



Housing Hazards and Licences, 2020-21

8 March 2022
SFR 79/2022

Housing hazards

The Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is used to assess whether properties are safe or whether a hazard exists that may cause harm to the health and safety of the occupant. Category 1 hazards pose the greatest risk and if found the local authority has a duty to take the appropriate enforcement action.

The onset of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in March 2020 and the subsequent public health measures introduced by the UK and Welsh Governments had a substantial impact on local authorities' ability to undertake inspections during 2020-21. Specifically, notably fewer inspections were undertaken in 2020-21 and, where available, resources were focussed on premises at higher risk.

- During 2020-21, local authorities carried out 1,873 assessments under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), just a third of the number carried out in 2018-19.
- Category 1 hazards were found in 845 (45%) of all assessments made during 2020-21. The most common Category 1 hazard found in both Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and non-HMOs was 'Excess Cold'.
- Action by local authorities during 2020-21, resulted in 567 Category 1 hazards being resolved, of which 511 (90%) were in non-HMO dwellings and 56 (10%) were in HMO dwellings.

Licences

- At 31 March 2021, there were 7,229 licensed HMOs, of which 34% (2,443) were under mandatory licenses and 66% (4,786) were under discretionary 'additional licensing' schemes.

About this release

This annual Release presents information on houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and on residential premises assessed by local authorities under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

The release also covers the selective licensing of dwellings by local authorities under the 2004 Housing Act and the licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

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1. Introduction

Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS)

The HHSRS is a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks, and hazards, to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. It is used to determine whether residential premises are safe to live in, or whether a hazard exists that may cause harm to the health and safety of a potential occupant. Whilst it covers all residential premises, it is more commonly used to assess standards in private sector housing.

The HHSRS assesses 29 types of housing hazard and provides a rating for each one. Those which score high on the scale (and are therefore the greatest risk) are called Category 1 hazards – if a dwelling contains a Category 1 hazard the local authority has a duty to take the appropriate enforcement action. Those that fall lower down the scale and pose a lesser risk are called Category 2 hazards – when these occur the local authority may take enforcement action. Local authorities now base all enforcement decisions, in respect of residential premises, on HHSRS assessments.

Any element categorised with an HHSRS Category 1 Hazard would automatically result in the dwelling 'Failing' the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS).

The information shown in this release only covers those residential dwellings which were assessed by local authorities during the period and not all residential dwellings. However, headline information about the HHSRS across all residential buildings is available in the [Welsh Housing Condition Survey](#) (headline results). Further information on the HHSRS is provided in the [Key Quality Information](#) section.

Assessments under the HHSRS may be carried out for a number of reasons. For example, an HHSRS assessment is carried out when licensing an HMO or when a complaint about a property is received from the occupier or a neighbour.

The following sections of this release cover the number of assessments made by local authorities during the year and the types of hazards found within those dwellings. It also looks at how assessments undertaken in dwellings with only one household (non-HMOs) compare with assessments undertaken in dwellings which contain more than one household which are known as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), and cover a wide range of housing types mainly in the private rented sector.

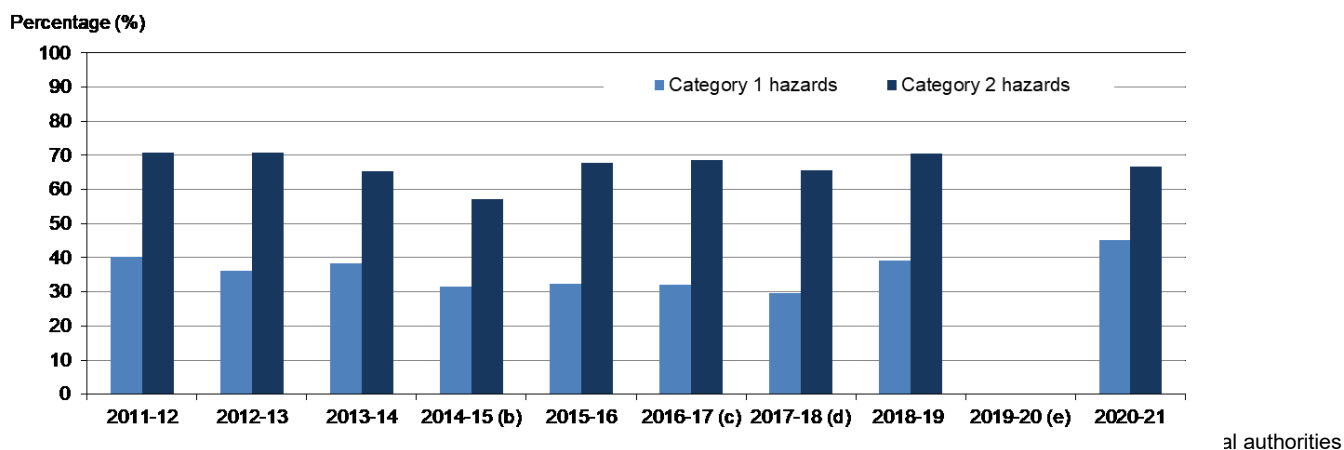
Further information on HMOs is provided in [Section 5](#) and in the [Glossary](#) section of this release.

2. Assessments

The number of assessments carried out each year by local authorities under the HHSRS will vary.

