



An Ghníomhaireacht  
Tithíochta  
The Housing Agency

National Study of Housing Experiences,  
Attitudes and Aspirations in Ireland

# RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN IRELAND 2020



## Acknowledgements

The Housing Agency would like to acknowledge and thank all the focus group and survey participants who have participated in this study.

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**<http://www.housingagency.ie/publications>**

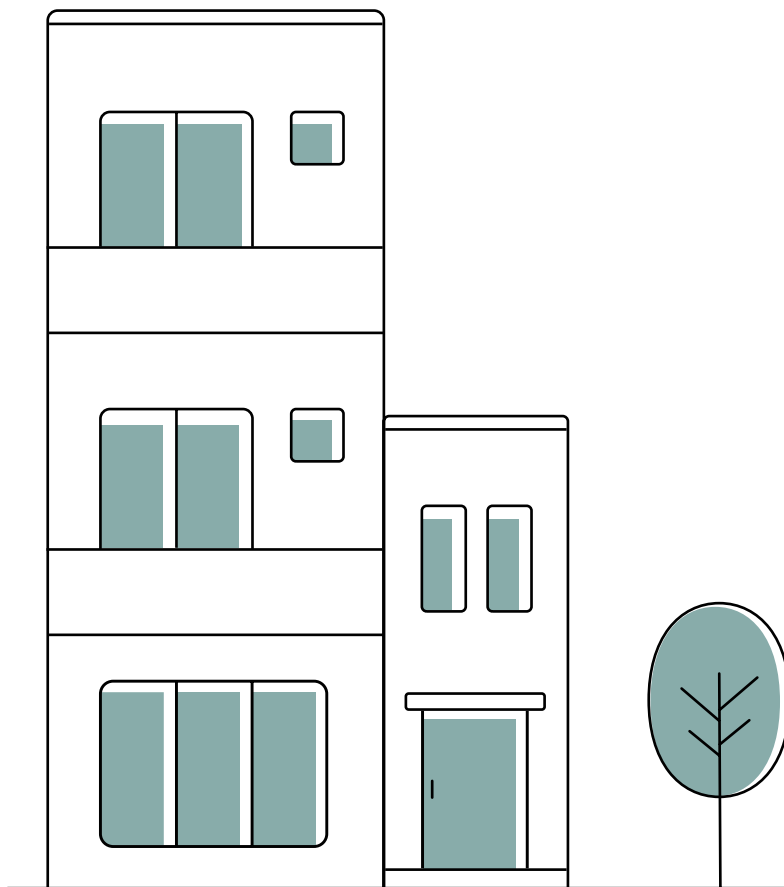
The 2018 and 2019 datasets are available to academics and researchers through the Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA) held in UCD, and the 2020 dataset will also be made available.

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# Foreword

*The National Study of Housing Experiences, Attitudes and Aspirations in Ireland* aims to add to our understanding of how people experience their homes and neighbourhoods, and their future plans. Now in its third run, the survey has helped to build up a picture of what people consider important and significant in their homes.



The Housing Agency's purpose is to provide expertise and solutions to help deliver sustainable communities throughout Ireland. Supporting stakeholders with evidence-informed insights and data is one way in which we hope to achieve this.

*The National Study of Housing Experiences, Attitudes and Aspirations in Ireland* aims to add to our understanding of how people experience their homes and neighbourhoods, and their future plans. Now in its third run, the survey has helped to build up a picture of what people consider important and significant in their homes.

This survey, carried out in Winter 2020, is a little different to the previous ones in the series, in that the fieldwork to collect the information had to move online due to public health restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, it clearly demonstrates the high levels of interest that we have in where we live and the surrounding community.

The findings of the survey have many positive features – the majority of respondents were satisfied with their housing and neighbourhood, and some became even more positive during Covid-19 restrictions, for example. But the survey has also helped to highlight problems that respondents reported – most notably, half of respondents said they experienced difficulties in keeping their home warm, this increased to 61% for those renting. Considering the recent increases in heating costs, this is a particularly important research finding.

A second interesting area in the research is in relation to the experiences of working from home. Overall, the ‘working from home experience’ was positive in that respondents reported they were able to adapt their home to find a suitable workspace to carry on their duties. Those renting and living in urban areas were more likely to report having problems in this regard. Looking to the future, based on the findings of this survey, many people would like to maintain a blend of working from home and in the workplace.

A third theme of the research was affordability. About one in four of those with a mortgage and half of those renting reported difficulties in paying their mortgage or rent. Almost one in three respondents reported a drop in household income during Covid-19. These

findings are important in the context of recent mortgage and rent increases.

This is the final report in the current series. It is hoped to continue this research with a second series of surveys, which will help to track changes and emerging issues. During periods of great uncertainty, such as we experienced over the last two years, people may consider changing their plans and future housing aspirations. It will be interesting to see how these unfold as we emerge from the pandemic and other world events take centre stage.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the researchers, Roslyn Molloy and Anne Murphy, for their work on this report and Amárach Research for their support over the three years of the project. A special thanks to those who gave of their time to participate in the research.

**David Silke**  
Director of Insights and Operations

# Key Findings

## Housing Satisfaction



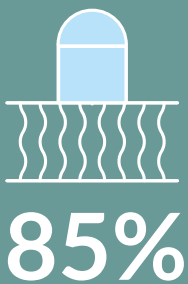
of all householders are **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with their homes



of all householders experienced difficulties keeping their homes warm



of householders working from home would like to continue post-pandemic working from home some of the time (**66%**) or all of the time (**26%**)



of householders were able to access an outside space to sit (garden/balcony) - **25%** renters compared to **6%** of owners lack a place to sit outside



of renters said 'shortage of space' was a problem for them compared to **29%** of homeowners



## Neighbourhood Satisfaction



of all householders are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their neighbourhoods



of householders said they felt 'more positive' about their neighbourhoods since the onset of Covid-19



of householders are able to access recreational parks/ green areas



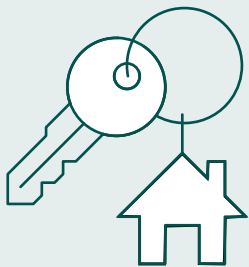
## Affordability



of households experienced an income decrease since the start of the pandemic

**57%**

of renters experience difficulty paying their rental costs



**39%**

of homeowners experience difficulty meeting mortgage repayments



of households were living comfortably on their present income

## Location and Future Aspirations

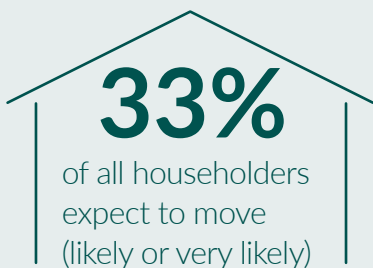


Between March 2020 and December 2020, **9%** of householders have either moved to a different home or had others move in to join their household.

**47%** of householders would consider new locations not considered prior to Covid-19 (**40%** rural village, **30%** open countryside, **18%** abroad)



**52%** of all renters think they will buy at some point in the future, **20%** of all renters think they will always rent and **28%** don't know



Top preference of those considering a move is a second-hand home with two or more floors.



Top attribute in a new home is to have a garden.

# Executive Summary

## Background

This study is the third in the Housing Agency series *National Study of Housing Experiences, Attitudes and Aspirations in Ireland*. Previous reports were published in 2018 and 2019.<sup>1</sup>

The 2020 *National Study of Housing Experiences, Attitudes and Aspirations in Ireland* aims to measure householders' satisfaction levels with homes and neighbourhoods, and also their future housing aspirations. The study took place in December 2020, ten months into the pandemic. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on householders was assessed through new questions.

## Approach

The report includes a literature review related to the impact of Covid-19 on housing, and a national representative survey of 1500 householders. A quota-controlled sampling methodology was used for the survey, applying quotas for gender, social class and region, matched with the CSO 2016 Census. Due to restrictions relating to Covid-19, Amárach Research carried out an online survey using its online panel. To mitigate the effects necessitated by Covid-19 of changing to an online data collection mode, a larger sample was collected than in 2018.

## Key Findings

The Covid-19 pandemic highlights the importance that our homes and neighbourhoods play in our lives, wellbeing and health. The literature review further supports the practical importance of living in good quality homes with decent outdoor environments. Other findings include:

**The majority of homes have been flexible enough to facilitate remote working**

The majority of Irish homes have proven to be flexible in adapting to remote working. This study found that 72% of householders working from home had a suitable workspace. This flexibility differed by tenure, with a lower proportion of renters (58%) reporting they had a suitable workspace than homeowners (77%).

The study found that continuing to work from home for at least some (66%), or all (26%), of the time was the preference of the majority of householders working from home as of December 2020.

**Half of all householders found it difficult to keep their homes warm and a quarter of homeowners had work carried out on their homes to make them more 'comfortable' since the start of the pandemic.**

Half of all householders reported that keeping their home warm was 'somewhat of a problem' (37%) or 'a big problem' (13%). The different demands made of Irish homes since the start of the pandemic are reflected in the finding that 26% of homeowners had carried out work between March 2020 and December 2020 to make their home more comfortable, such as insulation or energy upgrades, while a further 36% were planning to carry out work in 2021.

**Shortage of space is a problem for more renters than homeowners.**

While shortage of space was a problem for 43% of householders, the proportion of renters citing a shortage of space (62%) was more than twice that of homeowners (29%).

**Most Irish homes have access to outdoor space and a place to sit outside.**

A place to sit outside (garden/balcony) was available to 85% of those surveyed. However, not having a place to sit outside was a problem for 25% of renters compared to just 6% of owners.

**Renters had lower overall satisfaction levels with homes.**

1. All reports in the series are available on The Housing Agency's website: [www.housingagency.ie/publications](http://www.housingagency.ie/publications).



This study found that 33% of all householders felt more positive about their homes since the Covid-19 restrictions had first been imposed. Satisfaction with homes differed substantially by tenure. While 77% of homeowners in Ireland rated themselves as 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their homes, only 50% of renters did so.

**A high proportion of householders are satisfied with their neighbourhoods.**

80% of householders in Ireland reported being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their neighbourhoods. 23% reported feeling more positive about their neighbourhoods since the onset of Covid-19.

There were differences by tenure type, with 92% of homeowners satisfied with their neighbourhood, compared to 66% of renters. There were also regional differences, with 86% of those living in rural areas reporting that they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their neighbourhood, compared with those living in Dublin, regional cities and urban towns.

This study found that nationally, 78% of all householders 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were 'able to access recreational parks/green areas'.

**Affordability**

The study found that, during the period between March 2020 and December 2020, household income had decreased for 28% of households. For renters, 57% experienced difficulty paying their rent.

For owners with a mortgage, 6% stated they had 'a lot of difficulty' and 33% that they had 'some difficulty' meeting the monthly mortgage repayments. Furthermore, 16% of owners with a mortgage took a break on their mortgage payments. This is more than double the proportion of renters (7%) who had taken a break on their rental payments.

**Having a garden was the number one attribute people would like in their next home and people were considering new locations for their next home.**

This study reveals that in the ten months between March and December 2020, 9% of householders in Ireland had either moved to a different home, or had others move in to join their household.

33% of households in Ireland stated they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to move in the future: by tenure type, this was 52% of renters and 20% of homeowners. The top four reasons people gave for being likely to move were for a growing family (23%), to own a home (22%), to downsize (18%)

or for employment reasons (14%). When it comes to homeowners that are likely to move, the key reason is to downsize.

47% of householders who were considering a move stated they would be open to locations they would not have considered prior to Covid-19. Looking to what locations people would consider that they would not have before the pandemic, 40% of householders likely to move would consider moving to a rural village, 30% would consider a move to open countryside and almost 18% would consider a move abroad.

A garden was the most important feature for householders, followed by the number of bedrooms and then by feeling safe. The top two features that were most important in choosing the next place to live were living in a neighbourhood that was more peaceful and with friendly neighbours.

# 1 Overview of the Study

## 1.1 Introduction

This is the third wave of The Housing Agency series *National Study of Housing Experiences, Attitudes and Aspirations in Ireland*.

The aim of the research is to better understand current housing experiences and aspirations of householders in Ireland, and how different factors impact these. At the end of 2020, The Housing Agency set out to measure satisfaction levels with homes and neighbourhoods in the middle of the pandemic and therefore, people's attitudes regarding housing and neighbourhood are viewed through the lens of Covid-19. This report presents this view using residential satisfaction, a conceptual framework which includes:

- satisfaction with the home and neighbourhood
- housing affordability
- community and social cohesion
- life in general (Housing Agency, 2018)

In 2020, it was not possible to undertake face-to-face surveys due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, a survey of 1514 householders living in Ireland (weighted to a nationally representative sample of 1500), along with a booster sample of a further 314 renters, was undertaken online in December 2020. The survey instrument was kept as close as possible to

In 2020, it was not possible to undertake face-to-face surveys due to the Covid-19 pandemic

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the 2018 questionnaire, with additional questions included to allow exploration of the impact of Covid-19 on householders.

## 1.2 Rationale

The overall objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive housing study to better understand householders' housing situations and aspirations and to inform policy makers of trends in residential satisfaction over time.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

Specific research objectives are to:

- Provide data on trends in residential satisfaction over time
- Provide information on housing costs, affordability, housing quality, barriers to different tenures, location and residential features
- Provide information that will inform national and regional housing policy
- Track housing expectations and aspirations over time
- Collect information to help assess future housing requirements

## 1.4 Report Structure

Chapter 1 of the report provides an overview of the study and outlines the research aims and objectives, while Chapter 2 describes the research methodology. Chapter 3 provides background, context and a review of the literature on the impact of the pandemic on housing. Chapter 4 provides findings from the survey, in terms of housing satisfaction, neighbourhood satisfaction, tenure perceptions, housing journey, affordability, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on householders' experience and attitudes to their homes. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of the key findings.

## 1.5 Reports and Datasets

To date, The Housing Agency has published five reports and two working papers using the data from the 2018 wave, as well as *Apartment Living in Ireland 2019* from the 2019 wave. All reports and working papers are available on The Housing Agency's website: [www.housingagency.ie](http://www.housingagency.ie). The 2018 and 2019 datasets are available through the Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA) held in UCD for academics and researchers, and the 2020 dataset will also be made available.

# 2 Research Methodology

## 2.1 Research Methodology

This research was conducted using a quantitative cross-sectional design comprising a nationally representative survey of 1500 householders in Ireland. Amárach Research was appointed by The Housing Agency in 2020 to undertake the nationally representative survey of householders in Ireland.

## 2.2 Survey

### 2.2.1 Sampling Approach

A quota-controlled sampling methodology was used, which applied quotas on gender, social class and region. Table 2.1 provides an outline profile by demographic variables of the sample achieved. The sample came from two panels; the Amárach Research panel of 5000 adults specifically recruited for Amárach Research surveys; and a panel drawn from DataXcel, which has the largest panel resource in Ireland.

### 2.2.2 Sample Achieved

A nationally representative sample of 1500 Irish adults aged 18 and over was achieved, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Sample profile

		%	N (1500)
<b>Age group (years)</b>	18-24	6%	85
	25-34	19%	288
	35-44	24%	366
	45-54	20%	294
	55-64	17%	260
	65+	14%	206
<b>Gender</b>	Male	49%	732
	Female	51%	765
	Other	-	2
<b>Region</b>	Dublin	29%	438
	Leinster (exc. Dublin)	26%	392
	Munster	27%	405
	Connaught/Ulster	18%	265
<b>Tenure type</b>	Total renters	35%	526
	Private renters	20%	302
	Social renters	15%	224
	Total owners	57%	859
	Outright owners	25%	375
	Owners with mortgage	32%	484
	Live rent free	8%	115
<b>Social class</b>	AB	13%	195
	C1	31%	457
	C2	20%	300
	DE	30%	457
	F	6%	90

### 2.2.3 Weighting

The final sample of 1514 respondents was weighted to the 2016 CSO Census to ensure a nationally representative sample of 1500 householders. Quotas were placed on gender, social class and region during the fieldwork and weighting was also applied to these variables to ensure the sample matched the Irish population.

### 2.2.4 Design of the Survey Instrument

In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews as has been done in previous waves. Instead, the decision was made by The Housing Agency to conduct the survey using an online survey methodology.

The 2018 survey questionnaire, which had been devised to be conducted using face-to-face computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), was adapted by The Housing Agency for the online environment and followed as closely as possible the format, routing and sequencing of the previous two surveys. The questionnaire was organised by topic into eight modules: housing classification, dwellings, neighbourhood, tenure, housing journey, housing future and aspirations, quality of life and sociodemographic variables.

This study used both single-item and multiple-item measures to ascertain satisfaction levels. Two single-item measures asked respondents to rate on a 5-point likert scale their satisfaction, firstly with their housing and secondly, with their neighbourhood.

Additional questions related to Covid-19 were included. These were informed by both the literature review and by reviewing survey instruments created by other organisations, including the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, the CSO and the ESRI, during 2020.

A pilot study of 50 participants was completed to test comprehension, routing and response rates, inter alia, in November 2020 before the main phase of online fieldwork. The pilot testing identified potential issues in clarity and sequencing of questions, resulting in some amendments to the final survey instrument. It was established in the pilot that the questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

### 2.2.5 Data Collection

This study took place during Winter 2020 when Level 3 Covid-19 restrictions were in place, which asked people to stay in their region and to limit the number of people they met. An online survey administration strategy was implemented that ensured data collection was of a high standard and quality. Informed consent was sought from participants, with data

collection and storage following clear procedures. Fieldwork for the online survey commenced on the 8th of December 2020 for a three-week period, closing at the end of the month.

### 2.2.6 Data Analysis

The report provides a comprehensive set of findings using descriptive statistics for the 2020 survey, focusing on data analysis of the nationally representative sample. Descriptive univariate statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS statistics and Microsoft Excel, using frequencies and percentages for categorical variables and means for continuous scale variables. Findings that report analysis by tenure type omit 115 respondents who reported a tenure type of living rent-free. This means that analyses by tenure report 526 renters and 859 owners. However, respondents who live rent-free are included in the analyses by region and in results reported for the overall sample. **See Appendix 2.**

In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews as has been done in previous waves. Instead, the decision was made by The Housing Agency to conduct the survey using an online survey methodology.

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## 3

## How Covid-19 Affected Housing &amp; Householders: Literature Review

**3.1 Introduction**

The crisis presented by the Covid-19 pandemic was also a housing crisis, experienced across the world, which reinforced the integral part that homes play in our lives (Peters and Halleran, 2021, Torres et al., 2021). The relationship of Covid-19 with housing exacerbated housing inequalities and impacted mental and physical health (Brown et al., 2020). Early responses to the pandemic included lockdowns, working from home and flexible hours, protections for renters included eviction moratoriums and rent freezes, mortgage holidays for homeowners, and social assistance payment schemes for those who were made unemployed as a consequence of the pandemic (OECD, 2020). At the onset of the pandemic, governments made changes across many domains that had previously been unthinkable or viewed as too complex to implement (Moore et al., 2020).

In this chapter, research papers and studies completed in 2020 to 2022 were reviewed to gain an understanding of how Covid-19 impacted on housing, including how householders' residential satisfaction and future housing aspirations were affected. A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to complement and build on reviews conducted in earlier waves of the national study of Irish housing experiences, attitudes and aspirations in Ireland.

The review first considers aspects of the home as it became the location where householders experienced the pandemic and its associated restrictions. The review continues with a focus on flexible homes and housing quality, including housing design, remote working, and the impact of remote working and stay-at-home restrictions on the energy efficiency of homes.

It then describes the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the experience of, and attitudes to neighbourhoods, followed with a consideration of the increased importance of green spaces since the emergence of the pandemic. It considers affordability in the time of Covid-19, before concluding with a consideration of potential impacts on householders' housing aspirations.

**3.2 Effect of Housing Conditions on Quality of Life**

Home is most often viewed as a safe, protected space, offering sanctuary (Gurney, 2021). Public health restrictions resulted in homes becoming a refuge from infection but negatively impacted people's quality of life (Torres et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2020; Mouratidis and Yiannakou, 2022a). Being confined to the home during the pandemic changed people's attitudes to their accommodation (Thorstensen-Woll, Buck and Naylor, 2020). During the Covid-19 crisis, decent housing

The relationship of Covid-19 with housing exacerbated housing inequalities and impacted mental and physical health (Brown et al., 2020).

and the quality of the outdoor environment had never been so important (Scott, 2020; Brown et al., 2020). Lockdowns, quarantining and cocooning brought the impact of good quality homes on health, wellbeing and overall levels of satisfaction into clear focus (Brown et al., 2020; Cheshmehzangi, 2021).

