Bristol Central Renters Survey 2026

Results and Analysis, November 2026

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Introduction

As an MP, I have worked consistently to champion renters' rights and to end homelessness, both in Bristol and at the national level. I believe in the right to warm, safe, affordable homes for everyone. Unfortunately, this is just not the reality for millions of people, particularly in Bristol Central, and the current Government is not doing enough to help them.

Over the summer, **Bristol was named the least affordable city for private renters in England**, ahead of Greater London. I knew that in my casework I was only seeing a fraction of the cases in the constituency, so I wanted to run this survey to hear from a broader range of renters and to inform my asks of the Government, 6 months on from the Renters' Rights Act coming into force.

Overall, the responses I received have been sobering. **The majority of respondents do not feel they are paying fairly** for the service they receive from their landlord, while at the same time **70% of those surveyed reported using things like credit cards, loans, support from friends and family, or taking on extra shifts to cover their rent** in the first place.

People wrote movingly about the things they have to compromise on to afford rent: holidays, socialising, space, privacy, accessibility and security all came up repeatedly in answers.

When the Government introduced the Renters' Rights Bill to Parliament, I fought for amendments that would have improved security of tenure, energy efficiency, accessibility and rent affordability. Without these, I was concerned my constituents wouldn't see much real difference in their situations as a result of the new laws. Sadly, this seems to be the case; **59% of those surveyed said they did not think the Renters' Rights Act had done enough to tackle the high cost of rent in Bristol.**



Armed with the information I've gathered here, I am more clear than ever in my mission to tackle rip-off rents in this country and push for new legislation. **Renters in Bristol need an emergency brake on rents to stop the endless increases on an already staggering average, and the anxiety that comes with them**. This can give the Government space to deliver a fair deal for renters - including rent controls. I would be happy to work with them on developing it. Homes should not be seen as an asset for profit, but something protected and guaranteed.

Carla Denyer

Carla Denyer, MP for Bristol Central

What would a safe, affordable home look like to you?

“I am warm, dry, so are my belongings, and I'm not stressed about how to afford it every month.” - Private Renter, Bristol Central

“I would have choice over where I lived and I wouldn't have to move unless I wanted to. I would have enough money to work less and spend more time with my partner and friends, to contribute in tangible ways to my local area, and to causes that I care about.”
- Private Renter, Bristol Central

“I wouldn’t dread something breaking because I’d feel confident the landlord would fix it. I wouldn’t dread putting the heating on because I’d have the extra money to afford it.” - Private Renter, Bristol Central

Methodology

The Bristol Central Renters Survey was open to all constituents of Bristol Central who rent privately. The survey was hosted online and was accessible via a link on Carla's website and social media. The survey was open for a total of 5 weeks, from Friday 11th September to Friday 16th October. It was publicised via social media, online local news outlets, and in Bishopston Voice and Clifton Voice magazines via a QR code.

The survey consisted of 15 questions related to constituents' rental situations, including how much of their income was spent on rent, whether they relied on other funding streams to cover their rent, and whether they felt their housing provided value for their money. Of these, three were multiple-choice questions, three were yes/no questions, two were numerical, and one asked respondents to place themselves on a scale between 1 and 4 to describe whether the Renters' Rights Act made them feel more secure in their home.

There were also six questions with free-text answers that encouraged respondents to expand on how they felt about their housing situation, what made it good or poor value, and what compromises they had to make to afford rent. We also invited responses on what a safe, affordable home would look like in their opinion.

We received 208 responses to the survey, and of those, a high proportion responded to every question asked. 53% of respondents rented from an individual and 45% rented from a rental company.

"I've always had to live with people. I'm in my 30s with a professional job and have never been able to afford to live alone. Neither has anyone I know. I've had to move roughly once a year when my landlord raises rent." - Private Renter, Bristol Central

Summary of Findings & Key Statistics

Overall, this survey paints a dire picture of private renting in Bristol in 2026, with many respondents describing the huge negative impact high rents have had on their health and wellbeing, financial security and future prospects.

On top of that, many responses describe already cutting back on other parts of their lives in order to keep up with rental payments. Things that respondents repeatedly mentioned include going out less, living with flat mates longer than desired, and avoiding turning on the heating.

Although 92% of respondents said the Renters' Rights Act made them feel more secure in their home, only 4% said that the Renters' Rights Act had gone far enough to tackle the high cost of rent in Bristol. When asked what a safe and affordable home would look like, many respondents talked about a home where the rent was either capped or where increases were set at a manageable level.

Key Statistics:

- **71% of respondents said they did not feel they paid fairly for the service their landlord supplies.**

- **70% reported using extra funding streams like credit cards, loans, support from friends and family, or taking on extra shifts to cover their rent.** Many people reported relying on a combination of extra funding streams to make ends meet. Of those using extra funding streams:
    - 66% said they had to use savings to help cover their rent each month.
    - 26% said they had to use credit cards to help cover their rent each month.
    - 23% said they had to borrow from friends or family to help cover their rent each month.

- **82% of respondents said they would like to own a home in the next 5-10 years but, of those, only 17% said they felt able to save money for a deposit.**

- **59% did not feel the Renters' Rights Act had done enough to tackle the high cost of rent in Bristol.**

- **Only 4% said they thought the Renters' Rights Act had done enough to help tackle the high cost of rent in Bristol** and 54% said they would not feel comfortable challenging a rent increase via a tribunal (something the Renters' Rights Act relies on to keep unfair rent increases in check).

