



English  
House  
Condition  
Survey  
2005  
Headline  
Report

**decent homes  
and  
decent places**



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Decent Homes  
and Decent  
Places

With effect of 5 May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister were passed to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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## Introduction

Decent homes and places are essential for encouraging prosperous and cohesive communities where people can live in a safe and healthy environment. This short report presents headline findings from the 2005 survey and provides an update of progress towards providing better living conditions in England.

The report focuses on three key policy areas;

- Decent homes
- Liveability; the quality of the local environment
- Deprivation

Headline findings are published as soon as they are available each year followed by more detailed results in the annual report which is published each spring.

This short report focuses on indicators of progress related to key Government policies. Wherever possible change is assessed using the longest period for which consistent data is available. The text identifies key significant changes. Some caution is required in drawing additional conclusions from the detailed tables as some changes, particularly year on year differences, are not statistically significant.

The 2005 results relate to continuous fieldwork carried out between April 2004 and March 2006 and are presented as the mid-point position of April 2005. These results are based on a sample of 16,670 dwellings and 16,059 households. Technical details for the 2005 survey will be published in due course.

## Decent Homes

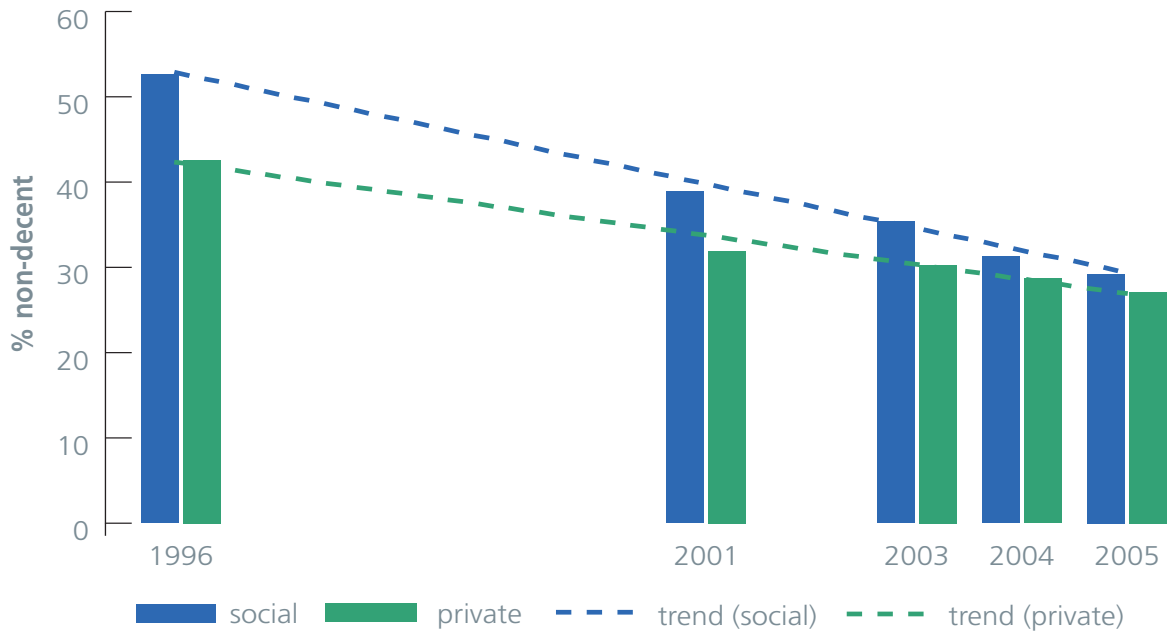
- Housing conditions continue to improve; since 1996 the number of non-decent homes has reduced by over 3 million, from 9.1 million (45%) to 6 million (27%) in 2005, Table 1.
- Homes in the private sector are less likely to be non-decent than social sector homes (27% compared to 29%), but within the private sector conditions of privately rented homes are considerably worse than the owner occupied stock (41% compared to 25%). Privately rented homes are on average more likely to be non-decent than any of the other three tenure groups. Within the social sector RSL homes continue to be in better condition than local authority homes.

