

ACORN Renters Survey

Executive Summary

Affordability is one of the main issues facing renters today. 68% of all survey respondents, including 83% of private renters, spend at least 30% of their income on rent. Half of renters in the private rented sector (PRS) spend at least 40%. Three in five renters had a rent rise imposed in the last 12 months, averaging £102 per month or 11%. More than a third (36%) have been forced to leave their community because they could no longer afford the rent.

Housing quality is poor and is making renters ill. 60% reported damp and mould in the last 12 months, 39% excessive cold, and 46% could not keep their home at a comfortable temperature. Almost half of all respondents (49%) said they were concerned about the effect of their home on their mental or physical health. 56% did not know their EPC rating.

Tenure is insecure for private renters. 29% of PRS respondents have been evicted at least once, with Section 21 “no-fault” evictions the most common type. Almost a third (32%) of private renters have not reported a problem to their landlord for fear of retaliation. 3% have experienced an illegal eviction.

PRS enforcement is inadequate. One in five respondents had involved their local council in a dispute with a landlord; almost two-thirds rated the outcome at 1 or 2 out of 5. Only 4% identified any part of the council as particularly helpful. Where housing-related crime or anti-social behaviour was reported to the housing provider, 68% rated the response at the lowest possible score.

Discrimination is widespread. 24% of respondents had been refused housing for not being a “professional”, and 18% had been refused outright on the basis of receiving benefits. 11% had given up a pet to secure housing. A third had been required to pay multiple months’ rent in advance, and 21% had been priced out of an otherwise affordable property by such demands.

Together, these findings give an overview of the experiences of renters in England and Wales, and establish a baseline against which the impact of the Renters’ Rights Act on English private renters can be measured. They also raise a problem that recent housing reforms do not significantly address: that without major action on rent levels, the unaffordability of renting described in this report will continue to transfer wealth from tenants to their landlords.

Introduction

This survey presents the results of a survey of tenants in England and Wales in the summer of 2025, who shared their experiences of renting across different sectors as the Renters’ Rights Bill was proceeding through its final stages in Parliament.

The report covers nine thematic areas: housing satisfaction and aspirations; housing quality and health; energy efficiency and thermal comfort; council and enforcement performance; landlord and provider behaviour; rent affordability and rent rises; evictions and security of tenure; discrimination and barriers to renting; and deposits and rent in advance.

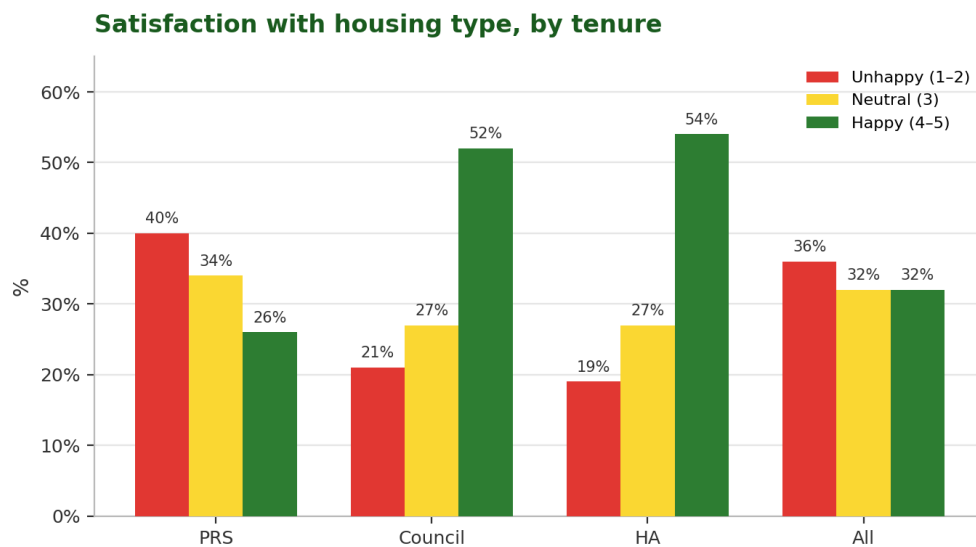
Methodology

The ACORN Renters Survey was conducted by ACORN among renters in England and Wales. Fieldwork ran from 21 May to 19 July 2025, and the survey received 419 responses. Results have been weighted to improve the representativeness of the sample relative to the renting population of England and Wales. Weights were calculated across nine demographic dimensions: age, gender, annual income, ethnicity, long-term illness or disability, household type, nation, region, and employment status. Population benchmarks were drawn from the English Housing Survey 2023–24 (age, income, ethnicity, disability, household type, region, and employment status), Census 2021 (gender), and official PRS household estimates. Weights were normalised so that the sum of weights equals the total number of respondents (419), preserving the effective sample size.

