

PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

HOMELESSNESS IN SCOTLAND: 2018-19 – Equalities Breakdowns

This bulletin provides information about homelessness in Scotland, with a focus on the equalities characteristics of homeless applicants. Specifically this bulletin looks at homelessness in Scotland with respect to Age, Gender and Ethnicity, as these variables are currently available in our Homelessness data collections. We intend to review our collections and consider whether to include other equalities characteristics in future.

The bulletin is based on data collected from local authorities through the HL1 case-level homelessness applications data collection and the HL3 case-level temporary accommodation return. It covers the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, with some additional analysis of trends over the last decade.

Excel workbooks containing tables and charts from this publication are available to download at <http://www.gov.scot/homelesstats>.

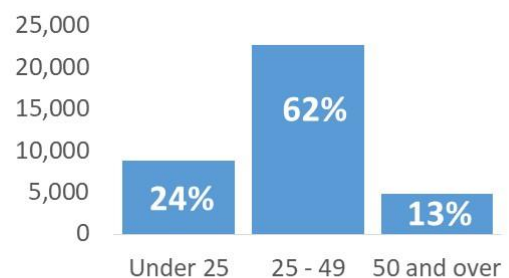
During 2018/19.....

76% of homeless applications were made by White Scottish Applicants



Almost three quarters of those who slept rough in the 3 months before making their application were single males.

The majority of main applicants were aged 25 - 49



The most common reason for female applicants making a homeless application was a violent or abusive dispute within the household, accounting for 22% of applications



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Main Points

Applications

- During 2018/19, 45% of homelessness applications came from single male households and 76% of main applicants were of White Scottish ethnicity.
- From 2008/09 to 2018/19 there has been a 57% reduction in homelessness applications from under 25's, including a 68% reduction in applications from 16-17 year olds, compared to a reduction of 37% in all homelessness applications.
- Single males make up a large proportion of homeless applicants who have previously slept rough. During 2018/19, 74% of those who slept rough in the 3 months before making their homelessness application were single males and 78% of those who slept rough the night before making their homelessness application were single males.
- For female main applicants, the most common reason for making a homelessness application is a violent or abusive dispute within the household, this accounts for 22% of all applications from female main applicants and compares to 5% of applications from male main applicants.

Assessments

- Older applicants were less likely to be repeat applicants, with 1.5% of those aged 65 or over assessed as repeat applicants compared to 5.8% for all assessments.
- Single female households were most likely to be assessed as having a support need (57%), with a mental health problem identified in 31% of cases. Couples with children were the least likely to have a support need identified, with just a third of this household type having at least one support need.
- 58% of applicants age 16-17 were assessed as having a support need, of which 'basic housing management / independent living skills' was the most common (44% of assessments).
- Support needs were more likely to be identified for applicants of White Scottish (51%), White British (52%) and Not known or refused (55%) ethnicity, than for other ethnic groups.

Temporary accommodation

- Households where the main applicant is of African, Caribbean or Black, Mixed or multiple ethnic groups are more likely to have more than one placement in temporary accommodation (65%, 65% and 64% respectively) compared to 41% of all households that exited temporary accommodation, although these households account for only a small proportion of temporary accommodation placements.

- Households where the main applicant was aged 65 or over had the shortest average length of time spent in temporary accommodation of 150 days (approximately 5 months). The average stay across all households was 180 days (approximately 6 months).
- Of the 3,540 HL3 applications that were not offered temporary accommodation during 2018/19, the majority (65%) were single male applicants, with a further 12% being single female applicants. 18% of those 'not offered' temporary accommodation were household types including children¹.
- Three quarters of placements where a breach of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order occurred had a female main applicant, with over half (56%) of all breaches in 2018/19 affecting female single parent households².

Outcomes

- The proportion of applicants securing settled accommodation increases with age, with 59% of main applicants assessed as unintentionally homeless aged 16-17 securing settled accommodation, compared to 78% of those aged 65 and over.
- Caribbean or Black households are most likely to secure settled accommodation (81% of cases), while the figure for Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British was just 69%.
- An outcome of lost contact is most common for single males, with 19% of those assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness losing contact, or having an unknown outcome. This compares with 13% for single female households.

¹ However it should be noted that household characteristics are taken from the homelessness application and in some cases this may not accurately reflect who is present in a temporary accommodation placement. For example a household with children may make alternative temporary accommodation arrangements for the children (e.g. living with relatives).

² This is partly due to the definition of a breach, which means households affected by a breach of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order will always include a pregnant woman or at least one child.

