

# What really matters to residents?

Renter Satisfaction Survey  
Perceptions within UK housing

1st Edition | March 2021



# Putting residents at the heart of the home.

**It is well-known that the UK is facing a housing crisis. There is not enough housing stock, which has pushed many into unsuitable and overcrowded homes. Meanwhile, house prices have continued to rise, while wages have not. This has narrowed the pool of those who are able to buy and created more demand for rental properties than ever.**

There is an increasing reliance on housing associations, local authorities and private landlords to provide homes. However, properties are not being built fast enough to meet demand. Meanwhile, a proportion of the UK's current housing stock is unsuitable. In fact, Shelter research suggests around three in ten people are living in 'bad housing'<sup>1</sup>.

Having access to quality housing goes far beyond the individual, with the effects reverberating throughout society. Poor housing is estimated to cost the NHS £1.4bn a year<sup>2</sup>, through poor health outcomes. It also contributes to the deprivation of whole areas, which in turn creates work, education and crime inequalities.

Compounding the issue is legislative pressure facing landlords in both the public and private sector. While most are dedicated to providing residents with safe and secure housing, they are also grappling with changes in legislation, from recent changes to electrical safety responsibilities in the private sector to the upcoming Building Safety Bill. This leaves them in a position of continuously playing catch-up to ensure they are meeting their responsibilities.

Our conversations with housing providers in recent months have suggested that residents may be under-reporting issues they face with their homes. In part, this is due to the pandemic impacting how people perceive their own circumstances in the face of wider societal problems, as well as a reluctance to highlight issues at a time when having a secure place to live is more important than ever. Not only does this leave

landlords unaware of their residents' needs, but it also means they are blind to issues that may cause substantial problems in the future.

We wanted to understand how the UK's renters really feel about the quality of their homes, the issues they have faced, as well as their relationship with their landlord. Our findings show that, on the surface, the vast majority of people are happy with the overall quality of where they live, but delving into the details presents a different picture.

**76%** of renters rate their current home as being of 'good' quality.

## HOWEVER

**54%** have carried out work themselves, or called in contractors themselves, to complete repairs.

**34%** have not had gas appliances checked in the last year.

**32%** have had problems with the general condition of their property, such as damp and mould.

**32%** say their experience of renting would be improved if their property was in better condition.

**27%** faced problems having repairs and maintenance works completed.

A safe and secure place to live is not a luxury. It is a basic human right. This research highlights where landlords are succeeding and where more work needs to be done. We hope you enjoy reading our findings and it becomes a useful resource for better understanding your residents and, ultimately, ensuring everyone has a quality home to live in.

**Cem Savas, CEO, Plentific.**

<sup>1</sup> People living in bad housing - numbers and health impacts.

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_and\\_research/policy\\_library/people\\_living\\_in\\_bad\\_housing\\_-\\_numbers\\_and\\_health\\_impacts](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/people_living_in_bad_housing_-_numbers_and_health_impacts)

<sup>2</sup> The cost of poor housing to the NHS.

[https://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_assets/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/87741-Cost-of-Poor-Housing-Briefing-Paper-v3.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/87741-Cost-of-Poor-Housing-Briefing-Paper-v3.pdf)

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# A snapshot.

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Around 10.5 million homes in the UK are rented; 5.5 million to private tenants and 5 million to social housing residents<sup>3</sup>.

Currently, private renters account for 19% of all households, while social housing occupants make up 17% of the market<sup>4</sup>. The proportion of renters has steadily increased over the last 20 years and, as the housing crisis deepens, will continue to grow.

A growing market represents an opportunity for landlords to widen their portfolio and increase returns, but the needs of residents must not be taken for granted. As scrutiny around landlords increases, those that provide their residents with safe and decent homes will ultimately succeed. And central to that is understanding what residents need and want.



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3 Dwellings by tenure in England, Wales and Scotland, Table 17c  
<https://www.ukhousingreview.org.uk/ukhr20/tables-figures/pdf/20-017.pdf>

4 Dwellings by tenure in England, Wales and Scotland, Table 17d  
<https://www.ukhousingreview.org.uk/ukhr20/tables-figures/pdf/20-017.pdf>

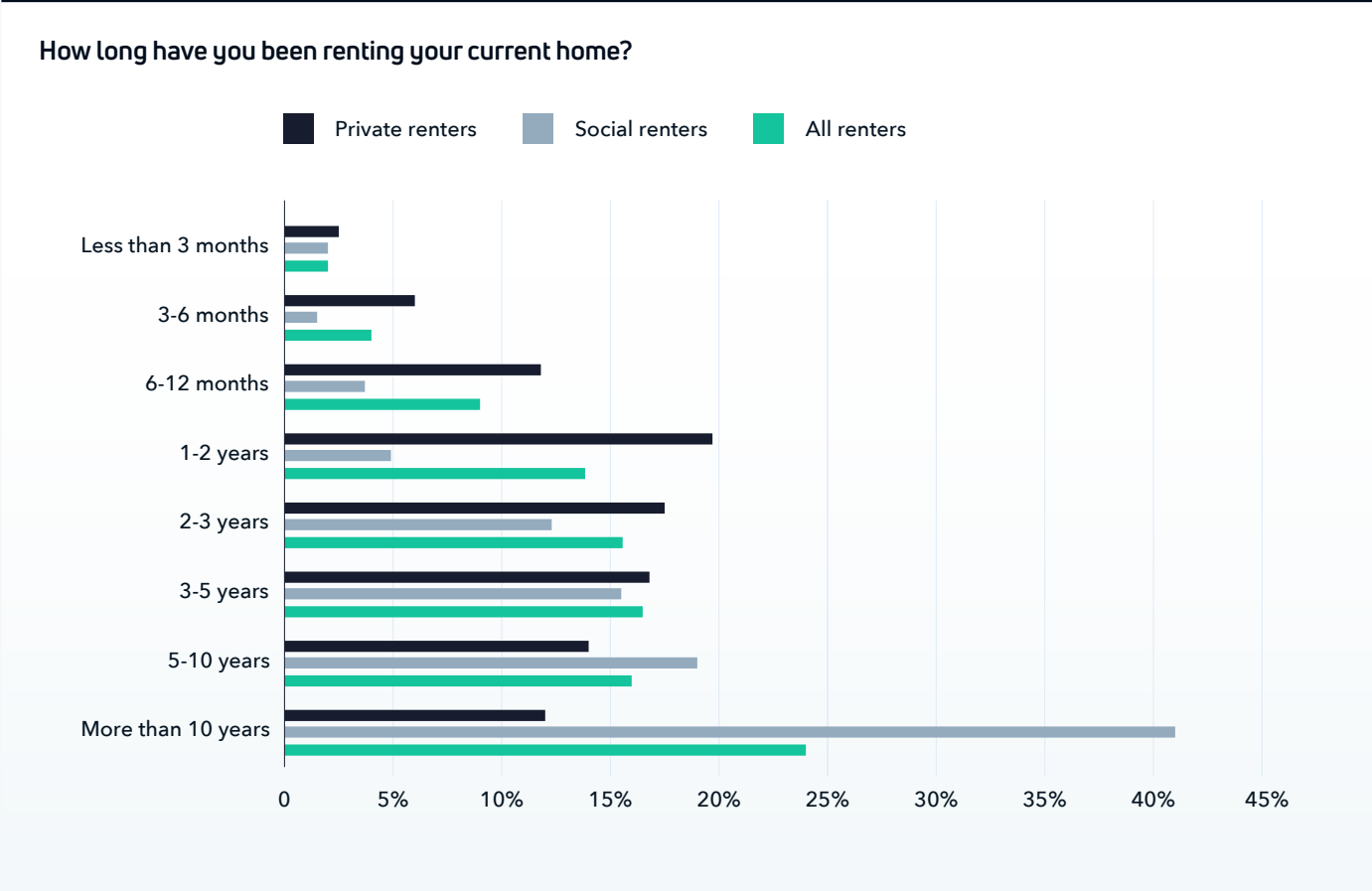
# Happiness across homes.

