

SHAC@L&Q

Newer buildings Quality Survey

August 2022

Introduction



SHAC@L&Q designed a questionnaire to survey L&Q residents' experiences of build quality issues in their homes. For the purposes of the survey, 'newer build' was defined as under 20 years and only residents who lived in blocks built less than 20 years ago were able to respond. In total, 53 responses to the survey were received.

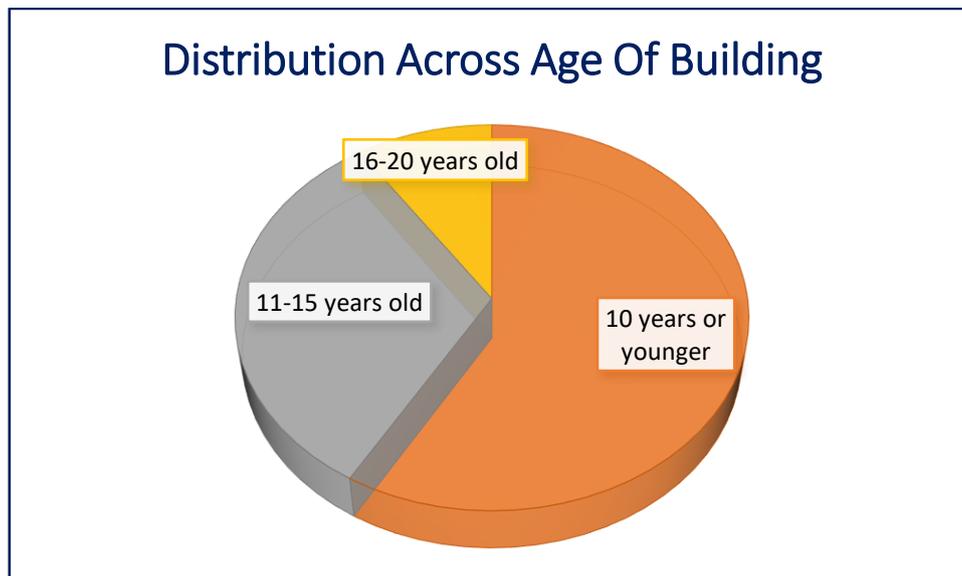
This report sets out a summary of responses to this survey, and reflects on the challenges L&Q residents face in relation to their homes. The summary gives an indication of the systemic issues L&Q needs to address and the overall conclusion to the report reflects the physical, mental, and financial burdens imposed on residents as part of the mismanagement of repair work and the overall lack of transparency and accountability within L&Q in relation to these issues.

1. Profile of residents

Survey questions 1-5 related to building age, tenancy profile, location, and block size

1.1 Summary of responses

A total of 31 people surveyed lived in blocks that were 10 years or younger, amounting to 58.49% of responses. A further 17 (32.08%) lived in blocks between 11-15 years old. The remaining 5 lived in blocks between 16-20 years old.



Only 3 people surveyed lived outside of London (2 in Essex and 1 in Buckinghamshire), with 31 (58.49%) living in East London, 12 (22.64%) living in South London, 6 (11.32%) in West London, and 1 (1.89%) in North London.

The vast majority of people surveyed were either shared owners (30 – 56.6%) or leaseholders (21 – 39.62%).

Those surveyed were given the option of estimating (if they didn't know the precise figure) the number of homes in their block. Of the 29 people who responded to this question, 4 stated fewer than 10 homes. The remaining answers ranged from 18 to 100 homes within their block.

2. Profile of issues experienced in individual properties

Survey questions 6 and 7 asked residents to set out the build quality issues that they have faced in relation to their own property

There were 53 responses to question (6). It asked residents to identify the number of issues experienced in each of the following categories:

- *Plumbing*
- *Appliance or safety equipment installation*
- *Access points in integrated units*
- *Tradesmanship*
- *Flooring*
- *Electrics*
- *Ventilation, condensation, and mould*
- *Roofing*
- *Other*

Question (7) enabled residents to provide further detail of the nature of the issues experienced. Those identifying 'other' issues in question (6) were particularly encouraged to answer this free-text question.