Applications

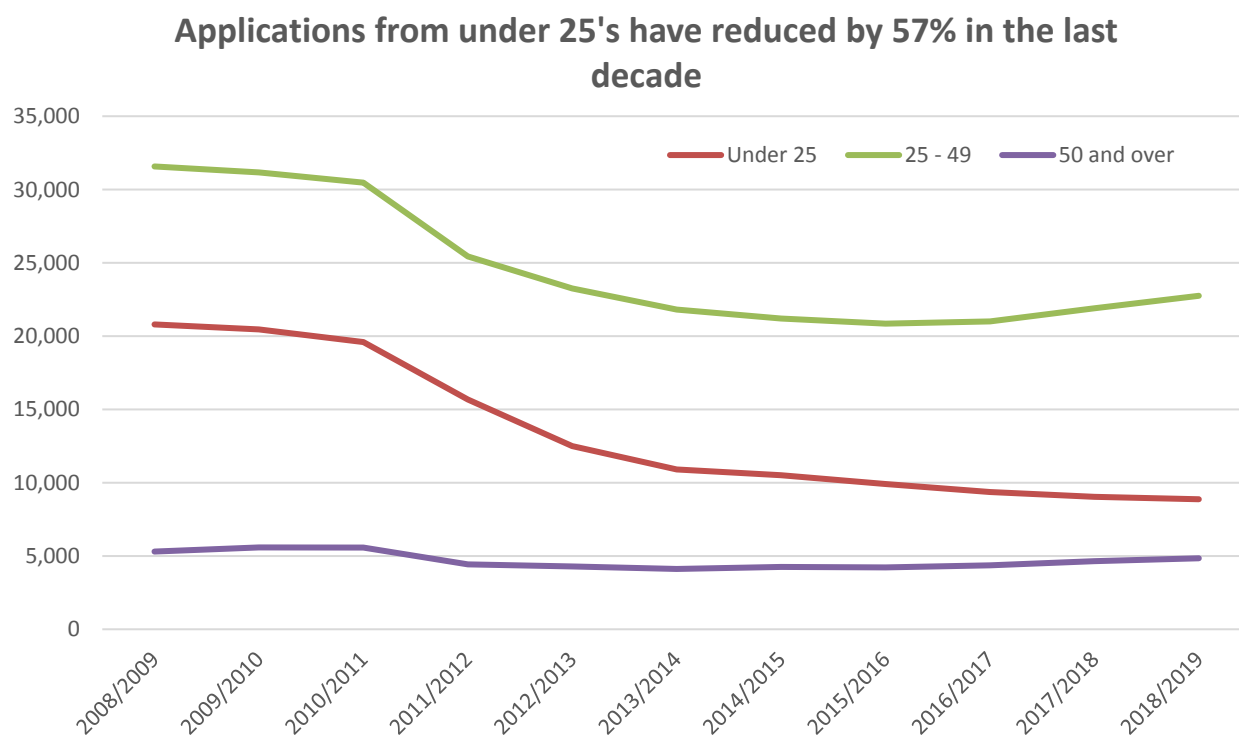
(Tables 1 to 7)³

Characteristics of Applicants

Age (Table 1a)

In 2018/19, the majority (62%) of homeless applications were made by a main applicant who was between 25 and 49.

During 2018/19 about a quarter of homeless applications were made by someone under the age of 25. The proportion of applications from under 25's has reduced over the last decade, from 36% in 2008/9 to 24% in 2018/19. Over the same period this represents a 57% reduction in applications from under 25's, including a 68% reduction in applications from 16-17 year olds, compared to a reduction of 37% in all homeless applications⁴.



However, when comparing to the proportion of households in Scotland headed by someone of this age⁵, this younger age group are over represented, as only 5% of households in Scotland are headed by someone aged 16 to 24 years old. It should be acknowledged however that the majority of under 25's making a homelessness

³ Tables and charts are available in the supporting documents section of the publication

⁴ Further analysis and commentary on the reasons for the reduction in all homelessness applications can be found in the [Homelessness in Scotland: 2018/19](#) publication

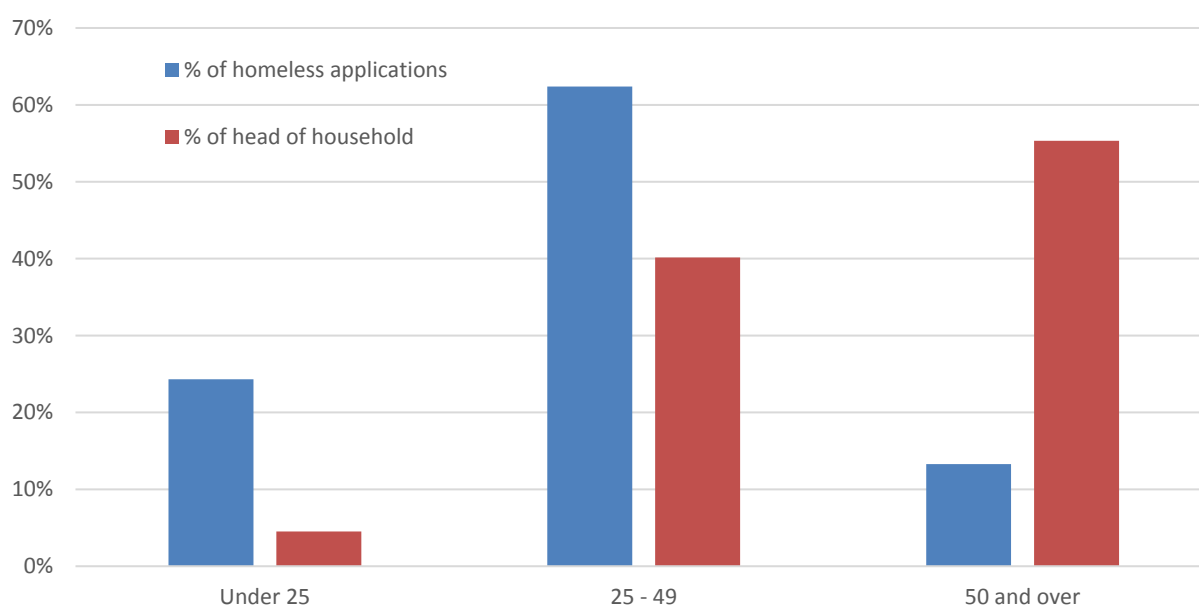
⁵ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/households/household-projections/2016-based-household-projections>

application lived with friends, relatives and partners prior to becoming homeless (Table 3), so would not always be considered a head of household.

Conversely, the proportion of applications from over 50's has been increasing, from 9% in 2008/09 to 13% in 2018/19. For this group the number of applications received has been a lot more stable, with just a 9% reduction over the last decade. However, when comparing to the proportion of households in Scotland headed by someone of this age, this older age group are under represented, as 55% of all households in Scotland are headed by someone aged 50 and over³.

The same trends are apparent in other parts of the UK too⁶.

A lower proportion of older adults make homeless applications



Gender⁷ (Table 1b and 1c)

During 2018/19 just over half (54%) of homelessness applications had a main applicant who was male. The gender split of main applicants has remained relatively stable for the past decade, with male main applicants always accounting for a slightly higher proportion than female main applicants. The proportion of male main applicants has fluctuated between 52% and 55% over the last decade.

