

Key findings from a Housing Committee survey about social housing allocations

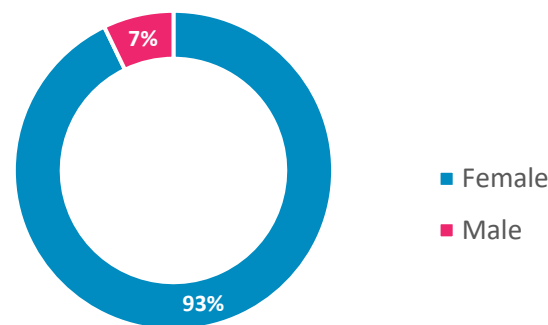
February 2026

Methodology and data limitations

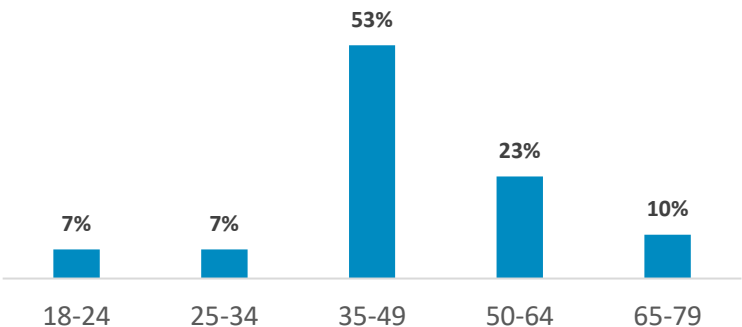
- This survey was produced in both an easy read and general format. These key findings analyse responses from both formats collectively.
- Responses to the survey were received between 16 September and 17 December 2025. All responses were gathered via an online survey platform. The survey was designed by Research Unit staff in consultation with the Housing Committee project team.
- The survey was promoted by the Committee and project team by sharing it with stakeholders, and online via social media.
- The primary purpose of the survey was to explore Londoner's experiences of the social housing allocation process and gather their thoughts on how it could be improved. This was done via qualitative questions.
- In total, there were 33 completed responses to the survey. Respondents to the survey were self-selected, and data has not been weighted to be representative. The respondents to the survey cannot be considered to be representative of the London population. The results should therefore be treated with caution. The findings can provide the Committee with an impression of the experience of some Londoners.
- Demographic data was collected to understand which groups of Londoners the survey reached. The next page provides an overview of the age, gender and ethnicity of respondents, as well as the proportion of respondents with a long-term health condition or disability.

