HC2.2 HOUSEHOLDS LIVING WITHOUT AN INDOOR FLUSHING TOILET

Definitions and methodology

A lack of basic sanitary amenities, such as an indoor flushing toilet, is a measure of poor quality housing and is also considered a health risk (Eurofound, 2016). Further discussion of housing quality indicators can be found in indicator HC1.5 Overview of housing affordability measures in the OECD Affordable Housing Database. To illustrate the extent of the issue, this indicator provides information on the share of households that do not have an indoor flushing toilet at their exclusive disposal. The information on access to basic sanitary amenities is derived from household survey microdata.

Key findings

While the vast majority of households in OECD countries have an indoor flushing toilet at their disposal, this is not always the case for poor households (Figure HC2.2.1, see online worksheet HC2.2.A1 for earlier years and results for non-poor households).

In Nordic countries, as well as Germany, Malta, and Switzerland, all poor households (below 50% of median equivalised disposable household income) had an indoor flushing toilet in their dwelling. The share of poor households without an indoor flushing toilet is around 10 to 15% in Poland, Estonia the Slovak Republic and Hungary, above 20% in Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria and over 60% in Romania and Mexico.

Figure HC2.2.1: Share of poor households without indoor flushing toilet

Share of poor households (below 50% of median equivalised disposable household income) without indoor flushing toilet, in percent, 2019 or latest year available

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Note: 1. No estimates available for Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and Turkey due to data limitations. 2. Poor households are households with equivalised disposable income below 50% of the median country income. In Chile, Mexico, Korea, and the United States gross income is used due to data limitations. 3. Results only shown if category composed of at least 100 observations. 4. The present publication presents time series which end before the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union on 1 February 2020. The EU aggregate presented here therefore refers to the EU including the UK. In future publications, as soon as the time series presented extend to periods beyond the UK withdrawal (February 2020 for monthly, Q1 2020 for quarterly, 2020 for annual data), the “European Union” aggregate will change to reflect the new EU country composition.

Source: OECD calculations based on European Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC); Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN) for Chile (2017); the Korean Housing Survey (2019); Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares (ENIGH) for Mexico (2018); American Community Survey (ACS) for the United States (2019).

In countries with a larger share of poor households that lack an indoor flushing toilet, the issue tends to be more prevalent among owners, rather than tenants (Figure HC2.2.2 only shows results for countries with more than 5% of low-income households without an indoor flushing toilet). Over three-quarters of poor owners lack an indoor flushing toilet in Mexico, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia and Romania. This result is not surprising, considering that the tenure structure in the countries at hand is dominated by homeowners across the income distribution.

Figure HC2.2.2: Tenure structure of poor households without an indoor flushing toilet in selected countries

Tenure shares of low-income households without an indoor flushing toilet, 2019 or latest year available, in percent 1,2,3

Note: 1. Disaggregation by tenure type only shown for countries where more than 5% poor households do not have a flushing indoor toilet and 100 or more of the sampled poor households reported lack of an indoor flushing toilet. 2. Poor households are households with equivalised disposable income below 50% of the median country income. In Chile, Mexico and Korea gross income is used due to data limitations. 3. The category “Other, unknown tenure” is composed of free accommodation and/or unknown or unclear types of tenure.

Source: OECD calculations based on European Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC); Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN) for Chile (2017); Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares (ENIGH) for Mexico (2018); American Community Survey (ACS) for the United States (2019).

In the vast majority of countries, the share of poor households without an indoor flushing toilet has remained stable at very low levels since 2010. In Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania, the situation has been improving, particularly for the poor (refer to online worksheet HC2.2.A1). For instance, in Romania, the share of poor households without an indoor flushing toilet has decreased from 82% in 2010 to 65% in 2019 and in Bulgaria from 55% (2010) to 32% (2019).
Data and comparability issues

This indicator is calculated based on household surveys. For European countries, the European Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) is used; for Chile, the Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN); for Korea, the Korean Housing Survey; for Mexico, the Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares (ENIGH); and for the United States, the American Community Survey (ACS). No information on flushing toilets is available in the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, the Canada Income Survey (CIS) in Canada or the Japanese Household Panel Study (JHPS).

The surveys ask whether the household has an indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of household.

Sources and further reading

