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**Consultation on licensing
private rented property in
West Bromwich**

Sandwell Council

Final report

May 2020



Project details and acknowledgements	3
1. Executive Summary	4
2. Introduction	9
3. Survey results.....	15
4. Public meetings/written responses	40
Appendices	42

Project details and acknowledgements

Title	Consultation on private rented sector licensing in West Bromwich
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Project number	19102
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M·E·L Research would like to thank Sandwell Council for their support with the consultation. We would also like to thank residents, tenants, landlords, agents and stakeholders for taking part in the consultation.

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1. Executive summary

Sandwell Council is considering extending their current mandatory licensing scheme to cover all privately rented Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in a targeted area within West Bromwich through an Additional Licensing scheme, as well as introducing a Selective Licensing scheme for all other privately rented properties in West Bromwich. Sandwell Council believe that the schemes will:

- Improve living arrangements for many tenants by improving the condition of properties;
- Support good landlords and remove rogue landlords from operating;
- Improve the image of the area, making it a desirable place to live.

Sandwell Council commissioned M·E·L Research to undertake an independent consultation on their behalf, to consult with and gather views of local people, in particular local landlords, private tenants, agents, residents, businesses and organisations within and outside of West Bromwich, on the proposals they are considering.

The consultation lasted 12 weeks, starting on the 27th January 2020 and finishing on the 20th April 2020 (12 weeks in total). A range of consultation methods were used to provide sufficient opportunities for interested parties to share their views. These included an online consultation page and survey, a postal survey to around 19,000 properties in and around the proposed area in West Bromwich, an online feedback form for in-depth comments, a telephone helpline to assist with surveys and queries, and a dedicated email address for written comments and queries. Promotion of the consultation was undertaken by the Council and included Facebook adverts, drop in sessions in and around West Bromwich, face to face visits to local letting agents, e-shots to landlords, agents, local businesses, as well as four public meetings and wider press releases to relevant trade and local press. These were targeted in and around West Bromwich and the wider Sandwell area.

In total, 598 survey responses were received; 141 from the online response and 457 postal responses. In total, 9 written responses were submitted via the online feedback form or by email, and 55 people attended public meetings. Key headlines from the consultation are provided below.

1. Additional Licensing proposal in selected area of West Bromwich

Figure 1: Responses to Additional Licensing proposal (overall/by respondent group)

	Overall	Landlords	PR tenants	Residents	Other
Base	590	77	58	351	45
Agree with Additional Licensing proposal	77%	34%	76%	87%	85%
Disagree with Additional Licensing proposal	17%	61%	14%	8%	9%
Base	581	76	59	344	44
Positive impact if implement Additional Licensing	53%	15%	48%	63%	59%
Negative impact if implement Additional Licensing	12%	51%	10%	4%	9%
Base	583	77	59	346	43
Agree that Additional Licence fees are reasonable	56%	9%	53%	70%	60%
Disagree that Additional Licence fees are reasonable	28%	79%	24%	15%	21%
Base	577	76	56	344	44
Agree with proposed Additional Licensing conditions	70%	30%	66%	81%	75%
Disagree with proposed Additional Licensing conditions	17%	57%	20%	7%	9%

- Support for an **Additional Licensing scheme** is strong overall with over three quarters (77%) of respondents agreeing with the proposal. Around one in six disagree (17%).
 - Residents in West Bromwich are most supportive of the proposal, followed closely by ‘other’ respondents (87% and 85% agree);
 - Landlords/agents in West Bromwich are least in favour of Additional Licensing, with six out of ten (61%) disagreeing with the proposal, and only one in three (34%) agreeing;
 - The most frequent comment around the Additional Licensing proposal is that it will **improve living conditions, standards and safety and ultimately protect tenants** (253 comments).

- Around half of respondents (53%) feel that the **impact of Additional Licensing** on them, would be positive if it were to be implemented. Only 12% feel it would have a negative impact on them.
 - Over six out of ten residents in West Bromwich (63%) feel it would have a positive impact on them, with only a very small proportion feeling it would be negative (4%);
 - Just over half of landlords and agents in West Bromwich (51%) feel it would have a negative impact on them, and only 15% feel it would be positive;
 - The most common comments around the impact of Additional Licensing, is that it will result in **better quality housing and living conditions** (94 comments) and that it will have a **positive impact on the local area** (91 comments).

- Over half of respondents (56%) agree that the proposed **Additional Licence fees are reasonable**. Over a quarter (28%) disagree.
 - Support is stronger amongst residents in West Bromwich (70%) than other groups, whilst around half of private renting tenants agree (53%);

- Landlords are again much more negative, with 79% disagreeing;
 - The most frequent comments around the fees are that they are **appropriate/reasonable and will have a positive effect** (154 comments).
- Seven out of ten respondents (70%) agree with the proposed **Additional Licensing conditions**, with just under half (48%) strongly agreeing. Around one in six (17%) disagree.
 - Residents are most supportive of the proposed conditions (81% agree), followed closely by 'other' respondents (75% agree);
 - Landlords are most strongly opposed to the conditions, with over half disagreeing (57%);
 - The most common comments by respondents around the conditions are that they are **appropriate/reasonable/will have a positive effect** (179 comments).

2. Selective Licensing proposal in selected area of West Bromwich

Figure 2: Responses to Selective Licensing proposal (overall responses/by respondent group)

	Overall	Landlords	PR tenants	Residents	Other
Base	584	76	58	347	45
Agree with Selective Licensing proposal	72%	29%	73%	82%	76%
Disagree with Selective Licensing proposal	21%	68%	17%	9%	18%
Base	573	76	59	340	42
Positive impact if implement Selective Licensing	50%	11%	48%	60%	50%
Negative impact if implement Selective Licensing	17%	68%	14%	6%	10%
Base	574	77	58	341	41
Agree that Selective Licence fees are reasonable	55%	5%	55%	68%	59%
Disagree that Selective Licence fees are reasonable	30%	90%	22%	16%	24%
Base	560	74	55	332	42
Agree with proposed Selective Licensing conditions	66%	23%	66%	77%	69%
Disagree with proposed Selective Licensing conditions	19%	66%	18%	8%	14%

- Support for the **Selective Licensing proposal** is strong overall with over seven out of ten (72%) respondents agreeing with the proposal. A fifth disagree (21%).
 - Residents in West Bromwich are more strongly in favour of the proposal than other groups (82% agree), although this is 5% points lower than support for Additional Licensing (87%);
 - Landlords/agents in West Bromwich are again most strongly opposed to the proposal, with just over two thirds (68%) disagreeing. This is 7% points higher than for Additional Licensing (61%);
 - The most common comments around the Selective Licensing proposal are similar to those for Additional Licensing, in that it will **improve living conditions, standards and safety and ultimately protect tenants** (221 comments).

- Half of respondents (50%) feel that **impact of Selective Licensing** on them, would be positive if it were to be implemented. One in six (17%) feel it would have a negative impact on them.
 - Generally speaking, a slightly higher proportion of respondents across most groups feel Selective Licensing will have a negative impact on them, compared to Additional Licensing;
 - Six out of ten residents in West Bromwich (60%) feel it would have a positive impact on them, with only a very small proportion feeling it would be negative (6%);
 - Over two thirds of landlords and agents in West Bromwich (68%) feel Selective Licensing will have a negative impact on them, 17% points higher than for Additional Licensing (51%);
 - The most frequent comments are that the impact will be **better quality housing and living conditions** (78 comments) and have a **positive impact on the local area** (76 comments).

- Over half of respondents (55%) agree that the proposed **Selective Licence fees** are reasonable. Three out of ten (30%) disagree.
 - Residents in West Bromwich are most supportive, with just under seven out of ten (68%) agreeing with the proposed fees;
 - Landlords and agents in West Bromwich are more strongly opposed to the Selective Licence fees, than Additional Licence fees, with nine out of ten (90%) disagreeing. This is 10% points higher than for Additional Licensing;
 - The most frequent comments are the same as those for Additional Licensing, in that fees are **appropriate/reasonable and will have a positive effect** (131 comments).

- Two thirds of respondents (66%) agree with the proposed **Selective Licensing conditions**, whilst just under a fifth (19%) disagree.
 - Residents in West Bromwich are again most supportive of the conditions, with just over three quarters agreeing (77%).
 - Landlords and agents in West Bromwich are most strongly opposed to the conditions, with two thirds disagreeing (66%), 10% points higher than for Additional Licensing.
 - Again, we see similar comments to those for Additional Licensing, with the most common that conditions are **appropriate/reasonable/will have a positive effect** (148 comments).

3. Other comments about the proposals and alternatives to licensing

Respondents were asked whether they had any other comments to add about the proposed licensing schemes or suggestions for alternatives that the Council could consider. 355 comments were received from 274 respondents. The most common comments were that;

1. There is a need to improve living conditions, standards and safety (69 comments);
2. There is a need for regular monitoring/checks to enforce conditions (39 comments);

3. Licensing proposals penalise good landlords and bad landlords will continue to operate (24 comments).

4. Views from the public meeting/written responses

Four public meetings were held (two face to face meetings and two online meetings, the latter as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, whereby social distancing measures meant that face to face meetings could not take place). In total, 55 attendees took part in the meetings. In addition, there were 9 written responses provided, 2 via the online feedback form and 7 via email or letter.

Key themes arising are that landlords and other respondents feel that although work is needed to **improve the standard of private rented properties in West Bromwich**, it is **unfair to penalise all landlords** in order to target the few who either do not take their responsibilities seriously or are criminal in their intentions. Many landlords feel it is unfair that they are **being unfairly penalised or taxed**, when they are providing a much-needed service in providing homes for local people, which cannot be provided via social housing.

Many feel that the Council should use its existing resources to **target bad landlords only**, rather than take a blanket approach to all landlords. In addition, they feel that landlords should not and cannot **be held accountable for tenant behaviour**, particularly around ASB. Finally, many suggest that the **fees will ultimately be passed onto tenants**, and this will see rents rising, and unintended consequences such as increased demands on social housing and homelessness.

2. Introduction

Background

Local councils can choose to require private landlords or their managing agents to have a licence to rent out their property. The licence conditions state that landlords must keep their property safe and well maintained as well as deal with any problems associated with the property such as dumped rubbish, untidy gardens or anti-social behaviour.

Sandwell Council believes that extending their current mandatory licensing scheme to cover all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in West Bromwich through Additional Licensing, as well as introducing a Selective Licensing scheme for all other privately rented properties in West Bromwich will:

- Improve living arrangements for many tenants by improving the condition of properties;
- Support good landlords and remove rogue landlords from operating;
- Improve the image of the area, making it a desirable place to live.

Before making any decision, Sandwell Council commissioned M·E·L Research to gather the views of local people, in particular local landlords, private tenants, agents, residents, businesses and organisations within and outside of West Bromwich.

Proposals

The consultation focused on the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with the proposal being considered by the Council around introducing:

- Additional Licensing of privately rented Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in a selected area within West Bromwich.
- Selective Licensing of all other privately rented properties in the same selected area within West Bromwich.

The consultation also looked at the likely impact either scheme may have on respondents, and the degree to which respondents feel the proposed fees and licensing conditions for each of the schemes are reasonable or unreasonable.

Public consultation

The consultation ran for 12 weeks from 27th January to 20th April 2020. The initial timetable of 10 weeks was extended by 2 weeks, due to any potential impact that the Coronavirus pandemic may have had on the ability of interested parties to take part in the consultation. A variety of consultation methods were used to allow interested parties to share their views on the proposals. These are detailed below.

The survey was promoted by the Council to interested parties in Sandwell and in particular West Bromwich, such as landlords, agents, tenants, residents, local businesses and third sector organisations. It was also promoted to neighbouring local authorities and encouraged neighbouring local authorities to promote the survey to landlords, residents, tenants and other businesses who may wish to take part in the consultation. A full list of all activities undertaken by the Council to promote the consultation, is provided here:

- Paid Facebook response reached 61,257, with 512 clicks onto the website
- Instagram posts:
 - People reached: 267
 - Total engagements: 40
- Facebook from all posts:
 - Total Reached – 977
 - Total Engagement – 107
- Twitter from all posts:
 - Total Reached – 3362
 - Total Engagement – 92
- Emails to the following groups:
 - Landlords and agents - 338
 - Community Groups - 22
 - Eastern European Groups - 11
 - Others - 206 (most were in English but EWA (59 Staff group chat) had both versions English and Polish.
- Visits to letting agents - 30
 - Phone calls/emails to letting agents - 21
- Visits to commercial / community centres / faith groups/ medical centres/ hospitals/police and fire stations - 40
- Raaj FM appearance
- Posts:
 - 3 posts on Landlord's Blog
 - Posts on 8 on-line community groups

- 10 drop-in sessions held at:
 - Sandwell Council Office (Court House) (2 drop-in sessions)
 - YMCA café (engaged a group representing 5 local churches)
 - Wood lane
 - Lyng centre
 - West Brom Leisure centre (2 drop-in sessions)
 - Central Library
 - Revenue and Benefits Office on West Bromwich High St (2 drop-in sessions).

Consultation methods

A variety of methods were used to consult with landlords, tenants, residents, businesses, stakeholders and other interested parties. These included an online survey, which was hosted independently by M·E·L Research, along with a postal survey sent to 18,973 properties within the proposed area in West Bromwich and neighbouring areas, within a 1km radius. Four public meetings were held, two held in local community venues and two undertaken online due to the introduction of social distancing measures by the UK Government, to reduce the spread of Coronavirus. In addition, an online feedback form was provided for written responses, along with an email address for any written responses and queries, and a freephone number.

In total, the consultation generated 598 responses to a survey and 9 written responses. In total, there were 55 attendees across the four public meetings. Of those who took part in the online survey, 41 responses to the survey were from respondents outside of West Bromwich. These have been included within the overall analysis and results provided separately in Appendix 5.

