

Learning from John Hills - on social housing

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1) Thinking from first principles

No firm criteria of success/failure were ever established for council housing, so it has had *'small scale successes'* while *'moving forward with a mounting sense of failure'* (Ravetz 2003:4).

'What are we trying to achieve?'

- Hills 2001 on the role of housing subsidies and benefits in *Urban Studies*

'What are we trying to achieve?... 'ends and means'

- *'Hills Review'* of social housing, 2007:16

"A decent home for all at a price within their means"

- Hills 2007

2) The role of quantitative data as a complement to qualitative data

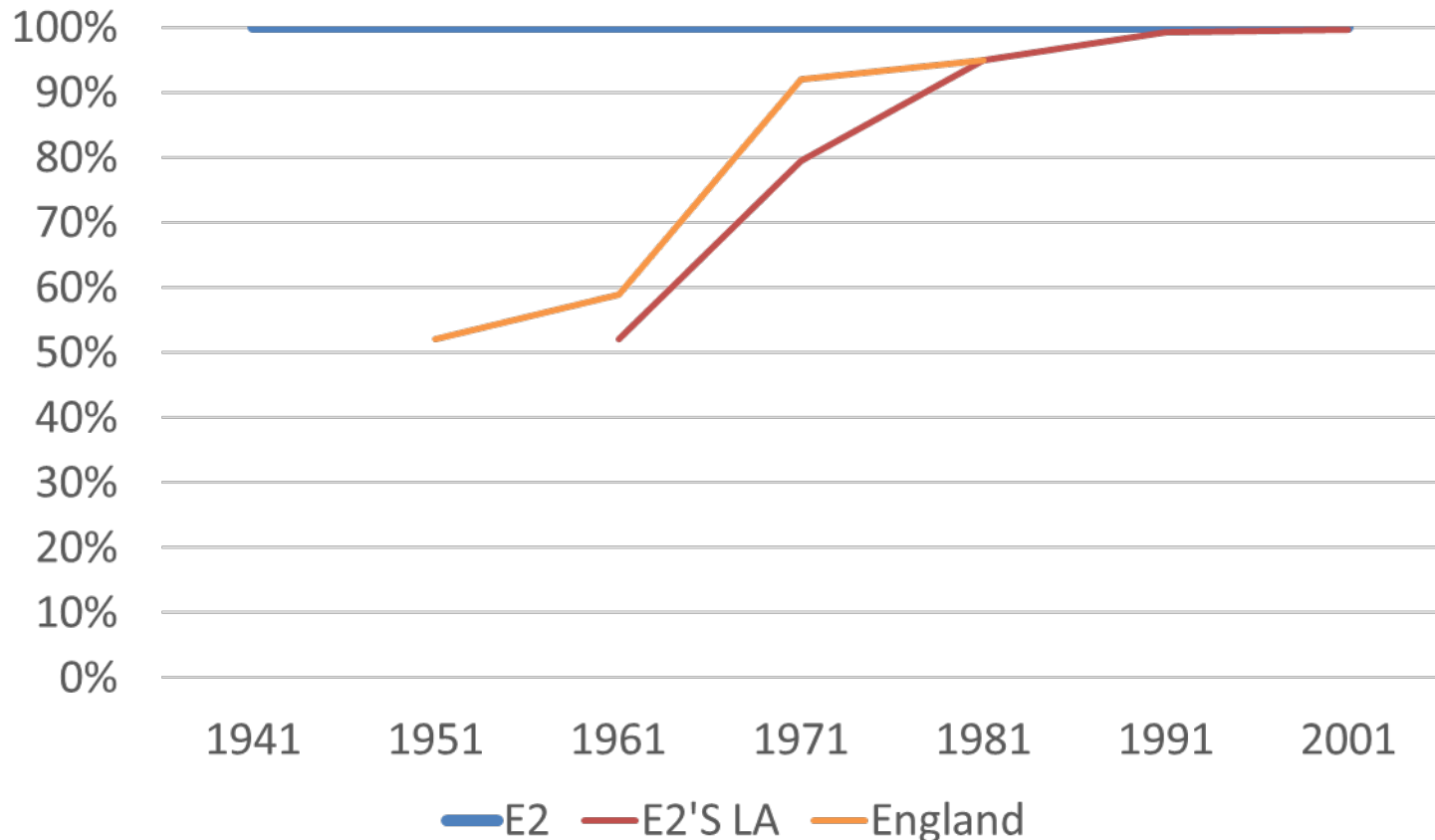
Eg Qualitative evidence of change at estate E2, in NW England...

