



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government



# English Housing Survey

Social rented sector, 2015-16



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# Introduction and main findings

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1. The English Housing Survey (EHS) is a national survey of people's housing circumstances and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England. In its current form, 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. It is one of the longest standing surveys in government, with 2017 marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the first survey in 1967.
2. This report focuses on social rented accommodation, housing owned and managed by local authorities and housing associations (private registered providers). The first chapter presents the profile of households living in the social rented sector. The second chapter covers housing moves.

## Main findings

### **The social rented sector remains the smallest tenure in England.**

- In 2015-16, 3.9 million households in England were renting in the social sector. This represents 17% of all households. The social rented sector is the smallest tenure, after the private rented (20% of all households) and owner occupied (63%) sectors.

### **More social renters rent from housing associations than from local authorities.**

- Among social renting households, 59% rented from housing associations (2.3 million households) and 41% from local authorities (1.6 million households). While households renting from housing associations now make up the majority of social sector households, this was not the case until fairly recently.

### **Social renters were, on average, younger than owner occupiers and older than private renters.**

- In 2015-16, the average age of household reference persons (HRPs<sup>1</sup>) in the social sector was 52 years old (compared with 57 for owner occupiers and 40 for private renters).
- Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, the proportion of 25 to 34 year olds and the proportion those aged 65 and over living in the social sector decreased (from 20% to 16% and from 22% to 16% respectively). Meanwhile, the proportion of those aged 45 to 54 increased from 14% to 18%. The 35 to 44 years olds remained steady at 17%.

### **Because of the way social housing is allocated, the sector houses more vulnerable groups than other sectors.**

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<sup>1</sup> In the social rented sector, the HRP is the 'householder' in whose name the accommodation is rented. See the glossary for further information.

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- About half (49%) of households in the social rented sector had at least one member with a long-term illness or disability. This is noticeably higher than in other tenures: 29% of owner occupier households and 23% of private renter households fell into this category.
  - The social rented sector also has a higher proportion of lone parents than other sectors; and almost three quarters (72%) of social renters were in the two lowest income quintiles.

**Overcrowding is more prevalent in the social rented sector, particularly among households with dependent children. Under-occupation is less prevalent.**

- In the social rented sector, 7% of homes were overcrowded in 2015-16 compared with 1% in the owner occupied sector. Local authority tenants were more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than housing association tenants (8% compared with 6%).
- Overcrowding was more prevalent among households with dependent children: 17% of such households lived in overcrowded accommodation compared with 2% of households without children.
- The increase in overcrowding in the social rented sector occurred alongside a decrease in under-occupation. That is, having two or more spare bedrooms. In 2015-16, 10% of households in the social rented sector under-occupied their accommodation down from 12% in 1995-96.

**Churn in the social rented sector is lower than in other sectors. When social renters do move, about half did so because they wanted a different type of home or for family reasons. Very few social renters move for job-related reasons.**

- In 2015-16, 8% of social renters had moved in the previous year. About half (49%) moved within the social rented sector, 26% had moved from the private rented sector, 19% were new households and 7% had previously owned their own home.
- About a third (31%) of social rented households that had moved in the last three years said they had mainly moved because they wanted a different type of home (larger, smaller or better). A fifth (20%) had moved for family or personal reasons such as marriage or cohabitation, divorce or separation. Just 2% cited job-related reasons as their main reason for moving.

**There has been an increase in the proportion of social renters who expect to buy a home in the future.**

- In 2015-16, 27% of social renters expected to buy, up from 24% in 2014-15. This represents a reverse in the decline in expectation to buy among social renters which occurred between 2008-09 and 2011-12 (from 27% to 20%).

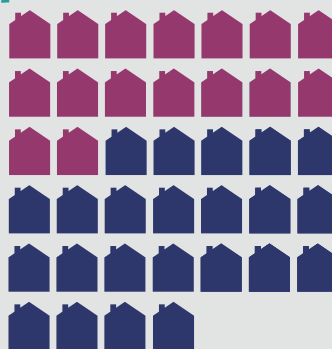
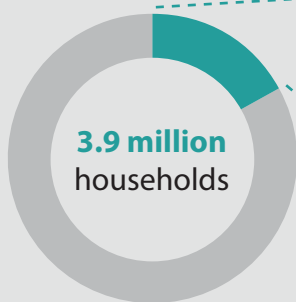
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- Among social renters who expected to buy a property, the proportion who expected to buy their current home increased from 35% in 2010-11 to 47% in 2015-16.

## 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 the following people and organisations, without whom the 2015-16 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.
4. This report was produced by Aimee Huchet-Bodet and Alun Humphrey at NatCen Social Research and DCLG.
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# Social Rented Sector

In England  
**17%**  
of households  
live in the **social  
rented sector**



**1.6 million**  
rented from  
**local authorities**

**2.3 million**  
rented from  
**housing  
associations**

## Vulnerable groups

The sector houses more vulnerable groups than other sectors



**49%**  
of households had at least one member with a **long-term illness or disability**



**21%**  
of households were **lone parent families**

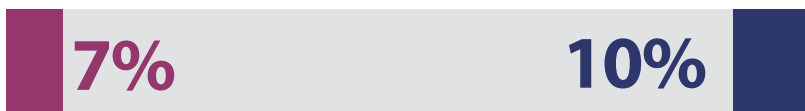


**72%**  
of households were in the **two lowest income quintiles**

## Overcrowding and under-occupation

Overcrowding is more prevalent in the social rented sector, particularly among households with dependent children

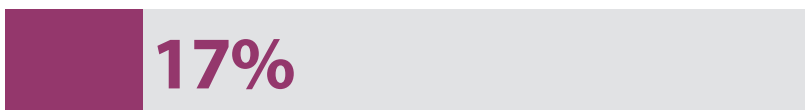
Homes in the **social rented sector**



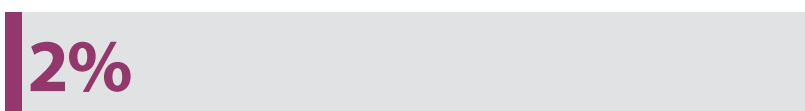
were **overcrowded**

were **under-occupied**

Homes with **dependent children**



Homes **without children**



## Household churn



There is less churn in the social rented sector than in other sectors



Social renters had, on average, lived in their current home for **11.6 years**

## Expectation to buy

There has been an increase in the proportion of social renters who expect to buy in the future



**24%**  
2014-15



**27%**  
2015-16

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# Chapter 1

## Profile of social renters

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- 1.1 This chapter presents the profile of the people living in the social rented sector looking at households living in dwellings rented from housing associations (HAs) and from local authorities (LAs). Whenever possible comparisons are made with households and individuals living in other tenures, especially with those renting in the private sector.
- 1.2 In 2015-16, 3.9 million households in England were renting in the social sector. This represents 17% of all households. The social rented sector is the smallest tenure, after the private rented (20% of all households) and owner occupied sectors (63%).
- 1.3 Among social renting households, 59% rented from housing associations (2.3 million households) and 41% from local authorities (1.6 million households). While households renting from housing associations now make up the majority of social sector households, this was not the case until fairly recently<sup>2</sup>.

