



CONTINUOUS TENANT OMNIBUS SURVEY 2023

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.

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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 2023. 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 2023 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

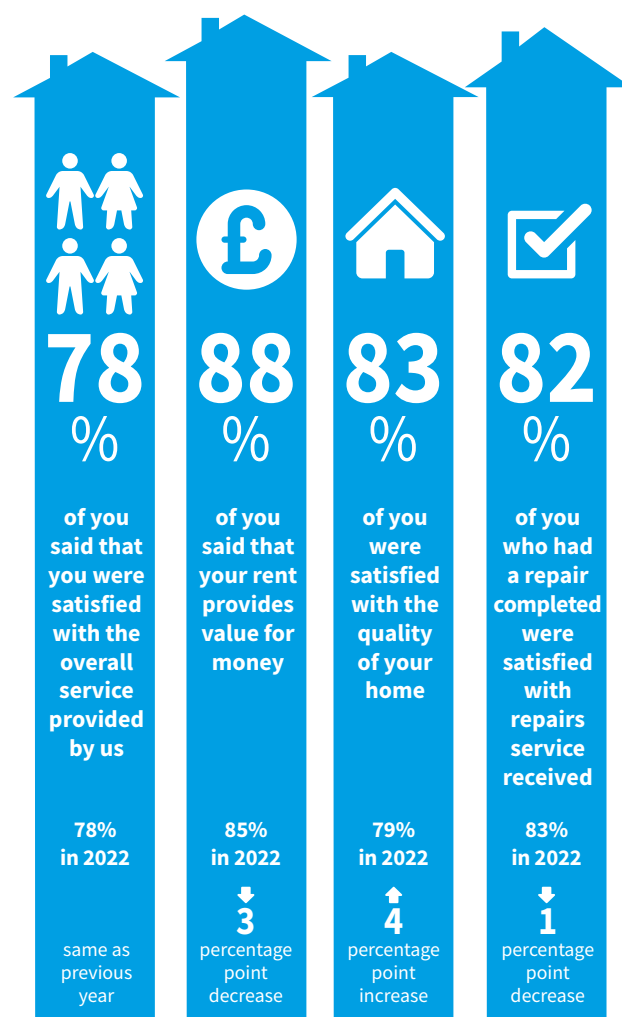
This report sets out feedback from you and relates to the following:

- 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 2023



78%

of you said that you were satisfied
with the overall service provided by us
78% in 2022
same as previous year



88%

of you said that your rent provides
value for money
85% in 2022
↑ 3 percentage point increase

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.
- In 2023 we raised our tenants' rents for the third time in eight years. The new rent level will improve our ability to invest in our stock and has considered the rate of inflation and rising costs for goods and materials.
- 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 identify and contact tenants having trouble paying their rent and make sure that they receive all the expert advice and assistance they need.
- The Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-28 was approved in June 2023. It builds on the success of the previous strategy and aims to embed financial inclusion in as many customer focused services as possible. The Housing Services Financial Inclusion team was expanded in January 2023 enabling us to deliver more financial inclusion interventions than ever.

Your home & neighbourhood in 2023

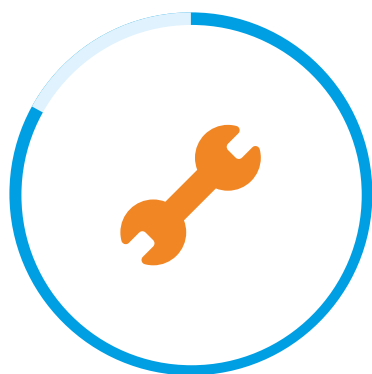


83%

of you were satisfied with the
quality of your home

79% in 2022

⬆ 4 percentage point increase



82%

of you said you were satisfied with the
general condition of your property

78% in 2022

⬆ 4 percentage point increase



85%

of you said you think your home
is just the right size

85% in 2022

same as previous year

In 2023
there were:

81,580

approx. occupied properties

160,047

approx. household members

Your home & neighbourhood in 2023



90%

of you were satisfied
with your neighbourhood
90% in 2022
same as previous year



73%

of you were proud of the
general image of your area
75% in 2022
↓ 2 percentage point decrease

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?