**Table 1: Non-decent homes by housing tenure, 1996 – 2005**

		owner occupied	private rented	all private	LA	RSL	all social	all tenures
<b>number (000s):</b>								
1996	decent	8,391	752	<b>9,144</b>	1,600	493	<b>2,092</b>	<b>11,236</b>
	non-decent	5,535	1,246	<b>6,781</b>	1,869	448	<b>2,318</b>	<b>9,099</b>
2001	decent	10,483	1,072	<b>11,554</b>	1,637	952	<b>2,589</b>	<b>14,143</b>
	non-decent	4,316	1,101	<b>5,416</b>	1,174	472	<b>1,647</b>	<b>7,063</b>
2003	decent	10,982	1,149	<b>12,131</b>	1,482	1,154	<b>2,636</b>	<b>14,767</b>
	non-decent	4,219	1,056	<b>5,275</b>	975	467	<b>1,442</b>	<b>6,717</b>
2004	decent	11,213	1,340	<b>12,553</b>	1,519	1,228	<b>2,748</b>	<b>15,301</b>
	non-decent	4,066	994	<b>5,060</b>	816	437	<b>1,252</b>	<b>6,312</b>
2005	decent	11,509	1,464	<b>12,974</b>	1,437	1,384	<b>2,821</b>	<b>15,794</b>
	non-decent	3,822	1,003	<b>4,825</b>	729	433	<b>1,162</b>	<b>5,987</b>
<b>percentage:</b>								
1996	decent	60.3	37.6	<b>57.4</b>	46.1	52.4	<b>47.4</b>	<b>55.3</b>
	non-decent	39.7	62.4	<b>42.6</b>	53.9	47.6	<b>52.6</b>	<b>44.7</b>
2001	decent	70.8	49.3	<b>68.1</b>	58.2	66.8	<b>61.1</b>	<b>66.7</b>
	non-decent	29.2	50.7	<b>31.9</b>	41.8	33.2	<b>38.9</b>	<b>33.3</b>
2003	decent	72.2	52.1	<b>69.7</b>	60.3	71.2	<b>64.6</b>	<b>68.7</b>
	non-decent	27.8	47.9	<b>30.3</b>	39.7	28.8	<b>35.4</b>	<b>31.3</b>
2004	decent	73.4	57.4	<b>71.3</b>	65.1	73.8	<b>68.7</b>	<b>70.8</b>
	non-decent	26.6	42.6	<b>28.7</b>	34.9	26.2	<b>31.3</b>	<b>29.2</b>
2005	decent	75.1	59.4	<b>72.9</b>	66.3	76.2	<b>70.8</b>	<b>72.5</b>
	non-decent	24.9	40.6	<b>27.1</b>	33.7	23.8	<b>29.2</b>	<b>27.5</b>

- Progress in the social sector continues at a greater rate than that of the private sector, (Figure 1). The gap of 10% points in 1996 has been reduced to just 2% points in 2005.

Figure 1: Proportion of non-decent homes by sector, 1996-2005



Base: all dwellings

## Reasons for failing the decent homes standard

- In 2005, 4.4 million homes (20% of all homes) fail to provide adequate thermal comfort and this remains the most common reason for failing the standard (73% of non-decent homes fail on this criterion, 59% on this criterion alone). However there have been considerable improvements in insulation and heating and the number of homes failing this criterion has reduced by almost 3 million since 1996, Table 2. The social sector has seen the greatest improvement where the number of homes failing thermal comfort has more than halved, (from 2 million to 850 thousand).

Table 2: Homes failing to meet the thermal comfort criterion, 1996 – 2005

	1996	2001	2003	2004	2005
<b>numbers ('000s):</b>					
private	5,284	4,200	3,856	3,698	3,526
social	1,986	1,321	1,061	913	848
<b>all tenures</b>	<b>7,270</b>	<b>5,520</b>	<b>4,917</b>	<b>4,610</b>	<b>4,374</b>
<b>percentage:</b>					
private	33.2	24.7	22.2	21.0	19.8
social	45.0	31.2	26.0	22.8	21.3
<b>all tenures</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>20.1</b>

- The proportion of homes failing thermal comfort only is similar in both the private and social sectors, (16% and 18% respectively) while 11% of homes in both sectors fail the standard for one of the other criteria (fitness, repair and modernisations), Annex Table A1.
- The methodology for assessing the energy efficiency of homes – the standard assessment procedure (SAP) – was updated in 2005.<sup>1</sup> Under the 2005 methodology the energy efficiency rating of the housing stock overall has improved from an average of 40.3 in 1996 to 46.2 in 2005 Table 3. Social sector homes are on average more energy efficient than those in the private sector (55.2 compared to 44.1 respectively) and are improving at a faster rate, Figure 2.

