

11 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in the events industry

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Introduction

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is becoming an increasingly important topic in every part of our lives and it will continue to gain importance, with the majority of UK households recording one or more of the Equality Act protected characteristics in the most recent census (ONS, 2021a). With 32% of households having at least one person with a registered disability (ONS, 2023a), 18% of the population belong to a Black, Asian, mixed or other ethnic group (Gov.UK, 2023), and 3.2% identified with an LGBTQ+ orientation (ONS, 2023b).

Despite the increasing importance of EDI it remains a challenge to develop inclusive practices in all areas of life. The event industry is no different – in fact it is probably more challenging to implement and push forward the EDI agenda. The fast-paced nature, variability of venues and organisations, means consistency for attendees and employees can be disparate. For example, a historic listed venue may be beautiful, but its accessibility is limited for attendees; economically events can price people out of attendance; some communities may feel unwelcome or marginalized and not attend particular events. As for employees in events, the senior levels of event companies are often white males, with ethnic minorities, women and disabled people finding it more challenging to rise through the industry. More research is needed in this area as previous events literature has focussed on operations and management; there is an emergence of new findings, but the literature is still limited (Calver et al, 2023).

This chapter will explore EDI from both an attendee and event industry employee perspective. The first part focuses on explaining EDI, UK regulations and an event professional's responsibility, it is then followed by current EDI issues to consider and suggestions for best practice when creating accessible events for attendees, before looking at EDI issues from an event employee/employer perspective.