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Report on outcome of Rent Level Consultation 2021/22

Introduction

Each year the council consults with tenants, tenants and residents groups and East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) on our proposals to increase rents. The council's existing budget plans are built around a five per cent increase over the next few years however taking into account the impact of the Coronavirus on household incomes, the council consulted on a proposal to limit next year's rent increase to 2% only.

This year due to Covid-19 we agreed through our Project Group to continue with our approach to consult with tenants by providing good information on what their rent pays for and give tenants the opportunity to complete a consultation questionnaire to give us their views on a proposed rent increase. It was agreed that for those tenants who have registered an email address with us, that we would email the consultation documents to them, all other tenants would receive a paper copy of the documents.

On 20th January 2021 the council sent out a consultation questionnaire to all tenants, the information also included a Rent Table so tenants could see what a 2% increase would mean in real terms. There were a number of social media posts and text message reminders sent out to remind and encourage tenants to respond to the consultation which ended on Friday 12th February 2021.

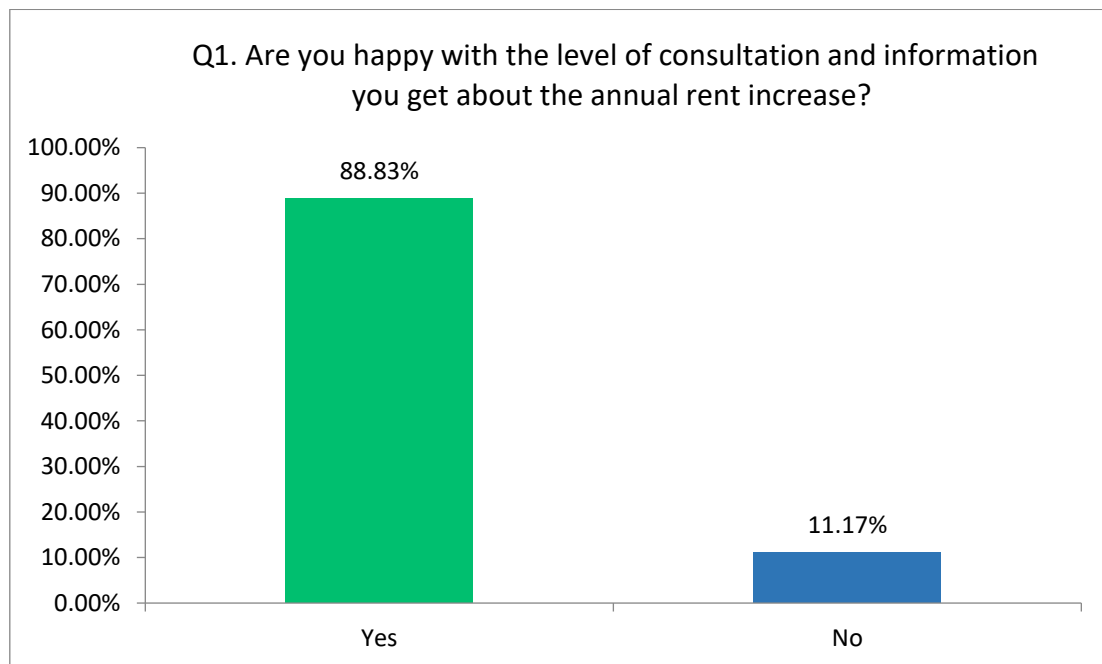
The questionnaire asked tenants if they think they rent the pay is good value for money and if they agreed with our approach to increase rents and continue with our commitment to our new build and modernisation programmes. We also asked if their financial situation has been affected by Covid-19 and gave them the opportunity to make any comments.

