



Sandwell MBC TSM Survey

Prepared by: Acuity Research & Practice



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Introduction

To conform with the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing, the survey aimed to achieve a minimum response from 2,212 tenants. The survey also included the properties in the Sandwell PFI scheme which are managed by Riverside. This report focuses on the results from the tenants excluding these from the PFI scheme, the results of which are shown separately in Appendix 1.

The survey aimed to complete 20% of the responses using an online option and 80% by telephone interview. The fieldwork for the online survey started on the 21st of August when all those with an email address were sent a message with a link to the survey. From the 4th of September all those not responding or without email addresses were included in the telephone survey. Quotas were used based on tenure, area and age to ensure the sample represents the whole tenant population. The survey closed on the 9th of October, but there was a delay completing the PFI survey, before all results were collated.

When all the responses were collated, a total of 2,352 responses were received, 543 online (23%) and 1,809 by phone (77%). This includes 79 from the PFI properties.

The survey is confidential, and the results are sent back to Sandwell MBC anonymised unless residents give their permission to be identified – 79% of tenants did give permission to share their name and 94% of these tenants are happy for Sandwell MBC to contact them to discuss any issues they raised.

The aim of this survey is to provide data on tenants' satisfaction, which will allow Sandwell MBC to:

- Provide information on tenants' perceptions of current services
- Compare the results with previous surveys, where possible
- Compare the results with other landlords (where appropriate)
- Report on the Sandwell PFI separately
- Report to the regulator from April 2024 onwards.

For the overall results, Acuity, Housemark and the Regulator of Social Housing recommend that landlords with over 25,000 properties achieve a sampling error of at least $\pm 2\%$ at the 95% confidence level. For Sandwell MBC, 2,352 responses were received, and this response is high enough to conclude that the findings are accurate to within $\pm 1.93\%$, so within the requirement and giving good accuracy of results.

The majority of figures throughout the report show the results as percentages. The percentages are rounded up or down from two decimal places in the data files to the nearest whole number, and for this reason, may not in all cases add up to 100%. Rounding can also cause percentages described in the supporting text to differ from the percentages in the charts by 1% when two percentages are added together.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council owns around 28,000 homes in the West Midlands and also has around 1,300 leaseholders.

The Council commissioned Acuity to undertake annual, independent satisfaction surveys of the tenants of Sandwell MBC to collect data on their opinions of, and attitudes towards, their landlord and the services provided. In addition, the Council's leaseholders will be surveyed bi-annually, and these will be reported separately

The survey was designed using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures from the Regulator of Social Housing, which became mandatory in April 2023 and will be reported for the first time in 2024.



74%

Overall Satisfaction

TP01

The survey for 2023/24, carried out in the autumn of 2023, found a number of very good scores; three-quarters of tenants being satisfied with the overall services provided by the Council

The highest levels of satisfaction are for the provision of a safe home (77%), the repairs service in the last 12 months and treating tenants fairly and with respect (both 76%).

However, at the other end of the scale, fewer than 60% of tenants are satisfied with the way the Council listens to their views and act upon them (57%), deals with anti-social behaviour (55%) and handles complaints (28%).

Key Metrics Summary 2023



71% Well maintained home
TP04



55% Anti-social behaviour
TP012



77% Safe home
TP05



67% Easy to deal with



76% Repairs - Last 12 months
TP02



57% Listens & Acts



70% Time taken - Last repair
TP03



68% Keeps you informed
TP07



66% Communal areas clean & well maintained
TP010



76% Treats fairly & with respect
TP08



63% Positive contribution to neighbourhood
TP011



28% Complaints handling
TP09



68% Energy efficiency



39% Promoters

National Context

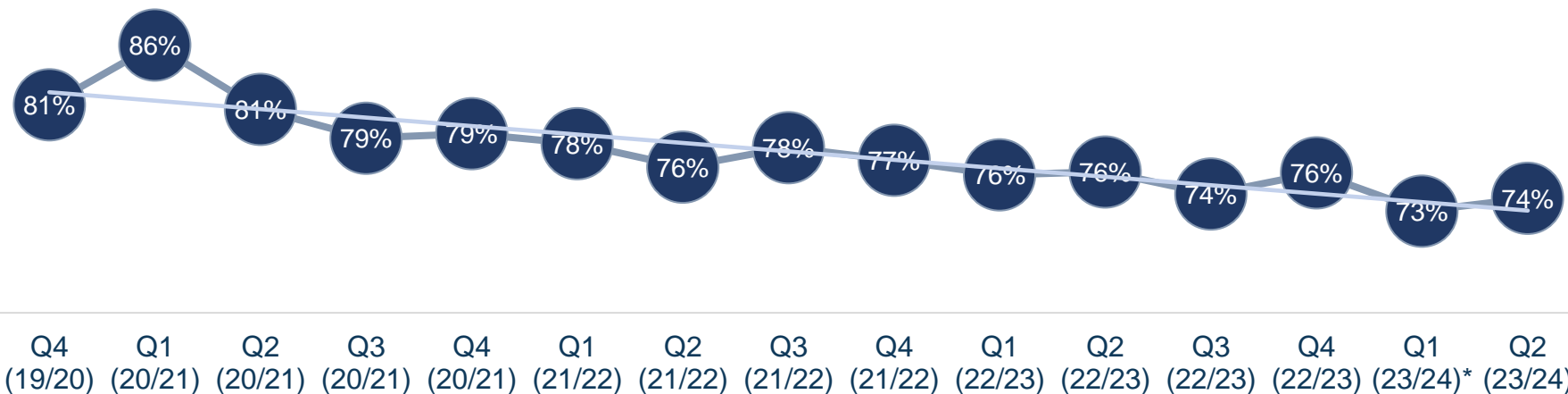
When considering the results, it is important that the national context and external factors should also be taken into account. For example:

- Cost of Living Crisis
- Government & Political Changes
- Uncertainty about the Future
- Brexit and the economy

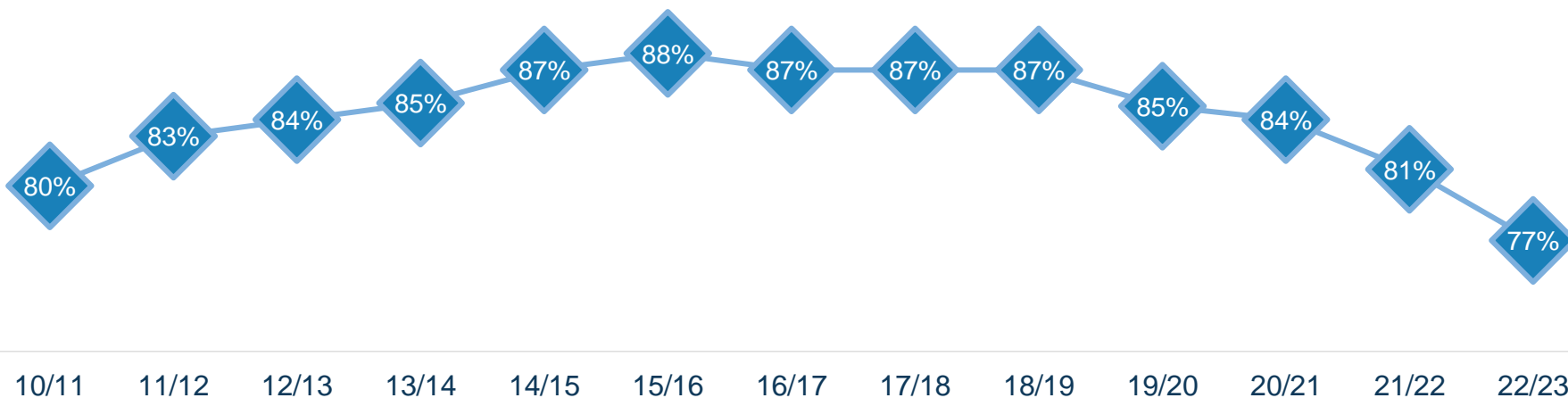
Satisfaction is based on perception rather than specific values so can be affected by these factors and how positive people feel about their lives. Factors such as the pandemic also altered the way social landlords operate, perhaps making them less accessible and responsive.

The top graph demonstrates how overall satisfaction has changed over time for Acuity's clients (tracker only). The trendline is downward over the last few years. The lower chart shows the results from Housemark members with a peak in 2015/16 but a slow decline since, this starting before the disruption caused by the pandemic.

