GLA Housing and Land

Housing Research Note 8
Housing and race equality in London: An analysis of secondary data

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1.   Executive summary

1.1   This research note analyses a range of secondary data sources to shed light on the relationships between housing and race inequality in London.

1.2   Black, Asian and minority ethnicity Londoners are not a monolithic group, and there is considerable diversity within each of the groups analysed in this report. But on average, Black Londoners and those from most other minority ethnicity groups experience worse housing conditions, less tenure security, higher rates of housing need, worse affordability and lower wealth than White Londoners. This was already the case before the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, which is likely to have exacerbated many of these differences.

1.3   Some of these inequalities can be traced back to differences in income and secure employment between Londoners from different ethnic backgrounds. But these existing differences are exacerbated by London's high housing costs, which disproportionately affect those on low incomes, increase barriers to mobility across London and amplify differences in property wealth.

1.4   Black households in London are significantly more likely than those of other ethnicities to report moving because their landlord ended the tenancy or evicted them, and more likely to say they expect to be treated worse by private landlords than people of other races.

1.5   Social housing makes an important contribution to addressing these inequalities because it is allocated on a needs-based basis, but there is clearly not enough social housing available to meet all of London's acute housing needs.

1.6   It is equally clear that the housing aspirations of Black, Asian and minority ethnicity Londoners (including eventually buying their own home) are similar to those of White Londoners, but Black Londoners are less able to realise these aspirations because of factors including the high cost of market housing, lower levels of savings and less access to inherited wealth.

1.7   Black Londoners stand to benefit most from new housebuilding because they experience worse housing affordability and higher rates of housing need, but predominantly White neighbourhoods in London saw relatively low levels of new housing supply over the last decade.

1.8   The analysis of secondary data presented in this report can only paint a partial picture, and should be supplemented with further research, particularly qualitative research into the lived experiences of Black, Asian and other minority ethnicity Londoners as they navigate the housing system.

2.   Introduction

2.1   Race and ethnicity are important dimensions of inequality in London, and this inequality is both reflected in and exacerbated by housing. The murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement have focused attention on structural racism, while the Coronavirus pandemic appears to have worsened some of the existing housing inequalities and highlighted their role in affecting health. To shed light on these issues, this research note brings together existing secondary data on housing and race inequality in London.

Selected existing literature

2.2   The existing literature on housing on housing and race equality in the UK is too large to offer any more than a very brief overview here (although it is not as voluminous as the equivalent literature in the United States).

2.3 The housing conditions of Irish immigrants to Britain had attracted critical commentary in the 19th century (see for example Engels, 1892), but the first systematic studies of housing and race were carried out in response to large-scale migration to the UK from the Caribbean and South Asia. One notable example was a 1967 analysis of competition for scarce housing in the diverse Sparkbrook neighbourhood of Birmingham (Rex and Moore, 1967). That work highlighted discriminatory practices by both public and private landlords, and research into discrimination has continued until the present day, recently including analysis of informal discrimination in London's shared housing market (Carlsson and Eriksson, 2014).

2.4 Researchers have used a variety of data sources to study housing and race, with the Census proving a particularly valuable source given its size. For example, Finney and Harries (2013) used Census data to track trends in a variety of housing problems over time, while Elahi and Khan (2016) compared inequalities in overcrowding rates by ethnicity in London boroughs in 2011.

2.5 There has been less use of the English Housing Survey to examine race equality, due to its limited sample size (the analysis in this report uses samples pooled over several years to overcome this challenge). One exception is a 2014 study by Garrett et al that used the survey to estimate the scale of poor housing among minority ethnic households and the resulting costs to the NHS. More recently, the UK Government has published an analysis of how housing conditions vary by ethnicity, based on the English Housing Survey and other sources.

2.6 Another strand of research uses smaller-scale but in-depth interviews to understand the lived experiences of respondents. For example, Race On The Agenda (2007) studied the experiences of homeless Londoners from Black, Asian and minority ethnicity backgrounds.

2.7 Some recent analysis has focused on the contribution of policy decisions to unequal outcomes. In 2021, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published an analysis of the drivers of structural racism in housing, highlighting the roles of immigration policy, rental legislation and social welfare policy. It found that working adults from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background are around twice as likely as White households to spend over a third of their income on housing. Similarly, Black, Asian and minority ethnic households comprise around 15% of the total population but an estimated 40% of those affected by the government's overall benefit cap. Also in 2021, the Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping found that statutory homelessness had risen much more quickly for Black and Asian households than for White households over the previous five years, and that minority ethnicity communities often face inequalities in the service that they receive from homelessness organisations (whether statutory or non-statutory).

Data sources

2.8 There are three broad categories of data used in this report. The most detailed data comes from the Census, which is carried out every ten years and provides fine-grained data on ethnicity and a limited number of housing-related topics at neighbourhood level. However, at the time of writing the most recent Census data available is for 2011.

2.9 The bulk of data in this report therefore comes from official surveys such as the English Housing Survey and Annual Population Survey. The English Housing Survey, and to a lesser extent the other official surveys, cover a rich range of topics relating to housing, but the cost of carrying out such detailed research mean that only a limited number of households can be surveyed each year. As a result, this report frequently combines data from several survey years to create a sample large enough to provide reasonably robust

results for distinct ethnic groups at the London level. Results at sub-regional levels are generally not available from official household surveys.

2.10 The third category of data comes from administrative systems, notably data on homelessness (collected by local authorities and reported by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) and on people seen sleeping rough in London (collected by outreach teams and reported by the GLA). This category of data is typically more up to date than either household surveys or the Census, but it tends to include a relatively narrow range of information.

Caveats and limitations

2.11 As mentioned above, the number of London households of different ethnic groups covered in a given year in a survey like the English Housing Survey is typically relatively small, and this report therefore uses samples combined over several years. This inherently introduces some imprecision given patterns can change over time, and in some cases there is a further amount of imprecision because the combined samples are still not very large. The results should therefore be interpreted as the best available estimates rather than precise measurements.

2.12 Partly because of limited sample sizes and partly to protect the privacy of respondents, the ethnicity categories available in survey data (particularly the English Housing Survey, which has a much smaller sample than the Annual Population Survey) are typically quite broad. For example, much of the data in this report is broken down into just four categories of ethnicity: 'Asian', 'Black', 'White' and 'Mixed/Other'. In reality, there is considerable diversity within each of these categories, and for that matter within sub-categories such as 'Black Caribbean' and 'Black African'.

2.13 Furthermore, much of the available data on households is reported on the basis of the ethnicity of a single 'household reference person', but this understates the level of ethnic diversity as in reality households often contain people of different ethnicities. For example, if we use the four broad categories of 'Asian', 'Black', 'White' and 'Mixed/Other' ethnicity, English Housing Survey data indicates that around 6% of households in London consist of a household reference person of one ethnicity and a partner of a different ethnicity (more than twice the rate in the rest of England). This figure would be higher if more detailed ethnicity categories were used, but households of a single ethnicity would still be in the majority. For this reason and for the sake of brevity, terms such as 'Asian households' are used throughout this report as a shorthand for 'Households whose household reference person is of Asian ethnicity', and so on.

2.14 Mainstream survey samples are too limited to provide any robust findings on smaller communities such as Gypsies and Travellers. There is some limited data in the 2011 Census on the housing circumstances of Gypsies and Travellers in London, including the finding that they are several times as likely as those from other ethnic backgrounds to experience some form of housing deprivation, when a range of contextual factors are controlled for (de Noronha, 2015). But the best source of information on the housing needs of these communities is a needs assessment based on a dedicated primary survey. The most recent London-wide assessment was published in 2009, and a new assessment is due to be undertaken in 2022.

2.15 Another key dimension of difference within ethnic groups is whether people were born in the UK, and if not when they came to this country. In an analysis of 2011 Census data, Lukes et al (2019) found that recent migrants from nearly all ethnic groups are more likely to experience housing disadvantage (defined as being overcrowded, lacking central

heating or sharing a kitchen or bathroom with another household) than migrants who arrived some years ago, or those who were born in the UK. Even with people of the same ethnicity and from the same country, there may be differences in terms of asylum and citizenship status that can have enormous consequences for their housing. Because this report focuses on data covering the mainstream household population, it does not explore the specific forms of disadvantage experienced by asylum seekers and refugees.

2.16 Finally, for reasons of both data availability and research scope, this report does not seek to capture the intersecting effects on Londoners' housing of ethnicity and other relevant characteristics like age, gender and sexual orientation, though they are undoubtedly very important. There is clearly scope for further analysis of these intersections, but it is equally clear that quantitative data has its limits when it comes to describing the lived experiences of Londoners in all their diversity and understanding the causes of the patterns identified. A fuller research agenda should therefore include seeking insights directly from Londoners using qualitative methods.

2.17 The limitations listed above are important, but this report still brings together in one place a wide range of detailed data on housing and race equality in London, much of it for the first time. It aims to serve as a useful contribution to the ongoing conversations on this topic.

3. Tenure and housing history

3.1 Household tenure is a fundamental source of difference between the housing experiences of Londoners, as each main tenure (social rent, private rent and home ownership) provides a very different mix of affordability, flexibility, security and opportunity for wealth accumulation. The chart below shows the proportions of households of different ethnicities living in owner occupied, private rented and social rented housing in London in 2019, compared to a decade earlier in 2009.

3.2 Only Indian and White British households are majority homeowners, while around half of Pakistani and Chinese and 'other Asian' households own their own home. The remaining ethnic groups are largely renters, but with significant differences in the degree to which they rent from private or social housing landlords. Over half of Black households and nearly half of Bangladeshi households live in social housing, while half of non-British White households rent privately.

3.3 These patterns did not change greatly between 2009 and 2019, with the most notable shifts being a fall in social renting (and rise in private renting) among Bangladeshi households and a decrease in the already relatively low rate of home ownership among Black households.
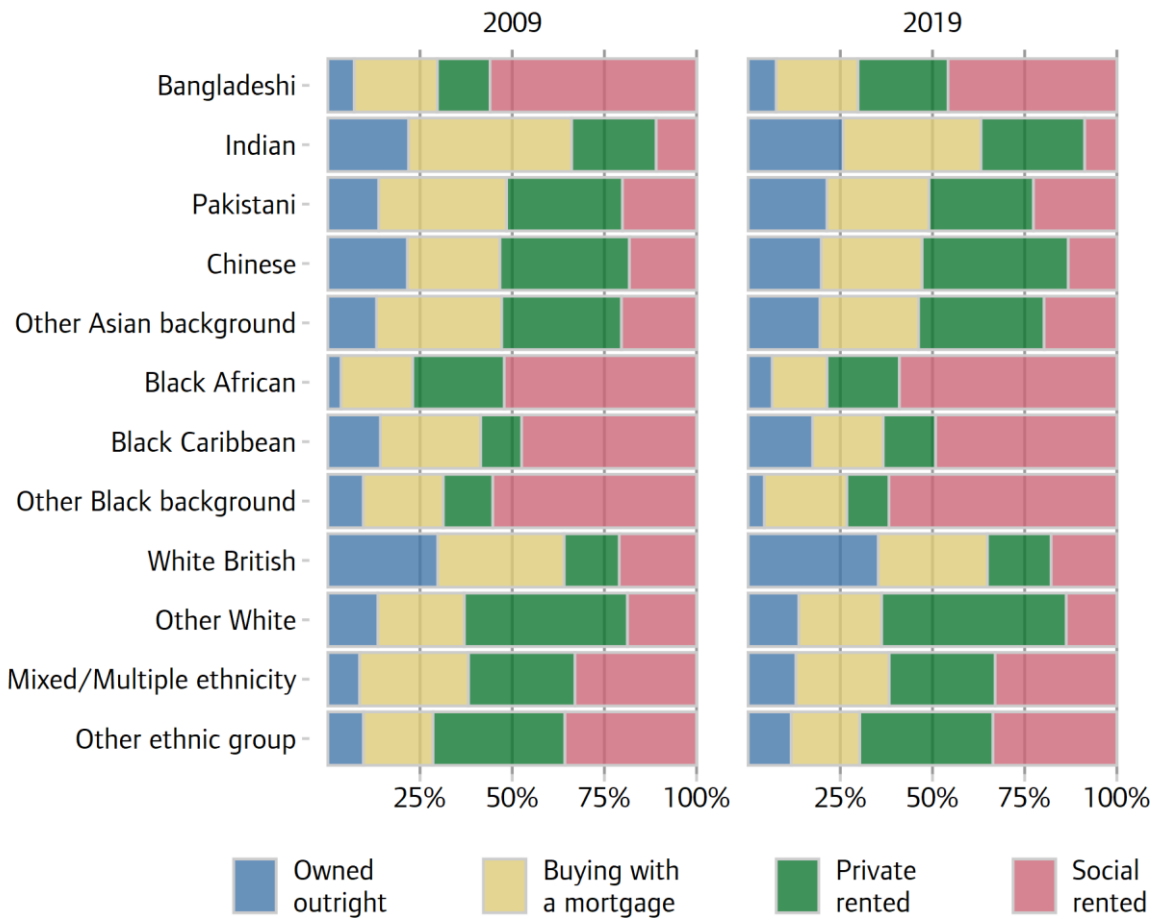
Housing tenure by ethnicity of household reference person, London 2009 and 2019. Source: Annual Population Survey

