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Housing Experiences of Global Southern Migrants

Glen S Jankowski^{ad*} Fatimah Bint-Hanif^a, Susan Coan^b and Louise Warwick-Booth^c

*^aSchool of Humanities and Social Sciences, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK; *ORCID: 0000-0003-0349-9356 ^bCentre for Health Promotion Research, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK: ORCID: 0000-0001-5279-8673. ^c Centre for Health Promotion Research, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK: ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7501-6491> *corresponding author address: University College Dublin, Belfield Campus, Dublin, Ireland, D04 VIW8; Email: glen.jankowski@ucd.ie*

Glen Jankowski is a Senior Lecturer in Social- and Health- Psychology with research interests in anti-racism, decolonising psychology and body image.

Susan Coan is a Research Fellow in Health Promotion who uses participatory and creative methods to research health inequalities affecting marginalised groups in society.

Louise Warwick-Booth is a Reader in Health Promotion with expertise in using participatory methods to gather data with underrepresented populations.

Fatimah Bint-Hanif is a research assistant with an MSc in Psychology and a BSc in Speech and Language Therapy. Fatimah's previous work has included leading initiatives with universities and professional bodies to enhance equity, inclusion and anti-racist practice within the Speech and Language Therapy profession.

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Housing Experiences of Global Southern Migrants

People from the Global South, including women who migrate, have neglected experiences in research. After consultation, this project aimed to explore Global Southern migrants' experiences with housing. Study 1 surveyed 158 migrants (75% female) revealing mixed conditions (e.g., 27% poor heating), challenges with housing providers (11% intimidation) and housemates (21% hid religion/sexuality). Study 2 through peer-led interviews and focus groups with 25 migrant students (68% female) also highlighted mixed experiences including family accommodation support against racism, bureaucracy and isolation (e.g., "*[I wish there was] a way that [I] can still like make friends*"). Attending to these experiences not only challenges psychology's colonial dominance but also emphasizes the critical importance of decent housing, especially for vulnerable groups like migrant women.

Keywords: migrants; migration; housing; global south; peer research

The social science neglect of Global Southerners and women

Psychology, housing studies and the wider social sciences are dominated by Globally Northern, male participants, researchers and standpoints (NUS & Universities UK, 2019; Peters, 2015; Thalmayer et al., 2021). Psychology, for example, has been documented to have >90% of participants from the Global North (i.e., North America, Australasia and Europe; Henrich et al., 2010; Rao & Donaldson, 2015; Thalmayer et al., 2021) with >56% also being male (Jankowski et al., 2022; Rao & Donaldson, 2015). Housing studies has been critiqued for conceptualizing housing that holds less relevance to women (e.g., treating the public and private spaces as separate, with the former for work, the latter for rest; Darab et al., 2018; Heslop, 2021). Similarly housing research has been criticised for neglecting working-class people whose limited financial and social capital multifariously restricts housing (Heslop, 2021). Ultimately meaningful differences in needs, standpoints and behaviours may exist across these groups (Henrich et al., 2010).

The social science neglect of migrants

A major behavioural difference between the select Global Northerners, who make up social science research, and others is migration. People from the Global South (Africa, South America and Asia) form the majority of migrants (75%), an increasingly common experience (Batalova, 2022). Migrants include migrant students, economic migrants, and refugees (those who have been granted asylum). Yet migrants are understudied in the social sciences (Due et al., 2022). Whilst important distinctions between these groups exist (e.g., including differing permissions to work in their host countries), there are also shared experiences; notably poor housing experiences (Dwyer & Brown, 2008).

The value of peer-led research

Peer-led research that is meaningfully informed by the standpoints of those so far neglected (including migrants) is recommended including for housing research (Darab et al., 2018; Due

et al., 2022; Heslop, 2021). Such research should include Global Southern people, women and migrants as peer researchers (e.g., to inform the initial study design). Researchers can mitigate the power differences between them and peer researchers by demystifying academic processes, working flexibly and compensating for peer researchers' input (Heslop, 2021; Tessitore & Margherita, 2024). In 2020, research conducted by ST4R (Stand Together '4' Refugees), a group consisting of young migrants, identified poor quality housing as a top priority issue among fellow UK migrants (ST4R Group, n.d.). The group called for further attention to the issue (Herbert, 2021).

Importance of initial housing experiences when migrating

Housing for migrants is critical. Migration is a challenging process that, by definition, entails some separation from community, culture and homes. Housing has both physical and symbolic influences on people ranging from physical shelter to a sense of security and identity in relation to wider environments. Yet poor housing for migrants is common (Romoli et al., 2022; Xie, 2019). Poor housing can be part of a wider 'hostile environment' that aims to deter migrants from permanent residency (Jannesari et al., 2022). Poor housing harms migrants' physical, psychological and social wellbeing (Camilleri et al., 2022; Due et al., 2022; Marcu, 2018; McDowell & Collins, 2023; Romoli et al., 2022; Xie, 2019). For example, Romoli et al. (2022) reviewed 28 studies assessing migrants' wellbeing in relationship to their homes. Housing helped migrants build and sustain a sense of psychological and physical normality. This was pivotal, the researchers concluded, as migrants often experienced loss and disruption prior to arrival.

