



English House Condition Survey 2007

Headline
Report

A large abstract graphic composed of overlapping geometric shapes in shades of green, blue, and teal. The shapes form a stylized house-like structure with a white triangular void in the center. The colors transition from light green on the left to dark green at the bottom, and blue on the right.

**decent homes
and
decent places**



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Report

Decent Homes
and Decent
Places

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English House Condition Survey 2007: Headline Report

1. This summary report presents key findings from the 2007 English House Condition Survey and progress made towards improving living conditions in England.
2. The following key policy areas are addressed:
 - Housing conditions
 - a. housing stock decency
 - b. housing stock and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
 - c. vulnerable households in the private housing sector and non-decent homes
 - d. children living in non-decent homes
 - e. deprived districts and non-decent homes
 - Energy efficiency of the housing stock
 - Quality of the local environment.
3. The report focuses on indicators of progress related to key Government policies. Change is assessed using the longest period for which consistent data is available. The text identifies significant changes.
4. Headline findings from the survey are published as soon as they are available each year followed by more detailed results in the Annual Report.
5. The 2007 results relate to continuous fieldwork carried out between April 2006 and March 2008 and are presented as the mid-point position of April 2007. These results are based on a sample of 16,217 dwellings and 15,604 households. Technical details for the survey will be published in parallel with the Annual Report.

Housing conditions

a) decent homes

6. From 2006 the definition of decent homes was updated with the replacement of the Fitness Standard by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) as the statutory criterion of decency. Estimates using the updated definition of decent homes are not comparable with those based on the original definition. Accordingly any change in the number of decent and non-decent homes will be referenced to 2006 only. Estimates for 1996 to 2006 using the original definition are available in the 2006 EHCS Headline and Annual Reports.¹
7. The survey estimates there were 7.7 million non-decent homes in 2007, a little under 35% of the housing stock, Table 1.² RSL stock was least likely to be non-decent (26%) and privately rented accommodation most likely to be non-decent (45%). Overall 1.1 million homes in the social sector were non-decent and social housing was less likely to be non-decent than privately owned homes (29% and 36% respectively).

Table 1: Non-decent homes by tenure, 2006 and 2007

	number (000s)		percentage	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
owner occupied	5,335	5,304	34.6	34.1
private rented	1,223	1,244	46.8	45.4
all private	6,558	6,548	36.3	35.8
local authority	676	652	32.4	32.8
RSL	465	486	25.2	25.5
all social	1,142	1,138	29.0	29.2
all tenures	7,700	7,686	35.0	34.6

Base: all dwellings

8. The survey shows no (statistically significant) change in the number or proportion of the housing stock that was non-decent between 2006 and 2007, Table 1. Only the private rented sector shows any significant reduction in the proportion of homes that were non-decent (from 47% to 45%). The key reason for this improvement in private renting is likely to be the number of new and existing properties entering the sector during this period – the private rented sector grew more than any other sector between 2005 and 2007.³

¹ The 2006 Headline and Annual reports are available at:
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/2006headlinereport
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/ehcs2006annualreport

² Estimates from the EHCS are based solely on whether a home meets the four stated requirements set out in the updated definition of decent home (see *A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation*, Communities and Local Government, June 2006), and is an assessment of the property as observed by surveyors and subject to any limitations of the information they collect. The EHCS estimates in this report do not take into account any practical considerations for making the home decent, the wishes of the occupants as to any necessary work being carried out, nor any planned action the owner may have for the property.

³ See CLG Live Table 104 at:
www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/xls/table-104.xls

9. The most frequent reason homes did not achieve the decent homes standard was the presence of one or more Category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), Table 2. However privately owned homes (which account for virtually all housing built before 1919) were almost twice as likely to have Category 1 hazards present compared to social housing. Social housing was just as likely to fail the thermal comfort standard as the HHSRS criterion.

Table 2: Homes failing decent homes criteria by tenure, 2007

	Category 1 hazard (HHSRS)	thermal comfort	modern facilities	repair	all non-decent
number (000s):					
owner occupied	3,458	2,281	395	999	5,304
private rented	834	625	140	341	1,244
all private	4,292	2,906	535	1,340	6,548
local authority	292	265	125	151	652
RSL	224	252	57	88	486
all social	516	517	182	239	1,138
all tenures	4,808	3,423	716	1,579	7,686
percentage:					
owner occupied	22.2	14.7	2.5	6.4	34.1
private rented	30.5	22.8	5.1	12.5	45.4
all private	23.5	15.9	2.9	7.3	35.8
local authority	14.7	13.3	6.3	7.6	32.8
RSL	11.8	13.2	3.0	4.6	25.5
all social	13.3	13.3	4.7	6.1	29.2
all tenures	21.7	15.4	3.2	7.1	34.6

Base: all dwellings

Note: some dwellings fail on more than one criterion

10. In 2007 some 86% of all non-decent homes (all sectors) did not meet either of the HHSRS or thermal comfort criteria. For the stock as a whole, there was some reduction in homes failing the thermal comfort criterion since 2006, but this was offset by no significant progress occurring for homes with HHSRS Category 1 hazards, Annex Table A1.

b) Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

11. Some 4.8 million homes (nearly 22% of the housing stock) had HHSRS Category 1 hazards present in 2007, Table 3. Some 2.5 million homes had at least one of the types of falls hazards present, and 2.2 million comprised an excess cold hazard. The presence of a Category 1 hazard does not necessarily imply that the current occupants themselves are at serious risk. This depends on their vulnerability to the hazard(s) present.⁴

⁴ The HHSRS assessment of the seriousness of a hazard is based on the assumption of the person most vulnerable to that risk being present and not the actual occupant(s). More detailed information on the HHSRS is available at: www.communities.gov.uk/hhsrs

12. There are marked differences in the incidence of hazards across the social and private housing sectors. Within the social sector a little over 0.5 million homes (13% of all social housing) had Category 1 hazards present compared with 4.5 million (24%) privately owned homes in 2007. Privately rented homes were most likely and those rented by Registered Social Landlords least likely to have Category 1 hazards present (30% compared to 12%).

Table 3: Homes with Category 1 hazards present by type and tenure, 2006 and 2007

	number (000s)		percentage	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
any hazard:				
owner occupied	3,452	3,458	22.4	22.2
private rented	797	834	30.5	30.5
all private	4,249	4,292	23.5	23.5
local authority	297	292	14.2	14.7
RSL	206	224	11.1	11.8
all social	503	516	12.8	13.3
all tenures	4,752	4,808	21.6	21.7
excess cold:				
owner occupied	1,842	1,654	11.9	10.6
private rented	438	416	16.8	15.2
all private	2,280	2,070	12.6	11.3
local authority	91	85	4.3	4.3
RSL	60	70	3.2	3.7
all social	150	155	3.8	4.0
all tenures	2,430	2,225	11.1	10.0
any falls:				
owner occupied	1,695	1,823	11.0	11.7
private rented	376	416	14.4	15.2
all private	2,070	2,240	11.5	12.2
local authority	172	172	8.3	8.7
RSL	109	118	5.9	6.2
all social	282	290	7.2	7.5
all tenures	2,352	2,530	10.7	11.4

Base: all dwellings

Notes:

- For EHCS estimates, a Category 1 excess cold hazard is present in the home if its energy efficiency (SAP) rating is below a threshold equivalent to SAP 35 under the 2001 SAP methodology.
- Falls include Category 1 hazards arising from falls on stairs, falls on the level and falls between levels.
- There is a greater margin of error entailed in the assessment of falls hazards by surveyors (which is based wholly on their professional judgement) than for excess cold (which, for the EHCS, is derived from the more factual energy efficiency assessment carried out for the property). The HHSRS is a new (2006) approach to property inspection and more variability of judgement is to be expected in its early years (as surveyors become fully conversant with its methodology) compared with more established EHCS assessments of housing conditions.

13. Overall, there was no significant change in the number or proportion of homes with **any** Category 1 hazards between 2006 and 2007. The reduction in the proportion of homes with an excess cold hazard (from 11% to 10% of all homes) is consistent with improvements in energy efficiency (see below) and in homes failing the decent homes thermal comfort criterion. However, this reduction was offset in the overall figures by no statistically significant change in the proportion of homes with falls hazards (11%).

