

# RentSafe in Owen Sound Landlord & Tenant Survey Findings

Corporate Services Committee for the City of Owen Sound

November 14, 2024

Presented by Seana Moorhead on behalf of the

**RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative**



The City of Owen Sound is situated on the traditional territory of the Anishinabek Nation: The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations.



# Introduction to the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative

The **RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative** is a group of organizations and community partners working together towards the goal of safe and healthy homes for all

- Catalyzed by the RentSafe EquiP research project in Owen Sound (2016-2019) that focused on building meaningful interaction among people from diverse sectors.
- Launched at the final RentSafe EquiP research event (November 2019) by community members and agency partners seeking to continue to work together to promote safe and healthy homes for all.
- *Linked to province-wide RentSafe initiative (2014-present) and supported by Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE)*

RentSafe: Connecting people across sectors towards healthy housing for all

# Survey Overview



## Why?

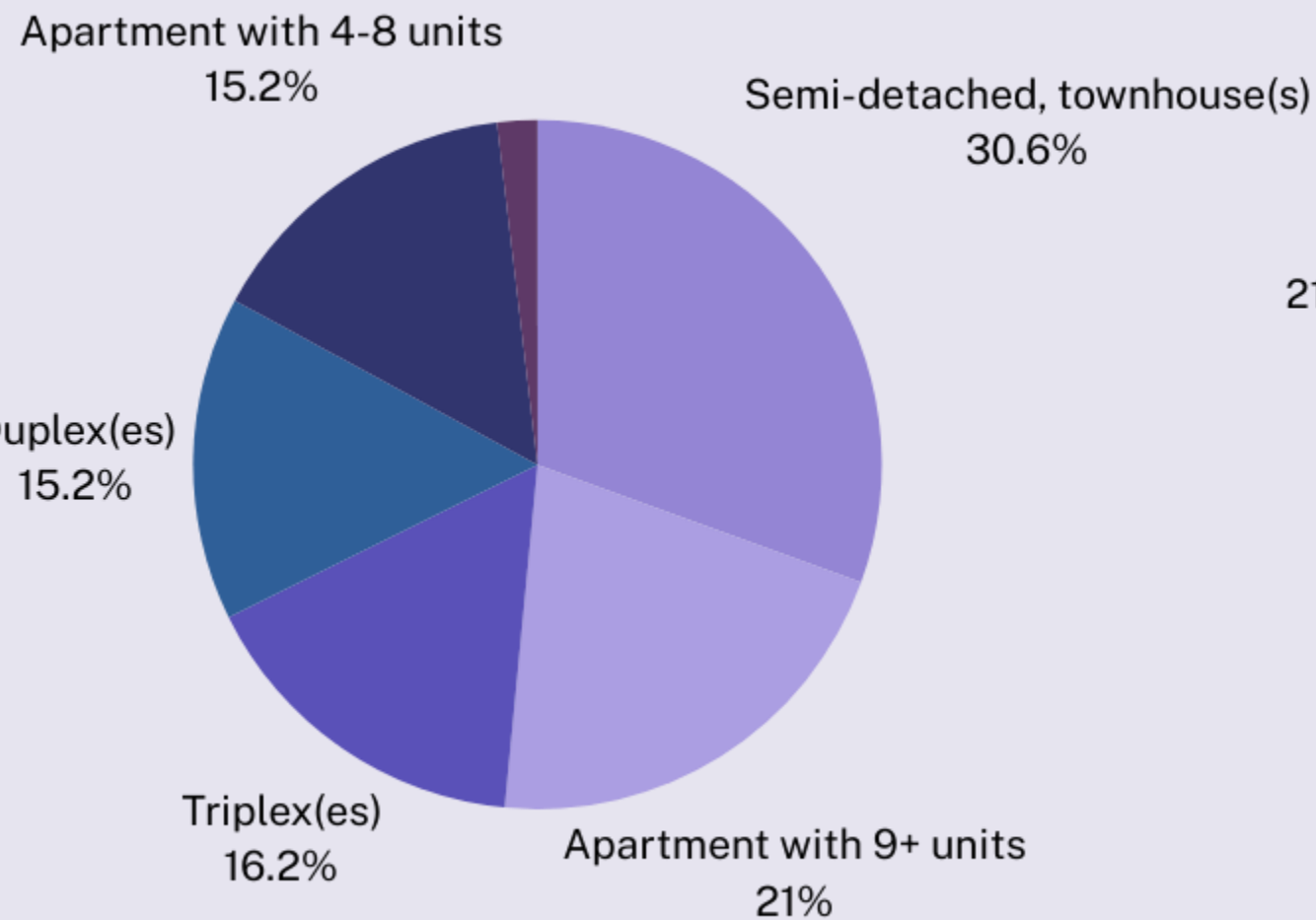
- Designed to provide better understanding of rental housing conditions
  - Issues faced by tenants and landlords/property managers
- Goal of informing community dialogue on issues and potential solutions
- Landlord survey conducted Fall of 2021, tenant survey conducted Fall of 2022
- Preliminary results reported at “Vital Signs” in Dec 2022



