



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities



# English Housing Survey

Social rented sector, 2020-21



---

# Contents

---

Introduction and main findings

Chapter 1: Profile of social renters

Chapter 2: Satisfaction and complaints

Chapter 3: Housing costs and affordability

Chapter 4: Housing history and future housing

Chapter 5: Dwelling condition and energy efficiency

Technical notes and glossary

---

# Introduction and main findings

---

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. This report provides the findings from the 2020-21 survey.
2. The report also presents selected findings from the 2020-21 Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS), which are based on data returns from local authorities in England.

## Impact of COVID-19 on the English Housing Survey

3. The 2020-21 English Housing Survey data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic which necessitated a change in the established survey mode. Face-to-face interviews were replaced with telephone interviews and internal inspections of properties were replaced with external inspections supplemented by information about the interior of the dwelling the surveyor collected (socially distanced) at the doorstep. Ordinarily such changes would not be done without thorough testing to examine the impact on survey response rates, data collection and reporting. Given that such testing was not possible, it is not clear to what extent changes observed in 2020-21 are the result of the change in mode, or real change (e.g. a change in people's housing circumstances as a result of COVID-19).
4. These issues are exacerbated by the fact that the composition of the EHS achieved sample changed significantly between 2019-20 and 2020-21. For example, in 2020-21, there were significantly more outright owners and fewer renters in the sample. There was also a skew toward older respondents (aged 65 and over), and fewer households with children than in 2019-20. These changes may be the result of changing housing circumstances, but it is also likely that household circumstances prevented some households from taking part in the survey during the pandemic (e.g. home schooling, caring responsibilities, and ill health and well-being meant that some households would be less inclined to take part in the survey).
5. There were also some data we were unable to collect at all, e.g. data on the condition of the homes that relies on a surveyor's assessment of the inside of a home. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to collect data in this way in 2020-21 and data was instead collected from an external inspection of properties (by a surveyor) and supplemented with information about the interior of the dwelling the surveyor collected (socially distanced) at the doorstep. Predictive modelling was also undertaken to produce much of the housing quality data reported in Chapter 5 of this report.

- 
6. More information on the impact of COVID-19 on the English Housing Survey and the modelling methodology can be found in the Technical Report<sup>1</sup>.

## This report

7. This report focuses on households within the social rented sector and brings together demographic and financial information collected in the household interview with details of the quality and condition of homes collected in the physical survey to outline the housing circumstances of social housing residents.
8. Chapter 1 provides an outline of the demographic characteristics of social housing tenants, such as age, region, household type and size, ethnicity and disability. The chapter also explores internet access and economic status.
9. Chapter 2 examines the satisfaction of social renters with their accommodation, tenure, area, housing services and repairs and maintenance. The chapter also looks at reasons for dissatisfaction, complaints, and perceptions of discrimination within the social rented sector.
10. Chapter 3 explores housing costs and affordability among social renters by looking at income and housing costs, as well as other aspects of affordability, the proportion of income spent on rent and rent arrears. The chapter further examines the method of payment for gas and electric, and the presence of savings among social renters.
11. Chapter 4 explores housing history and future housing, including house moves, experiences of homelessness, presence on waiting lists, time within the social rented sector and expectations to buy.
12. Chapter 5 discusses the quality of social rented homes, including the Decent Homes Standard, the presence of Category 1 hazards and damp. The chapter further explores energy efficiency and access to open space.

## Main findings

**There are 4 million households in the social rented sector, with a higher proportion in housing association homes compared to local authority homes.**

- Housing association tenants make up 10% of all households in England (2.4 million households), while local authority tenants account for 7% of all households (1.6 million households).

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice#technical-reports>

---

**A greater proportion of more vulnerable groups live in the sector compared to other tenures. This is likely due to social housing being allocated based on resident needs.**

- More than one quarter (26%) of social renters are aged 65 or over. Social renters on average are older (53 years on average) than private renters (41 years on average) and younger than owners (57 years on average).
- Lone parent households with dependent children make up a higher proportion of the social rented sector than other tenures (18% compared to 3% of owner occupied households and 11% of private rented households).
- In 2020-21, 55% of social rented households had at least one household member with a long-term illness or disability (2.2 million households). This contrasts with 28% of owner occupied households, and 29% of private rented households.
- Half of social rented households (50%) are within the lowest income quintile, almost 2 million households.

**Most social renters are satisfied with their accommodation, tenure, area and how housing services have been provided by their landlord. There is some variation in satisfaction by region. Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance was lower than satisfaction for other measures.**

- Overall, 75% of social renters are satisfied with their accommodation, although this varies by region. Across England, satisfaction with accommodation ranges from 66% in London to 85% in Yorkshire and the Humber and the East Midlands.
- Satisfaction with tenure is higher in the social rented sector (79%) than the private rented sector (63%), but lower than among owner occupiers (98%).
- In 2020-21, satisfaction with local area among social rented households ranged between English regions from 67% in the North East to 88% in the East Midlands. On average, 79% of social renters are satisfied with their local area.
- Most social renters are satisfied with the provision of housing services (72%). This also varies by region, from 66% in London to 91% in the North East.
- Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance is lower among social renters (66%) than private renters (75%). The most common reasons for dissatisfaction with repairs and maintenance among social renters are the landlord being slow to complete repairs (29%), the landlord not bothering to do the repairs (26%), and the work being of poor quality (17%).

**Most social renters are satisfied with their housing services. However, almost a third of social renters considered making a complaint to their landlord or tenancy management organisation in the last 12 months.**

- In the last 12 months, 32% of social renters had considered making a complaint. Compared to private renters, social renters are twice as likely to consider complaining. Older renters were less likely to consider complaining than younger renters (20% of those aged 65 or over considered making a complaint compared to 34% of those under 65).

- 
- Most social renters who chose not to make a complaint made this decision because of the hassle and time required to do so (43%), or because they believed that nothing would be done in response to their complaint (27%).
  - The majority of social renters who made a complaint were unhappy with the response to their complaint (63%).

**Social renters are less likely to have savings than private renters and owner occupiers.**

- In 2020-21, 69% of social renters had no savings, compared to 19% of owner occupiers and 45% of private renters.
- Social rented households with dependent children are least likely to have savings, with 85% of lone parent households with dependent children and 87% of couples with dependent children having no savings.

**Average rent before housing support for all social renters is £102 a week, lower than for private renters. Most social renters find it easy to pay rent, but nearly a quarter find it difficult to pay their rent.**

- Rent costs £198 per week on average for private renters, significantly higher than rents for social renters.
- Housing association tenants pay higher rent on average than local authority tenants (£107 per week compared to £94 per week).
- Social rent costs vary by region, from £83 per week in Yorkshire and the Humber to £129 per week in London, with rent in the East (£106 per week) and the South East (£111 per week) also relatively high.
- In 2020-21, 15% of social renters were in arrears either currently or within the last year.

**A quarter of social renters expect to buy their own home at some point in the future, with similar levels of expectation between those with savings and those without.**

- A significantly smaller proportion of social renters expect to buy compared to private renters (25% compared to 61%).
- In 2020-21, 25% of social renters with no savings expected to buy, compared to 26% of social renters with savings.

**Social rented homes are typically less likely to be poor quality, have a smaller proportion of serious safety hazards, and cost less to bring up to standard than homes in the private sector.**

- Compared to other tenures, social rented stock has the smallest proportion of occupied non-decent homes, at 11%. Almost a quarter (23%) of occupied private rented homes and 14% of occupied owner occupied homes were non-decent in 2020.

- 
- In 2020, 5% of social rented homes had a problem with damp, at 198,000 households. This is a higher proportion than owner occupied homes (2% or 335,000 households), but lower than private rented homes (10% or 409,000 households).
  - On average, it costs £5,457 to bring a non-decent social rented home up to the Decent Homes Standard. This is lower than costs to improve owner occupied homes (£7,852) and private rented homes (£8,475). Improving local authority homes costs more than housing association homes (£6,030 compared to £4,985).

**Social rented homes are more energy efficient than homes in the private sector. This is likely due to there being a higher proportion of flats (which have less exposed surface area and are therefore more efficient than houses or bungalows) and better insulation.**

- In 2020, the social rented sector had the highest proportion of dwellings already at EER band C or above (65%, compared to 41% in the private rented and 42% in the owner occupied sector).
- Social rented dwellings also have a higher SAP rating than other tenures, with a mean score of 70 compared to 65 for private rented and owner occupied dwellings.

**Overall, social renters are less likely to have private outdoor space compared to other tenures. However, they are more likely to have shared outside space than other renters. This varies by region and the type of dwelling.**

- Most social rented dwellings have a private plot (61%), while 34% shared a plot with other dwellings. The other 4% have no plot at all.
- Social renters in London are less likely to have private plots than social renters in the rest of England (35% compared to 68%).
- Social residents living in houses or bungalows were more likely to have a private plot at 98%, compared to 17% of those living in flats. Social renters living in flats were less likely to have no plot at all than other tenures (9% compared to 17% of private rented flats and 14% of owner occupied flats).

## Acknowledgements and further queries

8. Each year the English Housing Survey relies on the contributions of a large number of people and organisations. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) would particularly like to thank the following people and organisations, without whom the 2020-21 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.
9. This report was produced by Melanie Doyle at NatCen Social Research and Adele Beaumont and Molly Mackay at BRE in collaboration with DLUHC.

- 
10. 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@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:ehs@levellingup.gov.uk)
  11. The responsible analyst for this report is Alex Rudd, Housing and Planning Analysis Division, DLUHC. Contact via [ehs@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:ehs@levellingup.gov.uk)

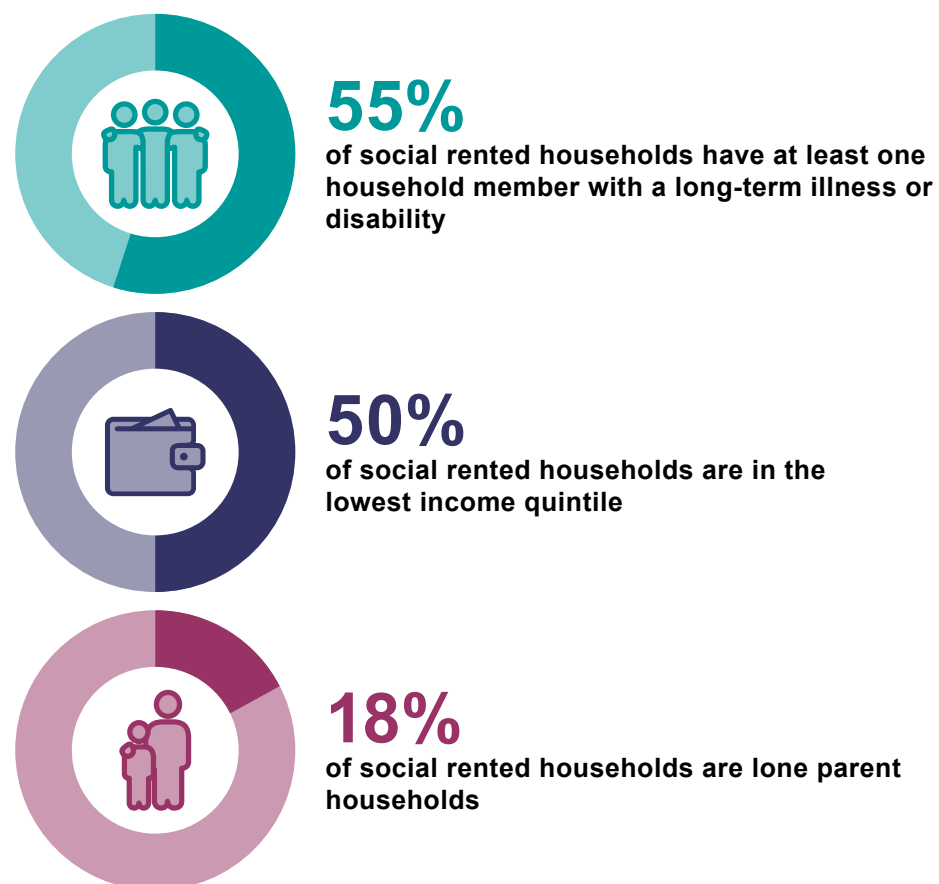


# Social rented sector

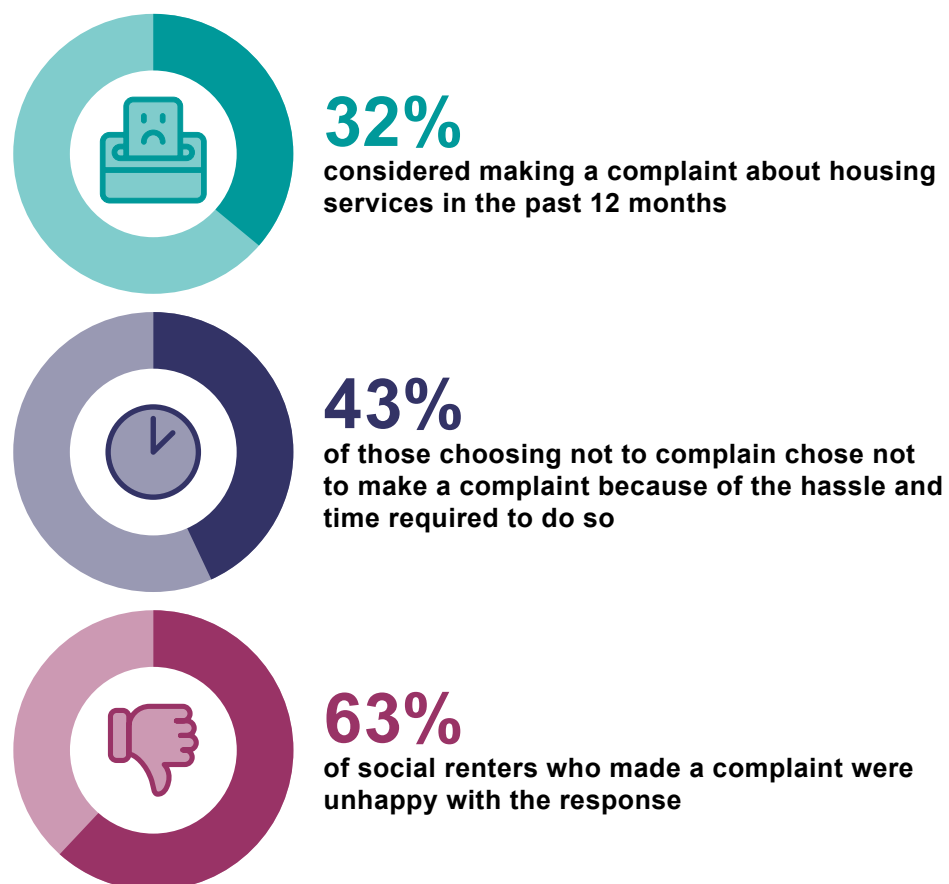
There are 4 million households in the social rented sector, representing 17% of households.



The social rented sector is home to a higher proportion of vulnerable groups than other sectors.



## Complaints

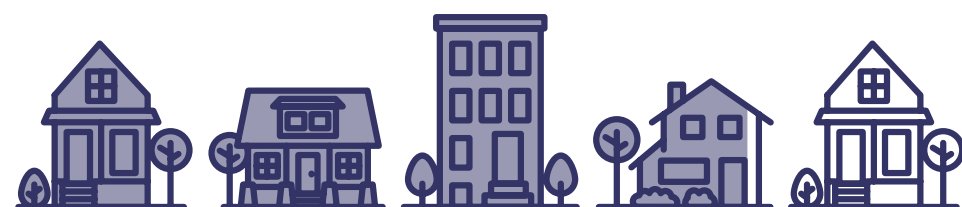


Most social renters are satisfied with their accommodation, their tenure and how repairs and maintenance have been conducted.

75% of social renters are satisfied with their accommodation



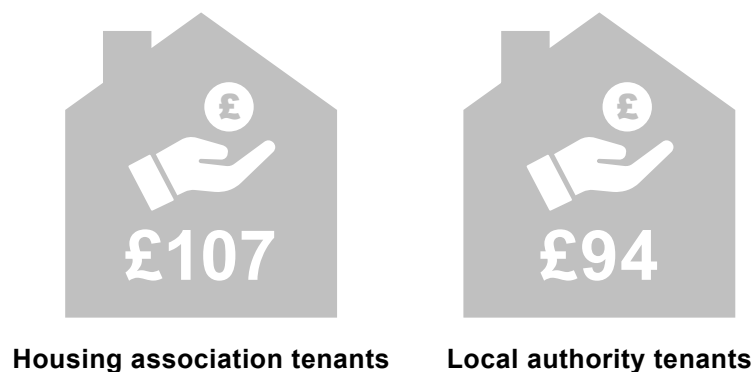
79% of social renters are satisfied with their tenure



66% of social renters are satisfied with repairs and maintenance



Average rent for social renters is £102 per week. Housing association tenants pay higher rent than local authority tenants on average.



