

Hearing the Tenants Voice in the Regulation of Housing Associations in Wales



Introduction

TPAS Cymru have worked closely with the Regulatory Board for Wales (RBW) and the Welsh Government Regulation team to ensure that the tenant voice is being heard at every level. Following the launch of The Right Stuff- Hearing the Tenants Voice at the TPAS Cymru summer conference, the RBW wanted to gain insight into tenants' perceptions of the Right Stuff report.

To gain this understanding we circulated a survey utilising our Tenant Pulse survey community.

Methodology agreed

1. Questions were developed and finalised by the Regulatory Board for Wales and the Regulation Team.
2. Tenant Pulse – on-line and postal survey for Tenant Pulse Housing Association members, issued 09th September 2019, closing 09th October 2019.
3. In September, using various events across Wales, TPAS Cymru gathered anecdotal evidence from tenants.
4. TPAS Cymru developed a webinar in August around the right stuff and used tenant feedback as supporting evidence.

Survey questions:

1. *Firstly, the report is called 'The Right Stuff - Hearing the Tenants' Voice'. Have you received information from your landlord about the report?
If you answer 'yes' how did your landlord tell you about the report?*
2. *Do you feel your landlord listens to you, takes your views in to account and gives you feedback on those views?*
3. *Would you describe your landlord as committed to building a good relationship with tenants and being open with a positive commitment and culture?*
4. *Would you say your landlord is "hearing the tenants' voice" and demonstrates the difference that is making?*
5. *Does your landlord provide information to you which allows you to compare it with other landlords?*
6. *If not already, would you like to be more involved in the decisions your landlord makes?*
7. *If you answered yes, how would you like this to happen?*

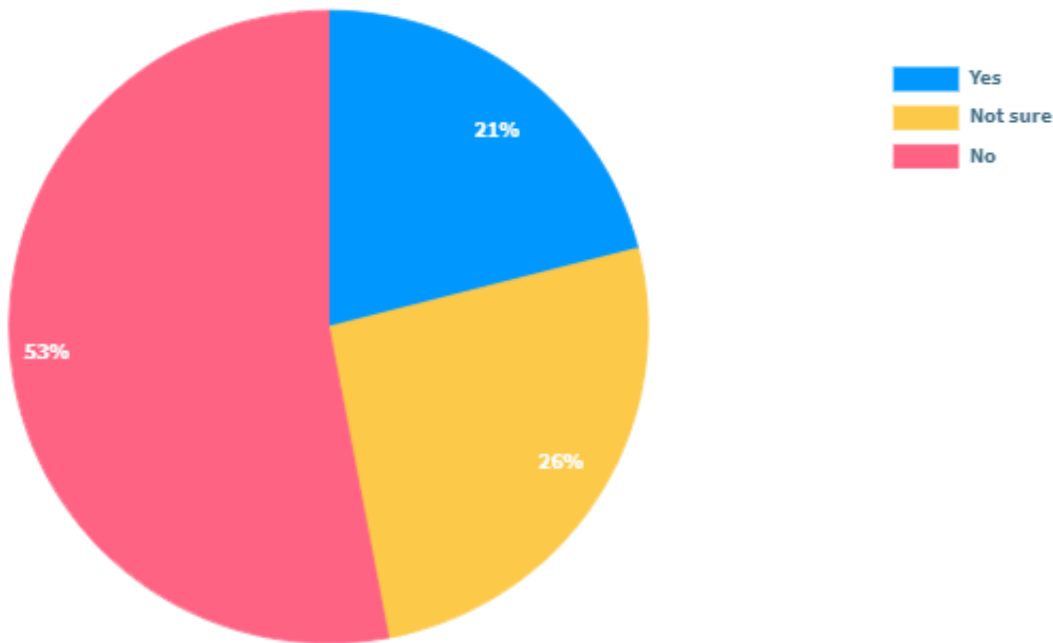
Response rates:

In total 188 Housing Association tenants completed the survey. At that time 667 tenants were signed up to tenant pulse meaning the response rate was 30%