c) private sector vulnerable households

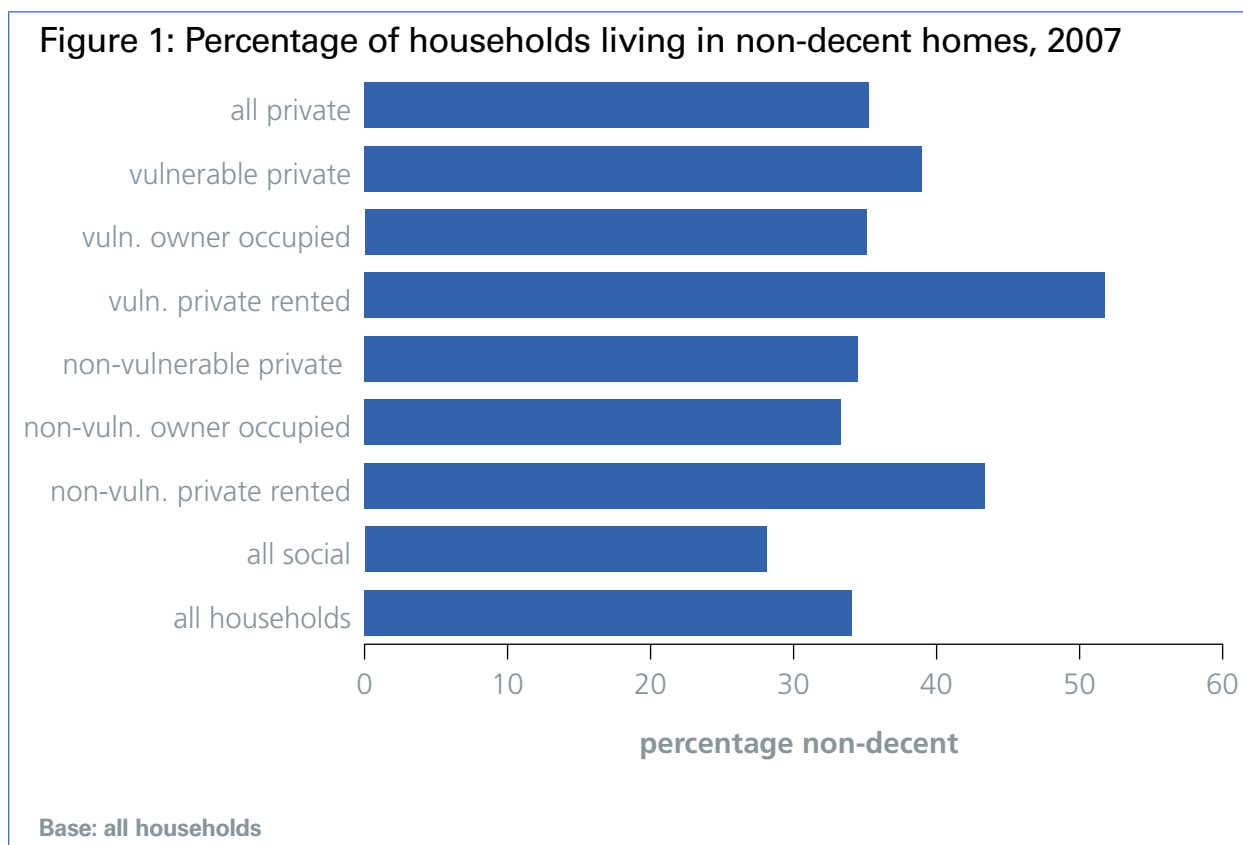
14. In 2007, 3.1 million 'vulnerable' households⁵ were living in the private sector and of these 1.2 million (39%) occupied non-decent accommodation, Table 4. The remaining were 1.9 million (61%) living in decent accommodation – an improvement from the 59% living in decent homes in 2006

Table 4: Households living in decent homes, 2006 and 2007

	number (000s)		percentage (%)	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
Decent homes:				
private vulnerable:				
owner occupied	1,543	1,575	63.0	64.9
private rented	334	354	45.0	48.2
all private vulnerable	1,877	1,929	58.8	61.0
private non-vulnerable:				
owner occupied	8,418	8,531	66.4	66.7
private rented	922	985	56.7	56.6
all private non-vulnerable	9,340	9,516	65.3	65.5
all owner occupied	9,961	10,106	65.8	66.4
all private rented	1,256	1,339	53.0	54.1
all private	11,217	11,445	64.1	64.7
all social	2,690	2,649	72.2	71.9
all households	13,907	14,094	65.5	65.9
non-decent homes:				
private vulnerable:				
owner occupied	905	851	37.0	35.1
private rented	408	380	55.0	51.8
all private vulnerable	1,313	1,231	41.2	39.0
private non-vulnerable:				
owner occupied	4,262	4,264	33.6	33.3
private rented	704	754	43.3	43.4
all private non-vulnerable	4,966	5,018	34.7	34.5
all owner occupied	5,167	5,115	34.2	33.6
all private rented	1,112	1,134	47.0	45.9
all private	6,279	6,249	35.9	35.3
all social	1,034	1,037	27.8	28.1
all households	7,313	7,286	34.5	34.1
Base: all households				

⁵ Vulnerable households are households in receipt of at least one of the principal means tested or disability related benefits.

15. Vulnerable households who privately rent their accommodation were more likely to live in non-decent homes compared to vulnerable home owners (52% and 35% respectively), Table 4 and Figure 1. However, housing conditions improved more for vulnerable households (owners and renters) than for other households living in the private sector.
16. In 2007, social tenants were less likely to live in non-decent homes in comparison to vulnerable or other households living in the private housing sector.



d) children living in non-decent homes

17. Government decent homes programmes are directed towards all social housing and the homes of vulnerable households owning or renting private accommodation. In 2007, 1.9 million households with children were living in non-decent homes, of which 687,000 were either social tenants or 'vulnerable' households living in the private housing sector, Table 5. Vulnerable households with children living in the private sector were more likely to live in non-decent homes than social tenants with children (38% compared to 27%).

Table 5: Households with children living in non-decent homes, 2006 and 2007

	number (000s)		percentage	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
social rented	341	338	26.7	27.4
private sector vulnerable	390	349	40.2	37.9
all targeted by decent homes	731	687	32.5	31.9
private sector non-vulnerable	1,246	1,238	30.7	31.2
all households with children	1,978	1,924	31.3	31.4

Base: all households with children

Notes:

- a) Children include anyone aged less than 16 years of age.
- b) 'All target by decent homes' includes households with children who are social tenants or 'vulnerable' households living in the private housing sector.
- c) 'Vulnerable' households are those in receipt of means tested and disability related benefits.
- d) There is no statistically significant change in the proportion of all children living in non-decent homes nor for any of the sub-groups of this table between 2006 and 2007.