1938 - 'we got a new house on the [E2] estate... it was great, we had a bathroom inside and a toilet as well and a garden back and front' (oral history)

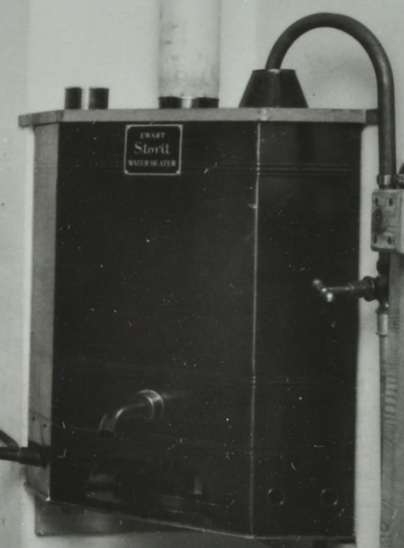
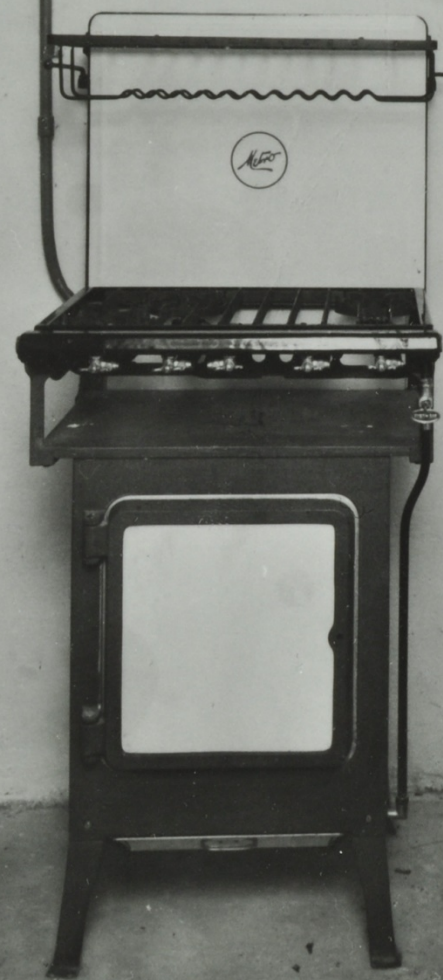
