

## Decent Homes

### Key points:

- Estimates show 44,340 of Cornwall's owner-occupied properties have category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards. This equates to 24% of owner-occupied properties;
- 12,497 (20% of all private rented) of private rented have category 1 hazards;
- And 2,637 (8% of all social rented) of social rented properties have a category 1 hazard;
- Social stock tends to be more thermally efficient than the private stock (owner-occupied and private rented together);
- Between 2016 and 2021, Cornwall Council served approximately 989 notices and orders including 350 Improvement Notices for category 1 hazards and 46 Prohibition Orders.

## Background

For a dwelling to be considered 'decent' it must<sup>1</sup>:

- Meet the statutory minimum standard for housing under the HHSRS (homes with a Category 1 hazard under the HHSRS are considered non-decent);
- Be in a reasonable state of repair;
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services\*;
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

\*This is not something Cornwall Council currently captures.

## Category 1 Hazards in England

The HHSRS is a risk-based assessment tool to aid local authorities with identifying and protecting against 29 potential hazards and risks arising from health and safety deficiencies identified within dwellings<sup>2</sup>. Hazards are split into category 1 (serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety) and category 2 (less serious or less urgent). Examples of hazards include excess cold, damp and mould growth, and fall hazards.

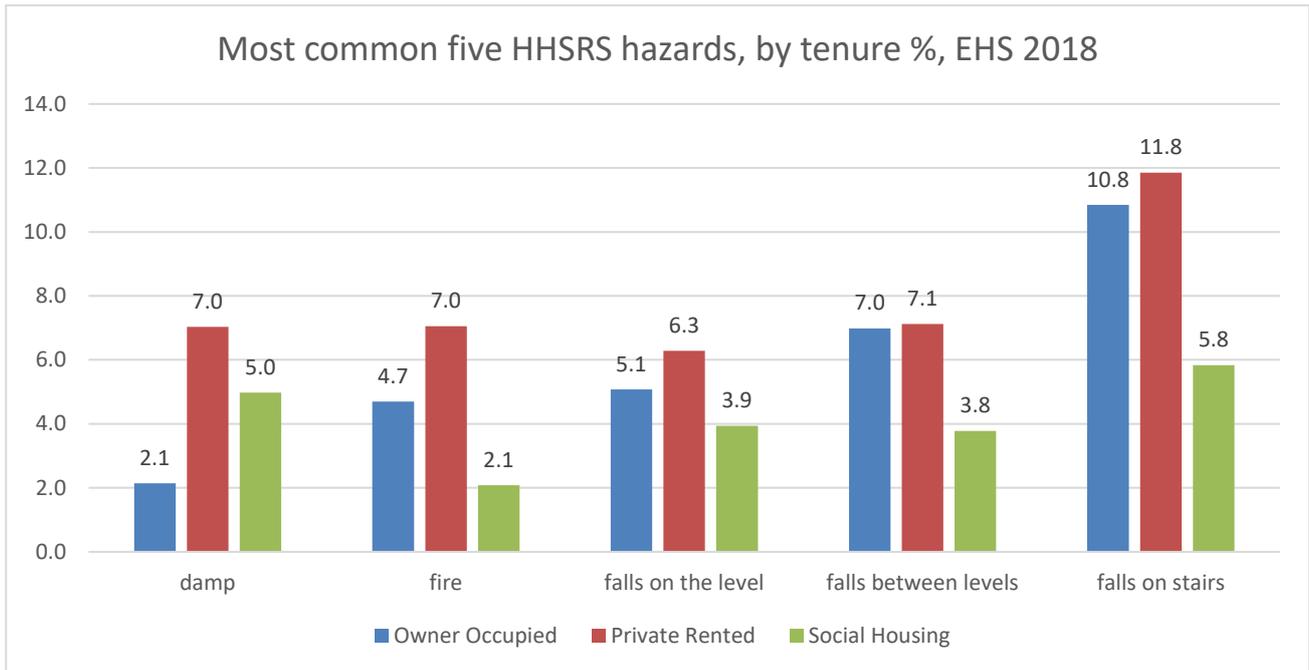
According to the English Housing Survey 18/19 (EHS)<sup>3</sup>, 11% of homes in England had at least one category 1 hazard in 2018, down from 22% in 2008. As shown on the figure on the next page, the most common five HHSRS hazards were falls on stairs, falls between levels, falls on the level, fire and damp. Within this, private rented properties had the greatest number of cases across all five hazards.