The majority of social renters live in dwellings of a decent standard.

89% of occupied social rented homes meet the Decent Homes Standard



---

# Chapter 1

## Profile of social renters

---

- 1.1 This chapter describes the key demographic characteristics of people living in the social rented sector, including those who rent their homes from local authorities and from housing associations<sup>2</sup>. The chapter will report differences between these two groups where significant and interesting to do so. For a more detailed description please refer to the Annex Tables that accompany this chapter and to the English Housing Survey 2020-21 Headline Report<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.2 The social rented sector is the smallest of the three tenures accounting for 17% of households in England, around 4 million households in total. Private renters account for 19% (4.4 million) households and owner occupiers for 65% (15.5 million households)<sup>4</sup>.
- 1.3 The social rented sector is made up of two groups: in England as a whole, 7% (1.6 million households) rented from a Local Authority, and 10% (2.4 million households) rented from a Residential Social Landlord (RSL, referred to here as 'housing association').

### Region

- 1.4 In 2020-21, the proportion of social rented households varied by region, from 13% in the South East and South West, to 22% in London and the North East. London had the highest number of social rented households in any region, around 798,000 households, Figure 1.1<sup>5</sup>.

---

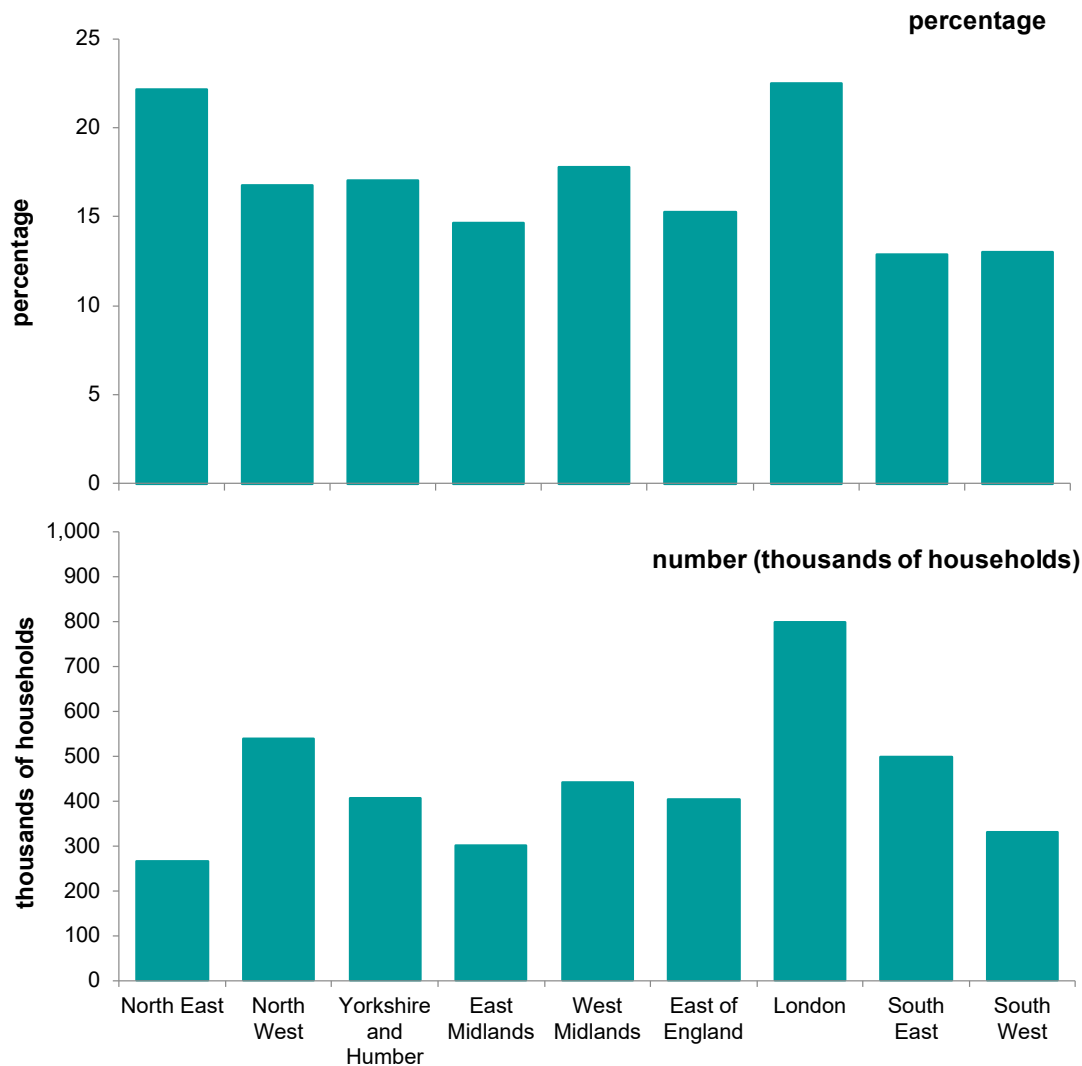
<sup>2</sup> Housing associations are also known as Registered Social Landlords or Private Registered Providers of Social Housing.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>

<sup>4</sup> English Housing Survey, 2020-21 Headline Report, Annex Table 1.1, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>

<sup>5</sup> English Housing Survey, 2020-21 Headline Report, Annex Table 1.2, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>

**Figure 1.1: Proportion and number of social renters, by region, 2020-21**



**Base: all social rented households**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Headline Report, Annex Table 1.2**

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

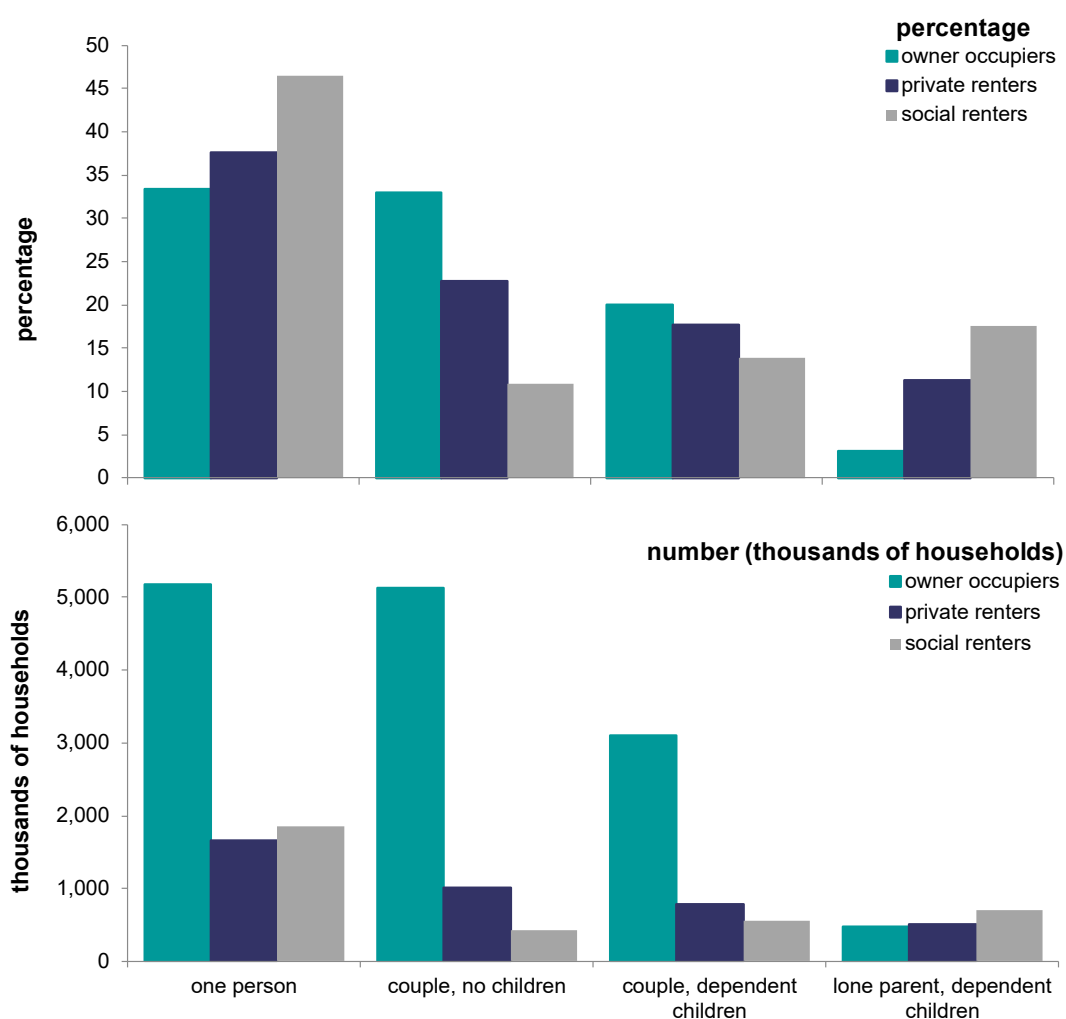
## Age

- 1.5 Social renters (mean age 53 years) were, on average, older than private renters (41 years) and younger than owners (57 years), Annex Table 1.1. Local authority tenants (mean age 55 years) were older than housing association tenants (mean age 51 years).
- 1.6 Over two thirds (68%) of social renters were aged 45 or over, and one quarter (26%) were 65 or older. In 2020-21, there were over one million social renters aged 65 and over, Annex Table 1.2.

## Household type

- 1.7 Among social renters, the most common household types were single person households (46%), followed by lone parents with dependent children (18%), couples with dependent children (14%) and couples with no children (11%), Together these groups accounted for the majority (89%) of social renters. Social rented households were more likely than other tenures to be single adult households and less likely to be couples, Annex Table 1.5, Figure 1.2.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1.2: Household type, by tenure, 2020-21**



**Base: all households**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.5**

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

<sup>6</sup> The headline report has a more detailed breakdown of household type where: 1) 'single person households' are split into one male households and one female households, and 2) family households are split into those with dependent children only, those with dependent and independent children, and those with independent children only. See Headline Report, Annex Table 1.3 for details.

- 
- 1.8 Social renters were more likely to have dependent children in the household (32%) than owners (23%), but were comparable to private renters (29%), Annex Table 1.6.

## Ethnicity

- 1.9 The majority of households in the social rented sector had a white HRP<sup>7</sup> (85%)<sup>8</sup>. Households with an ethnic minority HRP were more prevalent among social renters (15%) than owners (7%), but comparable with private renters (14%). Local authority tenants (20%) were more likely than housing association tenants (13%) to have an ethnic minority HRP.

## Sex

- 1.10 Social renters were more likely to have a female HRP (58%) than a male HRP (42%). Annex Table 1.4. Allocation based on need means those with lower income and lone parents are more likely to be eligible for social housing, attributes which are more prevalent among women.

## Nationality

- 1.11 The majority (93%) of social renters - 3.7 million households - were from the UK or Republic of Ireland. Social renters were more likely than private renters (83%) to be UK Nationals but less likely than owners (97%), Annex Table 1.7.

## Religion

- 1.12 Over half of social renters (52%) identified as Christian, and 40% had no religion. A further 5% identified as Muslim while other religions each accounted for 2% or less of social renters, Annex Table 1.8.

## Long-term illness and disability

- 1.13 Over half (55%) of social rented households – around 2.2 million households – had a household member with a long-term illness or disability (referred to here as ‘disability’), Annex Table 1.9.

---

<sup>7</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 recorded as the HRP.

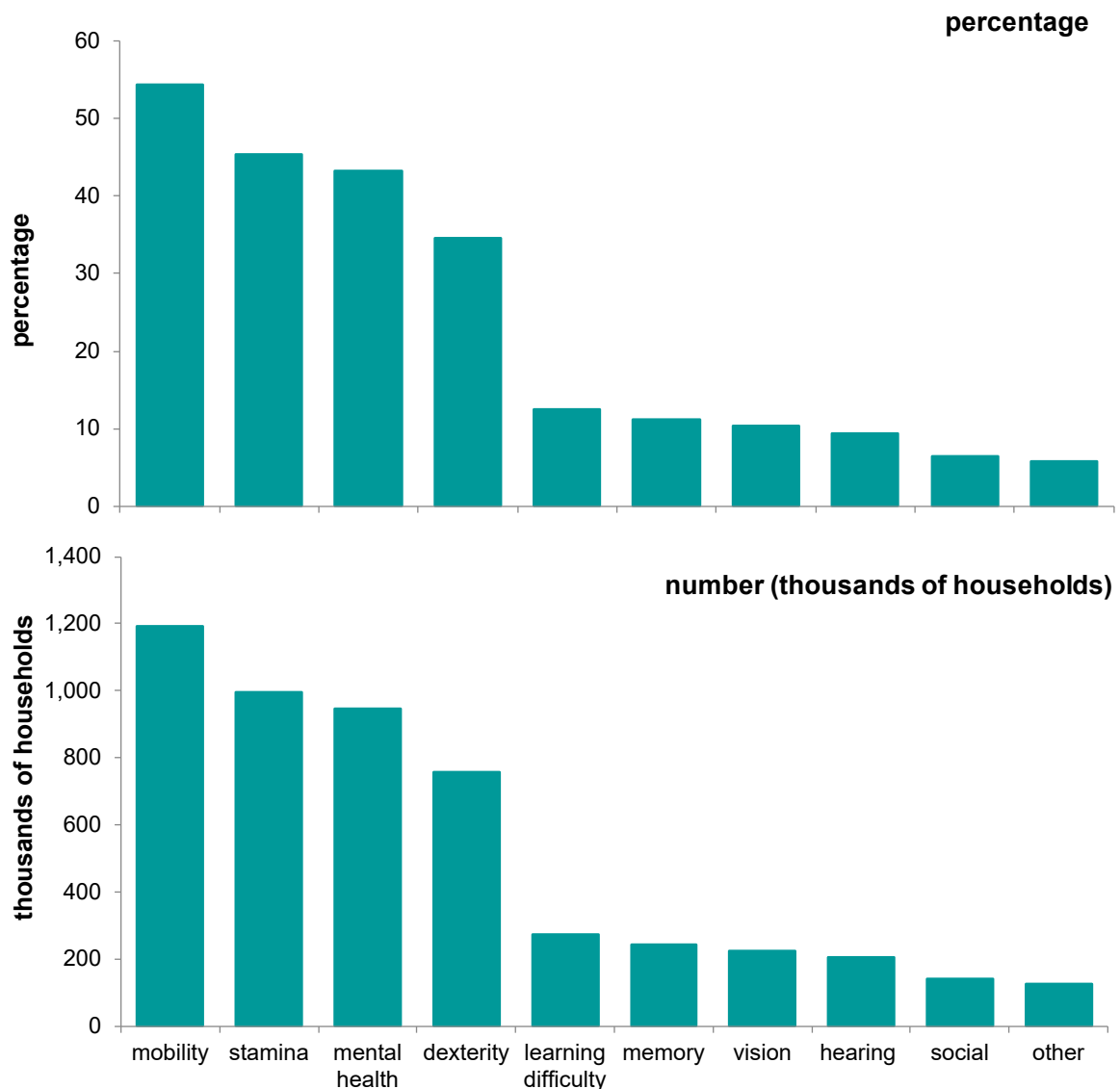
<sup>8</sup> English Housing Survey, 2020-21 Headline Report, Annex Table 1.3, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>

- 
- 1.14 Disability was more prevalent among social renters (55%) than owners (28%), despite these two groups having a similar age profile. Disability among social renters was also higher than for private renters (29%).
- 1.15 Social renters with a disability were asked which areas were affected by their disability. In social rented households, the most common issues reported by HRP's with a disability were mobility (54%, 1.2 million households), stamina (45%, 1 million households), mental health (43%, 950,000 households) and dexterity (35%, 760,000 households), Annex Table 1.10, Figure 1.3<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup> Type of disability is based on the disability reported by HRP's with a longstanding illness or disability and may show multiple disabilities for each household as respondents were able to report all areas affected by their long-term illness or disability. Other household members with a disability are not included in the table.

