

GLA Housing and Land

Housing Research Note 12

Housing for disabled Londoners: An analysis of secondary data



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Feedback on this report or suggestions for improvements are welcomed and should be sent to housing.analysis@london.gov.uk.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out key facts on the housing circumstances of disabled Londoners. This is based on an analysis of survey data and official statistics.

1.2 Previous research has shown that disabled people in Britain tend to:

- experience worse housing conditions than non-disabled people
- spend a higher share of their income on housing costs
- face greater challenges finding homes that meet their needs.

This report looks at the extent of those differences between:

- disabled and non-disabled Londoners
- disabled people in London and those in the rest of England (or the rest of the UK, depending on the data source used).

1.3 The report describes the housing circumstances of disabled Londoners, and the challenges they face. However, it does not attempt to tease apart the often-complex causes of the patterns it shows. For example: it does not look at the extent to which these patterns are due to lower average incomes for disabled people; or the more limited housing options available to them.

1.4 Due to a lack of space and available data, the report does not try to give a comprehensive analysis of how disability interacts with every other relevant characteristic that a disabled person may have. For example, previous research from the Greater London Authority (GLA) has found evidence of racial discrimination in London's housing. For disabled people from an ethnic minority background, that will likely have a compounding effect.

1.5 The report aims to provide evidence that can inform public discussion and policy-making, including the development of the next London Plan. However, it does not itself make any recommendations for policy changes.

Acknowledgements

1.6 The development of this report was informed by helpful discussions with Inclusion London, and with other members of the London Housing Panel. Fiona Rodrigues provided research assistance. Guk Yu and Cassie Barton provided additional research and editorial support.

2. Summary

2.1 This research uses a definition of disability that is consistent with the core definition under the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act). Under this Act, a person is considered disabled if they have an illness, disability or impairment that is expected to last 12 months or more that makes day-to-day activities substantially more difficult. According to the social model of disability (as used by the GLA), disability comes from the effects of the barriers, discrimination and disadvantages faced by disabled people. It does not come from the impact of their specific impairment.

2.2 According to 2021 Census data, there are 1.16 million disabled Londoners; this is approximately 13 per cent of the city's total population. The rate of disability in London is the lowest of all regions in England – even after accounting for the effect of age.

2.3 The types of disability experienced by Londoners vary widely. However, the most common are:

- mobility impairments
- conditions that affect stamina
- poor mental health.

According to NHS data on wheelchair use, around 1.2% of London's population are registered for wheelchair services. Note that this figure does not include Londoners using non-NHS issued wheelchairs.

2.4 Age is strongly correlated with disability. Around half of London's disabled residents are over 53 years old – even though that age group only accounts for a quarter of the city's total population. London's relatively young population exaggerates the differences between its rate of disability, compared to other cities.

2.5 In London, women experience a higher rate of disability (14.2 per cent) than men (11.6 per cent). This is driven partly by the higher proportion of older women; and partly by higher rates of disability among women at every age from early adulthood. Disability varies widely by ethnicity; the age profile of different ethnicities plays into this variance. Overall, across all age groups, a far higher proportion of Gypsy and Traveller Londoners are disabled than those in any other ethnic group. Roma and Chinese Londoners experience lower levels of disability.

2.6 The most common housing tenures for disabled Londoners are home ownership and the social rented sector. Together, these make up around 80 per cent of all housing arrangements for disabled Londoners. Compared to the disabled population in the rest of England, disabled Londoners are less likely to own their own home; and more likely to rent in either the social or private sector. The proportion of disabled Londoners living in the private rented sector has increased since the last Census; the proportion living in homes they own has declined.

2.7 Across England, around one in 10 households need to adapt their homes to make them accessible. However, half of homes built in England before 1919 cannot meet even basic accessibility standards, due to a lack of space for an access ramp. Most flats above ground level in England don't have lift access.

2.8 In London, some of these challenges appear particularly acute. Many disabled Londoners report being dissatisfied with their homes; or unable to safely use essential features within their homes.

2.9 Around 20 per cent of disabled people living in the social rented sector in London are living in overcrowded conditions, according to the Census. This is slightly lower in the private rented sector (around 19% of disabled people in the PRS). The lowest rate of overcrowding is among disabled Londoners living in owner-occupied homes (around 7%). Overall, disabled Londoners are less likely to live in overcrowded conditions than Londoners who are not disabled. The biggest difference here is in the social rented sector.

2.10 In both London and the rest of England, households with disabled members are more than twice as likely to say they are dissatisfied with their housing situation, than households without a disabled person. Disabled Londoners are more likely to report

dissatisfaction with their housing situation than elsewhere in England. This is partly driven by dissatisfaction in London's larger social rented sector; social renting households with a disabled member are the most likely to report dissatisfaction (around 27 per cent). When looking at dissatisfaction rates among households with and without disabled members, the gap between the two is greatest in private rented housing.

- 2.11 Surveys of anxiety levels show that households in London with at least one disabled member report a significantly higher average anxiety level, compared to households without a disabled person. This difference is greatest in the social rented sector; and smallest in households that own their home.
- 2.12 London households with a disabled person spend a median of 30% of their household incomes on housing costs (excluding utilities). This compares to 25% for other London households. This gap would be greater where there is no housing-related income support (Housing Benefit and Universal Credit); the share of disabled people who receive this support is bigger than the share of non-disabled people.
- 2.13 Previous research shows that disabled people are less likely to be employed (and more likely to be in poverty even when employed). This leaves disabled people with fewer resources to meet essential disability-related costs – such as home adaptation, medical care, and specialist equipment.
- 2.14 Households with disabled members are also more likely to:
 - be in arrears on their mortgage or rent
 - say they find it difficult to keep up with payments.
- 2.15 Around 17% of homes in London have all four basic accessibility features necessary to make them 'visitable':
 - level access to the main entrance
 - a flush threshold
 - sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space
 - a toilet at entrance level

This figure (17%) is more than in the rest of England, and has increased over time. This is almost entirely due to new construction – new homes are far more likely to be 'visitable' than older ones.

- 2.16 However, the proportion of London homes with a wider range of accessibility features – ones that disabled people are likely to need – is far lower. Less than 1% are fully visitable and have accessible bathrooms, accessible kitchens and (if they are on an upper floor) adequate lift access.
- 2.17 Around 11% of households in London with disabled members say they do not feel safe at home, because they fear a fire might break out. This is compared to around 8% of households with no disabled members.
- 2.18 Disabled Londoners are just as likely as others to say they expect to move house soon. However, they are much less likely to have moved in the last year.

2.19 When they do move house, disabled Londoners are more likely to have moved for negative reasons (for example, their previous property being unsuitable or unaffordable). They are less likely to have moved for reasons such as wanting a larger home, or job-related reasons.

2.20 Disabled Londoners have a narrower range of housing options than non-disabled residents. This is shaped by:

- lower incomes
- higher disability-related costs
- the limited accessibility of much of the city's housing stock.

New homes are more likely to meet basic accessibility standards; but there are too few to provide comparable choice.

2.21 Progress has been made in improving accessibility in new housing. However, there are still gaps in ensuring all disabled Londoners can access safe, suitable and affordable homes. To inform effective policy, further research is needed on:

- disabilities that are not mobility-related
- the interaction of disability and housing circumstances with other personal characteristics
- how accessible housing is distributed at a finer geographical scale.

3. Definitions and terminology

Disability

3.1 The definition of disability used in the Census, and in official surveys such as the Family Resources Survey and the English Housing Survey, is consistent with the core definition of disability under the Equality Act. According to this Act, a person is considered disabled if they have a physical or mental health condition, or illness, that is expected to last 12 months or more; and that makes with day-to-day activities substantially more difficult.¹

3.2 Some people who are classified as disabled, and have rights under the Equality Act, are not captured by this core definition. This includes:

- people with a long-standing illness or disability that is not currently affecting their day-to-day activities
- people with progressive conditions, where the effect of the impairment does not yet impede their lives.

People who were disabled in the past, and are no longer limited in their daily lives, are still covered by the Equality Act; but not by the core definition used in surveys.²

¹ Government Statistical Service (2019), [Measuring disability for the Equality Act 2010 harmonisation guidance](#)

² ONS (2018) [Equalities data audit, final report: Disability](#)

- 3.3 Surveys typically look at the impact of physical or mental health conditions or illnesses in terms of impairments. This means, in other words, the functions that a person cannot perform, or has difficulty performing, because of their health condition. For example, glaucoma is a medical condition; while being unable to see, or being partially sighted, is an impairment.
- 3.4 For the purposes of this Note, disability is defined in accordance with the Equality Act. In this way, the definition encompasses both physical and mental health conditions. However, the report focuses on physical accessibility requirements. This is because these needs are more consistently captured in available data; and can be reliably measured, for the purposes of this research.

Accessibility standards in Building Regulations

- 3.5 All construction of new buildings in England must comply with the Building Regulations. Approved Documents are a series of official documents that give practical guidance about how to comply with the Building Regulations.
- 3.6 Approved Document M volume 1 (published in 2015, and updated in 2016) covers access to and use of dwellings.³ It replaced the previous requirement M4 with three new categories of dwellings:
- M4(1): visitable dwellings – a basic standard to apply to all new homes
 - M4(2): accessible and adaptable dwellings – a higher standard of accessibility, broadly equivalent to the previous Lifetime Homes Standards
 - M4(3): wheelchair-user dwellings – a standard for wheelchair-accessible homes (which include the most common features needed by wheelchair users) and adaptable homes (which include features to enable conversion to full wheelchair accessibility).
- 3.7 Requirement M4(1) is currently mandatory for all new homes, unless either M4(2) or M4(3) is required by a planning permission. Following a consultation in 2020, the government has said that it intends to make M4(2) the minimum standard for all new homes. M4(1) will apply only where M4(2) is impractical and unachievable. This change is expected to be put in place, subject to a further consultation on the technical details.⁴ Research was commissioned to investigate the barriers, features and spatial requirements for accessibility. This research forms part of the technical review of the statutory guidance for accessibility in buildings.⁵
- 3.8 Since 2015, the London Plan has required 90% of new build homes to meet M4(2) and 10% to meet M4(3). Before then, versions of the London Plan from 2004 onwards required that 100% of homes met the Lifetime Homes Standards and 10% were wheelchair accessible or adaptable. Due to restrictions on the scope of Building Regulations, the optional standards M4(2) and M4(3) cannot generally be applied to new homes developed through conversions and changes of use.

³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2015), [Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M](#)

⁴ MHCLG (2022), [Raising accessibility standards for new homes: summary of consultation responses and government response](#)

⁵ MHCLG (2025), [Access to and use of buildings: research on demographic and ergonomic requirements](#)

4. Data sources

4.1 This Research Note primarily draws on data from:

- the 2021 Census
- the Family Resources Survey
- the English Housing Survey.

These sources all use the government's 'harmonised standard' for measuring disability. This is consistent with the core definition of disability under the Equality Act (see section 3.1, above).

What do the different datasets measure?

- 4.2 All three of the datasets listed at 4.1, above, include data on people living in households. However, only the census collects data on people in communal establishments (such as care homes and halls of residence). This means that, in the Family Resources Survey and English Housing Survey, the overall picture of disabled Londoners is less complete. However, these surveys do describe the experiences of disabled Londoners in mainstream household accommodation.
- 4.3 Surveys are conducted with a small sample of households. This means that estimates are always subject to statistical uncertainty. Methodological and timing differences between surveys also mean they won't necessarily report the same number of disabled people.
- 4.4 Censuses collect data on all residents, not just a sample. But the 2021 Census happened when Covid-19 restrictions disrupted everyday life. This affected the size of London's population.
- 4.5 Each source has different strengths and limitations. Other survey datasets (such as the Annual Population Survey) also have data on disability. However, the sources used in this Research Note were chosen for their relative robustness; and the level of detail they give on housing experiences. Where relevant, we draw on additional research and datasets, such as the Survey of Londoners. Below, you can find more detail about the datasets we have used for analysis.

Census

- 4.6 This report uses data from the 2021 Census⁶ to estimate:
- the number of Londoners with different characteristics who are disabled
 - changes since the previous Census in 2011.
- 4.7 In the Census, people who assessed their day-to-day activities as being limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses are considered disabled. This definition of a disabled person meets the harmonised standard for measuring disability in public statistics; and is in line with the Equality Act.

⁶ ONS, [Census 2021](#)

Family Resources Survey

- 4.8 The Family Resources Survey⁷ is an annual government survey of UK households. It focuses on their financial circumstances; but also collects information about disability and housing. The survey does not record information on individuals in nursing or retirement homes. This means that figures relating to people in relevant groups may not be representative of the entire population and their characteristics. For example, many elderly people may have moved into homes where they can receive more frequent help; they are therefore not covered by the Family Resources Survey. As such, it is likely that the real number of disabled people, and the proportion of older people with impairments, are higher than figures from the survey indicate.

English Housing Survey

- 4.9 The English Housing Survey⁸ is another annual government survey, covering England only. It gathers a lot of detailed information about housing, by interviewing households and surveying their homes. Like the Family Resources Survey, the English Housing Survey does not record information on individuals living in communal accommodation. The dataset includes a derived variable showing whether anyone in the household has a long-term illness or disability that limits their activities.

Survey of Londoners

- 4.10 The 2021-22 Survey of Londoners⁹ interviewed 8,630 adults in London on a range of topics, including disability and housing quality. Results are reported for individuals, rather than households.

Existing evidence

- 4.11 GLA analysis is supplemented with findings from existing research and quantitative evidence relating to housing and disability in the UK. Where possible, findings specific to London are included – however, such data is more limited. Unless otherwise stated, the GLA has conducted all analyses that refer to the Census, the Family Resources Survey, the English Housing Survey and the Survey of Londoners. External sources of analysis (such as the Office for National Statistics (ONS)) are clearly referenced.
- 4.12 London has the UK's lowest disability rate, and a younger population structure. While these factors influence local patterns, national trends in disability and housing are still relevant. National benchmarks give context for interpreting patterns in London – especially when London-level research on disability and housing is limited.