Migrants' greatest housing challenges can be on arrival in a new country where financial, social and linguistic resources may be minimal. These arrival or initial homes have sometimes been dubbed "*corridor accommodations*" reflecting their precarious nature yet key role finding security in new, host, countries (Brown et al., 2024, p. 258). For example,

women migrants face heightened risks of sexual violence in the first year of migration (Khouani et al., 2023). As such, initial home experiences have been identified as a critical ‘make or break’ factor for migrants and their host societies (Brown et al., 2024; Due et al., 2022).

Housing, discrimination and migrants

Poor housing can exacerbate pre-existing inequalities for migrants. Demonstrably, Mengesha et al. (2022) reviewed 32 studies including from the US, France, the UK, Lebanon, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Jordan showing housing inequalities between migrants and their citizen counterparts during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, relative to citizens, migrants were more likely to lose their jobs (e.g., cleaning other people’s homes), to live in crowded housing and to struggle with their rent (Mengesha et al., 2022). Each of these inequalities increased the impact of covid-19, not least through elevated infection rates.

Migrants of colour (those racialized as Black, Asian and Minoritized Ethnic; Hylton, 2018) can also face racism in their housing experiences. For example, some countries have long histories of redlining, where certain groups (e.g., Black people) were routinely excluded from buying houses in wealthier neighbourhoods that generally had better schools and amenities (Tippett et al., 2014). This blocked the wealth and security a Black family could accrue across generations (Butler et al., 2020; Coates, 2014). The impact of housing barriers typically rooted in systemic inequalities (e.g., racism) perpetuates disparities in psychological safety, belonging and opportunities that persist across multiple generations (Bint-Hanif & Jankowski, in prep.). Today, British people of colour are more likely to live in overcrowded houses, to rent and to be homeless compared to white people (UK Government, 2018). The housing experiences of migrants of colour requires attention.

Women migrants can also face discrimination relative to their male counterparts (Calderón-Jaramillo et al., 2020; Gewalt et al., 2018; Llacer et al., 2007; Mayock et al., 2012). For example, in their interviews with 17 migrant women who were homeless in Ireland, Mayock et al., (2012) found domestic violence, economic precarity and dependent children trapped women into a homeless cycle. For example, some migrant women reported being stalked, and having their citizenship documents stolen, by controlling, abusive, male partners. The researchers noted despite the female migrant participants' resourcefulness, homelessness could be impossible to exit due to these compound gender and citizenship inequalities around .

In gaining housing, migrants can face intersectional discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, US experiments have found White men making rental enquiries are at least twice as likely to get a positive response compared to Black women (Massey & Lundy, 2001). Housing requests are also received less favourably when they come from Black women and Latina women relative to White women (Faber & Mercier, 2022). Yet policymakers and researchers can fail such women if only focussing on singular causes of homelessness e.g., schemes that house migrants together regardless of sexuality, gender or other potential vulnerability (McDowell & Collins, 2023).

Housing provider and housemate influences

Housing providers play a crucial role in migrant housing experiences. In gaining housing, migrants typically rely on existing social connections in the host country, where available (Parutis, 2011). Male migrants can also form and utilize social connections more so than female migrants especially if from patriarchal cultures that block women's participation in public spaces (Mayock et al., 2012). Urbina Julio (2024) highlighted how migrants' legal liminality related to having less choice in the housing market and less ability to challenge

unfair housing provider practices such as overcrowding and broken amenities. Housing providers thus wield considerable power over migrants including enacting discrimination. Experimental evidence shows housing providers respond significantly less positively to rental enquiries if the sender has an African, Muslim or ‘racialized’ sounding name versus a White sounding name (Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016) or if the enquiry is from a woman with children or a woman in receipt of benefits (Faber & Mercier, 2022). This discrimination often goes unchallenged. For example, it took years to sanction a British ‘super landlord’ for routinely banning potential tenants if they were Asian, on zero-hour contracts or were ‘battered wives’ (BBC News, 2017, para. 3; Collinson, 2017).

Housemates also influence migrant housing experiences. Migrants are more likely to live in overcrowded housing, with less natural light and shared facilities than citizens (Urbina Julio, 2024). These conditions can result in a lack of privacy, comfort and safety (Urbina Julio, 2024); which may increase the risk of gender-based violence for women migrants in particular (Calderón-Jaramillo et al., 2020; Llacer et al., 2007). In their interviews with female asylum seekers to France, Khouani et al., (2023) found that migrant women were 9 times more likely to experience sexual violence than non-migrant women. Furthermore, between 5-11% of this violence was perpetrated by housemates. Unsurprisingly, 16% of migrant women reported feeling insecure when sharing accommodation. Nonetheless housemate experiences are not simplistic with some benefits such as solidarity being documented among migrants (Xie, 2019). Housemate and housing provider experiences are thus important to assess.

