Walterton & Elgin Community Homes (WECH) TSM Survey

2023 Report
October 2023
Prepared by: Acuity Research & Practice

making sense of housing

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Key Metrics Summary
3. Overall Satisfaction
4. Keeping Properties in Good Repair
5. Responsible Neighbourhood Management
6. Respectful & Helpful Engagement
7. Improvements
8. Wellbeing
9. Trends
10. Understanding Satisfaction
11. Conclusion
12. Recommendations

Introduction

Walterton and Elgin Community Homes are a Community Land Trust and Housing Association based in the Harrow Road ward of North Westminster. WECH owns and manages 675 homes, mostly tenants but also some leaseholders. WECH is a community owned and democratically controlled organisation with its residents in control.

Acuity has been commissioned to undertake a one-off, independent satisfaction survey of the tenants of WECH to collect data on their opinions of, and attitudes towards, their landlord and the services provided.

The survey was designed using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures from the Regulator of Social Housing, which became mandatory in April 2023 and will be reported for the first time in 2024.

All tenants of WECH with an email address were sent a message in early August with a link to complete the satisfaction survey online. From the 14th of August those not responding and those without an email address were sent a postal questionnaire and the survey then closed on the 23rd of September. The aim was to complete 242 surveys, if possible, to achieve the guideline margin of error, a response of 37%. However, at the close of the survey a total of 179 were received, a 27.5% response, which is similar to the previous survey conducted in 2022 of 29%.

Of the 179 completed surveys received, 107 were online with 72 postal and whilst a little outside the suggested margin of error (see below), this still represents a good return. In addition, by using a census approach, at least all tenants have had the opportunity to express their satisfaction and views if they so wished. The responses were checked for representativeness and whist there are some differences between the tenant profile and responses received, no weighting has been applied because of the low numbers involved.

This report is based on the results from the 179 responses and shows the key findings, the comments made to the open and probing questions included, a comparison with other social landlords and with previous surveys and an assessment of the national context in which WECH operates.

The survey is confidential, and the results are sent back to WECH anonymised unless residents give their permission to be identified – 84% of tenants did give permission to share their name and 82% of these tenants are happy for WECH to contact them to discuss any issues they raised.

The aim of this survey is to provide data on tenants' satisfaction, which will allow WECH to:

- Provide information on tenants' perceptions of current services
- Compare the results with previous surveys, where possible
- Compare the results with other landlords (where appropriate)
- Report to the regulator from April 2024 onwards.

For the overall results, Acuity, Housemark and the Regulator of Social Housing recommend that landlords with under 2,500 properties achieve a sampling error of at least ±5% at the 95% confidence level. For WECH, 179 responses were received, and this response is high enough to conclude that the findings are accurate to within ±6.2%. Whilst this is outside the guideline figure it still represents a good return and using a census approach will satisfy the Regulator.

The majority of figures throughout the report show the results as percentages. The percentages are rounded up or down from two decimal places to the nearest whole number, and for this reason, may not in all cases add up to 100%. Rounding can also cause percentages described in the supporting text to differ from those in the charts by 1% when two percentages are added together.

Key Metrics Summary 2023

51%

Overall Satisfaction

The 2023 survey shows that overall satisfaction is at 51%, with moderate ratings for the other measures within the survey. These have fallen, in some cases quite significantly, since the previous survey in 2022.

The highest satisfaction is for the repairs service in the last 12 months and the contribution made by WECH to the neighbourhood (both 64%) but some of the measures fall below 50% satisfied. These include the overall repairs and maintenance service, listening to tenants' views and acting upon them (both 48%), dealing with anti-social behaviour (47%) and just 31% are satisfied with the way complaints are handled.

54% Well maintained home

62% Safe home

64% Repairs - Last 12 months

53% Time taken - Last repair

48% Repairs - Overall satisfaction

55% Communal areas clean & well maintained

64% Positive contribution to neighbourhood

47% Anti-social behaviour

57% Easy to deal with

48% Listens & Acts

58% Keeps you informed

57% Treats fairly & with respect

31% Complaints handling

National Context

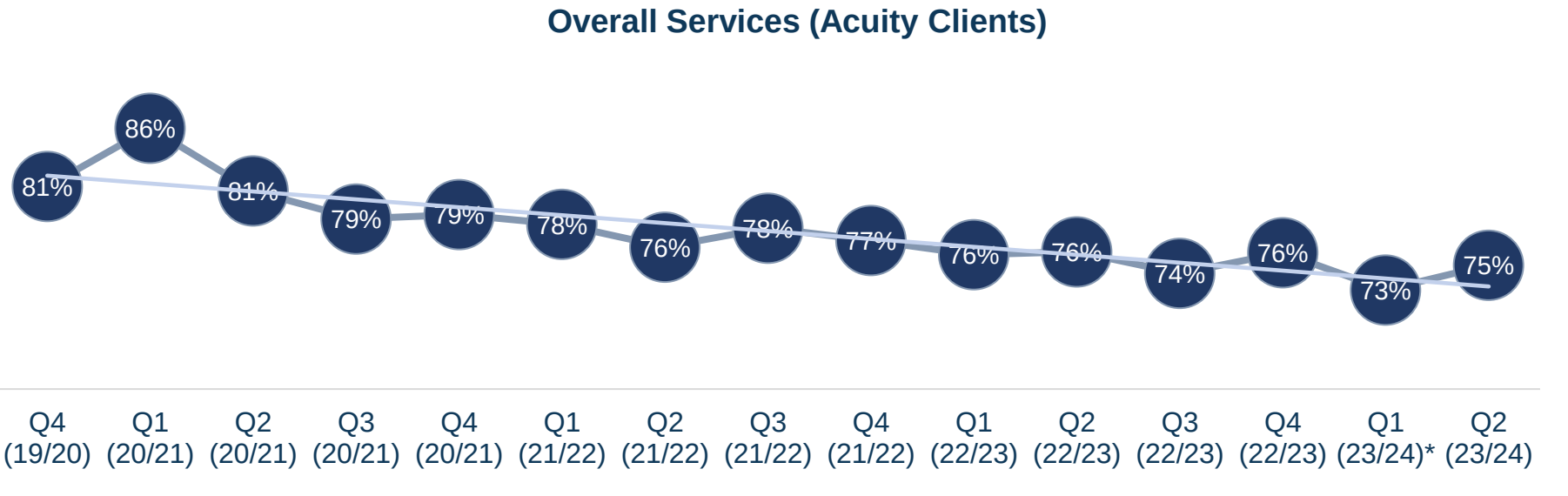
The results from these surveys have fallen since last year, which, in turn, were lower than the year before, but is this to do with WECH's performance or other factors?

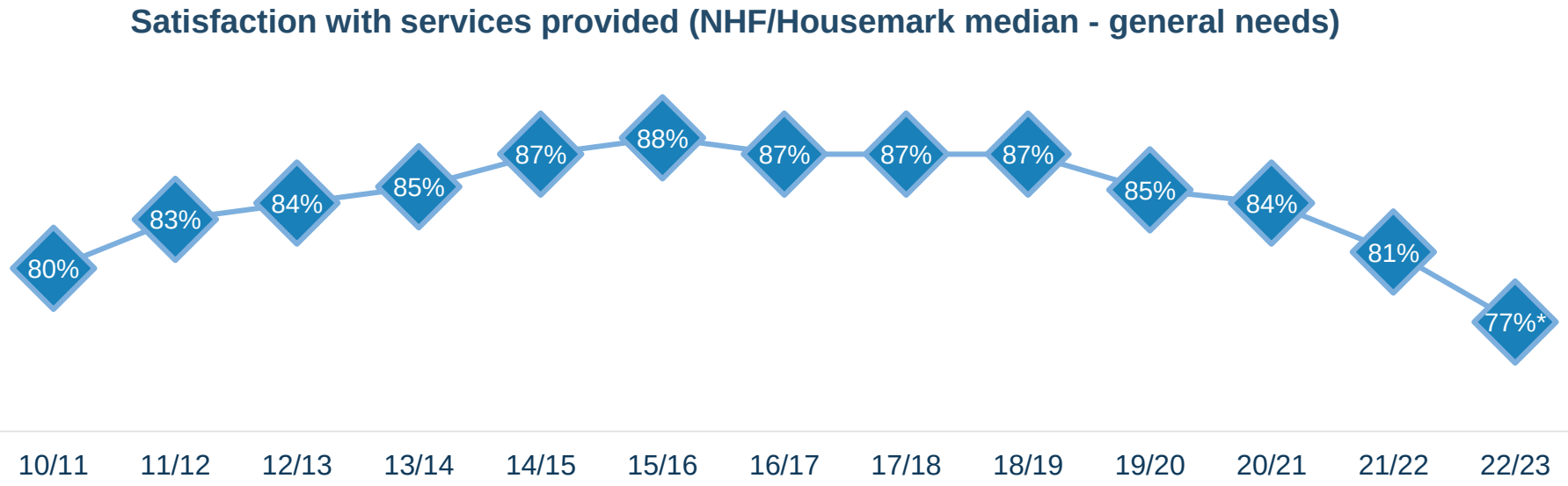
When considering the results, it is important that the national context and external factors should also be taken into account. For example:

- Cost of Living Crisis
- Government & Political Changes
- Uncertainty about the Future
- Brexit and the economy

Satisfaction is based on perception rather than specific values so can be affected by these factors and how positive people feel about their lives. Factors such as the pandemic also altered the way social landlords operate, perhaps making them less accessible and responsive.

The top graph demonstrates how overall satisfaction has changed over time for Acuity's clients (tracker only). The trendline is downward over the last few years. The lower chart shows the results from Housemark members with a peak in 2015/16 and a slow decline since; this starting even before the disruption caused by the pandemic.





**LCRA only onwards*

Overall Satisfaction

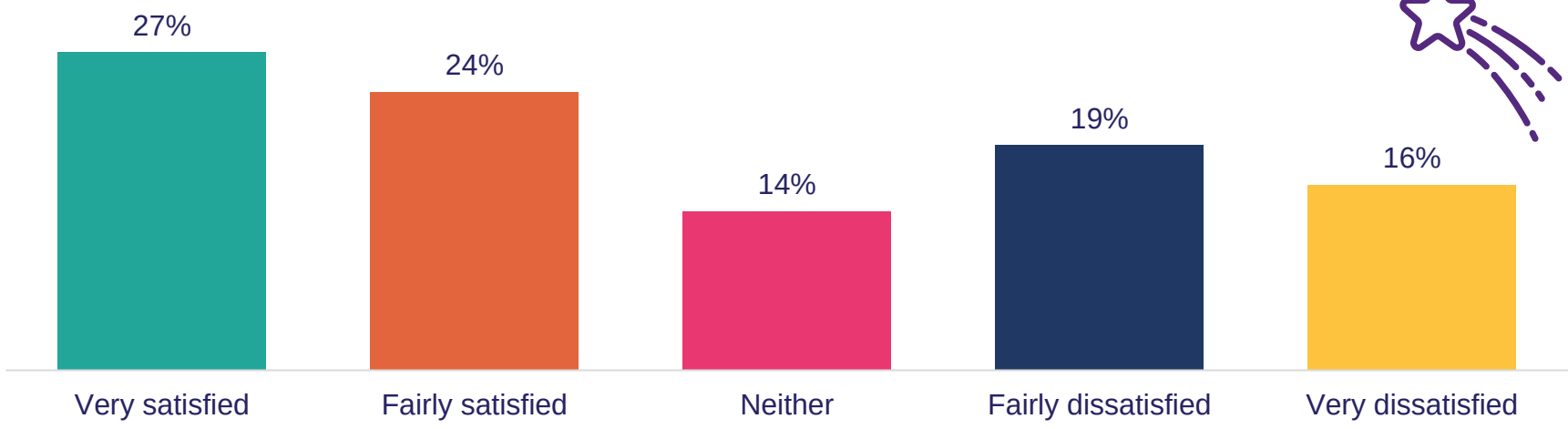
Overall Satisfaction

Tenants were asked, "*Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by WECH*?" This is the key metric in any tenant perception survey.

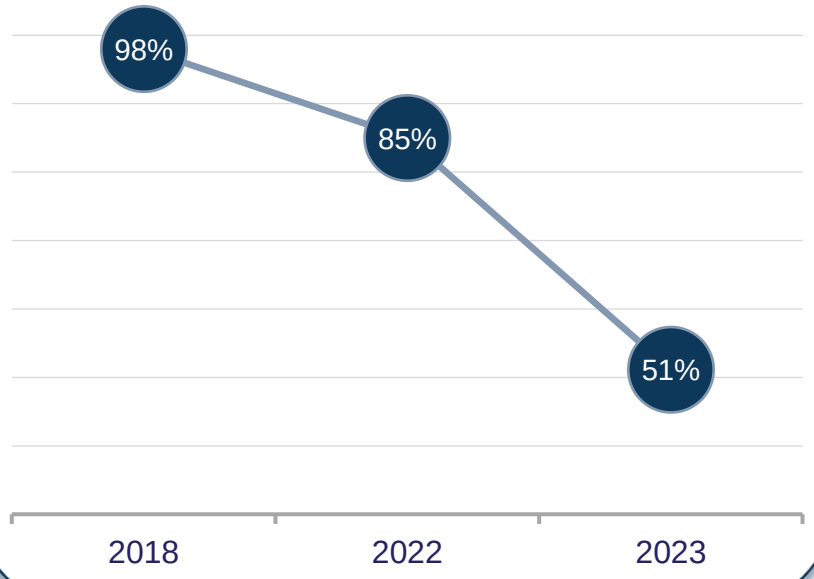
Just half the tenants (51%) are satisfied with the overall services from WECH, although more are very satisfied (27%) than fairly satisfied (24%). However, 35% of tenants are dissatisfied with the overall services provided and a further 14% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

WECH undertook satisfaction surveys in 2018 and 2022 and there has been some considerable change with satisfaction falling from 98% in 2018 to 85% in 2022 but then a fall of 34% to 51% in 2023. The report will try and discover some of the reasons for this decline, but it will be a cause for concern for WECH after such high satisfaction in previous years.

