Homelessness Amongst Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities in the UK

A Statistical Report on the State of the Nation

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I·SPHERE
Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research

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OAK FOUNDATION

Homelessness and Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities in the UK:

A knowledge and capacity building programme.

Funded by Oak Foundation, this knowledge and capacity building programme aims to support a fundamental step change in the UK evidence base on homelessness amongst people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities.

The programme is conducted by the Institute of Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University, with this first output completed in partnership with Race on the Agenda, and overseen by an expert Programme Advisory Group. It will run to 2024 and aims to offer a comprehensive account of the overall statistical picture with regards to the experience of homelessness of people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities, alongside rich qualitative evidence from research 'deep dives' into key groups, issues and experience of concerns. All this is done with a view to influencing priorities, tools and levers for intervention that can be used to reduce and eliminate racial discrimination, disparities and injustices in the homelessness and housing field. In addition, the programme seeks to train and equip a new cohort of early career researchers from Black and minoritised ethnic communities to drive forward progressive knowledge generation and policy and practice change in this field. This will be achieved in part via a paid internship programme. We are also working with a range of organisations to establish and strengthen partnerships that can effectively communicate and advocate for change.

For further information on the programme go to: [Homelessness and Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities in the UK – I-SPHERE (hw.ac.uk)](https://www.hw.ac.uk)

About Oak Foundation

Oak Foundation aims to address issues of global, social, and environmental concern. Through 11 programmes, they support others to make the world a safer, fairer, and more sustainable place to live. With offices in Europe, India, and North America, they make grants to organisations in approximately 40 countries worldwide.

This research is funded through Oak's Housing and Homelessness Programme which supports organisations to end homelessness and create housing opportunity.

About Race of the Agenda

Race on the Agenda (ROTA) is one of Britain's leading change drivers. Working with communities impacted by systemic racism, ROTA helps create the policies and practices to tackle inequality. Originally set up in 1984, ROTA aims to support and amplify the work of anti-racist organisations across the country as they work to bring equality to their communities.

About the authors

Professor Glen Bramley, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Jill McIntyre and Professor Sarah Johnsen are all based at the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University.

Acknowledgements

Preface from Programme Advisory Group

The structural causes of homelessness have been well documented by many in the housing and homelessness sector. Many influencing strategies recognise that homelessness is so often not the fault of individuals but instead systems that have enabled homelessness to persist. The drivers of homelessness are wide and varied. They include a lack of affordable homes, poverty, an over reliance on insecure private tenancies as well as temporary accommodation, through to social issues stemming from a lack of timely, equitable support for mental health difficulties, family breakdown and domestic abuse.

Our interest in coming together as an advisory group for this research, has been our commitment to identifying and engaging with the causes of homeless amongst Black and minoritised ethnic communities in the UK. We support Heriot-Watt's wide investigation of homelessness and its four main categories – core, statutory, hidden and at-risk homelessness. By adopting a broad definition, we have been able to engage more deeply with the different ways in which homelessness impacts on people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the research has confirmed that homelessness disproportionately impacts on Black and minoritised ethnic communities, mainly people from Black and Mixed ethnic backgrounds. What has caused us even greater concern is the apparent link between homelessness and race discrimination. This needs further investigation and action, and we are grateful to Heriot-Watt for its ongoing work.

This vital research provides a clear base line on which to build up further evidence, particularly qualitative evidence to better understand the direct experiences of Black and minoritised ethnic people facing homelessness, and what can be done to address this. We hope that this report will be shared widely amongst the housing and homelessness sector and beyond and used to develop their strategies on this issue. We encourage the race equality sector, and other social sectors with an interest in racial justice, to engage with the findings. We believe that any structural commitment to ending homelessness and creating greater housing security must take into consideration the racial disparities that have been identified in this report.

We are very grateful to the team at Heriot-Watt, under the leadership of Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, for the time and care they have taken to listen to our experience as an advisory group and to engage with the existing statistical evidence.

Programme Advisory Group members:
- Halima Begum, Runnymede
- Harinder Birring, Shelter
- Rachel Casey, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Pratichi Chatterjee and Sophie D'Souza, Crisis
- Raji Hunjan, Oak Foundation
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Executive Summary

Funded by Oak Foundation and in partnership with Race on the Agenda, this knowledge and capacity building programme undertaken by the Institute of Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University aims to support a fundamental step change in the UK evidence base on homelessness amongst people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities. This first published output uses statistical analysis of ten key survey, household and administrative datasets to assess the 'state of the nation' with regard to people from Black and minoritised backgrounds' experience of homelessness in the UK. The ten datasets analysed vary in terms of geographical reach, whether they capture information on individual people or households, the categorisations of ethnicity they employ and the relevant factors they include; however, they paint a largely consistent picture.

We posed the six core research questions below and here are our answers based on the findings thus far:

1. **Do Black and minoritised ethnic communities in the UK experience homelessness to a disproportionate degree?** Yes. There is overwhelming statistical evidence that people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities, taken as a whole, experience disproportionate levels of homelessness in the UK.

2. **Does the relative level of risk of experiencing homelessness vary between a) different Black and minoritised ethnic groups, and b) different forms homelessness?** Yes. In England, the very highest levels of homelessness risk is experienced by people from Black and Mixed ethnic backgrounds. These groups seem particularly exposed to 'statutory homelessness', that is, applying and/or being accepted as homeless by a local authority: Black people are three and a half times as likely to experience this as White British people. Asian people in England, on the other hand, experience lower rates of both statutory homelessness and 'core' (the most extreme) forms of homelessness (e.g. rough sleeping or staying in unsuitable forms of temporary accommodation) than Black people, and lower rates than White British people on some measures. However, they are at highly disproportionate risk of more hidden aspects of homelessness, such as overcrowding or 'doubling up' with other households. Within the Asian group, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households face greater risks of homelessness than Indian and other groups.

3. **Are there significant geographical variations in the extent and nature of homelessness risk for different racial and ethnic groups across UK?** Yes. The disproportionate risks of experiencing homelessness faced by Black and Mixed Ethnicity people in particular are substantially heightened in London. The position in Scotland is different to that in England, with overall levels of homelessness varying little between Black and minoritised ethnic communities and White-led households, although recent statutory homelessness data indicates rising homelessness affecting Black and Other ethnic groups. In Wales, statutory homelessness shows a similar picture to England, with a high incidence for Black Other and Mixed ethnicity-led households and a slightly higher incidence for Asian-led households. Comparable data for Northern Ireland is sparse, but 'doubling up' with other households seems relatively prevalent for Mixed and Other ethnic groups.

4. **Is there evidence of links between experience of racial or ethnic discrimination and exposure to homelessness?** Yes. Experience of discrimination, harassment or abuse on grounds of race or ethnicity in housing, or in other aspects of life, appears to be associated with elevated risks of homelessness. This is particularly true amongst Black people with experience of homelessness, one third (32%) of whom report discrimination from a social or private landlord. This may indicate that experiences of discrimination drive heightened exposure to homelessness and/or that Black and other minoritised groups who are homeless are exposed to higher levels of discriminatory behaviour.

5. **Can the heightened risks of homelessness faced by (some) Black and minoritised ethnic communities be fully explained by socio-economic, demographic and other factors rather than race and ethnicity itself?** No. Holding other contributory factors constant (including demographics, employment patterns, poverty levels, housing tenure, and local housing market conditions), ethnicity-related variables (including ethnic and racial background, having a migration background, and experience of discrimination) still increase the chances of experiencing homelessness substantially for Black (and in most analyses Mixed and/or Other) households. With respect to Asian households these effects seem limited mainly to Pakistani or Bangladeshi households.

6. **Do race, ethnicity and discrimination-related factors affect homelessness risks indirectly as well directly?** Yes. There is evidence that race, ethnicity and discrimination-related factors can, for example, heighten levels of poverty, or the chances of being a renter rather than an owner, which in turn increases exposure to homelessness. Once these indirect effects are accounted for, the relative risk of homelessness for Black and minoritised ethnic households is generally found to be substantially larger than when only direct effects are considered. For example, for a Black-led household reporting discrimination, with characteristics which are otherwise typical of the population as a whole, the risk of homelessness is nearly 50% greater than that of a White-led household with otherwise typical characteristics, with two-thirds of that effect being indirect via poverty and housing conditions.

The main report details the analysis underpinning these key findings, providing detail on the differential risks of homelessness, geographical variation, and associations between homelessness and racial discrimination. We use statistical modelling to analyse the factors which have an independent effect in increasing the chances of experiencing homelessness, when other relevant factors are held constant, and demonstrate that race and ethnicity continue to play a significant role in heightening some people's exposure to the trauma of homelessness. Our research programme aims to shed further light on this insidious issue and to deepen understanding of both its causes and potential solutions.

In future work we will focus on the experiences of specific ethnic groups, and interrelationships with demographics (including age, gender and household type), migration, citizenship status, religion and language. We will also drill down deeper into the evident contrasts between London and other parts of the country, and undertake local authority level analysis in England, Scotland and Wales, insofar as the available data will permit. In this first State of the Nation report we have provided illustrative results of initial innovative structural modelling work, including exploring mediation and interaction effects that allow the indirect as well as direct effects of race and ethnicity on homelessness to be identified. We plan to extend this type of analysis further, including the use of vignettes and longitudinal datasets to investigate the 'causes of the causes' (i.e. the predictors of homelessness that themselves can be shaped by racial and ethnic discrimination and disadvantage).

Over the period of this programme we will publish further reports on the state of the nation and 'deep dive' reports into specific priority topics on homelessness amongst people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities, in part identified by this initial statistical analysis, and also by our Programme Advisory Group and other key stakeholders. These deep dives will focus on qualitative insights, particularly from people from Black and minoritised ethnic backgrounds with lived experience of homelessness, but also frontline workers and other key stakeholders, supported by further statistical analysis where appropriate.

Background

Historically, issues of race, housing and homelessness were a matter of intense academic scrutiny (Rex & Moore, 1967; Henderson & Karn, 1984; Jeffers & Hoggett, 1995; Bowes, 1998; Harrison & Phillips, 2003), with discriminatory policies and procedures for the allocation of social housing a major theme in research on race and housing (Netto et al, 2001). However, focussed analysis of racial disparities in homelessness and related adverse housing experiences has been scant in the last decade or more, with the important exception of research on refugees, asylum seekers and people with No Recourse to Public Funds (e.g. Kissoon, 2010; Netto, 2011a,b; British Red Cross, 2020; Rogaly et al, 2021).