The pandemic illuminated the relationship between poor housing conditions and health, as observed by Thorstensen-Woll, Buck and Naylor (2020):

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*"The 'home' is more than the four walls of the house. The area we live in, stability of tenure and the affordability of housing have also been found to have a significant impact on health and wellbeing."*

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A US study found that nationally, for each 5% increase in the percentage of households with poor quality housing, there was a 50% higher risk of Covid-19 incidence and a 42% higher risk of dying from Covid-19 (Ahmad et al., 2020). In England, where 18% of homes are in ‘non-decent’ condition, “living in a poor-quality home has a major detrimental impact on physical and mental health” and overcrowded, damp and cold homes all contribute to poor health (Thorstensen-Woll, Buck and Naylor, 2020).

### 3.2.1 Quality Of Housing

The pandemic shone a spotlight on the link between housing conditions (including the size of accommodation, household density and access to outside open space), and health and wellbeing. A US study found that nationally, for each 5% increase in the percentage of households with poor quality housing, there was a 50% higher risk of Covid-19 incidence and a 42% higher risk of dying from Covid-19 (Ahmad et al., 2020). In England, where 18% of homes are in ‘non-decent’ condition, “living in a poor-quality home has a major detrimental impact on physical and mental health” and overcrowded, damp and cold homes all contribute to poor health (Thorstensen-Woll, Buck and Naylor, 2020). A New York study found that overall residential satisfaction decreased with extreme noise exposure and inadequate safety standards (Azad and Ghandehari, 2021). Poor quality housing was associated with an increased risk of depression for university students during the pandemic (Amerio et al., 2020; Wathélet, 2020). Apartment residents in the United States were more likely to experience mental

health issues during the pandemic than those living in houses (Ghimire et al., 2021).

### 3.2.2 Living Space

A KBC Bank Irish consumer survey conducted in 2020 found that the pandemic increased the importance of living space for 21% of respondents, with living conditions becoming more important for those on higher incomes, living in Dublin or aged 18-35, perhaps reflecting a less immediate impact of the pandemic on high earners than for those on lower incomes (Hughes, 2020). In the United Kingdom, 10% reported feeling depressed during lockdown because of a lack of space in their home (The National Housing Federation, 2020). Limited living space was negatively linked with lower wellbeing and poorer health outcomes during Covid-19 in the United Kingdom (Holmes et al., 2020) and in Norway (Mouratidis, 2022b), while larger dwellings were associated with positive wellbeing and good health outcomes in cities in Greece (Mouratidis and Yiannakou, 2022b). Living in a dwelling of sufficient size and quality mitigated the negative impacts of the pandemic on quality

of life for Norwegian households (Mouratidis, 2021).

### 3.2.3 Household Density

Lack of living space and higher household density makes it difficult for people to socially distance or to quarantine when necessary (Thorstensen-Woll, Buck and Naylor, 2020; Tokazhanov et al., 2020). Greater household density in poorer, higher-density suburbs led to greater exposure to Covid-19 infection for multifamily, multigenerational householders (OECD, 2020). In Italy, where 29% of the population live in high household density apartments, in-house transmission of Covid-19 was a problem (D’Alessandro et al, 2020). Higher rates of Covid-19 in the United States were evident in poorer, higher density suburbs where there was more likelihood of overcrowding, multigenerational households and the accommodation of frontline service workers (OECD, 2020). In the United Kingdom, 14 of 20 local authorities with the highest Covid-19 mortality rates also had the highest number of higher-density households, with residents living in homes with

fewer bedrooms than people (Thorstensen-Woll, Buck and Naylor, 2020).

### 3.2.4 Energy Consumption

Living and working in a home over a longer period during Covid-19 restrictions brought energy efficiency into sharp focus (Cheshmehzangi, 2021). Covid-19 lockdowns led to an increase in domestic energy and water consumption, and a change to waste generation mechanisms; when housing became more than solely a living space, but also a workspace, and a school (Cvetkovic, Nesovic and Terzic, 2020). Spending longer periods of time living and working from home led to increased levels of domestic energy consumption in Ireland by as much as 30% in lockdown (Mavrokefalidis, 2021).

### 3.2.5 Flexible Homes

Covid-19 tested the home for its flexibility and adaptability (Tokazhanov et al., 2020). Homes were reorganised in response to the pandemic: bedrooms were transformed into workstations, kitchens into web-meeting rooms, and living rooms into web-classrooms. Homes became a necessary provider of both personal yet flexible spaces and were working harder than ever before (Cussen, 2020; Signorelli et al., 2020). Homes also acted as quarantining and isolation spaces during the pandemic and it was not always easy to create self-isolation spaces in individual homes (Tokazhanov et al., 2020).

Covid-19 pandemic disrupted trends in home design and lifestyles and ushered in a fresh linking of public health

requirements with housing layout and design (Signorelli et al., 2020). As was the case in 19th century USA, when the link between urban planning and public health influenced housing layout standards (Scott, 2020), Covid-19 may similarly influence housing layout standards. Homes will have to respond to the demands that have been placed on them by pandemic restrictions, with less emphasis on open plan living (Hipwood, 2020), which can make it impossible for family members to each engage separately in remote working or for children to attend online lessons (Signorelli et al., 2020) and the pandemic highlighted the importance of rooms for study and/or home schooling (Hipwood, 2020; Torres et al., 2021). For apartment residents, some activities have the potential to move from the apartment to common spaces in the building: open space on the roof or surrounding the apartment block for children's play or adults' physical exercise, or a common laundry in the basement to save space in the apartment (Signorelli et al., 2020).

### 3.2.6 Working From Home

The pandemic transformed working from home into an urgent solution to reduce the risk of contagion and ensure economic continuity, which, if many employers viewed as working well, could be sustained post-pandemic (Fitzgerald, 2020; OECD, 2020). Working from home is likely to continue, but a review of practices would ensure everyone can benefit (Moore et al., 2020; OECD, 2020). The OECD (2020) forecast that although working from home was likely to increase, it would not become the most common

working practice. Issues emerged, such as safety concerns, worker's rights, and expenses arising from using homes as a place of work (OECD, 2020). The provision of digital infrastructure, essential to the ability to work and study from home (Tokazhanov et al., 2020), and already a national policy in Ireland (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, 2013), only increased in importance.

In Ireland, 34% of the workforce started to work from home due to the pandemic (Central Statistics Office, 2020). A survey carried out in May 2020 when school and creches were closed, of over 7000 remote workers in Ireland, found that one of the top three challenges they faced was a poor physical workspace in their homes. However, 71% of respondents reported that they had a dedicated workspace at home where they could work without too many interruptions. A signal perhaps that homes were providing the flexibility for people to work from home was that the majority (83%) said they would like to continue working remotely for at least some of the time after Covid-19 (McCarthy et al., 2020).

The ability to work from home and the need for greater space to facilitate this impacted people's attitudes to their homes. In the UK, a study showed that a third of people viewed their home differently since the onset of Covid-19, valuing in particular, the importance of more indoor space for remote working (National Housing Federation, 2020). The flexibility of homes to become a place of work impacts on the wellbeing of those working

remotely, and in turn, affects levels of satisfaction with the home (McCarthy et al., 2020).

### 3.3 Future Homes and Housing Design

Epidemics and pandemics will continue to occur in the future bringing with them requirements for populations to isolate and quarantine (Hoiby, 2020). The link between urban planning and public health influenced housing layout standards in early planning legislation in 19th century USA (Scott, 2020). D'Alessandro et al. (2020) argue that the pandemic has made it necessary to rethink living spaces to include visible and accessible green elements and spaces, adaptable living spaces, and to consider improved energy efficiency. A systematic review of the literature regarding required changes to residential buildings as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic identified three aspects (Tokazhanov et al., 2020):

- Health and safety - smart technologies, indoor finishing materials, green and natural environment, indoor air-quality, temperature and humidity
- Environment - energy, solid waste and wastewater
- Comfort - housing automation (sensors and detectors connected to smart systems to allow managing and control the home), layout and intimacy (privacy)

Future housing will be required to avoid disease propagation, minimise housing's environmental impact, and maintain/improve residents' comfort during any future lockdown periods

(Tokazhanov et al., 2020). Where housing comprises apartments, architects and planners face the challenge of accommodating the many requirements of pandemic restrictions in apartments of a reasonable size, while simultaneously not increasing construction costs (Signorelli et al., 2020). In addition, homes will have to become more energy efficient (D'Alessandro et al., 2020; Hipwood, 2020).

Peters and Halleran (2021) conducted a literature review focusing on quality of life in apartment housing during the pandemic. They identified six priorities for post-pandemic, health-promoting architecture principles, including window placement and views, internal lighting levels to accommodate multiple uses, bedrooms designed to be restful, better indoor air quality and natural ventilation, access to nature via better balcony design, and lastly, unit sizes and layouts that enable physical distancing and prevent crowding (Peters and Halleran, 2021).

Architectural approaches to increase health spaces post-pandemic will include energy-efficient heating/cooling systems, water supply, and air quality (Megahed and Ghoneim, 2020). For comfort, basic needs to consider in the design include natural light, proper ventilation and air quality, adequate acoustics levels (sufficient sound insulation for multi-storey buildings) and a comfortable climate (Tokazhanov et al., 2020). Humidity and temperature should also be reviewed in response to the pandemic (Pinheiro and Luis, 2020). Other pandemic-inspired ideas include hands-free

door opening and rethinking constructing buildings using closed building system methods with their unmodifiable subsystems, sub-assemblies and interchangeable components, which lack flexible ventilation openings (Pinheiro and Luis, 2020).

The need for green spaces and low-rise buildings to increase health may be future drivers of architectural approaches (Megahed and Ghoneim, 2020). Availability of outdoor spaces and better air ventilation to decrease chances of transmission will become more important post-pandemic (Peters and Halleran, 2021). Future buildings may include external space as a criterion, whether a balcony, terrace or flat roof (Signorelli et al., 2020).

### 3.4 Neighbourhoods

#### 3.4.1 Impact of the Neighbourhood Environment during the Pandemic

Pandemic restrictions influenced people's experiences of their neighbourhoods (Zecca et al., 2020). Neighbourhoods became much more important as daytime working spaces, not just as bedroom suburbs (Saunders, 2020). Feeling safe in the neighbourhood, its perceived quietness and degree of social cohesion, attachment to the neighbourhood and lower density were all associated with higher neighbourhood satisfaction during the pandemic (Mouratidis and Yiannakou, 2022a).

Higher neighbourhood density, smaller dwellings and less green space were linked with lower wellbeing and health outcomes during the pandemic in a study



of residents in Norwegian cities (Mouratidis, 2022). Access to parks and local amenities, lower neighbourhood density, and living away from the city centre were associated with better wellbeing and health outcomes, compared to before the pandemic, in a study in Greek cities (Mouratidis and Yiannoukou, 2022a).

The impact of the neighbourhood environment on behaviours, during the pandemic, was evidenced in a study of factors influencing physical activity levels in Canadian children aged five to seventeen. Changes to patterns of children's physical activity, and sedentary and sleep behaviours were associated with the built environment in neighbourhoods during the pandemic (Mitra et al., 2020). Higher levels of physical activity during the pandemic were associated with living far from major roads, and close to parks in high density areas (Mitra et al., 2020).

### 3.4.2 Green Space

Covid-19 led to a focus on access to green space and parks as an important need (Scott, 2020; Mouratidis, 2021). Green public spaces are vital for wellbeing, and extended periods of confinement at home have been found to reduce physical activity, especially for lower socioeconomic groups and to increase the risk of depression, anxiety, insomnia and self-harm (Clay et al., 2020; Pffefferbaum and North, 2020), while high density neighbourhoods are more likely to see reduced physical activity by residents (Mitra, 2020; Moore, 2020). Public parks and gardens are an important health asset that can help the urban population to sustain health and wellbeing

Architectural approaches to increase health spaces post-pandemic will include energy-efficient heating/cooling systems, water supply, and air quality (Megahed and Ghoneim, 2020). For comfort, basic needs to consider in the design include natural light, proper ventilation and air quality, adequate acoustics levels (sufficient sound insulation for multi-storey buildings) and a comfortable climate (Tokazhanov et al., 2020).

(Shoari et al., 2020). Restriction measures such as closing recreational and public facilities also contributed to decreased physical activity in Japan (Suzuki et al., 2020). Neighbourhoods with higher densities and with better access to parks are more likely to help youth stay active outdoors compared to neighbourhoods with lower density and limited access to parks, findings which emphasise the importance of parks and open spaces (Mitra et al., 2020). The presence of tree canopies had positive effects on psychological distress during the pandemic lockdowns (Zhang et al., 2022). City dwellers developed a new appreciation of natural spaces, including spaces to be used daily (Saunders, 2020). The importance of access to green spaces was underlined for residents in Paris when all of its parks were closed in response to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic (Shoari et al.,

2020). The experience of Covid-19 also demonstrated the importance of having access to outside space for air and sunlight to decrease chances of transmission and will also be more important post-pandemic (Tokazhanov, 2020).

### 3.5 Renters' Security of Tenure

The requirement to stay at home means that the experience of the pandemic may be viewed through a housing tenure lens (Maalsen, Rogers and Ross, 2020). Renters were disproportionately more likely to suffer financially due to Covid-19, as they were more likely to work in sectors worse affected by the lockdown (Goodman and Magder, 2020) and renters were more likely to experience mental health issues than homeowners (Ghimire et al., 2021). Living with insecure tenure has been shown to have a considerable negative

impact on health and wellbeing (Thorstensen-Woll, Buck and Naylor, 2020).

Already before Covid-19, one in three households in Ireland in the 'unsupported' private rented sector were struggling to achieve a minimum standard of living (O'Toole et al., 2020). A 2018 survey found that 59% of private renters experienced some level of difficulty meeting their rental costs (The Housing Agency, 2018). Those living in the private rented sector are more likely than homeowners to suffer from feelings of housing insecurity, exacerbated by living in more temporary accommodation with more frequent moves (Thorstensen-Woll, Buck and Naylor, 2020; Baker et al., 2020).

In Ireland, some protection for private renters was provided to those who were eligible and had difficulty meeting their rent, through the payment of Rent Supplement by the State (Government of Ireland, 2020). While normally means-tested and subject to a maximum limit, more flexibility was exercised during Covid-19. Direct rental payments, as opposed to rent deferrals, help renters stay in their homes and avoid eviction in the short- to medium-term (Goodman and Magder, 2020). Supports provided through the Pandemic Unemployment Payment and the Temporary Wage Subsidy scheme were larger than pre-Covid-19 payments. This was reflected in the findings by O'Toole et al. (2020) during the first Covid-19 wave when the share of renter households which were able to purchase a minimum bundle of

goods increased from one in five, to one in three (Coffey et al., 2020).

Research in Australia covering 15,000 renters in August 2020 showed that half reported being under increased stress, while a third were experiencing financial difficulties as a direct impact of Covid-19 (Rogers and Power, 2020). The temporary payments for those who had lost their jobs were supporting the renters to remain in their homes; but there was also evidence that renters who were most concerned about future financial rental support, were more likely to report a decline in mental health (Baker et al., 2020).

Some commentators in the early stages of the pandemic saw an opportunity to reform the rental sector long-term (Maalsen, Rogers and Ross, 2020; Threshold, 2020). Many countries, including Ireland, the United Kingdom and Australia, introduced rental and eviction moratoriums to secure homes during the pandemic. In Australia, the State supported renters through direct financial support, moratoriums on evictions, financial relief to landlords and deferrals on mortgage repayments (Maalsen, Rogers and Ross, 2020). These direct state supports, which enabled landlords to reduce rents and tenants to continue paying their rents, were vital for the long-term health of the rental sector (Goodman and Magder, 2020).

### 3.6 Affordability

The pandemic had an "uneven impact on income and employment prospects" in Ireland (Hughes, 2020). There were financial

consequences for those who lost their jobs or were working reduced hours. Workers in business sectors which were most impacted by Covid-19 (hospitality, tourism, retail, distribution, childcare, travel) were more likely to live in the rental sector (Coffey et al., 2020; Goodman and Magder, 2020).

However for others, savings were made and some experienced increased incomes (O'Donoghue et al., 2020). Savings were made on commuting costs, childcare, general working costs and accommodation costs for some (Mackle and Smith, 2020). A modelling exercise of Irish incomes found that those in the bottom 70% of income distribution were financially better off, on average, than pre-pandemic due to reductions in work-related expenses and housing costs, while the top 30% recorded losses (O'Donoghue et al., 2020).

In Australia, in terms of the affordability disparity between renters and homeowners, one issue that arose was that potentially there was more leniency allowed by banks to homeowners to defer their mortgage repayments, than there was by landlords to renters to defer rental repayments (Goodman and Magder, 2020). Policies were introduced to support landlords such as a land tax relief, which reduced landlords' expenses and deferral of mortgage repayments for landlords, which were intended to help them reduce rents (Maalsen, Rogers and Ross, 2020).

### 3.6.1 Renters

Prior to Covid-19, a substantial proportion of renters in the private sector were experiencing affordability issues (Molloy and Murphy, 2019; Corrigan et al., 2018). Covid-19, in the short-term, may have alleviated affordability issues for renters in Ireland (O'Toole et al., 2020). During the pandemic, there was some moderation seen in the rental price growth that had been evident prior to the pandemic. Between the third quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2020, rents had grown nationally by 1.4% and were shown to have had a clear and consistent drop in the growth rate for the third quarter in 2020 (Residential Tenancies Board, 2020). However, the same research pointed to the long-term implications on affordability potentially worsening due to incomes not rebounding as quickly as expenditure costs for households.

A further risk envisaged in the first year of the pandemic was that a build-up of rental arrears could lead to evictions after the ban on evictions ended (Cahill,

2020). Households, supported by the Housing Assistance Payment and paying top-up payments to landlords would potentially no longer be able to afford these top-up payments. While the moratorium in March and October 2020 offered some 'reprieve' (Hayden, 2020), Threshold, the tenant protection service, had to "intervene in over 100 illegal or threatened evictions and advised on almost 300 invalid notices of termination between March and August 2020, when the first moratorium was in place" (Threshold, 2020).

There were concerns that while measures taken by governments to support tenants in the rental sector worked in the short-term, long-term implications for tenants of indebtedness could cause damage to the sector, including risks of eviction, overcrowded accommodation, poor quality housing and decline in supply as landlords exit the market (Threshold, 2020).

### 3.6.2 Owners

Protection of homeowners in Ireland included deferment of

mortgage payments. While it was seen as likely that Covid-19 would eventually lead to an increase in mortgage arrears (Cahill, 2020), a decline in the number of homeowners in mortgage arrears in Ireland was seen in Central Bank of Ireland statistics between the second and third quarter of 2020, which it concluded was partly because of the availability of Covid-19 mortgage payment breaks (Central Bank of Ireland, 2020). In fact, the downward trend in the numbers of mortgage arrears continued in Q4 2020 and all quarters of 2021 (Central Bank of Ireland, 2021).

## 3.7 Housing Aspirations

Many households in Ireland experienced an increased ability to save during the pandemic: Allen-Coghlan and McQuinn (2020) conjectured that these households would put increased demand on the limited supply of homes leading to an increase in house prices with the release of pent-up demand. A KBC survey conducted in 2020 found that potential purchasers believed that property purchase had become a more remote prospect as a result of the

A further risk envisaged in the first year of the pandemic was that a build-up of rental arrears could lead to evictions after the ban on evictions ended (Cahill, 2020). Households, supported by the Housing Assistance Payment and paying top-up payments to landlords would potentially no longer be able to afford these top-up payments. While the moratorium in March and October 2020 offered some 'reprieve' (Hayden, 2020).

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pandemic (Hughes, 2020). On the other hand, the OECD (2020) conjectured that working from home could contribute to a fall in house prices as workers leave central neighbourhoods for lower-density locations. While there was a slow-down during the first quarter of 2020 in the residential housing market, sales in this sector did increase, particularly in the last quarter of 2020 (Sherry Fitzgerald, 2020).

Working from home has the potential to impact on housing and location preferences (Allen-Coghlan, McQuinn and O'Toole, 2020). A survey of householders in Ireland by KBC found that 16% were willing to live further from work, although a further 21% were not willing (Hughes, 2020). Those aged 35-44 were the sole age group willing to live further from work and those on lower incomes were less likely to be willing to live further from work than other income groups (Hughes, 2020).

