

Tenant Engagement Strategy for Council Tenants

Sandwell Council (SMBC) are committed to putting tenants at the heart of its housing services.

The Tenant Engagement Strategy sets out how the council will listen to, involve, and work alongside tenants to shape the homes and communities where they live.

The key aims of the strategy are to:

- Strengthen the tenant voice in decisions and service design
- Improve communication and transparency across housing services
- Make it easy and accessible for everyone to get involved
- Promote accountability through regular feedback and performance monitoring
- Build trust and stronger partnerships between tenants and the council

The strategy has been co-produced by a task and finish group made up of 9 tenants, our key partners, Sandwell Community Information and Participation Services (SCIPS) and officers from our Housing Service.

Through this strategy, we aimed to build stronger relationships, greater trust, and more open communication between tenants and the council - ensuring that housing services were shaped by the people who use them. Together, we worked towards creating a stronger, more responsive housing service for everyone in Sandwell.

It should be noted that the Tenant Engagement Strategy is planned for implementation at the beginning of the new financial year.

Tenant Engagement Strategy Development - Task and Finish (T&F) Group

The tenant representatives on the Task and Finish Group played a central role in shaping the development of the Tenant Engagement Strategy (TES). The group first met on 16 May 2025, coming together as a partnership of tenants and officers to co-produce the Strategy from its earliest stages.

The T&F has met regularly from May 2025 to November 2025 to develop the strategy. The time taken reflects the depth of discussion and the commitment of

tenant members. Across these sessions, the group explored and developed key elements of the Strategy, including:

- The purpose and objectives of a Tenant Engagement Strategy
- Guiding principles and expectations for engagement
- Approaches to communication, accessibility, and inclusion
- Methods for monitoring and reviewing the Strategy
- Drafting and refining the layout, wording, and presentation of the document

As part of the development process, tenants also helped design the consultation approach. They compiled and agreed the consultation questions used during the public consultation (18 October – 28 November 2025), which saw more than 30 residents take part across a broad range of age groups. Before the consultation launched, tenant representatives also led a discussion with the Senior Management Team (SMT) to review the draft Strategy and ensure tenant views were clearly embedded.

Findings from T&F Group Work

The T&F Group's discussions generated key insights and recommendations that directly informed the Strategy:

1. Strategy Content and Structure

- Clear purpose and objectives were essential.
- Headings, wording, layout, and graphics should be clear and accessible.
- Principles of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability needed to be embedded.

2. Engagement Approaches

- Multiple channels for engagement were necessary, including in-person, online, pop-ups, and youth-focused sessions.
- Accessible communication, including translations and summary documents, was critical.
- Engagement should be ongoing rather than one-off.

3. Monitoring and Review

- The Strategy should include mechanisms for monitoring progress and evaluating impact.
- KPIs should track engagement effectiveness.

4. Tenant Involvement in Decision-Making

- Tenants should be involved from the earliest stages of development.

- Tenant-led review and discussion with SMT was essential before consultation.

5. Branding and Identity

- A tenant-branded logo should clearly identify engagement materials and demonstrate tenant ownership.

6. Key Considerations and Challenges

- Communication and transparency were critical to building trust.
- Accessibility must be considered at all stages to enable participation.
- Engagement needs to be embedded in council processes to remain meaningful and sustainable.

Feedback received during this stage was generally positive, though tenants highlighted concerns around communication, the need for clearer commitments in delivery, and accessibility improvements such as translations and summary versions.

Key outcomes of the T&F Group's work include:

- Genuine co-production of the Strategy, with tenants shaping headings, wording, layout, graphics and ongoing revisions
- Joint consideration of how the Strategy will be embedded to remain a live, actionable document
- Creation of a tenant-branded logo and agreement on how and where it should be used

Tenant Engagement Strategy Consultation

The public consultation ran from **17 October to 28 November 2025**, during which the Strategy was discussed and feedback gathered through a wide range of forums:

- Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TLSG)
- Tenant and Resident Association (TRA) meetings
- Pop-up events at Rowley, West Bromwich, and Dorothy Parkes
- Youth engagement sessions through the Forum Independent Young Adults (FIYA)
- Workshops at the Council House
- SCIPS General Meetings
- Email submissions from tenants and officers

Additional outreach included:

- Engagement with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and faith partners
- Liaison with regional housing officers
- Promotion through the Tenant Engagement webpage, newsletters, and partner networks

Key Engagement Activities Timeline

- Early October 2025 – Draft TES shared with senior officers and councillors for review
- 17 October 2025 – TES consultation launched online and in-person
- 18 October 2025 – TLSG meeting to provide feedback on goals and KPIs
- 25 October 2025 – TRA Network Meeting, with paper surveys issued to five TRAs
- 7 November 2025 – In-person workshop at the Council House, attended by tenants
- 12, 19, 21 November 2025 – Pop-up events sharing the TES with tenants
- 25 November 2025 – SCIPS General Meeting, engaging tenant members
- 26 November 2025 – FIYA Young Adults Drop-In, promoting the TES and online consultation
- 27 November 2025 – Lancaster House TRA Meeting, where tenants raised concerns about trust, digital exclusion, and paper communication options
- 28 November 2025 – Consultation closed; findings reviewed to update the TES
- December 2025 – Final draft submitted to senior management for sign-off
- 9 December 2025 – TES report uploaded to mod.gov
- 8 January 2026 – TES presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Communities (SNAC) Board

Summary of Consultation Findings

The consultation shows strong support for Sandwell Council's Tenant Engagement Strategy, with most respondents agreeing that the strategy is clear, well-structured, and addresses key priorities for tenant involvement. However, feedback consistently highlights the need for effective implementation, clear accountability, and visible delivery to build trust and confidence.

Key Themes Across Responses:

- **Positive Reception:** Many respondents welcomed the strategy as long overdue, praising its clarity, structure, and focus on transparency, accessibility, and shared decision-making.
- **Concerns About Delivery:** Scepticism remains about whether commitments will be upheld, with respondents citing past failures to act on tenant input and unresolved repairs.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion:** Feedback highlighted the importance of accessible and inclusive engagement, suggesting consideration of alternative formats and approaches to support participation from all communities.
- **Communication and Feedback:** Strong emphasis on improving communication, creating feedback loops, and publishing clear evidence of how tenant input influences decisions.
- **Cultural Change:** Respondents stressed that staff attitudes and organisational culture must align with the strategy's aims for it to succeed.
- **Practical Suggestions:** Ideas included pop-up events, tenant ambassadors, welcome sessions for new tenants, and training opportunities to empower participation.

