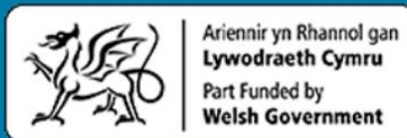




HOMELESSNESS ALLOCATIONS: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM TENANTS

FEBRUARY 2024
WWW.TPAS.CYMRU



TENANT VOICE SPONSOR

Introduction to TPAS Cymru's Tenant Pulse

Tenant Pulse is the national platform for Wales that enables tenants to provide anonymous accounts of their experiences, thoughts and feelings relating to their homes and communities.

They currently take the following form:

- 1) **Annual surveys** - subjects we believe are important and need tracking. Currently there are 3 annual surveys.
 - Energy and Net Zero survey
 - Rent setting consultation
 - Annual 'What Matters' survey looking at what really matters to tenants and their communities
- 2) **Specific topical surveys** we develop with stakeholders (such as Welsh Government) to help bring insight to policy developments, such as e.g. the recent Green Paper on Housing Adequacy and Fair Rents.
- 3) **Specific audience surveys**: we undertake specific targeted surveys including PRS Tenants in north Wales on support options, Housing Association tenants on regulation reform etc.

We hope the findings and recommendations within this research offer valuable insight into social housing tenants' views on allocations. We believe by listening to tenants and stakeholders, we can enable open, honest, and transparent conversations.

All reports are published on Tenant Pulse portal on our website. www.tpas.cymru/pulse

How the survey was promoted

The survey was sent to tenants who are signed up to our Tenant Pulse portal. At Welsh Governments request, this survey was only sent to social housing tenants, rather than the private sector.

We saw some publicity support from social landlord and tenant groups to their tenants. This method creates some noticeable differences in tenant responses per landlord depending on the landlord's degree of engagement/promotion.

Introduction and Summary

Back in October 2023, Welsh Government asked for views on their proposals for changes to policy and law, to end homelessness in Wales. They consulted on: the reform of existing core homelessness legislation; the role of Welsh public service in preventing homelessness; targeted proposals to prevent homelessness for those disproportionately affected; the access to housing; and the implementation of the policy changes.

Being the voice of tenant in Wales, TPAS Cymru were asked to ensure that the people impacted by these proposals get the opportunity to help shape it. We therefore launched a week-long survey to tenants in social housing, comprising of 21 questions. Over 600 social housing tenants from all 22 local authority areas in Wales responded, sharing their opinions on the proposals set out in the [White Paper](#).

Key findings

At first glance, the findings within this research suggest that over half of the respondents agree that people who are experiencing homelessness should be given priority. A third of the respondents went further to say that the impact this had on others being allocated social housing, was an acceptable one, due to the health and wellbeing benefits this would have.

However, when we looked further at respondents' comments, it became much more complex. Whilst respondents sympathised with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, they were concerned about the overall impact, if we were to amend legislation so that people experiencing homelessness were to take priority. Whilst there were differing opinions on priority allocation for social housing, there was a consensus on the importance of individualised support, fairness, and addressing the root causes of homelessness.

- 1. Accessibility for everyone:** The overarching belief is that social housing should be accessible to all, regardless of income or background, as housing is seen as a fundamental human necessity.
- 2. Need-Based Allocation:** Priority for social housing should be given to those who are homeless, have medical issues, or living in unsuitable conditions. One of these should not be deemed more important than the other.
- 3. Special Consideration for Specific Groups:** There's recognition of the diverse needs of various groups, such as families, single parents, people experiencing domestic violence, ex members of armed forces, with calls for tailored support and assessment that are fit for purpose and consider individuality.

Removal from the housing waiting list

The majority of respondents, particularly those from diverse ethnic backgrounds disagreed with the removal of individuals from the housing waiting lists if they were not deemed to have an immediate housing need by local authorities.

The themes in this section underscored the importance of fairness, transparency, and flexibility in housing allocation decisions, with focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable people.

De-prioritising those who manipulate the system.

The vast majority (86%) of respondents supported de-prioritizing individuals who manipulate the social housing system, although agreement varied among demographics, with younger, newer social housing occupants, and underrepresented groups showing slightly lower agreement. Notably, only 46% of those identifying as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic agreed, preferring a

case-by-case approach due to the difficulty in proving manipulation. Comments highlighted empathy for desperate actions due to long waiting times and system stagnation, alongside concerns about fairness, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making, stressing the importance of considering individual circumstances and implementing strict guidelines to prevent system misuse.

Satisfaction with social housing upon moving in

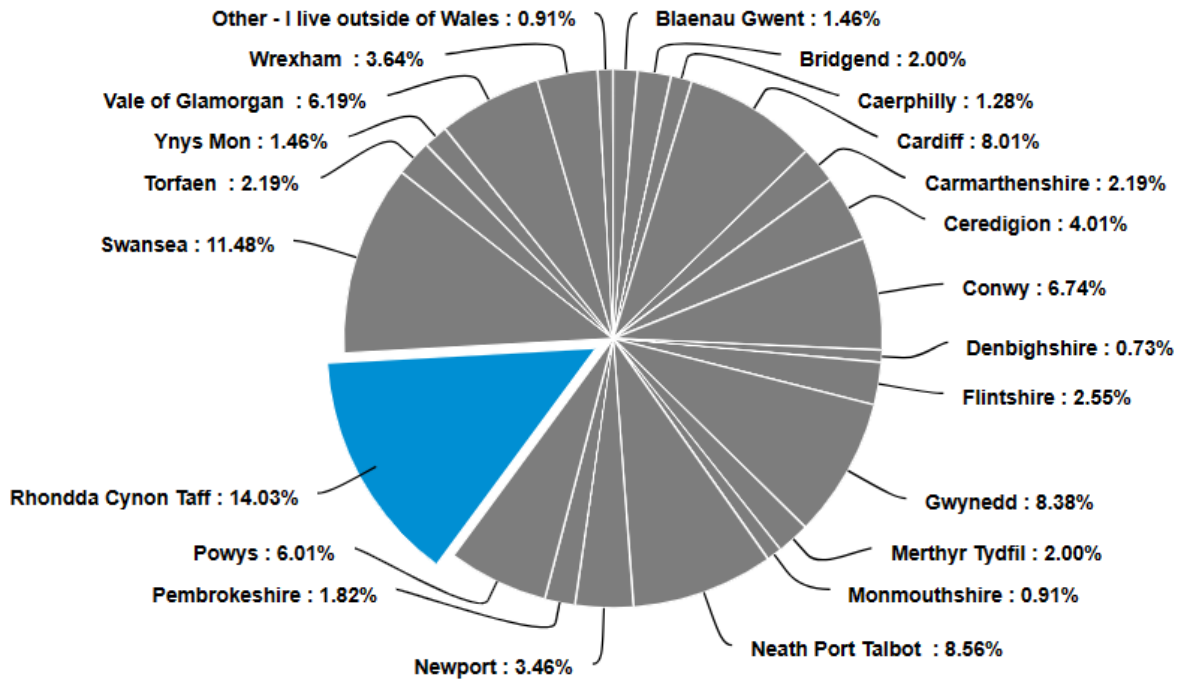
The majority (67%) of respondents were satisfied with the good and safe standard of their social housing upon moving in, though satisfaction levels varied among demographics. Younger respondents and those from under-represented groups reported lower satisfaction, while older individuals and those with less tenure in social housing were more satisfied. Regarding addressing issues with their landlord or housing association, over half (52%) reported being able to raise concerns, but not all issues were satisfactorily resolved. Those with less than two years' tenure found it easier to have their issues addressed, with a notable proportion of respondents from underrepresented groups and those identifying as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic reporting successful resolution of their concerns.

Methodology

Over the course of 1 week, we distributed 21 questions through the Questionpro survey platform to our members of Tenant Pulse. In addition to this, we shared the survey on our social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter.