1. Housing Satisfaction and Aspirations

1.1 Satisfaction with Housing Type

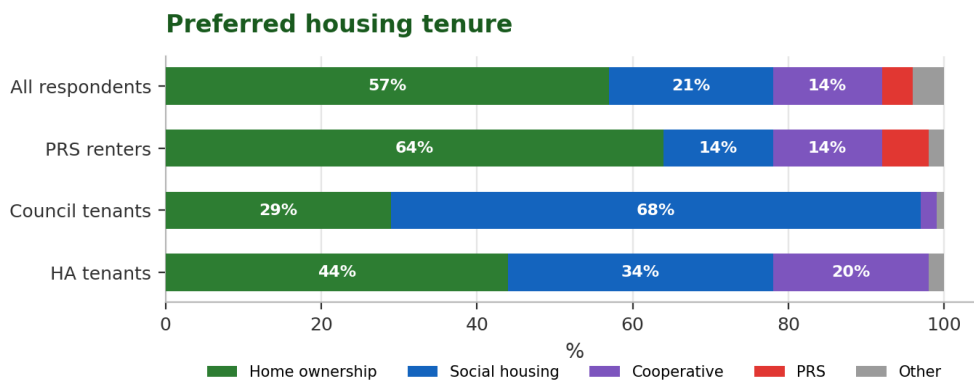
Renters were asked how happy they were with their type of housing on a scale of 1 to 5. The results show stark differences between tenure types.



Four in ten PRS renters rated themselves unhappy with their housing type, compared to roughly one in five social housing tenants. Over half of both council and housing association (HA) tenants rated themselves happy (4–5), compared to barely a quarter of PRS renters.

1.2 Housing Aspirations

When asked what type of housing they would ideally live in, the overwhelming preference, across all tenure types, was home ownership. Only 6% of PRS renters would choose to remain in the private rented sector.

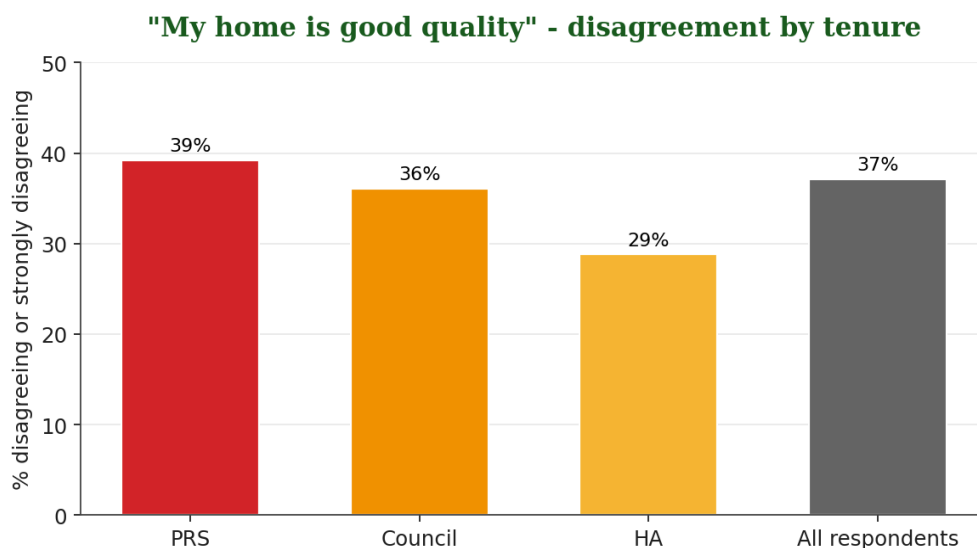


Among PRS renters, 64% would prefer home ownership, and a further 14% would prefer social housing. Social housing tenants showed a markedly different pattern: 68% of council tenants would choose to remain in council housing, while housing association tenants were more evenly split between ownership (44%) and social housing (34%).

2. Housing Quality and Health

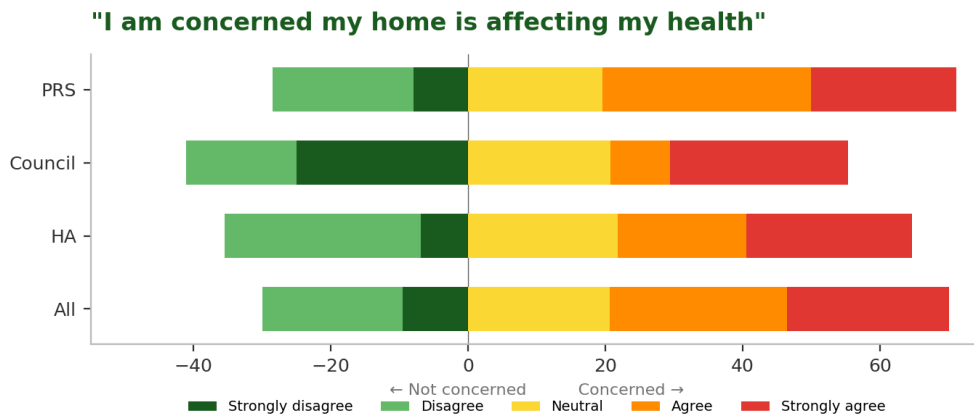
2.1 Housing Quality

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement “My home is good quality.” More than a third of all respondents (37%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. PRS renters fared worst, at 39%, with council tenants close behind at 36%. Even among housing association tenants, where satisfaction was highest, almost three in ten (29%) considered their home not to be good quality.



