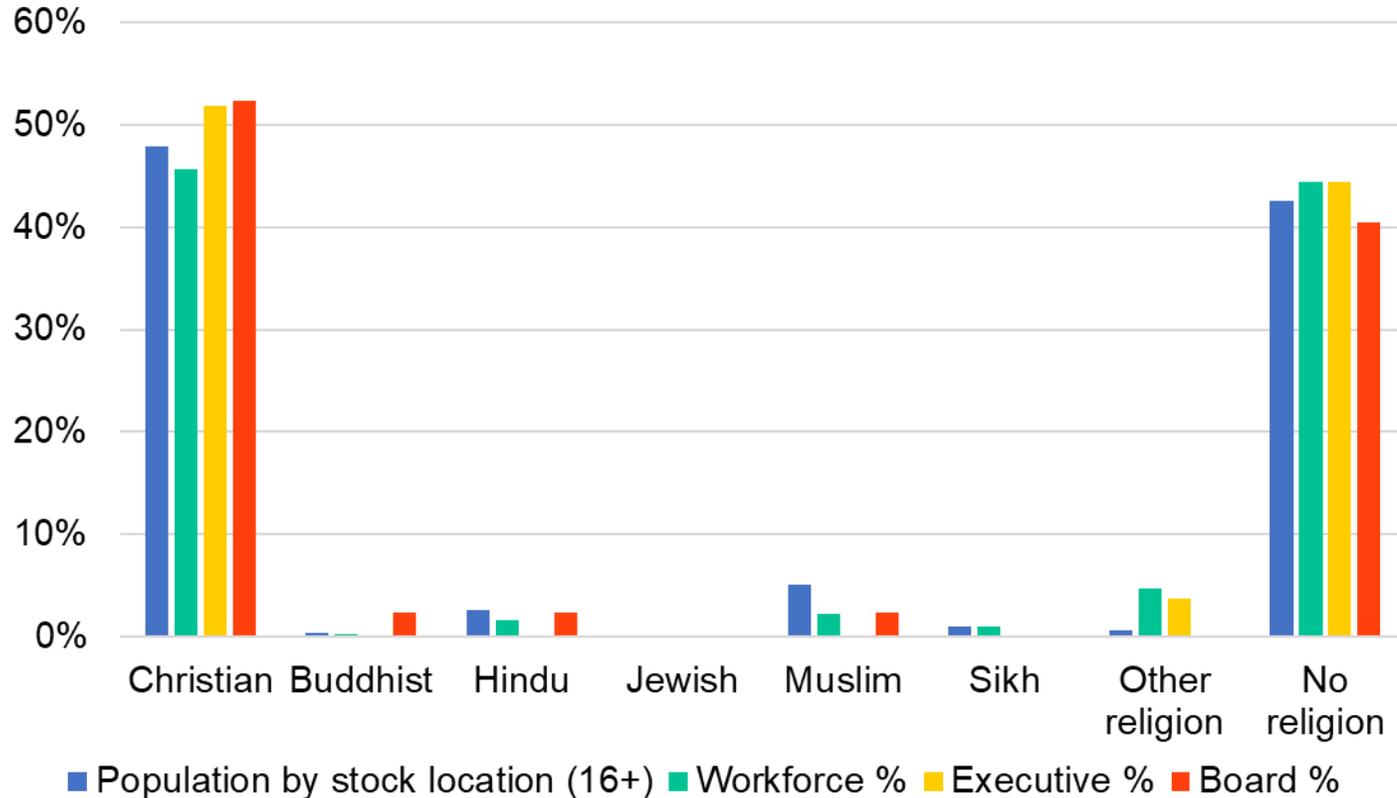


- The workforce reflects the population.
- Executives are much more likely to be married compared to the workforce and to boards – 91% of executives are married, compared to 51% of the workforce, and no executives are single.
- These findings are similar to 2021, when 87% of executives and 45% of the workforce were married.

*Includes (former) civil partnerships

Religion

Religion by group



- All workforce groups largely reflect the population.
- Compared to the workforce, people in leadership positions are more likely to be Christian, but this difference is small given the small numbers represented - 52% of executives and board members are Christian, compared to 46% of the workforce.

Areas for future focus

Housing associations in the East Midlands should aim to:

- Increase female representation on boards.
- Increase ethnic diversity at executive level.
- Increase the representation of Disabled people across all workforce groups.
- Increase the representation of people who identify as trans across all workforce groups.
- Collect more complete data on socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities.

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



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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