5. Demographic context

Disabled individuals

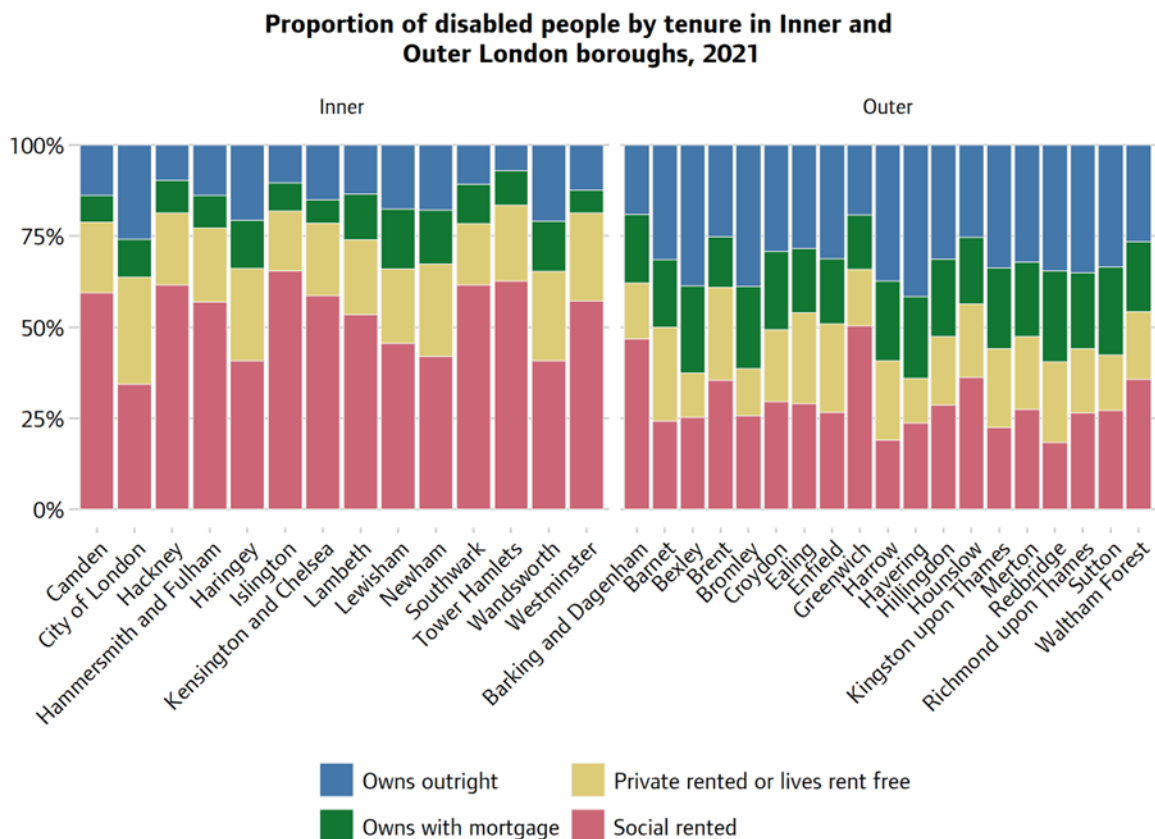
- 5.1 London has 8.8 million residents – 8.7 million in household accommodation, and roughly 100,000 in 'communal establishments' (such as student accommodation and care homes). Looking at the city's usual residents, the 2021 Census found that 1.16 million Londoners were disabled under the Equality Act definition. This is 13.2% of the total population.

⁷ DWP (2026), [Family Resources Survey](#)

⁸ MHCLG, [English Housing Survey](#)

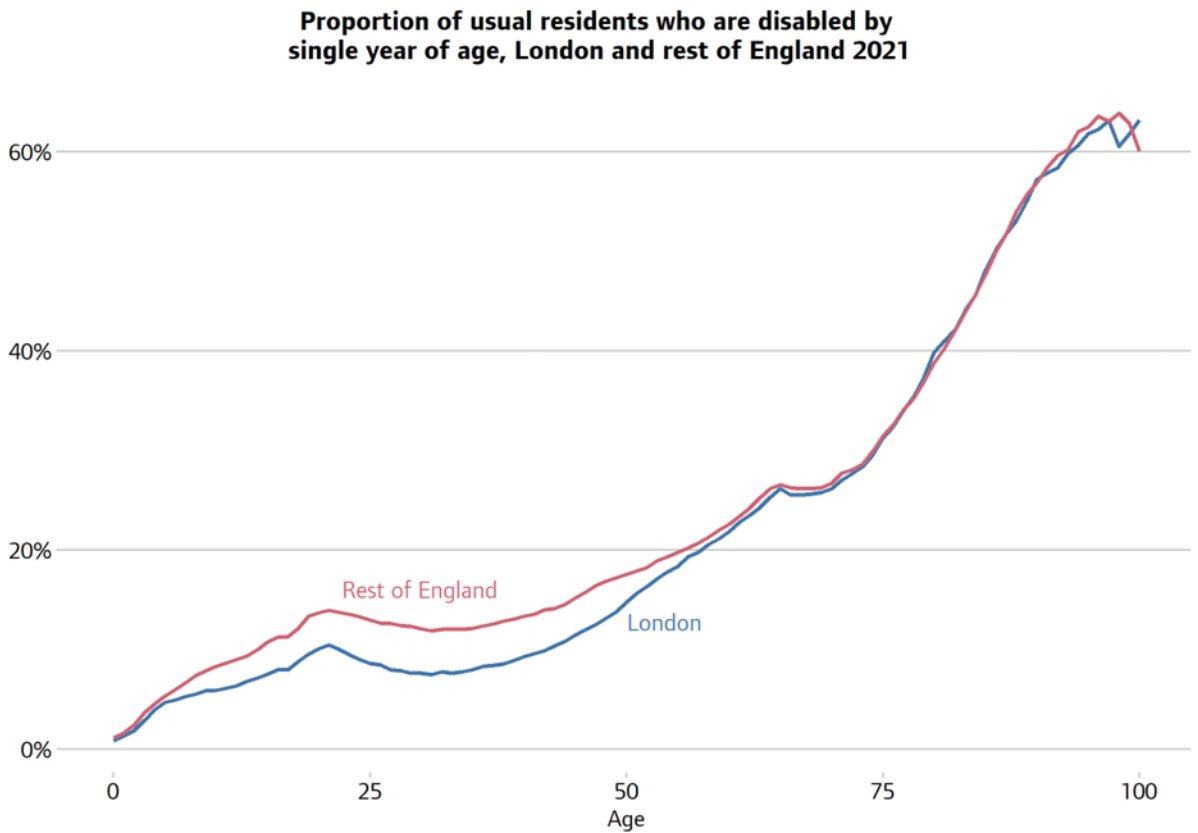
⁹ GLA, [2021-22 Survey of Londoners](#)

- 5.2 The rate of disability among communal establishment residents in London is far higher than among the population as a whole, at 39.2%. This is mainly due to significant number of older people living in care homes.
- 5.3 Of 1.16 million disabled residents in London:
- 506,000 (43%) said they had a long-term physical or mental health condition that limited their day-to-day activities “a lot”
 - 659,000 (56.6%) said their activities were limited “a little”.
- 5.4 At the same time, 460,000 (39.5%) Londoners (5.2% of the total population) did not meet the statistical definition of disability, but said they had a long-term physical or mental health condition (albeit one that did not currently limit their day-to-day activities).
- 5.5 The share of people who are disabled is marginally higher in Inner London (13.2%) than in Outer London (12.8%). Islington, Camden and Bexley boroughs have the highest rates. Redbridge and Wandsworth boroughs, and the City of London, have the lowest. The most common tenure for disabled people in Inner London is social housing; in Outer London, they are generally more likely to live in owner-occupied homes (either owned outright or with a mortgage).

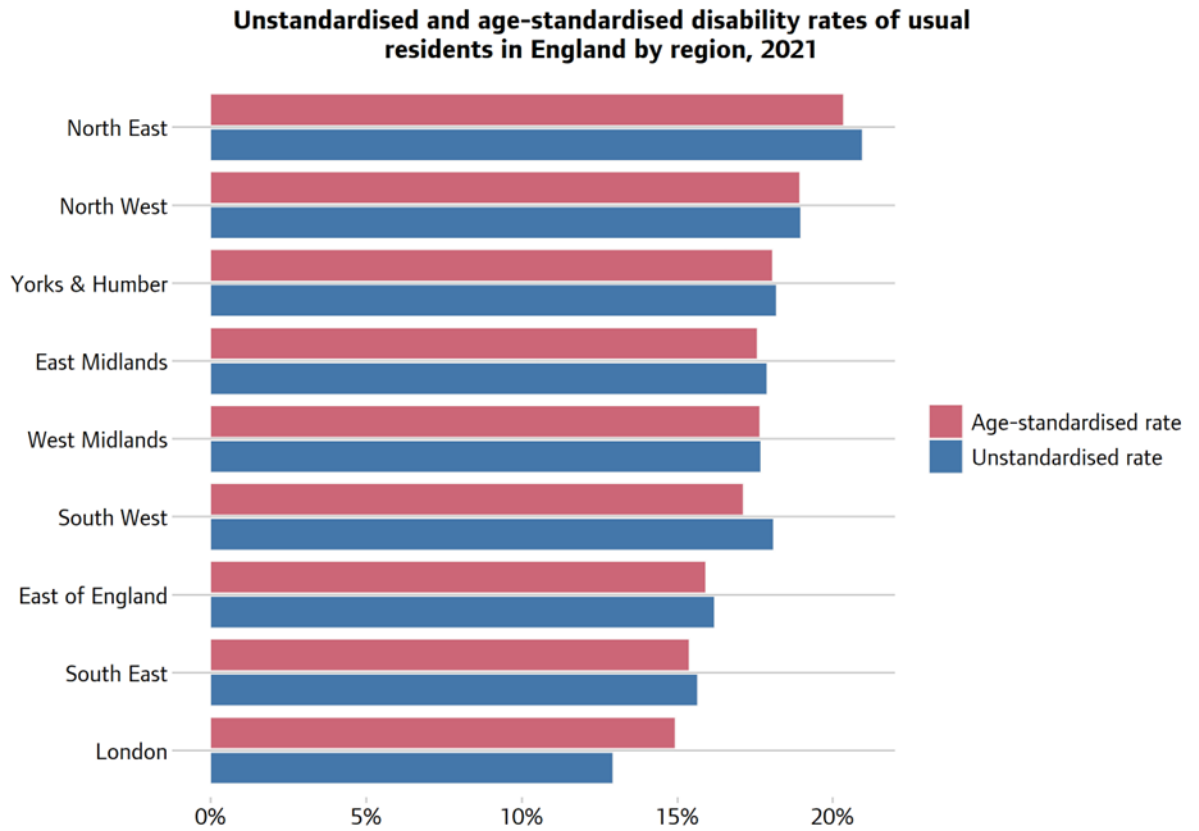


- 5.6 The Census results that are more comparable with the household survey analysis in this report focus only on the population living in households (excluding those in communal establishments). According to this definition, the 2021 Census found that 12.9% of London’s population was considered disabled under the Equality Act. This was the lowest rate of any region in England; the highest was in the North East, where 20.9% of the population is disabled.

5.7 As people get older, they are more likely to be disabled. Among those aged 86 or older, there are more people considered disabled under the Equality Act than not.

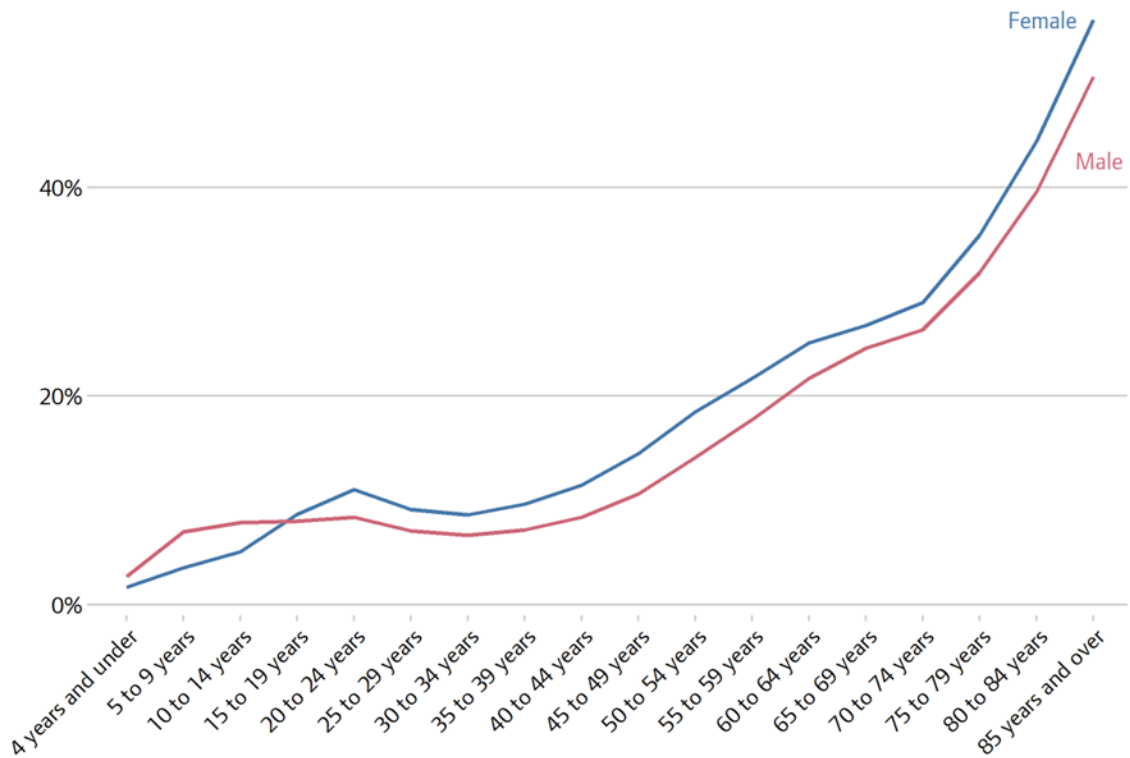


5.8 Part of the reason for London’s relatively small share of disabled residents is its age profile, which is younger than the rest of the country. If we calculate, from the Census data, an age-standardised rate of disability (which assumes that each region has the same age structure as England as a whole), then 14.9% of London’s population would have been disabled in 2021. This is still the lowest of any region – but is much closer to the national average at 17.3%.



5.9 The prevalence of disability in London among women (14.2%) is higher than among men (11.6%). This is driven partly by the higher proportion of older women; and partly by higher rates of disability among women at every age from early adulthood.