A UK study found that 15% of respondents were considering moving to less dense areas (National Housing Federation, 2020). Policy questions raised by the pandemic include how remote working affects urban and rural areas (OECD, 2020). One caveat, as noted by Cussen (2020), is that although remote working in rural areas has been mooted as an alternative to urban living, to follow this could lead to a highly energy intensive way of living and people disconnected from communities, an effect that would be at odds with the requirement to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

### 3.8 Conclusion

This review of the literature on Covid-19 and housing from the perspective of its impact on householders' experiences of their homes, neighbourhoods and future housing aspirations indicates that homes have become ever more important as they became the location where people experienced the pandemic. The literature establishes the causal link between housing conditions with health outcomes. It also indicates that people's priorities changed in response to using their homes as all-purpose spaces during lockdowns or while working from home. Access to gardens and balconies in the dwelling were increasingly valued by residents, while access to parks and green spaces close by became important during restrictions to a locality.

Renters and owners were affected by the changed circumstances brought about in response to the pandemic, with many measures introduced by governments, landlords and banks to mitigate the impacts of financial issues on people's ability to meet their accommodation and living costs, and to increase their security of tenure. Some householders experienced a drop in their income due to unemployment or furlough from their jobs, but for others, financial difficulties eased. Although the literature points to a lack of movement in the rental sector and the housing market during the pandemic, affordability of housing continued to be an issue, despite the measures adopted by governments. Finally, there were indications that people's experience of the pandemic may have changed their priorities about future housing aspirations regarding location.

# 4 Survey Results

This section provides the results of the online survey carried out in December 2020, capturing information during the Covid-19 pandemic about householders' housing satisfaction and neighbourhood satisfaction levels; renters' and homeowners' experiences; affordability; and householders' future housing expectations and aspirations. The 2020 wave of The Housing Agency study included extra questions to understand the impact of the pandemic on householders' housing experiences and future housing aspirations. These are reported throughout this chapter, alongside the standard analyses.

## 4.1 Housing Satisfaction

The majority of householders in Ireland were satisfied with their homes, with 66% reporting being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their homes. Homeowners were more likely to be satisfied with their homes than renters. In terms of dissatisfaction, 30% of renters were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with their homes compared to 15% of homeowners. 37% of owners were 'very satisfied' compared to just 14% of renters. **See Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1.**

Covid-19 has had both positive and negative impacts on how we feel about our homes. **40%** of homeowners and **30%** of renters feel more positive about their homes since restrictions were introduced in March 2020.



Figure 4.1: Housing satisfaction (N=1500)<sup>2</sup>

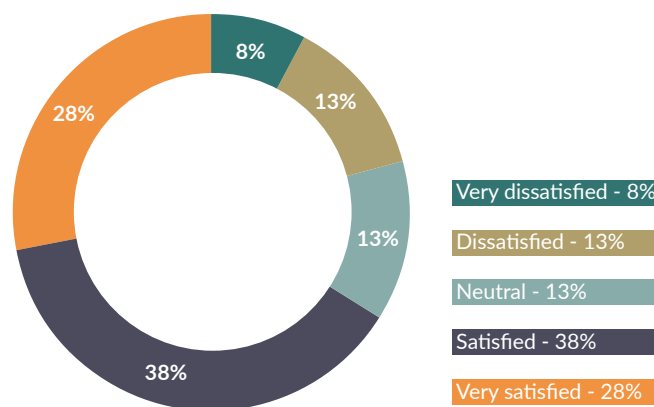


Table 4.1 Housing satisfaction for sample (N=1500) and by tenure type (n=1385)<sup>3</sup>

	Total N=1500	Renters n=526	Owners n=859
Very satisfied	28%	14%	37%
Satisfied	38%	36%	40%
Neutral	13%	20%	8%
Dissatisfied	13%	20%	9%
Very dissatisfied	8%	10%	6%

2. Q. Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current home? Rate on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied.

3. Analyses by tenure type in this chapter exclude householders who live rent-free, n=115.

Figure 4.2: Change in feelings about housing since Covid-19 (n=1412)<sup>4</sup>

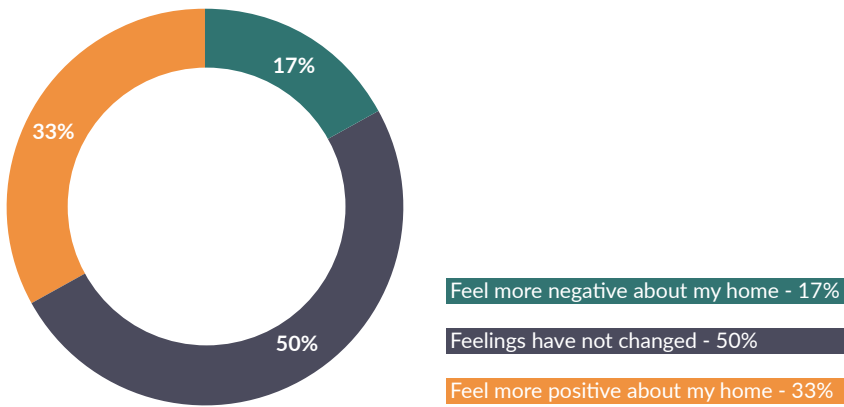


Table 4.2: Change in feelings about housing since Covid-19 by tenure type (n=1303) and region (n=1412)<sup>5, 6</sup>

	Total n=1412	Renters n=483	Owners n=820	Dublin n=415	Regional cities n=112	Urban towns n=397	Rural n=488
Feel more negative about my home	17%	22%	10%	22%	23%	19%	9%
Feelings have not changed	50%	49%	50%	50%	39%	48%	55%
Feel more positive about my home	33%	30%	40%	29%	37%	33%	35%

#### 4.1.1 Incidence of problems with the dwelling

The three biggest issues with homes reported in 2020 were: ‘difficulties keeping the home warm’ (50%), ‘difficulties with cost of upkeep’ (43%); and ‘shortage of space’ (41%). See Figure 4.3.

Half of all householders reported difficulties keeping their homes warm in 2020

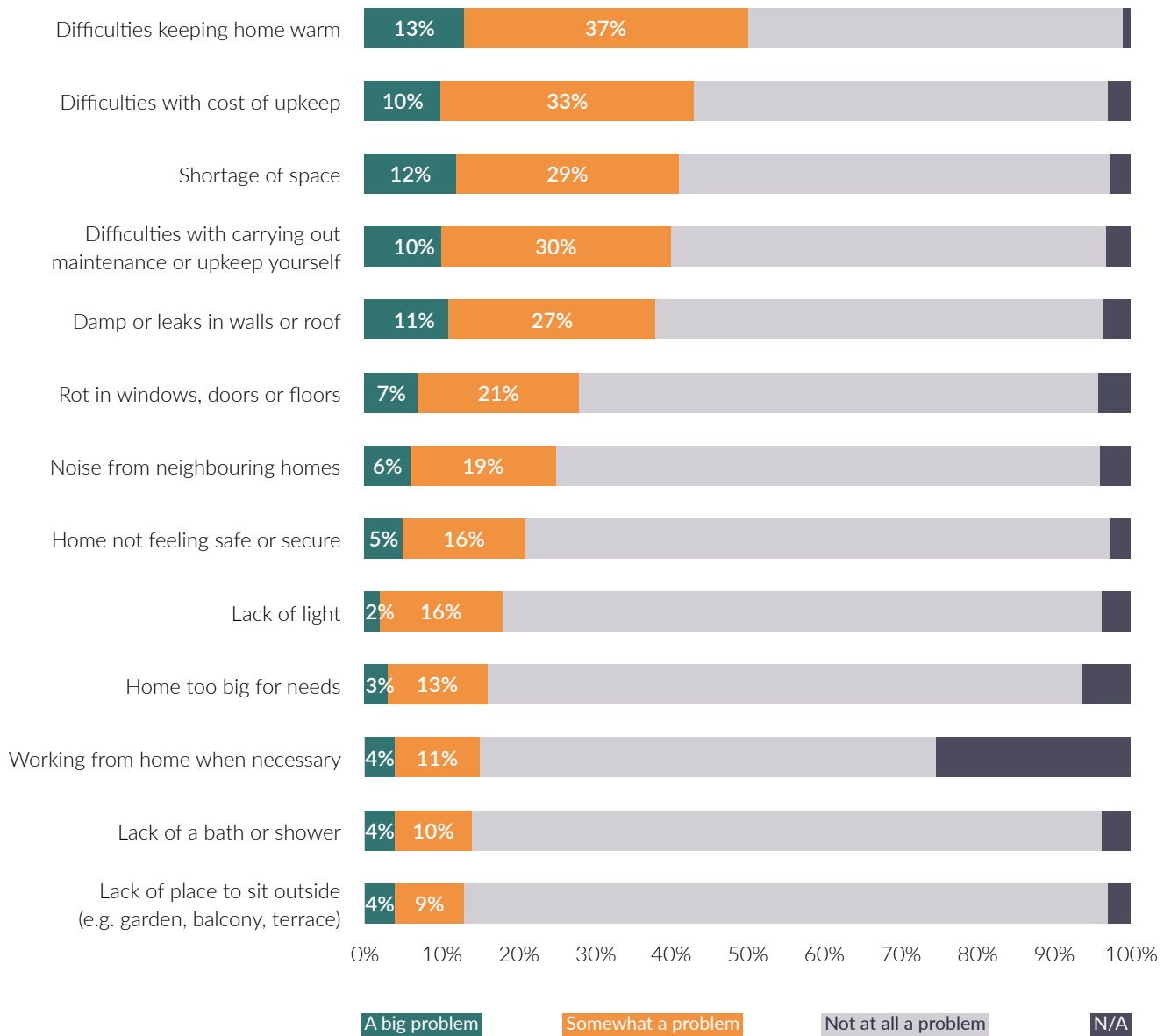


4. Q. Has your experience since March 2020 changed how you feel about your home?

5. Totals for renters and Dublin sum to 101% and to 99% for regional cities and rural.

6. Tenure and region totals exclude ‘don’t know’ and ‘not applicable’ responses in this table.

Figure 4.3: Incidence of housing issues/problems (N=1500)

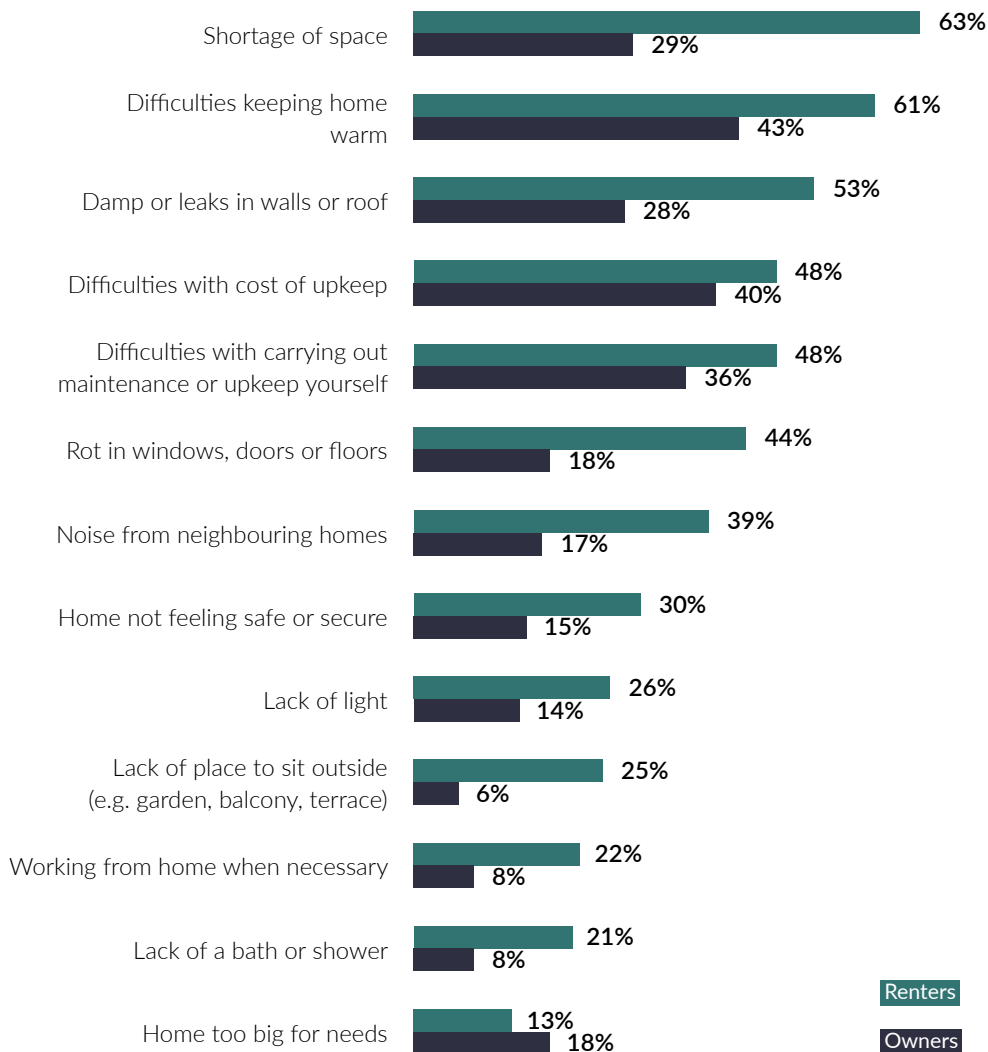


An analysis of reported housing issues/problems by tenure type points to differences between renters and homeowners, with renters reporting higher levels of housing issues/problems than owners on every issue except 'home too big for needs'. Both renters and owners reported difficulties with cost of upkeep

and keeping homes warm as the most critical issues. 63% of renters reported shortage of space as somewhat or a big problem, compared to 29% of owners, while working from home when necessary was a problem for a greater proportion of renters (22%) than homeowners (8%). Renters reported other issues concerning the quality of their homes in higher


proportions than homeowners, 53% reported dampness or leaks, 44% reported rot in windows or doors, 39% noise from neighbours and 30% the home not feeling secure. Four times as many renters (25%) as owners (6%) reported that a lack of a place to sit outside was somewhat or a big problem for them. **See Figure 4.4.**

Figure 4.4: Incidence of housing issues/problems (somewhat a problem/a big problem) by tenure type (n=1385)



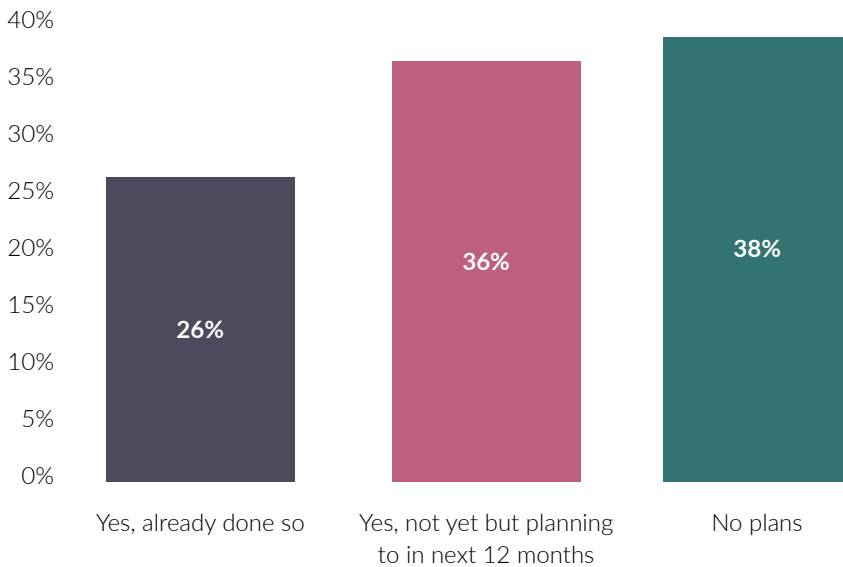
#### 4.1.2 Upgrading the condition of the dwelling

Owners were asked “Since the Covid-19 pandemic, have you thought about doing more to make your home more comfortable (e.g., insulation, energy efficiency)?” In response, 62% of homeowners stated they had considered making changes to make their homes more comfortable since the pandemic had begun, 26% had already made changes and a further 36% were planning changes in the next 12 months. **See Figure 4.5.**

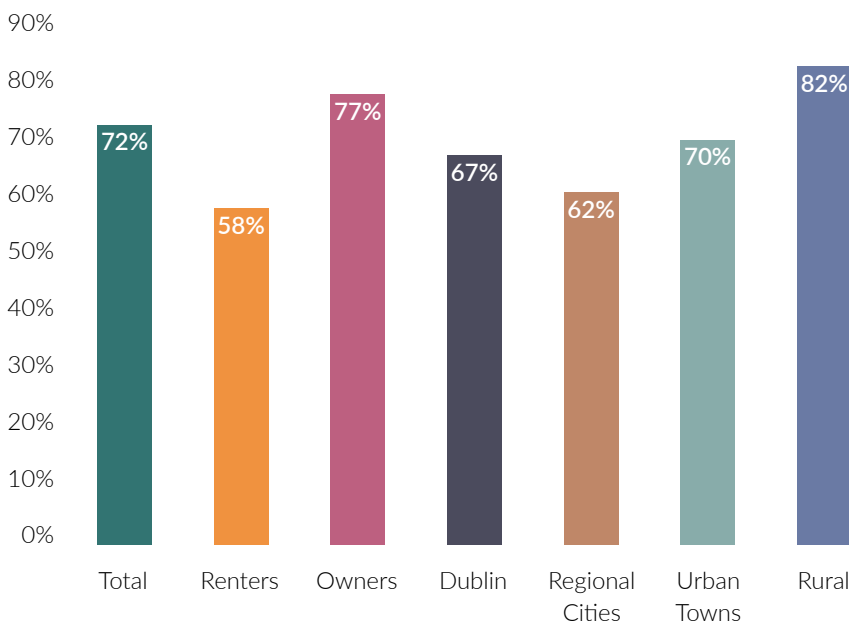
78%  of people ‘agree’, or ‘strongly agree’ that they are able to access recreational parks/ green areas.



**Figure 4.5: Whether owners have thought about doing more to make their home more comfortable since the start of the pandemic (e.g., insulation, energy efficiency) (n=859)**



**Figure 4.6: Percentage WFH equipped with a suitable workspace to work from home by tenure type (n=338) and region (n=370)**



### 4.1.3 Working from home

At the time the data was collected in December 2020, 6% of respondents then working from home had worked fulltime from home before Covid-19, while a further 8% had worked from home some of the time and 86% had not worked from home at all. Of those employed in December 2020, 44% had to work from home for some, or all, of the previous months because of the pandemic. 15% of those employed had reverted to their pre-pandemic workplace, 29% were still working from home and a very small number, just three respondents, were no longer working. **See Appendix 4, Tables A4.2 and A4.3.**

Another insight from the study is that of those working from home, 72% reported that they had a suitable workspace at home with adequate equipment to carry out their work duties. This study found differences by tenure type, with 58% of renters having a suitable workspace, compared to 77% of owners. Just 15% of householders reported that working from home was ‘somewhat of a problem’ or ‘a big problem’. **See Figure 4.6 and Appendix 4, Table A4.1.**

Rural versus urban differences were evident: while 82% of rural households working from home were equipped with a suitable workspace, this dropped to 62% for those living in regional cities and 67% for those living in Dublin. **See Figure 4.6.**

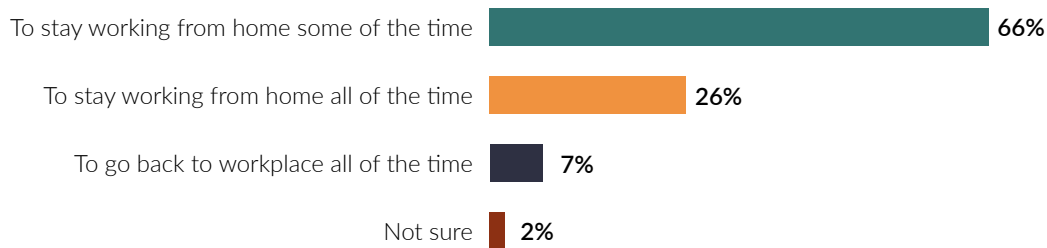
Householders working from home were asked about their preferences about returning to their workplace. 66% of all householders stated they would prefer a mix of working from the workplace and from home for some of the time. Just 26% preferred to 'stay working from home all of the time' and 7% would prefer 'to go back to the workplace all of the time'.

See Figure 4.7.



Only half of renters want to stay in their current neighbourhood long-term.

