

Housing Associations Boards Equality and Diversity

Housing Associations Boards submit annual returns reporting on the diversity of board members.

Since 2014, the Welsh Government has collected data on a range of protected characteristics of board members.

This report seeks to provide an overview of the 2019 position for parent boards, subsidiary boards and board chairs and compare it to statistics for previous years. The report uses diversity data collected by the Welsh Government since 2014. It should be noted that not all diversity data was collected since 2014, therefore some tables in the report only contain data from 2018 and 2019.

All population and social tenant comparison data was sourced from Census 2011 (unless stated otherwise).

It is acknowledged that, for comparisons to be meaningful at a local level, this has to be done using local rather than national data.

Gender

Women not only remain underrepresented on housing association boards but there seems to be a downward trend in female representation on boards and in chair positions.

Whilst the representation of women on parent boards kept improving from 2014 to 2017, we have seen a 1 percentage fall in female representation each year in the past two years.

The picture for boards including subsidiary boards looks even less positive with only 39% of female board members in 2019 – a 2% decrease from last year.

The percentage of female RSL parent board chairs has fallen substantially in the past 4 years. Although there was a 1% increase in the past year, the 2019 percentage of 34% female chairs is still far behind the 39% of female chairs in 2017 and 37% in 2016 and far behind the 51% representation of women in Welsh population and 54% amongst social housing tenants.

Parent boards

In 2019 42% of board members were female. This represents a 1% fall from the previous year when 43% of board members were female and a 2% fall compared to 2017 when the percentage was 44% - the highest since the monitoring commenced in 2014.

It is worth noting however that in 2019 the numbers of male board members also fell by 1% (from 56% to 55%), whilst the numbers of Prefer not to say/Other increased from 1% to 3%.

Whilst the fall in both female and male board members in 2019 is attributable to the increase in the Prefer not to say/Other option, it is still important to acknowledge that women are underrepresented on housing association boards, with a possible downward trend towards lower representation since 2017.

Gender %	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Population	Social Tenants
Female	38	39	42	44	43	42	51	54
Male	62	61	58	56	56	55	49	46
Prefer not to say/Othe		Not stated	Not stated	0	1	3	Not stated	Not stated

Boards including subsidiary boards

Data is available for boards including subsidiary boards for 2018 and 2019.

Underrepresentation of female board members is more significant when parent and subsidiary boards are considered as a whole.

For this group, in 2019 only 39% of board members were female, falling by 2% from the previous year when 41% were female, compared to male board members falling by 1% point (from 58% in 2018 to 57% in 2019). There was a bigger decrease therefore in female board members compared to male board members.

Chairs

The percentage of female RSL parent board chairs has fallen substantially in the past 4 years. Although there was a 1% increase in the past year, the 2019 percentage of 34% female chairs is still far behind the 39% of female chairs in 2017 and 37% in 2016 and far behind the 51% representation of women in Welsh population and 54% amongst social housing tenants.

Gender %	2016	2017	2018	2019
Female	37%	39%	33%	34%
Male	63%	61%	67%	66%
Prefer not to say/Other	0%	0%	0%	0%

Age

There is clear under representation of younger age groups amongst housing association board members.

Parent Boards

Only 1% of board members were under 30 years of age, a significant underrepresentation compared to Welsh and social tenant population. It is worth nothing that the percentage of board members aged 65 and over has decreased

significantly in the last 4 years (and is lower than overall population) in favour of the 30-44 and 45-64 age groups (with a slight increase in the former and a 10% increase in the latter).

Age	2016	2017	2018	2019	Population (Census categories)	Social tenants (Census categories)
Under 30	2%	2%	1%	1%	16% under 34	21% under 34
30-44	16%	16%	17%	19%	27% 34-54	27% 34-54
45-64	Not stated	46%	54%	56%	27% 50-64	24% 50-64
Over 65	Not stated	39%	27%	22%	29%	28%
Prefer not to			1%	2%	n/a	n/a

Boards including subsidiaries

Trends within this group largely followed the patterns of changes in the age diversity of parent boards, with significant underrepresentation of under 30's, underrepresentation of 30-44's and over representation of 45-64 age group.

Age	2018	2019
Under 30	1%	1%
30-44	15%	17%
45 -64	56%	58%
Over 65	27%	21%
Prefer not to say	1%	3%

Chairs

There were no chairs aged under 30 in 2019. Number of chairs aged 30-44 has decreased in favour of those aged 45-64. The proportion of chairs aged over 65 has continued decreasing since 2017 although this proportion hasn't decreased as significantly as for parent board members.

Age %	2016	2017	2018	2019	Population (Census categories)	Social tenants (Census categories)
Under 30	0%	1%	0%	0%	16% under 34	21% under 34
30-44	7%	14%	12%	8%	27% 34-54	27% 34-54
45-64	58%	46%	44%	55%	27% 50-64	24% 50-64
Over 65	35%	39%	44%	37%	29%	28%
Prefer not to	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a

Ethnicity

Parent Boards

There is an underrepresentation of BAME board members compared to the Welsh and social tenant population. BAME board members comprise 3% of all parent board members, compared to the Welsh BAME population of 6% and social tenant BAME population of 4% (although the latter is likely to have changed).

Interestingly the number and proportion of BAME board members increased in 2016 only to fall again the year after and remain at the same level until 2019.

