



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## BACKGROUND

# Welsh Housing Quality Standard: quality report

This report covers the general principles and processes leading up to the production of our statistics.

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# Contents

**What are these statistics?** (#section-109070)

**Policy and operational context** (#section-109072)

**Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)** (#section-109074)

**Users and uses** (#section-109096)

**Strengths and limitations of the data** (#section-109098)

**Data processing cycle** (#section-109100)

**Validation and verification** (#section-109102)

**Publication** (#section-109104)

**Standards** (#section-109106)

**Administrative Data Quality Assurance** (#section-109108)

**Quality** (#section-109110)

**Coherence** (#section-109124)

**Evaluation** (#section-109126)

**Footnotes** (#section-109149)

## What are these statistics?

These statistics provide summary information on the number of social housing dwellings that are compliant with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) (including acceptable fails) as at 31 March each year. The release covers compliance with the standard and information on compliance with the WHQS by individual component type.

As well as the detailed analysis shown within this annual release, all data at an individual social landlord level are published on [StatsWales](https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Social-Housing-Quality) (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Social-Housing-Quality>).

## Policy and operational context

### The Welsh Housing Quality Standard

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is the Welsh Government standard of housing quality. The WHQS was first introduced in 2002 and aims to ensure that all dwellings are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents. The Welsh Government set a target for all social landlords to improve their housing stock to meet the WHQS as soon as possible, with the deadline for achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) being the end of December 2020 with a small number of social landlords being granted an extension to December 2021 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Social landlords must maintain the WHQS on an ongoing basis.

To achieve the standard, all social landlords are expected to:

- have up to date information on the condition of their stock gathered via a rolling programme of stock condition surveys
- work to a comprehensive strategy for planned maintenance and improvement based on this information and taking into account the views and aspirations of its tenants, with the aim of keeping all homes in compliance, as far as practicable, with the standard.

The WHQS measures 41 individual elements within the following seven categories:

1. In a good state of repair
2. Safe and secure
3. Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated
4. Contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms
5. Well managed (for rented housing)
6. Located in attractive and safe environments
7. As far as possible suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities).

The information shown in this release does not cover all of the 42 individual elements as social landlords were not required to report on Part 6 <sup>[[footnote 1](#)]</sup> ([#footnote1](#)) of the WHQS (Located in attractive and safe environments) which was regarded as too difficult to measure consistently. A full list of the individual elements and which category of the WHQS they fall under is provided in Annex 1 in the main release.

**Revised guidance** (<https://gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-guidance>) was issued for social landlords in 2008.

Full compliance refers to dwellings where the WHQS standard is achieved for all individual elements.

However, there can be situations where achieving the standard for an individual

element is not possible. Such situations may include the cost or timing of the work, residents choosing not to have the work done or where there are physical constraints to the work. In these instances, the landlords may record one or more element as acceptable fails. Where a dwelling contains one or more acceptable fails but all other elements are compliant, the dwelling is deemed to be compliant subject to acceptable fails.

Once a Local Authority or Registered Social Landlord has reached 100% compliance, they have achieved the WHQS required standard and enter a maintenance phase at which point any properties that fall out of compliance will still be considered compliant subject to acceptable fails.

The **National Housing Strategy** (<https://gov.wales/review-evidence-inform-development-national-housing-strategy>) includes an objective for all households in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality homes.

The **White Paper for Better Lives and Communities** (<https://gov.wales/white-paper-better-lives-and-communities>) published in May 2012 includes the proposal to 'Improve the quality of existing homes, including their energy efficiency, through the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and other mechanisms'.

The **Housing (Wales) Act** (<http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=8220>) became law on 17 September 2014. The Housing Act aims to improve housing standards, increase affordability, enhance our communities and help prevent the difficulties and lack of opportunities often encountered by vulnerable people.

## **Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social,

economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the **Wellbeing of Wales report** (<https://gov.wales/wellbeing-wales>).

Further information on the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** (<https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-statutory-guidance>).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

## Users and uses

The collection was introduced to monitor the progress made by local authorities and RSLs in achieving the WHQS standard for all their stock.

More generally the information is used for:

- monitoring housing trends
- policy development
- advice to ministers
- informing debate in the Senedd Cymru and beyond
- geographic profiling, comparisons and benchmarking.

There will be a variety of users of these statistics including national and local government, researchers, academics and students.

## Strengths and limitations of the data

### Strengths

- The information is processed and published frequently and in an ordered manner to enable users to see the statistics when they are current and of greatest interest.
- Outputs have a clear focus on Wales and have been developed to meet the internal and external user need in Wales.
- Detailed statistics are provided via our **StatsWales** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Social-Housing-Quality>) website at local authority level.

