

## PH4.2 SOCIAL RENTAL HOUSING STOCK

### Definitions and methodology

Social housing includes different forms of housing support across OECD countries, with considerable cross-national differences in terms of tenure, size, and type of providers. For the purpose of this indicator, “social rental housing” refers to *the stock of residential rental accommodation provided at sub-market prices and allocated according to specific rules rather than market mechanisms* (Salvi Del Pero et al., 2016). Data used in this indicator are mainly taken from information provided by governments of EU and OECD member countries in the OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH), as well as from National Statistical Institutes (NSIs). Additional details on social housing in the OECD and EU are summarised in the OECD Policy Brief, “[Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy.](#)”

### Key findings

Social housing represents more than 28 million dwellings and accounts on average for 7% of the total housing stock in the OECD. Most, but not all, countries have a social housing sector, though the definition of social housing, as well as the size of the sector, varies considerably across countries (Figure PH4.2.1). The social housing stock is smallest in Colombia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Slovak Republic and Spain, where it accounts for less than 2% of the total housing stock. At less than 10% of the overall housing stock, the sector is also relatively small in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland and the United States. Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland and the United Kingdom have a moderately-sized social rental housing sector (between 10 and 19% of the stock). Accounting for over 20% of the total housing stock, the sector is largest in Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands (data on the number of dwellings in absolute terms are available in the online Annex, PH4.2.A1).

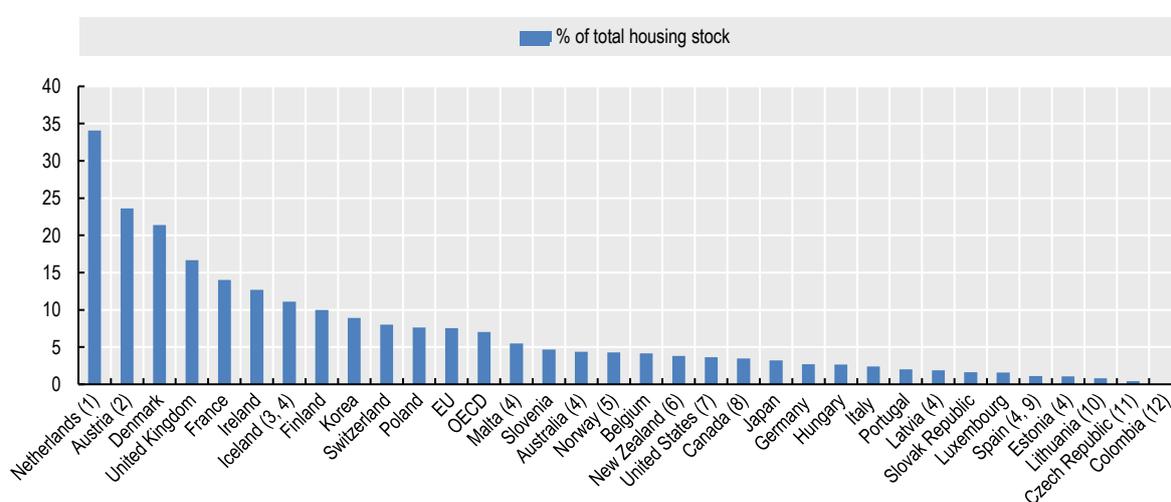
Several OECD and EU countries do not have a social rental housing stock per the definition in this indicator. Chile has virtually no social rental sector, and in Mexico, public rental housing is only offered to armed-forces personnel. In Turkey, social housing refers to owner-occupied housing sold below market rates to low-income populations. In Sweden, municipal housing associations provide dwellings and estates to a large share of low-income households, but rents are not set at below-market levels and are thus not considered as social housing in this indicator. These countries are thus not included in this indicator. Further, it can be difficult to distinguish between social housing and other types of housing tenure in some countries. For instance, in Ireland, traditional social housing is supplemented by dwellings that are publicly leased from private owners and allocated to recipients of housing allowances. Please refer to indicators PH 4.1 and PH 4.3, and the OECD Policy Brief, “[Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy.](#)” for further details.

