



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EUROSTAT

Directorate F: Social and information society statistics
Unit F-3: Living conditions and social protection



EU-SILC MODULE 2007 ON HOUSING CONDITIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The ad-hoc module on housing conditions was carried out in 2007 by the EU-27 countries plus Iceland and Norway¹. This document presents a first analysis of this Module.

The main characteristics of the Module 2007 are the following:

- Target variables: relate to two types of units: the household (all variables except those related to the 'change of dwelling'), and the household respondent (variables related to the 'change of dwelling').
- Mode of data collection: personal interview with the household respondent or register.
- Reference periods:
 - Usual: an ordinary winter/summer, in the area where the dwelling is located (for the variables 'dwelling comfortably warm during winter time' and 'dwelling comfortably cool during summer time')
 - Last two years (for the variables related to the 'change of dwelling')
 - Current (for all other variables)
- Definitions: the description of the following definitions can be found in the section 'Analysis of the definitions'.
 - Shortage of space in dwelling
 - Dwelling installations and facilities
 - Accessibility of basic needs
 - Overall satisfaction with dwelling
 - Change of dwelling
- Target variables: the areas and description of target variables (listed below) can be found in the section 'Analysis of the variables'.
 - MH010: Shortage of space in dwelling
 - MH020: Adequate electrical installations
 - MH030: Adequate plumbing/water installations
 - MH040: Dwelling equipped with heating facilities
 - MH050: Dwelling comfortably warm during winter time
 - MH060: Dwelling equipped with air conditioning facilities
 - MH070: Dwelling comfortably cool during summer time
 - MH080: Overall satisfaction with dwelling
 - MH090: Accessibility of grocery services
 - MH100: Accessibility of banking services
 - MH110: Accessibility of postal services
 - MH120: Accessibility of public transport

¹ Other countries might have also carried out the Module but did not send the results to Eurostat.

- MH130: Accessibility of primary health care services
- MH140: Accessibility of compulsory school
- MH150: Change of dwelling
- MH160: Main reason for change of dwelling

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE DEFINITIONS

➤ Shortage of space in dwelling

The variable *MH010 'Shortage of space in dwelling'* refers to the respondent's opinion/feeling concerning shortage of space in dwelling.

➤ Dwelling installations and facilities

- Electrical installations: wiring, contacts, sockets and other permanent electrical installations in the dwelling.
- Plumbing/water installations: pipes, taps, drainage and outlets.
- Central heating or similar: a housing unit is considered to be centrally heated if heating is provided either from a community heating centre or from an installation built in the building or in the housing unit, established for heating purposes, without regard to the source of energy. Fixed electrical radiators, fixed gas heaters and similar are included. The heating should be available in most rooms.
- This category contains fixed electrical radiators. So, if a dwelling is equipped with electrical panel heaters and if the heating is available in most rooms, then it will belong to this first category.
- Other fixed heating: a housing unit is considered heated by 'other fixed heating' when the heating is not considered as 'central heating/or similar'. It includes stoves, heaters, fireplaces and similar.
- No fixed heating: no fixed heating system or heating device. The dwelling could however be equipped with portable heating.
- Air conditioning facilities: systems for controlling, especially lowering, the temperature and humidity of an enclosed space; systems that keep air cool and dry. Simple fans are not considered as air conditioning.
- Adequate: sufficient to satisfy the general requirements/needs of the household. An installation which is permanently out of order is considered as no installation. Inadequate installations can be: installations in bad condition, dangerous installations, installations which are regularly out of order, where there is not enough electrical power/pressure for the water to be used, the water is not drinkable, or there is limited availability. Minor temporary problems such as a blockage in the outlet do not mean that the installation is inadequate.

➤ Accessibility of basic needs

Accessibility relates to the services used by the household with regard to financial, physical, technical and health conditions. The accessibility of the services is to be

assessed in terms of physical and technical access and opening hours, but not in terms of quality, price and similar aspects. Consequently, the access should refer to an objective and physical reality. It should not be based on a subjective feeling.

