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The experiences of South Asian private renters in the constituency of Ealing Southall in London

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Executive summary

This research report provides the findings of a project conducted by Generation Rent, Virendra Sharma MP, and his office, which sought to understand the experiences of South Asian private renters living in and around Ealing Southall.

Key facts

- Over a third of respondents stated that they had not received ANY of the six important documents they are entitled to from their landlord.
- Almost 1 in 5 stated that they did not know where they would go for information and support in a private renting issue.
- More than 4 in 5 respondents stated that they had struggled to find an affordable home to rent in their local area, with over 3 in 5 of all respondents indicating that they had “often” struggled to do so.
- Over half of the respondents stated that their rent had increased in the previous 6 months before completing the survey, with the median increase amongst those whose rent had gone up being £200 per month per household.
- Just under 1 in 6 private renters were living in households with more than 2 people per bedroom, putting them in danger of living in overcrowded conditions.
- Over 1 in 7 respondents stated that their landlord or letting agent had entered their home without permission.
- Almost a third of respondents stated that their landlord had threatened them with an unaffordable rent increase.

What needs to happen?

The upcoming Renters (Reform) Bill must include:

- An end to arbitrary Section 21 evictions.
- Longer notice periods to protect tenants from “landlord need” evictions.
- An introduction of tenant relocation payments in “landlord need” evictions.
- The maintaining of the right to a documentation requirement in legal evictions.
- A new property portal that is accessible for all.
- An extension of the right for tenants to claim rent back from criminal landlords.
- Restrictions on rent increases, to prevent landlords from pricing tenants out of their homes.
- A ban on landlords demanding multiple months’ rent upfront.

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Terminology

There is no perfect term to encompass the racially marginalised groups which are the subject of this project. Terms such as 'BAME' or 'BME' have traditionally been used by government departments, public bodies, the media, and others when referring to ethnic minority groups. However, these terms homogenise different communities, and ignore the diversity of experience between groups.

Moreover, the term 'non-white' defines ethnic minorities solely by reference to the white majority. Upon guidance from anti-racism organisations, such as the Runnymede Trust, we have chosen to use the term 'minority ethnic' to explore the racialised inequalities in the UK's housing sector.

In this report, we have understood 'minority ethnic' to mean individuals who do not identify as 'English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or British' or 'white Irish'. The only exceptions to this, are when we have quoted statistics from external organisations and government bodies, which pre-date this report.

The terms 'migrant' or 'migrant communities' have been used in this report to refer to groups of people living in the UK who were born abroad. It is important to note that this categorization comprises many different ethnic, racialised, religious and cultural groups which face their own distinct forms of prejudice, discrimination, and inequalities. However, the social and legal category of 'migrant' brings with it distinct stigmatisations, preconceptions and obstacles which affect and impede these groups' abilities to live equally amongst UK-born individuals, making it a grouping appropriate for analysis.

Whenever possible, we have been specific about the community we are referring to and the identity an individual has defined themselves as. It is important to note that, in the words of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, 'Racialised' "doesn't define people's community or identity, but the phenomenon that is happening to them."¹

Background

Ealing Southall

The Parliamentary constituency of Ealing Southall is located in the borough of Ealing in West London. The current sitting Member of Parliament of Ealing Southall is Virendra Sharma. As of 2021, the borough of Ealing had a population of 367,100, and over a third of households (34.3%) were renting privately.

In Ealing Southall, specifically, the population was around 108,000 and 32.5% of the 34,000 households rented privately.

About 51% of Ealing Southall's population identified as Asian - a total population of over 55,000 – and 55% were born abroad.

¹ Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, What we're doing about diversity, equity and inclusion, <https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/latest-news/what-were-doing-about-diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>

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Southall is also home to London's largest Sikh community. About 21% of the constituency aligned with the Sikh religion, a population of over 22,000 people.² The constituency hosts 10 gurdwaras, including the largest Gurdwara organisation outside of India, the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, which was the location in which Generation Rent and Virendra Sharma's office held a community event for the purposes of collecting data for this research.