Demographics:

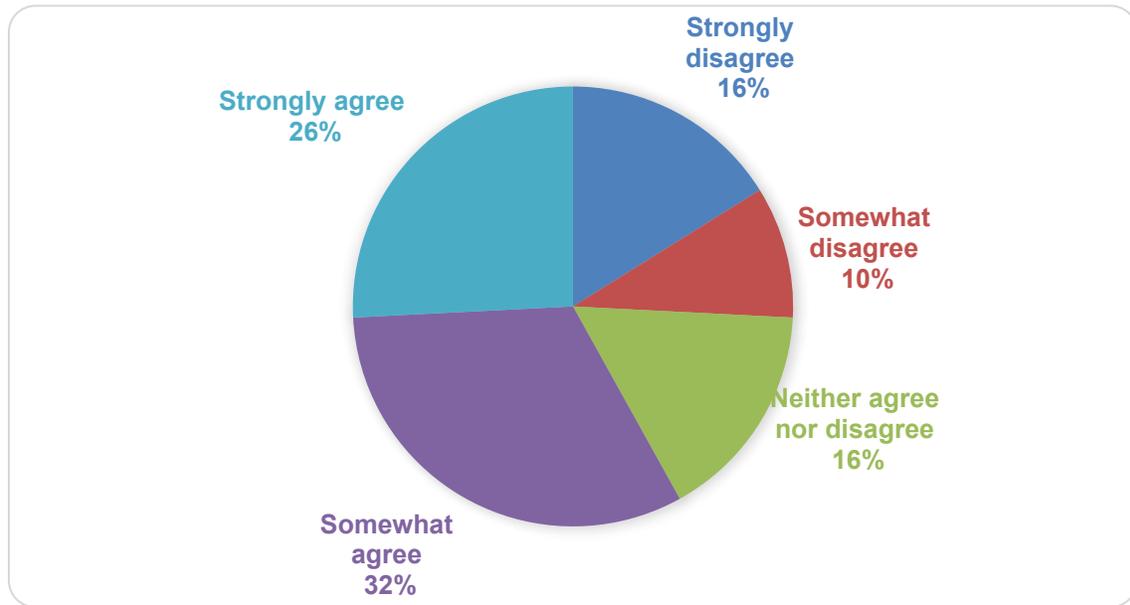
The consultation primarily engaged socially rented tenants (74%), with good representation across houses and flats. Most respondents were aged 35–59 (45%) or 65+ (19%), with limited engagement from younger tenants (18–24). Ethnic diversity was limited, with 55% identifying as White British and smaller representation from minority groups. Gender representation was balanced, with 48% female and 35% male.

Overall Implication:

The strategy is viewed as a positive framework, but its success depends on **turning commitments into action, embedding accountability, and ensuring inclusive, accessible engagement**. Targeted outreach to underrepresented groups and transparent reporting will be critical to achieving meaningful tenant involvement.

The activity ran from 17/10/2025 to 28/11/2025. Total responses to this survey: 31

1: Before reading the strategy were you aware of how Sandwell Council provides tenants and leaseholders opportunities to get involved?



Responses show varied awareness levels before reading the strategy. Around **26% of respondents strongly agreed** they were aware of opportunities, often mentioning involvement in groups or receiving newsletters. For example, some respondents described being part of the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group or attending community events where engagement was promoted. Others highlighted that newsletters and local meetings helped them stay informed.

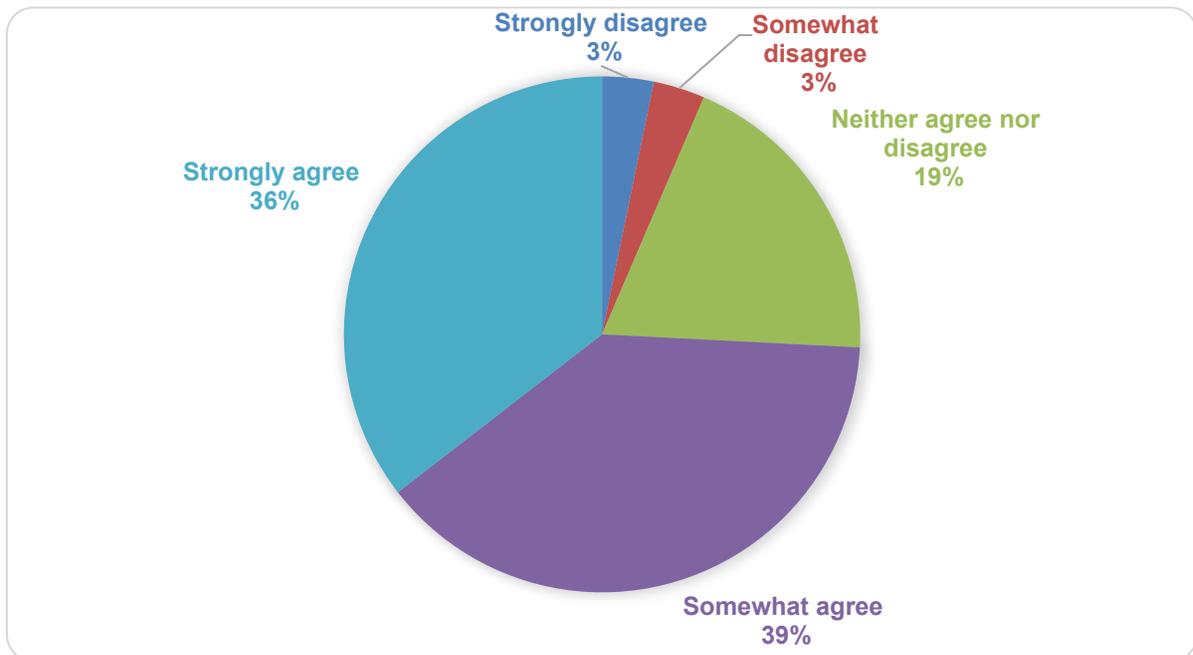
A further **32% somewhat agreed**, indicating partial awareness of some activities like surveys and estate walkabouts but not the full range. Several respondents reflected that while they knew about certain opportunities, the strategy revealed a much broader and more structured framework than they had previously realised.

Meanwhile, **16% were unsure**, and **10% somewhat disagreed**, pointing to limited knowledge and communication gaps. Comments included that opportunities were "not well advertised" and that information rarely reached tenants who speak English as a second language or those not connected to community groups. Practical barriers were also raised, such as the need for online meetings and ad-hoc feedback channels for working tenants and carers.

Notably, **16% strongly disagreed**, stating they had no prior awareness of engagement opportunities. Some expressed frustration, saying they “had no idea tenants were allowed to get involved” and questioned the council’s commitment to listening, citing unresolved repairs and poor follow-up.

Overall, while many welcomed the strategy for improving clarity and structure, feedback underscores the need for **better promotion, accessible engagement routes**, and reassurance that tenant contributions will be acted upon.