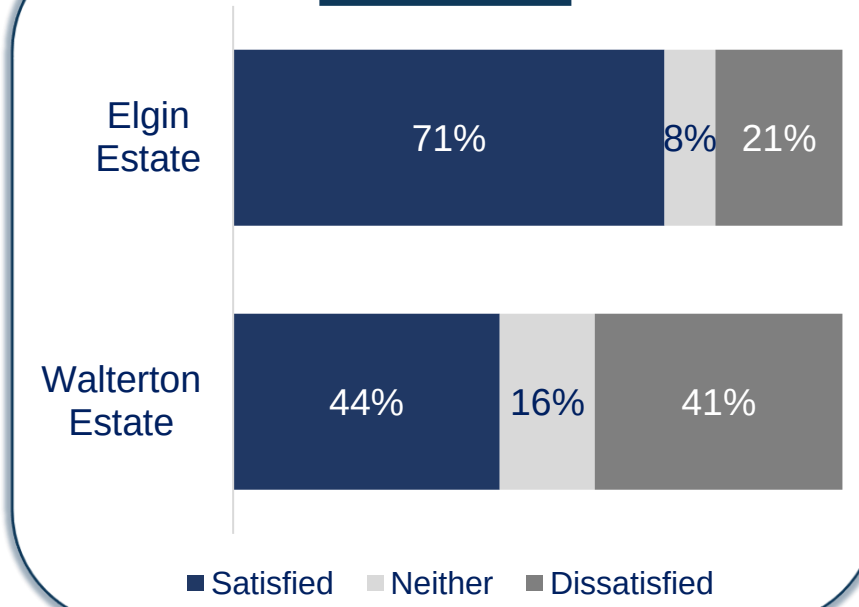
In terms of location, satisfaction is much higher among the tenants of the Elgin estate rather than the Walterton estate, 71% compared with 44%; almost as many here being dissatisfied (41%).



Over Time



By Estate



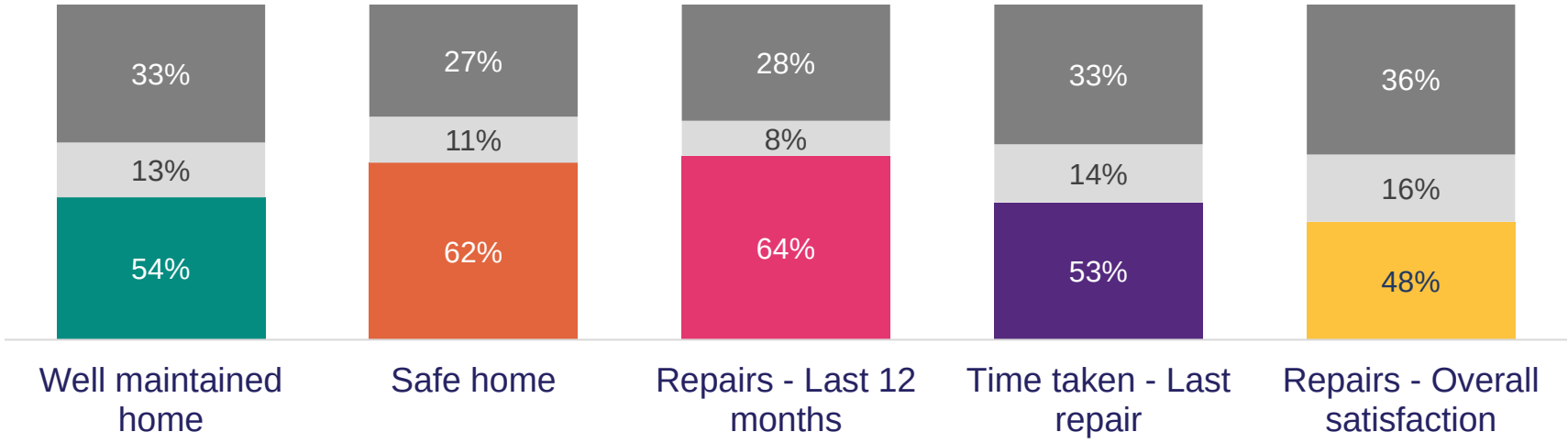
Keeping Properties in Good Repair

Keeping Properties in Good Repair

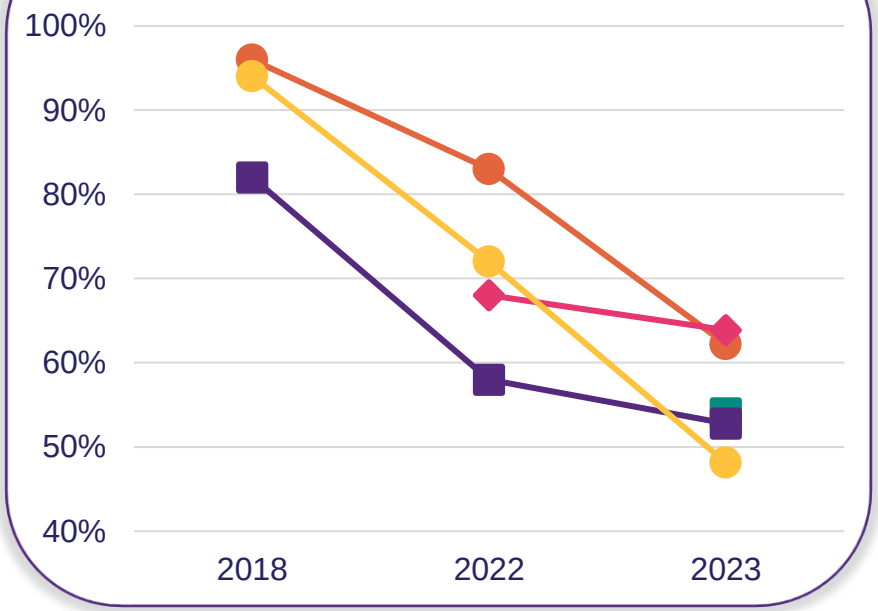
Just over half the tenants (54%) feel their homes are well maintained, although a third are dissatisfied. More feel they are safe (62%), but again dissatisfaction is high at 27% and satisfaction with the safety of the home has fallen from 83% in 2022, which in turn had fallen from 96% in 2018, although the wording of this question has changed a little.

Just under half the tenants (48%) are satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service, down 24%, whilst more (64%) are satisfied with the service in the last 12 months, although this is also down a little, from 68%. Fewer are satisfied with the time taken to complete their last repair (53%), down from 58%.

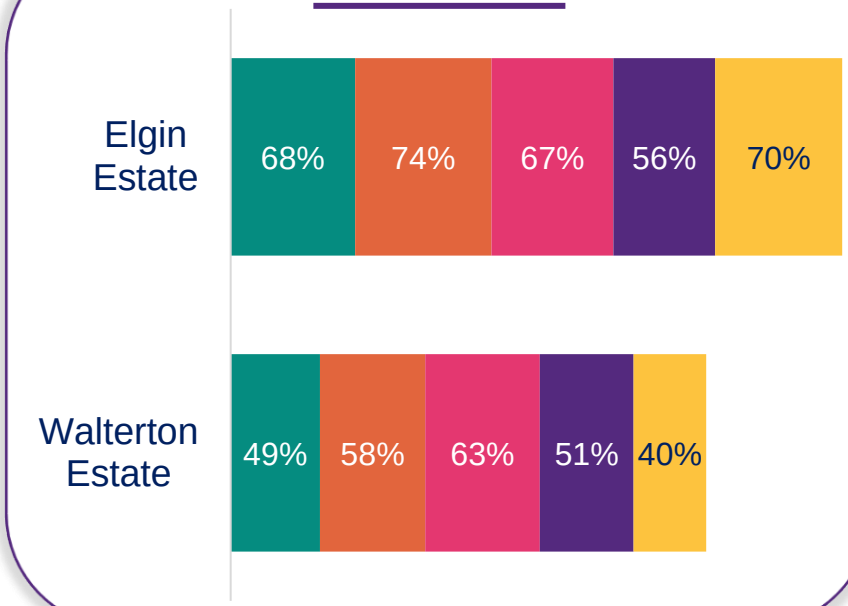
Again, there is a difference in the satisfaction levels between estates with those in the Elgin estate more satisfied on each of the measures shown here, 30% more being satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service.



Over Time



By Estate



*Safe home changed from “safe and secure” to “well maintained and safe” in 2022 and to just “safe” in 2023.

Comments – Home or Communal Areas

Tenants not satisfied with their homes or communal areas, were asked to explain why and what could be done to improve this, and 58 tenants made comments.

These are shown here coded into subject areas, and it is the external property maintenance that attracts the most comments, followed closely by the timescales to complete repairs, whilst some refer to outstanding or forgotten repairs.

The quality of the repair work and the overall condition of their property, including issues of damp and mould, are also important to some, as is the services employed to clean and maintain the communal areas.

Overleaf shows some of these comments in full to help explain the reasons behind some of the dissatisfaction. These help to provide insight and will help WECH target areas for improvement.

Number of respondents: 58

Home or Communal Areas – Comments

Property condition – External maintenance

“The communal areas could be better kept in terms of paint and exterior conditions.”

“Repaint outside.”

“Cyclical decoration no longer seems to take place and there is no explanation what is going on.”

“Work has not been done for years.”

“It hasn’t been painted in many years.”

“Ongoing maintenance, huge cracks in property, outdated bathroom which I was told years ago pre - covid would be updated only to be told that you were having problems with getting contractors, still no update!”

“Cyclical works on outdoor areas have been neglected or done poorly.”

“The external walls and steps to are in poor condition which has been an ongoing problem for many years.”

“Major cracks in the building, hasn’t been worked on in years even though there is meant to be a reno program every 5 years.”

Day-to-day repairs

“Repairs and maintenance- outside of the bi-annual external work, WECH is non-responsive to any ongoing repair queries. I had a leaky roof two years ago; it was never addressed despite me chasing for 8 months. After about 6 months I managed to get someone from WECH to go and see this, but I have never heard anything afterwards. I ended up fixing it myself.”

“Maintenance carried out by contractor is poor and repeat visits are requested and rarely actioned leaving me the tenant to sort out.”

“Maintenance seems nonexistent. Communications seem only available via email.”

“Long to respond to a repair, We don’t know who is doing what! No post inspection or pre inspections, wasting time. Poor quality materials used. Poor choice of contractors, operatives’ skills very bad”

“Very slow response time even to urgent issues.”

Property condition – Damp & mould

“Damp inside the home Front step has not been repaired.”

“Extremely damp walls which have not been resolved in years.”

“It’s been a while since the communal hallway was decorated. There is damp coming through and paint flaking off. This doesn’t affect me’ but it should bother WECH as the ingress of damp is deleterious to the property. Incidentally, in case its not covered by later questions in the survey, the outside of the property is suffering. The last time it was painted (by Des and gang) it was done very badly. Buddleia seems to be seeding in every available crack and cranny.”

“Lots of cracks on the walls, leaking damaged from neighbor upstairs on fixed. Need new bath and tiles. My daughter’s room is very cold and damp. Lots of work to be done.”

Communal area maintenance

“Not sure if this counts but dustbin area needs repairing. Loose doors and ill-fitting lids.”

“Lifts and landings often smell bad and there are always nasty stains, debris and residue left and not cleaned. There is also a pest problem in the landings outside flats with bugs colonising around landing and lights which then means bugs go into residents’ flats more when we need to open our windows.”

“Communal areas are always dirty. My home had a leak that caused damage to the floor and was refused to get repaired. Other repairs are of very bad quality, and I am not satisfied at all.”

“Community staircase has only been cleaned by us and WECH never offer the service. The floor surface is over 30 years old and never been replaced.”

“We clean the communal area ourselves and the mat needs changing!”

Number of respondents: 58

Comments – Dissatisfaction with Repairs

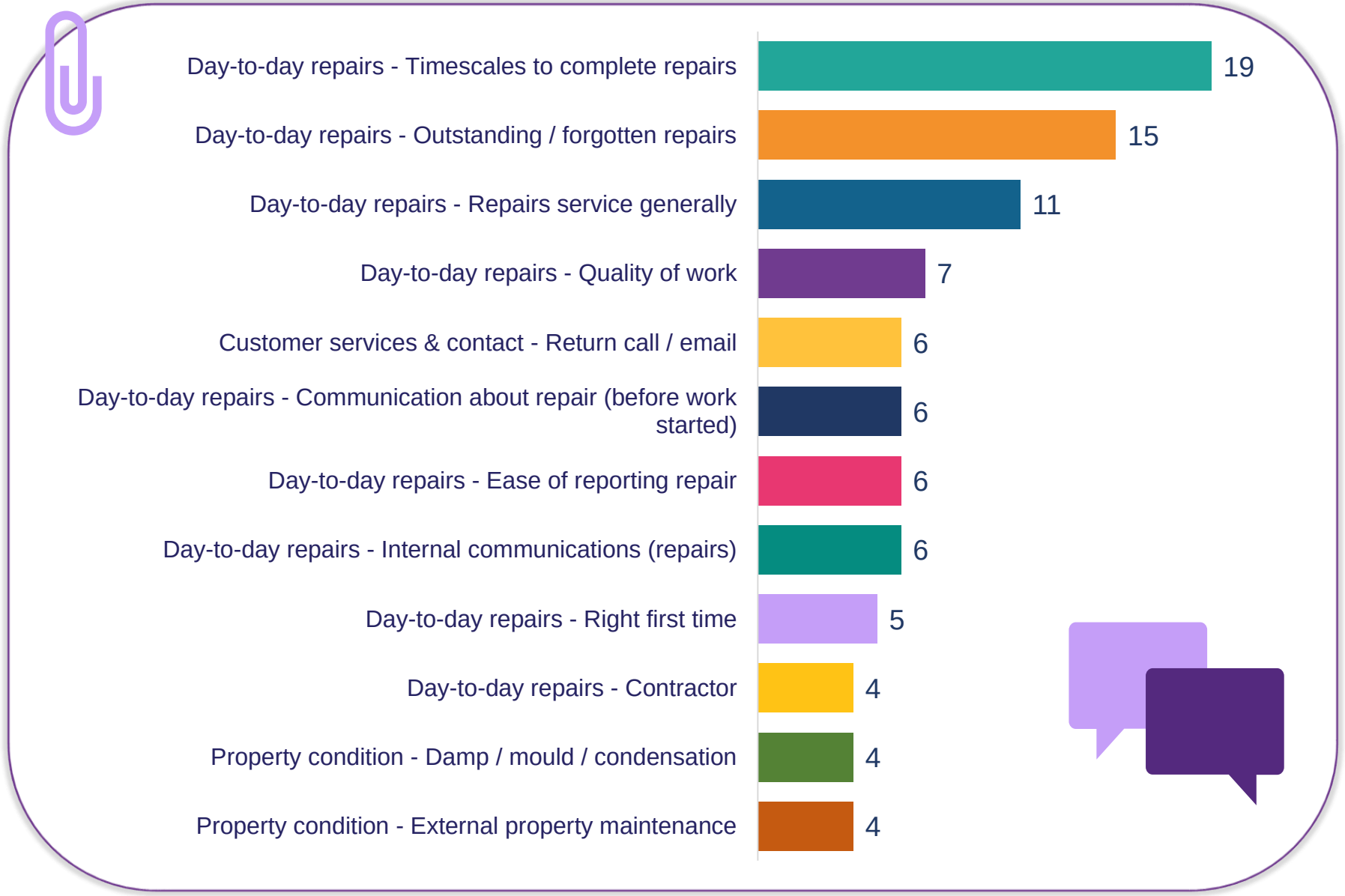
Tenants not satisfied with the repairs service were asked to explain why and 63 tenants made comments.

