



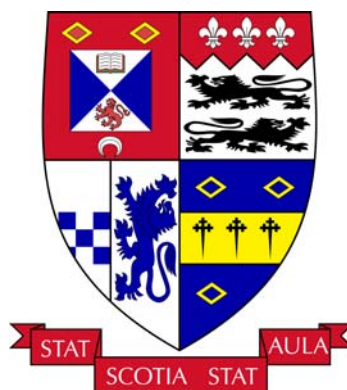
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the university of st andrews students' association

**University of St Andrews
Students' Association**

How to Rent Survey 2009

- Results, Analysis & Overview -



The 2009 Survey is the second survey of private accommodation in St Andrews, conducted by the SRC Accommodation Sub-Committee, in conjunction with the Students' Association. It still holds the majority of the same key aims as being central to the rationale behind such a survey.

Stated Aims of the Survey

- To improve property management standards in St Andrews, as per point 42 of the SRC's Accommodation Policy, by;
 - Creating incentives in the form of publicity for those property agents who perform well;
 - Increasing awareness of poor property agents by publishing the bad results as well as the good;
 - Encouraging year-on-year improvements by being conducted annually and publishing details on positive change;
 - Equipping both property agents and the Students' Association, in particular the Student Advocate (Accommodation), with sufficient information to note and improve on particular weaknesses.

- To assist the Students' Association's representational work, by;
 - Highlighting and differentiating between the needs of undergraduates and postgraduates;
 - Attempting to quantify the need for affordable accommodation;
 - Providing supplementary information with which to advise University accommodation strategy – the addition of *University Managed Private Accommodation* to this year's survey should also help this.

ROLLOUT

This year, the survey was able to build on the positive reputation and awareness it generated last year. This time round, the survey was trialled a number of times prior to it going live so as to ensure that there were no faults – this was also easier since as there was a template to build on from last year. As a result it is agreed that all results are accurate.

Advertising for the survey was a less gradual process than last year, with. This time a thread was started on “The Sinner” shortly before we sent round a Facebook message to the accommodation-related groups and a Link-up on the day the survey went live. A few days later, a reminder link-up was sent round, closely followed by a further message on Facebook. Three days before the survey closed, a final round of messages were sent to remind people of their last chance to fill out the survey. The thread on “The Sinner” was updated regularly to ensure it continued to be in people's consciousness there. It is noted that the posters accompanying the survey publicity campaign did not arrive until late in the campaign – it is recommended that this issue is resolved for next year and that the posters (including one A0 for outside of the Union) are ready for the start of the campaign.

It is recommended that the 2010 survey be rolled out in the following order:

- Notice on the main board of the student message board 'The Sinner' (www.thesinner.net); this is good for collecting early feedback and detecting faults.
- Town-wide poster campaign (excluding halls of residence) – including one A0 poster to be outside of the Students' Association for the duration of the campaign.
- Facebook group or event.
- Wednesday memos.
- Linkup email.
- Second linkup email and reminder messages on The Sinner, Facebook and Wednesday Memos (2nd week of survey).

RESPONDENTS

335 students responded to the survey between 16/01/09 and 04/02/09. An incentive of £75 cash to be given at random to one respondent was offered. 216 rented from property agents, whilst 95 rented directly from private landlords. This left 16 renting from University-Managed Accommodation and a further 8 in the category of 'other'.

An estimated **3,175** students do not live in halls and therefore probably rent privately. However, it is difficult to determine how many rented privately last academic year, and it is also noted that many have since graduated and will not be able to respond to St Andrews-related messages because their webmail accounts will have been deactivated. Suffice to say that response was very positive (around 10% turn-out) but, once again, could be improved upon greatly.

Only students in possession of an active University of St Andrews username and password were permitted to take part. This information was verified by the University's LDAP database upon logging in to the online survey. Students were asked only to take part if they had rented privately during the previous academic year (2007/08).

One question was designed to determine whether survey respondents were broadly reflective of the student body:

1. *Are you an undergraduate or postgraduate?*
 - *Undergraduate – 289 (86.3%)*
 - *Postgraduate – 46 (13.7%)*

