

SDR 11/2016

28 January 2016

## Housing hazards and licenses, 2014-15

This annual statistical release presents information on houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and the condition of residential properties assessed by local authorities across Wales under the [Housing Health and Safety Rating System](#) (HHSRS). The HHSRS is used by local authorities 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.

The information collected annually on housing hazards and licenses across Wales was previously shown within the annual statistical release 'Housing Demolitions and Hazards'. This annual release was the subject of a review during the autumn of 2015 and following consultation with users, it was agreed to publish the data on demolitions separately within a statistical headline and continue to publish information on hazards and licenses in an annual statistical release.

The information presented in this statistical release is used by the Welsh Government to monitor the quality of private sector dwellings and how licensing is being implemented across Wales. The information is also used to monitor the effectiveness of current policy, particularly progress against the [Programme for Government 2011 -2016](#) commitment to 'Improve the quality of accommodation in the private rented sector' and for future policy development.

Definitions of all terms used can be found in the [glossary](#) at the end of this release. A full set of data on hazards and licenses in Wales, including information by individual local authority, is available on [StatsWales](#).

### Key Results:

- During 2014-15, local authorities carried out 6,629 assessments under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), an increase of 7 per cent on the previous year.
- Almost a third of all assessments made during 2014-15 contained at least one category 1 hazard. Non-HMOs had a higher percentage of assessments containing Category 1 hazards than HMOs.
- During 2014-15, the most common category 1 hazard found in non-HMOs was 'Excess Cold' whilst in HMOs the most common was 'Damp and Mold Growth'.
- At 31 March 2015, local authorities reported 14,070 known HMOs across Wales, which is down by 2 per cent on the previous year. The overall number of licensed HMOs across Wales has increased steadily over recent years with 7,602 licensed HMOs reported at 31 March 2015.

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## 1. Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The [Housing Health and Safety Rating System](#) (HHSRS) replaced the Fitness Standard in July 2006; however, unlike the Fitness Standard, it does not provide a single rating for a dwelling/building as a whole. 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 [Glossary](#)) 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 [glossary](#).

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.

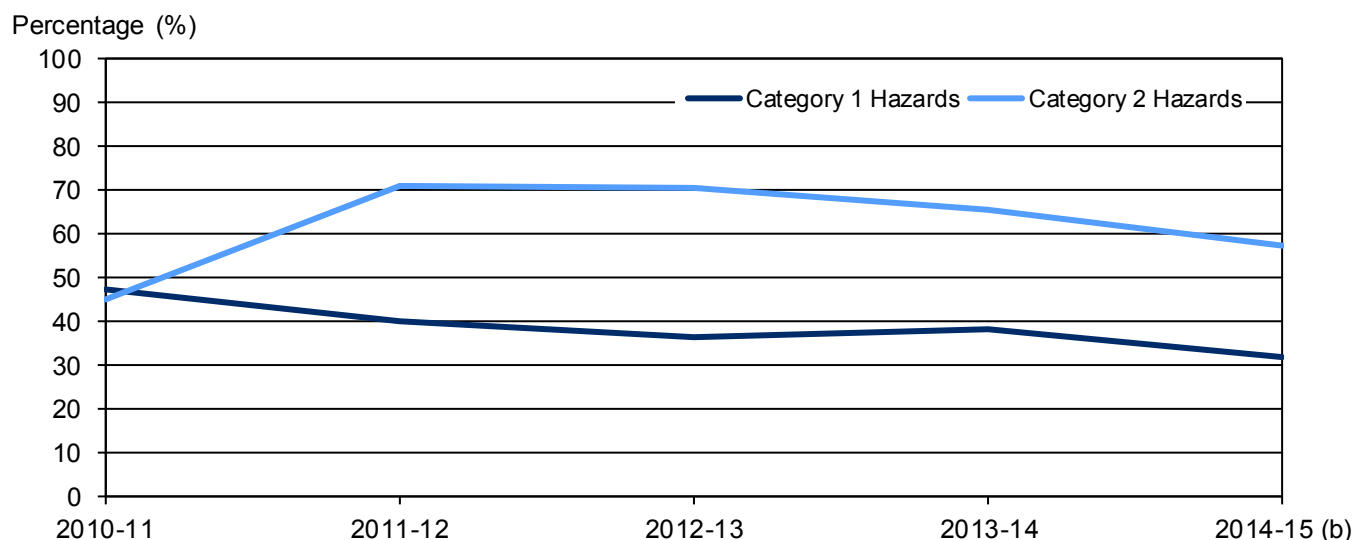
The following sections of this release cover the number of assessments made by local authorities during the year and the types of hazards found within those dwellings. It also looks at how assessments made in dwellings with only one household (non-HMOs) compare with assessments made in dwellings which contain more than one household (HMOs).

### 1.1 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 does vary. During 2014-15, 6,629 assessments were carried out across Wales, 7 per cent more than the number of assessments carried out during 2013-14, this is the largest number of assessments made since 2010-11.
- Over a third (40 per cent) of the assessments during 2014-15 were in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), which is the highest percentage reported to date.

**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) Flintshire were unable to provide the data on assessments for 2014/15, the information previously provided by Flintshire for 2013/14 has been used to calculate a Wales total. This may be revised at a future date.