1. Online survey

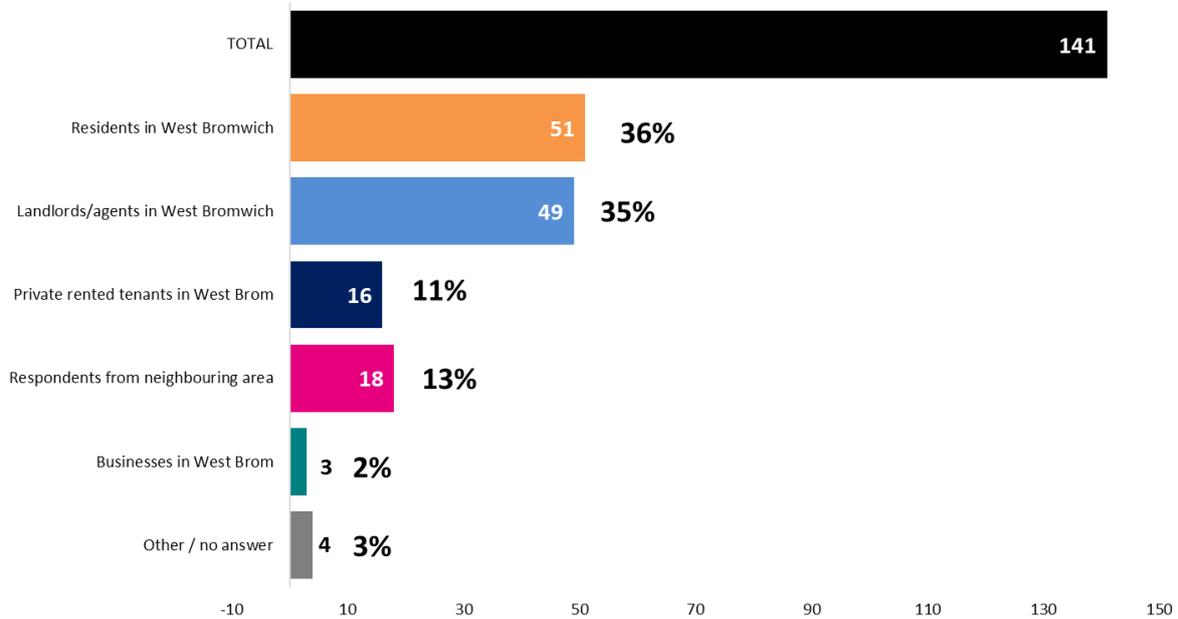
The online survey was open to all interested parties to have their say on the proposals. In total, there were 141 responses to the online survey. For the purposes of this consultation, results have been grouped to show respondents as 'landlords', which includes both landlords and letting/managing agents, 'private renting tenants', 'residents' and 'Other'. This includes the following descriptions:

- Own or manage a business
- Represent a business organisation
- A community group or charity
- 'Other'.

Where people identified themselves as belonging to more than one group, we have assigned respondents to one principal group (prioritised by landlords/agents first, followed by private renting tenants, residents and then 'other').

The chart below shows the breakdown of respondents by profile:

Figure 3: Respondent profile to online survey (n=141)

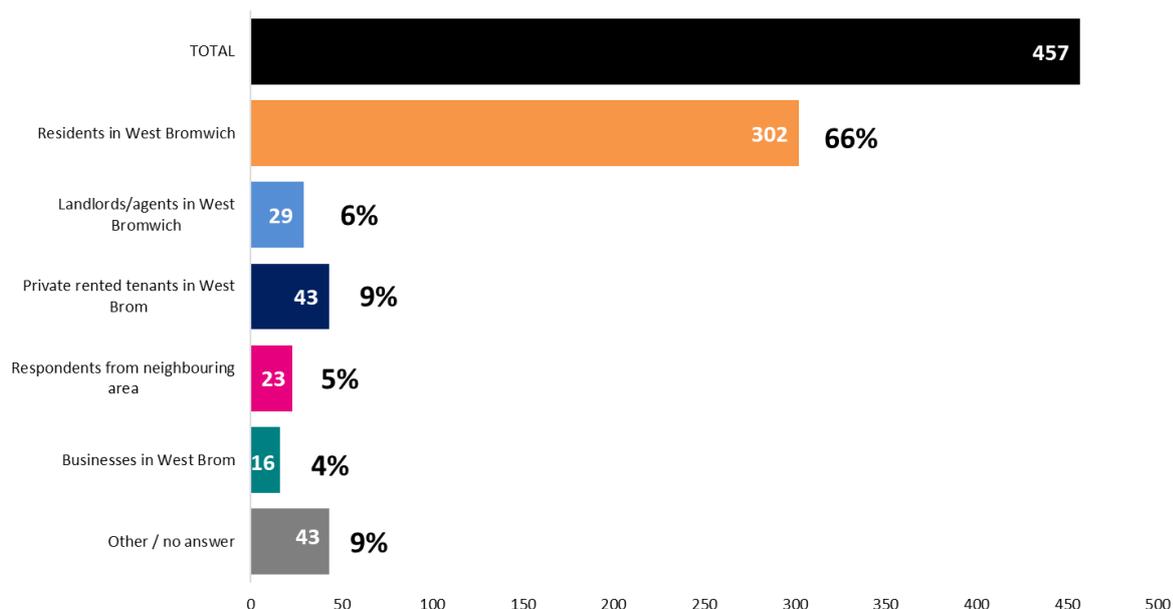


2. Postal survey

A postal survey was sent to 18,973 properties within the proposed designation area and neighbouring areas within a 1km radius. Sandwell Council's Gazetteer list was used to generate the addresses using their in-house analyst. In total, 457 responses were received by post. The chart below shows the breakdown of respondents by this profile:

The chart below also shows the profile of respondents to the postal survey by whether they are identified as a landlord/agent, private rented tenant, resident or 'other'.

Figure 4: Respondent profile to postal resident survey (n=457)



3. Public meetings

Four public meetings were hosted by M·E·L Research, to introduce the proposal to anyone interested in finding out more about the proposal and to share their views. Council officers were present at each of the meetings, with a Question and Answers session included as an opportunity for attendees to ask the council any questions about the proposals, as well as to provide them with an opportunity to feedback views and concerns. Due to Covid-19, the last face to face public meeting had to be cancelled, so two online sessions were then hosted by M·E·L Research. In total, 54 people attended a public meeting, the vast majority of which were landlords.

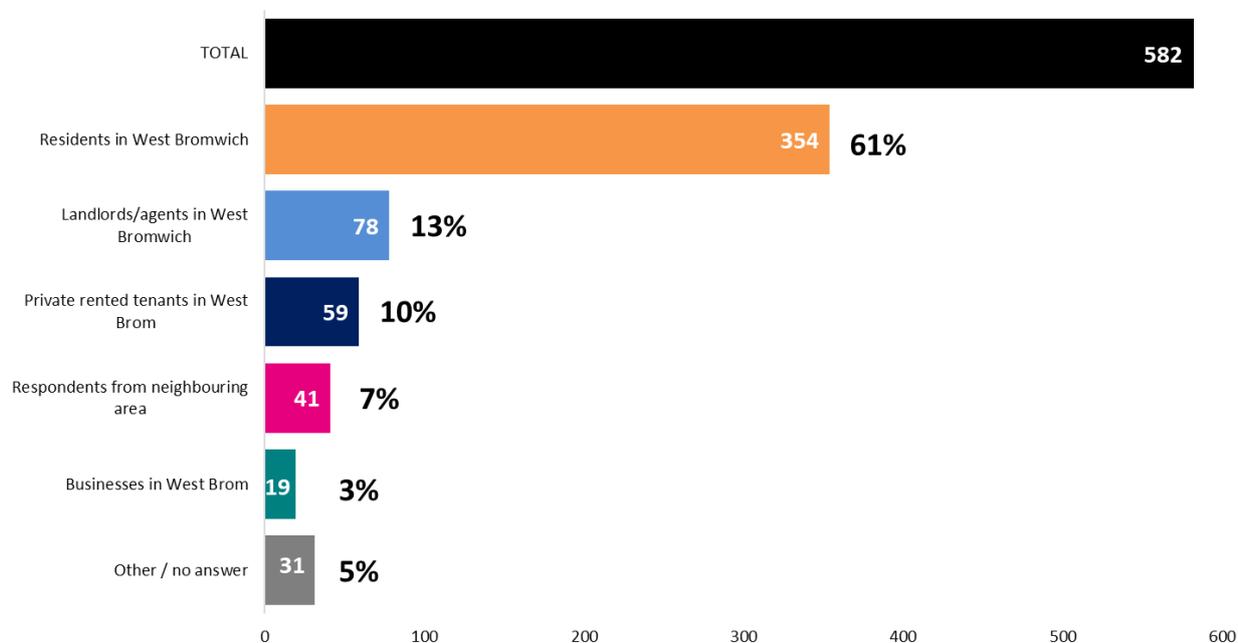
4. Written feedback/responses

In addition, respondents were asked to submit written responses if they wished. They could do this either by a feedback form online, by email, by letter or by telephone. In total, 9 written responses were submitted via the online feedback form or email. These have been included and analysed in the report and inserted in the Appendices. This includes responses from stakeholders such as landlords and agents' associations.

Overall profile of respondents

A breakdown of respondent types (across the online and postal surveys) is provided in the chart below where respondents gave a response.

Figure 5: Respondent profile to consultation (by group) (n=582)



Reporting conventions

Owing to the rounding of numbers, percentages displayed visually on graphs or charts in the report may not always add up to 100% and may differ slightly when compared with the text. The figures provided in the text should always be used. For some questions, respondents could give more than one response (multiple choice). For these questions, the percentage for each response is calculated as a percentage of the total number of respondents and therefore percentages do not usually add up to 100%.

The consultation findings are presented throughout the report as an overall figure (using combined results from the face to face and online surveys, as the principal survey tools for the consultation), and then by type of respondent (landlord/agent, privately renting tenant, resident, businesses and other) to show differing views in West Bromwich. Results by methodology are provided in Appendix 4 (by postal survey, and online survey methods). Responses from those outside of West Bromwich are included within the overall results and provided separately in Appendix 5 (41 responses in total).

The number of respondents to each question is presented as 'n=' throughout the report.

3. Survey results

This section of the report presents the results from the surveys, with overall results combining online and postal survey responses.

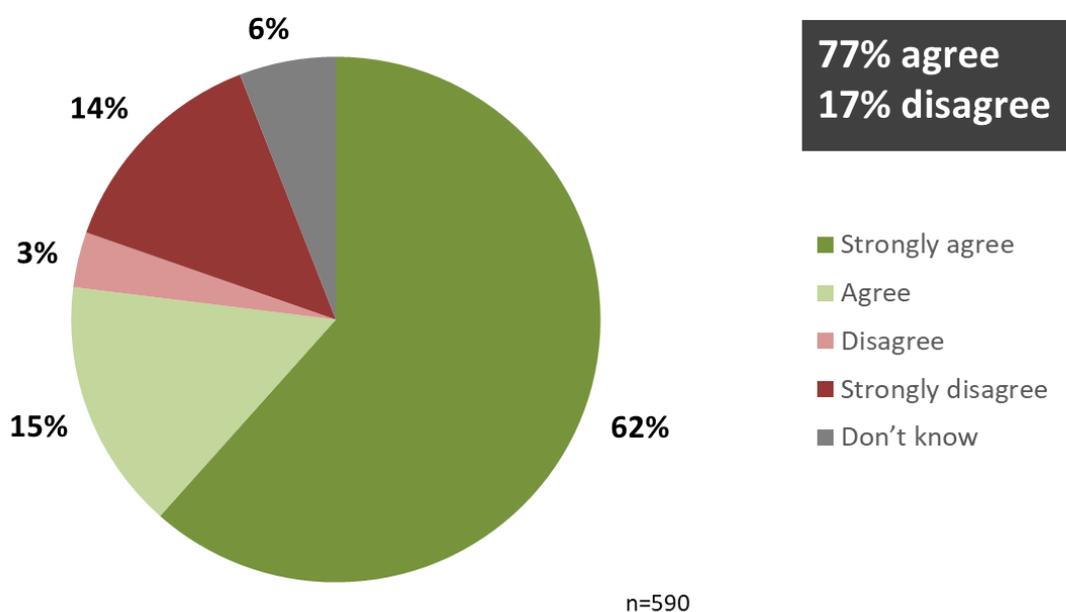
1. Views on the proposed licensing schemes

a. Proposal to introduce Additional Licensing in West Bromwich

The Council is proposing to Additional Licensing of privately rented Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in a selected area within West Bromwich. This would require all HMOs to be licensed, that do not currently fall under the Mandatory Licensing scheme.

Overall, just over three quarters of ten respondents (77%) agree with the proposal for Additional Licensing, with around one in six respondents (17%) disagreeing. Over six out of ten (62%) strongly agree with the proposal. Support is slightly higher (5%) for Additional Licensing than for Selective Licensing.

Figure 6: Support for introducing an Additional Licensing scheme in the proposed area (overall) (n=590)



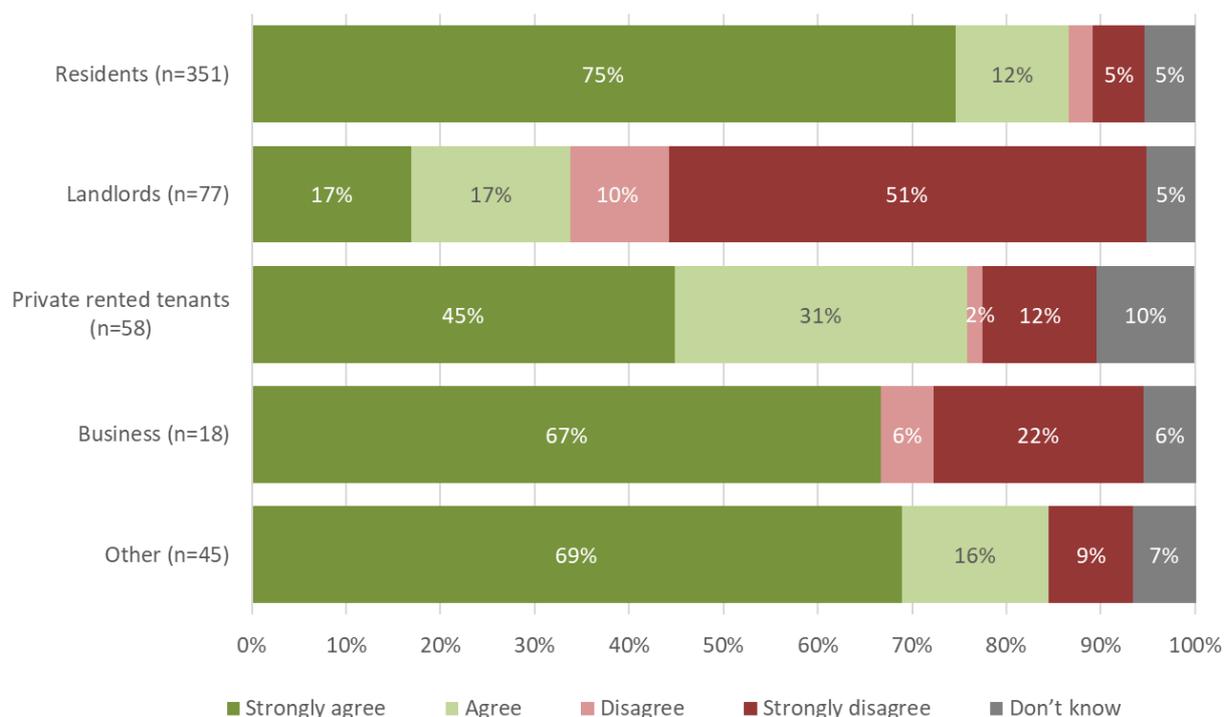
NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text.

