

## Houses in Multiple Occupation Survey 2021-22

The city council conducted a public survey between 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The purpose of this survey was to capture the views and experiences of people regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation. The survey was split to capture the views of three key groups: tenants, landlords and residents or local community groups.

### How the survey was run

As with any survey, there are limitations on the methods and data that it can provide. Officers from the City Council's Private Sector Housing (PSH) team worked to provide a survey that was accessible by as many people as possible, and that awareness of the survey was with as many people as possible who may realistically be considered as wanting to respond.

The survey was not mandatory, and was completed by those tenants, landlords and residents who wanted to complete it. This should be taken into consideration when considering the value of the responses given. It should also be considered that the survey outcomes are based upon the respondents and cannot necessarily be assumed to represent the whole population of the city, or even of tenants, landlords and residents living near HMOs.

The public survey was conducted in the following ways:

- An online survey promoted through the City Council's usual media and social media channels, as well as directly to key stakeholders, including landlords groups and the University.
- Open events held in community venues across the city to enable members of public to provide feedback in person.
- Targeted leaflet drops to key postcodes in the city with estimated high levels of relevant HMO properties.
- Targeted advertising to key audiences including seldom heard groups in Portsmouth.
- Posters advertising the survey set up in local community centres and libraries.

Drop-in events took place at four locations during the week commencing 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022 where members of the public could complete a paper survey and provide comment to council staff hosting the drop-in events. This feedback has been captured in this report.

The survey investigated the following themes:

HMO tenants:

- Actual and perceived safety within their HMO (may be the physical attribute of the property such as fire safety, or security).
- Actual and perceived problems of disrepair, and how their landlord deals with these issues.
- Perceived relationship with neighbours and other people living in the HMO.

- Duration and intention to use HMOs as a long term housing option and level of choice in housing.

#### Community:

- Experience of antisocial behaviour, noise, or waste issues which they believe are caused by a nearby HMO.
- Perceived relationships with HMO landlords and tenants.
- Ability to report problems caused by nearby HMOs.
- Were these issues being reported, and if so to who.

#### HMO landlords:

- Confidence in understanding their legal responsibilities as a HMO landlord.
- Where to seek advice on how to run their HMO safely and legally.
- Experiences operating a HMO.
- Views on what the council could do to support landlords.

Using various channels of marketing and communication the survey attracted 613 responses. Responses were gathered from:

"I live in an HMO" - 16.48%

"I own or manage an HMO" - 9.14%

"I am part of the wider community who lives or works near HMOs" - 74.39%

Unfortunately the survey had lower responses than expected. Nevertheless, this volume of responses ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 10%, based on estimated numbers of HMOs, landlords/property managers and residents or community groups in Portsmouth. This is within acceptable parameters and whilst a 10% margin of error should be applied to the responses received, these figures are still indicative of the respondent groups.

## Feedback from public drop-in events

As part of the public survey the City Council held a number of public drop in events, in order to allow those without access to the internet the ability to complete a paper survey and capture comments and experiences from member of the public regarding HMOs.

Four sessions in total were completed around Portsmouth. These drop-ins allowed officers from PSH to listen to comments from members of the public and build an understanding of typical themes regarding their concerns. These were:

- 1) Number of HMO's: The majority of members of the public that attended drop-in events said that there are too many HMO's in the city. In Southsea it was highlighted that some roads are 80% HMO properties and some people said they felt boxed in by them. Some residents that live in Southsea feel that more should be done by planning to remove the HMO status of a property once it is sold in areas with such a high density of HMO's.
- 2) HMO expansion: A number of residents raised concerns that many HMO's are increasing in size. They said that the smaller HMO properties have less impact on them compared with larger properties; due to more noise from the properties and more waste generated, which is often not stored or presented for collection correctly. Excessive building work was raised as an issue.
- 3) Parking: Some residents feel that the number of HMO properties impacts heavily on them being able to park due to more adults with cars sharing a property.
- 4) Noise: Some residents discussed issues of noise disturbance, mainly emanating from what they believed to be student properties. Comments regarding noise from car doors late at night, maintenance work taking place and the general living noise were described as having an impact on residents.
- 5) University: Residents expressed that they would like to see the University do more to educate students on how to live in a community and respond more proactively regarding complaints made.
- 6) Landlords: Some residents expressed a want for landlords to educate their tenants regarding noise and waste issues to reduce the impact on local residents.

The overall theme from these drop-in events concerned the volume of HMOs in particular parts of the city, with an emphasis on larger HMOs or HMOs undergoing development to house more occupants. Some difference could be observed in Southsea, where the number of students living in HMOs was a concern due to experiences with noise and parking.

Attendance at these drop-in events was mostly from local residents. However one landlord and one HMO tenant attended. One HMO tenant attended to express his positive experience of living in an HMO and having a good relationship with his landlord. One landlord that attended had a licenced HMO and expressed her positive relationship with her tenants. This landlord expressed a desire for the council to not

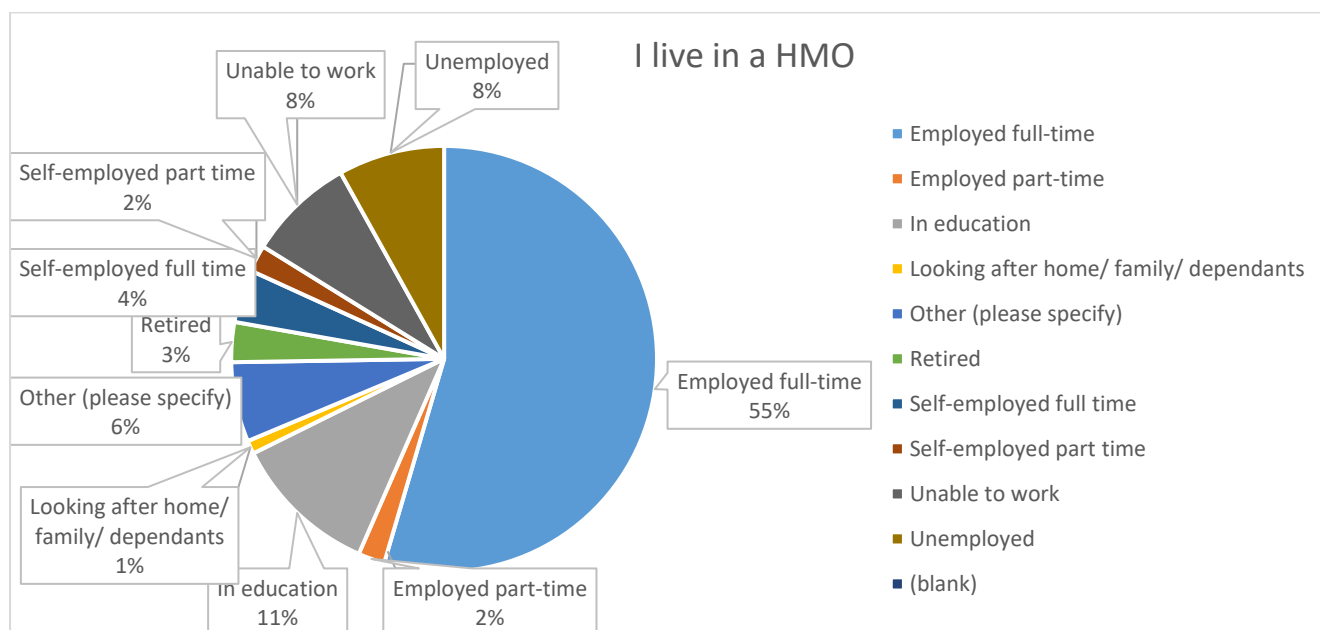
associate all landlords with "bad landlords" and pursue those that give a bad reputation.

## Shared Housing Survey Results

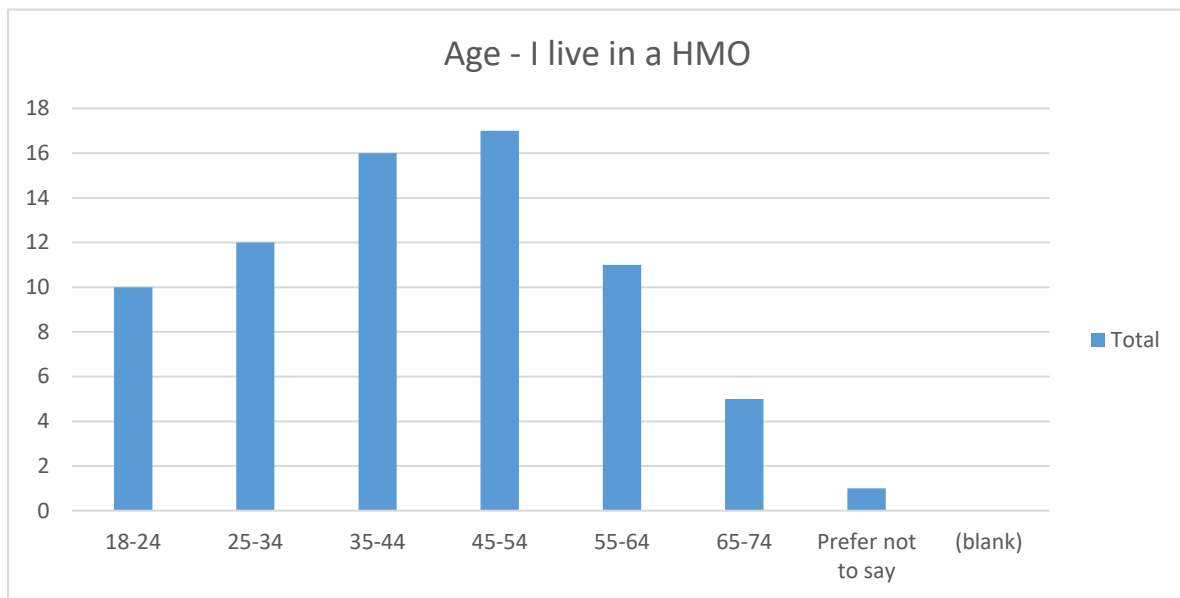
The results of this survey are summarised below into each respondent group, along with main conclusions and findings from this data.

### Part 1 - I live in an HMO: Data Summary

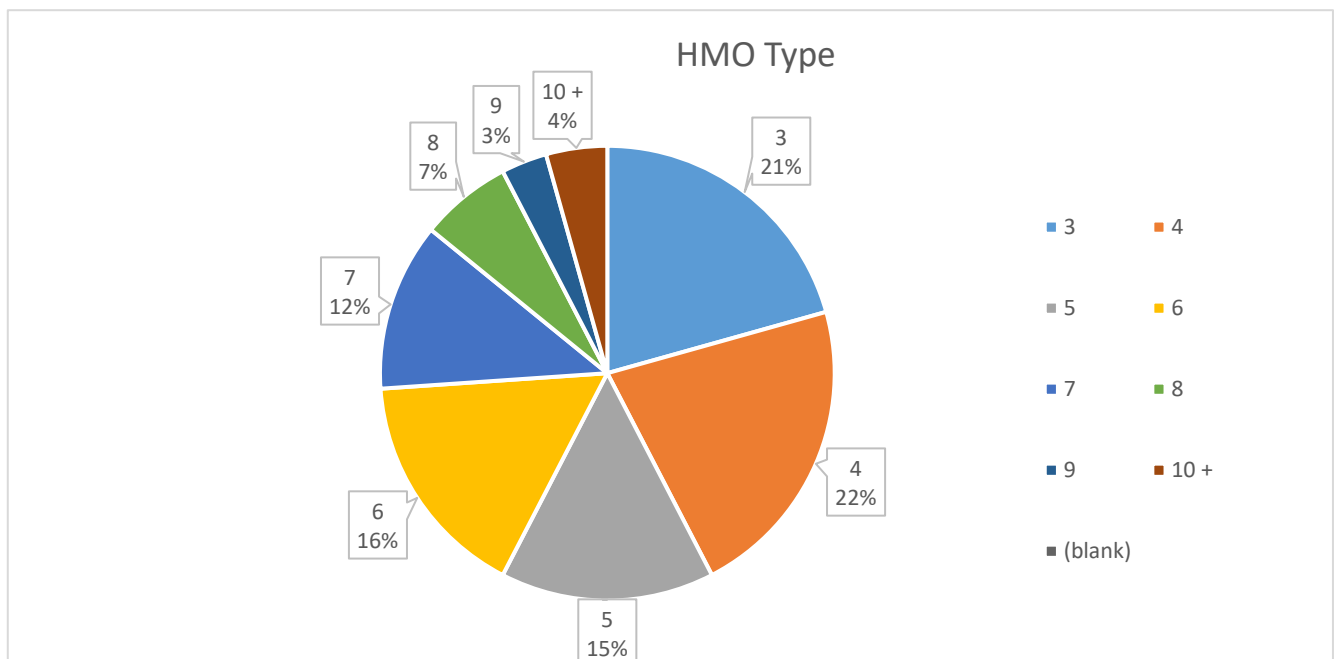
Demographics of respondents can be seen in the table below:



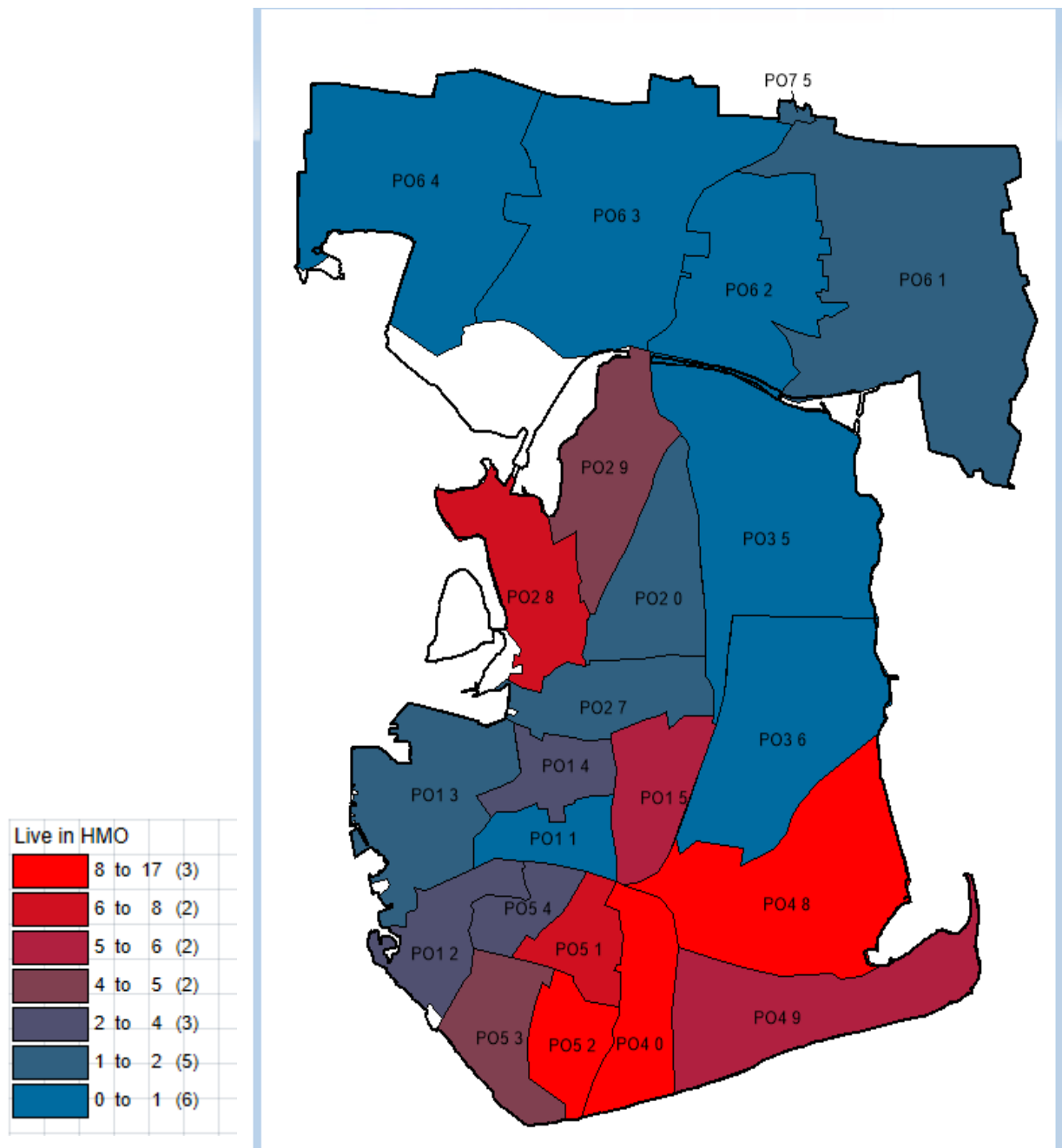
As seen above, the majority of respondents told the council they were in full time employment with the second largest single respondent group coming from those in education.



The demographics of those who responded to the survey show that 68% of tenants who responded were over the age of 35, with 15% between the ages of 55 and 64.

