

English House Condition Survey 1996: summary

On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Introduction

Background

The English House Condition Survey 1996 (EHCS) is the seventh in the five yearly series undertaken by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). The surveys provide a major source of information for the development and monitoring of housing policies on the repair, improvement and energy efficiency of the housing stock.

The survey has four separate, but related parts:

1. *Interview survey*: interviews with householders to determine their characteristics (including financial circumstances), attitudes to their homes, repair and improvement work undertaken and heating arrangements.
2. *Physical survey*: a survey of dwellings to provide a description of the stock and its present condition.
3. *Postal survey*: a survey of local authorities and housing associations to identify work they have undertaken on their stock and action taken by local authorities on private sector stock.
4. *Valuation survey*: a survey of current market values.

The chief findings in this summary are extracted from the main report of the EHCS 1996, which gives information on:

- the housing stock in terms of its composition, ownership, condition and the range and quality of facilities and services that it provides and how this has changed since 1991;
- the profile of household groups who are most likely to live in poor housing or in poor living conditions¹;
- the relationship between housing conditions and the circumstances of different household groups.

Conduct of the Surveys

Survey content and data analysis are the responsibility of staff at the DETR, together with the Building Research Establishment. The organisation of all five surveys, including sample selection, questionnaire design, fieldwork and data validation were undertaken by MORI Ltd, with support from NOP on the interview survey. MORI employed 104 qualified surveyors to undertake the physical survey. Colleys Professional Services Ltd provided market value data.

The interview survey was conducted between January and April 1996 and this was followed by

the physical and postal surveys from April to September. The valuation survey was completed in February 1998.

Valid information from the interview survey was obtained for 16,100 addresses, and the remaining surveys were sub-samples of these.

Survey Method

The method adopted was broadly the same as that used in 1991. However, some changes were made to improve the quality of the data collected and to meet demands for new information.

Interpretation of the Results

Results in the report are based on three populations: all dwellings (occupied and vacant); occupied dwellings and households.

Figures based on households present different figures from those based on dwellings because some dwellings are occupied by more than one household.

All results are grossed to national totals. The use of a sample survey to draw national conclusions introduces some uncertainty as each figure produced is subject to sampling error. Errors are also associated with the measurement methods used. All differences highlighted and comparisons made between figures in this document are outside the margins of error which arise through sampling and measurement.

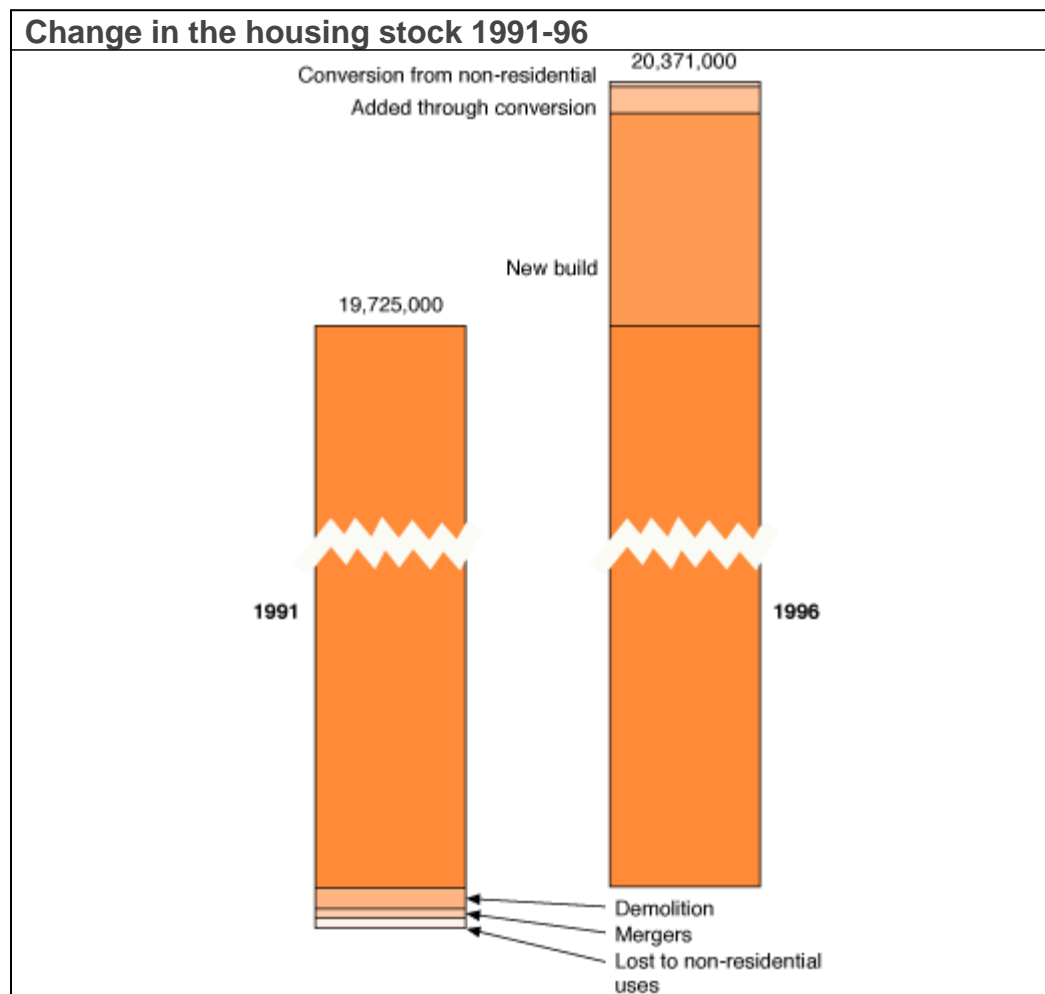
¹ See Glossary of Definitions in report for description of poor housing and living conditions.

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Profile of the Stock

There were 20.4 million dwellings in England in 1996. The stock has increased by 647,000 dwellings since 1991, some 776,000 dwellings have been added and some 130,000 lost. Of those added, 100,000 were through conversion and/or changes of use from non-residential to residential accommodation. The remainder were new build. Almost all the new build has been for owner occupation or for registered social landlords.

Overall, the average floor area of dwellings is 85sq.m. Over time, dwellings being added to the stock have become smaller, with those built after 1980 having average floor areas of 76 sq.m. compared with 85 sq.m. for inter-war dwellings. Plot sizes have also got smaller. Houses built since 1980 are in plots some 20% smaller than those built 1919-64.



Since 1991, 1.3 million dwellings have changed tenure. The major shifts are:

