

**PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES**

# **Housing Options (PREVENT1) Statistics in Scotland: 2021/22**

**Experimental statistics**

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
A note on interpreting the figures .....	1
<b>Approaches for housing support</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Household circumstances</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Prevention activity</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Outcomes</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Notes</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Legislation.....	11
An Official Statistics publication for Scotland – Experimental statistics .....	11
Correspondence and enquiries .....	12
How to access background or source data .....	12
Complaints and suggestions .....	12
Crown Copyright .....	12

# Introduction

This statistics bulletin provides information on Housing Options services in Scotland in the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

It includes information on the number of approaches made, as well as details on the reasons for the approaches made, the activities undertaken, and the outcomes achieved.

This publication also draws comparisons to trends within our most recent [homelessness statistics](#) publication.

The statistics in this publication are based on administrative data collected by local authorities in the course of providing Housing Options services that are available when households seek assistance for housing-related issues.

This bulletin focusses on data at a national level due to differences in how local authorities implement Housing Options. Local authority breakdowns are available in an Excel workbook, containing tables which can be downloaded from the [homelessness statistics webpage](#).

## A note on interpreting the figures

As local authority needs differ, it is appropriate to tailor service provision to the needs specific to each local authority. Therefore, the use and implementation of Housing Options varies greatly between local authorities.

For that reason, it is not appropriate to make direct comparisons between local authority Housing Options figures. Instead, local authority figures should be used to understand the delivery of Housing Options at an individual local authority level only.

## A Quick Guide to Housing Options

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure advice and information is available free of charge about:

- homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, and
- any services which may assist a homeless person or assist in the prevention of homelessness

When households seek assistance for housing-related issues from their local authority, they may be presented with advice on a range of housing options, including the opportunity to make a homelessness application. This is known as Housing Options and began to be implemented from around 2009.

The aim of this approach is to make households aware of their options for accommodation, and ensure they are able to make a more informed choice.

However, it is important to note that Housing Options is not a statutory function, but local authorities can use it in the delivery of their statutory duties.

## **Impact of coronavirus**

There was a decrease in Housing Options approaches and activity in 2020/21 because of COVID-19. This was likely a combination of limitations on local authorities being able to carry out services and decreased demand due to temporary measures put in place.

Temporary [Coronavirus legislation](#) was implemented to protect renters over the COVID-19 period by extending notice periods for eviction proceedings (lifted on 30 September 2021). In addition, [mortgage payment deferrals were introduced across the UK in March 2020](#) for customers experiencing issues paying their mortgage during COVID-19.

Caution should therefore be applied when making comparisons with 2020/21 figures, however, these comparisons are in themselves useful in observing any changes in trends since the onset of the pandemic.

Where findings are believed to have been impacted by COVID-19, or associated temporary protective measures, these have been outlined within the relevant sections.

## **Help us improve this publication and its statistics:**

Get in touch by email: [homelessness\\_statistics\\_inbox@gov.scot](mailto:homelessness_statistics_inbox@gov.scot)

Alternatively, you can fill out the [Scottish Government official statistics feedback survey](#).