### Limitations

- The WHQS currently applies only to social housing. The release does not therefore provide any information on the quality or condition of properties

- within other tenures including owner occupied and privately rented dwellings.
- The information shown in the release does not cover all of the 42 individual elements as social landlords were not required to report on Part 6 [\[footnote 1 \(#footnote1\)\]](#) of the WHQS (Located in attractive and safe environments) which was regarded as too difficult to measure consistently.

Because of the devolved administrations and differing policy, there is less scope for direct UK comparisons (see 'Coherence' later in the document).

## **Data processing cycle**

### **Data source and coverage**

This annual data collection was introduced in July 2012 in order to regularly monitor the progress made by all social landlords (local authorities and registered social landlords) in achieving the WHQS for all their stock. Landlords are asked to provide information on the number of dwellings within their stock which complied with the standard as a whole (excluding any assessments under Part 6). As well as information on the number of dwellings that complied subject to 'acceptable fails'.

### **Data collection**

The figures shown in this Statistical Release are based on information collected via annual statistical returns completed by local authorities and registered social landlords in Wales. Local authorities and registered social landlords are notified of the data collection exercise timetable in advance. This allows adequate time for local authorities and registered social landlords to collate their information,

and to raise any issues they may have. There is guidance in the spreadsheet, which assists users when completing the forms.

Copies of the current WHQS data collection form are available on the [statistics and research website](https://gov.wales/data-collection-welsh-housing-quality-standard) (<https://gov.wales/data-collection-welsh-housing-quality-standard>).

Data were collected from all 11 local authorities that retained stock as at 31 March 2022 and from 49 of the Welsh Registered Social Landlords including Abbeyfield societies, Almshouse Charities and Co-ownership societies.

For the purposes of this data collection 'stock to be assessed' is defined as all self-contained properties, including bedsits, under the headings of general needs, sheltered, other supported and extra care as provided in the annual stock return for 2018-19 for each social landlord.

The proportion of social housing stock managed by registered social landlords will have been influenced by the large scale voluntary transfers of local authority stock as shown below. All transfers covered 100% of the local authority housing stock.

## Date of Stock Transfer

Local authority	Date of transfer	Registered social landlord
Bridgend	12 September 2003	Valleys to Coast
Rhondda Cynon Taf	10 December 2007	RCT Homes
Monmouthshire	17 January 2008	Monmouthshire Housing
Torfaen	01 April 2008	Bron Afon Community Housing

<b>Local authority</b>	<b>Date of transfer</b>	<b>Registered social landlord</b>
Conwy	29 September 2008	Cartrefi Conwy
Newport	09 March 2009	Newport City Homes
Merthyr Tydfil	20 March 2009	Merthyr Valleys Homes
Ceredigion	30 November 2009	Tai Ceredigion
Gwynedd	12 April 2010	Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd
Blaenau Gwent	26 July 2010	Tai Calon Community Housing
Neath Port Talbot	05 March 2011	NPT Homes

Landlords were asked to provide information on the number of dwellings within their stock which complied with the standard as a whole as at 31 March 2022 (excluding any assessments under category 6) as well as information on the number of dwellings that complied subject to acceptable fails. Social landlords were asked to include only those properties meeting all of the elements of the WHQS apart from the environmental standards (as outlined in Part 6 of the **2008 WHQS revised guidance** (<https://gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-whqs-environmental-standard-0>)) in **Table 1 of the data collection return** (<https://gov.wales/data-collection-welsh-housing-quality-standard>). In **Table 2 of the data collection return** (<https://gov.wales/data-collection-welsh-housing-quality-standard>) social landlords were asked for the number of properties complying with 10 components. Thus the compliance numbers in Table 2 will generally be higher than those given in Table 1, as properties may comply with a subset of the elements without necessarily complying with them all.

The WHQS is an interpretive standard and there are many situations where full compliance with the standard on individual components has not been possible for social landlords due to the cost effectiveness of the work (for example making structural changes to the home to increase internal space), where residents exercise choice (for example where they don't want a bath and a shower in their bathroom) or where there are physical constraints to the work. In these cases landlords were instructed to record an 'Acceptable Fail' against that individual component. An 'Acceptable Fail' is only possible on individual elements and not the dwelling as a whole.

## **Validation and verification**

The information is collected annually via Excel spreadsheets which are downloaded from the Afon file transfer website which provides a secure method for users to submit data. There is guidance in the spreadsheet, which assists users on completing the form. The spreadsheets allow respondents to validate some data before sending the spreadsheet to the Welsh Government.

