



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



# English Housing Survey

Private rented sector, 2017-18



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# Introduction and main findings

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1. The English Housing Survey (EHS) is a national survey of people's housing circumstances and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England. It is one of the longest standing government surveys and was first run in 1967.
2. This report focuses on the private rented sector. The first chapter presents an overview of households in the private rented sector, including demographic characteristics, overcrowding and under-occupation, levels of satisfaction and households' perception of discrimination in the sector.
3. The second chapter focuses on housing costs and affordability, including rent as a proportion of income, receipt of Housing Benefit and how privately renting households pay for their gas and electricity. The extent to which private renters have savings is also explored.
4. Chapter three presents private renters' housing history and expectations, including movement into, within and out of the sector, experience of homelessness and expectation to buy.
5. Chapter four focuses on the privately rented housing stock. It presents findings on the condition of dwellings in the sector, including damp and disrepair, dwelling safety and energy efficiency.

## Main findings

**About one in five households in England live in the private rented sector, making it the second largest tenure.**

- 4.5 million households live in the private rented sector in England, 19% of all households. By comparison, 17% (4.0 million) live in the social rented sector and 64% (14.8 million) are owner occupiers.

**The majority of private renters are satisfied with their accommodation and tenure, though not as satisfied as owner occupiers.**

- The majority (84%) of private renters were satisfied or very satisfied with their current accommodation, though this was not as high a proportion of owner occupiers (95%).
- Private renters had the lowest proportion of satisfaction with tenure, at 69%, compared with 98% of owner occupiers.

**Compared with social renters and owner occupiers, private renters spend the highest proportion of their income on housing. Despite this, the majority said they found it easy to pay their rent.**

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- On average, private renters spent a third (33%) of their household income (including Housing Benefit) on rent. This is compared to 28% for social renters, and 17% for mortgagors. The proportion of household income spent on rent was higher for private renters in London (42%) than for the rest of England (30%).
  - Most private renters (71%) said they found it easy or very easy to pay their rent.

**One fifth of private renters received Housing Benefit. For most recipients, this does not cover their whole rent.**

- One in five private renters (20%) received Housing Benefit. Of these, 85% report the benefit covered part of their rent.

**About three quarters of private renters paid a deposit at the start of their current tenancy. Most of these deposits were equivalent to the value of four or more weeks' rent.**

- 76% of private renters report paying a deposit at the start of their current tenancy. About three quarters (73%) of these say this deposit was protected in one of the Government authorised tenancy deposit protection schemes. One fifth (20%) did not know whether their deposit was registered with one of these schemes.
- Where a deposit was paid, it was equivalent to either four weeks rent (42%) or more than four weeks rent (44%).

**Most private rented sector tenancies ended because the tenant wanted to move.**

- Of those who had lived in their current home for less than three years, 72% moved house because they wanted to. Main reasons for moving in the past three years were job related (18% of moves), to move to a better neighbourhood (16%) and to move to a larger home (13%).
- Of those who did not move solely by choice, reasons included being asked to move by a landlord (12%), moving on mutual agreement with a landlord (10%), and moving due to the end of a fixed term tenancy (8%).

**Nearly two thirds of private renters had no savings.**

- 63% of private renters report having no savings. Just over a third (37%) of private renters reported having some savings. 11% of private renters had savings of £16,000 or more.

**More than half of private renters thought they would eventually buy a home. A sizeable proportion of those who expected to buy did not currently have any savings.**

- Over half (58%) of private renters thought they would eventually buy a home. Younger renters were more likely to think they would eventually become home

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owners: 77% of those 16 to 24 thought they would buy, compared with 40% of those aged 45 to 64.

- Of the 42% of private renters who did not think they would eventually buy a home, most (68%) said this was because they could not afford to do so.
- There was no apparent link between those who thought they would eventually buy a home, and those who had substantial savings that could go towards a deposit: 12% of those who eventually planned to buy had substantial savings of £16,000 or more. Overall 42% of those who intend to buy had some savings.

### **Despite improvement over time, privately rented homes were more likely to have indicators of poorer housing quality and safety than other tenures.**

- The private rented sector had the highest proportion of non-decent homes. In 2017-18, 25% of homes in the private rented sector were non-decent according to the Decent Homes Standard. This is compared with 19% of owner occupied homes, and 13% of socially rented homes.
- According to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, 14% of privately rented homes had at least one Category 1 hazard, compared with 11% of owner occupied homes, and 6% of those in the social rented sector.

## **Acknowledgements and further queries**

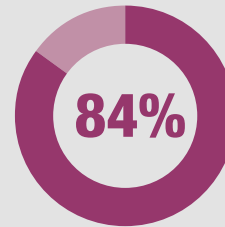
6. Each year the English Housing Survey relies on the contributions of a large number of people and organisations. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) would particularly like to thank the following people and organisations, without whom the 2017-18 survey and this report, would not have been possible: all the households who gave up their time to take part in the survey, NatCen Social Research, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and CADS Housing Surveys.
7. This report was produced by Melanie Doyle at NatCen Social Research and Helen Garrett at BRE in collaboration with MHCLG.
8. If you have any queries about this report, would like any further information or have suggestions for analyses you would like to see included in future EHS reports, please contact [ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk).
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## Private rented sector

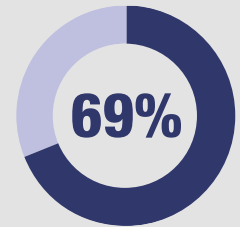


**1 in 5** households live in the **private rented sector**  
4.5 million households in England

### Satisfaction



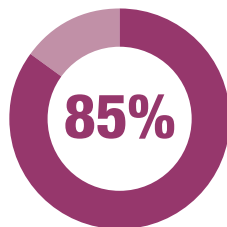
satisfied with **accommodation**



satisfied with **tenure**

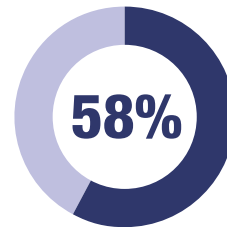
### Housing Benefit

**1 in 5** private renters received **Housing Benefit**



of private renters say **Housing Benefit covered part of their rent**

### Buying aspirations

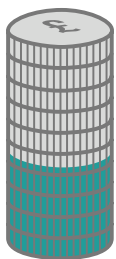


of private renters expect to buy a home

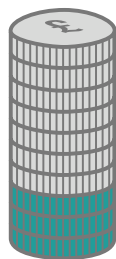


### Proportion of income

household income spent on rent (including Housing Benefit)

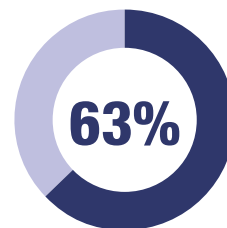


**42%** in London

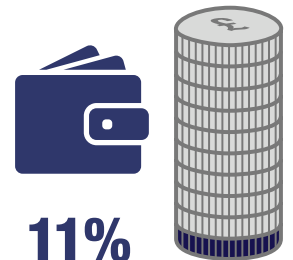


**30%** elsewhere in the country

### Savings of private renters



of private renters report they have **no savings**



**11%** of private renters had savings of **£16,000 or more**

### Moving

Reasons for moving in the last three years



### Housing condition



of homes in the private rented sector were **non-decent**



of homes in the private rented sector had a **category 1 hazard**

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# Chapter 1

## Profile of private renters

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- 1.1 This chapter provides a demographic profile of private renters. It also covers measures of overcrowding and under-occupation; perceived discrimination in the private rented sector; and levels of satisfaction with tenure and accommodation.
- 1.2 In 2017-18, the private rented sector remained the second largest tenure in England, accounting for 4.5 million or 19% of households.

### Age

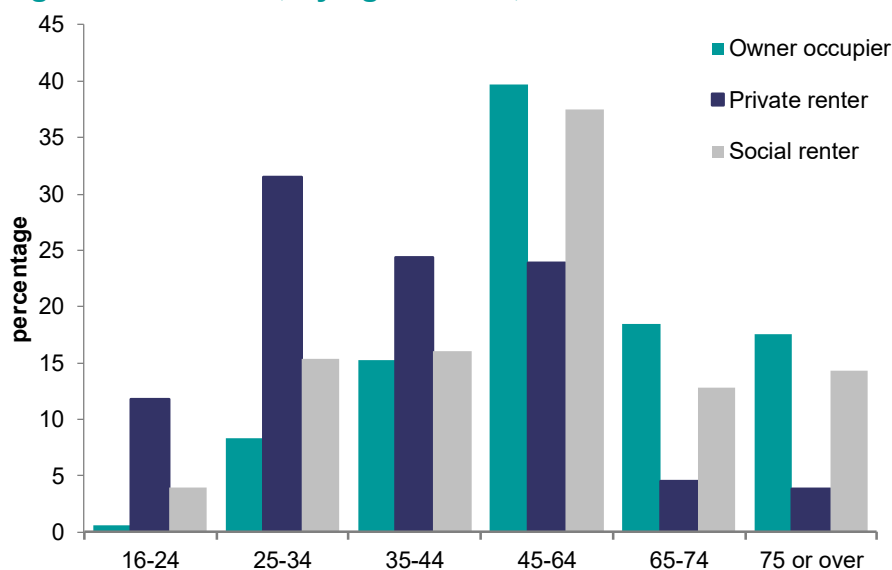
- 1.3 Private renters were younger than those in other tenures. The average age of private renters was 40 years, compared with 53 years for social renters and 57 years for owner occupiers.
- 1.4 The same is true when we look at the age distribution of private renters, who were more likely than other tenures to have a household reference person<sup>1</sup> (HRP) under 45 years of age. In 2017-18, 68% of HRPs in privately rented households were under 45 years, compared with 35% of social renters and 24% of owner occupiers. Of the 4.5 million households in this sector, over 3.0 million had a household reference person aged under 45 years. Households where the HRP was aged 65+, were less common in the private rented sector, Annex Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1.
- 1.5 While younger renters are still more common, the proportion of older HRPs in the private rented sector has increased over the past decade. In 2007-8, 5% of HRPs aged 55-64 were privately renting. In 2017-18, this increased to 9%<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Household Reference Person or HRP is the person in whose name the dwelling is owned or rented or who is otherwise responsible for the accommodation. In the case of joint owners and tenants, the person with the highest income is taken as the HRP. Where incomes are equal, the older is taken as the HRP. This procedure increases the likelihood that the HRP better characterises the household's social and economic position. The EHS definition of HRP is not consistent with the Census 2011, in which the HRP is chosen on basis of their economic activity. Where economic activity is the same, the older is taken as HRP, or if they are the same age, HRP is the first listed on the questionnaire.

