

The Clarion Index 2019

Summary findings from Clarion's annual behavioural insights survey



CLARION
HOUSING GROUP



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FOREWORD

Welcome to the Clarion Index 2019.

At Clarion we manage 125,000 properties across the country, offering a safe and secure home to over a third of a million people.

We want to create places that people want to live in and be responsive to the changing needs of residents. To do this we need to know what life is like for them, how government policies are affecting them and what their hopes are for the future. We produce this insight report each year which tracks what is important to residents, so we can ensure our services are properly designed around their needs and expectations.

To ensure our findings are robust, we commission an experienced agency, registered with the Market Research Society, to contact a randomly selected representative sample of 2,000 residents to ask about their lives, community and opinions in a 15 minute telephone survey. Their responses are used to guide decision-making at all levels in Clarion so we pay close attention to what they say.

We have been running this survey since 2012, meaning Clarion now has eight years of demonstrable customer engagement and trend data across a

number of key measures, forming the comprehensive picture given in this report. Over the years, findings have been used to shape our services and identify support needs, to target initiatives like our digital champions or to evidence our impact and help us win funding bids.

Our expertise in this area means we are well-placed to promote the use of robust customer insight for service improvement beyond Clarion. That's why we have piloted the 'Clarion Question Bank' with other leading Housing Associations. By encouraging other Housing Associations to use the same questions and comparable methodology as we do in the Index, we hope to build a detailed evidence base and benchmarking data across the wider sector.

Back to this year's results; as is often the case, the picture for residents is mixed, with community and wellbeing measures continuing to offer encouragement, while the financial hardship indicators make sober reading.

We learned from conversations with residents around the Social Housing Green Paper that many still believe there is a stigma attached to living in social housing. But that's not how Clarion residents feel about their own neighbourhoods which they overwhelmingly consider to be good places to live. The creation of attractive well-designed spaces for people through place-making is central to our development and regeneration plans, so it is encouraging that this year's survey found that community spirit continues to be strong among Clarion residents - most feel a sense of belonging (83%) and talk to their neighbours regularly (75%).

Of all the wellbeing indicators, feeling in control of what happens in our lives is one of the most important - the



We want to create places that people want to live in and be responsive to the changing needs of residents.



HACT social value calculator affords it a value equivalent to £12,470 a year per person. Therefore I'm delighted to see that, despite us all living through times of great insecurity, 87% of Clarion residents say they feel in control of what happens in their lives.

Finding work has long been championed as the best way to escape poverty and our charitable foundation, Clarion Futures, works closely with residents to support them into sustainable employment and in 2018/9 did so for over 4,000 residents. However, we're finding that in-work poverty is increasing, and that working families in particular have been negatively impacted by Welfare Reforms. Many families in Clarion homes are facing financial hardship, despite at least one adult being in paid employment. We offer a range of support for residents facing financial difficulties - from welfare benefits assistance and tenancy support to money guidance for dealing with debt and provision of white goods where needed - but we cannot, and should not, be a substitute for employers paying proper wages.

Charities have predicted a sharp rise in child poverty and evidence of this is already being seen. Over half (65%) of

Clarion residents aged between 18 and 44 have dependent children living with them and one in ten parents used a food bank in the last year while 17% went without food at least once. A quarter of families run out of money before the end of the week or month, and a further third only have enough for the essentials. This is why we are exploring more ways to support working age households with children.

Many of our softer measures around household finances - having contents insurance, putting money aside each month, going without heating - are moving in the wrong direction for all groups. This lack of financial resilience among residents is troubling, particularly given the uncertainty surrounding the country at the moment.

In this report last year I commended the work of staff across the whole organisation - including housing management, repairs teams, customer services, communications and the Clarion Futures Money team - for their work to raise awareness of Universal Credit and the support available. They continue to do a fantastic job. However the scale of the challenge is becoming clearer as more residents move onto the new benefit. Our survey found that despite

the support provided, some Universal Credit recipients are struggling to make ends meet: They were significantly more likely to have taken out a payday loan, be unable to replace broken electrical items and to have gone without heating or food in the last year than people not on Universal Credit. It is hard to imagine just how much worse individual situations might have been without this cross-departmental effort which is assisting over 1,000 households a year.

As well as understanding how residents are managing financially we ask about their digital activity because this helps us to recognise where additional support may be needed and shows us where interventions are working. I'm pleased that this year, more residents than ever are able to access the internet - enabling them to connect with friends and family, access good deals and apply for new jobs. Clarion Futures Digital has been working specifically with working age residents who were not online and this appears to have paid dividends, with the largest increases in digital inclusion among those aged 45-64.

In addition to responding to residents and managing our properties well, we know that the housing crisis requires resolute

action. We are on target to complete 1,742 new homes in this financial year and the majority of Clarion residents (77%) agree that it is important that we do this. Renters in particular are supportive of building more social rented homes in their area.

As the largest housing association with a national presence we are uniquely positioned to ensure our residents are living in safe, secure homes that they can afford. In the coming months, as the country faces significant political and economic uncertainty, we will do all we can to support our staff to continue to deliver the homes and services that are needed.

Clare Miller
Clarion Housing Group Chief Executive

KEY FINDINGS

84%

of residents agree their neighbourhood is a good place to live

81%

of residents are now online; of these 78% prefer to use their smartphones

75%

of residents talk to their neighbours regularly

67%

agree there is a need for more social rented homes in their area and 77% think it is important that Clarion build more new homes

15%

of residents have gone without food because they couldn't afford it, and 8% have used a food bank

COMMUNITY & WELLBEING



How you feel about where you live impacts on your health and wellbeing – the happier you are in your environment, the better you feel.

Clarion asks several questions each year to understand how residents feel about their neighbourhoods and we are pleased to see consistently positive results. An encouraging 84% of residents said they are satisfied with their neighbourhood and the same proportion feel their neighbourhood is a good place to live.

Humans are social creatures at heart, and a sense of belonging is fundamental to our wellbeing. Reassuringly, 83% of Clarion residents say they feel they belong in their neighbourhood.

Our older residents, particularly those aged 75 and over, are most likely to feel their neighbourhood is a good place to live

(90%) and are significantly more likely to report that they feel a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood than younger residents (81% of 18-34 year olds).

Feelings of belonging may be linked to feeling connected with neighbours, either through talking to them regularly, volunteering, or taking part in local community groups.

The percentage of our residents who volunteer once a month or more has remained steady since last year (12% to 11%). Perhaps **surprisingly**, among Clarion residents, we see that men are significantly more likely than women to volunteer once a month or more. There is also a clear difference between age groups, with those in middle age significantly more likely to volunteer (age 34-54, 14%) than younger and older residents (age 18-34: 10% and 55+: 9%).

Some of those less likely to volunteer regularly (women and younger residents) are still finding connections as they are most likely to attend social or community groups, such as parent and baby or church groups. Both the very youngest and very oldest residents are significantly more likely to do this than those in the middle age brackets.

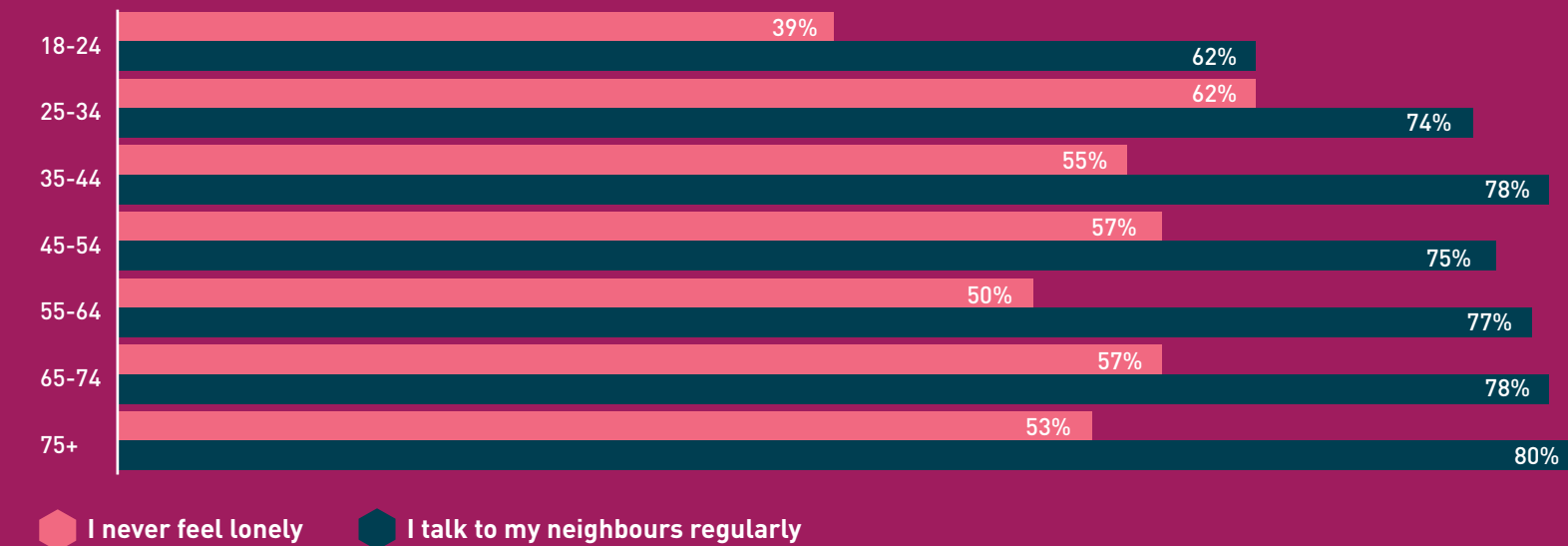
Each year we're happy to see that consistently around three quarters (75%) of our residents say they regularly talk with their neighbours. The percentage doing so increases steadily with age: our youngest residents are significantly less likely to talk regularly to their neighbours than every other age group. There is remarkably little difference between men and women, or between the regions in which we operate. Reinforcing the idea that being

connected is linked to community and wellbeing, residents who regularly talk to their neighbours are significantly more likely to say they belong in their neighbourhood, and be satisfied with it.

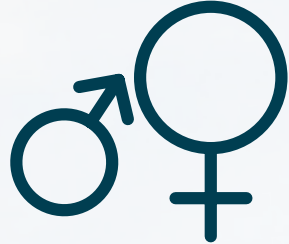
Loneliness can have a strong negative effect on our lives and health. Generally, according to **ONS figures**, loneliness tends to decrease with increasing age and affects women more than men. People who do not feel that they belong in their neighbourhood report feeling lonely most often.

Fig 1: Percentage of residents who talk to their neighbours regularly, never feel lonely, by age

Base: All respondents (n2000)



Humans are social creatures at heart, and a sense of belonging is fundamental to our wellbeing.



Women are significantly more likely to say they feel in control than men (89% vs 83%)



People in work are more likely to say they feel in control than those who are not (91% vs 84%)



Clarion Futures work closely with communities and community organisations to ensure that young people have safe places to go.



This year residents were asked how often they feel lonely, so this measures the frequency of loneliness, rather than the depth of that feeling.

Interestingly, The Index survey found the inverse of ONS figures, with male residents more likely to report feeling lonely than their female counterparts. The **Community Lives Survey** reports that 6% of men and 7% of women always or often feel lonely, but 12% of Clarion’s male residents and 9% of female ones reported this. Our age group findings are also out of step with the national statistics, as there is little difference between the age groups in terms of people saying they feel lonely (often or always). However, Clarion’s youngest householders aged 18-24 were the least likely to never feel lonely (39%) reflecting similar findings nationally. 5% of residents say they always feel lonely and in our data some of the strongest differentiators in this measure were presence of children or disability. Those with dependent children in the home are less likely to always feel lonely (3%) than those who do not (6%); and disabled residents are more likely to always feel lonely (9%) than those without (2%). These findings highlight the importance of the community work of our charitable foundation, Clarion Futures, as well as the support offered by frontline housing teams to engage residents and help build relationships.