### Age

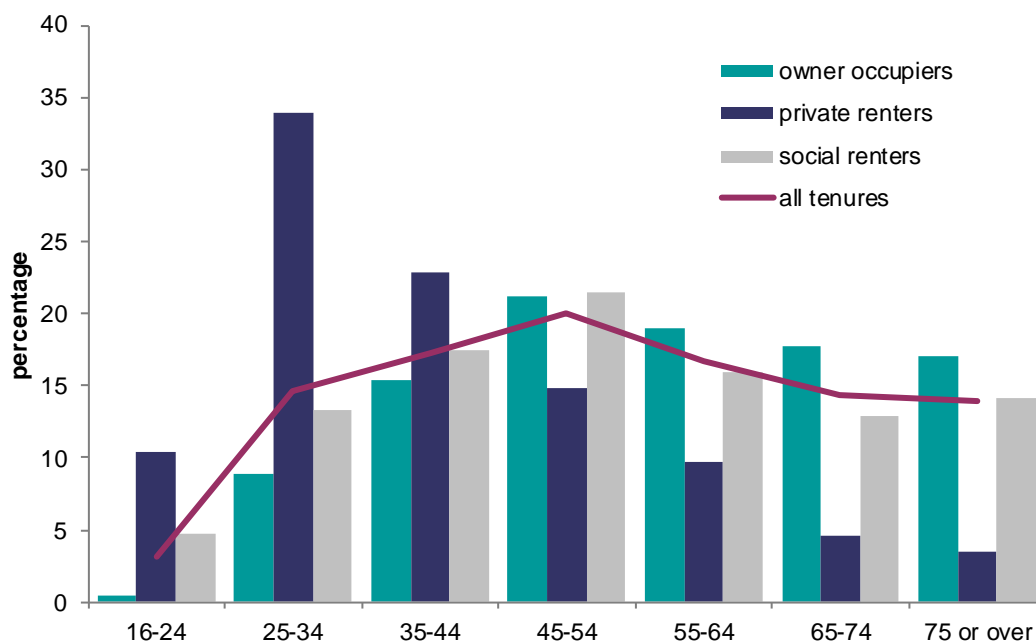
- 1.4 The age profile of social renters is similar to the age profile of the whole population. Social renters, on average, were slightly older than private renters and slightly younger than owners. In 2015-16, the average age of household reference persons (HRPs<sup>3</sup>) in the social sector was 52 years old (compared with 57 for owner occupiers and 40 for private renters).
- 1.5 In 2015-16, only 5% of social sector HRPs were aged 16 to 24; the proportion in each age group then increased such that 21% of social sector households had an HRP aged 45 to 54. The proportion in the older age groups then declines, Annex Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1.

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<sup>2</sup> The last few decades have seen local authority stock transferred to housing associations, and more new social stock constructed for housing associations than local authorities. See English Housing Survey Social Rented Sector Report, 2014-15 Annex Table 1.1.

<sup>3</sup> In the social rented sector, the HRP is the 'householder' in whose name the accommodation is rented. See the glossary for further information.

**Figure 1.1: Age of HRP, by tenure, 2015-16**



Base: all households

Note: underlying data are presented in Table FA1201

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

1.6 Younger and older households have become less prevalent in the social rented sector over the last decade. Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, the proportion of 25 to 34 year olds and the proportion those aged 65 and over living in the social sector decreased (from 20% to 16% and from 22% to 16%, respectively). Meanwhile, the proportion of those aged 45 to 54 increased from 14% to 18%<sup>4</sup>.

## Sex

1.7 In 2015-16, 56% of households in in the social rented sector had a female HRP. This is higher than in other tenures; 39% of private rented sector households and 36% of owner occupied households had a female HRP.

1.8 About a quarter (24%) of all women HRPs were social renters. While it is the least common of the three types of tenure for men, it is the second most common for women, Annex Table 1.2.

1.9 The predominance of male HRPs in the total population is in part due to the way the HRP is defined. Therefore the predominance of female HRPs in the social sector is notable. Lower incomes and lone parenting – both of which are more prevalent among women – make women generally more likely to be eligible for social housing which is allocated on the basis of need.

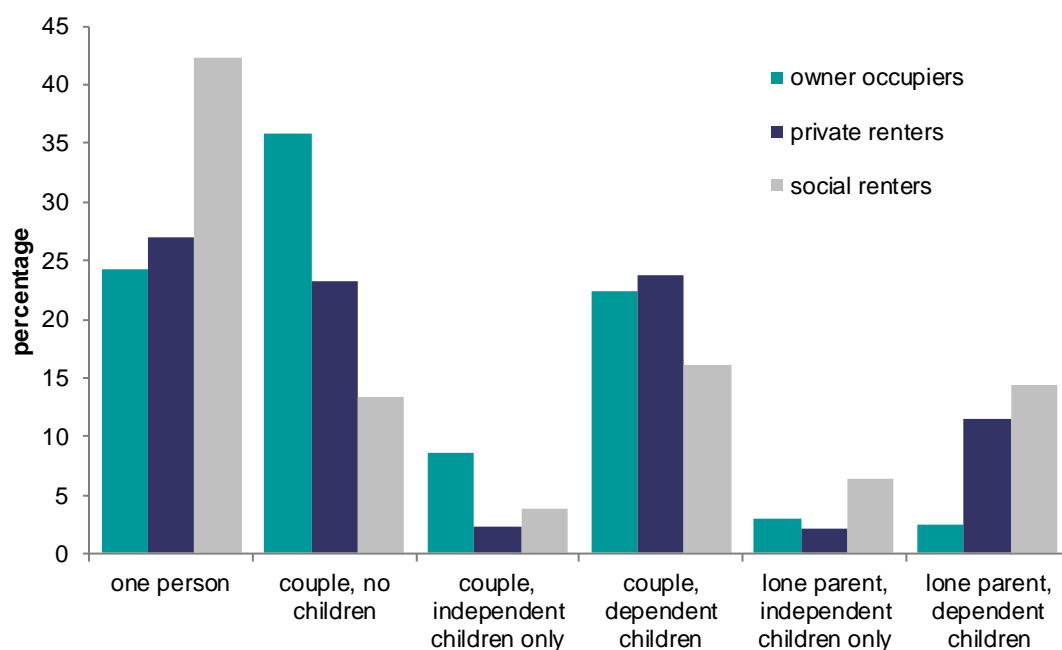
<sup>4</sup> See English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16 Annex Table 1.4



## Household type and size

- 1.10 Due to the way social housing is allocated, the profile of the social rented sector differs from other tenures in terms of household types. The proportions of people living on their own (single person households) and of lone parents were significantly higher among social renters than among owner occupiers and private renters.
- 1.11 In 2015-16, 42% of all social rented households were single person households, compared with 24% of owner occupied and 27% of private rented sector households, Figure 1.2.
- 1.12 The proportion of lone parents with dependent children was also higher among social renters (14%) than among private renters (11%) and owners (3%). In total, 39% of all lone parents with dependent children were social renters, Annex Table 1.3.