Survey Results

1. Have you heard of the 'The Right Stuff- Hearing the Tenants' Voice' report?

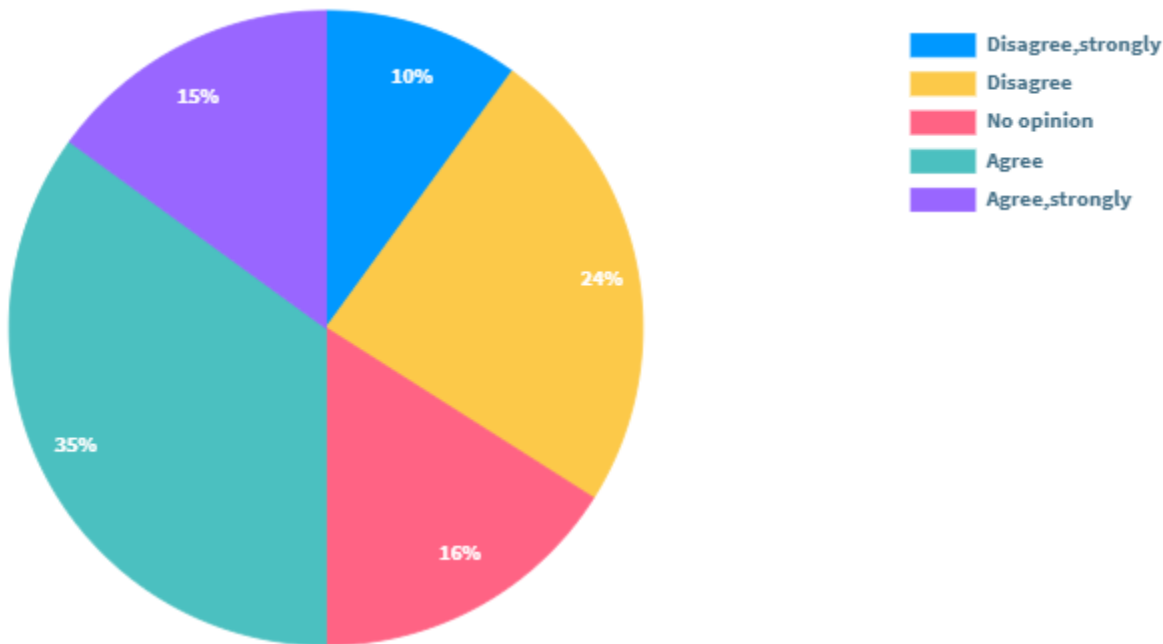
The survey asked respondents to answer yes, no or not sure. Over half of the tenants hadn't heard of The Right Stuff report: 53%. The 21% of tenants that had heard of the report had attended the TPAS Cymru summer conference for the launched or they were already engaged in traditional tenant groups and had received the information from landlords. As the level of awareness around the right stuff grows, it is predicted that these figures will change.



2. Do you feel your landlord listens to you, takes your views in to account and gives you feedback on those views?

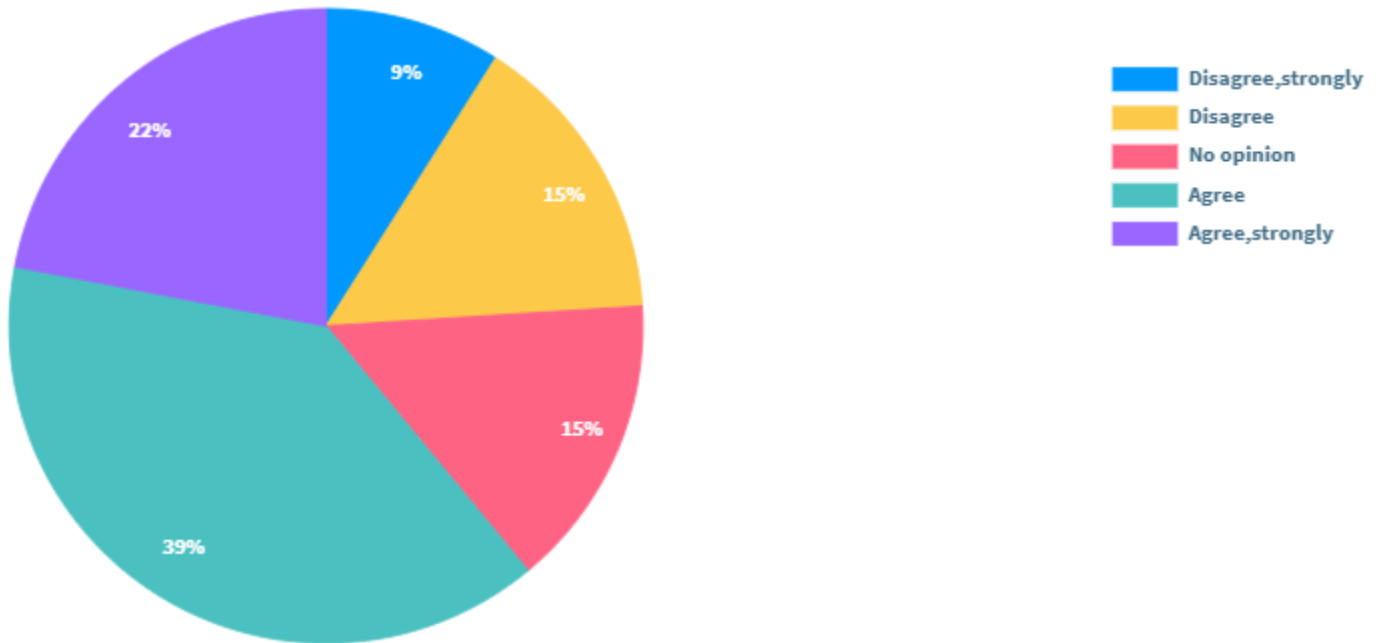
50% of tenants agreed or agreed strongly that their landlord listens and provides feedback. When reviewing the comments, many of those that strongly agreed appeared to be part of traditional tenant groups and therefore had a platform to get their views heard. These tenants felt like things were improving.