Spotlight on: Value for Money

Some questions asked about value for money were:

Q3: Do you feel that you pay fairly for the service your landlord supplies?
Q4: Why not? Or what is included that makes it worthwhile?
Q5: Do you make compromises on your housing to make it affordable? If so, what?

These questions went to the heart of this survey's findings: not only is the cost of private renting incredibly high in Bristol compared to the rest of the country, but many renters report that these high prices are not related to high quality of housing stock or the quality of service that landlords provide. This has an outsized impact in Bristol as a quarter of residents rent privately, significantly higher than the national average of 19%.

71% of respondents said they did not think they pay fairly for the service their landlord supplies.

Respondents who said they did not think they paid fairly highlighted a number of reasons why; the most common answers were hard-to-contact landlords, landlords that take too long to deal with repairs, and a lack of space. Other problems that came up frequently were lack of maintenance, issues related to energy efficiency like cold, damp, and mould, and issues with security.

“While I think the rent is comparable to other rental properties in the area, it remains unaffordable. The rental market should be addressed at a citywide scale. “
- Private Renter, Bristol Central

A common theme among both people who responded that they thought they paid fairly and those that didn’t was that what constitutes ‘fair’ in Bristol is out of step with other parts of the country. Some respondents felt that the low quality of housing stock meant that landlords felt they could get away with charging far higher prices than the properties would otherwise command given their state of repair and the amenities provide.

Some people did note that they have had a good experience with current or past landlords in Bristol, but the word ‘lucky’ was often used to describe these experiences.

“I live with five housemates, which is definitely more than I would like” - Private Renter, Bristol Central

“It's not that I make compromises on housing, it's that I make compromises on everything else.“ - Private Renter, Bristol Central

Answers to whether people made compromises to make their rent affordable commonly mentioned compromising on space and sharing with other people. Several respondents also talked about not spending money going out, not turning on the heating, not saving money, or compromising on location. Three disabled respondents commented that they had to compromise on accessibility in order to afford somewhere to live.





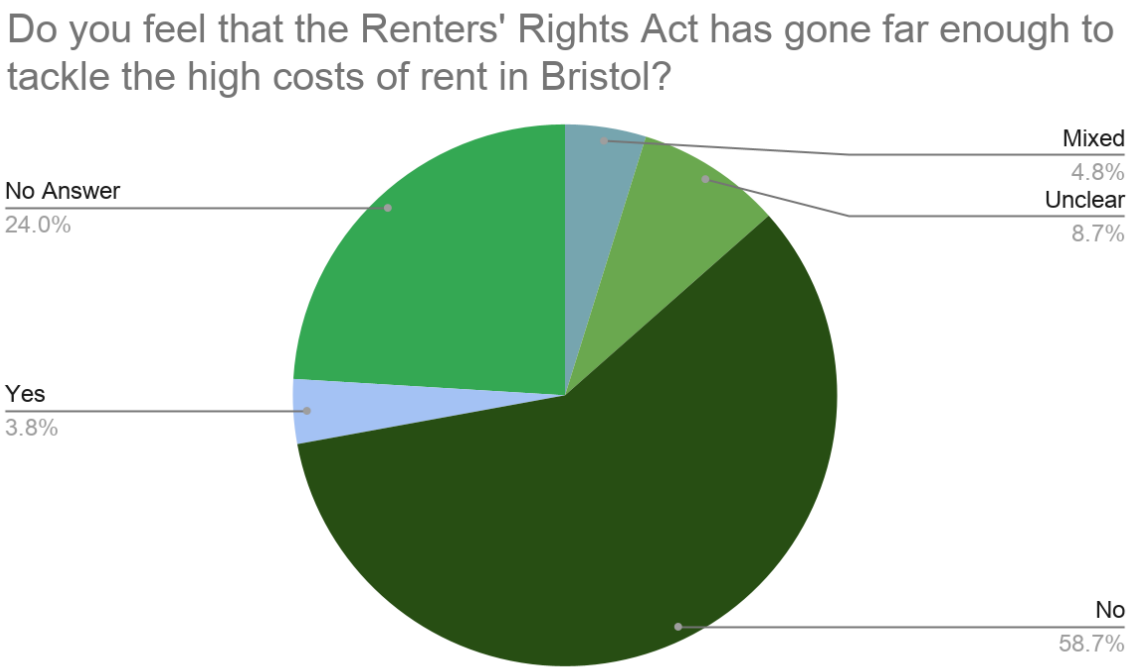
Carla hearing from Bristol Central residents about private renting