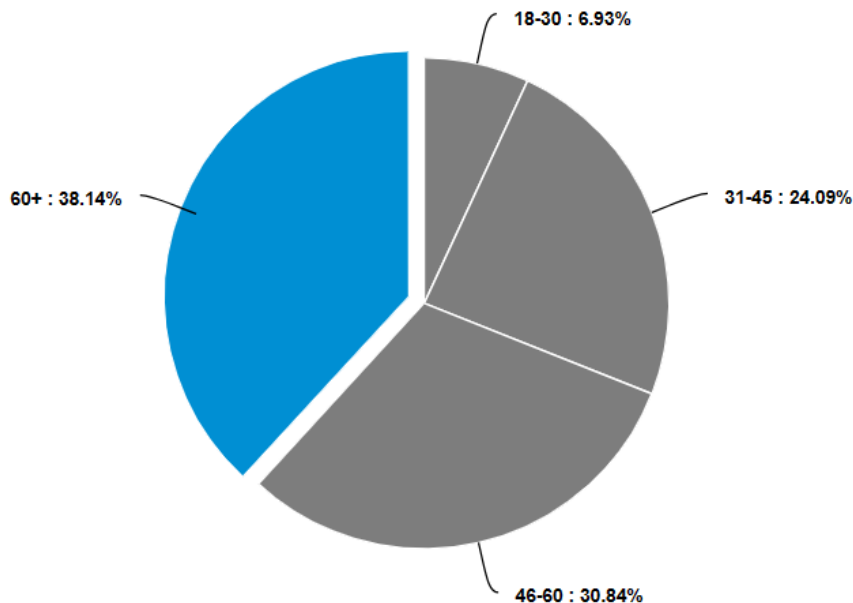
Response rate

662 social housing tenants from all 22 local authority areas responded to the survey. The highest responding area was Rhondda Cynon Taf and the lowest was Monmouthshire. This is consistent with previous Pulses that isolate social housing from private housing.

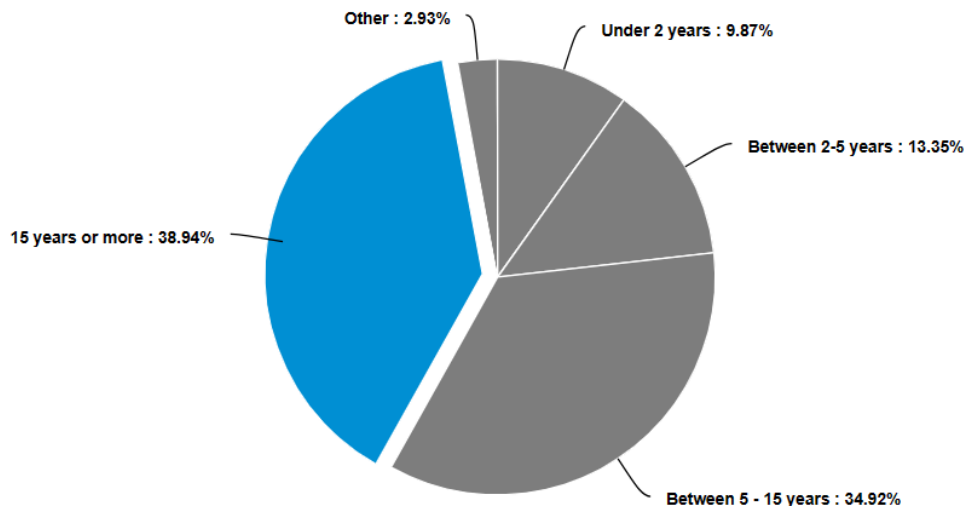


Age demographics

There was representation from all the identified age groups, with those aged over 60 being higher than the other three groups. This is consistent with our previous pulse surveys.

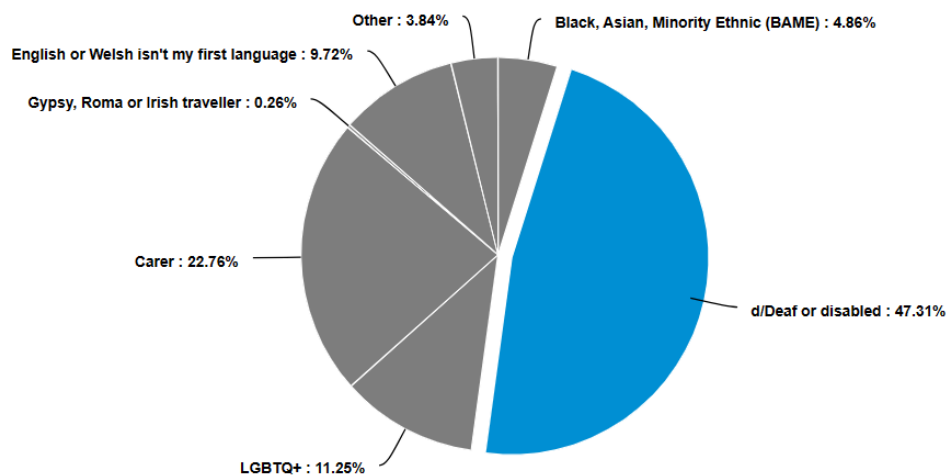


How many years have you lived in social housing?



Do you consider yourself or anybody in your household, to belong to any of the following underrepresented groups?

As with previous tenant pulse research, the highest proportion of social housing respondents identified as Deaf or disabled. There were comments highlighting representation from other groups that respondents deemed underrepresented, such as Welsh, Neurodiverse and parent/orphan.



Who do you believe Social Housing is for? (Note: Some people believe social housing should be for everyone, others think it should be prioritised for those most in need, including people who are homeless, people with medical needs or people who currently live in accommodation that is cold and damp, dangerous or overcrowded.)

Overall, there were **six key themes** identified within the data:

1. **Accessibility for everyone:**

- The most recurring theme throughout is the belief that social housing should be accessible to everyone, regardless of income, background, or other factors.

- The idea that housing is a basic human necessity that should be available to all is emphasised.

2. *Need- Based Allocation*

- The concept of needs-based allocation is emphasised, where priority is given to those with the greatest need, whether due to homelessness, medical issues, or unsuitable living conditions.
- Some suggested allocating housing based on the urgency and the severity of the individual situation.
- Emphasis on providing social housing for those on lower income.

3. *Local Connection and priority*

- Some respondents expressed the view that social housing should prioritise local residents or citizens, giving preference to those who have a connection to the area and in some cases, there is a preference for individuals born in a specific region.
- The idea of prioritising those with a long waiting history was mentioned.

4. *Special consideration for specific groups and diverse needs*

- There was consistent mention of the specific needs of families, single parents, those facing domestic violence and ex members of the armed forces.
- Acknowledgment that people have diverse needs and circumstances is evident, with calls for individual assessments and common sense to be used in determining priority and urgency.
- Concerns about the potential misuse of the system, such as individuals falsely claiming homelessness to secure social housing is mentioned.