- Category 1 hazards pose the greatest risk to the health and safety of occupants. During 2014-15, 32 per cent of assessments contained at least one Category 1 hazard, a drop of around 7 percentage points from the previous year and 16 percentage points less than 2010-11 (Chart 1).
- The percentage of assessments which contain the less serious Category 2 hazards has been decreasing since 2011-12. In 2014-15, 57 per cent of dwellings assessed contained Category 2 hazards compared with 65 per cent in 2013-14.

**Table 1 - Percentage of Assessments in HMOs and Non-HMOs which Contain Category 1 and Category 2 Hazards**

	Number						Percentage		
	Assessments			Category 1 Hazards			Category 2 Hazards		
Year	Non - HMOs	HMOs	Total	Non - HMOs	HMOs	Total	Non - HMOs	HMOs	Total
2010-11	4,775	2,049	<b>6,824</b>	52	35	<b>47</b>	41	53	<b>45</b>
2011-12	3,466	2,031	<b>5,497</b>	44	34	<b>40</b>	69	74	<b>71</b>
2012-13	4,292	2,290	<b>6,582</b>	38	33	<b>36</b>	67	78	<b>71</b>
2013-14	3,846	2,363	<b>6,209</b>	42	32	<b>38</b>	66	64	<b>65</b>
2014-15 (a)	3,952	2,677	<b>6,629</b>	35	27	<b>32</b>	53	63	<b>57</b>

Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from local authorities

(a) Flintshire were unable to provide the data on assessments for 2014/15, the information previously provided for 2013/14 has been used to calculate a Wales total. This may be revised at a future date.

- 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 2014-15, 35 per cent of assessments in non-HMOs were found to contain at least one Category 1 hazard, compared with 27 per cent of assessments in HMOs (Table 1).

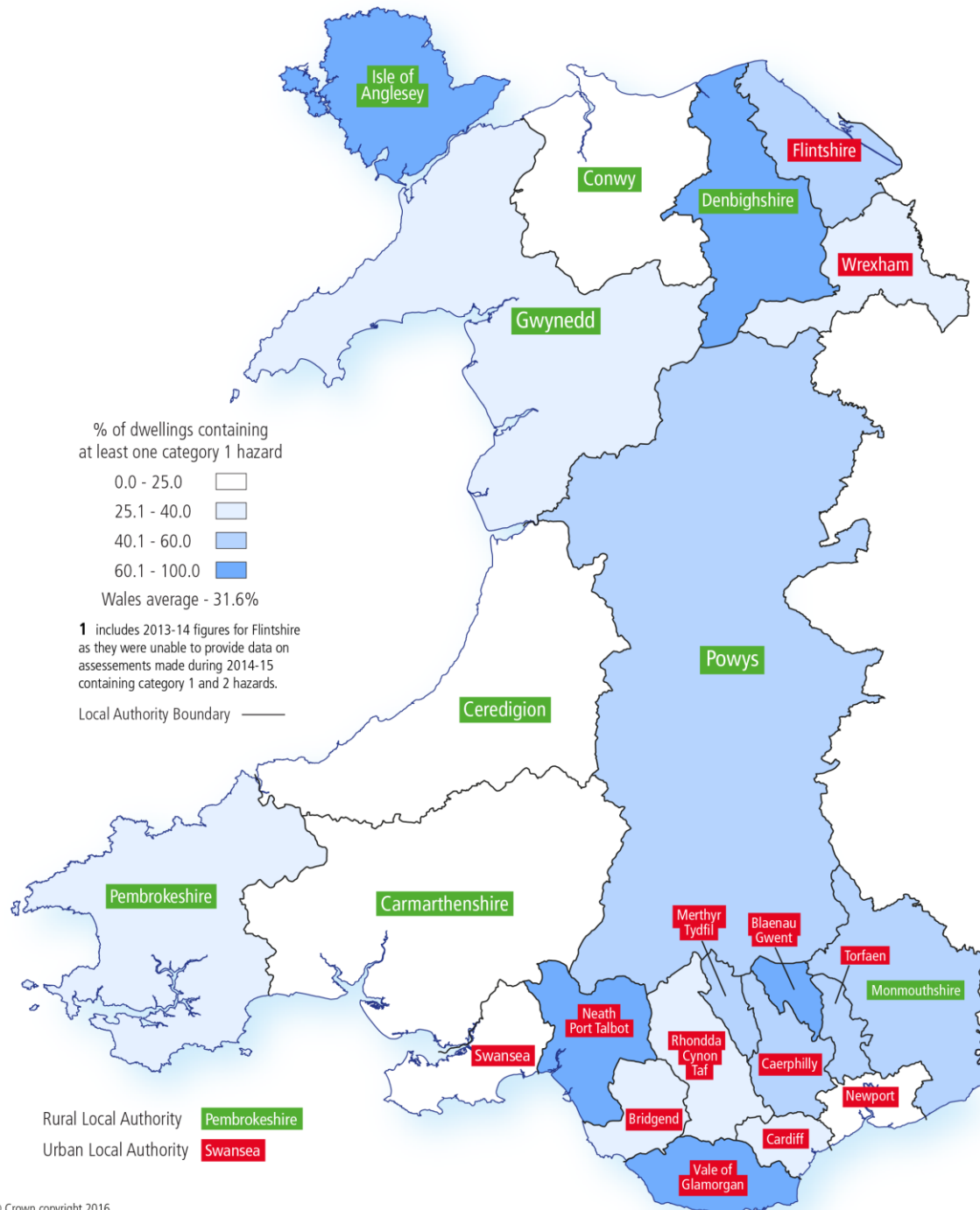
- The percentage of assessments found to contain the less serious Category 2 hazards has generally been lower each year in non-HMOs than in HMOs with the exception of 2013-14 (Table 1).
- During 2014-15, 53 per cent of assessments were found to contain Category 2 hazards in non- HMOs compared with 63 per cent in HMOs (Table 1).

