

# ENGAGING TENANTS IN CLIMATE ACTION



A report on tenants' biggest climate issues, barriers and solutions.

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# INTRODUCTION



The climate crisis is advancing, and the impacts associated are arriving with increasing ferocity. Climate change means more severe weather events, extreme heat and cold, poor air quality and more. While everyone is susceptible, people who are low-income (who are more likely to be renters than home-owners) are at a greater risk from the impacts. Yet tenants have very little control over measures that will make their homes more climate resilient or energy efficient.

In reading this report you will learn how tenant rights, housing affordability and climate change intersect. The report outlines key findings from Ottawa ACORN's survey of nearly 300 renters on climate related issues. Finally, we conclude with tenant-led policy solutions and how supporters can get involved in making change.

## What is ACORN

ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) Canada is a multi-issue, membership-based community union of low- and moderate-income people. We believe that social and economic justice can best be achieved by building community power for change. We have 177,000+ members organized into 30 neighbourhood chapters in 10 regions across 6 provinces. ACORN members are low- and moderate income tenants who are bearing the brunt of the housing crisis.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the funding support from the Ottawa Climate Action Fund (OCAF), the McConnell Foundation, ACORN members and community allies that helped make this work possible.





# CONTEXT

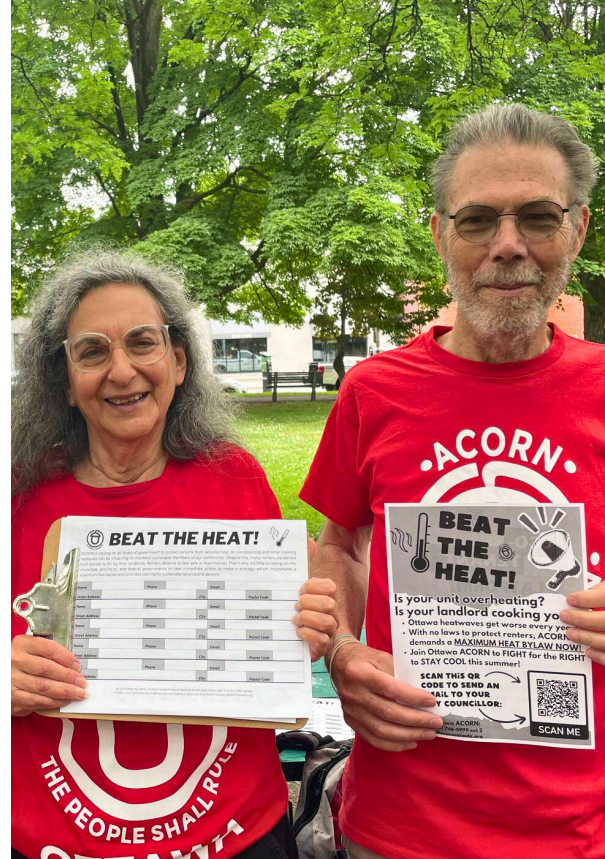


Low-and-moderate income as well as other vulnerable tenants are the most affected by the dual crises of climate change and housing. Increased rent and energy costs have long been outpacing their wages and fixed incomes. At the same time, tenants are least able to mitigate the negative health impacts that come with climate change, such as wild-fire smoke, heat-waves and more.

Retrofitting Canada's apartment buildings is a crucial step towards protecting tenants from these impacts as well as achieving our carbon reduction goals. The vast majority of Canada's apartment buildings were built before 1990, i.e., before energy efficient building standards were put into place. Also, as ACORN often highlights (1), apartment buildings, especially ones that are affordable, are often poorly maintained, which leads to more energy inefficiencies, not to mention less comfortable and livable housing for tenants. Take extreme heat for instance, as temperatures rise to dangerous levels, units without adequate ventilation, drafty windows and no AC can become inescapable saunas. According to the City of Ottawa, "almost 50% of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions come from heating, cooling, lighting and operating the building stock (2)."

Nonetheless, tenants have limited power to reduce the environmental impacts of their homes. Tenants don't control what heating system or insulation is used in their apartments, or how energy efficient their appliances are. That's the landlord's responsibility. Yet, consistently, the cost burdens of these inefficiencies are borne by the tenants themselves who are increasingly likely to pay utilities outside of their rent. This creates a split-incentive, whereby landlords pay for the retrofits but do not benefit from the energy cost savings. This poses a major challenge to retrofitting privately owned apartment buildings.

Moreover, as Canada moves towards achieving its net zero emissions, climate mitigation measures can have adverse





# CONTEXT



consequences if they don't include tenant protections. In Ontario, landlords are able to pass down the costs of capital expenditures onto their tenants through exorbitant rent increases called 'Above-Guideline-Increases' (AGIs).

In addition, data from the Landlord and Tenant Board shows that renovictions and demovictions\* are on the rise, locally having increased by 545% in Ottawa since 2017 (3). Yet protections for tenants are incredibly weak. Currently, Hamilton is the only city in Ontario that requires landlords to provide temporary accommodations and compensation for tenants whose units are undergoing major renovation. This happens until the tenant can return to their unit at the same rent.

Moreover, the City of Ottawa has not passed a rental replacement bylaw to protect existing affordable housing and stop mass tenant displacement as a result of demolition and redevelopment. Often these redevelopments are marketed by developers as 'green' and a form of 'sustainable living', but we should not have to destroy our limited stock of affordable housing to achieve our climate goals.

## Example: Vista Local

Vista Local is a building complex in Herongate that is owned by Hazelview (formerly known as Timbercreek). It is promoted and advertised to prospective tenants as sustainable living. However, ACORN members who once lived in the affordable townhomes Vista Local replaced would argue this "greenwashes" the mass evictions that occurred in 2015 and 2016. During this time 80+ low income, working class, and primarily immigrant families were forced out of their homes and ended up paying a lot more in rent outside of the community they had built.

A screenshot of the Vista Local website. The top navigation bar includes links for 'About us', 'Premium Collection', 'Student Living', 'Careers', 'Contact', 'FR', and 'Q'. There are buttons for 'Find Your Home' and 'Resident Portal'. The main header features a large image of a family (a woman, a man, and two children) in a park-like setting with the word 'SUSTAINABILITY' overlaid. Below this is a row of four categories: 'Pillars', 'Environment', 'Our People', and 'Corporate Social Responsibility'. The main content area shows a bedroom with a white bed and a nightstand. Below the image is a button 'See Available Units'. The text 'Vista Local' is followed by the address '2826 Sandalwood Drive, Ottawa, ON, K1V 2T6'. A note states '\* Currently offering 4 months of free storage!'. The description reads: 'Vista Local is a new concept of what a rental community can be. Experience luxurious, maintenance-free, stress-free, condo-style living without worrying about market values or paying any interest to interest rates. Find yourself in a vibrant, up-and-coming, sustainable community surrounded by parks, shopping, pubs, cafes, public transit, and schools. It's not just outside your door, it's inside your door.' To the right, there is a 'Book a viewing' button, a 'Price Range: \$1749 - \$2429', and a list of 'Amenities' including 'BBQ Patio' and 'Indoor Pool'.

\*Renovictions are evictions that take place under the guise of major renovations so that the landlord can increase the rent for a new tenant. Demovictions are evictions to demolish the building and replace it with a luxury rental/condo.

# CONTEXT



## Statistics on Climate Change & Housing

- In Ottawa, we are losing 31 units of affordable housing for every one unit that is built (4).
- 36% of Ottawa households are renters (5).
- In Ontario, many thousands of renters are paying well beyond 30% of their gross income on rent (6).
- Between 2001 and 2021, Ottawa saw average rents jump by 81% (7).
- If a family loses their home as a result of renoviction, they will have nowhere else to go. According to CMHC, in Ottawa the share of units with rents costing no more than 30% of the city's lowest income household's budget is 0% (7).
- There were 365 AGI applications in Ottawa between 2017 and August 2022 – the second most in the province (8).
- In 2019, the City of Ottawa declared a climate emergency (2).
- Homes and buildings produce almost half of the greenhouse gas emissions in Ottawa today (2).
- To meet the City of Ottawa's emissions reduction targets, 98% of existing homes must undergo a deep retrofit by 2040 (2).
- In 2021, an extreme heatwave in BC led to the loss of more than 600 lives. 98% of these heat-related deaths occurred indoors. Most died in homes without adequate cooling systems (9).
- ACORN Canada's 2023 national survey on extreme heat found that 79% of respondents said that they are impacted by extreme heat (10).
- The same ACORN report found that among those who do not have access to AC, close to half of the tenants cannot afford to have it in their units. A few cannot have it installed because their lease doesn't allow it or they had to take it out because their landlord threatened eviction, charged extra fees etc. (10)



**Bad for tenants  
AND the  
environment!**

# CONTEXT

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## Eco-Tenant Organizing

ACORN recognizes the two biggest crises facing our communities are climate change and housing. While tenants have pushed their way to the forefront of affordable housing campaigning and policy discussions, they have been largely absent from conversations about climate change. If tenants are both invited to be involved with, and have something to gain from GHG reduction action, they are certain to act.

