

PH4.3 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL RENTAL HOUSING

Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents information from the OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing on the definition and characteristics of social rental housing programmes, and provides details on the different methods used to define rent levels and rent increases, the eligibility of beneficiaries, and dwelling allocation. For the purpose of this indicator, the following definition of social rental housing was used: *residential rental accommodation provided at sub-market prices and allocated according to specific rules* (Salvi del Pero, A. et al., 2016). Based on this definition, surveyed countries provided information on a range of different supply-side measures in the rental sector, see Table PH4.3.1 below.

Key findings

In total, 33 countries report the existence of some form of social rental housing. Definitions of social rental housing differ across countries (see Table PH4.3.1). Further, many countries report having more than one type of rental housing that responds to administrative procedures (as opposed to market mechanisms), with different characteristics in terms of providers, target groups and financing arrangements. The complexity of the social housing sector in some countries is due in part to its long history, which has seen different phases and different stakeholders involved over time.

There are also a number of regional specificities that affect the size and functioning of the social housing stock across countries. For instance, in most Central and Eastern European countries (Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic), the social rental housing stock is quite small (see indicator PH4.2), while there is a much larger share of the population that owns their dwellings outright, as a result of the mass housing privatisation since 1990. In Japan and Korea, social rental housing corresponds to publicly provided rental housing, while in Denmark and the Netherlands social rental housing refers only to housing provided by the non-profit sector. Switzerland does not have social housing at national level, but some cities have some co-operative non-profit and municipal housing.

Seven countries report that they do not have social housing: Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Greece, Mexico, Sweden and Turkey. Chile and Mexico, for instance, favour affordable housing solutions that facilitate low-cost home ownership. In Turkey, social housing generally refers to sales of housing units below market price by the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ) to households of low income. Sweden has a significant public (municipal) rental sector but, strictly speaking, no social rental housing, as rents in municipal housing are in line with those in the private rental sector. (See indicator PH4.1 and PH4.2 for detail on public spending on and the stock of social housing across countries).

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to “Cyprus” relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”;

Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus

Table PH4.3.1: Social rental housing: Definitions and overview¹

Country	Term(s) used	Definition and summary overview
Australia	Australia has several types of social housing, including public housing, state owned and managed indigenous housing, community housing and Indigenous community housing.	Social housing is subsidised rental housing provided below the market rents, generally no more than 30% of a tenant's gross income, by not-for-profit, non-government or government organisations to assist people who are unable to access suitable accommodation in the private rental market.
Austria	"Subsidised housing", for dwelling administered by limited profit housing associations (with funding from the housing subsidy programmes). "Public housing" for dwellings administered by municipalities (predominately in Vienna).	Subsidised housing is defined by income limits, which are relatively high, meaning that subsidised housing is available to low- and middle-income households.
Belgium: Flanders	Social housing	Property that is rented at reduced prices by the Flemish Social Housing Company (VMSW) or a social housing corporation; the social rental agencies (SRA); or the <i>Vlaams Woningfonds</i> , a municipality or an inter-municipal partnership.
Bulgaria	Social housing is a comprehensive term for affordable homes and public housing in the rental market, which are subsidised by the state, municipalities or housing associations. These dwellings are prioritised for people in need.	Examples include affordable housing for low-income households (dwellings owned and managed by a housing association under the authority of local authorities); public housing (rental dwellings for people with low to medium income or people with special needs, which are at least partially funded by the state and run by a non-profit and/or local authorities); housing for immediate accommodation (for people in immediate need, including women and children, victims of domestic violence); housing with integrated social services (for disabled people and others).
Canada	Public housing, non-profit housing, co-operative housing, and a variety of other specific programs.	Public housing are units approved between 1950 and 1985 are administered by provinces and territories and, in some cases, by municipalities. The projects are targeted to low-income households who pay rent based on their income. Non-profit housing provides assistance to public or private non-profit organizations who agreed to build or acquire rental housing for low- and moderate-income households. Co-operative housing provides modest, affordable housing to low- and moderate-income households. These projects are jointly owned by their members who co-operate to maintain lower housing charges by contributing to efficiencies through volunteer labour.
Colombia	(Priority) social interest housing and <i>semillero de propietarios</i>	Social Interest Housing (VIS) ensures habitability and quality standards for units with a maximum value of 135 times the current legal monthly minimum wage. Priority Social Interest Housing (VIP) is social interest housing with a maximum value of 70 times the current legal monthly minimum wages. The <i>Semillero de Proprietarios</i> programme subsidizes rent and seeks to serve households that live in informal rents and in unworthy housing (or rewards savings towards home ownership).
Czech Republic	No national definition of social rental housing	Social housing consists of housing provided to people experiencing a housing crisis, or at risk of a housing crisis, including people who are overburdened by housing costs. Social housing is provided under specific lease conditions and in accordance with certain principles. On a local level, social housing always takes the form of accommodation in apartments, and may be linked to social services.
Denmark	Social family dwellings, social dwellings for the elderly, and social dwellings for youth	Social housing is constructed and run by social housing organisations. The term "social housing" is a collective designation for three different types of housing: social family dwellings, social dwellings for the elderly, and social dwellings for youth.
Estonia	Social housing	There is no official definition of social housing. Social housing is considered as dwellings rented to individuals in need of social services (e.g. dwellings adjusted for wheelchair access to accommodate handicapped people, dwellings appointed to the supported residing of mentally challenged individuals and the houses of the elderly).
Finland	Social housing	Social rental housing whereby the selection of the residents is based on social grounds. The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) grants subsidies, grants and guarantees for housing and construction and controls and supervises the use of the ARA housing stock. Apartments financed by interest subsidy loans are owned and produced by municipalities and associations the Housing Fund of Finland (ARA) has designated as non-profit organisations. The residents of apartments financed by long-term interest subsidy loans are selected on social grounds. The rent of ARA apartments is determined by the absorption principle, meaning that the rent covers the capital costs recurred from building the apartment and the management costs of the property.
France	Social housing or moderate rent housing (<i>Habitation à loyer modéré</i> , or HLM)	Social housing is housing built with public aid (tax benefits, public subsidies and loans at preferential rates) to accommodate people with low incomes.