2: Is this strategy easy and clear to understand?



The majority of respondents found the strategy clear and accessible. Around **35% strongly agreed** and **39% somewhat agreed**, describing it as “very clear,” “easy to read,” and “straightforward.” Many praised the structure, noting that the flow from vision through to aims, commitments, and engagement levels “made sense” and was presented in everyday language rather than “council speak.” Others highlighted that the layout was professional and welcoming, particularly for those unfamiliar with council processes.

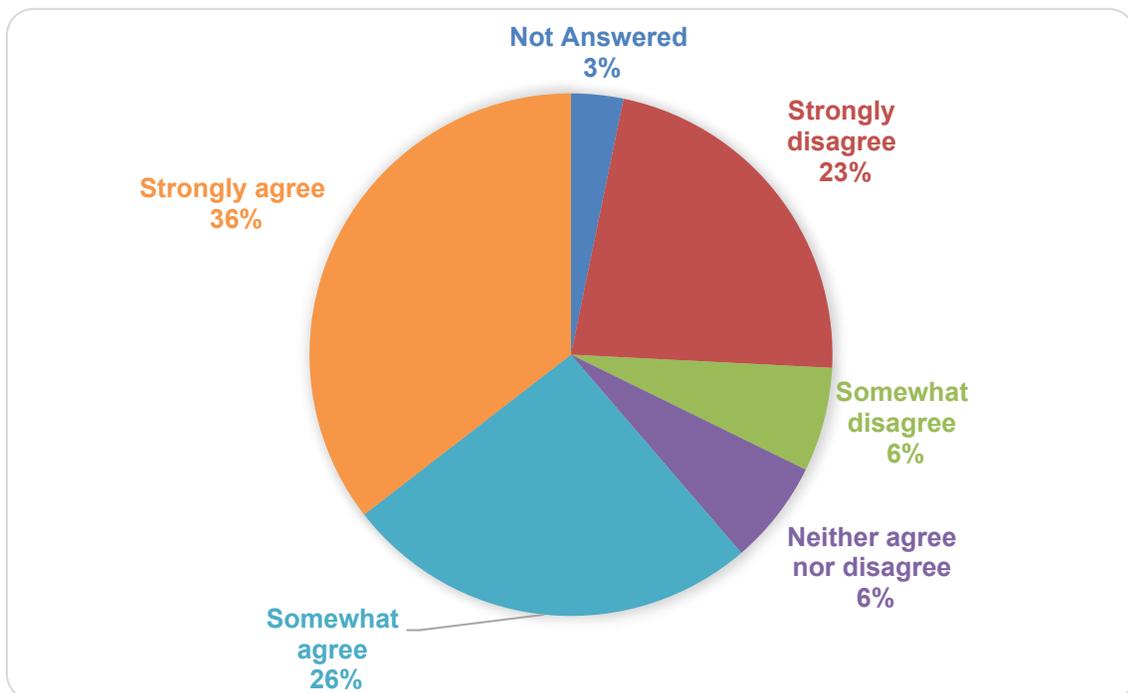
Neutral responses accounted for **19%**, often reflecting uncertainty. Comments included that while the strategy was well presented, some sections felt “dense” or “jargon-heavy,” which could make understanding harder for certain tenants. A few respondents suggested that the document could be shorter or include a visual summary to help tenants absorb the main points more easily.

Negative feedback was minimal, with **3% somewhat disagreeing** and **3% strongly disagreeing**. These respondents expressed scepticism about whether the strategy would be applied in practice, citing past failures to act on tenant input.

Several respondents offered constructive suggestions, such as creating an easy-read version, adding visual aids, and providing translations or alternative formats like audio and large print to ensure accessibility for tenants facing language or literacy barriers.

Overall, while clarity was widely praised, feedback highlights the need for **simplified versions, visual summaries, and inclusive formats** to ensure the strategy is understood by all tenants.

3: Do you agree with the vision and aims of this strategy?



Responses to this question were more divided compared to others. Around **35% strongly agreed** and **26% somewhat agreed**, praising the vision as “well-articulated,” “important,” and reflective of what tenants want—being respected and seeing real action. Several respondents highlighted that the aims align with regulatory expectations and demonstrate a genuine commitment to transparency and accountability. Others noted

that the vision reassures tenants their voice matters and promotes community pride and shared responsibility.

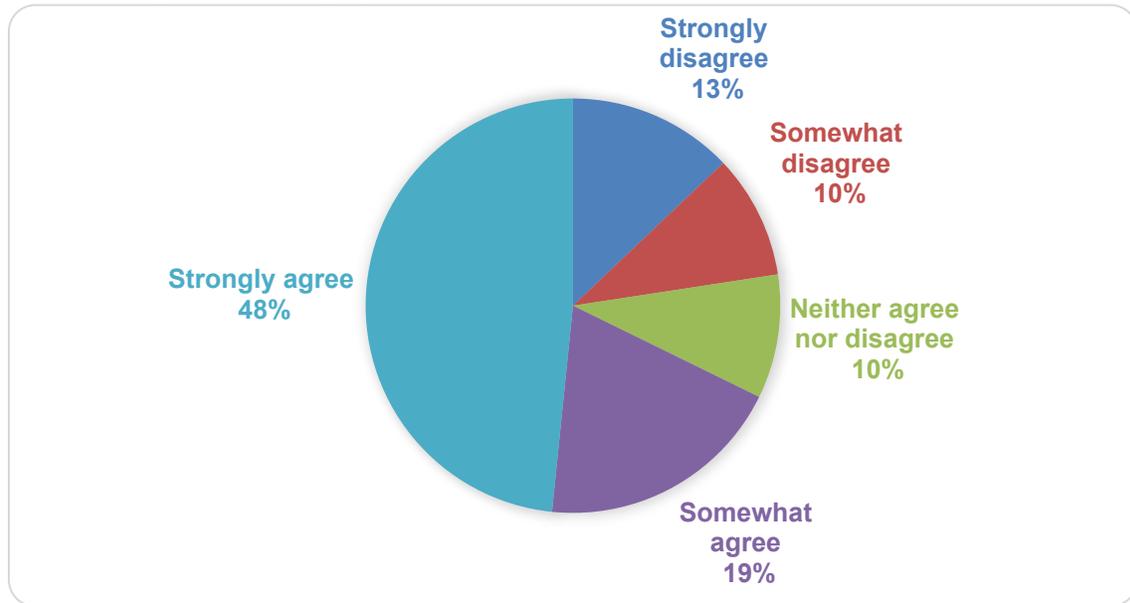
However, **22% strongly disagreed**, and **6% somewhat disagreed**, expressing scepticism about whether the vision would translate into practice. Negative comments often referenced past experiences where tenant input was “not acted on” or where basic maintenance and communication had failed. Some respondents described the vision as “stretching quite far” from reality, citing issues such as long-standing repairs, poor housing conditions, and lack of respect from staff.