Spotlight on: Renters' Rights

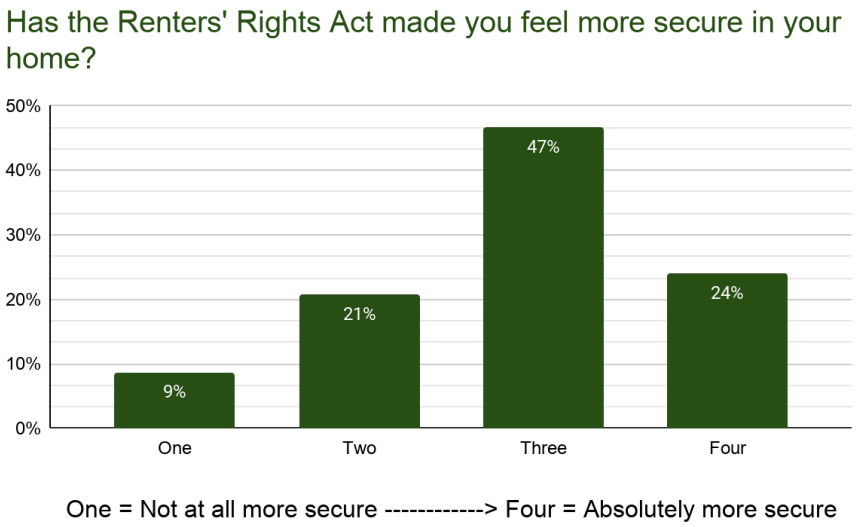
Some questions asked about the Renters' Rights Act and affordability were:

Q10: Has the Renters' Rights Act made you feel more secure in your home?
Q11: The Renters' Rights Act gives tenants the power to challenge rent increases at a tribunal. Would you feel comfortable challenging your landlord if they gave you a rent increase you felt was unreasonable?
Q13: Do you feel that the Renters' Rights Act has gone far enough to tackle the high costs of rent in Bristol?

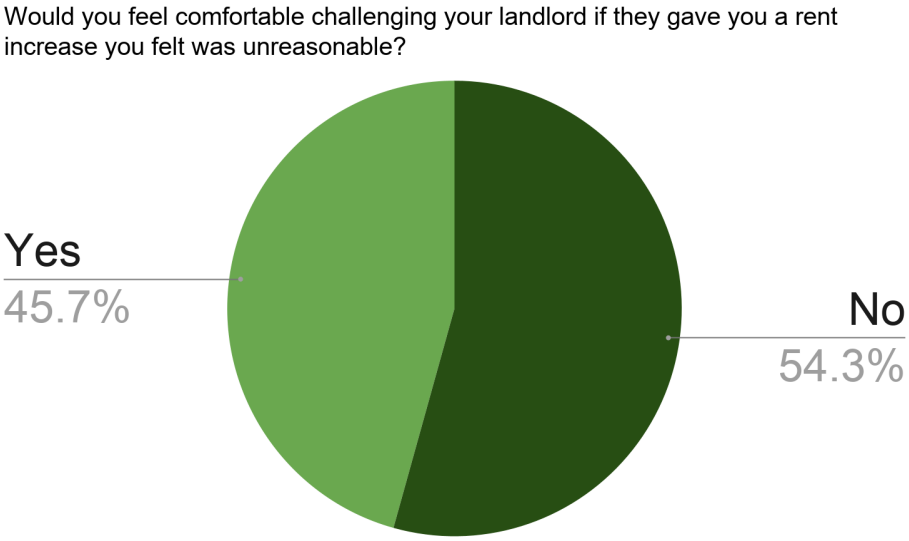
The Renters' Rights Act came into force in May this year - just over six months ago. The Government has stated that it "delivers [on its] manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting". Although it was certainly the biggest change in renting seen in several decades, Carla raised concerns through the bill process that the legislation did not go far enough - particularly when it comes to tackling the high cost of renting. This was borne out by the data, which showed that **59% of those surveyed felt that the Renters' Rights Act had not done enough to tackle the high cost of rent in Bristol.**



Q10 asked respondents to rank how much more secure the Renters' Rights Act made them feel on a scale of 1 - 4, with 1 being not at all more secure and 4 being absolutely more secure. Although 92% said they felt more secure, only 24% described feeling significantly more secure.



Although the Government claims this Act put an 'end to no-fault evictions', landlords can still hike prices in an inflated market like Bristol until tenants can no longer pay and are forced to leave. While this is still the case, tenants will continue to be evicted through no fault of their own. One of the key changes in the Renters' Rights Act was to make it easier for tenants to take landlords to a tribunal over an unfair rent increase. However, the survey found only 46% said they would feel comfortable challenging a rent increase via the tribunal system.



Spotlight on: A Safe & Affordable Home

Some questions asked about people's experience of renting, and what a good experience would look like are:

Q12: Here you are welcome to share the impact unaffordable rent has had on you.
Q14: Here you are welcome to share up to 100 words of what a safe, affordable home would look like.
Q15: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience of private renting?

Responses to Q12 overwhelmingly described the intense mental strain that high rents have had on them - both in terms of their day-to-day lives and in terms of their wider sense of self, progression, and happiness.

Many people talked about the mental stress and anxiety worrying about paying rent has placed on them. For many, this is intensified by having to work unsustainable hours to make ends meet, not being able to afford to take time off, or not feeling able to use the time off they do have to really relax or socialise because of their lack of disposable income. Some also mentioned having to stay in a job they do not enjoy.

Responses to what a safe and affordable home would look like (Q14) yielded answers describing homes that met basic needs for maintenance, cleanliness, and safety without jeopardising the financial security of the tenants. Many respondents expressed a deep desire for security of tenure, despite the fact that many people had said that the Renters Right's Act had made them feel somewhat more safe – this may indicate that some of the protections in the Act around security of tenure are not well understood.