5. *Affordability and accessibility*

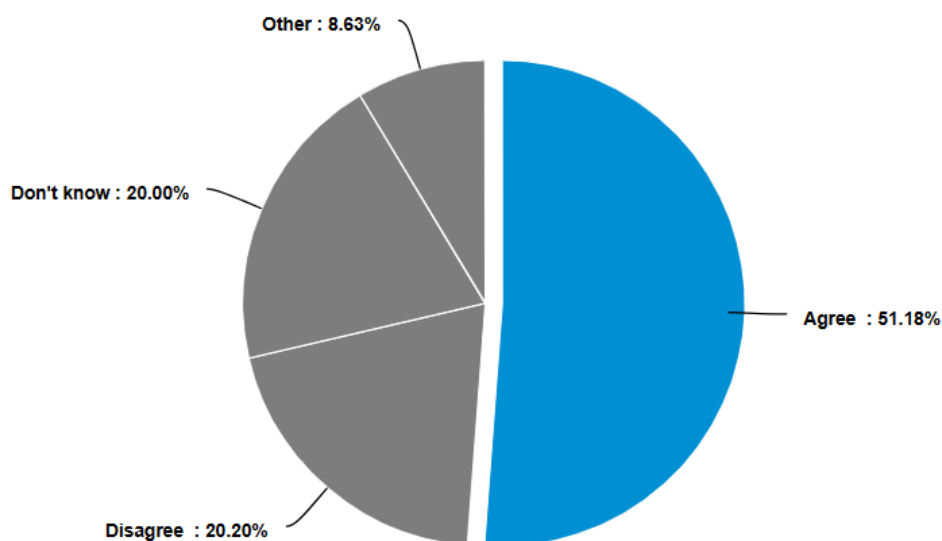
- A common theme was the idea that social housing should be available to those who can't afford to buy a home or rent in the private sector.
- Tenants emphasise their concerns around rising property prices, unaffordable rents, and the challenges faced by low-income families.

6. *Critical Evaluation of the System*

- Tenants accentuate that social housing allocations are based on historical factors rather than current needs. The transparency and fairness of the system needs to be evaluated, along with unbiased data collection.

Do you agree or disagree that those experiencing homelessness should be given additional or greater priority for social housing? (i.e receive social housing before others on the list).

Whilst 51% agree that those experiencing homelessness should be given additional or greater priority for social housing, those that felt otherwise stressed **two key themes**.



1. *The need for an individualised approach*

- Phrases such as ‘separate tailored support’ ‘each case on its merit’ and ‘depends on circumstances’, emphasises the need for an individualised approach to addressing homelessness.
- The idea is that solutions and support should be customised based on the unique circumstances and reasons for homelessness for each person.

2. **Housing solutions and priority**

- There is a recurring theme related to housing solutions and priority, ranging from the need to build specific types of housing, (e.g., single occupancy studio apartments) to discussions about prioritising certain groups or individuals based on their circumstances.

Further questioning around whether people agreed or disagreed, found/ recurring themes that align with previous themes mentioned.

1. **Contextual evaluation of homelessness:**

Many comments emphasised the need for a nuanced, contextual evaluation of homelessness. There was an acknowledgement that not all homeless situations are the same, and factors such as the reasons for homelessness, individual circumstances, and the potential for recurrence should be considered. The idea is to avoid a one-size fits all approach and evaluate cases individually.

2. **Challenges and support for those experiencing homelessness:**

Comments highlighted the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness, including mental health issues, trauma, and the lack of support. There is a consensus that providing social housing is not the sole solution; additional support services are needed to help individuals to rebuild their lives. The theme emphasises a holistic approach to addressing homelessness, considering both immediate shelter needs and ongoing support.

3. Priority and fairness:

Comments emphasised the importance of fairness in allocating housing to those experiencing homelessness. Some argue for a first-come, first-serve system, while others express concerns about people abusing the system and misrepresenting as homeless to gain priority. The theme revolved around the need for a fair and just system for allocating housing resources.

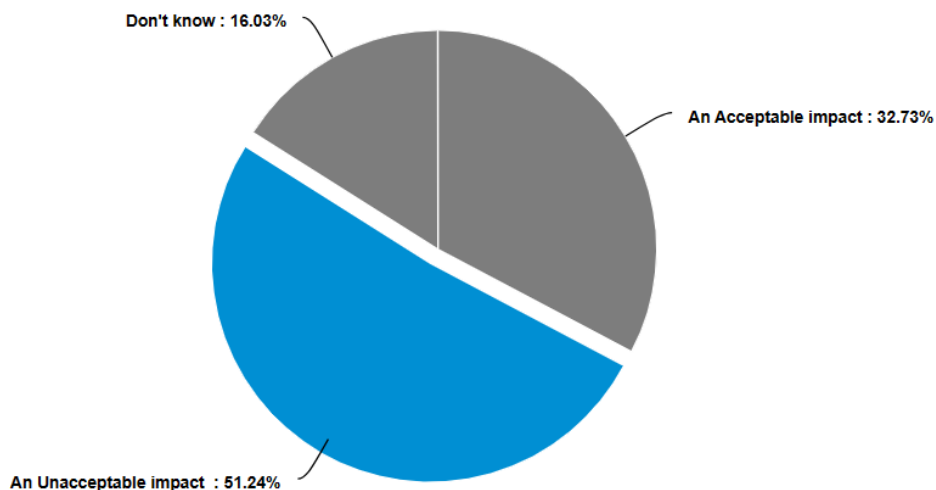
4. Diverse needs and circumstances

The comments highlight the diverse circumstances of individuals facing homelessness. Factors such as being a single parent, having children in school, facing unsafe living conditions, and dealing with mental health issues are discussed. The theme underscores the complexity of assessing and prioritising individuals based on their unique needs and situations.

5. Ethical considerations and compassion

Many of the comments reflected on the ethical considerations of prioritising housing for those experiencing homelessness. There is/was a recurring theme of compassion and empathy, arguing that those experiencing homelessness are often in great need and should receive support. The discussions touched on societal responsibility, humane treatment, and the potential positive impact on public health and wellbeing.

To give higher priority to social housing for those experiencing homelessness, there may be an impact (e.g slower access to social housing) on others such as, 1) People housed in insanitary or overcrowded housing; 2) People with medical or welfare needs, including disability; 3) People who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship; Do you believe this is an acceptable impact or an unacceptable impact?



51% felt that the potential impacts of giving higher priority to those experiencing homelessness was unacceptable on others. We asked respondents why this was the case, and **three key themes** were identified.

1. Challenges in the housing system:

Several comments expressed dissatisfaction with the current housing system, calling for a rethink. Concerns included overcrowded or under-occupied homes, the difficulty of moving from current accommodation, and the need for a more comprehensive support system.

2. Importance of long-term solutions and preventative measures:

A number of comments stressed the need for long-term thinking, cost effective solutions, and preventative measures to address the root causes of homelessness.

The idea of building hostels or alternative accommodations, as well as considering other needs such as mental health were mentioned as part of a comprehensive approach.

3. Individualised support and tailored solutions:

This has been the most common theme throughout each of the questions within the survey. Respondents emphasised the need for individualised support that considers the diverse reasons for homelessness and the different needs of people in such situations. There were comments regarding a two-tiered approach based on individual needs. This involves providing different levels of support and accommodation depending on the circumstances of the homeless individual.

For those that felt that placing homelessness at the top of the priority list **would have an acceptable impact** emphasised three themes:

1. The impact on health and wellbeing

Several comments highlighted the negative effects of homelessness on mental and physical health. There was a consensus that providing housing is not only a humanitarian act, but also contributes to reducing healthcare expenses and improving the overall wellbeing of individuals.