Feeling in control

Feeling in control of what happens in your life is a key driver of wellbeing and is associated with **better health and longevity**.

Women are significantly more likely to say they feel in control than men (89% vs 83%) and people in work are more likely to than those who are not (91% vs 84%). Looking across the age groups, those aged between 45 and 65 are less likely to feel in control (84%) than those in both the older and younger age bands (see figure 2). This C-shape graph tends to be common in **measures of well-being** plotted by age, as levels of life satisfaction and happiness tend to be lowest for those in the middle age bands, after youthful optimism and before rising again with retirement. This may be, at least in part, because in these middle years there are multiple demands to balance such as work, children and elderly parents.

The majority (79%) of long-term ill or disabled residents¹ agree that they feel in control of what happens in their life. However, the fact that it is significantly lower than for those without a long term illness or disability (91%) remains a concern and the gap has not changed over recent years.

Concerns about crime

Over the last year, there has been a rise in the reporting of violent crimes, such as knife crime in UK cities, in the news media. This can make us feel concerned about our own safety, even if we know the actual risk of being a victim of crime is low.

There has been a slight increase in the number of residents who agree that they are worried they might become a victim of a crime (29% in 2017, 27% in 2018, back up to 29% this year) while the proportion of residents who think there is a problem with teenagers hanging around where they live has remained steady at just over a third (35%).

Our very youngest and oldest residents (those aged 18 -24 and 75+) were the least likely to be concerned about being a victim of crime, significantly less so than all other age groups (highest among those aged 35-44 at 33%). Geographically, residents in London are significantly more likely to be concerned than those living elsewhere (34% vs 26%), likely **linked to the recent rise in knife crime and related media coverage**.

Clarion Futures work closely with communities and community organisations to ensure that young people have safe places to go though our community centres and by providing funding for youth provisions. Clarion Futures also run a flagship youth programme across communities - Community and National Ambassadors - which aims to change perceptions of young people, maximise their opportunities and give them a genuine voice. Some of these teams of young people have looked specifically at the impact that violence has had on their lives

Fig 2: Percentage agreeing with the statement “I feel I am in control of what happens in my life”, by age and key demographics

Base: All residents (n2000)

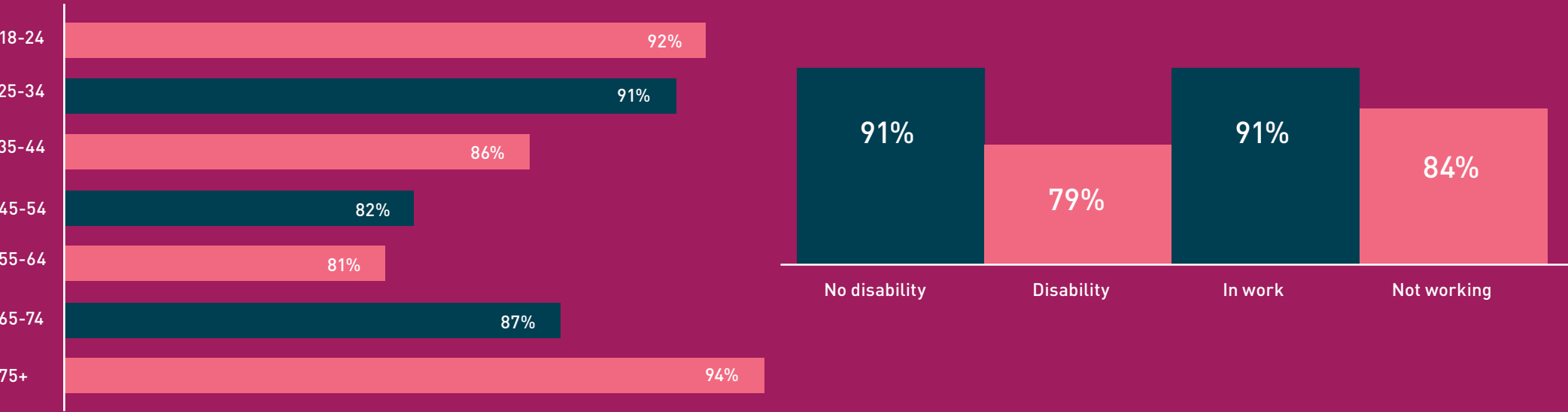
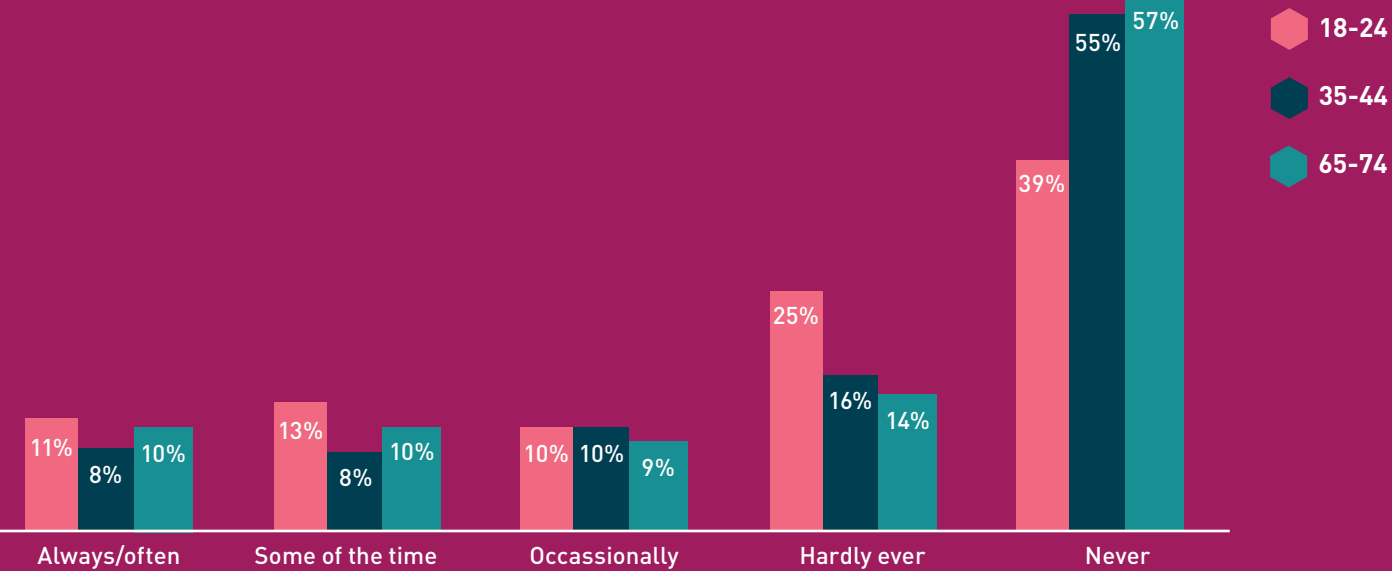


Fig 3: Reported frequency of loneliness in adults, selected age groups

Base: All respondents (n.2000)



87%
of Clarion residents agreed that they feel in control of what happens in their life.

“Taking part in regular physical activity is beneficial to both physical & mental health.”

and this programme has given them a trusted platform to share their stories and aim for social change, while helping them develop valuable skills for the future.

Physical Activity

Research shows that taking part in regular physical activity is beneficial to both physical and mental health.

Over the last few years, inactivity (not taking part in any regular physical activity, including walking) has increased steadily, with 44% of residents now saying they do not take part in any regular activity, up from 29% in 2016. This is a concern for the future health of Clarion residents. In 2019, for the first time, we asked a follow-up question to those who are inactive, to understand why.

Overall, health issues or a disability were the most frequently given reasons for not being active (41%), with a lack of time coming in second (33%). Looking at those who do not have a disability, the proportion who say they don't have time increases to half, and those who can't carry out regular activity because of their family commitments increases to a quarter.

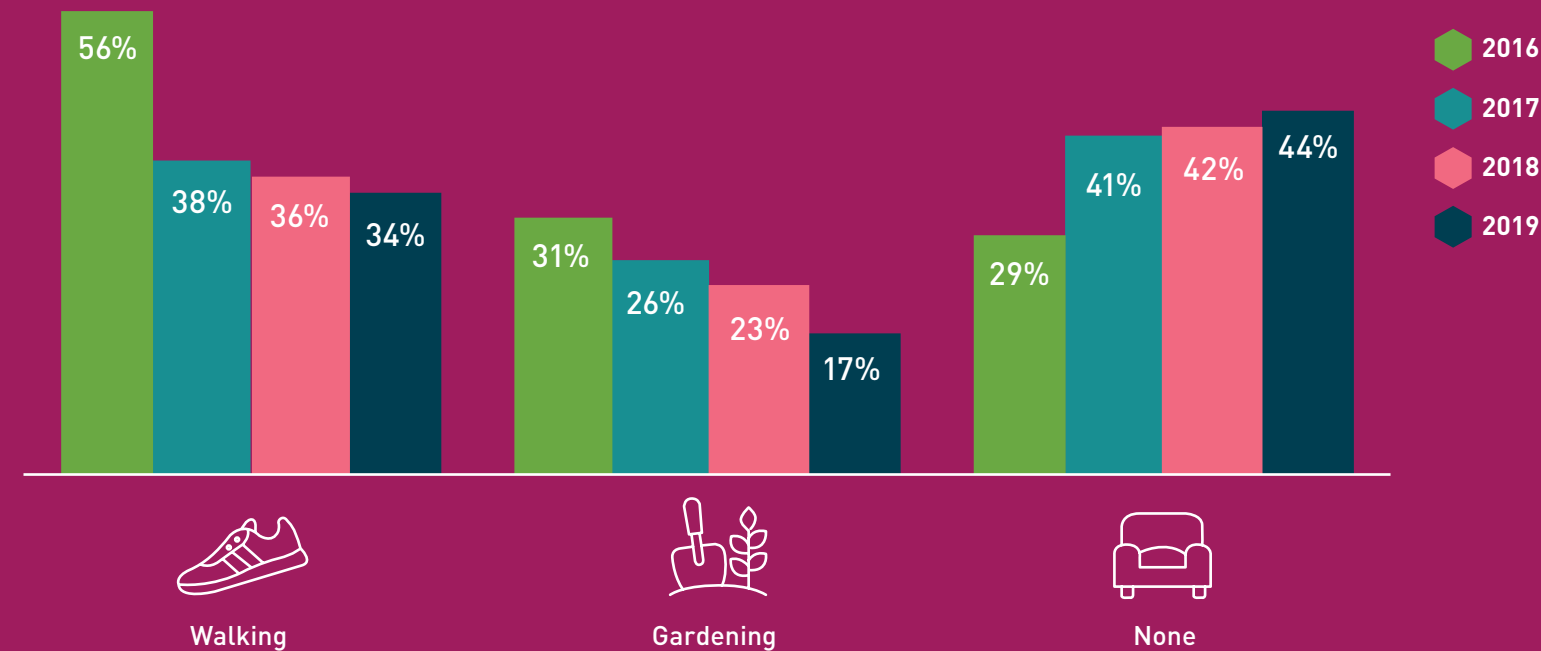
Women are more likely to say that they cannot exercise because of family or childcare commitments than men (18% vs 6%).

Younger people attribute their lack of activity to lack of time (45%), whereas older residents, aged 55 and over, who do not exercise hold a health issue or disability responsible (69%).