During 2020-21, 1,873 assessments were carried out across Wales. This was markedly lower than in previous years and was a direct result of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic with local authorities reporting that the pandemic affected their ability to undertake assessments. Of these assessments, 26% were in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), a markedly lower proportion than in previous years. Again, this was attributable to the impact of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

Chart 1: Percentage of all assessments which contained at least one Category 1 or Category 2 hazard (a)



(a) An assessment can contain both Category 1 and category 2 hazards.
 (b,c,d) Includes estimated figures for some local authorities, please see [Key quality information](#) for details.
 (e) Data not collected due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Category 1 hazards pose the greatest risk to the health and safety of occupants. During 2020-21, 45% of assessments contained at least one Category 1 hazard. This represented an increase of 6 percentage points on 2018-19 and the highest proportion reported since 2011-12 ([Chart 1](#)).

However, as previously noted, local authority resources were focussed on inspecting premises at higher risk during the pandemic and this is likely to have impacted upon this figure.

67% of all dwellings assessed were found to have Category 2 hazards, a small decrease compared to 2018-19 (66%) ([Chart 1](#)).

Table 1 - Percentage of assessments in HMOs and non-HMOs which contain Category 1 and Category 2 hazards

Year	Number			Percentage %					
	Assessments			Category 1 Hazards			Category 2 Hazards		
	Non - HMOs	HMOs	Total	Non - HMOs	HMOs	Total	Non - HMOs	HMOs	Total
2010-11	4,775	2,049	6,824	52	35	47	41	53	45
2011-12	3,466	2,031	5,497	44	34	40	69	74	71
2012-13	4,292	2,290	6,582	38	33	36	67	78	71
2013-14	3,846	2,363	6,209	42	32	38	66	64	65
2014-15 (a)	3,952	2,677	6,629	35	27	32	53	63	57
2015-16	3,624	2,652	6,276	36	26	32	66	70	68
2016-17 (b)	3,283	2,793	6,076	38	25	32	68	70	68
2017-18 (c)	3,292	2,990	6,282	36	23	30	65	67	66
2018-19	3,358	2,294	5,652	44	31	39	67	75	70
2019-20 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2020-21	1,391	482	1,873	54	19	45	70	58	67

Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from local authorities

(a,b,c) Includes estimated figures for some local authorities, please see [Key quality information](#) for details.
 (d) Not collected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2010-11, a higher percentage of assessments in non-HMOs were found to contain at least one Category 1 hazard than in HMOs.

During 2020-21, 54% of assessments in non-HMOs were found to contain at least one Category 1 hazard, compared with 19% of assessments in HMOs ([Table 1](#)).

The percentage of assessments found to contain the less serious Category 2 hazards has generally been lower in non-HMOs than in HMOs ([Table 1](#)). However, this was different in 2020-21 when 70% of assessments found to contain Category 2 hazards in non-HMOs compared with 58% in HMOs ([Table 1](#)).

Local authority assessments

In 2020-21, Pembrokeshire carried out the greatest number of assessments (369), followed by Powys (238) and Neath Port Talbot (231).

Isle of Anglesey had the highest percentage of assessments containing Category 1 hazards at 100% (10 assessments). The lowest percentage of assessments containing Category 1 hazards was reported by Conwy at just 7%.

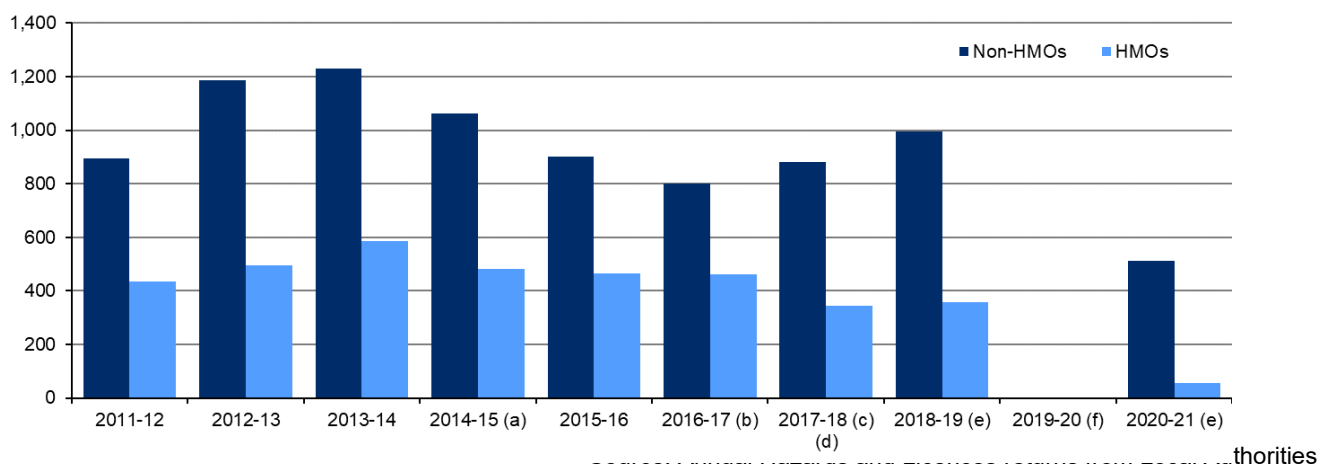
4 local authorities reported category 2 hazards in all undertaken assessments (Isle of Anglesey, Denbighshire, The Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tydfil). Conwy reported the lowest percentage of assessments containing Category 2 hazards at 7%, followed by Wrexham at 17%.

A detailed dataset containing the number of assessed category 1 and category 2 hazards by local authority can be found on [StatsWales](#).

3. Enforcement actions

Local authorities can use a range of options when they find a hazard, including serving a hazard awareness notice, serving an improvement notice requiring work to remove or reduce the hazard, making a prohibition order to restrict the use of all or part of the dwelling and taking action themselves where they consider the hazard needs to be dealt with as an emergency. However, the enforcement action taken may not always result in the resolution of a hazard.

