



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



English Housing Survey

Adaptations and Accessibility Report, 2014-15



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Introduction and main findings

1. The English Housing Survey is a national survey of people's housing circumstances and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England. It was first run in 2008-09. Prior to then, the survey was run as two standalone surveys: the English House Condition Survey and the Survey of English Housing.
2. This report provides the findings from the 2014-15 survey. It covers the circumstances of households that had a person/s with a long-term limiting illness or disability that required them to have adaptations in their home, including whether these households had the adaptation they require and the suitability of their home. It also examines the overall prevalence of accessible features in the housing stock in 2014 before comparing the prevalence of such features in homes built before 2001 and from 2001 onwards when new building regulations started to have an impact.

Main findings

Around 1.9 million households in England had one or more people with a long-term limiting illness or disability that required adaptations to their home.

- In 2014-15, 9% of all households in England (around 1.9 million households) had one or more people with a long-term limiting disability that required adaptations to their home. This has not changed since 2011-12 when these questions were last asked in the English Housing Survey.

Despite requiring adaptations, the majority of households felt their home was suitable for their needs.

- In 2014-15, 81% of households that required adaptations in their home, due to their long-term limiting disability, felt their home was suitable for their needs. The 19% (around 365,000 households) who considered their living accommodation unsuitable accounted for 2% of all households in England.

Those aged under 55 and private renters were most likely to feel that their accommodation was unsuitable for their needs.

- Households with a person aged under 55 who had a long-term limiting disability were more likely (32%) to state their accommodation was unsuitable than their counterparts in other age groups (24% or less). Those aged 75 and over with a long-term limiting disability were least likely to state their accommodation was unsuitable (12%). These findings had not changed since 2011-12.

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- Compared with other tenures, private renters (32%) were the most likely to feel that their accommodation was unsuitable for their needs. Around a fifth of social renters (22% of housing association tenants and 23% local authority tenants) stated their accommodation was unsuitable. Owner occupiers were the least likely to feel that their accommodation was unsuitable (15%).

The most common adaptations that households needed were inside their home and relatively simple to install.

- The four most common adaptations that households needed were inside their home: grab hand rail inside the dwelling (40%); a bath or shower seat or other bathing aids (30%); a specialist toilet seat (25%); a shower to replace a bath (19%).

Over half of the households that required adaptations in their home already had them installed; an improvement since 2011-12.

- Over half of households (55%) that required adaptations in their home already had them installed. Consequently, 45% of households lacked one or more of their required adaptations. This is an improvement since 2011-12 when 51% of households reported that they did not have their required adaptations present in their home.
- The most common reasons given for why households that did not have their required adaptations had not made these modifications to their home were: that they had not had enough time to carry out the modifications (24%)¹, they could not afford to pay for them (21%) or they were not worth doing (13%).
- One in ten households (10%) did not have their required adaptations because their landlord wouldn't pay for them, while 5% said that their landlord would not allow them.
- In 2014-15, one in ten households (10%) that included a person with a long-term disability requiring adaptations wanted to, or were trying to, move somewhere more suitable for their needs; unchanged from 2011-12.

Less than one in ten homes in England had all four accessibility features that provide visitability to most people, including wheelchair users.

- In 2014, just 7% (1.7 million) of homes in England had all four accessibility features that provide visitability: level access to the entrance, a flush threshold, sufficiently wide doorsets and circulation space, and a toilet at entrance level. Around two thirds (64%) of homes had a toilet at entrance level but the presence

¹ This may suggest that the adaptations were desirable rather than absolutely necessary.

of the other three visitable features was less common, especially level access (18%).

In line with changes to building regulations, homes built from 2001 onwards were more likely to provide visitability.

- The proportion of homes with each of the accessibility features that provide visitability was much higher in homes built from 2001 onwards compared to those built before 2001. This is due to Part M of the building regulations which came into force in 1999 and started to have an impact in 2001. For example, the provision of level access was five times more likely to exist in homes built from 2001 onwards (68%) compared with those built before 2001 (13%).

This has been particularly noticeable in the increase in wheelchair accessible WC's.

- The biggest change in provision in homes built before and after 2001 was for a wheelchair accessible WC at entrance level. This feature was present in 16% of homes built before 2001 but present in 61% of homes built after modern regulations took effect.

The two key factors impacting on visitability were the design and the age of the home, with flats and newer properties most likely to be fully visitable.

- Flats were markedly more likely to have full visitability (20%) compared with all types of houses (5% or less). Terraced (41%) and semi-detached (34%) houses were far more likely to have none of the four accessibility features than detached houses (9%) or flats (10%).
- It is not surprising that homes built after 1990 were more likely to have all four visitability features (34%) compared with older homes (ranging from 1% to 7%) due to the requirements of modern building regulations.

The majority of homes lacking full visitability could be adapted to provide all four features. It was more difficult for terraced houses and older properties to be made fully visitable.

- Almost three quarters (72%, around 15.7 million) of all the homes that lacked full visitability could be adapted to provide all these four features, but this was not feasible in the remaining 6.0 million (28%) homes.
- Terraced houses were the most likely dwelling type to be not feasible to be made fully visitable (50%) compared with flats (27%), and other houses (semi-detached, 15% and detached, 14%).

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- Over half of homes built before 1919 were not feasible to be made fully visitable (55%). Homes built from 1919 onwards tended to need moderate work to ensure full visitability.

Acknowledgements and further queries

3. Each year the English Housing Survey relies on the contributions of a large number of people and organisations. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) would particularly like to thank 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, without whom the 2014-15 survey and this report, would not have been possible.
4. This report was produced by Susie Margoles and Helen Garrett at BRE in collaboration with NatCen Social Research and DCLG.
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Chapter 1

Adaptations in households that included a person with a long-term limiting illness or disability

- 1.1 Home adaptations, which can range from simple grab rails and ramps to accessible shower rooms and stair lifts, can make homes safer and promote independent living for the people who require them. As well as having the potential to improve the quality of life for those who need them, adaptations help deliver some key government health and social care policy objectives, for example, prevention of unnecessary hospital stays following falls in the home and promoting the social inclusion and independence of people with long-term illnesses or disabilities. Due to the proportion of households aged 55 and over having increased², demand for home adaptations is also likely to increase. This need to promote accessible homes and independent living is reflected in modern building regulations, the impact of which is examined in Chapter 2 of this report.
- 1.2 This chapter investigates the circumstances of households that had a person/s with a long-term limiting illness or disability that required them to have adaptations in their home. It examines whether these households had the adaptation they require and the suitability of their home. These findings are provided by tenure and the age of the person with the long-term limiting disability. Where more than one person in the household had a long-term limiting disability, the age of the oldest person with the disability was used for this analysis. Both 2011-12³ and 2014-15 findings are compared to establish any changes over time.
- 1.3 It is important to note that the adaptations required and the suitability of an occupant's home are subjective as it is from the occupant's own assessment of need and may differ from those identified through a formal assessment of a trained occupational therapist. This is in contrast to the more objective assessment undertaken by a surveyor when examining a dwelling's accessibility and visitability (discussed in Chapter 2).

² See EHS Housing for Older People report, 2014-15.

³ The adaptations questions are a rotating module which, prior to 2014-15, was last included in the interview survey in 2011-12.

Households including a person with a long-term limiting illness or disability requiring adaptations

- 1.4 During the interview survey, households were asked if anyone in the household had a long-term limiting illness or disability (likely to last a year or more). These households were then asked if their long-term limiting disability required them to have any adaptations in their home, irrespective of whether they already had them or not.
- 1.5 In 2014-15, 9% of all households in England (around 1.9 million households) had one or more people with a long-term limiting disability that required adaptations to their home. This has not changed since 2011-12, Annex Table 1.1
- 1.6 Around 192,000 households (1%) had two or more people with a long-term disability that required adaptations in their home. This represented 10% of households that stated they needed adaptations, Annex Table 1.2.

