

[UN Human Rights Council 46: UK statement for the biennial high level panel on death penalty](#)

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[RSH data shows homes owned by private registered providers reach 3 million mark](#)

The Regulator of Social Housing today published [statistics about the social housing sector](#), including stock ownership and rents as at 31 March 2020.

This is the first time that we have produced local authority statistics, and combined statistics for local authority and private registered provider stock alongside the private registered provider statistics.

Returns from registered providers of social housing show the sector as a whole had 4.4 million social housing homes in 2020, with more than 60% owned by private registered providers and the remainder owned by local authorities. When non-social housing stock is included, private registered providers reported owning more than 3 million homes for the first time.

Looking across all providers, there has been a slight increase (0.3%) in low cost rental stock since 2019, with the reported increase in Affordable Rent units higher than the reported decrease in social rent units (reasons for which include sales to tenants (such as Right to Buy) and conversions to Affordable Rent).

The stock owned by for-profit private registered providers nearly doubled over the year, although the number of units remains low at just over 9,000. The increase in low cost home ownership units continues to accelerate with a further 14,500 units added in 2019-20.

The data covers the final year of the four-year rent reduction and shows that

general needs social rents have fallen by nearly 4% across the whole sector since 2016. The average weekly general needs rent across England at 31 March 2020 was £90.50 but there was considerable regional variation with rents lowest in the North East (£75.53) and highest in London (£111.74) and the South East (£101.12).

Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive of RSH said:

The data from the Statistical Data Return and Local Authority Data Return shows how the social housing sector is changing and growing. This is the first comparable data across both local authority and private registered providers that meets the National Statistics designation.

This data will help ensure we take a risk-based and proportionate approach to regulation across the whole sector, as we take on responsibility for regulation of rents for local authorities as well as private registered providers.

Further information

For press office contact details, see the [Media enquiries page](#).

For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

Notes to editors

- Local authority social housing data was formerly collected through the Local Authority Housing Survey. Since 1 April 2020 it has been collected by RSH through the Local Authority Data Return when RSH took on responsibility for the regulation of local authority rents. Private registered provider data has been collected by RSH through the Statistical Data Return since 2012.
- Both local authority and private registered provider data are designated as National Statistics by the UK Statistics Authority.
- A total of 1,557 providers completed either the LADR or the SDR in 2020. There was a response rate of 100% for the 2019-20 LADR and 96% for the 2019-20 SDR (100% for private registered providers owning 1,000 or more social housing units).
- Homes includes self-contained units such as houses and flats and non-self-contained bed spaces, referred to collectively as units in the data.
- Of the 4.4m units of social stock owned by RPs, private registered providers own 2.8m units while local authority registered providers own 1.6m units.
- The 49 for-profit providers reported 9,313 units of social stock in 2020, compared to 5,342 in 2019.
- An additional 14,500 units of low cost home ownership were reported as owned by PRPs on 31 March 2020 compared to 2019. This represents an 8%

increase. The rate of increase in LCHO has been speeding up since 2017.

- The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 introduced a 1% annual rent reduction for four years. Rents from 1 April 2020 are regulated through RSH's rent standard with a rent cap of CPI + 1%.
- Private registered providers report average net rent falls of 3.7% for their general needs social rent stock. Local authority registered providers report average net rent falls of 3.9%, but figures are based on a combined general needs/ supported housing total due to historic LAHS data not providing further breakdown. 94% of local authority registered providers' social rent units are general needs.
- RSH promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs.

Vaping better than nicotine replacement therapy for stopping smoking, evidence suggests

Public Health England's (PHE) seventh independent report on vaping in England, carried out by researchers at King's College London, found that:

- nicotine vaping products were the most popular aid (27.2%) used by smokers trying to quit in England in 2020
- it is estimated that in 2017, more than 50,000 smokers stopped smoking with the aid of a vaping product who would otherwise have carried on smoking
- 38% of smokers in 2020 believed that vaping is as harmful as smoking – 15% believed that vaping is more harmful
- using a vaping product as part of a quit attempt in local stop smoking services had some of the highest quit success rates – [between 59.7% and 74% in 2019 and 2020](#)

The report takes an in-depth look at the latest evidence on the effectiveness of nicotine vaping products in helping people to stop smoking. The report also provides an update on the use of nicotine vaping products among young people and adults and examines the data on people's perception of risk.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is likely to have had an impact on smoking and vaping behaviours in both adults and young people. However, it is still too early to assess the full effect of the pandemic, with much of the data examined in this report being pre-pandemic.

[In England in 2020](#), nicotine vaping products were the most popular aid used by smokers trying to quit, with 27.2% of smokers using a vaping product compared with 18.2% using nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products (such as patches and gum) and 4.4% using the prescription medicine varenicline.

Evidence over the years suggests that as the use of vaping products in quit attempts increases, the number of successful quits in England also increases. It is estimated that in 2017, more than 50,000 smokers stopped smoking with the aid of a vaping product [who would otherwise have carried on smoking](#). Data from systematic reviews since [PHE's 2018 report](#) show that vaping products were significantly more effective for helping people stop smoking than NRT.

Those using a vaping product as part of their quit attempt in local, stop smoking services have some of the highest quit-success rates – [between 59.7% and 74% in 2019 to 2020](#).