**Figure 1.2: Household type, by tenure, 2015-16**



**Base: all households**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.3**

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

- 1.13 The higher prevalence of lone parent and the single person households in the social rented sector is likely to be explained by the gender profile noted above; single household persons and lone parents were more likely to be women.
- 1.14 In 2015-16, in the total population, 89% of lone parent households with dependent children were headed by a woman. This is even more pronounced

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in the social sector where 94% of lone parent households were headed by a woman, Annex Table 1.4.

- 1.15 The proportion of households with dependent children in the social sector has decreased in the last 10 years: from 36% in 2005-06 to 32% in 2015-16, which translates to around 123,000 fewer families in the social rented sector. This occurred alongside a noticeable increase in the proportion of households with children in the private rented sector<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.16 While one person households formed the biggest category of social renting households, there were on average 2.3 individuals per social home, Live Table FA1211.

## Economic activity

- 1.17 Less than half (42%) of the social rented households had an HRP who was working (30% worked full-time and 13% part-time<sup>6</sup>). This proportion has increased from 38% in 2014-15.<sup>7</sup>
- 1.18 The employment rate of the HRP of social rented households was noticeably lower than in other tenures (30% were working full-time compared with 53% of owner occupiers and 62% of private renters). This is consistent with the need-based allocation of social homes. Similarly, a larger proportion of social rented households had a retired HRP (28%) compared with private rented households (8%) and those buying their home with a mortgage (4%). HRP in social rented households were also more likely to be economically inactive but not in full time education (21%) than owner occupied (3%) or private rented households (9%), Live Table FA1301.<sup>8</sup>
- 1.19 The economic activity of social renters is likely to be associated with the different profile in terms of household type, as noted above. For example, the higher proportion of part-time working households than in other tenures is consistent with the predominance of female HRPs, given that women are more likely than men to work part-time.
- 1.20 Only one significant difference in economic status was visible between local authority and housing association tenants. Households renting from a local authority were more likely to have an unemployed HRP (8%) than those renting from a housing association (6%).

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<sup>5</sup> See English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16, Annex Table 1.5

<sup>6</sup> Unrounded figures sum to 42%

<sup>7</sup> English Housing Survey Social Rented Sector Report, 2014-15 Annex Table 1.1

<sup>8</sup> People who were economically inactive but not in full time education included those with a long-term illness or disability and those who were looking after the family or home. The social rented sector is the tenure with the highest proportion of households with members having a disability or a long-term illness. See the section on health and disability.

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## NS-SEC (National statistical socio-economic classification<sup>9</sup>)

- 1.21 The profile of social renters in terms of economic activity was reflected in the NS-SEC composition of this group. In 2015-16, 55% of social renters were either in routine or semi-routine occupations. These categories are considered as the 'least advantaged' of the NS-SEC classification. In comparison, only 18% of owner occupiers fell into these categories, Figure 1.3 and Annex Table 1.5.
- 1.22 Conversely, the least common group for social renters was 'higher managerial and professional occupations'. Just 3% of all social renters were in this type of occupation.

**Figure 1.3: NS-SEC of HRP, social rented sector, 2015-16**



**Base: all social renters**

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

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

## Income

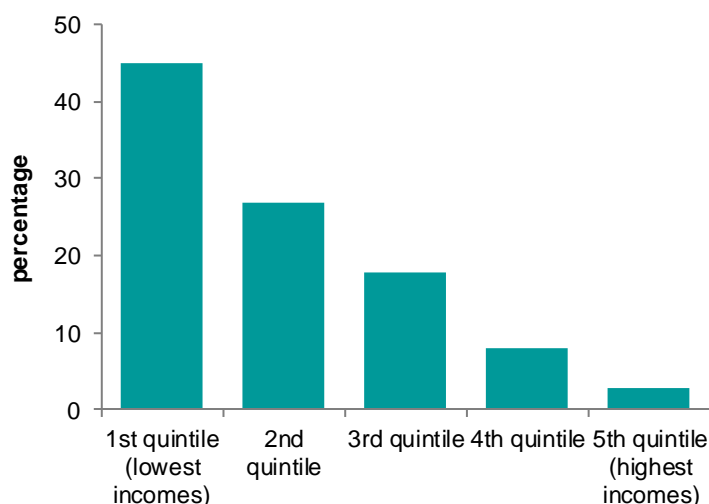
- 1.23 In 2015-16, the average (mean) gross weekly income of social renters was £394. This is significantly lower than the average income of private renters (£673) and of owner occupiers (£919), Live Table FA1341.

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<sup>9</sup> See the glossary for further information

1.24 This is reflected in the fact that almost three quarters (72%) of social renters were in the two lowest income quintiles, whereas only 3% were in the highest income quintile, Figure 1.4 and Annex Table 1.6.

**Figure 1.4: Weekly gross household income (quintiles), social renters, 2015-16**



**Base: all social renters**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 1.6**

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

## Health and disability

1.25 The social rented sector had the highest proportion of households where the HRP or their partner was registered with the local authority or social services as disabled. Almost one fifth (17%) of HRPs or their partner fell into this category.

1.26 In addition, almost half (49%) of social renter households had at least one member with a long-term illness or disability. This is noticeably higher than in other tenures: 29% of owner occupier households and 23% of private renter households fell into this category, Annex Table 1.7.

## Ethnicity and nationality

1.27 The majority of social renters (83%) identified as white. This is slightly lower than in the total population (88%). Among all black HRPs, almost half (48%) were social renters. However, analysis of ethnicity across tenure groups is likely confounded by factors such as geography and age, Annex Table 1.8.

1.28 The vast majority (92%) of social renters were UK or Irish nationals and there were no significant differences in nationality between those renting from a local authority and those from a housing association, Annex Table 1.9.