Housing area experiences

Typically research on migrant housing experiences neglects the location, neighbourhood and social connections around the housing. This is despite decisive, hostile, policies of placing

migrants into already deprived communities (Brown et al., 2024). Such neighbourhoods may include higher social isolation, rates of crime, racial harassment and fewer local amenities (Boccagni, 2022; Zill et al., 2020). These housing placement policies are argued to deliberately foster tensions between citizens and migrants. Furthermore, they may counter any potential ‘roots’ migrants can lay down; ultimately reducing their likelihood of staying permanently (Zill et al., 2020). Deprived areas can further compound the isolation of women migrants, who are more likely to have dependent children reliant on schooling and other amenities, relative to their male counterparts (Mayock et al., 2012). Housing area experiences are thus important to be studied.

Need for mixed-methods and peer led research

One review of 118 studies on migrant home experiences (Brown et al., 2024) found qualitative studies or literature reviews formed the dominant methodology (69%). Relatedly, in Romoli et al.'s (2022) review of 28 migrant housing studies, the researchers recommended mixed-methods projects that could retain depth of experiences whilst moving beyond exploration. Finally, due to the historic neglect of Global Southern migrant perspectives from the social sciences, some have argued this groups’ standpoint should take a more pivotal role in informing research via peer and participatory research (*Critical Psychology Confronts Racialized Crises*, 2012). Peer-led, mixed methods are thus needed to assess migrant’s housing experiences.

Current project

This project, shaped by those with lived experience of Global Southern migration comprised two studies. Study 1 formed a brief, mixed-methods survey on initial UK housing experiences after consultation with a research group of young migrants that identified the

need for greater attention to housing. Study 2 consisted of peer research co-led by four MSc migrant students about general migrant experiences including around housing.

Study aims:

- 1) To consult Global Southern migrants on research design and topic
- 2) To explore migrants' housing and area conditions
- 3) To explore migrants' housing providers and housemate experiences

Study 1 Survey Method

Survey participants

159 people who had migrated to the UK answered an online survey (Study 1) via *Prolific* (the research management company). They were invited to participate in our study if they had migrated to the UK, lived there currently and did not identify as White. Most self-defined their ethnicity as Asian (57%), Black, Black British, Caribbean or African (23%), 'Mixed' (11%), Arab (4%) or Other (5%). The mean age of participants was 33 years ($SD = 10.16$) and ranged from 19 to 82. Most were women (75%) and heterosexual (87%), while a smaller percentage identified as homosexual (3%) or bisexual (4%). Additionally, some participants preferred not to disclose their sexuality (7%). Just 15 of the participants indicated they were also asylum seekers and/or refugees when they first migrated. Of these, 10 indicated they had stayed in asylum accommodation.

Survey procedure

Study 1 arose from specific guidance from a young migrant group supported by the British charity, *The Children's Society* (ST4R Group, n.d.). The group's own research detailed poor housing experiences among their peer migrant participants. Meetings with the charity coordinator supporting the group led to a project design that initially involved primary research on housing experiences including workshops and a photo exhibition. However, due

to the covid-19 pandemic, the project shifted to a remote study to adhere to lockdown restrictions. Study 1 thus consisted of a short, online, survey in June 2020 via the research management system *Prolific* among eligible participants who lived in the UK but were born in the Global South (Africa, Asia, and South America). After engaging in the online survey, participants were debriefed and signposted to relevant support information. Participants were compensated with *Prolific* monetary credits in recognition of their time. Institutional ethical approval was granted, and data was stored in password-protected files. All participant quotes were assigned pseudonyms and participants read a debrief with relevant migrant charity contact details for support. Guidance from previous migrant research (e.g., Alessi & Kahn, 2023) helped ensure high ethical standards. Some of the results were disseminated into a short comic by the artist Karrie Fransman alongside links to existing campaigns for better migrant housing conditions (Jankowski, 2020).

Survey measures

Demographics.

Participants were asked to self-identify their gender, age, sexuality and ethnicity.

Housing conditions.

Participants were asked “*When you first came to the UK, please indicate what kind of housing conditions you experienced?*”. They were asked to select all the responses that applied and if none did, to not select any. This included “*dirt*”, “*infestation (e.g., rats, lice or bedbugs)*”, “*lack of Wi-Fi (internet access that was not via your phone)*”, “*no cleaning supplies*”, “*broken windows*”, “*broken furniture*” and “*poor heating*”. Participants could also indicate “*other*” and give a free-text response.

Housing area.

Participants were asked “*When you first came to the UK, please indicate what kind of area you lived in?*”. They were asked to select all the responses that applied and that if none did, to not select any. The options included “*felt safe*”, “*had good access to public transport*”, “*had good local facilities such as shops*” and “*had nearby parks*”.

City center distance.

Participants were asked “*When you first came to the UK, please indicate how long it would take you on average to get from your house to the nearest city centre?*”. Participants were asked to estimate in hours.

Housemate experiences.

Participants were asked “*When you first came to the UK, did you have to move into a home with people you did not already know?*”. For those that indicated yes, they were then asked to select all the response that applied and if none did, to not select any. These included “*I felt I could be friends with these people*”, “*I was treated fairly by the people I lived with*”, “*I felt I could be myself around the people I lived with*” and “*I did not feel I needed to hide my sexuality, religion or other aspect of myself because of the people I lived with*”. Participants could also indicate “*other*” and give a free-text response.