### **Local Authority Assessments**

- During 2014-15, Newport carried out the largest number of assessments ( 992), whilst the smallest number of assessments was carried out in Neath Port Talbot at just 25.
- Blaenau Gwent reported the highest percentage of assessments containing Category 1 hazards (94 per cent) whilst the lowest percentage was reported by Ceredigion and Newport both with 14per cent.
- Powys, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan found Category 2 hazards in all assessments made, whilst Caerphilly reported the lowest percentage of assessments containing Category 2 hazards (26 per cent).

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

# Percentage of All Assessments which Contained at Least One Category 1 hazard, 2014-15<sup>1</sup>



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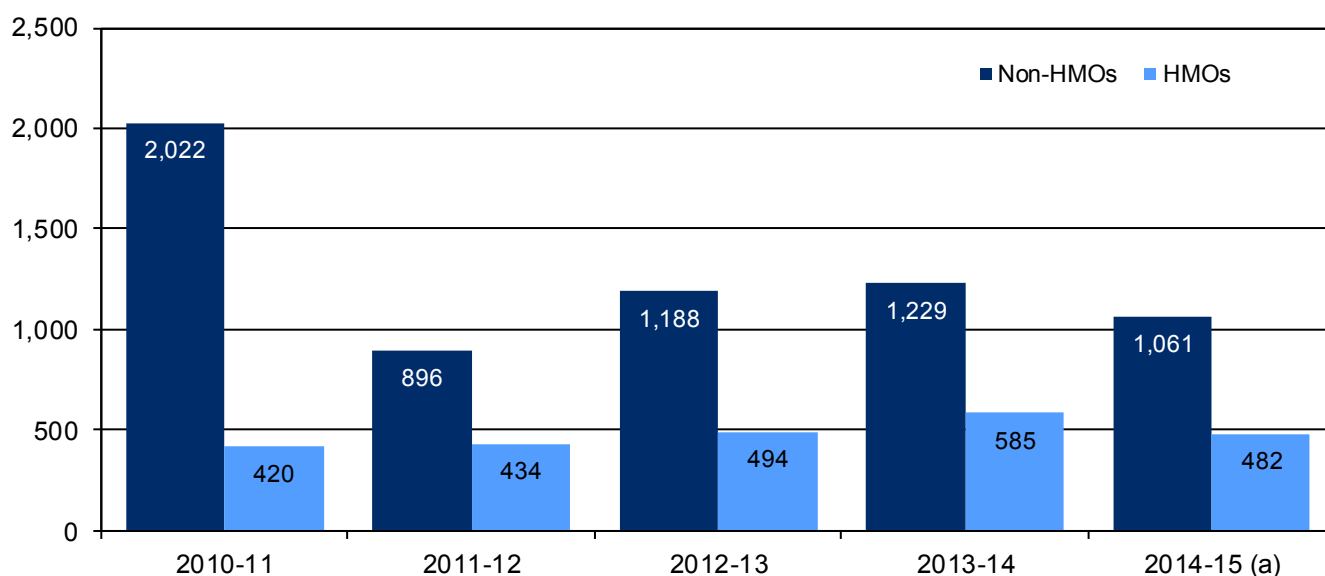
**OGL**

Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from local authorities

## 1.2 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 Licenses returns from Local Authorities

(a) Flintshire were unable to provide the data on assessments for 2014/15, the information previously provided for 2013/14 has been used to calculate a Wales total. This may be revised at a future date.

- During 2014-15, action by local authorities resulted in 1,543 Category 1 hazards being resolved, of which 482 (31 per cent) were in HMO dwellings and 1,061 (69 per cent) were in non-HMO dwellings. A higher percentage of resolutions for non-HMOs is to be expected given that since 2010-11 non-HMOs have had the highest percentage of Category 1 hazards found following assessment.
- At a local authority level, Cardiff reported the highest number of Category 1 resolutions in HMOs, at 132 (27 per cent of all resolutions), which is to be expected given that Cardiff reported the highest number of known HMOS at 31 March 2015.
- Caerphilly reported the highest number of non-HMO resolutions (217).