Suitability of accommodation

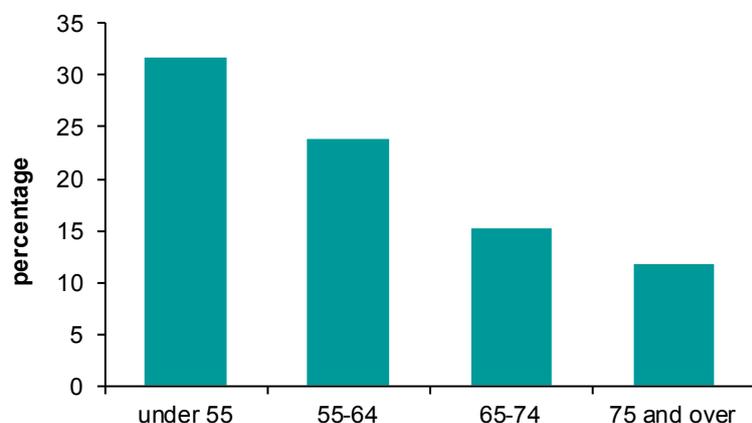
- 1.7 All households that required adaptations in their home were asked about the suitability of their accommodation for their needs. This section examines these households' assessment of suitability of their home by tenure and the age of the person with the long-term limiting disability.
- 1.8 In 2014-15, 81% of households that required adaptations in their home, due to their long-term limiting disability, felt their home was suitable for their needs. The 19% (around 365,000 households) who considered their accommodation unsuitable accounted for 2% of all households in England, unchanged since 2011-12, Annex Table 1.3.

Age of person with long-term limiting illness or disability

- 1.9 Those in the older age groups were less likely to state that their accommodation was unsuitable. Households who had a person/s aged under 55 with a long-term limiting disability were most likely (32%) to indicate that their accommodation was unsuitable compared with those with a long-term limiting disability in the older age groups (24% or less). Those aged 75 and over with a long-term limiting disability were least likely to state their accommodation was unsuitable (12%) compared with households aged under 65, Figure 1.1. These findings had not changed significantly since 2011-12.
- 1.10 These findings may be due to changing and developing health issues among younger households with a long-term limiting disability, who have yet to adapt their homes to their new needs. In contrast, older households may have

already adapted their home to meet their needs or moved to more suitable accommodation.

Figure 1.1: Proportion of households with a long-term disability who say that they live in unsuitable accommodation, by age, 2014-15



Base: all households that required an adaptation

Notes:

1) where more than one person in the household has a long-term limiting disability that requires an adaptation, the age of oldest person with the disability is used

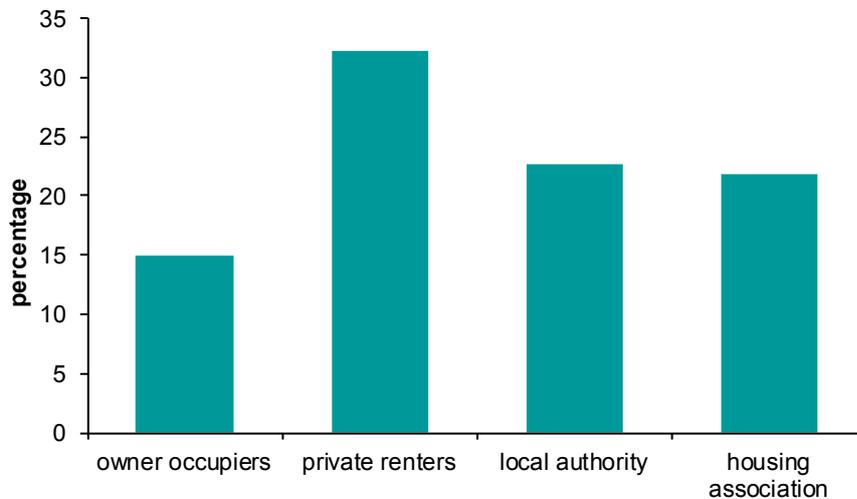
2) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.3

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

Tenure

- 1.11 Around a third of households in the private rented sector (32%) and around a quarter in the social rented sector (22% of housing association tenants and 23% local authority tenants) containing a person who had a long-term limiting disability stated their accommodation was unsuitable. This was a higher proportion than for households that owned their accommodation: 15% of owner occupiers with a long-term limiting disability found their accommodation unsuitable, Figure 1.2.
- 1.12 This finding may illustrate that owner occupiers have more control over altering their home and installing their required adaptations, or perhaps have the financial means to move to more suitable accommodation. Households that rent privately may encounter reluctance from the landlord to undertake housing adaptations e.g. a lack of landlord incentive or confusion over responsibility to install or maintain the adaptation.

Figure 1.2: Proportion of households with a long-term disability who say that they live in unsuitable accommodation, by tenure, 2014-15



Base: all households that required an adaptation

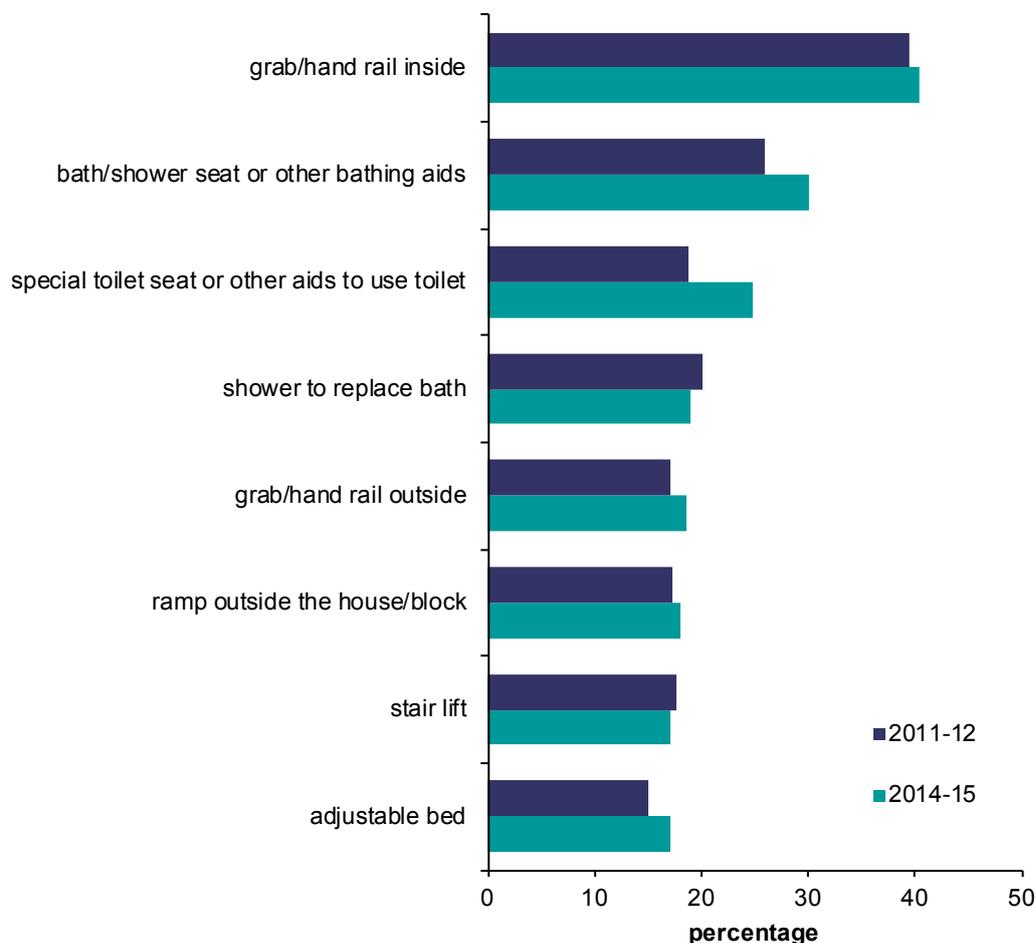
Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.3