18. There was no statistically significant change in the number of households with children living in non-decent homes from 2006 (this applies to all households with children and each of the sub-groups in the above table).

e) deprived districts and non-decent homes

19. In 2007, of the 91 districts⁶ that were or had been supported by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), 36% of homes were non-decent compared to 34% of homes in other areas.

20. In the social sector, 30% of homes were non-decent in these 91 'most deprived' districts compared to 28% of homes elsewhere, Table 6.

⁶ From 2006 the local authorities receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Fund allocations was revised. The 91 deprived districts include all receiving allocations during 2001-2006 and those receiving allocations 2006 to 2008. See the 'Glossary' section for further details.

Table 6: Non-decent homes by deprived districts by tenure, 2006 and 2007

		private sector		social sector	
		NRF91 districts	other districts	NRF91 districts	other districts
number (000s):					
2006	decent	4,270	7,225	1,487	1,307
	non-decent	2,596	3,962	677	465
2007	decent	7,339	4,411	1,530	1,223
	non-decent	3,846	2,702	670	468
percentage:					
2006	decent	62.2	64.6	68.7	73.8
	non-decent	37.8	35.4	31.3	26.2
2007	decent	62.0	65.6	69.6	72.3
	non-decent	38.0	34.4	30.4	27.7

Base: all dwellings.

Notes: The 91 districts include those receiving allocations from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) 2001 to 2006 and those receiving allocations 2006 to 2008. From 2008 the NRF has been replaced by the Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF).

Energy efficiency of the housing stock

21. Since 1996 the energy efficiency of homes has steadily improved - the average energy efficiency (SAP) rating increased by 8 points from 42 in 1996 to 50 in 2007, Table 7. On average social sector homes are substantially more energy efficient than private sector homes and the rate of energy efficient improvement since 1996 has been greater in the social sector. In 1996 the social sector was on average six SAP points greater than the private sector. In 2007 there was a 10 point difference between the two sectors; the social sector had an average SAP rating of 58 compared to 48 in the private sector.
22. In 1996 there was a three point difference in the average SAP between owner occupied and private rented dwellings, with the former being the more energy efficient out of the two categories. Since 1996 private rented dwellings have caught up in terms of average energy efficiency with owner occupied dwellings. In 2007 both owner occupied and private rented dwellings had an average SAP of 48.
23. Over the time period 1996 to 2007, RSL dwellings have consistently had a higher average SAP rating compared to the other three tenures. In 2007 the average RSL dwelling was three SAP points greater than the average local authority dwelling and 11 SAP points greater than the average private rented and owner occupied dwelling.

Table 7: Energy Efficiency, average SAP rating by tenure, 1996–2007

	1996	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
owner occupied	41.1	44.4	45.0	45.6	46.1	46.9	48.1
private rented	37.9	41.9	44.4	45.7	46.0	46.6	48.1
all private	40.7	44.1	44.9	45.6	46.1	46.8	48.1
local authority	45.7	49.6	52.0	53.9	55.3	55.8	56.2
RSL	50.9	56.4	56.7	57.3	58.9	59.3	59.5
all social	46.8	51.9	53.9	55.3	56.9	57.4	57.8
all tenures	42.1	45.7	46.6	47.4	48.1	48.7	49.8

Base: all dwellings

24. In 2007, 8% (1.7 million) of homes achieved the highest Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) Bands A to C, the majority of which were in Band C, with only 35,000 dwellings achieving a Band A/B rating⁷. Nineteen percent (4.3 million) of homes were in the least energy efficient EER Bands F and G, whilst the majority of homes (73%, 16.2 million) fell within the middle EER bands D and E, Table 8.

⁷ EER Bands are used in the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) provided as part of a Home Information Pack (HIP). The Certificate provides, among other indicators, an energy efficiency rating for the home on a scale from A-G (where A is the most efficient and G the least efficient). Under the European Union directive 2002/91/EC all housing (and other buildings) is required to have an Energy Performance Certificate by 2009. See <http://www.homeinformationpacks.gov.uk/> for more information.

