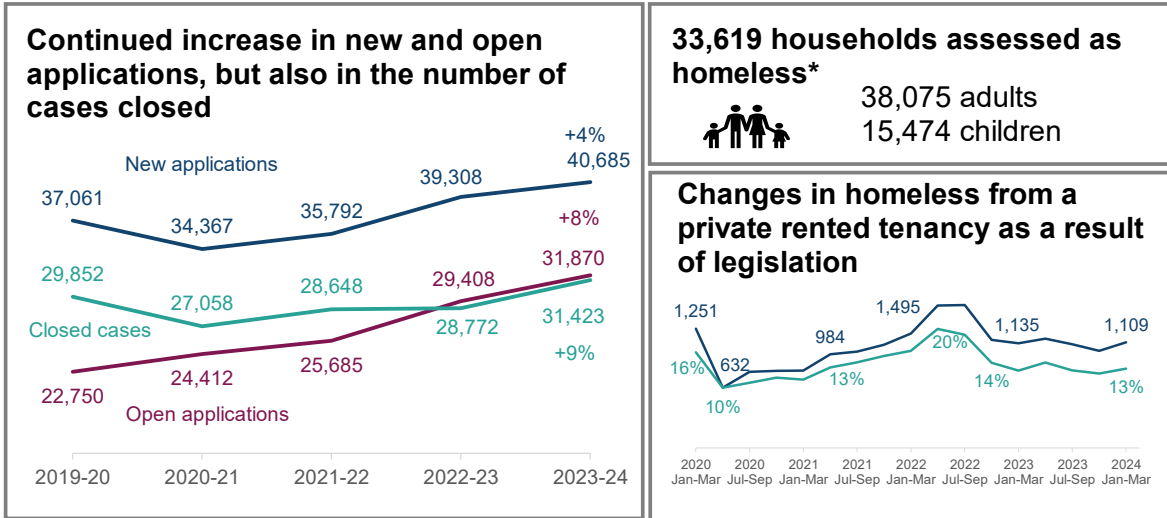


Accredited Official Statistics



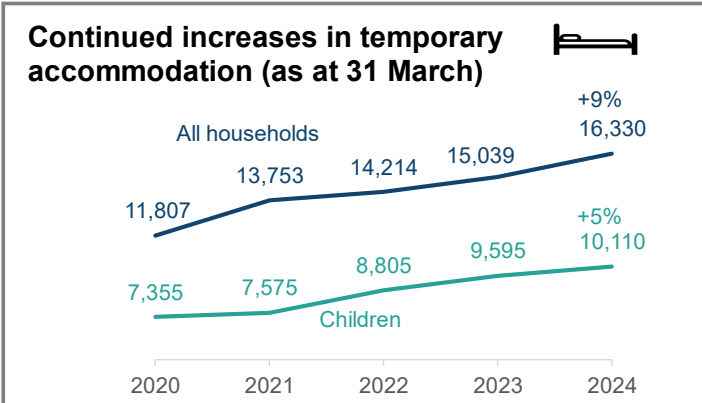
Homelessness in Scotland: 2023-24

Main points for 2023-24



Increases in rough sleeping

The number of households reporting rough sleeping the night before application has increased from 1,493 to 1,916 and in the three months prior from 2,425 to 2,931

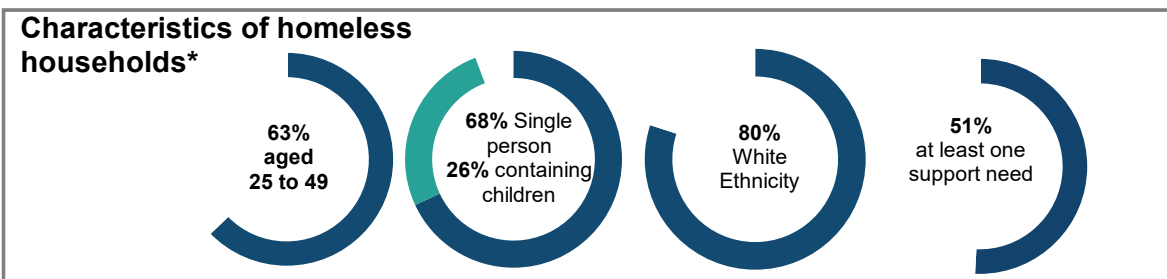
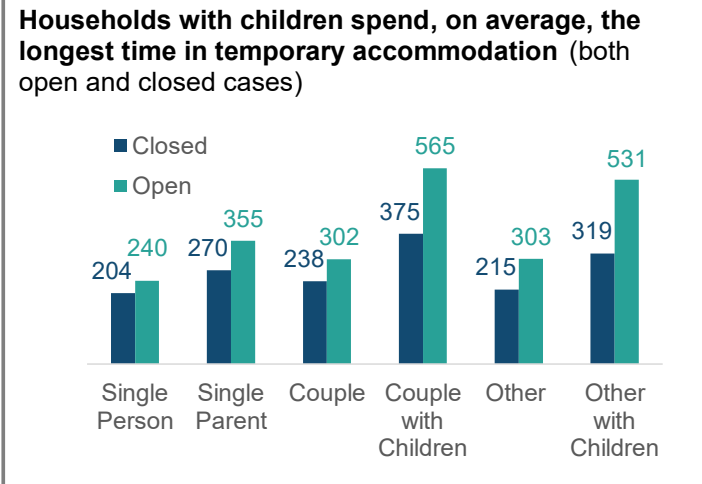


OUTCOMES

83% of unintentionally homeless households secured settled accommodation

Average time (days) from assessment to case closure

has increased greatly over time from 226 in 2019-20 to 278 in 2023-24



*Households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness (intentional or unintentional)

Introduction

This statistics bulletin presents information based on administrative data collected by Scottish local authorities in the course of carrying out their homelessness activities. This is the first release of the full 2023-24 data, from the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, set in the context of historical data.

It provides statistical information on all stages of the homelessness process, the circumstances from which households became homeless, use of temporary accommodation and the final outcomes of their application.

Characteristics of the homelessness population, including breakdowns by age, gender and ethnicity have also been released as part of this publication.

Workbooks containing the data and charts referenced in this publication, including local authority breakdowns are available to download at our [supporting documents page](#). A full time series is also available at [full statistical time series page](#).

These statistics are [accredited official statistics](#). The Office for Statistics Regulation has independently reviewed and accredited these statistics as complying with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).



These statistics were accredited on the 29th of November 2012. The published accreditation is also available at [Accredited Official Statistics](#)

What is the statutory duty of the local authority?

If a household is unintentionally homeless (or threatened with homelessness), the local authority must offer settled accommodation. Until this is available, the local authority must offer temporary accommodation.

If a household is intentionally homeless (or threatened with homelessness), the local authority has no statutory duty to provide settled accommodation (although they may choose to do so). There is a duty to provide temporary accommodation and advice and assistance to help the household secure alternative accommodation.

Temporary accommodation must be offered to all households while awaiting an assessment decision.

The statutory duty lies with the local authority the household applies to. Up until 28 November 2022, if a household had no local connection to the one to which it applied, but to another local authority in Scotland, they may be referred. From 29 November 2022, local authorities no longer have the power to refer an applicant to another local authority in Scotland on the grounds of their local connection.

A household can accept or refuse offers of accommodation. A local authority's duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless people would be fulfilled by an offer that is refused, provided that the offer is a reasonable one.

More information on the duties local authorities have to assist people who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness can be found in the [Code of Guidance on Homelessness](#).

A quick guide to the homelessness process

A household is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere, or have accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it. A household is threatened with homelessness if it is likely they will become homeless within two months.

There are **three stages involved in a homeless application in Scotland**:

1. The Application stage where the household first presents to the local authority.
2. The Assessment stage which determines:
 - a. If the household is eligible for assistance. Households with no recourse to public funds are not eligible for homelessness assistance, though they may be provided temporary accommodation while their status is assessed;
 - b. whether the household is homeless or threatened with homelessness;
 - c. if the household is homeless, whether this is 'unintentional' or 'intentional';
 - d. and if unintentionally homeless, whether there is a connection to the local authority to which the application was made and/or to any other (Scottish) local authority. (Note: local connection legislation changed in November 2022).
3. The Outcome stage. A case can only be closed once the local authority has fulfilled its statutory duty or contact has been lost for 28 days.

A note on interpreting the figures

It is not possible to make direct links within a reporting year for the different stages of the homelessness process as different households will be at a different stage at different times.

That is, not all applications made in 2023-24 will have an assessment or temporary accommodation placement that year. Similarly, some assessments made in 2023-24 will relate to applications received prior to this; and some temporary placements in 2023-24 will relate to household applications and assessments prior to this also. Furthermore, there will be households who entered and exited temporary accommodation within the same reporting year, and therefore will not appear in the end of year snapshot of households in temporary accommodation.

To also note:

- it is possible for households to make an application and/or be assessed more than once in the same year
- not all households assessed as homeless enter temporary accommodation

The term 'homeless households' is used throughout the publication to denote households who have been assessed as (unintentionally or intentionally) homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Impact of coronavirus (COVID-19)

There was a departure from longer-term trends for some aspects of homelessness following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions; this was particularly the case for the period April to June 2020. Caution should therefore be applied when making comparisons with the 2020-21 figures, however, these comparisons are in themselves useful in observing any changes in trends over the the pandemic period.

Local authorities are still reporting the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on homelessness service provision. In particular, backlogs built up due to increased demand for temporary accommodation and restrictions limiting the ability to move households in to permanent accommodation. Where findings are believed to have been impacted by COVID-19 these have been outlined within the relevant sections.

Impact of cost of living crisis

The [Cost of Living \(Tenant Protection\) \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) was introduced from 27 October 2022 in response to the cost of living crisis, to protect residential tenants from increases in rent and from eviction.

Where figures are believed to have been impacted by cost of living crisis, these have been outlined within the relevant sections.

Impact of Ukrainian displaced people

There has been negligible impact on the national increase in homelessness applications from Ukrainian displaced households. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were 290 applications from Ukrainian displaced households – 0.7% of the national total. Two-fifths of these were in Glasgow, accounting for 115 households, which was less than the 150 in 2022-23. Data relating to Ukrainian displaced households has been made available in a separate workbook available on our [supporting documents page](#).

Impact of changes to local connection legislation

Of the 33,619 households that were assessed as homeless in 2023-24, 985 (3%) were reported as having a local connection to another (Scottish) local authority only. This means that 97% had either a local connection to the local authority, or no local connection to any local authority in Scotland.

