

Cold homes are damaging to health which can lead to mortality. They are associated with an increased likelihood of developing a range of health conditions including cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, as well as accidental injury and poor mental health. Especially at risk of health issues related to cold homes are people with pre-existing conditions as well as babies, children and older people. Health inequalities are exacerbated when homes are cold because of fuel poverty. ([Institute of Health Equity](#), 2022)

Energy efficiency, incomes, housing costs and energy prices are key in determining the fuel poverty status of England's households, England uses the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) measure.

Why is this important?



Cold homes are harmful to both physical and mental health and are linked to various health conditions. Cold homes can impact people at any age and can increase health inequalities.

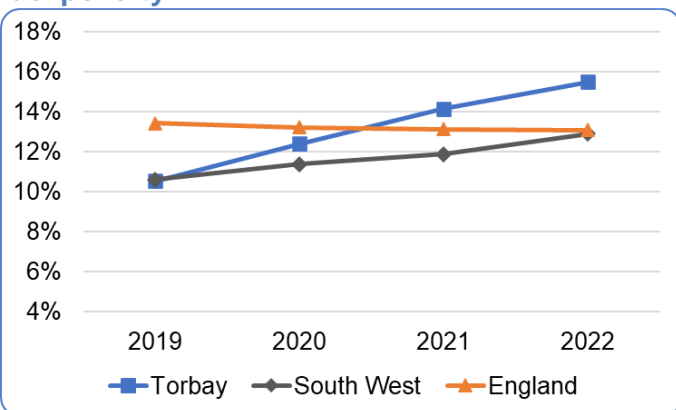
What is the local context?



Torbay's estimated percentage of households in fuel poverty is steadily increasing. Torbay has higher percentages of households without central heating than England.

Fuel poverty: A household in England is defined as fuel poor when living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating below band C and with a disposable income (after housing costs and energy needs) that is below the poverty line - the LILEE methodology. The [Dept for Energy Security & Net Zero](#) says this is based on energy bill requirements rather than actual spending so that those limiting usage in order to lower bills (i.e. cutting down on heating) are not overlooked.

Fig 1: Estimated percentage of households in fuel poverty



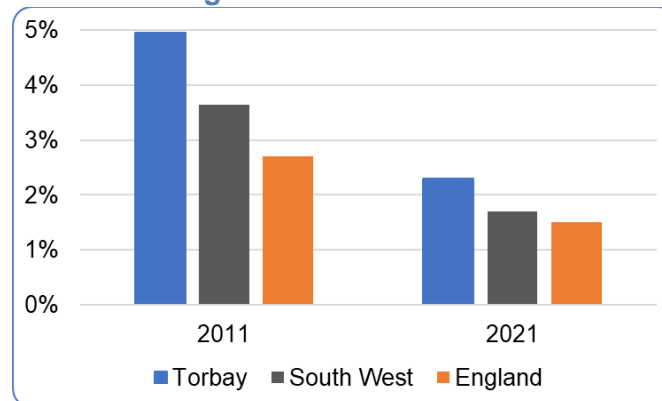
Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID): [Public health profiles](#)

Torbay's estimated percentage of households in fuel poverty has steadily increased in the four years shown in Fig 1, from 10.5% in 2019 to 15.5% in 2022. Torbay is in the second worst quintile in England in 2022. The England figure has remained pretty static over the four years with little movement. In 2022 the measure estimates 10,240 Torbay households to be fuel poor.

In England, higher levels of fuel poverty can be found amongst groups including: those living in the most deprived areas, tenants of private rented accommodation, ethnic minorities, lone parents with dependent children, the unemployed, and students in full time education.

The LILEE methodology means that households living in properties with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band A to C are not deemed fuel poor, irrespective of whether they can afford to heat their home adequately ([Institute of Health Equity](#)). In their [2024 annual report](#), the Committee on Fuel Poverty advocates reviewing the methodology, saying it does not cover all households who cannot afford energy bills, with a substantial gap between those defined by LILEE as in fuel poverty and the number who would be by other measures more related to income.

Fig 2: Percentage of households without central heating



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS), nomis: [Census](#)

In both the 2011 and 2021 census, Torbay has significantly higher percentages of households without central heating than the South West and England (Fig 2). In all three areas the percentage is significantly lower ten years later in 2021. In Torbay the proportion has halved but the trend of being higher than England has continued.

The 2021 census reports that 1,420 households have no central heating in Torbay. Over twice the proportion of private rented/rent free households have no central heating compared to owned and social rented. One person households with no central heating are also around double the proportion of other household types.

Energy Performance Certificates: These are required when buildings are constructed, sold or let and measure how energy efficient they are. They are valid for ten years and ratings range from A (best) to G (worst). In March 2023, 37% of EPCs for dwellings in Torbay were in the higher bands of A to C (Fig 3) which is joint 42nd from the bottom out of 331 Local Authority districts. The fuel poverty energy efficiency rating used in the LILEE fuel poverty measure is based on EPCs' methodology but is not the same.