3.4 Household tenure patterns partly reflect age, as shown in the following chart of the tenure of individuals broken down by ethnicity and age group. But there are still some sharp distinctions between ethnic groups even within age groups: for example, throughout the age distribution there are high rates of private renting among non-British White households, and high rates of social renting among Black and Bangladeshi households.
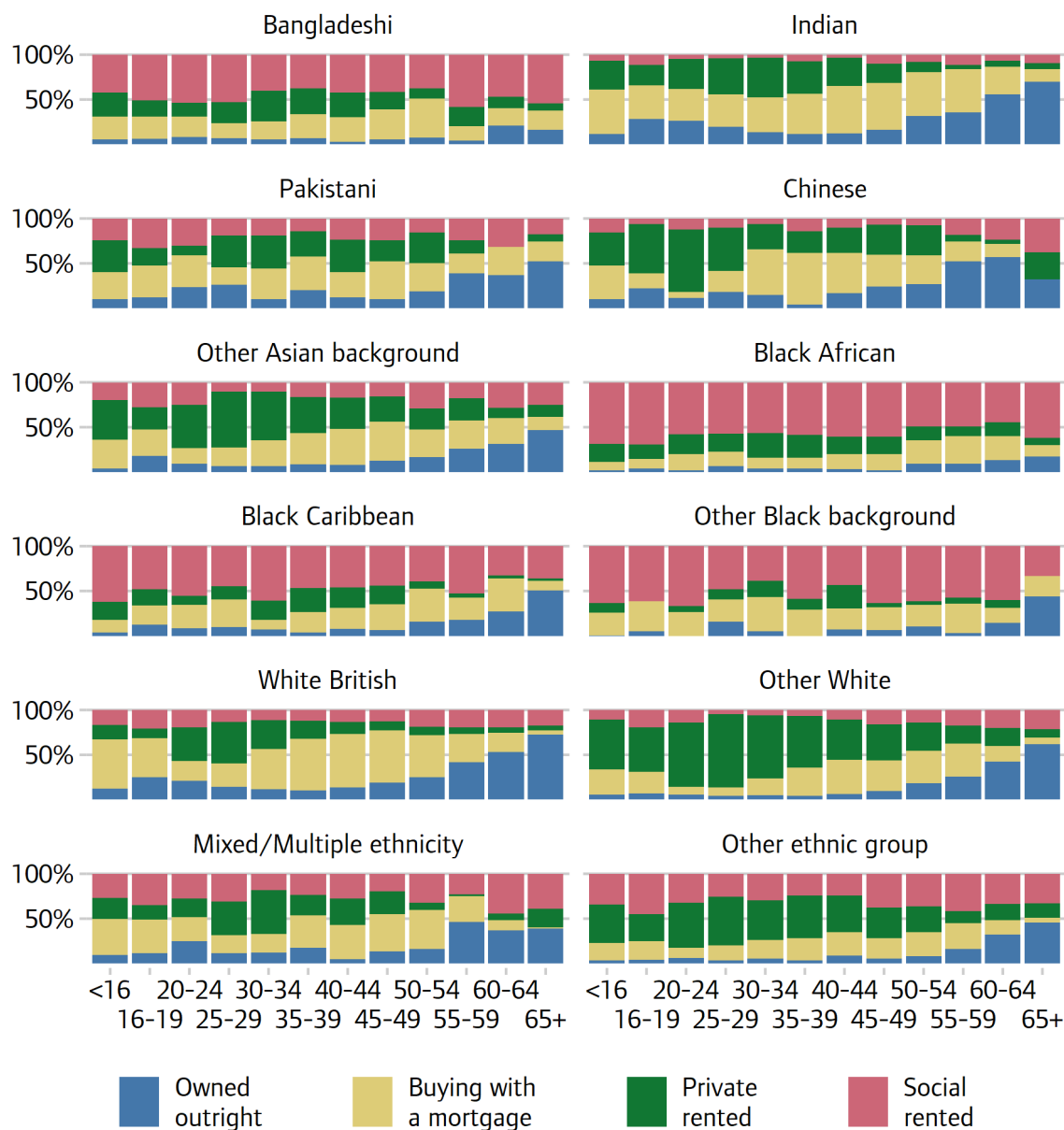
*Housing tenure of individuals by ethnicity and age, London 2018 and 2019. Source: Annual Population Survey*

3.5   As the above chart indicates, people typically do not stay in the same tenure throughout their lives. The next set of charts illustrate short-term flows of households between tenures (and the tenures that new households form into), based on moves in the last two years. In every ethnic group the largest category of moves is within the private rented sector, due to its size and high mobility rate.

3.6   Asian households have a notably high rate of moves from private renting to owner occupation, which contributes to the relatively high rate of home ownership in the charts above.
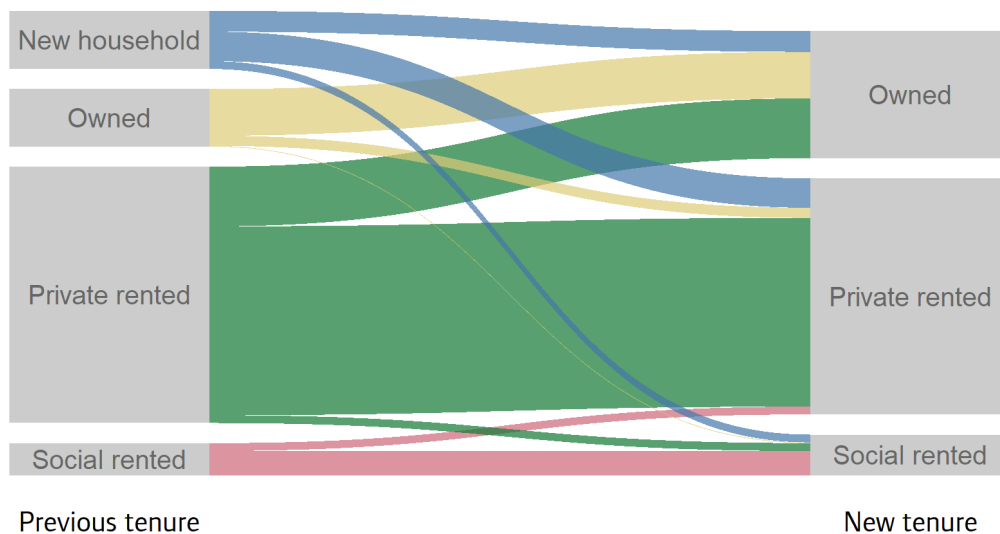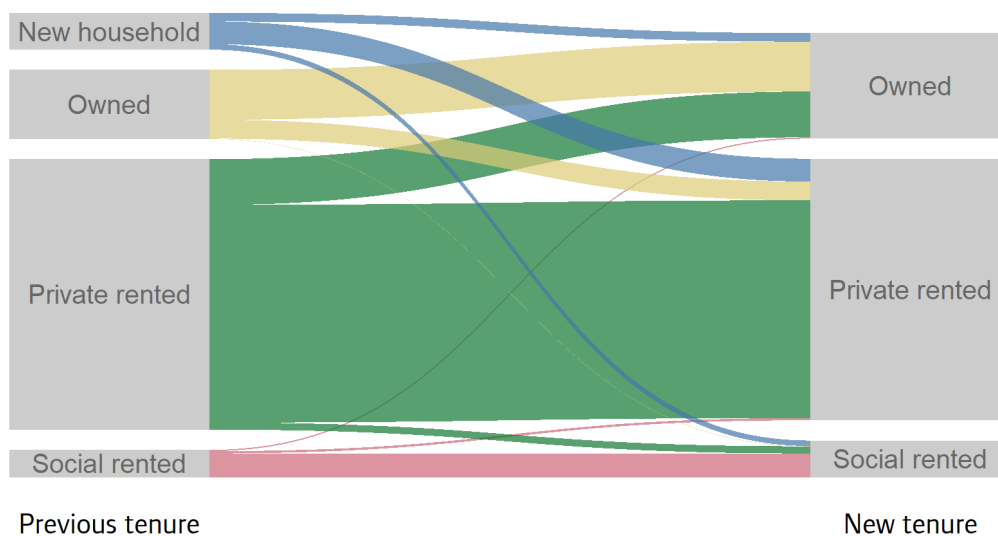
Flows between tenures in the last year – Asian households. Source: English Housing Survey

3.7 Black households moving from private rented homes are less likely than other groups to move into home ownership and more likely to move into social housing, and newly formed Black households are also more likely to move into social housing than other groups. These patterns are likely to reflect higher rates of housing need and lower levels of savings (see later sections of this report).
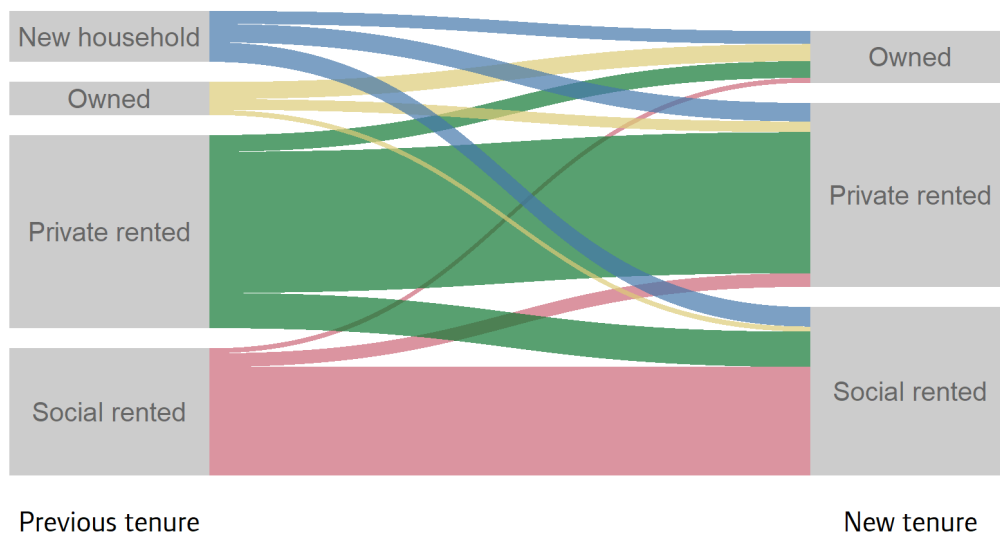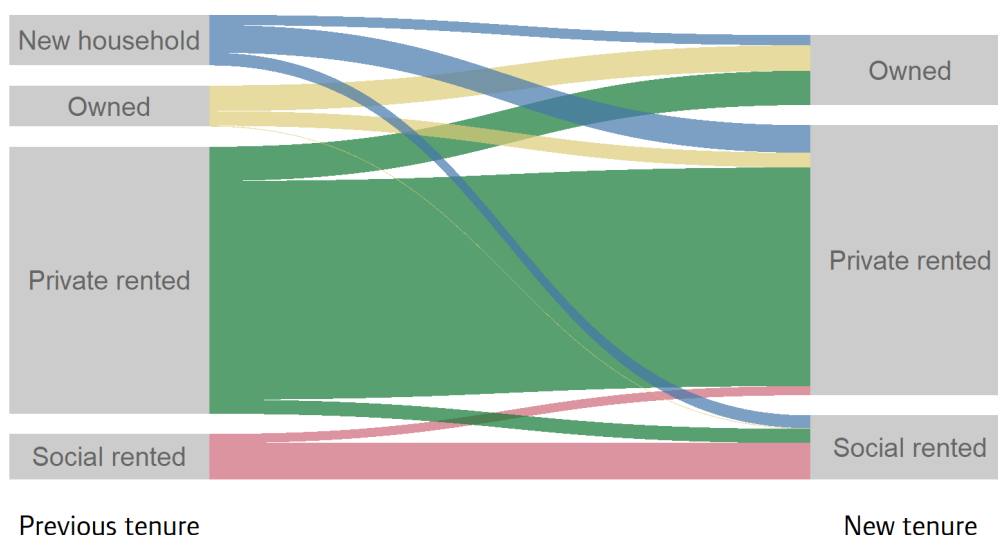

Flows between tenures in the last year – Black households. Source: English Housing Survey

3.8 Newly forming White households moved into private renting at a relatively high rate, but substantial numbers move from private renting into home ownership each year.

