



‘Getting to know you better...’

East Devon District Council’s 2009 Tenant profiling survey.

Background

East Devon District Council’s tenant profiling exercise was conducted between May and July 2009. One of the recommendations given by the Audit Commission on their last inspection was for the housing service to improve *the sensitivity of the service to the diversity of tenants*. Two areas particularly highlighted were awareness of tenant’s disabilities and their preferred method of communication.

A pilot survey titled ‘Getting to know you better’ was conducted in Seaton in August 2007. It was originally planned to follow up this with a full survey to all tenants in 2008; however a new government directive obliged us to complete our STATUS (Standardised Tenant Satisfaction Survey) survey a year ahead of schedule. A number of the questions in both surveys had marked similarities so it was thought a better response would be achieved if the full survey were delayed until STATUS had been completed.

The survey itself builds on a body of knowledge already gathered in previous years; however one particular area that we previously held only anecdotal evidence of was the profile of sheltered tenants. We now have a far better statistical understanding of the needs of our sheltered tenants who were not included in the most recent STATUS survey.

The questions in the survey were formulated in consultation with the Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel, and considered by the Housing Review Board before being sent out.

Methodology

A postal questionnaire was carried out between May and June 2009. The questionnaire was mailed out to the main tenancy holder of 4,089 general and sheltered needs properties owned by East Devon District Council. Those already surveyed during the Seaton pilot exercise were excluded. A reminder letter was sent out after four weeks to those tenants who could not or did not reply to the first mailing. To save on printing costs, the questionnaires were designed in black and white and the mailing and analysis was conducted in house.

The surveys were designed on Snap software and we did consider using Snap to key punch the information; however the charge for inputting alone would have been over £6,500 so it was decided to save money and conduct the exercise in house.

To increase our response rate an article was placed in the June 2009 edition of the Partnership News newsletter. Estate Management were helpful in answering queries and our Mobile Support Officer and Scheme Managers were valuable in assisting and encouraging the tenants on their schemes with the surveys completion.

Councillors and staff were given notice of the survey being sent out along with the FAQ sheet and the strategy team contact details should they need further information.

Mailouts	Returned forms General	Returned forms Sheltered
Mailout 1 May 09	General 757	Sheltered 606
Mailout 2 June 09	General 399	Sheltered 231

The questionnaire included a covering letter, a prepaid return envelope and a frequently asked question sheet. The questionnaire itself also included explanations to why the questions were being asked.

All documents can be viewed in the following folder: S:\Housing\Strategy\Tenant Profiling.

Overall 1,993 completed forms were returned which represents a 46% response rate. We expect this to steadily rise as late forms are sent back in.

Within this total we had back 1,156 returned forms from our general needs tenants (40% return rate) and 837 returned forms from our sheltered tenants (58% return rate).

A response rate of 30% is considered good when using postal questionnaires; therefore, given the sensitive nature of some of the questions, and conducting the survey shortly after our STATUS survey it was encouraging that we were able to achieve a total return rate approaching 50%.

The profiling exercise is part of a continuous process with more information gathered each year as new tenants are housed. The more we know about the makeup of our households the better we are able to make more accurate projections as to the resources needed over the coming years.

Summary of Findings

- 56% of the respondents were female
 - 64% of tenants were over 65 years of age
 - 53% of tenants lived alone
 - 45% of tenants did not own a vehicle
 - EDDC has a very low ethnic minority population where 99% of tenants classified themselves as White British
 - 90% of tenants stated they wished to be contacted by post by the council
 - 25% of tenants had the internet at home
 - 54% of households had someone with a disability
 - 70% of three bedroomed homes underoccupied
 - The preferred language of all tenants who responded was English
- } potentially vulnerable

Where possible the report follows the order in which the questions were asked.

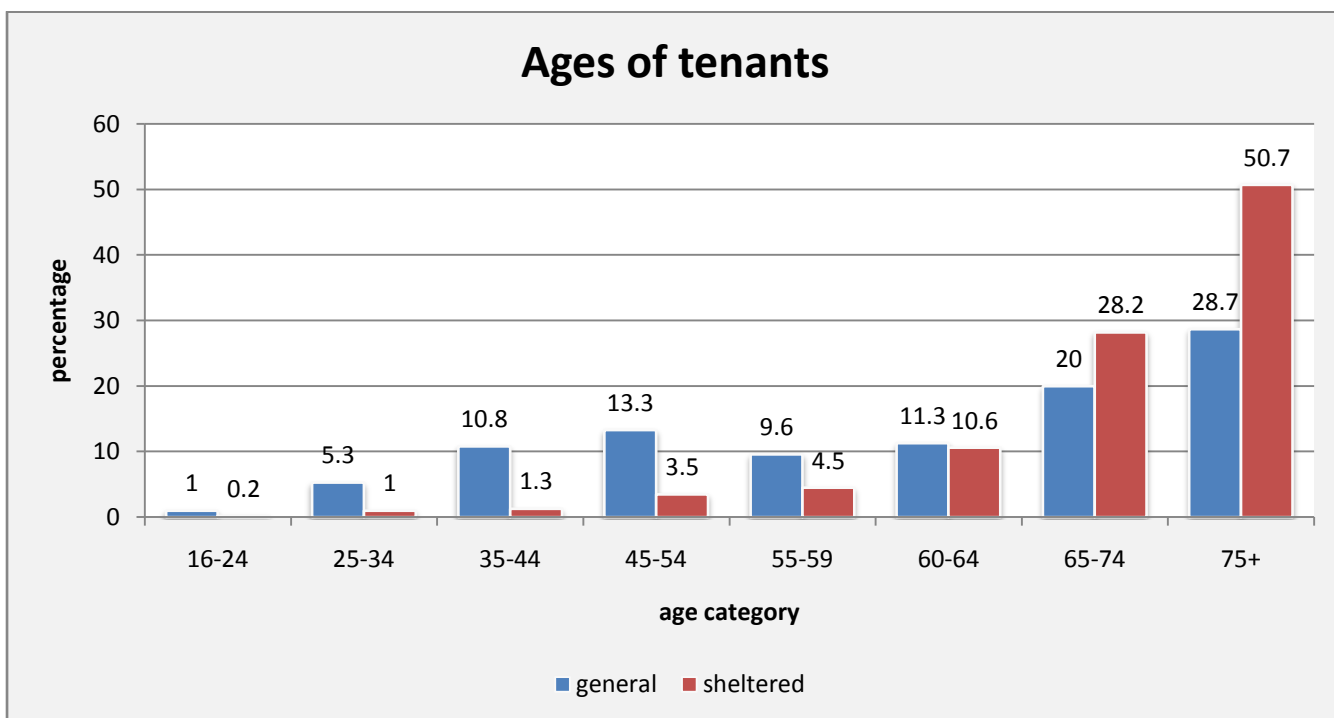
Initial outcomes

Some residents have indicated they would prefer to receive correspondence in large print or braille. This is being actioned by our tenant participation team.

East Devon tenants overwhelmingly prefer English to be used in communication with them; however we will continue to monitor this through ongoing surveys which to help us anticipate any change in this.

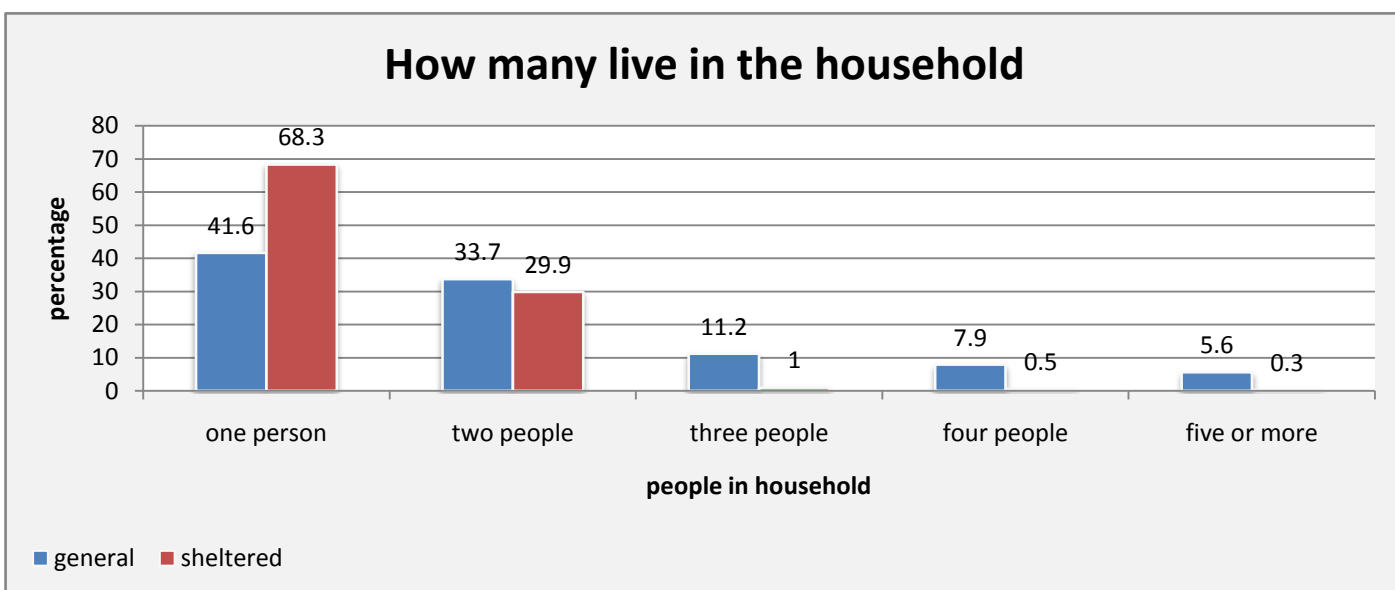
Under population of housing stock has already been identified, with the results supporting the introduction of financial incentives for tenants to downsize their properties.