Overall Services (Acuity Clients)



Satisfaction with services provided (NHF/Housemark median - general needs)



*LCRA only onwards

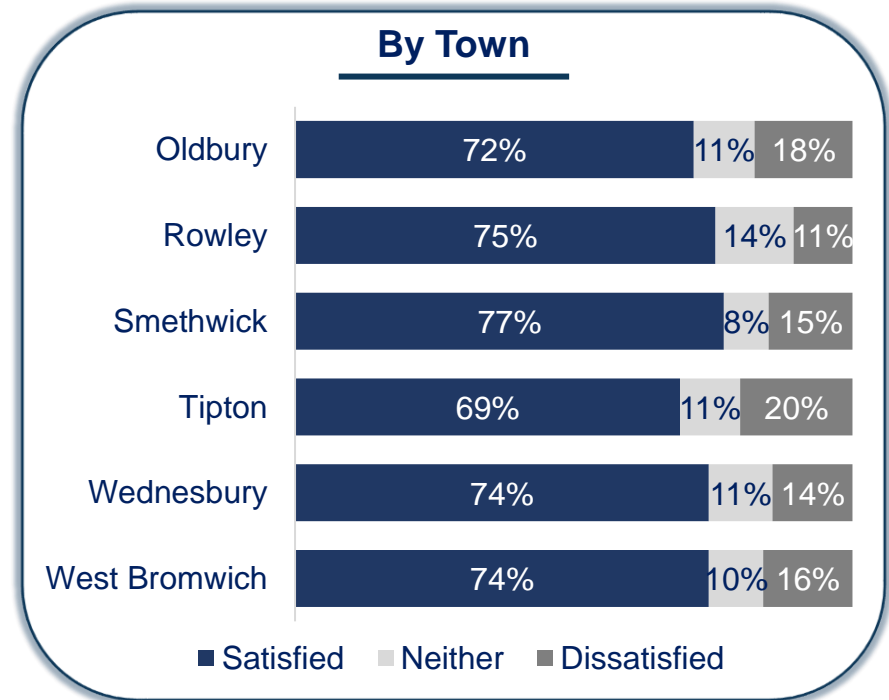
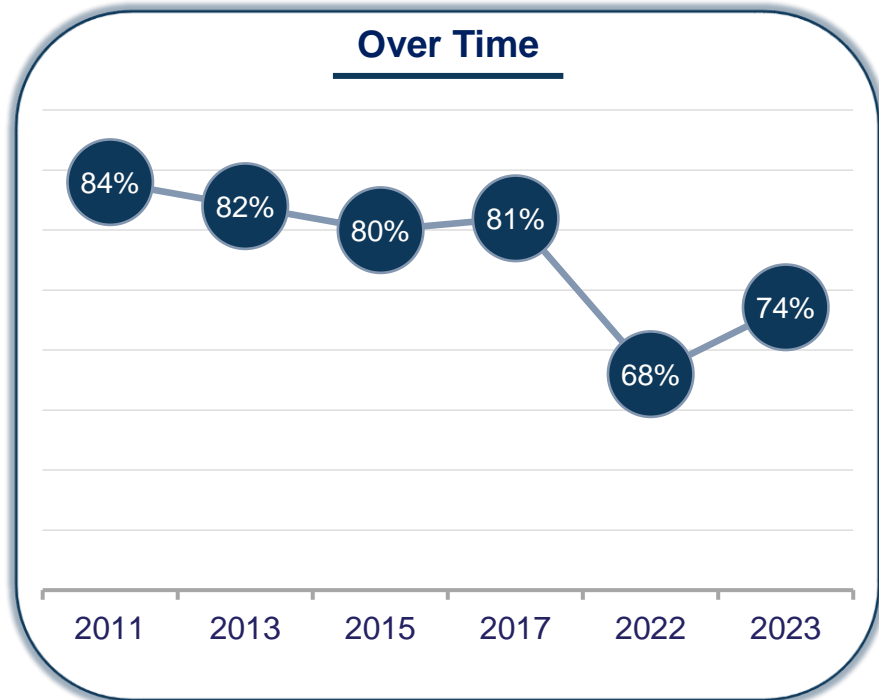
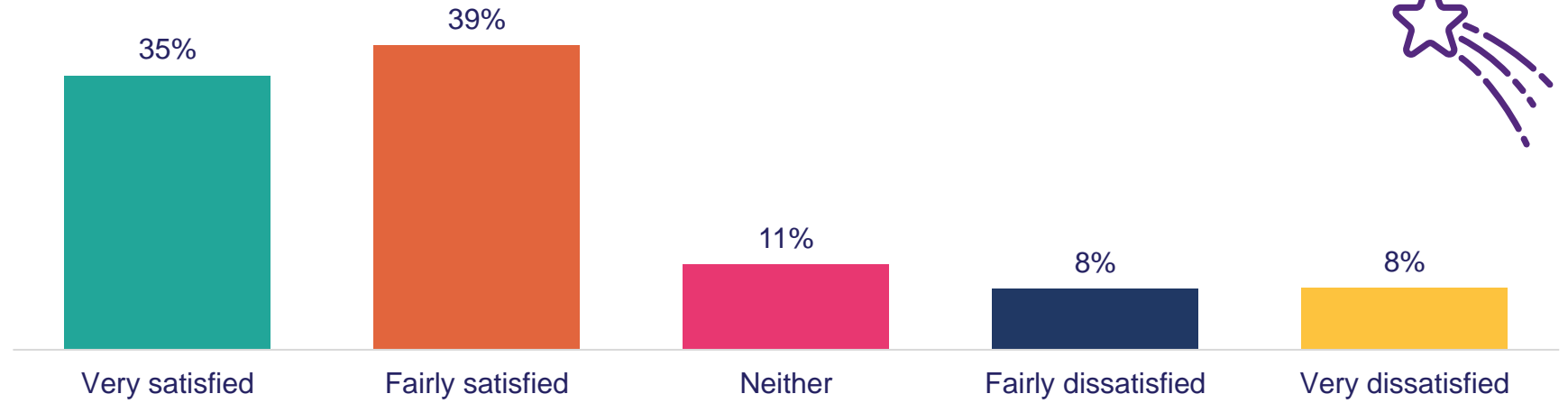


Overall Satisfaction





Overall Satisfaction



Tenants were asked, "Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Sandwell Council Housing Services?" This is the key metric in any tenant perception survey.

Around three-quarters of tenants (74%) are satisfied, although fewer are very satisfied (35%) than fairly satisfied (39%). Just 16% of tenants are dissatisfied with the overall services provided and a further 11% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

When looking at the results from previous surveys, satisfaction was around 80% from 2011 through to 2017. However, in 2022 this took a dip to 68% but in the current survey it has recovered somewhat to 74%.

Sandwell Council operates over six towns within its district but shown here are only those areas where 20 or more responses were received, and the Sandwell PFI properties are excluded but reported separately in Appendix 1.

Of these, the range of satisfaction is relatively small, suggesting a consistent level of service, although those in Smethwick are the most satisfied and those in Tipton the least.



