Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

English Private Landlord Survey 2024

Technical Report

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Introduction

The 2024 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 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

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, 2018 and 2021.

The 2024 EPLS took the same approach as the previous two surveys (2018 and 2021) - an online survey of landlords and agents registered with one of the three government-backed Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) schemes. This is a different methodology compared to that used in previous private landlord surveys.

The research was conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) in partnership with BRE research.

This report provides details of key technical features of the 2024 EPLS. Each section covers a specific aspect of the survey and is designed to be read as a standalone document. Findings from the survey can be found in a separate report. If you have any queries about the report or would like any further information, please contact epls@communities.gov.uk.

Methodology and approach

This section provides an overview of the methodology used to conduct the survey. it starts by giving some background information on the Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) schemes which provided the records from which the survey was sampled.

Background to the TDP schemes

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 one of three government-backed TDP schemes; Tenancy Deposit Scheme, My Deposits, or Deposit Protection Service. 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 administrative data on registered deposits held by TDP schemes was used to sample landlords (and agents) for the EPLS.

The administrative data used to sample for EPLS 2024 was that available as of May 2023. At that time, the TDP scheme data indicated that there were just over 4.2 million live deposits registered with a TDP scheme in England, corresponding to an estimated 550,000 registrants (landlords and agents – each agent representing multiple landlords on whose behalf they have registered a deposit). This estimate includes approximately 513,000 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.

There is no official estimate of the proportion of the private rented sector that is covered by the TDP schemes. In 2022-23, the latest year for which data are available from the English Housing Survey (EHS), 77% of households in the private rented sector paid a deposit when they moved into their current accommodation. Of these, 81% said that their deposit was protected in a government-backed TDP scheme; 6% said that it was not protected while 13% said that they did not know. Therefore, the total proportion of private rented sector households covered by a TDP scheme is estimated at between 63% and 73%, Annex Table 1.1 and 1.2.

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.

The number of private tenancies that are registered with a TDP scheme has increased steadily since 2008. The UK Tenancy Deposit Statistics collected by the TDPs themselves 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 (924,181 deposits) to March 2023 (4,685,417 deposits), an increase of over 400% in 16 years. 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.

Survey methodology

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. This online approach is more cost-effective and timely than the previous method of face to face and telephone data collection. This in turn means it is possible to efficiently survey a much larger number of landlords and enables regional analysis to be conducted.

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.

However, issues with the TDP admin data (used as a sample frame) available for agents - in particular a lack of clarity about the potential relationships between different agent registrants on the frame and the way in which they were responding to the survey (as an individual agent or on behalf of their whole company/a branch of that company) made it very difficult to construct a viable weighting scheme for agents. Ultimately, it was agreed that any attempt to weight the agent respondents would require assumptions that could not be justified. As a result, the main report presents analysis of cases sampled as landlords only. This is discussed in more detail in Section 6 on weighting.

Making contact with landlords and agents

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.

Of the 178,821 landlords and agents contacted, 47,031 were agents, of which 10,000 were invited to take part in the survey by letter (but not necessarily also by email). The remainder of agents were invited by email. All sampled landlords received an email invitation. In addition, 25,000 landlords also received an invitation letter. Letters were targeted at single deposit and large portfolio landlords, and landlords in London, in an effort to boost response among these groups.

Given concerns about the response rate, a reserve sample of landlords was issued three weeks into the seven week fieldwork period. The reserve sample were

contacted by email only. The initial agent sample represented a census of all agents so there was no scope for a reserve sample for agents. The inclusion of a reserve sample, though reflecting and resulting in a lower response rate overall, is not expected to have affected the substantive results of the survey.

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 Survey Enquiry Team who dealt with survey access issues, queries and any respondent comments.

Fieldwork was carried out between 3rd April and 20th May 2024. The reserve sample was issued on 25th April.

TDP Data

This section of the technical report provides details on the administrative data held by the Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) schemes from which the EPLS 2024 sample was drawn, how it was obtained and descriptive statistics on the combined TDP scheme registrant and deposit datasets.

Collecting and combining TDP data

MHCLG maintain a deposit level database of all deposits registered with TDPs and the current status of those deposits, that is which deposits are “live” at any given point in time. This dataset is kept up to date based on monthly data returns which the three TDP schemes are required to submit to MHCLG. Each of the three TDP schemes collect and record slightly different information about their landlords and agents and store these data in different ways. MHCLG harmonise the input data to maintain a single database and were able to deliver comparable deposit records to NatCen for all TDPs.

The datasets delivered to NatCen for sampling EPLS 2024 provided a snapshot of registered deposits as of May 2023. This was the latest data available at the time work on sampling started in January 2024. The dataset contained the following information about each deposit, which was used to understand the population profile for sampling and weighting purposes (see those sections for further details).

- 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

There were some gaps in the dataset with not all of the TDP schemes able to provide information on, for example, the counts of tenancies, type of property and the number of bedrooms for a deposit.

Prior to drawing a sample NatCen carried out some additional cleaning and processing of the data. This included:

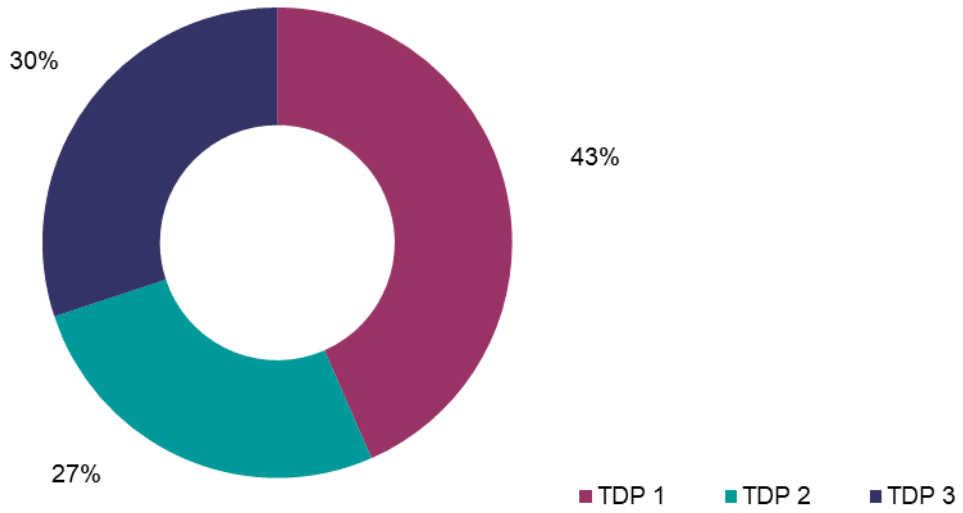
- filtering the dataset so that it included only deposits that were “live” as of May 2023
- removing any duplicate records (based on deposit id)
- removing any deposits for properties outside of England (that is missing a valid English postcode)
- sense checking the number of live deposits and registrants (Landlords and agents) in the dataset against the 2021 sampling frame and confirming with MHCLG that any changes in numbers were as expected

While NatCen carried out some checks on the data, given the number of records in the dataset (more than 4 million deposits) it was not possible to clean individual records, and the quality of the sample frame is dependent on the quality of the data returned by TDPs. As such the TDP scheme descriptive statistics should be treated as estimates rather than definitive counts.

TDP data analysis: Deposit level

At the time of the download there were 4.2 million TDP scheme registered deposits, with 43% of these registered with TDP1, 27% with TDP2 and the remaining 30% registered with TDP3, Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: 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).
The three TDPs have been anonymised in all of the results presented in this report.

