



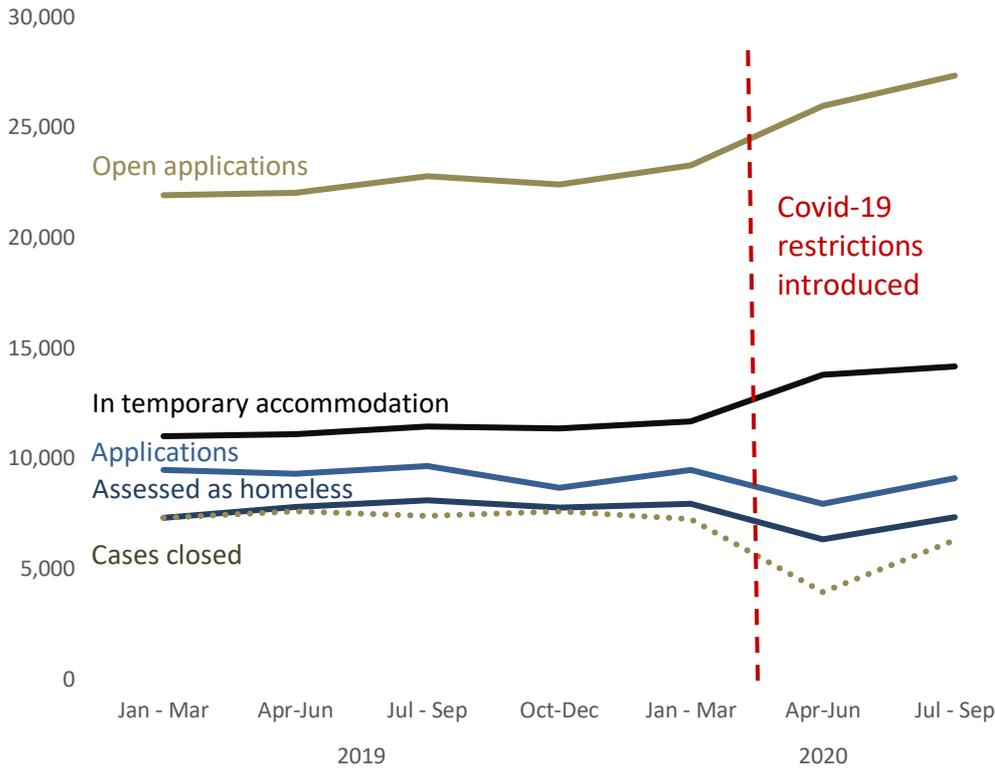
PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

Homelessness in Scotland: Bi-annual update to 30 September 2020

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Main findings



Upon the introduction of covid-19 restrictions, the number of homelessness applications, those assessed as homeless and homelessness cases that closed declined.

However, the number of households in temporary accommodation and open applications increased.

There were shifts in the patterns of homelessness in 2020 for the:

Reasons for homelessness

- ↑ Higher proportions giving reasons of **asked to leave** and **household**
- ↓ Lower proportions giving reasons for **loss of accommodation**

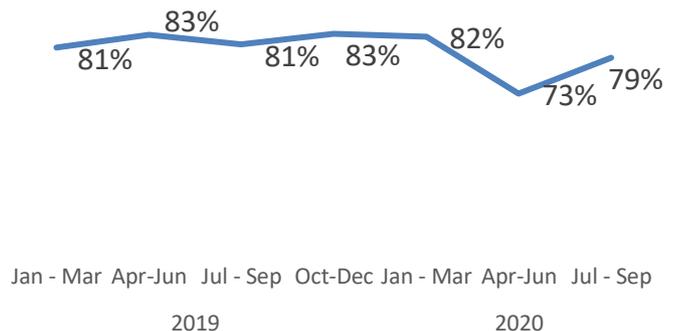
Profile of those assessed as homeless

- ↑ Higher proportions of **single males**, **18-24** year olds and those of **White Scottish** ethnicity

Types of temporary accommodation used

- ↑ Increased use of bed and breakfasts
- ↓ Lower use of hostels

Proportion securing settled accommodation



Introduction

This statistics bulletin provides information on homelessness in Scotland in the 6 month period from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020, alongside historical data.

Its main purpose is to provide an indication of trends for key aspects of homelessness including applications, assessments, use of temporary accommodation and outcomes ahead of the annual publication, which includes a fuller set of information.

The statistics in this publication are based on administrative data collected by local authorities in the course of processing homelessness applications. A limitation of this approach is that data is not collected for any households that are homeless but do not engage with their local authority. For this reason the statistics in this publication do not necessarily cover the entire homeless population in Scotland. More detail on the data sources we use are included at the end of this publication.

Excel workbooks containing the tables and charts referenced in this publication are available to download at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/homelessness-statistics/>

A Quick Guide to the Homelessness Process

A household is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere, or have accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it. A household is threatened with homelessness if it is likely they will become homeless within two months.

There are **three stages involved in a homeless application in Scotland**:

1. The Application stage where the household first presents to the local authority.
2. The Assessment stage which determines:
 - a. If the household is eligible for assistance. Households with no recourse to public funds are not eligible for homeless assistance, though may be provided temporary accommodation while their status is assessed;
 - b. whether the household is homeless or threatened with homelessness;
 - c. if the household is homeless, whether this is ‘unintentional’ or ‘intentional’; and
 - d. if unintentionally homeless, whether there is a connection to the local authority to which the application was made and/or to any other local authority.
3. The Outcome stage. A case can be closed only once the local authority has fulfilled its statutory duty or contact has been lost for 28 days.

What is the statutory duty of the local authority?

If a household is unintentionally homeless (or threatened with homelessness), the local authority must offer settled accommodation. Until this is available, the local authority must offer temporary accommodation.

If a household is intentionally homeless (or threatened with homelessness), the local authority has no statutory duty to provide settled accommodation (although they may choose to do so). There is a duty to provide temporary accommodation and advice and assistance to help the household secure alternative accommodation.

Temporary accommodation must be offered while the household is awaiting an assessment decision.

The statutory duty lies with the local authority the household applies to. If a household has no local connection to the one to which it applied, but to another local authority, they may be referred.

A household can accept or refuse offers of accommodation. A local authority's duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households would be fulfilled by an offer that is refused, provided that the offer is a reasonable one.

More information on the duty local authorities have to assist people who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness can be found in the [Code of Guidance on Homelessness](#).

A note on interpreting the figures

It is not possible to make direct links within a reporting period for each stage of the homelessness process as households will be at a different stage at different times.

That is, not all applications made between 1 April and 30 September 2020 will have an assessment or temporary accommodation placement within that same 6 month period. Similarly, some assessments made between 1 April and 30 September 2020 will relate to applications received prior to this; and some temporary placements in this period will relate to household applications and assessments prior to this also. Furthermore, there will be households who entered and exited temporary accommodation within the same reporting period, and therefore will not appear in the end of period snapshot of households in temporary accommodation.