Nearly 79% of sheltered and nearly 50% of general needs tenanted properties were over retirement age.



Household size

The table below indicateds that over 40% of general needs tenants and nearly 70% of our sheltered tenants reported they lived alone. As almost all our sheltered stock comprises of either one or two bedroomed properties the high percentage of single occupancy levels was expected. However the largest category of EDDC general needs housing stock are three bedroomed so the response that over 40% lived alone prompted further investigation into possible underoccupation.



By comparing the number of people residing in a property against its bedroom count we can determine that significant numbers of our general needs properties are under occupied. The cross tabulation table below was created from a sample of 1,153 general needs tenants. Areas highlighted in yellow indicate where the property is underoccupied and in green where the property is overoccupied.

Cross tabulation of persons to properties for general needs tenants (based on 40% return rate)

Number of people living in property								
Property size		one person	two people	three people	four people	five people	Six plus people	Total
one bed	Count	130	30	0	1	2	0	163
	% within number of beds	79.8%	18.4%	0.00%	0.6%	1.2%	0.00%	100%
two beds	Count	160	129	47	34	7	1	378
	% within number of beds	42.3%	34.1%	12.4%	9%	1.9%	0.3%	100%
three beds	Count	189	224	76	53	27	18	587
	% within number of beds	32.2%	38.2%	12.9%	9%	4.6%	3.1%	100%
four beds	Count	3	7	7	3	0	4	24
	% within number of beds	12.5%	29.2%	29.2%	12.5%	0.00%	16.6%	100%
five beds	Count	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	% within number of beds	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	0.00%	0.00%	100%

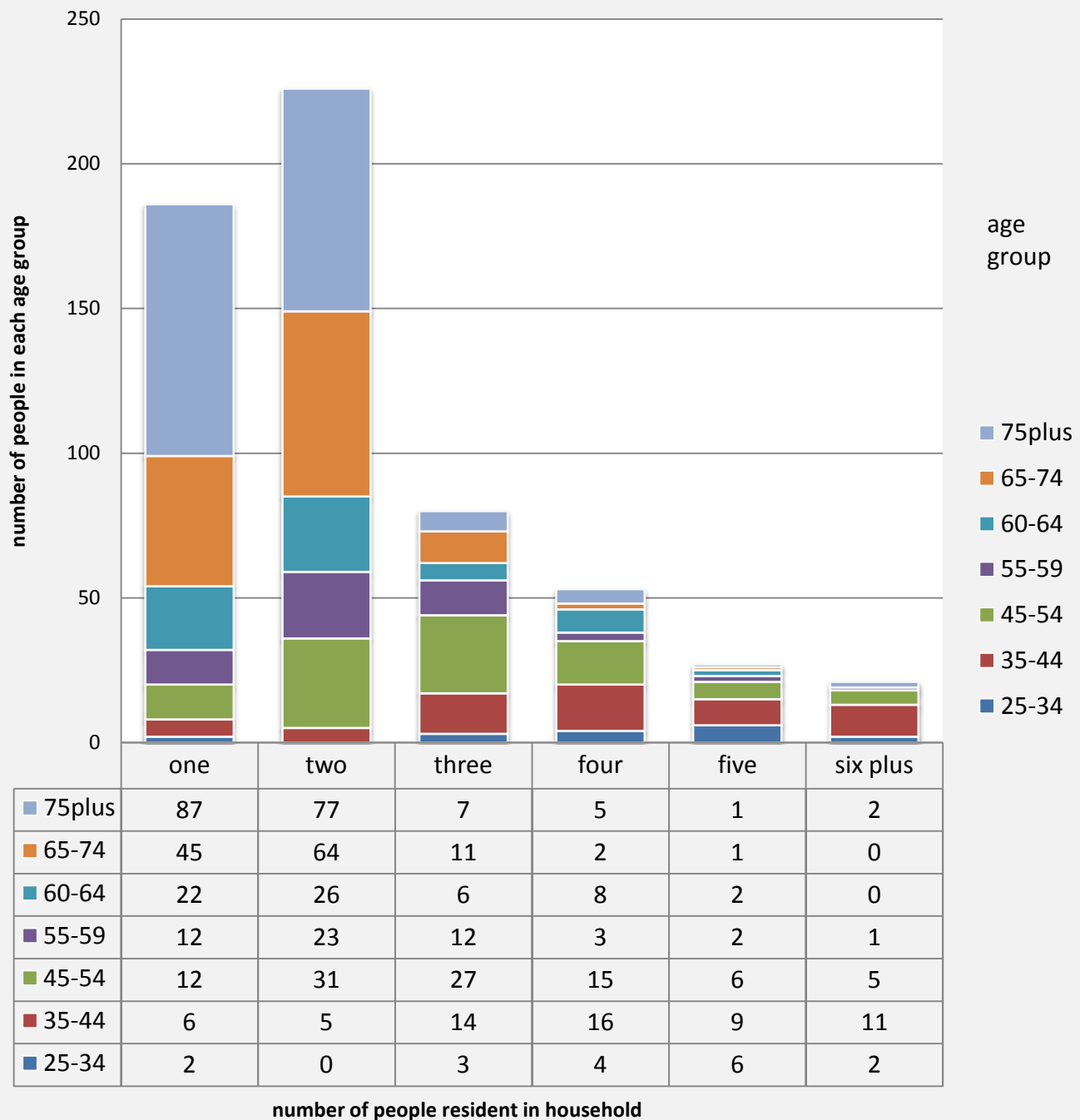
The 'total' column on the right indicates the total count of properties by type – i.e. there are 163 one bed roomed homes in our sample. Reading across and to the left from this number is the number of people resident in the 'one bed' category with the equivalent percentage.

The tables indicates that while a small proportion of general needs homes are over occupied a large number of three and four bed roomed properties are under occupied, in particular three bed roomed homes. To summarise the table:

- **42% of two bed roomed properties are occupied by one person**
- **32% of three bed roomed properties are occupied by one person**
- **38% of three bed roomed properties are occupied by two people**
- **70% of three bed roomed homes have only one or two occupants**
- **42% of four bed roomed homes occupied by one or two persons.**

We are able to further drill down into this data to see if any trend can be determined about the underoccupation of these properties

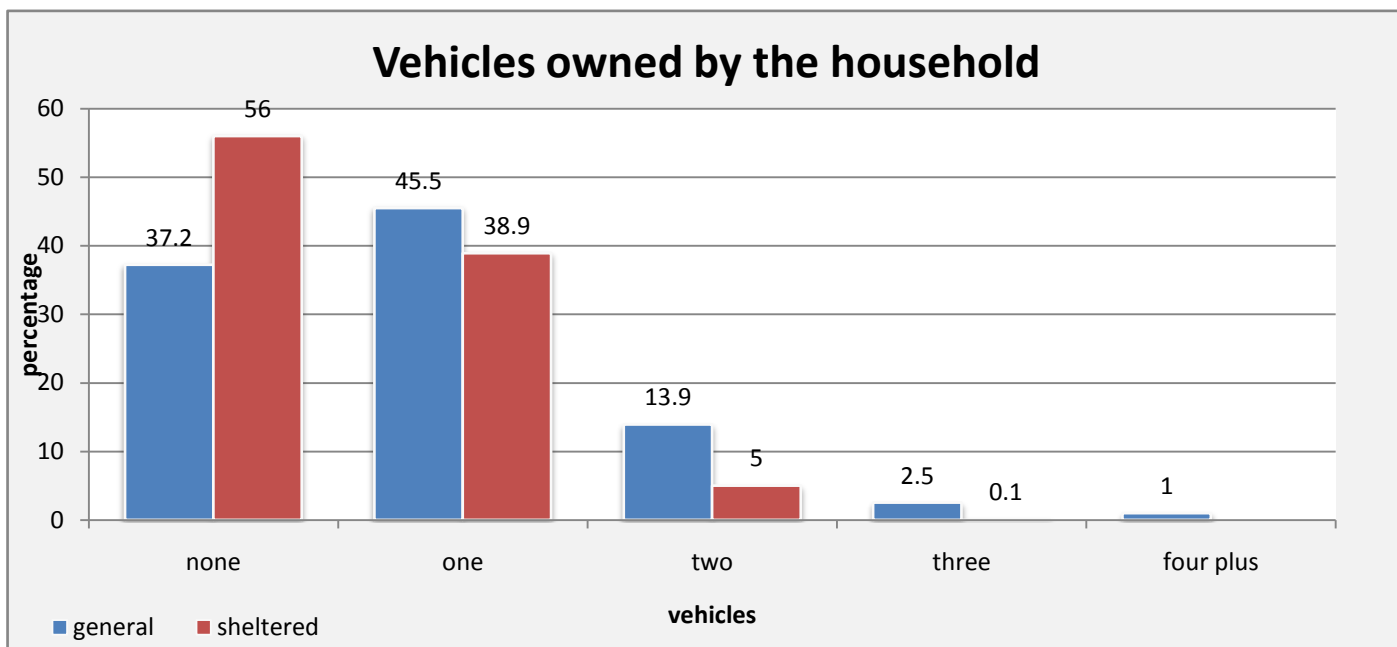
Number/age of people living in three bedroomed or more sized properties