Chart 2 - Resolution of Category 1 hazards



(a,b,c,d,e) Includes estimated figures for some local authorities, please see [Key quality information](#) for details.
(f) Not collected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During 2020-21, action by local authorities resulted in 567 Category 1 hazards being resolved, of which 511 (90%) were in non-HMO dwellings and 56 (10%) were in HMO dwellings. This is to be expected given that, since 2010-11, non-HMOs have contained the highest percentage of Category 1 hazards.

It is important to note that the assessment of some of these hazards may have been carried out in previous financial years. It should also be noted that one assessment may lead to more than one Category 1 or Category 2 hazard being identified depending on the nature of the hazard.

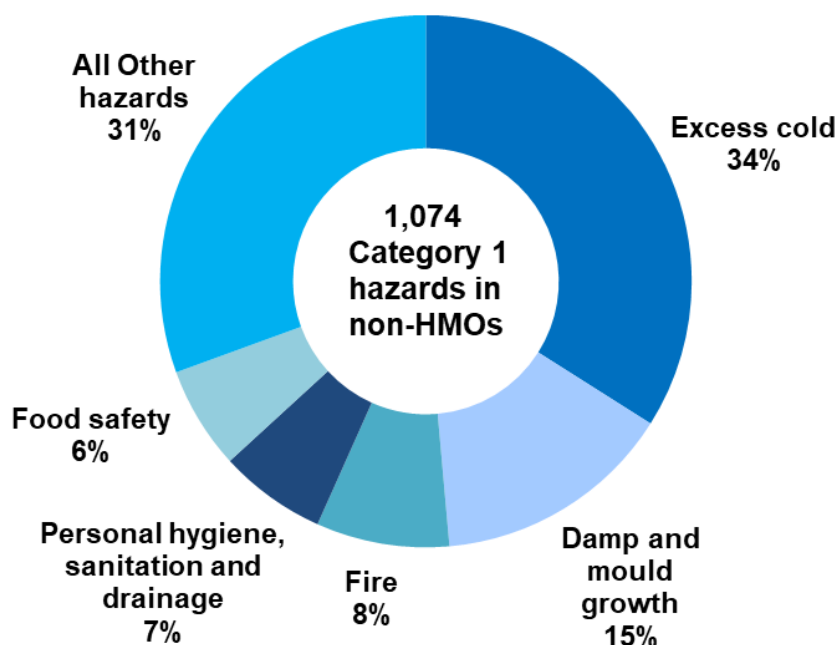
4. Hazard types

Single household dwellings (non-HMOs)

Category 1 hazards are the most serious hazards and pose the greatest risk to the health and safety of the occupants. Assessments may identify more than one Category 1 hazard present in the property.

In 2020-21, the most commonly identified Category 1 hazard in non-HMOs was 'Excess cold', accounting for 34% of all Category 1 hazards. The second most commonly identified Category 1 hazard was 'Damp and mould growth' (which accounted for 15% of Category 1 hazards), followed by 'Fire' (which accounted for 8%) ([Chart 3](#)).

Chart 3 - Category 1 hazards in non-HMO dwellings in 2020-21 (a)

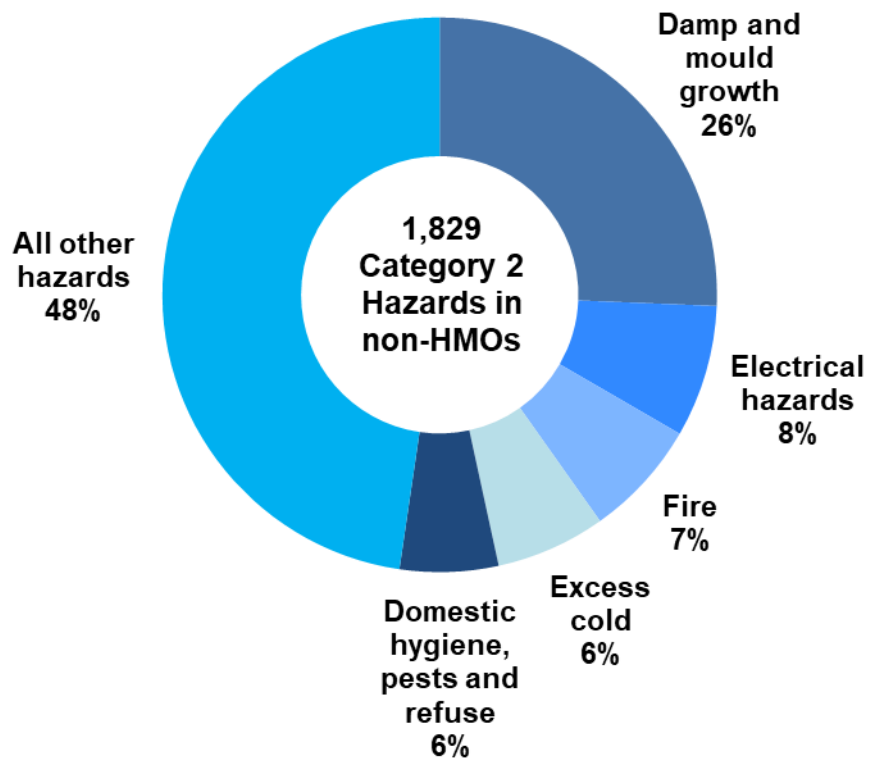


Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

(a) An assessment may identify more than one Category 1 Hazard.

Category 2 hazards are those considered to pose a less serious risk to the health and safety of the occupants. The most commonly identified Category 2 hazard found in non-HMOs in 2020-21 was 'Damp and mould growth' which accounted for 26% of all 1,829 Category 2 hazards found in non-HMOs ([Chart 4](#)). 'Electrical hazards' was the second most commonly identified Category 2 hazard found in non-HMOs, accounting for 8% of all Category 2 hazards, followed by 'Fire' which accounted for 7%.

