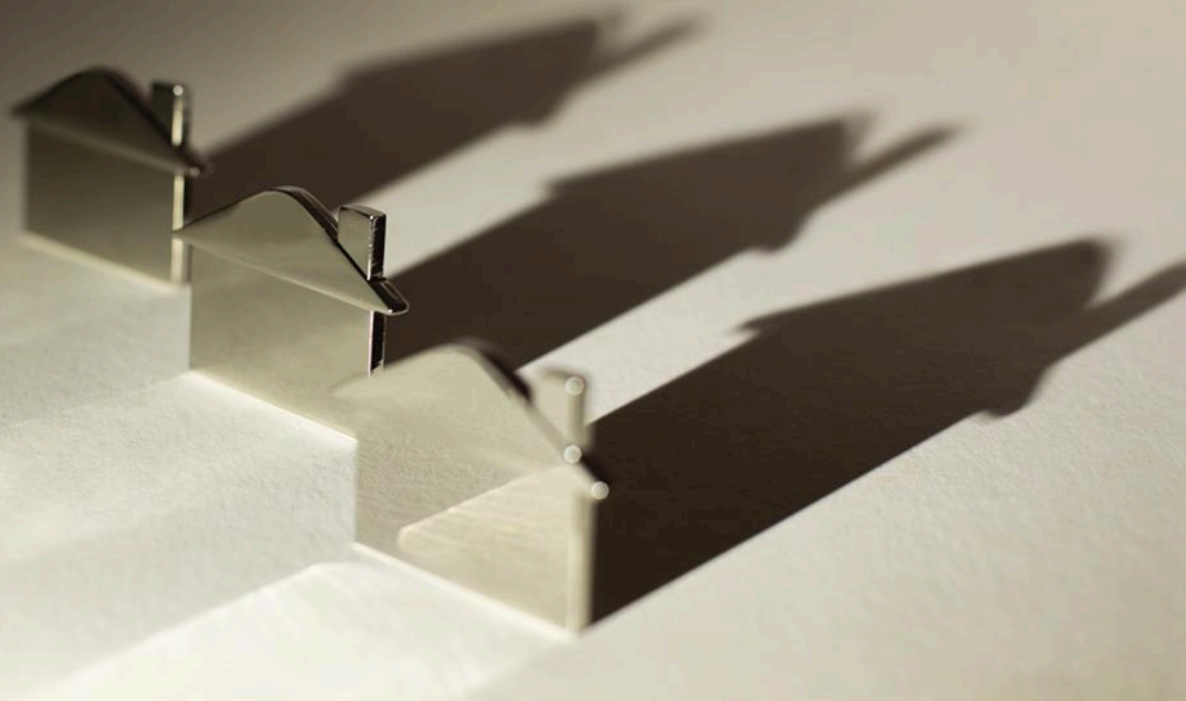




Survey Report • April 2024

A CONSTANT WORRY

Renters confront the impact of unfair evictions



A constant worry:

Renters confront the impact of unfair evictions

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Introduction

Eviction impacts lives. Moving house is generally considered one of life's most stressful events: the financial costs, and stress involved are substantial, and these are exacerbated when a household is forced to move. This report examines this impact, and specifically for those who have been evicted without being provided a reason. It draws on and centres the experiences of renters in NSW who have directly experienced a 'no grounds' eviction, often more than once, as well as renters who have not directly been served a 'no grounds' notice, but experience them as a chronic and persistent threat throughout their tenancy.

For this report we surveyed 123 NSW renters, asking them about the impact of the eviction financially and emotionally. We asked about challenges they may have faced in securing alternative housing, and how the 'no grounds' eviction - or the possibility of eviction - affected them during their next tenancy.

What renters shared, draws a compelling picture of the pervasive sense of housing insecurity, financial strain, and emotional distress many experience in the private rental market. Forced to find new accommodations abruptly, many renters faced challenges in securing suitable housing. Financial burdens, including moving expenses and increased rents in their new rental, compounded their difficulties, with some facing homelessness as a result. The impact on mental health was profound, exacerbating existing conditions and triggering anxiety-related health issues. Additionally, the imbalance of power between renters and landlords left many feeling powerless and vulnerable, reluctant to report property issues or assert their rights for fear of retaliation. Renters who shared their experience, expressed the need for reforms to end 'no grounds' evictions, and alongside this, greater accountability and transparency within the system more broadly.

The NSW Government is currently considering rental reforms to remove 'no grounds' evictions, and introduce in their place a set of new additional reasonable grounds for ending a tenancy. Given the impacts highlighted within this report, it is clear reform can't come soon enough.

Recommendations

- 1. Ensure NSW renters may only be evicted with 'reasonable grounds', whatever their lease type.**
- 2. Where 'reasonable grounds' include evictions without fault, these should be limited to the genuine and ongoing removal of a property from the rental sector.**

Background and methodology

'No grounds' evictions in NSW renting law

In NSW, current renting law allows landlords to evict a renting household without requiring them to provide a reason for the eviction. These are called 'no grounds' evictions in NSW; in other states and territories in Australia, they are variously known as 'no cause' or 'no reason' evictions. The ACT and South Australia are the only Australian jurisdictions to have introduced a reasonable grounds regime that has removed 'no grounds' eviction provisions completely.

Frequency of 'no-grounds' evictions

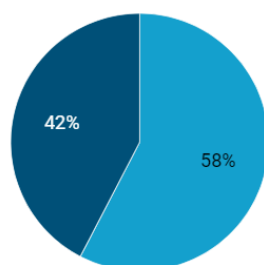
Available data on why tenancies end in NSW indicates that around 30,000 renting households each year are evicted for 'no grounds'—that is, they are served a termination notice under sections 84 or 85 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*. When the landlord ends the tenancy, just under half (43.2%) do so using 'no grounds' provisions.

Renters can receive a 'no grounds' eviction during a periodic tenancy or at the end of a fixed term agreement. When served a 'no grounds' during a periodic tenancy, 90 days notice is provided. When a 'no grounds' eviction is served at the end of a fixed term lease, only 30 days notice is required.

A majority of NSW renters (58%) are in fixed-term tenancy agreements. Renters in a fixed term agreement are most likely to receive a 'no grounds' eviction notice, with 71% of 'no grounds' evictions served on renting households at the end of a fixed term agreement vs 29% in a periodic tenancy.