There are different providers of social rental housing. Figure PH4.2.2 presents the relative size of the stock managed by the different types of providers as a share of the total social rental sector in each country. With the exception of Iceland, sole provision of social rental housing by public authorities tends to be associated with a small social rental housing sector, as is the case in Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania,

Norway, Romania and the Slovak Republic. By contrast, in several countries with a large or moderate share of social rental housing, such as the Netherlands and Finland, there is a strong presence of non- or limit-profit housing associations. In the United Kingdom (England), like in Austria, a large not-for-profit sector coexists with a significant stock owned and managed by local authorities, even though local authorities in the United Kingdom (England) have sharply reduced their investment in the construction of new dwellings. Social housing in the HLM sector (*habitations à loyer modéré*) in France is primarily provided by regional and/or municipal authorities, and non-profit providers. In some countries, central government agencies are involved in the direct provision of social housing, namely Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg, Malta, New Zealand, Portugal, Romania, and Slovenia.

### Figure PH4.2.1 Relative size of the social rental housing stock

Number of social rental dwellings as a share of the total number of dwellings, 2020 or latest year available

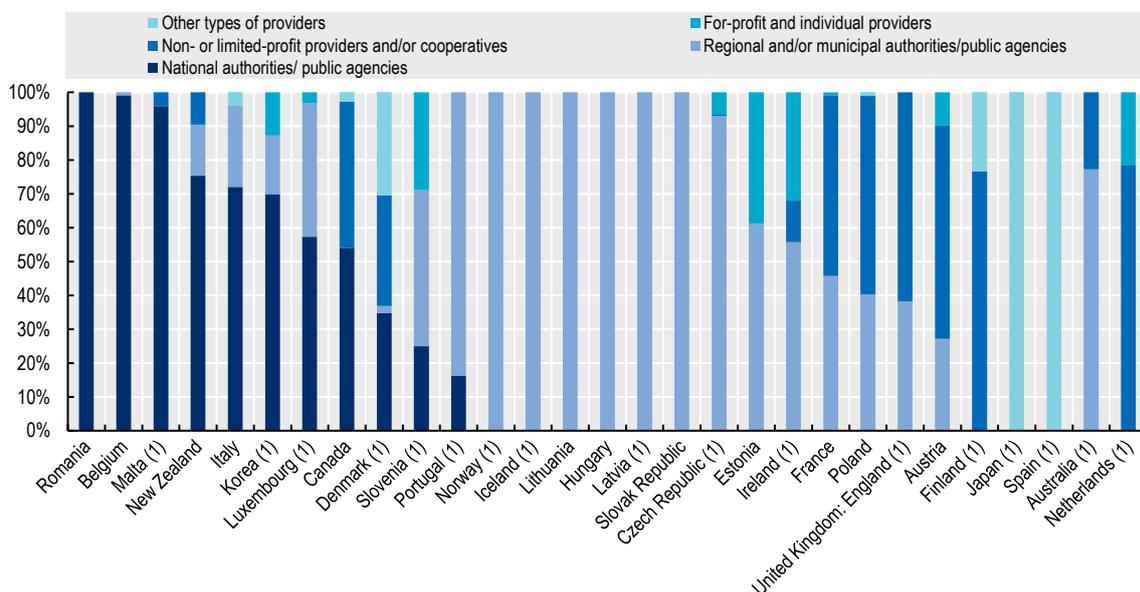


Note: 1. For the Netherlands, the social dwelling stock is estimated based on rent levels charged by landlords as provided by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. These figures include units in private rentals provided below market rent and units provided by housing associations, excluding those provided at market-rate. 2. For Austria, data only refer to the main residence dwellings. 3. For Iceland, data might also include student housing rent from family members for free or at reduced rate. 4. For Australia, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Malta and Spain, data are based on responses to previous QuASH rounds. 5. For Norway, data only contains dwellings provided by municipalities (about 75% of all social housing). 6. For New Zealand, data refer to the number of social housing places (public housing) that are funded through central government, and do not include social housing provided by local authorities. 