Flows between tenures in the last year – White households. Source: English Housing Survey

3.9   Households of other ethnicities show a broadly similar pattern of flows to White households, but with fewer moves into home ownership.

Flows between tenures in the last year – households of other ethnicity. Source: English Housing Survey

3.10 The chart below compares the reasons why recently moving households left their last address, as described by households themselves. Some of the differences between ethnic groups will reflect the differences in tenure patterns and flows shown above: for example, households moving within the owner occupied sector are unlikely to mention problems with a landlord.

3.11 Even with that caveat, however, it is striking that Black households are significantly more likely than those of other ethnicities to report moving because their landlord ended the tenancy or evicted them, as well as being less likely to report moving because of a new job. Households of different ethnicities are however fairly consistent in terms of how often they move because they wanted a larger house/flat or to move to a better or more pleasant area.
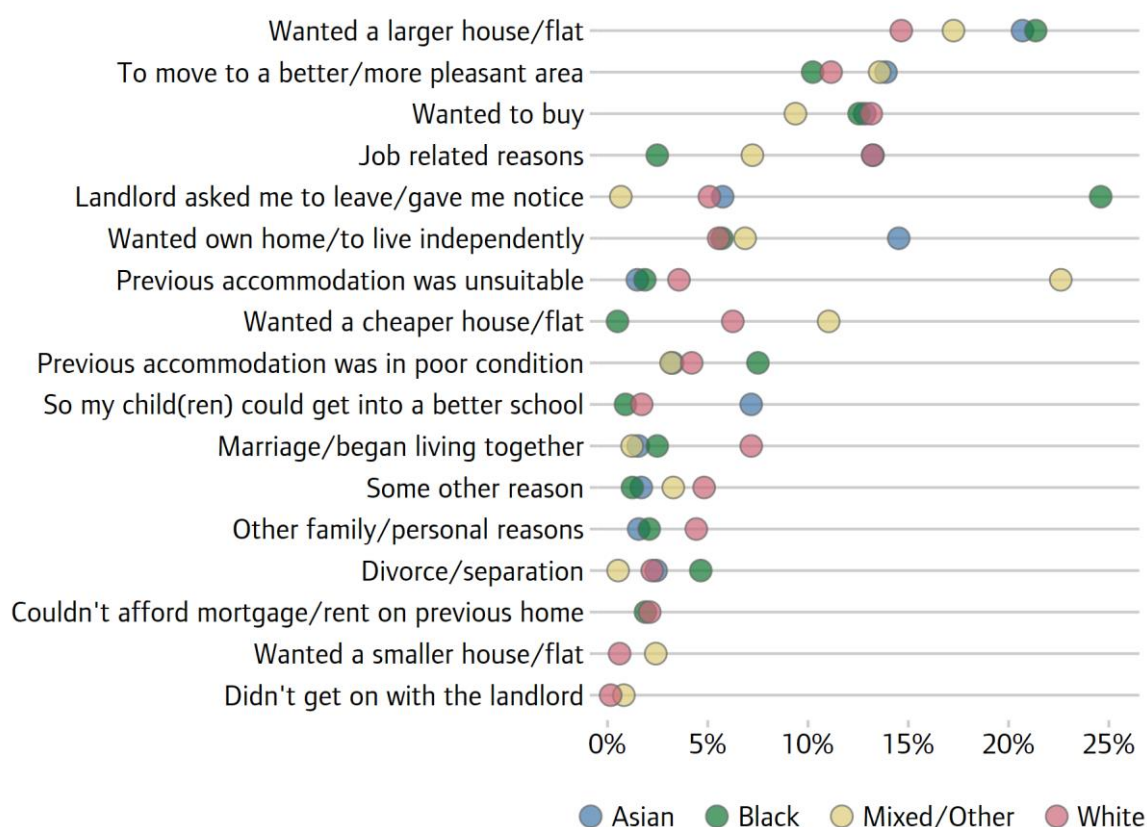
Reasons for recent moves by ethnicity of household reference person, London 2014 to 2018.
Source: English Housing Survey

3.12 There is more detailed information available on the ethnicities of households moving into affordable housing, from data collected through the official CORE system. The table below shows the ethnicities of households who moved into shared ownership in London in 2017/18, and who moved into social housing in 2019-20 (distinguishing between general needs and supported housing), comparing these patterns to the ethnic mix of all households in London. These figures were previously published in the GLA's Housing Research Notes on shared ownership and social housing.

3.13 Households moving into shared ownership homes in London have a broadly similar ethnic make-up to the population as a whole, although with slightly more White British households and fewer households of Asian ethnicity. The composition of households moving into supported and general needs social housing is significantly different, with a higher share of Black households than is found in the population as a whole. This echoes the findings above that showed higher than average proportions of Black households living in social housing, and it also reflects the findings in the next section of this report of higher rates of housing need among Black households.

Ethnic group	General needs social housing (2019-20)	Supported housing (2019-20)	Shared ownership (2017-18)	All households (2019-20)
Bangladeshi	9.4%	2.3%	1.0%	1.9%
Indian	1.8%	2.3%	4.5%	6.6%
Pakistani	1.9%	2.1%	1.9%	1.9%
Chinese	0.4%	0.3%	1.8%	1.1%
Other Asian background	4.5%	3.4%	3.8%	3.0%

Ethnic group	General needs social housing (2019-20)	Supported housing (2019-20)	Shared ownership (2017-18)	All households (2019-20)
Black African	18.8%	13.3%	4.4%	6.6%
Black Caribbean	10.1%	12.6%	4.0%	5.3%
Other Black background	3.1%	3.6%	1.0%	0.5%
White British	26.2%	38.5%	56.2%	50.0%
Other White	11.7%	9.3%	14.8%	15.0%
Mixed/multiple ethnicity	6.0%	8.5%	5.7%	2.4%
Other ethnic group	6.2%	3.8%	0.9%	5.7%

Ethnicity of household reference person of households moving into affordable housing in London. Source: CORE lettings data

4. Housing conditions and housing need

4.1 The chart below compares the proportion of households of different ethnicities living in homes below the official Decent Homes Standard in London. In every ethnic group private renters were the most likely to live in homes below the standard, and Black and Asian households in private rented housing were particularly likely to live in 'non-decent' homes.
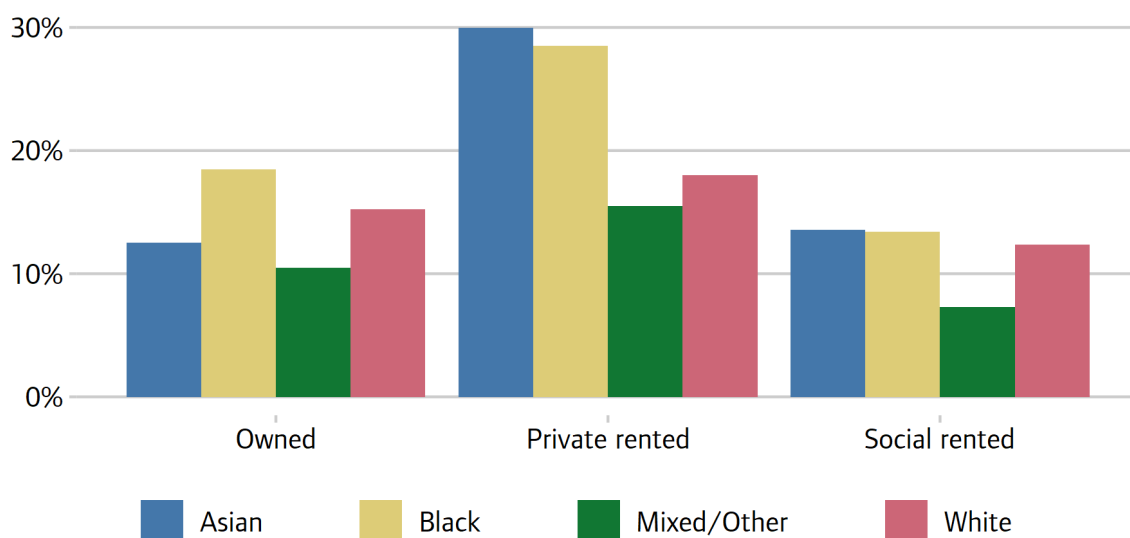

Proportion of households living in homes below the Decent Homes Standard by tenure and ethnicity, London 2015-17. Source: English Housing Survey

4.2 Black, Asian and mixed/other minority ethnic households are much more likely to live in overcrowded homes than White households, both in London and in the rest of England. While the rate of overcrowding is higher in London for every ethnic group, there is less of a difference in London between the different ethnic groups because White households in London are several times more likely to be overcrowded than White households in the rest of England.
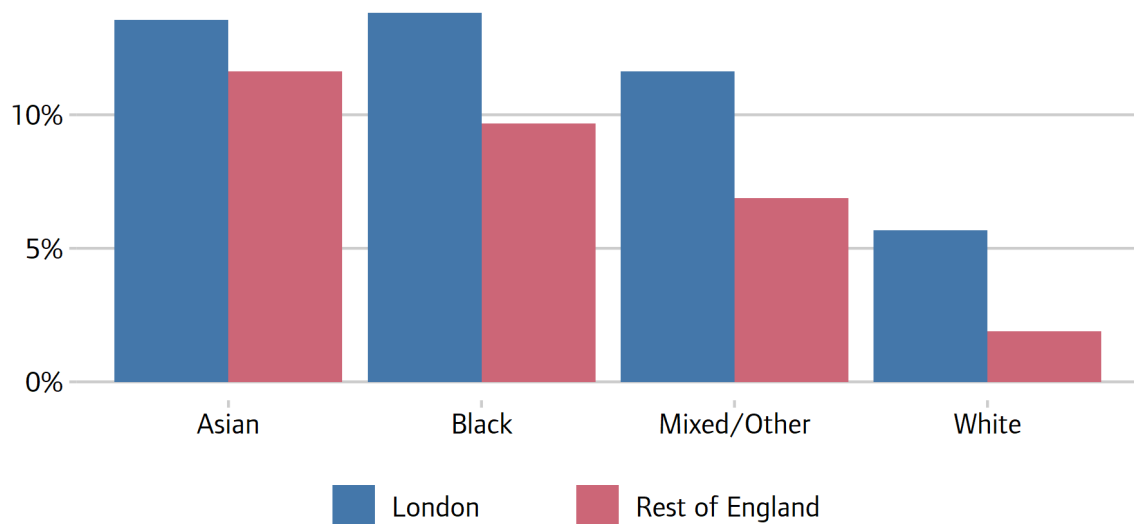
Proportion of households overcrowded by ethnicity, 2014-18. Source: English Housing Survey

4.3 The results of the 2011 Census, which used a slightly different measure of overcrowding, showed that there was considerable variation in overcrowding within these broad categories. For example, the Census recorded that 15% of Indian households in London had too few bedrooms, compared to 25% of Pakistani and 36% of Bangladeshi households (and 7% of White households).

