

Student Housing Report

24/25

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7-minute read

Introduction

This report presents students' experiences with housing while at Sheffield Hallam University, and is derived from a sample of 57 survey respondents.

It highlights several key issues relating to different types of accommodation, the personal impact of poor housing, and levels of confidence and awareness around tenant rights and support services.

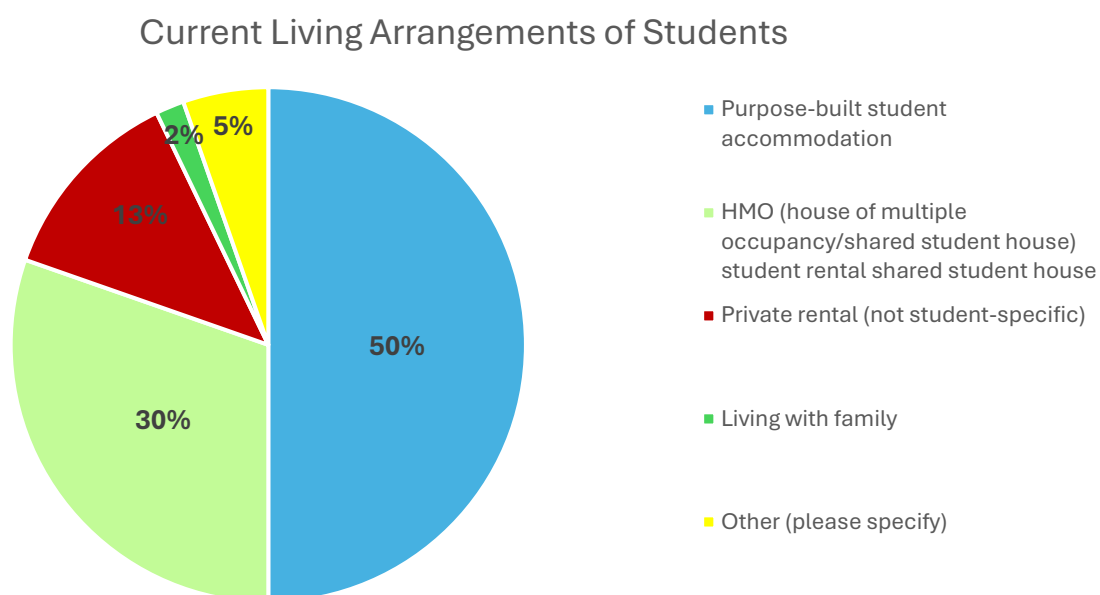
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Current Living Arrangements

Accounting for the vast majority of responses, Sheffield Hallam students are most likely to live in either purpose-built student accommodation or shared student houses (HMOs). Purpose-built housing was the single most common choice, likely reflecting its continued appeal for convenience and amenities.

HMOs are also a popular option, likely attracting those looking for more affordable or independent living arrangements.



A smaller number of students reported living in non-student-specific private rentals, while very few are living with family or in alternative arrangements.

