



**EQUALITY, DIVERSITY,
INCLUSION AND
BELONGING STRATEGY
2022-2025**

March 2022



Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy

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Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy

Our Plan for the Future 2022 – 2025

Community Housing is committed to further developing our approach to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) and creating a place where people thrive at work and in our communities. Over the next few years our EDIB strategy will support us to reach our overall goal to be recognised as an employer of choice and an inclusive, supportive social landlord.

1. Introduction

Community Housing's EDIB Strategy underpins the key themes of our Corporate Plan:

- Building Better Lives
- Building a Stronger Business
- Building Thriving Communities

Our vision is that equality, diversity and inclusion is a consideration in everything that everyone does within Community Housing. We want our colleagues, customers, and stakeholders to feel included and for their differences to be recognised and valued.

This EDIB strategy and actions has been prepared in consultation with and approved by the executive team and Board at Community Housing. In the final section of this document, we have produced a set of measurable EDIB objectives and our progress against these objectives will be reported to the quarterly People and Culture Committee and Board meetings.

Whether you are a Community Housing customer, colleague or member of the public who has dealings with us, we have developed a suite of policies to ensure EDIB considerations are embedded in our core internal and external activities. Many of our policies are available on our website.

2. Our Vision

Our EDIB Vision is for everyone who works, lives or comes into contact with us to feel comfortable to be their authentic self and supported to reach their full potential. Our purpose is to create a strategy and actions that ensure we deliver EDIB outcomes which are tangible, measurable and recognised throughout the company by colleagues, customers and partners alike.

3. Our Values

RESPECT – One Team

Responsible : Equality : Supportive : Passion : Empathy : Communication : Together

Our Company Values have been developed with both colleagues and customers in mind; and **equality** is a core value which is considered in everything we do. We aim to treat everyone with **Respect** and recognise that individuals' needs need to be met in different ways.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy

4. Our Strategic Aims

Community Housing believes that no-one should feel disadvantaged because of their gender, where they were born, the colour of their skin, what their beliefs are, what life choices they have made or whether they have a disability.

We commit to delivery of the following ten aims:

1. To have a more representative board and workforce which reflects the diverse communities we serve.
2. To take time to get to know our customers and listen to their experiences. Our services will be developed to support and reflect their individual needs.
3. We aim to educate and eradicate discrimination in all its' forms; and we all need to work together to improve awareness, understanding and actively promote inclusion.
4. To encourage everyone to challenge stereotyping and discriminatory practices both within and outside of our immediate environment.
5. To support our colleagues to learn and understand best practice through the delivery of training and awareness campaigns.
6. To improve our performance and ensure all policies and procedures are subject to effective EDIB assessment and analysis.
7. To be a fair employer and promote the development of skills and the employment of local people within Community Housing.
8. We will work with others to help to make our communities places where people feel safe and included.
9. We will provide advice and support to customers to help them to manage the impacts of welfare reform and other social change.
10. Our procurement framework will provide clear guidance to contractors, third parties and partners to evidence and demonstrate their commitment to EDIB.

The above 'Strategic Aims' have been developed in consultation with colleagues, customers, local residents and partners who gave their views on how social housing tenants are perceived by both the general public and Community Housing colleagues.

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5. Our Legal, Statutory and Regulatory Commitments

In addition to our internal commitments, Community Housing has legal, regulatory and statutory obligations in respect of EDIB

5.1 The Equality Act 2010

We are committed to upholding our legal requirements in respect of this act – specifically avoiding unlawful discrimination towards people on the grounds of their ‘protected characteristics’. These are Sex, Race, Disability, Age, Sexual Orientation, Transgender status, Pregnancy/Maternity, Religion/Belief and Marriage/Civil Partnership status.

5.2 The Equality Act Public Sector Duty

To meet the requirements of this duty, Community Housing will take proactive measures to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it
- Understand the impact of our services and policies may have on our colleagues and customers.
- Set ourselves specific Equality objectives.

5.3 The Equality Framework for Local Government

Prepared by the Local Government Association together with the various equalities’ commissions, the Equality Framework outlines expected equality standards. The framework helps us establish our compliance to equality legislation and provides us with a way to plan and improve the work we do in relation to EDIB.