Chart 4 - Category 2 hazards in non-HMO dwellings in 2020-21 (a) (b)



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

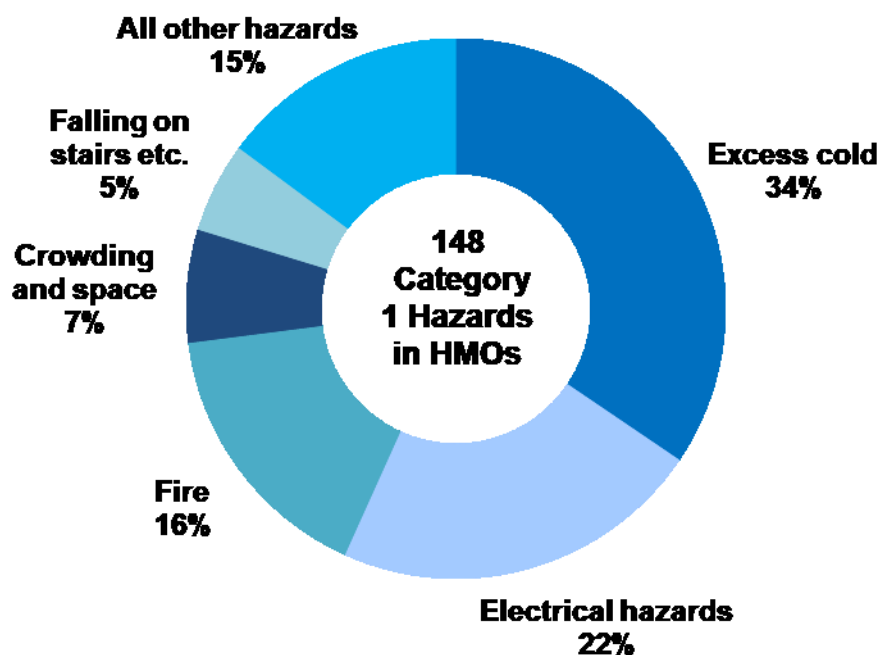
- (a) An assessment may identify more than one Category 2 Hazard.
- (b) Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%.

5. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Dwellings which contain more than one household are known as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), and cover a wide range of housing types mainly in the private rented sector.¹ They are often occupied by younger people and can include some vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

The main types of hazards (Category 1 and 2) found in HMOs tend to fluctuate more on an annual basis than those found in non-HMOs (as the overall numbers are smaller). In 2020-21, there were far fewer Category 1 Hazards identified in HMOs, than in previous years as the number of assessments undertaken was much smaller. However, 'Excess cold' remained the most commonly identified Category 1 hazard found in HMOs, accounting for 34% of all Category 1 hazards, followed by risk of 'Electrical hazards' which accounted for a further 22% of Category 1 hazards ([Chart 5](#)).

Chart 5 – Category 1 hazards in HMOs in 2020-21 (a)

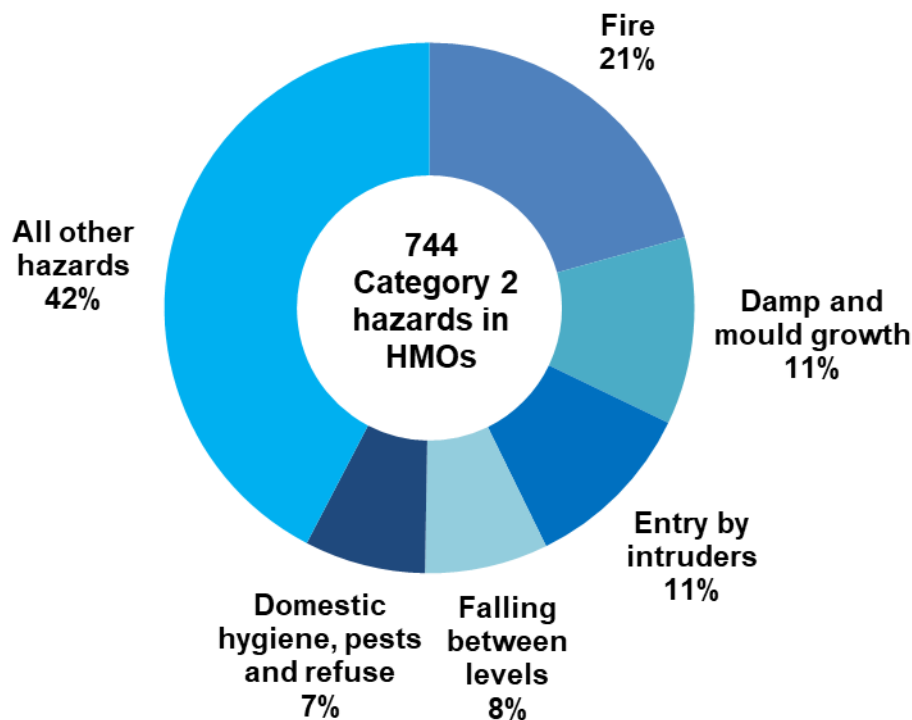


(a) An assessment may identify more than one Category 1 Hazard.

'Fire' has consistently been the most common type of Category 2 hazard found in HMO dwellings, accounting for 21% of all 744 Category 2 hazards found in 2020-21. The total number of Category 2 hazards identified in HMOs has decreased significantly, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 5,531 in 2017-18 (which was the highest number of category 2 hazards identified in HMO's since the recording began).