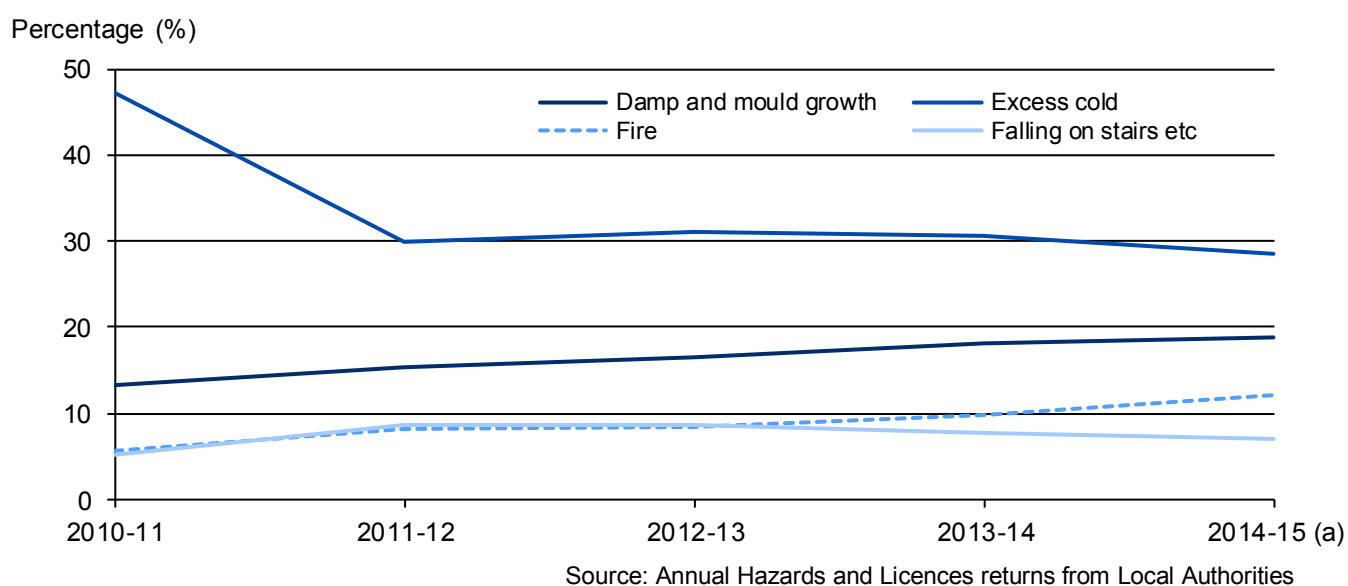
It is important to note that the assessment of some of these hazards may have been carried out in previous financial years.

## 1.3 Hazard Types

### 1.3.1 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 29 per cent of all Category 1 hazards found in 2014-15.
- 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. (Chart 3).
- 'Damp and mould growth' has consistently been the second highest Category 1 hazard found in non-HMOs and accounted for 19 per cent during 2014-15, followed by 'Fire' risks which accounted for 12 per cent and 'Falling on stairs ' which accounted for 7 per cent (Chart 3).

**Chart 3 - Top Four Types of Category 1 Hazards in Non-HMO Dwellings**

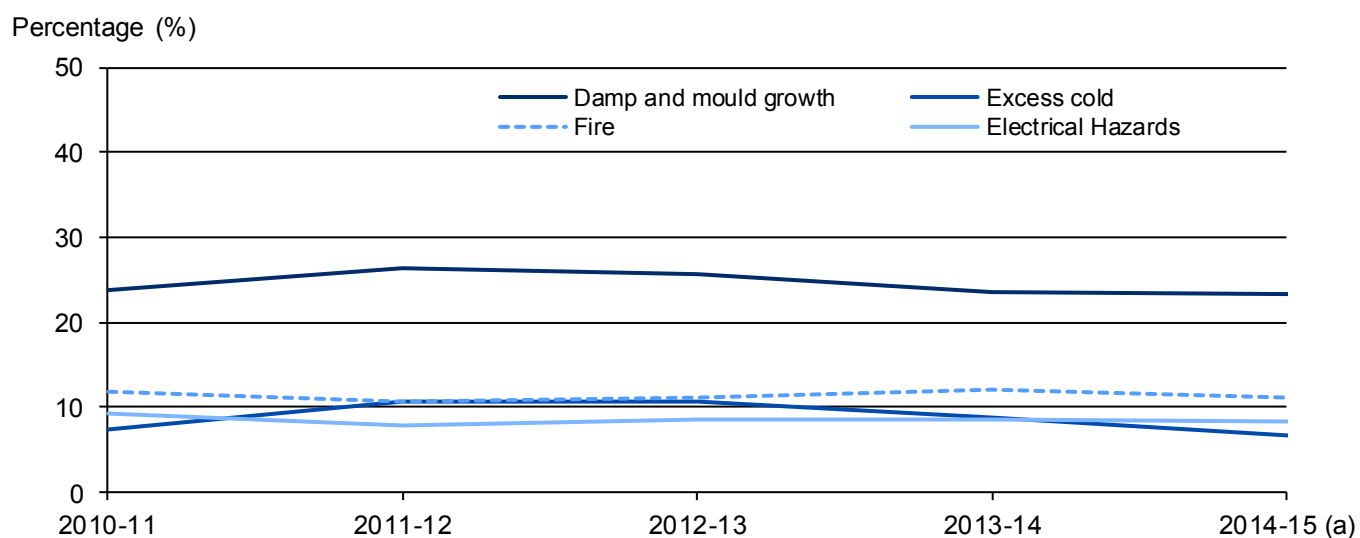


(a) Flintshire were unable to provide the data on assessments for 2014/15, the information previously provided for 2013/14 has been used to calculate a Wales total. This may be revised at a future date.