Ethnic Groupings	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Population*	Social Tenants**
White	98%	97%	95%	97%	95%	95%	94%	96%
BAME*	2%	3%	5%	3%	3%	3%	6%	4%
Prefer not to say/Not declared	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	0%	2%	2%		

Parent Board Members by Ethnic Grouping

*BAME for the purposes of this report refers to Black, Asian and ethnic minorities other than white groups

** BAME population statistics based on [Welsh Government latest estimates](#)

*** Based on Census 2011

Boards including subsidiary boards

The picture for boards including subsidiary boards is broadly similar to the one for parent board members. BAME board members comprise 3% of all parent board members, compared to the Welsh BAME population of 6% and social tenant BAME population of 4% (although the latter is likely to have changed).

Ethnic Groupings	2018	2019	Population**	Social Tenants***
White	95%	93%	94%	96%
BAME*	3%	3%	6%	4%
Prefer not to say/Not declared	1%	3%		

*BAME for the purposes of this report refers to Black, Asian and ethnic minorities other than white groups

** BAME population statistics based on [Welsh Government latest estimates](#)

*** Based on Census 2011

Chairs

It should be noted that in 2019 100% of chairs of housing association boards were white which means BAME population is underrepresented amongst housing association chairs.

Ethnic Groupings	2018	2019	Population**	Social Tenants
White	97%	100%	95.6%	96%
BAME	3%	0%	5.4%	4%
Prefer not to say/Not declared	0%	0%	n/a	n/a

* BAME for the purposes of this report refers to Black, Asian and ethnic minorities other than white groups

** BAME population statistics are likely to have increased since Census 2011

Disability

Disability remains underrepresented amongst parent board members with only 11% of members identifying as disabled compared to the population of 22% and the much larger social tenant disabled population of 33%. Proportion of disabled board members has fallen significantly since 2016 and is three times lower than the proportion of disabled social tenants – this represents a significant underrepresentation. Trends in subsidiary board member numbers are very similar.

Representation amongst chairs is even lower with only 6% of chairs identifying as disabled.

Interestingly there is a high proportion of Board members who chose Prefer not to say (7%) option, which might be attributable not only to individual preference but also to social stigma associated with some impairments. Next to sexual orientation, this is the only category where some chairs (3%) preferred not to state their

Parent Boards

Disability	2016	2017	2018	2019	Population	Social Tenants
Yes	18%	19%	17%	11%	22%	33%
No	Not stated	Not stated	80%	81%	78%	67%
Prefer not to say			3%	7%		

Boards including subsidiaries

Disability	2018	2019	Population	Social Tenants
Yes	16%	11%	22%	33%
No	82%	82%	78%	67%
Prefer not to say	2%	7%		

Chairs

Disability	2018	2019	Population	Social Tenants
Yes	10%	6%	22%	33%
No	87%	91%	78%	67%
Prefer not to say	3%	3%		

Sexual orientation

Parent boards

Gay/Bisexual/Other sexual orientation is well represented on parent boards, with slight overrepresentation in both years compared to the overall population. The numbers of board members selecting prefer not to say option is high (at 8% in 2019), see below for comment.

Sexual Orientation	2018	2019	Population*	Social Tenants
Gay/Bisexual/Other	4%	5%	3.2%	unknown
Heterosexual/Straight	85%	87%	95.2%	unknown
Prefer not to say	10%	8%	1.6%	unknown

*Based on [Welsh Government data](#)

Boards including subsidiary boards

Diversity trends for boards including subsidiaries are broadly similar to the representation on parent boards.

Sexual Orientation	2018	2019	Population*	Social Tenants
Gay/Bisexual/Other	4%	4%	3.2%	unknown
Heterosexual/Straight	87%	87%	95.2%	unknown
Prefer not to say	9%	9%	1.6%	unknown

Chairs

In 2019, 92% of chairs identified as Straight/Heterosexual, with 3% identifying as Gay/Bisexual/Other – this is representative of the overall population of Wales where 3.2% percent identify as other than heterosexual. As previously mentioned, apart from disability, this was the only other category were some chairs selected Prefer not to say option, with 5% choosing not to identify.

As with disability, there is a possibility that this is due to personal preference as well as due to social stigma associated with this protected characteristic.

Sexual Orientation	2018	2019	Population*	Social Tenants
Gay/Bisexual/Other	3%	3%	3.2%	unknown
Heterosexual/Straight	97%	92%	95.2%	unknown
Prefer not to say	0%	5%	1.6%	unknown

*Based on [Welsh Government data](#)

Key findings and challenges

Diversity returns for board members show that certain groups are underrepresented on the boards of housing associations. The most significant underrepresentation has been identified for the following groups:

- Women board members
- Board members under 44 years old
- Black, Asian and other ethnic minority board members (other than white)
- Disabled board members

Boards should consider the following actions to help address the identified gaps.

1. Review and publish their diversity data annually, including comparison to local population and tenant population data and action they are taking to address underrepresentation
2. Take steps aimed at increasing board diversity in the most underrepresented groups, this could include:
 - i. Setting targets
 - ii. Taking action to increase the pool of diverse candidates interviewed for board positions
 - iii. Training all board members, senior leaders and recruitment panels in unconscious bias
 - iv. Developing positive action initiatives aimed at increasing the pipeline of diverse board members
3. Be able to provide assurance they are monitoring the diversity of board members and comply with their adopted Code of Governance in relation to equality and diversity.
4. Consider adopting or using resources available to improve equality and diversity including, for example, Tai Pawb's QED quality mark.

The Regulator should consider the following actions:

1. To include specific reference to equality and diversity as part of the forthcoming regulatory framework review.

*Report prepared for the Welsh Government by Tai Pawb, February 2020
All board statistics based on figures provided by the Welsh Government.*