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# Chapter 5

## Social renters

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### Overview

- 5.1 The social rented sector declined throughout the 1980s and 1990s, from 5.5 million households in 1981 (32% of all households) to 4.1 million in 1999 (20% of all households). This period coincided with the introduction of the Right to Buy scheme, and the rise in owner occupation. Since then, the number of households in the social rented sector remained fairly constant, at around 3.9 million, but as a proportion of all households, the decline continued, albeit much less rapidly, throughout the 2000s. By 2013-14, 17% of households were social renters.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.2 Within the social rented sector, there were further changes in recent years. A proportion of local authority stock was transferred to housing associations, and more new stock was constructed on behalf of housing associations than local authorities. Of the 3.9 million households in the social rented sector in 2003-04, 2.5 million were in local authority accommodation. In 2013-14, this figure was 1.6 million, and the remainder were in housing association accommodation.
- 5.3 This chapter details differences in the profile of social renters between 2003-04 and 2013-14. It goes on to look at measures of the affordability of social rented accommodation, the satisfaction and well-being of residents, movements into and out of the social rented sector, and the suitability of accommodation, for a range of different types of social renter.

### Profile of social renters

#### Economic activity

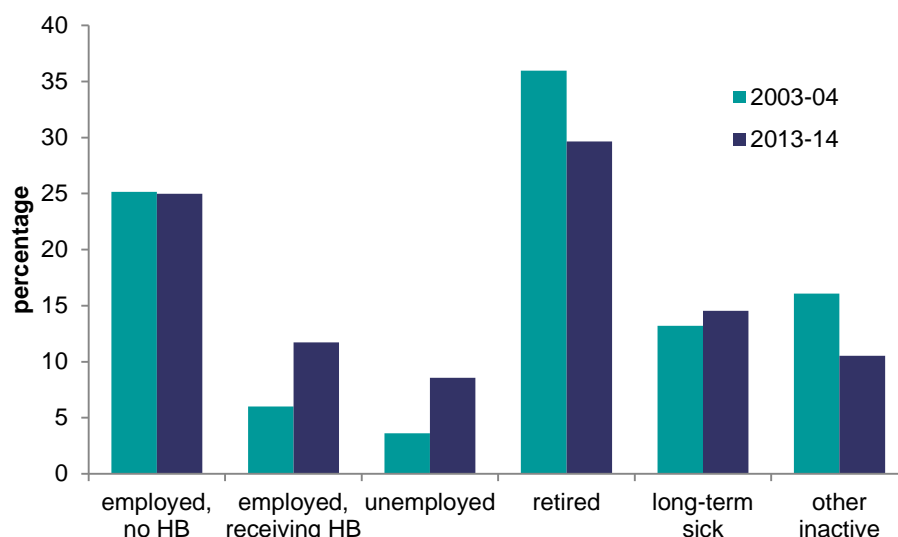
- 5.4 Between 2003-04 and 2013-14, there was a change in the economic profile of social renters. In 2003-04, 31% of social rented housing was rented to someone who was in employment, a fifth of whom were in

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1 for more information on long term tenure trends.

receipt of housing benefit, and the remainder were not<sup>2</sup>. By 2013-14, 37% were in employment, and a third of these were in receipt of housing benefit. There was also a rise in those in unemployment using the social rented sector over the same period, from 4% to 9%, and a fall in those who were economically inactive (from 16% to 11%), Figure 5.1, Annex Table 5.1.

**Figure 5.1: HRP economic activity, social renters, 2003-04 and 2013-14**



**Base: all households in social rented sector**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.1**

**Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample**

## Income and deprivation

5.5 Nearly half (46%) of social renters lived in the most deprived 20% of areas in 2013-14<sup>3</sup>. A similar proportion (45%) had an income in the lowest 20%. Households living in local authority accommodation were more likely to be in the most deprived areas, 56%, compared with 39% of those living in housing association homes.

5.6 The income profile of social renters actually shifted a little in the 10 years since 2003-04. There was a fall in the proportion of social renters in the lowest income quintile, and a rise of those with larger relative incomes. This appears to be due to a combination of factors, including the rise in the proportion in employment, and the relative rise in incomes of social renters in employment, Annex Table 5.1.

<sup>2</sup> Figures refer to the economic status of the household reference person (HRP), the person in whose name the accommodation is rented. See glossary for further details.

<sup>3</sup> This apparently high figure is a construct of the way in which the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) was created. The most deprived areas are classed as deprived because the people that live there tend to be on lower incomes, or are deprived in other ways. As social housing, and particularly local authority housing, tends to be clustered, the areas in which social housing is clustered are characterised by the residents of social housing estates.

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## Household types

- 5.7 A third (33%) of households in the social rented sector in 2013-14 included dependent children (1.3 million). Around two fifths (41%) consisted of single people without children (1.6 million). These figures have not changed significantly since 2003-04, Annex Table 5.1.

## Vulnerable groups

- 5.8 Some vulnerable groups need support to live independently in their own homes, which can be provided for in the social rented sector. A third of a million (334,000) households in social rented housing in 2013-14 were in sheltered accommodation for older people, 9% of all social rented households. In almost a quarter of a million homes (236,000), regular overnight care was provided for someone in the household by someone who did not live there, Annex Table 5.1.

## Satisfaction with accommodation

- 5.9 In 2013-14, the vast majority of social renters were satisfied with their accommodation; 81% said that they were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their current accommodation. Those in local authority accommodation were more likely than those in housing association accommodation to be slightly or very dissatisfied (15%, compared with 12%), Annex Table 5.1.

## Financial circumstances

### Income

- 5.10 In 2013-14, the mean gross weekly income of the HRP and their partner of households living in social rented accommodation was £315 (£16,400 p.a.)<sup>4</sup>. This varied considerably according to the type of household and the employment status of the HRP.
- 5.11 Working households in social rented accommodation not in receipt of housing benefit had an average joint gross weekly income of around £500 (£513 where the HRP was employed full-time, and £492 where she or he was employed part-time). Working households in receipt of housing benefit had an average income around two thirds of that (£327). The lowest average incomes of those in the social rented sector were for unemployed adults (£149 where the HRP was aged 40

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<sup>4</sup> Excluding the cost of services. Only the income of the household reference person (HRP) and their partner, if living in the same household, was taken into account.

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and above, and £190 where she or he was younger and more likely to be in receipt of child-related benefits).