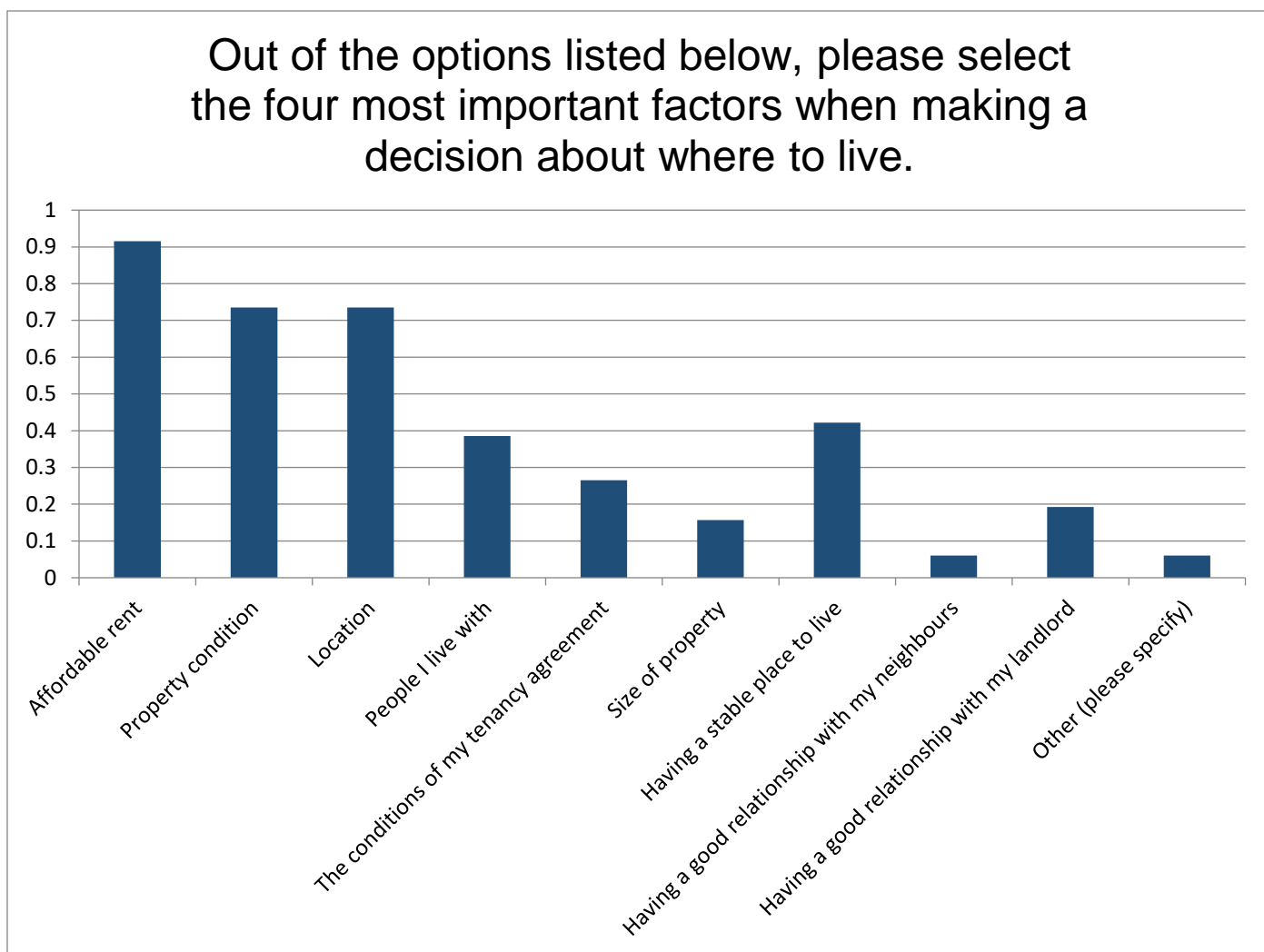


43% of respondents told the council that they lived in properties with fewer than 5 persons in total, falling outside the mandatory licensable HMO category. 73% of respondents told the council that they did not use Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to assist them with rent payments.



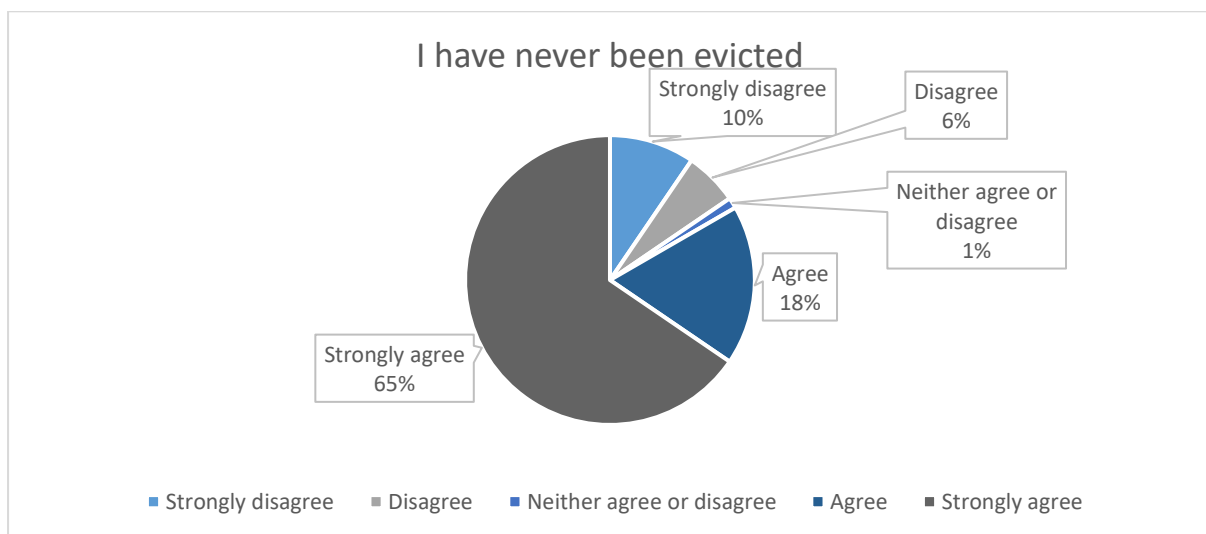
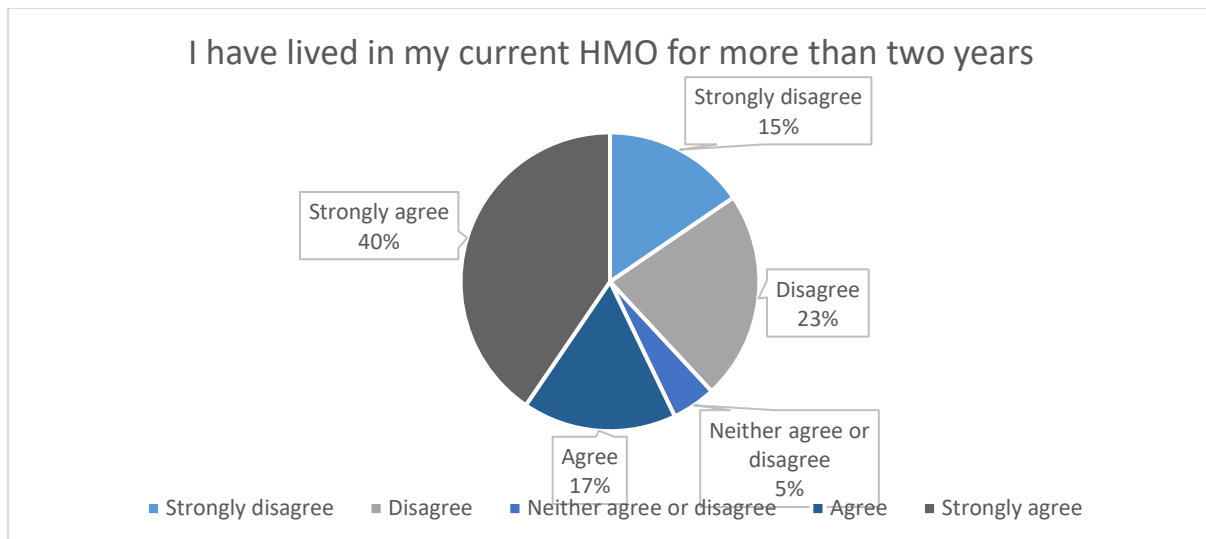
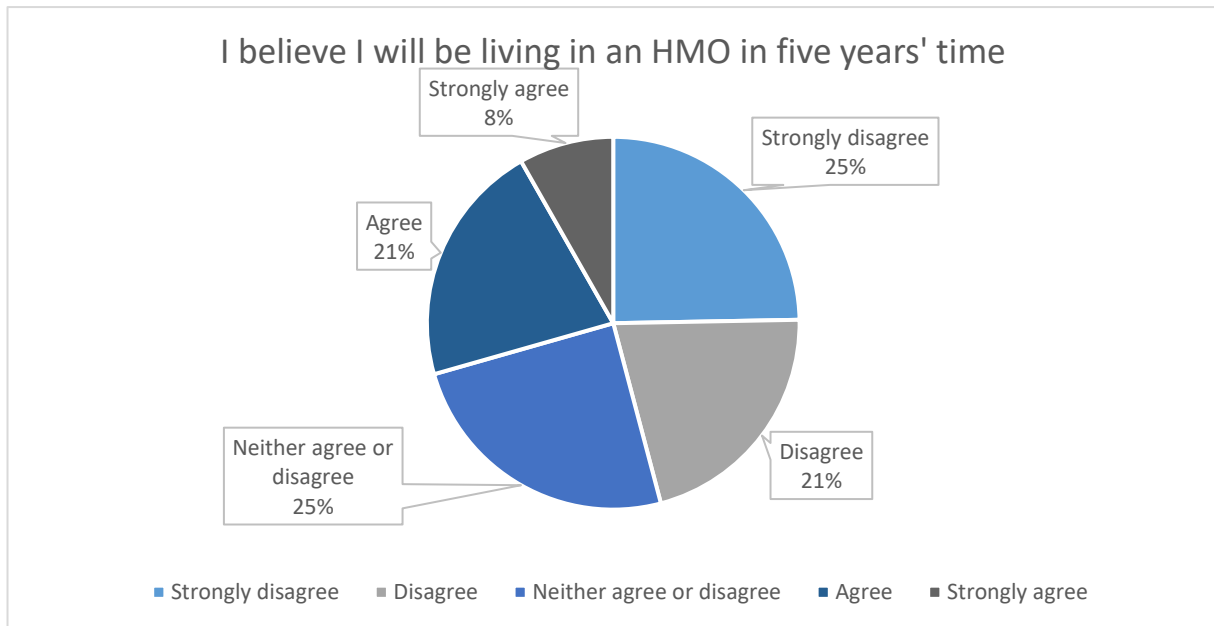
The above chart shows where the highest levels of responses to the surveys from tenants were, with the highest seen in some PO4, PO5 and PO2 areas.

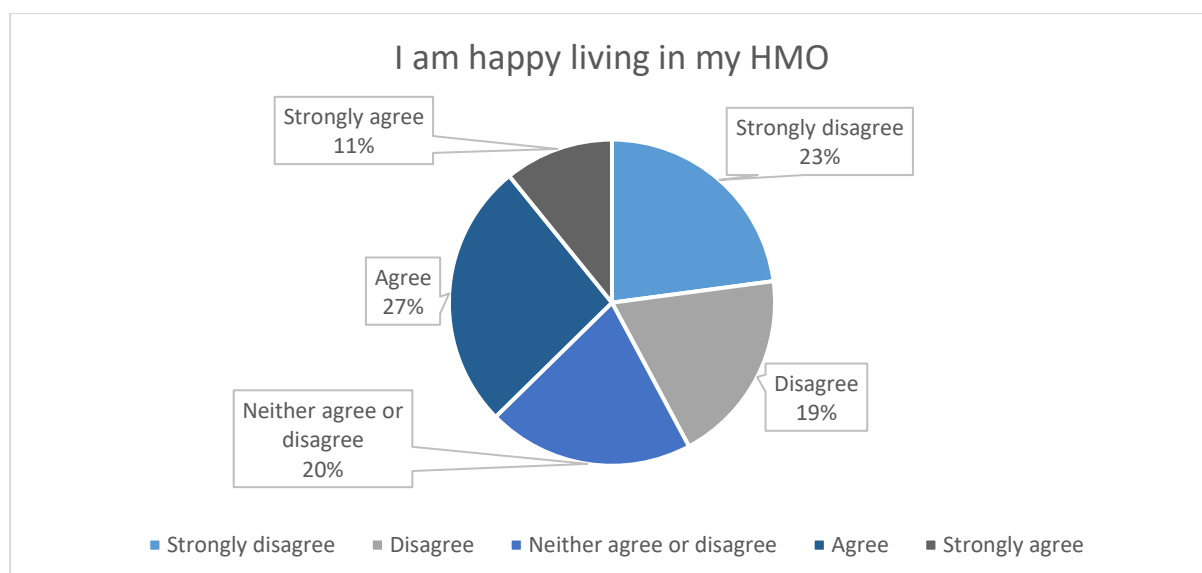
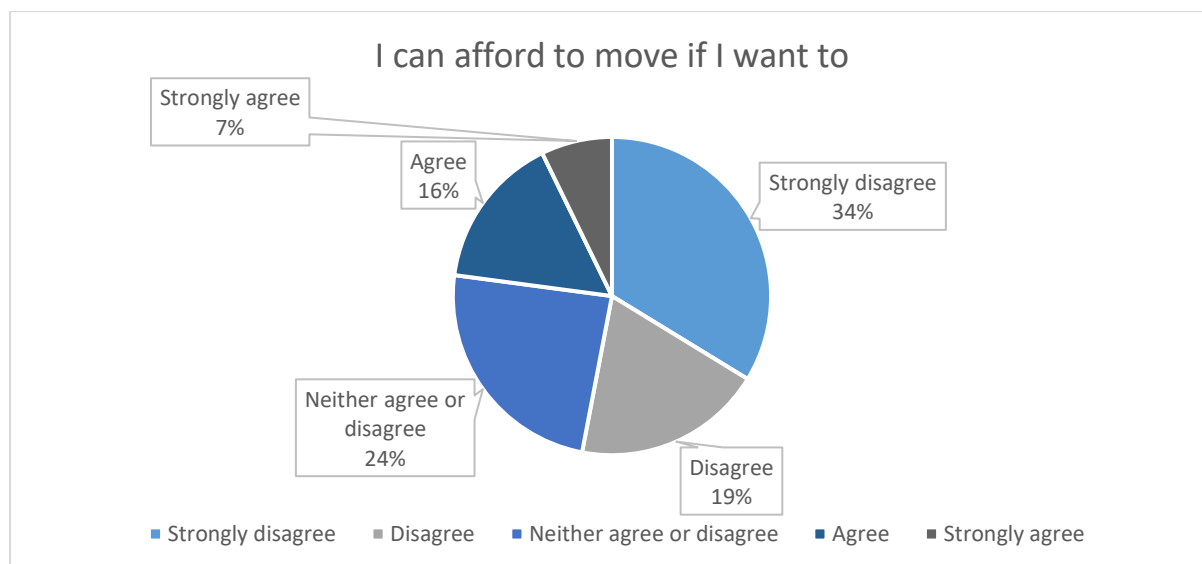
The below chart illustrates which factors are most important when choosing where to live, according to tenants. Some of the comments captured in the "other" category included rent and bills inclusive and allowing pets.



The data below is from a range of questions asked to tenants regarding experiences, beliefs and feelings regarding HMOs.



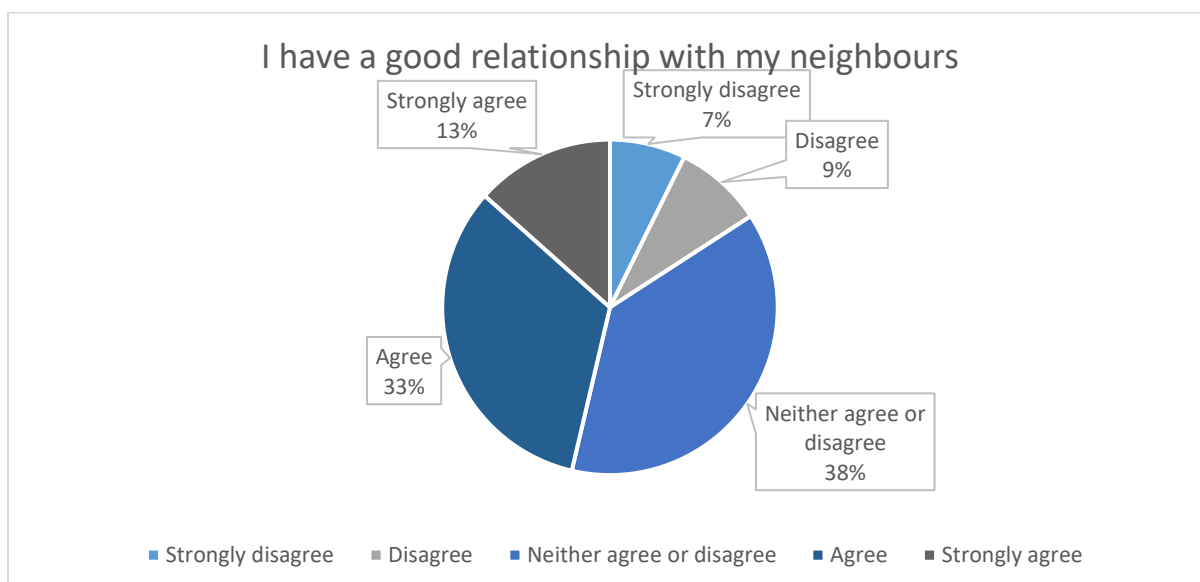
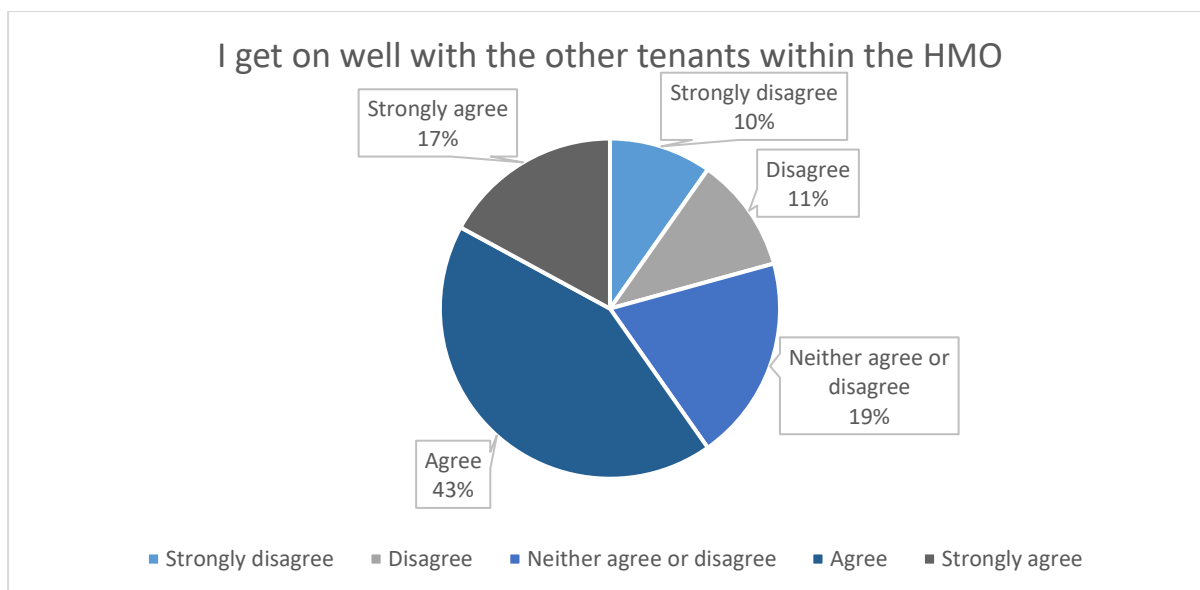