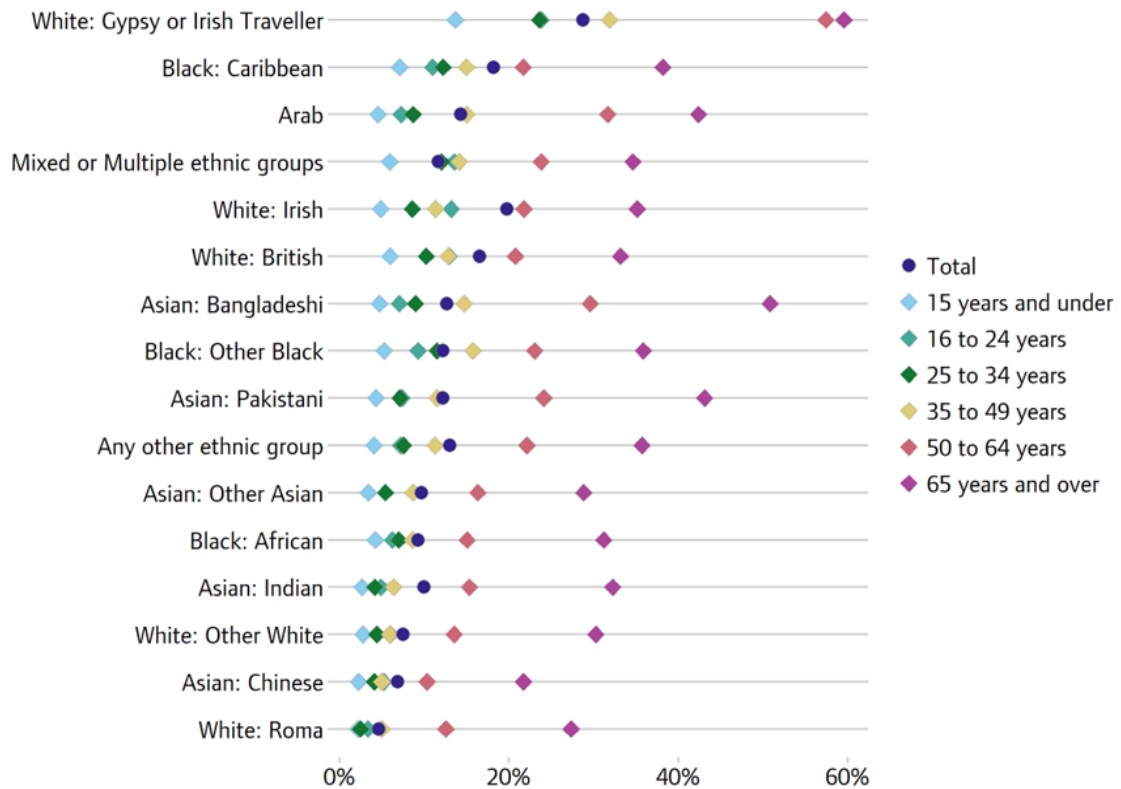
Proportion of usual residents in households who are disabled by age group and sex, London 2021



5.10 Disability rates among Londoners vary widely by ethnicity. A far higher proportion of Gypsy and Traveller Londoners are disabled than in any other ethnic group – both at the aggregate level (across the whole population) and when broken down into specific age groups. The second highest aggregate rate of disability is among White Irish Londoners;

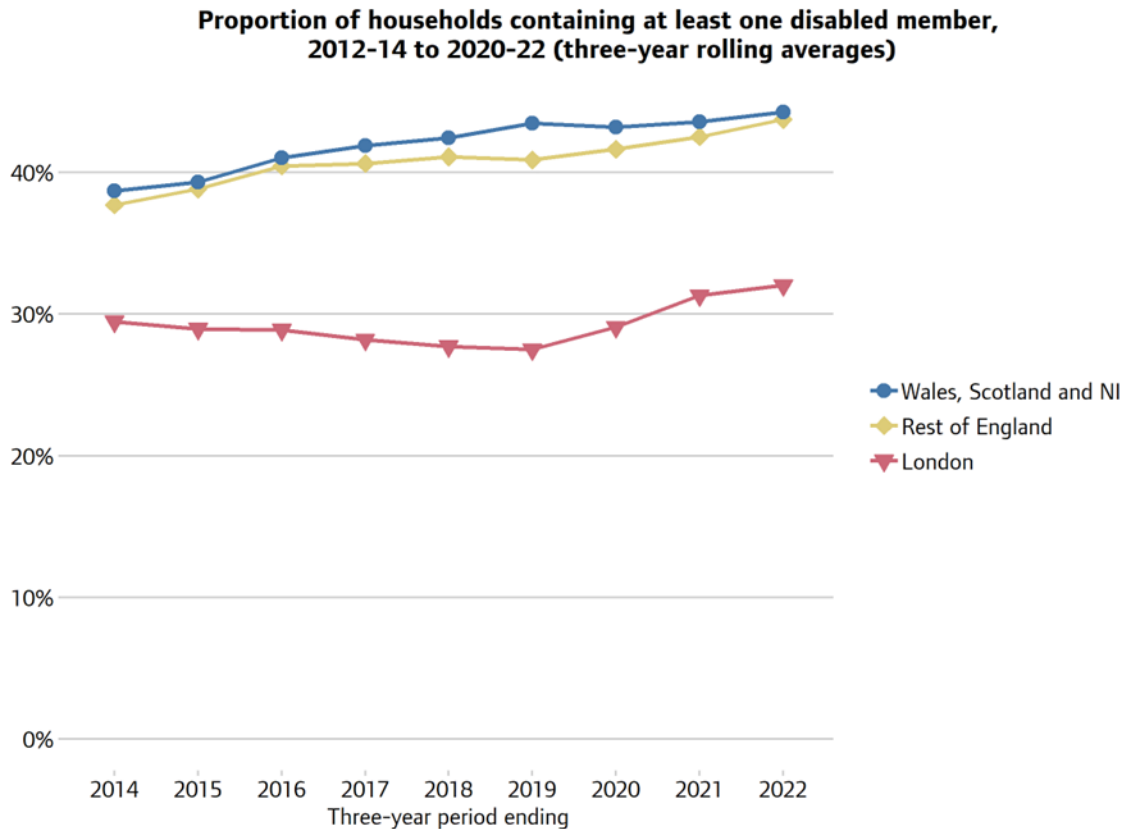
but this seems to be largely a function of the older age profile of that group.

Proportion of household residents who are disabled by ethnicity and age group, London 2021



Disability in households

- 5.11 According to the Family Resources Survey, there are 1.14 million households in London with at least one disabled member, of any age. This is equivalent to 32% of all London households. This is the lowest rate of any English region. Across the rest of England, 44% of households include at least one disabled member; this is similar to the combined figures in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 5.12 According to figures from the Family Resources Survey, the proportion of households in London with at least one disabled person fell slightly from 2012-14 to 2017-19; and then increased relatively sharply in 2020-22. This compares to steadier and larger growth in the rest of England; and in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (combined).



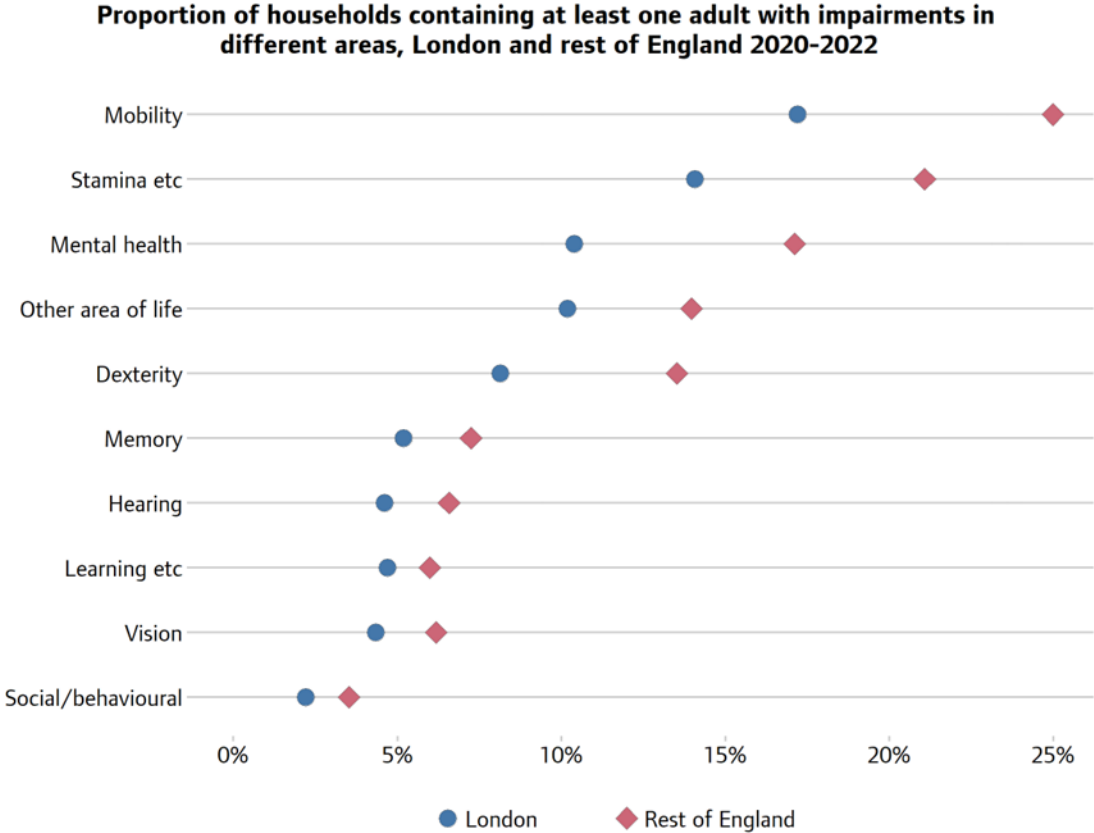
Impairments

5.13 Both the Family Resources Survey and the English Housing Survey record whether people report impairments in any of the following areas:

- vision (for example, blindness or partial sight)
- hearing (for example, deafness or partial hearing)
- mobility (for example, walking short distances or climbing stairs)
- dexterity (for example, lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard)
- learning, understanding or concentrating
- memory
- mental health
- stamina, breathing or fatigue
- socially or behaviourally (for example, traits associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD))
- difficulties in other areas of life.

5.14 The chart below shows the proportion of households in London, and the rest of England, with least one adult who has an impairment listed above. This uses pooled Family Resources Survey data from 2020-21 to 2022-23. The most commonly experienced

impairments relate to mobility, stamina and mental health. For each impairment type, the share of households with such an adult is lower in London than in the rest of England.



Wheelchair users

- 5.15 At the end of 2024 there were 89,642 adult patients, and 8,835 child patients, registered with NHS wheelchair services in London. This creates a total of 98,477 patients – equivalent to around 1.1% of London’s total population. In the final three months of 2024, there were 3,170 new adult patients, and 422 new child patients, registered with NHS wheelchair services in London.¹⁰ These figures do not capture Londoners who use privately purchased or non-NHS wheelchairs; so the total number of wheelchair users is likely higher.
- 5.16 According to the English Housing Survey (2020-21 to 2022-23), around 1.9% of households in London include someone who uses a wheelchair. Just over half of these use their wheelchair outside the home only. Just over 3.3% of households in the rest of England include a wheelchair user; and those who use one at home are, again, in the minority.
- 5.17 The rate of wheelchair use increases with age. Around 4.7% of households in London that are headed by someone aged 65 or older include someone who uses a wheelchair.
- 5.18 The number of people and households using a wheelchair is likely to under-estimate the number that need or would like to use one. This is due to the costs of acquiring a wheelchair; and (as set out in the later section on quality and accessibility) the difficulties

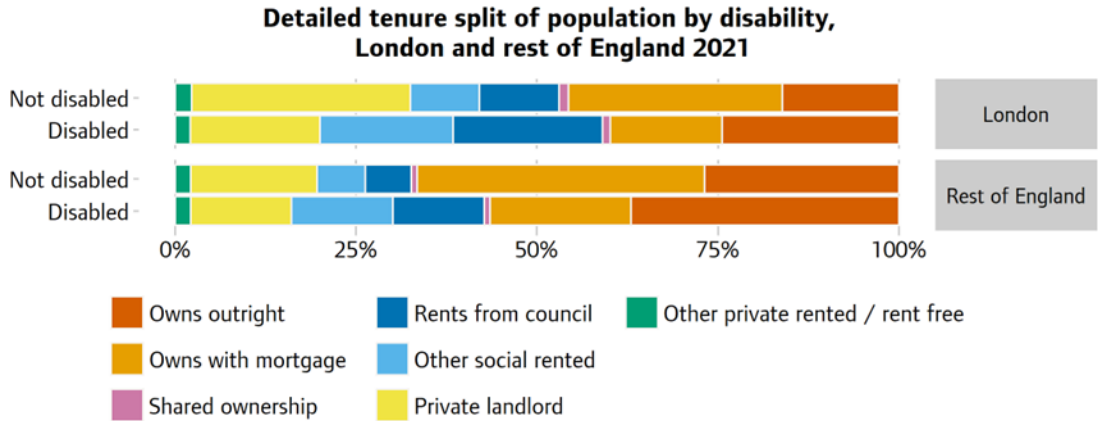
¹⁰ NHS England, [Wheelchair Data Collection](#), October-December 2024

of using and storing one in the home. These figures also do not consider the number of people using a powered mobility scooter.