- 5.12 Couples with dependent children had relatively high incomes, averages of between £490 and £531, depending on the age of the children. Couples without children had an average income of £425. Single parents tended to have lower incomes, with averages varying between £273 and £333 depending on age of youngest child.
- 5.13 Older people in social rented accommodation had lower average incomes than those of working age. This is reflected in the average incomes of retired households (£250 for those aged 70 and above, and £254 for younger retired households). Similar levels of income were observed for other groups with a high proportion of older people. These included those who had lived in the accommodation for 20 years or longer, single people, those in sheltered accommodation, and those receiving overnight care, Annex Table 5.2.

## Housing costs

- 5.14 Average rents in the social rented sector were £94 a week across England in 2013-14<sup>5</sup>. Rents varied according to the type of accommodation and the area. Detached houses were the most expensive, at an average of £113. Below average rents were paid in sheltered housing (£87). Rents in London were more than those in other parts of the country, as were those in the least deprived areas.
- 5.15 Single adults paid the least for their accommodation, an average of £85. Couples with no children paid an average of £92, while larger households paid an average of £100-£106.
- 5.16 Working people tended to pay above average rents (£96-£104 on average, depending on whether they were employed full- or part-time and whether they were in receipt of housing benefit). Retired people paid lower average rents (£84-£87, depending on age), as did the unemployed (£88-£91), reflecting the smaller typical household size and dwelling size for these groups.
- 5.17 Average rents also increased with income, from £90 for those in the lowest income quintile, to £115 for those in the highest quintile. Again this was a reflection of household composition and accommodation size.
- 5.18 Those who were dissatisfied with their accommodation tended to pay more for it, suggesting the cost of accommodation is a potential cause of dissatisfaction. Average rents among those who were very

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<sup>5</sup> Excluding the cost of services, and excluding those who reported paying no rent.

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dissatisfied with their accommodation were £103 per week, more than £10 higher than among those who were very satisfied with their accommodation, Annex Table 5.2.

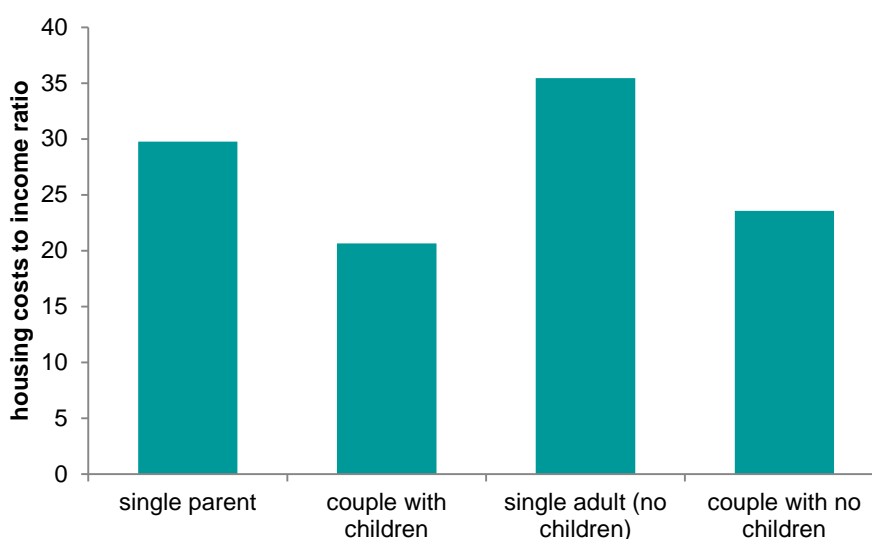
### **Housing costs to income ratio**

- 5.19 On average, those in the social rented sector spent 31% of their income (including housing benefit) on rent in 2013-14.<sup>6</sup> Excluding housing benefit from the household's income, this figure was 42%.
- 5.20 Working people not in receipt of housing benefit spent around a quarter (23-25%) of their income on average on rent. Working households in receipt of housing benefit, and retired households both spent an average of 30% of their income on housing costs, after housing benefit was taken into account. Unemployed people spent the largest proportion of their income on housing costs (39% for those aged under 40 and 46% for those aged 40 and above), despite below average rents.
- 5.21 Households on the lowest incomes spent the largest proportion of their income on rent, an average of 41% for those in the lowest income quintile. This compared with 26% in the next lowest, decreasing to 10% in the highest income quintile.
- 5.22 Couples with dependent children spent the smallest proportion of their income on rent (20-21%). Single parents spent 29-30% of their income on rent, while single people (with no children) spent 35% of theirs, Annex Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2.

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<sup>6</sup> i.e. rent, excluding the cost of services, divided by the sum of the HRP and their partner's income plus housing benefit.

**Figure 5.2: Ratio of housing costs to income (including housing benefit), by household type, social renters, 2013-14**



**Base:** all households in social rented sector, excluding those who reported paying no rent  
**Notes:**

1) Income of HRP and partner, including housing benefit. Housing costs exclude cost of services.

2) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.2

**Source:** English Housing Survey, full household sample

## Arrears

5.23 Around one third of social renters had their rent paid directly by housing benefit. Of those who did not have their rent paid by housing benefit, 85% were up to date with their rent payments in 2013-14, at the time of interview. The remaining 15% (390,000 households) were in arrears. A further 364,000 (17%) households had fallen behind with their rent payments at some point in the previous 12 months, Annex Table 5.3.