<sup>1</sup> [COVER \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Housing Health and Safety Rating System Operating Guidance, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, February 2006

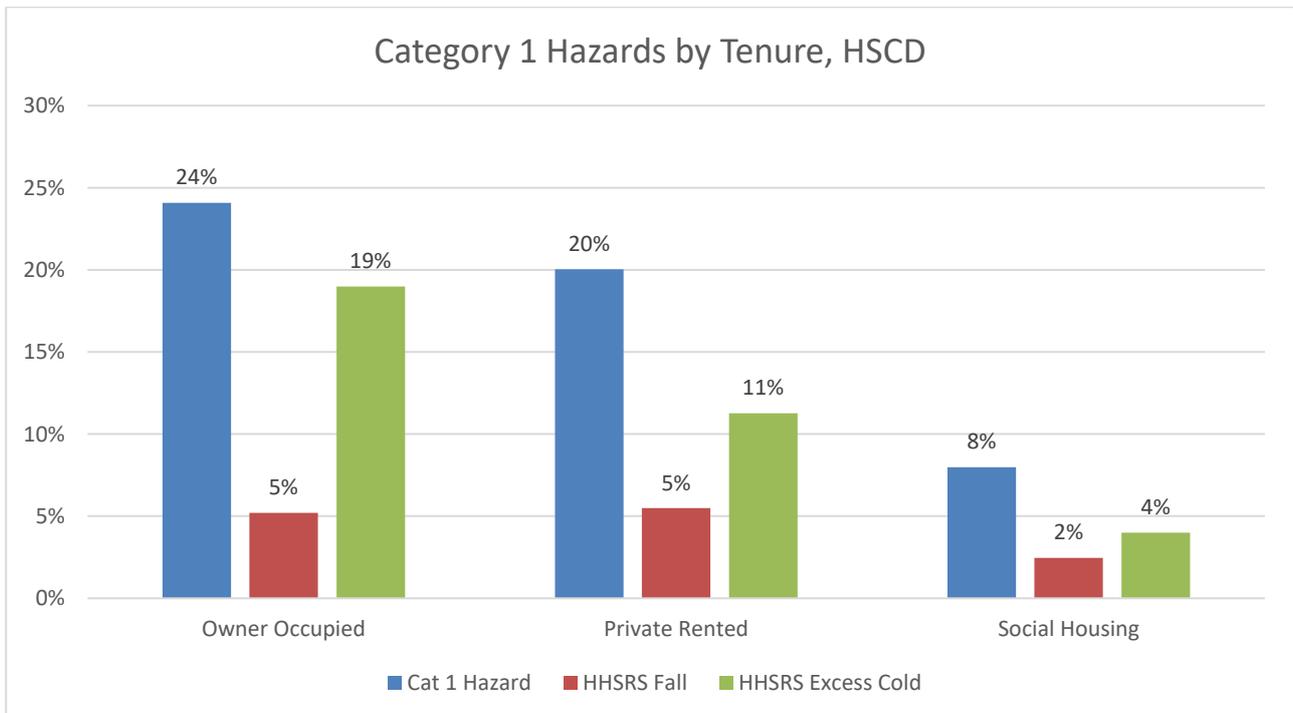
<sup>3</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/898172/2018-19\\_EHS\\_Stock\\_Profile\\_and\\_Condition.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/898172/2018-19_EHS_Stock_Profile_and_Condition.pdf)

## Housing in Cornwall 2021 Decent Homes



### Category 1 Hazards in Cornwall

The Housing Stock Condition Survey (HSCD)<sup>4</sup> found that *overall* category 1 hazards were higher in Cornwall’s owner-occupied properties (24%), followed by private rented (20%) and social housing (8%). To emphasise this point, HHSRS Falls, and Excess Cold hazards are also included (some of the most common hazards). NB: Falls hazards include falls on level surfaces, falls associated with baths and falls on stairs. Excess Cold looks at households where there is a threat to health arising from sub-optimal indoor temperatures.