Examples of validation checks within the forms include cross checks with other relevant tables and checks to ensure data is logically consistent. Respondents are also given an opportunity to include contextual information where large changes have occurred (e.g. data items changing by more than 10% compared to the previous year). This enables some data cleansing at source and minimises follow up queries.

On receipt of the data collection forms, the data collection team carry out further validation and verification checks, for example:

- Common sense check for any missing/incorrect data without any explanation.

- Arithmetic consistency checks.
- Cross checks against the data for the previous year.
- Cross checks with other relevant data collections.
- Thorough tolerance checks.
- Verification that data outside of tolerances is actually correct.
- We undertake a series of validation steps to ensure that the data is correct and consistent.

The data collection team work closely with the data providers to ensure the information provided is accurate and on a consistent basis. They also check that the data is consistent with the number of new build units reported during the past year and resolve any queries with landlords. If there is a validation error, we contact the local authority or registered social landlord and seek resolution. If we fail to get an answer within a reasonable timescale, we will use imputation to improve data quality and will inform the organisation and explain to them how we have amended or imputed the data.

Copies of the **data collection forms** (<https://gov.wales/data-collection-welsh-housing-quality-standard>) can be found on the website.

In tables where figures have been rounded, the sum of the individual figures may not equal the total shown.

## Publication

Once the data has been finalised, the release is compiled and key points and commentary are drafted. The release is independently checked and a final sense check is carried out by the relevant statistician prior to publication on the website.

## **Standards**

The statistics that are prepared adhere to recognised professional standards. They are produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics independently under the responsibility of the Welsh Government Chief Statistician.

Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political reference.

More detailed quality information relating specifically to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, which is not included in the quality report, is given below.

## **Administrative Data Quality Assurance**

This release has been scored against the UK Statistics Authority Administrative Data Quality Assurance matrix. The matrix is the UK Statistics Authority regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data. The Standard recognises the increasing role that administrative data are playing in the production of official statistics and clarifies what producers of official statistics should do to assure themselves of the quality of these data. The toolkit that supports it provides helpful guidance to statistical producers about the practices they can adopt to assure the quality of the data they receive, and sets out the standards for assessing statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The matrix assesses the release against the following criteria:

- Operational context and administrative data collection
- Communication with data supply partners
- Quality assurance principles, standards and checks applied by data suppliers
- Producer's quality assurance investigations and documentation.

The release has provisionally been scored as 'A2: Enhanced assurance' against each of the first three of the above categories and as 'A3: Comprehensive assurance' against the final category.

## Quality

Welsh housing statistics adhere to the Welsh Government's **Statistical Quality Management Strategy** (<https://gov.wales/statistical-quality-management-strategy>), and this is in line with the European Statistical System's six dimensions of quality, as listed in Principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Details of the six dimensions, and how we adhere to them, are provided below:

## Relevance

The degree to which the statistical product meets user needs for both coverage and content.

The data in this Statistical Release form the basis of evidence for measuring the number of social landlord dwellings that have achieved WHQS. They are used by the Welsh Government, local authorities, and other housing organisations to monitor the progress made by Welsh social landlords in achieving the WHQS for

all their stock by 2022. Other interests and uses of this data are outlined above.

We actively review all our outputs and welcome feedback.

## **Accuracy**

Data were collected from all 11 local authorities that retained stock as at 31 March 2022 and from 49 of the Welsh Registered Social Landlords including Abbeyfield societies, Almshouse Charities and Co-ownership societies.

Some landlords have advised us of recent stock condition surveys, improved estimation processes and improved data management systems, which has led to an improvement in the accuracy of their data. In a small number of cases, it has not been possible to revise the historic data affected (these are footnoted on StatsWales). This has led to a decrease in compliance levels for these landlords.

## **Revisions**

There have been no revisions made to any of the previous years' data.

We follow the **Welsh Government's statistical revisions policy**

(<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research-statement-revisions-errors-and-postponements>).

## **Timeliness and punctuality**

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication.

All outputs adhere to the Code of Practice for Statistics by pre-announcing the

date of publication through the **Upcoming pages on the Statistics for Wales website** (<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/upcoming>). Furthermore, should the need arise to postpone an output this would follow the Welsh Governments **revisions, errors and postponements** (<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research-statement-revisions-errors-and-postponements>) arrangements.

We publish releases as soon as practical after the relevant time period.

## Accessibility and clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format(s) in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.

WHQS statistics for Wales are published in an accessible, orderly, pre-announced manner on the Welsh Government website at 9:30am on the day of publication.