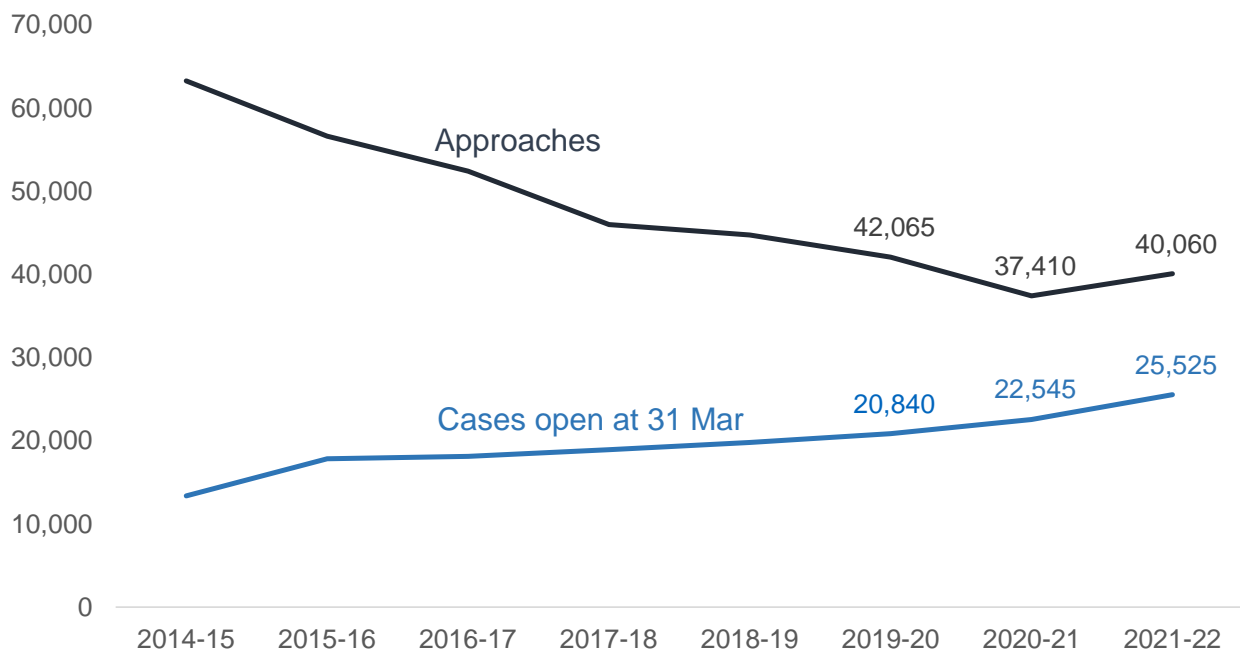
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All tables and charts from this publication are available online at the [homelessness statistics webpage](#).

# Approaches for housing support

Housing options approaches increased in the year 2021/22 following a reduction in 2020/21 and open housing options cases continue to increase

Chart 1: Annual housing options approaches and open cases, 2014/15 to 2021/22



There were 40,060 approaches (from 37,790 unique households) in 2021/22. This was an increase of 7% compared to 2020/21. Prior to the pandemic there had been a downward trend in the number of approaches. The latest figure is 37% lower than the start of the data collection in 2014/15.

Open cases have increased over time and are 13% higher than March 2021. This is the highest since the collection began in 2014/15.

The vast majority of households made one approach (95%), with only 1% making three or more.

These trends are similar to those experienced for homelessness applications where the number of applications increased in 2021/22 following a decrease in 2020/21, while the number of open homelessness cases continued to rise.

Many local authorities reported a reduction in approaches in 2020/21 due to remain at home COVID-19 guidelines, limitations in service provision during the pandemic and measures put in place to [temporarily extend eviction notice period and ban home repossessions](#) as well as [mortgage payment deferrals](#).

As a result of the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and ceasing of temporary legislation, several local authorities saw a notable increase in housing options approaches in 2021/22. East Ayrshire and East Dunbartonshire experienced increases of 150 (from 60 to 210) and 100 (from 45 to 145) respectively. The latest year's figures are much more in line with 2018/19 for these local authorities.

Conversely, Highland has experienced notable decreases over time with only 5 housing options approaches in 2021/22. Highland noted that this is due to focussing available resource on homelessness applications as opposed to Housing Options support.

