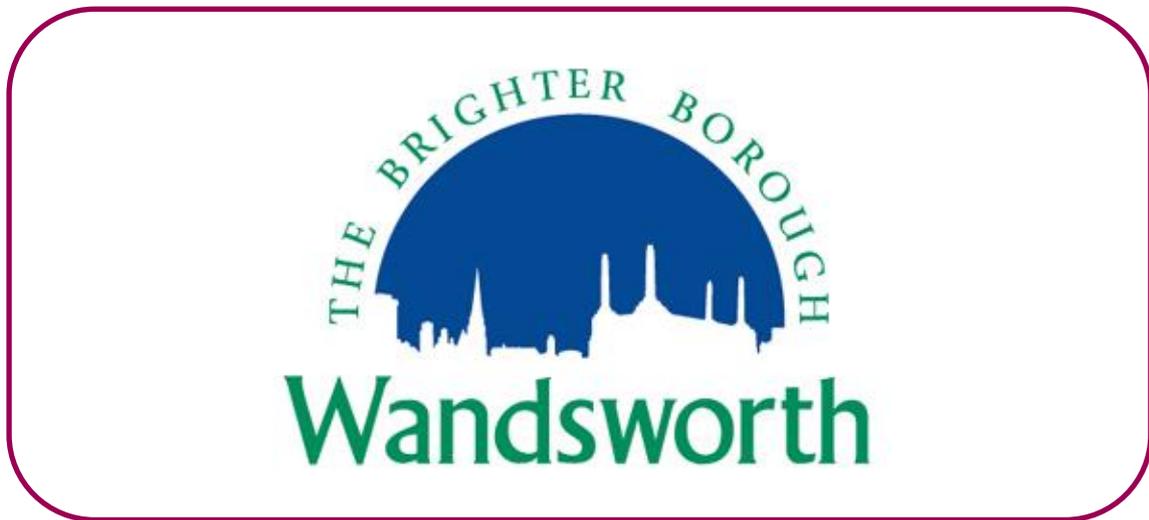


Research Report



New Tenants Survey 2020

Prepared for: Wandsworth Council

Prepared by: BMG Research

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Prepared for: Wandsworth Council
Prepared by: BMG Research
Date: February 2020



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Introduction

1. Background and objectives

In 2019, Wandsworth Borough Council commissioned BMG Research to conduct their 2020 new tenants survey. This survey is designed to measure perceptions of the housing process and of the service received since moving in. This latest wave of research amongst new tenants is based largely on the questionnaire used in 2015, with some additional questions where the new tenants process itself has changed over the past five years.

2. Methodology

BMG was sent a database of 643 tenants who had started their tenancy between June 2018 – July 2019. Tenants were offered the chance to complete the survey online via email. Those who did not respond or did not have an available email address were invited to complete a survey via telephone through BMG's call centre.

In total, 239 interviews were completed between January and February 2020. All remaining available contacts (i.e. those who had not completed an interview, refused to do so, etc) were called at least 20 times.

Based on a population of 643, 239 completed surveys is subject to a maximum confidence interval of +/- 5.03%. This means that if all tenants had responded to the survey a figure of 50% in this report would have actually been between 44.97% and 55.03%.

For this reason, sample sizes when splitting the data by key subgroups – e.g. area, property type, etc - are often low. Analysis by key subgroups is generally only shown where there is a statistically significant difference between the groups. The word 'significant' is only used in this report to mean statistically significant. Due to the smaller base sizes and to mirror that of the previous survey, the results will be shown unweighted.

Figures and tables are used throughout the report to assist explanation and analysis. Although occasional anomalies appear due to 'rounding' differences, these are never more than +/-1%. These occur where, for example, the proportion of respondents who are very satisfied and fairly satisfied are added to produce an overall satisfaction figure. For example, if 25.4% of tenants state they are very satisfied and 30.3% of tenants are fairly satisfied, these figures are rounded down to 25% and 30% respectively. However, the sum of these two responses is 55.7% which is rounded up to 56%, whereas the individual responses suggest this total should be 55%.

Throughout the report the abbreviation 'cf.' is used as shorthand for 'compared to' when examining the data, especially among different sample groupings.

Key findings

3.1.1 Overall perceptions of the Housing Service

Just over two thirds (67%) of residents are satisfied with the services provided by Wandsworth Council, with just 18% dissatisfied with the services. Satisfaction has significantly dropped compared to 2015 (83% cf. 67%). 40% of dissatisfied tenants list their landlord not dealing or fixing issues as a justification for holding negative perceptions. General property condition (19%) and poor customer service also are common reasons for dissatisfaction amongst new tenants.

72% of tenants are satisfied with the way Wandsworth Council is running the local area, with 26% very satisfied. Levels of satisfaction have fallen since the previous survey, however not significantly (72% cf. 80%). 15% express dissatisfaction towards this measure.

Three quarters (74%) of new tenants are satisfied with the neighbourhood as a place to live, 34% of which are very satisfied and just 12% are dissatisfied. Those who hold positive perceptions towards their neighbourhood as a place to live cite a good neighbourhood/ area (21%), good neighbours (19%) and the area being quiet (16%) as reasons for being satisfied.

3.1.2 Applying for housing

51% of tenants find the online housing application form easy to complete. Just under a fifth felt it was difficult to use. The most common reason for finding it difficult was that the form itself was bad and/or difficult to use and navigate. 19% also mentioned that some questions were hard to answer or too complex.

Three quarters (74%) of tenants felt that the application process could have been improved, when asked what could be improved, the most commonly mentioned aspect was more contact, feedback and improved communications standards (19%).

The ease of contacting a member of staff (51%) and knowing who to contact if they had a query (60%) are perceived less favourably than the previous statements however.

3.1.3 Viewing the property

During the viewing, two thirds (66%) of new tenants said they were told what repairs would be carried out before they moved in, a significant drop of 14% percentage points. 37% of tenants said they were told what repairs would be carried after moving in to their property, again a significant drop compared to 2015. The majority of new tenants (78%) said they were not informed at the viewing if there were planned improvements to the property or block. Three fifths (60%) of new tenants were informed who to contact if they wanted to refuse a property at their viewing, a significant drop from 2015.

3.1.4 Sign up

76% of new tenants feel that they have an understanding of what to expect from their landlord during their sign-up meeting, whilst nearly all (90%) have a full understanding of what their landlord expects from them.

79% agree that staff were helpful during the sign-up process; that the welcome pack was useful; and that they received all the information they needed from the sign-up meeting.

3.1.5 Your new home

Two thirds (65%) of new tenants said they were satisfied with the property they were offered at the time and now live in, with 32% very satisfied. This is a 5-percentage point drop from the previous survey in 2015, however this is not a significant decline. Around a quarter (24%) of tenants were dissatisfied with the property they were offered. By far the biggest reason for being dissatisfied with the property offered was the poor condition it was in or the state of repairs that needed doing (64%).

65% of tenants said the kitchen was in good condition when they moved in, whilst 63% said common parts were in good condition. Slightly less positive areas of the home in terms of condition when moving in was the garden, with around half (51%) saying it was in good condition, this has remained the same level as previous years.

Over half (53%) of tenants said that they had an agreed repair to be completed after moving into the property. Of those that had an agreed repair to take place, woodwork repairs were by far the most common (30%). 58% of tenants said that they had to report a new repair within the first two months of moving into their new property. In terms of the new repair however, plumbing has remained the most common repair to report (48%) when compared to 2015.

Just under two thirds (62%) said that they have been visited by their housing officer since moving in. Around half (49%) of those that were visited said that they received a visit within 1 month of moving in, whilst over a quarter (28%) said it took 3 months or longer for their first visit.

Overall Perceptions of the Housing Service

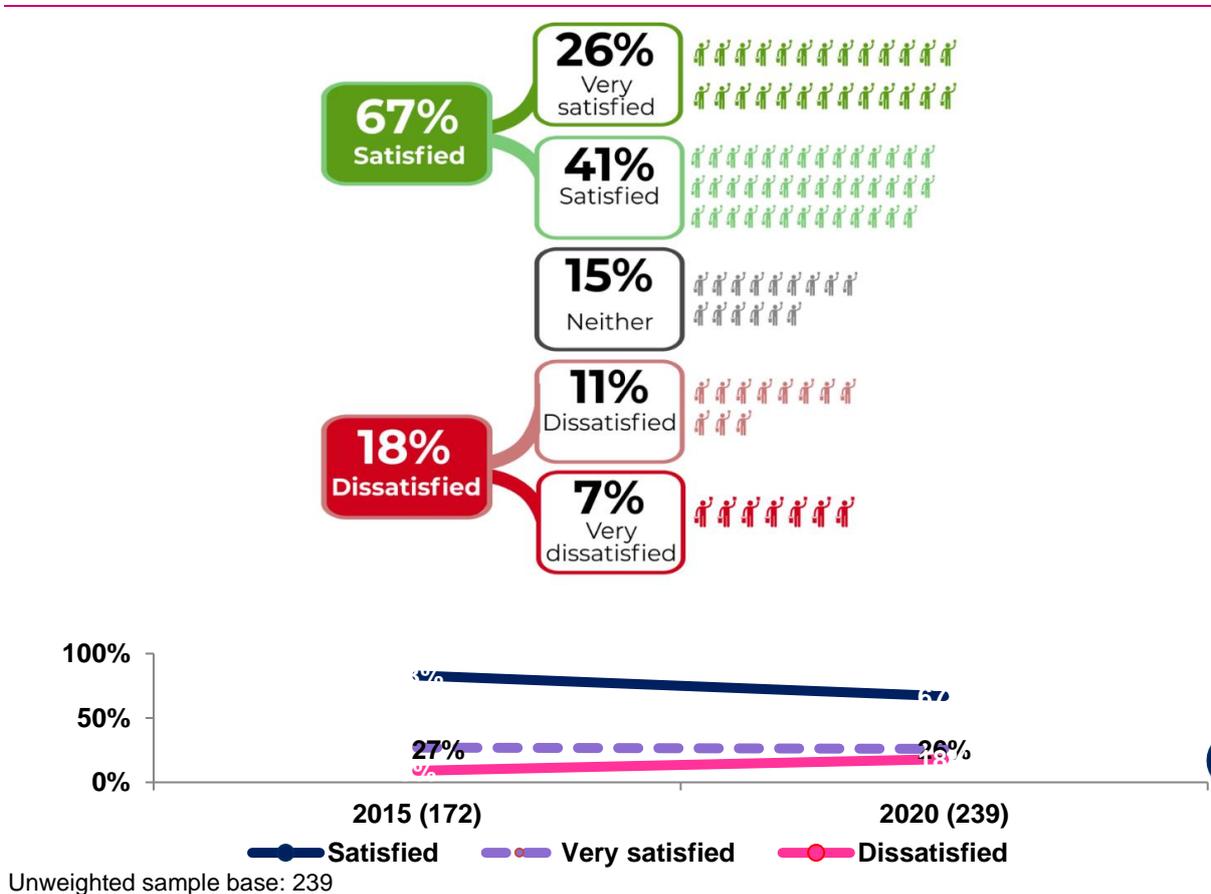
3.1.6 Overall satisfaction with the services provided by the landlord.