Rationale

Migrants experience greater degrees of poverty and destitution than their UK-born counterparts. Research in 2016 from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) examining the scale of destitution in the UK estimated that 139,145 migrant households experience destitution annually.

Furthermore, according to Crisis, in 2017/18, 33% of all households accepted as homeless by local authorities in England were migrants, compared to 10% of UK nationals.³ According to the Refugee Council, 26,380 migrants lived in hotels as temporary accommodation by the end of 2021.⁴ While this may not account for all homeless cases in England, this does indicate that migrant groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

Now a cost-of-living crisis threatens to push those who are most likely to have already faced destitution and poverty under even greater financial strain. According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), 87% of adults in the UK have reported an increase in their cost of living between November 2021 and March 2022.⁵

Moreover, Generation Rent's own research has uncovered inequalities which minority ethnic and migrant private renters face in the sector. In 2023, we published data which revealed that: 38% of minority ethnic private renters had been threatened with an eviction compared to 28% of white British or Irish respondents; minority ethnic respondents were more than twice as likely to have experienced faulty electrics than white British or Irish respondents; 6% of minority ethnic respondents had not received a written tenancy agreement from their landlord, with this rising to 16% amongst Black respondents.

Generation Rent also published research in 2023 on the discrimination of migrants in the private rented sector (PRS). 42% of migrant private renters surveyed reported that they had struggled to find a landlord or letting agent to rent to them as a migrant, 17% had not received any of the documents

² Census, 2021

³ Crisis, A home for all: Understanding migrant homelessness in Great Britain, 2019, https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/241452/a_home_for_all_understanding_migrant_homelessness_in_great_britain_2019.pdf

⁴ The Refugee Council, Number of people seeking asylum trapped languishing in hotels almost trebles in a year, 2022, <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/number-of-people-seeking-asylum-trapped-languishing-in-hotels-almost-trebles-in-a-year/#:~:text=The%20situation%20%E2%80%93%20which%20saw%20a,CEO%20of%20the%20Refugee%20Council.>

⁵ ONS, The cost of living, current and upcoming work: March 2022, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/thecostoflivingcurrentandupcomingwork/march2022>

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they were legally entitled to in their current tenancy, and 57% reported they had experienced mould or damp, with this rising to 61% amongst migrants of Colour.

Given the evidence of discrimination migrants and minority ethnic communities experience, and specifically Generation Rent's research highlighting substantial renting inequalities of these marginalised groups, it is important to continue and expand on this research by including new groups. This not only builds on the evidence base, strengthening the link between ethnicity, migrant status, and housing inequality, but also creates nuances regarding specific communities. Minority ethnic peoples are not a monolith, but an extremely diverse collection of intersecting ethnicities, racialisations, and interconnecting identities.

This report is one piece in a wider collection of research and projects which seek to understand, as comprehensively as possible, the many experiences of minority ethnic and migrant peoples in the PRS.

The Renters (Reform) Bill

In May 2023 the government introduced the long-anticipated Renters (Reform) Bill to Parliament. In its initial form, the Bill sets out to abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions, introduce a new property portal and private renter Ombudsman, and introduce new grounds of eviction, as well as changes to grounds already in place, which in some cases will make it easier for landlords to evict tenants via the courts.

Two new additional grounds for eviction (to sell the property and for the landlord or their close family to move into the property) are set to be introduced. Tenants will be given a 6-month protected period from these grounds at the start of a new tenancy, however after this, the landlord will only need to give them two months' notice to evict them. Moreover, the "no re-let" period after a landlord uses these grounds is currently only set to be three months.

The government also intend to include in the Bill two other new grounds. One for tenants in '*repeated arrears*' and a second for landlords complying with enforcement. They also want to change the current requirement of evicting anti-social behaviour tenants from actions "*likely to cause nuisance and annoyance*" to "*capable to cause nuisance and annoyance*". It is vital that landlords are not able to exploit these new and changed grounds for eviction and that the new Bill does not effectively bring in a 'Section 21 by the back door'.

