



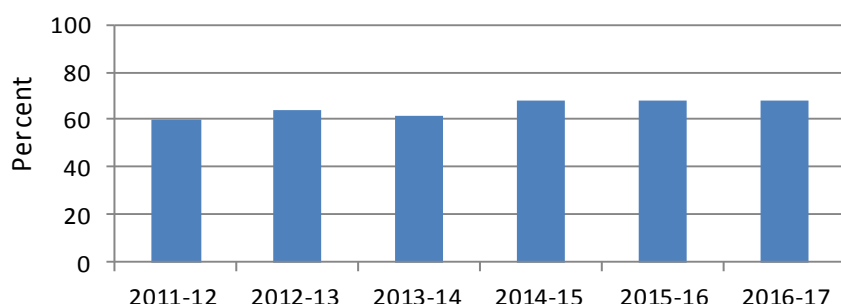
Housing Hazards and Licences, 2016-17

19 December 2017
SFR 190/2017

Housing hazards

During 2016-17, local authorities carried out 6,076 assessments ^(a) under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), a decrease of 3 per cent on the previous year. The 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. As was the case last year, over two thirds (68 per cent) of all assessments made during 2016-17 recorded no Category 1 hazards.

Percentage of assessments free from Category 1 Hazards



During 2016-17, Category 1 hazards were found in 1,949 (32 per cent) of all assessments made. The most common Category 1 hazard found in both Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and non-HMO dwellings was 'Excess Cold'.

Action by local authorities, during 2016-17, resulted in 1,263 Category 1 hazards being resolved, of which 802 (63 per cent) were in non-HMO dwellings and 461 (37 per cent) were in Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Licences

At 31 March 2017, there were 8,839 licensed HMOs, of which 34 per cent (2,973) were under mandatory licences and 66 per cent (5,866) were under discretionary 'additional licensing' schemes.

(a) Includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on assessments during the year.

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 HHSRS is the current source for a Well Being of Future Generations National Indicator (Percentage of assessments free from category 1 hazards). 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. The hazard types (listed in the Key Quality Information section) are the same for both Categories 1 and 2.

Any element categorised with a 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. 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

Information on the number of dwellings assessed by local authorities under the HHSRS has been collected annually since 2009-10.

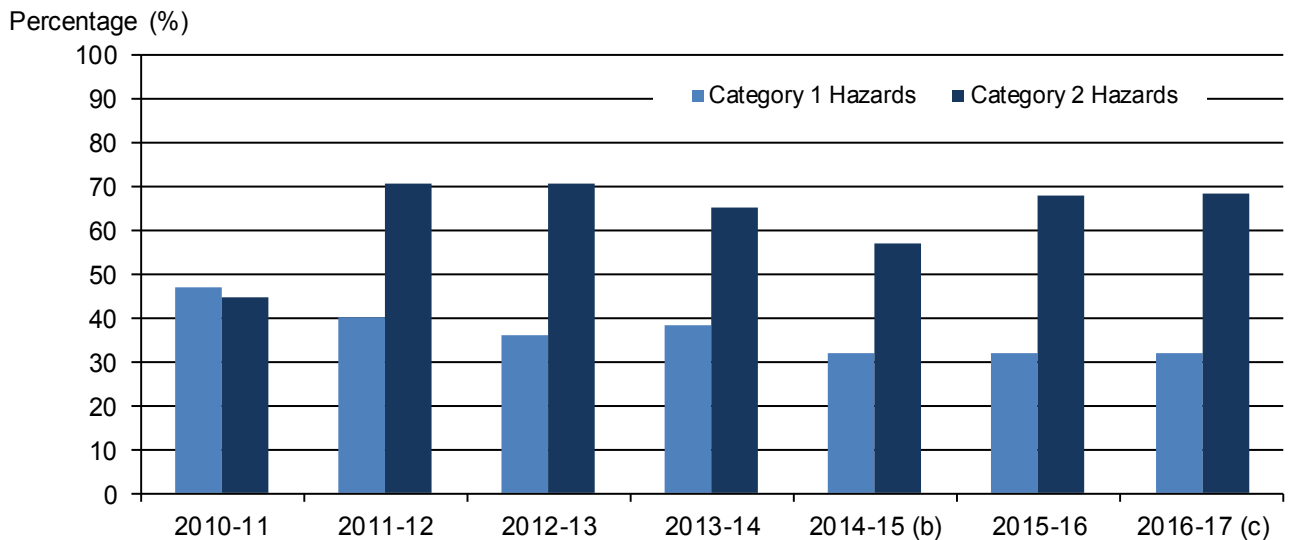
The number of assessments carried out each year by local authorities under the HHSRS will vary.