## Satisfaction and well-being

### Satisfaction with accommodation

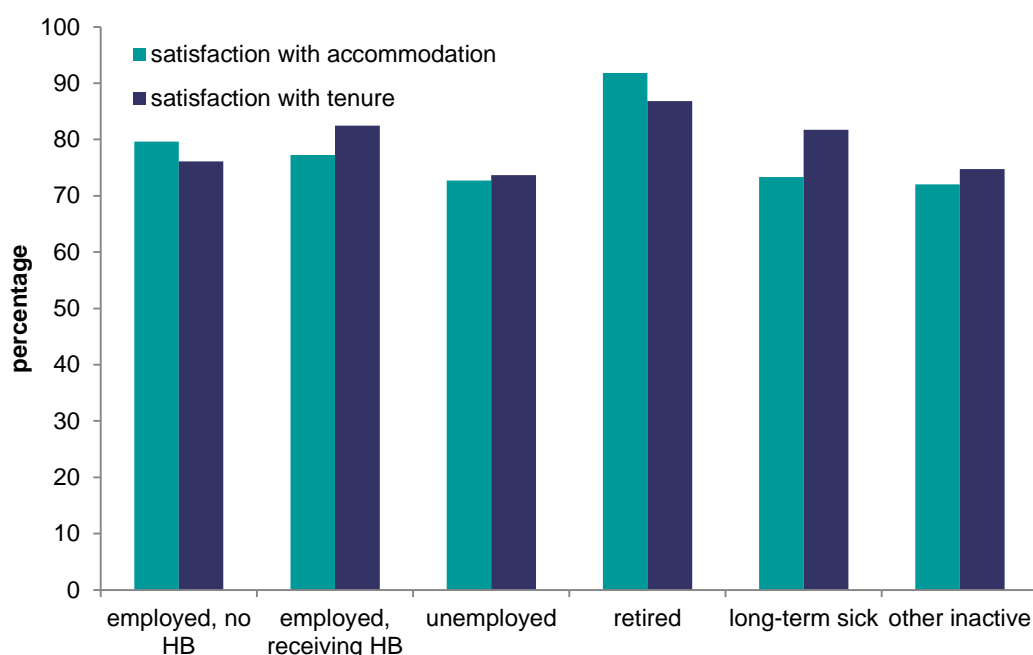
5.24 The large majority of social renters were satisfied with their accommodation in 2013-14 (81%). Those in houses were slightly more likely to be satisfied (83-85%) than those in flats (77-80%). Those living in London were also less likely to be satisfied (75%, compared with 81% in other urban areas and 84% in rural areas).

5.25 Older people tended to be more satisfied with their accommodation than those of working age. This was illustrated by high levels of satisfaction among retired people (90-92%, compared with 77-80% of working people, 65% of unemployed people aged under 40, and 72-

73% who were economically inactive due to long-term ill health or other reasons<sup>7</sup>).

5.26 Similarly, those living in sheltered housing for older people were more likely to be satisfied (90%, compared with 80% of those not living in sheltered accommodation). The same was true for those who had been living in their current home for 20 years or longer (88%, compared with 76-79% of those who had been living in their home for less than 10 years), Figure 5.3 and Annex Table 5.4.

**Figure 5.3: Satisfaction with accommodation and tenure, by economic activity, social renters, 2013-14**



Base: all households in social rented sector where HRP or partner interviewed in person  
 Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.4  
 Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

5.27 Single parents had the lowest levels of satisfaction with their accommodation of all the household types (69-71%). Single adults (84%) and couples with no dependent children (88%) had the highest levels of satisfaction, Annex Table 5.4.

### Satisfaction with tenure

5.28 Satisfaction with tenure followed similar patterns to satisfaction with accommodation. Overall, 80% of households in the social rented sector felt that renting from a council or housing association was a good way of occupying a home. Those living in houses were slightly more likely to be satisfied than those living in flats (83% in semi-detached /

<sup>7</sup> Other reasons include being a student, looking after the home or family, and any other reason not listed in Annex Table 5.4.

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terraced houses and 84% in detached, compared with 77% in low-rise flats and 78% in high-rise). Those living in London were less likely to be satisfied than those living in other areas (73%, compared with 82% in other urban or rural areas).

- 5.29 As with satisfaction with accommodation, older people were more likely to feel social renting was a good way to occupy a home. This held true for the retired (88% aged 70+ and 84% younger retired), those living in sheltered accommodation (88%), and those who had been living in their home for 20 years or more (85%).
- 5.30 On the whole, those who were satisfied with their accommodation were also satisfied with their tenure. However, some groups who were satisfied with their tenure had below average satisfaction with their accommodation. For example, single parents of children under the age of 12 had lower than average satisfaction with accommodation (69% where the youngest child was under 5, and 71% where the youngest was aged 5-11, compared to the average of 81%), but had an average level of satisfaction with tenure (79% and 77% respectively). Similarly, the long-term sick had 73% satisfaction with accommodation, but 82% satisfaction with tenure. This suggests there are a significant minority of people in these groups who are happy to rent from a council or housing association, but do not feel their property is suitable for their needs, Figure 5.3 and Annex Table 5.4.

## Well-being

- 5.31 Four measures of well-being were included in the survey, satisfaction with life, the extent to which one feels the things one does are worthwhile, how happy one is, and how anxious. Each was assessed on a 10 point scale, with higher scores for the first three, and a lower score on the last, indicating greater well-being.
- 5.32 The four measures were highly correlated with each other, and also with satisfaction with accommodation and tenure. Therefore, some of what has been said in the previous sections is perhaps more indicative of overall life satisfaction than specifically satisfaction with accommodation and tenure.
- 5.33 However, for some subgroups satisfaction was less related to well-being. Parents of young children were one obvious example, as having children tends to be associated with feelings of worth.<sup>8</sup> Single parents of children under the age of 12 had above average well-being, but relatively low satisfaction with their accommodation. Couples with