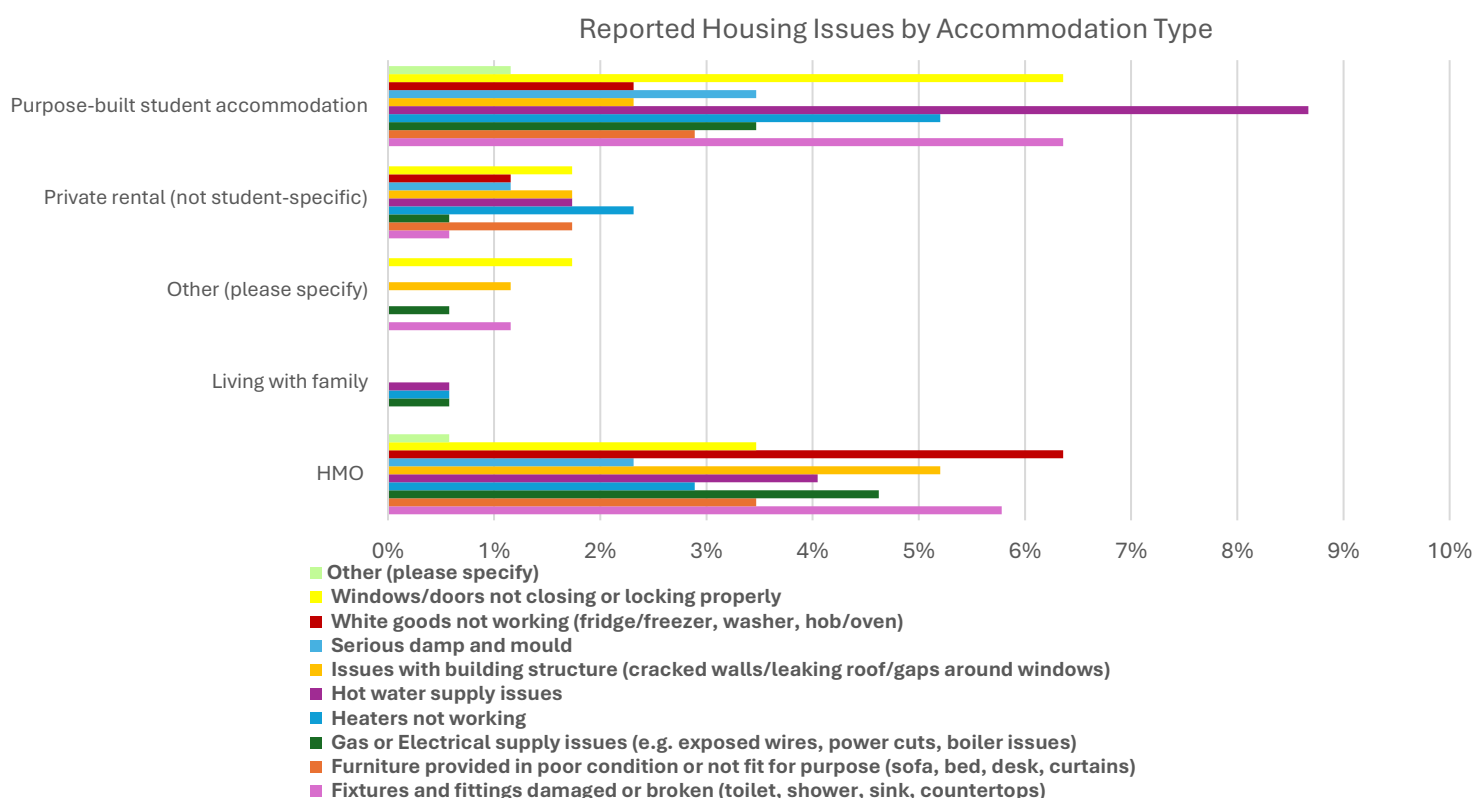
It's reasonable to suggest that these results reflect typical patterns for a student population in a city like Sheffield — where **both dedicated student accommodation and traditional shared houses form the backbone of student housing provision.**

Housing Condition Issues by Accommodation Type

While most students reported relatively few housing issues overall, some clear trends emerged across accommodation types.

Students from HMOs and purpose-built student accommodation are overrepresented in this research, and account for the majority of maintenance and repair concerns. Hot water supply problems were most common in purpose-built housing, **affecting nearly one in ten respondents**. HMO residents highlighted recurring issues with fixtures, white goods, and structural problems.

In contrast, students in private rentals and those living with family reported far fewer issues, suggesting these arrangements may offer more stable or better-maintained environments — though they also likely represent a smaller proportion of the overall student population.



These findings suggest that while purpose-built housing may offer convenience and modern facilities, there are still notable, detrimental gaps in basic provision.

This, in tandem with the high prevalence of issues in HMOs, highlights systemic problems inherent to the student rental market.