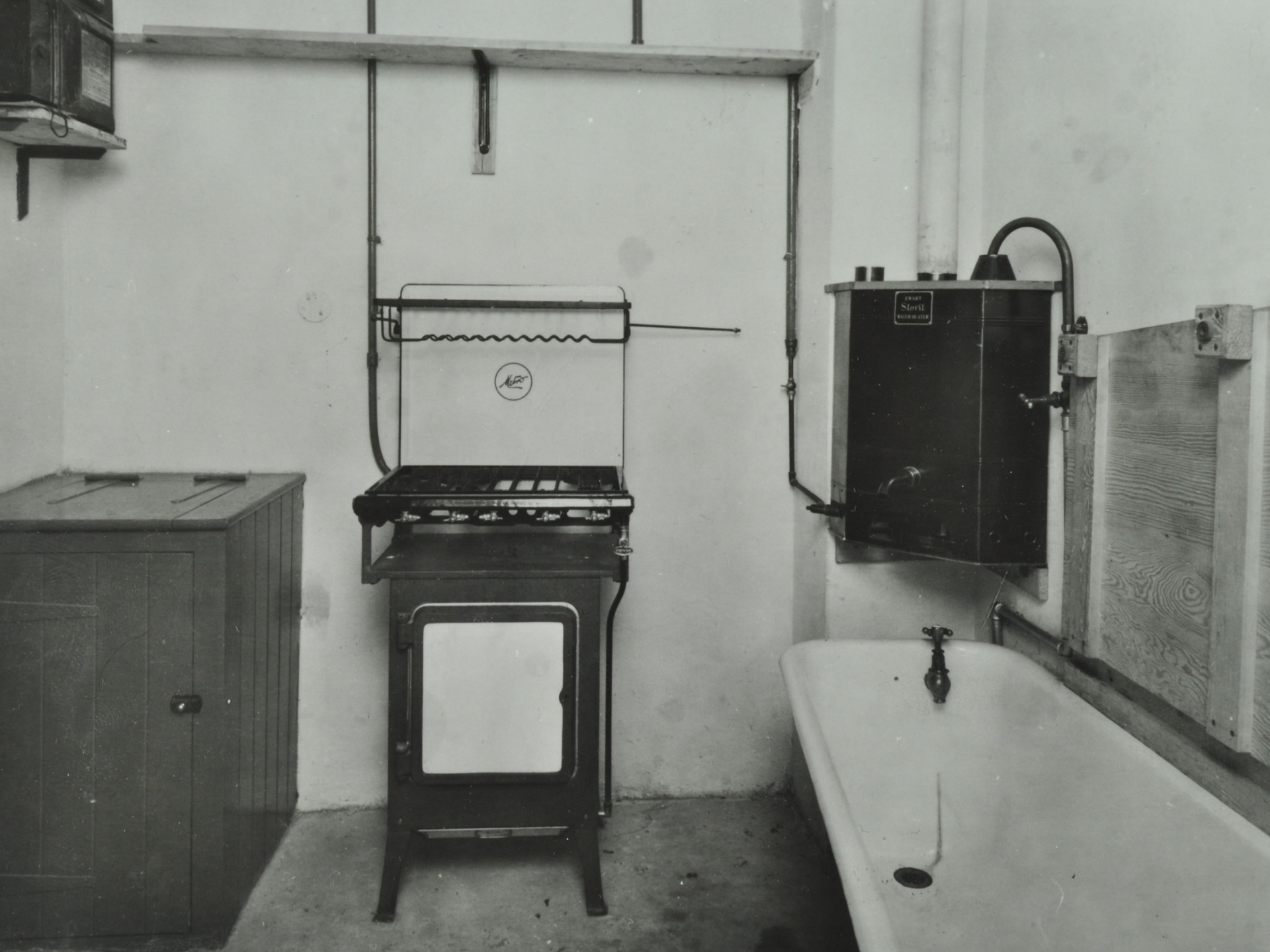
1979 - A resident: 'has to wear a woolly jumper, coat and scarf if she has a long job to do in the kitchen... she said, "the house was alright in summer but hopeless in winter"' (local paper)
(Tunstall 2020)