To also note:

- it is possible for households to make an application and/or be assessed more than once in the same period (although this would be extremely unlikely in a 6 month period only)
- not all households assessed as homeless enter temporary accommodation

The term 'homeless households' is used throughout the publication to denote households who have been assessed as (unintentionally or intentionally) homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Impact of covid-19

This is the first official homelessness statistics release for which covid-19 restrictions and changes in practices were in place for the full reporting period. Where it is believed that covid-19 has had an impact on the data and trends shown in the publication, these have been highlighted with explanations where possible.

In response to the pandemic, local authorities made a huge effort to house all of those in need (including those who would not otherwise be eligible for homelessness support). This included, but was not restricted to, the accommodating of rough sleepers. Where households housed in response to the pandemic have a formal homelessness application to a local authority and/or have a temporary accommodation placement recorded on management information systems, they will be included in the statistics presented in this publication. If there is no corresponding homelessness application and/or temporary accommodation placement recorded, they will not be included.

Some summary information for homelessness applications and the use of temporary accommodation during the coronavirus period has been collected (from local authorities) by both the [Scottish Housing Regulator](#) and by the [Scottish Government](#) (on behalf of SOLACE¹). To date, both of these returns have been collected on a monthly basis, and therefore provide more up to date information.

However, they are not subject to the same level of quality assurance processes as the Official Statistics presented in this publication. The SHR and SOLACE collections are instead released as management information. Comparisons between these sources and the Official Statistics are presented in this publication.

¹ [Solace](#)

The Extent of Homelessness in Scotland

Key Points

Between April and September 2020:

- 16,997 homeless applications were received - 10% less than 2019
- 13,645 households were assessed as homeless - 14% less than 2019

As at 30 September 2020 there were:

- 27,332 open homelessness cases – 20% more than 2019
- 14,151 households in temporary accommodation – 24% more than 2019

Applications, assessments and households in temporary accommodation

Differing trends have been experienced in homelessness over the 6 month period 1 April to 30 September 2020.

Table A: Annual differences for homeless applications, assessments and temporary accommodation, Apr-Sep 2019 and 2020

| | Apr -Sep | | Change | |
|---|----------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | Number | Percentage |
| Applications | 18,911 | 16,997 | -1,914 | -10% |
| Assessed as homeless | 15,860 | 13,645 | -2,215 | -14% |
| Open cases as at 30 September | 22,783 | 27,332 | 4,549 | 20% |
| Households in temporary accommodation as at 30 September | 11,431 | 14,151 | 2,720 | 24% |

Table A shows that while there has been a decrease in applications and households assessed as homeless over the 6 month period, there has been an increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation. New analysis has been included this year to show the number of open homelessness cases; this also shows an increase from the same period in 2019. (Tables 1, 6, 7 & 14)

The trends can largely be explained by changes in service use as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. Some local authorities have reported a reduction in presentations as households were reluctant to approach homelessness services while covid-19 guidelines advised households to remain at home, meaning households whose housing needs were less urgent opted to remain in their current accommodation. In addition, a reduction in the number of evictions due to emergency coronavirus legislation temporarily extending eviction notice periods also reduced the number of households presenting as homeless

from social rented housing, and more noticeably from private rented housing.² Furthermore, home repossessions were also temporarily banned in this period.³

Covid-19 restrictions limited the ability of local authorities to move households in to permanent accommodation, and therefore close cases, explaining the increase in the number of open homelessness cases. This included difficulties in carrying out necessary repairs, challenges conducting viewings due to households shielding or self-isolating, and a lower level of lets due to staff, especially registered social landlords, being furloughed.

There are a couple of reasons for the increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation. First, the rise in the number of open cases increased overall demand for temporary accommodation. In addition, some households who had previously chosen not to take up temporary accommodation provided by the local authority, now required it as the alternative arrangements they had made were no longer viable due to the pandemic.

The drop in applications and assessments are mainly driven by figures for April to June, with these increasing again between July and September (Chart 1). Monthly figures (with the caution that these are subject to natural variation) show that applications for April and May 2020 in particular were considerably lower compared to 2019, with figures for June 2020 comparable to the previous year (Table 29).

Chart 1: Applications and Assessments fell in April to June 2020

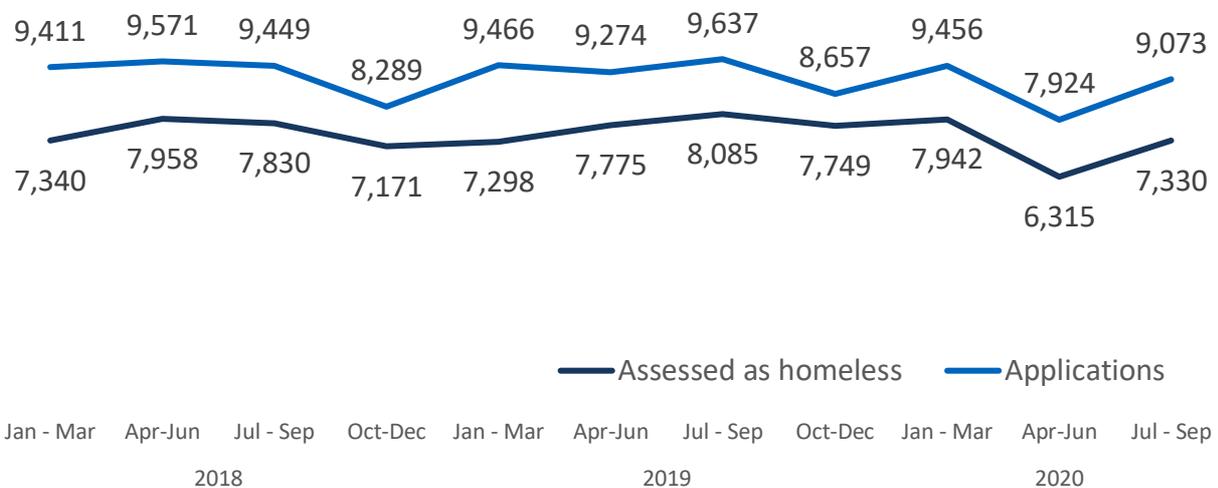
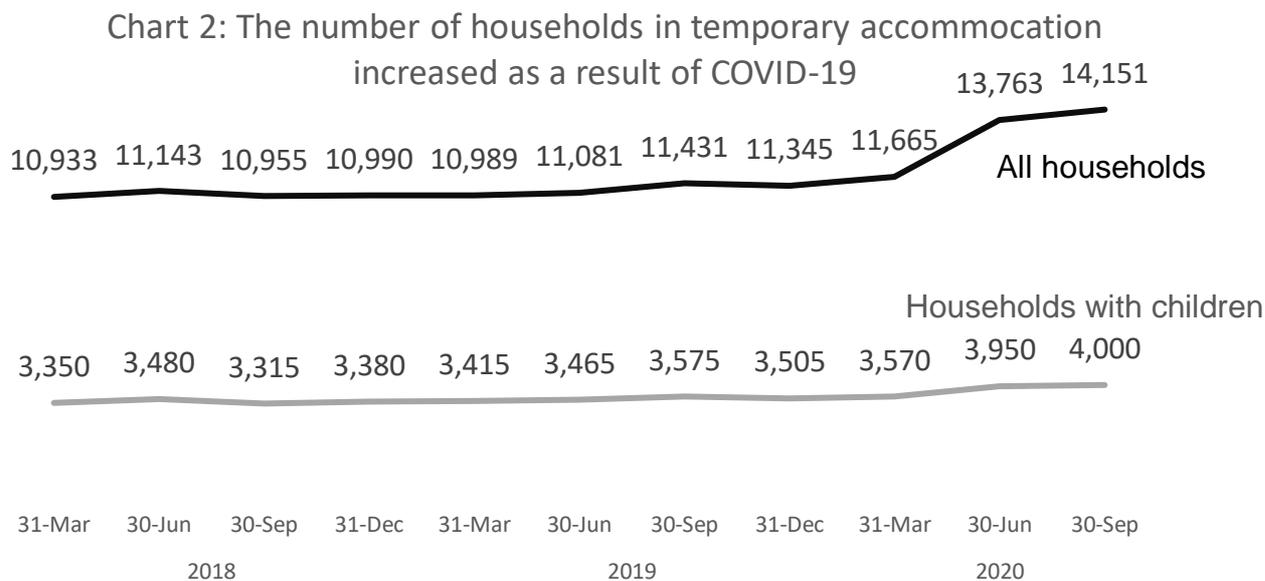