As previously mentioned, minority ethnic and migrant peoples are not a monolith, and as such their different experiences should be researched and understood as comprehensively as possible. However, migrant and minority ethnic experiences are often overlooked in legislature and judiciary proceedings, and the discrimination they face is often not taken into account when reforms and governmental changes are implemented.

Therefore, the findings of this research can, and should, be used when considering the Renters (Reform) Bill, which is the greatest opportunity for reforming the PRS that renters in England have seen in a generation. The experiences of marginalised groups are extremely useful in understanding the current issues and obstacles of the current system, and therefore offer valuable insights when

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considering how the private renting system should be changed, and how the upcoming reforms are best implemented.

Methodology

Generation Rent worked with Virendra Sharma (MP for Ealing Southall) and his office to design a survey specifically for the Sikh community of Southall. In April 2023 the two parties held a community event at the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, where locals were invited to submit a survey. Translators were on site to support local renters, especially Punjabi speakers, through the survey.

Leaflets were also distributed which included QR codes directing private renters to an online version of the survey. The leaflets also directed local residents to detailed factsheets about their rights as renters, which were available in Punjabi as well as Arabic, Bengali, French, Gujarati, Polish, Somali, Urdu and Ukrainian.

Over the course of the day, 120 local private renters completed the survey.

Please note: All figures have been rounded to one decimal place, which may account for some disparities in the data.

Who took part?

Age	%
18-24	20.0
25-34	39.2
35-44	16.7
45-54	6.7
55-64	6.7
65 and over	6.7
Preferred not to say	4.2

Gender	%
Female	29.1
Male	70.1
Prefer not to say	0.9

Gender	%
Female	29.1
Male	70.1
Prefer not to say	0.9

Ethnicity	%
Indian	90.7
Any other Asian background	4.2

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<i>Asian British</i>	3.4
<i>Any other white background</i>	0.8
<i>Bangladeshi</i>	0.8

<i>Religion</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Sikhism</i>	74.4
<i>Hinduism</i>	23.9
<i>Christianity</i>	1.7

<i>Country of birth</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>India</i>	92.0
<i>Afghanistan</i>	5.3
<i>Hong Kong</i>	0.9
<i>Portugal</i>	0.9
<i>UAE</i>	0.9

<i>Migration purpose</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>To find work</i>	31.2
<i>Student</i>	26.6
<i>To join family</i>	11.0
<i>As an asylum seeker</i>	5.5
<i>Other</i>	1.8
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	23.9

<i>How long lived in the UK</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Less than 1 year</i>	32.8
<i>1 to 2 years</i>	15.5
<i>2 to 5 years</i>	19.8
<i>5 to 10 years</i>	13.8
<i>Over 10 years</i>	15.5
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	2.6

<i>Personal income</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Up to £14,999</i>	36.6
<i>£15,000 to £29,999</i>	12.5
<i>£30,000 to £49,999</i>	1.8
<i>More than £50,000</i>	0.9
<i>Don't know</i>	20.5
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	27.7

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<i>Do you identify as disabled?</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Yes</i>	5.9
<i>No</i>	94.1
<i>Preferred not to say</i>	0.0

<i>Have you received Housing Benefit/Universal Credit in the last year?</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Yes</i>	16.9
<i>No</i>	77.1
<i>Unsure</i>	4.2
<i>Preferred not to say</i>	1.7

Full recommendations

The Renters (Reform) Bill is a piece of legislation that has the potential to transform renting for good. In May 2023, the Bill was introduced by the government to Parliament. The stated aim of the Bill was to deliver on the government’s commitment to “bring in a better deal for renters”, including abolishing ‘no fault’ evictions and reforming landlord possession grounds.