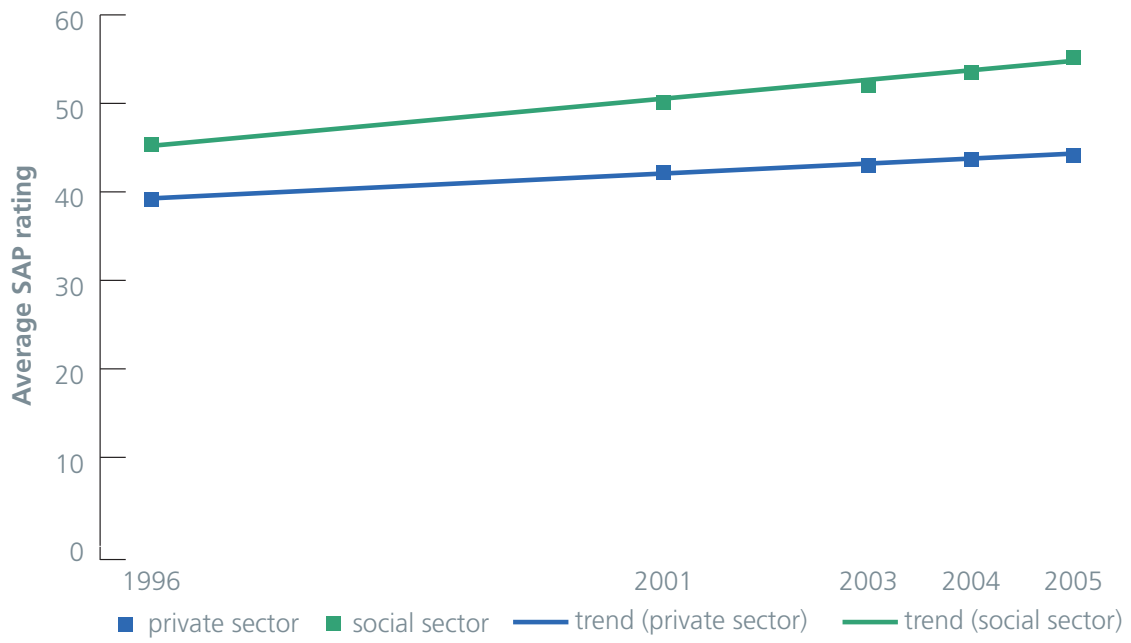
**Table 3: Energy Efficiency, SAP rating by tenure, 1996 – 2005**

	1996	2001	2003	2004	2005
<b>numbers ('000s):</b>					
owner occupied	39.3	42.5	43.0	43.6	44.1
private rented	36.4	40.2	42.8	43.9	44.3
<b>private sector</b>	<b>38.9</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>44.1</b>
local authority	44.2	47.8	50.2	52.1	53.5
RSL	49.3	54.6	55.0	55.6	57.2
<b>social sector</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>55.2</b>
<b>all</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>46.2</b>

**Note: Results have been calculated using the SAP 2005 methodology**

<sup>1</sup> Figures presented here are based on the new SAP 2005 methodology and are therefore inconsistent with previously published SAP data which were based on the SAP 2001 methodology. For a brief explanation of change to the SAP methodology and 2005 results based on the superseded SAP 2001 methodology see annex table A3.

Figure 2: Average SAP rating by tenure, 1996 – 2005



Base: all dwellings

## Vulnerable households living in the private sector

- Of the 3.2 million vulnerable households living in the private sector in 2005, 66% (2.1 million) live in decent homes, Table 4. Vulnerable owner occupiers tend to live in better conditions than their counterparts in the private rented sector; 71% live in decent homes compared to just 52% of private tenants.

