

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

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

# Background

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

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

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

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

In response we launched the EDI data tool.

# The EDI data tool

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

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

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

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

**The following slides presents the findings for housing associations with headquarters in the East of England.**

# About the data

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

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

## **Please note:**

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

# Language and terminology

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

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

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

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

**Further notes on language are include within the national report.**

# Who submitted their data?

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

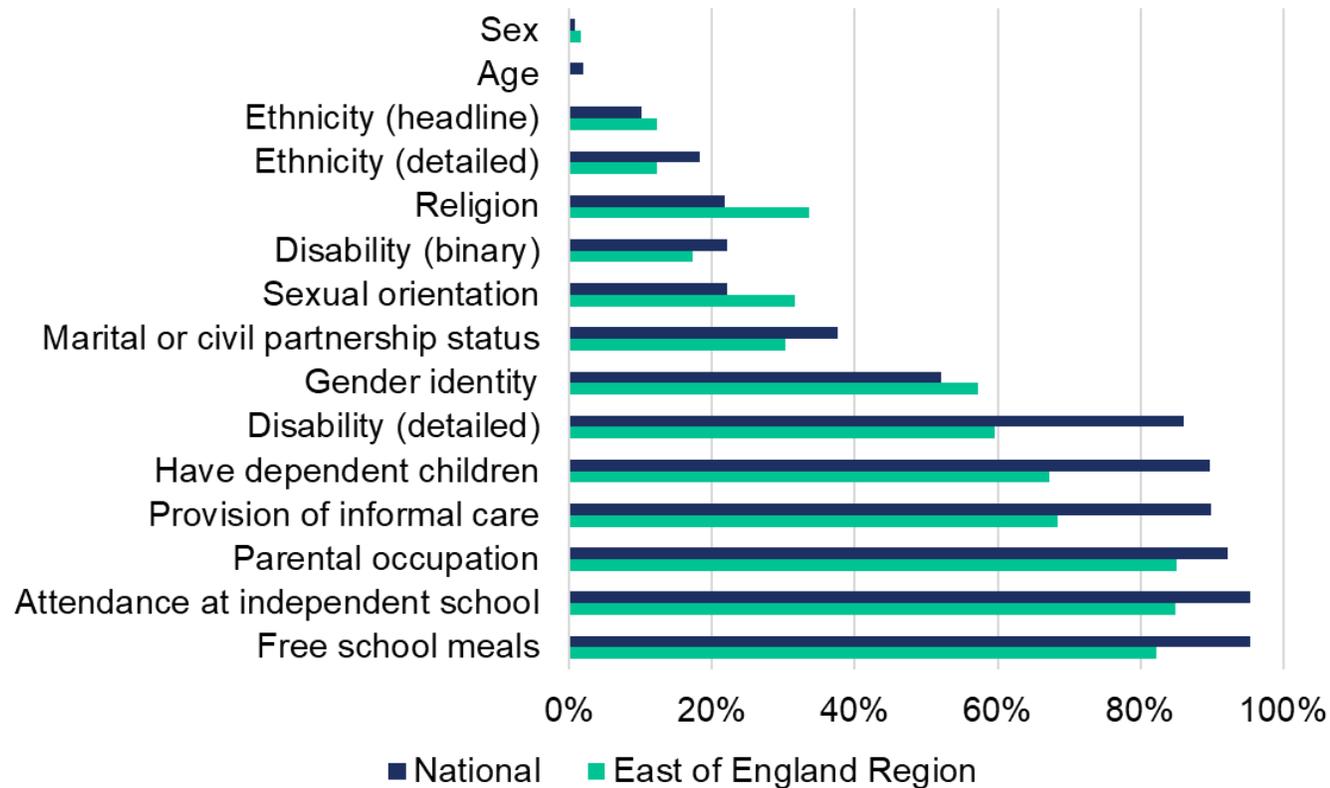
Region	Number of submissions	Response as % of member SDR stock in region
London	39	85%
North West	32	60%
<b>East of England</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>84%</b>
South East	18	63%
West Midlands	18	79%
Yorkshire and Humberside	18	92%
South West	17	92%
North East	11	99%
East Midlands	5	87%
Grand total (England)	177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

- 177 housing associations across England, representing 79% of members' homes and 76% of all housing association homes in England.
- 19 housing associations with headquarters in the East of England, representing 84% of members' homes.
- All 19 provided at least some data on their workforce and executives, 18 on their board, and 10 provided data on their residents.