- from owner occupation

- o 469,000 to private renting

- o 284,000 to vacancy

- from private renting

- o 312,000 to owner occupation

- o 121,000 to vacancy

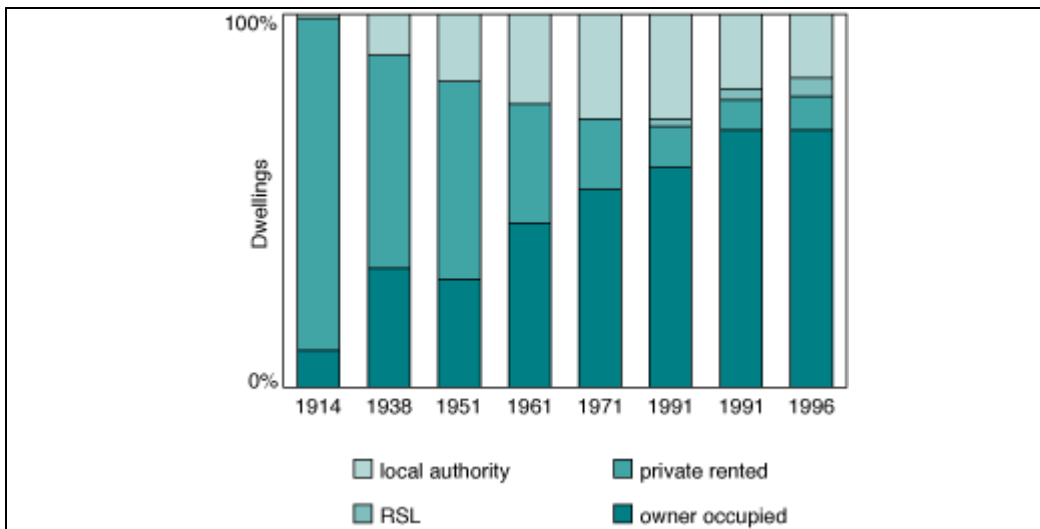
- from local authority

- o 236,000 to owner occupation

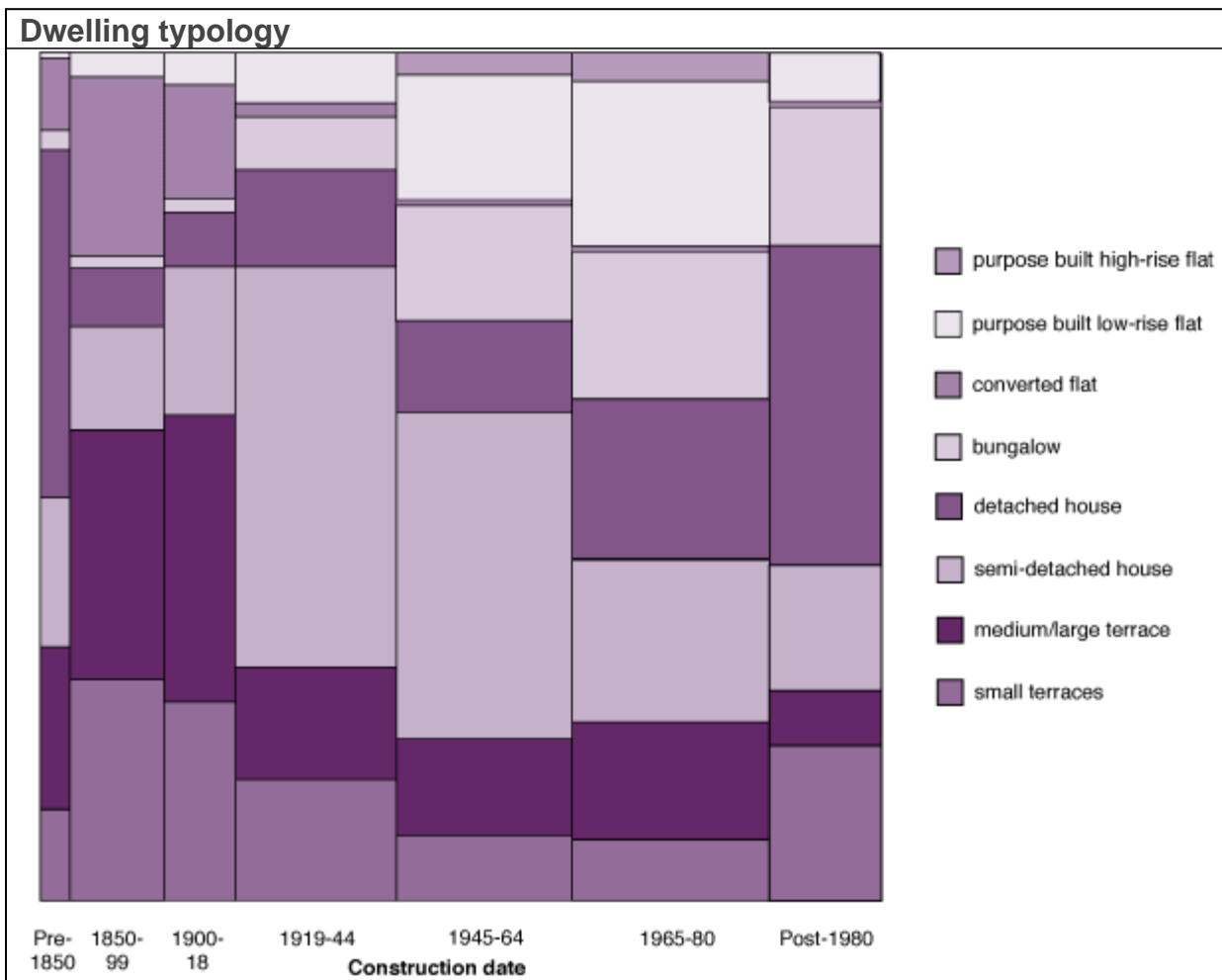
- o 182,000 to RSL

- o 117,000 to vacancy

Tenure change 1914-1996



The English stock has considerable differences from that of other countries. It is older, with 45% being more than 50 years old compared with 39% in France and 24% in the USA. It has far fewer flats: 19% compared with 59% in Germany and 28% in the USA. There are also higher levels of owner occupation: 68% compared with 38% in Germany and 64% in the USA.



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Profile of Households

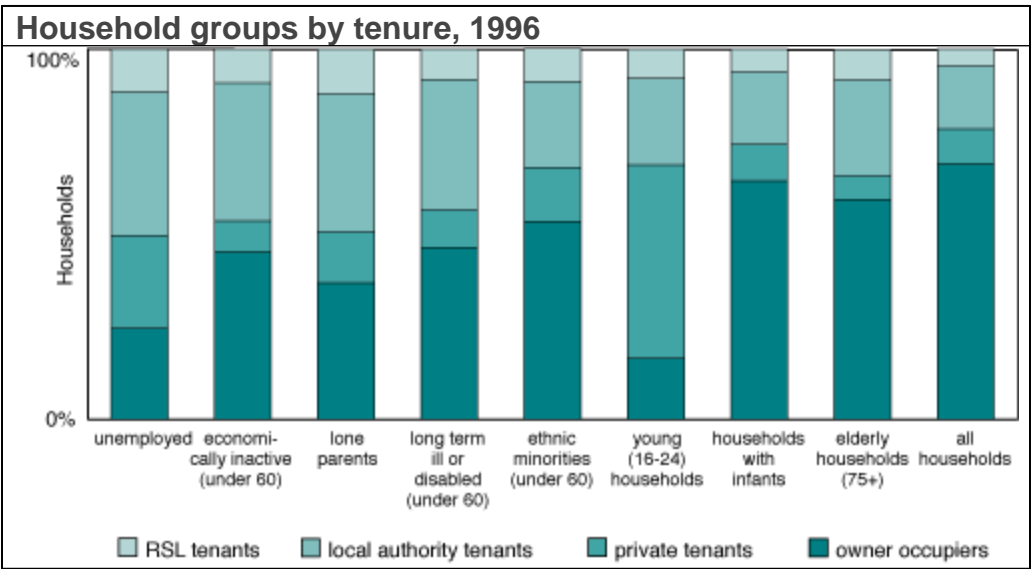
There were 19.7 million households in England in 1996, representing an increase of more than half a million since 1991. The growth in the number of households has been partly fuelled by long-term trends towards smaller households. These include:

- increasing numbers of people living alone, 5.4 million (27.4%) households;
- increasing numbers of lone parents, 1.25 million (6.4%) households.

Particular groups of households tend to be in poor housing and poor housing conditions. There are groups who might be defined as being more likely than average to be socially or economically 'disadvantaged' and those who may be particularly vulnerable to poor housing conditions. The (overlapping) groups considered are:

Disadvantaged

- unemployed or economically inactive households (aged under 60) : 2,785,000 (14%)
- lone parent households : 1,253,000 (6%)
- ethnic minority (aged under 60) households : 950,000 (5%)
- long-term sick or disabled (aged under 60) households : 913,000 (5%)
- young (aged 16-24) households : 776,000 (4%).