**Figure 1.3: Type of disability for social renters with a disability, 2020-21**



**Base: social rented households where HRP reported a limiting long-term illness or disability**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.10**

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

## Internet access

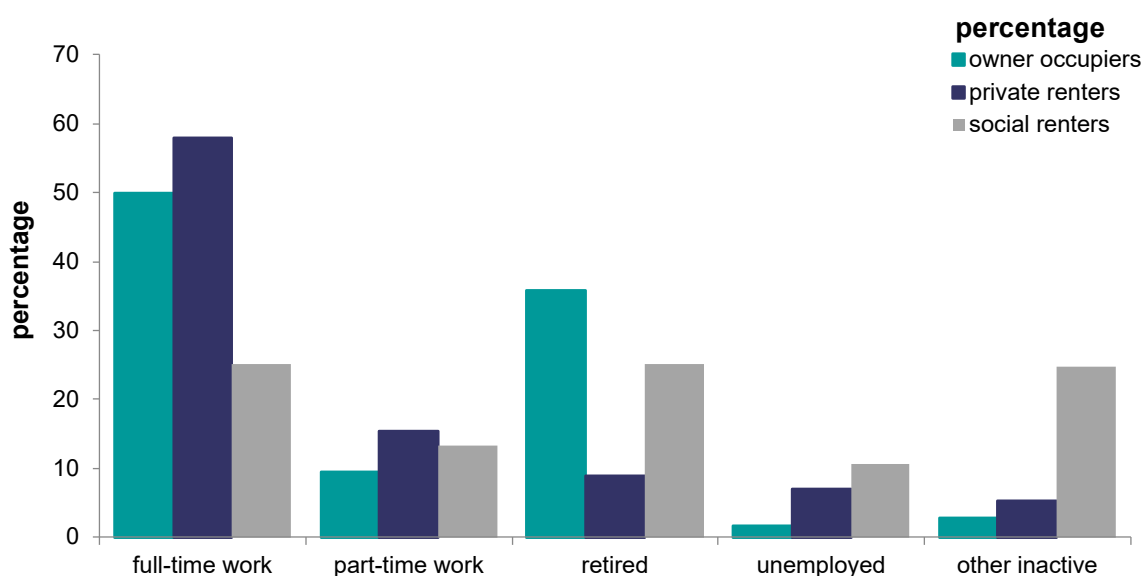
1.16 In 2020-21, 16% of social renters – around 640,000 households - did not have internet access at home<sup>8,10</sup>. The proportion with no home internet access was higher than for owners (4%) or private renters (5%).

<sup>10</sup> For internet access at home interviewers are asked to include wireless and ethernet connections, but to code 'no' if the household ONLY has access to the internet through a mobile phone using a mobile phone data plan. The new guidance was added in EHS 2020-21.

## Economic status

- 1.17 The majority of social renters fall into three main groups: working full-time (25%), retired (25%) and economically inactive for some other reason (25%), a group that includes those not working due to a long-term illness or disability or looking after home or family<sup>8</sup>.
- 1.18 Rates of full-time employment were lower among social renters (25%) than for owners (50%) or private renters (58%). Rates of part-time employment (13%) were comparable to private renters (15%), and higher than for owners (9%), Figure 1.4.
- 1.19 Social renters were more likely to be economically inactive for some other reason (25%) than owners (3%) or private renters (5%). Social renters were also more likely to be unemployed and actively seeking work (11%) than owners (2%) and private renters (7%).

**Figure 1.4: Economic status, by tenure, 2020-21**



Base: all households

Note: underlying data are presented in Headline Report Annex Table 1.3

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample



---

## NS-SEC

- 1.20 For socio-economic group, the EHS uses the eight-class version of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC)<sup>11</sup>. The most common NS-SEC groups for social renters were lower managerial and professional (23%), semi-routine occupations (23%), routine occupations (20%) and intermediate occupations (17%). Other groups each accounted for 6% or less of social renters, Annex Table 1.11.
- 1.21 Social renters were more likely to be in semi-routine or routine occupations than owners (6% semi-routine, 4% routine) or private renters (12% semi-routine, 8% routine).
- 1.22 Conversely, social renters were less likely to be in higher or lower managerial and professional occupation than owners (28% higher, 36% lower managerial and professional) or private renters (22% higher, 29% lower).

## ACORN

- 1.23 ACORN is a segmentation tool which categorises the UK's population into demographic types. ACORN provides a general understanding of the attributes of a neighbourhood by classifying postcodes into a category, group or type (see Glossary for further details).
- 1.24 The majority of social renters were classified as living in two ACORN categories - 49% were categorised as living in 'urban adversity' and a further 40% as 'financially stretched', Annex Table 1.12.
- 1.25 Social renters were more likely to live in 'urban adversity' than owners (11%) and private renters (23%)<sup>12</sup>, and were also more likely to be categorised as 'financially stretched' than owners (18%) or private renters (25%)<sup>13</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> The EHS uses the eight-class version of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NSSEC). The eight classes are: higher managerial and professional occupations; lower managerial and professional occupations; intermediate occupations (clerical, sales, service); small employers and own account workers; lower supervisory and technical occupations; semi-routine occupations; routine occupations; never worked or long-term unemployed. No EHS respondent is assigned to the last class because the survey does not collect enough information to code to someone as never worked or long-term unemployed.

<sup>12</sup> The 'urban adversity' category covers the most deprived areas of towns and cities and includes the subgroups: young hardship, struggling estates and difficult circumstances. Urban adversity is associated with a social renting, a younger age range (25-34), low household income below the national average, and living in a 1-2 bedroom flat or terraced house. [ACORN user guide \(caci.co.uk\)](https://caci.co.uk)

<sup>13</sup> The 'financially stretched' category is associated with a mix of traditional areas including social housing developments and areas where students live during term time, and includes the subgroups: student life, modest means, striving families and poorer pensioners. The group are predominantly social renters, characterised by a wide age range, low income, and living in 1-3 bedroom semi-detached or terraced homes. [ACORN user guide \(caci.co.uk\)](https://caci.co.uk)

---

## Chapter 2

# Satisfaction and complaints

---

- 2.1 This chapter explores social renters' levels of satisfaction with their accommodation, tenure, and repairs and maintenance along with reasons for dissatisfaction. It also considers complaints by social renters, satisfaction with the outcome and reasons for not complaining, and perception of discrimination in the social rented sector. Please note that analysis of satisfaction with repairs and maintenance, and all complaints analysis is based on two years of survey data.

### Regional differences

#### Satisfaction with accommodation

- 2.2 Overall, the majority (75%) of social renters were satisfied with their accommodation, Annex Table 2.1, Figure 2.1. Social renters were, however, less likely to be satisfied with their accommodation than owners (94%) or private renters (80%).
- 2.3 Levels of satisfaction among social renters varied by region, ranging from 66% in London to 85% in Yorkshire and the Humber, and in the East Midlands.

#### Satisfaction with tenure

- 2.4 The majority (79%) of social renters were satisfied with their tenure, Annex Table 2.2, Figure 2.1. Social renters were more likely to be satisfied with their tenure than private renters (63%), but less likely than owners (98%).
- 2.5 Satisfaction with tenure was lowest among social renters living in London and the North West (both 74%), and highest among those in the West Midlands (89%).

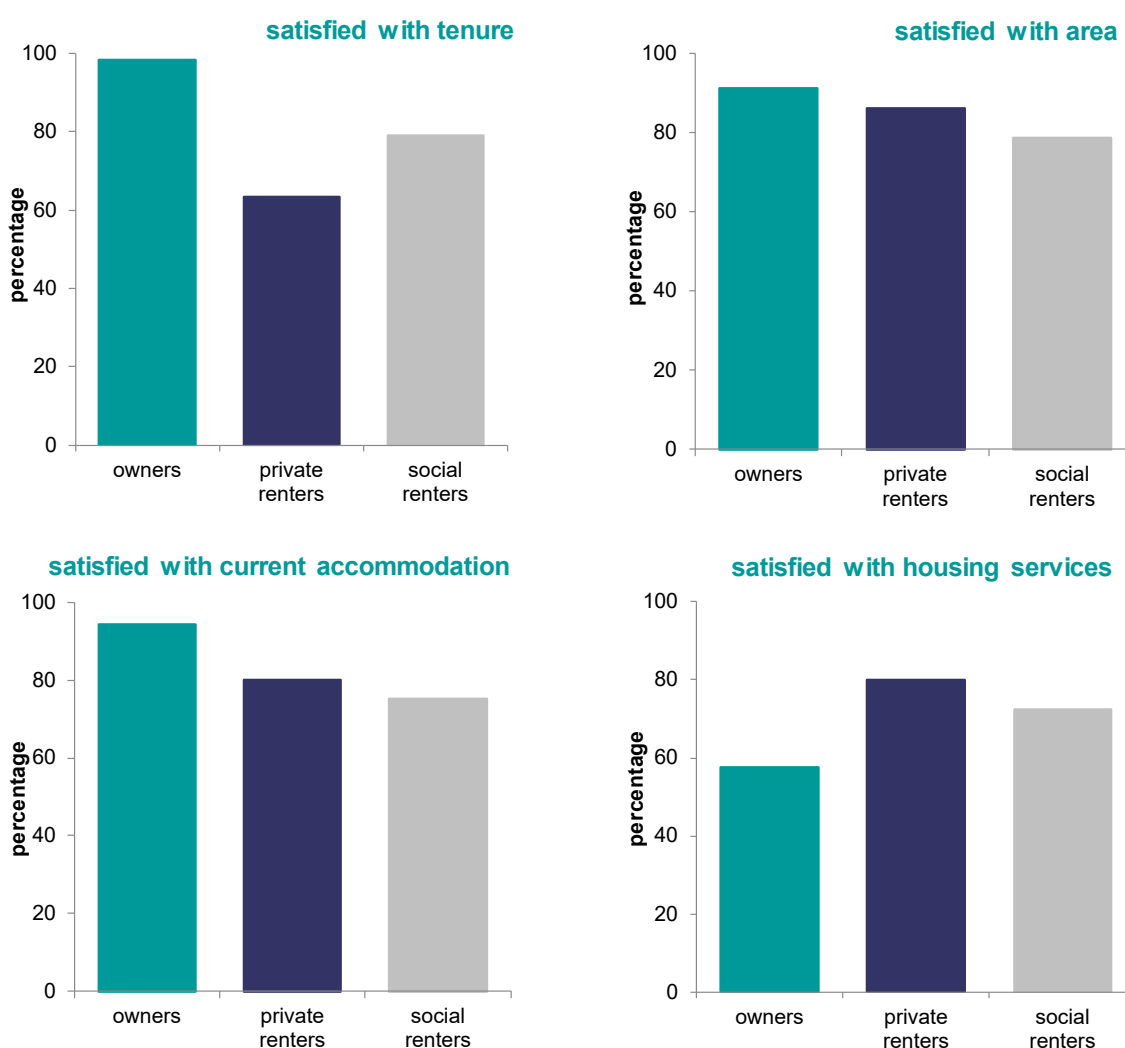
#### Satisfaction with area

- 2.6 Compared with other tenures, social renters were generally less satisfied with their local area: 79% of social renters were satisfied with their local area, compared with 91% of owners and 86% of private renters, Annex Table 2.3, Figure 2.1.
- 2.7 Satisfaction with area varied by region, ranging from 67% in the North East and 72% in London, to 88% in the East Midlands.

## Satisfaction with housing services provided by landlord or freeholder

- 2.8 The majority of social renters (72%) were satisfied with the housing services provided by their landlord, Annex Table 2.4, Figure 2.1<sup>14</sup>.
- 2.9 Across the regions, levels of satisfaction with housing services ranged from 62% in London to 91% in the North East.
- 2.10 In London, more than one quarter (27%) of social renters were dissatisfied with the housing services provided by their landlord.

**Figure 2.1: Satisfaction with tenure, area, current accommodation and housing services, by tenure, 2020-21**



**Base: all households**

**Notes: 1) owners who were leaseholders were asked about satisfaction with housing services  
2) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.1 (accommodation), 2.2 (tenure), 2.3 (area), 2.4 (housing services)**

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

<sup>14</sup> Please note that owners were only asked about satisfaction with housing services if they were leaseholders.

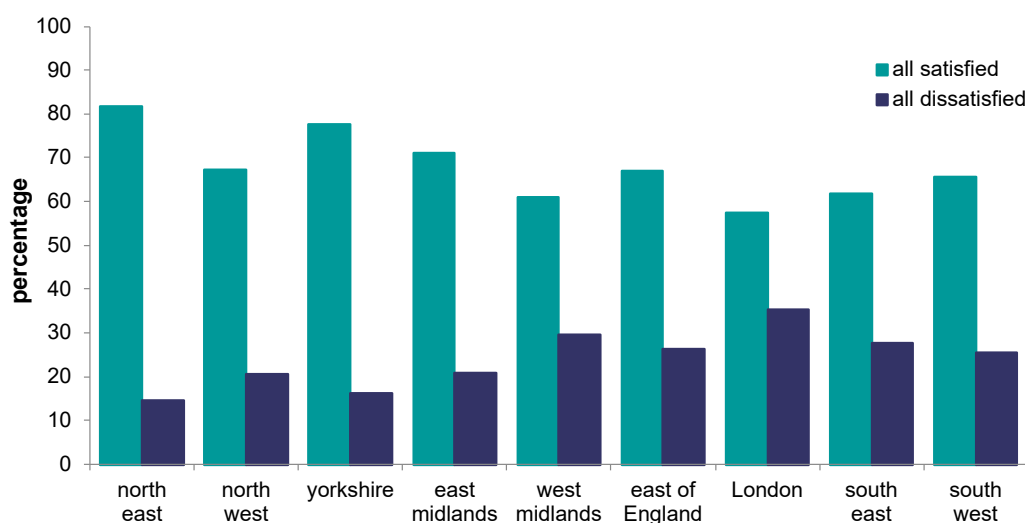
## Change in housing services, by region

- 2.11 Social and private renters were asked whether, in the past two years, the housing services provided by their landlord had got better, worse, or had not changed much.
- 2.12 Overall, 65% of social renters reported no change in housing services over the past two years. However, almost one quarter (24%) reported that their housing services had got worse, Annex Table 2.5.
- 2.13 There was considerable regional variation. The majority of social renters in Yorkshire and the Humber and the North East (both 85%) reported no change, compared with around half (52%) of social renters in the South East.
- 2.14 Where housing services were thought to have changed, social renters in the South West (22%) were most likely to report their housing services had got better. Conversely, social renters in London (33%) and the South East (34%) were most likely to report that their housing services had got worse.

## Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance, by region

- 2.15 Two thirds (66%) of social renters were satisfied with repairs and maintenance, and they were less likely to be satisfied with repairs and maintenance than private renters (75%), Annex Table 2.6, Figure 2.2.
- 2.16 Levels of satisfaction varied by region, with the lowest levels in London (58%), the West Midlands (61%) and the South East (62%) and highest levels in the North East (82%).