<sup>2</sup> English Housing Survey 2017-18, Headline Report, Annex Table 1.4

**Figure 1.1: Tenure, by age of HRP, 2017-18**



Base: all households

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.1

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

## Sex

- 1.6 Households in the private rented sector were more likely to have a male HRP (60%) than female HRP (40%). This could be partially explained by the definition of household reference person<sup>3</sup>. This contrasts with households in the social rented sector which were more likely to have a female HRP (45%) than a male HRP (55%), Annex Table 1.2.

## Household type and size

- 1.7 The most prevalent household types in the private rented sector were one-person households (25%), couples with no children (24%) and couples with dependent children (22%), each accounting for around a quarter of private rented households.
- 1.8 Shared households, with lone persons sharing with others, were more common among private renters (11%) than social renters or owner occupiers (both 2%), Annex Table 1.3. The higher prevalence of shared households is likely related to the younger age profile in this tenure.

<sup>3</sup> See Glossary



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- 1.9 Mean household size was similar across the three tenures, with an average household size of 2.4 in owner occupying households, 2.3 among social renters and 2.5 among private renters, Live table FA1211.

## NS-SEC

- 1.10 National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) is a statistical construction which allows for classification into one of eight socio-economic groups or categories based on a respondent's current occupation.
- 1.11 Of these eight groups, lower managerial and professional occupations were most common in the private rented sector (24% of households in the private rented sector).
- 1.12 The NS-SEC profile of private renters was broadly similar to that of owner occupiers, with managerial and professional groups most common, but differed from that of social renters where the most frequent NS-SEC groups were semi-routine and routine occupations, Annex Table 1.4.

## Economic activity

- 1.13 The economic activity of private renters was also related to the younger age profile of this tenure. The majority of private renters were working, either full-time (65%) or part-time (12%), and private renters were more likely to be in full-time work than social renters (27%) or owner occupiers (52%).
- 1.14 The proportion of retired HRP's was lower among private renters (8%) than social renters (28%) and owner occupiers (36%).
- 1.15 Private renters (8%) were also less likely than social renters (25%) to be economically inactive, Annex Table 1.6.

## Income

- 1.16 For private renters, household income is a better indicator than joint income as there are a higher proportion of shared households in this tenure where multiple people earn an income and contribute to rental payments.
- 1.17 Private renters' income was relatively evenly distributed across household income quintiles, albeit slightly lower in the highest income quintile (14%) than the other quintiles (19% to 23%), reflecting the diversity of the sector and its accommodation, Annex Table 1.7.

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## Long-term illness and disability

1.18 Private renters were less likely than other tenures to have someone in the household with a long-term illness or disability (23% of private renters, 54% of social renters, 31% of owner occupiers). This may reflect age, as private renters tend to be younger than owner occupiers and social renters, as well as eligibility for social rented accommodation, as those with a long-term illness and disability are more likely to be eligible for social housing, Annex Table 1.9.

## Life satisfaction

1.19 In order to assess well-being, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction in life on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all satisfied” and 10 is “completely satisfied”. Mean life satisfaction among private renters (7.4) was higher than for social renters (7.1) and lower than for owner occupiers (7.9), Annex Table 1.10.

## Ethnicity and nationality

1.20 The majority of private renters had a HRP who identified as white (81%). Other groups were less prevalent: 5% of private rented households had a black HRP, 3% had an Indian HRP, 3% had a Pakistani or Bangladeshi HRP, and 1% had a Chinese HRP. The remaining 7% of households had an HRP who identified with another minority ethnic group.

1.21 The profile of private renters was similar to social renters: with 83% of HRPs identifying as white. Owner occupiers were more likely to have a white HRP (91%), Annex Table 1.11.

1.22 Around three quarters (74%) of privately rented households had a HRP that was a British or Irish national. This was lower than the proportion of households in the social rented sector (92%) and in owner occupation (96%).

1.23 EU nationals were more prevalent, accounting for 17% of private renters, compared with 4% of social renters and 2% of owner occupiers, Annex Table 1.12.

1.24 EU nationals were more likely to live in private rented accommodation (62% of EU nationals) than social rented (12%) or owner occupied accommodation (26%), Annex Table 1.13.

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## Religion

- 1.25 Private renters were less likely than those in other tenures to consider themselves as Christian (52% of private renters, compared with 65% of owner occupiers and 60% of social renters. Private renters were also more likely to have no religion (38% of private renters, 31% of social renters and 28% of owner occupiers), Annex Table 1.14.

## Perceived discrimination in private rented sector

- 1.26 Respondents were asked to say whether they thought they would be treated better, worse or the same as people of other races by a number of institutions, including private landlords or letting agents. These questions measure peoples' perceptions, so it is not necessary for the respondent to have had direct contact with the institution to answer them.
- 1.27 The most common view was that people of different races would be treated the same by private landlords or letting agents. This view was supported more consistently by private renters (65%) than social renters (54%) or owner occupiers (53%).
- 1.28 Regardless of the respondent's ethnicity, the most common view was that people of different races would be treated equally. However, private renters identifying with a minority ethnic group were more likely to think they would be treated worse because of race (9%) than those identifying as white (4%), and less likely to think that they would be treated better than other races (3%, compared with 15%), Annex Table 1.16.
- 1.29 Views of discrimination in the private rented sector also varied by nationality. Private renters from the UK or Republic of Ireland (15%) were more likely than EU (6%) or other nationals (8%) to think they would be treated better than people of other races.
- 1.30 Private renters who were EU nationals were also more likely to think the private sector treats everyone the same (73%) than British or Irish Nationals (64%), Annex Table 1.17.<sup>4</sup>

## Overcrowding and under-occupation

- 1.31 Levels of overcrowding and under-occupation are measured using the bedroom standard (see glossary). This is the difference between the number of bedrooms needed to avoid undesirable sharing (given the number, ages

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<sup>4</sup> The 2018 English Private Landlord Survey asked landlords about willingness to rent to particular tenants. See the English Private Landlord Survey 2018, Main Report.

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and relationship of the household members) and the number of bedrooms actually available to the household.

- 1.32 Social renters (8%) were more likely to experience overcrowding than private renters (6%), and both groups were more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than owner occupiers (1%)<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.33 Relatedly, under-occupation was more common among owner occupiers (54%) than private renters (15%) or social renters (10%)<sup>6</sup>.

## Satisfaction

- 1.34 The majority (84%) of private renters were very or fairly satisfied with their current accommodation and reported higher levels of satisfaction than social renters (80%). However, renters were generally less satisfied with their current accommodation than owner occupiers (95%), Live table FA5401.
- 1.35 Private renters were also more likely to be satisfied with repairs and maintenance than social renters (73% of private renters and 66% of social renters very satisfied or satisfied), Live table FA5423.
- 1.36 However, private renters had the lowest levels of satisfaction with their tenure, with 69% very satisfied or satisfied with their tenure, compared with 98% of owner occupiers and 83% of social renters, Annex Table 1.18

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<sup>5</sup> English Housing Survey 2017-18, Headline report, Annex Table 1.21

<sup>6</sup> English Housing Survey 2017-18, Headline report, Annex Table 1.22

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# Chapter 2

## Housing costs and affordability

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2.1 This chapter explores the affordability of the private rented sector by looking at average income and rent and the proportion of income spent on housing costs. It also looks at receipt of benefits, cost of electricity and gas, casual letting and lodgers, and levels of savings.

### Income and rent

2.2 In the private rented sector, 'household income' provides a better measure of income than 'joint income', due to higher proportion of shared households where multiple residents have an income and contribute to rent<sup>7</sup>. Mean weekly household income for private renters was £728, higher than for social renters (£408) but lower than for owner occupiers (£941). Joint income showed a similar pattern.

2.3 Private renters had a median household income of £583 per week, compared with £744 for owner occupiers and £326 for social renters. Median household income was lower than mean income, which suggests the majority of incomes were centred around a lower value than suggested by the mean. Median income may therefore provide a better indicator of typical circumstances in the private rented sector, Annex Table 2.1.

2.4 Private renters reported higher rental costs than social renters, spending on average £193 per week in rent compared with £103 for social renters. Higher mean rental costs among private renters may reflect higher rents as well as the range of accommodation available in that sector, compared with the social rented sector, Annex Table 2.2.

### Proportion of income spent on housing

2.5 The proportion of income spent on rent is a useful measure of affordability. It is also possible to assess the impact of benefits by comparing income with and without housing benefit included.

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<sup>7</sup> Household income will include income from all adults living in the household. Joint income will only include the income of the HRP and their partner.

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- 2.6 Private renters spent one third (33%) of their total household income on rent, higher than for social renters (28%) and mortgagers (17%). Excluding Housing Benefit, private and social renters spent a similar proportion of their income on rent (37%)<sup>8</sup>.
  - 2.7 Younger private renters spend a higher proportion of their income on rent than older private renters, with 16 to 24 year olds spending 45% of their household income on rent, compared with a range of 32% to 39% for older age groups.
  - 2.8 Private renters in London spent 42% of their household income on rent, higher than those living elsewhere in England (30%).
  - 2.9 Household types that spent the highest proportion of their income on rent were: lone parents with dependent children (42%), one person households (39%) and shared households (37%), Annex Table 2.3.

