



Housing Services





The housing information within the benchmarking framework covers housing management, housing conditions and energy efficiency. Across the period, councils continue to manage their housing stock well, delivering sustained improvements in repair times and rent lost due to voids, and overseeing consistent and significant improvements in housing standards and energy efficiency. In contrast however, there has been a long-term growth in tenants rent arrears across the period representing the growing number of households facing financial hardship.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on councils ability to deliver housing services as normal. The pandemic affected landlords ability to deliver core services such as repairing homes, letting empty homes, assisting people experiencing homelessness, and a range of other services. Landlords have had to curtail their planned investment programmes, including those to build new homes and to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and the Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing.

Furthermore, the economic impact of COVID-19 will create direct challenges for the housing sector in relation to rental income. The increase in unemployment, along with fears of universal credit delays may create a significant 'bump' in rent arrears and may lead to long-term arrears for many. Less rent coming in to the council means less money for capital works programmes, which may have long term implications for stock quality.

The 2020/21 data presented in the LGBF this year provides early evidence of the impact of the pandemic on Local Authority housing services and their tenants. Only those councils who have responsibility for the provision of Housing Services are included here. Resources for housing services come from the Housing Revenue Account which is funded by tenants' rents and service charges, rather than from the General fund, which funds the other services covered in the LGBF.

Rent arrears

The average Scottish tenants' arrears as a percentage of rent due has increased from 5.6% in 2013/14 to 8.2% in 2020/21. The rate of arrears stabilised in 2019/20, however increased more sharply in 2020/21, rising from 7.3% to 8.2%. The increase since 2013/14 reflects an increase in gross rent arrears during this time of 50.6%, which is an increase of £34 million from £68 million in 2013/14 to £102 million in 2020/21. In 2013/14, the definition and methodology for this measure changed, therefore it is not possible to provide a direct comparison with previous years.

The impact of COVID-19, along with continuing welfare reform and Universal Credit roll out may create further pressure on this trend and it will be important to monitor this. Research indicates that one-in-six (17%) of social renters in the UK in May 2020 were estimated to have fallen into (or further into) rent arrears since the start of the coronavirus outbreak.⁴³ Separate results from the Scottish Household Survey show that an estimated 8% of social rented households in Scotland in 2020 had experienced difficulties in paying their rent in the previous 12 months.⁴⁴ Similarly, where evidence is available from Universal Credit pilot councils, there was a significant increase in rent arrears following the introduction of Universal Credit Full Service. Beyond the immediate impact on some individuals and families, an increase in arrears will result in the loss of rental income for councils and potentially affect the ability to build affordable housing.

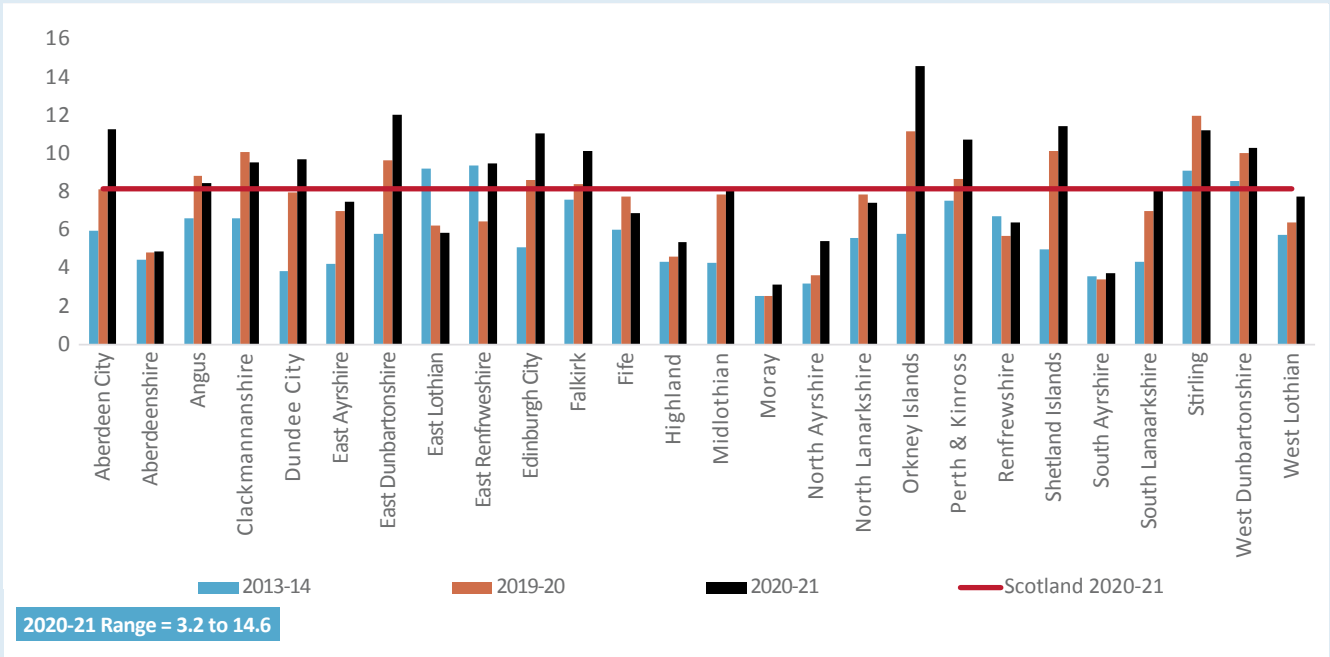
While the Scotland trend reveals a sustained increase in arrears, a small number of councils have seen their level of rent arrears fall since 2013/14, including in the most recent year. In 2020/21, the percentage of arrears range from 3.2% to 14.6% across councils, with the level of variation widening markedly in the most recent year. Rent arrears have risen more sharply in the least deprived group of councils in the most recent year (an increase of 2.2pp compared with 0.8pp) and tend to be higher on average compared to the most deprived (10.7% compared to 8.1%). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