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## ACORN

- 1.29 Using the ACORN classification of neighbourhoods<sup>10</sup>, half (50%) of all social renters were living in neighbourhoods considered to be in 'urban adversity'. This is significantly higher than in other tenures: only 23% of private renters and 8% of owner occupiers fell into this category.
- 1.30 Over a third (39%) of social renters were living in 'financially stretched' neighbourhoods, a significantly higher proportion than owner occupiers (17%) and private renters (22%).
- 1.31 At the other end of the ACORN classification scale, only 2% of social renters were living in neighbourhoods of 'affluent achievers' compared with 11% of private renters and 32% of owner occupiers, Annex Table 1.10.
- 1.32 Among social renters, local authority and housing association tenants had a slightly different ACORN profile. The proportion of housing association tenants living in 'financially stretched' neighbourhood was higher than for local authority tenants (41% compared with 36%), while local authority tenants were more likely than housing association tenants to live in 'urban adversity' neighbourhoods (58% compared with 44%).

## Housing costs<sup>11</sup>

- 1.33 In 2015-16, the average (mean) weekly rent for social renters was £101. It was slightly lower for local authority renters (£95) than for housing association renters (£106). The difference observed in average weekly rent between London and non-London was smaller in the social rented sector than in the private rented sector<sup>12</sup>.
- 1.34 On average, social renters spent 28% of the household income on rent. Excluding Housing Benefits, this proportion was 37%<sup>13</sup>.
- 1.35 More than half (59%) of social renters were in receipt of Housing Benefit in 2015-16, down from 63% in 2014-15<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> See the glossary for further information

<sup>11</sup> This section is based on the findings of the English Housing Survey Housing Costs and Affordability Report, 2015-16. Please refer to this report for more details on social sector housing costs.

<sup>12</sup> English Housing Survey Housing Costs and Affordability Report, 2015-16, Chapter 1 and Annex Table 1.1

<sup>13</sup> English Housing Survey Housing Costs and Affordability Report, 2015-16, Chapter 3 and Annex Table 3.3

<sup>14</sup> English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16, Annex Table 1.15

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## Satisfaction with current accommodation, with repairs and maintenance, and status as a social renter

- 1.36 As with other tenures, the majority (81%) of social renters were satisfied with their accommodation. However, social renters were more likely to report dissatisfaction with their accommodation (13% compared with 10% of private renters and 3% of owners). Social renters were also more likely than those in other tenures to be 'very dissatisfied' with their accommodation (6% compared with less than 1% of owners and 4% of private renters), Annex Table 1.11.
- 1.37 Social renters were also less likely than other tenure groups to feel safe in their neighbourhood<sup>15</sup>.
- 1.38 There were differences in satisfaction levels between local authority and housing association tenants. Local authority renters were slightly more likely to be dissatisfied with their accommodation than those renting from a housing association (15% compared with 12%). This difference among social renters might also be due to different age profiles and the quality of housing stock as housing association homes were typically built more recently than local authority stock<sup>16</sup>.
- 1.39 Social renters were slightly less satisfied than private renters with the repairs and maintenance carried out by their landlord. Overall, 22% of social renters were dissatisfied compared with 18% of private renters. When looking only at local authority renters, this proportion was one quarter (25%), Live Table FA5423.
- 1.40 The majority of social renters were satisfied with their status as social renters. Only 10% were either slightly or very dissatisfied. This did not vary between local authority and housing association tenants. In comparison, 21% of private renters were dissatisfied with their status as private renters, Annex Table 1.12.

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<sup>15</sup> English Housing Survey People's Perception of their Neighbourhood Report, 2015-16 Chapter 3 and Live Tables FA5362 and FA5363

<sup>16</sup> English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16 paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5.

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## Chapter 2

# Housing moves

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2.1 This chapter explores housing moves for social renters. It presents the average length of residence, and the number of movers into, out of and within the social rented sector. For those who had moved more recently, details on the reasons why households had moved are explored. It also presents details of overcrowding and under-occupation within the sector, the length of wait for allocation of a social home, whether households were accepted as homeless prior to moving into the social rented sector, and social housing waiting lists.

### Length of residence

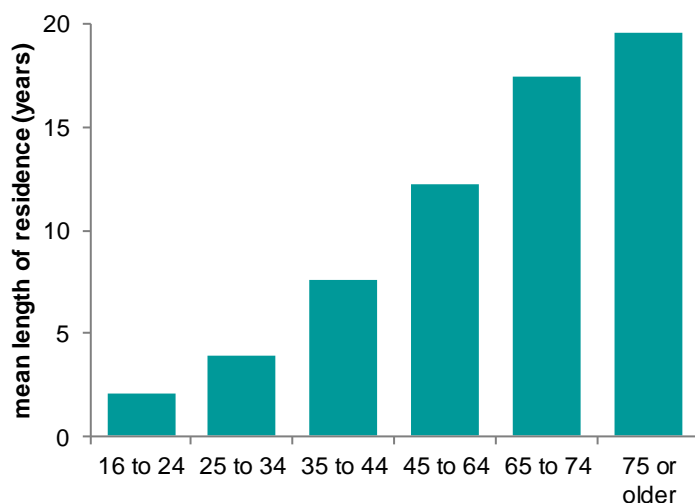
2.2 In 2015-16, social renters had lived at their current address for an average of 11.6 years. This compares with 17.8 years for owner occupiers and 4.3 years for private renters. Within the social rented sector, length of residence was slightly longer for local authority tenants than for housing association tenants (12.9 years compared with 10.7 years)<sup>17</sup>.

2.3 As would be expected, retired and older social renters had lived longer in their current accommodation than others. Average length of residence increased from 2.1 years among households with an HRP aged 16 to 24 up to 19.6 years among those with an HRP aged 75 or older, Figure 2.1 and Annex Table 2.1.

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<sup>17</sup> See English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16 Annex Table 1.17

**Figure 2.1: Mean length of residence of social renters, by age, 2015-16**



**Base: all social renters**

**Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.1**

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

2.4 Social renters with a retired HRP had lived in their accommodation for an average of 18.2 years. Families with dependent children had resided an average of 7.1 years compared with 13.6 among those without dependent children. This is also likely to be driven by age.

2.5 Among all social renters, 9% had lived in their present accommodation for 30 years or more, Live Table FA4131.

## Housing moves

2.6 In 2015-16, across all tenures, 2.1 million households had moved in the previous year. Of the total of 3.9 million social renters, 324,000 households (8%) had moved in the previous year, Figure 2.2.