2.1 Summary of responses

Access points in integrated units and roofing were the only two categories where the majority of respondents identified having experienced no issues. However, 34.69% and 39.58% of residents answering this question still identified having experienced problems in these two categories, respectively.



Plumbing and tradesmanship were the categories with the highest number of issues identified. 9 out of 53 responses identified 10+ plumbing issues within their property. 10 out of 53 responses identified 10+ issues with poor tradesmanship.

Overall, across 53 responses to question (6), 997¹ issues were identified.

23 responses were recorded for question (7). Generally, these free-text answers provided details of leaks, poor appliance installation, poor tradesmanship, and dangerous external wall systems.

Residents identified the impact these issues have had on their finances and their mental health. An indication of dishonesty and incompetence on the part of L&Q was given in answers to this question. For instance, one resident identified the following:

“Gas boiler incorrectly fitted. Flue is too close to the ceiling so we cannot get a gas safety certificate. Same in all flats. Only way to rectify is a hole has to be cut in the wall on to the outside of the building. We live on the 12th floor. So the cost of scaffolding is prohibitive. L&Q must have fudged gas certificates at the point of building to be able to get sign off.”

Another said, in relation to receiving an excessively expensive water bill and tracing it back to the installation of the property’s NIBE heat pump:

“I booked an official NIBE engineer to come and check the system. He was appalled at how badly the system had been installed: 1) the expansion vessel, unbelievably, was installed upside down! . . . 2) contrary to installation instructions, the balanced cold water feed was not used 3) the flexible ducting above the unit was far too long, was crushed into place because of that, thus blocking the air flow 4) the condenser pipe was impressively fitted completely incorrectly . . . leading to a leak and massive water wastage . . . I have made L&Q aware of this problem several times. No action has been taken by yourselves. The installation was and is L&Q’s responsibility.”

Patterns of responses in relation to plumbing issues and leaks from outside were particularly evident.

¹ For the purposes of calculation, 10+ issues were rounded down to exactly 10. In other words, there were *at least* 997 issues identified.

3. Profile of issues experienced in communal areas

Survey questions 8 and 9 asked residents to set out the build quality issues that they have faced in relation to communal areas

There were 53 responses to question (8). It asked residents to identify the number of issues experienced in each of the following categories:

- *Plumbing*
- *Appliance or safety equipment installation*
- *Access points in integrated units*
- *Tradesmanship*
- *Flooring*
- *Electrics*
- *Ventilation, condensation, and mould*
- *Roofing*
- *Lifts*
- *Bin stores*
- *Grounds and landscaping*
- *Bike sheds*
- *Other*

Question (9) enabled residents to provide further detail of the nature of the issues experienced. Those identifying other issues in question (8) were particularly encouraged to answer this free-text question.

3.1 Summary of responses



Lifts; bin stores; grounds and landscaping; and tradesmanship were the categories with the highest number of issues identified.



- 16 out of 53 responses identified 10+ lift issues.
- 13 out of 53 responses identified 10+ issues with bin stores.
- 14 out of 53 responses identified 10+ issues with grounds and landscaping.
- 15 out of 53 responses identified 10+ issues with tradesmanship.

Access points in integrated units (71.11%); flooring (67.35%); ventilation, condensation, and mould (62%); roofing (59.57%); and other (54.55%) were the categories where the majority of respondents identified having experienced no issues.

Overall, across 53 responses to question (8), **1912² communal issues** were identified. Of course, it is probable that some duplication of issues occurred, on the basis that residents from the same block may have responded to the survey separately:

- If, on an improbable presumption that answers from one block in each region, there were residents from only 6 blocks responding to this survey, this still amounts to 319 communal issues identified across the survey.

² For the purposes of calculation, 10+ issues were rounded down to exactly 10. In other words, there were *at least* 1912 issues identified, notwithstanding the caveat identified in text.

- If, on a generous presumption that there were 4 responses from each block, 478 communal issues were identified across the survey.
- The likelihood is that there were *some* examples of duplication. On the presumption that there were 2 responses from each block, there were 956 issues identified across the survey.