# East of England results

# Where are the biggest gaps in data?

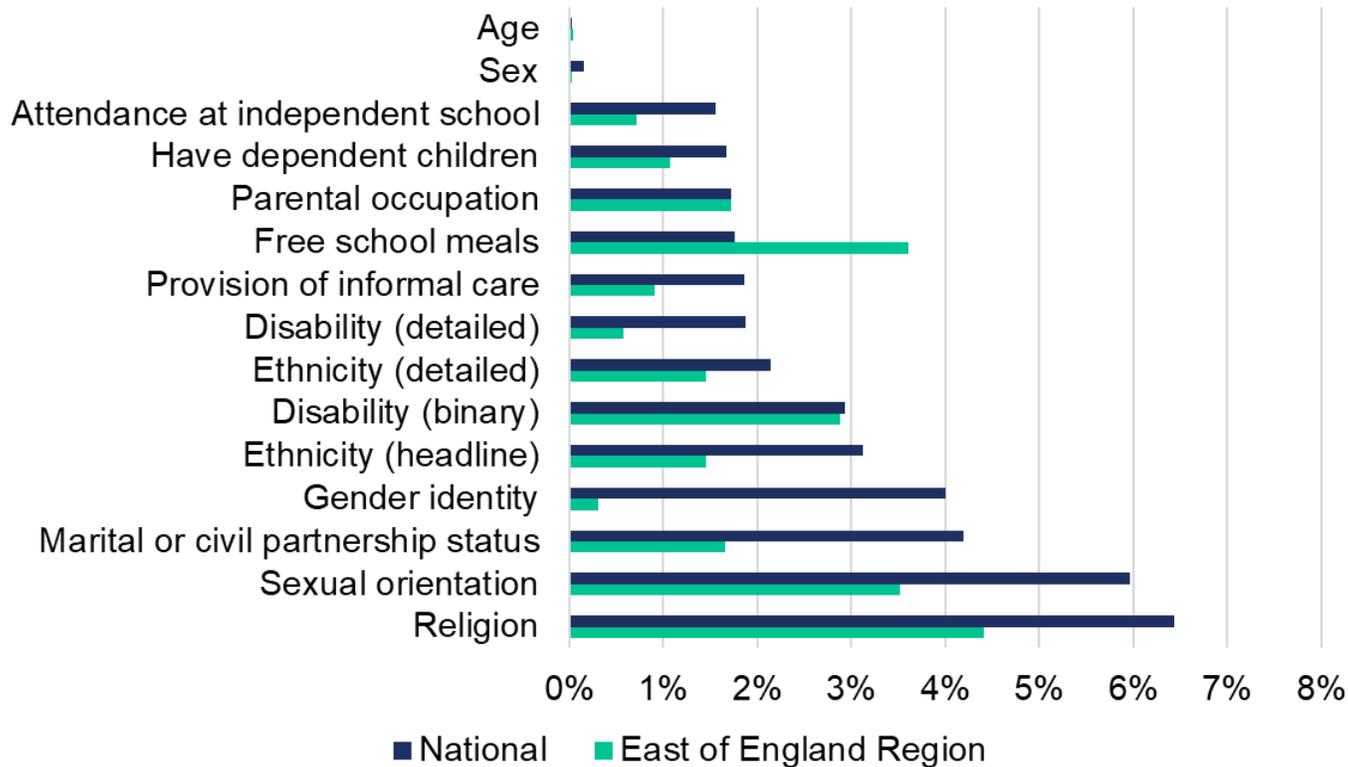
## Proportion of workforce where we don't have data for each characteristic



- Across all workforce groups, we received the most complete data for sex and age – missing only 0%-10% of data across workforce, executive and boards.
- The largest gaps in data are for socioeconomic characteristics and caring responsibilities, where we're missing 82%-85% of workforce data.
- There are fewer gaps for these characteristics compared to national data and to 2021. In 2021 we were missing 88%-97% of socioeconomic data for the workforce.

# What are people choosing not to share?

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



- Across all workforce groups, people were least likely to disclose their religion or sexual orientation – 4.4% of the workforce responded 'prefer not to say' for religion and 3.5% for sexual orientation.
- However, this is lower than in the national data, where 6.4% of the workforce chose not to disclose their religion and 6.0% chose prefer not to say for sexual orientation.