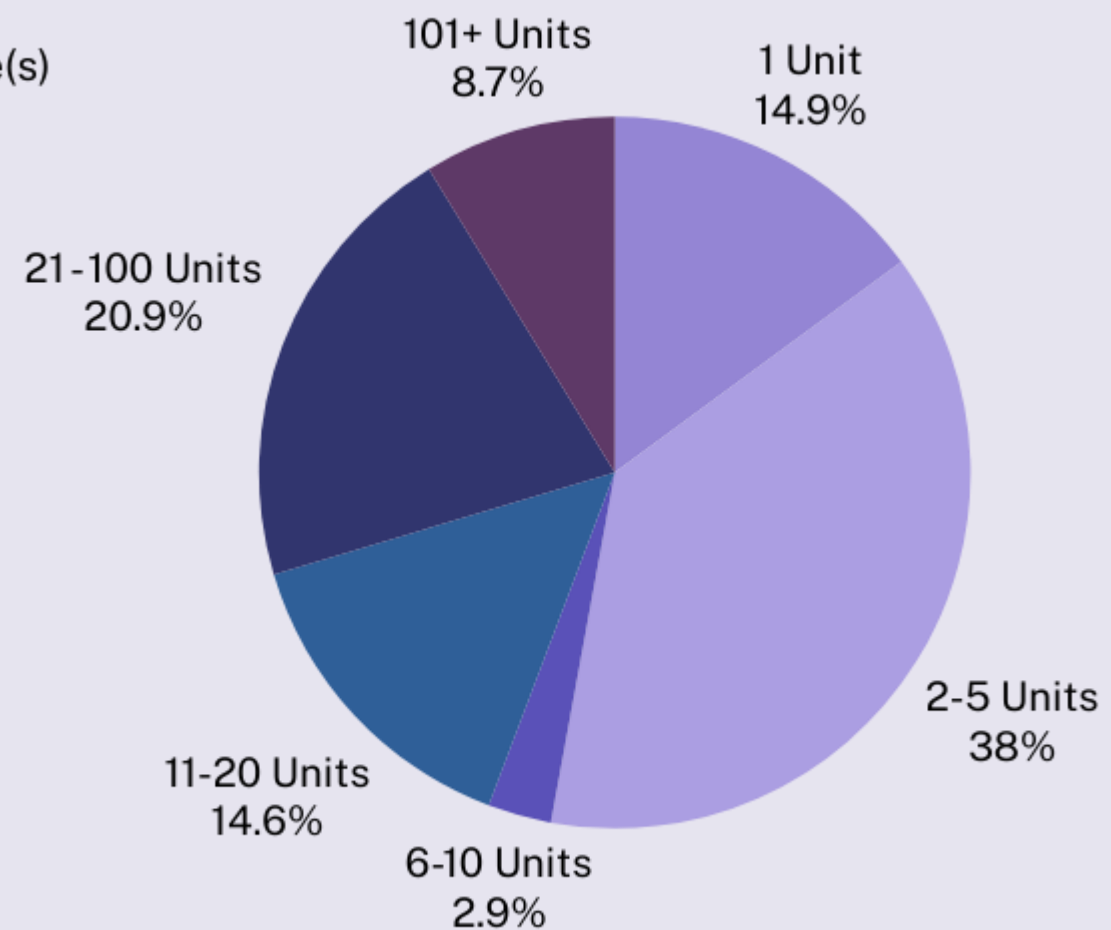
# Landlord Survey Demographics

- 36 respondents
- Responsible for nearly 800 rental units in Owen Sound (estimated to be about 40% of the rental market)