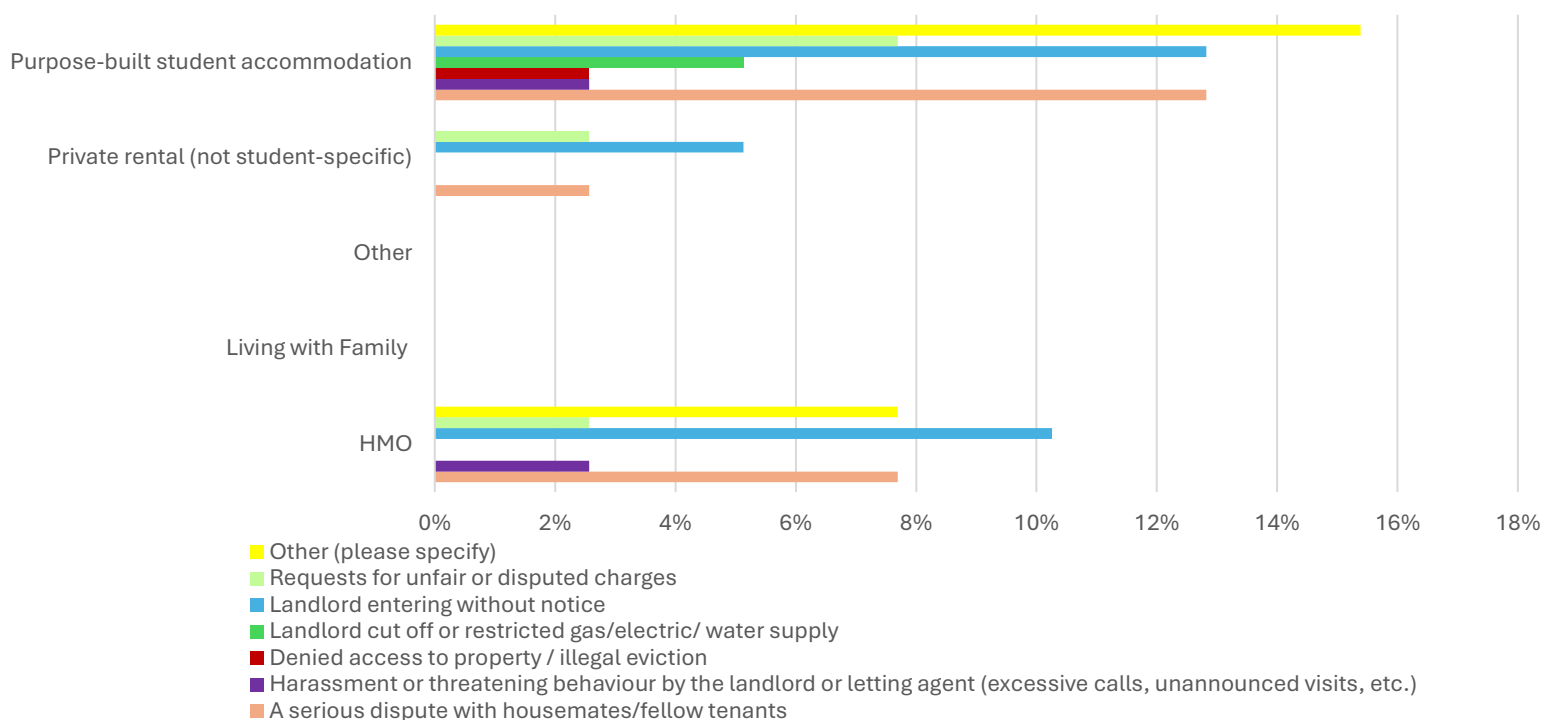
"I think that student housing and accommodation is kinda awful, but it's just sort of expected that you'll live somewhere with mould, broken furniture, messy flatmates etc so students don't speak up on it as much as they should" – Survey Respondent

Landlord, Tenant and Agent Issues

Overall, students in purpose-built accommodation and HMOs were the most likely to report issues related to landlord or agent behaviour, though the nature of these concerns varied.

In purpose-built accommodation, problems most commonly related to serious disputes with housemates, unannounced access by landlords or staff, and requests for disputed charges. A small proportion also experienced more severe incidents, such as being denied access or having utilities cut off. It is suggested that these issues may be associated with more informal rental settings.

Landlord, agent and tenant issues by accommodation type



In HMOs, the most common concern was landlords entering without notice, while a smaller proportion reported disputes, harassment, or unexpected charges.

Issues were reported far less frequently in private, non-student-specific rentals, and almost not at all among those living with family — potentially reflecting the comparative stability of those arrangements.

Importantly, the presence of serious problems in both HMOs and purpose-built accommodation suggests that **formal student housing does not necessarily equate to the guarantee of a fair and stable living situation.**

Impact of Housing Issues

The majority of students who experienced housing issues reported some form of negative impact, with mental health effects being the most common. **Over a fifth of students cited symptoms such as anxiety, low mood, or sleep disruption**, suggesting that poor housing conditions can have a significant psychological toll.

"The frequent power cuts have significantly hindered my uni experience and increased my workload. It has caused me stress, lack of sleep, severe anxiety, and has cost me financially due to all my food going off and having to eat out" – Survey Respondent

"I couldn't live in my flat for months as it was unsafe, so I had to commute from Nottingham. The stress caused by getting these issues resolved severely impacted my mental health" – Survey Respondent