The access should be determined in relation to the services actually used by the household. If the household does not use the service, flag -2 'Not applicable' should be used.

The physical access has to be assessed in terms of distance but also of infrastructure and equipment; for example, because of long distance, it takes too much time to get there, getting there is impossible.

If one member of the household has a disability but another member can easily access the service for him/her, the access to the service causes no problem for the household in the sense that it doesn't represent any burden for the household, consequently the service would be considered to be easily accessible by the household.

On the other hand, if one member of the household has a disability and can hardly access a service (which he needs as an individual) and he/she lives alone or the household has no resource available to provide him/her support (e.g. if no other member can easily access the service for him/her), or it really represents a burden for the household, in this case the access to the service would be considered difficult for the household.

The accessibility has to be evaluated according to the facility/difficulty to obtain the daily products (to fill the fridge) regardless as to whether it is done by internet, phone or 'ordinary shopping'.

The services provided at home should also be taken into account, if they are actually used by the household. The accessibility has thus to be evaluated regardless as to how the household accesses the service.

For banking services, the technical access could also intervene. The accessibility in terms of phone-banking and PC-banking should also be part of the assessment, if these methods are actually used by the household. The accessibility has to be evaluated according to the facility/difficulty to transfer, withdraw money... regardless of whether or not it is done by phone-banking, PC-banking or in a bank.

For public transport, as the accessibility should be assessed in terms of physical and technical access, if the respondent or another household member has a physical disability and if the available public transport is not adapted to his/her disability, a difficulty in accessibility should be recorded. In addition, if the public transport is too far away or has a restricted timetable, the access would also be considered difficult.

For compulsory school, the accessibility is assessed in relation to the school actually attended by the children of the household. If more than one child in the household is in compulsory school, the respondent should refer to the one with the most difficulty. This variable only concerns children whose age corresponds to the compulsory school attendance in the country and not to the other children even if the majority of them go to school².

² For example in Luxembourg, where the compulsory school attendance is fixed from 4 years until 15 years, the household has to evaluate the school accessibility only for the children (member of the household) aged from 4 until 15. Children aged from 16 to 18 must not be taken into account even if nearly all of them in the country attend the school.

The respondent should give an answer for the household as a whole. If the respondent doesn't use a service but other household member(s) do, the respondent should assess the accessibility according to this (these) other household member(s).

- Grocery services: services which can provide most of the daily needs.
- Banking services: withdraw cash, transfer money and pay bills.
- Postal services: send and receive ordinary and parcel post.
- Public transport: bus, metro, tram and similar.
- Primary health care services: general practitioner, primary health centre, a casualty department or similar where first-aid treatment could be received.
- Compulsory schools: if more than one child in the household is in compulsory school the respondent should refer to the one with the most difficulty.

➤ Overall satisfaction with dwelling

The variable *MH080 'Overall satisfaction with dwelling'* refers to the respondent's opinion/feeling about the degree of satisfaction with the dwelling in terms of meeting the household needs/opinion on the price, space, neighbourhood, distance to work, quality and other aspects.

➤ Change of dwelling

- Family-related reasons: change in marital/partnership status. To establish own household. To follow partner/parents. To obtain better school or care facilities for children or other dependants.
- Employment-related reasons: start new job or transfer of existing job. Looking for work or made redundant. To be closer to work/easier to commute. Retirement.
- Housing-related reasons: desire to change accommodation or tenure status. Wanting new or better house/apartment. Seeking better neighbourhood/less crime.
- Eviction/distrain: forced to move for legal reasons.
- Landlord did not prolong the contract: non renewal of contract, short-term contract.
- Financial reasons: problems paying rent/mortgage.
- Other reasons: to attend or leave college/university, health and other reasons.
- The reference period is 'the last two years'. If there have been several changes of dwelling, the main reason for the most recent change should be given.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIABLES

3.1. MH010 – Shortage of space in dwelling

Values	
1	yes
2	no

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing

This variable refers to the respondent's opinion/feeling about shortage of space in the dwelling.

The objective is to assess whether the respondent feels that space is a problem for the household. No common objective standards as to what constraints as 'problem' are implied.