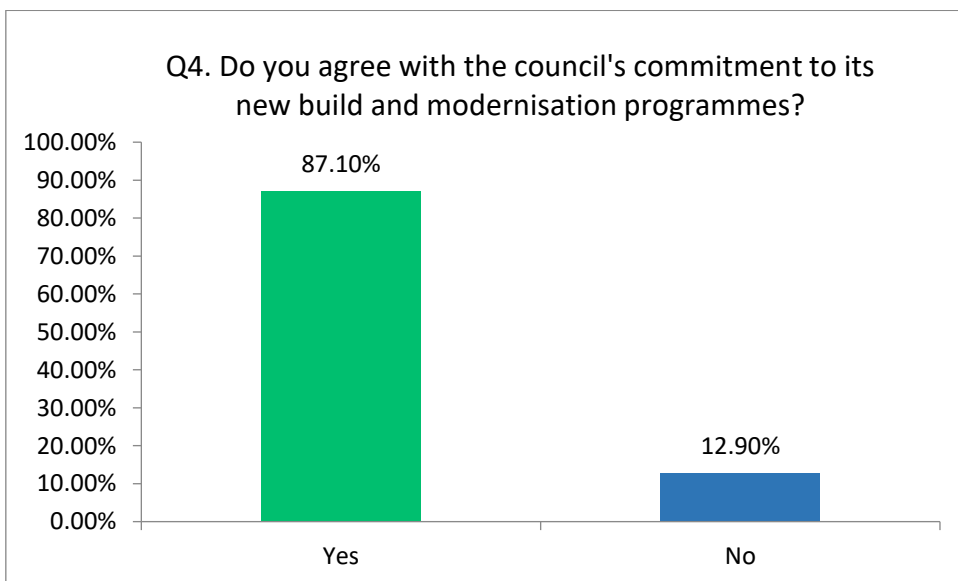
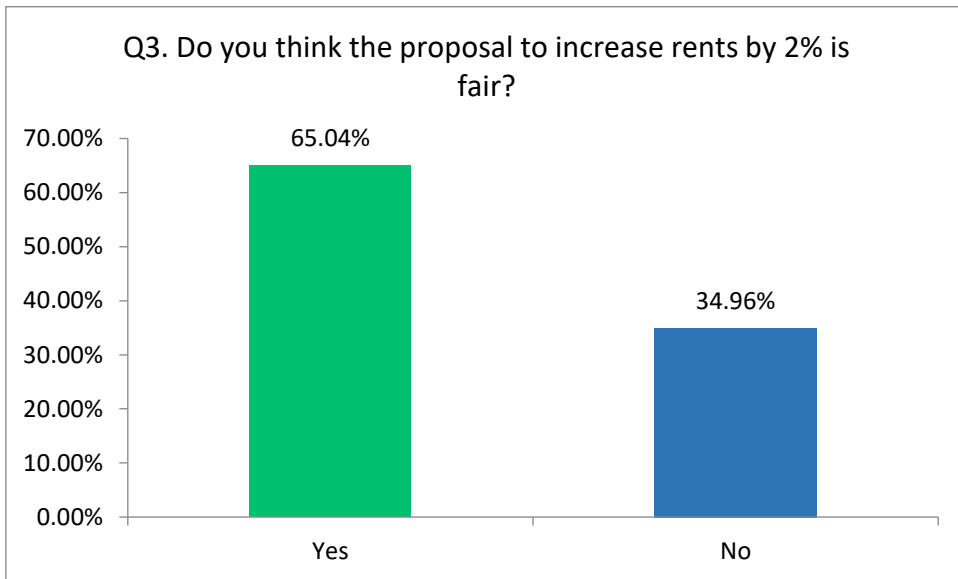
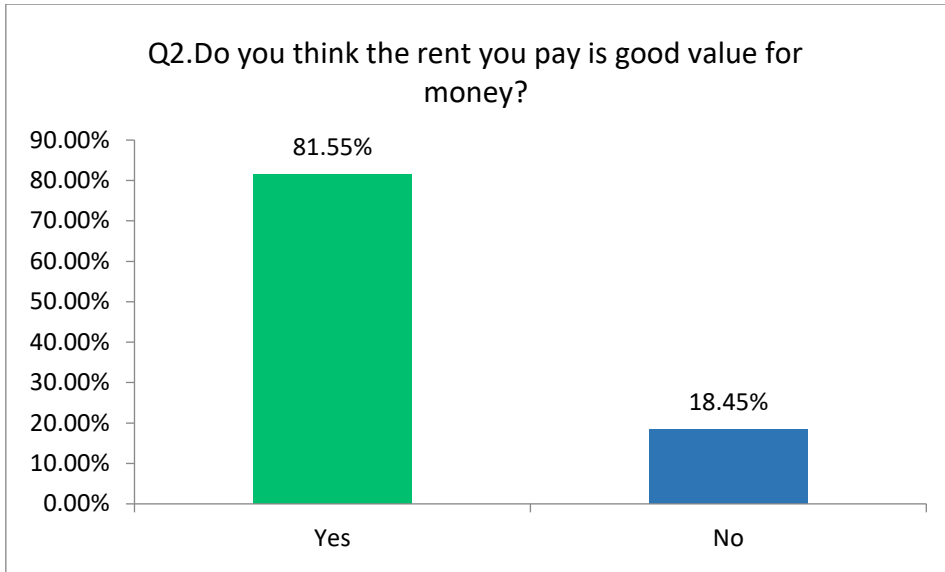
Summary of responses

