Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

English Private Landlord Survey 2021

Technical report

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Introduction

1. The 2021 English Private Landlord Survey (EPLS) is a national survey of landlords and letting agents who own and/or manage privately rented properties in England. It was commissioned by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

2. The aim of the EPLS is to inform government understanding of the characteristics and experiences of landlords and how they acquire, let, manage and maintain privately rented accommodation. Similar surveys of private landlords were carried out by the department in 2001, 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2018.

3. The 2021 EPLS took the same approach as the 2018 survey - an online survey of landlords and agents registered with one of the three government-backed Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) schemes. This is a new methodology compared to that used in previous private landlord surveys[1].

4. The research was conducted by NatCen Social Research in partnership with BRE research. The project was led by Sarah Frankenburg and David Hussey of NatCen Social Research and colleagues at DLUHC.

5. This report provides details of key technical features of the 2021 EPLS. Each chapter of the report covers a specific aspect of the survey and is designed to be read as a standalone document[2]. If you have any queries about the report or would like any further information, please contact epls@levellingup.gov.uk.

[1] The sample for previous government surveys of private landlords was drawn from private renters in the English House Condition Survey and English Housing Survey who provided details of their landlord or managing agent. This sample was used to conduct face-to-face and telephone surveys with around 1,000 landlords and agents.
[2] See link to the EPLS main report and accompanying outputs https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-private-landlord-survey-2021-main-report

Chapter 1
Methodology and approach

1.1 This chapter provides some background to the TDP schemes and an overview of the methodology and approach used to undertake the pilot and main stage surveys.

Background to the TDP schemes

1.2 Since the 6th April 2007 in England when a deposit is provided by a tenant to a landlord for an assured shorthold tenancy, all landlords (or their agents) are legally required to register that deposit with a TDP scheme.

1.3 The TDP scheme administrative data used for the EPLS were downloaded in January 2021[3]. At this time, the TDP scheme data indicated that there were just under 4.1 million live deposits registered with a TDP scheme in England, corresponding to an estimated 439,000 registrants (landlords and agents – each agent representing multiple landlords on whose behalf they have registered a deposit. In 2018 this figure was estimated at 1.5 million landlords). This estimate comprises approximately 408,000 landlords who registered (one or more) deposits themselves. A randomly selected sample of these landlords and agents were invited to take part in the EPLS. Landlords and agents with larger portfolios were over-sampled to provide sufficient numbers for analysis.

1.4 There is no official estimate of the proportion of the private rented sector that is covered by the TDP schemes. In 2021-22, the latest year for which data are available from the English Housing Survey (EHS), 80% of households in the private rented sector paid a deposit when they moved into their current accommodation. Of these, 78% said that their deposit was protected in a government-backed TDP scheme; 4% said that it was not protected while 18% said that they did not know. Therefore, the total proportion of private rented sector households covered by a TDP scheme is estimated at between 62% and 76%[4].

[3] TDP scheme data is administrative data generated for the purpose of administering the schemes. As such the limitations and constraints of these datasets and statistics generated from them should be recognised.

[4] The coverage of TDP schemes across the private rented sector was calculated as the proportion of private renters who reported having a deposit registered with a TDP scheme, out of the total number of private renters (regardless of whether they had a deposit registered). It includes tenants with all types of tenancies, including assured shorthold tenancies. It is expressed as a range, with the lower

1.5 There are various reasons why the remainder of the sector would not be registered with a TDP scheme. For example, the landlord may not have taken a deposit, or the tenancy agreement may have been in place before the TDP schemes became mandatory in 2007. While some landlords will be operating outside of the law, it is not possible to say how many.

1.6 The proportion of the private rented sector that is registered with a TDP scheme has increased steadily since 2007. The proportion is expected to continue to increase as more tenancies fall within the requirement and as there is increasing awareness of the need to register[5].

1.7 The three government-backed TDP schemes operating in the UK are[6]:

- Deposit Protection Scheme
- Tenancy Deposit Scheme
- mydeposits

1.8 There are two models of tenancy deposit protection. Landlords can choose to protect deposits in either a custodial scheme (where the deposit is held by a TDP scheme), or an insurance-backed scheme (where the landlord or agent retains the deposit but pays a fee to the scheme which insures against the landlord or agent unlawfully retaining the deposit). All three schemes offer both custodial and insurance-backed protection.

The survey methodology

1.9 Whereas previous surveys used face-to-face and telephone interviews with the sample drawn from the EHS, since 2018 the EPLS has used an online survey with the sample drawn from landlords and agents with deposits registered with one of the three government-backed TDP schemes.

1.10 The new approach is more cost-effective and timely than the previous method. The online approach made it possible to efficiently survey a much larger number of landlords and enables regional analysis to be conducted.

1.11 As with previous private landlord surveys, respondents were a combination of landlords and letting and/or management agents. This was to ensure the findings were as representative of the total private rented sector as possible, regardless of whether deposits were registered by a landlord or an agent.

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bound being tenants who were certain their deposit was registered in a TDP scheme and the upper bound including those who did not know.

[5] The UK Tenancy Deposit Statistics (October 2016) show that the number of deposits protected in the UK by one of the three TDP schemes increased steadily year on year from March 2008 to March 2016 from 924,181 to 3,425,718 deposits, or an increase of around 270% over eight years. www.tenancydepositscheme.com/resources/files/UK%20Tenancy%20Deposit%20Statistics.pdf

[6] See scheme websites for more information: www.depositprotection.com, www.tenancydepositscheme.com and www.mydeposits.co.uk

However, some issues with the TDP admin data (used as a sample frame), in particular a lack of correspondence between information on the frame and some survey responses, made it very difficult to construct a viable weighting scheme. Ultimately it was agreed that any attempt to weight the full set of responding cases would require assumptions that could not be justified and would affect comparability with 2018 data. After much deliberation it was decided that cases sampled as agents should be excluded from the weighting process. As a result, the main report presents analysis of cases sampled as landlords only. This is discussed in more detail in chapter seven.

Approach to consent and making contact

1.12 The sample was sent an email invitation and follow up reminder email, inviting them to take part. A subsample also received an invitation in the post. Those contacted were given an opportunity to opt-out of the survey.

1.13 Of the sample of 149,032 landlords and agents, 40,758 were agents, of which 10,000 were invited to take part in the survey by letter (but not necessarily also by email). All landlords and the remainder of agents were invited by email only.

1.14 A dedicated freephone number and email address was set up to receive any comments and queries throughout the course of fieldwork. This was staffed by the NatCen Freephone team who dealt with survey access issues, queries and any respondent comments.

1.15 The main stage survey was carried out between December 2021 until January 2022.

Chapter 2
TDP scheme data

2.1 This chapter provides details on the administrative data held by the schemes, how it was obtained and descriptive statistics on the combined TDP scheme registrant and deposit datasets.

Collecting and combining TDP scheme data

2.2 The 2018 EPLS was the first time TDP scheme administrative data has been used for research purposes. In 2021, the DLUHC received the data extract from each of the three TDP schemes and combined this into a single deposit level dataset for use in the administration of the survey. Each of the three TDP schemes collect and record slightly different information about their landlords and agents from one another, and store these data in different ways. There is therefore a task in harmonising and combing these datasets into a single file. This work was undertaken by DLUHC.

2.3 This combined dataset was then delivered by DLUHC to the NatCen research team, who carried out some additional cleaning and processing of the dataset and carried out some analysis to understand the population profile, and differences across TDPs. Although the primary objective of this exercise was to derive a sample for the survey, it was also essential for weighting the survey data (see Chapter 7).

2.4 NatCen created a deduplicated registrant level dataset from the deposit level file. Below is a list of all the variables compiled for each of the schemes in the two datasets:

Registrant level dataset

- Agent / landlord / member / customer ID
- Whether landlord or agent
- Landlord / agent location by district level postcode / country
- Whether landlord / agent has contact email address
- Agent branch ID / location / postcode
- Count of tenancies – by custodial and insured

Deposit level dataset

- Tenancy / deposit ID
- Member / landlord / agent ID
- Tenancy location by district level postcode

- Tenancy location by area / country
- Tenancy start and end date
- Tenancy length
- Deposit amount
- Type of deposit (e.g. custodial or insurance)
- Number of tenants
- Gross rent
- Rental period
- Type of property
- Number of bedrooms
- Whether property is furnished or unfurnished

2.5 As mentioned above, there is no standardised approach across the schemes towards data collection. As such not all schemes were able to provide data across all requested variables. This resulted in some data gaps in the combined datasets. For example, not all of the TDP schemes were able to provide data on landlords represented by agents, the counts of tenancies, type of property and the number of bedrooms for a deposit.

