

Statutory Homelessness: 4th Quarter 2008, England

Household acceptances¹

- 12,070 applicants were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty during the October to December quarter, 21 per cent lower than during the same period in 2007.
- On a seasonally-adjusted² basis, there were 12,670 acceptances, 9 per cent lower than the previous quarter.
- The quarterly level of acceptances is 62 per cent lower than the same period during 2003, the year of the most recent peak.

Households in temporary accommodation³

- 67,480 households were in temporary accommodation on 31 December 2008, 15 per cent lower than the same date last year, and the largest decrease since figures peaked in 2004.
- Temporary accommodation has now fallen for thirteen consecutive quarters, and is one third lower than the same date in 2004, the year in which it peaked.
- 88 per cent of households were in self-contained accommodation⁴. 4 per cent were in bed and breakfast hotels.



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Introduction

This release provides summary information on local housing authorities' activities under homelessness legislation, collected through the quarterly P1E return. Data include the number of households accepted as owed a main homelessness duty (referred to as acceptances) during the quarter, and the number of households in temporary accommodation on the last day of the quarter. The Definition of Terms section provides more detail of terms used, as footnoted, within the release.

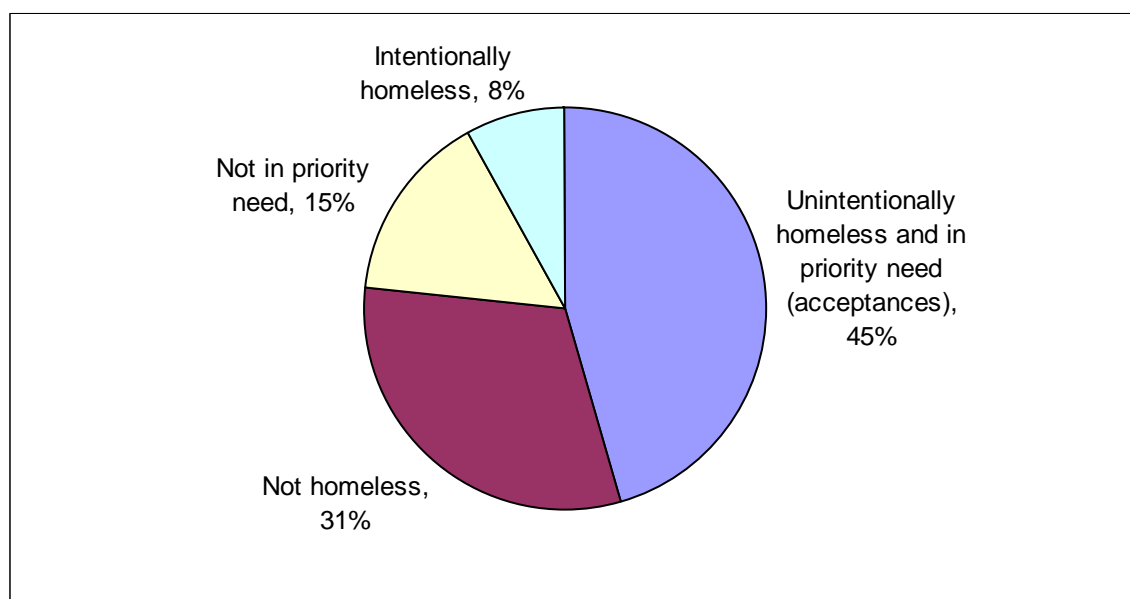
Decisions⁵ taken by local authorities on homeless applications

Between October and December, local housing authorities made 26,530 decisions on applications (by eligible households) for housing assistance, under the homelessness legislation of the Housing Act 1996. This is 15 per cent lower than the corresponding quarter in 2007. After seasonal adjustment the number of decisions was 27,290, 5 per cent lower than in the previous quarter.

Of the 26,530 applications made during the fourth quarter of 2008:

- 45 per cent were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty;
- 31 per cent were found not to be homeless;
- 15 per cent were found to be homeless but not in priority need; and
- 8 per cent were found to be intentionally homeless and in priority need.

Chart 1: Total decisions made during 2008 Q4 (October-December) by decision outcome, England

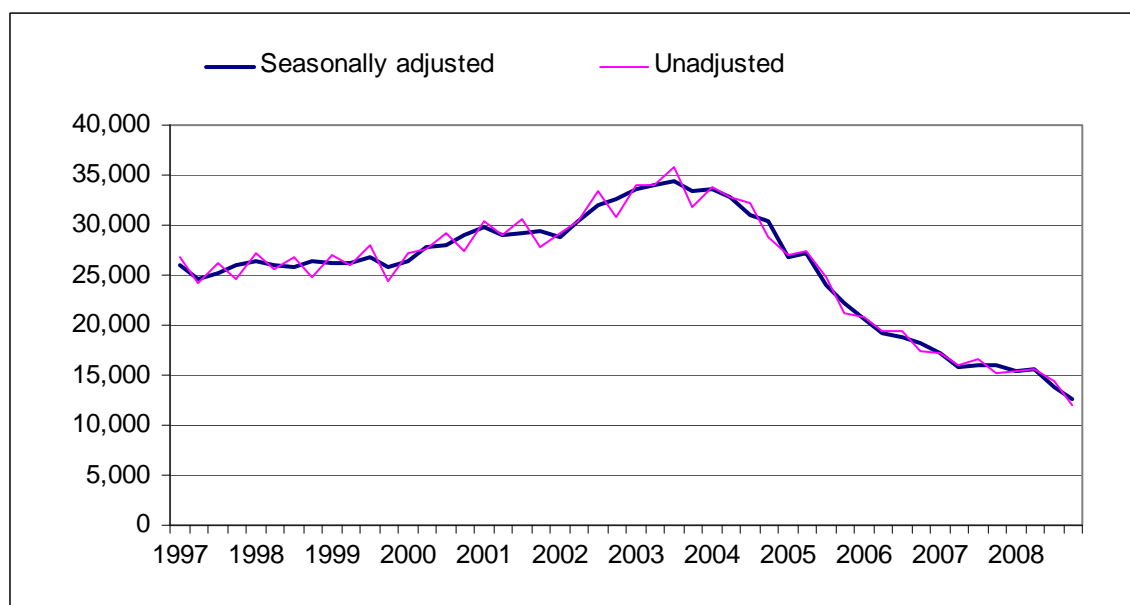


See Table 1: Decisions by outcome of decision

Households accepted¹ as owed a main homelessness duty (acceptances)

Between October and December, local authorities accepted 12,070 households as being owed a main homelessness duty (acceptances). This is 21 per cent lower when compared with the corresponding quarter last year. After seasonal adjustment the number of acceptances during the fourth quarter of 2008 was 12,670, 9 per cent lower than the previous quarter.