Country	Term(s) used	Definition and summary overview
Germany	Subsidised housing or social housing promotion	Housing that is publicly subsidised in order to support households that cannot adequately obtain housing on the market and need assistance. (Cf. Act on Housing Promotion (<i>Wohnraumförderungsgesetz</i>))
Hungary	No national definition of social rental housing	Social rental housing mainly consists of municipal housing. Since 2014, it is also understood to include dwellings let within the National Asset Management Programme (NAMP) to former owners who were no longer able to pay the mortgage
Iceland	Social housing	Social housing is for families and individuals who are not otherwise able to provide stable housing due to low income, heavy support needs, or other social difficulties.
Ireland	Social housing	Social housing is defined as housing provided by a local authority or a housing association to households who are unable to provide accommodation from their own resources. Social housing support can be provided in a number of ways: i) a rented tenancy in a property owned and managed by the local authority; ii) a rented tenancy in a property leased for 10-20 years by the local authority or approved housing body; iii) Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) where a local authority will make a monthly payment to a private landlord, subject to terms and conditions including rent limits, on a HAP tenant's behalf; iv) Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) tenancy where the local authority arranges leases with private landlords for homes; v) a rented tenancy in homes owned and managed by an approved housing body; vi) specific accommodation for homeless people, older people and Travellers; vii) adapting existing local authority homes to meet specific household needs; viii) grants to increase accessibility in private homes for people with disabilities and special needs.
Israel	Public housing	The most important providers of below-market price housing are government agencies. Public housing apartments are owned, maintained and preserved by the state through two government companies that operate throughout the country. These companies own 92% of the public-housing units: Amidar (72%) and Amigour (20%).
Italy	Social rental housing	In Italy, there are three types of social rental housing: i) public social housing (<i>edilizia sovvenzionata</i>), directed to the poorest households.; costs are almost entirely covered by public entities and rents are based on tenants' income; ii) subsidised housing (<i>edilizia agevolata</i>), sponsored by regional and local authorities, directed to low- and medium-income households; public subsidies vary between 20 and 60% of rental costs (which in any case cannot be higher than market prices); home purchases by tenants are incentivised; iii) private social housing (<i>edilizia convenzionata</i>), realised by private operators in agreement with local authorities, which establish sale prices or rent levels.
Japan	Public housing	Public rental housing for low-income households, the elderly, the handicapped and households with children.
Korea	Public rental housing	Public Rental Housing refers to rental housing constructed i) with funding from the state or local governments, or ii) with funding from the national housing fund according to the Article 60 of the Housing Law, or iii) on a housing site that is developed by public projects after obtaining approval according to the Article 16 of the Housing Law. It is mainly provided by the Korea Land and Housing Corporation (LH), local governments and local public corporations, with involvement from the private sector.
Latvia	Social houses and social apartments	A social apartment is owned or rented by a local government, which is then rented to a household that is entitled to public support. A social house is a building in which all apartments are rented to households that are entitled to public support. A social dwelling may also be a building owned by an association or foundation tailored for people with disabilities.
Lithuania	Municipal housing	Social housing is a dwelling owned by the municipality. It is included in the list of municipal social housing fund approved by the municipal council, and is a part of the municipal housing fund list.
Luxembourg	No official definition of social rental housing, but the law of 25th February 1979 regarding housing allowance refers specifically to dwellings belonging to public developers (<i>Fonds du Logement</i> and <i>Société Nationale des Habitations à Bon Marché</i> , as well as municipalities)	Rental dwellings owned by public developers, where rents are defined according to the composition of the household and its taxable income. Also, dwellings rented through social real estate agencies (<i>Agences Immobilières Sociales</i>) are considered social rental housing.
Malta	State-owned rental dwellings	<i>More detailed information is not available.</i>
The Netherlands	Social housing	Social rental housing consist of dwellings rented at constrained prices that are operated by non-profit housing associations. Tenants of social housing units are entitled to rental benefits. Currently, all rental dwellings with a rental rate below EUR 763.47 are subject to the aforementioned regulations (2022). In 2018, nearly 70% of rental dwellings in the Netherlands were owned by housing associations, of which more than 90% are