- 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 (23 per cent) of all Category 2 hazards found during 2014-15 (Chart 4).
- 'Fire' risks continued to be the second most common type of Category 2 hazard found in 2014-15, accounting for 11 per cent of all Category 2 hazards found in non-HMO dwellings. This was followed by 'Electrical Hazards' and 'Excess Cold', accounting for 8 per cent and 7 per cent, of all Category 2 hazards found in non-HMO dwellings, respectively (Chart 4).



**Chart 4 - Top Four Types of Category 2 Hazards in Non-HMO Dwellings**



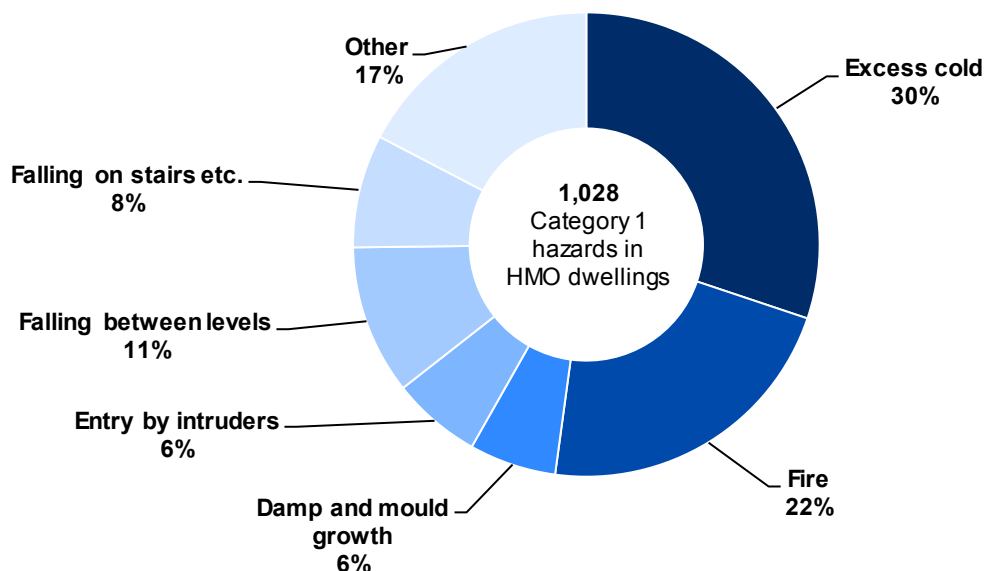
Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

(a) Flintshire were unable to provide the data on assessments for 2014/15, the information previously provided for 2013/14 has been used to calculate a Wales total. This may be revised at a future date.

### 1.3.2 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

- 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.

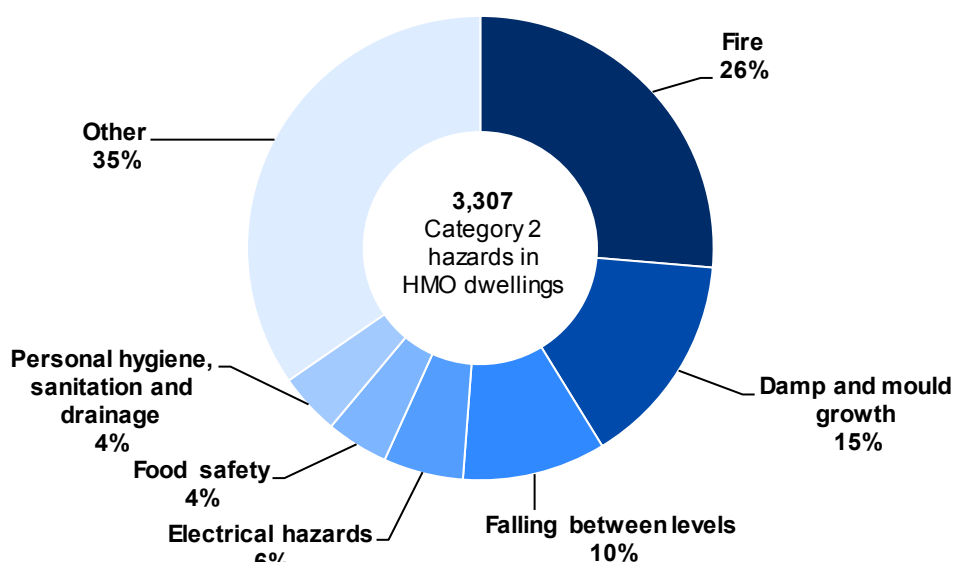
**Chart 5 – Category 1 Hazards in HMOs in 2014-15 (a)**



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

- 'Excess cold' and 'Fire' have continued to be the most common Category 1 hazards over the last six years, with 'Excess Cold' the most common in 2014-15, accounting for 30 per cent of all Category 1 hazards found.

**Chart 6 – Category 2 Hazards in HMOs in 2014-15 (a)**



Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

(a) Flintshire were unable to provide the data on assessments for 2014/15, the information previously provided for 2013/14 has been used to calculate a Wales total. This may be revised at a future date.

