



What people think,
feel and do

www.opinium.com
research@opinium.com
[@opiniumresearch](https://twitter.com/opiniumresearch)

Opinium/The Guardian

Impact of COVID-19 on Renters



Key findings

14 April 2020

Project details

PROJECT NUMBER	OP14414
PROJECT NAME	Impact of COVID-19 on Renters
CLIENT COMPANY NAME	Opinium/The Guardian
CLIENT CONTACT NAME	Damien Gayle
CLIENT CONTACT EMAIL	Damiengayle@theguardian.com
PROJECT MANAGER NAME	Molly Maclean/Grantley White
PROJECT MANAGER EMAIL	mollymaclean@opinium.com/ grantleywhite@opinium.com
SAMPLE	2,002 UK Adults (18+) – the sample has been weighted to be nationally representative of the UK population
FIELDWORK DATES	3 rd – 6 th April 2020

Key findings

- The majority (**58%**) of renters who were working before the COVID-19 outbreak have had their employment impacted in some way.
- Half (**48%**) of renters are worried about the stability of their living situation.
- Two fifths (**43%**) of renters whose work has been impacted by the outbreak report that they've struggled to pay rent, bills or for other essentials, like food.
- Three quarters (**73%**) of landlords are concerned their tenants won't be able to pay all or part of their rent.
- A quarter (**25%**) of renters whose work has been impacted by the outbreak have either had to voluntarily leave their home, move in with friends or parents, or request for their tenancy to end earlier than planned to avoid paying rent.

-
- Ethnic minority groups are almost twice as likely than Caucasian groups to have reached out for financial support since the outbreak (**23% compared to 13% respectively**) and twice as likely to have applied for Universal Credit to help them pay their rent (**11% compared to 5% respectively**).
 - While general awareness of policies aimed at helping renters is modest, actual knowledge of the policies among renters is low.
 - While **65%** of renters are aware the government has made £500 million available to fund households experiencing financial hardship, three in five (**61%**) also have no actual knowledge about what that means or what it entails.
 - **43%** of renters are completely unaware that the government will increase the housing element of Universal Credit to cover the cheapest 30% of rents in an area.
 - One in five (**19%**) renters are still completely unaware that government has banned new eviction proceedings against tenants for the next three months.
 - Support for new policies to support renters is widespread.
 - The policy with the greatest support among the total UK population and for renters is enforcing a grace period where energy companies cannot cut off households who are not able to pay their bills (**82%** of Brits, and **82%** of renters say this).
 - A third (**36%**) of UK adults who are dissatisfied with their living conditions report that having to stay at home during the pandemic is 'anxiety inducing' and a third (**34%**) report it to be 'depressing'.

The impact of COVID-19 on renters in the UK

Half of renters in the UK are worried about their housing situation

Last week marked the first instalment of rent payments since the government-imposed lockdown that put many UK workers out of employment. At this time, half (48%) of renters, those who rent from a private landlord, local authority or housing association, reported being worried about the impact COVID-19 could have on their living situation, with this rising to two thirds (65%) of those whose employment has been impacted.

Rent payments are not only a worry for renters, three in four (73%) landlords reported being concerned that their tenants will not be able to pay all or part of the rent due to the impact of COVID-19.

The majority of renters have had their employment impacted by COVID-19

The majority (58%) of renters report their employment has been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, with this rising to 83% of renters in non-traditional work.

Of all renters who were working before the outbreak, a quarter (25%) have been furloughed, a sixth (17%) have suffered a loss in earnings and a seventh (14%) have had their hours cut.