Just over two thirds (67%) of residents are satisfied with the services provided by Wandsworth Council, with close to one quarter very satisfied (26%) and just 18% dissatisfied with the services. Perceptions have notably dropped, in comparison to the 2015 figures. Satisfaction levels are significantly lower in 2020 (-16%) and corresponding to this, dissatisfaction is significantly greater (+9%).

Those residing in the Western estate management area are significantly more satisfied (78%), especially in comparison to Eastern and Southern areas (60%, 56%). On the whole, Western tenants were significantly more likely to say that their issues and queries were dealt with (22%). Maisonette dwellers are significantly more likely to be very dissatisfied (16%) with the services provided. The most common reason for dissatisfaction among this groups is the general poor condition of the properties (38%). Tenants living in properties with 3+ rooms are considerably more likely to be very satisfied (36%), particularly when compared to those with 2 bedrooms (14%).

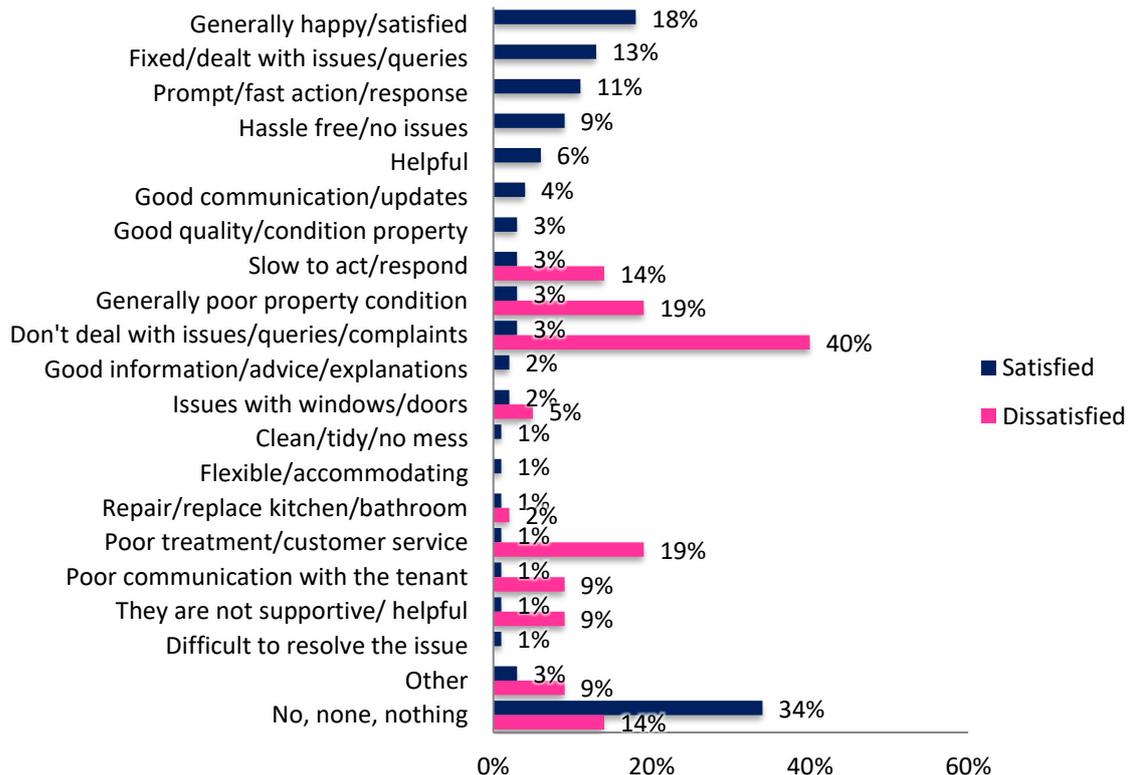
Levels of satisfaction are similar to those in the 2019 perceptions survey (65% cf. 67%). We would however expect to see overall perceptions amongst newer tenants as typically higher than existing customers, as this cohort can only go off their first impressions of the organisation.

Figure 1: Q20. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services provided by your landlord? (All responses)



On the whole, there is no specific reason given by new tenants to justify high levels of satisfaction although Wandsworth dealing with issues (13%) and acting promptly (11%) are popular responses. In regards to dissatisfaction, dealing with/fixing issues and queries is again, highlighted as an important factor determining satisfaction with the service. 40% of dissatisfied tenants list their landlord not dealing or fixing issues as a justification for their negative perception. General property condition (19%) and poor customer service also are common reasons for new tenant dissatisfaction

Figure 2: Q21. Why do you say that? (Where satisfied and dissatisfied)



Unweighted sample base: 160, 43

“When they say they will call you back they don’t, also they don’t have the answers to my questions, it is frustrating, when the engineers say they can’t come, I have taken a day off work, issues at work. They are nasty, they need to be sacked, all my neighbours complain about same issue.”

“Nothing has been easy. Everything has been frustration. You try call someone at the council and you can’t get through to the right people and it’s takes a whole hour they keep taking long and aren’t very helpful.”

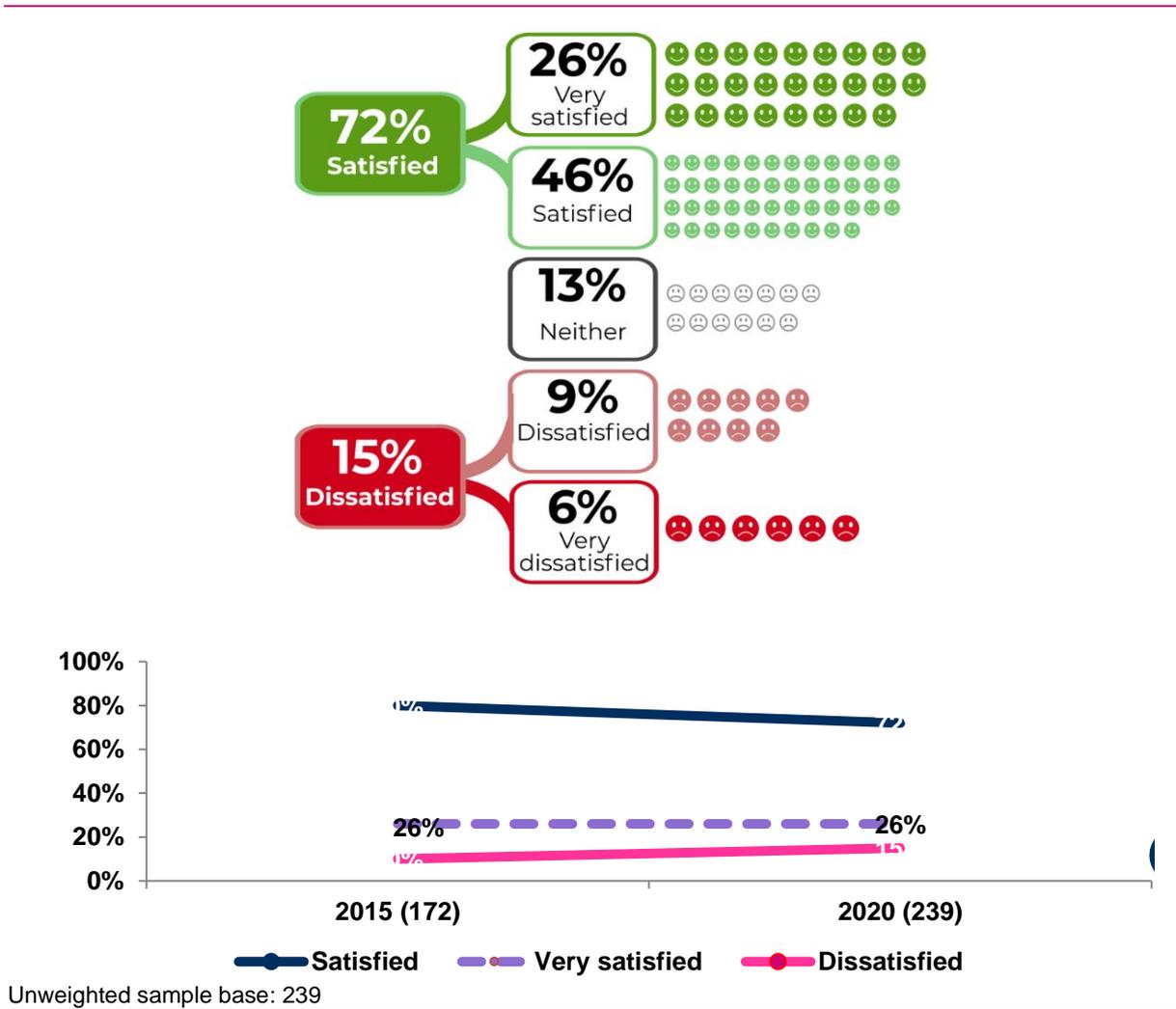
“Because it takes a long time to get the right person on the line and they don’t write it down and the appointment takes for ever to be placed and they send the wrong person to come.”

“The process of getting the house was not straight forward. But when I did get the place the sign up was fine, Housing officer came once and said repairs would need be carried out, but they haven’t followed up on it, not even a phone call since the visit of the housing officer.”

4.2.1 Satisfaction with local areas

When asked to consider more broadly the way in which the council were running the local area, just under three quarters (72%) of new tenants are satisfied. Whilst the proportion of those who are very satisfied has stayed in line with 2015 figures, there has been a notable drop in satisfaction (72% cf. 80%). Levels of dissatisfaction have in turn risen when compared to 2015 figures also this is not statistically significant. By estate management area, those living in the Western are significantly more satisfied (84%) than those in Central, Eastern and Southern areas.