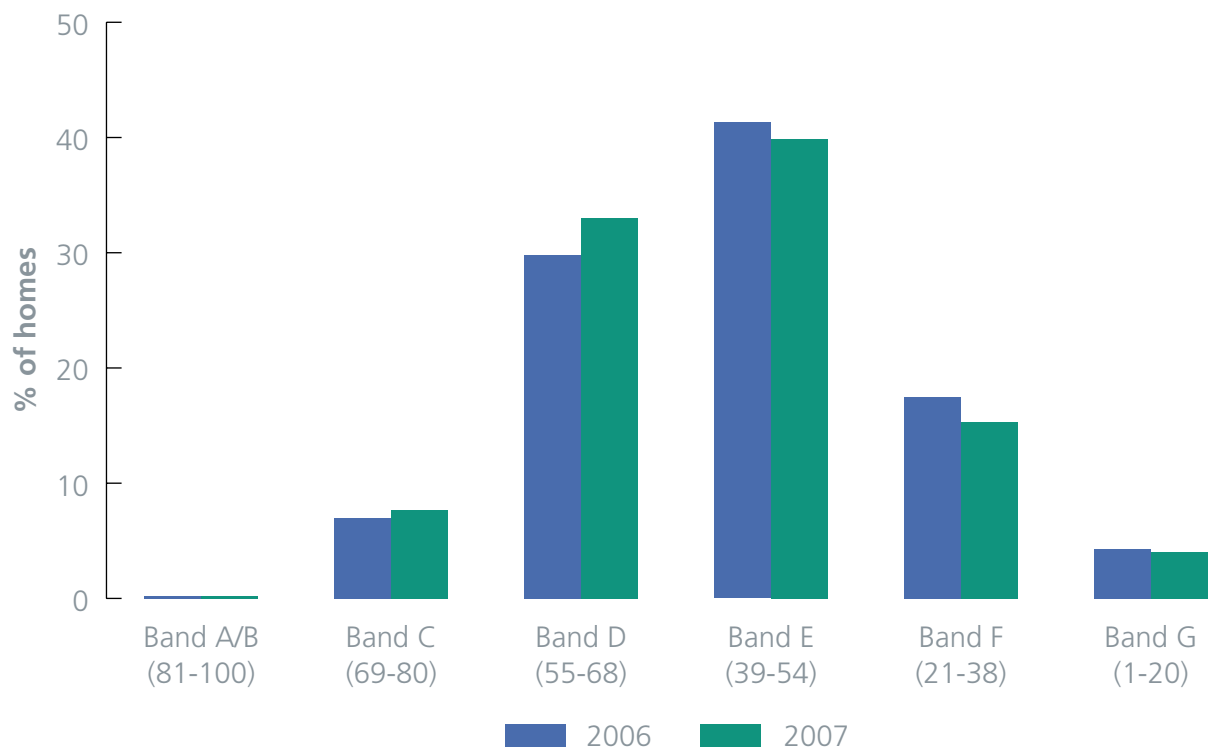
Table 8: Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) Bands for the whole stock, 2006–2007

	number (000s)		percentage	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
Band A/B (81-100)	35	35	0.2	0.2
Band C (69-80)	1,545	1,710	7.0	7.7
Band D (55-68)	6,555	7,316	29.8	33.0
Band E (39-54)	9,072	8,859	41.3	39.9
Band F (21-38)	3,838	3,389	17.5	15.3
Band G (1-20)	943	881	4.3	4.0
Total	21,989	22,189	100.0	100.0

Base: all dwellings

Note: EER Bands are based on SAP ratings which are shown in brackets. EER Bands A and B are grouped. There are currently insufficient numbers of Band A properties existing for which meaningful estimates can be made through a sample survey.

25. The gradual improvement in the energy efficiency of homes over time affects the proportion of homes in the highest and lowest EER bands, Figure 3. In 2007 there were a higher proportion of homes in EER Bands C and D than in 2006, and there were a lower proportion of homes in EER Bands E, F and G.
26. The percentage of homes in the most energy efficient Bands A to C increased from 7% to 8% from 2006 to 2007 and the percentage of homes in the least energy efficient Bands F and G decreased from 22% to 19% from 2006 to 2007, Figure 3.

Figure 3: Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) Bands for the whole stock, 2006–2007