Encouraging physical activity among residents is important in combatting and preventing future health issues. Clarion is working in partnership with other housing associations and developers with NHS England to create 'healthy new towns'. This network will prioritise health and wellbeing in the facilities and design of new residential developments and regeneration projects, such as Ebsfleet Garden City in Kent.

Fig 4: Proportion of residents who take part in activities, over time

Base: All respondents (2019, n2000; 2018:n2000, 2017:n2000, 2016:n1000 AS only)



¹ Residents reporting that they consider themselves to have a disability (n704)

LANDLORD SERVICES

As a national housing association working across 171 local authorities, we understand the importance of offering services that meet resident's needs locally. Delivering this involves investing in new technology and new ways of working for our staff.

Clarion is committed to providing a high quality, local offer to our residents. For this to work it is crucial that we maintain the trust of our residents, make it easy for them to access our services and provide them with modern choices of how they interact with us, such as paying their rent.

Accessing our services

Last year fewer residents said they found it easy to access Clarion services than in previous years. We were aware of difficulties in our contact centres, which meant longer waiting times and frustration for some residents. This was a particular concern for those unable to use the internet as an alternative – evidenced by the fact that older residents saw the biggest decline in ease of access.

Last year's results were complex, as the number of residents saying they found it difficult to access service did not increase; the downward movement among those who found it easy was driven by those answering, 'Don't know'. Results also varied substantially by operating region and their distribution suggested it was the impact of new processes yet to bed in.

Significant effort has been made to improve service delivery so this year, it's reassuring to see some of that investment pay off as the proportion of residents finding it easy to access Clarion's services has started to creep back up to 65% from 63% last year. While this is still significantly lower than in 2017 (70%), it is moving in the right direction.

As we saw last year, ease of access varies significantly by operating region. Residents in Clarion's London areas were more likely to report finding it difficult to access our services (24%) compared to other regions (13-21%).

In previous years, we noted that people in the central age groups (aged 35-64) were least likely to say they found it easy to access Clarion's services, observing that this might be because they are less able to phone when the contact centres are open. This year has seen a significant rise in younger residents also finding it difficult to access services, in particular those aged 25-34 (from 14% to 26%). However, the youngest group of residents – 18-24, 99% of whom are online, mainly using smartphones – are most likely to find it easy to access our services. This shows that the digital improvements being made are starting to benefit those who are confident online, but work remains to be done around more traditional channels and increasing digital confidence among the wider resident population.

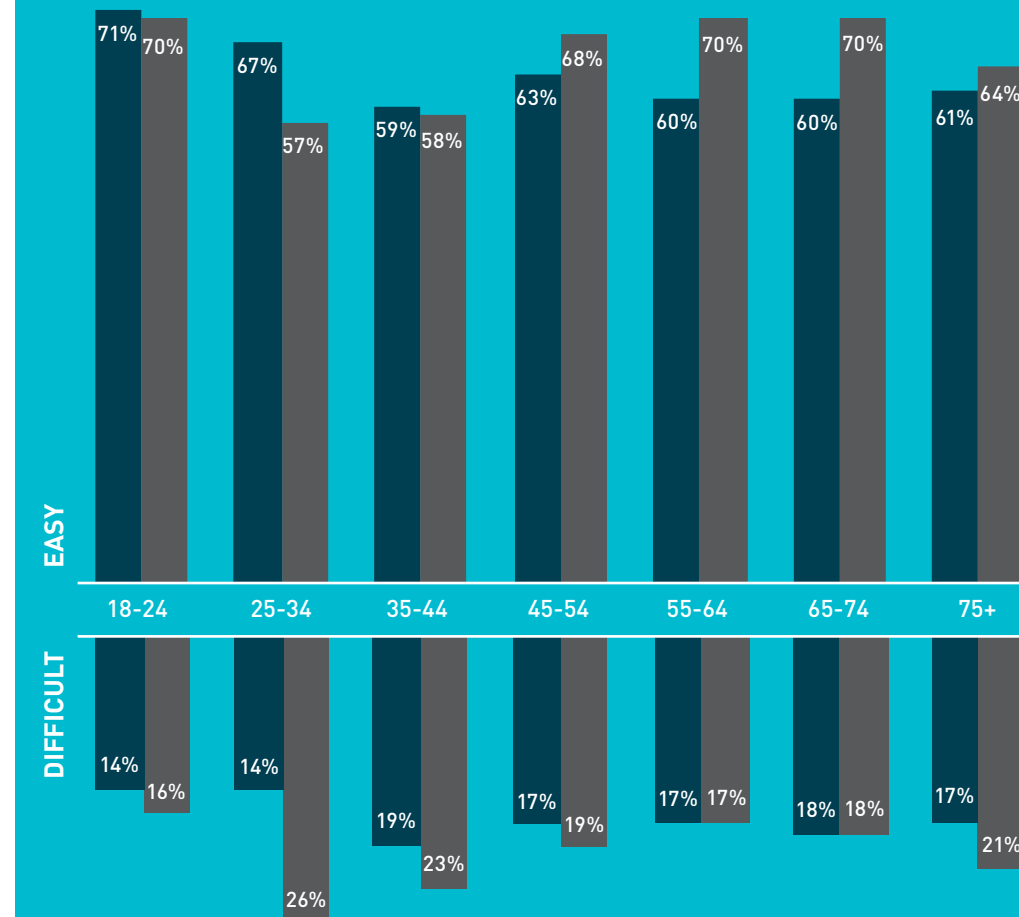
Access and Disability

While the majority of residents find Clarion services easy to access, residents who have a disability or long term health condition are less likely to. We see this each year and are working across the organisation, and in consultation with the resident's Clarion Ability Network (CAN), to better understand what drives this and what can be done to improve this for disabled residents.

Following last year's report we undertook some further research with a sample of those residents who had said they had a disability and found Clarion services difficult to access. The findings

Fig 5 & 6: Percentage of residents who find it easy/difficult to access services by age band

Base: All respondents (2019: n2000; 2018:n2000)





68%
of residents agree that they have trust and confidence in Clarion.

from this research are being used to shape training, improve systems (where possible) and enhance communications.

This year, the gaps between residents with or without a disability or long term health condition and how easy or difficult they find accessing our services still exist, but have decreased. We will continue monitoring this to ensure it continues in the right direction.

How would you prefer to pay your rent?

Another part of making life easier for residents is making it straightforward for them to pay their rent in the way they prefer. This means offering a variety of options and keeping up with new digital payment methods, like Apple Pay and Google Pay. We know that some residents have unpredictable or erratic incomes with casual and zero hour work contracts and Universal Credit payments in arrears adding complexity to their budgets. We continue to explore how new payment methods can help residents make the most of their income.

At the moment, nearly half of our residents (49%) say they prefer to pay by direct debit, saving time and hassle as payments are taken automatically and are guaranteed by the bank. Smaller numbers of residents say they prefer to pay online (13%) or at a PayPoint (14%). Only a handful of residents currently say they would prefer to pay using one of the modern digital methods such as Google Pay, Apple Pay or PayPal (total 1%) but as digital natives start to make up an increasing proportion of Clarion residents this is likely to increase.

A key driver in the differences in people's preferences appears to be whether or not they use the internet. While direct debit is the most popular way of paying rent, reflecting it's wide use and acceptance,

internet users are significantly more likely to chose this method (50% vs 44% internet users vs not). Our youngest residents, aged between 18 and 24, are significantly more likely than older residents to want to pay online (22%). We know that young residents are most likely to be internet users (99% of this age group), but even looking at age groups with similar internet usage statistics, the 18-24 year olds still show this preference. Non-internet users are three times as likely to say they prefer the PayPoint (30% vs 10%) and tied to this we see a clear age preference with residents aged over 55 significantly more likely to want to use a PayPoint.

While people with a disability still have a preference for direct debit (42%) they are significantly more likely to want to use a PayPoint (16% vs 13%), compared to people who do not report having disability

Trust and confidence in Clarion

This year, we have seen a slight decrease in the proportion of residents agreeing that they have trust and confidence in Clarion, down to 68% from 71% last year. This may well be linked to the decrease in people finding it easy to access our services – trust may decrease in line with experience – or it may flow from negative press around housing associations or other issues.

Looking more closely, although the overall figure has not moved substantially the percentage who strongly agree has decreased since last year (from 24% to 18%), and the percentage that strongly disagree has increased (from 5% to 9%).

Clarion will want to arrest this trend and it will be monitored closely to understand how far this is driven by access issues or other concerns.

Fig 7: How would you prefer to pay your rent?

Base: All respondents (n2000)

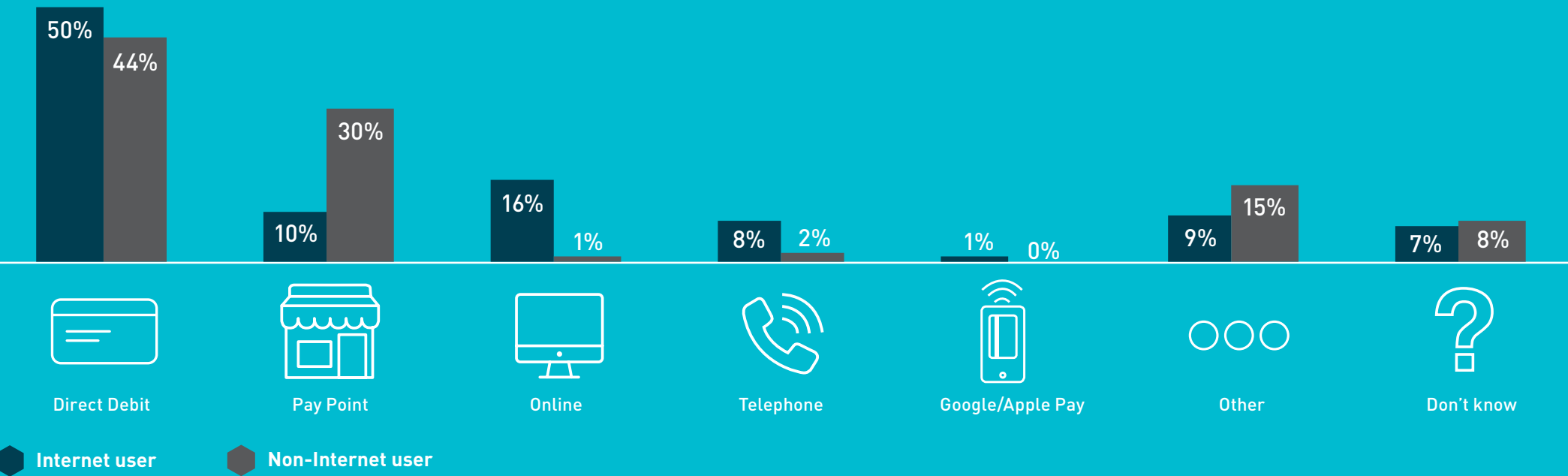
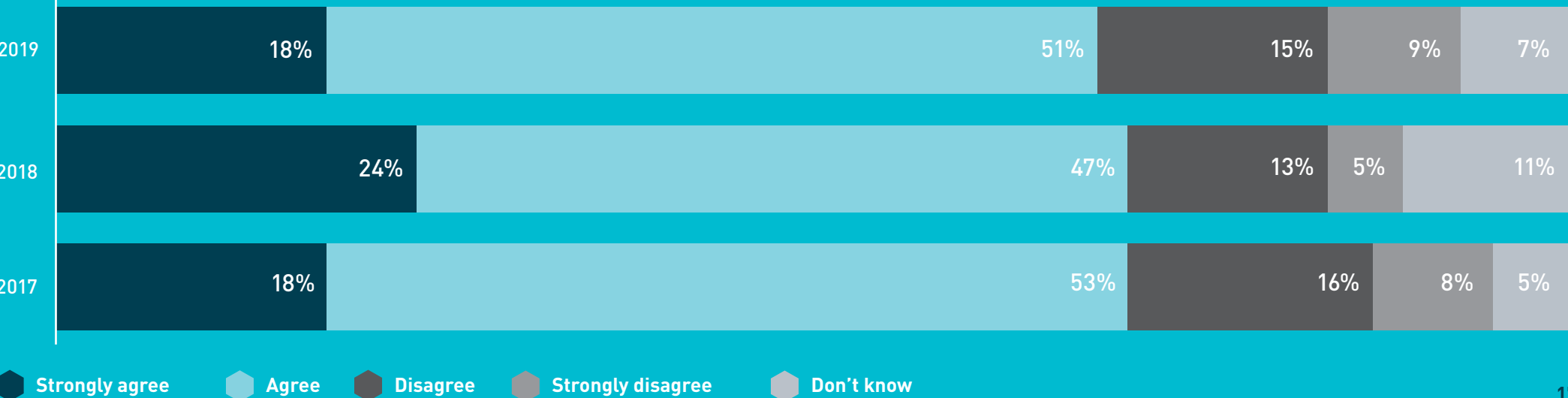


Fig 8: To what extent do you agree with the statement: "I trust and have confidence in my landlord"

Base: All respondents (2019:n2000, 2018:n2000, 2017:n2000)



HOUSEHOLD FINANCES



For many of the findings here, comparable figures are used from one or two previous years to highlight changes or where things have remained static. However, Clarion has data going back to 2012 for many of these measures and sometimes it is worth looking across the whole length of the study to understand what we are looking at more fully.

