

Report

The experiences of housing in Wales of people from ethnic minority communities

February 2024



Ethnic Minorities
and Youth Support
Team Wales

Tîm Cymorth
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig
ac Ieuenctid Cymru



promoting equality in housing
hybu cydraddoldeb ym maes tai

funded by



Report Authors

Tai Pawb (housing for all) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Our vision is a “Wales where everyone has the right to a good home.” We operate a membership system which is open to local authorities, registered social landlords, third (voluntary) sector organisations, other housing interests and individuals. Tai Pawb works closely with the Welsh Government and other key partners on national housing strategies and key working groups, to ensure that equality is an inherent consideration in national strategic development and implementation. The organisation also provides practical advice and assistance to its members on a range of equality and diversity issues in housing and related services, including QED – the equality and diversity accreditation for the housing sector. We are also part of a coalition called “Back the Bill”, which seeks to establish the legal right to adequate housing for all citizens in Wales.

For further information visit: www.taipawb.org

Charity registration no. 1110078

Company No. 5282554

EYST Wales (Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. An award-winning, beneficiary-led organisation, established since 2005, which supports ethnic minority people in Wales to participate, integrate and be a valued part of Wales. We do this through delivering services which are targeted and culturally sensitive, addressing a broad range of areas including Black Asian Minority Ethnic young people, families, refugees & asylum seekers and challenging racism in the wider community. We also challenge negative racial stereotypes and promote better understanding of ethnic minorities and their contribution to Wales.

EYST funded by the OAK Foundation to deliver the Race and Housing in Wales - a Fresh Perspective Project: to look into the issues and challenges of Racial inequalities in Housing across Wales. The project supports with case work to individuals, to build evidence to shape and influence policy in the Housing sector whilst working with a network of partners in Wales.

Charity Registration No. 1152486

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Introduction

As part of the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan, Welsh Government set a goal to ensure that housing standards, provision and services advance race equality, embed anti-racism, equality and human rights, and meet the diverse needs of ethnic minority people.

In delivering on this goal, it is crucial that the lived experiences of housing in Wales of people from ethnic minority communities are captured to help shape and reflect on policy and practice.

This report seeks to capture these experiences and is a result of a partnership between Tai Pawb and EYST. In 2023, Tai Pawb has been funded to support the housing sector in implementing Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, including the voices of people with lived experience. EYST has been funded by Oak Foundation to provide housing advocacy and capture the views and experiences of ethnic minority people in housing.

This report will present in more detail below the findings and common themes that arose which included (but is not limited to) communication challenges, overcrowding, racism, various maintenance issues, private rented sector rents and access to appropriate social amenities. As well as points for consideration, the research sought to encompass direct feedback from participants on their current housing conditions and, where possible, what they would like to see improved.

Methodology

This research adopted a largely qualitative approach using in-person focus groups (4) through November 2023. These sessions were conducted by EYST, which identified participants, facilitated focus groups and shared the data with Tai Pawb. The questions posed to focus group participants can be viewed [here](#).

Additionally, EYST developed an online survey distributed across social media platforms, newsletters and via relevant stakeholders. The questions asked through this survey were broadly the same as both the interviews and focus groups and aimed to capture additional information.

Participant numbers - focus groups

A total of thirty-eight (38) people participated in the focus groups research, broken down as follows:

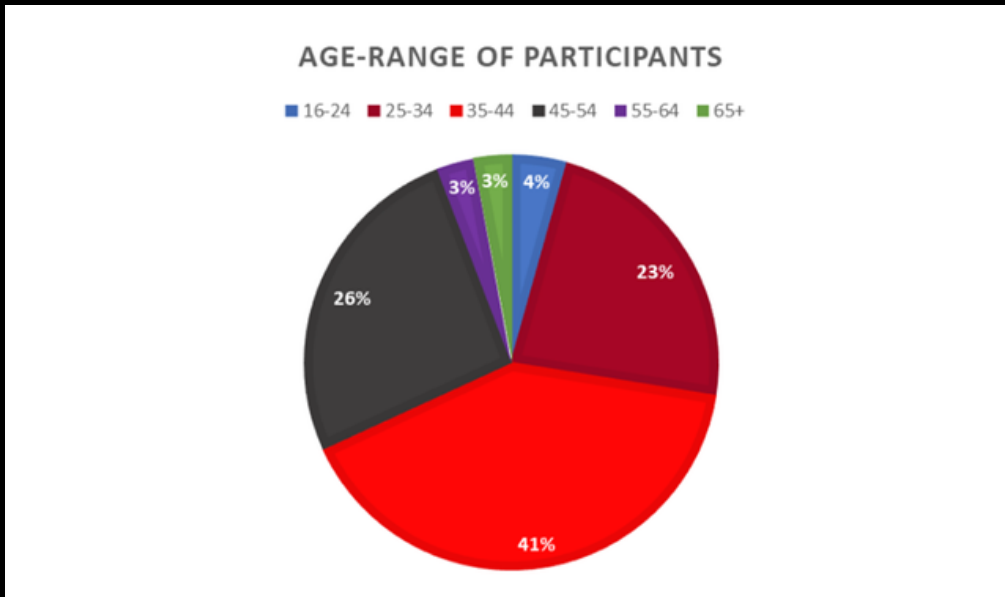
Dates	Area	Participants			Type of rental			
		Male	Female	Total	Private Landlord	Agent	Council	Housing Association
14th November	Cardiff	5	5	10	2	2	5	1
16th November	Swansea	1	7	8	5	2	1	
21st November	Wrexham	1	9	10	3	3	4	
27th November	Haverfordwest	5	5	10	4	4	2	