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

Type of adaptation/s required

- 1.13 All households that included a person with a long-term limiting illness or disability were asked about the adaptations they thought they needed, both inside and outside their home, irrespective of whether or not they had them. This section describes the adaptations required and then explores which adaptations were not present in their home and why they were not installed.
- 1.14 The four most common adaptations that households needed were inside their home: grab hand rails (40%); a bath or shower seat or other bathing aids (30%); a specialist toilet seat (25%); a shower to replace a bath (19%), Figure 1.3.
- 1.15 The next most commonly reported adaptations were required to the outside of the home; with 19% requiring external grab hand rails and 18% a ramp outside the block or house. This indicates the importance of entering and leaving the home as safely as possible to reduce the likelihood of falls, to prevent social isolation and to promote independence through mobility.
- 1.16 Between 2011-12 and 2014-15, there was an increase in the proportion of households requiring a bath or shower seat or other bathing aids (from 26% to 30%) and in the proportion requiring a specialist toilet seat (from 19% to 25%). The proportion of households requiring the other most commonly needed adaptations did not change between 2011-12 and 2014-15.

Figure 1.3: Adaptations most commonly needed by the household, 2011-12 and 2014-15



Base: all households that required an adaptation

Notes:

1) multiple responses allowed

2) all underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.4

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

Age of person with long-term limiting illness or disability

1.17 There was little variation by age in households that included someone with a long-term limiting disability in the requirement of the top six most commonly required adaptations. A similar proportion of all age groups required internal grab rails (between 37% and 43%). Similarly, there was little variation by age in the requirement for specialist bathroom aids for the bath/shower (29%-32%) or specialist toilet aids (23%-26%), or the installation of a stair lift (15%-20%), Annex Table 1.5.

1.18 Installation of a shower to replace a bath was only required by 14% of households with a long-term disability aged under 55, a smaller proportion compared with the older age groups (for example, 24% of those aged 55-64).

-
- 1.19 Between 14% and 22% of all age groups needed a ramp outside their home. Grab rails outside the home were least likely to be needed by households under 55 years (15%), but most likely to be required by those aged 55-64 (23%).

Tenure

- 1.20 The proportion of households needing the top six most commonly required adaptations within each tenure type was broadly similar, Annex Table 1.6.

Households that required adaptations but did not have them installed

- 1.21 All households with a person/s with a long-term limiting disability that said they needed adaptations in their home were asked about their existing adaptations. Over half of households (55%) that required adaptations in their home already had them installed. Consequently 45% of households lacked one or more of their required adaptations. This is an improvement since 2011-12 when 51% of households reported that they did not have their required adaptations present in their home, Annex Table 1.7.

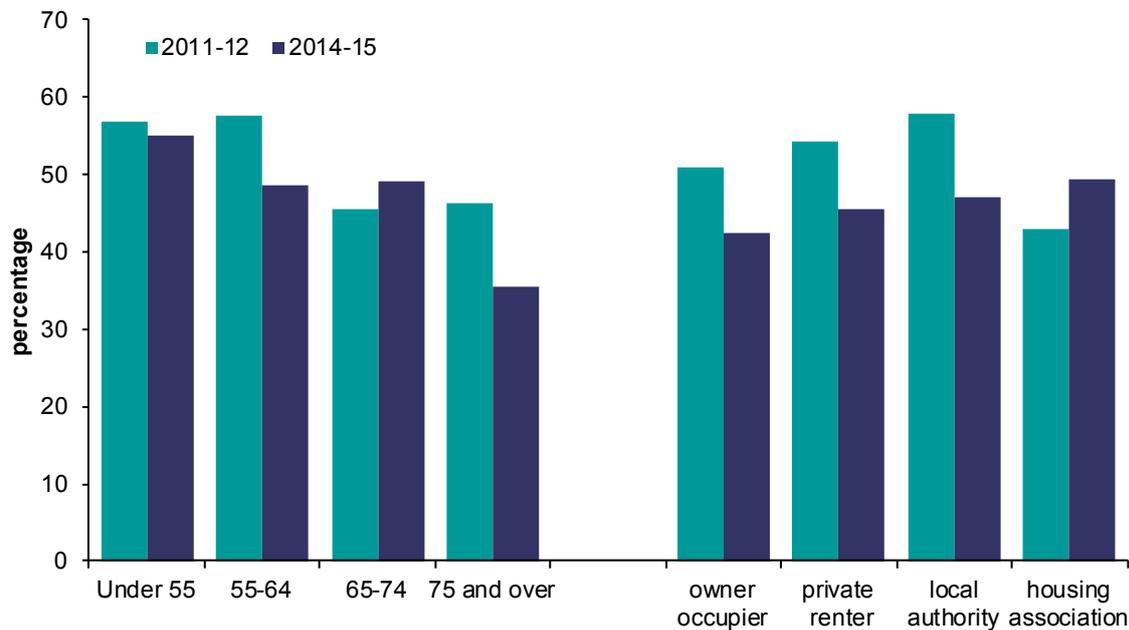
Age of person with long-term limiting illness or disability

- 1.22 In 2014-15, households where the oldest member was aged 75 or older were less likely to be lacking an adaptation compared with any other age group. Just over a third (36%) of those aged 75 and over lacked adaptations compared with more than half of those aged under 55 (55%), Figure 1.4.
- 1.23 Since 2011-12, there has been an improvement in the proportion of households that were aged 75 and over that lacked any adaptations (a fall from 46% to 36%) and for those aged 55-64 (from 58% to 49%).

Tenure

- 1.24 Between 2011-12 and 2014-15, there was a drop in the proportion of local authority renters that lacked adaptations (from 58% to 47%). During the same period, there was no change in the proportions of the other tenure groups that lacked adaptations.

Figure 1.4: Proportion of households that required one or more adaptation to be installed, by age and tenure, 2011-12 and 2014-15



Base: all households where required adaptations had not been installed in the home

Notes:

