



CONTINUOUS TENANT OMNIBUS SURVEY 2022

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Produced by the Research Unit

Housing
Executive

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Acknowledgement

The Housing Executive would like to thank everyone involved in this research. In particular our gratitude goes to all the tenants who took the time to participate and whose goodwill and co-operation made the Survey possible.

For any information on the Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey please contact:

**CTOS Team,
The Research Unit,
Housing Executive
2 Adelaide Street,
Belfast BT2 8PB
Tel: 03448 920 900
www.nihe.gov.uk**

email: shauna.mulgrew@nihe.gov.uk

What is the Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey?

The Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) is the main way we collect information about what our tenants think about their tenancy, their home, the service they receive and about the neighbourhood they live in. It has been providing feedback from tenants for more than twenty years and this current report provides up to date views for 2022. Any change in tenants' opinions over time can be identified and used to inform local housing managers and central planning in order to improve the quality of our services.

Who takes part?

Throughout 2022 a total of 2600 tenant interviews were completed, randomly selected to represent households across our 13 Area Offices. Interviews were completed with either the household reference person (HRP) or their partner.

Findings

This report sets out feedback from you and relates to the following:

- Your home and neighbourhood
- Your views on some of our key services areas
- Your views on how we have consulted and communicated with you
- Your experience of contacting us

If you have any comments about the report please don't hesitate to get in touch with us by telephone (03448 920 900), email information@nihe.gov.uk or calling at your local Housing Executive Office.

To read the full report please go to the Landlord Services section at <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Attitudes-to-landlord-services-under-Completed-Research>.

Here's what we found



Overall satisfaction & value for money in 2022



78%

of you said that you were satisfied with the overall service provided by us
84% in 2021
↓ 6 percentage point decrease



85%

of you said that your rent provides value for money
89% in 2021
↓ 4 percentage point decrease

What are we doing?

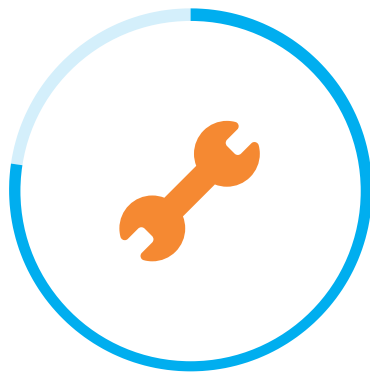
- We will continue to ensure that tenants receive value for their rent payments through the delivery of quality accommodation and services.
- Housing Executive rents were frozen in 2022/23 and remain amongst the lowest within the UK social housing sector. We continue to monitor our rents in comparison to other social housing providers in the UK, as well as other data in relation to our tenants, to ensure that our rents remain affordable.
- We will continue to maximise our rental income so that we are able to invest in our communities and in the required repairs and improvements in our properties to ensure that our housing stock remains fit for purpose.
- We will continue to identify and contact tenants experiencing difficulty paying their rent and make sure that they receive all of the expert advice and assistance they need.
- Our Financial Inclusion Strategy aims to improve the financial wellbeing of our tenants and ensure they have the ability to access the right financial help, support and services when needed. Our dedicated Financial Inclusion Managers work with our customers and this specialist service has significantly improved the financial wellbeing of numerous tenants within the last year.

Your home & neighbourhood in 2022



79%

of you were satisfied with the quality of your home
85% in 2021
↓ **6** percentage point decrease



78%

of you said you were satisfied with the general condition of your property
84% in 2021
↓ **6** percentage point decrease



85%

of you said you think your home is just the right size
84% in 2021
↑ **1** percentage point increase

In 2022
there were:

82,238
approx. occupied properties

154,598
approx. household members

Your home & neighbourhood in 2022



90%

of you were satisfied with your neighbourhood
89% in 2021
↑ **1** percentage point increase



75%

of you were proud of the general image of your area
68% in 2021
↑ **7** percentage point increase

5%

said you were ashamed of the general image of your area

5%

of you were dissatisfied with where you live, the main reason being the people/ neighbours and anti-social behaviour

What are we doing?