6. Housing tenure

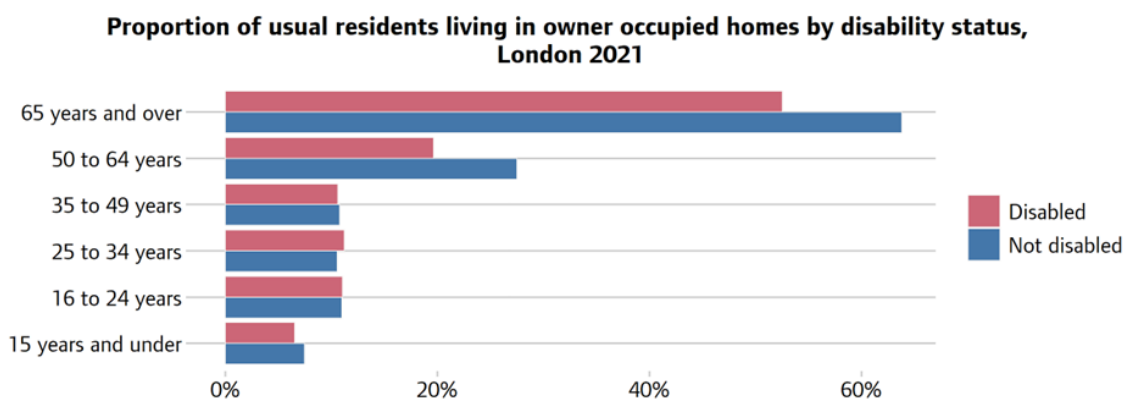
Disability by tenure

- 6.1 Analysis of trends in self-reported disability between 2004 and 2020 (using questions asked consistently in the Annual Population Survey) shows that disability rates at the UK level began to rise in around 2010. They have become increasingly polarised by tenure; there is more growth among social housing tenants than in other tenures.¹¹
- 6.2 According to the most recent Census, disabled Londoners are most likely to live in owner-occupier households (40.9%), closely followed by those living in the social rented sector (39%). Only 20% live in privately rented households, compared to 32.5% of Londoners who are not disabled. This lower proportion is likely linked to evidence that it is more difficult to get reasonable accessibility adaptations in the private rented sector. Some disabled people have also reported being reluctant to request adaptations, due to concerns about being given a section 21 notice (and, therefore, being evicted).¹²
- 6.3 Comparing these tenure shares to the rest of England, disabled Londoners are significantly less likely to live in owner-occupied homes (40.9% compared to 57.3%). However, they are more likely to be in social rented, private rented or shared ownership housing. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHCR) reports that social housing’s affordability and tenure security are key reasons that disabled people are more likely to live in this sector; and social landlords are more likely to install adaptations and offer other types of support.¹³
- 6.4 In 2023-24, 13% of new social housing lettings in London were to households with specific disability-related housing needs (such as wheelchair access, mobility aids, or adaptations relating to visual/hearing impairment). This compares to 16% in England. On a national level, this proportion has grown steadily from 14% in 2009-10.¹⁴



¹¹ Murphy and Grundy (2024), [Housing tenure and disability in the UK: trends and projections 2004–2030](#)
¹² House of Commons: Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2024), [Disabled people in the housing sector](#)
¹³ EHCR (2018), [Housing and disabled people: Britain's hidden crisis](#)
¹⁴ DLUHC (2025), [Social Housing Lettings in England, tenants: April 2023 to March 2024](#)

6.5 Census data shows that living in owner-occupied accommodations is generally less common for disabled people than for the rest of the population (47% of non-disabled population live in owner-occupied accommodations). However, the gap between disabled and non-disabled people in owner-occupied housing is smaller than in the social and private rented tenures. For both groups, the likelihood of living in owner-occupied housing increases with age. However, in any given age group, disabled Londoners are less likely to live in owner-occupied housing than their non-disabled counterparts. More detailed analysis by the ONS found that, among those who live rent-free in the UK, a larger share of disabled people aged 25 to 54 live with their parents, compared to the share of non-disabled people. The opposite is true for people aged 16 to 24.¹⁵



6.6 Between the 2011 and 2021 Census, the proportion of disabled Londoners living in households that owned their homes outright fell from 30% to 24%. The proportion living in households buying with a mortgage fell only slightly, from 17% to 16.5%. There was a small increase in the share who lived in social housing (from 38.5% to 39%); and a much larger increase in the share who lived in private rented housing (14% to 20%).

6.7 In 2024, the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence projected the population of people aged 65 and older by tenure and poverty status (measured in terms of relative low income). It projected that, across Britain, around 14% of older disabled people will be living in private rented housing by 2040 (up from 4% in 2022). The proportion living in social housing is projected to fall from 17.5% to 16%. The projections indicate that 61% of disabled older people who rent privately would be in relative poverty in 2040, compared to 76% of those in social housing and 11% of those who own their own home.¹⁶

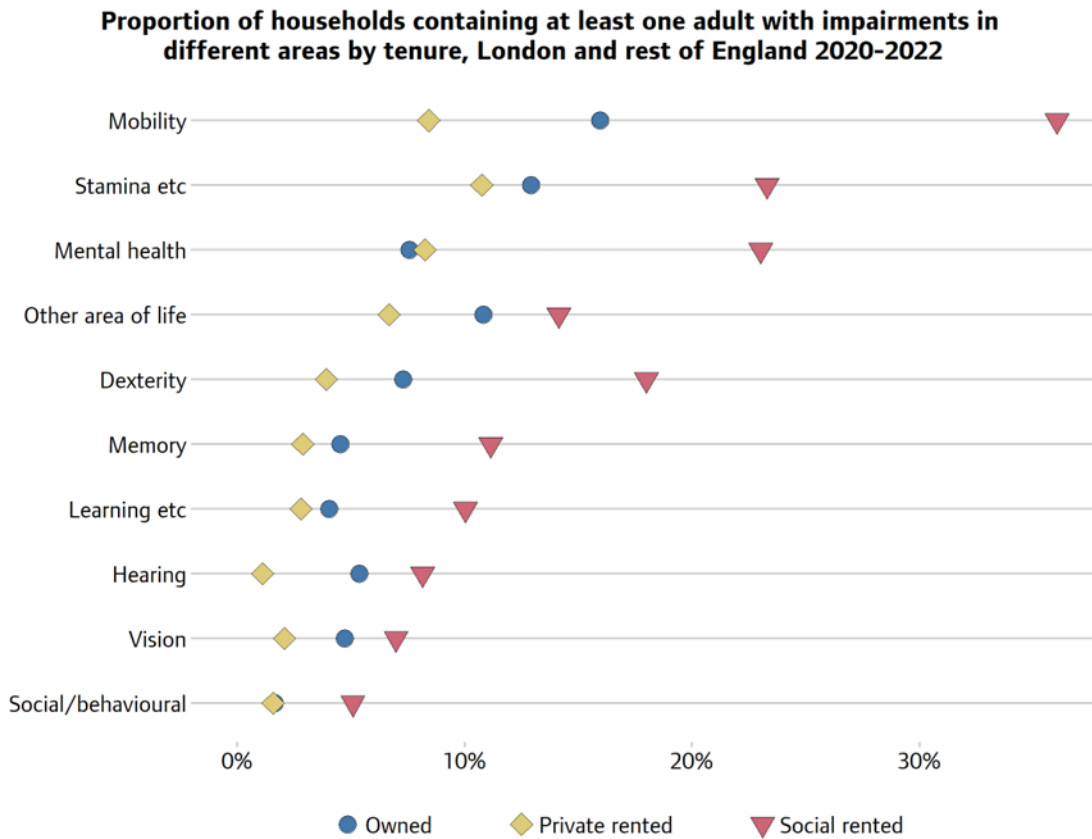
Impairments by tenure

6.8 The chart below shows the proportion of London households, in each of the three main housing tenures, that contain at least one person with each type of impairment. Again, this uses Family Resources Survey data from 2020-21 to 2022-23. Households in social housing are significantly more likely to contain at least one person with each type of impairment than home-owning or privately renting households. Every type of impairment except mental health is less likely to be seen in privately renting households. This

¹⁵ ONS (2019), [Statistical bulletin – Disability and housing, UK: 2019](#)

¹⁶ UK Centre for Collaborative Housing Evidence (2024), [Projections of housing tenure and poverty in older age in Great Britain, 2022-2040](#). Figures are for households in poverty after housing costs have been taken into account.

probably reflects the lower likelihood of receiving disability adaptations in the private rented sector.



6.9 It is likely that these results are driven to a great extent by ‘selection’ factors. For example, younger people are both less likely to report impairments and more likely to live in private rented housing. And disabled people are more likely to be considered a high priority for allocation to social housing than non-disabled people.

7. Housing need and satisfaction

Overcrowding

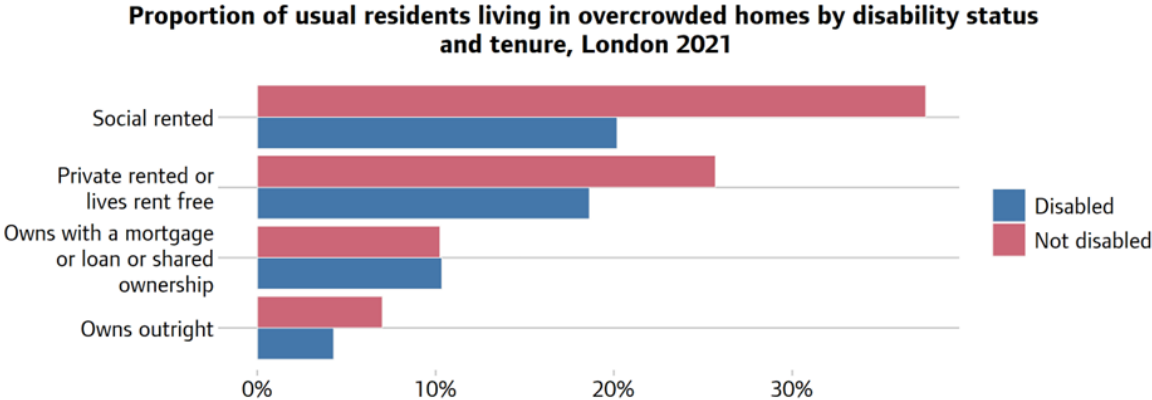
7.1 According to the 2021 Census, 14.4% of disabled Londoners live in a household classed as being overcrowded. The rate is higher among Londoners who do not have a disability (20.3%). These figures use the Census bedroom occupancy rating, where a household is considered overcrowded if it lacks one or more of the bedrooms it is estimated to require, based on its household members.

7.2 Breaking this down by tenure, 20.2% of disabled people in social rented housing live in an overcrowded household. This is the highest rate among all tenures. However, the social rented sector has biggest difference in overcrowding rates between disabled Londoners and those without a disability. People living with a disability in social housing are around 17.3 percentage points less likely to live in an overcrowded household than their counterparts who do not have a disability.

7.3 This is the largest difference of all the tenures. It highlights the likely effects of allocation policies, where disabled applicants are awarded higher priority bands; or are considered for properties that better meet their accessibility and space requirements (for example,

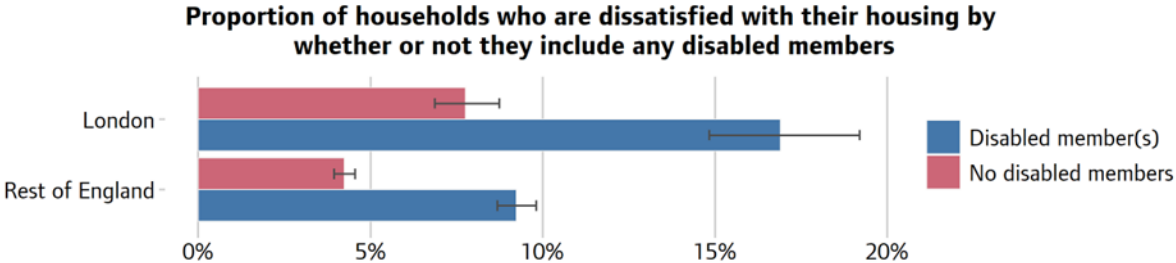
ground-floor or adapted homes). It also points to the high levels of overcrowding faced by Londoners who do not have a disability, and live in the social rented sector.

- 7.4 The private rented sector has the second-highest rate of overcrowding for disabled Londoners (18.6% of its disabled residents live in an overcrowded household). Overcrowding rates in owner-occupied households are much lower.



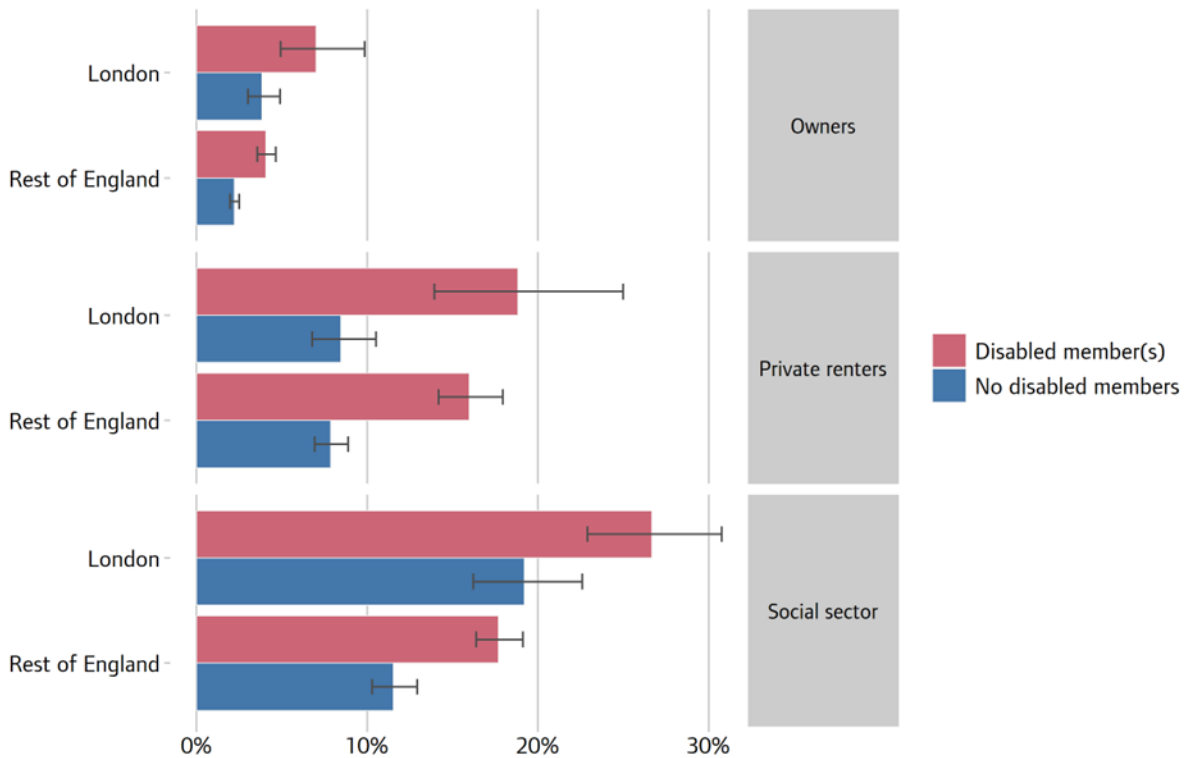
Satisfaction with housing

- 7.5 According to data from the English Housing Survey, 16.9% of London households with disabled members say they are dissatisfied with their current accommodation. This is compared to 9.2% of households with disabled members in the rest of England. In both London and the rest of England, households with disabled members are more than twice as likely as those without disabled members to say they are dissatisfied with their accommodation. However, for both groups, the rate of dissatisfaction is far higher in London than in the rest of the country.