Participant numbers – digital survey

A total of sixty-nine (69) people responded to the survey.

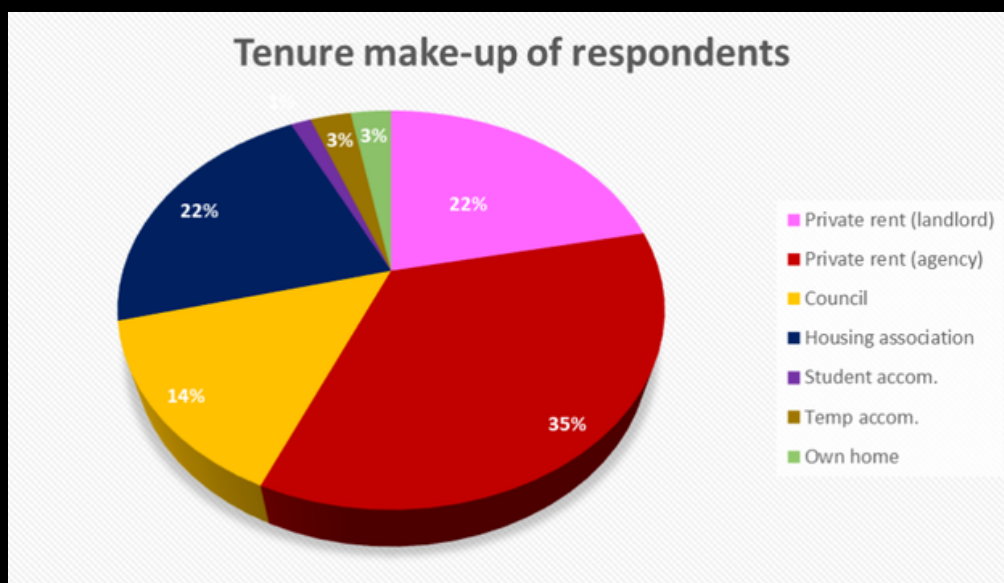
Participants	
Male	20
Female	48
Pref. not to say	1

Age range	
16-24	3
25-34	16
35-44	28
45-54	18
55-64	2
65+	2
Total	69



Tenure make-up – digital survey

Most respondents were renting either privately via an agency or directly via a landlord (57 per cent). A fifth (22 per cent) were housing association tenants while smaller numbers made up of council house tenants (14 per cent); there was a small group of home-owners (3 per cent); temporary accommodation (3 per cent) and student accommodation (1 per cent).



Case Studies

To amplify the research work, EYST also collected a number of case studies with participants willing to share their circumstances and experiences in more detail. All names quoted in case studies have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants.

Challenges and Limitations

While this research aimed to gather and present examples of lived experiences of ethnic minority communities, the relatively small scale of the research means that it cannot be construed as representative of the wider housing experiences of this particular cohort.

While the law is consistent throughout Wales, its application and access to services may differ; for instance, a large proportion of focus group and survey respondents are from urban areas of Wales and so few experiences have been captured of people from an ethnic minority background residing in a rural area of Wales.

In the final section of the report, we jointly pose a number of considerations for how housing policy and services in Wales may better manage the experiences identified in this report. In particular, we highlight the need to better meet the needs of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, to ensure a fairer and more equitable housing experience across Wales.

Identified Themes

Communication Issues

Participants in all four focus group sessions spoke about currently experiencing (or having had) problems in communicating with their landlord; this was particularly felt when it came to information sharing and guidance from landlords – tenants felt there was a lack of it, concerning tenancy changes or support available for example.

The challenge of communication, or its absence, predominantly affected social tenants in council properties, especially concerning timely responses regarding the duration of repair works or potential renovations. Similarly, there was felt to be ambiguity in communication for housing association tenants when it comes to understanding the process of being relocated to an alternative property during ongoing maintenance or renovation work. Private rent tenants also spoke of challenges in understanding how to access support for specific issues, for example not knowing the correct department to contact through phone calls or emails.

Moreover, a number of participants cited difficulties in communication because of poor access to digital technology; some referenced email contact being challenging.