## Ease of paying rent

- 2.10 The majority of private renters (71%) found it fairly easy or very easy to pay their rent. Social renters expressed a similar view (69%), Annex Table 2.4

## Receipt of Housing Benefit

- 2.11 One in five private renters (20%) received Housing Benefit, lower than the proportion of social renters (60%) in receipt of Housing Benefit<sup>9</sup>.
- 2.12 For private renters, Housing Benefit was more likely to cover only some of their rent (85% reported their benefit covered part of their rent). Private renters were less likely than social renters to receive Housing Benefit that covered their whole rent (13% of private renters, 54% of social renters), Annex Table 2.5 and Annex Table 2.8 in 2017-18 Social rented sector report.
- 2.13 Among private renters receiving Housing Benefit, 61% were in receipt of Housing Benefit at the start of their tenancy, Annex Table 2.6.

## Savings

- 2.14 Respondents were asked if they currently had investments or savings and the value of these. Overall, 37% of private renters had savings, compared with 17% of social renters and 66% of owner occupiers, Annex Table 2.7.

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<sup>8</sup> English Housing Survey 2017-18, Headline report, Annex Table 1.13

<sup>9</sup> English Housing Survey 2017-18, Headline report, Annex Table 1.14

- 2.15 Levels of savings provided one indicator of ‘readiness to buy’, as substantial levels of savings may be needed to fund a deposit, particularly for first time buyers.
- 2.16 Looking at levels of savings, 11% of private renters had substantial savings of £16,000 or more, compared with 30% of owner occupiers and 3% of social renters. A substantial proportion of private renters (63% overall) had no savings, Figure 2.1 and Annex Table 2.8,

**Figure 2.1: Savings amounts, by tenure, 2017-18**



**Base: all households**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.8**

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

- 2.17 Older private renters were more likely to have substantial savings than older private renters (for example, 3% of those aged 16 to 24 and 28% of those aged 65 to 74 had substantial savings), Annex Table 2.9. Though, for older private renters, having substantial savings is not necessarily linked to plans to purchase a home (see Chapter 3 of this report).
- 2.18 Around two thirds of private renters aged under 65 had no savings: the proportion with no savings ranged from 61% to 69%. Older private renters, aged 65 and over, were less likely to report having no savings (39% of 65 to 74 year olds, and 44% of those aged 75 and over had no savings).

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## Utility payments

- 2.19 Private and social renters were asked how they paid for their electricity and gas. They were also asked about their method of payment, which was grouped into three categories: direct debit; standard credit including payment on receipt of bill; and prepayment.
- 2.20 Direct debit was the most common form of payment used by private renters for electricity (62%) and gas (62%). Social renters were less likely to pay for electricity or gas by direct debit (both 39%).
- 2.21 Prepayment was less common for private renters: 21% of private renters pay for electricity and gas in this way. However, it was the most common form of payment for social renters, used by 46% of social renters to pay for electricity, and 45% for gas<sup>10</sup>.
- 2.22 While direct debit has previously been the least expensive way of paying for gas and electricity, the latest figures from BEIS show this is no longer the case, with prepayment bills similar to direct debit bills. Standard credit remains the most expensive option<sup>11</sup>.
- 2.23 Around 18% of private renters had no mains gas. They were more likely to live in a property without mains gas than social renters (13%), Annex Table 2.10. Living in a property without mains gas may result in higher energy costs, outside the control of the private renter.

## Deposits and other fees

- 2.24 Around three quarters of private renters (76%) paid a deposit at the start of their current tenancy. Of those who paid a deposit, the majority (73%) report their deposits were protected under a Government authorised tenancy deposit scheme. However, tenants were not always sure whether their deposits had been protected in this way: 20% of those who paid deposits did not know, Annex Table 2.11.
- 2.25 Private renters were typically asked to pay a deposit equivalent to either four weeks rent (42%) or more than four weeks rent (44%), Annex Table 2.12.
- 2.26 Private renters also mentioned a range of other fees at the start of their tenancy, the majority of which were, at the time of the survey, non-returnable.

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<sup>10</sup> EHS figures vary from those published by BEIS in their Quarterly Energy Prices, section on payment methods in <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-energy-prices-june-2018>. This is due to differences in methodology as the BEIS data is collected directly from energy companies. EHS respondents may not be aware of their payment type, for example thinking that standing order (classed as standard credit) is a type of direct debit.

<sup>11</sup> Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Quarterly Energy Prices, June 2018

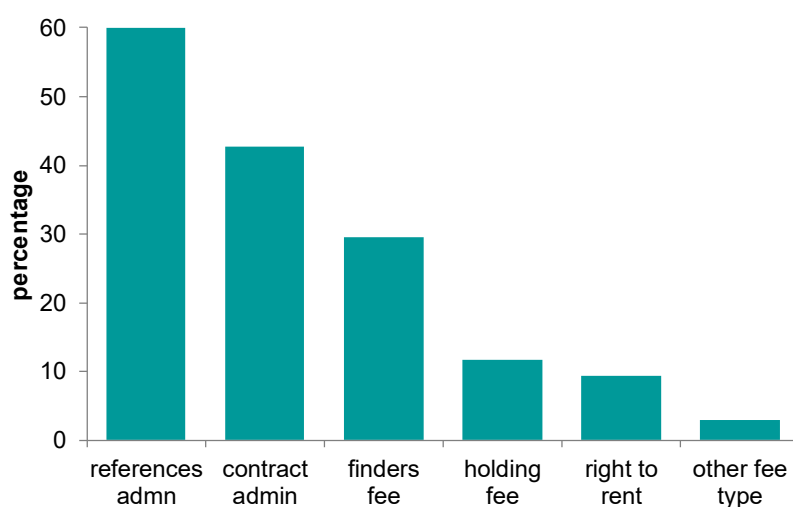


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Overall, 44% of private renters were charged an additional fee by a landlord or letting agent in their previous tenancy.

- 2.27 Among those charged other fees in their current tenancy, the most common were non-returnable: administration fees for references (60%), administration fees for contracts and inventories (43%), finders fees (29%), holding fees (non-returnable: 12%, returnable: 7%) and 'right to rent' checks (9%), Figure 2.2 and Annex Table 2.13.

**Figure 2.2: Prevalence of non-returnable fee types among private renters who paid other fees, 2017-18**



**Base: all private renters who paid some other fee at start of tenancy**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.13**

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

- 2.28 The total amount of fees paid varied, with private renters most commonly asked to pay £100 to £200 (26%) or £200 to £300 (27%) in additional fees, on top of their deposit. Higher fees of £500 or more were mentioned by 12% of private renters. The cost of starting a new tenancy, and moving within or into the private rented sector, is highlighted by the deposit and these additional fees, which were largely non-returnable, or at least not immediately so<sup>12</sup>, Annex Table 2.14

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<sup>12</sup> The Tenant Fees Act 2019 would prohibit many of these fees, and make others returnable; however, this Act was not in force at the time EHS fieldwork was completed.

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## Casual letting and lodgers

- 2.29 In 2017-18, lodgers<sup>13</sup> were relatively rare, reported by 2% of private renters, 1% of owner occupiers and less than 1% of social renters, Annex Table 2.15.
- 2.30 Casual letting was more prevalent and, in the last 12 months, 13% of households in the private rented sector had rented all or part of their home using home sharing organisations<sup>14</sup>, Annex Table 2.16. We do not know how frequently they had done this, or for how long they had rented it out.
- 2.31 Private renters were more likely to rent out their whole home (12%) rather than part of it (1%). This was the same for owner occupiers and social renters (11% and 1% respectively, though the differences were not significant from private renters), Annex Table 2.16.
- 2.32 Younger private renters were no more likely to rent out their home than older private renters, Annex Table 2.17.
- 2.33 Casual letting by private renters was more prevalent in London (20%) and in the West Midlands (18% of private renters in this region)<sup>15</sup>, Annex Table 2.18.

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<sup>13</sup> In the EHS lodgers are defined as household members aged 16 and over who pay rent as a lodger. Lodgers are not related to or cohabiting with the HRP, partner or relative/other householder and are not named on the rental agreement or as joint owners.

<sup>14</sup> Respondents were asked: In the past 12 months, have you used these or similar organisations to let your home or part of your home? Airbnb, FlatClub, FlipKey, HomeAway, Housetrip, Roomorama, Uproost, Vive Unique, Windu, WorldEscape, 9Flats, other similar organisation.

<sup>15</sup> For a breakdown of casual letting by region, see the English Housing Survey 2017-18 Home ownership report, Annex table 2.7.

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## Chapter 3

# Housing history and future housing aspirations

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- 3.1 This chapter describes private renters' housing history and future housing aspirations. As well as looking at time in current tenure and housing moves between tenures, this chapter looks at current accommodation, tenancy type, homelessness and buying expectations.