The framework has five aspects, which our strategy, objectives and action plan aims to support:

- Knowing our communities and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisations commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern and diverse workforce

The equality framework measures equality performance against three levels of attainment: ‘Developing’; ‘Achieving’ and ‘Excellent’. **Community Housing is currently at the ‘Developing’ level of the framework.**

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5.4 Regulatory Standards & Accreditations

- 5.4.1 The **National Housing Federation Code of Governance** requires specific actions to take place in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion. These, generally, follow the requirements of the Equality Act and include overall requirements towards properties, customers, colleagues and board make up. An annual compliance standard is completed each year to confirm we are meeting these requirements.
- 5.4.2 The **Care Quality Commission** set requirements, especially focused on disability, to support customers in an inclusive way.
- 5.4.3 The **European Social Fund** requires the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) project to link to a Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy and Implementation Plan and specifically, how the project will turn the equality commitment into action.

6. Our Local Context

In June 2020, a comparison of the workforce profile against the local area was completed using the National Housing Federations EDIB tool – refer to Appendix 1.

We know locally, there are relatively low numbers who identify as an ethnicity other than White-British with 98% defining themselves as white. We are aware that included in these numbers, a relatively higher average proportion identify as Gypsy, Traveller or Romany (GTR). This is an area of focus for us and is specifically referenced within our Corporate Plan.

We can also see we have over 20% of the local population who have a disability which may be considered as work limiting. Given our involvement, through BBO as well as our tenants, with those furthest from the workplace this is also a significant area of focus for us as a Company.

Our age profile tells us that we need to focus on attracting younger colleagues (16-24) into the workplace as we have a notable ageing workforce with over 60% of colleagues aged 45 plus.

Although our colleague stats on sexual orientation are fairly reflective of the local area it is clear that our involvement in local events with LGBTQ+ community and partners provides us with an opportunity to deliver more.

Regardless of the characteristics of the local area, we wish for our homes to be part of strong, cohesive communities where there is a strong sense of pride.

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7. Our Plan for the Next Four Years

We want to be aspirational with our objectives and focus on sharing knowledge and expertise, listening to all stakeholders and tackling matters important to them. Our objectives should create an environment that is transparent and fosters a culture of allyship.

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Objective 1 | Deepen our knowledge of our customers to better understand their needs, experiences and expectations. |
| Objective 2 | Provide visible leadership & commitment to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging. Build and maintain strong relationships with our strategic partners and community led organisations. |
| Objective 3 | Integrate equality, diversity and inclusion values into our ways of working, service delivery and procurement mechanisms. |
| Objective 4 | Take steps to diversify our workforce and deliver a people first approach where leaders place care and wellbeing of colleagues at the heart of everything we do. |

8. Responsibilities for delivering EDIB

Community Housing's Board will provide strategic leadership on inclusion issues and ensure that the actions derived from the objectives in the strategy are delivered.

Executive Management and Senior Leadership team will ensure that colleagues understand our approach as set out in the strategy, support a culture of inclusion by their actions, not just words, and monitor and report progress of action plans in relation to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Colleagues are responsible for working to our standards of conduct and for promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging. They are required to ensure that they, and others, work in an inclusive way and should do whatever they reasonably can to respond to and take account of the needs of our customers.

Customers will be expected to act in a non-discriminatory way.

Partners, including contractors working on our behalf, will be expected to actively demonstrate these commitments and act in an inclusive way.

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9. Monitoring and Review

Our overall approach to EDIB is overseen by the Board and led by the Executive Management Team to ensure that it is fully embedded across the organisation.

As well as a set of reportable EDIB performance indicators, we will also monitor progress with colleagues via internal engagement surveys, Our Big Conversation events and Colleague Focus Meetings.

We will monitor progress for customers through interactions with the Customer Voice Assurance Group (CVAG). An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be included in every scrutiny review to provide assurance that this has been fully considered and is reflected in all emerging recommendations, policies and procedures. Anecdotal feedback through conversations with customers will also be canvassed.

9. Resources

To support the success of this strategy consideration will need to be given to the following:

- A clear EDIB communication and engagement plan to support the EDIB strategy;
- Actively encourage all to support both local and national activity such as PRIDE;
- Commitment to training and education to raise EDIB awareness amongst colleagues
- Appoint a senior executive sponsor with oversight for EDIB strategy delivery and actions