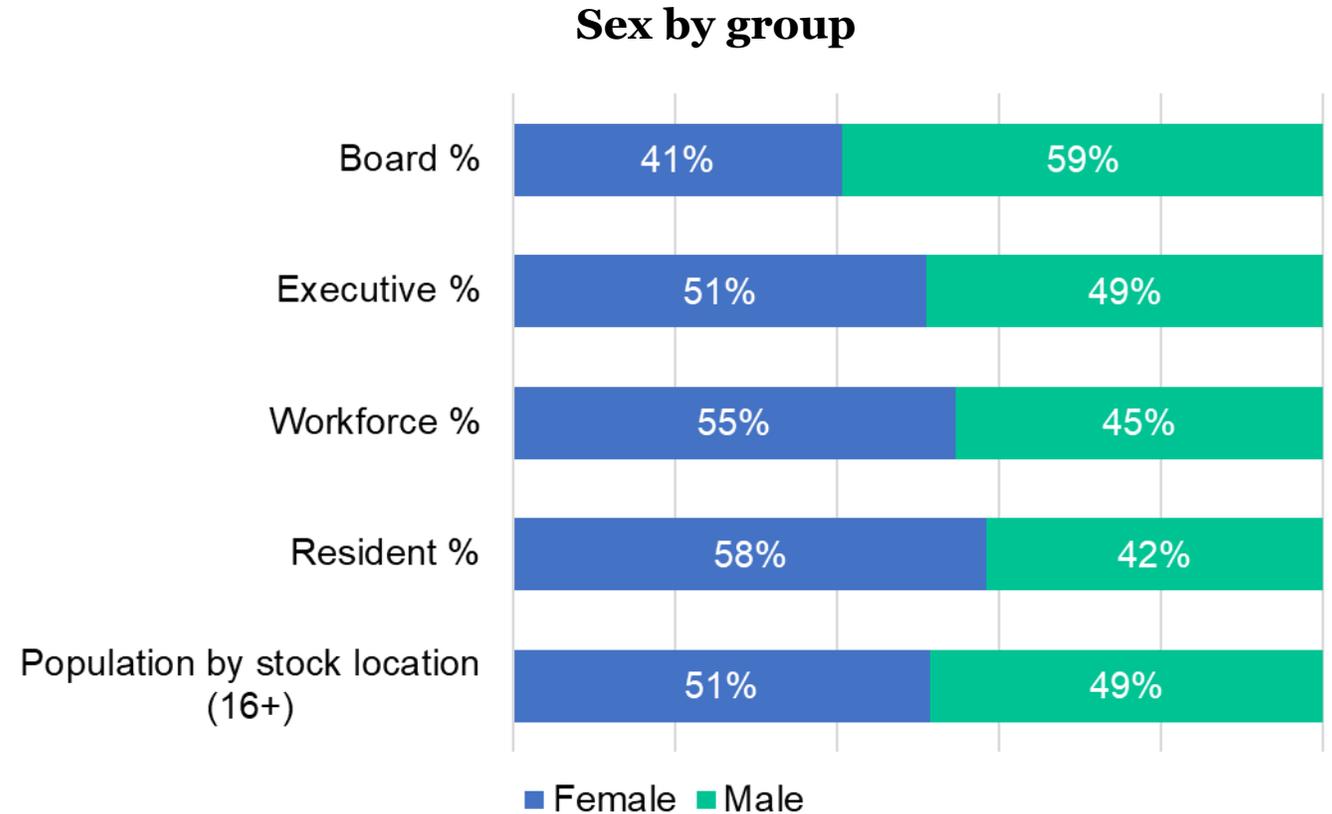
# How representative is the workforce?

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 – 55% of the workforce are female, compared to the 51% of the population and 58% of residents.
- Although there are fewer female executives compared to the workforce, female representation at executive level has increased since 2021 (from 42% to 51%) and is higher than the national figure (47%).
- However, there is still a lack of female representation on boards, where 41% of board members are female compared to 40% in 2021.



# Gender identity

- Trans women, trans men and non-binary people are represented within the workforce.
- No executives or board members are trans\*, compared to 6.2% of the population.
- However, we need more complete data to understand this better as, for example, we're missing 57% of workforce data on gender identity.