Characteristics of survey respondents

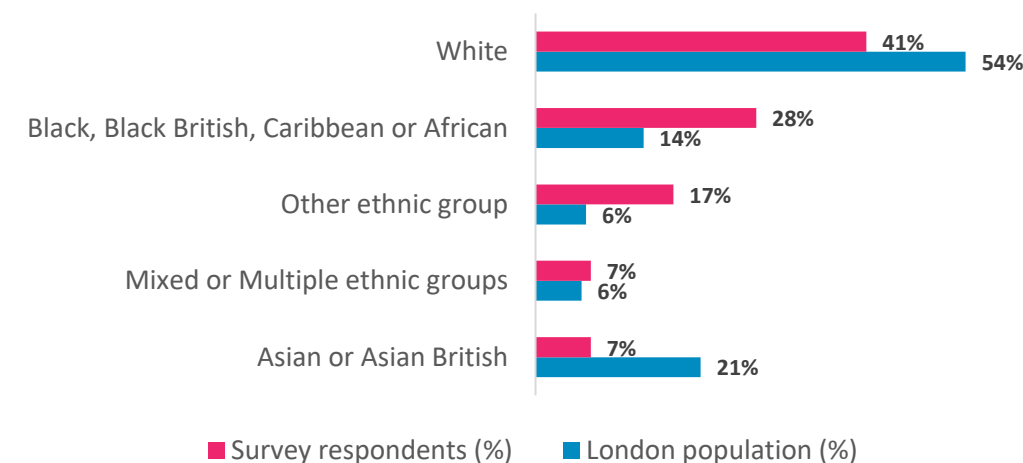
Gender of survey respondents



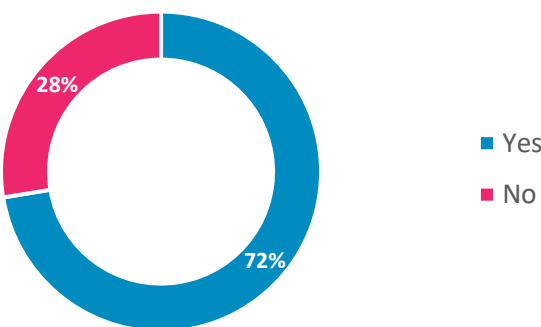
Age group of survey respondents



Ethnicity of survey respondents



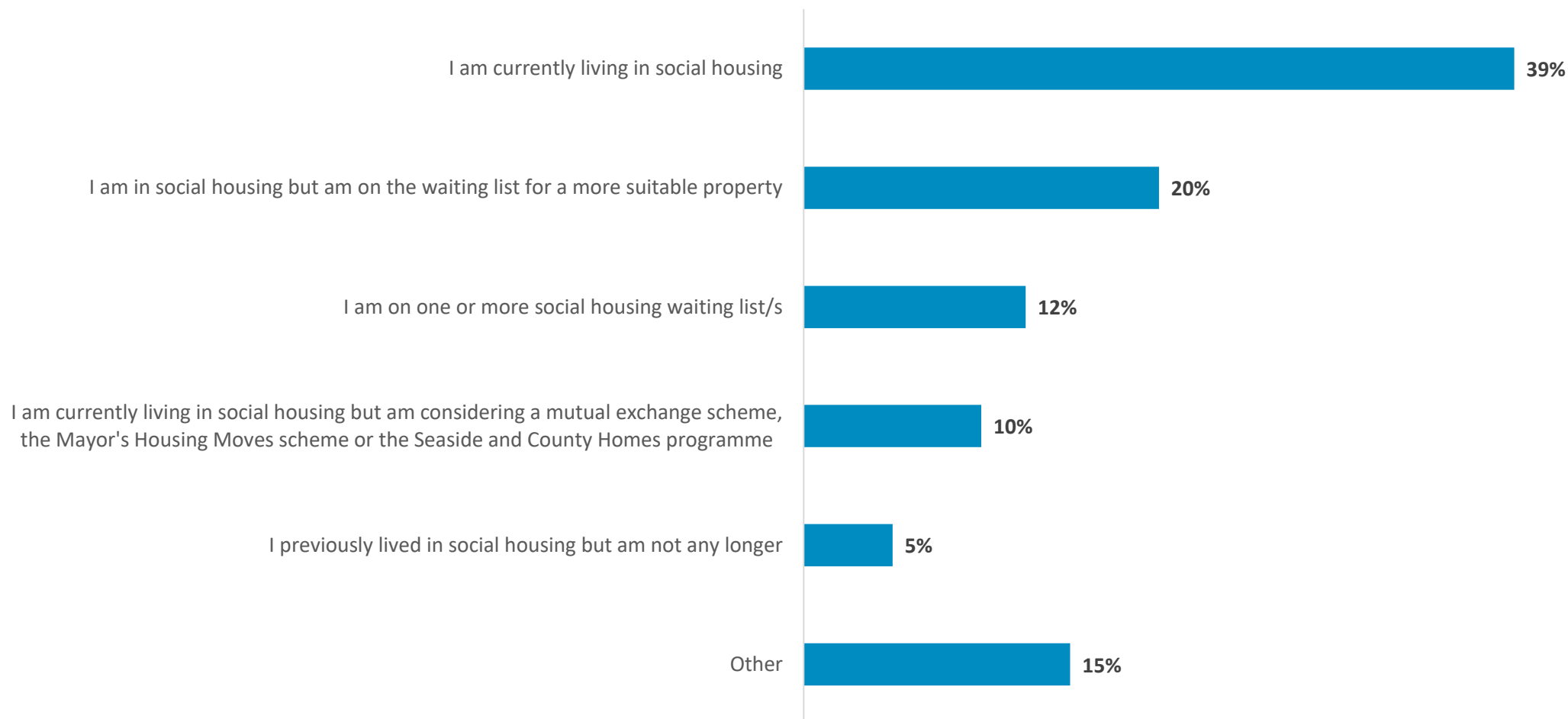
Survey respondents with a disability or long-term health condition



Where questions were skipped or respondents answered 'prefer not to say', these are not included in percentage calculations.