A wider point raised by many participants was around a lack of dialogue from their landlord about plans for repairs or maintenance to be carried out. Some shared experiences of the landlord having not made prior arrangements to visit the property and it being inappropriate to visit at that time. Further, when repairs/maintenance had been raised as an issue, there was often lack of further communication on what course of action the landlord would take (in particular private landlords) and what timeframe was in place to undertake the work. Specific incidents were highlighted, such as a leaking bath where the landlord entered the property without prior notice, leaving a note advising against bathroom use for 48 hours. This action was taken without affording the tenant an opportunity to plan or make reasonable adjustments.

Meanwhile, two (private-rented) respondents to the survey highlighted issues where they felt making a complaint would have a negative impact on them and their situation:

“My landlord/ letting agency is intimidating me, they took money from me and refused to give me tenancy agreement to sign, I complained about the thick bushes at the garden they said I should pack out and return their key and has refused to refund me.”

“If I complained, I may be asked to look for another house and it's not easy to get one.”

Overcrowding

While no participants in the Haverfordwest focus group reported issues around overcrowding, it was a theme in the remaining three (Swansea, Cardiff and Wrexham). One example was given of nine people living in a three-bedroom property owned and maintained by a local authority. This issue had been ongoing for 17 years; the participant said their request for a larger property to accommodate everybody has not been addressed.

Case study - overcrowding: Mr. A, an ethnic minority council housing tenant residing in South Wales, has faced continual challenges relating to overcrowding alongside concerns about racism while seeking suitable housing for his family. Mr. A has lived in his current property for 20 years and, over a period of 17 years, Mr. A has made multiple applications to the council for a larger property. He however finds himself still residing in the same, cramped living space with his wife and children (a family of nine, cramped in a 3-bedroom council property). Mr. A is also concerned about racial discrimination as the areas with larger properties available for relocation are often predominantly inhabited by White Welsh tenants, raising concerns for him about potential racial discrimination and difficulties integrating into new communities. The fear of facing racism has been a significant barrier to accepting housing offers in certain areas.

Racism

The focus group discussions revealed distressing accounts of racism experienced by participants – in particular those in private rented accommodation in Cardiff and Swansea (though occurrences were less frequent among the group in Haverfordwest). Participants recalled instances of racism both directly from their landlords and through letting agents/agencies.

These tenants spoke of having faced condescending attitudes and an 'accept this or leave the property' approach when expressing concerns about various aspects of the property. During routine inspections, landlords or agents had subtly implied incompetence where it comes to maintaining the property or appliances/fixtures, insinuating that tenants are unfamiliar with common appliances, like showers.

Additionally, it was felt that landlords may have overlooked that certain appliances/fixtures may have reached the end of their lifespan, coinciding with the tenant's move-in, rather than attributing it to intentional damage by the tenant. Private sector tenants in three areas out of four believed this was due to their ethnicity, feeling White Welsh tenants don't get asked the same type of questions (or no questions at all) when similar incidents happen within their properties. Direct discrimination which is race-related was also reported where it concerns the search for a property.

Fear and anxiety stemming from the prospect of facing racism in specific geographical areas acted as a barrier; this deterred individuals from moving away from certain areas to seek perceived better opportunities elsewhere.

Numerous instances of discrimination emerged during the search for private rental accommodation. One participant recounted experiencing disrespect from and being condescended by a letting agent, describing patronising treatment while seeking private housing. Another participant shared a stark contrast in the housing search—despite working full-time, she struggled for over a year to find accommodation until her British-origin partner returned from Egypt, securing housing within a week.

Blatant racism was evident in some interactions, as one landlady explicitly stated she didn't typically rent to Black people. Additionally, ethnic minorities faced challenges in obtaining approval for properties, especially when dealing with property agents who demanded specific checks and histories, which these individuals often lacked.

Unequal treatment was observed in the maintenance of rented properties. White neighbours using the same agency were perceived as having received prompt attention for repairs, while ethnic minority tenants with similar issues were overlooked, further exacerbating the disparities in treatment.

Antisocial Behaviour

Antisocial behaviour was mainly experienced in Cardiff and Swansea, but was comparatively rare in Wrexham.

Issues between neighbours have arisen concerning cooking smells, with suggestions that neighbours should prioritise being more accommodating and tolerant rather than engaging in disputes over one another's cooking habits.

In some instances, participants suggested that their neighbours had been intolerant by asking them to "stop moving around the property." It was felt this was a result of unavoidable noise caused by creaky floorboards and staircases within the property.

During group discussions, ethnic minority social tenants (in council rentals) in the Swansea-hosted focus group believed that they are intentionally assigned properties in areas where Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is prevalent. These tenants feel frustrated as issues in these areas are often left unresolved. The council and the police engage in a 'back-and-forth', passing responsibility for handling these matters to each other. Sometimes, the police arrive after the disruptive behaviour has ceased, leaving no witnesses to testify, and the report is then labelled a false alarm.

Flooring

A tenant in a housing association property was surprised to discover that the floor in the property was completely bare, even down to the concrete, with no hardwood flooring. To his dismay, he had to bear the costs of flooring himself. When enquiring about support or funding for these expenses, he mentioned having to 'jump through numerous hoops' and paperwork for a process that would only cover a fraction of the needed funds.