**Figure 2.2: Social renters' satisfaction with repairs and maintenance, by region, 2020-21**



Base: all rented households

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.6

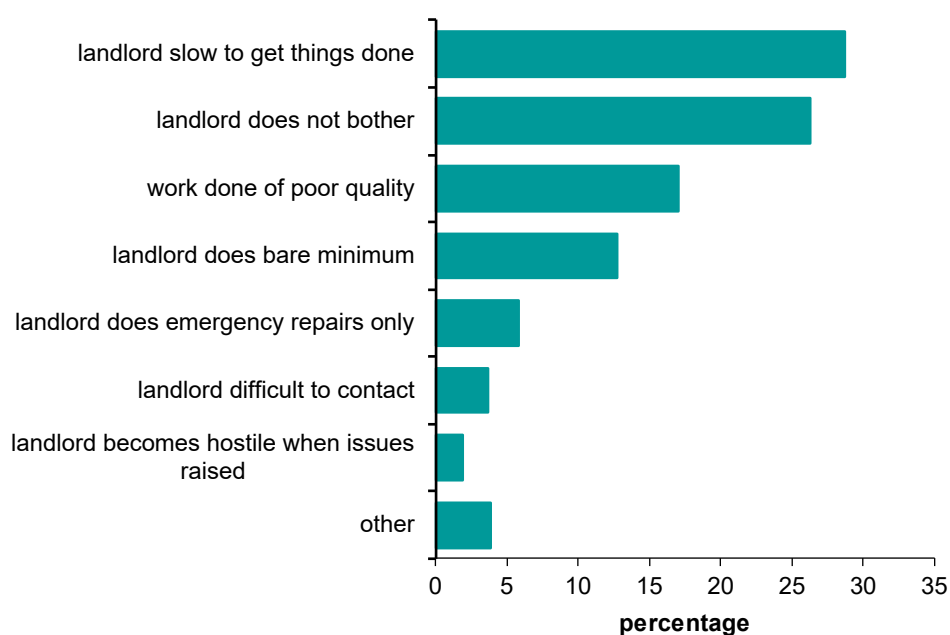
Source: English Housing Survey 2019-20 and 2020-21, full household sample

---

## Reasons for dissatisfaction with repairs and maintenance

2.17 Among social renters who were dissatisfied with repairs and maintenance, the main reasons for dissatisfaction were: ‘the landlord is slow to get things done’ (29%), ‘the landlord does not bother’ (26%), ‘the work done was of poor quality’ (17%) and ‘the landlord does the bare minimum’ (13%), Annex Table 2.7, Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3: Main reason for dissatisfaction with repairs and maintenance among social renters, 2019-21**



**Base: social rented households dissatisfied with repairs and maintenance**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.7**

**Source: English Housing Survey 2019-20 and 2020-21, full household sample**

## Complaints

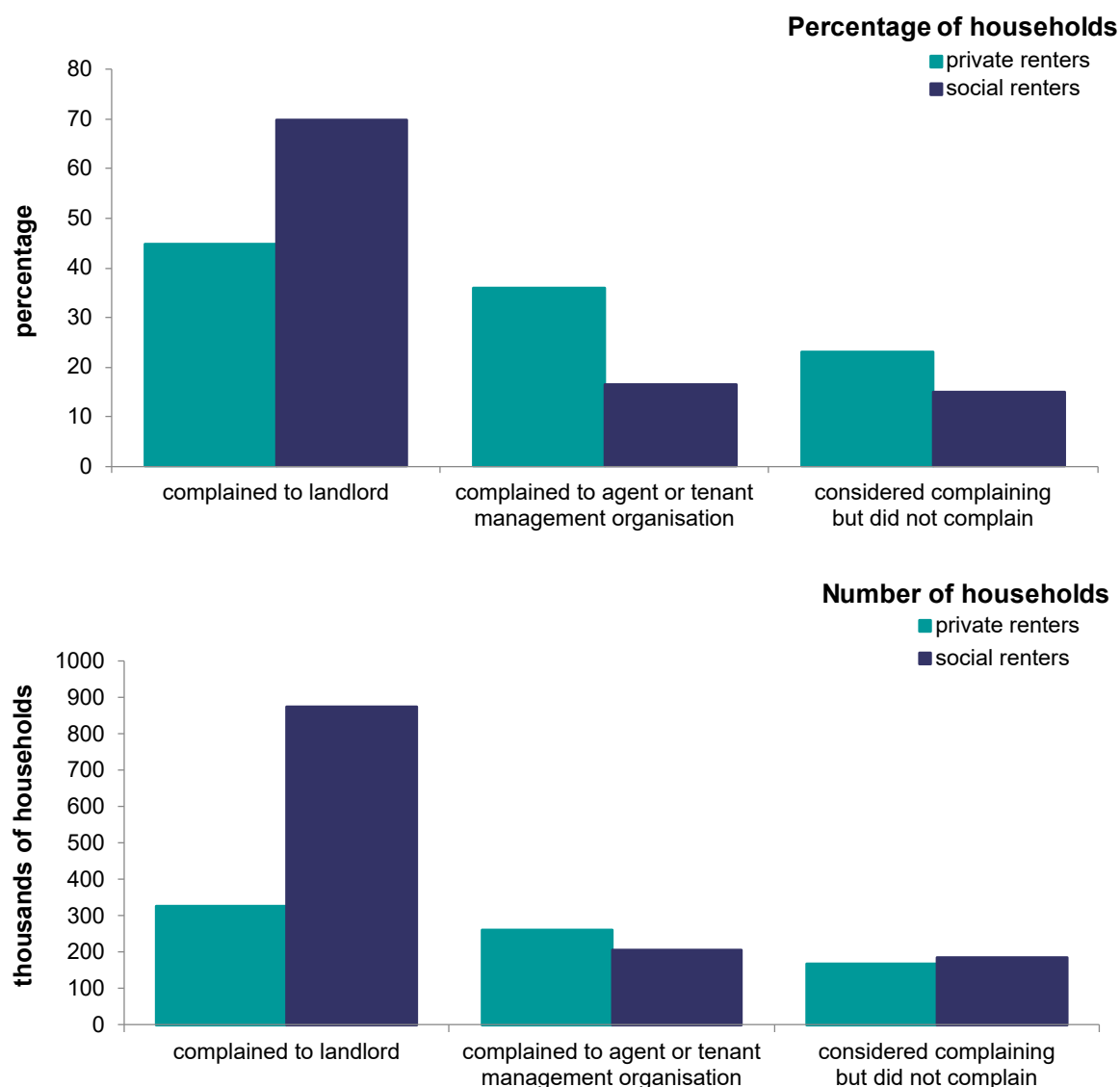
2.18 Almost one third (32%) of social renters had considered making a complaint to their landlord or tenant management organisation<sup>15</sup> in the past 12 months, Annex Table 2.8. Local authority and housing association tenants were equally likely to consider a complaint.

---

<sup>15</sup> Tenant management organisations allow residents of local authority and housing association homes to form a management committee that takes on responsibility for specific aspects of management, such as day-to-day repairs, cleaning, allocations and lettings, tenancy management, rent collection and recovery.

- 
- 2.19 Social renters were twice as likely to consider complaining as private renters (16%) and the number of social renters considering a complaint (1,250,000 households) was higher than for private renters (730,000 households).
- 2.20 There was significant variation with age, with older social renters aged 65 or over (19%-20%, around 200,000 households) less likely to consider a complaint than those under 65 (34%-41%, around 1 million households), Annex Table 2.9.
- 2.21 Social renters with an HRP from an ethnic minority background (38%, around 263,000 households) were more likely to consider complaining than those with a white HRP (30%, around 992,000 households), although this difference might reflect different age profiles.
- 2.22 Among social renters who considered complaining, the majority (85%) went on to make a complaint, with comparable rates for local authority and housing association tenants, Annex Table 2.10, Figure 2.4. Overall, 874,000 social renters complained to the landlord and 205,000 to the tenant management organisation.
- 2.23 Older renters aged 65 and over, who considered complaining were more likely to go on to complain than younger age groups, although this older group were less likely to consider making a complaint in the first place, Annex Table 2.11.
- 2.24 The proportion of social renters who, after considering a complaint, went on to make one was the same for households with an ethnic minority HRP and those with a white HRP (both 85%).
- 2.25 Social renters tended to direct their initial complaint to the landlord (70%), although a smaller proportion (16%) complained to a tenant management organisation<sup>15</sup>, Annex Table 2.10, Figure 2.4.
- 2.26 Local authority tenants were more likely to complain to the landlord (74%) than housing association tenants (67%), and less likely to complain to their tenant management organisation (11% of local authority tenants and 20% of housing association tenants).
- 2.27 Among social renters as a whole, there was some variation with age in who tenants complained to, but no clear pattern, Annex Table 2.11.
- 2.28 The pattern of complaints was similar among households with a white HRP and those with an HRP from an ethnic minority group (excluding white minorities).

**Figure 2.4: Complaints by private and social renters, 2019-21**



**Base: renters who considered making a complaint in the past 12 months**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.10**

**Source: English Housing Survey 2019-20 and 2020-21, full household sample**

- 2.29 Among social renters who complained, 37% were happy with the response to their complaint: 19% were happy with all of the response, and 18% were happy with some of the response, Annex Table 2.12. Almost two thirds of social renters (63%) were not happy with the response to their complaint.
- 2.30 Social renters were less likely than private renters (47%) to be happy with the response to their complaint.
- 2.31 Satisfaction with the response varied with age, although there was no clear pattern, Annex Table 2.13. There was no difference by ethnicity of HRP.

- 
- 2.32 The majority (76%) of social renters who were unhappy with the response to their initial complaint chose not to escalate their complaint. However, almost one quarter (24%) took their complaint further, Annex Table 2.14.
- 2.33 Among those who took their complaint further, social renters most commonly contacted their Member of Parliament (12%) or a local councillor (11%).
- 2.34 The main reasons for social renters choosing not to make an initial complaint were the hassle and time involved in doing so (43%), and the expectation that nothing would be done (27%), Annex Table 2.16.

### Perception of discrimination within the SRS, by ethnicity

- 2.35 The majority view of social renters was that they would be treated the same as people of other races by a council housing department or housing association (76%), compared with 66% of private renters and 65% of owners, Annex Table 2.17.



---

## Chapter 3

# Housing costs and affordability

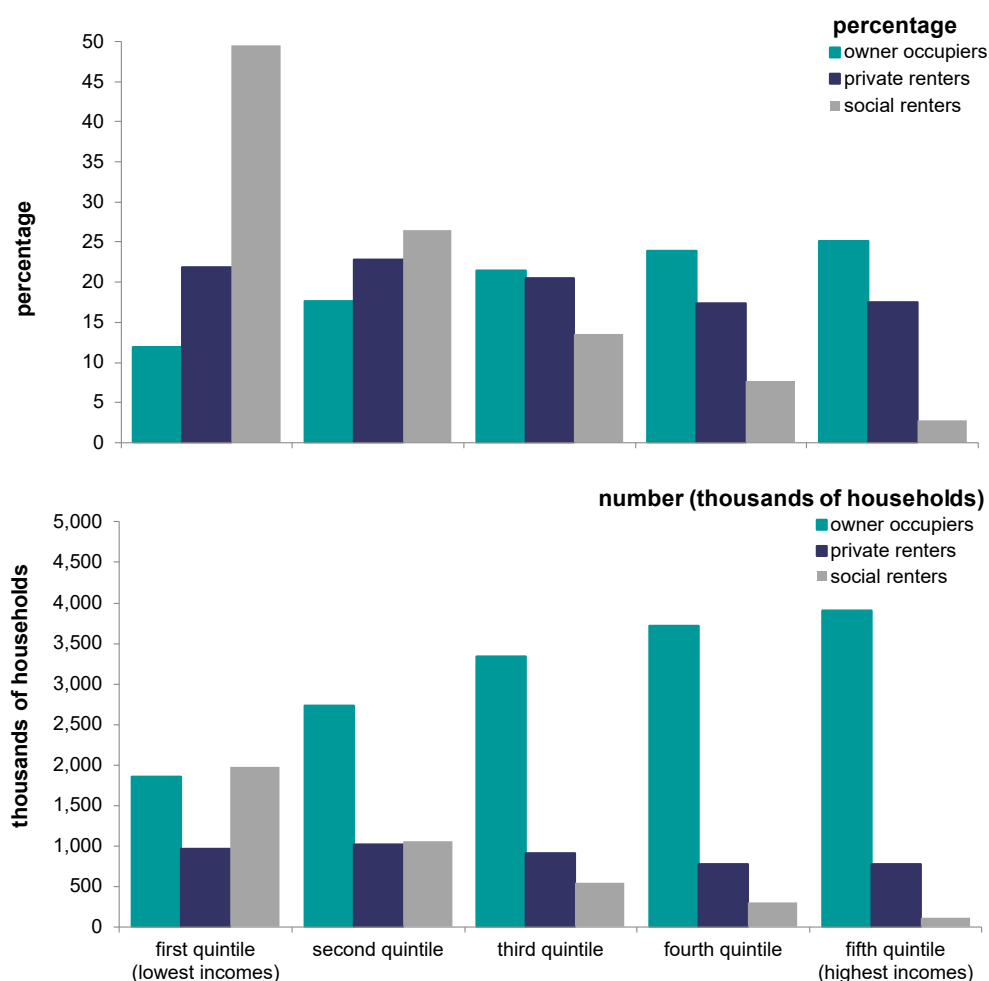
---

- 3.1 This chapter explores the housing costs and affordability of social housing, including income, presence of savings, average rent, the proportion of household income spent on rent, perception of rental costs and rent arrears.
- 3.2 Housing costs and affordability are explored for different regions, household type and economic status, and comparisons are made between local authority and housing association tenants where significant and interesting to do so.

### Income

- 3.3 Social renters tended to have a lower income than owners or private renters<sup>8</sup>. Half (50%) of social renters – almost 2 million households - were in the lowest income quintile, and social renters were more likely to be in the lowest income quintile than owners (12%) or private renters (22%). A further 27% of social renters – 1 million households - were in the second lowest income quintile.

**Figure 3.1: Income, by tenure, 2020-21**



**Base: all households**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Headline Report, Annex Table 3.1**

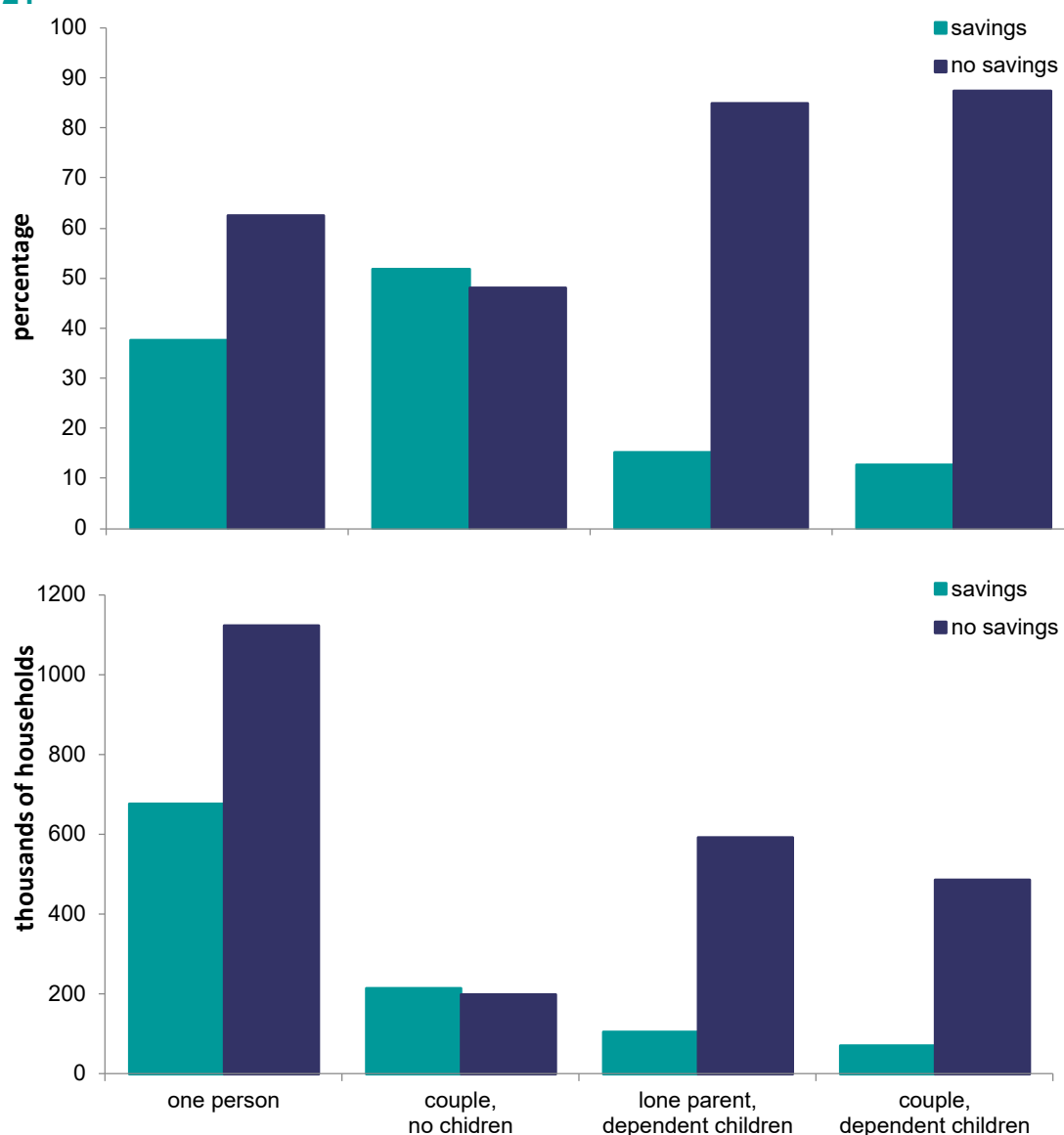
**Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample**

- 3.4 Among social renters, household income varied by household type: households with one adult, such as one person and lone parent households, were more likely to be in the lowest income quintile than those with couples. The proportion of social rented households in the lowest income quintile ranged from 73% of one person households, to 45% of lone parents with dependent children, and 24% of couples with no children, Annex Table 3.1.
- 3.5 Social renters' income also varied with age, with older adults more likely to be in the lowest income quintile than younger age groups. Around two thirds (67%) of social renters aged 75 and over were in the lowest income quintile, compared with 36% aged 25 to 34, and 31% aged 35 to 44. This difference could in part reflect household composition, with older social renters likely to be in one person households, Annex Table 3.2.