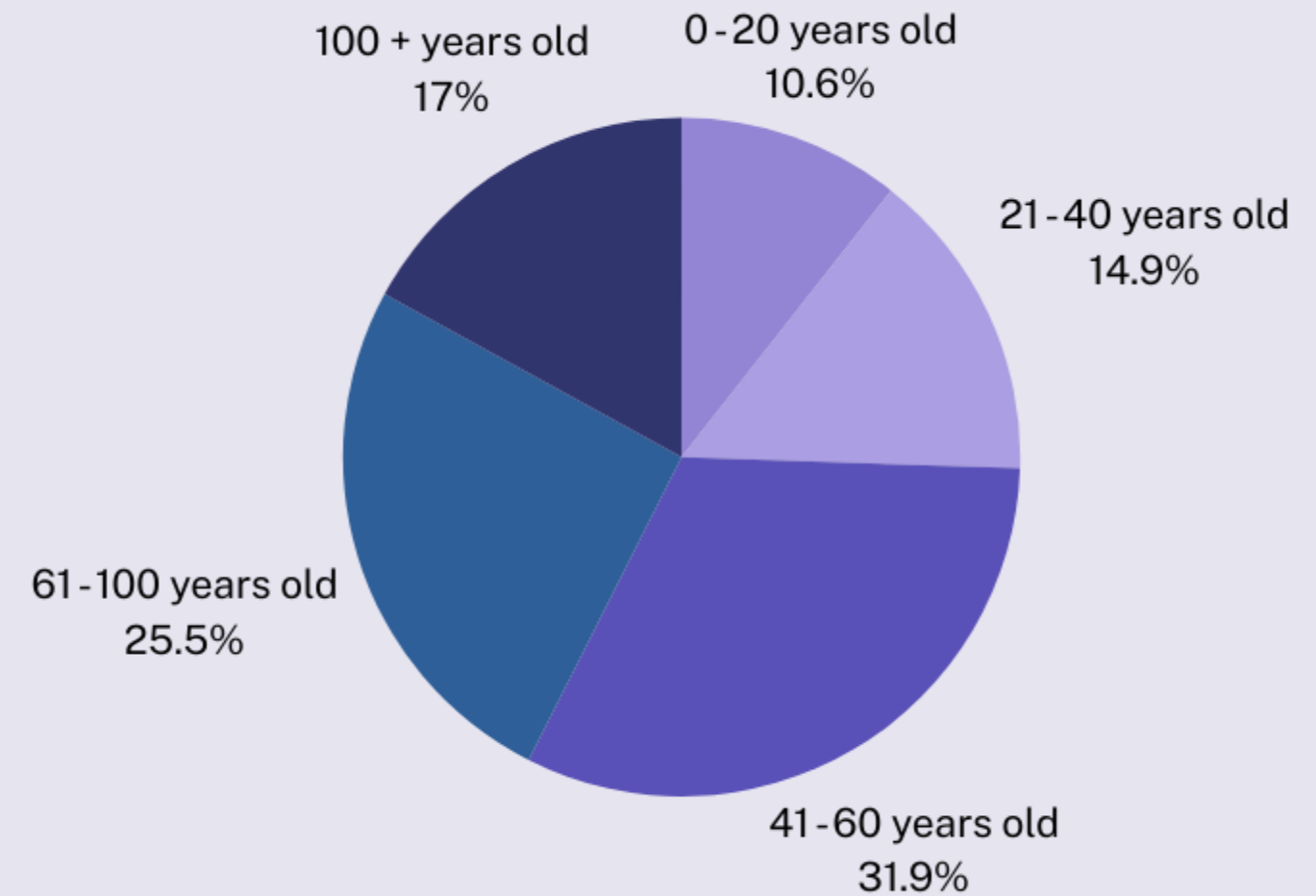
“What type of units do you own/manage?”



“How many units are you responsible for?”



“What is the age of your rental stock?”





# Survey Demographics

## Tenant Survey



- 47% of respondents in co-operative, non-profit, or county housing
- Individual (30%), company/corporation (23%)

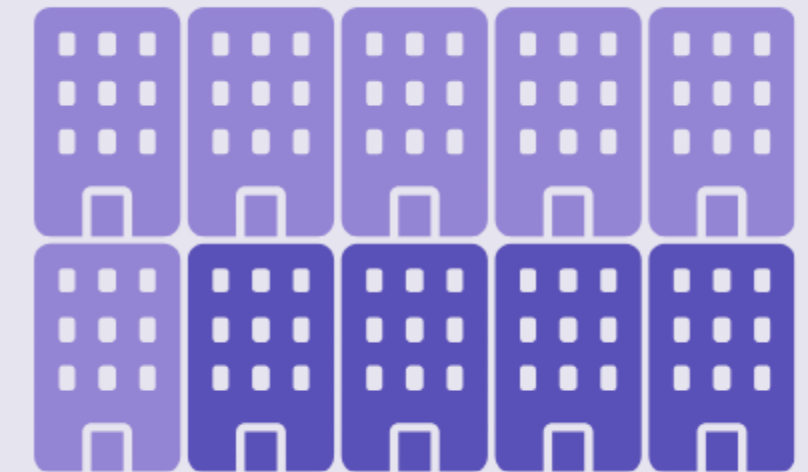


- 40% reported living in a rental unit in Owen Sound for the past 1-5 years
- 31% reported 6-10 years, 20% reported 11+ years, 9% reported less than 1 year

- 545 valid responses (estimated to be about 28% of rental units)
- Indigenous community members and newcomers to Canada were well represented



- 26% of respondents were living alone
- 1+ roommates (23%), couple w/o children (22%), couple with children/multigenerational (20%), single parent (10%)



- 45% of respondents living in duplex or triplex
- Semi-detached, townhouse, single family (20%), apartment building with 4-8 units (20%), apartment building with 9+ units (16%)



- 29% of respondents reported household income of \$50,000 - \$74,999
- 26% reported \$30,000 - \$49,999, 26% reported \$75,000 or over, 20% reported under \$30,000

# Landlord Survey Findings

## Maintenance

- 19% of respondents reported all of their units required repairs costing over \$1,000 per year
- 32% of respondents reported less than 10% of units requiring repairs over \$1,000; 19.4% reported none of their units

**50%** of respondents reported difficulty hiring contractors to complete repairs in Owen Sound, with timing/availability being the most frequently reported challenge