Given this has been consistently between 2% and 3% for the last few years, it would appear that the change in legislation is not having a notable impact on the number of applications as a result of the changes in legislation.

Temporary accommodation data sources

Local authorities provide two sets of temporary accommodation data:

1. aggregate snapshot information as at the end of the quarter, available since 2002
2. placement level information, provided since 2016

The snapshot data is used to report headline temporary accommodation figures (i.e. households, households with children and number of children as at 31 March). The placement level information is used to provide greater detail and context around the use of temporary accommodation (e.g. number of placements, length of time).

The plan is to discontinue the snapshot collection given the richer placement level data. However, this has been difficult due to:

- figures between the two sources not matching (placement level returns are higher by 4%); and
- the placement level information not containing information on children within the placements.

New questions were introduced into the placement level collection in 2019 and this data has been provided by all 32 local authorities. This is subject to on-going quality assurance. New data relating to the individual placement return has been made available in a separate workbook on our [supporting documents page](#).

Stock transfer authorities

For six local authorities – Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, Eilean Siar, Glasgow, Inverclyde, and Scottish Borders – stock was transferred from local authority control to housing associations between 2003 and 2007. This should be borne in mind when

interpreting figures at local authority level, particularly for outcomes by accommodation type.

The extent of homelessness in Scotland

Key points in 2023-24



Increases in all of homelessness applications, households assessed as homeless, households and children in temporary accommodation, and open applications.

Applications, assessments, and households in temporary accommodation

Table 1: Continued increases for homeless applications (new and open), households assessed as homeless and households in temporary accommodation

Homelessness applications, assessments and temporary accommodation 2022-23 and 2023-24

Measure	2022-23	2023-24	Change 2022-23 to 2023-24	
			Number	Percent
Applications	39,308	40,685	1,377	4%
Assessed as homeless	32,531	33,619	1,088	3%
Households in temporary accommodation at 31 March	15,039	16,330	1,291	9%
Open homelessness applications at 31 March	29,408	31,870	2,462	8%

The number of applications and households assessed as homeless are the highest since 2011-12, with the number of open homelessness applications and households in temporary accommodation reaching the highest in the time series (back to 2003 and 2002 respectively).

The increases are largely due to Glasgow, with the highest numerical increases across all measures. Glasgow have attributed these to an increase in applications from asylum seekers and refugees. Indeed, homelessness applications in Glasgow from those present in the UK e.g. because they have been granted refugee status or leave to remain, have nearly doubled in the last year (from 1,384 to 2,709).

The cost of living crisis and pressures in the current housing system, related to backlogs and lack of availability of suitable properties were also noted by a number of local authorities as reasons for the increases.

Number of households vs number of people

The 33,619 homeless households in 2023-24 contained a total of 53,549 people, comprising 38,075 adults and 15,474 children. The number of adults increased by 2% compared to the previous year, while the number of children decreased by 7%.

There were 10,110 children in temporary accommodation as at 31 March. This is the highest in the time series. There was an increase of 5% children in temporary accommodation compared to 4% in the number of households with children or pregnant women and 9% in the number of households overall. [To note, data is not collected on the number of adults in temporary accommodation placements.]

Intentionality

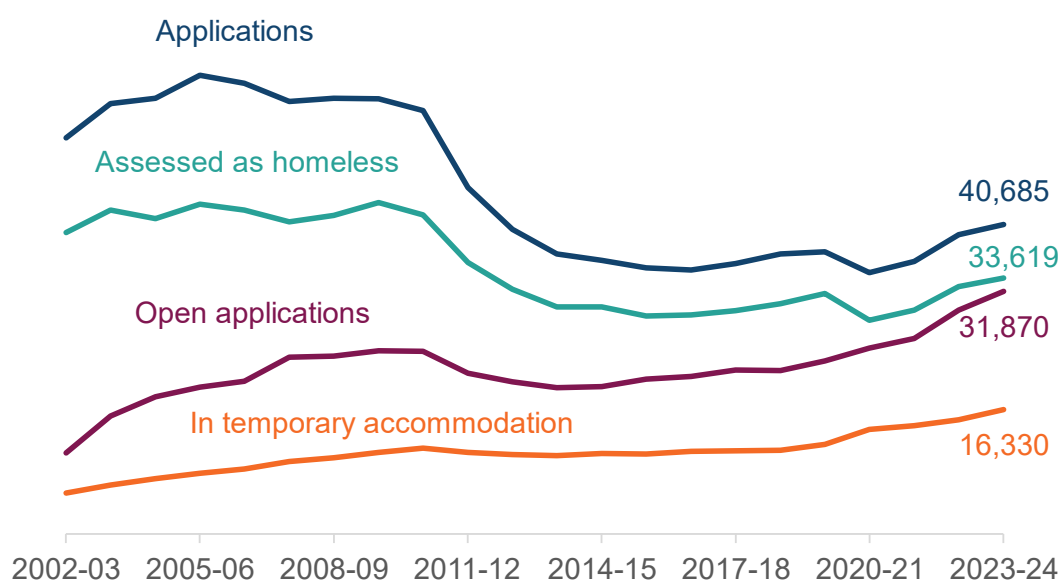
In 2023-24, 32,907 (98% of all homeless households) were assessed as unintentionally homeless, with the remaining 712 assessed as intentionally homeless.

This is the highest number (and proportion) of households assessed as intentionally homeless since legislation changed in November 2019, giving local authorities the power to assess for intentionality, rather than it being a legal duty to do so.

Longer term trends

Chart 1: Longer term trends in homelessness in Scotland are impacted by previous legislation, policy, and practice, with a shorter-term impact due to COVID-19

Homelessness applications, assessments, open applications, and households in temporary accommodation: 2002-03 to 2023-24



In 2001, [Scottish homelessness legislation](#) extended councils' duties to non-priority need homeless households. Before 2002, the majority of homeless households in priority need were households with children. Following the 2001 extension duty there was a notable increase in the number of single people applying for homelessness assistance.

These single people were also eligible for temporary accommodation. This can, at least in part, explain the increase from 2002-03. The [priority need test was abolished](#) on 31 December 2012.

The sharper decrease shown from 2009-10 is likely due to the impact of the introduction of [Housing Options](#) services in Scottish local authorities, with a focus on prevention.

From 2016-17, applications and assessments were increasing year on year until 2020-21, when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in decreases due to stay at home guidance and emergency legislation to protect renters. The lifting of these resulted in a return to increasing trends. The number of open applications and households in temporary accommodation continued to rise throughout the pandemic and are now at an all time high.

How does homelessness vary across Scotland?

Applications

Seventeen local authorities experienced an increase in applications, with 15 experiencing a decrease.

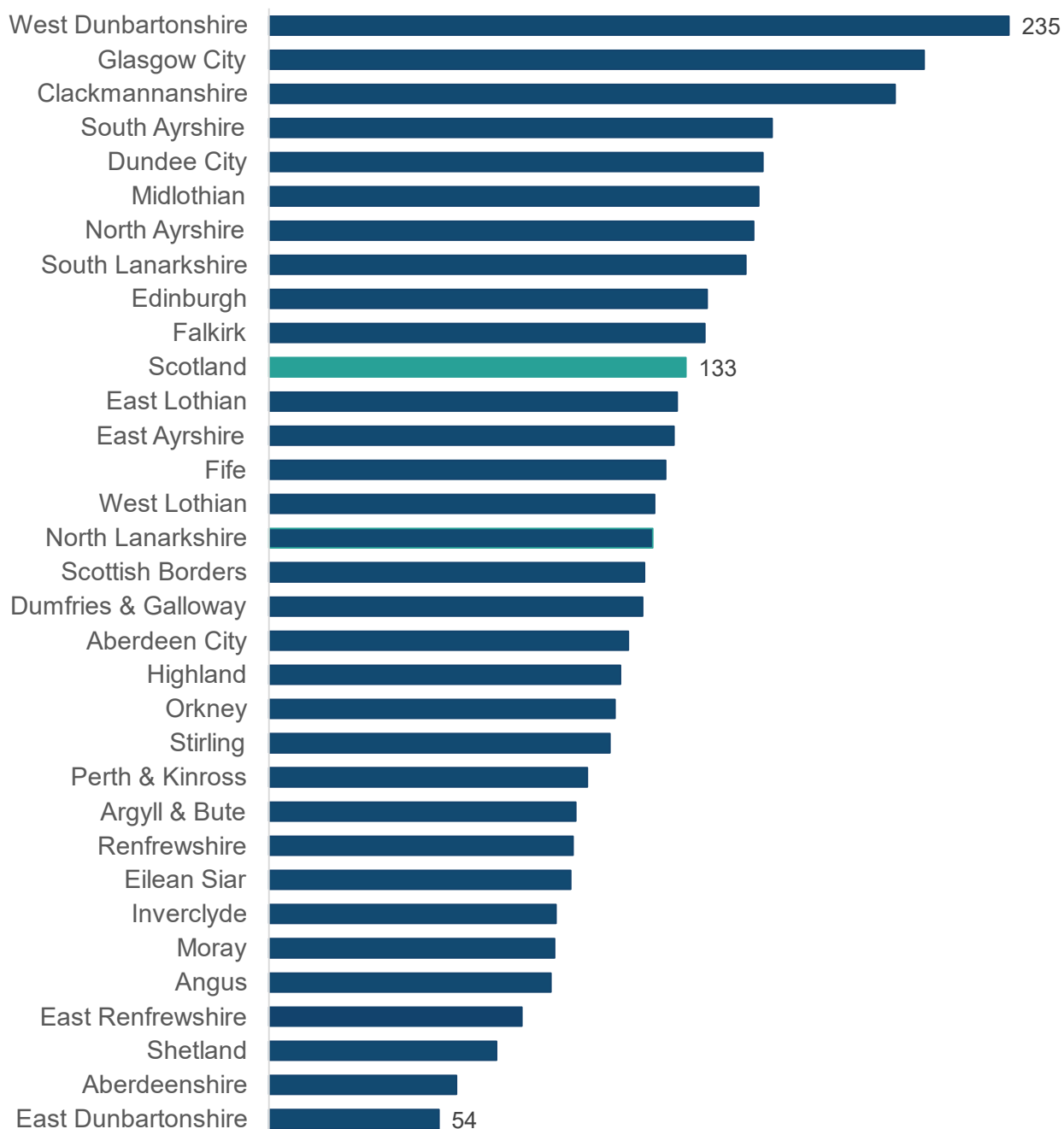
The largest numerical increases were in Glasgow (983, 15%), North Lanarkshire (309, 16%), Edinburgh (197, 5%) and South Lanarkshire (192, 8%). Inverclyde and Midlothian experienced the largest proportionate increases at 29% (84) and 28% (161), respectively.