2.2 Health Impact

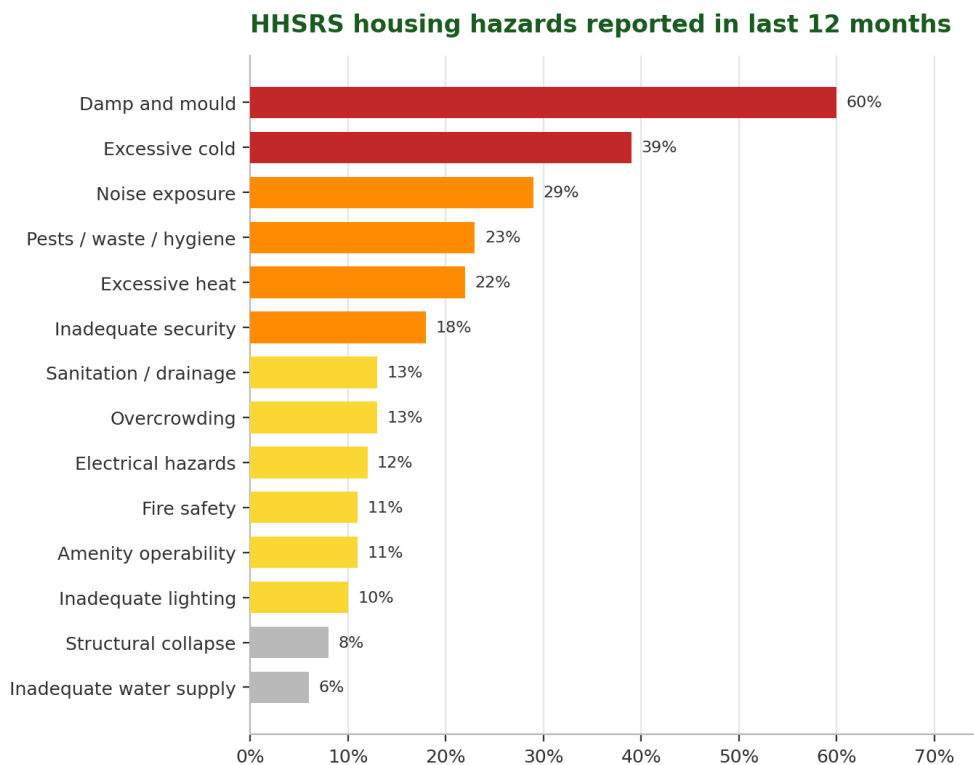
The survey asked renters whether they agreed that they were concerned about the effect their home was having on their mental and/or physical health.



49% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their home was affecting their health. Among PRS renters, 30% agreed and 21% strongly agreed. Council tenants showed a less concentrated pattern, but housing association tenants were also significantly affected, with 43% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

2.3 Housing Conditions (HHSRS Hazards)

Respondents were asked whether their home had experienced any of 29 specific issues in the last 12 months.

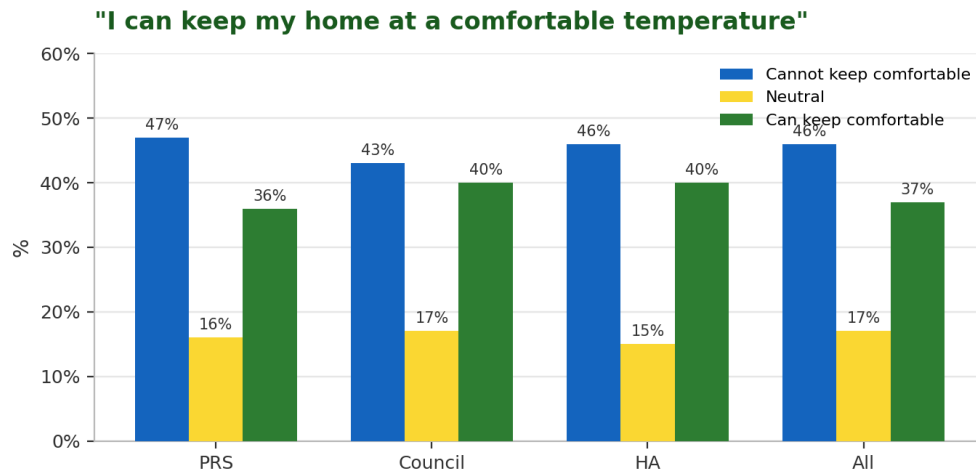


A comfortable majority (60%) of respondents reported experience of damp and mould, with issues around noise, temperature and safety also well represented.

3. Energy Efficiency and Thermal Comfort

3.1 Thermal Comfort

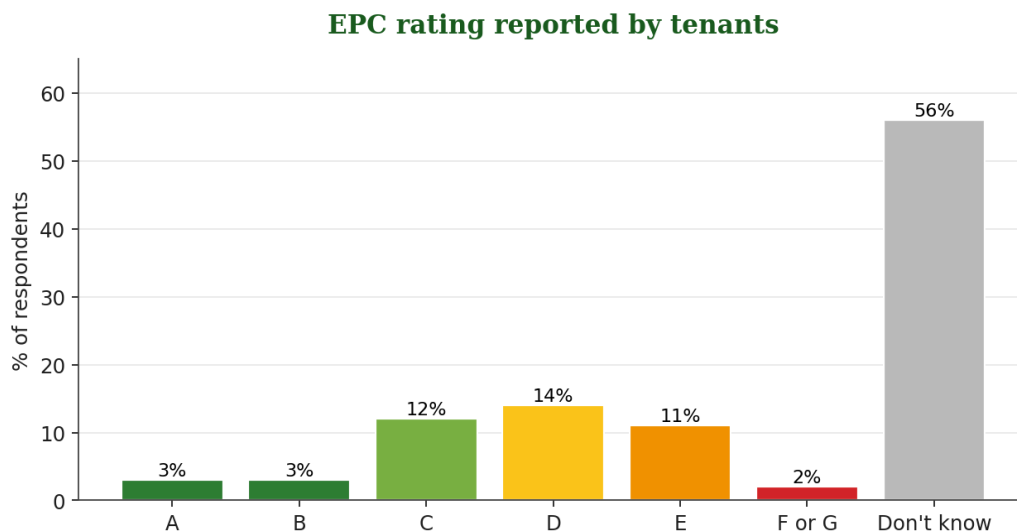
Renters were asked whether they could keep their home at a comfortable temperature throughout the year.