Base: all dwellings

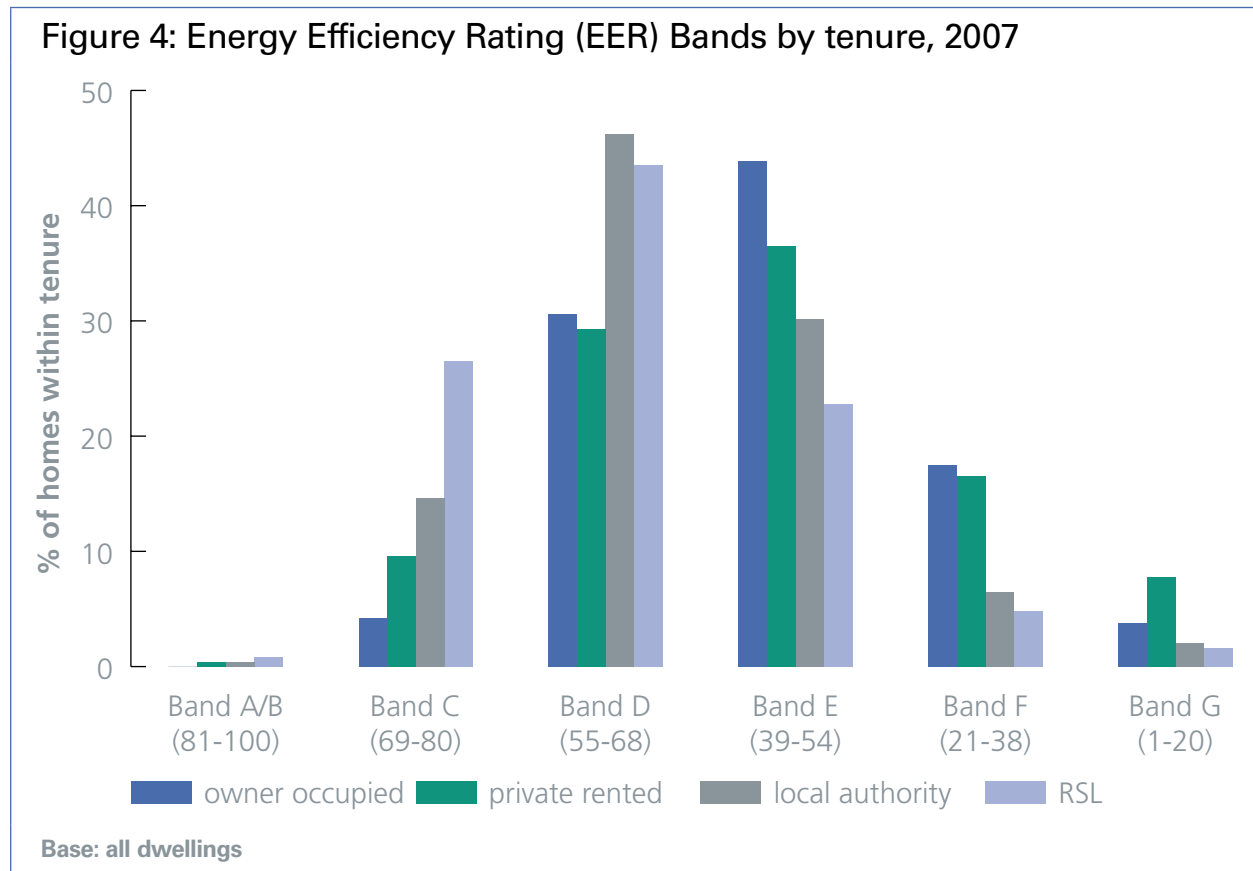
27. Social sector homes tend to be much more energy efficient than those in the private sector. In 2007 21% (0.8 million) of social sector homes achieved EER Bands A to C, compared to 5% (0.9 million) in the private sector, Table 9. Likewise, social sector homes had a smaller proportion of energy inefficient stock with only 7% (0.3 million) in the lowest Bands F and G, compared to 22% (4.0 million) in the private sector.

Table 9: Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) Bands by tenure, 2007

	private			social		
	owner occupied	private rented	all private	local authority	RSL	all social
number (000s)						
Band A/B (81-100)	0	10	10	9	16	24
Band C (69-80)	653	263	916	290	504	794
Band D (55-68)	4,768	801	5,569	919	828	1,747
Band E (39-54)	6,826	998	7,825	600	435	1,034
Band F (21-38)	2,717	451	3,168	130	91	221
Band G (1-20)	595	215	810	40	30	71
Total	15,560	2,738	18,298	1,987	1,904	3,891
percentages						
Band A/B (81-100)	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.8	0.6
Band C (69-80)	4.2	9.6	5.0	14.6	26.5	20.4
Band D (55-68)	30.6	29.3	30.4	46.2	43.5	44.9
Band E (39-54)	43.9	36.5	42.8	30.2	22.8	26.6
Band F (21-38)	17.5	16.5	17.3	6.5	4.8	5.7
Band G (1-20)	3.8	7.8	4.4	2.0	1.6	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Base: all dwellings						
Notes:						
a) EER Bands are based on SAP ratings which are shown in brackets. EER Bands A and B are grouped. There are currently insufficient numbers of Band A properties existing for which meaningful estimates can be made through a sample survey.						
b) A value of zero under the number of homes represents a value of less than 500 dwellings.						

28. In 2007 the greatest proportion of local authority and RSL dwellings (when split by EER Bands) were categorised as Band D with 46% and 44% respectively, whereas the owner occupied sector and private rented sector had the greatest proportion of homes categorised under the less energy efficient Band E with 44% and 36% respectively (Figure 4). These results emphasise the greater efficiency of social sector homes compared to private sector homes.
29. The private rented sector had an above average proportion of homes with an EER of Band C or higher, however the private rented sector had twice the average proportion of homes in the least energy efficient Band G (8% compared to 4% on average).

30. The owner occupied stock had the lowest percentage of dwellings achieving an EER Bands A to C in 2007 with 4%, approximately half the average for all tenures at 8%. The RSL stock had the greatest percentage of dwellings achieving an EER Bands A to C in 2007 with 27% and the lowest percentage of dwellings achieving Bands F and G with 6%.



Poor quality environments

31. In 2007, 3.2 million households lived in areas with substantial environmental problems as assessed by the survey, Table 10.