The most frequent comments are about the timescales for work to be completed, followed by dealing with outstanding repairs and the service generally.

The quality of work is a concern to some whilst others have issues with calls not returned and the ease of reporting repairs in the first place.

The timescales for work and dealing with outstanding repairs are common issues facing other social landlords, many still trying to return to normal after the pandemic but now also facing issues of rising costs and the availability of labour.

Repairs is such a vital service and is often what associations are judged on and the comments shown overleaf confirm this and will also help identify the main areas in need of improvement.



Number of respondents: 63

Dissatisfaction with Repairs – Comments

Day-to-day repairs – Timescales to complete repairs

"Faster response, drags on too long. Damp in hall."

"Contractor is poor quality never completes the job properly still waiting for compensation and repairs to be completed 4 months after emergency gas leak. Emails are not being answered."

"I have made maintenance reports over 6 months ago and still have not had an update. Even after making a formal complaint."

"Waiting time for calls to be answered when reporting and issue - sometimes no answer. Once reported the maintenance company are very slow to come and sometimes you have to call be WECH this never used to be the case."

"You have to wait too long for repairs."

"After reporting repairs, it takes a long time for someone to call back and even longer for works to be carried out. For example, I reported a rodent issue in early June and the works will take place in August."

Day-to-day repairs – Outstanding/forgotten repairs

"Been asking for an urgent water leak to be repaired since February."

"I'm still waiting for any feedback following me reporting a leaky roof 2 years ago."

"I've been waiting for nearly 1 year for my roof to be repaired."

"The work was not done properly, and it is just as it was prior to works about 18 months ago."

"The upstairs roof leaked from my neighbours, destroying my flat due to negligence by WECH. They continue to not sort the problem."

"Asked for my roof to be fixed, now over a year and it hasn't been."

"Issues with dampness have not been resolved."

"The shower broke the repair man was efficient and great. The walls and cracks in ceiling from the heavy rain wasn't looked at and seems to be getting worse."

Day-to-day repairs – Other issues

"There is NEVER any follow up on repairs. In the past I've been told by engineers/work men that they will write up reports of the repair and WECH should be getting in touch to provide (for example) a new bathroom fan. Never happens. So either the contractors used are lying about them keeping WECH updated/WECH just can't be bothered with certain households."

"Sub standard(cheap) materials used to replace broken or rotten items. Rotten exterior wooden windowsills replaced with plastic?!"

"Its not responsive anymore, WECH does not engage with the tenant about the repair by visiting them. Have to be chased up."

"Sometimes have to chase up calls as no contact is made after initial report for repair made."

"Sort out external painting of windows and doors and check the work after the workmen have finished."

"Use competent companies."

Other

"They say they respond to emails within 2 working days but don't reply back at all. Difficult to know the progress of repairs. In particular, I had a mice issue, and they weren't communicating between the 2 companies that were separately completing the checks and doing the work. I ended up being the person liaising between the 2 companies and sharing the information as WECH wasn't sharing the reports to them."

"Communication is lacking. Updates on work. And I get passed on to different people during my enquiries."

"They should stay true to their words and not ignore certain complaints."

"It used to be much better. Has declined over the past 2-3 years or so. Now you have to chase things up, calls/messages not returned, and you are not kept up to date with progress etc."

"When calling the phones aren't answered."

Number of respondents: 63

Responsible Neighbourhood Management

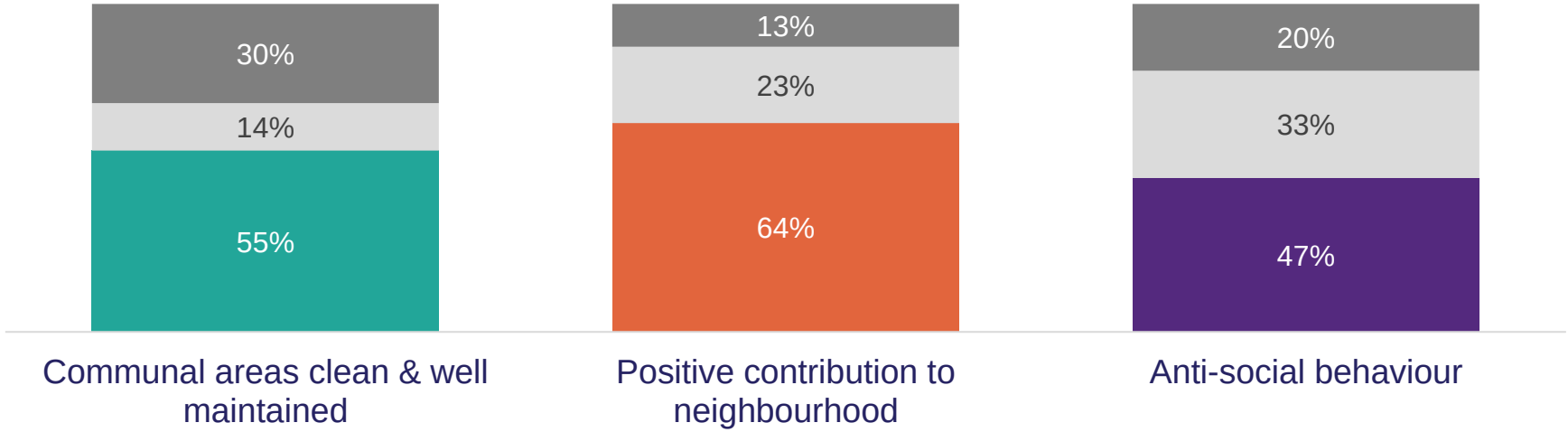
Responsible Neighbourhood Management

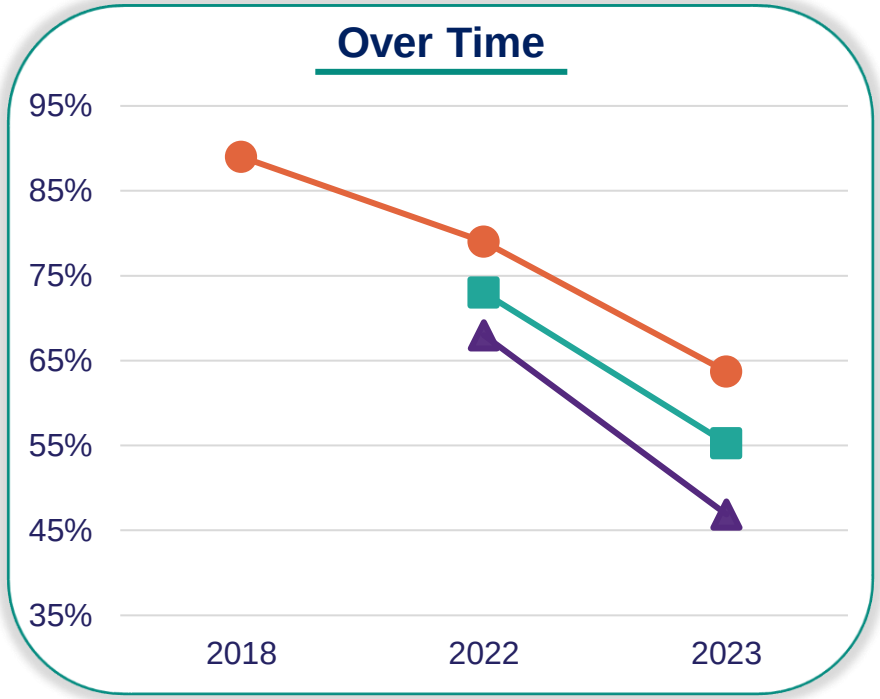
Over half the tenants (53%) live in a building with communal areas that WECH is responsible for maintaining, and 55% of these tenants are satisfied that WECH keeps their communal areas clean and well maintained, although this has fallen from 73% in 2022; 30% are dissatisfied .

Nearly two-thirds of tenants (64%) are satisfied that WECH makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood, but 23% said they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, perhaps because they are unaware of the contribution made. Satisfaction has fallen from 79% in 2022.

Additionally, satisfaction with how anti-social behaviour is handled has fallen by 21%; down from 68% to 47%. Although, 20% of tenants remain dissatisfied with this measure.

Again, the main issues appear to be on the Walterton estate with satisfaction with these neighbourhood issues far less here than on the Elgin estate; just 34% are satisfied here with the upkeep of the communal areas.





Respectful & Helpful Engagement

Respectful & Helpful Engagement

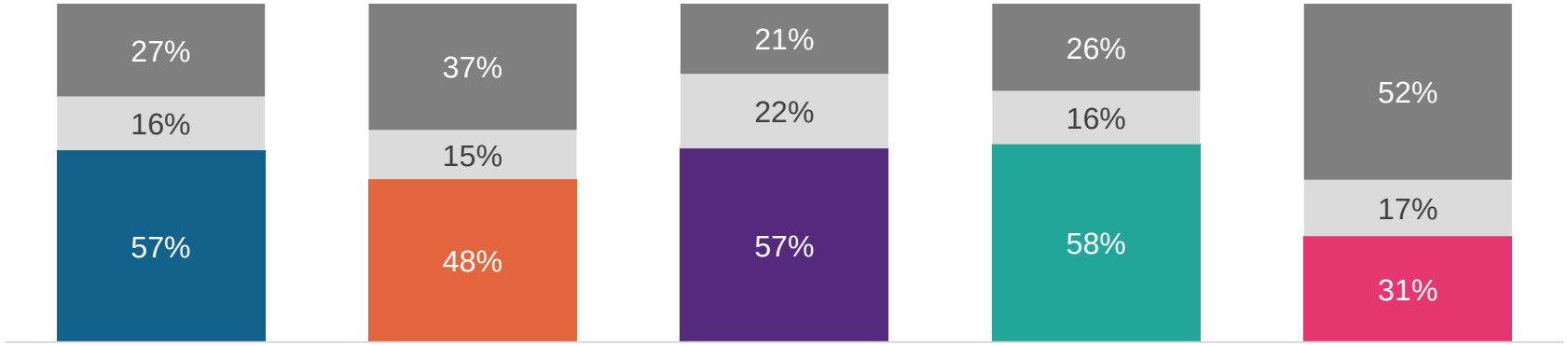
Over half the tenants find WECH easy to deal with, although 27% find it difficult; 30% fewer find it easy compared with 2022.

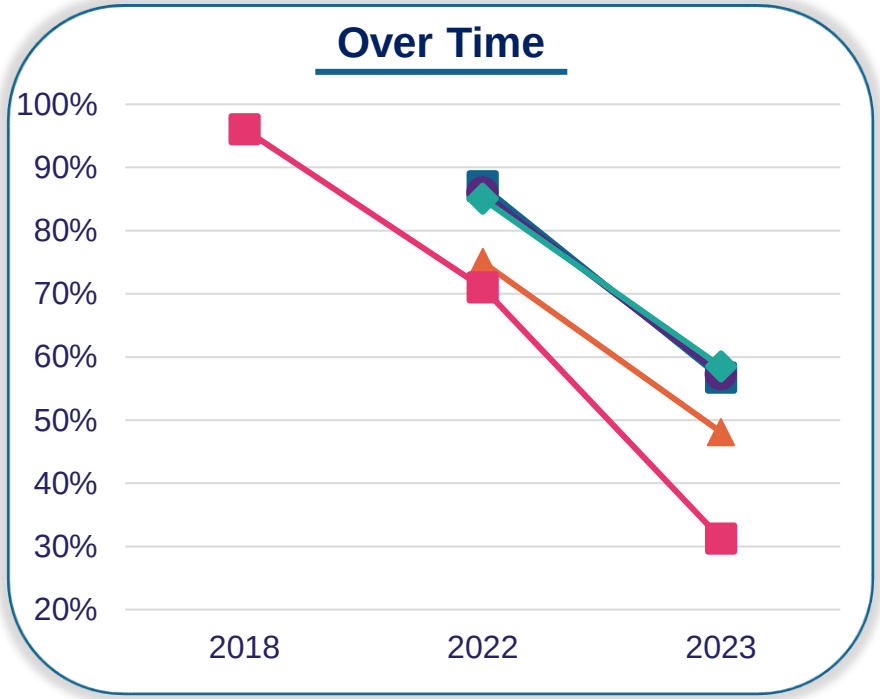
Three-fifths of tenants (58%) are satisfied with how they are kept informed about things that matter to them, but fewer are satisfied that WECH listens to their views and acts upon them (48%); there are 26% and 37% respectively dissatisfied. Furthermore, satisfaction with both these measures has decreased since last year; both down by 27%.