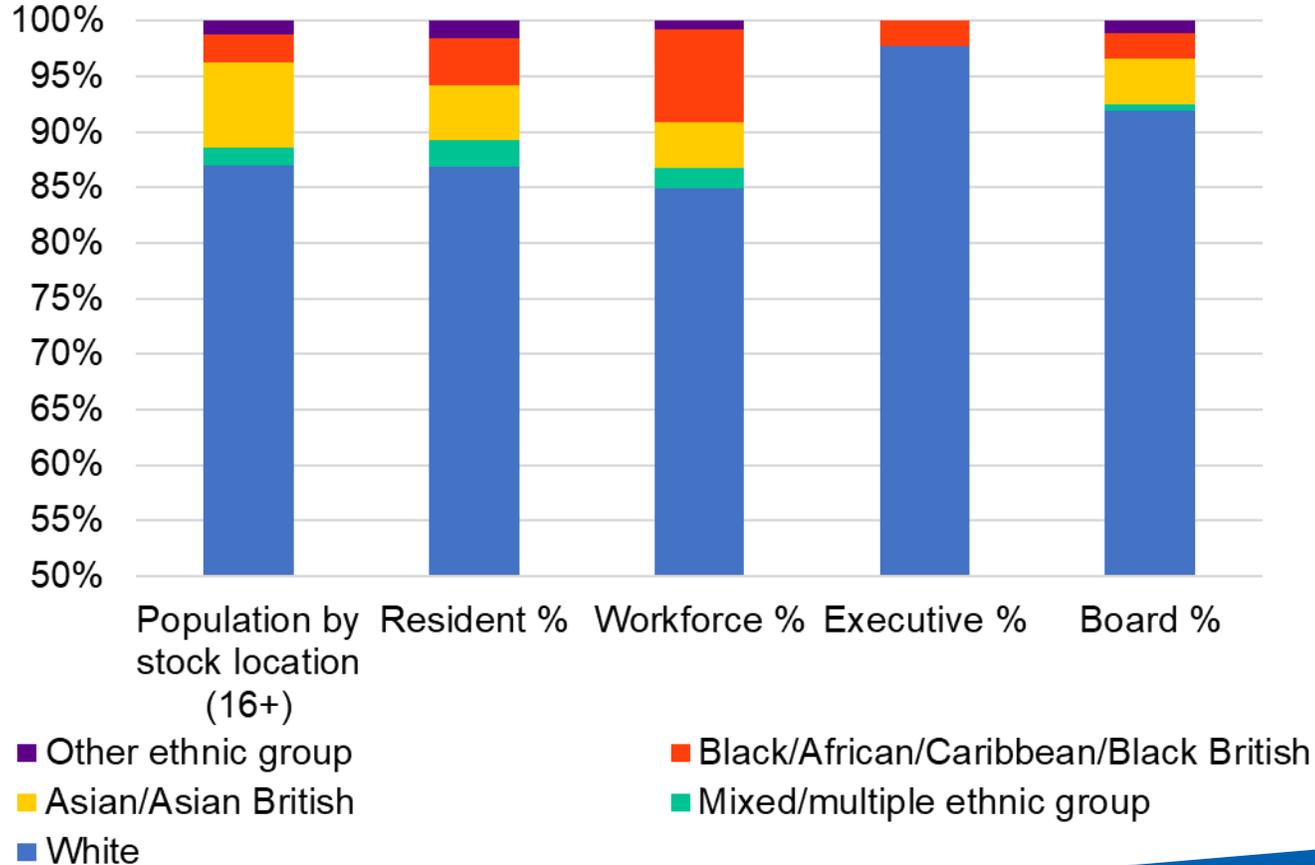
## Gender identity by group

	Population by stock location (16+)	Workforce %	Executive %	Board %
Gender identity same as sex at birth	93.8%	99.6%	100.0%	100.0%
Identify as trans(gender) woman	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Identify as trans(gender) man	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Identify as non-binary	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth, but not listed	6.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%

\*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](#).