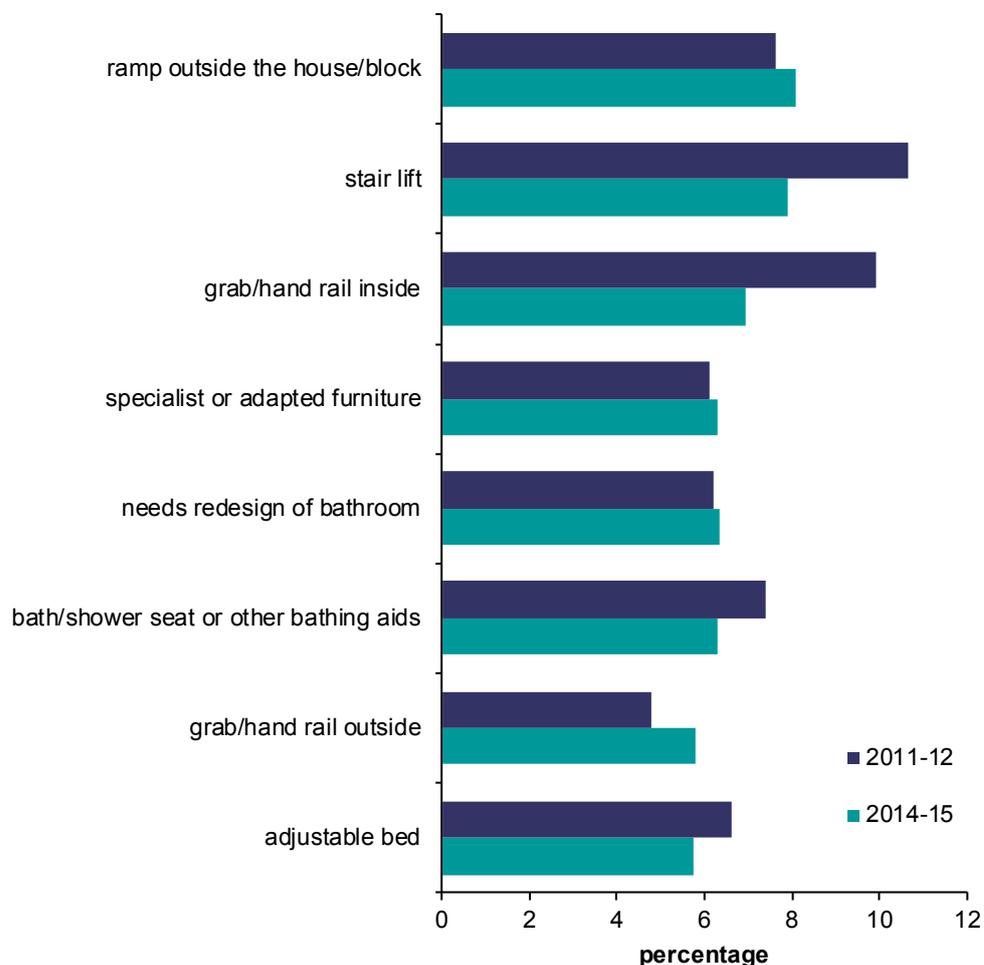
1) where more than one person in the household has a long-term limiting disability that requires an adaptation the age of oldest person with the disability is used

2) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.7

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

1.25 The adaptations most frequently reported as required and not installed were: external ramps (8%), stair lifts (8%) and grab rails inside the home (7%). For some of the adaptations, these findings have changed slightly since 2011-12. Although broadly similar in the type of items commonly not installed, more households required stair lifts (11%) and internal grab hand rails (10%) in 2011-12 compared with 2014-15, Figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5: Adaptations most commonly needed by the household but not installed, 2011-12 and 2014-15



Base: all households that required an adaptation

Notes:

1) multiple responses allowed

2) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.8

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

Why households did not have their required adaptations

1.26 All households that did not have their required adaptations were asked why these modifications to their home had not been made; multiple responses were allowed. The most commonly selected from the listed reasons given were: that they had not had enough time to carry out the modifications (24%)⁴, they could not afford to pay for them (21%) or they were not worth doing (13%), Figure 1.6.

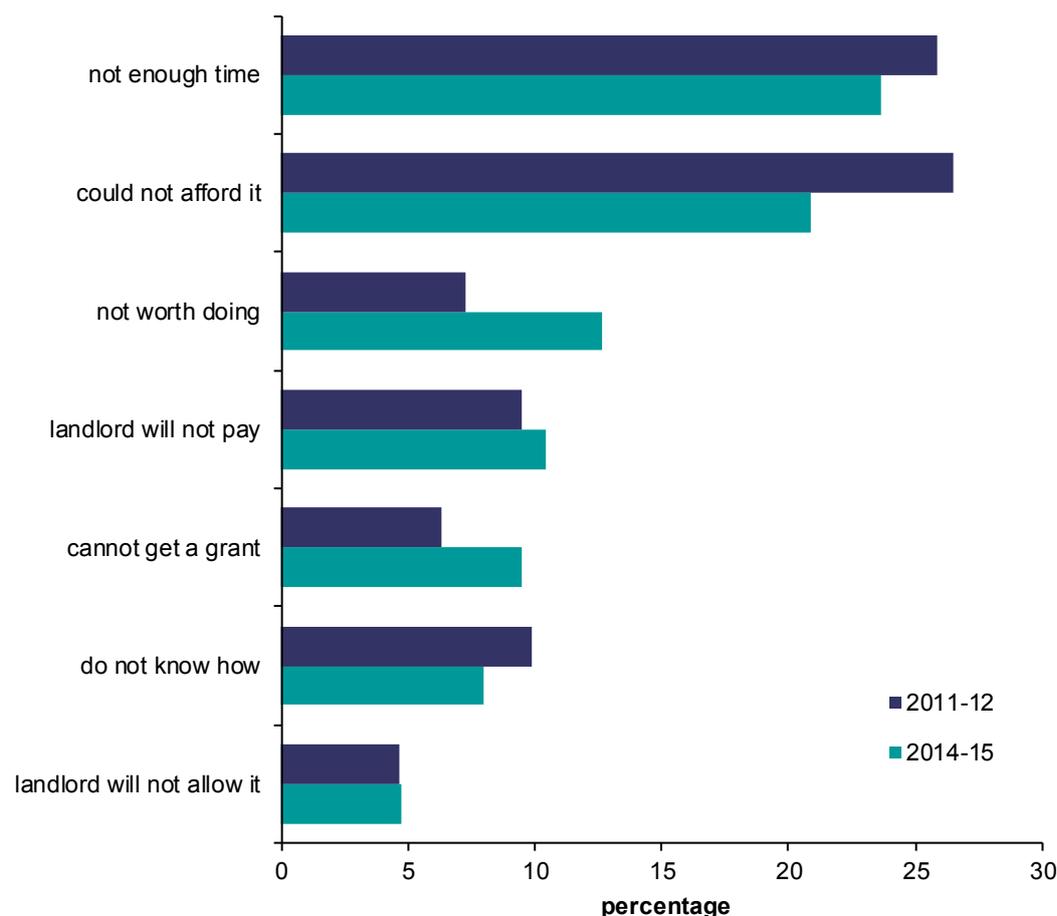
1.27 Between 2011-12 and 2014-15 the proportion of households that stated they could not afford to install the adaptations decreased from 26% to 21% and the

⁴ This may suggest that the adaptations were desirable rather than absolutely necessary.

proportion of households reporting that their modification was 'not worth doing' increased from 7% to 13%

1.28 One in ten households (10%) did not have their required adaptations because their landlord would not allow it, unchanged from 2011-12.

Figure 1.6: Reasons why households did not have their required adaptations, 2011-12 and 2014-15



Base: all households where required adaptations had not been installed in the home

Notes:

1) multiple responses allowed

2) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.9

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

Households wanting different accommodation

1.29 In 2014-15, one in ten households (10%) which included a person with a long-term limiting disability requiring adaptations wanted to, or were trying to, move somewhere more suitable for their needs; a similar position to 2011-12 (8%), Annex Table 1.10.

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- 1.30 Nearly half of the households (47%) that wanted to move somewhere more suitable contained a person with a long-term disability aged under 55; this represented 19% of households of such households, making them the most likely age group that wanted to move to more suitable accommodation. This was also the only age group that showed an increase since 2011-12 (up from 31%), Annex Table 1.11.
- 1.31 Only 6% of owner occupiers that had a household member with a long-term limiting disability wanted to move, a lower proportion compared with their renting counterparts (12%-19%), Annex Table 1.10.