In our report last year we noted that the financial measures for residents did not appear to shift significantly year on year, but when we put these together over a longer time period, we see more clearly that following a period of household finances improving, since 2016 residents are increasingly have to make do with less. When we look at the detail, financial difficulties are most felt by those impacted by recent welfare reforms – working age households in need of support.

Last year, 49% of our residents said they either only had enough money for the essentials, or that they ran out of money before the end of the week or month. This year that figure has drifted up slightly to 51%, but what's more striking is the drop in the proportion of people saying they can afford some luxuries, or even have money left over at the end of the week or month, which has dropped from 42% to 37% - the lowest we've seen since asking this question.

So what's happening here is not straightforward - the number struggling is going up slowly, while the number doing well has dropped more significantly. We see there has been a slight increase in the number of people who don't want to answer the question, or who say none of the categories apply to them –and it's difficult to interpret this without further conversations.

What we can do, is piece this together with the many other measures we collect and look at some specific groups to build up a picture of their real financial situation.

Worrying about money

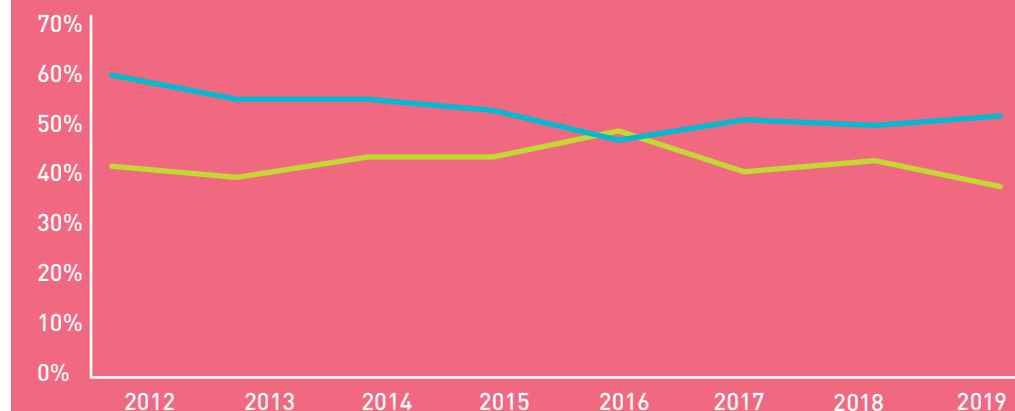
About two in five (42%) Clarion residents say they are worried about money this year, the same result as last year. Interestingly, a smaller proportion of residents worry about money than say they are struggling to afford anything more than the essentials. Some specific groups of residents worry more about money than others:

- People who are not in work are more likely to worry about money (43%) than people who work (40%) and the gap between these two groups has shrunk this year;
- Having children living at home means households are significantly more likely to have worries about money (48%) than those without (38%);
- Those who report a long-standing health issue or disabilities are significantly more likely to worry (47%) than those who do not (39%);
- Working age residents (18-64) are much more worried about money issues (47%) than the over 65's (24%);
- Those in London are more likely to be worried (46%) than those in other regions. This is perhaps unsurprising as despite higher living costs in the Capital, benefit payments such as Job Seekers Allowance are the same as elsewhere in the country.

Obviously, some residents will feature in two or more categories (a tenancy holder might be both not working and have children at home for example).

Fig 9: Resident financial experience, 2012 - 2019

Base: All respondents (2017-2019: n2000, 2016: n1500, 2012-2015: n1000)



- Residents with money left at the end of the week/month or able to afford some luxuries
- Residents who only have enough for the essentials or run out of money



The proportion of people saying they can afford some luxuries, or even have money left over at the end of the week or month, has dropped from 42% to 37% - the lowest we've seen since asking this question.



“
One in ten
working
residents
went
without food
because
they couldn't
afford it in
the last year.”

Softer measures

As well as asking outright for the resident's financial situation, we also ask a series of related questions which give us a broader picture of their status. Because we ask them every year, we're able to track how residents are doing. Over the past few years, unfortunately, most of these measures have moved in the wrong direction – fewer people are saving money, fewer have contents insurance and more are using weekly payment stores (such as Brighthouse), catalogues and doorstep lenders which tend to have high interest rates, and offer poor value for money.

The combination of results we are seeing in employment and financial activity – the apparent static nature of households' ability to cover bills alongside a decrease in savings activity and an increase in the use of high cost credit – suggests that more residents than previously are struggling now, and will do more so in an uncertain economy.

Food poverty: cutting out food, and food bank use

Food poverty is defined as the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet. Recent studies have shown that **this is on the rise in the UK**. As a result, Clarion Futures Money & Digital have made tackling food poverty a key priority of their work by supporting food banks, pantries and cooking schools.

After a small decline last year in the proportion of Clarion residents going without food, from 14% in 2017 to 13% last year, it is a real concern to see this metric ticking back up again, now reaching 15% overall. It is well-known that food poverty is just one indicator of a wider experience of poverty, so families in food poverty will also be going without other essentials.

As we have seen with other areas of financial struggle, the age demographic of those who have gone without food is tightly correlated to where welfare reforms have been focussed.

We were dismayed last year to see that one in five of our youngest residents (20%) had gone without food because they couldn't afford it. This year, when we look across the age bands the picture is even more troubling, as almost every age group saw an increase, and now one in five residents aged 18-44 had gone without food in the last year.

There is now a statistically significant difference between people with or without children at home going without food (17% vs 13% respectively) and residents with a disability or long standing health problem were also significantly more likely to have gone without food (20% vs 12% without).

Although significantly more residents who do not work went without food (17%), in-work food poverty is clearly an issue with 11% of workers still reporting having gone hungry.

Care professionals such as health visitors, schools and social workers and housing officers can issue people in financial crisis a food bank voucher so they can get a few days' worth of emergency food. Overall, 8% of Clarion residents have used a food bank in the last year, and a further 1% had to access free or low-cost food via a pantry or lunch club. These interventions are designed to support households through a temporary squeeze on their finances such as the wait for a first Universal Credit payment or first pay check, but 6% of residents have had to use these more than once, suggesting the presence of a more persistent hardship.

It seems likely that many people are going hungry without accessing a food bank or pantry, as nearly twice as many residents have gone without food than have used a food bank. It may be that residents are unable to get to the food banks or pantries in their area without transport, none exist locally, they aren't aware of them, or they don't meet the criteria for access.

Going without heating

This year 21% of Clarion residents said they had gone without heating to save money in the past year, a surprising increase after year-on-year decreases reported previously (see figure 11). This varies by age and is significantly higher among working age residents than those aged 65 and over, but is especially high among residents with a disability or long term health problems and households receiving a disability related benefit (27% vs 17% in residents without a disability).

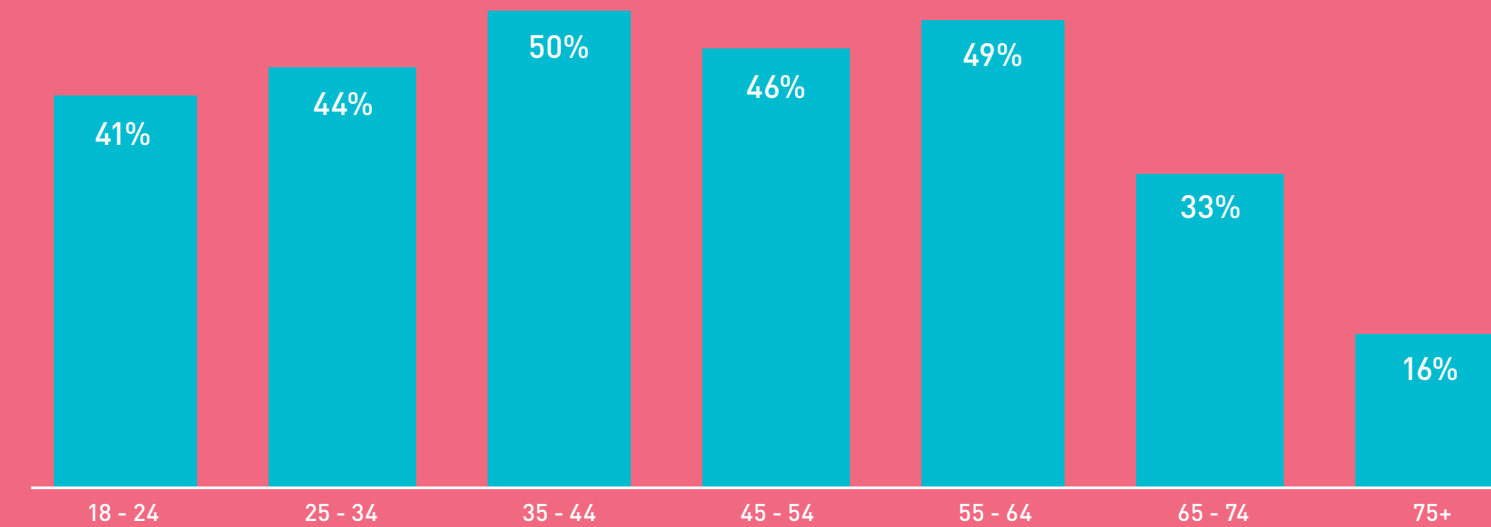
Awareness of our services

A change to data protection law in 2018 means it is has become more difficult for Clarion Futures to market their financial inclusion guidance services to residents. Last year this resulted in a dramatic drop in resident awareness of these services, such as access to affordable loans, credit unions and guidance on money management. It's important that we support residents to maximise their income and manage their finances without needing to resort to expensive credit or go without essentials.

The proportion of residents who said they knew about Clarion's money guidance service has continued to drop to only 24%, having peaked at 53% in 2016 following a high profile marketing campaign.