> "A safe, affordable home is one where I am warm, I am able to have long term stability, not worry about unaffordable rent increases. It is one where I can decorate, have a pet, have enough room, and have space to invite friends and family over." - Private Renter, Bristol Central

Many answers said that a safe and affordable home would be one where rent increases were manageable or where rent would be capped at an affordable level. Many also talked about a home that was well insulated to protect from mould and damp, and to avoid high energy bills. People also spoke about having enough space to live comfortably. Some people talked about having the right accessibility adaptations as standard or at no extra cost.

"Manageable yearly rent increases, a more effective way of raising maintenance issues when renting through agencies, an official way of raising repair/maintenance needs which is binding on the landlord, free legal advice service or more centralised place to get this"
- Private Renter, Bristol Central

Beyond the physical properties of the home, many respondents talked about how an affordable home would be one where they could pay their rent and still be able to save money and afford to live well, participate in the community, and engage with friends and hobbies.

Many of these findings were also echoed in answers to Q15.

"It has felt difficult building healthy relationships and enjoying a social life when a safe, stable home isn't even possible. I've been unable to build a community, to form reciprocal relationships of trust and kindness with the people around me."
- Private Renter, Bristol Central

"Renting as a wheelchair user is much more difficult than as someone able-bodied. Most other wheelchair users I know personally live in inaccessible housing because accessible housing is so hard to get." - Private Renter, Bristol Central

"It really is luck of the draw whether you get a decent and reasonable landlord. I consider myself to have been extremely lucky with my landlords, and yet have still lived in properties with issues that just never get fixed." - Private Renter, Bristol Central

“I don’t feel comfortable to challenge my landlord's rent increase. because Bristol is so competitive I’m afraid they’ll just evict us and get someone in who is happy to pay it and we will struggle to find somewhere else in turn because it is so competitive.”
- Private Renter, Bristol Central

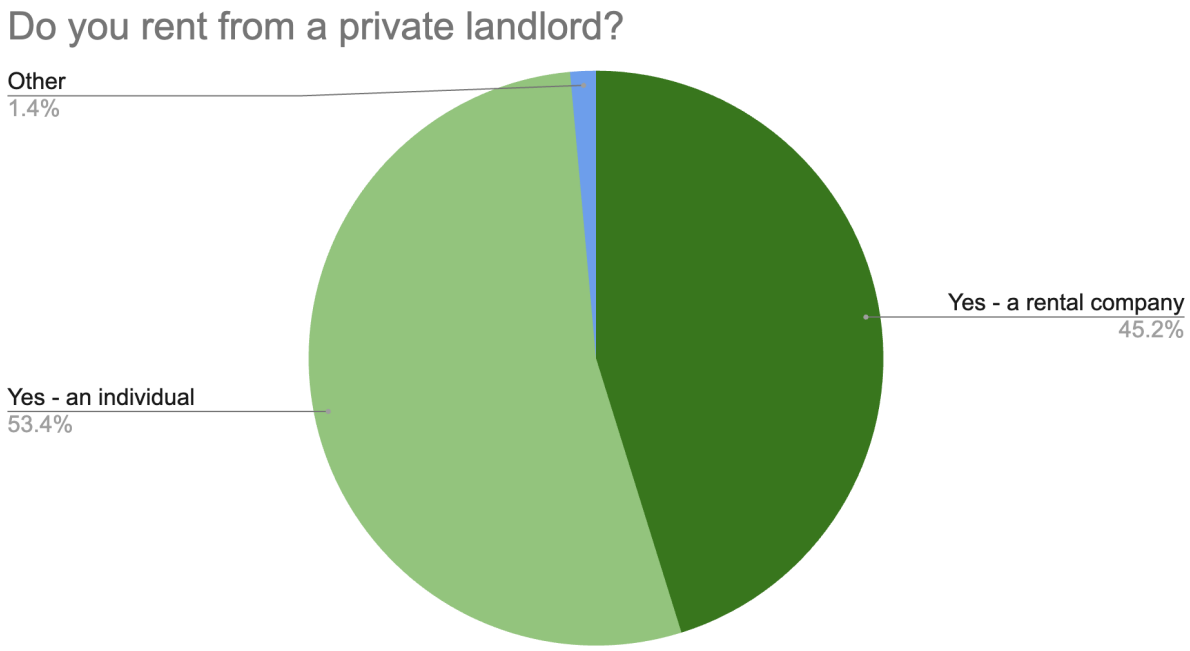
“You never recover from having the rug pulled out from underneath you when you are evicted. It keeps me up at night the idea of being told to leave or our rent increasing.” - Private Renter, Bristol Central

Appendix

Q1: Do you rent from a private landlord?

This question was compulsory. Respondents could answer, 'Yes, a rental company', 'Yes, an individual', 'Yes, an individual known to me (friends or family)' or 'Other'.

Yes, a rental company = 94 (45%)
Yes, an individual = 111 (53%)
Yes, an individual known to me = 0
Other = 3 (1%)



Q2: How much is your rent? Is this charged monthly, weekly, yearly?