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bregroup.com/services/advisory/housing-stock/housing-stock-condition-database-hscd/>

## Housing in Cornwall 2021 Decent Homes

In comparison with England's 11% of properties having at least one Category 1 hazard, 21% of Cornwall's overall housing stock have a Category 1 hazard. The below table outlines the numbers of category 1's in Cornwall over a 5-year period (2016-2021).

HHSRS Category 1 Hazard	Number
Excess cold	500
Fire	251
Electrical hazards	73
Falling on stairs etc	65
Falling between levels	43
Falling on the level surfaces etc	19
Damp and mould growth	16
11a Crowding and space (Actual)	13
Food safety	7
Structural collapse and failing elements	7
6A Carbon Monoxide	4
Entry by intruders	4
Excess heat	3
Asbestos and MMF	3
Personal hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage	3
Collision and entrapment	3
Water supply	1
Flames, hot surfaces etc	1
Position and operability of amenities etc	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1017</b>

### State of Repair

The disrepair component is failed if:

- One or more key building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair; or
- Two or more other building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacement or major repair<sup>5</sup>.

In England 2018, 3.5%<sup>6</sup> of properties are in disrepair which is slightly higher than Cornwall's figure of 3%. The highest levels of disrepair in Cornwall were in the wards of Altarnun, Penzance East and Camborne Trelowarren.

<sup>5</sup> [COVER \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/898172/2018-19\\_EHS\\_Stock\\_Profile\\_and\\_Condition.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/898172/2018-19_EHS_Stock_Profile_and_Condition.pdf)

## Thermal Comfort

This criterion requires dwellings to have both effective insulation and efficient heating<sup>7</sup>. Lack of thermal comfort in England 2018, was present in 6% of homes (down from 13% in 2008)<sup>8</sup>. In Cornwall, excess cold was measured at 15% and although this is not a direct comparison to thermal comfort, it does highlight the poor insulation and heating sources that exist across the county. This is reinforced by the following facts about Cornwall's overall stock:

- 18% have uninsulated cavity walls;
- 13% have no to 50mm loft insulation;
- 30% have solid walls (these are almost certainly not insulated)<sup>9</sup>.

## Notices and Vulnerable Groups

Between 2016 and 2021, Cornwall Council served approximately 989 notices and orders including 350 Improvement Notices for category 1 hazards and 46 Prohibition Orders.

Each hazard under the HHSRS is also associated with a vulnerable group. This is the age group of people for whom the risk arising from a hazard is greater than for any other age group in the population. Where there is no vulnerable group for a specific hazard, the population is taken as a whole<sup>10</sup>.

Revisiting the most common types of hazards in Cornwall (fall hazards and excess cold) and aligning this with the HHSRS vulnerable group has shown that 60 years plus are the most vulnerable group. Though, children under 5 are more likely to have falls between levels.

When Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) (or other officers that have completed the HHSRS training) carry out an HHSRS assessment, they will have to have regard to the vulnerable age group for that particular hazard. For example, falls between levels, say from a window, has a vulnerable age group of under 5. Therefore, EHOs have to assess whether a child of that age can access the window i.e., low windowsill, followed by what injuries they would sustain if they fell out of it. This would provide the EHOs the justification to raise the likelihood of harm or spread of harm outcomes which would identify a category 1 or 2 hazard.

## Links to further information

- HHSRS Government Guidance  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/9425/150940.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9425/150940.pdf)
- Private Sector Enforcement Policy  
<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/upkegwaha/2018-final-version-v16-current-version.pdf>

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<sup>7</sup> [COVER \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/898172/2018-19_EHS_Stock_Profile_and_Condition.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/898172/2018-19\\_EHS\\_Stock\\_Profile\\_and\\_Condition.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/898172/2018-19_EHS_Stock_Profile_and_Condition.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/solid-wall-insulation/>

<sup>10</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/15810/142631.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15810/142631.pdf)