TDP data analysis: Registrant data

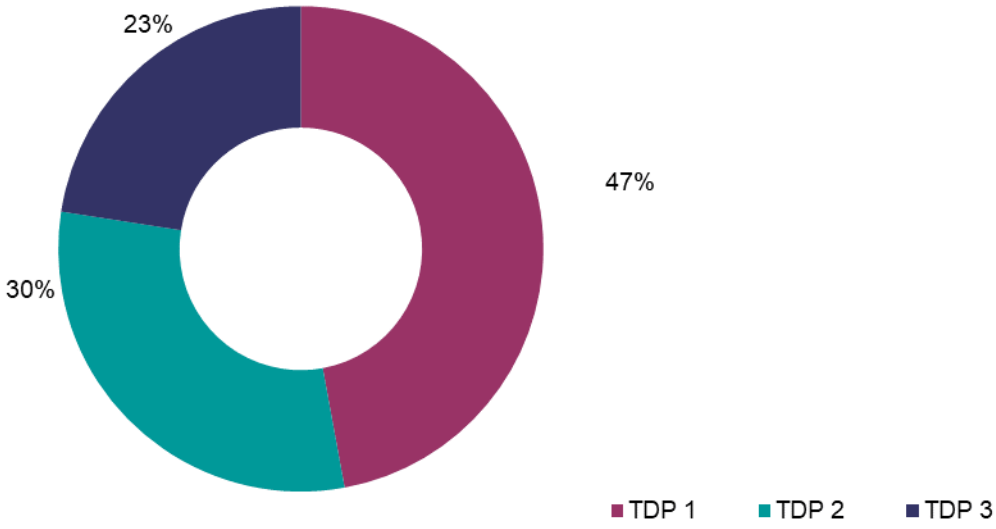
Deposit level data was aggregated to 'registrant level' using LLAG_ID, an identifier provided by the TDPs. The number of registered deposits under each identifier was summed to give the total number of deposits for each registrant. LLAG_ID is the best source of information available on unique registrants. However, there were some instances of the same email address being used across multiple values of LLAG_ID (especially in the agent sample), suggesting that some agents may have more than one registered LLAG_ID.

Despite aggregation by LLAG_ID, there could still be multiple records with the same agent email. The mean number of emails addresses per LLAG_ID for agents was 9995 A small proportion of IDs (7%) matched one on one to an email address while 12% of records (53,000) were associated with a single email address. To ensure we were only contacting unique registrants, therefore, the agent data was further aggregated by email (there was some aggregation for landlords but to a much smaller degree – deduplicating by email reduced the number of landlord records by around 30,000). The population of registrants includes all landlords and agents who were members of a TDP scheme with a registered live tenancy in England at the time of the data download.

At the time of the data download there were 550,330 registrants (a mix of landlords and agents) recorded as registered with a TDP scheme. Of the 550,330 registrants,

513,136 were landlords who registered a deposit themselves with the remainder being agents registering deposits on behalf of landlords. Figure 2.2 shows the distribution of registrants across the three schemes. TDP1 has 47% of all registrant landlords and agents, with TDP2 having 30% and TDP3 the remaining 23%. This is a more equal distribution of registrants across TDPs than was found in 2021 and is most likely related to a change in how records from one TDP were sampled in 2024 (see section on comparisons over time below).

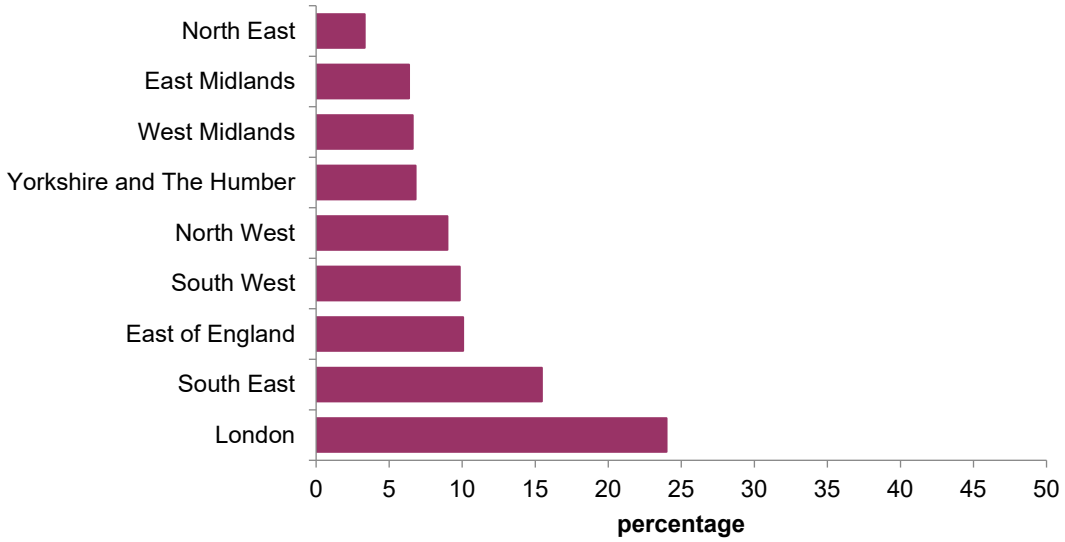
Figure 2.2: Registrants by TDP scheme



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

Figure 2.3 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 (15%), the South West (10%), and the East of England (10%).

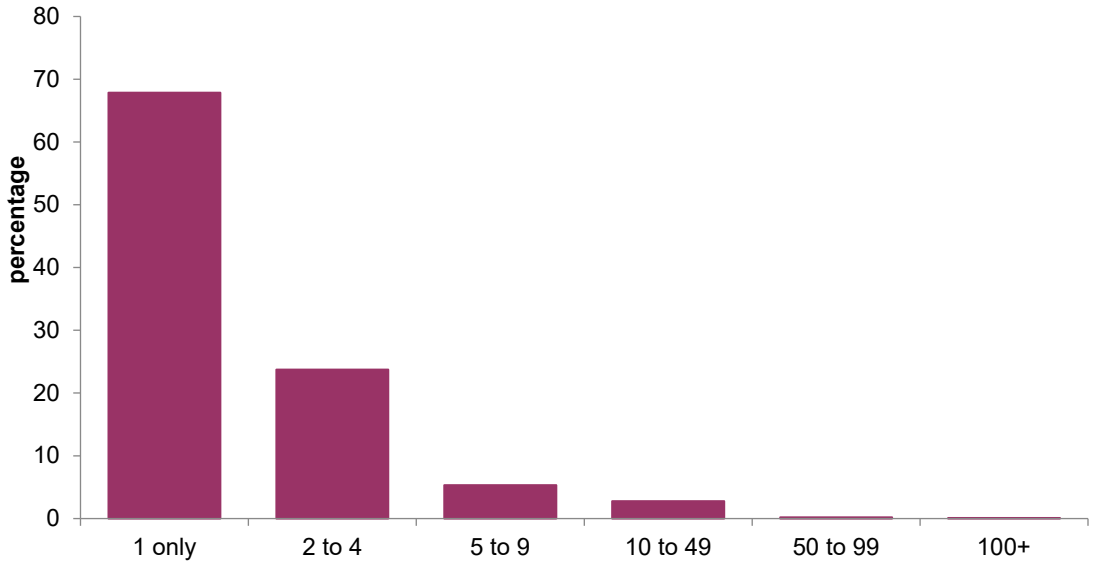
Figure 2.3: Landlord registrants by location



Base: all landlords where location data was available (n=469,132 landlord registrants)
Note: excludes a small number outside England, or in 'other, missing or Channel Isles'
Source: Combined TDP scheme registrant dataset

Two thirds (68%) of landlords had registered just one deposit with a quarter (24%) registering between 2 and 4 deposits and 5% registering between 5 and 9 deposits. The remaining 3% of landlord deposits were with landlords who had registered 10 or more deposits, Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Landlord registrants by number of deposits



Base: all landlords (n=513,136)
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.