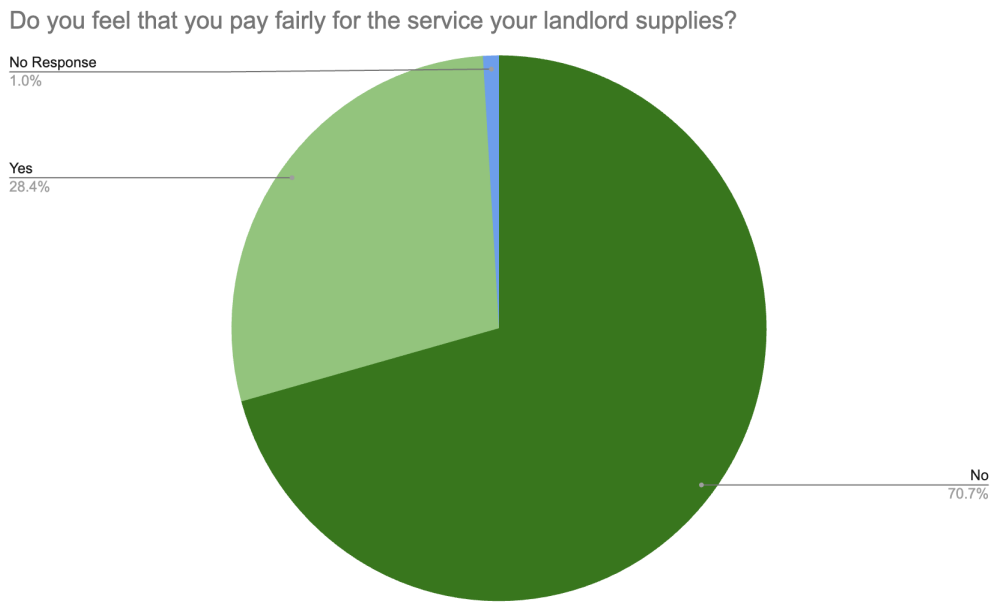
204 people responded to this question (98%).

The survey respondents' **average rent paid per month, per person, in Bristol Central was £1131**. This compares to the national average rent (as of April 2026) of £1381 per household. It is worth noting that the ONS average is calculated on a per-household basis, whereas the survey data was calculated per person. The average household size in Bristol in 2021 was 2.4 people per household, which is similar to the UK average household size.

Q3: Do you feel you pay fairly for the service your landlord provides?

206 people responded to this question (99%).

No = 147 (71%)
Yes = 59 (28%)
No response = 2 (1%)



Q4: Why not? Or what is included that makes it worthwhile?

193 people answered this question (93%).

Respondents to this question who reported that they did not think they pay fairly for the services their landlord supplies highlighted a number of reasons why. The most common answers were hard-to-contact landlords, landlords that take too long to deal with repairs, and a lack of space. Other problems that came up frequently were lack of maintenance, issues related to energy efficiency like cold, damp, and mould, and issues with security.

A common theme among both people who responded that they thought they paid fairly and those that didn't was that what constitutes 'fair' in Bristol is out of step with other parts of the country. Some respondents felt that the low quality of housing stock meant that landlords felt they could get away with charging far higher prices than the properties would otherwise command given their state of repair and the amenities provide.

Some people did note that they have had a good experience with current or past landlords in Bristol, but the word 'lucky' was often used to describe these experiences.

Q5: Do you make compromises on your housing to make it affordable - if so what?

163 people answered this question (78%).

Answers to this question commonly mentioned compromising on space and sharing with other people. Several respondents also talked about not spending money going out, not turning on the heating, not saving money, or compromising on location. Three disabled respondents commented that they had to compromise on accessibility to afford somewhere to live.

Q6: How much of your take-home income do you spend on rent each month?

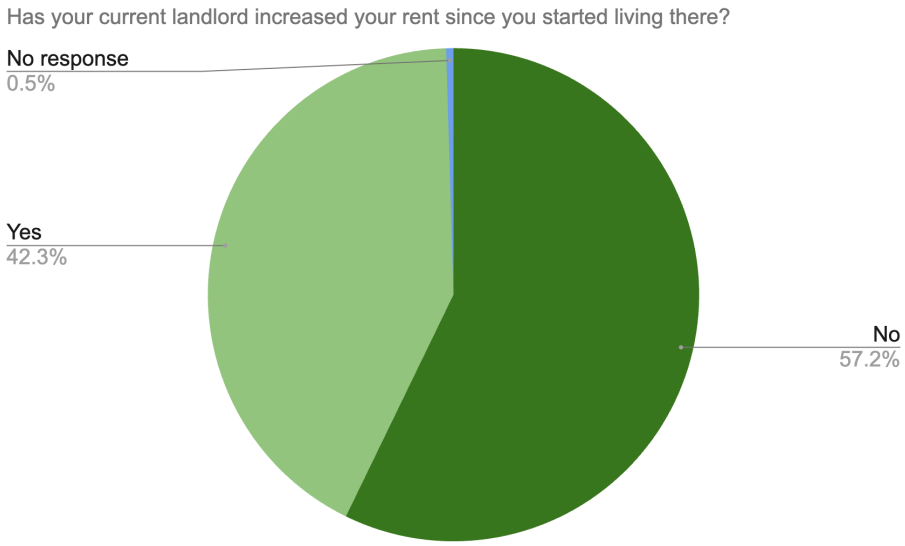
173 people answered this question (83%)

The average of people who responded to this question said that they spent 45% of their take-home income on rent. The average cost of private renting in Bristol, according to the latest Office for National Statistics data is 45% of gross income.