Country	Term(s) used	Definition and summary overview
		considered social housing units. Further, estimates indicate that approximately 634,000 rental dwellings offered by private entities fall below the threshold of EUR 720.42.
New Zealand	Public housing (e.g. housing that belongs to Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) and community housing)	Premises receiving public subsidies, let by or on behalf of a registered community housing provider or by the public company Housing New Zealand Corporation, with income-based rents.
Norway	The municipalities provide housing for the most vulnerable groups.	The housing provided by the municipalities is allocated according to specific rules rather than market mechanisms. The municipalities are encouraged to take market rent in their rental housing, but housing allowances (from the state and some municipalities), are used to cover the extra cost for those who need it.
Poland	No legal definition of social rental housing, but it can be understood as referring to municipal housing let according to social criteria, as well as social housing companies (TBS)	According to definition provided by the Act of 20 July on <i>Krajowy Zasób Nieruchomości</i> , social rental housing must meet following conditions: i) access to dwellings is provided on non-market basis, based on criteria defined by public authorities; ii) at the stage of construction, reconstruction or use of buildings, entities carrying out investments use support from <i>Krajowy Zasób Nieruchomości</i> or public funds; and iii) dwellings are provided by entities whose main purpose is not to gain a profit.
Portugal	Social housing	Social (subsidised) housing refers to public dwellings that are rented at below-market values in consideration of household income.
Romania	Social housing	Social housing is defined as publicly-owned dwellings with a subsidised rent, which are allocated to households whose economic situation does not allow them to access a dwelling in the property or to rent a dwelling under market conditions.
Slovak Republic	Social housing	Social housing is housing acquired with the use of public funds, addressed for adequate and humanly decent housing of individuals who are not able to ensure housing with their own effort.
Slovenia	Non-profit housing	Non-profit rental housing is awarded to citizens of Slovenia (or EU citizens with permanent residency) that meet eligibility criteria. Non-profit dwellings belong to municipalities, the state, public housing funds or non-profit housing organisations. The rents are set legislatively.
South Africa	Social housing	Social Housing is a rental or co-operative housing that requires institutionalised management and is provided by accredited social housing institutions (SHIs) or in accredited social housing projects in designated restructuring zones.
Spain	Publicly protected housing (<i>Vivienda de protección pública</i> or VPO) is the general term for subsidised housing. It includes mainly subsidies for home ownership but also rent with an option to buy and public rental housing. Only the latter is to be considered as social rental housing.	Dwellings let at low rent to low- to middle-income households. They are mainly provided by local authorities, public bodies and publicly owned companies, although funding is virtually open also to NGOs and not for profit companies. There are different schemes in place targeting different income levels, but the overall size of public rental housing is very small.
Switzerland	No national definition of social rental housing, different definitions apply at the communal, cantonal and federal level	Non-profit housing is provided mainly by cooperatives, which are independent from the state but statutorily obliged to create affordable housing and to consider the needs of vulnerable people/groups. Municipalities also own and let a limited stock of dwellings to households in need.
United Kingdom: England	Social housing is defined in law (the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008) as 'low cost rental accommodation' and 'low cost home ownership accommodation'.	Low cost rental accommodation is made available for rent below the market rate, with rules to ensure it serves people whose needs are not adequately met in the commercial housing market. Low cost home ownership accommodation is made available in accordance with shared ownership arrangements, equity percentage arrangements or shared ownership trusts, with rules to ensure it serves people whose needs are not adequately met in the commercial housing market.
United States	Public housing and supportive housing	Public housing is direct provision of rental housing by the states and local housing agencies with subsidies from federal government. Furthermore, the federal government provides subsidies to private entities (both for-profit and non-profit) who own and manage supportive housing for elderly and disabled. Also included in the estimate of the subsidised housing stock are rental units produced through the Low-income housing tax credit programme (LIHTC).

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021. Some information comes from previous QuASH rounds for Hungary, Korea, Malta, Spain and Switzerland.

Setting the rent

The rent in social housing is set in different ways, with some countries taking a blend of factors into account to determine rent levels:

- *Market-based*: 13 countries set the rent levels in social housing – at least in part – with reference to market rent levels for similar properties: Australia, Canada, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Norway, the Slovak Republic, the United Kingdom (England) and the United States.
- *Cost-based*: in 10 countries the rent in social rental housing is cost-based, so as to allow long-term recovery of the cost of building/acquiring the dwelling: Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia Finland, France, Japan, Slovenia, South Africa and the United States
- *Income-based*: 17 countries establish rent levels at least in part based on household income levels : Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, the United Kingdom (England) and the United States.
- *Utility-based*: in Iceland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovenia, the United Kingdom (England) and the United States, the rent level is defined at least in part by considering the dwelling characteristics (including size, amenities, location).