43 <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/coping-with-housing-costs-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

44 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2020-telephone-survey-key-findings/documents/>



Fig 126: Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 8.2%; council range: 3.2% - 14.6%. Widening variation in the most recent year. Least deprived councils report a higher proportion of rent arrears compared to more deprived councils (10.7% compared to 8.1%, not statistically significant)

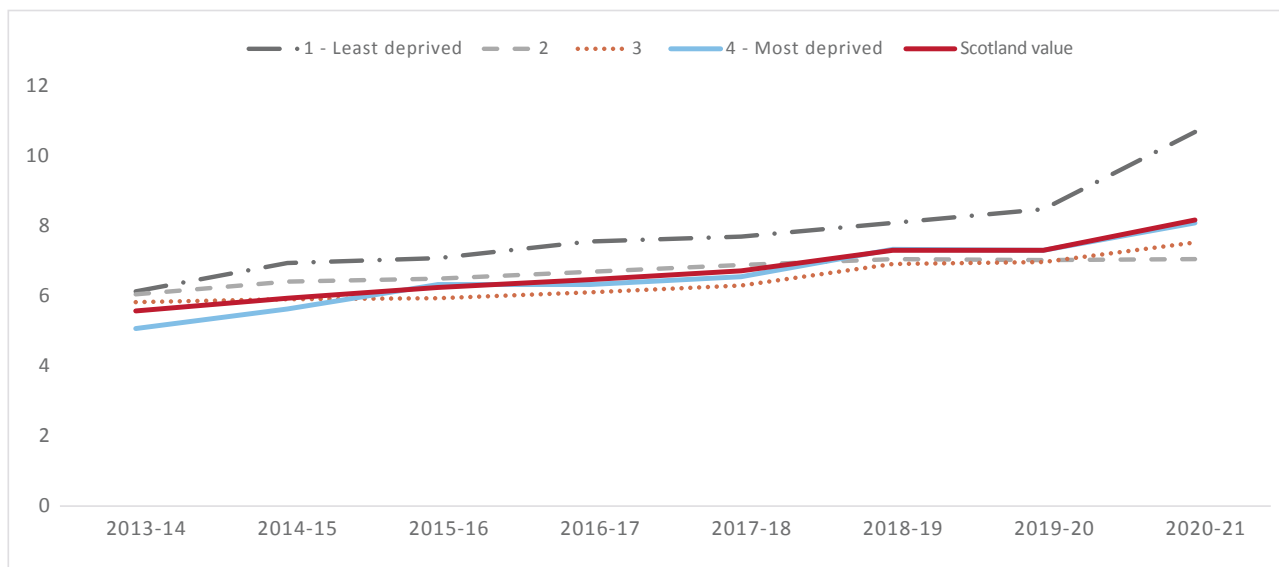
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland +0.9pp; councils: 20 increased and 6 decreased (range: -0.9pp to +3.4pp). Rent arrears have risen more sharply in the least deprived group of councils (an increase of 2.2pp compared with 0.8pp, not statistically significant)

Since 2013/14: Scotland +2.6pp; councils: 24 increased and 2 decreased (range: -3.4pp to +8.8pp).