- We launched our new Tenancy Sustainment Action Plan and continued to deliver our Sustaining Tenancies Funding Programme, which since its launch in 2021 has invested £1.4 million in projects to foster happy, healthy and resilient tenancies and communities.
- We continued to deliver our Community Safety Strategy which works to address Anti-Social Behaviour in our (ASB) in our estates. In 2022/23 we responded to 1,604 reports of alleged ASB and invested £545k to address community safety issues in our estates. We are committed to tackling ASB in all forms, through investment in diversionary schemes and taking appropriate action against perpetrators.
- We continue to deliver our Community Strategies, including our Involvement, Cohesion and Social Enterprise Strategies. These are designed to give residents a voice and help improve local neighbourhoods as places to live.
- We identified improvements for new Grounds Maintenance contracts and continued to work with our partners on environmental improvement schemes in our estates. In 2022/23 we planted over 11,490 native trees and whips.

Repair service in 2022



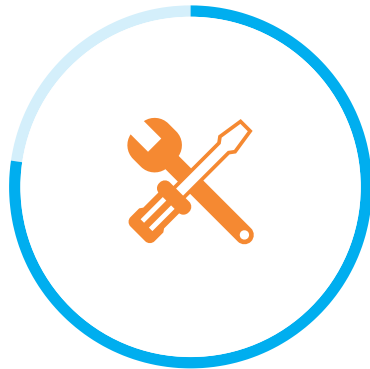
66%

of you reported a repair in the 12 months prior to being surveyed
68% in 2021 ↓ 2 percentage point decrease



84%

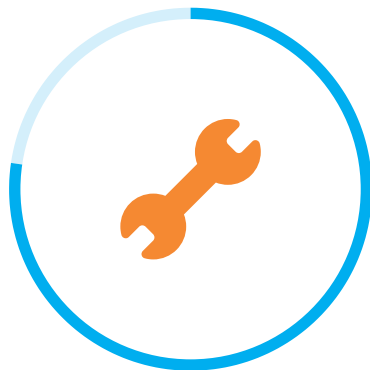
of you said the work was carried out within the timescale advised
86% in 2021 ↓ 2 percentage point decrease



78%

of you who requested a repair had at least one repair **fully completed** in the 12 months prior to being surveyed
83% in 2021 ↓ 5 percentage point decrease

*The following relates to those of you who had at least one repair **fully completed** in the 12 months prior to being surveyed:*



79%

of you said the repair was completed on the first visit
78% in 2021 ↑ 1 percentage point increase

In 2022 at least **9 in 10**

of you were satisfied with repair work done and with those who carried out the work in terms of: Speed, Quality of work, Quality of materials, Tidiness, Politeness, Friendliness

Repair service in 2022



93%

of you were satisfied with how we had managed the repair
93% in 2021
same as previous year



90%

of you were satisfied with how the contractor had carried out the work
93% in 2021
↓ 3 percentage point decrease



83%

of you who had a repair completed in the 12 months prior to being surveyed were satisfied with the repairs service
87% in 2021
↓ 4 percentage point decrease

Overall

10%

of you were dissatisfied with our repair service.

The main reasons were:

- Repairs not completed on time
- Poor workmanship or repairs not done properly/repairs take too long

What are we doing?

- In 2022/23 we invested £130.9 million in stock investment and adaptations. We also spent over £87.4 million on response maintenance.
- We are working in partnership with our contractors to help manage cost inflation, labour and supply issues causing pressures in the construction industry.
- We continue to ensure that we offer customers appointments at a range of times that suit them.
- We continued to progress our DLO “Evolve” Project to ensure a focused, efficient, and effective service planned and response maintenance service.