## 83% of residents feel physically safe in their home and neighbourhood

The ability to live in a safe home and community positively impacts outcomes for both people and society. Unsafe living conditions, in need of significant repair, can have a negative impact that goes beyond the individual or family – it reverberates throughout society. Whilst it is encouraging to know that the UK’s renters are generally happy in their homes and feel safe within their local communities, there is a significant minority that doesn’t (17%). Landlords must do more to understand their concerns.

## 5.5 years is the average renting time

Perhaps unsurprisingly those in social housing remaining in their home for almost double the time private residents do (an average of 7.6 years vs. 4.0 years). In fact, more than two-in-five (40%) social housing residents have been in their current home for more than 10 years, compared to just one-in-eight of private renters. This increases the onus for landlords to continue to upgrade and retrofit properties on an on-going basis to ensure high levels of customer satisfaction.



# The importance of quality.

**In general, UK renters feel that their homes are in good condition.**

A small proportion of social housing residents felt their home was in a bad condition when they moved in, but that proportion has fallen with regards to how they rate their current living conditions.

Results reveal residents are happy with the condition of their homes when they first move in. Only 7% rate their home as being in poor condition.

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the overall condition of your current home when you first moved into it (0="Terrible" to 10="Excellent")



## About 32% have experienced issues with damp or mould

Common problems amongst renters relate to the general property condition, damp, mould and repairs and maintenance issues.

Private renters are more likely to have experienced problems with their home's electricity, and contacting their landlord or letting/management agency.

For landlords, streamlining repairs and maintenance processes and timely redress of reported issues will help reduce instances of the figures reported here.

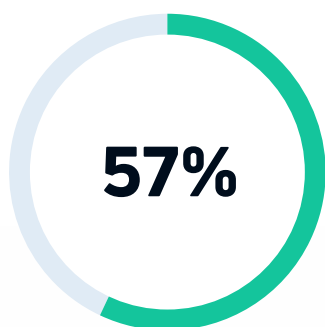
### In your current property, have you ever had any problems with the following?



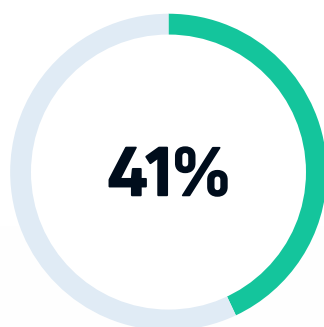
### Common issues residents highlighted within their properties.

Of all renters surveyed, more than two thirds said their homes were in good condition. 31% said they weren't in good condition.

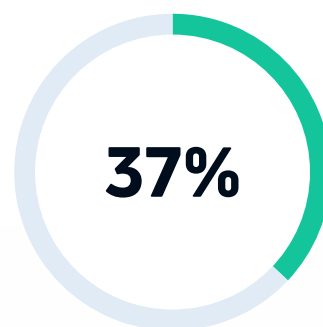
Of the latter, common issues cited were as follows:



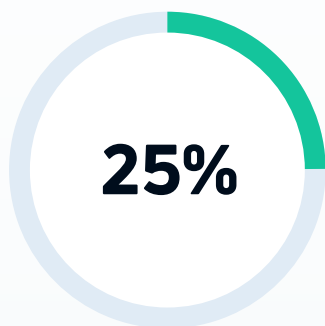
of residents said  
they needed  
re-decoration



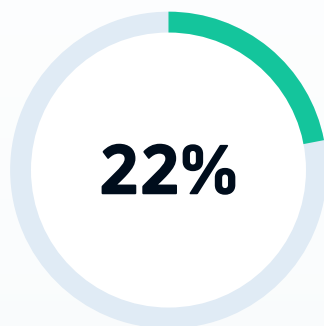
of residents said  
they needed property  
maintenance



