



Briefing: Are there disparities in the length of time White and Black and Black Mixed heritage headed households are spending in temporary accommodation?

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Summary

Shelter's peer research project, *My colour speaks before me: How racism and discrimination affect Black and Black Mixed heritage people's access to social homes in England*, reveals that Black and Black Mixed heritage (B/BMH) people continue to face discrimination when trying to secure a social home in England. While waiting to access a social home, many of these people live in temporary accommodation (TA).

We analysed new data from the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) to explore the length of time households are spending in temporary accommodation. We compared the experiences of White-headed households, and Black and Black Mixed heritage households.

We found that, in England, Black and Black Mixed heritage (B/BMH)-headed households are more likely to be stuck in TA for a very long time than households as a whole, and much more likely to be in TA for a very long time compared to White-headed households.

- The majority of B/BMH-headed households in TA have been there for more than a year; whereas the majority of White-headed households in TA have been there for less than a year
- B/BMH-headed households are more than twice as likely to have been in TA for over five years, than White-headed households.

Introduction

Shelter's peer research project, *My colour speaks before me: How racism and discrimination affect Black and Black Mixed heritage people's access to social homes in England*, reveals that Black and Black Mixed heritage (B/BMH) people continue to face discrimination when trying to secure a social home. While waiting to access a social home, many of these people live in temporary accommodation (TA).

We analysed new data to explore whether there are racial disparities in the length of time households are spending in temporary accommodation. This report explores the experiences of Black and Black Mixed heritage households, in line with the focus of our peer research project, using White households as a comparator.

Methodology

This report is based on analysis of new data retrieved through a Freedom of Information request to the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) in April 2025. We requested categorical data derived from the Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) system. Every time a household applies as homeless to their local council, a system records the Household Reference Person (HRP)'s ethnicity, and thereafter keeps track of the length of time they spend in TA.

We received data in categories matching those regularly published in [Table TA6](#) (ethnicity) and [Table TA4](#) (length of time) of the Financial Year Additional TA Breakdowns. The data covers the most recently available quarter (September 2024) and provides figures for every local authority in England, as well as regional totals and an imputed national total for England.

We used the data to produce our own categories of length of time spent in TA. Our analysis looks at the following periods: over five years, over two years, over and under one year and under 6 months. We then created ethnicity categories: using the given MHCLG category "White" and then summing the MHCLG category "Black" with the two Black-specific subcategories under "Mixed" to produce a figure for "Black and Black Mixed heritage" (B/BMH)-headed households.

For this report, we looked at the proportion of households within each of these ethnic groups who have been in TA for each time period. This allowed us to explore whether there is a difference between the proportion of B/BMH-headed and White-headed households who have been in temporary accommodation for different time periods. Results were tested for significance using a chi-squared test.

We also calculated an indicative and approximate average (median) length of time that households in each of these two ethnic groups have been in temporary accommodation. This average is based on assumptions of the distribution of the underlying, uncategorised data and therefore should be regarded as approximate and illustrative.

We repeated this analysis for each English region, and for areas of England outside of London to understand whether national trends were also replicated in regional areas. All results are for England, unless stated otherwise.

The focused nature of the analysis, which explored one broad ethnic group (Black and Black Mixed heritage people) at a national and regional level, means further exploration would be valuable. For example, analysis to understand local trends or to explore the experiences of households headed by people from other ethnicities.

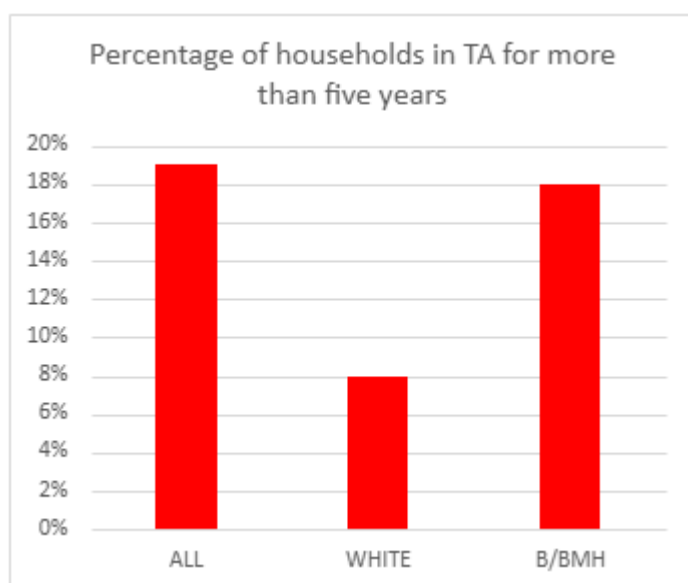
Findings

Temporary accommodation (TA) is rarely 'temporary' in nature. Almost four in ten households living in TA (39%) have been there for more than two years.