Chart 2: Households accepted by local authorities as owed a main duty each quarter, 1997 to 2008, England



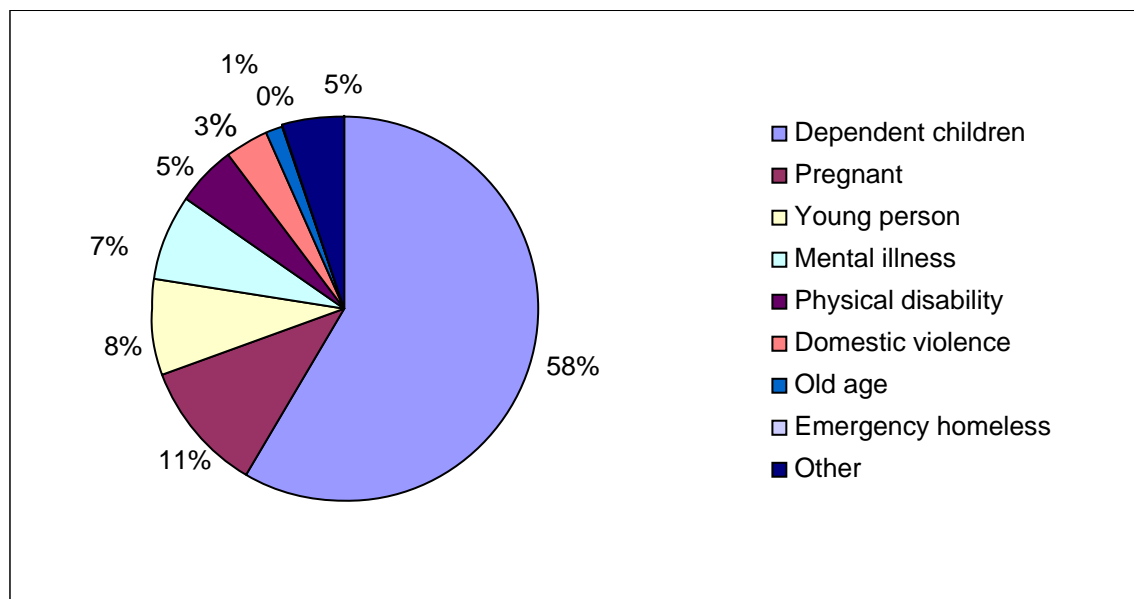
See Table 1: Decisions by outcome of decision

Acceptances by priority need⁶ category

Between October and December, in 58 per cent of acceptances the presence of dependent children in the household was the primary reason for priority need, and a further 11 per cent of households had priority need because they included a pregnant woman.

8 per cent of acceptances were in priority need through being a young person (either 16 or 17 year olds, or 18 to 20 year olds formerly in care). The majority of the remainder were in priority need due to vulnerability (for example, mental illness or physical disability). Emergencies accounted for less than 1 per cent of all acceptances, a decrease of 150 households when compared to last quarter.

Chart 3: Acceptances by priority need categories during 2008 Q4 (October-December), England



See Table 4: Acceptances by priority need category

Acceptances by reason for loss of last settled home

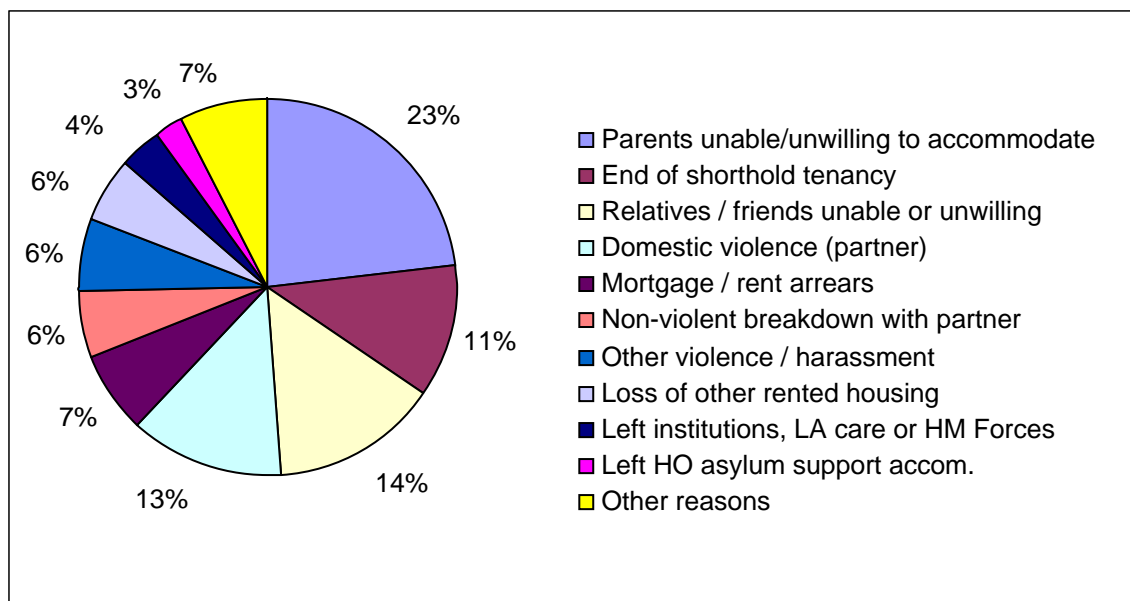
Between October and December, in 38 per cent of acceptances the reason for homelessness was because parents, relatives or friends (mostly parents) were no longer able, or willing, to accommodate them.