4. Resident assessment of L&Q response to issues

Survey questions 10-12 asked residents to reflect on how well and how quickly L&Q responded to issues when made aware of them. Residents were also asked, where possible, to reflect on whether L&Q (and its contractors) were meeting their service level agreements.

Question (10) asked residents to rank whether L&Q resolved issues to a reasonable standard on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'never' and 10 is 'always'.

Question (11) asked residents to rank whether L&Q resolved issues reasonably quickly on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'never' and 10 is 'always'.

Question (12) asked residents to rank whether L&Q resolved issues pursuant to service level agreements with contractors on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'never' and 10 is 'always'.

Residents were asked to answer questions (10)-(12) for each of the following categories:

- *Plumbing*
- *Appliance or safety equipment installation*
- *Access points in integrated units*
- *Tradesmanship*
- *Flooring*
- *Electrics*
- *Ventilation, condensation, and mould*
- *Roofing*
- *Lifts*
- *Bin stores*
- *Grounds and landscaping*
- *Bike sheds*
- *Other*

Answering these questions was compulsory, though a column of N/A was provided for residents who had experienced no issue relating to each of the categories of issues set out or who were, for example, not familiar with the relevant service level agreements.

4.1 Summary of responses

4.1.1 Question 10

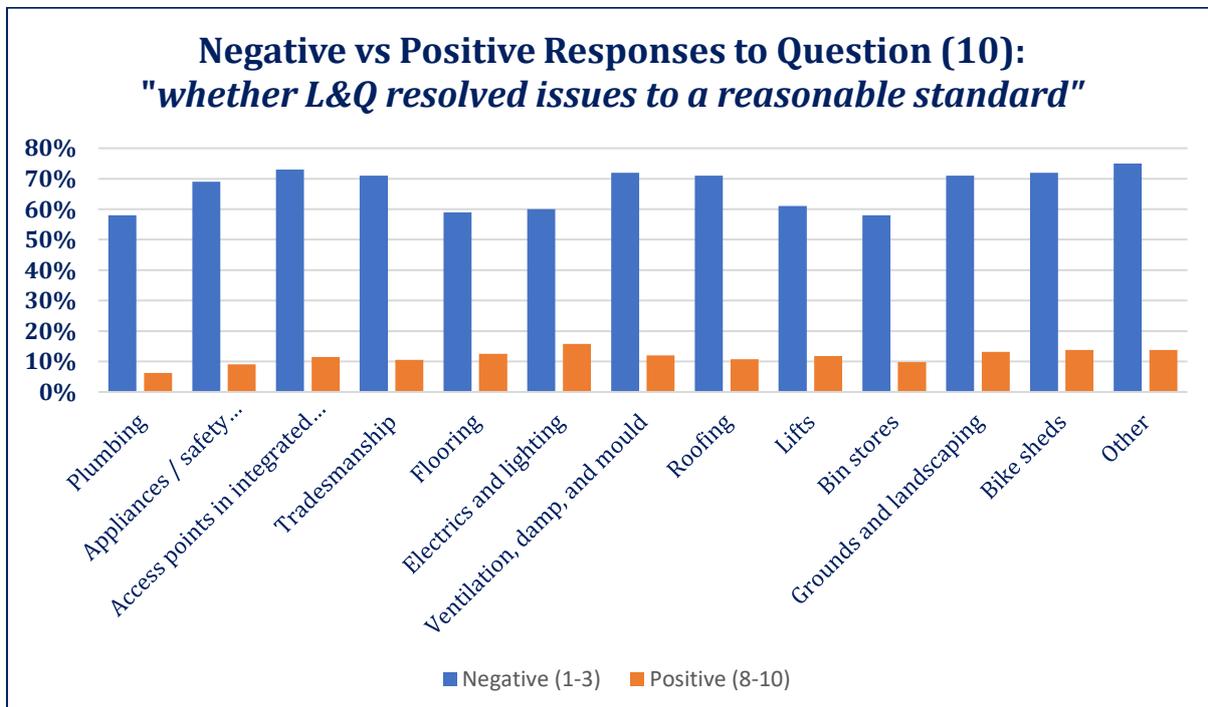
In relation to question (10), residents were overwhelmingly negative about the standard of remediation work undertaken by L&Q, across each of the categories.