- 'Fire' has consistently been the most common type of Category 2 hazard found in HMO dwellings, accounting for over a quarter (26 per cent) of all Category 2 hazards found in 2014-15.

This was followed by 'Damp and Mould growth' at 15 per cent and 'Falling between levels' at 10 per cent.

## **2. Licensing**

### **2.1 Selective Licenses**

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 91 dwellings licensed at 31 March 2015.

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](#).

### **2.2 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.<sup>1</sup> They are often occupied by young lower-income single people and can include some vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. 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.

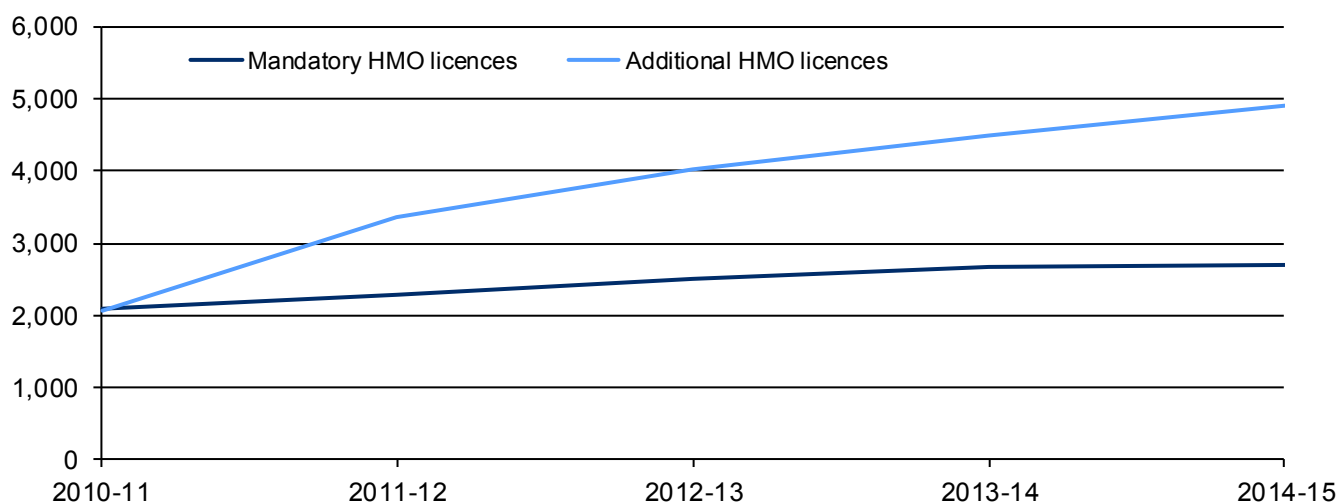
Local authorities have the discretion to extend licensing to other categories of HMOs. This is known as additional licensing and enables local authorities to address particular problems that may exist in smaller properties or in particular geographical areas that the local authority considers appropriate.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

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<sup>1</sup> Description/definition of houses in multiple occupation taken from 'The Housing Act 2004', chapter 34, paragraph 24 and available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/notes>

- The overall number of licensed HMOs across Wales has been steadily increasing since 2008-09, as local authorities have identified new mandatory HMOs and, since 2009-10 in particular, have made increased use of additional licensing powers.
- Since 2010-11, the number of mandatory licensed HMOs has increased by 29 per cent and the number of additional licensed HMOs has more than doubled. At 31 March 2015, there were 7,602 licensed HMOs, of which 35 per cent (2,691) were under mandatory licenses and 65 per cent (4,911) were under discretionary 'additional licensing' schemes.

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



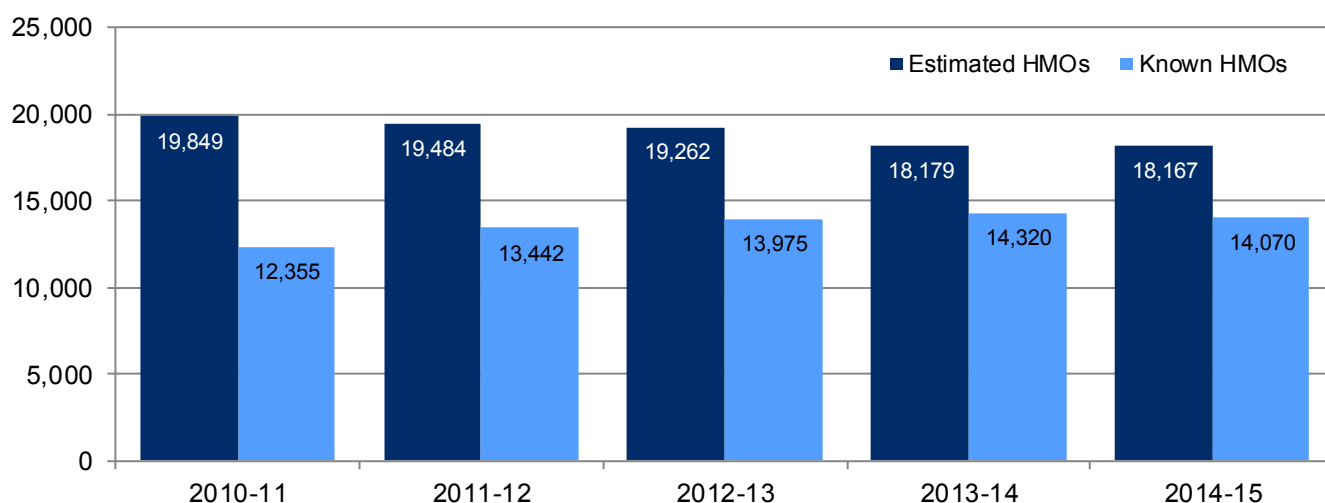
Source: Annual Hazards and Licences returns from Local Authorities