Keeping Properties in Good Repair



Keeping Properties in Good Repair

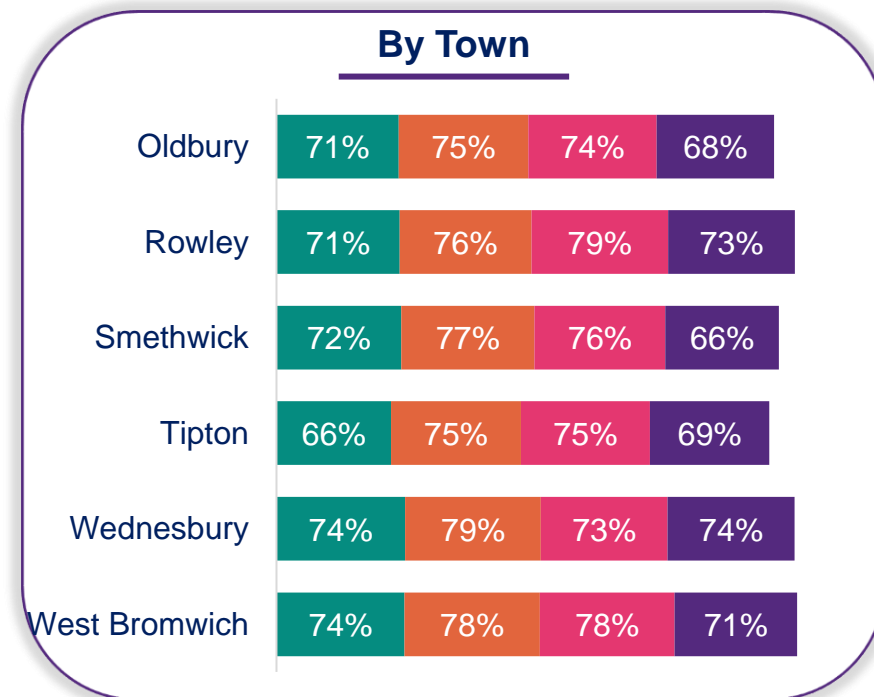
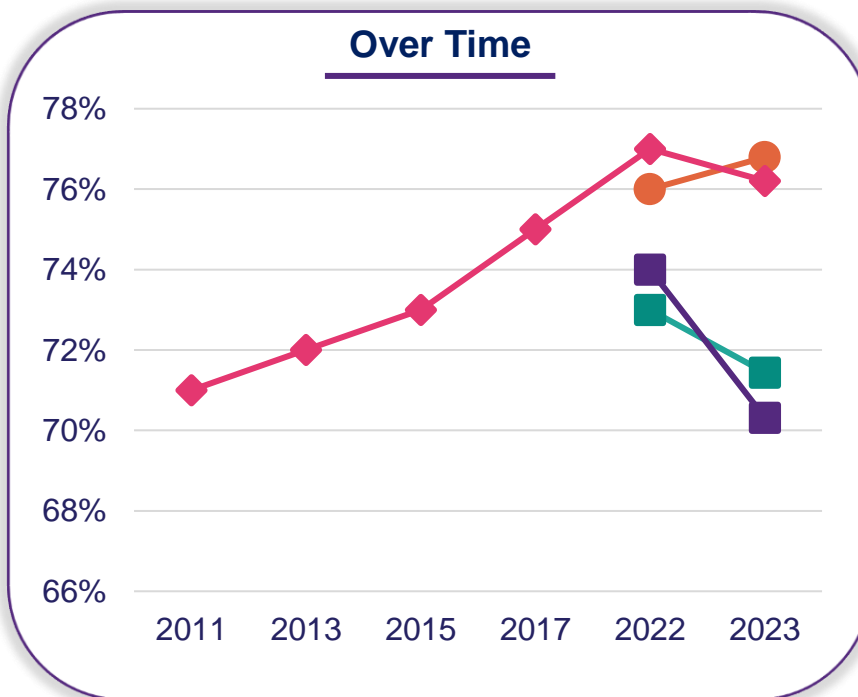
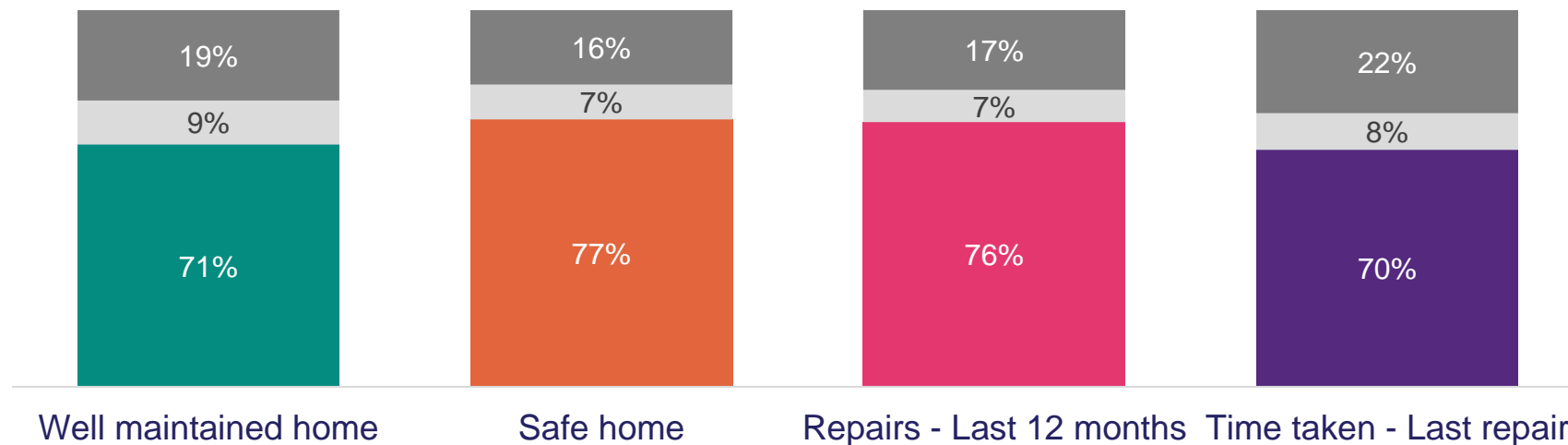
Over three-quarters of tenants (77%) are satisfied that their home is safe, this being up marginally from 2022 (76%). However, 16% are dissatisfied with their home's safety.

Fewer feel their home is well maintained (71%), a fifth being dissatisfied. Satisfaction having fallen 2% since 2022.

Satisfaction with the recent repairs service rose steadily through the years from a low of 71% in 2011 to a high of 77% in 2022. This is now down marginally to 76%.

Satisfaction with the time to complete repairs is lower at 70%, a pattern often seen with other social landlords, and this is also down since 2022 (down 4%).

There is little between the areas in terms of satisfaction with their homes and the repairs service. Those in Wednesbury are a little more satisfied with their home, those in Rowley with the repairs service in the last 12 months and those in Wednesbury again with the time to complete repairs.



Comments – Doesn't Feel Safe

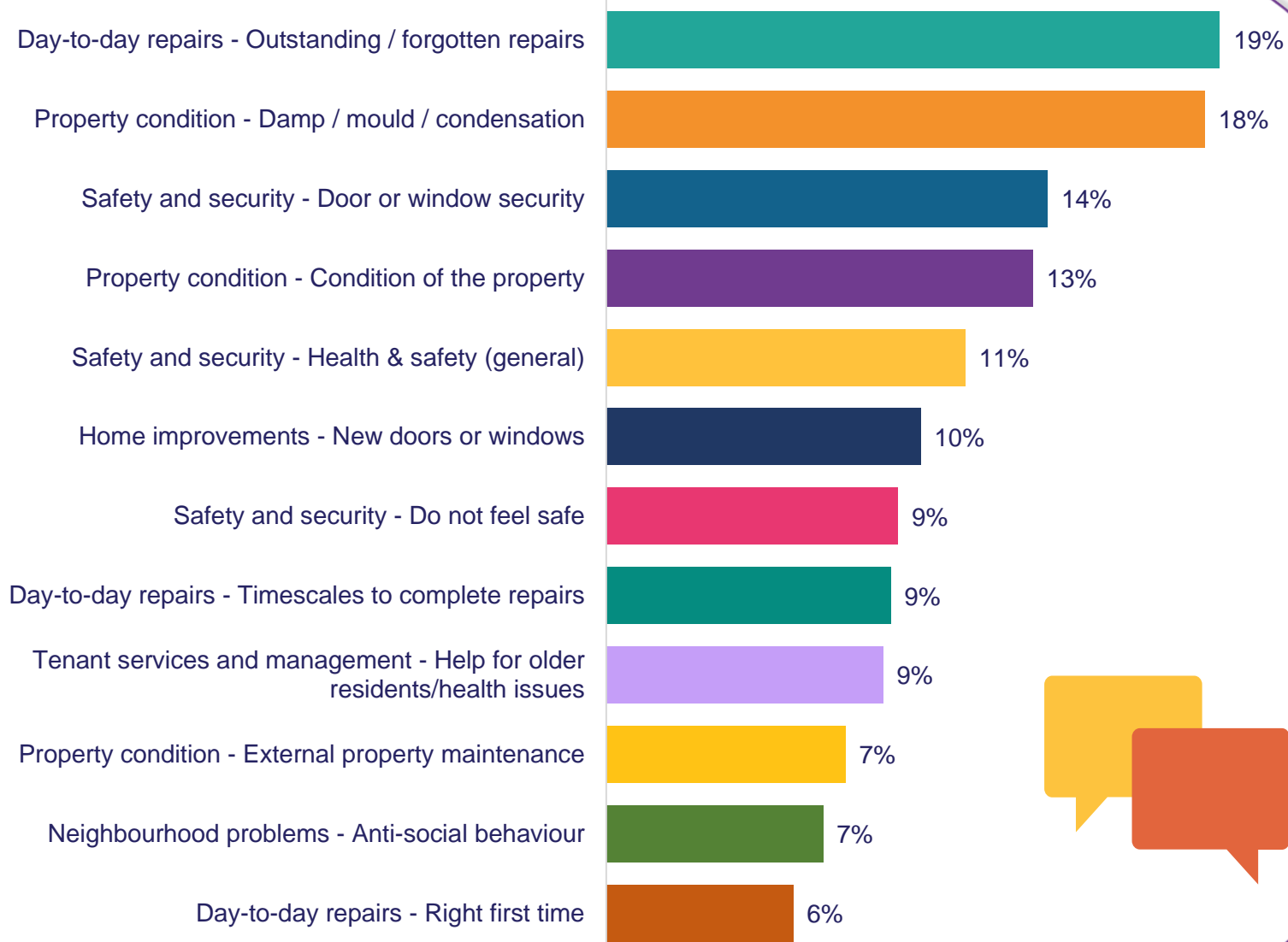
Tenants who do not feel safe in their home were asked to explain why and what could be improved, and 433 tenants made comments.

Dealing with outstanding or forgotten repairs attracted the most comments (19%), followed closely by damp and mould issues. The security of doors and windows also affects the way tenants feel about their homes as does the general condition of their property.

There are 9% of tenants who don't feel safe and 7% say there are issues with anti-social behaviour.

Overleaf are some examples of the comments made.

However, these comments are only from around a fifth of the tenants which suggests that the majority do feel safe.



