

## Two Million Renters in England Made Ill by Housing Worries

Almost one in four private renters – equivalent to 2 million adults – have felt physically ill or sick because of housing problems or worries in the last year, shocking research by Shelter reveals today.

The new study from Shelter and YouGov shows the dramatic impact that housing worries like affording the rent, poor conditions and the threat of eviction are having on people's physical and mental health.

A staggering 45% of private renters (or 3.8 million adults) have experienced stress and anxiety as a direct result of their housing concerns, with nearly one in three (2.8 million adults) saying this has kept them awake at night. Distressingly, almost the same number of renters said their housing situation had left them feeling hopeless (2.7 million adults).

At a time of year that can be difficult and bleak for many, Shelter is urging anyone who is feeling overwhelmed by their housing problems to get in touch for free and expert advice by visiting [www.shelter.org.uk/get\\_help](http://www.shelter.org.uk/get_help).

As well as the many advice pages on its website, the leading housing charity operates a free web-chat service, emergency national helpline, and face-to-face services across the country.

**Shelter emergency helpline manager Andrea Deakin said:** "This time of year can be especially stressful and difficult for families who are struggling to cope with big rent bills, or things like cold and mouldy homes during the winter months.

"Every day at Shelter we see the toll that expensive, unstable or poor-quality private renting can take on people's lives and their health. We know how easy it can be to lose hope and feel overwhelmed by these worries, but our message is that you do not have to face them alone.

"People all over the country will be experiencing the same housing heartache, and there's no shame in asking for help. Shelter's services are open 365 days a year, and with the continued support of the public we will do all we can to be there for everyone who needs us."

Shelter is also asking those who can afford to do so, to support its Winter Appeal and raise vital funds for the charity's frontline services as they work to help the people worst affected by the housing emergency.

**Claire Newton, 41, her husband and two children were renting in Poole and had severe problems with disrepair. They received a Section 21 'no fault' eviction from their landlord and subsequently became homeless when they couldn't find another home they could afford. The family was placed in temporary accommodation by the council, but they have since moved into a housing association home.**

"We went through hell fighting for repairs to be done and then we got an eviction notice. I was in a mess and couldn't function properly. Everything felt like it was going wrong. I already had problems with my mental health and suffered from post-natal depression following the birth of my first child.

“The worst bit was when I was trying to get the landlord to fix the issues in the kitchen. It was falling apart - cupboard doors would come off in my hands when I was trying to open them. I asked them to have a look at it and they just said, ‘it’s fine, it’s still functional’. How can you expect people to live like that? You get to the point where you don’t want to invite people to your home because it’s embarrassing so you start feeling isolated and less sociable. You feel like you’re not worthy.

“And we were paying a lot for the privilege - £900 a month - but we were still evicted. It was a painful experience and so awful. There’s no reason for people to have to go through that.”

To support Shelter’s Winter Appeal please visit [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk) or text SHELTER to 70030 to donate £3. Texts cost your standard network rate + £3. Shelter receives 100% of your donation.

ENDS

### **Shelter emergency helpline manager, Andrea Deakin’s top five tips on easing the pressure of housing problems:**

1. **Making a start can make all the difference.** Whatever the housing pressure or problem you face, if it’s affecting your or your family’s health, take the first step towards getting help by visiting [www.shelter.org.uk/get\\_help](http://www.shelter.org.uk/get_help)
2. **Respond to letters and phone calls:** It’s natural to want to keep your head down and hope your renting worries will go away but it’s important to read everything your landlord or letting agent sends to you. Keep a record of every letter and phone call.
3. **Find out your rights as renter.** If you’re living in a rented home that isn’t up to scratch, find out what your landlord should be doing to address poor conditions and disrepair.
4. **If you’re falling behind on your rent or at risk of losing your home, get help straight away.** Missing two rent payments could put you at risk of eviction. Talk to one of our expert advisers as soon as possible who can take you through your options and advise on next steps. For example, you may be able to claim housing benefit to help pay the rent.
5. **Your mental health matters.** You can get specialist help with mental health issues from charities like [Rethink Mental Illness](#) and [Mind](#), or by speaking to your local GP.

### **Notes to editors:**

1. Shelter’s research comes from a YouGov survey of 3,995 adult private renters in England (18+), carried out online. Full results of the research questions asked are in the table below.
2. The estimated equivalent number of adults (18+) is calculated by Shelter using the survey results in conjunction with official statistics on the number of private renters / people from the latest English Housing Survey, the Census 2011 and ONS mid-year population estimates.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  Housing problems or worries (e.g. affording the rent, poor conditions, losing my tenancy etc.) have...	...kept me awake at night during the last year	...made me feel physically ill/ sick in the last year	...negatively affected my eating/ diet in the last year	...left me feeling hopeless in the last year	...made me feel stressed or anxious in the last year
<b>Base:</b>	3995	3995	3995	3995	3995
Strongly agree	13%	10%	10%	14%	21%
Tend to agree	19%	13%	14%	18%	24%
Neither agree or disagree	13%	15%	16%	15%	13%
Tend to disagree	16%	18%	18%	16%	12%
Strongly disagree	34%	39%	39%	34%	27%
Don't know	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
<b>Net: agree</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Estimated equivalent number of adults	2,774,416	2,017,679	2,075,034	2,717,917	3,825,629

**Source:** YouGov survey of 3995 private renters in England, online, weighted using official statistics, 18+, Aug-Sept 2019. The estimated equivalent number of adults (18+) is calculated by Shelter using the survey results in conjunction with official statistics on the numbers of private renters/ people from English Housing Survey, Census 2011 and ONS mid-year population estimates.

**About Shelter:** Shelter helps millions of people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through our advice, support and legal services. And we campaign to make sure that, one day, no one will have to turn to us for help. For free and independent advice from Shelter visit: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/get\\_help](https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help)