Tenants that disagreed or disagreed strongly made up 34% of the respondents. The overall feeling within comments was that Housing Officers and maintenance teams were unapproachable and rarely came back to them in relation to their concerns. There were numerous comments around lack of repairs and maintenance, as well as poor communication. It is possible that tenants may have responded as a result of an interaction with an individual staff member about a specific issue rather than the organisation listening to tenants as a whole.



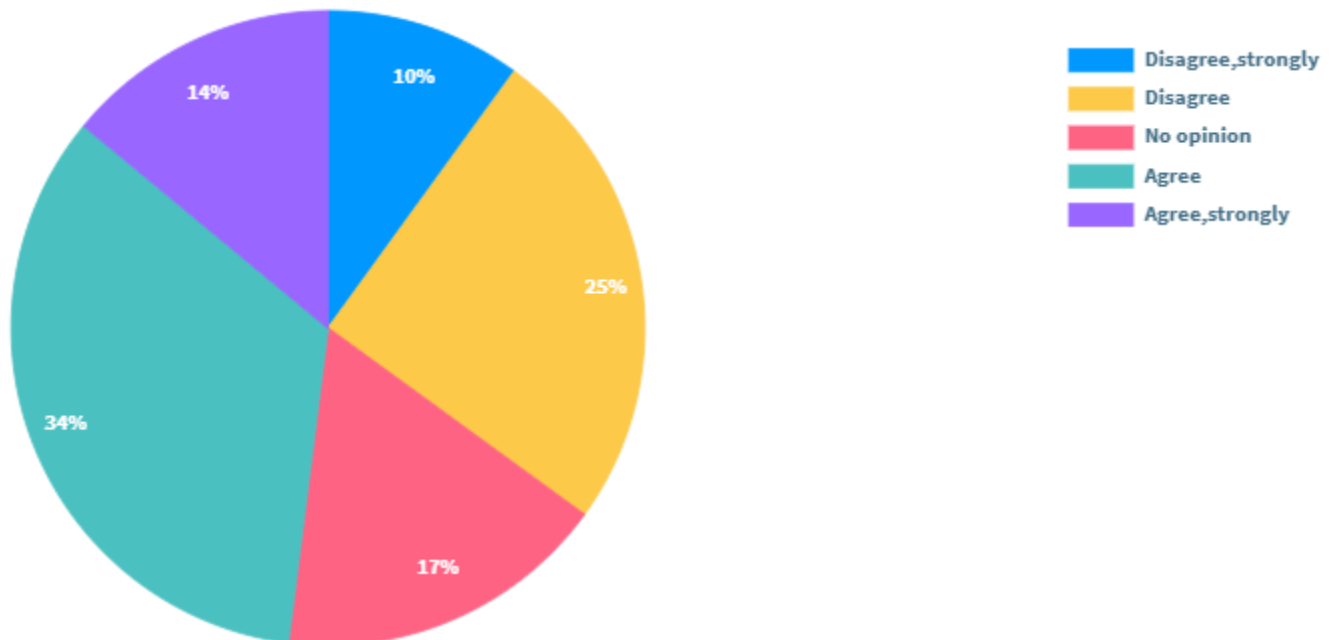
3. Is your landlord committed to building a good relationship with tenants and being open with a positive commitment and culture?