## Housing Conditions

The most frequently reported rental unit problems (presented as % of affected units) include:

- Plumbing leaks ( $\leq 18\%$ )
- Broken windows ( $\leq 15\%$ )
- Broken or non-functioning exterior door locks ( $\leq 14\%$ )
- Bedbugs ( $\leq 14\%$ )
- Mice ( $\leq 13\%$ )
- Pet damage ( $\leq 10\%$ )
- Cracks or holes in walls floors or ceilings ( $\leq 9\%$ )
- Heat not working ( $\leq 12\%$ )
- Evidence of mould ( $\leq 3\%$ )
- Water leaks or flooding from outside ( $\leq 2\%$ )

Respondents reported that 12 to 30% of the units had damage caused by tenants / guests beyond expected wear and tear. Non-payment and conflict between tenants were similarly reported issues

## Tenant Relations

**35%** of respondents reported difficulty in accessing unit to complete repairs, with entry refusals and difficulty contact tenants being the most frequently reported challenges

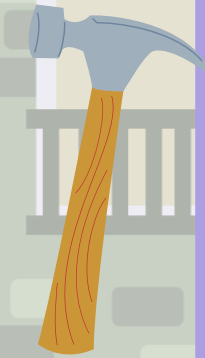
Other concerns reported by landlords effecting between 3 - 18% of the units include:

- Housekeeping issues resulting in additional costs
- Conflict/stressful situations with tenants
- Hoarding issues resulting in additional cost
- Illicit activity requiring police intervention

# Tenant Survey Findings

## Maintenance

- 77% of respondents reported requesting maintenance in the past year
- 35% of respondents had requested maintenance and it was completed
- 27% of respondents had requested maintenance and it was not yet completed
- 15% of respondents reported their landlord doesn't intend to address their concerns



## Housing Conditions

Reported rental unit problems (presented as % of respondents) include:

- Pests/insects other than bedbugs (73%)
- Unit too hot or too cold (71%)
- Water leaks (62%)
- Anxiety regarding their unit's physical condition (60%)
- Had left a unit in the past due to poor conditions (57%)
- Noise (51%)
- Drafty doors (49%), dysfunctional windows (49%)
- Mould (47%)
- Poor air quality (43%)
- Bedbugs (42%)

## Landlord Relations

- Nearly all respondents (95%) reported knowing how to contact their landlord when needed, and reported prompt responses (82%)
- Over half reported feeling comfortable raising issues with their landlord (55%)
- Just under half of respondents reported issues with requesting maintenance (49%) such as delays in completing the work, refusal to do the work, being unable to reach the landlord or having a poor relationship with the landlord