Chart 2 shows that the increase for households with children and/or pregnant women in temporary accommodation isn't as steep as for households overall (24% increase for all vs 12% for households with children/ pregnant women). There were a total of 7,900 children

² Measures providing additional protections for tenants were introduced in the [Coronavirus \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#)

³ [Mortgages and coronavirus: information for consumers | FCA](#)

in temporary accommodation at 30th September – a decrease of 9% (from 7,245) the previous year. (Tables 14-16)



Changes in homelessness assessments

There were a total of 16,568 applications assessed in the 6 month period, 13,645 (82%) of which were found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness. Of these, 13,645, 13,382 (98%) were assessed as unintentionally homeless, with the remaining 263 assessed as intentionally homeless. There is a decrease in the proportion assessed as intentionally homeless compared to the same period last year (2% vs 3%) – this is likely due to changes in legislation which, from November 2019, allows local authorities the power to assess for intentionality rather than it being a legal duty to do so. (Table 7)

Local authority differences

The fall in households assessed as homeless was not experienced uniformly across Scotland. The largest decrease in the period April to September 2020 was seen in Edinburgh, where 1,184 households were assessed as homeless (a decrease of 573, 33% compared to the same period in 2019). Other notable decreases were seen in North Lanarkshire (700 households, a decline of 241, 26%) and Glasgow (2,318 households, a decline of 216, -9%). (Table 8)

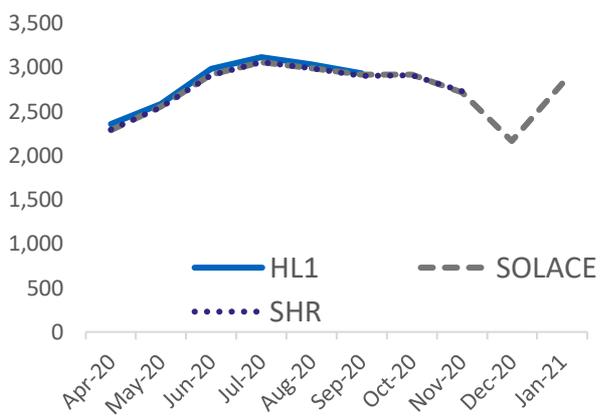
The biggest increase in temporary accommodation was seen in Glasgow, with 3,179 households in temporary accommodation at September 30th, an increase of 862 (37%) compared to September 30th 2019 (Table 14). This is related to the large drop in failures to accommodate in Glasgow – see temporary accommodation section.

Comparisons with administrative data sources

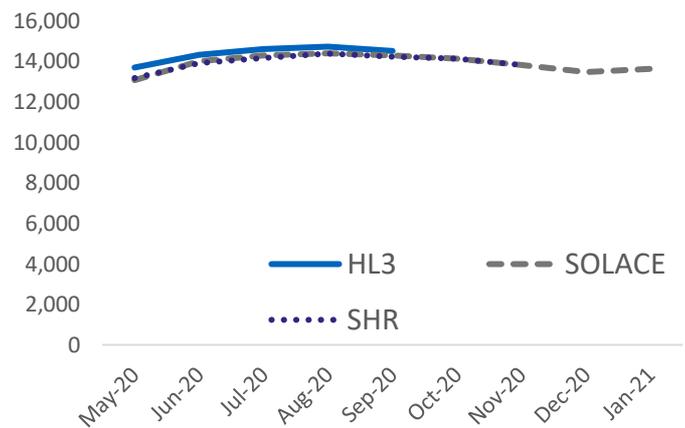
During the course of the pandemic, the collection of monthly management information was set up by the Scottish Government (SG), on behalf of SOLACE, and the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to monitor the impact of covid-19 on homelessness.

The number of applications and households in temporary accommodation reported by official statistics (HL1 & HL3) and monthly management information (SOLACE & SHR) sources are extremely similar for April/May-Sep 2020.

Applications



Temporary accommodation



From the management information it can be seen that the number of applications have remained fairly stable from October onwards, with the exception of the dip in December, which is usual. Temporary accommodation figures peaked in August and were continuing to decline until January 2021, where there was a slight increase again.

Reasons for Homelessness and Prior Circumstances

Key Points

- ‘Household disputes’ and ‘asked to leave’ were more common reasons for homelessness in 2020 than 2019; with reasons associated with loss of property less common.
- 1,365 applications reported a household member experiencing rough sleeping in the 3 months prior to application, and 859 the night before.

There were notable differences in the main reason given for making a homelessness application during April to September 2020 compared the same period in 2019.