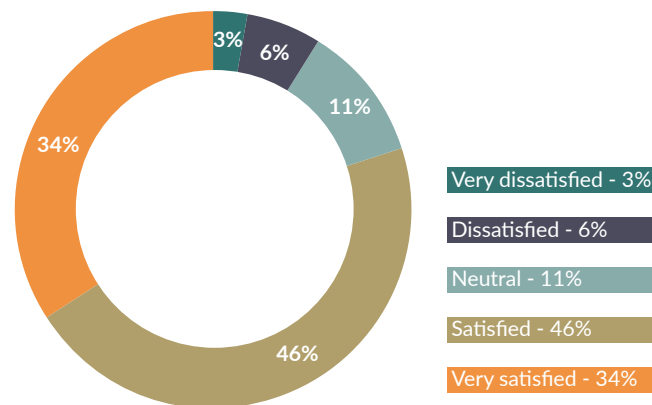
**Figure 4.7: If you were told you could return to your usual place of work either right away or in a few months' time, which would you choose? (WFH, n=242)<sup>7</sup>**



## 4.2 Neighbourhood Satisfaction

Neighbourhood satisfaction levels were high, with 80% of householders either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their neighbourhoods, and just 3% 'very dissatisfied'. Owners (51%) rated themselves as 'very satisfied' with their neighbourhoods in higher proportions compared to renters (22%), with those living in rural areas reported being the most satisfied with their neighbourhoods of the regional groups. See Figure 4.8 and Table 4.3.

**Figure 4.8: Overall neighbourhood satisfaction (N=1500)<sup>8</sup>**



7. Only those in current employment at the time of the survey were asked this question.

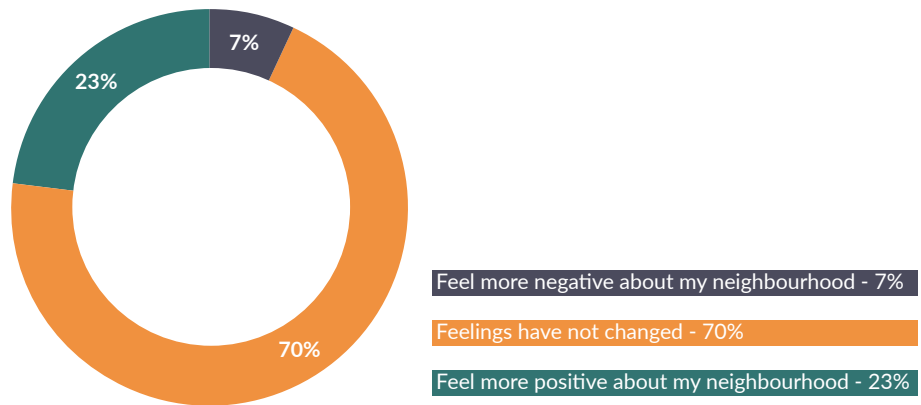
8. Q. Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live? Rate on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied.

**Table 4.3: Neighbourhood satisfaction by tenure type (n=1385) and region (N=1500)<sup>9</sup>**

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional cities	Urban towns	Rural
	N=1500	n=526	n=859	n=438	n=119	n=421	n=522
Very satisfied	34%	22%	51%	31%	34%	31%	39%
Satisfied	46%	44%	41%	44%	40%	47%	47%
Neutral	11%	19%	5%	13%	10%	13%	9%
Dissatisfied	6%	10%	2%	7%	13%	6%	3%
Very dissatisfied	3%	5%	1%	4%	3%	3%	1%

Householders were asked in the 2020 study about whether their satisfaction with their neighbourhood had changed since the start of the pandemic to assess changing attitudes to neighbourhoods. 23% of householders said that they felt more positive about their neighbourhood since the start of Covid-19, while just 7% felt more negative, with the majority (70%) feeling the same. **See Figure 4.9.**

**Figure 4.9: Change in feelings about neighbourhood since Covid-19 (n=1385)<sup>10</sup>**



81% of householders agreed or strongly agreed that it was ‘easy to get to supermarkets or other shops’ in their neighbourhood, with 79% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they enjoyed ‘living in this home’, were ‘happy with the neighbourhood environment’, that their neighbourhood was ‘a calm area to live’ and that they felt safe. **See Figure 4.10.**

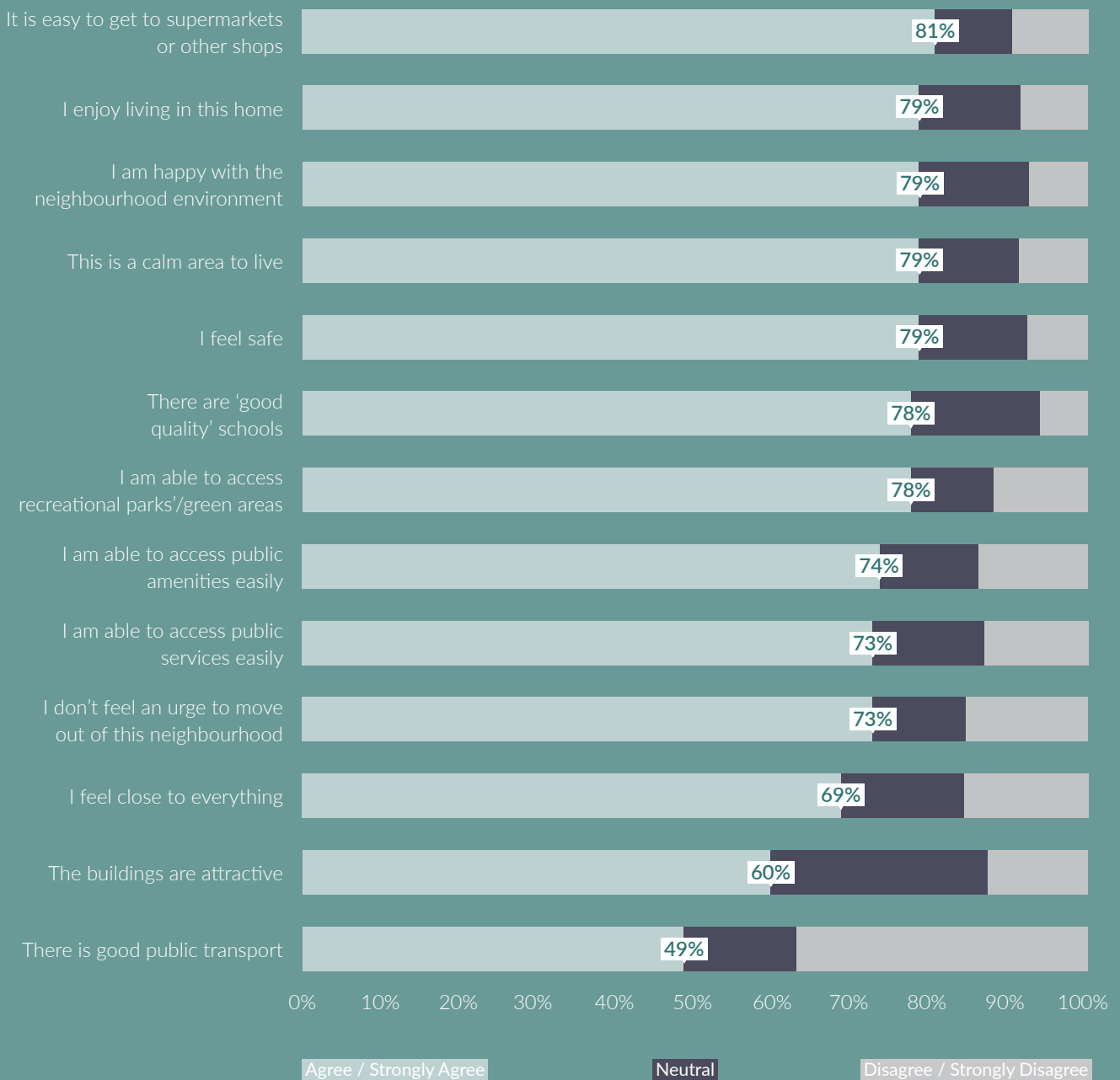
Living in a neighbourhood that is peaceful and friendly were the top two features that were the most important for people when choosing where next to live.



<sup>9</sup>. Totals for Dublin and Rural sum to 99% due to rounding.

<sup>10</sup>. Q. Have your satisfaction levels with your neighbourhood changed since Covid-19?

Figure 4.10: Neighbourhood attributes (N=1500)



By region, those living in rural areas strongly agreed that they enjoyed their homes, lived in calm areas and were happy with the neighbourhood environment in higher proportions than householders living in other regions. In line with this finding, those living in rural areas reported the lowest levels of wanting to move. Those living in regional cities stated they felt close to everything, and found it easy to access public amenities, supermarkets, and shops in higher proportions than other regions. **See Appendix 4, Table A4.4.**

On the whole, people wanted to stay in the area in which they were living (67%) but only 54% of renters wanted to stay in their area long term, compared to 79% of homeowners. Most householders stated they would recommend their neighbourhood to a friend (77%) and thought it was a good place to raise children (78%). Again, differences between tenure types were marked, with a lower proportion of renters agreeing or strongly agreeing they would recommend their neighbourhood to a friend (65%) or thought it would be a good place to raise children (63%), compared to owners (86% and 88% respectively). There were no differences about the importance of living close to other family members between renters (61%) and owners (60%).

See Figures 4.11 and 4.12.

Figure 4.11: Neighbourhood satisfaction (N=1500)

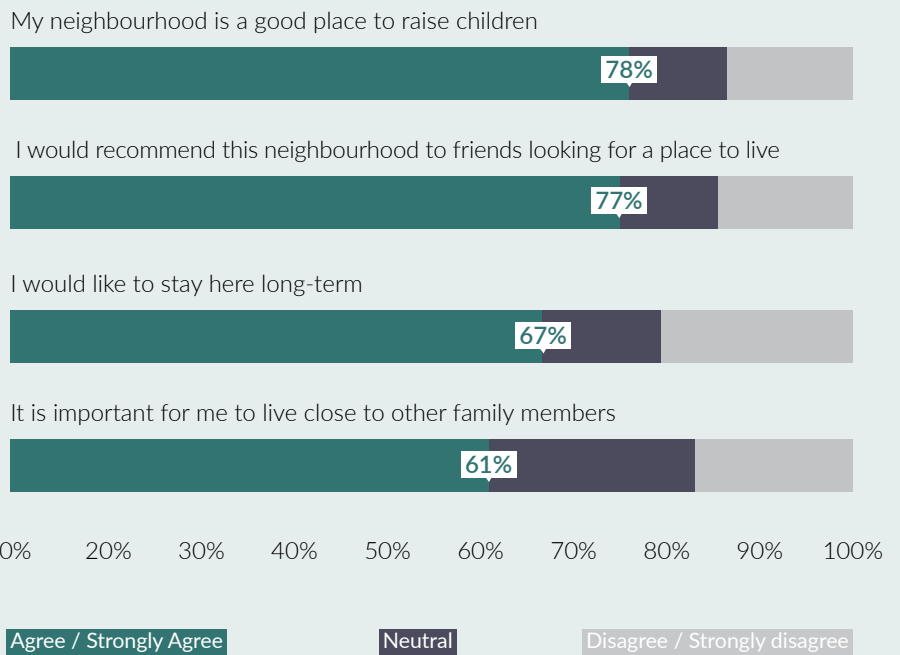


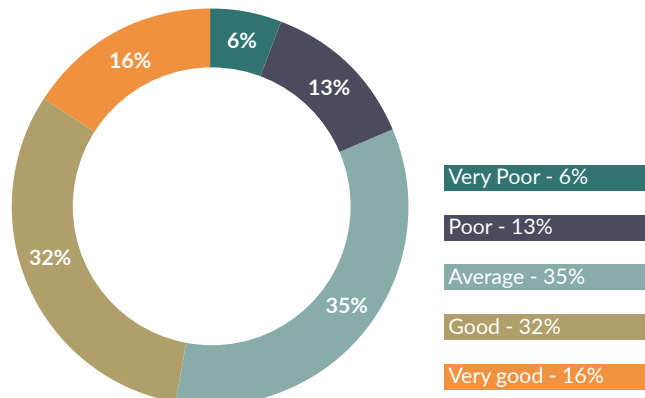
Figure 4.12: Neighbourhood satisfaction (% agree/strongly agree) for renters (n=526) and owners (n=859)



### 4.3 Renters' Experiences

The data for renters is explored in this section, with analyses broken down by social and private renters<sup>11</sup>. **See Appendix 3 for rental sector classification.** 19% of renters rated their experience of renting as 'poor' or 'very poor', while just over a half rated their experience as 'good' (32%) or 'very good' (16%). Renters had spent on average just over eight years in their current accommodation. Those living in the social sector had lived twice as long in their current homes as those living in the private sector. The top reason renters gave for moving from their previous rented accommodation was that the landlord was selling and had asked them to leave (43%). **See Figure 4.13, Table 4.4 and Appendix 4, Table A4.5.**

Figure 4.13: Experience of renting (n=526)<sup>12, 13</sup>



One in four ranked garden space as the most important attribute when considering choosing their next home.



Table 4.4: Average length of time in current home and length of time renting in total by rental tenure subtype (n=430)

	Total Years n=526	Social Renters' Years n=224	Private Renters' Years n=302
Avg. no. years renting current home	8.45	11.19	5.56
Avg. no. years renting in total	13.62	15.86	11.31

52% of all renters felt either 'secure' or 'very secure' with their tenure. Feeling 'very secure' in their tenancy did not differ between social renters (19%) and private renters (20%), although 34% of private renters reported their security of tenure as 'average' compared with just 21% of social renters. 34% of renters in regional cities felt 'very secure' in their tenure compared to 20% of renters in Dublin, 20% in urban towns and 20% in rural regions. **See Figures 4.14 and 4.15.**

11. The same classification was applied during the validation process as in 2018 to provide consistency in the tenure classification for those living in the rented sector. Those in receipt of Rent Supplement were included in the private sector analysis, except for those who reported that they lived in an Approved Housing Body dwelling – these were included in the social sector analysis. Those in receipt of RAS and HAP were included in the social sector analysis.

12. Q. Please could you rate our experience of renting? Rate on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good.

13. Total sums to 102% due to rounding.

Living in a neighbourhood that is peaceful and friendly were the top two features that were the most important for people when choosing where next to live.



Figure 4.14: Renters: How secure do you believe your tenure security to be? (n=526)

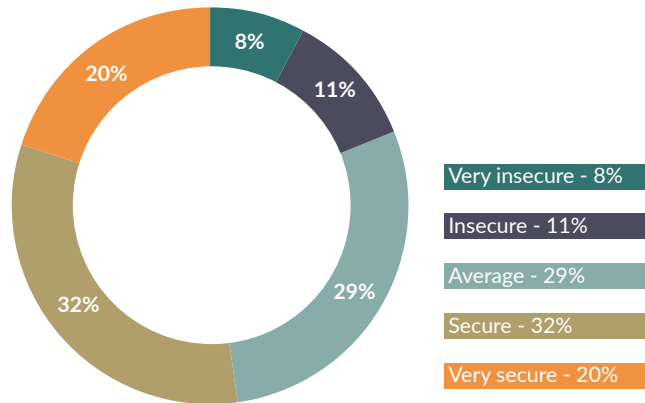
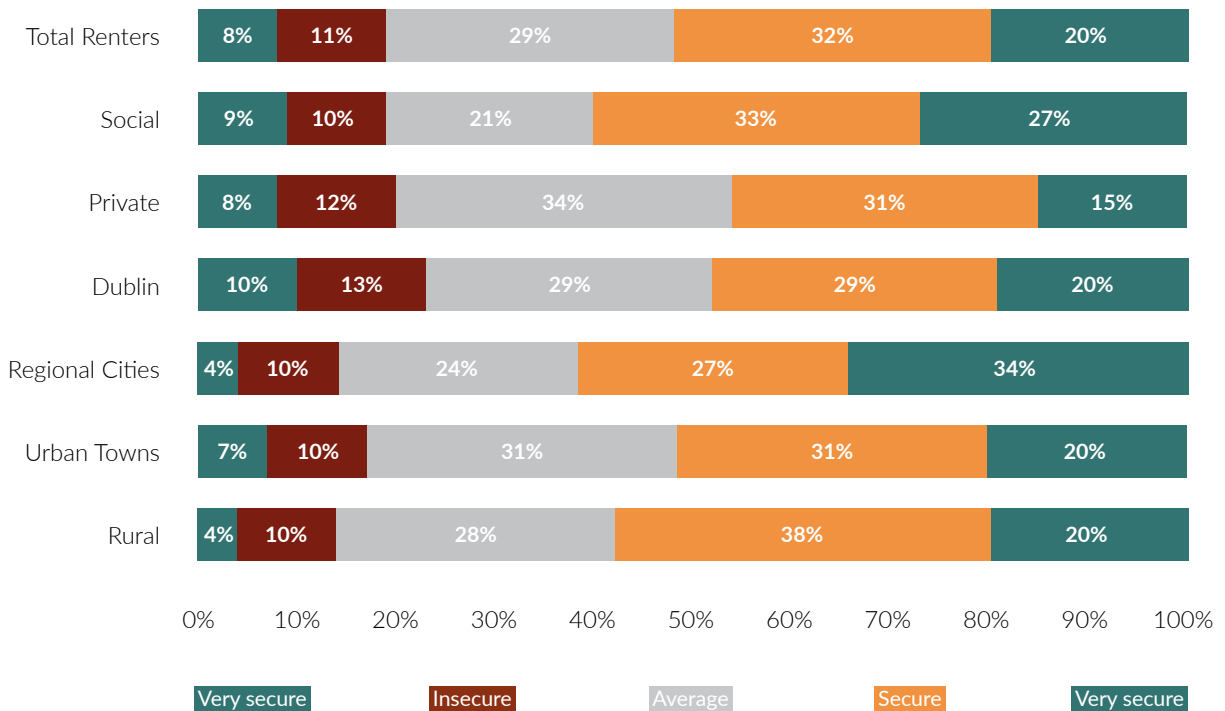


Figure 4.15: Security of tenure: How secure do you believe your tenure security to be? By rental tenure type (n=526) and region (n=641)<sup>14</sup>

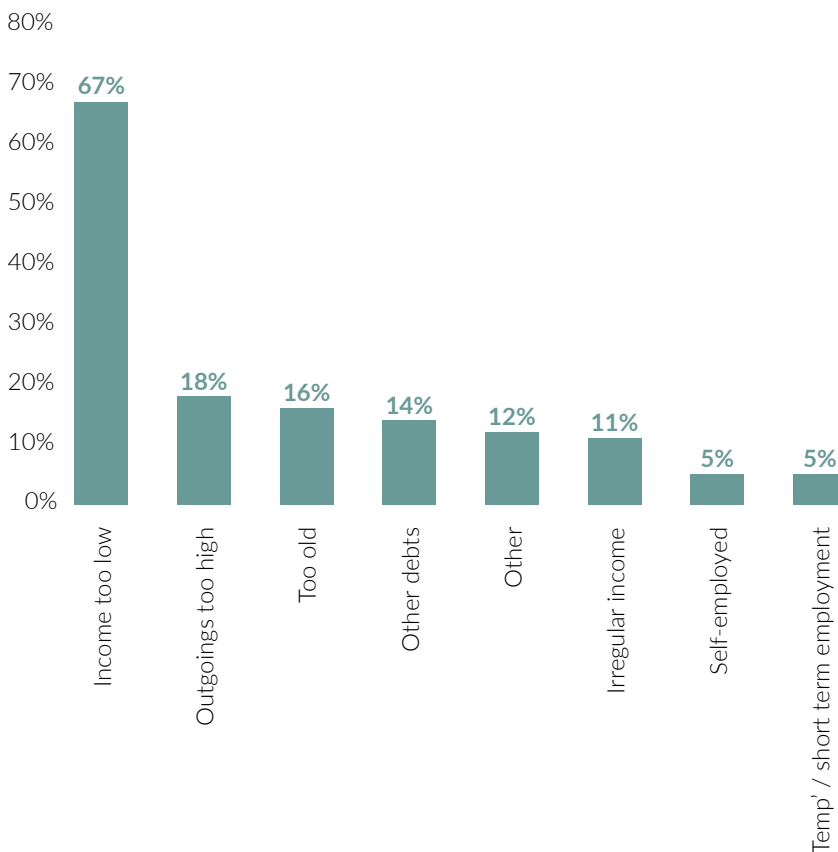


Reasons for renting included not being able to 'secure a mortgage' (44%). More than three times the proportion of private renters were 'saving for a deposit' (21%) compared to social renters (6%). Of those renters who stated they could not 'secure a mortgage', 67% stated the reason was that their income was too low. A higher proportion of social renters (17%) than private renters (7%) reported they could not get a mortgage due to having 'other debts', or because their income was 'irregular' (23%) compared with private renters (8%). **See Table 4.5, Figure 4.16 and Appendix Table A4.14.**

<sup>14</sup> Total for Dublin sums to 101% and to 99% for regional cities and urban towns due to rounding.