For this reason, over the past year Ottawa ACORN built a citywide network of tenants concerned about climate change issues impacting renters. Our first goal was to better understand the impacts of climate change on tenants, issues in their building leading to greater emissions, and what climate issues were a priority for tenants. This is why ACORN conducted a survey of Ottawa renters. Once we knew the problems tenants were the most motivated to work on, we looked for solutions. Through research and consultation with other ACORN chapters, our international affiliates, environmental experts and local ACORN tenant leaders, we have identified a number of policy recommendations that will be outlined later in this report.

## ECO-TENANT SURVEY

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### Survey Methodology

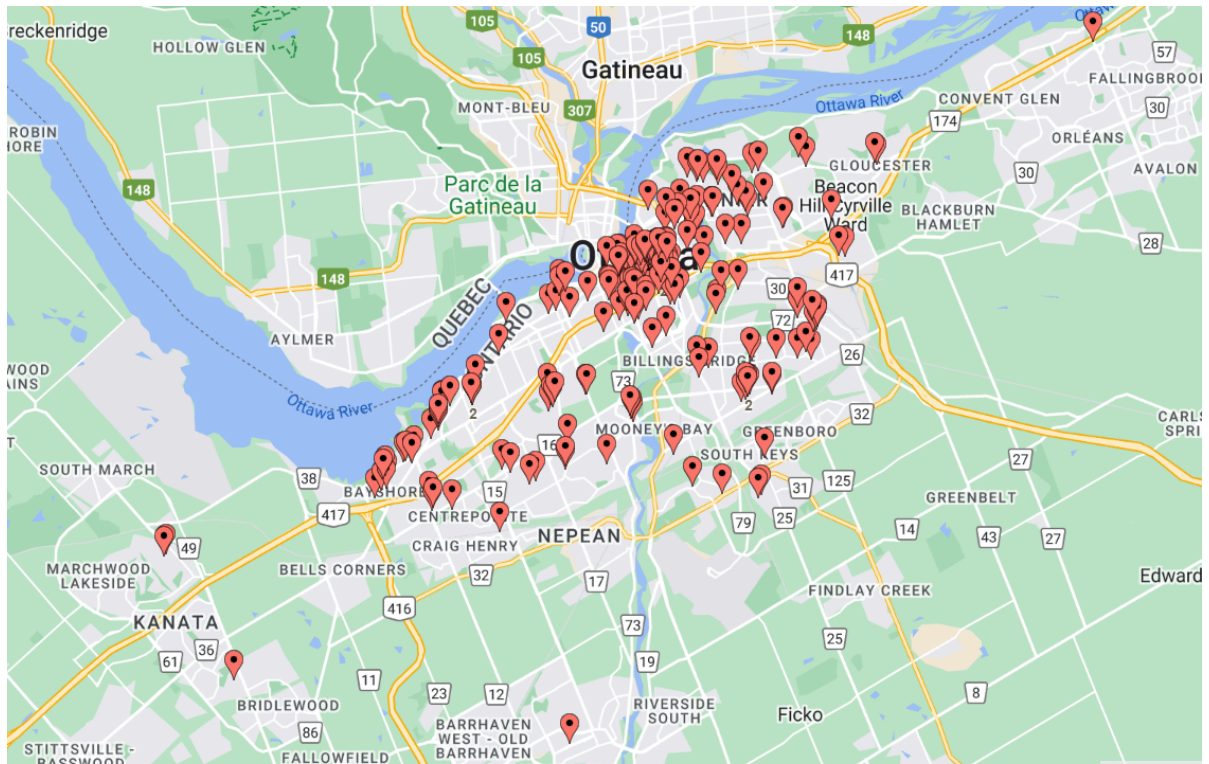
Ottawa ACORN surveyed 295 tenants between July 2023 and March 2024. The majority of responses were collected through doorknocking apartment buildings in low-moderate income neighbourhoods. Other methods to gather information included:

- Phone calls, texts and emails to ACORN's existing members and tenant contacts
- Flyering/postering
- Social Media
- Promotion by elected officials and supportive organizations





Geographically, respondents were dispersed across Ottawa, with the exact locations mapped below.



## Summary of Key Findings

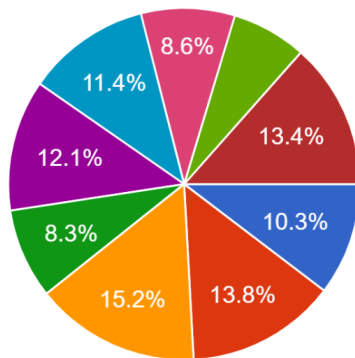
- 39% of respondents made less than \$30,000 a year.
- Approximately 42% live in a high rise of more than 10 stories
- Almost 90% of respondents said their building was constructed prior to 1990
- Nearly 55% are paying more than \$1,400/month in rent. 11% are paying \$2,000+.
- 71.5% of tenants are paying electricity/hydro outside of their rent
- Nearly half of tenants said their unit is too hot in the summer
- 40% do not have air conditioning/cooling in their unit
- Similarly, almost 40% reported having experienced a lack of heat in the winter
- Almost ¼ said their appliances didn't work OR were very old and had problems
- Of respondents with inadequate heating, 46% had bought space heaters to keep warm. 20% bought multiple.
- Roughly 30% had problems with hot water
- While the majority of tenants have access to recycling, over 50% do not have access to composting.
- 78% of respondents say it's important to them that their building is environmentally friendly
- Nearly 60% did not trust their landlord to put the interests of tenants first
- Only 11% of tenants reported that their buildings had been renovated within the past 5 years to improve energy efficiency

# SURVEY RESULTS



## Demographics

### *Income and employment*



- \$10, 000 or less
- \$10,000 to \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$30,000
- \$30,000 to \$40,000
- \$40,000 to \$50,000
- \$50,000 to \$60,000
- \$60,000 to \$70,000
- \$70,000 to \$80,000
- \$80,000+

- 39% of respondents made less than \$30,000 a year.
- 59% made less than \$50,000 a year
- 40% worked full-time while 12.5% worked part-time
- 16% were retired
- 10.5% were receiving social assistance

### *Age*

- The largest age category was 26-35, representing 35.5% of respondents
- 14% were 18-25, 15% were 36-45, 9% were 46-55
- 26.5% are over the age of 55

### *Languages*

- Almost all respondents spoke English
- 15.6% spoke a language other than English or French

- 32.6% also spoke French

### *Citizenship*

- Almost 80% are Canadian-born citizens
- Just under 11% are Canadian citizens by naturalization immigration
- Roughly 7% are permanent residents
- The remaining respondents are refugees or have a student/work visa

### *Disability, Race & Gender*

- 30% of respondents identified having a disability
- 22% identified as racialized or as a visible minority
- 61.5% of respondents were women
- Almost 8% said they are trans or non-binary