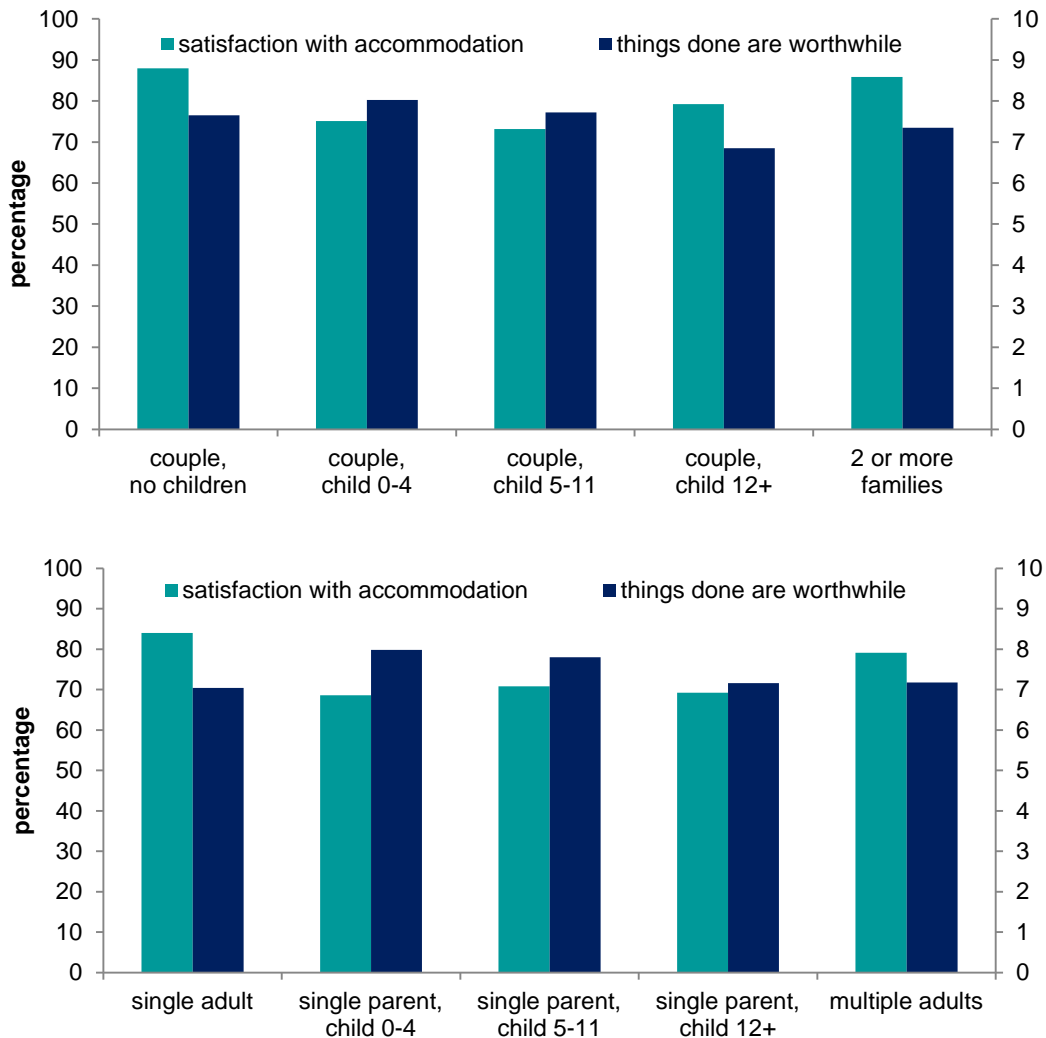
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<sup>8</sup> Baumeister RF, Vohs KD, Aaker JL and Garbinsky EN (2013). 'Some key differences between a happy life and a meaningful life'. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*: volume 8(6), pages 505-516, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.830764>



children under the age of 12 also had high levels of well-being, as did couples with no children, Figure 5.3 and Annex Table 5.4.

**Figure 5.4: Satisfaction with accommodation and feeling that things done in life are worthwhile, by household type, social renters, 2013-14**



**Base: all households in social rented sector where HRP interviewed in person**  
**Left axis: percent fairly satisfied or very satisfied with accommodation**  
**Right axis: average score, on a scale of 0-10, of feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile**  
**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.4**  
**Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample**

5.34 The long-term sick, not surprisingly, had relatively low levels of well-being, but as was seen above, were as satisfied with their tenure as other groups (see paragraph 5.30). Similarly, those in the lowest income quintile had relatively low levels of well-being, but were no different from the average in terms of satisfaction with accommodation or tenure.

5.35 Working adults had similar, above average, levels of well-being to retired people, but had lower levels of satisfaction with their accommodation and tenure. Those living in London, who had lower

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than average levels of satisfaction with their accommodation and tenure, did not have low levels of personal well-being. On the whole, though, those who were very satisfied with their accommodation had the highest levels of well-being, Annex Table 5.4.

## Housing moves

### Reasons for moving into social rented accommodation

- 5.36 The HRP or partner of all households who had been resident in their current home for less than three years was asked the reason they moved. The most common reasons given in 2013-14 were wanting a larger house or flat (20%), the previous accommodation not being suitable (20%), family reasons other than separation or beginning to live with a partner (19%), and wanting to move to a better neighbourhood (16%). Wanting to move to a smaller house or flat was also mentioned by 9%, and 10% mentioned wanting to live independently. Only 5% said that they could not afford the rent or mortgage on their previous property.
- 5.37 These 5% were additionally asked why they could not afford the rent or mortgage. Around one in five of them, or 1% of all social renters who had moved in the previous three years, said this was because their benefits had been reduced. Similar proportions said it was because someone in the household had lost a job, because wages or work hours had been reduced, and / or because rent payments had increased, Annex Table 5.5.
- 5.38 Respondents whose previous accommodation had been in the private rented sector, whose tenancy had ended, and who had moved into the social rented sector in the last three years were asked why the tenancy had ended. Three quarters (74%) of the 235,000 households in this situation said it was because they wanted to move, Annex Table 5.6.

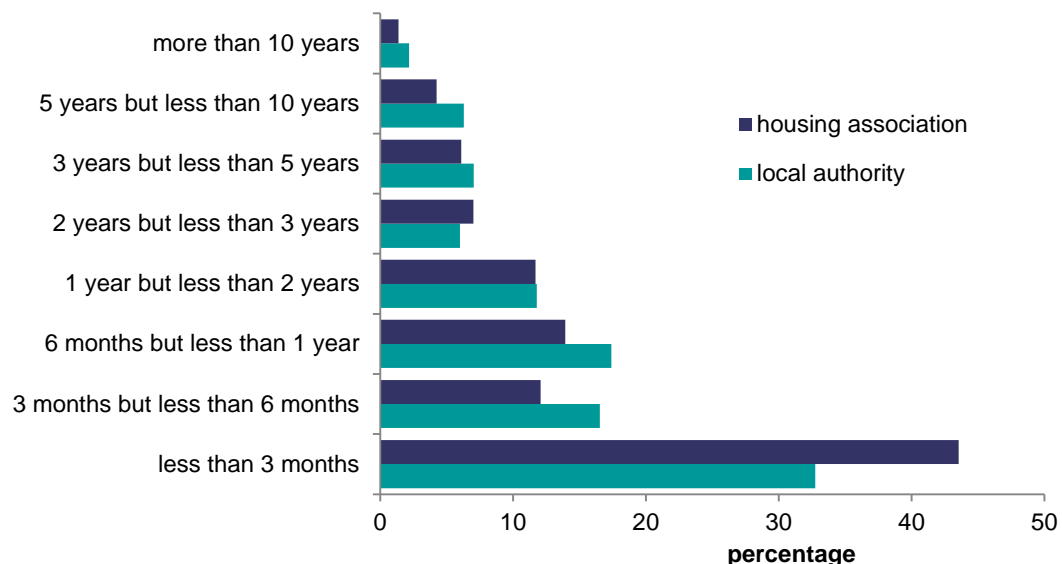
### Homelessness

- 5.39 One route into the social rented sector is to be accepted as homeless. All those living in social rented accommodation who did not take on the tenancy from someone they were living with were asked if they had been accepted as homeless prior to moving into the accommodation. Some 644,000 households, 18% of those in the social rented sector, had been accepted as homeless. Those currently living in local authority housing (23%) were more likely to have been accepted as homeless than those currently living in housing association accommodation (15%), Annex Table 5.7.