In several countries, municipalities are primarily responsible for setting the rent and/or managing the social housing stock, in which cases practices can vary widely across jurisdictions within countries. Hence, no detailed information is available at national level in Latvia or Poland. Similarly, rent setting in social housing in Germany varies across *Länder*: in Nordrhein-Westfalen for instance, a combination of utility- and income- based system is used, while in Schleswig-Holstein social rents are set based on the rent levels in the region.

In terms of increases to rent levels in social housing, there are regular adjustments to rent levels in 18 countries, most commonly (but not systemically) on an annual basis. Adjustments to the rent level may be made in line with increases to the Consumer Price Index (or other relevant index) (Austria, Colombia, France, Israel, Korea and Norway); when a tenant's income increases (Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and New Zealand); or when costs increase (Denmark). Meanwhile, there is no general rule about regular increases in rent levels in 7 countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Japan, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. In five countries, conditions relating to rent level increases vary by jurisdiction: Australia, Canada, Germany, Latvia and Lithuania.

The difference between actual rents paid in social housing and market rents can be significant, but comparable data on rent levels between social and market rents are hard to come by. Typically, social rents can be much lower than market rents in high-demand locations, such as big cities and capitals, while the difference may be smaller in less dynamic areas. Based on national averages, mainly based on capital cities, the gap between social rents and market rents varies widely across countries. While average social rents are between 70 and 90% of market rents in Austria, Finland and Israel they are below 20% of market rents in Estonia, Latvia, Poland and the United States, and between 25% and 55% in Australia, Denmark, France, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, the and United Kingdom.

Right-to-buy policies, whereby sitting tenants can acquire the dwelling in which they live at a discounted price, exist in some countries. Hungary, Ireland, and Malta provide sitting tenants in social housing with the right to buy. In eight countries, sitting tenants may only purchase certain types of social dwellings, or may only be able to purchase social dwellings under certain conditions; this is the case in Austria, Colombia, Ireland, Italy Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland and the United Kingdom (England).

Further details on rents in social rental housing are provided in Table PH4.3.2 below.

Table PH4.3.2: Rents in social rental housing

Factors affecting the setting of rents and rent increases in the social housing sector, OECD and EU countries

	Rent-setting system:				Rent increase system:		Social rent as percentage of market rent	Sitting tenant right to buy
	Market-based	Cost-based	Income-based	Utility-based	Regularly increased	Not regularly increased		
Australia (1)	Market-based		Income based		Depending on regulation at level of States and Territories		26-33% (Sydney)	Depending on regulation at level of States and Territories
Austria		Cost-based, with significant entry deposit			Often by consumer price index; specific increasing payment schemes in other provinces		70-80% (Vienna)	From limited-profit housing associations under distinct conditions, option to buy if they contributed upfront payment at time of contract signing for over 70 EUR/m ²
Bulgaria			Income based (primarily)			Not regularly increased	Not available	No
Canada	Market-based		Income based		Varies		Not available	No
Colombia	Market-based (primarily)		Income based		Yearly, by no more than retail price index		Not available	Yes, but only applies to new dwellings at beginning of rental contract
Czech Republic	Market-based (primarily)	Cost-based			Yes, in accordance with consumer price index		Not available	No
Denmark		Cost-based			Increased or decreased according to running costs		56% (Copenhagen)	No
Estonia		Cost-based				Not regularly increased	15% (Tallinn)	No
Finland (1, 2)		Cost-based			Annually, depending on increase in utilities charges		Average 82%	No
France (1)		Cost-based	Income based (primarily)		Annually, increase limited to the reference rent index (<i>indice de référence des loyers</i>)		Average 55%	No