# Ethnicity

Ethnicity by group

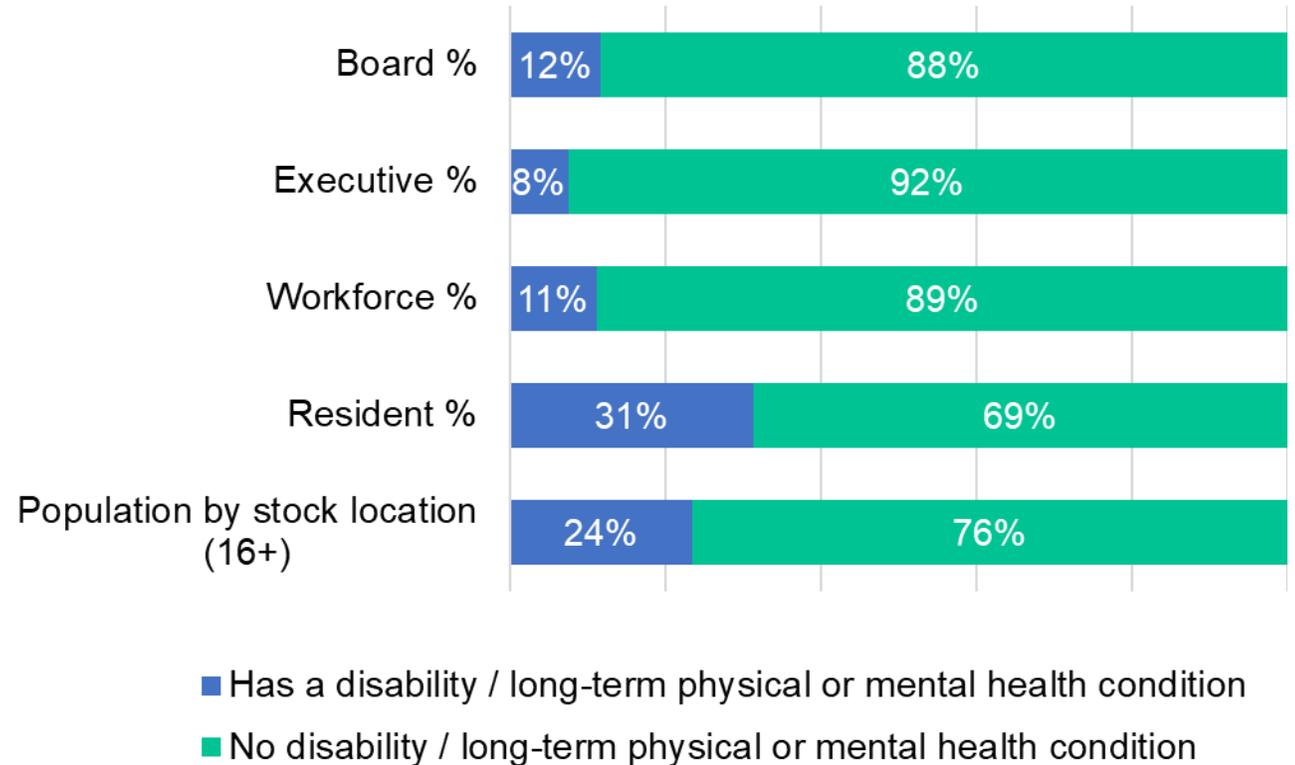


- The workforce is largely representative when it comes to ethnicity – 85% of the workforce is White compared to 87% of the population and residents.
- However, this ethnic diversity is not reflected in the leadership positions – for example, only 2% of executives are Black, African, Caribbean or Black British – the remainder are White.
- Little has changed since 2021, when 1% of executives were Asian or Asian British and the remainder were White.

# Disability

- As with the national findings, Disabled people are underrepresented within the workforce – 11% of the workforce has a disability or long-term health condition, compared to 24% of the population.
- This has increased slightly since 2021, when 9% of the workforce were Disabled and is higher than in the national data (also 9%).
- Only 8% of executives have a disability or long-term health condition, fewer than in 2021 (17%).

