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Housing

# What you need to know about the Census 2021 housing data: England

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The first datasets from the 2021 Census were released on 5 January 2023, giving an overview of household formation across the country and the homes they live in. The data shows the variation across England of property type, tenure, and household composition. It reveals how housing need is spread unevenly across the country, and provides indications of the demands on housing in the decades to come.

## Household size

According to the Census data there are 23.4 million households in England. The average household size across England is 2.4 people. This varies between local authority areas, with Newham, Slough, and Redbridge having the highest average household size at 3.0 residents per household, while the City of London (1.7 residents per household) and North Norfolk (2.1 residents per household) have the lowest average figures in England.

## Overcrowding and underoccupation

The Census also revealed that 1,024,691 households (4.4%) in England live in a property which is overcrowded, measured by having at least one bedroom fewer than necessary for the household. This rises to 11.1% in London, where 380,000 households have fewer bedrooms than required. Additionally, 16,132,747 households (68.8%) live in properties they are underoccupying, with one or more surplus bedrooms relative to household size.

## Tenure and housing types

The Census data showed a slight decrease in the numbers of households who owned their home, and an increase in households who rent their home, compared to the 2011 Census:

- 14,605,016 households (62.3%) were owner-occupiers or in shared ownership properties
- 4,005,663 (17.1%) lived in the social rented sector
- 4,825,406 (20.6%) lived in the private rented sector or other rent-free situation.

Most households in England live in a house or bungalow (18,128,595 households, 77.4%) while 5,297,596 (22.2%) live in a flat or maisonette. A further 99,894 households (0.4%) live in a caravan, mobile home, or other temporary structure. However, in London the proportion of households living in a flat or maisonette is far higher, at 54% of households (1.8 million).



# Central heating

In England 22,865,362 homes (97.6%) had central heating which was not sourced from renewable energy. 92,396 homes (0.4%) had central heating powered fully by renewable energy, and 126,692 homes (0.5%) had central heating partly powered by renewable energy. Additionally, 351,635 homes (1.5%) had no central heating at all.

## CIH's view

The changes noted in the Census in housing tenure reflect CIH's findings as illustrated in the [UK Housing Review](#) (Table 17a). Since 2011, the private rented sector in England has been larger than the social rented sector, and the two sectors continue to diverge in size. The impact for tenants is significant – the private rented sector offers less security of tenure and higher rent levels than found in the social rented sector. Concern over the number of former right-to-buy properties now in the private rented sector [is not new](#), and its impact on the ability of local authorities to meet housing need has been of sufficient concern in London for a [buy-back scheme](#) to be put in place.

Data revealing the extent of overcrowded homes echoes concerns raised by CIH during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic. As one of the organisations behind [Homes At The Heart](#), CIH has called for increased delivery of social homes to enable growing families to have safe, affordable homes to move into. Occupants of overcrowded housing are more likely to suffer from the effects of poor health, while children in overcrowded housing often find their education is negatively affected as they struggle to find space in the home to complete their homework.

Concerns over current high energy prices have thrown the spotlight onto the way homes in England are heated, and their energy efficiency. The impact of cold homes on health and the cost to the NHS was [estimated at £857 million a year in 2021](#). More energy-efficient homes, heated by sustainable methods which do not put householders at the mercy of volatile global energy markets, belong at the heart of a national transition to net zero. CIH has called for a [national energy efficiency programme](#) to improve the way homes are heated, reduce the impact of cold homes on health, and create an industry which will support up to half a million jobs.