	Rent-setting system:				Rent increase system:		Social rent as percentage of market rent	Sitting tenant right to buy
	Market-based	Cost-based	Income-based	Utility-based	Regularly increased	Not regularly increased		
Germany	Market-based (primarily)		Income-based		Yes, conditions vary across jurisdictions; increases every 1-2 years and capped at % increase		Not available	No
Iceland	Primarily market-based			Utility-based	Yes, but no details provided		Not available	No
Ireland	Market-based		Income-based		Yes, rent increases with tenant income		Not available	Yes
Israel (1)	Market-based			Utility-based	Yes, in accordance with consumer price index		80%	No
Italy	Market-based		Income-based (primarily)	Utility-based (primarily)	Yes, rent changes with income and household composition		Not available	Yes, but under specific conditions and only for a percentage of the social housing stock owned by public entities
Japan		Cost-based	Income-based			Not regularly increased	Not available	No
Latvia		Varies across municipalities			Varies across municipalities		8.5% (Riga)	No
Lithuania				Utility-based	Varies across municipalities			No
Luxembourg (3)			Income-based (see note)	Utility-based	Yes, depending on household income and composition		Not available	No
Malta			Income based (primarily)	Utility-based	Yes, every 2 years		Not available	Yes
The Netherlands (1)			Income-based	Utility-based (primarily)	Max % increase is set by the government		Not applicable (about 90% of the rental sector applies regulated rents)	Yes, if the housing corporation decides to sell
New Zealand			Income-based (primarily)	Utility-based	Yes, in line with tenant income		44% (Wellington)	Yes, for Housing New Zealand tenants under certain conditions
Norway	Market-based				Yes, annually with CPI		Not available	No
Poland (4)				Set by the municipality taking into account		Not regularly increased	18% (Warsaw)	Only if landlords intends to sell dwelling

	Rent-setting system:				Rent increase system:		Social rent as percentage of market rent	Sitting tenant right to buy
	Market-based	Cost-based	Income-based	Utility-based	Regularly increased	Not regularly increased		
				characteristics of the dwelling and location				
Portugal			Income-based			Not regularly increased	Not available	No
Slovak Republic	Market-based					Not regularly increased	28% (Bratislava)	No
Slovenia		Primarily cost-based		Utility-based		Not regularly increased	23-35% (Ljubljana)	No
South Africa (4)		Cost-based (primarily)	Income-based		Yes, yearly		Not available	No
United Kingdom: England (5)	Market-based		Income based	Utility-based	Yes, see note		48%	Some are eligible to buy at discounted price
United States	Market-based	Cost-based	Income based (primarily)	Utility-based	Yes, in accordance with HUD Fair Market Rents		16% (Washington, DC)	No

Note:

1. Social rent as percentage based on responses in previous QuASH rounds.
2. Rent increase system based on responses in previous QuASH rounds.
3. Luxembourg: Rent levels depend upon the household income and composition, according to the (modified) Grand-ducal regulation of November 16, 1998 (Article 18).
4. Rent setting system based on responses in previous QuASH rounds.
5. United Kingdom: Information refers to England. Social rent is based on a formula considering condition and location of a property, local earnings and property size. Landlords are permitted to increase rents by up to CPI+1% per year until 2025.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021.

Eligibility criteria

All countries have criteria to determine who is eligible to live in social rental housing. In many cases, these criteria determine which households may be placed on waiting lists to obtain a social dwelling, to be then selected on the basis of a set of priority criteria. In practice, the combination of eligibility and priority criteria determines which households ultimately obtain social tenancies (see Table PH4.3.3 below).

Depending on the country, eligibility criteria are more or less restrictive, relating to household income, citizenship/residency status, household size and composition, and a household's current housing situation. The majority of countries impose minimum conditions to be eligible for social housing.

Most commonly, income thresholds exist in 26 countries. Income-tests are usually benchmarked against either average incomes or minimum incomes/minimum wages. Income ceilings can be set at relatively high levels, however, so as to allow mixing of households at different income levels to combat segregation (such as for instance in Austria and France). Assets are typically not included in means-testing (except in Finland and Korea). Citizenship or permanent residency status is required in 21 countries, but exemptions for some refugees exist for example in Norway. In Germany, for instance, eligible tenants must have legal residency for at least a year. In 11 countries, local residency is also required. For example, eligibility for municipal housing in Vienna requires local residency for three years.

Additional criteria relating to disabilities of household members are in place in 3 countries (Colombia, Latvia and Slovenia), while 2 countries require employment (Colombia and Slovenia). Further details on criteria defining who is eligible to live in social rental housing are provided in Table PH4.3.3 below.

Table PH4.3.3: Social rental housing eligibility criteria¹

Criteria assessed in selecting eligible households

	All are eligible	Income threshold	Citizenship/ Perm. Residency	Criteria assessed in selecting eligible households:			Other
				Local residency	Employment	Disability	
Australia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Eligibility criteria for social housing is determined by state and territory housing authorities and varies between states and territories.
Austria (1)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes (Vienna)	No	No	
Belgium	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Applicants must not in possession of property rights.
Bulgaria	No	Yes	No				
Canada (2)	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		Priority allocation varies by specific social housing programme.
Colombia	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Victims of forced displacement, informal sector workers, elderly, members of ethnic communities, people with disabilities, members of the public force and their families when the member of the public forces has died in service.
Czech Republic	No	Yes	No	No	No		Unsatisfactory dwelling before entering social housing
Denmark	Yes						
Estonia	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	
Finland (3)	Yes	No					Household selection is based on suitability and financial needs assessed on the basis of the applicant's housing needs, wealth and income
France (3)	No		Yes				
Germany (3)	No	Yes	Yes				Legal residency of at least one year
Hungary	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		No	Rents and eligibility conditions are regulated by a decree of the municipalities.
Iceland (3)	No	Yes	Yes				
Ireland	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	
Israel	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
Italy	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Criteria are defined at the local level, but there are some general requirements
Japan (3)	No	Yes	Yes				
Latvia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	See priority cases in PH 4.3.5
Lithuania	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	
Luxembourg (3)	Yes	No	No				
Malta (3)	No	Yes	Yes				
Netherlands	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	