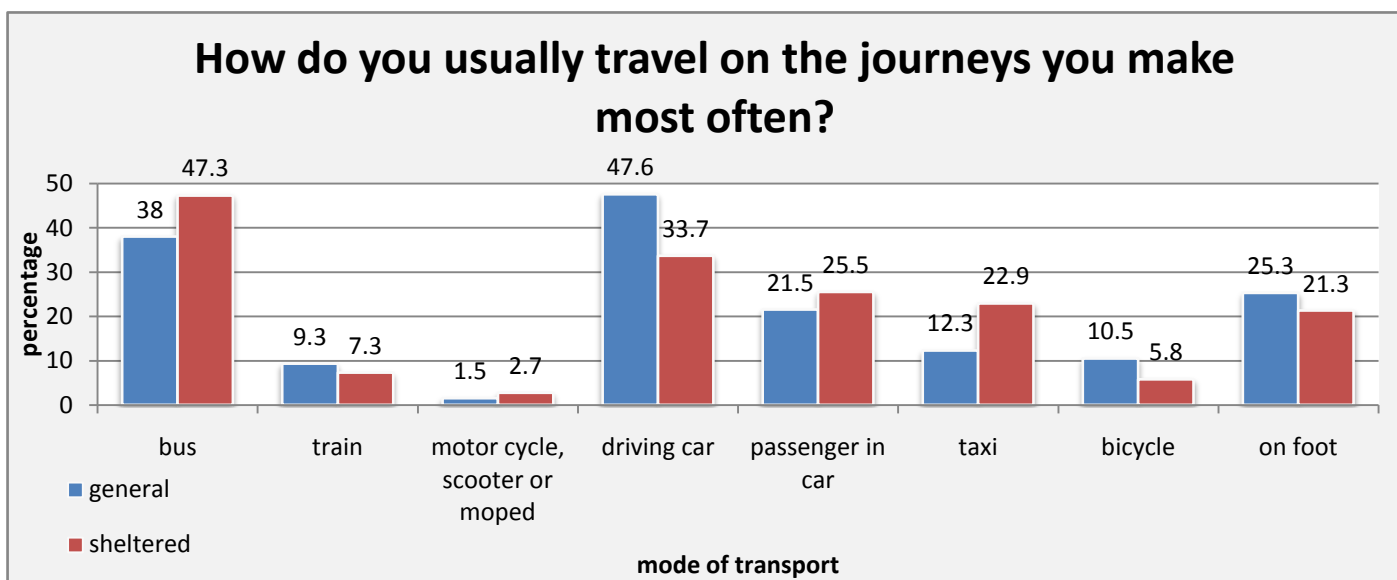
The table above is only looking at general needs properties with three or more bedrooms. A comparison has been made between the number of people resident and their ages. Two points can be noted from the chart above; firstly a significant number of larger properties are underoccupied with only one or two people resident, and secondly these properties are underoccupied by older tenants.

Transport

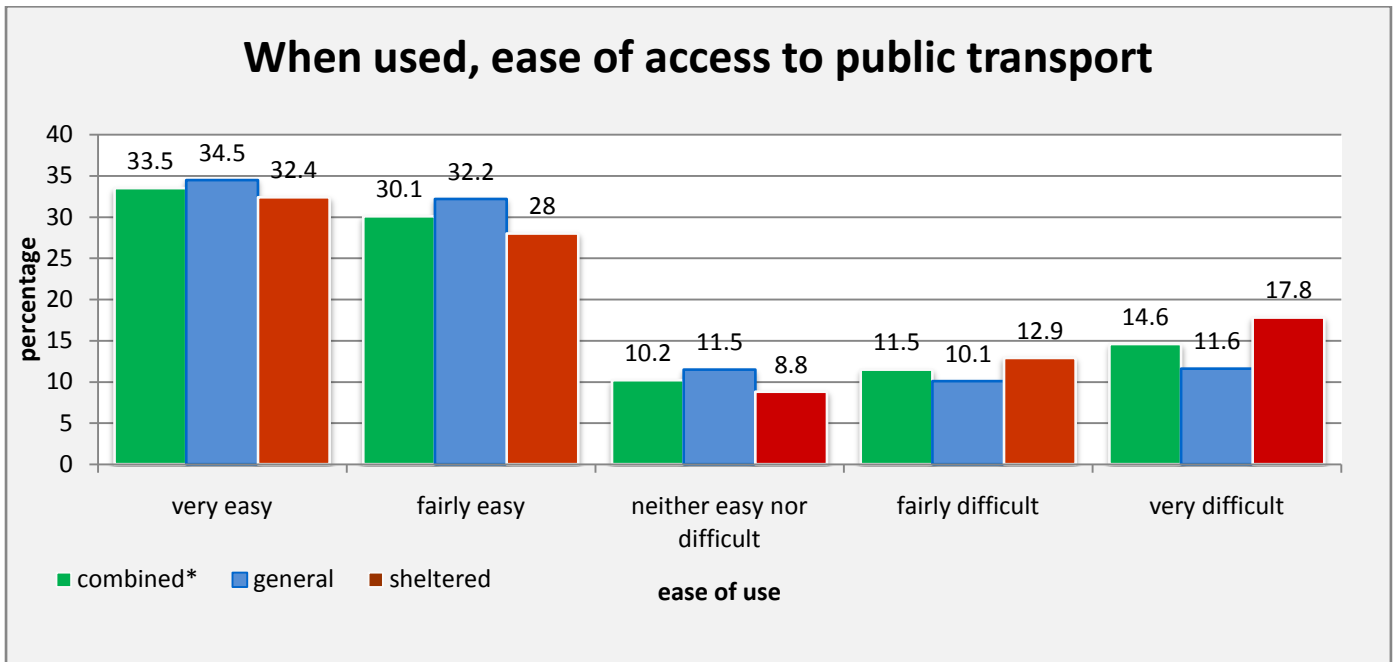
Over half of sheltered tenants and approaching four out of ten general needs tenants do not own a vehicle, so it would be expected that parking does not represent a large problem amongst tenants. This is supported by our recently completed estate management survey which found only 11% of complaints were concerning parking disputes.



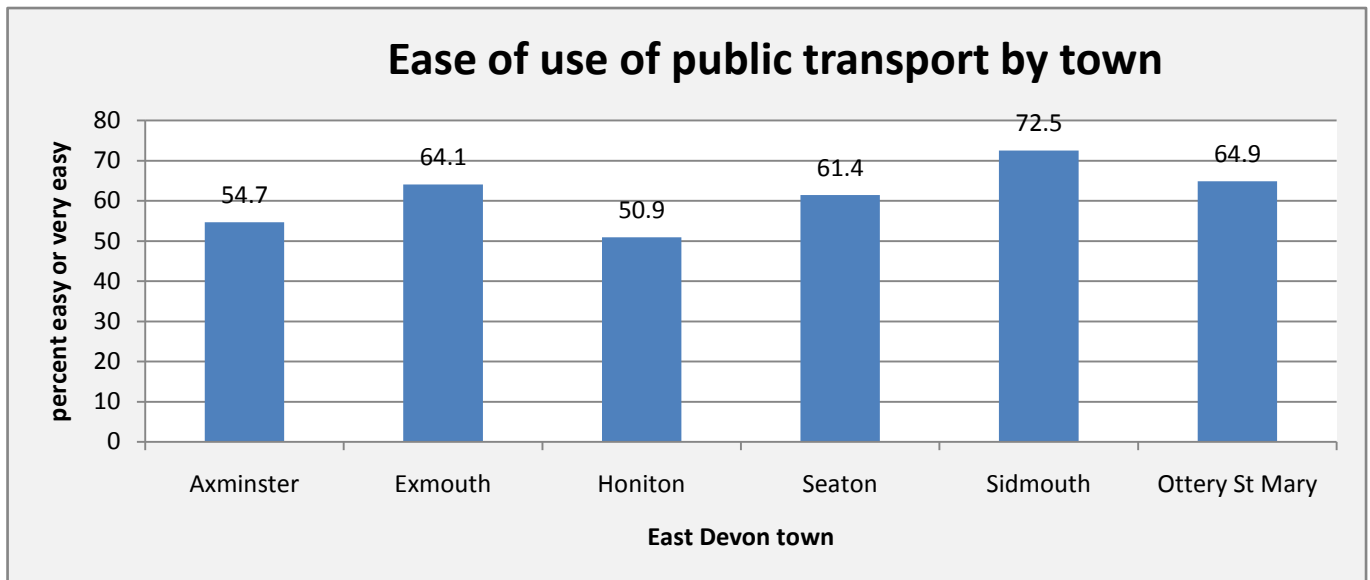
Overall, 64% of EDDC tenants found it generally easy to access public transport with 66% of general stating it was either 'very easy' or 'fairly easy', but the figure slightly lower at 62% for sheltered tenants. Nearly 40% of tenants who reported a disability stated they experience difficulty with public transport.



Tenants reported that buses and cars are the most popular ways of making their journeys, which reflects the findings that nearly half of the households do not have transport of their own. Please note totals add up to more than 100% due to the multiple response options available for this question.