# SURVEY RESULTS



## Housing Type

### Size of Building

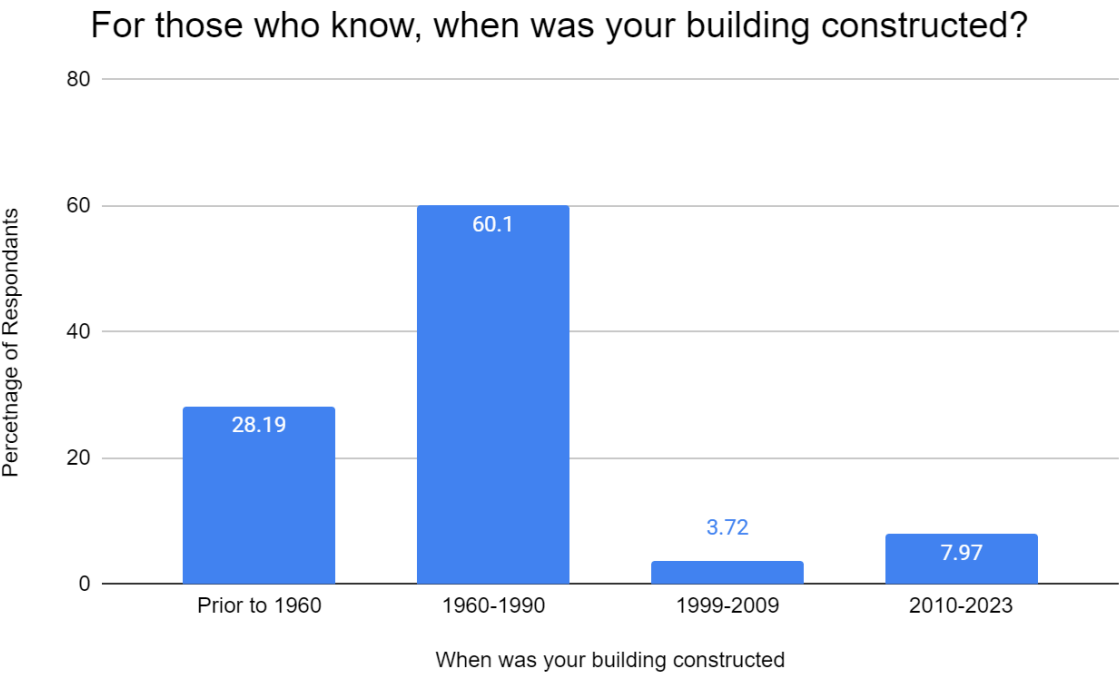
- 41.7% live in a high rise of more than 10 stories
- 14.6% live in a mid-rise of 5-9 stories
- 20% live in a low rise of 1-4 stories

### Age of Building

- 196 respondents knew what year their building was built.
- Out of these answers, 173 (nearly 90%) said their building was constructed before 1990.
- Almost half were built before 1970

The older the building the less efficiently it is going to operate, not only because energy efficiency wasn't introduced into building codes anywhere in Canada until 1997, but as buildings age they become less efficient and less effectively sealed. A low-rise building constructed before 2005 can use as much as 200% more energy than a similar type of new build (11).

Only 11% of tenants reported that their buildings had been renovated within the past 5 years to improve energy efficiency. There is clearly a lot of work still to do!





# SURVEY RESULTS

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## *Rent*

- 53.8% of respondents are paying more than \$1,400/month in rent.
- To afford this rent a tenant must earn \$56,000/year. Approximately 29.5% of respondents earned at least this much.
- Nearly 11% are paying more than \$2,000/month in rent.
- Only 3.1% of respondents had subsidized rent.
- \$750/month is considered affordable for those with incomes of \$30,000/year (39% of survey respondents).
- Only 7.3% of respondents without a subsidy are paying \$800/month or less.

## *Landlord Type*

- The majority of respondents (71%) rent from a private corporation.
- 11% rented from a social housing, co-op or non-profit housing provider
- Roughly 18% rented from an individual

## *Age vs. Rent*

Older buildings are more likely to be affordable.

- Apartments built prior to 1970 had the greatest proportion of units renting for less than \$800/month (8%)
- Rentals built in the 1990s or later had the largest percentage of units going for \$2,000+ (36%)

The path to more energy efficient buildings isn't to simply knock down older buildings and replace them with new net-zero developments - that will only exacerbate the housing crisis. Instead, we can address climate change and housing affordability by retrofitting our existing affordable housing stock.

# SURVEY RESULTS



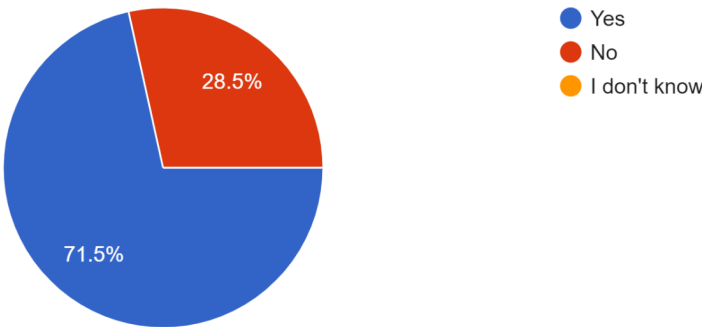
## Energy Efficiency

### Cooling

This graph clearly exemplifies the split-incentive, as almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of respondents are financially responsible for electricity/hydro.

Do you pay for electricity/hydro?

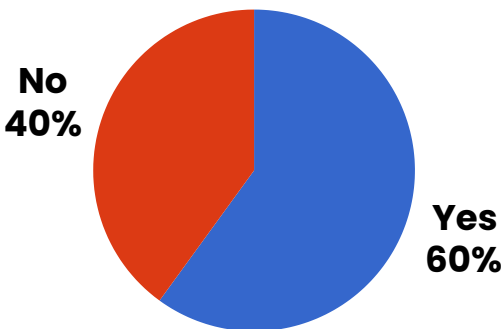
295 responses



The most common hydro provider tenants reported was Hydro Ottawa. However, several submetering companies were also common. Primarily, Wyse and Metergy Solutions. Submetering companies are underregulated and have a documented history of overcharging tenants.

Do you have air conditioning/cooling in your unit?

295 responses

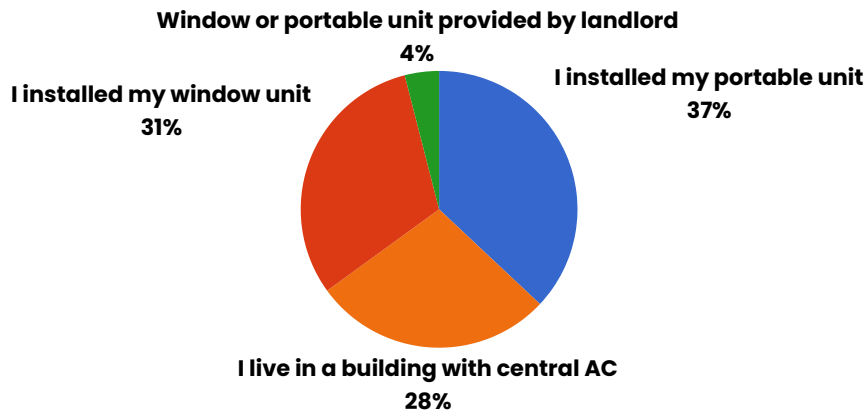


- 40% of tenants did not have air conditioning/cooling in their unit

# SURVEY RESULTS

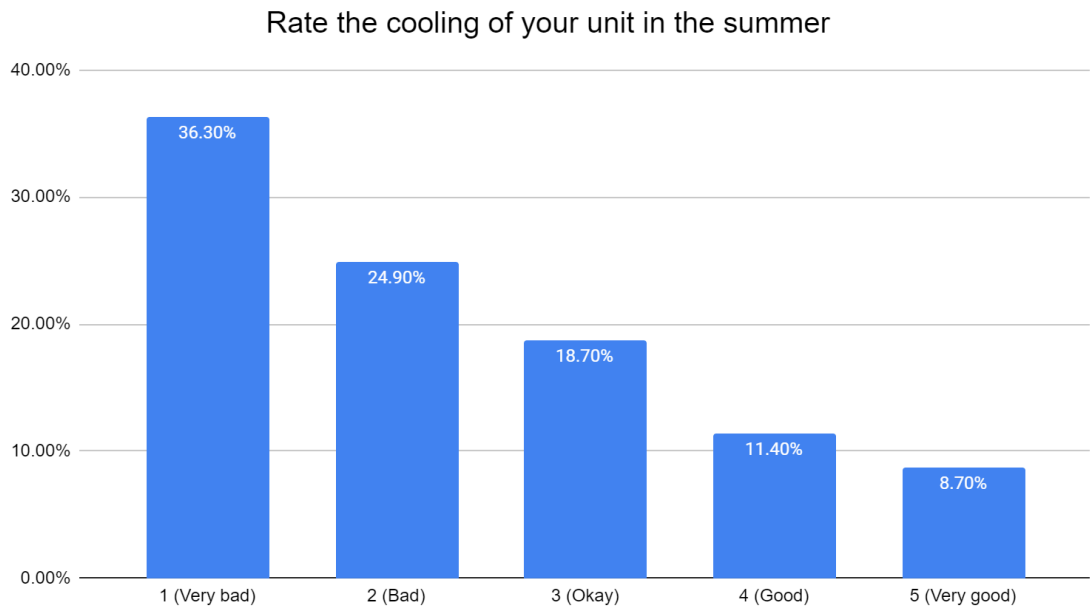


What type of air conditioning do you have?  
177 responses



Out of those that have air conditioning:

- 68% installed an air conditioning unit themselves compared to 4% who had AC provided by the landlord



- This chart indicates a serious problem, in that the majority of respondents occupy a unit that can become uncomfortably hot and thus unsafe.
- Only 20% of respondents described the cooling of their unit as good or very good.