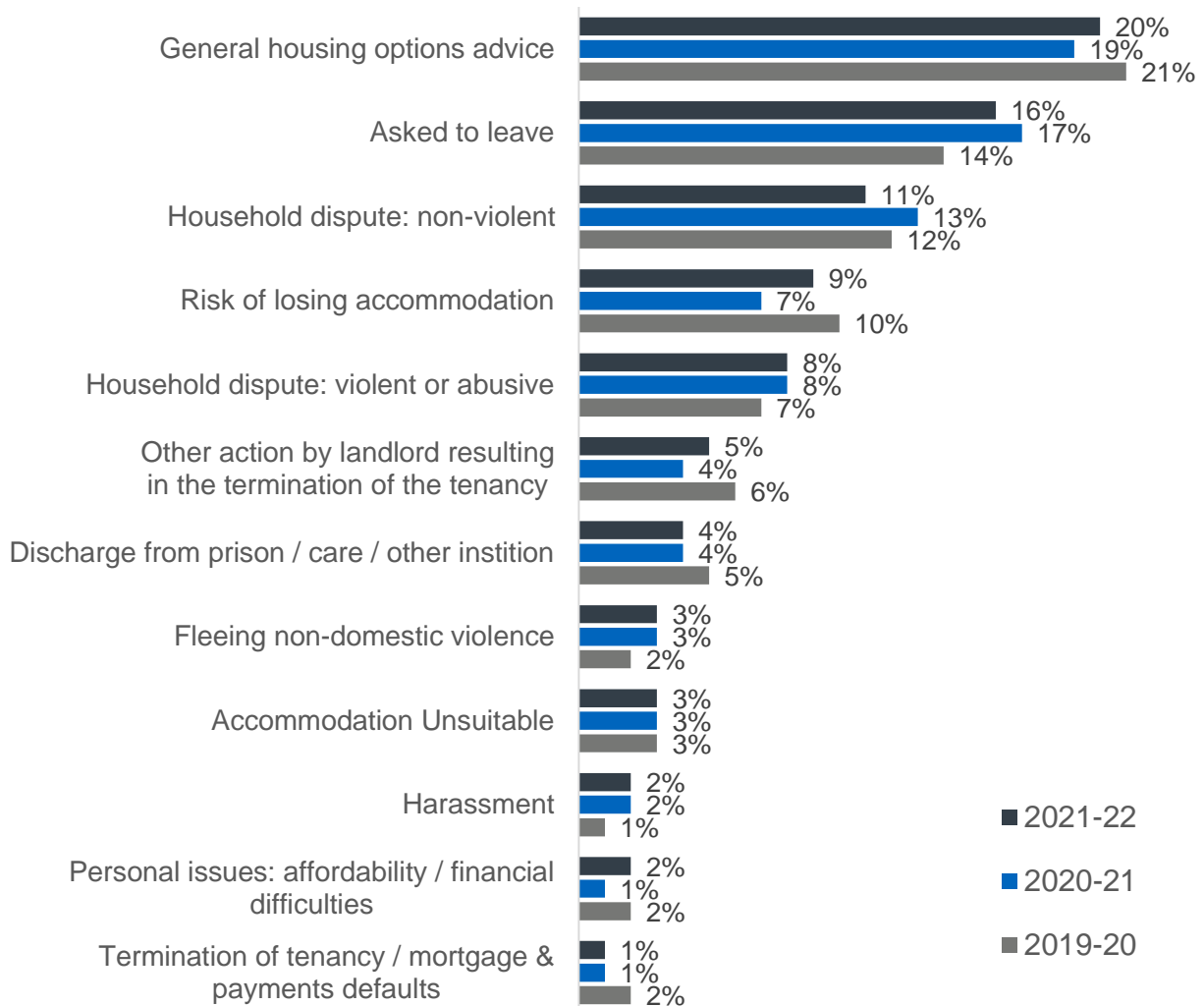
Glasgow accounts for the largest share of unique household approaches at 26% (9,760), followed by Edinburgh at 10% (3,725).

The national rate of approaches is 827 households per 100,000 population aged 16 and over, which varies greatly between local authorities. Of the mainland authorities, Glasgow has the highest rate of 1,823 households and East Dunbartonshire the lowest rate of 162, with the exception of Highland (with a rate of 3). The varying rates are likely reflective of local authorities using different approaches to provide their statutory duties.