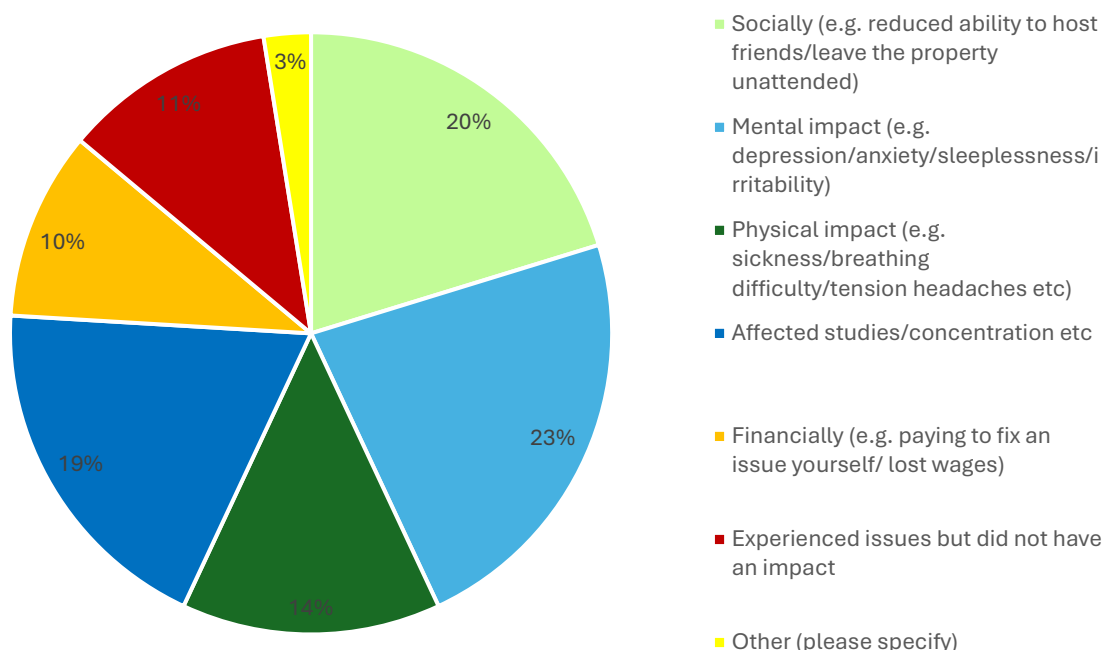
Academic performance was also affected, with **nearly one in five reporting that housing issues had impacted their ability to study or concentrate**. A similar proportion described social consequences, such as avoiding having guests or feeling unable to leave the property unattended

— highlighting how housing can influence not just wellbeing but also students' social lives and sense of autonomy.

Around 14% experienced physical health effects, while 10% faced financial consequences, such as paying for repairs out of pocket or losing income due to housing-related disruption.

Only a small group — 11% — experienced issues without perceivable impacts, indicating that, **for most, housing problems were not just an inconvenience, but a source of tangible harm.**

Impact of Housing Issues on Students

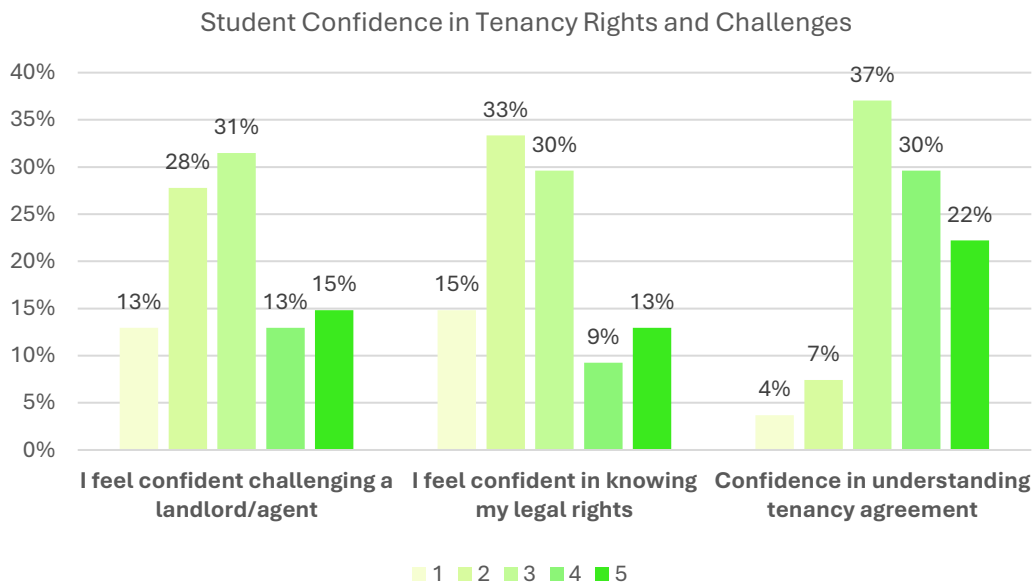


Student Confidence in Navigating Tenancy Issues

Overall, student confidence appears mixed, with the majority falling somewhere in the middle of the scale — indicating uncertainty or only moderate levels of self-assurance when it comes to renting. When asked about challenging a landlord or agent, fewer than 30% felt confident (rating 4 or 5), while over 40% rated their confidence as low (1 or 2). A similar pattern emerged around knowledge of legal rights, where one in three students reported low confidence, and just 22% expressed high confidence.