Housing provider experiences.

Participants were also asked who their housing provider was if any. Participants were asked “*When you first came to the UK, please indicate what kind of experience with the housing provider you had?*”. They were asked to select all the response that applied including “*did not take my concerns seriously*”, “*were intimidating*”, “*scrutinized me unfairly*”, “*positive*” and “*no problems*”. Participants could also indicate “*other*” and give a free-text response.

Other housing conditions .

Participants were asked: “*Is there anything else about your housing conditions when you first came to the UK that you would like to share?*”. Participants could give a free-text response.

Survey analytical plan

Numerical responses were quantified into percentages. As participants could give multiple responses to each question percentages do not always total 100. To analyse the free-text, qualitative responses a simple content analysis was conducted where responses were categorized and matched with related numerical responses.

Study 2 Method

Interview and focus group participants

Self-selecting MSc migrant students of the authors responded to a peer research opportunity call. They were then trained by the authors, and other staff members employed within their institution, to peer research other migrant students. The peer researchers consisted of 3 women and 1 man who were Black African migrants (aged in their 20s and 30s). The authors were mindful that the peer-researchers were full time students, with other commitments. As such they were guided to data gather in a way that was convenient to them. Peer researchers were offered recognition for participants’ time and input in the form of a £10 food voucher for use in the university. The peer researchers gathered data from a total of 25 migrant students, through 6 individual interviews, and 2 focus groups. The peer researchers recruited using their own student networks and connections to reach other migrant students at the same institution. Due to practical constraints and because the aim of this qualitative research was not generalizability, demographics of participants were not gathered by peer researchers. All were migrant students from the Global South, however and most ($n = 17$; 68%) were women.

Interview and focus group procedure

Study 2 arose from course team reflection and discussions about migrant student experiences when studying in the UK, following staff concerns about the wider challenges they faced beyond higher education. The project recruited 4 peer researchers from the MSc Public Health-Health Promotion teaching programme, a course which includes students with diverse personal characteristics. The peer research opportunity was open to wider groups of students, studying on other course, but those who volunteered were those who had existing connections with the staff. The in-person workshops were organised by the staff team to support the peer researchers, using a model previously refined by the staff, and used successfully in a range of community settings (Warwick-Booth, et al 2023). Workshop 1 focused on staff's interest in migrant student experiences and our commitment to peer research as a way of working. Workshop 1 then outlined the potential range of methods (qualitative and quantitative) Study 2 could use and encouraged peer researchers to select both their preferred method and specific topic focus. The peer researchers decided to explore the educational journeys of other migrant students using a mixture of qualitative methods (focus groups and individual interviews). Workshop 2 trained the peer researchers in using interviews and focus groups and entailed co-designing a semi-structured schedule. We also reflected on mitigating potential ethical issues using real-world scenarios and ethical guidance. For example, peer researchers were reminded that their involvement in the research would not impact their course grades and that they were able to decline or withdraw from collaboration at any point with no consequences. Institutional ethical approval was granted. Peer researchers were then able to begin data collection. Workshop 3 took place once data collection had been completed and focused on analysis using interview and focus group transcripts to determine key themes. Themes were identified by the peer researchers present at the workshop and over email. Peer researcher reflections on the process of the work were also gathered during this workshop (Warwick-Booth, et al 2023). They were debriefed and then thanked for their collaboration

with £20 vouchers plus university merchandise, and course textbooks. Peer researchers were listed as co-authors of a chapter write up of the wider migrant educational findings (Warwick-Booth, et al 2023) and were also invited to feedback on the analysis and dissemination more broadly. Though owing to their course commitments they declined further involvement.

Interview and focus group measures

The co-produced semi-structured schedule used by the peer researchers to explore the experiences of other migrant students focused on 3 key areas including course, migrant and study transitions and experiences. Example questions included: “*How have you found settling in [to a new city]?*” and “*How was your move to the UK?*”

Interview and focus group analytical plan

Interviews and focus groups were transcribed, and then thematically analysed. Using the initial, draft, codes and themes identified by the peer researchers in workshop 3, staff (SC) developed a coding framework for application across the entire data set, drawn from the 3 peer researchers’ suggestions. The original thematic analysis was broad in focus, though it illustrated that several participants raised accommodation related issues as a concern (Warwick-Booth et al, 2023). The data set was then revisited for the purposes of this paper, and a secondary analysis undertaken to highlight all the housing related issues discussed. This was undertaken in reference to previous migrant housing research findings (including Study 1) focusing on housing conditions, housemate experiences, and neighbourhood experiences. with a new research question: ‘*What were the students' experiences of housing/finding accommodation on arrival in the UK?*’ Findings from Study 1 and Study 2 have been integrated. Pseudonyms have been assigned to all quotes followed by key demographics for Study 1 participants and “*migrant students*” for Study 2 participants.

Migrant consultation

Our consultation with migrants influenced both studies through our mixed-methods design where we could gain breadth and depth; through the accessibility of our questions; through our mindfulness of the need not to homogenize migrant perspectives and through acknowledgement of the gratitude some migrants wished to reflect in their experiences.