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| Strategic Objective 1: Deepen our knowledge of our customers to better understand their needs, experiences and expectations. | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|---------------|----------|
| Required outcome | Actions to achieve this | By Whom | Review Date | Progress |
| 1. Strong levels of customer data to help support service delivery, business initiatives and actions to foster inclusivity and community cohesion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our 'Getting to Know Our Customer' campaign. A review of customer equality, diversity and inclusion data captured and how this is used. Ensure additional equality, diversity and inclusion data is captured e.g., ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability | Jo Simcox | End April '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower colleagues to develop professional relationships with customers reinforced via positive engagement and EDIB education | Catherine Cole | Ongoing | |
| 2. A dashboard of customer equality, diversity and inclusion information is created to monitor progress and ensure unconscious bias is removed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create reportable set of EDIB indicators of improvement | Jo Simcox | End June 22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build closer relationships with customers – especially those who represent marginalised communities, and have effective community engagement programmes linked directly to the Customer Engagement Model | Gill Mooney | August '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular community action days to support specific initiatives and community needs as well as to deepen community relationships and share understanding about services offered and needed – starts April '22 | Gill Mooney | Ongoing | |
| 3. Strong partnerships with customer groups – including those who may have previously felt marginalised by society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular involvement and/or partnerships with community groups | Gill Mooney | Ongoing | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TEC Services – WCF (Worcestershire Community Friends) loneliness and isolation project | Katie Schofield | April '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-engineering our Customer Engagement project | Gill Mooney | April '22 | |
| 4. Representation of our diverse customer profile at a strategic customer engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding what customers are interested in, how customers want to engage and when | Gill Mooney | Ongoing | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted and diverse recruitment campaigns and methods for strategic customer engagement to encourage participation from underrepresented/ minority groups | Gill Mooney | Ongoing | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore customer engagement opportunities for all teams to participate in, from social media involvement to onsite inclusivity (as part of Engagement Model) | Gill Mooney | August '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct 6-monthly impact assessment for customer engagement | Gill Mooney | June '22 | |

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy

| Strategic Objective 2: Provide visible leadership & commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Build and maintain strong relationships with our strategic partners and community led organisations. | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Required outcome | Actions to achieve this | By Whom | Review Date | Progress |
| 1. A dashboard of colleague equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging information is created to monitor progress and ensure unconscious bias is removed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living the values – bring RESPECT culture to life through role modelling leadership behaviours measured via colleague engagement surveys | Jan Norris | March 2023 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a calendar of events for regular updates, opportunities for engagement and embedding EDIB within culture | Jan Norris | April '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create reportable set of EDIB indicators of improvement | Jan Norris | April '22 | |
| 2. Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging accreditations published and colleague knowledge of these is increased | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish our ethnicity pay gap alongside the gender pay gap reporting | Jan Norris | Annual | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete annual workforce profile and comparison to customers | Jan Norris | July '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop some videos of our customers and colleagues “stories of us” to share experiences | Fiona Law | Sept '22 | |
| 3. Colleagues are engaged in diversity events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDIB has a theme or standard agenda for board meetings, big conversation events and team/individual meetings | Jan Norris | Ongoing | |
| 4. The company is actively involved with, and responds quickly, to wider social equality movements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of existing EDIB related accreditations and/or accreditations with EDIB expectations | Jan Norris | Ongoing | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain Worcestershire Works Well Level 2 | Jan Norris | March 2023 | |
| 5. The Company has a network of partner organisations to work with and support in relation to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging initiatives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase colleagues’ awareness of EDIB accreditations | Jan Norris | Ongoing | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular colleague events to build relationships across the Company and promote equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging actions | Jan Norris | Ongoing | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners – local groups who support those with marginalised characteristics, women in construction, consider joining EDIB network (HQN) etc. | Jan Norris | March 2023 | |
| 6. Leaders model inclusive behaviours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure our physical environment is truly inclusive | Jan Norris | Ongoing | |

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy

| Strategic Objective 3: Integrate equality, diversity and inclusion values into our ways of working, service delivery and procurement mechanisms. | | | | |
|---|---|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Required outcome | Actions to achieve this | By Whom | Review Date | Progress |
| 1. All policies and procedures demonstrate inclusivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission an EDIB Gap Analysis to help support and develop our approach further including benchmark within sector. | Jan Norris | April '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate EDIB review into policy /procedure review (language, unintentional bias) | Jan Norris | July '22 | |
| 2. Equality impact assessments are robustly completed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and review Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) | Jan Norris | July '22 | |
| 3. Ensure our supply chain mirrors our EDIB ethos | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure policy owners and those who develop them have received specific Equality Impact Assessment training | Jan Norris | October '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review communication practices and channels to ensure inclusivity | Jan Norris | July '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract Management – contractors regularly reviewed to ensure EDIB compliance / evidence provided | Justin Bryant | June – August '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Procurement strategy to ensure references to EDIB are up to date and relevant | Justin Bryant | April '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Procurement checklist to ensure EDIB and impact on customers / colleagues is considered | Justin Bryant | July '22 | |