When we look at responses by group, we can see the following differences:

- Residents in West Bromwich are more strongly in favour of the Additional Licensing proposal than other groups, with 87% agreeing, followed closely by those who were classed as 'other' (85%).

- Private rented tenants in West Bromwich are supportive of the proposal, with around three quarters saying they agree (76%). 14% disagree.
- Landlords/agents in West Bromwich are most strongly opposed, with six out of ten (61%) disagreeing. Around a third of landlords (34%) agree with the proposal.

Figure 7: Support for introducing an Additional Licensing scheme (by group)



NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

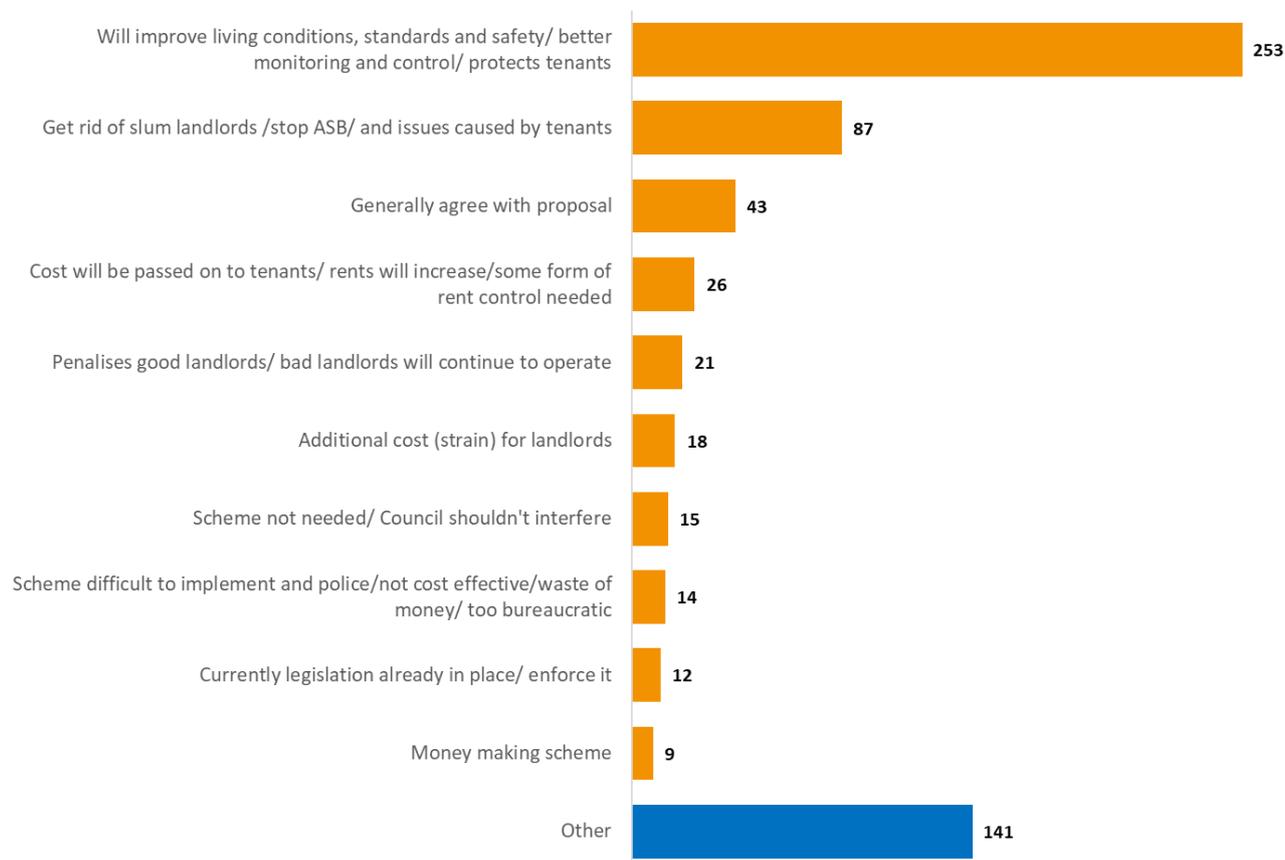
Comments on Additional Licensing scheme proposals

Respondents were invited to provide any further comments they may have on the proposed Additional Licensing scheme. For all free text responses throughout the report, each response was analysed and coded into one or more 'theme'. Comments that were not relevant to the question have been excluded from the analysis. In total, 541 comments were identified and coded into key themes (from 455 respondents). Any themes with fewer than 5 comments received were grouped under 'other'.

The top three themes on the Additional Licensing proposal are positive, with respondents feeling that Additional Licensing will **improve living conditions, standards and safety and ultimately protect tenants** (253 comments); it will **get rid of slum landlords/stop ASB and issues caused by tenants** (87 comments); and that respondents are **generally in support of the proposal** (43 comments). The most common

negative comment around the proposal is that **costs will be passed onto tenants** (26 comments). The chart below shows all themes with the number of comments received.

Figure 8: Themed comments on Additional Licensing proposal (no of comments coded by theme) (541 comments)

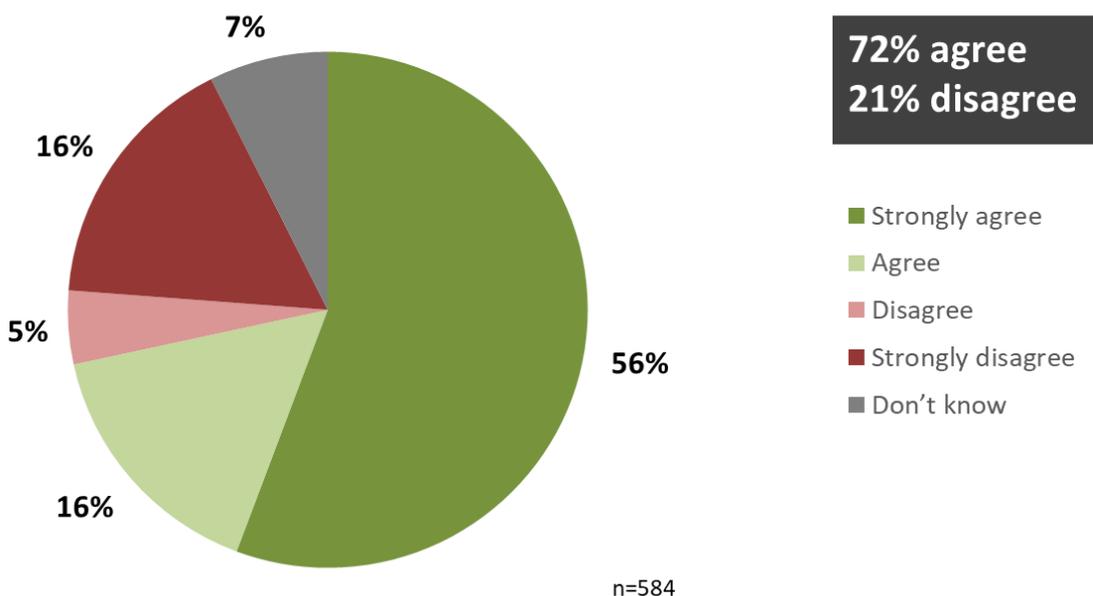


b. Proposal to introduce Selective Licensing in West Bromwich

The Council is also proposing to introduce a Selective Licensing scheme, which would require all privately rented properties within the identified area in West Bromwich to be licensed. This would cover properties which are not covered by either the Mandatory Licensing scheme, or the proposed Additional Licensing scheme.

Overall, just over seven out of ten respondents (72%) agree with the proposal for Selective Licensing, with over half (56%) strongly agreeing. This is slightly lower than those agreeing with Additional Licensing (5% lower). A fifth (21%) disagree.

Figure 9: Levels of support for introducing a Selective Licensing scheme (overall) (n=584)

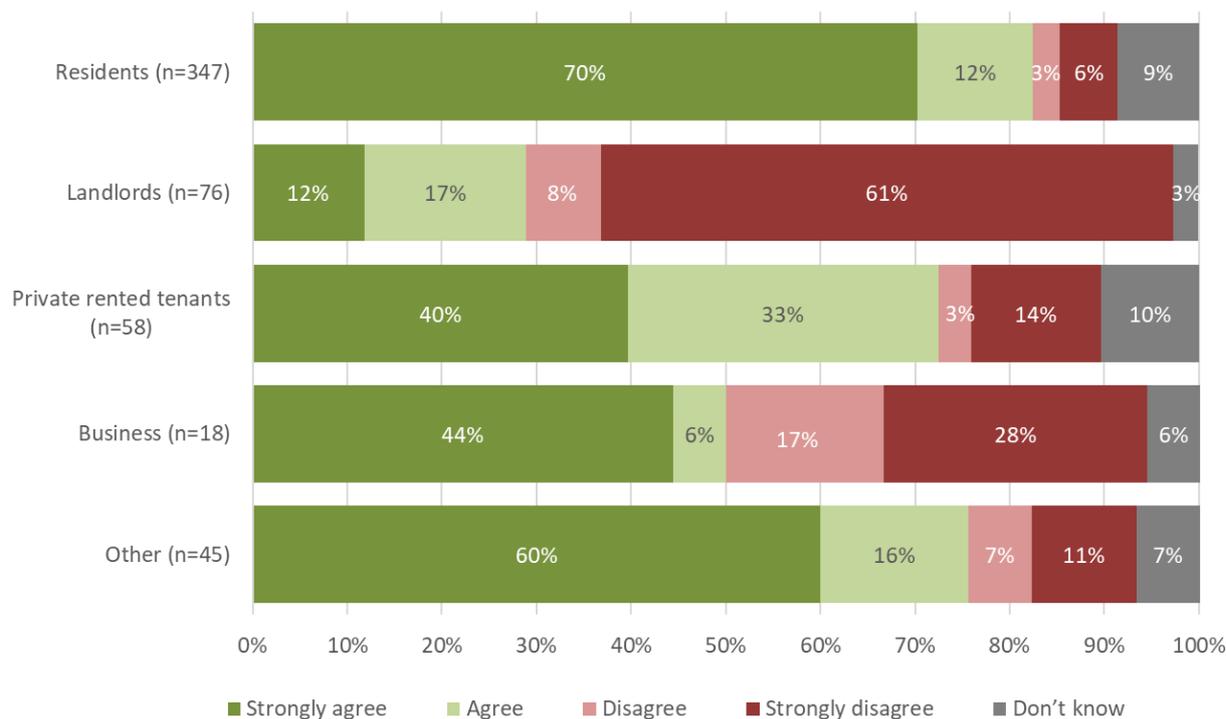


NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text.

When we look at responses by group, we can see the following differences:

- Residents in West Bromwich are again more strongly in favour of the proposal than other groups, with over eight out of ten agreeing (82%). This is 5% points lower than those in support of Additional Licensing (87%).
- Private rented tenants in West Bromwich and 'other' respondents are also in favour, with around three quarters agreeing (73% and 76% respectively).
- Landlords/agents in West Bromwich are again most strongly opposed to the proposal, with just over two thirds (68%) disagreeing. This is 7% points higher than for Additional Licensing. Around three out of ten landlords (29%) agree with the proposals.

Figure 10: Levels of support for introducing a Selective Licensing scheme (by group)



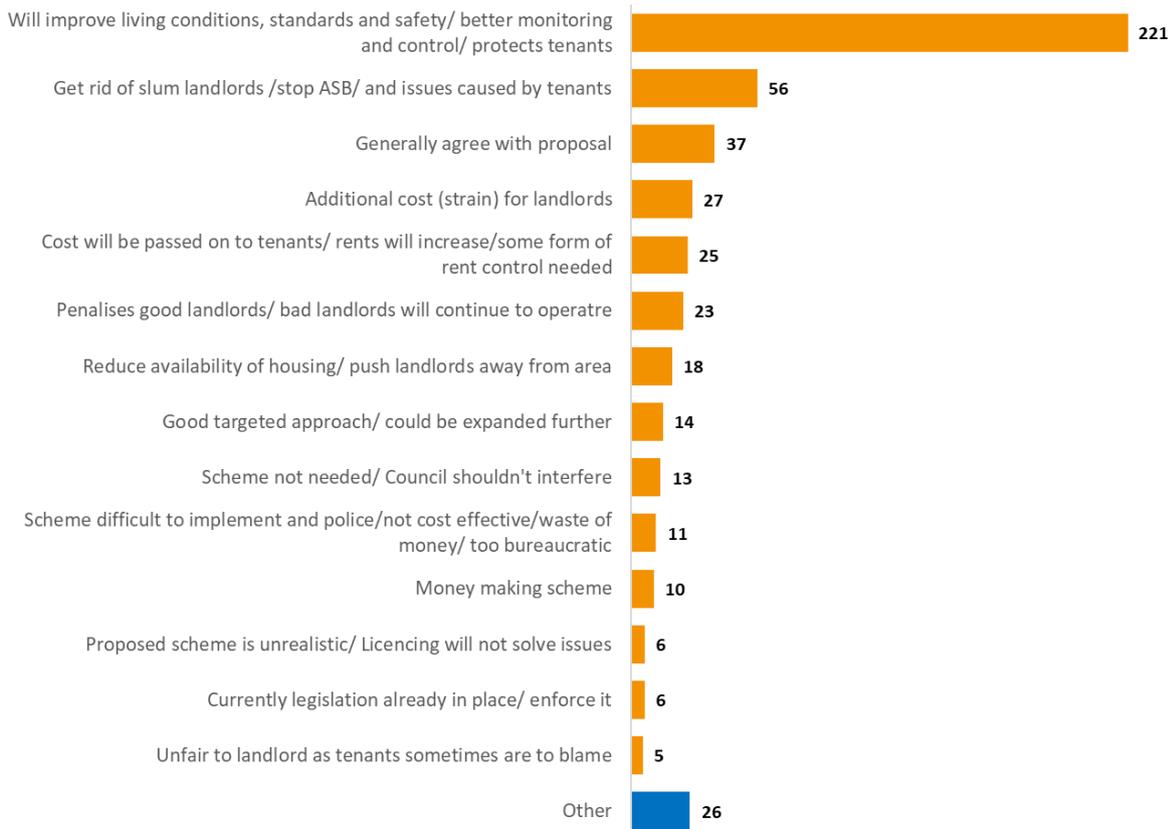
NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

Comments on Selective Licensing scheme proposals

Respondents were invited to provide any further comments they may have on the proposed Selective Licensing scheme. In total, 498 comments were identified and coded into key themes, from 406 respondents. Themes which received fewer than 5 comments were grouped under 'other'.