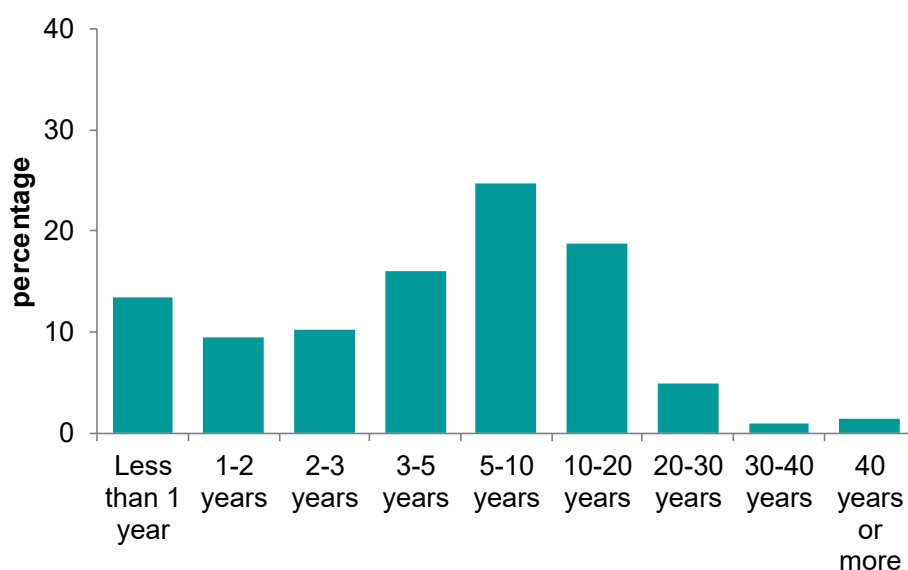
### Time spent in current accommodation

- 3.2 Private renters lived in their current accommodation for shorter periods than social renters or owner occupiers: mean length of time in current residence was 4.1 years for private renters, 11.9 years for social renters and 17.8 years for owner occupiers.
- 3.3 Short periods of residence of less than one year were reported by more than a quarter (27%) of private renters, but relatively less often by social renters (6%) or owner occupiers (4%).
- 3.4 Social renters and owner occupiers were more likely than those in the private rented sector to report living in their current home for 10 years or more, with 10 to 19 years being most common for social renters (24%) and owner occupiers (26%), Annex Table 3.1.
- 3.5 In general, older private renters had lived in their current home for longer than younger private renters, Annex Table 3.2.

### Time spent in current tenure

- 3.6 A quarter (25%) of private renters had been living in the private rented sector for between 5 and 10 years. Around half of private renters (49%) had been in the tenure less than 5 years, Figure 3.1 and Annex Table 3.3.

**Figure 3.1: Private renters' time in the private rented sector, 2017-18**



**Base:** all private renters

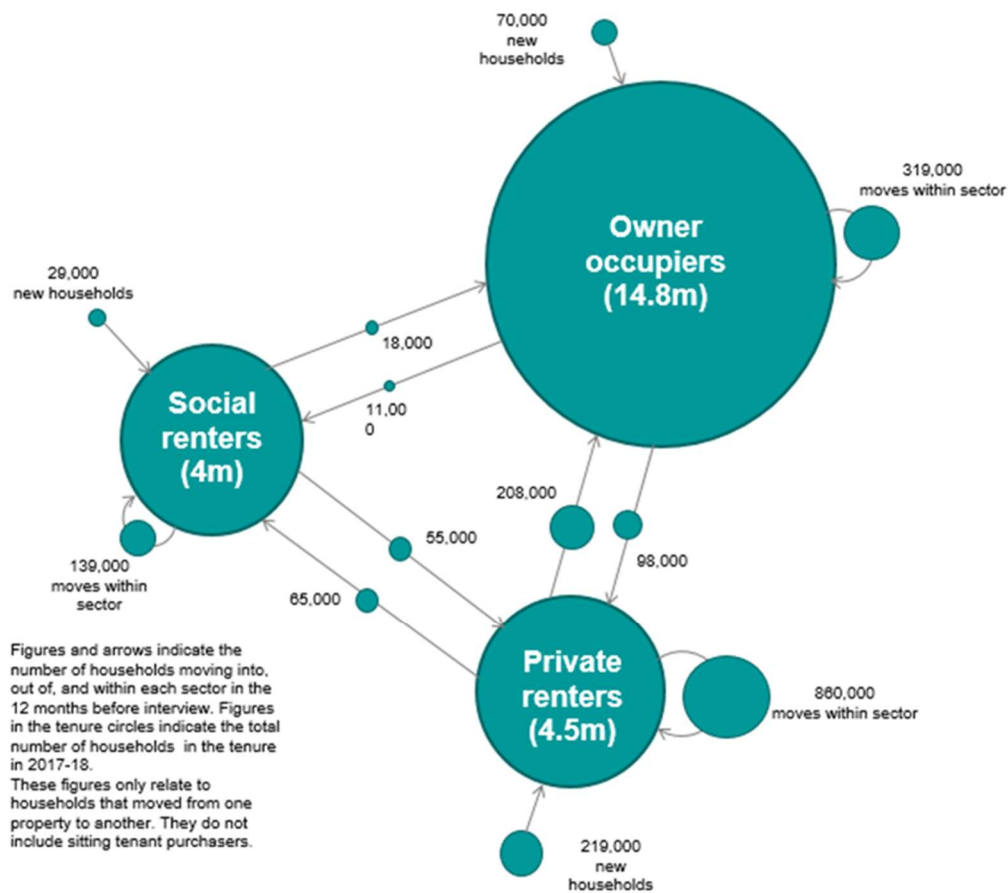
**Note:** underlying data are presented in Annex Table 3.3

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

## Housing moves

- 3.7 In 2017-18, 2.1 million households had moved home in the previous 12 months. More moves occurred within, into or out of the private rented sector than owner occupation or the social rented sector.
- 3.8 The majority of moves were within the private rented sector (or 'churn'): 860,000 private renters had moved from one private rented accommodation to another in the past year.
- 3.9 Private renters also moved out of the sector. In 2017-18, 208,000 bought a home and moved into owner occupation, and a further 65,000 moved into the social rented sector.
- 3.10 Those moving into the private rented sector included new households (219,000), those who had previously owned their own home (98,000) or rented in the social rented sector (55,000), Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2: Household moves, by tenure 2017-18**



**Base:** all households resident for less than one year.

**Notes:**

- 1) underlying data are presented in Headline Report, Annex Table 1.20
  - 2) a small number of cases with inconsistent responses have been omitted
  - 3) survey cannot identify the number of households which have ended
- Source: 2017-18 English Housing Survey, full household sample

## Reasons for moving

- 3.11 Private renters who were resident in their current home for less than three years were asked why their previous tenancy had ended and their reasons for moving.
- 3.12 The main reasons for moving given by private renters were: job related reasons (18%), to move to a better neighbourhood (16%) and to move to a larger home (13%).
- 3.13 Other reasons were also mentioned: getting married and living together (4%), divorce or separation (3%), wanting to live independently (4%) and other personal reasons (5%), Annex Table 3.4.

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- 3.14 Almost three quarters (72%) of previous tenancies had ended because the private renter wanted to move. Other reasons were less common but included being asked to move by the landlord (12%), moving on mutual agreement with the landlord (10%) or moving due to the end of a fixed tenancy (8%), Annex Table 3.5.
- 3.15 Where private renters were asked to leave by their landlord, this was predominantly because the landlord planned to sell or to use the property (69%), Annex Table 3.6.

## Type of tenancy and length of initial tenancy agreement

- 3.16 Assured shorthold tenancies were the most common type of tenancy, accounting for 80% of tenancies in the private rented sector. Those who had lived in their current home for longer periods also mentioned assured tenancies (4%), which applied to tenancies starting between 1989 and 1997. A further 13% of private renters mentioned they had some other type of let, although when asked for details the majority did not know, Annex Table 3.7.
- 3.17 Private renters reported relatively short initial tenancy agreements lasting six months (32%) or 12 months (50% of private renters). A relatively small proportion (3% of private renters) had an initial tenancy agreement of 18 months, Annex Table 3.8.

## Notice period

- 3.18 Assured Shorthold Tenancies, the most common type of tenancy, have a standard notice period of at least two months so the landlord is required to give a tenant at least two months to move out and the leaving date must be at least six months after the initial tenancy period began<sup>16</sup>. Assured or Regulated tenancies allow the tenant to remain the property for life. However other less common tenancy types do not have a standard notice period.
- 3.19 Private renters with a resident landlord, educational institution or other type of let were asked about the length of their notice period, or the length of time the landlord must give them to move out. Overall, 40% of private renters with these other types of let reported they had no notice period, suggesting they believed the landlord could ask them to move out without giving notice. Where a notice period did exist, self-reported notice periods of less than two months

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<sup>16</sup> With Assured Shorthold Tenancies the landlord is required to give at least 2 months written notice and the leaving date must be at least 6 months after the initial tenancy period began, unless the leaving date coincides with the end of a fixed term tenancy. Landlords' must also have protected the tenants' deposit in a deposit protection scheme. Accessed, 18 June, 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/tenancy-agreements-a-guide-for-landlords/ending-a-tenancy>.

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(28%), exactly two months (11%) and longer than two months (21%) were all mentioned, Annex Table 3.9.

- 3.20 All private renters were asked whether their notice period was adequate. While most (69%) private renters felt the notice period gave them enough time to move, others felt their notice period was possibly (19%) or definitely (13%) too short to find a new place to live, Annex Table 3.10.

## Homelessness and waiting lists

- 3.21 Approximately 6% of private renters had, in the last few years, contacted the council because they were homeless or about to become homeless, while 10% of social renters had done so, Annex Table 3.11.
- 3.22 Of those who contacted the council, the majority formally asked the council to consider them homeless, although social renters were more likely to have done so (74% of private renters, 87% of social renters).
- 3.23 Those currently in the private rented sector were less likely to have been accepted as homeless (35% accepted as homeless) than those now in the social rented sector (73%), Annex Table 3.12.
- 3.24 Overall, 7% of private renters (approximately 14,000 households) who had asked the council to consider them homeless were currently living in temporary accommodation in the private rented sector, Annex Table 3.13<sup>17</sup>.
- 3.25 Overall, 6% of private renters and 8% of social renters were on a waiting list for social rented accommodation from a local authority or housing association. Those already in living in social rented accommodation may be on a waiting list to move to a different area or property better suited to their needs, Annex Table 3.14.