- Our Tenancy Sustainment Action Plan team has been progressing a number of work streams to tackle threats to tenancy sustainability and resilience. The Sustaining Tenancies Funding Program was renewed for 2023-25 and will award £3.1 million in projects to foster happy, healthy and resilient tenancies and communities.
- We continue to deliver our Community Safety Strategy which works to address Anti-Social Behavior (ASB) in our estates. In 2023/24 we responded to 1,534 reports of alleged ASB. Almost £600k was awarded to a range of voluntary and community groups to partner with councils to address community safety issues in our estates. We are committed to tackling ASB in all forms, through investment in divisionary schemes and taking appropriate action against perpetrators. Plans to build on the success of the current strategy are outlined in the new Community Safety Strategy Building Safer Communities Together 2025-2030 due to be launched in early 2025.
- We continued to roll out Action Plans for our range of 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. A new Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy was co-designed during 2023/24 in partnership with the Central Housing Forum which was launched in October 2024 after a 12-week public consultation.
- We will continue to work with Ground Maintenance partners on environmental improvements schemes in our estates. In 2023/24 we planted 7,557 native trees and whips. Grounds Maintenance were successfully awarded new Grounds Maintenance and Tree Surgery contracts to commence in 2024. Our new contracts will positively impact the local economy as we now have an increased number of contractors providing these services.

Repair service in 2023



65%

of you reported a repair in the 12 months
prior to being surveyed
66% in 2022 ↓ 1 percentage point decrease



86%

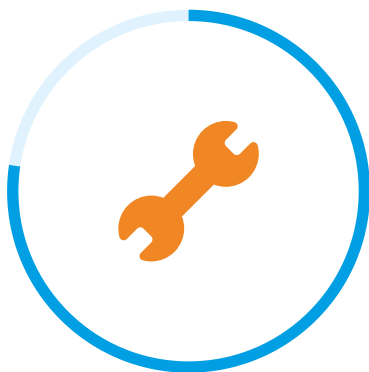
of you said the work was carried out
within the timescale advised
84% in 2022 ↑ 2 percentage point increase



76%

of you who requested a repair had at least one repair
fully completed in the 12 months prior to being
surveyed
78% in 2022 ↓ 2 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
79% in 2022
same as previous year

**In 2023
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 2023



89%

of you were satisfied with how we had managed the repair

93% in 2022

↓ 4 percentage point decrease



90%

of you were satisfied with how the contractor had carried out the work

90% in 2022

same as previous year



82%

of you who had a repair completed in the 12 months prior to being surveyed were satisfied with the repairs service

83% in 2022

↓ 1 percentage point decrease

Overall

11%

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 2023/24 we invested £209.1 million in our stock via planned, cyclical and response maintenance activities.
- We are working in partnership with our contractors to help manage cost inflation, and 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 planned and response maintenance service. We initiated an apprenticeship programme where 18 individuals of all ages undertook apprenticeships in Plumbing, Electrical and Joinery.

Tenant consultation & communication in 2023



75%

of you said you were satisfied that we listen to your views and act upon them
70% in 2022
 ⬆ 5 percentage point increase



75%

of you said you had been well consulted by the Housing Executive
72% in 2022
 ⬆ 3 percentage point increase



77%

of you felt the Housing Executive was good at keeping you informed about things that might affect you as a tenant
73% in 2022
 ⬆ 4 percentage point increase

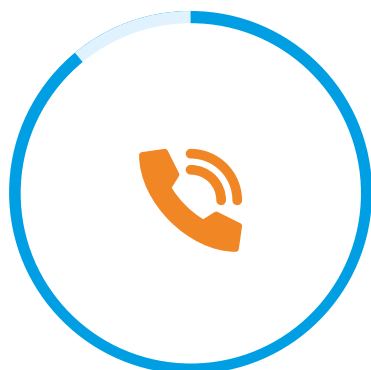
13%

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

What are we doing?

- The development and launch of our new Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy was completed in 2024. A pre-consultation took place with community groups from the Housing Community Network and further afield to include tenants who are involved in other Community and Voluntary Groups.
- We continued to deliver services through our online Collaboration Portal to support our community representatives in engaging with us digitally.
- 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 continued to meet and work with our Rural Resident's Forum, Youth Forum and Disability Forum.
- We worked with our Central Housing Forum customer representatives on several Working Groups and Task and Finish Groups.

Contacting us in 2023



71% of you had contacted us by telephone in the 12 months prior to interview

87%

of you were satisfied with the telephone contact

88% in 2022

↓ 1 percentage point decrease



6% of you visited a local office in the 12 months prior to interview

89%

of you were satisfied with the visit

86% in 2022

↑ 3 percentage point increase



28% of you had received a home visit by a member of staff in the 12 months prior to interview

82%

of you were satisfied with the home visit

84% in 2022

↓ 2 percentage point decrease

What we are doing?