7. For the United States, the social housing stock includes public housing, subsidised units developed through specific programmes targeting the elderly (section 202) and disabled people (section 811), as well as income-restricted units created through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) programme; the number of public housing units as well as section 202 and 811 dwellings financed through the LIHTC programme have been adjusted to avoid double-counting, following OECD correspondence with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The data is preliminary. 8. For Canada, data exclude units managed by the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) for the Province of Quebec. 9. For Spain, the figures may also contain other types of reduced rent housing, e.g. employer-provided dwellings. 10. For Lithuania, the share of social housing is calculated based on the previous years' total dwelling stock due to data limitations. 11. For the Czech Republic, data only contains dwellings provided by the central government. 12. For Colombia, data only refers to social rental housing produced since 2019 in the semillero de propietarios programme.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021, 2019 and 2016; (Austria) Bundesanstalt Statistik Österreich (2020); (Belgium) Centre d'Etudes en Habitat Durable de Wallonie (2016), Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse (2019); (Korea) Korean Statistical Information Service (2020); (United Kingdom) Scottish Government (2019), Northern Ireland Housing Executive (2018), Statistics for Wales (2019); (New Zealand) Ministry of Housing and Urban Development New Zealand (2021); (Canada) Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2019); (United States) OECD exchanges with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; (the Netherlands) Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2021); (Italy) data from Federcasa and the Tax Revenue Agency, based on OECD exchanges with the Bank of Italy, March 2022.

**Figure PH4.2.2 Providers of social rental housing in selected OECD countries**

Share of total social rental housing stock by type of providers, 2020 or latest year available



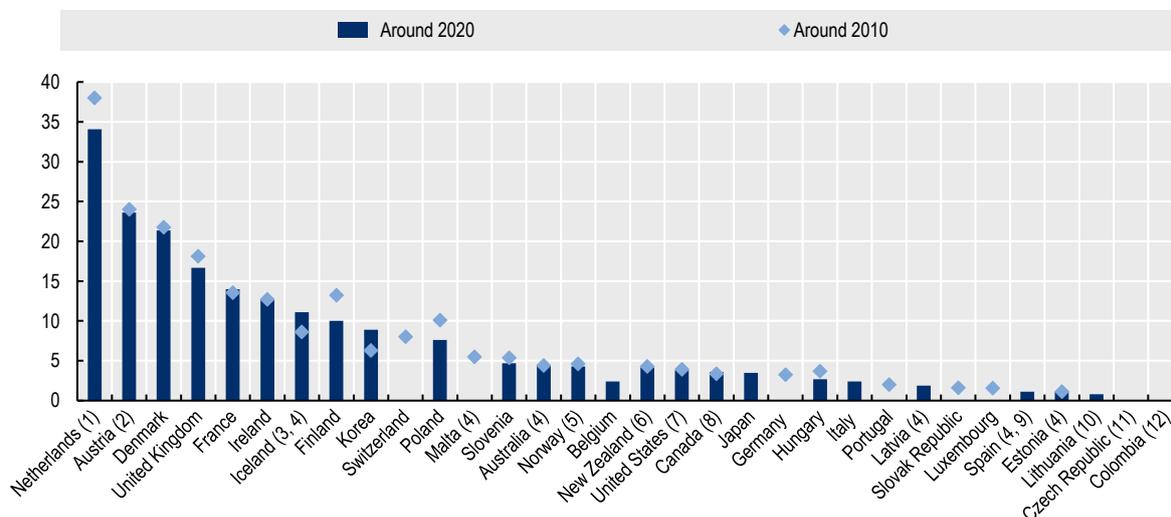
Notes: 1. Responses based on replies to previous QuASH rounds. 2. Data for Germany are not available, but in most states (*Länder*), the majority of social dwellings is provided by municipalities or other public institutions as well as housing cooperatives; in some states, private providers are responsible for a significant share of the social housing stock. 3. Data for the United States are not available, but generally public housing is provided by local public housing authorities; for-profit, and in some cases non-profit, providers, more commonly provide housing developed through the Low-income Housing Tax Credit programme (LIHTC).