**Table 4.5: Top 5 reasons why currently renting by rental tenure subtype and region (n=526)<sup>15</sup>**

	Total	Social	Private	Dublin	Regional cities	Urban towns	Rural
	n=526	n=224	n=302	n=194	n=58	n=170	n=103
Can't get a mortgage	44%	43%	45%	40%	33%	46%	55%
Currently saving for a deposit	14%	6%	21%	14%	17%	15%	12%
It is convenient to things I need to be close to (e.g., work, college)	11%	6%	15%	6%	20%	17%	6%
I've always lived in the family home	9%	4%	13%	12%	10%	4%	10%

**Figure 4.16: Renters: Reasons why cannot get a mortgage (n=232)**


#### 4.3.1 Renters' housing journey

49% of renters had moved in the last five years, while 22% had moved in the last six to ten years, and a further 22% had last moved in the previous eleven years or more (22%). 57% of private renters reported having moved in the last five years compared to 38% of social renters. **See Figures 4.17 and 4.18.**

<sup>15</sup>. Columns do not sum to 100% as respondents could select more than one answer.



Figure 4.17: Renters: when last moved (n=526)<sup>16</sup>

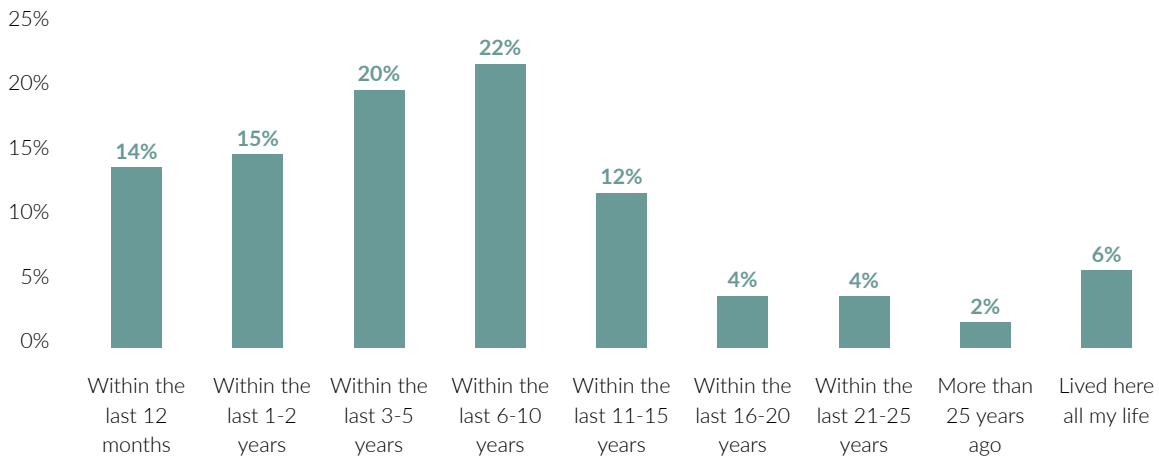
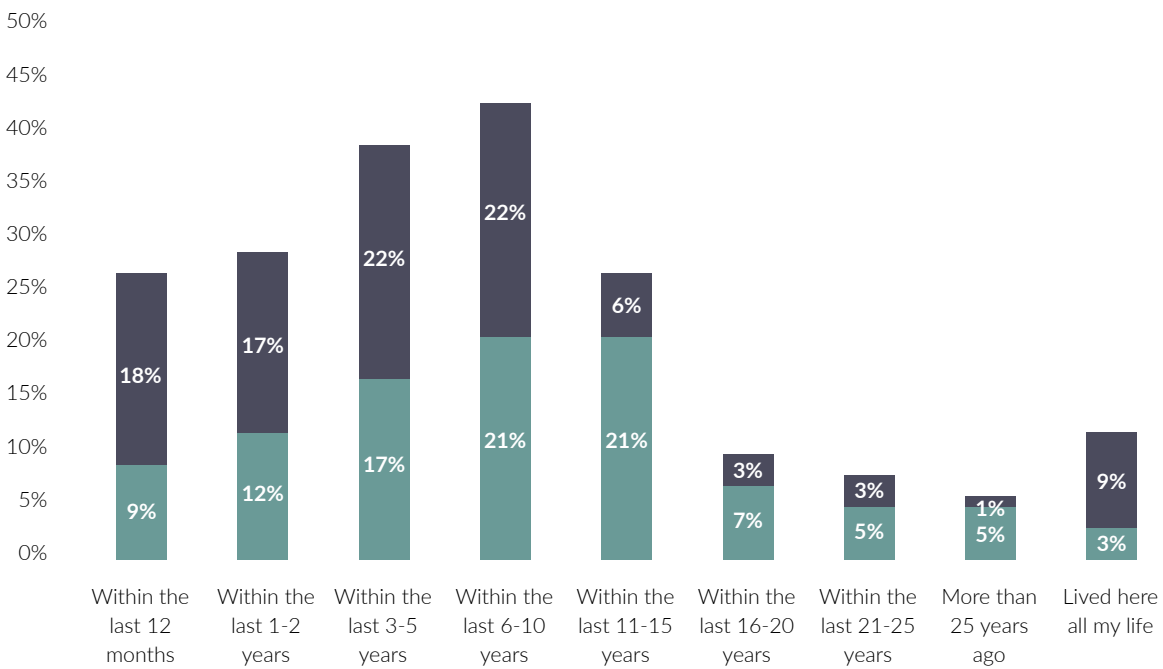


Figure 4.18: Renters: when last moved by tenure type (n=526)<sup>17</sup>

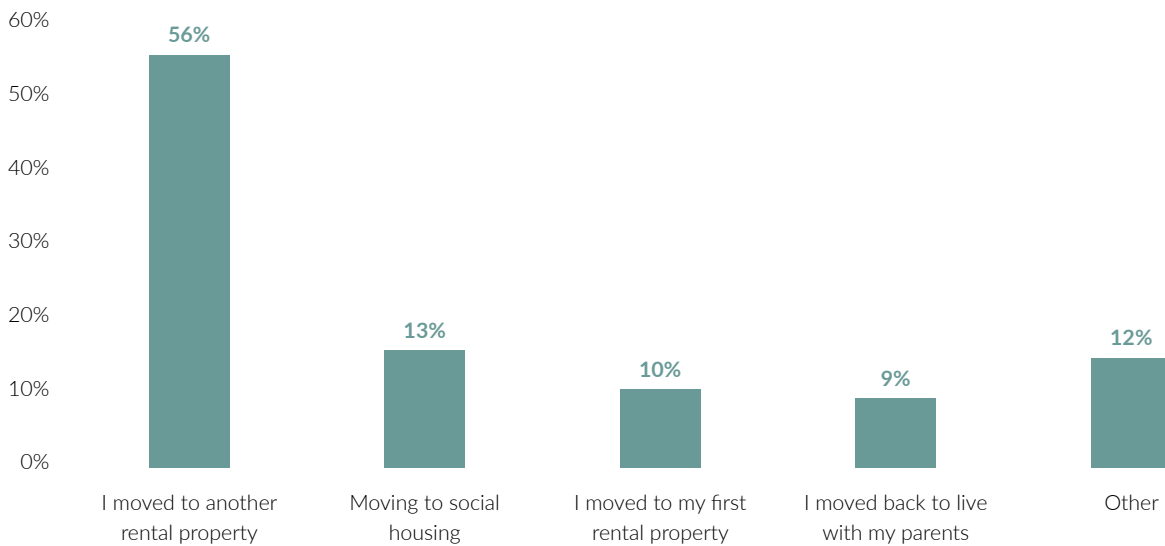


In looking at where renters moved to, 56% 'had moved to another rental property', 10% had moved to their 'first rental property' and 9% reported 'moving back to live with parents'. See Figure 4.19.

<sup>16</sup>. Total does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

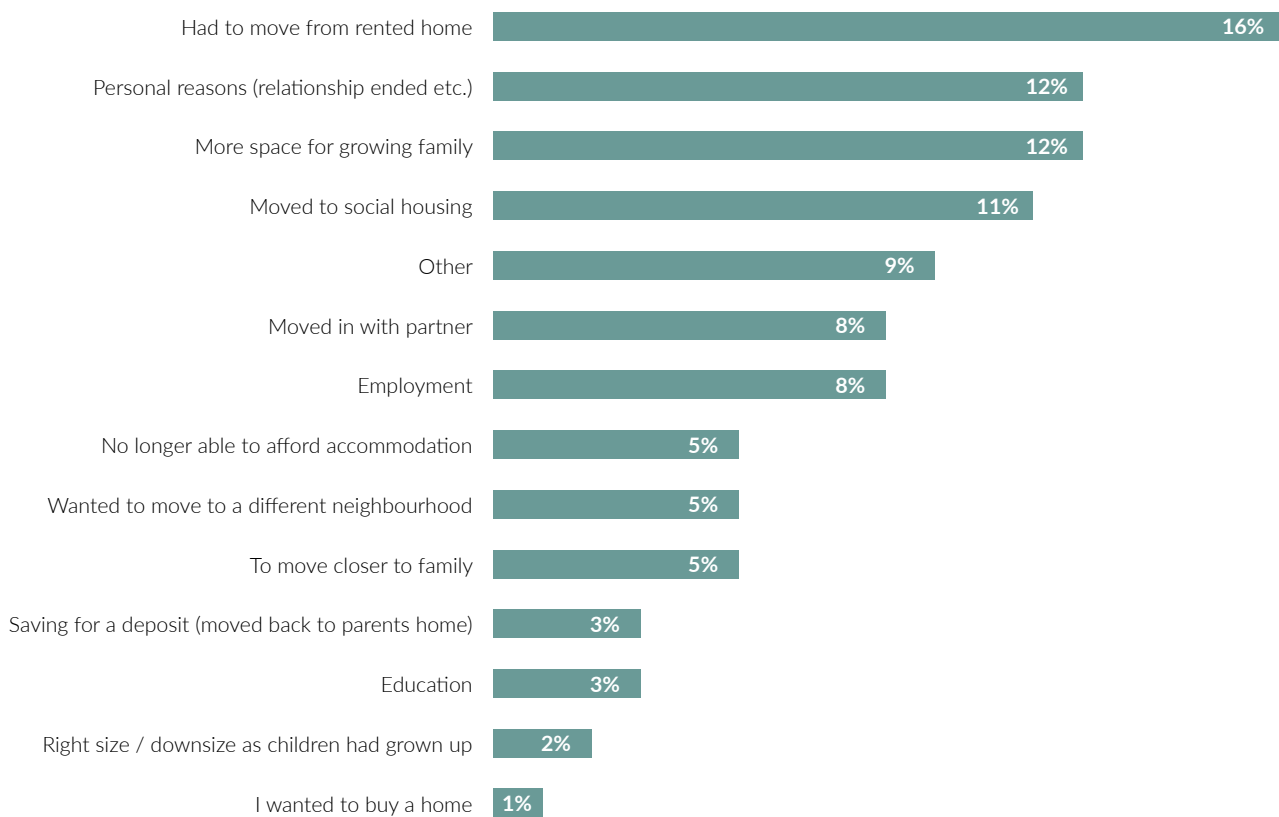
<sup>17</sup>. Total does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Figure 4.19: Renters: Which of the following best describes your most recent move? (n=316)**



When looking at reasons given for moving, 16% of renters stated they ‘had to move from rented home’, 12% moved for ‘personal reasons (relationship ended)’ and 12% moved to have ‘more space for a growing family’. See Figure 4.20.

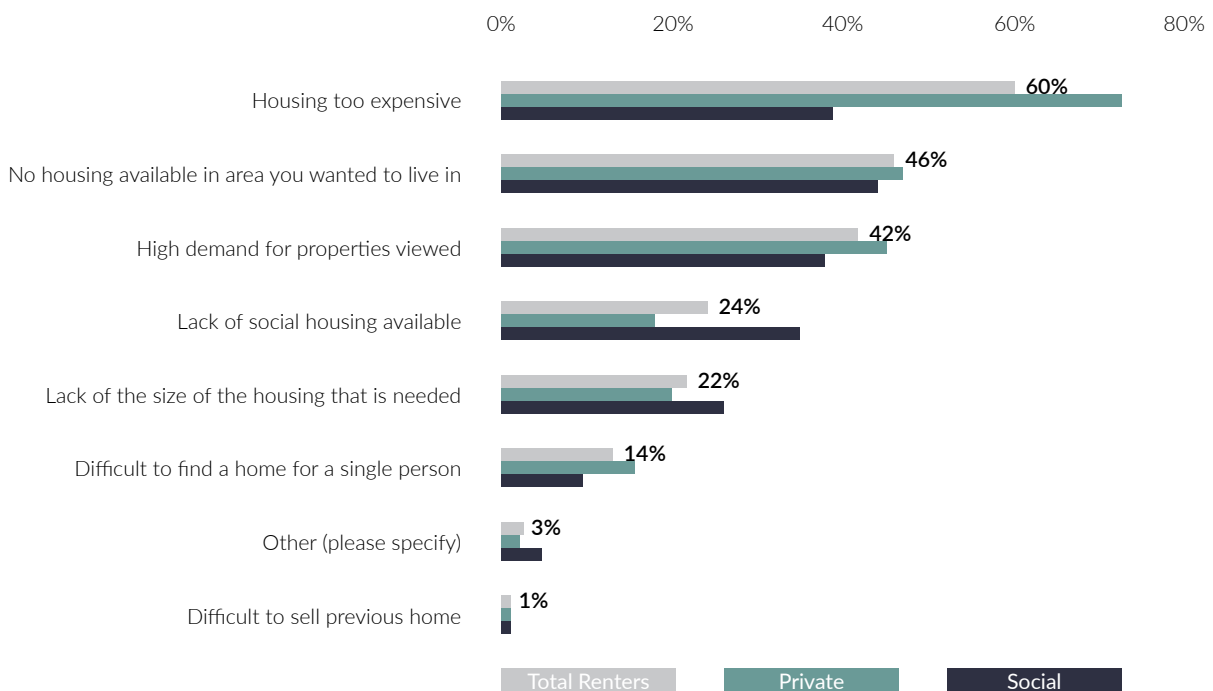
**Figure 4.20: Renters: main reason moved (n=357)<sup>18</sup>**



<sup>18</sup> Total does not sum to 100% as respondents could select more than one answer.

59% of renters stated that their last move was 'difficult' or 'very difficult'. There were no differences between social renters' (61%) and private renters' (58%) reported levels of difficulty in finding a home the last time they had moved. When asked for the reasons that the last move had been difficult, 60% of renters stated that housing was 'too expensive for them', while for 46%, a 'lack of available housing' and for 42%, a 'high demand for properties' were other reasons that had caused them difficulty. There were also differences between social and private renters, with 72% of private renters reporting 'housing [was] too expensive' as a difficulty compared to 39% social renters. **See Appendix 4, Table A4.6 and Figure 4.21.**

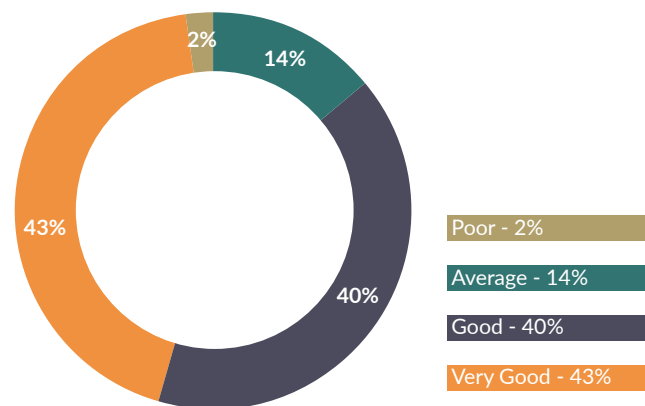
**Figure 4.21: Renters: Reasons difficult to find a home on last move (n=210)**



#### 4.4 Homeowners' Experiences

Experiences of homeownership were positive, with 83% of homeowners stating their experience was 'good' or 'very good'. The majority of homeowners reported having experienced financial sacrifice when they had bought their current home, with 38% reporting 'some' and 41% reporting 'a lot'. **See Figure 4.22 and Table 4.6.**

**Figure 4.22: Experiences of ownership (n=859)<sup>19</sup>**



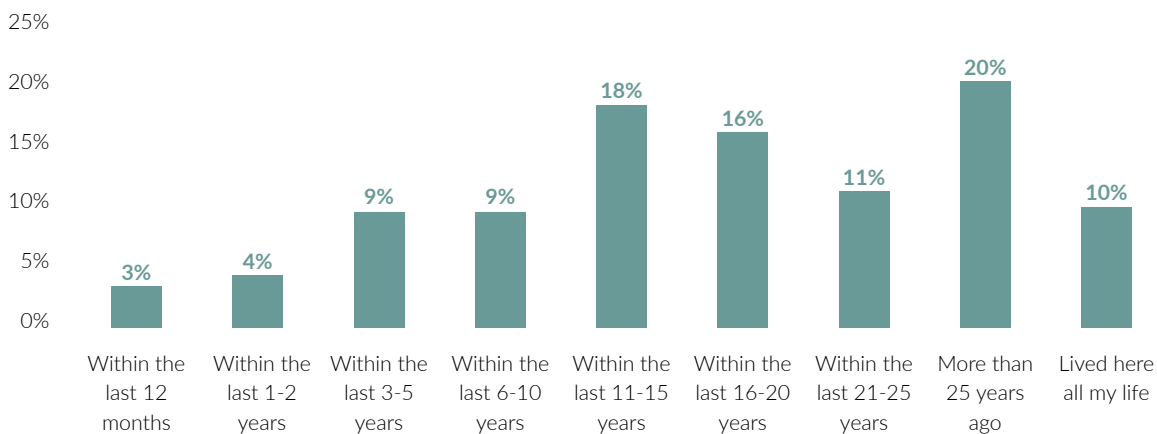
<sup>19</sup>. Total sums to 99% due to rounding.