## Buying aspirations

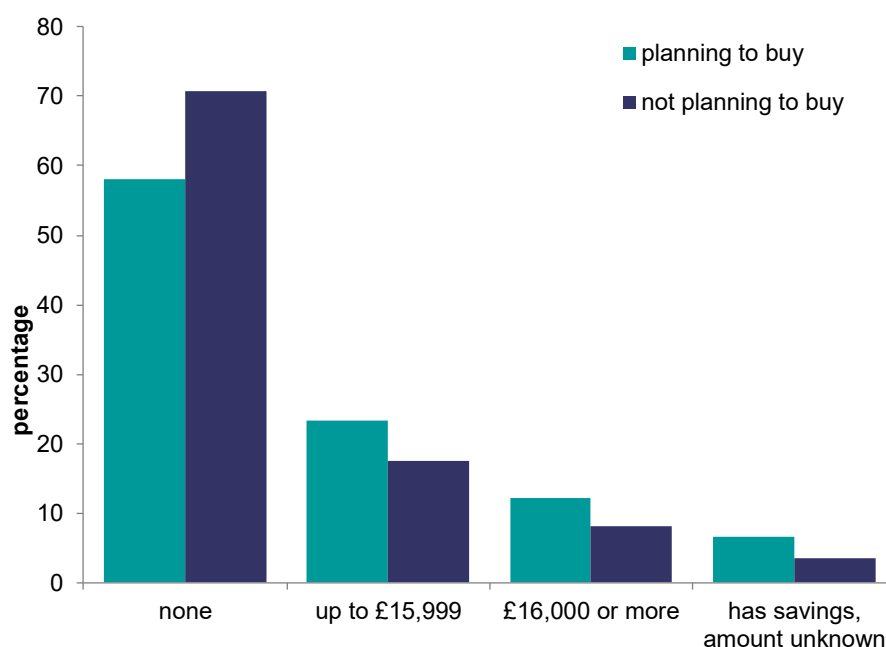
- 3.26 Private and social renters were asked whether they thought they would eventually buy a home in the UK. Overall, private renters (58%) were more likely than social renters (25%) to say that they expected to buy a home, Annex Table 3.15.

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<sup>17</sup> All renters were asked whether their current accommodation was temporary or emergency accommodation. Table 3.13 shows results for those who had asked the council to consider them homeless. Please note that the unweighted base for these figures is small.

- 3.27 Younger private renters were more likely to plan to buy than older private renters: 77% of those aged 16 to 24 planned to buy, compared with 40% of those aged 45 to 64, Annex Table 3.16.
- 3.28 Buying expectations were higher among those with a higher income: 34% of private renters in the lowest income quintile expect to buy compared with 73% of those in the highest income quintile, Annex Table 3.17.
- 3.29 Of those private renters who planned to buy, more than half (58%) had no savings. Others had some savings, with 12% of private renters who planned to buy reporting substantial savings of £16,000 or more, Figure 3.3 and Annex Table 3.19.

**Figure 3.3: Private renters' savings, by buying aspirations, 2017-18**



**Base: all private renters**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 3.19**

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

- 3.30 Overall, 26% of private renters planned to buy within the next two years. Longer term buying expectations were more common, with 41% of private renters planning to buy in five years or more, and 33% in two to five years, Annex Table 3.18.

## Barriers to ownership

- 3.31 Those who did not plan to buy – around 42% of private renters<sup>18</sup> – were asked the main reasons they did not expect to buy or own their own home. The most

<sup>18</sup> Annex Table 3.15



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common reason, mentioned by 68% of this group, was that they were unlikely to be able to afford their own home.

- 3.32 Other reasons, mentioned less frequently, included positive reasons such as liking their current home (15%) or preferring the flexibility of renting (11%), as well as constraints, such as not having a secure job (13%), not wanting to be in debt (12%) and not wanting the commitment of owning their own home (10%), Annex Table 3.20.

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## Chapter 4

# Dwelling condition and energy efficiency

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- 4.1 This chapter examines the overall dwelling condition, safety and energy efficiency of the 4.8 million homes in the private rented sector<sup>19</sup>.
- 4.2 The housing quality indicators examined are; the Decent Homes Standard, damp and disrepair. Dwelling safety is examined through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), electrical safety, and the presence of working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. For each measure the private rented sector is compared with other tenures.

### Overview - dwelling condition and dwelling safety

- 4.3 Overall, privately rented homes were more likely to have indicators of poorer housing quality, particularly when compared with the social rented sector, Figure 4.1.
- 4.4 One of the main reasons for the relatively higher prevalence of poorer housing conditions among privately rented homes is the age of the stock; over one third (35%) of homes were built before 1919<sup>20</sup>. These older homes tend to have greater disrepair, are generally less energy efficient and are more likely to fail the statutory minimum standard for housing<sup>21</sup>. The private rented sector also has the highest proportion of converted flats (11%)<sup>22</sup>; these are predominantly older dwellings and just over a fifth failed the statutory minimum standard for housing, Live tables DA4101.

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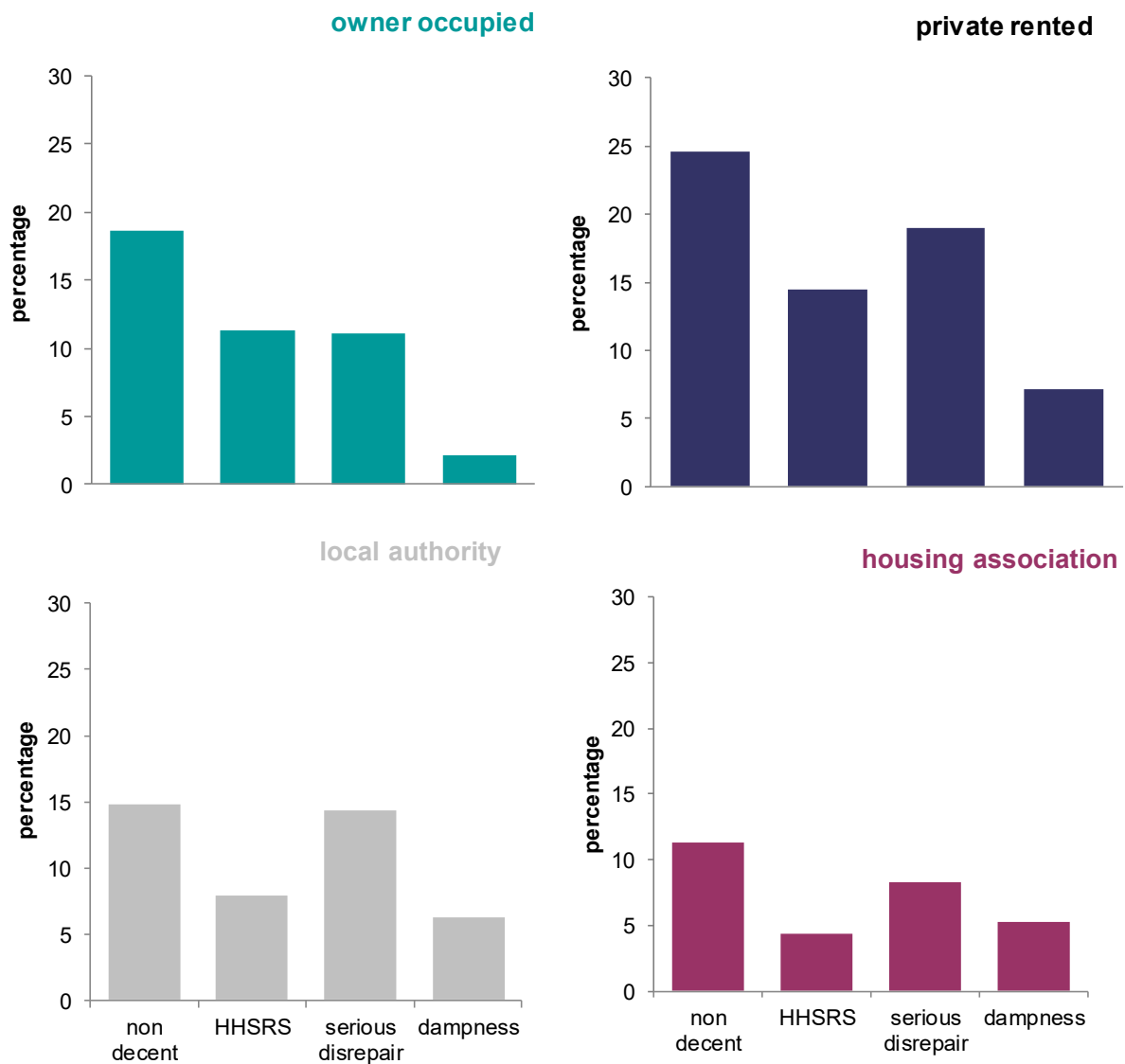
<sup>19</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.1.

<sup>20</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.1.

<sup>21</sup> As assessed by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). See 'Dwelling Safety' section of this chapter.

<sup>22</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.1.

**Figure 4.1: Poor housing conditions, by tenure, 2017**



Base: all dwellings

Note: underlying data are presented in Live tables DA3201, DA4101, DA5101, DA5201.

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

## Dwelling condition

### Decent homes<sup>23</sup>

4.5 The private rented sector had the highest proportion of non-decent homes. In 2017, 25% (1.2 million) of privately rented homes were non-decent compared

<sup>23</sup> For further information on the Decent Homes Standard see Glossary.

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with 19% of owner occupied, 15% of local authority and 11% of housing association homes<sup>24</sup>.

## Damp

4.6 This section firstly reports on the prevalence of damp using the physical survey and, secondly, the prevalence of damp reported by households as part of the interview survey. The surveyor and household assessments are not directly comparable as the physical survey records the presence of damp on the day of the survey, while the interview survey asks respondents about their experiences of damp and mould in their home more generally.

### *Surveyors assessment*

4.7 Overall, privately rented homes were more likely to have damp problems than owner occupied and housing association homes, but dampness was equally likely to be present in privately rented and local authority dwellings, Figure 4.1.