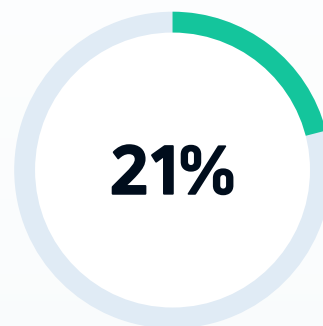
of residents said  
they needed garden  
maintenance



of residents said  
they had plumbing problems  
at their property



of residents said  
they had boiler-related  
issues at their property



of residents said  
they had electrical issues  
at their property



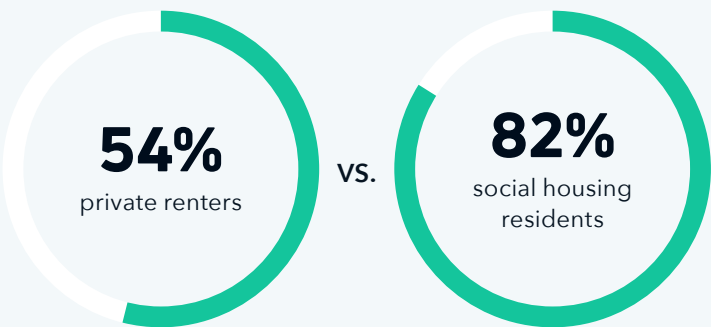
# Prepare and prevent.

## Almost 50% of private renters have not had their gas appliances checked in 12 months.

Our research reveals certain landlords are putting themselves and their residents at risk by not complying with the required safety regulations (this is more prevalent in the private sector).

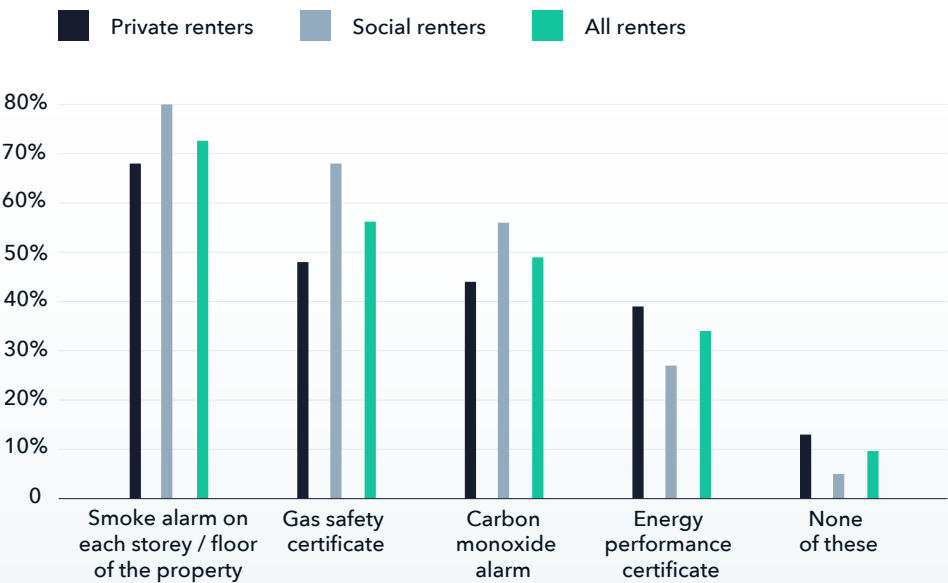
When it comes to gas safety checks almost half of private renters have not had their gas appliances checked in the last 12 months – a legal requirement landlords are falling short on.

Housing Associations and Local Authorities seem to be better equipped to ensure these checks are carried out, with 82% of our social housing resident respondents confirming an inspection was carried out within the last year. It is also clear that information about compliance certification is not being made available to residents.

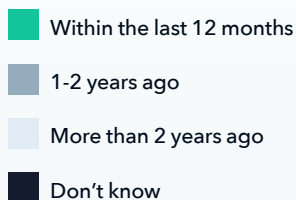
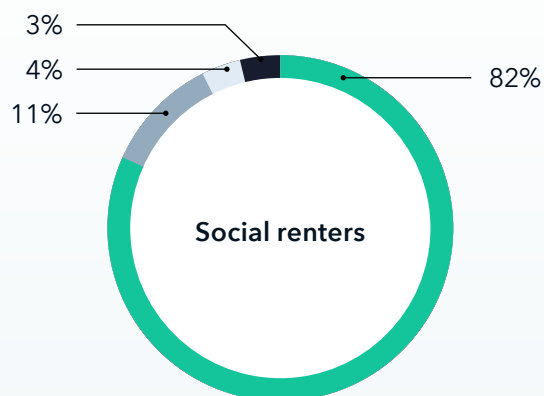
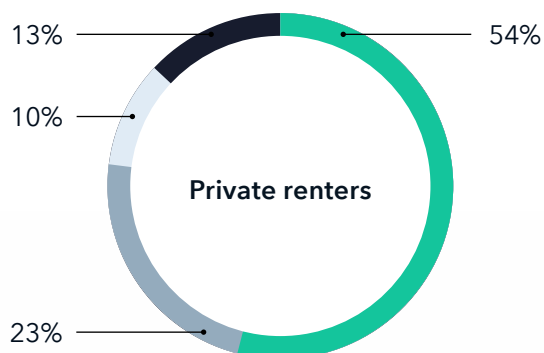


Residents who have had their gas appliances checked in the last 12 months

### Has your landlord provided you with, or made available to you, any of the following?

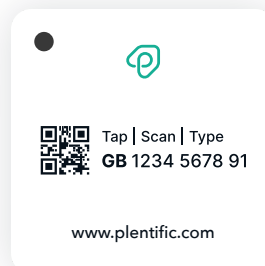


When were all the gas appliances in your home (e.g. heating system, gas oven) last serviced?



## Safety is not a choice.

Ensuring gas and electrical safety checks are carried out is not a choice for landlords and, aside from the penalties they may receive should they fail to do so, residents are being put at risk. Automating the process, with reminders for the expiration of certifications and alerts when the checks have been successfully carried out will help to ensure there are no oversights.