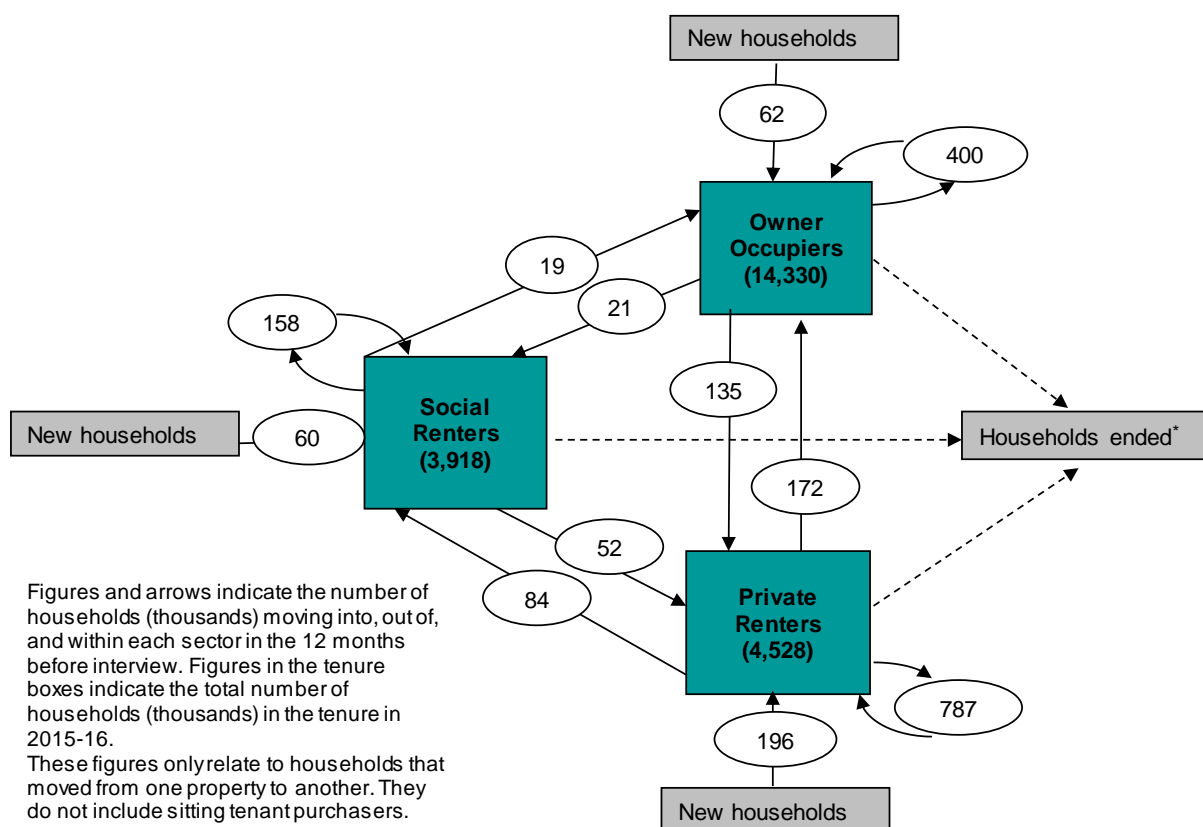
2.7 The 324,000 social renting households that moved in the last year represent 15% of all moving households. This is similar to the overall proportion of social renters in England (17%) suggesting that the social renters were just as likely to move as other groups in the population.

2.8 Nearly half (49%, 158,000) of social renting movers moved within the social rented sector, 26% (84,000) had moved from the private rented sector, 19% (60,000) were new households and 7% (21,000) had previously owned their own home.

2.9 The 158,000 households who had moved within the social sector represent 4% of the social rented sector as a whole. A similar proportion (3%) of owners moved within the owner occupier sector but 17% of all private renters had moved within the private rented sector in 2015-16.



**Figure 2.2: Household moves, by tenure, 2015-16**



Figures and arrows indicate the number of households (thousands) moving into, out of, and within each sector in the 12 months before interview. Figures in the tenure boxes indicate the total number of households (thousands) in the tenure in 2015-16. These figures only relate to households that moved from one property to another. They do not include sitting tenant purchasers.

**Base: all households**

**Notes:**

- 1) underlying data are presented in English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16 Annex Table 1.19
- 2) a small number of cases with inconsistent responses have been omitted
- 3) \* the survey cannot identify the number of households which have ended

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

2.10 Among the new social rented households (including new households and those that have moved in from other sectors), 22% were households with an HRP aged 16 to 24. For the social rented sector as a whole this figure was 5%. Of all social renters, 42% were working. Among new households in the social rented sector, 51% were working. The proportion of new entrants who were in receipt of housing benefit was similar to that among all social renters at 59%, Annex Table 2.2.

## Buying expectations

2.11 There has been an increase in the proportion of social renters who expect to buy a property at some point in the future. In 2015-16, 27% of social renters expected to buy, up from 24% in 2014-15. This represents a reverse in the decline in expectation to buy among social renters which occurred between 2008-09 and 2011-12 (from 27% to 20%).

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2.12 Among social renters who expected to buy a property, the proportion who expected to buy their current home increased from 35% in 2010-11 to 47% in 2015-16<sup>18</sup>.

## Reasons for moving

2.13 Households that had moved within the previous three years ('recent movers') were asked the reasons they had moved. Respondents could give as many reasons as they wanted. This section starts by presenting results of all the reasons provided for moving before focusing on the main reason for moving.

### All reasons for moving

2.14 The most frequent reasons given by recent movers in the social sector were 'wanted a large house or flat' (19%) and 'family or personal reasons (other than divorce or marriage)' (18%).<sup>19</sup> A further 15% said their previous accommodation was unsuitable, 13% wanted to live independently, 12% wanted to move to a better neighbourhood and 18% said some other reason. Only 4% said they had moved for job-related reasons while 7% were asked to leave by their landlord, Annex Table 2.3.

### Main reason for moving

2.15 Households were asked the main reason that they had moved. These have been summarised into groups of similar answers. The most common reason for moving was wanting a different type of home (larger, smaller or better), which was given by 31% of social rented households that had moved in the last three years, Annex Table 2.4.