Finally, our migrant consultation emphasized to us the importance of doing to ourselves what we were asking participants to do – that is to reflect on our own (lack of) migrant housing experiences, biases and standpoints through reflexivity (see Reflexivity).

Results and discussion

Housing problems

Study 1's survey participants reported positive, neutral and negative housing experiences.

Two fifths (41%) reported no housing problems. Previous research also attests to the positive home experiences some migrants report (Migrant Voice, 2017; Romoli et al., 2022). Partly this is due to good quality accommodation, in welcoming and resourceful areas, via compassionate, professional, providers. It may also be due to migrants' resilience in creating positive home environments, social networks and assimilating despite any hostility or barriers. Supportively, Parutis (2011) found Polish and Lithuanian migrants to the UK, faced limited housing options on arrival, but navigated this and the general housing market to their advantage including through subletting and improving their English by living with native English speakers etc. Romoli et al. (2022) documented migrant participants' resilience through 'home making' specifically decorating, designing and cooking. These activities helped migrants feel secure regardless of specific living environment.

Many of Study 1's survey participants reported housing issues (59%), including multiple problems. Specifically, 28% reported problems accessing internet, 27% reported

poor heating, 15% reported dirt, 12% reported infestations, 12% a lack of cleaning supplies, 9% broken furniture and 4% broken windows. Others reported broken smoke alarms, damp, cramped rooms, leaks, mice, mould and dirt.

In Study 2, experiences were also mixed with some positive and negative housing conditions. For some students migrating was a smooth process, with accommodation in place before they left their home country. Other migrant students reported that they found it difficult to locate suitable places to live, particularly in instances where their partners and children were also joining them in England. Accommodation was highlighted as being expensive, with some contracts additionally requiring guarantors, which served as a barrier to securing housing (Warwick-Booth et al, 2023). This impacted how they settled into the UK and their studies:

“It was a big issue for me getting an accommodation because I came with my family [...] I came [...] two weeks ahead to look for accommodation. I tried all I could in [city]. All I get is ‘no’, they can’t give. You have to get a guarantor. You have to go and bring this....[it was] so difficult that I have to move to a different city entirely”
(John, migrant student)

Previous evidence has documented housing problems for migrants (Brown et al., 2024; Urbina Julio, 2024; Zill et al., 2020). For example, Brown et al. (2024) reviewed 118 housing studies among refugees in different countries. The researchers highlighted the “*striking consistency*” (pg. 258) of poor housing conditions including inadequate cleaning and personal facilities (including broken heating), overcrowding, damp and mould issues and a lack of outside spaces. Subsequently this impacted the physical and mental wellbeing of those living in these houses (for example, respiratory problems from dampness and anxiety from a lack of privacy and living in socially isolated areas). In a study among 62 UK migrants (Migrant Voice, 2017), researchers found that 78% experienced housing problems including dirt (50%) and infestation (44%). Collectively these findings indicate the poor quality and insecurity of

housing that migrants face. Such factors are related; fewer options to secure housing means less ability to reject poor quality housing.

Neighbourhoods

Study 1's survey responses revealed migrants had to commute 38 minutes to get to the nearest city centre on average. Some (5%) reported commutes of more than 2 hours. About a third (35%) lived in areas that did not have nearby parks, good local facilities such as shops (22%) or good access to public transport (21%). Almost two fifths (37%) reported feeling unsafe in the area they lived in.

In Study 2, given the accommodation challenges being faced, some commuted from cities over 100 miles away (Warwick-Booth et al, 2023). Migrant students, and migrants generally, need safe, appropriate accommodation to be able to feel settled in their new country. Being unable to find housing in the city where they were studying greatly added to the stress of migration and distracted them from their studies. When they eventually found somewhere to live, there were often long commutes necessary to attend classes in person:

“Going to [university in city] from [city].....everyday [is]... like 4 hours [commuting] to and fro.” (Nasir, migrant student).

Brown et al., (2024) highlighted the commonality of hostile housing allocation policies across countries (including the UK). Ostensibly these are designed to create tensions between migrants and local citizens; impeding assimilation and stabilisation that might make migrants able to gain permanent citizenship. Zill et al (2020) concurred, emphasizing how migrants were pushed into deprived housing areas that made dis-assimilation and social isolation more likely. Our results show this issue is not confined to refugees but some migrants more broadly including migrant students.

Housemates

Some of Study 1's participants reported over-crowding e.g., *"Had to share room with 3 adults, no personal space"* (Anika, 19, Asian woman). Of those that had to live with strangers when they first came to the UK, 50% felt they could not be themselves around housemates, 33% felt they could not be friends with their housemates, 21% felt they had to hide aspects of themselves (e.g., their religion or sexuality) and finally, 20% were not treated fairly by their housemates.

Study 2 participants reported problems not only with potential housemates but also course mates and neighbours. Such problems ranged from difficulties in understanding local accents and cultural differences, to racism and segregation. As one participant noted about interactions in university:

"I don't know, we don't really interact as such. But when you see the Indians, they sit on one corner, they talk together, they speak their language and all. You see the Nigerians at one corner. Sometimes I just felt, is it supposed to be like that? Can't you just mix up despite the tribal differences?" (Glory, migrant student).