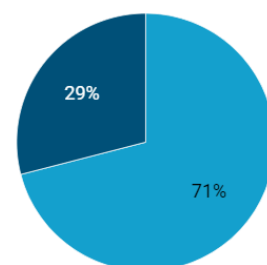
Fixed term and periodic

■ Fixed term agreement ■ Periodic agreement



All tenancies

Total:
53,700



No grounds evictions

Total:
4,943

Methodology

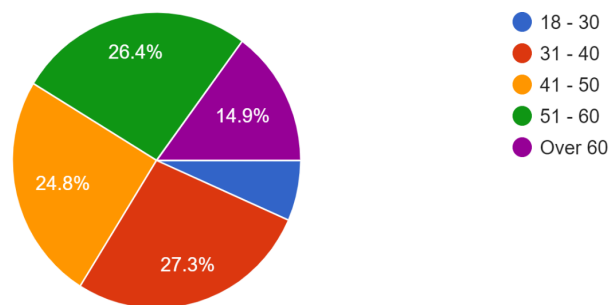
We surveyed 123 NSW renters about their experience in relation to 'no grounds' evictions. Just under two thirds of respondents had directly experienced a 'no grounds' eviction. The remaining respondents had not received a 'no grounds' while renting yet, but shared how 'no grounds' eviction has nonetheless impacted their housing experience.

Of those who had experienced a 'no grounds' eviction 55% of respondents shared they had been in a periodic tenancy agreement when they received the eviction. Around a quarter were in a fixed-term agreement, and just over 18% shared they had received a no-grounds eviction more than once - while on periodic and also while on a fixed-term agreement.

Respondents were from across NSW, and ranged in age and household composition. Over 84% of renters identified they were paying more than 30% of their household income on housing costs, with close to a third (31.1%) sharing they pay more than 50%.

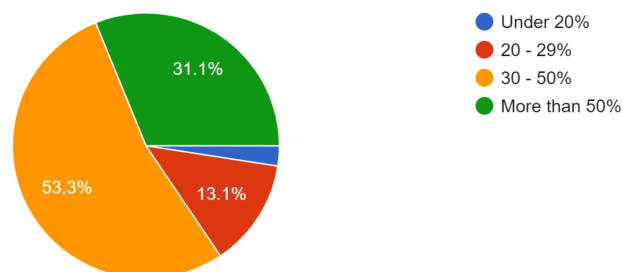
What is your age?

121 responses



What proportion of your weekly income do you spend on housing costs?

122 responses



Findings

Housing insecurity

The experience of being forced to find new accommodation at short notice due to 'no grounds' evictions exacerbates housing insecurity among renters, particularly during periods of high rental demand. Many renters told us they had felt blindsided by the notices and believed they deserved an explanation or opportunity to negotiate terms before being asked to vacate.

It happened all of a sudden and we had nowhere else to go. It created more pressure and stress because I don't have any more extra money after paying the bond and the rent in advance. I had to worry about where I'll be sleeping tonight and what I can afford to eat.

Tom, 40s, Western Sydney

It was sudden and sprung up on me. The landlord also went away on holiday so I had no direct help from him in terms of what was needed of me to do next.

Nate, 20s, Inner West

It was a shock out of the blue eviction notice.

Michelle, 40s, Inner Sydney

It happened at the end of a six month lease, where we were promised a 12 month but then handed the 6 months on the day of signing. We had to move out on a Wednesday in the middle of school term and during exam periods at uni. They wouldn't even let us extend it until the Saturday.

Kylie, 40s, Illawarra

Overwhelmingly renters (86% of respondents who had experienced a 'no-grounds' eviction) told us they found it challenging to find new accommodation after being evicted. Many also told us navigating the process of finding suitable accommodation within a limited timeframe was hard.

The weeks and months following the no-grounds eviction was one of the most stressful periods of my life. It was logistically challenging and emotionally taxing to be house hunting while also working full-time. Most housing inspections were during business hours, which either meant that I couldn't attend or that I had to take time off work to check out a property that might not be suitable or that I might not get. We inspected many properties and made many unsuccessful applications before we were ultimately accepted for a property. For a long time, I was terrified that I would not find a suitable property.

Basia, 30s, Inner West

Stressful rental application process and no reply with rejections. [We felt] forced to take the 1st that accepted our application a week before the eviction date.

Lorena, 40s, Inner West

The challenges involved in securing a new home were particularly hard for renters with specific needs, such as renters with a disability, or households with children or pets.

Having a small dog made it difficult to find another property in the given time.

Lee, 60s, Mid North Coast

It was extremely stressful as there were not many rentals available. At viewings 100-200 people would attend, and I have 2 dogs so I had no chance.

Simon, 50s, Western Suburbs

It was very stressful, we knew we had limited time to find something. There was a lot of competition, looking for a new place was like having a second job. It consumed all our spare time.

Lucy, 50s, Blue Mountains

A significant number of renters who responded to our survey shared they had experienced 'no grounds' evictions with alarming frequency - facing multiple evictions over a relatively short period.

The lack of housing security and having to move constantly from one home to another has taken its toll. After being in my current home for 2.5 yrs I again received a notice that the owner will be putting the property on the sales market. The last 4 properties I have obtained for rent I have been evicted on no grounds!!!! Enough already!

Rental crises, increased rental prices, managing chronic health/pain and ageing makes moving every 2 or so years detrimental to my physical, emotional and mental health.

Katherine, 50s, Southern Highlands

Facing multiple 'no grounds' evictions was particularly hard for some renters, such as households with children, and aged pensioners.

[Because of my] previous times of eviction on no grounds, while my son was attending school we had to move 4 times.

Ella, 60s, Central Coast

I had two of these [no grounds evictions] back to back when I had small kids. The first one was when one of the kids was 6 weeks old and then another two years later.

Cathy, 50s, Inner Sydney

One older renter discussed her experience of enduring four 'no grounds' evictions in ten years.

As an aged pensioner I have had 4 no grounds evictions in 10 years. It depletes my small reserve of savings as it costs money to move. It has just happened again and I am at a loss what to do. As a 74 year old woman, I have applied for government housing but am not hopeful that it will eventuate in the time frame I have.

Mary, 70s, Inner Sydney

Renters described each instance as traumatic and emotionally taxing, but in subsequent evictions, the impact was compounded due to their earlier experience.

I have significant issues with anxiety since this particular eviction. It is only one of many no grounds evictions we have suffered through no fault of ours. We have never been late with rent or done anything to warrant eviction, yet we keep being evicted. I have nightmares almost every night and have started having panic attacks as the date of the end of our criminally short lease gets closer.