Current housing situation

Current housing situation of respondents (%)



Data is from respondents' answers to the question, "What is your current housing situation?". Number of respondents = 31. Respondents were able to pick multiple options where more than one was applicable.

Current housing situation

When asked about their current housing situation, respondents most commonly described it as “overcrowded” and “unsuitable”.

Respondents emphasised the negative impact their current housing situation was having on their mental health, and the wellbeing of their children, with multiple responses suggesting a lack of space had caused family separation.

“ There are 5 of us living in a 2 bed property. Me and my husband, my 10 year old boy, 8 year old boy and 4 year old daughter. We would need at least another bedroom. ”

“ Eldest child with autism and ADHD has been placed in temporary foster care, due to living in overcrowded home is affecting his mental health. ”

“ I am currently residing in a 2 bedroom 4th fl[oo]r property with my partner and our 4 children aged 6, 10, 12, 22. We have been on the waiting list for a 3 bedroom property since 2015. ”

“ I'm suffering depression trying to cope with this situation. Social housing landlord doesn't have larger houses. We need [a] 4-bedroom home. [Currently we are] 6 people in 2-bedroom flat, 1 bedroom is single room. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, “Please give further detail about your current housing situation. For example, the kind of accommodation you currently live in, the size of your household, the number of bedrooms you currently have, and if it differs from this, the number of bedrooms you require”, which allowed free text entry.

Current housing situation

Respondents also frequently described living in housing which was unsuitable for their accessibility needs, as well as living in housing with unresolved maintenance and repair issues such as ongoing mould.

“ I live in a [...] second floor property therefore I can't have my wheelchair [and...] struggle a lot with the stairs, struggle to take rubbish down the stairs, struggled to get shopping up the stairs. I've been trying to move for over 10 years now. ”

“ The property has been unsuitable due to defects, cladding, fire safety issues, leaks, damp, mould and housing association not carrying out repairs. ”

“ [Eldest child has autism with high support needs...] We therefore require a three bedroom property no further than the first floor for safety reasons. The current property is registered as a first floor flat, however there is a basement level which still puts the eldest child at risk of fatality. ”

“ I have long term chronic pain since [the] 2020 pandemic. My health condition affects my mobility as well as mental and physical health. My flat is situated in a steep hill and this is an accessibility issue for me. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, “Please give further detail about your current housing situation. For example, the kind of accommodation you currently live in, the size of your household, the number of bedrooms you currently have, and if it differs from this, the number of bedrooms you require”, which allowed free text entry.

Experience of applying for social housing

Respondents' descriptions of their experiences of applying for social housing were overwhelmingly negative, commonly describing the process as “stressful”, “frustrating” and “difficult”.

Experiences highlighted issues with the application process, describing admin errors, as well as long and uncertain application and waiting times. Several responses also highlighted a lack of trust in councils and housing associations.

“ [My experience was] Awful. I was 5 months pregnant, [the] council wanted to put me in temporary accommodation, a large room divided into 2 self contained bedsits, shared bathroom/toilet. I had to fight every inch of the way, I will never forget it. ”

“ I waited 3 years just to get [a] council housing application form. The application form I recently completed doesn't ask about the medical conditions of the family, I'm still waiting for this stage of the process. ”

“ We have no access to housing applications as forms are filled out by the housing association who purposely fill out wrong information. ”

“ My details were lost, I dropped off the list when lists were transferred around 2004/5 [... I] waited four years to be housed despite being a sole parent with a severely disabled child. ”

“ It took over a year for my family to receive the link [to the application] and in the meantime we lived with severe disrepair, cracked floor vinyl tiles, rotten cracked sash windows, black mould next to the bed causing the youngest child to be hospitalised. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, “How would you describe your experience of applying for social housing”, which allowed free text entry.