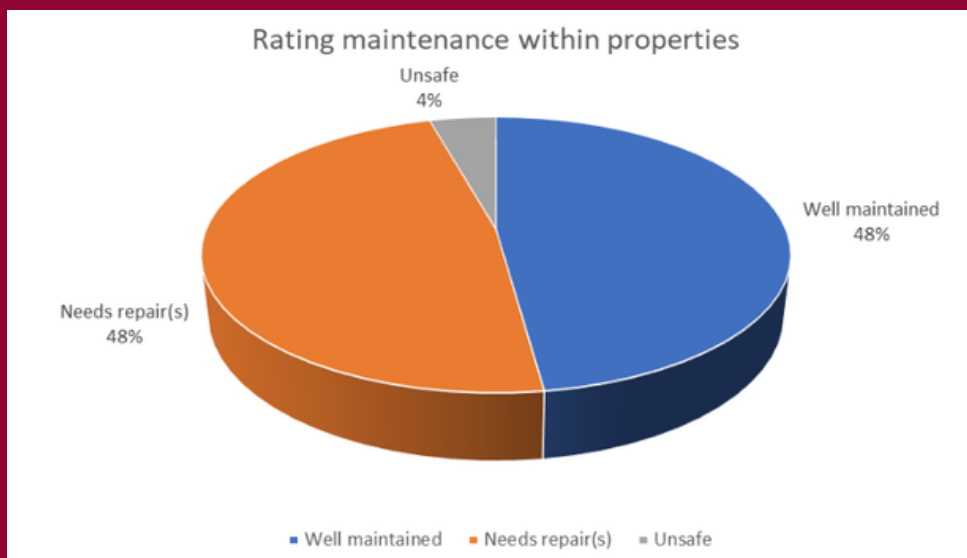
One council tenant in the Haverfordwest group reported that their local authority had a tenancy support unit which offered help in addressing such issues. However, this support was reported for only one council area and not across others (suggesting the authority had a specific budget in place) - and more generally, council tenants complained of bare concrete flooring. It was generally found that there is limited or no funding support for flooring in council or housing association properties in the other three areas.

Maintenance Issues

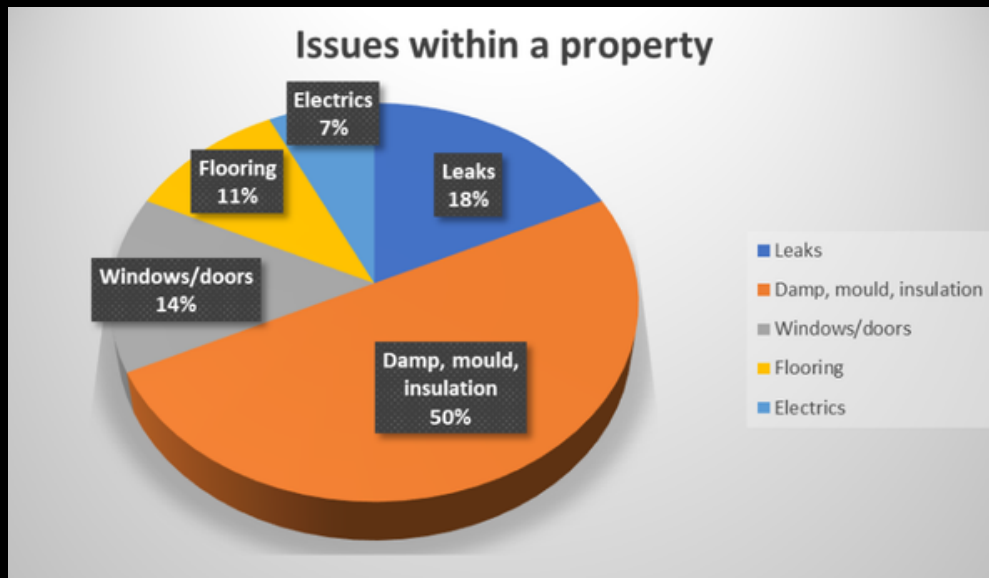
The focus group discussions highlighted a concerning lack of maintenance culture, particularly in council-managed and private rental properties. Individuals expressed a sense of neglect from the council after reporting issues, citing inadequate responses and delayed actions. Moreover, in particular among private rental and council tenants, there was felt to be a pervasive issue of poor communication from landlords regarding impending repairs or ongoing maintenance, leaving tenants uninformed about repair durations and the timing of repair work. Additionally, tenants expressed feeling unfairly blamed for faults or damages within their residences.