Q7: Has your current landlord increased your rent since you started living there?

207 respondents answered this question (99.5%).

Yes = 88 (42%)
No = 119 (57%)
No response = 1



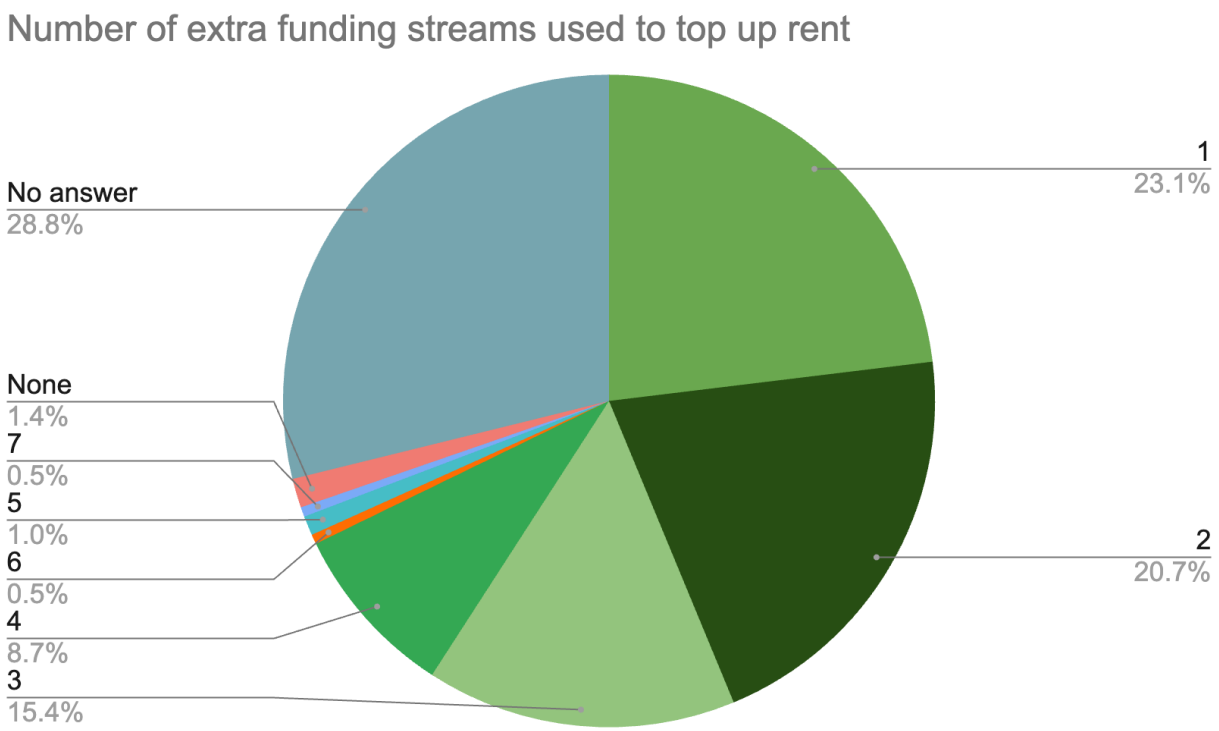
Q8: Do you have to use any of the following to cover your costs each month?

145 people responded yes to this question (70%). They were able to choose more than one option.

Of those who responded:

23% reported borrowing from friends or family
23% reported using gifts from friends or family
18% reported using loans
33% reported using an overdraft
66% reported using savings
36% reported taking on a second job or extra shifts
26% reported using credit cards
1% 1 person reported selling items they would rather not sell to fund their rent.

Many of those who did use other funding streams used more than one of these things to help cover their rent.



Q9: Would you like to own a home in the next 5-10 years? If so, do you feel able to save money for a deposit?

208 people responded to this question (100%). Respondents were able to answer 'Yes and yes I feel able to save towards it', 'Yes and no I do not feel able to save', 'No I don't want to buy' or 'other'.

12 said they did not want to buy a home in the next 5-10 years (6%).

26 responded 'other', including that they could not contemplate aspiring to buy a house because it seems so out of reach (13%).

170 answered that they would like to own a home in the next 5-10 years (82%). Of these, 141 said they did not feel able to save for a deposit (83%), compared to 29 who said they were able to save for a deposit (17%). Other people mentioned not being able to save but being able to buy due to money from family or saving with a partner.

Q10: Has the Renters' Rights Act made you feel more secure in your home?