Nearly half of all respondents (46%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they could maintain a comfortable temperature, with consistency across tenure types.

3.2 EPC Ratings

A majority of respondents (56%) did not know their home's EPC rating. Among those who did, the most common ratings were D (14%) and C (12%), with 11% at E. Only 3% reported an A rating and 3% a B rating, while 2% reported F or G — the lowest bands of energy efficiency.

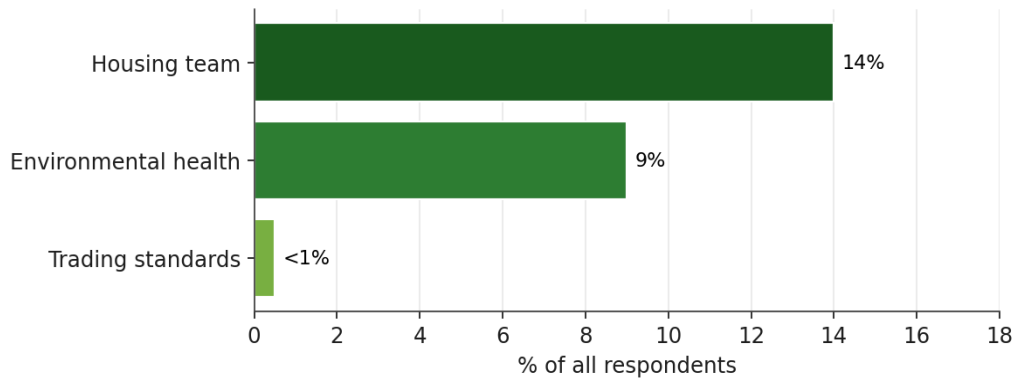


4. Council and Enforcement Performance

4.1 Council Involvement in Disputes

One in five respondents (20%) had involved their local council in a dispute with a landlord over repairs, licensing, or another issue. Among those who had dealt with the council, the housing team was the most commonly contacted department (14% of all respondents), followed by environmental health (9%), and trading standards (less than 1%).

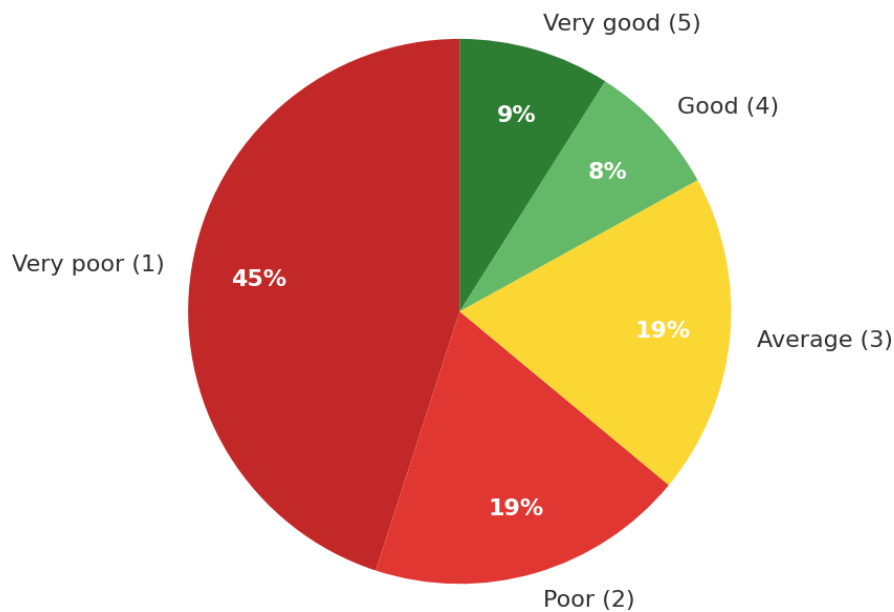
Council departments contacted in landlord disputes



4.2 Council Satisfaction

Satisfaction with council handling was overwhelmingly negative.