These challenges regarding connections to others may explain Study 2's migrant participants' preferences to stay with family members who were already located in England. In many cases, the student chose a city where they had a family member which meant that they benefited from their local knowledge for house-hunting and their general support in acclimatising to the UK. Unfortunately, such family members were rarely based in the same city as the participants' university (Warwick-Booth et al, 2023).

"I had a lot of troubles in accommodation in (city) and luckily my cousin is staying in (Town). It is [a] nearly one hour journey, to (city) and I got a great accommodation

nearby to my cousin sister. I searched for a lot of accommodation in (city) [...] but for us a family we can't afford.” (Samira, migrant student).

The impact of living with others influences an individual's wellbeing including migrants (Xie, 2019). Migrant Voice (2017) found 80% of their 62 migrant UK participants reported feeling unsafe or sad in their accommodation at times. This impact may be especially true for those migrants where homophobia or sexual violence may be heightened living with strangers (e.g., LGBT migrants and women migrants). Previous research has identified heightened vulnerability in such groups including worse home experiences (Camilleri et al., 2022; Gewalt et al., 2018; McDowell & Collins, 2023). Notably, women migrants are more likely to have dependants, income precarity and face sexual violence that makes them especially vulnerable living with others (Freedman, 2016; Gewalt et al., 2018; Khouani et al., 2023; Mayock et al., 2012).

Housing provider experiences

Of the Study 1's participants who indicated who their housing provider was (N = 148), the majority indicated this was a family member, partner or friend (n = 76; 52%). Fewer reported accommodation was secured by participants themselves usually through private renting (n = 34; 23%) or an education provider such as university accommodation (n = 17, 11%). The remainder were provided housing through their employer (n = 8, 5%) the government or local council (n = 7, 5%) or indicated ambiguously (n = 6, 4%). Study 2 participants also either secured their housing through the university, independently or through family and friend networks. Most Study 2 participants had to find accommodation on arrival in the UK. Other research has found similar routes to housing provision for migrants. In Parutis' (2011) analysis of Polish and Lithuanian migrants to the UK, the author highlighted how private renting through family or social networks was usually the only housing available to migrants

on first arrival. A finding replicated in Urbina Julio's (2024) analysis of the renting experiences of migrants in Chile.

Many Study 1 participants reported no problems (61%) with their experiences of housing providers or reported explicitly positive experiences (4%) e.g.,

"None. I had a good landlord" (Deepti, 30, Asian woman)

"The people in the UK were very accepting and made us feel more comfortable...after 8 years here, it feels like home." (Jalissa, 25, Mixed woman)

"It was a good and convenient place for me when I first came to the UK." (Linh, 27, Asian woman).

The remainder of the Study 1 participants (35%) reported housing providers did not take their concerns seriously (22%):

"It was very hard to keep the place warm....the windows needed replacing which the landlord did not want to do" (Hina, 44, Asian woman)

"The agents were terrible.... no one was ready to help us." (Nabeel, 27, Asian man)).

Some Study 1 participants reported housing providers were intimidating (11%) and subjected them to unfair scrutiny (7%):

"I did experience landlords being dodgy about my rent and deposit" (Gabriel, 40, Mixed man)

"I felt like I was being watched all the time" (Esmerelda, 35, Hispanic woman)).

As mentioned, many Study 2 migrant students struggled to secure housing from a housing provider in the city in which they studied in. Other housing provider experiences were positive. One student in Study 2 discussed their housing provider experiences in detail.

Specifically, how stressful and time-consuming it was trying to find accommodation in time for their family's arrival from overseas. After many challenges they finally found a good housing option which was a relief:

“Under one week I had signed the contract, they had given me my keys and all that.

But before then it was not funny.... thank God for settling in very well.” (Ade, migrant student).

Migrant Voice (2017) found 90% of their 62 migrant UK participants reported negative experiences from housing providers ranging from maintenance delays, unannounced visits and even sexual harassment. Urbina Julio (2024) highlighted issues around housing providers' racism, rent inflation and overcrowding for migrant tenants. In Brown et al (2024)'s review of 118 housing refugee studies they highlighted how difficult it was to challenge (due to its covert nature) housing provider discrimination including through landlords and letting agents in the housing process. Vulnerability to housing providers can be compounded for women migrants whose greater economic precarity, risk of sexual violence and public life participation make asserting basic housing rights even harder (Khouani et al., 2023; Mayock et al., 2012).

COVID 19 context

Study 1 was conducted during the covid-19 pandemic in 2021. However, we appreciated that housing difficulties for migrants preceded the pandemic and were likely to continue after the pandemic. We were interested in housing experiences when migrants first arrived in the UK, a particularly vulnerable time. As with other research, the pandemic may have influenced our results perhaps increasing remote survey uptake given more people were staying at home and off work. In contrast, other research on migrant home experiences had to be postponed due to the planned, face to face, nature of the research (McDowell & Collins, 2023). Other research

has suggested the impact of COVID-19 may have also ‘flattened out’ differences between migrants and citizens in home experiences for example by increasing homes’ importance (Camilleri et al., 2022)

Study 2 was conducted in 2022, with the peer researcher training delivered in person on campus. The focus groups (n=2) for this study were conducted online and recorded with permission. The ability to offer hybrid teaching and meeting options is a legacy of the Covid pandemic, when technology was used to facilitate online teaching, and meetings as the norm, in line with government policy.