The last major empirical study of homelessness amongst minoritised ethnic populations in England was published almost twenty years ago, and was undertaken by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Gervais & Rehman, 2005). It focused on the causes of 'statutory homelessness' amongst Black and minoritised ethnic communities, that is, households being accepted as homeless by English local authorities as being in 'priority need' and entitled to rehousing. It found that Black and minoritised ethnic households were around three times more likely to become statutorily homeless than the majority White population. However, there were marked differences between ethnic groups, with people of Black African and Black Caribbean ethnicity twice as likely to be accepted as homeless as people of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origins. Amongst South Asian households, domestic violence, forced marriages and family disputes were the main causes of homelessness amongst single female-headed households, while private landlord evictions were the most common trigger amongst couples with children. Overcrowding was also a common housing need. Amongst Black Caribbeans, pregnancy often led to family disputes and overcrowding, with young women finding that family and friends were no longer being able to accommodate them. Multiple and complex support needs associated with child abuse, drug misuse, crime and mental health problems were also sometimes present. The Black African population was extremely diverse and no clear patterns emerged with respect to their reasons for homelessness. Interestingly, the authors also found that, while knowledge of statutory homelessness services was generally poor amongst most minoritised ethnic groups, this was not the case for Black Caribbean households.

Around the same time, a Government-commissioned study in Scotland also explored the factors that contributed to vulnerability to homelessness among Black and minoritised ethnic communities (Netto, 2006). It found that, in common with the White majority population, relationship breakdown, marital problems and domestic abuse all led to changes in household formation and were major contributory factors to homelessness in Black and minoritised ethnic communities, with overcrowding and financial problems also prominent. The most common response given by surveyed homelessness agencies, when asked about common housing problems faced by Black and minoritised ethnic communities, was problems relating to racist abuse or unsafe areas, with reports that racist incidents had led people to flee from their homes (see also Chahal, 2007; Law, 2007).

More recent studies of homelessness often acknowledge that Black and minoritised ethnic communities are disproportionately affected (e.g. Watts et al, 2015; Bramley & Fitzpatrick, 2018), but they tend not to explore the role of ethnicity in any depth. Likewise, Shelter has periodically issued press releases highlighting the disproportionate representation of minoritised ethnic communities, particularly Black people, in the statutory homelessness statistics (e.g. Shelter, 2020). In their recent analysis of the 'housing emergency', Shelter argue that structural racism explains why Black and Asian respondents to their Great Britain-wide survey were more likely than White respondents to report experiencing discrimination when looking for a home (Shelter, 2022; see also Lukes et al, 2019).

At the same time, homelessness tends to receive only a relatively brief mention in publications which are more broadly concerned with Black and minoritised ethnic communities' housing market experiences (for example, Clarke et al, 2008; Gulliver, 2016; Scottish Government, 2020; Treloar & Begum, 2021). Moreover, most of the relevant housing literature focuses on the Black and minoritised ethnic population as a whole rather than examining the situation of particular ethnic groups, though some specific attention has been paid to the Roma and/or traveller communities (Niner, 2004; Netto 2006; Greenfields, 2009), and to the Somali community (Cole & Robinson, 2003). It is also acknowledged that homelessness and other acute housing problems such as overcrowding are more likely to affect Pakistanis and Bangladeshis than other Asian groups such as Indian or Chinese people (Rogaly et al, 2021). At the same time, Census-based analysis has indicated that stable and high levels of adult sharing among Indian as well as other South Asian groups in England and Wales, which has significant long-term implications for the demand for larger housing units, is not sensitive to improved economic circumstances in isolation from other social and demographic factors, and rather reflects persistent differences in traditional preferences for household arrangements (Catney & Simpson, 2014).

One recurring theme in the (limited) extant UK literature on homelessness amongst Black and minoritised ethnic communities is that some at least tend to experience more hidden forms of homelessness rather than sleep rough (Netto, 2006). DeVerteuil (2011), for example, in a study involving Bangladeshi immigrants in London, finds that they are likely to live in overcrowded housing as a way to 'survive and avoid homelessness' and to avoid racist attacks, particularly when they first arrive in the UK (p. 938). More recent research in Bristol suggests that complexities surrounding the Universal Credit and social housing systems, combined with perceived and existing institutional racism, creates an environment where hidden forms of homelessness such as sofa surfing can seem a more viable option for some Black and minoritised ethnic groups than seeking help from the local authority or social landlords (Retief & Lodi, 2020).

Another prominent theme is an apparent disconnect between the housing needs of Black and minoritised ethnic communities and what (mainstream) housing and service providers are able to offer, with lack of cultural and religious awareness, language barriers, structural/institutional racism and racial harassment all cited as contributing factors (Cole and Robinson 2003; Netto, 2006; Clarke et al, 2008; Bristow, 2021). Cole and Robinson's (2003) report notes that even service providers/organisations explicitly aiming to support Black and minoritised ethnic communities are not always able to offer support for particular groups such as the Somali community.

Some evidence suggests that social housing allocation systems may 'unintentionally' discriminate against Black and minoritised ethnic communities who may understand less about these systems than the White majority population because, for example, they are recently migrated to the UK or have less knowledge of their housing rights (Rutter and Latorre, 2008; see also Kowalewska, 2018). There is currently very little evidence available on the appropriateness and effectiveness of homelessness services specifically with regards to their work with Black and minoritised ethnic communities, though we understand that this will the subject of research by some major homelessness service providers in the near future (see below).

There is also relatively little up-to-date evidence on the causes of homelessness amongst Black and minoritised ethnic communities (Kowalewska, 2018), but a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation exploring structural racism in housing (Rogaly et al, 2021) highlights a range of potentially relevant findings. Racial inequalities in the labour market, 'hostile environment' policies, and design of the social security system are argued to be contributing factors in Black and minoritised ethnic people's disproportionate lack of access to secure, good quality and affordable homes. People from Black and minoritised ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be in lower paid jobs, have less secure contracts, spend more of their incomes on housing and be affected by the two-child limit on Child Benefit and Total Benefit Cap. The authors argue that there is a history of structural racism in housing which stems from direct discrimination that British colonial subjects and Commonwealth citizens experienced when they migrated after World War II that continues to impact to this day. They voice particular concerns over the 'Right to Rent' policy as implemented under the Immigration Act 2016[1], which prohibits landlords from letting out accommodation to someone who is disqualified

[1] A landlord could incur civil and criminal penalties if they let accommodation to a person without a 'right to rent'. An occupier with no right to rent can be evicted without a court order in certain circumstances.

from renting because of their immigration status (see also Burnett, 2016; Crawford, 2020). They highlight that this legislation can have a detrimental effect on British-borne people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities as well as migrants, with landlords reluctant to rent to anyone that can be perceived as 'foreign'.

These findings echo those of Lukes et al (2019) who note the 'slippery nature of housing discrimination in that it is difficult to precisely evidence and challenge, has become embedded and normalised over a long period and feeds on shifting racialisations of migrants and minorities' (p. 3188). Like Rogaly et al (2021), they highlight the role of historical factors that have perpetuated housing inequalities which affect migrants and minoritised ethnic groups. They also note that, since the early 1990s, diversifying migration patterns to the UK have been 'accompanied by national legislation and local practices which have explicitly restricted the housing and welfare rights of migrants, forcing many into more insecure parts of the PRS' (Lukes et al, 2019, p.3196). A key finding from their analysis is that recent migrants from nearly all ethnic groups are more likely to experience housing disadvantage than migrants who arrived in the UK longer ago, or people born in the UK. They argue that this highlights the need for more housing research which explores the interaction between ethnicity, race, migration history and citizenship.

The March 2021 publication of the UK Government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities ('the Sewell Report') sparked huge controversy and critical comment by arguing that the roots of racial disparities in employment, education, health, and the criminal justice system in the modern UK context lie predominantly in factors other than racism, including in cultural, family and individual-level factors and behaviours. Though the report acknowledged that "overt and outright racism persists in the UK" (p.29), it expressed scepticism about the existence of institutional racism. The report's conclusions were widely contested by race and equalities organisations and by all the major political opposition parties (Bristow, 2021). The Runnymede Trust (2021), for example, contended that "the report…is a script that has been written for 10 Downing Street. The people involved in this

Commission had no interest in genuinely discussing racism…" (para.1). However, little attention has been paid to issues of housing or homelessness in these high-profile recent debates and controversies, aside from acknowledgement of the contribution of poor housing conditions to the unequal impacts of COVID on Black and minoritised ethnic communities (Haque et al, 2020; de Noronha, 2021).

There does now, however, seem to be a step-change under way in the attention being paid to the issue of race and homelessness, with a range of housing and homelessness organisations committed to driving forward both knowledge and practice in this area. For example, Crisis have launched a programme on race, homelessness and housing precarity, which includes a major lived experience component[2]. Both Crisis and Shelter plan to do research on their own service provision through an anti-racist lens, with the subject featuring prominently in Shelter's strategic plan for 2022-25[3]. At a city level, Pathway Housing Solutions in Nottingham are working with Nottingham University to research the links between ethnicity and housing disadvantage and homelessness in the city using action research to instigate change. The Greater London Authority has recently published an illuminating quantitative analysis of housing and race equality in London which demonstrates that, on average, Black Londoners and those from most other minoritised ethnic groups experience worse housing conditions, less tenure security, higher rates of housing need, worse affordability and lower wealth than White Londoners, with these inequalities exacerbated by London's high housing costs (Gleeson, 2022). This also means that the impact of so-called 'out-of-area' placements of homeless households, made mainly by London boroughs, are likely to impact most acutely on minoritised ethnic groups, with all of the implications for disruption of education, employment, and social and kinship ties that this may imply (Cooper & Weaver, 2022).

This new wave of work sits alongside the longstanding contribution of organisations like Runnymede, whose briefing papers and research reports provide crisp insights into issues that are highly relevant to the homelessness context, such as gentrification in London (for example, Almeida, 2021).

This research programme aims to complement and build upon the work of these and other stakeholders by offering a comprehensive and up-to-date account of the statistical picture on homelessness amongst Black and minoritised ethnic communities in the UK, alongside rich qualitative evidence that will offer a 'deep dive' into key groups, issues and experiences of concern. All of this is being done with a view to shaping priorities, tools and levers for intervention that can be used to eliminate racial discrimination, disparities and injustices in the homelessness and housing field.