2.6 Although substantial data cleaning was undertaken, given the size of the datasets (4.1 million deposits and over 439,000 registrant records) within the constraints of the survey it was not possible to undertake a thorough detailed data cleaning exercise across all individual cases[7].

TDP scheme data analysis

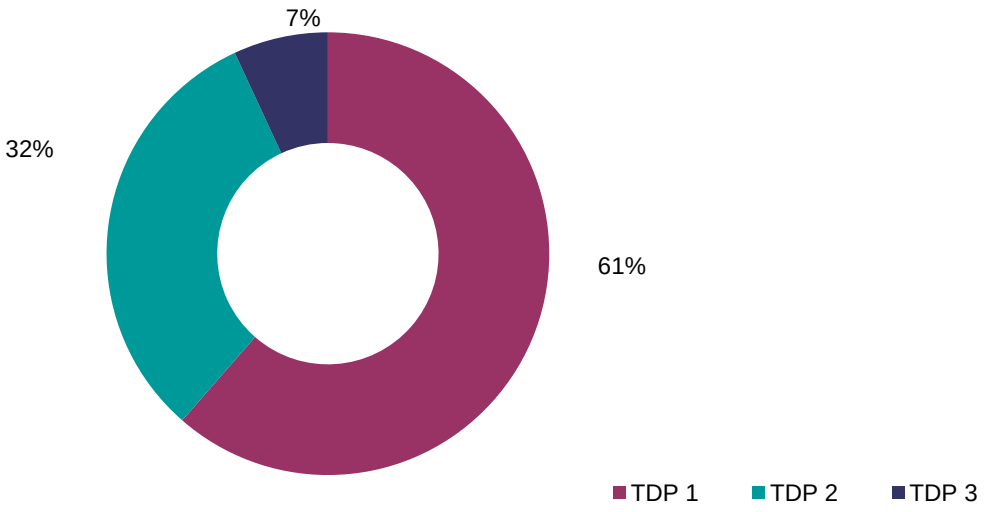
Registrant data

2.7 The registrant dataset included landlords or agents who were members of a TDP scheme with a registered live tenancy in England at the time of the data download.

2.8 At the time of the data download there were 438,501,[8] registrants (a mix of landlords and agents) recorded as registered with a TDP scheme. Figure 2.1 below shows the distribution of registrants across the three schemes[9]. TDP1 has almost two thirds (61%) of all registrant landlords and agents, with TDP2 having 32% and TDP3 the remaining 7%.

[7] As such the TDP scheme descriptive statistics should be treated as estimates rather than definitive counts.
[8] As this figure was derived from administrative datasets that could not be fully verified, this should be treated as an estimate rather than a definitive count. Of the 438,501 registrants, approximately 407,730 were landlords who registered a deposit themselves with the remainder being agents registering deposits on behalf of landlords.
[9] For the purposes of this report, the individual TDP scheme names have been anonymised.

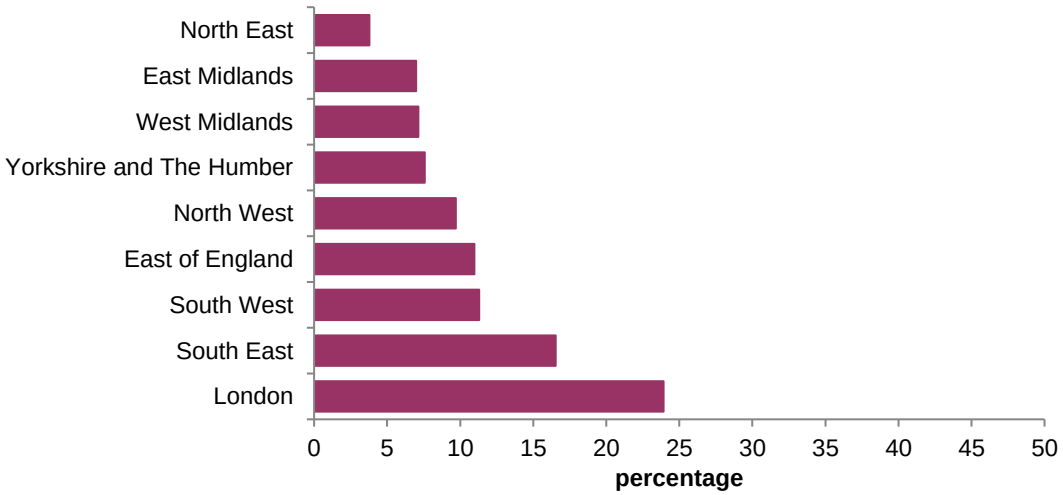
Figure 2.1: Registrants by TDP scheme



Base: all TDP scheme registrants
Source: Combined TDP scheme registrant dataset

2.9 Figure 2.2 summarises the location of landlord registrants by region, where such data was available. The largest number of landlords registering a deposit was in London (24%). This was followed by the South East (17%), the South West (11%), the East of England (11%) and the North West (10%).

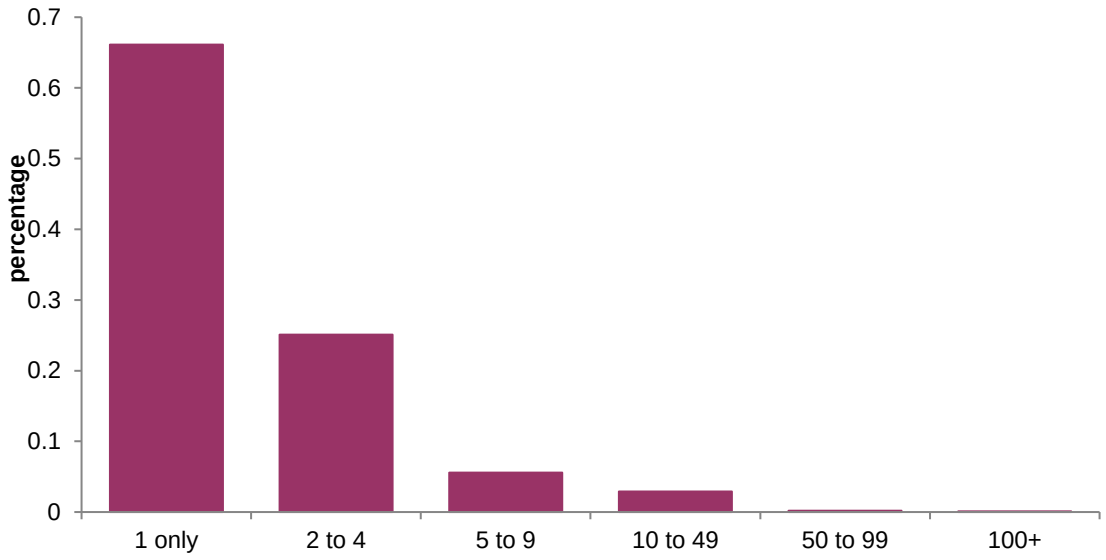
Figure 2.2: Landlord registrants by location



Base: all landlords where location data was available (n=399,218 landlord registrants)
Note: excludes a small number outside England, or in 'other, missing or Channel Isles'
Source: Combined TDP scheme registrant dataset

2.10 Two thirds (66%) of landlords had registered just one deposit with a quarter (25%) registering between 2 and 4 deposits and 6% registering between 5 and 9 deposits. The remaining 3% of landlord deposits were with landlords who had registered 10 or more deposits, Figure 2.3[10].

Figure 2.3: Landlord registrants by number of deposits



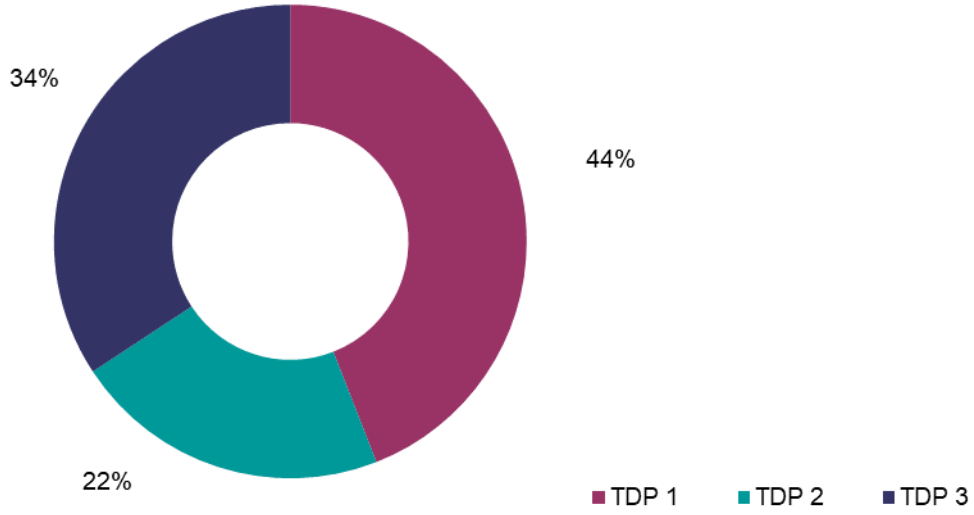
Base: all landlords, (n=407,730 landlord registrants
Source: combined TDP scheme registrant dataset
Note: some landlords will be registered with more than one scheme. Such landlords were not able to be identified and linked across TDP scheme datasets.