Figure 3: Q22. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Wandsworth Council is running your local area? (All responses)

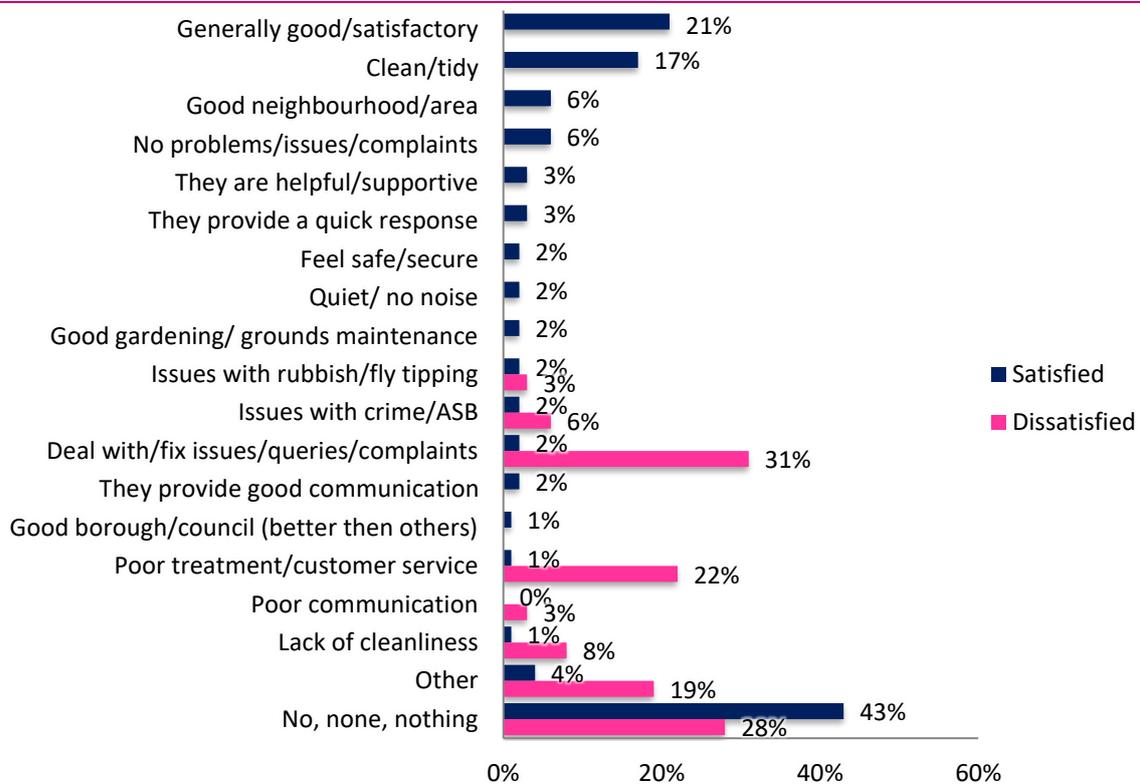


New tenants living in larger properties with 3 plus bedrooms are again more likely to be very satisfied (39%) than those with 2 bedrooms (13%) indicating that larger families more content with the way in which Wandsworth is running their local area.

New tenants who have higher levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live, are significantly more likely to also be satisfied (83%) with the way the council are running their local area.

When asked why they are satisfied with the council's running of the local area close to a fifth (17%) of new tenants stated that it was due to their local area being clean and tidy. New tenants who were generally dissatisfied with Wandsworth's running of the local area predominantly thought they didn't deal with or fix issues (31%) and they received poor treatment or service (22%).

Figure 4: Q23. Why do you say that? (Where satisfied and dissatisfied)



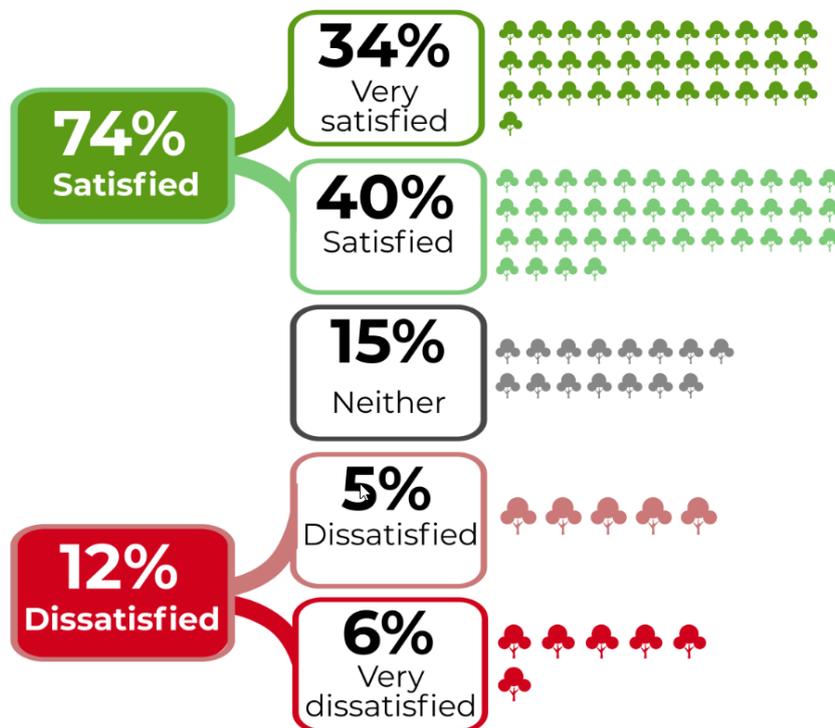
Unweighted sample base: 173, 36

4.2.2 Neighbourhood as a place to live

Close to three quarters (74%) of new tenants are satisfied with the neighbourhood as a place to live, 34% of which are very satisfied and just 12% are dissatisfied. When considering the location of new tenants, although no one area of estate management was statistically significantly greater, those in the Central area are more likely to be very satisfied (43%) and those in Western are more satisfied with their neighbourhood as a whole (+7 percentage points compared to the total).

New tenants residing in houses are significantly more satisfied (89%) with their neighbourhood, especially in comparison to maisonette dwellers who are notably less satisfied (50%) with their neighbourhood as an area to live. Just over a quarter (26%) of new tenants living in houses place their satisfaction on living in a good neighbourhood. Three quarters (75%) of those living in maisonettes were dissatisfied with their neighbourhood based on issues of crime/ASB and similarly 25% noted issues with drug/alcohol use and users. Due to a small base size, these results are not indicative. Gender also appeared to influence residents' levels of satisfaction, as men (43%) are significantly likely to be very satisfied with their local neighbourhood than women (29%). Older, new tenants are more satisfied although as the sample sizes of those over 64 are so small, the results are not indicative.

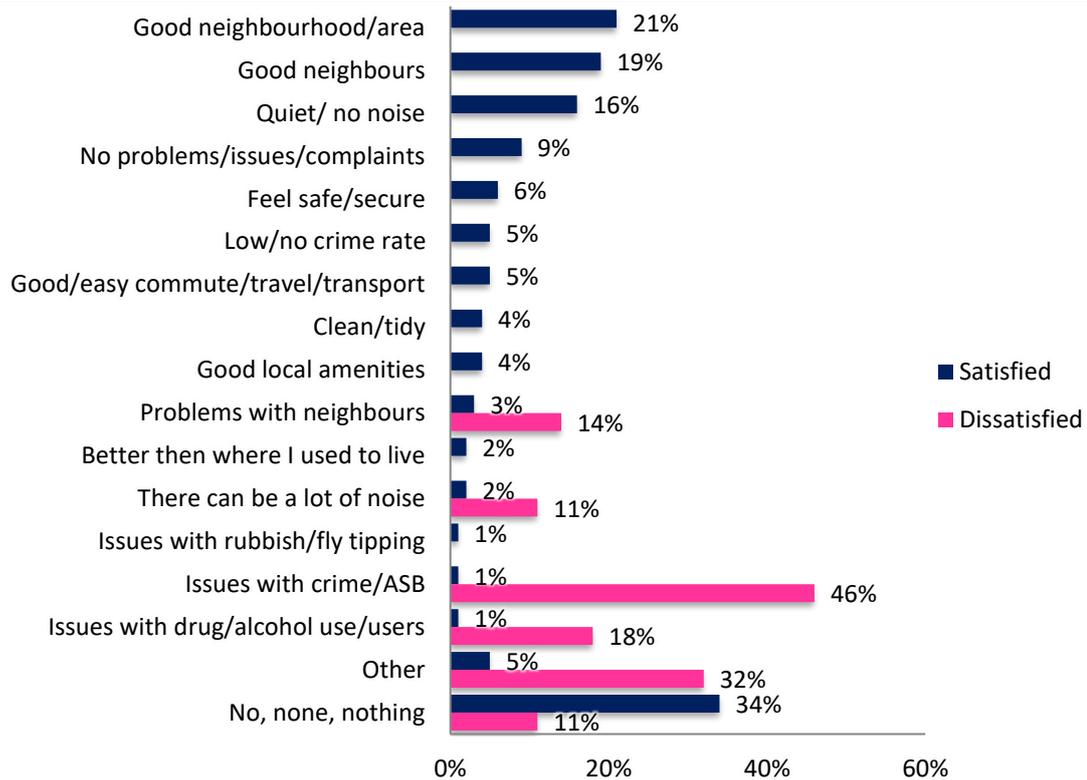
Figure 5: Q24. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live? (All responses)



Unweighted sample base: 239

Tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live cited a good neighbourhood/ area (21%), good neighbours (19%) and the area being quiet (16%) as reasons for their positive perceptions towards this measure. Conversely, those dissatisfied with the neighbourhood as a place to live cited issues with crime/ ASB as the main reason (46%). Other commonly mentioned issues amongst dissatisfied tenants were problems with neighbours (14%), a lot of noise (11%) and issues with drug and alcohol use (18%).