**Table 4.6: Financial sacrifice when buying by tenure type and region (n=859)<sup>20</sup>**

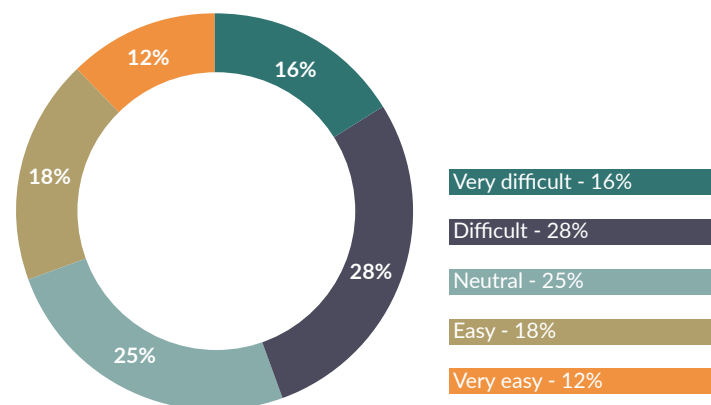
	Total Owners n=859	Mortgage n=484	Outright n=375	Dublin n=220	Regional cities n=55	Urban towns n=221	Rural n=362
A lot	41%	49%	31%	44%	38%	45%	38%
Some	38%	38%	37%	36%	50%	36%	38%
Not very much	13%	11%	15%	13%	12%	15%	12%
No financial sacrifice	8%	2%	17%	8%	0	4%	13%

#### 4.4.1 Homeowners' Housing Journey

64% of owners were living in the first home they had purchased. 25% of owners had moved within the last ten years, while 75% had been in their current home for more than ten years. **See Appendix 4, Table A4.9 and Figure 4.23.**

**Figure 4.23: Owners' most recent move (n=859)**


Those homeowners who had moved in the last ten years were asked where they had moved from: 28% had 'moved from a rental property', 25% had 'bought a property (but not their first)' and 23% had 'moved from a family home to purchasing their first home'. This group of owners were asked to rate the ease of finding a home: 44% stated that they had found it 'difficult' or 'very difficult', 25% had found it to be a 'neutral' experience and 30% reported finding a home to be 'easy' or 'very easy'. **See Appendix 4, Table A4.8 and Figure 4.24.**

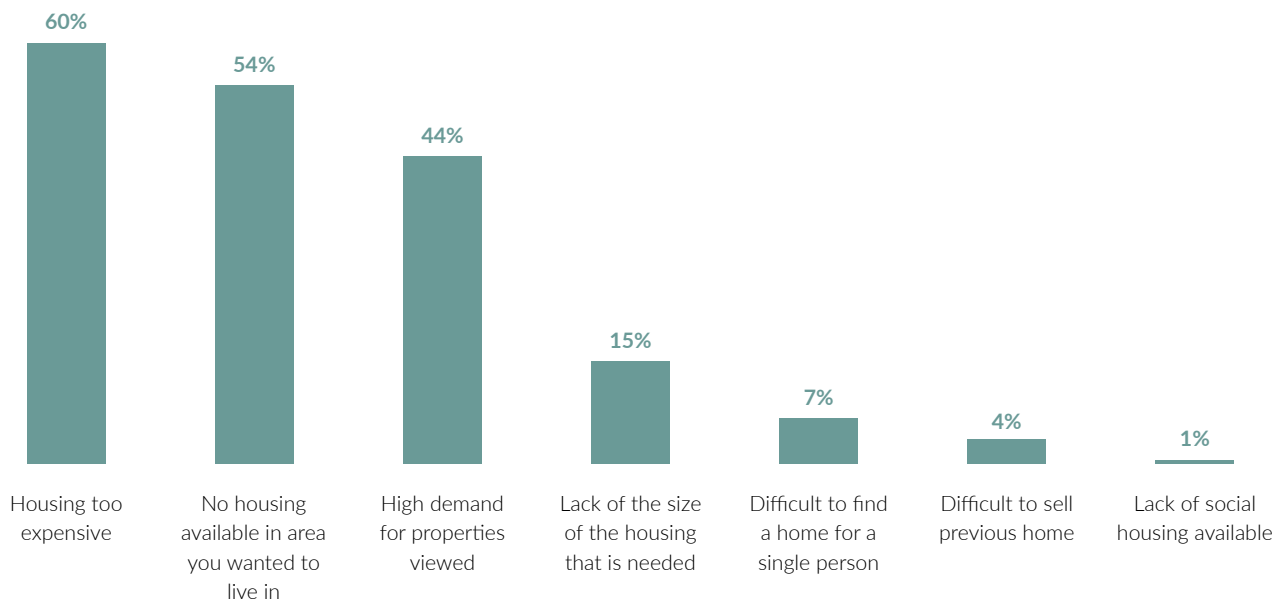
**Figure 4.24: Owners: Ease of finding a home last time moved (n=208)<sup>21</sup>**


<sup>20</sup>. Totals for Dublin and Rural sum to 101% due to rounding.

<sup>21</sup>. Total sums to 99% due to rounding.

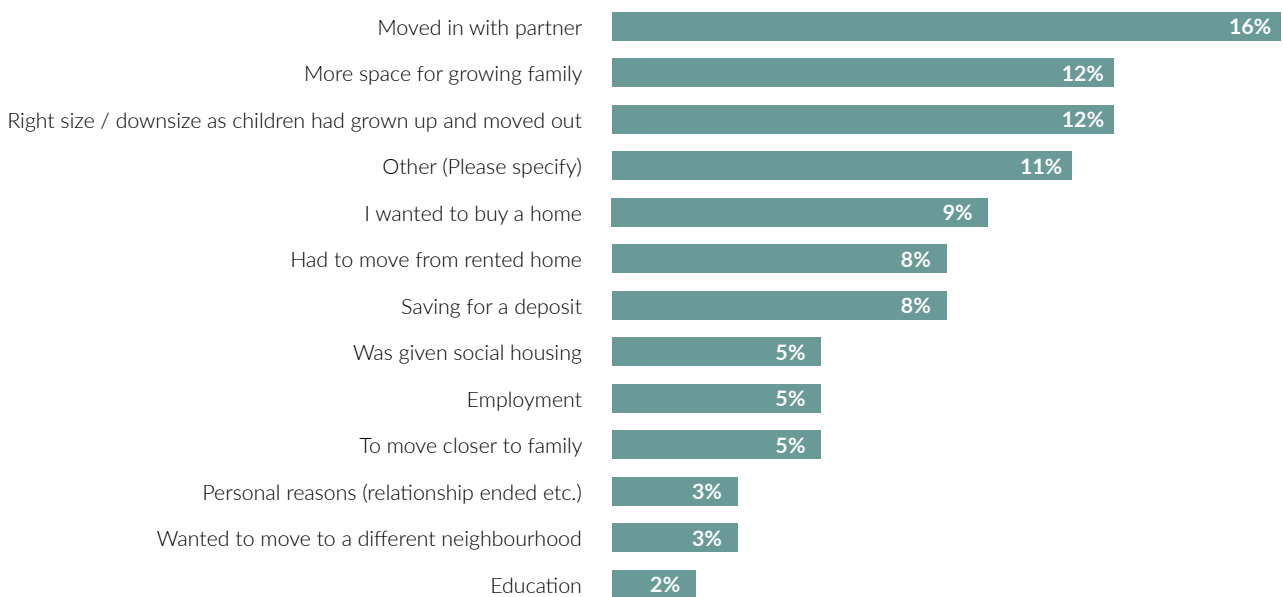
Homeowners who stated finding a home had been 'difficult' or 'very difficult' were asked what had made it difficult and were able to give more than one reason in response. 60% reported that 'housing was too expensive', 54% stated there was 'no housing available in the area they wanted' and 44% reported that there was a 'high demand for properties they viewed'. See Figure 4.25.

Figure 4.25: Owners: Reasons most recent move was difficult (n=92)



When asked what the main reason for their move had been, 16% stated they had 'moved in with a partner', 12% 'had wanted to have 'more space for a growing family', a further 12% had moved to 'rightsize/downsize' because their children had left the family home, 9% stated they 'wanted to buy a home'. See Figure 4.26.

Figure 4.26: Owners: Reasons for most recent move (n=208)<sup>26</sup>



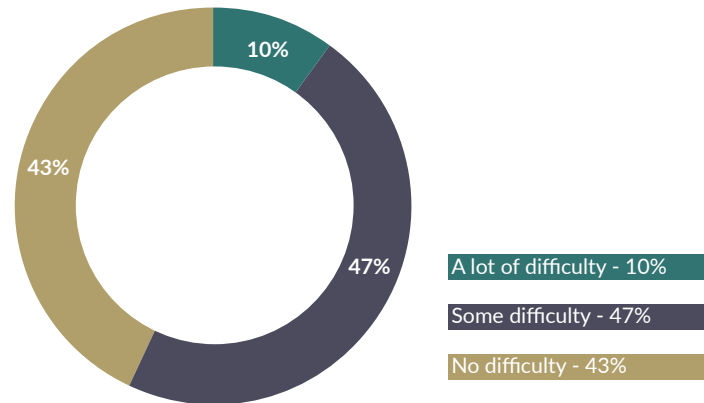
22. Total sums to 99% due to rounding.

### 4.5 Affordability

This section examines householders' views on the affordability of their housing costs, whether mortgage or rental payments. It also reviews levels of reported difficulty paying monthly bills and additionally, the effect Covid-19 had on incomes at the time of the survey in December 2020.

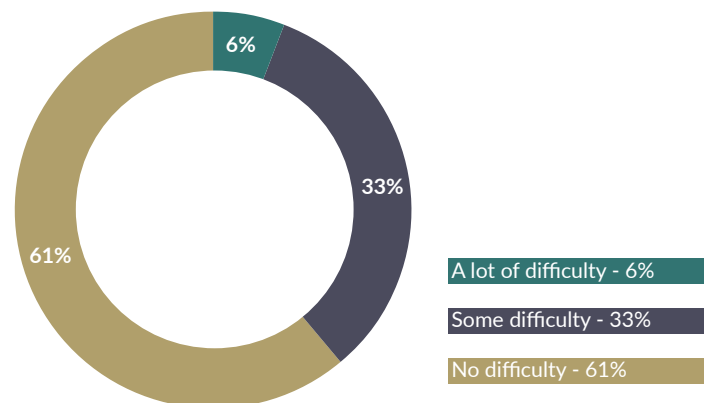
In terms of the rental sector, 10% stated that they experienced 'a lot of difficulty' paying their rent, while 47% experienced 'some difficulty'. **See Figure 4.27.**

**Figure 4.27: Renters: Level of difficulty in meeting monthly rental costs (n=526)**



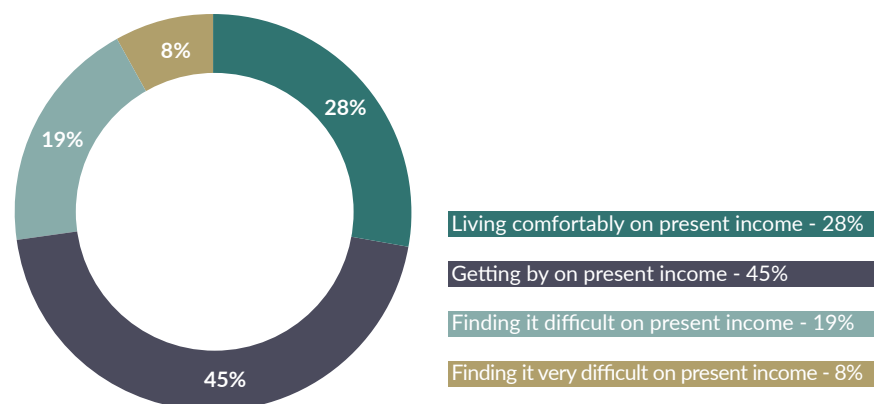
In terms of repaying monthly mortgage payments, 61% of householders reported 'no difficulty' at all, while 33% of all homeowners with a mortgage reported experiencing 'some difficulty' making the repayments, with 6% reporting they experienced 'a lot of difficulty'. In terms of region, there was very little difference noted between urban and rural homeowners. **See Figure 4.28 and Appendix 4, Table A4.10.**

**Figure 4.28: Owners: Level of difficulty in meeting monthly mortgage repayment (n=453)**



27% of householders were 'finding it difficult' or 'very difficult' on their present income in December 2020, 45% reported 'getting by' on their present income, with 28% stating they were 'living comfortably'. **See Figure 4.29.**

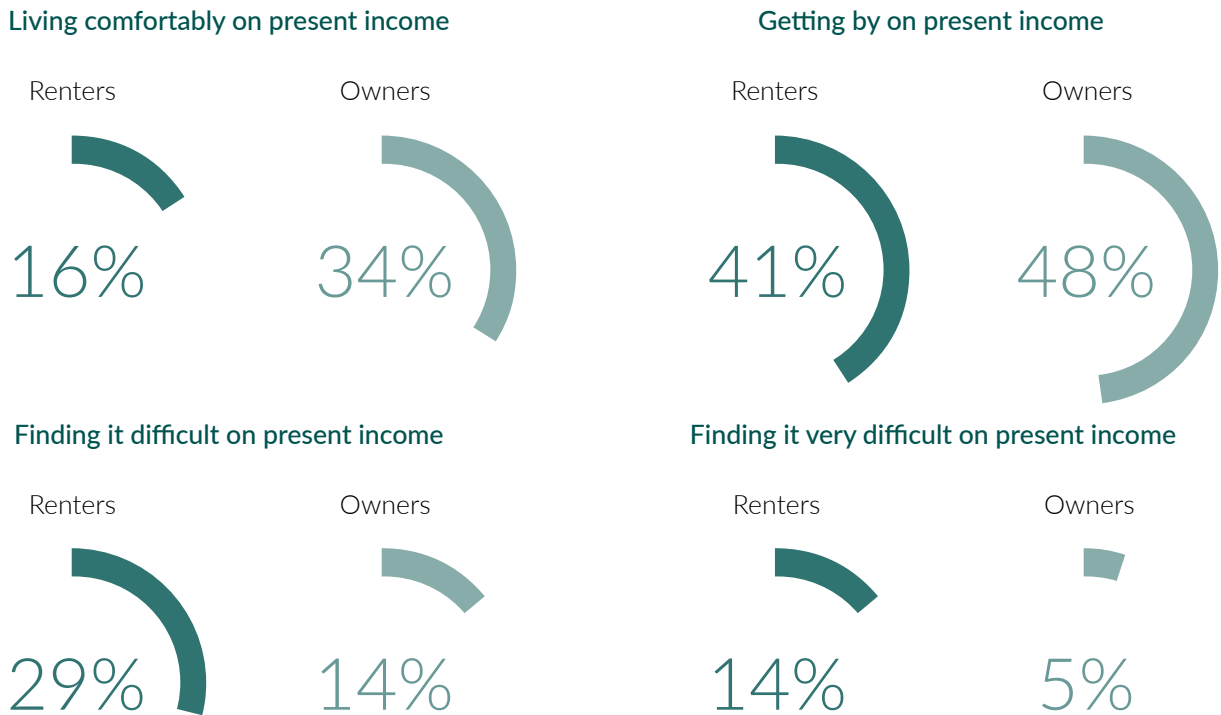
**Figure 4.29: Householders' views on present income<sup>23</sup> (N=1500)**



43% of renters reported finding it 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to live on their income compared to 19% of owners. Conversely, 34% of all homeowners were 'living comfortably' on their present incomes, compared with just 16% of renters. **See Figure 4.30.**

<sup>23</sup> 'Present income' refers here to income in December 2020 when the survey was conducted.

Figure 4.30: Level of difficulty getting by on present income for renters (n=526) and owners (n=859)



4.5.1 Changes to Household Income

By December 2020, incomes had decreased for 28% of households March 2020, but for 9%, their incomes had increased. See Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Change in household income compared with before Covid-19 by tenure type (n=1385) and region (N=1500)<sup>24</sup>

	Total N=1500	Renters n=526	Owners n=859	Dublin n=438	Regional cities n=119	Urban towns n=421	Rural n=522
Increased	9%	10%	7%	8%	12%	10%	7%
Remained the same	63%	54%	65%	65%	60%	60%	64%
Decreased	28%	26%	28%	27%	28%	29%	29%

Looking to the impact of changes to household income on meeting mortgage or rental payments, a lower proportion of renters availed of the possibility of taking a break in rental payments (7%) during Covid-19, compared to the proportion of owners with a mortgage (16%) who reported taking a break in repayments.

See Figure 4.31.

Figure 4.31: Householders who took a break from rent or mortgage payments during Covid-19 by tenure type (n=1010)



24. Q. When thinking about your household's income today, how has your household income changed, if at all, compared with before Covid-19?

46% of renters taking a break in rental payments had agreed this with their landlord beforehand, in contrast to nearly 80% of owners who agreed a mortgage repayment break with their lender beforehand.

Of the 16% of owners who had taken a break in repaying their mortgages due to the pandemic, 75% had restarted mortgage payments at the time of the survey, while 25% were still on a break from mortgage repayments by December 2020.

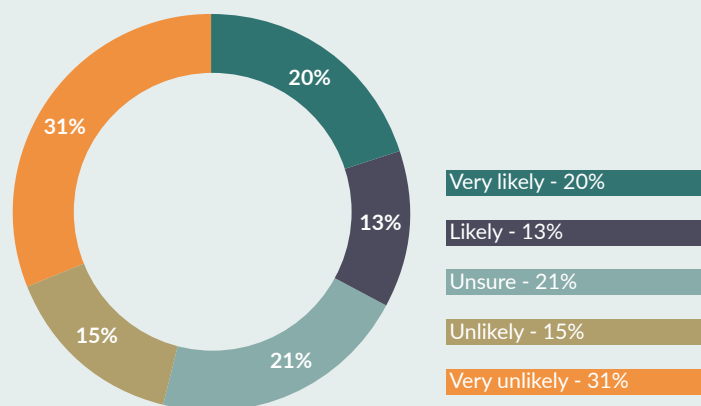
## 4.6 Future Housing Expectations and Aspirations

This section examines householders' expectations and aspirations for their future homes.

### 4.6.1 Likelihood of moving

Looking towards a next move, one third of all householders reported it was 'very likely' (20%) or 'likely' (13%) that they would move in the future, while 21% were 'unsure' if they would move. **See Figure 4.32.**

Figure 4.32: Likelihood of moving, all households (N=1500)



A greater proportion of renters stated they were 'likely' (16%) or 'very likely' (35%) to move than homeowners, of whom 11% stated they were 'likely' and 9% stated they were 'very likely' to move. Looking to renters, 63% of private renters were 'likely' or 'very likely' to move compared to 33% of social renters. **See Table 4.8.**

Table 4.8: Likelihood of moving by tenure type (n=1385)

	Total Renters n=526	Social n=224	Private n=302	Total Owners n=859	Mortgage n=484	Outright n=375
Very unlikely	17%	29%	7%	41%	32%	53%
Unlikely	10%	14%	6%	20%	21%	18%
Unsure	23%	23%	23%	19%	22%	16%
Likely	16%	13%	18%	11%	15%	6%
Very likely	35%	20%	45%	9%	10%	7%

The top five reasons people gave for considering a future move were: 'more space for a growing family' (23%); 'wanting to buy a home' (22%); 'downsizing' (18%); 'employment' (14%); or 'to move closer to family' (11%). 37% of homeowners stated that the reason they would move was to downsize. 35% of renters saw their next move as motivated by wanting to buy a home. **See Table 4.9.**



Table 4.9: Top 5 reasons<sup>25</sup> for being likely to move (unsure, likely and very likely to move) by tenure type (n=730) and region (n=805)

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=805	n=388	n=332	n=263	n=77	n=226	n=239
More space for growing family	23%	21%	22%	30%	20%	24%	16%
I want to buy a home	22%	35%	2%	21%	22%	23%	23%
Right size / downsize as children grow up and move out	18%	5%	37%	15%	13%	17%	23%
Employment	14%	18%	7%	11%	15%	17%	15%
Want to move to a different neighbourhood	14%	10%	20%	17%	12%	14%	12%
Other	13%	9%	18%	12%	7%	15%	13%
To move closer to family	11%	8%	16%	11%	7%	9%	13%
Move to social housing	6%	11%	0	4%	9%	9%	5%
Have to move from rented home	6%	11%	1%	6%	6%	7%	5%
No longer able to afford accommodation	5%	10%	2%	7%	5%	5%	5%
Education	4%	4%	1%	2%	14%	3%	3%
Saving for a deposit (move back to parents)	2%	2%	0	3%	0	2%	0
Impact of Covid-19 / pandemic	2%	2%	1%	4%	1%	1%	1%

The study shows a clear difference in reasons householders gave as to why they were 'unlikely' to move to a new home in the future. Either they did not want to move because they were happy in their current (56%) or 'forever home' (39%), or there were barriers to moving such as housing was too expensive (18%), or they could not afford to move to another home (12%). **See Table 4.10.**

25. Respondents could give more than one reason.

**Table 4.10: Top 5 reasons<sup>26</sup> for being unlikely/very unlikely to move by tenure type (n=664) and region (n=694)**

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=805	n=388	n=332	n=263	n=77	n=226	n=239
Happy in current home	56%	45%	60%	49%	71%	60%	55%
I view this as my 'forever home'	39%	25%	43%	33%	41%	32%	47%
Housing too expensive	18%	25%	15%	27%	21%	18%	11%
Could not afford / high up-front costs (mortgage / rental deposit)	12%	20%	10%	15%	19%	19%	5%
No housing available in area you wanted to live in	7%	13%	5%	5%	7%	8%	7%

#### 4.6.2 Location and Covid-19

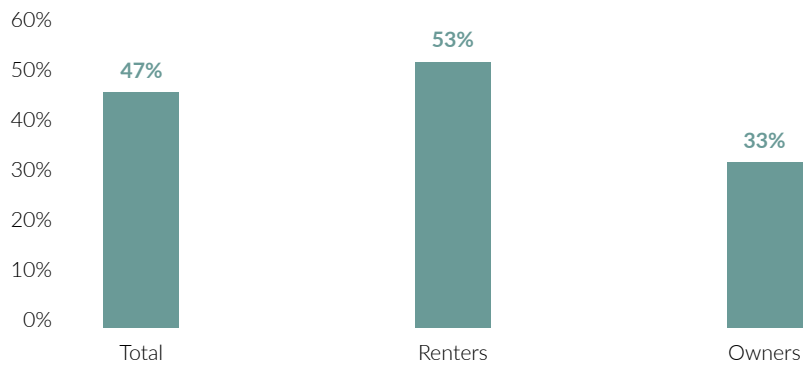
In December 2020, 9% of householders had experienced changes to their household's composition since March 2020 when government pandemic restrictions began, with householders either having moved to a different home themselves or had others move in with them. By tenure type, a higher proportion of renters experienced change (11%) compared with owners (4%). There was a difference between rental tenure subtypes, with 14% of private renters having experienced a change compared to 7% of social renters. 12% of householders living in regional cities reported seeing the biggest change in their household composition. **See Figure 4.33.**