Comparison with previous years

Direct comparisons cannot be made with 2018 and 2021 regarding the number of deposits and the number of landlords. This is because of a difference in the definition of the population used for the 2024 survey compared with 2018 and 2021. Each of the three TDP schemes offers both custodial and insurance-backed schemes for registering deposits. In 2024, records from both insured and custodial schemes for all three TDPs were included in the sample and the resulting population estimates whereas, due to data not being available, custodial scheme records from one of the TDPs were not included in 2018 and 2021. The resulting population estimates for those years are therefore lower than they would otherwise have been.

For example, the total number of landlord-registered deposits based on the TDP records supplied for the 2024 survey was 1.28 million. If custodial cases from the relevant TDP were not present, that number would reduce to 1.21 million. Similarly, the number of landlords in 2024 falls from 513,000 to 462,000, if custodial deposits were to be excluded from the relevant TDP. Despite the difference in the total population, a comparison of key survey estimates for 2024 both including and excluding the relevant custodial records suggests there is little difference in the underlying profiles of landlords or their properties regardless of whether or not these cases are included. This means it is possible to compare the proportion of landlords with different characteristics/experiences over time in the main EPLS report.

Questionnaire

This section provides an overview of the questionnaire landlords and agents were asked to complete.

The 2021 EPLS questionnaire was the starting point for the 2024 survey. The majority of the 2021 questionnaire was retained for 2024 in order to facilitate analysis of change over time. However, some questions from 2021 which were no longer as relevant, most notably those relating to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, were dropped. A small number of new questions were added to ensure the questionnaire reflected the current legislative and policy landscape.

Some questions were asked of both landlords and agents. Other questions – relating to landlord finances and demographics – were only asked of landlords. The average (mean) time taken to complete the questionnaire was 25 minutes for people answering as landlords and 14 minutes for agents. This is slightly longer than in previous years. In 2021 the mean interview length was 22 minutes for people answering as landlords and 10 minutes for people answering as agents.

Table 3.1 below gives an overview of the different sections of the questionnaire and whether they were asked of landlords and/or agents.

Table 3.1: Overview of EPLS 2024 questionnaire

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

Section	Question topic	Asked of landlords?	Asked of agents?
Your rental property and tenants	Number of rental properties	Yes	No
Your rental property and tenants	How many landlords based overseas	No	Yes
Your rental property and tenants	Types of rental property owned, let or manage	Yes	Yes
Your rental property and tenants	Types of tenants currently letting to	Yes	Yes
Your rental property and tenants	Whether own / manage any HMOs, how many households renting in HMOs	Yes	Yes
Your rental property and tenants	Use of deposit replacement scheme	Yes	Yes
Your rental property and tenants	In which region rental property is located	Yes	Yes
Your rental practice	Sources of information for renting property	Yes	No
Your rental practice	Use of an agent	Yes	No
Your rental practice	How find tenants for lettings	Yes	No
Your rental practice	Types of tenants willing to let to, why not willing to let to	Yes	Yes
Your rental practice	Compliance with legal requirements	Yes	Yes
Your rental practice	Whether they have applied for a license – if required in their region	Yes	No
Your rental practice	Whether damp identified in any properties and any action taken	Yes	Yes

Section	Question topic	Asked of landlords?	Asked of agents?
Your rental practice	Whether asked make/has made any reasonable adjustments to property	Yes	No
Rents and deposits	Rent setting for new and existing tenants, amount charged and factors influencing rents	Yes	Yes
Rents and deposits	Amount of deposit	Yes	Yes
Rents and deposits	Whether rent guarantor requested	Yes	Yes
Rents and deposits	How long most recently let property was vacant before let	Yes	Yes
Arrears	Whether tenancy is in arrears, amount in arrears	Yes	No
Tenancies that ended	Why tenancies ended	Yes	Yes
Tenancies that ended	Why asked tenant to leave	Yes	Yes
Tenancies that ended	Whether deposit was returned to tenant and reasons for doing so	Yes	Yes
The landlord journey	Number of years a landlord	Yes	No
The landlord journey	How acquired and funded first and most recent rental property	Yes	No
The landlord journey	Why became a landlord	Yes	No
Future plans	Future plans for increasing, decreasing or keep number of properties the same over the coming two years and reasons for doing so	Yes	No
	Issues that cause concern	Yes	Yes

Section	Question topic	Asked of landlords?	Asked of agents?
Landlord and agent concerns	Use of government's Courts and Tribunals Service	Yes	Yes
Finances and taxation	Approximate market value of rental property, value of any borrowing or loans for rental property, number of properties for which borrowing	Yes	No
Finances and taxation	Type of borrowing or loans for rental property	Yes	No
Finances and taxation	Approximate income and rental income	Yes	No
Finances and taxation	Awareness and understanding of recent and planned landlord tax, lending or fees	Yes	No
Energy Efficiency and safety	Properties with an E, F or G EPC rating	Yes	Yes

Sampling

This section summarises the sampling approach for the survey.

An initial sample of 148,826 cases (101,795 landlords and 47,031 agents) was issued for the mainstage survey with the aim of achieving 10,000 responses. A census of agents (more specifically a census of unique agent emails) was taken to maximise the number of agent responses. In addition, to mitigate against a lower than expected response, a reserve sample of landlords was selected of which a subsample of 29,995 cases was issued towards the end of fieldwork. The total number of landlord cases issued is therefore 131,790.

Landlords were selected from each scheme (roughly) in proportion to their population across the schemes. As the largest of the three Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) schemes, TDP1 therefore accounted for the highest proportion of landlords in the EPLS sample. 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 without valid contact details. Table 4.1 summarises the survey sample across the schemes and across landlords and agents.

Table 4.1: Survey sample by TDP scheme

	TDP1		**TDP2**		**TDP3**		**Total**
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	
Landlords	59,448	64.7	42,023	87.9	30,319	77.5	131,790
Agents	32,434	35.3	5,809	12.1	8,788	22.5	47,031
Total	**91,882**	**51.4**	**47,832**	**26.7**	**39,107**	**21.9**	**178,821**

Sampling landlords

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 breakdown of the sample by scheme, registrant type and sizeband is provided in Table 4.2.

Sampling rates were set with a view to achieving 3,000 interviews with single deposit landlords. Around 14-16% of single deposit landlords were selected in the three TDP schemes (a slightly lower proportion than in 2021 where the corresponding figure was 18-19%). Sampling rates in other sizebands varied by TDP scheme, except for landlords with 50+ deposits registered where all landlords were selected (see Table 4.2).

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.

Sampling agents

A different approach was used for the agent sample to ensure that all sampled cases were contactable, and to maximise the likelihood that the person (or organisation) contacted was the one intended. The sample frame included many duplicate email addresses; in some cases, up to 53,000 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 agent records from the frame. Often, these appeared to be different agent branches sharing one central email address (e.g. admin@agent.co.uk). Hence, the agent letter sample was drawn first. The other possibility was that the address given was for the landlord on whose behalf the agents had registered the deposit, see section 5 on response for more on this.