Figure 6: Q25. Why do you say that? (Where satisfied and dissatisfied)



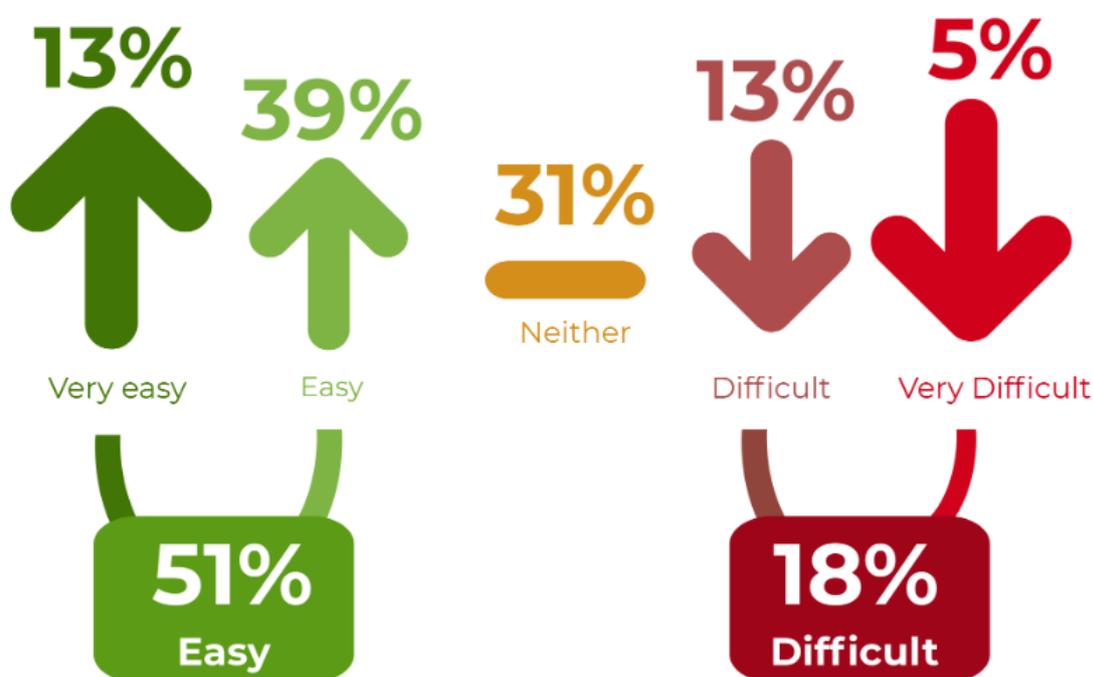
Unweighted sample base: 173, 36

Applying for housing

4.2.3 Ease of using the online housing application form

Around half (51%) of tenants found the online housing application form easy to complete, with 13% saying it was very easy. Just under a fifth felt it was difficult to use. Those aged 55-64 are significantly more likely to find the form easy to complete (72% cf. 51%). Conversely, those aged 45-54 were significantly less likely to find the form easy to complete (39% cf. 51%). In the 2015 report, just 38% said they would have liked an option to complete the application form online. With just half (50%) finding it easy to complete, there may be some tenants who would prefer more traditional methods of completing their housing application form.

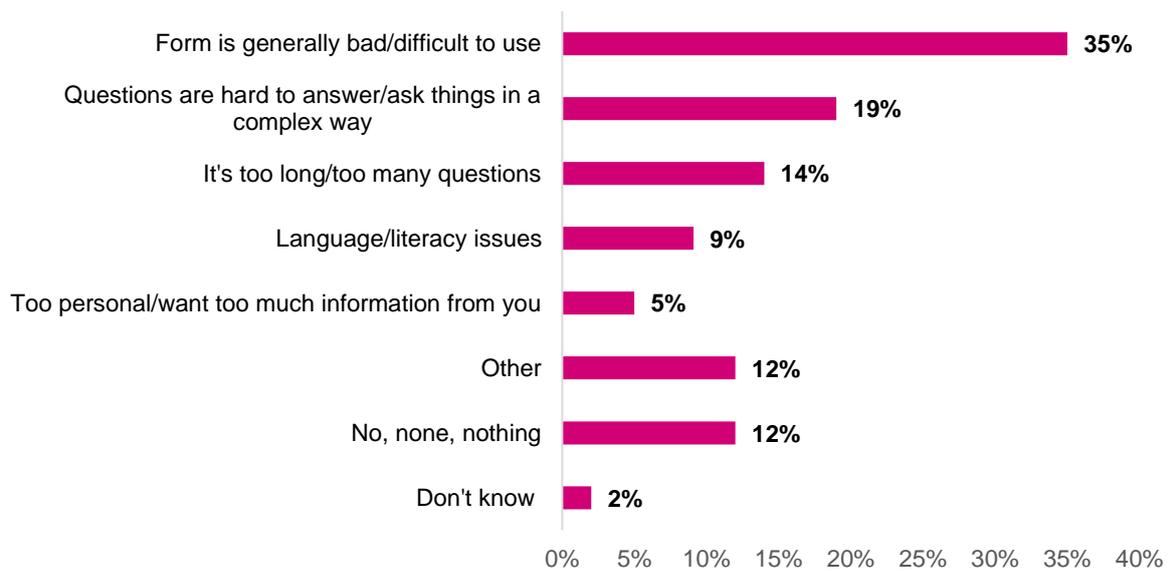
Figure 7: Q1. How easy or difficult did you find the online housing application form to complete? (All responses)



Unweighted sample base: 239

Those who found the online housing application form difficult were asked to explain why. The most common reason for finding it difficult was that the form itself was bad and/or difficult to use and navigate. As mentioned previously, the online form is a fairly new service offered to new tenants of Wandsworth Council, so it may be expected that it isn't perfect. Around a fifth (19%) also mentioned that some questions were hard to answer or to complex, perhaps further information could be provided on the online form, where as previously a staff member may have been able to assist when first enquiring about the housing process either in person or over the phone.

Figure 8: Q2. If you found the online housing application form difficult or very difficult to complete please explain why. (Where found online housing application form difficult to complete)

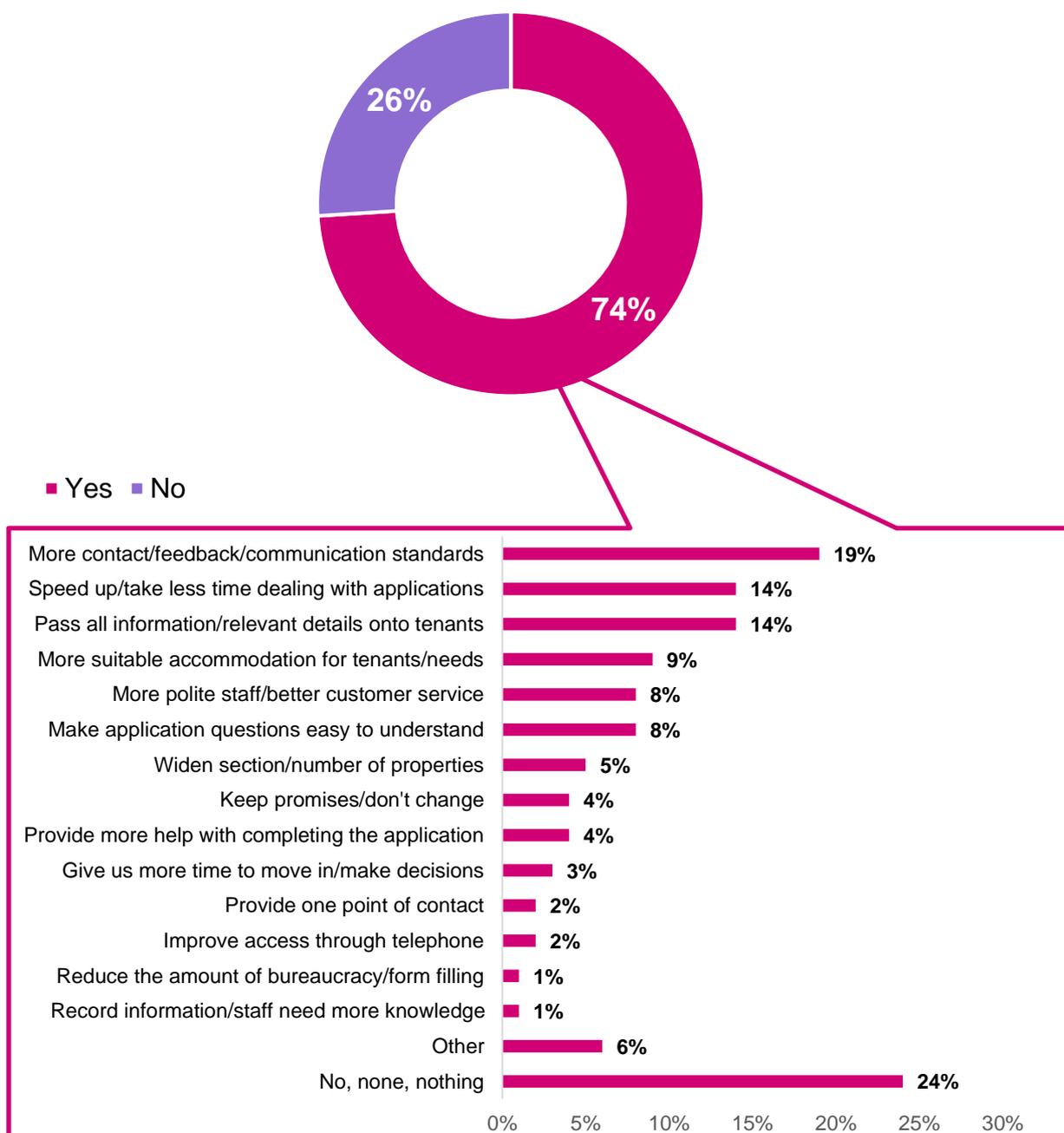


Unweighted base:43

4.2.4 Improvements to the online housing application form

Three quarters (74%) of tenants felt that the application process could have been improved. When asked what could be improved to the process, the most commonly mentioned aspect was more contact, feedback and improved communications standards (19%). Speeding up the time taken to deal with applications and passing all information/ relevant details onto tenants (14%) are the second most mentioned aspects to improve on.