Number of respondents: 433

Home Doesn't Feel Safe – Comments

Day-to-day repairs – Outstanding/forgotten repairs

“I have been reporting numerous problems regarding the state of my property for some time now and nothing has been done to correct the problems.”

“There are jobs I need doing . I had a leak and need new tiles on the roof which I reported last year .I have heard nothing, and the back gate doesn't close.”

“I have numerous urgent repairs that have been outstanding for too long and are causing the property to be unsafe.”

“There is a loose brick next to my door. You could put your hand through the wall and grab the front door key out of the lock and get into the property. This was reported 4 years ago and needs dealing with . I also have damp around the door.”

“The electric was not wired up properly they had to come again and do it.”

“The house is old. The maintenance service is poor. The electrics and plumbing are old.”

“Repair needed to various aspects of the property.”

Property condition – Damp & mould

“Home is very damp and mould recurring, and wife and child is asthmatic as a result of this.”

“External brickwork not good and internal plastering sub standard and causing damp and mould - has been treated but has reoccurred.”

“Since moving in I've had problems with moisture and damp This in turn has caused an infestation of silverfish and I can't get rid of them.”

“The house is riddled with damp, and they will only do the work if I am staying here. I am disabled and, in a wheelchair, and I can barley fit through the doors as they are not wide enough for my wheelchair.”

“When I got the house, it needed everything doing as it was very outdated therefore, I had to put a lot of work into it to make it livable.”

“Not comfortable and not up to living standard due to lack of insulation and draughts.”

Safety & security

“The external doors are not safe. One bang on the back door and someone could get in.”

“We just have issues with people getting in the building so when people come in and out, there are kids that will put their foot there so the door doesn't close and then they get in the building, and I have to tell them to leave, and other residents have to do that too. Install cameras in the lobby will help.”

“Main entrance security lock not always working.”

“We have no gates or fencing at the front of the property. We can't let children play there as it goes straight onto the road.”

“Door security could be improved.”

“There are drug uses, alcoholics and prostitution and I was stopped last week going to work by a few drug users by the door outside blocking the entrance. I am trying to get out of here due to my health.”

“Safety in the communal areas of the block I live in.”

Property condition

“Not warming quickly and home doesn't keep the heat.”

“The area is safe, but the condition of the house could be better and really improved.”

“Exposed ceiling in the bathroom, missing handrail external and internal, electrics not working properly, cracks to rendering with water seeping through,”

“Lintel fell on me; boiler is not working. Plaster falling off the wall. Bathroom floor is not in great condition.”

“I have rusty pipework inside my bathroom and the outside wall of my bungalow is a disgrace ..I am 70 years of age this year and find this is unacceptable to be living like this.”

“We have cages full of bricks in the garden to support the wall. These are dangerous. When we moved in there was an exposed live wire in the living room.”

“Need soundproof insulation in property.”



Responsible Neighbourhood Management



Just over two-fifths of tenants (43%) live in a building with communal areas that Sandwell MBC is responsible for maintaining. Two-thirds of these tenants are satisfied that the Council keeps their communal areas clean and well maintained (66%). Satisfaction is up by just 1% since last year, however, a quarter of tenants remain dissatisfied.

There are 63% of tenants satisfied that Sandwell MBC makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood, the same as last year but following a fall from 77% in 2017.

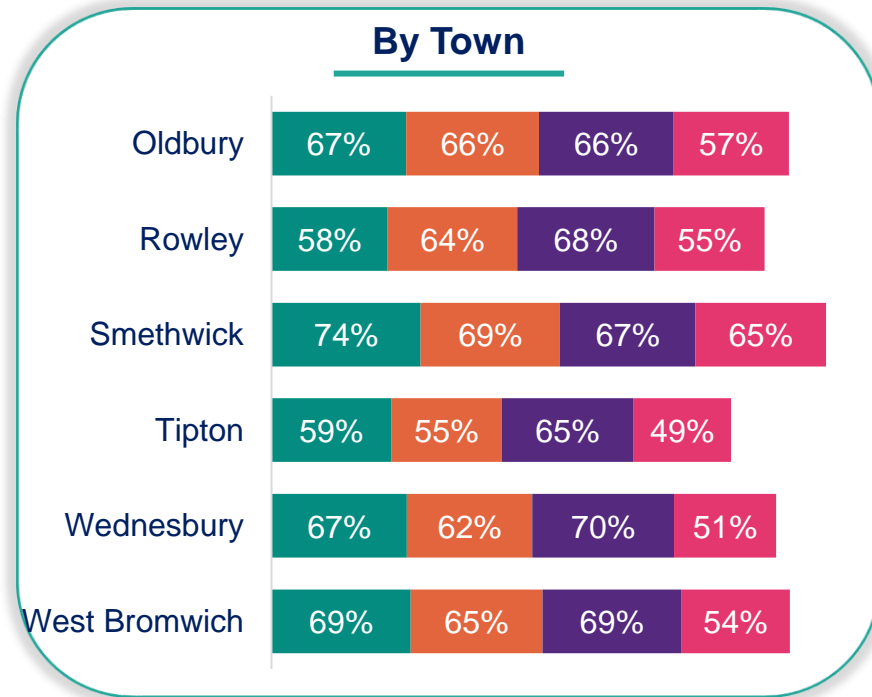
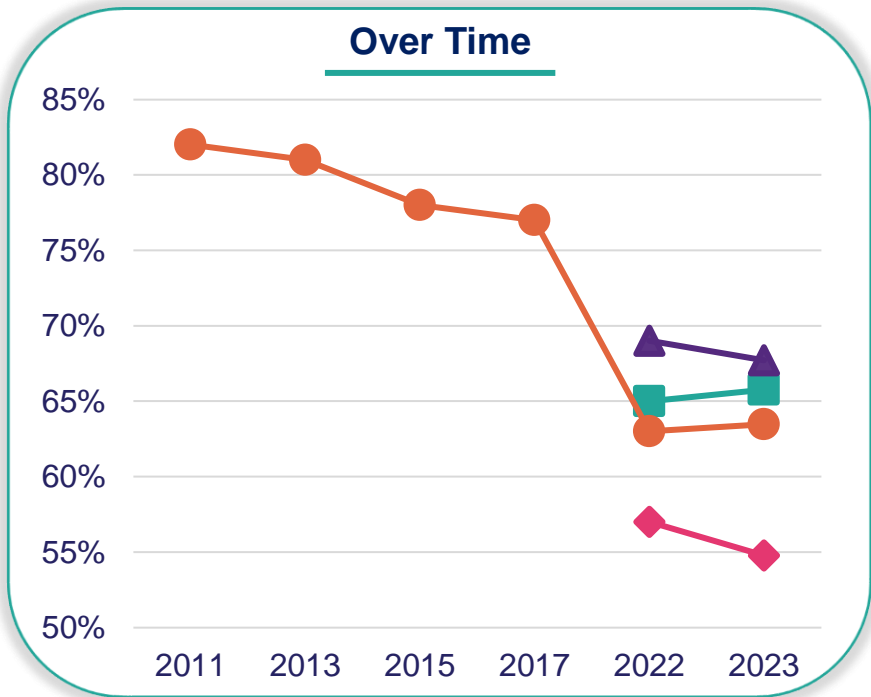
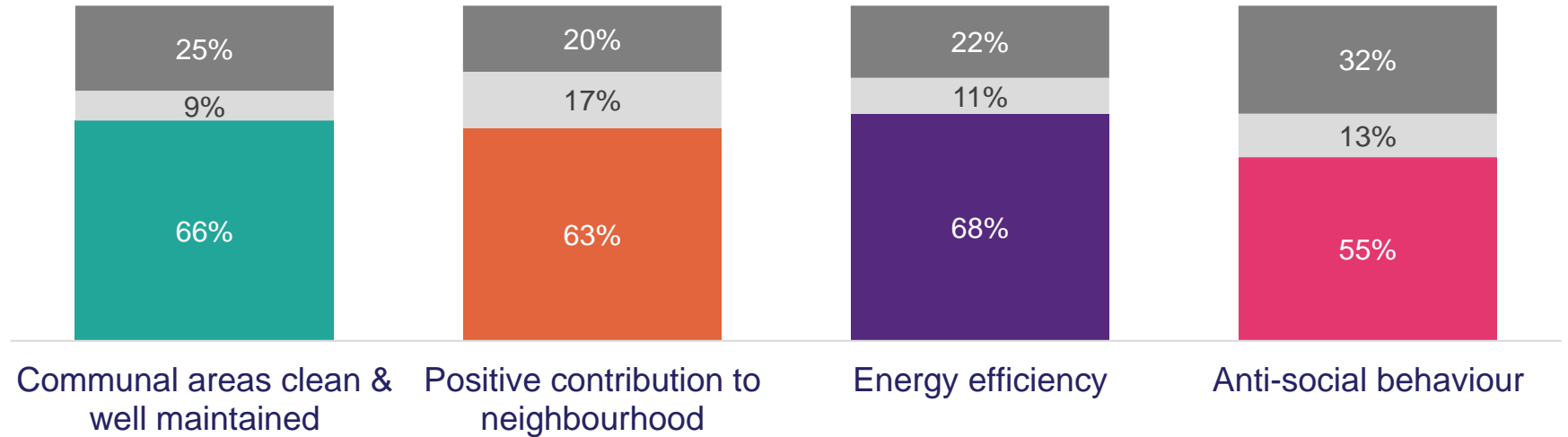
The energy efficiency of the home is seen as good by 68%, although this is down marginally from 69% in 2022, but 22% are dissatisfied with this.