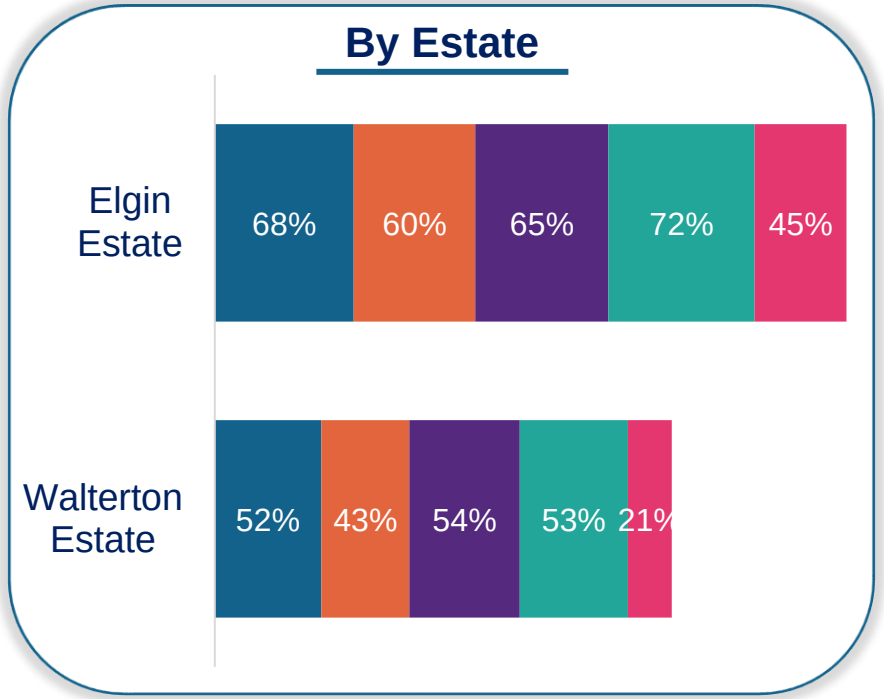
Just 57% of tenants agree that they are treated fairly and with respect, down 29%, and 21% are dissatisfied.

Nearly a third of tenants (31%) said they had made a complaint to WECH in the last 12 months, although it is not clear how many of these are genuine complaints following a failure of service or service requests yet to be fully actioned. Nevertheless, just 31% of these tenants are satisfied with the way complaints are handled, with more dissatisfied (52%). Satisfaction has decreased by 40% since 2022, although this does correspond with a change in format for this question with a pre-qualifier now added so just those making a complaint are asked about its handling.

Again, those in the Elgin estate are more satisfied than those in Walterton.





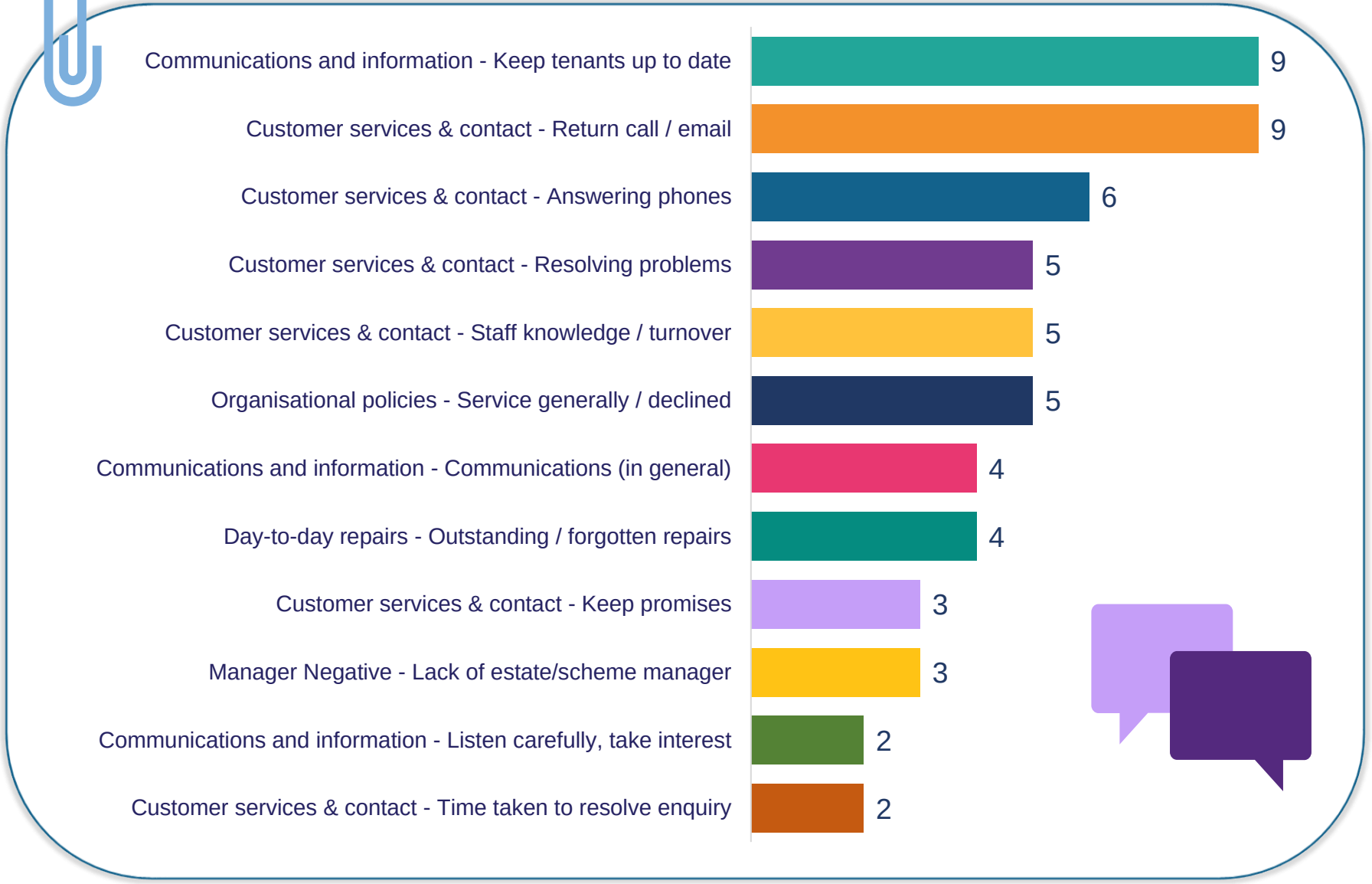


Comments – Customer Service & Communications

Tenants who stated that they are not satisfied with the customer service or communications were asked why and what could be improved, and 48 tenants gave comments.

There is a mix of responses to this question with the most about keeping tenants up to date and for returning calls when promised.

The remaining comments cover a range of issues, as shown, and overleaf shows examples of these in full, which will help WECH better understand the issues faced by its tenants and will help target areas in need of improvement.



Number of respondents: 48

Customer Service & Communications – Comments

Communications & information– Keep tenants up to date	Customer service & contact – Answering and returning calls	Customer service & contact – Other issues	Other matters
“I’ve been asked to pay my rent in advance now, I am currently on a plan to get ahead of the rent, to keep control and informed I asked to be sent statements monthly and this was agreed, and I was told this was supposed to be sent anyway. I don’t get these. WECH should provide monthly statements to residents.”	“Housing officers have changed several times, without being informed. Emails and callbacks are often not followed through/ responded to. I was previously quite happy with WECH but the last year or so it has been very chaotic and near impossible to get the help needed because there are so many changes in staff. This is a shock considering that before 2019, there were the same faces I’ve seen since first becoming a part of WECH in 1997.”	“I have called once a week for the past 3 weeks with the promise that I will be contacted. This issue has been ongoing for nearly 1 year.”	“Lack of response to repair/fixing issues.”
“Had to wait for the newsletter to be advised that Phyliss was no longer my Housing Officer. There could have been a blanket email/text sent to residents who were under her charge, advising us of this, and advising us of whom we would need to speak to in the future.”	“It is difficult to speak with someone on the phone.”	“Actions are not followed up.”	“Receptionist can be very rude & unprofessional.”
“Contact relevant people.”	“Takes ages to get things done. Phone calls often not answered. Residents not informed. Jackie our housing officer was sacked. She was our housing officer for years and knew us well.”	“The staff are awful. The housing manager believes is a social worker whose job it is to tell residents how to live our lives, she is patronising. There have been a number of events which have been arranged by her team in which 2 or 3 people turn up and she promotes it as a success. She has total contempt for resident and an awful professional manner.	“Have to face to face meetings.”
“To continue to ensure that communication is sent out regularly to all residents.”	“Answer the phones and the person you want to talk to should ring back but they don’t.”	“Unable to use website to report repairs.”	“WECH used to be really good with all the above but now has gone downhill.”
“It has been quite an upheaval for us as tenants as nearly all the old staff left without us knowing till after the fact. New staff have come on board and we as tenants have not been introduced to. It all feels very distant at the moment.”	“Return and Email within 24hrs. Pickup the phone.”	“Contacted my income officer weeks ago with a question and a statement. Not heard anything back to date.”	“We’ve lost many of the relationships which made WECH work. All the different ways that staff, residents, contractors and others in the WECH family communicated have been shut down. WECH has gone from being open and communicative to being closed and secretive.”
		“Get people who are interested.”	“It is easy to report things to the receptionists but beyond this point there is a lack of response or action.”
		“They have gone downhill. All the good staff have gone. They don’t reply to your email.”	“Bring WECH back to being tenant led where housing officers took the time to build a rapport with tenants and understand their needs and offer support or a listening ear, when needed.”
			“Response time could be better.”

Number of respondents: 48

Improvements

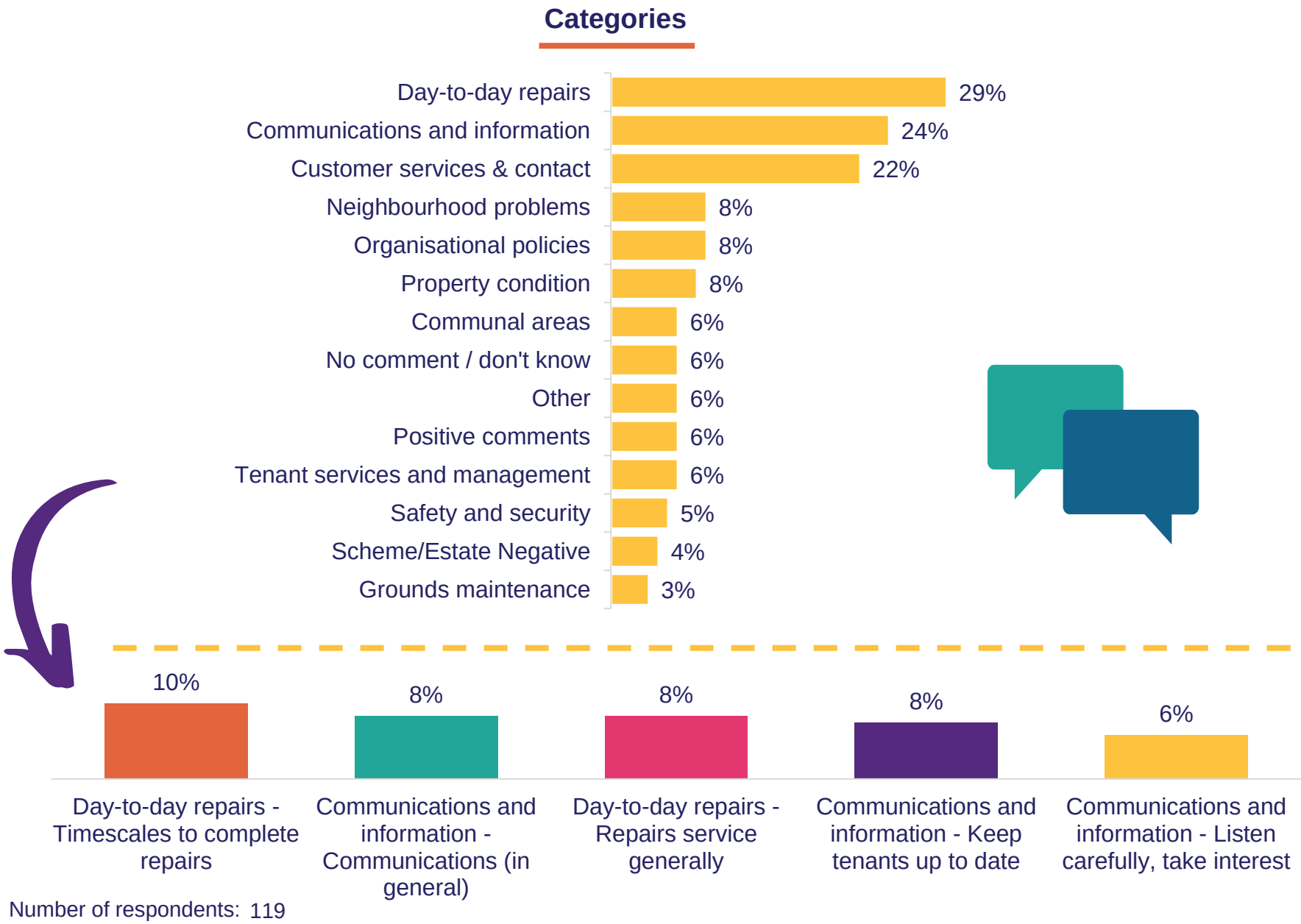
Improvement Suggestions

Tenants were asked if there was one thing WECH could do to improve its services, what would they like it to be, and 119 tenants gave comments.

Nearly a third of the comments focus on the repairs service, the timescales to complete works in particular. This is followed by communication issues and customer service.

Tenants would like to see an improvements in the way WECH communicates with them, wanting to be kept up to date and want staff to listen to them more carefully and take an interest in their concerns.

Again, some of these comments are shown overleaf, giving more information about possible improvements.



Number of respondents: 119

Improvements to Service – Comments

Day to day repairs

"Provide more resources to the repairs team, seems like they need more help and support."

"Calling people back. Fixing repairs in a timely manor."

"Getting repairs done & doing them properly instead of slap dash jobs."

"Fixing a roof problem that's been a long time. I cannot fix the interior till the exterior is done. They opted for the CHEAP way of fixing it and now as I said it would have not been fixed correctly."