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[1]. After drawing the sample of 10,000 letters, the frame was de-duplicated on email to obtain the census of agents. As a result, we ended up with a total agent issued sample of 47,031. This total includes 10,000 letters sent to agent branches sharing an email address. These are counted separately from the “agent” represented by the email address. For example, if the email address admin@agent.co.uk was shared by ten agent branches and one of these was sampled for the letter sample, the letter and the email together count as two distinct “agents”.

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

In addition to the data cleaning undertaken prior to sampling, the addresses of landlords/agents that were selected for the letter sample were checked using an algorithm which compared the provided address against addresses on the Royal Mail's Postcode Address File and made amendments for any mismatch where possible. This ensured that as many as possible of the selected addresses could be reached via Royal Mail (it was, unfortunately, not possible to match all of the sampled addresses to the PAF). In total, around 22% of addresses were reformatted. This included deleting repeated information (e.g. the name of the town appearing twice) and splitting up the address across more than one line to make them visible in the window of the envelope.

Table 4.2 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	21%	33,681
	2-4	22%	12,562
	5-9	75%	8,655
	10-49	100%	4,331
	50-99	100%	154
	100+	100%	65
TDP 1 Agent	1	100%	7,383
	2-4	100%	6,181
	5-9	100%	3,752
	10-49	100%	7,072
	50-99	100%	2,749
	100-249	100%	3,370
	250-499	100%	1,414
	500-999	100%	427
	1000+	100%	86
TDP 2 Landlord	1	21%	21,833
	2-4	22%	8,685
	5-9	52%	5,407
	10-49	68%	5,018
	50-99	100%	687

TDP/Registrant type	Sizeband (no. of deposits)	Proportion of landlords/agents selected (%)	Number of landlords/agents selected
	100+	100%	393
TDP 2 Agent	1	100%	1,515
	2-4	100%	1,320
	5-9	100%	789
	10-49	100%	1,281
	50-99	100%	379
	100-249	100%	341
	250-499	100%	124
	500-999	100%	34
	1000+	100%	26
TDP 3 Landlord	1	22%	17,961
	2-4	26%	6,763
	5-9	66%	3,483
	10-49	80%	1,970
	50-99	100%	112
	100+	100%	30
TDP 3 Agent	1	100%	2,594
	2-4	100%	1,310
	5-9	100%	674
	10-49	100%	1,029
	50-99	100%	631
	100-249	100%	1,295
	250-499	100%	882
	500-999	100%	275
	1000+	100%	98
Total			**178,821**

TDP/Registrant type	Sizeband (no. of deposits)	Proportion of landlords/agents selected (%)	Number of landlords/agents selected

Survey response

This section summarises the response rates to the survey.

Defining a productive response

Full and partial responses were included in the survey data as productive responses. A full response was one 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 but had stopped before reaching the end. To count as a partial response, the respondent had to get to Section 9 of the questionnaire which is the start of the more sensitive questions on financial information. Individuals who completed some questions but did not reach this cut-off question were not included as productive responses.

Overall response rate

The survey response rates are summarised in Table 5.1. The survey achieved 10,919 total productive responses with an overall response rate – calculated as the number of responses as a percentage of the issued sample - of 6.1%. Of these productive responses 10,176 were full responses (93% of productive cases) and 743 were partial responses (7% of productive cases).

Table 5.1: Response statistics – summary

	number of cases	% of sample frame	% of issued sample
sample frame	550,330	-	-
issued sample	178,821	32.2%	-
productive	10,919	2%	6.1%
fully complete	10,176	1.8%	5.7%
partial complete	743	0.1%	0.4%
excluded due to issues with data quality	44	0.0%	0.0%
opt out	57	0.0%	0.0%
non-responders	167,801	30.2%	93.8%

Table 5.2 breaks down responses by landlords and agents. The figures are split based on the role assigned to the indiviudal on the sample frame (that is whether it was a landlord or agent who registered the deposit with a Tenancy Deposit Protection scheme (TDP). In practice, as described below and shown in Table 5.3, people did not always respond to the survey in the same role as they were identified on the sample frame. Landlords had a higher response rate (7%) than agents (3.5%).

Table 5.2: Response statistics by landlord and agents

	Landlord	Landlord	Agent	Agent	Total	Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
issued sample	131,790	-	47,031	-	178,821	-
productive	9,251	7.0%	1,668	3.5%	10,919	6.1%
fully complete	8,599	6.5%	1,577	3.4%	10,176	5.7%
partial complete	652	0.5%	91	0.2%	743	0.4%
excluded due to issues with data quality	35	0.0%	9	0.0%	44	0.0%
opt out	51	0.0%	6	0.0%	57	0.0%
non-responders	122,453	92.9%	45,348	96.4%	167,801	93.8%

Excluding cases where there was a mismatch between landlord/agent role

At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were asked to confirm whether they were landlords or agents. They were first asked '*Are you a landlord or an agent?'*, and then *'you have selected that you are a landlord/ an agent. Please confirm if this is correct'*. For some participants, especially those sampled as agents, their self-reported role was different from how they were sampled. As in 2021, participants who said they were a landlord but had been sampled as an agent (or vice-versa) were allowed to continue the survey in their self-reported role. Participants who said they were both an agent and a landlord were asked to complete the survey in their sampled role.

While participants for whom there was a mismatch in roles were allowed to complete the survey (in part so that we could understand more about the extent of this potential mismatch) it creates problems when it comes to weighting the survey data back to the known population of landlord/agents from the sample frame. For that

reason, it was agreed to only include participants who completed the questionnaire in their sampled role in the final dataset.

Table 5.3 gives detail of the final survey response, once the mismatched cases have been removed. The impact of this on landlords was minimal, with only thirty-two cases needing to be removed from the landlord sample. For agents, however, 59% of the 'agent' responses needed to be removed because, although an agent registrant was sampled, the survey respondent said they were a landlord. It appears that when registering deposits on behalf of a landlord, some agents recorded the landlord's contact details during the registration process. When they were sampled for EPLS, therefore, using those TDP records the survey invitation went to the landlord on whose behalf they had registered the deposit.

Table 5.3: Response statistics by landlord and agent after all data cleaning complete

	Landlord	**Landlord**	**Agent**	**Agent**	**Total**	**Total**
	No	%	No	%	No	%
issued sample	131,790		47,031		178,821	
productive	9,219	7.0%	685	3.5%	9,904	6.1%
fully complete	8,567	6.5%	679	3.4%	9,246	5.7%
partial complete	652	0.5%	6	0.2%	658	0.4%
excluded:						
Questionnaire wrongly completed as agent/landlord	32	0.0%	983	2.1%	1,015	0.6%
excluded due to other issues with data quality	35	0.0%	9	0.0%	44	0.0%
opt out	51	0.0%	6	0.0%	57	0.0%
non-responders	122,453	92.9%	45,348	96.4%	16,7801	93.8%

Weighting

The sample frame of landlords was used to derive population estimates for weighting. Weights were produced for landlords (those sampled and responding as such) only. No weights were produced for agents.

Two different landlord weights were produced:

- Tenancy weights: these make the data representative of live deposits/tenancies registered by landlords with a Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) scheme.

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

Using the appropriate weight for analysis

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

In the main report:

- 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

The tenancy weighting was done in two main steps:

- **Selection weights** were calculated for each landlord and applied to the responding sample. These were scaled up so that the sum of the weights matched population totals.

- **Calibration weighting** was used to adjust the selection weights so that the sample profile matched population totals.

