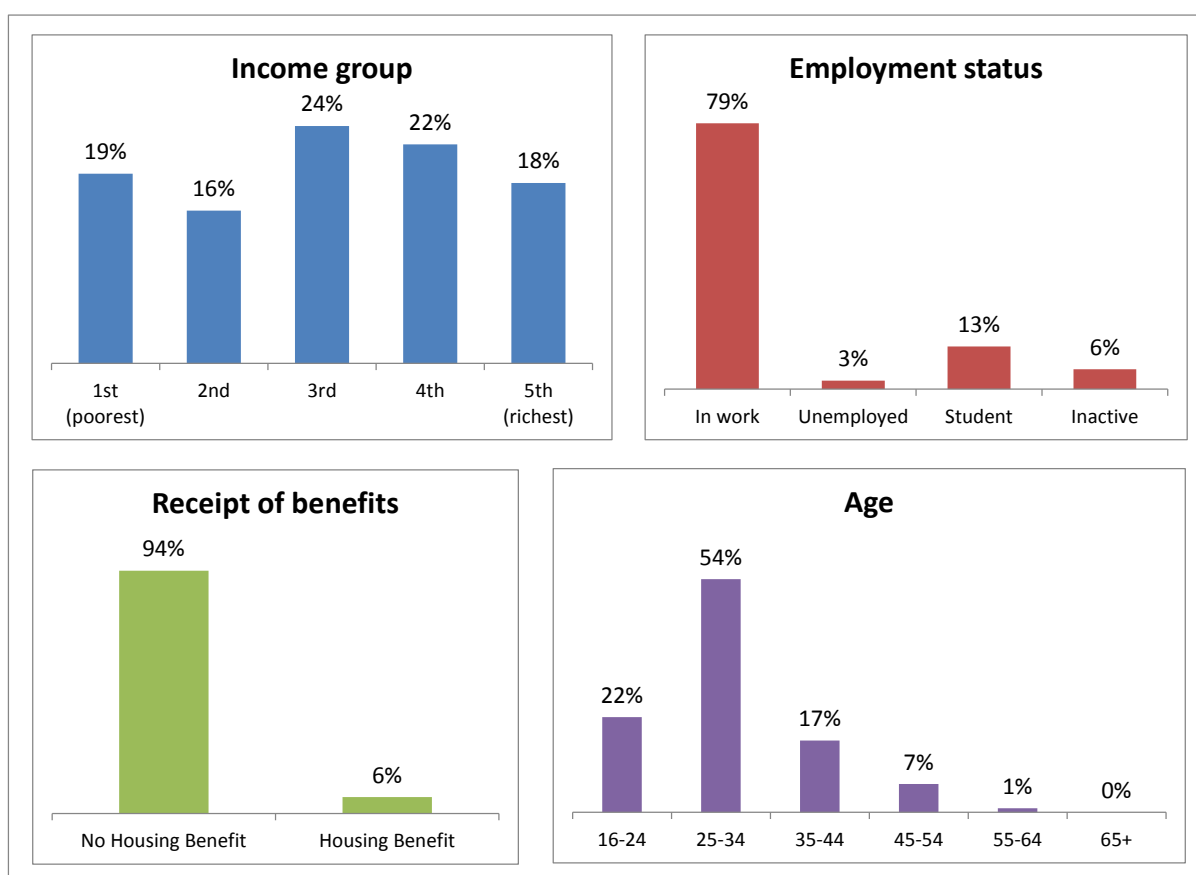


The growth of the private rented sector is a subject that has been of increasing public and political interest, particularly over the last couple of years. The increase is well documented, with the number of households living in the sector increasing by one million over the last decade, an increase of 60 per cent. The latest Census data show that around 17 per cent of households in England and Wales are now private tenants.

It is well known that the private rented sector is by far the most common tenure for newly arrived migrants. [Recent research](#) looking at the characteristics of households in the UK Private Rented Sector, published by research charity, the [Building and Social Housing Foundation](#), has identified key trends among migrants making their home in the sector, notably that there is no such thing as a 'typical' migrant. The findings outlined in *Who Lives in the Private Rented Sector?* identify the household characteristics of private renters who arrived in the UK within the last two years showing a wide range of household structures, ages, and economic circumstances.



Source: *Who Lives in the Private Rented Sector?*, BSHF (2013)

As the diagrams show, many of the common images associated with migrants in the media – such as “beds in sheds” – are by no means the whole story. While it is undoubtedly the case that many recent migrants live in poor housing conditions and are paid very low wages, many are on above average incomes. And, contrary to the caricature of ‘welfare tourism’, the vast majority of migrants are in work and not in receipt of Housing Benefit. Migrants also live in a wide range of household formations, with 38 per cent living in households with children, a higher percentage than the non-migrant population.

A clearer picture of migrants and their housing circumstances is important if their needs are to be effectively met, and an evidence-based discussion on immigration is to be had. BSHF’s research goes some way to bringing clarity to this complex picture. While protection of migrants who are vulnerable to exploitation and struggling financially is of vital importance, it is also important to recognise that many migrants do not fit this picture: the ‘victim’ view of migrants misrepresents a much more complex picture.

Jen Pearce is a Researcher for the leading housing research charity, BSHF (Building and Social Housing Foundation). She is the author of *Who Lives in the Private Rented Sector* and has published research on issues such as welfare reform and housing supply.

Who Lives in the Private Rented Sector? is available for download from the BSHF website: <http://bshf.org/published-information/publication.cfm?lang=00&thePubID=19F007B2-15C5-F4C0-990836C156D907F7> [accessed 01/03/13]



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