Additionally, satisfaction with how anti-social behaviour is handled has decreased by 2%; down from 57% to 55%. Although, 32% of tenants remain dissatisfied with this measure.

Tenants in Smethwick are the most satisfied with the upkeep of the communal areas, the contribution made to the neighbourhood and the way ASB is dealt with, although it is those in Wednesbury who are the most satisfied with the energy efficiency of their home. Tipton tenants are again the least satisfied.



Responsible Neighbourhood Management





Respectful & Helpful Engagement



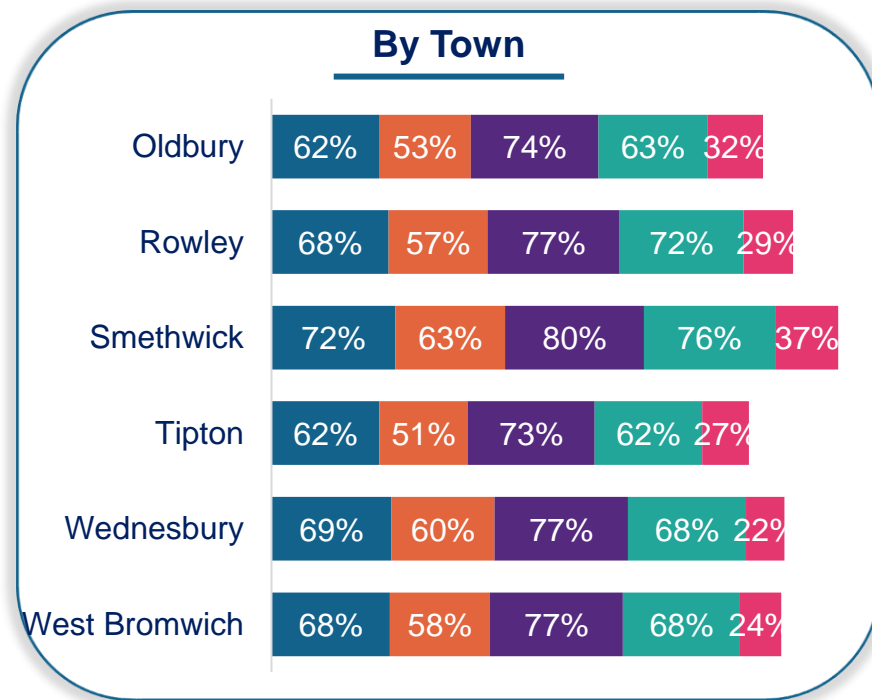
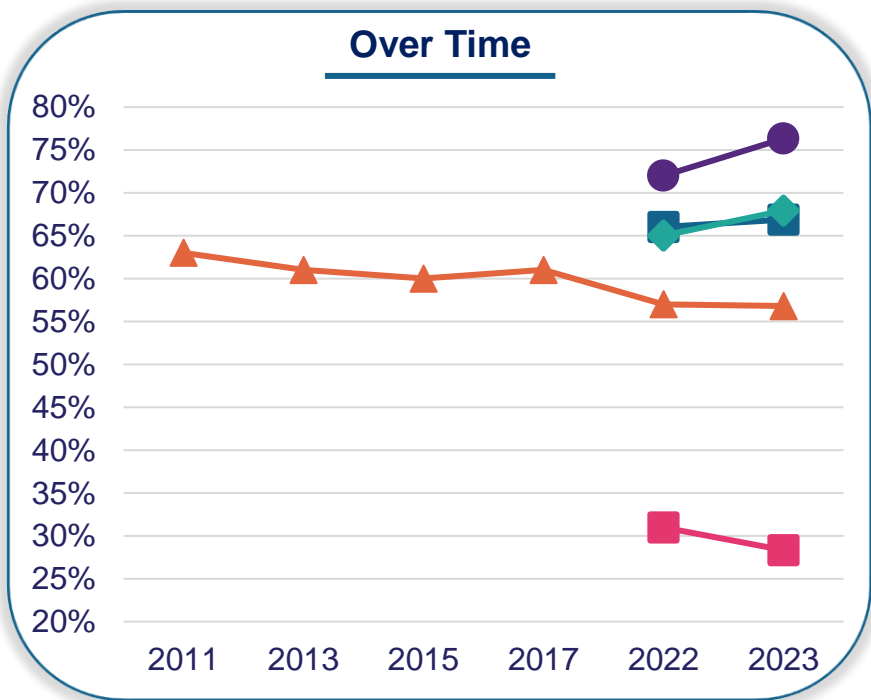
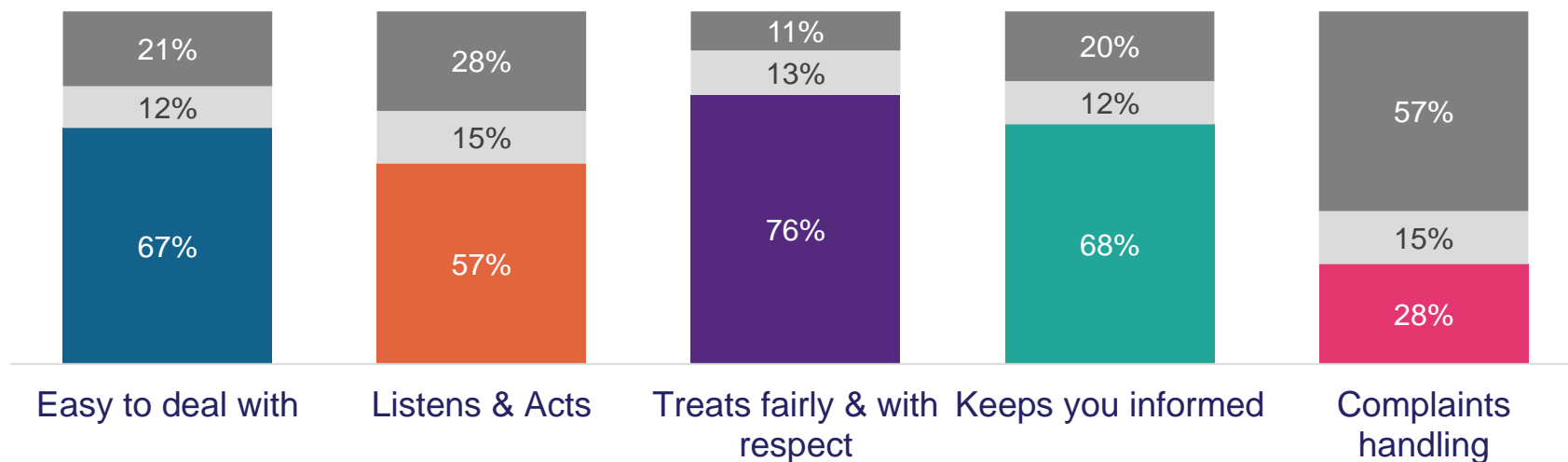
Respectful & Helpful Engagement

Two-thirds of tenants are satisfied with how they are kept informed about things that matter to them (68%), but fewer are satisfied that Sandwell MBC listens to their views and acts upon them (57%). Satisfaction with keeping tenants informed is up 3% whilst for listening to views, satisfaction has remained the same. However, 20% and 28% respectively are dissatisfied.

Three-quarters of tenants agree that they are treated fairly and with respect (76%), up 4% and two-thirds (67%) find Sandwell Council easy to deal with, up 1%.

A quarter of tenants (26%) said they had made a complaint to Sandwell MBC in the last 12 months, although it is not clear how many of these are genuine complaints following a failure of service or service requests yet to be fully actioned. Nevertheless, of these tenants just 28% are satisfied with the way complaints are handled, with twice as many dissatisfied (57%). Satisfaction has decreased from 31% in 2022.

Again, those in Smethwick tend to be the most satisfied and those in Tipton the least.