The largest numerical decreases were in East Ayrshire (213, 19%) and Aberdeenshire (161, 16%). East Dunbartonshire had the greatest proportionate decrease (93, 22%).

Comparing homelessness figures with the total number of households for each local authority (i.e. rates) provides a useful insight as to how homelessness varies across Scotland.

Chart 2: 133 households per 10,000 in Scotland assessed as homeless

Households assessed as homeless compared to all households, by local authority: 2023-24



Open homelessness applications

It is not always the case that the same patterns are observed across all local authorities for new and open applications. There have been a number of instances where there has been an increase in open applications, despite a decrease in the number of new applications. For example, East Dunbartonshire experienced a 22% decrease in applications, but a 26% increase in open applications. This can be explained by the fact that the number of

new cases is greater than the number of closed cases, and hence leads to an overall increase in open cases.

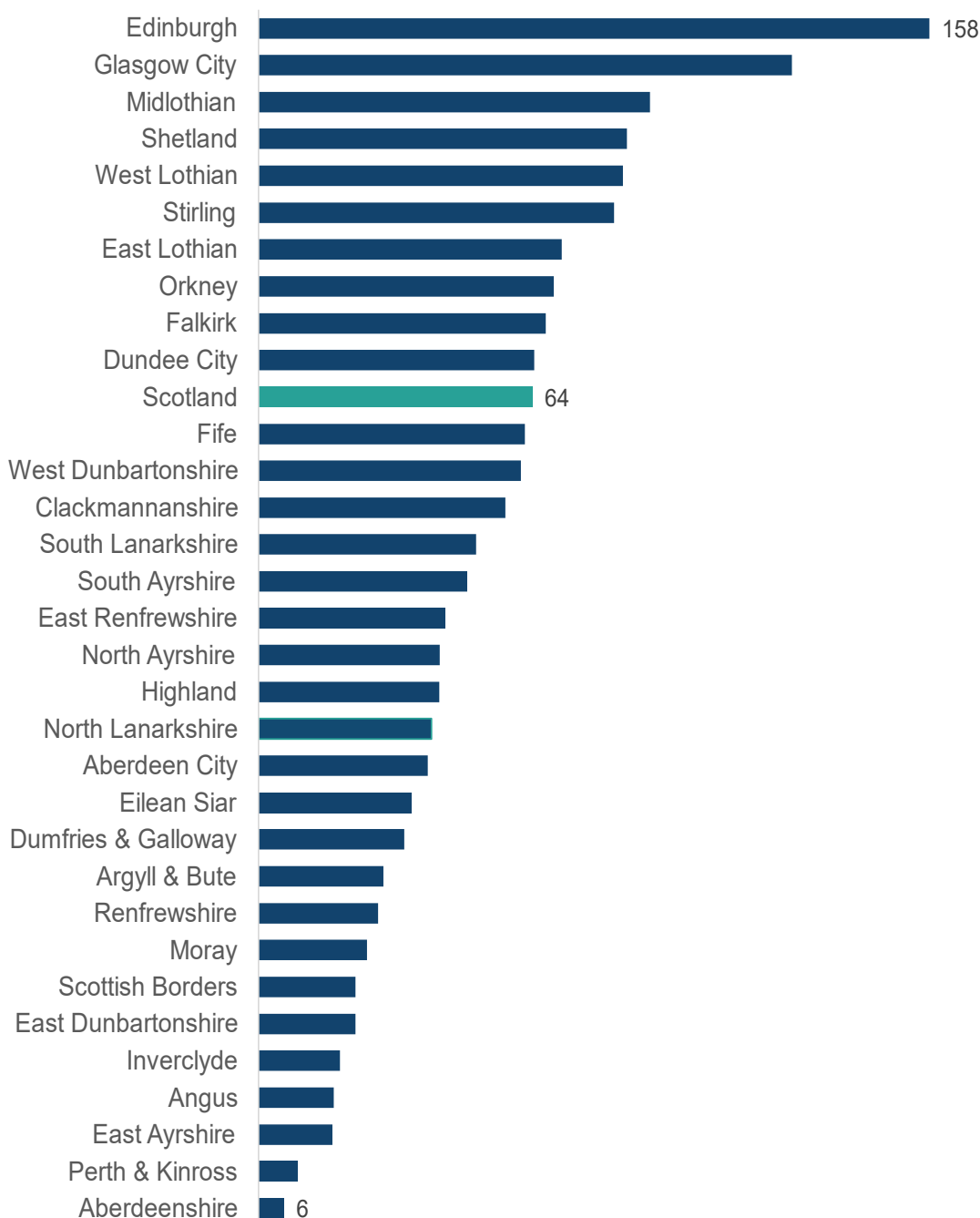
Edinburgh has the highest number of open cases at 7,067, accounting for 22% of all open cases compared to 9% of all new applications.

Temporary accommodation

Similarly, it is not necessarily the case that the local authorities with the highest rates of homeless households have the highest rates for use of temporary accommodation, and vice versa. This implies some local authorities have a disproportionately high use of temporary accommodation, while others have a disproportionately low use.

Chart 3: 64 households per 10,000 in Scotland in temporary accommodation

Households in temporary accommodation compared to all households, by local authority: as at 31 March 2024



Reasons for homelessness and prior circumstances

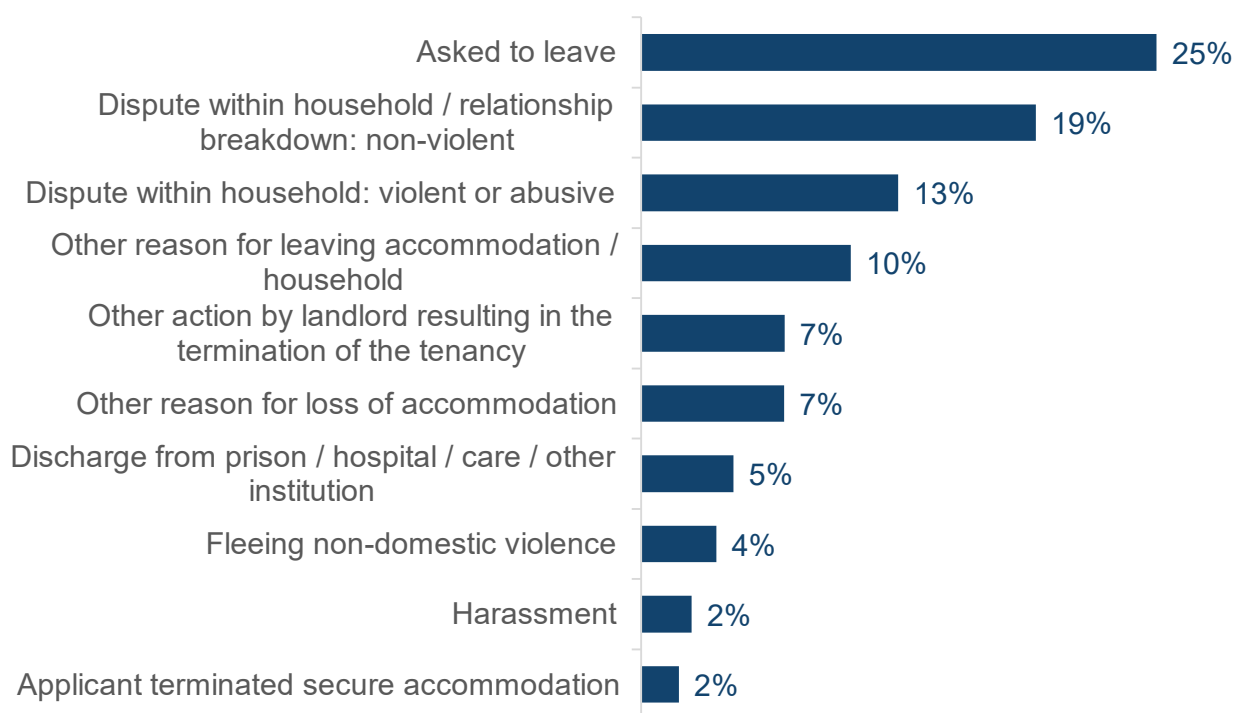
Key points in 2023-24

- Proportions becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy have been reacting to legislation changes.
- ↑ Increases in the reporting of rough sleeping.

Why do households make a homelessness application?

Chart 4: Most common reasons for homelessness remain consistent

Main reason for making an application for homelessness, as a proportion of all applications: 2023-24



The number of households applying due to termination of tenancy due to rent arrears increased for both local authority and registered social landlord properties, however, decreased for private rented properties.

There was a 22% increase in households becoming homeless as a result of loss of service or tied accommodation (from 281 to 342).

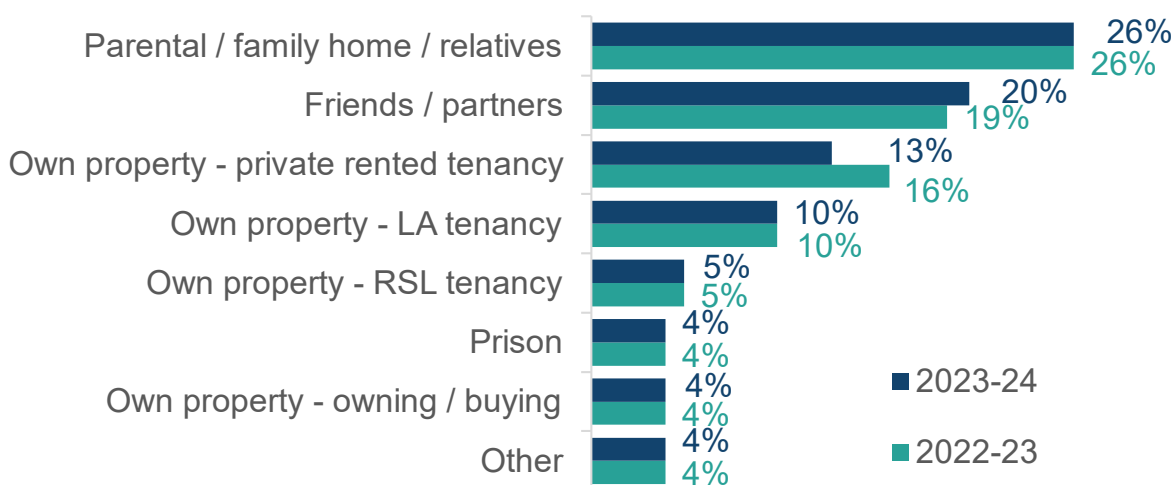
Over half (51%) of reasons for failing to maintain accommodation are 'not to do with applicant household'. Mental health reasons are the next most common (26%). There was a notable increase (18%) in those citing physical health reasons.