Impact of being on a social housing waiting list

Several respondents described the negative impact being on a social housing waiting list, and remaining in unsuitable housing, had on their mental and physical health and their relationships.

“ [My experience of being on the list was] Endless waiting. 1 bedroom for 6 people, 4 children aged 6, 11, 12 and 16. The temporary accommodation was filthy and had black mould across most of the walls especially in the bedroom. We were in this situation for 2 years with no indication of when it would end. ”

“ Dealing with the housing register [...] while living in severe overcrowding has caused me anxiety, depression, strain on my marriage and above all is harming my children's well-being and development. ”

“ Being on the waiting list without knowing how long it would take severely affected my mental health. I was sofa surfing for ages which impacted my health and well-being and my ability to work. ”

“ The housing association first offer was a few minutes walk from the home I fled with my son due to serious domestic abuse and violence. ”

“ I feel the effects of waiting for a suitable one bed or studio because I live in an overcrowded house - things get tense easily, I don't feel like an adult and feel a bit helpless. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, "Please describe your experience of being on a social housing waiting list and any impact this has had. This could include impacts on different aspects of your life, both day-to-day and longer term. Please share anything you feel is important", which allowed free text entry.

Views on improvements to social housing allocation

When asked about potential improvements to the allocation process, respondents frequently expressed the need for more social housing, and for larger housing that is suitable for families.

Responses also highlighted the need to ensure the allocation process resulted in suitable accommodation for individuals with accessibility needs.

“ We just need more [social housing]! A lot more. ”

“ I would like to see the council [...] ensure that properties are suitable for families. ”

“ [Changes should include] Providing more specialist housing to those who need support to live happy and independent lives. Ensuring that the allocation process is fair and realistic, especially for vulnerable households and those with disabilities. Secure disabled parking for mobility vehicles. ”

“ I think that changes to housing allocation in London is like moving deckchairs on a sinking ship. It's more social housing that is needed and I don't mean housing at council rents. ”

“ [I would like] More flats available for families and not to be put in tiny flats. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, “What changes, if any, would you like to see to how social housing is allocated in London?”, which allowed free text entry.

Views on improvements to social housing allocation

Respondents also emphasised the importance of a fair allocation system and clearer application and waiting timelines.

Some respondents suggested that social housing should be allocated on the basis of local connection, such as how long residents have lived in a certain borough. However, other respondents suggested it should be easier to access housing outside the borough an applicant currently lives in.

“ [There should be] A simple process to complete the form online and provide the info needed. It is important to be kept informed of how the process works and when you would likely receive a suitable offer. ”

“ I think neighbouring boroughs should work together to offer properties. I live in Tower Hamlets but would happily move to Newham, if the properties were close enough but I'm not eligible for their social housing. ”

“ I would like to see priority given to those who have strong local connections to the area. ”

“ [I would like] Fairness in the allocation process. Equality in allocation process. Reduced waiting times. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, “What changes, if any, would you like to see to how social housing is allocated in London?”, which allowed free text entry.

Views on improvements to social housing allocation

Several responses called for the application process to be simpler, with more “transparency” and “accountability” from councils.

Respondents also suggested a need for cultural change within the process, stating applicants needed to be treated with more “respect” and “kindness”.

“ [The system should] Treat people with kindness and not contempt. ”

“ [There should be] Transparency about the number of empty homes. ”

“ [Changes should include a] Transparent and clear timeframe about application processing from the start of applying right through. ”

“ [We need] More clarity and information given to applicants and yearly updates around their position on the register. ”

“ [I would like to see] Respect and compassion [for applicants]. ”

The above quotes are from respondents’ answers to the question, “What other practical improvements would you like to see to the social housing application and allocation process in London? ”, which allowed free text entry.