Table 10: Type of poor quality environments, 2003-2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
number (000s):					
'upkeep'	2,101	2,115	2,279	2,210	2,157
'traffic'	1,596	1,473	1,560	1,607	1,459
'utilisation'	453	389	395	365	370
poor quality environments	3,291	3,226	3,409	3,374	3,216
percentage:					
'upkeep'	10.1	10.1	10.8	10.4	0.0
'traffic'	7.7	7.0	7.4	7.6	0.0
'utilisation'	2.2	1.9	1.9	1.7	0.0
poor quality environments	15.9	15.4	16.1	15.9	15.0

Base: all households

Note: see 'Glossary' for definitions of poor quality environments and the three component types of problems covered by the survey.

32. The most prevalent of these problems relate to the 'upkeep' of the area (that is, problems associated with the management, maintenance and misuse of public and private buildings and space in the immediate environment). Some 2.2 million (10% of) households were living in neighbourhoods with upkeep problems. Some 1.5 million households were living with substantial problems related to traffic. A relatively small (and declining) number (370,000) were living in areas with substantial 'utilisation' problems related for example to vacant or boarded up housing and shops.
33. Overall, there is no clear trend in the number of households living with poor quality environments, with around 15 to 16% of all households experiencing such problems during the period 2003 to 2007.

Annex Tables

Table A1: Homes failing decent homes criteria by tenure, 2006 and 2007

	number (000s)		percentage	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
any non-decent:				
owner occupied	5,335	5,304	34.6	34.1
private rented	1,223	1,244	46.8	45.4
all private	6,558	6,548	36.3	35.8
local authority	676	652	32.4	32.8
RSL	465	486	25.2	25.5
all social	1,142	1,138	29.0	29.2
all tenures	7,700	7,686	35.0	34.6
HHSRS:				
owner occupied	3,452	3,458	22.4	22.2
private rented	797	834	30.5	30.5
all private	4,249	4,292	23.5	23.5
local authority	297	292	14.2	14.7
RSL	206	224	11.1	11.8
all social	503	516	12.8	13.3
all tenures	4,752	4,808	21.6	21.7
thermal comfort:				
owner occupied	2,408	2,281	15.6	14.7
private rented	655	625	25.1	22.8
all private	3,062	2,906	17.0	15.9
local authority	302	265	14.5	13.3
RSL	252	252	13.6	13.2
all social	553	517	14.1	13.3
all tenures	3,616	3,423	16.4	15.4
modern facilities:				
owner occupied	277	395	1.8	2.5
private rented	110	140	4.2	5.1
all private	387	535	2.1	2.9
local authority	118	125	5.6	6.3
RSL	45	57	2.4	3.0
all social	163	182	4.1	4.7
all tenures	550	716	2.5	3.2
repair:				
owner occupied	1,117	999	7.2	6.4
private rented	374	341	14.3	12.5
all private	1,491	1,340	8.3	7.3
local authority	141	151	6.8	7.6
RSL	74	88	4.0	4.6
all social	215	239	5.5	6.1
all tenures	1,707	1,579	7.8	7.1

Base: all dwellings

Note: the apparent increase in homes failing the modern facilities and services criterion (by 166,000 homes across all tenures) is primarily the combination of sampling error and a change in the assessment made by surveyors which should not be regarded as indicating any deterioration in overall condition on this measure. The change in assessment is related to the impact of the introduction of the HHSRS in the survey from 2006, with surveyors tending to be more likely to regard kitchen layouts as inadequate on account of fire, flames and hot surfaces hazards.

Table A2: Vulnerable groups by decent homes, 2006 and 2007

	number (000s)		percentage	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
decent homes:				
non vulnerable private	9,340	9,516	65.3	65.5
vulnerable private	1,877	1,929	58.8	61.0
social tenants	2,690	2,649	72.2	71.9
all households	13,907	14,094	65.5	65.9
non-decent homes:				
non vulnerable private	4,966	5,018	41.2	34.5
vulnerable private	1,313	1,231	34.7	39.0
social tenants	1,034	1,037	27.8	28.1
all households	7,313	7,286	34.5	34.1

Base: all households

Glossary

Key definitions and terms are included with entries grouped under the following headings:

- **Conditions** – decent homes; Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- **Areas** – deprived districts; Neighbourhood Renewal Fund; Working Neighbourhoods Fund and poor quality environment.
- **Households** – vulnerable households
- **Energy efficiency** – Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) Band.

• Conditions

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

- a) meets the current **statutory minimum** standard for housing. From April 2006 the Fitness Standard was replaced by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- b) it is in a reasonable state of **repair** (related to the age and condition of a range of building components including walls, roofs, windows, doors, chimneys, electrics and heating systems).
- c) it has reasonably **modern facilities and services** (related to the age, size and layout/location of the kitchen, bathroom and WC and any common areas for blocks of flats, and to noise insulation).
- d) it provides a reasonable degree of **thermal comfort** (related to insulation and heating efficiency).