In a further 19 per cent of acceptances during the fourth quarter, the reason for homelessness was the breakdown of a relationship with a partner, with over two-thirds of these cases involving violence.

In 11 per cent of acceptances the reason for homelessness was the ending of an assured short hold tenancy.

At 4 per cent, the proportion of acceptances where homelessness resulted from mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home) has remained level for the last four quarters. There had been a steady increase in the proportion of such acceptances since 2003, however it remains much lower than its peak level - 12 per cent during 1991.

Chart 4: Acceptances by reason for loss of last settled home during 2008 Q4 (October-December), England



See Table 5: Acceptances by reason for loss of last settled home

Acceptances by ethnicity

Between October and December, 69 per cent of applicants accepted were White, and 25 per cent were from an ethnic minority group – 12 per cent Black, 6 per cent Asian and 7 per cent another ethnic group or mixed ethnicity. The remainder did not state their ethnic origin.

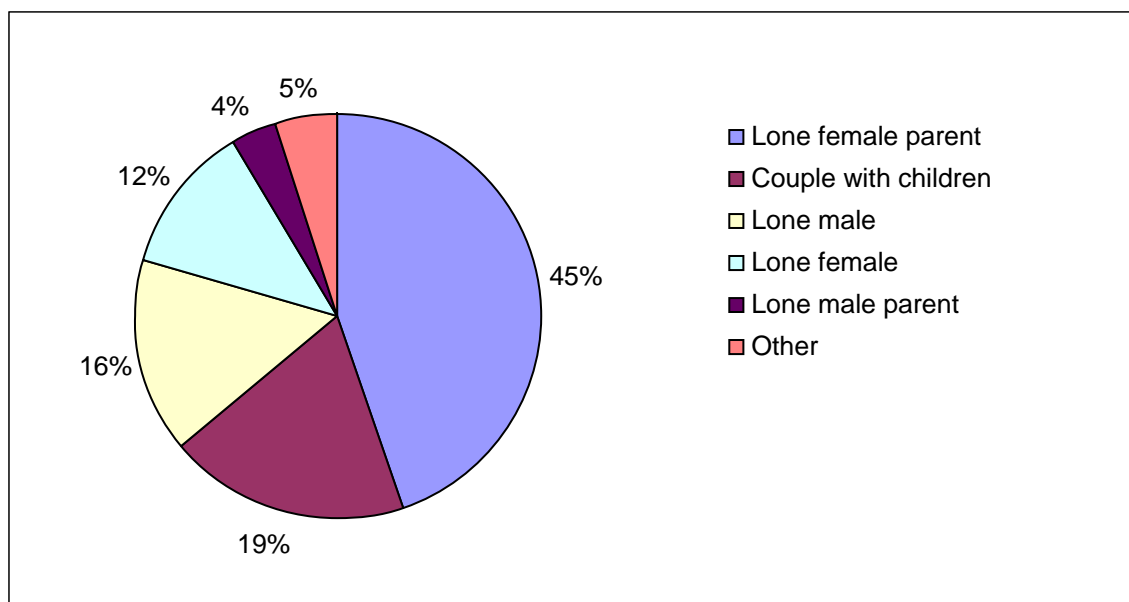
Compared to the population as a whole, there is a far higher incidence of acceptances amongst ethnic minority groups than amongst the White population.

See Table 2: Acceptances by ethnicity

Acceptances by household type

Of the 12,070 acceptances between October and December, 45 per cent were lone mothers, and 19 per cent were couples with dependent children. One person households accounted for 28 per cent of acceptances, with a higher proportion male than female.

Chart 5: Acceptances by household type during 2008 Q4 (December-December), England



Acceptances by age band

Between October and December, the vast majority (almost 90 per cent) of all acceptances were applicants under 45 years old. 47 per cent were aged between 25 and 44, and 41 per cent between 16 and 24.

See Table 10: Acceptances and temporary accommodation by household and applicant characteristics

Action taken in respect of acceptances

Of the 12,070 acceptances between October and December, 60 per cent were placed in some form of temporary accommodation for a period of time. For a further 27 per cent of accepted households, arrangements were made for them, with consent, to remain in their existing accommodation for the immediate future, while awaiting the provision of alternative accommodation⁷.

10 per cent of acceptances were provided with settled accommodation, by being granted a secure tenancy in local authority or registered social landlord accommodation, or an assured short hold tenancy. The remaining 3 per cent either made their own arrangements or had no further contact with the authority, thus bringing the homelessness duty to an end.

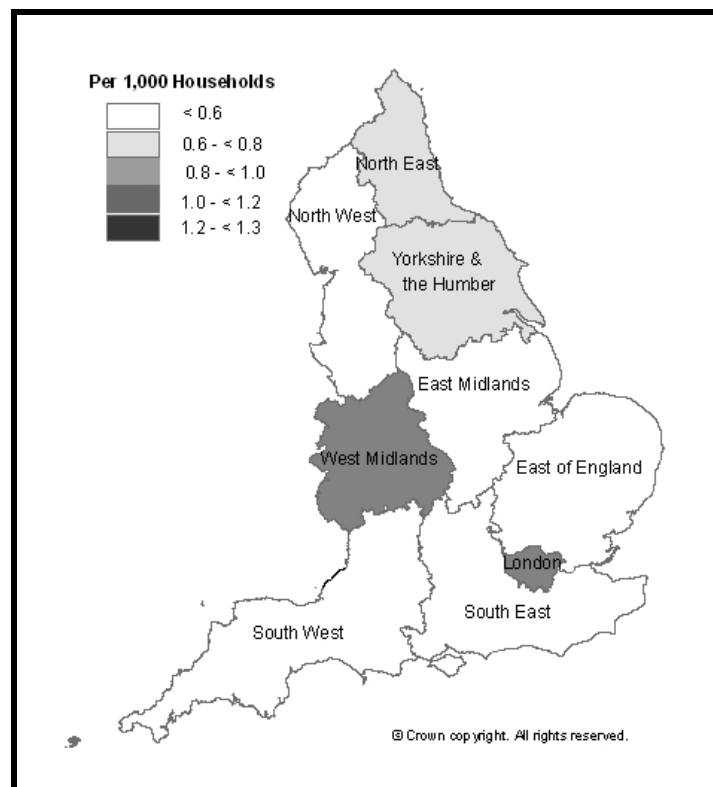
See Part 1 of Table 8: Outcomes: those accepted during the quarter, and those leaving temporary accommodation (or no longer recorded as “homeless at home”) during the quarter

