

# **A tool to characterize the impact of housing on health and well-being – the “Domiscore”**

## **Executive summary**



November 30, 2020

**Introduction.** Housing represents the primary living place of an individual or a family. It encompasses the built structure where one lives in, as well as its surrounding environment. Housing constitutes a major determinant of health because it directly and indirectly impacts the residents’ physical, mental and social well-being. In France, several provisions aim to establish standards for housing to protect the households’ health and focus on the structure’s decency, salubrity and security. Over the years, France has experienced changes in its demography characterized by a decrease in the household size and an increased population, while facing the aging of social housing structures. This led to a change in the legislative and regulatory frameworks, the implementation of experimentations and innovations to increase the quality of housing. On April 2018, the General Directorate of Health (DGS) asked the French High Council for Public Health (HCSP) to provide insights into a draft decree on housing salubrity. A dedicated working group first reviewed the factors that contribute to a safe, healthy housing and published a synthetic report in 2019<sup>1</sup>. Following this report, the working group developed a tool to inform on the impact of a housing on its occupants’ health and wellbeing: the Domiscore.

**The aim of the Domiscore.** The Domiscore aims to promote healthy housing and to detect at risk situations that require complementary procedures. It can also provide information on a housing situation at a local level to inform decision makers, by assessing a representative set of houses on a same sector. The Domiscore is a multicriteria grid that assesses several characteristics that are known to impact health and well-being. The Domiscore is unique in that it is not limited to the sole hazardous potential of a housing since it considers both the negative and the positive impacts a housing can have on health. It takes into account vulnerable populations (disabled or elderly people for instance) and can help to identify those who require social assistance. It does not require measuring tools and can be used by a variety of professionals (e.g. private landlords, estate agents and social housing providers, NGOs fighting for housing rights, elected representatives and agents from collectivities in charge of housing, consultants for indoor environment) that are not necessary experts of the housing field.

**Evaluation process.** The Domiscore encompasses 46 factors (called “variables”) selected from the report [Facteurs contribuant à un habitat favorable à la santé \(2019\)](#) (“Factors contributing to a safe housing”), clustered into 16 categories. Each category encompasses between 1 and 6 variables. The evaluation consists in scoring the variables on a four-levels scale (0, 1, 2, 3; 0 being associated to a situation that is favorable for health and well-being), through three different methods: on-site inspection, consultation of diagnoses reports and websites, and/or exchanges with the residents. A category’s score corresponds to the highest score obtained by at least one of its variables and is assigned to a specific color that informs on its impact on health (0=green, 1=yellow, 2=orange, 3=red). The housing overall score is computed as the arithmetic summation of all categories’ scores and is associated to a specific color as well.

The provisional grid was tested by several professionals (specialized or not in the housing field) on 28 accommodations. Their feedback was collected through interviews and the grid was modified accordingly. An average time of filling was estimated at 1.5 hours, which likely will be reduced after several trials. The Domiscore was then submitted to a variety of actors through a public consultation (mayors, deputies, associations against low quality housing, health agencies, insalubrity agents, real-estate agent, social workers...) and their reviews were taken into account in the elaboration of an ultimate version of the grid.

The full report *Élaboration d’un outil de caractérisation d’un habitat du point de vue de la santé et du bien-être – le « Domiscore ». Rapport de faisabilité* (“A tool to characterize the impact of housing on health and well-being – the “Domiscore”. Feasibility report”) is available in French [at this address](#).

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<sup>1</sup> [Facteurs contribuant à un habitat favorable à la santé \(2019\)](#) (“Factors contributing to a safe housing”)

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