Fig 10: Percentage of residents worried about money issues, by age

Base: All respondents (n2000)

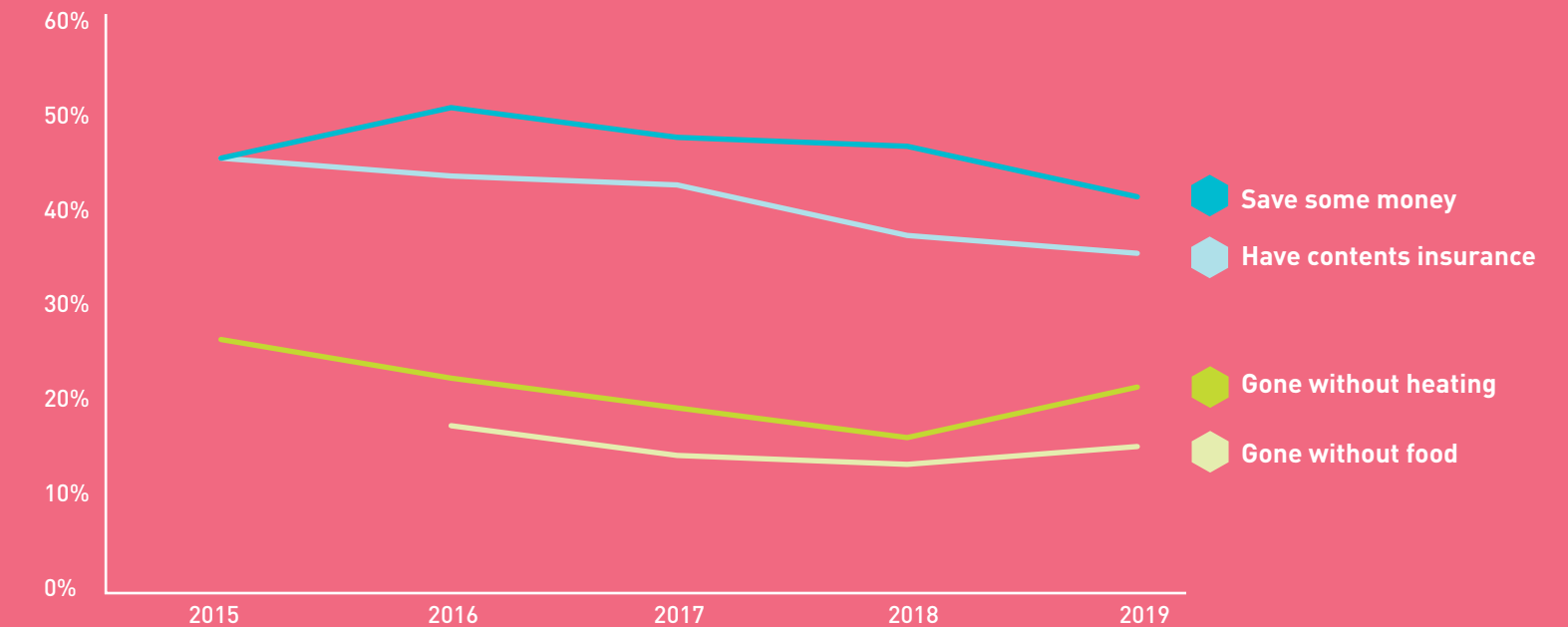


27%
of residents with a disability or long term health issue went without heating to save money in the past year.

“
One in five
residents aged between 18 and 44 have gone without food because they couldn't afford it in the last year.”

Fig 11: Percentage of residents exhibiting financial behaviours, over time

Base: All respondents (2017-2019: n2000, 2016: n1500, 2015: n1000)



24%
of residents are aware that Clarion offers guidance to help them manage their money.

The correlation between household finances and lack of awareness of the money guidance service does not denote causality, but it does highlight (see figure 13) the need to reach more residents with this support.

Awareness levels across all of Clarion's support services are significantly lower than last year and now nearly two thirds (63%) of residents say they are not aware of any of the services offered.

There is some awareness of training to get online (19%), affordable loans (18%), access to banking services (17%) and online employability training (16%). However, each of these is down around 7% on last year.

Work is underway to understand how these services can be communicated effectively to residents within the new regulations; this is especially important as we see increases across a number of measures relating to residents struggling financially and looking for work.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit replaces a number of weekly paid benefits – including Housing Benefit – with a single monthly sum paid in arrears to an individual household member. Although it was introduced in 2013, the roll-out of Universal Credit has been slow; both delayed and managed. Now that full service is in place, it is expected that the proportion of Clarion residents in receipt of the payment will increase dramatically over the next few years.

Because it is paid in arrears, no Universal Credit payment is received for the first five weeks after a household submits a claim. Households therefore need to have saved up enough money to carry them through those first five weeks.

Although claimants can now access an advance payment to tide them over this period, this is then paid back from later monthly payments which can prove difficult for those on very tight budgets.

There is now strong evidence that Universal Credit can **cause hardship** for families who receive it². Recent research published by **Riverside Housing Association** showed that residents switching from legacy benefits to Universal Credit were more likely to have rent arrears and struggle to pay their everyday bills.

We've seen the number of residents who are aware of Universal Credit increase from only 51% in 2017 to 69% this year, after a series of pilot campaigns involving our frontline staff. Having been tested in the field this is now being rolled out nationally to ensure residents can prepare themselves as best they can and do not end up in arrears or relying on high cost credit to pay their bills.

This year 14% (n.273) of all residents say they are receiving Universal Credit, up from just 8% last year. So we have seen a marked increase in both awareness and receipt of the benefit and now have sufficient sample size to look more carefully at these residents' views and financial experience.

As a follow up, we asked residents who were either aware of Universal Credit, or receiving it, if they thought it was a good idea. Overall, just a fifth thought it was a good idea and a further 14% thought it was a good idea, but poorly implemented. 44% think it is a bad idea.

Interestingly, residents in receipt of Universal Credit are more likely to say they think it is a good idea (31%), than those who have only heard of it (17%

good idea). It is true that often the threat of something is worse than the reality, and the media has tended to focus on the worst cases where Universal Credit has gone wrong. For some residents at least, after the initial difficulties, it seems they find Universal Credit is not as bad as they perhaps expected.

However, the largest single group of Universal Credit recipients still thought it was a bad idea (40%) and when we look at our markers within the survey it may point to some reasons why. Universal Credit recipients are:

- Significantly more likely to run out of money before the end of the week or month (36% vs 18%)
- Significantly more likely to have taken out a pay day loan (10% vs 5%)
- Significantly less likely to be able afford to replace a broken electrical item (48% vs 28%)
- Significantly more likely to have gone without heating (30% vs 19%) or food (29% vs 12%) in the last year for financial reasons

One in five residents on Universal Credit (21%) had to use a food bank or other low cost food pantry in the past year, and over half of these residents have used this more than once.

Clarion Futures Money Guidance Team have been making pro-active calls to new Universal Credit claimants to provide advice and support at what is a time of significant change for many residents. This support is vital as we know the number of residents on Universal Credit is going to ramp up over the next few years as managed migration is implemented.

Fig 12: Percentage of residents who have gone without food because they couldn't afford it in the last year, by age, over time

Base: All respondents (2019: n2000, 2018: n2000)

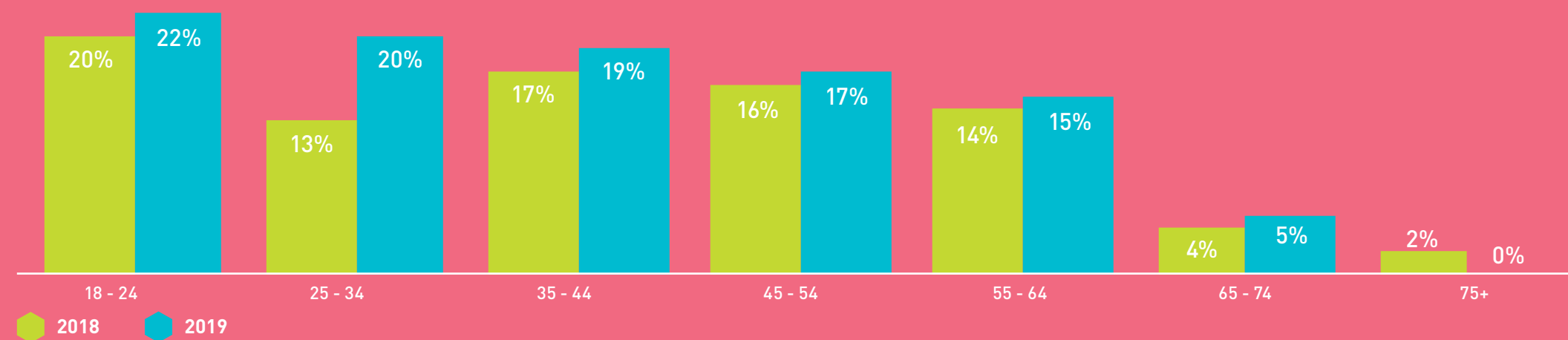
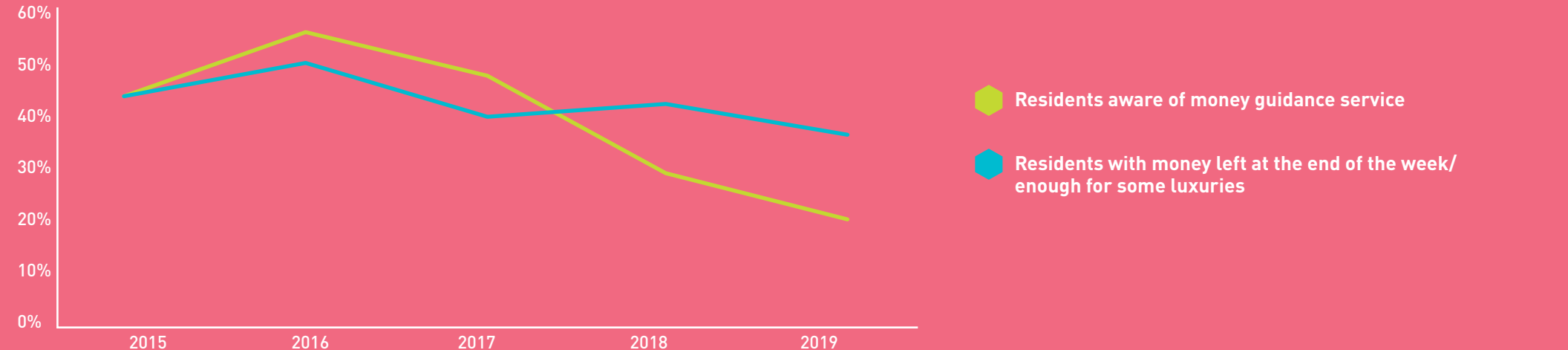


Fig 13: Household finances and awareness of money guidance service over time

Base: All respondents (2017-2019: n2000, 2016: n1500, 2015: n1000)



² These figures show that 20% of referrals to the Trussell Trust Food Banks in 2018-19 were due to benefit delays, and 18% were due to benefit changes. The Trust distributed 1.6 million three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis in 2018-19, a 19% increase on the previous year.

EMPLOYMENT

This summer, the **English Housing Survey** reported that **41% of social housing tenants were in paid work in 2017-18, the same figure as our survey found for Clarion residents this year.**

When we look at working age residents (18-64), this increases to 50%. Both of these findings are marginally lower than in 2018 when 42% of all residents and 53% of working age residents were in paid work. We continue to see the same gender split as in previous years with more women working part time than men.

Over a third of households (37%) have two working adults, and among respondents who aren't in paid work themselves, 14% said someone else in their household is.