Acceptances by region

London and the West Midlands had the highest incidence of acceptances per 1,000 households during the quarter, both at 0.9, compared to 0.6 for England as a whole. The South East, at 0.3 per 1,000 households had the lowest incidence.

Compared to the same period last year, all of the nine regions had reductions in acceptances, with the largest percentage drops in the North West and South West (40 per cent and 24 per cent respectively), followed by the East Midlands (22 per cent decrease). The West Midlands and London had the smallest decreases in acceptances (14 per cent).

Map 1: Homelessness Acceptance Rates 2008 Q4 (October-December)

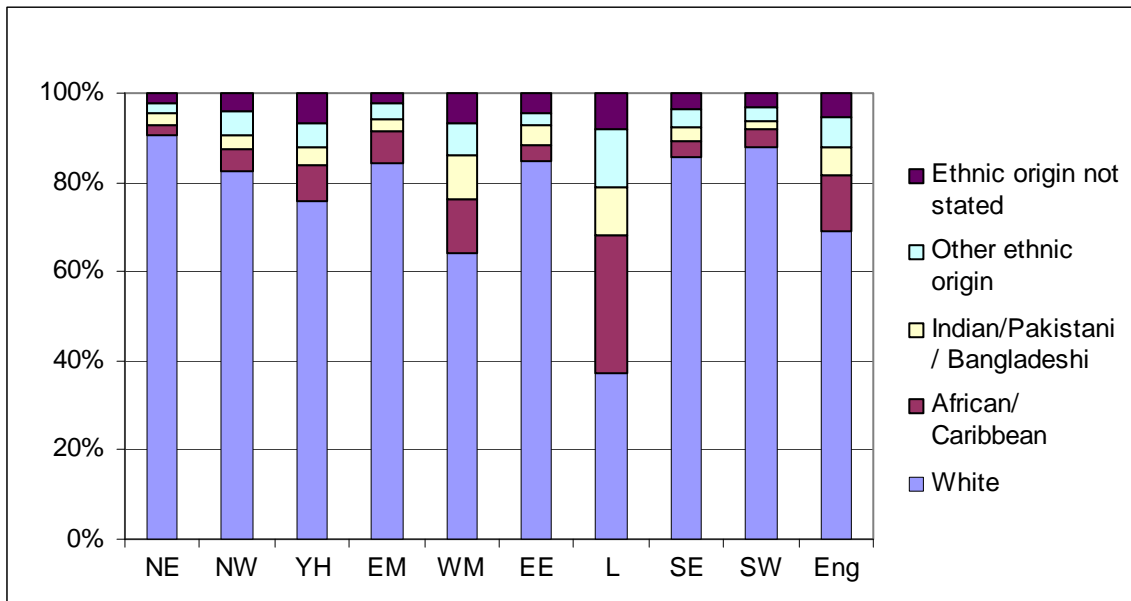


See Table 3: Acceptances by region

Acceptances by ethnicity and region

There is large variation in the ethnicity of accepted applicants across the regions. In London, only 37 per cent of acceptances were White, while in the North East the proportion was 91 per cent. London had the highest percentage of acceptances from Black and Asian groups (31 and 11 per cent respectively), and also 'other' ethnic groups (13 per cent). The West Midlands had the next highest proportion of acceptances from Black, Asian and 'other' groups, at 12, 10 and 7 per cent respectively.

Chart 6: Proportion of acceptances during 2008 Q4 (October-December) by ethnicity, England and regions



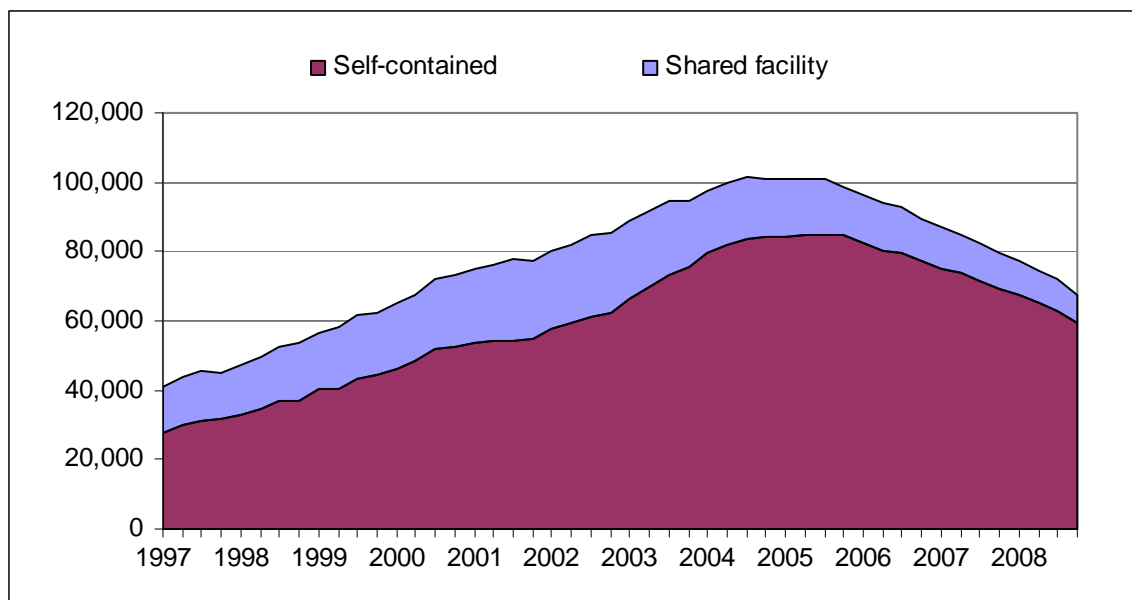
Households in temporary accommodation³

The number of households in temporary accommodation on 31 December 2008, arranged by local authorities under homelessness legislation, was 67,480. This is 12,020 (15 per cent) lower than the same date last year, and 33,550 (one third) lower than at the end of 2004, the year in which temporary accommodation peaked.