- 7.6 There are sharp differences in dissatisfaction rates when broken down by tenure – both in London and in the rest of the country, and for households with and without disabled members. Around 26.7% of social renting households in London with disabled members are dissatisfied with their housing. This is compared to 19.2% of non-disabled counterparts. This distinction is the smallest for owners: 7% of owning households with disabled members are unhappy with their housing, compared to 3.9% of those without disabled members. In London, the gap in dissatisfaction rates between households with and without disabled members is greatest in private rented housing (a 10.3% gap). Around 18.8% of privately renting households in London with disabled members are dissatisfied with their housing; this is compared to around 8.5% of private renting households without disabled members. The overall gap in satisfaction rates between London and the rest of England is therefore partly due to London’s larger social rented sector, where satisfaction tends to be lower – but it is also driven by a persistent gap across tenures.

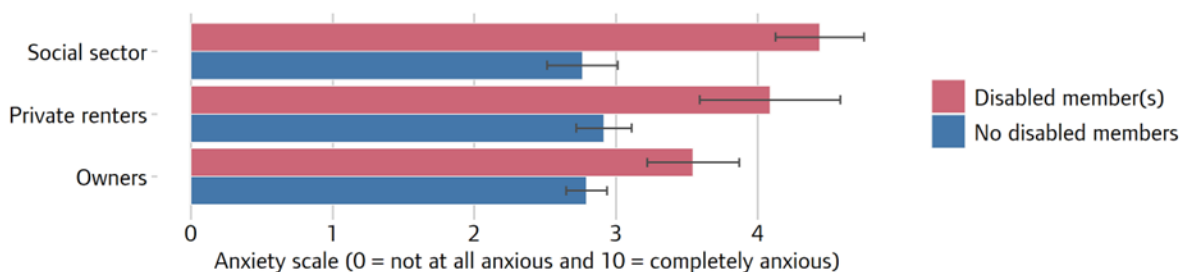
Proportion of households who are dissatisfied with their housing by tenure and whether they include any disabled members - pooled data from 2018/19 to 2022/23



Anxiety

- 7.7 As part of the English Housing Survey, each household reference person is asked how anxious they felt the day before on a scale of 0 (not at all anxious) to 10 (completely anxious). Londoners reported an average anxiety value of 3.2 in 2018 to 2022. This is higher than the average value of 2.9 for the rest of England. Households in London that contain at least one disabled member report a substantially higher average level of anxiety at 4.0, compared to 2.8 for other London households.
- 7.8 When broken down by tenure, the gap in anxiety levels between households with disabled members, and other households, is widest in social housing, followed by private renting. It is narrowest among home-owners.

Average anxiety level of household reference persons in London by tenure and whether household includes disabled members (2018-22)



Homelessness

7.9 ONS carried out an analysis of homeless people living in hostels or shelters at the time of the 2021 Census. ONS found that 44.1% of them were disabled, compared to only 17.5% of the general population.¹⁷

7.10 In financial year 2023-24, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) found that 17,660 households were unintentionally homeless (becoming homeless for reasons out of a person's control), and fell within a priority need group – for example:

- are at risk of domestic abuse
- have dependent children
- are pregnant
- are 16 or 17 years old and not looked after by social services
- are young adults who spent time in care between 16 and 18.

These households were therefore owed a 'main homelessness duty' by a local authority. Each homeless household was identified with a single priority-need category. Of those owed a main duty in London, 10.5% were found to be in need due to physical disability and ill health. Another 8.4% were in need due to mental health problems.¹⁸

7.11 In practice, these figures are likely to understate both the number and proportion of disabled Londoners becoming homeless each year. This is for two reasons.

7.12 Firstly, at least some of the households found to be owed a main duty are likely to have more than one form of need. For example, the most commonly used priority-need category was 'household includes dependent children'. This category accounted for 56.5% of all those found to be owed a main duty in 2023-24. It is very likely that some of those households also contained a disabled person.

7.13 Secondly, these 'main duty' decisions do not cover households that became homeless, but then secured accommodation through the local authority's homelessness prevention or relief actions. There is no available data, for London, on the number of households who were disabled and became homeless in London. However, MHCLG statistics show that:

- 15.4.1% of all households initially owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty in London in 2023-24 had a physical disability or ill-health support need
- 15.3% had a support need associated with a history of mental health problems
- 3% had a learning disability support need.

The statistics also show a significant amount of co-occurrence among these support needs.¹⁹

¹⁷ ONS (2024), [People experiencing homelessness in England and Wales](#)

¹⁸ MHCLG (2024), [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2023-24](#)

¹⁹ MHCLG (2024), [Statutory homelessness England: Support needs dashboard 2022-24](#)

Safety

- 7.14 Women’s Aid carried out an analysis of female domestic abuse survivors accessing services in 2023–24. It found that 32.8% of refuge or community-based service users across England reported being disabled. Mental health and physical health issues were the most commonly reported forms of disability²⁰. In 2022–23, 16% of victims/survivors supported through Mayor-commissioned safe accommodation-based services had a disability²¹. However, Women’s Aid separately reports that, in 2023–24, only 0.7% of vacancies in refuge services across England were for wheelchair users. This means that survivors using wheelchairs may not be able to flee abuse, and could be forced to stay with their abusers, due to a lack of suitable refuge spaces²².

8. Affordability

- 8.1 This chapter sets out a range of objective and subjective measures of housing affordability. Disabled people typically face a greater housing affordability challenge. This is due to earning lower incomes than average. The ONS estimated that, in 2023, median hourly pay for disabled employees in the UK was 13% lower than for non-disabled employees. The pay gap was wider for men than for women; and for those with impairments that limited their day-to-day activities a lot. The central estimate of the pay gap was lower in London than the national average, but the difference was not statistically significant.²³
- 8.2 In early 2025, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that 30% of disabled people in the UK were in poverty (defined in terms of relative income after housing costs and excluding disability benefit income) in 2022–23. This proportion has remained fairly steady since 2013–14. This means the number of disabled people in poverty has increased, because the population of disabled people has grown in this period.
- 8.3 The proportion of disabled working-age adults in work across the UK increased from 42% in 2010–11 to 53% in 2022–23. Employment rates for disabled people are still well below average, with 54% of working-age disabled adults in employment in mid-2023 compared to 83% of their non-disabled peers. Disabled people with a limiting mental health condition were less likely to be in employment, and more likely to be in poverty, than people with a physical or other type of impairment.²⁴

Housing costs as a share of income

- 8.4 Analysis of English Housing Survey data reveals that households with a disabled person spend more of their income on housing costs – those in London spend a particularly large proportion. London households with a disabled person spend a median of 29.7% of their household incomes (including housing-related income support from Housing Benefit and Universal Credit) on housing costs. This is compared to 24.6% for other London households. Households in the rest of England with a disabled person spend a median of 21.2% of their incomes on housing costs, compared to 18.0% for other households.

²⁰ Women’s Aid (2025), [On Track Data Briefing: 2023–24](#)

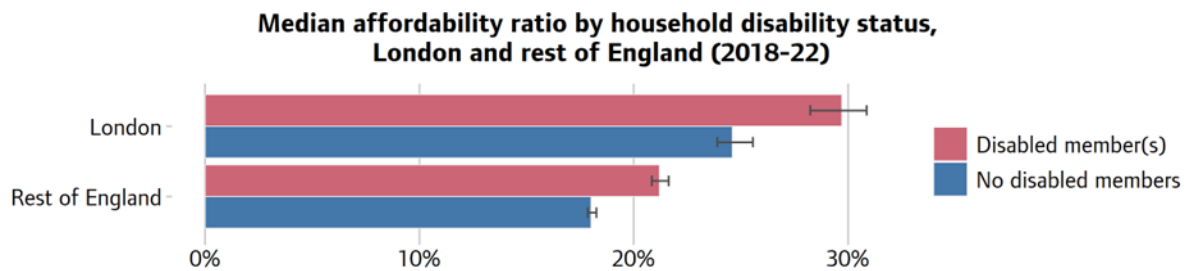
²¹ Mayor of London (2025), [Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2025–28 Equalities Impact Assessment](#)

²² Women’s Aid (2025), [The Annual Audit: 2025](#)

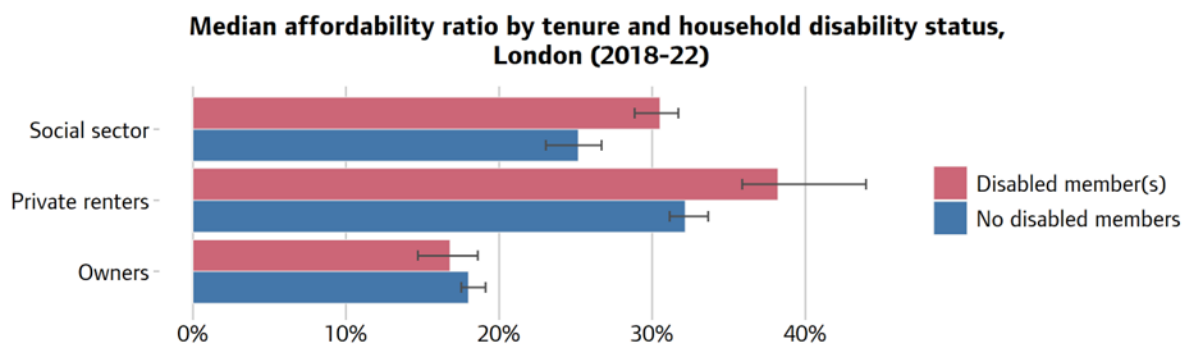
²³ ONS (2024), [Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2014 to 2023](#)

²⁴ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2025), [UK Poverty 2025](#)

8.5 Across the UK, the gap in disposable household income (including disability benefits) between adults with and without a disability was 30% in 2020-21; this rises to around 44% if disability benefits are excluded.²⁵ Households with a disabled person often face additional costs – such as specialist equipment, home adaptations, increased transport costs, and medical care. As another example, energy makes up a larger proportion of spending for disabled people, as they need more heating to stay warm (if they lack mobility), and to charge specialist equipment.²⁶ This combination of lower disposable income and higher essential costs means that households with a disabled person have significantly less income available to meet necessary disability-related needs and adaptations.



8.6 The higher housing cost burden for disabled people comes despite them being more likely to live in social housing. Disaggregating the results by tenure reveals that London households with a disabled person spend more of their incomes on housing costs than other households, in both social housing and private rented housing. However, there is no significant difference among homeowners (perhaps because older homeowners are both more likely to be disabled and to have lower mortgage costs).



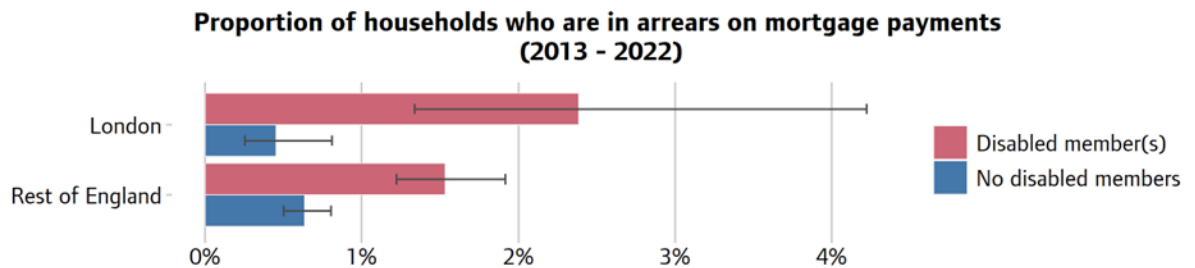
8.7 These gaps in the housing cost burden would be larger if not for housing-related income support from Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. Households that include disabled members are much more likely to be in receipt of these benefits than other households. Based on English Housing Survey data for 2018-22, around 42.1% of privately renting households, and 71.0% of social renting households in London, with disabled members are in receipt of these benefits. This is compared to around 15.5% of privately renting households, and 42.8% of social renting households, without a disabled member.

²⁵ Resolution Foundation (2023), [Costly differences: Living standards for working-age people with disabilities](#)

²⁶ Scope (2018), [Out in the Cold](#)

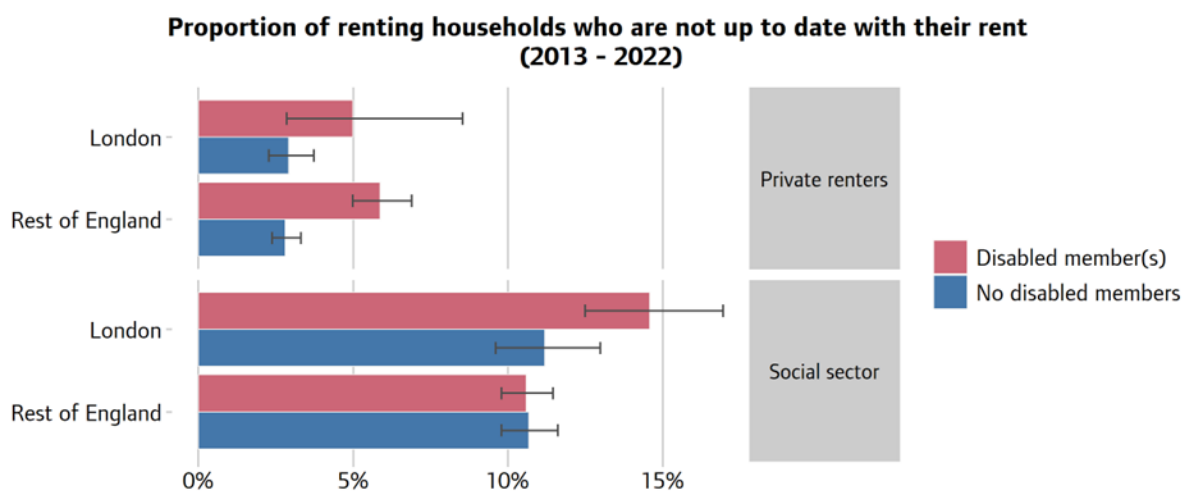
Subjective assessments of affordability

8.8 The English Housing Survey asks several questions to gauge respondents' ability to keep up with their housing costs. Among homeowners with a mortgage, around 2.4% of households in London with a disabled person said they were in arrears on their mortgage payments; this is compared to less than 1% of London mortgage-paying households without a disabled person. These figures are based on pooling 10 years of English Housing Survey data (2013-22) to account for small samples in individual years.



