

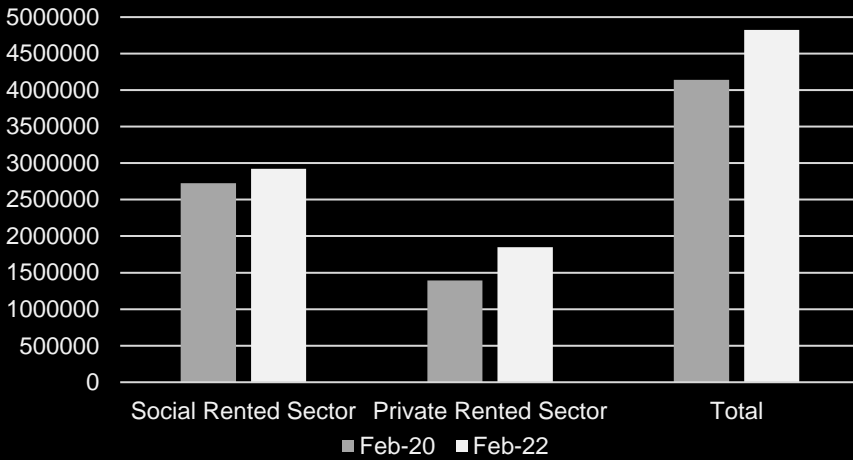
1.8m private renters relying on housing benefit

A third more private renters claim than before the pandemic – but soaring rents and frozen benefits mean they’re left short

1

4.8 million households receive help with rent

4.8 million households claimed housing benefit (Universal Credit housing element or legacy housing benefit) in February 2022. The number of private renters claiming (1.8 million) is 32% higher compared to before the pandemic in February 2020. The number of households in social housing (currently 2.9 million) is 7% higher. These high numbers remained stable over the winter as we entered a predicted year of price rises and a sharp squeeze on household budgets.



▲ **684,000**

more households claiming support in February 2022 than the same month before the pandemic in 2020

Total households claiming housing benefit (UC HE and HB)

2

Housing benefit isn't fit for purpose

A third (33%) of all private renters in England now receive housing benefit according to Shelter analysis. But the amount people can claim (known as the Local Housing Allowance (LHA)) is currently frozen at the bottom 30% of rents in 2020. Meanwhile, rents in England (excluding London) have **grown at their highest recorded annual rate**.

As a result, LHA covers a shrinking number of homes. There are simply more households claiming housing benefit than there are homes affordable on the LHA rate.

Less than 30%

private rents covered by Local Housing Allowance

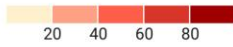


33%

private renters in England receiving housing benefit

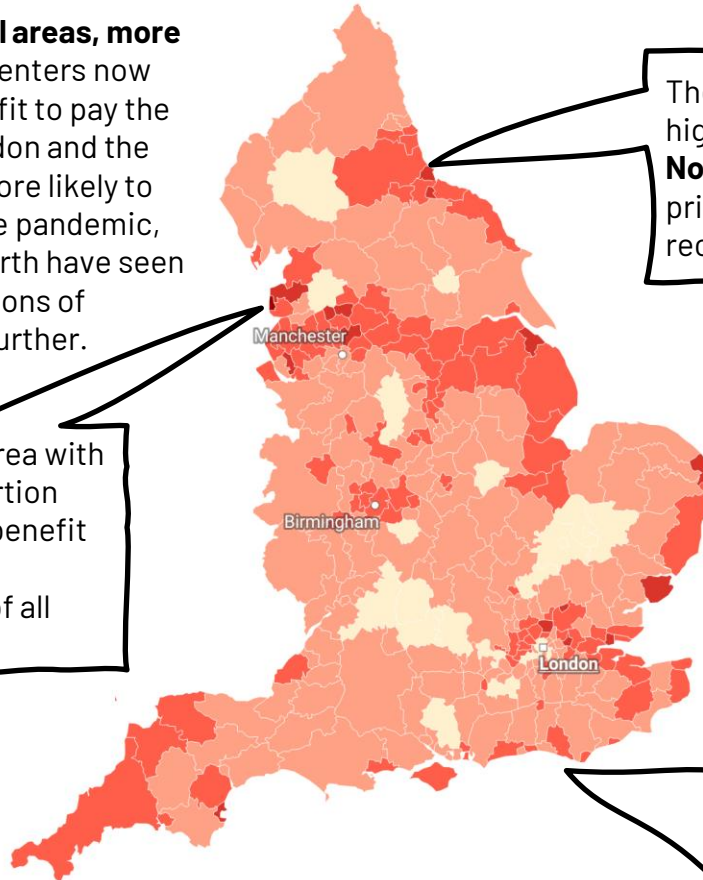
3 Majority of renters claiming support in 1 in 5 areas