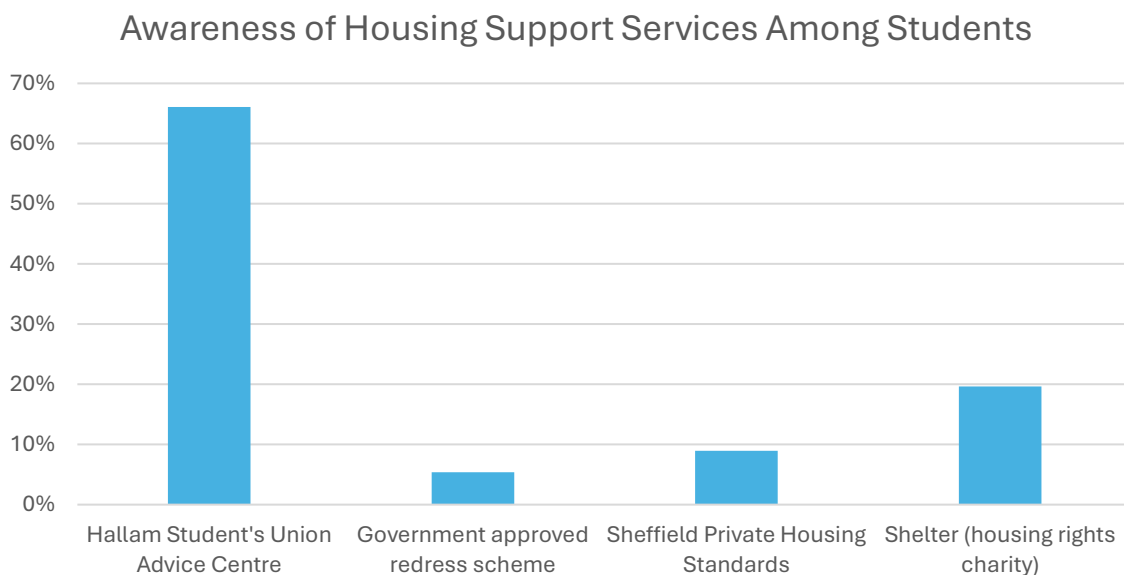
"I complained and sent several emails, I am a foreign student and always feel helpless" – Survey Respondent

The area students felt most comfortable with was understanding their tenancy agreement — here, over half (52%) rated their confidence as 4 or 5, and only 11% felt unconfident (rating 1 or 2). This suggests that while students may be relatively comfortable with the paperwork, they feel less sure about how to act on issues or assert their rights.



Awareness of Housing Support Services

Awareness of available housing support varies among respondents. Encouragingly, **two-thirds (66%) were aware of Hallam Students' Union Advice Centre, highlighting it as the most well-known resource for housing support.** However, awareness of external or statutory services was significantly lower. Only 1 in 5 respondents had heard of Shelter, a national housing rights charity, while fewer still were aware of Sheffield's Private



Housing Standards service (9%). Only 5% knew about government-approved redress schemes, which play a critical role in resolving disputes and enforcing accountability.

These findings suggest that while the Students' Union is a vital and recognised point of contact, there is a clear gap in students' awareness of wider legal protections and specialist support — a gap that could leave them vulnerable in challenging or unsafe housing situations.

"I didn't know who to contact when all of this was going on, so making it more known amongst students that there is a support system within uni would be helpful" – Survey Respondent

Recommendations

1. **Increase awareness of support services:** Promote Hallam SU Advice Centre more visibly and regularly, particularly during housing search periods.
2. **Improve housing rights education and tools:** Develop accessible guidance on common housing issues, tenancy agreements and legal rights, including how-to guides, letter templates and articles.
3. **Harness partnerships with local support resource:** Work more closely with [local housing support resource](#) and [Shelter](#) to signpost students effectively.
4. **Targeted support for high-risk housing types:** Focus monitoring and support on students in HMOs and purpose-built accommodation, where issues are most prevalent.
5. **Encourage reporting and feedback:** Create/promote safe, simple channels for students to report housing concerns and help the university monitor emerging patterns.