During 2016-17, 6,076 assessments¹ were carried out across Wales, 3 per cent less than the number of assessments carried out during 2015-16.

During 2016-17, 46 per cent of all the assessments made were in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) compared with 42 per cent the previous year.

¹ Includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on assessments during the year.

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



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from local authorities

(a) An assessment can contain both Category 1 and Category 2 Hazards.

(b) Includes estimated figures for Flintshire as they were unable to provide data on assessments during the year.

(c) Includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on assessments during the year.

Category 1 hazards pose the greatest risk to the health and safety of occupants. During 2016-17, 32 per cent of assessments contained at least one Category 1 hazard which is similar to the previous two years ([Chart 1](#)).

Following decreases in the percentage of assessments found to contain the less serious Category 2 hazards during 2013-14 and 2014-15 there was an increase to 68 per cent in 2015-16. During 2016-17 the percentage recorded remained at 68 per cent ([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)	4,047	2,685	6,732	35	27	32	54	62	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

Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from local authorities

(a) Includes estimated figures for Flintshire as they were unable to provide data on assessments containing category 1 and 2 hazards during the year.

(b) Includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on assessments containing category 1 and 2 hazards during the year.

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 2016-17, 38 per cent of assessments in non-HMOs were found to contain at least one Category 1 hazard, compared with 25 per cent of assessments in HMOs ([Table 1](#)).

The percentage of assessments found to contain the less serious Category 2 hazards has generally been lower each year in non-HMOs than in HMOs with the exception of 2013-14 ([Table 1](#)).

This remained unchanged during 2016-17 with 68 per cent of assessments found to contain Category 2 hazards in non-HMOs compared with 70 per cent in HMOs ([Table 1](#)).

Local authority assessments

During 2016-17, Cardiff carried out the highest number of assessments (943), whilst the lowest number of assessments was carried out in Monmouthshire at 44.

The highest percentage of assessments containing Category 1 hazards was reported by the Vale of Glamorgan (83 per cent) during 2016-17 and the lowest percentage of assessments containing Category 1 hazards was reported by Conwy with just 9 per cent.

Category 2 hazards were found in all assessments made in Powys during 2016-17; whilst as was the case last year, Conwy reported the lowest percentage of assessments containing Category 2 hazards (16 per cent).

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

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

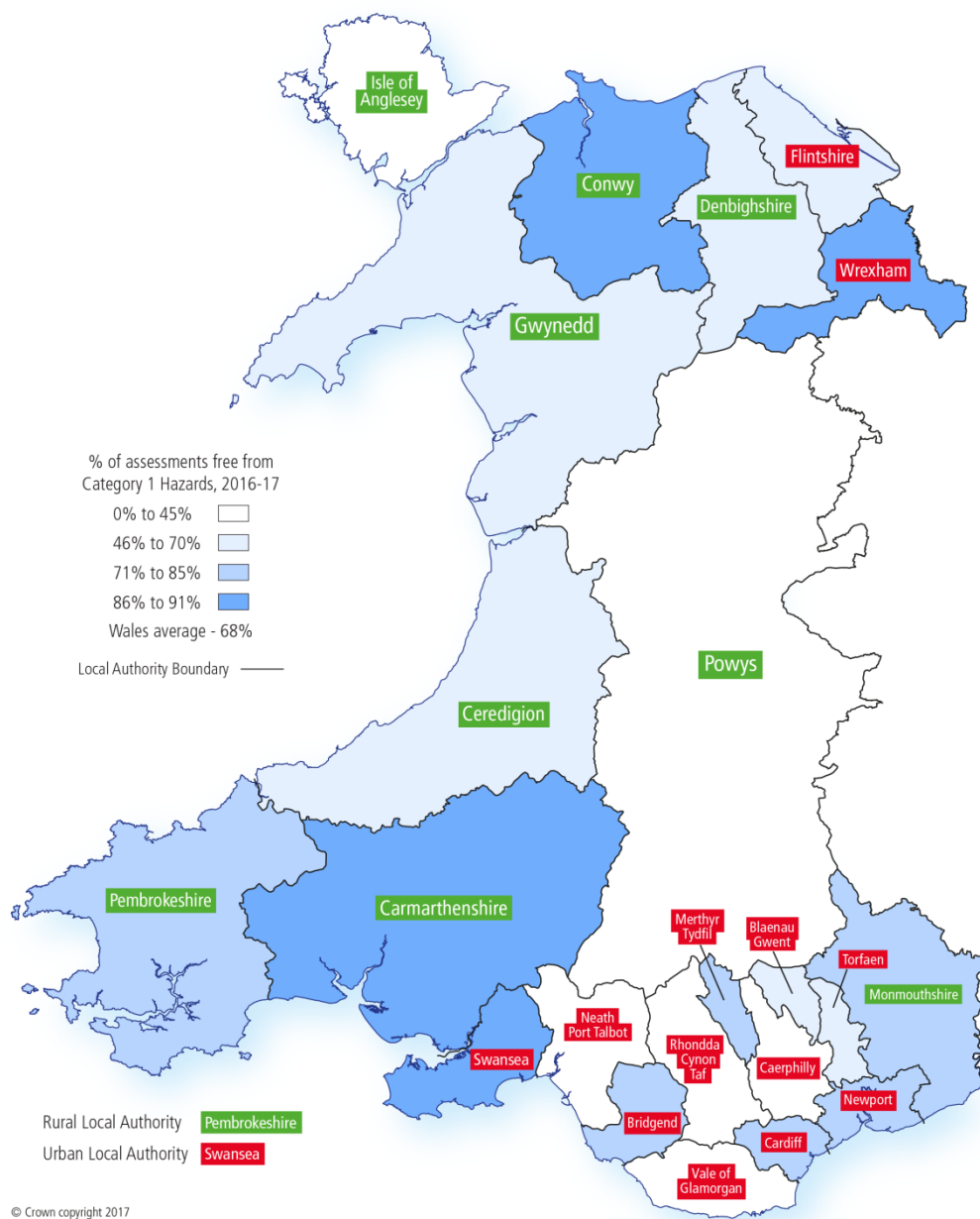
Information on the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is provided in the [Key quality information](#) section of this release.

The HHSRS is the current source for one of 46 national indicators, developed to measure progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, namely indicator 31 'Percentage of dwellings which are free from hazards.'

The data collected annually on the HHSRS and shown within this release is based on the overall number of assessments which may differ from the number of dwellings assessed - a dwelling can be assessed more than once over a given period.

The following [map](#) shows the percentage of assessments during 2016-17 which were free from Category 1 hazards at a local authority level. Over two thirds (68 per cent) of all assessments made during 2016-17 recorded no Category 1 hazards. The local authority with the highest percentage of assessments free from Category 1 hazards during 2016-17 was Conwy at 91 per cent, whilst the lowest percentage was in the Vale of Glamorgan at just 17 per cent. The percentage of assessments free from category 1 hazards was below the Wales average (68 per cent) in 12 of the 22 local authorities during 2016-17 compared with 10 during the previous year.

Percentage of assessments free from Category 1 Hazards, 2016-17



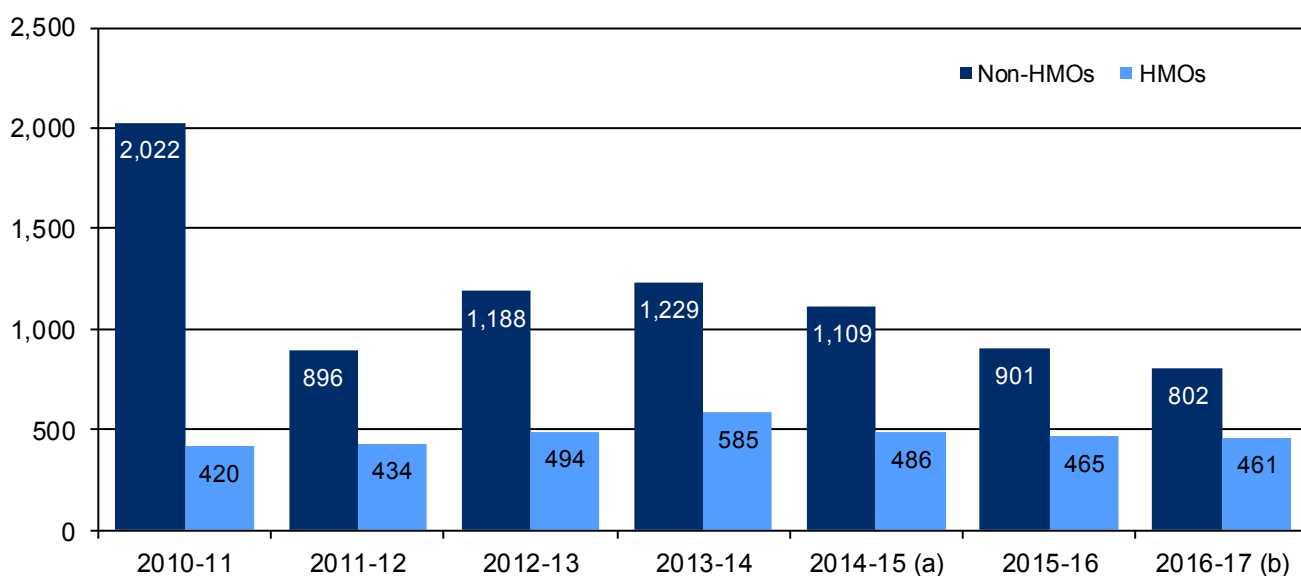
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3. Enforcement actions

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



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

- (a) Includes estimated figures for Flintshire as they were unable to provide data on assessments during the year.
- (b) Includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on assessments during the year.

During 2016-17, action by local authorities resulted in 1,263 Category 1 hazards being resolved, of which 461 (37 per cent) were in HMO dwellings and 802 (63 per cent) were in non-HMO dwellings. This is to be expected given that since 2011-12 non-HMOs have had the highest percentage of Category 1 hazards found following assessment.

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

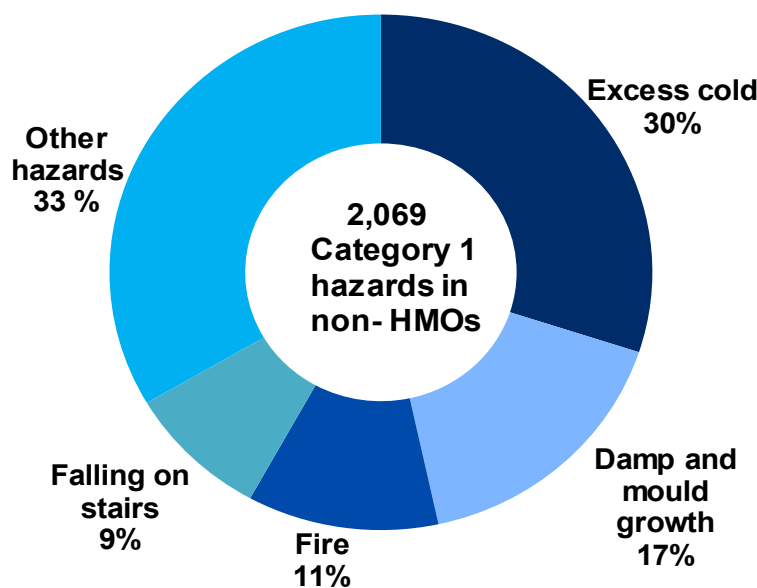
Single household dwellings (non-HMOs)

Category 1 hazards are the most serious hazards and pose the greatest risk to the health and safety of the occupants. Since the introduction of the HHSRS in July 2006, the most common Category 1 hazard for non-HMOs has been 'Excess Cold' which accounted for 30 per cent of all 2,069 Category 1 hazards found in 2016-17.

The peak in 'Excess Cold' category 1 hazards, of 47 per cent, seen in 2010-11, may have been related to the severe weather conditions when some authorities reported they targeted hazards relating to excess cold in the prolonged cold period during the winter.

'Damp and mould growth' has consistently been the second highest Category 1 hazard found in non-HMOs and accounted for 17 per cent during 2016-17, followed by 'Fire' risks which accounted for 11 per cent and 'Falling on stairs ' which accounted for 9 per cent ([Chart 3](#)).

Chart 3 - Category 1 hazards in non-HMO dwellings in 2016-17 (a) (b)



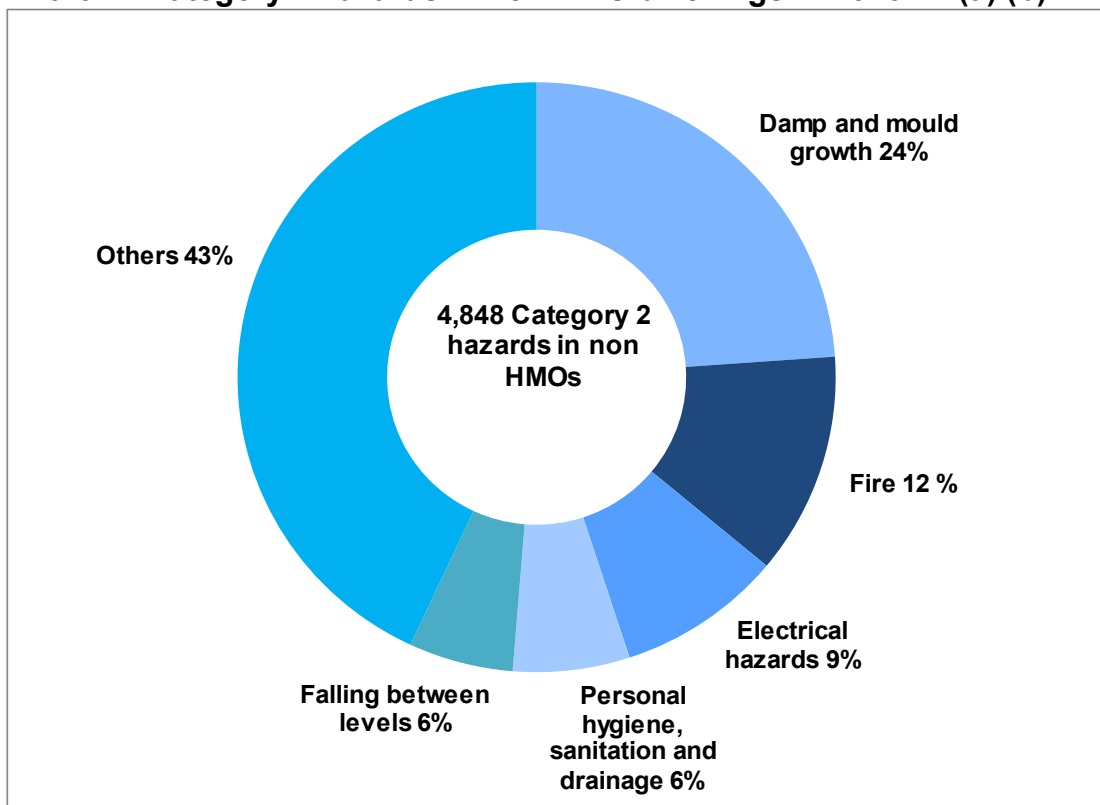
Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

- (a) Includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on Category 1 Hazards in non-HMO dwellings during the year.
- (b) An assessment may identify more than one Category 1 Hazard.

Category 2 hazards are those considered as posing a less serious risk to the health and safety of the occupants. The most common type of Category 2 hazards in non-HMOs continued to be 'Damp and Mould Growth' which accounted for just under a quarter (24 per cent) of all 4,848 Category 2 hazards found in non HMOs during 2016-17 ([Chart 4](#)).

As was the case in 2015-16, 'Fire' risks continued to be the second most common type of Category 2 hazard found accounting for 12 per cent of all Category 2 hazards found in non-HMO dwellings. This was followed by 'Electrical Hazards' accounting for 9 per cent and 'Personal Hygiene, sanitation and drainage' and 'Falling between levels' both of which accounted for 6 per cent of all Category 2 hazards found in non-HMO dwellings ([Chart 4](#)).

Chart 4 - Category 2 hazards in non-HMO dwellings in 2016-17 (a) (b)



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

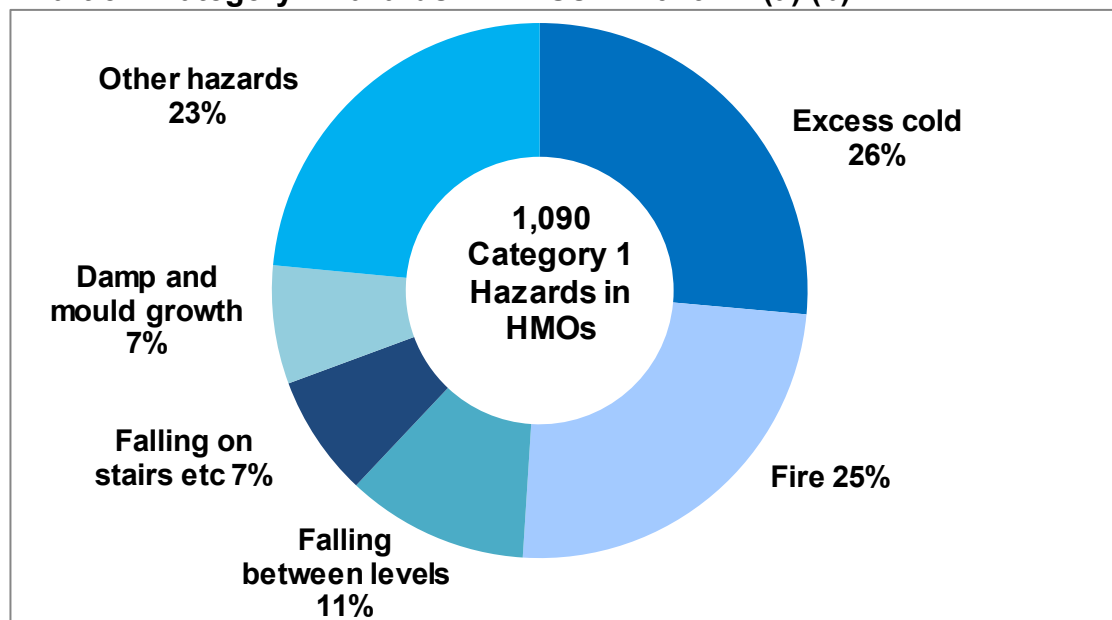
(a) Includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on category 2 hazards in non-HMO dwellings during the year.

(b) An assessment may identify more than one Category 2 Hazard.

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.² They are often occupied by young lower-income single people and can include some vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Chart 5 – Category 1 hazards in HMOs in 2016-17 (a) (b)



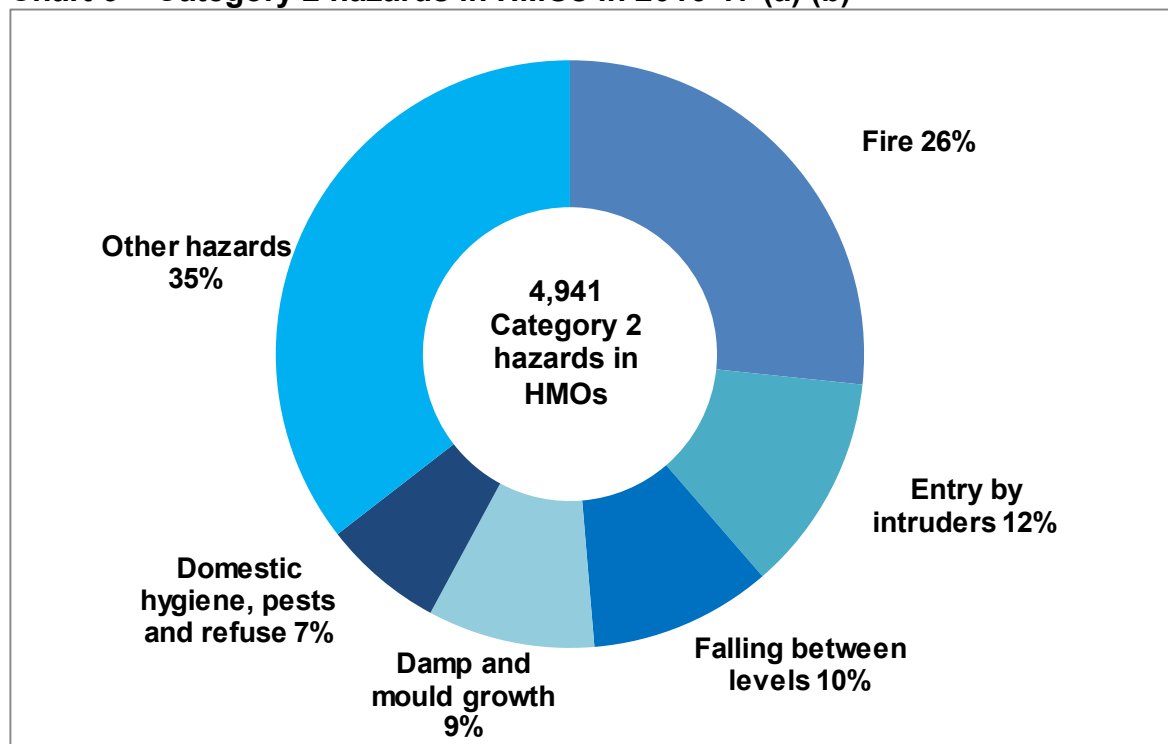
Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

- (a) Data includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on category 1 hazards in HMO dwellings during the year.
- (b) An assessment may identify more than one Category 1 Hazard.

‘It is noticeable that the main types of hazards (Category 1 and 2) found in dwellings for multiple households (HMO dwellings) each year tend to fluctuate more than those found in single non-HMO dwellings however ‘Excess Cold’ and ‘Fire’ have continued to be the most common Category 1 hazards since 2006-07. In 2016-17 ‘Excess Cold’ and ‘Fire’ accounted for 26 per cent and 25 per cent respectively of all 1,090 Category 1 hazards found. ‘Falling between levels’ accounted for a further 11 per cent and ‘Falling on stairs’ and ‘Damp and mould growth’ both accounted for 7 per cent of the Category 1 hazards found in HMOS during 2016-17 ([Chart 5](#)).

² Description/definition of houses in multiple occupation taken from ‘The Housing Act 2004’, chapter 34, paragraph 24 and available from the [Legislation website](#).

Chart 6 – Category 2 hazards in HMOs in 2016-17 (a) (b)



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

- (a) Includes estimated figures for Denbighshire and Wrexham as they were unable to provide data on category 2 hazards in HMO dwellings during the year.
- (b) 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 26 per cent of all 4,941 Category 2 hazards found in 2016-17. This was followed by ‘Entry by intruders’ at 12 per cent and ‘Falling between levels’ which accounted for 10 per cent.

During 2015-16, ‘Damp and mould growth’ had been the second most common type of category 2 hazard found in HMO dwellings however during 2016-17 it was the fourth most common accounting for 9 per cent of all Category 2 hazards found in HMOs compared with 12 per cent the previous year.

Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse accounted for a further 7 per cent of the category 2 hazards found during 2016-17.

6. Licensing

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.

Selective licensing is intended to address the impact of poor quality private landlords and anti-social tenants. In an area subject to selective licensing, all private landlords must obtain a licence and if they fail to do so, or fail to achieve acceptable management standards, the authority can take enforcement action.

Since 2009-10, local authorities have been required to report on the number of dwellings licensed at 31 March, under any selective licensing scheme they introduce. Previously, Neath Port Talbot had been the only local authority to introduce a selective licensing scheme, this scheme ended in May 2014.

Carmarthenshire is now the only local authority running a selective licensing scheme, with 297 dwellings licensed at 31 March 2017.

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.

Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

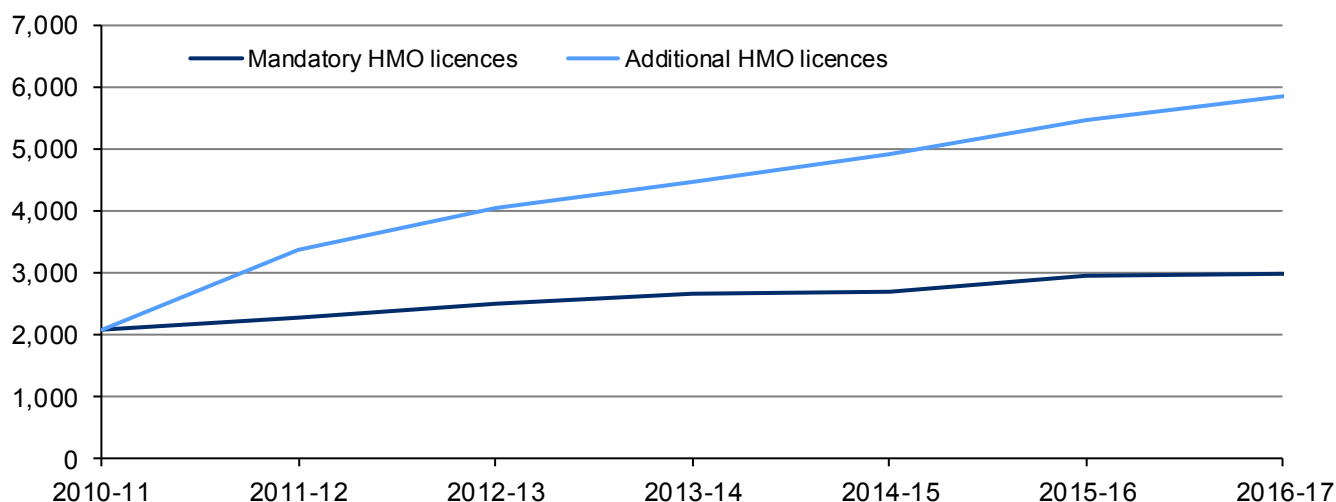
Local authorities are responsible for licensing, which is mandatory for some types of HMO and may be applied to others. Mandatory licensing applies to larger, higher risk HMOs of three or more storeys occupied by 5 or more people.

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.

Since 2010-11, the number of mandatory licensed HMOs has increased by 42 per cent and the number of additional licensed HMOs has nearly tripled. At 31 March 2017, there were 8,839 licensed HMOs, of which 34 per cent (2,973) were under mandatory licences and 66 per cent (5,866) 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

At 31 March 2017, the local authority with the largest number of licensed HMOs (both mandatory and additional) was Cardiff, containing 37 per cent of all licensed HMOs in Wales, followed by Swansea with 18 per cent. These are both large urban areas with high levels of private rented dwellings and large student populations.