Alina, 40s, South West Sydney

[I] feel like it has made me really worried about our security in our current rental home. [...] I'm always worried an eviction can come at any time. It's outside of our control. I definitely worry about 'annoying' my landlord with repair requests. I hate how it makes me feel so concerned and so powerless all the time about my home. Very unsettling!

Katia, 40s, South West Sydney

One renter described feeling that their landlord and agent became more hostile after serving the notice, further exacerbating the distress:

Every eviction has been some of the most traumatic experiences in my life - the landlord/real estate agent then turns on you.

Sam, 30s, Inner Sydney

The suddenness of 'no grounds' evictions came as a shock to many renters, leaving them with little time to prepare for the upheaval. Despite the standard notice period of three months, the current rental market conditions often force renters to move into new homes at much higher - often unaffordable to them - rents. Or to accept properties that are of a lower standard.

We had to find somewhere quickly and we didn't get to choose a good place.

Frank, 40s, Northern Suburbs

[We] moved to a house that wasn't practical for the family just so we had a roof over our heads.

Lauren, 40s, Central Tablelands

We all got sick from the stress of the first notice, which impacted our decision making and put us in a panic when trying to find a place. We signed a lease on the next place out of desperation and it turned out to have structural flaws which

meant we had to move a year later.

Cathy, 50s, Inner Sydney

Many were priced out of their desired neighbourhoods, forcing the household to move to a location much further away from family or work, or their kids' schools.

We had to spend money on the move, a 2-3hrs distance away. We would have stayed in the area had we been able to secure a place we could afford. Rent is cheaper where we have ended up but we had absolutely no plans to move here at this stage. It was enforced. We ran out of options. Had to just do something. We have no back up, it's just us.

Francesca, 50s, South Coast

Along with the enormous financial burden, we were forced to leave the area and move more remote. Twice.

Marg, 40s, South Coast

We have two kids, and it's really hard for them. Moving meant moving to a new neighbourhood - new school, new daycare, new soccer team. Now still my little ones - even years later - worry: 'but what if we get evicted mum? Will we need to move schools? I don't want to leave my friends.'

Katia, 40s, South West Sydney

I just received my notice today. This will be financially devastating [...] I may not be able to continue with my Honours degree, which is on-campus only, and will have nowhere to go. I'll have to move in with my parents over 200km away. Basically, they may have ruined my career.

Anna, 30s, Mid North Coast

CASE STUDY:

Dave's story

In his twenties, Dave became a homeowner, a husband, and a father. Years later, when his relationship came to an end, so did his housing stability. During the divorce, Dave's family home was sold, and the security and reliability in his life were replaced by the challenges of being a single father of two and a renter.

Since the divorce, Dave and his kids have been forced to move many times—never by choice. Two of his most recent leases ended with a no-grounds termination. First, in 2022, he was in Stanmore, in a home ridden with mould that appeared in the wet winter months. Dave repeatedly asked for repairs, but no one came to address the issue until the end of November.

"Eventually painters and mould remover professionals came out. But then, the next day, I got my eviction notice. I really got the impression it was because I'd raised the issue."

Dave and his 20-year-old son were given 30 days' notice and forced to vacate their rental a week before Christmas.

"That was traumatic, the timing of the move but also the lead-up."

A little over a year after that stressful ordeal, Dave is once again looking for a new rental. In early February 2024, he received another no grounds eviction, this time from a place in Enmore. Despite being given 8 weeks to find a new place to live, he's worried about his prospects.

"I am so freaked out I've taken leave from my work at RPA. I'm using my annual leave. I've taken time and honestly am thinking of moving interstate. I'm thinking of moving to Tasmania because the situation here is so dire."

CASE STUDY:

Dani's story

In June 2022, Dani found an ad listing a studio apartment in the inner suburbs of Newcastle, seeking a long-term tenant. After moving three times in three years, she was excited at the prospect of the stability and security of staying in one place for longer. Unfortunately, the promise of a long-term tenancy wasn't fulfilled; six months into her fixed-term lease, Dani was asked to vacate the property.

The eviction notice came without explanation, only a note that the landlord requested vacant possession. Surprised by the sudden change of circumstances, Dani tried negotiating with the real estate agent and later directly with the landlord. She wanted to remain in the place she thought was going to be her long-term home, so she offered to pay \$50 more per week to be able to stay. Her offer went unanswered.

Thankfully, Dani was allowed to stay in the Newcastle studio until her lease was up. She certainly needed the time to find a new home. During the year she lived in the studio, rents around Newcastle had gone up so much that she can no longer afford to live in the area and had to expand her search to surrounding towns.

In the end, Dani moved to Lake Macquarie, south of Newcastle. Her new apartment is of a lower quality than the studio she occupied in Newcastle. It is also more expensive than her previous rental. The unit may require repairs, but the building houses many long-term renters, making Dani hopeful that, finally, she will be able to find the stability she was looking for.

Financial burden and risk of homelessness

Renters highlighted the disruptive and financially burdensome consequences of eviction. Financial barriers, such as the need to pay for moving expenses and increased rent at new properties, were identified as contributing to difficulties in securing alternative housing, especially for low-income individuals and families.

We can not afford the bond. Cleaning. Or moving expenses. So we are now behind on rent which now impacts us getting approved for a rental.

Linda, 50s, Central West NSW

Renters recounted the challenges of facing eviction, of having to sell or store belongings and buy new ones, and adapt to new living conditions. They described eviction as leading to financial strain and uncertainty about the future.

We had to save up and borrow \$3800 for bond, \$1900 for rent and high cost of removalists for a 3 bedroom home which cost more for relocating further away.

Lorena, 40s, Inner West

We made a move that we would not have otherwise, at a cost of approximately \$4k. And the next property was \$180 per week more costly.

Diana, 30s, Inner Sydney

We had to pay more \$25 a week more rent at our new place, pay for moving costs, pay for fuel to drive to inspections of new places over 66 days, pay more for public transport as our new place is further away, pay for new household items eg a new dryer because the new place did not come with a dryer, and pay for gardening equipment e.g. lawnmower. I estimate the cost to us was over \$4000 over the course of a year.

Joanna, 30s, North Shore

Trying to fit a 4bd 2 storey house into a storage unit was stressful and now paying for the storage is an issue.