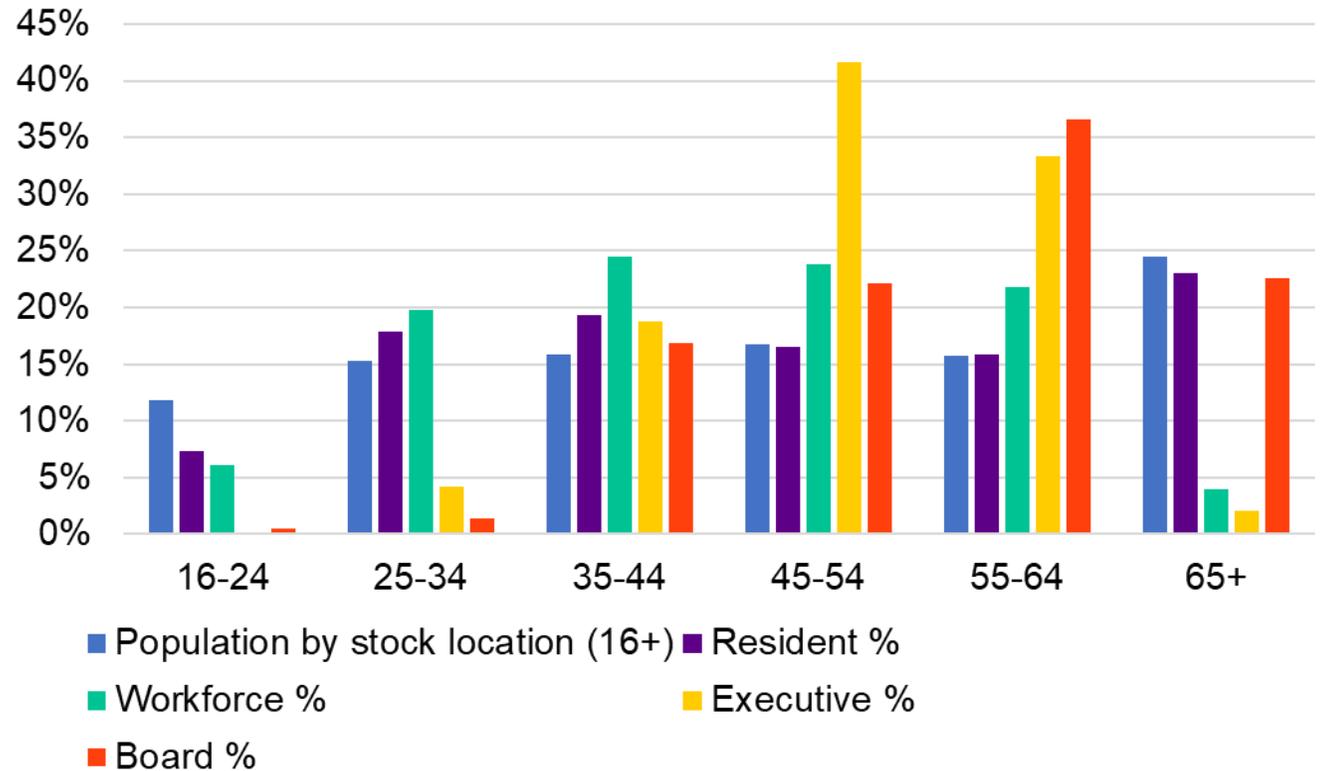
**Disability (Yes / No) by group**



# Age

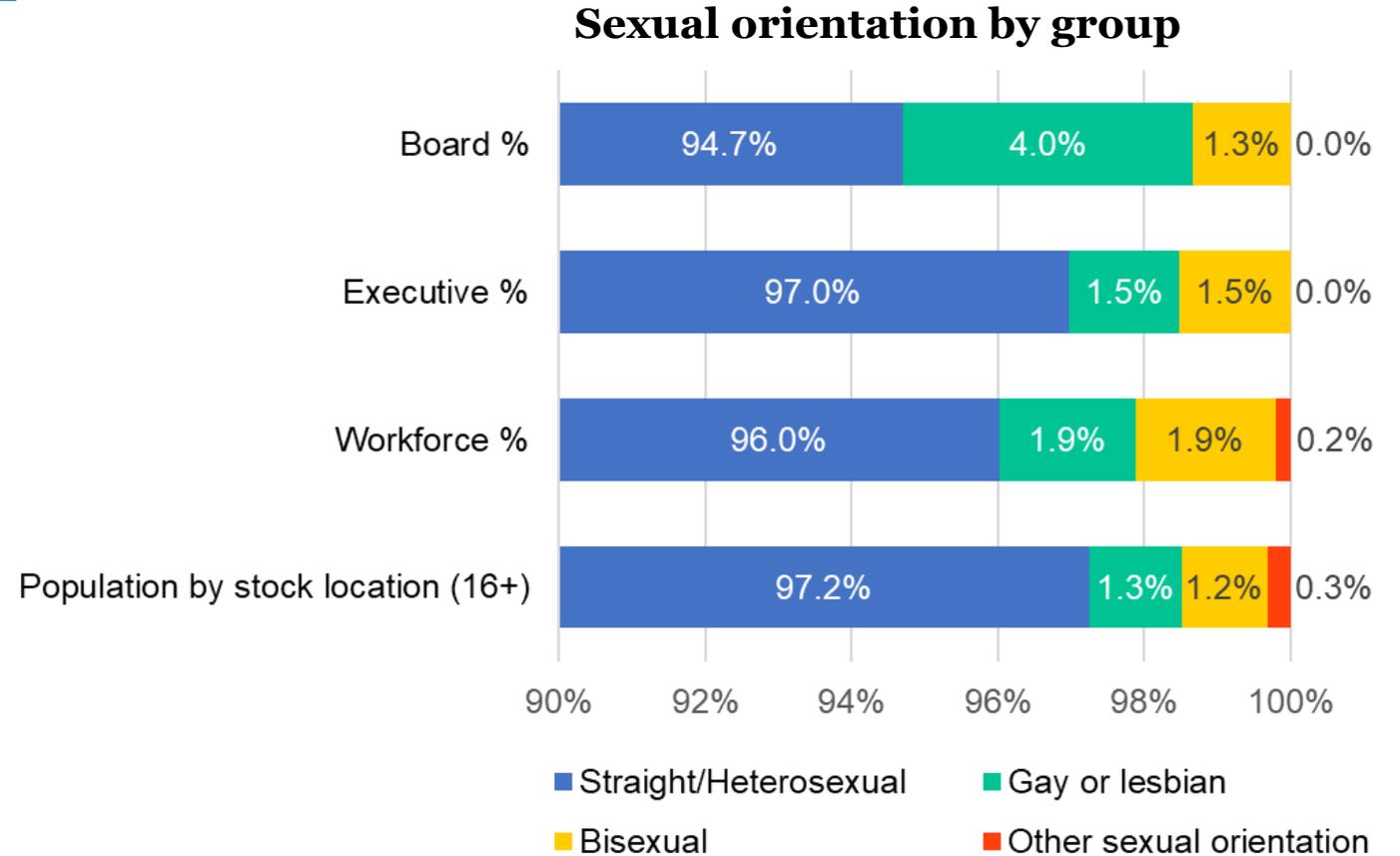
- Board members are more likely to be older – 59% are aged 55 and over, compared to 26% of the workforce.
- Reflecting the national trend, executives are younger than they were in 2021 – in 1% executives were aged 25-34 in 2021, this has increased to 4% in 2023.