Contextual quantitative evidence:

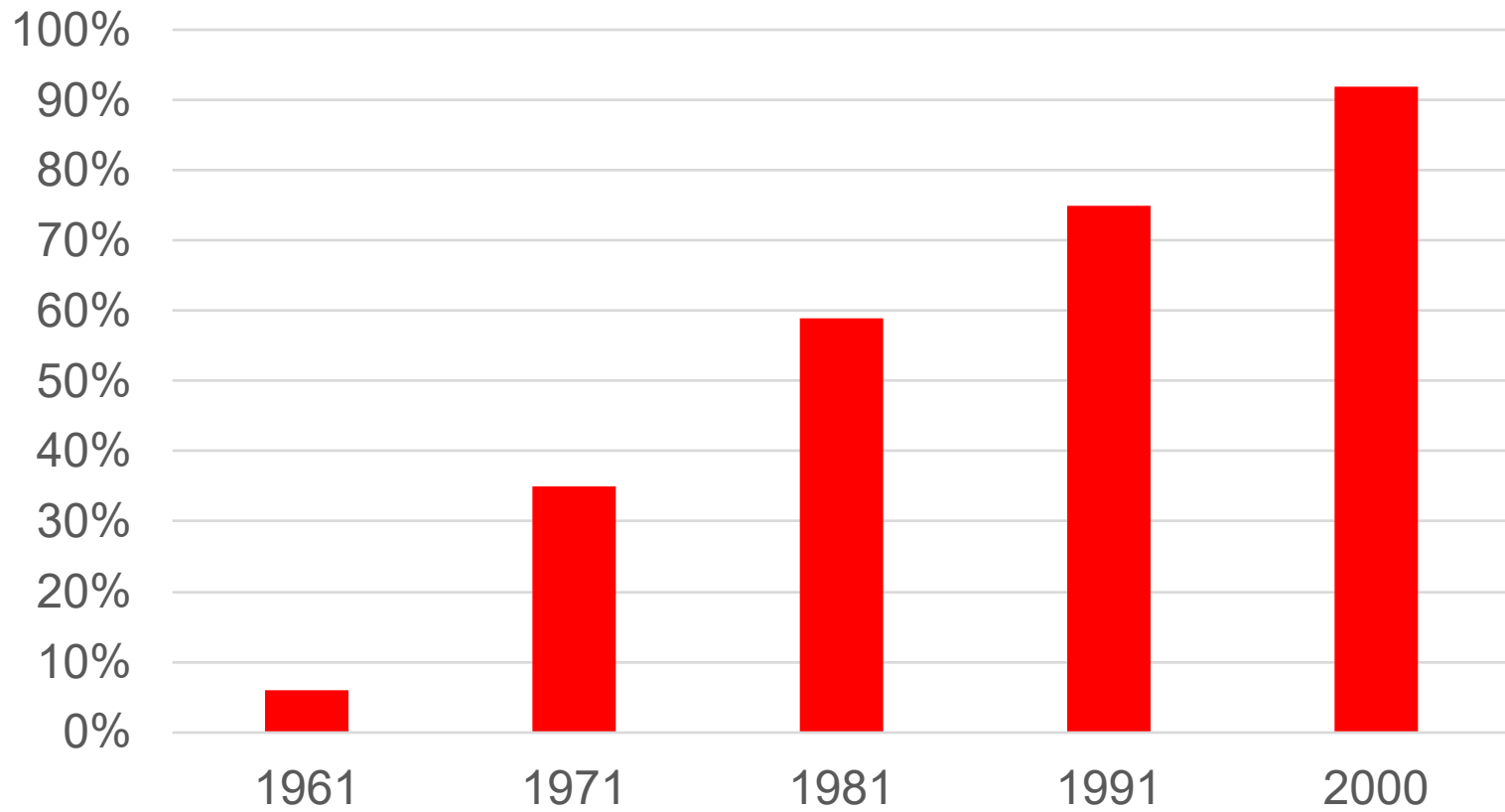
The percentage of households with sole use of indoor toilet and bathroom, E2 estate, E2's LA and England