It is essential that this Bill legislates for reforms which effectively and comprehensively re-balance the sector to empower renters and protect tenants from exploitation. It is also vital that these reforms reach through to all private renters, across the many different groups and communities which make up the sector. These reforms must include:

- **An end to arbitrary Section 21 evictions.** Private renters have now been waiting over four years for the government to fulfil their promise and end no fault evictions. Bringing an end to these evictions will enable private renters to utilise their rights as tenants. New grounds for no-fault eviction are being introduced as part of the reforms in the Renters (Reform) Bill, including when landlords want to sell the property or want to move their family into the property. There is a risk that if it is too easy to use these new ‘no fault’ grounds, unscrupulous landlords could abuse them, creating Section 21 by the back door. Penalties for abuse of these grounds must be comprehensive and easy to enforce to protect tenants’ rights.

This research shows not only the high proportion of renters who feel a constant worry of eviction, but also that severe affordability issues are at play in the market which means that a Section 21 ‘no fault’ eviction can very easily lead to homelessness., Amidst rising rents and other increases in the cost-of-living, it is all the more important that renters, such as those in Southall, are afforded greater stability in their homes.

- **Longer notice periods to protect tenants from “landlord need” evictions.** It is vital that tenants are given longer than a two months’ notice period currently proposed when their

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landlords are selling the property or moving themselves or family members in. Tenants should be given four months' notice in "landlord need" grounds such as in scenarios where the property is being sold. Landlords should be required to provide unequivocal evidence when serving a notice and there should also be a no-letting period of 12 months after a tenant has been evicted. This will prevent the new "landlord need" grounds from being abused by landlords. The grounds should not be able to be used until two years into the tenancy.

An increased notice period in "no fault" evictions will give tenants more time to find suitable accommodation, meaning that they will not have to settle for poor quality housing, something that minority ethnic, migrant, and lower-income renters are too often forced to do. Longer notice periods will also ensure that minority ethnic and migrant groups are not forced to organise and carry-out moves during holidays and holy periods. The Christian Christmas period, Jewish Hanukkah, Islamic Ramadan and Eid, Hindu Diwali, Buddhist Vesak, Sikh Vaisakhi and other festivities, holidays and religious periods should not be interrupted by moves that are not the tenants' fault.

Longer eviction notices would mean that communities, such as the Sikh community in Southall, are able to celebrate their holidays and observe their religious customs without interruption.

- **An introduction of tenant relocation payments in "landlord need" evictions.** When upfront costs, deposits (set at 5 weeks' rent) and time off work are all considered, it typically costs renters £1400 to move house. This can have a devastating impact on renters, especially those already struggling to find somewhere affordable to rent in their local area and affected disproportionately by the cost-of-living crisis. In evictions where the tenant is not at fault, renters should receive two months' worth of rent from their landlords to cover moving and relocation costs.

Once again, the unaffordability of the market in Southall demonstrates that support with the cost of moving in these evictions would significantly remove obstacles to finding a new home and prevent homelessness locally.

- **The maintaining of the right to a documentation requirement in legal evictions.** Currently, an eviction notice is only valid if a landlord has given their tenant: a written tenancy agreement; an Energy Performance Certificate; a Gas Safety Certificate (if there is a gas supply); an Electrical Safety Record; and a government "How to Rent" guide; as well as information on where their deposit is protected. The upcoming Renters (Reform) Bill threatens to remove this.

Our research has shown that in some communities and locals, many private renters are already not currently being given these documents by their landlords. It is therefore vital in

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the fight for housing equality that we do not remove the only incentive landlords have to provide tenants with these documents.

The government should also ensure that all eviction notices must be issued through the new Property Portal. This would require landlords to follow the legal process and ensure that compliance surrounding documentation requirements in evictions is upheld and practised consistently.

- **A new property portal that is accessible for all.** The proposed new digital property portal to help landlords demonstrate their compliance with legal requirements will help councils focus their enforcement work and help tenants make informed decisions. The portal will also help to educate landlords about their responsibilities.