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| Strategic Objective 4: Take steps to diversify our workforce and deliver a people first approach where leaders place care and wellbeing of colleagues at the heart of everything we do. | | | | |
|--|--|------------|-------------|----------|
| Required outcome | Actions to achieve this | By Whom | Review Date | Progress |
| 1. Colleagues demonstrate inclusive behaviours in their day-to-day activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review training programmes for colleagues and board which include awareness, allyship training and inclusive leadership | Jan Norris | July '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish reciprocal mentoring programme | Jan Norris | March '23 | |
| 2. The culture of the company is an inclusive one | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Diversity Champions group | Jan Norris | Sept '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review website for full accessibility, content and language review, and diversity inclusion | Jan Norris | Sept '22 | |
| 3. The workforce has a greater understanding and knowledge of differing customer needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create specific EDIB page on SharePoint | Jan Norris | Sept '22 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of Hybrid working arrangements | Jan Norris | Sept '22 | |
| 4. Colleagues can select rewards, benefits and working arrangements that are most appropriate to them whilst meeting company needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review recruitment practices including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> feedback from unsuccessful candidates re their experience role profiles, adverts, interview questions and process to check for unconscious bias Job descriptions essential and desirable characteristics language and imagery used Board recruitment process Approaches to positive action | Jan Norris | Sept '22 | |

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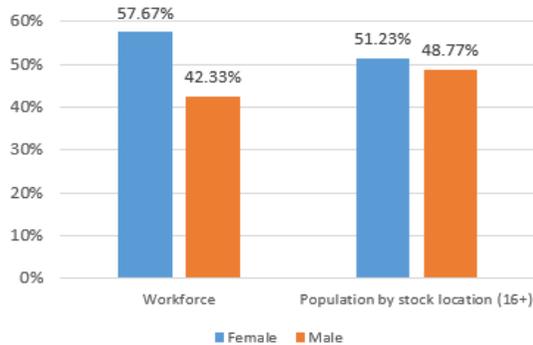
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Gender, Age, Disability & Ethnicity

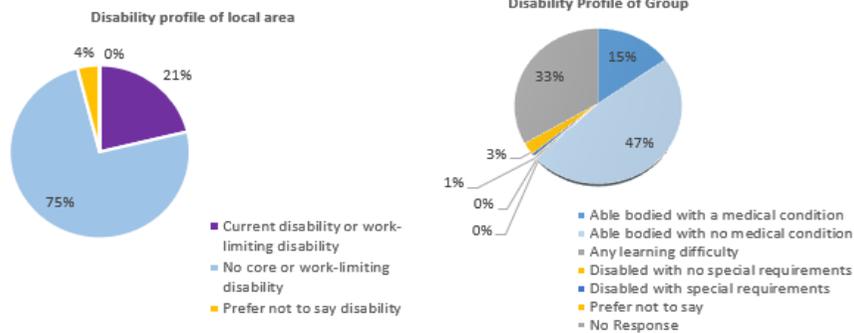
Workforce Profile – Comparison to local area

Gender



Using the NHF’s Equality Diversity and Inclusion tool, the gender profile of the Group is not dissimilar to the gender profile of the local area.

Disability



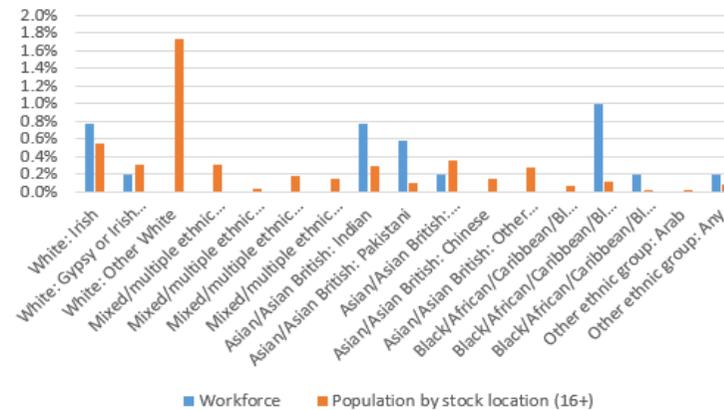
The NHF disability categories do not match the Groups. Both Graphs are shown for comparison.