4.4 These figures pre-date the Coronavirus pandemic, but there is evidence (reported in DLUHC's Household Resilience Study) that rates of overcrowding significantly worsened in 2020, particularly for minority ethnic households. Higher rates of overcrowding among minority ethnic households are also likely to have increased the risk of transmission and illness during the pandemic, contributing to Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups being at higher risk of dying from Covid-19 than the rest of the population.

4.5 The overcrowding figures correlate with data on the amount of floorspace per person that households have at home. As shown in the chart below, in each tenure Black and Asian households tend to have less space per person in their home than the London average.
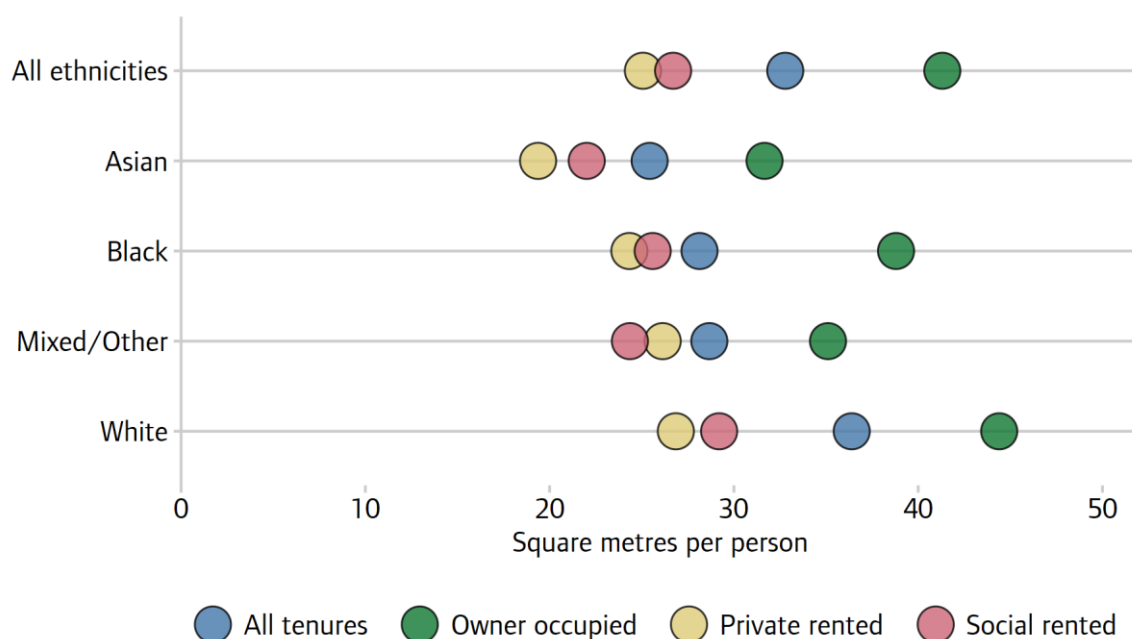
Average floor area (square metres per person) in London by tenure and broad ethnic group, 2015-17. Source: English Housing Survey

4.6   The table below shows the ethnicity of individuals seen sleeping rough in London in 2020-21 and of households assessed as owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty in 2019-20, compared to the ethnicity of all households in London in 2019. Londoners from a White British background are less likely to experience homelessness or rough sleeping, but among rough sleepers the largest group is people from a non-British White background (many of them of Central or Eastern European nationality, a group that made up around a quarter of those seen sleeping rough in 2020-21).

| Ethnic group	Households assessed as owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty, 2019-20	Individuals seen sleeping rough in London in 2020-21	Households in London, 2019
White British	24.1%	28.1%	48.9%
Other White	10.4%	31.6%	16.5%
Mixed/Multiple ethnicity	6.0%	3.2%	2.1%
Indian	2.0%	3.6%	6.2%
Pakistani	2.7%	1.1%	1.9%
Bangladeshi	3.9%	1.1%	2.4%
Other Asian background	4.7%	3.7%	2.8%
Black Caribbean	10.8%	4.9%	4.2%
Black African	21.2%	14.9%	7.1%
Other Black background	3.5%	4.2%	0.9%
Chinese	0.4%	0.1%	1.4%
Other ethnic group	10.2%	3.6%	5.5%

Homelessness and rough sleeping in London by ethnicity. Sources: DLUHC statistics and CHAIN rough sleeping data

4.7   There were 54,080 households assessed as owed a homelessness duty in London in 2019-20, equivalent to 1.6% of all households in London. But this rate varies enormously by ethnicity – from less than one in every 1,000 for Chinese, Indian and White British households to four or five in every 100 for Black and Mixed ethnicity households.

4.8   The high rates at which Black households in London experience homelessness in a single year also translate into high rates of homelessness over a lifetime. According to the English Housing Survey, 17% of Black households living in private rented or social housing in London say they have been homeless at some point in their lives, compared to 8% of Asian households, 6% of White households and 9% of mixed/other ethnic minority households.
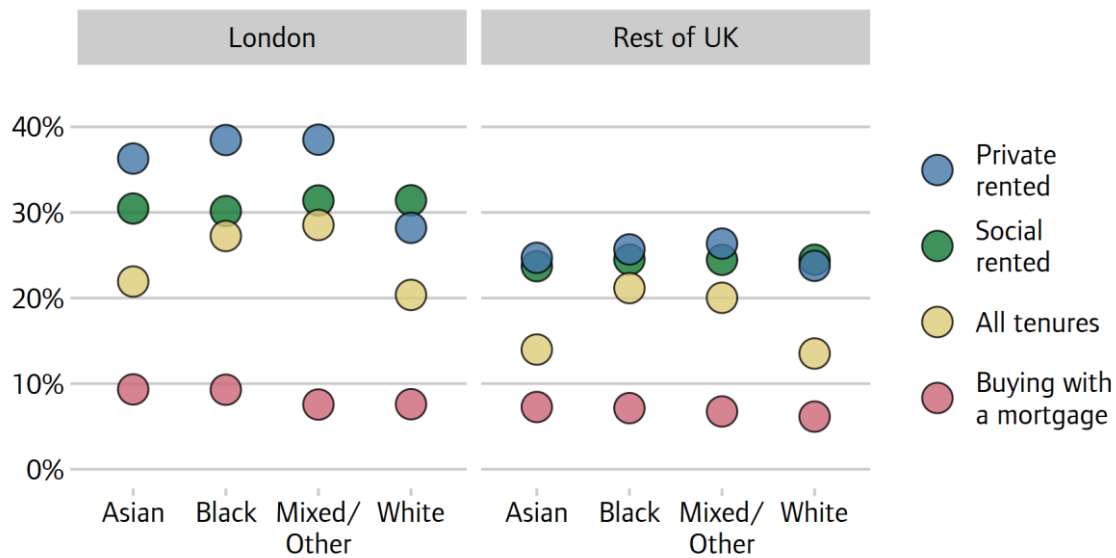
5.   Housing costs and affordability

5.1   This chapter examines differences in the ability of Londoners of different ethnicities to afford housing. Some of these differences could be due to differences in housing circumstances, but some may also be down to non-housing factors such as different income levels. The following chart illustrates this issue by showing the proportion of households in London of each main ethnic group who are considered to be in poverty (defined as having an income below 60% of the national median) before and after housing costs are taken into account.
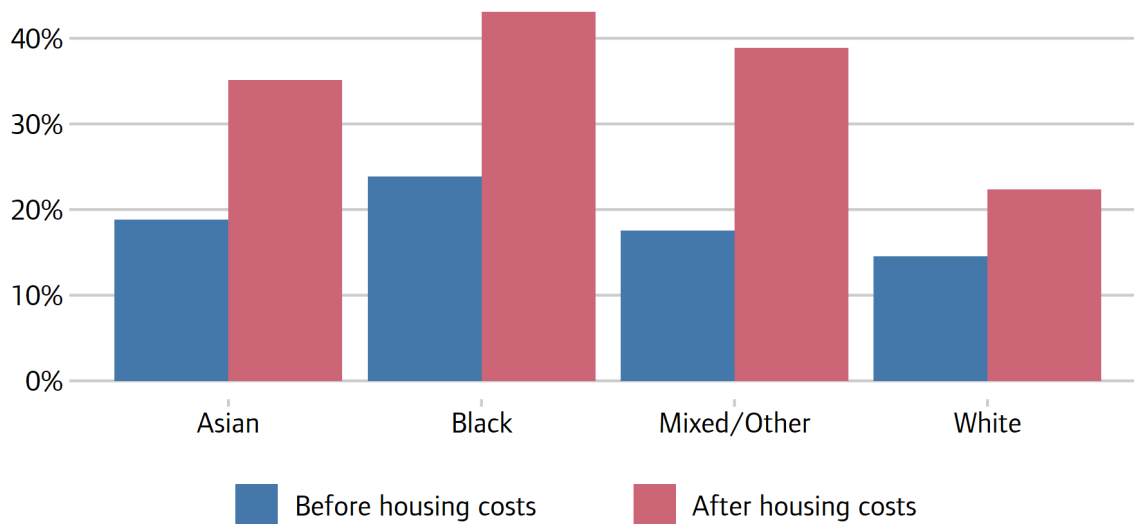
Proportion of households in London in relative income poverty before and after housing costs, by ethnicity (2015/16 to 2019/20). Source: Households Below Average Income

5.2   The fact that Black, Asian and mixed/other minority ethnic Londoners are more likely to live in poverty before housing costs indicates a problem of relative low income that is largely independent of the housing market, but the wider gap in poverty rates when housing costs are taken into account indicates that minority ethnic groups are also more affected by London's high housing costs than White Londoners.

5.3   The chart below reinforces this point. It shows the median of housing costs as a share of household income by tenure and ethnicity, for households in London and the rest of the UK. Affordability for renting households is worse across the board, but particularly for Black, Asian and mixed/other minority ethnic households in London's private rented sector, who spend a larger share of their income on rent than White households. Because White households are also more likely to be homeowners, they also benefit from the lower burden of housing costs in that tenure.

Median of housing costs as a proportion of household income, London and rest of UK 2015-16 to 2019-20. Source: Households Below Average Income

5.4   While the chart above shows an 'objective' measure of affordability, we can get a sense of the subjective burden of housing costs from survey responses. The first chart below shows how homeowners with mortgages in London describe their ability to keep up with payments in the last year. The vast majority of homeowners in each ethnic group say they had no difficulty keeping up with payments in the last year, but minority ethnic groups were at least twice as likely as White homeowners to say they found it difficult or very difficult to keep up.
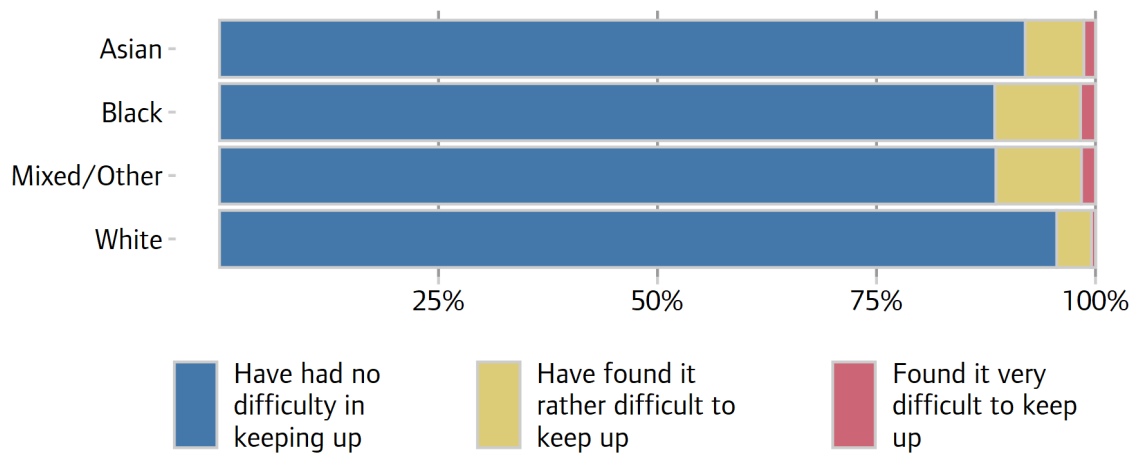
Ease or difficulty of keeping up with mortgage payments in the last year by ethnicity, London 2016-17 to 2018-19. Source: English Housing Survey