The new property portal should also have information surrounding renting and tenancies available to private renters. The large proportion of renters in this research who stated that they would not know where to go for information or support highlights the critical need for an accessible source of resources these groups can go to.

A portal, and the associated new rights it brings, will be especially beneficial to minority ethnic, migrant, and lower-income tenants who are more likely to be living in the unprofessional and exploitative side of the market. However, for these groups to fully benefit, tenants' and renters' rights information must be available in different languages and with translation options. Renters in Southall for example would greatly benefit from information being made available in Punjabi, as well as other languages.

- **An extension of the right for tenants to claim rent back from criminal landlords.** Although councils will be responsible for enforcing the new property portal's membership, the government should also give tenants the right to claim back rent if their landlord is not registered.

This research indicates that under the current system, landlords in Southall are already not fulfilling their responsibilities such as distributing documents their tenants require. Clearly, more needs to be done to ensure that landlords are adhering to the law. Moreover, if the property portal is to be effective in regulating the market, substantial incentives need to be in place to ensure that landlords follow the law under the new system and register onto the portal.

- **Restrictions on rent increases, to prevent landlords from pricing tenants out of their homes.** There is a danger that with an end to Section 21 'no fault' evictions, landlords in areas with high demand for homes could easily use unaffordable rent rises to force tenants out. To prevent this, there needs to be a limit to rent rises based on affordability.

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As this research demonstrates, markets such as that in Southall are already extremely uncompetitive, with locals struggling to find affordable homes in their community. As well as this, rent rises are currently exacerbating this issue. Renters, such as those in Southall, are in severe need of restrictions on rent increases.

To ensure that renters aren't forced out by an unaffordable rent increase, landlords should not be able to raise the rent by more than wage growth or consumer price inflation. There should also be restrictions on when a landlord can serve a notice to increase the rent. If they fail any sort of compliance, they should be unable to raise the rent, as is the case with Section 21 now. It should also be easier for tenants to challenge formal rent increase notices at rent tribunals.

- **A ban on landlords demanding multiple months' rent upfront.** The demand for upfront rent not only acts as yet another barrier for renters accessing good quality housing but is a tactic used to deny benefit claimants a home. Removing this barrier would mean that lower-income and benefit claimant renters can more easily access safe and stable homes. As an unaffordable market continues to negatively affect Southall's renters, these marginalised communities would especially benefit from bans on upfront rent.

Without these reforms, private renters will not be able to utilise their rights, with migrant tenants especially restricted from good quality housing and decent landlords and letting agents.

Full results

Documentation and information

Q1. Which of the following do you remember receiving at the start of your tenancy either personally or by email?

	%
<i>Written tenancy agreement</i>	38.1
<i>Deposit protected information</i>	6.8
<i>Electrical safety record</i>	5.1
<i>Gas safety certificate</i>	5.1
<i>Energy Performance Certificate</i>	3.4
<i>Help to Rent Guide</i>	3.4
<i>None of the above</i>	37.3
<i>Don't know/ Can't remember</i>	16.9

It was extremely common for private renter participants to report that their landlord or letting agent had not given them the documents they are entitled to at the start of their tenancy.

Over 3 in 5 (61.9%) reported that they had not even been given a written tenancy agreement by their landlord or letting agent.

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It was extremely rare that respondents received any of the other documents tenants are entitled to. Just 6.8% had received information about where their deposit was protected, 5.1% an electrical safety record and the same proportion a gas safety certificate. Finally, a minuscule 3.4% of all respondents had been given an Energy Performance Certificate and a government How to Rent guide.

In all, over a third (37.3%) of respondents stated that they had not received ANY of these six important documents from their landlord.

The six documents tenants are legally entitled to receive contain important information about their rights as well as useful and important information regarding health and safety in the property. Tenants can also be protected from a Section 21 'no fault' eviction if their landlord has not provided them with all the documents they are entitled to.