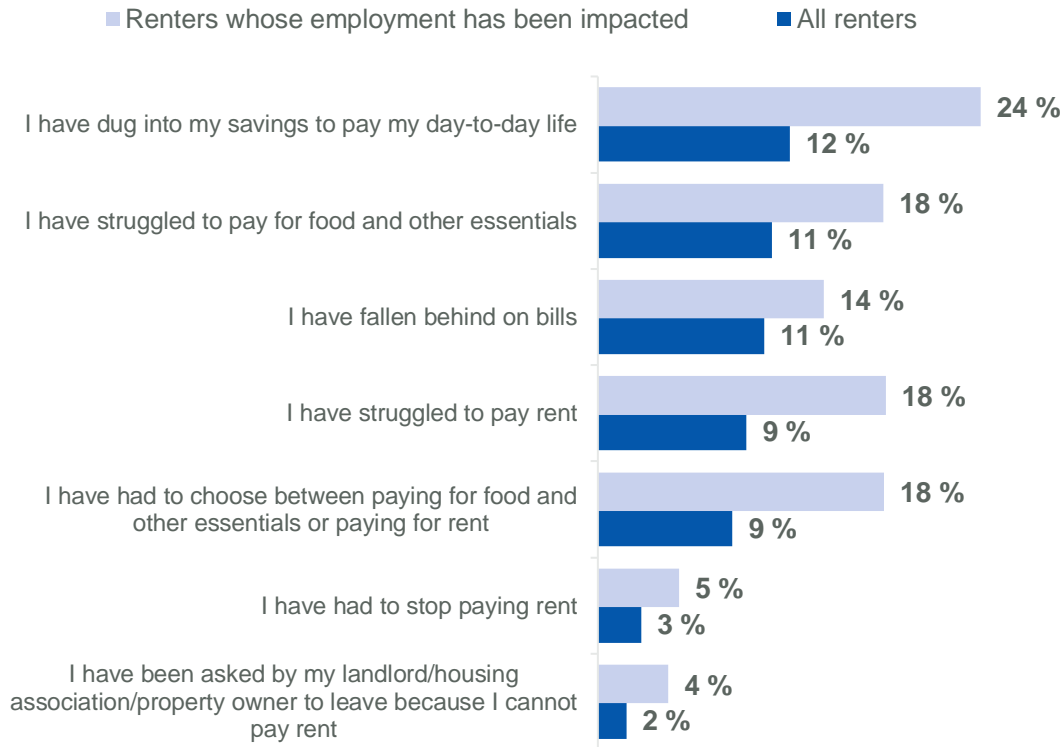
The impact of this is significant with two in five (43%) renters whose work has been impacted reporting that they've struggled to pay rent, bills or other essentials.

One in eight (12%) of all renters, and one in four (24%) of renters who's employment has been impacted by the outbreak, report having to dip into savings to pay for day-to-day life due to the current pandemic, likely having a long lasting impact on their individual finances.

HOW RENTERS EMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN IMPACTED

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. I have been put on furlough | 25% |
| 2. I've suffered a loss in my usual earnings | 17% |
| 3. I've had my hours cut | 14% |
| 4. I've had freelance work cancelled or postponed | 13% |
| 5. I've been forced to go on unpaid leave | 9% |
| 6. I've been made unemployed or redundant | 4% |

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PAYING FOR BASIC NEEDS AMONG RENTERS



One in six renters have had to seek financial help

COVID-19 has added financial pressure to UK renters with one in six (17%) reporting they've had to seek some kind of financial help since the outbreak. Of those whose employment has been impacted by the pandemic, 31% report seeking financial help, including applying for Universal Credit to help with rent payments (13%) and borrowing from friends and family (11%).

The process of applying for Universal Credit has not been easy, two thirds (66%) of renters who reported submitting an application said that it was difficult and even if accepted, the wait time of 5 weeks to receive payment would be a struggle for two fifths (42%) of renters.

Ethnic minority groups in the UK are almost twice as likely to report seeking financial help during the pandemic than Caucasian groups (23% compared to 13% respectively). Ethnic minority groups are also twice as likely to have applied for Universal Credit to help them pay their rent (11% compared 5% respectively), indicating that COVID-19 has had a greater financial impact on Non-White communities.

One in ten renters have requested to reduce their tenancy or have voluntarily left their home due to COVID-19