Chart 3: There was an increase in the proportion of applications due to household disputes

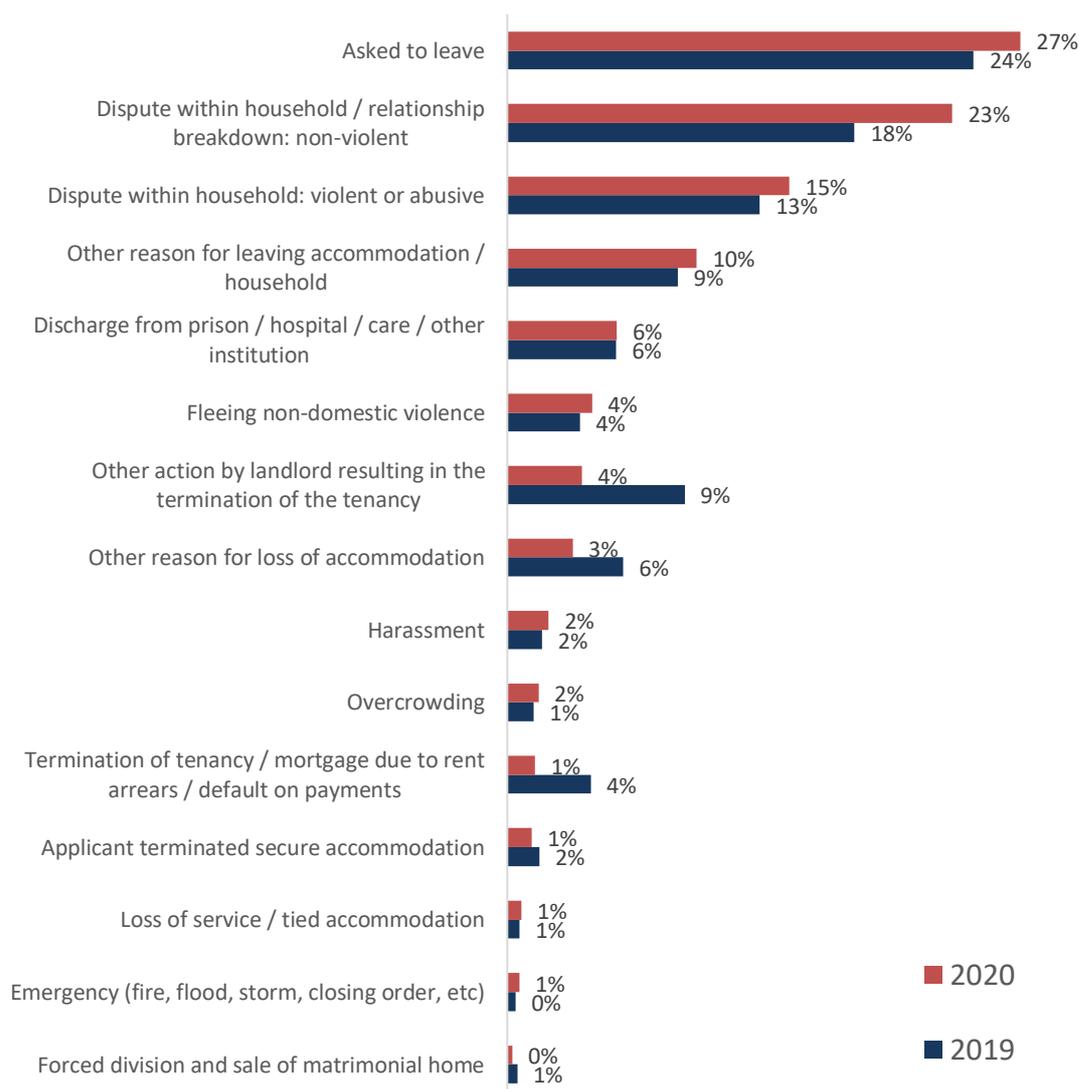


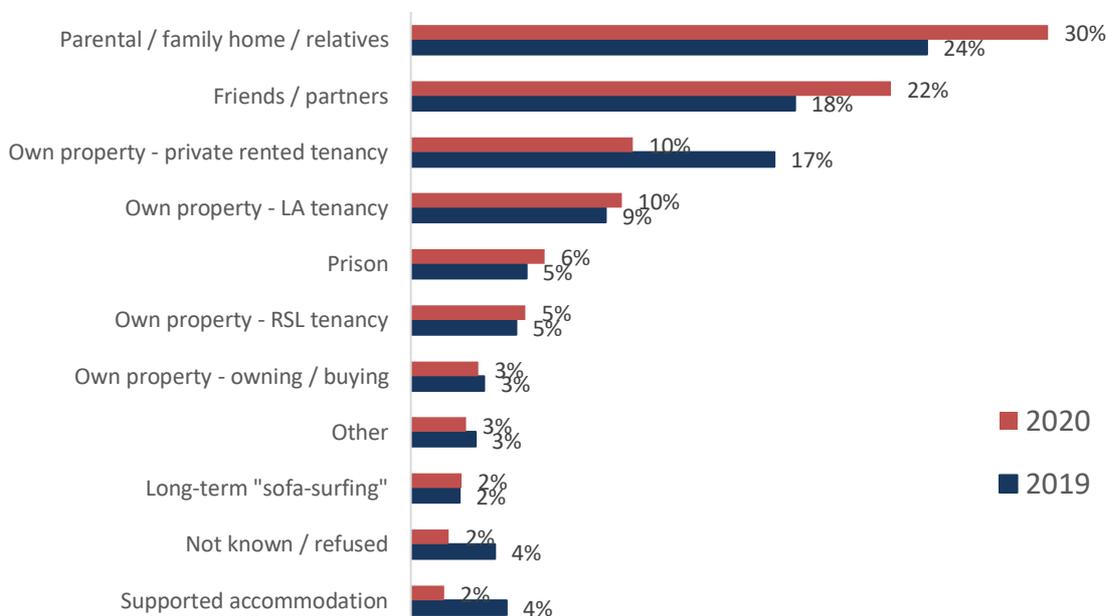
Chart 3 shows there have been increases in the proportion of those presenting as homeless for reasons of 'being asked to leave' and household disputes (both violent and non-violent, and including fleeing domestic violence) in 2020 compared to 2019. These tie in with the increase in proportion of those noting 'Lack of support from friends/ family' as an additional reason (15% to 17%).

Conversely, there have been decreases for the reasons of 'Termination of tenancy / mortgage due to rent arrears / default on payments'; 'Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy' and 'Other reason for loss of accommodation'. This is likely due to temporary measures introduced to protect renters over the covid-19 period, including the use of extended notice periods for eviction proceedings as noted earlier⁴. In addition, mortgage payment deferrals were introduced across the UK in March 2020 to allow customers experiencing issues paying their mortgage during the covid-19 pandemic to apply for a break in making mortgage payments for a period of up to 6 months, alongside a temporary ban on home repossessions⁵.

'Not to do with the applicant household' (5,353, 31% of all applications); 'mental health reasons' (2,970, 17%); and 'lack of support from family and friends' (2,968, 17%) were the most common additional reasons given for failing to maintain accommodation. (Tables 4 & 5).