5.5   The next chart looks at private and social housing tenants. In both tenures and across all ethnic groups there are far higher rates of respondents reporting difficulties in paying their rent compared to homeowners and their mortgage costs. More than half of Black and Asian private renters and almost half of Black and Asian social tenants in London said they found it difficult to pay their rent.
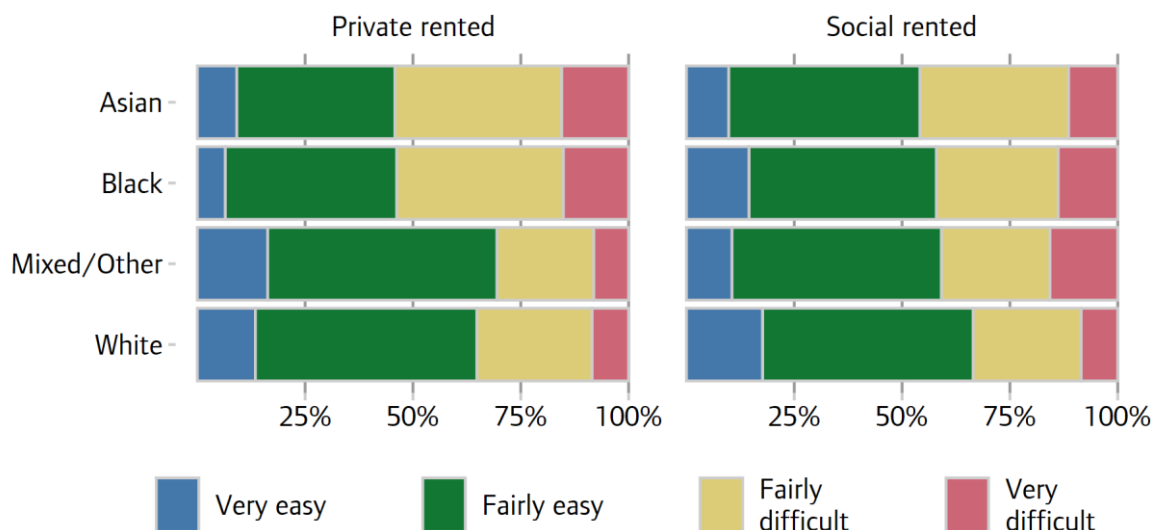
Ease or difficulty of paying rent by tenure and ethnicity, London 2016-17 to 2018-19. Source: English Housing Survey

5.6   So far this section has analysed affordability in terms of incomes, but the ability to buy a home also depends on access to savings and other forms of wealth, and home ownership in turn can then become a source of wealth if prices rise. There are even larger differences between ethnic groups in London in terms of average savings than in average incomes – for example, according to the 2018-19 and 2019-20 Family Resources Survey, around 70% of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black households in London report having no savings at all, compared to 40% of White and 46% of Indian households.

5.7   In practice, those looking to buy a home are often able to tap into other sources of wealth, such as gifts from family. But as these transfers rely on family having their own savings or wealth to spare, they are likely to only widen the gap in access to home ownership. In 2018, research by the Resolution Foundation found that people aged 30 whose parents have no property wealth are around 60 per cent less likely to own their home than those whose parents are homeowners. It also found that the chances of owning a home increased with parental property wealth, and that the impact of parental property wealth on access to home ownership has increased over time (Resolution Foundation, 2018).

5.8   But even if we assume away the issue of savings, unequal incomes and high house prices mean that renters from different ethnic groups in London have very different prospects of buying a home, with many parts of the city unaffordable to minority ethnic Londoners. The maps below show the proportion of renting households of different ethnicities in the peak first-time buyer age groups (with household reference persons aged 25 to 54) who, on the basis of their household income, are able to buy a home priced at the 25th percentile (using prices from 2019/20) in different neighbourhoods of London. It is assumed that households can borrow up to 4.5 times their income and have a 10% deposit available – both of which are arguably quite generous assumptions. The high overall price level and, in some parts of London, a lack of more affordable housing types like flats tends to exclude lower income households from many neighbourhoods, something which particularly affects Black Londoners and (to a lesser extent) other minority ethnic groups.

17

Asian   Black

Mixed/Other   White

| 0% to 7% | 7% to 14% | 14% to 22% | 22% to 32% | 32% to 68% |
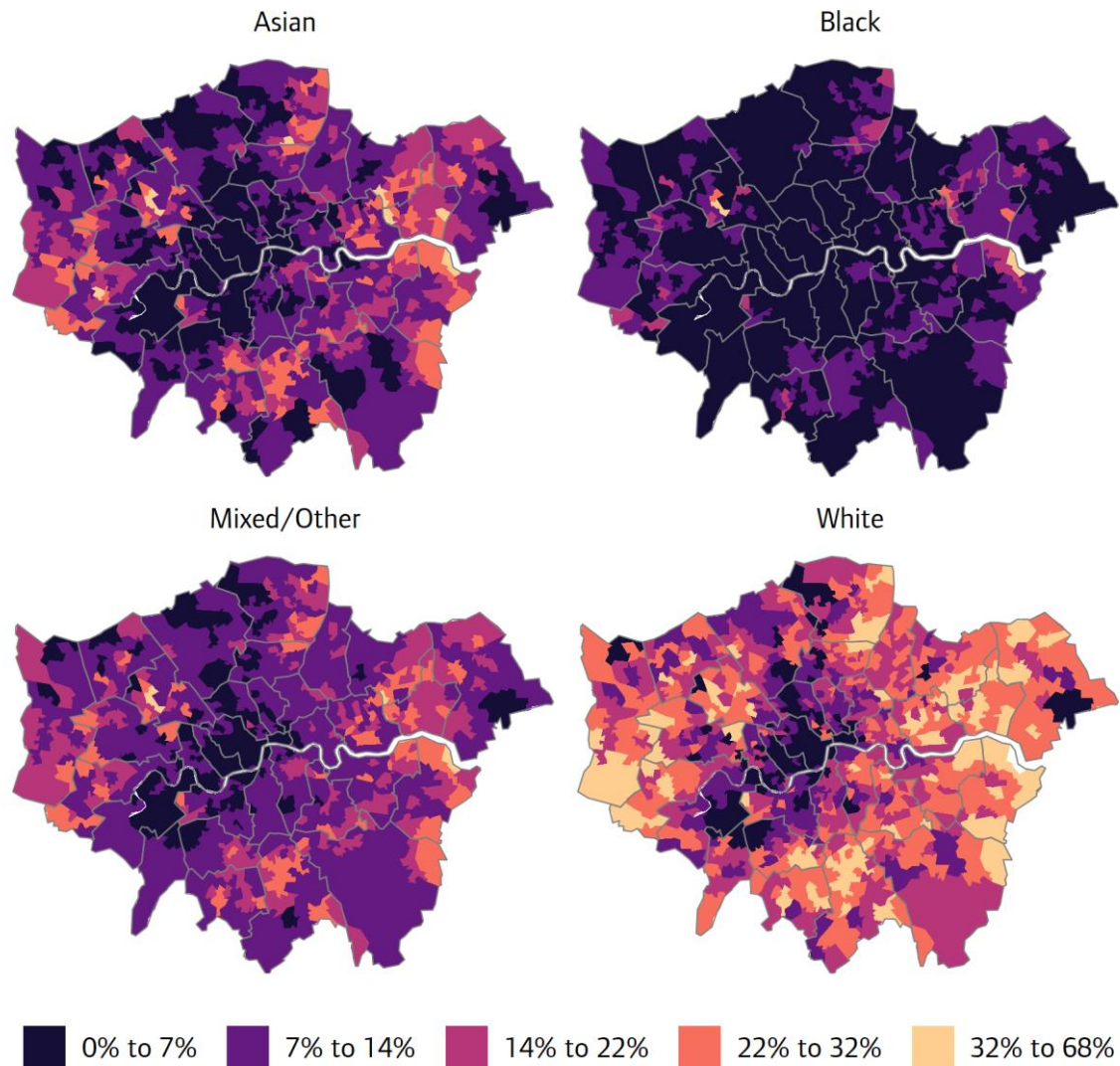
Proportion of renting households able to afford lower-quartile house prices, by ethnicity.
*Source: GLA analysis of Family Resources Survey and Land Registry data*

5.9   Unequal access to home ownership compounds wealth inequality when house prices rise. The chart below shows trends in average household wealth (including housing wealth but also pensions and other financial wealth) by region and very broad ethnicity between 2010-12 and 2016-18. Broadly speaking, the ethnic wealth gap is widest in London, and White households in London are wealthier than White households in the rest of the country, while households of other ethnicities are less wealthy in London than elsewhere. The sample used here (from the ONS Wealth and Assets Survey) is too small in London to provide more detail on ethnicity, but data from the national level indicates significant differences in average wealth between minority ethnic groups (for example, between Indian and Bangladeshi households) and this is also likely to be the case in London.

Median household wealth by region and broad ethnic group, 2010-12 to 2016-18. Source: Wealth and Assets Survey

6. Attitudes to housing

6.1   The chart below shows how satisfied or dissatisfied households of different ethnicities in London are with their homes. While a large majority of households in each group are satisfied, there are notably higher rates of dissatisfaction among Black Londoners and those of mixed/other ethnicity than among Asian and White Londoners.
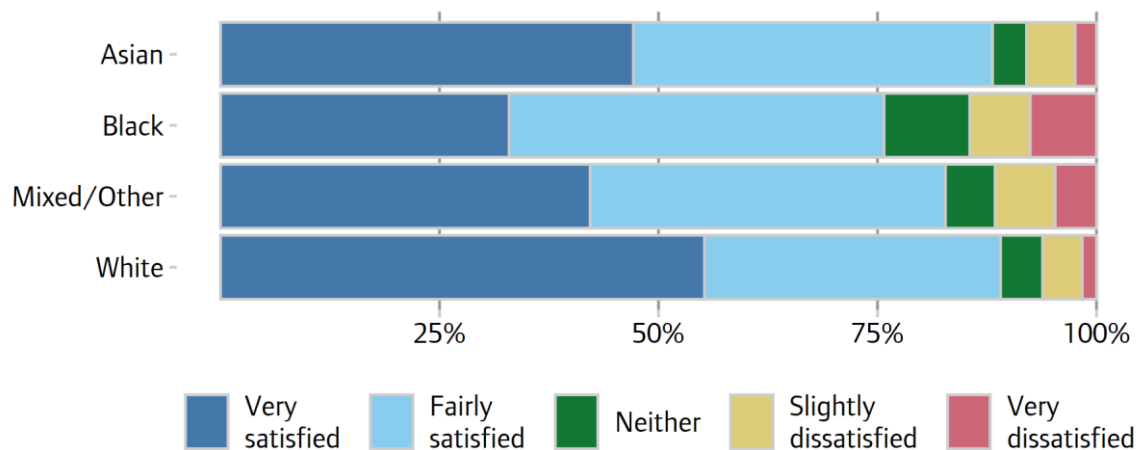

Satisfaction with housing by ethnicity of household reference person, London 2016-18. Source: English Housing Survey