39% agreed that their landlord was committed to building a good relationship with them and 22% strongly agreed making up 61% of the respondents. Similar to the last question, many of the tenants in agreement were involved tenants. One tenant commented that "I really only know this from my volunteering within the housing association. It is not common knowledge amongst tenants.



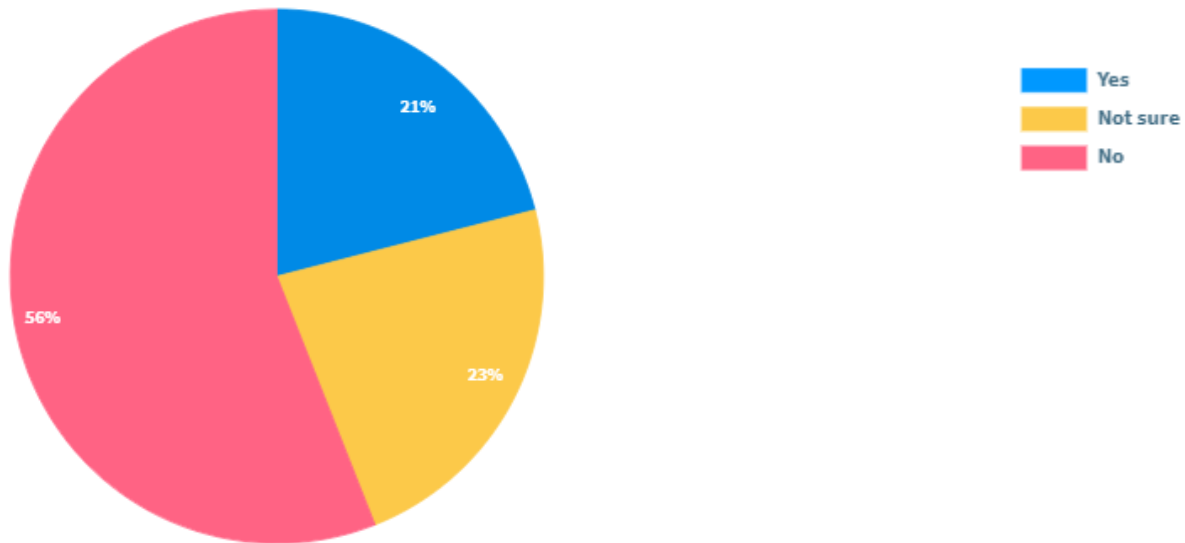
4. Would you say your landlord is “hearing the tenants’ voice” and demonstrates the difference that is making?

Just under half of tenants (48%) felt they agreed or agreed strongly with this statement, and 35% disagreed or disagreed strongly. It seemed that the tenants who disagreed hadn’t been provided with the feedback from their landlord to demonstrate the difference being made.



5. Does your landlord provide information to you which allows you to compare it with other landlords?

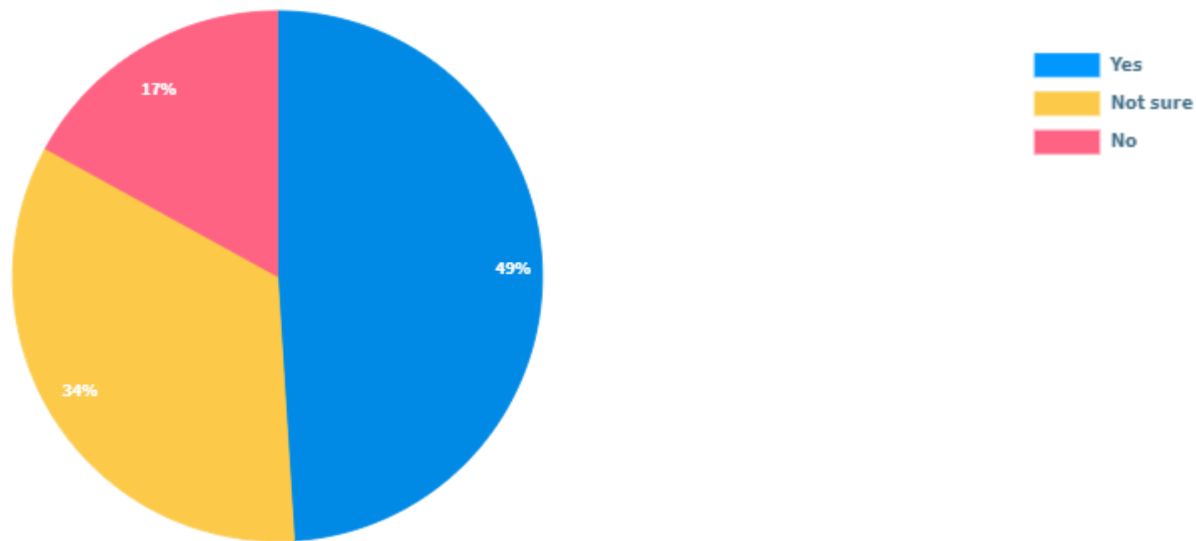
TPAS Cymru anticipated that the majority of tenants (56%) would not have received information to compare their landlord. This is likely to be a result of the WG comparison tool not being used as frequently as anticipated. The data suggests that the 21% that had been provided with information had, again, been involved tenants who were likely to have attended TPAS Cymru conference where the tool was launched.