# Communication is key.

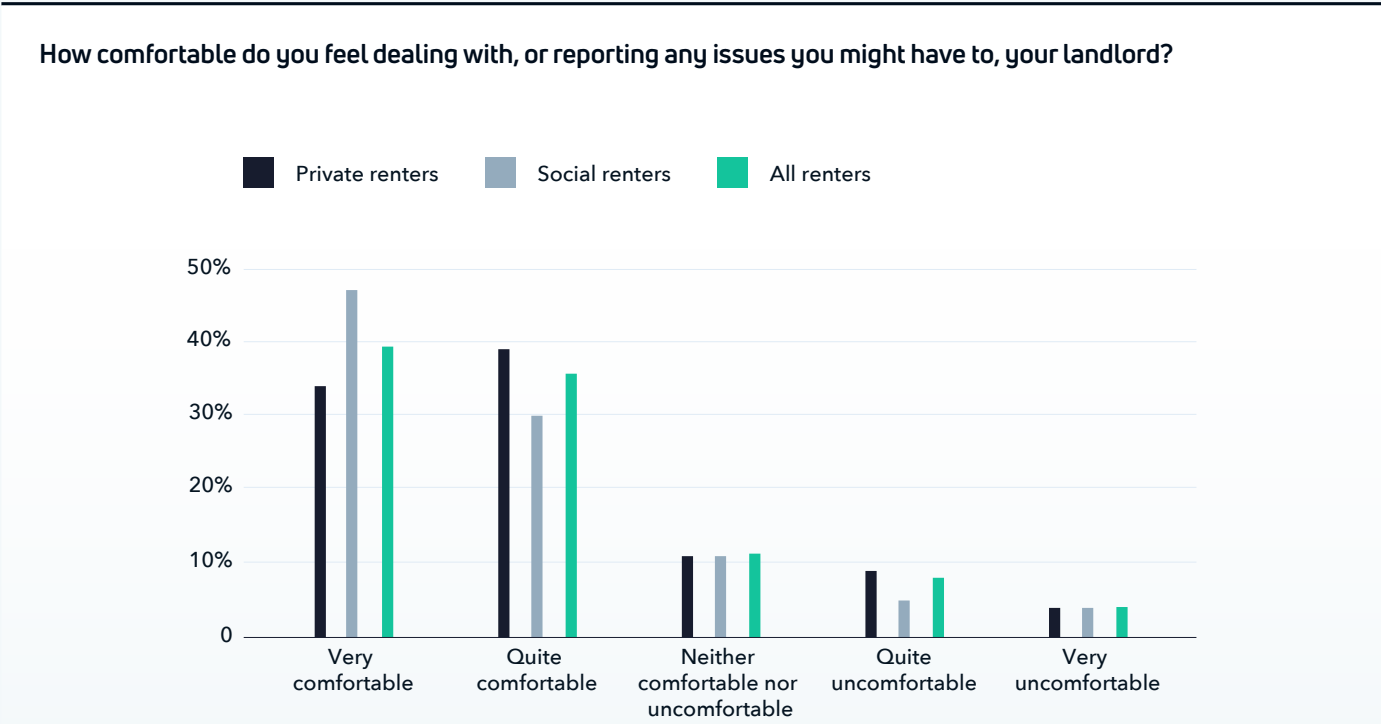
Across the board, resident relationships and communication with their landlord is generally good but could improve, particularly within the private rented sector.



A small proportion of residents have a bad landlord relationship; a more responsive landlord would appreciably improve their overall renting experience.

The good news is that three quarters of UK residents feel comfortable dealing with, or reporting issues to, their landlord. However, there’s room for improvement, with only four-in-ten feeling very comfortable. In fact, a small but not insignificant proportion – one in eight – actually feels uncomfortable when dealing with their landlord.

One in eight residents feels uncomfortable when dealing with their landlord.



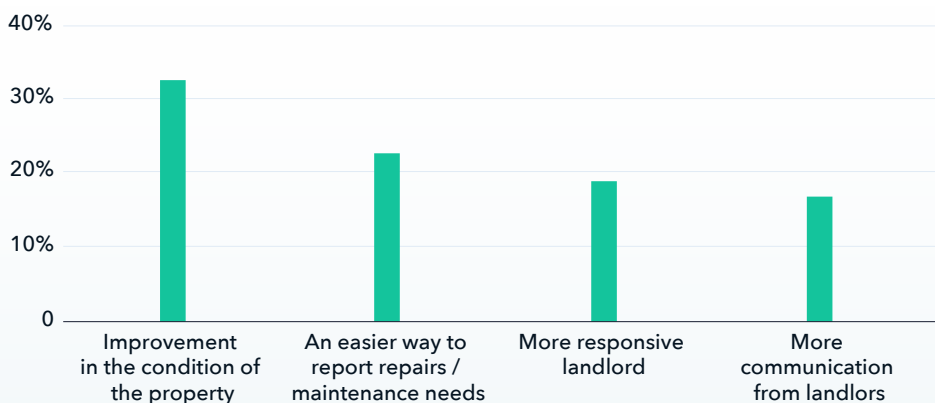
**The relationship between landlord and resident is crucial to how renters feel about their homes, with almost two-thirds feeling that their experience of renting could be improved in terms of their relationship with their landlord.**

There are a whole host of ways landlords can ensure they are effectively communicating with residents. Many still rely on letters through the post but often these are ignored or not read until too late.

Almost 90% of our respondents have a smartphone and providing an app or web portal for ongoing communication, alongside text messages and letters may well improve communication and, as a consequence, the relationship further.

**Better technological solutions can repair broken down relationships quickly.**

**What, if anything, would improve your experience of renting, in terms of your relationship with your landlord (all respondents)?**



# To repair and to maintain.

**Most residents have requested maintenance work from their landlord and feel they respond well to their requests; most work has been carried out, although a proportion have been waiting a long time for it to be completed and a small proportion had their request refused.**

Of those who have asked their landlord for work to be carried out on their property, three quarters feel that their landlord is responsive to their repairs or maintenance requests, including a third who feel their landlord could not be more responsive.