This report is the first output from the programme and uses statistical analysis to assess the 'state of the nation' with regard to Black and minoritised ethnic communities' experience of homelessness in the contemporary UK. Six main research questions are addressed.

1. Do Black and minoritised ethnic communities in the UK experience homelessness to a disproportionate degree?
2. Does the relative level of risk vary between a) different Black and minoritised ethnic communities, and b) different forms homelessness?
3. Are there significant geographical variations in the extent and nature of homelessness risk for different racial and ethnic groups across UK?
4. Is there evidence of links between experience of racial or ethnic discrimination and exposure to homelessness?
5. Can the heightened risks of homelessness faced by (some) Black and minoritised ethnic communities be fully explained by socio-economic, demographic and other factors rather than race and ethnicity itself?
6. Do race, ethnicity and discrimination-related factors affect homelessness risks indirectly as well directly?

We address each of these questions below, but first we outline the definitions, parameters and methods employed in this research.

Definitions and scope

The definition of homelessness has long been a matter of controversy, in the UK as elsewhere (Busch-Geertsema et al, 2016), and for this reason is often described as an 'essentially contested' concept.

Our starting point in this programme is to take a broad and inclusive approach, incorporating four distinct (although to some extent overlapping) categories:

a) *core homelessness'*, comprising the most severe and immediate forms of homelessness (e.g. rough sleeping, living in homeless hostels/shelters, and 'sofa surfing'[4]) (Bramley, 2017; see Appendix 1 for full description of 'core homelessness');

b) *'statutory homelessness'*, based on relevant legislation in each of the four UK jurisdictions (i.e. households which have applied to a local authority and have been found to be both eligible and homeless (or threatened with homelessness in the near future) and entitled to prevention, relief or the main rehousing duty) (Fitzpatrick & Davies, 2021);

c) *'hidden homelessness'* amongst people whose situation is not visible either on the streets or in homelessness services or official homelessness statistics (e.g. people experiencing overcrowding, living in 'concealed'[5] or 'sharing households'[6], and/or living in unsuitable or inadequate conditions) (Watts et al, 2022);

d) *'at risk of homelessness'* in the near future (e.g. through insecurity of tenure or financial difficulties) (Bramley, 2019).

We use the terms both 'race' and 'ethnicity' in this report. Race refers to distinctive aspects of people's physical traits, while ethnicity is more broadly defined as 'an aspect of individual and group identity that combines migrant history, race, religion and nationality' (Aspinall 2009, cited in Lukes et al, 2019, p. 3191).

We employ classifications of race and ethnicity that are used across UK surveys and statistics. The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2016) seeks to harmonise the categories used while stating that 'Ethnic group classifies people according to their own perceived ethnic group and cultural background'. Most commonly these are White – Black – Asian – Other – Mixed/Multiple). In some analyses we are able to distinguish White – Non-UK born, and separate Indian/Pakistani-Bangladeshi/Chinese/Other Asian groups. We distinguish migrants (non-UK born) in some analyses, but do not otherwise examine religion, language or citizenship classifications at this stage, although we plan to do so in future analysis.

It should be noted that, as with the definitions of homelessness deployed, the classifications of ethnicity used are dependent on what is available in relevant datasets. It is partly for that reason that a wide variety of datasets have been used in this analysis to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible.

[4] 'Sofa surfers' are concealed households, living with others although preferring to move, and overcrowded, excluding non-dependent children of main household and students.

[5] 'Concealed households' are single adults or family groups living within another household (where a 'household' is a single adult or group of people living together at the same address and sharing cooking facilities and a living/sitting room or dining area.) Some definitions of concealed households restrict this to those who have a wish or intention to move out, and/or exclude nondependent children of the main householder. Concealed households are the broader group of which sofa surfers (who are core homeless) are a part; and are also the group from which significant numbers of statutory homeless applicants to local authorities emerge.

[6] 'Sharing households' are households who share parts of a dwelling with other households, for example toilet, bathroom or circulation space (but do not share cooking facilities or a living/sitting room or dining area because in that case they would be considered to be living in the same household.

Methods

The report draws on a wide range of statistical data sources including Census, surveys and administrative data. In all, ten data sources were consulted for this analysis including:

The official statutory Homelessness Statistics, which are produced via the 'H-CLIC' system in England, the HL1 system in Scotland, the WHO-12 in Wales, and by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, capture information on adults who apply as homeless or threatened with homelessness in each of the UK countries and on their wider household circumstances.

Kantar Public Voice Panel Survey, a UK-wide population panel of adults set up for diverse purposes, whereby specific suites of questions may be combined with a standard suite of socio-demographics. A specific set of 'housing experiences' questions were included in its 2020 iteration which allowed for capturing aspects of both 'core' and 'statutory' homelessness retrospectively.

The UK Household Longitudinal Survey ('Understanding Society') is the premier longitudinal annual panel survey conducted on UK households on a long-term basis. Of the order of 20-30,000 households participate in the survey, with all adult members tracked and interviewed where possible, and the range of question topics is wide, although not all questions are asked every year. While the survey has a wide range of information on housing circumstances, it does not have a particular section with explicit questions on homelessness, but does capture data which is indicative of being at risk of homelessness.

The Annual Population Survey is a continuously refreshed large-scale sample survey of the adult population of UK, also known as the Labour Force Survey. In this analysis we use data from 2010, 2015 and 2020.

The ESRC-funded Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey was a UK-wide survey carried out in 2012 as part of a major ESRC-funded research programme. The survey involved follow up interviews with households which had already participated in the 2011 Family Resources Survey, and attempts were made to interview all adult household members. Information was collected on a comprehensive range of measures of material deprivation and social exclusion. Information was collected on past experiences of homelessness (ever or in the last five years) distinguishing key categories of core homelessness as well as some aspects of wider homelessness risk.

The British Cohort Study (1970) is a classic longitudinal study which provides systematic data from birth to adulthood on every individual born in Great Britain in one specific week in 1970. In the year 2000, cohort members were asked about homelessness experiences up to age 30. The Census of Population (2011) contains relevant data about overcrowding and other aspects of hidden homelessness. We draw on data from the 2011 Census for England and Wales as much of the relevant data from the 2021 Census has not yet been released.

A large panel dataset of local authority level data. This has been derived from multiple official sources for England, as used to support modelling of aspects of homelessness[7], in this case enhanced by including estimates of post-2011 Black and minoritised ethnic population numbers.

The English Housing Survey draws a new stratified random sample of c.12,000 households each year. In addition to a wide range of long-standing housing topics, such as overcrowding and concealed households, additional questions on homelessness have been added, so that it is now possible to identify eight distinct indicators of homelessness which can be individually tabulated by ethnicity. We include analysis primarily for the period 2016/17-18/19[8].

[7] This dataset has been developed to support work for Crisis since 2017 on homelessness projections, as published in the Homelessness Monitors series; see particularly the Technical Report, Bramley (2021a); the work reported here is for England, but parallel datasets are available for Scotland and Wales.

[8] Because English Housing Survey draws a fresh sample each year, it is valuable to pool data over several years to boost sample size – this recent period also includes the most relevant indicators.

The **Scottish Household Survey** is a survey with some similarities to the English Housing Survey, although with less specialist housing content and more of a general local services focus. A suite of homelessness-specific questions – including an array of both objective and subjective questions on past experiences of homelessness - were asked in 2012-2015, while sofa surfing can be identified for more recent years.

All of these data sources, and the specific time-frames or data waves selected, were chosen on the basis that they contained relevant variables on homelessness or related housing difficulties. The most up-to-date relevant source is used in all instances.

Please also note that, whilst UK-wide data is used where possible for the analysis below, in practice the most robust or relevant data available for many purposes covers only the sub-UK level. We concentrate much of our analysis on England as a result, as by far the largest of the four UK jurisdictions, and also having by far the biggest population of people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities both numerically and proportionately. (According to the latest Office for National Statistics data, around 15% of England's total population is from a (non-White) Black and minoritised ethnic community, as compared with less than 5% of the population of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). However, we also undertake some geographically-focussed analysis that compares the position in the UK jurisdictions, or between different parts of England, where this is possible.

The analysis employs descriptive cross-tabulation techniques, where we particularly show the relative risk of homelessness affecting different Black and minoritised ethnic communities compared with the White population (risk ratios)[9]. We also use the statistical techniques of regression analysis (particularly logistic regression) that allows for the identification of variables (and groups of variables) which are statistically significant predictors of homelessness, once a range of other factors are controlled for. A more exploratory part of the work involves mediation analysis to investigate how associated factors like poverty may be part of the pathway from race, ethnicity and discrimination to homelessness. More detail on all aspects of the sources used, methods and analysis is given in the accompanying Technical Report (Bramley, 2022). In general, we note where differences are not statistically significant given the relevant sample sizes.

Disproportionate risks of experiencing homelessness

Our analysis has found overwhelming evidence that people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities backgrounds experience highly disproportionate levels of homelessness in the UK. However, these patterns vary markedly, both between different minoritised communities, and by type of homelessness.

Table 1 is based on the Public Voice Panel Survey, and captures both people's 'subjective' sense of whether they have ever been homeless (defined as having lost your own home with no alternative accommodation), as well as asking 'objective' questions that allow us to assess whether people have experienced the more extreme ***core homelessness*** (see Appendix 1 for the definition). It also includes data on statutory homelessness. As can be seen, Black people report much higher rates of all categories of homelessness than White people, being almost three times as likely to report being core homeless in the past five years, and roughly twice as likely to apply to the council as homeless.

In all, 28% of Black people as compared with only 14% of White people surveyed reported having experienced core homelessness and/or applying to the council as homeless.

There was a more mixed picture with Asian people, those from Chinese and other single ethnic groups, or of Mixed/Multiple ethnicities, with these groups largely reporting higher rates of homelessness experiences than White people, but not on all measures, and some of the relevant differences are too small to be statistically significant.

Focussing on ***statutory homelessness*** specifically, official statistics confirm this picture of heavily disproportionate exposure of Black people in particular to homelessness. Table 2 below expresses this data as 'risk ratio': how much more likely a head of household in a given ethnic group is to apply as homeless than a White British head of household.