Percentage of private renting households claiming housing benefit by local authority, February 2022



In **1 in 5 (19%) council areas, more than half** of private renters now rely on housing benefit to pay the rent. Renters in London and the South East are far more likely to claim than before the pandemic, while parts of the North have seen already high proportions of claimants increase further.

Blackpool is the area with the highest proportion claiming housing benefit in England – an astonishing **84%** of all private renters



The English region with the highest proportion is the **North East, where 41%** of all private renters are in receipt of housing benefit.

Towns across the country with a majority of renters claiming housing benefit, include **Great Yarmouth (73%)** and **Burnley (65%)**. Explore a zoomable version of this map [here](#).

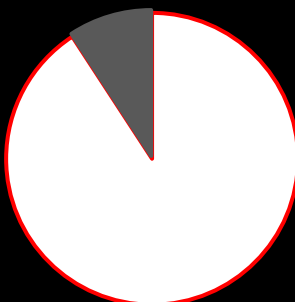
Map: Shelter • Source: DWP • Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2021 • Created with Datawrapper

4 Housing benefit falls short in 91% of England

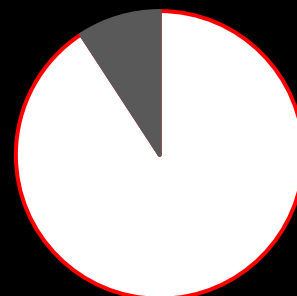
The government plans to keep the LHA frozen at March 2020 levels until at least 2023. Due to rent rises, the average gap between LHA and rent for a modest 2 bedroom home is now £10.53 a week – over £45 a month that a family has to make up to avoid falling into rent arrears, eviction and possible homelessness. LHA no longer covers the cost of a modest 2 or 3 bedroom home in 91% of England.

2 bedroom homes

3 bedroom homes



- Areas where LHA covers lowest 30% of rents
- Areas with shortfall between LHA and lowest 30% of rents



5

Restore housing benefit and prevent homelessness

As people across the country struggle with rising rents and the rapidly rising cost of living, housing benefit ought to be a safety net to prevent homelessness. But with private renters facing growing gaps between LHA rates and rents, they will face impossible choices over what other spending they can cut to stay out of rent arrears. We know the government wants to prevent families from becoming homeless this year, so the answer is simple: they must **urgently re-link and restore** housing benefits to the real cost of renting in 2022. Given the cost of the living crisis, this is now an essential stopgap, until there's enough investment in a new generation of permanent and decent social homes that ordinary families can afford without having to claim housing benefits.

Sources

Numbers of households claiming legacy housing benefit and the housing element of Universal Credit are from DWP, Statexplore, accessed May 2022. Comparisons to before the pandemic compare statistics from February 2022 with figures from February 2020.

The proportion of private renters claiming housing benefit is an estimate derived from combining administrative data from the DWP with population estimates published by DLUHC (the English Housing Survey), and by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). We have adjusted the total number of private rented households in England and each region to account for the number of adults living in households (such as multiple single adults or multiple families sharing a home) where more than one welfare claim could be made. This number is calculated using English Housing Survey data. We introduced this method in September 2021 so these estimates should not be compared to Shelter publications from before that date.

Household number estimates for local authorities are derived from ONS, [Subnational households by tenure estimates](#), Table 1a Count of households by tenure by local authority district, England, 2012- 2020, published January 2022. We have adjusted the total number of households in each local authority area using the regional proportion of households where multiple welfare claims could potentially be made and the regional average number of adults living in such households using data from the English Housing Survey 2016-18.

Local Housing Allowance and 30% percentile rents are taken from Valuation Office Agency, [Local Housing Allowance \(LHA\) rates applicable from April 2022 to March 2023](#), published January 2022.

Private rents in England rose by 2.5% over the year to April 2022. In England excluding London the figure was 3.3%, the highest rate since this record series began in 2005. ONS, [Index of Private Housing Rental Prices, UK](#), published May 2022.