One variable which measures the exposure to over-crowding is the primary target variable *HH030 'Number of rooms available to household'*. In the module 2007 the variable *MH010 'Shortage of space in dwelling'* considers the aspects of the size of rooms and the plan of the dwelling, as these have an impact on the usability of a room. An objective measure of the over-crowding could be obtained with the record of the square meters, but as the measurement of square meters is not commonly used in all countries, this subjective variable "Shortage of space" was selected for the module 2007. This variable has been used in ECHP without problem and with good results. For the module 2009 on "Material deprivation", both the variables on "Shortage of space" and "Square meters" were selected but the second one was defined as optional, to take account of the unusual character of this concept in some countries.

3.2. MH020 – Adequate electrical installations

Values	
1	yes
2	no

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	not applicable (no electricity/installations)

The electrical installations refer to wiring, contacts, sockets and other permanent electrical installations in the dwelling. The objective is to measure the household respondent's experience of the conditions of the electrical installation in his/her dwelling. Most dwellings in the Member States are equipped with electrical installations but if these installations are in poor condition for the household's needs, it is an expression of housing deprivation.

The term 'adequate' means sufficient; to satisfy the general requirements/needs of the household. An installation which is permanently out of order is considered as no installation.

Inadequate installations can be: installations in poor condition, dangerous installations, installations which are regularly out of order, where there is not enough electrical power or there is limited availability.

Minor temporary problems such as a blockage in the outlet do not mean that the installation is inadequate. We are only interested in the installations of the dwelling or installations in direct connection with the dwelling. Power cuts and limitations due to problems in power plants should not be included.

To avoid this variable becoming too technical, it is important to stress that we are not interested in a professional judgement of the installations, which can only be done by an electrician, but we are instead interested in the household respondent's experience of the conditions of the installation. Hence it can be possible that a household respondent who has not experienced any problem with the installations will rate them as 'good' while a professional would condemn the same installations.

3.3. MH030 – Adequate plumbing/water installations

Values	
1	yes
2	no
Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	not applicable (no plumbing/water installations)

The plumbing/water installations refer to pipes, taps, drainage and outlets. The objective is to measure the household respondent's experience of the conditions of the plumbing/water installation in his/her dwelling. Most dwellings in the Member States are equipped with plumbing/water installations but if these installations are in poor condition for the household's needs, it is an expression of housing deprivation.

The term 'adequate' means sufficient to satisfy the general requirements/needs of the household. An installation which is permanently out of order is considered as no installation.

Inadequate installations can be: installations in poor condition, dangerous installations, installations which are regularly out of order, where there is not enough pressure for the water to be used, the water is not drinkable, or there is limited availability.

Minor temporary problems such as a blockage in the outlet do not mean that the installation is inadequate. We are only interested in the installations of the dwelling or installations in direct connection with the dwelling. Water cuts and limitations due to problems in water plants should not be included.

To avoid this variable becoming too technical, it is important to stress that we are not interested in a professional judgement of the installations, which can only be done by a plumber, but we are interested in the household respondent's experience of the conditions of the installation. Hence it can be possible that a household respondent who has not experienced any problem with the installations will rate them as 'good' while a professional would condemn the same installations.

3.4. MH040 – Dwelling equipped with heating facilities

Values	
1	yes - central heating or similar
2	yes - other fixed heating
3	no - no fixed heating
Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing

This variable should refer to the degree of comfort of the dwelling, the first category corresponding to the most comfortable and the third category to the least comfortable. When deciding if a dwelling belongs to the first category, a key element should be the availability of heating in most rooms.

If different modes of heating are combined, the aspect of 'degree of comfort' must be kept in mind. If the combination allows a high level of comfort and if heating is available in most rooms, the first category should be chosen. An example of this situation is a fireplace (in the living room) combined with panel heaters (in the other rooms).

A detailed description of the three categories can be consulted in the section above on 'Analysis of the definitions'.

3.5. MH050 – Dwelling comfortably warm during winter time

Values	
1	yes
2	no
Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing

This variable refers to the equipment of the dwelling in terms of heating system and insulation.