"The maintenance repairs team. They never pick up the phone always voice message, and no one gets back to you."

"Carrying out repairs quicker and using competent companies."

"Fixing things that are a risk to tenants' safety when broken."

"Maintenance responding time."

Communications & information

"Listen to the people."

"Need to keep tenants updated on their housing officers and other staff changes."

"Being more transparent. Maybe the clique culture is being eradicated, but from the outside looking in, it seems that WECH seems to work with certain tenants and others can go take a running jump."

"Walk the neighbourhood and be seen by people rather than sitting in the office."

"Nobody knows who the WECH staff are."

"Communication with tenants on an individual basis when there is a problem - sometimes it is hard getting a response from the appropriate person."

"Everything. We are the ones that live in there building. They should listen to us."

"Communication and proactiveness."

"There are two things the professionalism/care of its contractors and the diabolical situation that is the Maida Vale Market / Plaza."

Customer service & contact

"I think it would be great to have an email address for maintenance issues on the website."

"I would like to know what is going on with the staff and the whole running of WECH."

"Communication with tenants and staff. Staff actually caring about their jobs and not answering the phone with well what do you expect me to do when asking for an update on repairs."

"Have a direct way of handling complaints - Westminster usually handles complaints such as noise. Website contact numbers are unclear to use."

"Responsiveness to email / phones."

"Easier access to weekend emergencies as I'm not sure who to call for water, electric or other emergencies. Maybe a handbook with numbers to contact."

"Get a new management structure in place.

" Reply to emails."

Other issues

"More tenants involvement in running WECH. All the familiar faces of WECH have been replaced by strangers!"

"Longer opening hours. I would like them to open earlier and stay open later ideally 8-6pm."

"Treat leaseholders with a bit of respect we are paying for a service but we get little back in return."

"Please sort out parking. It is ridiculous that some residents are leaving cars which are unused, growing moss and taking up unnecessary space when there are other residents in desperate need for these wasted parking spaces."

"A little more help with interior improvements and modernisation."

"To keep communal area cleaned frequently."

"Cutting down trees, very overgrown."

"Exterior housing maintenance."

Number of respondents: 119

Wellbeing

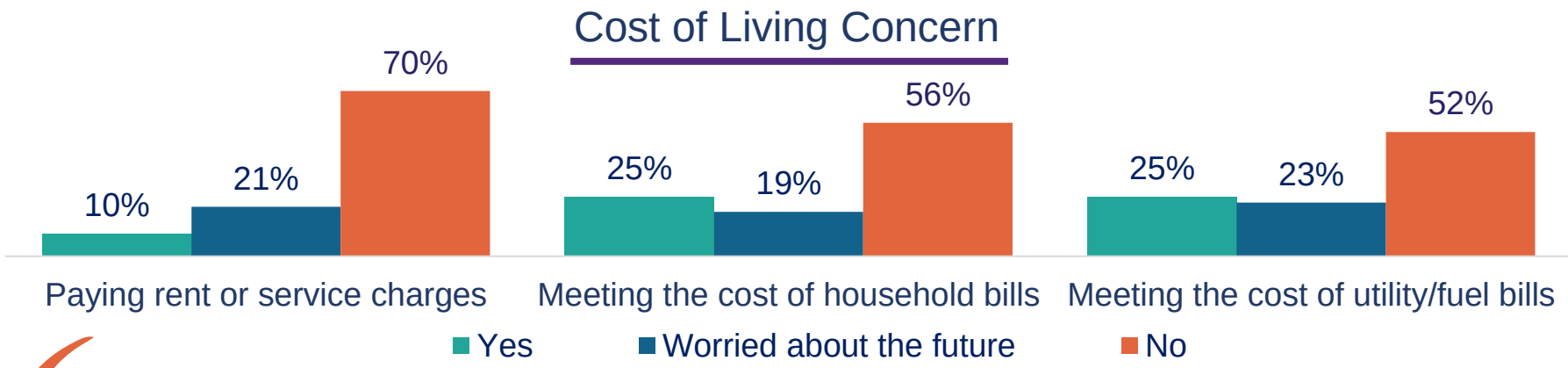
Cost of Living Concern

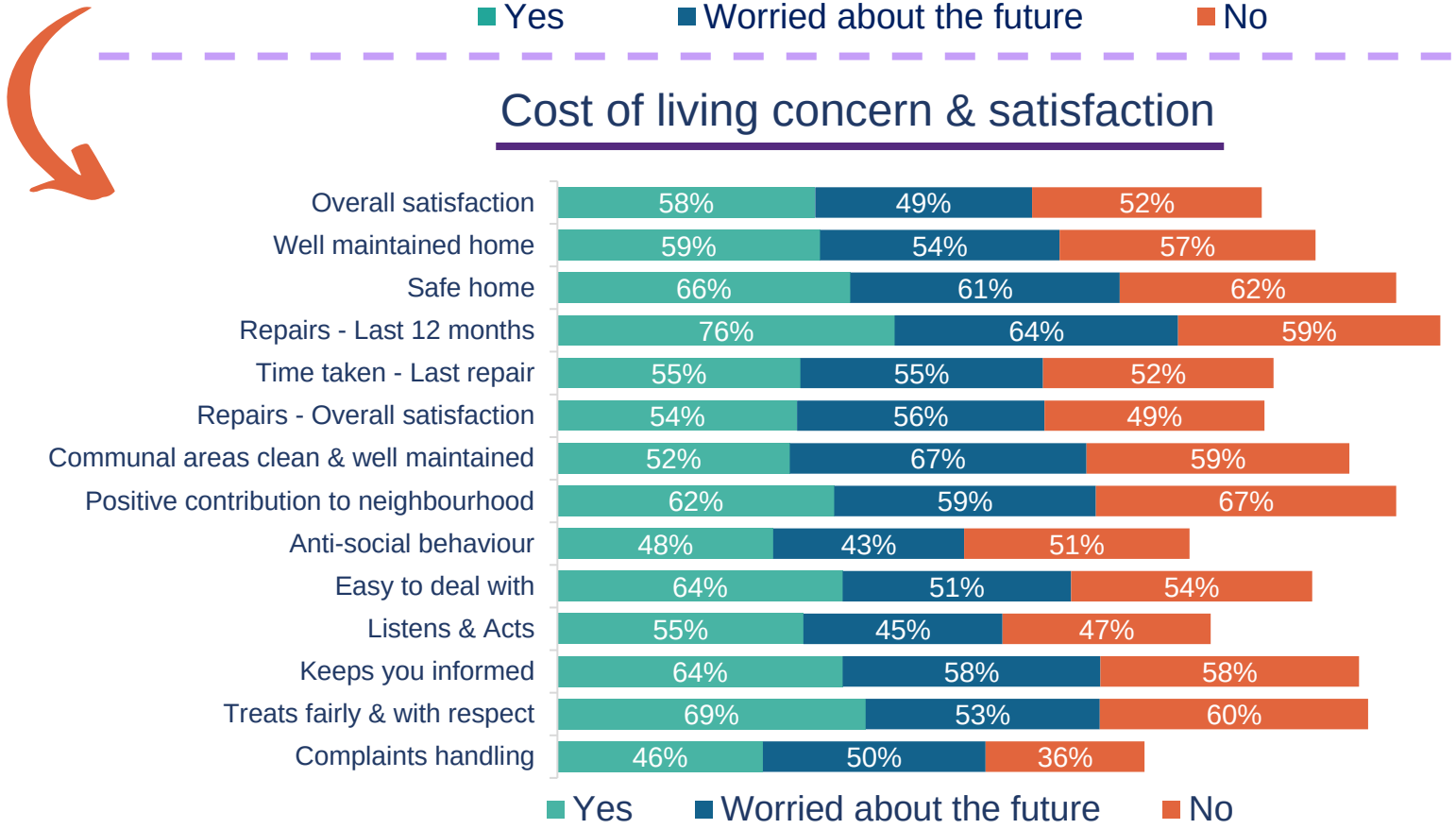
WECH also took this opportunity to ask tenants some questions about their wellbeing, including how they feel about the cost-of-living crisis and whether they suffer with damp or mould in their homes.

The survey shows that some tenants are concerned about their bills; 10% say they are currently struggling to meet the costs of rent or service charge payments, 25% with general household essentials and also 25% with their utility/fuel bills.

Despite the news that inflation is dropping, and fuel bills will fall, similar numbers remain worried about the future, for instance, 23% are worried about future fuel bills.

Evidence from similar surveys shows that those struggling financially are often less satisfied with their homes and the services provided by their landlord, however, this doesn't appear to be the case with WECH. For example, in regard to the overall service provided, 58% of tenants struggling are satisfied compared with 52% of those not struggling. It is mixed across the other measures and the differences are relatively small, so this doesn't appear to be an issue with WECH tenants.





Damp & Mould

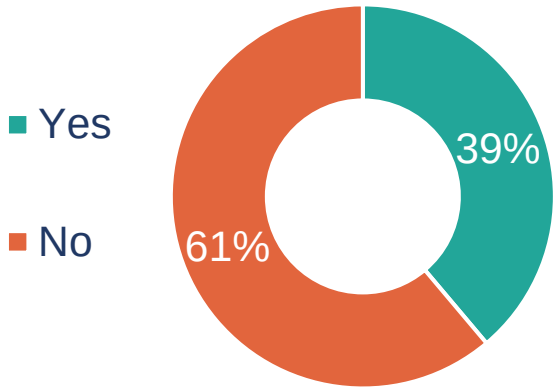
WECH also asked tenants if they currently have any damp or mould problems in their homes.

Four out of ten tenants (39%) stated that they do have damp or mould in their homes, this equating to 61 of the tenants that responded to the survey. Most tenants (89%) say that they have reported the problem to WECH to look into.

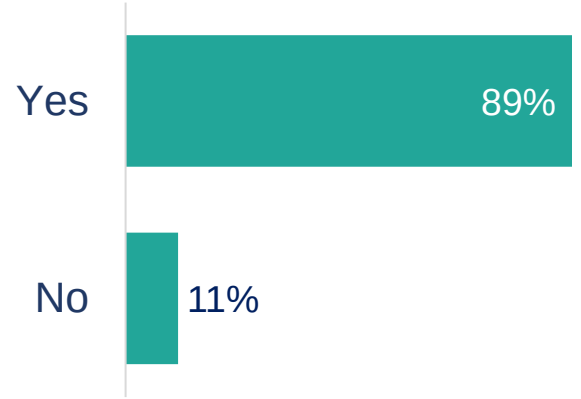
Although Elgin estate tenants are generally more satisfied, they also reported a few more instance of damp and mould and house tenants reported more issues than those in flats, although this does affect very few in houses.

The details of the tenants with damp or mould issues have been passed back to WECH. These need to be addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure tenants are kept safe and the condition of their properties does not deteriorate any further.

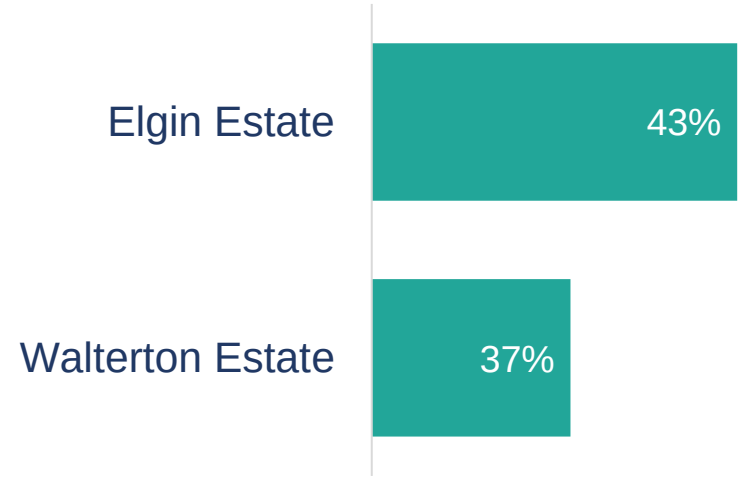
Damp/Mould in Home



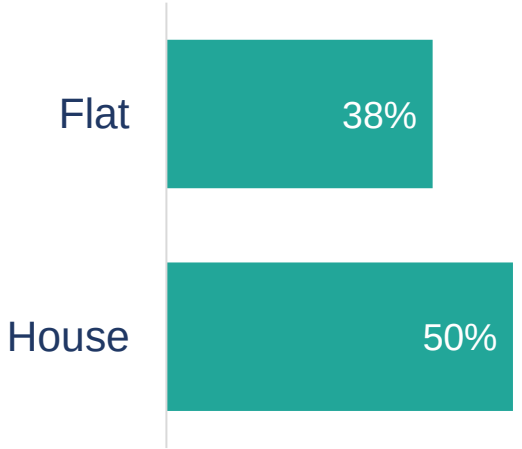
Reported it?