What are the circumstances of the homeless population?

As part of the application process, information is gathered on the following: where the household became homeless from; whether anyone in the household had slept rough; whether anyone in the household was former armed forces; whether anyone in the household had been previously looked after by their local authority as a child; and any support needs.

Chart 5: Family and friends remain the most common property to be homeless from

Property type from which the households became homeless, as a proportion of all households assessed as homeless: 2022-23 and 2023-24



The numbers have more than doubled from last year for households becoming homeless from supported accommodation (from 932 to 1,978) and Bed & Breakfast (from 75 to 186). These account for 6% and 1% of all homeless households, respectively.

The increase in supported accommodation is due to Glasgow, where this has more than doubled (from 704 to 1,619), this ties in with the increase in asylum seekers/refugees. Edinburgh's figure also doubled, but is much smaller in magnitude (from 84 to 181).

Households becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy decreased from last year. This has seen the largest change over the last few years in response to changes in legislation.

Chart 6: Households becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy has been reacting to legislation changes

Number and proportion of households becoming homeless from a private rented tenancy, January 2020 to March 2024

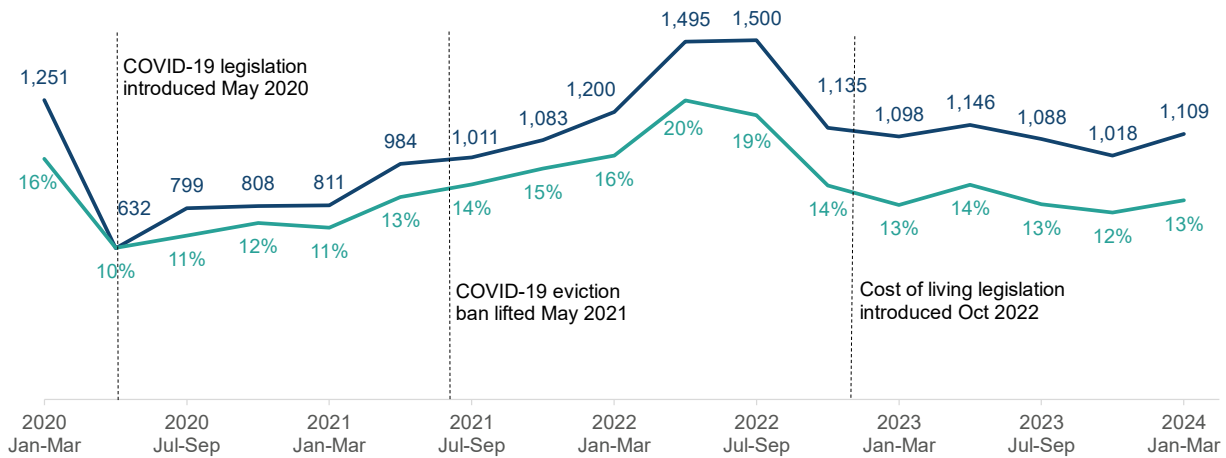
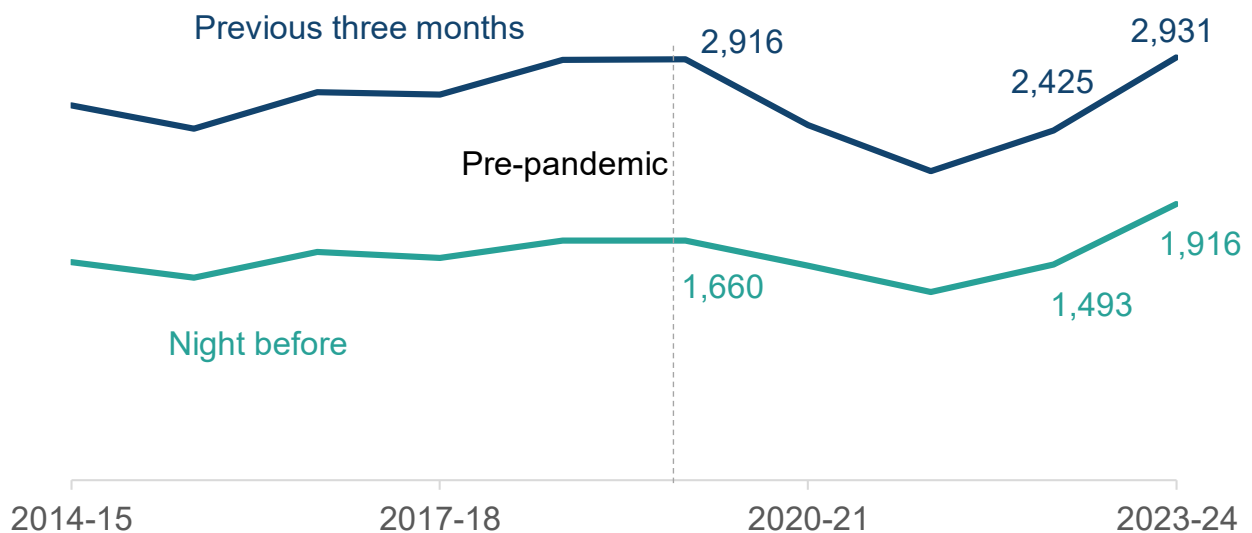


Chart 7: Large increases in the reporting of rough sleeping over the last year, now exceeding pre-pandemic figures

Applications where at least one member of the household experienced rough sleeping, 2014-15 to 2023-24.



The proportion of households reporting rough sleeping in the previous three months and the night before making an application have both increased compared to last year – from 6% to 7% and from 4% to 5% respectively.

The figures are highest in the series for the night before and three months prior since 2011-12 and 2012-13, respectively.

Edinburgh experienced increases from 275 to 415 and from 130 to 230 in the reporting of rough sleeping in the previous three months and the night before making an application. Respective figures for Glasgow show increases from 335 to 635 and 325 to 640.

There were 788 households assessed as homeless that had a household member that was previously a member of the armed forces. This accounts for 2% of all homeless households.

There were 1,098 homeless households that contained a household member under 25 that had been looked after by their local authority as a child. This accounts for 5% of all households with a household member under the age of 25.

The proportion of households reporting at least one support need was 51% - similar to the last few years, although a large increase from 33% in 2007-08 when data collection began. The largest increase over time is in mental health problems with 30% of homeless households noting this as a support need compared to 12% in 2007-08. The next most common support need is basic housing management with 21% noting this.

Temporary accommodation

Key points in 2023-24

- Households spent an average of 226 days in temporary accommodation
 - Households with children spent longer in temporary accommodation than those without
 - Higher average times for open cases than closed cases
- ↑ Large increases in the number of cases not offered temporary accommodation
- ↑ Large increases in the number of breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order

Sources of temporary accommodation data

Since 2002, local authorities have provided aggregate snapshot information relating to households in temporary accommodation. While this allows trends to be explored over time, understanding around individual placements and how these relate to assessed households is not possible from the snapshot data. Therefore, since 1 April 2016 placement level information on households in temporary accommodation has been provided to enable a more rounded picture of the use of temporary accommodation.

The snapshot data shows 16,330 households in temporary accommodation as at 31 March 2024. The placement level returns show that there were 17,015 temporary accommodation placements open at 31 March 2024 – higher (685, 4%) than the snapshot returns. Differences may be explained by the returns including different types of temporary accommodation and the placement level returns experiencing a lag in cases being closed.

Both of these figures show households in temporary accommodation at a point in time and, as such, will include those who have recently entered temporary accommodation as well as those who have been in temporary accommodation for a longer period of time (including prior to the reporting year).

Reporting of temporary accommodation

Over 2023-24, 47,394 temporary accommodation placements were entered and 46,542 were exited. This is a net difference of 852. This is not quite the same as the increase of 1,291 households in temporary accommodation between 31 March and 2023 and 2024 from the HL2 data, however, this is likely due to the differences in the collections outlined above. Total number of placements is a useful measure for showing the overall scale of temporary accommodation usage. However, placement level analysis alone provides limited insight due to the often very transient nature of the use of temporary accommodation. It is not unusual for households to enter and exit multiple placements, with or without gaps in between.

When considering certain aspects of temporary accommodation such as number of placements, average time spent in temporary accommodation etc., the true extent of this

can only be fully understood once a household's homelessness application has been closed.

How many households entered temporary accommodation for the first time? How many exited for the last time?

In 2023-24, 23,578 households entered a first (ever) temporary accommodation placement. This may include households who made a homelessness application prior to this year. Over the same period, 19,775 households exited their last (ever) temporary accommodation placement. A household is considered to have 'exited' temporary accommodation in a reporting year only if their homelessness case has closed and their last associated temporary accommodation placement is within that year.

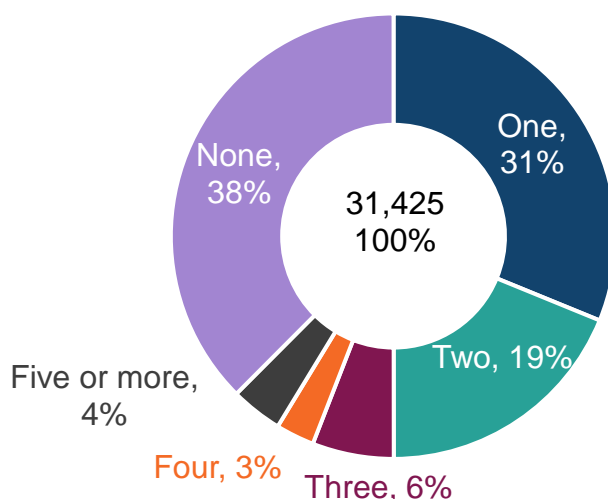
These figures give a net difference of 3,803 more households entering temporary accommodation for the first time than exiting for the last time. This relates to the increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation which can be seen in the snapshot figures. Although the numbers will not match given the differences outlined above.