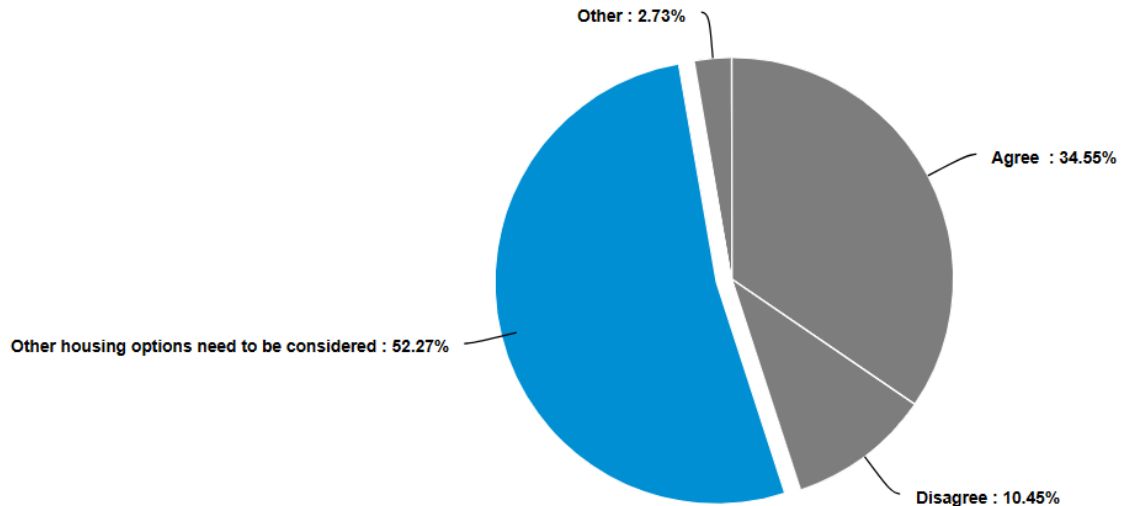
2. Priority and fairness

Whilst there are differences of opinion within this section, many emphasised that homeless individuals should be prioritised. However, many thought that specific factors should be at play when giving priority, such as the presence of children, health issues, or the reasons for homelessness. Some emphasised the need for a fair and just system to determine priority without abuse.

3. Individual circumstances

Many comments stressed the importance of considering individual circumstances when prioritising housing for those experiencing homelessness. This includes factors such as the reasons for homelessness, whether it was by choice or not, and the presence of additional challenges like addiction or antisocial behaviour. There was a call for a case-by-case evaluation rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

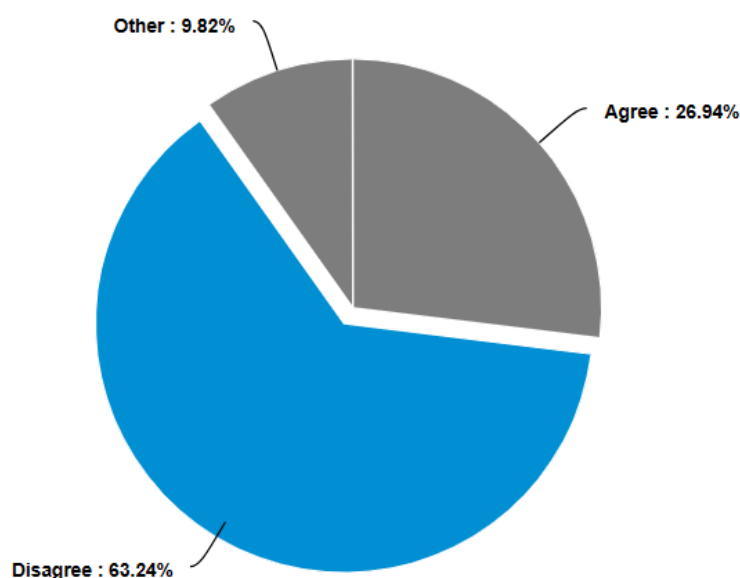
Young people leaving the care system are currently NOT one of the priority groups for social housing set out in legislation. Do you agree that they should be added as a new priority group for social housing? (i.e get faster access to social housing)



35% of the respondents agreed that young people leaving the care system should be a priority group for social housing, with neither agreeing nor disagreeing, but feeling other options needed to be considered. There were minimal comments explaining the answers, but those who did elaborated on this emphasised that there cannot be a 'block category' approach and instead needs to focus on the individual.

When looking at the demographic of those responding to this question, there were no significant differences in responses from the 60+ group, the underrepresented group, the disability only group, and interestingly, the 18-30 group. The only significant difference came from those who identified as Black Asian Minority Ethnic, with 47% agreeing that young people leaving the care system should be added to the priority list.

Council Housing Priority Lists – Currently many people are waiting on the housing lists and may never get allocated social housing. The Welsh Government proposals say if you are not viewed by the Local Authority as having a "housing need", you may be removed from the waiting list. Do you agree with this?



63% of respondents felt that people should not be removed from the waiting list if they are not views by the local authority as having a housing need. There were slight variations based on the following demographics who **disagreed**.

- 53% of aged 18-30s
- 73% of those identifying as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic
- 67% of over 60s

When looking at the comments surrounding these decisions, there were 3 recurring themes.

1. Fairness and Transparency in Decision-Making:

- Questions about how judgements of determining 'housing need' are made fairly.
- Emphasis on the need for transparent criteria and a justifiable decision-making process.
- Concerns about how the reliability of local authorities in making accurate assessments.

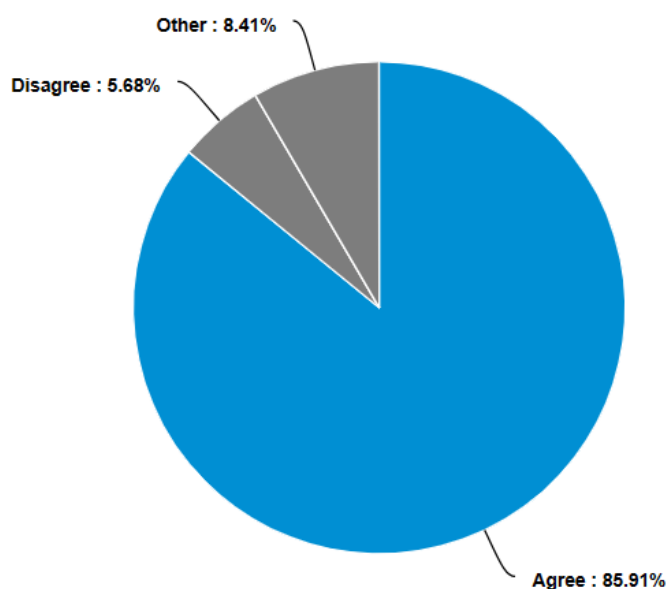
2. Individual Circumstances and Complexity:

- Recognition that each situation is unique and needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Acknowledgment of the complexity involved in determining housing needs.
- Discussion on the impact of various factors. Such as personal circumstances, training of decision-makers, and the potential for mistakes in assessments.

3. Prioritisation and Access to Housing:

- Discussions about the prioritisation of vulnerable individuals and families.
- Suggestions for implementing systems like a mutual exchange register or bidding system for fair access to housing.
- Concerns about the effectiveness of waiting lists and calls for clearer rules to prioritise the most vulnerable.

Do you agree or disagree that if people manipulate the system to gain social housing (possibly by actively worsening their current housing conditions or falsifying information), they should be moved down (deprioritised) on the waiting list?



A significant majority (86%) of respondents agreed that manipulation of the system to gain social housing should lead to the consequence of deprioritising. There were some variations based on demographics who **agree** with this proposal.

- 75% of aged 18-30
- 78% of those who had been in social housing for less than two years.
- 83% of underrepresented groups
- 86% of those with a disability
- 46% of those identifying as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic. This being the most statistically significant variation, we explored further, to find that it should be a case-by-case approach as it is very difficult to prove.

Further comments surrounding these decisions found 2 recurring themes.