The top three themes on the Selective Licensing proposal are the same as those for Additional Licensing. The most common comments are that it will **improve living conditions, standards and safety and ultimately protect tenants** (221 comments); it will **get rid of slum landlords/stop ASB and issues caused by tenants** (56 comments); or that respondents are **generally in support of the proposal** (37 comments). The most negative comments around the proposal are that it will be an **additional cost for landlords** (27 comments) and that **costs will be passed onto tenants** (25 comments). The chart below shows all themes with the number of comments received.

Figure 11: Themed comments on Selective Licensing proposal (no of comments coded by theme) (498 comments)

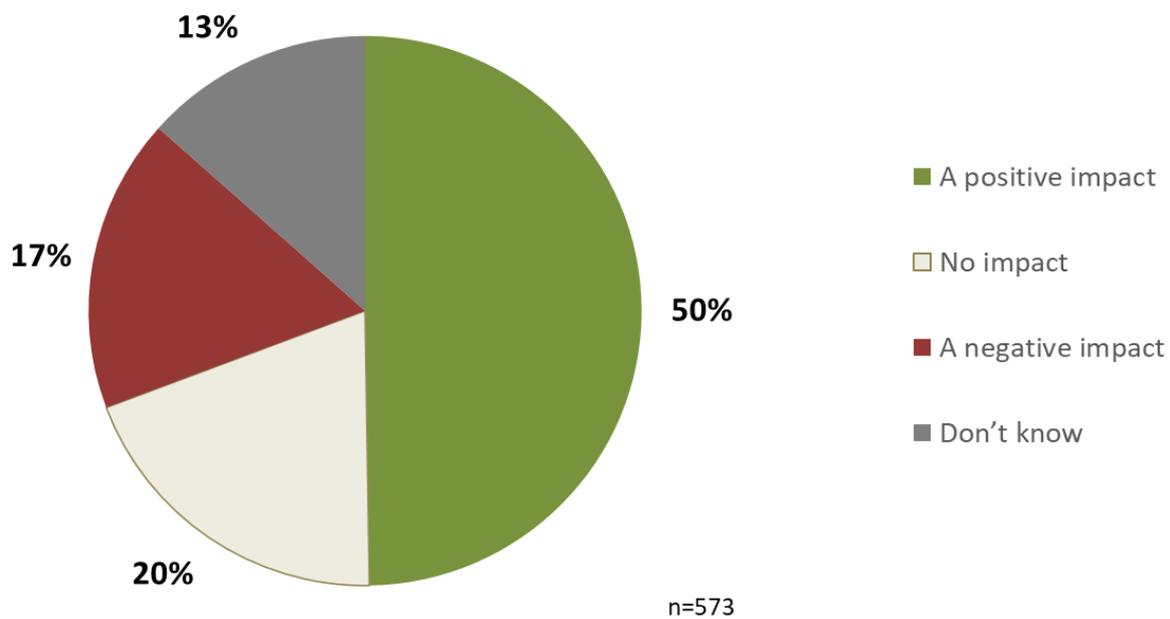


2. Views on the likely impact of licensing

a. Likely impact of Additional Licensing on respondents

Respondents were asked what they feel the likely impact of implementing an Additional Licensing scheme would have on them. Over half of respondents (53%) feel that introducing Additional Licensing will have a positive impact on them, whilst around one in eight (12%) feel it will have a negative impact. Around a fifth (21%) feel it will have no impact.

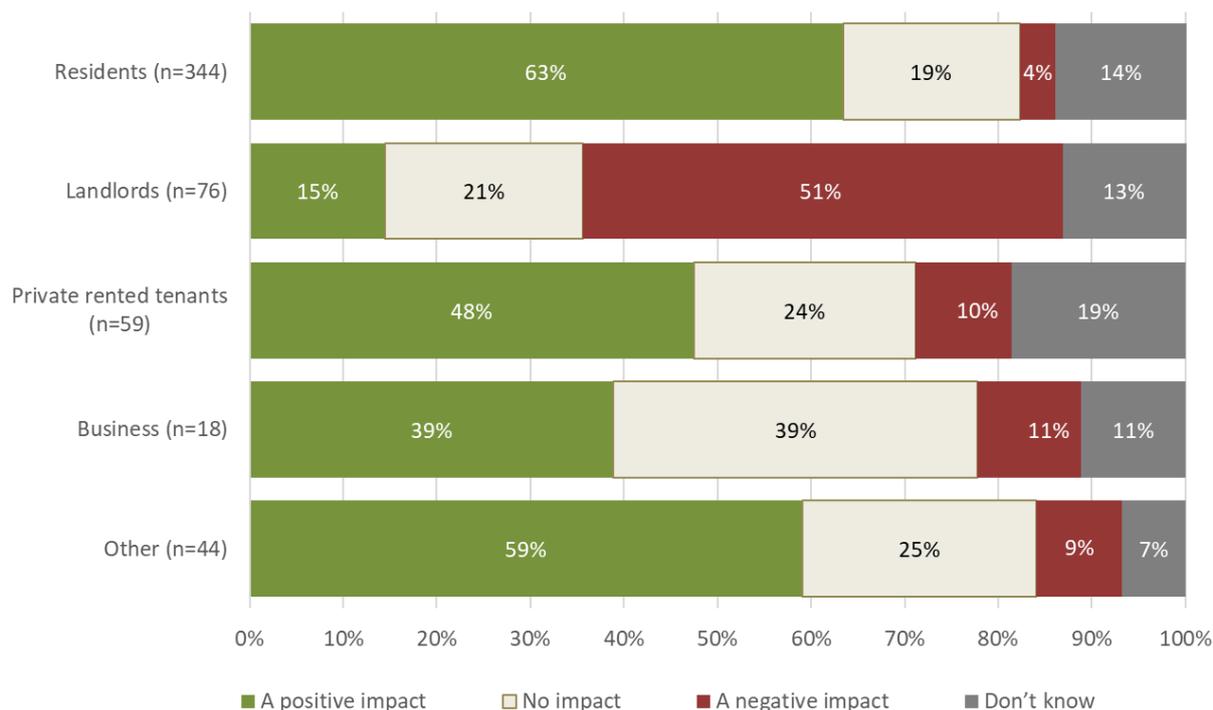
Figure 12: Likely impact of implementing Additional Licensing (overall) (n=581)



When we look at responses by group, we can see the following differences:

- Residents in West Bromwich are most supportive, with over six out of ten (63%) saying Additional Licensing will have a positive impact on them. This is closely followed by 'other' respondents (59% feel it will have a positive impact).
- Just under half of privately renting tenants in West Bromwich (48%) feel Additional Licensing will have a positive impact on them, whilst around a quarter (24%) feel it will have no impact on them.
- Around half of landlords and agents in West Bromwich (51%) feel Additional Licensing will have a negative impact on them, whilst a fifth (21%) feel it will have no impact on them.

Figure 13: Likely impact of implementing Additional Licensing (by group)



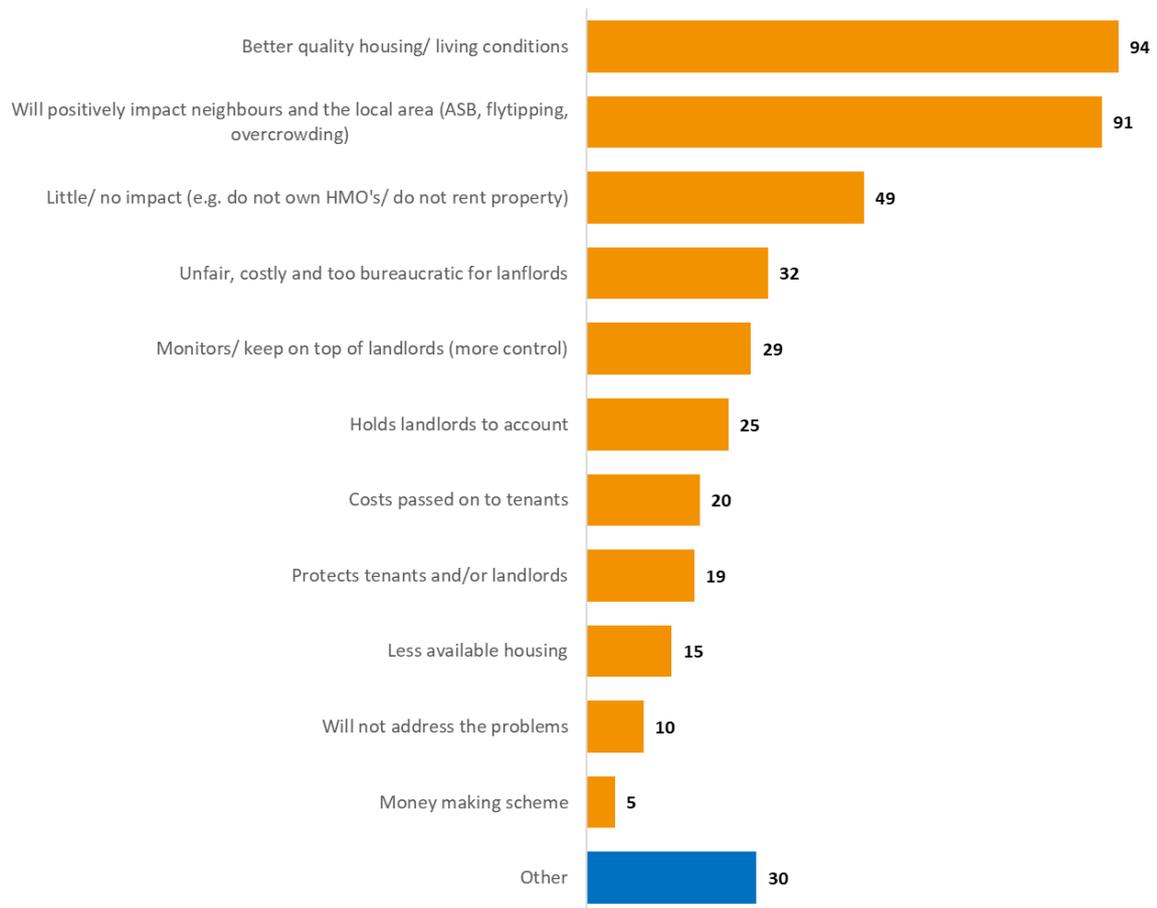
NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

Comments on the impact of Additional Licensing on respondents

Respondents were invited to provide any further comments on the impact of Additional Licensing. In total, 419 comments were identified and coded into key themes, from 352 respondents. Themes which received fewer than 5 comments were grouped under 'other'.

The most common comments are that it will result in **better quality housing and living conditions** (94 comments) and that it will have a **positive impact on the local area** (91 comments), followed by **it will have little or no impact** (because not renting/own HMO) (49 comments). The most negative comments are that it is **unfair and costly for landlords** (32 comments). The chart below shows all themes with the number of comments received.

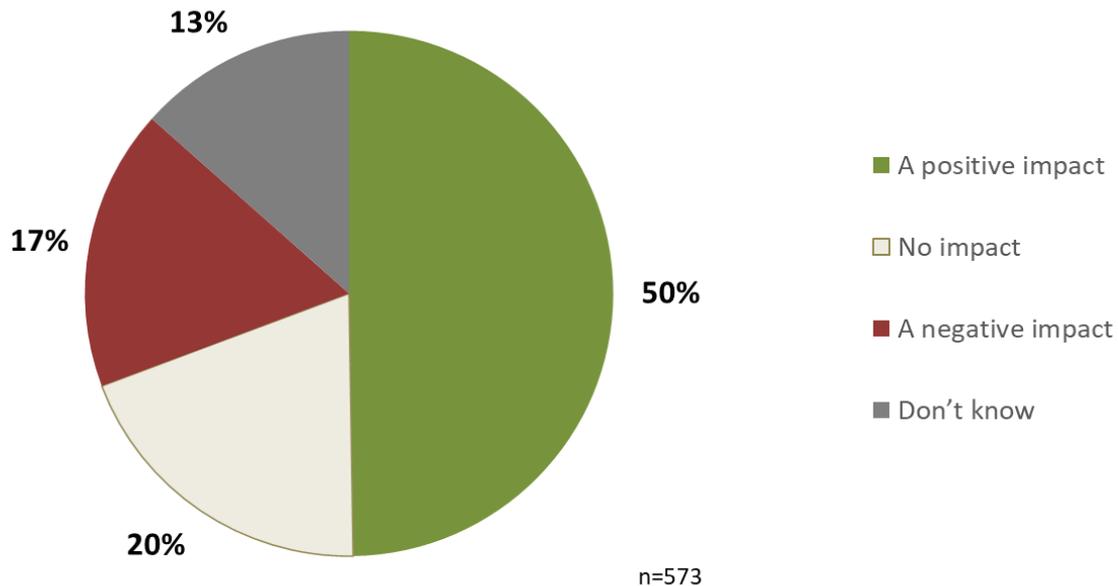
Figure 14: Themed comments on impact of Additional Licensing (no of comments coded by theme) (419 comments)



b. Likely impact of Selective Licensing on respondents

Respondents were asked what they feel the likely impact of implementing a Selective Licensing scheme would have on them. Half of respondents (50%) feel that introducing Selective Licensing will have a positive impact on them, whilst around one in six (17%) feel it will have a negative impact. A fifth (20%) feel it will have no impact.