By Estate



By Property Type



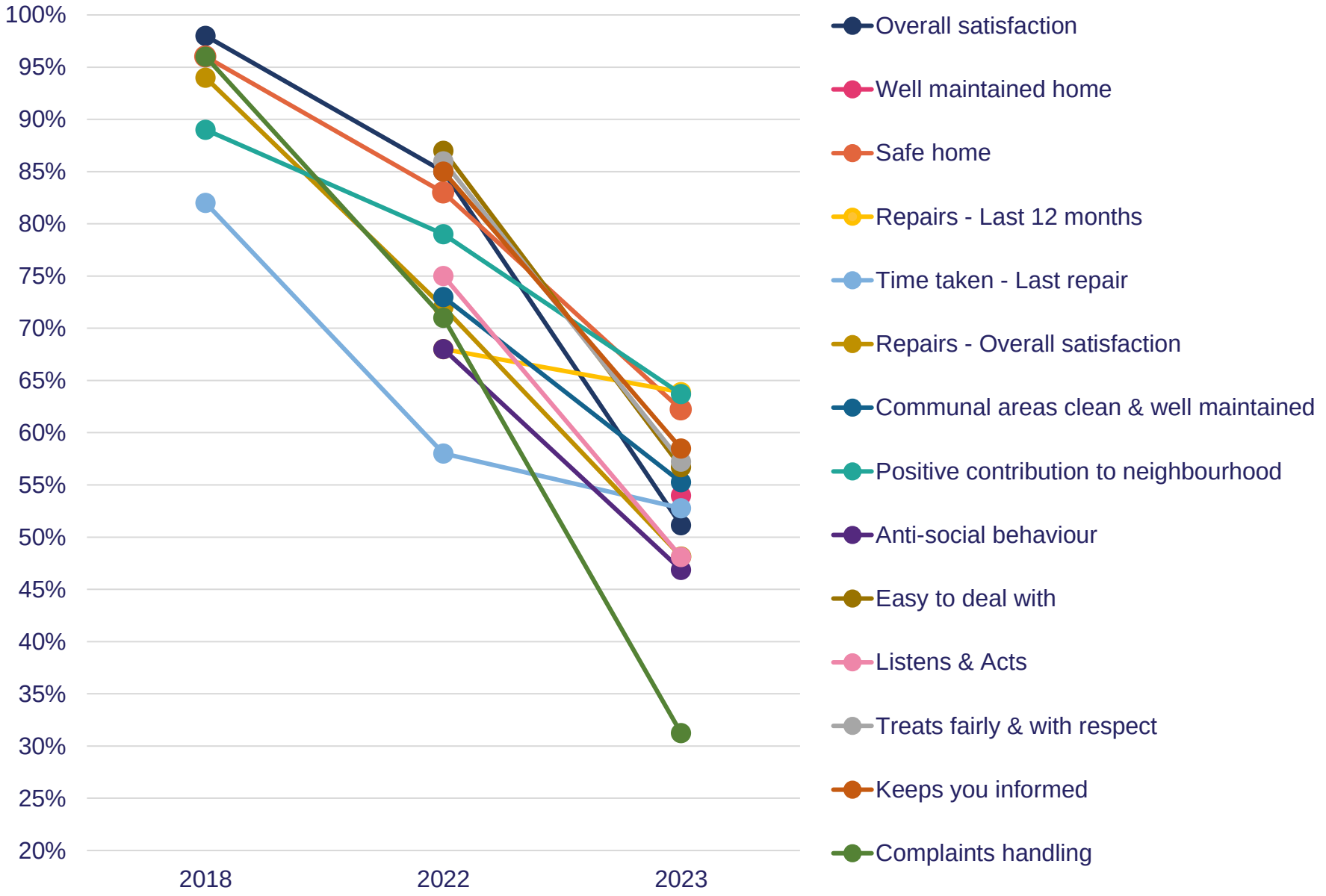
Trends

Trend Over Time

It is of concern that satisfaction has fallen significantly since the previous survey in 2022. A number of tenants referred to service deteriorating, and there are clearly issues with the repairs service, but apart from that, it is not entirely clear why this change has occurred, and further investigation may be needed.

Satisfaction has fallen on all measures in the survey, some quite considerably, including 34% fewer satisfied with the overall services.

There is at least 20% fewer satisfied with the overall repairs service (down 24%), dealing with ASB (down 21%), being easy to deal with (down 30%), listening to views and keeping tenants informed (both down 27%). Additionally, there are 29% fewer satisfied that they are treated fairly and with respect and 40% fewer satisfied with the way complaints are handled; although the way this is now asked has changed.



Year on Year Change

The table opposite displays the results from the last two surveys in a different format and this clearly shows the differences between 2022 and 2023.

Satisfaction with all measures is down since the previous survey, most by more than the survey's margin of error and this demonstrates a disturbing direction of travel.

	2022	2023	Change
Overall satisfaction	85%	51%	-34%
Well maintained home	--	54%	
Safe home	83%	62%	-21%
Repairs - Last 12 months	68%	64%	-4%
Time taken - Last repair	58%	53%	-5%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	72%	48%	-24%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	73%	55%	-18%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	79%	64%	-15%
Anti-social behaviour	68%	47%	-21%
Easy to deal with	87%	57%	-30%
Listens & Acts	75%	48%	-27%
Keeps you informed	85%	58%	-27%
Treats fairly & with respect	86%	57%	-29%
Complaints handling	71%	31%	-40%

Understanding Satisfaction

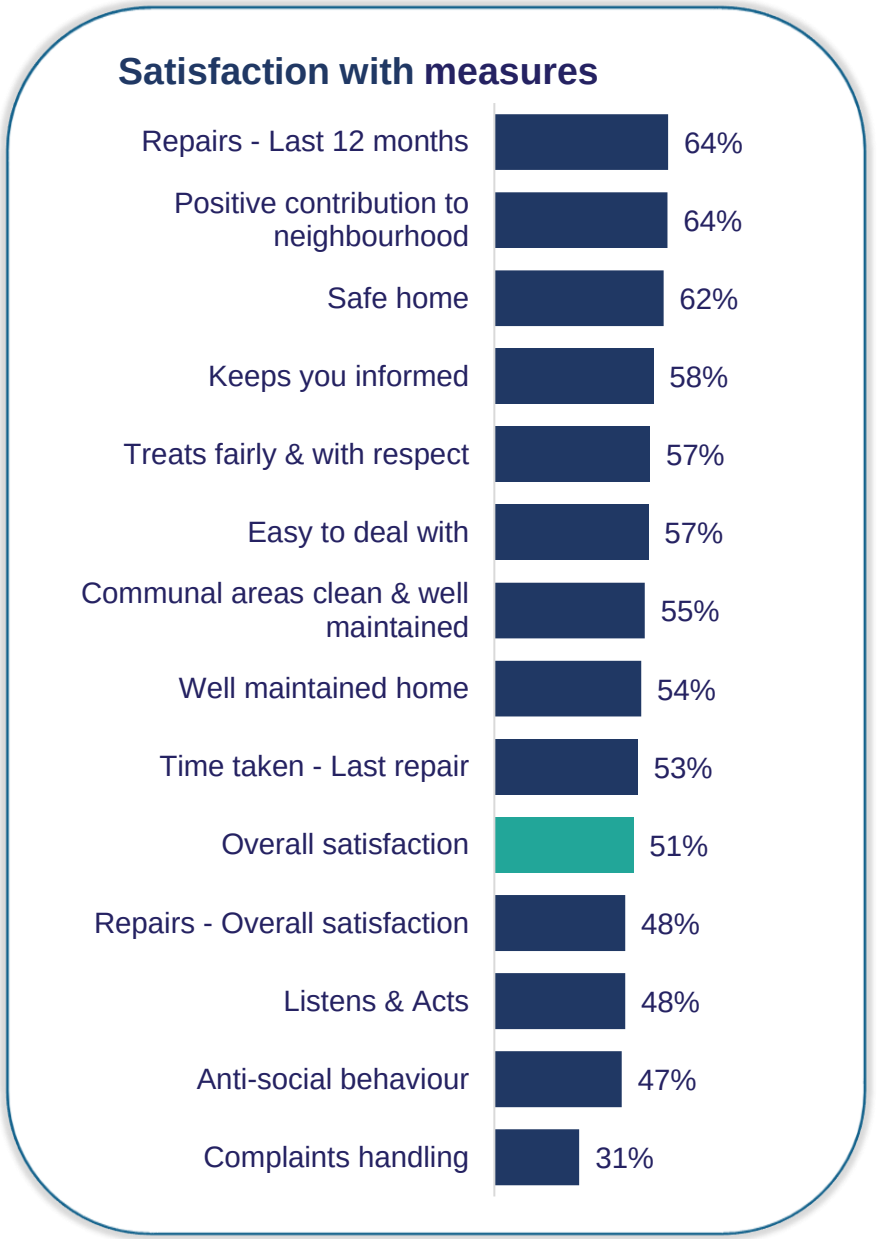
Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction

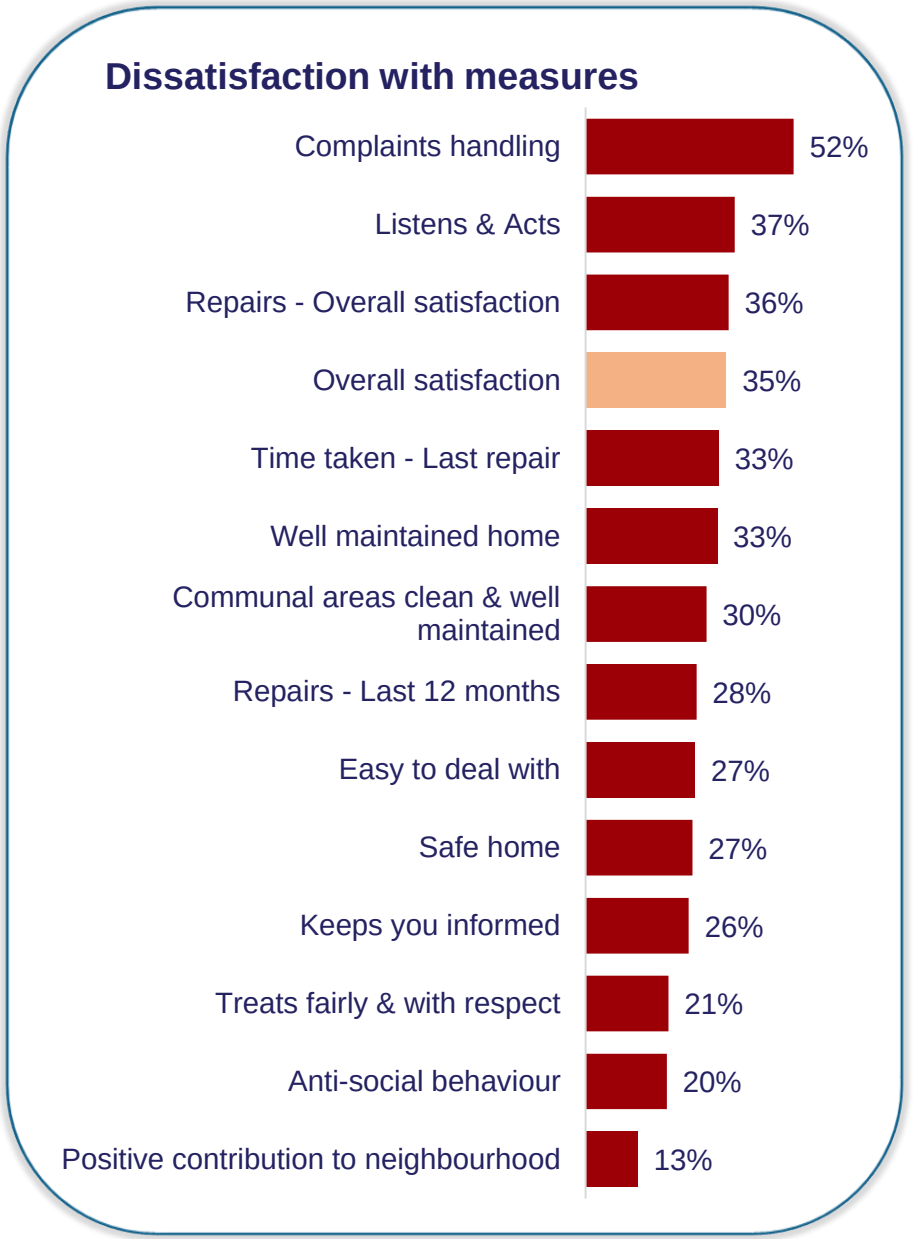
The charts opposite show the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction across the range of measures in the survey.

This shows that generally over half the tenants are satisfied with the services, 51% overall, and about a third are dissatisfied, 35% overall.

The highest satisfaction is for the repairs service in the last 12 months and the positive contribution WECH makes to the neighbourhood (both 64%), but some measures have satisfaction levels below 50%, the overall repairs service and how WECH listens to tenants' views and acts upon them (both 48%), dealing with ASB (47%) and complaint handling (31%).

Dissatisfaction more or less corresponds to this with the most for the handling of complaints (52%), listening to views (37%) and the overall repairs service (36%), although only 20% are dissatisfied with the way ASB is dealt with.





Combined Comments

The tables to the right include analysis of all the comments received across all open-ended questions, with positive comments displayed in green, although there are none shown here.

This shows the most frequent negative comment area is the repairs service, specifically the timescales for completing repairs, dealing with outstanding repairs, the quality of work and the service generally.

Also of concern to tenants is the customer service they receive, particularly answering the phones and returning calls when promised.

The comments also refer to issues with communications, the condition of the properties and communal areas.

Included in the report are several examples of these comments and they not only make interesting reading but help to better understand what is driving satisfaction, and dissatisfaction, at WECH.