“L&Q contractors only made things worse and make constant promises to improve...”

“Most issues are still unresolved. Leaking windows in flats. Roof leaking into penthouse flat. All gas boilers installed incorrectly never been rectified.”

“L&Q will half-arse a job 20 times rather than doing it properly once . . . inside it is a genuinely dangerous place to live.”

For the full response tables, see Appendix I



The majority of residents in each category were of the opinion that the work undertaken was not of a reasonable standard.

4.1.2 Question 11

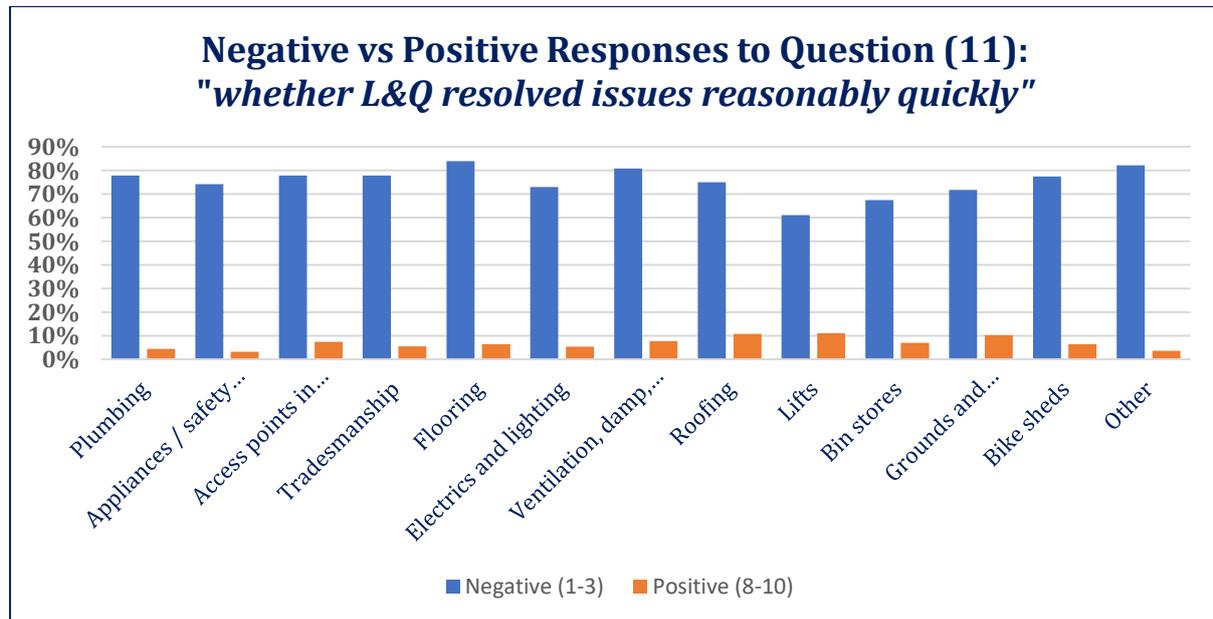
“Bins and gates are constantly breaking and takes ages to get new parts. Roof has been leaking for years. Still not resolved. Leaking windows in flats with mould. Still not fixed after years.”

“I had an issue with my balcony leaking 13 years ago! It’s now being fixed... after complaints year after year.”

“Issues don’t get resolved. It’s almost as though no one is coordinating the completion of issues raised. All we get is apologies but no action taken.”

Compared with question (10), residents offered even more negative assessments about the time it took remedial work to be undertaken by L&Q, across each of the categories.

For the full response tables, see Appendix I



The majority of residents in each category were of the opinion that the work undertaken was not of a reasonable standard. In general, fewer than 1 in 10 residents were of the opinion that work was always or usually done quickly.