Fig 127: Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year by family group - deprivation

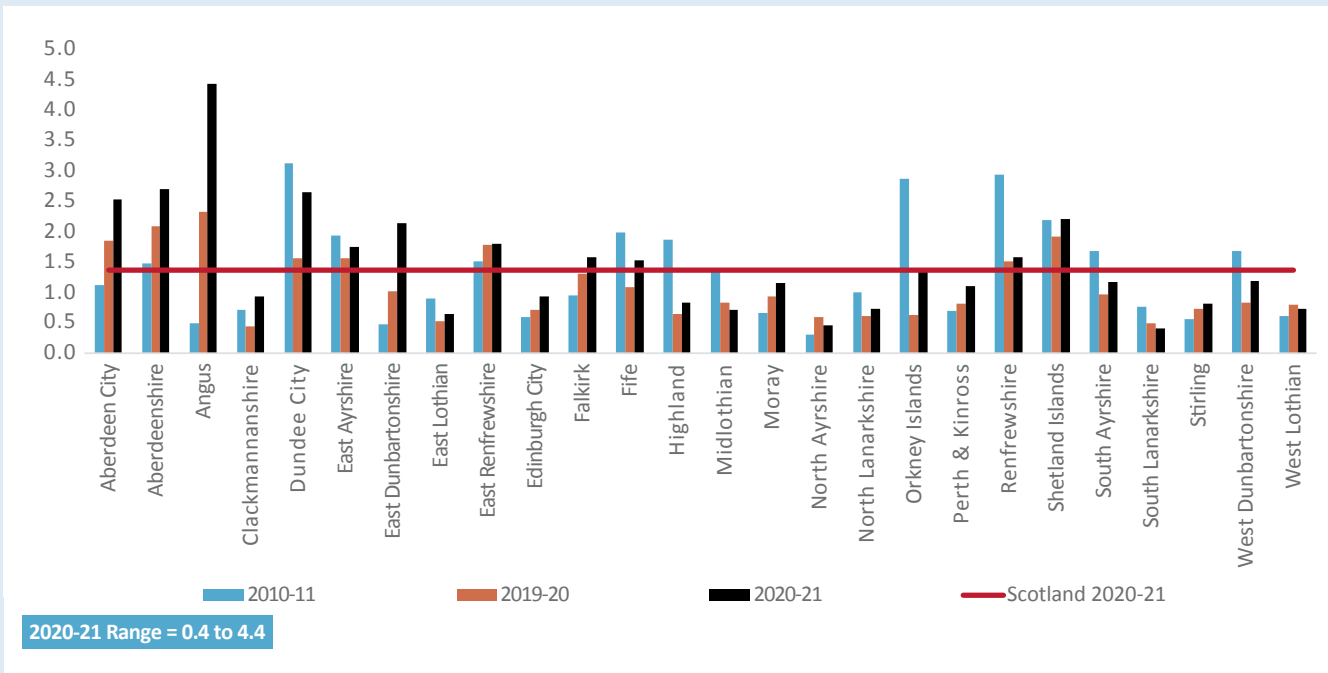


Rent lost due to voids

Prior to COVID-19, rent lost due to voids had reduced from 1.3% in 2010/11 to 1.1% in 2019/20. In 2020/21, this increased to 1.4%, the highest recorded level of rent lost since the start of the benchmarking framework. This recent increase however is not universal, with 4 authorities reporting a reduction in rent lost due to voids in 2020/21.