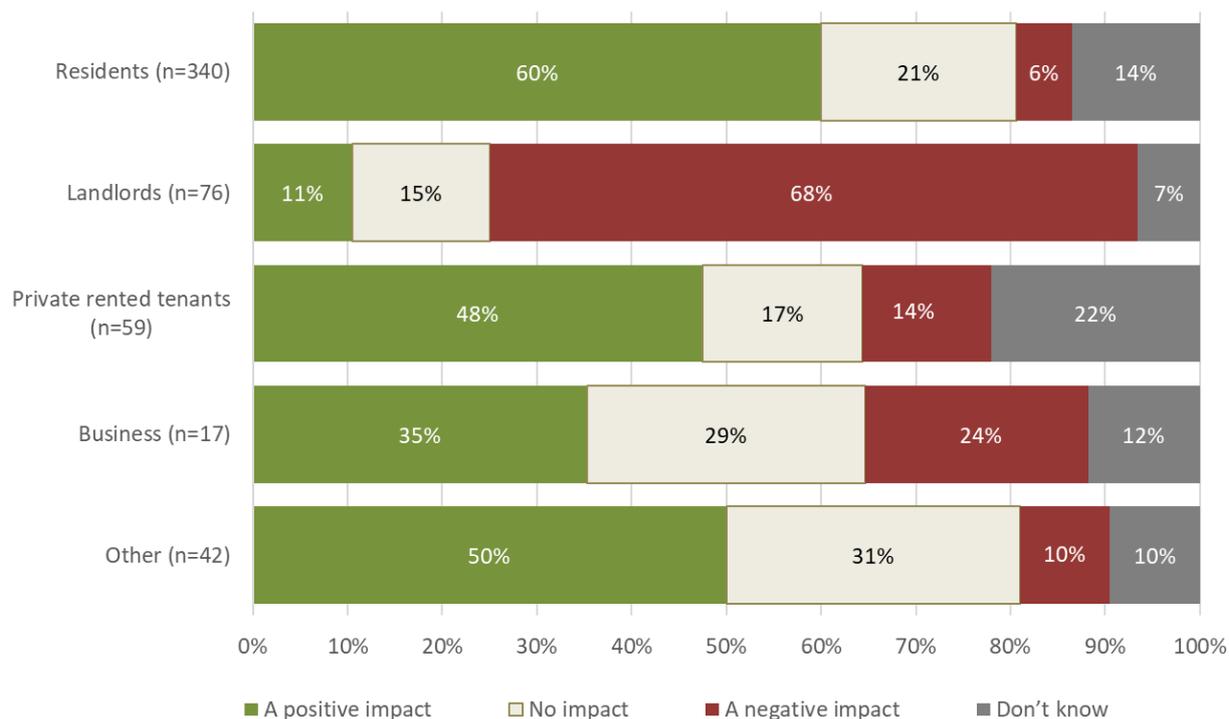
Figure 15: Likely impact of implementing Selective Licensing (overall) (n=573)



When we look at responses by group, we can see the following differences:

- Residents in West Bromwich are more supportive than other groups, with six out of ten (60%) saying Selective Licensing will have a positive impact on them.
- Half of 'other respondents (50%), and just under half of privately renting tenants in West Bromwich (48%) feel Selective Licensing will have a positive impact on them. 14% of privately renting tenants feel it will have a negative impact on them.
- Generally speaking, a slightly higher proportion of respondents across most groups feel Selective Licensing will have a negative impact on them, compared to Additional Licensing.
- Over two thirds of landlords and agents in West Bromwich (68%) feel Selective Licensing will have a negative impact on them, 17% points higher than for Additional Licensing.

Figure 16: Likely impact of implementing Selective Licensing (by group)



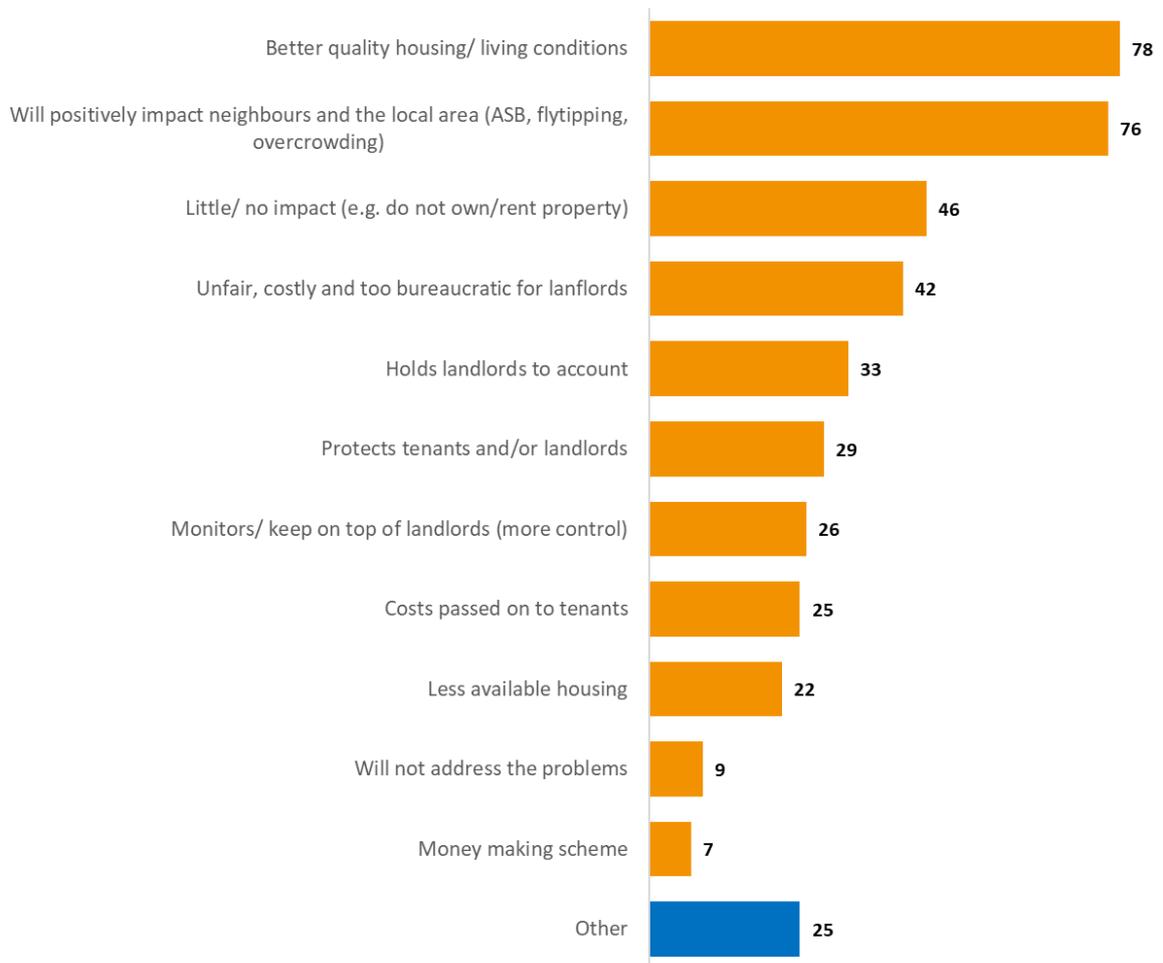
NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

Comments on the impact of Selective Licensing on respondents

Respondents were again invited to provide any further comments on the impact of Selective Licensing. In total, 418 comments were identified and coded into key themes, from 334 respondents. Themes which received fewer than 5 comments were grouped under 'other'.

The most common comments are the same as those for Additional Licensing, in that it will result in **better quality housing and living conditions** (78 comments) and that it will have a **positive impact on the local area** (76 comments), followed by **it will have little or no impact** (because not renting/own a property) (46 comments). The most negative comments are that it is **unfair and costly for landlords** (42 comments). The chart below shows all themes with the number of comments received.

Figure 17: Themed comments on impact of Selective Licensing (no of comments coded by theme) (418 comments)



3. Views on proposed licence fees

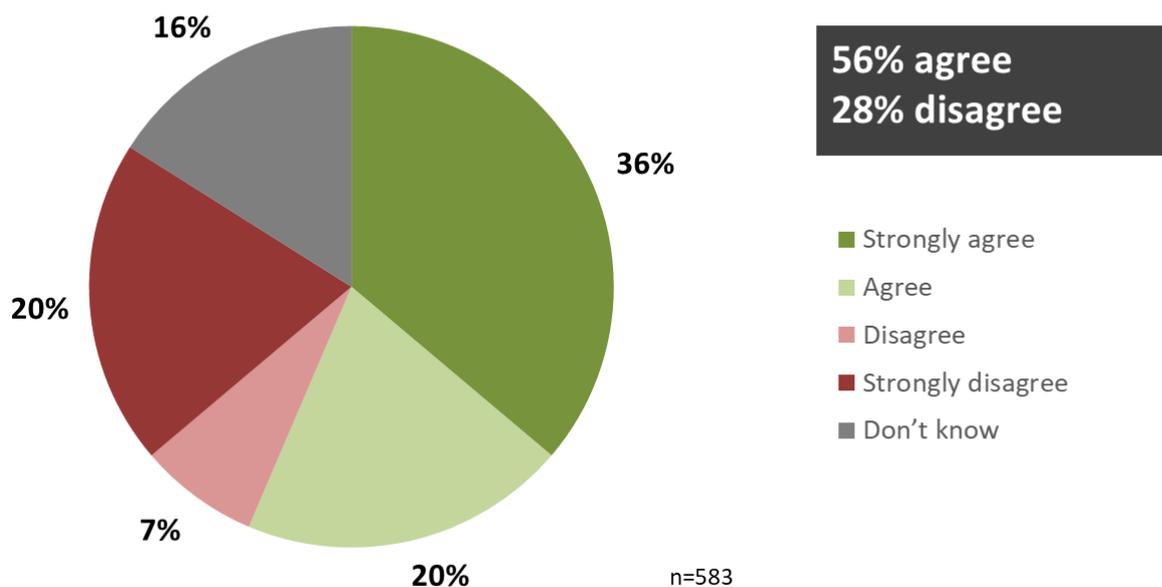
The consultation also sought views on the proposed licence fees for Additional Licensing and Selective Licensing. Links to documents or further information about the fees were provided within the consultation documents.

a. Additional Licence fees

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree that the proposed fees are reasonable. For Additional Licensing, the proposed fees are £850 for a five-year licence, before discounts.

Overall, over half of respondents (56%) agree that the proposed Additional Licence fees are reasonable, with over a third (36%) saying they strongly agree. Around three out of ten disagree (28%) disagree, with a fifth (20%) saying they strongly disagree.

Figure 18: How reasonable is the proposed Additional Licence fee? (overall) (n=583)

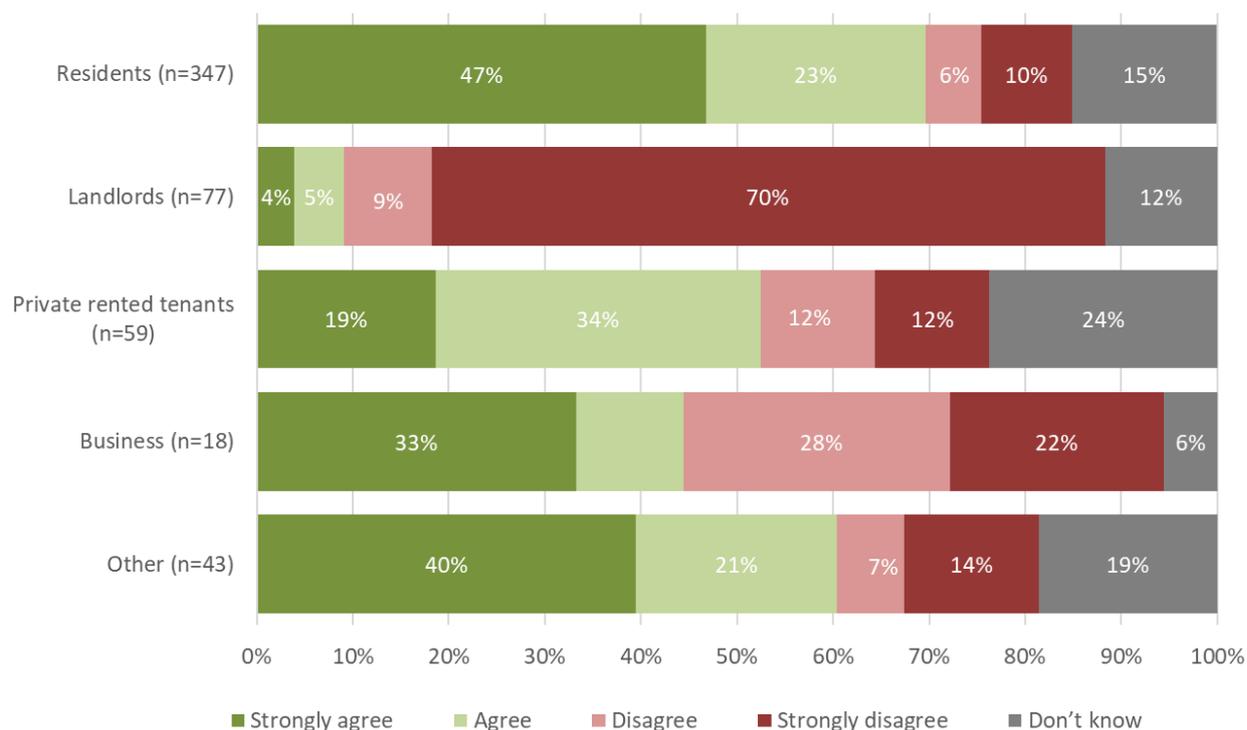


NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text.

When we look at responses by group, we can see the following differences:

- Residents in West Bromwich are more supportive of the proposed Additional Licence fees than other groups, with seven out of ten (70%) agreeing.
- 'Other' respondents and privately renting tenants in West Bromwich are also mostly in favour, with 60% and 53% saying they agree with the fees, respectively. However, around a quarter of privately renting tenants (24%) disagree with the proposed fees.
- Landlords/agents in West Bromwich are most strongly opposed to the proposed Additional Licence fees, with 79% saying they disagree with them. Only around one in ten (9%) agree.