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021, 2019 and 2016; (Italy) Data from Federcasa and the Tax Revenue Agency, based on OECD exchanges with the Bank of Italy, March 2022.

The relative size of the social housing stock, measured as the share of social housing dwellings as a percentage of total dwellings, has increased noticeably in Iceland and Korea since 2010 (Figure PH4.2.3). By contrast, Finland, the Netherlands and Poland experienced the most significant reduction in the relative size of the social housing sector. There was a small reduction in the size of the sector in Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Germany, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent in Belgium, Estonia, and Norway (see the online xlsx file with the numbers). The decline is partly related to a slowdown in new social housing construction, as well as the privatisation of the stock, whereby social dwellings are converted into market-rate rental housing (Germany), or are purchased by tenants and thus transition to the owner-occupied stock (the United Kingdom - England and Northern Ireland).

**Figure PH4.2.3 Social rental housing stock: trends over time**

Social rental dwellings, % of the total housing stock in selected years (2010, 2020)



Notes: 1. For the Netherlands, the social dwelling stock is estimated based on rent levels charged by landlords as provided by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. These figures include units in private rentals provided below market rent and units provided by housing associations, excluding those provided at market-rate.

2. For Austria, data only refer to the main residence dwellings.

3. For Iceland, data might also include student housing rent from family members for free or at reduced rate.

4. For Australia, Estonia, Ireland, and Malta: data for "Around 2010" are based on responses to previous QuASH rounds. For Australia, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia and Spain: data for "Around 2020" are based on responses to previous QuASH rounds.

5. For Norway, data only contains dwellings provided by municipalities (about 75% of all social housing).

6. For New Zealand, data refer to the number of social housing places (public housing) that are funded through central government, and do not include social housing provided by local authorities.

7. For the United States, the social housing stock includes public housing, subsidised units developed through specific programmes targeting the elderly (section 202) and disabled people (section 811), as well as income-restricted units created through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) programme; the number of public housing units as well as section 202 and 811 dwellings financed through the LIHTC programme have been adjusted to avoid double-counting, following OECD correspondence with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Data for 2019 is preliminary.

8. For Canada, data exclude units managed by the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) for the Province of Quebec.

9. For Spain, the figures may also contain other types of reduced rent housing, e.g. employer-provided dwellings.

10. For Lithuania, the most recent share of social housing is calculated based on the previous years total dwelling stock.

11. For the Czech Republic, data only contains dwellings provided by the central government.

12. For Colombia, data only refers to social rental housing produced since 2019 in the semillero de propietarios programme. Source: OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing (QuASH), 2021, 2019 and 2016; (Austria) Bundesanstalt Statistik Österreich (2020); (Belgium) Centre d'Etudes en Habitat Durable de Wallonie (2016), Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse (2019); (Korea) Korean Statistical Information Service (2020); (United Kingdom) Scottish Government (2019), Northern Ireland Housing Executive (2018), Statistics for Wales (2019); (New Zealand) Ministry of Housing and Urban Development New Zealand (2021); (Canada) Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2019); (United States) OECD exchanges with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; (the Netherlands) Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2021); (Italy) data from Federcasa and the Tax Revenue Agency, based on OECD exchanges with the Bank of Italy, March 2022.

## Data and comparability issues

The relative size of the social rental sector was calculated on the basis of the overall number of dwellings in each tenure (owner-occupied dwellings, market-rented dwellings, co-operative dwellings, social rental dwellings, others), as collected from governments in the OECD 2021 Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH 2021). There are significant gaps in the information gathered, which does

not allow for inclusion of all countries. Differences in the years of reference for information across countries constitute an additional limitation.

## Sources and further reading

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