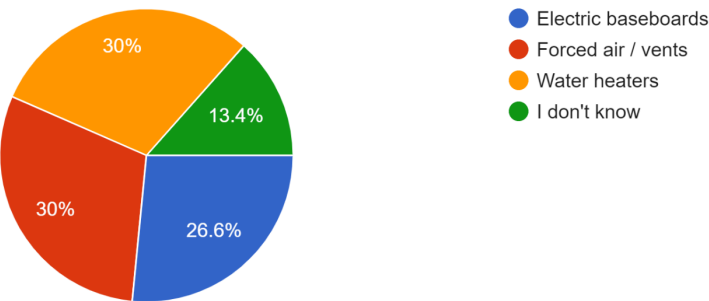
# SURVEY RESULTS



## Heating

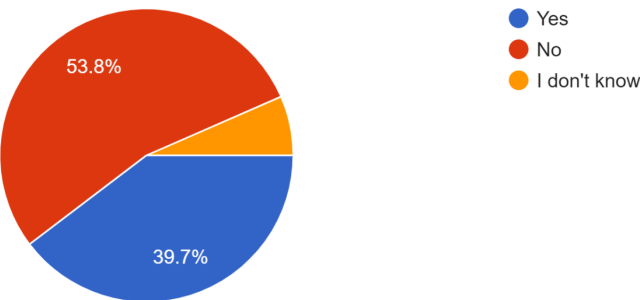
What type of heating system do you have?

290 responses



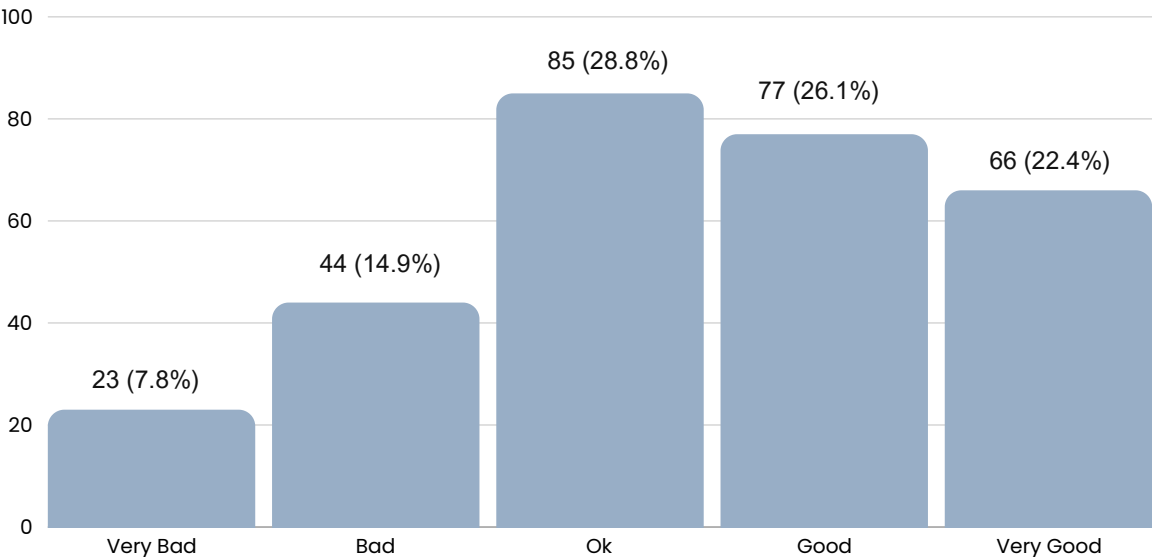
Have you ever experienced a lack of heat in the winter in your building?

290 responses



Rate the heating in your unit in the winter

295 Responses



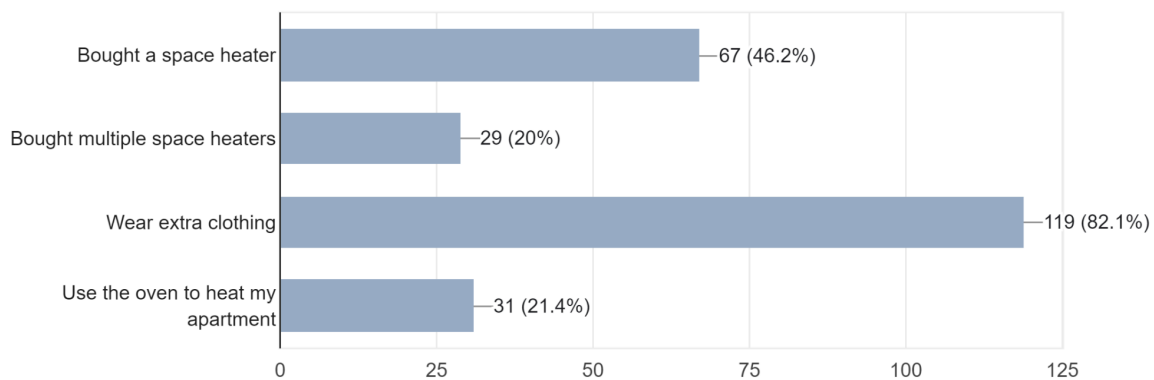
# SURVEY RESULTS



- Almost ¼ of respondents rated the heating in their unit as bad or very bad.
- Nearly 40% of respondents do not have a thermostat. Therefore, they cannot control their own heating.
- 49% survey respondents feel that their heating is inadequate and have taken the following measures to keep themselves warm in the winter:

If your heating is inadequate, please select from the following things you have done to keep warm:

145 responses



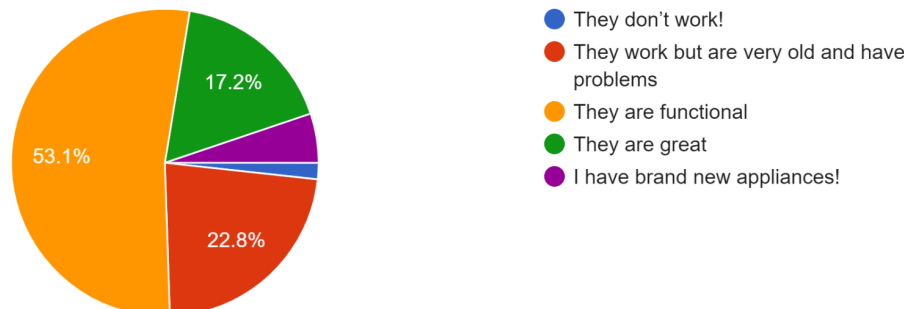
The most common reasons listed for why heating in their unit is poor are:

- Drafty windows (61.5%)
- Poor insulation (40.2%)
- Heating system is old and doesn't work (33.7%)