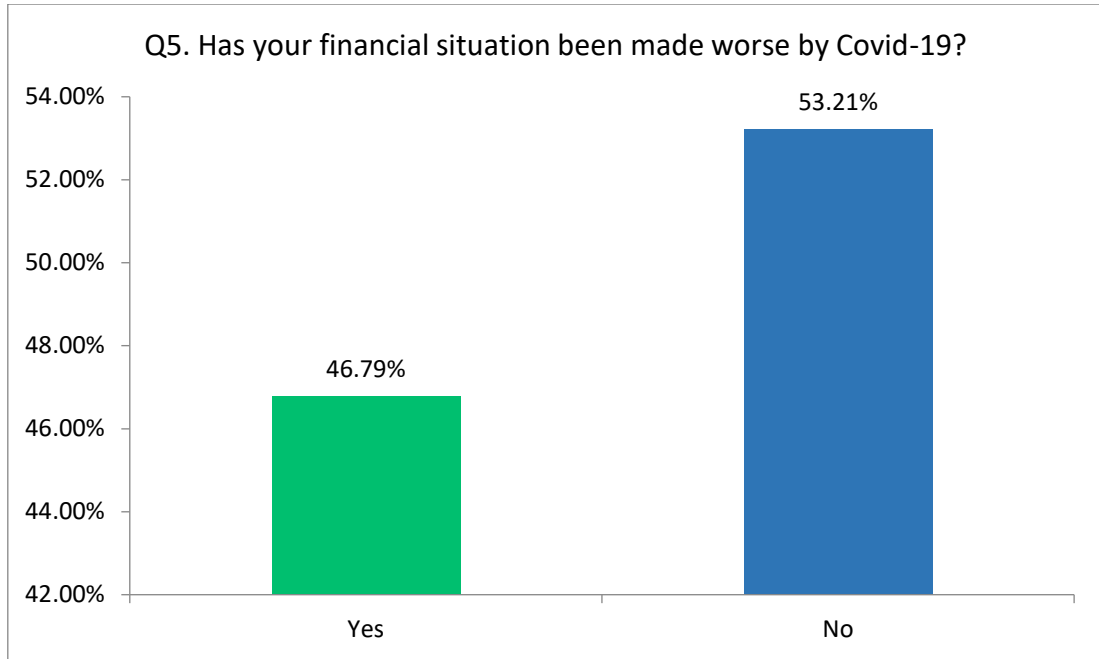
A total of 1,560 responses (908 last year) were received to our consultation, this comprised of 874 online responses and 686 completed questionnaires, which were returned by post (5 of those were from Tenants and Residents Associations).

This represents a return rate of 17.94% (10.5% last year) and shown below is a summary of the responses received.