**On average, it takes 10 days for requested works to be completed. Social housing landlords are slower.**

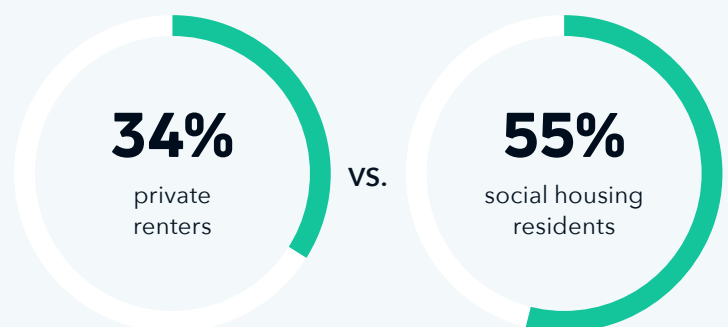
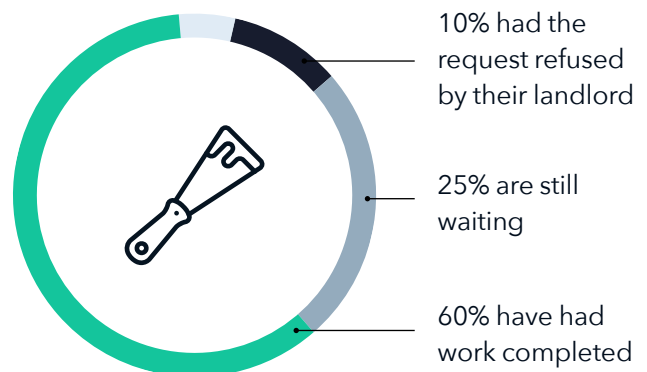
## However, completion times vary.

Private landlords are often much faster at getting the work done, with 40% of private renters having work completed within three days – compared to a third of social housing residents. There is no significant difference in the average time it takes for the work to be completed, between private (9.5 days) and social housing (10.8 days) residents.

For those respondents who have had work agreed by their landlord but have yet to see it completed, over half of social housing residents and over third of private renters have been waiting more than four weeks.

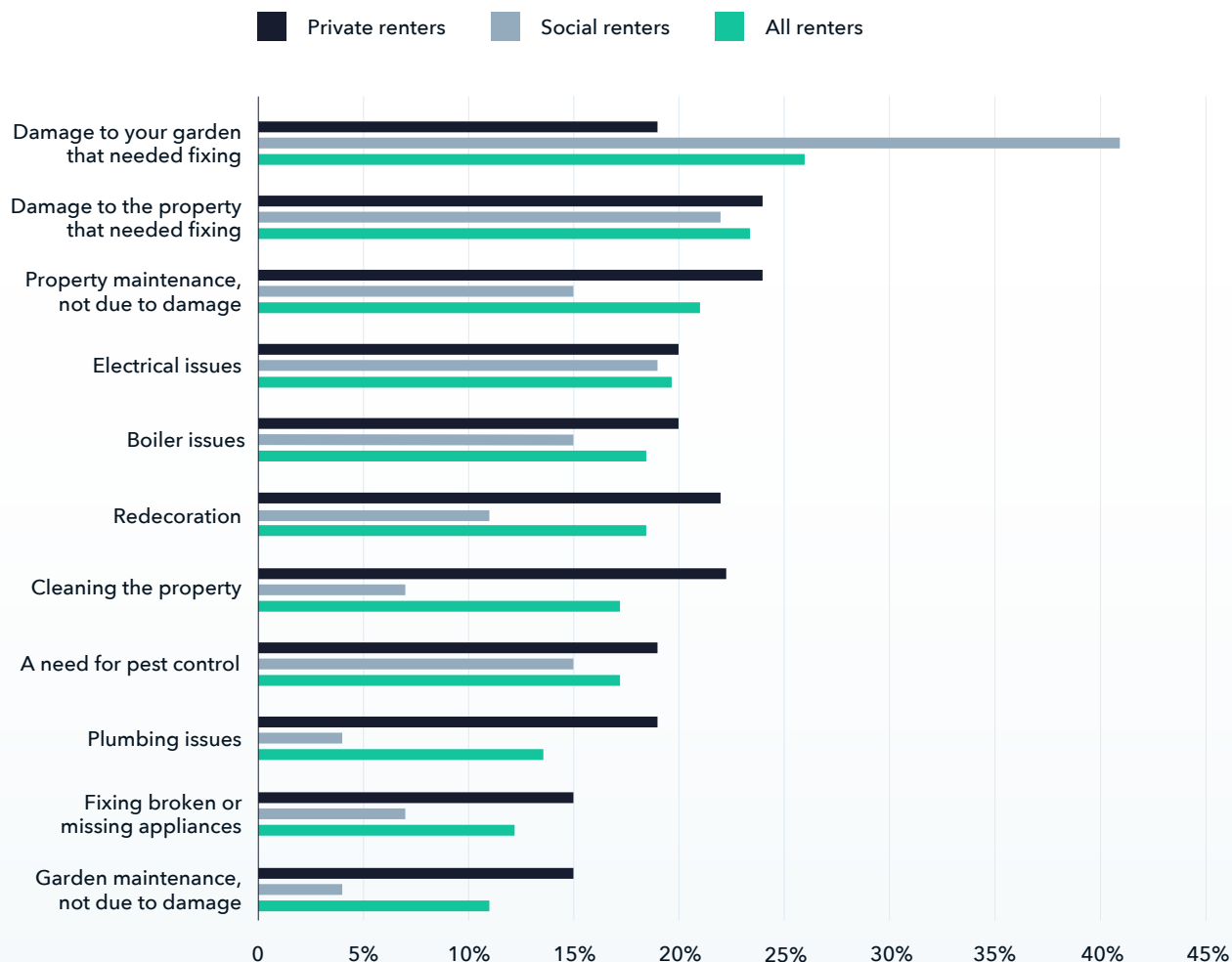
## 86% of renters have requested repairs or maintenance from their current landlord at some point.

Our research shows that a vast majority of renters have requested repairs or maintenance from their current landlord at some point. Around 60% have had work completed, 25% are still waiting, and just under one in ten have had the request refused by their landlord.



Residents who have been waiting more than four weeks for work they requested and agreed with their landlord

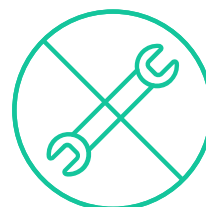
### What maintenance or problem(s) that you asked to be fixed, have been refused by your landlord?