4.1.3 Question 12

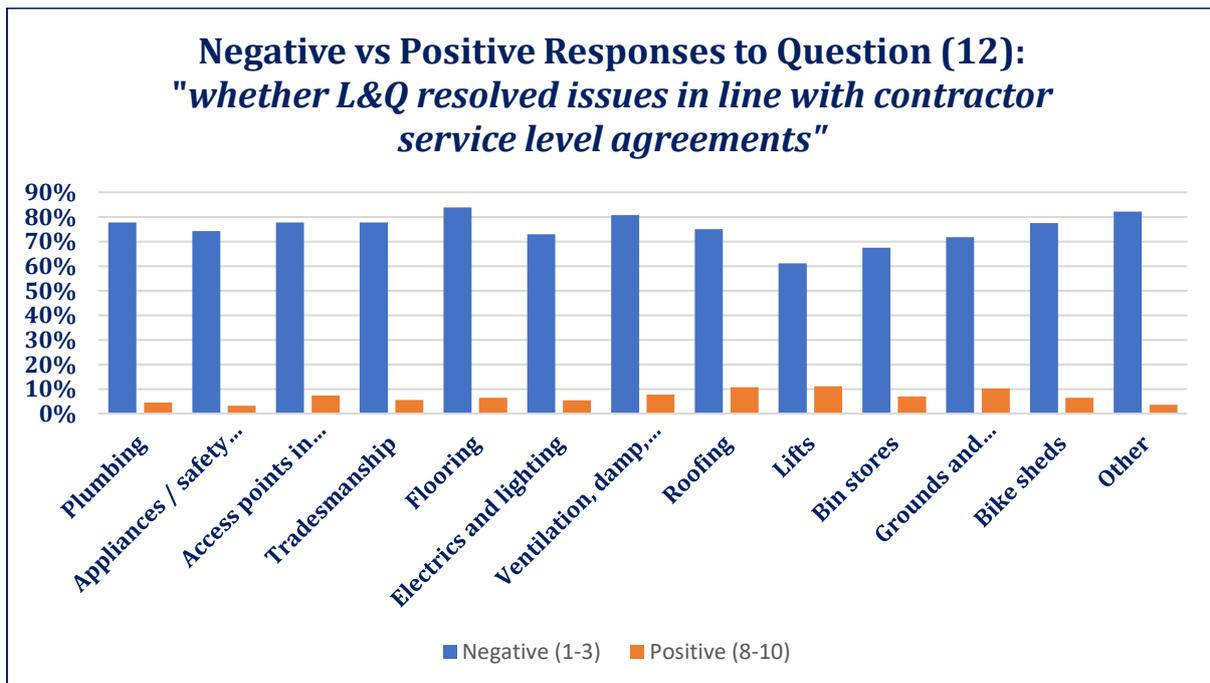
“To my knowledge they do not have SLAs with contractors and do not want to enforce them if they have them. I have asked on multiple occasions to see or have SLAs explained to me following routinely exceptionally poor service. I am always ignored or fobbed off. Meanwhile, administration of all issues remains atrocious.”

“Generally very poor at resolving any issue or responding.”

“If L&Q bother to acknowledge you at all, you get given a date for someone to come and visit to assess, not repair, the fault. This often creates more damage. From there it’s just a spiral of various people, contractors, surveyors, visiting days or even weeks apart, leaving notes for each other and still nothing gets done.”

In relation to question (12), residents were, again, negative in their assessment of whether or not the service level agreements with contractors were met for work relating to their properties, across each of the categories.

For the full response tables, see Appendix I



As above, the majority of residents in each category were of the opinion that work was not undertaken in accordance with contractor service level agreements. The N/A responses, or responses which were 'ambivalent', were slightly higher for this question it is a point residents were not necessarily aware of and the question asked residents to answer to the best of their knowledge.

5. Conclusion

The results of this survey confirm a long-held suspicion that residents face systemic issues in relation to build quality of L&Q homes and poor (or sometimes no) responses to repair and remediation issues.

"I absolutely hate L&Q. They are the worst landlords ever. Do not deal with issues. Ignore tenants. Do not provide value for money. They are not transparent. They are lazy. I spend hours and hours emailing them and raising formal complaints."