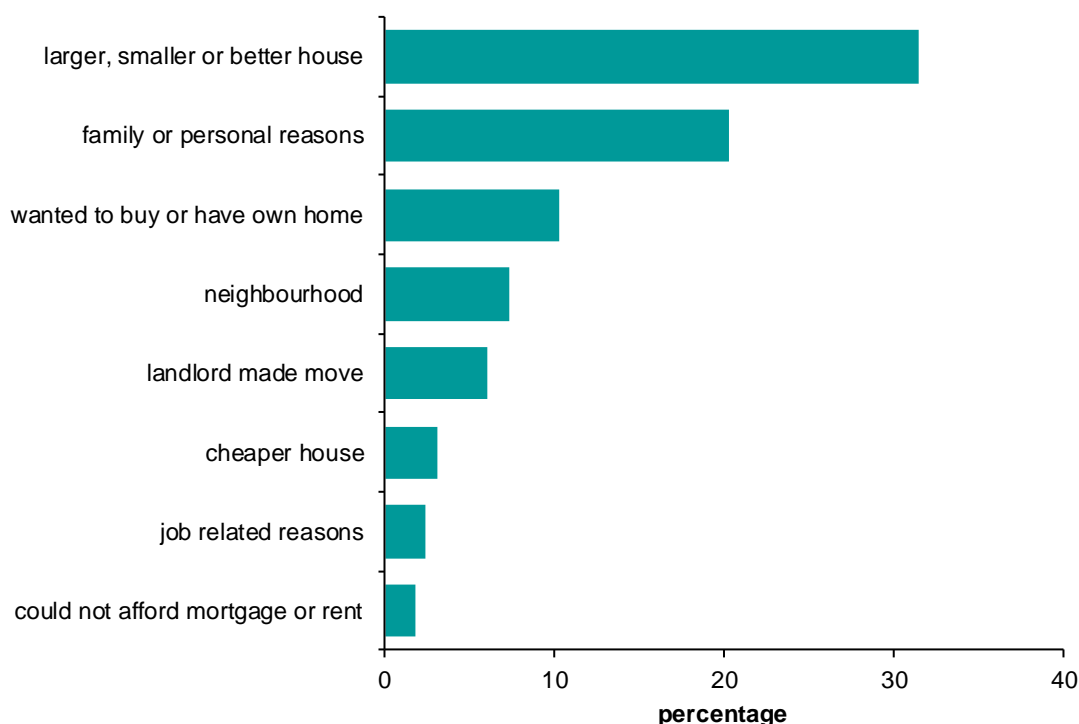
2.16 A fifth (20%) had moved for a family or personal reason such as marriage or cohabitation, divorce or separation. Wanting to buy, have a home of their own or to live independently was given as the main reason by 10%, 17% gave some other reason and 6% had been asked to leave their previous accommodation by their landlord. Just 2% cited job-related reasons as their main reason for moving, Figure 2.3.

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<sup>18</sup> See English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16 Annex Table 1.10 and English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2010-11 Annex Table 1.11.

<sup>19</sup> The 'divorce' category includes separation and the 'marriage' category includes two people starting to live together as a couple.

**Figure 2.3: Main reason for moving, social renters, 2015-16**



**Base:** all social renters who had moved into their current accommodation in the last three years

**Note:** underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.4

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

- 2.17 As would be expected, the most common main reasons for moving given by new households were the desire to live independently (35%) and family or personal reasons (31%). Among those who had moved from the private rented sector, 33% wanted a different type of home (either a larger, smaller or better), 15% had moved for family or personal reasons and for 12%, their landlord had made them move. In addition, 5% of private renters had moved to the social sector for job-related reasons.
- 2.18 Unsurprisingly, younger households were more likely to have moved because they wanted to buy their own home, to have a home of their own or to live independently (27% of households with an HRP aged 16 to 24).
- 2.19 The proportion of local authority tenants who had moved for family reasons was higher at 25% than for housing association tenants at 17%.
- 2.20 Families with dependent children were much more likely (42%) to say they moved as they wanted a larger, smaller or better house compared with 25% of those without dependent children, Annex Table 2.4.

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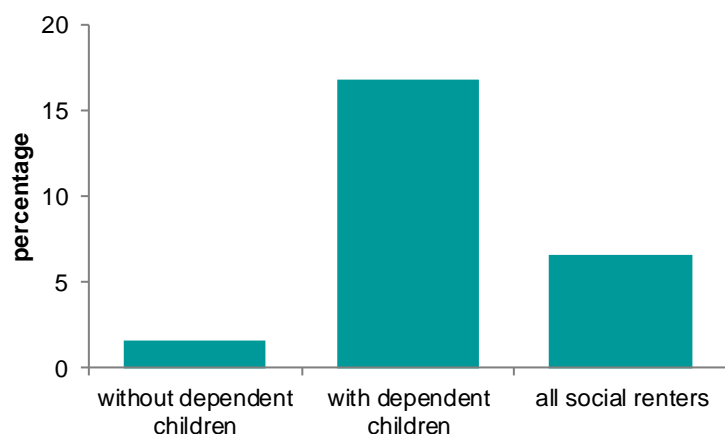
## Overcrowding and under-occupation

- 2.21 Levels of overcrowding and under-occupation are measured using the bedroom standard (see glossary). This is essentially the difference between the number of bedrooms needed to avoid undesirable sharing (given the number, ages and relationship of the household members) and the number of bedrooms actually available to the household.
- 2.22 Since the number of overcrowded households included in each survey year is too small to enable reliable overcrowding estimates for any single year, data from the three most recent survey years were combined to produce the overcrowding estimates in this section.
- 2.23 Overcrowding was more prevalent in the rented sectors than among owner occupiers. In the social rented sector, 7% of households (258,000) were overcrowded in 2015-16 (compared with 1% of owner occupied households). The proportion of social rented households in overcrowded accommodation has increased in recent years<sup>20</sup>.
- 2.24 Local authority tenants were more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than housing association tenants (8% compared with 6%).
- 2.25 Households in the middle age groups were more likely to be overcrowded. Among households with an HRP aged 35-44, 13% were overcrowded compared with 8% of those with an HRP aged 16-24. This is likely to reflect the greater prevalence of children in these households. Indeed, overcrowding was more prevalent among households with dependent children: 17% of households with dependent children were overcrowded compared with 2% of households without children, Annex Table 2.5 and Figure 2.4.

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<sup>20</sup> See English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16 Annex Table 1.20

**Figure 2.4: Overcrowding, by presence of dependent children, 2015-16**



**Base: all social renters**

**Notes:**

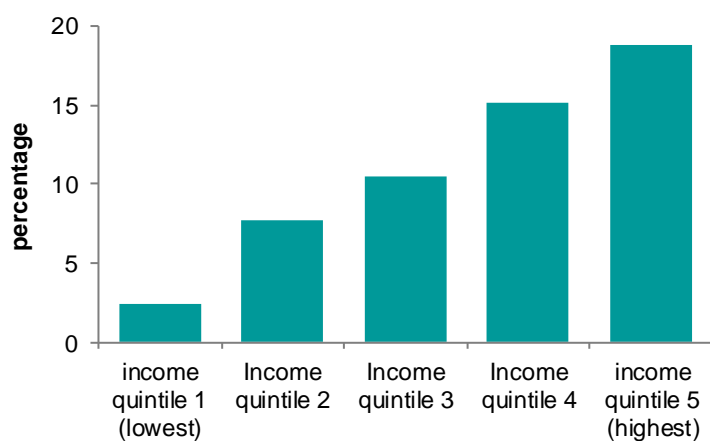
1) data are based on three year averages, which are the average of the three years up to and including the labelled date

2) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.5

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

2.26 Households in the highest income quintile were more likely to be overcrowded (19% compared with 2% of those in the lowest income quintile). This is because household size is strongly associated with income (single person households tend to be on lower incomes), Annex Table 2.5, Figure 2.5.