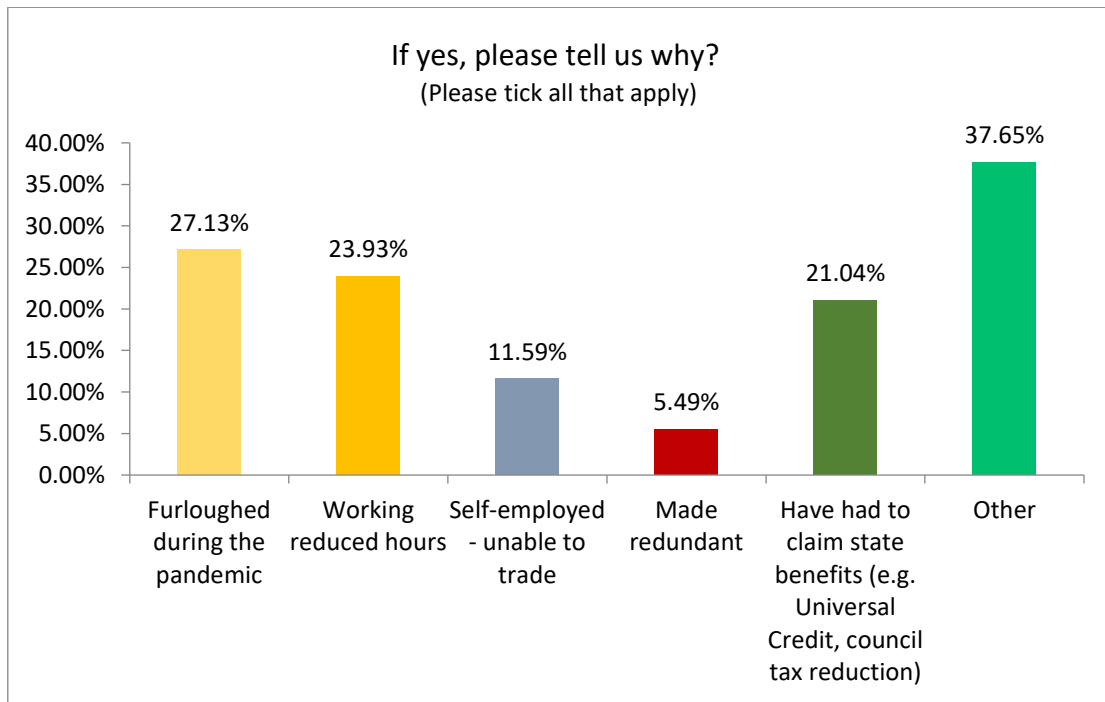
We asked tenants a total of five questions which they could answer yes or no and then gave them the opportunity to give us any comments. All the comments received will be analysed and responded to where the tenant has provided contact details.