## Housing Cost

**75%** of tenants reported spending 30%+ of their income on housing

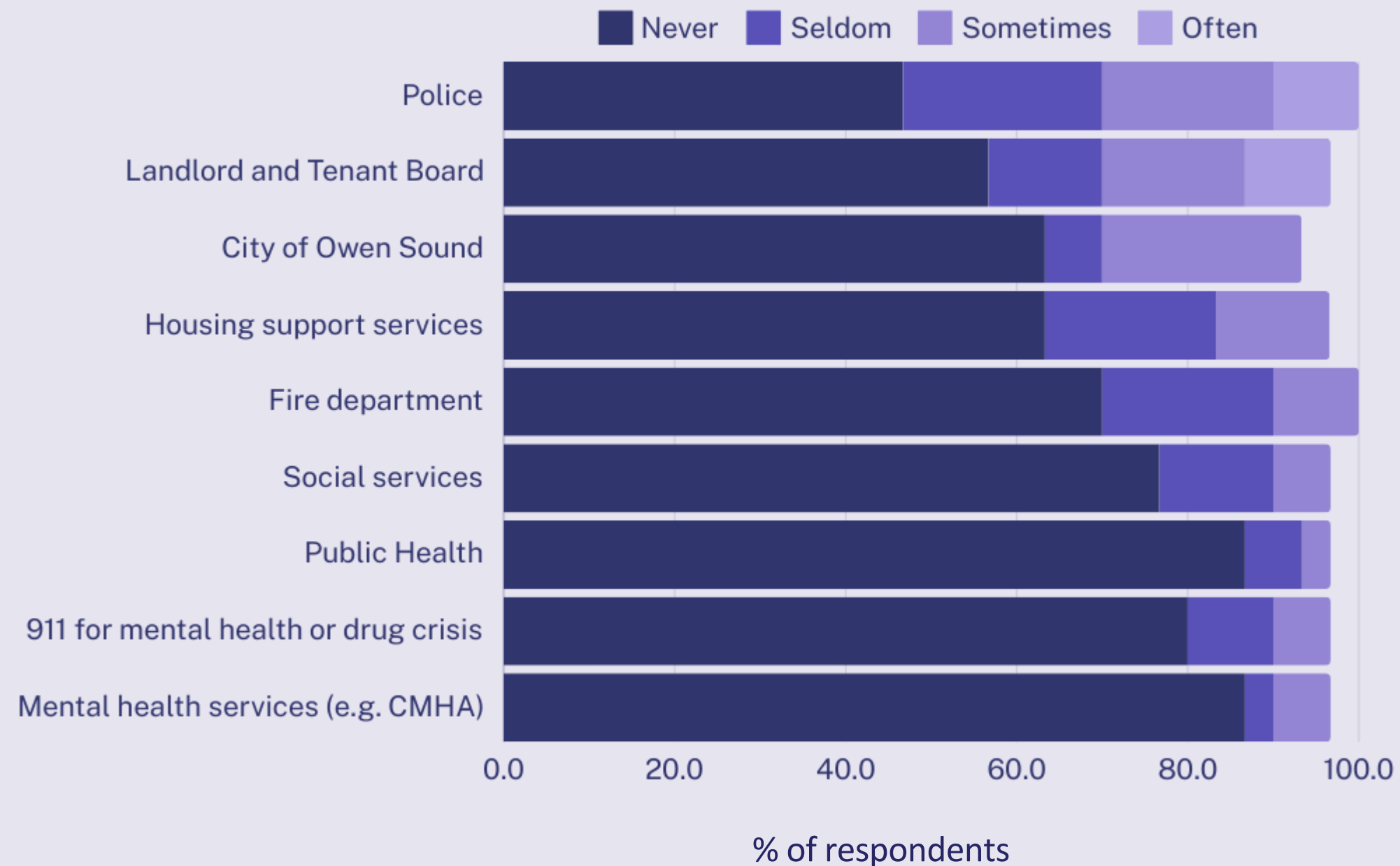


**87%** of respondents reported wanting to leave due to poor conditions but not being able to



# Landlord Survey Findings

What local services were landlords accessing for tenants?

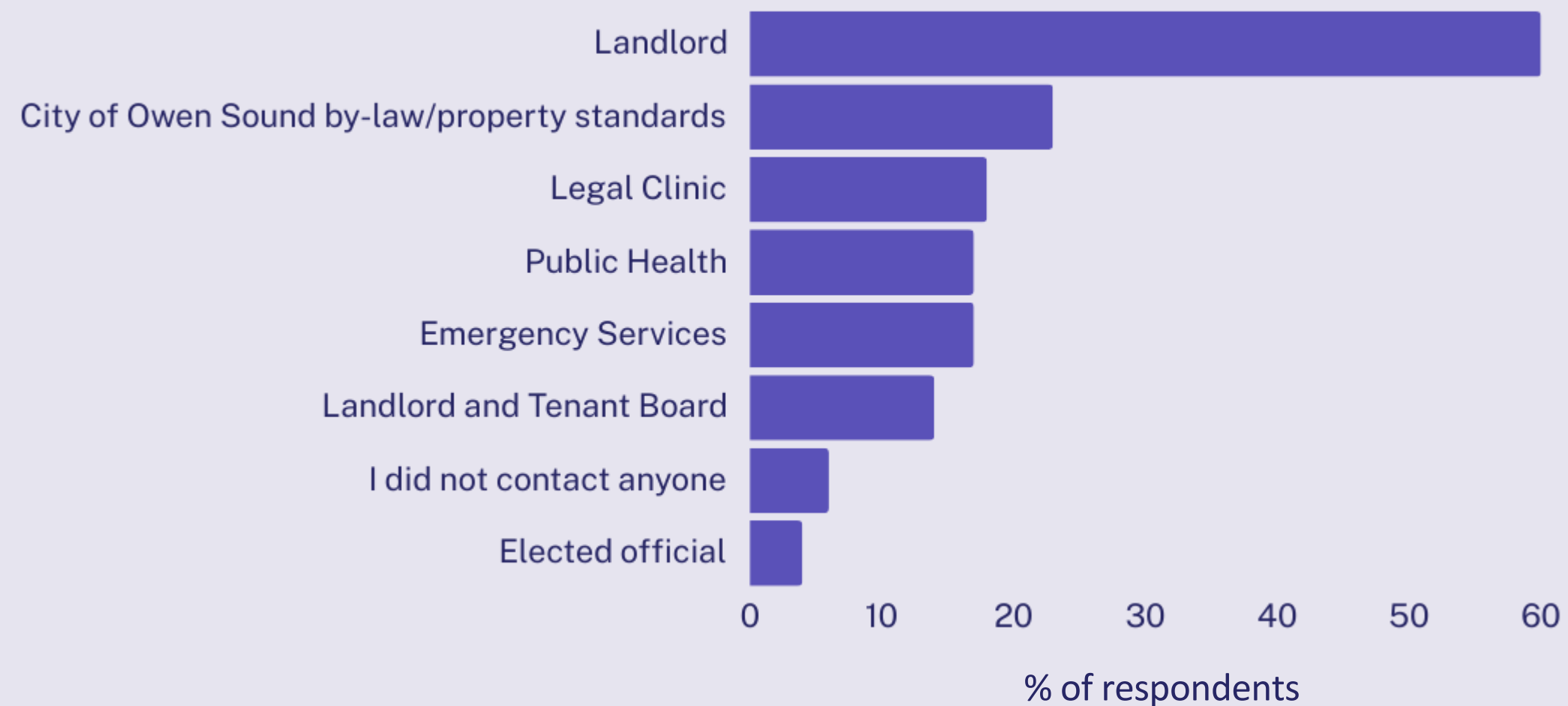


- Landlords reported highest degrees of satisfaction with fire department (8/9 satisfied), and police (12/16 satisfied). Lower levels of satisfaction with the Landlord and Tenant Board (2/12 satisfied), City of Owen Sound (4/9 satisfied), housing support services (5/8 satisfied), and social services (0/6 satisfied).