Neutral responses (**6%**) reflected uncertainty, with comments suggesting that while the vision sounds positive, it lacks measurable indicators. Several respondents warned that without clear accountability and defined outcomes—such as what “mutual respect” or “stronger relationships” look like—the aims risk becoming aspirational rather than actionable.

Constructive suggestions included adding explicit commitments to inclusive engagement, measurable goals, and practical examples of how progress will be tracked. Respondents also emphasized the need for cultural change within the council to ensure the vision is upheld consistently.

Overall, while many respondents welcomed the vision and aims as a positive step, feedback highlights the importance of **turning words into action**, **embedding accountability**, and **addressing trust issues** to make the strategy credible and effective.

4: Do you agree that the commitment in the strategy supports the vision for increasing tenant engagement?



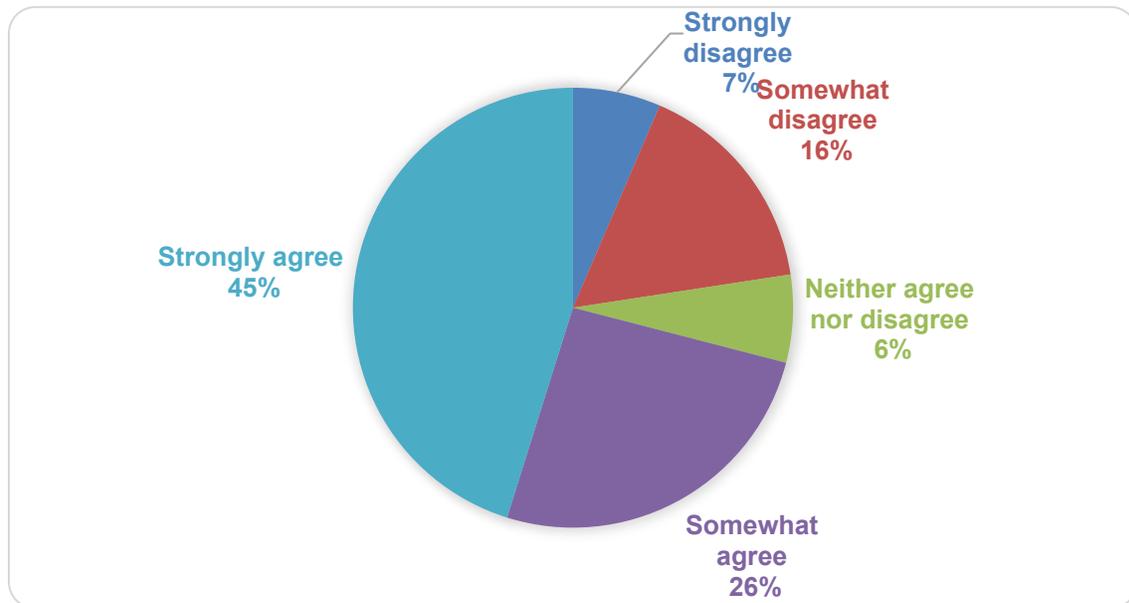
Most respondents expressed confidence in the commitments outlined in the strategy. Around **48% strongly agreed** and **19% somewhat agreed**, describing the commitments as “realistic,” “comprehensive,” and focused on accessibility and communication. Positive comments highlighted that the commitments demonstrate genuine intent to work with tenants and provide a strong foundation for partnership working and co-production. Several respondents noted that the commitments address barriers and show dedication to shared decision-making, which they felt was essential for meaningful engagement.

However, **13% strongly disagreed** and **10% somewhat disagreed**, raising concerns about whether these commitments would be delivered in practice. Negative feedback often referenced past experiences where promises were not upheld, with comments such as “SMBC will only go as far as it feels it is prepared to” and frustrations about unresolved repairs and poor responsiveness. Some respondents felt the strategy was “out of step with how council staff deal with tenants,” suggesting that cultural change within the organisation is necessary for commitments to be credible.

Neutral responses (**10%**) reflected uncertainty, with comments noting that while the commitments sound strong in theory, they lack clear accountability mechanisms. Suggestions included adding measurable indicators, timelines, and reporting processes to ensure transparency and consistency. Respondents also called for practical details on how barriers will be removed, such as providing interpreters, translated materials, and accessible meeting venues.

Overall, while the majority welcomed the commitments as a positive step, feedback underscores the need for **clear accountability**, **visible delivery**, and **practical support measures** to ensure that commitments translate into real improvements in tenant engagement.

5: Are the levels of tenant engagement easy and clear to understand?



Most respondents felt the levels of tenant engagement were clear and easy to follow. Around **45% strongly agreed** and **26% somewhat agreed**, describing the structure as “clear,” “easy to follow,” and “well explained.” Positive comments highlighted that the progression from ‘inform’ and ‘consult’ through to ‘involve,’ ‘collaborate,’ and ultimately ‘tenant-led decision’ provided a straightforward framework that helped tenants understand what to expect at each stage. Several respondents noted that the levels reflect national best practice and make it easier for tenants to choose involvement that suits their capacity and interest.

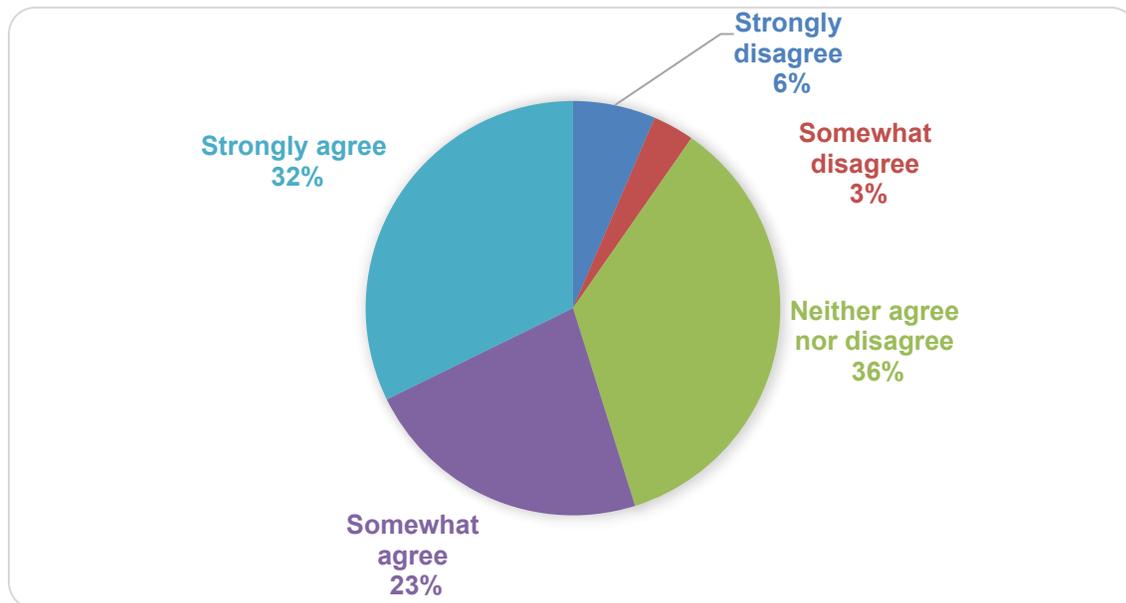
However, **16% somewhat disagreed** and **6% strongly disagreed**, raising concerns about practical application. Some respondents felt that while the levels make sense in theory, they lack real-world examples and practical descriptions of roles, such as estate champions or scrutiny panel members. Others expressed frustration that engagement processes do not always work in practice, citing poor communication and unresolved issues.