Limitations.

Whilst both studies were informed by Global Southern migrant people, the covid-19 lockdown restricted Study 1 particularly to a remote design. Further peer-led research on migrant housing experiences that is face-to-face is needed. Study 1 used self-constructed measures given the lack of validated, quantitative research in this area and the need for brief, accessible and simple questions for our participants who may not have had native level English language proficiency. Study 1 also used *Prolific* which has been found to offer more reliable and diverse participant data compared to other online participation platforms but is limited for requiring some digital nativity and other potential biases among participant migrant groups (Adams et al., 2020). Aspects of the study such as the use of the imperfect, flattening terms like ‘people of colour’ and the limited assessment of gendered, classed and intersectional experiences risks homogenizing housing experiences among diverse migrant people. In addition, the peer researchers were students on a course taught by the staff supporting them, therefore they may not have spoken openly in all instances, given the power dynamics at play (Warwick-Booth et al, 2023). However, discussions on the topic of housing experiences were considered to be less of a sensitive issue in study 2, because this topic was

not imbued with the same power dynamics as university learning and educational experiences.

Most of our migrant participants were women. LGBT migrants and other groups (e.g., women migrants) may face compounding and intersecting barriers in having good housing experiences. For example, women migrants are more at risk of sexual- and domestic-violence, of job insecurity and poorer health outcomes due to sexism (Calderón-Jaramillo et al., 2020; Gewalt et al., 2018; Llacer et al., 2007; Mayock et al., 2012). In support of this, Camilleri et al. (2022) suggested that male migrants to Italy felt more sense of security in their homes compared to female migrants. Our research was limited because we did not assess the potential influence of sexism or other intersecting barriers our participants may have faced (notably we did not ask our peer researchers did not formally assess demographics in Study 2). Housing experts can also ignore these intersections. For example, domestic violence shelters that have policies that prioritise English speakers mean migrant victim-survivors may not gain appropriate support (Calderón-Jaramillo et al., 2020; Crenshaw, 1991; Mayock et al., 2012). Relatedly, gay migrants' risk of homophobic violence when housed with strangers (Calderón-Jaramillo et al., 2020; Gewalt et al., 2018; McDowell & Collins, 2023) and racism from the LGBT community form dual burdens ignored in housing provider decision making (McDowell & Collins, 2023). As such, future research should acknowledge the distinct and compound barriers some migrants face

Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

Housing's importance cannot be conceptualized as only materially impacting individuals. Our research adds to the wider body of evidence showing the impact of housing in more abstract but still significant ways including wellbeing. In Brown et al.'s (2024) synthesis they highlighted enforced dependence, sleep disturbance and non-privacy as detrimentally impacting migrants' mental health via poor housing conditions particularly.

National and international housing crises can harm many, but these harms should not be conceived of as impacting all equally. Women's vulnerability to inadequate housing has been highlighted (Darab et al., 2018; Heslop, 2021) as has discrimination to migrants of colour in the housing sector (Butler et al., 2020). These vulnerabilities can compound and change each other including by nationality and migration status (Crenshaw, 1991). These differential and intersecting impacts should be considered in housing studies theorizations.

Policy Implications

Teaching about- and researching- the Global South including migrants is important (APA, 2021). Such research and teaching can play a vital role in empirically rebutting anti-migrant stigma. Contrary to stigma, evidence suggests migrants are less likely to access welfare systems including social housing relative to citizen counterparts (Dustmann et al., 2010). This may be due to stigma that migrants are 'parasitic drains' on a country's economy (Dustmann et al., 2010). Evidence also shows migrants are more likely to be net contributors to a country's economy (given their higher labour force participation relative to citizens). Specifically, Dustmann, Frattini and Halls (2010) assessed immigration's economic impact on the UK after the country had expanded its borders to include EU citizens in 2004. Their analysis showed migrants were 60% less likely to receive state benefits, tax credits or social housing than their citizen counterparts. Migrants are also stigmatized as disease vectors. Abubakar et al. (2018) compared the health records of more than 15 million migrants relative to their citizen counterparts. This was in response to misuse of some of the researchers' prior health research by far-right political groups. The researchers found migrants, had better health, on average, than citizens partly because the former were more likely to be of working age/ studying (and thus younger). This evidence rebuts migrant stigma, though ultimately

none of these factors should determine migrants' human rights, including access to good housing.