Source: Censuses



The proportion of GB households with central heating



Source: Holmans 2005

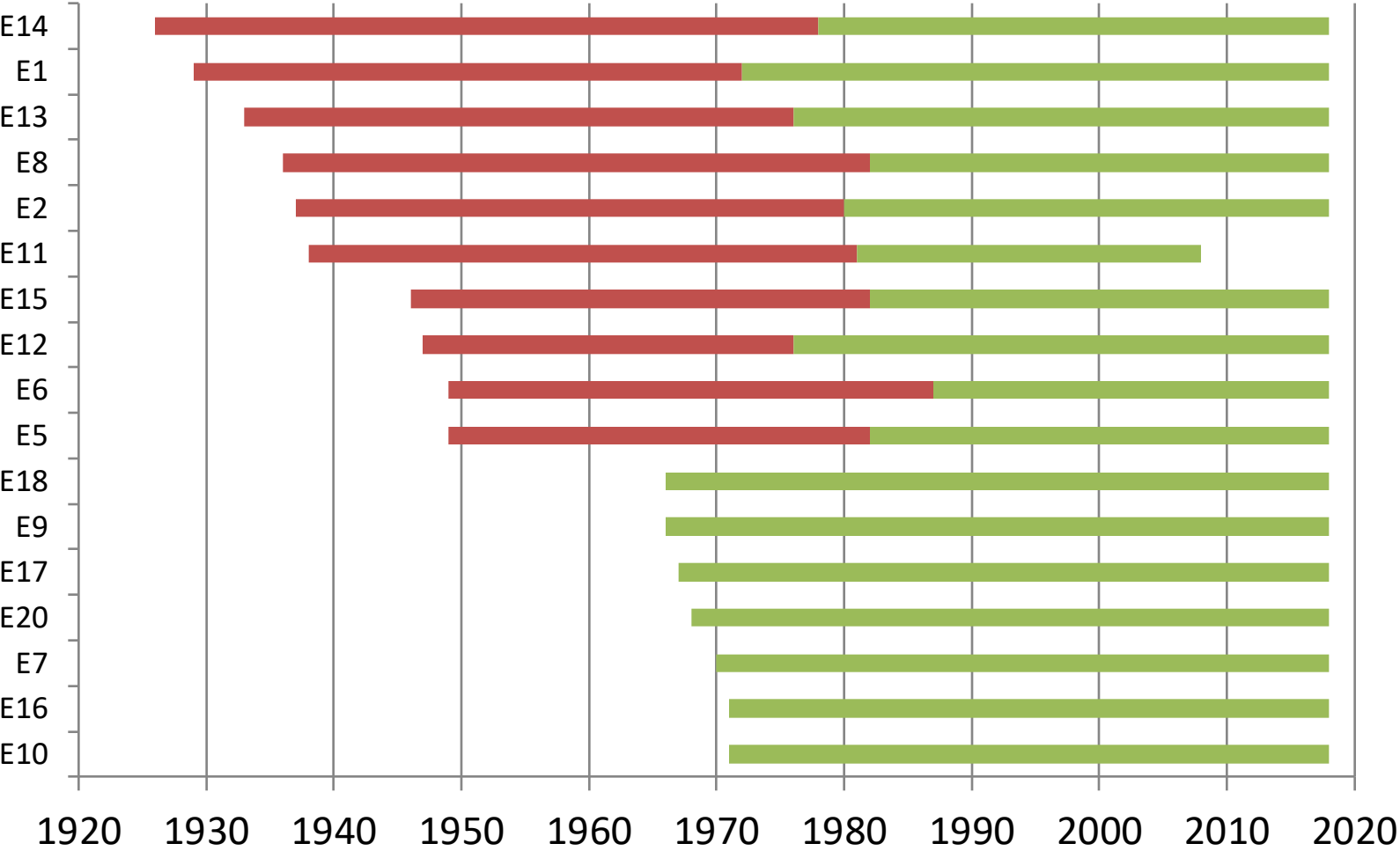
Average indoor winter temperature, England:

1970 – 11.2°C

2010 – 17.7°C

Source: Palmer and Cooper 2014

The arrival of central heating at the 20 estates, 1966-1987 (Tunstall 2020)



■ Years without central heating ■ Years with at least some central heating

3) The place of housing policy in UK public policy overall

“‘Housing policy’ per se hardly exists any more: it survives within the welfare state mainly as an adjunct of social security (through Housing Benefit) or as part of wider city regeneration policies”

- Hills 1998:13 – *The state of welfare*, 2nd edn

The main owner/manager in the 20 estates, 1926-2018 (Tunstall 2020)



By 2010s, housing policy as means not end?
Means to support economy and govt income

The case of the pandemic:

- £440bn quant easing in 2020 and interest rates dropped to 0.25%
- £10.4 billion SEISS to construction industry (41% total)
- £5.5bn furlough to construction industry (8% total)
- £4.7bn stamp duty holiday (England and NI)
- 23% of UK mortgage holders used a 'mortgage holiday'
- Construction sites and estate agents closed for 7 weeks only
- July 2020 – OBR predicted annual house price fall of 8%
- 2020 – UK house prices rose by 11% (on average by £37,000)
(Tunstall 2023)

4) Social housing: *Ends and means: The future roles of social housing, the 'Hills review', 2007*

Strong argument for social housing *per se*

But *"in terms of some of the key reasons for using social housing to achieve housing policy aims, the outcomes are at present disappointing"* (Hills 2007:11)

- Inefficiencies and injustices
- Socio-tenurial polarisation: *"collapse"* in tenants' employment rates 1981-2006 (p100)
- *"lacking.... evidence of the positive effect on employment rates that the existence and security of sub-market rents should give"* (p104)

Policy ideas: Mixed income communities, aiding choice and mobility, housing advice and employment/training advice, more varied/short-term tenancies

After the Grenfell tragedy in 2017... another (unpublished) review of social housing

Continuity 2007-18...