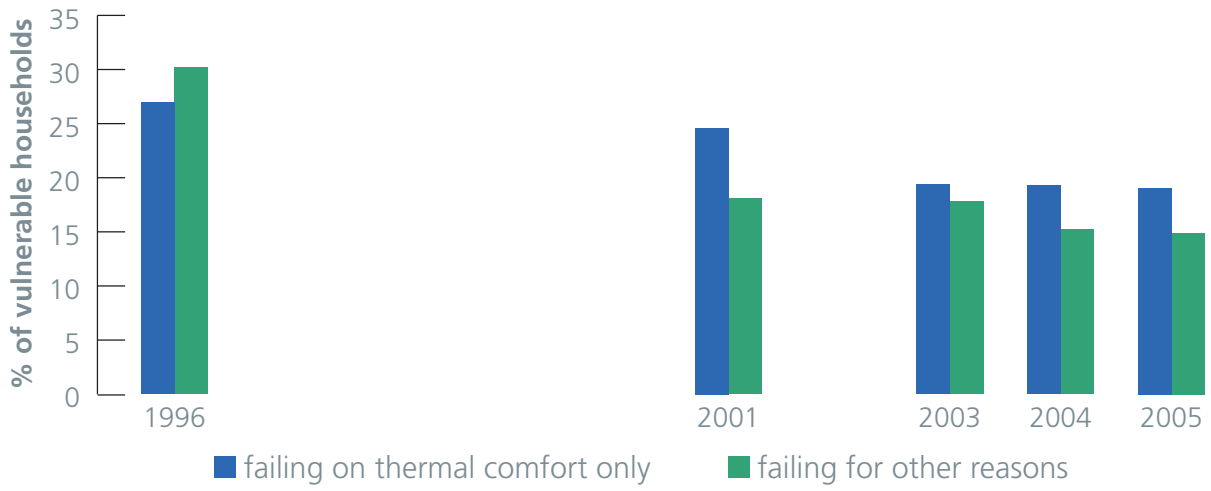
**Table 4: Private sector vulnerable households living in non-decent homes, 1996 – 2005**

		owner occupied	private rented	all private
<b>number (000s):</b>				
1996	decent	880	196	1,076
	non-decent	929	504	1,433
2001	decent	1,285	256	1,542
	non-decent	784	366	1,151
2003	decent	1,506	277	1,783
	non-decent	722	335	1,056
2004	decent	1,617	347	1,963
	non-decent	691	342	1,033
2005	decent	1,697	387	2,084
	non-decent	709	362	1,071
<b>percentage:</b>				
1996	decent	48.6	28.0	42.9
	non-decent	51.4	72.0	57.1
2001	decent	62.1	41.2	57.3
	non-decent	37.9	58.8	42.7
2003	decent	67.6	45.3	62.8
	non-decent	32.4	54.7	37.2
2004	decent	70.1	50.3	65.5
	non-decent	29.9	49.7	34.5
2005	decent	70.5	51.7	66.1
	non-decent	29.5	48.3	33.9

Base: all vulnerable private sector households

- As in the social sector the thermal comfort criterion is the most commonly failed of the four criteria. Some 780 thousand (25% of) vulnerable households in the private sector live in homes which fail to provide adequate thermal comfort (600 thousand of these fail on thermal comfort alone). Despite this, improvements in the housing conditions of vulnerable households since 2001 have been largely driven by improvements in thermal comfort, Figure 3.

Figure 3: Private sector vulnerable households by reasons for failing  
1996 – 2005