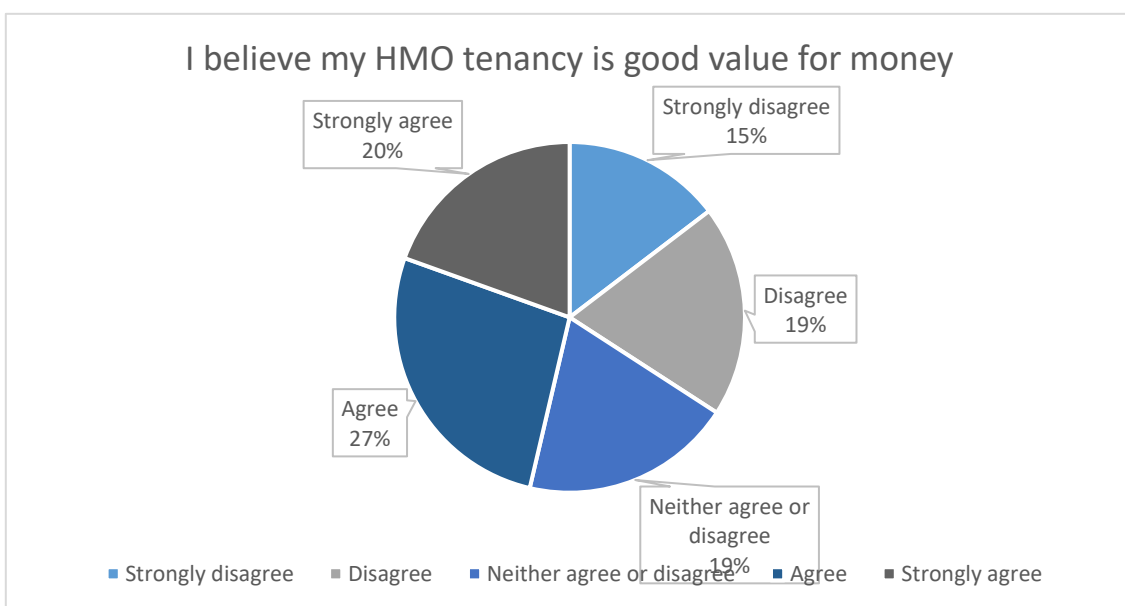
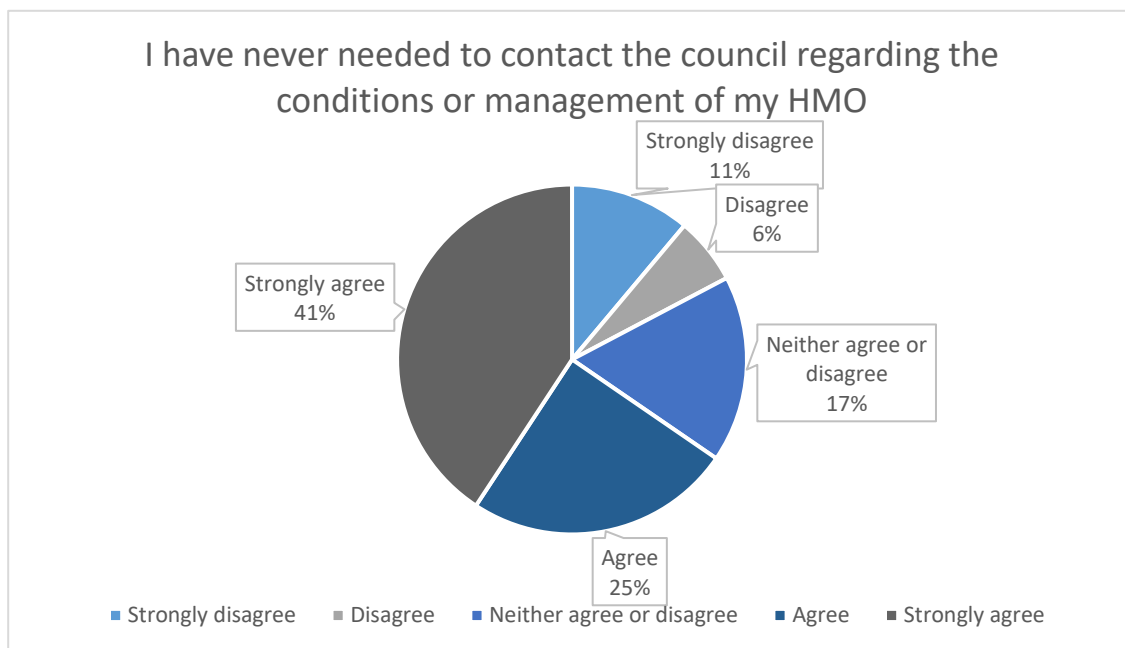
Tenants told the council in the above data that 29% believed they would still be living in a HMO in 5 years' time and 57% said that they had lived in their current HMO for more than 2 years. 83% said that they had not been evicted.

53% of HMO tenants said that they could not afford to move if they wanted to and 42% disagreed that they were happy living in their current HMO.

Other data collected in the survey showed that 59% agreed that the council should do more to intervene in HMOs and 82% wanted to see the council take more enforcement action against bad landlords. Approximately one third of HMO tenants did not believe their property was secure from potential burglary.

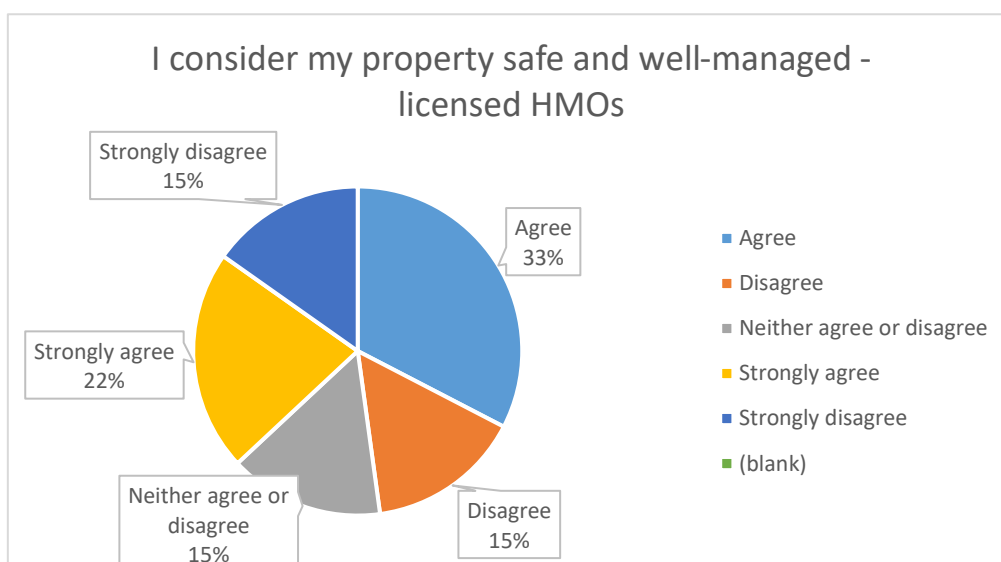
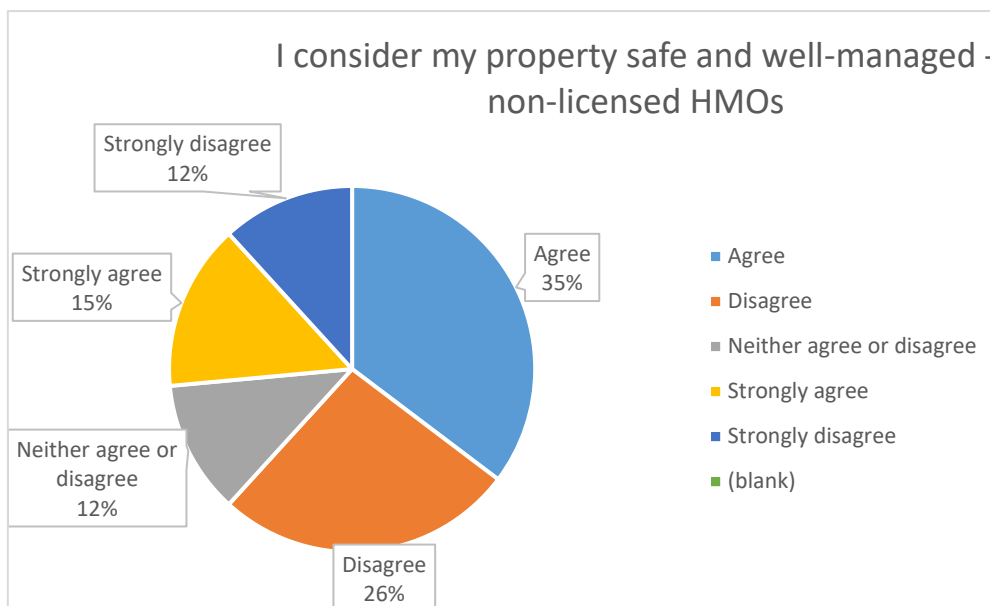


The vast majority of HMO tenants told the council they had a positive or neutral relationship with the people they lived with. More agreed they had a good relationship with neighbours, however a strong neutral response was given to this question.

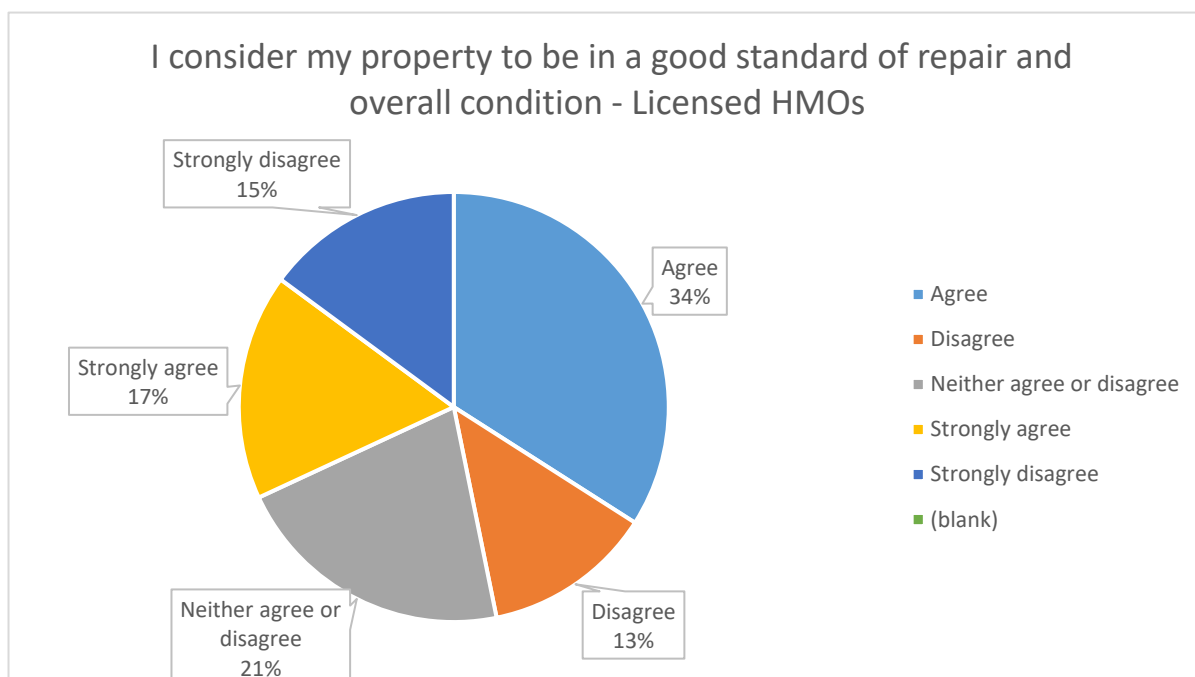
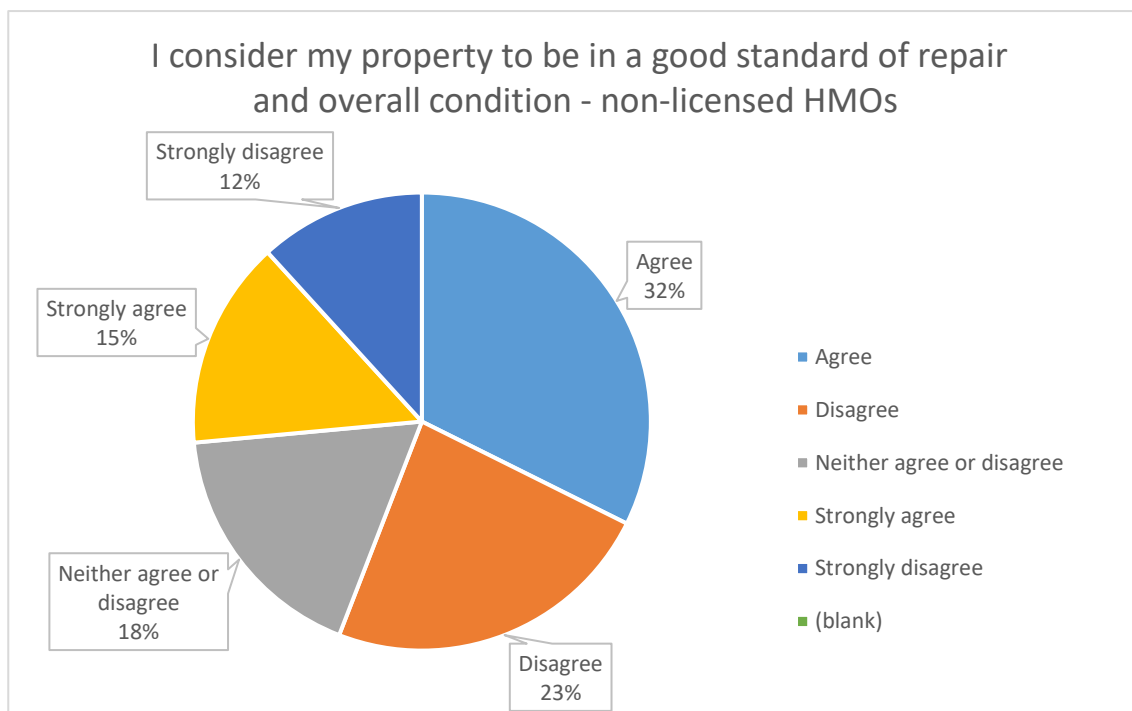


Only 17% of HMO tenants said they had needed to contact the council regarding the conditions or management of their HMO. More agreed that their HMO tenancy was good value for money however 34% did not agree with this.

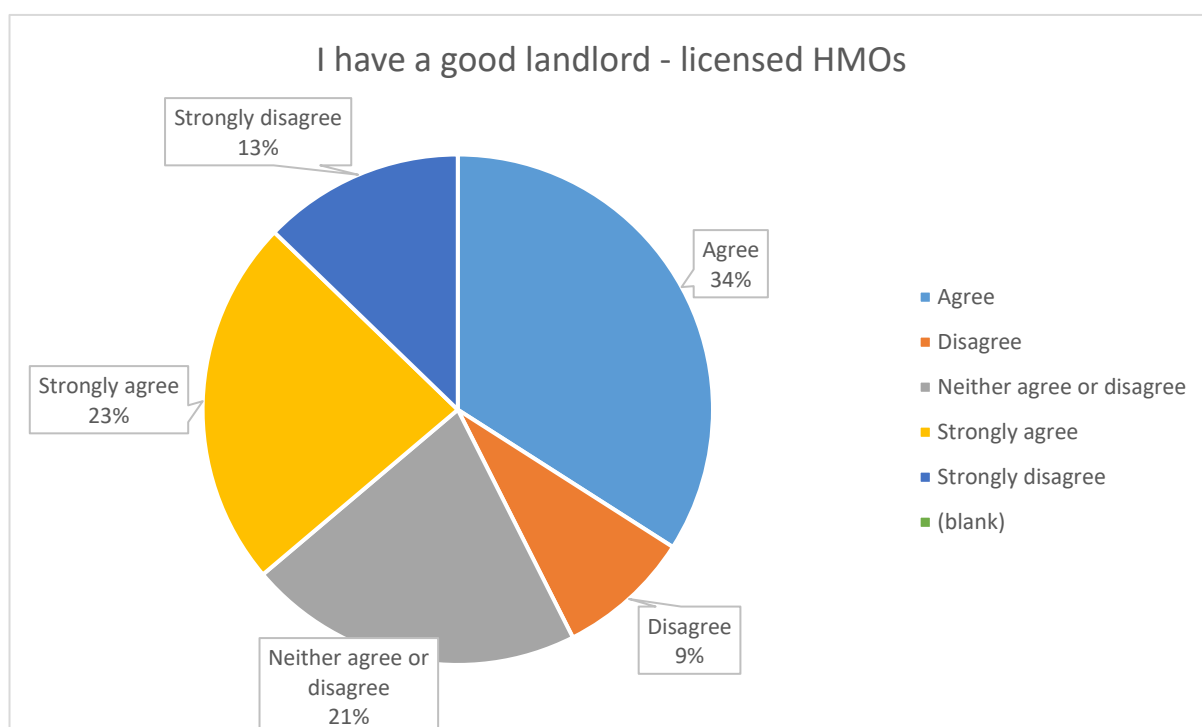
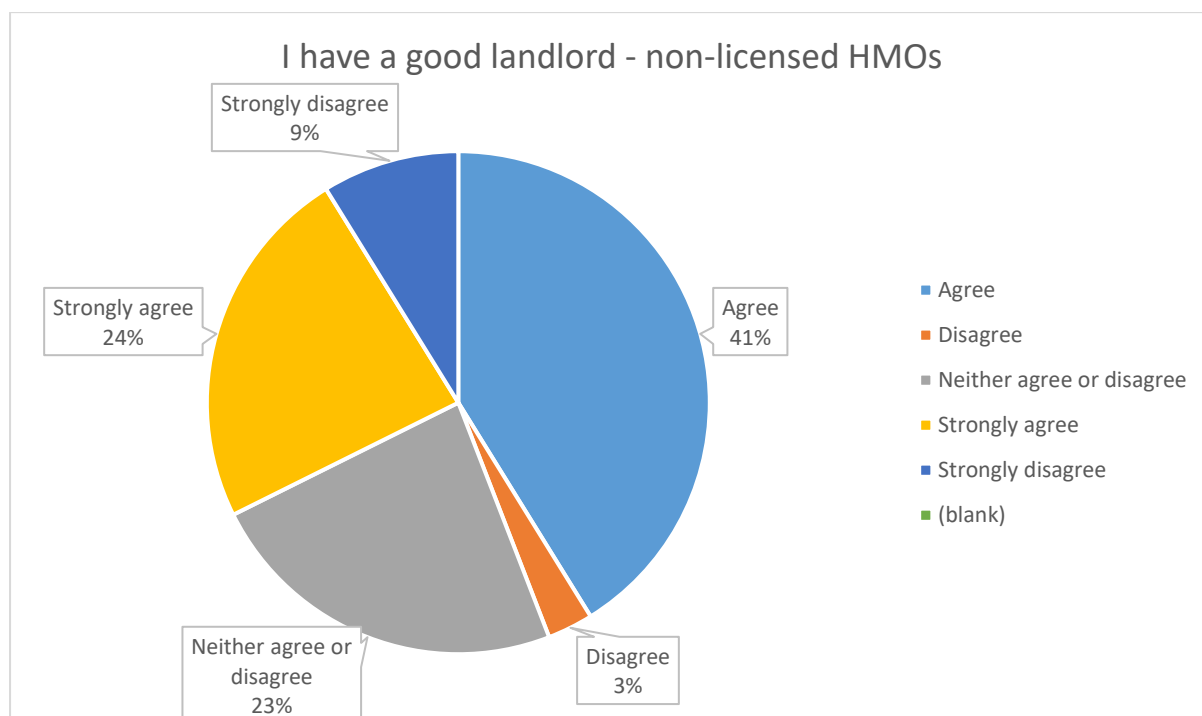
A further series of questions were asked about perceived safety and property conditions within these HMOs. The below data has been broken down into those who responded from mandatory licensable HMOs and from small non-licensable HMOs to understand: whether a difference could be observed between HMO types and what issues were highlighted within both sets of HMOs.