# Tenant Survey Findings

When you had a concern about unsafe or unhealthy conditions in your unit, who, if anyone, did you contact?



- Tenants reported lower levels of satisfaction with Housing Support Services (31% dissatisfied), Mental Health Services (29% dissatisfied), and City of Owen Sound (28% dissatisfied). Highest degree of satisfaction with fire department (47% satisfied), Social Services (44% satisfied), and the Landlord and Tenant Board (43% satisfied).

# Landlord Survey Findings

Plans for the future (presented as % of respondent's units)

- 7 - 16% of are expected to have major renovations and rent will be increased
- 4-6% are expected to be sold to outside investors
- 4-6% are expected to be sold to local buyers
- 1-12% are expected to have major renovations but rents will be kept at/near current level
- Up to 2% are expected to be converted into short-term rentals
- Up to 3% of units are expected to be made into supportive housing
- Less than 1% are expected to be taken over for personal use

# Points of Connection



## Unit quality concerns

- A large majority of tenant respondents reported some sort of quality concern with units
- Landlords and tenants both commonly reported issues related to temperate control (including broken/impaired windows), plumbing and water leaks, pests and bedbugs, and mould

### Landlord concerns

1. Plumbing leaks ( $\leq 18\%$ )
2. Broken windows ( $\leq 15\%$ )
3. Broken or non-functioning exterior door locks ( $\leq 14\%$ )
4. Bedbugs ( $\leq 14\%$ )
5. Mice ( $\leq 13\%$ )
6. Pet damage ( $\leq 10\%$ )
7. Cracks or holes in walls floors or ceilings ( $\leq 9\%$ )
8. Heat not working ( $\leq 12\%$ )
9. Evidence of mould ( $\leq 3\%$ )
10. Water leaks or flooding from outside ( $\leq 2\%$ )

### Tenant concerns

1. Pests/insects other than bedbugs (73%)
2. Unit too hot or too cold (71%)
3. Water leaks (62%)
4. Noise (51%)
5. Drafty doors (49%)
6. Dysfunctional windows (49%)
7. Mould (47%)
8. Poor air quality (43%)
9. Bedbugs (42%)
10. Large cracks in unit (37%)



# Points of Connection

## Lack of trust and communication

- Landlords reported challenges with contacting tenants and accessing units to complete repairs
- Tenants reported a lack of comfort with landlords accessing unit

### Landlord concerns

- 35% of respondents reported challenges in accessing a rental unit
  - 42% of those who reported challenges cited tenant refusal
  - 37% of those who reported challenges cited not being able to reach the tenant
  - 26% of those who reported challenges cited concern for personal safety
  - 21% of those who reported challenges cited concern for tenant's mental health

### Tenant concerns

- 56% of tenants reported being comfortable with landlords accessing unit
  - 25% reported being somewhat uncomfortable, 9% reported being uncomfortable
- Tenants whose landlord lived in the same building as their landlord/property manager were 19% more likely to report anxiety, worry, nervousness or lack of sleep related to the physical conditions of their housing



# Points of Connection

Lack of satisfaction and effects on wellbeing

- Approximately 1/3 of landlords reported a lack of financial and/or personal fulfillment with being a landlord in Owen Sound
- A significant proportion of tenants reported poor conditions and/or feelings of being unsafe in their unit

## Landlord concerns

- 38% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the prompt “I find it financially rewarding to be a landlord/property manager in Owen Sound”
- 34% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the prompt “I find it personally rewarding to be a landlord/property manager in Owen Sound”
- 35% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the prompt “I would recommend being a landlord/property manager to a friend or family member”
- 41% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “Five years from now, I could see myself being a landlord/property manager in Owen Sound”