Another issue raised was the inefficiency of extractor fans in addressing concerns such as cooking odours and condensation, indicating either ineffective or malfunctioning ventilation systems. This is particularly important, as research indicates that some ethnic minority communities spend on average four times as much time cooking as white groups¹. Further, tenants shared frustrations over incomplete repairs within their properties. Instances were reported where repair work commenced but was left unfinished, exacerbating existing faults and leaving residents with unresolved issues that were sometimes worse than before the repair efforts were initiated. This was reported by mostly tenants in private rent properties. Some tenants noted that there is usually a complexity around who is really picking up the repairs – the agent assigning a contractor, subject to landlord's approval, or the landlord, who is getting their own contractor or even carrying out the repair themselves).

Respondents to the digital survey were asked whether they considered their property to be well-maintained or in need of repairs. There was an equal split between both answers at 48 per cent. Those most likely to be in need of repair by proportion were private agency rental properties, while those considered well-maintained were evenly spread through other tenures. Some 4 per cent considered their property 'unsafe' - two being housing association tenants and one a council tenant.



Where respondents to the survey highlighted that their property was in need of repair, they were asked to identify what the issues were. For those who answered, we have categorised them as 'leaks', 'damp, mould and insulation', 'windows/doors', 'flooring' and 'electrics'. Some respondents listed more than one issue. The most common issue identified was that of damp, mould or insulation/heating problems at 50 per cent; again, the most likely tenure reporting this issue was private rental via an agency.



Case study – access and maintenance: Ms. B, living in South Wales, initially experienced direct discrimination from an ethnic minority private landlady who said to her ‘I don’t rent to Black people.’ This gave Ms. B a bit of anxiety around looking for properties as she was in desperate need of accommodation at the time with two little children. She managed to convince the landlady to rent the property to her after having to get a British-born resident to stand as a guarantor for her. Since she has been in the property, the landlady has constantly been turning up (and letting herself in) without prior notice, or even permission from the tenant and has sometimes accused the tenant of not taking good care of the property. There are repair issues that remained unaddressed. Ms. B suggested that the landlord could access some funding for repairs, such as the Warm Homes scheme (to get a boiler replacement) and to help sort some issues of leaking in the property. There was a feeling that the the landlady may have feared having the council’s environmental team visit the property to assess its condition, and therefore she prevented the tenant from making the application by saying she will “sort the issues.” Still, the leak remains unresolved and is a big issue as the weather deteriorates through the winter again.

The digital survey captured a number of responses centred around perceived poor response times to maintenance and repair concerns:

Respondent A (council): ***“The time it takes for anyone to come out is months. Have loads of council workers coming out for issues that haven't been asked for so assuming it must be for somewhere else. Council also turning up unannounced expecting to be able to get on with work and then when told it's not a good time and they'll contact in next few days, there never is any follow up call unless called from my side.”***

Respondent B (council): ***“I have sent an email for over 3 to 4 [no timeframe given] for the repairs but no response yet.”***

Respondent C (council): ***“Sometimes the council doesn't think the issue is important enough, I called for some damage after a leak, they came and inspected it and said they would come, they never did. We have to chase them for everything again and again and sometimes they threaten us if we call for an emergency if it's not we will fine you. One time we weren't sure if a dangerous leak would be considered an emergency because the person we spoke to said sounds like you can manage but we risked it the operative was very shocked when he saw the state of it.”***

Respondent D (housing association): ***“No response from housing associations and no help from local authority. The local authorities are aware of issues in the block but no routes to a solution have been made.”***

Respondent E (housing association): ***“We have leaks in the house from bathroom, one incident the water came through and it was as though it was raining in the dining and living room. The ceiling was soaking and it was crumbling. All they did was come and take the light bulbs out. We were left like this for months. In the end they didn't repair the ceiling but just plastered and painted over it. This is just one problem.”***

Respondent F (private rent – agency): “The landlord is slack in repairing any thing we complain about as many are still left unrepaired after all this while and the house is very far from the bus stop and we walk through the cemetery to and from including my children. If I have enough money, I’ll go search for another accommodation.”

Respondent G (private rent – agency): “Agents barely respond and when they do, they send a contractor that doesn’t do anything to resolve the issue.”

Respondent H (private rent – agency): “Agency say they will get round to it but never do.”

Respondent I (private rent – landlord): “The timely intervention and repair of the damages...”

Respondent J (private rent – landlord): “For over 6 months, these concerns are not met.”

Insulation, Damp and Mould

The issue of insulation emerged as a common concern spanning Cardiff, Swansea, and Wrexham during the focus group discussions. However, participants in all four highlighted prevalent problems of dampness and mould within their properties.

Inadequate insulation was identified as a significant challenge, leading to considerable financial strain, especially for households caring for children with sickle cell disease (particularly prevalent for people with African or Caribbean background) in their efforts to maintain a warm living environment.

Additionally, one participant residing in a high-rise building raised an alarming issue - after the removal of cladding with the promise of replacement, there has been a delay in the cladding replacement process. Consequently, the flats have experienced reduced insulation, making the living spaces colder since the cladding was removed.

These shared experiences underscore the urgent need for improved insulation measures and prompt resolution of structural issues to ensure adequate living conditions for residents in these areas.