Figure 19: How reasonable are the proposed Additional Licence fees? (by group)



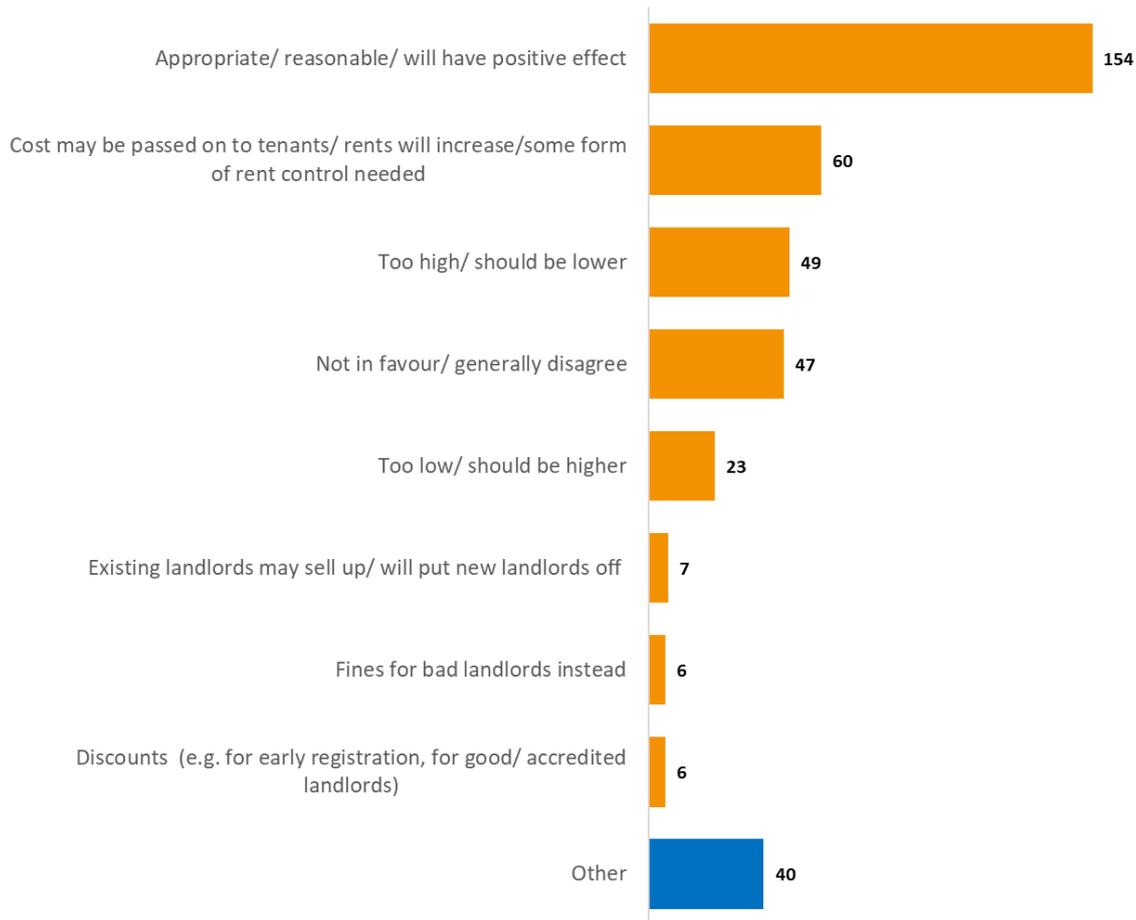
NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

Comments on Additional Licence fees

All respondents were invited to provide any other comments they had around the proposed Additional Licence fees. Comments that were not related to the question were removed. In total, 392 comments were provided which have been coded into common themes (from 359 respondents).

These show a mixture of positive and negative views, with all themes presented in the graph below. The most frequent comments were that respondents **feel they are appropriate/reasonable and will have a positive effect** (154 comments). This was followed by **fees will be passed onto tenants/ rents will increase** (60 comments).

Figure 20: Comments on Additional Licence fees (no of comments coded by theme) (392 comments)

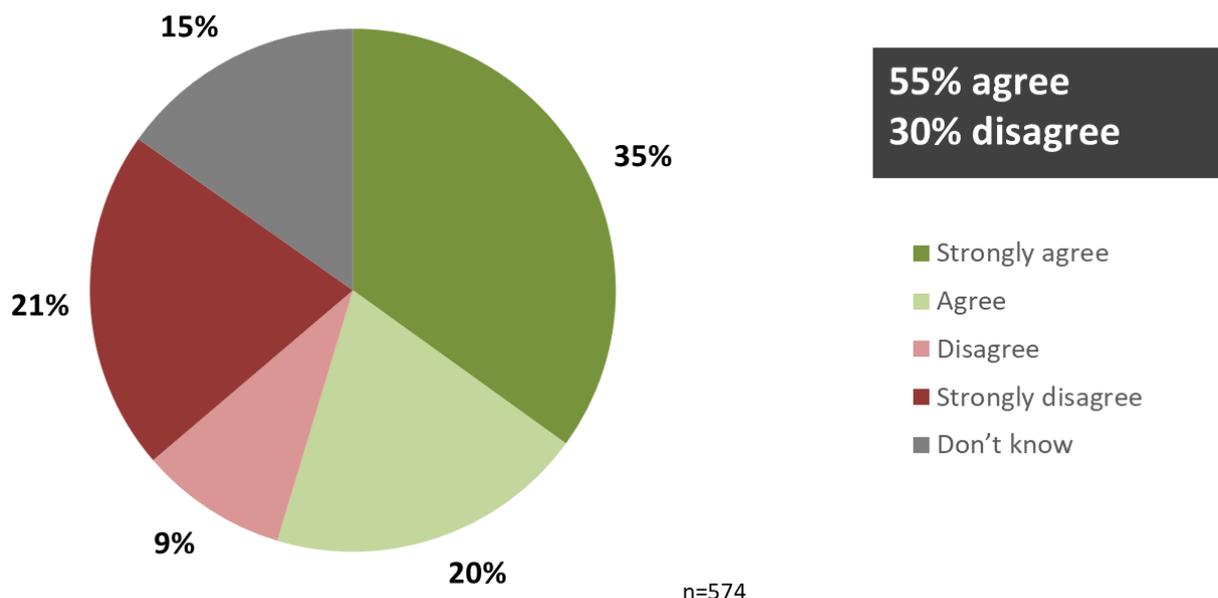


b. Selective Licence fees

Respondents were then asked the extent to which they agree or disagree that the proposed Selective Licence fees are reasonable. The proposed fees are £650 for a five-year licence, before discounts.

Overall, over half of respondents (55%) agree that the proposed Selective Licence fees are reasonable, with around one in three (35%) saying they strongly agree. Three out of ten disagree (30%) disagree, with around a fifth (21%) saying they strongly disagree.

Figure 21: How reasonable are the proposed Selective Licence fees? (overall) (n=574)

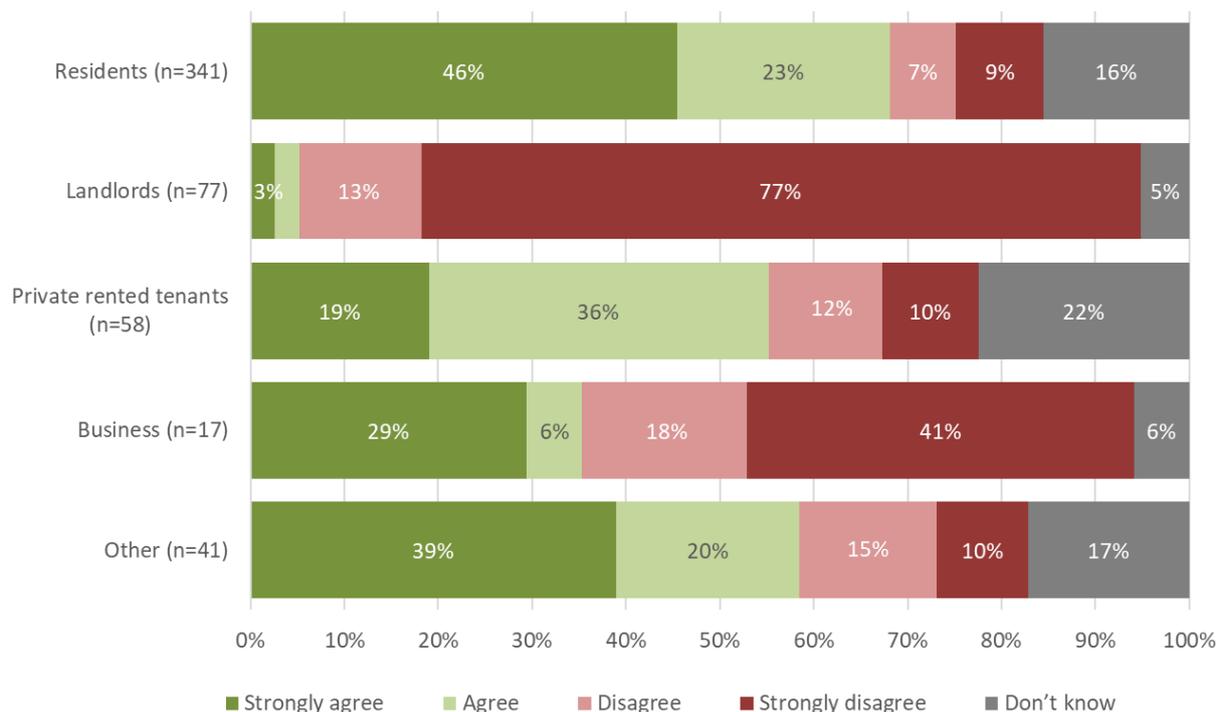


NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

When we look at responses by group, we can see the following differences:

- Support for the proposed Selective Licence fees are relatively similar for most groups, with the exception of landlords and agents in West Bromwich.
- Residents are most supportive, with just under seven out of ten (68%) agreeing with the proposed fees.
- Results are broadly similar for privately renting tenants in West Bromwich, with 55% agreeing and 22% disagreeing.
- Landlords and agents in West Bromwich are more strongly opposed to the Selective Licence fees, than Additional Licence fees, with nine out of ten (90%) disagreeing (77% strongly disagreeing and only 5% agreeing. This is 10% points higher than for Additional Licensing.

Figure 22: How reasonable is the proposed Selective Licence fee? (by group)



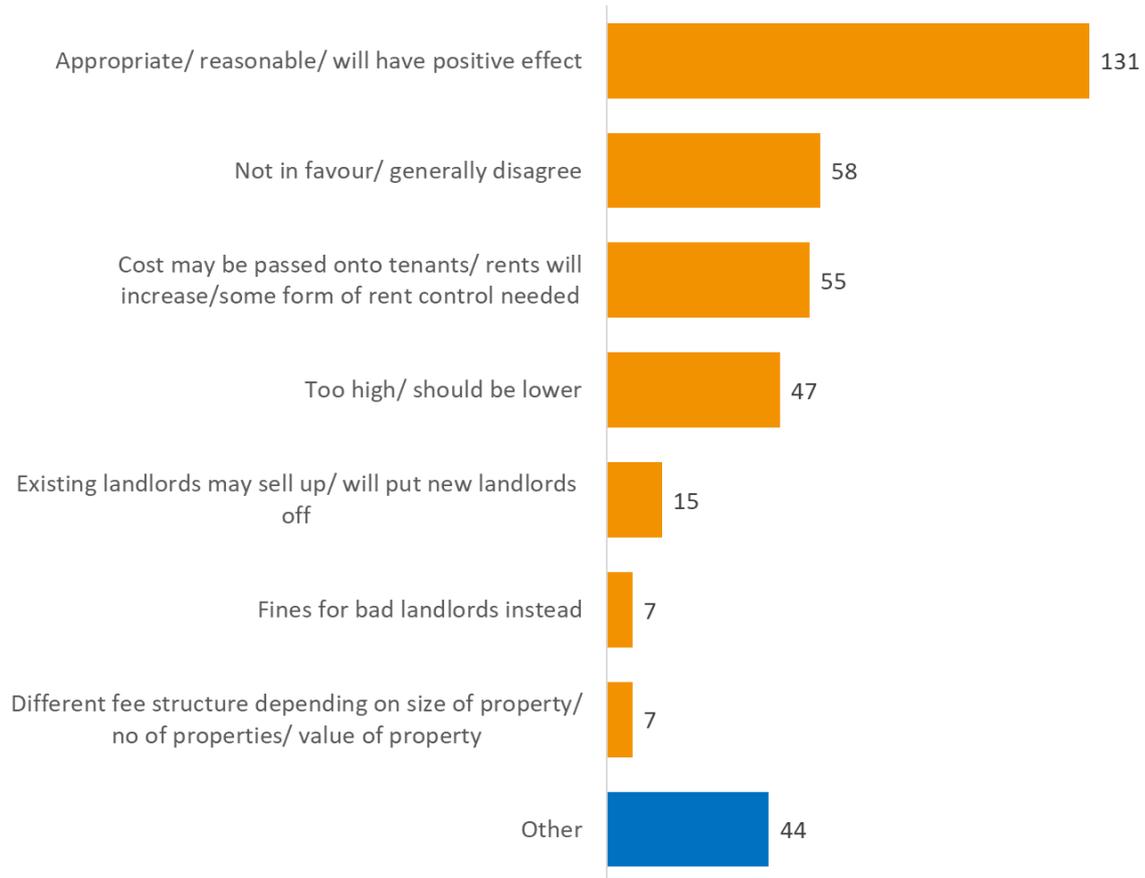
NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

Comments on Selective Licence fees

Respondents were again invited to provide any other comments they had around the proposed Selective Licence fees. Comments that were not related to the question were removed. In total, 388 comments were provided from 335 respondents.

These show a mixture of positive and negative views and are relatively similar to those around the Additional Licence fees. The most frequent comments were that respondents **feel they are appropriate/reasonable and will have a positive effect** (131 comments). This was followed by respondents saying they were **generally not in favour** (58 comments) and that **costs could be passed onto tenants/ rents will increase** (55 comments).

