

**PLANNING  
FOR  
THE  
FUTURE**

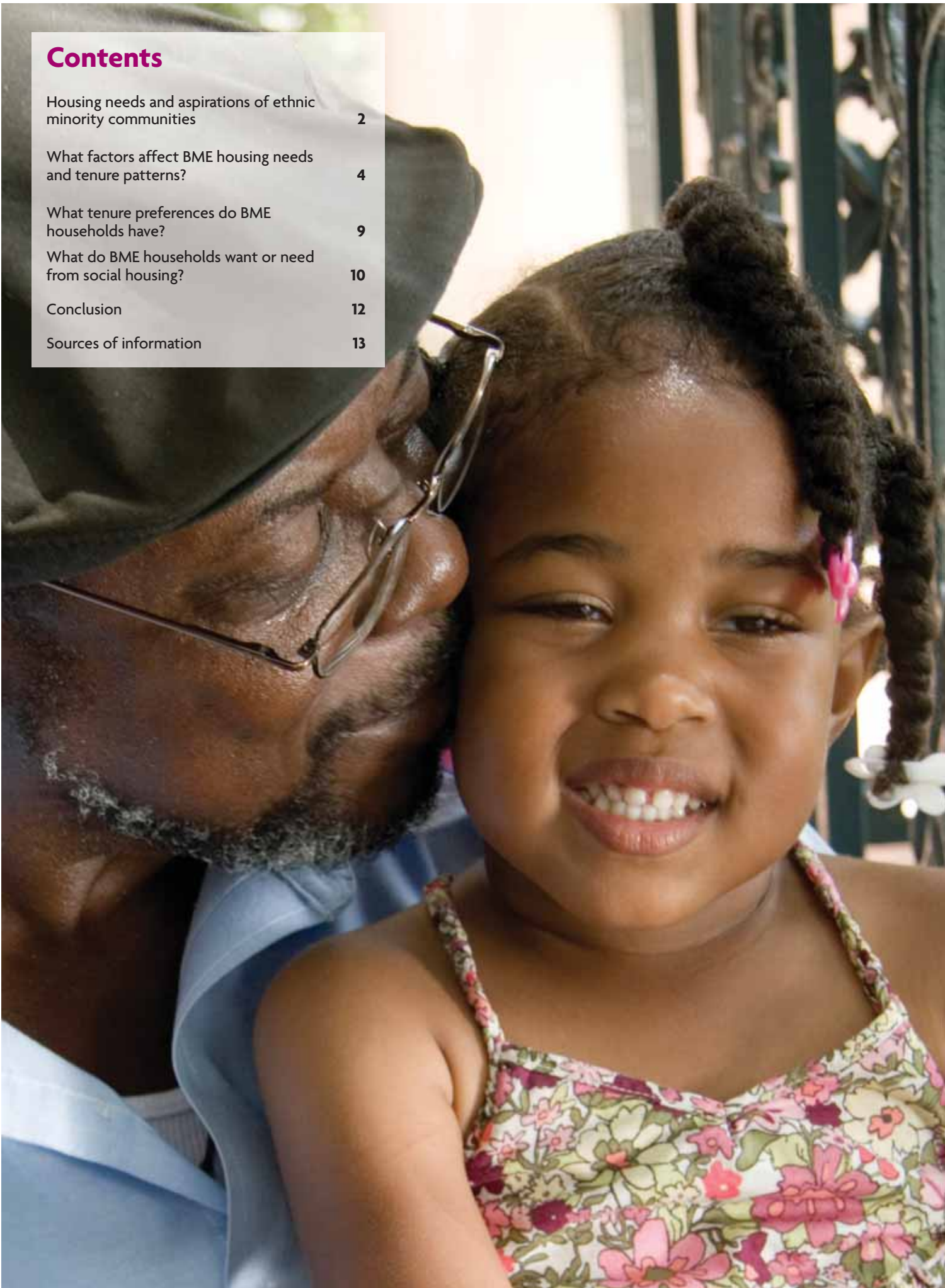
Part seven of an eight part series  
looking at demographic, spatial  
and economic impacts on future  
affordable housing demand

# HOUSING NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES



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## INTRODUCTION

Following the July 2007 Housing Green Paper and decisions to create a new housing regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (previously known as OFTENANT) and new housing and regeneration agency, Homes and Communities, it is clear that housing in England is going through a period of far-reaching change.

With three million new homes in the pipeline, many of them affordable, it is also clear that the English housing landscape will look quite different in ten years time. But for all the new building, regeneration programmes and fundamental institutional change, our key challenge remains ensuring that affordable housing, both available now and planned for the future, meets the needs and aspirations of residents.

The Housing Corporation and CIH are both committed to supporting the housing sector to improve the services offered to people who live in affordable housing. With a growing commitment to expanding choice for residents, as well as plans for greater recourse and redress when services fall short of expectations, this is clearly a challenge to which housing organisations must rise.

A key element in this must not only be understanding the customer base of today, but planning for the future needs of these and new residents.

This is why the Housing Corporation and CIH have collaborated to produce a series of eight briefing papers – **Planning for the Future** - setting out some of the key drivers of housing demand.

Drawn from a detailed body of academic research commissioned by the Housing Corporation's Centre for Research and Market Intelligence (CRMI) and carried out by the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR), Cambridge University, the papers have been written with a particular emphasis on their accessibility for housing professionals. Their value lies in presenting the latest research findings in a way that can help inform and shape both strategic planning and housing practice within organisations providing affordable housing. The original research papers and source documents can be found at the CRMI and CCHPR websites, listed in the 'Sources of information' section.

The series of eight briefing papers explores the following areas:

- Who lives in affordable housing?
- Life in affordable housing
- Mobility and social housing
- Moving into affordable housing
- Aspirations and shared ownership
- Affordable housing in London
- Housing and black, minority and ethnic groups
- Affordable housing in the regions.

We hope you will find these valuable in informing your understanding of change in the sector. More importantly, we hope that they will support your commitment to delivering excellent services for both current and future residents.



Peter Dixon  
Chairman - Housing Corporation

## **Housing needs and aspirations of ethnic minority communities**

The housing needs and aspirations of Britain's large black and minority ethnic (BME) communities differ from those of white British communities. This seventh paper in the Planning for the Future series looks at these differences. It shows how demographic, spatial and economic factors have influenced BME tenure patterns, and how changes in these patterns will affect their demand for affordable housing in the future. The paper makes reference to the whole of the UK (for example, in discussing migration), but the figures in the text and the detailed commentary relate to England.

In the UK, the proportion of the population which is 'white British' has fallen. This trend is likely to continue because the white British population is generally older and its natural population growth is slower - and also because of migration. The changing UK population and the growth of its BME communities will affect the composition of the affordable housing sector in the future. Exactly what the impact will be is hard to determine, but as BME populations grow, their needs and aspirations are likely to become increasingly important considerations for housing providers.