Of these 67,480 households, 89 per cent had been accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty and were being housed in temporary accommodation by the authority until a settled home becomes available. The remainder were being accommodated pending a decision on their application, the outcome of a local authority review or an appeal to the county court on the authority's decision, or possible referral to another local authority, or had been found intentionally homeless and in priority need and subsequently were being accommodated for such a period as would give them a reasonable opportunity to find accommodation for themselves.

88 per cent of households in temporary accommodation were in self-contained⁴ accommodation (either in local authority or registered social landlord stock, or within the private sector) and 12 per cent were in accommodation with shared facilities (bed and breakfast style, or hostels and women's refuges).

Chart 7: Households in temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter, by type, 1997 to 2008, England



Young people in temporary accommodation

Of the 67,480 households in temporary accommodation on 31 December, 52,290 included dependent children and/or a pregnant woman (within which households there were 98,880 children or expected children).

Of these 52,290 households with children, 94 per cent were in self-contained accommodation. 520 (1 per cent) were in bed and breakfast style accommodation.

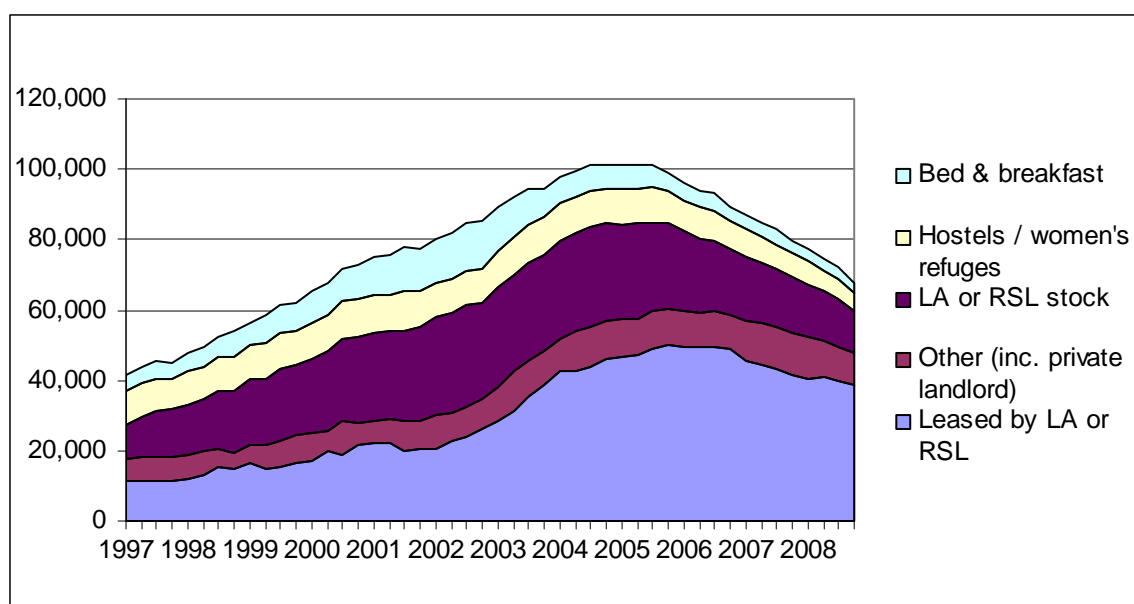
At the end of December, there were 330 households headed by 16 and 17 year old applicants in bed and breakfast style accommodation, of which 150 had been there for longer than six weeks (11 of these pending an appeal).

Households in temporary accommodation, by type of accommodation

There is a wide range of accommodation used to provide temporary accommodation, most of which (88 per cent) is self-contained.

Use of accommodation with shared facilities has declined over recent years, largely through reduced bed and breakfast usage. Within the last ten years, bed and breakfast style accommodation use peaked during 2002, when 16 per cent of households were in this form of temporary accommodation, compared to 4 per cent at the end of December 2008. The proportion of self-contained accommodation has increased over this period, in particular private sector accommodation leased short term by local authorities or housing associations, which has risen from under 30 per cent during 2002 to 57 per cent at the end of last quarter.

Chart 8: Households in temporary accommodation, by type, at the end of each quarter, 1997 to 2008, England



On 31 December 2008, of the 67,480 households in temporary accommodation:

47,740 households were in **private sector accommodation** (71 per cent of all households), most commonly in a property leased by the local authority or registered social landlord (RSL, or housing association), or in some cases let directly to the applicant as the tenant of a private sector landlord. This is a drop of 11 per cent since the 31 December last year, and of 16 per cent compared to the same date in 2004, the year in which temporary accommodation use peaked.

11,930 households were in accommodation owned by **social landlords** (18 per cent of all households), a fall of 25 per cent since last year and 57 per cent since the end of December 2004. Of these 11,930 households, two thirds were in local authority owned stock, and one third in RSL owned property.

5,250 households were in **hostel accommodation and women's refuges** (8 per cent of all households), a decrease of 21 per cent since this time last year and of 48 per cent since the end of 2004.

2,560 households were in **bed and breakfast style accommodation** (4 per cent of all households), 27 per cent lower than the end of last year, and 60 per cent lower than the same date in 2004. Historically, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation peaked in March 1987, when 47 per cent (England) and 59 per cent (London) of households in temporary accommodation were housed in this style of accommodation.