## Waiting lists

5.40 Those who had been living in their current home for less than ten years, and had not inherited the tenancy from someone they lived with, were asked how long they had been on the waiting list before being housed in their current accommodation. Of the 2.1 million households in this situation in 2013-14, 39% were on the waiting list for less than 3 months prior to being housed. Short waits were more common among those in housing association accommodation (44%) than local authority (33%). One in five households (20%, or 417,000) were on the waiting list for more than two years; 7% (142,000) were on the waiting list for at least five years, Figure 5.5 and Annex Table 5.7.

**Figure 5.5: Time on waiting list prior to being housed, social renters, 2013-14**



**Base:** all households in social rented sector resident less than ten years and who did not take on tenancy from someone they were living with or were living at their current home before they took on the tenancy

**Note:** underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.7

**Source:** English Housing Survey, full household sample

## People who might otherwise have their own accommodation

5.41 Many households living in social rented accommodation contain adults who may go on to form their own household at some point in the future. Some of these individuals, under different circumstances, might have already done so. In total, 1.3 million adults in 2013-14 were identified as people who might otherwise have their own accommodation.

5.42 Most of these adults were not planning to move out in the immediate future. Reasons given were because they did not want to (45%), because they were being cared for by their parent (14%), or because

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they could not afford to (25%). A further 8% planned to move out shortly, to rent or buy their own accommodation, to go to college or on an extended holiday, or were only staying temporarily while looking for work. The remaining 8% gave other reasons, Annex Table 5.8.

### **Average length of residence**

- 5.43 As has already been discussed in this chapter, the vast majority of social renters were satisfied with their current accommodation and tenure. Consequently a large number of them have no aspirations to buy property. Others may see the social rented sector as serving their present needs, but plan to move on in the future.
- 5.44 The average length of residence of households in the social rented sector was 11.5 years in 2013-14. This varied considerably for different subgroups. Retired people aged over 70 had lived in their accommodation for an average of 20 years. By comparison, unemployed people aged under 40 had lived in theirs for an average of less than 4 years.
- 5.45 People living in houses tended to have been resident for longer than those in flats (an average of 13.6 years for those in terraced or semi-detached houses, compared with 9.2 years for low-rise flats).
- 5.46 Families tended to have lived in their present accommodation for less time than those without children, particularly those with young children, as they are likely to have been offered accommodation to suit the changing size of the family.
- 5.47 Those who were very satisfied with their accommodation tended to have resided there for longer than average. This may be, at least in part, due to the associations between satisfaction and age previously mentioned, Annex Table 5.9.

### **Aspirations to buy**

- 5.48 Respondents were asked about the type of housing they expected to live in in the longer term, and also whether they expected they would ever buy a home in the UK. In response to the first question, 20% of social renters in 2013-14 said they expected to become an owner occupier, whereas in answer to the second, 25% said they expected ever to buy.
- 5.49 This apparent discrepancy is due to respondents only being allowed to select one from a range of tenure options in the first question, when some may have expected to rent before buying. Patterns of responses with respect to buying were very similar for both questions, and the

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subsequent discussion only considers responses to the second question.

- 5.50 Between a third and a half of people in employment, unemployed and under the age of 40, and those classed as economically inactive, but neither retired nor long-term sick<sup>9</sup>, expected to eventually buy a home in the UK, compared with just 1-2% of retired people.
- 5.51 In general, the longer someone had been resident in their current home, the less likely they were to expect to buy in the UK. Only 9% of those who had been resident for 20 years or more expected to buy, compared with 36% of those who had been resident for less than 5 years. This is perhaps as much a reflection of the age of long-term residents as it is their satisfaction with their current accommodation and tenure.
- 5.52 Residents of London were more likely than those in other parts of the country to expect to buy (37%, compared with 23% in other urban areas and 18% in rural areas).
- 5.53 Expectations of buying increased with income, from 19% of those in the lowest income quintile, to 60% in the highest quintile. However, very few respondents living in social rented accommodation actually fell into the highest income bracket.
- 5.54 Families, with children under the age of 12 (headed by both single parents and couples) were more likely to expect to buy than other types of household. 45-54% of such families expected to buy, compared with 32-35% where the youngest child was aged 12 or above. Only 13% of single people and 16% of couples without children expected to buy, although much of this difference may be due to age.
- 5.55 Those who were very satisfied with their accommodation were less likely to expect to buy than others (18%, compared with 28-35% of other groups), Annex Table 5.9.

## Right to buy

- 5.56 Secure tenants of local authorities who have been resident in their home for at least five years are provided with the right to buy their home at a discount<sup>10</sup>. Approximately 1 million tenants<sup>11</sup> of local

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<sup>9</sup> including students, and those looking after the home or family

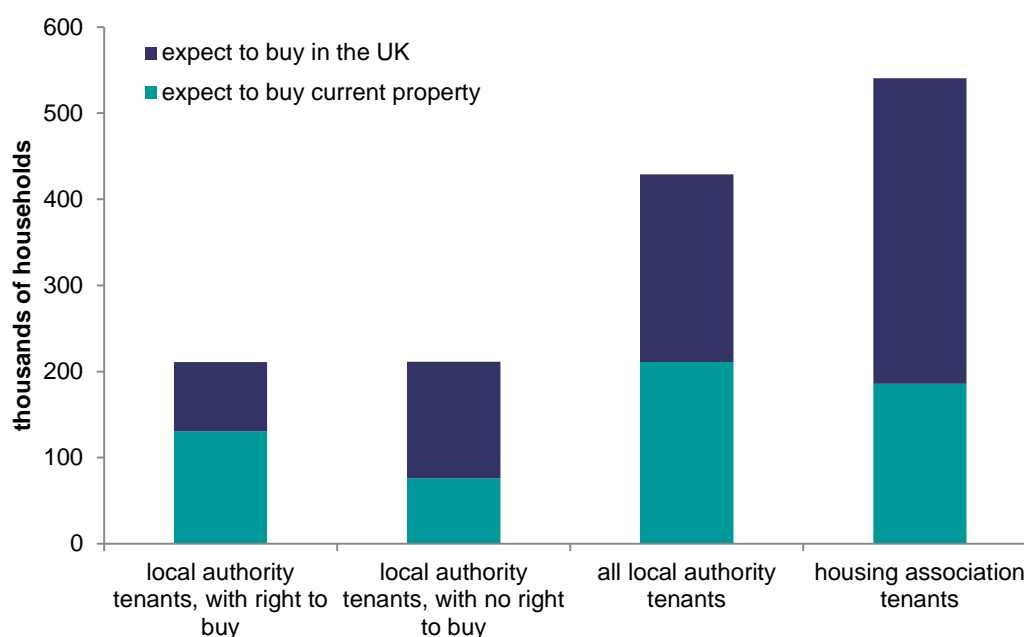
<sup>10</sup> Assured tenants of a housing association who were previously secure tenants of a local authority and were transferred with their homes as part of a stock transfer keep their right to buy under a scheme known as 'Preserved Right to Buy'. The Queen's Speech May 2015 included an announcement on a Housing Bill to enable the extension of Right to Buy levels of discount to housing association tenants. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/queens-speech-2015-what-it-means-for-you/queens-speech-2015-what-it-means-for-you>