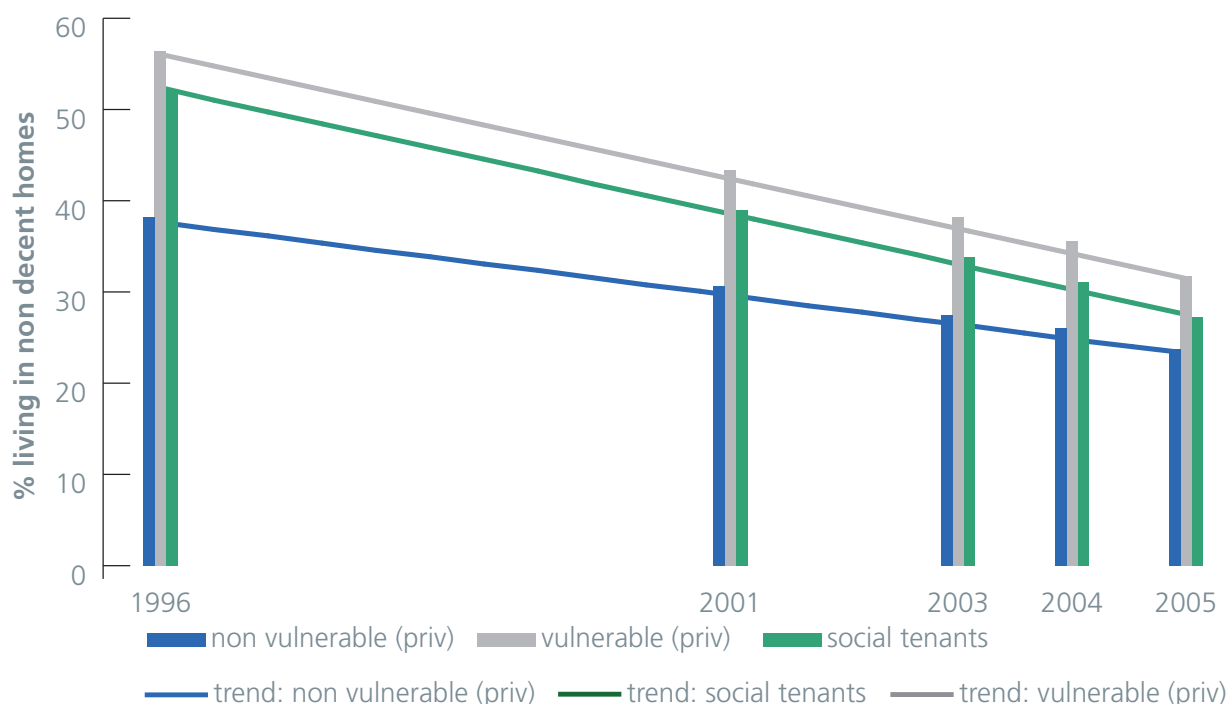
Base: All private sector vulnerable households

Note: See annex table for underlying data

## Disparities in living conditions

Social tenants and vulnerable households living in the private sector are more likely than other households to live in non-decent homes. However the gap is closing in both absolute and relative terms. The proportion of social tenants and private sector vulnerable households has fallen by an average of 2.5 percentage points each year compared to around 1.5 percentage points for other generally more affluent households, Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Disparity between PSA7 – related and other households living in non-decent homes, 1996 – 2005**



## Liveability

- In 2005 3.4 million (16% of) households live in poor quality environments. Problems with the upkeep, management and misuse of the surrounding public and private buildings or space ('upkeep') continue to be the most common of the three types of liveability problems reported through the survey with 2.3 million households (11%) living in areas with these problems.
- Overall there has been no significant change in the proportion of households living in poor quality environments since 2003.

**Table 5: Type of poor quality environments, 2003 – 2005**

	2003	2004	2005
<b>number (000s):</b>			
upkeep	2,101	2,115	2,279
traffic	1,596	1,473	1,560
utilisation	453	389	395
<b>poor quality environments</b>	<b>3,291</b>	<b>3,226</b>	<b>3,409</b>
<b>percentage:</b>			
upkeep	10.1	10.1	10.8
traffic	7.7	7.0	7.4
utilisation	2.2	1.9	1.9
<b>poor quality environments</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>16.1</b>

Base: All households

- Around 1.2 million households living in poor quality environments also live in non-decent homes. Of these 290,000 (24%) are social sector tenants and 230,000 (19%) are vulnerable private sector households.

## Deprivation

- Living conditions in the 88 districts supported by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) tend to be worse than in other districts. In 2005, 30% of homes in the most deprived districts are non-decent compared to 26% elsewhere. Households in these districts are also more likely to be living in poor quality environments, 20% compared to 16% elsewhere.
- However there have been significant improvements in housing conditions in deprived areas since 1996, Table 6. The number of non-decent social sector homes has reduced by 680 thousand since 1996 and 300 thousand since 2001 (accounting for 63% of progress in the social sector since 2001). In the private sector there are almost 900 thousand less non-decent homes in the NRF88 in 2005 than there were in 1996.
- The rate of improvement of housing conditions in the most deprived districts has been similar to that of other areas.