The concern of this variable covers the following two concepts: 'Is the heating system efficient enough to keep the dwelling warm?' and 'Is the dwelling sufficiently insulated against the cold?' These two concepts should be kept in mind by the interviewers but the two questions do not have to be explicitly recorded in the questionnaire. The central point concerns the general state of the dwelling, i.e. is the condition of the dwelling good enough to allow that it is comfortably warm during winter time.

It should not be confused with the core variable *HH050 'Ability to keep home adequately warm'* which refers to the financial resources of the household and for which the concern could be expressed as: 'Does the household have sufficient financial resources to keep its dwelling sufficiently warm during winter time?'

3.6. MH060 – Dwelling equipped with air conditioning facilities

Values	
1	yes
2	no

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing

The air conditioning facilities are systems for controlling, especially lowering, the temperature and humidity of an enclosed space. These are systems that keep air cool and dry. Simple fans are not considered as air conditioning.

3.7. MH070 – Dwelling comfortably cool during summer time

Values	
1	yes
2	no

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing

This variable refers to the equipment of the dwelling in terms of insulation and cooling system.

The concern of this variable is the following: 'Is the cooling system efficient enough to keep the dwelling cool?' and/or 'Is the dwelling sufficiently insulated against the heat?'

3.8. MH080 – Overall satisfaction with dwelling

Values	
1	very dissatisfied
2	somewhat dissatisfied
3	satisfied
4	very satisfied

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing

The variable refers to the respondent's opinion/feeling about the degree of satisfaction with the dwelling in terms of meeting the household needs/opinion on the price, space, neighbourhood, distance to work, quality and other aspects.

3.9. MH090 – Accessibility of grocery services

Values	
1	with great difficulty
2	with some difficulty
3	easily
4	very easily

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	n/a (services not used by household)

About the concepts of 'accessibility' and 'grocery services' see explanations in the section above on 'Analysis of the definitions'.

3.10. MH100 – Accessibility of banking services

Values	
1	with great difficulty
2	with some difficulty
3	easily
4	very easily

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	n/a (services not used by household)

About the concepts of 'accessibility' and 'banking services' see explanations in the section above on 'Analysis of the definitions'.

3.11. MH110 – Accessibility of postal services

Values	
1	with great difficulty
2	with some difficulty
3	easily
4	very easily

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	n/a (services not used by household)

About the concepts of 'accessibility' and 'postal services' see explanations in the section above on 'Analysis of the definitions'.

3.12. MH120 – Accessibility of public transport

Values	
1	with great difficulty
2	with some difficulty
3	easily
4	very easily

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	n/a (services not used by household)

About the concepts of 'accessibility' and 'public transport' see explanations in the section above on 'Analysis of the definitions'.

3.13. MH130 – Accessibility of primary health care services

Values	
1	with great difficulty
2	with some difficulty
3	easily
4	very easily

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	n/a (services not used by household)

About the concepts of 'accessibility' and 'primary health care services' see explanations in the section above on 'Analysis of the definitions'.

3.14. MH140 – Accessibility of compulsory school

Values	
1	with great difficulty
2	with some difficulty
3	easily
4	very easily

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	n/a (services not used by household)

About the concepts of 'accessibility' and 'compulsory school' see explanations in the section above on 'Analysis of the definitions'.

3.15. MH150 – Change of dwelling

Values	
1	yes
2	no

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing

The reference period is ‘the last two years’.

This variable records if there has been at least one change of dwelling during the last two years.

3.16. MH160 – Main reason for change of dwelling

Values	
1	family related reasons
2	employment related reasons
3	housing related reasons
4	eviction/distrait
5	landlord did not prolong the contract
6	financial reasons
7	other

Flags	
1	filled
-1	missing
-2	n/a (MH150 not = 1)

The reference period is ‘the last two years’.

If there have been several changes of dwelling during the reference period, the main reason for the most recent change should be given.

The seven categories are described in detail in the section above on 'Analysis of the definitions'.