Deposit data

2.11 At the time of the download there were 4.1 million TDP scheme registered deposits[11], with 44% of these registered with TDP1, 22% with TDP2 and the remaining 34% registered with TDP3, Figure 2.4.

[10] The proportions do not add to 100% due to rounding
[11] As this figure was derived from administrative datasets that could not be fully verified, this should be treated as an estimate rather than a definitive count.

Figure 2.4: Registered deposits by TDP scheme



Base: all deposits
Source: Combined TDP scheme deposit dataset
Note: A deposit does not in all cases equate to a tenancy, household or dwelling. In some cases, a rental dwelling may have more than one registered deposit or tenancy (for example, multiple households living in the same property).

Chapter 3
User testing and pilot

3.1 The 2021 EPLS included a small-scale pilot intended to test the survey administration and questionnaire. This chapter provides details on the pilot, its outcomes and how these informed the approach to the main stage survey.

Questionnaire

3.2 The user testing and pilot were an opportunity to develop and test the questionnaire in advance of the main stage survey. The questions used in the 2018 EPLS were first reviewed to determine if they could be used or needed to be revised for the 2021 survey and were still relevant to DLUHC policy priorities. In addition, new questions were added for the 2021 questionnaire to reflect current policy and the wider context in which the survey was run – most notably in relation to COVID-19.

3.3 As part of the design process, colleagues from the specialist Questionnaire Design Team (QDT) at NatCen Social Research then carried out user testing of new questions devised for the EPLS.

3.4 User testing interviews were carried out over the telephone with 10 participants from the 2018 EPLS who had agreed to be recontacted for future research, with five landlords and five agents with varying portfolio sizes from across different regions in England. Participants were given a £10 high street voucher for their time.

3.5 The testing explored the user experience for participants attempting to complete the questionnaire. In addition, interviewers probed on comprehension of key terms, the ability of the question to capture the information requested accurately and the suitability of the response options. Details of changes made to the questionnaire following the user testing are provided in Chapter 4.

Pilot Fieldwork

3.6 Following the user testing we carried out a pilot, which replicated the mainstage fieldwork model. In total 3,000 landlords and agents were selected at random from the combined registrant dataset and invited to participate in the pilot survey (80% landlords and 20% agents, 1,000 per TDP scheme).

3.7 Fieldwork for the pilot took place over a ten day period from 1st - 10th November 2021. In total 2,999 email invitations were sent out to landlords and agents, followed by a single reminder.

3.8 This resulted in 82 full survey completions and 3 partial completions, a total of 85 achieved or productive responses which equated to an overall productive response rate of 2.7%. Response was higher among landlords than agents. The proportion of productive responses[12] (87% landlord, 13% agent) was somewhat similar to the sample (80% landlord, 20% agent). Overall response was much lower than in previous EPLS pilots (5% in the 2018 survey). This might have been in part due to the much shorter fieldwork period, and a single email reminder. The lower response prompted the research team to draw a reserve sample in case of a low response rate at mainstage.

3.9 The pattern and timing of responses was analysed over the pilot period, including interrogating statistics on 'open' and 'click through' rates to better understand how invitees engaged with the survey[13].

3.10 Email data from the advance emails showed that of 2,999 invitation emails sent, 2,881 emails were delivered. 1,122 emails were opened, and 95 clicked on the link. For the reminder emails, 2,999 were sent, 2,811 were delivered, 1,130 were opened and 76 clicked on the link.

3.11 Para-data on various aspects of the survey data was analysed to explore which questions or parts of the questionnaire were problematic and could be improved or should be removed. Types of para-data explored included overall average completion times, completion times for individual questions and identification of questions where high numbers of respondents dropped out.

Outcome of the pilot

3.12 Full data checks were carried out using data from the pilot. No issues were found with the data, with all data collected being in line with the questionnaire specification

3.13 The pilot identified low response rates as a challenge for the main stage survey and so a number of changes were suggested.

3.14 As a consequence of the pilot, the following changes were adopted for the mainstage survey:

- preparation of a reserve sample in case of low response;

[12] A productive response was one where a respondent had completed sufficient questions in the questionnaire to enable it to be included in the survey dataset for analysis.
[13] An 'open rate' is the proportion of invitees who were recorded as opening the email invite or reminder and the 'click through rate' the proportion who opened the email and then clicked through to the online questionnaire.

- it was decided to make it possible for participants to still take part in the questionnaire even if they answered at the first question that their role was not the same as on the TDP data, for example if they were a landlord but presented as an agent on the TDP data. This was because of uncertainties about the sample frame and, in particular, evidence that some landlord contact details were presented against an agent identifier – that the landlords ‘behind’ the agents were flagged as agents in the dataset.

Chapter 4
Questionnaire

4.1 This chapter provides an overview of the questionnaire used in the main stage survey.

Questionnaire design – the main stage survey

4.2 The first stage of the 2021 questionnaire development was to review and revise the 2018 EPLS questionnaire as described in chapter 3 above.

4.3 Following user testing some further amends were then made. These changes were largely to aid comprehension of the questions, such as adding clarification or introductory text where necessary. The final questionnaire included a total of 90 questions. Because agents do not have the knowledge to be able to answer some questions that only the landlord would know (e.g. landlord finances, the landlord journey, demographic information), agents were presented with fewer questions than landlords.[14]

4.4 Survey questions asked across the different sections of the questionnaire and who they were asked of are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Overview of questions asked in the main stage survey

Section	Question topic	Asked of landlords?	Asked of agents?
1: About you	How they let property	Yes	No
	Employment status	Yes	No
	Number of rental properties – leaseholder or freehold	Yes	No
	Number of deposits registered	No	Yes
	How view role as a landlord	Yes	No
	Property related organisational membership	Yes	Yes

[14] The questionnaire is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-private-landlord-survey

	Age / year born	Yes	No
	Gender	Yes	No
	Ethnicity	Yes	No
2: Your rental property and tenants	Number of rental properties	Yes	No
	Types of rental property owned, let or manage	Yes	Yes
	Types of tenants currently letting to	Yes	Yes
	Whether own / manage any HMOs, how many households renting in HMOs	Yes	Yes
	In which region rental property is located	Yes	Yes
3: Your rental practice	Sources of information for renting property	Yes	No
	Use of an agent	Yes	No
	How find tenants for lettings	Yes	No
	Types of tenants willing to let to, why not willing to let to	Yes	Yes
	Compliance with legal requirements	Yes	Yes
	Whether they have applied for a license – if required in their region	Yes	No
4: Rents and deposits	Rent setting for new and existing tenants and factors influencing rents	Yes	Yes
	Amount of deposit	Yes	Yes
	How long most recently let property was vacant before let	Yes	Yes

5: Arrears and evictions	Whether tenancy is in arrears and whether this was result of COVID-19, amount in arrears	Yes	No
	Whether made any new rent arrangements with tenants as result of COVID-19	Yes	Yes
	Why tenancies ended	Yes	Yes
6: Tenancies that ended	Why asked tenant to leave	Yes	Yes
	Whether deposit was returned to tenant and reasons for doing so	Yes	Yes
	Number of years a landlord	Yes	No
7: The landlord journey	How acquired and funded first and most recent rental property	Yes	No
	Why became a landlord	Yes	No
	Future plans for increasing, decreasing or keep number of properties the same over the coming two years and reasons for doing so	Yes	No
8: Future plans	Issues that cause concern	Yes	Yes
9: Landlord and agent concerns	Use of government's Courts and Tribunals Service	Yes	Yes
	Approximate market value of rental property, value of any borrowing or loans for rental property	Yes	No
10: Finances and taxation	Type of borrowing or loans for rental property	Yes	No
	Approximate income and rental income	Yes	No
	Whether took a mortgage holiday as result of COVID-19	Yes	No

	Awareness and understanding of recent and planned landlord tax, lending or fees	Yes	No
11: Energy Efficiency and safety	Properties with an E, F or G EPC rating	Yes	Yes

4.5 The average (mean) response time for the mainstage survey was 19 minutes for landlords and 10 minutes for agents.

Chapter 5
Sampling

5.1 This chapter summarises the sampling approach for the survey.

Sampling

5.2 A sample of 149,032 landlords and agents was selected for the mainstage survey with the aim of achieving 10,000 responses[15]. A census of agents was taken to maximise the number of agent responses. In addition, to mitigate against lower than expected response, a reserve sample of landlords was selected but wasn't used. Landlords were selected from each scheme (roughly) in proportion to their population across the schemes. Large portfolio landlords were over-sampled to ensure they were adequately represented in the survey responses. The samples were selected after the removal of landlords and agents who had already been sampled for the pilot and those without valid contact details. Table 5.1 summarises the survey sample across the schemes and across landlords and agents.