Neutral responses (**6%**) reflected uncertainty, with comments suggesting that while the levels are understandable, the council needs to demonstrate consistency in applying them. Suggestions included creating easy-read versions,

visual summaries, and adding examples to help tenants visualise what each level involves.

Overall, while clarity was widely praised, feedback highlights the need for **practical examples**, **accessible formats**, and **consistent implementation** to ensure the engagement model works effectively in practice.

6: In your opinion will the Tenant Engagement Strategy allow tenant and leaseholders contributions to be recognised and acted on by Sandwell Council?



Responses to this question were mixed, reflecting both optimism and scepticism. Around **32% strongly agreed** and **23% somewhat agreed**, expressing confidence that the strategy provides a strong framework for recognising tenant input and building accountability into engagement activity. Positive comments highlighted the emphasis on transparency and shared decision-making, with some respondents noting that the approach feels “modern and respectful” and could give tenants “much more influence.” Others suggested that regular feedback loops, outcome summaries, and varied engagement methods would strengthen this further.

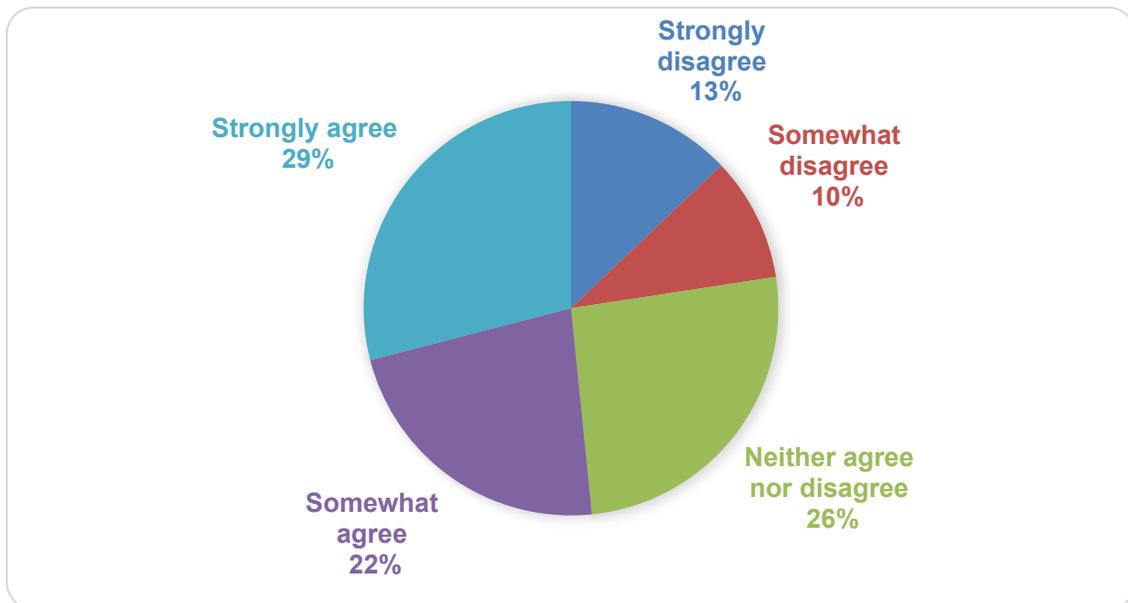
However, **35% neither agreed nor disagreed**, indicating uncertainty. Many respondents said “time will tell,” pointing to past experiences where tenant contributions were not acted upon. Comments stressed that recognition depends on consistent implementation and cultural change within the organisation. Some respondents warned that without visible evidence of action, the strategy risks becoming a “paper exercise.”

Negative feedback accounted for **3% somewhat disagreeing** and **6% strongly disagreeing**, with concerns that commitments will not be upheld. These respondents cited poor communication, unresolved repairs, and lack of equality across neighbourhoods as reasons for doubt.

Constructive suggestions included standardising recognition processes, publishing clear evidence of how feedback influences decisions, and ensuring accountability measures are embedded. Respondents also called for more inclusive engagement methods—such as online options and accessible formats—to ensure a wider range of voices are heard.

Overall, while many welcomed the strategy as a positive foundation, feedback underscores the need for **visible delivery, transparent reporting, and cultural change** to build trust and demonstrate that tenant contributions truly matter.

7: Overall, how confident are you that this strategy will improve how tenants and leaseholders are listened to and involved?



Responses to this question were mixed, reflecting both optimism and caution. Around **29% strongly agreed** and **23% somewhat agreed**, expressing confidence that the strategy could significantly improve trust and transparency if implemented properly. Positive comments highlighted commitments to clearer communication, stronger engagement structures, and shared decision-making as a solid basis for meaningful involvement. Some respondents described the strategy as “one of the best engagement strategies I’ve read” and felt it could help build stronger community connections over time.

However, **26% neither agreed nor disagreed**, indicating uncertainty. Many respondents said “time will tell,” pointing to past experiences where tenant voices were not acted upon. Comments suggested that while the approach appears promising, its success depends on consistent delivery and cultural change within the council. Several respondents noted that implementation will determine impact, and without visible evidence of action, confidence will remain low.

Negative feedback accounted for **10% somewhat disagreeing** and **13% strongly disagreeing**, with concerns that the strategy could become a “paper-shuffling exercise.” Respondents cited unresolved repairs, poor communication, and systemic issues such as lack of resources and arbitrary decision-making by staff. Some questioned the point of engagement when basic statutory duties, like essential repairs, are not being met.