6. If not already, would you like to be more involved in the decisions your landlord makes? How would you make this happen?

Around half of the 'already involved tenants' (49%) would like greater involvement, whereas the other half wanted to continue being involved at the same level. Similarly, many who chose 'no' then wrote in the comment section that they would like greater involvement.

Tenants that weren't already involved commented that they like to be involved via email and text due to working full-time or being unable to drive. There was a common theme amongst tenants around the need for more surveys to involve a different demographic of tenants. Tenants felt that this would provide them with a platform so that they can be a part of the decision-making process.



In September, using various events across Wales, TPAS Cymru gathered anecdotal evidence from tenants

South and West Tenant Network

33 tenants attended out South and West tenant network. Following the presentation of the report, tenants emphasised that there was nothing in there that they didn't already know. A few tenants mentioned that there was no point in having the report if landlords weren't made to implement the findings. Some spoke of their landlords already being accountable and transparent and that they felt heard. There was a clear difference in perception from tenants living in local authority housing compared to those living in housing associations. LA tenants emphasised that the suggestions within the report would be impossible to implement in many of the councils because tenant involvement isn't deemed crucial due to it not being regulated. Tenants in housing associations were more optimistic and looked forward to sharing it with tenants and landlords.

Annual All Wales Officers Network – North.

TPAS Cymru held an all wales event for staff responsible and working in tenant involvement activities. Over 30 delegates attended from across wales, a broad mix of RSL and local authority staff. The network was held 10 days after the launch of the Right Stuff report

To support the dissemination of the report and its findings we included a specific session to on the report to explore what it meant to their work and their organisation.

It was apparent that not all staff attending had been made aware of the report via their own organisation, with all those who hadn't indicating they would be raising this within their own organisation.

After a presentation on the report, the findings appeared to be welcomed by all the staff present. Many felt it would help to raise the profile of tenant involvement again within their organisations and support them to highlight how involvement practice could be more effective.

The focus on 'clarity of purpose' of involvement and the debate it ensued was welcomed as a way to ensure involvement practices are making a difference and delivery positive outcomes. Again, many staff attending the network indicated they would use the key themes in the report as a basis to review and 'self-assess' their own organisation's approach to tenant involvement. The model 'wheel' framework was, again, seen as a useful and practical tool to prompt thinking and evaluate current involvement practise.

TPAS Cymru developed a webinar in August around the right stuff and used tenant feedback as supporting evidence.

The week after the formal launch of The Right Stuff – Hearing the Tenants' Voice' report TPAS Cymru held a 'Right Stuff' themed webinar event.

This free webinar was designed to support the sector, tenants and staff, by providing an opportunity to learn about the review, examine its findings and to consider what it means for tenant involvement. 20 landlord organisations were represented at the webinar.

In general terms feedback gathered during the webinar about the report was positive. Many indicated they would use the key themes in the report as a basis to review and 'self-assess' their own organisation's approach to tenant involvement. The model 'wheel' framework was seen as a useful and practical tool to prompt thinking and evaluate current involvement practise.

It is far to say that some staff within the sector had, it seems, expected the report to have been more prescriptive rather than indicative. The clarification in the report regarding tenants being on Boards appears to have been welcomed in order to clarify misunderstandings.

Summary of findings

A large proportion of tenants were yet to hear about the Right Stuff report and those that had were predominantly involved tenants sitting on various panels. Again, tenants that felt they were heard by landlords and that they received feedback were mainly those who were already involved and therefore had a platform to speak with their landlords. Those that were working full-time or lived in rural parts of Wales felt that they weren't given opportunities to have their say. Other tenants who weren't involved through traditional methods felt that landlords ask but do not act or feedback. In terms of moving forward with tenant involvement, tenants who weren't already involved asked for mixed methods, including social media and home visits