Tenant consultation & communication in 2022



70%

of you said you were satisfied that we listen to your views and act upon them
73% in 2021
 ↓ 3 percentage point decrease



72%

of you said you had been well consulted by the Housing Executive
75% in 2021
 ↓ 3 percentage point decrease



73%

of you felt the Housing Executive was good at keeping you informed about things that might affect you as a tenant
78% in 2021
 ↓ 5 percentage point decrease

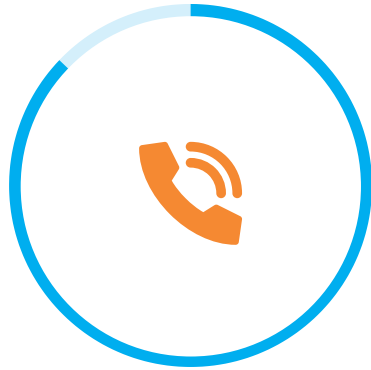
12%

of you said you had been poorly consulted due to lack of communication or no consultation at all.

What are we doing?

- We completed research with our tenants and community groups to identify areas for improvement for tenant participation and communication, which will help shape how we communicate and consult with customers.
- We started to develop our new Community Involvement Strategy, in partnership with our customer representatives.
- We developed our online Collaboration Portal to support our community representatives to engage with us digitally, including appointment of a Digital Engagement Officer through Supporting Communities.
- Our Housing Community Network continues to be a key source of reflecting customer views on matters such as strategy development, contract procurement, service delivery and customer communication.
- We worked with our Central Housing Forum customer representatives on a number of Working Groups and Task and Finish Groups, including Welfare Reform, Disabled Adaptations and Social Clauses.
- We continued to meet and work with our Rural Resident's Forum.

Contacting us in 2022



66% of you had contacted us by telephone in the 12 months prior to interview

88%

of you were satisfied with the telephone contact
91% in 2021,
↓ 3 percentage point decrease



4% of you visited a local office in the 12 months prior to interview

86%

of you were satisfied with the visit
90% in 2021
↓ 4 percentage point decrease



31% of you had received a home visit by a member of staff in the 12 months prior to interview

84%

of you were satisfied with the home visit
86% in 2021
↓ 2 percentage point decrease

What we are doing?

- We continue to invest in our telephony infrastructure to handle up to 90,000 calls per month and ensure customers get to the correct office automatically.
- In 2022 we were able to lift the final operational restrictions following the Covid pandemic and increased the services available face to face. We continue to operate appointments systems for customers to visit our offices at times that suit them.

86%

of those who visited a local office were seen in less than 15 minutes (88 respondents)

96%

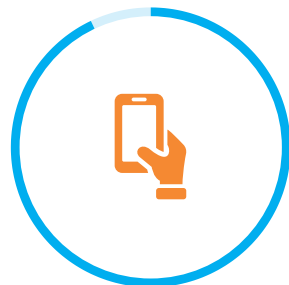
of you felt that staff dealt with you in a courteous manner when phoning the Housing Executive

Digital inclusion in 2022



67%

of you had access to the internet
72% in 2021
 ↓ 5 percentage point decrease



93%

of you owned a mobile phone
93% in 2021
 same as previous year



73%

of households with no members with long term illness or disability had access to the internet



64%

of households with at least one member with long term illness or disability had access to the internet



71%

of households with **adults** had access to the internet



91%

of households with **children** had access to the internet



44%

of households with **older** tenants had access to the internet

66% mainly access the internet via a smartphone

What we are doing?

- We participate in a number of programmes to enable digital inclusion amongst our customers and community including PEACE IV and ONSIDE projects.
- We continued to work with our Digital Inclusion Working Group as part of our Housing Community Network partnership. This identifies key actions and information to increase our digital capacity and engagement with customers.
- We developed our online Collaboration Portal so that community groups could engage with us digitally and appointed a Digital Engagement Officer through Supporting

Communities to support our customer representatives to engage with us digitally.