Constructive suggestions included embedding accessibility from the start, strengthening communication and outreach to underrepresented communities, and providing clear evidence of how tenant feedback influences decisions. Respondents also emphasized the need for cultural change and accountability to rebuild trust.

Overall, while many welcomed the strategy as a positive step, feedback underscores the need for **visible delivery, transparent reporting, and consistent implementation** to turn confidence into reality.

8: Any other comments or suggestions?

Respondents provided a range of comments, offering constructive ideas and highlighting areas for improvement. Several emphasized that while the strategy “sounds good,” its success depends on delivery, noting that “the devil is in the detail.” There were repeated calls for **visible action, clear evidence of progress, and consistency in applying the strategy** to build trust.

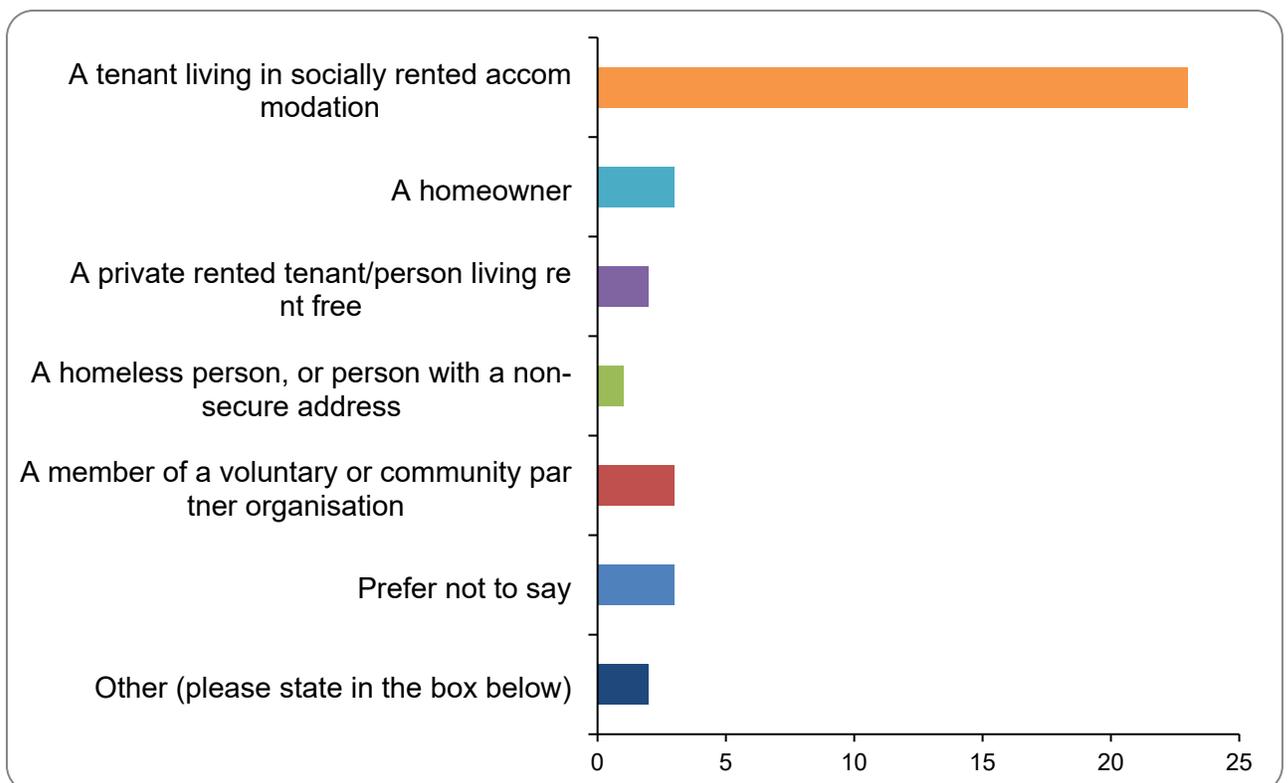
Common suggestions included:

- **Improved communication and feedback loops:** Respondents recommended creating an ideas and recommendations inbox for tenants, publishing outcome summaries after consultations, and maintaining regular updates to show how tenant input influences decisions.
- **Accessible and inclusive engagement:** Many suggested Easy Read versions, translations, audio formats, and hybrid meetings to ensure participation from all communities. There were also calls for interpreter support and collaboration with local community groups.

- **Practical engagement tools:** Suggestions included pop-up events, welcome sessions for new tenants, and tenant ambassadors for estates to strengthen local involvement.
- **Training and empowerment:** Respondents proposed training opportunities for tenants to build confidence in participation and ensure engagement is meaningful.
- **Cultural change and accountability:** Comments stressed that staff attitudes and organisational culture must align with the strategy's aims, and accountability measures should be embedded to ensure commitments are upheld.

Overall, the additional feedback reinforces the need for **transparent reporting**, **inclusive practices**, and **practical mechanisms** to turn the strategy into tangible improvements for tenants and leaseholders.

9: Please tick which best describes your interest in this consultation.



The majority of respondents identified as **tenants living in socially rented accommodation**, accounting for **74%** of all participants. This reflects strong engagement from the core audience most affected by the Tenant Engagement

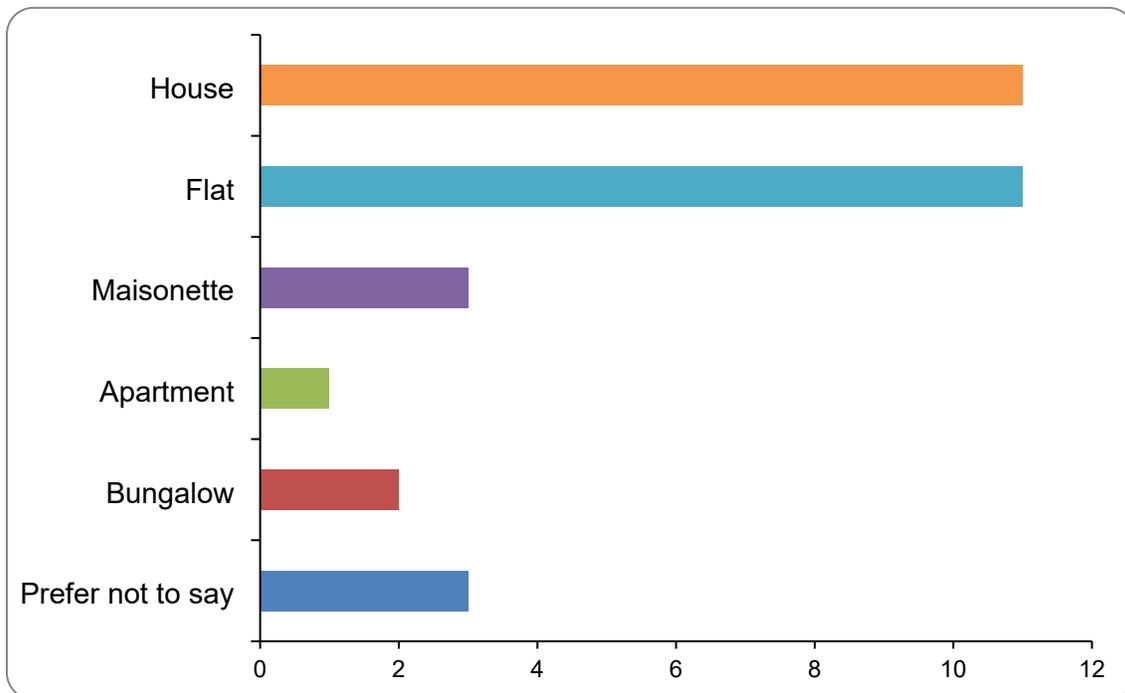
Strategy. Smaller proportions included **homeowners (10%)**, **members of voluntary or community partner organisations (10%)**, and **private rented tenants or those living rent-free (6%)**. A very small number (**3%**) identified as homeless or having a non-secure address, highlighting the need for targeted outreach to this group.