Table 5.1: Survey sample by TDP scheme

	TDP1		TDP2		TDP3		Total
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	
Landlords	64,615	67.6	36144	87.4	7515	62.3	108274
Agents	31,011	32.4	5192	12.6	4555	37.7	40758
Total	**95,626**	**64.2**	**41336**	**27.7**	**12070**	**8.1**	**149032**

5.3 Sampling of landlords was carried out in SPSS using systematic sampling (with a random start and fixed interval). The sample frame was explicitly stratified by TDP scheme and 'sizeband', a classification of the number of deposits registered. This enabled the over-sampling of landlords (in each TDP) with larger rental portfolios. Prior to sampling, the sample frame was sorted within each sizeband by region, and by the number of registered deposits. The regional classification for each landlord/agent was created using a combination of scheme data from postcode district, area and country variables, depending what data was available. Cases without a valid postcode or area were grouped with those that were located outside of England. A full

[15] The sample numbers were calculated by drawing on evidence from the pilot to inform an assumption about the likely response rate (10%) and the number of responses needed to carry out analysis at a regional level.

breakdown of the sample by scheme, registrant type and sizeband is provided in Table 5.2.

5.4 Sampling rates were set with a view to achieving 3,000 interviews with single deposit landlords; around 18-19% of single deposit landlords were selected in the three TDP schemes (a slightly larger proportion than in 2018 where the corresponding figure was 15%). Sampling rates in other sizebands varied by TDP scheme, except for landlords with 50+ deposits registered where all landlords were selected (see Table 5.2).

5.5 Due to issues with the sample frame, some adjustments were made to the intended sampling process to ensure that all sampled cases were contactable, and to maximise the likelihood that the person (or organisation) contacted was the one intended. For example, one of the TDP schemes had a significant proportion of cases where (what appeared to be) landlord contact details were registered against an agent identifier. It was suspected that most of these cases were landlords 'under' agents, who were falsely flagged as agents. Changing the 'roletype' for these cases did not seem appropriate; instead, it was decided that the letter sample should be selected prior to de-duplication to give such cases a chance of selection (see 5.7).

5.6 When sampling landlords, the dataset was de-duplicated on email first. Following this, a sample was drawn from the remaining landlords (aggregated by name and postcode to ensure that no landlord was given more than one chance of selection). This way the letter sample was nested within the email sample and the postal contact could be used to maximise response rates among sampled emails.

5.7 A different approach was used for the agent sample. The sample frame included many duplicate email addresses; in some cases up to c.80,000 entries that shared the same email. Compressing this large number of records into one sole email contact, before drawing the letter sample, risked removing legitimate agents records from the frame. Often, these appeared to be agent branches sharing one central email address (e.g. admin@agent.co.uk) or, as described above, the landlords 'under' the agents. Hence, the agent letter sample was drawn first.

5.8 Prior to drawing the agent letter sample, the frame was aggregated by name and postcode (as per the landlord sample) and sorted by number of deposits registered with the TDP scheme. In line with the other sampling exercises, SPSS was used for systematic sampling (with a random start and fixed interval). The sampling rates were broadly proportionate to size, whilst taking eligibility and duplicate emails into account[16]. After drawing the sample of 10,000 letters, the frame was de-duplicated on email to obtain the census of

[16] TDP1 5,000 / TDP2 2,500 / TDP3 2,500

agents. As a result, we ended up with a total agent sample of 40,758 of which 10,000 were drawn as letter recipients but not necessarily email recipients.

5.9 In addition to the data cleaning undertaken prior to sampling, Landlords/Agents that were selected for the letter sample were verified using a 'PAF-checker'. This ensured that all the selected addresses could be reached via Royal Mail.

Table 5.2: Survey sample by TDP scheme, type of registrant and sizeband

TDP/Registrant type	Sizeband (no. of deposits)	Proportion of landlords/agents selected (%)	Number of landlords/agents selected
TDP 1 Landlord	1	18%	30305
	2-4	36%	21073
	5-9	73%	8629
	10-49	100%	**4413**
	50-99	100%	**136**
	100+	100%	**59**
TDP 1 Agent	1	100%	7939
	2-4	100%	6587
	5-9	100%	3823
	10-49	100%	6264
	50-99	100%	2222
	100-249	100%	2697
	250-499	100%	1100
	500-999	100%	329
	1000+	100%	50
TDP 2 Landlord	1	18%	16281
	2-4	35%	10687
	5-9	50%	4214
	10-49	70%	4159
	50-99	100%	519
	100+	100%	284
TDP 2 Agent	1	100%	2409
	2-4	100%	1028
	5-9	100%	620
	10-49	100%	810
	50-99	100%	160
	100-249	100%	117
	250-499	100%	29
	500-999	100%	12
	1000+	100%	7

TDP 3 Landlord	1	17%	2108
	2-4	23%	3425
	5-9	35%	988
	10-49	65%	891
	50-99	100%	71
	100+	100%	32
TDP 3 Agent	1	100%	116
	2-4	100%	185
	5-9	100%	122
	10-49	100%	505
	50-99	100%	461
	100-249	100%	1126
	250-499	100%	1069
	500-999	100%	677
	1000+	100%	294
Total			**149,032**

Chapter 6
Mainstage survey response

5.1 This chapter summarises the response rates of the mainstage survey.

Response rates

5.2 Full and partial responses were included in the survey data of productive responses. A full response was where all relevant questions in the questionnaire were completed by the respondent. A partial response was where the respondent partly completed the questionnaire up to a specific question[17] but had stopped before reaching the end. Those who completed some questions but did not reach this cut-off question were not included as productive responses.

5.3 At the beginning of the questionnaire, TDP scheme data were used to confirm whether respondents were landlords or agents. The question asked was – '*We understand you are a landlord / agent. Is this correct?*'. Previously, if the response was that the information was incorrect, they were not able to take part in the survey and their response was treated as ineligible and if they said they were both a landlord and an agent, they could continue with the questionnaire, from the perspective that matched their record in the TDP data. However, in the 2021 survey this approach was changed following analysis of the TDP data. Participants who did not identify as the same role as registered in the sample frame were still allowed to take part. Unfortunately, in practice some cases then went on to answer about separate properties to those recorded in the sample frame (despite being the correct person), which caused issues at the calibration stage of weighting.

5.4 The survey response rates are summarised in Table 6.1. The survey achieved 10,643 total productive responses with an overall response rate of 7.1%. Of these productive responses 9,831 were full responses (92%) and 812 were partial responses (8%).

[17] The question used for the cut-off point in the questionnaire was named 'Court' asking about the use of the government's courts and tribunal system. The question was at the end of section nine of the eleven section questionnaire and immediately before the more sensitive questions on financial information.

Table 6.1: Response statistics – summary

	number of cases	% of sample frame	% of issued sample
sample frame	438486		
issued sample	149032	34%	
fully complete	9831	2%	7%
partial complete	812	0%	1%
ineligible	11	0%	0%
opt out	37	0%	0%
non-responders	138341	32%	93%

5.5 Table 6.2 below summarises responses by landlord and agent. Landlords had a higher response rate (8.6%) than agents (3.2%). Almost all partial responses came from landlords (90%).