As can be seen, Black heads of household are more than three times as likely as White heads of household to apply to English local authorities as homeless or threatened with homelessness. These official homelessness statistics also indicate heightened rates of homelessness amongst Mixed and Other ethnic groups, but only marginally elevated risks for Asian groups taken as a whole.

The latest official statistics in England confirm this as an ongoing pattern (DLUHC, 2022). During 2021/22, 10% of homeless households had a Black

Table 1: Measures of subjective, core and statutory homelessness by broad ethnic groups in UK, percent of adults 2020.

Ethnicity	Ever Homeless (subjective)	Ever Core Homeless	Core Homeless in last 5 years	Applied as homeless to Council	Core and/or applied as homeless to Council
White	7%	10%	3%	8%	14%
Black	12%	16%	8%	15%	28%
Asian[10]	4%	13%	8%	6%	18%
Chinese and other single ethnic groups	14%	21%	4%	29%	37%
Mixed/Multiple	6%	21%	13%	8%	23%
All	7%	10%	3%	8%	15%

Source: Kantar Public Voice Survey of adults in private households across UK, 2020.

[9] "Risk ratios" presented in this report express the rate of homelessness experienced by each ethnic group divided by the rate for White British households.

[10] Note that Chinese is excluded from the Asian category in this instance

Table 2: Risk ratios for homelessness application by ethnicity of head of household, compared with 'White British' heads of household, England 2020/21

Region	All Other White	Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	Asian / Asian British	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	Other ethnic group
England	1.1	2.2	1.1	3.6	2.4

Source: DLUHC statutory homelessness returns from H-CLIC system, detailed local authority tables, 2020-21. Household denominators estimated by author from ONS population estimates by ethnicity for 2016 and survey-based average household size by ethnicity data.

lead applicant, even though Black individuals account for less than 4% of the whole population according to ONS population estimates. On the other hand, only 68% of homeless households had a White lead applicant, while 84% of individuals in England are White. Households containing an Asian lead applicant were also underrepresented, with Asian individuals accounting for 8.3% of the whole population, but only 6.1% of homeless lead applicants.

However, when we switch focus to look at aspects of *hidden homelessness*, a different picture emerges, wherein the disproportionate exposure of Asian-led households to relevant experiences becomes apparent. The Annual Population Survey provides particularly useful measures of two key forms of potential hidden homelessness across all of the UK: 'concealed households' and 'sharing households'.

Table 3 shows that for sharing households, the risk ratios for all Black and minoritised ethnic communities, except Mixed ethnicities, are higher than for White-led households, with the Other ethnic group having by far the highest exposure. These risk ratios are also higher in all cases for concealed households, but this time the highest group is Asian. This ties in with evidence from the English Housing Survey, that the Asian group also experience a particularly high level of 'sofa surfing', for example, having 5.5 times the rate for White households on one measure. The English Housing Survey further indicates that, amongst Asian-led households, it is those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds who tend to experience the greatest homelessness risks across a range of measures, whereas those from Indian and Chinese origins have rates significantly below those for the White group.

Table 3: Sharing and Concealed Households, relative risk ratios vs White, UK 2020 (% of households)

Ethnic Group of head of household	Risk Ratio Sharing households 2020	Risk Ratio Concealed households 2020
White	1.0	1.0
Black	1.6	1.2
Asian	2.1	2.2
Other	6.5	1.4
Mixed	0.0	1.9
Total		

Source: Authors' analysis of Annual Population Survey 2020. Note: concealed households here exclude nondependent children who are not part of a couple or lone parent family group. Sharing is based on a very small proportion of households (0.61%) leading to very small base numbers for some ethnic groups in this survey).

Table 4: Under-occupation and overcrowding, residents of households in England and Wales, 2011

England and Wales	Total Population	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Other
Underoccupying	29.1%	31.7%	14.6%	14.6%	9.9%	12.1%
Overcrowded	8.3%	5.7%	15.9%	25.8%	26.4%	24.3%
Relative Risk Ratio of Overcrowding vs White			2.76	4.49	4.60	4.24

Source: Author's analysis of Census of Population 2011, England and Wales, Table LC24004EWIs. Note that this analysis is based on the Census-based occupancy standard 2011

Another important form of hidden homelessness is overcrowding, and Table 4 above contrasts underoccupancy with overcrowding as calculated for England and Wales, using 2011 Census data[11]. The table shows that all Black and minoritised ethnic groups have much higher rates of overcrowding than the White group, with risk ratios over four times higher for Asian as well as the Black and Other ethnic groups (see also Rogaly et al, 2021). Conversely, it is worth noting the extent to which White-led households dominate those under-occupying their accommodation, with approximately one third of such households doing so, as compared with only one in ten Black-led households.

The UK Household Longitudinal survey also captures data on both overcrowded and concealed households. Table 5a shows that households headed by people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities are almost five times more likely than White-headed households to live in overcrowded accommodation across the UK, with Black-led households almost six times more likely, and Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-led households almost ten times more likely. While the risk ratios are not as extreme for concealed households, these still show Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-led households faring worst, albeit that in this instance Indian and Black-led households are not far behind.

Table 5a: Indicators of hidden homelessness by ethnicity, showing relative risk ratios: UK households 2017-19, percent of heads of households.

Ethnic Categories (based on head of household)	Overcrowded	Concealed household
White British	2.5%	7.6%
White Other	4.1%	8.2%
Mixed	7.5%	8.2%
Black	14.1%	13.0%
Indian	7.6%	14.4%
Pakistani /Bangladeshi	23.6%	17.7%
Other	7.2%	11.3%
All Black/minoritised	11.8%	12.9%
Total	3.1%	7.9%
Risk ratios vs White British		
All Black/ minoritised ethnic	4.8	1.7
Black	5.7	1.7
Pakistani and Bangladeshi	9.5	2.3

Source: Authors' analysis of UK Household Longitudinal Survey data, pooled for waves 9-11, using need categories as defined in Bramley (2021b); concealed households exclude non-family non-dependent children of main householder.

[11] The most recent Census data is not yet available

With regards to being **'at risk of homelessness'** in the near future through, for example, insecurity of tenure or financial difficulties, recent work by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has highlighted indications of disproportionate risk affecting Black and minoritised ethnic communities (Rogaly et al, 2021). We can add to this evidence by again drawing on data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey data, as summarised in Table 5b. The indicators included here cover groups considered at risk of becoming homeless, particularly those experiencing affordability problems, but also a broader indicator of any housing need shortfall including with regard to housing condition or unsuitability. This shows that for the affordability indicators the risk of experiencing these issues is higher, often much higher, for most Black and minoritised ethnic communities (except Indian), with particularly high risks for Pakistani and Bangladeshi as well as Black-headed households. For the broad 'any need' indicator, all Black and minoritised ethnic communities (including Indian) report markedly higher incidence than White British (or White Other). Consistent with this, the analysis by Rogaly et al (2021) found that, on average, Black African renters spend 39% of their income on their rent, Black Caribbean renters 34% and Arab renters 46%. White British renters spend 30% of their income on rent on average.

Table 5b: Indicators of risk factors by ethnicity, showing relative risk ratios: UK households 2017-19, percent.

Ethnic Categories	Affordability problem[12]	Private rented tenant with unaffordable rent[13]	Any housing need[14]
White British	2.1%	1.4%	11.3%
White Other	2.3%	2.3%	12.9%
Mixed	4.8%	0.9%	17.9%
Black	10.4%	2.4%	29.6%
Indian	1.8%	0.7%	20.0%
Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	9.6%	2.6%	37.8%
Other	3.3%	1.6%	17.8%
All Black/ minoritised	6.1%	1.6%	27.4%
Total	2.3%	1.4%	24.7%
Risk ratios vs White British			
All Black/ minoritised	2.9	1.2	2.4
Black	4.9	1.8	2.6
Pakistani and Bangladeshi	4.5	1.9	3.4

Source: Authors' analysis of UK Household Longitudinal Survey data, pooled for waves 9-11, using need categories as defined in Bramley (2021b)

[12] 'Affordability problem' = households whose ratio of housing costs (rent/mortgage payment) to gross household income exceeds 25% or for whom residual net income less housing costs exceeds their housing benefit applicable amount by less than 20%, and who report any difficulty meeting housing payments or other related bills (e.g. Council Tax, utilities) in the last year.
[13] 'Private rented tenant with unaffordable rent' = private renting households not reporting difficulty whose ratio of housing costs (rent/ mortgage payment) to gross household income exceeds 27.5% or whose net equivalised household income after housing costs (AHC) would fall short of 60% of the national median.
[14] 'Any housing need' = households experiencing any of following housing need problems: overcrowding (bedroom standard); concealed household wanting to move; affordability problem (as above); private renters in unsuitable housing for age or health condition who want to move; external condition problem and household wants to move.

Migration

It is also important to reflect at this point on the interrelationship between migrant experience and ethnicity in driving disproportionate risks of homelessness. One might expect being a migrant to the UK to compound, or possibly even explain, heightened homelessness risks, whether through legal issues associated with citizenship or residency status, limited eligibility for publicly funded benefits or social housing, unfamiliarity with language and systems, or lack of support networks (Lukes et al, 2019). However, the statistical evidence on this is actually quite mixed. As Figure 1 demonstrates, using a broad indicator of any recent homelessness experience captured in the English Housing Survey, Black heads of household in England appear equally highly likely to experience homelessness whether or not they are born in the UK. While for Asian respondents there is an elevated risk associated with being a migrant as compared to UK born, the gradient here is similar to that for non-UK born Whites as compared to UK-born Whites. For the Other/Mixed ethnicity group, the relationship goes the other way, with those who are UK born having relatively higher levels of homelessness experience than those who are migrants.

One might tentatively infer from this that while there appears to be a general tendency for migrants to face higher homelessness risk (as expected), this seems to be overlaid by a strong tendency for UK-born Black and Mixed/Other ethnic groups to experience such significantly heightened levels of homelessness risks that this may offset any migrancy effect for the[15]. That said, there is substantial evidence that some vulnerable groups of migrants, particularly those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), are at acute risk of both homelessness and destitution (Lukes et al, 2019; Fitzpatrick et al, 2020; Rogaly et al, 2021). It also must be borne in mind that some of the datasets used in this analysis exclude NRPF groups explicitly (such as the statutory homelessness statistics) or are vulnerable to both attrition and non-response from many in these groups. We will explore further the impact of migration and citizenship status in later stages of this analysis.