Wendy, 40s, Illawarra

We had to borrow money for bond, I had to deep clean and repair the house which caused a chronic pain flare because we couldn't afford help cleaning. We had to move everything ourselves in car trips because we couldn't afford movers, and we didn't get our bond back at the end of it. It cost us thousands.

Sam, 40s, Blue Mountains

[The impact of the eviction was] terribly hard - with only having one part time worker and 1 carers pension to try and find money for moving costs, rental bonds and rent in advance.

Lauren, 40s, Central Tablelands

Makes it impossible to get ahead and save money when you're constantly having to move every 12 months. Also very hard on kids having to constantly move schools.

Dave, 30s, Sydney North West

Ongoing financial strain was identified by respondents as a common consequence, with many renters reporting they accumulated significant debt due to relocation expenses, including moving costs, and cleaning fees.

We had to liquidate all savings and borrow to move.

Nova, 50s, Inner West

Massive credit card debt to be able to pay for cleaning/moving expenses while having cash on hand for a new bond.

Sam, 30s, Inner Sydney

I had to borrow money to be able to come up with bond, rent, removalist, cleaning, which I still haven't finished paying.

Amanda, 50s, Hunter

I had to take out a loan to cover the bond & 2 weeks rent in advance.

Theresa, 50s, Central Coast

The whole move cost north of \$5000 at a time when I couldn't afford it. I had to ask my family for help.

Katie, 20s, Eastern suburbs

[The eviction caused] a financial burden from which I haven't quite recovered.

Laura, 40s, Inner Sydney

So expensive to move. Really hit hard - the moving costs, double rent for a period, so much time taken off to get stuff done. New appliances ... all those costs add up. It takes you a long time to recover as a family.

Katia, 40s, South West Sydney

Instances of landlords refusing to return bond money illustrate the unequal power dynamics at the point of eviction and the financial strain imposed on renters.

They refused to give the bond back so we had no money at all to move.

Jordan, 50s, North Western Sydney

The agent of the old place refused to give the bond back unless we left the place sparkling and in showroom quality, much better than we found it.

Joanna, 30s, North Shore

Agents seem to always look for something so they can take money from the bond. Not being able to transfer a bond from one property to another means having to find bond plus 2 weeks rent in advance (6 weeks rent) in a short time period.

Lee, 60s, Mid North Coast

Renters also frequently discussed the ongoing strain caused by significantly increased rent at new properties.

The biggest financial impact was that we had to move to a place with higher rent. This has had a significant, ongoing impact on my and my household's finances.

Basia, 30s, Inner West

18 months on from eviction we are paying 50% more for a similar house.

Petra, 40s, Inner Sydney

The rental property market had gone crazy and everything comparable was more than double what I'd been paying. Lifestyle gone, had to suddenly work a lot harder and longer just to pay rent, and have any hope of maintaining a life near what I used to have.

Robert, 60s, Western Sydney

Some renters faced challenges balancing work obligations with the demands of house hunting and relocation.

I had to take time off work to view potential rentals and then to move. It was really stressful.

Amanda, 50s, Hunter

I was searching for jobs at the time and had to surrender that to solve my precarious housing situation.

Kia, 20s, Lower North Shore

Impact of eviction? Developed PTSD to the point of such fear, [I was] unable to work & [faced] loss of income.

Carter, 50s, Northern Beaches

Loss of wages [as I was] severely distressed and depressed, anxiety and panicking.

Emma, 40s, Inner West

As a business owner, being homeless affected everything. We had no home and the real risk of losing our livelihood.

Rose, 60s, Northern Rivers

It impacted us terribly! It was impossible for us to find a place nearby again as rents were heaps more, and we had to move hours away and quit jobs to do so.

Francesca, 50s, South Coast

The eviction came at a time where I was pregnant and unable to work so I had to move house while pregnant, right after Christmas, at a time where I was on bedrest and lost my casual employment.

Bea, 30s, Western Sydney

[It was] extremely stressful trying to find a home for a single person at an affordable price in eastern suburbs. It impacted my ability to teach my students. I needed to take days off viewing places etc

Eva, 30s, Inner West

A number of renters reported they feared the 'no grounds eviction' may put them at risk of homelessness, or had actually pushed them into homelessness.

I understand it is their property but when you apply daily for 4/5 properties [every week] for nearly 6 months you start worrying you are headed for living in a car. It is not a nice feeling at all.

Avery, 30s, Illawarra

I was homeless.

Jai, 30s, Central Coast

Ended up living in a hotel and losing all my furniture.

Rebecca, 50s, Central Coast

[The concern about] possible homelessness caused significant family stress and anxiety.

Faith, 50s, Illawarra

It has caused me terrible stress, anxiety and severe insomnia as I worry whether I will be able to find somewhere to live before I have to move out. I'm terrified of being made homeless.

Stephen, 60s, Blue Mountains

I haven't been able to find another place because of the housing shortage and the real estate bad mouthing me. I have had to stay with church friends.

Brian, 60s, Western Sydney

CASE STUDY:

Bri's story

Brianna and her wife used to share a two-bedroom apartment with another pair of roommates in Dulwich Hill. When they first moved in the place wasn't perfectly maintained, to say the least. The real estate agent took 117 photos of various defects, maintenance issues and existing damage to the property when the condition report was compiled at the beginning of the lease. Nevertheless, Brianna and the others liked their rental. The apartment was in a small building of 8 flats, conveniently located near buses and local shops.

Things started to turn for the worse three years into their tenure. First, a newly appointed real estate agent placed the household on a fixed-term lease and increased their rent by 19%. Then, in the spring of 2023 an eviction notice came. The note arrived via email, backdated three weeks, and with no explanation or reason for the eviction provided.