# Household circumstances

The most common reasons for housing options approaches are returning towards pre-pandemic proportions

Chart 2: Reasons for housing options approaches, 2019/20 to 2021/22



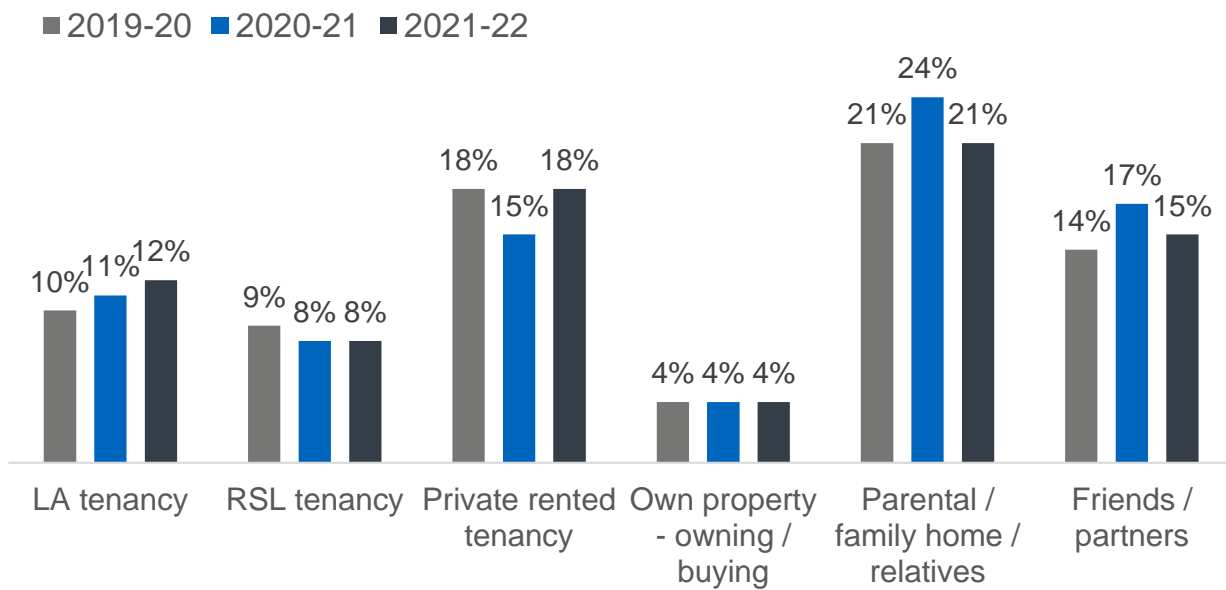
An exception is non-violent household disputes which decreased below the pre-pandemic proportion reaching the lowest since the collection began in 2014/15.

For some of the lesser common reasons there is a slightly different trend with proportions of violent household disputes, fleeing non-domestic violence and harassment similar to 2020/21 proportions, remaining above those pre-pandemic.

The largest proportionate increase compared to last year was 'risk of losing accommodation'. This may be influenced by the lifting of the above mentioned COVID-19 legislation, although this isn't reflected in the proportions for termination of tenancy / mortgage due to rent arrears / default on payments.

**Biggest increase in last year in proportion of approaches made from private rented tenancies and biggest decreases from family, friends and partners**

**Chart 3: Property type from which the household made an approach, 2019/20 to 2021/22**



The lifting of the earlier mentioned emergency coronavirus legislation is likely to have contributed to the increase in approaches from the private rented sector.

The trends in reasons and property types are similar to those experienced for [households assessed as homeless in 2021/22](#).