Figure 23: Comments on Selective Licence fees (no of comments coded by theme) (388 comments)



4. Views on licence conditions

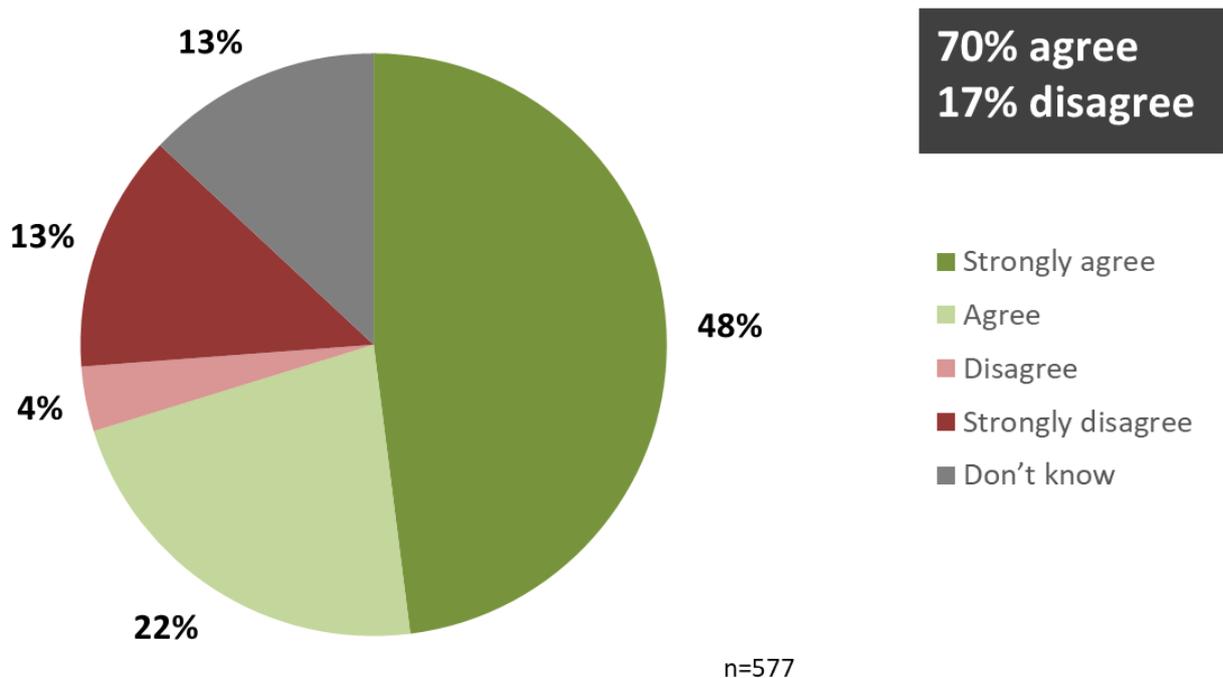
The consultation sought the views of respondents on a set of proposed licence conditions, for both Additional and Selective Licensing schemes. Links or further information about the sets of conditions were provided within the consultation documents.

a. Additional Licence conditions

Respondents were firstly asked to what extent they agree or disagree that the proposed Additional Licence conditions are reasonable.

Overall, seven out of ten respondents (70%) agree that the proposed Additional Licence conditions are reasonable, with just under half (48%) strongly agreeing. Around one in six (17%) disagree.

Figure 24: Extent to which proposed Additional Licence conditions are reasonable (overall) (n=577)

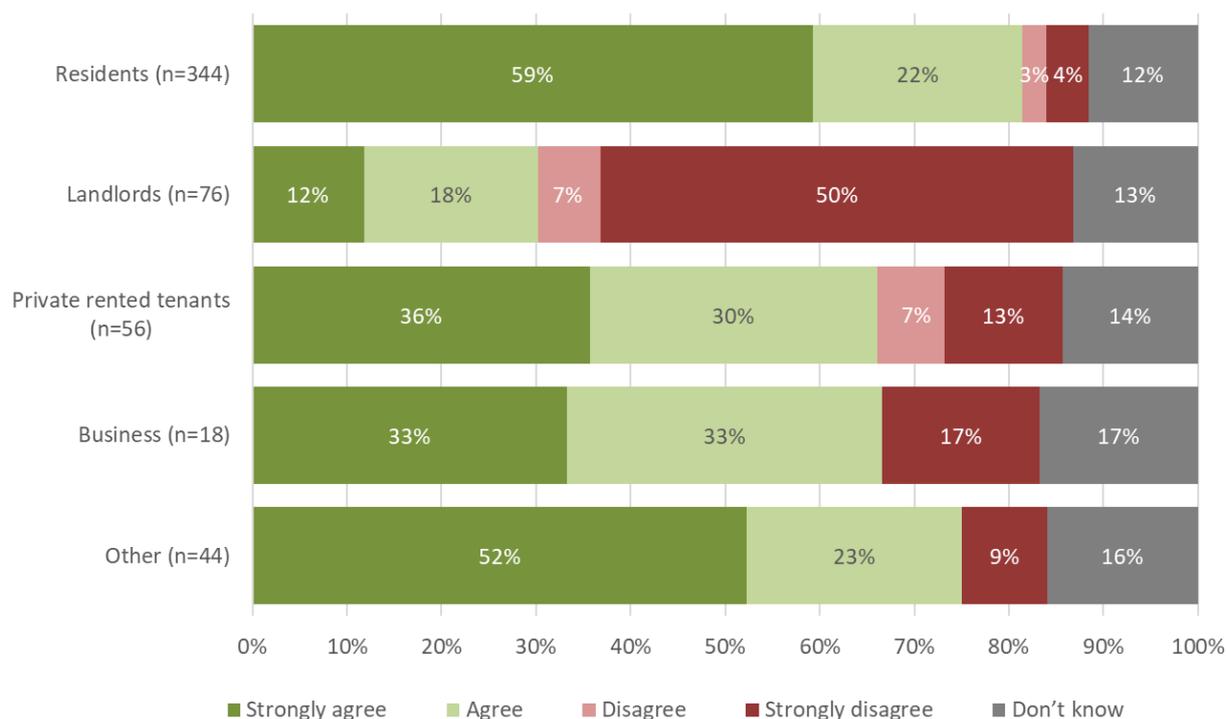


NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text.

When we look at responses by group, we can see the following differences:

- Residents in West Bromwich are most supportive of the conditions, with around eight out of ten agreeing (81%), closely followed by 'other' respondents (75% agreeing).
- Private rented tenants in West Bromwich are also very supportive, with two thirds (66%) agreeing. However, a fifth (20%) disagree with the conditions.
- Landlords and agents in West Bromwich are most strongly opposed to the proposed Additional licence conditions, with just under six out of ten (57%) disagreeing. One in three (30%) agree.

Figure 25: Do you agree or disagree with the proposed Additional Licence conditions (by group)



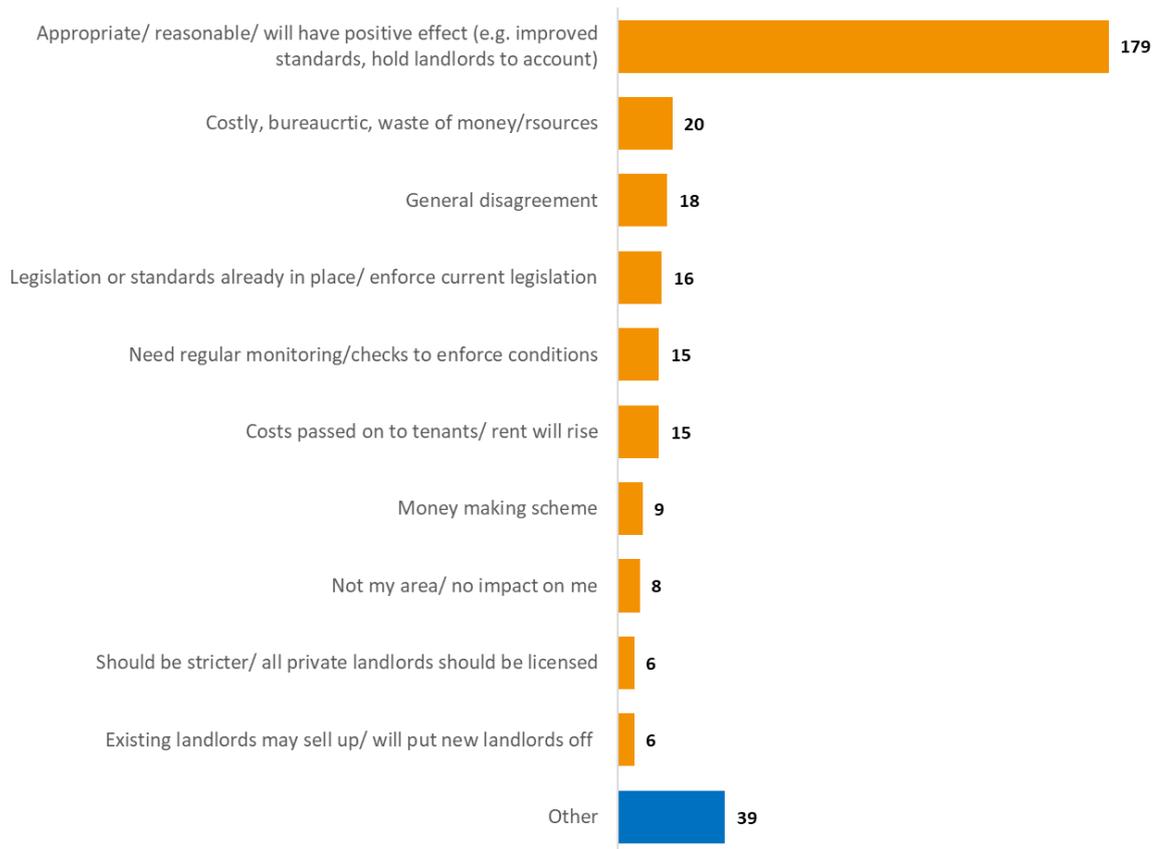
NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

Comments on Additional Licence conditions

Respondents were invited to provide any comments around the Additional Licence conditions. In total, 331 comments were identified and coded into key themes (from 303 respondents). Themes which received fewer than 5 comments were grouped under 'other'.

The most common theme by far is that the conditions are **appropriate/reasonable/will have a positive effect** (179 comments). This is followed by a range of more negative comments around the scheme being **a waste of money/resources** (20 comments), **generally disagreeing** with the conditions (18 comments) and others such as **legislation is already in place** (16 comments). The chart below shows all themes with the number of comments received.

Figure 26: Comments on Additional Licence conditions (no of comments coded by theme) (331 comments)

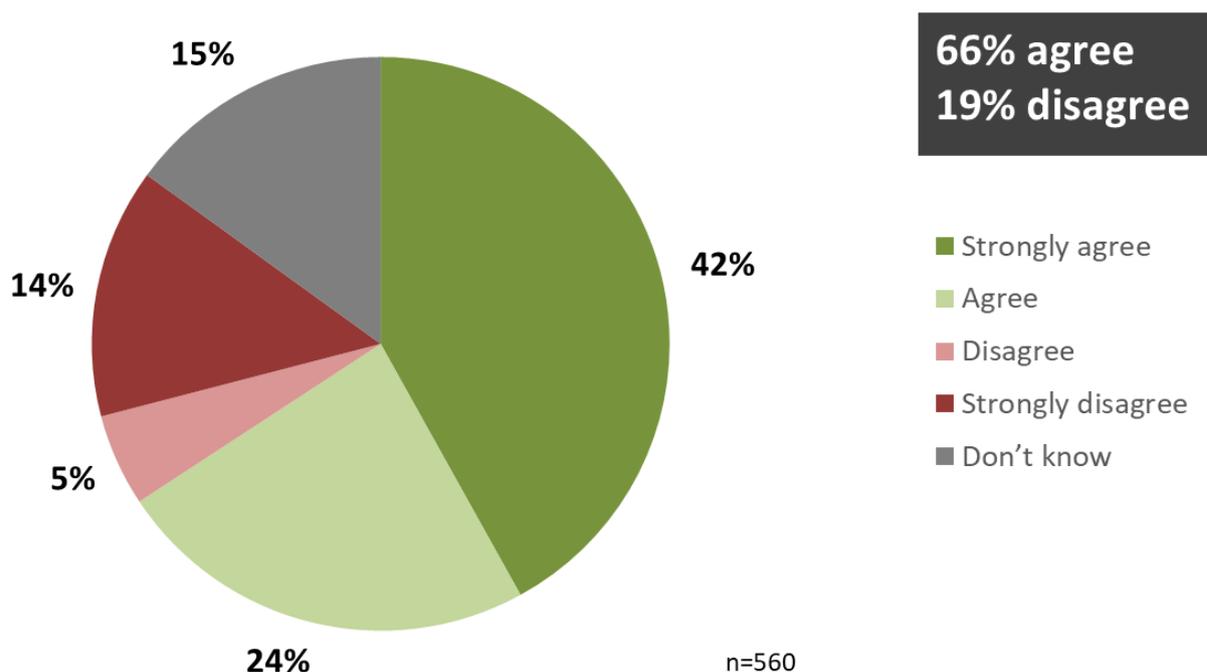


b. Selective Licence conditions

Respondents were then asked the extent to which they agree or disagree that the Selective Licence conditions are reasonable (provided as a separate document).

Overall, two thirds of respondents (66%) agree with the proposed Selective Licence conditions, with around four out of ten (42%) strongly agreeing with the proposal. Just under a fifth (19%) disagree.

Figure 27: Do you agree or disagree with the proposed Selective Licence conditions (overall) (n=560)

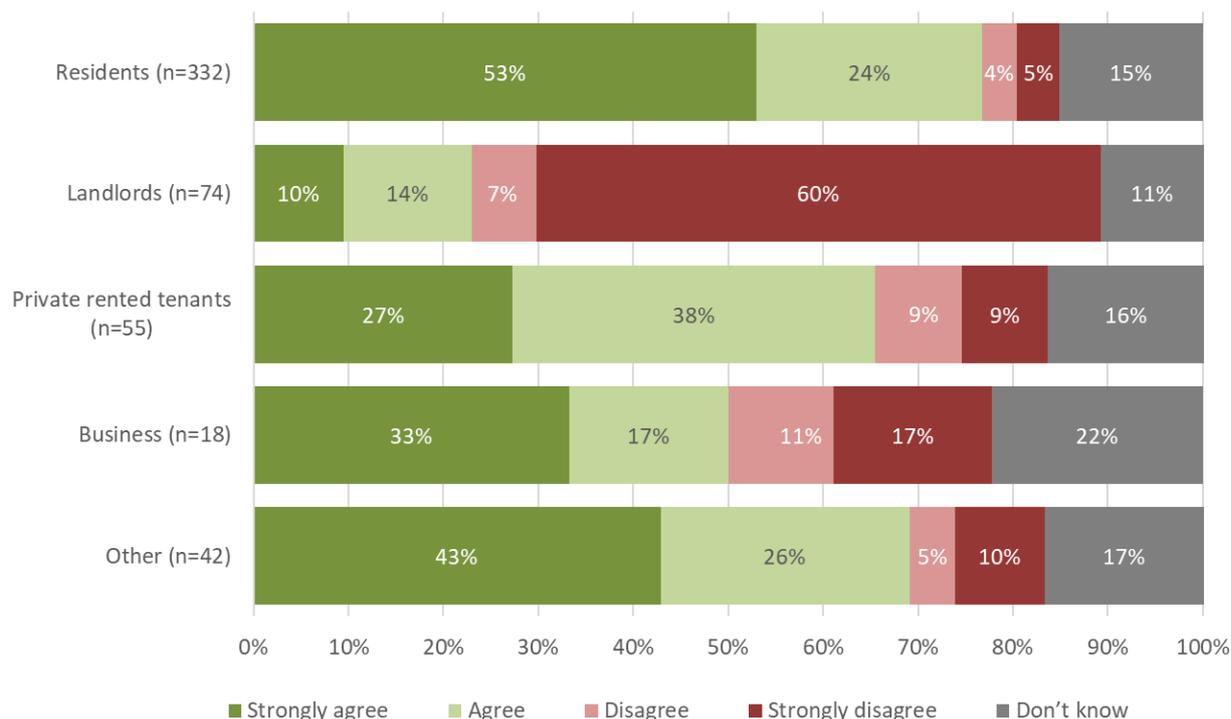


NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text.