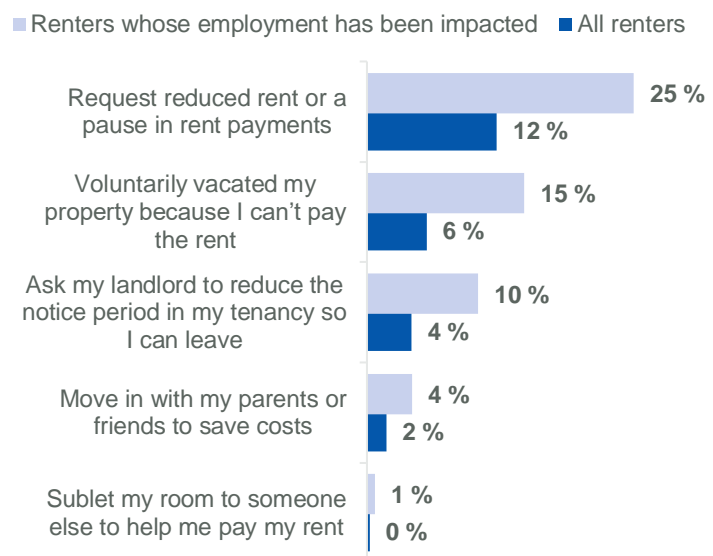
The COVID-19 outbreak has led to several renters leaving or considering leaving their homes due to not being able to pay the rent, leaving landlords across the country feeling concerned.

One in ten (10%) renters have either had to voluntarily leave their home, move in with friends or parents or request for their tenancy to end earlier due to the COVID-19 outbreak, with this rising to one in four (25%) renters whose employment has been impacted.

Meanwhile, seven in ten (70%) landlords are concerned that their tenants will vacate leaving them with an empty property.

Overall, a fifth (19%) of renters have had to take some kind of action to change their living situation in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, with this rising to two fifths (39%) of renters who've had their employment impacted.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LIVING SITUATION AMONG RENTERS



Almost a third of those who've had to change their living situation report that their landlord was not supportive

COVID-19 could put a strain on renter-landlord relationships. While 56% of those who've had to make a change to their living situation due to COVID-19 report that their landlord has been supportive, almost a third (31%) report that their landlord has not been supportive, including one in ten (9%) who said they were not at all supportive when having to make the changes.

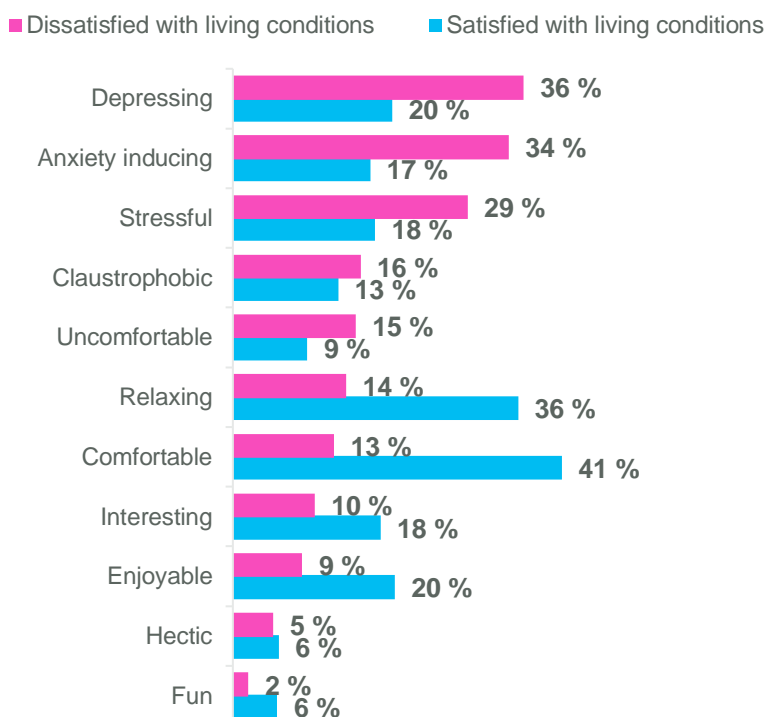
In line with this, landlords across the UK are concerned that the relationship they have with their tenants could become hostile with three in five (62%) reporting this.

COVID-19 has left over third of those who are dissatisfied with their living situation feeling depressed about being at home all the time

Since the Government imposed lockdown, most people in the UK have had to spend all of their time at home and for those who are dissatisfied with their living situation, this has had a significant effect.

A third (34%) of those who are dissatisfied with their living conditions report that being at home all the time is ‘anxiety inducing’ and a further 36% report that it’s ‘depressing’.

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE EXPERIENCE OF BEING AT HOME DURING THE LOCKDOWN, BY SATISFACTION WITH LIVING CONDITIONS



Renters have little knowledge of policies that will specifically affect them

While renters appear to have knowledge on the new policies that have been put in place to support employees in general, such as government paying up to 80% of a workers wages if they’ve been furloughed (77%), few have knowledge of policies that are in place to support renters specifically.