- At 31 March 2015, the local authority with the largest number of licensed HMOs was Cardiff, containing 34 per cent of all licensed HMOs in Wales, followed by Swansea with 20 per cent of Wales' HMOs. These are both large urban areas with high levels of private rented dwellings and large student populations.
- Two local authorities, Torfaen and Monmouthshire, did not report any licensed HMOs. Both of these authorities had proportions of private rented dwellings below the Wales average in 2014<sup>2</sup>
- Merthyr Tydfil, reported just 1 licensed HMO at 31 March 2015 and Blaenau Gwent reported 3.

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 below (Chart 8).

<sup>2</sup> These figures are taken from the latest published Dwelling Stock Estimates for Wales as at 31 March 2014 available at the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/housing-demolitions-hazards/?lang=en>

**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 2015, local authorities estimated there were approximately 18,167 HMOs in total in Wales, which is just under 1 per cent less than in 2013-14 and the lowest number recorded to date. The number of these HMOs which are actually known to local authorities also decreased, by around 2 per cent, compared with the previous year with 14,070 known HMOs reported at 31 March 2015.
- 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. In 2014-15 however, the difference increased which suggests that a slightly smaller proportion of all HMOs are known to local authorities than was the case last year.
- At a local authority level, during 2014-15, the highest proportion of both known and estimated HMOs in Wales were reported by Cardiff, at 35 per cent and 39 per cent respectively. Cardiff also had the highest proportion of private rented dwellings of all local authorities in 2014<sup>3</sup>.
- The lowest proportions of known and estimated HMOs were in the three valley authorities of Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, all of which reported less than 1 per cent of all known and estimated HMOs across Wales.

<sup>3</sup> These figures are taken from the latest published Dwelling Stock Estimates for Wales as at 31 March 2014 available at the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/housing-demolitions-hazards/?lang=en>

### 3. Key Quality Information

1. In addition to the information below, further information can be found in the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#) which is available on our website.

#### Data Source and Coverage

2. 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 at the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/housing-hazards-licences-data-collection/?lang=en>

3. Further information on the data processing cycle can also be found in the Housing Statistics Quality Report at the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/housing-demolitions-hazards/housing-statistics-quality-report/?lang=en>
4. Data were collected from all of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales. However, during 2014-15, Flintshire County Council failed to provide data on the number of:
  - Assessments, which contained category 1 and 2 hazards;
  - HMOs and non-HMOs where all category 1 hazards had been resolved as a result of local authority action;
  - Category 1 and 2 hazards identified by the local authority, by hazard type in non-HMOs.
  - Category 1 and 2 hazards identified by the local authority, by hazard type in HMOs.

As a result, 2013-14 data has been used as an alternative. Therefore care should be taken when comparing the 2014-15 'all Wales' totals for the above, as Flintshire's figures are based on assumptions.

Flintshire was able to provide data on the number of Licences and the number of known/estimated HMOs in the local authority area, as at the 31 March 2015.

#### Users and Uses

5. 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.
6. The [National Housing Strategy](#) includes an objective for all households in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality homes. The, [Programme for Government 2011 -2016](#) which is the current government programme, also outlines the Welsh Government commitment to 'Improve the quality of accommodation in the private rented sector'. 'Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System hazards as proportion of assessments' is a Programme for Government indicator and the latest indicator data published for 2015 is available at the following link:  
<http://gov.wales/about/programmeforgov/homes/progresssummary?lang=en>

The '[White Paper for Better Lives and Communities](#)', which was published in May 2012, also included proposals to 'improve the quality of existing homes' and to 'improve the private rented sector.'

Wales' first Housing Bill the [Housing \(Wales\) Act](#) was introduced into the National Assembly for Wales on 18 November 2013, and set out an ambitious programme of action, including taking forward proposals set out in the White Paper. The Act became law on 17 September 2014 and introduces 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.

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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

10. 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.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

11. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political reference.
12. 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:**

13. Data are collected from local authorities via Excel spreadsheets. These are downloaded from the Afon file transfer website which provides a secure method for users to submit data.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. Examples of validation checks within the forms include year-on-year changes, cross checks with other relevant data tables and checks to ensure data is logically consistent

## **Validation and Verification**

17. 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.
18. 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.
19. More detailed quality information relating specifically to hazards and licenses, is given below.