When we look at responses by group, we can see the following differences:

- Results across most groups are broadly similar in terms of agreeing/disagreeing with Selective Licence conditions, in comparison to Additional Licence conditions. However, fewer tend to 'strongly agree' with the proposed Selective Licence conditions, compared to Additional Licence conditions.
- Residents in West Bromwich are again most supportive of the conditions, with just over three quarters agreeing (77%).
- Overall levels of support from privately renting tenants in West Bromwich is the same for the Selective Licence conditions as for Additional Licence conditions (66% agree). Similarly, around one in five (18%) disagree.
- Landlords and agents in West Bromwich are most strongly opposed to the proposed Selective Licence conditions, with two thirds disagreeing (66%), 9% points higher than for Additional Licensing. Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) disagree, 7% points lower than for Additional Licensing.

Figure 28: Do you agree or disagree with the proposed Selective Licence conditions (by group)



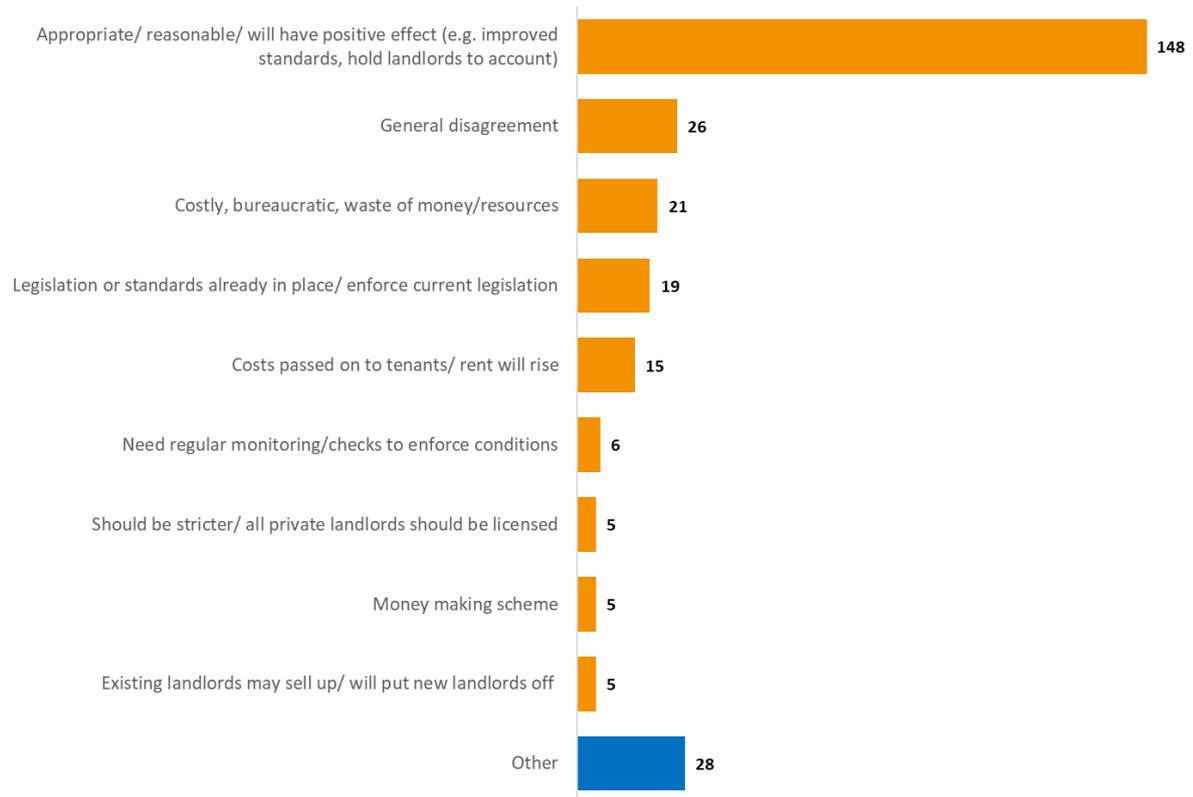
NB. Due to the rounding of numbers, % may not add up to 100%. Please refer to the % in the text. We have not commented on the 'businesses' responses due to such a small number of returns, however they are shown in the graphs for information.

Comments on Selective Licence conditions

Respondents were invited to provide any comments around the Additional Licence conditions. In total, 278 comments were identified and coded into key themes (from 246 respondents). Themes which received fewer than 5 comments were grouped under 'other'.

The most common theme by far is that the conditions are **appropriate/reasonable/will have a positive effect** (148 comments). This is followed by more negative comments around respondents **generally disagreeing** with the conditions (26 comments), the scheme being a **waste of money/resources** (21 comments), and others such as **legislation is already in place** (19 comments). The chart below shows all themes with the number of comments received.

Figure 29: Comments on Selective Licence conditions (no of comments coded by theme) (278 comments)

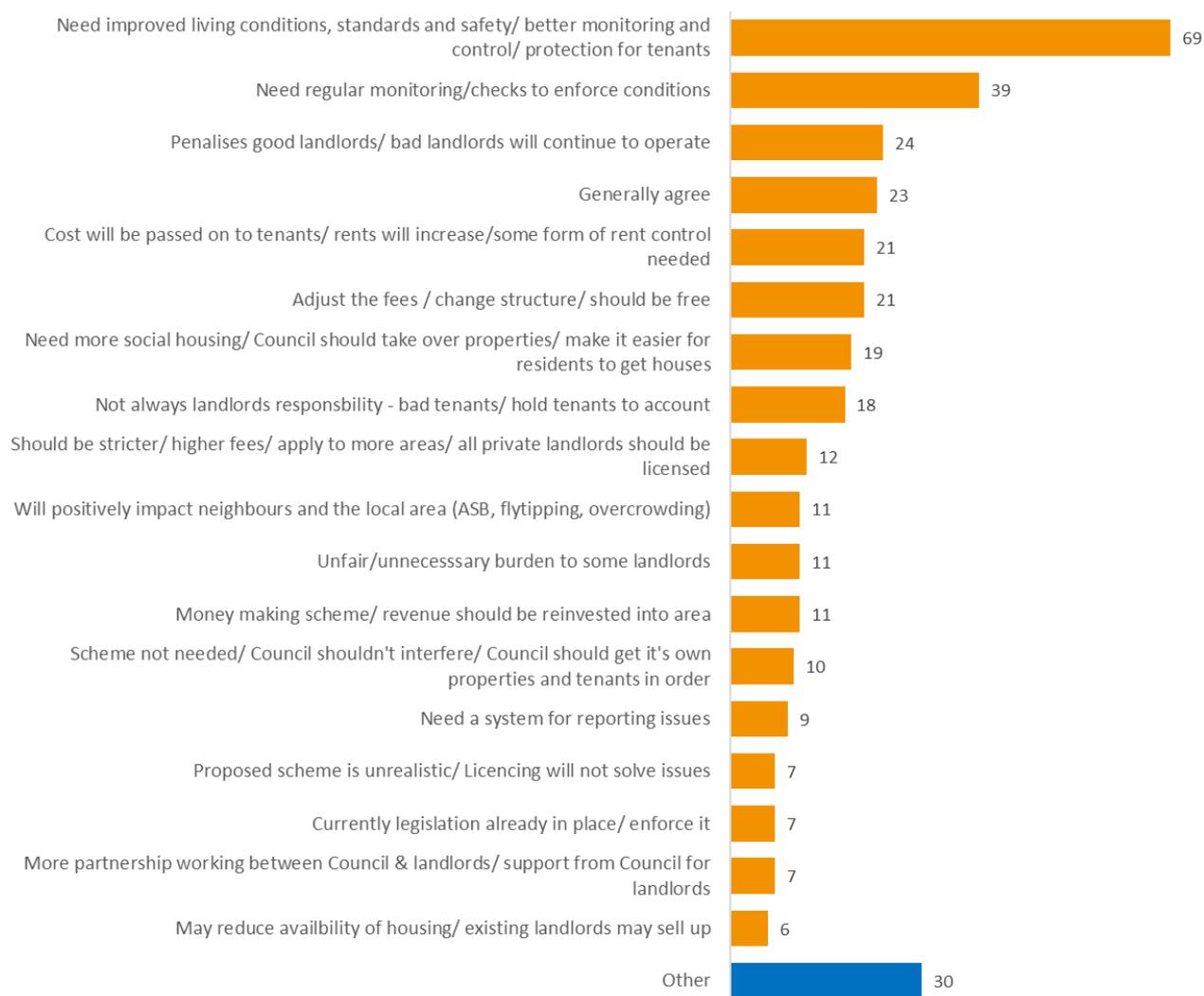


5. Other comments or suggestions

The final question in the survey asked respondents to add any further comments they would like to make about the proposed licensing schemes, or any alternatives the Council could consider. In total, 355 comments have been identified and coded into themes (from 274 respondents). Any comments that were not relevant to the question were not included in this analysis. Themes that receive fewer than 5 comments were put under 'Other'.

Key themes are around respondents generally feeling there is a need to **improve living conditions, standards and safety** (69 comments), followed by a **need for regular monitoring/checks to enforce conditions** (39 comments). 24 comments are around the proposals **penalising good landlords/bad landlords will continue to operate**. All themes are provided in the chart below and verbatim comments have been provided to the Council.

Figure 30: Comments on proposals (no of comments coded by theme) (355 comments)



4. Public meetings/written responses

M·E·L Research facilitated four public consultation meetings during the consultation period. Two events took place for landlords in February 2020. Two further events were scheduled to take place in March 2020 but were cancelled as a result of the social distancing measures that were introduced by the UK government in an attempt to reduce the spread of Coronavirus. The meetings were switched to online events which took place in April 2020. The target audience for the public meetings was mainly landlords, although any interested parties were welcome to attend. Council Officers were present at the meetings, therefore many of the queries and questions that were raised, were dealt with at the time. The 'Frequently Asked Questions' document was also updated in line with questions that came up at the meetings.

In total, there were 55 attendees across the four meetings. Most of these attendees were landlords, and all of the comments were from this group. In addition, there were 9 written responses provided, 2 via the online feedback form and 7 via email or letter.

Below is a summary of some of the key themes that came out from both the written responses and the feedback from the public meetings. **All feedback provided by individuals and organisations is provided in Appendix 3.**

West Bromwich area for licensing

Many agree that there are problems with poor properties being let in the proposed West Bromwich area. Many acknowledge that there are more significant problems here than in other areas of Sandwell. Others also commented that it is sensible for the Council to be concentrating on an area where there are known to be problems, rather than going much wider and targeting areas unnecessarily.

Tax/penalty on good landlords

Many landlords felt that Sandwell Council was unfairly penalising good and law-abiding landlords, to cover the costs of a scheme which is dealing with uneducated, neglectful or criminal landlords. Many landlords said that they let their properties through reputable agents, so have all the checks and certificates in place that are needed through licensing, so they do not see why they should have to pay more for a piece of paper. Others said that they look after their tenants and do above and beyond what is required, to provide them with a safe and decent home, yet they are still being 'tarred with the same brush' as the bad landlords under the proposed schemes. Some suggest this will dissuade new landlords from entering the

market, and that some landlords will exit the market, due to financial pressures that have been placed on them by government over recent years.

Council to target bad landlords only

Many landlords felt that the Council should just be focusing on the bad landlords, not taking a blanket approach across all landlords. Some queried how the Council were going to target these, as if they do not already know who and where they are, then how will a licensing scheme do this. Conversely, if the Council do know, then they should be using their powers to tackle them without the need for licensing. One landlord said that the Council should be spending their money on asking the public for help to identify criminal landlords/properties where human trafficking is happening, rather than waste money on a licensing scheme that would achieve little more than this could.

Landlords' accountability for tenants' behaviour

There were a small number of questions raised over how landlords could fairly be held to account for tenants' anti-social behaviour. One cited the fact that they had previously had troublesome tenants and they could do nothing to influence their behaviour and it took a lot of money and time to remove them from their properties. Some landlords and feedback suggest that landlords are little protected against bad tenants, and this is putting even more onus on landlords, with the buck being seen to be passed from the Council to landlords. The NLA express very strong views that licensing does not help to tackle tenants who cause problems for private landlords.

Licence fees and other costs passed onto tenants

A number of landlords, along with some of the written comments, state that the licence fees and other costs incurred as result of licensing, would be passed onto tenants. One landlord said that they already have tenants who are struggling to make ends meet and many will find these costs unaffordable, but they can't afford to swallow more and more costs out of their own pocket. From the public meetings and emailed comments, there were a number who question whether the Council has considered the people whom this would affect most – those who are paying for poor accommodation because they can't afford anything else, and that this could create more social and housing problems, such as an increase in demand on council housing and homelessness.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of proposed licensing schemes

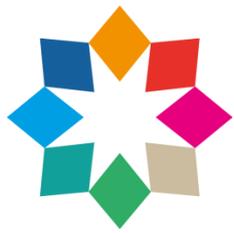
Appendix 2: Survey questions

Appendix 3: Email and written responses to consultation

Appendix 4: Responses by methodology (postal survey and online survey)

Appendix 5: Responses from outside West Bromwich

Appendix 6: Demographic profile of respondents



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