Table 1c shows that in 2018/19 almost half (45%) of homelessness applications came from single male households, while single female households account for

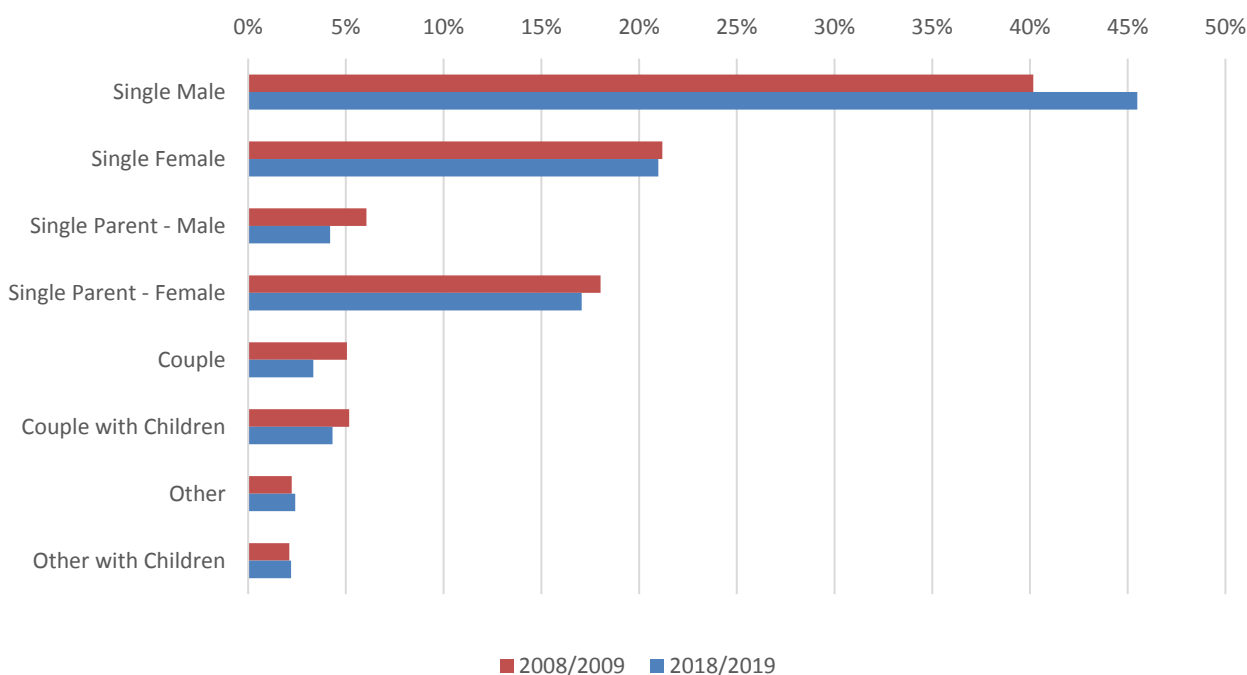
⁶ [UK homelessness: 2005 to 2018 \(ONS, Sept 2019\)](#)

⁷ It should be noted that the current gender question in the homelessness data collection has only male female options, see question 9 [HL1 data specification](#). The Scottish Government are planning to review this question in the near future.

21% of applications. Female single parents make up a larger proportion of applications than male single parents however, with 17% compared to 4%.

Over the last decade there has been an increase in the proportion of applications from single males, from 40% in 2008/09 to 45% in 2018/19. This may be partly due to the abolition of the Priority Need Test in December 2012, which meant all unintentionally homeless households were entitled to settled accommodation.⁸

In 2018/19 single males represented 45% of all homeless applications



Ethnicity (Table 1d)

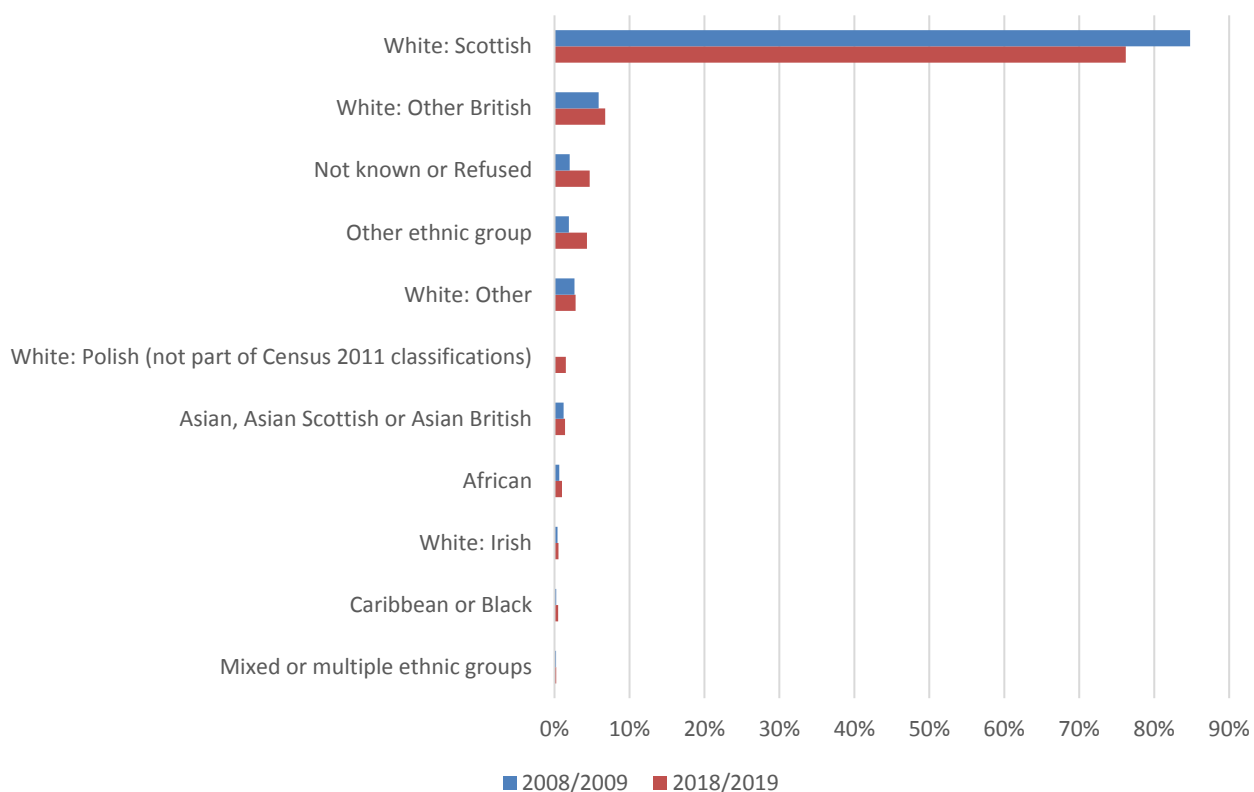
During 2018/19, 88% of main applicants were of White ethnicity (76% were of White Scottish ethnicity). By comparison 95% of the Scottish population are of white ethnicity (77% White Scottish).⁹