Chapter 2

Accessibility of the housing stock in England

- 2.1. Given that individuals' mobility may change over time, there are benefits in having dwellings that offer flexible accommodation to enable individuals to remain in their homes, should they wish, as/when changes in health and/or mobility arise. Inaccessible homes of friends and family may also make socialising difficult and so add to the risk of social isolation.
- 2.2. Part M of the building regulations⁵ requires new housing to be built with standards that enable disabled people, particularly wheelchair users and those with mobility problems, to visit a dwelling and have access to ground floor living space and a toilet. These standards also enable households to cope better with any reduction in their mobility.
- 2.3. Part M of the building regulations came into force in 1999 but started to have an impact in 2001. This chapter examines the overall prevalence of accessible features in the housing stock in 2014 before comparing the prevalence of such features in homes built before 2001 and from 2001 onwards. The 'visitability' of homes, based on four key accessibility features, and the relative ease of adapting homes to provide full visitability, are then examined by dwelling characteristics and by households who are most likely to benefit from these features; those containing older people, someone with a long-term disability and wheelchair users.
- 2.4. Accessibility and visitability are measured through an objective assessment of the dwelling by a surveyor. This is in contrast to the more subjective assessment of the adaptations required and the suitability of an occupant's home discussed in Chapter 1.

Accessibility features

- 2.5. This section examines nine accessibility features assessed by the English Housing Survey. The first four of these are required for a home to be fully visitable (to most people, including wheelchair users) under Part M of the building regulations; level access to the entrance, a flush threshold, sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space, and a toilet at entrance level (see the glossary for more details).

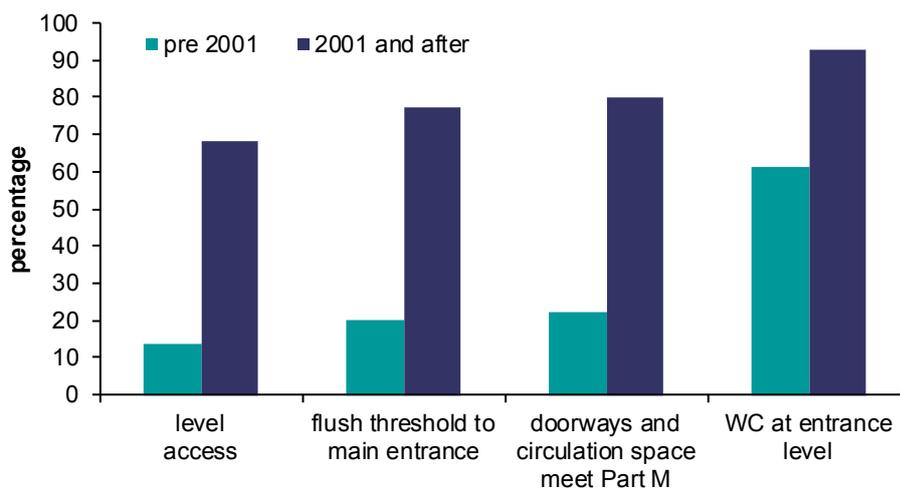
⁵ <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/adm/admv01>

- 2.6. In 2014, almost two thirds (64%) of homes had a toilet at entrance level but the presence of the other three visitable features were less common, especially level access, which was present in just 18% of homes, Annex Table 2.1.
- 2.7. Of the other accessibility features assessed by the English Housing Survey, the most common in 2014 were the absence of any trip steps (75%) and the presence of a room at entrance level that could be converted into a bedroom (56%). Less common were the presence of a bathroom at entrance level (39%), and straight stairs (for the installation of a stair lift) with a sufficiently wide landing to allow wheelchair access (24%). Just a fifth had a wheelchair accessible toilet at entrance level (20%).

The impact of modern building regulations

- 2.8. Not surprisingly, the proportion of homes with each of the accessibility features that provide visitability was much higher in dwellings built from 2001 onwards compared to those built before 2001, Figure 2.1.
- 2.9. The provision of level access was five times more likely to exist (68%) in homes built from 2001 onwards compared with those built before 2001 (13%). The proportion of homes with a flush threshold and with sufficient circulation space was over three times more prevalent in these newer homes. A toilet at entrance level was available in the majority of homes (93%) built from 2001 onwards compared with 61% of homes built before 2001.

Figure 2.1: Proportion of homes with accessibility features that provide full visitability, 2014



Base: all dwellings

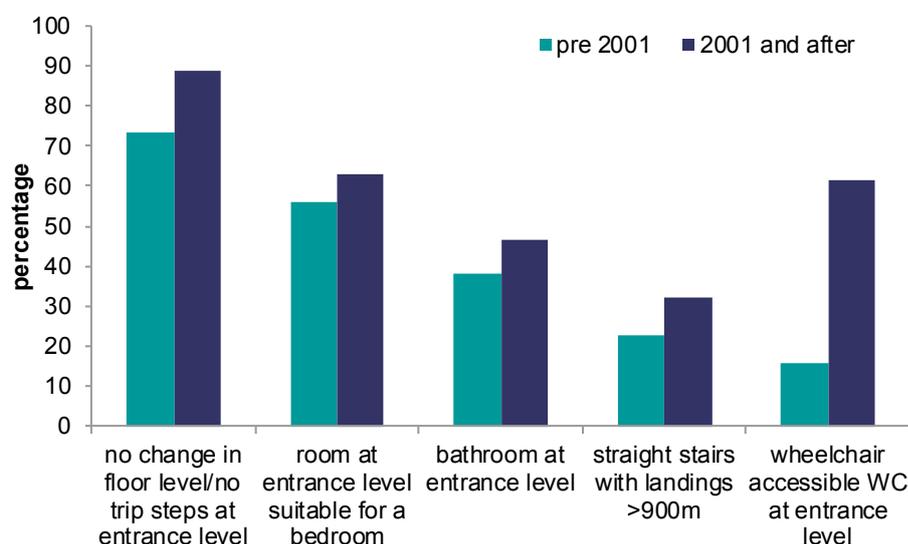
Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.1

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

- 2.10. Modern building regulations have also had a positive impact on the provision of other accessibility features. The biggest change was in the provision of a

wheelchair accessible WC at entrance level. This feature was present in just 16% of homes built before 2001 but present in 61% of homes built from 2001, Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of homes with other accessibility features, 2014



Base: all dwellings

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.1

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

Visitability of different types of homes and the relative ease of making them fully visitable

- 2.11. The rest of this chapter examines how the level of visitability varied in 2014 by dwelling age, dwelling type and by tenure. Where homes were not fully visitable, it investigates the relative ease of adapting homes to provide these four features (see the glossary for more details of the scale of adaptability used for this analysis).
- 2.12. Overall, just 7% (around 1.7 million) of homes in England had all four visitability features in 2014. Of the remaining 21.7 million homes that did not have all the features required to make them fully visitable, almost three quarters (72%, 15.7 million) could be adapted to provide all these four features while 6.0 million homes (28%) could not, Annex Tables 2.2 and 2.3.