In addition to the 67,480 households in temporary accommodation on 31 December 2008, 6,070 households accepted as owed a main duty remained (with consent) in their existing accommodation while awaiting the provision of alternative accommodation⁷. This is 25 per cent lower than the same date last year and 62 per cent lower than at the end of 2004.

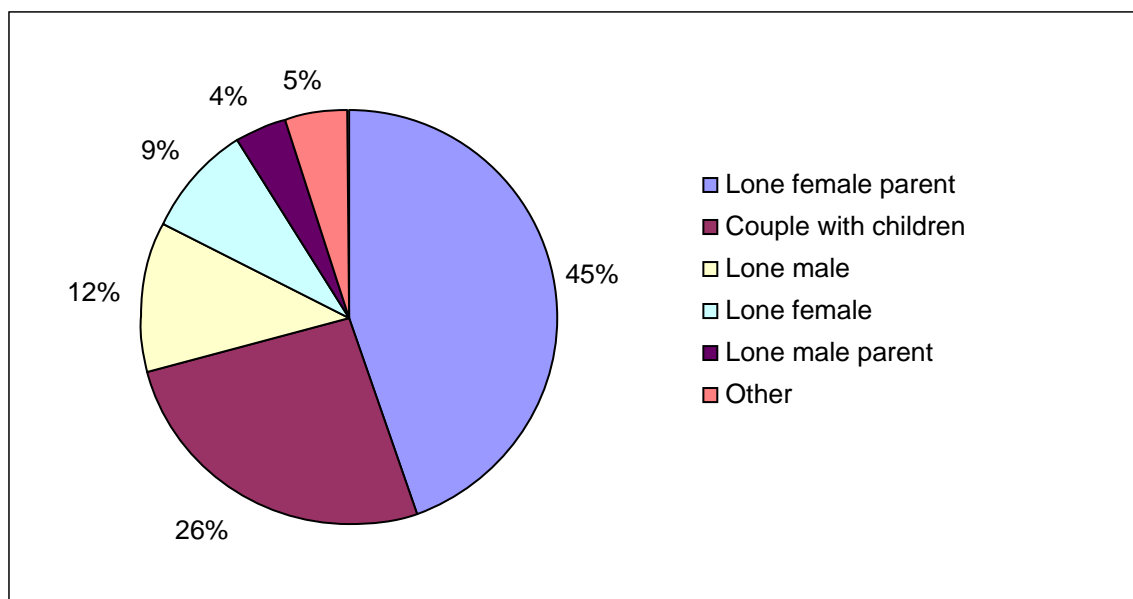
See Table 6: Temporary accommodation, by type (plus "homeless at home"), of which with children

Households in temporary accommodation, by household type and ethnicity

Of the 67,480 households in temporary accommodation at the end of December, the biggest group (45 per cent) were lone female parent households with dependent children. Couples with dependent children accounted for just over a quarter (26 per cent) of households. Single person households with no dependent children accounted for 20 per cent of households, the majority of which were male.

Over half of all households in temporary accommodation were headed by ethnic minority applicants. The vast majority of these households (94 per cent) were in London, reflecting the high usage of temporary accommodation and larger ethnic minority population in the region. Outside of London, ethnic minority applicants accounted for only 12 per cent of households in temporary accommodation.

Chart 9: Households in temporary accommodation by household type: 31 December 2008



See Table 10: Acceptances and temporary accommodation by household and applicant characteristics

Households leaving temporary accommodation and other temporary arrangements

Between October and December, a main homelessness duty was ended for 13,850 households who had previously been in temporary accommodation (or had remained, with consent, in their existing accommodation while awaiting the provision of alternative accommodation).

9,280 (67 per cent) of these households were provided with settled accommodation, by accepting a "Part 6" offer of a secure tenancy in local authority or RSL accommodation, although a further 7 per cent refused such an offer. An additional 7 per cent accepted alternative offers of rented accommodation.

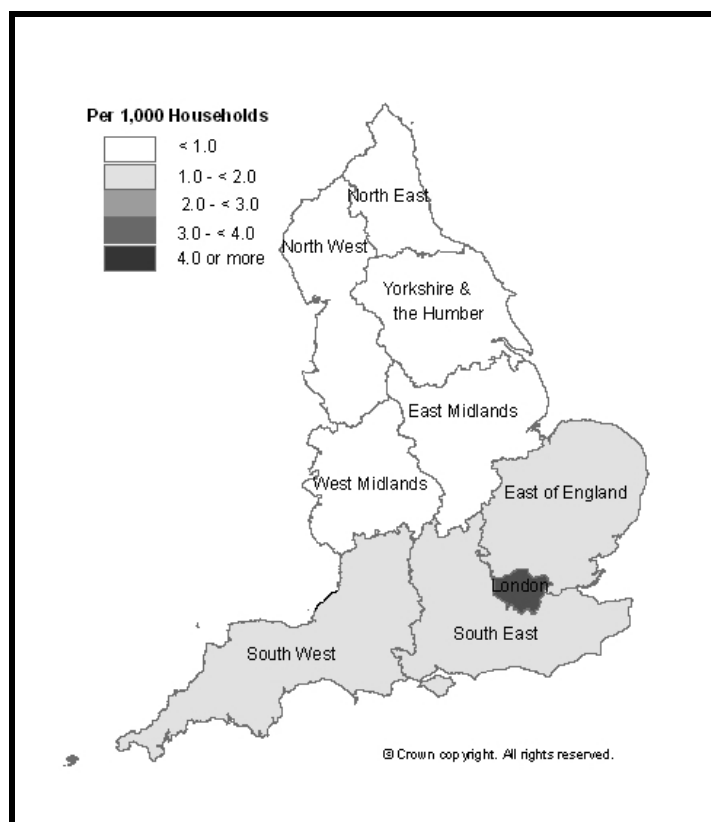
14 per cent of households voluntarily left the temporary arrangements organised by the local authority. The remaining 5 per cent of households ceased to be eligible, or became intentionally homeless from the temporary accommodation provided for them.