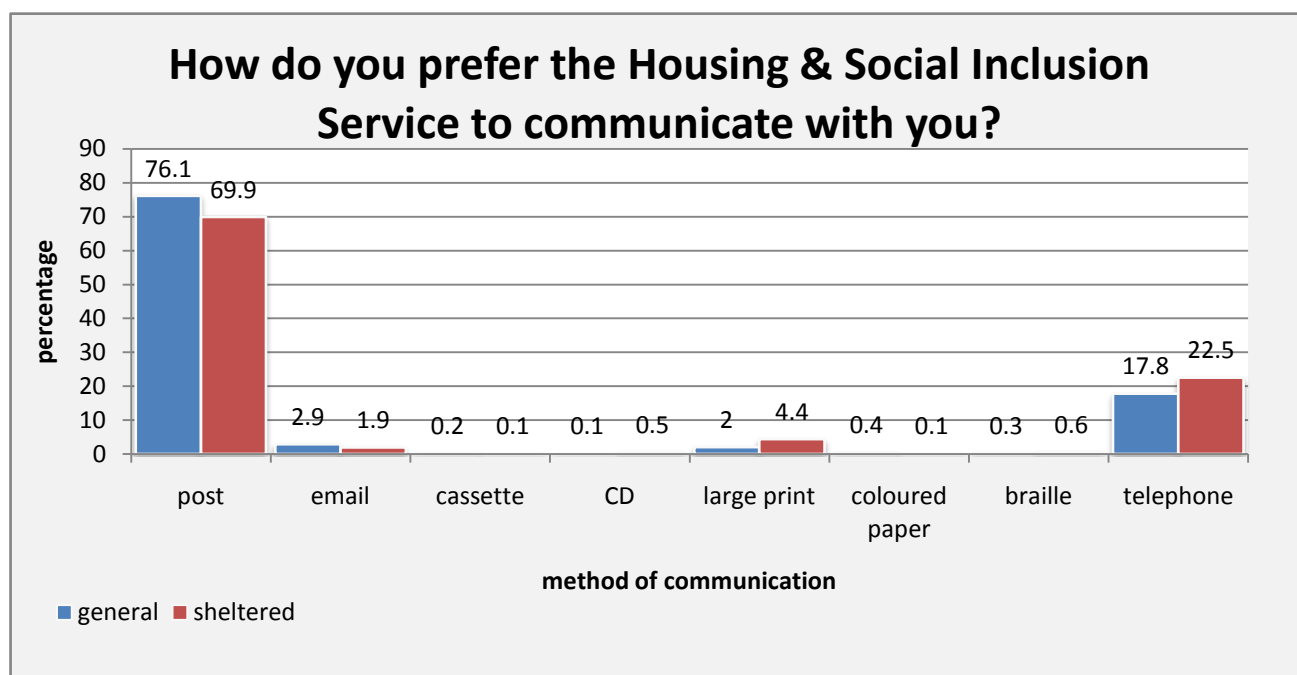


It is possible to drill down into this information to determine how the ease of access compares across the towns in East Devon. Honiton and Axminster are the towns where tenants find public transport the hardest to access.



Communication

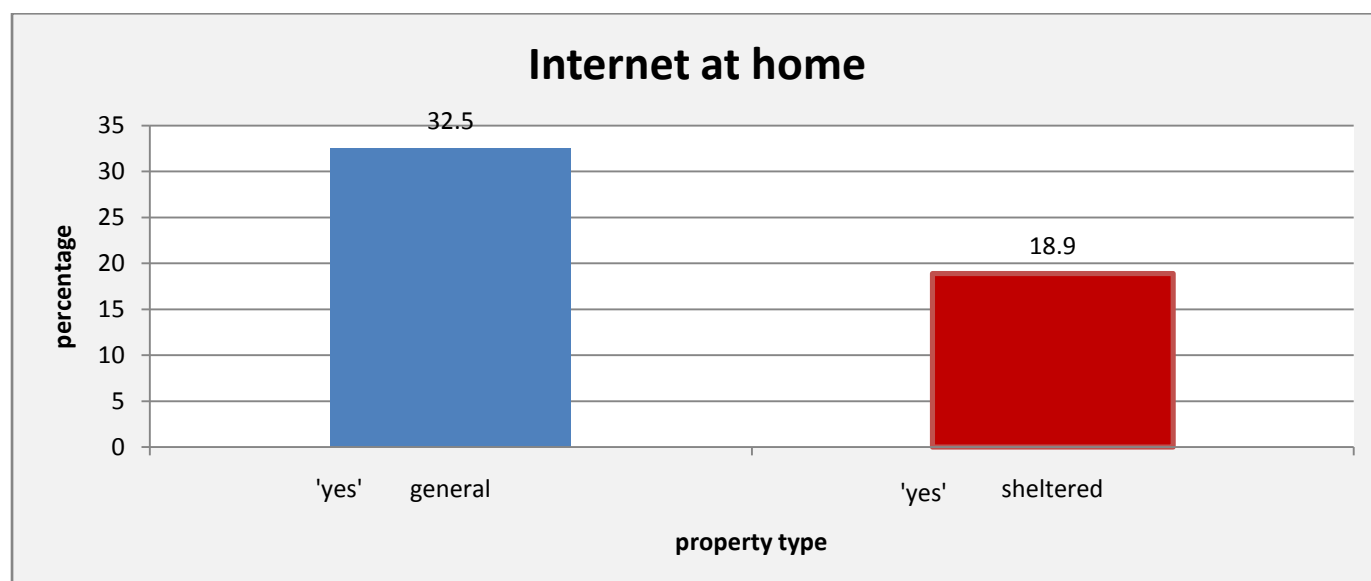
The preferred language that tenants wished to be communicated in was overwhelmingly English. All who answered this particular question ticked the English option. Only 3% did not answer the question.



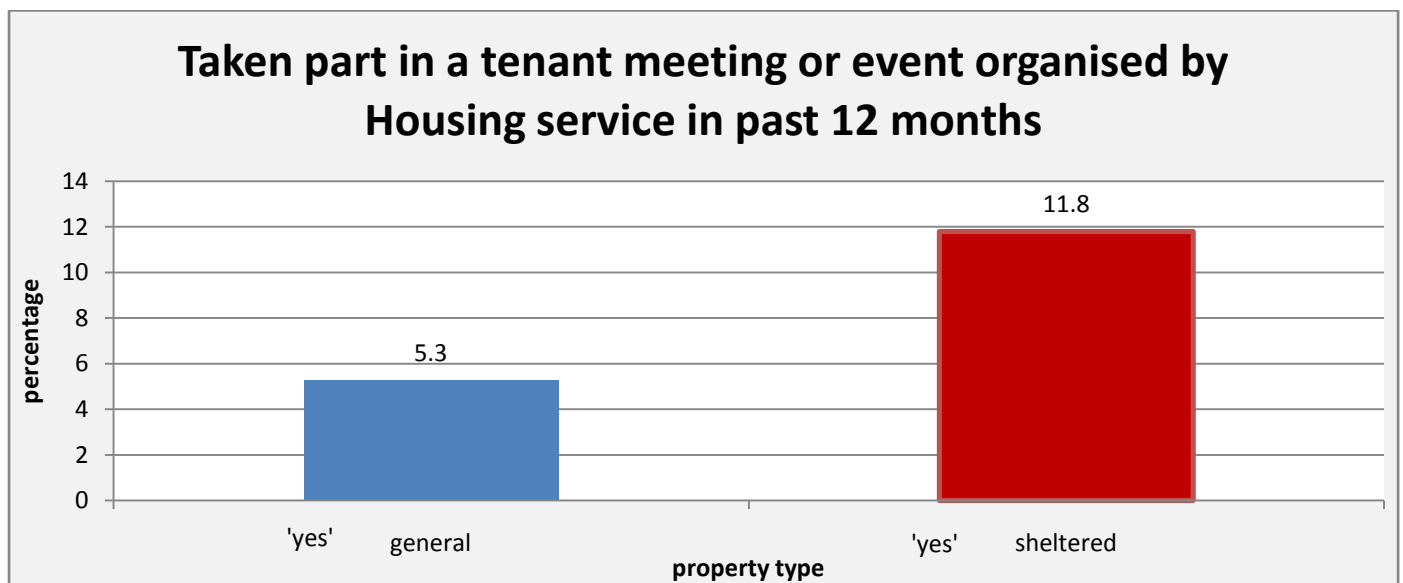
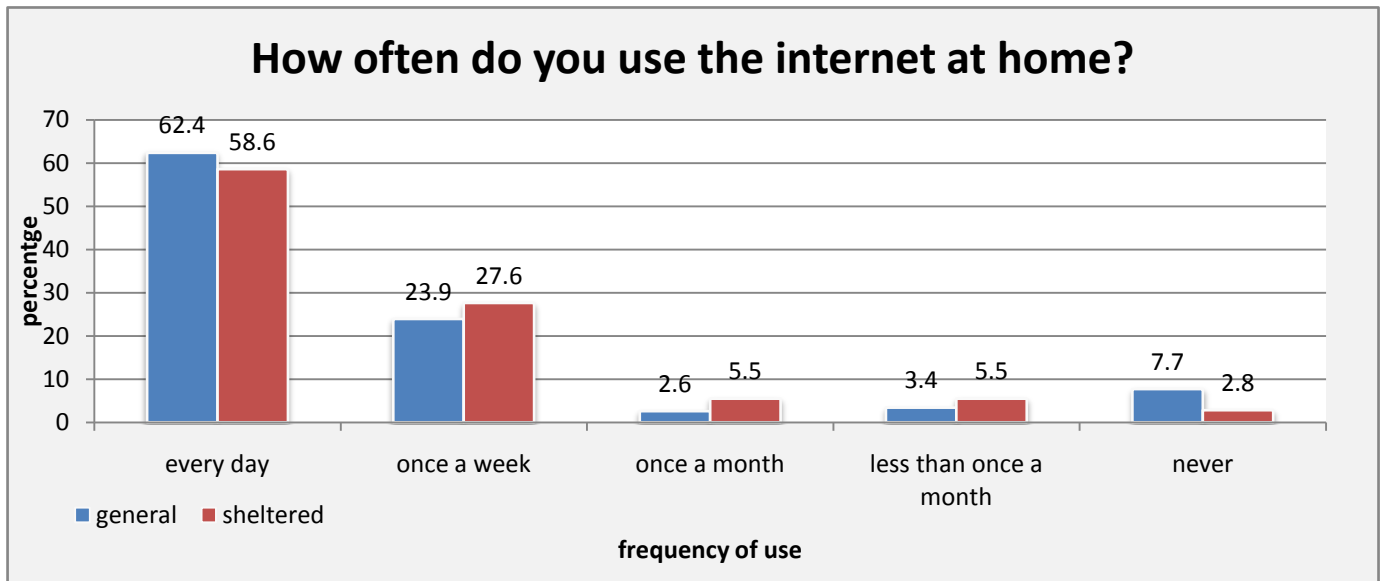
*85% of those who ticked the telephone option also ticked the post option.