- We continue to invest in our telephony infrastructure and information technology to ensure we consistently develop the customer experience. To accommodate our ever-changing userbase we also promote digital forms of contact including the Customer Portal and social media allowing the customer to contact us at a time which suits them.
- Face to face contact has returned to normal following the pandemic with nearly 75,000 customers visiting our offices in 2023 with a high percentage experiencing a timely and courteous service.

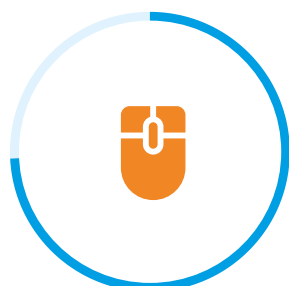
94%

of those who visited a local office were seen in less than 15 minutes

95%

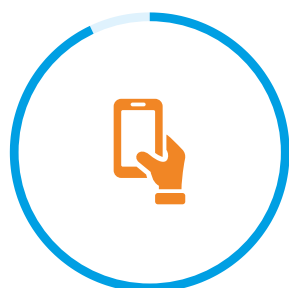
of you felt that staff dealt with you in a courteous manner when phoning the Housing Executive

Digital inclusion in 2023



75%

of you had access to the internet
67% in 2022
 ↑ 8 percentage point increase

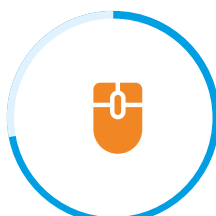


93%

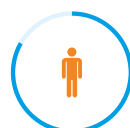
of you owned a mobile phone
93% in 2022
 same as previous year



80%
 of households with
 no members with long term
 illness or disability had
 access to the internet



72%
 of households with at least
 one member with long term
 illness or disability had
 access to the internet



81% of households with
adults had access to
 the internet



94% of households with
children had access
 to the internet



51% of households
 with **older** tenants
 had access to the
 internet

 **75%** mainly access the internet via a smartphone

What we are doing?

- 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 continued the use of our online Collaboration Portal to enable community groups to engage with us digitally.
- Our Social Media team continues to play an important role in providing up to date information for customers.
- Reviewing the content of our website is an ongoing process to ensure it remains relevant and accessible for our customers.
- We continue to encourage uptake and use of our Customer Portal as a key method to allow customers to engage with us. It is a 24/7 service and so allows customer to make contact at a time that suits them.

Client Response 2023

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 measure 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 remained at 78% (78% in 2022). Satisfaction levels decreased to 82% (83% in 2022) for customers who had a repair completed. However, tenant satisfaction with the quality of their home encouragingly increased to 83% (79% in 2022).

2023 continued to be a challenging year in terms of customer service delivery, particularly for our repairs service. Ongoing challenges experienced in some key operational areas impacted satisfaction with repairs. Contributors to this include issues relating to transitions in contract delivery, contractor backlogs, ongoing impacts of industrial action, resource and supply chain issues, and delays in planned maintenance works placing greater pressure upon response maintenance. Work is underway across the organisation to monitor and address these issues and improve customer satisfaction.

Satisfaction that rent provides value for money increased to 88% (85% in 2022). It is positive to see this increase in satisfaction and 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, most respondents (85%) felt their home was just the right size. 11% felt their home was too small, while only 3% 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 continuation of mitigation measures in Northern Ireland to assist tenants in sustaining tenancies and meeting their rental charges.

Throughout 2023/24, tenants continued to naturally migrate from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit. In October 2023, the Department for Communities began the managed migration of Tax Credit customers in Northern Ireland to Universal Credit. As a result, towards the end of the financial year, we saw an uplift in the number of tenants not previously in receipt of help with their housing costs. Throughout 2023/24, we verified nearly 6,000 tenancies to Universal Credit for help with housing costs - an increase of 1,000 cases on the year. The active UC caseload in payment at the end of March 2024 was 23,900.

Throughout the 2023/24 financial year, we 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. 2023 continued to see the significant impact of our Financial Inclusion Managers and the benefit they provide to our customers. There was an 91% increase in referrals from front line staff in 2023/24 totaling 4,267 referrals (2237 in 2022/23). They were able to generate additional potential benefit entitlement of approximately £1.8 million. For low-income families, such interventions can make a substantial difference. We continue to promote the 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 increased in the last year with 75% of all households (67% in 2022) having access to the internet. Whilst this remains low compared to the NISRA 2022/23 Northern Ireland figure of 90%, it is useful to note that the majority of younger households are enabled, with 94% of households with children having internet access. There was an increase across all age cohorts; 94% (88% in 2022) of households with a HRP aged between 16 and 25 have internet access, 92% of those with a HRP between 25 and 44 (88% in 2022) and 86% (74% in 2022) of those with a HRP between 45 and 59 are internet enabled.