Vulnerable

- households with infants (aged under 5) : 2,702,000 (14%)
- elderly households (with persons aged 75 or over) : 2,398,000 (12%).

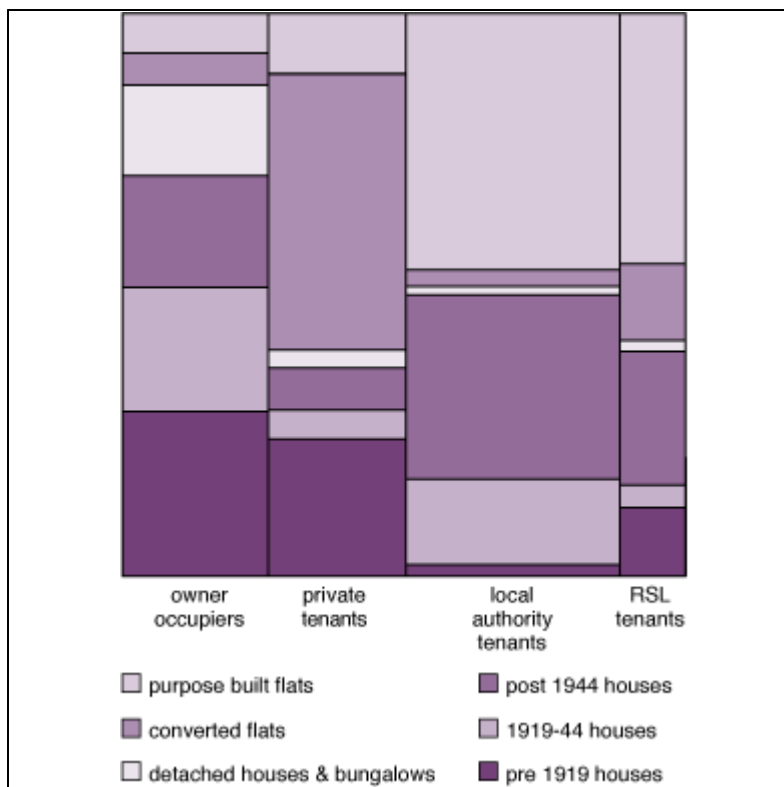
Generally, 'disadvantaged' groups are much less likely than average to own their homes. Their access to housing is therefore more dependent, than average, on the allocation priorities of local authorities and RSLs, and what they can rent privately. Since 1991 there have been some significant shifts in the tenure distribution of these groups:

- an increase in unemployed people being housed in the private rented and RSL sectors;
- a decrease in lone parents renting from local authorities;
- an increase in the proportion of the youngest households (aged 16-24) renting from the private sector;
- an increase in the proportion of ethnic minorities privately renting.

Groups which are more likely to be 'disadvantaged' show distinct differences in the way they are distributed across the stock, compared with all households.

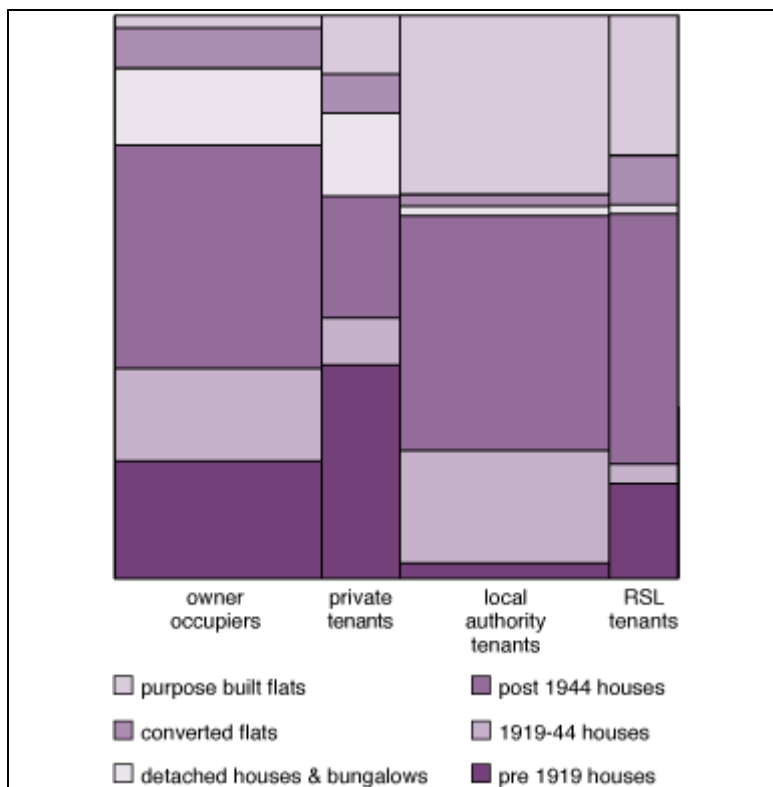
- **Unemployed households:** privately renting unemployed households are very much concentrated in converted flats (50%) or pre-1919 largely terraced houses (25%). This compares with unemployed tenants of local authorities and RSLs who are largely accommodated in purpose built flats and post-1944 houses.

<p>Distribution of unemployed households by dwelling type and tenure, 1996</p>



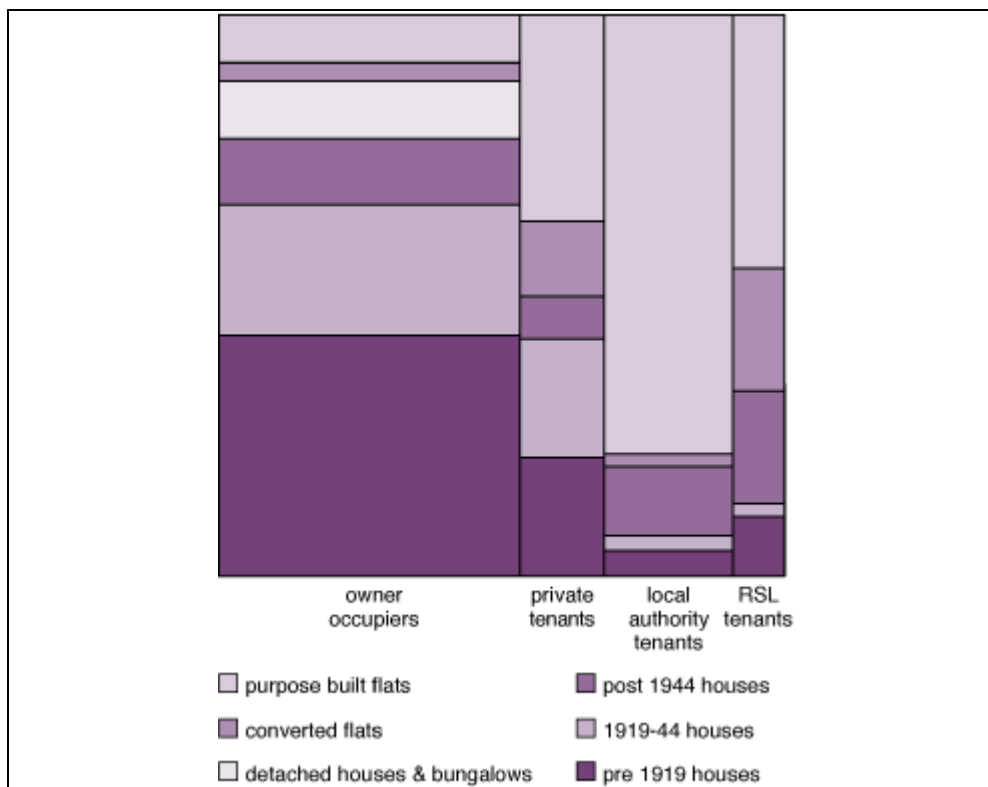
- **Economically inactive (aged under 60) households:** the majority of those owning their homes (55%) live in detached houses and bungalows or other post-war houses. The majority of others rent purpose-built flats and post-war houses from local authorities and RSLs. However, a high proportion (62%) of inactive private tenants rent pre-1919 houses and converted flats.
- **Lone parent households:** lone parents tend to live in post-1944 houses and, in the social sectors, purpose-built flats. However, more than one-third of those renting privately live in pre-1919, largely terraced, houses.