4.8 In 2017, 7% (343,000) of privately rented homes had dampness compared with 2% of owner occupied and 5% of housing association homes<sup>25</sup>. Some 6% of local authority homes had damp<sup>26</sup>.

### *Household assessment*

4.9 Although the proportion of damp homes reported by households was markedly higher for each tenure compared with the surveyor assessment, there was a similar pattern in the relative prevalence of damp across tenures.

4.10 Around 1.9 million private renters reported an issue with condensation, damp or mould in their home in 2017-18. Overall, a higher proportion of private renters (42%) reported a problem with damp compared with owners (24%) and housing association renters (38%), but a similar proportion of local authority renters reported damp problems (42%), Annex Table 2.1.

4.11 Of those 1.9 million (42%) private renters who reported an issue with condensation, damp or mould in their home, 17% reported that the problems occurred in the winter only, 23% reported that damp occurred all year round and 2% reported the problems occurred at some other time.

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<sup>24</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.2, which includes Decent Homes trends over time. Chapter 2 of the EHS 2017-18 Stock profile and condition report examines the characteristics of non-decent homes in greater detail, including the reasons for failing the Standard.

<sup>25</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.5.

<sup>26</sup> The English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report examines trends in the prevalence of damp problems over time. In addition, chapter 2 of the EHS 2017-18 Stock profile and condition report examines damp problems in greater depth.

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- 4.12 Of those who reported damp problems, private renters were far more likely to report that the damp was already present when they moved into their home (96%) than all other households (87% to 90%) depending on tenure.

### **Disrepair**

- 4.13 To provide comparative levels of medium-term disrepair for each tenure, the following analysis uses EHS standardised basic repair costs in square metres (£/m<sup>2</sup>)<sup>27</sup>.
- 4.14 Overall, privately rented homes had higher levels of disrepair. The average level of disrepair among privately rented homes was £22/m<sup>2</sup> compared with £13/m<sup>2</sup> for both owner occupied and social rented homes, Live table DA5201.
- 4.15 Similarly, almost one fifth (19%) of private rented dwellings had serious disrepair (over £35/m<sup>2</sup>) compared with 14% of local authority, 11% of owner occupied and 8% of housing association homes, Figure 4.1.
- 4.16 Although the average level of disrepair was higher for privately rented dwellings, the proportion of stock with no repair costs (33%) was higher compared with local authority homes (29%), likely reflecting the higher proportion of newer homes within the private rented stock.

## **Dwelling safety**

### **Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)**

- 4.17 The HHSRS is a risk-based assessment tool that identifies hazards in dwellings and evaluates their potential effects on the health and safety of occupants and their visitors<sup>28</sup>. This section reports on the prevalence of any Category 1 hazard and the most common types of hazard in all homes: excess cold and falls<sup>29</sup>.
- 4.18 Privately rented homes were more likely than other tenures to fail the statutory minimum standard for housing. In 2017, 14% (691,000)<sup>30</sup> of privately rented dwellings had at least one Category 1 hazard compared with 11% of owner occupied and 6% of social rented homes, Figure 4.1.
- 4.19 The EHS estimates whether a dwelling poses a threat to health from excessive cold based on its SAP rating. Private rented homes were more

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<sup>27</sup> See English Housing Survey Technical Report, 2016-17, Chapter 5 Annex 5.5, for further information. This repair cost indicator is different to that used to calculate whether a home meets the repair criterion of the Decent Homes Standard

<sup>28</sup> For further information on the HHSRS see English Housing Survey Technical Report, 2016-17, Chapter 5, Annex 5.5.

<sup>29</sup> Includes risks of: falls associated with stairs, falls between levels, falls on the level and falls associated with baths.

<sup>30</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.3.

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likely to have a risk of harm from excessive cold (5%) than both owner occupied (4%) and social rented homes (1%), Live table DA4101.

- 4.20 The proportion of private rented homes with a serious risk of harm from a falls hazard (7%) was no different to that in the owner occupied sector (7%) but higher compared to social homes (3%).

### **Electrical safety<sup>31</sup>**

- 4.21 This is an area of housing quality where provision in the private rented sector was similar to that in the owner occupied sector, likely because of legislation that places obligations on landlords to ensure that electrical installations are safe. Provision of key electrical safety features<sup>32</sup> was, however, markedly higher in the social sector.

- 4.22 In 2017, 61% of privately rented homes and 60% of owner occupied homes had all five electrical safety features, a notably lower proportion than social sector homes (73%), Live Table DA5201.

### **Smoke alarms<sup>33</sup>**

- 4.23 Landlords are responsible for providing a working smoke alarm for each floor level at the start of each new tenancy. Thereafter, responsibility for on-going smoke alarm testing rests with the tenant<sup>34</sup>.
- 4.24 In 2017 95% of private renters had one or more smoke alarms in their home, most commonly two smoke alarms (45%). A similar proportion of private renters had either one (27%) or three or more alarms (24%), Annex Table 4.2.
- 4.25 The proportion of private renters who reported that at least one of these alarms working was 89%, a similar proportion to owner occupiers although less than social renters (95%)<sup>35</sup>. The proportion of private renters who had at least one working smoke alarm when they first moved into their home was 88%<sup>36</sup>, Annex Table 4.3.

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<sup>31</sup> It may not be possible for the surveyor to identify the presence of each electrical safety feature e.g. due to problems accessing a garage, so there will be some unknown cases.

<sup>32</sup> The five key measures analysed are modern wiring, modern earthing, a modern consumer unit arrangement, miniature circuit breakers for overload protection and residual current devices which break electrical circuits when an 'abnormality' is detected such as a person touching a live wire.

<sup>33</sup> This analysis uses data from the EHS interview survey.

<sup>34</sup> With regards to HMOs, the main legislation is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

<sup>35</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.16

<sup>36</sup> The question on whether private renters had a working smoke alarm when they first moved into their home was introduced part-way through the survey year.

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## Carbon monoxide detectors

- 4.26 In 2017, 35% of all private rented sector homes had a carbon monoxide detector compared with 37% of social rented and 39% of owner occupied dwellings<sup>37</sup>.
- 4.27 Regulations require landlords to install a carbon monoxide detector in every room with a solid fuel burning appliance. However, as any gas appliance can emit carbon monoxide, landlords are also encouraged to install carbon monoxide detectors in those containing gas heaters, boilers, cookers etc.
- 4.28 The number of dwellings with solid fuel heating is too small to produce reliable estimates of the proportion of these which have a carbon monoxide detector.

## Energy efficiency

- 4.29 This analysis uses the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) which monitors the energy efficiency of a dwelling and allows comparisons between different dwellings to be made<sup>38</sup>.
- 4.30 In 2017, the average SAP rating among private rented homes was 61, the same average rating as owner occupied homes, but lower than for all social rented homes (68)<sup>39</sup>. This is largely because the private rented sector has a higher proportion of the 'oldest' and generally less well-insulated housing stock than the social sector.
- 4.31 Since 1 April 2018, privately rented homes are required to have a minimum energy performance rating of E, unless there is an applicable exemption<sup>40</sup>. In 2017 around 6% (303,000) of private rented homes had an F or G EER rating band. A similar proportion of owner occupied homes were F or G EER rated but the proportion was significantly lower for all social rented homes (1%)<sup>41</sup>.
- 4.32 At the other end of the scale, over a quarter of private rented homes (27%) (1.3 million) had the highest EER bands of A to C in 2017. This was a similar proportion to that in the owner occupied sector (25%), but a much lower proportion than in the social rented sector (52%).

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<sup>37</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.18.

<sup>38</sup> To ensure that the energy performance findings in this report are as compatible as possible with energy performance assessments and certificates issued in England during 2016-17, findings presented in this report were calculated using Reduced Data SAP (RdSAP) version 9.92. Please see the SAP / EER band entries of the glossary or the English Housing Survey Technical Report, 2016-17, Chapter 5 for further details.

<sup>39</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.6.

<sup>40</sup> The regulations will apply for new lettings and renewals of tenancies with effect from 1st April 2018 and for all existing tenancies on 1st April 2020.

<sup>41</sup> English Housing Survey, 2017-18 Headline Report, Annex Table 2.7.

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# Technical notes and glossary

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## Technical notes

1. Results for the first section of this report, on households, are presented for '2017-18' and are based on fieldwork carried out between April 2017 and March 2018 on a sample of 13,395 households. Throughout the report, this is referred to as the 'full household sample'.
2. Results in the second section of the report, which relate to the physical dwelling, are presented for '2017' and are based on fieldwork carried out between April 2016 and March 2018 (a mid-point of April 2017). The sample comprises 12,320 occupied or vacant dwellings where a physical inspection was carried out. Throughout the report, this is referred to as the 'dwelling sample'.
3. The reliability of the results of sample surveys, including the English Housing Survey, is positively related to the unweighted sample size. Results based on small sample sizes should therefore be treated as indicative only because inference about the national picture cannot be drawn. To alert readers to those results, percentages based on a row or column total with unweighted total sample size of less than 30 are italicised. To safeguard against data disclosure, the cell contents of cells where the cell count is less than 5 are replaced with a "u".
4. Where comparative statements have been made in the text, these have been significance tested to a 95% confidence level. This means we are 95% confident that the statements we are making are true.
5. Additional annex tables, including the data underlying the figures and charts in this report are published on the website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey> alongside many supplementary live tables, which are updated each year but are too numerous to include in our reports. Further information on the technical details of the survey, and information and past reports on the Survey of English Housing and the English House Condition Survey, can also be accessed via this link.

## Glossary

**Acceptance as homeless:** local authorities have a responsibility for securing accommodation for households who are in priority need, eligible (certain categories of persons from abroad are ineligible) and are homeless through no fault of their



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own. A household satisfying these criteria is said to be ‘accepted as homeless’, or more formally as ‘accepted as owed a main homelessness duty’.