A number of respondents to the survey specifically highlighted damp and mould as a challenge:

Respondent A (private rent – agency): **“Need to wipe damp from wall and ceiling, check and wipe windows.”**

Respondent B (private rent – landlord): **“I believe we should not have to cough out money for dehumidifiers that cost on average £100 or plus. The house is energy rating B. It's 2023 the council should have done a damn good job in making sure the homes are conditioned well enough to be suffering from damp in this day and age.”**

Respondent C (private rent – agency): **“I take time cleaning mould almost every week.”**

Respondent D (council): **“When you mention mould, they do say it's 'common' or it's 'normal'. Once this was said, then who am I to keep chasing and asking?”**

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The discussion on mental health and wellbeing highlighted distressing experiences among individuals facing various challenges. This was an issue reported across all tenures with varying degrees. It was often made worse by how they are addressed, treated by or spoken to by their landlords/letting agents.

Participants shared instances of harassment from energy suppliers regarding debts, adding to the mental strain.

Participants expressed frustration at the lack of sympathy or support for tenants, feeling that the focus and understanding were predominantly directed towards the landlords' perspectives. These experiences underscored the need for more compassionate and equitable treatment, recognising and addressing the mental health impacts caused by these housing-related challenges.

Case study – safety and transferred debt: Ms. K got her property in South Wales as an all-bills inclusive, private rental - not knowing that the landlord would continue living in the property and was in debt. The landlord never paid bills, leading to the property being cut off from gas, electric and internet supply. In addition, Ms. K’s allocated room in the property did not have proper locks, making safety a concern, alongside being plunged into darkness and left cold when gas/electricity is out. Debt collectors and bailiffs also visited the property asking for the occupants, obtained Ms. K’s details and started sending letters to her in her own name, asking her to pay debts owed by the landlord. Ms. K has provided evidence to show her rental contract and ‘bills-inclusive-of-rent’ agreement, but is still being harassed by phone calls and letters from debt collector agencies. She has had to seek help from Citizens Advice, despite now having moved out of the property. The landlord is currently serving a criminal sentence. Ms. K is also worried that these incessant calls and letters from debt collectors, and having her name on correspondence, will affect her credit rating.

Two respondents to the survey, meanwhile, highlighted problems where a lack of suitable accommodation was impacting on their lives:

“...moving around the house, moving on second floor, moving in back yard and going around the street is so painful with prosthesis [sic] leg, from the beginning that I settled in this house and area I have not feel safe and comfort due to my limb amputee” (council tenant)

“Disabled access for myself and partner [is a challenge] about the residence. I am an amputee and my partner had a stroke” (housing association tenant)

Rents in Private Rented Sector

The issue of rent regulation for private landlords emerged as a shared concern across all areas in Wales during discussions.

Participants voiced grievances about ‘government-imposed regulations’ which was perceived by or heard from landlords; which, in turn, was said to have led to rent increases that disproportionately affected tenants.

Another issue discussed was the difficulty in obtaining refunds for deposits, along with unresolved disputes through tenancy deposit schemes (TDS), which posed challenges for tenants seeking fair resolutions.

The focus groups also referenced concerns about letting agencies prioritising landlords' financial gains at the expense of tenants' living standards.

Lack of Awareness of Rights as Tenants

The lack of awareness regarding tenants' rights was notably more pronounced in Wrexham and Haverfordwest, as discussed in the focus groups amongst private rental tenants.

Participants shared concerning instances where their rights as tenants were compromised. One individual recounted being asked to pay an exorbitant upfront amount, totalling one year's rent plus a one-month security deposit, amounting to £1,500 per month.

One participant highlighted the difficulty in understanding council tax, feeling that insufficient support was provided by the local authority, despite being entitled to a council tax reduction. They cited a language barrier and requested additional guidance from a council support worker, but, in spite of having booked 'multiple appointments', the requested was not followed up.

This lack of assistance resulted in a significant outstanding debt of nearly £1,000, despite efforts and evidence provided to seek support for the claim.

In another case, a Ukrainian family had to rely on a child's teacher from their school to act as a guarantor to secure a private rental property. Questions also arose about the regulations concerning the provision of white goods in rental properties, indicating a lack of clarity on such matters.

Moreover, a majority of private sector rental participants highlighted the dearth of information and support provided regarding form-filling processes, further complicating their tenancy experiences. In particular, references were made to the lack of clarity on how to describe faults or issues or how to categorise them according to the forms.

Waste Management

Waste management was described as a problematic issue in both Newport and Cardiff, according to the discussions held. During the time of the focus groups some local authorities had implemented new recycling programmes and were also experiencing staff strikes.

Case study – waste management: Mr. T, a council housing tenant in South Wales, is worried about the poor and deteriorating living standard in his area. Mr. T said he initially thought or expected the area where he lived to be a fairly nice area with good facilities, but is appalled at the state of the area with regards to drainage; he thinks this is due to poor waste management (see images below which he provided). In addition, he is also having issues with a service provider that provided energy to the property before he moved which is now regularly contacting him to settle the bill for the meter. He has repeatedly complained to the council but there appears to be a gap in communication somewhere and he keeps getting these calls and letters from the energy company. Mr. T expressed his frustrations about this as he feels the council are doing nothing about it and it is beginning to affect his state of mind; he gets anxious each time the company calls, and he needs to repeat what he has told them countless times prior.