Distribution of lone parent households by dwelling type and tenure, 1996



- **Ethnic minority (aged under 60) households:** ethnic minority owners are much more likely than average to be concentrated in pre-1919 and inter-war housing. But tenants, particularly of local authorities, are heavily concentrated in purpose-built flats. Those living in older housing tend to be Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households, while black households are particularly concentrated in flats.

Distribution of ethnic minority (under 60) households by dwelling type and tenure, 1996



- **Long-term sick or disabled (aged under 60) households:** long-term sick and disabled people tend to live in post-war houses and purpose-built flats if they are owner occupiers or tenants in the social sector. More than a third of those privately renting live in converted properties.
- **Young (aged 16-24) households:** the minority of young households who have bought their own homes have acquired houses rather than flats. The majority who rent are generally more likely to be accommodated in flats than other groups. Private tenants, who form the majority of young households, are particularly concentrated in converted flats. Some 21% of young householders are students who are very much concentrated in purpose-built flats and pre-1919 terraced houses, while unemployed young people are particularly concentrated in converted flats.

The distribution of households with infants around the stock is similar to the overall average. But elderly households are much more likely to occupy detached houses and bungalows. Within the social sectors, elderly households are also more concentrated than average in purpose-built flats.

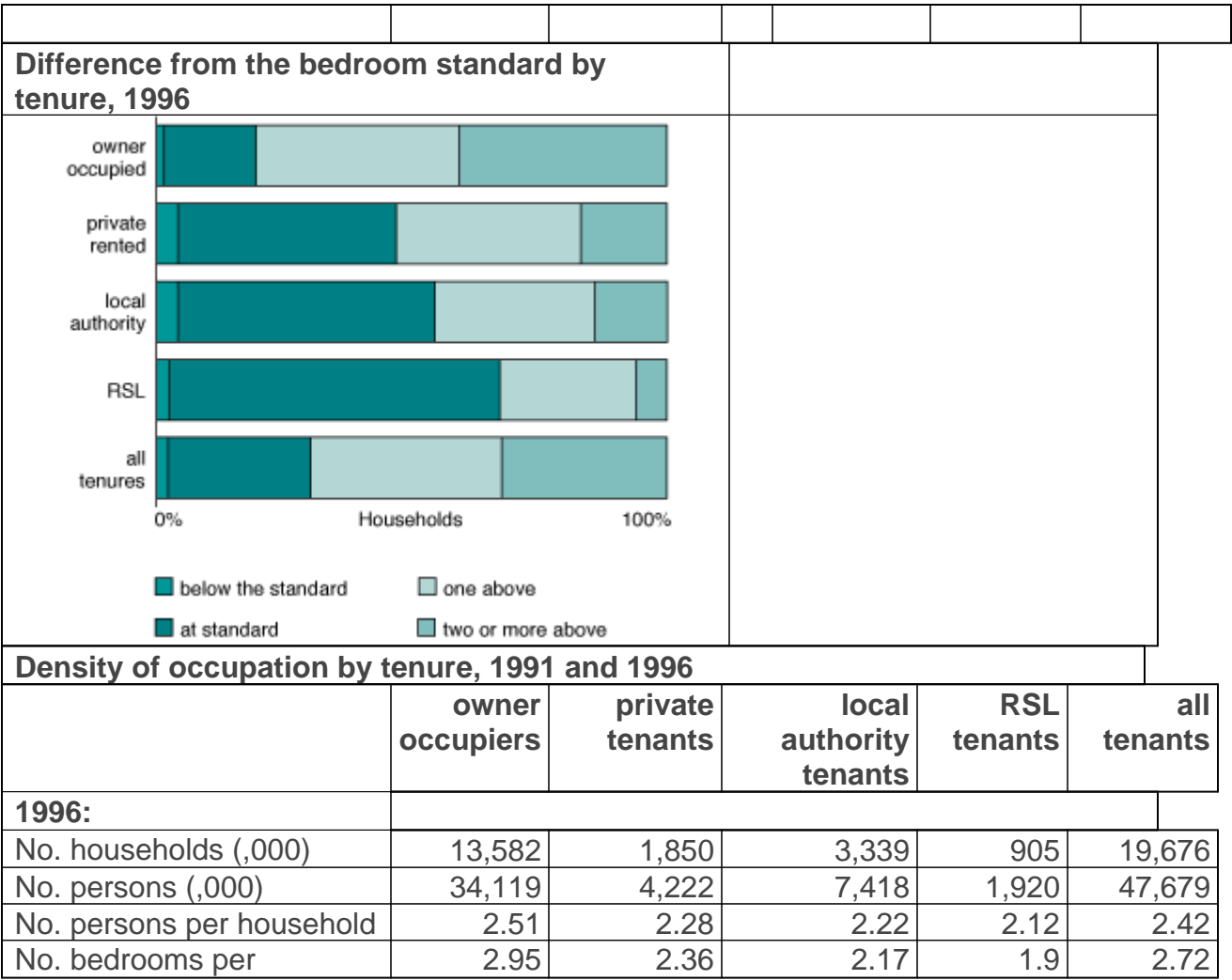
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Use of the Dwelling Stock

Average density of occupation has decreased slightly in all tenures, except the private rented sector, since 1991, owing to reductions in household size. Occupation densities are highest for the social rented sector and lowest for owner occupiers.

Larger households have less floor space per household than smaller ones, with single person households having on average four times the amount of floor space per person than six or more person households.

Some 450,000 households do not have sufficient bedrooms available to them, while more than 6.3 million households have surplus bedrooms. Insufficient bedrooms are more of a problem among local authority and private tenants, where 4.3% of households fail to meet the bedroom standard. This compares with only 1.5% of owner occupiers.

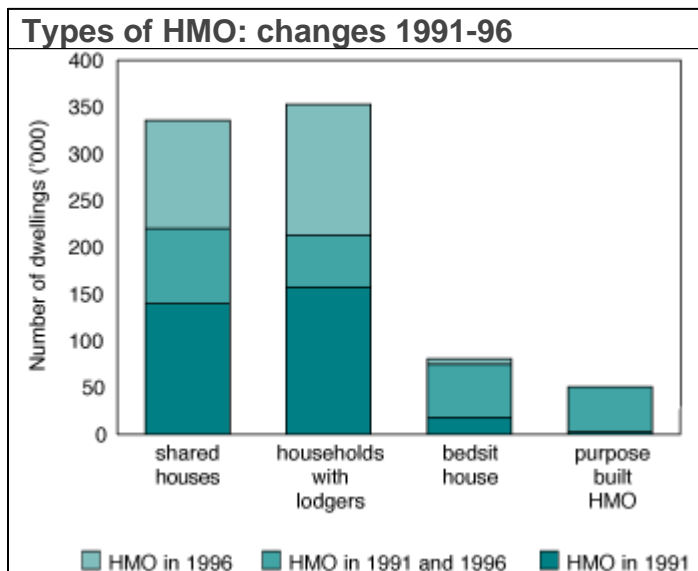


household					
Mean usable floor area per household (sqm)	92	73	63	59	84
Floorspace per person (sqm)	45	39	37	36	43
1991:					
Floorspace per person (sqm)	41	41	33	32	38

Under-occupation is most prevalent in the private sector with 40% of owner occupiers having two or more surplus bedrooms. Under-occupation occurs mainly among older households with 2.8 million lone persons or couples over 60 years of age having three or more bedrooms.