Figure 9: Q4. In your view could the application process be improved? (Valid responses) Q5. If you feel the application process could be improved, please tell us how (Where application could be improved)



Unweighted sample base: 186, 138

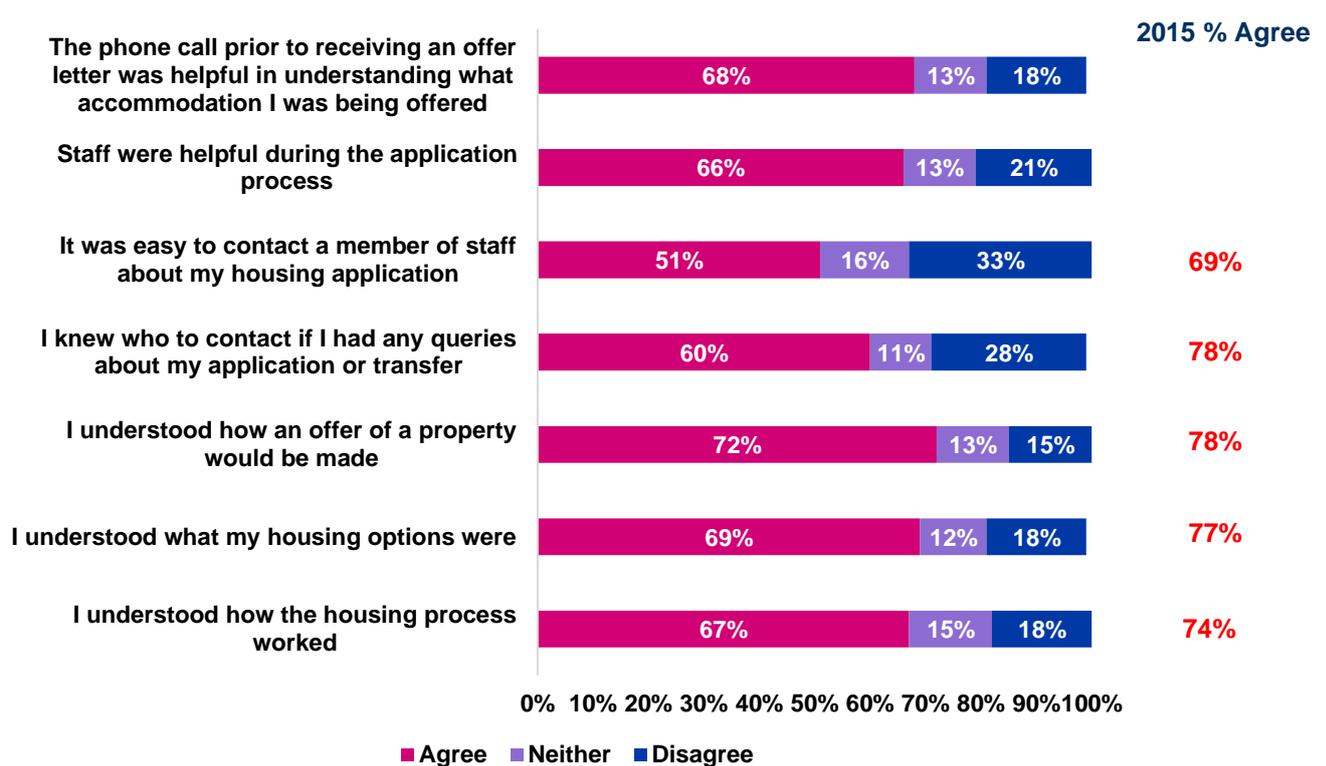
4.2.5 Overall perceptions of the application process

New tenants were asked a series of questions relating to the process of applying for their housing application. As the figure below indicates, around two thirds of respondents rate the application process positively. The ease of contact a member of staff (51%) and knowing who to contact if they had a query (60%) are perceived less favourably than the previous statements however.

When compared to 2015, all statements that were asked previously have seen significant declines in positive perceptions. This may be due to a bigger focus on the online element of the housing applications when compared to last time. Generally, dissatisfaction has stayed at a similar level with the exception of knowing who to contact for queries, with most of the falls in positive falling into those who neither agree nor disagree. This feeds back to the previous figure where we have seen improvements to communication cited amongst tenants as a way to improve the application process.

Like the previous figure, those aged 55-64 are significantly more likely to agree with all statements compared to the total average, with the exception of ease of contacting a member of staff and knowing who to contact regarding queries.

Figure 10: Q3. Overall please say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements (All responses)



Unweighted sample base: 239

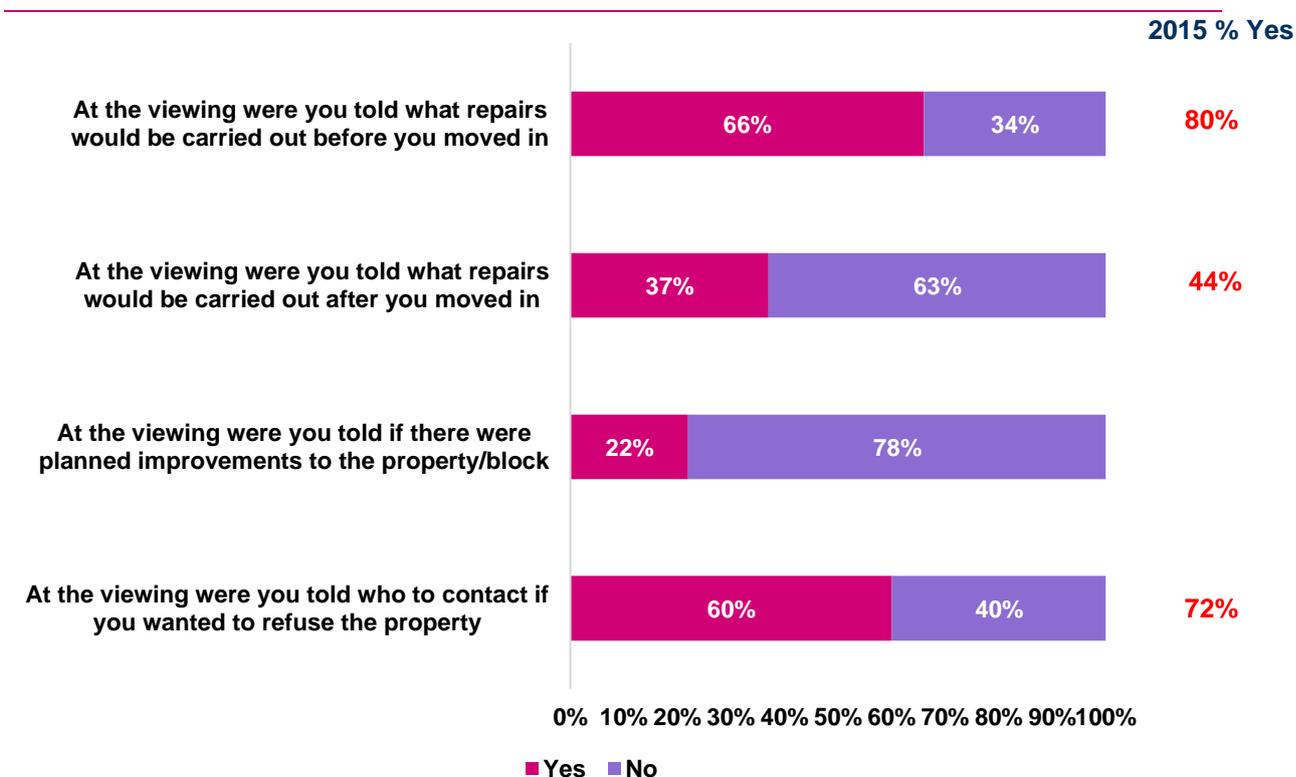
Viewing the property

During the viewing, two thirds (66%) of new tenants said they were told what repairs would be carried out before they moved in, a significant drop of 14% percentage points. In comparison, just 37% of tenants said they were told what repairs would be carried out after moving in to their property, again a significant drop compared to 2015. Interestingly, among new tenants who had been informed at their viewing of any repairs to be completed, prior (77%) or post move in (51%), they were significantly more likely to have to follow up on agreed repairs in their new home. Tenants were notably more satisfied with the properties they were offered if they were informed about repairs to be completed both prior (72%) and post (42%) move in.

The majority of new tenants (78%) said they were not informed at the viewing if there were **planned improvements** to the property or block, especially those who viewed a maisonette (94%). Those who were informed are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the property they were offered (28%). In contrast, new tenants who were not provided with this information at the viewing are significantly more dissatisfied with the overall service Wandsworth Council provides (90%).

Three fifths (60%) of new tenants were informed who to contact if they wanted to refuse a property at their viewing, a significant drop from 2015.

Figure 11: Q6. Were you given any of the following information during your accompanied viewing of the property (All responses)