6.2   The next chart shows households' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their current tenure. It shows a very similar picture, with dissatisfaction again highest among Black households and lowest among Asian and White households.
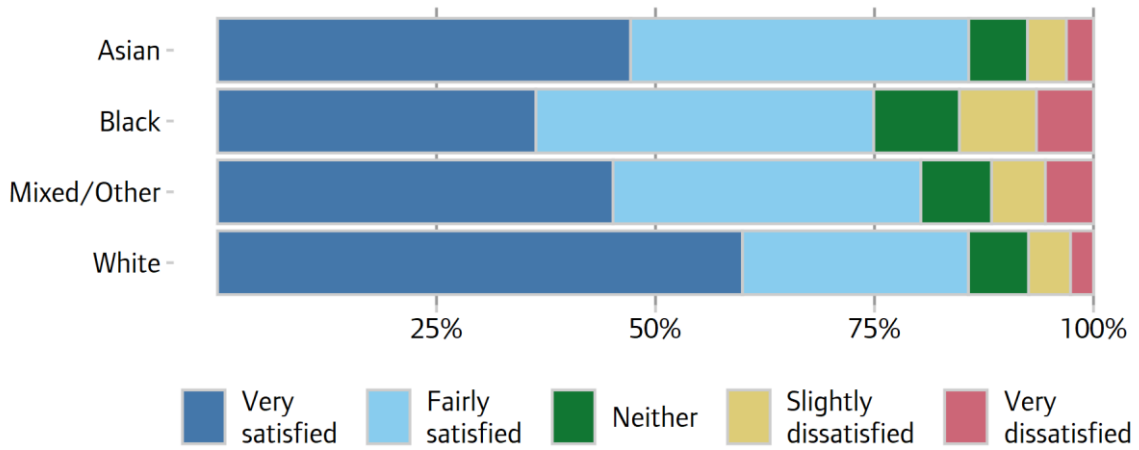
Satisfaction with tenure by ethnicity of household reference person, London 2016-18. Source: English Housing Survey

6.3 The English Housing Survey recently started asking respondents how they would expect to be treated by landlords and agents. As the chart below shows, most Londoners either have no opinion one way or the other, or expect to be treated the same as everybody else. When it comes to council housing departments or housing associations, Black and mixed/other ethnicity households are the most likely to expect to be treated worse, followed closely by White households. But when it comes to private landlords or agents, White households are significantly more likely than other groups to expect to be treated better while Black households are significantly more likely to expect to be treated worse.
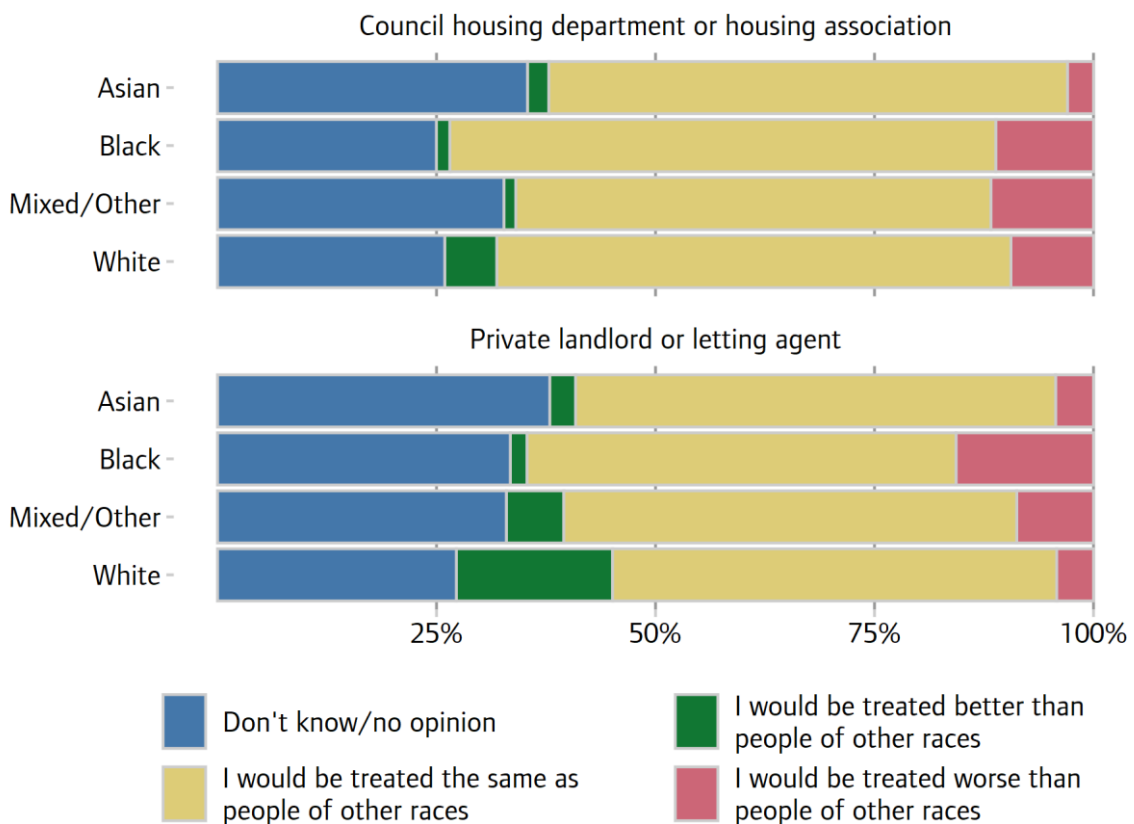

How people from different ethnic groups would expect to be treated by social or private landlords, London 2017-18 to 2018-19. Source: English Housing Survey

6.4   These results broadly tally with recent research by Shelter, which found that 14% of Black people across the country as a whole said they had found it hard to secure a safe and secure home because of discrimination, compared to 10% of Asian people and 3% of White people (Shelter, 2021). There is also evidence of discrimination in London's house-sharing market, with a 2014 study estimating that people from an ethnic minority background are between 11% and 37% less likely (depending on their specific ethnicity) to be invited to a room viewing compared to White people (Carlsson and Eriksson, 2014).

6.5   Earlier sections of this report showed wide gaps between Londoners of different ethnicities in current home ownership rates, and in prospects of being able to buy a home based on incomes and savings. But as the chart below shows, there is relatively little difference between renters of different ethnicities when it comes to whether they would choose to buy or rent a home given a free choice, with a large majority of all groups saying they would choose to buy.
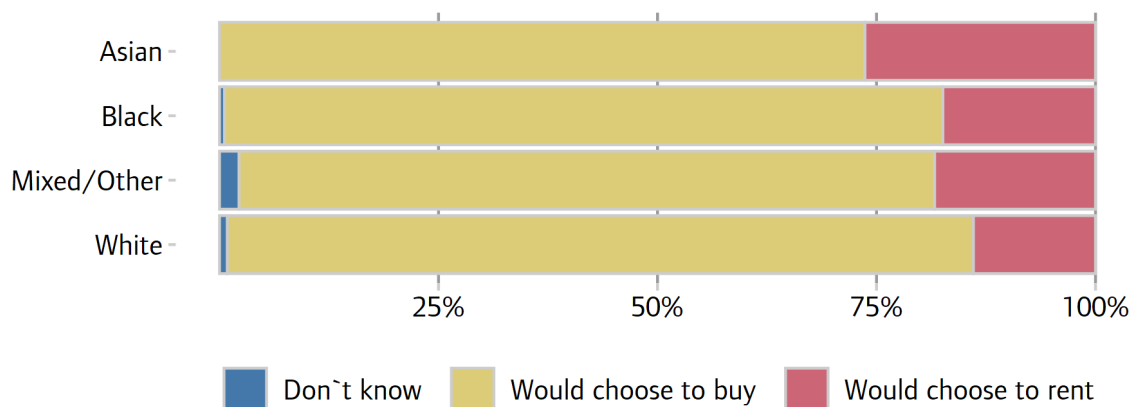
Whether respondents would choose to buy or rent a home if given a free choice - London 2017 and 2018. Source: British Social Attitudes Survey

6.6   Finally, the chart below shows that while a significant majority of people in all ethnic groups support more homes being built in their local area, this support is highest (and opposition lowest) among Black Londoners, while Asian and White Londoners have lower levels of support and higher levels of opposition.
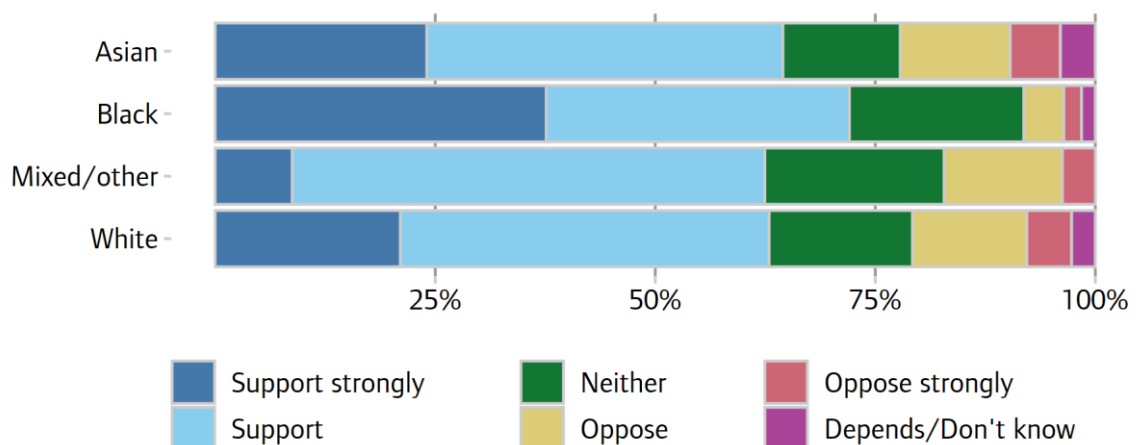

Support for more homes being built in the local area, London 2016-18. Source: British Social Attitudes Survey

6.7   Further analysis of 2014 and 2018 British Social Attitudes Survey data indicates that, at the national level, Black people who said they did not support new homes being built in

their local area were less likely than other groups to say that they would actively oppose a local housing development (the sample at the London level was not large enough to allow for robust analysis). This finding is consistent with other research which found that people who support new homes in their area are less likely to actively engage with the planning system than those who are opposed (see Shelter (2015), Demos (2019) and MHCLG (2019)).

7. The neighbourhood dimension

7.1 The analysis in previous sections dealt with households and individuals, but this section compares places - specifically, neighbourhoods in London as represented by the Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) geographical units used in the Census. In 2011 there were 983 MSOAs in London, with an average population of 8,315 reported in the Census. The Census also reported the ethnic mix of each MSOA's population, and this data can be used to analyse the differences between neighbourhoods on various measures according to their ethnic mix.

7.2 The map below shows the proportion of the population in each MOSA that belonged to each of the four broad ethnicity categories in 2011. In most neighbourhoods, a majority of the population was White, while Londoners of Black, Asian or Other ethnicity were much more unevenly distributed around the city. There were only 70 MSOAs where Asian Londoners comprised a majority of the population, and just three where Black Londoners were in the majority.
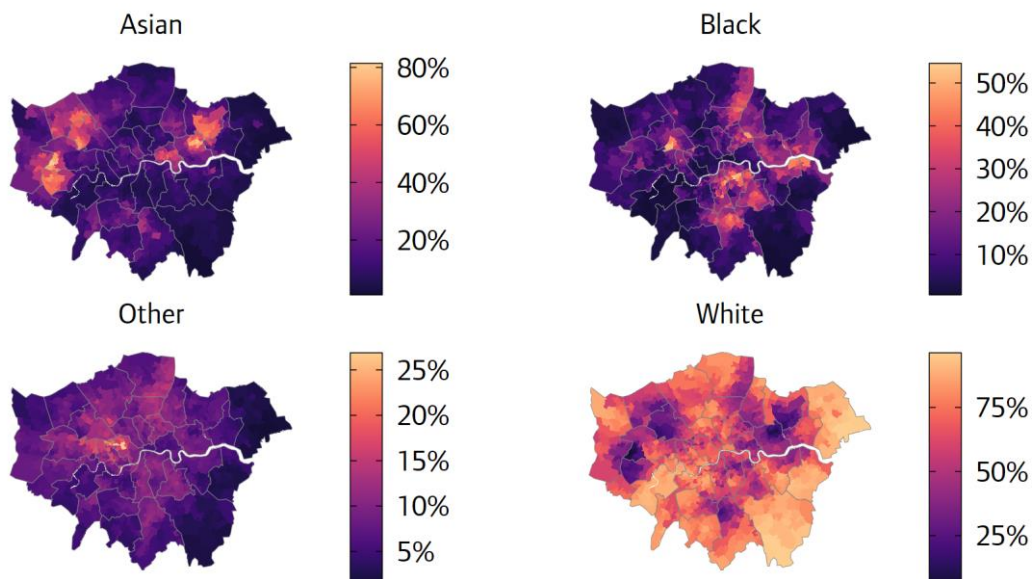