Our analysis shows that B/BMH-headed households in TA are more likely to be in temporary accommodation for a very long time, than households on the whole; and much more likely to be in TA for a very long time than White-headed households.

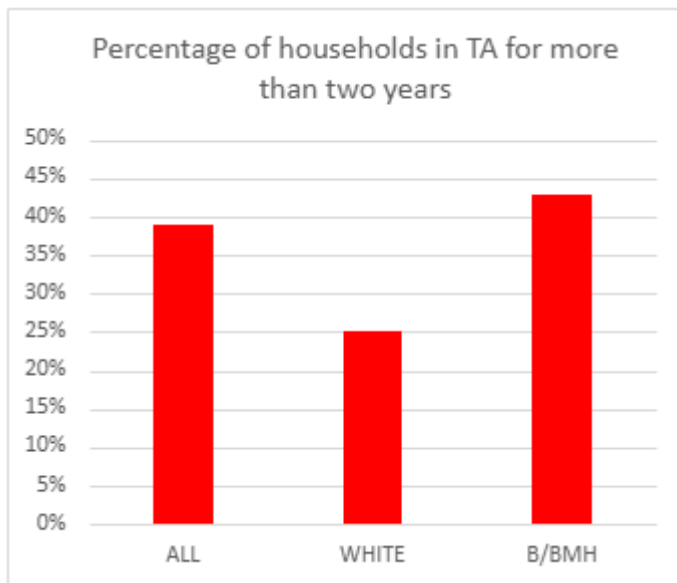
Over five years

B/BMH households are more than twice as likely to have been in TA for more than five years, compared to White-headed households. 18% of B/BMH-headed households in TA have been there for this length of time, compared to just 8% of White-headed households.



Over two years

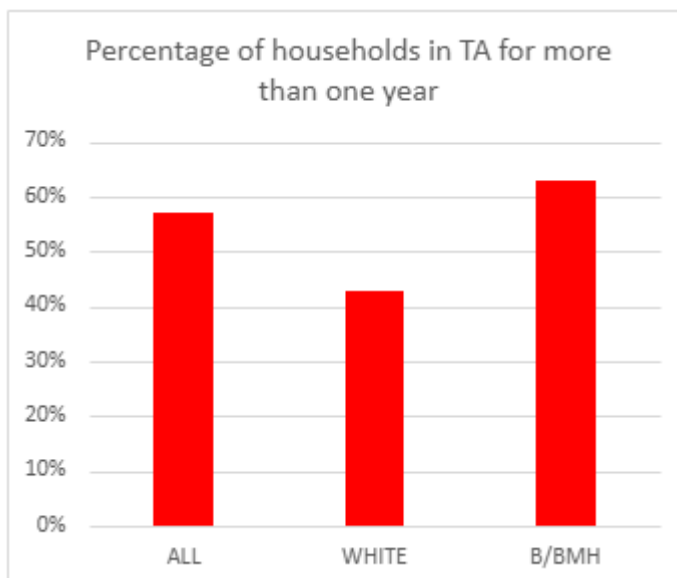
Our analysis reveals that B/BMH-headed households are also significantly more likely to have been in TA for over two years. 43% of B/BMH-headed households in TA have been there for over two years. This compares to 39% of all households, and just 25% of White-headed households in TA.



Over 1 year

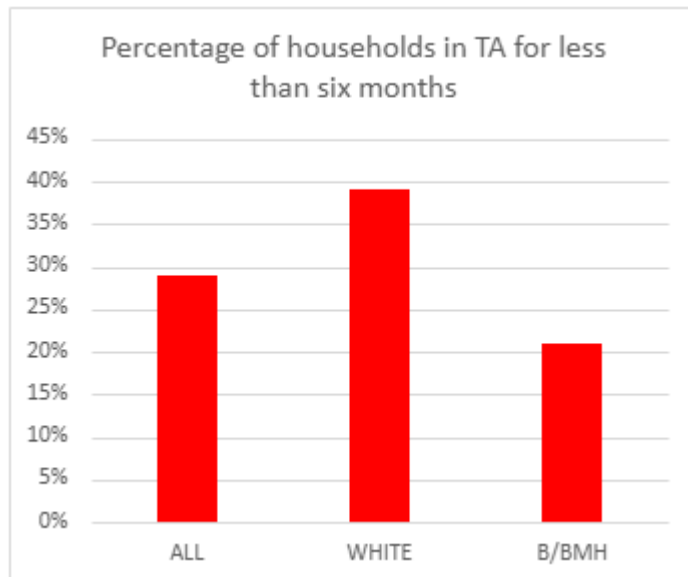
63% of B/BMH-headed households in TA have been there for more than a year. This is compared to 57% of all households, and 43% of White-headed households.

This means that the majority of B/BMH-headed households in TA have been there for more than a year, whereas the reverse is true for White-headed households in TA. The majority (57%) of White-headed households in TA have been there for less than a year.