## Appliances

Rate your appliances

290 Responses



# SURVEY RESULTS



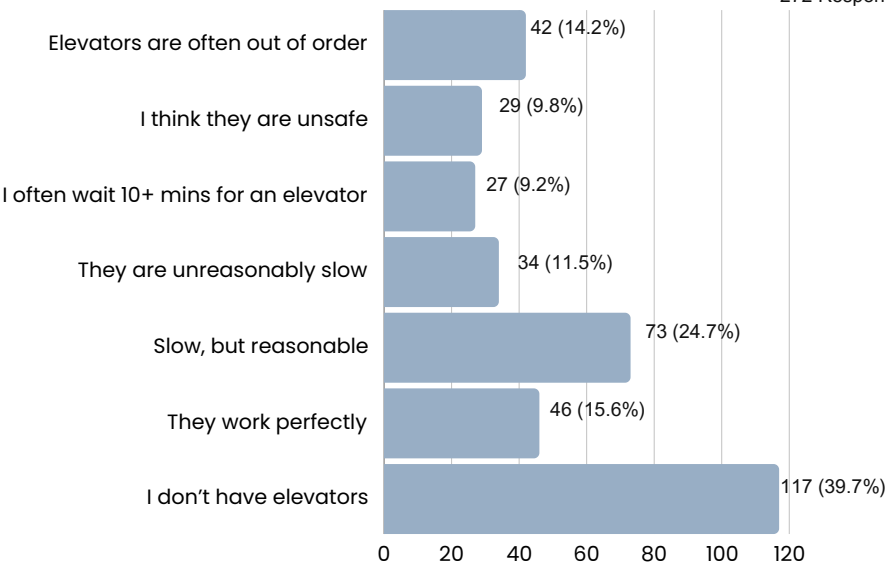
Appliances are major consumers of electricity. Additionally, the older an appliance the less efficient it is. Not only because older designs were less concerned with consumption but because as they age, they need to draw more energy to accomplish the same task.

- Only 22% of respondents described their appliances as great or brand new
- Almost ¼ said their appliances didn't work OR were very old and had problems

## Elevators

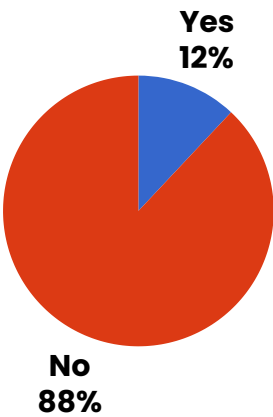
How would you rate the elevators in your building?

295 Responses



Have you been trapped in your elevator in the past 2 years?

272 Responses



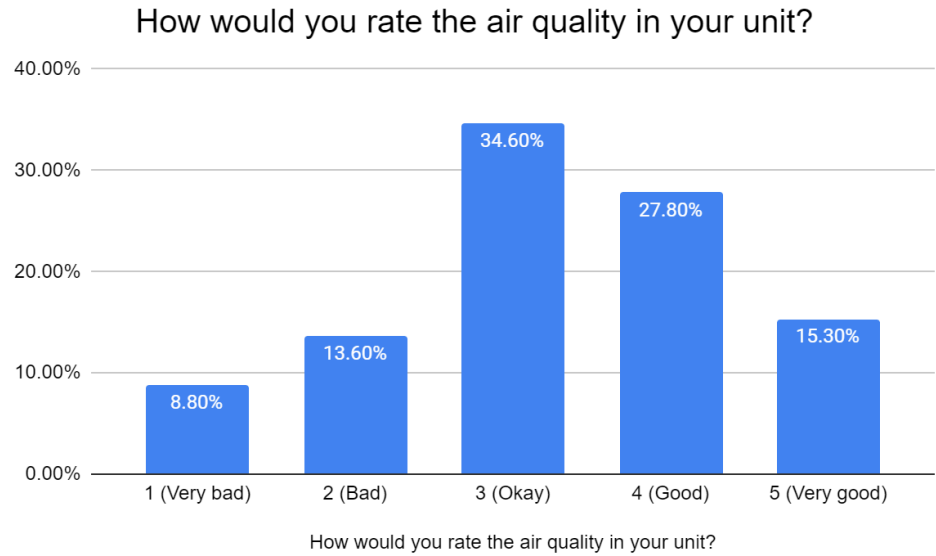
- An alarming 12% of respondents have been trapped in their elevator within the past 2 years
- Additionally, nearly 10% of respondents believe their elevators to be unsafe



# SURVEY RESULTS

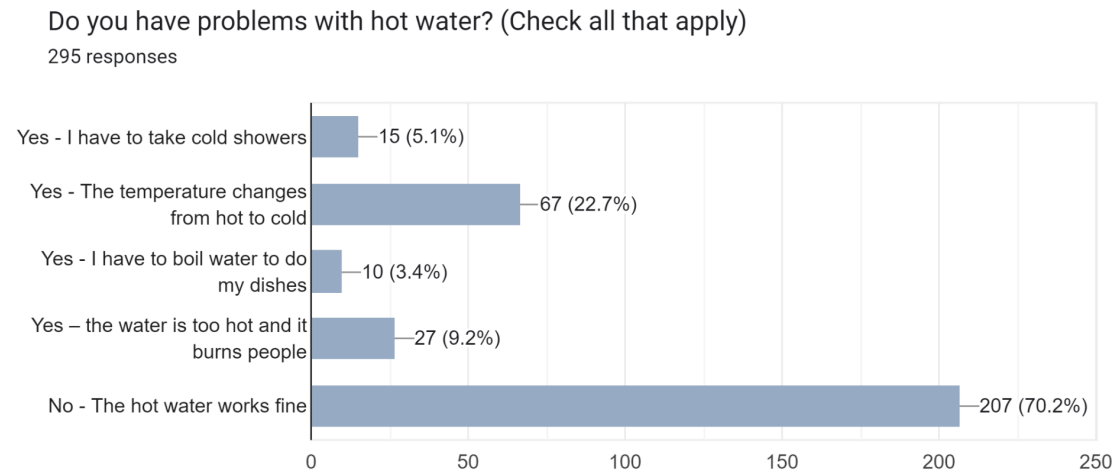


## Air Quality



Several tenants provided comments on how the wildfire smoke from last summer impacted their breathing or exacerbated existing health conditions.

## Water



- 30% of respondents have issues with hot water in their unit.