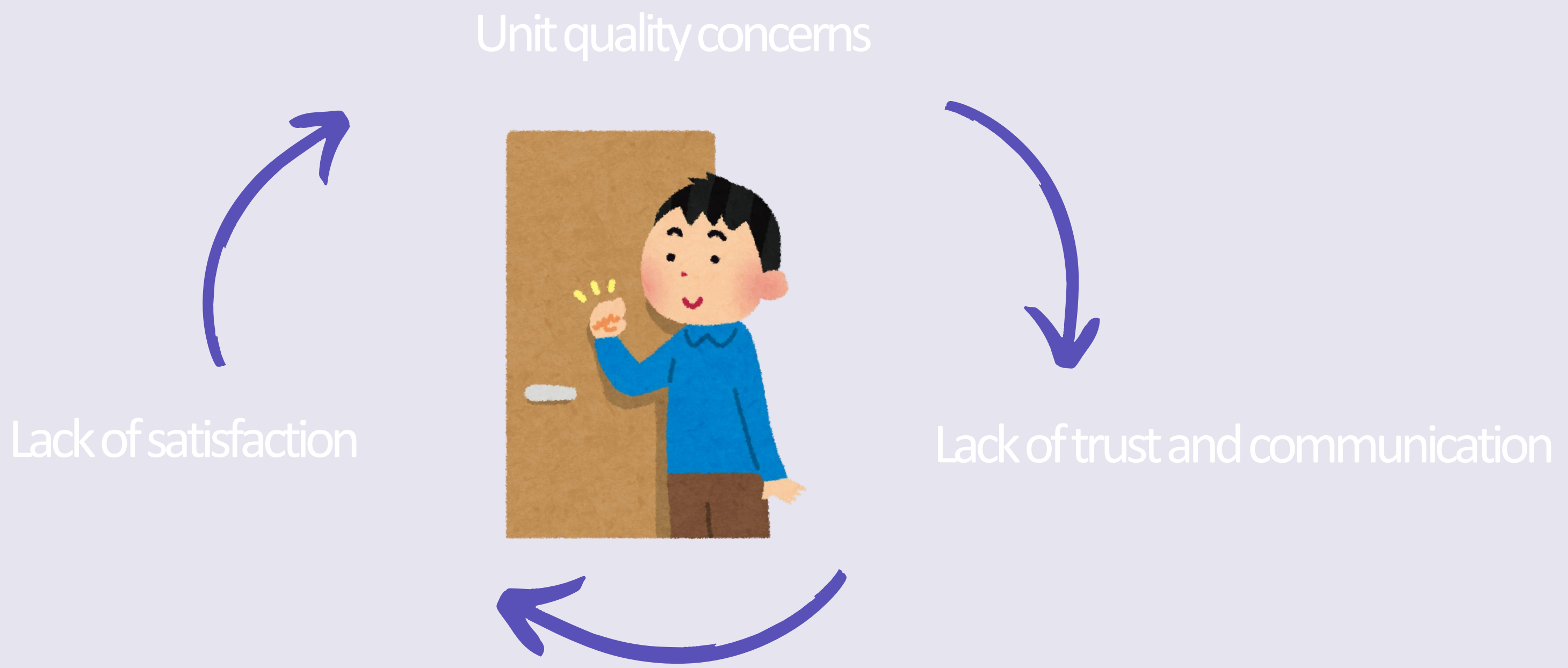
## Tenant concerns

- Wanted to move due to poor conditions but couldn't (87%)
- Anxiety regarding their unit's physical condition (60%)
- Had left a unit in the past due to poor conditions (57%)
- Not comfortable raising issues (34%)
- Feel unsafe (29%)





# Points of Connection



# Quotes from Survey Respondents



The reason substandard housing exists in Owen Sound is simply the fact the City allows it to by its lack of bylaw enforcement” – Landlord survey respondent

“Why do we not have a certain standard that landlords have to keep places in...should be inspections done in rentals, fire, home inspections.” – Tenant survey respondent

# We Are All Neighbours



Charm of small town living in Owen Sound, however:

- Older housing stock related to rental unit quality issues
- Older housing stock and lack of available units
- Tenant affordability and landlord financial incentive