Under six months

By contrast, just 21% of B/BMH-headed households find themselves in our shortest length-of-time category, (in TA less than six months). A much larger proportion of all households (29%) and particularly White-headed households (39%) are in this category.



Approximate average stays

By making assumptions about the underlying data, we can generate an approximate estimate of the average (median) length of time that households from different ethnic groups are spending in temporary accommodation¹. Due to data sufficiency, this average should be regarded as approximate and illustrative.

This analysis finds that B/BMH-headed households in TA have spent approximately 20 months in TA on average. Meanwhile, White-headed households in TA have spent approximately 10 months in TA on average.

This means that the data suggests that the average B/BMH-headed household in TA has been there for approximately twice as long as the average White-headed household.

¹ As we have categorical data, this median average is an estimate derived from assuming uniform distribution within classes, and using the following formula $\text{median} = \text{lower boundary of median class} + \left\{ \left[\frac{(\text{total frequency} / 2) - \text{cumulative frequency of the class before the median class}}{\text{frequency of the median class}} \right] \times \text{class width} \right\}$. The distribution of time spent in TA skews to lower time periods. So, we cannot be sure, but there is indication that there may not be uniform distribution within classes. This average should be regarded as illustrative only, and useful for comparisons rather than precise measurements. Further information on this formula and approach available here: <https://www.cuemath.com/data/median-of-grouped-data/>

National trends are replicated in some regions, but not all.

We looked at whether these national trends were replicated in each region of England, or if there were differences across regions. We looked particularly at the proportion of households in each ethnic group who have been in TA for more than two years.

At the national level, B/BMH-headed households are overrepresented amongst households staying in TA for longer than two years, whilst White-headed households are underrepresented.

In four of England's nine regions, we see a similar pattern. The North West in particular shows shocking disparities: 18% of all households in TA have spent 2+ years there, but this is the case for 29% of B/BMH-headed households, meanwhile White-headed households sit at 13%.

But this pattern is not replicated consistently at the regional level.

In a further two regions (London and the West Midlands), B/BMH-headed households are more likely than White-headed households to spend longer (2+ years) in TA – but both groups fall below the proportion seen across all households. This may suggest that in these areas, other ethnic groups are staying in TA longer than White or B/BMH-headed households.

It would be valuable to carry out further analysis into local patterns, in order to shed more light on the drivers of longer stays in temporary accommodation

Conclusion

All stays in temporary accommodation should be short. However, we know that many households in temporary accommodation are stuck there for months, and even years.

Shelter's analysis of government data reveals that B/BMH-headed households in TA are more likely to have been there for a very long time than households as a whole, and much more likely to have been in TA for a very long time than White-headed households.

For example, the majority of B/BMH-headed households in TA have been there for more than a year, but the majority of White-headed households in TA have been there for less than a year.

This national picture is also seen in some regions of England, but is not replicated consistently across all regions.

Further analysis is needed to further explore the length of time spent in TA by different groups, and to explore sub-national patterns in greater detail.

We cannot say for certain why Black-led households are more likely to spend longer in TA.

Systemic factors such as a lack of suitable social housing stock, undoubtedly play a role. The distribution of homelessness across England, and local factors, will also contribute.

Shelter's new qualitative research, [*My colour speaks before me: How racism and discrimination affect Black and Black Mixed heritage people's access to social homes in England*](#), identified evidence of racism, stereotyping, excessive questioning, and suspected de-prioritisation. These experiences may also contribute to leaving B/BMH households stuck homeless in temporary accommodation.

Appendix

Table showing the proportion of households within each ethnicity group, who have been in temporary accommodation for each time period

	< 6 mo			>1Y			>2Y			>5Y		
	ALL	B/BMH	WHITE	ALL	B/BMH	WHITE	ALL	B/BMH	WHITE	ALL	B/BMH	WHITE
ENGLAND	29%	21%	39%	57%	63%	43%	39%	43%	25%	19%	18%	8%
ENGLAND WITHOUT LONDON	45%	34%	48%	37%	43%	32%	18%	20%	14%	4%	3%	3%
North East	73%	100%	72%	13%	0%	15%	6%	0%	7%	1%	0%	1%
North West	47%	29%	55%	38%	52%	29%	18%	29%	13%	2%	1%	2%
Yorkshire and The Humber	72%	60%	66%	15%	7%	16%	4%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
East Midlands	54%	41%	56%	25%	34%	22%	6%	7%	5%	0%	0%	1%
West Midlands	40%	31%	48%	45%	45%	32%	23%	20%	14%	5%	0%	2%
East of England	42%	33%	44%	40%	46%	37%	20%	23%	18%	6%	8%	5%
London	16%	16%	19%	72%	70%	66%	56%	51%	47%	31%	23%	20%
South East	35%	31%	37%	44%	44%	41%	23%	21%	21%	8%	5%	5%
South West	53%	33%	55%	30%	44%	25%	11%	19%	9%	1%	2%	1%