Nine out of ten tenants wished to be contacted by post. EDDC already maintains a listing of those who prefer large print or other alternative methods of communication. This information has been passed on to our tenant participation team.

While this question was single response a number of respondents ticked more than one box. The most frequent occurrence was the selection of both telephone and post where 85% of those who ticked the telephone option also ticked the box marked 'post'.



A potential method of communication with tenants the future maybe via the internet; however at the moment only a third of general tenants, and less than one in five of sheltered tenants use the internet. Of those that do have the internet at home, over 86% were using the facility on at least a weekly basis.

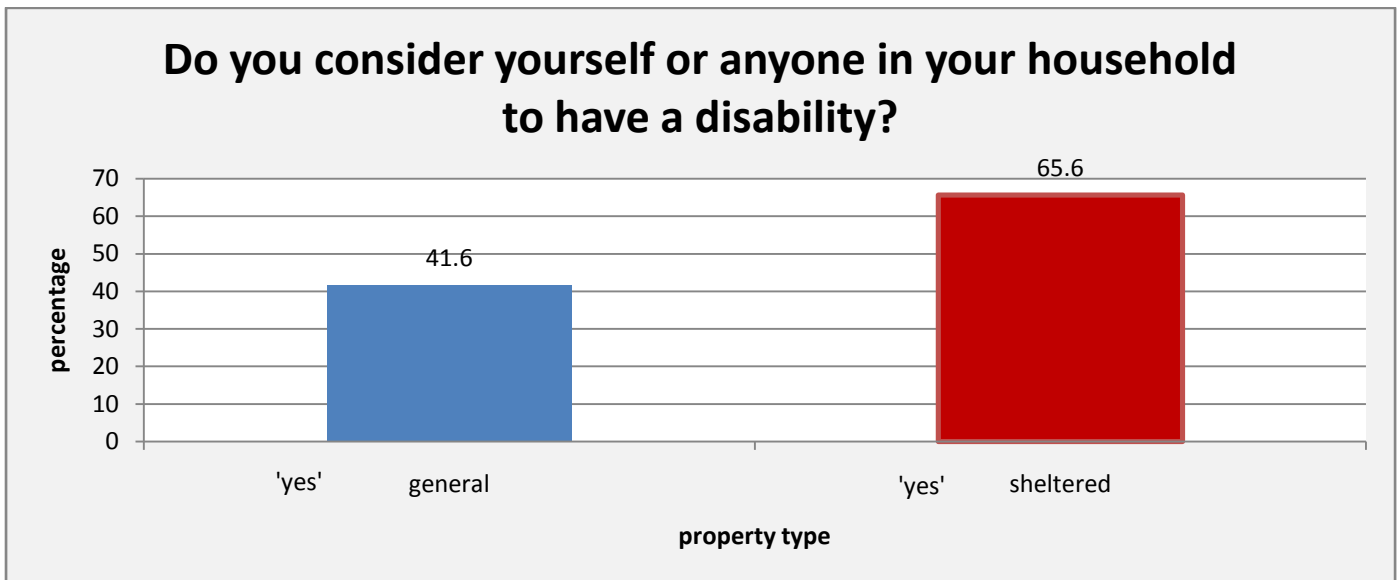


One of the challenges facing the Housing Service is finding a successful way of engaging with our tenants. The results of the survey indicated a low level of tenant involvement in housing events over the past year. Nine out of ten of those who did take part were over 60 years of age.

Whilst EDDC continues to develop a Tenant Participation Strategy in consultation with tenants, it is important that the right methods of communication and information are made available to allow tenants to choose how they wish to become involved, if at all.

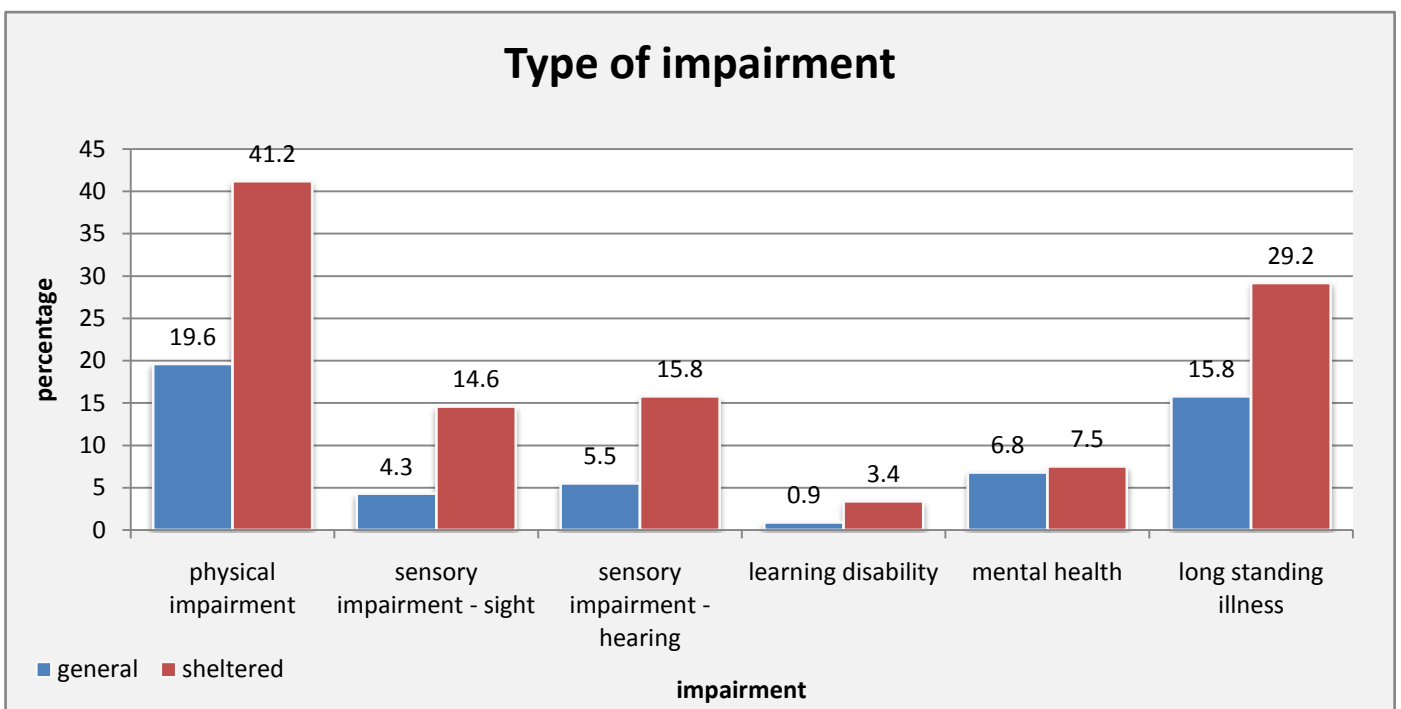
It is our intention to engage our younger tenants, but the task is made difficult by the fact that the demographic of our tenants is predominantly old, with over 69% of general needs and 94% of sheltered tenants above 54 years old. East Devon has been pro active in this area and appointed an officer whose role is to seek ways of engaging with younger tenants to finds their needs and aspirations.

Disability

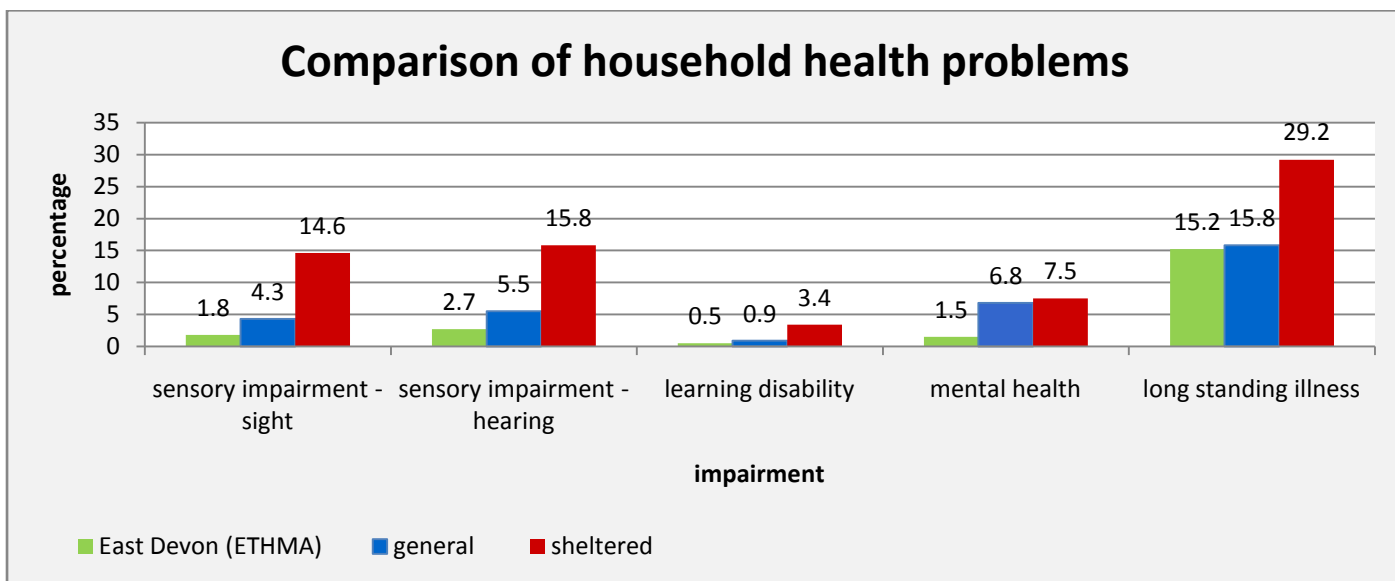


Over 41% of general needs tenants and almost two thirds of sheltered tenants reported a disability in the household. This general needs percentage is supported from our 2008 STATUS survey which reported almost an identical figure in 42%. Nearly two in three of sheltered tenants reported some sort of disability in the household. The most frequently reported being physical impairment followed by a long standing illness.