Again, figures vary across authorities, from 0.4% to 4.4%, with variation widening in the most recent year. In recent years, the rent lost due to voids appears to be higher and increasing faster in the least deprived council areas. In 2020/21, the proportion of rent lost for the least deprived councils was 1.8% compared to 1.4% for the most deprived councils. However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

Fig 128: Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 1.4%; council range: 0.4% - 4.4%. Widened variation in the most recent year. Least deprived councils report a higher proportion of rent lost to voids compared to more deprived councils in most recent years (1.8% compared to 1.4%, not statistically significant)

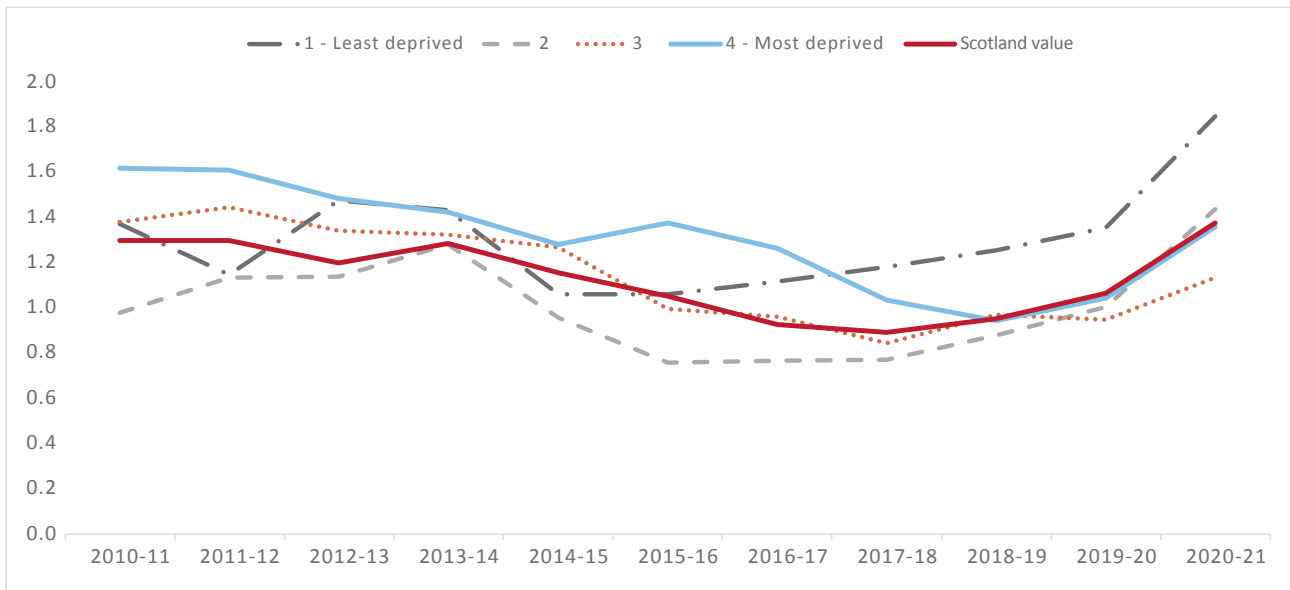
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland +0.3pp; councils: 22 increased and 4 decreased (range: -0.1pp to +2.1pp).

Since 2010/11: Scotland +0.1pp; councils: 14 increased and 12 decreased (range: -1.5pp to +3.9pp). Least deprived councils have increased by 0.5pp compared to 0.3pp in most deprived, not statistically significant