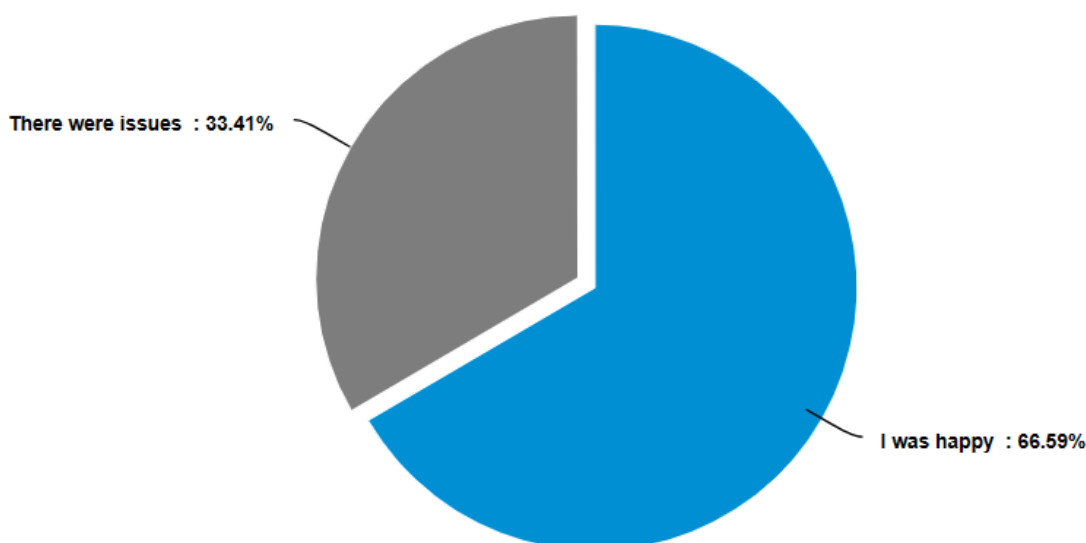
1. Desperation and manipulation of the system:

- Expressions of understanding towards desperate actions taken by individuals due to lengthy waiting times and perceived lack of change in the system.
- Discussions on the potential reasons behind falsifying information, such as desperation or profit motives
- Recognition that certain situations may drive people to manipulate the system, and the need to consider each case individually.

2. Fairness, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making:

- Concerns about the fairness of deprioritising or penalising individuals without proper consideration of their circumstances.
- Emphasis on the evidence-based decision making and the need for stringent guidelines to prevent misuse of the system.
- Scepticism about the ability of local authorities to follow up and enforce consequences, with a call for more accountability.

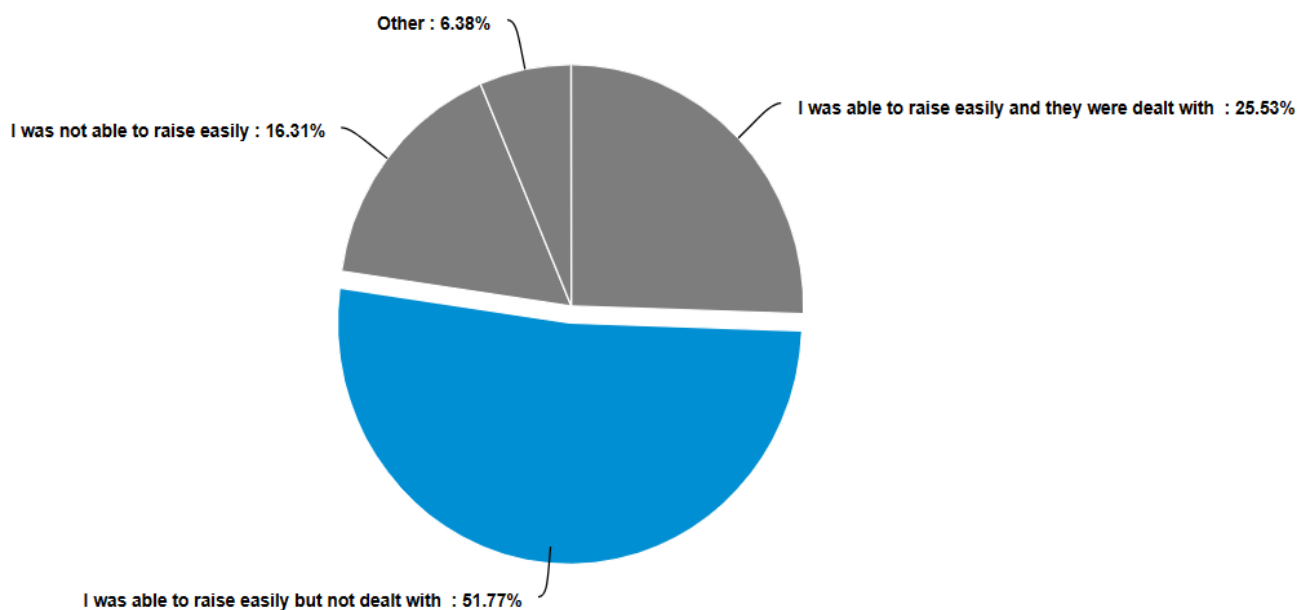
When you received your social housing accommodation, was the accommodation of a good and safe standard for you to occupy? (i.e., were you happy with it? Was there anything you would change about it?)



The majority (67%) of respondents were happy about the good and safe standard of their property when they moved in. There were variations in the demographics who **were happy**.

- 50% of those aged 18-30
- 63% within underrepresented groups
- 72% aged over 60
- 57% of those identifying as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic
- 72% of those who had lived in social housing for less than 2 years.

If there were issues, were you able to raise these issues with your landlord/housing association in a straightforward way? Were your concerns addressed in a satisfactory way?

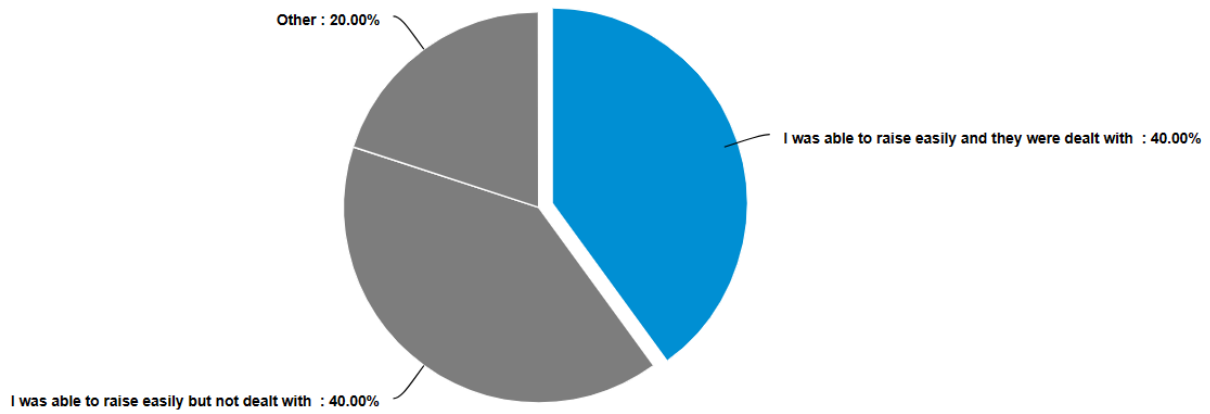


Over half of the respondents (52%) were able to raise the issues that they identified but those issues haven't been dealt with.