Fig 3 and 4: Percentage of housing with Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) at Band C or above, 10 years to March 2023

Fig 3: All housing

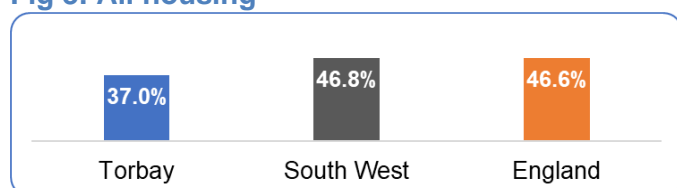


Fig 4: Housing tenure and property type

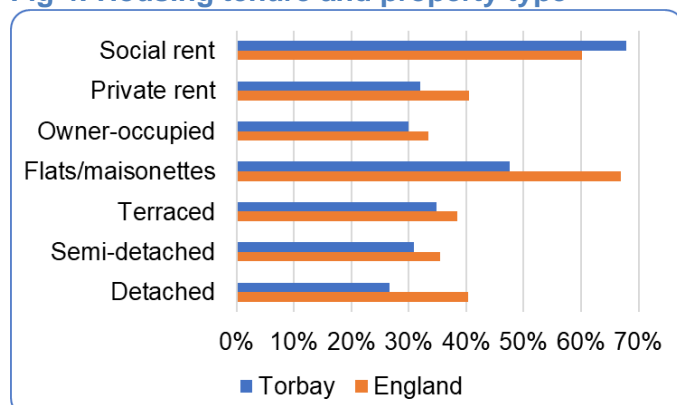
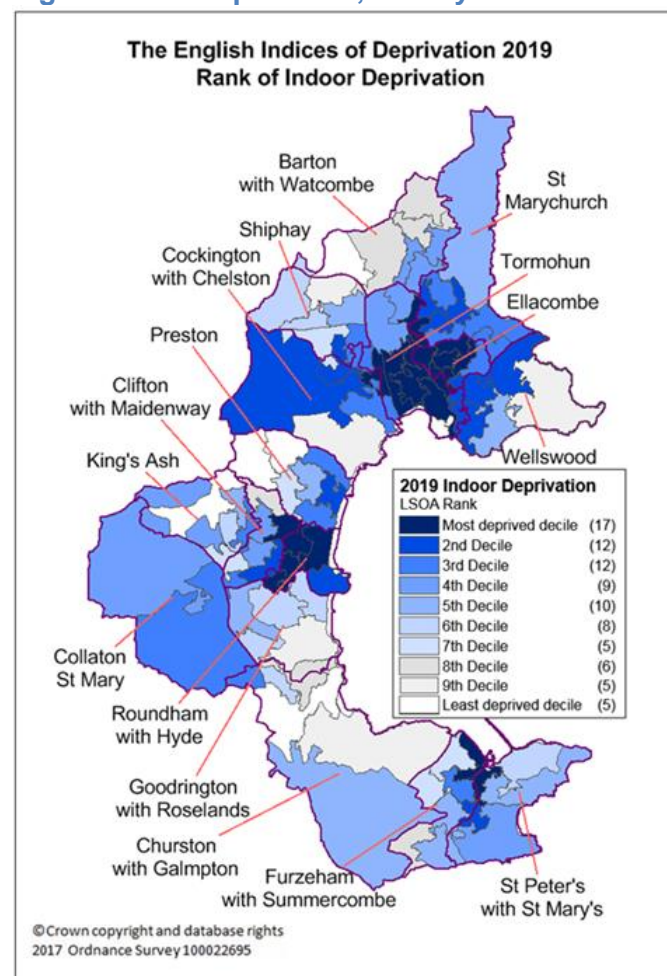


Fig 3 & 4 source: ONS- [EPCs](#), of those with valid EPCs

In Torbay the percentage of social rented housing with EPCs rated A to C is more than double that of private rented and owned- 68% compared to 32% and 30% respectively (Fig 4). Torbay is higher for social rented than England but lower for other tenure types. Compared to other property types, Torbay and England have a higher percentage of A to C ratings for flats/maisonettes. However, Torbay is much lower than England. Unsurprisingly, older housing is much less energy efficient than newer housing.

Indoor deprivation: Part of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, this includes houses without central heating and houses that fail to meet the Decent Homes standard. Highest levels of indoor deprivation are in central areas of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham (Fig 5). One in three Torbay residents (33%) live in an area that is amongst the 20% most deprived in England in relation to indoor deprivation.

Fig 5: Indoor deprivation, Torbay



Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2019, ONS mid-year population estimates

Winter mortality index: Previously called excess winter deaths, this is the difference in the number of deaths in the winter period compared to the average of the non-winter periods.

Cold homes are shown to contribute to increased winter deaths. Higher winter mortality can be due to the cold affecting chronic conditions. Leading causes of increased levels of winter deaths in England are cardiovascular, respiratory, dementia and injuries- all made worse by living in cold homes. ([Institute of Health Equity, 2022](#))

The increased level of Torbay deaths in winter compared to non-winter was similar to England for the latest year- Aug 2021 to Jul 2022. ([OHID](#))

References:

- Committee on Fuel Poverty: [Can Fuel Poverty be Ended? Annual Report 2024](#)
- Dept for Energy Security & Net Zero: [Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics in England, 2024 \(2023 data\)](#)
- Institute for Health Equity: [Fuel Poverty, Cold Homes and Health Inequalities in the UK, 2022](#)

References/links to data used are throughout the profile.