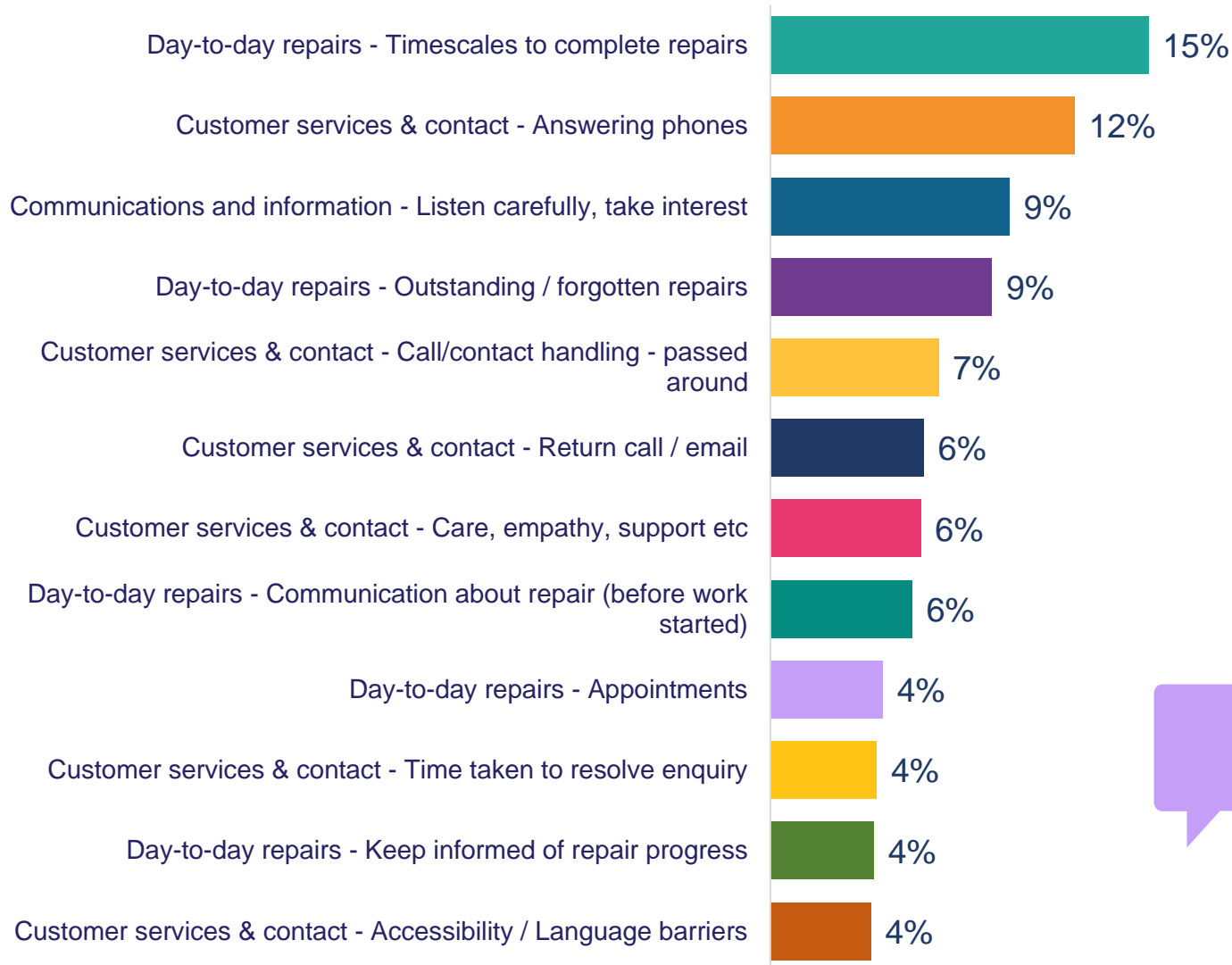


Comments – Customer Service & Communications

Tenants who stated that they are not satisfied with customers service or communications were asked why and what could be improved; 859 residents gave comments.

The timescales to complete repairs tops the list of comments followed quite closely by the way the phones are answered. Other repairs issues are also listed as are other contact problems such as the call handling and returning calls when promised.

Communications issues are mentioned in 9% of the comments, particularly for staff to listen to tenants' concerns more carefully and to take an interest in their issues.



Number of respondents: 859

Customer Service & Communications – Comments

Day-to-day repairs – Timescales to complete repairs

“Well spend more money to improve people’s homes instead of trying to just bodge job them also have more appointment available to be booked into see o there is less of a wait to get jobs done.”

“We have bee waiting for repairs for over 2 years and the council do not keep you informed unless we make contact to find out what is happening.”

“Customer services are to be commended on having to deal with a totally inept repairs dept who constantly fail to deploy work operatives in a reasonable and well-informed timescale.”

“Not to keep you waiting and act upon report.”

“They take too long carrying out repairs.”

“They could do the repairs on time. They don’t always send the right person for the job. There is a lack of internal communication.”

“They could respond more quickly to health and safety.”

Customer service & contact – call handling

“Get rid of automatic response that leads you in circles and then cuts you off.”

“They don’t listen and say that people will call me back and never do.”

“The call waiting time is too long and the out of hours communication is quite poor.”

“Trying to talk to someone about anything other than repairs is awful. The automated line never lets you actually speak to someone.”

“They need to improve their phone services and the my Sandwell website. Its almost impossible to get through to the department you need!”

“They are difficult to get hold of on the phone.”

“It takes ages to answer, and they never phone you back. You have to chase them or go down to the office.”

“Answer the phones for a start. We make a phone call, and we are stuck waiting sometime.”

Communications & information – Listen carefully, take interest

“Listen for starters.”

“I don’t think they do take any notice of what we have to say, and we don’t get enough input.”

“They need to listen more to tenants and look at each individual case.”

“We can call about a repair and we have to chase them for weeks but don’t get anywhere, when we do put in a repair they don’t listen.”

“Listen more and act more on what people are actually saying , as sometimes we talk to them, and they have strict rules and they cannot or will not go against them and they should be a bit more flexible.”

“They just don’t listen, when you phone them, they sound disinterested, not everybody but 99% of the time and then they just try to palm you off.”

“They should listen and understand the tenants’ requirements before allocating house to them. Also be aware of child wellbeing and their mental health and social circles.”

Day-to-day repairs – Other issues

“Very hard to contact especially if multiple issues each one has to be logged separately.”

“I have reported in person, over the phone and on my account about my shared balcony needing to be cleaned because it was a mess when I moved in 5 months ago and still nothing has happened.”

“Communication needs improvement. Workmen turn up on the wrong day and then the office cancelled the correct date after.”

“They need to keep in contact about repair timelines.”

“There is a lack of communication. When you report a repair, it is often not logged, and you have to chase it up.”

“The inspector that has come around my house has treated me like a piece of dirt. He is telling me to turn off my heating in the winter when I have COPD and am 62.”

“They should be communicating things at the right time, keep a check on the work progress.”



Improvements



Improvement Suggestions

Tenants were asked if there was one thing Sandwell MBC could do to improve its services, what would they like it to be, and 1,998 tenants gave comments.

15% of the comments are positive about the current service and a further 7% of tenants had no suggestions, perhaps also feeling no improvements are needed.

However, 21% of the comments focus on repairs, in particular tenants want repairs done quicker and outstanding repairs dealt with.

Almost as many comments mention customer service, some wanting the staff to show them more care, empathy and support whilst others struggle with accessibility.

Categories



Number of respondents: 1,998



Improvements to Service – Comments

Positive comments

“I am satisfied with Sandwell Council services it does not need to improve anything.”

“Nothing really, customer services is easy enough to get through to, so all good.”

“Just to carry on doing what they’re doing, I think they’re doing a good job.”

“She has lived there for 57 years, and she is more than happy there.”

“Everything is fine, we are happy with the services.”

“To be fair if we need anything or any help we can get the right ones, some people look for help and do not get it. I need to apply for the next property and hopefully I will get it soon.”

“I think so far whenever I rang Sandwell Council, they have been okay and they have listened, so I cannot think of any improvements.”

“I do not know as I am quite satisfied.”

Day to day repairs

“Faster on repairs. Plus, better telephone service for repairs.”

“Make sure that incomplete repairs are followed up until completed.”

“Do the work right with better quality fixtures and fittings.”

“Have the right information. Be more flexible with appointments ask the engineer to give you a call/text hour before when he’s on the way.”

“Definitely improve on things that have been reported and do not get done or workers turn up and haven’t got down the right instructions for your repair.”

“Make it easier to speak to someone directly about repairs.”

“I live on the 2nd floor, and I don’t always hear the workmen arrive. It would be good if they could text me just before arriving so I don’t miss the appointment.”

“Repairs need to be better organised especially when booked online.”

Customer service & contact

“To listen and get the problem sorted.”

“Make phoning Sandwell Council much quicker.”

“Answer the phones and not get sidetracked.”

“Customer service needs improving and way they talk and treat tenants.”

“Make the phone system easier to use. Actually have people answering phones instead of automated that aren’t relevant to what you need. Absolutely no need to hear 5 minutes of recorded messages at start of call.”

“To train their staff to speak with respect on phone and in person.”

“It would be good if they could provide a translator, somebody who so speaks, Urdu, Panjabi and Hindi.”

“They need to listen and do what they say they will.”

“To be easier to contact.”

Communications & information

“Improved communication.”

“Regular visits, maybe on a yearly basis.”

“To listen to what we are saying then act upon it instead of taking months.”

“Have face to face talks with tenants about the area they live in.”

“An online chat forum to make it easier to report repairs and explain in detail.”

“They need to do a better job at informing tenants about everything.”