The largest net increase was in Glasgow with 1,076 more households entering than exiting. This is nearly double the next largest in Edinburgh, with a net difference of 829.

How commonly is temporary accommodation used?

Chart 8: Three fifths of homelessness applications take up temporary accommodation

Number of temporary accommodation placements for applications closed in 2023-24

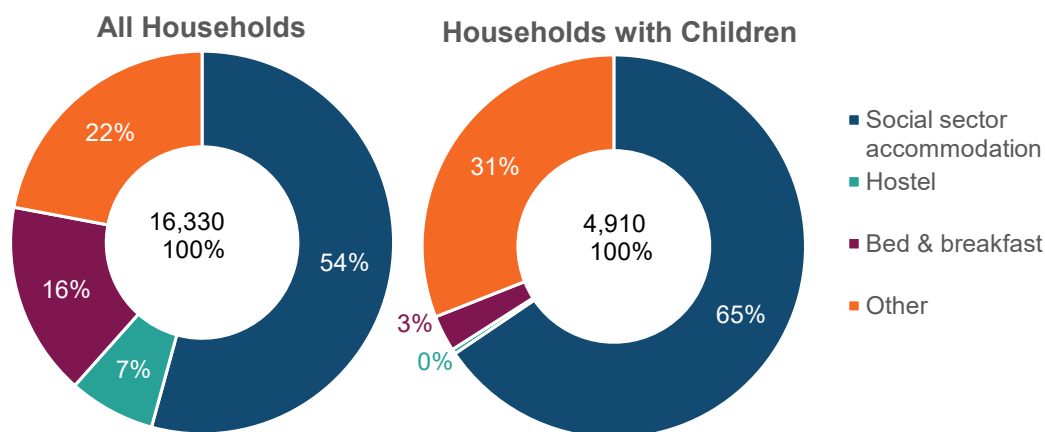


There is variation in the number of placements between local authorities with 89% of homeless households in Shetland having at least one temporary accommodation placement compared to 24% in East Renfrewshire. In Edinburgh and Glasgow, 11% and 9% of homeless households had five placements or more, respectively. Caution should be applied for local authorities where findings are based on small numbers.

What types of temporary accommodation are used?

Chart 9: Social sector accommodation is the most common type of temporary accommodation, in particular for households with children

Households in temporary accommodation, by type of accommodation, as at 31 March 2024



There has been an increase in the use of Bed & Breakfast temporary accommodation. For all households, this has increased from 12% of all placements at 31 March 2023 to 16% in 2024. For households with children this has increased from 2% to 3%. The increased pressures on temporary accommodation, as a result of the availability of settled accommodation, have led to an increased need to use B&B type accommodation.

Data from the placement level data collection can provide further insight into the total use of temporary accommodation over the course of homelessness cases. However, it is difficult to make direct comparisons with the snapshot data (shown in Chart 9) as different categories of temporary accommodation are used between the two returns.

There were a total of 43,260 temporary accommodation placements associated with cases that closed in 2023-24. Of which, 36% were in local authority or housing association/registered social landlord (RSL) accommodation; 16% were in hostel accommodation; and 34% were in bed & breakfast accommodation.

The higher proportion of hostel and bed & breakfast accommodation in the placement level returns (34% vs 16%) indicates that these types of temporary accommodation are more frequently used than the snapshot data suggests. However, this can be explained by the fact that the average duration for stays in these types of accommodation is much shorter - for example, 38 days in bed & breakfast compared to an average of 113 days for all temporary accommodation – and therefore they account for a much smaller proportion of the overall use of temporary accommodation. See Chart 11 for average durations by accommodation type.

Data on the number of placements and average length of time will help improve understanding of the ways in which different types of temporary accommodation are used.

How long do households spend in temporary accommodation?

The average time households that took it up spent in temporary accommodation was 226 days for cases that closed in 2023-24. This is similar to the 225 days last year, although has increased from 176 in 2017-18, the start of the time series.

Note that total duration is calculated by summing the time a household spends in individual placements, excluding time between placements when a household is not in temporary accommodation. As a result the time a household spends in temporary accommodation may not be continuous.

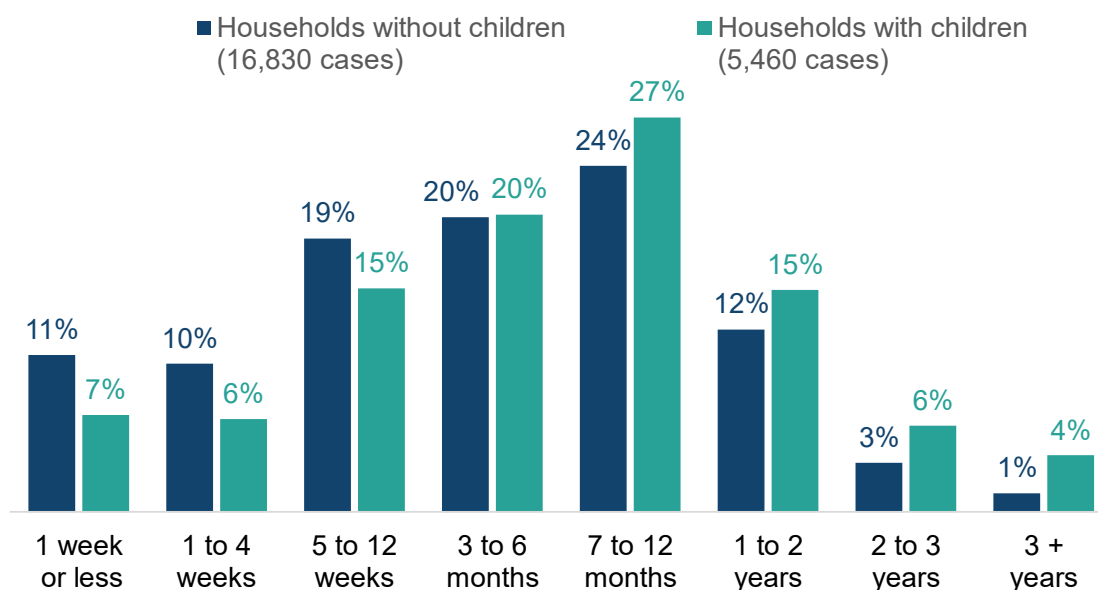
Edinburgh has the highest average time at 507 days. Other notably high durations in temporary accommodation are in Shetland (348 days), East Lothian (342 days), Midlothian (328 days) and Stirling (316 days).

Perth & Kinross remains the local authority with the lowest average time in temporary accommodation (74 days). Aberdeenshire is the next lowest (76 days).

Average total time spent in temporary accommodation also varies by household type.

Chart 10: Households with children spend longer in temporary accommodation

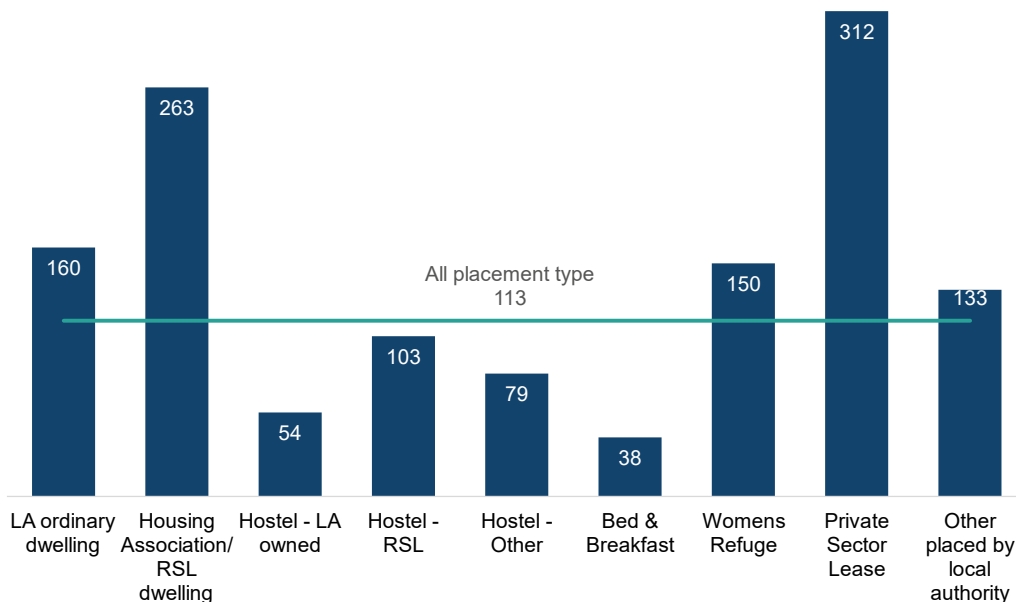
Time households with and without children spent in temporary accommodation (for cases closed in 2023-24)



[To note: information about individuals within temporary accommodation placements is not available from the placement level data. Household type has therefore been derived from the information provided on the homelessness application. This accounts for the difference in the number of households with children compared to the snapshot data return.]

Chart 11: Households spend the longest, on average, in private sector lease and housing association accommodation

Average duration (days) in temporary accommodation, by type of accommodation (for cases that closed in 2023-24)

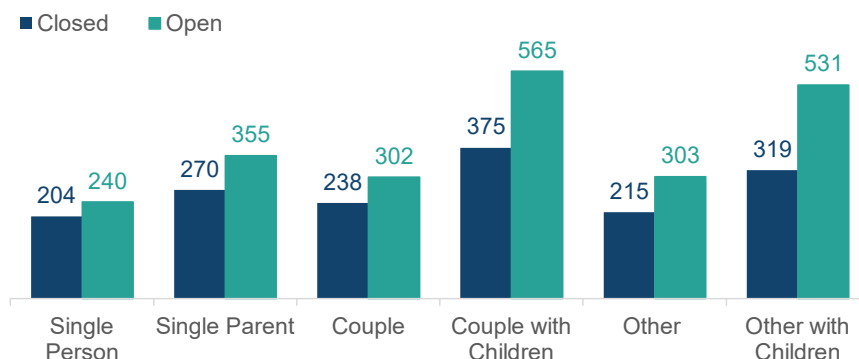


What about households that are still in temporary accommodation?

The time spent in temporary accommodation up to 31 March 2024 can also be calculated for homelessness cases that are still open.

Chart 12: Average time in temporary accommodation is longer for open cases than closed cases for all household types

Average total time (days) spent in temporary accommodation, for open and closed cases, by household type: 2023-24



How often do applicants refuse temporary accommodation?