Ethnic groups as proportion of total population by Middle Super Output Area, 2011. Source: Census

7.3 To simplify the neighbourhood analysis, the 983 MSOAs in London are divided into ten groups (or 'deciles') for each of the four main ethnic groups, ranging from the decile with the lowest population share of that ethnic group in 2011 to the decile with the largest. As a guide, the first chart below shows the range of ethnic group shares in each decile. For example, in the decile of neighbourhoods with the largest Asian population share, this share ranged from 43% to 81%. As noted above, there were only a handful of neighbourhoods in London where Black people comprise more than 50% of the population, while most neighbourhoods in London had a majority White population.
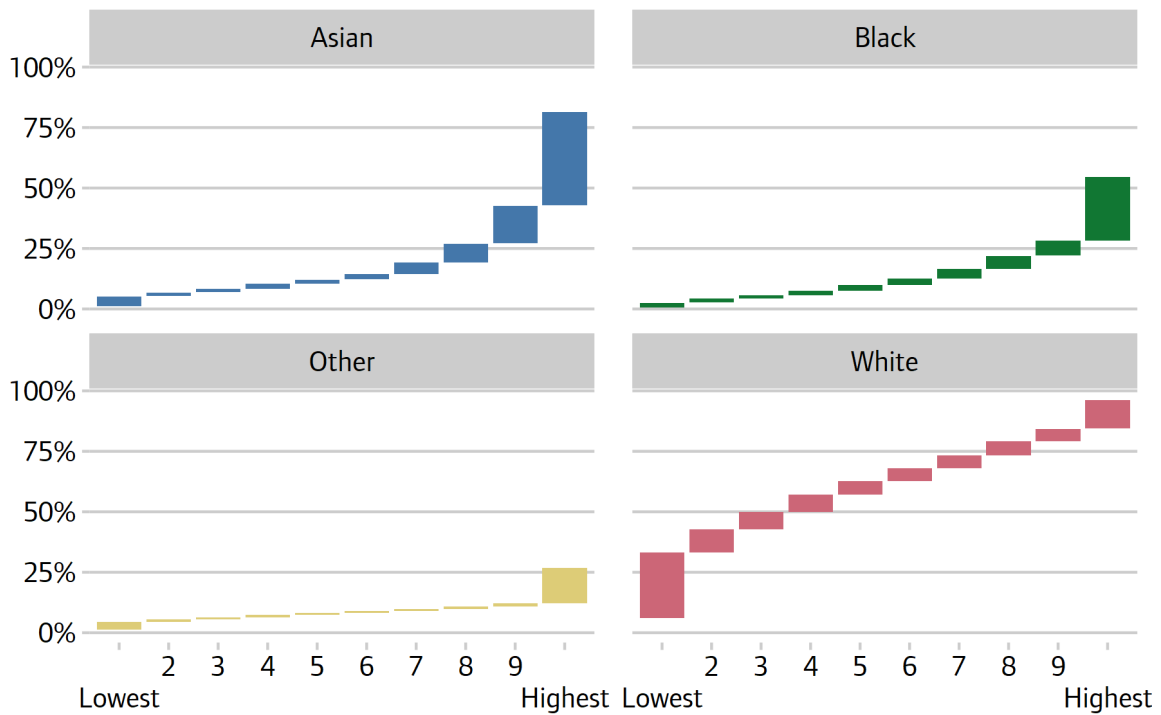
Range of ethnic group concentrations by decile, London 2011. Source: Census

7.4   This approach can then be used to compare different neighbourhood-level variables according to the concentration of each ethnicity in those neighbourhoods.

7.5   The first such variable is house prices. The map below shows the entry-level (lower quartile) house price by MSOA, based on the same 2019/20 data that was used in the comparison of affordability above.
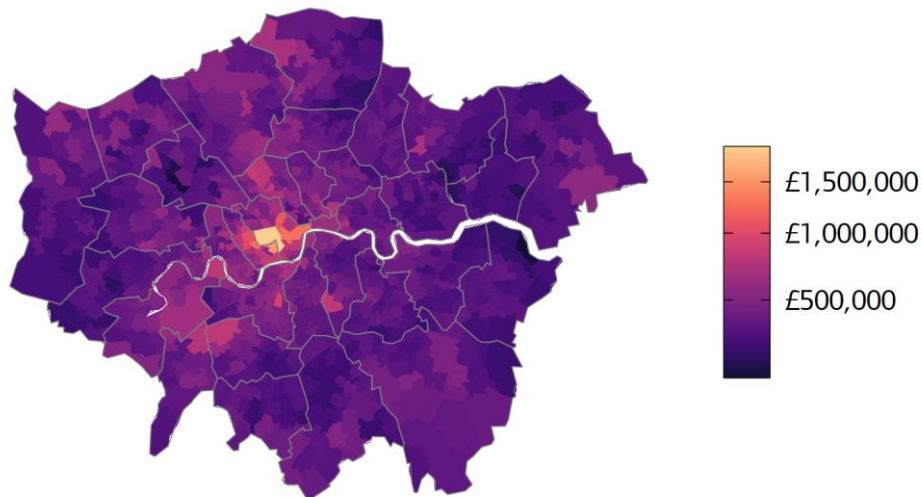
*Lower quartile house price by MSOA, London 2018/19. Source: ONS*

7.6   The next chart then shows the average entry-level (lower quartile) house price of neighbourhoods by decile of ethnic group concentration. The most notable patterns here are that prices tend to be higher in neighbourhoods with larger White populations, and lower in areas with larger Black populations.

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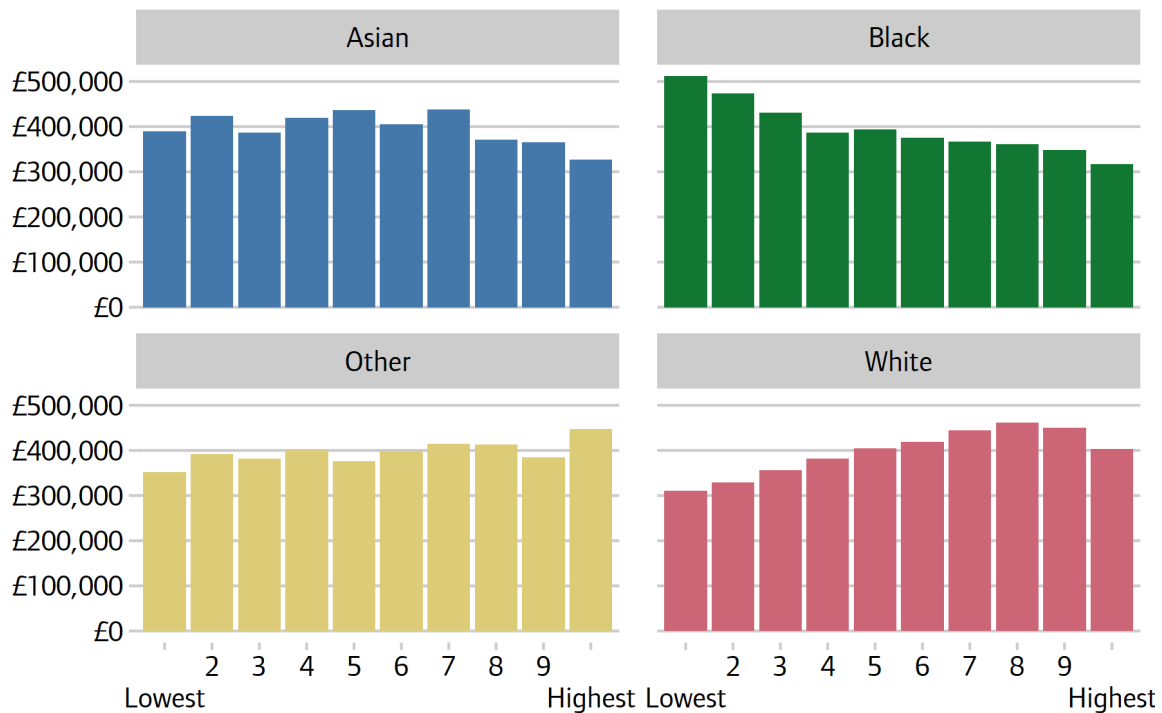
Average entry-level (lower quartile) house price in London neighbourhoods by each ethnic group's share of the total population. Sources: ONS/Census

7.7   The next variable to examine is housing supply, measured as the net growth in the housing stock of London neighbourhoods between 2011 and 2021.
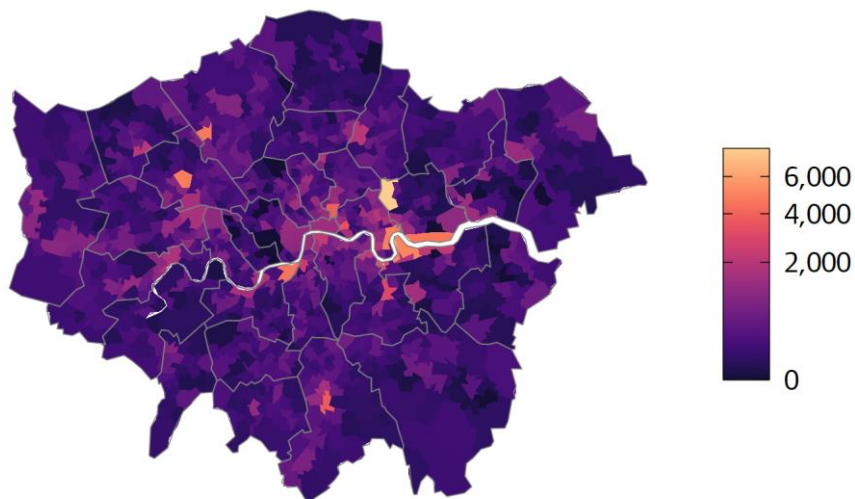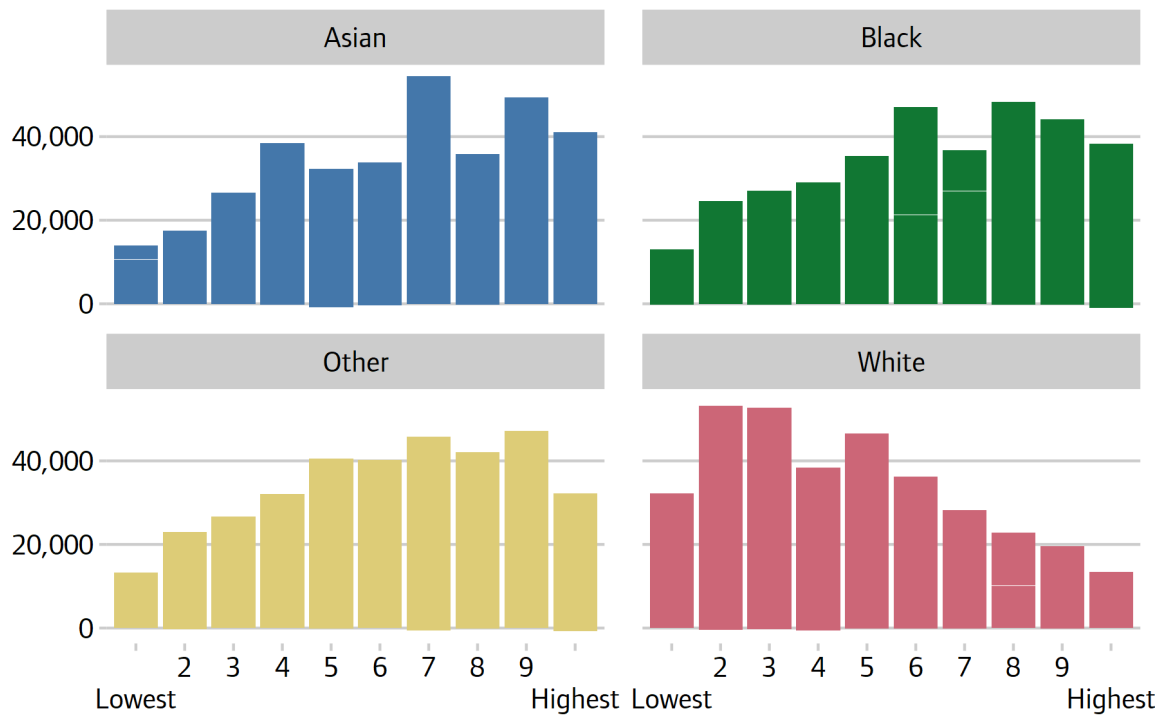

Net growth of housing stock in London neighbourhoods between 2011 and 2021. Source: VOA

7.8   Again there is a notable pattern when new housing supply is compared to the concentrations of different ethnic groups. London neighbourhoods with higher shares of White population tended to see lower growth in their housing stock between 2011 and 2021, while more homes were provided in neighbourhoods with higher shares of Black, Asian and mixed/other minority ethnicity populations.