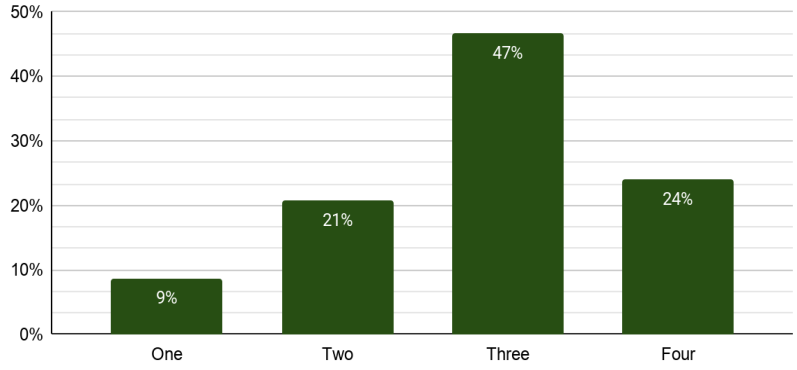
208 people answered this question (100%)

This question was on a scale of 1 - 4, where one corresponded to 'not at all more secure' and four corresponded to 'Absolutely more secure'.

For analysis purposes, we have interpreted this scale as follows:
1= not at all more secure,
2 or 3 = more secure
4= significantly more secure

So we can say that:
9% of respondents described not feeling at all more secure,
68% of respondents described feeling more secure, and
24% of respondents described feeling significantly more secure.

Has the Renters' Rights Act made you feel more secure in your home?



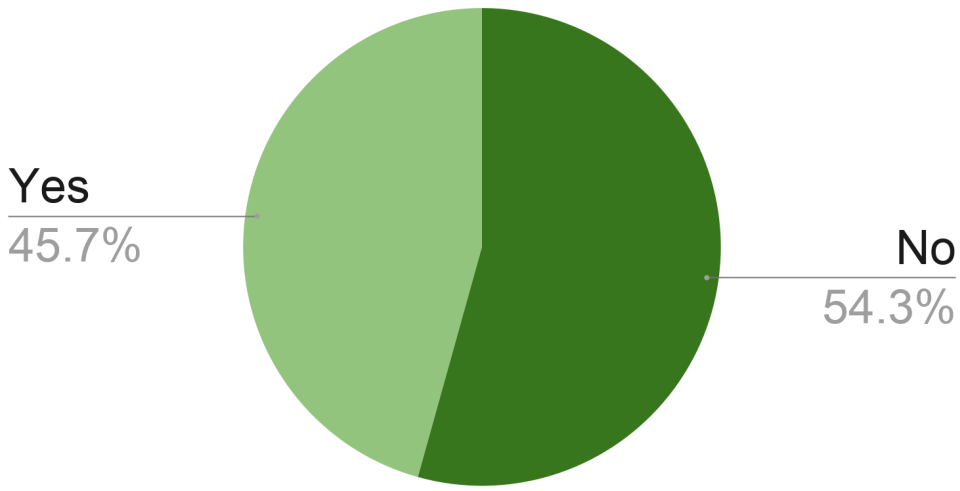
One = Not at all more secure ----------> Four = Absolutely more secure

Q11 The Renters' Rights Act gives tenants the power to challenge rent increases at a tribunal. Would you feel comfortable challenging your landlord if they gave you a rent increase you felt was unreasonable?

208 people answered this question (100%).

Yes = 95 (46%)
No = 113 (54%)

Would you feel comfortable challenging your landlord if they gave you a rent increase you felt was unreasonable?



Q12 Here you are welcome to share the impact unaffordable rent has had on you.

133 people answered this question (64%).

overwhelmingly described the intense mental strain that high rents have had on them - both in terms of their day-to-day lives and in terms of their wider sense of self, progression, and happiness.

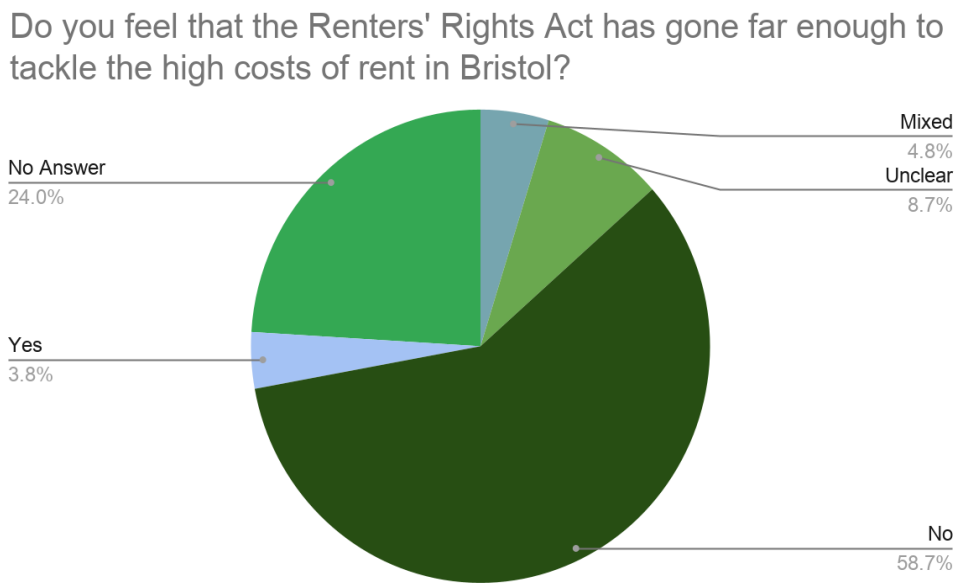
Many people talked about the mental stress and anxiety worrying about paying rent has placed on them. For many, this is intensified by having to work unsustainable hours to make ends meet, not being able to afford to take time off, or not feeling able to use the time off they do have to really relax or socialise because of their lack of disposable income. Some also mentioned having to stay in a job they do not enjoy.