There are 759,000 buildings defined as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) of which 62,000 are houses divided into bedsits. The number of bedsits has fallen by about 10,000 since 1991. More than half of all HMOs are found in London and the South East.

Two-thirds of the houses divided into bedsits in 1996 were bedsits in 1991. However, there is much more change in other types of HMOs. Only one third of shared houses in 1996 were shared five years previously and only 15% of houses with lodgers had lodgers in 1991.

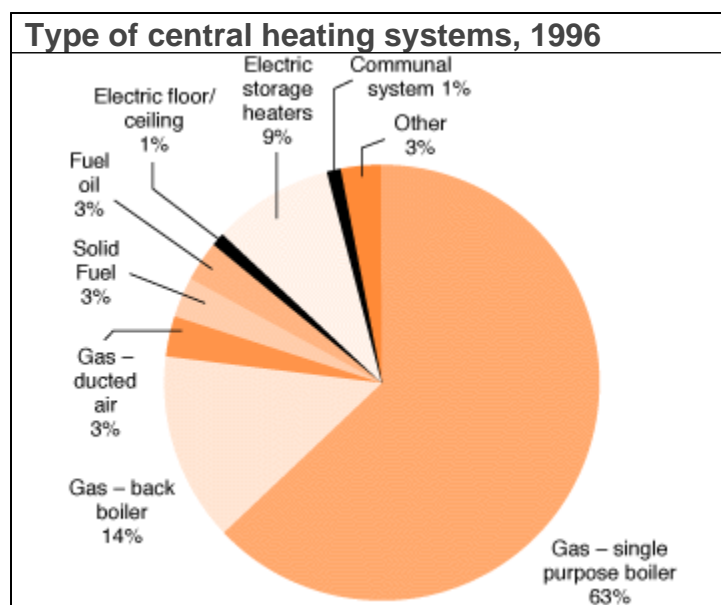


Not all the housing stock is currently in use, with 798,000 empty properties. The majority of these are in the private sector. Most vacant dwellings move into and out of vacancy quite quickly, but some stay vacant for a long time. Of the vacant dwellings in 1996, 81,000 were also vacant in 1991. One fifth of these were owned by local authorities.

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Facilities and Services

Over time, the provision of facilities and services inevitably improves as new dwellings are added to the stock and existing dwellings are upgraded. Levels of provision of key facilities such as central heating, double glazing, modern kitchens and bathrooms, have historically been much higher in the owner occupied sector although there are signs that the rented tenures, particularly RSL homes, are catching up.



The number of dwellings which lack basic amenities is reaching an irreducible minimum of around 200,000. Almost half of these are vacant.

The incidence of central heating has increased from 72% in 1986 to 88% in 1996. Although there have been large proportionate improvements in all rented sectors, the private rented sector has the lowest incidence with 75% of dwellings having central heating.

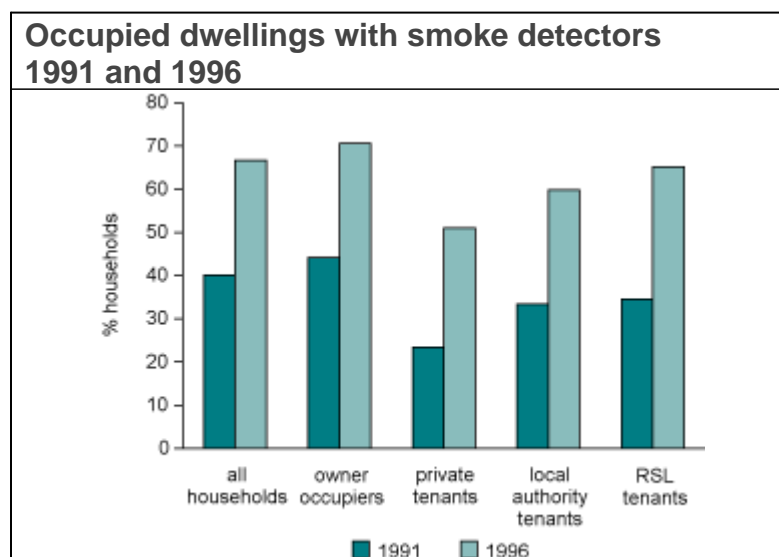
The incidence of double glazing has almost doubled since 1986 with around 60% of dwellings now having some double-glazed windows. This increase has been most marked in the social rented sectors.

The provision of smoke detectors has increased substantially since 1991, particularly in the rented sectors where it has almost doubled. Owner occupied dwellings are the most likely to have such detectors (70%).

A quarter of all households say they fear being burgled and having a dwelling which is insecure can exacerbate this fear. Less than a third of homes have fully secure windows and doors. Lack of security is a particular problem in the private rented and local authority sectors.

Modern kitchens and bathrooms (dating from after 1964) are least likely to be found in the private rented and local authority stocks.

Taking a modern dwelling as one which has kitchen and bathroom facilities installed after 1964, modern electrical wiring and central heating which is less than 30 years old, 78% of dwellings are modern. Owner occupied and RSL homes are most likely to be fully modernised. Provision of modern facilities in the local authority and private rented sectors, in particular local authority homes built between 1945 and 1964, is at a similar low level.



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Disrepair

Nearly 80% of dwellings have some fault recorded to the external or internal fabric but most of these faults are relatively minor requiring little or no work to rectify. Private rented dwellings are most likely to have such faults and RSL dwellings least likely.

Using standardised repair costs, the average level of disrepair across the whole stock is £17.20 per sq.m. which represents about £1,500 for an average size house. But the distribution of disrepair is not normal and the average is inflated by a small number of dwellings which have very high levels of disrepair. The median level of disrepair (£6.50 per sq.m.) is more indicative of the extent of disrepair for a typical dwelling.

There are higher levels of disrepair in the private rented sector . The median for these dwellings is £17.20 per sq.m. which is nearly twice the median value for local authority dwellings, three times the value for owner occupied homes and five times the value for RSL homes.

It is often assumed that the private rented sector has the most problems with disrepair because its dwelling stock tends to be older, but this is not the whole story. Private rented dwellings of all ages (except post-1964) are in a noticeably worse state of repair than dwellings of the same age in other tenures.

In the local authority stock it is the newer dwellings (post-1964) which tend to be worse than dwellings of the same age in other tenures. This is largely accounted for by high levels of disrepair in these purpose-built flats.