8.9 However, mortgage-payment difficulties don't only affect households in arrears. Again, looking over the last decade of English Housing Survey responses, around 10.3% of households in London that include a disabled person said they found it difficult to keep up with their mortgage payments. This is a similar rate to their counterparts in the rest of England; but higher than the approximately 7% of households in London that do not include a disabled person.

8.10 Reported rates of arrears are higher among renting households. In London, around 14.6% of social-housing households with a disabled person said they were in arrears. This is compared to about 11.2% of social-housing households without a disabled person. Among London households in privately rented housing, the proportion of those in arrears was the same for with those with a disabled person as those without: both were 5%.



8.11 As with mortgage payments, the proportion of households who find it difficult to keep up with their rent is higher than those who report being in arrears. In London, around 52.7% of private renting households with a disabled person reported finding it difficult to pay their rent; for social renting households, this figure is 44.6%. This is compared to 34.6% of London's private renting households, and 36.0% of social renting households, that did not include a disabled person. The rate of payment difficulties was higher in London than

in the rest of England; but across the country, households with a disabled person were more likely to say they found it difficult to pay rent than other households.

- 8.12 The ONS analysed the impacts of increased costs of living between July and October 2023. It found that disabled adults (particularly renters) were more likely to say they were unable to save money; or that they are finding it difficult to pay their housing costs. In London, 53% of disabled people who had a mortgage, or were renting, said they found it difficult to pay their housing costs. This is the highest rate of any region, and compares to 44% of non-disabled Londoners.²⁷

Cost of living

- 8.13 Research by WPI Economics for Scope in 2024 found that households with a disabled person have to allocate more of their overall spend to non-housing essentials (such as energy and food). This leaves less to spend on housing costs and discretionary items.²⁸ Nearly two-thirds of Deaf and disabled Londoners who responded to a survey by Inclusion London said they had to cut back on something to afford housing costs; a third said they had to cut back on food or other essentials to afford housing costs.²⁹
- 8.14 Between January 2022 and summer 2025, the GLA commissioned YouGov to poll Londoners on the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. In the April 2025 polling, disabled Londoners were more likely to report struggling with the cost of living (and housing costs specifically) than other Londoners:
- 6% of those who said their activities were limited a little or a lot by health or disability said they were having to go without their basic needs and/or rely on debt to pay for those basic needs, compared to 2% of non-disabled people
 - 31% of those whose activities were limited a lot said they had fallen behind on some or all of their housing payments, or that they had kept up with payments but struggled every time – this compared to 21% of those whose activities were limited a little, and 14% of non-disabled people
 - 20% of those whose activities were limited a lot said their rent, mortgage or other housing payments had increased a lot in the last six months, compared to 18% of those whose activities were limited a little, and also 18% of non-disabled people.³⁰
- 8.15 This pattern is true among disabled people across different characteristic groups. In a survey of LGBTQ+ Londoners aged 50+, Tonic Housing found that disabled respondents were more likely to be finding it very difficult to manage financially than non-disabled respondents. They were also far more likely to be using support from charities such as food banks; or to be reducing the number of meals they ate to get by.³¹

²⁷ ONS (2024), [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: July to October 2023](#)

²⁸ WPI Economics for Scope (2024), [Disabled people's extra burden of essentials](#)

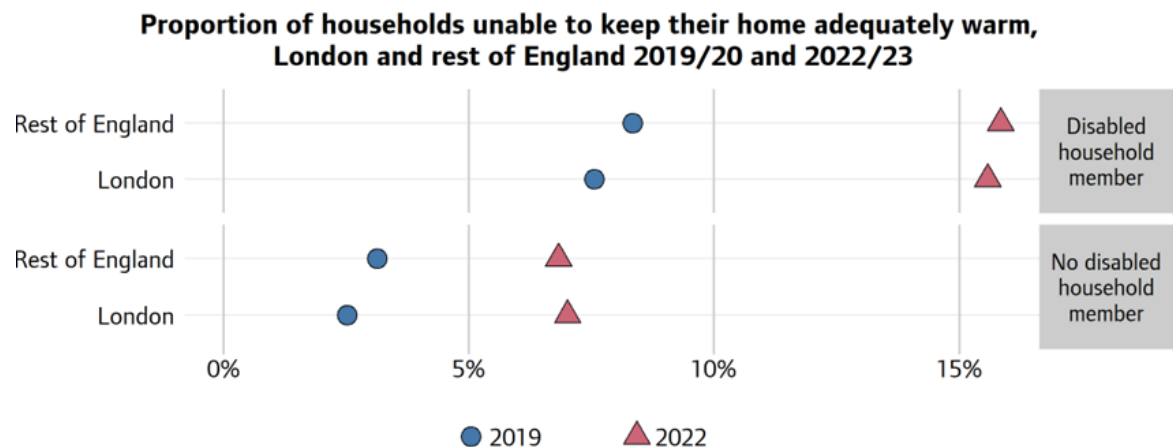
²⁹ Inclusion London (2025), [Barriers at Home: Housing crisis for Deaf and Disabled Londoners](#)

³⁰ GLA, [Cost of living polling](#), July 2025. Fieldwork was carried out from 18 to 25 July; the total sample size was 1,026 adults.

³¹ Tonic Housing (2025), [Precarious Lives: Financial and material hardship among older LGBTQ+ people in London](#)

Keeping warm at home

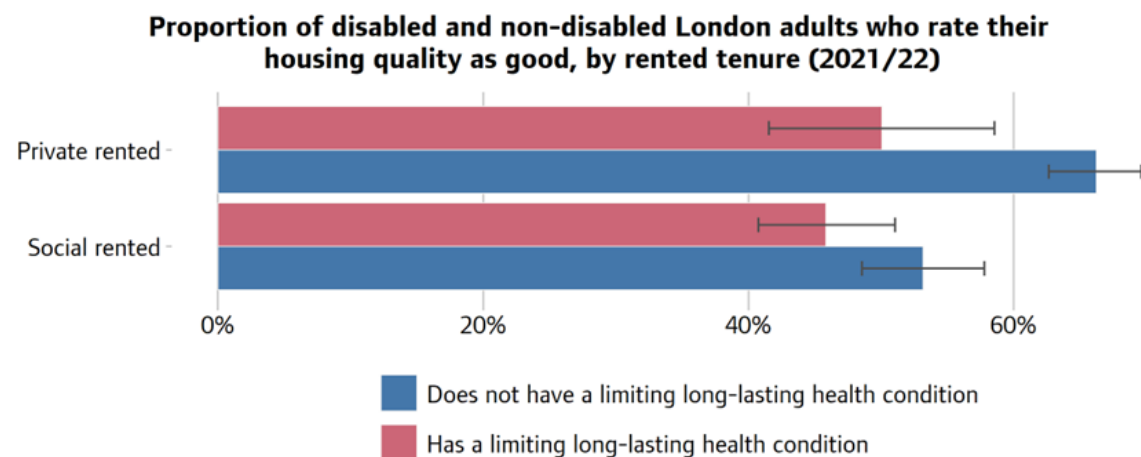
- 8.16 The Family Resources Survey also asks respondents whether they can afford other essentials of life, including keeping their home warm enough. Between 2019-20 and 2022-23, the energy-costs increase led to a rise in the proportion of households who said they could not afford to keep their home warm enough. This rise was seen among both disabled and non-disabled households; and those in both London and the rest of England. However, households with disabled members saw a larger increase: 15.6% of such households in London said, in 2022-23, that they could not afford to keep their home warm. The increase over this period was also marginally higher in London than in the rest of the country.



9. Quality and accessibility

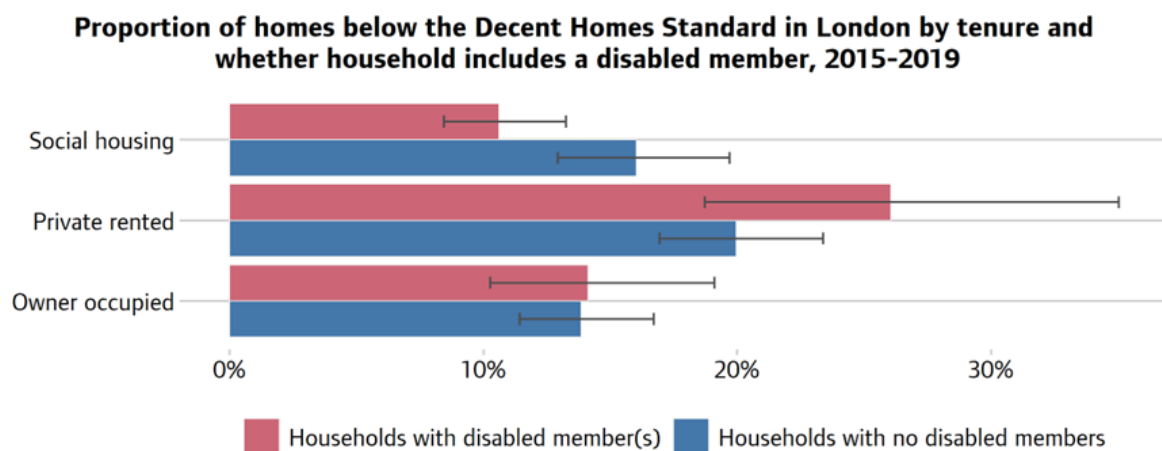
Quality of rented homes

- 9.1 According to the 2021-22 Survey of Londoners, 58.0% of adults in London who live in privately or social rented homes rate the quality of their housing as good (the question was not asked of homeowners). But only 47.4% of disabled adults (those with a limiting long-lasting health condition) rate their housing as good, compared to 61.7% of non-disabled adults. The chart below breaks this down further by tenure, finding that while non-disabled adults living in private rented homes are significantly more likely to describe their housing as good than those in social housing, there is no significant difference between the tenures for disabled adults.



Decent homes

- 9.2 According to the English Housing Survey, 12.9% of households in London that contain at least one disabled member live in homes that fall below the government’s official Decent Homes Standard,³² compared to 16.3% of households that do not contain any disabled members. Part of this difference is driven by the fact that disabled Londoners are more likely than other Londoners to live in social housing (the tenure with the smallest share of non-decent homes) and less likely to live in private rented housing (the tenure with the largest share).
- 9.3 But another factor is that, even when looking only at social housing, households in London with at least one disabled person are less likely to be living in homes below the standard (see chart below). This pattern may be because households with a disabled person are more likely to move into accessible homes; and these are more likely to be recently built, and therefore meet the Decent Homes Standard.



- 9.4 The Decent Homes Standard comprises four separate criteria:

- homes are free of serious health hazards
- homes allow for a reasonable degree of thermal comfort
- homes are free of serious disrepair
- homes have modern facilities.

On all four criteria, there are no statistically significant differences in the shares of London households with a disabled person, and households without a disabled person, that live in sub-standard homes.

Visitable and accessible homes

- 9.5 In 2021, MHCLG published an analysis by PRP Innovate. This found that more accessible homes could reduce:

³² The Decent Home Standard is a regulatory standard in the social rented sector only. However, the standard is used in the English Housing Survey as a measure across all tenures. The recent Renters’ Rights Act 2025 is introducing a Decent Homes Standard in the private rented sector for the first time. This is expected to be implemented in late 2026.

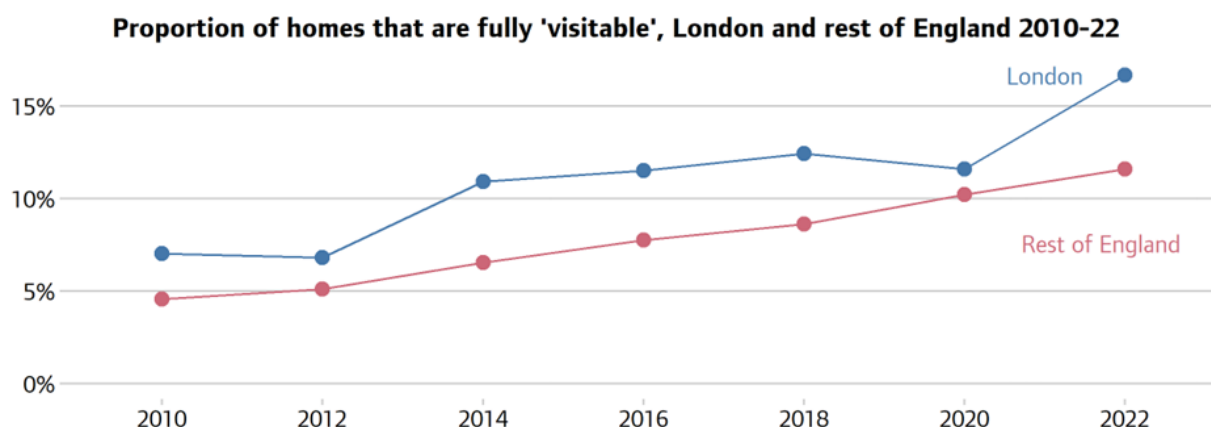
- the incidence of trips and falls in the home
- the costs of delayed hospital discharges
- the need for residential care arising from adaptations to the home
- the cost of care assistance in the home.³³

9.6 There are four basic accessibility features defined in the English Housing Survey as necessary to make a dwelling ‘visitable’ by people with mobility difficulties. These are:

- level access (no steps between the gate/pavement and the front door of the house or block of flats)
- a flush threshold, with no obstruction higher than 15mm
- sufficiently wide doors and circulation space
- a toilet at entrance level.

9.7 It also found that, across England, around half of homes built before 1919 could not even be made ‘visitable’, due to a lack of space for an access ramp; and only 21% of flats above ground floor level had lift access.³⁴ Flats in London are likely to have a higher proportion of lift access, as denser developments mean that buildings of six or more storeys are more prevalent.

9.8 Based on single years of data from the English Housing Survey, around 16.7% of homes in London in 2022 were fully visitable because they have all four features. This figure has roughly doubled since 2012, and compares to a figure of around 11.6% in the rest of England.