Many respondents also talked about how the high cost of renting has stopped them moving forward with their lives, whether that be because they are unable to save up for a deposit to own a home themselves, deciding to delay having a family, not being able to complete study, or delaying moving out of an unsatisfactory living situation.

Q13: Do you feel that the Renters' Rights Act has gone far enough to tackle the high costs of rent in Bristol?

158 people responded to this question (76%).

122 people (59%) said the Renters' Rights Act had not done enough to tackle the high cost of rent in Bristol. 8 (4%) said it had gone far enough. 28 (13%) were mixed or unclear about the impact of the Renters' Rights Act on high rents. 50 (24%) did not record an answer.



Q14 Here you are welcome to share up to 100 words of what a safe, affordable home would look like.

97 people answered this question (47%).

Responses to this question overwhelmingly talked about homes that met basic needs for maintenance, cleanliness, and safety without jeopardising the financial security of the tenants. Many respondents expressed a deep desire for security of tenure, despite the fact that many people had said that the Renters Right's Act had made them feel somewhat more safe – this may indicate that some of the protections in the Act around security of tenure are not well understood.

Many answers said that a safe and affordable home would be one where rent increases were manageable or where rent would be capped at an affordable level. Many also talked about a home that was well insulated to protect from mould and damp, and to avoid high energy bills. People also spoke about having enough space to live comfortably. Some people talked about having the right accessibility adaptations as standard or at no extra cost.

Beyond the physical properties of the home, many respondents talked about how an affordable home would be one where they could pay their rent and still be able to save money and afford to live well - participating in the community and engaging with friends and hobbies.

"Manageable yearly rent increases, a more effective way of raising maintenance issues when renting through agencies, an official way of raising repair/maintenance needs which is binding on the landlord, free legal advice service or more centralised place to get this"

"A safe, affordable home is one where I am warm, I am able to have long term stability, not worry about unaffordable rent increases. It is one where I can decorate, have a pet, have enough room, and have space to invite friends and family over."

"Reasonable pricing, not overcharging students, safe, clean, modern and sanitary living environment, efficient energy usage."

"Adaptations to make the property wheelchair accessible that I don't need to pay a premium for and an appropriate fire evacuation plan so I don't have to worry what will happen to me in an emergency."

"Minimum wage workers should be able to pay their rent and groceries without having to sacrifice necessities"

"I would love to rent a flat where I don't feel uncomfortable asking the landlord to fix issues that should've been fixed before we moved in, in fear that we will be asked to leave."

“A home where I can complain about repairs or unlivable conditions without fear of being asked to leave under another pretext.”

“A home which is secure, in a good state of repair, sufficient space for your belongings, easy to warm and cool, has fresh air and daylight, and is rented long term to establish as a proper home, as a home bought outright is.”

Q15: Is there anything else you’d like to tell us about your experience of private renting?

91 people answered this question (44%).

Answers to this question spanned a variety of topics, some covered elsewhere and some only raised here. A sample of these answers are below and some were also included in the body of the report.

“It feels really unfair”

“I would like to highlight the poor quality of student properties that I have had to deal with. Properties ridden with damp and mold that you are expected to cope with because the price range offers you no alternative.”

“The power should shift towards tenants who are currently being exploited.”

“It has felt difficult building healthy relationships and enjoying a social life when a safe, stable home isn’t even possible. I’ve been unable to build a community, to form reciprocal relationships of trust and kindness with the people around me.”

“I am on UC and PIP which covers my rent but leaves little left to cover any extra accessibility needs I have, such as Ubers or any extra medical equipment I may need in future”

“There is still much work needed to ensure that people like me who live and work in Bristol have the opportunity to own a home without having to rely on family wealth.”

“I wish I was able to buy instead of giving my money away to someone else and I don’t even get to own the flat.”

“Really mixed, and entirely dependent on the landlord’s capability to be a decent, reasonable person.”

“Many lettings agencies in Bristol especially seem to be using the desperation to their own advantage; we often had lettings agents ignore our emails, turn up to viewings late or unprepared”

“Renting as a wheelchair user is much more difficult than as someone able-bodied. Most other wheelchair users I know personally live in inaccessible housing because accessible housing is so hard to get.”

“I have avoided asking for necessary repairs due to fear of retaliation, or moving due to lack of suitable properties. I would say it definitely has had a negative impact on my mental health.”

“Have a great home & super landlord”

“I would be clear that my landlord is excellent, and I have no issues with them. They set rent fairly within market demand and prices, and explain to me clearly why they are doing this and within what parameters. The market prices are the issue as those are fundamentally too high.”

“It is a source of constant frustration to me that I have to deal with sub-par living conditions because I cannot afford my own home, and I cannot afford my own home because I am paying extortionately for someone else to own their home. There is definitely a place for private renting in society, but it should not come at such an extortionate cost relative to the often meagre housing being provided.”

“I think there needs to be more regulation on renting to students. It’s an incredibly predatory market, and I think poorer students suffer more”

“Something has to be done, we need rent controls, councils need to be able to intervene and regulate their market.”