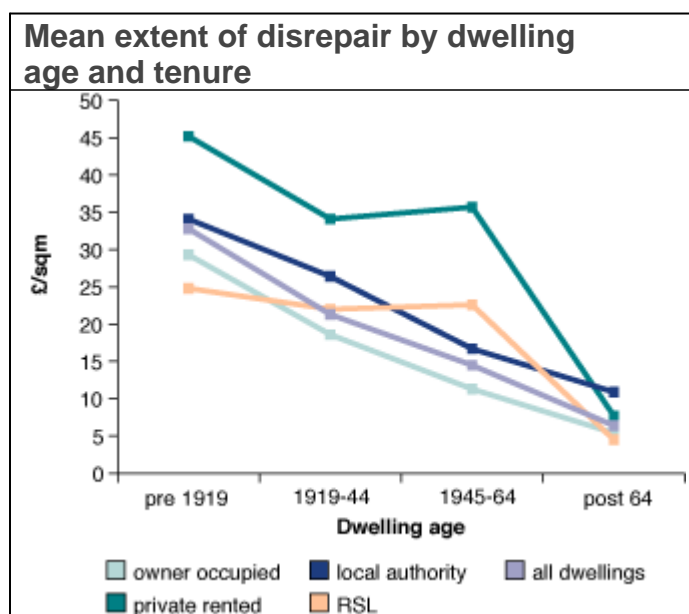
The highest levels of disrepair are found in older London boroughs, large urban districts and older resort and university towns. Levels of disrepair are twice as high in the 56 most deprived authorities, as identified in the Index of Local Conditions, than in other areas.

The estimated expenditure required to remedy urgent repairs (taking into account regional building prices, dwelling sizes and commissioning methods) works out at an average of £1,280 per dwelling. Adding in all other repairs increases this figure by about 50%. Including replacements due over the next 10 years increases it to nearly £3,500 per dwelling.

Mean costs of repairs and replacements for common dwelling types

	M
	e
	a
	n
owner occupied semis/terraces pre-	3
1919	4
	6
	0

owner occupied semis/terraces 1919-45	2
	2
	1
	0
owner occupied detached	1
	8
	4
	0
private rented pre-1919 houses	5
	3
	2
	0
private rented post-1919 houses	2
	1
	3
	0
local authority high rise flats	1
	0
	9
	0
local authority low rise flats 1945-64	1
	1
	0
	0
local authority houses post-1965	6
	3
	0
RSL pre-1919 houses	1
	9
	9
	0
RSL 1965-80 houses	4
	9
	0
RSL 1965-80 flats	4
	4
	0

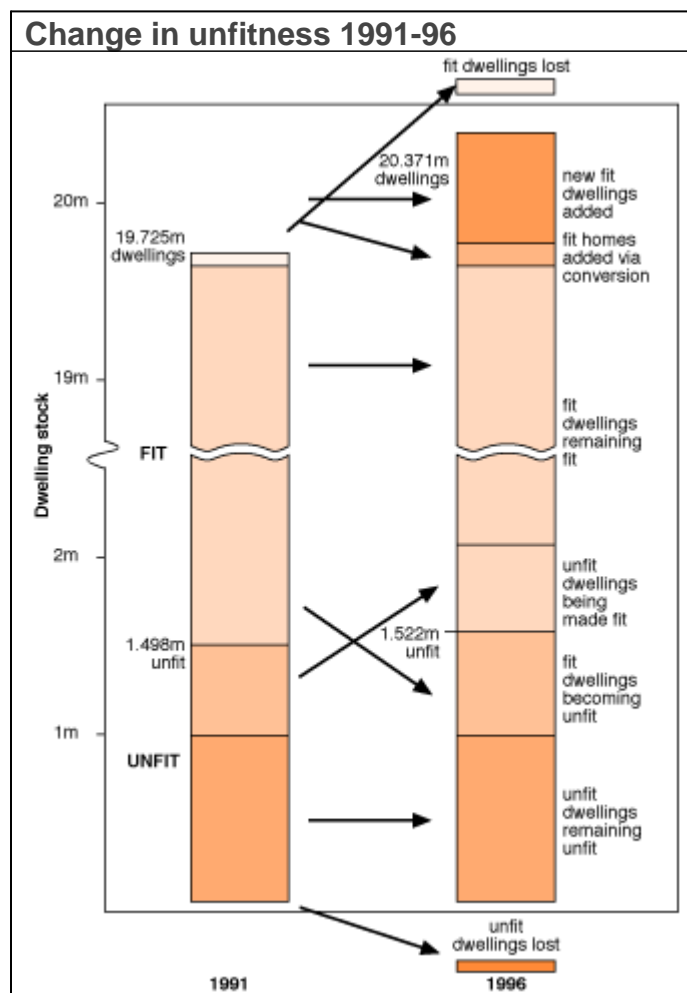


For the stock as a whole, the level of disrepair has shown little change since 1991 with reduction in standardised disrepair in the range of 0-5%. There has been a relative reduction in the levels of disrepair in the private rented and RSL sectors, largely a reflection of the changing composition of the private rented sector and substantial additions to the RSL stock since 1991. There has been a small relative increase in the levels of disrepair for households in the local authority stock.

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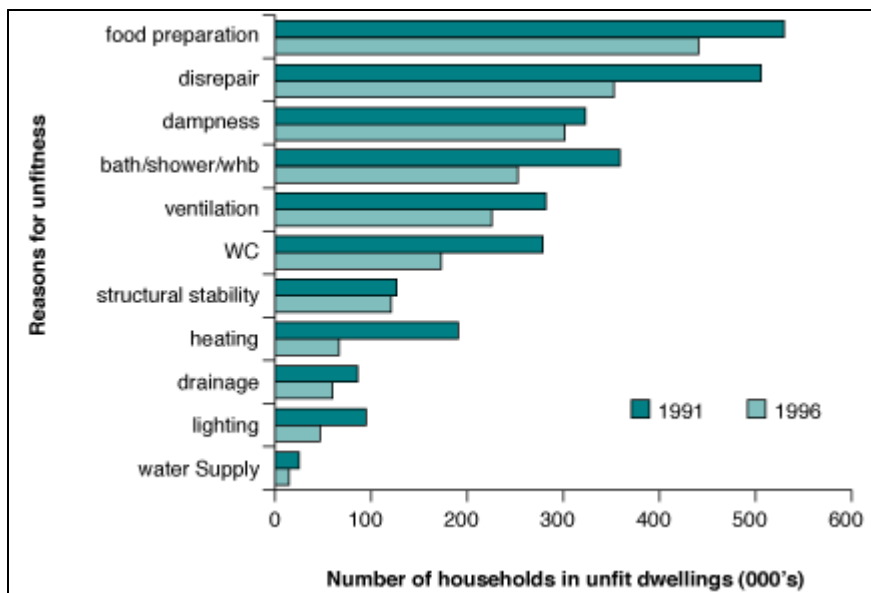
Unfitness

There are 1,522,000 unfit dwellings representing 7.5% of the stock. This is the same proportion as was unfit in 1991. About one million of these dwellings were also recorded as unfit in 1991 but the remaining half a million became unfit since 1991, with an equal number being made fit.



The most common reasons for unfitness are unsatisfactory facilities for preparation and cooking of food, disrepair and dampness. In 1996, more dwellings were unfit on one item alone than in 1991.

Reasons for unfitness 1991-96



The dwelling types with the highest rates of unfitness are pre-1919 houses (16.1%) and converted flats (21.6%). Post-1919 detached houses have the lowest rate of unfitness of all types (1.2%).