Chart 6 – Category 2 hazards in HMOs in 2020-21 (a)

¹ Description/definition of houses in multiple occupation taken from 'The Housing Act 2004', chapter 34, paragraph 24 and available from the [Legislation website](#).



(a) An assessment may identify more than one Category 1 Hazard.

6. Licensing

Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Local authorities are responsible for licensing, which is mandatory for some types of HMO and may be applied to others. Mandatory licensing applies to larger, higher risk HMOs of three or more storeys occupied by 5 or more people.

HMO licensing was introduced to help ensure that HMOs are well managed. Licensing of houses in multiple occupation aims at improving the physical condition and management of various types of properties in the private rented sector. Mandatory licensing seeks to ensure that 'high risk' houses in multiple occupation are in a good condition and well managed. The Housing Act 2004 introduced these measures.

Local authorities have the discretion to extend licensing to other categories of HMOs. This is known as additional licensing and enables local authorities to address particular problems that may exist in smaller properties or in particular geographical areas that the local authority considers appropriate. See the [Glossary](#) for further information.

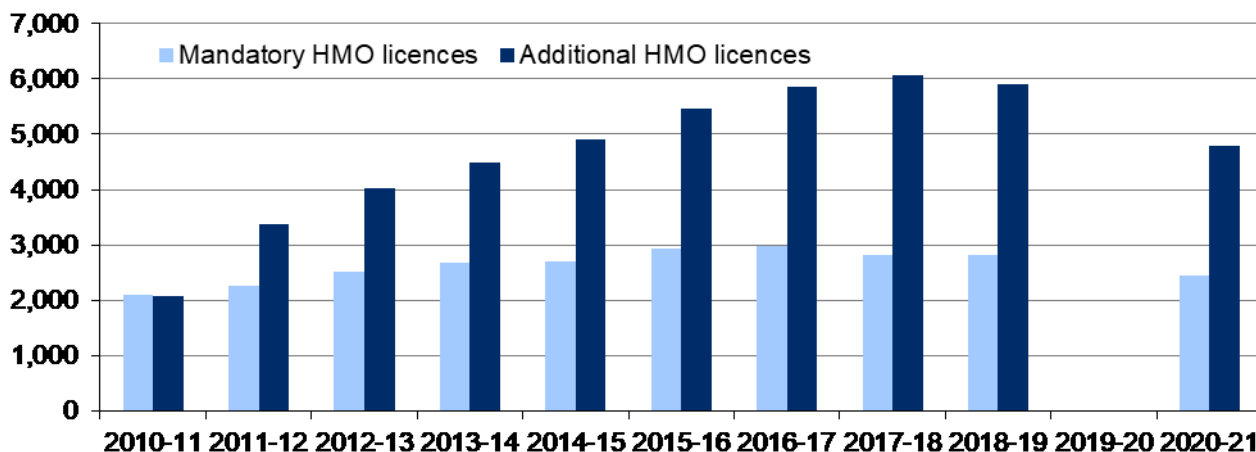
Selective Licences

Selective licensing only applies to dwellings which are single household dwellings and not HMOs. Selective licensing was introduced under the 2004 Housing Act in order to allow local authorities to deal with particular problems in an area and is primarily focused on areas of low housing demand and other areas suffering from anti-social behaviour.

Further information on selective licensing is available from the [Glossary](#) and detailed data tables showing the number and type of dwellings licensed across the local authorities can be found on [StatsWales](#). No local authorities ran this scheme in 2020-21.

Since 2010-11, the number of mandatory licensed HMOs has increased by over a third (34%) and the number of additional licensed HMOs has nearly tripled. At 31 March 2021, there were 7,229 licensed HMOs, of which 34% (2,443) were under mandatory licenses and 66% (4,786) were under discretionary 'additional licensing' schemes.

Chart 7 – Number of licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

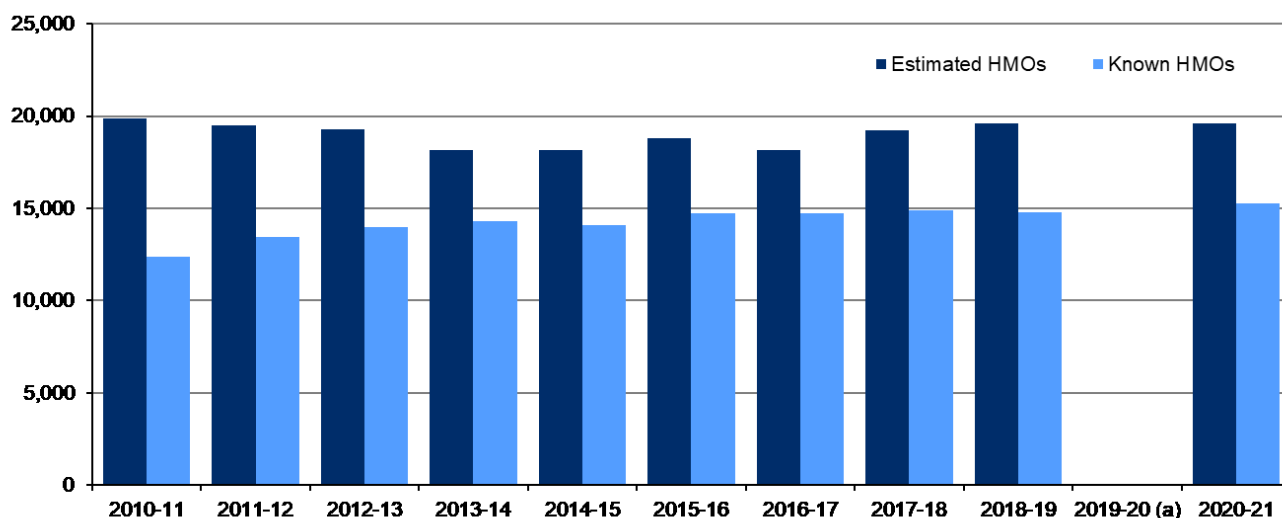
(a) Data not collected for 2019-20 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At 31 March 2021, the local authority with the largest number of licensed HMOs (both mandatory and additional) was Cardiff, containing 34% of all licensed HMOs in Wales, followed by Swansea with 23%. These are both large urban areas with high levels of private rented dwellings and large student populations.

