

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

This summary presents the key findings and recommendations from the National Housing Federation's (NHF) 2023 report on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the housing association workforce in England.

We analysed data from 177 organisations representing 76% of housing association-owned homes in England, providing insights into the diversity and representation of the sector's workforce and leadership. We have compared the characteristics of the workforce to the population where housing association homes are located and the characteristics of the leadership (executives and board members) to the workforce.

Read our full report on the NHF's website via housing.org.uk/EDI-report-2023

54%

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

47%

of executives are female.

Key findings

Lack of representation:

- Female representation in leadership positions has increased but is still not reflective of the workforce or residents. Only 47% of executives and 44% of board members are female compared to 54% of the workforce.
- Only 9% of the sector's workforce have a disability or long-term health condition compared to 24% of the population and 29% of residents.
- The ethnic diversity of the workforce is not reflected in executive positions. 10% of the workforce is Black/African/Caribbean/Black British but only 3% of executives. 5% of the workforce is Asian/Asian British but only 1% of executives.

Reluctance to disclose:

- Staff are less likely to disclose their religion (6.4%), sexual orientation (6.0%), marital status (4.2%) and gender identity (4.0%) choosing prefer not to say for these characteristics. This highlights the need to create more inclusive workplace cultures where people can bring their whole selves to work.

Data gaps:

- We have more complete data for all workforce groups and characteristics compared to 2021, but big gaps still remain around data on socioeconomic background and caring responsibilities. We are missing over 90% of data on all these characteristics for the housing association workforce.



Recommendations for housing associations

Based on our findings, our recommendations are that housing associations in England should:

- Review processes for collecting and storing EDI data. Engage staff to build trust and confidence.
- Continue to use the EDI data tool to set targets, shape plans and strategies, and measure progress over time. Engage with staff with lived experience to understand the barriers they experience and how to overcome them.
- Review recruitment processes and address barriers to progression and recruitment for ethnic minorities and Disabled people.
- Adopt sector-wide initiatives to drive change including [Disability Confident Scheme](#), [Leadership 2025](#) and [HouseProud Pledge](#).
- Join the [NHF Chairs' Challenge](#) and use our resources to help increase board diversity.

9%

of the sector's workforce have a disability or long-term health condition.

29%

of the sector's residents have a disability or long-term health condition.



Driving long-term change

The results from our second report on diversity in the social housing sector shows commitment from the sector to hold itself to account with equality, diversity and inclusion but progress has been slow.

The results highlight collective action is needed for long-term change. We will continue to support our members to focus on areas of improvement and build on our recommendations.

Next steps

- The NHF will repeat the data collection in 2026, enabling us to see whether the sector has made progress in new areas.
- Continue to share best practice resources and case studies with members.
- The NHF will publish regional breakdowns of the data.
- Develop guidance on the information housing associations should collect about residents.

Together we must keep up the momentum. Addressing inequalities and improving diversity should remain a priority for housing associations.

Let's drive progress towards creating a more diverse and inclusive social housing sector that reflects the communities we serve.

Read our full report on the NHF's website via housing.org.uk/EDI-report-2023

You can find out more about our work on EDI - including the EDI data tool, best practice case studies, and our two National Networks for CEOs and EDI Professionals - via housing.org.uk/diversity