A household can choose to refuse an offer of temporary accommodation made by the local authority. However, a household that has refused an offer of temporary accommodation may accept a subsequent offer.

In 2023-24, there were 6,775 cases of households refusing offers of temporary accommodation. This is a decrease of 370 (5%) compared to 2022-23. The largest numerical decrease was in Glasgow (from 2,280 to 1,905) and the largest numerical increases were in Aberdeen City (from 505 to 690) and West Lothian (40 to 165).

How often do local authorities fail to provide temporary accommodation?

A local authority is required to indicate when they do not offer temporary accommodation to a household and are therefore acting unlawfully. During 2023-24, there were 7,915 instances of households not being offered temporary accommodation. This is an extremely large increase compared to 450 in 2022-23, mainly due to Glasgow who reported less than 5 instances in 2022-23 and 6,260 in 2023-24. Glasgow have attributed this to increased demands on housing and homelessness services. Edinburgh's figures increased from 420 to 1,515 over the same period.

How often do local authorities breach unsuitable accommodation legislation?

Between April 2023 and March 2024 there were 7,400 reported breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order (UAO) across twenty-five local authorities. This compares to 5,240 reported in 2022-23.

Glasgow had the largest number of breaches (2,990), followed by Edinburgh (1,525), Aberdeen city (540) and West Lothian (520). There were notable increases for Dumfries & Galloway (from 45 to 315) and Dundee City (from 45 to 230).

Important! There is still a degree of caution to be exercised when considering these figures due to reporting anomalies and inconsistencies. These are still inherent in the data as a result of uncertainty caused by the extension of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO) legislation in May 2020.

See [known data quality issues](#) for further details.

Outcomes

Key points in 2023-24

- ↑ The number of homelessness cases closed increased by 9%
- 83% of unintentionally homeless households secured settled accommodation, the same as last year

Homelessness cases are closed once the local authority has fulfilled its statutory duty or contact has been lost with the applicant household for 28 days. Local authorities provide information on the circumstances and outcomes of homelessness cases once they have been closed.

Number of cases closed

Overall, 31,423 cases for homeless households were closed in 2023-24, an increase of 9% compared to 2022-23.

How often do local authorities lose contact with applicants?

For homeless households with cases that closed in 2023-24, contact was maintained for 92% of those assessed as unintentionally homeless and for 88% assessed as intentionally homeless.

The proportion of households maintaining contact has increased over time for unintentionally homeless households, from 81% in 2007-08. For intentionally homeless households, the proportion has remained more stable, particularly in recent years where this has been between 87% and 88% since 2018-19.

What are the outcomes for homeless households?

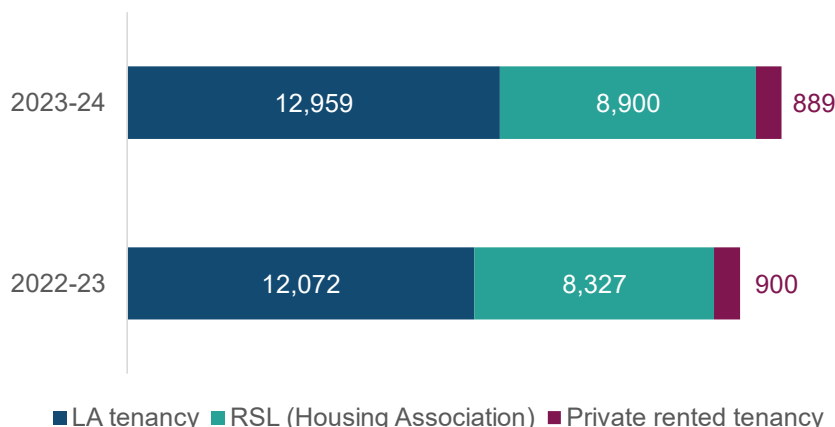
Of the 27,560 unintentionally homeless cases that closed in 2023-24 (where contact was maintained and the outcome was known), 83% (22,748) secured settled accommodation.

Settled accommodation is defined as a local authority tenancy, a tenancy with a registered social landlord or a private rented tenancy.

Unintentionally homeless households saw an increase in the number with an outcome of local authority or social registered landlord (each with an increase of 7%), while there was a slight decrease (1%) in the number securing a private rented tenancy.

Chart 13: More households securing settled accommodation

Households securing settled accommodation by accommodation type: 2022-23 to 2023-24



The proportion of unintentionally homeless households securing settled accommodation has increased over time, from 64% in 2002-03 to 83% in 2023-24.

Intentionally homeless households are less likely to secure settled accommodation due to there being no statutory duty to provide settled accommodation for these households. In 2023-24, 39% of intentionally homeless households secured settled accommodation. To note, these are based on relatively small numbers (which have decreased as a result of changes in intentionality legislation) and are therefore particularly susceptible to natural fluctuation.

Is there a return to homelessness?

In order to understand the longer-term outcomes for homeless households, and whether outcomes upon case closure are sustained, there is an interest in 'repeat homelessness'. This is defined as household previously assessed as homeless re-entering the homelessness system at a later point in time.

There were 1,311 households (4%) that had previously been assessed as homeless in the 12 months prior to their most recent assessments and 3,905 (12%) in the previous 5 years. Note that these are cumulative.

Were housing support assessments carried out?

Upon closing a homelessness case, local authorities are required to assess whether any housing support services are required by the household for any cases assessed as unintentionally homeless and where it has reason to believe that support would be beneficial. It also has a duty to provide that support if needed.

Across Scotland, assessments for housing support needs were carried out in 77% of cases where there was a duty to assess in 2023-24. In 22% of cases where there was a duty to assess, no assessment took place, and no support was provided. Housing support was provided in 38% of all cases. Support was not provided for 5% of cases where a support need was identified.

How long does it take to complete the homelessness application process?

Key points in 2023-24

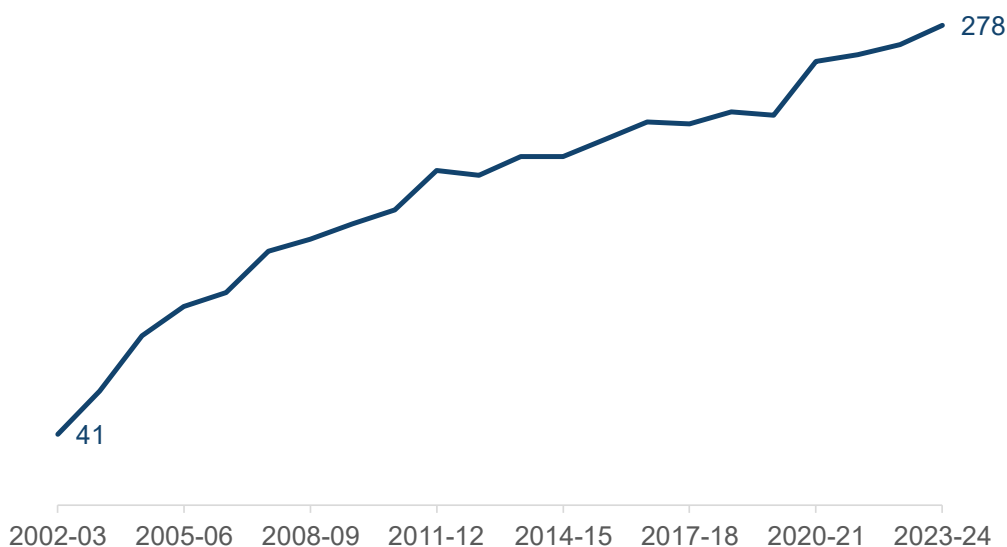
- It took 19 days on average for a homelessness case to be assessed; 2 days less than last year
- It took 278 days on average from assessment to case closure for homeless households; an increase compared to 267 last year

How long does it take for an application to be processed?

In 2023-24, it took 19 days on average for a case to be assessed following an application; two days shorter than 2022-23. The longest average time in 2023-24 was 51 days in East Renfrewshire – an increase from 22 the previous year. Inverclyde had the shortest average time of 9 days, compared to 13 the previous year.

Chart 14: Continued increase in average time to close homelessness cases

Average time (in days) to close a homelessness case: 2002-03 to 2023-24



Edinburgh had the highest average of 728 days from assessment to case closure; an increase from 651 in 2022-23. West Lothian was the next highest at 479 days, a slight decrease from 481 the previous year. Aberdeenshire had the lowest average at 69 days; a decrease from 81 days the previous year.

There were notable decreases for average time in Midlothian (548 to 428), Stirling (517 to 451), Highland (from 295 to 228) and East Lothian (430 to 372), which local authorities have attributed to temporary tenancies being converted to permanent ones and increased priority on provision of permanent outcomes.

For households not assessed as homeless, where the local authority does not have a duty to provide temporary accommodation or permanent settled accommodation, the average time to close a case was 37 days. This is a decrease compared to 2022-23 (44 days), although an increase over time (from 7 days in 2002-03). West Lothian was the highest (88 days compared to 60 the previous year).

Characteristics of the homeless population

The following findings provide a broad overview of the characteristics of the homeless population and how they compare to the Scottish (adult) population. They highlight key findings where differences exist for aspects of homelessness across the characteristics of age, gender, and ethnicity. Characteristics are based on those of the main applicant.

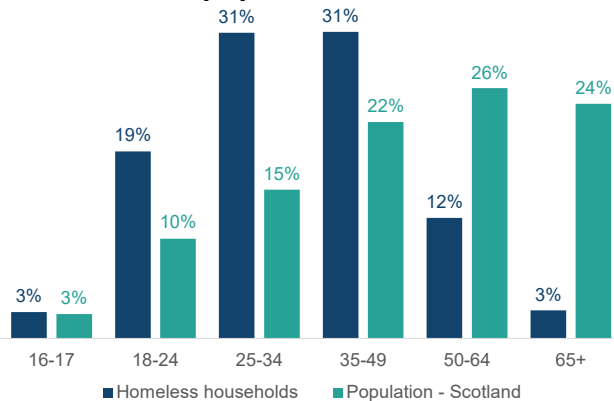
Although data is captured for the main applicant and a second applicant where applicable, findings are based on the characteristics of the main applicant only, for ease of reporting. Given the majority of homeless households only contain one adult, this only affects 11% of all households where there are two or more adults.