**Figure 2.5: Overcrowding, by income, 2015-16**



**Base: all social renters**

**Notes:**

1) data are based on three year averages, which are the average of the three years up to and including the labelled date

2) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.5

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

2.27 The increase in overcrowding in the social rented sector occurred alongside a decrease in under-occupation. That is, having two or more spare bedrooms.

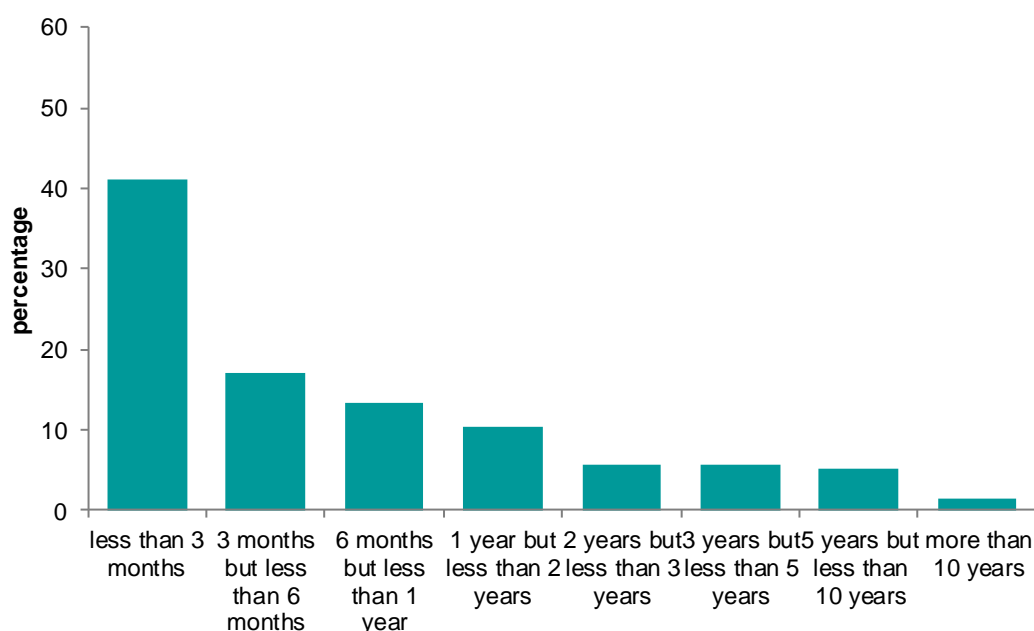
In 2015-16, 10% of households in the social rented sector under-occupied their accommodation down from 12% in 1995-96.<sup>21</sup>

2.28 Under-occupation is more prevalent in the private rented sector (14% of homes are under-occupied, down from 18% in 1995-96) and among owner occupied households (52%, up from 39% in 1995-96)<sup>22</sup>.

## Length of wait prior to allocation of social home

2.29 Renters who had been resident less than 10 years<sup>23</sup> were asked how long they had to wait before being allocated a social home. Among this group, 41% had to wait less than three months and for 72% it was less than a year. A further 5% had waited five years but less than 10, and 1% 10 years or more, Figure 2.6.

**Figure 2.6: Length of wait prior to allocation of social home, 2015-16**



**Base: all social renters who had moved into their current accommodation in the last 10 years**

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

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

2.30 Housing association tenants were slightly more likely than local authority tenants to have to wait less than three months (45% compared with 35%).

2.31 Younger social renting households were also more likely to wait less than three months (51% of households with an HRP aged 16 to 24 compared with 37% of those with an HRP aged 25 to 44). However, of households with an

<sup>21</sup> See English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16 Annex Table 1.21

<sup>22</sup> See English Housing Survey Headline Report, 2015-16 Annex Table 1.21

<sup>23</sup> Excluding those who had been living in the accommodation before taking over the tenancy or living with someone else who had the tenancy

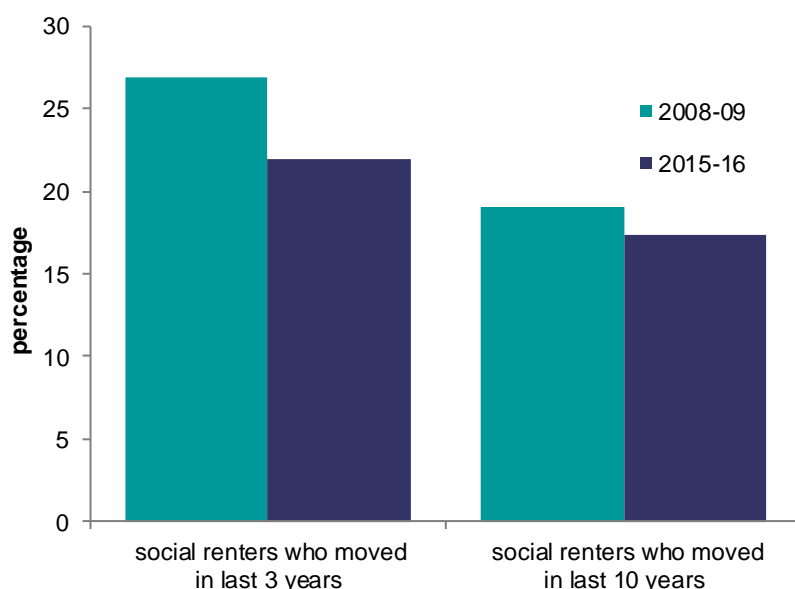
HRP aged 75 or older, a similar proportion (50%) had to wait less than three months, Annex Table 2.7.

## Households moving into the sector after being accepted as homeless

2.32 In 2015-16, 17% of all social renting households who moved into their accommodation in the previous ten years had been accepted as homeless prior to moving into their accommodation. This was similar to the proportion in 2008-09.

2.33 Among social renters who had moved within the previous three years, 22% had been accepted as homeless prior to moving into the sector, down from 27% in 2008-09, Figure 2.7 and Annex Table 2.8.