Given the severe lack of distribution of these important documents, despite the incentive for landlords to supply their tenants with them in order to process valid and legal evictions, clearly more needs to be done to ensure that tenants, especially migrant and minority ethnic tenants, are given them.

Q2. If you were having a problem with your home or tenancy, where would you go to for information or support?

	%
<i>Landlord or letting agent</i>	44.1
<i>Friends/ family</i>	28.8
<i>Social media</i>	9.3
<i>Local council</i>	8.5
<i>Web search</i>	6.8
<i>Citizens Advice</i>	5.1
<i>Faith leader</i>	5.1
<i>Shelter</i>	3.4
<i>Community leader</i>	2.5
<i>Student Union</i>	2.5
<i>Other advice organisation</i>	0.8
<i>MP</i>	0.8
<i>Other</i>	0.8
<i>Don't know</i>	18.6

Respondents were most likely to indicate that they would go to their landlord or letting agent for information and support, with almost half (44.1%) stating as such. Over a quarter (28.8%) meanwhile stated that they would go to their friends or family.

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Respondents however very rarely reported that they would go to third-party organisations or use online resources for information and support. Less than 1 in 10 (9.3%) stated that they would use social media and only 8.5% that they would go to their local authority.

Around 1 in 20 (5.1%) stated that they would use Citizens Advice and the same proportion stated that they would go to a faith leader for information and support.

Only 3.1% stated that they would go to Shelter, 2.5% to their community leader and the same 2.5% to their Student Union. Less than 1% indicated that they would go to another advice organisation or to their MP.

Concerningly, almost 1 in 5 (18.6%) stated that they did not know where they would go do for information and support.

While landlords and letting agents can be a useful source of information and support for tenants, it is vital that private renters can access reliable information and support from a range of sources. It is especially important that they can access information and support from impartial groups or third-party organisations, for tenants to fully understand their rights and to protect themselves from exploitation and criminality. Therefore, the inaccessibility to available sources of information and support for renters in Southall is an obstacle to their understanding and utilisation of tenancy rights.

Q3. Have you ever experienced any of the following challenges as a renter?

	%
<i>Not knowing what my rights are as a tenant</i>	24.8
<i>Getting my landlord or letting agent to carry out repairs</i>	16.8
<i>Being able to afford the fuel bills for my home</i>	15.0
<i>Concern about being asked to leave my home/fear of eviction</i>	13.3

Almost a quarter (24.8%) of respondents stated that they had struggled to know their rights as a tenant. About 1 in 6 (16.8%) meanwhile stated that they had struggled to get their landlord or letting agent to carry out repairs. Over 1 in 7 (15%) had found it challenging to be able to afford the bills for their rented home, and over 1 in 8 (13.3%) reported concern about being evicted from their home.

These concerns and worries from renters reflect wider issues with the PRS surrounding the lack of access to useful rights information as well as problems with disrepair, standards, affordability, and security in their homes. Tenants need to feel confident and secure in their homes if they are to effectively utilise their rights as tenants – be it in getting their landlords to carry out repairs or challenging unaffordable rent rises. With so many tenants struggling to fully utilise their current rights, let alone the changes coming into force with the Renters (Reform) Bill, tenants' powers will be continually undercut and undermined.

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Moreover, general worries surrounding paying the bills and being evicted, as well as struggles in getting landlords to fulfil their responsibilities to their tenants, indicate a clear need for the empowerment of renters in the market.

Affordability and accessibility

Q4. Have you ever struggled to find an affordable home to rent in your local area?

	%
<i>Yes, often</i>	60.5
<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	20.2
<i>Yes (TOTAL)</i>	80.7
<i>No</i>	17.6

The vast majority (80.7%) of respondents stated that they had struggled to find an affordable home to rent in their local area, with over 3 in 5 (60.5%) respondents indicating that they had “often” struggled to do so.

This indicates a severe shortage of affordable and appropriate properties available to private renters in Southall.

Q5. Have you ever struggled to find somewhere to rent close enough to any of the following services/ amenities?