Age



The Group’s workforce age profile is higher than the customer profile from 45 – 64. The opposite is true for 16 -24 and 65+ although that would be expected.

Ethnicity



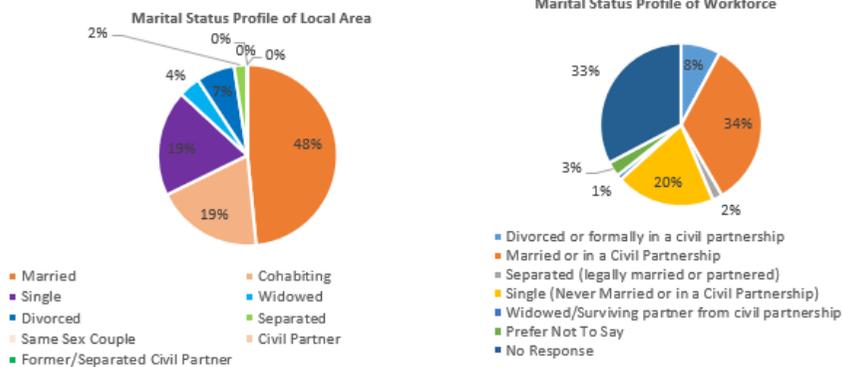
The NHF tool suggests that 98% of the local population have defined themselves as white. This compares to 63% of the workforce (although 32% have not completed their ethnicity). There are low numbers locally and in the workforce of other ethnic backgrounds.

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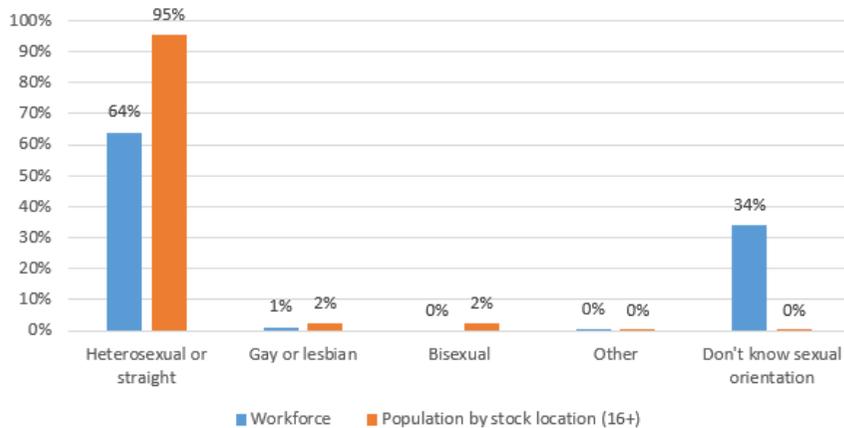
Marital Status, Sexual Orientation & Religion

Workforce Profile – Comparison to local area

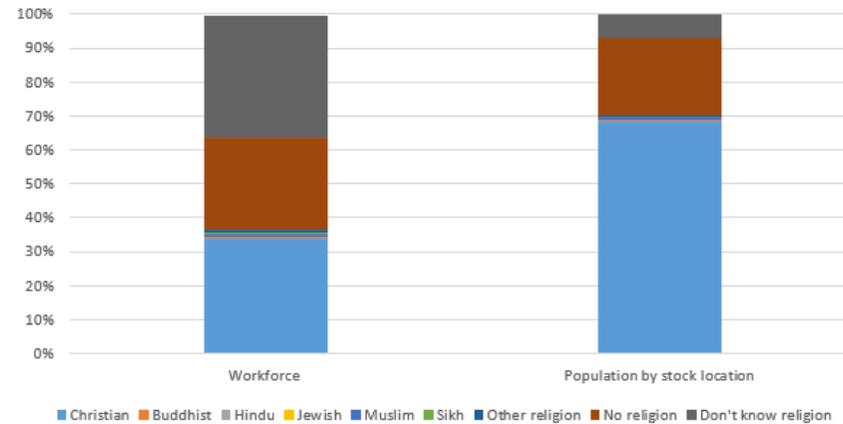
Marital Status



Sexual Orientation



Religion



The Categories for Marital status don't match the NHF's tool so both graphs are shown for comparison.

The majority of the workforce, and local population, define themselves as heterosexual. There is a lower proportion of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual colleagues compared to the local area (1% compared to 4%).

Within the workforce and local area there is a low proportion of individuals who have a religion other than Christianity or no religion.