Satisfaction with council handling of disputes

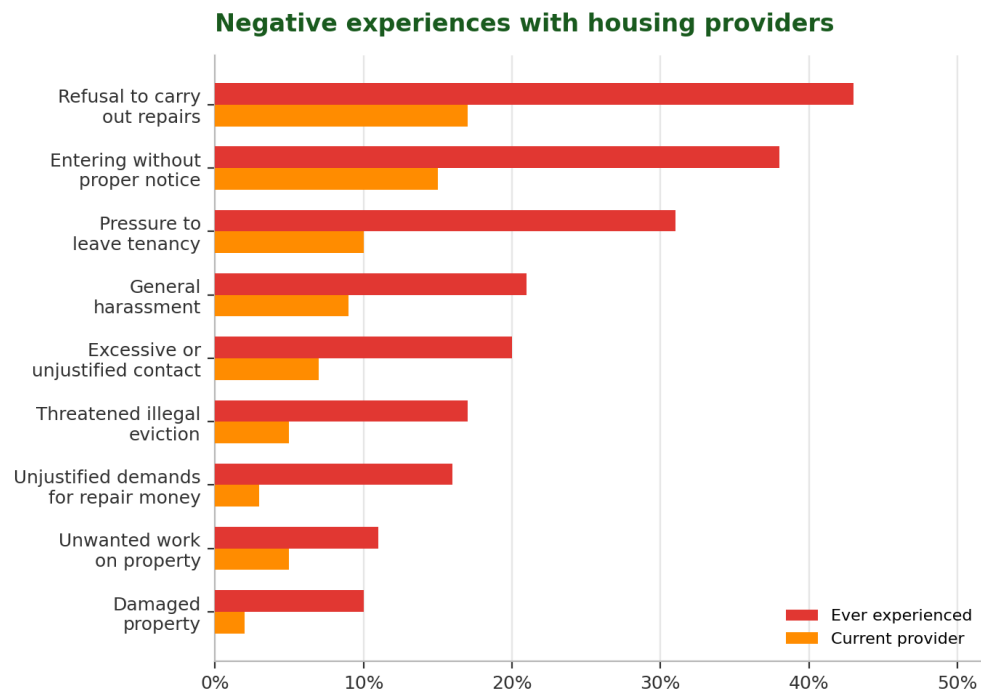


Almost two-thirds (64%) of those who involved the council rated the outcome at 1 or 2 out of 5, and only 9% gave a score of 4 or 5. When asked whether any part of the council was particularly helpful, only 4% said yes. Conversely, 9% identified parts of the council as particularly unhelpful.

5. Landlord and Housing Provider Behaviour

5.1 Lifetime and Current Experience

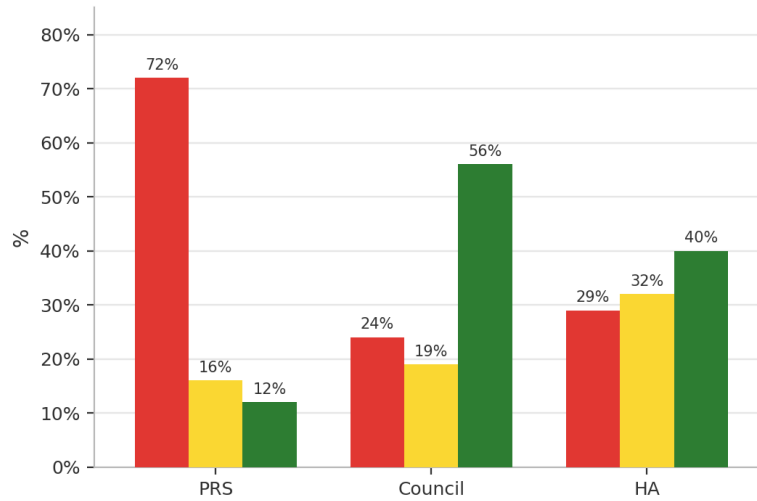
The survey asked whether respondents had ever experienced a range of specific behaviours from a housing provider, and whether they were experiencing them from their current provider.



The single most common experience was refusal to carry out repairs, reported by 43% of all respondents (and 17% from their current provider). Nearly four in ten renters have had a landlord enter their property without proper notice (38%), and almost a third (31%) have been pressured to leave a tenancy.

5.2 Value for Money

"My home is good value for money", by tenure



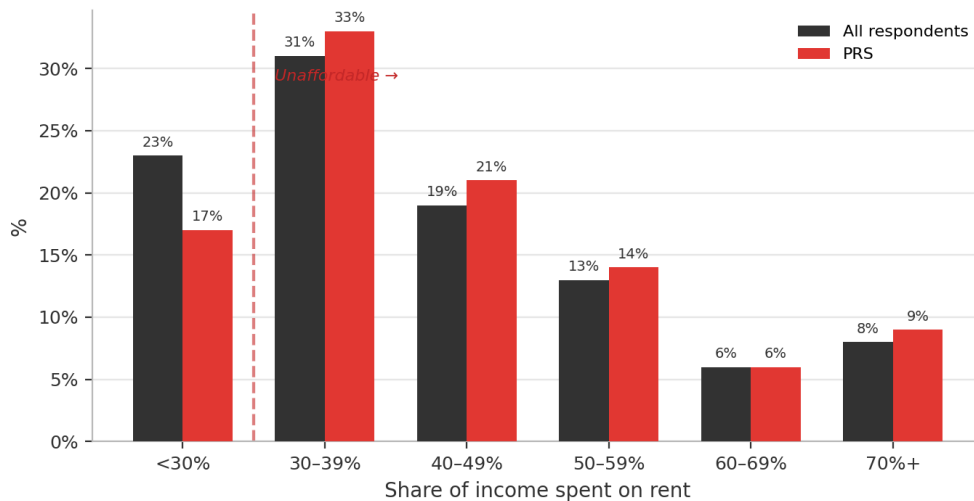
The gap between PRS and social housing tenants is enormous. Nearly three-quarters of PRS renters (72%) considered their home poor value, compared to roughly a quarter of social housing tenants. Only 12% of PRS renters considered their home good value for money.