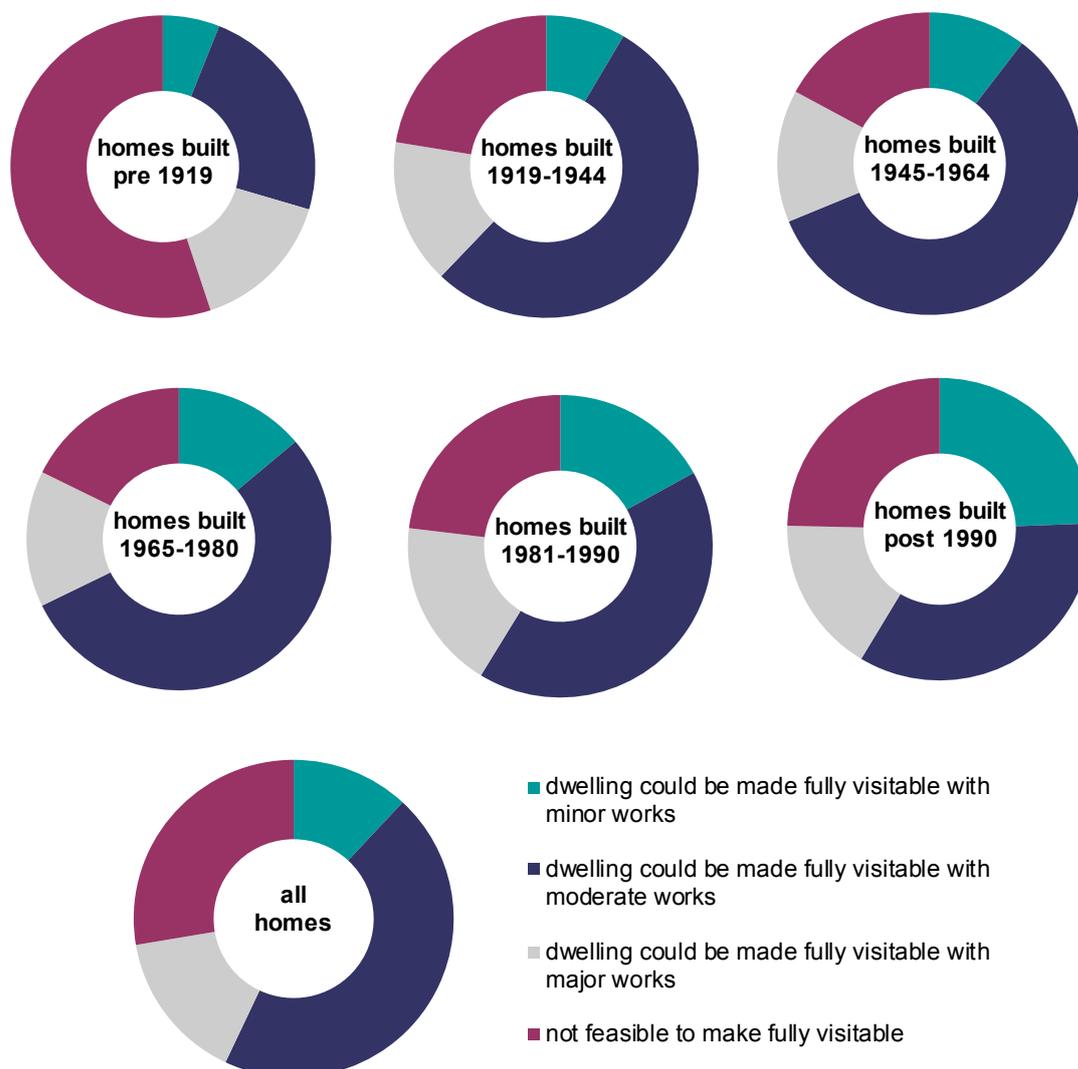
-
- 2.13. The two main factors impacting on visitability were the age of the home, namely whether it was built under modern building regulations and the design of the home.

Dwelling age

- 2.14. It is not surprising that homes built after 1990 were more likely to have all four visitability features (34%) compared with older homes due to the requirements of modern building regulations. The proportion of homes built before 1991 that had all four visitability features ranged from just 1% (of homes built before 1965) to 7% (of those built from 1981-1990), Annex Table 2.2.
- 2.15. Homes built before 1991 were also more likely to have no visitability features; ranging from 21% of homes built from 1965-1990 to 34% of those built prior to 1944. In contrast 7% of homes built after 1990 had no visitability features; some of these newer dwellings were built before modern building regulations came into force.
- 2.16. Improving the visitability of the oldest homes in England would be especially difficult. Over half of homes built before 1919 (55%) were simply not feasible to make fully visitable and only 6% of these homes could be made visitable with minor works. For homes built from 1919 to 1980, over half (54% to 58% depending on age band) could be made compliant through some form of moderate work such as the rearrangement of internal space, Figure 2.3
- 2.17. Although a quarter of newer homes built since 1990 (24%) could be made compliant with minor works only, a similar proportion (25%) of these homes were not feasible to make fully visitable. This latter finding can be partly explained by the dwelling type profile of newer homes, namely the relatively high proportion of flats that have been built⁶; where these are not fully visitable, it is often impractical to extend or redesign these homes.

⁶ See the English Housing Survey Housing Supply Report for further information.

Figure 2.3: Level of work required to create full visitability by dwelling age, 2014



Base: all dwellings

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.3

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

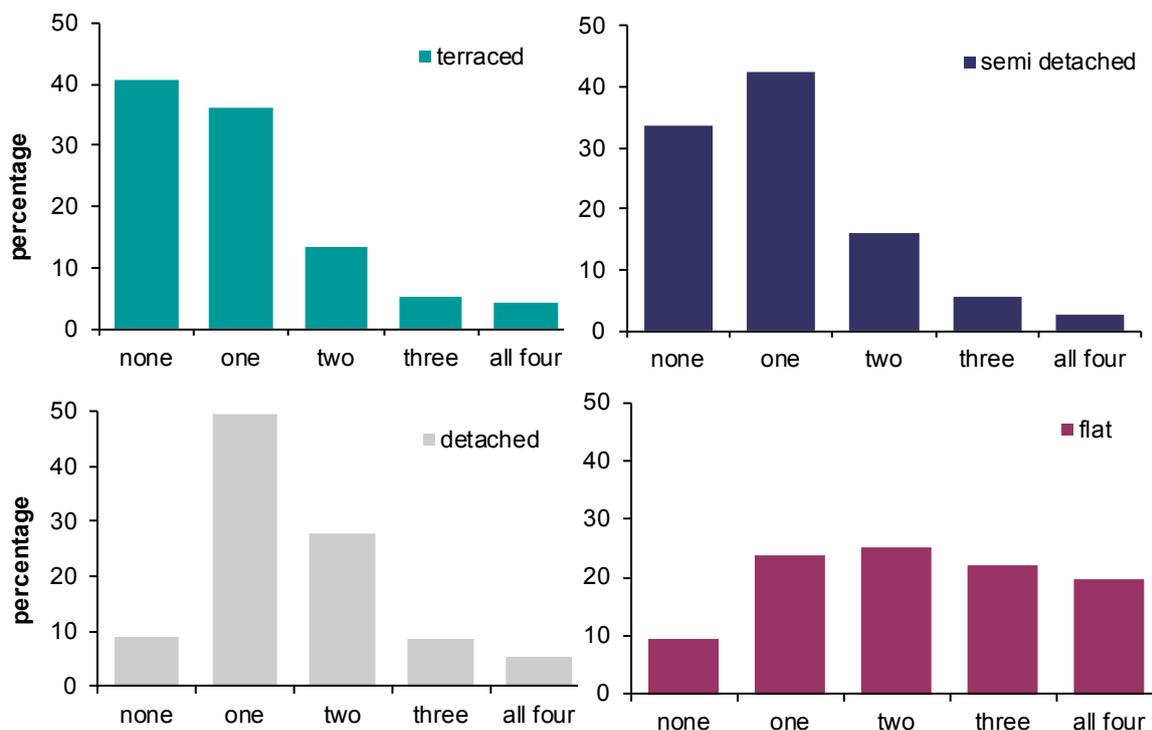
Dwelling type

2.18. Flats were markedly more likely (20%) to have full visitability compared with all types of houses (5% or less). Flats also had a relatively low proportion with no visibility features (10%). Even though most flats are above ground level, they still comply with the level access requirements (see glossary). The proportion of flats that were fully visitable would, however, decrease significantly if they were required to have a lift, especially a wheelchair accessible one, in order to make them comply with modern building regulations, Figure 2.4

2.19. Terraced (41%) and semi-detached (34%) houses were far more likely than other types of dwelling to have none of the four accessibility features and a

further 36% and 42% respectively had just one accessible feature. Detached houses were markedly less likely to have no visitability features (9%) compared with other houses but one half (50%) of these homes had just one accessible feature.