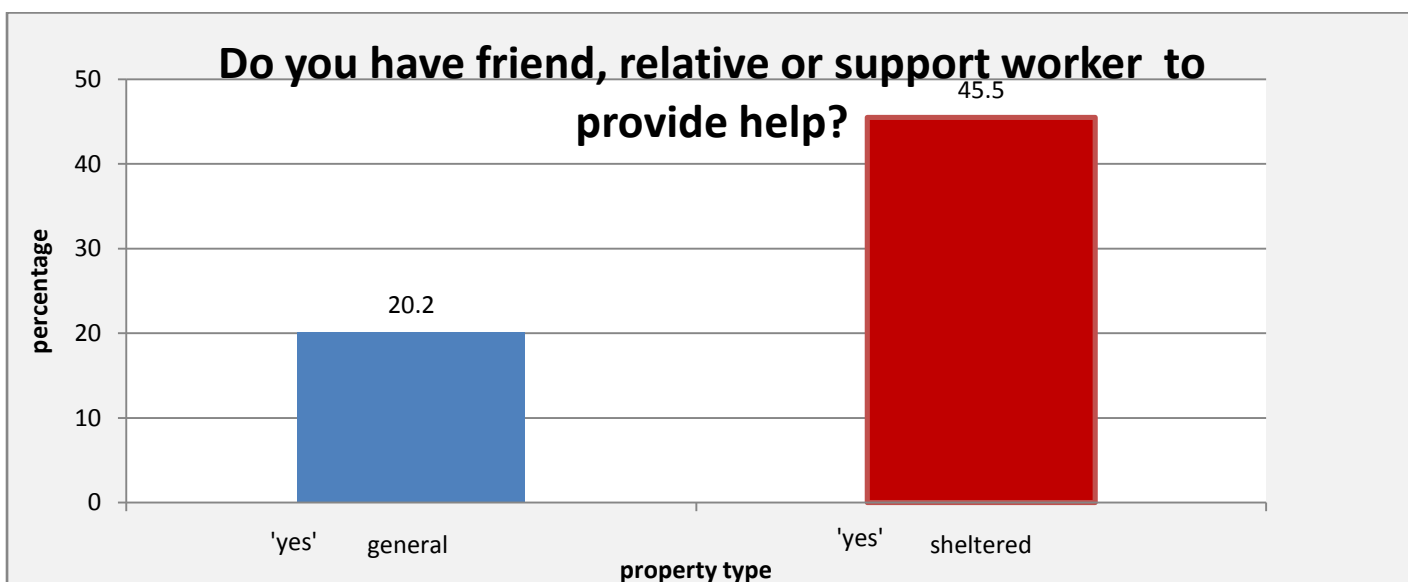
Council tenants report they suffer a greater level of disability compared to the East Devon region as a whole. To help put this in context with East Devon as a whole, the 2007 Exeter and Torbay Housing Market Assessment (ETHMA) found that only 26.8% of households reported health problems, compared to our findings of 42%, indicating that council tenants may have proportionally greater health needs.



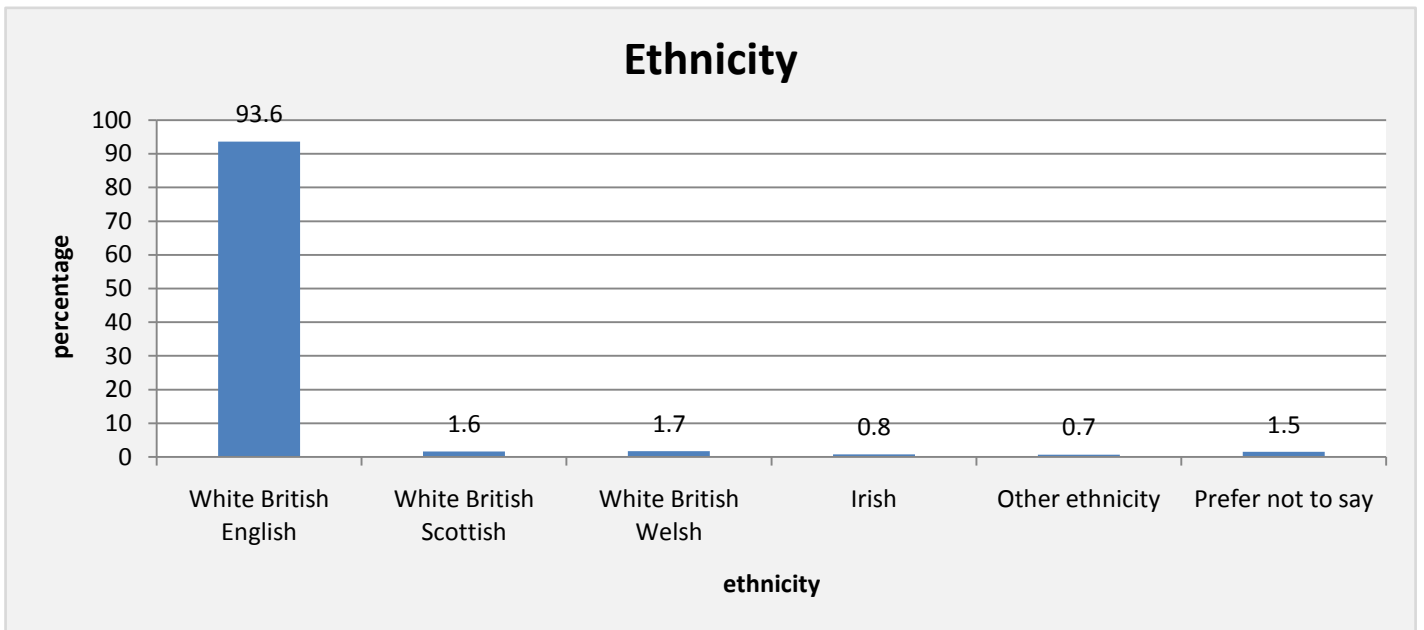
The chart below introduces information published in the ETHMA alongside the profiling survey to demonstrate how across all categories health problems in council properties are proportionally larger when compared to East Devon as a whole.



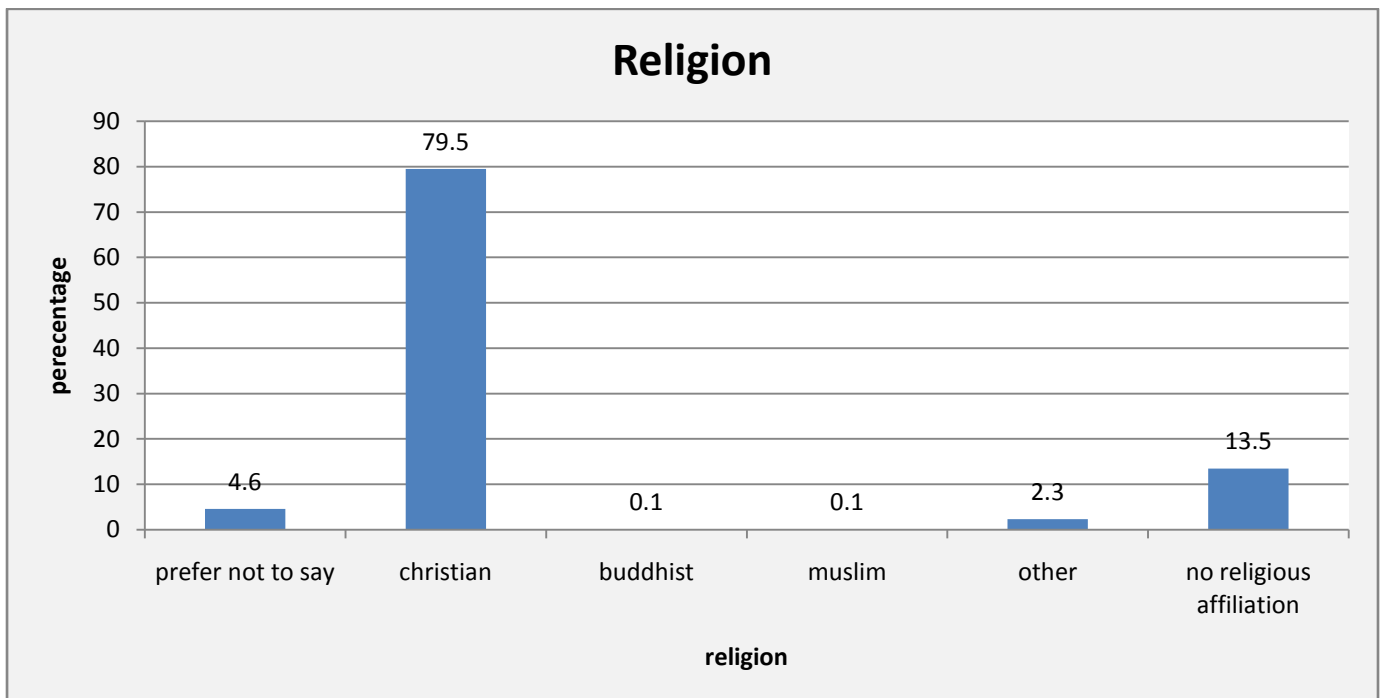
Sheltered tenants had (in most cases) twice the incidence of health problems compared to general needs tenants. However in the case of mental health illness the incidence were approximately the same.



Less than half of sheltered tenants and only one in five general tenants reported they had a friend, relative or support worker to help them. Of the sheltered tenants who provided details of the support contact, the most frequent contact identified were their scheme manager, social services or the details given for next of kin. This lack of support reinforces the important role that our call centre and mobile support officers perform in creating a support network for our tenants.