Additionally, **6% selected 'Other'**, and **10% preferred not to say**, suggesting that while the strategy reached a broad audience, there is scope to improve demographic data collection and ensure inclusivity across all housing types and circumstances.

Implications:

The high proportion of socially rented tenants indicates that the consultation successfully engaged its primary audience. However, feedback suggests opportunities to strengthen engagement with homeowners, private renters, and vulnerable groups such as those with insecure housing. Future engagement activities should consider tailored approaches for these segments, including partnerships with community organisations and targeted communication.

10: Please state which type of accommodation you live in:



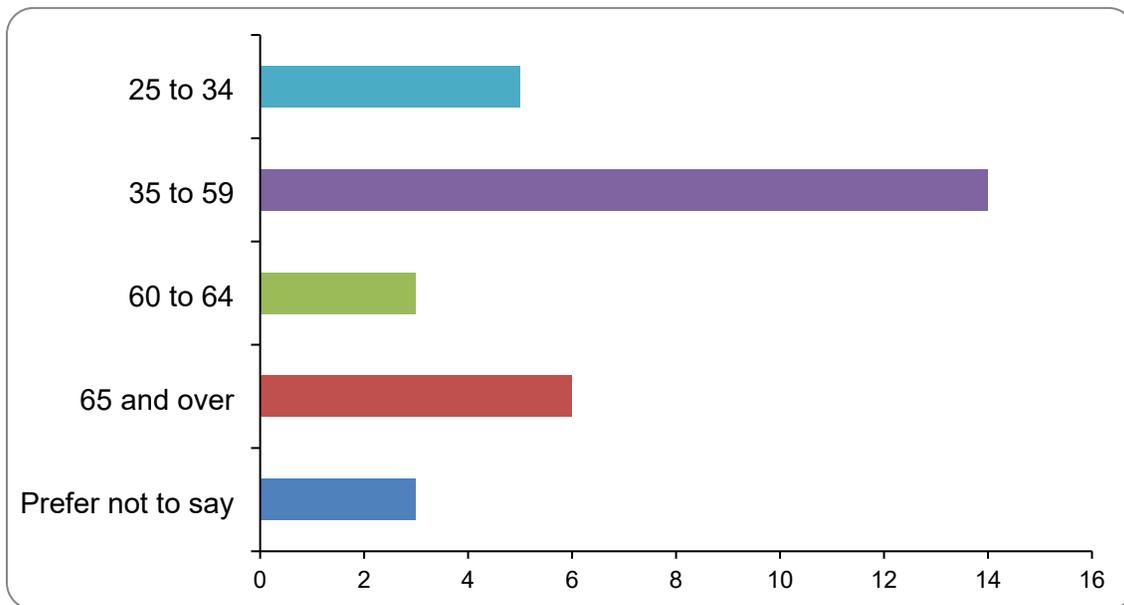
Respondents represented a mix of housing types, with **houses and flats each accounting for 35%** of responses. This indicates strong engagement from tenants in both traditional homes and multi-unit buildings. Smaller proportions

included **maisonettes (10%)**, **bungalows (6%)**, and **apartments (3%)**, while no respondents reported living in caravans or other temporary structures. Additionally, **10% preferred not to say**, suggesting some reluctance to disclose housing details.

Implications:

The high representation of houses and flats reflects the diversity of Sandwell's housing stock and suggests that engagement strategies should cater to both single-dwelling and communal living environments. Feedback from flats and maisonettes often referenced issues such as repairs, communication, and shared spaces, highlighting the need for tailored approaches for multi-unit properties. Future engagement should also consider outreach to residents in less common housing types and ensure accessibility for all.

11: Please state your age group:



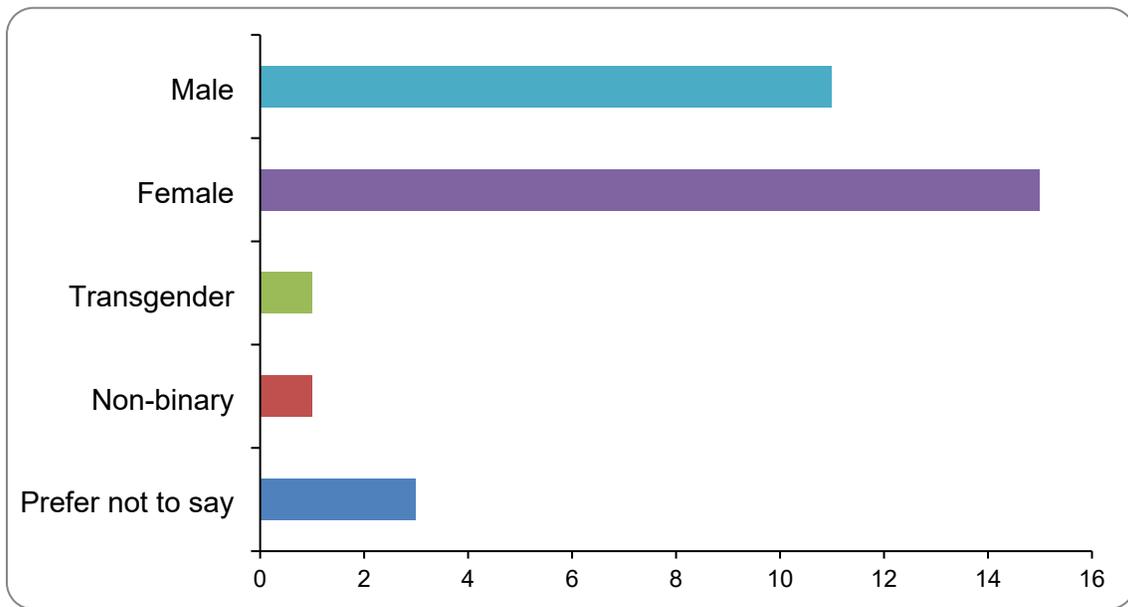
Respondents represented a broad age range, with the largest proportion (**45%**) aged **35 to 59**, followed by **19% aged 65 and over** and **16% aged 25 to 34**. Smaller segments included **10% aged 60 to 64**, while no respondents were aged 18 to 24. Additionally, **10% preferred not to say**, suggesting some reluctance to disclose age information.