See Part 2 of Table 8: Outcomes: those accepted during the quarter, and those leaving temporary accommodation (or no longer recorded as "homeless at home") during the quarter

Households in temporary accommodation, by region

London had the highest number of households in temporary accommodation, at 49,960 on 31 December, accounting for 74 per cent of the England total. The South East had the next highest number, with 7 per cent of the England total. The North East, with less than 1 per cent, had the lowest.

Map 2: Households in Temporary Accommodation as at 31 December 2008



England had a rate of 3.1 households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households. Of the regions, London had by far the highest rate at 15.7 per 1,000 households. The South West, East of England and the South East had the next highest rates, at 1.5 per 1,000 households. The North East had the lowest rate at 0.3 per 1,000 households.

Compared to the same date last year, all regions experienced a fall in the number of households in temporary accommodation, with the biggest drops in London (6,780) and the South East (1,710). The largest percentage falls were in the North West (35 per cent) and the East Midlands (32 per cent).

See Table 7: *Temporary accommodation: by region*

Length of time in arranged accommodation

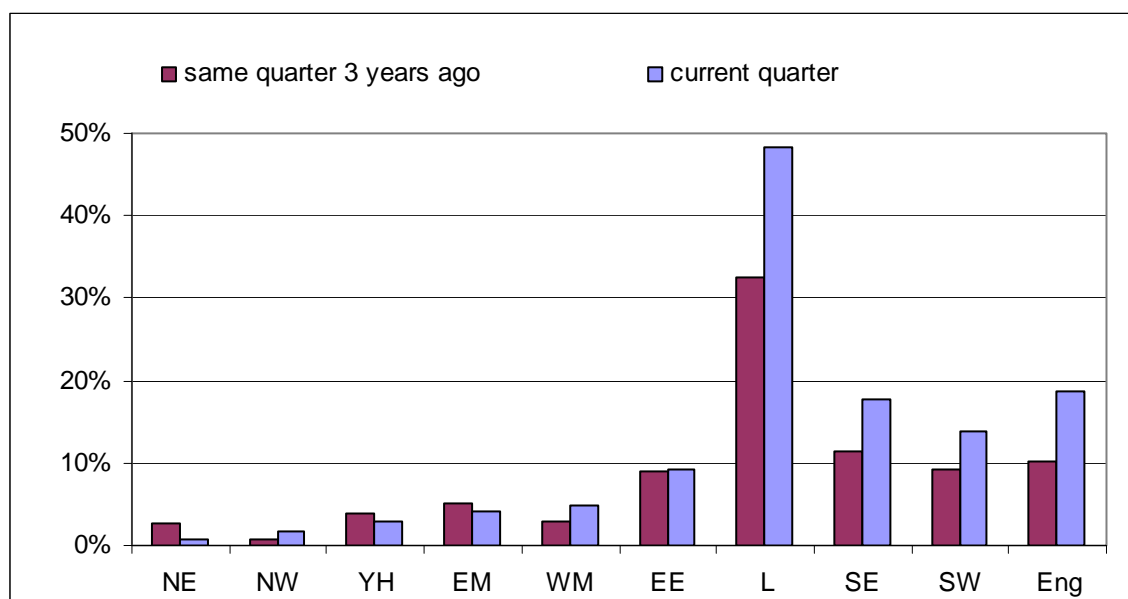
Of the 13,850 households who left temporary accommodation, or who no longer remained in their existing home while awaiting alternative accommodation during the quarter, 56 per cent had been in these temporary arrangements for less than six months. 19 per cent had been so for two years or more. Over the last ten years, the percentage of households who spend two or more years in such arranged accommodation has increased markedly, particularly in London.

Lengths of time in arranged temporary accommodation vary across the regions. Chart 10 compares the proportion of those spending 2 years or more in temporary accommodation, for each regions' most recent quarter's figures and those of the same quarter three years ago. London's figures stand out with the longest stays- in the fourth quarter of 2008, 48 per cent of households had previously spent two or more years in temporary arrangements, compared with 33 per cent in the same period during 2005. The South East and South West have the next highest proportions of stays longer than two years, with 18 per cent and 14 per cent respectively this quarter, and both having increased since 2005.

The Northern and Midland regions have a much lower proportion of longer stays. The North East region had the lowest proportion of two year or longer stays in the most recent quarter, at 1 per cent, compared to 3 per cent three years ago.

See Table 9: Households leaving temporary accommodation (or no longer recorded as "homeless at home"): by length of stay, by region

Chart 10: Proportion of households spending 2 years or more in arranged accommodation, England and regions: Q4 2008 and Q4 2005



Scope

The scope of this data collection and statistical release is limited to English local housing authorities' activities under homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996). This release does not contain data on other forms of homelessness, for example, rough sleeping. The devolved administrations publish their own statistics on statutory homelessness.

The most recent statutory homelessness statistics for Scotland are available at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/09/29091120/0>

The most recent statutory homelessness statistics for Wales are available at:
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2009/hdw20090114/?lang=en>

Homelessness targets

Temporary accommodation figures are an important indicator for monitoring the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07) target to increase long term housing supply and affordability. The Government has set a national target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation to 50,500 households by 2010. Following thirteen consecutive quarterly decreases, by the end of December 2008 there were 67,480 households in temporary accommodation.

Data source

Local housing authorities report their activities under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to Communities and Local Government by completing the quarterly P1E statistical return. Statutory homelessness statistics are published around 51 working days after the end of each quarter, on a pre-announced date in accordance with the National Statistics Code of Practice.

Data quality

All P1E returns submitted by local housing authorities undergo thorough validation and cross-checking, and late returns are pursued to ensure overall response is as complete and accurate as possible. Anomalous data is highlighted and verified by contacting the local authority.

Local authorities also provide details of any data checks they undertake. These can take the form of audits (by the National Audit Office or the authorities own auditors), periodic quality checks on data extracts, or random quality checks. For the period October to December 2008, most authorities reported some form of checking on all data items in the return.