**Figure 4.33: Percentage of householders who had moved or had others move in since March 2020 by tenure type (n=1385) and region (N=1500)**

26. Respondents could give more than one reason.

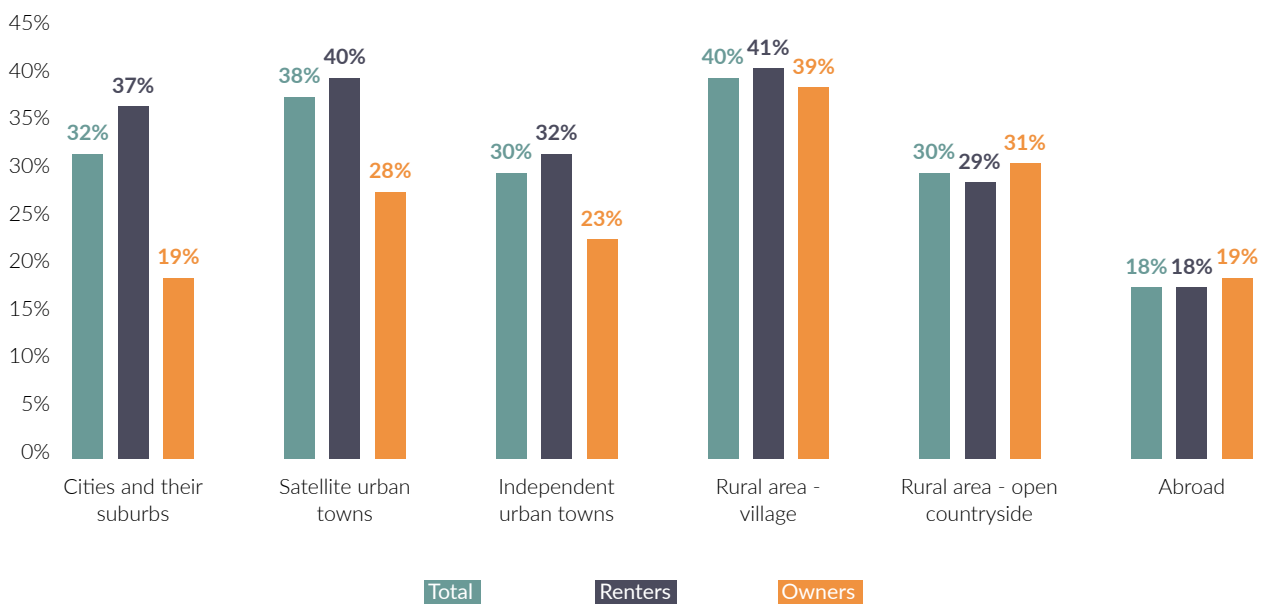
Since the beginning of the pandemic, people's attitudes changed about what location<sup>27</sup> they would consider living in. 47% of householders who were considering a move stated they would be open to locations different to those they would have considered prior to Covid-19.<sup>28</sup> 53% of renters considering a move stated they would be open to new locations, while only 33% of owners would be. **See Figure 4.34.**

**Figure 4.34: The percentage of those likely to move home in the future, who would now consider locations would not have considered before the pandemic by tenure type<sup>29</sup> (n=806)**



Looking to locations, 40% of householders likely to move stated they would now consider moving to a rural village, while 30% would consider a move to open countryside and 18% would consider a move abroad. 37% of renters would consider cities and their suburbs, satellite urban towns (40%) and independent urban towns (32%) in higher proportions to owners. **See Figure 4.35.**<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 4.35: Different locations that would now consider since Covid-19 for next move by tenure type (n=335)**



27. Would you now consider locations that you would not have considered before the pandemic?

28. Considering a move includes those who responded 'unsure', 'likely' or 'very likely'.

29. Would you now consider locations that you would not have considered before the pandemic?

30. Location full definitions:

- Cities and their suburbs - Towns / Settlements with populations greater than 50,000
- Satellite urban towns - Towns / Settlements with between 1500 and 50,000 inhabitants and where 20% or more employed inhabitants would work in a 'city'
- Independent urban towns - Towns / Settlements with between 1500 and 50,000 inhabitants and where less than 20% of people employed work in a 'city'
- Rural area - village
- Rural area - open countryside

### 4.6.3 Future Tenure

52% of renters stated they would like to buy a property at some point in the future. 60% of private renters reported they expected to buy at some point in the future, compared to a lower proportion of social renters (38%). See Figure 4.36 and Table 4.11.

Figure 4.36: Renters: Future tenure aspirations (n=641)

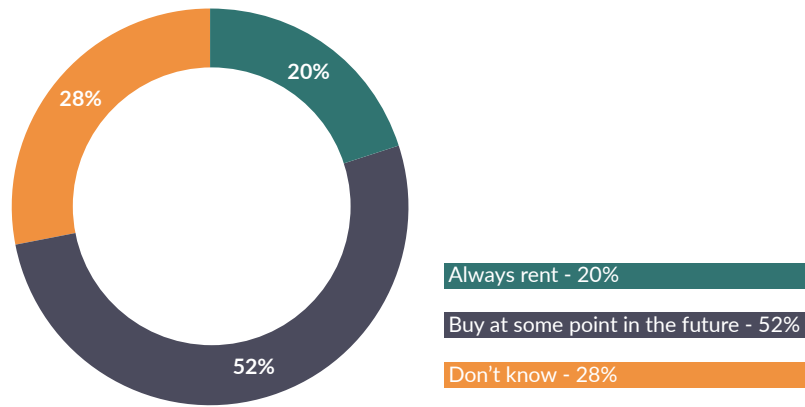


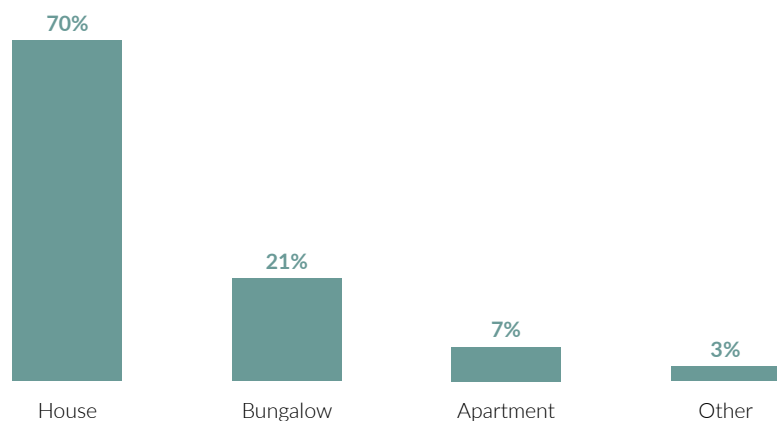
Table 4.11: Renters: Future tenure expectations by rental tenure subtype (n=526) and region (n=641)

	Total renters n=526	Social n=224	Private n=302	Dublin n=218	Regional Cities n=54	Urban Towns n=200	Rural n=160
Always rent	20%	31%	18%	24%	23%	19%	15%
Buy at some point in the future	52%	38%	60%	52%	53%	51%	52%
Don't know	28%	31%	21%	24%	23%	30%	33%

64% of renters expected that when they bought their home it would take 'a lot' of financial sacrifice, while 31% anticipated 'some' financial sacrifice. Top of the list of renters' preferences for future housing was to buy a second-hand home (30%), followed by 16% who preferred to buy a new build. 70% of renters stated they would like to buy a house with two or more floors, 21% aspired to purchase a bungalow and just 7% an apartment. See Appendix 4 Tables A4.13 and A4.16, and Figure 4.37.

For homeowners, the preference for a second-hand home as their future home was stronger than it was for renters: 56% of homeowners stated they would prefer, and 59% stated they would expect their future home to be second-hand, while just 12% would prefer to buy a new build. 13% of future home purchasers stated they would prefer to build their own next home. See Appendix 4, Table A4.16.

Figure 4.37: Renters: Housing type preference in future move (n=332)<sup>31</sup>

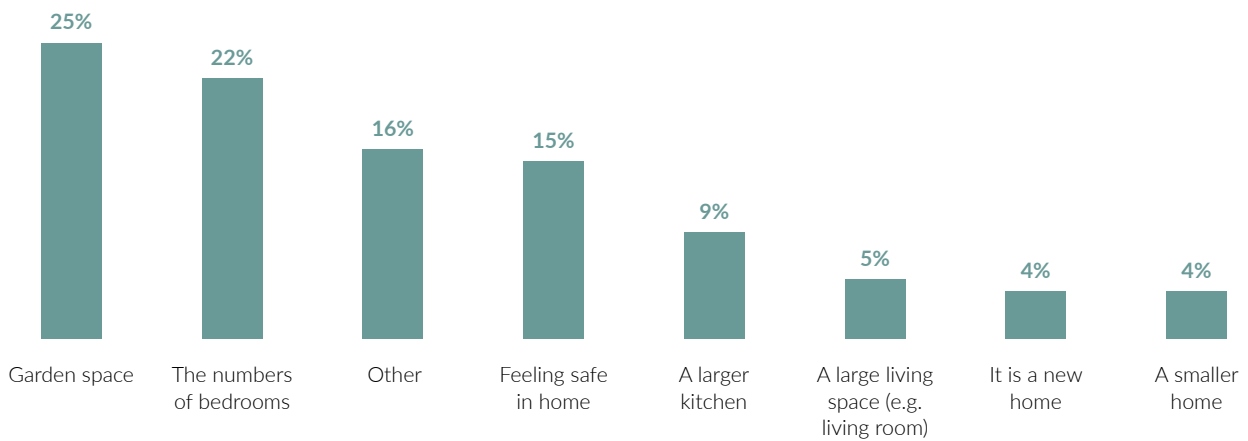


31. Total sums to 101% due to rounding.

#### 4.6.4 Future features of the home and neighbourhood

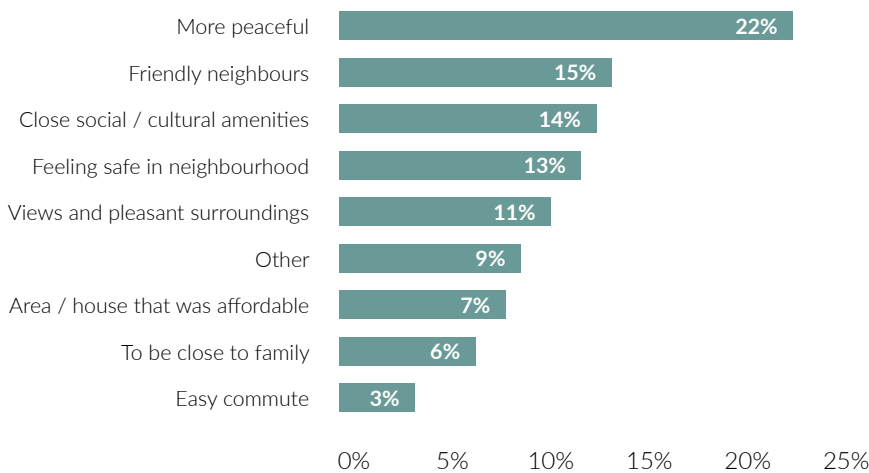
For householders considering moving, the most important feature in their next home was to have garden space, 25% of all householders ranked this as the most important feature; and for 50% it was one of the most frequently mentioned attributes. This was followed, in order of importance, by the number of bedrooms (22%) and then by having a home in which people felt safe (15%). See Figure 4.38 and Appendix 4, Table A4.18.

Figure 4.38: Important attributes for the next home (n=806)



When considering the most important neighbourhood characteristics in a future move, householders rated living in a 'peaceful' neighbourhood as most important (22%) when choosing their next home, followed by 'friendly neighbours' (15%), and being 'close to social and cultural amenities' (14%). In terms of the importance of commuting considerations when choosing a neighbourhood to live in, just 3% said having an 'easy commute to work or education' was the number one attribute when choosing where to live. See Figure 4.39 and Appendix 4, Table A4.19.

Figure 4.39: Most important neighbourhood features for next home (n=806)



# 5 Conclusion and Summary of Key Findings

The impact of Covid-19 has reinforced the importance of our homes and neighbourhoods in our lives, to our wellbeing and to our health. This 2020 study captures the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of householders during a period when Covid-19 restrictions were in place. The extent to which these attitudes and aspirations may have changed as restrictions lifted is not known. The literature review highlighted the practical importance of living in good quality homes with decent outdoor environments during a prolonged periods of restrictions to social contact and travel. The impact of Covid-19 on householders' experiences of their homes and their neighbourhoods is clear. This chapter summarises some of the key findings emerging from this study.

## Housing Satisfaction

66% of householders in Ireland rated themselves as 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their homes in December 2020. 30% of renters were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with their homes, compared to 15% of owners. However, 33% of all householders reported they felt more positive about their homes since Covid-19 restrictions were first imposed.

## Issues with the Dwelling

The different demands made on Irish homes since the pandemic is reflected in the finding that 26% of homeowners had, between March

to December 2020, carried out work such as insulation or energy upgrades to make their home more comfortable, while 36% were planning to carry out work in 2021.

Spending longer periods of time living and working from home led to increased levels of domestic energy consumption in Ireland by as much as 30% in lockdown (Mavrokefalidis, 2021). In the current study, half of all households reported difficulties keeping their homes warm (37% 'somewhat of a problem' and 13% 'a big problem').

## Flexible Homes

Homes have needed to be flexible to facilitate changing requirements as people have had to spend more time at home, cocooning, working from home or schooling from home. The flexibility of homes is linked to available space for different activities. The importance of quality housing and adequate space during the pandemic, along with the impact that a shortage of space has on people's health

72% of householders working from home had a suitable workspace. This flexibility differed by tenure type in the study, with 58% of renters stating they had a suitable place to work from home compared to 77% of homeowners.

and mental well-being, was evident in the literature (Ahmad et al., 2020; Thorsten-Woll, Buch and Naylor, 2020; Amerio et al., 2020; Wathélet, 2020). This study found that although 57% of all householders stated that shortage of space was 'not at all a problem', when analysed by tenure type, 62% of renters reported that shortage of space was an issue for them compared with 29% of owners.

## Working from Home

In terms of working from home, the majority of Irish homes have proven to be flexible in adapting to changes. A study carried out in 2020 in Ireland reported that 71% of respondents had a dedicated workspace at home (McCarthy et al., 2020). This Housing Agency study corroborates that finding with a similar result that 72% of householders working from home had a suitable workspace. This flexibility differed by tenure type in the study, with 58% of renters stating they had a suitable place to work from home compared to 77% of homeowners.

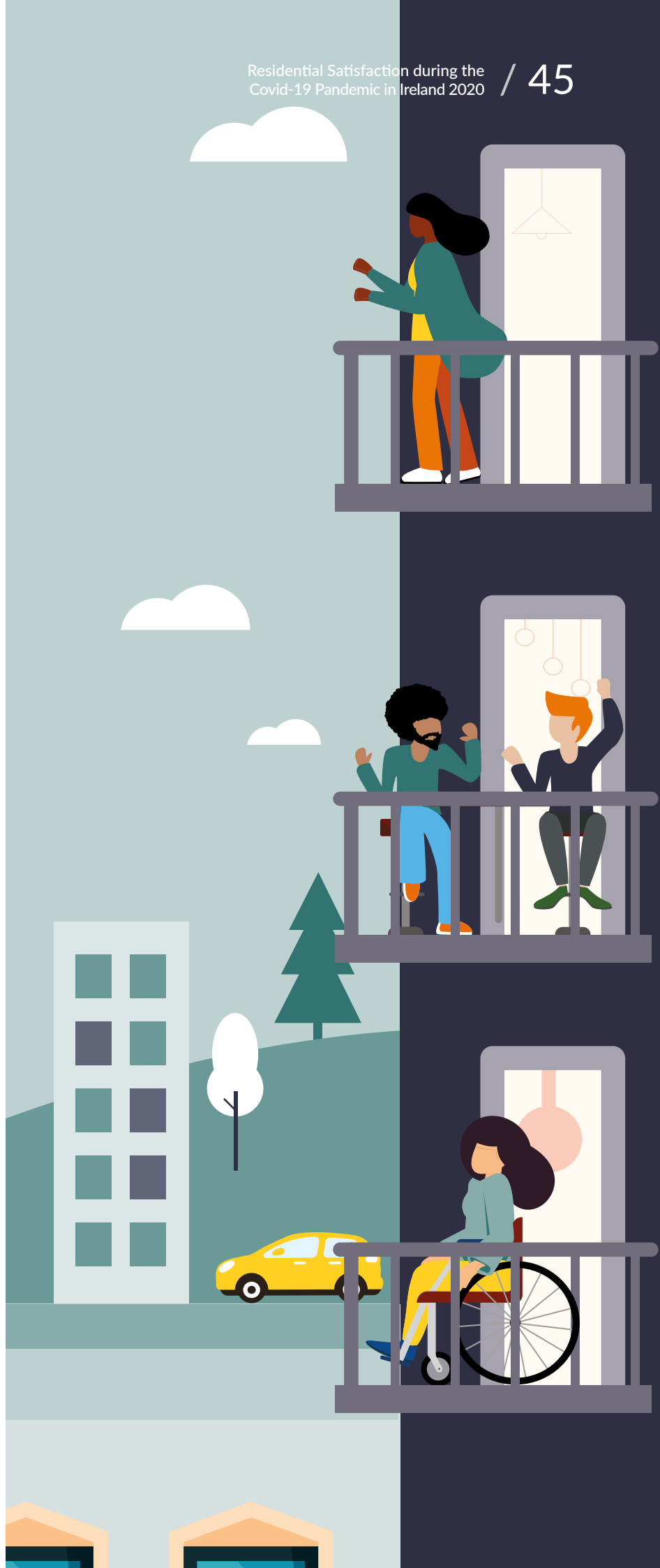
The study also found that the preference of the vast majority of householders working from home was to continue with this practice for at least some (66%) or all (26%) of the time.

### Garden and Private Outdoor Space

The literature review pointed to the increased importance, since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, of having a garden or private outdoor space (National Housing Federation, 2020; Signorelli et al., 2020). In terms of having a place to sit outside, 85% reported in this study that they were able to access a place to sit outside (garden/balcony). However, not having a place to sit outside was a problem for 25% of renters, compared to just 6% of owners.

### Neighbourhood Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction levels with neighbourhoods in Ireland were high, with 80% of householders reporting being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their neighbourhoods. By tenure type, 92% of homeowners report they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' compared to 66% of renters. By region, 86% of those living in rural areas report being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their neighbourhood compared to 75% for those living in Dublin, 74% for those living in regional cities and 78% of those living in urban towns.



Neighbourhoods became more important as they transformed for some to be daytime working spaces and not just bedroom suburbs (Saunders, 2020). In this study, 23% of householders said they felt more positive about their neighbourhoods since the onset of Covid-19. The OECD (2020) noted the number of cities and governments which are changing aspects of the neighbourhood, with the provision of increased pedestrian space, dining spaces, attention given to outdoor green spaces and cycling lanes.

Access to quality green public spaces is critical for wellbeing, in particular for urban dwellers (Shoari et al., 2020). One reason for the high rating of satisfaction with our neighbourhoods may be due to the ability to access green spaces. This study found that nationally 78% of all householders 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were 'able to access recreational parks/green areas'. This was 84% of households living in Dublin.

## Affordability

The literature pointed to a potential alleviation, in the short term, in affordability issues for renters at the onset of Covid-19 (O'Toole et al., 2020). However, the proportion of renters having 'some difficulty' (47%) or 'a lot of difficulty' (10%) paying their rent still accounted for nearly two thirds of renting households. At the same time, for those owners with a mortgage, 6% stated they experienced 'a lot of difficulty', with 33% experiencing 'some difficulty' meeting the monthly repayments. In terms of household income, in December 2020 when the survey was

conducted, it found that income had decreased since the start of Covid-19 for 28% of households.

Goodman and Magder (2020) pointed to potentially more leniency being allowed by banks to homeowners to defer their mortgage repayments, than there was by landlords to renters to defer rental repayments. This study found that it was owners with a mortgage (16%) rather than renters (7%) who were most likely to have taken a break on monthly housing payments between March to December 2020.