6. Rent Affordability and Rent Rises

6.1 Rent as a Proportion of Income

The widely used threshold for housing unaffordability is 30% of income. The survey results show the overwhelming majority of respondents exceed this threshold.

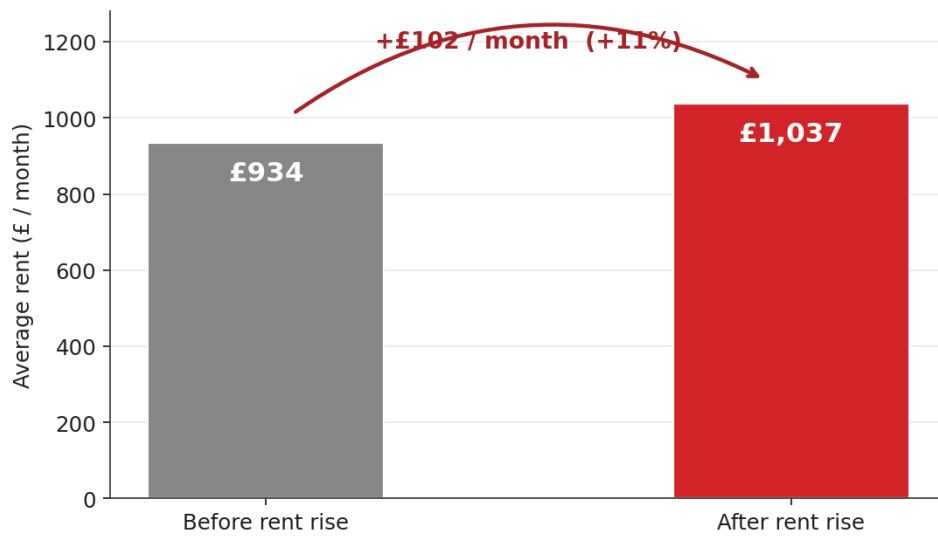
Rent as a proportion of income



68% of all respondents spend 30% or more of their income on rent. Among PRS renters, 83% spend 30% or more, and nearly half (50%) spend 40% or more.

6.2 Rent Rises

Average rent before and after annual rise



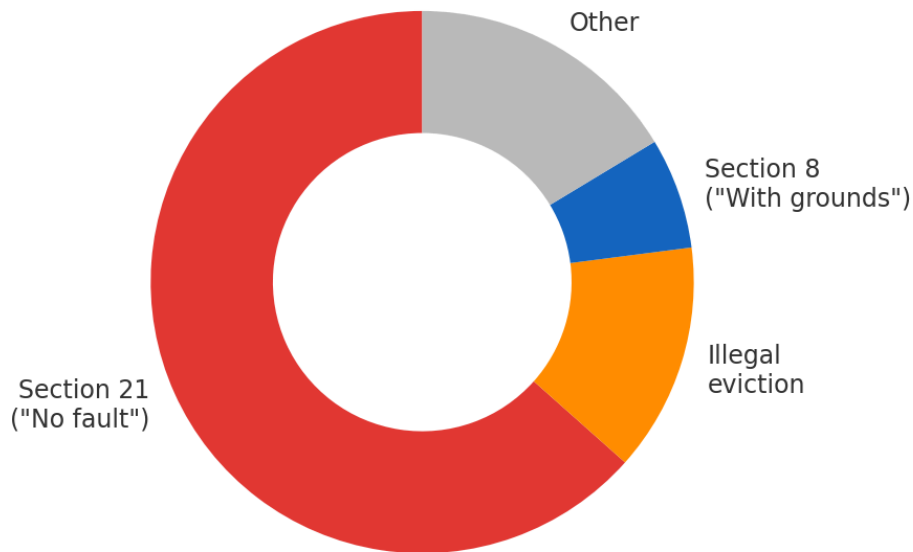
Among those who experienced a rent rise, the average increase was approximately £102 per person per month, representing a rise of around 11%. Over a year, this amounts to over £1,200 in additional housing costs per person. 10% of those who experienced a rent rise were forced to relocate as a result.

More than a third of respondents (36%) reported being displaced from their community by unaffordable rent. Of those with children who were forced to move, 24% reported that their children had to change schools.