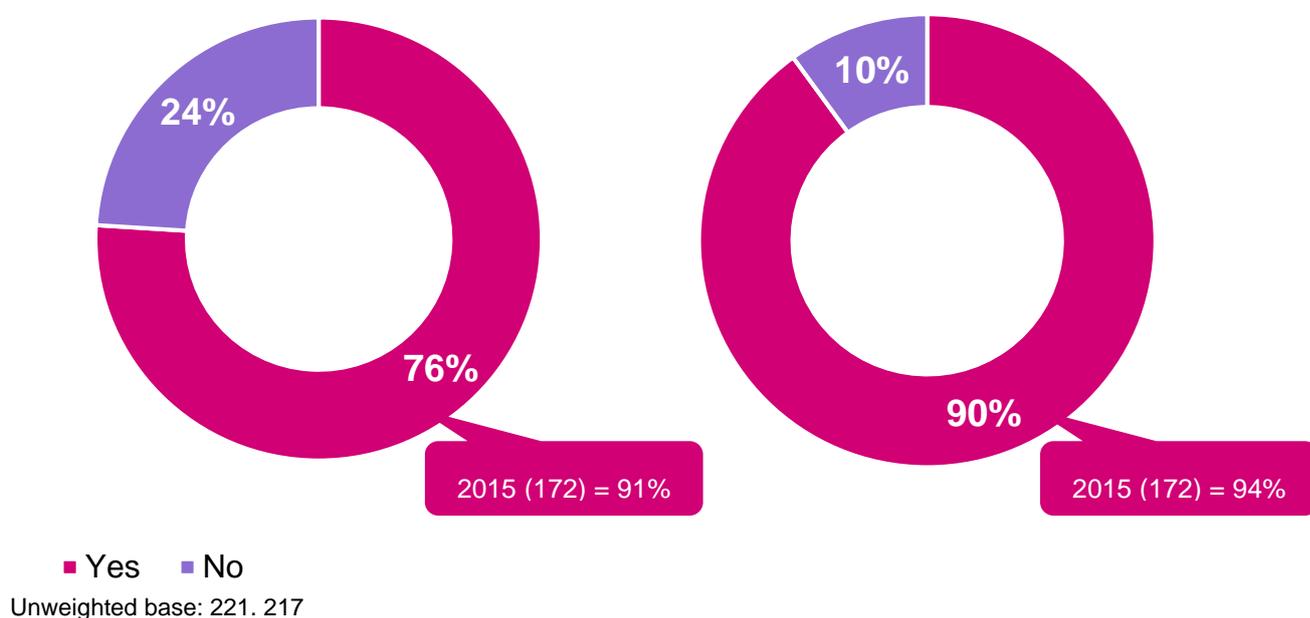


Unweighted sample base: 239

Sign-up

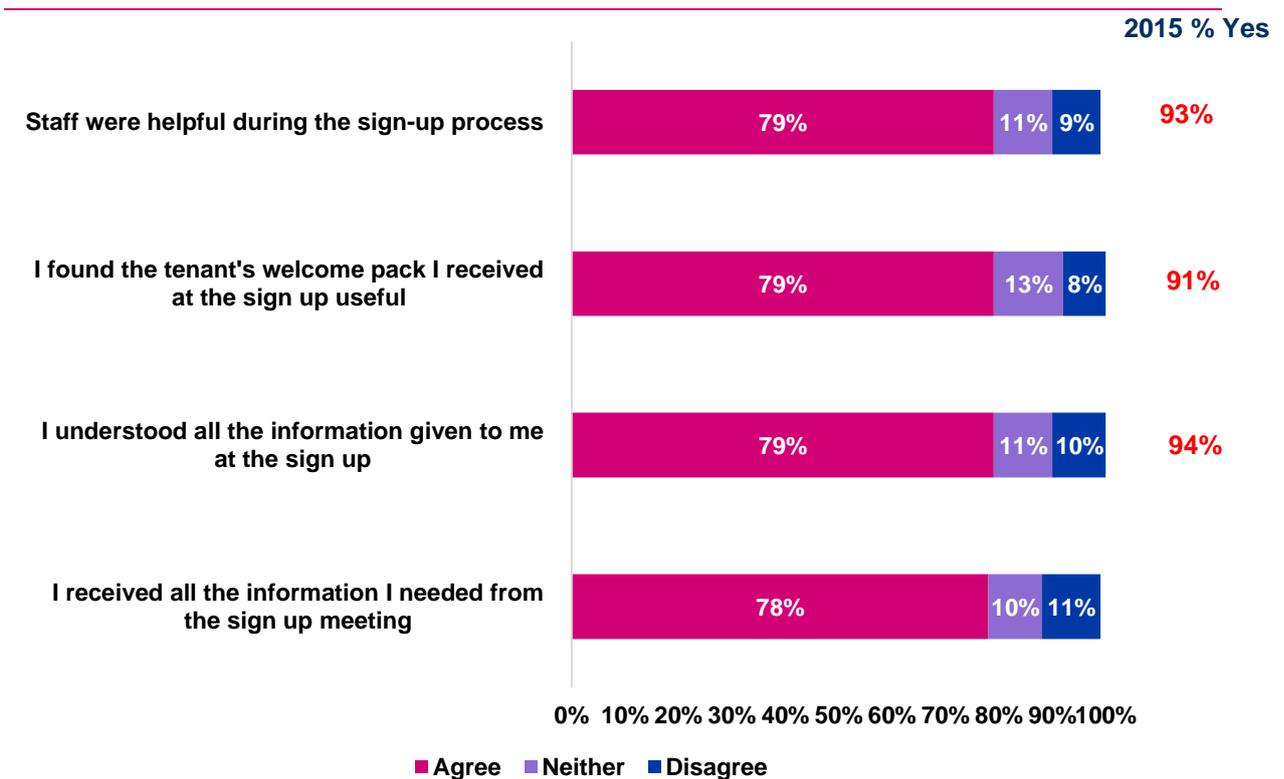
During the sign-up meetings, around three quarters (76%) of new tenants feel that they have an understanding of what to expect from their landlord and, reciprocally, nearly all (90%), especially those moving into a house (100%), have a full understanding of what their landlord expects from them. This has declined significantly since 2015, especially in regards to understanding the expectations of a landlord (76% cf. 91%).

Figure 12: Q7.1 Do you feel that the meeting you had to sign your new tenancy agreement gave you a full understanding of what you can expect from your landlord? Q7.2 Do you feel that the meeting you had to sign your new tenancy agreement gave you: A full understanding of what your landlord expects from you as a tenant? (Valid responses)



The sign-up meetings prove positive in that four fifths of new tenants (79%) agree that staff were helpful during the sign-up process; that the welcome pack was useful; and that they received all the information they needed from the sign-up meeting. Perceptions of the staff being helpful during the sign-up process appears to have improved, as new tenants signing up in January to July 2019 were significantly more likely to strongly agree that the welcome was useful (36% cf. 29%) compared to the total average. This cohort were also significantly more likely to say they were provided with sufficient information (31% cf. 20%) compared to those who signed up in 2018. However, when compared with the 2015 data, agreement on the whole has significantly declined.

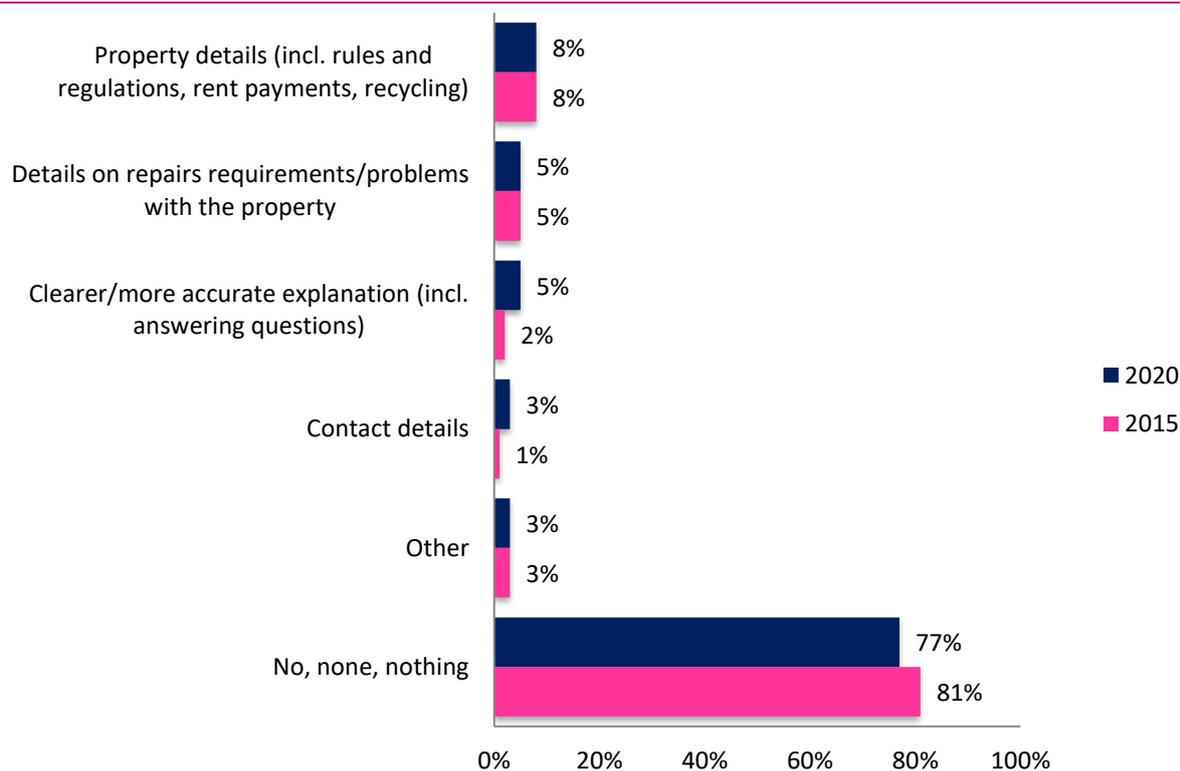
Figure 13: Q8. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.



Unweighted sample base: 239

New tenants were asked if any further information would have been useful to have during the sign-up meeting. As with the 2015 findings, the majority of new tenants feel that the information provided at the sign-up meetings is sufficient with over three quarters (77%) of new tenants noting no other information would have been useful. Of those that did give an answer, the most commonly mentioned additional information was in regards to property details, such as rules, rent payments and recycling (8%).

Figure 14: Q9. Please specify any additional information you would have found useful at the sign-up meeting



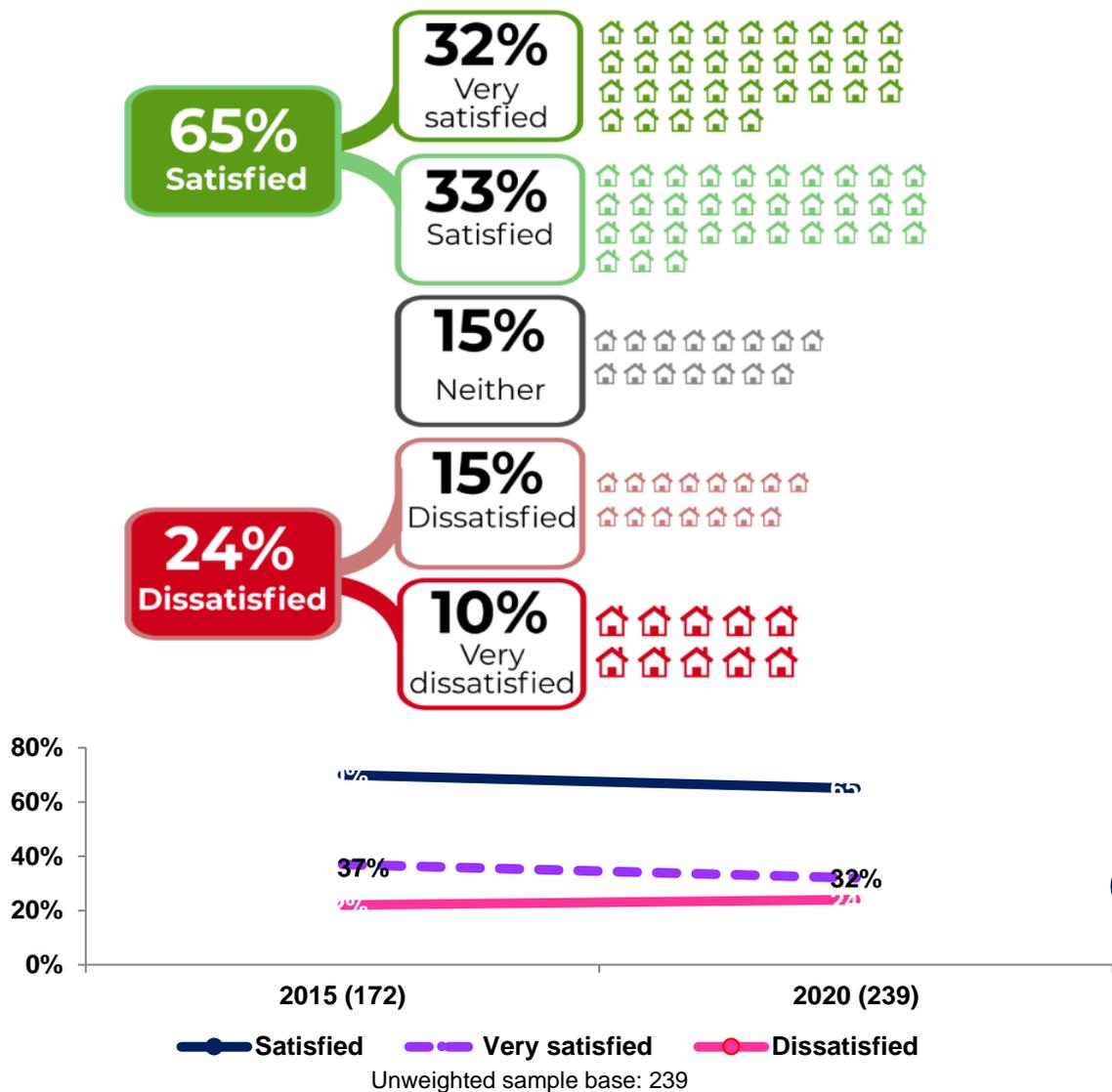
Unweighted sample base: 239

Your new home

4.2.6 Property offering

Two thirds (65%) of new tenants said they were satisfied with the property they were offered at the time and now live in, with 32% very satisfied. This is a 5-percentage point drop from the previous survey in 2015, however this is not a significant decline. Around a quarter (24%) of tenants expressed dissatisfaction towards the property they were offered. Those who live in a house are significantly more likely compared to the total average to have been satisfied with the property they were offered (80% cf. 65%). Those living in the Eastern area however were significantly less likely to be satisfied with the property they were offered (54% cf. 65%), as are those aged 25-34 (53% cf. 65%).