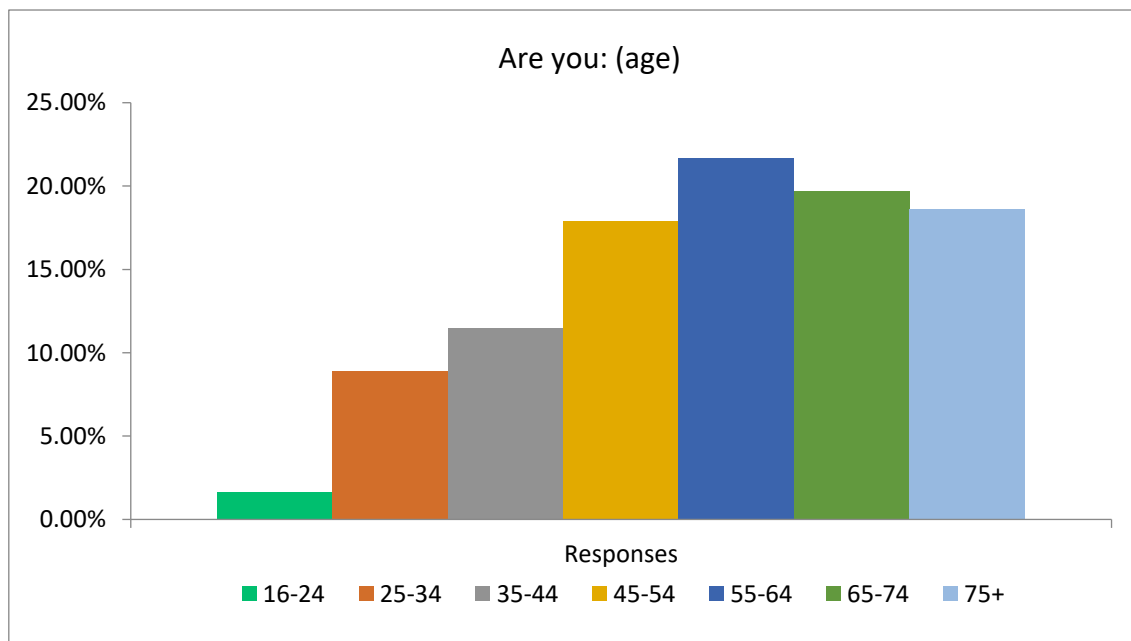
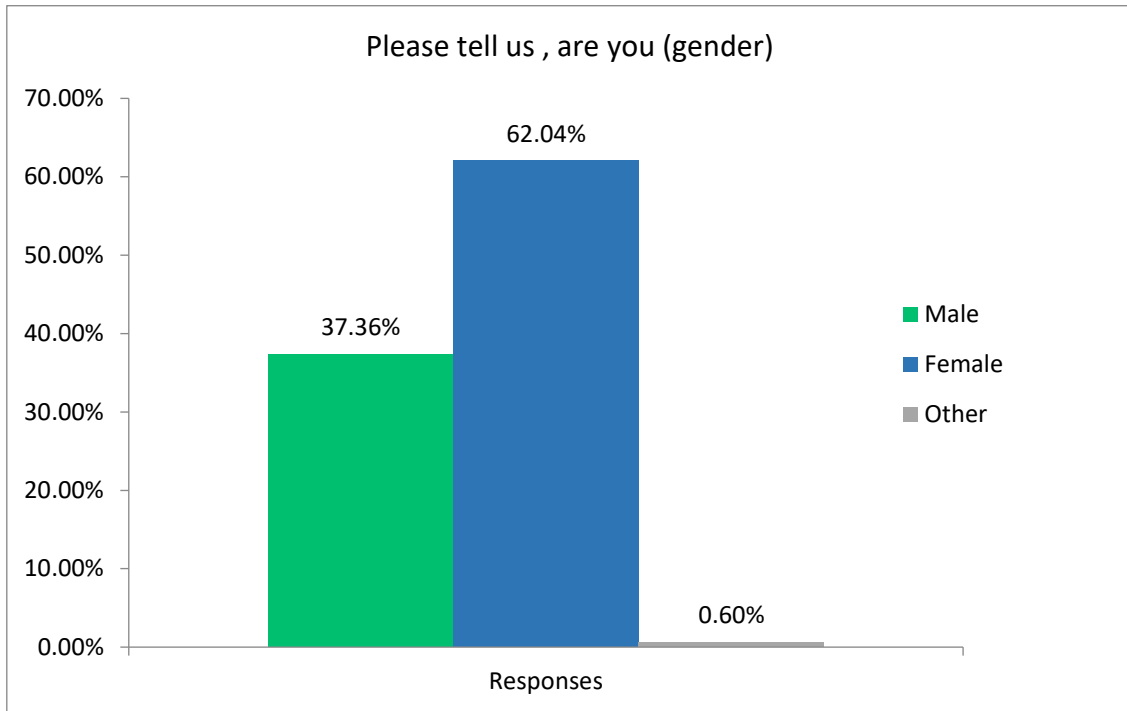