Over the last decade the proportion of homelessness applications from main applicants of White Scottish ethnicity has reduced from 85% in 2008/09 to 76% in 2018/19. The proportion of those identifying themselves as in Other ethnic group has increased over time, from about 2% in 2008/09 to about 4% in 2018/19.

⁸ Note that while children may be included in the household type data the child may not necessarily be present on a permanent basis. This is because local authorities include children in homelessness applications wherever an applicant has regular overnight access to a child.

⁹ Ethnicity figures are taken from the [Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2018](#).

The majority of homeless of applicants were of White Scottish ethnicity



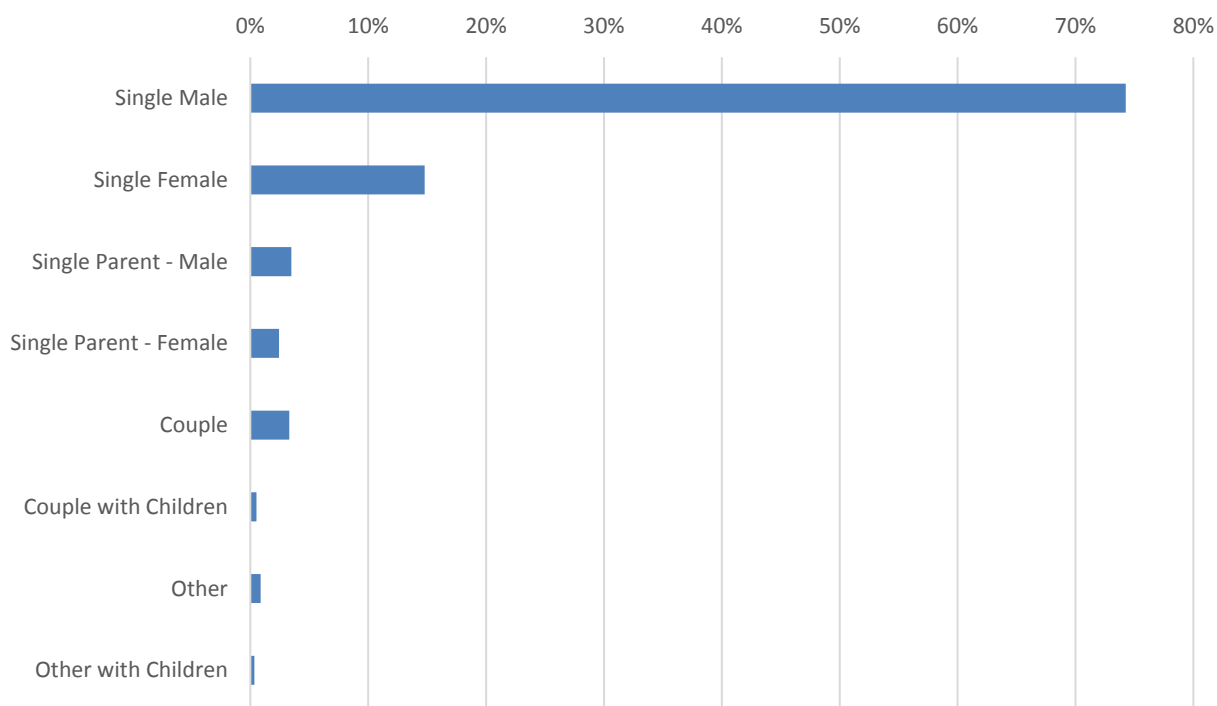
Rough sleeping (Table 2)

During 2018/19 the proportion of applications where a household member reported sleeping rough at least once during the last 3 months prior to application was 8% and the number sleeping rough the night before application was 5%.

The majority of applicants where at least one member of the household slept rough either in the 3 months preceding applying or the night before, were single males (74% and 78% respectively). 13% of single male applicants reported sleeping rough at least once in the preceding 3 months and 8% reported sleeping rough the night before the application during 2018/19.

While applicants from households including children accounted for 10% of those reporting a household member sleeping rough in the three months prior to their application, and 4% of applicants for the the night before their application, this does not necessarily indicate that the children within the household slept rough.

74% of households who slept rough in the three months prior to their application were single males



Applicants who reported rough sleeping prior to their application were more likely to be aged 25 to 49, with 68% of applications who reported sleeping rough in the three months prior to their application belonging to this age range.

Applicants of White Irish ethnicity were the most likely to report rough sleeping prior to their application, with 16% reporting sleeping rough in the three months prior to their application and 13% the night before. This compares to 8% of all applicants reporting sleeping rough in the three months prior to their application and 5% the night before. However it should be noted that applicants of White Irish ethnicity make up a small proportion (1%) of all applications.