## Future Housing Aspirations

The findings from this study reveal the possible impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on people's attitudes and preferences for their future homes in a next move. The study shows that 33% of households in Ireland were 'likely' or 'very likely' to move in the future. By tenure type this was 51% of renters compared to 20% of homeowners. The top three reasons people gave for being likely to move were: a growing family, to own a home or to downsize because adult children had moved out of the family home. For homeowners who stated they were likely to move again, the key reason given was to downsize. Looking to the attributes that people are looking for in their next home, having a garden was the most important feature for householders, followed by the number of bedrooms and then by feeling safe. The top three features that were most important in choosing the next location to live, were a peaceful area with friendly neighbours and being close to social and cultural amenities.

## Location

Not surprisingly, where we reside has been impacted by Covid-19. This study reveals that in the ten months between March and December 2020, 9% of householders in Ireland either moved to a different home or had others move in and join their household. 9% of respondents reported moving back to live with their parents.

Working from home has the potential to impact on housing location preferences (Allen Coghlan, McQuinn and O'Toole, 2020; National Housing Federation, 2020). The study finds that 47% of householders who were considering a move would be open to different locations that they would not have considered prior to Covid-19. Looking to which locations people would consider, 40% of householders likely to move stated they would consider moving to a rural village, 30% would consider a move to open countryside and 18% would consider a move abroad.

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# 7 Appendices

## Appendix 1: Dwelling Characteristics

**Table A1.1: Sample distribution of dwelling construction by tenure type (n=1385) and region (N=1500)**

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
Before 1919	8%	5%	9%	7%	8%	2%	13%
1919 – 1945	6%	7%	4%	7%	7%	3%	8%
1946 – 1960	9%	10%	8%	13%	13%	8%	6%
1961 – 1970	7%	9%	7%	11%	8%	7%	4%
1971 – 1980	12%	10%	14%	16%	14%	12%	9%
1981 – 1990	10%	9%	10%	7%	9%	12%	12%
1991 – 2000	15%	17%	15%	15%	16%	19%	13%
2001 – 2005	15%	15%	15%	12%	12%	18%	15%
2006 – 2011	12%	12%	12%	8%	10%	12%	14%
2012 or later	5%	5%	6%	4%	2%	7%	6%

**Table A1.2: Average number of bedrooms and living rooms per dwelling by tenure type (n=1385) and region (N=1500)**

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
Number of bedrooms	3.37	2.92	3.60	2.97	3.48	3.35	3.71
Number of living rooms	1.71	1.37	1.88	1.63	1.75	1.62	1.85

Table A1.3: Presence of dwelling features by tenure type (n=1385) and region (N=1500)

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
Private garden (including patio / yard / courtyard)	87%	73%	95%	77%	79%	89%	95%
Own parking space	74%	63%	80%	69%	69%	74%	80%
Garage (private or communal)	23%	12%	27%	11%	17%	19%	37%
Own balcony / roof terrace	5%	8%	4%	12%	5%	3%	2%
Communal gardens or other space	8%	12%	6%	11%	15%	8%	3%
Lift	3%	6%	1%	6%	7%	2%	0
Secure place to park bike	28%	19%	33%	23%	26%	24%	36%
Separate secure storage space on site	20%	10%	26%	12%	14%	18%	30%
Electric vehicle charging point	1%	1%	1%	1%	0	1%	1%
Shared TV / satellite dish	12%	10%	12%	11%	10%	11%	14%
On-site security / concierge presence	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%
Post parcel holding facility	3%	3%	3%	4%	6%	3%	4%
Office space	5%	2%	6%	2%	5%	5%	8%
None	2%	6%	0	4%	5%	1%	1%

## Appendix 2: Sample Profile by Tenure Type<sup>32</sup>

Table A2.1: Sample profile by tenure type (N=1500)

		Within-category %		
		Renters n=526	Owners n=859	Rent-free n=115
<b>Age</b>	18-24	9%	*(2)	34%
	25-34	32%	9%	34%
	35-44	35%	18%	20%
	45-54	13%	26%	4%
	55-64	7%	26%	5%
	65+	4%	21%	3%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	36%	59%	33%
	Female	64%	41%	65%
	Other / prefer not to say	0%	0%	2%
<b>Province</b>	Dublin	37%	26%	21%
	Leinster (exc. Dublin)	21%	28%	30%
	Munster	27%	27%	28%
	Connaught/Ulster	15%	19%	21%
<b>Region</b>	Dublin	37%	26%	21%
	Regional Cities	11%	6%	5%
	Urban Towns	32%	26%	25%
	Rural	20%	42%	49%

32. Respondents with a tenure type of living rent free (N=115) are not included in analysis by tenure in Chapter Four but are included in all other analyses.

Table A2.1, continued: Sample profile by tenure type (N=1500)

		Within-category %		
		Renters n=526	Owners n=859	Rent-free n=115
<b>Employment status</b>	Employee and currently engaged in work duties	54%	52%	39%
	Employee pre Covid-19, currently not working, expecting to return to the same job	6%	3%	8%
	Employee pre Covid-19, currently not working and not expecting to return to the same job	3%	2%	5%
	Self-employed and currently engaged in work duties	1%	7%	2%
	Self-employed but not carrying out work duties	0%	2%	2%
	Unemployed pre Covid-19 and currently unemployed	5%	2%	8%
	Third level education (incl. vocational training or retraining)	5%	1%	19%
	Unable to work, sickness or disability	8%	5%	6%
	Retired	4%	18%	3%
	Looking after family home	10%	6%	2%
	Other	4%	2%	6%
<b>Social class</b>	AB	8%	16%	10%
	C1	34%	28%	34%
	C2	19%	22%	14%
	DE	36%	28%	24%
	F	3%	6%	18%





Table A2.1, continued: Sample profile by tenure type (N=1500)

		Within-category %		
		Renters n=526	Owners n=859	Rent-free n=115
<b>Tenure</b>	I own this home with a mortgage or loan	-	56%	-
	I own this home outright	-	44%	-
	I rent here privately	34%	-	-
	I rent here from the Local Authority (e.g. Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council or Cork City Council etc.)	38%	-	-
	I rent a room under the rent a room scheme	*(1)	-	-
	I rent as part of a house or apartment share with friends / house mates	5%	-	-
	I live in a family home and pay rent	18%	-	-
	I rent here from an Approved Housing Body / Voluntary or Cooperative Housing Body (an independent, not for profit organisation which provides social and affordable housing to people in need e.g. Cluid, Túath or The Iveagh Trust)	5%	-	-
	I live here rent free (can include living at family home but not paying rent)	-	-	100%
<b>Housing support</b>	Rent Supplement	*(1)	-	-
	Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)	8%	-	-
	Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)	28%	-	-
	Don't know	6%	-	-
	None of these	59%	-	-

# Appendix 3: Rental Sector Classification

## **Rental Sector Classification**

This report applied the classification that was used in 2018 during the validation process to provide consistency in the tenure classification for those living in the rented sector.

- Renters in receipt of Rent Supplement are included in the private sector analysis, except for renters who reported they lived in an Approved Housing Body dwelling, who are included in the social sector analysis.
- Renters in receipt of RAS are included in the social sector analysis.
- Renters in receipt of HAP are included in the social sector analysis.

## Appendix 4: Additional Analyses

**Table A4.1: Incidence of housing issues/problems 'somewhat a problem' or 'a big problem' (N=1500)**

Difficulties keeping home warm	50%
Difficulties with cost of upkeep	43%
Shortage of space	41%
Difficulties carrying out maintenance/upkeep yourself	40%
Damp/leaks in walls/roof	38%
Rot in windows, doors or floors	28%
Noise from neighbouring homes	25%
Home not feeling safe or secure	21%
Lack of light	18%
Home too big for current needs	16%
Working from home when necessary	15%
Lack of bath/shower	14%
Lack of place to sit outside	13%

**Table A4.2: Working from home *before* the Covid-19 pandemic by tenure type (n=799) and region (n=847)**

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=847	n=293	n=506	n=252	n=62	n=246	n=287
WFH all the time pre-Covid	6%	5%	8%	3%	0	4%	12%
WFH some of the time	8%	6%	9%	11%	6%	6%	7%
Not WFH pre-Covid	86%	89%	83%	85%	94%	90%	81%

**Table A4.3: Working from home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic by tenure type (n=799) and region (n=847)**

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=847	n=293	n=506	n=252	n=62	n=246	n=287
Was WFH as a result of Covid but back working normally	15%	12%	17%	16%	14%	16%	13%
Still WFH	29%	31%	27%	31%	41%	25%	27%
Was WFH as result of C-19 but no longer working	*(3)	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%
Not had to WFH as a result of Covid	56%	60%	56%	52%	43%	59%	60%

**Table A4.4: Neighbourhood attitudes (% strongly agreed) by tenure type (n=1385) and region (N=1500)**

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	N=1500	n=526	n=859	n=438	n=119	n=421	n=522
I am able to access recreational parks / green areas	36%	29%	42%	46%	31%	34%	30%
I feel safe	31%	24%	35%	27%	27%	31%	35%
The buildings are attractive	18%	12%	21%	13%	17%	19%	21%
This is a calm area to live	34%	21%	42%	22%	24%	32%	48%
I am happy with the neighbourhood environment	33%	23%	40%	25%	25%	31%	45%
There are 'good quality' schools	33%	21%	41%	27%	34%	29%	41%
I don't feel an urge to move out of this neighbourhood	38%	24%	48%	35%	26%	32%	46%
There is good public transport	19%	20%	19%	37%	25%	14%	6%
I am able to access public services easily (library, community centre, health, church etc.)	24%	22%	27%	34%	32%	27%	12%
I am able to access public amenities easily (cafes, restaurants, pubs etc.)	25%	22%	29%	31%	33%	29%	13%
It is easy to get to supermarkets or other shops	31%	29%	33%	39%	41%	37%	16%
I feel close to everything	25%	24%	28%	36%	34%	29%	11%
I enjoy living in this home	35%	19%	47%	35%	31%	34%	39%

Table A4.5: Renters: Reasons for moving from previous rented home by tenure subtype (n=58) and region (n=67<sup>33</sup>)

	Total	Social	Private	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns
	n=67	n=13	n=45	n=25	n=9	n=21
Landlord selling and asked me / us to leave	43%	64%	40%	50%	5%	52%
Landlord refurbishing	5%	3%	7%	0	21%	4%
Conflict with landlord	12%	11%	15%	10%	21%	4%
Lease not renewed no reason given	10%	14%	5%	7%	13%	12%
Other	29%	8%	33%	33%	40%	27%

Table A4.6: Renters: Ease of finding a home last time moved by tenure subtype(n=357)

	Total	Social	Private
	n=357	n=128	n=230
Very difficult	31%	35%	29%
Difficult	28%	26%	29%
Neutral	20%	21%	20%
Easy	14%	15%	14%
Very easy	7%	4%	8%



33. Region includes 4 owners and 5 respondents who live rent free.

**Table A4.7: Reasons for moving back to family home by tenure type (n=35) and region (n=76)**

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=76	n=30	n=5	n=18	n=8	n=20	n=29
To save for a mortgage deposit	34%	37%	73%	25%	59%	27%	39%
Unable to find anywhere suitable to rent	12%	18%	0	14%	0	22%	8%
Unable to find anywhere suitable to buy	4%	3%	0	10%	0	5%	0
Can no longer afford to rent	26%	27%	0	15%	50%	36%	18%
Personal reasons (relationship ended etc)	27%	33%	0	24%	21%	31%	27%
To care for / support a parent	13%	14%	27%	34%	5%	8%	6%
Impact of Covid-19 / pandemic	15%	12%	0	0	24%	5%	29%
Other	5%	8%	0	5%	0	8%	3%

**Table A4.8: Owners: Reasons for last move by tenure subtype (n=208)**

	Total	Owner with mortgage	Outright owner
	n=208	n=157	n=51
I moved to another rental property	2%	2%	0
I moved from family home to purchasing my first property	23%	29%	6%
I moved to my first rental property	*(1)	1%	0
I bought a property, but it was not my first purchase	25%	13%	59%
I moved from a rental property to purchasing my first home	28%	35%	7%
I moved back to live with my parents	2%	2%	3%
I moved from a rental property to buying another property, but it was not my first purchase	5%	6%	4%
Moved from abroad	3%	3%	4%
Moved to social housing	0	0	0
Other (please specify)	7%	5%	12%
Prefer not to say / NA	4%	4%	4%

Table A4.9: Owners: Living in first home purchased by tenure subtype and region(n=859)

	Total	Mortgage	Outright	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=859	n=484	n=375	n=220	n=55	n=221	n=362
Yes	64%	69%	57%	63%	52%	69%	63%
No	36%	31%	43%	37%	48%	31%	37%

Table A4.10: Owners: Level of difficulty in meeting monthly mortgage repayment by region (n=453, % excludes those who stated they preferred not to say)

	Total	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=484	n=116	n=27	n=150	n=190
Lots of difficulty	5%	5%	2%	7%	5%
Some difficulty	31%	28%	32%	33%	32%
No difficulty	57%	60%	58%	56%	57%

Table A4.11: Renters: Saving for a deposit by tenure subtype (n=178) and region (n=233)

	Total	Social	Private	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=233	n=38	n=141	n=75	n=24	n=70	n=64
Yes	60%	28%	72%	69%	72%	54%	52%
No	37%	72%	25%	29%	28%	40%	46%
Don't know	3%	0	3%	2%	0	6%	2%

Table A4.12: Renters: Average in years saving for a deposit by tenure subtype (n=111) and by region (n=140)

	Total	Social	Private	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=140	n=10	n=101	n=52	n=17	n=38	n=33
Average in Years	2.88	5.18	2.76	3.06	2.48	2.72	2.96



**Table A4.13: Renters: Expectation of financial sacrifice to buy next home by tenure subtype (n=267) and region (n=332)**

	Total Renters	Social	Private	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=332	n=85	n=182	n=112	n=34	n=102	n=84
A lot	64%	63%	69%	62%	77%	60%	66%
Some	31%	33%	25%	35%	15%	32%	33%
Not very much	3%	2%	4%	3%	0	6%	0
No financial sacrifice	2%	2%	2%	1%	8%	1%	1%

**Table A4.14: Renters: Reasons why cannot get a mortgage by tenure subtype and region (n=232)**

	Total	Social	Private	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=232	n=97	n=134	n=77	n=19	n=78	n=57
Income too low	67%	61%	71%	57%	100%	66%	70%
Outgoings too high	18%	7%	3%	5%	0	1%	11%
Too old	16%	2%	7%	10%	5%	*	3%
Other debts	14%	17%	7%	11%	0	9%	18%
Other	12%	12%	22%	12%	9%	21%	24%
Irregular income	11%	23%	8%	9%	11%	14%	23%
Self-employed	5%	16%	16%	22%	0	22%	5%
Temp / short-term employment contract	5%	11%	13%	17%	0	11%	12%

**Table A4.15: Owners: Expectation of financial sacrifice to buy next home by tenure type (n=267) and region (n=332)**

	Total	Mortgage	Outright	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
A lot	41%	49%	31%	44%	38%	45%	38%
Some	38%	38%	37%	36%	50%	36%	38%
Not very much	13%	11%	15%	13%	12%	15%	12%
No financial sacrifice	8%	2%	17%	8%	0	4%	13%

Table A4.16: Where prefer to move by tenure type (n=720) and by region (n=806)

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=806	n=388	n=332	n=263	n=77	n=226	n=239
Rent in the private sector	7%	13%	1%	10%	7%	7%	4%
Rent in the social sector: local authority or AHB	12%	20%	1%	10%	15%	14%	10%
Buy a second-hand home	42%	30%	56%	45%	45%	41%	39%
Buy a new build	15%	16%	12%	17%	13%	14%	14%
Build own home	13%	8%	18%	6%	7%	13%	21%
Inherit	3%	4%	3%	2%	1%	5%	4%
Other	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Don't know	7%	8%	6%	8%	11%	5%	7%

Table A4.17: Where expect to move by tenure type (n=720) and by region (n=806)

	Total	Renters	Owners	Dublin	Regional Cities	Urban Towns	Rural
	n=806	n=388	n=332	n=263	n=77	n=226	n=239
Buy a second-hand home	40%	27%	59%	45%	34%	38%	39%
Rent in the private sector	13%	20%	2%	14%	28%	10%	11%
Rent in the social sector - local authority or AHB	10%	18%	1%	8%	11%	16%	8%
Build own home	10%	7%	14%	4%	8%	11%	17%
Buy a new build	9%	8%	8%	10%	4%	9%	8%
Inherit	3%	5%	2%	1%	4%	4%	5%
Other	3%	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Don't know	10%	12%	9%	13%	8%	10%	8%

**Table A4.18: Most important, or any mention of, features in future home (unsure or likely to move home in the future, n=806)**

	Most important	Any mention
Garden space	25%	50%
The number of bedrooms	22%	49%
Feeling safe in home	15%	38%
A larger kitchen	9%	29%
A large living space (e.g. living room)	5%	25%
It is a new home	4%	10%
A smaller home	4%	11%
A private driveway	3%	15%
Good storage space	3%	21%
Other (please specify in space provided)	3%	7%
A fireplace / open hearth	2%	12%
It is a period home / character features	2%	4%
Good broadband	2%	18%
A garage	1%	7%
Space for a home office	0	5%

**Table A4.19: Most important characteristics ranked when choosing neighbourhood of future home (unsure or likely to move home in the future, n=806)**

	Most important	2nd	3rd
More peaceful	22%	3%	4%
Friendly neighbours	15%	16%	6%
Close social / cultural amenities in this area (pubs, restaurants etc.)	14%	6%	5%
Feeling safe in neighbourhood	13%	19%	14%
Views and pleasant surroundings	11%	11%	6%
Area / house that was affordable	7%	14%	9%
To be close to family	6%	7%	10%
Easy commute to work / education	3%	4%	7%
Proximity to public transport	2%	4%	6%
Close to the city / town centre	2%	1%	3%
Better mobility reasons / easier to get around	1%	3%	5%
Proximity to 'good' schools	1%	2%	4%
Convenient access to shopping areas	1%	2%	5%
Close to the countryside / green spaces	1%	3%	7%
Proximity to a favourite activity	0	0	1%
Proximity to Health Services (e.g., doctor)	0	2%	2%
Other (please specify in space provided)	0	3%	7%

**Table A4.20: Owners: Reasons for finding property search difficult for next home (n=92)**

	Total n=92	Mortgage n=78	Outright n=14
Lack of the size of the housing that is needed	15%	15%	17%
Housing too expensive	60%	62%	50%
No housing available in area you wanted to live in	54%	55%	53%
High demand for properties I viewed	44%	47%	28%
Difficult to find a home for a single person	7%	5%	16%
Other (Please specify)	9%	4%	3%

## Appendix 5: Abbreviations and Glossary

<b>AHB</b>	<b>Approved Housing Body</b>	Also called housing associations or voluntary housing associations, they are independent, not-for-profit organisations. They provide affordable rented housing for people who cannot afford to pay private sector rents or buy their own homes; or for particular groups, such as older people or homeless people.
<b>HAP</b>	<b>Housing Assistance Payment</b>	The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support for people who have a long-term housing need. HAP will eventually replace long-term Rent Supplement. The scheme is administered by the local authorities, who pay landlords directly.
	<b>Local Authority</b>	Local authorities are responsible for public services and facilities in a particular area. They provide affordable rented housing for people who cannot afford to pay private sector rents or buy their own homes; or for particular groups, such as older people, or homeless people.
	<b>Owners</b>	Owners include those with and without a mortgage. This study refers to owners and these are owner-occupiers only and not landlord/owners.
	<b>Private Renter</b>	Private renter refers to those renting from a private landlord and not in receipt of RAS or HAP.
<b>RAS</b>	<b>Rental Accommodation Scheme</b>	RAS is a social housing support introduced to cater for the accommodation needs of persons who are in receipt of long-term rent supplement. Under the RAS scheme, private rented properties provide an additional source of rental accommodation for eligible persons.
	<b>Social Renter</b>	Social renter refers to those living in LA/ AHB owned housing and also those renting from a private landlord and in receipt of HAP and/ or RAS
	<b>Social Class/ Socioeconomic Groupings</b>	<p><b>AB:</b> Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, professional occupations</p> <p><b>C1:</b> Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative, professional occupations</p> <p><b>C2:</b> Skilled manual occupations</p> <p><b>DE:</b> Semi-skilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations</p> <p><b>F:</b> Unskilled occupations</p>
<b>WFH</b>	<b>Working from home</b>	





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