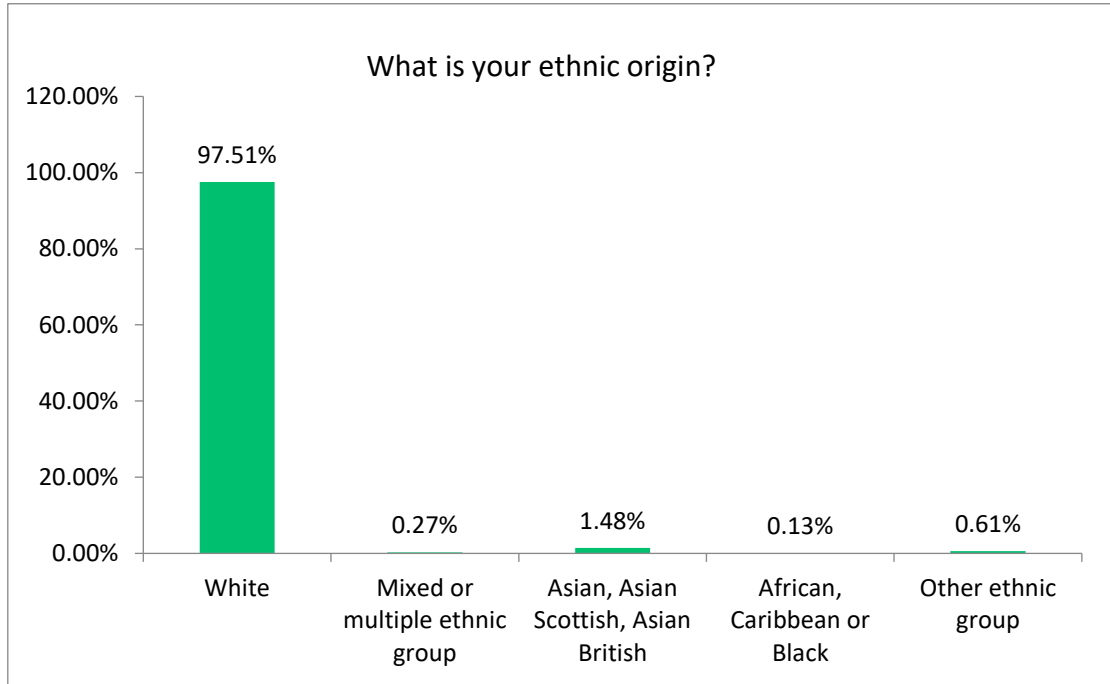
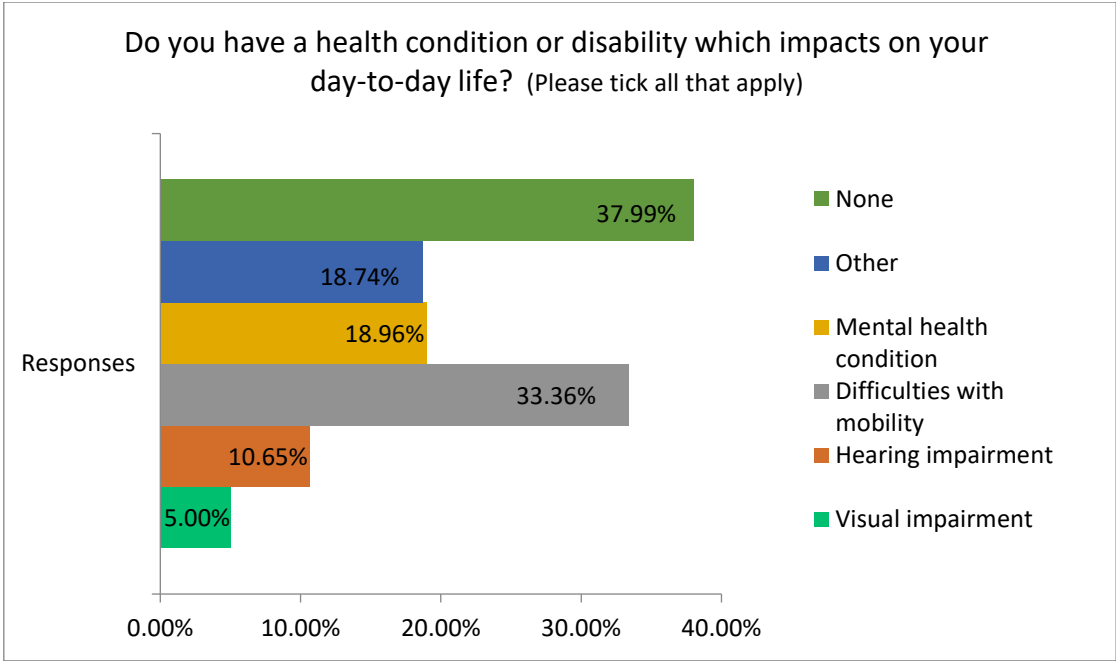
If tenants answered yes to the above question, we asked them to tell us why.

