PH4.2 SOCIAL RENTAL HOUSING STOCK

Definitions and methodology

Social housing includes different forms of housing support across OECD countries, with considerable cross-national differences in terms of tenure, size, and type of providers. For the purpose of this indicator, the “social rental housing stock” refers to *the stock of residential rental accommodation provided at sub-market prices and allocated according to specific rules rather than according to market mechanisms* (Del Pero et al., 2016). Data used in this indicator are taken from the replies provided by governments of EU and OECD member countries to the OECD 2019 Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH).

Key findings

Chile, Greece and Turkey have virtually no social rental sector, and in Mexico public rental housing is only offered to armed-forces personnel. Considering the formal definition, Sweden does not social rental housing either. Please refer to indicators PH 4.1 and PH 4.3 for further details.

Among countries that do have a social rental housing sector (Figure PH4.2.1), the latter is smallest in Eastern European countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and Luxembourg, where it accounts for less than 2% of the total housing stock. At less than 10% of the housing stock, the sector is also relatively small in Japan, Germany, Hungary, Canada, the United States, Norway, Australia, Malta, New Zealand, Korea, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain. Iceland, Ireland, Finland, France and the United Kingdom (England) have an intermediate-sized social rental housing sector, while at over 20% of the housing stock, the sector is largest in Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands (data on the number of dwellings in absolute terms are available in online Annex under PH4.2.A1).

There are different providers of social rental housing. Figure PH4.2.2 represents the relative size of the stock managed by the different types of providers as a share of the total social rental sector in each country. Sole provision of social rental housing by public authorities can be associated with a small social rental housing sector, as illustrated by Eastern European countries. By contrast, in countries with a large share of social rental housing, such the Netherlands and Denmark, we find a strong presence of the non-profit sector. In the United Kingdom (England) and Austria, a large not-for-profit sector coexists with a significant stock owned and managed by local authorities, even though local authorities in the United Kingdom (England) have sharply reduced their investment in the construction of new dwellings. Social housing in the large “HLM sector” in France is mostly provided by regional and/or municipal authorities, public agencies and non-profit providers. Provision of social rental housing by private and for-profit providers is important in Germany and the United States, but not elsewhere. In some countries, central government agencies are involved in the direct provision of social housing, namely Canada, Denmark, Korea, Luxembourg, Malta, New Zealand, Portugal and Slovenia.

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Figure PH4.2.1 Relative size of the social rental housing stock
Number of social rental dwellings as a share of the total number of dwellings, 2018 or latest year available¹ ²

1. For New Zealand, data refer to the number of social housing places (public housing) that are funded through central government. This does not include social housing provided by regional and municipal authorities.

2. Data refer to responses as in the 2019 QuASH except for Canada, Czech Republic, Hungary, Korea, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia where they refer to 2016 QuASH.

Source: OECD, QuASH (2016, 2019).
Figure PH4.2.2 Providers of social rental housing in selected OECD countries
Percentage of social rental dwellings by type of provider, 2018 or latest year available

Notes:
1. Data refer to responses as in the 2019 QuASH except for Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Korea, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia where they refer to the 2016 QuASH.

Source: OECD, QuASH (2016, 2019).

Figure PH4.2.3 shows that since around 2010s, the social rental housing stock increased in Austria, France, Iceland and the United States. By contrast, Finland and Poland experienced the most significant reduction in the relative size of the social housing sector; the sector also shrank in Germany and Denmark, and to a lesser extent in Estonia, Norway, New Zealand and Japan. The decline in the stock of social rental housing in a number of countries is partly related to a slowdown in new social housing construction, as well as policies towards the privatisation of social housing, as for instance in Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom.

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Notes:

1. For New Zealand, data refer to the number of social housing places (public housing) that are funded through central government. This does not include social housing provided by regional and municipal authorities.

2. Data refer to responses as in the 2019 QuASH except for Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Korea, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovenia where they refer to 2016 QuASH

Source: OECD, QuASH 2016, 2019.

Between 2010 and 2018, the annual number of dwellings added to the social rental stock through construction and acquisition has increased particularly in Ireland, and to a smaller extent in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, France and New Zealand (Figure PH4.2.4). In contrast, it decreased in Australia, Austria, the Netherlands, Finland, Norway, Poland, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom (England).
Data and comparability issues

The relative size of the social rental sector was calculated on the basis of the overall number of dwellings in each tenure (owner occupied dwellings, market rented dwellings, co-operative dwellings, social rental dwellings, others), as collected from governments in the OECD 2019 Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH 2019). There are significant gaps in the information gathered, which does not allow for including all reporting countries, as indicated in the notes to the figures above. The fact that the years of reference of available information varies across countries constitutes an additional limitation.

Sources and further reading:


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