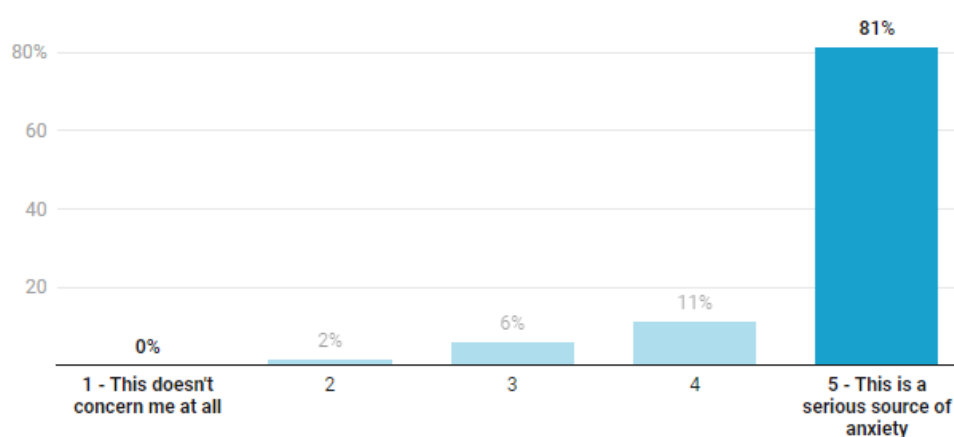
Brianna and her flatmates were surprised and unsettled. A feeling made worse when it became clear that theirs was not the only household asked to leave. The whole building, all eight flats, as well as two other buildings in their street, were all evicted at the same time. It seemed the same real estate agency who managed their property was in charge of other units in the area as well, and all residents were being treated the same way.

Suddenly a portion of a small neighbourhood had several groups of newly evicted people looking for new homes in the area. With the competition for already scarce apartments made even greater, Brianna and her flatmates had to split up to attend all available inspections and rush to secure a new home. The group cleared out their savings to pay the bond on a place in Ashfield, not far from where they used to live. The new flat is smaller than their Dulwich Hill unit, but well maintained and, most importantly, well priced. Meanwhile, their old apartment was released two weeks after Brianna and her household left, for \$140 more weekly in rent and seemingly without any improvements to the standard of the property.

Impacts on health and well being

Over 90% of renters told us that the possibility of being forced to move without being given a reason was a source of anxiety for them, with over 80% identifying it as a serious source of anxiety. This corresponds with previous research on the impact of eviction, which also found that where a renter had personal experience of a 'no grounds' eviction this substantially increased the likelihood and seriousness of concern reported.¹

Respondents were asked - Is the possibility of having to move without being given a reason a source of anxiety for you? (n=118)



Renters in the survey shared that the eviction process often triggered significant emotional distress and anxiety, and had strained family relationships. They reported their stress levels intensified during the search for new housing, particularly in a competitive rental market. Renters struggled to balance house hunting with work and family responsibilities, with many experiencing sleep disturbances and anxiety-related health issues.

[The emotional impact of the eviction was] extremely negative, distressing and stressful.

Rachel, 20s, Inner Sydney

I did not see how I could possibly find or afford somewhere else close to where I'd built my life, community, friends, family work - no hope, no solution, no home - soul destroying after 13 years in the same tenancy, 30 years in the same neighbourhood. It took a long time to pull myself together to try and find a way

¹ The 2019 report, *Lives Turned Upside Down*, found 74.6% of renters with experience of a 'no grounds' eviction identified the possibility of eviction as a 'serious source of anxiety', compared with 52.7% of renters with no experience of 'no grounds' evictions. See Tenants' Union of NSW (2019), [Lives Turned Upside Down](#). Accessed 09/04/2024

through - it all seemed too much and insurmountable.

Robert, 60s, Western Sydney

A no grounds eviction was one of the most stressful experiences of my life. While I have found a new home, I am still a renter - I live in constant fear that I will receive another no grounds eviction.

Lorena, 40s, Inner West

The ongoing impact on mental health of the eviction can be profound, with several respondents mentioning the eviction had exacerbated existing health conditions and triggered mental health issues such as anxiety, panic attacks and deep depression.

It triggered a relapse of my anxiety disorder and my children still ask to move back to the area, however with the cost of living that's no longer possible. Extreme stress.

Bea, 30s, Western Sydney

It absolutely made my disability worse, and I have not been able to get proper rest knowing that I can be asked to move any minute. It doesn't matter if they give us 1 month or 3 months notice, it's the fact that I don't get a choice in the matter. The anxiety of being served another notice is like a low dull pain at the back of my brain 24/7, if my stress levels were a 2 before this, it's now a 5 constantly. It's so awful.

Talia, 30s, Sydney North West

Renters described feeling constantly on edge, expressing they now are acutely aware of their ongoing lack of stability because of being a renter.

I panic every time I get an email, text or phone call from real estate.

Mai, 30s, Southern Sydney

I'm still scared of eviction again, so I still don't feel at home in our new house, two years on. I have a lot of nightmares about being evicted and losing my kids, pets, and possessions. It was extremely stressful. We were packing with nowhere to go, our applications for rentals were being ignored by real estate agencies, and the sudden lack of security sent my mental health down the toilet. Two years on I'm still terrified of becoming homeless with little warning.

Sam, 40s, Blue Mountains

Stress, anxiety, constant fear of being homeless. I've felt so much closer to the possibility of being homeless since I got evicted under no grounds. Plus it felt really unsafe in any rentals going forward since they could just ask us to leave at any time it felt like. Without any reason and without any adequate notice.

Talia, 30s, Sydney North West

I have been evicted twice since then with no grounds and have seriously considered suicide both times. I am now in a relationship with a home owner and put up with things that border on domestic violence because I am so afraid of being suddenly homeless again.

Kylie, 40s, Illawarra

As a single mum it is terrifying. I do work, but with a single income it feels very scary not knowing if you will have to move and if you could find another rental you can afford.

Juliette, 40s, Hunter

It's a crippling, hopeless feeling.

Ben, 40s, Hunter

Renters' responses to this survey tallies with other research on the impact of housing insecurity on renters' mental health. Recent research undertaken by Ang Li et al has identified that for renters to close the gap between renters' and homeowners' mental health, they require around 5-6 years of stability in their rental property.² Unfortunately, very few renters are lucky enough to remain in their rented home for that long.

Disruption for family and strain on relationships

The emotional toll of 'no grounds' evictions is evident, with respondents describing feelings of stress, panic, and even the breakup of relationships. Many described the impact in terms of the strain it put on their household, and their family.

My now ex-husband was working full time and I was studying full time. The impacts lasted for years [...] It impacted our health, the kids' health, my studies, and our marriage. I try not to think about how differently things might've been if we all felt stable.

Cathy, 50s, Inner Sydney

Worst news ever. Crumbled my relationship and broke up my family.

Rachel, 30s, Western Suburbs

The impact of the eviction? Total panic and my relationship ended within 1 year.

John, 60s, Inner Sydney

Damaged my relationship with my son very badly and I've had serious anxiety about being made suddenly homeless ever since.

Kylie, 40s, Illawarra

It was our home. My daughter ended up moving from the family home as she was not happy with the new one.