With both licensed and non-licensed HMOs, more responded in agreement that their property was safe and well managed, with only a 5% percentage difference seen between the two HMO types. Approximately one third in both HMO types disagreed with this statement.

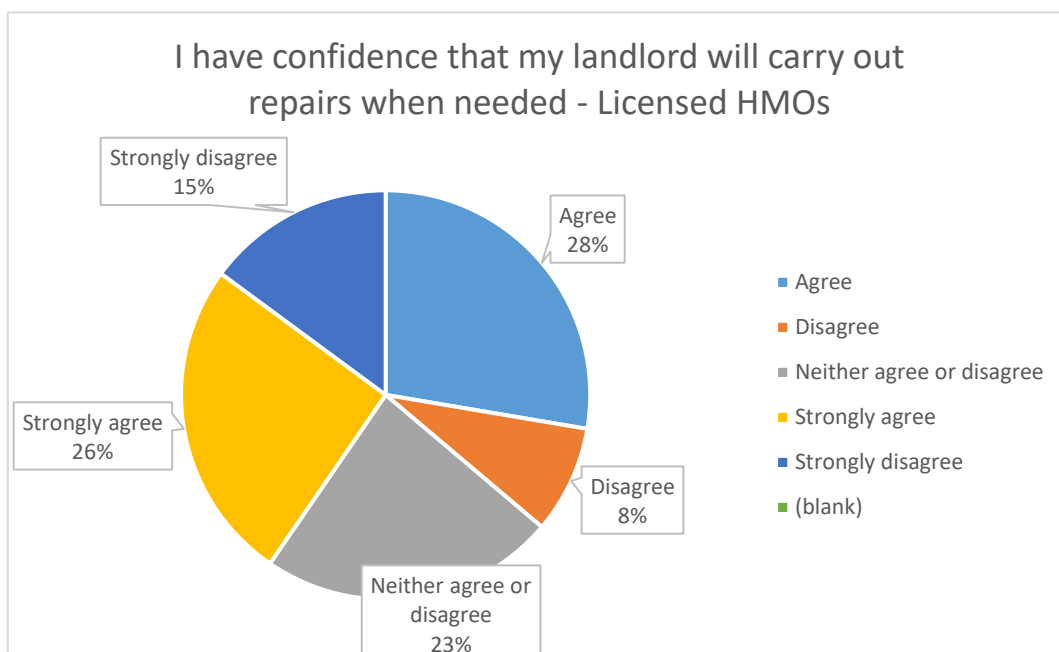
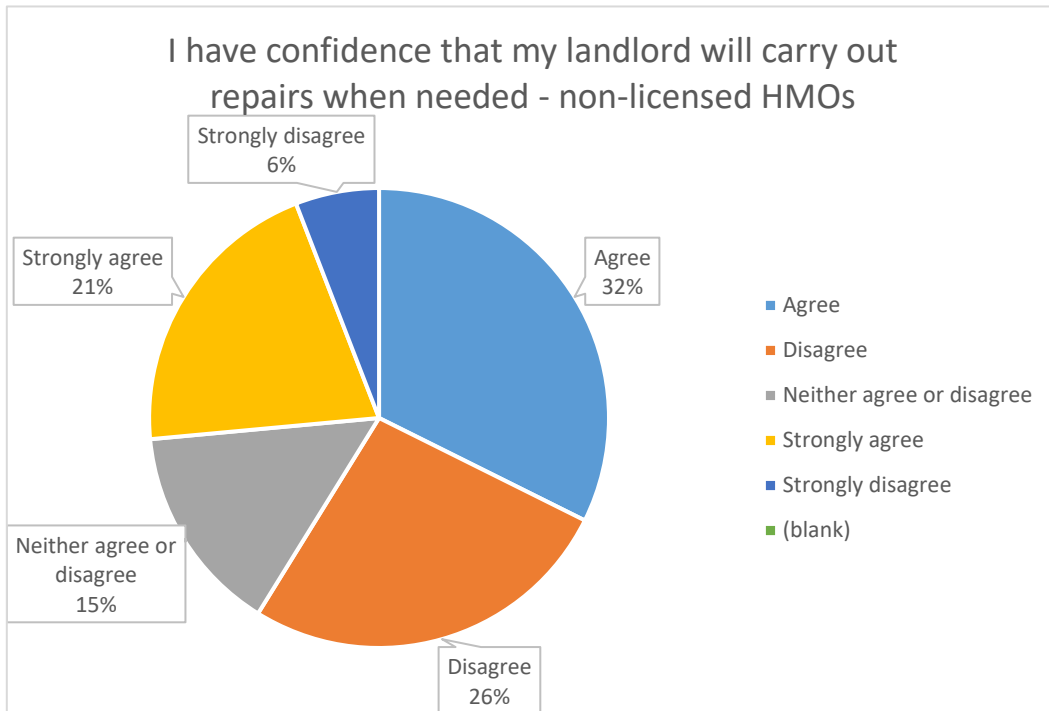


47% of non-licensed HMO tenants agreed and 51% of licensed HMO tenants agreed with this statement. However, 35% of non-licensed HMO tenants and 28% licensed HMO tenants disagreed with that their property was in a good standard of overall condition and repair.



Tenants responded positively to the above statement, with 65% of non-licensed HMO and 57% of licensed HMO tenants agreeing they had a good landlord. A notable percentage responded neutrally to this question.

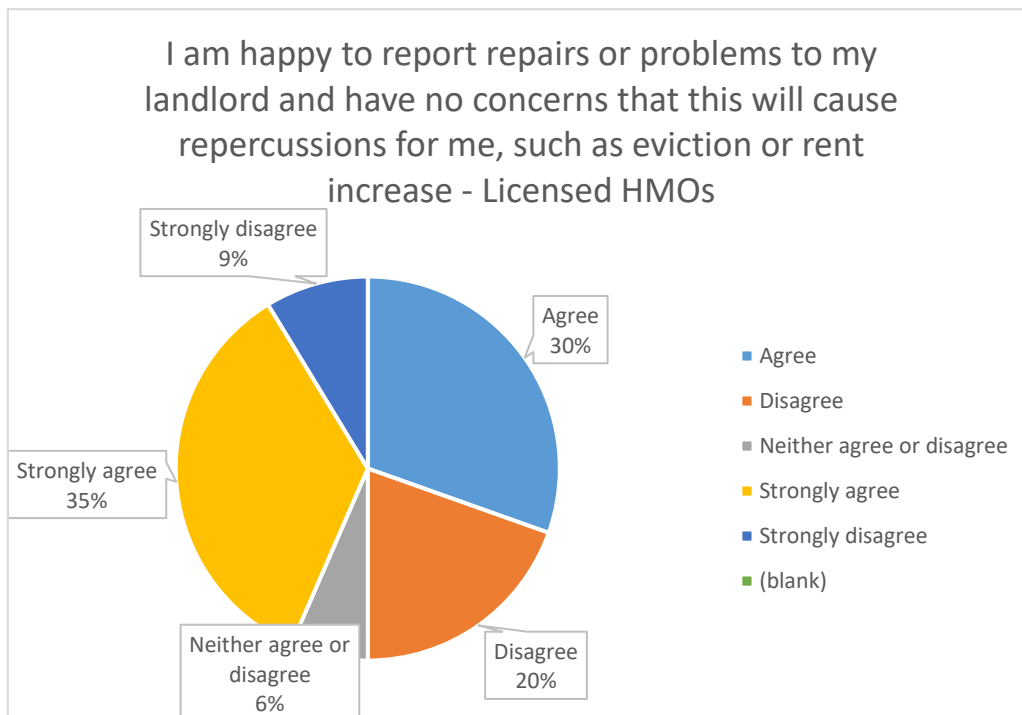
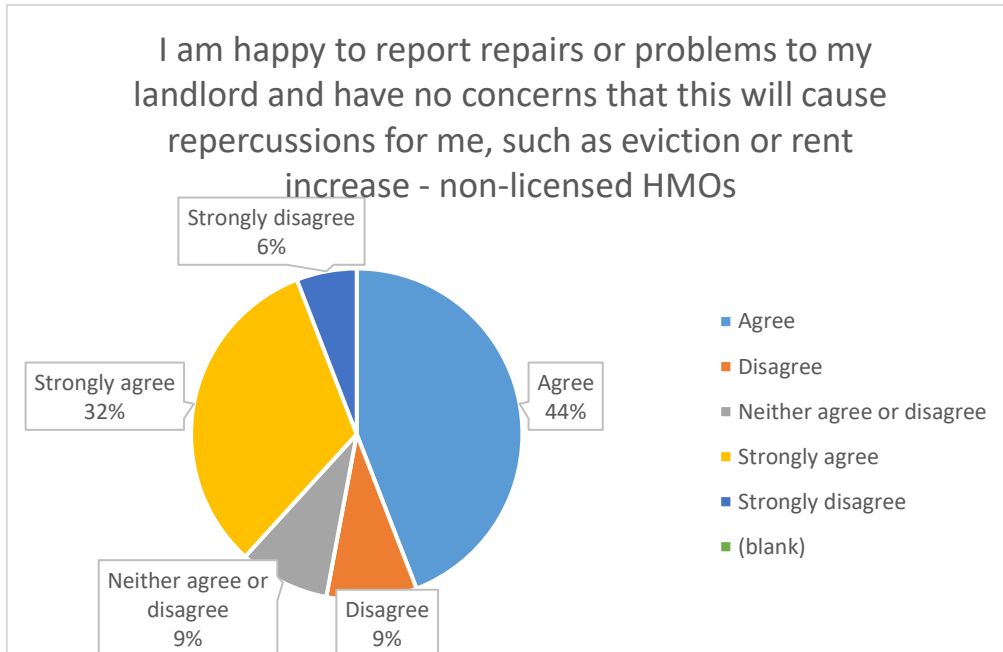
A larger percentage difference can be seen in this question between non-licensed and licensed HMO tenant responses. 12% of non-licensed HMO tenants disagreed that they had a good landlord, however more licensed HMO tenants disagreed with almost a quarter saying they did not have a good landlord.



32% non-licensed HMO tenants and 23% licensed HMO tenants said they were not confident that their landlord would carry out repairs when needed. Almost the same



positive response was given between non-licensed and licensed HMO tenants, with over half of tenants saying they did have confidence their landlord would carry out repairs when needed. Nearly a quarter of tenants gave a neutral response to this question.



The vast majority of HMO tenants told the council they were happy to report repairs of problems to their landlord without retaliation. However, some difference can be seen from non-licensed and licensed HMO tenant responses to this, with 15% of non-licensed HMO tenants disagreeing however nearly double of licensed HMO tenants saying they feared some form of retaliation from their landlord.

### Findings and Conclusion: I live in a HMO

A number of themes can be found in the data received through the survey regarding those who live in HMOs. One third of the HMO tenants who responded to the survey told us they expected to continue living in HMO accommodation during the next 5 years, indicating a notable portion of HMO tenants view these as a long-term housing option.

The data also showed that the majority were over the age of 35, with a significant portion between 45 - 54 years old, showing that more people are relying on HMOs into later life. It is well known that HMOs are among the most affordable housing options and tenants told us in the survey that affordable rent was the most important factor for them when choosing where to live.

Just over half of HMO tenants said they could not afford to move if they wanted to, however 46% indicated they had plans to move out of HMO accommodation in the next 5 years. This data suggests a lack of choice amongst many HMO tenants regarding their housing options, relying on HMOs as an affordable option for them.

The survey told us that tenants overall felt positive about the relationships they had with their housemates and neighbours. However many gave a neutral answer regarding their relationship with neighbours. This may indicate that HMO tenants do not know their neighbours well, or not feeling a sense of community.

The vast majority of HMO tenants told the council they had not needed to contact the council regarding the conditions or management of their HMO, with only 17% suggesting they had. Responses to questions regarding conditions, safety, standards and management generated more positive responses, with approximately half of HMO tenants suggesting they were satisfied with these. However, a notable portion of HMO tenants told the council they were not happy with these factors with roughly a third saying they were unhappy with property conditions, standard and managements. Similar responses were given regarding confidence in landlords to carry out repairs on time.

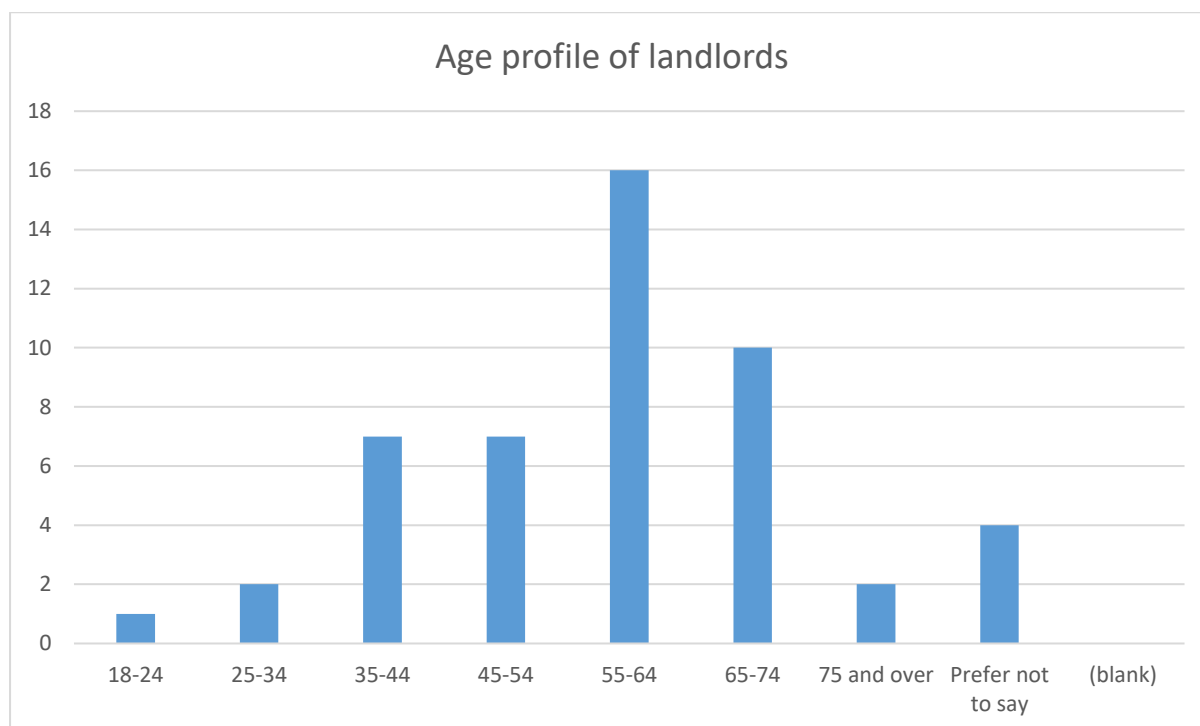
Very little difference in these responses could be observed between licensed HMOs and non-licensed HMOs regarding property conditions, standards and management questions, except where more licensed HMO tenants expressed their view that reports of disrepair would lead to retaliation from their landlord through eviction or rent increase. This similarity in results shows that tenant opinion toward these factors is the same regardless of licensing, suggesting that licensing only cannot fully remove these concerns.

The majority of tenants said they had a good landlord and most, especially non-licensed HMO tenants, expressed a confidence in ability to report disrepair issues to their landlord. This is perhaps reflected in the low percentage who told the council they had needed to escalate complaints to Officers to intervene.

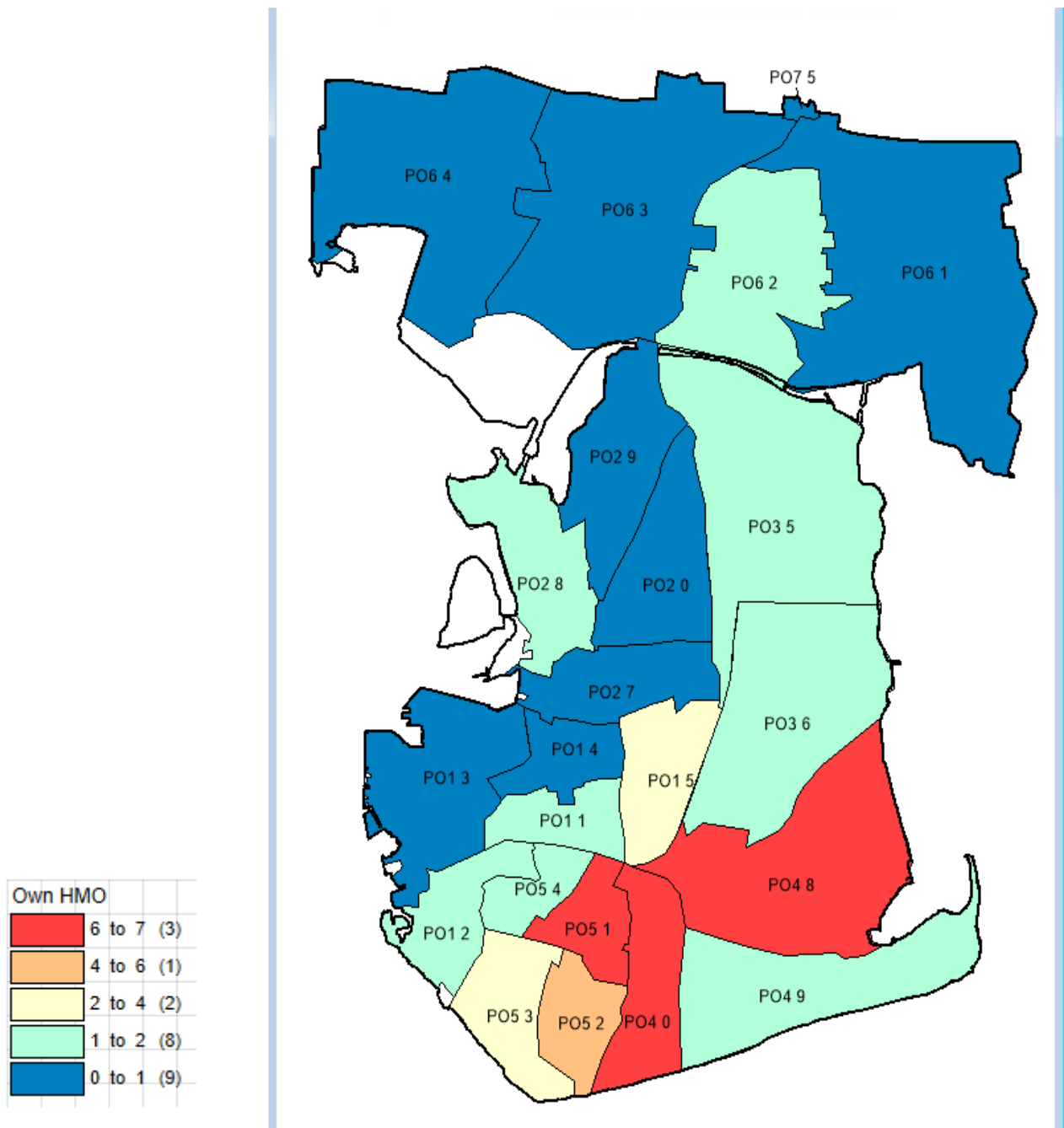
## Part 2 - I own or manage a HMO

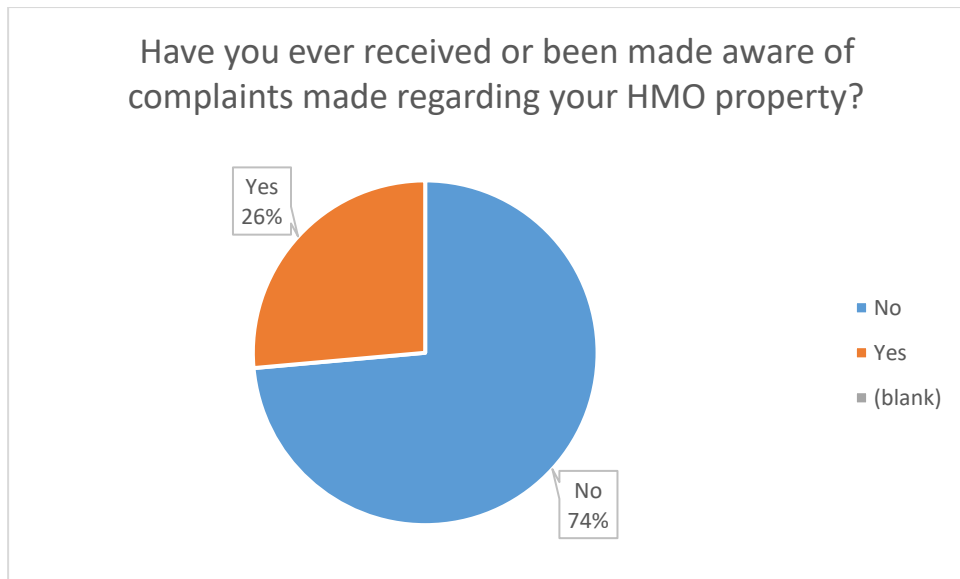
Most of the respondents to the landlord survey were landlords, however some responses were received from managing agents.