and change –

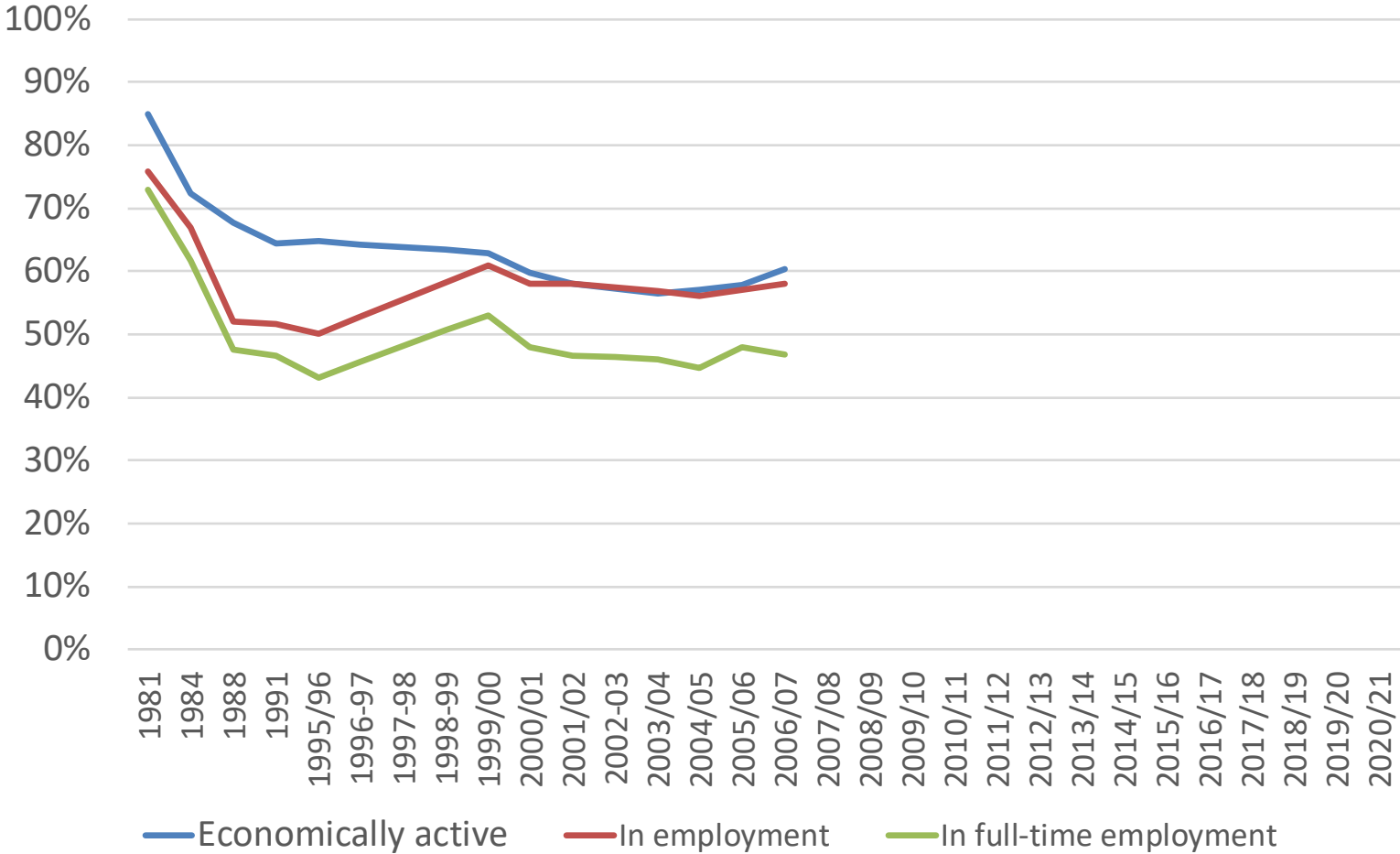
- Regulation reorganised in 2008, 2010, 2010, 2016, 2018...
- No single publicly accessible data on landlords' stocks and structures; relatively little research being done
- Shrinking of social housing tenure stopped; welfare reform; compulsory real rent decreases 2015-19; cladding crisis (Tunstall and Pleace 2018)

5) Socio-tenurial polarisation revisited

Council tenants' incomes as a proportion of home owners' incomes stopped falling in the late 1990s (Hills et al 2010)...