Families with children and households that include someone who is vulnerable, for example because of pregnancy, old age, or physical or mental disability, have a priority need for accommodation.

**Arrears:** If the HRP or partner are not up to date with rent or mortgage payments they are considered to be in arrears.

**Assured shorthold private tenancy:** This type of tenancy is where the landlord can regain possession of the property six months after the beginning of the tenancy, as long as they provide the tenant with two months’ notice.

**Assured private tenancy:** This type of tenancy is where the tenant has the right to remain in the property unless the landlord can prove they have grounds for possession. The landlord does not have an automatic right to repossess the property when the tenancy comes to an end.

**Basic repair costs:** Basic repairs include urgent work required in the short term to tackle problems presenting a risk to health, safety, security or further significant deterioration plus any additional work that will become necessary within the next five years. See Chapter 5, Annex 5 of the Technical Report for more information about how these are calculated and assumptions made.

**Bedroom standard:** The ‘bedroom standard’ is used by government as an indicator of occupation density. A standard number of bedrooms is calculated for each household in accordance with its age/sex/marital status composition and the relationship of the members to one another. A separate bedroom is allowed for each married or cohabiting couple, any other person aged 21 or over, each pair of adolescents aged 10-20 of the same sex, and each pair of children under 10. Any unpaired person aged 10-20 is notionally paired, if possible, with a child under 10 of the same sex, or, if that is not possible, he or she is counted as requiring a separate bedroom, as is any unpaired child under 10.

This notional standard number of bedrooms is then compared with the actual number of bedrooms (including bed-sitters) available for the sole use of the household, and differences are tabulated. Bedrooms converted to other uses are not counted as available unless they have been denoted as bedrooms by the respondents; bedrooms not actually in use are counted unless uninhabitable.

Households are said to be overcrowded if they have fewer bedrooms available than the notional number needed. Households are said to be under-occupying if they have two or more bedrooms more than the notional needed.

**Category 1 hazard:** The most serious type of hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). Where such a hazard exists the dwelling fails to reach the statutory minimum standard for housing in England.

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**Damp and mould:** There are three main categories of damp and mould covered in this report:

- **rising damp:** where the surveyor has noted the presence of rising damp in at least one of the rooms surveyed during the physical survey. Rising damp occurs when water from the ground rises up into the walls or floors because damp proof courses in walls or damp proof membranes in floors are either not present or faulty.
- **penetrating damp:** where the surveyor has noted the presence of penetrating damp in at least one of the rooms surveyed during the physical survey. Penetrating damp is caused by leaks from faulty components of the external fabric e.g. roof covering, gutters etc. or leaks from internal plumbing, e.g. water pipes, radiators etc.
- **condensation or mould:** caused by water vapour generated by activities like cooking and bathing condensing on cold surfaces like windows and walls. Virtually all dwellings have some level of condensation. Only serious levels of condensation or mould are considered as a problem in this report, namely where there are extensive patches of mould growth on walls and ceilings and/or mildew on soft furnishings.

**Decent home:** A home that meets all of the following four criteria:

- it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing as set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS – see below).
- it is in a reasonable state of repair (related to the age and condition of a range of building components including walls, roofs, windows, doors, chimneys, electrics and heating systems).
- it has reasonably modern facilities and services (related to the age, size and layout/location of the kitchen, bathroom and WC and any common areas for blocks of flats, and to noise insulation).
- it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (related to insulation and heating efficiency).

The detailed definition for each of these criteria is included in *A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation*, Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2006<sup>42</sup>.

**Dependent children:** Any person aged 0 to 15 in a household (whether or not in a family) or a person aged 16 to 18 in full-time education and living in a family with his

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance>

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or her parent(s) or grandparent(s). It does not include any people aged 16 to 18 who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household.

**Dwelling:** A unit of accommodation which may comprise one or more household spaces (a household space is the accommodation used or available for use by an individual household). A dwelling may be classified as shared or unshared. A dwelling is shared if:

- the household spaces it contains are ‘part of a converted or shared house’, or
- not all of the rooms (including kitchen, bathroom and toilet, if any) are behind a door that only that household can use, and
- there is at least one other such household space at the same address with which it can be combined to form the shared dwelling.

Dwellings that do not meet these conditions are unshared dwellings.

The EHS definition of dwelling is consistent with the Census 2011.

**Dwelling age:** The date of construction of the oldest part of the building.

**Economic status:** Respondents self-report their situation and can give more than one answer.

- **working full-time/part-time:** full-time work is defined as 30 or more hours per week. Part-time work is fewer than 30 hours per week. Where more than one answer is given, ‘working’ takes priority over other categories (with the exception that all those over State Pension Age (SPA) who regard themselves as retired are classified as such, regardless of what other answers they give).
- **unemployed:** this category covers people who were registered unemployed or not registered unemployed but seeking work.
- **retired:** this category includes all those over the state pension age who reported being retired as well as some other activity. For men the SPA is 65 and for women it is 60 if they were born before 6th April 1950. For women born on or after the 6th April 1950, the state pension age has increased incrementally since April 2010<sup>43</sup>.
- **full-time education:** education undertaken in pursuit of a course, where an average of more than 12 hours per week is spent during term time.
- **other inactive:** all others; they include people who were permanently sick or disabled, those looking after the family or home and any other activity.

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<sup>43</sup> For further information see: [www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension](http://www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension)

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On occasions, **full-time education** and **other inactive** are combined and described as **other economically inactive**.

### **Electrical safety:**

- **wiring:** this is the cabling from the input electrical supply point, which runs through the meters and consumer units and leading out into the dwelling. The earliest types of wiring used lead or black rubber sheathings to enclose the wires. The danger with this type of cable is the degrading of the rubber: any failure of the insulation can cause the outer covering to become live. Modern wiring is PVC sheathed.
- **earthing:** these are the wires joining the components at the electrical distribution centre. The early forms of earthing wires were unsheathed then later covered with green rubber, then green plastic. In 1977 the colour convention changed and all wires had to be coloured green and yellow.
- **consumer unit arrangement (fuse boxes):** in older systems, each individual electrical circuit was fed through an individual switch and fuse box. From 1960s through to the 1980s, fuses were collected together into a small number of smaller boxes, normally with a switch on the front which controlled all the circuits leading to the box. These boxes were normally fitted with a cover, the removal of which gave access to the fuses hidden inside. From the early 1980s, the newly named consumer unit (some dwellings have two) catered for the whole dwelling and was also designed to accommodate modern safety measures namely circuit breakers and residual current devices.
- **overload protection / miniature circuit breakers (MCBs):** these provide the most modern form of electrical current overload protection by detecting a fault condition and interrupting the current flow. MCBs replaced cartridge fuses and the original wire fuses (these simply melt when overheated) which formed the earliest form of protection.
- **residual current devices (RCDs):** these are designed to break an electrical current very easily by detecting any abnormality in the circuit, for example, through someone touching a live wire. They are normally located in the consumer unit but a separate RCD may exist to protect an additional circuit, for example, an electrical circuit used in the garden.

**Energy cost:** The total energy cost from space heating, water heating, ventilation and lighting, less the costs saved by energy generation as derived from SAP calculations and assumptions. This is measured in £/year using constant prices based on average fuel prices for 2012 (which input into the 2012 SAP calculations) and do *not* reflect subsequent changes in fuel prices. Energy costs for each dwelling are based on a standard occupancy and a standard heating regime.

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**Energy efficiency rating (EER, also known as SAP rating):** A dwelling's energy costs per m<sup>2</sup> of floor area for standard occupancy of a dwelling and a standard heating regime and is calculated from the survey using a simplified form of SAP. The energy costs take into account the costs of space and water heating, ventilation and lighting, less cost savings from energy generation technologies. They do not take into account variation in geographical location. The rating is expressed on a scale of 1-100 where a dwelling with a rating of 1 has poor energy efficiency (high costs) and a dwelling with a rating of 100 represents zero net energy cost per year. It is possible for a dwelling to have an EER/SAP rating of over 100 where it produces more energy than it consumes, although such dwellings will be rare within the English housing stock.

The detailed methodology for calculating SAP to monitor the energy efficiency of dwellings was updated in 2012 to reflect developments in the energy efficiency technologies and knowledge of dwelling energy performance. These changes in the SAP methodology were relatively minor compared with previous SAP methodology updates in 2005 and 2009. It means, however that a SAP rating using the 2009 method is not directly comparable to one calculated under the 2012 methodology, and it would be incorrect to do so. All SAP statistics used in reporting from 2013 are based on the SAP 2012 methodology and this includes time series data from 1996 to the current reporting period (i.e. the SAP 2012 methodology has been retrospectively applied to 1996 and subsequent survey data to provide consistent results in the 2013 and following reports).

### **Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs):**

An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) indicates the energy efficiency of the dwelling. The assessments are banded from A to G, where A is the most efficient in terms of likely fuel costs and carbon dioxide emissions. An EPC is required whenever a dwelling is newly constructed, sold or let. The purpose of an EPC is to show prospective tenants or buyers the energy efficiency of the property. The requirement for EPCs was introduced in phases and fully implemented for domestic properties by autumn 2008. EPCs are valid for 10 years.

Based on current energy performance the EPC provides a range of indicators, such as whether the property would benefit in terms of improved performance from a range of heating, insulation and lighting upgrades and the likely performance arising from the application of those measures. For further information on how the EHS models this, see the Technical Report for further information and also the EPC Improvements Modelling Review report:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice#methodology-reports>.

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**Ethnicity:** Classification according to respondents' own perceived ethnic group.