authorities had the right to buy their current home in 2013-14, Annex Table 5.10.

5.57 Of those local authority tenants with the right to buy in 2013-14, 16% expected to become an owner occupier in the longer term and 22% expected ever to buy a property in the UK (see paragraphs 5.48 and 5.49 for discussion of the distinction). Those without the right to buy, who were likely to have been resident for a shorter period of time, and younger on average, were more likely to expect to become an owner occupier (24%) and buy in the UK (36%). Housing association tenants had similar expectations to local authority tenants as a whole.

5.58 Of those local authority tenants with the right to buy and who expected to buy in the UK, two thirds (130,000 households<sup>12</sup>) expected to buy their current property. More than a third (76,000 households) of those who did not have the right to buy, but may get the right with time, expected to buy their current property. A third (186,000) of housing association tenants who expected to buy a home in the UK expected to buy their current home, Figure 5.6 and Annex Table 5.11.

**Figure 5.6: Expectations of buying in the UK and expectations of buying current home, social renters, 2013-14**



**Base: all households in social rented sector who answered questions on expectations of buying**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.11**

**Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample**

<sup>11</sup> This figure could be a slight underestimate, as the right to buy was not calculated for around 2.5% of local authority tenants who did not provide sufficient information on the details of their tenancy.

<sup>12</sup> This figure could be a slight underestimate, as 7% of those with the right to buy who expected to buy in the UK did not say whether they planned to buy their current property.

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## Ability to buy

- 5.59 As a rough indication of the likelihood of getting a mortgage and being able to afford to buy a property in the UK, 15% of social renters, 590,000 households, earned above the median income in 2013-14. This proportion was similar for both local authority and housing association tenants, and for those with the right to buy or not. Just over 160,000 households with the right to buy earned above the median income, Annex Table 5.12.

## Accommodation characteristics

### Dwelling type

- 5.60 In 2013-14, 55% of social renters lived in houses, with nearly all the rest living in flats<sup>13</sup>. Those who had been resident for longer were more likely to live in houses (72% of those resident for 20 or more years, decreasing to 48% of those resident for less than 5 years).
- 5.61 Social rented houses were rare in London compared with other parts of England. Only 27% of social renters in London lived in houses, compared with 60% in other urban areas and 76% in rural areas. Sheltered accommodation was also predominantly flats, with only 32% houses, although 63% of households in which someone receives overnight care lived in houses.
- 5.62 Single people were less likely to live in a house (37%), suggesting that larger properties were generally made available to meet the needs of larger households. Between two thirds and three quarters (67-74%) of most other household types lived in houses. The exceptions to this were single parents with a child aged under 5 (52%), and households consisting of multiple families (84%), Annex Table 5.13.

### Overcrowding and under-occupation

- 5.63 Overcrowding and under-occupation are discussed in the following paragraphs in relation to the “bedroom standard”, Box 1. Data are presented for the three years, 2011-12 to 2013-14 combined because of small sample sizes, as with previous reports.

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<sup>13</sup> Less than 0.5% were recorded as living in “other” types of accommodation, such as bedsits.

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- 5.64 Overall, 10% of social renters were under-occupying their accommodation i.e. two or more spare bedrooms, and a further 28% of households were living in accommodation with one spare bedroom.

**Box 1: Bedroom standard**

The bedroom standard is the difference between the number of bedrooms needed to avoid undesirable sharing and the number of bedrooms available to the household.

- A dwelling is considered to be “under-occupied” if it has two or more bedrooms that are not required, taking into account the age, sex, and relationships of the household members.
- It is said to be “overcrowded” if it has fewer bedrooms than needed.

The figures discussed in this chapter relate to the 2006 definition of the bedroom standard, as defined in the Housing (Overcrowding) Bill of 2003. This differs from the size criteria used for the purposes of Local Housing Allowance and the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy, under which an adult is considered to be a person 16 or over, rather than 21 or over.

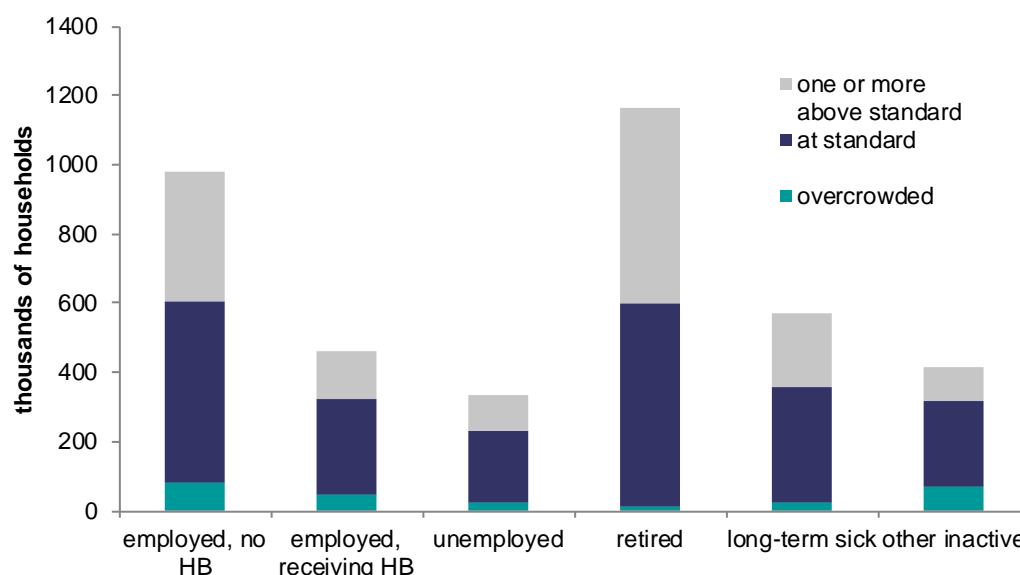
See Glossary for further details.