An RSS feed alerts registered users to this publication and a tweet from **@StatisticsWales** (<http://www.twitter.com/statisticswales>) alerts Twitter users to it's release. Simultaneously the releases are also published on GOV.UK.

We aim to inform known key users of the publication of the statistics when they are published. An e-mail is circulated to the **Housing Information Group** (<https://gov.wales/housing-information-group>).

All releases are available to download for free. More detailed data are also available at the same time on the **StatsWales website** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Social-Housing-Quality>) and this can be manipulated online or downloaded into spreadsheets for use offline.

In our outputs, we aim to provide a balance of commentary, summary tables, charts and maps where relevant. The aim is to ‘tell the story’ in the output, without the bulletin or report becoming overly long.

We aim to use Plain English in our outputs and all outputs adhere to the **Welsh Government accessibility policy** (<https://gov.wales/accessibility-statement-govwales>). Furthermore, all our headlines are published in Welsh and English.

We regularly peer review our outputs internally.

Further information regarding the statistics can be obtained by contacting the relevant staff detailed on the release or via **stats.housing@gov.wales** (<mailto:stats.housing@gov.wales>).

A full set of data including information by individual local authority and individual RSL back to 2007-08 is available to download from our **StatsWales interactive website** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Social-Housing-Quality>).

## Comparability

The degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.

In May 2014 a social research report was published by Altair called the ‘<https://gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-verification-progress-achieving-standard-0>) **Welsh Housing Quality Standard: Verification of progress in achieving the Standard** (<https://gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-verification-progress-achieving-standard-0>)’ (<https://gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-verification-progress-achieving-standard-0>) was published which included a recommendation for the Welsh Government to ‘consider splitting the results to reflect the three landlord types: Local Authority, LSVT Housing Association and Traditional Housing Association.’ Following on from this, whilst this release does not currently provide any separate analysis for all 3 different landlord types,

detailed data are now available on the Stats Wales website both at an individual landlord level and by each of the 3 landlord types.

## **Coherence**

The degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but which refer to the same phenomenon, are similar.

## **Housing health and safety rating system**

The WHQS was first introduced in 2002. In 2004 The Housing Act changed the way in which landlords assessed the standard and safety of their dwellings. The Act replaced the Fitness Standard with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which assesses twenty nine categories of housing hazard and provides a rating for each hazard. From 2004 onwards landlords were required to include HHSRS in their inspection process and stock condition surveys. Any element categorised with a HHSRS Category 1 Hazard would automatically result in the dwelling 'Failing' the WHQS.

## **Related Statistics for Other UK Countries**

### **England**

In July 2000 a 10-year target was set with the aim of bringing all social housing in England up to a decent standard by 2010 or other renegotiated deadline. The Decent Homes Standard arose from the UK Government's Housing Green Paper – 'Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All' and the standard was first

published in England in April 2002. The national baseline was set at 1 April 2001 using data from the 2001 English House Condition Survey (EHCS). Progress up to 2011 has been monitored nationally on a regular basis through the same survey.

The latest information is available in the **English Housing Survey 2020 to 2021: headline report (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)**. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2020-to-2021-headline-report>)

## **Scotland**

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) was introduced in February 2004 and is the Scottish Government's principal measure of housing quality in Scotland. The SHQS is a set of five broad housing criteria which must all be met if the property is to pass SHQS. Scottish Government set a policy target for those landlords to bring their stock up to every element of the Standard (where applicable) by April 2015.

The Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) is the official, national measure of SHQS progress towards, and beyond, the April 2015 deadline for social landlords. The latest information is available in the report **Scottish House Condition Survey: 2019 key findings (Scottish Government)**. (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-house-condition-survey-2019-key-findings/pages/11/>)

## **Northern Ireland**

The Decent Homes Standard was introduced in June 2004 to promote measurable improvements to housing in Northern Ireland. The Decent Homes standard in Northern Ireland is tracked via the **House Condition Survey**

**(Northern Ireland Housing Executive)** ([http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/housing\\_research/house\\_condition\\_survey.htm](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/housing_research/house_condition_survey.htm)) and the latest information is available in the report **Northern Ireland House Condition Survey 2016 Main Report (Northern Ireland Housing Executive)**. (<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey>)

## Evaluation

We always welcome feedback on any of our statistics. Please contact us via email: [stats.housing@gov.wales](mailto:stats.housing@gov.wales) (<mailto:stats.housing@gov.wales>)

## Footnotes

[1] Part 6 is the environment standard of the WHQS, 'Located in attractive and safe environments' and compliance with this cannot be easily measured on a consistent basis.

This document may not be fully accessible.

For more information refer to our **accessibility statement** (<https://gov.wales/accessibility-statement-govwales>).