"Nothing gets fixed in a timely manner. Complaints achieve nothing. Raising issues to the CEO achieves nothing."

"The company is an absolute joke!!!"

"I cannot stress enough that L&Q are not a good company."

Open text responses to the survey suggest residents feel caught in a web of mismanagement, circular or dead-end bureaucracy, and L&Q's failure to take responsibility for issues. For some, this is as a result of their position as leaseholders, where they are caught in a trap: *"the answer given is that nothing is the responsibility of L&Q but then I'm not allowed to make any changes to fix any issues because I'm a leaseholder. Madness!"*

Others reflected on the extent of the stress caused by the disrepair to their homes, the mismanagement of remediation works, and the lack of time residents spend chasing L&Q for resolutions with one reflecting that *"the stress they have caused me and my family over the last 3 years has led to mental health issues and nearly divorce!"*



Another confirmed that L&Q's lack of ability to communicate with residents or to undertake remediation works that needed doing affected *"residents' personal agency as well as mental health"*, and another survey participant believe that L&Q have *"destroyed [their] life and mental health."*

The impact poor build quality and a hopeless attitude to undertaking remediation works has, equally, impacted on the physical health of residents, with many reflecting on rat infestations and extensive mould (bearing in mind all residents responding live in newer build properties of less than 20 years old).

Equally, L&Q seems unresponsive to particular challenges faced by disabled residents, or residents with additional needs, when things fall into disrepair.

A lift being out of commission for a week because of a failure to respond is frustrating at the best of times, but has a serious impact on disabled residents in blocks of flats who are trapped and unable to leave their homes for this duration. One resident responding to the survey made this point, with another setting out that L&Q's mismanagement of remediation works that need to be undertaken extends to care/sheltered facilities, too.

In isolation, repair issues faced by residents are unacceptable; the patterns and volume of issues being identified by residents would suggest that these are not isolated incidents but are endemic.

"No system, always failure."

This should be a source of great shame to L&Q, and must prompt action. Survey participants also identified their dissatisfaction with circular complaints procedures which rarely lead to

resolutions, and this just compounds the issues relating to poor build quality and the unreasonableness of repair works that are undertaken.

5.1 A related note on service charges

In amongst all of this, so many residents gave accounts of how expensive their service charges were. One indicated that their service charges amounted to £4,080 per year and that this was not reflected in the day-to-day management or upkeep of the property. On top of this, the same resident indicated that L&Q were also asking for an additional £1,600 without any paper trail to support this. Another survey participant identified that that their service charges amount to over £3,500 per year, and repeated that this was not reflected in the management or upkeep of the property.

The survey itself was not related to service charges, but survey participants' stories of their service charges were told nonetheless, and it was identified as a source of real anxiety and anger for residents. Responses within this survey have been supported by anecdotal accounts amongst resident groups that service charges are spiralling out of control, enabled by a lack of transparency or accountability within L&Q.

Overall, L&Q must reflect on the poor build quality; the unacceptable responses to complaints, repairs and remediation. They should also reflect on how this directly contributes, in many instances, to driving residents in affordable housing schemes into poverty and adversely impacting on their mental and physical health

Appendix I: Full Tables: Questions (10)-(12)

What follows is a summary breakdown of the answers in response to **Question (1)** for each category, setting out the percentage of those who answered: never (a score of 1); negatively (the combination of scores 1-3), ambivalently (the combination of scores 4-7); positively (the combination of scores 8-10); always (a score of 10). For the purposes of this summary, the N/As were removed.