The paper is in four sections. The first section provides background information about England's largest minority ethnic groups and their tenure patterns. The second focuses on demographic, economic and spatial factors and the way in which they affect BME housing needs and demands for social housing. This section also has some predictions about how BME communities will change in the future and how this may influence housing needs and aspirations. Using data from BME focus groups, the third section provides an overview of BME tenure aspirations. The final section looks at BME housing needs and aspirations in more detail to provide some insight into what BME households want from their housing and how well their needs are met.

### **Ethnic minority groups and housing tenure**

#### **What is the make up of England's population?**

Overall, BME populations (including white Irish and white 'other') form 13% of England's population and about 11% of its households. The proportion of non-white groups is slightly lower, approximately 9% of England's population and just under 7% of households (from 2001 Census).

There are limitations in the use of census data because it is only possible to distinguish certain nationality groups and not others. The census separately identifies people and households whose ethnic origin is in nationalities with a long-standing history of migration to the UK, but not those from places like Iraq and Afghanistan whose migration history is generally more recent.

With this limitation in mind, the groups selected for detailed coverage in this paper are:

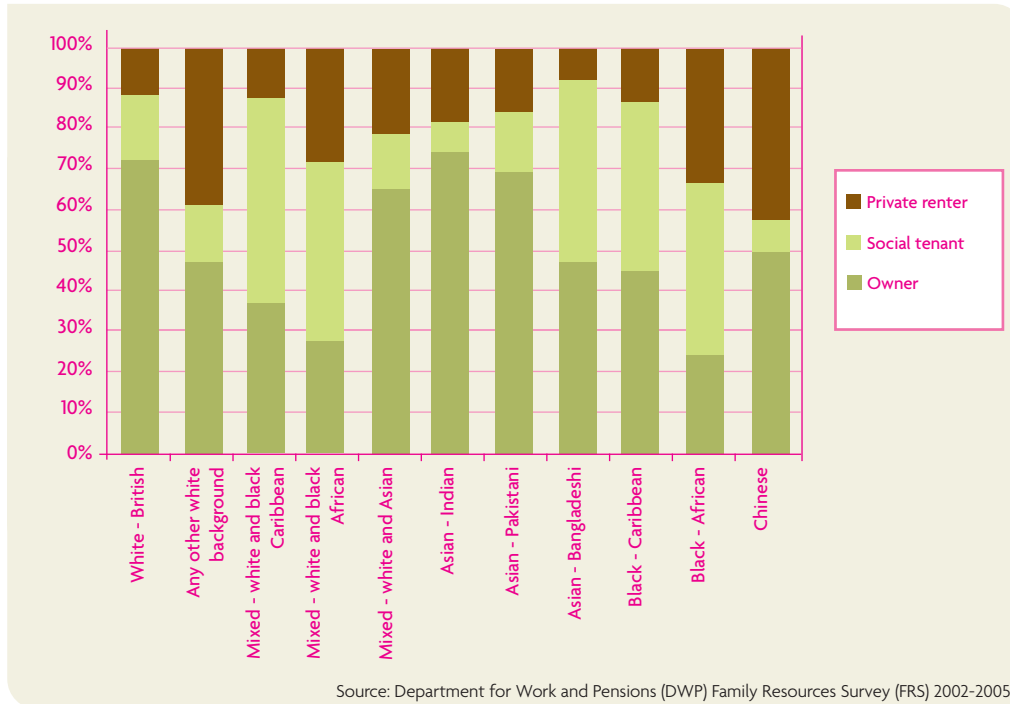
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Chinese (especially the elderly)
- Black and white (BW) mixed heritage - mixed white and black Caribbean
- Black and white mixed heritage - mixed white and black African
- Mixed heritage - mixed white and Asian

Where 'household' is used it means a household headed by a person from a specific ethnic background. 'BME household' refers to households headed by a person from one of the BME groups, including white Irish and white 'other'. 'Mixed households' are those headed by someone of mixed heritage (rather than a household that is a mixture of white and black or Asian individuals).

#### **Ethnic groups and housing tenure**

Housing tenure patterns vary considerably between ethnic groups. While some groups have very high rates of homeownership, others are largely concentrated in the private rented or social rented sectors.

## The tenure of different ethnic groups in England



Indian householders are more likely than any other ethnic group (including white) to be owner-occupiers. Homeownership is also common among Pakistanis, while very few black African and BW mixed households are homeowners. Chinese, non-British white people and black Africans are more likely to rent from the private sector than people from other ethnic groups. This may be at least partly related to the numbers of recent migrants in these groups.

Only 10% of Indian and 13% of Chinese households live in social rented housing, compared with 19% of all households. Pakistani and mixed (white and Asian) households are also under-represented in the social sector, with the vast majority of households headed by a member of these groups being either private tenants or homeowners. Bangladeshi, black Caribbean, black African and BW mixed groups, on the other hand, are more concentrated in the social sector.

The next chart shows the number of new social lettings made to households from different ethnic groups in 2001-2006.

## New social sector lettings by ethnic group in England 2001-2006

	<b>New lettings in England to each group</b>	<b>Group's % of new lettings</b>	<b>Group's % of all households</b>
White British	600,166	85.8	88.9
White Irish	8,127	1.2	1.7
White other	15,795	2.3	2.6
Mixed - white and black Caribbean	7,039	1.0	0.2
Mixed - white and black African	4,265	0.6	0.1
Mixed - white and Asian	1,994	0.3	0.2
Asian - Indian	5,815	0.8	1.5
Asian - Pakistani	7,630	1.1	0.8
Asian - Bangladeshi	4,498	0.6	0.3
Black - Caribbean	19,920	2.8	1.3
Black - African	22,454	3.2	0.9
Chinese	1,449	0.2	0.4

Source: Continuous Recording of lettings and sales (CORE) database 2001-2006

## What factors affect BME housing needs and tenure patterns?

BME groups' housing needs and demands are influenced by demographic, economic and spatial factors, as well as by cultural preferences and historical factors. Poverty and high costs of market housing are two of the main factors pushing people towards social housing but they are not the only ones.

### Historical and cultural factors

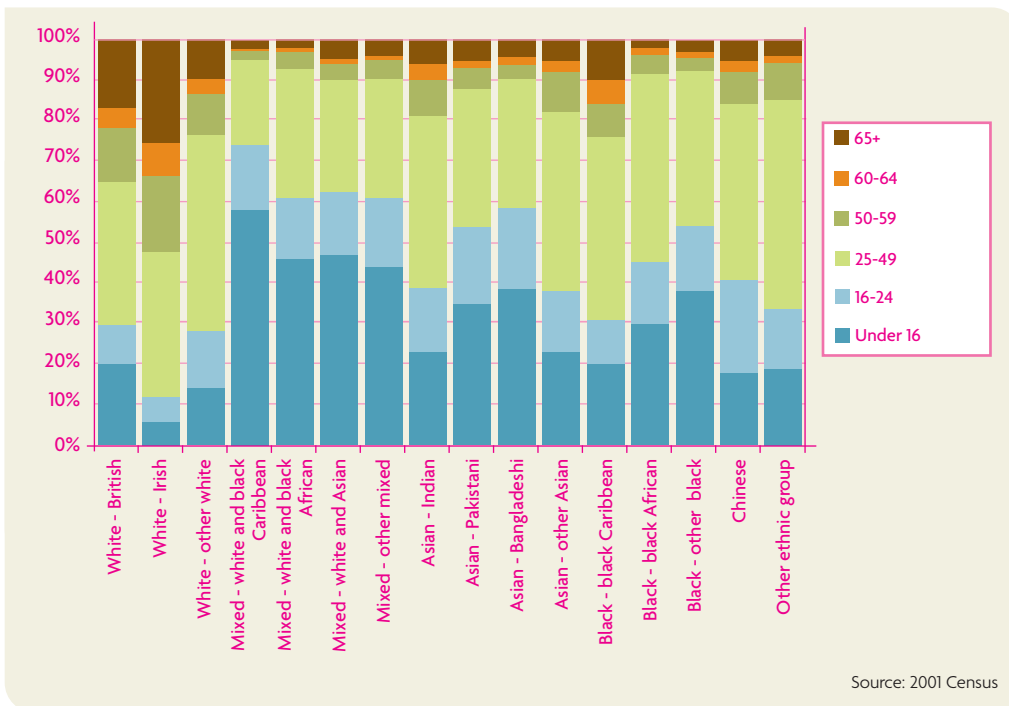
Although it is common to group Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities together when looking at social issues, their experiences in relation to housing are very different. Despite their similar socio-economic status, Pakistanis are much more likely to be owner-occupiers than Bangladeshis. In fact, they are as likely to be owner-occupiers as white Britons (with 70% of Pakistani households living in an owned property). For Bangladeshis, the rate is much lower (44%) and, in contrast, nearly 50% of Bangladeshi households are social tenants.

The difference in Pakistanis' and Bangladeshis' housing patterns may be at least partly based on history. Pakistanis - a longer-established minority than the Bangladeshis - began to arrive in the UK in large numbers in the mid-1960s. Poor quality accommodation in the private rented sector, as well as widespread discrimination, encouraged many early Asian migrants to turn to homeownership. Bangladeshi migration, however, did not peak until the 1980s, when it may have been easier for those on low incomes to access social housing and (paradoxically) more difficult to get onto the homeownership ladder.

### Demographic factors and household composition

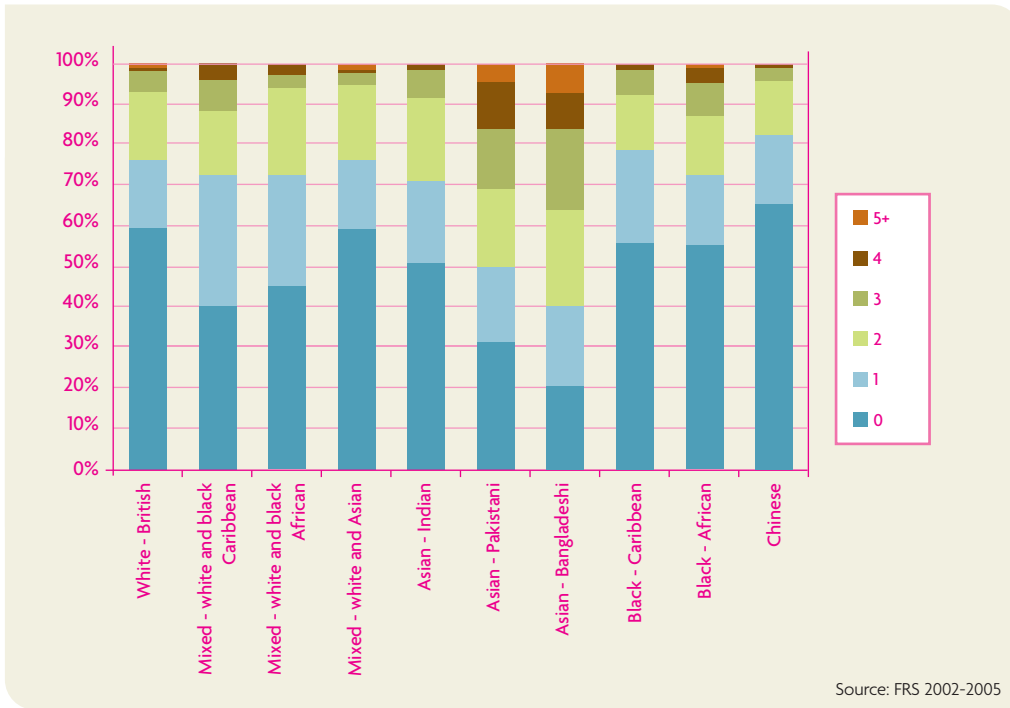
The age profile of BME households is quite different from that of the white British population (see below). While BME groups form less than 8% of England's population, they account for nearly 18% of those aged 16-24, indicating that their proportion of the overall population will grow rapidly in future even if no further migration occurs.

Age distribution by ethnic group in England, 2001



Large families are harder to support on the basis of income alone, and families with only one earner tend to have below average household incomes. Consequently, large families and lone-parent families are more likely to be poor and to need affordable housing. Large and lone-parent households are more common among certain BME groups than the white British population (the next chart shows family size).

Number of dependent children by ethnic group

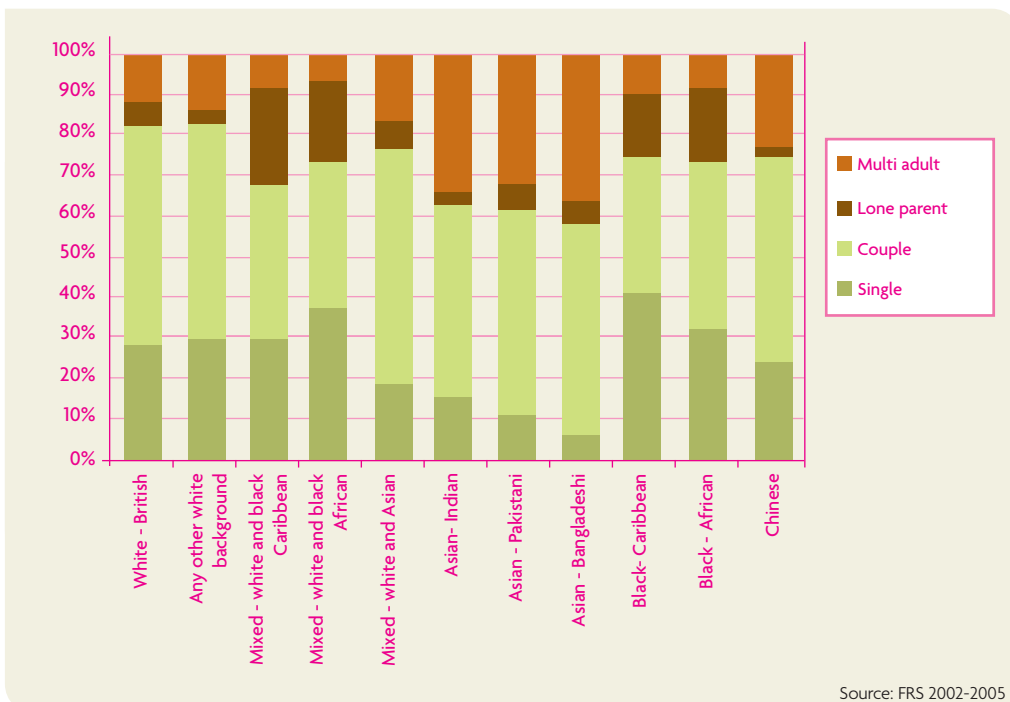


Although Caribbean women’s fertility rates are similar to those of white women, Caribbean women tend to have children at a younger age. The Caribbean group is characterised by very low rates of marriage and partnership, and high prevalence of single parenthood.

South Asian people (especially Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) have very high rates of marriage at a relatively early age, higher fertility rates and larger families on average. Most Pakistani and Bangladeshi women look after their home and family full-time rather than having paid jobs. Another feature of all South Asian ethnic groups is that elderly people still often live with one of their sons, making average household sizes larger. This has an impact on their housing requirements as well as the proportion of households unable to meet their needs within the private market, making them more likely to be looking to social housing.

As the next chart demonstrates, the proportion of couple households with children is higher in all South Asian groups than among the white British (and, even more so, the black Caribbean). BW mixed heritage, black Caribbean and black African ethnic groups have higher proportions of lone parent and single households than other ethnic groups. Lone parenthood is rare amongst the South Asians and Chinese.

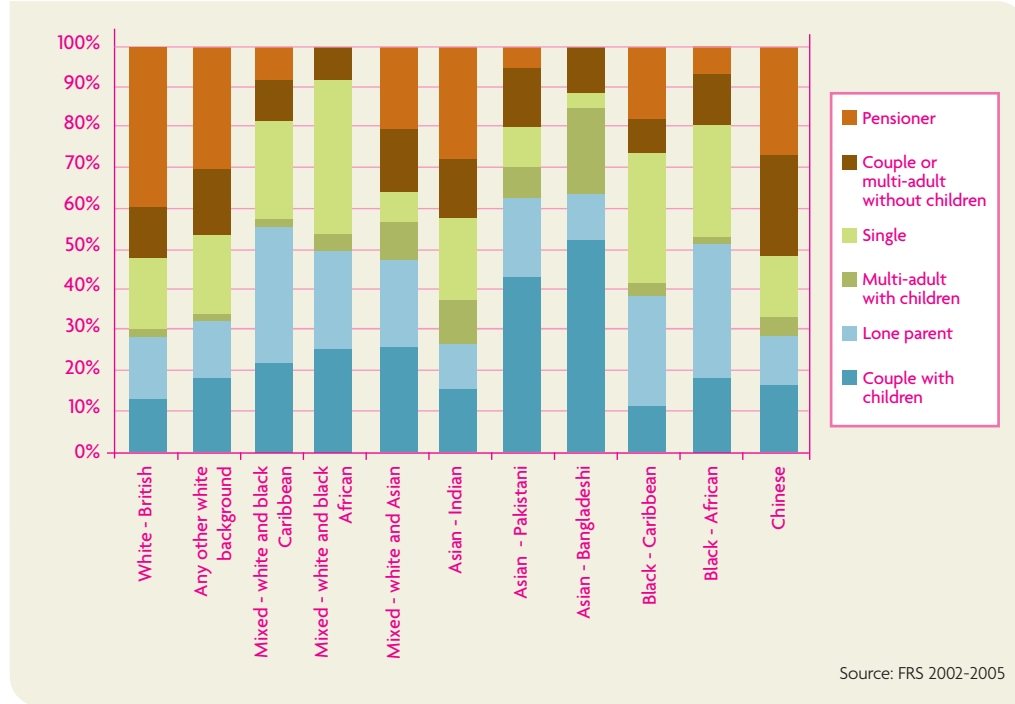
Household composition by ethnic group



All South Asian ethnic groups (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) have higher proportions of multi-adult and fewer single households than whites. The exceptionally low proportion of single households in these groups indicates that both young and old single people are less likely to live independently. However, Indian people appear to be more likely to live on their own and/or postpone starting a family than other South Asians.

BME households in social sector housing reflect the age structures and household composition patterns of these groups. As the next chart shows, the proportion of pensioners is high only among Chinese, Indian and white 'other' social tenants, though it is still lower than that of white British. Nearly half of all Pakistani households and over half of Bangladeshi households in social sector housing are couples with children. Lone parents and singles account for a very high proportion of social tenancies amongst all black and BW mixed groups, as they do of these groups overall.

**Household types in social sector housing by ethnic group**



**Economic factors**

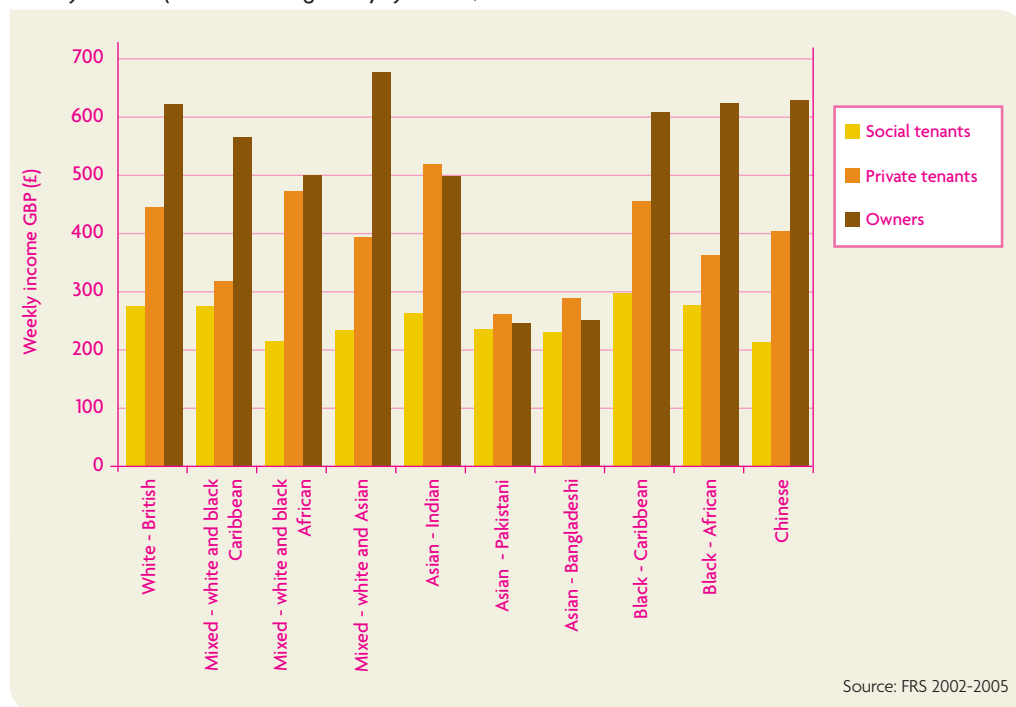
Economic factors, such as income and employment, influence tenure choice. BME groups, on average, have lower incomes than white people (see next chart). Almost 60% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are in low-income households, compared with just 16% of white households.

**Weekly income by ethnic group**



The incomes of Pakistani and Bangladeshi homeowners are significantly below the incomes of other homeowners (see below). As house prices have become more unaffordable, households from these two groups may find it difficult to access homeownership, especially if they have large families.

Weekly income (before housing costs) by tenure, 2005



Employment rates and patterns vary between ethnic groups. Indian and Chinese households have high levels of employment, and their earnings are on a par with those of white Britons, but Pakistani and Bangladeshi households have high levels of unemployment. Between 1991 and 2001, employment rates increased for all groups. The increase was most notable for black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men, largely due to improvements in educational attainment. Although the percentage of employed Pakistani and Bangladeshi women increased during this time, their employment rate remains very low.

The proportion of households with no earners is higher among social sector tenants than all tenure types for nearly all ethnic groups. A very high proportion of white British, black African, Indian and mixed white and Asian households who live in social sector housing have no earners at all.

### Geographical factors

Most ethnic minority populations are concentrated in certain parts of the country. Black Africans are mostly centred upon London, with nearly 80% of them living in the capital. Black Caribbeans are concentrated in London and (to a lesser extent), in Birmingham. Pakistanis are more dispersed, predominantly across the North West, Yorkshire and Humber and the West Midlands regions, as well as London. Approximately half of the Bangladeshis live in London, with smaller numbers in Yorkshire and Humber, North West and West Midlands. The Indian population is clustered in London, Midlands, Lancashire and West Yorkshire, while Chinese and BW mixed groups are more dispersed.

London houses the vast majority of BME households who already live in social housing, and most BME groups within London are more likely than whites to be living in social housing. In other areas the pattern is more mixed.

In 2001-2006, new social lettings to BME groups accounted for 14.2% of total lettings (CORE 2001-2006). These lettings were unevenly distributed throughout England, and lettings to most BME groups were geographically concentrated, sometimes within distinct regional centres.

### Which types of household move into social housing?

Overall, single people and then lone parents are the commonest types of household among new social tenants – and this pattern is followed by white British, white Irish, black Caribbean, black African and mixed heritage households. But there are some distinctive features about the types of households moving into social housing from different ethnic groups:

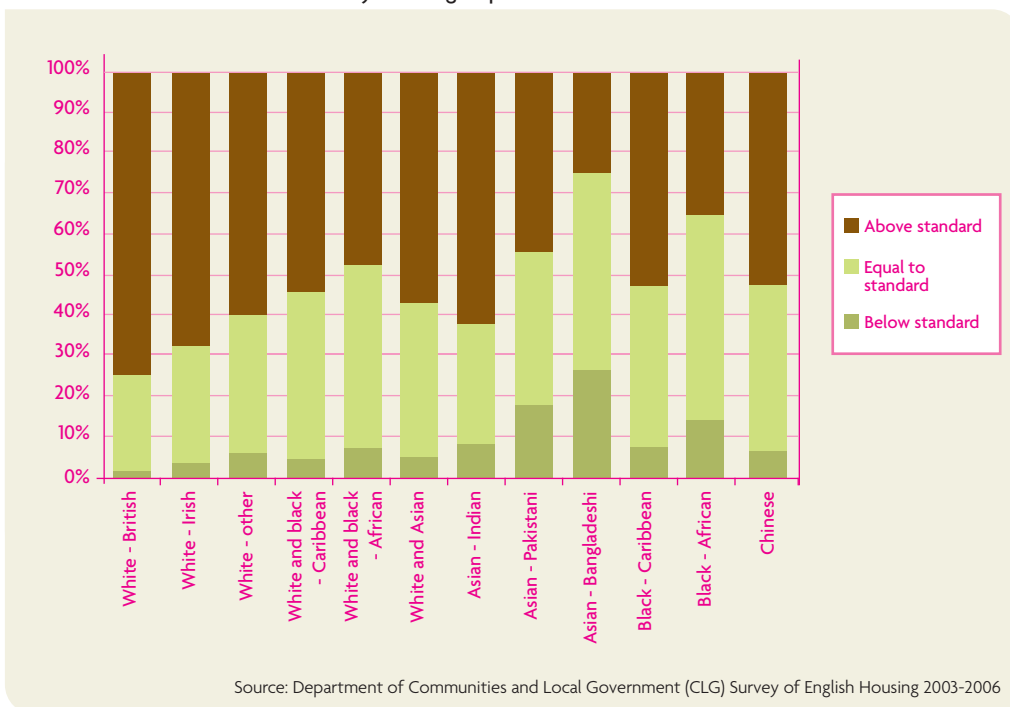
- Among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, the most common household type to enter social sector housing is couples with children. While Bangladeshis have been well represented in social housing for some time, the proportion of Pakistani households entering the sector is increasing.
- Indian and white 'other' groups who enter social housing are most commonly single people.
- Black African households make up an increasing share of new social housing tenants, and within them the commonest household type is single people, possibly because of the large number of black African refugees. Very few other childless black African households enter the social sector. This is both because the population is younger and less likely to be eligible on grounds of ill health, and because more of the black African population live in high-demand regions where social housing is unlikely to be allocated to households with low priority.

- Black Caribbean households have historically had a higher likelihood of living in social housing than many other ethnic groups (including white British). A strikingly high proportion enters social housing as single people or lone parents, due to factors such as overcrowding or relationship breakdown. The figures also suggest that social housing is commonly a route into independent living.
- Among white Irish people entering social housing, single people without children are much the commonest type. Ill health and need for support was the commonest specified reason for moving, reflecting the older age structure of this group.
- People from the new countries which have recently entered the European Union accounted for less than one per cent of new lettings in England in 2006-2007, although it is not known what proportion are new migrants as opposed to long-established residents. By far the largest group from the new accession countries was Polish.

#### Reasons for moving - overcrowding

As the next chart shows, BME households tend to live in more overcrowded conditions, and overcrowding is most severe among Pakistani, Bangladeshi and black African households. These three groups also have the highest numbers of children. Overcrowding may also be related to multi-generational living arrangements, the shortage of large properties in the social sector, clustering in areas where overcrowding is particularly severe (such as London), and low incomes. Bangladeshi households are more affected than any other ethnic group, with nearly one quarter living in overcrowded conditions.

#### Difference from bedroom standard by ethnic group



Black Africans and Bangladeshis are more overcrowded in social sector housing than in other tenures. This is a problem especially in London - Tower Hamlets, Newham and Ealing, where a great proportion of black Africans and Bangladeshis are concentrated, have the worst overcrowding in England. Overcrowding may be a reason for black Africans' and Bangladeshis' high levels of dissatisfaction with social housing.

#### Reasons for moving - homelessness

Over the last decade, there has been an increase in BME homeless applicants, possibly because of increased numbers of refugees (who are particularly vulnerable when they lose the support they received as asylum seekers). Although people were rarely forced to sleep rough, many people in the focus groups found homelessness deeply distressing:

'Now I have been staying with friends for 7 months, it's a very long time! I am not happy to live with friends, just today one place, next day some other place... It's a very problematic situation...' (Refugee focus group)

'Something which is, I feel is very hard... is that when you move from one city to another. I would just like to mention, to point how I feel, how I suffered when I moved from Liverpool to London... It was very important to me that I'd move to London, but when I come here it was really very hard to find my own place here... when I came here I was sleeping rough, I went from church to church, I was in a very bad situation...' (Refugee focus group)

'At the moment I am living with a friend. It is very difficult to stay there because I have three kids and I am a single parent.... I have been living with friends for about 8 months. I want to move, but I don't know how.' (Indian focus group)

Having experienced severe housing need, people really appreciated the security of social rented housing:

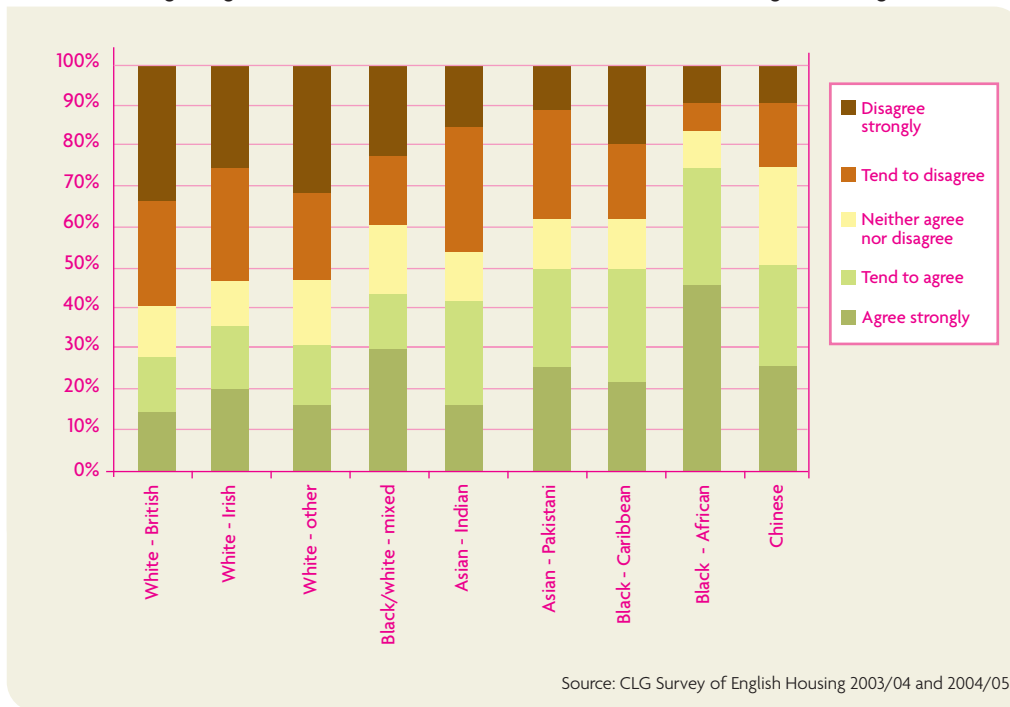
'But finally I came to this housing association and they gave me accommodation. When I think of that, I really can't say... Whatever place I get is really a palace for me.' (Refugee focus group)

## What tenure preferences do BME households have?

### Interest in social renting

Private renters in all BME groups express higher levels of interest in social housing than white British and other white households (see next chart). Indian private sector tenants were least likely and black African most likely to agree that they would like to live in social housing if they could. This is likely to have an effect on future demand, as black Africans are one of the fastest growing BME groups.

Private renters agreeing with the statement: "I would like to live in social housing if I could get it"



Chinese and Pakistani private tenants expressed a great deal of interest in social housing, with over 25% agreeing strongly that they would like to live in it if they could. At the moment, these two groups are under-represented in social housing. Interest was particularly high among the elderly. Other groups that expressed a great deal of interest were black Caribbeans, black Africans, and BW mixed heritage groups. Inability to afford suitable private sector housing may partly explain these high levels of interest in social housing.

Although BME social tenants express higher levels of dissatisfaction with their housing, most BME focus group participants who currently live in social housing considered it a good option for its security, the fact that repairs are paid for and for its affordability.<sup>1</sup>

As with tenants generally, affordability and accessibility are the positive factors influencing BME households' interest in social housing, while financial constraints (eg having to find deposits or guarantors) may also push people into the sector who would otherwise prefer private housing. Refugees are often restricted to the social sector due to a lack of any alternative.

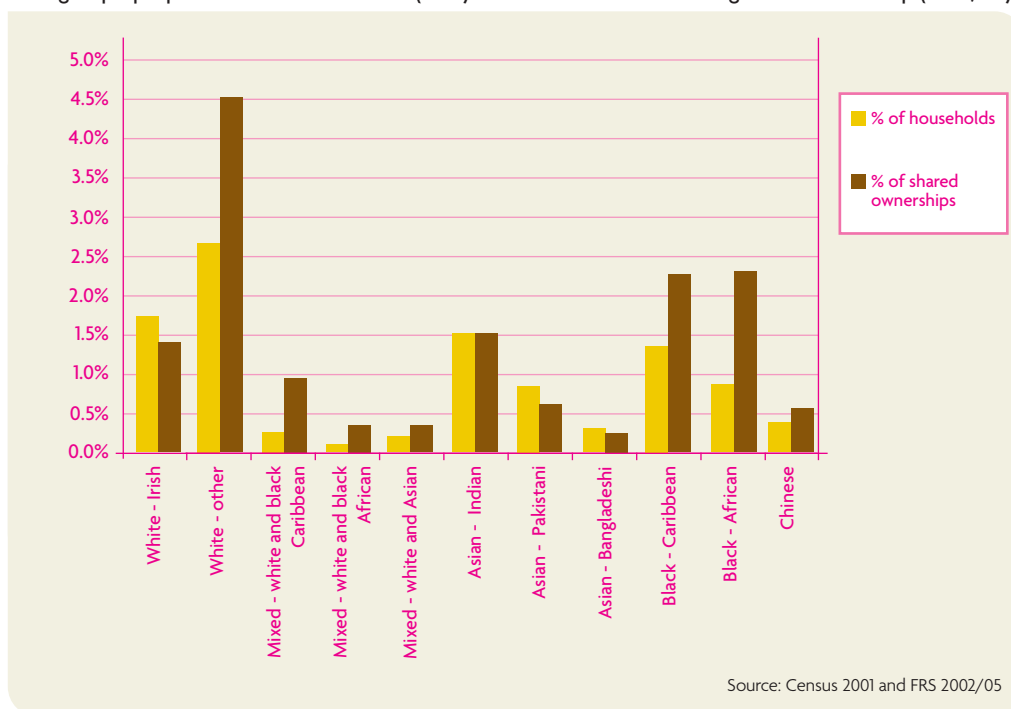
### Interest in shared ownership

It is possible that shared ownership will attract BME households with limited financial resources but who would prefer ownership eventually. The proportion of BME people that had heard of shared ownership is smaller than among white British people. Black people are the most likely to have heard of it, and this also came across in focus group discussions. Some confusion about what shared ownership entails was evident, especially in the Chinese focus group. This may be due to language barriers and inadequate efforts to communicate with particular groups.

However, BME households are in fact making greater use of shared ownership than white Britons (see next chart). This may be explained by BME groups' lower average incomes and difficulty in accessing full ownership, and their younger age profile.

<sup>1</sup> See 'Drivers of satisfaction amongst black and minority ethnic (BME) tenants' (2008), Ipsos MORI, available from the Housing Corporation website.

BME groups' proportion of all households (2001) and of households entering shared ownership (2002/05)



### Interest in private renting and homeownership

Many of the people who participated in the BME focus group discussions had experience of renting from the private sector. On the whole, private renting was considered to be very expensive, and largely beyond the means of most respondents. People who had experience of it also noted that private renting is not necessarily of good quality, especially at the bottom end of the market.

Some of the refugee focus group participants would have been interested in renting from the private sector, mainly because that would enable them to choose their location, avoid homelessness and/or bring their families over. Financial constraints, however, ruled this out for most of them.

Views on homeownership were divided between those who thought that a mortgage is too great a commitment and those who saw homeownership as desirable, though possibly still beyond their reach. The benefits of homeownership cited by BME focus group participants were very similar to those of the mainstream population.

Some BME groups (such as Indians and Pakistanis) have traditionally entered homeownership by buying run-down properties in unpopular areas. With fewer such opportunities, their access to homeownership has become more limited. Inherited wealth and/or parental support are the key means helping young British households to access homeownership, but lower incomes and lower homeownership rates among many BME groups mean they are less likely to enjoy such support.

Young, British-born people from BME groups can be assumed to be affected by the same difficulties in accessing home ownership as their white counterparts. Other forms of affordable housing may become increasingly important for newly forming BME households in future, even among groups that have historically preferred homeownership.

### What do BME households want or need from social housing?

This and other studies confirm that BME households often have housing aspirations and concerns that are similar to those of white British households, such as: difficulties with neighbours, security and safety of the area, schools, shops and transport, size of dwellings, and overall dislike of flats and preference for houses with gardens (as discussed in paper 2 of this series). The main differences are fear of racial harassment in certain areas and a desire to be close to other members of their community, shops with traditional foods, and opportunities for socialising. There are also some cultural differences in terms of preference over housing design.

What makes a nice neighbourhood or what are the most important aspects of housing design vary from group to group and even within groups. Here we look at four main types of need or preference.

#### Needs and preferences for particular areas

This is an aspect in which there can be strong generational differences. More recent migrants may particularly need social contact with other people from their ethnic group and access to shops that sell familiar foods. The same seems to apply to older and/or foreign-born people:

**'Close proximity to the China Town is particularly important for the elderly who like to use the Chinese language services in the China town and who want to have access to the shops in that area. The elderly also feel much more comfortable and secure in an area where they are surrounded with other people from the same ethnic group.'** (BME HA – Northwest)

**'For refugees, there is a real fear of isolation. They do not want to be housed on large estates where they feel unsafe. They want easy access to familiar social networks to aid socialisation and assist with purchasing ethnic foods and clothing.'** (BME HA – London)

Recently it has become apparent that growing numbers of British-born people from BME groups are willing to move away from traditional areas to live in better quality housing and neighbourhoods. For many BME households with children, access to good schools has become more important than the closeness of ethnic community or specialist shops.

Exclusively white areas or areas that were known to have problems with racial harassment, however, may not be regarded as safe and desirable. BME HA representatives in the study said that they generally try to acquire new properties in mixed areas.

**'In our last customer satisfaction review, racial harassment was considered to be a serious problem only by eight per cent of the respondents. This may be because we are based in South London which is very diverse, and this issue may be worse in other, less diverse, area.'** (BME HA – London)

By active avoidance of areas they know to be racist, many black people reduce their chances of being subjected to racial abuse.

Many participants in focus groups called for improved security and neighbourhood management. But as paper 2 showed, this is a common concern among all social tenants. Disputes with neighbours are a major issue for social tenants living in high density areas. This is no less so for BME groups. Main causes of complaints are pets, anti-social behaviour, and fears for children's safety. Many of the difficulties experienced with neighbours were similar to those experienced by people in social housing more generally, and were not related to ethnicity.

Compatibility and good relationships with neighbours were considered important for all BME focus group participants. Making contact and getting along with one's neighbours was of particular importance to the refugee focus group participants, related to their background as relatively new migrants and their lack of established social networks and/or desire to make friends with local people.

#### Cultural preferences

The extent to which cultural needs and preferences influence people's housing aspirations in terms of the design of the building vary between different BME groups. BME HAs that house large numbers of Chinese and South Asian people mentioned several issues of importance to their clients:

**'Chinese people need more space in the kitchen to store rice sacks etc, and cooking on the wok produces flames and smoke, and it is important to have food ventilation system in the kitchen. We take these needs into consideration when designing the kitchens.'** (BME HA – Northwest)

**'Many of the families that we house are very big, and thus need more bedrooms, more floor space, and larger communal spaces. Especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi households want living rooms that can be partitioned to provide separate living areas for males and females. Our clients need more robust kitchens with deeper sinks. South Asian people also tend to prefer showers to baths. Some more traditional Muslims also express wishes for enclosed gardens, but this is not really taken into consideration.'** (BME HA – Yorkshire)

Large communal areas are important to people who like to entertain at home:

**'I think that the dining room or the saloon should be large, I'd like it to be large. I think it is very important, because we like to invite people over to spend time together, and to have a larger room where you can sit with your friends is very important. The size of the bedroom doesn't really matter.'** (Refugee focus group)

Open-plan kitchens were not well received by refugees, all of whom made reference to their traditional African cooking practices. Again, however, this preference for separate kitchens and living/dining areas also occurs in the white British population.