Previous property

Chart 4: A greater proportion of households became homeless from accommodation shared with relatives, friends or partners



⁴ [Coronavirus \(Scotland\) Act 2020 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7)

⁵ [Mortgages and coronavirus: information for consumers | FCA](https://www.fca.org.uk/consumers/mortgages-and-coronavirus)

The reporting of previous property is linked strongly with reasons for homelessness. As is clear from Chart 4, there are increase in the proportions becoming homeless from the family home or friends/partners, and decreases from own private rented property and supported accommodation. (Table 10)

Rough Sleeping

Between April and September 2020, 859 households (5% of all applications) reported a household member experiencing rough sleeping the night prior to their application, and 1,365 (8% of all applications) reported a household member experiencing rough sleeping in the three months prior to their application (Tables 2 & 3).

There was an increase of 4% in the proportion reporting rough sleeping the night before. Indeed, the proportion of households reporting rough sleeping the previous night was higher (6%) in April-June 20 than any other quarter from January 2018. Although there was a 4% decrease in reported rough sleeping in the 3 months prior, this was less than the overall decrease in applications (10%). These findings may be the result of additional efforts by local authorities to house rough sleepers following the outbreak of covid-19. The decrease over the 3 month period, particularly compared to the increase from the night before, may be due to a reduction in applications from households with less urgent housing needs.

Characteristics

Key Points

Compared to 2019, there were a higher proportion of applicants who were:

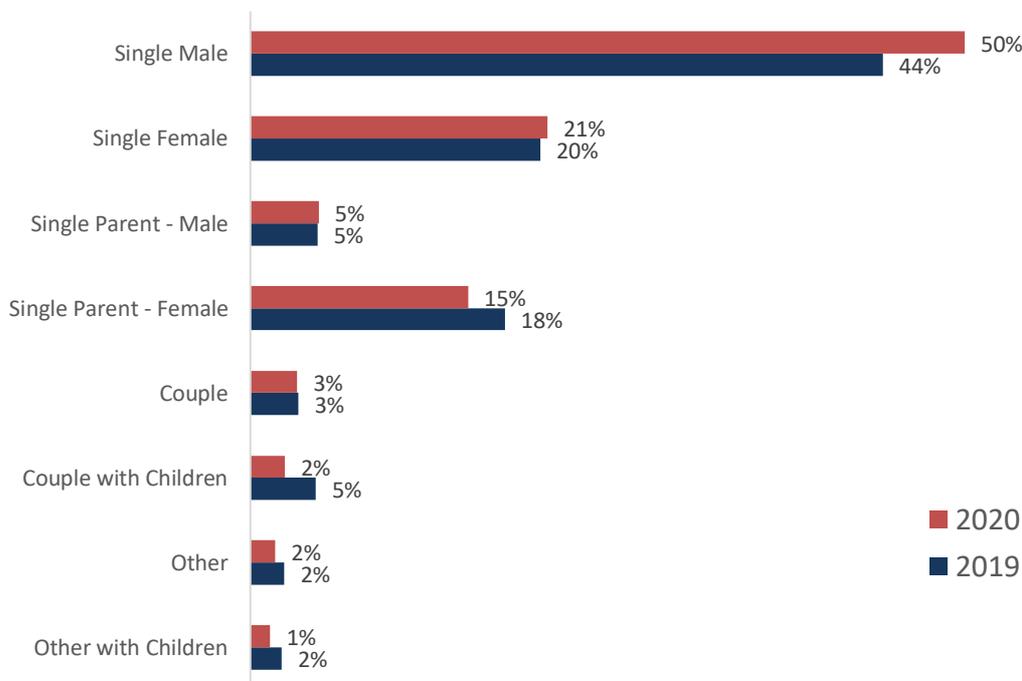
- Single males
- 18-24 years old
- Of White Scottish ethnicity

Applications in the 6 month period in 2020 were made up of a higher proportion of single person households than in 2019 (71% compared to 65%). Conversely, there was a decrease in the proportion of households with children (29% to 24%); this ties in with the lower increases in households with children in temporary accommodation. This was largely driven by increases in the proportion of single male applicants in the period April to June in particular. (Chart 5 & Table 11)

There was a higher proportion of 18-24 year old applicants in the 6 month period in 2020 compared to 2019 – from 20% to 22% (Table 12).

There was also an increase in the proportion of those of 'White Scottish' ethnicity – 78% for the April-September 2020 compared to 75% in 2019 (Table 13).

Chart 5: Higher proportion of single male applicants in 2020



Temporary Accommodation

Key Points

- The number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation at 30th September 2020 increased by 99% compared to the previous year.
- There were 460 instances of households not being offered temporary accommodation between April and September – 76% less than 2019
- There were 135 breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order – 39% less than 2019 (to be treated with caution - see notes below)

Sources of temporary accommodation data

Since 2002, local authorities have provided aggregate snapshot information relating to households in temporary accommodation. While this allows trends to be explored over time, understanding around individual placements and how these relate to assessed households is not possible from the snapshot data. Therefore, since 1st April 2016 placement level information on households in temporary accommodation has been provided to enable a more rounded picture of the use of temporary accommodation.

The snapshot data shows 14,151 households in temporary accommodation as at 30th September 2020. The placement level returns show that there were 14,483 temporary accommodation placements open at 30th September 2020 – 332 (2%) higher than the snapshot returns. Differences may be explained by the returns including different types of temporary accommodation and the placement level returns experiencing a lag in cases being closed.

Both of these figures show households in temporary accommodation at a point in time and, as such, will include those who have recently entered temporary accommodation as well as those who have been in temporary accommodation for a longer period of time (including prior to the reporting period).

How many households entered temporary accommodation? How many exited?

Between April and September 2020, 10,957 households entered temporary accommodation while 7,372 exited – this is a net difference of +3,585 households in temporary accommodation over this period (Table 20).

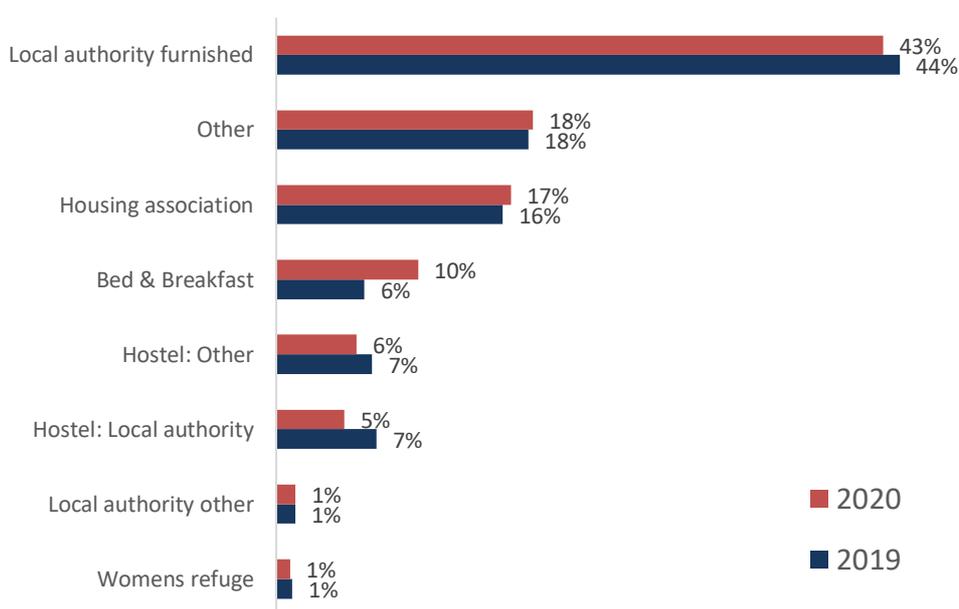
This ties in with the overall numbers in temporary accommodation and open cases increasing over the same period.