Table 6.2: Response statistics

	Landlords		Agents		total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
issued sample	108,274	73%	40,758	27%	149,032	100%
response n / %	9,352	8.6%	1,291	3.2%	10,643	7.10%
full response	8,618	88%	1,213	12%	9,831	100%
partial response	734	90%	78	10%	812	100%
ineligible	10	91%	1	9%	11	100%
opt out	34	92%	3	8%	37	100%
non-responders	98,878	71%	39,463	29%	138,341	100%

5.6 Twenty three fully productive cases (18 landlord and 5 agents) and one partially productive case were later dropped from the dataset because of concerns over data quality, for example completing the survey in an unrealistically quick time.

5.7 For weighting purposes only those people who responded to the survey in the same way as they were identified on the sampling frame and included in the sample were considered. After droping 32 responses from cases sampled as landlords but who actually filled in the survey as an agent, the final number of productive landlord cases assigned a weight and used in analysis was 9,301 (see chapter 7).

Chapter 7
Weighting

7.1 The sample frame of landlords and agents used for sampling was also used to derive population estimates for weighting. Two different weights were produced:

(i) Tenancy weights: these make the data representative of live deposits/tenancies registered by landlords with a TDP scheme;

(ii) Landlord weights: these make the data representative of landlords who have registered live deposits with a TDP scheme.

Challenges with EPLS weighting

7.2 As noted above, some issues with the sample frame made it difficult to arrive at a weighting scheme that could be applied to all responding cases. There were a number of aspects to this, which we set out below.

7.3 For the 2018 survey, calibration weighting was used to weight the responding sample to population estimates for registrants, landlords and tenancies, all of which were derived from the sample frame. However, issues uncovered with the 2021 frame made it difficult to produce corresponding estimates for agents.

7.4 For example, investigation of one TDP suggested that some landlords were misclassified as agents on the sample frame, or were in fact companies that effectively operated as both landlords and agents. As such, the ‘agent’ population for this TDP was inflated and so couldn’t be used to represent the true number of agents registering deposits with that TDP.

7.5 Whilst it is not unexpected that a large administrative dataset would present challenges for sampling and weighting, some of the issues with the TDP data were not apparent in 2018. In part, this is because DLUHC and the research team did not have names or contact details in the TDP data used in 2018. Some of the same issues are likely to have been present but they were not so easily identifiable.

7.6 In addition to issues with the sample frame, there were concerns about some survey responses – most notably that some participants answered in relation to properties that were not included in the sample frame (or were included but not identifiable) – which made weighting these cases very challenging.

7.7 Unfortunately, these issues when considered together, meant it was not viable to include cases sampled as agents in the calibration weighting: their inclusion would require assumptions that could not be justified and would affect comparability with 2018 data. As such, the difficult decision was made to exclude all these cases from the main analysis dataset and not to generate a grossing weight for these cases. These responses will still be of value to analysts within DLUHC, but without a grossing weight they are not included in the main report.

7.8 The process undertaken for the remaining landlord cases is largely equivalent to that done in 2018, making comparison between these two surveys possible.

Using the appropriate weight for analysis

7.9 The decision about which weight to use for any given analysis depends on the survey question.

7.10 In the main report[18]:

- The tenancy weight was used when reporting findings on the total population of tenancies with a registered deposit; for example, the proportion of tenancies controlled by landlords with different sized portfolios. This weight should not be applied to questions relating to a specific tenancy (e.g. the most recent letting) or a subset of respondents' portfolios. This is because the responses about the most recent letting or subset of the portfolio cannot reasonably be extrapolated to the total population of the respondents' tenancies.

- The landlord weight was used for reporting findings on the registered landlord population and questions only asked of landlords; for example, when reporting the characteristics of registered landlords or landlord answers to questions on their future investment plans.

- The process of creating each of the weights is described below.

Tenancy (deposit) weights

7.11 The tenancy weighting was done in two main steps:

(iii) Selection weights (equal to the inverse of the probability of selection) were calculated for each TDP/registrant and applied to the responding sample.

[18] See link to the EPLS main report and accompanying outputs
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-private-landlord-survey-2018-main-report

These were scaled up so that the sum of the weights matched population totals;

(iv) Calibration weighting was used to adjust the selection weights so that the sample profile matched the population targets (from (ii)).

In more detail:

(i) Selection weighting

(ii) The selection weights (equal to the inverse of the probability of selection) were calculated by TDP/registrant and applied to the responding sample. Landlords were sampled at different rates depending on size of portfolio (see sampling chapter 5): they received weights that varied between 1 and 5.37. These weights were then scaled up so that their sum matched the total population of deposits. This exercise allowed us to see where extreme weights could occur, often due to small numbers in particular cells[19].

(iii) Calibration weighting

For the calibration weighting a key decision was to choose between weighting to totals for each sizeband and each region within TDP/registrant and weighting to totals within registrant only. As the aim of the survey was to investigate behaviours and attitudes of landlords without reference to their membership of a particular TDP scheme, weighting within registrant (only) was preferred. Despite this, it was decided to weight by sizeband within TDP/registrant, mainly as it was in line with what was done in 2018 (which in turn was found to be more efficient than the alternative).Population counts for sizeband were therefore created within each TDP/registrant. Overall, there were less than 0.3% of landlords who had registered more than 100 deposits across all three TDP schemes. It was decided to merge the top two sizeband categories to avoid extreme wights for these few large portfolio landlords.

For region, it was more efficient to weight to registrant only (rather than Region within TDP scheme) therefore counts of deposits were created within region for all landlords (regardless of TDP scheme).

Once the final set of targets (shown below in Table 7.1) was decided upon, calibration weighting was used to adjust the selection weights so that the (weighted) sample profile matched the population. The weighted dataset was then checked to ensure that the weighted counts (of deposits) match the population estimates. The final weight was then scaled down so that the mean weight was 1.

[19] This was dealt with later by merging cells, see ii. Calibration weighting.

Table 7.1: Population estimates used in tenancy weighting (by sizeband)[20]

TDP/Registrant type	Sizeband (no. of deposits)	Unweighted frequencies	Population estimate (no of deposits)
TDP 1 Landlord	1	2,154	168,362
	2-4	2,122	147,303
	5-9	1,074	74,130
	10-49	548	74,136
	50+	15	20,506
TDP 2 Landlord	1	1,053	90,450
	2-4	907	77,830
	5-9	425	53,506
	10-49	432	114,084
	50+	74	105,759
TDP 3 Landlord	1	120	10,865
	2-4	215	33,248
	5-9	78	16,597
	10-49	79	24,167
	50+	5	12,819
Total		**9,301**	**1,023,762**

[20] The figures in the 'Population estimate' column are rounded, hence their sum might not add up to the total exactly.

Table 7.2: Population estimates used in tenancy weighting (by region)

TDP/Registrant type	Region	Unweighted frequencies	Population estimate (no of deposits)
Landlord	Missing, other or Channel islands	355	13,957
	North East	839	38,872
	North West	710	107,178
	Yorkshire and The Humber	690	85,818
	East Midlands	682	72,437
	West Midlands	1,059	74,289
	East of England	1,675	103,128
	London	1,754	247,766
	South East	1,386	166,691
	South West	355	113,626
Total		**9301**	**1,023,762**

Landlord weights

(i) A similar process was used to produce the landlord weights. The same two main steps were followed: **Selection weighting**

First, selection weights were applied to the responding sample and scaled up to match the total population of landlords (estimated from the sample frame). Comparison of the responding sample weighted by the selection weights with the full population of deposits allowed us to see where extreme weights might occur without merging of small cells.

As with the tenancy weights, a key decision was whether to weight to totals for each sizeband (and region) within TDP/registrant or within registrant type only. Again, it was decided to weight by sizeband within TDP/registrant, mainly as this was more efficient than the alternative and consistent with what was done for the tenancy weights.

(ii) Calibration weighting

Finally, calibration weighting was used to adjust the selection weights so that the sample profile matched the population targets. The weighted dataset was then checked to ensure that the weighted counts (of landlords) match the

population estimates. As per tenancy weights, the two top sizebands were merged to reduce the weights for large portfolio landlords. . This was then scaled down so that the mean weight was 1.