Experiences of local community amenities (including culturally appropriate food)

Access to essential local amenities such as parks, schools and transport has been a pressing concern for residents, particularly affecting children in certain areas. Further, issues were raised around the difficulty in sourcing culturally appropriate (Halal) food.

Accessibility issues have emerged, particularly for older children attending comprehensive school, due to the location and lack of adequate public transportation options. This situation forces children to embark on early and lengthy commutes involving multiple buses to and from school. Additionally, in some areas, there was a reported noticeable lack of nearby amenities, with inadequate or insecure parks that deter children from playing outdoors safely.

These limitations have contributed to mental health and wellbeing challenges, as residents, especially children, felt cramped indoors without proper play areas. The cumulative effect was a strain on mental health due to limited access to safe outdoor spaces, exacerbating concerns about overall wellbeing within these communities.

Responses to the digital survey also captured similar issues, with six respondents citing a lack of culturally appropriate facilities (Halal options, a mosque) and a couple of respondents referencing the lack of play facilities for children. One said that "neighbours don't feel safe using the play park because of hostilities [from others]."

Case Study – local amenities and well-being: Mrs. S currently lives in a three-bed council flat with one other adult and four children in North Wales. With limited space in the flat and the children not having a place to go out and play safely, it is affecting her mental health and wellbeing. (Although Mrs. S didn't say much about her background, there is indication she has fled a traumatic situation to be given refugee status in North Wales). The park across the road for the occupants in the block of flats in the area is not safe for children to play as there are no safety fences or barriers and no traffic control for cars driving by the park. Mrs. S is also not sure of what her rights are when applying for another, more suitable property as she is being told by the council that she needs to wait two years before she can move. The lack of local Halal shops is also another concern for Mrs. S as it makes shopping difficult for her and her family. They have to travel to where there are Halal shops to get food, even though Mrs. S expressed that they are now used to that routine. She would very much like to live in an area where her children can access a safe outdoor space to play and run around, as the current lack of such facilities is not only affecting her, but the children too.

Support and Signposting

Throughout all of themes highlighted above and discussed, there was a persistent thread of a perception that landlords lacked receptiveness towards, or understanding of, ethnic minority people, particularly more in the private rent sector (less so in social housing sector); In some cases this prompted the necessity for external advocacy - often through charitable organisations - to mediate and bring about positive resolutions. Additionally, there were notable challenges arising from a lack of adaptability/flexibility within the legal framework and service provisions to effectively address some of the circumstances encountered by residents.

These limitations in flexibility within the existing laws and services have posed obstacles in adequately managing and resolving specific issues faced by individuals in their housing situations.

Suggestions for Improvements from Research Participants

Survey respondents were offered the opportunity to suggest ways of improving the issues they'd reported, to help address housing inequality. The suggestions varied and we have grouped these into the following themes.

Better support and sign-posting.

"I needed to be moved to a flat in safe area due to my vulnerability and been asked to deal with many things on my own with huge help from an auntie who became friend and huge support to mum with a limb amputation. She wasn't treated fairly till auntie started speaking to housing association offering her inappropriate accommodation and managing other daily support and many more things my mother and me [sic] gone through." (housing association tenant).

Improved tenant awareness on maintenance and the complaints process.

"We need to know more about what repairs the council are supposed to and what we can do if they don't take us seriously."

"Liasing with these organisations like [housing association redacted], council, etc and showing authority and that if things aren't done like they should be, complaints will be made. They seem to brush ethnic Minorities off cos of the barriers. If they see that ethnic minority tenants have support they may be reluctant to fob them off. Also make their systems easier for reporting problems/issues etc."

"Availability of Govt regulated complaints portals to help immigrants channel their dissatisfaction about their housing conditions."

"More support available if they have been discriminated against. Making sure they are aware of their rights."

"Clarity on where to seek help where there's a disagreement with landlord or agency."

"Would be good to be aware of our rights, and what services are out there. Also what to do when it comes facing issues with the housing association."

Documentation checks and application process for migrants

The digital survey picked up a theme around migration and challenges in the private rented sector. These suggestions were wholly from those renting in the private sector.

"Some of the checks are prerequisites are too tough and hard for ethnic minorities and immigrants to meet."

"Cutting down the loops we have to jump over just to rent a house from agencies. Agents now request for 3-6 months rents before being considered as a tenant. Its slowly becoming a dangerous trend."

"House owners should be lenient with migrants when asking for documentation."

"Abolition of deposit if tenants can provide a UK Guarantor. Deposit is still collected after providing a UK based Guarantor. This is a lot of stress on renting houses."