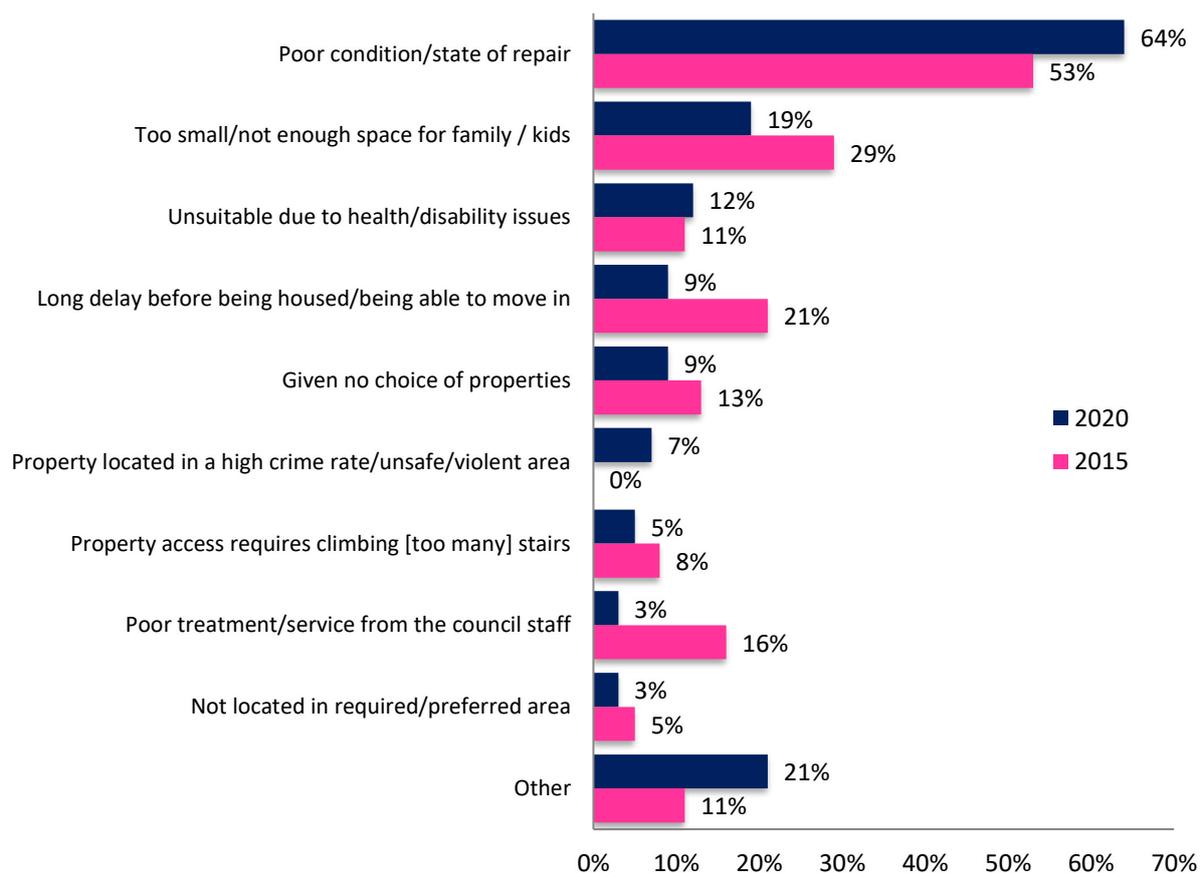
Figure 15: Q10. Overall, how satisfied were you with the property you were offered at the time and now live in?



Those who were dissatisfied with the property they were offered were asked why this was the case. By far the biggest reason for being unhappy with the property offered was the poor condition it was in or the state of repairs that needed doing (64%). This was also the most common reason amongst those dissatisfied with this measure in 2015.

There has been a drop in those saying the property is too small or not enough space for family compared to the 2015 survey (19% cf. 29%), as has the proportion of those saying there was a long delay before being housed (9% cf. 21%).

Figure 16: Q11. If you were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, please explain why.

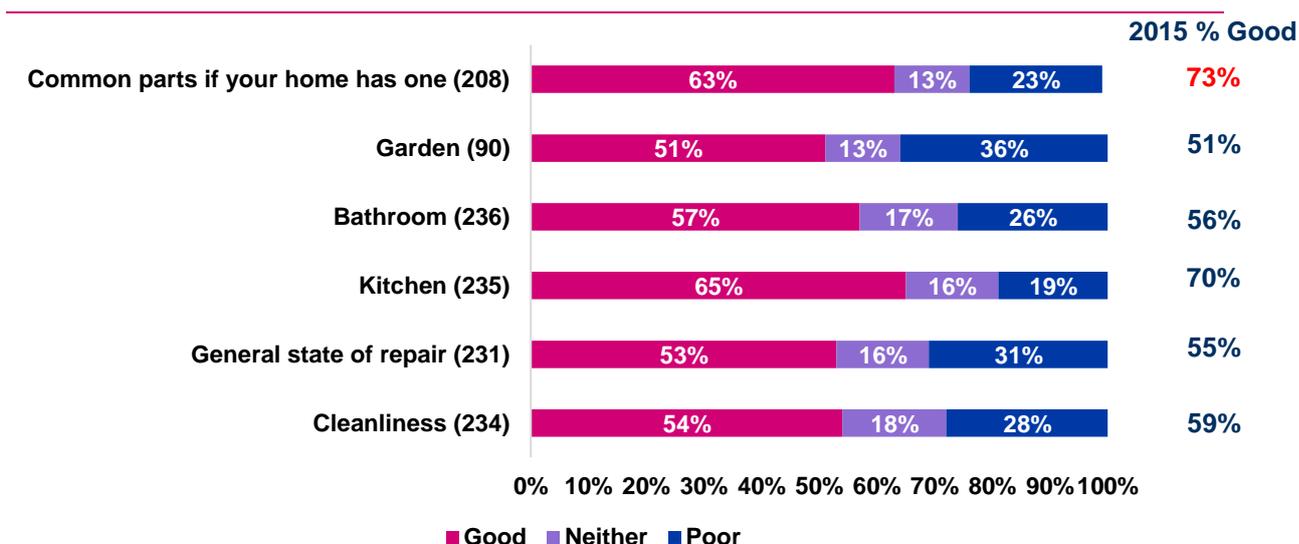


Unweighted sample base: 58

4.2.7 Condition of the property

Tenants were asked to describe the general condition of their new home on the day they moved in. Two thirds (65%) said the kitchen was in good condition, whilst 63% said common parts were in good condition (Although this has dropped significantly compared to the 2015 results 63% cf. 73%). The least positive area of the home was the garden, with around half (51%) saying it was in good condition, this has remained the same level as previous years.

Figure 17: Q12 How would you describe the general condition of your new home on the day you moved in (Valid responses)



Unweighted sample base in parenthesis

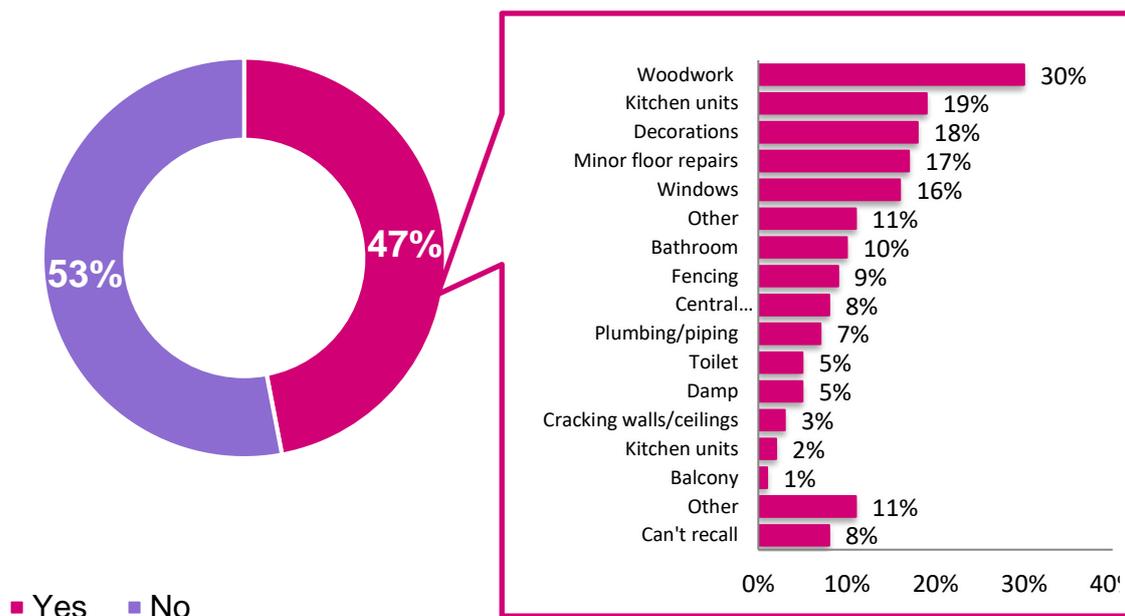
Those living in a maisonette are significantly less likely to think the cleanliness of their property was good when moving in compared to the total average (38% cf. 54%), as are those living in a property with 2 bedrooms (38% cf. 54%). Tenants living in a property with 0-1 bedrooms are significantly more likely to feel that the general state of repair and conditions of their kitchen and bathroom were good. The opposite can be said for those living in a 2-bedroom property.