Migrant groups (e.g., ST4R Group, n.d.) have urged the UK government to offer some redress to these issues (e.g., by including internet access as a basic housing necessity which currently the Home Office (n.d.) do not list). Our research adds to the evidence-base call for greater housing support which may be particularly important on first arrival to a host country for migrants. Universities who have a duty of care to their students including their migrant ones could better consider how to facilitate good housing for their migrant students (e.g., by earmarking central accommodation for such students). Researchers may consider advocating for improved housing conditions in better housing areas (resisting the dispersal policies of some Governments towards some migrants; Brown et al., 2024). This is particularly important within a UK 'housing crisis' context, in which decent and affordable housing is not available to everyone (UK Government, 2023). For example, the UK Government (2023) recently reported 15% of occupied houses were non-decent (e.g., were thermally inadequate, in poor repair etc) and 4% had problems with damp. The UK Government further acknowledged renters, who are more likely to be migrants, were more likely to be in substandard standard housing compared to owners. Organizational (e.g., governmental or university) comprehensive, support for migrants is needed. This study and others show migrants' precarious reliance on informal networks to gain housing (e.g., through friends or charities) may worsen other vulnerabilities. Gaps in informal support exist and can pressure others who already may be struggling (e.g., migrant relatives). Bureaucratic requirements, language barriers and landlord discrimination mean finding good quality accommodation independently can be difficult (e.g., Brown et al., 2024). Accessible, formal, channels for good housing and other support are needed.

Reflexivity

Jannesari et al., (2022) highlights how self-reflexivity in migrant research is important. Specifically, where researchers can explicate and reflect on their preconceptions, standpoints and insights into a topic and how these shaped the research. As the first author (GSJ), and a White man born in the UK, I have no lived experience of racism. My father was an Irish economic migrant, and my grandfather was a Polish refugee. Both of their housing experiences in the UK involved private renting and was precarious. I see their housing experiences as substandard and of questionable quality (especially around safety). Some of my family disagree however, believing their migration housing experiences to be routine and even fortunate. Reflecting on my family's experience and this research, I feel caught between exposing unjust experiences concealed as 'mundane' whilst not imposing my views over migrants who report positive experiences. I am also interested in how UK migrant experiences overlap and differ. For example, the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act restricted the rights to work and reside in the UK for many migrant groups except the Irish (Hickman, 1998). I am interested if White privilege played a role in this exceptionalism.

SC has lived and worked in 5 other countries and had to find accommodation on arrival. The accounts of unscrupulous landlords, difficulties finding properties available for rent to migrants, overcrowding, insecure tenancy, and poor-quality accommodation are all familiar. I recognise that being from overseas meant for many landlords that I was a risk as a tenant but being a white woman with a British passport gave me an advantage. These experiences are stressful in a second language and unfamiliar country, but it was a choice to be there, and I could have left at any point. For forced migrants, there is very little choice about most things, and for migrants from the Global South coming to the UK, the experiences of racism, discrimination and exploitation are a significant

problem that does not compare to my own experiences. The protective factors are also familiar, social capital is so important when starting afresh in an unknown place. I came to this research expecting negative accounts (because of the UK housing crisis, and because of attitudes to migrants) so had to take care not to confirm my bias.

LWB has never lived outside of the UK and is a white middle-class professional holding a position of power within a university. Similar to the first author, she has no lived experience of migration, though has experienced microaggressions related to her skin colour when working overseas in sub-Saharan Africa. In applying reflexivity to the process of peer research, rather than the topic of housing, I recognise that power dynamics remain at play given that I am a member of the course team teaching the migrant students who were working as peer researchers. Whilst I attempted to minimise these through the qualitative workshop approach, using co-production, I was still the principal investigator on the project bounded by university rules for example on delivering the work to completion within a funded period. Furthermore, in writing up the project for publication, peer researchers were not involved other than in being invited to comment on a previous book chapter (Warwick-Booth et al, 2023). They are cited as co-authors, but as an academic I am more vested in writing for publication given the nature of my role, and the associated pressures that accompany it, in line with university key performance indicators.

FBH is a British woman with a heritage from the Global South. I am a direct descendant of migrants and have an appreciation of the migration challenges that my grandparents faced when they came to the UK circa 1960s-1970s. I am acutely aware of the racism, classism and sexism that my grandparents experienced during their lifetime. I recollect my grandparents sharing their experiences of inadequate housing facilities, for example, damp and mould with a lack of provisions and amenities as recently explored

qualitatively in my MSc Psychology dissertation (Bint-Hanif & Jankowski, in prep.). However, my grandparents also speak highly of the Ethnic minority neighbourhood and community where an unbreakable bond of unity was formed over their shared lived experiences. This close-knit environment was formed by a commitment to mutual care and support through times of success and challenge, exemplifying the strength of solidarity and resilience. While I was not involved in data collection, I recognise my background and lived experiences may influence my approach towards the research topic of migration. I am approaching this research with an understanding of some challenges that marginalised communities may face within our society, while being committed to learning further about these experiences including the experiences of other marginalised communities.

Conclusion

Migrants are not homogenous and can have diverse experiences in their migration journey, their host countries and their origins. This includes differential vulnerabilities e.g., from gendered violence if women. Nonetheless our two-study project showed coalescing experiences among migrants in housing via an online survey (Study 1) and peer-led research from migrant students (Study 2). Whilst positives experiences existed, challenges including dirt and crowding, problems securing accommodation and problems with living with others and neighbourhoods. Our results emphasize the need to counter the neglect of people from the Global South who migrate through social science research and ultimately to challenge poor migrant housing conditions.

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