Fig 129: Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids by family group



Housing repairs

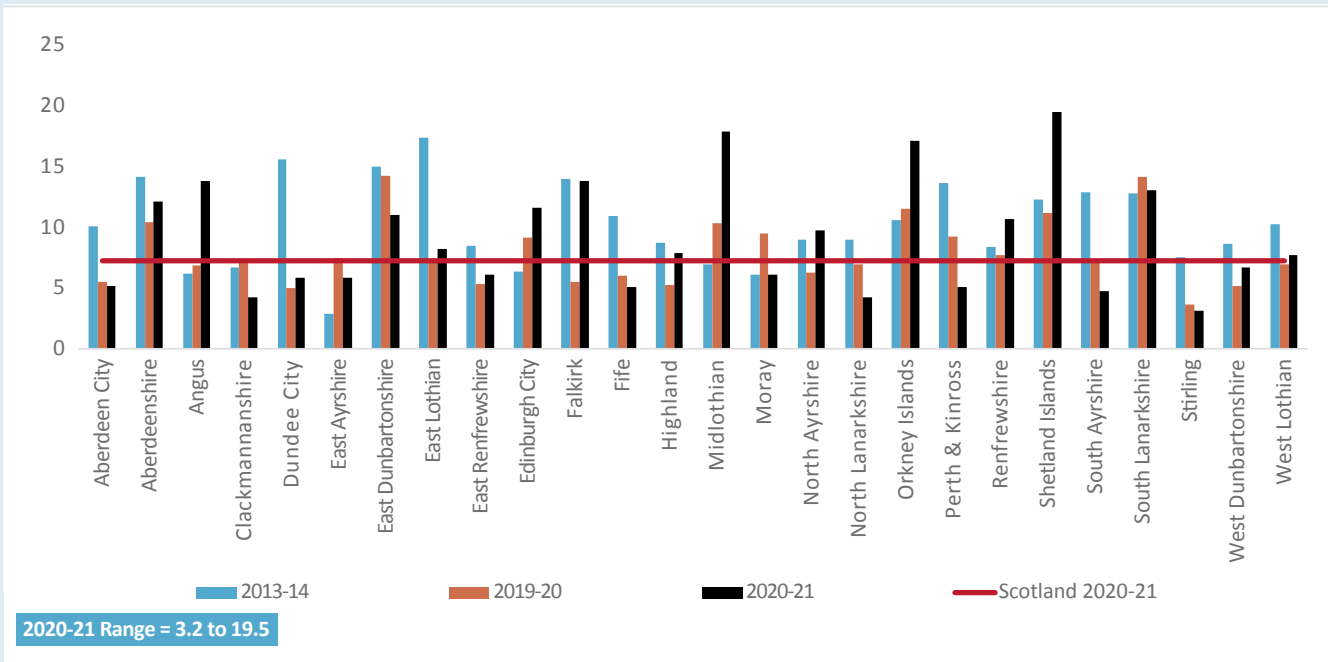
The average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs has reduced by 28.4% over the period, from 10.2 days in 2013/14 to 7.3 days in 2020/21. During 2020/21, average repair times improved very slightly, reducing by 0.7%. As with rent arrears, the definition and methodology for this measure changed in 2013/14, therefore it is not possible to provide a direct comparison with previous years.

While repair times at a national level have improved, there is significant variation across councils. A third of councils have seen an increase in repair times since 2013/14, and over half have seen repair times increase during 2020/21. In 2020/21, the average repair time ranged from 3.2 days to 19.5 days. Repair times tend to be higher and rising faster in recent years for the least deprived group of councils on average compared to the most deprived (11.0 days compared to 6.5 days). However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

Overall, these figures suggest the councils continue to manage their stock well in the face of mounting pressures, however future performance should be monitored closely to understand longer term impact of COVID-19.



Fig 130: Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (no. of days)



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 7.3 days; council range: 3.2 - 19.5 days. Widened variation in the most recent year. Least deprived councils report longer repair times compared to the most deprived councils (11.0 Days compared to 6.5 Days, not statistically significant)

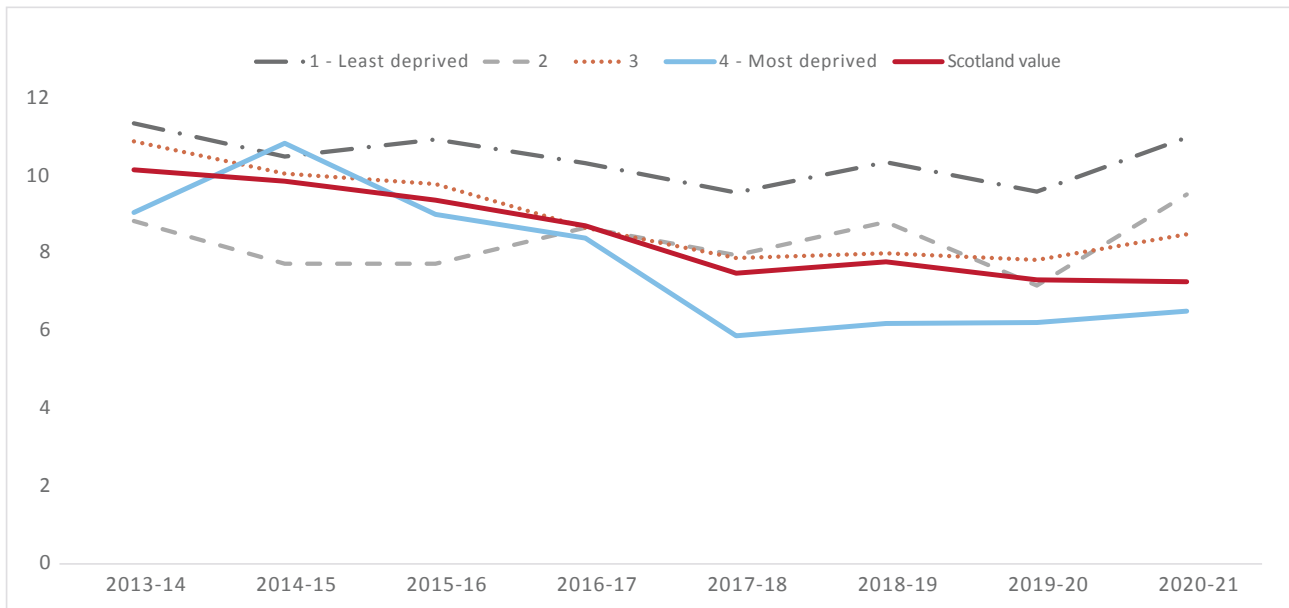
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -0.7% ; councils: 15 increased and 11 decreased (range: -45% to +150%, -45% to +74% Excluding Outliers). Least deprived councils increased by 14.5% compared to 4.7% for most deprived, not statistically significant.