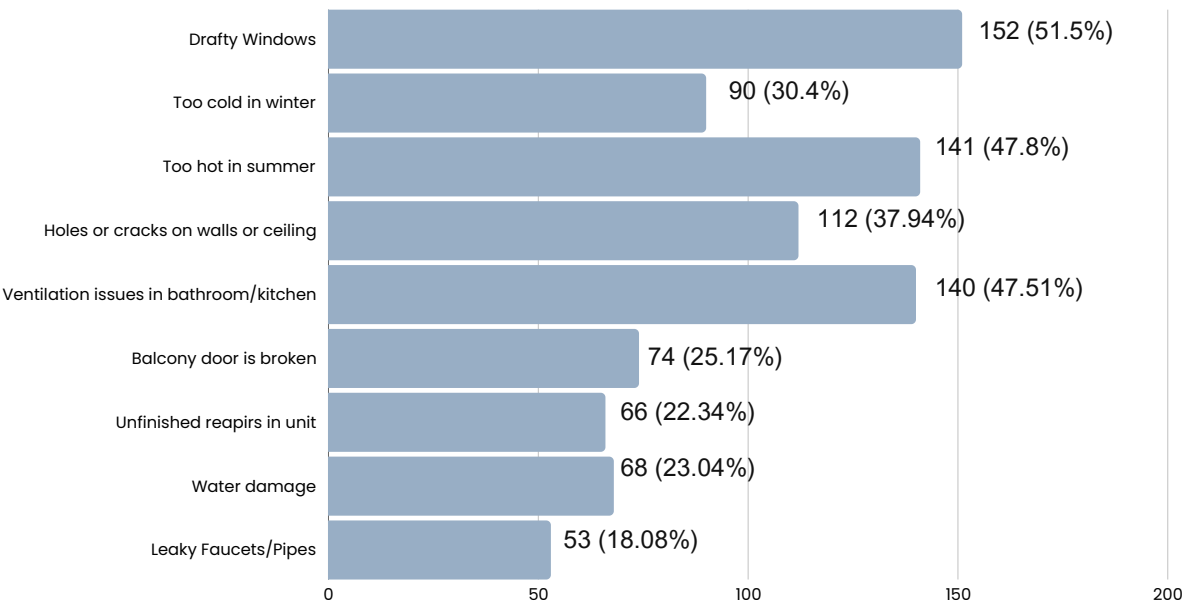
# SURVEY RESULTS



## Issues in Unit/Common Areas

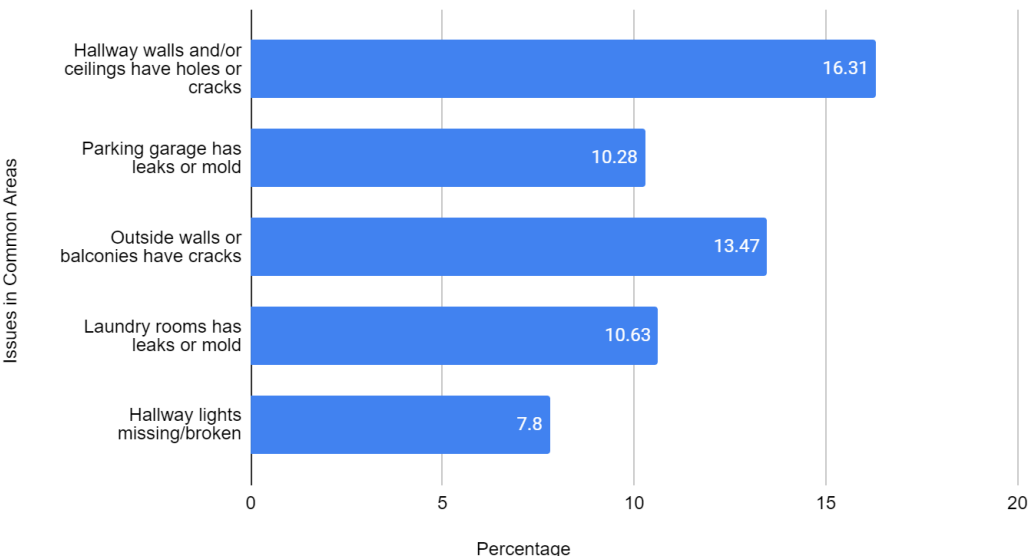
I have the following issues in my unit

295 Responses



Drafty windows appear to be the most common issue contributing to energy inefficiency (along with higher utility bills & tenant discomfort!). Ventilation problems and being too hot in the summer are not far behind.

I have the following problems with the common areas in my buildings



# SURVEY RESULTS



## *Accessing Repairs*

Response times to service requests was a big issue for respondents:

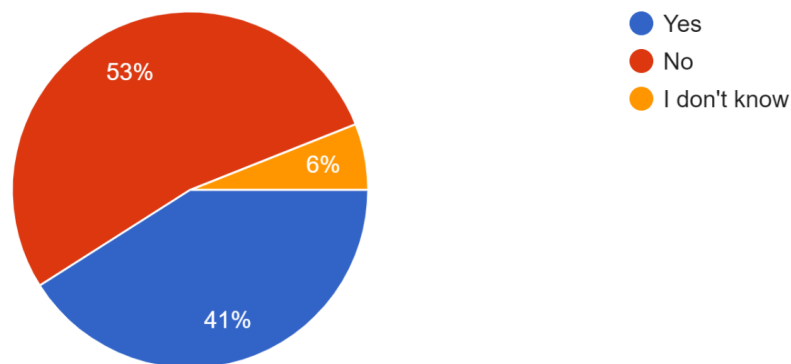
- 27.5% of survey respondents who reported an issue to their landlord said it took longer than a few weeks to get resolved. For some it was over a year.
- 23% said their complaint was never resolved

## Recycling, Composting & Greenspace

### *Recycling & Composting*

Do you have access to composting?

283 responses



While the majority of tenants have access to recycling, over 50% do not have access to composting.

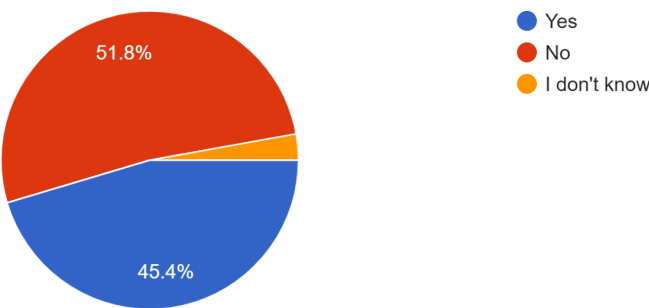
# SURVEY RESULTS



## Greenspace

Do you have access to a garden and/or green space on the property?

282 responses



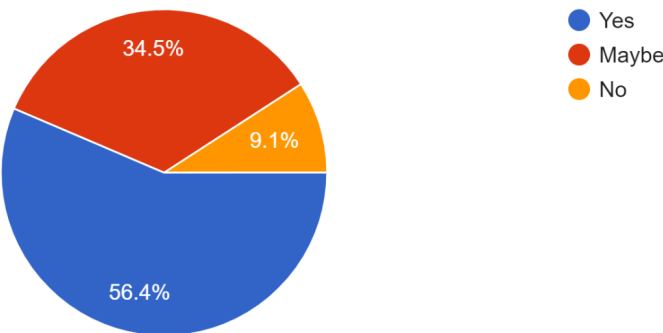
Access to greenspaces and the amount of vegetation in an area directly correlates to how much heat is retained by the environment. Trees, green roofs and vegetation help reduce the 'urban heat island effect' as they absorb rather than reflect and re-emit heat from the sun.

## Working Towards Change

### Attitudes on Climate Change

- 78% of respondents say it's important to them that their building is environmentally friendly. Only 7% disagreed.

Would you work with fellow tenants across the city to take action against climate change (particularly on issues impacting renters)?

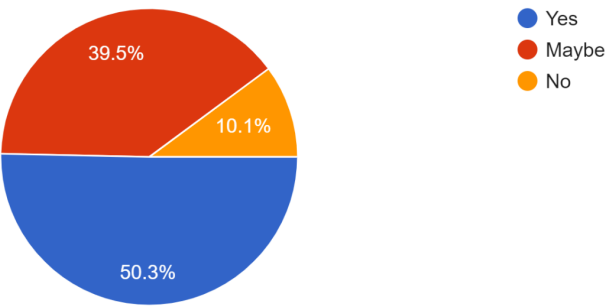




# SURVEY RESULTS



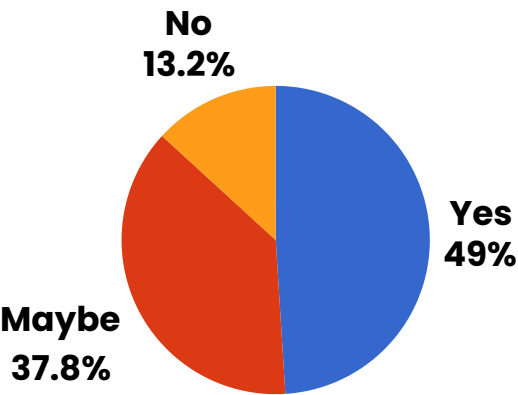
Would you work with fellow tenants to make your building more environmentally friendly?



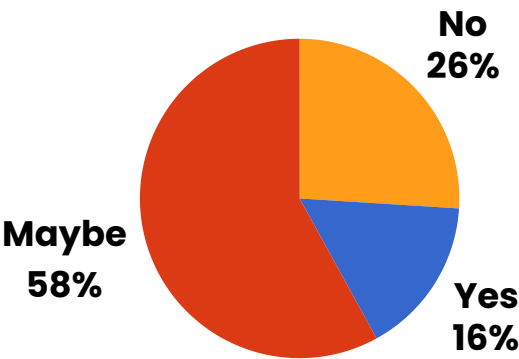
## *Working with Landlords*

Respondents were more likely to work with their neighbours and other tenants in the city to make their building more environmentally friendly compared to their landlord

Would you work with your landlord to make your building more environmentally friendly?  
296 responses



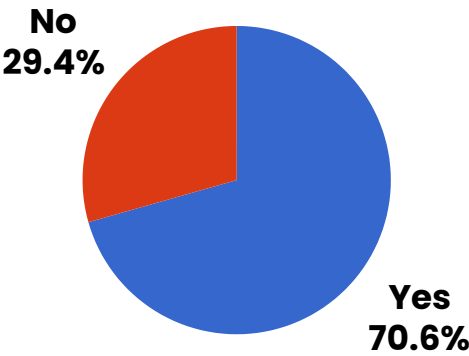
Do you trust your landlord to put the interest of tenants first?  
295 responses