Figure 2.4: Number of visitability features, by dwelling type, 2014



Base: all dwellings

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.2

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

2.20. Improving the accessibility of terraced homes would be the most challenging, with half (50%) of these homes simply not feasible to make fully visitable in 2014. This is partly because smaller and mid-terraced homes do not easily allow for any moderate or major adaptations, such as the rearrangement of internal space or building extensions to take place. There are similar issues with extensions to upper floor or basement flats and so 27% of flats were not feasible to make visitable, Figure 2.5.

2.21. Over half of semi-detached (58%) and detached homes (60%) could be made fully visitable through a moderate level of work but 15% and 14% respectively were not feasible to make them to compliant.

Figure 2.5: Level of work required to create full visitability by dwelling type, 2014



Base: all dwellings

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.3

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

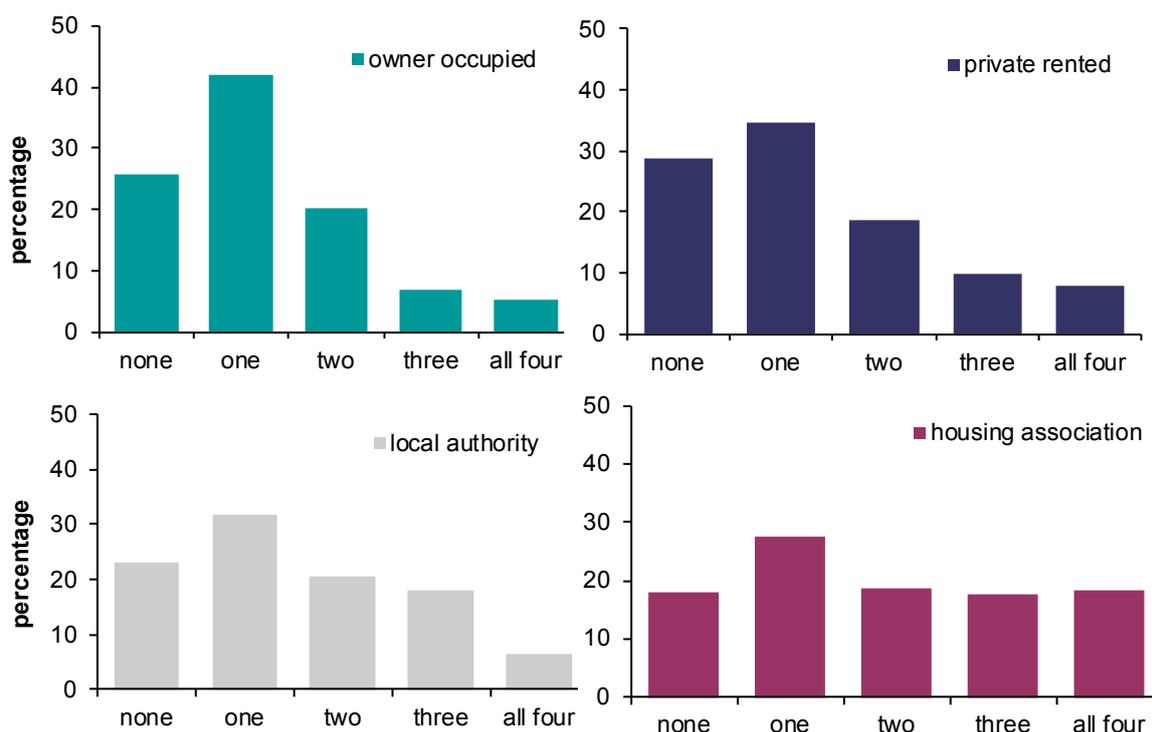
Tenure

2.22. In 2014, housing association homes were more likely to have all four visitability features (18%) than other tenures particularly owner occupied homes (5%). This is largely because the housing association tenure contained the highest proportion of the newest homes built after 1990⁷. The prevalence of full visitability was similar for private rented (8%) and local authority (7%) tenures, Figure 2.6.

2.23. Housing association homes also had a comparatively lower proportion of homes with no visitability features (18%) compared with other tenures. Local authority homes were less likely to have no visitability features (23%) compared with both owner occupied homes (26%) and privately rented homes (29%). This finding is most likely due to two key reasons; the higher proportion of purpose built flats, which are generally more accessible, within the local authority stock and the relatively older stock within the private sector.

⁷ See EHS live web table DA1101

Figure 2.6: Number of visitability features, by tenure, 2014



Base: all dwellings

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.2

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

- 2.24. Overall, owner occupied homes were most easy to adapt to create full visitability; this sector contained the highest proportion of homes that could be adapted through minor work only (14%) and around a half (49%) could comply with more moderate work. This is partly because this sector had the largest proportion of detached homes which are generally easier to adapt. Nonetheless a quarter (25%) of owner occupied homes were not feasible to make fully visitable, Figure 2.7.
- 2.25. Both local authority and housing association homes were relatively easy to adapt compared with private rented sector homes; half of social sector homes could be made visitable through either minor or moderate work compared with 42% of private rented homes. Similarly, the proportion of homes that were not feasible to adapt was lower in both local authority (23%) and housing association (28%) homes compared with privately rented homes (38%). The findings for the private rented sector likely reflect that one third (33%) of these homes were built before 1919 and a similar proportion (36%) were terraced houses⁸.

⁸ See EHS web table DA1101

Figure 2.7: Level of work required to create full visitability, by tenure, 2014



Base: all dwellings

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.3

Source: English Housing Survey, dwelling sample

Levels of visitability and adaptability for households

Older households

- 2.26. Housing options for older people may be very complex. Where homes are not accessible and cannot be adapted where required, moving to another home may be neither desirable nor feasible, particularly for households in lower equity properties. There may also be limited options in the social housing sector due to limited availability of suitable properties.
- 2.27. Overall, around 1.6 million households (7%) lived in homes that had all four accessibility features, but over three times as many, 5.8 million (26%), lived in homes that had none of these features. This section investigates the extent to which the homes of older people, where the oldest member of the household is aged 55 years or over, are fully visitable and the relative ease of attaining full visitability, Annex Table 2.4.
- 2.28. There appeared to be no clear relationship between the age of the oldest person in the household (where this was 55 years or over) and the relative visitability of their homes.

-
- 2.29. There was little variation by age of the oldest member of the household in the proportion of households that lived in a home with all four accessibility features. In contrast, households where the age of the oldest person was 65 or more were less likely to have no visitability features than those aged under 65. Households where the oldest person was aged 75 or over were more likely than households where the oldest person was under 65 to have one visitability feature.
- 2.30. Overall, 28% of households lived in a home that was not feasible to make fully visitable. This proportion differed by the age of the oldest person in the household, ranging from 19% where the oldest person was aged 75 or over to 32% where the oldest person was under 55, Annex Table 2.5.