“The maintenance website, make it easier to order multiple repairs.”

“They need to have more contact with tenants to ensure everything is ok, social and housing wise.”

“They need to be clearer about what support services are available for the elderly tenants.”

“Communicate more effectively with the tenants.”



Trends



Year on Year Change

This table shows the differences in satisfaction between the current survey and the one completed last year.

As can be seen, the changes are small, although 6% more are satisfied with the overall services provided by Sandwell MBC.

Of the remaining measures, some have increased in satisfaction a little, including the repairs service and upkeep of communal areas (both up 1%) and 3% more are satisfied with the way they are kept informed and 4% with how they are treated fairly and with respect.

However, the provision of a well-maintained home is down 2%, the time to complete repairs is down 4%, the energy efficiency of the home is down 1% and handling ASB and complaints are down 2% and 3% respectively.

The overall pattern is that little has changed since last year.

	2022	2023	Change
Overall satisfaction	68%	74%	6%
Well maintained home	73%	71%	-2%
Safe home	76%	77%	1%
Repairs - Last 12 months	77%	76%	1%
Time taken - Last repair	74%	70%	-4%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	65%	66%	1%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	63%	63%	0%
Energy efficiency	69%	68%	-1%
Anti-social behaviour	57%	55%	-2%
Easy to deal with	66%	67%	1%
Listens & Acts	57%	57%	0%
Keeps you informed	65%	68%	3%
Treats fairly & with respect	72%	76%	4%
Complaints handling	31%	28%	-3%
Promoters	--	39%	

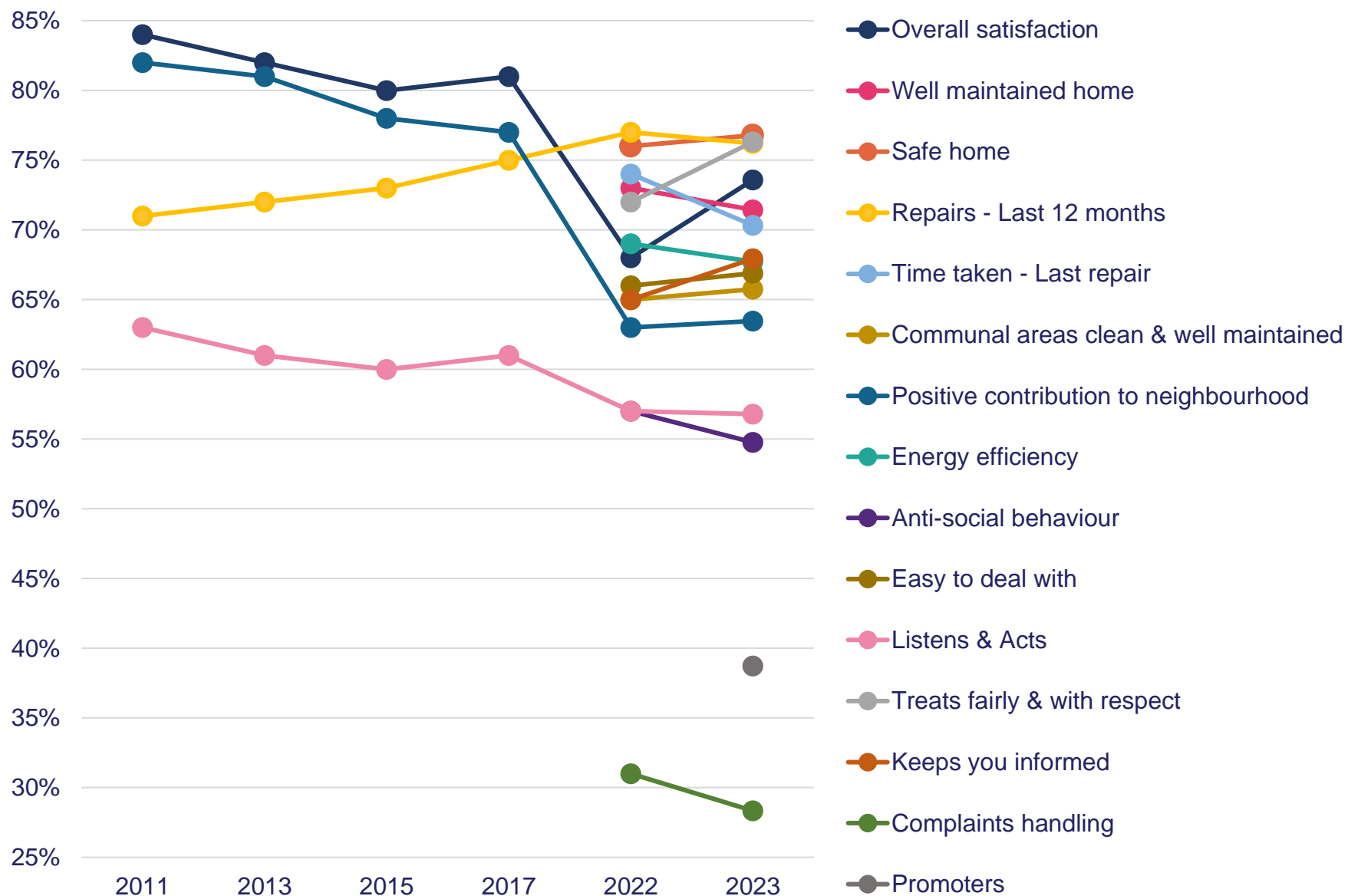
Trend Over Time

Whilst this chart shows the changes since last year, similar to the previous page, it also shows the results from previous years where questions match up.

This shows that with the exception of the repairs service in the last 12 months, satisfaction was fairly steady for some time but dropped steeply in 2022.

This maybe to do with some wording changes to similar questions but was also following the pandemic and the disruption that caused.

As shown above, there has been little change between 2022 and 2023 and it will be interesting to see whether satisfaction has stabilized or will start to increase or decrease again in 2024.





Understanding Satisfaction



Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction

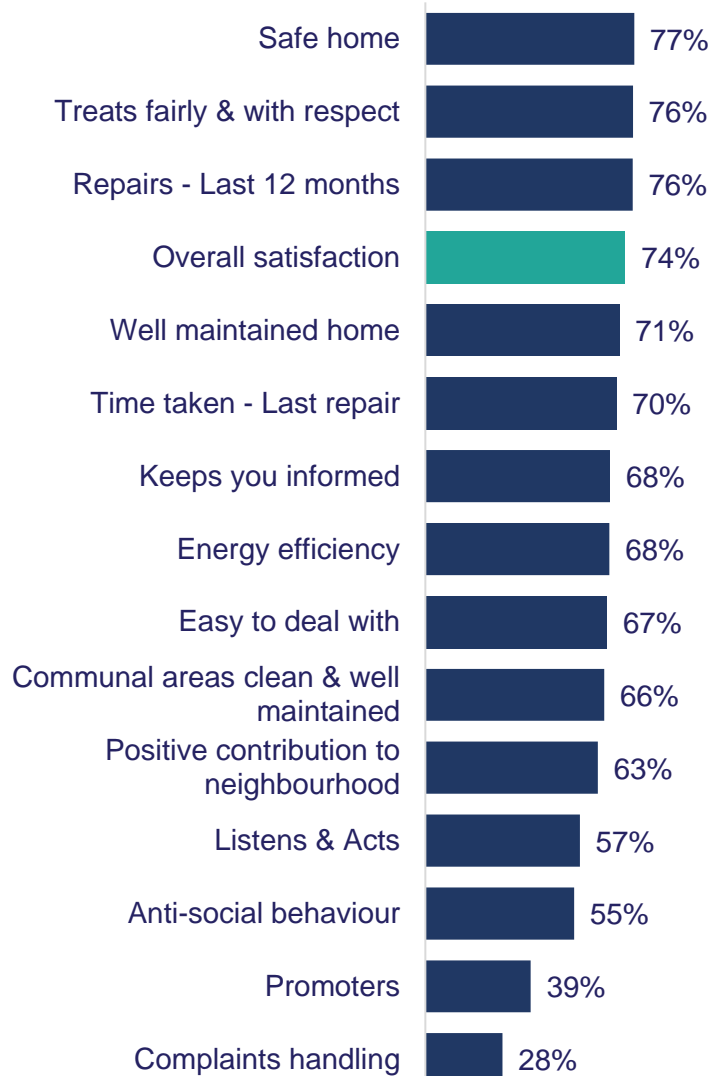
Around three-quarters of tenants are satisfied with the overall services provided by Sandwell MBC. This sits towards the top of the range of measures with only the provision of a safe home, treating tenants fairly and with respect and the repairs service in the last 12 months above it.

At the other end of the list is listening to tenants' views (57%), the handling of ASB (55%) and complaints (28%).