Table 7.4: Population estimates used in landlord weighting (by sizeband)

TDP/Registrant type	Sizeband	Unweighted frequencies	Population estimate (no of deposits)
Landlord	1	3,327	269,677
	2-4	3,244	102,312
	5-9	1,577	22,799
	10-49	1,059	11,755
	50+	94	1,187
Total		**9,301**	**407,730**

Table 7.5: Population estimates used in landlord weighting (by region)

TDP/Registrant type	Region	Unweighted frequencies	Population estimate (no of deposits)
Landlord	Missing, other or Channel Islands	151	8,512
	North East	355	15,461
	North West	839	39,587
	Yorkshire and The Humber	710	30,926
	East Midlands	690	28,443
	West Midlands	682	29,117
	East of England	1,059	44,691
	London	1,675	97,493
	South East	1,754	67,457
	South West	1,386	46,043
Total		**9,301**	**407,730**

Chapter 8
Analysis

8.1 This chapter outlines some of the survey data preparation processes. Before analysis could be carried out the data were prepared, checked and cleaned. This includes checking:

- derived variables;
- for and cleaning of implausible or invalid data and;
- all variable formats, labels and value labels

Derived variables

8.2 Prior to the survey data analysis, a series of derived variables were produced and checked. These ranged from relatively straightforward banding of raw variables such as the number of properties, to more complex computed variables such as the proportion of landlord income that comes from their rental properties. Details of all derived variables can be found in the data dictionary and survey dataset user guide[21].

Data cleaning

8.3 The EPLS questionnaire had several quality assurance measures in place, for example to restrict implausible value ranges such as income amounts, or to prevent respondents selecting mutually exclusive answers. However, some data cleaning was additionally required. This consisted of basic cleaning and plausibility checks on the data. As the questionnaire included a number of quality assurance measures on most questions, data cleaning was primarily focussed on continuous and free text variables where regulation of input data is more difficult (for example, the number of properties, income, loan and market value amounts and postcodes).

8.4 The process undertaken for the survey analysis dataset is outlined below. Additional processes were applied to the dataset submitted to the UK Data Archive to ensure anonymity and reduce risk of disclosure. These are detailed in the dataset user guide.

[21] The EPLS dataset will be made available via the UK Data Service for users who want to undertake secondary analysis. This will include a data dictionary and survey dataset user guide http://data-archive.ac.uk/.

Implausible data

8.5 The questionnaire itself included checks to ensure only plausible figures could be input into numeric questions. However, these variables were reviewed for implausible data, but we could not conclude that very high values were in fact erroneous and therefore these have been left in the data. This is especially the case for larger portfolio landlords. It is recommended that readers take this into account when considering mean values; a small number of very high value cases raise the mean. It is for this reason we recommend using the median value. The median is therefore used in the main report.

8.6 More information about cleaning of individual variables can be found in the data dictionary and user guide[22].

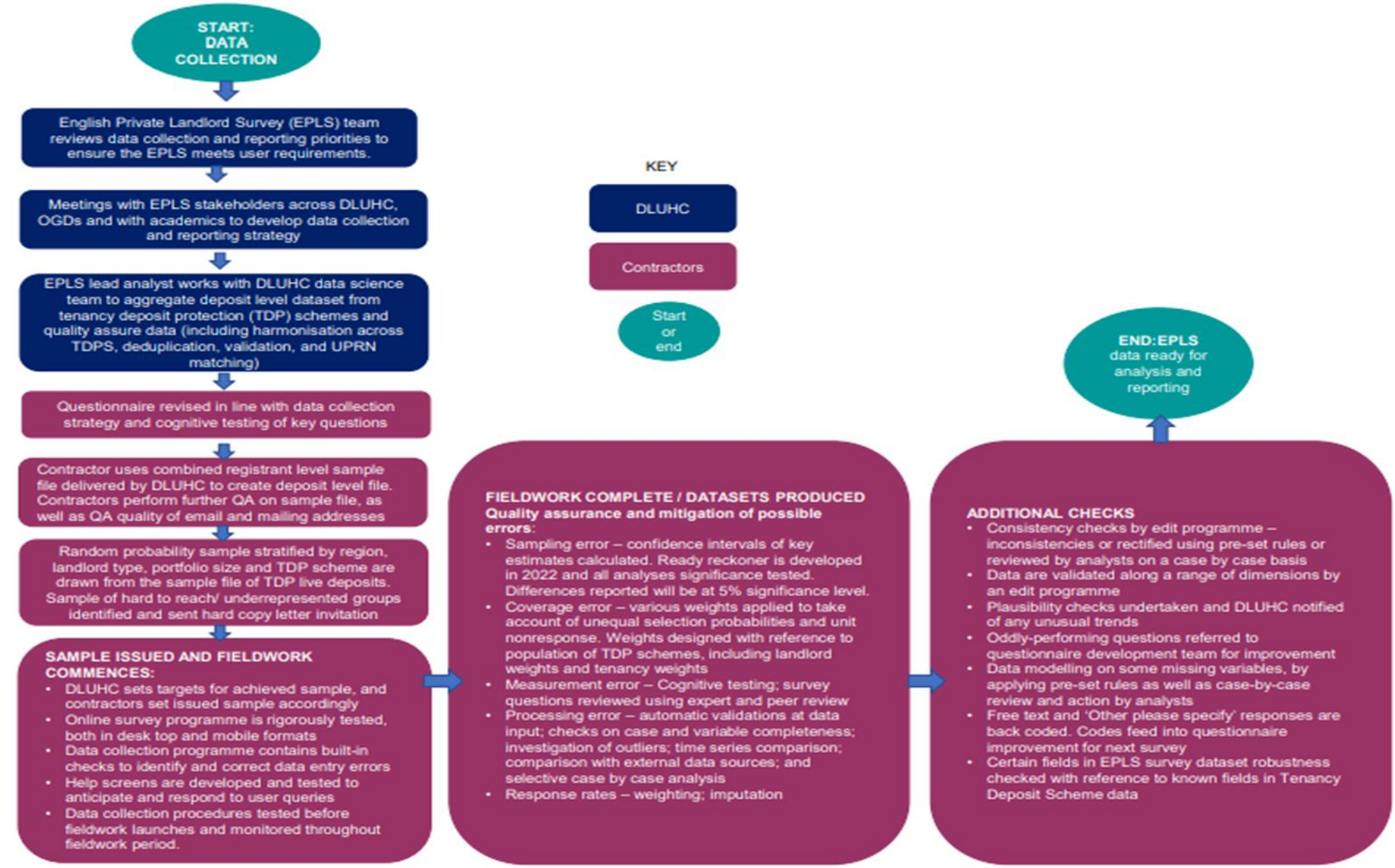
Significance testing

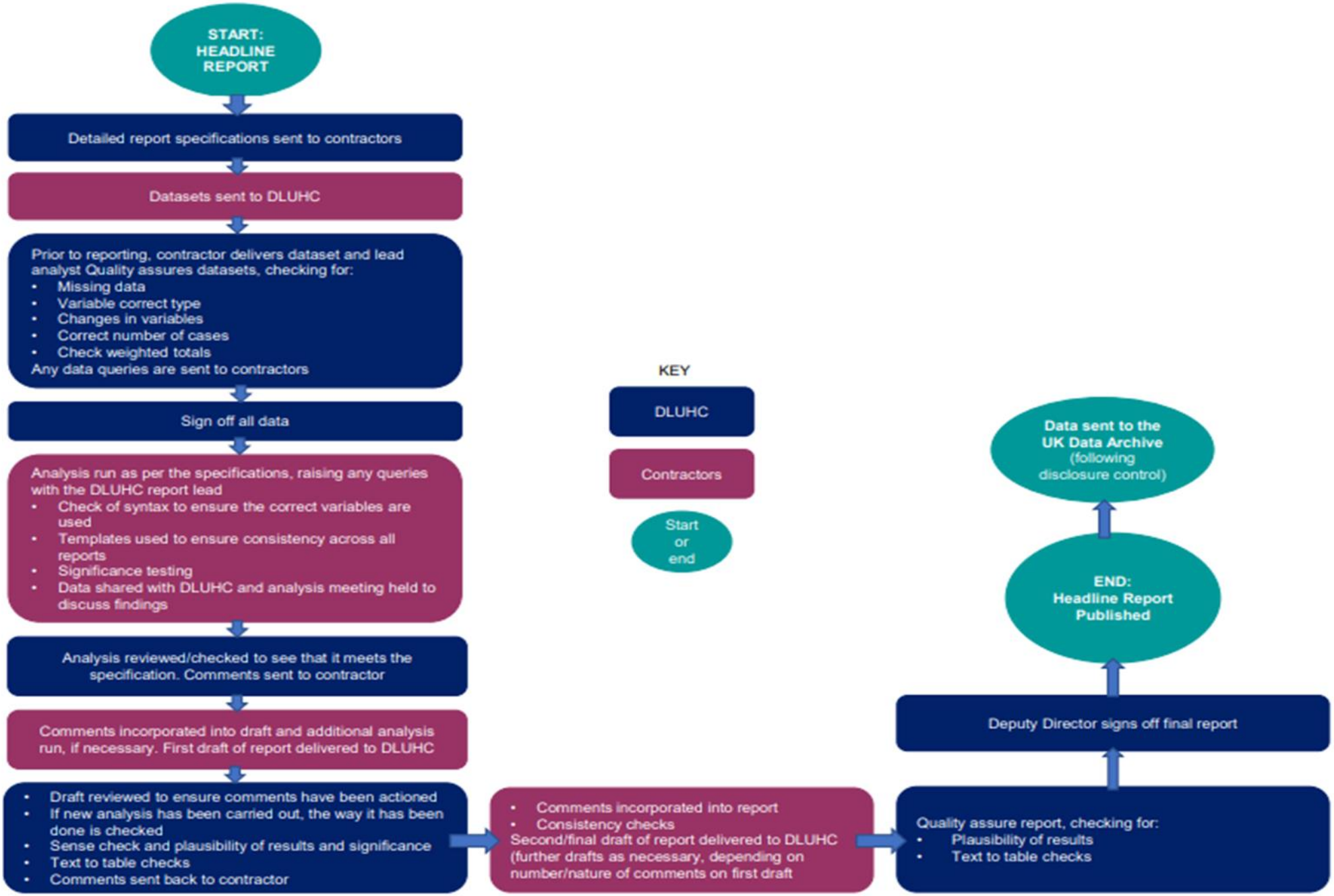
8.7 All reported comparisons were tested at the 5% significance level, taking into account the effect of the weights. Although an estimate produced from a sample survey will rarely be identical to the population value, confidence intervals indicate the likely range within which the population value will fall and provide an indication of the precision of the survey results.