Figure 1: Homelessness by ethnicity and migrant status of household head, percent of households England 2016-18.
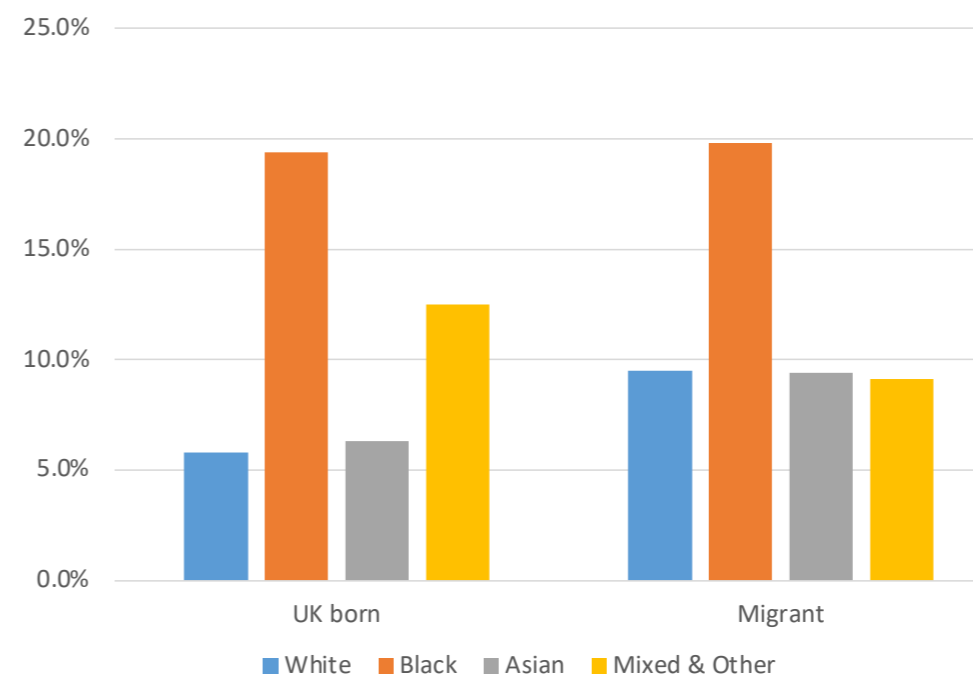
Source: English Housing Survey, 2016-18; any recent homelessness reported.

[15] As will be seen below, the position in Scotland is rather different in this respect.

Geographical variations

There are substantial variations in the risks of homelessness facing different ethnic groups in different parts of the country, with the greatest risks of all faced by Black people living in London.

To illustrate these geographical patterns we present below recent statutory homelessness application rates by ethnic groups across the broad English regions. As Figure 2 indicates, statutory homelessness levels are much higher for Black, Other and Mixed ethnic groups than for White British-led households across all broad English regions, with Black-led households in London facing the highest overall risks (see also Gleeson, 2022).

For Asian-led households, on the other hand, rates of homelessness applications are only slightly higher than that for White British-led households in the North and Midlands of England, and actually slightly lower in the South of England. It is only in London that Asian-led households face substantially higher statutory homelessness risks than those of White-led households, albeit still well below those for the Black, Other and Mixed groups.

Across England as a whole, Black and Mixed/Other ethnic groups have risks for statutory homelessness that are, respectively, three-and-a-half and two-and-a-half times those faced by White-led households, whereas for Asian-led households the overall risk at national level is only slightly above that of White British-led households (see Table 6 below, and also Table 2 above). However, as Table 6 indicates, in London specifically the risk ratios rise for all of the Black and minoritised ethnic communities, with the figure for Black-led households strikingly high at around 5.1 times the White rate, while the Asian rate is about 1.6 times that of White-led households, and the Mixed/Other rate around 3.3. This disaggregated regional analysis also shows that for Asian-led households relative risks are above the national average in Yorkshire and Humber and East Midlands; while for the Mixed/Other ethnicities risk ratios are above average in West and East Midlands, North West and Yorkshire and Humber.

Care is needed in extrapolating from English experience to the devolved nations. For example, in Scotland overall levels of homelessness appear to vary little between adults from Black and minoritised ethnic communities and White adults, and also very little between migrants and UK-born individuals within each group, as measured by reports on past experiences of homelessness in the Scottish Household Survey (see Figure 3). These patterns probably reflect the lower overall levels of migration to Scotland of Black and minoritised ethnic communities, and the differing character of some of these migration flows, which include, for example, substantial numbers of university staff and students (see also Netto, 2006).
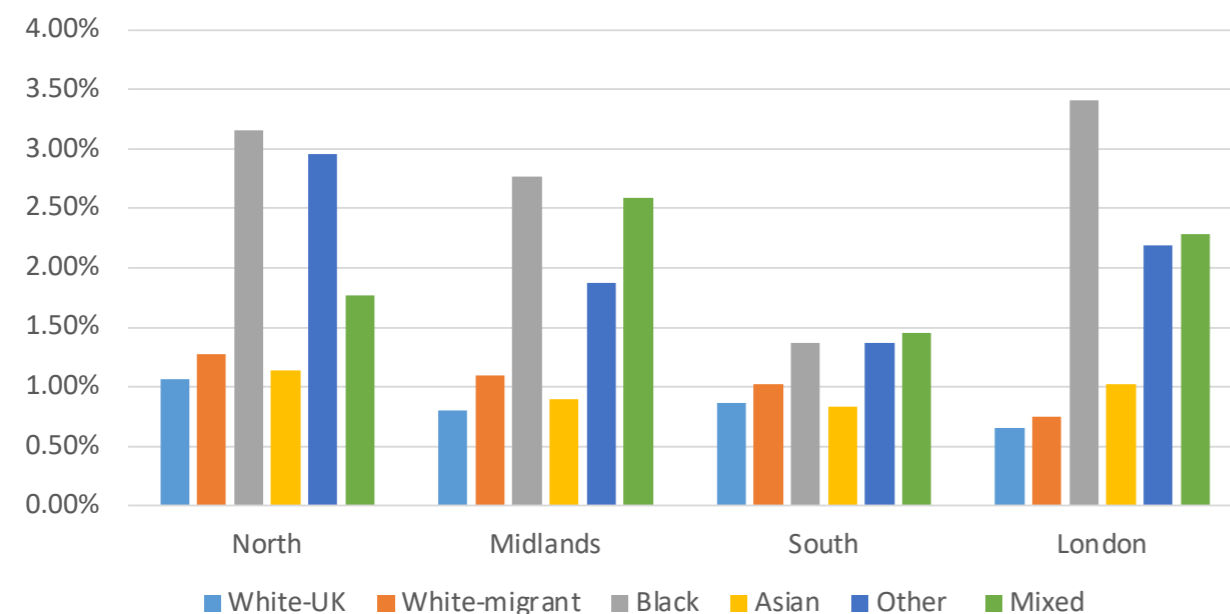
Table 6: Risk ratios for homeless application rates by households from three broad ethnic groups relative to White British households, England 2020-21

Region	Black	Asian	Other/Mixed
North East	2.5	0.9	1.9
North West	3.1	1.1	2.5
Yorks & Humber	3.4	1.3	2.4
East Midlands	3.6	1.2	2.7
West Midlands	3.3	1.0	2.9
South West	3.5	0.8	1.6
East England	2.9	1.1	1.6
South East	3.5	1.1	1.7
London	5.1	1.5	3.3
England	3.6	1.1	2.3

Source: DLUHC statutory homelessness returns from H-CLIC system, detailed local authority tables, 2020-21. Household denominators estimated by author from ONS population estimates by ethnicity for 2016 and survey based average household size by ethnicity data.

Note: Risk ratios express the rate of homelessness for each ethnic group divided by the rate for White British households.

Figure 2: Homeless application rates by broad region and ethnicity, England 2020 (percent of estimated resident households by ethnicity of household head)

Source: DLUHC statutory homelessness returns from H-CLIC system, detailed local authority tables, 2020-21. Household denominators estimated by author from ONS population estimates by ethnicity for 2016 and survey based average household size by ethnicity data.

Figure 3: Homelessness by ethnicity and migrant status, % of household heads, Scotland 2012-15.
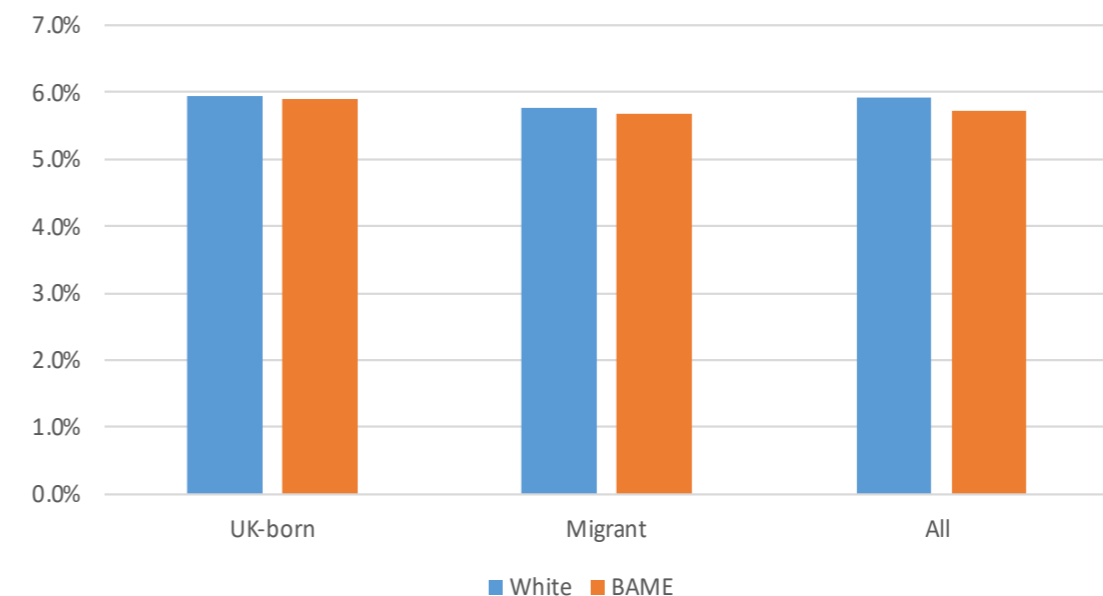
Source: Scottish Household Survey, retrospective homelessness experience questions.

Table 7a underlines the relatively small proportion of Black and minoritised ethnic communities in the Scottish population, with only the Asian group having a significant population share at 2.7%. Absolute numbers of households headed by someone from a Black and minoritised ethnic background applying to local authorities as homeless have not been very large, at 1,266 in 2011 (out of a total of 45,534), but they had risen noticeably, to 3,266 by 2019 (out of a smaller total of 36,855). This rise in the share of homeless has been noticeable in the Black and Mixed groups, and to some extent in the larger Asian group (where the relative risk is still well below the White or average figures), but the most spectacular rise has been in the 'Other' ethnicity category. It is likely that this reflects a large and strongly growing share in asylum/refugee groups, particularly from the Middle East.

Table 7b presents a similar picture for Wales using the latest available data; again the shares of ethnic populations in Wales are relatively low. The relative risk of homelessness is markedly high for Black and especially for 'Other' ethnic groups, but this time slightly above average also for Asian and Mixed groups.

Data on homelessness and ethnicity is especially sparse in Northern Ireland. However, it is possible to use some UK-wide datasets (for example, the Annual Population Survey and the UK Longitudinal Survey) to include Northern Ireland alongside analysis of the other UK jurisdictions. This data indicates that concealed and sharing households seem relatively prevalent for Mixed and Other ethnic groups in Northern Ireland.

Table 7a: Shares of statutory homeless applicants in Scotland relative to shares of population, 2011 and 2019

| Ethnic Groups	Share of total adult population 2011	Share of homeless applicants 2011	Share of homeless applicants 2019
White British	91.8%	91.3%	85.5%
White Other	4.2%	3.4%	5.2%
Black	0.7%	1.1%	1.7%
Asian	2.7%	1.4%	1.5%
Mixed	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%
Other	0.3%	2.6%	5.8%

Source: NRS Scotland's Census 2011, Table KS201SC; Scottish Government Homelessness in Scotland Equalities Breakdown: 2019 to 2020, Table 1. Note that no detailed population estimates by ethnicity are available in Scotland post-2011. Percentage shares of homeless households exclude those where ethnicity of applicant was refused or not stated.

Table 7b: Shares of statutory homeless applicants in Wales in 2021 relative to shares of population in 2016

Wales	Population 2016	Homeless 2021	Relative Risk 2021
White	95.8%	88.0%	0.9
Black	0.7%	3.1%	4.6
Asian	2.0%	2.4%	1.2
Mixed	0.8%	1.4%	1.7
Other	0.7%	5.1%	6.9

Source: Authors' estimates of 2016 ethnic populations based on ONS Research Report; Homeless applications from Stats Wales Homelessness Outcomes Table 2021-2.

Links With Discrimination

There is evidence from a range of statistical sources that minoritised ethnic communities' experience of discrimination, especially Black people's, is associated with greater exposure to homelessness.

Figure 4: Subjective discrimination in housing by ethnic group and whether any recent homeless experience, England 2016-18.
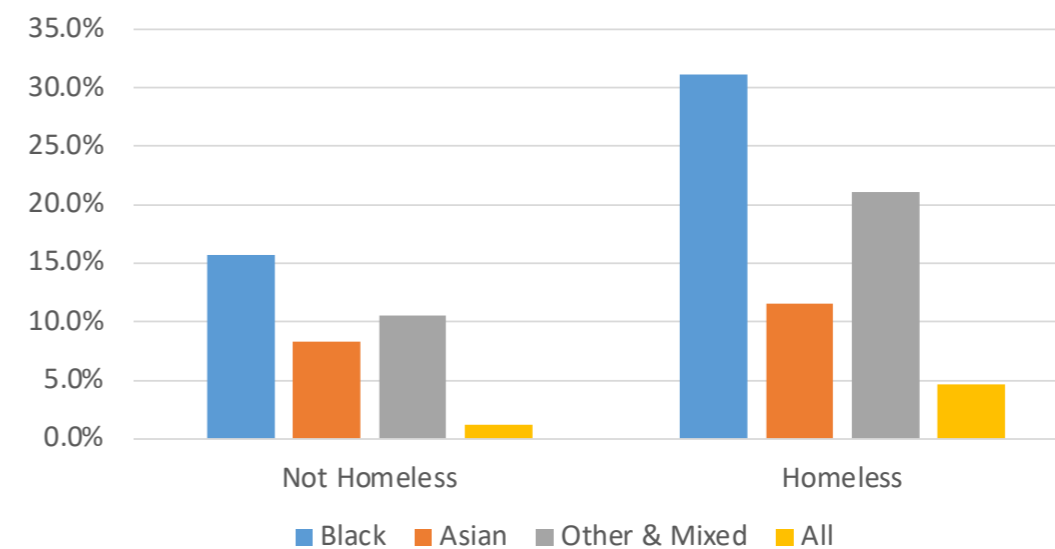
The English Housing Survey, for example, asked respondents whether they had experienced discrimination, either from a local authority/social landlord or from a private landlord. As can be seen from Figure 4, sizeable proportions of Black, Other and Asian respondents reported such experiences.

Moreover, rates of perceived discrimination were much higher for those experiencing some form of homelessness. This was especially true of Black people experiencing homelessness, one third (32%) of whom reported having experienced discrimination from a social or private landlord. This may indicate that experiences of discrimination drive heightened risks of homelessness and/or that Black and other minoritised ethnic communities who are homeless are exposed to higher risks of discriminatory behaviour. Related to this, some earlier research has indicated that racist abuse and incidents can be a cause of homelessness by forcing people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities to flee their homes. (Netto, 2006).

The Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey (2012) included broader questions on being harassed, abused or made to feel uncomfortable, or being treated badly in last year for reason of one's ethnicity, and also asked about experience of 'Stop and Search' by police in the last year. The first and second of these indicators were both reported by much higher proportions of all respondents from Black and minoritised ethnic communities than by White respondents, albeit these are still minorities of those respondents. Stop and Search was reported by markedly higher proportions of Black and Mixed ethnicity respondents, but by lower proportions of Asian and Other respondents, relative to the prevalence among White respondents. Our statistical modelling work reported on below indicates that both harassment and Stop and Search experiences were significant predictors of increased homelessness risks [16].

[16] It should be acknowledged that causality might run in either direction in this case, given that these experiences were reported in the year before survey while homelessness experiences were as reported over a longer preceding period. For example, people who slept rough might be more likely to be harassed or subject to Stop and Search.

Further statistical weight is given to this potential link between discrimination and homelessness by our analysis of the most recent wave of the UK Household Longitudinal Survey. In this survey, respondents are asked whether they 'identify as a member of a group discriminated against in this country', including optional categories of colour or rac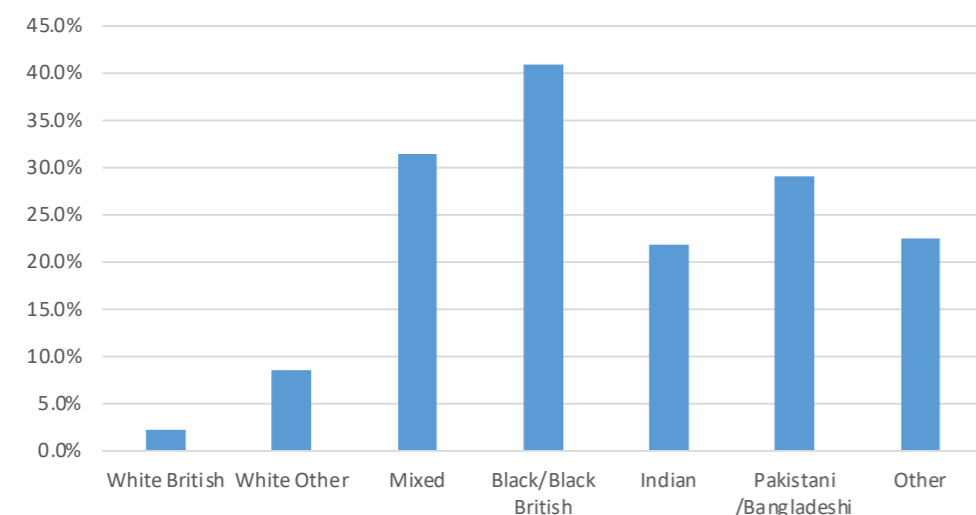e, nationality, religion, language or ethnic group. Those reporting any of these range from 2% of White British respondents through 9% of White Other, 22% of Indian and of Other ethnicities, 29% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi, 31% of Mixed and 41% of Black ethnicity. Using a summary indicator from this source, our modelling analysis reported below indicates an (indirect) effect heightening the risk of homelessness.

Figure 5: Experience of harassment, bad treatment or Stop and Search in last year by ethnicity, adults in UK 2012
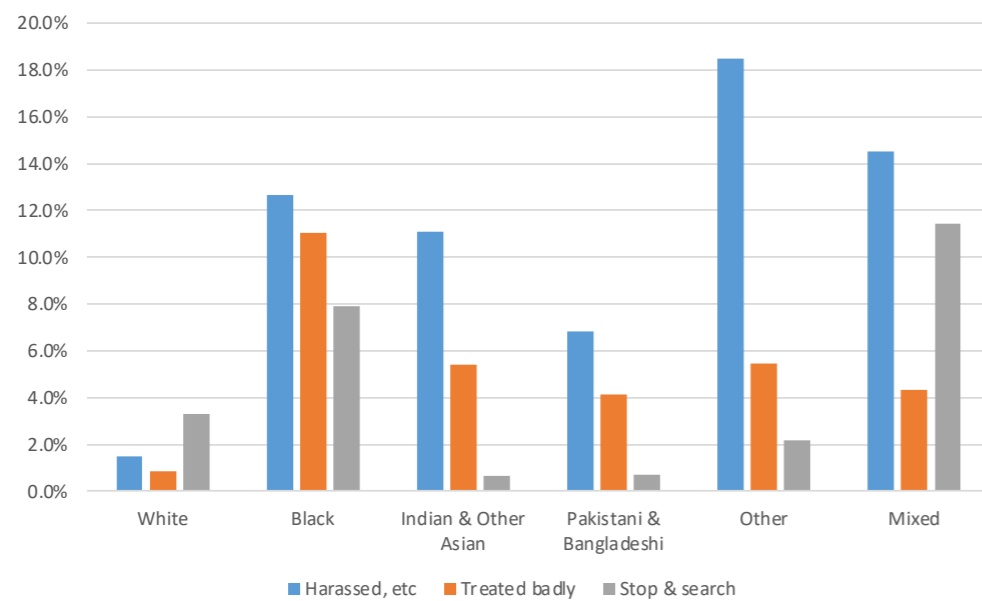
Source: Source: UK Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey 2012. Note in this survey analysis Chinese are grouped with 'Other' ethnicity.'

**Figure 6:** Experienced any group-based discrimination by ethnicity, adults in UK 2019-20

Source: UK Household Longitudinal Survey, Wave 11.

Factors that contribute to disproportionate risks

Holding other relevant factors constant, ethnicity-related variables (including ethnic and racial background, having a migration background, and experience of discrimination) increase the risk of experiencing homelessness substantially for Black (and in some analyses Mixed and/or Other) households. With respect to Asian-led households, these effects seem mainly limited to Pakistani or Bangladeshi households.

Figure 7 illustrates the results of our logistic regression analysis based on the English Housing Survey, using an indicator of 'any homelessness'[17] experienced. As can be seen, by this measure, 5.8% of all English households, ranging from 5.4% of White-led households to 15.4% of Black-led households, have experienced homelessness.

The vertical axis represents the percentage of households experiencing homelessness in each broad ethnic group, broken down into the parts that can be attributed, statistically, to particular groups of explanatory factors. This shows that the higher homelessness incidence for Black, Mixed/Other and (to a lesser extent) Asian groups can be attributed to a range of factors. These factors include demographic profile (i.e. age and household type), that vary the risks to some extent around a common baseline homelessness (i.e. the average level of homelessness combining all ethnicities together) . This means that the concentration of Black and minoritised ethnic communities in certain age brackets (younger households) and household types (single, lone parent, large families) goes a small way to accounting for their elevated risk of homelessness. Employment factors (occupation, unemployment, economic inactivity) make only small differences, generally favourable for Black and minoritised ethnic groups. In other words, in some cases, patterns of employment amongst Black and minoritised ethnic communities people actually reduce their risks of homelessness.

Figure 7: The statistical contribution of groups of variables to the generation of homelessness
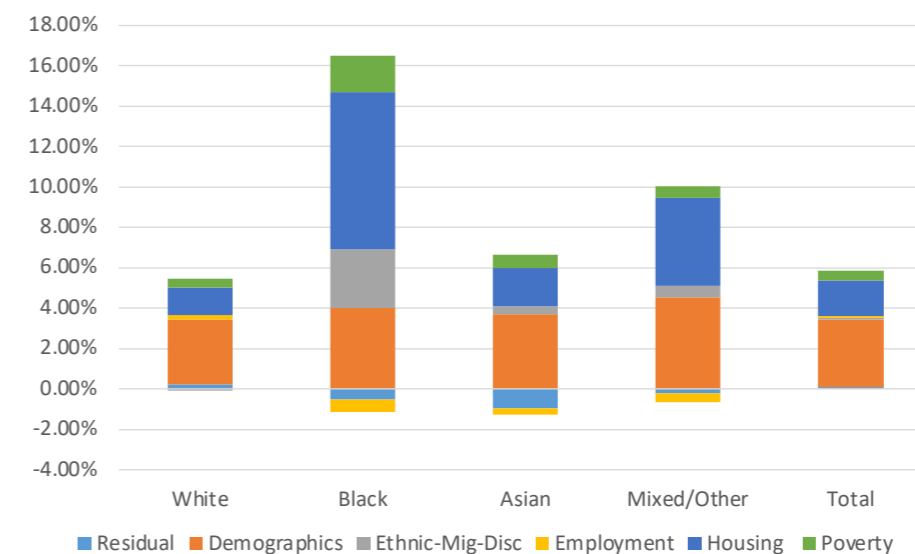
Source: English Housing Survey (2016-2018), based on logistic regression model. Note that 'residual' in this graph captures the differential percentage of homelessness that is, statistically, left unexplained for a particular group once all the factors in the model are taken into account.

[17] Any homelessness' in this analysis includes households reporting any of: sofa surfers, including temporary household members in last year who would otherwise have been homeless; ever contacted council about homelessness in last few years; applied as homeless; previously or currently staying in temporary accommodation; rehoused as homeless.

However, much more significant are the housing factors considered, particularly renting rather than owning your home, loss of tenancy, living in a flat, or living in an area with high house prices and rents. These factors increase risks for all groups, but especially for Black and Other ethnicities. Poverty (low income, on benefits, living in a deprived neighbourhood, affordability difficulties) further increase risk for all groups to a modest extent but significantly more, again, for Black households.

It can be seen that the group of factors captured under the 'Ethnic-Migration-Discrimination' category (which includes ethnic and racial background, having a migration background, reporting experience of discrimination as result of ethnicity) increases risks substantially for Black households, even after all of these other factors are taken into account, but only rather marginally for other minoritised communities.

It should be noted that this graph captures only the direct effect of these ethnic and related factors, after taking account of the other variables in the model. Indirect effects – that is where the effects of race and ethnicity operate via their impact on other predictors of increased homelessness risks – are considered further below.

It should be cautioned that, as with all regression models, the results of these analyses and the apparent relationships that they reveal are based on correlation, which may be indicative of but do not prove causation. They are nonetheless valuable in pointing to potential causal factors, with this being especially true of the British Cohort study, with the temporal analysis permitted by its longitudinal design enabling, crucially, exploration of the direction of causation that is not possible within purely cross-sectional data (see Bramley & Fitzpatrick, 2017) . The full technical report includes results and discussion of similar analyses of three other major survey datasets, leading to broadly similar findings but with more insight into some aspects (Bramley, 2022).

Indirect drivers of disproportionate experience of homelessness

Race, ethnicity and discrimination-related factors affect homelessness risks indirectly as well directly by, for example, heightening levels of poverty, or the chances of being a renter rather than an owner, which in turn increases exposure to homelessness.

Once these indirect effects are accounted for, the relative risk of homelessness for households headed by a person from a Black and minoritised ethnic community is generally found to be substantially larger than when only direct effects are considered.

The kinds of regression models used in our initial modelling work provide a valuable first step towards quantifying the effects of different factors on the homelessness risks of different ethnic groups in the UK. However, insofar as different factors associated with homelessness may be interpreted as potentially causal, this begs the question as to what are the causes of these causes, and whether race and ethnicity plays a part earlier in the causal chain. Given the controversies surrounding the Sewell report (2021), which focus significantly on the failure to fully consider these types of indirect effects, we have focussed on testing approaches which enable us to explore such hypotheses.

This involves 'structural modelling' techniques, with a particular focus on the techniques of 'mediation' and 'interaction'. Mediation involves the essentially simple idea that causal processes work partly directly and partly indirectly, through third factors which 'intervene' in the relationship between the background causal factor and the outcome of interest (MacKinnon, 2008, VanderWeele, 2015, Pearl & MacKenzie, 2018). For example, poverty and housing tenure may be intervening factors between ethnicity (and other background factors including demographics, regional housing or labour markets) and homelessness outcomes. This may mean that people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities disproportionately experience poverty, or be renters rather than owners, which in turn places them at greater risk of homelessness. 'Traditional' regression analysis which 'controls for' poverty and tenure may lead to the misleading finding that ethnicity has no or a small 'independent' effect on homelessness. Mediation analysis can potentially get past this limitation, by digging further back into the causal

chain, revealing the wider and longer-term effects of race and ethnicity. A related variant is the concept of interaction, where (for example) it is the combination of ethnicity and poverty which has an impact on homelessness, so that where both are present the effect on homelessness is markedly higher.

Work on this is at an early stage but we can report some indicative results in this first State of the Nation report. Figure 8 illustrates this approach using data from the English Housing Survey, where we are seeking to explain variations in homelessness using a composite indicator of ethnicity, migrancy and/or discrimination , other external factors which we need to control for , and two potential mediating or interacting variables: poverty and housing tenure/conditions.

As can be seen, the composite indicator capturing ethnicity, migration and discrimination has both indirect influences on homelessness, mediated through housing and through poverty (which in part also influences housing) and also a direct influence through an interaction with poverty . These influences act through pathways shown by thick black arrows in Figure 8. The numbers associated with the thick black arrows express the change in the variable at the end of the arrow for one unit change in the variable at the beginning of the arrow. For example, the Ethnic-Migrant-Discrimination indicator has quite a strong effect on the Housing indicator (rental tenure, flat-living, threat of eviction), shown by the dark black line and the 0.273. The Housing indicator has a very strong effect on the Homelessness indicator, given by the value 0.448. Therefore, the combined effect of this indirect pathway is quite substantial, being given by the product of these two numbers multiplied together (0.273 x 0.448 = 0.122). The other dark black lines in the diagram show other routes by which the Ethnic-Migrant-Discrimination factor affects homelessness, including through poverty and its interaction with ethnicity etc.