Category	Never (1)	Negative (1-3)	Ambivalent (4-7)	Positive (8-10)	Always (10)
Plumbing	43.75%	58.33%	35.41%	6.25%	6.25%
Installation of appliances or safety equipment	42.42%	69.69%	21.21%	9.09%	6.06%
Access points in integrated units	46.15%	73.08%	15.38%	11.54%	11.54%
Tradesmanship	39.47%	71.05%	18.42%	10.52%	7.89%
Flooring	40.63%	59.38%	28.13%	12.5%	9.38%
Electrics and lighting	31.58%	60.53%	23.68%	15.79%	10.53%
Ventilation, condensation, and mould	56%	72%	16%	12%	12%
Roofing	53.57%	71.43%	17.86%	10.71%	10.71%
Lifts	35.29%	61.76%	26.47%	11.76%	8.82%
Bin stores	36.59%	58.54%	31.71%	9.76%	7.32%
Grounds and landscaping	42.11%	71.05%	13.16%	13.16%	10.53%
Bike sheds	55.17%	72.41%	13.79%	13.79%	10.34%
Other	51.72%	75.86%	10.34%	13.79%	10.34%

Column 3 sets out the percentage of residents responding with a negative assessment of the standard of remediation work undertaken in relation to each category. The majority of residents in each category were of the opinion that the work undertaken was not of a reasonable standard.

What follows is a summary breakdown of the answers for **Question (11)** for each category, setting out the percentage of those who answered: never (a score of 1); negatively (the combination of scores 1-3), ambivalently (the combination of scores 4-7); positively (the combination of scores 8-10); always (a score of 10). For the purposes of this summary, the N/As were removed.

Category	Never (1)	Negative (1-3)	Ambivalent (4-7)	Positive (8-10)	Always (10)
Plumbing	53.33%	77.78%	17.78%	4.44%	4.44%
Installation of appliances or safety equipment	58.06%	74.19%	25.81%	3.23%	3.23%
Access points in integrated units	51.85%	77.78%	14.81%	7.41%	7.41%
Tradesmanship	55.56%	77.78%	16.67%	5.56%	5.56%
Flooring	61.29%	83.87%	12.9%	6.45%	6.45%
Electrics and lighting	43.24%	72.97%	21.62%	5.41%	5.41%

Appendix I: Full Tables: Questions (10)-(12)

Ventilation, condensation, and mould	53.85%	80.77%	11.54%	7.69%	7.69%
Roofing	57.14%	75%	14.29%	10.71%	10.71%
Lifts	36.11%	61.11%	27.78%	11.11%	5.56%
Bin stores	44.19%	67.44%	25.58%	6.98%	4.65%
Grounds and landscaping	51.28%	71.79%	17.95%	10.26%	7.69%
Bike sheds	58.06%	77.42%	19.35%	6.45%	6.45%
Other	57.14%	82.14%	14.29%	3.57%	3.57%

What follows is a summary breakdown of the answers for **Question (12)** each category, setting out the percentage of those who answered: never (a score of 1); negatively (the combination of scores 1-3), ambivalently (the combination of scores 4-7); positively (the combination of scores 8-10); always (a score of 10). For the purposes of this summary, the N/As were removed.

Category	Never (1)	Negative (1-3)	Ambivalent (4-7)	Positive (8-10)	Always (10)
Plumbing	50%	75%	17.5%	7.5%	7.5%
Installation of appliances or safety equipment	44.12%	64.71%	29.41%	2.94%	2.94%
Access points in integrated units	46.43%	71.43%	21.43%	7.14%	7.14%
Tradesmanship	47.06%	76.47%	17.65%	5.88%	5.88%
Flooring	48.39%	70.97%	22.58%	6.45%	6.45%
Electrics and lighting	37.14%	60%	31.43%	8.57%	5.71%
Ventilation, condensation, and mould	51.85%	66.67%	25.93%	7.41%	7.41%
Roofing	55.56%	74.07%	18.52%	7.41%	7.41%
Lifts	38.24%	64.71%	26.47%	8.82%	5.88%
Bin stores	48.65%	64.86%	29.73%	5.41%	5.41%
Grounds and landscaping	55.88%	67.65%	26.47%	5.88%	5.88%
Bike sheds	62.07%	72.41%	20.69%	6.90%	6.90%
Other	61.54%	80.77%	15.38%	3.85%	3.85%

As above, the majority of residents in each category were of the opinion that work was not undertaken in accordance with contractor service level agreements. The N/A responses, or responses which were 'ambivalent', were slightly higher for this question it is a point residents were not necessarily aware of and the question asked residents to answer 'to the best of [their] knowledge'.