What types of temporary accommodation are used?

There was a notable increase in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation following the outbreak of covid-19. While 789 (7%) of the 11,665 household in temporary accommodation at March 31st were in this accommodation type, the figure at September 30th was 1,414 (10%). This was an increase of 704, 99% compared to September 30th 2019.

Over the same period there was a reduction in the use of hostel accommodation. 1,477 households were in this accommodation type at September 30th 2020 compared to 1,578 at 30th September 2019 (Table 17).

Chart 6: There was an increase in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation



The increased use of bed and breakfast accommodation was due to increased availability of this accommodation type, alongside additional funding provided to local authorities to provide temporary accommodation in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Bed and breakfast accommodation was increasingly offered to households in this period as it was easier for households to socially distance in this accommodation type in comparison to other more communal accommodation such as hostels.

It remains the case that hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation is far less likely to be used for households with children than those without. Of those households containing children or a pregnant woman in temporary accommodation at 30th September, 1% were in bed and breakfast accommodation compared to 10% of all households. (Table 17 & 18)

How often do applicants refuse temporary accommodation?

A household can choose to refuse an offer of temporary accommodation made by the local authority. The number of cases of households refusing temporary accommodation increased by 28% in 6 month period from April to September 2020 (3,565 compared to 2,775 in 2019), with particularly large increases from July to September. 1,585 of these

refusals (44%) were in Glasgow, while there was a notable increase in Aberdeen City (310 in April to September 2020 compared to 130 in 2019). (Table 21)

Information provided by local authorities suggest that the increase may be the result of households rejecting offers of bed and breakfast accommodation, which were more common as the availability of other accommodation types decreased during the pandemic while the availability of bed and breakfast accommodation increased.

How often do local authorities fail to provide temporary accommodation?

A local authority is required to indicate when they do not offer any temporary accommodation to a household and are therefore acting unlawfully.

Between April and September 2020 there were 460⁶ instances of households not being offered temporary accommodation – 170 for April-June and 290 July-September. These figures are considerably smaller than any reported previously, which has mainly been driven by the reduction in Glasgow – 55 reported for the 6 month period in 2020 compared to 1,520 for the same period in 2019. This was the result of increased availability of bed and breakfast accommodation for use as temporary accommodation in this period.

A total of 24 local authorities reported at least one instance of not offering accommodation over the 6 month period in 2020, with Edinburgh reporting the majority (370). (Table 22)

How often do local authorities breach unsuitable accommodation legislation?

There were 135 breaches reported across 10 different local authorities between April and September 2020. Fife accounted for 75 of these (all between July and September), having not previously reported high numbers of breaches. Conversely, Edinburgh who do usually report a relatively high number of breaches reported less than 4 over the 6 month period. (Table 23)

Important! Over the reporting period i) there was a significant change to legislation and ii) temporary exceptions were put in place at very short notice in response to covid-19, both of which have had considerable impacts on the data. The urgency of having to adapt to the revised legislation without any specific guidance means that local authorities have reported inconsistencies in the information captured regarding breaches which is likely to affect comparability. For these reasons, these figures should be treated with caution.

Changes in legislation

Prior to 5 May 2020, a breach was encountered when a household with a pregnant woman and/or child is in unsuitable temporary accommodation for more than 7 days. From 5 May

⁶ The City of Edinburgh Council have previously been unable to report 'not offered' places via their placement level temporary accommodation return due to technical issues. These technical issues have been resolved and not offered information is now supplied as part of the regular data return from 2019/20. Backdated information for 2018/19 has been provided by the City of Edinburgh Council.

2020, this was extended to all households. Therefore, the breaches reported between April and September 2020 will include those based on both old and new legislation.

Covid-19 exceptions

Temporary exceptions were put in place to allow local authorities to provide households with accommodation in response to covid-19. The legislation noted that a placement was not considered unsuitable if:

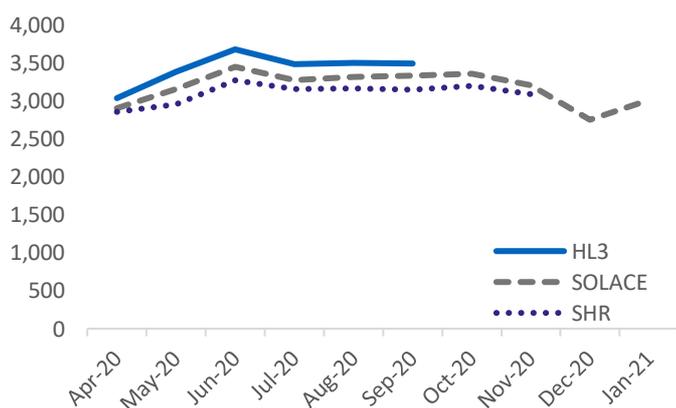
- a person in the household has symptoms of coronavirus and the household requires to isolate; or
- the accommodation is required to provide temporary accommodation to ensure that a distance of 2 metres can be maintained between a member of the household and a person who is not a member of the household in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus; or
- the local authority is unable to place the household in suitable accommodation as a result of the impacts of coronavirus on temporary accommodation supply in the area, provided that where a household includes a child or a pregnant woman the household is not placed in unsuitable accommodation for more than 7 days.

(To note: the third of these only came into effect on 30th September, which is right at the very end of the reporting period within this publication)

A household placed in unsuitable accommodation for longer than 7 days where an exception did not apply must still be recorded as a breach.

Comparisons with administrative data sources

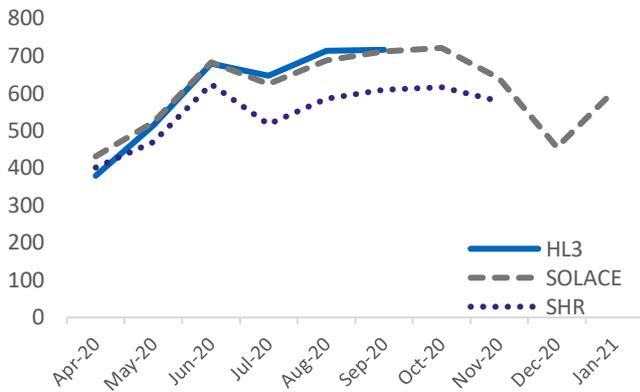
Acceptances⁷



The number of acceptances recorded in the official statistics (HL3) was 5-7% higher than SOLACE and 10-13% higher than SHR for Apr-Sep 2020. This may be the result of delays to data entry at the time SOLACE and SHR data was compiled meaning a complete set of records for the month was not available.