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

From 2006 the definition of decent homes was updated with the replacement of the Fitness Standard by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) as the statutory criterion of decency. Estimates using the updated definition of decent homes are not comparable with those based on the original definition. Accordingly any change in the number of decent and non-decent homes will be referenced to 2006 only. Estimates for 1996 to 2006 using the original definition are available in the 2006 EHCS Headline and Annual Reports

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/2006headlinereport

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/ehcs2006annualreport

Estimates from the EHCS are based solely on whether a home meets the four stated requirements set out in the updated definition of decent home (see *A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation*, Communities and Local Government, June 2006) and is an assessment of the property as observed by surveyors and subject to any limitations of the information they collect. These estimates do not take into account any practical considerations for making the home decent, the wishes of the occupants as to any necessary work being carried out, nor any planned action the owner may have for the property. In not taking into account such factors, the EHCS estimates differ from Social landlord's own statistical returns. These differences have been evaluated and are published on the Communities and Local Government website www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/decenthomessocialsector

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

The purpose of the HHSRS assessment is not to set a standard but to generate objective information in order to determine and inform enforcement decisions. There are 29 categories of hazard, each of which is separately rated, based on the risk to the potential occupant who is most vulnerable to that hazard. The individual hazard scores are grouped into 10 bands where the highest bands (A-C representing scores of 1000 or more) are considered to pose Category 1 hazards. Local authorities have a duty to act where Category 1 hazards are present. Local authorities may take into account the vulnerability of the actual occupant in determining the best course of action.

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

The EHCS is not able to replicate the HHSRS assessment in full as part of a large scale survey. Its assessment employs a mix of hazards that are directly assessed by surveyors in the field and others that are indirectly assessed from detailed related information collected. Not all hazards are covered by the EHCS but it is expected that those included account for more than 95% of all Category 1 hazards. More details of how the HHSRS is measured by the EHCS is available in the 2006 EHCS Technical Report.

An overview and links to more detailed guidance on the HHSRS are available from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/hhsrs>

• Areas

Deprived districts

These are based on districts, which were supported through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) between 2001 and 2008.

The NRF aimed to enable England's most deprived local authorities to improve services, narrowing the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the country.

The districts were receiving an NRF allocation 2006 to 2008 or had received an allocation in earlier years (91 districts in total).

From 2008, Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) replaced NRF.

Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) replaced the NRF from April 2008. The WNF is a new dedicated fund to support councils and communities in developing more concentrated, concerted, community-led approaches to getting people in the most deprived areas of England back to work.

Poor Quality Environments: this measure is based on the professional surveyors' assessments of problems in the immediate environment of the home. In all sixteen specific environmental problems (separately assessed by the surveyors) are grouped together (through content and factor analysis - see the 2006 EHCS Technical Report for more details) into three types of problems related to:

- a) 'upkeep' – the upkeep, management or misuse of the private and public space and buildings (specifically, the presence of: scruffy or neglected buildings, poor condition housing; graffiti; scruffy gardens or landscaping; litter, rubbish or dumping; vandalism; dog or other excrement, nuisance from street parking);
- b) 'traffic' – road traffic and other forms of transport (specifically the presence of: intrusive motorways and main roads; railway or aircraft noise; heavy traffic; and ambient air quality);
- c) 'utilisation' – abandonment or non residential use of property (specifically, vacant sites; vacant or boarded up buildings; intrusive industry; or non conforming use of a residential area).

The overall assessment (providing the estimate of 3.2 million households living in poor quality environments) is based on whether the home has any of the three types of problems.

• Households

Vulnerable households: are households in receipt of at least one of the principal means tested or disability related benefits.

The definition of vulnerable households was households in receipt of: income support, housing benefit, attendance allowance, disability living allowance, industrial injuries disablement benefit, war disablement pension, pension credit, child tax credit and working tax credit. For child tax credit and working tax credit the household is only considered vulnerable if the household has a relevant income of less than the threshold amount (£15,460 for 2007).

The focus of the report is on vulnerable households in the private housing sector where choice and achievable standards are constrained by resources available to the household. This focus reflects the Government target to increase the proportion of private sector vulnerable households living in decent homes.

The survey has not been able to include two benefits listed in the decent homes guidance (*A Decent Home – the definition and guidance for implementation*, Communities and Local Government, June 2006), council tax benefit and income based job seekers allowance. Any households in receipt of either of these two benefits only will therefore be excluded from the survey's estimate of vulnerable households.

• Energy efficiency

SAP: is the energy cost rating as determined by the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) and is used to monitor the energy efficiency of homes. It is an index based on calculated annual space and water heating costs for a standard heating regime and is expressed on a scale of 1 (highly inefficient) to 100 (highly efficient with 100 representing zero energy cost).

The method for calculating SAP was comprehensively updated in 2005. SAP data based on the 2005 methodology was first published in the 2005 EHCS Headline Report (January 2007). Any data published before that was based on the SAP 2001 methodology and is therefore inconsistent.

Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) Bands

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

- Band A (92-100)
- Band B (81-91)
- Band C (69-90)
- Band D (55-68)
- Band E (39-54)
- Band F (21-38)
- Band G (1-20).

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