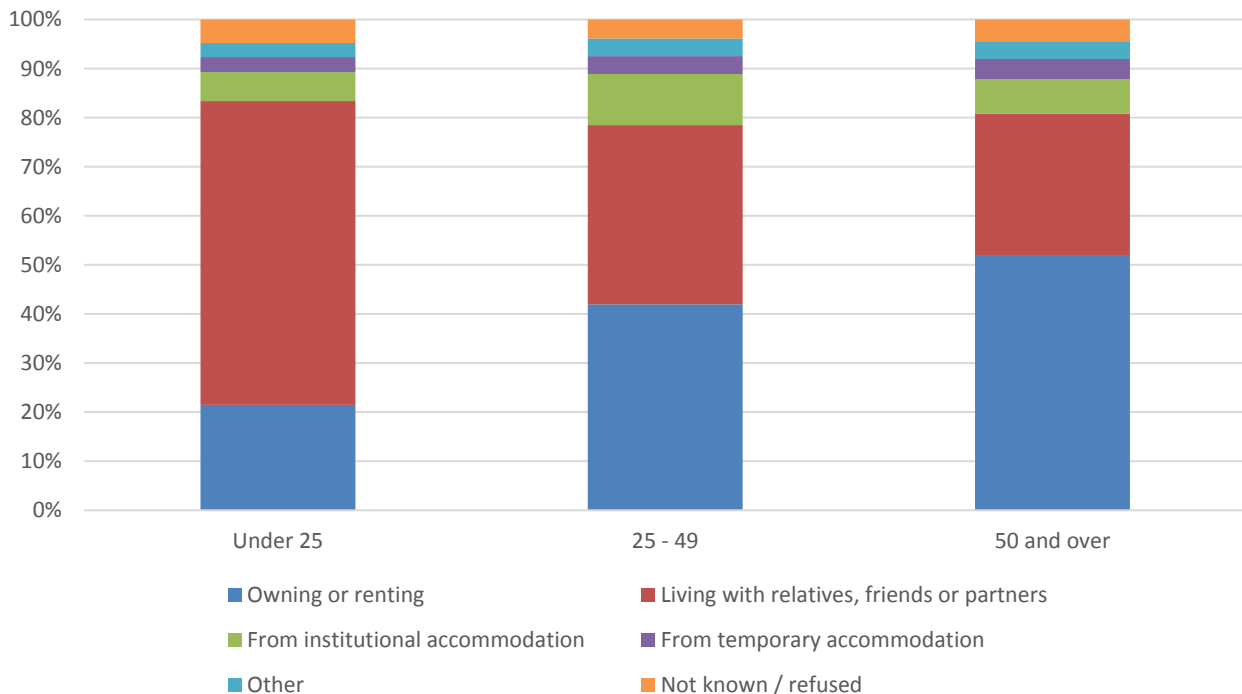
Prior circumstances of applicants (Table 3)

Of the 36,465 homelessness applications in 2018/19, 15,202 (42%) had been living with friends, relatives and partners, while 13,966 (38%) had been living in their own accommodation (i.e. which they either rented or owned).

Younger homeless applicants are far more likely to have been living with friends, relatives and partners, than older applicants. With 62% of main applicants who were under 25 having lived with friends, relatives and partners compared to 29% of main applicants who were 50 and over. Over half (52%) of main applicants who

were 50 and over owned or rented the accommodation they became homeless from, compared to 21% of applicants aged under 25.

Older applicants are more likely to own or rent the property they become homeless from



Single males, single females and male single parents are much more likely than other household types to have been living with friends, relatives and partners before becoming homeless. The majority of households including children (56%) had been living in their own accommodation, with 30% living in private rented accommodation. This compares to 12% of households without children living in private rented accommodation.

There is not much variation in prior circumstances of applicants of different ethnicities. Apart from, 37% of applicants identifying as Other ethnic group reporting living in Supported Accommodation prior to applying as homeless, compared to 3% of all applications. 98% of these applicants are not EU nationals but have been granted refugee status or leave to remain, therefore it is highly likely that they have left the accommodation provided by the Home Office (recorded here as Support Accommodation) whilst their status was considered and are then presenting as homeless.

Reasons for homelessness (Tables 6 and 7)

The most common reason for all homelessness applications is that the applicant household has been asked to leave their current accommodation (25%). For younger applicants, this is even more likely. For those aged 16-17, this is the reason for over half (55%) of homelessness applications, whereas for those aged 65 and over it accounts for only 14% of applications.

For female main applicants, the most common reason for making a homelessness application is a violent or abusive dispute within the household, this accounts for 22% of all applications from female main applicants and compares to just 5% of applications from male main applicants. 21% single females making a homelessness application state this as the main reason for doing so and 27% of female single parents.

Applicants of Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British ethnicity are most likely to state the reason for their homelessness application as a violent or abusive dispute within the household. This accounts for 23% of all applications from Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British applicants and compares to 13% of all applications. 88% of these are from female main applicants, this accounts for the main reason for homelessness for 41% of female Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British applicants.

As the causes of homelessness can be complex and not the result of a single incident or event, 67% of applications cited additional reasons for making an application. The most common additional reason for all but the 16-17 age group, was 'not to do with applicant household (e.g. landlord selling property, fire, circumstances of other persons sharing previous property, harassment by others, etc)'. However, for main applicants aged 16-17 the most common additional reason for homelessness was lack of support from friends and family.

Over 50's were much more likely to report a physical health reason as an additional reason for their homeless application. 25% of main applicants who were 50 and over did so, compared to 7% of those under 50.

Almost two thirds (65%) of applicants who were couples with children reported unmet need for support from housing/ social work/ health services as an additional reason for their homelessness application.

82% of applicants from Other ethnic group cited additional reasons for making a homelessness application, this compares to 67% of all applications. Of those citing an additional reason 81% of those of an Other ethnic group reported unmet need for support from housing/ social work/ health services as an additional reason for their homelessness application. This may be related to the fact that 60% of applicants of Other ethnic group ethnicity are not EU nationals but have been granted refugee status or leave to remain.