One local authority, Merthyr Tydfil, did not report any licensed HMOs at 31 March 2021, with a further 7 local authorities reporting less than 10 licensed HMOs at 31 March 2021.

It should be noted that not all HMOs are licensed; the figures shown in the above text and [Chart 7](#) should not be used as an estimate of the total number of HMOs in Wales. Figures on estimated and known HMOs in Wales are shown in [Chart 8](#).

Chart 8 – Number of estimated and known Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)



(a) Data not collected for 2019-20 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Local authorities were asked to provide data on both the number of known HMOs in their area and an overall estimate of the total number of HMOs they believe are present within the area.

At 31 March 2021, local authorities estimated there was a total of 19,587 HMOs in Wales, a slight increase on 2018-19 (9 HMOs) and the highest estimated number since 2010-11. The number of HMOs which were known to local authorities was up slightly (3%) on the 2018-19 with 15,247 known HMOs reported at 31 March 2021 compared with 14,783 in 2018-19.

At 31 March 2021, 78% of all estimated HMOs were known to local authorities compared with 76% at the end of March 2019.

At a local authority level, Cardiff reported both the highest proportion of estimated HMOs (36% or 7,000 HMOs) and known HMOs (42% or 6,419 HMOs) in Wales at 31 March 2021. Cardiff also reported the highest number and highest proportion of private rented dwellings of all local authorities at 31 March 2020 (31,065 dwellings, 15%)², this may be influenced by the high student population in Cardiff.

At 31 March 2021, 6 local authorities (Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire and Isle of Anglesey) estimated that less than 1% of all HMOs in Wales were present in their local authority. A further 4 local authorities (Caerphilly, Powys, Denbighshire, and Wrexham) reported that less than 2% of all HMOs in Wales were known to their local authority. Information at a local authority level data is available on [StatsWales](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/).

² These figures are taken from the latest published provisional Dwelling Stock Estimates for Wales as at 31 March 2020 available from [StatsWales](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/).

7. Key quality information

In addition to the information below, further information can be found in the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#).

Policy and operational context

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is used to determine whether residential premises are safe to live in. It replaced the Fitness Standard in July 2006. Local authorities use the System to determine whether a hazard exists that may cause harm to the health and safety of a potential occupant who is most vulnerable to that hazard. For instance, stairs are a greater risk to older people and the very young so when assessing hazards associated with stairs they are considered the most vulnerable group.

The assessed risks are scored on a scale, which divides into two categories. Those which score high on the scale (and therefore the greatest risk) are called Category 1 hazards. Those that fall lower down the scale and pose a lesser risk are called Category 2 hazards. Where a condition is classified as a Category 1 hazard the local authority has a duty to take the appropriate enforcement action. If it poses a Category 2 hazard the local authority may take enforcement action. These hazard types are used for both categories 1 and 2:

Damp and Mould Growth	Crowding and space	Falling on stairs etc.
Excess cold	Entry by intruders	Falling between levels
Excess heat	Lighting	Electrical hazards
Asbestos and manufactured mineral fibres (MMF)	Noise	Fire
Biocides	Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse	Flames, hot surfaces
Carbon monoxides and fuel combustion products	Food safety	Collision and entrapment
Lead	Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage	Explosions
Radiation	Water supply	Position and operability of amenities
Uncombusted fuel gas	Falls associated with baths etc.	Structural collapse and falling elements
Volatile organic compounds	Falling on level surfaces etc.	

The introduction of HHSRS represented a big change in the assessment of properties for occupation. The system moved away from the focus on property condition to the health and safety of potential occupants. It is not appropriate to compare statistics compiled under the previous fitness standard with those produced by HHSRS.

Assessments under the HHSRS may be carried out for a number of reasons. For example, an HHSRS assessment is carried out when licensing an HMO or when a complaint about a property is received from the occupier or a neighbour.

Local authorities have a range of options when they find a hazard. They can:

- serve a hazard awareness notice;
- serve an improvement notice requiring work to remove or reduce the hazard;
- make a prohibition order to restrict the use of all or part of the dwelling; or
- take action themselves where they consider the hazard needs to be dealt as an emergency.

When assessing, local authorities must consider the most vulnerable group. However, when deciding on any enforcement action they may take account of the actual occupant.

Selective licensing

The Housing Act 2004 introduced selective licensing to deal with particular problems in an area. Selective licensing applies to non-HMOs. Selective licensing will be primarily focused on:

- areas of low housing demand; and
- other areas suffering from anti-social behaviour.

The Selective Licensing of Houses (Additional Conditions) (Wales) Order 2006 sets out additional conditions which apply to selective licensing in Wales. These include firstly, where a local authority has declared a renewal area under section 89 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, or has provided assistance in accordance with a published housing renewal policy. Secondly, an area that comprises a minimum of 25% of the housing stock let by private sector landlords (this definition does not include a registered social landlord within the meaning of Part 1 of the Housing act 1996). Local authorities should be able to demonstrate that these conditions are having an adverse effect on the private rented sector and that this will be addressed by the selective licensing designation. A selective licensing scheme automatically ends after 5 years, unless a local authority revokes it earlier.