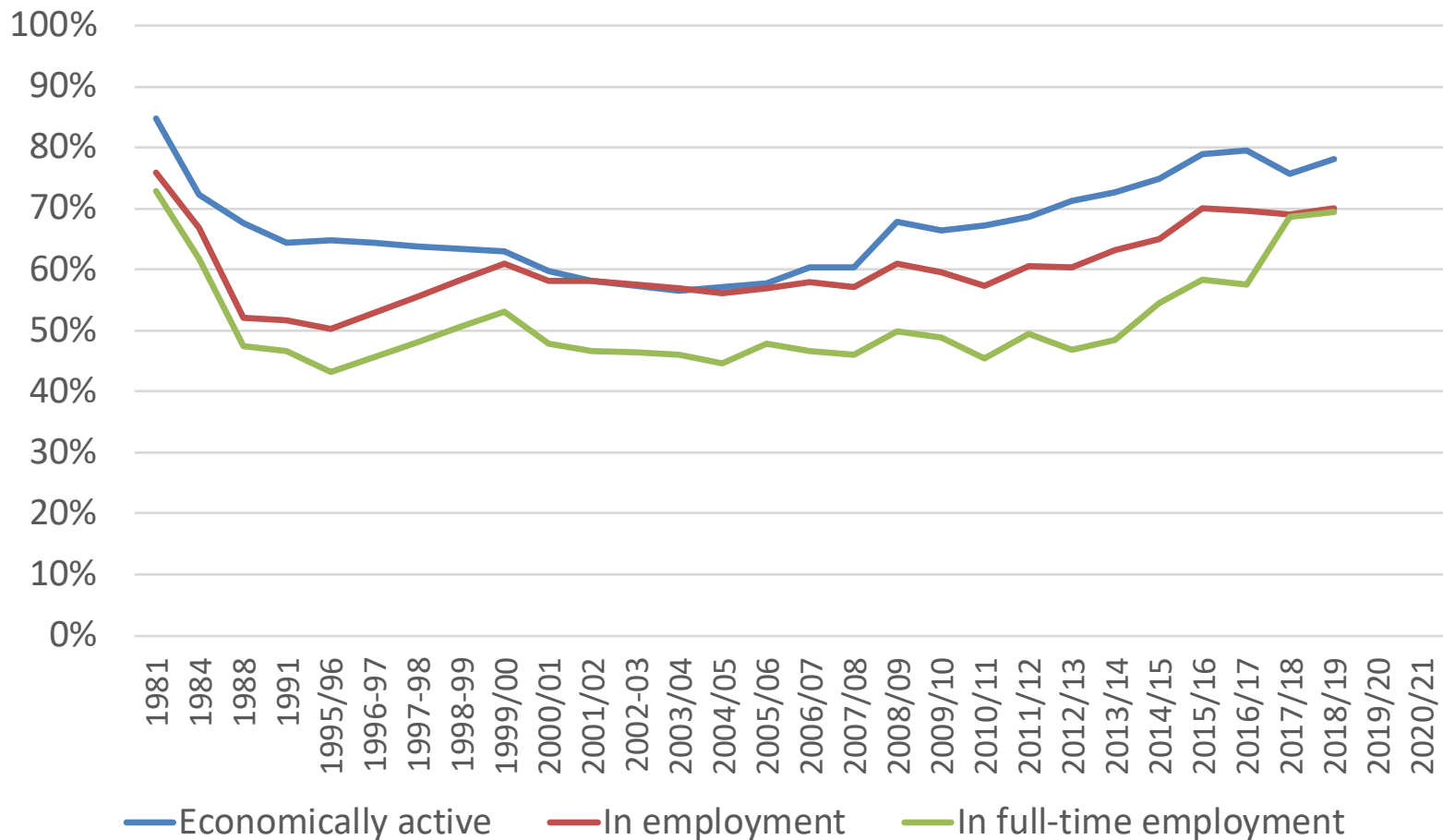
Residualisation

Social renting HRP in England relative to all HRP – Hills 2007



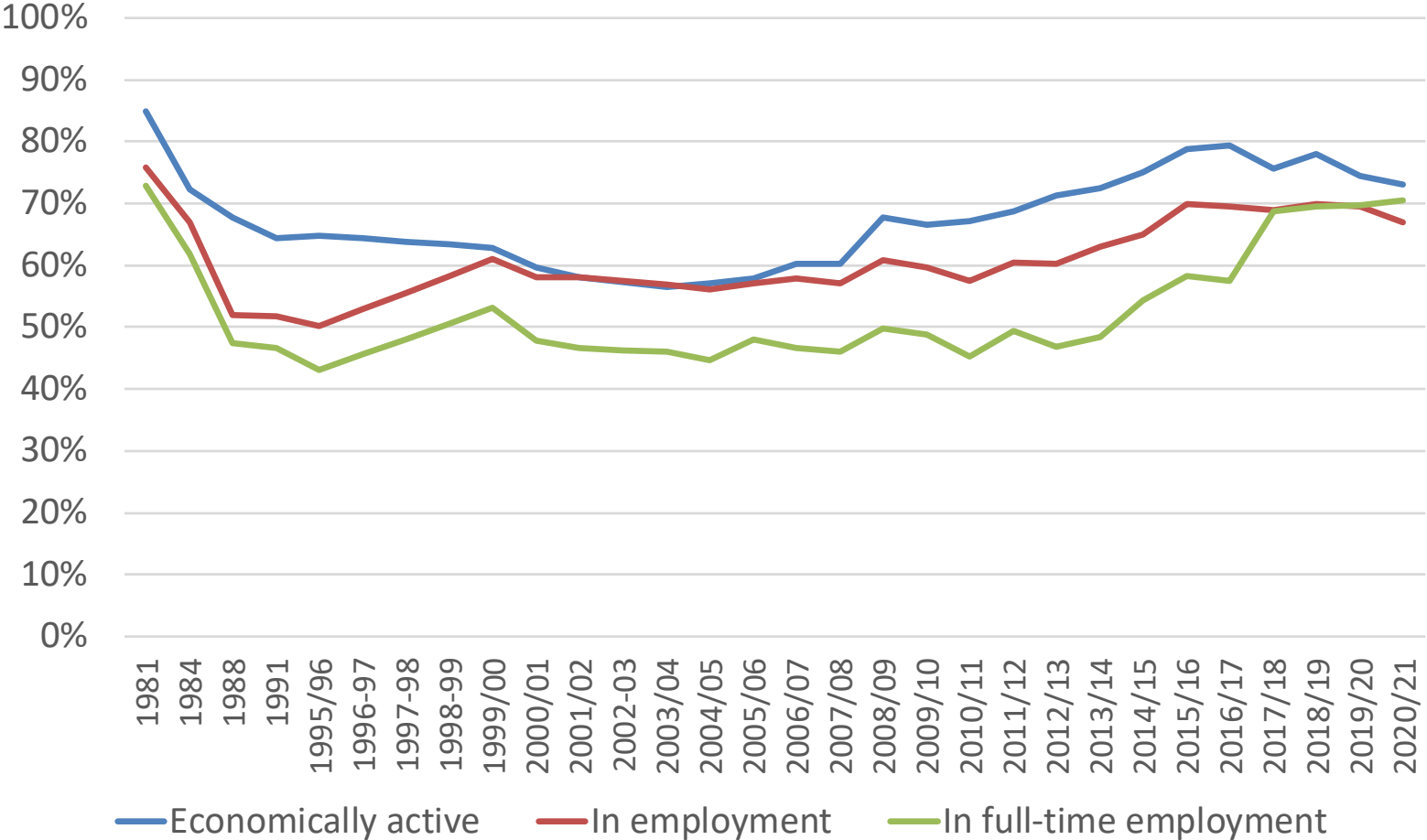
De-residualisation?

Social renting HRP's in England relative to all HRP's –
Tunstall 2021



Re-residualisation?

Social renting HRP in England relative to all HRP – 2022





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Reception

- “seminal” – *Inside Housing*; good analysis but “repellent” - Stephen Dorrell MP; queries from Shelter, HAs...

Impact

- Experiments by LAs with housing options services, now standard, then Housing (Wales) Act 2014; Homeless Prevention Act 2017 (England)
- More effort by social landlords on support into employment
- Experiments by social landlords with fixed-term social tenancies, then Housing and Planning Act 2016