Top Comment Areas	
Day-to-day repairs	43%
Customer services & contact	23%
Communications and information	17%
Property condition	15%
Organisational policies	9%
Communal areas	6%
Neighbourhood problems	5%
Safety and security	4%
Tenant services and management	4%
No comment / don't know	4%
Scheme/Estate Negative	3%

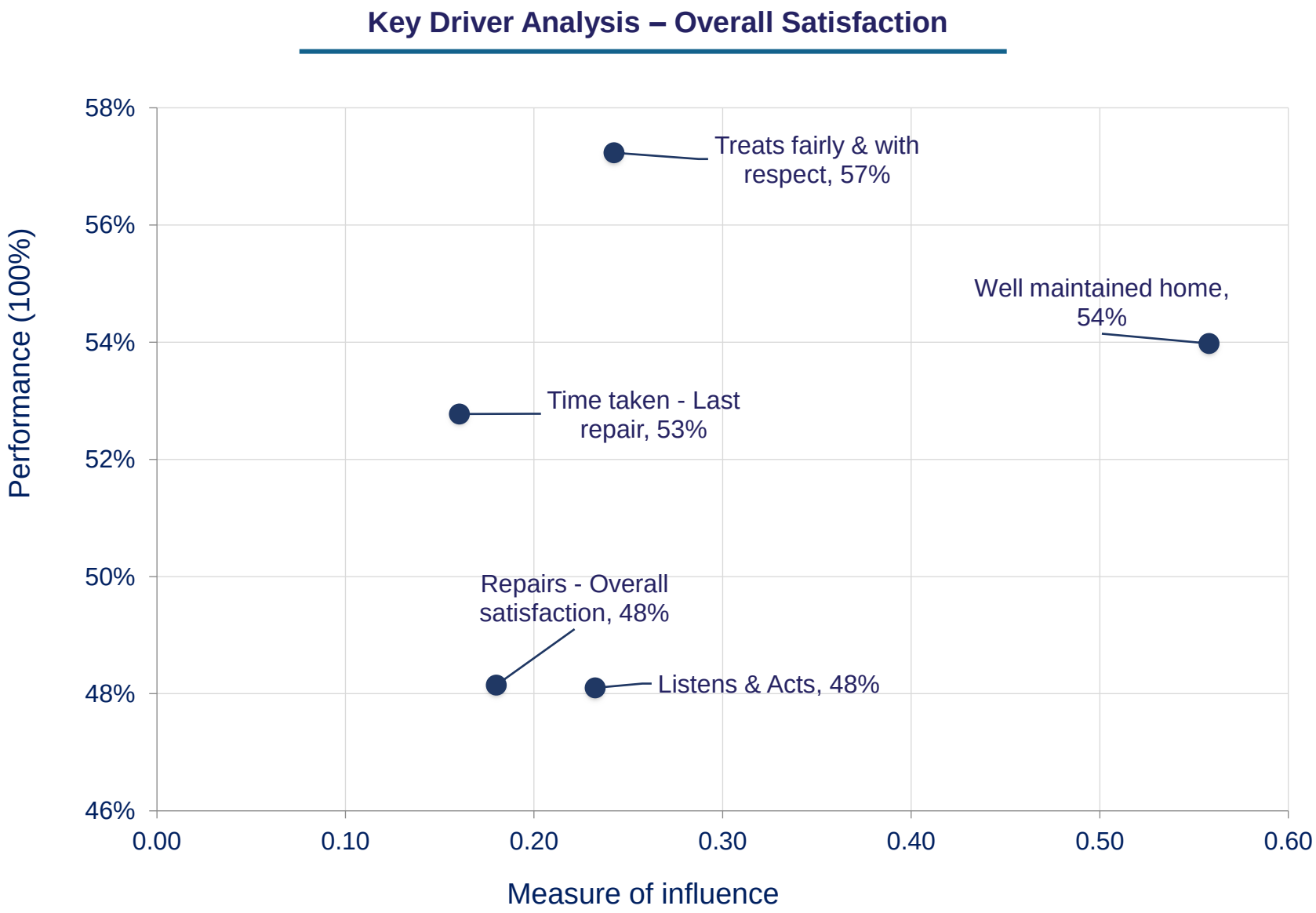
Hot Topics	
Day-to-day repairs - Timescales to complete repairs	16%
Day-to-day repairs - Outstanding / forgotten repairs	10%
Day-to-day repairs - Repairs service generally	9%
Customer services & contact - Return call / email	8%
Property condition - External property maintenance	8%
Day-to-day repairs - Quality of work	7%
Communications and information - Keep tenants up to date	7%
Communications and information - Communications (in general)	5%
Customer services & contact - Resolving problems	4%
Day-to-day repairs - Communication about repair (before work started)	4%
Communications and information - Listen carefully, take interest	4%
Customer services & contact - Answering phones	4%
Customer services & contact - Staff knowledge / turnover	4%

Key Driver Analysis

Key driver analysis is used to examine the relationship between the different variables (the questions asked in the survey) and determine which elements of the service are the key drivers for tenants' overall satisfaction.

Each landlord will create a unique pattern and for WECH the most important driver for tenants' satisfaction with the overall services is the provision of a well-maintained home, this is followed by the way WECH treats their tenants and listen to their views and acts upon them. Also of importance are the overall repairs service and the time to complete repairs.

The implication of this analysis is that if improvements around the most influential measures can be achieved, it is more likely to lead to increased satisfaction with the overall services provided.



Benchmarking – Acuity Clients

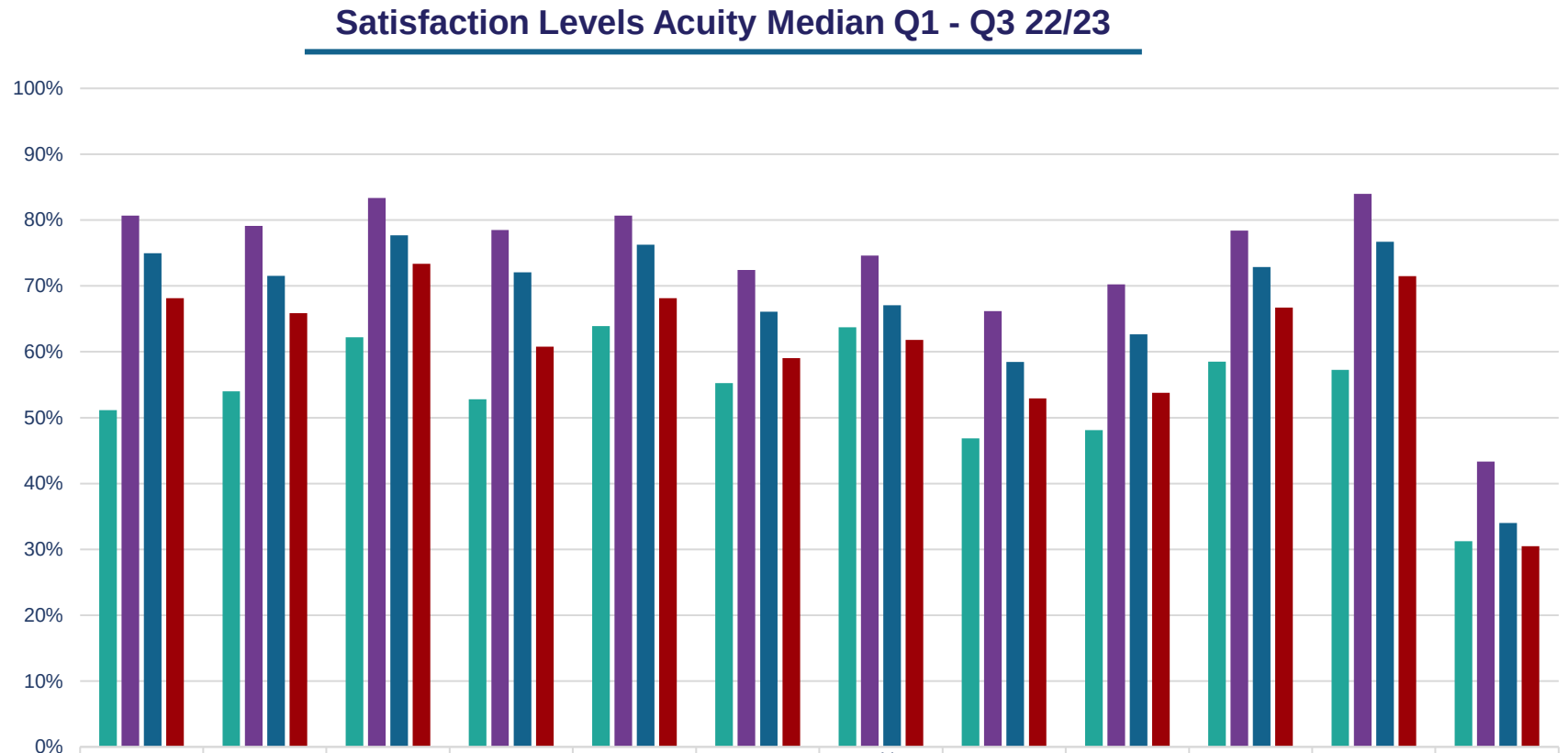
It is also possible to compare performance on the core questions against Acuity clients that have been using the new TSM questions during the year. The chart shows the quartile positions based on the results collected from Q1 to Q2 2023/24.

Satisfaction does not compare well against this group of landlords with all measures below the group medians and all but one being in the lower quartile, the exception being the complaint handling which falls into the third quartile.

Whilst the landlords in this cohort vary in type, size and location and are not closely matched to WECH, this does help to provide some context to the results.

As landlords are required to publish their results next year and larger landlords send their results to the Regulator, a large bank of benchmarking information will start to build up making benchmarks more accurate to the individual characteristics of the different landlords' results.

It should also be noted that there is some evidence of a 'London bias'. This shows that those organisations based in the capital can often have results up to 5% lower than similar organisations based elsewhere.



	Overall satisfaction	Well maintained home	Safe home	Time taken - Last repair	Repairs - Last 12 months	Communal areas clean & well maintained	Positive contribution to neighbourhood	Anti-social behaviour	Listens & Acts	Keeps you informed	Treats fairly & with respect	Complaints handling
WECH	51%	54%	62%	53%	64%	55%	64%	47%	48%	58%	57%	31%
Upper Quartile	81%	79%	83%	78%	81%	72%	75%	66%	70%	78%	84%	43%
Acuity Median	75%	72%	78%	72%	76%	66%	67%	58%	63%	73%	77%	34%
Lower Quartile	68%	66%	73%	61%	68%	59%	62%	53%	54%	67%	71%	30%
Quartile Position	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3
Number of Landlords	74	64	65	65	65	64	64	72	73	65	64	65

Benchmarking – Acuity London

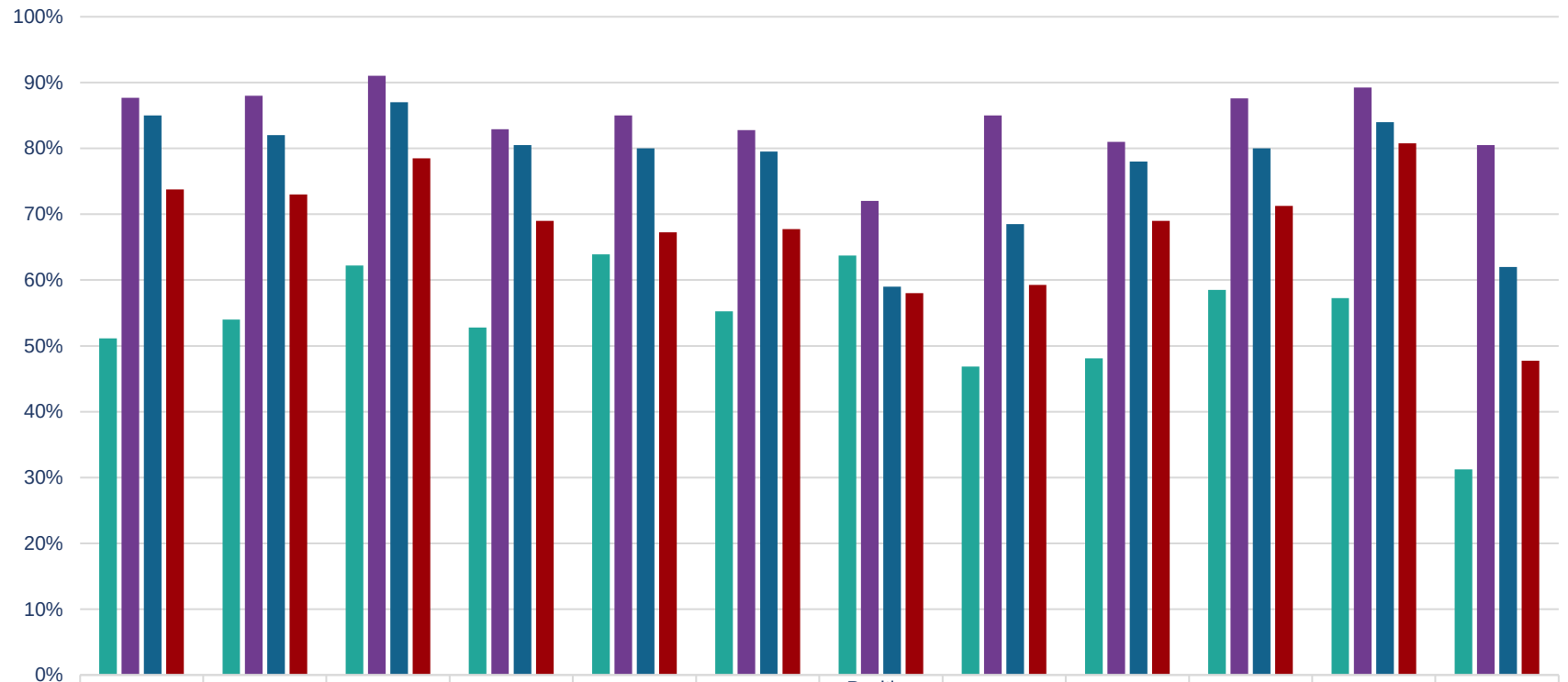
Given that WECH is based in London, the chart opposite shows further comparisons with Acuity's benchmarking for organisations based in London only.

All the landlords in this group are small (under 1,000 homes) and located in the London area and also mostly provide general needs accommodation.

WECH also doesn't perform well against this group with all measures in the lower quartile, except for the contribution made by WECH to the neighbourhood, which is in the second quartile.

This marks quite a change from the 2022 survey where the overall satisfaction fell into the second quartile against the London based landlords with some measures in the top quartile.

Satisfaction Levels – Acuity London – 2022/23



	Overall satisfaction	Well maintained home	Safe home	Time taken - Last repair	Repairs - Last 12 months	Communal areas clean & well maintained	Positive contribution to neighbourhood	Anti-social behaviour	Listens & Acts	Keeps you informed	Treats fairly & with respect	Complaints handling
WECH	51%	54%	62%	53%	64%	55%	64%	47%	48%	58%	57%	31%
Upper Quartile	88%	88%	91%	83%	85%	83%	72%	85%	81%	88%	89%	81%
Acuity Median	85%	82%	87%	81%	80%	80%	59%	69%	78%	80%	84%	62%
Lower Quartile	74%	73%	79%	69%	67%	68%	58%	59%	69%	71%	81%	48%
Quartile Position	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4
Number of Landlords	16	9	12	10	15	10	5	10	13	10	12	10

Subgroup Breakdown

As shown on the following pages, the results have been split down by various subgroups based on tenant and service characteristics, including estate, age, length of tenancy, ethnicity, and response method.

This section rounds up these different responses and attempts to summarise some conclusions from them.