44% of landlords said that they owned or managed 1 - 2 properties, with 41% owning or managing 3 - 10 and 15% owning or managing than 11 properties. 55% of respondents were a member of a landlord association. 79% said they had owned or managed a HMO for 5 or more years.



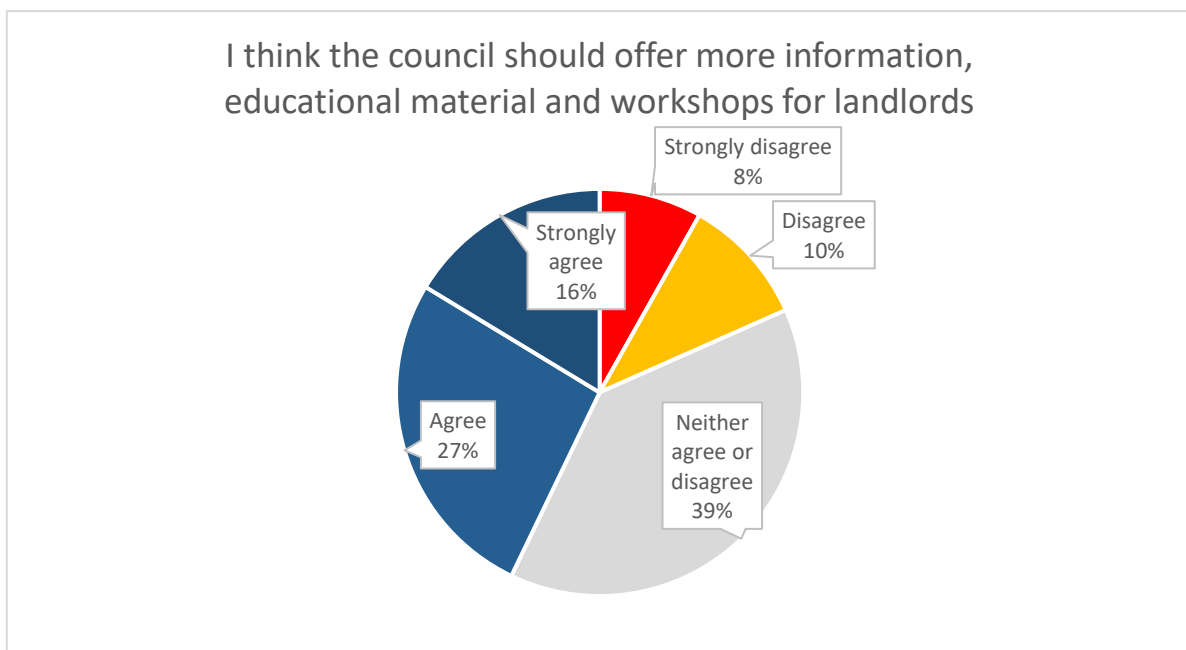
The majority of landlord who responded were aged 55 or older with the largest single response group saying they were 55-64 years old.

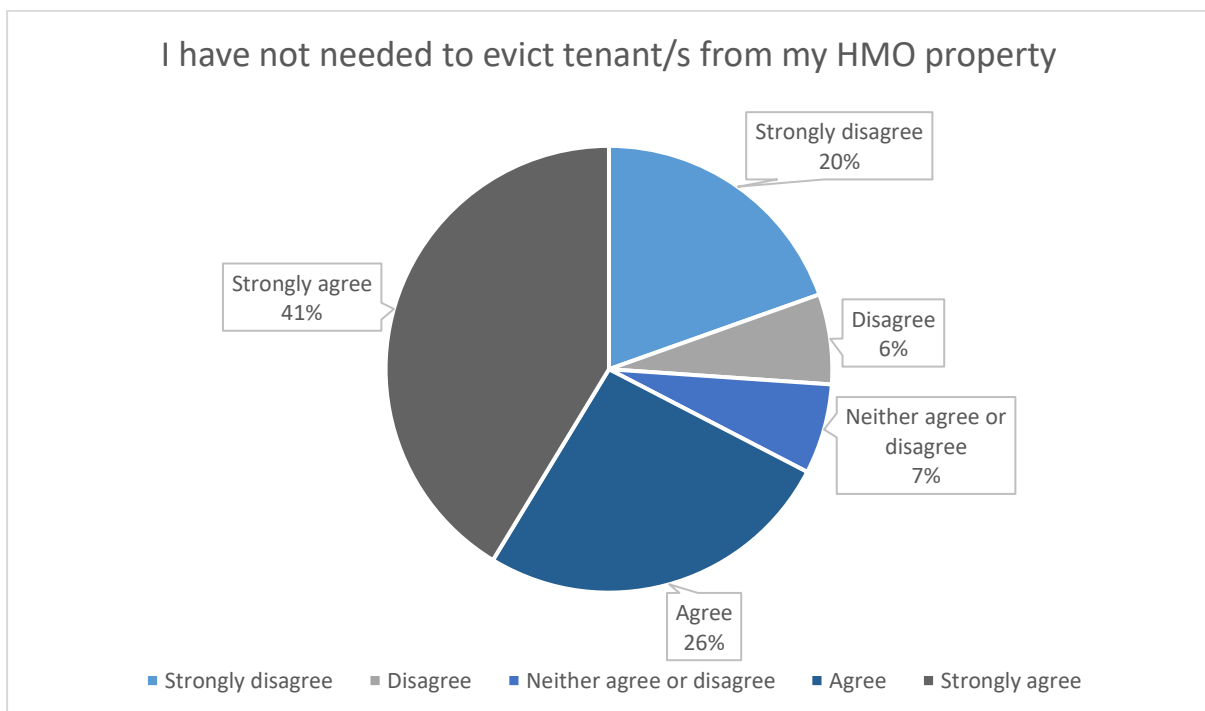
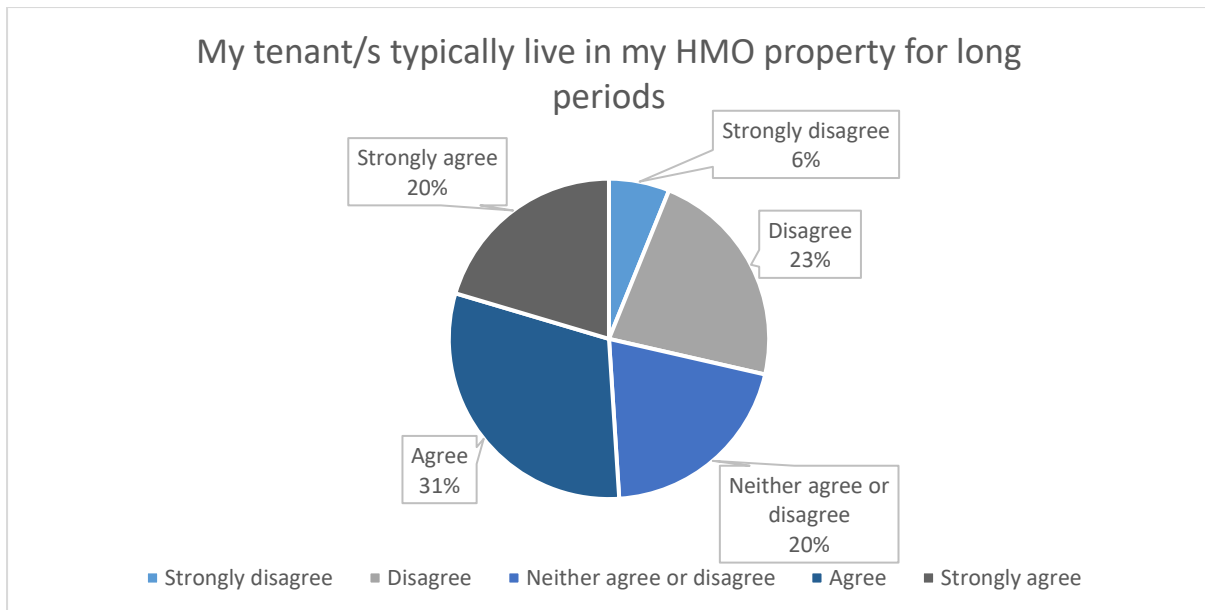




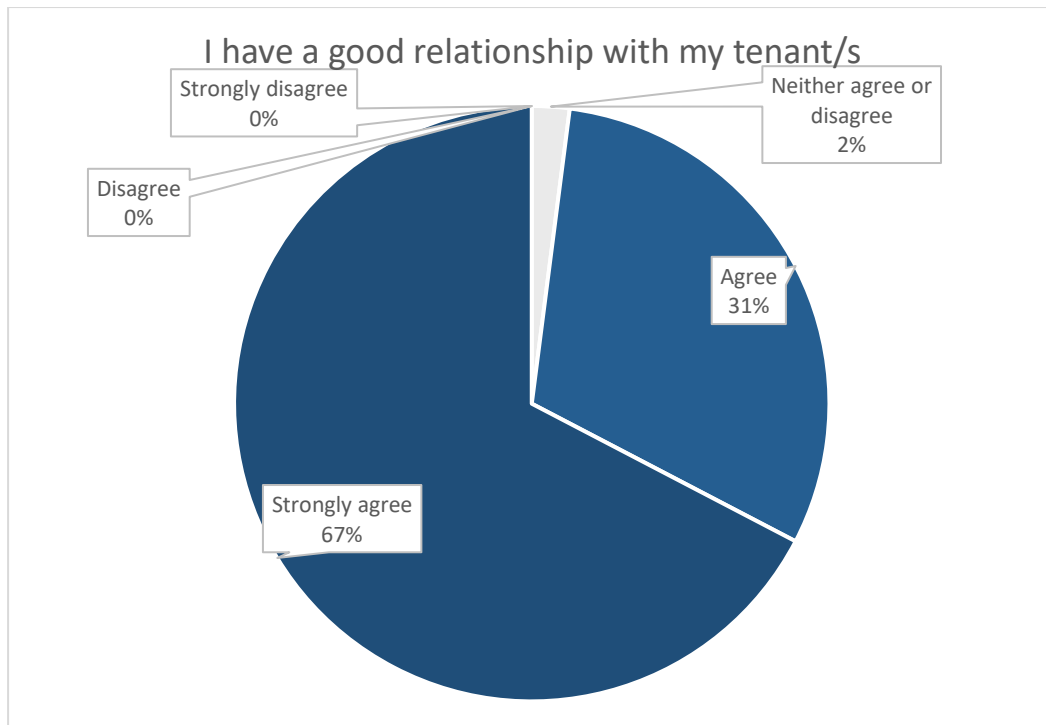
26% of landlords said that they had received or been made aware of complaints made regarding their HMO property. 55% said that at some point they had been instructed by the council to make improvement works to their HMO property. The survey did not capture the extent of repair work requested.

Landlords and managing agents were asked a series of questions regarding their experiences and views managing a HMO. Landlords told us that overall they felt confident in their property conditions and knowledge to manage their HMO. 43% said they wanted to see the council offer more information and educational material for landlords.

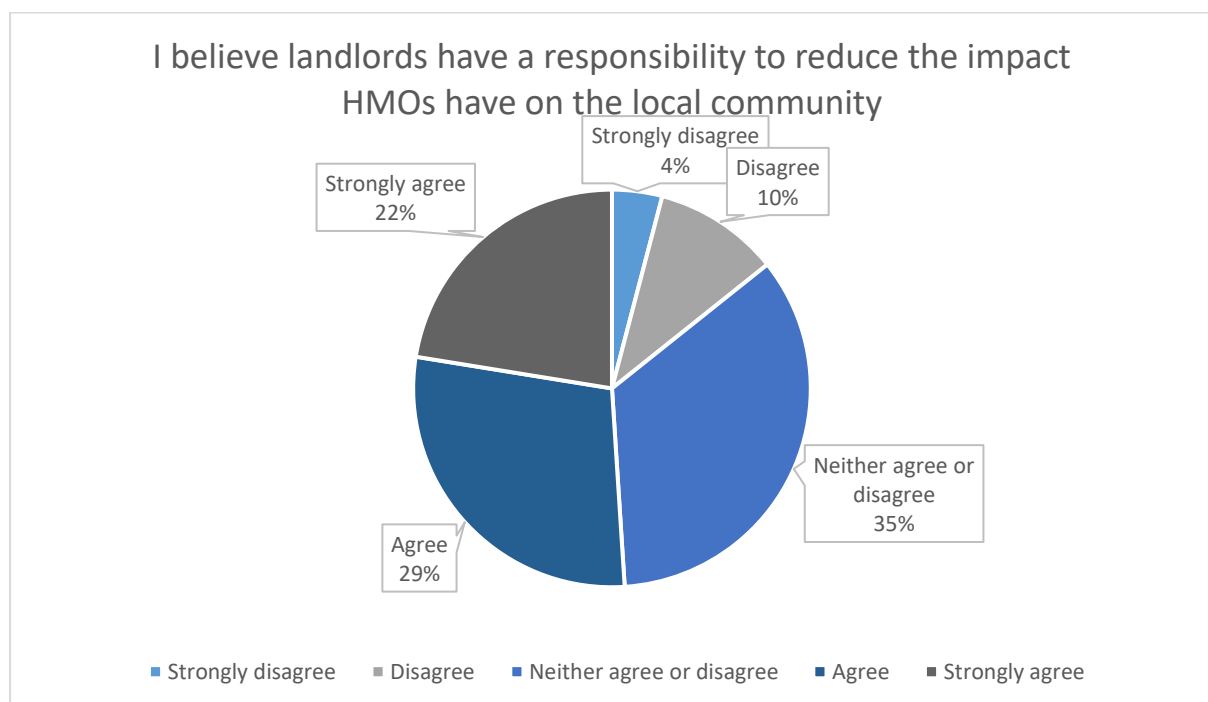




More landlords told the council that tenants in their HMOs had lived there for a long period of time and most told us that they have not needed to take eviction action regarding tenants in their HMOs.



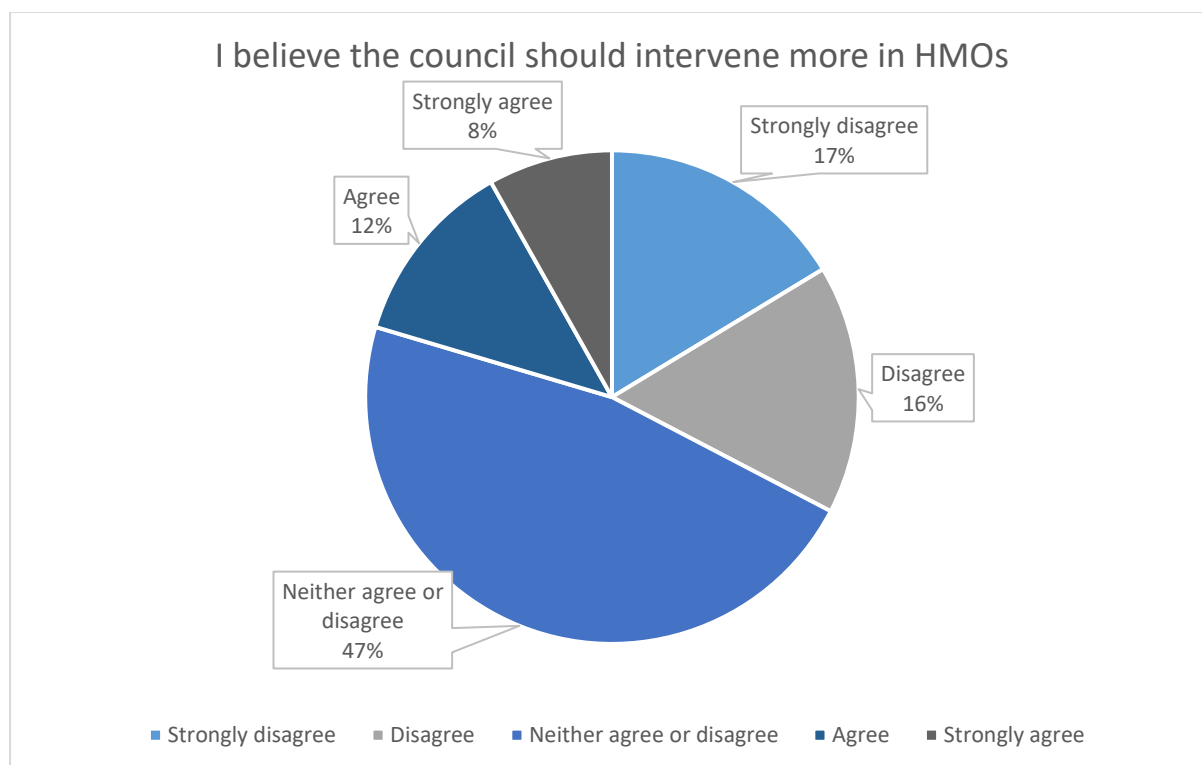
Landlords felt that they had a good relationship with their tenants, with no responses to say that they did not.