## Savings

- 3.6 In 2020-21, over two thirds (69%) of social renters – around 2.7 million households – did not have any savings, significantly more than the proportion of owners (19%) and private renters (45%) with no savings, Annex Table 3.6.
- 3.7 Among social renters, 87% of couples with dependent children and 85% of lone parents with dependent children had no savings. Together these two groups account for 1.1 million social rented households with no savings. One person households (62% reported no savings) accounted for a further 1.1 million social rented household with no savings, Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2: Presence of savings among social renters, by household type, 2020-21**



Base: social rented households

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 3.6

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

---

## Receipt of housing support

- 3.8 Overall, 60% of social renters – around 2.4 million households – received housing support. They were more likely to do so than private renters (26%), Annex Table 3.3.
- 3.9 Although the proportion of social rented households receiving housing support was broadly comparable across regions., the number was influenced by region size. Social renters in London, the largest region, accounted for around one fifth of social renters in receipt of housing support – around 470,000 households – which may be linked to higher rental costs in London.
- 3.10 Receipt of housing support varied by household type, with households with one adult or with dependent children most likely to receive housing support. For social renters as a whole, 77% of lone parents with dependent children, 66% of one person households, and 53% of couples with dependent children received housing support.

## Proportion of rent covered by housing support

- 3.11 Among social renters in receipt of housing support, 58% received housing support that exactly covered their rent and 41% received housing support that partly covered their rent, Annex Table 3.4.
- 3.12 The proportion of social renters who received full housing support (58%) was higher than for private renters (23%).
- 3.13 There was some regional variation in levels of housing support: the proportion of social rented households whose housing support exactly covered their rent ranged from 49% in London, to 71% in the South East. This difference may reflect higher rental costs in London, Annex Table 3.5.

## Rental costs

- 3.14 Average rental costs are based on mean total weekly rent excluding cost of services unless otherwise stated.
- 3.15 In 2020-21, social renters average rent before housing support was £102 per week (median £95 per week). Average rent was lower than for private renters (mean £198 per week, median £163 per week), Annex Table, 3.7. Average rent was higher for housing association (£107 per week) than local authority (£94) tenants.
- 3.16 Among social renters, average weekly rent varied by region, ranging from £83 in Yorkshire and the Humber and £85 per week in the East Midlands, to £129

---

in London. Average weekly rent in the East of England (£106) and South East (£111) was also relatively high.

- 3.17 For social renters as a whole, average rent ranged from £95 per week for retired households to £112 per week for those in full time work. This variation appeared to be driven by differences among housing association tenants, where rents ranged from £98 among retired housing association households to £122 for households in full time work. Rents for local authority tenants were broadly comparable across household type.
- 3.18 Average rent was higher for family households than one person households: lone parents with dependent children (£110 per week) and couples with dependent children (£109 per week) paid higher rental costs, on average, than one person households (£97 per week). This may reflect differences in the size of the accommodation for family and one person households.

## Proportion of income spent on rent

- 3.19 The proportion of income spent on rent provides a measure of affordability. The commentary below is based on the proportion of household income, including benefits, spent on rent as this best captures the total amount of money available to cover rental costs. Where appropriate, this is compared with the proportion of household income, excluding benefits, spent on rent to assess the impact of benefits on affordability.
- 3.20 In 2020-21, social renters spent 27% of their household income, including benefits, on rent, Annex Table 3.8.
- 3.21 With benefits excluded, this proportion increased to 36% of household income, a difference which highlights the importance of housing support to make rental costs more affordable, Annex Table 3.9.
- 3.22 The proportion of household income, including benefits, that social renters spent on rent ranged from 24% in Yorkshire and the Humber to 30% in London, Annex Table 3.8. As social renters tend to have low incomes – three quarters of social rented households are in the lower two income quintiles – spending 30% of household income on rent is likely to make it difficult to afford other essential living costs, Annex Table 3.8.
- 3.23 Social renters in full time work spent the lowest proportion of their household income on rent (19%) and there was no difference when benefits were excluded (20%), indicating that this group were least reliant on housing support to make rental costs affordable.
- 3.24 Conversely, social rented households with an HRP who was unemployed and seeking work spent the highest proportion of their income on rent (37%). With

---

benefits excluded, the proportion of income unemployed social renters spent on rent increased to 60%. Having a low income, relatively high rental costs and greater reliance on housing support to make housing costs affordable are likely to be a particular challenge for unemployed social rented households.

- 3.25 One person households and those with dependent children spent a higher proportion of their household income on rent. The proportion of household income spent on rent was highest for one person households (33%), followed by lone parents with dependent children (25%). Couples with dependent children spent 19% of their household income on rent.

## Ease of paying rent

- 3.26 The majority (77%) of social renters found it easy to pay rent. However, 23% of social renters – almost 680,000 households - found difficult to pay, or afford, their rent, Annex Table 3.10.
- 3.27 Among social renters, lone parent households (44%) were more likely to find it difficult to afford their rent than other households, including one person households (21%) and couples with dependent children (18%).

## Rent arrears

- 3.28 In 2020-21, 8% of social renters were currently in arrears and a further 7% had been in arrears in the past year, Annex Table 3.11. The number and proportion of social renters in arrears has remained fairly stable in the last few years, including over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>16</sup>.
- 3.29 Despite the relative stability in the proportion of social renters in arrears, Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) show that the total arrears of current local authority tenants<sup>17</sup> have increased substantially (from £206 million in 2016-17 to £317 million in 2020-21<sup>18</sup>), suggesting that while more people may not been falling into arrears, the amount of arrears they are in has increased, Figure 3.3.

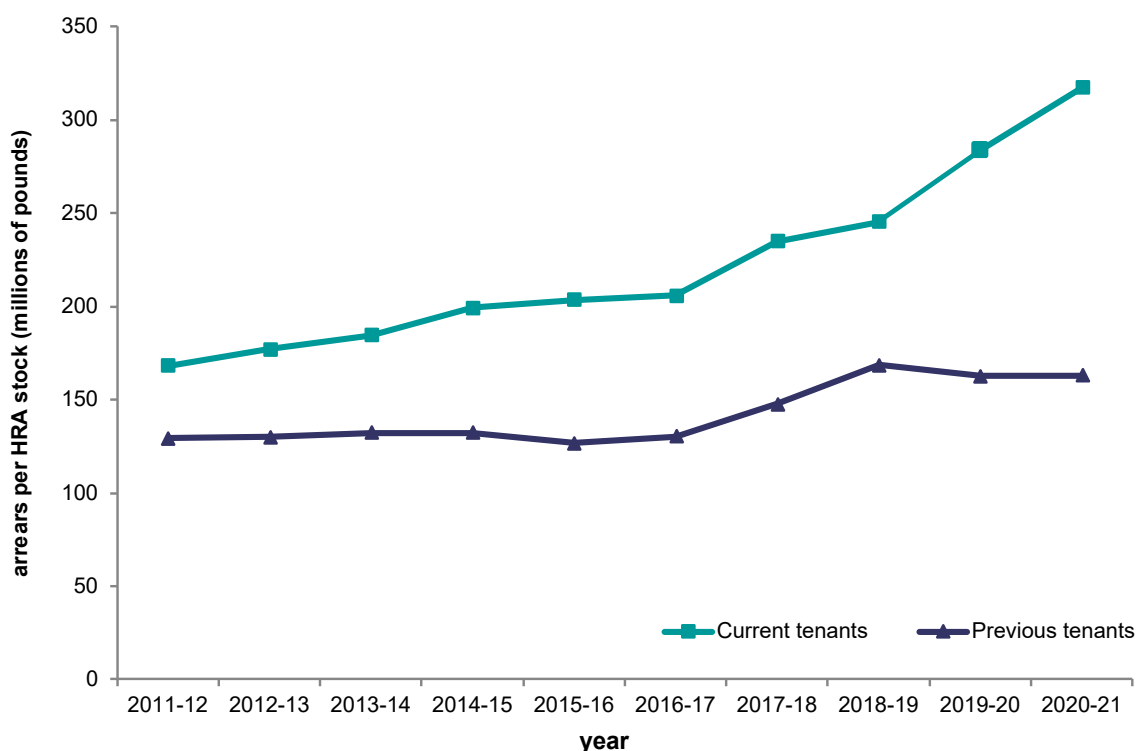
---

<sup>16</sup> The Household Resilience Study, conducted three times between June 2020 and May 2021 found that, while the proportion of private renters in arrears increased over the pandemic, the proportion of social renters in arrears did not change.

<sup>17</sup> Tenants of properties owned through a Housing Revenue Account only.

<sup>18</sup> These LAHS figures only cover local authorities with a Housing Revenue Account (which applies to local authorities with more than 200 properties), although this represents over 99% of local authority stock.

**Figure 3.3: Total rent arrears of current and previous local authority tenants, 2011-21**



**Note:** Local Authority Housing Statistics figures only cover local authorities with a Housing Revenue Account, or HRA, although this represents over 99% of local authority stock  
**Source:** Local Authority Housing Statistics Section H

3.30 This increase is largely explained by an increase in arrears owed to London local authorities. In 2020-21, London local authorities had, on average, £347 owing in arrears for every property that they owned, up from £189 in 2016-17. This compared to around £130 to £170 per property in the other English regions. Comparable data for housing association owned homes are not available.

## Method of payment for gas and electric

- 3.31 Social renters were more likely to use a prepayment method for their gas and electricity and less likely to pay by direct debit than other tenures, exposing social renters to higher unit costs for energy, Annex Table 3.12, Figure 3.2.
- 3.32 Overall, over a third of social renters used a prepayment meter: 35% of social renters (around 1.4 million households) used a prepayment meter for electricity, and 36% (around 1.2 million households) used a prepayment meter for gas.
- 3.33 Direct debits were used by just over half of social renters to pay for electricity or gas (both 56%). Although direct debit was the most common method of

---

payment, social renters were less likely than owners (electricity and gas 93%) or private renters (electricity and gas 76%) to use this method.



---

## Chapter 4

# Housing history and future housing

---

- 4.1 Chapter 4 describes the housing history of social renters, including time in the social rented sector, previous tenure, reasons for moving and prior experience of homelessness.

### Housing moves

- 4.2 Within the social rented sector, there were 221,000 housing moves in the past year. Over half (58%) of these moves – 129,000 households – were social renters moving to another home within the social rented sector<sup>19</sup>.
- 4.3 Other key groups moving into the social rented sector were new households formed in the social rented sector (19%, 42,000 households) and moves from the private rented sector (16%, 35,000 households). The number of households moving out of the social rented sector was too low to report.

### Why previous tenancy ended

- 4.4 Among renters with a previous rented tenancy, the most common reasons for ending the tenancy were that the household wanted to move (64%) or were asked to leave by a landlord or agent (28%), Annex Table 4.1. Other reasons were less common, including a tenancy ending by mutual agreement or accommodation being tied to a job that had ended (both 4%).

### Prior experience of homelessness

- 4.5 One in ten (10%) social renters – around 397,000 households – had experienced homelessness in the last few years, Annex Table 4.2. The EHS uses a broad definition of homelessness: respondents were asked to include times where they had to stay in a hostel, temporary accommodation, or with friends or family because they had lost their home and had no accommodation to go to. Social renters were more likely than private renters (4%) or owners (1%) to have experienced homelessness in the past few years.

---

<sup>19</sup> English Housing Survey, 2020-21 Headline Report, Annex Table 1.23.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>

---

## Waiting lists

- 4.6 Among social renters who had lived in their current home for less than ten years, 11% – just over 265,000 households – had someone in the household on a social housing waiting list, Annex Table 4.4. The majority (71%) of this group had been on the waiting list for less than one year, Annex Table 4.3.
- 4.7 Social rented households were more likely to have a household member on a social housing waiting list than private renters (5%), Annex Table 4.4.
- 4.8 There was no regional variation in the proportion of social renters on the waiting list.
- 4.9 Younger social renters, aged 25 to 34, were more likely to be on the social housing waiting list (19%) than older renters (6% aged 65 to 74) which might reflect household composition.
- 4.10 Overall, 21% of lone parents with dependent children and 16% of couples with dependent children had someone on a social housing waiting list.

## Length of time in current accommodation

- 4.11 On average, social renters had lived in their current accommodation for 11 years, Annex Table 4.5. This was longer than for private renters (mean 4 years) and shorter than for owner occupiers (mean 16 years)<sup>20</sup>.
- 4.12 Length of residence increased with increasing age, from a mean of 4 years for social renters aged 16 to 24 years, to 12 years for those aged 45 to 64, and 18 years for social renters aged 75 and older, Annex Table 4.6.

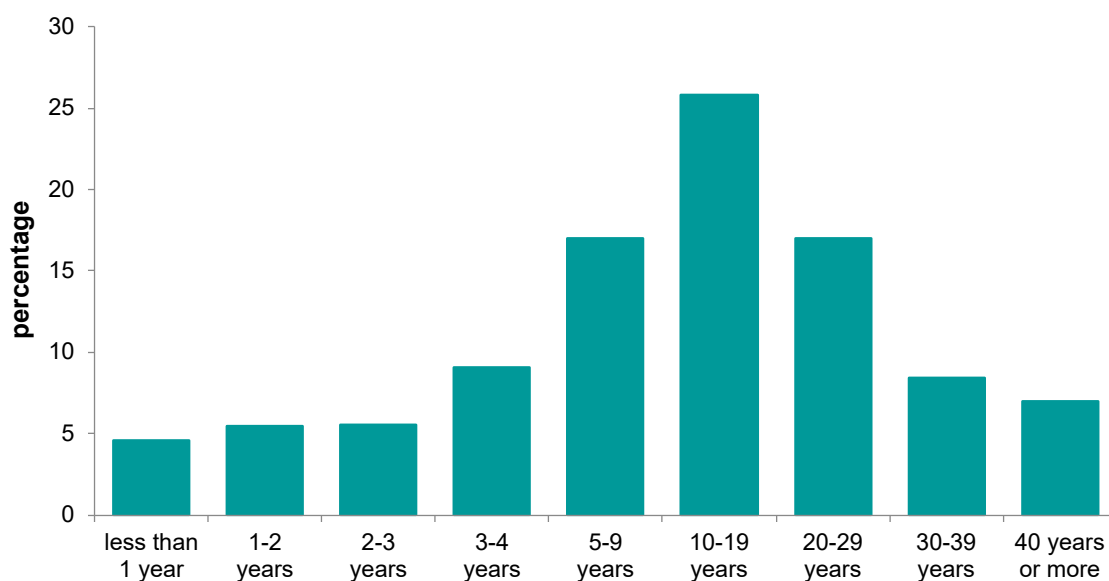
## Time in the social rented sector

- 4.13 For social renters as a whole, the most common length of time in the social rented sector was 10 to 19 years (26% of social renters), Annex table 4.7, Figure 4.1.
- 4.14 Overall, 58% of social renters – around 2.3 million households - had been in the sector for 10 years or more.

---

<sup>20</sup> English Housing Survey, 2020-21 Headline Report, Annex Table 1.22.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>

**Figure 4.1: Length of time in the social rented sector, 2020-21**



**Base: all households**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 4.7**

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

## Reasons for moving

4.15 Based on social renters who had moved in the past 12 months, the main reasons for moving were: previous accommodation being unsuitable (20%), wanting to live on their own or independently (16%), and some other reason (15%), Annex Table 4.9.

## Reasons for considering moving

4.16 For social renters as a whole, the main reason for having considered moving the last 12 months were: to move to a larger house of flat (16%), to have nicer accommodation (14%), or to move to a better neighbourhood (12%). A further 15% reported 'some other reason', not specified, and 49% reported none of the reasons shown, Annex Table 4.10.