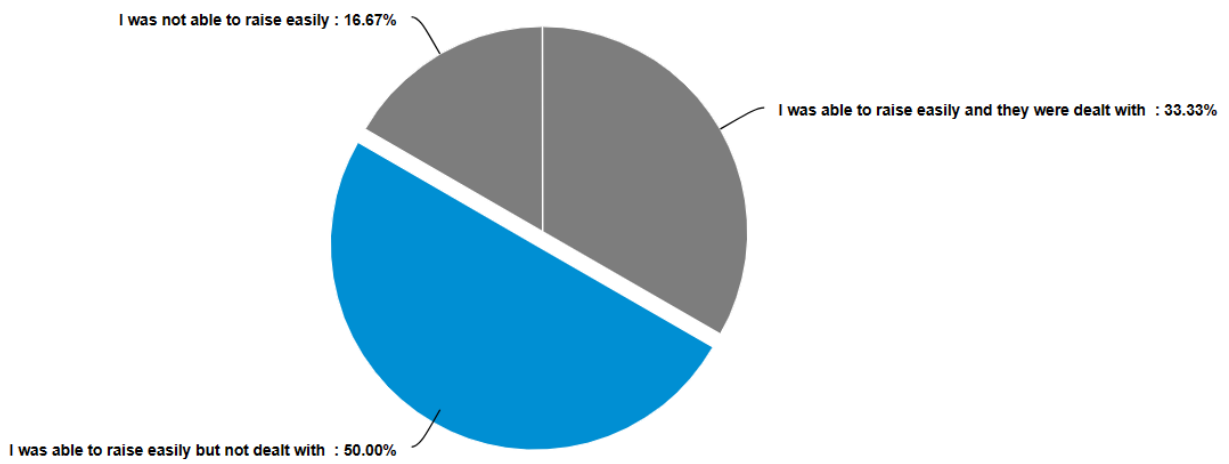
When looking further, those that had lived in social housing for under 2 years had found it easier, with 40% raising the issue and having it dealt with. Respondents identifying as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic had also found it easier than other demographic groups, with 33% stating that they were able to raise the issue easily and have it dealt with.

There were also no respondents who emphasised that they were not able to raise the issue. Further breakdown of responses by individual demographics are illustrated overlap.

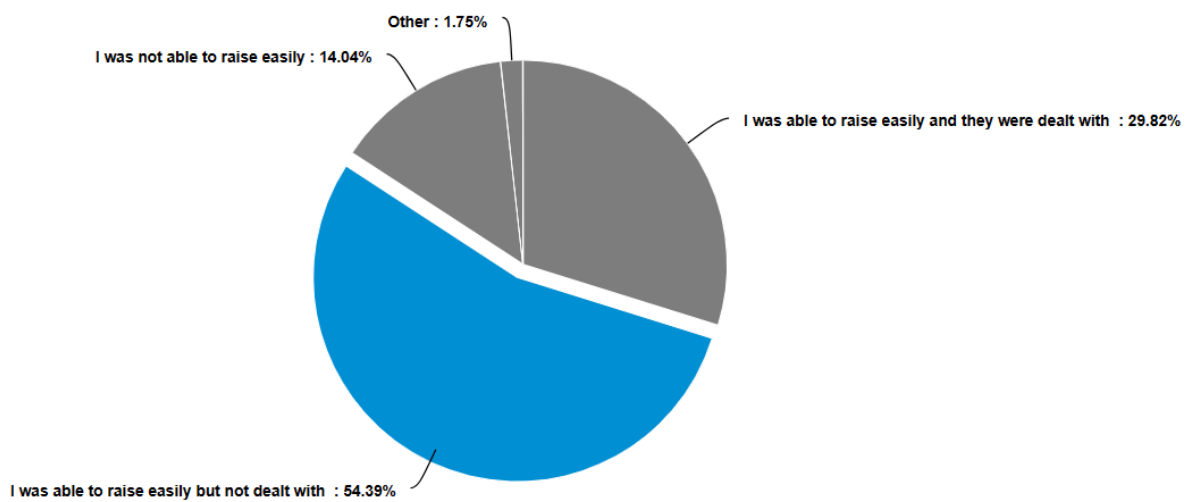
Respondents who had lived in social housing for less than 2 years:



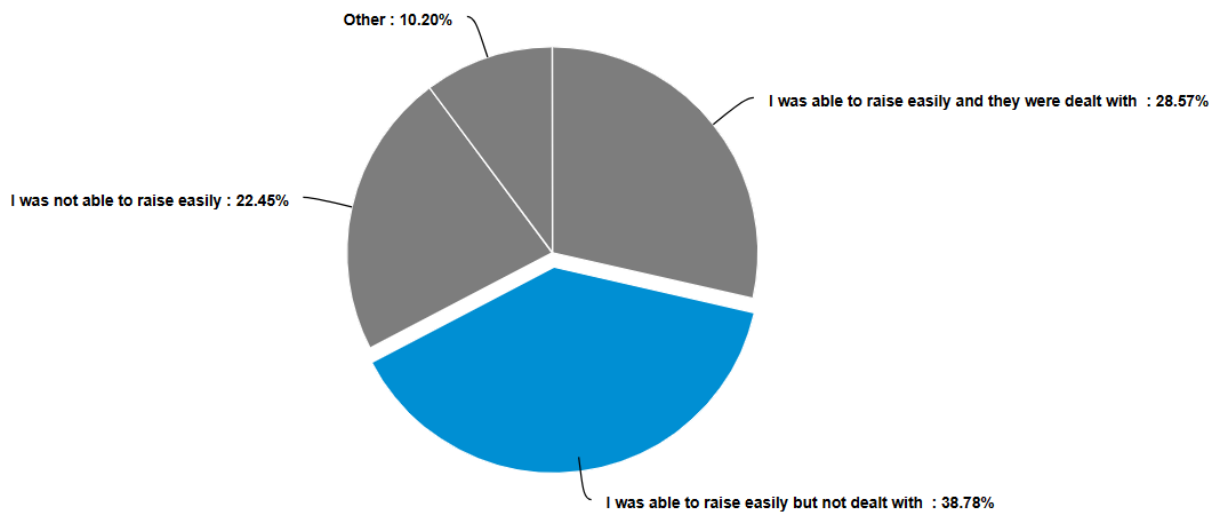
Respondents identifying as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic:



Disabled respondents:

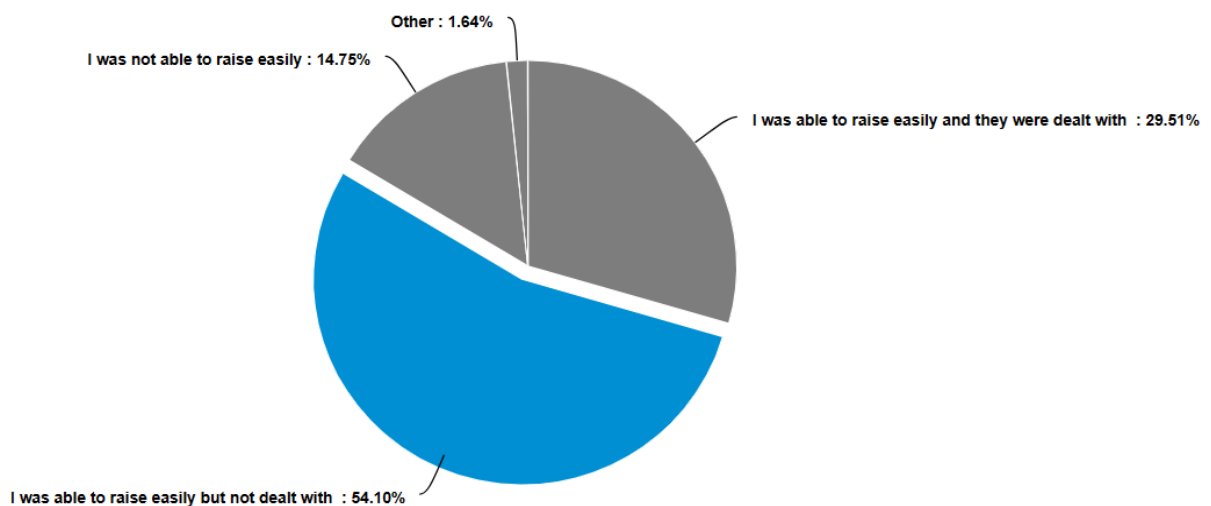


Respondents over the age of 60:

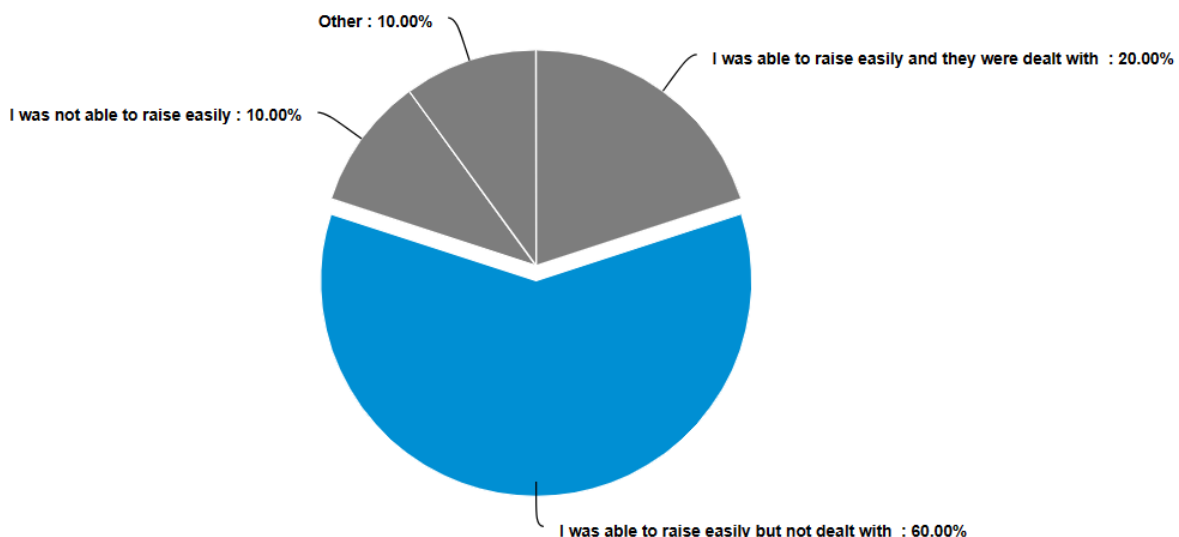


When exploring the comments to understand why this age group were not able to raise concerns, the comments were limited. The only recurring theme was that when concerns are raised, they are dismissed. There was a feeling amongst these respondents that their landlord didn't care.

Respondents in underrepresented groups:



Respondents aged between 18-30



Respondents who selected the 'other' choice identified three common themes within their comments:

1. Housing conditions and maintenance:

- Expressions of dissatisfaction with the state of the property
- Frustrations over the lack of action taken by the housing association despite numerous reports and inspections.
- Concerns about the lack of investment and temporary nature of problem- solving, suggesting a need for more comprehensive solutions.

2. Right to buy scheme and housing policies

- Mixed opinions on the Right to Buy Scheme, with a desire for it to be bought back by some, believing it encourages ownership and responsibility.
- Criticism of government priorities, suggesting that resources could be better utilised for housing needs rather than temporary accommodation for students.

3. Access to Disability- Adapted housing and Grant Processes

- Concerns about the lack of standardisation in disability-adapted housing, with call for standardised level of accommodation
- Issues with grant processes and delays in implementing necessary changes, such as converting bathrooms into wet rooms.
- Personal initiatives taken by individuals to address issues, indicating a proactive approach to resolving problems.

If you were not able to raise these issues, what were the reasons for this?

As well as the 3 themes mentioned within the previous section, 2 additional themes were identified within the comments.

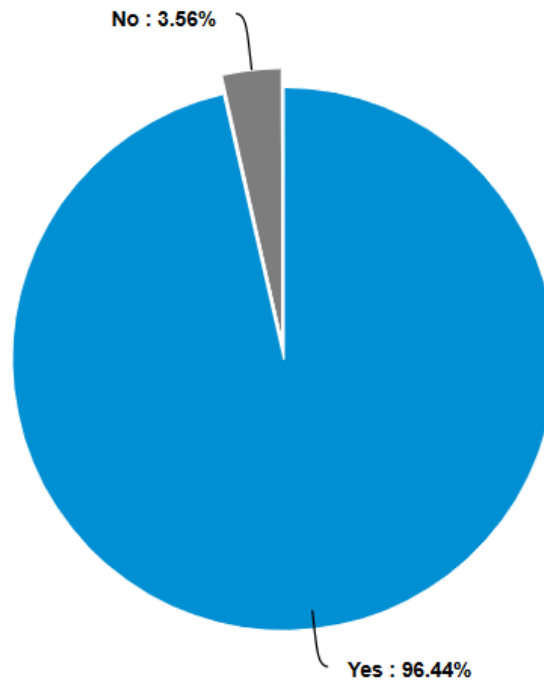
1. Inefficiency and lack of accountability in housing management:

- Criticism of housing association managers being perceived as inefficient.
- Complaints about the lack of coordination in handling anti-social behaviour, crimes and the need for CCTV cameras
- Instances of staff passing the responsibility, delaying repairs, and dismissing concerns, leading to the overall lack of accountability.

2. Issues with Local Councils and Government Priorities

- Mention of local councils facing financial challenges, resulting in the closure of public conveniences, adult day care centres and job reductions.
- Concerns about the lack of investment in housing and public services, with focus on cost cutting measures.
- Criticism of council housing management, disrepair issues, and the perception that welfare, especially for disabled individuals is not prioritised.

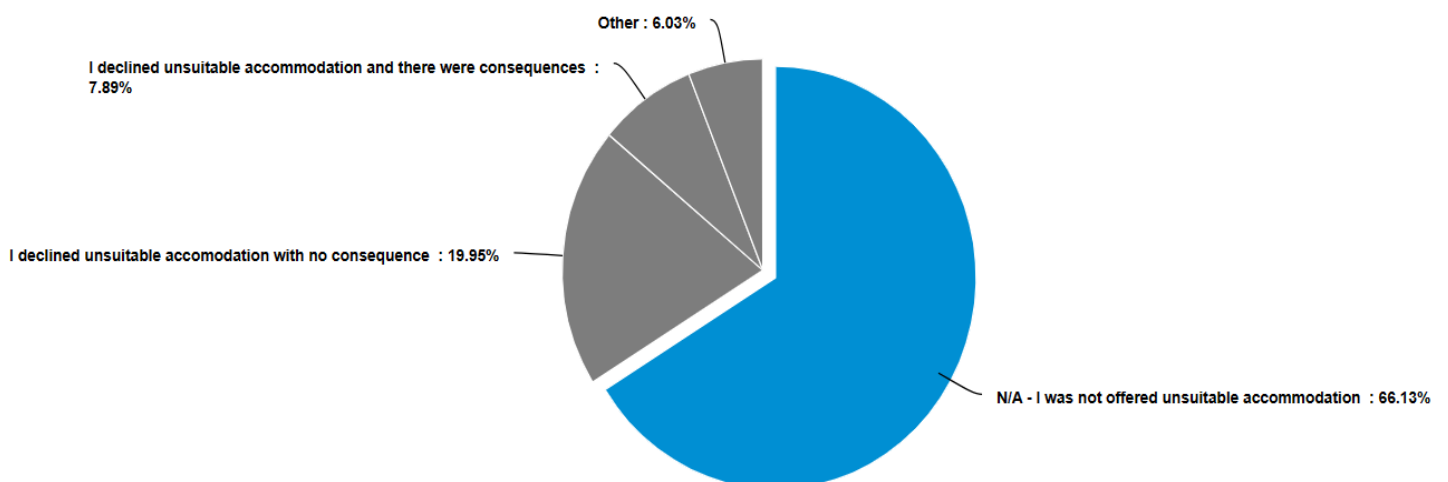
Generally, if you were to identify a fault, hazard or physical condition at your current accommodation which affected your safety and wellbeing, would you know how to report it?



97% of respondents felt confident that they would be able to report an issue in their home if it effected their safety and wellbeing.

The only notable difference when looking at demographic variations was those identifying as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic, with 100% stating 'yes'; and those who have lived in social housing for less than 2 years, with 88% stating 'yes'.