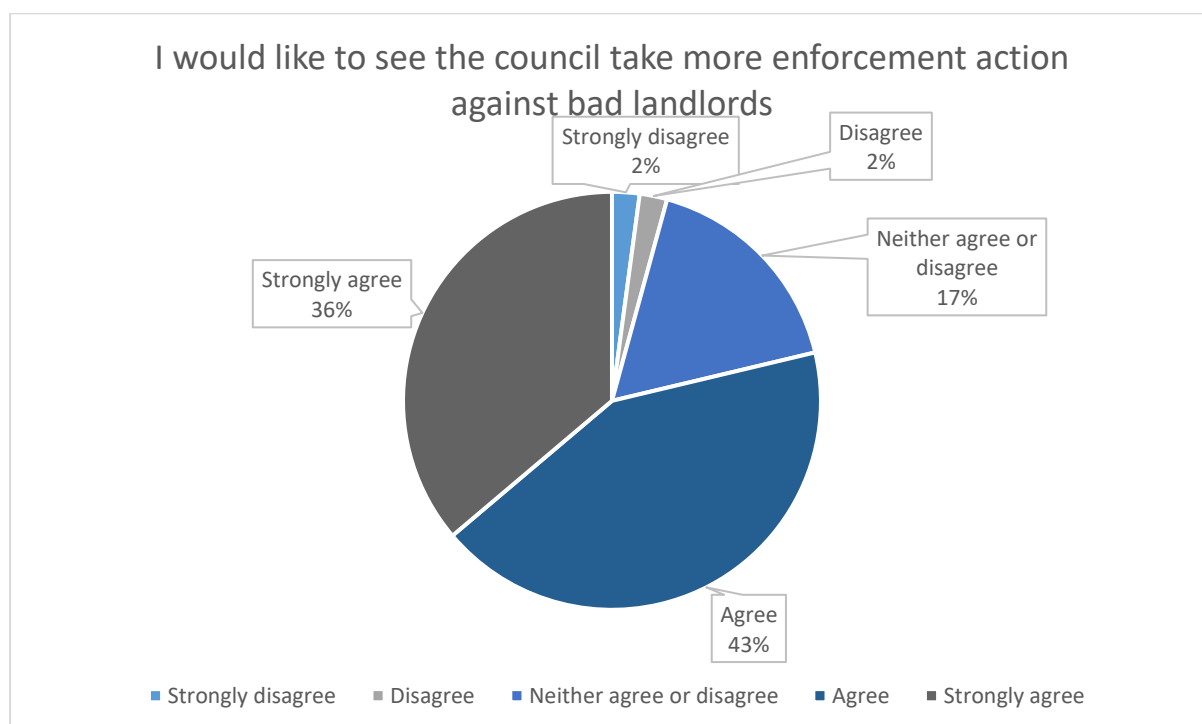
51% landlords said that they did have a responsibility to reduce the impact HMOs have on the local community.



When asked if the council should do more to intervene in HMOs 33% of landlords disagreed however a large proportion answer neutrally to this question.



Landlords answered strongly to say they would like to see more action taken against bad landlords.





The above chart illustrates landlords most important factors being property conditions and standard, having a good relationship with their tenants and security of income. Comments in the other category included relationships between HMO tenants being an important factor to landlords.

#### Findings and Conclusion: I own or manage a HMO

The data obtained through the survey suggests that a significant portion of respondents would be considered experienced landlords or managers, based on the number of properties managed and length of time landlords had managed these. This is reflected in feelings of confidence and knowledge regarding HMOs.

More landlords expressed a view that the council should not intervene more with HMOs, although a large number were neutral on this question. Landlords also expressed that they would like to see more action taken against "bad landlords". This feedback likely frames an opinion amongst landlords that focus from the council should be aimed at those who breach rules and regulations, instead of introducing regulations which effects all landlords.

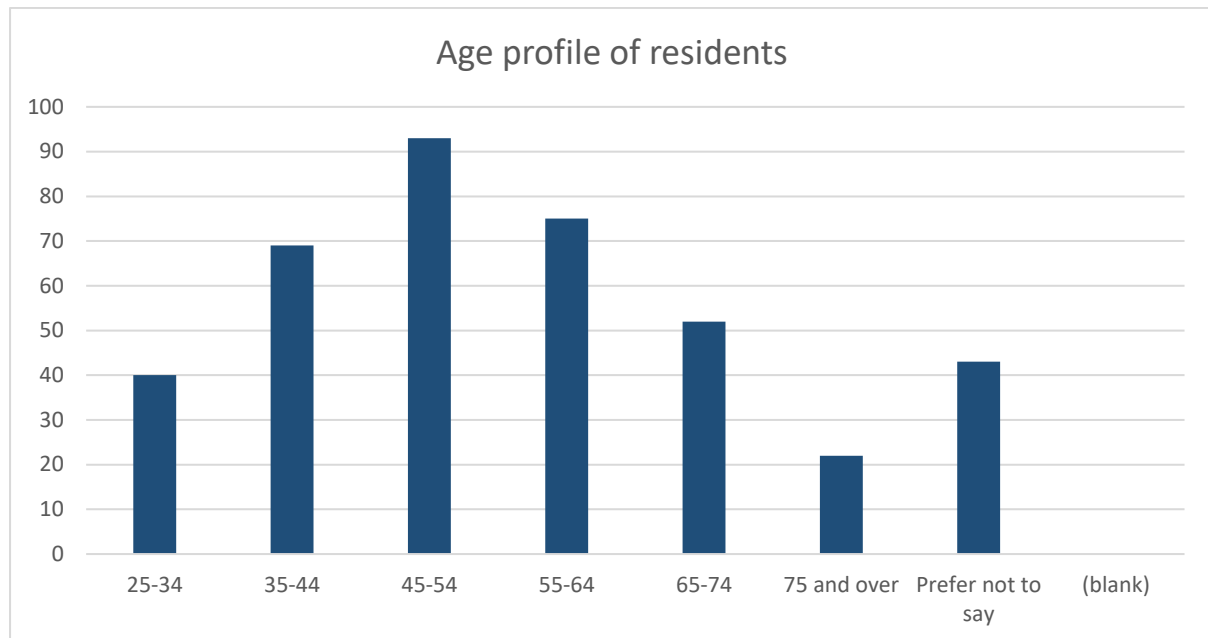
More landlords agreed that they would like to see the council offer more educational materials and most agreed that landlords had a responsibility to reduce the impacts of HMOs on the local community.

Landlords believe they had a good relationship with their tenants and just over half said their tenants lived in their properties for long period of time; both of these were reciprocated in tenant's responses. This indicates an overall view that tenants are able to meet their responsibilities as per their tenancy agreement. This view is also highlighted in the low number of landlords who told the council they had need to evict tenants from HMOs.

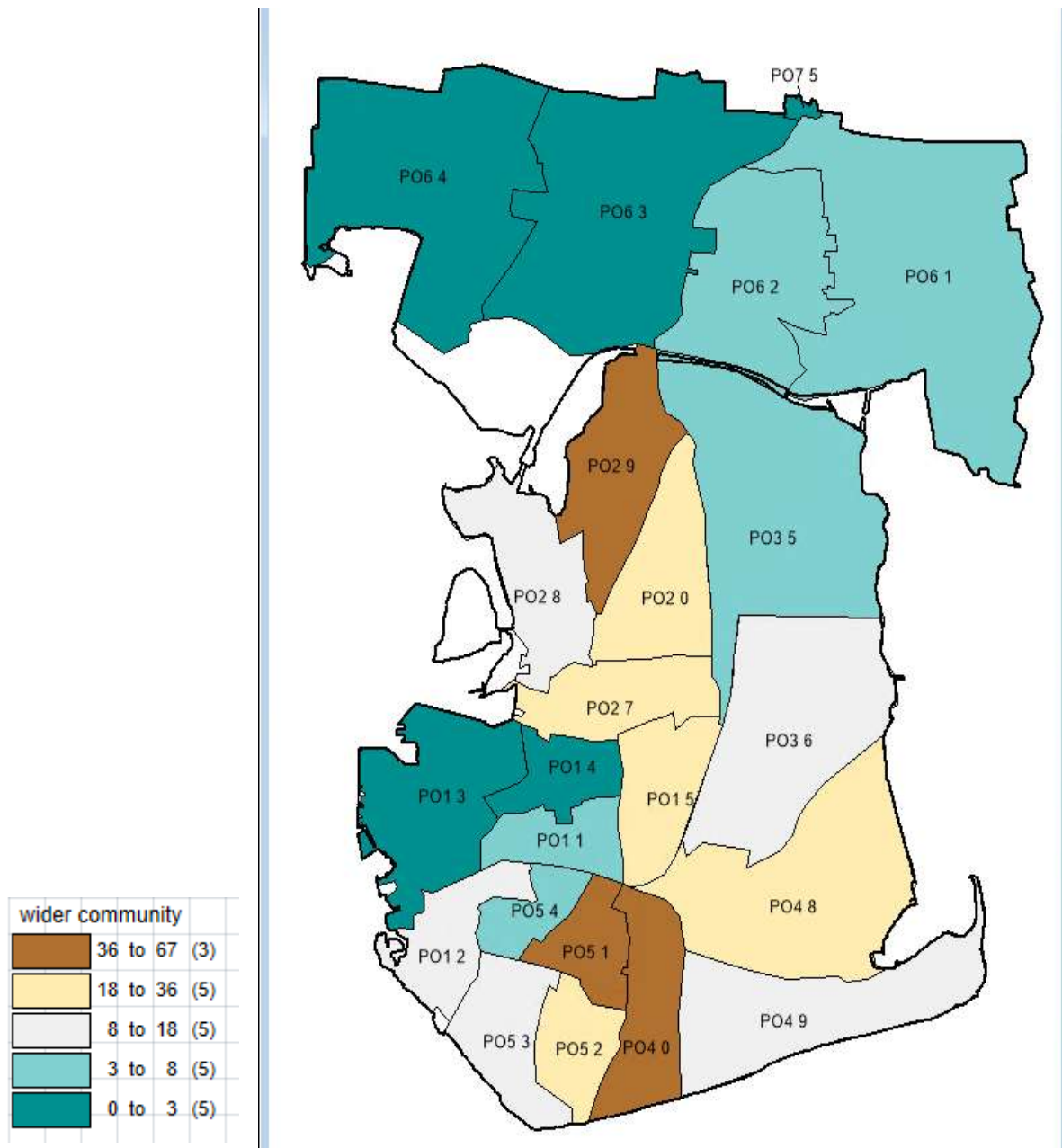
Landlords said their most important factors were: property conditions, good relationships with tenants and security of income. These priorities are partly reflected in tenant's responses which told the council more believed they had a good landlord, good conditions and their property was good value for money.

**Part 3 - I am part of the wider community who lives or works near HMOs**

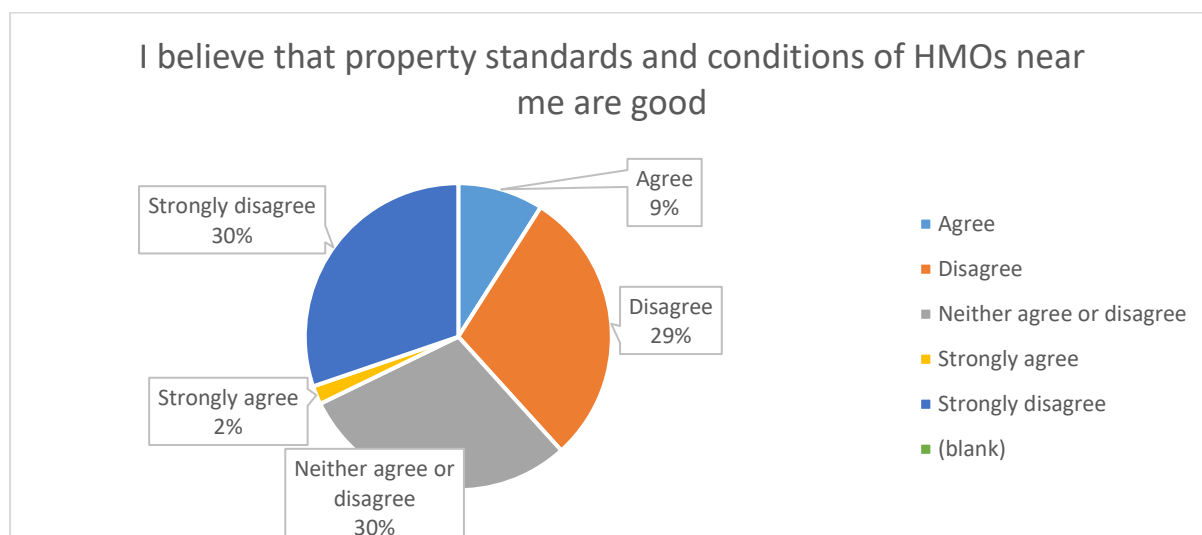
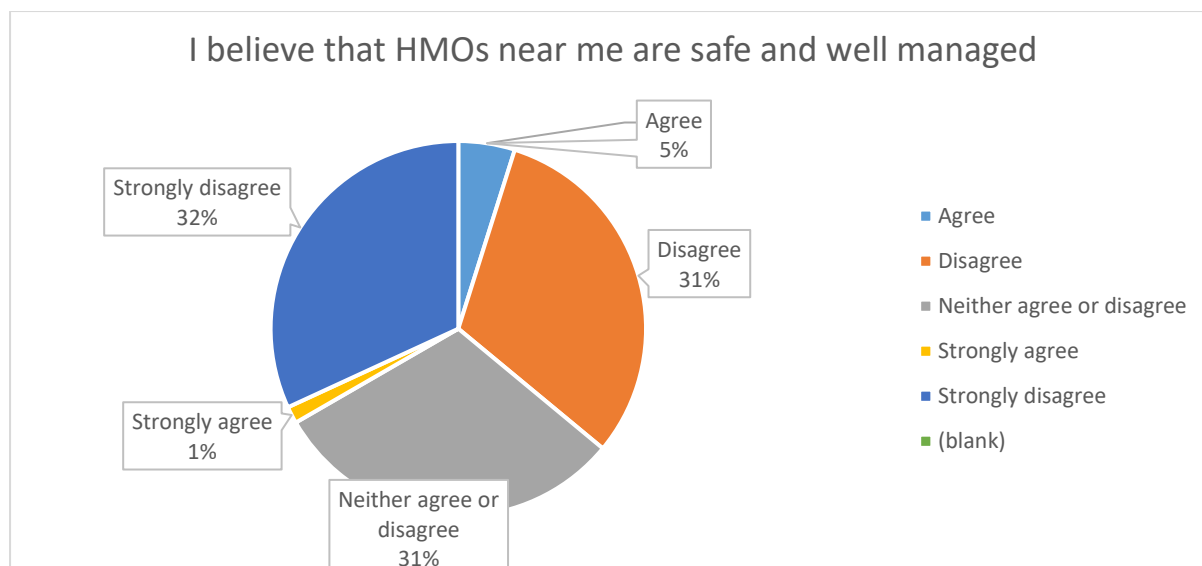
The strongest response to the survey was from members of the wider community near HMOs. Of these the largest response was from Portsmouth Residents.



The majority of residents who responded to the survey were working age adults with the largest single response group being between 45-54 years old.

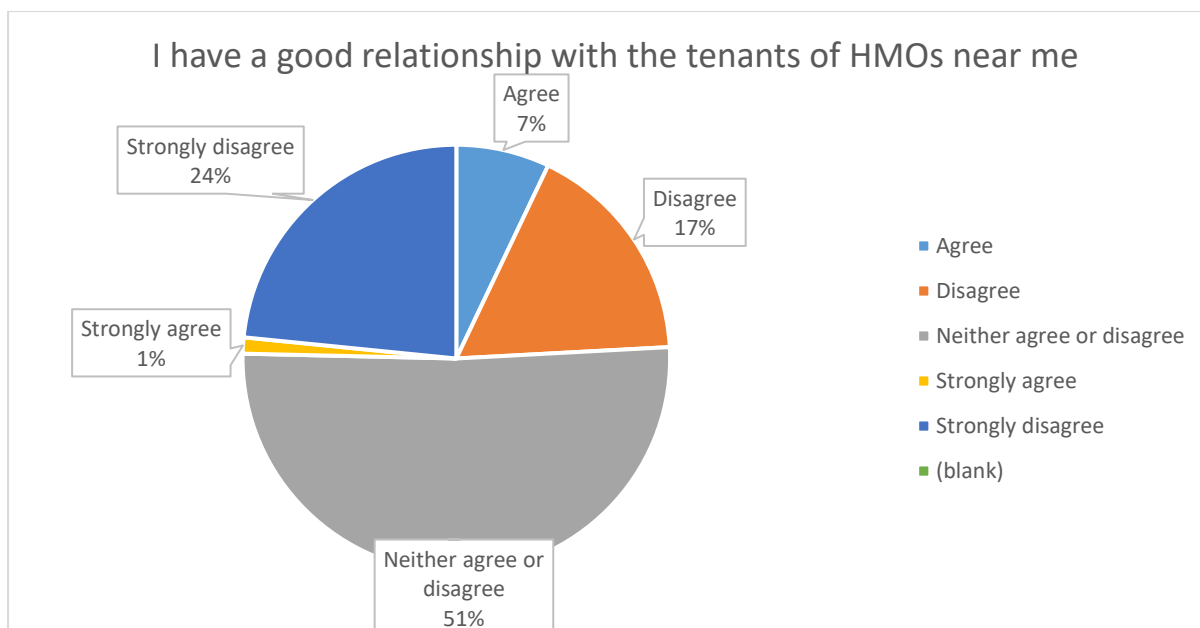


The above map illustrates where the highest responses from residents were, with the most responses seen in some PO4, PO5 and PO2 areas.