Bonnie, 40s, Central Coast

Our child developed emotional problems as a result of the trauma of losing our home the way we did.

Alina, 40s, South West Sydney

² Ang Li, Emma Baker, Rebecca Bentley (2022), 'Understanding the mental health effects of instability in the private rental sector: A longitudinal analysis of a national cohort' in *Social Science and Medicine*, Volume 296, See [Science Direct](#), Accessed 28 March 2024

The pressure of finding a new rental & the bond money ended my relationship.

Theresa, 50s, Central Coast

It caused a massive amount of tension in my family and caused family fights.

Katie, 20s, Eastern suburbs

The disruption caused by the eviction is particularly significant for those households who are forced to relocate to unfamiliar neighbourhoods. This often required changes in schools and daycare facilities, and other community services and supports.

I had to move to an area out of my children's school catchment area and as a result they were in separate schools for 3 years until the local finally let my daughter in. My children lost connection to the area they grew up in for 12 years.

Bea, 30s, Western Sydney

[I feel] very stressed, my children have just started a new school 4 weeks prior so this [eviction] is very disruptive & unsettling for 2 boys, especially as one just started high school & is neurodivergent.

Grace, 40s, Inner Sydney

[I'm worried] that I will not be able to live in the area that I have built my support networks, community and friendships, thus isolating me and ostracising me from the community I was living in.

Stephen, 60s, Blue Mountains

CASE STUDY:

Faizan's story

Faizan and his partner Emma had lived in a unit in Ryde with their three cats and pet fish for approximately 14 months when they were issued with a 'no grounds' eviction notice. From the beginning, the apartment had visible water damage on the floorboards but over time, and with the heavy rains of the 2022 La Nina summer, the condition of the floor deteriorated further. The floor around the leak and near the balcony door frame began to warp, leading to some of the boards rising and creating a sharp trip hazard. Still, Faizan's calls to the real estate agent for repairs went unanswered.

After an incident that left him with a serious foot injury sustained from walking barefoot on the floor of his apartment, Faizan decided to call the real estate agent and demand the floor be attended to. A tradesperson was sent out to fix the issue. The repairs made included only superficial trimming of the raised floorboard and taping it down. The source of the issue, however, remained unaddressed.

The winter weather and more rain added to the damage and created perfect conditions for mould to spread. As a result, Faizan and Emma no longer felt comfortable walking barefoot in their home. They also stopped inviting friends over, embarrassed by the look of the blackened sticky floor in their flat.

After enduring these conditions and a lack of support from their landlord and real estate agent during this time, Faizan and Emma received a notice of an increase in rent from \$850 to \$920 a week. Their response was to accept the increase under the condition that the requested repairs finally be done.

When no work was carried out, Faizan filed a complaint with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. A week later, the couple received a no grounds eviction notice.

Further negotiations and pleading with the real estate and strata have not been fruitful - Faizan and Emma are being forced to leave their home despite not yet having secured a new rental.

An unfair and unjustified eviction

Many renters expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of adequate protection against 'no grounds' evictions, sharing that they felt the eviction they had experienced was unfair and unjustified. They described having been good tenants, paying rent on time, and maintaining the property adequately, yet still facing eviction without valid reasons.

I have been evicted on no grounds 5 times in my life, at one point 3 times in 2 years. Only once was due to my actions - retaliatory eviction for seeking my rights by taking an overdue repair to NCAT. Of the other 4 evictions none were my fault - I was a good tenant, always paid my rent on time and gave no trouble - but none of that counted for squat in a rising market.

Robert, 60s, Western Sydney

A number of renters felt their personal circumstances, such as being students or having health issues, may have led to a 'no grounds' eviction served on discriminatory grounds.

I feel they want to evict us [...] because I'm a single parent. I have one son with autism and the other with severe anxiety and have had mini strokes and been ill and cannot work and they think I will not be able to pay more rent ... which I won't.

Linda, 50s, Central West NSW

It was retaliatory due to my complaint about sexual harassment by the landlord.

Marg, 40s, South Coast NSW

No. I was sharing with 2 other uni students and when the property was sold [I was told] the new landlord didn't like leasing to students.

Kylie, 40s, Illawarra

Several renters believed their evictions were a direct response to complaints made to landlords or authorities about property maintenance issues, rent increases, or problems around access without notice. They viewed the evictions as punitive actions to silence dissent or avoid fulfilling landlord responsibilities.

It was horrible, I was having to find a new place immediately after I complained about mould in the house.

Katie, 20s, Eastern suburbs

The last eviction was unjustified and was due to my complaint about black and yellow mould dripping from an internal bedroom roof.

Katherine, 50s, Southern Highlands

[I] kept the place immaculate, [then I] asked for the old hot water heater to be replaced as it was broken and was evicted.

Leanne, 60s, Central Coast

They tried two two illegal things which we pushed back on, they then gave rent increase, withdrew then evicted us. It gave me anxiety attacks and I was unable to work properly due to stress.

Frank, 40s, Northern Suburbs

Many understood the eviction to have been served for financial gain, so that the landlord could increase rent without challenge from their sitting tenant.

One eviction I was told on the phone the owner was selling. I ended up two doors away. They repainted and fixed items I had asked for then re-leased the property for \$150 more a week. Real estate would not admit she told me it would be sold.

Dee, 50s, Illawarra

[The rented home I was evicted from] was back on the rental listing within 2 weeks of moving out for \$100 more a week than I paid. The landlord had tried to increase my rent for the second time within a 12 month period, when I questioned it I was given notice.

Juliette, 40s, Hunter

We were good tenants for 15 years. A new property manager at the managing agents told the owners she could triple the rent. And she did. I was paying \$250, new rent [after we were evicted was] \$770 a week.

Rose, 60s, Northern Rivers

Overall, renters expressed a sense of injustice and frustration with the lack of transparency and fairness surrounding 'no grounds' evictions.

Power imbalance between renter and landlord

Respondents highlighted the imbalance of power between landlords and renters. They described feeling powerless and disrespected in interactions with landlords and real estate agents, who wield significant control over their housing situations.

I'm exhausted from moving - and worrying about maybe moving - and worrying about complaining about the aircon breaking, the bathroom leaking or the faulty lighting as they just threaten to put the rent up.

Petra, 40s, Inner Sydney

You are in a perpetual state of worry about the future. You feel powerless and are treated as less worthy. Agents are likely to treat you poorly due to a power imbalance. It stops you from complaining or reporting issues, trying to keep the peace so you don't upset the apple cart.