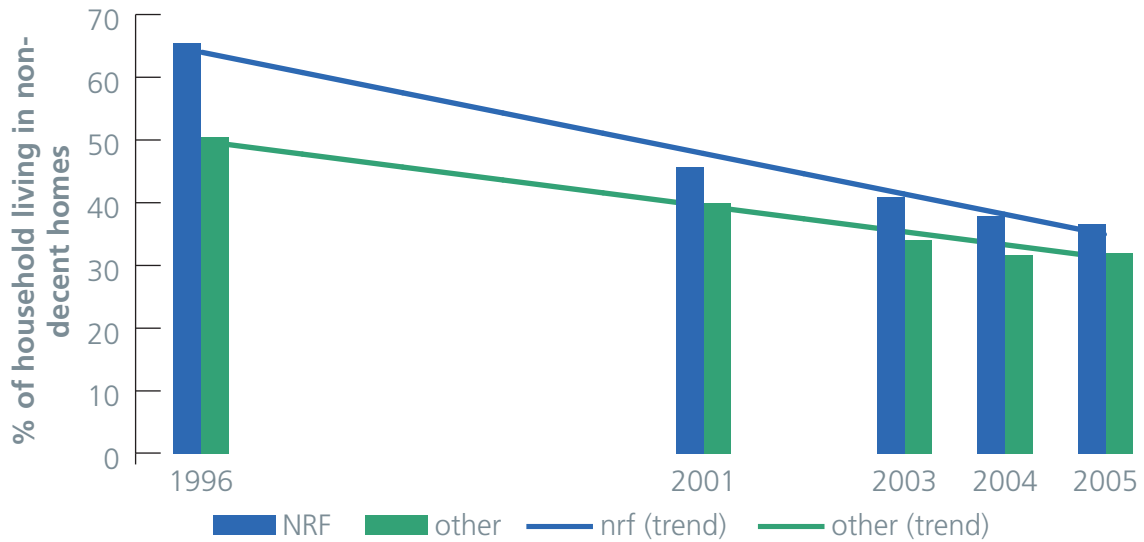
**Table 6: Non-decent homes in Neighbourhood Renewal Fund districts by tenure, 1996 – 2005**

		private sector		social sector	
		NRF districts	other districts	NRF districts	other districts
<b>number (000s):</b>					
1996	decent	3,042	6,102	1,149	944
	non-decent	2,790	3,991	1,362	956
2001	decent	4,075	7,479	1,417	1,172
	non-decent	2,383	3,034	988	659
2003	decent	4,262	7,888	1,446	1,193
	non-decent	2,182	3,073	849	590
2004	decent	4,397	8,157	1,532	1,216
	non-decent	2,102	2,958	747	506
2005	decent	4,455	8,518	1,486	1,334
	non-decent	1,915	2,909	683	479
<b>percentage:</b>					
1996	decent	52.2	60.5	45.8	49.7
	non-decent	47.8	39.5	54.2	50.3
2001	decent	63.1	71.1	58.9	64.0
	non-decent	36.9	28.9	41.1	36.0
2003	decent	66.1	72.0	63.0	66.9
	non-decent	33.9	28.0	37.0	33.1
2004	decent	67.7	73.4	67.2	70.6
	non-decent	32.3	26.6	32.8	29.4
2005	decent	69.9	74.5	68.5	73.6
	non-decent	30.1	25.5	31.5	26.4

Base: all dwellings in NRF and other districts

- In the most deprived areas 1.4 million vulnerable households live in the private sector, and of these 37% live in non-decent homes. This compares to just 32% of the 1.8 million vulnerable private sector households living in other districts. However, since 1996 improvement in the most deprived districts has occurred at a faster rate than elsewhere – on average 1.6 percentage points compared to one percentage point per year respectively – therefore the gap between the two is closing, Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Private sector vulnerable households living in non-decent homes by Neighbourhood Renewal Fund districts, 1996 – 2005**



Base: all private sector vulnerable households

**Note: the bars represent the survey estimate for the NRF88 and other areas. The trend and the disparity between groups are modeled using all available results for the period.**