## **Data Quality**

### **20. 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.

### **21. 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.

The Welsh Government's guidance on statistical quality is available online:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/statement-of-compliance/quality-management/?lang=en>



## **Symbols**

22. The following symbols may have been used in this release:

- negligible (less than half the final digit shown)
- . not applicable
- .. not available
- ~ not yet available
- \* disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication
- p provisional
- r revised

## **Comparability**

23. Caution should be taken if comparing the number of assessments and hazard types over a number of years as numbers can vary each year depending on the demand for assessments.
24. Care should be taken when comparing the 2014-15 'all Wales' totals, as Flintshire County Council's figures are based on assumptions. See 'Data Quality' section above for details.

## **Accuracy**

25. As stated above, Local authorities completed data collection forms with built in guidance and primary validation. On receipt of the data collection forms, the data collection team carried out secondary validation and worked closely with the different types of data providers to ensure information provided was accurate and on a consistent basis. Copies of the data collection forms can be found on the website: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/housing-hazards-licences-data-collection/?lang=en>

## **Revisions**

26. This release contains the final data for the year ending 2014-15 but includes an estimate for one local authority in relation to the number of assessments and number of Category 1 and Category 2 hazards found. This may result in revised data for 2014-15 being published at a later date.
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. Revised data is marked with an (r) in the statistical release

We follow the Welsh Government's statistical revisions policy, details of which are available at:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/statement-of-compliance/revisions-errors-postponements/?lang=en>

## **Accessibility**

30. 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 at the following link:

<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Housing/Hazards-and-Licences>

## **Coherence with Other Statistics**

### **Living in Wales**

31. The 2008 Living in Wales property survey carried out assessments of homes to determine whether they met HHSRS. The survey provides an estimate of the condition of the dwelling stock across Wales in relation to HHSRS. These data are not comparable with the figures in this statistical release which provide information on HHSRS assessments and hazards by local authorities.

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/living-in-wales-survey/?lang=en>

### **Programme for Government Indicators**

32. The Programme for Government 2011 - 2016, which is the current government programme, outlines the Welsh Government commitment to 'Improve the quality of accommodation in the private rented sector'. A number of indicators have been established to assist in measuring the progress made in achieving this commitment. The programme for Government outcome indicator OU048 'Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System hazards as proportion of assessments' measures the percentage of Category 1 Hazards identified which create a duty for the local authority. The latest published data for this indicator covers 2013-14 and is published in the '2015 Progress Report: Welsh Homes' available at the following link:

<http://gov.wales/about/programmeforgov/homes/?view=Standard&lang=en>

### **Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)**

30. The WHQS was first introduced in 2002 and aims to ensure that 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). The WHQS measures 42 individual elements within the following seven categories:

- 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
- As far as possible suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities).

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

The Welsh Government set a target for all social landlords to improve their housing stock to meet the WHQS by the end of 2012 (since re-defined as by the end of 2012-13) or other renegotiated deadlines.

An annual data collection was introduced in July 2012 to provide a regular, consistent and robust mechanism for monitoring the progress made by local authorities and the latest results for 31 March 2015 are available at the following link:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-housing-quality-standard/?lang=en>

## Related Statistics for Other UK Countries

### 31. Hazards

Information on HHSRS in England is collected by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This was previously collected as part of Section A and Section B of the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix data collection and is now collected as Sections F5 to F7 of the Local authority housing statistics (LAHS) data returns. Published data includes the number of dwellings with Category 1 hazards by tenure and the estimated cost of removing Category 1 hazards by tenure as well as the number of private sector dwellings with Category 1 hazards made free (resolved) as a direct result of local authority action. Latest published data covers 2013-14 and is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2013-to-2014>

32. HHSRS does not apply to Scotland or Northern Ireland.

### 33. 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.

34. The Department for Communities and Local Government collects detailed information on HMOs in England. This was previously collected via Section G of the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix data collection and is now collected as Sections F8 to F11 of the Local authority housing statistics (LAHS) data returns. Information is published on the estimated total number of HMOs and the estimated number of mandatory licensable HMOs as well as the actual number of properties with mandatory HMO licenses issued by the local authority. Information is also collected and published on the number of properties identified as being mandatory licensable HMOs which have been found upon inspection to contain Category 1 hazards according to the HHSRS. The latest published information covers 2013-14 and is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2013-to-2014>

35. Information on HMOs with mandatory licences in Scotland is available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/HMO>

## 4. 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.<sup>4</sup> 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. 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.

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<sup>4</sup> Description/ definition of houses in multiple occupation taken from 'The Housing Act 2004', chapter 34, paragraph 24 and available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/notes>

## 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.

## 5. Further information

Further information is available from the statistics web site:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/?topic=Housing+and+regeneration&lang=en>

More detailed data are available on the StatsWales website:

<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Housing/Hazards-and-Licences>

National Housing Strategy – ‘Improving Lives and Communities – Homes in Wales’:

<http://gov.wales/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/strategy/publications/strategydoc/?lang=en>

‘Programme for Government 2011 -2016’ - current government strategy:

<http://gov.wales/about/programmeforgov/?jsessionid=56BB1727144DA211806FFBDA837E305B?lang=en>

The White Paper for Better Lives and Communities:

<http://gov.wales/consultations/housing-and-regeneration/housewhitepaper/?lang=en>

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014

<http://gov.wales/legislation/programme/assemblybills/housing/?lang=en>

We actively encourage feedback from our users. If you have any comments please e-mail us at:

[stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

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