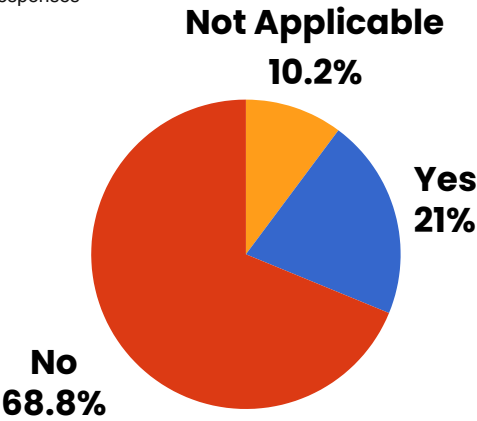
# SURVEY RESULTS



Building management in the building treats me fairly:  
295 responses

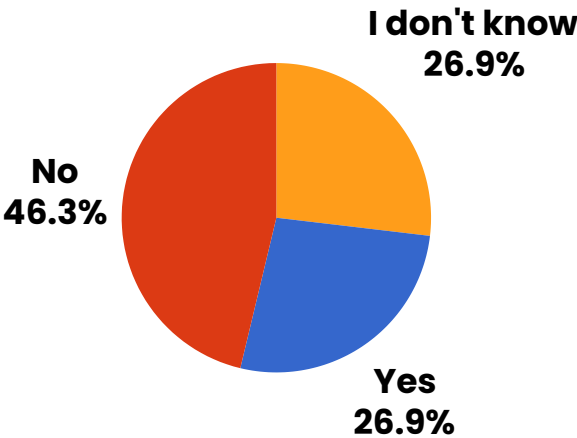


Do you feel threatened when making complaints about the building?  
295 responses



Tenants care about the environment. However, many don't feel comfortable requesting repairs and/or energy improvements in their buildings for fear that their housing may be at risk. Even if the landlord does make upgrades to the building, tenants are at risk of receiving an AGI. Given how many tenants are struggling to afford rent and other basic necessities, this is a huge disincentive for renters to advocate for changes to the building.

Has your landlord ever applied for an Above-The-Guideline Increase (AGI) in your rent?  
283 responses



# TENANT TESTIMONIES



“  
The heat will likely kill us. It's causing serious illness every summer already. It's unsafe and we have no alternative. We could succumb to it any summer. I lost at least two weeks of sick time from work last summer due to illness from heat. Working full time from home I am trapped in it.  
”

“  
Last night because of the heat and the bed bugs I slept in the tub with the cold water running. Most nights I only sleep a couple hours. I think tonight I'll sleep out back, but I'll likely end up with security getting called on me. Even before my AC broke, it wasn't a great one and for the last two summers I would bring my mattress into the kitchen to sleep right in front of it. This year I'm in the living room. The bedroom is brutal this time of year. The heat is fine other than the horrible dryness and the fact the baseboards get dangerously hot sometimes.  
”

“  
Last winter went over 30 days with the thermostat reading 14-16 degrees and management kept clearing my maintenance requests saying there was nothing they could do. I had to spend multiple nights with my pet in a different building to warm up.  
”

“  
The building is a 3 story walk up with 8 units and was built sometime between 1905-1915 and is pretty poorly maintained. Issues are starting to pile up. The entryway currently has an open crack in the ceiling that drips/trickles every time it rains. With this extreme weather it's getting worse and worse. Recently had my bathroom flood from a rotted pipe in my upstairs neighbour's unit and they gutted part of my bathroom but did an atrocious job. The heat seems to only turn on when it's 0 or below, so much of the fall and spring I have to run my oven and a space heater to keep it warm, but I've heard from neighbours at the top floor that it's sweltering all year round. A couple months ago, my side of the building went without hot water for 4 days because the hot water tank broke and it took several days to get the part.  
”

# ACORN'S ECO-PLATFORM



The following pages compile Ottawa ACORN's recommended policy solutions. These solutions are a result of multiple tenant focus groups, feedback from Ottawa ACORN's membership and other chapters across the country, as well as consultation with environmental organizations.

## All Levels

1. Provide free heat/cooling pumps and energy efficient air conditioners for low income renters, prioritizing tenants with utilities outside their rent
2. Implement Mandatory Building Performance Standards (MBPS)/ Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards
3. Financial support for low and moderate income households impacted by natural disasters (ex. Flooding, storms, power outages, extreme heat events)
4. Fund retrofits in rental buildings. This must include:
  - a. Affordability and anti-eviction covenants
  - b. Energy efficiency and mechanical cooling measures
  - c. All rental types (townhomes to high-rises)
  - d. Allowance of other improvements (ex. mold remediation) if needed to upgrade a unit before energy efficiency and mechanical cooling
  - e. Require landlords to demonstrate that the retrofits will result in benefits for tenants, particularly in cases where the landlord pays the energy costs
  - f. Signed agreements from the landlord made transparent to the tenants in the building
  - g. Formal tenant participation where independent tenant unions existing in the community and building receive resources to support tenants participating
  - h. Funding would ideally be upfront, full cost covered by grants
  - i. Retrofits that are "turnkey" so that no additional work is required – include installation, clean up, painting etc
  - j. Coordination with trusted local delivery agents



# ACORN'S ECO-PLATFORM



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## Municipal

### *Extreme Weather*

1. Maximum heat bylaw to ensure units in rental buildings do not reach more than 26 degrees celsius. However, a maximum temperature should be determined in consultation with tenant organizations, experts and other stakeholders.
2. Improvements to the city's tree canopy and access to green space in low- and moderate- income tenant communities
3. Protect tenants in emergency cases of infrastructure failures during power outages to ensure tenants still have running water and access to elevators.
4. Direct local public health authorities to track heat-related deaths, illnesses and emergency room visits
5. Implement emergency measures such as:
  - a. Mandate temporary cooling spaces that are air conditioned in all apartment buildings
  - b. Equip public and community spaces such as public libraries, schools and community centres in the most impacted communities during extreme and prolonged heat waves
  - c. Make transit free on extreme heat days to allow for mobile cooling and easier travel for those suffering to access cooling spaces

### *Substandard Housing & Energy Efficiency*

1. Landlord licensing or registration program to proactively enforce property standards issues that lead to energy inefficiencies (and other tenant concerns) similar to RentSafeTO
2. Mandatory Energy Efficiency Labeling & Benchmarking
  - a. Make a publicly accessible map for all residential housing, including multi-unit residential buildings, and require building owners to display their rating label in the building lobby.
3. Create a rent escrow account so that tenants can pay their rent into the City when the landlord isn't doing their repairs. The City can then use this money to do the needed repairs themselves if necessary.

# ACORN'S ECO-PLATFORM

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4. Fund and expand municipal retrofit programs like the Better Homes Ottawa Loan Program, and those in other cities, to all rental buildings.\* See above for other improvements.

## *Tenant Protections*

1. Affordability and anti-eviction covenants in all municipal retrofit programs. See above for other improvements.
2. Hire a Tenant Liaison to engage tenants and independent tenant unions in the building and community before, during and after the retrofit takes place.
3. Introduce a Tenant Defense Fund to ensure tenants have access to paralegal/legal services
4. Pass an Anti Renoviction Bylaw so that landlords cannot evict tenants and raise the rent when retrofitting the building
5. Pass a Rental Replacement Bylaw so that affordable housing lost to redevelopment is replaced in the new (often green) development and tenants are protected
6. Require Landlords to disclose energy costs to prospective tenants

## *Other Climate Issues*

1. Transit should be free – starting with those on social assistance.
2. Until we have free transit, transit passes should be free for anyone under the low income measure
3. No minimum payment to upload transit passes for people under the low income measure.
4. Transit also needs to be reliable. Increase bus service in underserved neighbourhoods.
5. Improve infrastructure that promotes active transportation
6. Ensure all apartment buildings have green bins – existing programs must be expedited (Example: Ottawa's Multi-Residential Waste Diversion Strategy gives landlords until 2028 to provide green bins in their buildings).

\*A scan of retrofit programs at the municipal level is currently underway.