7. Evictions and Security of Tenure

7.1 Eviction Prevalence and Type

Types of eviction experienced (% of all respondents)

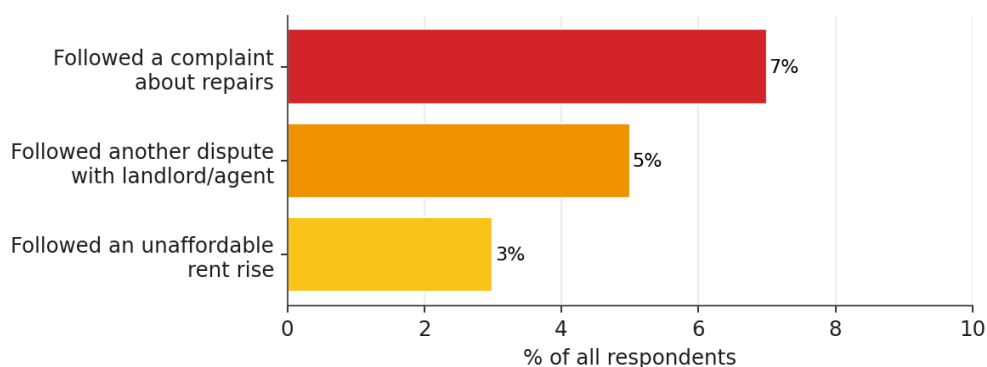


Section 21 “no-fault” evictions were by far the most common type, reported by 16% of all respondents. Illegal eviction was reported by 3%, and Section 8 “with grounds” evictions by 2%. 29% of PRS respondents reported having been evicted at least once

7.2 Eviction Triggers

Among respondents who had been evicted, 7% of all respondents reported that the eviction followed a complaint about repairs or maintenance. 5% said their eviction followed some other dispute with their landlord or agent, and 3% said it followed an unaffordable rent rise.

Triggers preceding an eviction

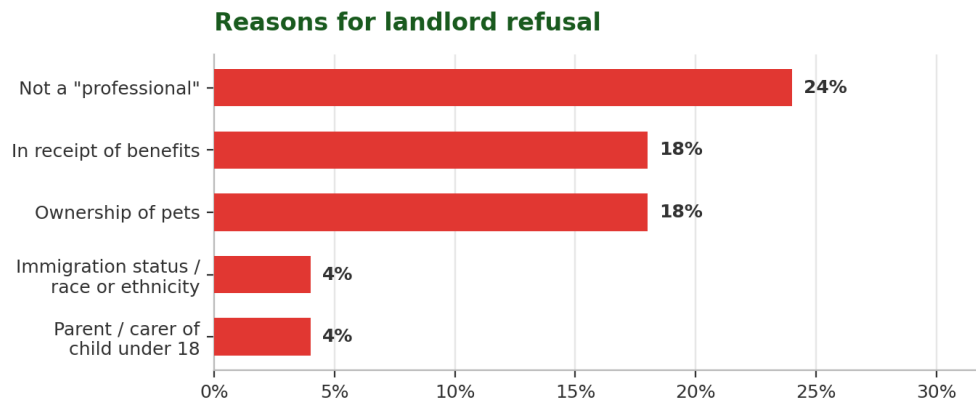


Almost a third of private renters (32%) have been deterred from raising a problem with their landlord by the threat of retaliatory eviction. Among parents, guardians, or carers who had been evicted and forced to relocate, 28% reported that one or more of their children had to move school.

8. Discrimination and Barriers to Renting

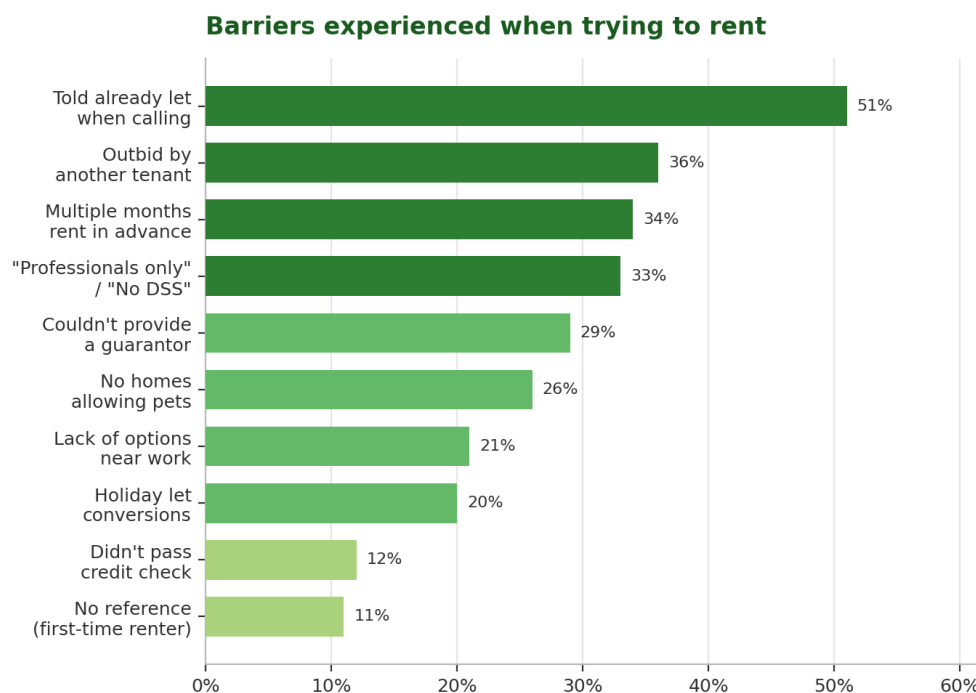
8.1 Landlord Refusal

Respondents were asked whether they believed they had been refused by a landlord for specific reasons.



Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) reported being refused housing for not being a “professional”, 18% reported direct refusal on the basis of receiving benefits, 4% reported refusal on the basis of immigration status or race/ethnicity, and 4% on the basis of being a parent or carer.

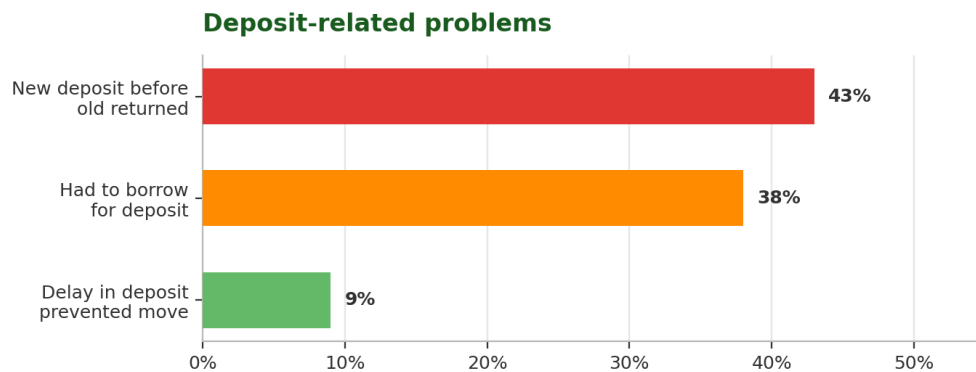
8.2 Barriers to Renting



Over half of respondents (51%) had been told a property was already let when they called to view. Over a third (36%) encountered a bidding war, and a third (34%) were required to pay multiple months' rent in advance.

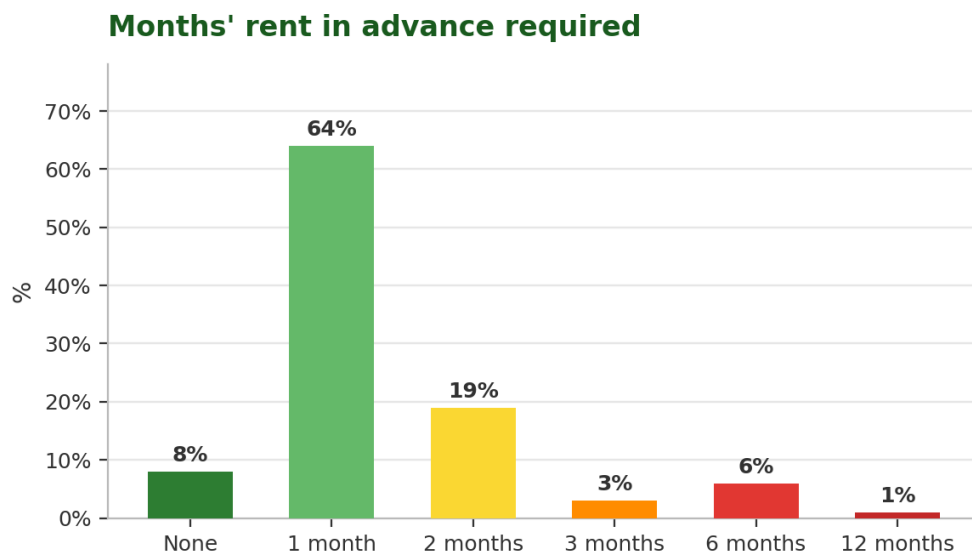
9. Deposits and Rent in Advance

9.1 Deposit Problems



The most common problem was having to pay a new deposit before the previous one was returned, reported by 43%. 38% had to borrow money to fund a deposit, meaning that moving home can push renters into debt before they have even moved in.

9.2 Rent in Advance



While the majority (64%) were asked for the standard one month, a significant minority faced higher demands: 19% paid two months in advance, and 6% paid six months. 21% of respondents have been prevented from renting an otherwise affordable property due to rent-in-advance demands.

Conclusion

It is unsurprising that only 6% of private renters wish to remain within the private rented sector, a sector characterised by unaffordability, insecurity, poor housing quality and discrimination. When tenants experience problems from their landlord, the threat of no-fault eviction makes many too afraid to speak up and enforce their rights, and when they do, they are too often met with an inadequate response from their local authority. But problems aren't limited to the private rented sector: social renters also reported issues with housing quality, thermal comfort and institutional failure at alarming rates.

If properly enforced, the Renters' Rights Act should improve most of the problems for private renters in England identified by this survey. The end of Section 21 should reduce the fear of retaliatory evictions that prevents many tenants from enforcing the rights they have. The extension of the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law to the private rented sector should improve quality and conditions. The new ombudsman should provide a route to redress, and new burdens funding should bolster under-resourced council enforcement. The ban on rental bidding wars, the protections for renters in receipt of benefits and parents, and the default right to keep a pet should each reduce barriers to renting.

But there is still work to be done. Renters in Wales are now more exposed to no-fault eviction than their counterparts in England. Private renters in both nations are paying more than they can afford, and renters of all tenure types endure poor quality housing that is too cold in winter and too hot in summer. Politicians on both sides of the border must take action to ease the burden of rent on tenants' wallets, retrofit properties to bring them up to the standard we expect in the 21st century, introduce legislation where necessary to guarantee security of tenure for tenants who do nothing wrong, and properly fund enforcement to ensure that rights on paper are felt in practise.