- 5.65 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, the removal of the spare room subsidy meant that working age households would forego 14% of their eligible housing benefit if one spare bedroom, or 25% if two or more spare bedrooms. This change in the benefits system was intended to free up housing for those currently living in overcrowded circumstances and facilitate effective use of the stock. Exceptions were made for various groups, including pensioners and people requiring overnight care. As noted in Box 1, the figures in this report do not use the DWP definition of bedroom standard.
- 5.66 Three quarters (74%) of households who had been resident for 20 years or more had one or more spare bedrooms in their home. A quarter (25%) who had been resident for less than five years had one or more spare bedrooms.
- 5.67 Around half of all retired people had one or more spare bedrooms in their home. Two fifths (39%) of full-time employees and 34% of part-time employees not in receipt of housing benefit had one or more spare bedrooms. In comparison, 29% of workers who were in receipt of housing benefit had one or more spare bedrooms.



5.68 There were 40% of the unemployed aged 40 and above and 38% of the long-term sick with one or more spare bedrooms in their home, Figure 5.7 and Annex Table 5.14.

**Figure 5.7: Bedroom standard, by economic activity, social renters, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 combined**



**Base:** all households in social rented sector

**Note:** underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.14, with numbers of households in each category in Annex Table 5.1

**Source:** English Housing Survey, full household sample

5.69 Overall, 6% of social renters lived in overcrowded dwellings. The largest households were the ones most likely to be living in overcrowded housing. In particular, 36% of households consisting of multiple families (e.g. three generations) lived in overcrowded housing. Two fifths of these had at least two rooms below the standard.

5.70 Other social renting families were also more likely to be living in overcrowded housing, particularly when children were young. For example, 18% of single parents with a child aged under 5, 24% of couples with a child aged under 5, and 15% of couples with a child aged 5 to 11 lived in overcrowded housing.

5.71 Households renting in London were more likely to be overcrowded than in other parts of the country (12%, compared with 5% in other urban areas and 3% in rural areas).

5.72 One in five (22%) households who were very dissatisfied with their accommodation lived in overcrowded circumstances, compared with just 3% who were very satisfied. A quarter (24%) households who were

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very dissatisfied, and nearly half (46%) of those who were very satisfied, had one or more spare bedrooms, Annex Table 5.14.

## Usable floor area

- 5.73 Usable floor area for dwellings was calculated using measurements taken by surveyors as part of the physical survey of dwellings. Because of the smaller sample size, figures presented here are for data from the 2012-13 and 2013-14 surveys combined, presented throughout as 2013 (a mid-point of April 2013).
- 5.74 The average usable floor area in social rented accommodation was 66 m<sup>2</sup>. Floor areas were larger in houses than flats. They averaged 74 m<sup>2</sup> in terraced and semi-detached houses, and 78 m<sup>2</sup> in detached houses, compared with 55 m<sup>2</sup> in low-rise flats, and 61 m<sup>2</sup> in high-rise.
- 5.75 The average size of the accommodation for different subgroups was partly determined by the type of dwelling. It tended to follow the same patterns as described above for the proportion of houses and flats. For example, single people, who were the most likely to live in flats, tended to have the smallest properties, an average of 55 m<sup>2</sup>. Accommodation for two or more families, which was mostly houses, tended to be the largest, an average of 89 m<sup>2</sup>. One exception was with regard to location. London properties, despite being predominantly flats, were no smaller on average than properties elsewhere.
- 5.76 The homes of older people were smaller on average than those of working age, aligned with the smaller typical household size. Retired people aged 70 and above lived in homes with an average usable floor area of 59 m<sup>2</sup>. Sheltered housing for older people tended to be smaller than other types of dwelling, at an average of 48 m<sup>2</sup>. This is a reflection of the low rates of spare bedrooms in sheltered housing, compared with older people in general, Annex Table 5.15.

## Decent homes<sup>14</sup>

- 5.77 The social rented sector had a higher proportion of decent homes in 2013 than other housing sectors. In total, 85% of social rented accommodation met the standard. Non-decent homes were spread fairly evenly among the subgroups of the population, with few significant differences. Those who were dissatisfied with their accommodation were more likely to live in a home classed as non-decent (19%) than those who were very satisfied (12%), Annex Table 5.15.

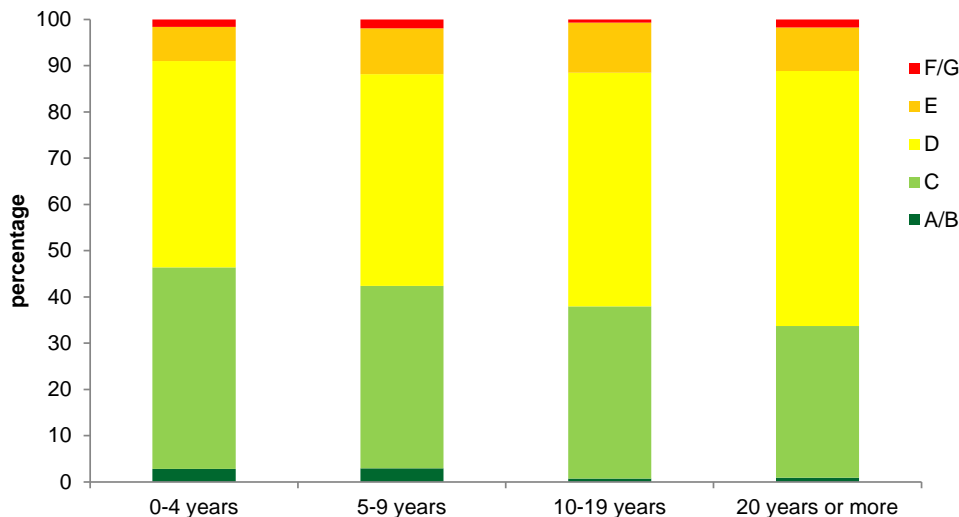
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<sup>14</sup> Assessment against the decent homes standard, assessment of energy efficiency, and assessment of accessibility were all calculated from physical survey data for the years 2012-13 and 2013-14 combined, presented here as 2013. Further information on the terms used is provided in the glossary.