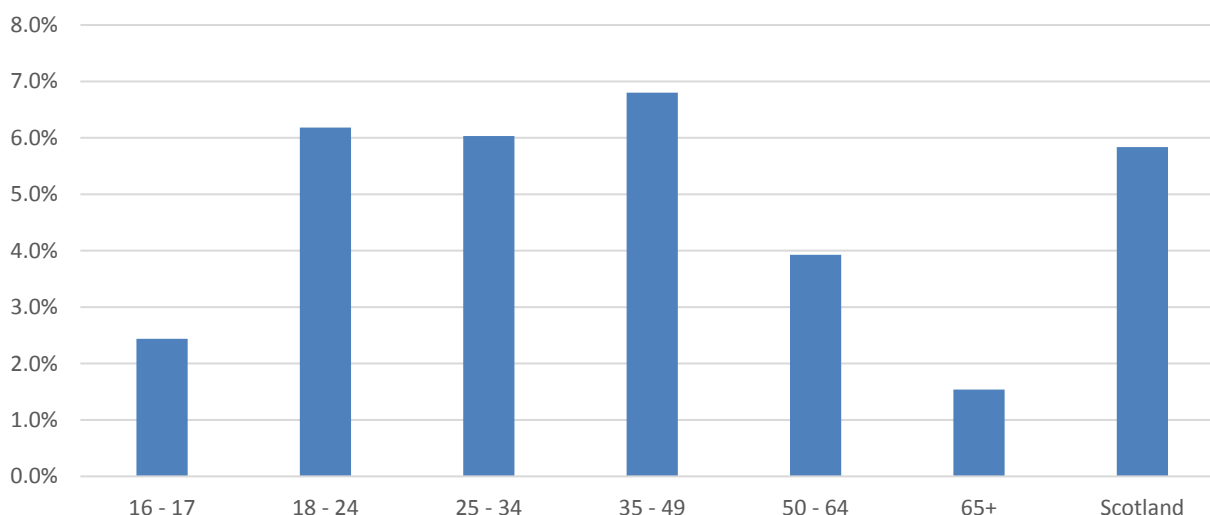
Assessments

(Tables 8 to 10)

Repeat homelessness

The percentage of homeless assessments identified as repeat cases (i.e. where a previous application from the household had been closed less than 12 months before the current assessment¹⁰) was 5.8% across Scotland in 2018/19. Older applicants were less likely to be repeat applicants, with 1.5% of those aged 65 or over assessed as repeat applicants compared to 5.8% for all assessments. 6.8% of applicants aged 35-49 were assessed as repeat homeless.

Older applicants are less likely to be repeat homeless



Single men were particularly likely to be repeat applicants, with 8.4% assessed as repeat homeless, compared to the least likely household type to be a repeat case, which was Other with children, where less than 1% of applications were repeat cases. However it should be noted that this will partly be due to the definition of repeat homelessness and the requirement that the adults and family composition need to be the same in both applications.

Those applicants of mixed or multiple ethnic groups are most likely (6.7%) to have a repeat homelessness application and those of White Irish and White Polish ethnicity are least likely to make a repeat homelessness application (0% and 1.2% respectively).

Support needs of homeless households

Across Scotland 49% of cases assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness were identified as having a support need, although the nature of the

¹⁰ To be classed as a repeat homelessness assessment the applicant household must (1) be assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in both applications; (2) the previous case must have been closed within 12 months of the current assessment and; (3) the adults and family circumstances also need to be the same in both applications.

support need varies across age groups. 58% of applicants age 16-17 were assessed as having a support need, of which 'basic housing management / independent living skills' was the most common (44% of assessments).

For applicants age 65 or older 55% were assessed as having a support need, of which a physical disability (25% of cases) or a medical condition (30%) were most common. A mental health problem was most common among those age 35-49 (27% of assessments), and similarly for drug or alcohol dependency (17%).

Single female households were most likely to be assessed as having at least one support need (57%), with a mental health problem identified in 31% of cases. This compares to 53% of single male households assessed as having at least one support need, with a mental health problem identified in 26% of cases. Couples with children were the least likely to have a support need identified, with just a third of this household type having at least one support need.

Support needs were more likely to be identified for applicants of White Scottish (51%), White British (52%) and Not known or refused (55%) ethnicity, than for other ethnic groups. Less than a quarter (24%) of applicants of African ethnicity had a support need identified and proportions of households of other ethnicities with a support need identified varied between 26% and 40%.

Temporary Accommodation

(Tables 11 to 17)

Homeless applicants may be placed in temporary accommodation while the Local Authority assesses their application or while awaiting the offer of a permanent let.

The characteristics used in this section are taken from the homelessness application (the HL1 data collection), however in some cases this may not accurately reflect who is present in a temporary accommodation placement. This is because there are cases where for example a household with children will make a homelessness application but make alternative temporary accommodation arrangements for the children (e.g. living with relatives).

Numbers of households

Between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019, a total of 21,095 unique households entered temporary accommodation. Around 63% of these were aged between 18 and 49. 50% of those entering temporary accommodation were single male households, while 19% were single females. 76% were of White Scottish ethnicity. These percentages closely match those for homelessness applications as discussed above.

Duration in temporary accommodation

The average length of time spent in temporary accommodation across all households was 180 days (approximately 6 months). Households where the main

applicant was aged between 35 and 49 were in temporary accommodation for 196 days on average, while the figure was 150 days for households aged 65 or over.

Single male households spend more time in temporary accommodation on average than female households (167 days compared to 162 days), although female single parent households spend more time than male single parents (208 days compared to 192 days).

Households of African ethnicity on average spend longest in temporary accommodation on average (247 days), followed by Caribbean or Black households (226 days). In particular Caribbean or Black households of 'Other' household type (households with 3 or more adults) on average spent 629 days in temporary accommodation, and African households of type 'Other with children' on average spent 560 days in temporary accommodation on average.

Number of placements

The majority (59%) of households that exited temporary accommodation during 2018/19 had one placement in temporary accommodation. Almost a quarter (24%) of households had two placements in temporary accommodation and 18% had three or more placements. This reflects that most households using temporary accommodation are placed once, but that there are some who move through multiple temporary accommodation placements.

Older applicants are less likely to have multiple placements, with 70% of main applicants aged 65 and over having just one placement in temporary accommodation.

Single males and couples are most likely to have more than one placement in temporary accommodation, with 45% of single males and 46% of couples having more than one placement. 42% of single female households had more than one placement, while just 34% of households containing children¹¹ have more than one placement in temporary accommodation.

Households where the main applicant is of African, Caribbean or Black, Mixed or multiple ethnic groups are more likely to have more than one placement in temporary accommodation (65%, 65% and 64% respectively) compared to 41% of all households that exited temporary accommodation, although these households account for only a small proportion of temporary accommodation placements.