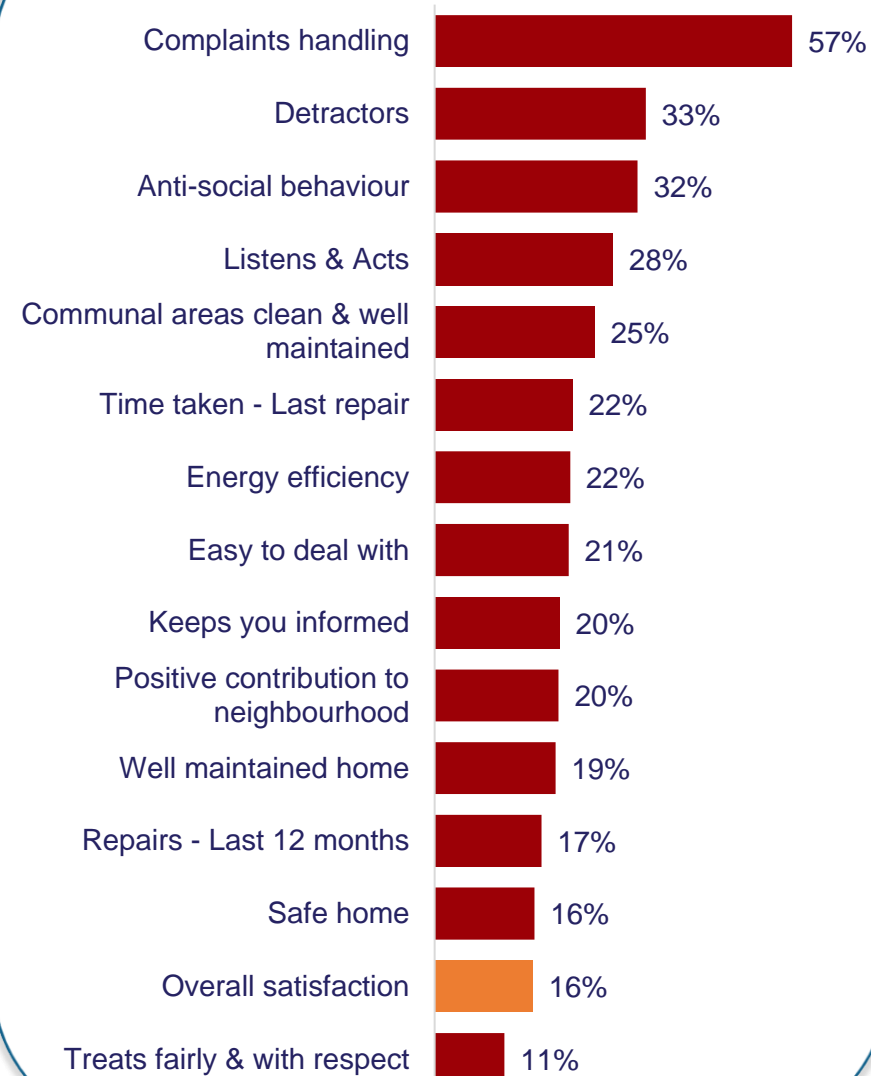
Dissatisfaction corresponds with satisfaction, the most dissatisfaction being for the complaints handling, this being the only measures where more are dissatisfied than satisfied, then handling ASB and listening to views.

Dissatisfaction with the overall services is low at just 16%.

Satisfaction with measures



Dissatisfaction with measures





Combined Comments

The tables to the right include analysis of all the comments received in the 2023 survey across all open-ended questions, with positive comments displayed in green.

This shows the most frequent negative comment area is the repairs service with customer service close behind.

In addition, communications and information, the condition of their property and neighbourhood problems are key areas of concern for tenants.

In terms of the more specific comments given by tenants, timescales to complete repairs is the top negative comment in 2023, followed by dealing with outstanding or forgotten repairs.

It should be remembered, however, that many comments are positive about the service and that most interactions go off without a hitch.

Top Comment Areas	
Day-to-day repairs	27%
Customer services & contact	25%
Communications and information	12%
Property condition	11%
Positive comments	10%
Neighbourhood problems	8%
Safety and security	8%
Home improvements	7%
Grounds maintenance	6%
No comment / don't know	6%
Tenant services and management	6%

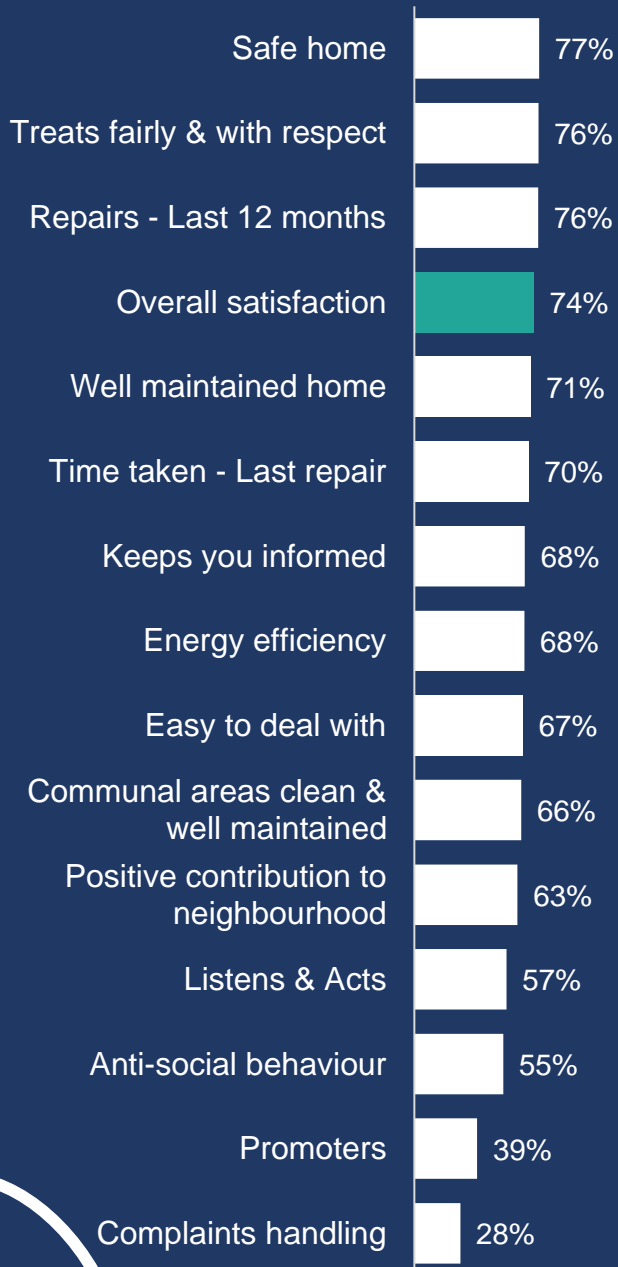
Hot Topics	
Day-to-day repairs - Timescales to complete repairs	12%
Day-to-day repairs - Outstanding / forgotten repairs	9%
Positive comments - Generally happy, no problems	7%
Communications and information - Listen carefully, take interest	6%
Customer services & contact - Answering phones	5%
Customer services & contact - Care, empathy, support etc	4%
Other - Dont know	4%
Customer services & contact - Accessibility / Language barriers	4%
Neighbourhood problems - Anti-social behaviour	4%
Property condition - Damp / mould / condensation	4%
Home improvements - New doors or windows	3%
Property condition - Condition of the property	3%
Day-to-day repairs - Appointments	3%



Conclusion



Satisfaction 2023



Conclusion

- Sandwell MBC commissioned Acuity to carry out annual independent satisfaction surveys to conform with the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing.
- The survey was completed both online and by telephone interview and at the close of the survey, 2,352 responses had been received sufficient to give a margin of error of $\pm 1.93\%$.
- The survey in 2023 shows good levels of satisfaction with the services provided by Sandwell MBC, with satisfaction increasing in some areas but falling in others since the previous survey in 2022, although all changes are small.
- Three-quarters of tenants (74%) are satisfied with the overall services provided, whilst just 16% are dissatisfied. The highest ratings are for the provision of a safe home, tenants being treated fairly and with respect, and the repairs service in the last 12 months. However, just 55% of tenants are satisfied with the way anti-social behaviour is dealt with and only 28% are satisfied with the way complaints are handled, with 57% dissatisfied. 39% of tenants would recommend Sandwell MBC to other people and the Net Promoter Score is 5.
- Overall satisfaction has increased a little, by 6% since the previous survey, with 3% more who feel Sandwell MBC keeps them informed and 4% more are satisfied with the way they are treated fairly and with respect. However, 2% fewer satisfied with the maintenance of their home, 4% fewer with the time to complete repairs, 2% fewer with the handling of ASB and 3% fewer with the handling of complaints
- The key driver for overall satisfaction is that the Council listens to its tenants' views and acts upon them, followed by the provision of a safe home and the repairs service in the last 12 months.
- When asked about possible improvements to services, 1,998 tenants gave comments with the most common about the repairs service - having better timescales for repairs and dealing with outstanding repairs, in particular. However, tenants would also like the Council to listen to their concerns a little more carefully and to generally show them more care, empathy and support.