	%
<i>My GP or hospital</i>	22.0
<i>My family and/ or friends</i>	16.1
<i>My child’s school</i>	13.6
<i>My place of worship or community centre</i>	12.7

Respondents also indicated that they had struggled to rent close enough to important services and amenities. Over 1 in 5 (22%) had struggled to find somewhere to rent close enough to their GP or hospital, just under 1 in 6 (16.1%) to their family or friends, around 1 in 7 (13.6%) to their child’s school, and over 1 in 8 (12.7%) to their place of worship or community centre.

Once again, these findings indicate a lack of affordable homes to rent where people need to live in Southall.

Q6. In the last few months, have you found it more difficult to pay your rent than usual?

	%
<i>A lot more difficult</i>	37.3
<i>A bit more difficult</i>	33.1
<i>More difficult (TOTAL)</i>	70.3

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<i>No change</i>	20.3
<i>It is easier</i>	8.5
<i>Don't know</i>	0.8

As well as general affordability issues for tenants in Southall, the research revealed that renting is only becoming increasingly unaffordable for locals.

The vast majority (70.3%) stated that they had found it more difficult to afford the rent in the last few months prior to completing the survey, with over a third (37.3%) of respondents stating that they had found it “a lot” more difficult.

Q7. Has your rent gone up in the last 6 months, per month?

	%
<i>Yes</i>	57.5
<i>No</i>	35.8
<i>Don't know</i>	6.7
Median increase	£200

Over half of the respondents (57.5%) stated that their rent had increased in the previous 6 months before completing the survey, with the median increase amongst those whose rent had gone up being a shocking £200 per household.

Q8. Have your energy bills gone up in the last 6 months, per month?

	%
<i>Yes</i>	49.2
<i>No</i>	30.8
<i>Don't know</i>	20.0
Median increase	£110

Around half (49.2%) of respondents stated that their energy bills had increased in the previous 6 months before complaint the survey, with the median increase amongst these respondents being £110 per household.

Between rent increases and rises in energy bills, private renters in Southall are often seeing increases of over £300 per household. Moreover, this does not include other recent increases to the cost-of-living such as food prices and transport costs. Amidst an already unaffordable market, and as the cost-of-living crisis continues, private renters are in increasingly desperate need of rent stabilisation measures and greater support in paying their bills.

For further information contact: Tilly Smith, 0756 1530 137, Tilly@GenerationRent.org

Standards

Q9. What is your home's EPC rating?

	%
A-C	10.2
D-G	11.9
Don't know	77.8

The vast majority of respondents (77.8%) did not know their home's EPC rating. Only just over 1 in 10 (10.2%) were able to identify an EPC rating of A to C in their home. Considering only 3.4% of respondents received an EPC from their landlord, 22.2% knowing their EPC is quite remarkable. This does indicate an interest amongst private renters in understanding more about their homes.

However, the huge proportion of respondents not knowing their EPC remains a huge problem. A home's EPC rating is useful in understanding how to reduce energy bills and keep the property warm. Most privately rented homes with an EPC of F or G are also illegal to rent out to tenants, meaning that some could be unknowingly living in illegal homes.

Q10. How many people are living in your household per bedroom?

	%
Less than 1	1.0
1 to 2	83.3
3 to 4	14.6
5 or more	1.0

15.6% of all respondents indicated that they were living in a property with three or more people per bedroom in the household.

The definition of statutory overcrowding is complicated and has many caveats. A home is overcrowded if two people have to sleep in the same room and they are of a different sex or not a couple. Children under the age of 10 however do not count, and living rooms, dining rooms and studies all count as rooms you can sleep in. A property can also be overcrowded if the rooms available to sleep in do not meet space standard rules.

It is therefore difficult to make definitive conclusions surrounding overcrowding rates in Southall, however, with 15.6% of all respondents living in homes with three or more people to a bedroom, this means that just under 1 in 6 private renters are in danger of living in overcrowded conditions. Moreover, with the severe affordability issues in Southall, only being made more acute by the cost-of-living crisis, more and more locals are in danger of being forced into overcrowded, unsuitable housing.