## Energy efficiency

- 5.78 Only 2% of homes in the social rented sector were rated in the top energy efficiency bands, A and B. The majority were rated as either C (39%) or D (48%). Flats were naturally much more likely to be rated as more energy efficient than houses, due to having fewer external walls.
- 5.79 The likelihood of living in a home rated A, B or C fell the longer the home had been occupied, from 46% for those resident less than 5 years, to 34% for those resident more than 20. This reflects both the age of the property, and that significant upgrades were less disruptive, and possibly more likely to be carried out, when properties were vacant, Figure 5.8 and Annex Table 5.15.

**Figure 5.8: Energy efficiency of home, by length of residence, social renters, 2013**



Base: all households in social rented sector

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.15

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

- 5.80 Properties in rural areas were more likely to be rated as E, F or G than in urban areas (17%, compared with 12% in London and 9% in other urban areas). This reflects the higher proportions of older properties and houses in rural areas.
- 5.81 Sheltered housing for older people tended to be more energy efficient than other types of accommodation. 52% were rated in bands A, B or C, compared with 41% for other types of housing, reflecting the fact that sheltered housing comprises mainly flats.

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5.82 Where someone in the household received overnight care, 55%<sup>15</sup> were rated in bands A, B or C. This is much higher than would be expected given that almost two thirds of these properties were houses, Annex Table 5.15.

### **Wheelchair accessibility**

5.83 Surveyors assessed the “visitability” of dwellings on four features making the home accessible to wheelchair users: level access through the main door from the pavement or driveway; flush thresholds within the home; a ground floor WC; and passage space throughout the home of at least 81cm wide. All four of these criteria were met in 12% of homes, while none of them were met in 20%.

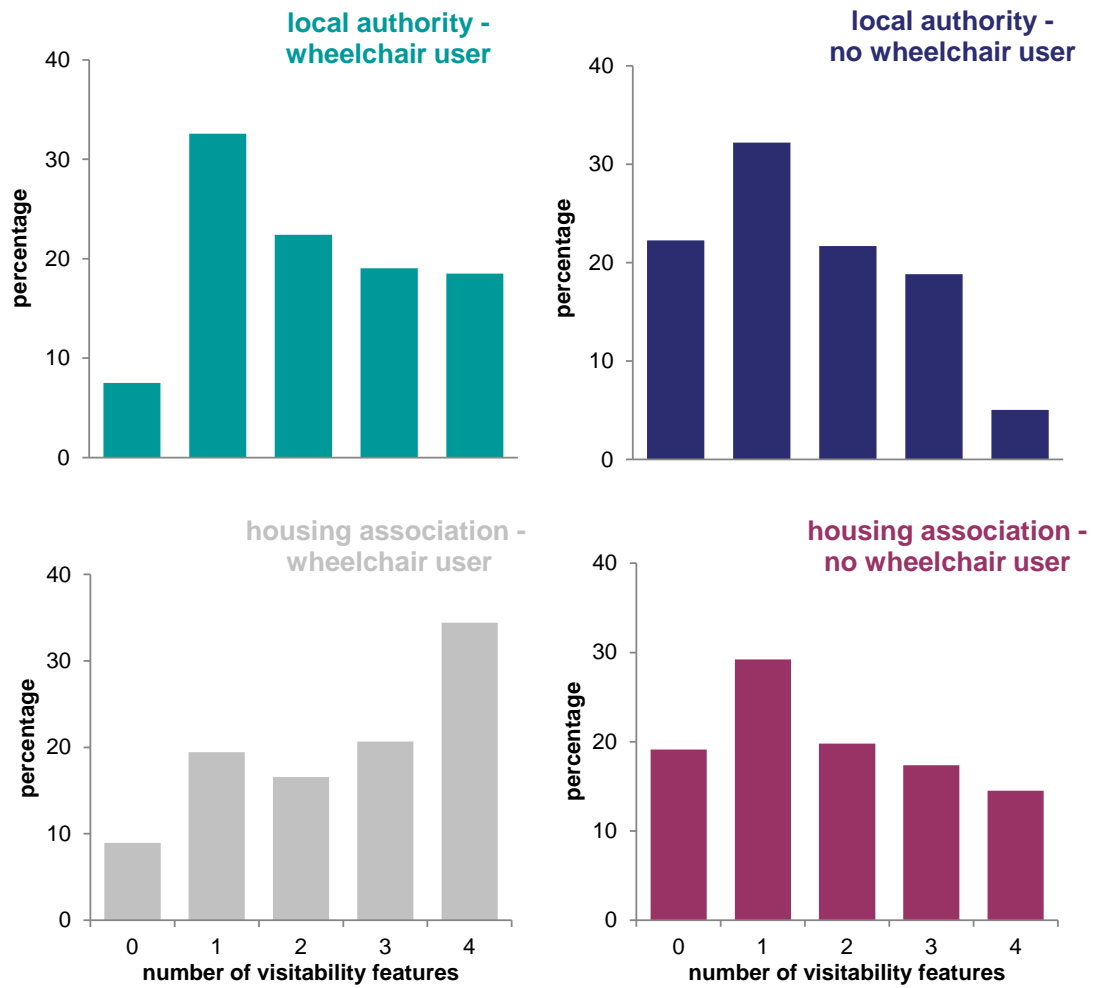
5.84 In 2013, a quarter of a million households in the social rented sector included someone who used a wheelchair, either inside or outside the home. Homes which were occupied by wheelchair users were more likely to meet the visitability criteria. 27% of homes occupied by wheelchair users were fully visitable, whereas 8% demonstrated none of the visitability features.

5.85 Housing association accommodation, which tended to have been built more recently than local authority, was more likely to meet the visitability standards. 16% of housing association accommodation met the full standards, including 34% of those occupied by wheelchair users, compared with 6% of local authority accommodation, and only 19% occupied by a wheelchair user, Figure 5.9 and Annex Table 5.16.

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<sup>15</sup> This figure is based on 2013-14 data only, and is not directly comparable to other figures presented here, as the data show a considerable improvement in the energy efficiency of dwellings in the social sector between 2012-13 and 2013-14, with 45% of properties rated in bands A, B or C in 2013-14, compared with 41% in the two-year combined data. The question about overnight care was not asked in the 2012-13 survey.

**Figure 5.9: Visitability features, by wheelchair use, social renters, 2013**



Base: all households in social rented sector  
 Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.16  
 Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample