

SDR 225/2010

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## Living in Wales 2008: Welsh Housing Quality Standard

The Living in Wales survey is a household survey for Wales commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government. The survey comprised a household survey for each year from 2004 to 2008 with additional property surveys in 2004 and 2008. The Living in Wales property survey involved qualified surveyors visiting some 2,700 addresses that had participated in the Living in Wales household survey.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (the Standard) was introduced in 2002 to implement the long-term vision for housing in Wales set out in "Better Homes for People in Wales". The Standard was developed to provide a common target for all housing in Wales, but the Guidance, which was revised in 2008, is specifically used to assess social housing. The expectation is that all social landlords should adopt the Standard and that properties should meet the Standard by 2012, unless an extended timetable has been agreed by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Standard is made up of a series of individual element assessments which determine whether a dwelling passes the overall standard. Each of these elements is categorised into a primary or secondary element. Primary elements relate mostly to the safety of the occupants whereas secondary elements relate mostly to the comfort of the occupants. For the purposes of the Living in Wales Survey, a dwelling must pass all the primary elements and the majority of the secondary elements. The Living in Wales property survey is not able to measure all elements of the Standard, therefore a modified definition of the Standard is used here. More information on the elements that are included is given in annex A.

This release provides information on progress towards meeting the 2008 Standard for social housing, as well as some information relating to the previous definition of the Standard. This is to allow comparison with data from the 2004 property survey, when stock was assessed against the Standard for the first time. The information in this statistical release is used by the Welsh Assembly Government, housing professionals, local authorities and registered social landlords to monitor progress in areas such as the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, fuel poverty and sustainability.

### Key Points:

- The overall pass rate for social rented dwellings was 6 per cent in 2008. This was equivalent to approximately 13,000 dwellings achieving the Standard. The pass rate was higher for housing association dwellings than local authority dwellings (4 per cent and 9 per cent respectively).
- Of the dwellings that failed the Standard, almost all did so by failing to meet all the primary elements. More than 90 per cent of the failing dwellings passed the required nine or more secondary elements.
- When using the 2002 Standard definition, the overall pass rate for the Standard had not changed between 2004 and 2008. It remained at less than one per cent.

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## The Quality of Welsh Social Housing

**Table 1: Dwellings Passing the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, by tenure**

Tenure	WHQS Pass		Total
	%	Count	
Local authority	4	5,000	138,000
Housing association	9	7,000	83,000
<b>All social housing</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13,000</b>	<b>221,000</b>

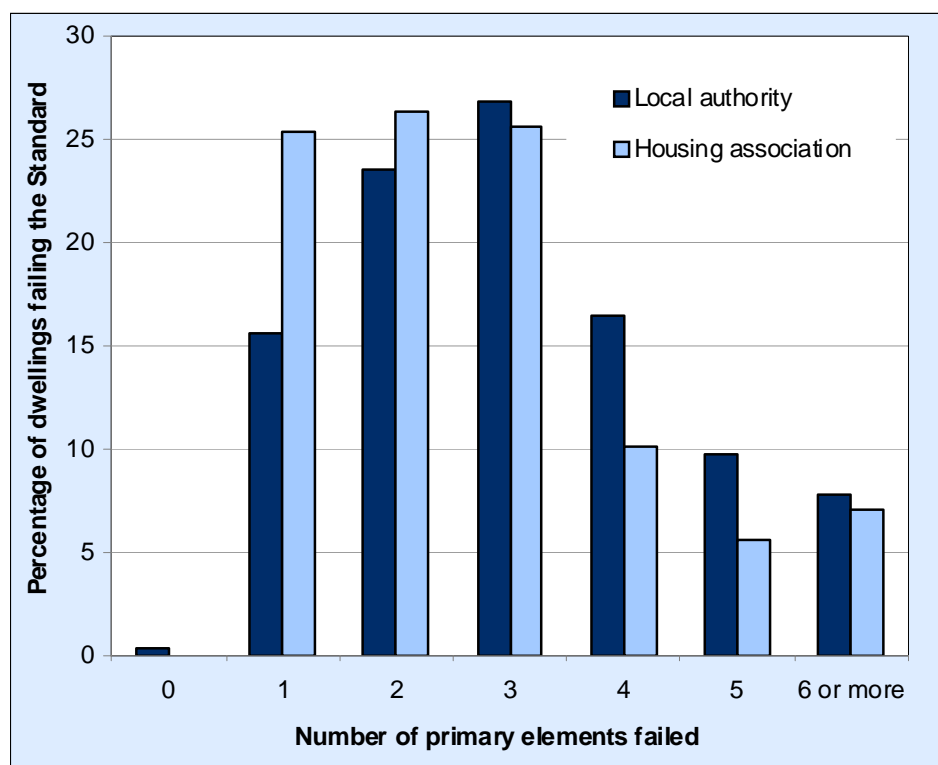
Coverage: social housing  
Weighted total: 221,300

Source: Living in Wales 2008

Overall, 6 per cent of social housing met the Standard. A higher proportion of housing association dwellings than local authority dwellings met the standard. Of the 83,000 housing association dwellings, 9 per cent met the Standard. The Standard was met by 4 per cent of dwellings that were rented from the local authority (equivalent to 5,000 dwellings).

Of those that failed the Standard, almost all did so by failing to meet one or more of the primary elements. More than 99 per cent of failing local authority dwellings failed one or more primary element compared with 100 per cent of housing association stock. Less than one per cent failed to meet the Standard by meeting all the primary elements but not meeting a sufficient number of secondary elements.

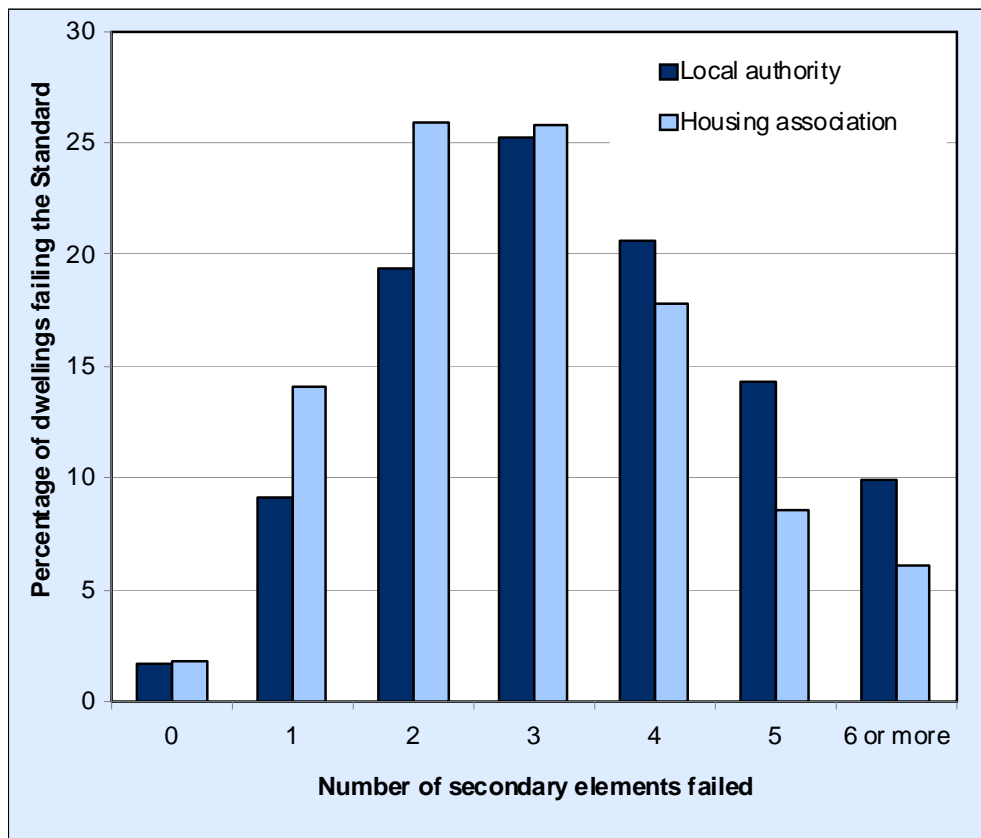
**Chart 1: Percentage of dwellings that failed the Standard, by number of primary elements failed, by tenure**



The number of primary elements failed varied by tenure. In 2008, 66 per cent of local authority dwellings and 77 per cent of housing association dwellings failed on 3 or more primary elements. No dwellings in either social tenure failed on 11 or more of the primary elements.

Dwellings could pass the Standard if they passed all the primary elements and failed 4 or fewer of the 13 secondary elements. Chart 2 shows the number of secondary elements failed for both social tenures.

**Chart 2: Percentage of dwellings that failed the Standard, by number of secondary elements failed, by tenure**



Nearly 80 per cent of the dwellings that failed the Standard failed on 4 or fewer of the secondary elements, with more than half failing on 3 or fewer secondary elements. Housing association dwellings tended to fail on a smaller number of secondary elements than the local authority dwellings.

Individual elements were classified as either pass, fail or not applicable. Excluding those that were not applicable, the pass rate for each primary element is given in Table 2.

**Table 2: WHQS primary element pass rate, by tenure**

Primary Element	Pass rate (%)		
	Local authority	Housing association	All social tenures
1a Is the dwelling structurally stable and free from	79	85	81
1b Is the dwelling free from damp?	100	100	100
2a Is the staircase and balustrade safe?	93	93	93
2h Are there adequate fire alarms and equipment?	92	97	94
2j Are mains powered smoke detectors on each floor?	78	79	78
2n Do external doors and windows give a reasonable level of physical security?	64	67	65
2o Is the rear garden easy to maintain, reasonably private, safe and suitable for young children to play	63	73	66
3a Is the heating system reasonably economical?	32	49	38
3b Are external doors and windows adequately draught proofed?	82	79	81
3d Is the hot water tank effectively insulated?	92	97	93
4a Is the kitchen 15 years old or less, unless in good condition?	84	90	86
4c Are the bathroom and WC facilities 25 years old or less, unless in good condition?	100	100	100
4d Is there a shower as well as a bath?	39	43	41
- Is the dwelling free from Category 1 HHSRS hazards	81	88	84

Coverage: social housing excluding elements classed as "not applicable"  
Weighted total: varies by element

Source: Living in Wales 2008

Two elements (1b Is the dwelling free from damp? and 4d Are the bathroom and WC facilities less than 25 years old, unless in good condition?) were passed by all dwellings. The lowest pass rate for a primary element was for 3a Is the heating system reasonably economical? This element was passed by only 38 per cent of all dwellings, although this varied by tenure with 32 per cent of local authority dwellings passing and 49 per cent of housing association dwellings. This was the biggest difference in pass rate between the two tenures for the primary elements.

**Table 3: Secondary element pass rate by tenure**

Secondary Element	Pass rate (%)		
	Local authority	Housing association	All social tenures
2b Is there adequate space for kitchen appliances?	84	88	85
2c Is the work surface sufficient for safe food	98	98	98
2d Is the cupboard storage convenient and adequate?	83	86	84
2e Is the number of convenient power sockets in the kitchen sufficient?	100	100	100
2f Is the flooring in the kitchen and bathroom safe and suitable for use?	68	86	74
2i Do rooms used for sleeping have escape routes not passing through another room?	92	90	91
3c Is the living room separated from the main entrance	98	95	97
3e Is there adequate mechanical extract ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom?	12	31	19
4b Are there adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes?	58	63	60
7b Is internal and external general storage space	19	12	17
7d Does the dwelling have the necessary physical aids to suit the requirements of the residents?	68	69	68
7e Is there a level area no smaller than 10m <sup>2</sup> directly accessible from the dwelling?	87	88	87
7f Is there paved access to the drying line and any garden gate?	73	74	73

Coverage: social housing excluding elements classed as "not applicable"  
 Weighted total: varies by element

Source: Living in Wales 2008

The secondary element pass rates are shown in Table 3. The element with the lowest pass rate was 7b Is internal and external storage space adequate? This had an overall pass rate of 17 per cent, but was 12 per cent for housing association dwellings. The element with the largest pass rate difference was 3e Is there adequate mechanical extract ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom? This had a fairly low overall pass rate of 19 per cent, but had a 19 percentage point difference between the two social tenures with only 12 per cent of local authority stock passing this element.

The only secondary element that was passed by all dwellings was 2e Is the number of convenient power sockets in the kitchen sufficient?

### Progress towards meeting the Standard – 2002 WHQS Definition

The 2002 definition of the Standard was also measured in Living in Wales 2008. This analysis can be used to measure progress toward achieving the Standard between 2004 and 2008 on a comparable basis, as it does not take into account the changes made to the WHQS guidance in 2008.

Using the 2002 WHQS definition, the overall pass rate for the Standard had not changed between 2004 and 2008. It remained at less than one per cent.

## Quality Information about the Living in Wales survey

### The Welsh Housing Quality Standard Definition

'Better Homes for People in Wales' states the Welsh Assembly Government's vision that "all households in Wales...shall have the opportunity to live in good quality dwellings that are:

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

These constitute the essential characteristics of homes meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, and guidance was provided in 2002 on how to interpret each. To measure against these features through the 2004 physical stock survey it was agreed that the Standard would be divided into elements separated into two categories; primary and secondary:

- A primary element is one that must be met by all dwellings and includes assessment of the safety of the occupants; and
- A secondary element should be met, but is more focussed around the comfort of the occupants. These elements include assessment on storage and design.

Elements that could be assessed by Living in Wales were categorised as pass, fail, not applicable or missing. Elements that might be classed as not applicable were for example, "the amount of insulation in the loft" in dwellings that were flats. These elements would essentially count as a pass. Elements were classified as missing if the survey failed to record sufficient information to make the assessment.

### 2002 guidance assessment

There were 62 individual elements in the Standard. The Living in Wales survey measured 42 of these elements, of which 19 were primary and 23 were secondary. Of the 20 elements not measured, 4 were primary and 15 were secondary. One element, 5a Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well managed?, was not formally assessed within the Standard. A full list of the elements and their assessment in Living in Wales can be found in the Living in Wales 2004 Welsh Housing Quality Standard report published July 2006 (revised):

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2006/hdw200606142/?lang=en>

In order to meet the Standard as measured by Living in Wales, a dwelling had to pass all 19 primary elements and 18 or more of the 23 secondary elements.

11 per cent of the dwellings had one or more missing elements. These cases were excluded from the analysis. A separate analysis of this excluded data showed that there were no systematic differences between these missing data and the data analysed.

### 2008 revised guidance assessment

In 2008 guidance was revised and the number of elements reduced. There are 42 individual elements in the Standard. The Living in Wales 2008 survey measured 27 of these elements, of which 14 were primary and 13 were secondary. Of the 15 elements not measured by the Living in Wales 2008 survey 2 were primary and were 12 secondary. The primary elements not assessed within Living in Wales 2008 were in relation to valid gas and electricity certificates. One element, 5a Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well

managed?, is not formally assessed within the Standard. A full list of all the elements in the Standard is given in an annex to this report. It shows the primary/secondary status and whether it was measured in the Living in Wales survey.

In order to meet the Standard, as measured by the Living in Wales 2008 survey, a dwelling had to pass all 14 primary elements and 9 or more of the 13 secondary elements.

Only one per cent of the dwellings had one or more missing elements. These cases have been excluded from the analysis in this report. A separate analysis of this excluded data showed that there are no systematic differences between these missing data and the data analysed.

## **Methodology**

- The 2008 Living in Wales Property Survey continues a series of Welsh House Condition Surveys, last conducted in 1998 and 2004. The survey provides information to the Welsh Assembly Government for the development and monitoring of housing policies directed at the repair, improvement and energy efficiency of the housing stock.
- The survey was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, managed by the Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales and conducted by Ipsos MORI.
- The sample for the Property Survey is taken from the 2008 Living in Wales Household Survey. The Household Survey was used to assess the condition of the dwelling and determine its inclusion in the Property Survey sample. The householder must also give consent. The final sample was 2,741 dwellings stratified by condition, age of the dwelling and tenure. The sample only contains occupied first homes. Further details of the survey are available in the technical report: <http://wales.gov.uk/about/aboutresearch/social/ocsropage/living-wales/technicalreports/?lang=en>
- The data from the 2008 household survey was linked to the data from the 2008 property survey to provide information on the dwelling and its occupants.
- The Living in Wales survey is an all-Wales level physical stock condition survey, but the policy allows for some flexibility in interpretation when implemented at local level and therefore results may differ from those local assessments – typically carried out at local authority area level.

## **Comparability**

- There are no known reasons why the 2004 and 2008 Living in Wales Surveys should not be comparable. The surveys were designed to ensure comparability where possible. If this is not the case it is noted in the text of the report.
- The Living in Wales Survey methodology differs from other house condition survey methodologies in the UK and care should be taken when making comparisons.
- The methodology for calculating the Welsh Housing Quality Standard has changed between 2004 and 2008. This is due to the guidance being revised in 2008. The results in this report refer to the 2008 version of the Standard, unless stated otherwise.

## **Accuracy**

- The overall response rate for the property survey was 71.6 per cent. Response rates varied by local authority from 60 per cent to 80 per cent. The figures are designed to be reported at a Wales level.
- The Living in Wales Survey is a sample survey and is subject to sampling variability.
- Figures reported in this publication but have been rounded to the nearest 1,000 grossed responses and percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.
- Where comparisons have been made with 2004 data, the figures may have different accuracy associated with them due to sampling.

## **Timeliness**

- The 2008 Living in Wales Household Survey was conducted between January and August 2008. The 2008 Living in Wales Property Survey was conducted between September and December 2008.

- The Living in Wales Survey was conducted in 2004 and similar methodology was used in previous House Condition Surveys in 1998 and 1986.
- The Living in Wales Survey has now been replaced by the National Survey for Wales for the household element. No further house condition surveys are planned at present.
- The Living in Wales Property Survey data is collected via paper forms and scanned to form an electronic database. The processes for checking the data are more complicated than for the Household Survey which is collected electronically. The Property Survey data is used in various post-survey modelling processes to obtain energy efficiency ratings and repair costs. These processes all contribute to a longer analysis period and therefore a delay in publication compared to the Household Survey results.

## Terms and Definitions

**Household** – is defined as one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address with common housekeeping – that is, sharing either a living room or sitting room or at least one meal a day.

## Further Information

- Living in Wales Household Survey 2008 results  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/livinginwales08/?lang=en>
- Living in Wales Household Survey 2008 technical report  
<http://wales.gov.uk/about/aboutresearch/social/ocsropage/living-wales/technicalreports/?lang=en>
- Living in Wales Property Survey 2008 technical report  
<http://wales.gov.uk/about/aboutresearch/social/ocsropage/living-wales/technicalreports/?lang=en>

Further information is available from the Living in Wales web pages:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/livinginwalesurvey>

If you require any further information about using the data collected by the Living in Wales survey, then please contact the Welsh Assembly Government. The contact point for requests for statistics on the Living in Wales survey is:

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## Annex A

The table below lists the elements within the Standard. It shows which elements are primary and which are secondary. Elements shaded in grey are not measured by the Living in Wales 2008 property survey.

Element	Primary /secondary
<b>Part 1. In a good state of repair</b>	
1a Is the dwelling structurally stable and free from disrepair?	P
1b Is the dwelling free from damp?	P
<b>Part 2. Safe and secure</b>	
2a Is the staircase and balustrade safe?	P
2b Is there adequate space for kitchen appliances?	S
2c Is the work surface sufficient for safe food preparation?	S
2d Is the cupboard storage convenient and adequate?	S
2e Is the number of convenient power sockets in the kitchen sufficient?	S
2f Is the flooring in the kitchen and bathroom safe and suitable for use?	S
2g Is there an external fire escape?	S
2h Are there adequate fire alarms and equipment?	P
2i Do rooms used for sleeping have escape routes not passing through another room?	S
2j Are mains powered smoke detectors on each floor?	P
2k Are window locks without automatic locking action in rooms used for sleeping?	S
2l Is the gas, solid fuel or oil service and safety certificate up to date, and have all heating installations and appliances been certified safe by an appropriately qualified person as required by law?	P
2m Have electrical lighting and power installations been checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person?	P
2n Do external doors and windows give a reasonable level of physical security?	P
2o Is the rear garden easy to maintain, reasonably private, safe and suitable for young children to play in?	P
<b>Part 3. Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated</b>	
3a Is the heating system reasonably economical?	P
3b Are external doors and windows adequately draught proofed?	P
3c Is the living room separated from the main entrance door?	S
3d Is the hot water tank effectively insulated?	P
3e Is there adequate mechanical extract ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom?	S
<b>Part 4. Contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms</b>	
4a Is the kitchen 15 years old or less, unless in good condition?	P
4b Are there adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes?	S
4c Are the bathroom and WC facilities 25 years old or less, unless in good condition?	P
4d Is there a shower as well as a bath?	P

Element	Primary /secondary	
<b>Part 5. Well managed (for rented housing)</b>		
5a	Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well managed	not assessed
<b>Part 6. Located in attractive and safe environments</b>		
6a	Are roads and footpaths accessible, providing safety for residents, pedestrians and children?	S
6b	Is there soft and hard landscaping with planting in protected areas?	S
6c	Is there adequate street lighting?	S
6d	Is there adequate and safe play space for young children?	S
6e	Are there adequate, practical and maintainable communal areas?	S
6f	Are dwellings clearly identifiable with definable boundaries?	S
6g	Are utility services practically located and well identified?	S
6h	Is there adequate and practically located car parking clearly visible to residents?	S
<b>Part 7. As far as possible, suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities)</b>		
7a	Is there sufficient space within the dwelling for everyday living?	S
7b	Is internal and external general storage space adequate?	S
7c	Does the dwelling layout meet the special cultural needs of the residents?	S
7d	Does the dwelling have the necessary physical aids to suit the requirements of the residents?	S
7e	Is there a level area no smaller than 10m <sup>2</sup> directly accessible from the dwelling?	S
7f	Is there paved access to the drying line and any garden gate?	S

Source: Welsh Housing Quality Standard (revised 2008)