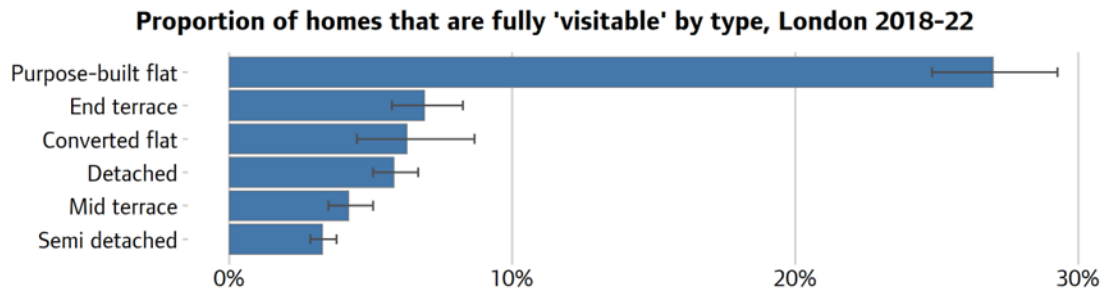


9.9 Based on data from 2018 to 2022, 19% of social homes in London are visitable. This is the highest proportion amongst tenures, followed by 17% of privately rented homes. Owner-occupied homes have the lowest proportion, at 9%.

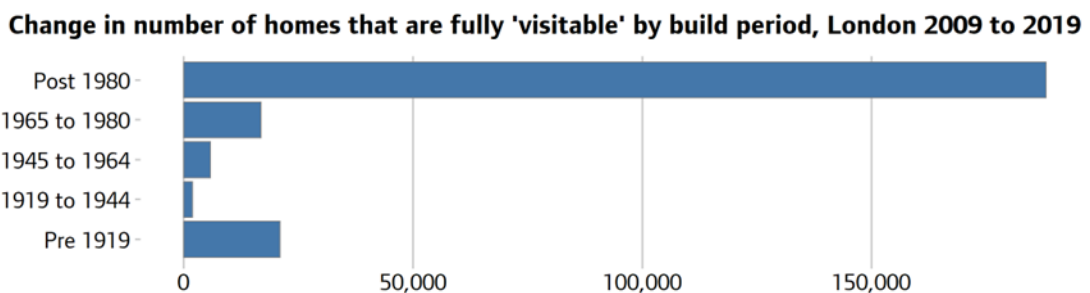
³³ MHCLG (2021), [Research on Part M: access to and use of buildings](#)

³⁴ Building Research Establishment Ltd (2012), [Modelling the current and potential accessibility of the housing stock](#)

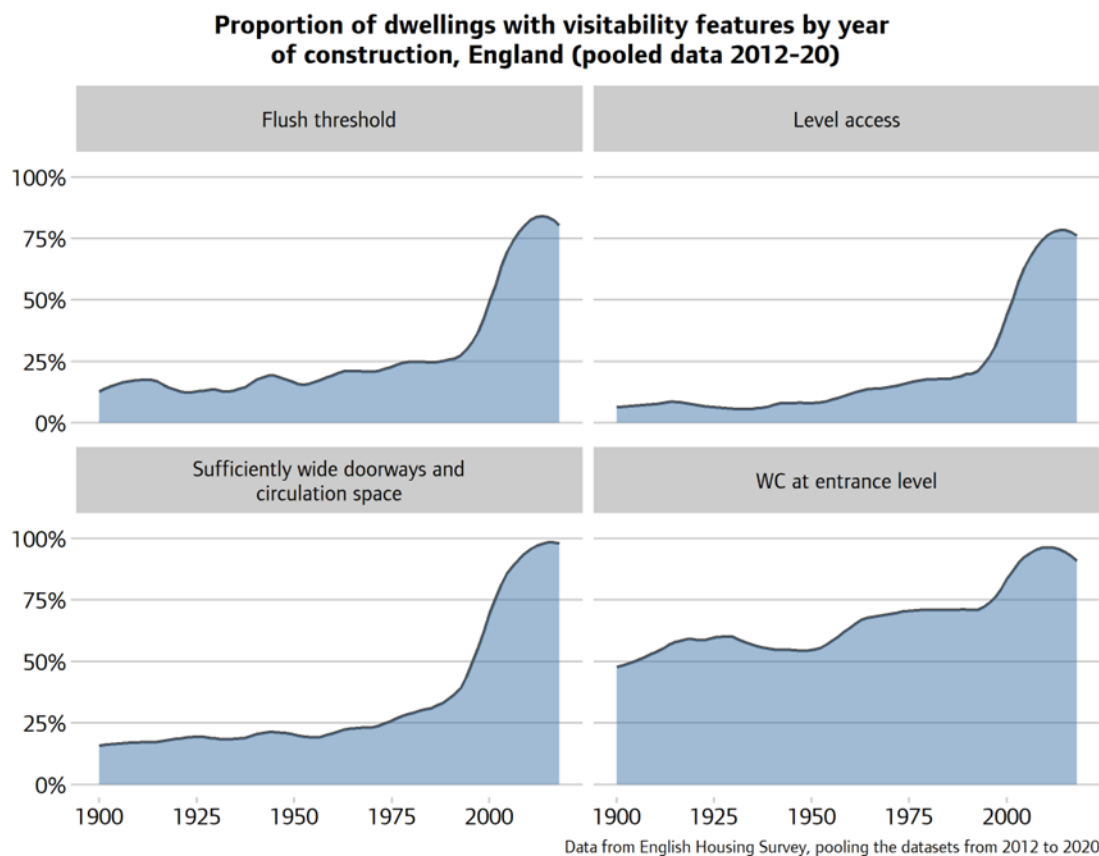
9.10 The share of homes in London that are fully visitable is far higher for purpose-built flats than for other types. Based on data from 2018 to 2022, around 27% of purpose-built flats are fully visitable, compared to less than 10% for converted flats and houses. Much of this difference is likely to be driven by the period in which different home types were built – purpose-built flats are much more likely to have been built relatively recently.



9.11 We can also track the change in the number of homes over several build periods. This will show whether improvements in overall accessibility are due to new homes being built; or older homes being improved. The chart below shows the change in the number of fully visitable homes in London, in each age category, between 2009 and 2019. Over this period, homes built since 1980 accounted for the vast majority of the increase in fully visitable homes. This is likely to reflect, for the most part, new construction. There was relatively little change in the number of older homes that were fully visitable over this period.



9.12 Using English Housing Survey data on the estimated year when homes were built, we can track how the prevalence of accessibility features has changed over time, as the standards for new homes evolved. The chart below shows the share of homes with each of the four 'visibility' features, by estimated year of construction for England. (The equivalent chart for London is too imprecise; according to the report, this is due to a lack of homes built in some years). After Part M of the building regulations was extended to new housing, in the late 1990s, there were particularly sharp increases in the proportions of homes with sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space; flush thresholds; and level access. The change in the share of homes with toilets at entrance level was less significant – presumably because bungalows would usually have been built with entrance-level toilets. The estimates for the most recent years are based on relatively small amounts of data, so should be viewed as approximate.



- 9.13 According to English Housing Survey data for 2018 and 2022, around 14.9% of households in London that include someone with a mobility-related impairment live in fully visitable homes. This is slightly higher than (but not significantly different from) the figure of 13% for other households. Both figures are higher than in the rest of England, where around 11.2% of households including someone with a mobility impairment and around 9.2% of other households live in fully visitable homes.
- 9.14 In an Inclusion London survey, a quarter of Deaf and disabled Londoners said their home was completely inaccessible. This means that they could not safely and easily use basic facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms and entryways. Around a third of respondents with mobility impairments indicated that their doorways were not wide enough to accommodate their needs; and that they did not have level access in their homes.³⁵
- 9.15 It is important to stress that while the ‘visitable’ standard is well established and straightforward to measure, a home that meets the standard may still not provide the other accessibility features a disabled household might need to live there. In an earlier analysis carried out on behalf of the government, the Building Research Establishment proposed that, to be considered ‘accessible and adaptable’, homes should satisfy 10 criteria. These include the four criteria listed at 9.6, above, plus other features such as a shower and a bedroom or bedspace on the ground floor; and suitable parking space on the dwelling plot. It also found that, across England, around half of homes built before 1919 could not even be made ‘visitable’, due to a lack of space for an access ramp; and only 21% of flats above ground floor level had lift access.³⁶ Flats in London are likely to

³⁵ Inclusion London (2025), [Barriers at Home: Housing crisis for Deaf and Disabled Londoners](#)

³⁶ Building Research Establishment Ltd (2012), [Modelling the current and potential accessibility of the housing stock](#)

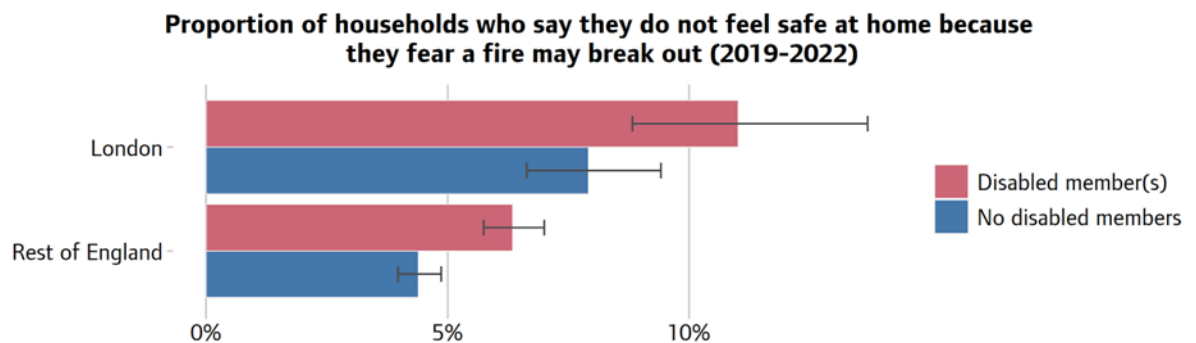
have a higher proportion of lift access, as denser developments mean that buildings of six or more storeys are more prevalent. Its analysis found that only around 110,000 homes in 2007 met all 10 criteria – although around 2 million households needed accessible and adaptable homes. A far smaller proportion of the housing stock in 2007 met a more demanding ‘accessible and adaptable’ standard.

9.16 The Building Research Establishment’s analysis has not been replicated here. However, further analysis of the English Housing Survey data shows the limits of the ‘visitable’ standard. For example:

- Only 12% of homes that meet all four ‘visitable’ criteria also have a bathroom that has been adapted for disabled use.
- 69.2% of homes in London have a toilet at entrance level, but only 19.5% have one that is wheelchair-accessible.
- Almost a third of the homes in London with ‘level access’ are on an upper floor with no lift access.
- Only a tiny proportion of homes in London (less than 1%) are fully ‘visitable’ with have accessible bathrooms, accessible kitchens and (if they are on an upper floor) adequate lift access.

Fire safety

9.17 According to the English Housing Survey, around 11% of households in London with disabled members say they do not feel safe at home because they fear a fire might break out. This is compared to around 7.9% of households with no disabled members. Fear of fire is higher in London than in the rest of England for households with or without disabled members.

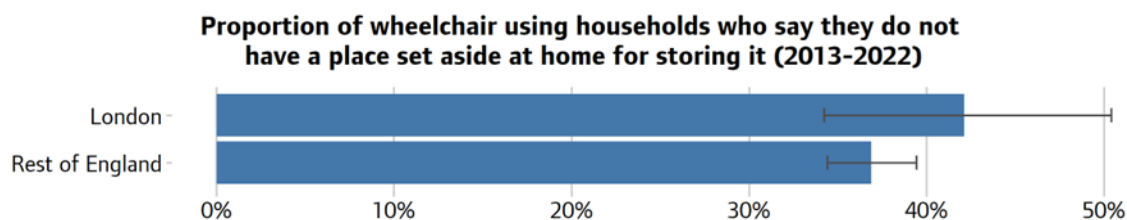


Using a wheelchair at home

9.18 In each year of the English Housing Survey, it is only a relatively small number of households that report using a wheelchair at home. Because of this, the following section pools data from 10 years of the survey (2013-14 to 2022-23) to achieve a large enough sample for analysis. Statistical confidence intervals are included on some charts; these showing the range within which we can say, with 95% confidence, that the true figure falls.

9.19 Around 65.7% of London households that use a wheelchair at home report finding it difficult to manoeuvre their wheelchair around their home. This is compared to around 53% of households in the rest of England.

- 9.20 Across England, there are no statistically significant differences in reported difficulties manoeuvring wheelchairs at home by dwelling type or tenure. In England, 18.6% of households who reported difficulties manoeuvring a wheelchair at home also said they were dissatisfied with their housing in general; this is compared to just 5.7% of those who reported no difficulties. The sample in London was too small to produce reasonably precise estimates for these breakdowns, even when pooling 10 years of surveys.
- 9.21 The English Housing Survey also asks whether households with someone who uses a wheelchair (whether at home or outdoors only) have a place in their home to store it. Around 42.1% of wheelchair using households in London said they lacked such a place. This is not significantly different from the figure of around 36.9% in the rest of England.



Adaptations

- 9.22 In Britain, 59% of disabled people aged 65 or older say they will need accessible housing features in the next five years, according to a 2016 report by Habinteg and the Papworth Trust.³⁷ A 2025 academic analysis found that housing adaptations may slow down development of impairment in older people with initially good health.³⁸
- 9.23 There is also a general preference to 'age in place'. A 2016 Ipsos MORI survey, for Habinteg and the Papworth Trust, looked at people's preferred housing options if they needed care or support later in their lives. This found that 50% would favour staying in their current home, with some adaptations to allow them to live independently. Around 19% of British adults said they would prefer moving to a different property, one specifically designed or adapted to enable them to live independently.³⁹
- 9.24 According to English Housing Survey data from 2014, 2019 and 2020 (the relevant questions are not asked every year), around 6% of households in London include someone whose long-standing physical or mental health condition, illness, disability or infirmity makes it necessary to have accessibility adaptations in their home. This compares to around 8% of households in the rest of England. In both areas, the rate is similar (around 24%) when expressed as a proportion of households that include someone who is disabled.
- 9.25 In London, 17% of households with a disabled person say their current accommodation is unsuitable for that person, compared to 11% in the rest of England.