Age by group



# Sexual orientation

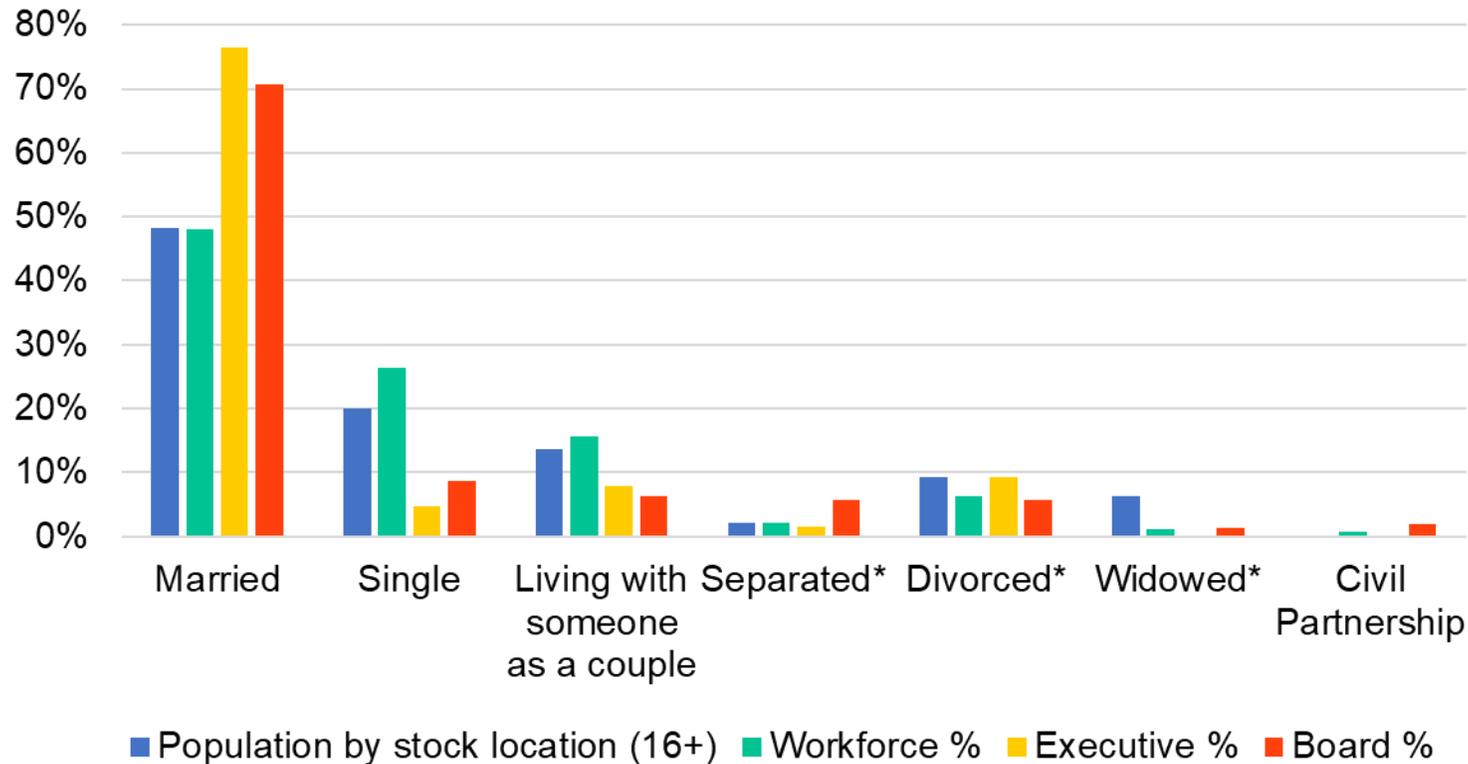
- People who identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual are well represented across all workforce groups.
- 4% of board members identify as gay or lesbian compared to 1.9% of the workforce. This has increased compared to 2021, when 0.8% of board members identified as gay or lesbian.