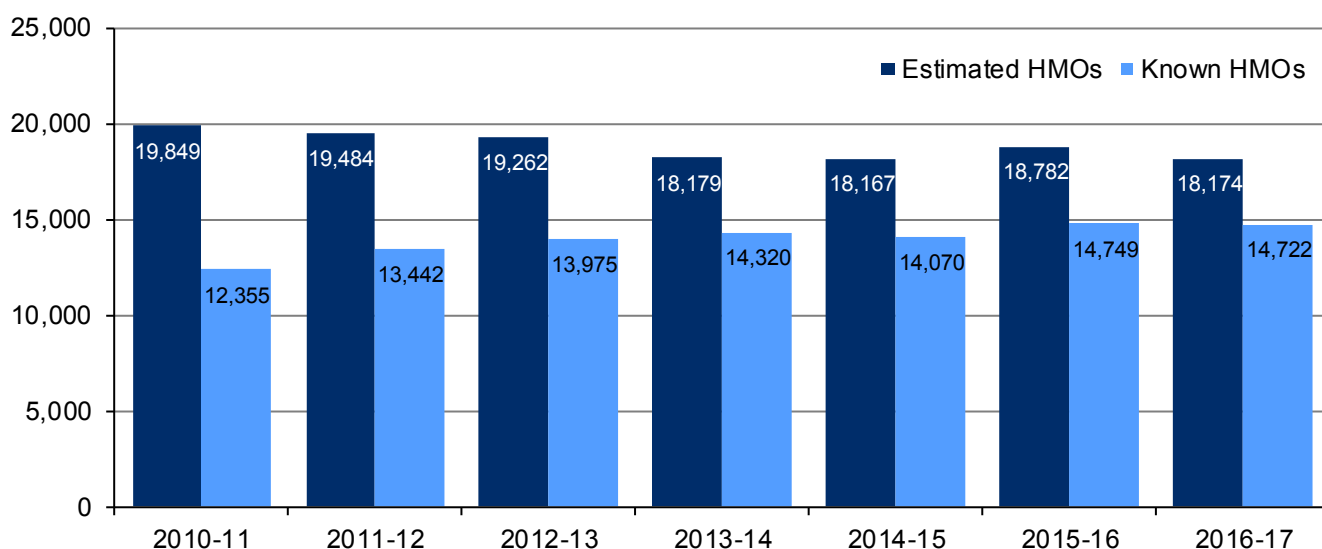
One local authority, Torfaen, did not report any licensed HMOs at 31 March 2017 though this authority had proportions of private rented dwellings well below the Wales average in 2016 at just 9 per cent.³

Merthyr Tydfil and Powys both reported just 1 licensed HMO at 31 March 2017 and Monmouthshire reported 2.

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](#).

³ These figures are taken from the latest published Dwelling Stock Estimates for Wales as at 31 March 2016 available from [StatsWales](#).

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



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences Return

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 their local authority.

At 31 March 2017, local authorities estimated there were approximately 18,174 HMOs in total in Wales, which is 3 per cent less than the number estimated at 31 March 2016. The number of these HMOs which are actually known to local authorities was also down very slightly (0.2 per cent) on the previous year with 14,722 known HMOs reported at 31 March 2017 compared with 14,749 a year earlier..

It is noticeable that between 2010-11 and 2013-14, the difference between the estimated total number of HMOs and those known to the local authorities reduced each year. At 31 March 2017, 81 per cent of all estimated HMOs were known to local authorities compared with 79 per cent at the end of March 2016.

At a local authority level, Cardiff reported both the highest proportion of all estimated HMOs and all known HMOs in Wales at 31 March 2017, at 39 per cent (7,000 HMOs) and 40 per cent (5,881 HMOs) respectively.

Cardiff also reported the highest number of private rented dwellings of all local authorities at 31 March 2016 (25,490 dwellings) however the highest proportion of private rented dwellings was recorded in Ceredigion at 21 per cent (7,280 dwellings)⁴. This is likely to be due to the high student population in Ceredigion relative to the rest of the population. At 31 March 2017, the lowest proportions (less than 1 per cent) of both known and estimated HMOs were in the three valley authorities of Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil.

A further 3 local authorities (Monmouthshire, the Isle of Anglesey and Pembrokeshire) reported less than 1 per cent of known HMOs and Pembrokeshire also reported less than 1 per cent of all estimated HMOs.

Information at a local authority level data is available on [StatsWales](http://StatsWales.gov.uk).

⁴ These figures are taken from the latest published Dwelling Stock Estimates for Wales as at 31 March 2016 available from [StatsWales](http://StatsWales.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 per cent 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 affect 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.

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 were laid in March 2016 and this release includes one of the national indicators namely indicator 31 ‘Percentage of dwellings which are free from hazards’.

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](#).

This release includes data which would currently be used to report against national indicator 31, as referenced in the technical document or the Well-being of Wales report in the previous link.

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.

The HHSRS data will be reported for indicator 31 until improved data are available from the Welsh House Condition Survey 2017/18.

As a national indicator under the Act they 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.

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.

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 National Assembly for Wales 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 Official 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 Official 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 below.

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

This release contains the final data for the year ending 2016-17

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)

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 2017'..

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

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 2015-16 is published in Section F of the DCLG local authority housing statistics data returns and is available on the [DCLG 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 2015-16 is published in Section F of the DCLG local authority housing statistics data returns and is available on the [DCLG 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.⁵ 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.

⁵ 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.

Further details

The document is available at:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/housing-hazards-Licences/?lang=en>

Next update

Annual release 'Housing Hazards and Licences, 2017-18' to be published December 2018

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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