We are now on edge about our current rental, we don't know if we will get evicted or if the landlord will increase the rent. We don't have a lot of power because the rental market is worse than ever.

Lucy, 50s, Blue Mountains

The powerlessness is awful. I loathe the feeling I could lose my home on a whim of the [landlord].

Anika, 50s, Northern Beaches

Every 6 months I worry that the lease may not be renewed. As a single person who works casually, I won't be able to afford a new home or the cost of moving.

Faith, 50s, Illawarra

As an older woman living alone I have limited options to ever feel safe at home again.

Dee, 50s, Illawarra

I live in constant fear of homelessness and not having stable housing each time the lease is due to end.

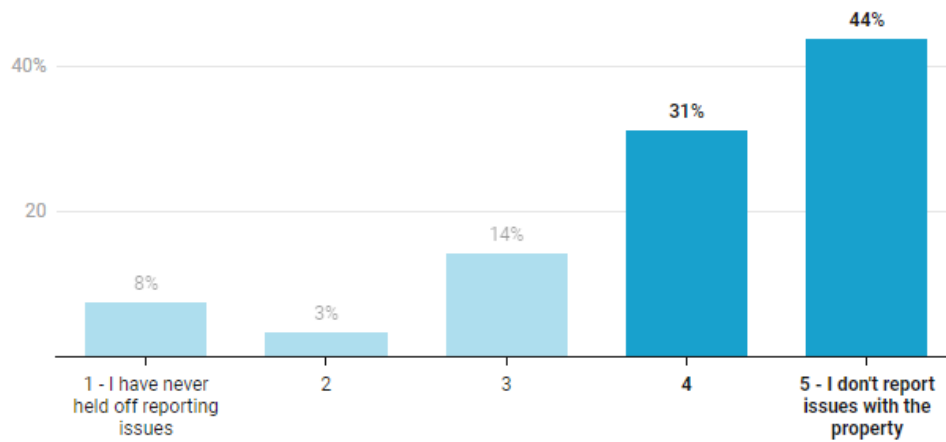
Lorena, 40s, Inner West

Renters expressed concerns about privacy violations by landlords and real estate agents, as well as dissatisfaction with property conditions including issues like dampness, mould, and inadequate heating. They shared that a lack of responsiveness from property managers added to their stress and sense of vulnerability.

Despite these general concerns with standards in rental properties renters did not feel confident addressing these with their landlords or agents. Around three quarters (74.8%) of all respondents told us they had held back from reporting repair issues, with 43.7% reporting they did not report issues with the property. This corresponds with previous research undertaken on the impact of 'no grounds' evictions on renters' confidence in asserting their rights.³

³ The 2019 report, [Lives Turned Upside Down](#), found just over three quarters (77%) of renters have held back from asserting a right or reporting a problem because they worried about receiving a 'no grounds' eviction. See Tenants' Union of NSW (2019), [Lives Turned Upside Down](#), Accessed 09/04/2024

Respondents were asked - Have you held off addressing other issues, because you were worried about the consequences? (n= 119)



Many renters expressed fear of retaliation by eviction from landlords or agents if they asserted their rights.

I feel powerless to ask for repairs because I'm worried they will evict me and I will have nowhere else to go in the current housing crisis.

James, 30s, South West Sydney

I always assume I can't complain about anything or request for anything to be fixed, without the possibility that I'll be evicted for it. It makes me super anxious.

Katie, 20s, Eastern Suburbs

In the current rental market yes, tenants are scared to report maintenance, challenge unfair rental increases or basically do anything that might jeopardise their tenancy. Landlords have tenants over a barrel at the moment.

Lauren, 40s, Central Tablelands

We have been explicitly advised by our landlord not to complain about our massively leaking roof or the tenancy will be ended. Not in writing, so no proof of a retaliatory eviction.

Lisa, 30s, Illawarra

I reported repairs 3 years ago. Nothing has been done. I'm too scared to report them again.

Alex, 40s, Blue Mountains

The house we are in now did not have heating as advertised and we had to hassle the agent for the first 3 months of our new tenancy. Now when we report repairs we worry about annoying the landlord and getting a no grounds notice.

Lucy, 50s, Blue Mountains

This fear leads to unaddressed maintenance problems and a reluctance to negotiate rent increases or challenge unlawful access or other poor behaviour on the part of the landlord or their agent.

Issues are not addressed [because] reporting more would have consequences. Our age as pensioners, and the current costs of renting are worrying. If we get booted, where do we go?

Michael, 70s, South Coast

My partner and I are fearful to report repairs needed at the property due to fears around no grounds evictions. Our current property did not have a fire alarm installed and we felt stressed contacting our real estate/landlord to meet their legal obligations.

Jason, 20s, Eastern Suburbs

I've been terrified of a retaliatory eviction for years. They have threatened it (indirectly) in the past when I have threatened to go to NCAT about issues. I didn't report things, or if I did I let them slide - some for literally nearly a decade because I couldn't handle being evicted. Now I have finally stood up for myself, they have retaliated and sent me a termination notice.

Anna, 30s, Mid North Coast

Last year my rent went up by 43 per cent. I could have tried to negotiate around the hike or gone to the Tribunal. I didn't because I felt there was no point. If I questioned the rent increase, the landlord would have most likely served me with a no grounds eviction notice. If there had been better protections for renters against no grounds evictions in place, I would have exercised my rights in relation to such an unfair rent increase. As things stand, I felt there was really no point.