**Excess cold (HHSRS Category 1 hazard):** Households living in homes with a threat to health arising from sub-optimal indoor temperatures. The assessment is based on the most vulnerable group who, for this hazard, are those aged 65 years or more (the assessment does not require a person of this age to be an occupant). The EHS does not measure achieved temperatures in the home and therefore this hazard is based on dwellings with an energy efficiency rating of less than 35 based on the SAP 2001 methodology. Under the SAP 2009 methodology, used for the 2010- 2012 EHS reports, the comparable threshold was recalculated to be 35.79 and the latter was used in providing statistics for the HHSRS Category 1 hazard. Since 2013, the EHS Reports have used the SAP 2012 methodology and the comparable excess cold threshold has been recalculated to 33.52.

**First time buyer:** First time buyers are defined as households that have purchased a property that is their main home in the last three years, and in which neither the HRP or partner have previously owned a property. It includes households who have purchased their property outright as well as those who are buying with the help of a mortgage or loan.

**Full-time education:** Full-time education is education undertaken in pursuit of a course, where an average of more than 12 hours per week is spent during term time.

**Gross income of the HRP and partner:** The gross annual income of the HRP and partner from wages, pensions, other private sources, savings and state benefits. This does not include any housing related benefits or allowances. This measure is divided by 52 to calculate weekly income. Income is presented in quintiles throughout this report (see income quintiles definition – below).

**Gross household income:** The gross annual income of all adults living in a household from wages, pensions, other private sources, savings and state benefits. This does not include any housing related benefits or allowances. This measure is divided by 52 to calculate weekly income. Income is presented in quintiles throughout this report (see income quintiles definition – below).

**Heating fuel:**

- **gas:** mains gas is relatively inexpensive and produces lower emissions per unit of energy than most other commonly used fuels. Liquefied Petroleum Gas and bottled gas are still associated with slightly higher costs and emissions.
- **electricity:** standard rate electricity has the highest costs and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with main fuels, but is used in dwellings without a viable alternative or

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as a back-up to mains gas. An off-peak tariff such as Economy 7 is cheaper than bottled gas but with the same emissions as standard electricity.

- **oil:** in terms of both costs and emissions, oil lies between main gas and electricity.
- **solid fuel:** most solid fuels have similar costs to oil, with the exception of processed wood which can be more expensive than off-peak electricity. Fuels included are coal and anthracite, with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions above those of gas and oil; wood, which has the lowest emissions of the main fuels; and smokeless fuel, whose emissions are close to those of electricity. By law, some areas (usually towns or cities) are designated as smoke control areas where the use of solid fuels emitting smoke is illegal.

**Household:** One person or a group of people (not necessarily related) who have the accommodation as their only or main residence, and (for a group) share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area.

The EHS definition of household is slightly different from the definition used in the 2011 Census. Unlike the EHS, the 2011 Census did not limit household membership to people who had the accommodation as their only or main residence. The EHS included that restriction because it asks respondents about their second homes, the unit of data collection on the EHS, therefore, needs to include only those people who have the accommodation as their only or main residence.

**Household reference person (HRP):** The person in whose name the dwelling is owned or rented or who is otherwise responsible for the accommodation. In the case of joint owners and tenants, the person with the highest income is taken as the HRP. Where incomes are equal, the older is taken as the HRP. This procedure increases the likelihood that the HRP better characterises the household's social and economic position. The EHS definition of HRP is not consistent with the Census 2011, in which the HRP is chosen on basis of their economic activity. Where economic activity is the same, the older is taken as HRP, or if they are the same age, HRP is the first listed on the questionnaire.

**Household type:** The main classification of household type uses the following categories; some categories may be split or combined in different tables:

- couple no dependent child(ren)
- couple with dependent child(ren)
- couple with dependent and independent child(ren)
- couple with independent child(ren)
- lone parent with dependent child(ren)
- lone parent with dependent and independent child(ren)
- lone parent with independent child(ren)

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- two or more families
  - lone person sharing with other lone persons
  - one male
  - one female

**Housing Benefit:** A benefit that is administered by local authorities, which is designed to assist people who rent their homes and have difficulty meeting their housing costs. Council tenants on Housing Benefit receive a rent rebate which means that their rent due is reduced by the amount of that rebate. Private and social housing tenants usually receive Housing Benefit (or rent allowance) personally, although sometimes it is paid direct to the landlord.

**Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS):** A risk assessment tool used to assess potential risks to the health and safety of occupants in residential properties in England and Wales. It replaced the Fitness Standard in April 2006.

The purpose of the HHSRS assessment<sup>44</sup> is not to set a standard but to generate objective information in order to determine and inform enforcement decisions. There are 29 categories of hazard, each of which is separately rated, based on the risk to the potential occupant who is most vulnerable to that hazard. The individual hazard scores are grouped into 10 bands where the highest bands (A-C representing scores of 1,000 or more) are considered to pose Category 1 hazards. Local authorities have a duty to act where Category 1 hazards are present, and may take into account the vulnerability of the actual occupant in determining the best course of action.

For the purposes of the decent homes standard, homes posing a Category 1 hazard are non-decent on its criterion that a home must meet the statutory minimum requirements.

The EHS is not able to replicate the HHSRS assessment in full as part of a large scale survey. Its assessment employs a mix of hazards that are directly assessed by surveyors in the field and others that are indirectly assessed from detailed related information collected. For 2006 and 2007, the survey (the then English House Condition Survey) produced estimates based on 15 of the 29 hazards. From 2008, the survey is able to provide a more comprehensive assessment based on 26 of the 29 hazards. See the EHS Technical Note on Housing and Neighbourhood Conditions<sup>45</sup> for a list of the hazards covered.

**Income quintiles:** All households are divided into five equal groups based on their income (i.e. those in the bottom 20%, the next 20% and so on). These groups are known as quintiles. These can be used to compare income levels of particular groups to the overall population.

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-hhsrs-guidance>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-technical-advice>



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**Long-term limiting illness:** This is consistent with the core definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010. A person is considered to have a disability if they have a long-standing illness, disability or impairment which causes substantial difficulty with day-to-day activities.

**Method of payment for energy:** There are three main ways households can pay their energy bills: direct debit, standard credit and prepayment meters. The EHS gives respondents a number of options to choose from:

- (1) Direct debit (including online direct debit)
- (2) Payment on receipt of bill by post, telephone, online or at bank/post office
- (3) Standing order
- (4) Pre-payment (keycard, slot or token) meters
- (5) Included in rent
- (6) Frequent cash payment method (i.e. more frequent than once a month)
- (7) Fuel direct/direct from benefits
- (8) Fixed Annual Bill (however much gas/electricity is used) e.g. StayWarm

These options are then grouped into the three main types as follows:

- **Direct debit:** option 1, 5, 7 and 8
- **Standard credit:** option 2, 3 and 6
- **Prepayment meters:** option 4

There is also an 'other – specify' category in the EHS questionnaire, kept as 'other'.

**Median income:** the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

**New household:** Where neither the household reference person (HRP) nor their spouse/partner occupied the HRP's previous permanent accommodation, in either of their names. The EHS does not differentiate between previous accommodation within England and outside of England (including abroad).

**Overcrowding:** Households are said to be overcrowded if they have fewer bedrooms available than the notional number needed according to the bedroom standard definition. See bedroom standard.

**Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) schemes :** Since the 6th April 2007 in England when a deposit is provided by a tenant to a landlord for an assured shorthold tenancy, all landlords (or their agents) are legally required to register that deposit with a TDP scheme. There are two models of tenancy deposit protection. Landlords can choose to protect deposits in either a custodial scheme (where the deposit is held by a TDP scheme), or an insurance-backed scheme (where the landlord or

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agent retains the deposit but pays a fee to the scheme which insures against the landlord or agent unlawfully retaining the deposit). All three schemes offer both custodial and insurance-backed protection. The three government-backed TDP schemes operating in the UK are:

- Deposit Protection Scheme
- Tenancy Deposit Scheme
- mydeposits

**Tenure:** In this report, households are typically grouped into three broad categories known as tenures: owner occupiers, social renters and private renters. The tenure defines the conditions under which the home is occupied, whether it is owned or rented, and if rented, who the landlord is and on what financial and legal terms the let is agreed.

- **owner occupiers:** households in accommodation which they either own outright, are buying with a mortgage or as part of a shared ownership scheme.
- **social renters:** this category includes households renting from Local Authorities (including Arms' Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and Housing Action Trusts) and Housing Associations, Local Housing Companies, co-operatives and charitable trusts.

A significant number of Housing Association tenants wrongly report that they are Local Authority tenants. The most common reason for this is that their home used to be owned by the Local Authority, and although ownership was transferred to a Housing Association, the tenant still reports that their landlord is the Local Authority. There are also some Local Authority tenants who wrongly report that they are Housing Association tenants. Data from the EHS for 2008-09 onwards incorporate a correction for the great majority of such cases in order to provide a reasonably accurate split of the social rented category.

- **private renters:** this sector covers all other tenants including all whose accommodation is tied to their job. It also includes people living rent-free (for example, people living in a flat belonging to a relative).

**Under-occupation:** Households are said to be under-occupying their property if they have two or more bedrooms more than the notional number needed according to the bedroom standard definition. See bedroom standard.

**Universal Credit:** This is a single, means-tested working-age benefit; paid to people whether in work or not. Over time it will replace:

- Child Tax Credit;
- Housing Benefit;
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance;

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- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance;
  - Income Support; and
  - Working Tax Credit.

For more information, see: <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>.

During the 2014/15 EHS survey fieldwork period only a small number of new claimants in pilot areas were eligible for Universal Credit.

**Waiting list:** The main route into social housing is through a waiting list which is operated by the local authority. An individual or household must apply for social housing. Applicants are then assessed against rules set individually by each local authority but which by law must give priority to certain types of people, being people in identified housing need. These rules decide whether they qualify to go onto the waiting list and their level of priority.

**Younger households:** Households where the oldest person in the household is aged less than 55 years.

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In accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 the United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, signifying that they are fully compliant with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

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