Most focus group participants who had children wanted access to safe outdoors space for children's play. When this was not available, people sometimes preferred to keep children indoors. Although child safety affects all households with children, it may be a bigger issue for BME families, partly because so many have children, and partly due to their concentration in urban areas where anti-social behaviour is often a bigger problem.

#### Needs arising from household size and composition

Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other Muslim families are more likely than white Britons to have extended families or families with more than three children. As is the case with white British households, most BME households with children want/need three-bedroom homes, preferably with gardens – or possibly larger. Yet large properties of four bedrooms or more form only two per cent of England's social housing stock. Some BME HAs specialise in addressing the needs of extended and large families:

**'Demand for large family homes is high. We build our own houses, and take our customers needs into consideration when doing this. At the moment, over 50 percent of our properties are large family homes (4-7 bedrooms, with gardens). However, the ability of our housing association to meet this need depends largely on our ability to secure land to build as many family homes as are required. There is a growing need for family homes with gardens rather than for flats, but flats are what are being built.'** (BME HA - Yorkshire)

As the proportion of BME groups of the overall population grows, the need for larger family homes in the social rented sector may increase significantly.



### Support needs of particularly vulnerable BME groups

Certain groups within BME populations are particularly vulnerable. These include lone, teenage parents, the elderly, victims of domestic violence, refugees, disabled people, and people suffering from mental illnesses. While their needs are largely similar to those of similar white Britons, they may also have special needs that arise from their ethnic background or history as migrants, eg for culturally sensitive or bilingual services. Some people may have their difficulties compounded by low incomes, low levels of educational attainment or illiteracy.

Many BME HAs take into consideration the fact that that people unable to speak English are generally also unable to deal with local authorities and utilities, and need floating support services:

**'Language is the major issue. Especially the elderly and the asylum seekers do not speak much English, and need help also in their dealings with the government agencies etc.'** (BME HA – Northwest)

Other BME communities may have other kinds of service needs that are not always addressed within mainstream service provision:

**'For the refugees and the elderly we provide culturally sensitive services, such as food and care services. We provide balanced meals for the elderly, within the food groups that they are familiar with and recognise. We also take people's needs in consideration when providing the care services, for example, we make sure that the care personnel know how to take care of black people's hair.'** (BME HA – London)

Lone parenthood and teenage pregnancy are particularly common in black and BW mixed groups, increasing the demand for specialist services addressing the needs of young mothers. In some areas special projects have been set up to address the housing difficulties of black and South Asian women fleeing domestic violence:

**'We run a support project for black and Asian women fleeing domestic violence. There is a growing need for this kind of help, and the demand remains largely unmet, provision should be about doubled. We are also in the process of researching the possible need to provide sheltered housing for young women who were forced into marriage or who are running away from the threat of being forced into marriage.'** (BHA – Yorkshire)

As recent migrants, refugees often have distinctive needs ranging from help with English language to practical support with the settlement process. Problems that refugees face are exacerbated by the widespread placing of refugees in temporary accommodation.

Continuing migration and the present diversity within Britain's population are likely to mean that the need for bilingual and culturally sensitive services will continue in the future. The demand for some rather specific services, such as culturally sensitive care services and sheltered housing projects may increase as the BME populations age. Assumptions that special service provision for older people from BME groups is unnecessary as they will be taken care of by their families are increasingly proving to be wrong.

## Conclusion

There are above average numbers of BME households in social housing and numbers are likely to increase further as their proportion of the overall population grows. However, a number of factors will have an effect. Such factors include:

- Continuing migration and international marriages.
- Some BME groups being so disadvantaged economically that reliance on social housing is likely to persist.
- Unaffordable house prices and growing reliance of first-time buyers on parents' help. This may further increase the gap between white British and some BME groups' owner-occupation levels - reducing homeownership rates among BME groups that are currently mainly homeowners.
- High levels of interest in affordable housing from all BME groups. BME groups are more likely to live in areas where it is more plentiful, and to be in housing need (eg through overcrowding).

Another important factor is improving levels of educational attainment and income levels among British-born people from BME backgrounds. These changes may restrain their demand for affordable housing as their housing aspirations increasingly fall into line with those of white British people.

As the age structure, household composition and housing preferences of BME groups change, social sector providers will probably encounter new needs. These may include forced migrants from different countries and age-related needs from more established communities (although it will be at least fifty years before the proportion of elderly BME people becomes similar to that of the overall population).

Although BME populations often live in cities with sizeable ethnic minority communities, places of worship and specialist shops, proximity to good schools and the relative safety of the area are becoming increasingly important to them. Fear of racism restricts the locational choices of many non-white BME groups. It is hard to predict how these different factors will play out in the future, as some pull BME groups towards staying in traditional areas, while others push people out towards new areas. Aspirations to homeownership, along with high house prices, may push more people out of London where many BME groups have traditionally been based.

Some BME households have specific preferences regarding the design of their homes, and some groups have specific needs in terms of language or help in settling in a new country. However, the housing needs and preferences of most households are influenced more by personal circumstances, household size and type, and (where appropriate) their children's needs. Young people want accommodation they can afford, close to jobs, shops and places to study. Families with children want to live in safe areas, near good schools, in homes that are sufficiently large and suitable for families. Older people need suitable accommodation in areas near to family, social networks and social support. In other words, the aspirations of BME households are increasingly like those of white British people.

## Sources of information

The original research and source document can be found at:

Housing Corporation's Centre for Research and Market Intelligence (CRMI)  
[www.housingcorp.gov.uk/CRMI](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/CRMI)

Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR)  
[www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/)

Most of the data in this paper are from one of the following:

Survey of English Housing  
[www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/surveyofenglishhousing](http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/surveyofenglishhousing)

Census 2001  
[www.statistics.gov.uk/census](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census)

CORE lettings data  
[www.core.ac.uk](http://www.core.ac.uk)

Family Resources Survey  
[www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/frs/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/frs/)

These are available from government websites. Many statistics are brought together in the annual UK Housing Review published jointly by CIH and the Building Societies Association. Recent research on BME housing needs is summarised in a 'Round Up' produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and CIH, The Housing and Neighbourhood Impact of Britain's Changing Ethnic Mix (available from [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk) from October, 2008).

Specific research for this paper consisted of five focus groups with members of different BME populations and telephone interviews with six BME housing associations.

This paper is based on an original by Sanna Markkanen with Anna Clarke, Alex Fenton, Sarah Monk and Christine Whitehead, written at the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, January 2008.

This version was funded by the Housing Corporation and edited by Christoph Sinn of CIH.  
Published for the Housing Corporation by the Chartered Institute of Housing, Octavia House, Westwood Way, Coventry CV4 8JP Tel: 024 7685 1700

October 2008



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**[www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)**

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