### Works refused.

The types of works refused by landlords vary. On average, 25% of residents asked for repairs to their garden or damage to their property.

20% have been refused general property maintenance, electrical issues, boiler issues, or redecoration.



# Flexibility in repairs delivery.

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We asked respondents about the flexibility of the repairs and maintenance process, specifically the means provided to them to report problems - and when corresponding work orders are arranged.

When it comes to reporting repairs, just under 66% have been offered an online method (other than email), and this facility is more common for residents in the social housing sector (75%) than private rented sector (52%).

However, almost 33% say they do not have this facility, impacting the flexibility with which they can report any problems.

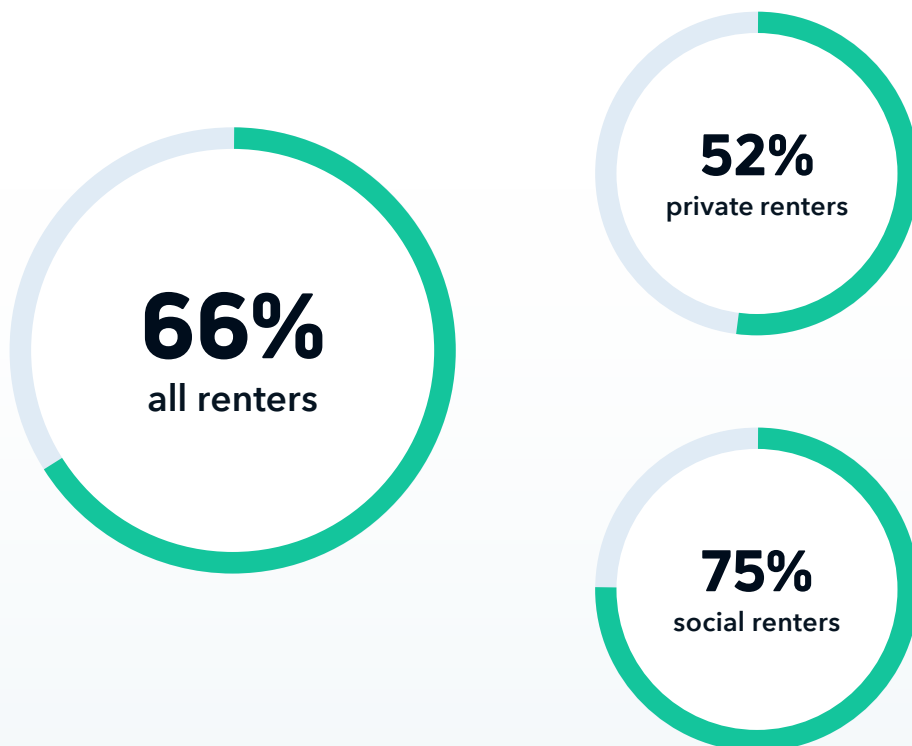
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Almost 33% of residents do not have an online method of reporting repairs other than email.

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## Resident access to online reporting tools.



## More flexibility in PRS.

**When it comes to contractor visits, private renters appear to have more flexibility than social housing residents.**

A quarter of social housing residents said they were not given a choice of when the work would be carried out, compared to just one-in-seven private renters. Only 25% of social renters felt arrangements were very flexible, compared to almost 50% of private renters.

Providing a level of flexibility will have a big impact on resident satisfaction. In fact, more than 20% of respondents said an easier way to report repairs and maintenance requests would improve their experience of renting.

**1 in 4**

social housing  
residents

were not given a choice  
of when the work  
would be carried out

**1 in 7**

private  
renters

**25%**

social housing  
residents

felt arrangements  
were very flexible

**50%**

private  
renters

## A dedicated tool.

Providing a mechanism for residents to choose the time and date, as far as possible, for contractors to come to their homes would also have an impact, empowering residents to take greater control and, in all likelihood, improve first-time-fix rates for landlords.

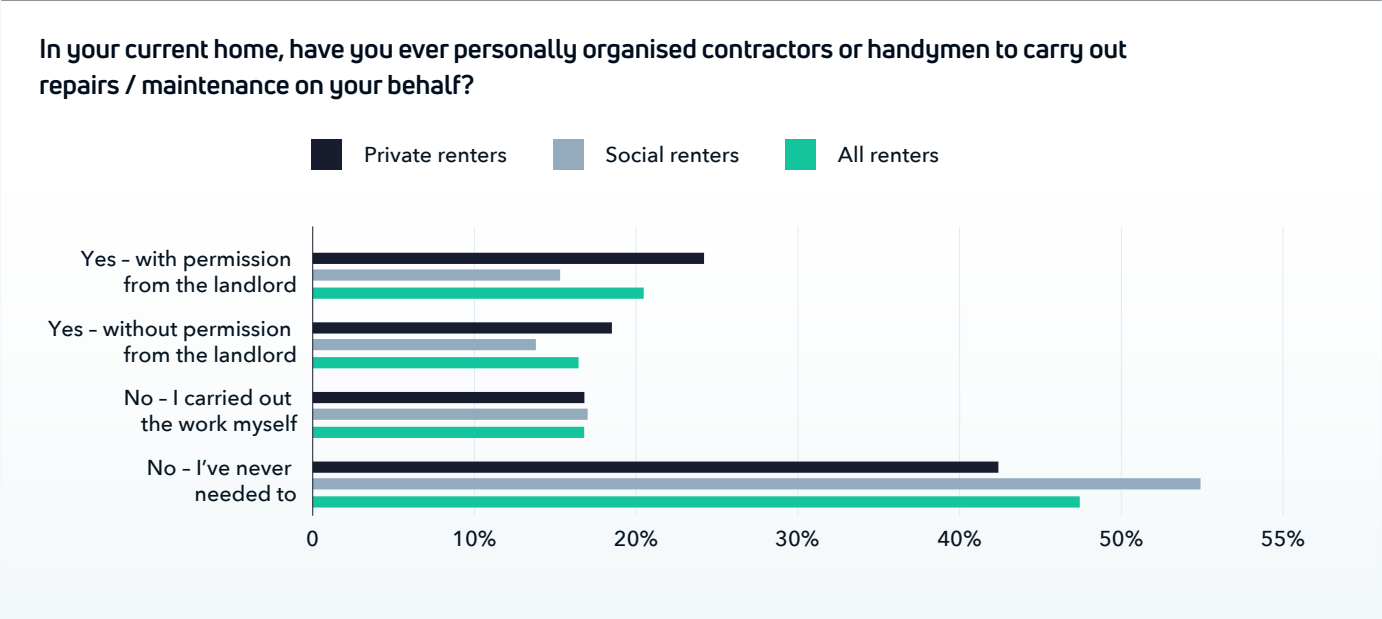




# Self-service and empowerment.

A minority of residents have organised work themselves, either with or without permission, more likely in the private sector - with the majority claiming the work was needed urgently.