Since 2013/14: Scotland: -28%; councils: 9 increased and 17 decreased (range: -62% to +157%, -62% to 83% excluding outliers). Least deprived councils reduced by 3.2% compared to 28.1% for the most deprived, not statistically significant.



Fig 131: Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (no. of days) by family group - deprivation



Housing quality

In terms of housing quality, there have been significant improvements over the past 11 years in terms of dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) and energy efficiency standards.⁴⁵ 2020/21 however, saw these improving trends either halt or slow for many authorities.

In 2020/21, 90.3% of council dwellings met the SHQS, an increase of 36.7pp from 2010/11, but a reduction of 4.5pp from 2019/20. While almost all councils report an improvement since 2010/11, over half of councils report a decline in 2020/21. Least deprived councils report the sharpest decline, an average fall of 14pp. In 2020/21, variation across councils widened significantly, ranging from 59.9% to 99.1%, with the least deprived councils reporting the lowest levels (80.5% compared to 93.1%). There is however no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

In 2020/21, 86.4% of council dwellings were energy efficient, an increase from 65.2% in 2015/16, and including a 2.3pp increase from 2019/20. Almost all councils report an improving trend, although 4 councils show a reduction in the most recent year. Councils range from 57% to 99%, with higher rates on average for councils with higher levels of deprivation. However, there is no statistically significant relationship with deprivation due to variation within the family group.

⁴⁵ To reflect new energy efficiency standards, the LGBF indicator has been amended to adopt the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) as a reference, replacing NHER – SAP.