Vaping has plateaued in adults and young people since the last PHE report in March 2020.

Around 4.8% of young people (aged 11 to 18 years) reported vaping at least once a month – the same as last year – and most of these were either current or former smokers (only 0.8% of young people who had never smoked currently vape). [Smoking prevalence among young people](#), including those who smoked sometimes or more than once a week, was 6.7% in March 2020, similar to March 2019, at 6.3%. The law bans the sale of smoking and vaping products to under 18s but age-of-sale violations are being reported.

Similar to last year, around 6% of adults are current vapers, equating to about 2.7 million adult vapers in England. Smoking prevalence continues to fall and is between 13.8% and 16% depending on the survey. Vaping prevalence was between 17.5% and 20.1% among current smokers, around 11% among former smokers and between 0.3% and 0.6% [among those who have never smoked](#). The proportion of vapers who also smoke, or 'dual users', has declined since 2012.

There are still concerns around increasing misperception of the relative risk caused by vaping products, compared to smoked tobacco. In 2020, 38% of smokers believed that vaping is as harmful as smoking and 15% [believed that vaping is more harmful](#). This is out of line with expert reviews from the UK and [US](#), concluding that using regulated nicotine vaping products is far less harmful than smoking.

Professor John Newton, Director of Health Improvement at PHE, said:

Smoking is still the leading preventable cause of premature death and disease – [killing almost 75,000 people in England in 2019](#). The best thing that a smoker can do is to stop smoking completely and the evidence shows that vaping is one of the most effective quit aids available, helping around 50,000 smokers quit a year.

Thousands more could have quit except for unfounded safety fears about e-cigarettes. The evidence has been clear for some time that, while not risk-free vaping is far less harmful than smoking.

For anyone who smokes, particularly those who have already tried other methods, we strongly recommend they try vaping and stop smoking – ideally with additional support from their local stop

smoking service for the very best chance of quitting for good.

PHE's advice remains that smokers should switch to vaping products to help them quit smoking, but non-smokers should not take up vaping. Vaping products contain significantly less harmful chemicals than cigarettes but are not without some risks.

PHE has commissioned a full review of the evidence on the safety of vaping products, which will be published next year in 2022. King's College London is working with a number of different researchers from the UK and US (including some who contributed to the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's e-cigarette report in in 2018](#)) to conduct this review.

Professor Ann McNeill, Professor of Tobacco Addiction at King's College London, and lead author of the report said:

Our report draws together findings from randomised controlled trials, stop smoking services and population studies and concludes that nicotine vaping products are an effective way of successfully quitting smoking.

What is concerning is that smokers, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, incorrectly and increasingly believe that vaping is as harmful as smoking. This is not true and means fewer smokers try vaping.

The goal for 2030 is to be smokefree in England. The development of a new [Tobacco Control Plan](#) and this year's review of the [Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016](#) is an opportunity to ensure that the regulations around vaping are appropriate. The regulations are also hoped to help smokers to quit, while not attracting people who have never smoked.

[Violence in Myanmar: G7 Foreign Ministers' statement](#)

News story

The Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US, and the High Representative of the European Union have firmly condemned violence by Myanmar's security forces against peaceful protests.



Statement from the Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US and the High Representative of the European Union:

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union firmly condemn violence committed by Myanmar's security forces against peaceful protests. We offer condolences for the loss of life. The military and the police must exercise utmost restraint and respect human rights and international law. Use of live ammunition against unarmed people is unacceptable. Anyone responding to peaceful protests with violence must be held to account.

We condemn the intimidation and oppression of those opposing the coup. We raise our concern at the crackdown on freedom of expression, including through the internet blackout and draconian changes to the law that repress free speech. The systematic targeting of protesters, doctors, civil society and journalists must stop and the state of emergency must be revoked. We continue to call for full humanitarian access to support the most vulnerable.

We remain united in condemning the coup in Myanmar. We call again for the immediate and unconditional release of those detained arbitrarily, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint and continue to stand with the people of Myanmar in their quest for democracy and freedom.

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[HMA Philip Malone met with Prime](#)

Minister L.Oyun-Erdene

World news story

HMA Philip Malone met with the newly appointed Prime Minister of Mongolia, L.Oyun-Erdene



HMA Philip Malone and Prime Minister of Mongolia L.Oyun-Erdene

HMA Philip Malone met with L.Oyun-Erdene, Prime Minister of Mongolia on 19 February 2021. They discussed the COVID-19 situation in Mongolia, climate change and the upcoming COP26 summit, education, and trade relations including bilateral work on several infrastructure projects.

The Prime Minister highlighted that Mongolia was about to receive 150,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and was keen to source more. He welcomed the UK's role in the COVAX facility that would be supplying further vaccines in the coming weeks, and expressed a desire to strengthen Mongolia-UK relations in several areas including trade.

HMA Malone commended Mongolia's efforts to contain and stop the spread of COVID-19 and highlighted the UK's financial support for vulnerable Mongolians stranded abroad. HMA raised the UK's new trade preference scheme and the role it could play in deepening trade and investment relations, and encouraged the government of Mongolia to be as ambitious as possible on climate change, including the reduction of emissions.

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