## Buying expectations

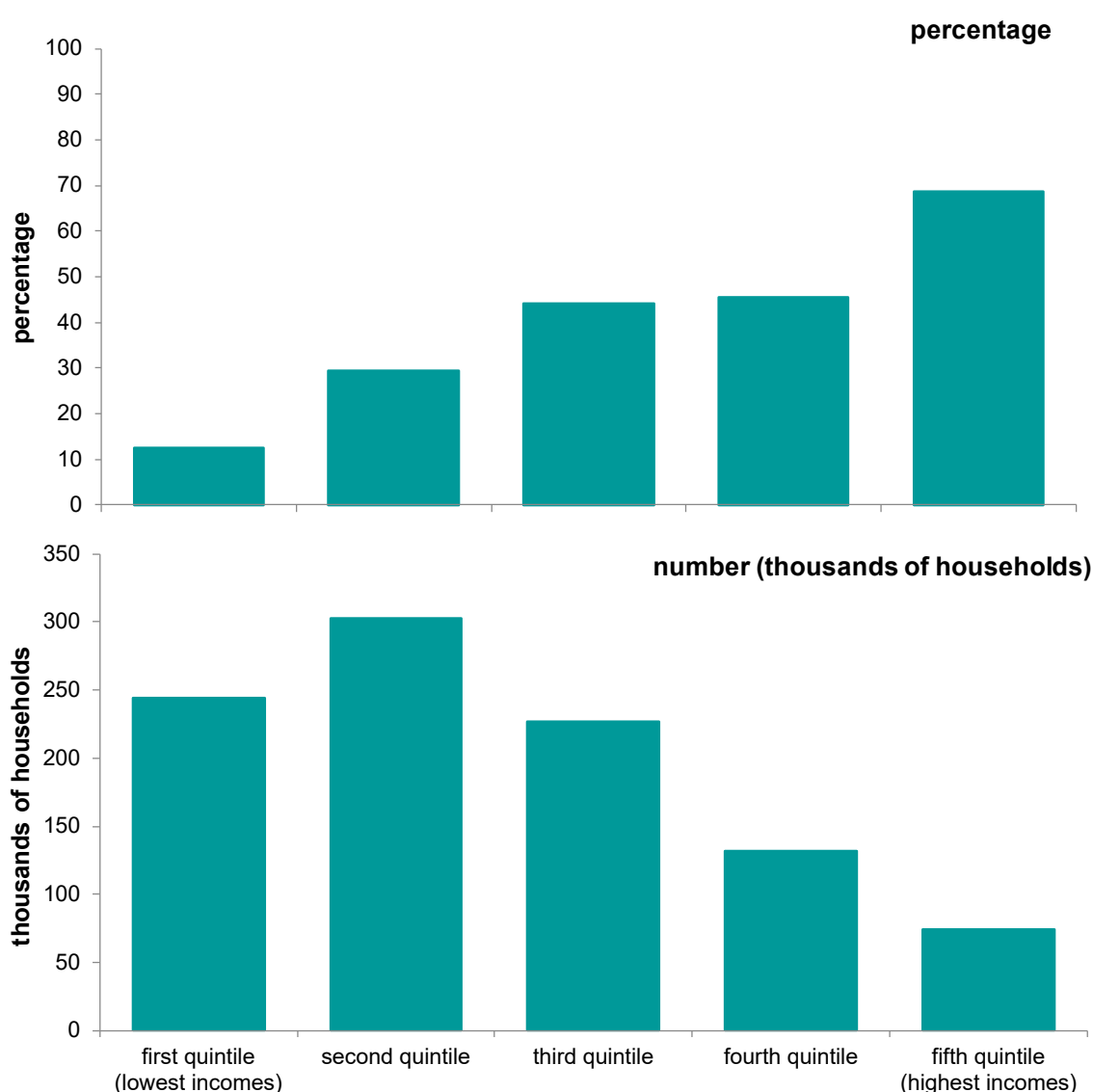
4.17 One quarter (25%) of social renters – 980,000 households – expected to buy a home in the future, and social renters were less likely than private renters (61%) to expect to buy, Annex Table 4.11.

4.18 The proportion of social renters planning to buy varied by ethnicity. Social rented households with an ethnic minority HRP (48%) were more likely to plan

to buy their own home in future, than those with a white HRP (21%). This may partly reflect the younger age profile of ethnic minority households.

- 4.19 The proportion planning to buy increased with increasing income, from 13% of social renters in the lowest income quintile, to 69% in the highest quintile, Figure 4.2.
- 4.20 Over three quarters of social renters are in the lower two income quintiles so, despite the relatively low proportion of social renters with low incomes planning to buy, there are over 500,000 social rented households in the lower two income quintiles who plan to buy in future.

**Figure 4.2: Social renters planning to buy, by income, 2020-21**



**Base: all households**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 4.11**

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

- 
- 4.21 Social renters with savings and those with no savings had similar buying expectations: 25% of social renters with no savings expected to buy, as did 26% who had savings.

## Expectation to buy current home

- 4.22 Among social renters who planned to buy, one third (33%) – around 313,000 households – planned to buy their current home. Social renters were more likely to plan to buy their current home than private renters (11% of private renters who planned to buy).
- 4.23 Local authority tenants who expected to buy were more likely to plan to buy their current home (51%) than housing association tenants (23%).

---

## Chapter 5

# Dwelling condition, safety, and energy

---

5.1 This chapter examines the quality of social rented homes in 2020-21 using a number of housing quality indicators: the Decent Homes Standard; Category 1 Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)<sup>21</sup> hazards; presence of damp; subjective overheating; working smoke alarms and energy efficiency<sup>22</sup>. It estimates the costs to make non-decent homes meet the Standard and the potential costs to raise minimum energy efficiency standards to at least energy efficiency rating (EER) band C. The chapter also reports on access to open space (private or shared plots for the home). Throughout the chapter comparisons are made with other tenures<sup>23</sup>.

### Quality of homes

#### **Decent Homes Standard by household characteristics and region**

5.2 For a dwelling to be considered 'decent' under the Decent Homes Standard it must:

- meet the statutory minimum standard for housing (the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) since April 2006). Homes which contain a Category 1 hazard under the HHSRS are considered non-decent
- provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort
- be in a reasonable state of repair
- have reasonably modern facilities and services

5.3 In 2020, 11% of dwellings in the social rented sector failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard. This equates to around 448,000 homes. This is lower than the proportion of private rented (23%) and all owner occupied (14%) homes (970,000 and 2.1 million homes respectively). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible for EHS surveyors to conduct a full internal inspection in 2020-21 and the prevalence of non-decent homes has been modelled differently to the EHS 2019-20. Statistics from the 2020-21 Headline Report have been extrapolated from previous EHS trends, while the following

---

<sup>21</sup> For further information on the Decent Homes Standard and the HHSRS, see Chapter 5 of the English Housing Survey 2020-21 Technical Report, Annex 5.5

<sup>22</sup> For further information on the energy efficiency rating of dwellings, see Chapter 5 of the English Housing Survey 2020-21 Technical Report, Annex 5.6

<sup>23</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible for EHS surveyors to conduct a full internal inspection of vacant properties in 2020. Analysis throughout reports on occupied homes only.

---

statistics on occupied homes only has used predictive modelling. See the technical notes section of the 2020-21 Headline Report and the Housing Quality and Condition Report for further details. The predictive modelling resulted in 11% of occupied dwellings in the social rented sector failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard, Annex Table 5.1.

- 5.4 Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) show that 8% of local authority homes did not meet the Decent Homes Standard in 2020-21<sup>24</sup>. The LAHS figures show a significantly lower proportion of non-decent homes. This is because the EHS measures the decency of the stock against a common standard across all tenures, and irrespective of whether it is occupied or the characteristics of the tenant. Landlords, on the other hand, make exceptions in certain cases, in line with the government's decent homes guidance. For example, homes where tenants have refused improvement work are excluded from LAHS. Also, local authorities may be unaware of a non-decent home until the property is vacated or if the tenant raises an issue.
- 5.5 Of the 71,000 non-decent local authority-owned homes that are reported as non-decent to the local authority, the majority (53,000, 75%) were not in a reasonable state of repair while 5,400 dwellings (8%) had Category 1 hazards<sup>25</sup>.
- 5.6 In 2020-21, more local authority owned dwellings became non-decent than were made decent by local authorities (33,000 compared to 40,000).
- 5.7 The LAHS return also records where dwellings have been prevented from becoming decent for various reasons, namely the tenant refusing improvement work (2,163), the stock being demolished (436), or partially transferred out of local authority control/sold through schemes like Right to Buy (524). In total, in 2020-21, 3,300 local authority homes were not made decent because of these reasons (5% of non-decent local authority stock reported in LAHS)<sup>26</sup>.
- 5.8 Social renters in one person households (14%) or couples with no children (13%) were more likely to live in a non-decent home than lone parents with

---

<sup>24</sup> These figures underestimate the total number of local authority owned non-decent dwellings, as some stock-holding local authorities each year did not report the number of non-decent dwellings in their stock.

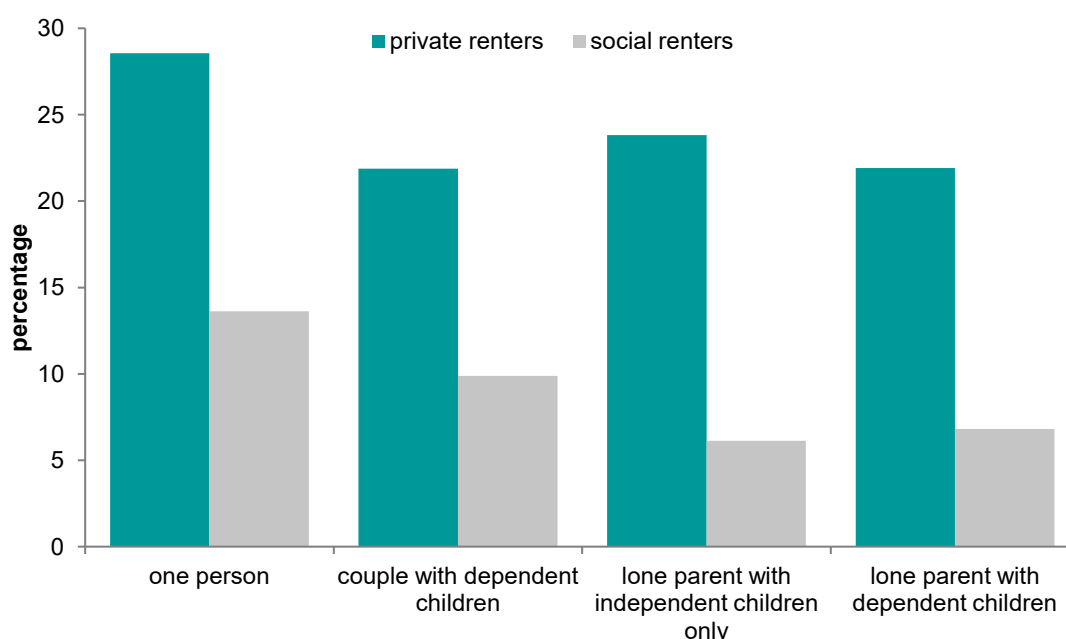
<sup>25</sup> Categories of non-decency are not mutually exclusive and a dwelling can fall into multiple categories.

<sup>26</sup> The percentages were calculated excluding instances where information on stock was reported but data on non-decency was not. In January 2022, the calculation methodology was refined to exclude cases where a value of zero for the number of non-decent dwellings was submitted by local authorities, to ensure that non-responses by local authorities are not included in the calculation. This has led to an increase in the overall proportion of stock reported as non-decent in LAHS.

either independent children only (6%) or dependent children (7%), Annex Table 5.2.

5.9 Social renters were less likely than private renters to live in a non-decent home. This was the case for one person households (14% and 29%), couples with dependent children (10% and 22%), lone parents with independent children (6% and 24%) and lone parents with dependent children (7% and 22%). Social renters who were lone parents with independent children (6%) were also less likely to live in a non-decent home than owner occupier lone parents with independent children (20%).

**Figure 5.1: Non-decent homes, by household type, rented sectors, 2020-21**



**Base: all households**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.2**

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

5.10 Among social renters, households were no more likely to live in a non-decent home whether they were in receipt of housing support or not. Overall, 11% of social renter households that received housing support lived in a non-decent home, as did 12% of those that did not receive housing support.

5.11 Among social renters, there were no significant differences in the prevalence of non-decency and the income quintile of the household. This is not the case among other tenures, with low income owner occupier and private renters more likely to live in a non-decent home.

5.12 Social renters were no more likely to live in a non-decent home if the HRP was white or was from an ethnic minority background. This trend was not unique to the social renters, the same was evident for private renter and owner occupier households.



- 5.13 Overall, 10% of social renter households containing a member with a long-term illness or disability were living in a non-decent home. This was a lower proportion than those with no member with a long-term illness or disability (13%). The opposite was seen among owner occupier households, where those containing a member that had a long-term illness or disability were more likely to fail the Decent Homes Standard (16%) than those without (13%).
- 5.14 Although social rented sector homes were less likely to fail the Decent Homes Standard compared with other tenures across the whole stock, this finding was not evident in every region. There was no difference in the prevalence of non-decent homes in the social rented and private rented sectors in the West Midlands and South East regions. The only statistically significant differences between social rented homes and owner occupied homes were found in the North West (11% and 17%, respectively) and East (5% and 13%, respectively), Annex Table 5.3.
- 5.15 Within the social rented sector, the East had a lower prevalence of non-decent homes (5%) compared with all other regions except the North East (9%) and the South East (8%). The South West region was more likely to have non-decent social rented homes (17%) than the East (5%), North East (9%) and the South East (8%), Figure 5.2.

**Figure 5.2: Occupied non-decent homes in the social rented sector, 2020**



**Base: all social rented dwellings**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.3**

**Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample**

### Cost to make decent

- 5.16 The EHS reports an estimated cost of all work needed to bring a dwelling up to the Decent Homes Standard. In 2020, on average it would cost £5,457 to make a non-decent home in the social rented sector meet the Standard. This

---

is less than it would cost to bring a non-decent home in the private rented (£8,475) or owner occupied (£7,852) sector up to the Standard. Within the social rented sector, it would cost an average of £6,030 to bring a local authority rented dwelling up to the Standard, and a housing association rented dwelling £4,985, Annex Table 5.4.

- 5.17 Non-decent homes occupied by social renter couples with dependent children had a higher mean cost to make decent (£9,600) compared with those occupied by couples with no children (£4,920) or couples with independent children (£4,800). The average cost to make decent in the homes of couples with dependent children was also higher than for any household containing a lone parent or containing just one person, Annex Table 5.5.

### **Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) by household characteristics and region**

- 5.18 The HHSRS is a risk-based assessment that identifies hazards in dwellings and evaluates their potential effects on the health and safety of occupants and their visitors, particularly vulnerable people. The most serious hazards are called Category 1 hazards and where these exist in a home, it fails to meet the statutory minimum standard for housing in England.
- 5.19 In 2020-21, 5% of social rented homes had at least one Category 1 hazard, a lower proportion than both owner occupied (9%) and private rented homes (13%). Within the social rented sector, dwellings rented from local authorities were more likely to have a Category 1 hazard (6%) than dwellings rented from housing associations (4%), Annex Table 5.3.
- 5.20 As the most common reason for social rented homes failing the Decent Homes Standard was the presence of any Category 1 hazard<sup>27</sup>, it is not surprising that similar disparities in the prevalence of Category 1 hazards by household type, receipt of housing benefit, ethnicity and long-term illness or disability were seen to those found for non-decent homes.