	Criteria assessed in selecting eligible households:						Other
	All are eligible	Income threshold	Citizenship/ Perm. Residency	Local residency	Employment	Disability	
New Zealand	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
Norway	No	Yes	Yes				Housing situation is a criterion as well. In terms of citizenship, there are exceptions for some refugees.
Poland	No	Yes					Income thresholds and any additional specific criteria are set by the municipalities
Portugal	Yes						
Romania	No	Yes					
Slovak Republic	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	
Slovenia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
South Africa	No	Yes	Yes				
United Kingdom: England	No	No	No	No	No	No	Application is open to all British citizens or citizens who have the right to stay in the UK for an unlimited time. Allocation by local authorities according to own criteria.
United States	No	Yes	No		No	No	Eligibility for HUD rental assistance is generally based on income. Additional admissions preferences can be set by state and local housing agencies, pursuant to federal requirements.

Notes: Empty cells are missing information or QuASH responses stating uncertain.

1. Municipality housing in Vienna requires local residency for 3 years

2. Canada: Eligibility is determined by the First Nation governments when programmes are delivered On-Reserve. A Tenant Selection Criteria, shared with all members, is a requirement of the programme.

3. Responses (partially) based on replies to previous QuASH rounds.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021.

The eligibility of tenants to remain in social housing is typically re-assessed on a regular basis, but this is not the case in all countries (Table PH4.3.4). Eight countries re-assess eligibility of social housing tenants on an annual basis (Australia, Canada, Estonia, Japan, Lithuania, New Zealand and the United States), while five countries usually verify eligibility every two to three years (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Norway, Poland and the Slovak Republic). In Ireland, re-assessment happens on a continuous basis. The frequency of eligibility re-assessments was not specified in a handful of countries. In the case that a sitting tenant no longer fulfils eligibility requirements, seven countries impose rent increases (Canada, France, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Slovenia and the United States); ten countries terminate the lease of the sitting tenant (Australia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway and South Africa). In Canada, for instance, when a tenant's income increases to exceed the maximum threshold, rent is increased to market rent and the federal subsidy is allocated to another eligible tenant on the waiting list.

By contrast, there is no regular re-assessment in 11 countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom (England).

Table PH4.3.4: Details on eligibility re-assessment for social housing

	Frequency of re-assessment	If sitting tenants no longer fulfil eligibility:		
		Rent increase	Lease termination	Other
Australia	At the end of probationary lease (generally 12 months) or at end of fixed-term lease (generally two, five or ten years), and subject to other reviews on an ad hoc basis or when a tenant's circumstances change.		Yes	Depending on regulation at level of States and Territories, tenants may fall under transition policies to support them to exit public housing. Some States also waive eligibility criteria if exiting public housing would negatively affect the tenant.
Austria	No regular reassessment			
Belgium	Bi-annually			No information provided
Bulgaria (1)	No regular reassessment			
Canada	Annually	Yes		
Colombia	No regular reassessment			
Czech Republic	Bi-annually		Yes	
Denmark	No regular reassessment			
Estonia	Annually or bi-annually		Yes	
Finland (1)	No regular reassessment			
France (1)	Yes	Yes	Yes	A rent increase applies to households whose income increases above the income limits for social housing; some exceptions, depending on household age and composition.
Germany	No regular reassessment			
Hungary	Re-assessment, but no information on timing provided	Yes		
Iceland (1)	Eligibility is re-assessed			No information provided
Ireland	Continuous review	Yes		
Israel	Re-assessment, but no information on timing			
Italy	Depends on local management		Yes	
Japan (1)	Annually	Yes		
Latvia	Social housing: Semi-annually Municipal housing: Varies by municipality		Yes	
Lithuania	Annually, but potentially earlier if tenant situation changes		Yes	Rent is not terminated if income threshold is exceeded by less than 25 percent.

	Frequency of re-assessment	Rent increase	If sitting tenants no longer fulfil eligibility:	
			Lease termination	Other
Luxembourg (1)	No regular reassessment			
Malta (1)	No regular reassessment			
Netherlands	No regular reassessment			
New Zealand	Annually		Yes	
Norway	At lease expiration, usually every three years		Yes	
Poland	Municipal housing: No more often than every 2.5 years Social housing: Bi-annually			
Portugal	No regular reassessment			
Slovak Republic	Varies, typically every 3 years			Depends on the situation in the municipality; if a new tenant needs social housing, sitting tenant must move out.
Slovenia	Every 5 years	Yes		
South Africa (1)	Eligibility is re-assessed		Yes	Rent subsidy is abolished.
United Kingdom: England	No regular reassessment			
United States	Annually	Yes		

Notes:

1. Responses based on replies to previous QuASH rounds

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021.