The characteristics of a household are initially collected by the local authority at the application stage. While it is possible for these characteristics to change between application and case closure, it may not be practical for the data collection to be updated to reflect these changes. Therefore, for a small number of households, the characteristics information reported may be out of date. This is most likely to affect household composition.

Detailed figures are available in accompanying equalities tables from our [supporting documents page](#). Caution should be taken when interpreting results based on small numbers of households. This is particularly true when comparing results for different ethnic groups.

Age

The homeless population is younger than the overall Scottish population



Reasons and prior circumstances

Younger people are more likely to become homeless for the reason of being asked to leave

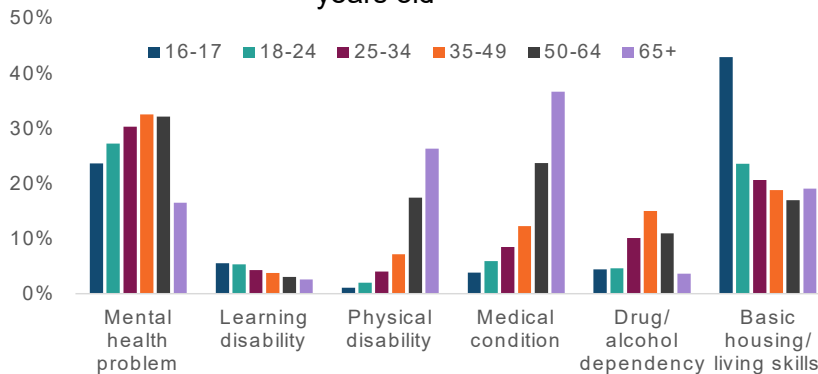
The proportion becoming homeless from a privated rented tenancy and owning own property increases with age

Support needs

Younger applicants are more likely to require basic housing/living skills

Drug/alcohol dependency is most common amongst **35-49** years old

Older applicants are more likely to have support needs related to medical condition



Rough Sleeping



is most common among 35-64 years olds

Repeat Homelessness



is least common amongst oldest and youngest applicants

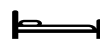
Outcomes



82% - 85% secured settled accommodation for all ages except for **16-17** years old where 76% achieved secured settled accommodation

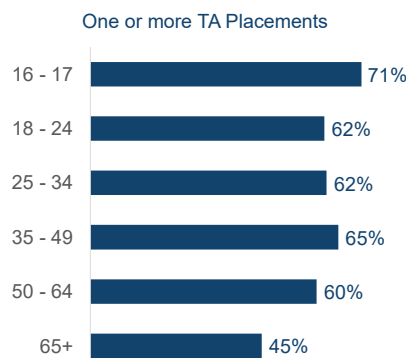
Average time for case closure was shortest for **65+** age group

Temporary accommodation



Younger applicants are most likely to take up temporary accommodation whilst **older** applicants are least likely

Youngest and oldest applicants spend least time in temporary accommodation, 190 days and 193 days respectively on average, compared to 226 days overall



25 to 49 year olds most likely to breach the unsuitable accommodation order

Gender and household type

Gender composition

58% are **male** compared to 48% of the Scottish population

This is the highest proportion, joint only with 2020-21, which was over the pandemic period

Rough Sleeping

85% of those reporting rough sleeping in the previous 3 months were men



Repeat Homelessness

71% of those previously assessed as homeless in the last year were men



Property type homeless from

Women are more likely to become homeless from private rented tenancies

Men are more likely to become homeless from supported accommodation, prison and sofa surfing

Outcomes

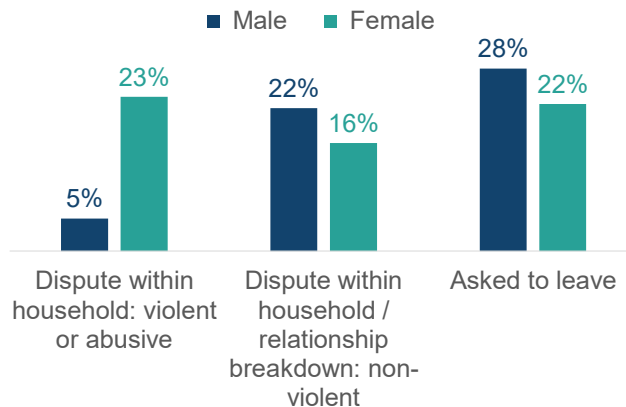


Women are more likely to secure settled accommodation - 85% compared to 81% for men

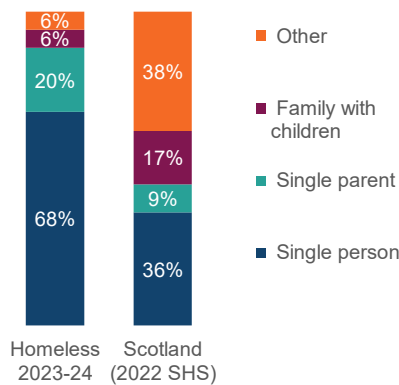
Single male households are least likely to secure settled accommodation - 79% compared to 81% for **Single female** households and 83% overall

Households with children are more likely to secure settled accommodation than those without - 85% compared to 78%

Women are more likely to be homeless as a result of a violent or abusive household dispute



Homeless households are more likely to be single adult or single parent compared to overall population



Single parent households more likely to be female 15% vs 5% male

Single person households more likely to be male 48% vs 20% female

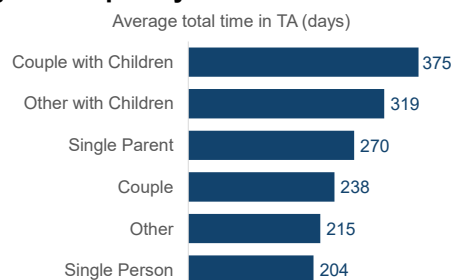
Temporary accommodation



Women spend longer time in temporary accommodation an average of 243 days compared to 215 for men, although men are more likely to use it (67%) than women (57%)

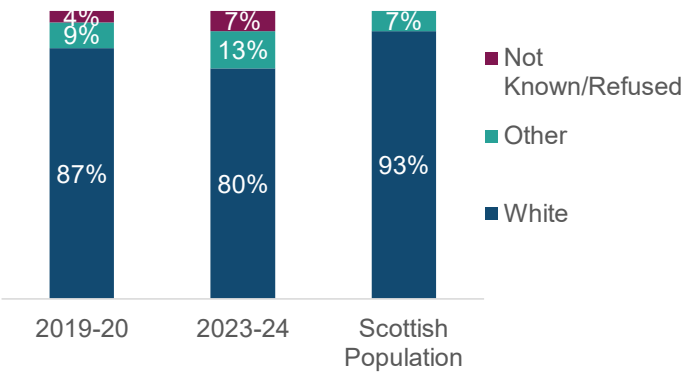
Men account for 87% of temporary accommodation not offered and 73% of breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order.

Households with children spend longer on average in temporary accommodation



Ethnicity

The homeless population has a much lower proportion with White ethnicity vs Scotland overall, with 2023/24 the lowest in the time series

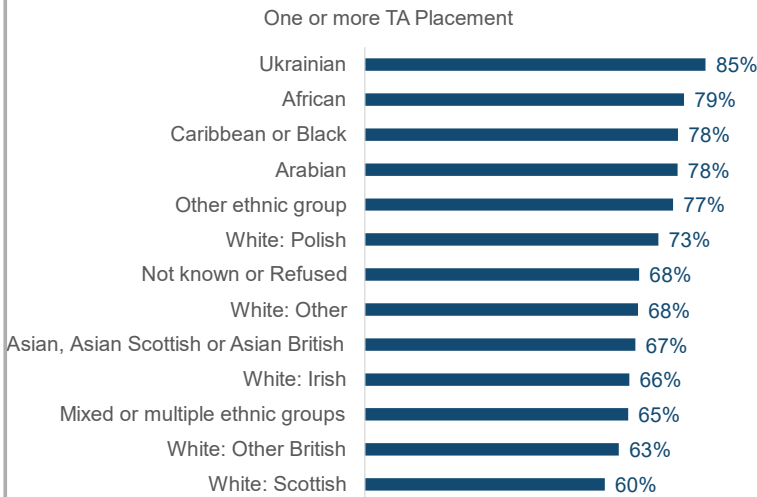


'White Scottish' and 'White Irish' are the only ethnicities with a numerical decrease since 2019-20.

For ethnicities that are not 'White', numbers have increased by a third or more across all categories except 'Caribbean / Black'.

Largest increases for 'not known / refused', 'other' and 'Arabian'.

Temporary accommodation take up

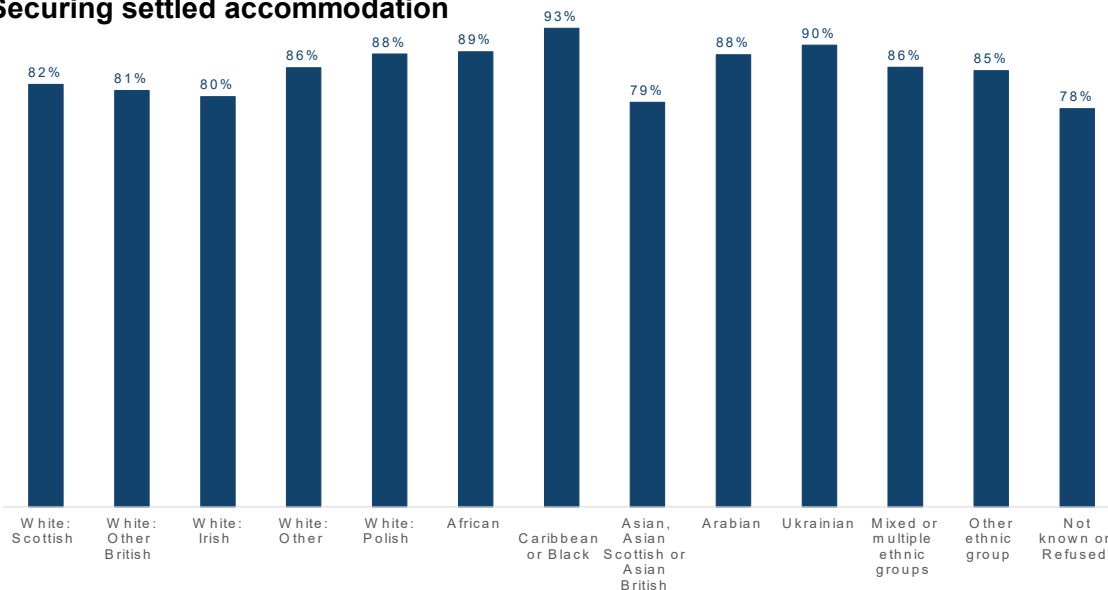


Most common reasons for homelessness are notably different for those of 'Ukrainian' and 'other' ethnicities, with a much larger proportion of 'other reasons'.