### **Damp by household characteristics and region**

- 5.21 In 2020-21, 5% of social rented homes (198,000 households) had a problem with damp. This was lower than the 10% of private rented homes (409,000 households) but higher than the 2% of owner occupied homes (335,000 households) that had damp present, Annex Table 5.7.
- 5.22 The overall findings for the total stock differed by region. Social rented homes were only less likely to have dampness than private rented homes in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber (private rented 15% and social rented

---

<sup>27</sup> See EHS Live Table DA3201

---

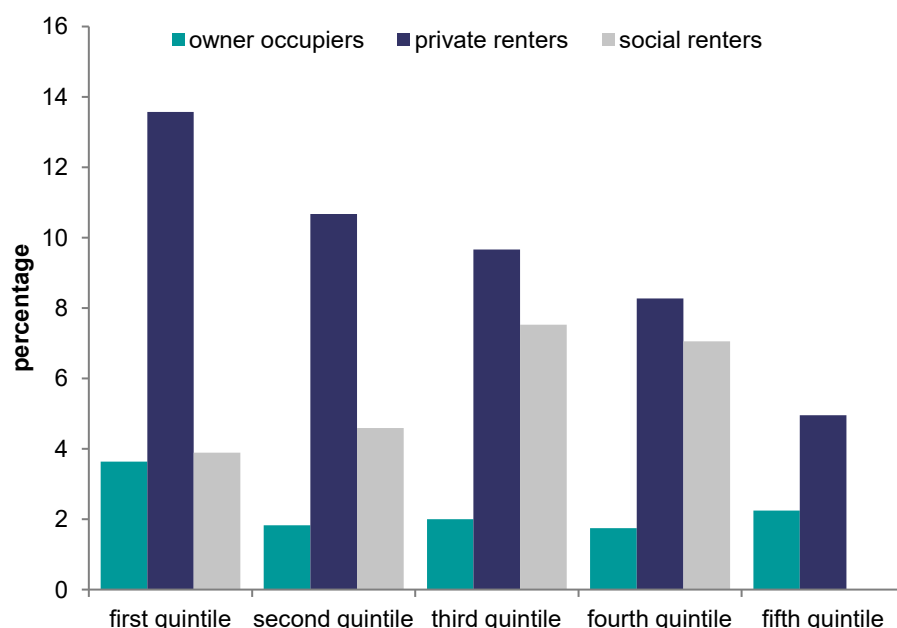
5% in both regions). In addition, owner occupied homes were only less likely to have dampness in the London area (2%) than social rented homes (7%).

- 5.23 There were no statistically significant differences in the prevalence of dampness by region among social rented homes. This finding differs from that for owner occupied homes and private rented homes where some regional differences were found<sup>28</sup>.
- 5.24 Social renters comprising a couple with independent children only, had a higher prevalence of damp (14%) compared with one person households (2%) and couples with no children (4%), Annex Table 5.8.
- 5.25 Within the rented sectors, one person households (2%), couples with dependent children (7%) and lone parent households with dependent children (7%) that were social renters had a lower prevalence of damp compared with their private renter counterparts (10%, 13%, and 14%, respectively). However, when compared with owner occupiers, all social renter couple households had a higher prevalence of damp.
- 5.26 Social renters in the lowest income quintile had a lower prevalence of damp (4%) than those in the third income quintile (8%).
- 5.27 Social renter households in the lowest 2 quintiles (4% and 5%, respectively) had a lower prevalence of damp compared to their private renter counterparts (14% and 11%, respectively). Compared with owner occupiers, social renters in the lowest income quintile had a similarly low prevalence of damp, whereas social renters in quintiles 2, 3, and 4 had a higher prevalence of damp compared to their owner occupier counterparts, Figure 5.3.

---

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 3 of the English Housing Survey Housing quality and condition report, 2020

**Figure 5.3: Presence of damp, by household income, all tenures, 2020-21**



**Base:** all households

**Note:** underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.8

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

### Overheating by household characteristics and region

- 5.28 To explore subjective overheating, households are asked whether any part of their home gets uncomfortably hot, even when the heating is turned off and the windows are open.
- 5.29 Overall, social renters were less likely to report subjective overheating (6%, or 243,000 households) than owners (9%, or 1.3 million households). Subjective overheating was more common among owners (9%), housing association (7%) and private (7%) renters than local authority renters (4%), Annex Table 5.9.
- 5.30 There was a higher proportion of social renters reporting subjective overheating in the East (9%), Yorkshire and the Humber (9%) and South East (8%) than in the South West (3%) and North West (2%). More specifically, housing association renters in Yorkshire and the Humber (17%) were generally the most likely to report overheating in their homes while households in the North West (3%) generally the least likely.
- 5.31 Social rented households consisting of lone parents with dependent children (9%) were more likely to report overheating than one person households (5%), a difference that appeared to be driven by housing association tenants.
- 5.32 As a comparison, owners in one person households (7%) were less likely to report their homes overheating than couples with independent children (12%), couples with dependent children (10%) and couples with no children (9%).

5.33 Although reported overheating was generally more prevalent in households in the higher income quintiles than the lower income quintiles, for both owner occupiers and private renters, there were no such differences in the prevalence of overheating for social renters.

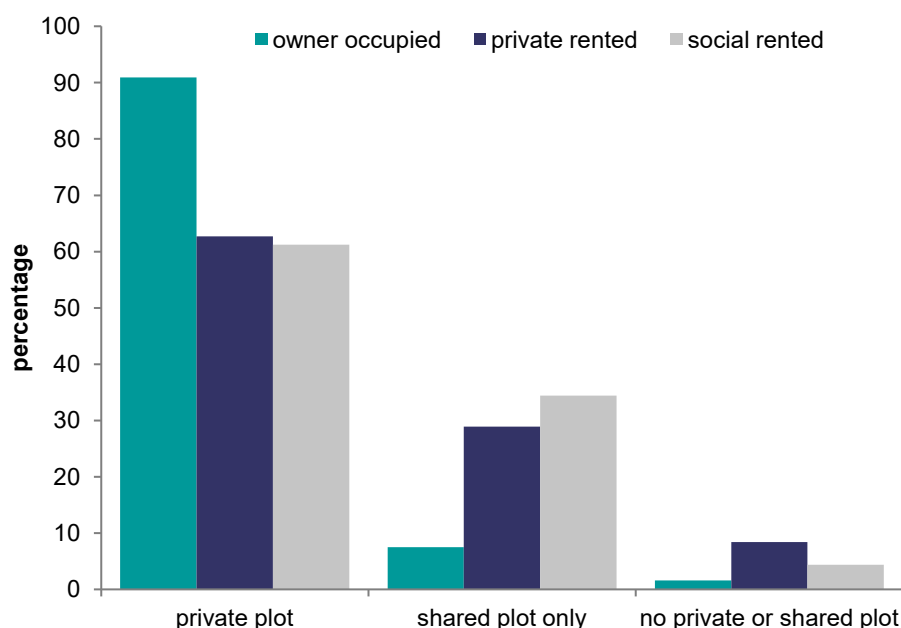
### Access to open space

5.34 The EHS records a number of details relating to the land immediately surrounding a dwelling, referred to as the dwelling’s plot. The plot may be private (exclusive access) or shared, and may consist of hard landscaping, soft landscaping, or a combination of both.

5.35 Overall, 2.4 million social rented dwellings (61%) had a private plot, 1.4 million (34%) had a plot shared with other dwellings, and the remaining 172,000 (4%) had no private or shared plot<sup>29</sup>. Among social rented homes, 96% of dwellings rented from local authorities and 95% of dwellings rented from housing associations had a private or shared plot, Annex Table 5.10, Figure 5.4.

5.36 Owner occupied dwellings were more likely to have private plots (91%) than other tenures. Private rented homes were more likely to have no plot (8%) compared with social rented homes (4%)<sup>30</sup>.

**Figure 5.4: Type of plot, by tenure, 2020**



**Base: all dwellings**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.10**

**Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample**

<sup>29</sup> EHS Headline report 2020-21, Annex Table 2.2

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>

<sup>30</sup> EHS Headline report 2020-21, Annex Table 2.2. as above

- 
- 5.37 Social rented houses or bungalows were more likely to have a private plot (98%) than social rented flats (17%). Conversely, flats were more likely to have a shared plot (74%) than houses or bungalows (2%).
- 5.38 Overall, social rented flats were more likely to have some type of plot surrounding their dwelling than flats in other tenures. Social rented flats (9%) were less likely to have no plot than private rented flats (17%) and owner occupied flats (14%).
- 5.39 Social rented dwellings in London were less likely to have a private plot (35%) than those in the Rest of England (68%). Meanwhile, social rented dwellings in London were more likely to have either a shared plot (49%) or no plot (16%) than those in the Rest of England (31%, and 2% respectively), Annex Table 5.11.
- 5.40 One person social rented households were significantly less likely to have a private plot (46%) than couples with or without any children and lone parents with any children. In addition, social renting couples with only independent children were more likely to have a private plot surrounding their dwelling (89%) than couples with no children (65%), couples with dependent children (78%) and lone parents with dependent children (68%), Annex Table 5.12.
- 5.41 Generally, there were no significant differences between the proportion of social renters and private renters that have a private plot across all household types.

## Smoke alarms

- 5.42 In 2020-21, social renters were most likely to have at least one working smoke alarm (97%), compared with 94% of owner occupiers, and 93% of private renters<sup>31</sup>.
- 5.43 No significant difference was seen in the prevalence of smoke alarms among social renters in homes of different ages, Annex Table 5.13.

## Energy efficiency

- 5.44 The English Housing Survey (EHS) uses the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP 2012) to monitor the energy efficiency of homes, through the calculation of a SAP energy efficiency rating (EER). The EER is also converted into an A to G banding system, where band A represents high

---

<sup>31</sup> EHS Headline report 2020-21, Annex Table 2.16  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>

---

energy efficiency and band G represents low energy efficiency<sup>32</sup>. The EER is the primary rating presented on an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

### **SAP rating**

- 5.45 In 2020, the mean SAP rating for all households was 66. Social renters had a higher SAP rating of 70 points compared with owner occupiers and private renters (both had 65 SAP points), Annex Table 5.14. Overall, social rented homes were more energy efficient as the stock has a higher proportion of flats (which tend to be more energy efficient due to less exposed surface area (walls and roofs)) and tends to be better insulated<sup>33</sup>.
- 5.46 Social renters living in London (71 SAP points) had a higher mean SAP rating than those living in the South West, Yorkshire and the Humber, the East Midlands and the West Midlands (68 to 69 SAP points). Social renters in the West Midlands also had a lower SAP rating by 2 SAP points than social renters living in the South East, East and North East (all with 70 SAP points).
- 5.47 This trend of higher SAP ratings in London was seen across all tenures, and reflects the higher prevalence of flats, which tend to be more energy efficient, in the capital.
- 5.48 Both private renters and owner occupiers lived in homes with a lower SAP rating in every English region when compared with social renters. The differences in the SAP ratings of social and private renters ranged from 4 SAP points in London, the North East, and the South East to 9 SAP points in Yorkshire and the Humber, Figure 5.5.

---

<sup>32</sup> See Glossary for more information about EER also known as SAP

<sup>33</sup> See live tables DA1101 (stock profile) and DA6201 (insulation)

**Figure 5.5: Mean SAP rating, by region, rented sectors, 2020-21**



Base: all private and social renters

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.14

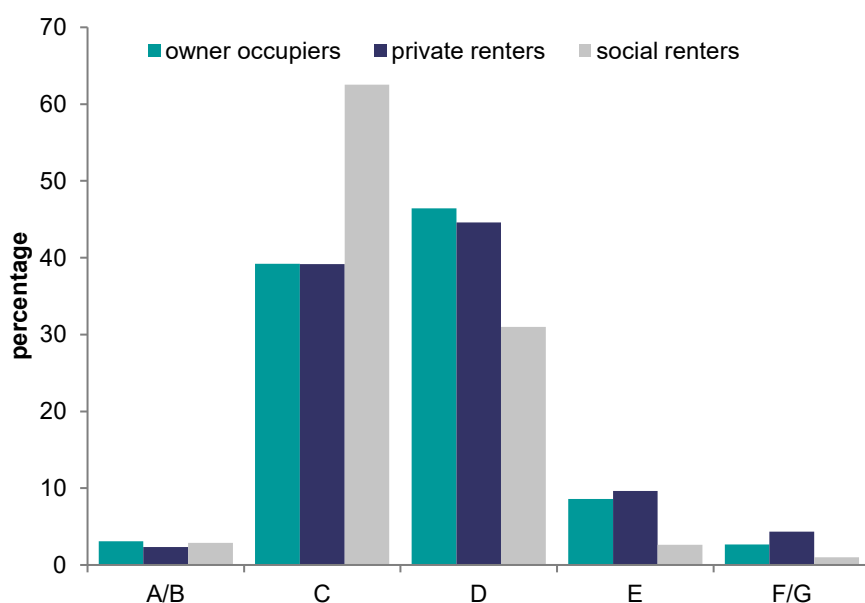
Source: English Housing Survey, household sub sample

### Energy efficiency rating (EER)

- 5.49 Overall, most social rented households lived in dwellings with an EER band C (63%, or 2.5 million households), Annex Table 5.15, Figure 5.6.
- 5.50 Local authority tenants were less likely to live in a dwelling with an EER of band A/B or C (2% and 59%, respectively) than housing association tenants (4% and 65%, respectively) and consequently local authority tenants were more likely to live in a dwelling with an EER band D (36%) than housing association tenants (28%).
- 5.51 There was a higher proportion of social renters living in dwellings with an EER band C (65% of housing association renters and 59% of local authority renters) compared with owners and private renters (both 39%). Owners and private renters, however, were more likely to live in dwellings with an EER band D (46% and 45%, respectively) than local authority (36%) and housing association (28%) tenants. Private renters (4%) were also more likely to live in the least energy efficient dwellings, rated F or G, than owners (3%) and housing association tenants (1%).
- 5.52 Social renters were less likely to live in a dwelling with an EER rating of band E (3%) than owners (9%) and private renters (10%), Figure 5.6.



**Figure 5.6: Energy efficiency rating bands, by tenure, 2020-21**



**Base:** all households

**Note:** underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.15

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

5.53 Overall, London had a higher proportion of households living in the most efficient dwellings, rated A or B (5%), than households living in other regions (3%). On the other hand, there was a higher proportion of households living in dwellings with bands D, E, F and G in other English regions (44%, 8% and 3%, respectively) than in London (40%, 6% and 1%, respectively). This trend of more efficient dwellings in the London region was also seen for social renters where social renters within London were more likely to be in an EER band C or D dwelling (67% and 26%, respectively) than social renters in the Rest of England (61% and 32%, respectively).

### Cost to make energy efficient

5.54 This section looks at the cost of improving dwellings with an energy efficiency rating (EER) band D or lower to an EER band of at least C<sup>34</sup>. The Government has set an aspiration for as many homes as possible to be EER Band C by 2035 where practical, cost-effective, and affordable.

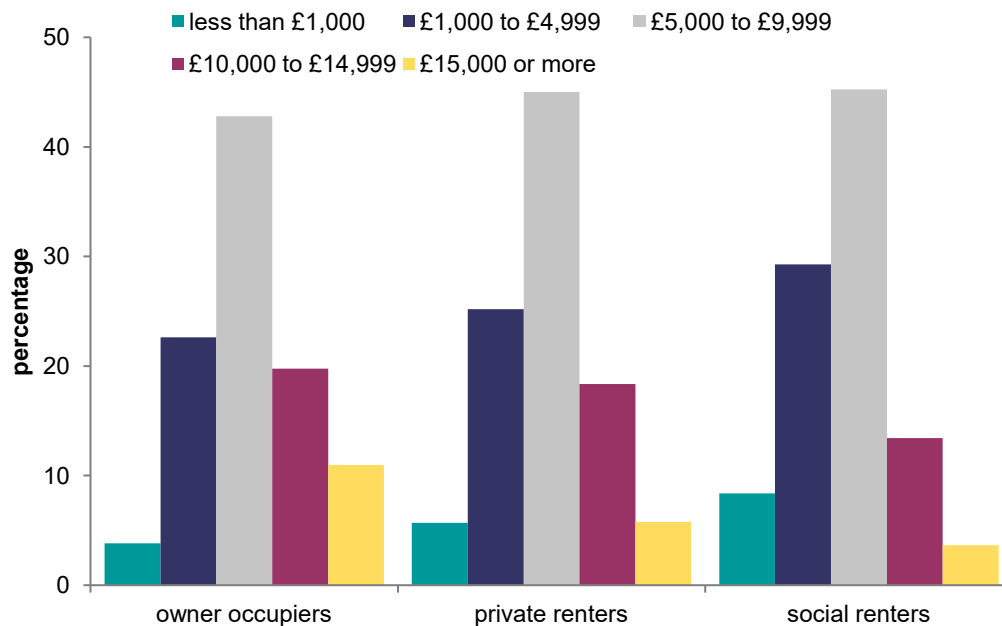
5.55 In 2020-21, social renters had the highest proportion of dwellings already at an EER rating band of C or higher (65%) and generally, it was less expensive to improve these homes to an EER band C.

5.56 Homes occupied by social renters were more likely to need less than £1,000 to be improved to an EER band of C (8%) than those occupied by private renters (6%) and owner occupiers (4%). Social rented homes were also more

<sup>34</sup> Further details of the modelling methodology can be found in the English Housing Survey Energy Report 2020-21.

likely than owner occupiers to need between £1,000 and £4,999 to improve their home (29% compared with 23%), Annex Table 5.16, Figure 5.7.