Quality Assurance

8.8 The EPLS goes through several stages of quality assurance to ensure the data are accurate and robust. We include two flow charts that detail steps taken to ensure the quality of both the data and the publication, below.

[22] The EPLS survey dataset will be made available via the UK Data Service for users who want to undertake secondary analysis. This will include a data dictionary and survey dataset user guide http://data-archive.ac.uk/.


START: DATA COLLECTION
English Private Landlord Survey (EPLS) team reviews data collection and reporting priorities to ensure the EPLS meets user requirements.
Meetings with EPLS stakeholders across DLUHC, OGDs and with academics to develop data collection and reporting strategy
EPLS lead analyst works with DLUHC data science team to aggregate deposit level dataset from tenancy deposit protection (TDP) schemes and quality assure data (including harmonisation across TDPS, deduplication, validation, and UPRN matching)
Questionnaire revised in line with data collection strategy and cognitive testing of key questions
Contractor uses combined registrant level sample file delivered by DLUHC to create deposit level file. Contractors perform further QA on sample file, as well as QA quality of email and mailing addresses
Random probability sample stratified by region, landlord type, portfolio size and TDP scheme are drawn from the sample file of TDP live deposits. Sample of hard to reach/ underrepresented groups identified and sent hard copy letter invitation
SAMPLE ISSUED AND FIELDWORK COMMENCES:
• DLUHC sets targets for achieved sample, and contractors set issued sample accordingly
• Online survey programme is rigorously tested, both in desk top and mobile formats
• Data collection programme contains built-in checks to identify and correct data entry errors
• Help screens are developed and tested to anticipate and respond to user queries
• Data collection procedures tested before fieldwork launches and monitored throughout fieldwork period.
KEY
DLUHC
Contractors
Start or end
FIELDWORK COMPLETE / DATASETS PRODUCED
Quality assurance and mitigation of possible errors:
• Sampling error – confidence intervals of key estimates calculated. Ready reckoner is developed in 2022 and all analyses significance tested. Differences reported will be at 5% significance level.
• Coverage error – various weights applied to take account of unequal selection probabilities and unit nonresponse. Weights designed with reference to population of TDP schemes, including landlord weights and tenancy weights
• Measurement error – Cognitive testing; survey questions reviewed using expert and peer review
• Processing error – automatic validations at data input; checks on case and variable completeness; investigation of outliers; time series comparison; comparison with external data sources; and selective case by case analysis
• Response rates – weighting; imputation
ADDITIONAL CHECKS
• Consistency checks by edit programme – inconsistencies or rectified using pre-set rules or reviewed by analysts on a case by case basis
• Data are validated along a range of dimensions by an edit programme
• Plausibility checks undertaken and DLUHC notified of any unusual trends
• Oddly-performing questions referred to questionnaire development team for improvement
• Data modelling on some missing variables, by applying pre-set rules as well as case-by-case review and action by analysts
• Free text and 'Other please specify' responses are back coded. Codes feed into questionnaire improvement for next survey
• Certain fields in EPLS survey dataset robustness checked with reference to known fields in Tenancy Deposit Scheme data
END:EPLS data ready for analysis and reporting


START: HEADLINE REPORT
Detailed report specifications sent to contractors
Datasets sent to DLUHC
Prior to reporting, contractor delivers dataset and lead analyst Quality assures datasets, checking for:
• Missing data
• Variable correct type
• Changes in variables
• Correct number of cases
• Check weighted totals
Any data queries are sent to contractors
Sign off all data
Analysis run as per the specifications, raising any queries with the DLUHC report lead
• Check of syntax to ensure the correct variables are used
• Templates used to ensure consistency across all reports
• Significance testing
• Data shared with DLUHC and analysis meeting held to discuss findings
Analysis reviewed/checked to see that it meets the specification. Comments sent to contractor
Comments incorporated into draft and additional analysis run, if necessary. First draft of report delivered to DLUHC
• Draft reviewed to ensure comments have been actioned
• If new analysis has been carried out, the way it has been done is checked
• Sense check and plausibility of results and significance
• Text to table checks
• Comments sent back to contractor
• Comments incorporated into report
• Consistency checks
Second/final draft of report delivered to DLUHC (further drafts as necessary, depending on number/nature of comments on first draft
Quality assure report, checking for:
• Plausibility of results
• Text to table checks
Deputy Director signs off final report
END: Headline Report Published
Data sent to the UK Data Archive (following disclosure control)
KEY
DLUHC
Contractors
Start or end

Chapter 9
Interpreting the results

9.1 Detailed findings from the EPLS are provided in the main survey report[23].To help interpret these and their implications, this chapter examines the extent to which private renters with a registered TDP scheme deposit differ from private renters generally[24].

9.2 This analysis is based on English Housing Survey (EHS) data. By comparing the profile of tenants reporting their deposit was registered with a TDP scheme and all private renters, we can consider the extent to which the TDP scheme population is likely to be representative of the wider private rented sector.

TDP scheme coverage

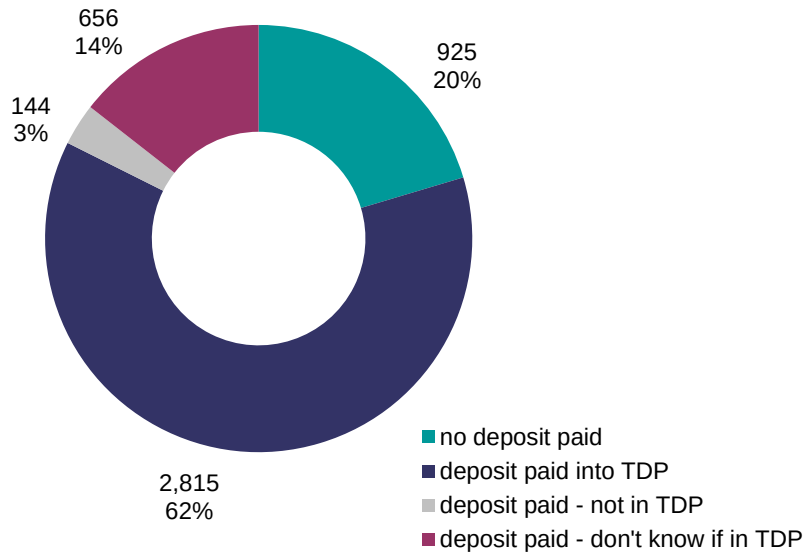
9.3 As mentioned in Chapter 1, there is no official estimate of the proportion of the private rented sector that is covered by the TDP schemes. In 2021-22, the latest year for which data are available from the EHS, 80% of households in the private rented sector paid a deposit when they moved into their current accommodation. Of these, just over three quarters (78%) said that their deposit was protected in a government-backed TDP scheme; 4% said that it was not protected while 18% said that they did not know. Therefore, the total proportion of private rented sector households covered by a TDP scheme is estimated at between 62% and 76%[25], this equates to 2.8 million households who were certain a deposit was registered and a further 656,000 who did not know, Figure 9.1.