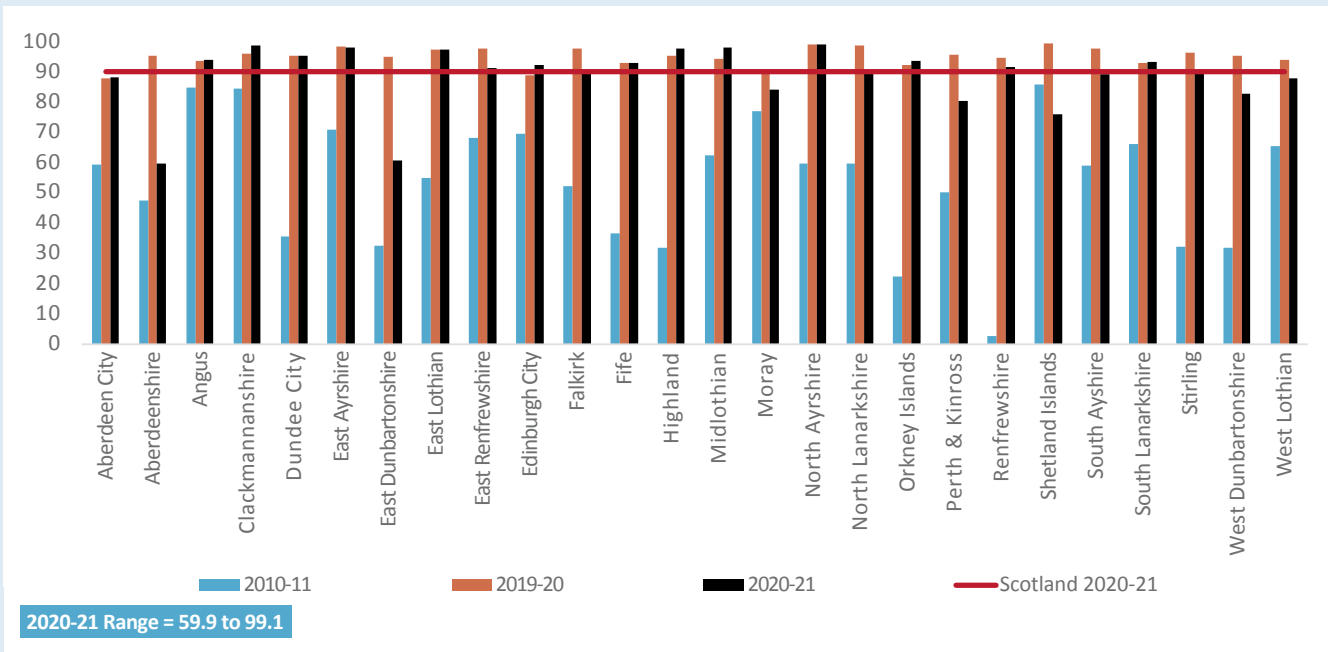


Table 48: Housing quality and energy efficiency (%)

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Value Change 2019-20 to 2020-21	Value Change 2010-11 to 2020-21
% dwellings meeting SHQS	53.6	66.1	76.6	83.7	90.4	92.5	93.6	93.9	94.3	94.9	90.3	-4.6	36.7
% dwellings that are energy efficient						65.2	71.2	75.3	80.9	84.1	86.4	2.3	21.2



Fig 132: Properties meeting SHQS (%)



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Percentage of dwellings meeting SHQS

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 90.3%; council range: 59.9% - 99.1%. Widened variation in the most recent year. Less deprived councils report lower proportion of properties meeting SHQS compared to more deprived councils (80.5% compared to 93.1%, now statistically significant)

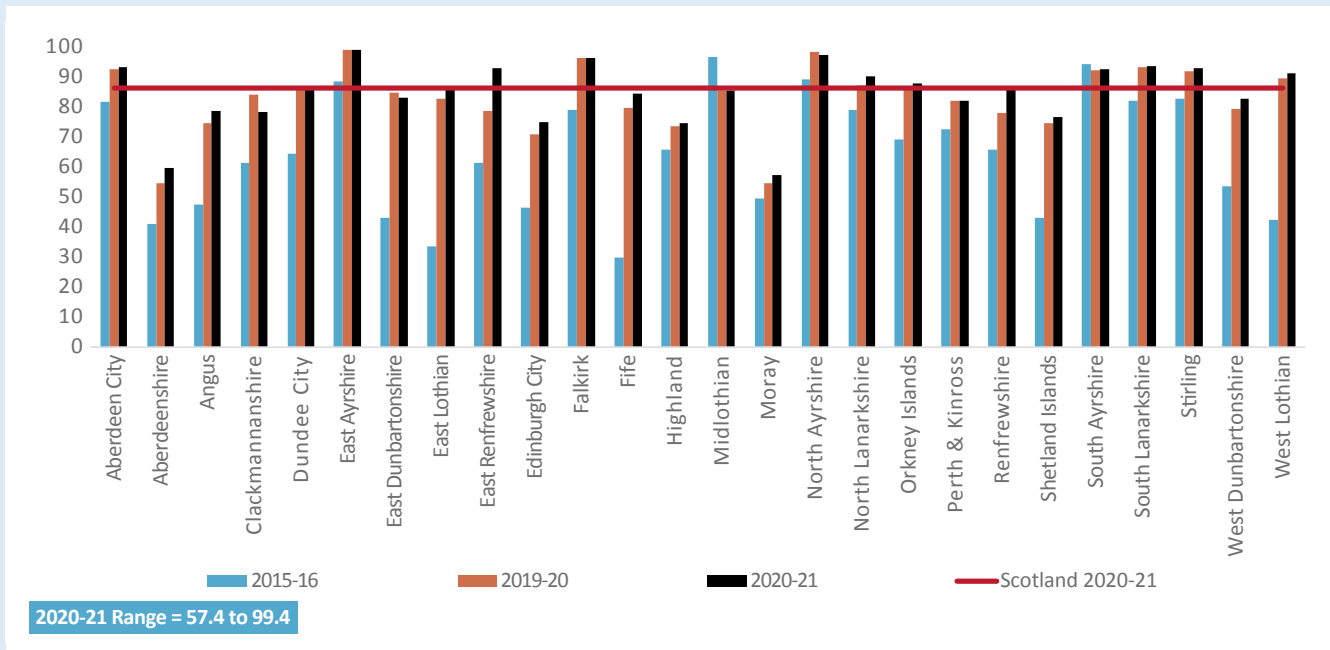
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: -4.6pp; councils: 11 increased and 15 decreased (range: -35.5pp to +3.8pp). Least deprived councils report the sharpest decline, an average fall of 14pp (compared to -4.4pp)