Questions were also included to capture respondents' ownership of an email address; again, this showed an increase to 52% from 45% in 2022. Email usage remains highest among households with a HRP aged between 16-24 years, with around 84% in this cohort having an address and 76% of those HRPs aged 25-44.

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. The number of registrations on the Customer Portal is steadily increasing month on month and by the end of March 2024 there were over 23,000 registered users.

Financial Inclusion Insights:

The Survey asked if tenants had any difficulty making their rent payment during the 12 months before the interview. 60% reported they were in receipt of full Housing Benefit (65% in 2022), and 18% were in receipt of full Universal Credit Housing Costs (14% in 2022) and therefore were not subject to rent payments. A further 30% indicated that they had not experienced any difficulty in paying their rent during the previous year (30% in 2022). The proportion of all tenants who said they had experienced difficulty in paying their rent in the past 12 months remains relatively small at 6%. This represents a small increase from the previous year's figure of 5%. We 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 receiving help to pay their housing costs, the figure who experienced difficulty increased to 16% (14% in 2022). This indicates challenges for this group of tenants in relation to tenancy sustainment, financial inclusion and maximisation of rental collection. Both our Making Your Money Work service (delivered by frontline staff) and the Financial Inclusion team target help and support towards those who fall into this category. We continue to monitor the situation and tailor our response as the economic situation evolves.

These findings highlight the ongoing importance of services such as Making Your Money Work, Financial Inclusion Officers, the Benefit and Budgeting calculator, and the investment we make in them. Of those who reported difficulty in paying their rent, 45% reported that the reason for this was no entitlement to rates rebate. 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. Three-quarters of respondents (75%, 72% in 2022) felt they were well consulted by the Housing Executive, and three-quarters of respondents (75%, 70% in 2022) 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. The increase in satisfaction from 2022 reflects that the Housing Executive is committed to prioritising customer focus throughout the organisation.

Results from previous years revealed challenges in awareness levels and engagement with young people and families. Results from this year have shown improvement as there has been an increase in satisfaction with younger household groups that the Housing Executive listens to their views – 64% in the 16-24 (51% in 2022) and 68% (63% in 2022) in the 25-44 age bracket.

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, and to help shape our services, strategies, and plans.

Plans to support and encourage more tenant participation have been outlined in the newest Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy, which for the first time has merged the Community Involvement and Community Cohesion Strategies as a recommendation from the community. We continue to ensure that we support our customers to make their voices heard so that we can shape our services around their needs and make engagement as wide and representative as possible through our partnerships with the Disability Forum, Youth Forum, Rural Forum, and our Strategic Cohesion Group.

Tenant Communication & Digital Inclusion insights:

Over three-quarters (77%, 73% in 2022) 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 wanted to be kept informed and get in touch with the Housing Executive remains by telephone (89% and 80%, 84% and 75% in 2022) 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 87% (88% in 2022).

Interest in other methods of contact is growing, and we will continue to consider service delivery in light of this. The number of tenants who would be happy to be kept informed by email continues to increase (29%, 27% in 2022). The percentage of tenants who would be happy to be kept informed by writing decreased by 8% (60%, 68% in 2022). To embrace this increased willingness for email contact both the Housing Executive and our customers can send and track electronic messages through our Customer Portal. However, there was a significant decrease in the number of tenants who would be happy to be kept informed via the Customer Portal (6%, 13% in 2022) while the percentage of tenants who would be happy to be kept informed by telephone increased by 5% (89%, 84% in 2022). This question was asked of all respondents and therefore includes tenants who do not have access to internet, highlighting both the ongoing need for methods of contact that do not rely on internet access, and preference for personal and direct contact with staff when it comes to being kept informed.

In 2023, there was an increase of 8 percentage points to 75% (67% in 2022) of all households who had access to the internet. This indicates that the gap between Housing Executive tenants and wider society is narrowing after a 5% decrease in 2022 (the NI figure for 22/23 is 90%). 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 extend the Digital Engagement Officer through Supporting Communities to facilitate the development of this work.

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 with access to internet who had accessed services through the website decreased to 16% (25% in 2022) and 16% accessed services through the Customer Portal. Previous surveys only captured the number accessing services

through the website. The most used function on the Customer Portal is reporting a repair highlighting that tenants who have registered to the Customer Portal use it to access certain services, but as highlighted previously telephone contact is the preferred method for being kept informed by the Housing Executive. As the portal is a 24-hour service it allows customers to make contact at a time that suits them.

User and transaction numbers on the Customer Portal continue to grow with over 23,000 users at the end of March 2024. 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,
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