9.4 The proportion of the private rented sector that is registered with a TDP scheme has increased steadily since 2007. The proportion is expected to

[23] See link to the EPLS main report and accompanying outputs https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-private-landlord-survey-2018-main-report
[24] TDP scheme households were compared to all private renters, rather than non-TDP scheme households, as the analysis was testing the extent to which the TDP scheme population is representative of all landlords / properties and tenants in the private rented sector (including TDP landlords / tenants).
[25] The coverage of TDP schemes across the private rented sector was calculated as the proportion of private renters who reported having a deposit registered with a TDP scheme, out of the total number of private renters (regardless of whether they had a deposit registered). It includes tenants with all types of tenancies, including assured shorthold tenancies. It is expressed as a range, with the lower bound being tenants who were certain their deposit was registered in a TDP scheme and the upper bound including those who did not know.

continue to increase as more tenancies fall within the requirement and as there is increasing awareness of the need to register[26].

Figure 9.1: Private renter households by deposit paid and whether registered with a TDP scheme (% of households), EHS 2021-22



Base: all private renters
Source: English Housing Survey 2021-22, full household sample

Household characteristics

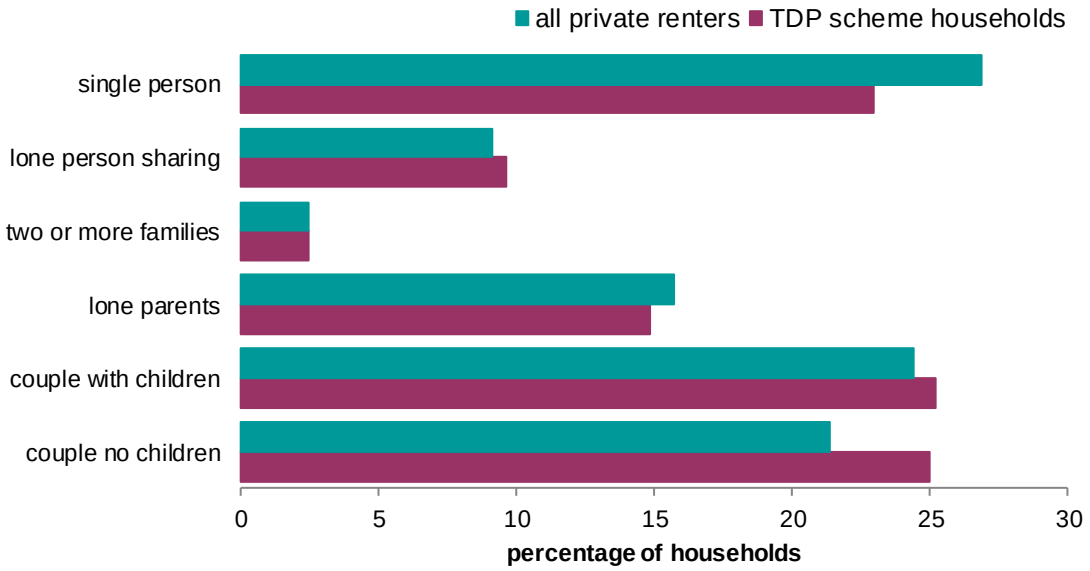
9.5 For the previous survey, the EHS 2014-15 was analysed to compare the following characteristics between households stating they provided a deposit which they believe was registered in a TDP scheme and all private rented sector households[27]:

- Household type
- Economic activity of household reference person
- Income distribution
- Length of residence

[26] The UK Tenancy Deposit Statistics (October 2016) show that the number of deposits protected in England and Wales by one of the three TDP schemes increased steadily year on year from March 2008 to March 2016 from 924,181 to 3,425,718 deposits, or an increase of around 270% over eight years.
[27] More characteristics were explored, however only those that were found to be statistically significant (with a 95% confidence interval) are reported here. Other characteristics analysed were age of property, age of household reference person, property type and region of household.

9.6 In terms of the types of households, the TDP scheme household population were more likely to be couples without children (25% compared to 21% of all private renters), and less likely to be single person households (23% compared to 27% of all private renters). Other apparent differences between the two groups were not statistically significant, Figure 9.2.

Figure 9.2: Comparison of TDP scheme and all private renter households, by household type, 2014-15



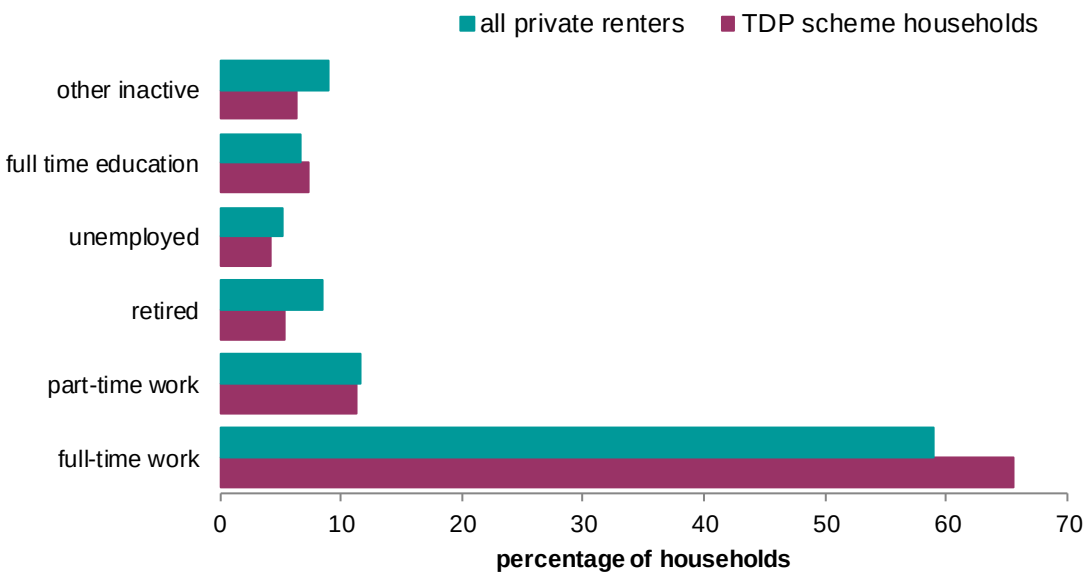
Base: all private renters
Source: English Housing Survey 2014-15, full household sample

9.7 More notable differences were observed in relation to economic activity and income. Household Reference Persons (HRPs)[28] in households with a TDP scheme registered deposit were more likely to be employed and particularly employed full-time (66% in full-time employment compared with 59% of all private renters).

9.8 HRPs in households with a TDP scheme registered deposit were less likely to be retired than all private renters (5% compared to 9%) and be classed as 'other inactive[29]' (6% compared with 9%), Figure 9.3.

[28] In the private rented sector, the HRP is the person in whose name the accommodation is rented. In joint tenancies, the person with the highest income is the HRP,
[29] Other inactive includes people who were permanently sick or disabled, those looking after the family or home and any other activity.

Figure 9.3: Comparison of TDP scheme and all private renter households, by economic activity, 2014-15



Base: all private renters
Note: This is the economic activity of the Household Reference Person (HRP)
Source: English Housing Survey 2014-15, full household sample

9.9 The income profile of TDP scheme households is skewed towards higher income households (and in particular the highest income households) compared to the income profile of all private renters which is evenly spread, Figure 9.4. The average (median) incomes for all adults in TDP scheme households were 13% higher (£29,900) than for all private renters (£26,390).

Figure 9.3: Comparison of TDP scheme and all private renter households, by income distribution, 2014-15

Base: all private renters
Note: This is the income of the Household Reference Person (HRP) and partner
Source: English Housing Survey 2014-15

9.10 TDP scheme households also have been living in their properties for shorter periods than all private renters, with over half (53%) of TDP households living in their current home for one year or less compared to 45% of all private renters. TDP scheme households are also less likely to be long term tenants with 2% of TDP households residing in their current home for 10 or more years compared to 10% for all private renters.

Implications for EPLS findings

9.11 Although across most of the household characteristics the profiles of households with a TDP scheme registered deposit and all private renters were very similar, the findings above have shown some clear differences. In particular, TDP scheme households were more likely to be employed (and employed full-time in particular) and more likely to be on higher incomes. Further, the TDP schemes cover an estimated 62% to 76% of households in the private rented sector. These differences need to be recognised when interpreting the survey findings.

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Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Telephone: 030 3444 0000
Email: epls@levellingup.gov.uk

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