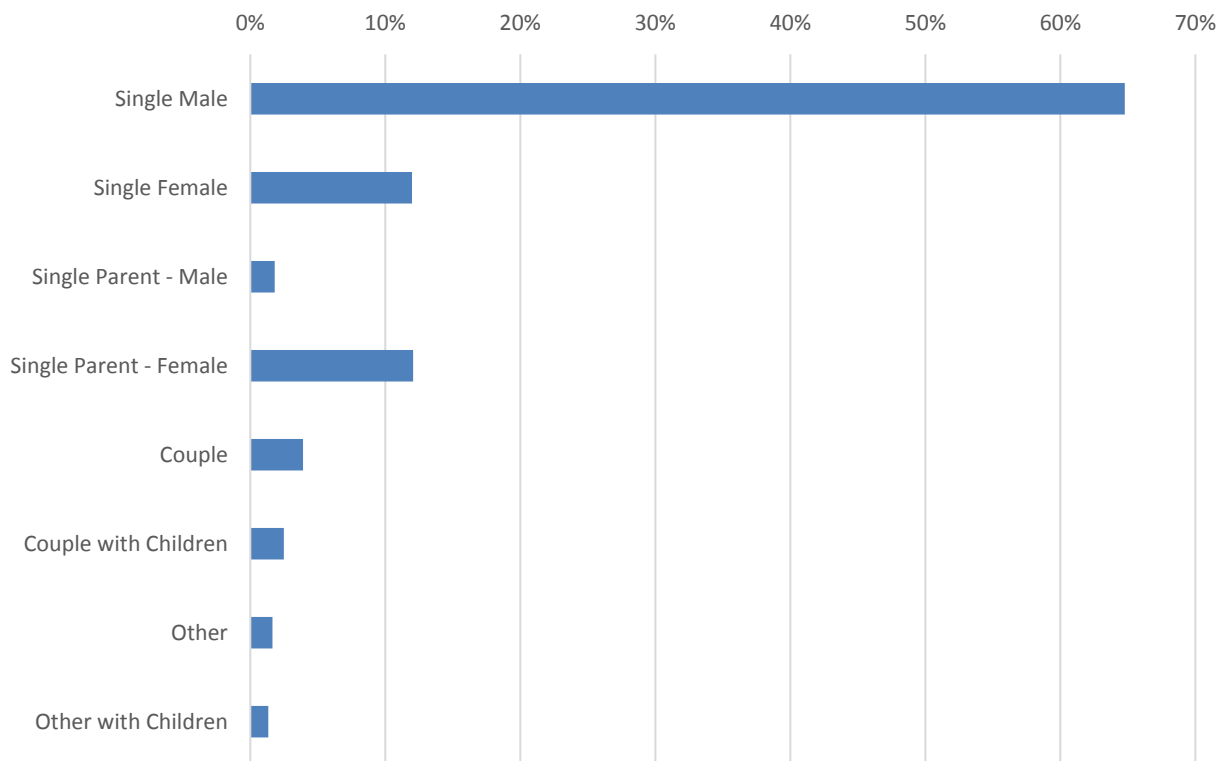
Applications in which temporary accommodation was not offered

An HL3 return is completed when a local authority has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation under the homeless person's legislation, however, a local authority is also required to indicate when they do not offer any temporary accommodation to a household and thus, are acting unlawfully.

¹¹ Single parent – male, Single parent – female, Couple with children and Other with children

During 2018/19, 3,540 HL3 applications were ‘not offered’ temporary accommodation. The majority of these cases (65%) were single male applicants, with a further 12% being single female applicants. 18% of those ‘not offered’ temporary accommodation were households including children, however as noted at the start of this section, the children recorded as in these households may not actually require temporary accommodation as their parents/guardians may have made alternative arrangements for them.

65% of cases where temporary accommodation was not offered were single male households



In addition, 69% of those not offered temporary accommodation were of White Scottish ethnicity. Applicants in the age groups 25 to 34 and 35 to 49 together accounted for 74% of those applications not offered temporary accommodation.

Breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2017, limits the number of days that local authorities can use unsuitable accommodation, such as bed and breakfasts, for families with children or pregnant women to 7 days, except in exceptional circumstances.

In total, there were 617 breaches of the Homeless Persons Unsuitable Accommodation Order during 2018/19, this accounts for about 2% of all temporary accommodation placement cases closed during this time period.

Three quarters of placements where a breach occurred had a female main applicant, with over half (56%) of all breaches in 2018/19 affecting female single

parent households. This is partly due to the definition of a breach, which means households affected will always include a pregnant woman or contain at least one child.

Households including children are by definition, much more likely to be affected by a breach. 6% of closed temporary accommodation placements involving a household with children are affected by a breach, this compares to 2% of temporary accommodation placement cases closed during 2018/19.

Households where the main applicant is Caribbean or Black, White Polish or Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British are also more likely to be affected by a breach of the unsuitable accommodation order. With 7% of closed temporary accommodation placements involving a household where the main applicant is Caribbean or Black, 8% where the main applicant is White Polish and 10% where the main applicant is Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British affected by a breach of the unsuitable accommodation order. This is partly due to the fact that households with a main applicant of this ethnicity are more likely to include children.