**Figure 5.7: Distribution of costs to improve to EER band C, by tenure, 2020-21**



**Base: all households in dwellings able to be improved to EER Band C**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 5.16**

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

5.57 Likewise, the homes of social renters were generally less likely to require larger sums of money to reach an EER band C than other tenures. A lower proportion of social rented homes (13%) needed between £10,000 and £14,999 to improve their home to an EER band C compared with 20% of owner occupied homes and 18% of private rented homes.

5.58 Furthermore, owners (11%) were more likely to be required to spend £15,000 or more to improve their homes to an EER band of C than the landlords of private renters (6%) and social renters (4%).

5.59 There were no regional differences (London versus Rest of England) in the banded cost of improving homes occupied by social renters.

---

# Technical notes and glossary

---

## Technical notes

1. Results for the first four chapters of this report, on households, are presented for '2020-21' and are based on fieldwork carried out between April 2020 and March 2021 on a sample of 7,474 households. Throughout the report, this is referred to as the 'full household sample'.
2. Results in Chapter 5 of the report, which relate to the physical dwelling, are presented for '2020' and are based on fieldwork carried out between April 2019 and March 2021 (a mid-point of April 2020). The sample comprises 11,152 occupied dwellings only where a physical inspection was carried out. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the sample does not include vacant dwellings, where in previous years' it did. Throughout the report, this is referred to as the 'dwelling sample'.
3. In a normal year, the dwelling sample is based on data collected by a qualified surveyor in the home. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020-21 it was not possible to collect data in this way. Instead, data was collected from an external inspection of properties by information about the interior of the dwelling the surveyor collected (socially distanced) at the doorstep. However, for some measures, it was not possible to collect data at all using this alternative approach, e.g. on non-decency, HHSRS Category 1 hazards, damp and carbon monoxide alarms. Statistics on these topics have been extrapolated from previous EHS trends.
4. 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".
5. 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.
6. 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.

- 
7. A more thorough description of the English Housing Survey methodology is provided in the Technical Report which is published annually<sup>35</sup>. The 2020-21 Technical Report includes details of the impact the COVID-19 on the 2020-21 survey. A full account of data quality procedures followed to collect and analyse English Housing Survey data can be found in the Quality Report, which is also updated and published annually<sup>36</sup>.

## Glossary

**ACORN:** a classification of residential neighbourhoods developed using a series of modelling algorithms. ACORN groups households, postcodes and neighbourhoods into six categories, 18 groups and 62 types, according to age, household composition, facilities, household size, income, marital status, mode of travel to work, occupation, ownership of car, ownership of home, etc. DLUHC matches ACORN data onto the EHS datasets to classify households into the following categories for analysis:

- **Affluent achievers:** some of the most financially successful people in the UK. They live in wealthy, high status rural, semi-rural and suburban areas of the country. Middle aged or older people, the ‘baby-boomer’ generation, predominate with many empty nesters and wealthy retired people.
- **Rising prosperity:** generally younger, well educated, and mostly prosperous people living in our major towns and cities. Most are singles or couples, some yet to start a family, others with younger children. Often these are highly educated younger professionals moving up the career ladder. Most live in converted or modern flats, with a significant proportion of these being recently built executive city flats. Some will live in terraced town houses. While some are buying their home, occasionally through some form of shared equity scheme, others will be renting. While many have good incomes not all might yet have had time to convert these into substantial savings or investments.
- **Comfortable communities:** all life stages are represented in this category. Many areas have mostly stable families and empty nesters, especially in suburban or semi-rural locations. Generally people own their own home. Most houses are semi-detached or detached, overall of average value for the region. Incomes overall are average, some will earn more, the younger people a bit less than average. Employment is in a mix of professional and managerial, clerical and skilled occupations. Educational qualifications tend to be in line with the national average.

---

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice#technical-reports>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-quality-report>

- 
- **Financially stretched:** a mix of traditional areas of Britain. Housing is often terraced or semi-detached, a mix of lower value owner occupied housing and homes rented from the council or housing associations, including social housing developments specifically for the elderly. This category also includes student term-time areas. Unemployment is above average as are the proportions of people claiming other benefits.
  - **Urban adversity:** this category contains the most deprived areas of large and small towns and cities across the UK. Household incomes are low, nearly always below the national average. The numbers claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and other benefits is well above the national average. Levels of qualifications are low and those in work are likely to be employed in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations. The housing is a mix of low rise estates, with terraced and semi-detached houses, and purpose built flats, including high rise blocks. Properties tend to be small and there may be overcrowding. Over half of the housing is rented from the local council or a housing association.

More details available at: <https://acorn.caci.co.uk/downloads/Acorn-User-guide.pdf>

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

**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.

**Cost to make decent:** The cost of carrying out all works required to ensure that the dwelling meets the Decent Homes standard. This is the estimated required expenditure which includes access equipment (e.g. scaffolding and prelims). It is adjusted to reflect regional and tenure variations in building prices.

**Damp (condensation 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>37</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 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.

---

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance>

---

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.

**Dwelling type:** Dwellings are classified, on the basis of the surveyor's inspection, into the following categories:

- **small terraced house:** a house with a total floor area of less than 70m<sup>2</sup> forming part of a block where at least one house is attached to two or more other houses. The total floor area is measured using the original EHS definition of useable floor area, used in EHS reports up to and including the 2012 reports. That definition tends to yield a smaller floor area compared with the definition that is aligned with the Nationally Described Space Standard and used on the EHS since 2013. As a result of the difference between the two definitions, some small terraced houses are reported in the 2014 Housing Supply Report as having more than 70m<sup>2</sup>.
- **medium/large terraced house:** a house with a total floor area of 70m<sup>2</sup> or more forming part of a block where at least one house is attached to two or more other houses. The total floor area is measured using the original EHS definition of useable floor area which tends to yield a small floor area compared with the definition used on the EHS since 2013.
- **end terraced house:** a house attached to one other house only in a block where at least one house is attached to two or more other houses.
- **mid terraced house:** a house attached to two other houses in a block.
- **semi-detached house:** a house that is attached to just one other in a block of two.
- **detached house:** a house where none of the habitable structure is joined to another building (other than garages, outhouses etc.).
- **bungalow:** a house with all of the habitable accommodation on one floor. This excludes chalet bungalows and bungalows with habitable loft conversions, which are treated as houses.
- **converted flat:** a flat resulting from the conversion of a house or former non-residential building. Includes buildings converted into a flat plus commercial premises (such as corner shops).
- **purpose built flat, low rise:** a flat in a purpose built block less than six storeys high. Includes cases where there is only one flat with independent access in a building which is also used for non-domestic purposes.

- 
- **purpose built flat, high rise:** a flat in a purpose built block of at least six storeys high.

**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>38</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.

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

**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

---

<sup>38</sup> For further information see: [www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension](http://www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension)



---

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 efficiency rating (EER)/SAP bands:** The 1-100 EER/SAP energy efficiency rating is also presented in an A-G banding system for an Energy Performance Certificate, where Band A rating represents low energy costs (i.e. the most efficient band) and Band G rating represents high energy costs (the least efficient band). The break points in SAP (see below) used for the EER Bands are:

- Band A (92–100)
- Band B (81–91)
- Band C (69–80)
- Band D (55–68)
- Band E (39–54)
- Band F (21–38)
- Band G (1–20)

### **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>.

### **EPC modelling in the EHS:**

The EHS EPC assessment is based on a simplified form of the energy efficiency SAP known as reduced data SAP (RdSAP). Following revisions to the way that RdSAP software implements improvements as part of the EPC production process, a

---

new EPC methodology has been applied to the EHS data since 2015. Several additional improvement measures have been added to the methodology, and for some existing measures the criteria and/or improvement specification has changed (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>).

The EHS currently provides the following EPC based indicators, calculated using the survey's own approach to:

- **current and post improvement performance:**
  - *energy efficiency rating* (EER) and bands
  - *environmental impact rating* (EIR) and bands
  - *primary energy use* (kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year)
  - *energy cost* (£/year) for space heating, water heating, lighting and renewables
  - CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide) emissions (tonnes/year)
- **improvement measures:** The Technical Report provides a list of improvements specified in the updated EHS methodology. These include loft insulation measures, wall and floor insulation measures, boiler upgrades, solar water heating, glazing and lighting measures. They are also listed in the relevant Annex Table.
- **the notional costs of installing the recommended measures:** The EHS also estimates the notional costs of installing each of the recommended measures and the total cost of applying all the recommended measures to the dwelling stock. The methodology for estimating these costs has also been revised (see the Technical Report for further information).

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

**Ethnic minority background** is used throughout the report to refer to those respondents who do not identify as White.

The classification of ethnic group used in the EHS is consistent with the 2011 Census. Respondents are classified as White if they answer one of the following four options:

1. English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
2. Irish
3. Gypsy or Irish Traveller
4. Any Other White background

Otherwise, they are classified as being from an ethnic minority background.

**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).

**Habitable room:** A room in the dwelling that offers ‘living accommodation’. Includes bedrooms, kitchens if there is additional space to provide a dining area large enough to accommodate a table and chairs (typically an area of 2m<sup>2</sup> in addition to kitchen space). A fully converted room in the loft space is classified as a habitable room even if it can only be reached by a fixed ladder or unsafe staircase.

**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 in poverty:** a household with income below 60% of the equivalised median household income (calculated before any housing costs are deducted). Income equivalisation is the adjustment of income to take into account the varied cost of living according to the size and type of household (see the EHS Technical Report, Chapter 5, Annex 4 for further information).

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

**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>39</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>40</sup> for a list of the hazards covered.

**Housing support:** a means tested welfare benefit that can help those who are unemployed, on a low income, or receiving other benefits pay their rent (and some service charges if the landlord is a Housing Association or Local Authority). Housing

---

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-hhsrs-guidance>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-technical-advice>

---

support includes all housing related benefits, such as Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.

**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.

**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.

**Marital status:**

- **single**, that is never married and never registered in a civil partnership,
- **married**, or in a registered civil partnership
- **separated**, but still legally married or in a civil partnership,
- **divorced**, or formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved
- **widowed**, or a surviving partner from a civil partnership

**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.

**Non-dependent children:** any person aged over 18 or those aged 16-18 who are not in full-time education living in a family with his or her parent(s) or grandparent(s).

**Plot:** The EHS records a number of details relating to the land immediately surrounding a dwelling, referred to as the dwelling's plot. The plot may be private (exclusive access) or shared (shared access, for example where a block of flats have a shared garden). The plot may consist of hard landscaping (e.g. concrete, tarmac, paving, gravel), soft landscaping (e.g. lawn, flower/vegetable beds), or a combination.

**Private accommodation:** The majority of homes in all three tenures, excluding hotels, bed and breakfast accommodation and institutional residences such as student halls, army barracks and care homes. The EHS only covers private accommodation.

**Private registered providers (PRPs):** private registered providers refer in this document to private providers of social housing in England that are registered with the social housing regulator (from 1st April 2012 this is the Homes and Communities Agency's Regulation Committee). These were previously termed Registered Social Landlords or housing associations. This term excludes local authority registered providers.

**Right to Buy scheme:** The Right to Buy scheme gives secure tenants in a local authority home the opportunity to buy their home at a discount. In order to qualify for the scheme a social tenant must have lived for a total of at least three years in a public sector tenancy.

The scheme is also available to assured tenants of non-charitable housing associations who have transferred with their homes from a local authority as part of a stock transfer. In this case the tenants is said to have a 'preserved Right to Buy'.

The Government has plans to extend Right to Buy to housing association tenants and are currently running a Voluntary Right to Buy pilot scheme amongst a small number of housing associations.

**Recent movers:** Households which moved into their current home in the last 12 months. This includes both new and continuing households, but does not include sitting tenant purchasers.

---

**Region:** A nine region classification is used to present geographical findings, as follows:

- North East
- North West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East
- London
- South East
- South West

**SAP rating:** See the entries for the Standard Assessment Procedure and Energy Efficiency Rating

**Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP):** The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the methodology used by the Government to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings. The SAP is used to calculate the energy efficiency rating (EER) of dwellings, also known as the SAP rating. The EER is an index based on calculated energy costs for a standard heating regime and is expressed on a scale of 1 (highly inefficient) to 100 (highly efficient with 100 representing zero energy cost). It is possible for a dwelling to have a rating of over 100 where it produces more energy than it consumes, although such dwellings will be rare within the English housing stock.

Reduced Data SAP (RdSAP) was introduced in 2005 as a lower cost method of assessing the energy performance of existing dwellings. RdSAP is used in the calculation of the energy ratings on the Energy Performance Certificate, a document which is required every time a home is put up for sale or rent. Since the 2015 survey, the EHS has provided a number of indicators on energy performance calculated using an approach which is in line with RdSAP 2012 version 9.92, since then a newer version has been released (version 9.93). In 2018 the methodology moved to using RdSAP version 9.93, which includes updated U-Values for cavity, solid and stone walls, both insulated and uninsulated, between age bands A and E. In addition to this methodological change, there have also been a number of improvements made to the energy model, such as aligning the calculation of ventilation parameters with RdSAP conventions and incorporating more detailed data into the modelling of water heating parameters. These updates were applied to dwellings from the 2018/19 EHS survey, making the 2019 combined year dataset the first dataset with these changes applied to both years. As such the full effect of this is seen in 2019 and is estimated to increase SAP by 0.7 SAP points, compared to 2017.

**Social housing rents:** Most social housing rents are calculated according to 'rent restructuring' policy, introduced in 2001. The overall intention of the policy was that similar properties in similar areas should have similar levels of rents. The formula calculates rents for each individual property based on 30% of the relative property values at 1999 levels, 70% on relative local earnings and the size of the property.



---

The formula rent had been increased annually at the rate of Retail Price Index inflation at the previous September + 0.5% until 2015-16 when it was increased by CPI +1%.

In 2012, the Government introduced Affordable Rent as another main type of social housing rents, which can be set at up to 80% of the market rate of the property, inclusive of service charges.

Between 2016-17 and 2019-20, social housing rents will be reduced by 1% a year, for four years except from supported housing, almshouses, community land trusts and fully mutual housing co-ops which will be excepted during the first year.

There is also a different arrangement for rents for intermediate rent properties (which falls within the statutory definition of social housing).

**Socio-economic groups:** The EHS uses the eight-class version of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC). The eight classes are:

- Higher managerial and professional occupations
- Lower managerial and professional occupations
- Intermediate occupations (clerical, sales, service)
- Small employers and own account workers
- Lower supervisory and technical occupations
- Semi-routine occupations
- Routine occupations
- Never worked or long-term unemployed.

No EHS respondent is assigned to the last class because the survey does not collect enough information to code to someone as never worked or long-term unemployed.

**Thermal comfort:** an assessment from the surveyor as to whether a dwelling has both efficient heating; and effective insulation. Efficient heating is defined as

- any gas or oil programmable central heating
- electric storage heaters; or warm air systems
- underfloor systems
- programmable LPG/solid fuel central heating
- similarly efficient heating systems which are developed in the future

The primary heating system must have a distribution system sufficient to provide heat to two or more rooms of the home. There may be storage heaters in two or more rooms, or other heaters that use the same fuel in two or more rooms.



---

Because of the differences in efficiency between gas/oil heating systems and the other heating systems listed, the level of insulation that is appropriate also differs:

- For dwellings with gas/oil programmable heating, cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively) or at least 50mm loft insulation (if there is loft space) is an effective package of insulation.
- For dwellings heated by electric storage heaters/LPG/programmable solid fuel central heating a higher specification of insulation is required: at least 200mm of loft insulation (if there is a loft) and cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively).

**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).

**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;
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance;
- Income Support; and

- 
- Working Tax Credit.

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

**Vacant dwellings:** The assessment of whether or not a dwelling is vacant is made at the time of the interviewer's visit. Clarification of vacancy is sought from neighbours. Both properties in between lets and those that are vacant for a longer period are classified as vacant on the EHS. Surveyors are required to gain access to vacant dwellings and undertake full inspections.

**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.

---

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.

© Crown copyright, 2022

*Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.*

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk).

This document/publication is also available on our website at [www.gov.uk/dluhc](http://www.gov.uk/dluhc)

If you have any enquiries regarding this document/publication, complete the form at <http://forms.communities.gov.uk/> or write to us at:

Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF  
Telephone: 030 3444 0000  
Email: [ehs@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:ehs@levellingup.gov.uk)

For all our latest news and updates follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/luhc>

July 2022