# Prevention activity

**Most prevention activity is general housing advice or informing clients of their rights under homelessness legislation**

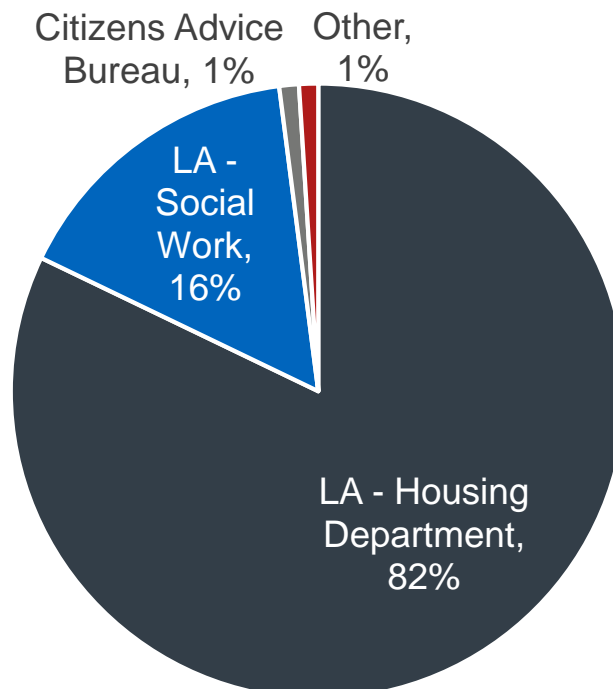
**Chart 4: Prevention activity carried out, 2021/22**



'Mediation/outreach work', 'tenancy/social care support/adaptations to property' and 'mortgage/home ownership advice' activity was carried out by less than half of local authorities.

**The vast majority of prevention activity is undertaken by the local authority, particularly in the housing department**

**Chart 5: Organisation carrying out prevention activity, 2021/22. [LA refers to local authority]**



## **Type of prevention activity**

Local authorities may undertake several activities related to Housing Options approaches. These are grouped in to three types, based on 'workload', where type I is considered the least and type III is the most.

- Type I – Active Information, Sign-posting and Explanation
- Type II – Casework
- Type III – Advocacy, Representation and Mediation at Tribunal or Court Action Level

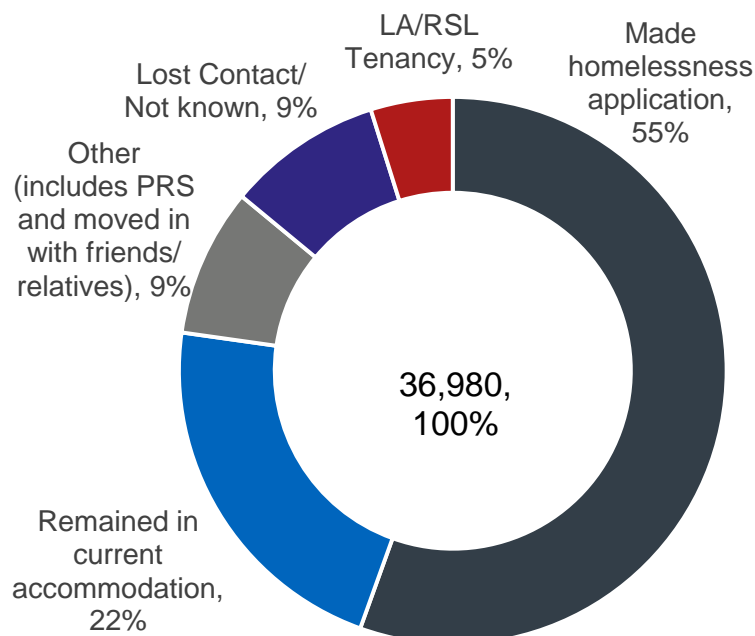
There were 39,802 households with associated activities in 2021/22. Of these, 43% involved providing active information, sign-posting or explanation only and 57% involved casework (note: these may also have included type I activities).

Very few local authorities report advocacy work, with Angus, East Lothian and West Dunbartonshire being highest with 3%, 1% and 1%, respectively.