Since 2010/11: Scotland: +36.7pp; councils: 25 increased and 1 decreased (range: -9.6pp to +88.8pp). Least deprived show smaller increase on average (26pp compared to 41pp).



Fig 133: Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient



Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords



Local Variation – Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient

2020/21 Value

Scotland: 86.4%; council range: 57.4% - 99.4%. Narrowed variation in the most recent year. Most deprived councils report a higher proportion of which are energy efficient compared to more affluent councils (91% compared to 81%, not statistically significant)

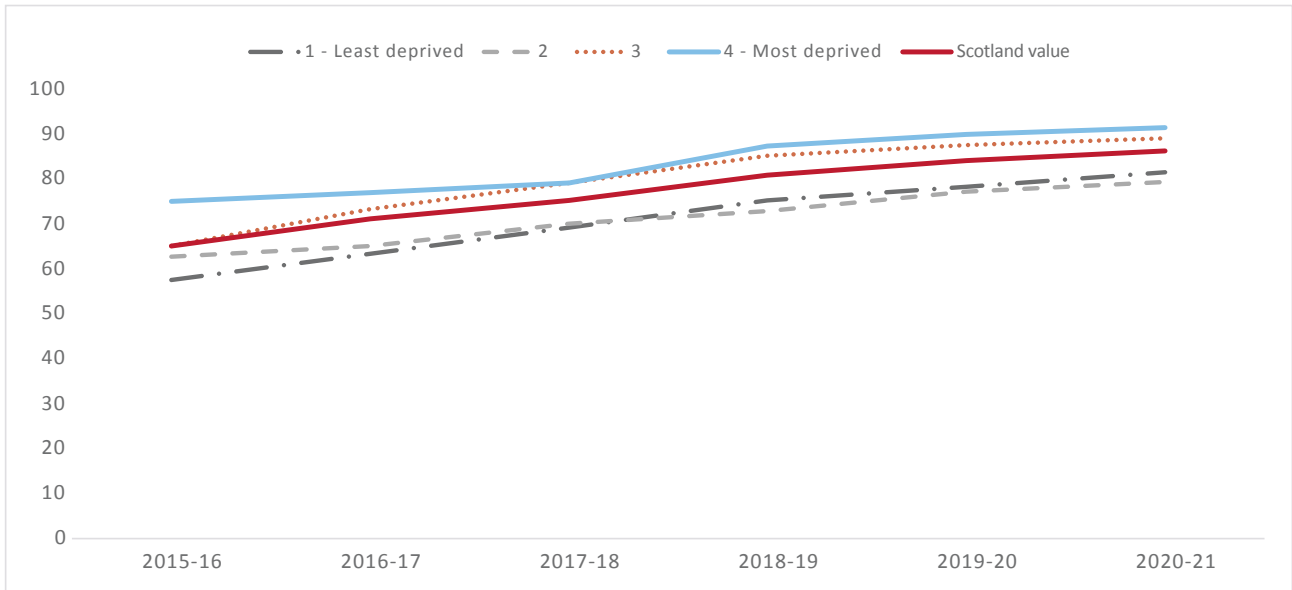
Change Over Time

In 2020/21: Scotland: +2.3pp; councils: 22 increased and 4 decreased (range: -5.8pp to +14.3pp).

Since 2015/16: Scotland: +21.2pp; councils 24 increased and 2 decreased (range: -11.3pp to +54.7pp).



Fig 134: Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient by family group - deprivation



It is important to note that the sources used within this publication are not based on the Scottish Government data sources (Housing Revenue Account statistics and Scottish Housing Condition Survey) rather they are based on data collected by the Scottish Housing Regulator. There will be differences between the two sets of data. For example, the data published here reports only on council provision rather than provision by all registered social landlords. Additionally, there are differences in the SHQS methodology between SHR and SHCS. For example, abeyances and exemptions are not taken into account by the SHCS as it is not feasible to collect this kind of information in the survey.