Housing Act (Wales) 2014

The [Housing \(Wales\) Act](#) 2014 introduced significant improvements across the housing sector to ensure that people have access to a decent, affordable home and better housing-related services. The Act sits alongside a wide range of policy developments and deployment of resources to increase housing supply, improve housing quality and housing services.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being 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 Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators developed to measure progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals were laid in March 2016.

One of the National Indicators (Number 31) is ‘the percentage of dwellings which are free from hazards’. Until new data on hazards in the Welsh housing stock across all tenures became available from the Welsh House Condition Survey (WHCS) 2017-18, the data on local authority assessments was used as the source for this indicator. The first [headline data](#) from the WHCS was published on 6 December 2018 and this is the source for Indicator 31 ‘Percentage of dwellings which are free from hazards’.

The HHSRS data shown within this release provides further annual contextual information related to the indicator. It should be noted however that the data in this release is based on the number of assessments made over the period and will differ from the information provided by the WHCS which covers estimates for all residential dwellings and not just those assessed by local authorities

It should also be noted that a dwelling can be assessed more than once over a given period. Whilst the data on hazards identified through assessments under the Housing Hazards and Safety Rating Scheme can cover all tenures it mainly relates to properties in the private rented sector.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Under the Act the national indicators must be referred to in the analyses of local well-being produced by public services boards when they are analysing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas.

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

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

Data on hazards are used by the Welsh Government to monitor the quality of private sector dwellings and how many have been improved to an acceptable level during the year. This evidence helps to inform policy and legislation on private housing and provides evidence to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.

The information on HMOs is used to monitor the number of HMOs in Wales and how licensing is being implemented across Wales. It is also used to assess local authority effectiveness in supporting national housing priorities.

More generally the information is used for:

- Monitoring housing trends;
- Policy development;
- Advice to Ministers;
- Informing debate in the Senedd Cymru and beyond; and
- Geographic profiling, comparisons and benchmarking.

There are a variety of users of these statistics including national and local government, researchers, academics and students. For further information on the users and uses please refer to the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#).

Quality

National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Welsh housing statistics adhere to the Welsh Government's 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 Official Statistics. Further detail on how these are adhered to can be found in the Housing Statistics Quality Report, which covers the general principles and processes leading up to the production of our housing statistics. The report covers various topics including definitions, coverage, timeliness, relevance and comparability.

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

Data Collection Process

Data on hazards and HMOs are collected annually by the Welsh Government via Excel spreadsheets which are downloaded from the Afon file transfer website which provides a secure method for users to submit data. The data shown in this release are collected for HMO licences and assessments of residential dwellings under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

Copies of the current [hazards and houses in multiple occupation data collection form](#) are available.

Further information on the data processing cycle can also be found in the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#).

The spreadsheets allow respondents to validate some data before sending to the Welsh Government. 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.

Local authorities are notified of the data collection exercise timetable in advance. This allows adequate time for local authorities to collate their information, and to raise any issues they may have. There is guidance in the spreadsheet, which assists users on completing the form.

Accuracy

Occasionally a local authority is unable to provide data for a variety of reasons as outlined below:

- During 2020-21, the onset of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and the subsequent public health measures introduced by the UK and Welsh Governments had a substantial impact on local authorities' ability to undertake inspections. Specifically, notably fewer inspections were

undertaken overall and, where available, resources were focussed on premises at higher risk. This is reflected in the data collected for 2020-21.

- Data for 2019-20 was not collected or published due to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.
- During the 2018-19 data collection, Neath Port Talbot were unable to provide data on resolved hazards during the year and therefore an estimated figure has been calculated based on data provided for the previous 3 years. Care should therefore be taken in comparing annual data for this authority and for Wales as a whole.
- During the 2017-18 data collection, Cardiff were unable to provide complete data on assessments made during the year and therefore their 2016-17 data has been used as an estimate. Care should therefore be taken in comparing annual data for this authority and for Wales as a whole
- During the 2016-17 data collection, two local authorities were unable to provide complete data due to changes in their data recording systems. Wrexham provided information on the total number of assessments, but were unable to provide a breakdown of these figures. Wrexham data for 2015-16 was used to distribute the 2016-17 totals to detailed breakdowns. Denbighshire were unable to provide data for 2016-17 and therefore their 2015-16 data has been used as an estimate. Care should therefore be taken in comparing annual data for these two authorities and for Wales as a whole.
- During 2014-15, Flintshire County Council were unable to provide data on the number of assessments containing category 1 and 2 hazards and the number of dwellings where all category 1 hazards had been resolved as a result of local authority action. As a result, 2013-14 data has been used as an alternative and care should be taken when comparing the 2014-15 'all Wales' totals for the above, as Flintshire's figures are based on assumptions.

Validation and verification

Once we receive the data, it goes through 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.

If there is a validation error, we contact the local authority and seek resolution. If we fail to get an answer within a reasonable timescale, we will use imputation to improve data quality. We will then inform the organisation and explain to them how we have amended or imputed the data. The method of imputation and the affected data is highlighted in the 'quality information' section of the first release.

More detailed quality information relating specifically to hazards and licences is given in the [data quality section](#).

Data quality

Hazards

In some cases, local authorities will carry out an inspection prior to assessment which will indicate that a full assessment of hazards is required. In these instances, it is often the case that the number of assessments will be closely related to the number of properties in which at least one hazard is found. This should be taken in to consideration when comparing statistics for different local authorities.

Caution should be taken if comparing the number of assessments and hazard types over a number of years. The number of assessments and the subsequent number of hazards identified can vary each year depending on the demand for assessments. For example, exceptionally cold winters may lead to a higher number of assessments due to more complaints received about cold.

Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

The number of known HMOs was introduced following a review of data requirements and has only been collected and published since 2009-10. Prior to this, local authorities were only asked to provide an estimate of HMOs within their local authority area.

Revisions

Revisions can arise from events such as late returns from a local authority or when a data supplier notifies the Welsh Government that they have submitted incorrect information and resubmits this. Occasionally, revisions can occur due to errors in our statistical processes. In these cases, a judgement is made as to whether the change is significant enough to publish a revised statistical release.

Where changes are not deemed to be significant, i.e. minor changes, these will be updated in the following year's statistical release. However, minor amendments to the figures may be reflected in the StatsWales tables prior to that next release.

Revised data is marked with an (r) in the statistical release

We follow the [Welsh Government's statistical revisions policy](#).

Accessibility

A full set of data on hazards and licensing in Wales, including information by individual local authority is available to download from our [StatsWales interactive website](#).

Coherence with Other Statistics

Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) at 31 March 2019

The WHQS was first introduced in 2002 and sets a target standard for all residential dwellings are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents. The Standard was developed to provide a common target standard for all housing in Wales, but will primarily be used to assess the social housing provided by local authorities and housing associations (social landlords).

Further information is available in the annual release, '[Welsh Housing Quality Standard \(WHQS\) as at 31 March 2020](#)'.

Any element categorised with a HHSRS Category 1 Hazard would automatically result in the dwelling 'Failing' the WHQS.

Welsh House Conditions Survey 2017-18

Headline information on the HHSRS was published in the [WHCS 2017-18 headline report](#). The information shown in this report however covers all residential dwellings and not just those which were assessed during the year. Full details of the measurement and modelling of these hazards are available in the Survey Technical Report on the [WHCS webpage](#).

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales, with the latest Index published in November 2019. WIMD is currently made up of eight separate domains (or types) of deprivation, including housing. Each domain is compiled from a range of different indicators.

For the first time in 2019, the WIMD housing domain included a modelled indicator on poor quality housing which measures the likelihood of housing being in disrepair or containing serious hazards (for example, risk of falls or cold housing). The new indicator is calculated using a model built from survey data, which makes probabilistic predictions about individual level dwellings in Wales, using a range of administrative datasets as inputs. This allows the calculation of estimates of the likelihood that dwellings in a given area:

- contain a Category 1 hazard for excess cold, falls or other hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- or are in a state of disrepair

Further information is available in the [WIMD report](#).

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 [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

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.

Related Statistics for Other UK Countries

Hazards

Information on HHSRS in England is collected by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Latest published data covering 2020-21 is published in Section F of the DULHC local authority housing statistics data returns and is available on the [MHCLG website](#).

HHSRS does not apply to Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

The same legislation is used by England and Wales regarding HMO licensing. The definitions of an HMO are broadly similar across the UK, but different licensing rules apply in Scotland and Northern Ireland which affects the statistics that are produced. Scotland collects information on mandatory licensed HMOs only. Northern Ireland does not publish statistics on HMOs. The differences in licensing requirements and the statistics that are produced mean that care must be taken if attempting to draw comparisons between the four UK countries.

The Department for Communities and Local Government collects detailed information on HMOs in England. Latest published data covering 2020-21 is published in Section F of the DULHC local authority housing statistics data returns and is available on the [MHCLG website](#).

[Information on HMOs with mandatory licences in Scotland is available](#) on the Scottish Government website.

8. Glossary

Dwelling

A building or part of a building occupied or intended to be occupied as a separate dwelling. For the purpose of this return, dwellings include houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) as defined in section 77 of the Housing Act 2004. They do not include individual bedsits (that is single rooms without the exclusive use of bath/shower or inside WC), but each group of bedsits sharing facilities should be counted as one dwelling.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Dwellings which contain more than one household are known as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), and cover a wide range of housing types mainly in the private rented sector.³ They are often occupied by young lower-income single people and can include some vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

For the purposes of this data collection, an HMO means a house in multiple occupation as defined in sections 254 to 259 of the Housing Act 2004, as a building or part of a building which:

- Meets the standard test;
- Meets the self-contained flat test;
- Meets the converted building test;
- Has an HMO declaration in force; or
- Is a converted block of flats.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing

HMO licensing was introduced to help ensure that HMOs are well managed. Licensing of houses in multiple occupation aims at improving the physical condition and management of various types of properties in the private rented sector. Mandatory licensing seeks to ensure that 'high risk' houses in multiple occupation are in a good condition and well managed. The Housing Act 2004 introduced these measures.

Local authorities are responsible for licensing, which is mandatory for some types of HMO and may be applied to others. Mandatory licensing applies to larger, higher risk HMOs of three or more storeys occupied by 5 or more people.

Local authorities have the discretion to extend licensing to other categories of HMOs. This is known as 'additional licensing' and enables local authorities to address particular problems that may exist in smaller properties or in particular geographical areas that the local authority considers appropriate.

Before implementing an 'additional licensing' scheme the local authority must satisfy certain criteria. Local authorities have the discretion to extend licensing to other categories of HMOs.

³ Description/definition of houses in multiple occupation taken from ['The Housing Act 2004', chapter 34, paragraph 24 and available from the Legislation website.](#)

Some types of buildings are exempt from licensing, these include:

- properties managed or owned by a public body (such as the police or the NHS), a local authority or a Registered Social Landlord;
- student halls of residence; and
- buildings entirely occupied by freeholders or long leaseholders.

9. Further information

The document is available at:

<https://gov.wales/housing-hazards-and-licences>

Next update

Annual release 'Housing Hazards and Licences, 2021-22' to be published December 2022.

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to stats.housing@gov.wales

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