- Our Social media team continues to play an important role in providing up to date information for customers.
- As more and more of our customers become digitally enabled we:
 - are reviewing the content of our website to ensure it remains relevant and accessible for our customers.
 - continue to encourage uptake and use of our Customer Portal as a key method to allow customers to engage with us 24/7, at a time that suits them. We have developed our Customer Portal services to meet customer's needs and supported performance improvements to ensure a quality service.

Client Response 2022

CTOS Summary Report

The annual CTOS provides the Housing Executive with a comprehensive socio-economic profile of our tenants and their views and attitudes about the services we provide. The Survey is invaluable in providing management with a measurement of customer satisfaction across various areas of our business. This can be tracked over time and used to assess the quality of services and identify good practice or areas for improvement.

The Survey provides a wealth of information which ensures we can monitor the profile and needs of our tenants on an ongoing basis. This allows us to identify priorities and develop and tailor our services to those needs. The Survey also allows us to gather data where we identify emerging evidence needs.

Overall Satisfaction levels:

Overall levels of satisfaction with service provided by the Housing Executive dropped to 78% (84% in 2021). Satisfaction decreased to 83% (87% in 2021) for customers who had a repair completed. Tenant satisfaction with the quality of their home also dropped to 79% (85% in 2021).

While these drops in satisfaction are understandable in light of the challenging operational environment, particularly with our partners in the construction industry, it is nonetheless disappointing. Work is underway across the organisation to monitor and address these issues and improve customer satisfaction.

2022 was a challenging year in terms of customer service delivery. The most significant impact was on our repairs service, as the Housing Executive worked with our contractor partners to manage the pressures seen in the construction industry, including the impacts of cost inflation and resource and supply chain issues. This resulted in us releasing 10 of our 13 contractors from planned maintenance contracts, which delayed delivery of planned maintenance schemes. However, we developed plans to re-procure swiftly and to re-tender works within the year, to permit ongoing delivery of works where this was possible. In addition, a number of our Areas were impacted by a significant period of industrial action which ended in March 2023, and we will continue to progress addressing the backlog of works as swiftly as possible.

Satisfaction that rent offered value for money dropped to 85% (89% in 2021). This is likely impacted by the ongoing challenges with repairs and planned maintenance. However, overall it remains very positive to see that the vast majority of our tenants feel that their rent provides value for money and see the value of the ongoing investment in their homes and communities.

In relation to tenants' views on the size of their property, the vast majority of respondents (85%) felt their home was just the right size, compared to 84% in 2021. Twelve per cent (the same as in 2021) felt their home was too small, while only 3% (4% in 2021) felt their home was too big. This contrasts with our own estimate that around one-third of our tenants

would face a shortfall in their rental income should Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC) mitigation end. We therefore welcome the ongoing continuation of mitigation measures in Northern Ireland to assist tenants in sustaining tenancies and meeting their rental charges.

Tenants continued to move to Universal Credit throughout 2022/23 with 5,000 doing so, bringing the caseload to 29,822 at the end of March 2023. We have continued to carry out significant work to prepare our tenants and staff for Universal Credit and the Survey provides valuable information to shape this work. With the move to Universal Credit, we continue to focus on ensuring our tenants are prepared and to support them with a focus on budgeting, banking and being online. The dedicated Welfare Benefits Unit within Housing Services continues to support tenants and staff. We are witnessing the significant impact of our Financial Inclusion Managers and the benefits they bring to customers. They received 2,237 referrals from front-line staff in 2022/23 and were able to generate additional potential benefit entitlement of approximately £1.325 million for customers. For low-income families such interventions can make a substantial difference. We continue to promote our usage of our Benefit and Budgeting calculator by staff and customers. This indicates benefits which a customer may be entitled to and helps them to create a household budget.