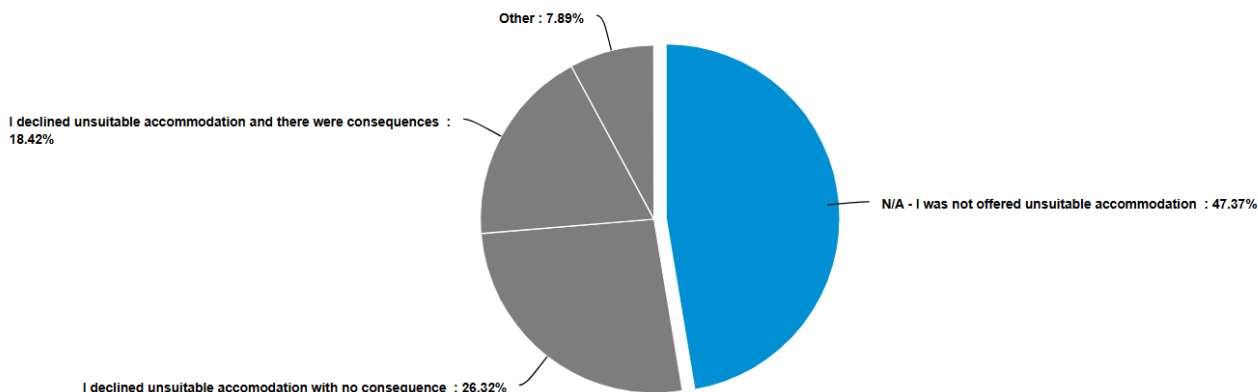
Final question - Whilst waiting for settled housing accommodation, have you ever had to decline or refuse an offer, because it was not suitable for the needs of you and your household? Was there a consequence of doing so?



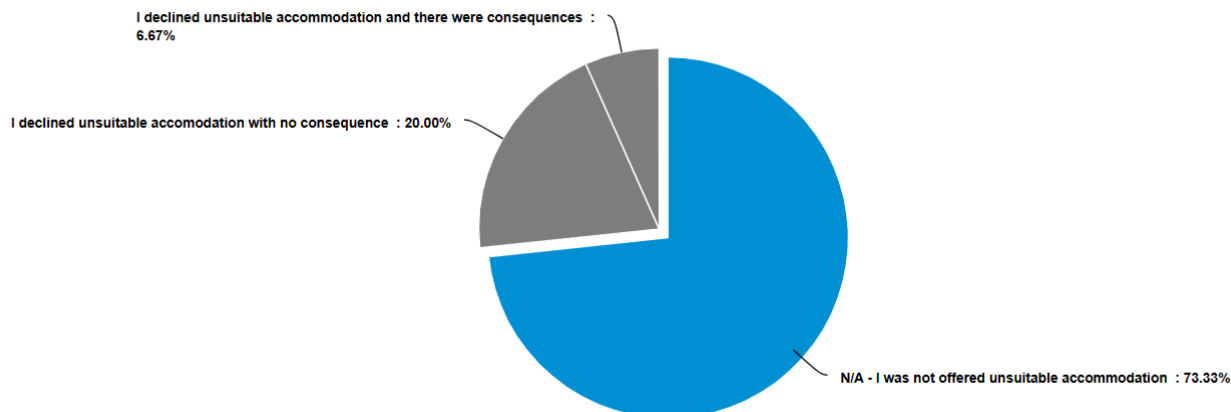
The majority of respondents 66% had not been offered unsuitable accommodation. 20% had declined unsuitable accommodation without consequence and 8% had declined with consequence. When looking at variations across demographics, the two groups with notable differences, were those living in social housing for less than 2 years. Declining unsuitable accommodation led to higher (10%) consequences than other groups. That being said, they were also within the group with the highest decline of unsuitable accommodation with no consequence.

Respondents who identified as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic, had higher success rates with not being offered unsuitable accommodation (7% higher than the overall).

Lived in social housing for less than 2 years:



Identifies as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic:



You said there were consequences to the last question - can you provide us with some more detail so we can understand better?

To understand what the consequences were for those who decline unsuitable accommodation, we looked at the respondents' comments which focused on a variety of things, including their reasoning for not accepting accommodation and the consequences. **4 key themes** were identified.

1. Limited Housing Options and Pressure to Accept Unsuitable Accommodation:

- Instances where individuals feel pressured to accept accommodation that is unsuitable for their needs.

- Consequences, such as being moved down the waiting list or removed from it, for refusing properties deemed unsuitable.
- Lack of choice and support in the housing allocations process, leading to individuals feeling trapped in accepting less-than-ideal living conditions.

2. Challenges in Accessibility and Adaptability

- Issues related to accessibility and adaptability of offered housing, especially for disabled respondents.
- Struggles in finding properties that meet specific disability needs, and the consequences of refusing unsuitable options.
- Frustration over the lack of suitable housing options for individuals with mobility challenges or specific medical requirements.

3. Geographical Challenges and Impact on Family Ties

- Concerns over being offered accommodation far away from family, affecting the individual's ability to maintain relationships and support networks.
- Instances where geographical location of the offered property is a major factor in refusing the accommodation.
- Challenges in balancing housing needs with proximity to family members support systems.

4. Communication and Support Issues with Housing Authorities

- Instances of poor communication and lack of support from housing authorities during accommodation allocation process.
- Feeling ignored, dismissed, or penalised for expressing concerns about unsuitable offers.
- Criticism of housing officers and authorities for not adequately addressing specific needs and conditions, leading to frustration and stress among applicants.

Next Steps

Tenants have given us their time to provide their views in this survey. Their voices matter and deserve your consideration and action.

- 1) All tenants who completed the survey and opted to receive a copy of the report will be sent a copy ahead of publication.
- 2) We have sent this report to key decision makers across the housing sector including Welsh Government, Members of the Senedd (with an interest in housing), Housing CEOs and Heads of Service asking for their consideration and action.
- 3) TPAS Cymru will look for opportunities to present and discuss the findings withing sector and media to ensure stakeholders absorb and act on the report.
- 4) In addition, based on other TPAS Cymru's reports its likely we will be approached to present to tenant groups and staff teams across Wales. To request a session, please contact enquiries@tpas.cymru

We are very interested to know your views on this report and especially what action you took as result.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our Tenant Pulse panel for their continuous inspiration and commitment to taking part in our surveys. Your input is truly valued and helps to shape the future of housing.

We would also like to thank the Welsh Government for part funding TPAS Cymru as an organisation and to Wales & West for the year-round lead sponsorship.

About TPAS Cymru



TPAS Cymru has supported tenants and landlords in Wales for over 30 years developing effective tenant and community participation through training, support, practical projects and policy development. Locally we support community empowerment through practical advice, support, training and project work.

At Government level, we contribute to policy changes by working with partner organisations to ensure the tenant voice influences decision making.



Tenant Pulse is the voice of tenants in Wales. www.tpas.cymru/pulse. It's been created by TPAS Cymru and is supported by Welsh Government. We aim to:

1. Find out what matters most to tenants
2. Release regular surveys
3. Hold prize draws to reward people who take part

The results of our surveys are used by decision makers to create housing policy which works for tenants, and which helps make housing in Wales safer and fairer.

Tenant Voice sponsor



Tenant Pulse is part of programme of a work looking to amplifying the voice of tenants. We are very grateful for Pobl Group who sponsor this work.

Notes:

- 1) To meet one of our team to discuss the points raised, please contact: Elizabeth Taylor at elizabeth@tpas.cymru.
- 2) Media enquiries; contact David Wilton drw@tpas.cymru / 07896871164
- 3) To view our other Pulse Reports please visit www.tpas.cymru/pulse
- 4) To learn more about Tenant Pulse, and request promotional material for awareness building, contact: eleanor@tpas.cymru