

# RURAL TENANTS BEARING BRUNT OF GROWING PRIVATE SECTOR RENTS

## ABOUT THE TDS CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The TDS Charitable Foundation works to advance education on housing rights and obligations in the private rented sector in general, especially in regard to:

- Best practice in the management of private rented housing.
- Legal rights and obligations of those involved in the provision or management of private rented housing.
- Using alternative dispute resolution for more efficient and effective resolution of disputes between landlords and tenants.

We are funded mainly by donations from The Dispute Service – the leading Tenancy Deposit Scheme which operates on a non-profit basis across the UK.

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Voice of the Tenant Survey is a national survey funded by the TDS Charitable Foundation. It looks at people's experience of living in the English private rented sector (PRS) and is repeated every six months with a new sample of over 2,000 tenants who are representative of those living in the PRS. This briefing provides details of the latest survey, conducted in September 2023.

The data in this survey is intended to inform debate and support evidence-based policy making in respect of the private rented sector.

The full results of the survey can be accessed [here](#).



## TENANTS UNDER FINANCIAL STRAIN

In the past year, tenants reported an average increase of **17%** in the cost of their rent, with a more pronounced increase of **27%** in rural areas.

Although **68%** of tenants said that they would like to become homeowners, **35%** say that they expect to be renters most of their life.

Almost **one-third** of tenants said it was difficult or very difficult to afford the rent each month. Over **40%** of both student tenants and tenants who are subject to the Local Housing Allowance freeze are struggling to pay the rent.

Currently **14%** of all tenants are in rent arrears, and this figure increases to **42%** among those who find it difficult or very difficult to afford the rent.



Over half (**52%**) of all tenants said they regularly made cutbacks on household essentials such as food, heating and clothing in order to pay the rent. **40%** said they were struggling to afford utility bills.

**52%** of all tenants said it was difficult to find a suitable property.



**82%** of those who moved into a private rental property in the past six months reported experiencing one or more challenges in securing a suitable property. Of note, **48%** struggled to find anywhere affordable.

## LANDLORD-TENANT RELATIONSHIPS

**47%** of tenants rent via a letting agent, and 53% rent directly from their landlord.

Over **40%** of all tenants said that they worry they could be asked to leave their homes at any time, whilst just **50%** feel secure from eviction.

Most tenants (**70%**) enjoy positive relationships with their landlord or letting agent.



**75%** rate the condition of their property as "good" or "acceptable".



**87%** of tenants had reported a repair issue or maintenance concern, of which **78%** said it was either fully or partially addressed.

Whilst **38%** of tenants have pets in their property, **28%** of pet owners said finding a landlord that permits pets was a challenge when searching for their current rental property.



## TENANT AWARENESS OF THE RENTERS (REFORM) BILL

Just **17%** of tenants are aware of planned reforms to the PRS in the Renters (Reform) Bill, with **83%** unaware of it and its proposals.

**60%** of tenants agreed that ending section 21 would impart a sense of stability, while **40%** agreed that its removal would make them more inclined to engage with the new ombudsman for the private rented sector.

For further information, please contact Dr Jennifer Harris, Head of Policy, Research and Strategy at TDS Group by emailing [jennifer.harris@tdsgroup.uk](mailto:jennifer.harris@tdsgroup.uk).