7.9   To contextualise these figures, it is worth noting that growth in London's housing stock between 2011 and 2020 was not enough to keep up with growth in either the population

(for which 2021 data is not yet available) or the number of jobs, leading to worsening affordability and housing need.

Net growth of housing stock in London neighbourhoods between 2011 and 2021 by neighbourhood decile of ethnic group concentration in 2011. Sources: VOA/Census

7.10 Finally in this section, the following map shows how the home ownership rate varied by neighbourhood in 2011.
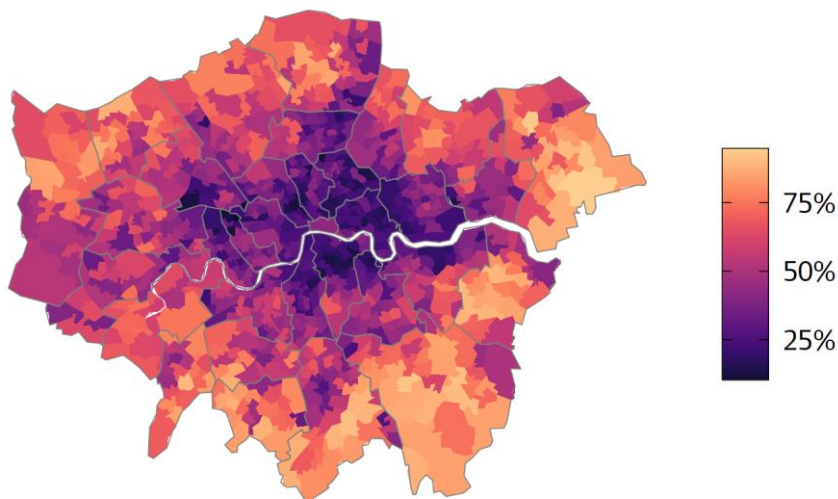
Homeowners as a proportion of all households by MSOA, London 2011. Source: Census

7.11 The chart below then compares the average neighbourhood home ownership rate by deciles of ethnic group concentration. Again, there is a clear gradient in ownership according to the neighbourhood-level concentation of White and Black Londoners, with neighbourhoods with more White Londoners having higher rates of home ownership and those with more Black Londoners having lower rates. There is no such gradient according

to the concentration of Asian Londoners, because the relatively high rates of ownership among Indian Londoners are offset by relatiely low rates among those of Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnicity.
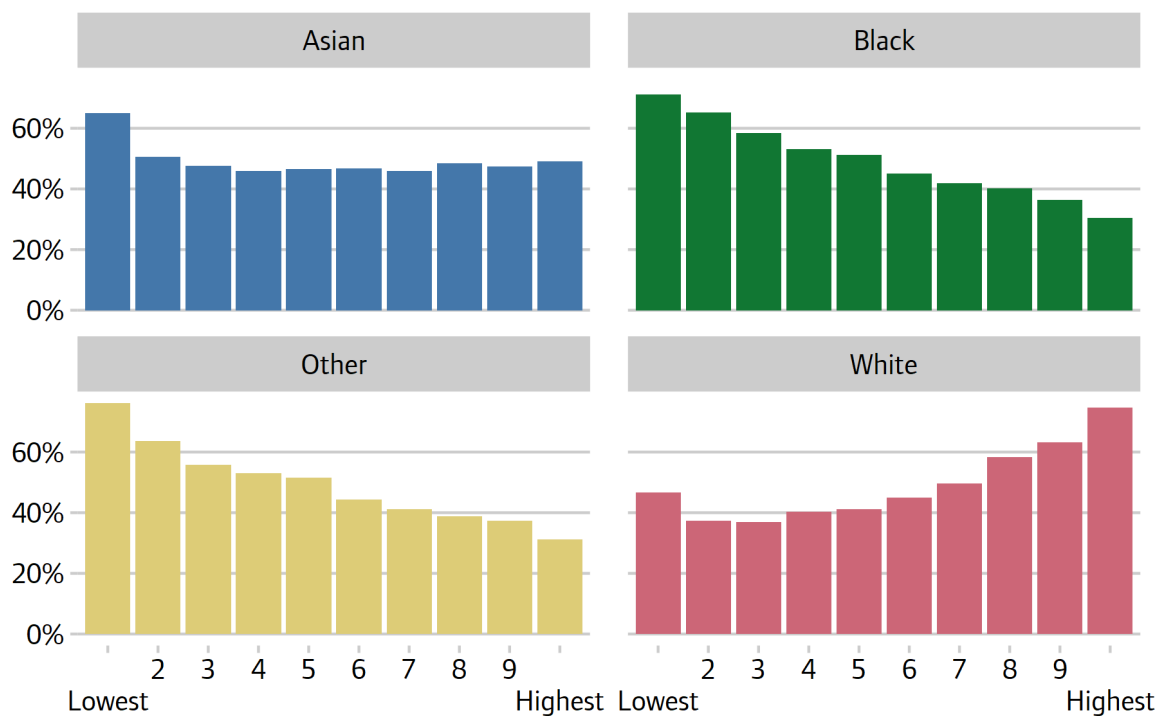
Average home ownership rate in London neighbourhoods by each ethnic group's share of the total population, 2011. Source: Census

8. Discussion

8.1 It is clear from the data presented in this report that Black, Asian and minority ethnicity Londoners are not a monolithic group. For example, at the most aggregated level of the four main categories used in much of this report, there are clearly substantial differences between Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Londoners. But there is also considerable diversity within each of these smaller groups, and there would still be even if we had much more detailed ethnicity categories to work with. The White British category is no exception: just because on average White British Londoners experience better outcomes does not mean that many of them are not living in acute housing need. In fact, the size of London's White British population means that they comprise the single largest group of many need categories, such as homeless households.

8.2 On average, Black Londoners and those from most other minority ethnic groups experience worse housing conditions, less tenure security, higher rates of housing need, worse affordability and lower wealth. Of course, these are just averages, which can mislead if they are interpreted as applying to every member of each group. But that does not make the results any less concerning, because while some in each group will be better off than indicated by the averages, some will be worse off.

8.3 As mentioned in the introduction, the aggregate figures presented in this report cannot fully reflect the intersecting identities that characterise every individual Some of these intersectionalities have important consequences for housing outcomes, and for the services that are intended to respond to them. For example, the charity Akt works with LGBTQ+ young people facing homelessness, and reports that 65% of them identify as people of colour. But research by Akt has found that a third of LGBTQ+ young people of

colour facing homelessness were not aware of any support services available to them, compared to 21% of White people in similar circumstances. This illustrates that housing and homelessness services should be sensitive to the specific identities and needs of individuals rather than making assumptions based on group averages.

8.4   Not all of the inequalities highlighted in this report are solely the result of factors relating to housing. For example, the higher rates of affordability problems experienced by Black and other minority ethnic Londoners are partly due to the same groups also being more likely to be in insecure work and on lower incomes.

8.5   But these existing inequalities are exacerbated by higher housing costs, in distinct but overlapping ways:

- First and most straightforwardly, high prices and rents disproportionately affect those on low incomes as they are left with less disposable income to pay for other necessities. As already noted, households on low incomes are disproportionately likely to come from Black, Asian and other minority ethnicity backgrounds.
- Second, when access to neighbourhoods with advantages such as better amenities, cleaner environments, safer streets or better schools is rationed according to market prices or rents, households in low incomes will tend to be excluded and suffer a lower quality of life as a result. This effect widens the gap between White and Black, Asian and minority ethnicity households.
- Third, when predominantly White neighbourhoods (which also tend to have higher rates of home ownership) build fewer homes than other neighbourhoods, the reduction in housing supply exacerbates the other two effects and introduces an additional element of wealth inequality.

8.6   Affordability also has a direct bearing on more acute forms of housing need. If private rents were lower, for example, it is likely that fewer Black Londoners with lower incomes would find it so difficult to pay their rent and, in some cases, face the prospect of becoming homelessness.

8.7   Social housing makes an important contribution to addressing these inequalities because it is allocated on a needs-based basis, but there is clearly not enough social housing available to meet all of London's acute housing needs (and low or insecure incomes also mean that some households in social housing also struggle to afford their rent). It is equally clear that the housing aspirations of Black Londoners (including eventually buying their own home) are similar to those of White Londoners, but Black Londoners are less able to realise these aspirations because of factors including the high cost of market housing, lower levels of savings and less access to inherited wealth.

8.8   The neighbourhood-level analysis presented in this report shows that there is also a spatial dimension to housing inequality in London. Predominantly White neighbourhoods, for example are on average more expensive and have higher home ownership rates, but build fewer homes. Black Londoners stand to benefit most from new housebuilding – including new social housing supply – and in that light the higher rate of construction in neighbourhoods with larger Black populations looks welcome. But in the context of a significant overall shortage of housing in London, the high costs facing renters, the barriers to moving into more expensive areas and a large and widening gap in wealth between White Londoners and others, the relatively low level of supply in predominantly White neighbourhoods is concerning. Unmet demand for housing in high-cost areas can also spill over into lower-cost neighbourhoods, pushing up prices and rents.

9. Recommendations for future research and data gathering

9.1 As shown by the analysis in this report, the English Housing Survey and other official household surveys are valuable sources of information on the housing circumstances of households. But the number of Black, Asian and other minority ethnicity households interviewed in London each year in these surveys is typically rather limited – largely due to the overall size of the sample (around 13,300 a year across the country as a whole in the case of the English Housing Survey). Boosting the sample of minority ethnic households surveyed (as has been done for the Understanding Society study, for example) would allow for more precise and robust estimates for these groups and reduce the need to combine several years of data when analysing the data, enabling changes over time to be reported in a more timely fashion. Any such increase would of course come at an additional cost in terms of public funding.

9.2 There may also be scope to release more breakdowns by ethnicity of data from administrative systems such as the quarterly homelessness statistics published by DLUHC. Currently these statistics provide a breakdown by ethnicity of the number of households assessed as owed a homelessness duty, but it may also be possible to provide ethnicity breakdowns of other variables such as temporary accommodation and reasons for homelessness.

9.3 The results of the 2021 Census are due to be published from mid-2022, and should provide a valuable insight into the housing circumstances of Black, Asian and minority ethnicity Londoners since 2011. Where possible, this data should be analysed at neighbourhood level and with reference to changes since 2011.

9.4 However, as stated at the outset of this report, there are inherent limits to how much can be learned from quantitative analysis alone, especially about relatively small groups of people or about subjective experiences of the conditions and processes discussed here. There is therefore an important role for more qualitative research that explores the experiences and views of Black, Asian and minority ethnicity Londoners. Priorities for qualitative research could include the experiences of homeless people navigating housing options systems, and the experiences of changing housing tenures (or of unsuccessful attempts to do so).

9.5 This report is just one part of the GLA's work on housing and race equality in London. Next steps will include engagement with London's communities and housing sector to gather evidence of lived experiences, impacts of housing on communities and proposals for change. There is also scope for further research to explore issues highlighted in this report in more detail, and to look at new data sources as and when they become available.

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