Unfitness rates vary considerably between tenures. For all dwellings, the rates are:

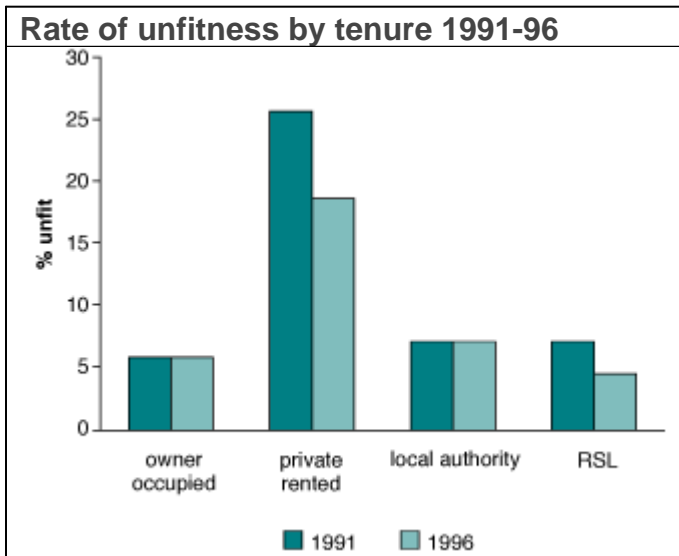
owner occupied	6.0%
private rented	19.3%
local authority	7.3%
RSL	5.2%

The unfitness rates experienced by households in these sectors are different because of differential rates of unfitness in vacant dwellings in each sector and also because of multi-occupancy in the private rented sector. In each tenure, the proportion of households living in unfit dwellings is:

owner occupiers	5.4%
private tenants	17.9%
local authority tenants	6.8%
RSL tenants	3.8%

%

The proportion of households living in unfit homes has remained the same since 1991 for owner occupiers and local authority tenants but it has fallen significantly for private and RSL tenants. Because of the sheer size of the sector, more than half of all unfit homes are owner occupied, and this proportion has increased since 1991.



The average cost of making dwellings just fit is £5,230. Vacant dwellings cost about twice as much as occupied dwellings to make fit. Highest costs to make fit are found in detached houses, where the average cost is £11,000, although the largest number of unfit dwellings are in pre-1919 semi-detached and terraced houses, where the average cost to make fit is £6,400.

A small proportion of dwellings (8%) can be made fit for a relatively small sum (£500), but these are dwellings with a single problem which is an acute health and safety hazard, typically ventilation and heating.

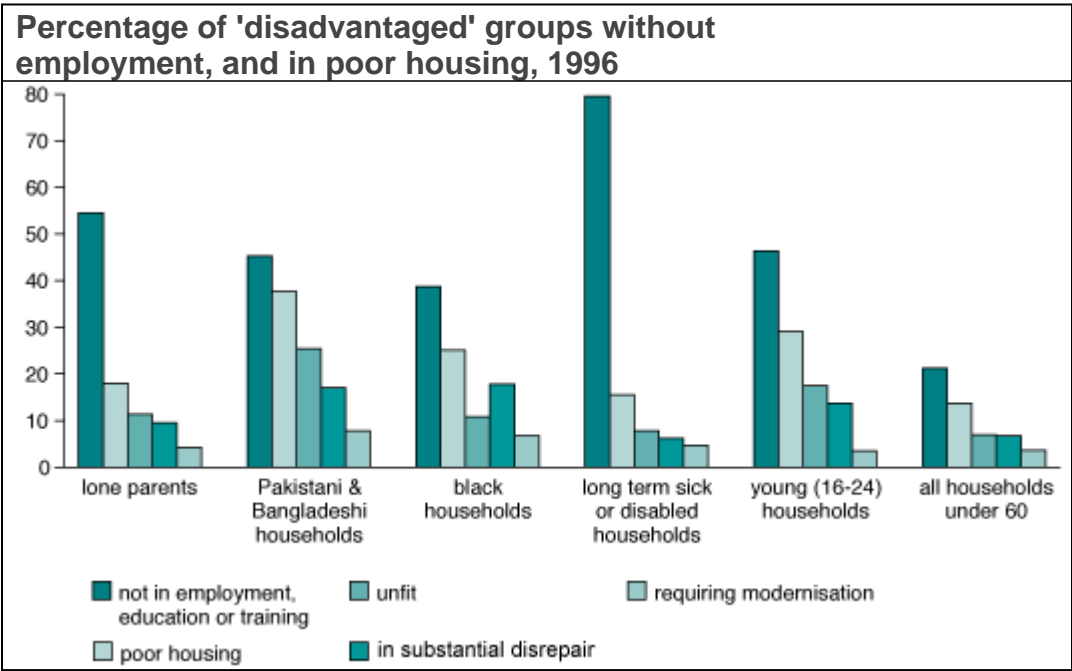
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Poor Housing

Poor housing is defined as that which is either unfit, in substantial disrepair or requires essential modernisation. 14.2% of households live in poor housing.

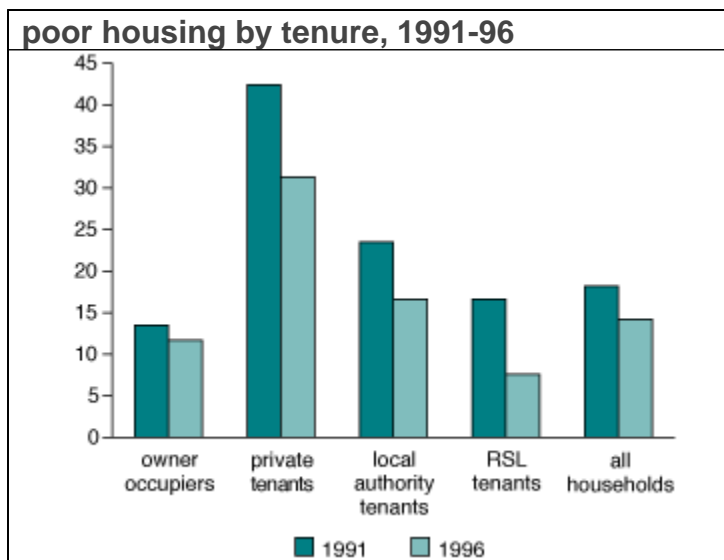
Households which are the most likely to live in poor housing are:

- ethnic minority households, but particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi (35%) and black (23%) households
- young (aged 16-24) households (29%)
- unemployed households (25%)
- elderly (aged 75 or more) households (20%)
- households employed part time (19%)
- lone parent households (18%).



Since 1991 there has been a reduction in the proportion of households living in unmodernised homes, but no significant change in the levels of disrepair and unfitness experienced by all households. However, the position of lone parents and that of ethnic minority households has worsened relative to all households since 1991. The position of all lone households and the unemployed has generally improved, largely as a result of essential modernisation having been carried out.

Change in percentage of households in



The tenure in which a household lives has an impact on whether particular household groups are more or less likely to live in poor housing. Private tenants are the most likely to live in poor housing (31%) and RSL tenants the least likely (8%). The position of both these groups of tenants has improved since 1991.

The particular groups which are the most likely to be in poor housing in each tenure are:

- owner occupiers
 - o all long term resident households (27%)
 - o ethnic minorities (24%)
 - o unemployed households (19%)

whereas the average for all owner occupiers is 12%.

- private tenants
 - o long term resident tenants (62%)
 - o households in regulated tenancies (47%)
 - o unemployed households (47%)

- o elderly households (45%)

- o tenants in receipt of housing benefit (41%)

whereas the average for all private tenants is 31%.

- for local authority (17%) and RSL (8%) tenants, there is little differentiation between the types of groups who live in poor housing.

Poor housing is not evenly distributed across the country. Local authorities with the highest level of poor housing are likely to be:

- old London boroughs
- older resort and university towns
- large urban districts.