Increasing the supply of housing/more affordable rent

"More and more people are here now, and mostly, they are here to work and support the economy, so I don't see how that's possible without new homes being built if the influx is more than [the government] expected. Also, offer proper housing to those working once it's built and ready for occupation."

“Make more houses available especially neat and modern buildings.”

“Affordable, well maintained houses and community garden and spaces.”

“Affordable housing that meets with immigrant’s needs.”

“Probably more housing with lower rents and suitable for them.”

“More housing should be made available and it should also be affordable especially for families.”

“Building of more council houses and making it more accessible.”

Person-centred approach

“Actually taking each person into account, not just assuming and ticking boxes. I was in [address redacted] for five years to then find out children aren't allowed that high [in the building]; council knew I had kids, only found out it wasn't allowed AFTER I started kicking off with the council to clean the area up because of the amount of drug addicts and antisocial behaviour was happening and then I got moved and the help I was sorting out at the flats then stopped. So actually taking each person as someone rather than just a number would help.”

Points for Consideration

This research provides insights into the housing experiences of people from ethnic minority communities. While, as a small-scale, qualitative research project, it cannot be considered a definitive sample of these communities' experiences, it does nonetheless highlight a series of issues and circumstances which may well reflect wider experiences.

We have captured 'points of consideration' based on the research and the responses/suggestions of those who have taken part in this work, and identified the following five areas:

Communication

Cross-tenure

- Adequate notice should be given before visiting a property to carry out any repairs and to enable access
- Tenancy contracts should be clearer and easier to understand
- Language support when communicating with tenants/clients where English is not their first language.

Private rented sector

- Private landlords and agencies should respond to communication from their tenants/clients to acknowledge receipt of messages, particularly about repairs
- Clearer information should be made available on who should provide and install 'white goods' (washing machines, dishwashers, cooker etc. – whether that should be a qualified person)

Knowledge and information

Cross-tenure

- Consideration should be given to expanding training for anyone in a role that supports tenants, to cover cultural awareness
- More work should be undertaken to raise awareness among tenants of their rights
- More in-depth consultation should be carried out with tenants before issuing housing regulations
- Further work should be undertaken by all housing providers to raise awareness of how to manage problems with damp and mould in a property

Local authorities

- Local authorities should consider offering more support to newly-granted refugees to find affordable and adequate accommodation, particularly around deposits, guarantors and references
- More and better information should be made available to those seeking social housing, in particular around the application process

Social housing providers

- Housing providers should work more closely with the police to help address and prevent any anti-social behaviour problems arising from discrimination or racism

Maintenance

Social housing providers

- Housing providers should continue up-skilling their maintenance and repairs teams to avoid tenants resorting to 'DIY' jobs where inappropriate

Availability of adequate and affordable housing

Welsh Government and social housing providers

- Welsh Government should work closely with social housing providers to build more homes that are suitable for a wide range of needs

Local authorities

- Local authorities to assess, in-depth, local need to help prevent people being forced from their area as a result of rising rent costs

Regulation and monitoring

Cross-tenure

- Welsh Government and all housing providers (social and private) to amplify work in improving housing conditions and standards, as part of both the Renting Homes (Wales) Act and Welsh Housing Quality Standards.

Welsh Government and private rented sector

- Welsh Government should consider rent regulation in the private rented sector as part of its White Paper on fair rents and the right to adequate housing
- Consideration should be given to reducing the burden on new housing applicants – particularly refugees or migrants - where background checks and guarantor requests have proven challenging because they have no rent record prior

Conclusion

Tai Pawb and EYST are grateful to all participants for having shared their housing experiences to support the publication of this report. It contains a number of clear themes and some suggested ways forward both from those participating and from the authoring organisations.

While some issues reported by tenants showed overt experiences of racism, hostility and discrimination, some others were reported to be linked to an undercurrent of racist attitudes and stereotyping leading to less favourable treatment.

Additional problems that were mentioned were of a broader nature and could affect tenants regardless of their race. However, the severity of these issues and the inability to effectively address or confront them may be exacerbated by specific racial or ethnic factors, such as language barriers, communication challenges, fear of discrimination and limited awareness stemming from migration or refugee status.

On response times to maintenance and repair issues, for example, there is a pressing need for improved communication, more timely responses and a more thorough approach to property maintenance and repair procedures within these housing arrangements.

Meanwhile, experiences of racism and hostility have led to people facing disadvantage, barriers and unequal opportunities. Further, there is an opportunity to consider education and training for housing providers.

Specifically in the private rented sector, stories shared as part of this report underscore the need for more balanced and effective monitoring that considers both landlords' responsibilities and tenants' rights, aiming for fairer and more transparent practices within the rental sector in Wales. Further, tenants have called for improved education, support, and accessible resources in order that they can navigate what is perceived to be a complex system and better understand their rights and responsibilities within the rental sector.

The report is an opportunity for Welsh Government, housing providers and partners to reflect on what has been shared and to review how the 'points for consideration' can be taken forward and actioned.