

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND HOUSING

Briefing May 2024

BRIEFING SCOPE

This briefing is part of a wider series to be released by the Black Equity Organisation (BEO) exploring housing inequality in Black communities. Our aim with these briefings is to not only highlight the longstanding barriers but also the pathways and enablers for better housing for Black communities in the UK.

The problem of housing in black communities is a long-standing issue that has deep historical roots. It is beyond the scope of this short briefing to pay due comprehensive attention to these issues. However, it is important to refer to this briefly before discussing the problems black communities face today in Britain with housing. This short briefing will focus on four primary issues, namely:

01. Social housing
02. Private renting
03. Homeownership
04. Homelessness



HISTORICAL ISSUES IN HOUSING AND BLACK COMMUNITIES IN BRITAIN

Housing inequality among black communities has long historical roots. The famous sign in a private landlord's window of 'no Irish, no Blacks, no Dogs' illustrates the discrimination that black people have faced in accessing decent homes. Black communities experienced disproportionate housing need, discrimination in various housing markets and higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage. This greater housing need, especially overcrowding and poor housing, impacted severely on the lives and life chances of black communities¹.

The housing needs of black communities were compounded by direct and indirect discrimination in housing markets in England. Black people were disadvantaged in the social housing sector with both council and housing associations in terms of unequal access to waiting lists, available quality social housing and transfers².



As a result of the discrimination in social housing, many black migrants were funnelled into the private rented sector, and into the arms of slum landlords, who greeted their new tenants with poor and overcrowded living conditions. These were often rundown, older housing in neighbourhoods that were already considerably disadvantaged. Decades on we can see many of these issues persist and overcrowding, poor housing quality and exploitation from rogue landlords continue to disproportionately impact black communities today .

While the Race Relations Act 1976 placed a duty on local authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity, racial inequality in housing clearly continued. The overt signs in landlord windows have gone away, however the covert practices persist which are enabled through policies that disproportionately impact Black communities.



A sign reading No Irish, no blacks, no dogs. 'There is significant evidence that exists in several interviews with Caribbean communities that such signs existed well into the 60s.

01. SOCIAL HOUSING

The 2021 Census showed that black people in England and Wales are almost three times as likely to live in social housing when compared to their white counterparts. While 16% of white British people live in social housing 44% of black Britons did so (44% of Black African groups and 40% of black Caribbean groups)⁴.

An under-occupancy penalty for those in social housing, a (lowered) benefit cap and two-child limit for means-tested support have all increased the risk of poverty amongst low-income Black families. Black families are also more likely to live in households with three or more children and are therefore most likely to be affected by the two-child limit⁵. These benefit cuts of course occur in a context of a cost-of-living crisis, therefore exacerbating poverty in low-income black families in social housing.

Black African communities are among the groups with the highest levels of overcrowding at 16.3%, compared to just 1.7% for white households⁶. Rogue social housing landlords have led to the deaths of black children, including Awaab Ishak who died from mould exposure at his Rochdale home in 2020.

02. PRIVATE RENTING

Recent research by Generation Rent revealed that white people are 36% more likely to receive a positive response when applying to rent on SpareRoom than black people. Profiles where the user appears to be white are also 17% more likely than black profiles to receive any response at all⁷.

The direct and indirect racism that black people face when seeking housing in the private rental sector, too often pushes them to rogue landlords where they are often taken advantage of⁸. Consequently, black renters are more likely to receive a Section 21 eviction notice than any other ethnicity. They are more likely to be made homeless than any other ethnicity. On average black renters are most likely to experience disrepair (including mould)⁹.

03. HOMEOWNERSHIP

One of the most overt signs of the ethnicity wealth gap is the disparity in home ownership between different ethnic groups. While 68% of white and 71% of Indian communities own their homes, just 40% of black Caribbean and 20% of black African communities own a home.¹⁰

The reasons for the disparities relate to the legacy of historical racial discrimination and the current structural racism across society today. However, black African communities also tend to have a much different migration history than black Caribbean communities, which has meant that they have not resided in Britain as long. This impacts factors such as inherited wealth and assets gained from previous generations who have lived in the UK. However, both black Caribbean and African communities have among the lowest levels of wealth and homeownership in the UK. This shows that while efforts to close the ethnicity pay gap are important, it is not enough as there is an important task of closing the ethnicity wealth gap.

04. HOMELESSNESS

Given all the historical and present-day injustice in housing mentioned above, it is unfortunately no surprise that black people are three and a half times as likely to experience statutory homelessness as white British people. Amongst black people with experience of homelessness, one third (32%) report discrimination from a social or private landlord.¹¹

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