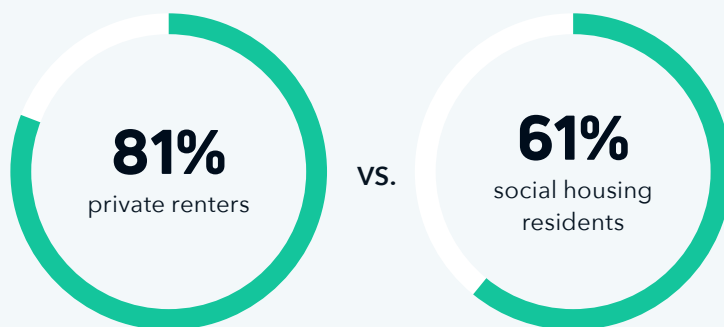
The research shows that more than 33% of renters in the UK have taken it upon themselves to organise contractors to carry out repairs on their behalf, including 20% who had permission from their landlord and circa 16% who did not.



## It's an emergency.

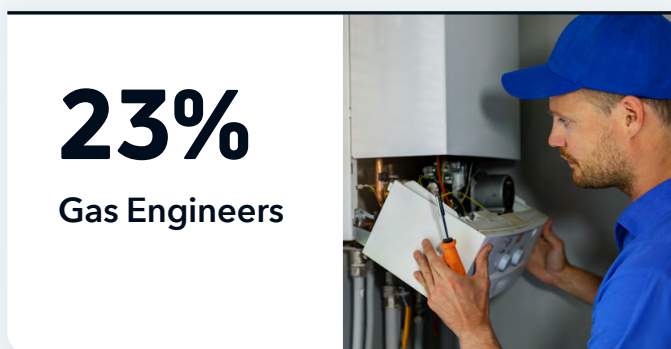
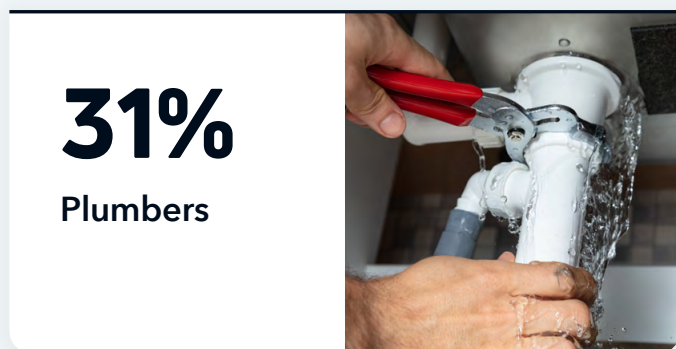
The services people are most likely to arrange themselves are plumbers, electricians and handypeople, with over 20% calling one of these professionals in.

Interestingly, social housing residents who have done this are more likely to feel it wasn't an emergency (39% vs. 19%), whereas private renters are more likely to feel it was an emergency (81% vs. 61%).



Residents who felt it was an emergency

The services residents are most likely to arrange themselves



## A serious impact on resident satisfaction.

**Residents should be able to rely on their landlord to provide the repairs and maintenance services that they need and, if they do not, it not only impacts resident satisfaction but also leaves landlords without oversight.**

Without a level of control of the work taking place within their properties, landlords will have little idea of what to expect when they take the property back. This brings us back full circle to the need to provide quality homes when residents first move in and the revenue loss that can result from properties left empty.

**When you have organised contractors or handymen to carry out repairs/maintenance on your behalf, what service(s) did you require?**



# The need of the hour – quality homes.

**Everybody, no matter their age, income, circumstances or experiences, should have a safe and well-maintained home to live in.**

Our research shows that while residents are broadly happy with their homes, there are a whole host of issues they contend with in their rented properties.

The main problems centre around communication, time to repair and compliance – all of which are impacting residents' enjoyment of their homes. Understanding the experiences of residents is just the first step on the journey and landlords now need to focus on where resident satisfaction can be improved.

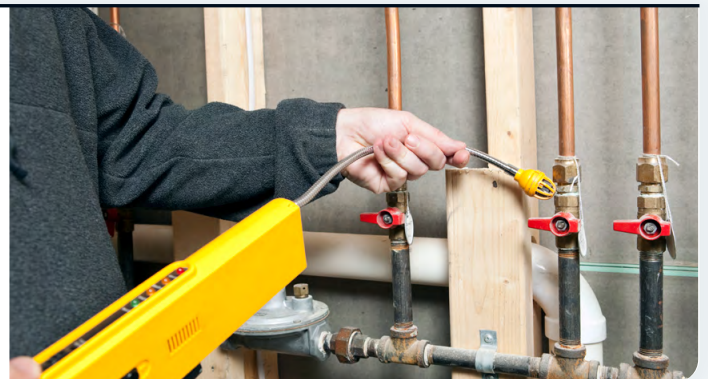
## 66%

think that communication can be improved



## 50%

have not had gas checks completed in more than a year



## 23 days

average waiting time for renters who have had work agreed by their landlord but have yet to see it completed