Figure 8: Illustrating the indirect effects of ethnicity on homelessness, mediated via poverty and housing factors, based on model fitted to English Housing Survey data.
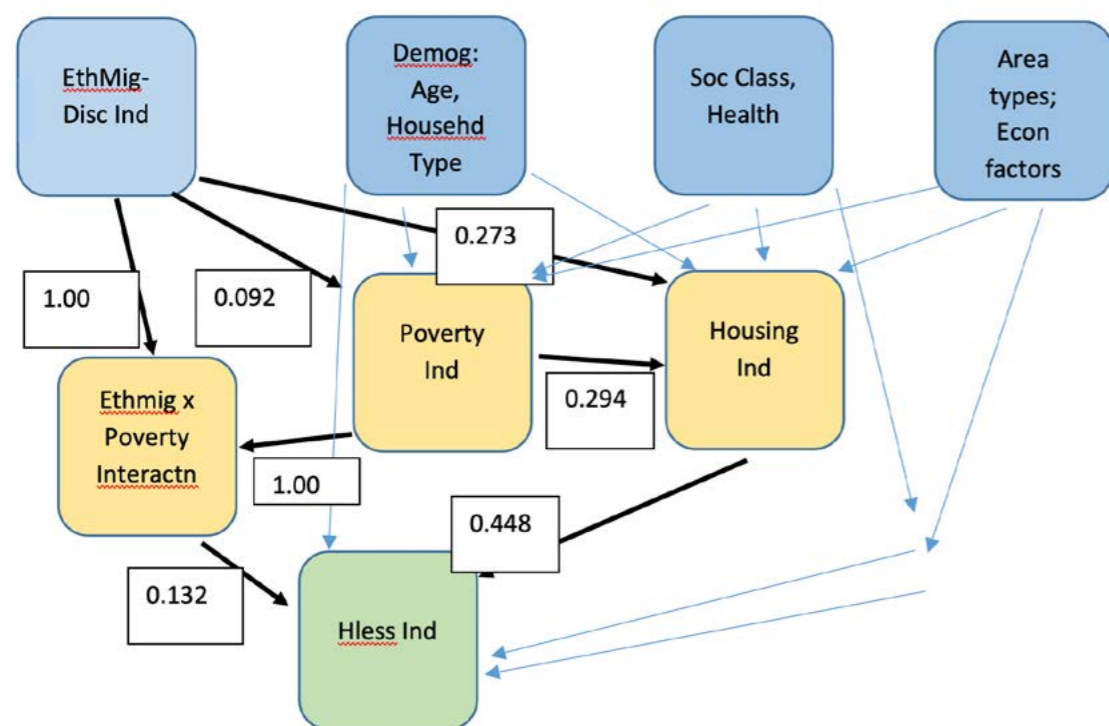
The statistical models also take account of the effect of other external variables which also impact on poverty, housing and homelessness, shown in the blue-grey boxes above and via the light blue arrows connecting these to the key variables of interest. These external factors include demographic factors of age and household type, social factors such as occupational class and health conditions, and characteristics of areas including housing and labour market conditions and density of population.

Overall, it is important to understand that there is not a single 'measure' of the effect of ethnicity (or migration or discrimination) on homelessness; it all depends on the household circumstances and context. For this reason, as well as to make things a bit more concrete, we present below a series

of vignettes (i.e. hypothetical households with particular characteristics) to reveal the variation in these excess risks of homelessness, and also the extent to which indirect mediation and interaction effects increase the impact of the composite ethnicity/ migration/ discrimination variable on homelessness.

As Table 8 below indicates, each of these vignettes of Black and minoritised ethnic-led households is predicted to experience a markedly higher incidence of homelessness as compared with White households in similar circumstances, but the risk ratios range widely from 1.33 to 5.35. In each case the overall impact on homelessness is greater once we allow for indirect effects. The ratio of indirect mediation effects to the total effects of the ethnicity/

migration/discrimination composite variable on homelessness also ranges widely across these cases, accounting for between 36% and 76% of the total effect. In four of the five cases illustrated, the indirect mediated effect is larger than the direct effect.

As can be seen, for a Black-led household reporting discrimination, with characteristics which are otherwise typical of the UK population as a whole, the risk of homelessness is nearly 50% above that of a comparable White household, with two-thirds of that effect being indirect via poverty and housing conditions. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, for younger Black single people in London who reported discrimination while living

in poverty and renting, taking into account these indirect as well as direct effects increases their risk ratio as compared with White households with similar characteristics, from 2.21 to 5.35. The strength of this effect is driven by a particular feature of the model sketched in Figure 8, whereby ethnicity/ discrimination interacts with poverty.

Table 8: Vignettes comparing households headed by someone from a Black or other minoritised ethnic community with otherwise comparable White-headed UK households, showing effects of poverty and housing factors as mediators or interactors in contributing to predicted homelessness

Vignette Description	Risk Ratio vs White UK	Risk Ratio excluding mediation	Mediation Effect as % of Total Effect
Black, UK-born, discrimination reported, with otherwise 'average' characteristics	1.47	1.16	66%
Younger, Mixed ethnicity, single, renter, London	1.76	1.18	76%
Middle-aged, Black, UK-born, poorer area, health problem, renter	1.33	1.21	36%
Adult, Other ethnicity, migrant, poorer area, South, rural, renter	2.13	1.49	57%
Younger, Black, discrimination reported, single, poorer, London, renter	5.35	2.21	72%

Source: Based on English Housing Survey count regression models in Table 18 in Technical Report

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[20] Our index of ethnicity/migrancy/discrimination is a simple score sum of flags for Black or mixed ethnicity and for having migrated to the UK in the last 10 years and for having experienced discrimination in housing. Asian ethnicity is not included because of earlier findings on its limited impact on homelessness, e.g. Figure 7.

[21] These external or 'exogenous' factors, while they may affect other variables in the model, are assumed not to be causally determined by homelessness, poverty or housing. They need to be 'controlled for' by including them in the models to avoid confounding the measured effects of the key variables of interest.

[22] An 'interaction' in this context simply means that the two variables are multiplied together.

Conclusions

Funded by the Oak Foundation and in partnership with Race on the Agenda, this knowledge and capacity building programme aims to support a fundamental step change in the UK evidence base on homelessness amongst people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities.

This first published output from the programme uses statistical analysis of ten key datasets to assess the 'state of the nation' with regard to the experience of homelessness of people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities in the UK.

We found overwhelming statistical evidence that people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities experience highly disproportionate levels of homelessness in the UK. However, these patterns vary markedly, between different minoritised groups, by type of homelessness, and by geographic area within the country, with the very highest levels of homelessness apparently associated with Black and Mixed ethnicity people living in London, who seem particularly exposed to the risk of experiencing 'statutory homelessness', that is, applying and/or being accepted as homeless by a local authority. Asian households experience lower risks of statutory homelessness or 'core' (the most extreme) forms of homelessness, but are at highly disproportionate risk of more hidden aspects of homelessness, such as severe overcrowding or 'doubling up' with other households.

Experiencing discrimination, harassment or abuse on grounds of race or ethnicity in housing or other aspects of life is associated with significantly elevated risks of homelessness, particularly for Black people, but also for Mixed and some Other ethnic groups. Holding other contributory factors constant (including demographics, employment patterns, poverty levels, housing tenure, and local housing market conditions), ethnicity-related variables (including ethnic and racial background, having a migration background, and reporting experience of discrimination as result of ethnicity) increase homelessness risks substantially for Black-led households, and often for Mixed and Other groups, but only marginally for some other minoritised ethnic groups.

Race, ethnicity and discrimination can affect homelessness risks indirectly as well as directly by, for example, heightening levels of poverty, or the chances of being a renter rather than an owner, which in turn increases exposure to homelessness. For a Black-led household reporting discrimination, with characteristics which are otherwise typical of the population as a whole, the risk of homelessness is nearly 50% above that of a typical White-led household, with two-thirds of that effect being indirect via poverty and housing conditions.

The position in Scotland is rather different from that in England, with overall self-reported levels of homelessness varying little between Black and minoritised ethnic communities and White households. This likely reflects the historically much lower levels of migration of Black and minoritised ethnic communities groups to Scotland and their different, generally more affluent, profile. More detailed statutory homelessness data suggests that Black and Other ethnicity groups in Scotland have significantly higher and increasing rates of homelessness relative to population, while the larger Asian group has relatively lower risk. Data for Wales suggests a similar pattern, with relatively high risks for Black and other groups, but with Asian and Mixed groups showing somewhat higher incidence than White. Comparable data for Northern Ireland is sparse, but concealed and sharing households seem relatively prevalent for Mixed and Other ethnic groups.

Next Steps

As flagged above, we are still in the relatively early stages of a multi-year programme of work and plan an extensive agenda of further statistical analysis.

In future work we will focus on the experiences of specific ethnic groups, and interrelationships with demographics (including age, gender and household type), migration, citizenship status, religion and language.

We will also drill deeper into the evident contrasts between London and other parts of the country, and undertaking local authority level analysis in England, Scotland and Wales, insofar as the available data will permit, is another priority. There is scope for more detailed analysis of the statutory homelessness data in England, including micro (household) level analysis to gain a more nuanced picture of the profile of different sub-groups as well as further modelling of outcomes as well as risks.

During the lifetime of this project we also hope that there may be the possibility of data linkage between the statutory homelessness data and other administrative datasets, which could permit analysis of the relationship between homelessness and other social, economic and health outcomes, and their relationship with race and ethnicity.

In this first State of the Nation report we have provided illustrative results of initial innovative structural modelling work, including exploring mediation and interaction effects that allow the indirect as well as direct effects of race and ethnicity on homelessness to be identified. We plan to extend this type of analysis further, including the use of vignettes and longitudinal datasets to investigate the 'causes of the causes' (i.e. the predictors of homelessness that themselves can be shaped by racial and ethnic discrimination and disadvantage).

We would also wish to extend both our analysis of trends over time, which we have not prioritised in this first State of the Nation report, focused as it was on providing the most up-to-date picture we could give of the current position in the contemporary UK.

Over the period of this programme we will publish further reports on the state of the nation and 'deep dive' reports into specific priority topics on homelessness amongst Black and minoritised ethnic communities, in part identified by this initial statistical analysis, and also by our Programme Advisory Group and other key stakeholders. These deep dives will focus on qualitative insights, particularly from people within Black and minoritised ethnic communities who have lived experience of homelessness, but also frontline workers and other key stakeholders, supported by further statistical analysis where appropriate.

Find out the latest on our programme at Homelessness and Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities in the UK – I-SPHERE (hw.ac.uk)

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Appendix 1: Core Homelessness Categories and Definitions

(From Bramley, 2017. The definition of 'core homelessness' was developed jointly with the charity Crisis, and features in the long-running Homelessness Monitor series https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/)

Category	Description
Rough Sleeping	Sleeping in the open e.g. in streets, parks, carparks, doorways
Unconventional Accommodation	Sleeping in places/spaces not intended as normal residential accommodation, e.g. cars, vans, lorries, caravans/motor home, tents, boats, sheds, garages, industrial/commercial premises
Hostels etc.	Communal emergency and temporary accommodation primarily targeted at homeless people including hostels, refuges and shelters
Unsuitable Temporary Accommodation	Homeless households placed in temporary accommodation of certain types, viz Bed and Breakfast, Private Non-selfcontained Licensed/Nightly Let, and Out of Area Placements (half in London, all elsewhere)
Sofa Surfing	Individuals or family groups staying temporarily (expecting or wanting to move) with another household, excluding non-dependent children of host household and students, who are also overcrowded on the bedroom standard