Gia, 50s, North Shore

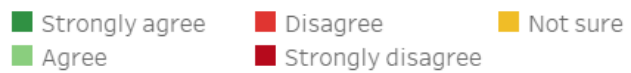
In recent polling research undertaken by Ipsos Public Affairs for the Tenants' Union of NSW, landlords reported they consider it to be important that renters feel comfortable reporting repairs.⁴ 88% of landlords polled in this research agreed or strongly agreed that this is important. However, our survey and previous research with renters demonstrates there is a clear gap between this aspiration and the current experience for renters, which can be independent of a particular owner's action or view.⁵ The frustrations reported by renters are echoed by the owners in the Ipsos Polling Research who also agreed (80%) that the way some landlords or agents behave creates an unfair perception of landlords generally.⁶

⁴ Tenants' Union of NSW (2024), [Briefing on Ipsos Public Affairs: Reasonable Grounds Reform](#), March 2024, Accessed 09/04/24

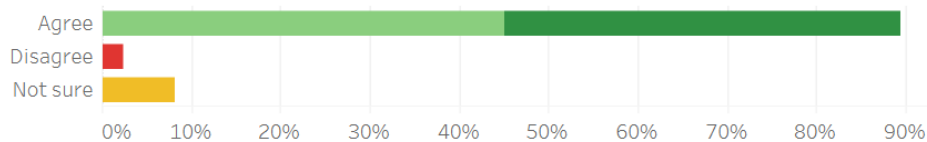
⁵ Australian Productivity Commission (2019) [Vulnerable Private Renters: Evidence and Options](#); National Shelter, CHOICE and the National Association of Tenants Organisations (2018) [Disrupted: The Consumer Experience of Renting in Australia](#); Choice, National Shelter, National Association of Tenants' Organisations (2017) [Unsettled: Life in Australia's Private Rental Market](#); Stephen Rowley, Amity James, [The Private Rental Sector in Australia](#); Tenants' Union of NSW (2019), [Lives Turned Upside Down](#), Accessed 09/04/24

⁶ Tenants' Union of NSW (2024), [Briefing on Ipsos Public Affairs: Reasonable Grounds Reform](#), March 2024, Accessed 09/04/24

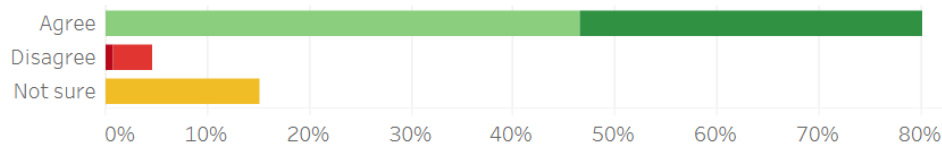
Landlords were asked – As an investor to what extent do you agree with the following statements (n=299):



It is important to me that my tenants are comfortable raising maintenance issues with the property



The way some landlords or agents behave creates an unfair perception of landlords generally



What renters want changed

Renters identified the need for rental reforms to end 'no grounds' evictions.

There needs to be a valid reason and they [landlords] shouldn't be able to re-let it within a certain amount of time. They shouldn't be able to say that family want to move in, and [then] be able to re-let it.

Wendy, 40s, Illawarra

It should be illegal for the owner of a property to kick people out, only to put the rent up with new tenants and new real estate.

Francesca, 50s, South Coast

This shouldn't be an option for eviction, period.

Nate, 20s, Inner West

Doesn't matter if you are in a periodic, or in a fixed term lease - everyone who rents needs security and stability. I'm really worried if they leave the option open for 'no grounds' or no reason eviction for those in fixed terms, they'll simply move all renters in NSW on to short fixed terms. Is that really going to be an improvement?!

Katia, 40s, South West Sydney

It [no grounds eviction] should be removed, and a valid reason given with reasonable time to find another place.

Simon, 50s, Western Suburbs

No grounds evictions should be abolished or landlords needs to pay compensation if they break a lease just as the tenants do.

Tom, 40s, Western Suburbs

Additionally, they discussed the need for stronger consequences for landlords/agents who engage in retaliatory behaviour, and strong compliance and enforcement measures.

It's unfair real estate agencies can even break the law and their agency requirements regularly and there is almost no consequence or impact to them.

Rachel, 20s, Inner Sydney

Removing no grounds evictions will be a good start, but the LL/agents need to be held accountable if they were to give a reason and later retracted it. Otherwise it'll just be useless because they can just make stuff up and there's absolutely nobody to keep them accountable.

Talia, 30s, Sydney North West

More broadly, they called for strengthened renter rights and increased accountability for landlords to help address the systemic issues contributing to housing instability and financial hardship among renters.

Improving the relationship between renters and landlords

Renters' responses in our survey identifying the changes needed, align closely with the findings of the *Ipsos Polling Research: Reasonable Grounds Reforms*. The Ipsos Polling Research found renters (88%) overwhelmingly support reforms to introduce new reasonable grounds for ending a tenancy and remove 'no grounds' eviction provisions from NSW renting laws.

The ability to end a tenancy without genuine or transparent reason contributes heavily to the prevailing feeling of distrust that underpins many renters' relationship with their landlords/agents. Eviction reforms, among others required to strengthen and modernise tenancy laws, will help transform the relationship between renters and landlords. A greater level of trust and good faith between the two, will mean concerns such as repairs and maintenance issues are raised by renters with their landlords more easily.

The Ipsos Polling Research also suggests landlords are aware of the need for a recalibration in their relationship with renters, with a clear majority of

landlord respondents (77%) supporting reform of evictions to implement 'reasonable grounds'.⁷

Eviction reforms would also implement a more transparent way of working for property managers, alleviating a significant point of stress and a behaviour that contributes to a documented lack of trust in the profession. Property managers find themselves in a dual role both acting for and advising their investor client, which can create a perception of influence which may or may not exist. The ability for the agent to act with genuine and transparent reasoning, especially around the eviction of a renter in good standing, reduces the risk that the perception of the agent will be a negative one, and will help the industry establish a better reputation more broadly.

⁷ The *Ipsos Polling Research: Reasonable Grounds Reforms* results differed from responses to the recent NSW government formal consultation, *Improving NSW Rental Laws*, undertaken in 2023. This is not a surprising result as respondents to consultation processes, renters and landlords alike, are generally those who are most engaged and motivated. They may be responding based on prepared material. In contrast, the Ipsos Polling Research was undertaken with a broader sample of respondents from the community and we suggest is more representative of broader views. See NSW Fair Trading (2024), [Improving NSW Rental Laws: Public Engagement Summary Report](#), Accessed 09/04/24

Conclusion

'No grounds' evictions have wide-ranging impacts on renters' lives, affecting their financial stability, mental and physical health, family relationships, and sense of security. The experiences of 'no grounds' shared by renters for this report underscore the urgent need for rental reforms to better safeguard renters' rights and protect against unnecessary, unfair eviction. As one renter expressed eloquently, it is not just the financial and emotional impact of eviction that is hard, but all the missed opportunities wrapped up with housing instability:

There is so much that I could have achieved if I didn't have to deal with moving all the time.

Ella, 60s, Central Coast

By amplifying the voices of impacted renters, this report aims to inform policy discussions and advocate for eviction reforms to renting laws that prioritise ensuring renters have greater housing stability and peace of mind.