# ACORN'S ECO-PLATFORM



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## Provincial

### *Extreme Weather*

- 1.Repeal Bill 97. While the bill has not yet received royal assent, if it does it will allow landlords to increase rents for air conditioning.
- 2.Direct the Ontario Coroner's Office to track heat-related deaths, illnesses and emergency room visits
- 3.Require landlords to have backup power systems in their buildings that are capable of running an elevator and water pump in the event of a power outage
- 4.Expand Ontario's Energy Affordability Program:
  - a. Include all rental buildings so more tenants can access free heat pumps.
  - b.The program also provides energy efficient air conditioners for tenants in larger buildings but only if AC already exists in the unit. In the event that installing a heat pump is not possible within a reasonable timeframe, tenants without AC should be provided with new energy efficient air conditioners.

### *Energy Efficiency*

- 1.Make energy efficiency data publicly accessible and granular by building (ex. Create a public map of Ontario's Energy and Water Reporting and Benchmarking (EWRB) initiative)
- 2.Recapture utility costs under landlords' responsibilities or allow tenants to apply directly for free energy efficient appliances, removing barriers and limiting the conditions in which the building owner must sign off.

# ACORN'S ECO-PLATFORM



## *Tenant Protections*

1. Full Rent Control applied to ALL units and includes vacancy control
2. Banning AGIs (Above Guideline Rent Increases) is the ultimate goal, in the interim:
  - a. Expenses done to fix something because of chronic neglect should be considered an ineligible expenditure for AGIs
  - b. The onus of enforcing rent reductions after the AGIs expire should be on the LTB and landlord, not the tenants
  - c. Cooling infrastructure and energy conservation related expenditures such as retrofits aimed at energy efficiency should not be covered under AGIs
  - d. Landlords must prove that they are not eligible for any rebates/funding programs

## *Energy Poverty*

1. Make the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) automatic with eligible low income residents' taxes.
  - a. Remove the requirement to re-apply every two years
  - b. Increase the rebate during the summer months to account for increased costs of running an air conditioner





# ACORN'S ECO-PLATFORM



## Federal

1. All green infrastructure retrofit partnerships and agreements from the Canada Infrastructure Bank, Ministry of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, or CMHC must include tenant protections. Funding agreements must include:
  - a. Affordability and anti-eviction covenants
  - b. Energy efficiency and mechanical cooling measures
  - c. All rental types (townhomes to high-rises)
  - d. Allowance of other improvements (ex. mold remediation) if needed to upgrade a unit before energy efficiency and mechanical cooling
  - e. Require landlords to demonstrate that the retrofits will result in benefits for tenants, particularly in cases where the landlord pays the energy costs
  - f. Signed agreements from the landlord made transparent to the tenants in the building
  - g. Formal tenant participation where independent tenant unions existing in the community and building receive resources to support tenants participating
  - h. Retrofits that are "turnkey" so that no additional work is required - include installation, clean up, painting etc
  - i. Coordination with trusted local delivery agents
  - j. Perform a Benefit Scan so that unique potential local benefits (environmental, labour, community, tenant) are identified and included in the funding agreement.



# CONCLUSION

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There is a strong consensus that Ottawa tenants want to tackle climate change. For many, living in poverty makes it impossible to prioritize climate action over simply surviving and making ends meet. However, the persistence of extreme heat events has meant that access to cooling is no longer about comfort, it's about survival now too. For others, they are motivated and ready to act but are limited by constraints outside of their control. While some programs for tenants to improve energy efficiency exist, they are very limited and come with many hurdles in order to access support.

A recurring theme has been the conflict between tenants' desire for improvements in their buildings and their concern about potential rent increases or housing loss. Many ACORN members have either experienced or know of instances where a landlord has used non-essential repairs or upgrades to the building as a means to raise rents for existing tenants, or to evict tenants to raise the rents without rent control for new tenants (renovictions). Real, substantive policy change is needed to address these barriers to climate action and housing affordability.

**Change is possible when enough people come together. Will you join ACORN to make it happen?**





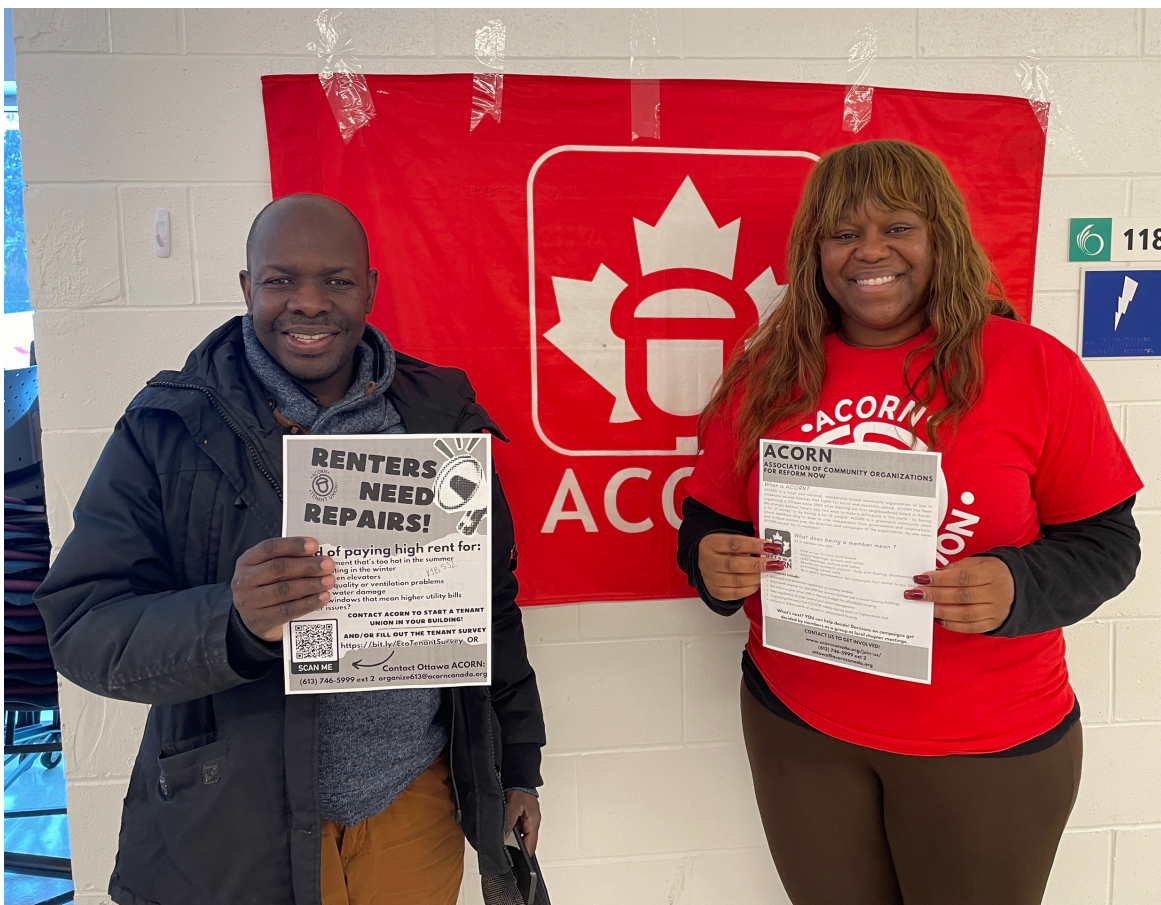
# CONCLUSION

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## Here's how you can support this work:

1. Send a message to the Mayor and your city councillor using our online action: [https://acorncanada.org/take\\_action/tell-ottawa-city-council-to-take-action-on-climate-change-housing/](https://acorncanada.org/take_action/tell-ottawa-city-council-to-take-action-on-climate-change-housing/)
2. Share this report with your councillor, MPP, and MP
3. Join our citywide network of tenants taking action on climate change!
4. Start an eco-tenant union in your building - ACORN can help you do this
5. Sign up for our newsletter to stay up-to-date on next steps and receive invites to events: <https://acorncanada.org/newsletter/>
6. Are you a renter or low-to-moderate income? Become an ACORN member: <https://acorncanada.org/join-us/>
7. Make a donation: <https://acorncanada.org/contributions/>



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