Table 1: Q12 How would you describe the general condition of your new home on the day you moved in (By property type and number of bedroom)

% Good	Property type			Number of bedrooms		
	Flat	House	Maisonette	0-1	2	3+
Cleanliness	57%	65%	38%	62%	38%	63%
General state of repair	54%	62%	39%	63%	38%	57%
Kitchen	68%	69%	51%	73%	53%	67%
Bathroom	58%	63%	51%	65%	42%	63%
Garden	54%	44%	50%	60%	44%	44%
Common parts if your home has one	63%	76%	58%	66%	63%	61%

Just over half (53%) of tenants said that they had an agreed repair to be completed after moving into the property, around the same proportion observed in the 2015 findings (50%). Of those that had an agreed repair to take place, woodwork repairs were by far the most common (30%), significantly higher than the proportion of those that said this repair in 2015. In 2015, central heating/ boiler/ radiator repairs were the most common agreed repair, however this has significantly fallen this year (8% cf. 35%).

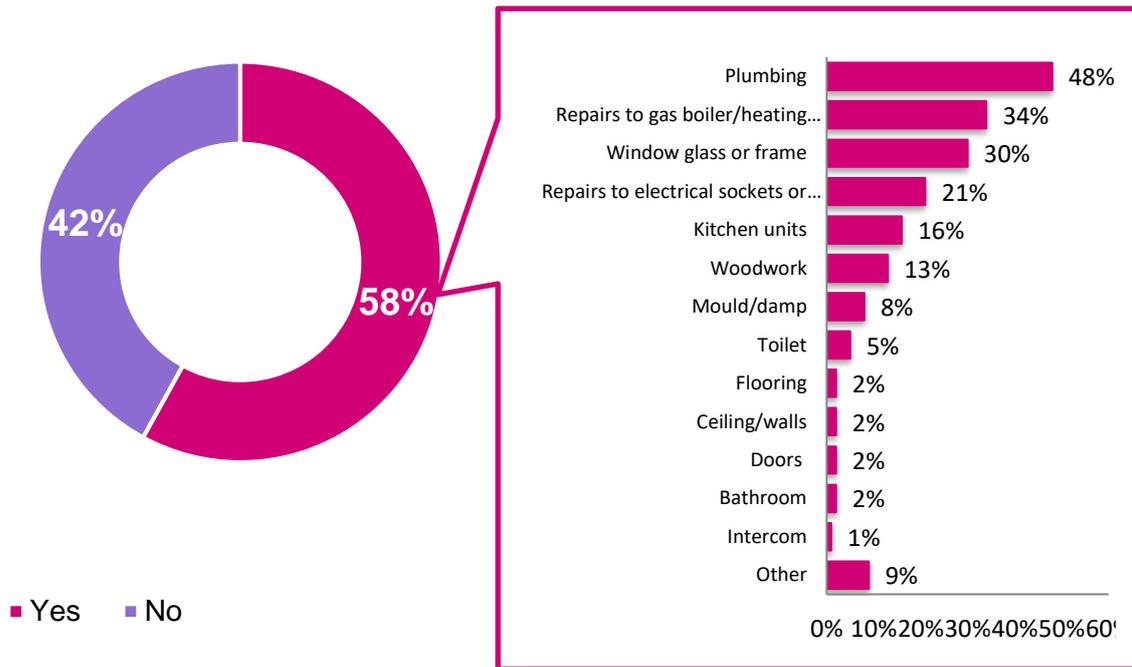
Figure 18: Q13. Did you have to follow up on any repairs agreed be completed soon after you moved into your home? (Valid responses) Q14. Please indicate what agreed repairs you had to follow up on



Unweighted sample base: 189, 88

58% of tenants said that they had to report a new repair within the first two months of moving into their new property, 5-percentage points higher than in 2015. In terms of the new repair however, plumbing has remained the most common repair to report, mirroring the previous survey findings (48%). Repairs to boiler/ heating systems (34% cf. 29%) and window glass or frames (30% cf. 15%) meant the top three most common new repairs remained the same five years on.

Figure 19: Q15. Did you have to report any new repairs to your home within the first two months of moving in? (Valid responses) Q16. Please indicate what new repairs you had to follow up on (Where reported a repair)



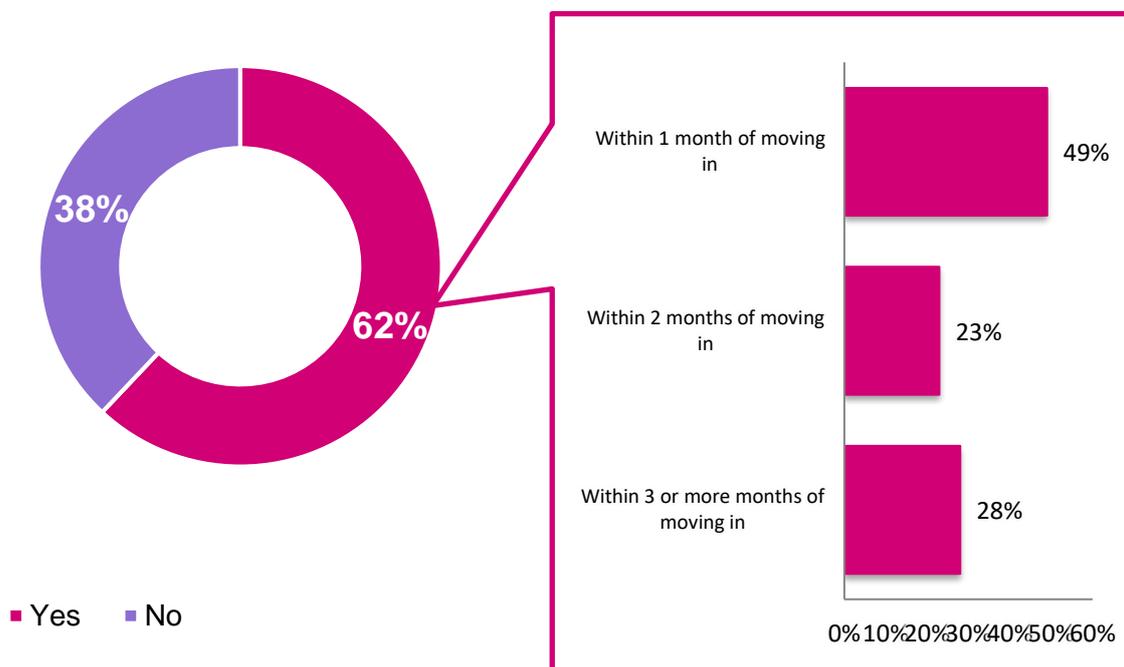
Unweighted sample base: 222, 128

4.2.8 Tenancy visits

Just under two thirds (62%) said that they have been visited by their housing officer since moving in. Those in the Eastern area are the most likely to have seen a housing officer (69%), whilst those in the central area are least likely to have (55%), these results are not statistically significant however.

Of those that have been visited by a housing officer, around half (49%) said that they received a visit within 1 month of moving in, with over a quarter (28%) saying it took 3 months or longer to have their first visit.

Figure 20: Q17. Have you had a new tenancy visit by your housing officer since moving in? (Valid responses) Q18. Please indicate how long since moving in? (Where visited by a housing officer)

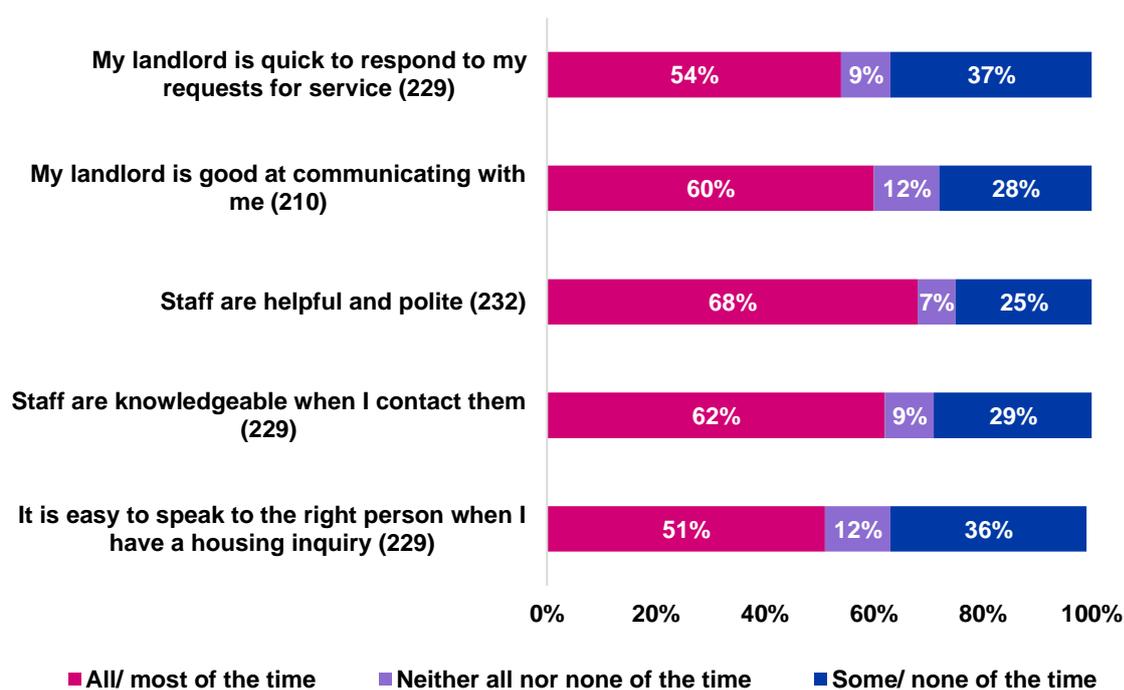


Unweighted sample base: 217, 110

4.2.9 Perceptions of the landlord and staff of Wandsworth

Just under seven in ten (68%) feel that most of the time staff are helpful and polite, whilst around three fifths feel that their landlords are good at communications (60%) and staff are knowledgeable (62%) most of the time. The least positive measures are that around half feel that their landlords are quick to respond (54%) and its easy to speak to the right person (51%) most of the time. Those aged 55-64 are significantly more likely to say staff are helpful and polite all the time compared to those aged 25-34 (55% cf. 24%).

Figure 21: Q19. Please choose the response that best fits your view on the following statements (Valid responses)



Unweighted sample base in parenthesis

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