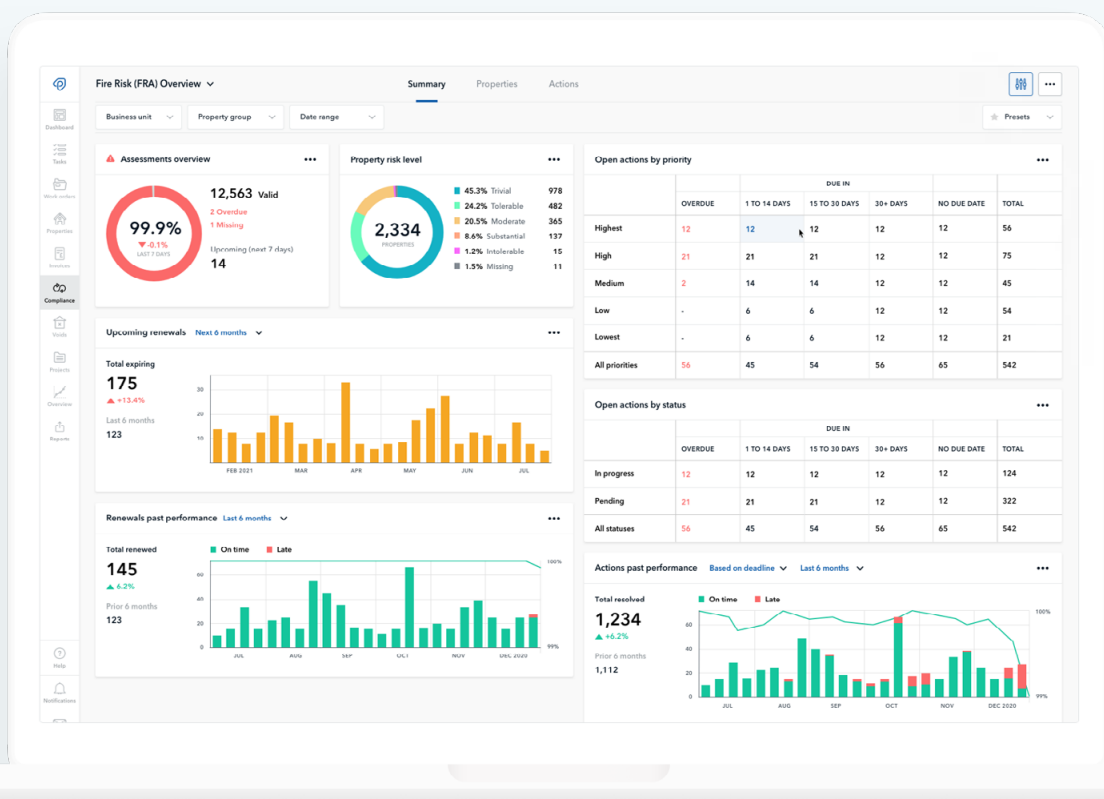
## Talk to us.

**Innovation is crucial. For too long, housing providers have relied on legacy tools to manage their portfolios but as resident expectations increase, digital technologies will be fundamental to putting residents back at the heart of the home.**

While residents are, and must be, the primary focus for future strategies, we must not forget that if the process of managing properties is streamlined, landlords will benefit too.

Plentific's cloud software integrates repairs, compliance and resident management to streamline the process and improve resident experiences. With advanced analytics, Plentific offers landlords and property managers deep insight into the health of their property portfolio at the touch of a button.

Find out more about Plentific by visiting:  
[www.plentific.com](http://www.plentific.com)





# Appendix.

## Methodology.

A 12-13 minute survey was devised and administered in collaboration with 3Gem's experienced market research professionals, and answered online by respondents who were:

- living as a resident with a formal rental agreement to pay rent to a private landlord, management company or lettings agency (but excluding friends/family), or
- living as a resident in a home provided by the government, a local authority, a housing association or a charity
- not a student
- living in a property connected to mains gas, electricity or water supplies
- had a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer (with access to the internet)

The target sample was n=1,000 UK adults, who are residents with a formal rental agreement (excluding friends or close family members) for the accommodation that they usually live in, split approximately equally between those in the Private sector and those in Social Housing.

## Achieved Sample.

The final sample achieved 1,000 UK residents, with slightly more renting from the Private sector (n=594) than in Social Housing (n=406). The sample sufficiently reflected the UK rental market, with the demographic characteristics: illustrated on the following page.

Results are based on an independent online survey conducted by 3Gem Research on behalf of Plentific; 1,000 UK residents aged 18+, were surveyed 5th – 8th February 2021.

## About 3Gem.

3Gem is a global market research firm that utilises industry-standard panel management systems and adheres to stringent quality control and GDPR procedures. All 3Gem researchers are MRS and ESOMAR accredited.

# Appendix.

## Sample Characteristics.

	Total Sample (n=1,000)	Private Sector (n=594)	Social Housing (n=406)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male / Female	50% / 50%	48% / 52%	53% / 47%
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	12%	16%	6%
25-34	22%	27%	15%
35-44	25%	27%	22%
45-54	18%	15%	23%
55-64	14%	10%	20%
65+	8%	5%	13%
Average Age	42.2 years	38.8 years	47.1 years
<b>GOR</b>			
London (inc. Greater London)	13%	16%	10%
South East	13%	13%	14%
South West	9%	9%	9%
West Midlands	11%	11%	11%
East Midlands	8%	8%	6%
Eastern England	7%	6%	7%
North West	12%	13%	11%
North East	5%	5%	5%
Yorkshire & Humberside	8%	8%	8%
Scotland	6%	4%	10%
Northern Ireland	2%	2%	2%
Wales	6%	6%	7%
<b>Employment Status</b>			
Working (Full/Part-time, Self-employed)	63%	75%	47%
Not Working (Unemployed, Homemaker)	29%	21%	40%
Retired	8%	5%	13%
<b>Household Income</b>			
Under £15,000	27%	19%	39%
£15,000-£29,999	39%	38%	39%
£30,000 or more	31%	40%	17%
Average (£'000)	£27.8	£32.4	£20.9
<b>Type of Rental Property</b>			
Detached / Semi-detached house	31%	32%	29%
Terraced house	24%	26%	22%
Bungalow	6%	5%	7%
Flat / apartment in converted house	18%	22%	12%
Flat / apartment in a block of 1-25 homes	16%	13%	22%
Flat / apartment in a block of >25 homes	4%	4%	6%
Other	2%	1%	3%

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