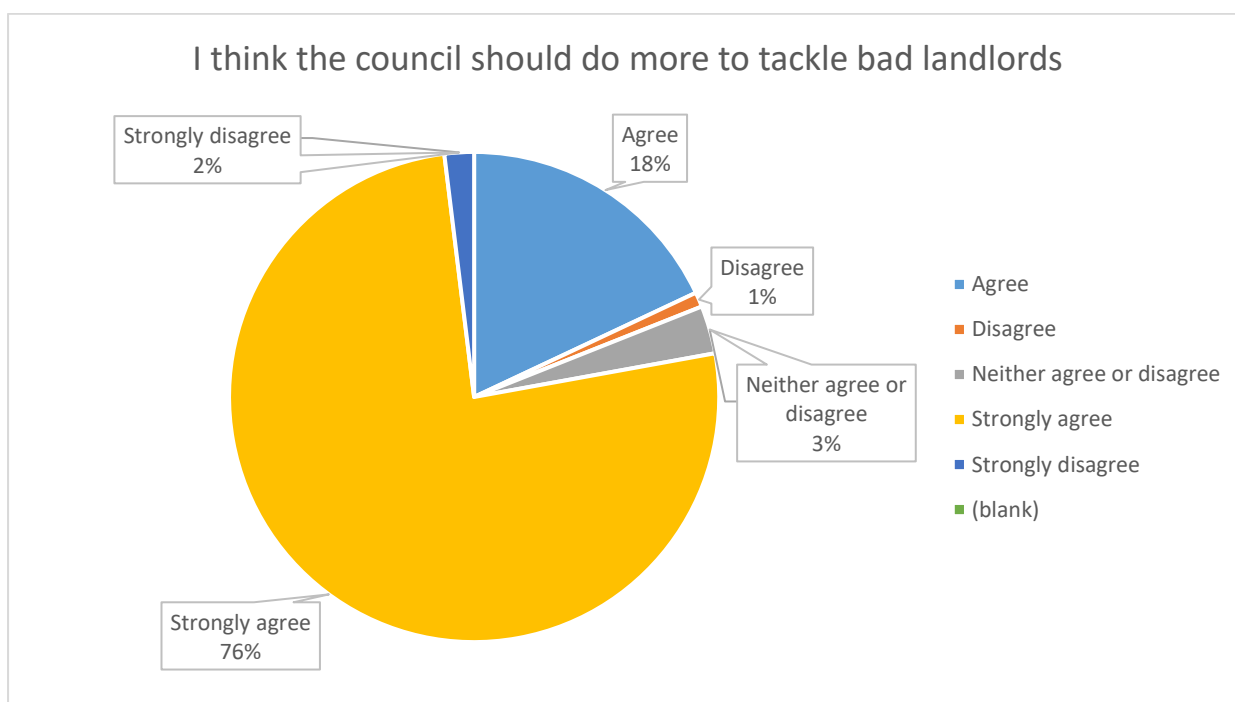


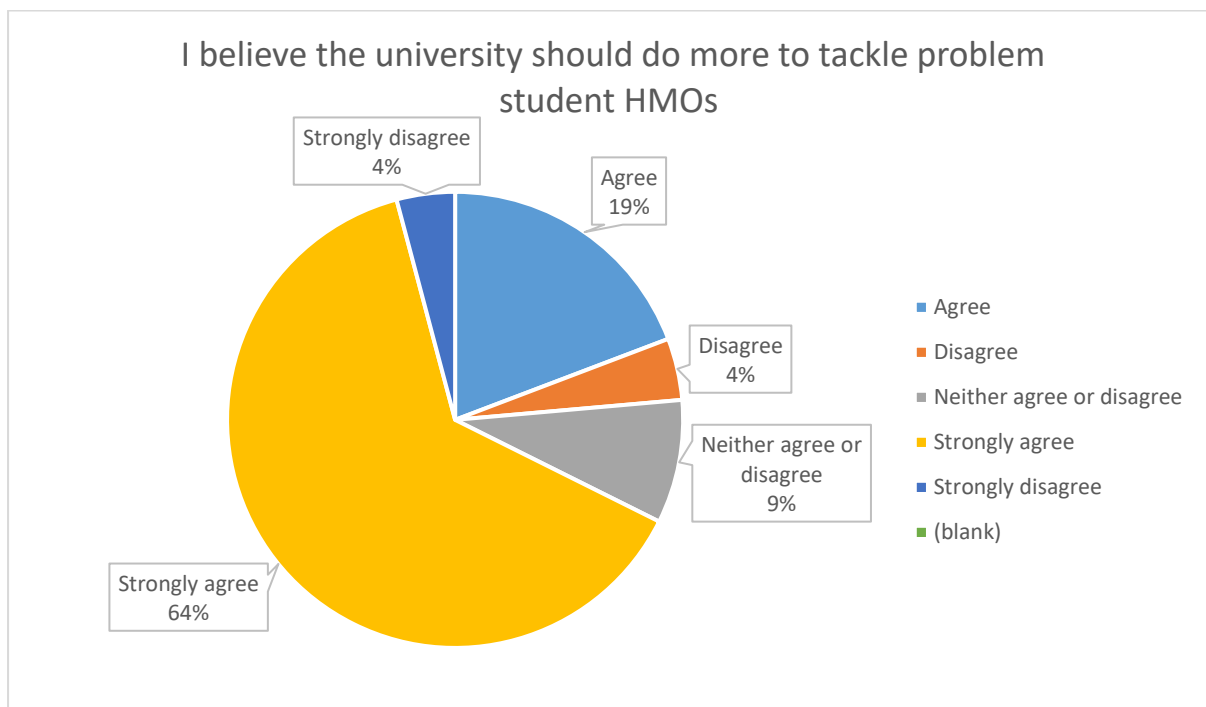
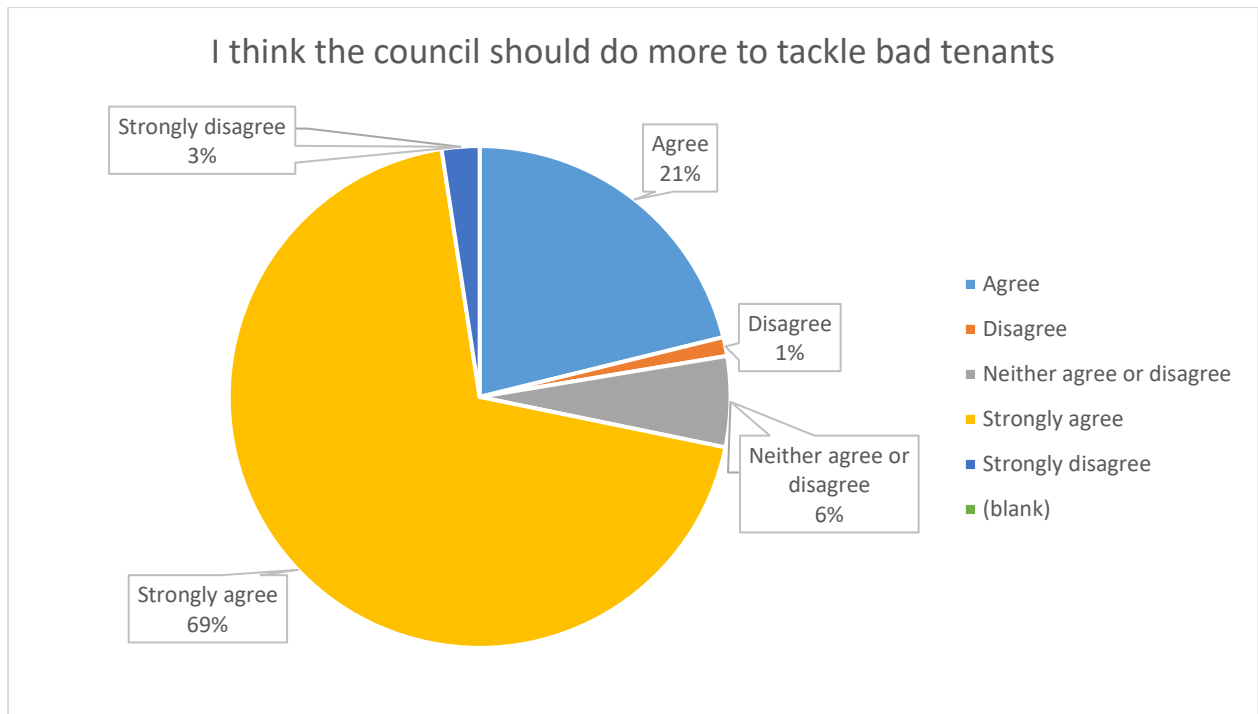
Two thirds of residents expressed that they did not consider HMOs safe or well managed, with almost the same amount of residents saying that they believed the property standards and conditions of HMOs were not good.

When asked if they felt they had a good relationship with tenants, most residents were neutral and said they neither agreed nor disagreed. The second strongest response indicated a view that residents did not have a good relationship with tenants.



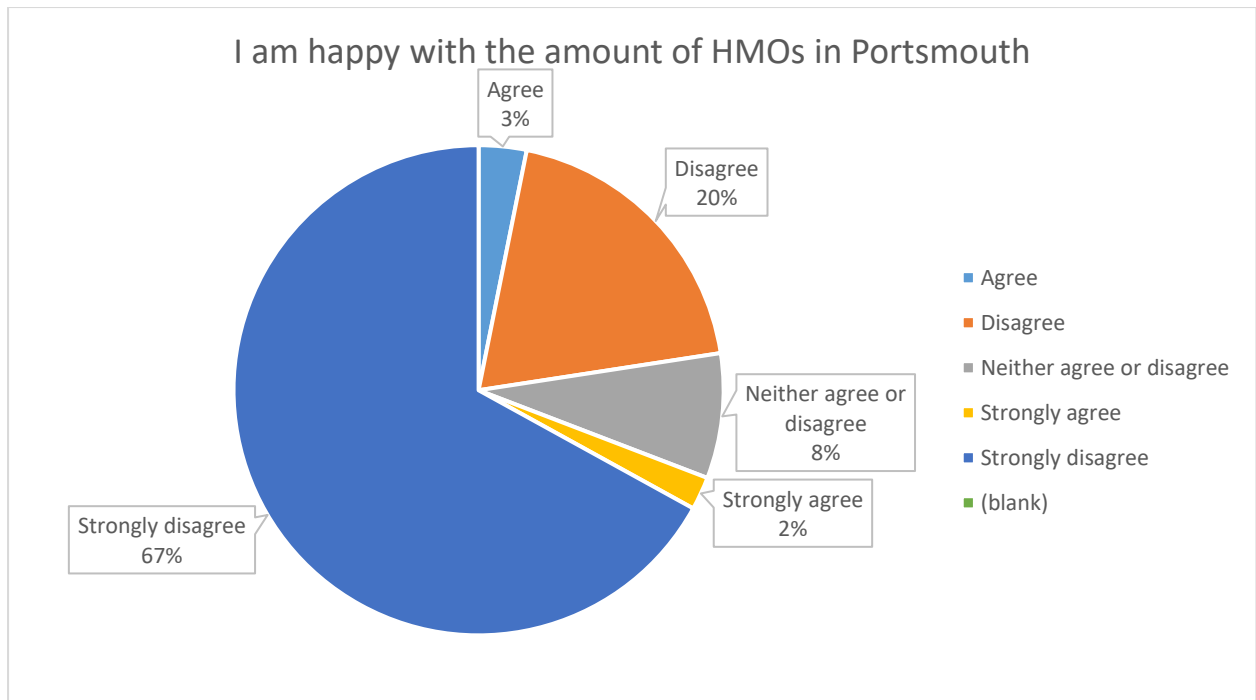
Most residents believed the council should intervene more with HMOs and most wanted the council to do more to tackle bad landlords. A similar response was given regarding tackling "bad tenants". 83% of residents felt that the University should do more to tackle problem student HMOs.



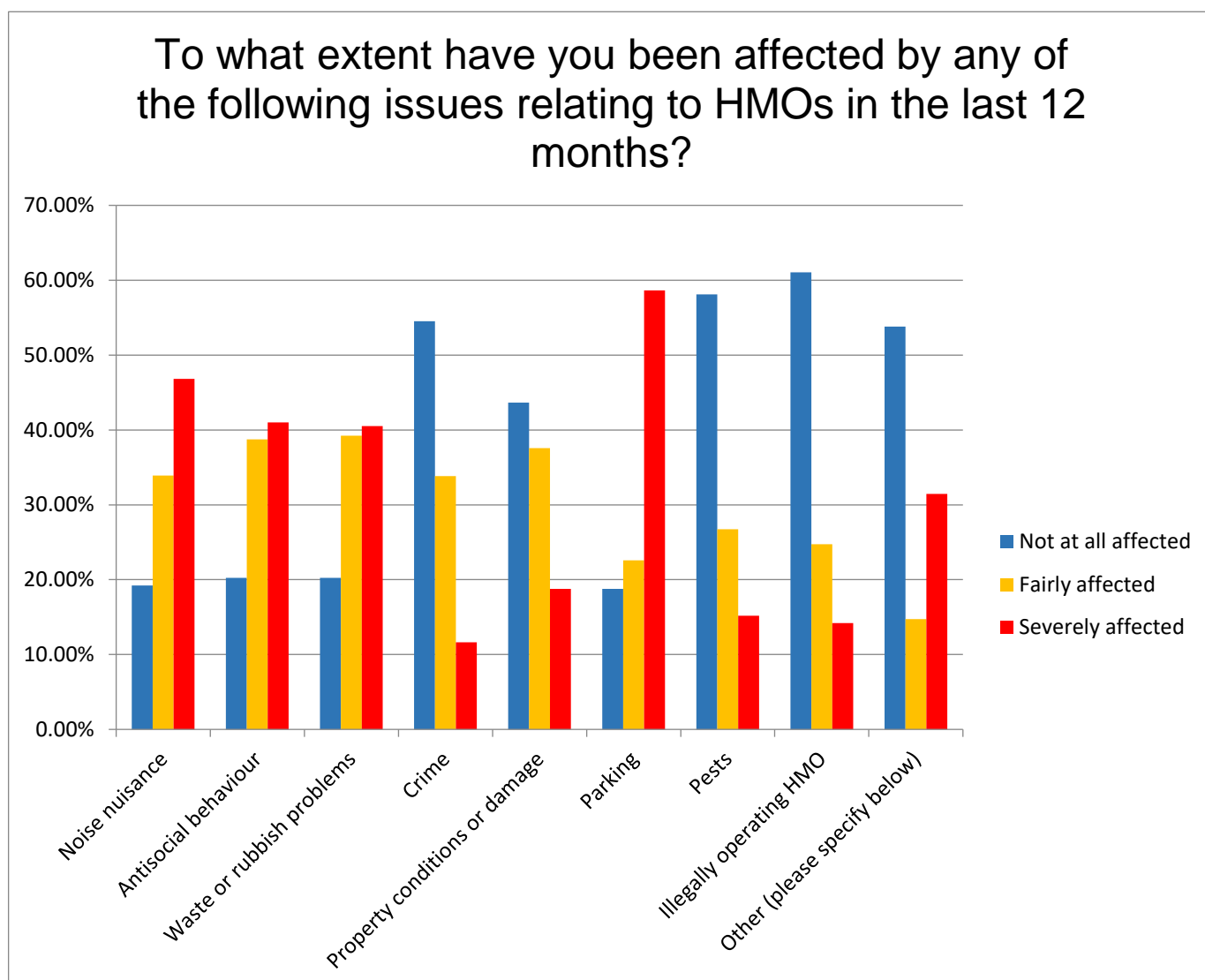


Residents told the council in the survey that they were not happy with the volume of HMOs in Portsmouth with only 5% saying they were happy with the number of HMOs in Portsmouth.

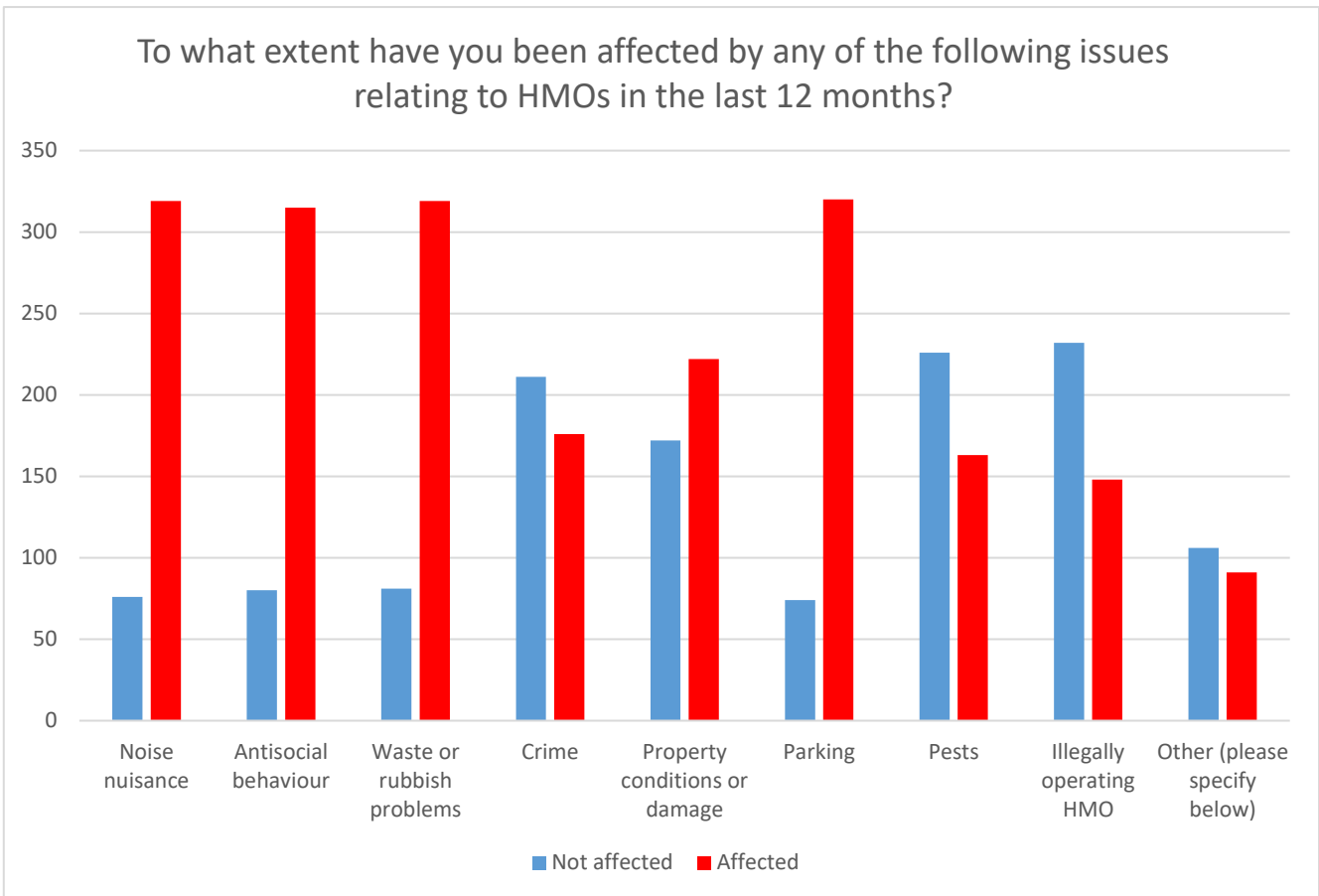




The survey asked a series of questions to indicate what issues residents were most impacted by, whether these issues were reported and who these were reported to. The below chart illustrates these key areas residents feel impacted by:

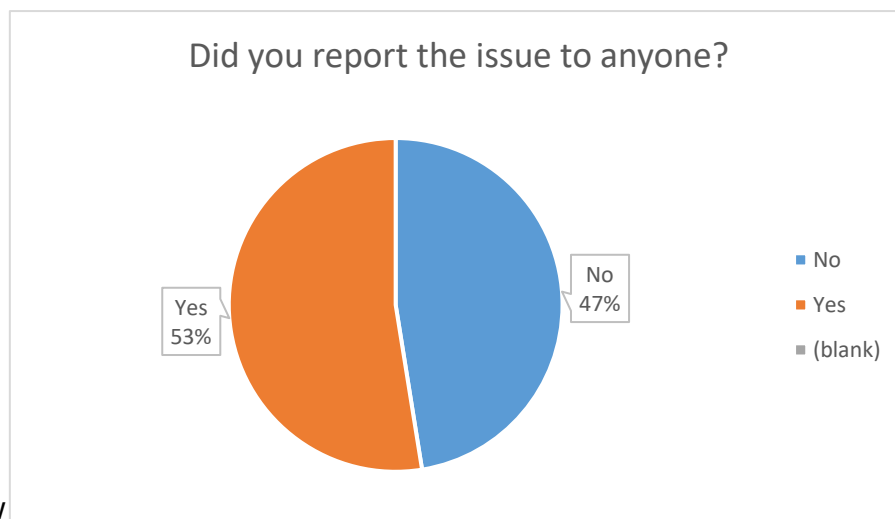


The below gives a representation of this with fairly and severely affected responses combined to show the overall highest areas residents feel impact by:

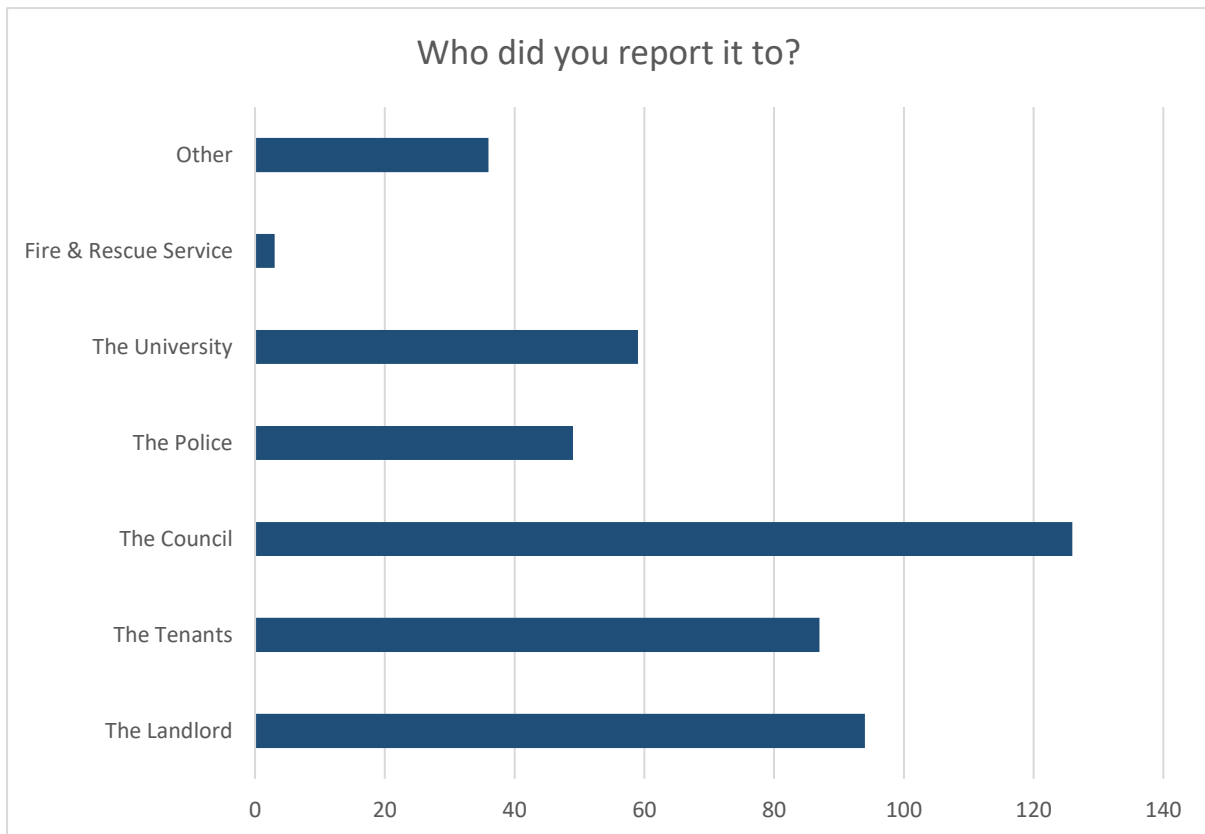


The above table shows that the main issues which residents say impact them from HMOs are: Parking, noise nuisance, waste or rubbish and antisocial behaviour. More said they were not affected by crime, pests and illegally operating HMOs than those who responded to tell the council they were.

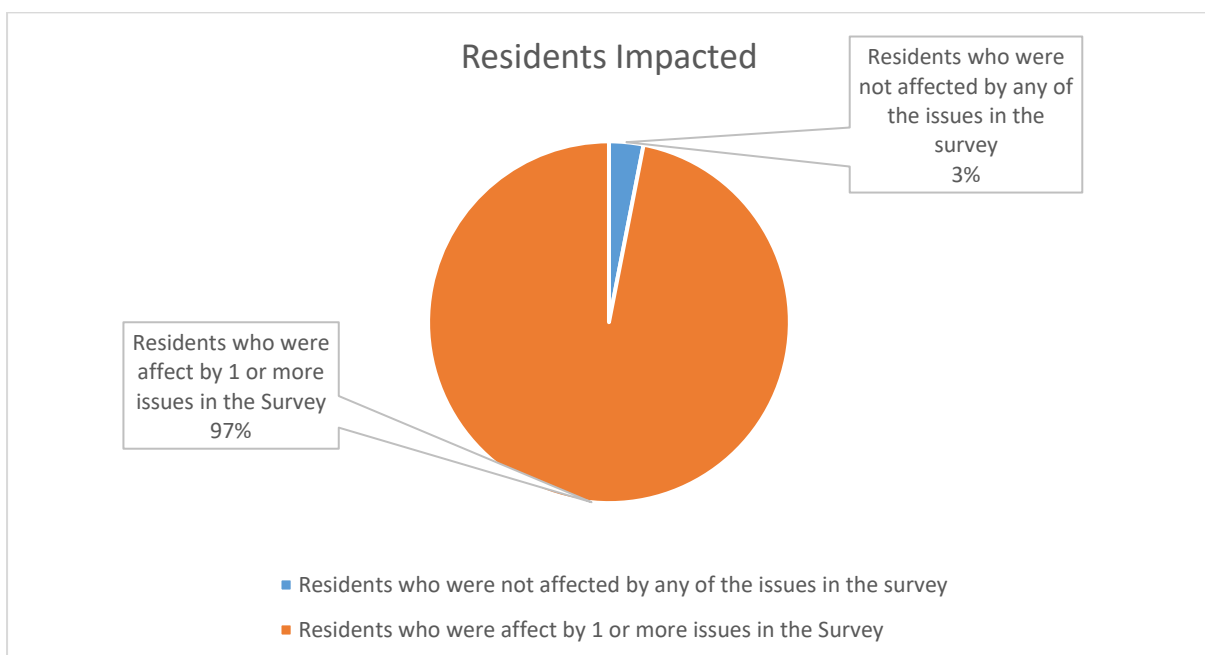
Residents were asked if they had reported any of these issues, 53% responded to say they had.



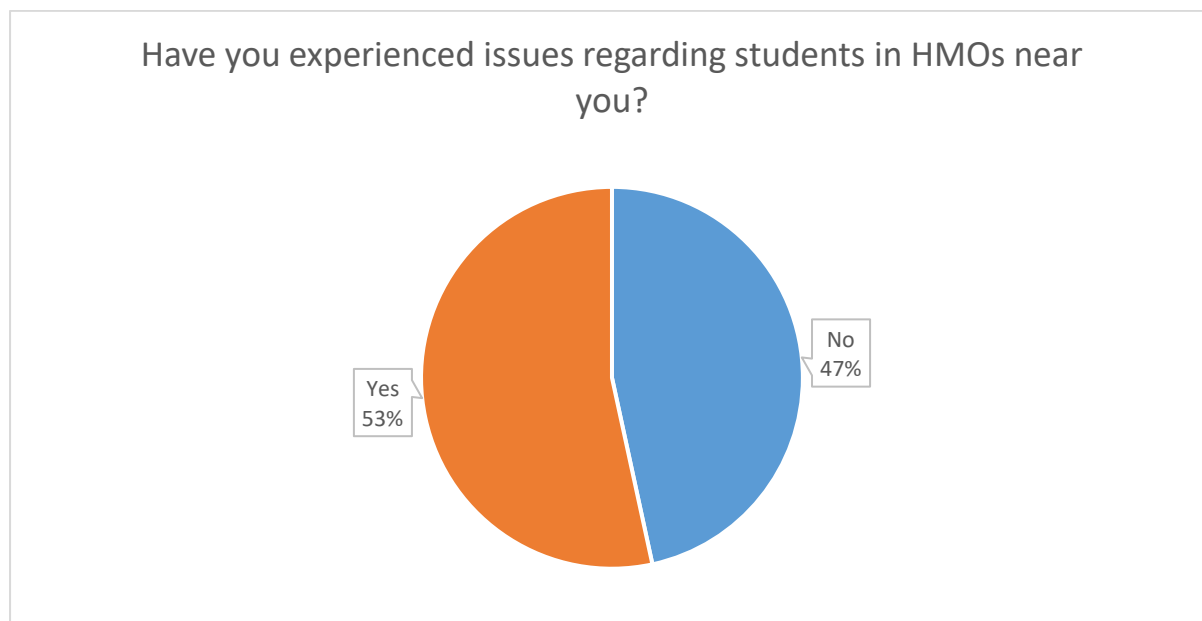
The below



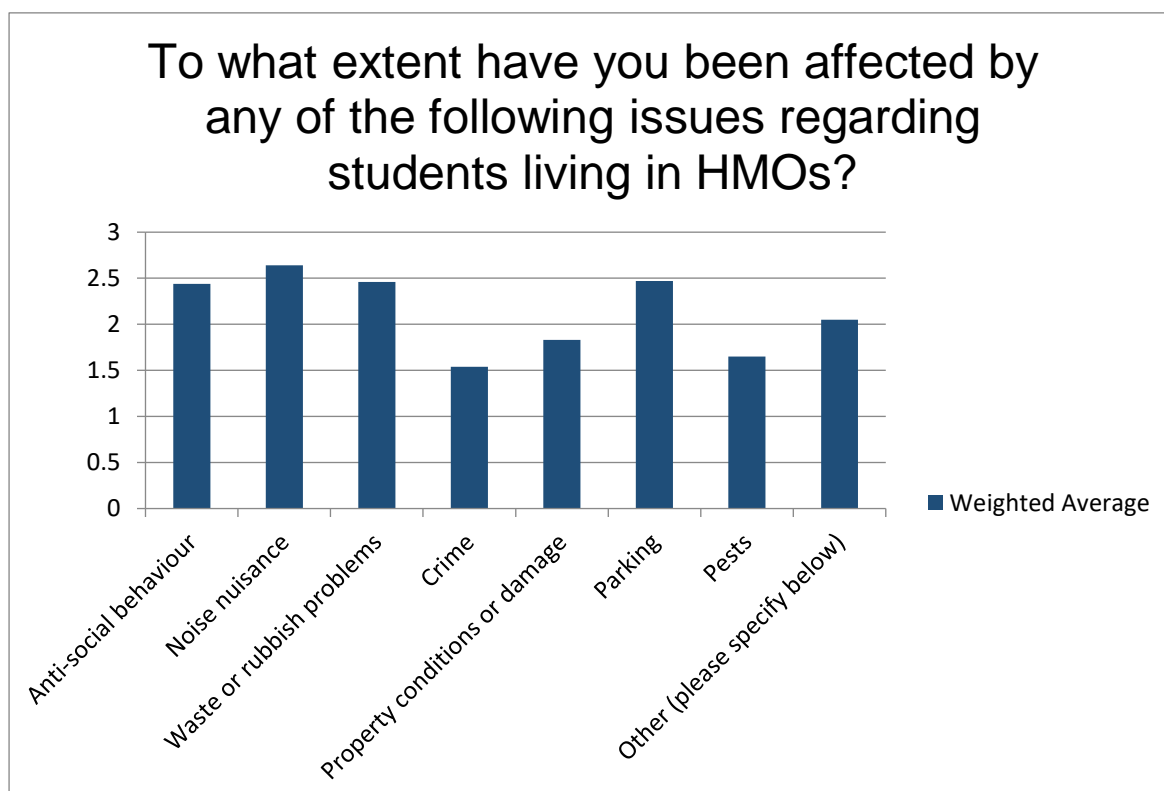
Very few residents responded to the survey said they were not impacted by any of the issues raised.



A separate series of questions was asked regarding residents who had experienced issues regarding students in HMOs near them.

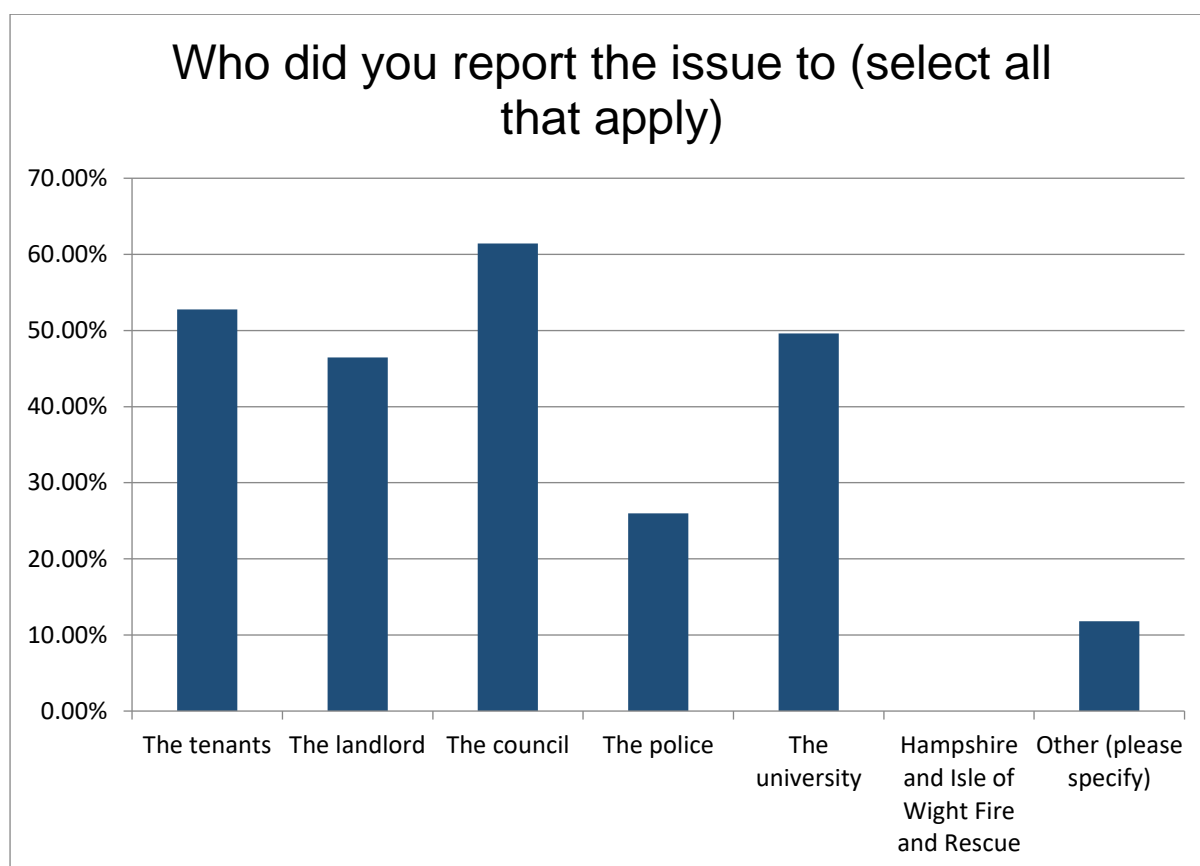


61% of those affected said that they had reported these issues. The below table illustrates the weighted average of issues resident told the council impacted them regarding student HMOs:



Similar to themes seen in all HMO responses, residents told the council noise issues and parking are ranked as having the highest impact on residents as a result of student HMOs. Comments made within the "other" category which were not captured in the main survey categories however included, a diminished sense of community, excessive building works and effect on property value.

The below shows where these issues were reported:



### Findings and conclusion: I am part of the wider community who lives or works near HMOs

It is clear from the survey data and responses given at public drop in events that residents feel the most negatively impacted by HMOs as a group.

Residents told the council that the main areas they felt negatively impacted were: parking, noise nuisance, anti-social behaviour and waste/rubbish. Residents attributed these issues towards the volume of HMOs in Portsmouth, which they felt was too high and that this had created an imbalance within their communities. Residents told the council they wanted to see more done to tackle bad landlords and tenants, and wished to see the university do more to tackle problems students.

Most residents who attended drop in events spoke about a concern that HMOs were getting bigger, as a way for landlords to increase revenue without breach planning

rules regarding numbers of HMO in the city. Residents said that larger HMOs impacted on them more due to increased parking demand, anti-social behaviour due to less cohesive living arrangements and more noise being generated by an increase in adults in the property.

The results of the survey showed that 97% of residents who responded were impacted by HMOs. Of those who experienced issues with HMOs 53% reported these, with most reports being made to the council, tenants, landlords and the university. It is not known why 47% of residents have not reported issues which have impacted them. However a likely contributing factor is a feeling that issues will not or cannot be resolved, as expressed by some residents during drop in events.

Similar findings were seen regarding student HMOs and the impacts these can have on residents. 53% of residents told the council they were impacted by student HMOs, with 61% of those affected reporting these issues. Issues experienced from students resemble other HMOs, however a bigger impact from noise nuisance can be seen.

Most residents who took part in the survey were working age adults. It is likely that some of the issues experienced are as a result of conflicting lifestyles between HMO tenants and local residents. This may be more evident regarding student occupied HMOs and their neighbours. This was reflected in some of the feedback given by residents during drop in events.

The overall theme from residents suggests that behaviours of some HMO tenants, such as noise nuisance, antisocial behaviour and waste issues, have a negative impact on local residents and communities. Increased population density and the effects this has on space available also has an impact, as seen in reports of parking availability as a result of HMOs. Some feedback from residents gives a view that landlords, the council and in some circumstances the university should do more to educate tenants who disregard their community or neighbours.