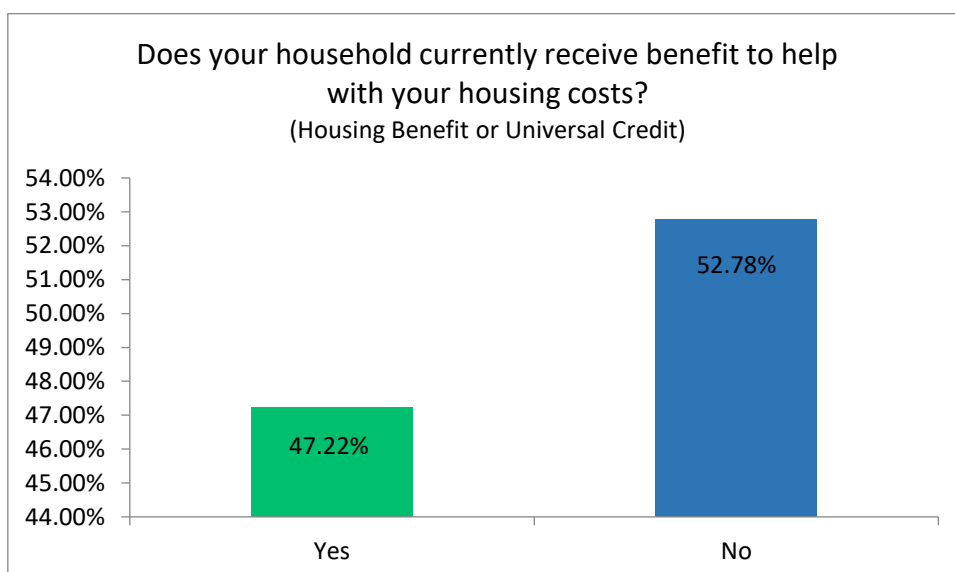
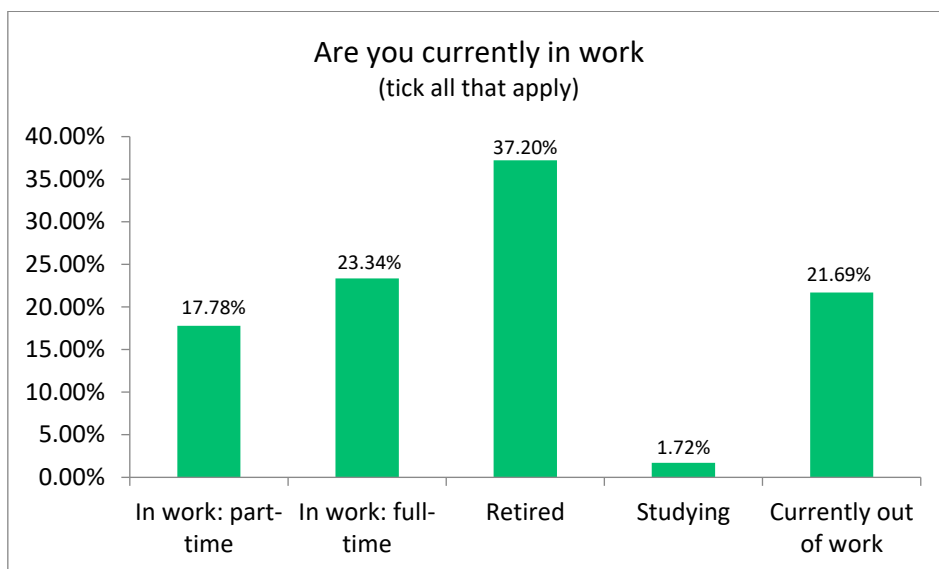
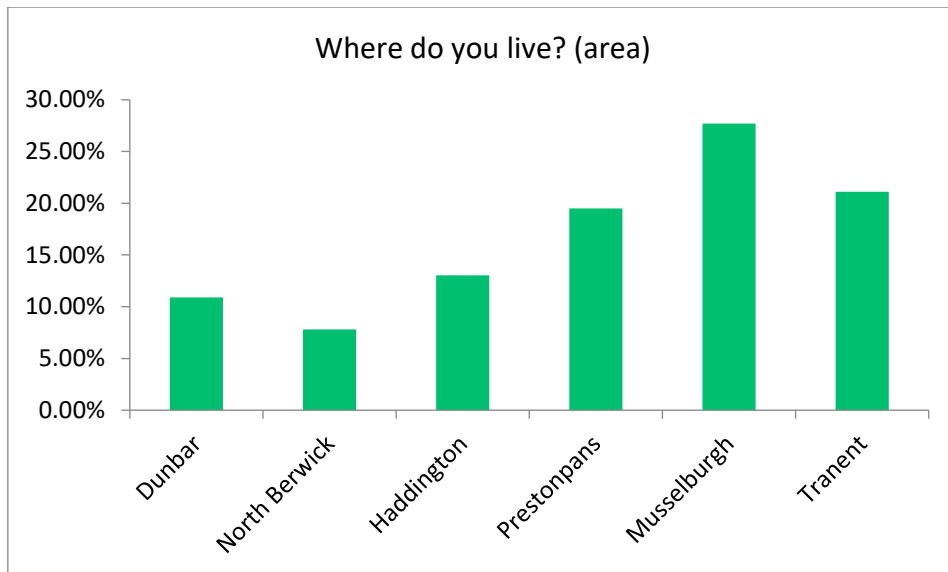