# Outcomes

## Over half of housing options approaches result in a homelessness application

Chart 6: Outcomes of housing options approaches, 2021/22



While 5% of outcomes were a Local authority / Registered social landlord (LA/RSL) tenancy, many of those who make a homelessness application will also go on to a local authority or registered social landlord tenancy.

Nearly all (99%) housing options approaches in Clackmannanshire have an outcome of 'made homelessness application'.

East Dunbartonshire had the highest proportion with an outcome of 'remained in current accommodation' at 88%. East Dunbartonshire notes that this was a result of utilising the [COVID-19 Tenant Grant Fund](#) to help households.

Fife continued to have the highest proportion with an outcome of Local authority / Registered social landlord tenancy at 28%.

East Lothian continues to have the highest proportion with an outcome of private rented sector tenancy at 26%.

Across Scotland, it took an average of 116 days to close a housing options case (that did not result in a homelessness application). This has decreased from 160 days in 2020/21.

The time to close cases varied greatly by local authority, which may be reflective of the differences in housing options service provision and case management between local authorities.

North Lanarkshire had the highest average length of time at 389 days, although this is a substantial reduction compared to the previous two years (847 days in 2020/21 and 611 days in 2019/20). North Lanarkshire note that this is due to ongoing efforts to provide training for recording and reviewing of Housing options cases with the still relatively high figure for 2021/22 due to a delay in closing cases on their management information systems.

East Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde have seen their average time to close housing options cases decrease significantly from 36 to 3 days and 198 to 100 days respectively. Both noted this was a result of utilising the Covid-19 Tenant Grant Fund which made delivering financial assistance a more streamlined process enabling cases to be closed quickly.

# Notes

All tables and charts in this publication are available in electronic format at the [supporting documents page](#).

These statistics are based on administrative data collected by local authorities while carrying out their Housing Options duties. The data is collected from local authorities and quality assured by the Scottish Government on a quarterly basis. Details about the data we collect, our quality assurance process, and how we engage with users to improve our statistics are outlined in our [quality assurance statement](#).

The data specification for the Housing Options (PREVENT1) statistics is available on our [data provider information page](#).

## Known issues with the data

South Lanarkshire has not been able to provide case level data for 2019/20, 2020/21 or 2021/22 due to technical issues. As a result, we have not been able to carry out our usual level of quality assurance checks for South Lanarkshire's data.

For 2019/20 and 2020/21, South Lanarkshire provided aggregate level data to be incorporated into the tables accompanying this publication. No data at all has been provided for 2021/22 and aggregate data for 2020/21 has therefore been carried forward.

However, the 2020/21 data contained a discrepancy of 260, which therefore persists for the 2021/22 figures. The number of approaches (973) differs from the number for 'type of prevention activity' (713) and we have been unable to confirm with South Lanarkshire which of these is the correct figure. Additionally, we cannot confirm whether the total activities (2,395) are related to the 973 or 713 figure. This uncertainty affects all tables within the publication.

Midlothian and North Lanarkshire have reported systems issues which has led to a number of cases not being appropriately closed. This has artificially increased the number of open cases in these local authorities.

## Legislation

Local Authorities can use Housing Options as a means of delivering their duty under [section 2 of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#).

To note: the provision of Housing Options services is not a statutory duty.

Guidance to help Local Authority officers to record information is available on our [data provider information page](#).

## An Official Statistics publication for Scotland – Experimental statistics

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference. These statistics are classified as experimental due to their volatility and

known quality concerns (as outlined above). However, there is a user need for these statistics which is why they are published (with clear notes about their limitations).

## Correspondence and enquiries

### For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Homelessness Statistics and Analysis,

Telephone: 0131 244 8502

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### For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

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## How to access background or source data

### The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route. Summary tables can be found at the [homelessness statistics webpage](#).
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [homelessness\\_statistics\\_inbox@gov.scot](mailto:homelessness_statistics_inbox@gov.scot) for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

## Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail [statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

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