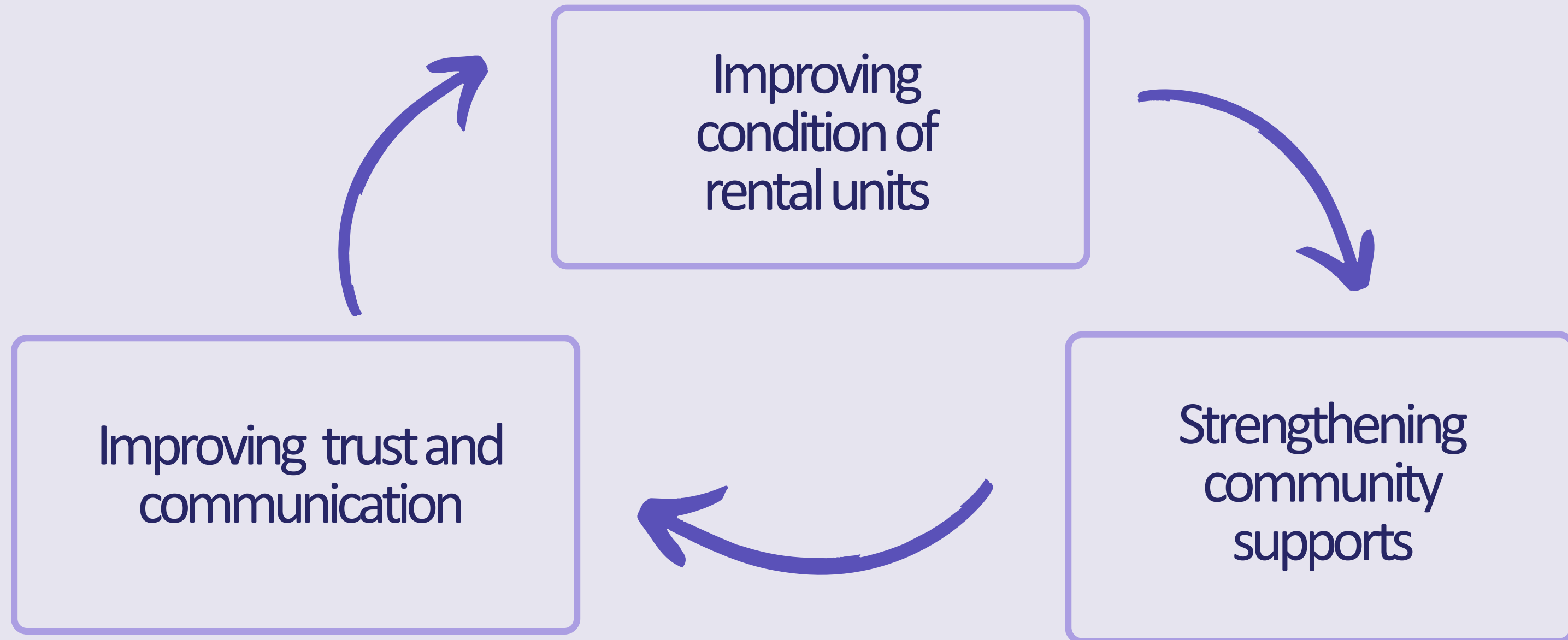
## Landlords feeling stuck

“Government incentives for improved efficiencies such as windows/doors/heating are only available for homes that you own and live in as your primary residence. How does that help the tenants to live in the best possible home?” – Landlord survey respondent

## Tenants feeling trapped

“With the rising costs of rental units, many are unable to afford an increase in rent to move to a new unit so they are stuck where they are. Living in an unsafe and unhealthy home should not be ‘better than being homeless’” – Tenant Survey respondent

# How Do We Move Forward?



## Recommendation #1: Collection of data



- We recommend that the City collect data on habitability issues in rental housing (for example, the incident of mould, pests, water leaks, broken windows, etc) via bylaw and fire department inspections.
- This data is important to better understand the depth of the issues facing older housing stock in the City and in developing strategies to encourage and support landlords to maintain existing housing stock that is safe and healthy.





## Recommendation #2: Include model bylaw language for mould repairs in Owen Sound's bylaws

*The Municipal - Public Health Provincial Working Group to Address Substandard Housing Issues*, a successful intersectoral collaboration that was catalyzed by the province-wide RentSafe work, recently developed a model by-law on mould for use by municipalities across the province. The Working Group unites the efforts and expertise of the leading professional associations serving public health inspectors and municipal by-law/property standards officers across Ontario.

Its members include: Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers (OAPSO), Municipal Law Enforcement Officers Association of Ontario (MLEOA), Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors - Ontario Branch (CIPHI-ON), Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors of Ontario (ASPHIO) and RentSafe.

**The mould model by-law, now available through the Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers (OAPSO), was informed by a comprehensive scan of existing by-laws across Ontario and co-created with the expertise of both public health inspectors and municipal property/by-law officers.** The model by-law supports municipalities across the province to update and improve municipal property standards regarding mould in rental housing.

**Recommendation #3: Prioritize supports for landlords to maintain the habitability of their units and to facilitate effective tenant-landlord interaction as a key strategy in retaining and improving the existing rental housing stock in Owen Sound**



We are currently in a housing crisis with increased incidents of homelessness.

Households and individuals are turned away every day from accessing Grey County emergency housing because of lack of space. Not only is more housing required but we also want to keep and maintain our existing affordable rental housing stock and retain existing tenancy for long-term stability for both landlords and tenants.

The City should play a role in retaining existing rental housing stock, informed by better data on habitability concerns, and via supports to ensure that both tenants and landlords are equipped to fulfill their responsibilities to maintain healthy conditions. The City should be involved in helping to find solutions to maintain a robust, healthy and financially diverse rental housing market for the Owen Sound community.

# **Systematic Change: What long term changes do we need to ensure that existing rental housing stock in Owen Sound is affordable, healthy and safe for all?**

Explore options for pro-active inspections to avoid a complaint driven process similar to restaurant inspections system

Improvements with the Landlord and Tenant Board process to make it more accessible and proactive

Strong community involvement and reporting mechanism to ensure long term stability, such as a City / Public Health rental housing committee

Explore options for renoviction bylaws to prevent bad faith evictions and maintain affordable housing stock (similar to examples in Hamilton and Toronto)

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Thank you  
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<https://rentsafe.ca/owen-sound/>

Interested to learn more or get involved?

Contact:

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[Full Report Available at:](https://rentsafe.ca/owen-sound/)

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