In more detail:

Selection weighting: Selection weights (equal to the inverse of the probability of selection) were calculated for each landlord and applied to the responding sample. Landlords were sampled at different rates depending on size of portfolio (see sampling chapter 4): they received weights that varied between 1 and 4.56. These weights were 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. If this was the case this was dealt with later by merging cells (see below).

Calibration weighting: As in 2018 and 2021, the selection weights were adjusted using calibration weighting to match population counts of total deposits in each sizeband category within each TDP, and (separately) in each region.

Only 0.3% of landlords (across all three TDP schemes) had registered more than 50 deposits, hence the top two sizeband categories were merged to avoid extreme wights for the few large portfolio landlords. The final set of targets is shown below in Tables 6.1 and 6.2.

Lastly, the calibration weight was scaled down to create a scaled weight with a mean of 1. Hence there are two versions of the tenancy weights: a grossing weight (summing to the total population of deposits) and a scaled weight (summing to the unweighted sample size).

Table 6.1: Population estimates used in tenancy weighting (by sizeband)

TDP/Registrant type	Sizeband (no. of deposits)	Unweighted frequencies (no. of landlords)	Population estimate (no. of deposits)
TDP 1 Landlord	1	2,304	159,497
	2-4	1,175	140,975
	5-9	980	72,595
	10-49	529	73,847
	50+	20	24,732
TDP 2 Landlord	1	1,170	105,282
	2-4	548	100,110
	5-9	472	66,890
	10-49	402	140,681
	50+	89	155,047
TDP 3 Landlord	1	779	83,434
	2-4	394	66,078
	5-9	225	33,440
	10-49	125	44,094
	50+	7	15,071
Total		**9,219**	**1,281,773**

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

Table 6.2: Population estimates used in tenancy weighting (by region)

TDP/Registrant type	Region	Unweighted frequencies (no. of landlords)	Population estimate (no. of deposits)
Landlord	Missing, other or Channel islands	657	67,781
	North East	323	44,933
	North West	817	129,554
	Yorkshire and The Humber	706	97,605
	East Midlands	629	84,472
	West Midlands	580	88,229
	East of England	1,024	121,020
	London	1,554	323,637
	South East	1,707	198,205
	South West	1,222	126,337
Total		**9,219**	**1,281,773**

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

Landlord weights

A similar process was used to produce the landlord weights. The same two main steps were followed:

Selection weighting: The 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 landlords allowed us to see where extreme weights might occur without merging of small cells.

Calibration weighting: Calibration weighting was used to adjust the selection weights so that the sample profile matched population counts for landlords in each sizeband category within each TDP, and (separately) in each region. As per the tenancy weights, the two top sizebands were merged to reduce the magnitude of weights for large portfolio landlords. The final set of targets is shown below in Tables 6.3 and 6.4.

Lastly, the calibration weight was scaled down to create a scaled weight with a mean of 1. Hence there are two versions of the landlord weights: a grossing weight (summing to the total population of landlords) and a scaled weight (summing to the unweighted sample size).

Table 6.3: Population estimates used in landlord weighting (by sizeband)

TDP/Registrant type	Sizeband	Unweighted frequencies (no. of landlords)	Population estimate (no. of deposits)
Landlord	1	4,253	34,8213
	2-4	2,117	121,816
	5-9	1,677	27,308
	10-49	1,056	14,216
	50+	116	1,583
Total		**9,219**	**513,136**

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

Table 6.4: Population estimates used in landlord weighting (by region)

TDP/Registrant type	Region	Unweighted frequencies (no. of landlords)	Population estimate (no. of deposits)
Landlord	Missing, other or Channel Islands	657	44,004
	North East	323	17,036
	North West	817	46,147
	Yorkshire and The Humber	706	34,964
	East Midlands	629	32,640
	West Midlands	580	33,907
	East of England	1,024	51,615
	London	1,554	123,063
	South East	1,707	79,312

	South West	1,222	50,448
Total		**9,219**	**513,136**

Note: The figures in the ‘Population estimate’ column are rounded, hence their sum might not add up to the total exactly.

Issues with weighting agents

Data collected from agents in the EPLS has not been weighted or reported on. Weighting to the population of agents relies on the sampling frame (TDP records) to produce population counts of agents with different characteristics, most notably for EPLS the number of agents in each size band, where size bands are based on the number of deposits registered.

There are two main issues with the frame:

1. Coverage error caused by lack of information on the sample frame.
2. Mismatches between response and the corresponding record on the sample frame.

Coverage error: The first issue relates to deposits that are covered by the frame but did not have useable contact details associated with them. Many records had a generic email address e.g. info@agency, which is unlikely to generate a response. Other records contained the contact details (especially postal address) for the landlord on whose behalf the deposit was registered, rather than the agent themselves. This means the survey invite went out to landlords rather than agents.

Mismatches between frame and responding sample: Agents can act as an individual, on behalf of a branch of a company or on behalf of a company (with one or more branches) when registering deposits with the TDPs. The agent IDs on the sample frame represent a mix of individual agents, agent branches and companies (with one or more branches). The frame is an aggregated version of deposit level data supplied by the TDPs (see Section 4), hence it includes no information about the level at which each registrant appears, i.e. whether as an individual, a branch or a company.

In many instances, agent respondents reported within the survey about many (sometimes 100s) more deposits than the number associated with their email address on the frame, suggesting that they had answered on behalf of their branch or company, rather than just themselves or, more accurately, the deposits associated with their individual email. If agents respond about deposits registered by others it produces a mismatch between the frame and the responses which introduces potential for double counting of deposits and makes weighting impractical.

Implications

The problems identified with the sample frame in 2024 were also likely to be present in 2018 and 2021. In 2021 agent data were also not weighted or reported on. In 2018, when the sampling process and access to TDP records was handled slightly differently the extent of the issues with the sample frame were not known and the agent data was weighted in good faith. Given the issues that have since been uncovered with the EPLS sample frame, data users should interpret weighted estimates for agents with caution.

Data processing and quality assurance

The section outlines the processing and quality assurance that was carried out before the survey data were analysed. This included:

- identifying and removing invalid responses
- backcoding “other” responses
- cleaning implausible values
- checking all variable formats, labels and value labels
- producing derived variables

Identifying invalid responses

The EPLS questionnaire had several quality assurance measures in place, for example to restrict implausible value ranges when asking for numeric amounts, or to prevent respondents selecting mutually exclusive answers. However, with EPLS being a web survey, the number of checks was kept to a minimum to avoid disrupting the interview and causing respondents to get frustrated and exit the questionnaire. Without an interviewer to oversee the data collection process, web surveys can suffer from poor data quality. Several data quality checks were carried out to ensure that all of the data included in the final EPLS dataset was of as high a quality as possible.

Speeders: One way to identify poor quality, or potentially falsified, data is by looking at the length of time taken to complete the questionnaire. An expected interview length for each respondent who completed the survey online was calculated based on the median interview length for someone following a given route through the questionnaire. Any cases where the actual interview length was identified as an outlier, that is, significantly far from the lower quartile of responses in the sample, were excluded from the dataset. The number of cases excluded for speeding was 29.

Duplicates: It is possible for a landlord to have registered deposits with more than one Tenancy Deposit Protection scheme (TDP) and, therefore, potentially to have received more than one survey invitation and completed the survey more than once. We reviewed the survey data for potential duplicates – based on the name and address of responding landlords. Nine cases were removed as potential duplicates.