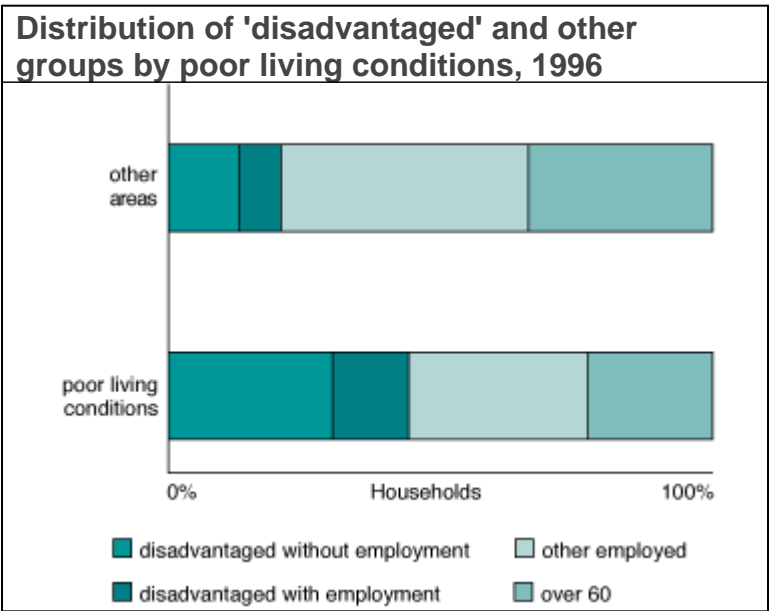
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Poor Living Conditions

Nearly 1.3 million (6.6%) households are housed within 'poor living conditions'. These are areas where there are concentrations of poor housing and/or environmental problems. Many of the groups who are more likely to live in poor housing are also more likely to be housed in poor living conditions. Those most likely to be housed in the latter are:

- ethnic minorities (19%), but particularly Bangladeshi and Pakistani households (30%)
- unemployed households (19%).

The majority (59%) of households in poor living conditions are tenants (social or private sectors). The tenants of local authorities are most likely to be both socially or economically 'disadvantaged' and housed in poor living conditions.



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Household Responses to Poor Conditions

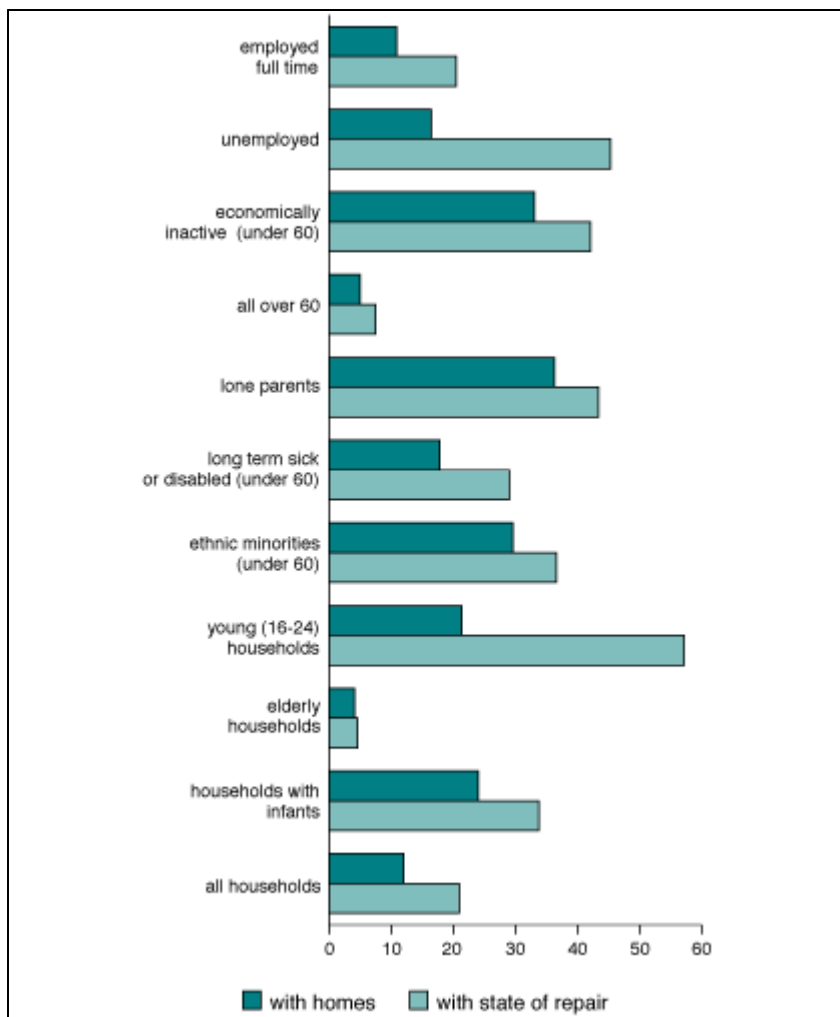
More than 90% of households are satisfied with their home and 86% satisfied with the condition of their home. Overall, the impact of poor housing and poor living conditions is not great:

- only 12% of households in poor housing are dissatisfied with their home;
- only 21% of households in poor housing are dissatisfied with its state of repair;
- only 16% of households in poor living conditions are dissatisfied with their home.

But some groups of households in poor housing are much more dissatisfied than others. Those more dissatisfied with the state of repair are:

- young households (57%)
- unemployed households (45%)
- lone parents (43%)
- private tenants (35%)
- ethnic minorities (37%)
- households with infants (34%).

<p>Percentage of household groups in poor housing who are dissatisfied with their home or its state of repair, 1996</p>
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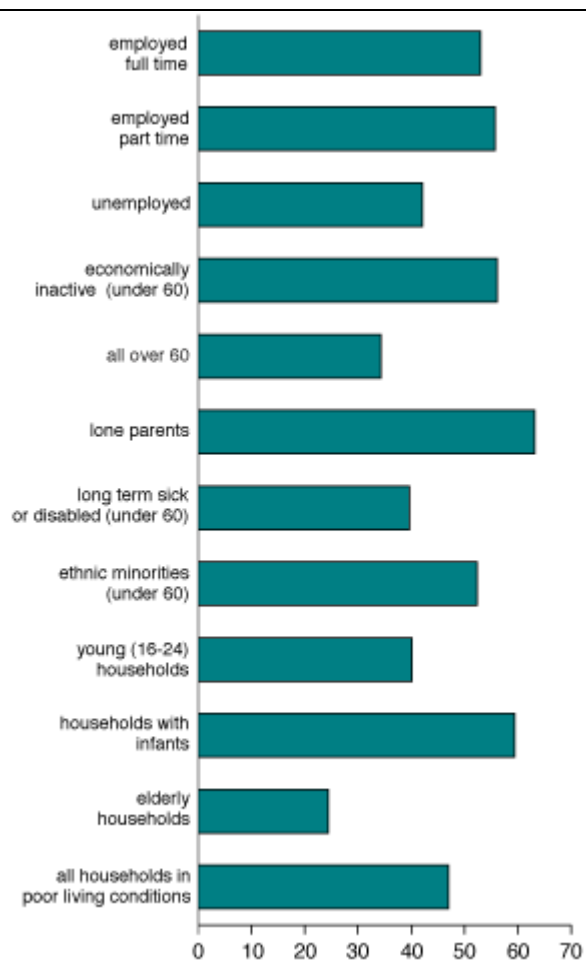


Generally, the same groups of households are also the most likely to be dissatisfied with their home if they are housed in poor living conditions.

Households in poor living conditions (47%) are much more likely to want to move than those in poor housing (37%) and households generally (32%). Those households in poor living conditions most wanting to move are:

- lone parents (63%)
- households with infants (59%)
- economically inactive households (56%)
- part time employed households (56%).

Percentage of household groups in poor living conditions needing or wishing to move, 1996



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Further Information

You can get copies of the full report, English House Condition Survey 1996 (ISBN 0 11 753458 7), priced £50, from The Stationery Office.

A full set of detailed tables to support the results presented in this report are available on the Department's Internet site.

If you cannot access the Internet, the Department can supply the tables in hard copy form. For further details, contact Peter-tomàs Gray, 2/B5, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU (Tel: 0171 890 3528).

Future Reports

A series of further reports will be prepared by the Department throughout 1998 and 1999.