Outcomes

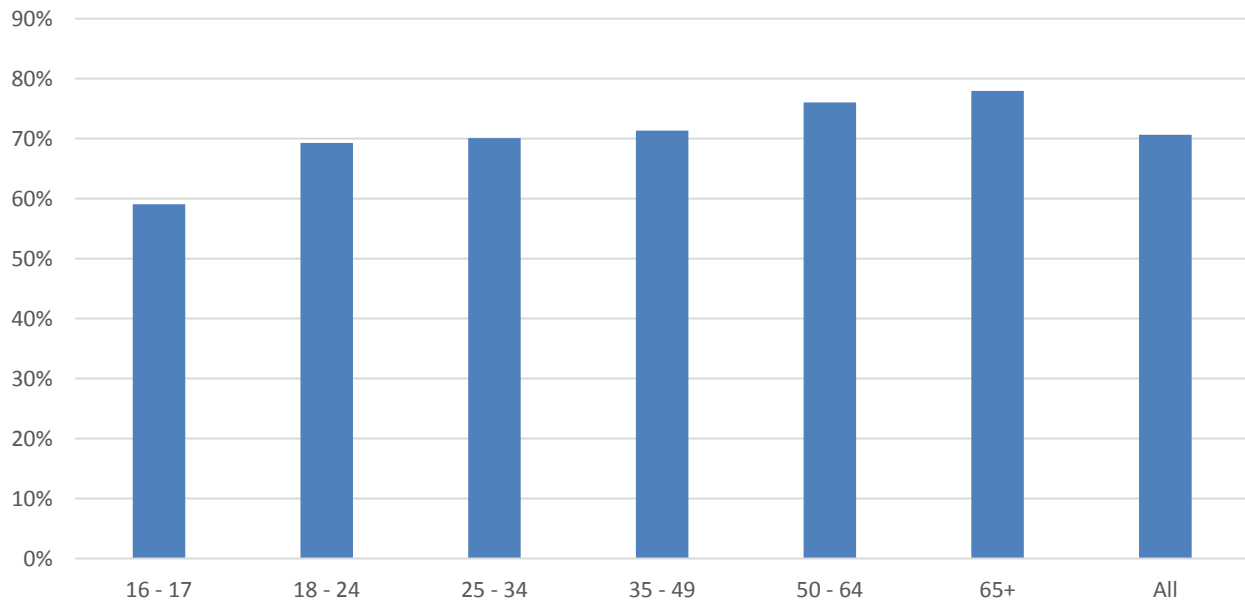
(Tables 18 and 19)

Households assessed as unintentionally homeless have a right to settled accommodation - this is usually a tenancy with a local authority landlord or housing association, or a tenancy in the private rented sector. In 2018/19, 71% of unintentionally homeless households secured settled accommodation.

The proportion of applicants securing settled accommodation increases with age, with 59% of main applicants assessed as unintentionally homeless aged 16-17 securing settled accommodation, compared to 78% of those aged 65 and over.

Younger applicants, particularly those aged 16-17 are more likely to move in with friends or family and are much less likely than older applicants to secure an Registered Social Landlord (RSL) let.

The proportion of applicants securing settled accommodation increases with age



Single males are the least likely household type to secure settled accommodation (63%, compared to 69% for single female households) and couples with children are the most likely (84%). This is partly because single males are more likely to lose contact or to have an unknown outcome.

Caribbean or Black households are most likely to secure settled accommodation (81% of cases), while the figure for Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British was just 69%.

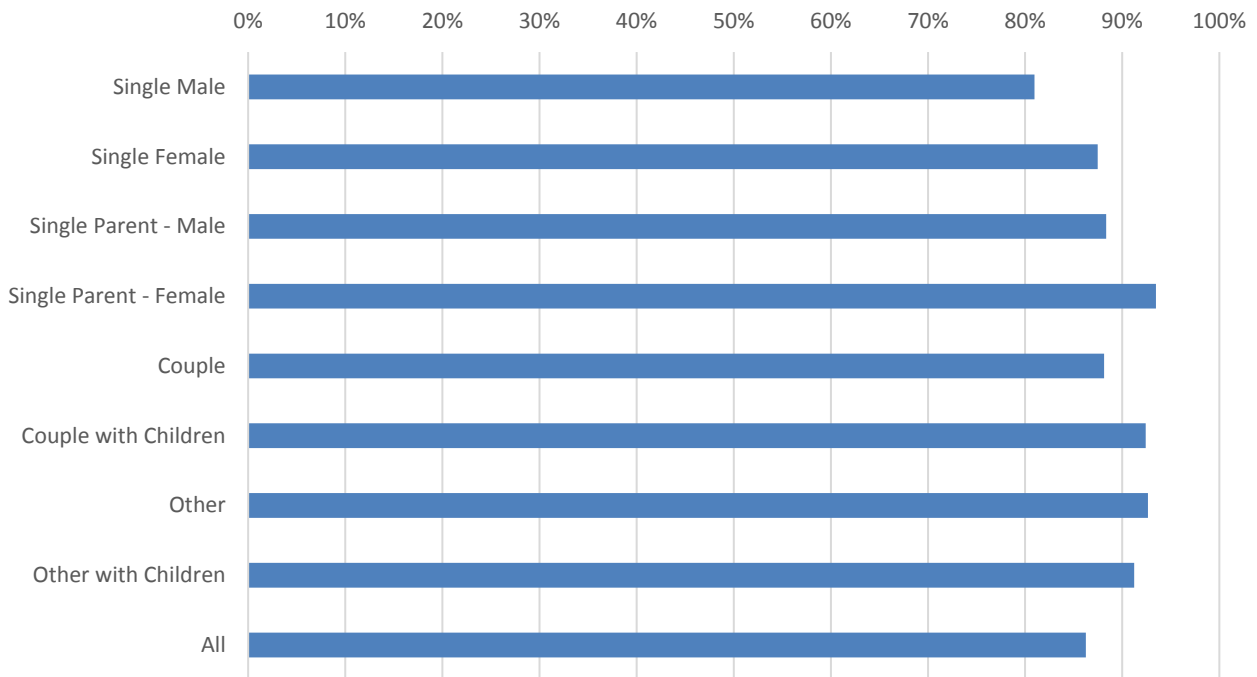
Contact Lost / Unknown Outcomes

In 2018/19, local authorities closed a total of 30,143 cases. Of these, following an assessment of homelessness or threatened with homelessness, an outcome of lost contact or unknown outcome was reported for 14% of cases.

An outcome of lost contact is most common for single males, with 19% of those assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness losing contact, or having an unknown outcome. This compares with 13% for single female households.

Older applicants are less likely to lose contact or to have an unknown outcome, with just 7% of main applicants assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness aged 65 and over and 9% aged 50-64 losing contact or having an unknown outcome.

Single males were least likely to maintain contact with their local authority



There was very little variation in the percentage of households maintaining contact with their local authority with respect to ethnicity. African and Caribbean or Black households were least likely to maintain contact (84%) while White: Other, Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British and Other ethnic group the most likely (88%)

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

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