Access to the internet has decreased in the last year with 67% of all households (72% in 2021) having access to the internet. This remains low compared to the NISRA 2022/23 Northern Ireland figure of 90% (89% in 2021/22) and the gap has increased since 2021. It is useful to note that the majority of younger households are enabled, with 91% of households with children having internet access. There was a drop across all age cohorts; 88% (100% in 2021) of households with a HRP aged between 16 and 25 have internet access, 88% of those with a HRP between 25 and 44 (91% in 2021) and 74% (78% in 2021) of those with a HRP between 45 and 59 are internet enabled. These differences are important to note as welfare changes, including the shift to digital delivery, primarily affect those of working age.

Questions were also included to capture respondents' ownership of an email address; again, this showed a drop to 45% from 55% in 2021. Email usage was highest among households with a HRP aged between 16-24 years, with around 87% in this cohort having an address and 75% of those HRPs aged 25-44. We will continue to monitor the data to assess if this reduction in digital inclusion is an emerging trend, and to assess responses if this is the case.

This evidence is useful in shaping and targeting our approach with tenants while also preparing for future needs. We will continue to monitor these figures as Universal Credit rolls out and use them to understand and shape our approach to digital services, including the ongoing development of our Customer Portal.

Financial Inclusion Insights:

The Survey asked if tenants had any difficulty making their rent payment during the 12 months before the interview. Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) reported they were in receipt of full Housing Benefit or full Universal Credit Housing Costs and therefore were not subject to rent payments, and a further 30% indicated that they had not experienced any difficulty in paying their rent during the previous year (33% in 2021). The proportion of all tenants who said they had experienced difficulty in paying their rent in the past 12 months remains relatively small at 5%. This represents a small decrease from the previous year's figure of 6%. Given the changing economic environment, we will continue to monitor this closely and factor this into considerations of affordability and support offered to tenants.

When we separate out those who did pay rent, in addition to or instead of benefit coverage, the figure who experienced difficulty is 14% (the same as in 2021). This indicates particular challenges for this group of tenants in relation to tenancy sustainment, financial inclusion and maximisation of rental collection for this group. We will monitor the situation and develop appropriate responses as it evolves.

These findings do highlight the importance of the continued role of services such as Making Your Money Work, Financial Inclusion Officers and the Benefit and Budgeting calculator and the investment we make in them.

Of those who reported difficulty in paying their rent, 26% reported that the reason for this was a change in personal circumstances, and 13% each reported unexpected other bills and illness as the reasons. We will monitor the situation and ensure that support is available to those customers who need it, through the range of services highlighted above.

Tenant Involvement & Consultation insights:

The Survey also provides important insight into the area of tenant involvement, consultation, and communication. Almost three-quarters of respondents (72%, 75% in 2021) felt they were well consulted by the Housing Executive, and almost three-quarters of respondents (70%, 73% in 2021) were satisfied that the Housing Executive listens to their views and acts upon them. It is encouraging to see high levels of satisfaction with standards of contact and consultation with customers, but we will be evaluating how we can address the small drops in satisfaction in this regard. The Housing Executive is committed to prioritising customer focus throughout the organisation.

We will continue to develop our Community Involvement framework and work with over 300 community groups across Northern Ireland through our Housing Community Network, ensuring they have a real voice at every level of our organisation. We continue to invest in our Housing Community Network to give tenants a voice, to help shape our services, strategies, and plans. For example, our Central Housing Forum plays a crucial role at the heart of policy development and decision making at organisational level. At local level,

Area Housing Community Networks work closely with local offices to scrutinise performance and service delivery standards.

A number of the questions reveal a particular challenge in awareness levels and engagement with young people and families. Younger household groups showed slightly lower satisfaction that the Housing Executive listens to their views - approximately 51% in the 16-24 and 63% in the 25-44 age bracket compared to over 78% of those aged 65 and over.