³⁷ Habinteg and Papworth Trust (2016), [The hidden housing market: A new perspective on the market case for accessible homes](#)

³⁸ Jiawei Wu and Emily Grundy (2025), [Housing adaptations and older adults' health trajectories by level of initial health: evidence from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing](#)

³⁹ Habinteg and Papworth Trust (2016), [The hidden housing market: A new perspective on the market case for accessible homes](#)

9.26 Around 3% of households in London with a disabled person say they are in the process of moving, or are trying to move, to somewhere more suitable for the disabled person(s) in their household. This is compared to around 2% in the rest of England.

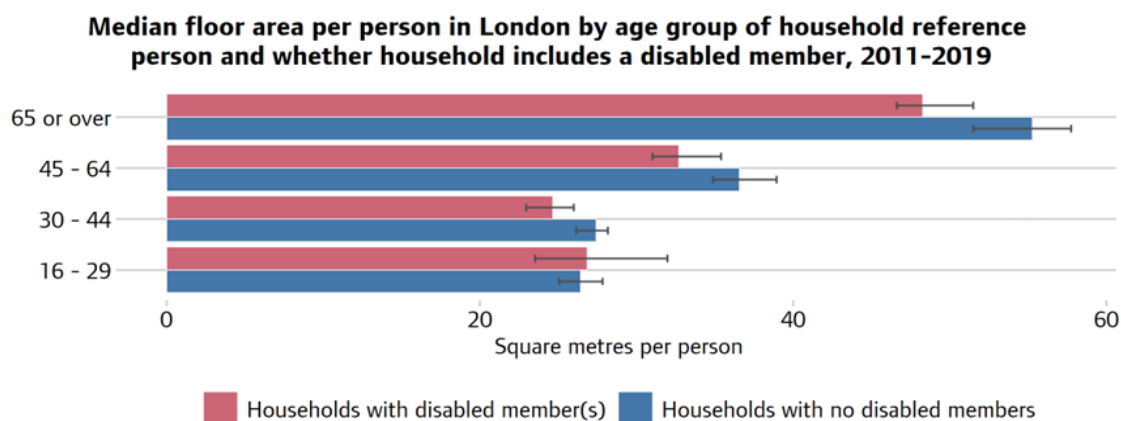
9.27 In 2018, Adobe Impact surveyed wheelchair-user households around the UK. This made the following findings:

- 80% of respondents said their current home did not fully meet their needs
- 63% said they would like to move in the next three to five years, of which:
 - 61% said they would like to move to social housing
 - 50% said they would like to move to a privately rented home (respondents could pick more than one option).

However, the vast majority of those seeking to access the private rented sector had experienced barriers in doing so, primarily due to a lack of accessibility features.⁴⁰

Floor area per person

9.28 Based on English Housing Survey data from 2011 to 2019 (because data collected during the pandemic does not accurately record household sizes), households in London with a disabled person had a median of 35.2 square metres of floor area in their home per person. This is compared to 32.9 square metres for other households. However, the greater amount of space per person for households with disabled people appears to be a function of age. When the comparison is made by age group of the household reference person, households with disabled people generally have less space available per person.



10. Finding housing

Data on the accessibility of new homes

10.1 Until relatively recently, GLA statistics on the number of new homes that met accessibility standards relied on scheme descriptions provided by London borough planning officers. Changes to Building Regulations Part M from 2015 introduced new accessibility standards M4(2) and M4(3). The London Plan 2021 requires these standards to be secured through planning permission. Before these changes were introduced, reporting on new-build

⁴⁰ Adobe Impact (2018), [Accessibility is the key: Wheelchair accessible homes needed for private rent](#)

accessible homes was done manually by boroughs; the GLA had no ability to audit the data.

10.2 Following this new system, the recorded number of homes that meet the standards has fallen (but this does not necessarily mean the real rate of compliance has fallen). GLA officers are now working with London boroughs to ensure they adopt this new approach, so that data on the accessibility of new homes can be accurately and comprehensively reported. The GLA Planning Datahub team is currently piloting a new reporting process that will ensure data is updated every quarter. If successful, the aim is to roll this process out across London by mid-2026.

Social housing lettings

10.3 In 2017, the EHRC found that:

- social housing allocation policies and procedures often disadvantage disabled people
- the process of finding suitable housing can often be long and complex.⁴¹

10.4 Successfully matching disabled applicants to a suitably accessible property often takes longer than more conventional letting. Research published in 2019 by Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning found that this often conflicts with landlords' objective to minimise relet times (and therefore lost rent).⁴²

10.5 A survey of local authorities by the EHRC showed that – for the authorities who reported on waiting times – the average waiting time for disabled people to be allocated housing was 25 months. The survey also found that only 22% local authorities across Britain have an Accessible Housing Register (AHR). This figure was 52% in Wales, where the use of AHRs is more widely encouraged.⁴³

10.6 A 2022 analysis by Habinteg (based on Freedom of Information requests to 325 local authorities) found that an estimated 20,000 people are on English local authority waiting lists for a fully wheelchair-accessible home. A further 104,000 people are waiting for an accessible or adaptable home. At the current rate of building, Habinteg estimated that a wheelchair user joining the list today could wait up to 47 years for a new home that meets their needs.⁴⁴

10.7 MHCLG data shows that, in London in 2023-24, 65% of new general-needs social-housing lettings, and 33% of new supported housing lettings, were to households that a local authority had judged to be in a 'reasonable preference' priority category. Of these households, 11% of those moving into general needs housing, and 25% of those moving into supported housing, were given preference at least in part due to needing to move on medical or welfare grounds (which can include grounds relating to disability).⁴⁵

10.8 According to CORE data reported by MHCLG, 5,917 households moving into social housing in London in 2023-24 included at least one person with a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting, or expected to last, 12 months or more. This is

⁴¹ EHRC (2018), [Housing and disabled people: Britain's hidden crisis](#)

⁴² Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning (2019), [Match Me - What works for adapted social housing lettings? Action research to enhance independent living for disabled people](#)

⁴³ EHRC (2018), [Housing and disabled people: Britain's hidden crisis](#)

⁴⁴ Habinteg (2022), [Wheelchair users subjected to decades-long wait for new accessible housing](#)

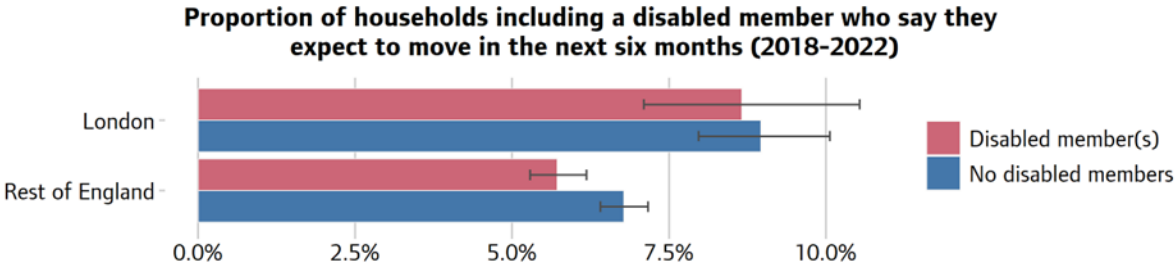
⁴⁵ MHCLG (2024), [CORE Social housing lettings sub-national data dashboard, 2023-24](#)

equivalent to 34% of all households moving into social housing. This share was higher for households moving into supported housing (44%) than for those moving into general-needs social housing (29%). MHCLG statistics for England as a whole show that mental health and mobility-related issues were the most common impairments among households moving into social housing.⁴⁶

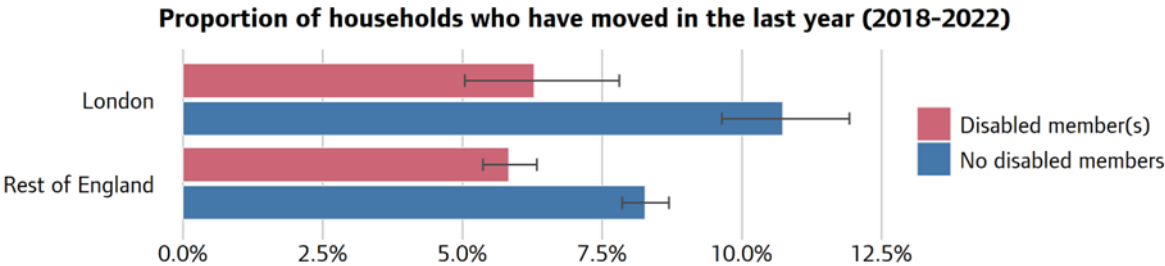
10.9 In London in 2023-24, 911 new lettings of general-needs social housing homes were built or adapted to wheelchair standards (M4(3) of the 2010 building regulations). This means a wheelchair user can make full use of all the property’s rooms and facilities (including both inside and outside space), and enter and exit the property). This figure represents 6.1% of all general-needs social housing lettings in London in 2023-34.

Moving house

10.10 According to the English Housing Survey, around 9% of all London households say they intend to move house in the next six months, compared to around 6.4% of all households across the rest of England. Households with disabled members are less likely, across England, to say they intend to move; but there is no significant difference in London.



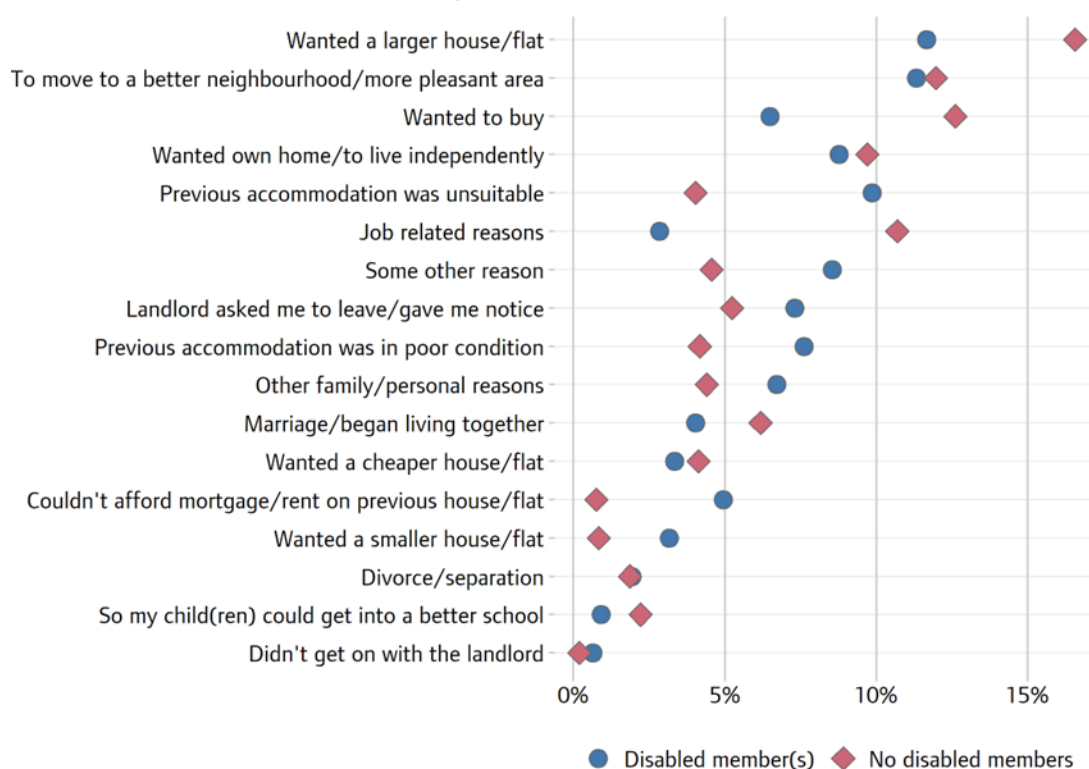
10.11 The proportion of London households with a disabled person, that have actually moved, is lower than the proportion who say they expect to – even when measured over an entire year (rather than six months). Around 6.3% of these households said they had moved in the last year, compared to around 10.7% of other households. Households in the rest of England without any disabled members were also more likely than those with disabled members to have moved in the last year.



10.12 Among households in London who said they had moved within the last two years, those with a disabled person are less likely than other households to say they moved for positive (or “pull”) reasons (such as wanting a larger house; moving to a better neighbourhood; or moving because of a new job). They were more likely to say they moved for negative (or “push”) reasons (such as their previous home being unsuitable or in poor condition; or not being able to afford their housing costs).

⁴⁶ MHCLG (2024), [Social housing lettings in England, tenants: April 2023 to March 2024](#)

Main reason for moving as a share of all households who moved within last three years, London (2013-2022)



11. Conclusions and further research

- 11.1 There are several limitations to the analysis set out in this report, beyond the usual challenges of data availability and small sample sizes. One issue is that survey questions have tended to focus on physical barriers to accessibility for people with mobility impairments. Therefore, they may not capture all the relevant barriers that disabled people (particularly those with other impairments) may face.
- 11.2 Some of the results also reflect the role of ‘selection’ or ‘sorting’ – for example, households on lower incomes having to avoid expensive areas; and disabled people being more likely to move into social housing and newer homes, due to allocation policies and improved accessibility standards. As a further example, the fact that disabled Londoners are less likely to live in non-decent homes is likely a reflection of the fact that older properties (which are more likely to fall below the standard) are less accessible to them.
- 11.3 What is clear from the analysis is that disabled Londoners have a much narrower range of housing choices than non-disabled Londoners. This is partly due to lower incomes; and a smaller disposable income due to higher costs associated with having a disability, such as higher energy bills. This makes much of London’s housing financially inaccessible. However, another reason is London’s housing stock being physically inaccessible. Only a small share of homes in London (but more than the rest of England) is even ‘visitable’; a far smaller share, perhaps less than 1%, could be considered fully accessible.
- 11.4 New homes are far more likely to be accessible to disabled people. However, there are not enough of them to give disabled Londoners the same range of choices around where to live as other Londoners.

- 11.5 The findings of this report will inform an assessment of Londoners' housing needs (including disabled Londoners) called the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This is currently under way. The evidence set out in this report and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment will inform policy development, including the preparation of the next London Plan. The current Plan includes targets for the proportions of new-build homes that should meet accessibility standards.
- 11.6 Clearly, more could be done to understand the housing circumstances, needs and aspirations of disabled people in London and beyond; and the extent to which existing and new housing provision meets their needs. Topics that researchers could tackle include:
- the experiences and needs of people with impairments not related to mobility
 - the interaction of disability and housing circumstances with other personal characteristics
 - the distribution of homes that meet different accessibility standards at a finer geographical scale than attempted in this research.