Please note, axis starts at 90%

# Marital and civil partnership status

Marital and civil partnership status by group

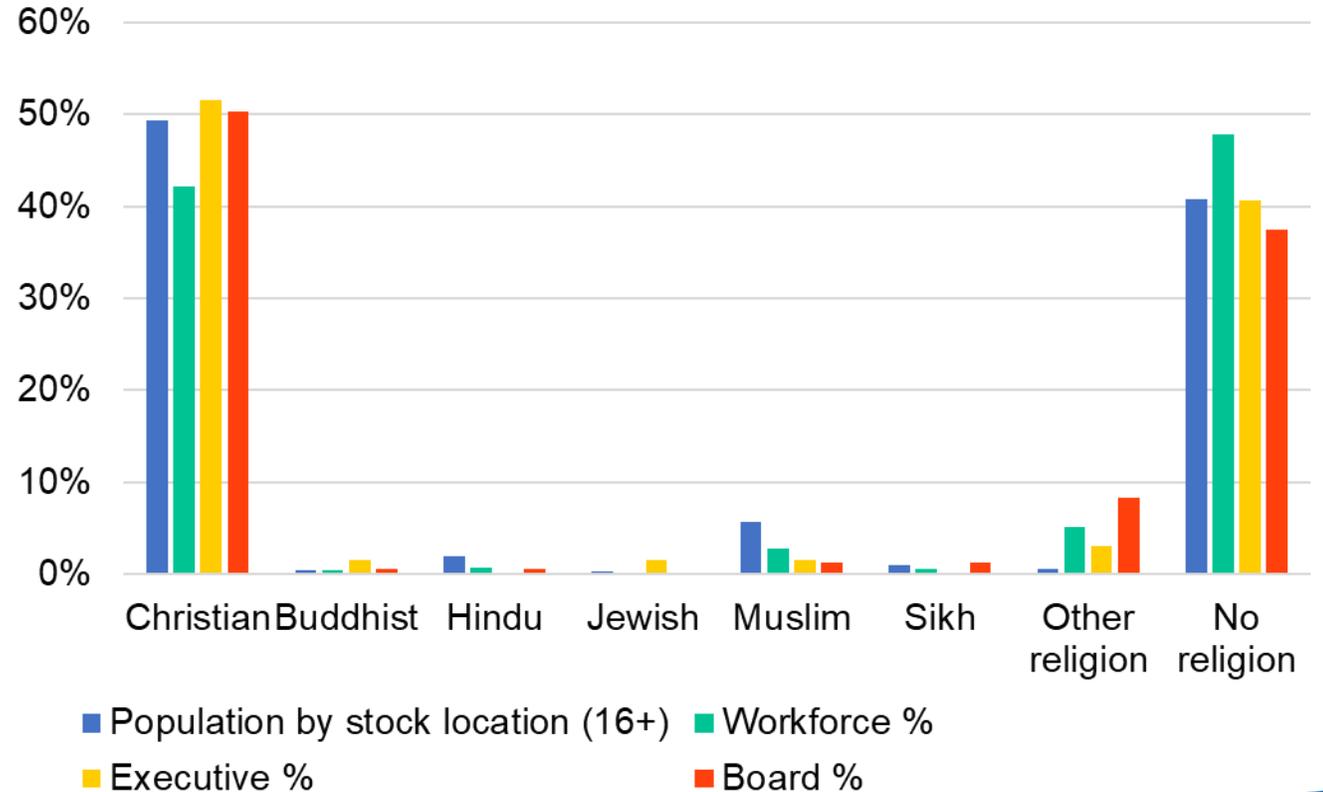


- The workforce is largely representative of the population.
- As in 2021, people in leadership positions are more likely to be married – 77% of executives and 71% of board members are married, compared to 48% of the workforce.

# Religion

- The workforce are more likely to have no religion - 48% of the workforce have no religion, compared to 41% of the population.
- People in leadership positions are more likely to be Christian (52% of executives and 50% of boards).
- People who are Muslim are underrepresented across all workforce groups compared to the population - 6% of the workforce are Muslim, compared to 3% of the workforce.

Religion by group



# Areas for future focus

## **Housing associations in the East of England should aim to:**

- Increase the representation of Disabled people across all levels of the organisation.
- Improve ethnic diversity within leadership positions, particularly executive teams.
- Increase female representation on boards.
- Increase the representation of trans people at leadership level and collect more complete data on gender identity.

# Recommendations for the sector

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



# Next steps for the NHF

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

# We want to hear from you

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

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

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

Please get in touch via [Katie.Hipkiss@housing.org.uk](mailto:Katie.Hipkiss@housing.org.uk)