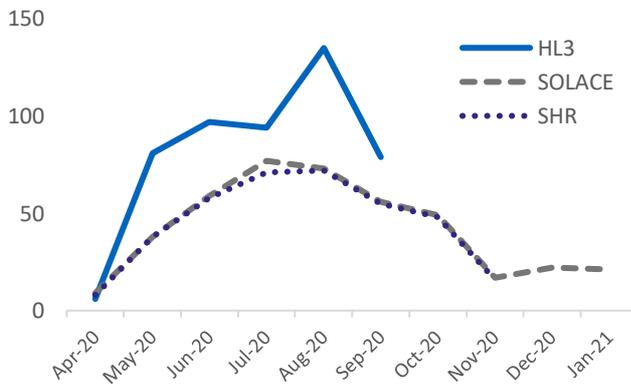
⁷ Edinburgh April 2020 acceptance figures has been estimated to provide a meaningful national figure as local data management practice in Edinburgh involves recording placements as closing at the end of the financial year and re-opening them at the beginning of the next financial year, artificially inflating the figures.

Refusals



While HL3 and SOLACE refusals figures were very similar. The SHR figures were 8-20% lower for May-Sep 2020, which is explained by Glasgow reporting households, rather than instances, in the SHR return.

Not offered



The number of not offered reported via HL3 was consistently higher than both SOLACE and SHR for May-Sep 2020.

Outcomes

Key Points

- 9,920 homelessness cases assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness were closed in the period April to September 2020 – a fall of 30% compared to 2019.
- The proportion of households assessed as unintentionally homeless securing settled accommodation fell from 82% to 77%

Homelessness cases are closed once the local authority has fulfilled its statutory duty or contact has been lost with the applicant household for 28 days. Local authorities provide information on the circumstances and outcomes of homelessness cases once they have been closed.

Number of cases closed

The number of homelessness applications that were closed declined in the months immediately following the outbreak in covid-19. As a result, there were 30% fewer homelessness cases closed in the period April to September 2020 for applications assessed as unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness (9,920 compared to 14,265). This was due to covid-19 restrictions at this time limiting the ability of local authority staff to move households into permanent accommodation. Similarly, there were 59% fewer intentionally homelessness cases closed over the same period (from 690 to 285). (Table 24)

How often do local authorities lose contact with applicants?

For households assessed in the period from April to September 2020, contact was maintained for 95% of those assessed as both unintentionally and intentionally homeless, in line with 2019 proportions.

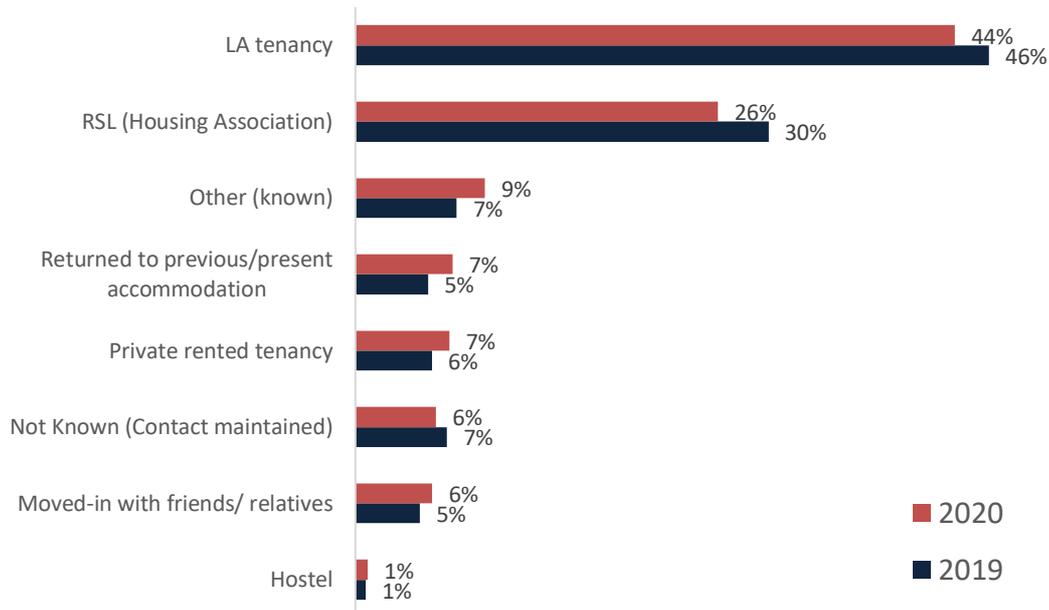
What are the outcomes for homeless households?

Of the 9,400 unintentionally homelessness cases that closed in the period April to September 2020 (where contact was maintained and the outcome was known), 77% secured settled accommodation as their outcome. Settled accommodation here is defined as a local authority tenancy, a tenancy with a registered social landlord or a private rented tenancy.

This proportion fell from 82% securing settled accommodation in the same period in 2019, with an increasing proportion returning to their previous accommodation, moving in with friends or relatives and 'other (known)' outcomes. (Table 25)

The proportion of intentionally homeless households securing settled accommodation also fell in this period, from 47% in 2019 to 37% in 2020 (Table 26).

Chart 7: A smaller proportion of households moved into LA tenancy or RSL accommodation



Were Housing Support assessments carried out and housing support provided?

Upon closing a homelessness case, local authorities are required to assess whether any housing support services are required by the household for any cases assessed as unintentionally homeless and where it has reason to believe that support would be beneficial. It also has a duty to provide that support if needed.

Across Scotland, assessments for housing support needs were carried out in 77% of cases where there was a duty to assess in April to September 2020. Housing support was provided in 40% of all cases, although support was not provided for 10% of cases where a support need was identified. In 22% of cases where there was a duty to assess, no assessment took place and no support was provided. (Table 27)

Notes on Tables

All of the tables and charts in this publication are available in electronic format at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/homelessness-statistics/>

The statistics included in this publication are based on administrative data collected by local authorities in the course of carrying out their homelessness activities. This data is collected from local authorities and quality assured by the Scottish Government on a quarterly basis. Details about the data we collect, our quality assurance process, and how we engage with users to improve our statistics are outlined in our quality assurance statement.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/data-protection-impact-assessment-and-quality-assurance-statement-for-hl1-hl2-hl3-and-prevent1-data-collections/>

Updates to previous statistics

The data we use in this publication is collected from local authorities on a quarterly basis. As a result of this figures are updated on an on-going basis and may differ from those previously published. This may be a result of delays in some cases being reported to the Scottish Government due to IT issues, quality assurance processes and delayed entry of data – particularly at the end of the financial year.

