

INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights the key findings from our housing survey of UNISON members, which was conducted to find out more about the housing problems our members across the UK are facing.

Primary concerns

774 of UNISON members responded to the survey. The majority of respondents were from Eastern Region (32.8%) and South Eastern Region (23.2%). This reflects the serious housing shortages and affordability issues in those regions.

The survey identified four primary concerns:

- High cost of housing
- Impact of Covid-19 on housing costs and living standards
- Quality of housing
- Commuting costs

Costs of Housing

The high costs of housing is hitting household budgets and affecting living standards.

- 27.8% said the cost of housing is making them look elsewhere to live and work – a figure that rises to 48.2% for health workers in the private rented sector
- 60.8% said they were really struggling to manage financially or are just about managing
- Housing costs are up to £300 a week for 14.4% of people
- 9.2% say their housing is unsatisfactory, but it is all they can afford
- 11.8% say they want to move but can't afford to
- 10.1% say their adult children cannot afford to move out or find a place of their own

Impact of Covid-19 on housing costs and living standards

Our survey showed that a number of our members have been severely impacted by the pandemic, putting some at risk of eviction and homelessness in the coming months.

- 34.9% had lost income/seen their income reduced due to the economic impact of Covid-19
- 10.4% have missed rent/deferred mortgage payments or have fallen into arrears
- 6.4% are struggling to pay their housing costs
- 9.9% are struggling to pay household bills
- 12.1% are getting into debt, and are worried about losing all or some of their income
- 3.2% have been threatened with – or faced - eviction and homelessness

Quality of housing / housing situation

Properties in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) are generally poorly maintained.

- **100%** of those renting from the PRS said their landlord does not maintain their home to an adequate standard.
- **17.6%** in overcrowded homes or have fewer rooms than is required with some children/family members having to share a room

Commuting and housing

Our survey identified that some people are spending large proportions of their income on housing or a lot of time and money on long commutes:

- 23.4% spend more than £1000 a year getting to work
- 27.8% would like to live nearer their workplace. In London the figure is 36.4%.
- 5% of respondents spend over an hour to travel to and from work

Housing circumstances of UNISON members

Owner occupied (paying with a mortgage)	35.6%
Owner occupied (mortgage paid)	20.9%
Rent privately	19.3%
Rent from a council or housing association	17%
Other (including shared/part ownership)	3.3%

SOLUTIONS

Our members **want to see action to solve the housing crisis and would like to see the following measures introduced (during and after the pandemic):**

- **96.2%** say the government should do more to address the housing shortage of affordable homes. Figure is 100% for respondents from London.
- **74.1%** say provide councils and housing associations with funding to build 150,000 new social and genuinely affordable homes per year. This figure rises to 78.5% for respondents from London.
- **68.0%** Provide councils with adequate funding to house the vulnerable (rough sleepers and homeless households) during and after the pandemic
- **63.7%** End the five-week wait for universal credit and housing benefit
- **62.1%** Provide funding for councils to take back sub-standard accommodation from private landlords
- **58.4%** Legislation to set fair rents and limit increases in the private rented sector.
- **55.9%** Suspend evictions/re possessions for the duration of the pandemic
- **47.6%** Put in place clear guidance on how rent arrears can be minimised, through clearer guidance to landlords backed by legislation
- **44.9%** Give tenants longer to pay back rent arrears
- **43.6%** End the bedroom tax and repeal the two-child limit
- **42.8%** Raise local housing allowance (housing benefit) to cover average rents in local areas
- **39.4%** Scrap no-fault evictions by introducing indefinite, permanent tenancies
- **32.2%** End the benefit cap, which hits families with high housing costs
- **24.4%** Lift the caps on property size restrictions on housing benefit for private renters

FURTHER INFORMATION: Email: policy@unison.co.uk

UNISON Housing Website: <https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/community/key-issues/housing/>