## Annex

Table A1: Reason for failing the decent homes standard by sector, 1996 – 2005

		thermal comfort only		fitness, repair or modern facilities		decent homes		all homes	
		(000s)	%	(000s)	%	(000s)	%	(000s)	%
1996	private	3,917	24.6	2,864	18.0	9,144	57.4	15,925	100
	social	1,574	35.7	744	16.9	2,092	47.4	4,410	100
2001	private	3,303	19.5	2,114	12.5	11,554	68.1	16,970	100
	social	1,070	25.3	577	13.6	2,589	61.1	4,236	100
2003	private	3,024	17.4	2,231	12.8	12,151	69.8	17,406	100
	social	861	21.1	578	14.2	2,639	64.7	4,078	100
2004	private	2,981	16.9	2,078	11.8	12,553	71.3	17,613	100
	social	743	18.6	509	12.7	2,748	68.7	4,000	100
2005	private	2,808	15.8	2,017	11.3	12,974	72.9	17,798	100
	social	712	17.9	450	11.3	2,821	70.8	3,983	100

Base: All dwellings

Table A2: Private sector vulnerable households – Reasons for failing the decent homes standard, 1996 – 2005

	thermal comfort only		fitness, repair or modern facilities and services*		decent homes		all vulnerable households	
	(000s)	%	(000s)	%	(000s)	%	(000s)	%
1996	676	26.9	757	30.2	1,076	42.9	<b>2,509</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2001	662	24.6	487	18.1	1,542	57.3	<b>2,692</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2003	550	19.4	506	17.8	1,783	62.8	<b>2,839</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2004	578	19.3	455	15.2	1,963	65.5	<b>2,996</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2005	599	19.1	465	14.8	2,078	66.1	<b>3,142</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Base: all private sector vulnerable households

\* Note: some homes failing fitness, repair or modern facilities and services may also fail the thermal comfort criterion

**Table A3: Average SAP rating by tenure since 1996 calculated using SAP 2001 and SAP 2005 methodologies**

	1996	2001	2003	2004	2005
<b>SAP 2005 methodology</b>					
private sector	38.9	42.2	43.0	43.7	44.1
social sector	45.3	50.1	52.1	53.5	55.2
all	40.3	43.8	44.7	45.5	46.2
<b>SAP 2001 methodology</b>					
private sector	44.7	48.9	50.0	50.3	50.6
social sector	48.0	54.9	57.5	58.5	61.1
all	45.4	50.1	51.4	51.8	52.5

**Notes:**

The detailed methodology for calculating the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) to monitor the energy efficiency of homes was comprehensively updated in 2005 to reflect developments in the energy efficiency technologies and knowledge of dwelling energy performance. The rating scale has also been revised to run between 1 and 100 under the 2005 methodology (the higher the rating the better the standard with 100 now representing zero energy cost). Under the 2001 methodology the scale ran between 1 and 120.

The 2005 methodology replaces that specified in 2001. Therefore, a SAP rating using the 2001 method is not directly comparable to one calculated under the 2005 methodology, and it would be incorrect to do so. SAP figures reported in the 2003 and 2004 EHCS reports were based on the 2001 methodology.

**Table A4: PSA7-related households in non-decent homes – disparity from non-vulnerable private sector households, 1996 to 2005**

	percentage of group living in non decent homes					difference from non vulnerable		ratio to non vulnerable		difference from 1996	ratio to 1996	annual rate of progress
	1996	2001	2003	2004	2005	1996	2005	1996	2005	2005	2005	1996-2005
<b>survey estimates:</b>												
<b>non vulnerable private households</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>24.7</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
vulnerable private households	57.1	42.7	37.2	34.5	33.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
social tenants	52.3	38.3	34.2	30.3	27.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>modeled results:</b>												
<b>non vulnerable private households</b>	<b>38.2</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-13.7</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>1.5</b>
vulnerable private households	56.4	43.4	38.2	35.6	33.0	18.2	8.5	1.48	1.35	-23.3	0.59	2.6
social tenants	52.2	39.0	33.8	31.1	28.5	14.0	4.0	1.37	1.16	-23.7	0.55	2.6

**Notes:**

1) 'Survey estimates' provide the actual survey findings for each year. Because each year's estimate is subject to a degree of error related to sampling, design and measurement aspects of the survey, results across the whole period are modelled to arrive at robust conclusions on disparities that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. 'Model results' are derived from the output of the model. Further details of the analysis to assess trends in observed disparities are provided in the Technical Report for the EHCS.