For example, this publication estimates that 9,456 homeless applications were made in January to March 2020, but the previous 'Homelessness in Scotland: 2019 to 2020' publication gave a figure of 9,324. This is a difference of 132 applications, or approximately 1%. A table comparing the annual number of applications is included in the tables accompanying this publication.

Known data quality issues

There are other data quality issues of which we are aware:

- There are a small number of temporary accommodation cases on the Scottish Government temporary accommodation placement database that are recorded as open but are linked to homelessness applications that we know to be closed. This occurs when a local authority fails to provide an update for these cases after the placement is closed. In these cases we have taken the approach of using the close date of the homelessness application as the exit date of the temporary accommodation placement. This may have the impact of inflating the length of time these households are recorded as using temporary accommodation.
- Snapshot data about temporary accommodation provided by Fife does not include all temporary accommodation placements used, and therefore understates the number of households in temporary accommodation in Fife.

- There were inconsistencies between local authorities in the reporting of breaches of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020. This was due to changes in legislation – extending breaches from households with only a pregnant women and/or child(ren) to all households – and exceptions put in place in response to covid-19. The urgency of having to adapt to the revised legislation without any specific guidance means that some local authorities have reported being unclear as to how these related to the covid-19 exceptions in place. Local authorities were able to capture different levels of information regarding breaches around this time (i.e. whether an exception could or could not be applied) which has implications for data comparability.

Comparability with Other UK Homelessness Statistics

Because of the substantial differences in legislative frameworks and data collection methods that exist across the UK care needs to be taken in comparing homelessness statistics across the four countries.

In September 2019 the Office for National Statistics published the [UK homelessness: 2005 to 2018](#) report, which assessed of the comparability and coherence of existing UK government homelessness data sources.

Also published in September 2019, the [GSS Homelessness Interactive Tool](#) allows users to explore the similarities and differences between how key concepts relating to homelessness are defined across the four UK countries. It allows users to explore an applicants' process through each of the different homelessness systems and enables users to visualise the different definitions of homelessness currently being used for official statistics and how these compare.

Summary of Current Legislation

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, now consolidated into Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, introduced statutory duties on Local Authorities to assist those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (potentially homeless), including providing accommodation in certain circumstances.

The legislation currently requires Local Authorities to make inquiries into the circumstances of applicants to satisfy themselves whether the applicant is homeless or potentially homeless. Once the authority is satisfied this is the case, prior to 31st December 2012, it also determined whether the applicant had a priority need. However, from 31st December 2012, the priority need test was abolished (see Paragraph 24). The Local Authority can then test whether the applicant became homeless intentionally and, in some cases, whether the applicant has a local connection with another authority in Scotland, England or Wales. A local connection with an authority means that the applicant normally resided in that area from choice, either because he/she was employed in it or had family associations with it, or for other special reasons.

Section 24 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, defines homelessness for the purposes of the Act as follows. A person is homeless if he/ she has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere. A person is also homeless if he/ she has accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it, for example because of a threat of violence. A person is potentially homeless (threatened with homelessness) if it is likely that he/ she will become homeless within two months. A person is intentionally homeless if he/ she deliberately did or failed to do anything which led to the loss of accommodation which it was reasonable for him/ her to continue to occupy.

Section 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, defined the categories of household regarded as having a priority need for accommodation. Further details can be found in the Code of Guidance on Homelessness. This is available on-line at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366>.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 amends the 1987 Act and requires councils to provide a minimum of temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to all applicants assessed as homeless, regardless of whether they have been assessed as being in priority need.

The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 was more long-term in scope, notably introducing a phasing out of the distinction between priority and non-priority applications. The ultimate aim of the Act was to ensure that everyone assessed as being unintentionally homeless was entitled to settled accommodation from 31st December 2012.

In November 2012, the Scottish Parliament approved the Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012 which gave effect to this commitment. From 31st December 2012, the priority need test for homeless households was abolished. As a result, from this date, all unintentionally homeless households are entitled to settled accommodation.

Summary of Local Authority duty to homeless households:

Unintentionally homeless [and in priority need]⁸

Provide temporary accommodation until settled accommodation has been secured.

Settled accommodation is defined as:

- A Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST)
- A Private Residential Tenancy

If the applicants have previously been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the last 3 years, or if they are subject to an anti-social behaviour order - a short Scottish Secure Tenancy can be offered.

⁸ If before 31st December 2012.

In some circumstances, the Local Authority can provide non-permanent accommodation. These circumstances are laid out in the Homeless Persons (Provision of Non-permanent Accommodation) (Scotland) Regulations 2010.

Under certain circumstances, a Local Authority may apply a local connection test and refer the applicant to another Local Authority. However, the receiving Local Authority must then secure settled accommodation for the applicant.

Intentionally Homeless [and in Priority Need / Homeless and not in Priority Need]:

Provide temporary accommodation for a reasonable period of time, advice and assistance.

Potentially homeless, unintentionally so [and in Priority Need]:

Take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available.

Potentially homeless, intentionally so [and in Priority Need / Potentially Homeless and not in Priority Need]:

Provide advice and assistance to help retain accommodation.

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 came into force on 6 December 2004, and is intended to prevent the routine use of unsuitable temporary accommodation for households with family commitments. Under this Order, Local Authorities cannot put households with children and pregnant women into temporary accommodation which is not suitable, unless exceptional circumstances apply. Unsuitable accommodation is defined in the Order as accommodation which does not meet standards relating to the physical properties of the accommodation (the physical standard), its proximity to health and education services (the proximity standard) and its suitability for use by children (the safety standard).

The 2004 order was revoked by [The Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Order 2014](#), which came into force on the 21st November 2014. The 2014 order adds the additional requirement that the accommodation must be wind and watertight.

While the Order provides for exceptional circumstances, in which accommodation which does not meet the physical and/or proximity standards may be used, the safety standard must always be met. Further details can be found in the Code of Guidance available on-line at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33366>

The 2014 Order specifies that the local authority may provide an applicant with temporary accommodation which does not meet the requirements set out by Article 5 of the Order, but for no longer than 14 days in total in respect of that person's application. The [Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2017](#), which came into force in October 2017, reduces the number of days from 14 to 7 days before a 'breach' is recorded for the applicant remaining in such unsuitable accommodation.

The Housing Support Services (Homelessness) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 came into force on 1st June 2013. These Regulations make provision in relation to the duty of Local Authorities to assess whether some persons found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness (“an applicant”) need housing support services.

Regulation 2 prescribes four types of housing support services which apply for the purposes of that duty. If a Local Authority has reason to believe that an applicant may be in need of one or more of these services, it must assess whether the applicant, or any person residing with the applicant, is in need of such support. If so, the Local Authority must ensure that the service is provided to the person who needs it. Further information on these regulations can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/3279/2>.

A National Statistics Publication for Scotland

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 interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route [Homelessness statistics - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

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