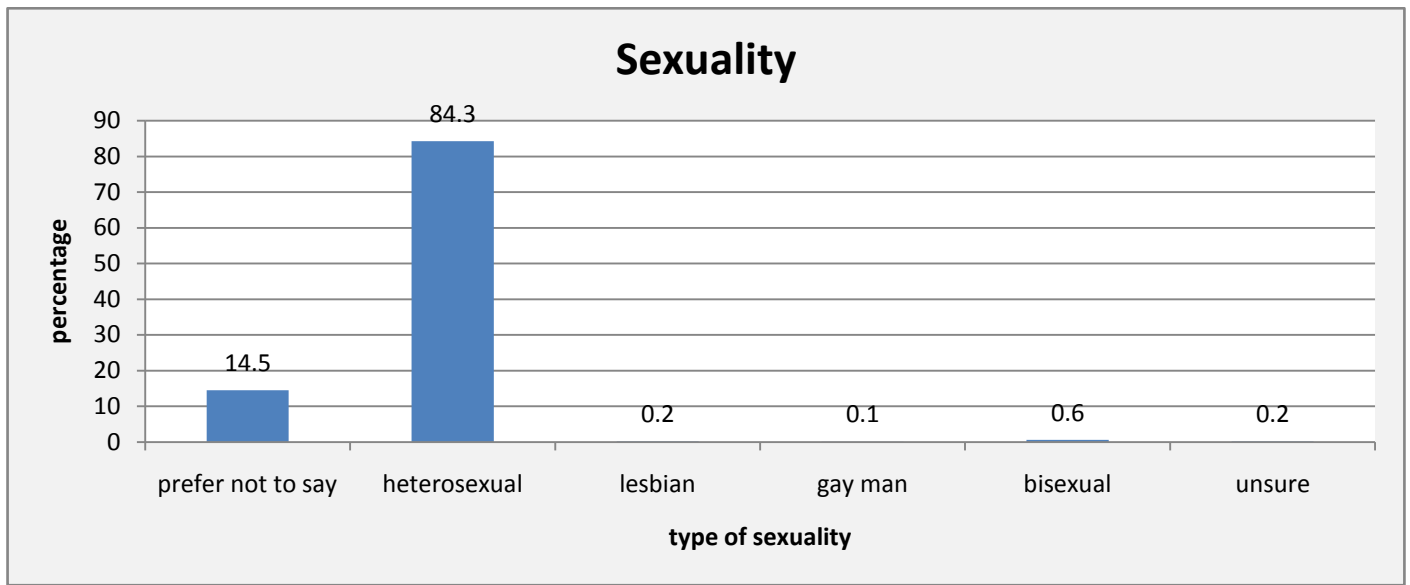


The findings on ethnicity support both the 2001 census, the 2007 Exeter and Torbay Housing Market assessment and the 2008 STATUS survey in reporting that East Devon has a very small ethnic minority population. However as good practice this is regularly monitored, to ensure minority groups are not disadvantaged.



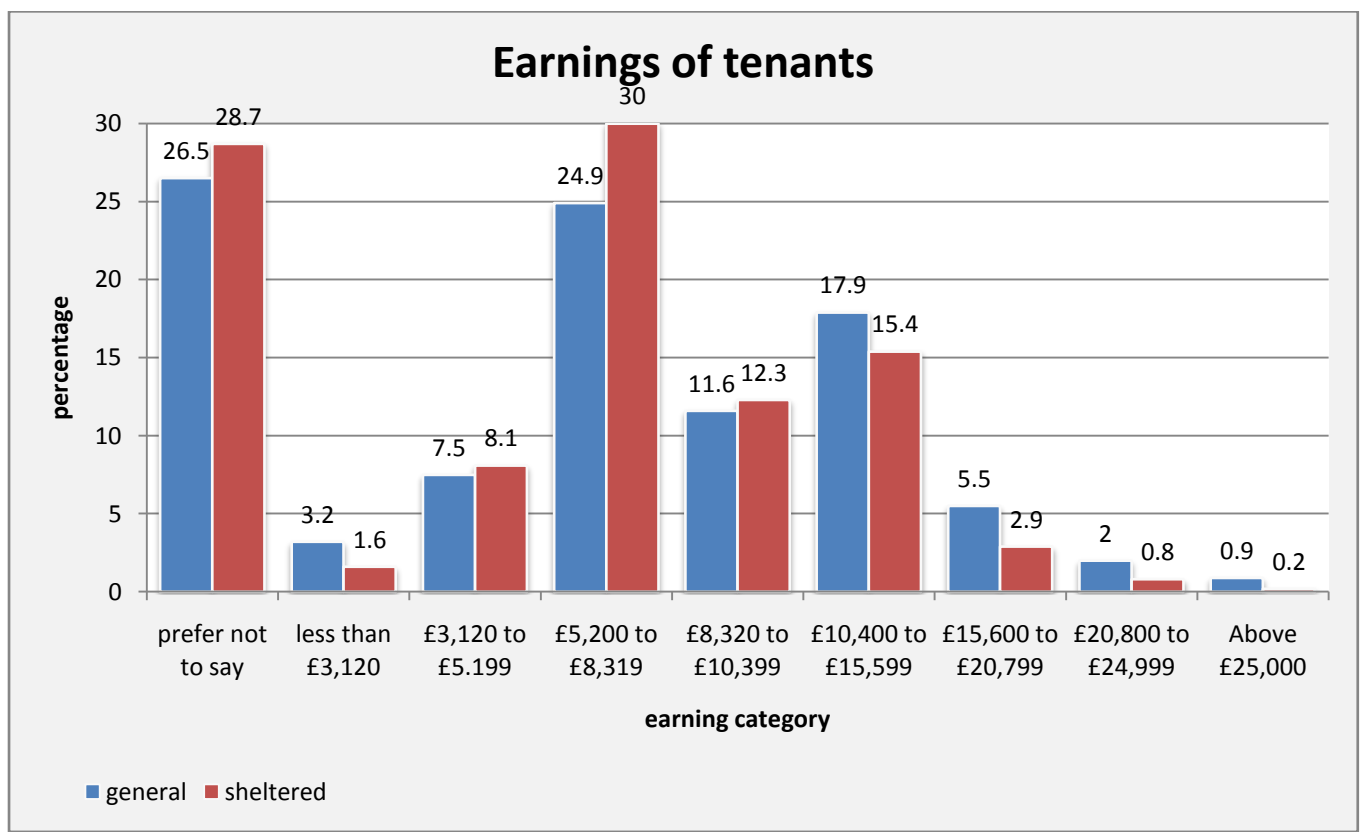
Eight out of ten tenants identified themselves as Christian. This figure is also reflected in East Devon as a whole, with the 2001 census data reporting similar (77.85%) data.

When asked about their sexuality the most popular response was heterosexual. Less than 1% stated they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual. The 2001 census reported similar findings for East Devon as whole