**Figure 2.7: Whether accepted as homeless, 2008-09 and 2015-16**



**Base:** all social renters who had moved into their current accommodation in the last ten years

**Notes:**

1) underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.8

2) the apparent difference between the 2008-09 and 2015-16 figures for all social renters is not statistically significant

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

## Waiting Lists

### Households

2.34 Households in need of accommodation can apply to join a council or housing association waiting list. There are certain restrictions on who is eligible for council housing including, in some areas, how long they have lived in the

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area. All households were asked whether they or anyone else was on a council and/or housing association waiting list (or transfer list).

- 2.35 Overall, 3% of households included someone who was on a waiting list. This was higher among renters than owner occupiers. Of all social renting households, 8% included someone on a waiting list. This is similar to the proportion (7%) among private renters but higher than for owners (1%) There was little difference between local authority tenants (8%) and housing association tenants (7%).
- 2.36 Younger households were more likely to be on a waiting list. Among households with a HRP aged between 16 and 24, 6% of households included someone on a waiting list. This dropped to 1% of households with a HRP aged 75 or more.
- 2.37 Families were more likely to be on a waiting list. Of households with dependent children, 6% included someone on a waiting list compared with 2% of those without dependent children.
- 2.38 Households with an unemployed (9%) or other inactive HRP (10%), were more likely to contain someone on a waiting list, Annex Table 2.9.

### **Individuals**

- 2.39 A total of 733,000 adults were on a waiting or transfer list. This represents 2% of the adult population in England. The 'Future home owners' report, published alongside this report, includes analysis of additional adults in households who would like to buy or rent but can't afford to. Among this group, a similar proportion (2%), were on a council or housing association waiting list, Annex Table 2.10.
- 2.40 Of all adults on a waiting list, 9% had been on a list for 10 years or more and 27% had been on a list for five years or more, Annex Table 2.11.



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# Technical notes and glossary

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## Technical notes

1. Results on households for this report are presented for '2015-16' and are based on fieldwork carried out between April 2015 and March 2016 on a sample of 13,468 households. Throughout the report, this is referred to as the 'full household sample'.
2. 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.
3. **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.
4. 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, which are updated each year (in the summer) but are too numerous to include in our reports. Further information on the technical details of the survey, and information and past reports on the Survey of English Housing and the English House Condition Survey, can also be accessed via this link.

## Weighting methodology

5. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) revised the weighting process on the English Housing Survey (EHS) going forward from 2015-16. The aim of the revision was to improve the stability of year-on-year estimates including household numbers. This new approach to weighing was approved by 'external' experts on the EHS Technical Advisory Group.
6. The improved weighting methodology was necessary because the initial weighted household counts increased considerably between 2014-15 and 2015-16 (by 361,583 additional households, 344,921 of which were in the private rented sector). The provisional 'grossed' dwelling and household estimates showed that, between 2014-15 and 2015-16, there were two additional households for every one additional dwelling (the number of dwellings increased by 180,814).

This appeared implausible when compared with an expected household growth of up to 200,000 per year as indicated by the Household Projections<sup>24</sup>.

7. NatCen (the current EHS contractor) investigated and advised that some of the year-on-year variation in the initial weighted household counts was due to sampling variation in the data used in the weighting. The household weights are dependent on estimates of 'dwelling-to-household' ratios, which are subject to sampling variation. (This differs from the weighted dwelling counts that are controlled to 'external' DCLG estimates of dwellings by tenure and region.)
8. 'Dwelling-to-household' ratios vary by tenure and by year, Table T.1. In 2015-16, the average ratio increased from 1.0062 to 1.0129, resulting in a large increase in the grossed household counts between 2014-15 and 2015-16.

**Table T.1: Dwelling-to-household ratio by tenure, 2013-14 to 2015-16**

<i>all households</i>			
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16 (before revision)
owner occupiers	1.0039	1.0013	1.0013
private rented	1.0600	1.0239	1.0670
local authority	1.0092	1.0103	1.0053
housing association	1.0091	1.0033	1.0079
<b>total</b>	<b>1.0139</b>	<b>1.0062</b>	<b>1.0129</b>

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

9. To reduce the year-on-year variation, the dwelling-to-household ratio was re-calculated by smoothing across two years of the EHS (2015-16 and 2014-15). The revised (smoothed) weights were used for producing the published EHS findings<sup>25</sup>. Smoothing across two years was preferred to smoothing across more years because the EHS sample uses a two year cycle whereby England is divided into 1,808 primary sampling units (PSUs) and interviewing takes places in the same 904 PSUs every other year.
10. When smoothed across two survey years, the average dwelling-to-household ratio reduced from 1.0129 to 1.0096, Table T.2. To assess the stability of the new methodology in producing less variable ratios across years, the 2014-15 ratio was also re-calculated using the same methodology (i.e. smoothing over 2 years: 2013-14 and 2014-15). As can be seen in the table below, the ratio appears quite stable (1.0100 in 2014-15 compared with 1.0096 in 2015-16).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/household-projections>

<sup>25</sup> Both the household and the dwelling weights were revised because the dwelling-to-household ratio also has a minor role in the computation of the latter. The impact of the revision of the dwelling weights was very small.

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**Table T.2: Dwelling-to-household ratio by tenure, 2013-14 to 2015-16**

<i>all households</i>	2014-15	2015-16
owner occupiers	1.0012	1.0022
private rented	1.0467	1.0425
local authority	1.0087	1.0102
housing association	1.0049	1.0059
<b>total</b>	<b>1.0096</b>	<b>1.0100</b>

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

11. This new approach to weighting was approved by two external experts on the EHS Technical Advisory Group. It is considered to be the most robust and practical solution to the year-on-year inconsistencies observed in the household estimates. We expect to continue to smooth the weights in future waves of the EHS. The EHS team at DCLG, with NatCen and the EHS Technical Advisory Group, will review the further options to improve the weighting methodology. If you would like to share your views on the EHS weighting strategy, please contact: [ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk).

12. More detail on the EHS methodology can be found in the technical report<sup>26</sup>.

## Glossary

**Acceptance of homeless:** local authorities have a responsibility for securing accommodation for households who are in priority need, eligible (certain categories of persons from abroad are ineligible) and are homeless through no fault of their own. A household satisfying these criteria is said to be 'accepted as homeless', or more formally as 'accepted as owed a main homelessness duty'.

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

A more detailed explanation is available from page 7 onwards in the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7841/152056.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7841/152056.pdf)

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice>

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

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

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

**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.

**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>27</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.

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<sup>27</sup> For further information see: [www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension](http://www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension)

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- **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**.

**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 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).

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

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

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

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

**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.

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

**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).

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

**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

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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.

**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 4 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.

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

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

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

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

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

**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.



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- 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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