Incorrect or out of date information: A few landlords got in touch to notify us of issues with their survey responses including the fact that they had included commercial properties in their responses or that they were no longer a landlord. Where we were made aware of these issues we removed the responses. Six cases were removed for this reason.

Inconsistent role types: A check at the start of the questionnaire asked respondents to confirm if they were a landlord, an agent, or both and then routed them to complete the questionnaire accordingly. If they said “both” they were directed to complete the questionnaire as a landlord if they were sampled as a landlord and an agent if they were sampled as an agent. To facilitate weighting (see section 6) cases were only included in the final dataset if the role the respondent selected at the start of the questionnaire was consistent with how they were sampled for the survey. A small number of individuals (32) sampled as landlords but who said they were an agent were excluded. A majority of the individuals sampled as agents who responded to the survey told us they were landlords and had to be excluded (983 of 1,668). The fact that so many of the survey invites sent out to the agent sample went to landlords rather than the intendent agent recipient is one reason why it was decided not to weight the agent data (see Section 6 of this report).

Backcoding

Many of the EPLS questions included an “other” response option where respondents were invited to write in their response. These “other” responses were reviewed by a team of specialist coders and backcoded into one or more of the original response categories where possible. The backcoded versions of variables (denoted by _Final in the dataset) have been used for all analysis.

If the same “other” response occurred repeatedly the coders – in consultation with the research team and MHCLG – added an extra code and associated variable to the dataset. These additional variables can be identified by codes 051 plus i.e. varname_Final051, varname_Final052 in the dataset. The published tables report only on those responses displayed in the original questionnaire, reporting on all remaining responses that could not be backcoded into these responses as “other”. However, the additional variables are available in the final dataset for data users. To reproduce the published tables these additional codes should be combined with those shown as varname_final906 in analysis.

Excluding implausible values

All of the numeric variables were reviewed post fieldwork to ensure as far as possible that there were no inconsistent values or values that were obviously wrong.

For many variables it was not possible to say with any certainty that very high values were in fact erroneous (especially with some landlords/agents having very large portfolios). In most cases, therefore, the raw data has not been trimmed or otherwise adjusted. It is recommended that data users take this into account when considering mean values - a small number of very high value cases can raise the mean – and consider using median values instead. Median values are used in the main EPLS report.

The analysis of landlord income and property values included in the main EPLS report excluded some values at the lower end of the distribution which were deemed to be implausibly low (specific details are given under the relevant table). However,

these values have been left in the dataset so that future analysts can make their own choices about which, if any, values to exclude.

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 accompanying the archived data.

Derived variables

A number 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 user guide accompanying the EPLS 2024 dataset deposited with the UK Data Archive.

Imputing missing data

Due to a routing error in the online questionnaire programme, which was not picked up before or during fieldwork, some data which should have been collected was not. Specifically, we were missing data on the total value of any loans or borrowing for single deposit landlords.

The likely loan value for single property landlords in 2024 was imputed using data from 2018 and 2021, as well as information from landlords with two or more properties in 2024. A Machine Learning (ML) approach was used. Different methods – including LASSO, CART and Random Forest – were tried and the best performing models were blended to optimise performance. The final model used only information from landlords with one and two property portfolios. Data on landlords with many properties did not add much value to predicting loan value for the missing cases. The following EPLS variables were used in prediction: variables on portfolio characteristics (e.g. types, market value, locations and number of properties landlord owns), landlord borrowing behaviour (e.g. what loans they have), landlord characteristics (e.g. age, length of experience, region and income), landlord's concerns and future plans.

To evaluate the success of the imputation approach, we used data from 2018 and landlords with two or more properties in 2021 to predict values for single property landlords in 2021 and compared the predictions to the known values for this group. It is assumed that predicting 2024 loan value for single property landlords using data from 2018, 2021 and 2024 (landlords with 2+ properties) will perform similarly to predicting loan value in 2021. Given that we do not observe big changes in loan value across time this is a reasonable assumption.

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 provide summary statistics on the performance of the final ML model and the extent of the difference between the imputed and true values for single property landlords in 2021.

Table 7.1: Performance of imputation model (single property landlords 2021)

Statistic	Value
root mean square error (RMSE)	111,135.30
mean absolute error	63,760.40
median absolute error	42,973.00

Table 7.2: Summary statistics for difference between imputed and observed values (single property landlords 2021)

Statistic	Value
Median	-7,156
inter quartile range	-48,520, 34,858
Mean	-2,859
standard deviation	111,146
Minimum	-512,571
Maximum	1,855,899
sample size	1,181

The overall distribution of imputed values were judged to be sufficiently close to the original to enable them to be used in reporting aggregate level statistics such as means and medians. However, the potential for large differences at an individual level (median absolute error=£43,000) suggests that the imputed data should not be used for subgroup analysis with small samples, where the uncertainty around the true value may be amplified when scaling, or to model other outcomes.

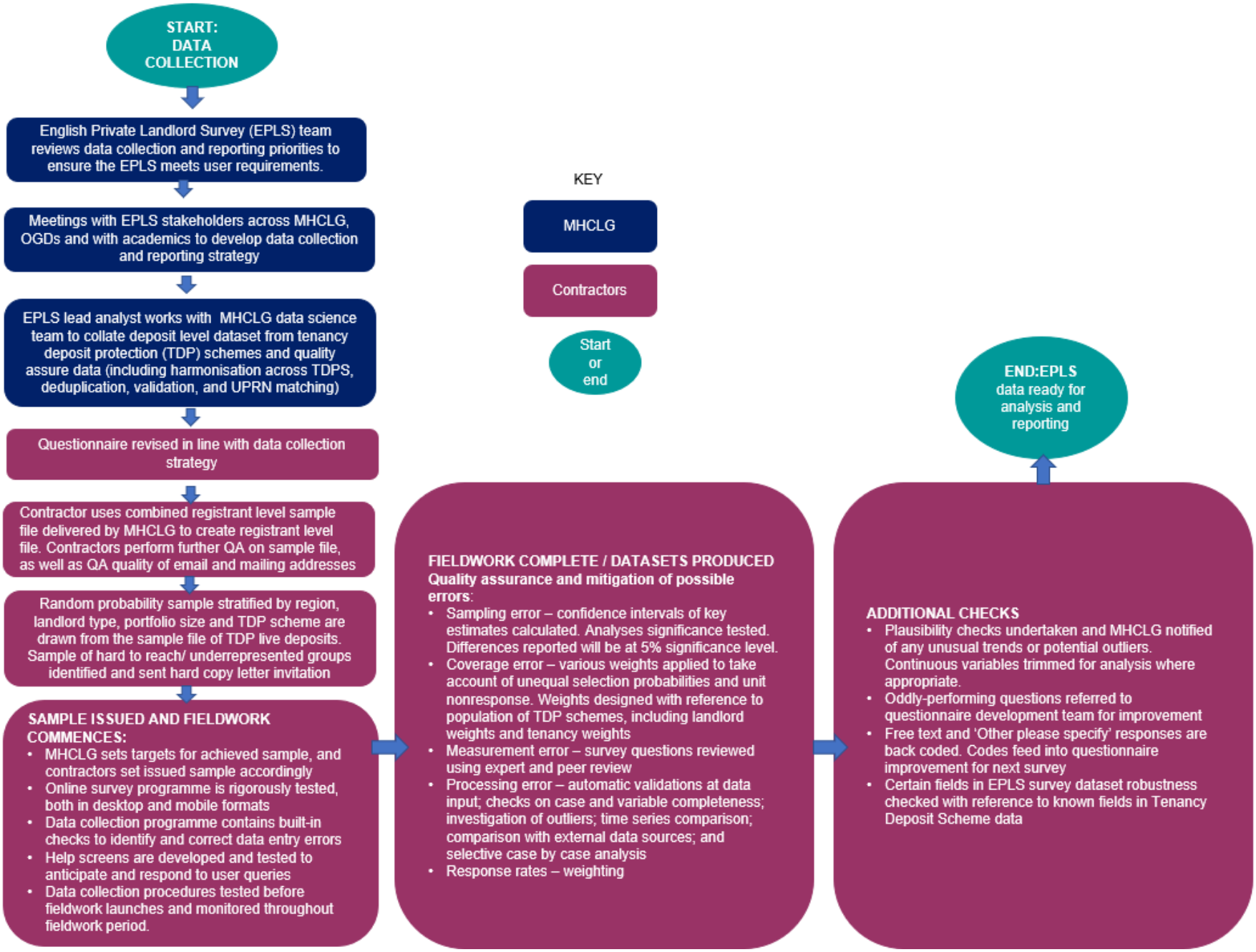
The main report includes findings relating to loan value and loan to value ratios for single property landlords based on the imputed data. The imputed loan values are available in the archived version of the EPLS dataset in a separate variable.