We look forward to implementing the findings of our recent Tenant Participation research, where we asked tenants and community representatives about how they wanted to be involved with us, and how we could best communicate with them and keep them informed. This included exploration of the possibility of exploring online forums and digital consumer panels as potential ways of increasing connectivity with younger groups. We are aiming to make involvement as quick and easy as possible for people who wish to engage in these ways. These findings will feed into the ongoing development of our new Community Involvement Strategy, to ensure that we support our customers to make their voices heard so that we can shape our services around their needs.

We continue to encourage tenants and their representatives to become actively involved and participate in decisions about our housing services through the ongoing delivery of the Community Involvement Strategy. We continue to make engagement as wide and as representative as possible through our partnerships with the LBGTQ+ community, Disability Forum, Youth Forum, Rural Forum, and our Strategic Cohesion Group.

Tenant Communication & Digital Inclusion insights:

Almost three-quarters (73%, 78% in 2021) of respondents felt the Housing Executive was good at keeping them informed about things that might affect them as a tenant. The main method by which respondents want to get in touch with the Housing Executive remains by telephone (84% of respondents, 91% in 2021) and we continue to invest in improving our telephony service. Improvements include the introduction of Caller Telephony Integration, which identifies and routes customers correctly based on their phone number, making service delivery quicker. Satisfaction with telephone contact remains very high at 88% (91% in 2021).

Interest in other methods of contact is growing and we will continue to consider service delivery in light of this. Over a quarter of tenants (27%) would be happy to be kept informed by email (25% in 2021). To embrace this increased willingness for email contact both the Housing Executive and our customers can now send and track electronic messages through our Tenant Portal.

In 2022, we saw a drop to 67% (72% in 2021) of all households who had access to the internet, a decrease of 5 percentage points. This indicates that the gap between Housing

Executive tenants and wider society is widening after a period of narrowing (the NI figure of 90% increased by 1 percentage points between 2021 and 2022). We will continue to work to narrow this gap by continuing to support our tenants to become more digitally included by developing their confidence, skills and knowledge to access and use online services. We will make our own digital services as easy and efficient to use as possible. We will also continue to increase the engagement of hard-to-reach groups by providing digital support through our various digital programmes including our Central Housing Forum Digital Inclusion Working Group. This group gives participants the opportunity to gain new skills and to engage at a pace that suits them. We will continue to support our 'HCN membership' who provide a key service in supporting tenants, residents and leaseholders to develop their digital skills, and recently appointed a Digital Engagement Officer through Supporting Communities to facilitate the development of this work.


We are developing the online delivery of advice and services for customers who prefer to make use of digital services, particularly thinking of the higher numbers of younger household groups with internet access who may wish to use this service channel. The Housing Executive invested in a new, mobile friendly website in 2019, to reflect that mobile/smartphone was still respondents' main method of accessing the internet (66%, 70% in 2021). Ongoing website development and content review demonstrates our commitment to enabling online transactions and improving digital communications with tenants, where they wish to do so. The number of respondents who had accessed services through the website remained fairly steady, with one quarter of all respondents having done so (25%, 23% in 2021).

User and transaction numbers on the Customer Portal continue to grow with around 17,000 users by the end of March 2023. The Customer Portal is an important service development to empower tenants who wish to carry out transactions online including self-servicing rent accounts, reporting repairs, updating their details and sending a message. We are continuing to explore ways to increase usage and improve the customer experience when using the Customer Portal. This includes publicity videos, ongoing development of bulk messaging to keep customers informed, and developing functionality to allow customers to send us photos of repairs. We also continue to monitor our internal standards of service for responding to Customer Portal transactions, to ensure continued delivery of a high-quality service. Performance is high with over 90% of transactions being actioned within target timeframes.

Overall access to the internet and email is highest amongst our younger households and households with children. We will continue to reflect these societal changes in the way we offer our services.

To discuss or comment on this document,
or to request an alternative format,
please contact:

CTOS Team
The Research Unit
Housing Executive
2 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8PB

 03448 920 900

 shauna.mulgrew@nihe.gov.uk

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Executive

nihe.gov.uk
   