For further information contact: Tilly Smith, 0756 1530 137, Tilly@GenerationRent.org

Treatment from landlords and letting agents

Q11. Has your landlord or letting agent ever entered your home without permission?

	%
Yes	14.5
No	79.5
Unsure	6.0

Over 1 in 7 (14.5%) of respondents stated that their landlord or letting agent had entered their home without permission.

Legally, a landlord or letting agent must give the tenant 24 hours' written notice before entering the property, and it is entirely up to the discretion of the tenant whether they allow their landlord or letting agent to access the property, unless there is an emergency. This is because all tenants have the right to "quiet enjoyment" of their home.

It is extremely concerning that so many tenants in Southall reported that their landlord had broken the law and had denied their tenants their right to quiet enjoyment.

Q12. Has a landlord or letting agent ever threatened you with any of the following?

	%
<i>Unaffordable rent increase</i>	31.8
<i>Eviction</i>	8.4
<i>Refusal to do repairs</i>	8.4

A significant proportion of the respondents reported that their landlord or letting agent had threatened them with various legal and illegal powers.

Almost a third (31.8%) of respondents stated that their landlord had threatened them with an unaffordable rent increase. Meanwhile, almost 1 in 10 (8.4%) reported that their landlord had threatened them with an eviction and the same proportion again reported that they had threatened them with the refusal to do repairs.

Evictions and rent increases are all (when carried out correctly) legal acts which are sometimes justifiable. However, there is no justification for landlords and letting agents using them to prevent their tenants from fully utilising their rights. No tenant should feel that they cannot report disrepair, that they cannot question rent increases and that they cannot hold their landlord to account for fear of reprisal.

It is vital that the market is rebalanced so that tenants are able to fully utilise their rights and appropriately question the actions of their landlord and letting agents without fear of reprisal.

For further information contact: Tilly Smith, 0756 1530 137, Tilly@GenerationRent.org

Conclusion

Through the survey respondents, it emerged that a great many obstacles lay in the way of Southall's private renters accessing their rights and good quality homes. The lack of availability of properties meant that many local private renters were being forced to endure high rents they have no choice but to pay.

There were widespread worries surrounding the rise of rents, energy bills and food prices. Respondents were finding it increasingly difficult to keep themselves fed and their homes warm.

Moreover, the high risk of overcrowding amongst many of the participants, as well as issues in getting landlords to carry out repairs and their illegal entering of the property, demonstrate a clear need for improved regulation of the sector.

Tenants were heavily reliant on their landlords for information and support, and often did not cite any other sources that they would go to, especially online resources and third-party organisations. Participants often therefore accepted their landlord's information without further scrutiny, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

The Renters (Reform) Bill must work to address the significant power imbalance currently in place which skews the market significantly in the favour of landlords over tenants. Although Ealing Southall is but one constituency, countless regions and locals around the country have similarly uncompetitive rental markets, and the tenants in these areas must be accommodated for in these reforms.

In order for the Bill to meaningfully improve the lives of renters and re-balance the market, the changes must not allow for eviction grounds open to exploitation, creating loopholes and effectively re-instating a Section 21 by the backdoor. And, in cases where evictions must go ahead, tenants need to be given the time and support they need, even in unaffordable markets so prevalent in the PRS, to move to safe and suitable homes.

Moreover, given the struggles that tenants already face in understanding their rights, as well as the regularity to which landlords do not fulfil their responsibilities in some markets such as Southall, it is vital that the Bill take every opportunity to inform and support renters to utilise their rights. The property portal in particular is a huge opportunity in supporting renters in such a way.

Finally, the Bill must not disincentivise renters from utilising their current and new rights but should work to enable renters to utilise the law and the powers that they have, in order to hold landlords and letting agents to account and to fight against illegal activity.