Priority criteria

Once registration for social housing is completed, criteria are often used to establish the order of allocation to different registered applicants. In 14 countries, the length of time a household has been registered on a waiting list is driving key means to prioritise the allocation of social housing (Table PH4.3.5). At the same time, additional criteria may in place to ensure that persons in greatest needs are served first. In 22 countries, people with disabilities are given priority allocation. Some countries have also established specific arrangements to identify priority cases; for instance, in Austria, municipalities retain the right to allocate a portion of the social housing stock to households they deem in priority need. This may include, for instance, victims of domestic violence (France and Malta) or households that have been affected by natural disasters (Latvia). Other criteria can also grant the elderly or those with adverse housing conditions priority access in many countries.

Table PH4.3.5: Social rental housing: Criteria for priority allocation to eligible recipients¹

	Time on waiting list	Income level	Disability	Elderly	Housing situation	Household composition/ size	Other
Australia	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Allocated to households in greatest need; criteria vary by State/territory
Austria	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	There is no consistent system across providers. Limited profit housing associations are obliged to have a system of social criteria and municipalities have their own criteria.
Belgium	Yes				Yes	No	
Bulgaria (1)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	
Canada							Priority allocation varies by specific social housing program.
Colombia			Yes	Yes		Yes	
Colombia			Yes	Yes		Yes	
Czech Republic (1)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	If the obliged criteria are fulfilled by the household, then the priority allocation depends on the social landlord.
Denmark	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Estonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Finland (1)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
France (1)	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Homeless; people at risk of eviction; people with temporary accommodation; persons in unhealthy or unfit accommodation; households with children in overcrowded or indecent dwellings; disabled; victims of domestic violence; etc.
Germany		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Hungary		Yes			Yes	Yes	
Iceland (1)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Ireland	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Local authorities need to have an allocation scheme determining the order of priority. It is the local authority that assesses housing applicants, taking into account factors such as the condition and affordability of existing accommodation, medical and compassionate grounds, etc. The authority then prioritises the needs of approved applicants in accordance with its allocation scheme
Israel (1)	No	No	No	No	No	No	Allocated through a lottery
Italy		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	The criteria for priority allocation in social rental housing depend on the local laws and can include (but are not limited to): situation of severe housing deprivation; family members with physical or mental disabilities with a reduction in working capacity of at least 66%; elderly people (over 65 years); young families (below 35 years); families with 3 or more children; single parents; current accommodation in a poor status; overcrowding; refugee status; very low income; eviction notice. Each category is associated with a score on the basis of its relevance and contributes to a final ranking.
Japan (1)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	A limited number of dwellings are assigned through a lottery system
Latvia	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Priority to people who are victims of natural

	Time on waiting list	Income level	Disability	Elderly	Housing situation	Household composition/ size	Other
							disasters, as well as to households that have been evicted and are: low-income, elderly, disabled, taking care of a dependent child/elderly or disabled person, and/or several other specific cases.
Lithuania	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Families with 5 or more children (or with triplets), persons without parental care (group life or independent living)
Luxembourg (1)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Malta (1)	No	No	Yes		Yes	No	Victims of domestic violence living in shelters, people leaving institutionalised care
The Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
New Zealand	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Norway	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Allocation is determined at municipal level.
Poland							Priority allocation varies by municipality.
Portugal	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Slovak Republic (1)	No	No	No	No	No	No	Criteria are set by the municipalities and vary locally
Slovenia	Yes						Position on waiting list based on a number of above-mentioned different criteria.
South Africa	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	
United Kingdom: England	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Local authorities must give 'reasonable preference' to people who are homeless; people living in overcrowded, unsatisfactory or insanitary accommodation; people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability; and people who need to move to avoid hardship to themselves or others. Additional criteria can be set at local level.
United States							Nationally, eligibility for HUD rental assistance is based on income. State and local housing agencies and providers can adopt additional priorities based on a variety of options and restrictions.

Notes: Empty cells are missing information or QuASH responses stating uncertain.

1. Responses based on replies to previous QuASH rounds

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021.

Support measures for social housing introduced in response to the COVID-19 crisis

Among the countries responding to the 2021 QuASH, nine countries reported having introduced new or extending existing support measures for the social housing sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Australia, Belgium, Belgium, Belgium, Hungary, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and the United States (Table PH4.3.6). Six countries developed new support measures, while four adapted or extended existing measures that were in place before the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, a number of additional countries have passed measures that span across different tenure forms, such as eviction bans for social and private rental housing. These are discussed in indicators HC3.3 Evictions and PH.5.1 Rental regulations, and in the OECD Policy Brief [“Building for a better tomorrow: Policies to make housing more affordable”](#).