Equalities Information

We then asked tenants a series of questions to provide us with some information about themselves to help us make sure we are capturing the views of a wide range of tenants and are meeting their needs.







ELTRP Response

ELTRP held an online Rent Consultation event as part of their Burns Supper on 28th January 2021 to gather the views of their members. The event was publicised through their social media channels and information was included in the council's consultation mail-out. At the event members were provided with information from the council on the rent increase proposals and then discussed in groups and took part in an online poll.

The general feedback from the event was:

The general comments suggest that people think that 2% is fair, however, some of the attendees did think it was the wrong time for an increase and a rent freeze should take place this year.

The results of the poll show that:

- 69% of respondents agreed that 2% was a fair rent increase
- 81% think that the rent is good value for money
- 94% agree with the council's commitment to their modernisation and new build programmes
- 25% said that their financial situation has been made worse by Covid-19, reasons stated as:
 - 13% are working reduced hours
 - 6% have been made redundant
 - 6% stated *other* as reason

Conclusion

This year's consultation, although done slightly differently has attracted more responses than previous years and more online responses (874) than we have ever received. Overall, tenants think the rent they pay is good value for money (81%), 65% think the proposal to increase rents by 2% is fair and 87% agree with our commitment to our new build and modernisation programmes.

A consultation register will be published as will our Impact Assessment of the consultation and the decision to increase rents will be taken at the council budget meeting towards the end of February 2021.