2) The estimates and model results show a narrowing of both the 'absolute' and 'relative' gap between social tenants and private sector vulnerable households on the one hand and other (private sector) households on the other. A narrowing of the absolute gap (indicated by the difference in proportions in 1996 and 2005) can be expected simply because there has been a substantial reduction in the proportion of all households living in non decent homes. However there is also a significant narrowing of the relative gap as measured by the ratio of the proportions of each group living in non decent homes. So for example the proportion of private sector vulnerable households living in non decent homes was 48% greater than that for non vulnerable households in 1996 but only 35% greater in 2005.

## Terms used in the report

A number of terms are used without detailed definition in the text. These are:

**Decent home:** is one that meets the following four criteria:

- a) It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing (fitness standard for the reporting period of this survey).<sup>1</sup>
- b) It is in a reasonable state of repair (related to the age and condition of a range of building components including walls, roofs, windows, doors, chimneys, electrics and heating systems).
- c) It has reasonably modern facilities and services (related to the age, size and layout/location of the kitchen, bathroom and WC and any common areas for blocks of flats, and to noise insulation).
- d) It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (related to insulation and heating efficiency).

The detailed definition for each of these criteria is included in *A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation*, Communities and Local Government, June 2006.

**Liveability:** the liveability problems from the survey are based on the professional surveyors' assessments of problems in the immediate environment of the home. In all sixteen specific environmental problems (separately assessed by the surveyors) are grouped together (through content and factor analysis) into three types of liveability problems related to:

- a) the upkeep, management or misuse of the private and public space and buildings (specifically, the presence of: scruffy or neglected buildings, poor condition housing; graffiti; scruffy gardens or landscaping; litter, rubbish or dumping; vandalism; dog or other excrement, nuisance from street parking);
- b) road traffic and other forms of transport (specifically the presence of: intrusive motorways and main roads; railway or aircraft noise; heavy traffic; and ambient air quality);
- c) abandonment or non residential use of property (specifically, vacant sites; vacant or boarded up buildings; intrusive industry; or non conforming use of a residential area).

The overall assessment (providing the estimate of 3.4 million households with liveability problems) is based on whether the home has any of the three types of liveability problems.

<sup>1</sup> From April 2006 the fitness standard was replaced by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The EHCS began collecting data on the HHSRS from April 2005. Results will be presented as part of the 2006 EHCS report when the HHSRS will form part of the decent homes standard.

**Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF):** aims to enable England's 88 most deprived authorities, in collaboration with their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), to narrow the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the country in terms of increased employment and improved economic performance, reduced crime, better educational attainment, improved health and better housing. The 88 local authorities are those that are amongst the 50 most deprived on any of the six measures in the Indices of Deprivation 2000 (ID2000) – these total 81 in all. Another seven local authorities are included that were within the 50 most deprived on any of the four measures under the previous (1998) Index of Local Deprivation, but are not in the list of 81.

**SAP:** is the energy cost rating as determined by the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) and is used to monitor the energy efficiency of homes. It is an index based on calculated annual space and water heating costs for a standard heating regime and is expressed on a scale of 1 (highly inefficient) to 100 (highly efficient with 100 representing zero energy cost).

The method for calculating SAP was comprehensively updated in 2005. Figures presented in this report are based on the new SAP 2005 methodology and are therefore inconsistent with previously published SAP data which were based on the SAP 2001 methodology. For a brief explanation of changes to the SAP methodology and 2005 results based on superseded SAP 2001 methodology see Annex table A3.

**Vulnerable households:** are households in receipt of at least one of the principal means tested or disability related benefits.

The definition of vulnerable households for April 2004 to March 2006 was households in receipt of: income support, housing benefit, attendance allowance, disability living allowance, industrial injuries disablement benefit, war disablement pension, pension credit, child tax credit and working tax credit. For child tax credit and working tax credit the household is only considered vulnerable if the household has a relevant income of less than £14,600.

The focus of the report is on vulnerable households in the private housing sector where choice and achievable standards are constrained by resources available to the household. This focus reflects the Public Service Agreement target (ODPM PSA7) to increase the proportion of private sector vulnerable households living in decent homes.

The survey has not been able to include two benefits listed in the decent homes guidance (*A Decent Home – the definition and guidance for implementation*, Communities and Local Government, June 2006), council tax benefit and income based job seekers allowance. Any households in receipt of either of these two benefits only will therefore be excluded from the survey's estimate of vulnerable households.