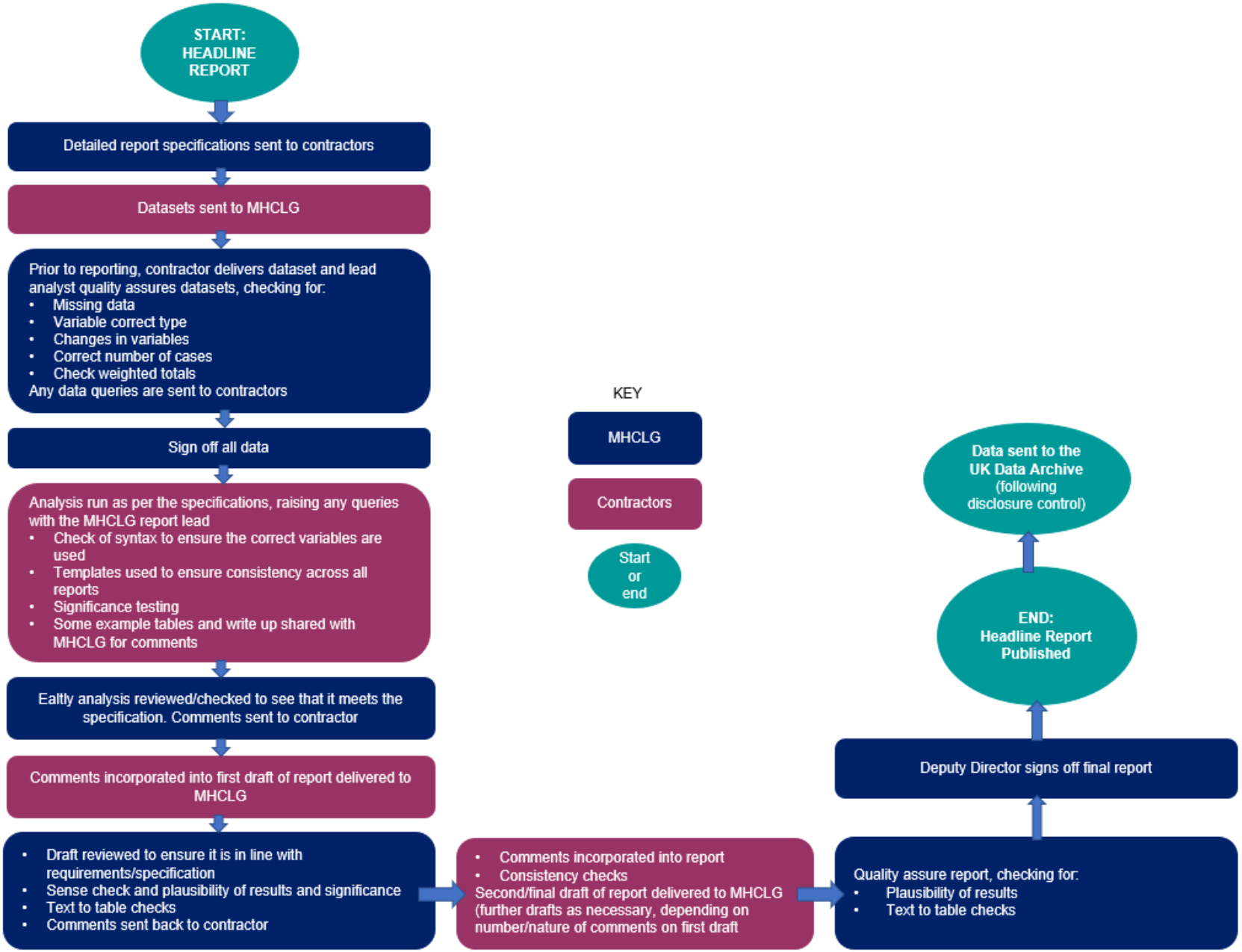
Significance testing

All reported comparisons between subgroups were tested at the 5% significance level, taking into account the effect of the weights.

Quality assurance

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.


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 MHCLG, OGDs and with academics to develop data collection and reporting strategy
EPLS lead analyst works with MHCLG data science team to collate 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
Contractor uses combined registrant level sample file delivered by MHCLG to create registrant 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:
• MHCLG sets targets for achieved sample, and contractors set issued sample accordingly
• Online survey programme is rigorously tested, both in desktop 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
MHCLG
Contractors
Start or end
FIELDWORK COMPLETE / DATASETS PRODUCED
Quality assurance and mitigation of possible errors:
• Sampling error – confidence intervals of key estimates calculated. 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 – 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
ADDITIONAL CHECKS
• Plausibility checks undertaken and MHCLG notified of any unusual trends or potential outliers. Continuous variables trimmed for analysis where appropriate.
• Oddly-performing questions referred to questionnaire development team for improvement
• 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 MHCLG
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 MHCLG report lead
• Check of syntax to ensure the correct variables are used
• Templates used to ensure consistency across all reports
• Significance testing
• Some example tables and write up shared with MHCLG for comments
Ealtly analysis reviewed/checked to see that it meets the specification. Comments sent to contractor
Comments incorporated into first draft of report delivered to MHCLG
• Draft reviewed to ensure it is in line with requirements/specification
• 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 MHCLG (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
MHCLG
Contractors
Start or end

Interpreting the results

Detailed findings from the EPLS are provided in the main survey report. 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.

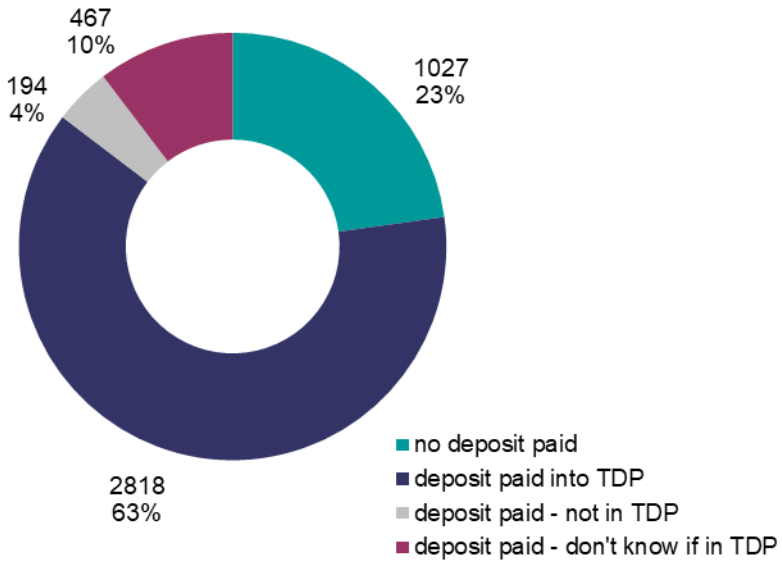
This analysis is based on English Housing Survey (EHS) data collected in 2022-23. By comparing the profile of tenants reporting that their deposit was registered with a TDP scheme and all private renters, we can consider the extent to which the TDP scheme population is likely to be representative of the wider private rented sector.