Some of the measures specific to the social housing sector include supports or stimulus packages for landlords and social housing providers that aim to boost maintenance of existing as well as construction and acquisition of new social housing units (Australia, Belgium, Poland, the Slovak Republic and the United States). For example, the CARES Act in the United States provides extended capital for the Public Housing Operating Fund to maintain normal operations during the pandemic. Social rental agencies in Flanders (Belgium) received dedicated funding to hire part-time employees tasked to extend their dwelling stock to release pressure on the social rental market. Other measures directly support tenants, for example by lowering the rent for those whose income has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Israel, the Netherlands, Portugal) or suspending regular rent increases (Hungary).

Table PH4.3.6. Social housing measures introduced and/or modified in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Country	Measure name	Level of government	New or adapted?	Who receives?	Details
Australia	State and territory government stimulus packages	Regional/state	Adapted/expanded	Landlords & tenants	Housing stimulus packages varying by state and territory government, including funds for the maintenance and construction of social dwellings.
Belgium	Subsidy for SRA's to hire a part-time employee to extend building stock (<i>subsidie aan SVK's voor het aanwerven van een halftijdse prospectiemedewerker</i>)	Regional/state	New	Landlords	Subsidy of EUR 25 000 for social rental agencies to hire a part-time employee to extend the building stock.
Belgium	Lowering the minimum interest rates for social loans (<i>verlaging intrestvoet bijzondere sociale leningen</i>)	Regional/state	New	Landlords	Reduction of interest rate from 2% to 1.6% for new social loans.
Belgium	Payment deferment of social loan (<i>betalingsuitstel sociale lening</i>)	Regional/state	New	Landlords	Option to postpone payment of the mortgage loan in the case of temporary or full unemployment resulting from Covid-related reasons.
Hungary	Prohibition of termination (<i>felmondási tilalom</i>)	National/federal	New	Tenants	The landlord of a municipal or state-owned apartment may not terminate the contract or increase the rent.
Israel	Discounts (<i>הנחות</i>)	National/federal	Adapted/expanded	Tenants	Tenants of general public housing received an extension of regular discounts.
Netherlands	One-time rent reduction for tenants with lower incomes	National/federal	New	Tenants	Mandate for housing associations to decrease the

Country	Measure name	Level of government	New or adapted?	Who receives?	Details
	<i>(eenmalige huurverlaging huurders met een lager inkomen)</i>				rent of low-income tenants if their rent was deemed too high.
Poland	Government Housing Development Fund (<i>rzadowy fundusz rozwoju mieszkalnictwa</i>)	National/federal	New	Landlords	Fund to help finance municipalities expenditures on acquisition of shares in new or existing social housing initiatives.
Poland	The Act of 10 December 2020 (<i>ustawa z dnia 10 grudnia 2020</i>)	Joint (shared across levels of government)	Adapted/expanded	Landlords & tenants	Variety of financial funds supporting housing development, including some dedicated to development of social housing initiatives or acquisition of shares in social housing initiatives.
Portugal	Law 4-C/2020 of April 6 (<i>lei 4-C/2020, de 6 de abril</i>)	Joint (shared across levels of government)	New	Tenants	Possibility to lower the social housing rent for COVID-related reasons during the state of emergency.
Slovak Republic	Postponement of loan payment (<i>odklad spätok úveru</i>)	National/federal	New	Landlords	Potential postponement of loan payments to the State Housing Development Fund for a maximum of 12 months.
United States	CARES Act (<i>Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act</i>)	Joint (shared across levels of government)	Adapted/expanded	Landlords & tenants	Funding of USD 12.4 billion for a variety of programs intended to protect tenants, including extended funding for the Public Housing Operating Fund.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021

Sources and further reading

Braga M. and Palvarini P. (2013), *Social Housing in the EU*, European Parliament, Brussels.

Housing Europe (2021), The State of Housing in the EU 2021, www.housingeurope.eu/resource-1540/the-state-of-housing-in-europe-in-2021.

OECD (2020), “Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy”, *Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Policy Briefs*, OECD, Paris, <http://oe.cd/social-housing-2020>.

OECD (2021), “Building for a better tomorrow: Policies to make housing more affordable”, *Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Policy Briefs*, OECD, Paris, <http://oe.cd/affordable-housing-2021>.

Peppercorn, I.G. and Taffin, C. (2009), “Social housing in the USA and France: Lessons from convergences and divergences”, *Urban Planning Overseas* (3), 26-33.

Salvi del Pero, A. et al. (2016), “Policies to promote access to good-quality affordable housing in OECD countries”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 176, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jm3p5gl4djd-en>.

UNECE (2015), *Social Housing in the UNECE Region: Models, Trends and Challenges*, United Nations, Geneva, www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/Social_Housing_in_UNECE_region.pdf.

Whitehead C. and Scanlon K. (2014), *Social Housing in Europe*, LSE London.