Two thirds (65%) of renters have no knowledge of the changes made around the Local Housing Allowance which means that rent subsidies will be made for at least 30 percent of market rents in each applicant’s area.

Furthermore, three fifths (61%) have no knowledge of governments plan to make £500 million available to fund households experiencing financial hardship.

Over a third (38%) of renters also have no knowledge of the government suspending the filing of new eviction proceedings against tenants for three months.

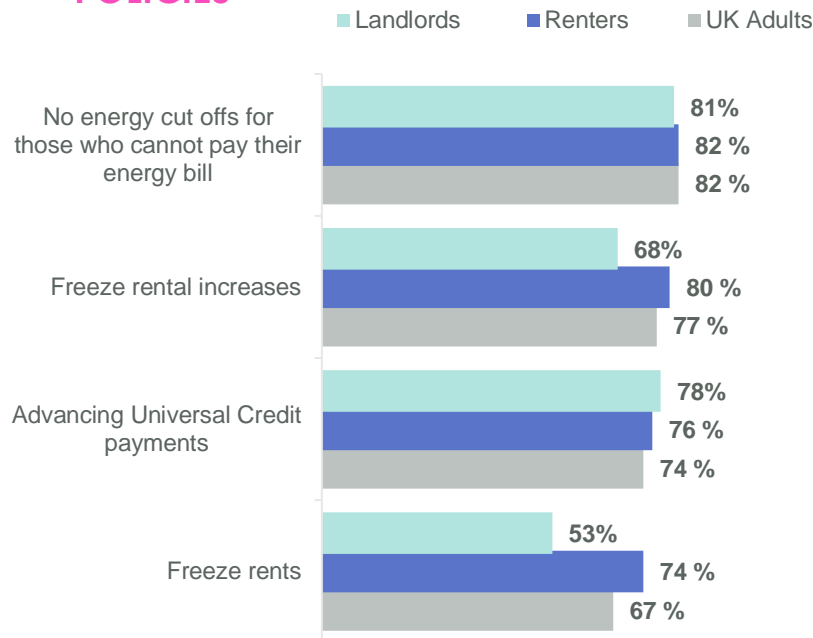
Overall, it’s clear that renters do not have the full perspective of their rights and entitlements that are crucial in guiding them through the outbreak.

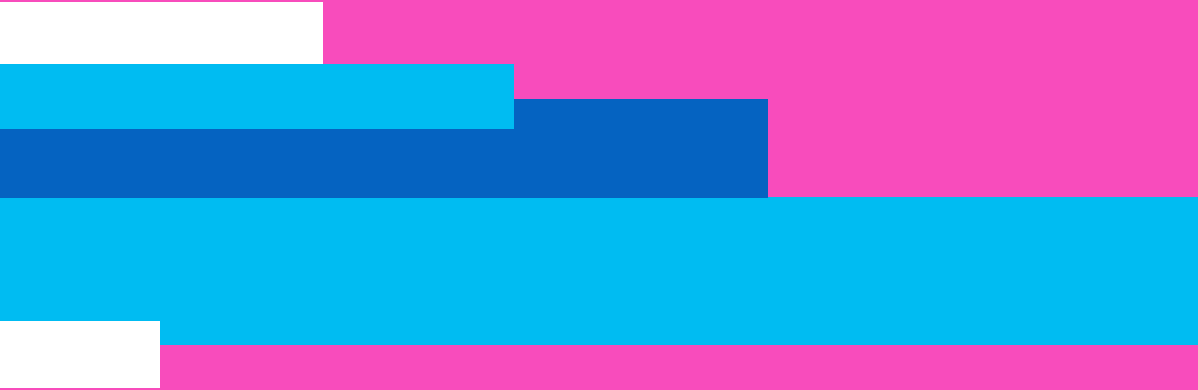
There is widespread support for policies that support renters

Looking to the future, there is widespread support from not only renters but also the general public when it comes to implementing policies that support renters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Landlords tend to show support both for policies that will help them, but also for policies that will help renters, even if that means freezing rents.

% THAT SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING POLICIES





OPINIUM is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people **think, feel** and **do**. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

www.opinium.com | research@opinium.com | 0207 566 3190