- **Estate –** There is a considerable difference in satisfaction levels between the tenants of the Elgin and Walterton estates; those in Elgin being far more satisfied. On the overall services, 71% of those in Elgin are satisfied compared with just 44% in Walterton. Satisfaction with the maintenance of their home and the upkeep of the communal areas in considerably lower, as is dealing with ASB and complaints. It could be these factors influencing the satisfaction levels or there could be other factors at play. This has been a marked change since the previous survey where overall satisfaction was the same for both estates, although Elgin tenants tended to be a little more satisfied generally. It is suggested that further investigation is undertaken to get to the bottom of the differences.

- **Age –** Age is often a factor in determining satisfaction, with older tenants generally more satisfied than those younger. This pattern is followed with WECH, those 75 to 84 being the most satisfied with those 25 to 34 the least; it maybe down to different levels of expectation or more of a readiness to be critical among younger tenants, but the age profile remains a key driver for satisfaction.

- **Length of tenancy –** WECH shows a different pattern of satisfaction in terms of length of tenancy than many other landlords. Those with the Association for 11 to 20 are the most satisfied and those of 20 years and over are the least. The age profile can make a difference but usually the older tenants will have been with WECH the longest, so it is suggested that further investigation takes place to find out what is driving this pattern.

- **Ethnicity –** The majority of tenants are White British but there are also numbers of Asian and Black tenants. The Asian tenants tend to be the most satisfied, including with the overall services (55%), together with the Black Caribbean tenants. However, the Black British tenants tend to be the least satisfied.

- **Response method –** It is often shown that those responding to surveys of this type online are less satisfied than those using the postal method; this is certainly the case for WECH. It is suggested that this is linked to the age issue and for WECH whilst 50% of those using the postal method are over 65, it is just 17% for those responding online. Slightly more responded online this time compared with 2022 but this difference is not likely to explain the fall in satisfaction over that period.

- **Response method by estate –** The proportion of those using the online method or postal is very similar across the two estates, so whilst it would be easy to say that the response method is responsible for the differences between the estates, this doesn't appear to be the case and it is likely that other factors are at play, for instance property maintenance, ASB etc.

Estate

It has been shown throughout this report that there is a difference in satisfaction between those in the Elgin and Walterton estates; this summarises these differences.

In fact, those in the Elgin estate are more satisfied on each of the measures in the survey, 71% with the overall services compared with just 44% at Walterton.

Whilst satisfaction with the recent repairs service is relatively similar, 30% fewer are satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service and 19% fewer are satisfied with the home being well maintained. Maintenance of the communal areas is also considerably less in Walterton, just 34% compared with 80% and the comments made by tenants suggest that external property maintenance is an issue on this estate.

However, this lower satisfaction is not limited to maintenance issues, with fewer satisfied with the communication they receive and 27% fewer are satisfied with the way ASB is delt with.

	Elgin Estate	Walterton Estate
Overall satisfaction	71%	44%
Well maintained home	68%	49%
Safe home	74%	58%
Repairs - Last 12 months	67%	63%
Time taken - Last repair	56%	51%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	70%	40%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	80%	34%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	72%	60%
Anti-social behaviour	65%	38%
Easy to deal with	68%	52%
Listens & Acts	60%	43%
Keeps you informed	72%	53%
Treats fairly & with respect	65%	54%
Complaints handling	45%	21%

Base: Elgin Estate = 48, Walterton Estate = 131

Age Group

It is common in surveys of this type that satisfaction increases with age, and this is largely true for WECH.

The most satisfied overall are those aged 75 to 84 and this group are also the most satisfied on six other measures.

The least satisfied are those aged 25 to 34, just 19% satisfied with the overall services from WECH, just 20% are satisfied with the maintenance of their home and only 25% find WECH easy to deal with.

It is suggested that younger tenants tend to have higher expectations and are quicker to complain than their older counterparts, but whether this is the cause of these differences or there are other factors, the age profile clearly has an influence on satisfaction levels.

	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+
Overall satisfaction	19%	40%	65%	58%	52%	48%	69%	55%
Well maintained home	20%	43%	71%	62%	48%	60%	60%	67%
Safe home	43%	53%	73%	62%	52%	76%	75%	64%
Repairs - Last 12 months	22%	60%	71%	65%	75%	69%	67%	80%
Time taken - Last repair	22%	47%	52%	53%	67%	56%	56%	60%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	0%	37%	69%	41%	60%	55%	71%	42%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	29%	33%	83%	38%	57%	77%	75%	50%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	42%	60%	70%	55%	56%	83%	79%	73%
Anti-social behaviour	36%	38%	52%	35%	33%	63%	67%	50%
Easy to deal with	25%	47%	63%	54%	55%	65%	73%	62%
Listens & Acts	25%	31%	53%	35%	50%	59%	73%	60%
Keeps you informed	33%	40%	63%	59%	45%	74%	80%	67%
Treats fairly & with respect	36%	41%	67%	57%	45%	64%	80%	55%
Complaints handling	0%	29%	25%	33%	20%	50%	67%	100%

Base: 25-34 = 16, 35-44 = 21, 45-54 = 31, 55-59 = 26, 60-64 = 21, 65-74 = 25, 75-84 = 16, 85+ = 13

Length of Tenancy

The chart opposite shows the satisfaction levels of those with different lengths of tenancy. This shows that those who have been with WECH for between 11 and 20 years are the most satisfied, with those of 20 years or longer generally the least satisfied.

There is no clear explanation why this pattern is shown as often it is the newer tenants who show the most satisfaction.

It could be linked to their location or age profile so more investigation is needed to determine what is going on here.

	1 - 3 years	6 - 10 years	11 - 20 years	Over 20 years
Overall satisfaction	59%	38%	67%	38%
Well maintained home	58%	48%	65%	43%
Safe home	62%	53%	77%	51%
Repairs - Last 12 months	67%	62%	72%	59%
Time taken - Last repair	50%	31%	67%	50%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	46%	39%	64%	38%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	56%	17%	56%	53%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	52%	61%	73%	55%
Anti-social behaviour	52%	42%	54%	37%
Easy to deal with	52%	53%	68%	48%
Listens & Acts	48%	37%	58%	42%
Keeps you informed	60%	61%	62%	52%
Treats fairly & with respect	50%	53%	64%	52%
Complaints handling	38%	0%	33%	35%

Base: 1-3 years = 27, 6-10 years = 22, 11-20 years = 48, Over 20 years = 70

Ethnicity

Whilst the majority of tenants are in the White British category, there are also tenants from other ethnic groups and the main ones are shown here.

Satisfaction with the overall service is highest among the Asian tenants (55%), compared with 47% of the Black British tenants.

The Asian and the Black Caribbean groups tend to be the most satisfied across the range of services, Black British tenants being the least satisfied.

	Asian - Any other Asian background	Black - British/European	Black - Caribbean	White - British/European
Overall satisfaction	55%	47%	53%	52%
Well maintained home	55%	50%	55%	57%
Safe home	73%	58%	63%	64%
Repairs - Last 12 months	89%	62%	80%	64%
Time taken - Last repair	33%	54%	70%	57%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	64%	50%	53%	46%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	67%	67%	67%	48%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	40%	59%	71%	63%
Anti-social behaviour	30%	29%	67%	43%
Easy to deal with	55%	56%	61%	57%
Listens & Acts	45%	35%	56%	48%
Keeps you informed	64%	41%	65%	58%
Treats fairly & with respect	64%	44%	56%	62%
Complaints handling	20%	40%	60%	29%

Base: Asian – Any other Asian background = 11, Black – British/European = 19, Black – Caribbean = 20, White – British/European = 69

Response Method

More tenants responded to the survey online than by post and, as shown, these tend to be less satisfied.

On the overall services, whilst 64% of those responding by post are satisfied, this falls to 42% for those using the online method. This pattern continues throughout the range of services.

One theory for this is that younger tenants are more likely to use the online method, and these are generally less satisfied. This does appear to be the case with WECH where 50% of those using a postal response are aged 65 and over, compared with just 17% of those using the online approach.

The response method is, therefore, an important consideration.

	Online	Postal
Overall satisfaction	42%	64%
Well maintained home	44%	69%
Safe home	50%	80%
Repairs - Last 12 months	58%	71%
Time taken - Last repair	46%	61%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	38%	64%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	44%	71%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	52%	78%
Anti-social behaviour	35%	60%
Easy to deal with	45%	72%
Listens & Acts	39%	60%
Keeps you informed	45%	75%
Treats fairly & with respect	46%	71%
Complaints handling	21%	57%

Base: Online = 107, Postal = 72

Response Method by Estate

It is shown above that tenants in the Walterton estate are less satisfied than those in Elgin. It is also shown that those responding online show lower levels of satisfaction.

Therefore, to test the reasons behind these differences the chart shows the different response methods used by the different estates.

This shows that the proportion of those using online compared to postal is not dissimilar, so it is likely that the differences are due to the factors at the different estates rather than the method of response.

	Elgin Estate		Walterton Estate	
	Online	Postal	Online	Postal
Overall satisfaction	71%	70%	32%	62%
Well maintained home	64%	74%	37%	67%
Safe home	70%	80%	42%	80%
Repairs - Last 12 months	60%	75%	57%	69%
Time taken - Last repair	45%	69%	46%	57%
Repairs - Overall satisfaction	67%	74%	26%	60%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	71%	93%	21%	53%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	65%	82%	46%	77%
Anti-social behaviour	58%	74%	23%	54%
Easy to deal with	59%	80%	38%	69%
Listens & Acts	52%	70%	33%	56%
Keeps you informed	69%	75%	35%	75%
Treats fairly & with respect	56%	79%	42%	69%
Complaints handling	38%	57%	10%	57%

Base: Elgin Estate-Online = 28, Elgin Estate-Postal = 20, Walterton Estate-Online = 79, Walterton Estate-Postal = 52

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Acuity undertook a census survey of all of WECH's tenants in August and September of this year using the new TSM questions from the Regulator of Social Housing. At the close of the survey, 179 responses were received, 107 online and 72 by post with a margin of error of ±6.2%, which is a little outside the guideline figure but still representing a good return, similar to that from the previous survey in 2022.
- The survey shows reduced satisfaction since the previous survey with 51% satisfied with the overall services provided compared with 85% in 2022. The highest satisfaction is for the repairs service in the last 12 months and the contribution made to the neighbourhood by WECH (both 64%) and the provision of a safe home (62%). However, less than half the tenants are satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service and how WECH listens to tenants' views and acts upon them (both 48%), the way ASB is dealt with (47%) whilst just 31% are satisfied with the handling of complaints, more being dissatisfied (52%).
- There are 34% fewer tenants satisfied with the overall services from WECH in 2023 compared with 2022 with other significant changes for the safe home (down 21%), the repairs service (down 24%), being easy to deal with (down 30%), being kept informed and listening to views (down 27%) and 40% fewer are satisfied with the handling of complaints, although this does follow a different format for this question. This change is clearly of concern and further investigation is needed to determine the main reasons, although satisfaction is also falling a little across the sector.
- The key driver for satisfaction is the provision of a well-maintained home, with other linked issues such as the overall repairs service and time to complete repairs influential. However, listening to tenants' views and treating tenants fairly are also important to tenants.
- Satisfaction doesn't compare well with other social landlords who have used the TSM questions to date, and also with Acuity's London benchmarking group; most measures fall into the lower quartile.
- When asked about the services provided and what could be improved, perhaps not surprisingly, repairs tops the list, in particular the timescales for completing works and dealing with outstanding or forgotten repairs. However, answering the phone and returning calls also appears to be an issue for some and many complain about the condition of their properties, and the external maintenance in particular.

Recommendations

WECH aims to provide homes at affordable rents for those in housing need but is also a Community organisation organisation events for the local community and being an active part of the regeneration of North Paddington.

The survey in 2023 shows considerably changes since the similar survey of 2022 with overall satisfaction falling from 85% to 51%.

This will be of concern to WECH who have previously seen high levels of satisfaction. Whilst more will need to be done to determine the causes of these changes, the recommendations opposite may help to target areas which require improvement.

Change over time

The changes in satisfaction since the previous survey in 2022 are quite considerable and affect all services in the survey. There are 34% fewer satisfied with the overall services in 2023 than in 2022, with significant falls in satisfaction with the repairs service and communications. Repairs does appear to be at the root of some of this, but tenants also refer to a decline in service and changes in personnel at WECH, having lost many of the positive relationships that had been built up. There also appears to be quite a difference based on where the tenants live, and this is also explored below. It is suggested that further analysis of these results and the comments made is undertaken, perhaps including a deep dive into these, to help identify the main factors and then target areas where improvements can be made. Turing this around will be quite a challenge for WECH and may take some time to rectify.

Repairs & maintenance

Satisfaction with the overall repairs service has fallen by 24% since last year and when asked about this, some refer to external maintenance issues, complaining that cyclical maintenance like painting hasn't been completed for some time but properties also suffering from cracks and other defects. A third of tenants complained about damp and mould in their homes. Providing a well-maintained home is also the key driver for satisfaction and tenants want repairs done quicker and outstanding repairs dealt with. Whilst these issues are also problems for some other social landlords, they need to be addressed as a matter of urgency at WECH.

Estate differences

There is a marked difference in satisfaction between the tenants of Elgin and Walterton estates, with 71% satisfied overall at Elgin but just 44% in Walterton. Looking at the comments suggests that repairs and maintenance appears to be at the root of at least some of this difference, with Walterton tenants complaining about the external maintenance on the estate, but there are also other issues such as ASB which appear to be affecting satisfaction here. Satisfaction at this estate has fallen far more since last year than at Elgin and it maybe obvious to WECH what is causing this but, perhaps, they should work with the tenants here to find out more about what is driving the dissatisfaction so action can be taken to rectify the issues.

This research project was carried out to conform with ISO20252:2019 and the MRS Code of Conduct.

For further information on this report please contact:

Adam Jewitt: adam.jewitt@arap.co.uk

Acuity

Tel: 01273 287114

Email: acuity@arap.co.uk

Address: PO Box 395, Umberleigh, EX32 2HL

acuity
making sense of housing

MRS Evidence Matters™ Company Partner

Housemark

QMS ISO 20252 : 2019 REGISTERED

Certificate No:359292021

CYBER ESSENTIALS CERTIFIED PLUS