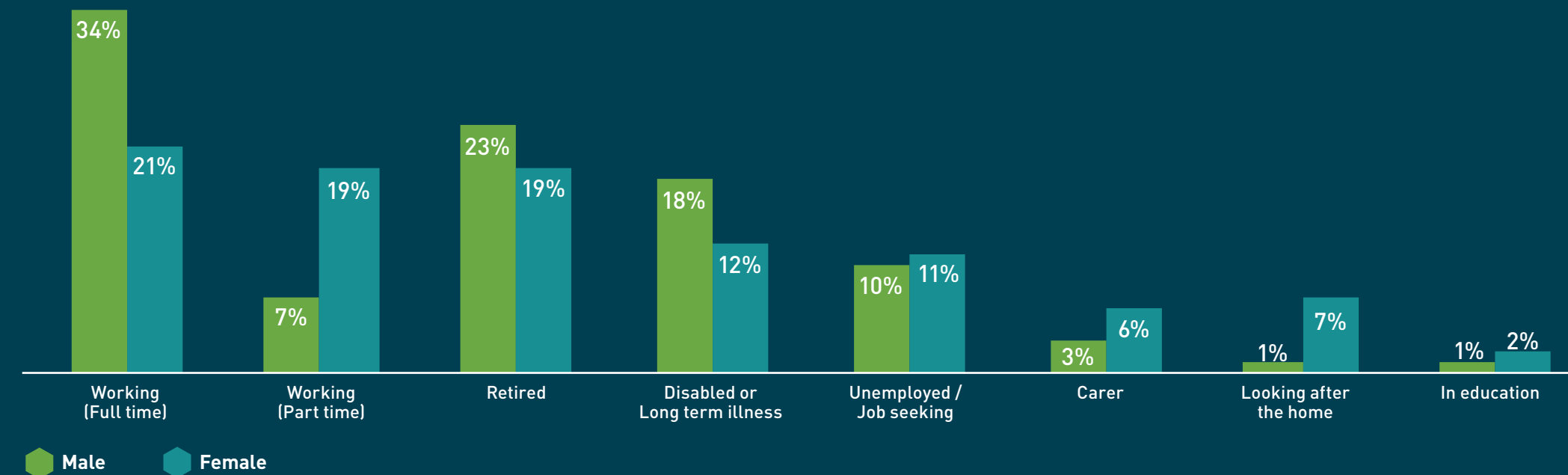
This year we have seen a decrease, from 17% to 14% in residents who say they are not working due to a disability or long term illness. However the overall number of residents saying they have a disability or long term health condition has remained almost the same (37%), as has the number of residents in employment. But there has been a spike in the number of Clarion residents who are unemployed and seeking work, up from 5% last year, to 11% this year. This is an unexpectedly high jump, particularly with no substantial change in the proportion of residents in employment. This reflects recent **national findings** and is likely largely due to the requirement for more people to seek work under Universal Credit.

A fifth of Clarion residents are fully retired from work and, as in previous years, within this figure a higher proportion of men are retired than women (23% vs 19%). In 2017, 29% of male residents were retired, last year this fell to 26% and this has reduced again to 23% this year. This is a trend worth monitoring as it may be that men are continuing to work later in life (either through choice or necessity) or are finding themselves unable to work for other reasons. Male residents are more likely than women to have a disability or be unable to work due to a long term health issue (18% vs 12%). Women are more likely to be carers although the gap is reducing – last year 8% of women were carers compared to 1% of men, this year it has started to level out at 6% and 3% respectively.

41%
of residents are in paid work and this increases to 50% of working age residents.

Fig14: Employment status by gender

Base: All respondents n2000 (male=703, female = 1297)



Paid employment

Almost two thirds (63%) of residents in work say they are full time and a just over a third (36%) part time, showing a slight increase in full time working on last year (up from 61%). Part time work is most common among women (48% of working women) and those with dependent children at home (49% of working parents).

Most people say they have a permanent contract with their employer (75%), which does mean that a substantial minority of our working residents are on are on a less secure type of contract (fixed term 4%, zero hours 6%) or are self employed (9%). Of course, many people value the flexibility that comes with this type of work, but this can come with a volatile, erratic income and make it hard to plan.

When asked about the barriers to potentially working more hours, or improving their household income, the cost and availability of childcare were frequently raised, as was a lack of relevant skills.

Clarion Futures can help working parents identify the help they are entitled to, such as tax credits, and free nursery hours. They also provide back to work training aimed not just at getting people any job, but a secure job with a future, if that's what they are aiming for.

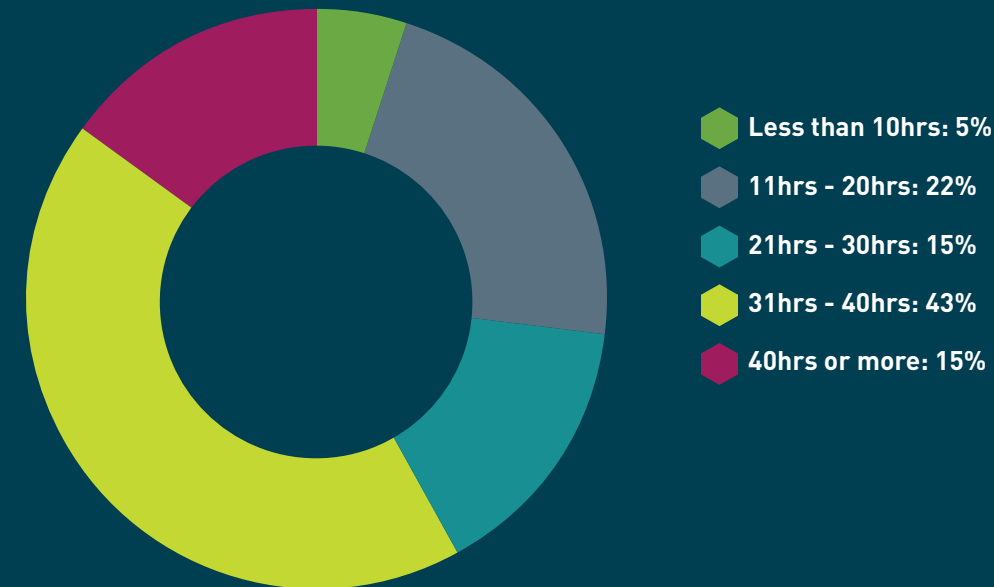
The proportion of residents beyond retirement age working in paid employment has stayed the same as last year. In 2017 just 6% of those aged 65 to 74 said they were working, but this increased to 11% in 2018 and remained the same in

2019, with just over half of them working full time. Older residents have typically been insulated from benefit cuts but this finding highlights that there are individuals hidden in the larger numbers.

Paid employment has varied quite significantly across Clarion's operating regions in the past, with lower levels seen outside of London and the South. When we look a little closer, at Local Authority level data for the first time, we see that the difference is statistically significant but not as striking as previously seen – with 43% of Londoners working, and 39% of residents elsewhere.

Fig 15: How many hours a week do you normally work?

Base: Residents in work n780



Clarion Futures supported **over 4,000 people** in to work;
250 people in to apprenticeships;
81% sustained their employment for six months or longer.



DIGITAL & COMMUNICATIONS

Today's customers have high expectations of dealing with businesses online – wanting to carry out transactions, find information, and interact with staff at a time and place convenient to them.

We want the high quality landlord service that we are committed to providing to be easily accessible. While residents can access some of our services online, our digital offer is a work in progress and has some way to go before it can benchmark with the services our customers interact with on a daily basis.

Being online can provide residents with a boost to their wellbeing and finances, enabling them to connect with family and friends on social media and via messaging apps, find out about events, access local support services and find the best deals and tariffs. Digital skills are a necessity for many jobs now, and as they may be advertised online only, searching for and applying for jobs requires these skills too.

We also have a significant minority of residents who don't use the internet, and so we must still offer alternatives to our digital service and help to those who want to get online, but can't.

81%
of Clarion residents access the internet.

Since 2011, when just 57% of Affinity Sutton residents were online, the yearly increase and subsequent levelling of residents online has tracked the national digital usage trends to a large extent, albeit usually around 10% below ONS figures.

Indeed, the latest national figures for GB households accessing the internet have increased to 93%, after plateauing at 90% for a couple of years. Clarion residents have shown a greater percentage increase this year from 76% to 81%, therefore narrowing the gap between our residents and the national average.



We want the high quality landlord service that we are committed to providing to be easily accessible.



Fig 16: Internet access over time

Base: All respondents (2011-2015:n1000,2016:n1500,2017:n2000;2018:n2000); GB data source ONS

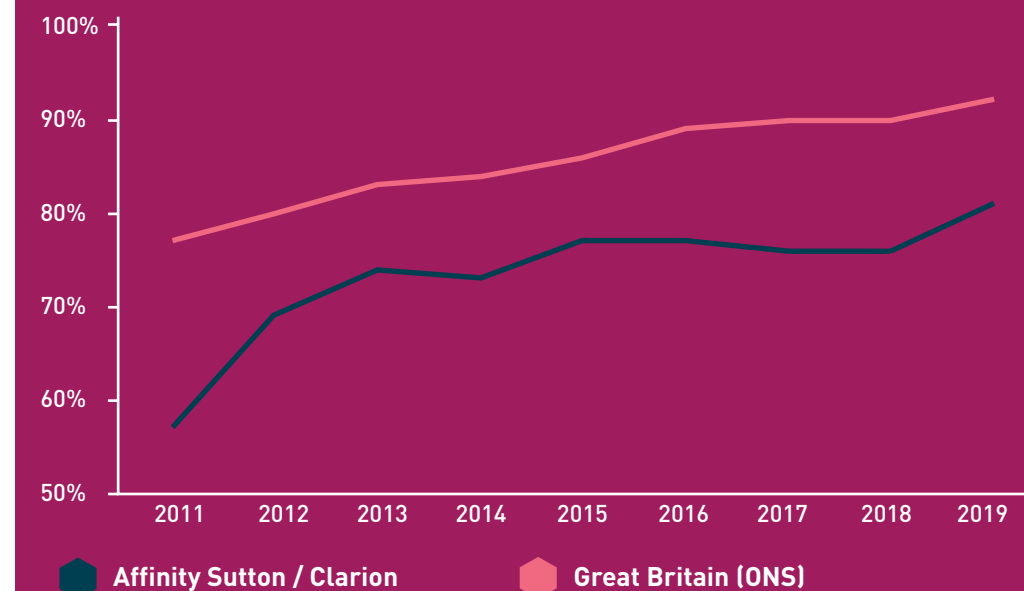
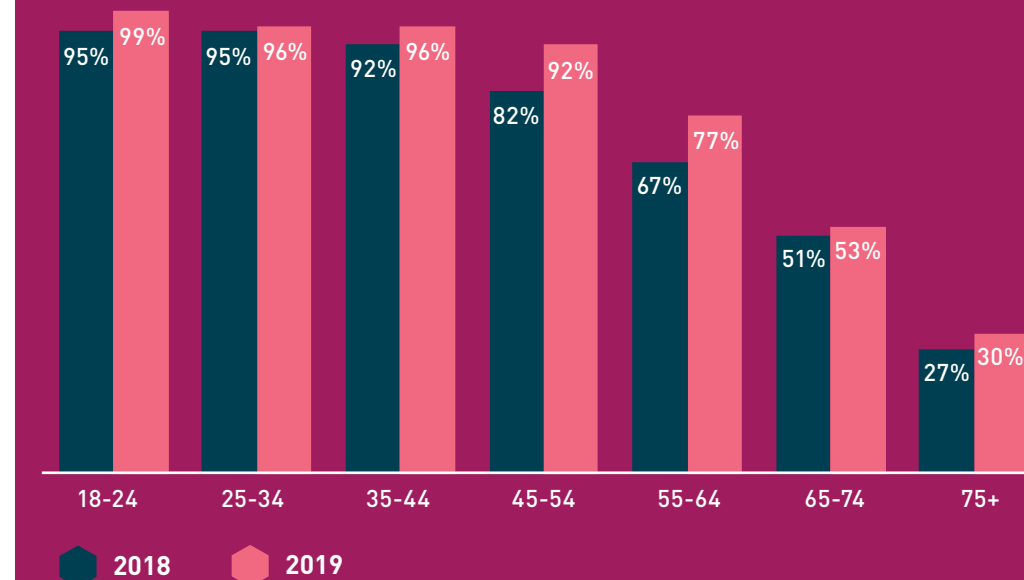


Fig 17: Internet access, by age over time

Base: All respondents (2019: n2000; 2018:n2000)



Being online provides residents with a boost to their wellbeing and finances, allowing them to connect with family & friends on social media and via messaging apps, access local support services and find the best deals & tariffs.