Households that included a person with a long-term illness or disability

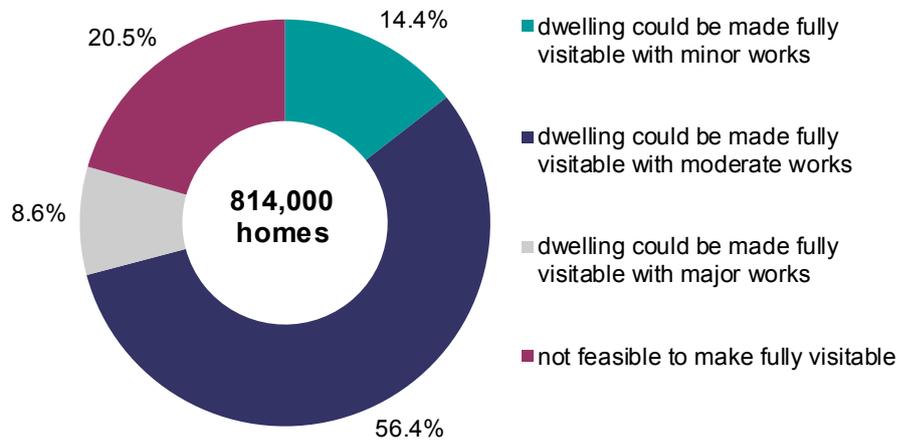
- 2.31. Accessible housing can be especially beneficial to people with long-term mobility problems. There was, however, no notable difference in the proportion with visitable features present depending on whether the household contained a person with a long-term illness or disability or not, Annex Table 2.4.
- 2.32. There were also no marked differences in the adaptability of the home to create full visitability; for example, 60% of homes occupied by households which included a person with a long-term illness or disability could be adapted through minor or moderate work compared with 56% of households without these health problems. Households with a long-term illness or disability were also slightly less likely to live in a home that was not feasible to adapt (26%) compared with 28% of households without such difficulties, Annex Table 2.5.

Wheelchair users

- 2.33. There were around 814,000 (4%) households with a wheelchair user in England in 2014. Around 521,000 (64%) of these households included someone who only required a wheelchair outside the home while 210,000 (26%) of these households contained someone who used a wheelchair all the time. The remaining 84,000 (10%) households had someone who just used their wheelchair when indoors, Annex Table 2.6
- 2.34. Among all households with a wheelchair user, 84% (685,000) lived in a home that did not have full visitability including the 19% (158,000) who lived in a home that lacked any of the four features. One visitability feature was most commonly present for these households (32%), Annex Table 2.4.
- 2.35. Of those 685,000 homes that lacked full visitability for wheelchair users, around 99,000 (14%) could be adapted to comply through minor work only, but over half, 387,000 (56%) could only be made visitable through moderate

work. It would not be feasible to create full visitability for 141,000 households with wheelchair users (21%).

Figure 2.8: Level of work required to create full visitability for households with wheelchair users, 2014



Base: all households with wheelchair users

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.5

Source: English Housing Survey, household sub sample

Technical notes and glossary

Technical notes

1. Results for the first chapter of this report are presented for '2014-15' and are based on fieldwork carried out between April 2014 and March 2015 on a sample of 13,174 households. Throughout the report, this is referred to as the 'full household sample'.
2. Results in the second chapter of the report, which relate to the physical dwelling, are presented for '2014' and are based on fieldwork carried out between April 2013 and March 2015 (a mid-point of April 2014). The sample comprises 12,297 occupied or vacant dwellings where a physical inspection was carried out. Throughout the report, this is referred to as the 'dwelling sample'.
3. Where the numbers of cases in the sample are too small for any inference to be drawn about the national picture, the cell contents are replaced with a 'u'. This happens where the cell count is less than 5. When percentages are based on a row or column total with unweighted total sample size of less than 30, the figures are italicised. Figures in italics are therefore based on a small sample size and should be treated as indicative only.
4. Where comparative statements have been made in the text, these have been significance tested to a 95% confidence level. This means we are 95% confident that the statements we are making are true.
5. Additional annex tables, including the data underlying the figures and charts, are published on the website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>, alongside many supplementary tables that are too numerous to include in our reports. Further information on the technical details of the survey, and information and past reports on the Survey of English Housing and the English House Condition Survey, can also be accessed via this link.

Glossary

Accessibility features:

- **Bathroom at entrance level:** there is an inside bathroom located on the entrance floor to the dwelling. For houses, this is usually the ground floor and for flats it will be the same level as the main entrance door into the flat. The bathroom does not have to be fully wheelchair accessible to be coded as 'at entry level'.

-
- **Room on entrance level suitable for a bedroom:** must be large enough to accommodate a single bed. It must provide adequate privacy and be heated. The room cannot be the main living room, kitchen or bathroom.
 - **Straight stairs with landings at least 900 mm:** internal stairs which are straight and have at least 900 mm square landings top and bottom to allow wheelchair access. It should be possible to install a stair lift if required.
 - **No change in floor level or trip steps at entrance level:** there are no steps at entrance level within the dwelling creating a change in floor level.
 - **Wheelchair accessible WC at entrance level: meets the following criteria:**
 - the space between the front of the WC bowl and the opposite wall/door should be a minimum of 750 mm.
 - the distance from the central line of the cistern and the adjoin wall should be a minimum of 450 mm.
 - where oblique (non-direct/angled) access is provided, there should be a minimum of 250 mm to the side of the door.
 - the WC door should open outwards. Wheelchair users should be able to enter the amenities unaided.

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:

- **terraced house:** includes **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; and **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. In this report terraced, semi-detached and detached dwelling types include bungalows.
- **flat:** includes **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; and **purpose built flat, high rise** a flat in a purpose built block of at least six storeys high.

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. This is variously referred to throughout the report as long-term limiting illness or disability, long-term illness or disability and long-term limiting disability.

Visitability: Visitability comprises four key features which are considered to be the most important for enabling people with mobility problems to either access their home or visit someone else's home. These four features form the basis for the requirements in part M of the Building Regulations, although the EHS cannot exactly mirror the detailed requirements contained there.

- **Level access:** For all dwellings with a private or shared plot, there are no steps between the gate/pavement and the front door into the house or block of flats to negotiate. This includes level access to the entrance of the survey module (i.e. a group of flats containing the surveyed flat). Dwellings without a plot are excluded from the analysis as access is, in effect, the pavement/road adjacent to the dwelling.
- **Flush threshold:** a wheelchair can be wheeled directly into the dwelling from outside the entrance door with no steps to negotiate and no obstruction higher than 15mm.
- **Sufficiently wide doors and circulation space:** the doors and circulation space serving habitable rooms, kitchen, bathroom and WC comply with the requirements of part M of the Building Regulations.
- **WC at entrance level:** there is an inside WC located on the entrance floor to the dwelling.

Each dwelling is classified according to the highest degree of difficulty of the required work, for example, if work to provide a flush threshold is minor but providing a WC at ground floor involves building an extension, the dwelling is classed as requiring major works in order to make it fully visitable.

- **Minor work:** no structural alterations required. Costs likely to be under £1,000. Examples include replacing a door and frame to create a flush threshold or installing a ramp for level access.
- **Moderate work:** rearrangements of internal space required that will involve removing internal partitions and/or increasing size of doorways. Costs are likely

to be in the region of £1,000-£15,000 depending on the size of dwelling and the precise nature of the work. Examples include:

- internal structural alterations such as using an integral garage, storage cupboard or larder to create a WC at entrance level. This will likely involve partitioning off existing rooms together with associated works to water supplies, wastes and heating.
- removing some wall partitions (where this does not contravene fire regulations) to create sufficient width for internal doorways or hallways.
- **Major work:** building extensions required. Works will be in excess of about £15,000 and the precise amount will depend on the size of the extension to be built, the scale of work to water and drainage services and ground conditions. A home, for example, may require an extension for a downstairs WC.
- **Not feasible:** it is not physically possible to carry out the necessary work. For example, this could be due to the physical impossibility of building an extension or installing a ramp up to the front door.

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and Signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official 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.

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