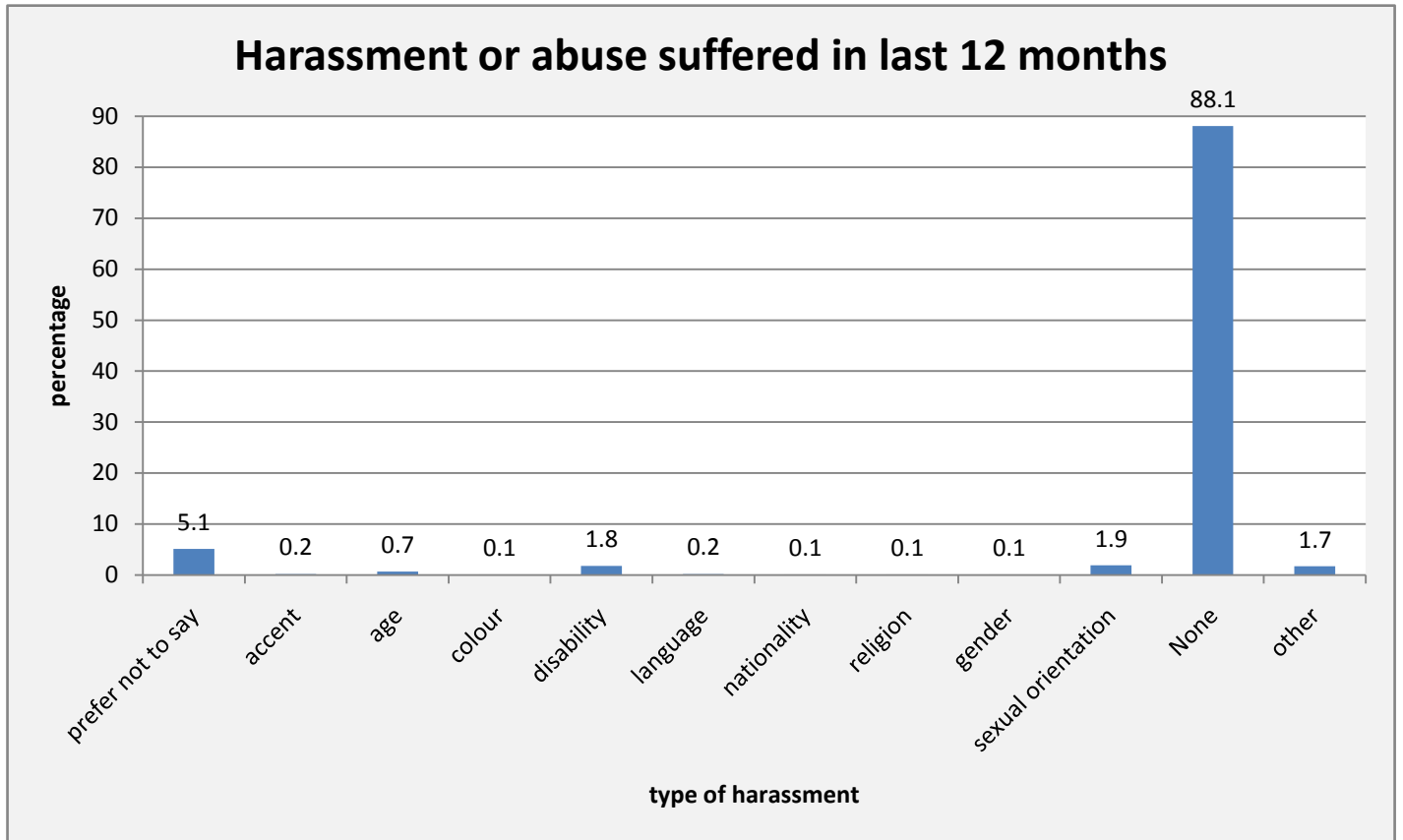


Income

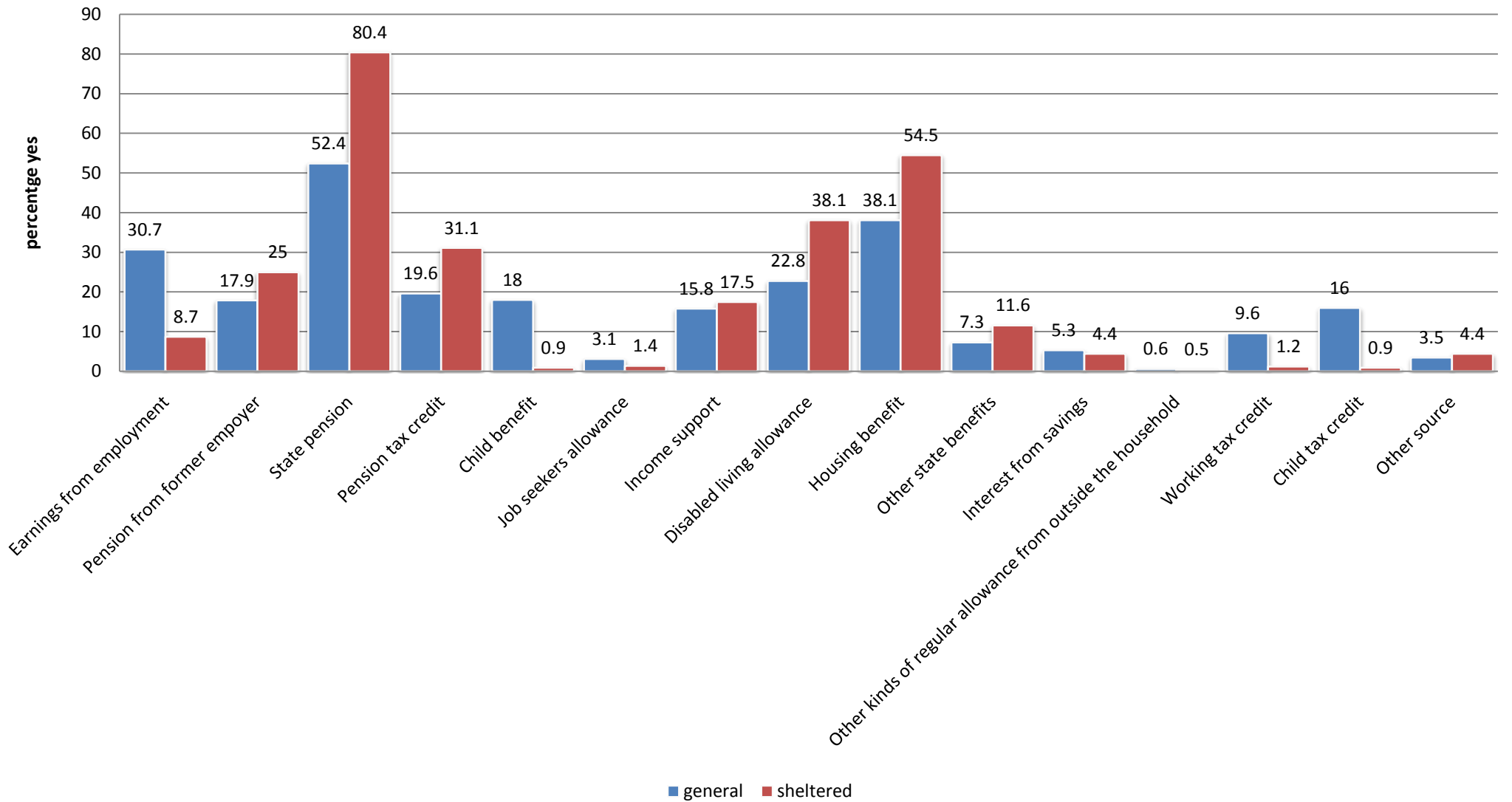
Around a quarter of those who responded to the income question preferred not to answer the question, The earnings between sheltered and general needs tenants are quite similar. A quarter of sheltered tenants and a fifth of general needs tenants stated their income was in the £5,200 to £8,319 (£100 to £159 per week) range. Less than 1% of households reported a household income of over £25,000.



Over 88% of tenants stated they had suffered no harassment or abuse in the past 12 months. As can be seen from the chart above there was no distinct pattern with those who reported they were harassed, or abused. Less than 7% reported any sort of harassment.



What kind of income does your household receive?



Kind of income

The most common source of income was the state pension and this was received by two thirds of tenants. The second most common source of income was housing benefit which was indicated by half of the tenants. However less than 3% of tenants stated they were on jobseekers. This reflects the older ages of the tenants living in EDDC properties and the proportion of tenants who may not be able to work due to disabilities. Over 30% of general needs tenants received income from employment, although it was not specified if this employment was full or part time. Very few tenants have interest from savings to support them.

Conclusion

The survey has enabled EDDC to collect detailed information on the needs and household make up of its tenants. Two particular areas that we wanted to address were preferred method of communication and details of disabilities. The next step of the process will be placing this particular information on the tenant's individual file.

This information supports our Equality and Diversity policy by improving our understanding of who is or is not accessing housing services. As we strive to become an 'excellent' service KLOE13 (Key line of Enquiry) identified that for a housing service to be classified as 'excellent' it needs to know how its tenants wish to be contacted.

Information gathered about sexuality, income, and belief, while useful to give an overall picture of our tenants will not be placed onto individual records. It was not felt appropriate to store this on an individuals file without giving a clear indication of how it was to be used to improve the service.

As indicated in the opening section, the survey gave us the opportunity to ask the views and needs of both our sheltered tenants and general needs tenants. The result that 20% of sheltered tenants are already 'online' provides us with the knowledge that there is useful tool to communicate with them in the future.

The findings that 64% of our tenants are over 65 years old and that around 50% live alone and without a vehicle indicates we have a significant amount of potentially vulnerable tenants. Our tenant participation, estate management, and supporting housing teams play an important role in ensuring that some sort of contact point is available for them.

The survey uncovered a concern that was felt that some of our properties were underoccupied. A 'virtual housing team has been set up to tackle the under occupation of its housing stock.

The questionnaire has also been beneficial as a data cleansing exercise. We have been able to update our telephone numbers, and names and addresses when we find a mismatch against what is already stored.

The questions contained within this survey have provided us an opportunity to both update our records and obtain information on issues such as under occupation. The results and the ability to now manipulate the data will enable us to form a baseline for future surveys.

Table of where tenants who completed the questionnaire came from in East Devon

TOWN/VILLAGE	COUNT	PERCENT	TOWN/VILLAGE	COUNT	PERCENT
ALFINGTON	1	.1	METCOMBE	4	.2
ALL SAINTS	1	.1	MONKTON	3	.2
AWLISCOMBE	2	.1	MUSBURY	23	1.2
AXMINSTER	150	7.5	NEWTON POPPLEFORD	31	1.6
AXMOUTH	8	.4	NORTHLEIGH	3	.2
AYLESBEARE	14	.7	OFFWELL	4	.2
BEER	27	1.4	OTTERTON	12	.6
BRAMPFORD SPEKE	11	.6	OTTERY ST MARY	94	4.8
BRANSCOMBE	10	.5	PAYHEMBURY	8	.4
BROADCLYST	36	1.8	PLYMTREE	5	.3
BROADHEMBURY	11	.6	POLTIMORE	6	.3
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON	93	4.7	REWE	4	.2
CHARDSTOCK	3	.2	ROCKBEARE	14	.7
CLYST HONITON	3	.2	ROUSDON	1	.1
CLYST HYDON	3	.2	SEATON	110	5.6
CLYST ST MARY	2	.1	SHUTE	5	.3
COLATON RALEIGH	5	.3	SIDBURY	15	.8
COLYFORD	1	.1	SIDFORD	59	3.0
COLYTON	62	3.1	SIDMOUTH	166	8.3
COMBE RALEIGH	1	.1	STOCKLAND	1	.1
COTLEIGH	2	.1	STOKE CANON	12	.6
COWLEY	1	.1	TALATON	7	.4
DALWOOD	4	.2	THOVERTON	1	.1
DUNKESWELL	6	.3	TIPTON ST JOHN	2	.1
EAST BUDLEIGH	14	.7	UPLYME	15	.8
EXMOUTH	449	22.5	UPOTTERY	1	.1
FARRINGDON	1	.1	UPTON PYNE	10	.5
FENITON	2	.1	WEST HILL	2	.1
GITTISHAM	4	.2	WESTHILL	1	.1
HAWKCHURCH	4	.2	WHIMPLE	20	1.0
HONITON	228	11.4	WHITFORD	6	.3
KILMINGTON	18	.9	WIDWORTHY	1	.1
LITTLEHAM	49	2.5	WILMINGTON	4	.2
LUPPITT	5	.3	WITHYCOMBE	23	1.2
LYMPSTONE	36	1.8	WOODBURY	50	2.6
MEMBURY	1	.1	YARCOMBE	7	.4