We can see in the graph [Fig 17] that the percentage of residents online has increased in every age group and young people continue to be the most digitally connected group. The largest annual changes are seen in the 45-54 and 54-65 age groups, which have both increased 10%. These groups are those specifically being targeted by One Digital (see box below) to help them get online, largely because Universal Credit requires online registration and these groups were far less likely to be online last year. The confluence of residents needing to get online and having support readily available, has resulted in a marked change in a short space of time. The proportion of residents online declines markedly after the age of 55 and the only group where fewer than half are online is the over 75s.

This year, we asked a follow up question to those who said they don't use the internet to uncover their reasons and understand where there would be scope for Clarion Futures Digital to provide assistance.

Overall, just under half said they never use the internet because they simply don't want to (45%). A slightly smaller fraction don't know how to get online (41%) and these will be a target group

for Clarion Futures Digital to support. The cost of accessing the internet (be it the phone line, broadband contract, computer costs) was an important factor for 14% of non-internet-users. Providing public facilities for getting online, cost effective Wi-Fi options and hotspots at community centres could help get these people connected.

Of those who don't use the internet, two thirds are aged 65 and over and 59% have a disability. Our services are designed with accessibility front-of-mind but new ways of using the internet like smart speakers (Amazon Echo or Google Dot), while not in widespread use yet (see Fig 19), could really help people get online who might otherwise find it difficult.

Frequency

As well as the proportion of residents online going up since last year, the frequency with which those online use the internet has changed, so much so that we introduced a new category this year – for users that access the internet several times an hour.

One Digital is a collaborative digital inclusion programme developed by Clarion Futures and other bodies, such as Age UK, supporting a network of peer 'Digital Champions' to teach other residents how to get online.

This programme provides residents with the skills to use the internet to enhance their lives and also improves the skills and employability of the Digital Champions themselves.

One Digital has screened over 4,000 people to assess their suitability for training through this route, and subsequently referred over 1,300 of them for Digital Champion support.



Fig 18: How often do you use the internet?

Base: All respondents (n2000)

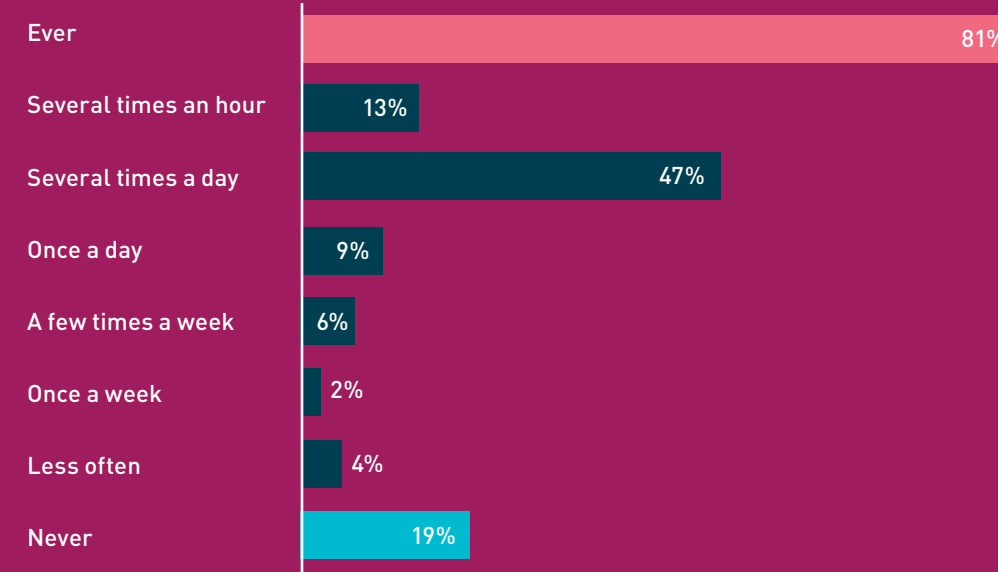


Fig 19: If you contact Clarion by email or webform, how confident are you that you will receive a response?

Base: Internet users (n1612)

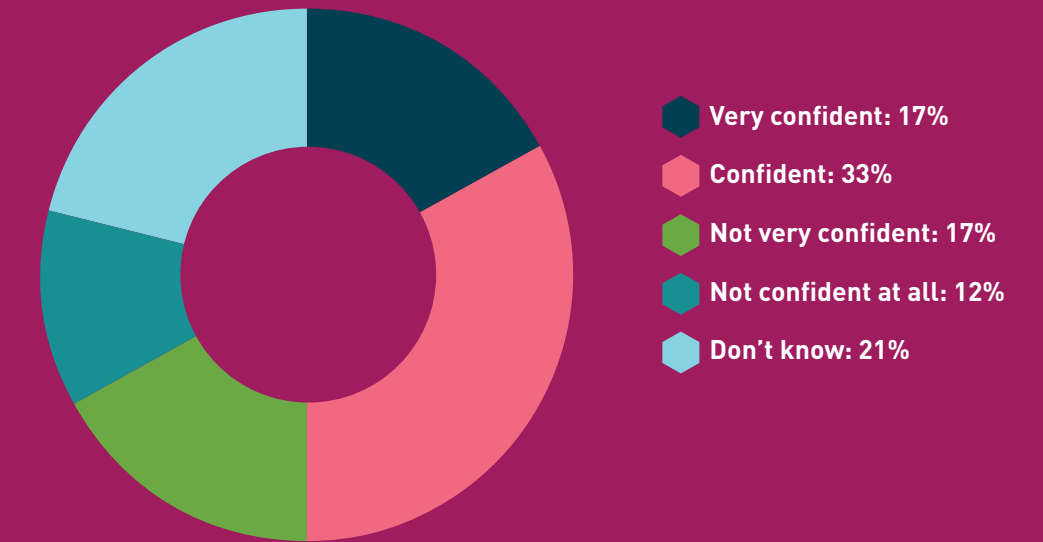
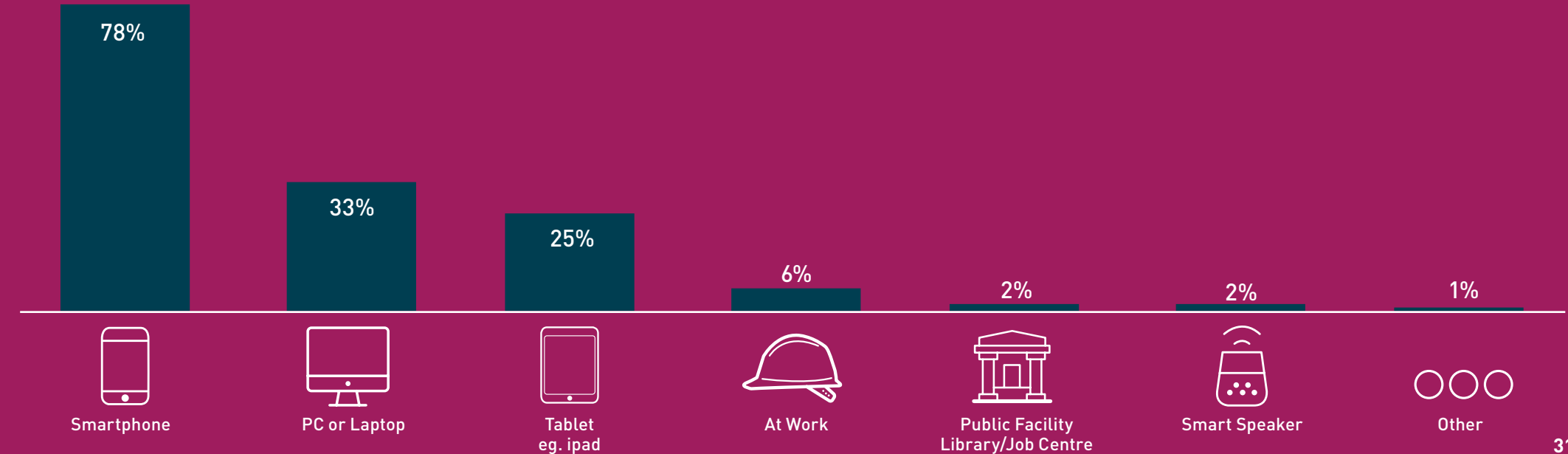


Fig 20: How do you usually access the internet?

Base: Internet users (n1612)





Our findings highlight that customers still value human interactions, so we need to think carefully as we digitise services and make sure we recognise where people are better suited to deal with certain issues than algorithms.



In 2018 well over half of our residents (57%) said they used the internet several times a day, an increase of 10% on the year before (47%). This year, 60% of residents would fall in to this category, but we're able to separate out those really high users. And we see that 13% of residents (16% of internet users) get online several times an hour. About half of these high frequency users (49%) are aged under 35 and the vast majority primarily use their smartphones, so designing digital services with these users in mind is becoming increasingly important.

Just under half our residents still say they use the internet several times a day (47%), but not as much as several times an hour. 91% of residents aged 18-34 use the internet at least several times a day, compared to a quarter of those aged 55 and over (26%).

Only one in five (19%) online residents said they were not confident in using services on the internet, but this was significantly higher in residents over 55 (32%), the same as last year. As part of One Digital, Digital Champions can help improve other residents' confidence online, at the same time as developing their own skills.

How do you access the internet?

The same proportion of internet users as last year, 78%, prefer to get online using their smartphones. Although this has stayed the same, all the other methods (laptop, PC, tablet etc.) have decreased substantially, becoming less popular, even as a secondary way of getting online (Fig 20). People are focussing their internet usage on just their smartphone rather than using their phone while they are out, and a PC or laptop when at home. As more sites become mobile first, and more companies develop Apps this becomes an obvious and probably cost effective choice.

Almost all residents aged under 35 (96%) primarily use their smartphones - these are also the people most likely to get online several times an hour.

We introduced a new option to this question: smart speakers, such as Google Home or Amazon Echo. These are small speakers connected to an online virtual assistant; the user interacts with them using their voice: "Set a timer for 15 minutes", for example. Voice interfaces can be very useful to older users as they are intuitive to use without having to learn new skills, such as keyboard or mouse usage. They can also be ideal for less able users, with visual or other physical issues. There are only a handful of residents currently using these as their primary way of accessing the internet (2%). We would expect this to grow in the future, in particular as they offer a very different way of getting connected, particularly to the groups of residents least likely to be online now.

78%

of online residents use the internet on their smartphone.

Contacting us

So 81% of our residents use the internet, many of them several times through the day, and 80% of these are confident using services online. However they aren't so confident about contacting us by email or webform on our website; only half say they'd be confident of getting a response if they did so. Less than a third (29%) actually said they weren't confident of hearing back, but 21% didn't know; suggesting they weren't aware of the option, or hadn't used it.

It is important to build trust in our digital channels; design can help but we need to back that up. There is perception that digital is quicker but in reality this may not be the case. We know that our contact centres are efficient and can often resolve issues immediately, so that could be one of the reasons why residents who do everything else online, still call Clarion.

Even if residents log a repair online, hearing back from us by phone is still most popular, actually increasing since last year (from 33% to 41%). Email also increased as a preference

(from 12% to 21%) but fewer people want to hear back by text than last year (down 12% from 34% to 22%).