Implications:

The strong representation of respondents aged 35 to 59 and 65+ reflects engagement from long-term tenants and older residents, who often have significant experience with housing services. However, the absence of younger

respondents (18–24) highlights a gap in engagement among younger tenants, which may require targeted outreach through digital channels, social media, and youth-focused community initiatives. Ensuring accessibility and relevance for all age groups will be key to building inclusive engagement.

12: What is your gender?

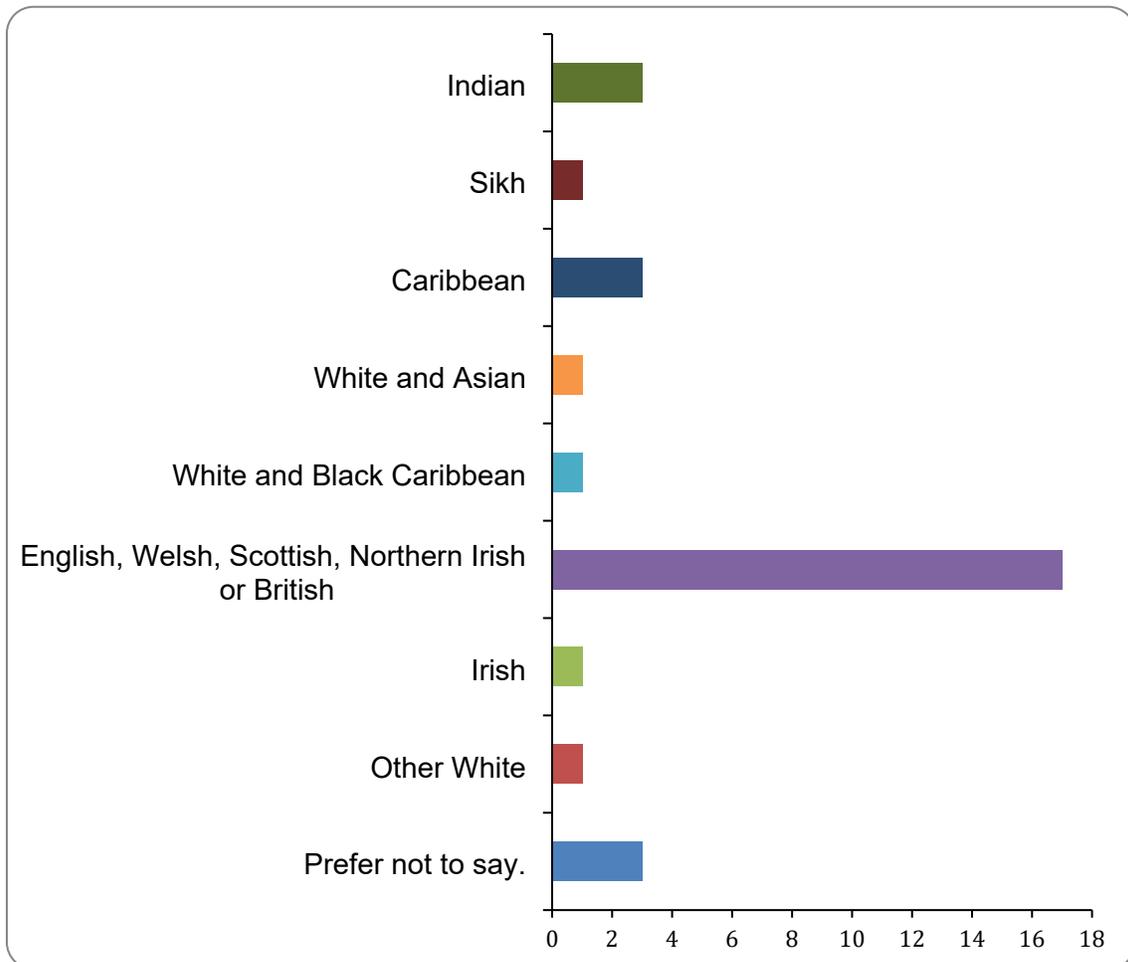


The majority of respondents identified as **female (48%)**, followed by **male (35%)**. Smaller proportions included **transgender (3%)** and **non-binary (3%)**, while **10% preferred not to say**, indicating some reluctance to disclose gender identity.

Implications:

The strong representation of female respondents suggests that engagement activities are reaching women effectively, but there is scope to ensure inclusivity for all gender identities. The presence of transgender and non-binary respondents, though small, highlights the importance of maintaining an inclusive approach and providing accessible, respectful engagement opportunities for diverse communities. Future strategies should continue to promote equality and consider targeted outreach where participation is lower.

13: What best describes your ethnicity?



The majority of respondents identified as **English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (55%)**, followed by smaller proportions of **Indian (10%)** and **Caribbean (10%)**. Other ethnic groups represented included **Sikh (3%)**, **White and Asian (3%)**, **White and Black Caribbean (3%)**, **Irish (3%)**, and **Other White (3%)**. Additionally, **10% preferred not to say**, and no respondents identified as Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Chinese, African, or other listed categories.

Implications:

While the consultation reached a diverse audience, representation was heavily weighted toward White British respondents, with limited engagement from other

ethnic groups. This highlights the need for **targeted outreach to underrepresented communities**, including partnerships with local cultural organisations, translation of materials, and provision of interpreters. Ensuring inclusivity will be critical to achieving the strategy's aim of meaningful engagement across all communities.

Changes made to the Tenant Engagement Strategy following consultation:

Following feedback from the consultation, the Tenant Engagement Strategy has been updated to reflect the views and suggestions received. The key changes made are as follows:

- An executive summary has been included to provide a concise, plain-English overview of the strategy.
- The strategy now confirms that an accompanying action plan will be developed in partnership with tenants, responding to feedback requesting clearer performance measurement.
- Additional performance measures have been incorporated to demonstrate how progress against the strategy will be monitored and reviewed.
- The KPI section has been revised to highlight the indicators specifically linked to delivery of the Tenant Engagement Strategy.
- Graphics are being incorporated to support presentation and improve clarity.