TDP scheme coverage

As mentioned previously, there is no official estimate of the proportion of the private rented sector that is covered by the TDP schemes. In 2022-23, the latest year for which data are available from the EHS, 77% of households in the private rented sector paid a deposit when they moved into their current accommodation. Of these, just over eight in ten (81%) said that their deposit was protected in a government-backed TDP scheme; 6% said that it was not protected while 13% said that they did not know. Therefore, the total proportion of private rented sector households covered by a TDP scheme is estimated at between 63% (if those saying don't know are assumed not to be covered) and 73% (if they are assumed to be covered). This equates to 2.8 million households who were certain a deposit was registered and a further 467,000 who did not know, Figure 8.1. The proportion of private tenancies covered by TDP schemes has increased since 2014-15 (the most recent EHS data available at the time of EPLS 2018) when the equivalent range was 56% to 71%.

The number of private tenancies that are registered with a TDP scheme has increased steadily since 2008. The UK Tenancy Deposit Statistics collected by the TDPs themselves 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. The number is expected to continue to increase as more tenancies fall within the requirement and as there is increasing awareness of the need to register.

Figure 8.1: Private renter households by deposit paid and whether registered with a TDP scheme (% of households), EHS 2022-23



Base: all private renters
Source: English Housing Survey 2022-23, full household sample

Household characteristics

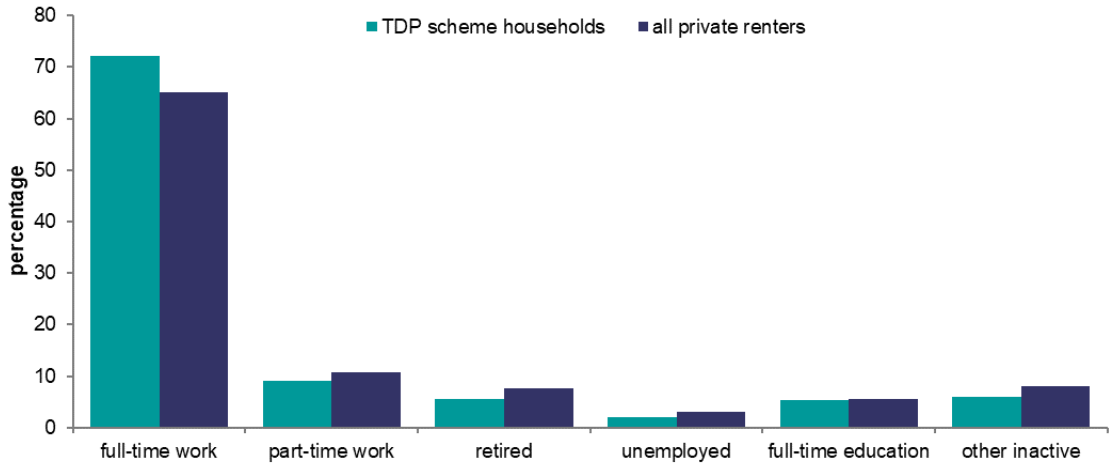
EHS data from 2022-23 was used to examine the extent to which private renters registered with a TDP scheme differed from the private rented sector as a whole on the following characteristics:

- household type
- economic activity of Household Reference Person (HRP)
- income distribution
- age of HRP
- length of residence
- type of property
- region

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). Results are presented for variables where a difference of five percentage points or more was found between private renters registered vs not registered with a TDP.

Economic activity: The Household Reference Person (HRP) in households with a TDP scheme registered deposit were more likely to be employed and particularly employed full-time (72% in full-time employment compared with 65% of all private renters), Figure 8.2.

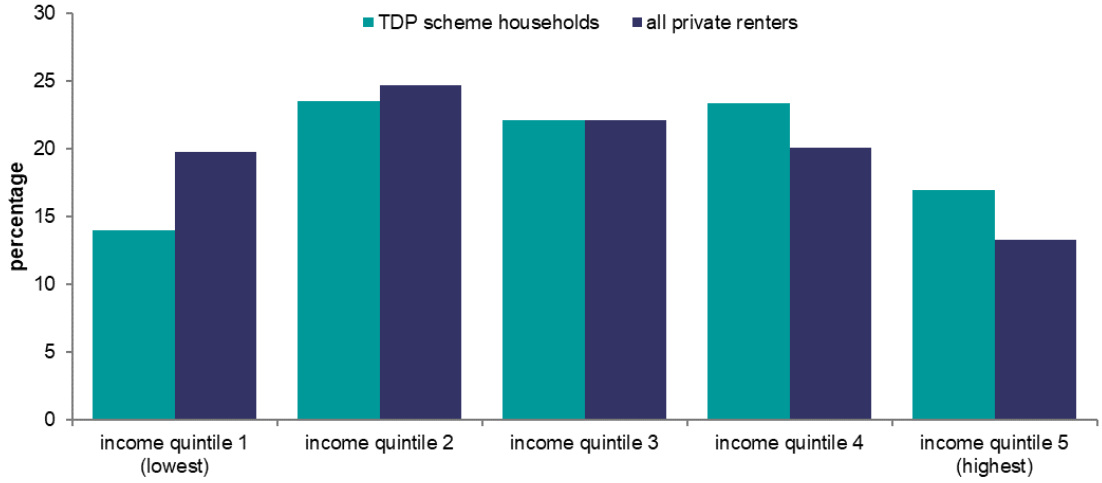
Figure 8.2: Comparison of TDP scheme and all private renter households by economic activity (% of households), EHS 2022-23



Base: all private renters
Source: English Housing Survey 2022-23, full household sample

Income distribution: TDP-registered renters are underrepresented at the lower end of the income distribution compared with all private renters, Figure 8.3. The median income of renters registered with a TDP was £41,968, 14% higher than the median income of all private renters, £36,869.

Figure 8.3: Comparison of TDP scheme and all private renter households by household income (% of households), EHS 2022-23



Base: all private renters
Source: English Housing Survey 2022-23, full household sample

Length of residency: TDP scheme households have generally been living in their properties for shorter periods than all private renters, with 43% of TDP households living in their current home for one year or less compared to 38% of all private renters, Figure 8.4. Conversely, TDP scheme households are less likely to be long term tenants with 7% of TDP households residing in their current home for 10 or more years compared to 12% for all private renters.

Figure 8.4: Comparison of TDP scheme and all private renter households by length of residency (% of households), EHS 2022-23

Base: all private renters
Source: English Housing Survey 2022-23, full household sample

Implications for EPLS findings

EPLS covers landlords with tenancies registered with a TDP only. 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 63% to 73% of households in the private rented sector. These differences need to be recognised when interpreting the EPLS survey findings.