If there is a problem with their rent payment, 62% (down 2%) of residents say they would prefer to be contacted by phone and 12% would like to receive an email and 11% a text (both up 3% on last year). These findings highlight that customers still value human interactions, so we need to think carefully as we digitise services and make sure that we recognise where people are better suited to deal with certain issues than algorithms.



It is important to build trust in our digital channels; design can help but we need to back that up. There is a perception that digital is quicker but in reality this may not be the case.



BUILDING NEW HOMES



The impact on a person's life of having a secure, affordable home is hard to quantify, though researchers have tried: The University of Birmingham and Vivid Housing Association showed recently that living in social housing can have a positive impact on individuals lives compared to other tenures (such as private renting or owner/occupying).

For example, renting a social home is associated with a reduction in anxiety levels of 7 percentage points, all other things being equal. The research found that what really mattered to residents was feeling secure and having a degree of control over their home; two things not typically offered by the unregulated private rented sector.

Our survey found that our many of our residents are aware of social housing's importance on a more fundamental level. Although Clarion residents are keen for new homes to be built in their area, in particular they want to see more social rented homes, extending the availability of secure, affordable housing to others.

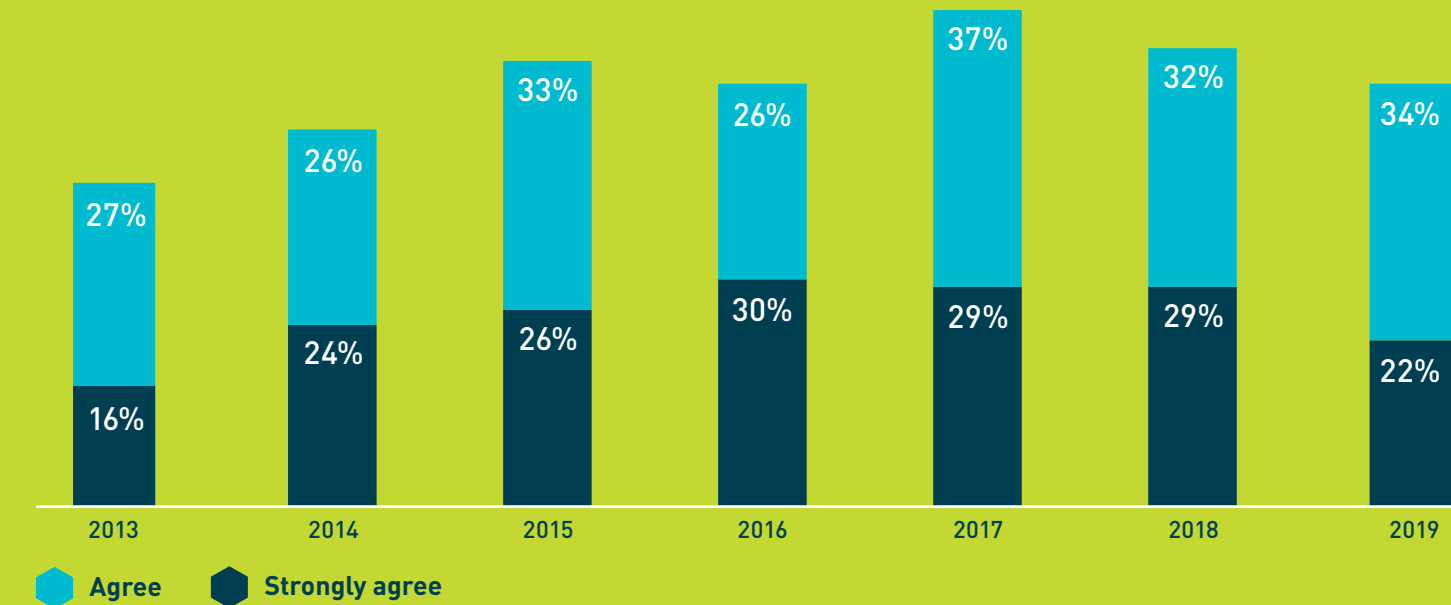
Despite the housing crisis deepening across the country, with affordability at an all-time low in many areas, resident attitudes towards house building shift each year – more so than other areas we ask about in the survey.

In fact, we've seen three years' consecutive decline in residents who agreed that there is a need for more homes in their area: in 2017, two

“What really mattered to residents was feeling secure and having a degree of control over their home.”

Fig 21: Percentage of residents agreeing with the statement, “There is a need for more homes in my area?”, over time

Base: All respondents (2017-2019: n2000, 2016: n1500, 2013-2015: n1000)



77%
of residents agree it is important to them that Clarion builds more homes.

Clarion is certain that building more social rented homes is a key way to help alleviate the current housing and affordability crisis.

thirds (67%) agreed, this decreased in 2018 to 61% and this year only 55% of residents agreed with this statement.

Support for building new homes varies by geography, with greatest agreement in London (60%), where affordability is particularly poor with private rents being equivalent to between 47% and 127% of local monthly median **earnings**. Understandably, people who live in areas where housing is under the most pressure and is least affordable are feeling the greatest need for new homes.

Agreement with the need for more homes also varies by tenure: Clarion tenants (55%) are significantly more likely to agree that there is a need for new homes than Clarion shared owners (44%), who are also more likely to actively disagree that there is a need for more homes.

Clarion is certain that building more social rented homes is a key way to help alleviate the current housing and affordability crisis. The majority of our residents agree that there is a need for more socially rented homes in their area, with over two thirds agreeing (67%), and only one in five (20%) disagreeing that there is a need for more of this tenure.

Again, views vary by tenure, age and to a lesser extent geography; here the disparity between tenants and shared owners is even greater with a twenty percentage point difference. 68% of tenants agreed that more socially rented homes are needed in their area, compared with only 48% of shared owners.

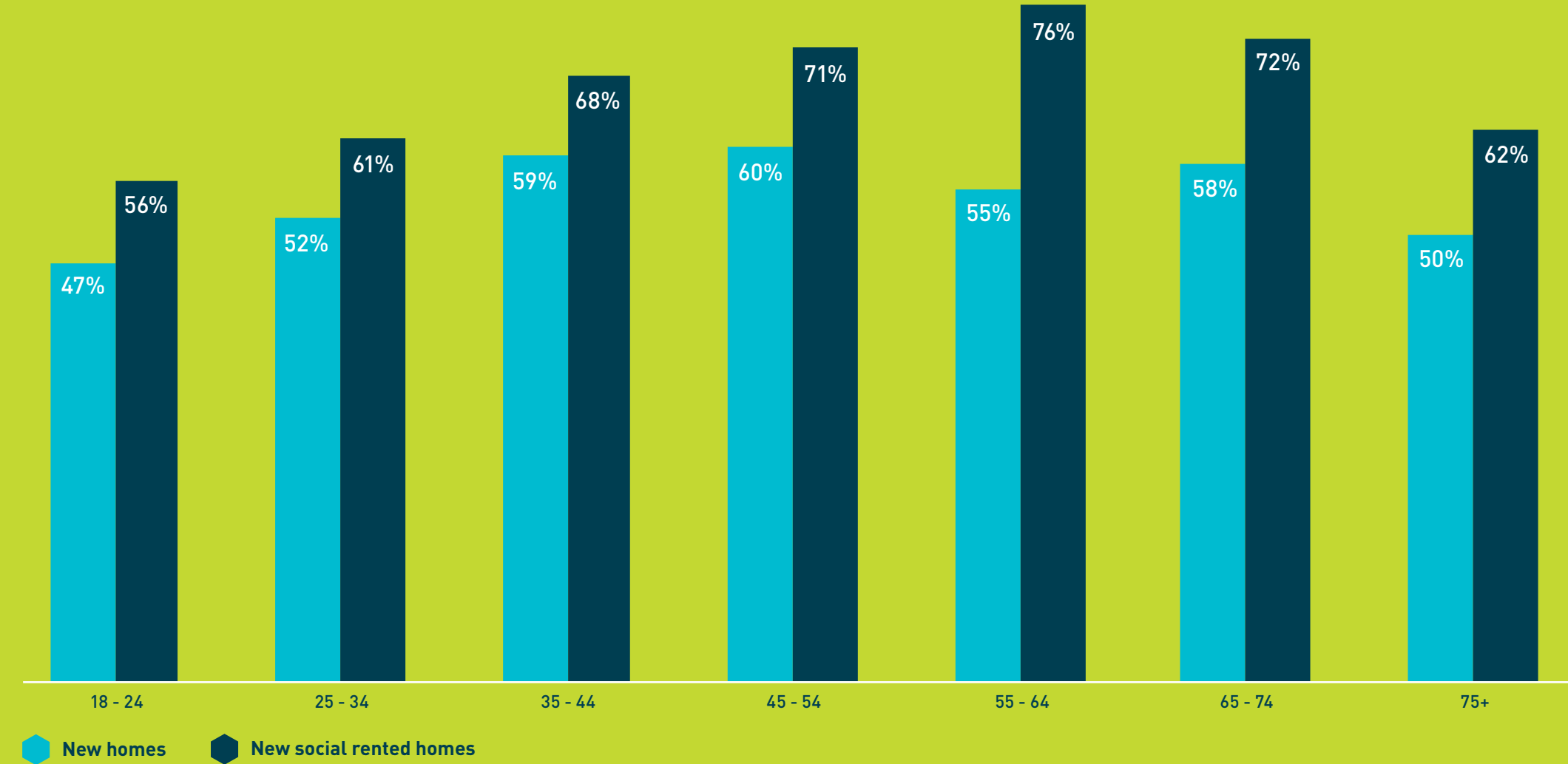
Looking outside of their own local area and experience, over three quarters (77%) of Clarion residents still think it is important that their landlord builds more homes.

67%
of residents agree there is a need for more social rented homes in their area.

While it is disappointing to see the overall agreement with a need for new homes decrease for a second year in a row, this does change year on year and may reflect the prominence of housing in news stories, particularly in election years. Crucially we see that residents still feel that it is important for us to build new homes. Shared owners, around 80% of whom work full-time and tend to view themselves as owner/occupiers, may be more insulated from the housing crisis than renters, hence less likely to see the benefits of providing more homes for social rent.

Fig 22: Percentage of residents agreeing that there is a need for new homes, new social rented homes in my area, by age

Base: All respondents (n2000)



METHODOLOGY



Market Research Society registered, Enventure Research was commissioned to undertake this year's resident survey with randomised customer contact details provided by Clarion.

A similar methodology was used to the surveys of previous years and telephone interviews were carried out with a representative sample of 2,000 residents. Quotas were used for age, gender and region as well as legacy Housing Association. All calls were completed between 30 May and 21st June 2019.

The questionnaire included a number of the same or similar 'tracking' questions and also new questions were developed. The design closely replicated the order that similar questions had appeared in previous years to ensure results were comparable and was timed to be no more than 15 minutes to prevent incomplete interviews.

To ensure the survey was as inclusive as possible, calls were made at different times of day including evenings and weekends. Where Clarion data from 2017, 2018 and 2019 is cited, the source is Enventure Research, where Affinity Sutton resident data from 2012 and 2013 is cited the source is DJS Research Ltd, where figures for 2014-16 and 2011 are used the source is Qa Research Ltd.

There are likely to be interactions between the different demographics reported in this publication. This report mainly focuses on individual characteristics, so differences cited here cannot necessarily be attributed directly to the characteristic being described.

We refer to 'Clarion Housing' and 'Clarion' throughout this report to apply to the activities of Clarion Housing Group Limited which comprises, Clarion Housing Association Limited, Clarion Futures and Latimer Developments Limited.

Please see our website clarionhg.com, for more details.

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Clarion Housing

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