Ukrainians were more commonly homeless due to 'emergency' than any other ethnicity.

White Scottish and White Other British main applicants are more likely to have a **support need** than any other ethnicity.

Securing settled accommodation



Data and Methodology

Data within this publication is available in electronic format within tables and charts on the [supporting documents page](#).

There are workbooks available which contain data for:

- Main findings
- Equalities
- Ukrainian displaced households
- Children in temporary accommodation (HL3 Q12 & Q13)

In response to user feedback, the number of years available in the main findings and equalities workbooks have been reduced (to the most recent five years) to make these more user friendly. Full time series data is available on the [full statistical time series page](#).

The statistics included in this publication are based on administrative data collected by local authorities in the course of carrying out their homelessness activities. A limitation of this approach is that data is not collected for any households that are homeless but do not engage with their local authority. For this reason the statistics in this publication do not necessarily cover the entire homeless population in Scotland.

This data is collected from local authorities and quality assured by the Scottish Government on a quarterly basis. Details about the data we collect, our quality assurance process, and how we engage with users to improve our statistics are outlined in our quality assurance statement.

[Data Protection Impact Assessment and Quality Assurance Statement for HL1, HL2, HL3 and PREVENT1 data collections](#)

The rates of homeless households and households in temporary accommodation per 10,000 households were calculated using [Households and dwellings in Scotland, 2022 statistics, produced by National Records of Scotland](#).

Updates to previous statistics

The data we use in this publication is collected from local authorities on a quarterly basis. As a result these figures are updated on an ongoing basis and may differ from those previously published. This may be a result of delays in some cases being reported to the Scottish Government due to IT issues, quality assurance processes and delayed entry of data – particularly at the end of the financial year.

For example, this publication estimates that 39,308 homeless applications were made in 2022-23, but the previous 'Homelessness in Scotland: 2022 to 2023' publication gave a figure of 39,006. This is a difference of 302 applications, or approximately 1%. A table comparing the annual number of applications is included in the main tables document accompanying this publication (table QA2) available on the [supporting documents page](#).

Characteristics information

Information on the characteristics of the main applicant/household are gathered and recorded as part of the application stage of a homelessness case. This information is linked to the temporary accommodation placements associated with that household to enable reporting by characteristic for temporary accommodation. To note, it is not possible to do the same for the aggregate snapshot temporary accommodation data.

Data for the Scottish population was taken from [mid-2022 population estimates produced by National Records of Scotland](#).

Data for household types was taken from the [Scottish surveys core questions: 2022 supplementary tables: Household_Type](#).

Data for ethnicity was taken from the [Scottish surveys core questions: 2022 supplementary tables: Ethnic_Group](#).

Known data quality issues

There are data quality issues of which we are aware:

- There are a small number of temporary accommodation cases on the Scottish Government temporary accommodation placement database that are recorded as open but are linked to homelessness applications that we know to be closed. This occurs when a local authority fails to provide an update for these cases after the placement is closed. In these cases we have taken the approach of using the close date of the homelessness application as the exit date of the temporary accommodation placement. This may have the impact of inflating the length of time these households are recorded as using temporary accommodation.
- Snapshot data about temporary accommodation provided by Fife and Orkney do not include all temporary accommodation placements used, and therefore understates the number of households in temporary accommodation within these councils.
- There are inconsistencies between local authorities in the reporting of breaches of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020. From May 2020 to September 2021 exceptions were put in place in response to COVID-19 which caused confusion for some local authorities, particularly around when the extension of the legislation (from only households with pregnant women and/or children to all) should commence. Local authorities were able to capture different levels of information regarding breaches around this time (i.e. whether an exception could or could not be applied) which has implications for data comparability. In May 2022, enhanced guidance was issued to provide clarity around the reporting of breaches. It was anticipated that this should relate to all data from 1 April 2022, however, a small number of local authorities are still working towards the consistent recording of this information in adherence with enhanced guidance. Therefore, there will remain a small number of inconsistencies and inaccuracies within the data.

Comparability with other UK homelessness statistics

Because of the substantial differences in legislative frameworks and data collection methods that exist across the UK care needs to be taken in comparing homelessness statistics across the four countries.

In September 2019 the Office for National Statistics published the [UK homelessness: 2005 to 2018 report](#), which assessed the comparability and coherence of existing UK government homelessness data sources.

Also published in September 2019, the [GSS Homelessness Interactive Tool](#) allows users to explore the similarities and differences between how key concepts relating to homelessness are defined across the four UK countries. It allows users to explore an applicants' process through each of the different homelessness systems and enables users to visualise the different definitions of homelessness currently being used for official statistics and how these compare.

Summary of current legislation

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, now consolidated into [Part II of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#), introduced statutory duties on Local Authorities to assist those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (potentially homeless), including providing accommodation in certain circumstances.

The legislation currently requires Local Authorities to make inquiries into the circumstances of applicants to satisfy themselves whether the applicant is homeless or potentially homeless. Once the authority is satisfied this is the case, prior to 31 December 2012, it also determined whether the applicant had a priority need. However, from 31 December 2012, the [priority need test was abolished](#). The Local Authority may then test whether the applicant became homeless intentionally and, in some cases, whether the applicant has a local connection with another authority in Scotland, England or Wales. There were changes in legislation from November 2019 which give local authorities the power to assess for intentionality, rather than it being a legal duty to do so. A local connection with an authority means that the applicant normally resided in that area from choice, either because he/she was employed in or had family associations with it, or for other special reasons.

[Section 24 of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#), as amended, defines homelessness for the purposes of the Act as follows. A person is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it, for example because of a threat of violence. A person is potentially homeless (threatened with homelessness) if it is likely that they will become homeless within two months. A person is intentionally homeless if they deliberately did or failed to do anything which led to the loss of accommodation which it was reasonable for them to continue to occupy.

[Section 25 of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#), as amended, defined the categories of household regarded as having a priority need for accommodation. Further details can be found in the [Code of Guidance on Homelessness](#).

[The Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) amends the 1987 Act and requires councils to provide a minimum of temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to all applicants assessed as homeless, regardless of whether they have been assessed as being in priority need.

[The Homelessness etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#) is more long-term in scope, notably introducing a phasing out of the distinction between priority and non-priority applications. The aim of the Act was to ensure that everyone assessed as being unintentionally homeless was entitled to settled accommodation from 31 December 2012.

In November 2012, the Scottish Parliament approved the [Homelessness \(Abolition of Priority Need Test\) \(Scotland\) Order 2012](#) which gave effect to this commitment. From 31 December 2012, the priority need test for homeless households was abolished. As a result, from this date, all unintentionally homeless households are entitled to settled accommodation.

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 came into force on 6 December 2004, and is intended to prevent the routine use of unsuitable temporary accommodation for households with family commitments. Under this Order, Local Authorities cannot put households with children and pregnant women into temporary accommodation, which is not suitable, unless exceptional circumstances apply. Unsuitable accommodation is defined in the Order as accommodation which does not meet standards relating to the physical properties of the accommodation (the physical standard), its proximity to health and education services (the proximity standard) and its suitability for use by children (the safety standard).

The 2004 order was revoked by [The Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Order 2014](#), which came into force on the 21 November 2014. The 2014 order adds the additional requirement that the accommodation must be wind and watertight.

While the Order provides for exceptional circumstances, in which accommodation which does not meet the physical and/or proximity standards may be used, the safety standard must always be met. Further details can be found in the [Code of Guidance on Homelessness](#).

The 2014 Order specifies that the local authority may provide an applicant with temporary accommodation which does not meet the requirements set out by Article 5 of the Order, but for no longer than 14 days in total in respect of that person's application. The [Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2017](#), which came into force in October 2017, reduces the number of days from 14 to 7 days before a 'breach' is recorded for the applicant remaining in such unsuitable accommodation.

The [Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2020](#) extended the order to include all households, rather than just those containing children or a pregnant woman.

The [Housing Support Services \(Homelessness\)\(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) came into force on 1 June 2013. These Regulations make provision in relation to the duty of Local Authorities to assess whether some persons found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness ("an applicant") need housing support services.

Regulation 2 prescribes four types of housing support services which apply for the purposes of that duty. If a Local Authority has reason to believe that an applicant may be in need of one or more of these services, it must assess whether the applicant, or any person residing with the applicant, is in need of such support. If so, the Local Authority must ensure that the service is provided to the person who needs it. There is [guidance available for local authorities on their Housing Support Duty to Homeless Households](#).

Summary of Local Authority duty to homeless households:

Unintentionally homeless

Provide temporary accommodation until settled accommodation has been secured.

Settled accommodation is defined as:

- A Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST)
- A Private Residential Tenancy

If the applicants have previously been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the last 3 years, or if they are subject to an anti-social behaviour order - a short Scottish Secure Tenancy can be offered.

In some circumstances, the Local Authority can provide non-permanent accommodation. These circumstances are laid out in [the Homeless Persons \(Provision of Non-permanent Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2010](#).

Under certain circumstances, a Local Authority may apply a local connection test and refer the applicant to another Local Authority. However, the receiving Local Authority must then secure settled accommodation for the applicant.

From 29 November 2022, local authorities no longer have the power to refer an applicant to another local authority in Scotland on the grounds of their local connection. However, the power to refer applicants with a local connection to an authority in England and Wales remains, provided they do not have a local connection with the authority receiving the application. Only applicants who are assessed as being unintentionally homeless may be referred to another authority.

Intentionally Homeless

Provide temporary accommodation for a reasonable period of time, advice and assistance.

Potentially homeless, unintentionally so

Take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available.

Potentially homeless, intentionally so

Provide advice and assistance to help retain accommodation.

Tell us what you think

We are always interested to hear from our users about how our statistics are used, and how they can be improved.

Enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Homelessness Statistics & Analysis

E-mail: homelessness_statistics_inbox@gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

Office of the Chief Statistician

e-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

More information about Scottish Government statistics is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

Join our mailing list

If you would like to receive notification about statistical publications or find out about consultations on our statistics, please join the [ScotStat mailing list](#).

Future publications

Details of future publications can be found on our [forthcoming publications](#) page.