The validation process typically takes around six weeks, after which estimates for missing data are calculated. The latest quarter's figures are based on full or partial returns from all of the 354 local authorities (100 per cent response).

Published figures may include estimates for a small amount of missing data. These estimates are calculated by an automated grossing procedure which either (i) updates previously reported data based on the changes observed in similar authorities in the same region or (ii) apportions totals based on ratios reported by these similar authorities.

Accompanying tables

Table 1	Decisions taken by local authorities under the 1996 Housing Act on applications from eligible households
Table 2	Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities, by ethnicity
Table 3	Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities, by Government Office Region
Table 4	Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities, by priority need category
Table 5	Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities, by reason for loss of last settled home
Table 6	Households in temporary accommodation (and “homeless at home”) arranged by local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act, by type of accommodation, at the end of each quarter
Table 7	Households in temporary accommodation arranged by local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act, by Government Office Region, at the end of each quarter
Table 8	Households accepted as owed a main homelessness duty, and households leaving temporary accommodation (or no longer recorded “homeless at home”), by outcome
Table 9	Households leaving temporary accommodation (or no longer recorded “homeless at home”) during each quarter, by length of stay, England and London
Table 10	Acceptances and temporary accommodation by household and applicant characteristics (a) Acceptances by household type (b) Acceptances by age of applicant (c) Temporary accommodation by household type and ethnicity

Background notes

Definition of Terms

1. **Acceptances:** households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falling within a priority need group (as defined by homelessness legislation- see paragraphs 8-10 below), *during the quarter*, are referred to as “acceptances”. These households are consequently owed a main homelessness duty by a local housing authority. The main duty is to secure settled accommodation.
2. **Seasonal adjustment:** the seasonally adjusted estimates have been produced using the X12-ARIMA model, in accordance with National Statistics practices, which have then been constrained so that they are consistent with the unadjusted financial year totals. Historically, the number of decisions and acceptances tends to be lower in the second quarter than in the first and third quarters, and will also be affected by seasonal holiday periods, especially Christmas and the New Year. At present, only the statutory homelessness acceptance and decision figures are seasonally adjusted. We plan to review seasonal adjustment of the households in temporary accommodation series in Summer 2009.
3. **Temporary accommodation:** households in temporary accommodation (excluding those who are recorded as “homeless at home⁷”) *on the last day of the quarter*, as arranged by a local housing authority as a discharge of their statutory homelessness functions. In most cases, the authority is discharging a main homelessness duty to secure suitable accommodation until a settled home becomes available for the applicant and his/her household. However, the numbers also include households provided with accommodation pending a decision on their homelessness application, households pending a review or appeal to the county court of the decision on their case, and households found to be intentionally homeless and in priority need who were being accommodated for such period as would give them a reasonable opportunity to find accommodation for themselves.
4. **Self-contained accommodation:** this includes all temporary accommodation where the household has sole use of kitchen and bathroom facilities, including property held by local housing authorities, registered social landlords and private sector landlords. A distinction is made between this type of accommodation and accommodation where such facilities are shared with other households (i.e. bed and breakfast, hostels and women's refuges).
5. **Decisions:** these include only the decisions made by local housing authorities where the applicant has been found to be eligible for assistance and therefore excludes any households found to be ineligible (some persons from abroad are ineligible for assistance).
6. **Priority need groups:** include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman and people who are vulnerable in some way e.g. because of mental illness or physical disability. The priority need categories were extended by Order in January 2002 to include, additionally: applicants aged 16 or 17; applicants aged 18 to 20 who were previously in care; applicants

vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in custody, or in HM Forces, and applicants vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of violence or the threat of violence. It is not possible to establish precisely how much of the changed profile of acceptances is attributable to the Order. Previously, some local authorities would have accepted households who fall within the new categories as having a priority need because of "another special reason". This applies in particular to applicants such as vulnerable young people, and people fleeing domestic violence. In the fourth quarter of 2008 the "new" priority need categories accounted for 10 per cent of homeless acceptances, compared to 9 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2007. Note that where applicants are accepted as homeless because of an emergency, for example fire or flood, this will always be recorded as the main priority need category.

7. **"Homeless at home"**: These are households who have been accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty and for whom arrangements have been made for them, with consent, to remain in their existing accommodation for the immediate future. Prior to the second quarter of 2005, figures were also collected on those potentially "homeless at home" but whose application was still under consideration pending a decision. Both series are now presented in the final columns of Table 6.

Legislation

8. Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 places statutory duties on local housing authorities to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Authorities must consider all applications from people seeking accommodation or assistance in obtaining accommodation. A main homelessness duty (see below) is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a priority need group. The priority need groups are specified in the legislation, although paragraph 6 above provides a summary.

9. Where a main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household until a settled home becomes available for them. Where households are found to be intentionally homeless or not in priority need, the authority must make an assessment of their housing needs, provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves. Where the applicant is found to be intentionally homeless but falls in a priority need category the authority must also ensure that accommodation is available for long enough to give the applicant a reasonable opportunity to find a home.

Other

10. Figures in the accompanying tables are presented rounded to the nearest 10 households or applicants.

11. The maps are based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office:

12. Details of officials who receive pre-release access to the Communities and Local Government quarterly Statutory Homelessness Statistical Release up to 24 hours before release can be found at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/statistics/nationalstatistics/>

13. The publication date for the 1st Quarter (January to March) 2009 Statutory Homelessness Statistical Release is **Thursday 11th June 2009**.

Enquiries

1. This Statistical Release, as well as previous Releases, can be accessed and all text, tables and charts downloaded electronically, from the Communities and Local Government website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/publicationshomelessness/>

2. Further details on this Statistical Release are available from Alex Arulanandam, Communities and Local Government, Zone 2/A1, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU. Telephone 020 7944 3316. E-mail: <mailto:homelessnessstats@communities.gov.uk>.

Media Enquiries:

office hours: 020 7944 3049

out of hours: 020 7944 5945

e-mail: press@communities.gov.uk

Public enquiries:

telephone: 020 7944 4400

Information on Official Statistics is available via the UK Statistics Authority website:

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