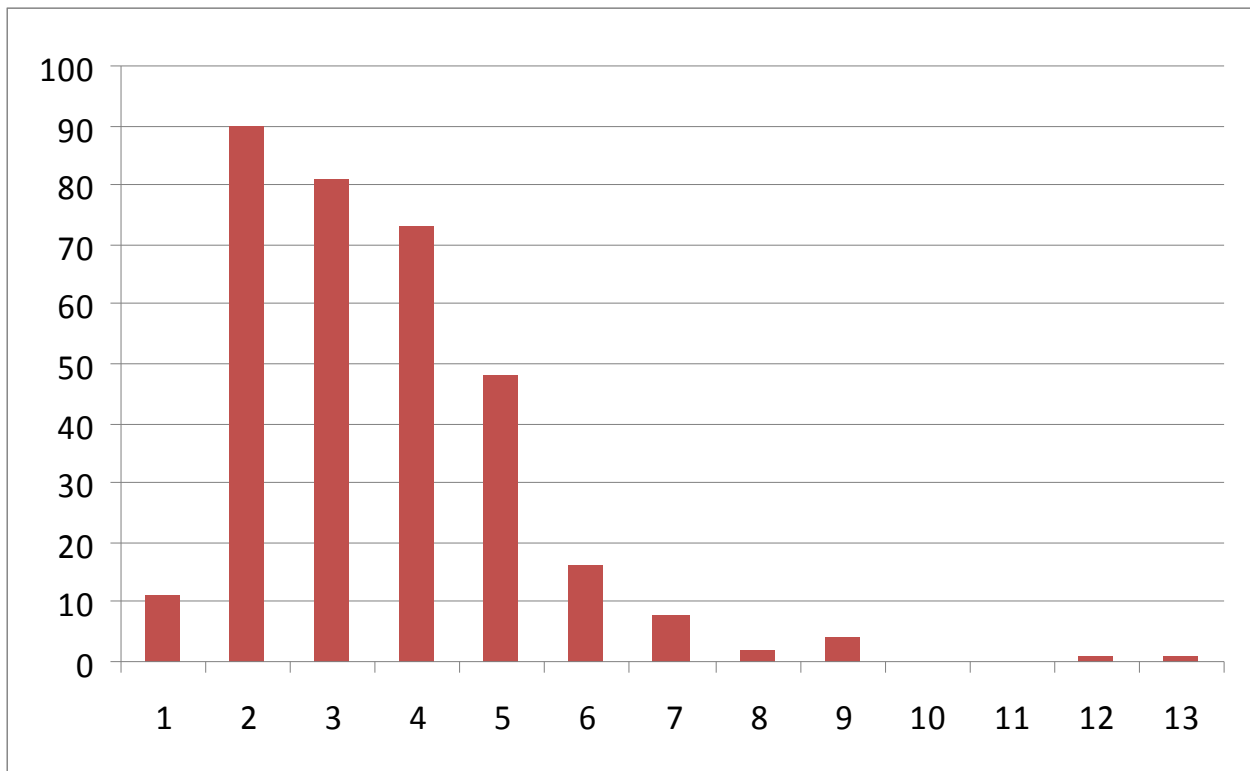
The gap between these figures is slightly larger than last year and do not quite reflect the actual proportion of undergraduates to postgraduates (actual equals 82% undergrad: 18% postgrad). This, however, is not a significant change but indicates that next year's survey could benefit from more advertising in the direction of postgraduates.

GENERAL OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

2. Please select the property agent/landlord you rented from last academic year (2007/08).

Murray Donald Drummond Cook now exists as one single entity for the year of this survey. St Andrews Student Leasing Ltd no longer existed too. For next year, it is advised that all agents on the list are checked to see if they still operate.

3. How many people did you live with?



BEFORE MOVING IN

4. "My landlord/agent provided the registration or licence number of the landlord on request"

Total:

- Yes – 33 (10%)
- No – 23 (7%)
- Not Requested – 278 (83%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Yes – 20 (9.3%)
- No – 15 (7%)
- Not Requested – 180 (83.7%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Yes – 10 (10.5%)
- No – 8 (8.4%)
- Not Requested – 77 (81.1%)

In general, we can suggest that we need to publicise to students that their agents/landlords should be able to show registration or licence numbers more as many do not request this when renting. It seems that only around 60% of requests result in the agent/landlord producing the proper documentation.

5. "My landlord/agent advised that he/she was a member of the Students' Association's Landlord/Tenant Charter"

Total:

- Yes – 31 (9.3%)
- No – 163 (48.7%)
- Can't remember – 141 (42%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Yes – 25 (11.6%)
- No – 101 (46.8%)
- Can't remember – 90 (41.6%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Yes – 5 (5.3%)
- No – 55 (57.9%)
- Can't remember – 35 (36.8%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Yes – 1 (6.2%)
- No – 4 (25%)
- Can't remember – 11 (68.8%)

It would appear that even though the Charter is having an ever increasing sign-up rate with landlords, the agents tend not to publicise the fact they are a member. We need to raise awareness with the agents and the tenants and promote the benefits of the scheme.

6. "My landlord/agent allowed 7 days to view the lease"

Total:

- Yes – 219 (65.4%)
- No – 80 (23.9%)
- Can't remember – 36 (10.7%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Yes – 149 (69%)
- No – 43 (19.9%)
- Can't remember – 24 (11.1%)

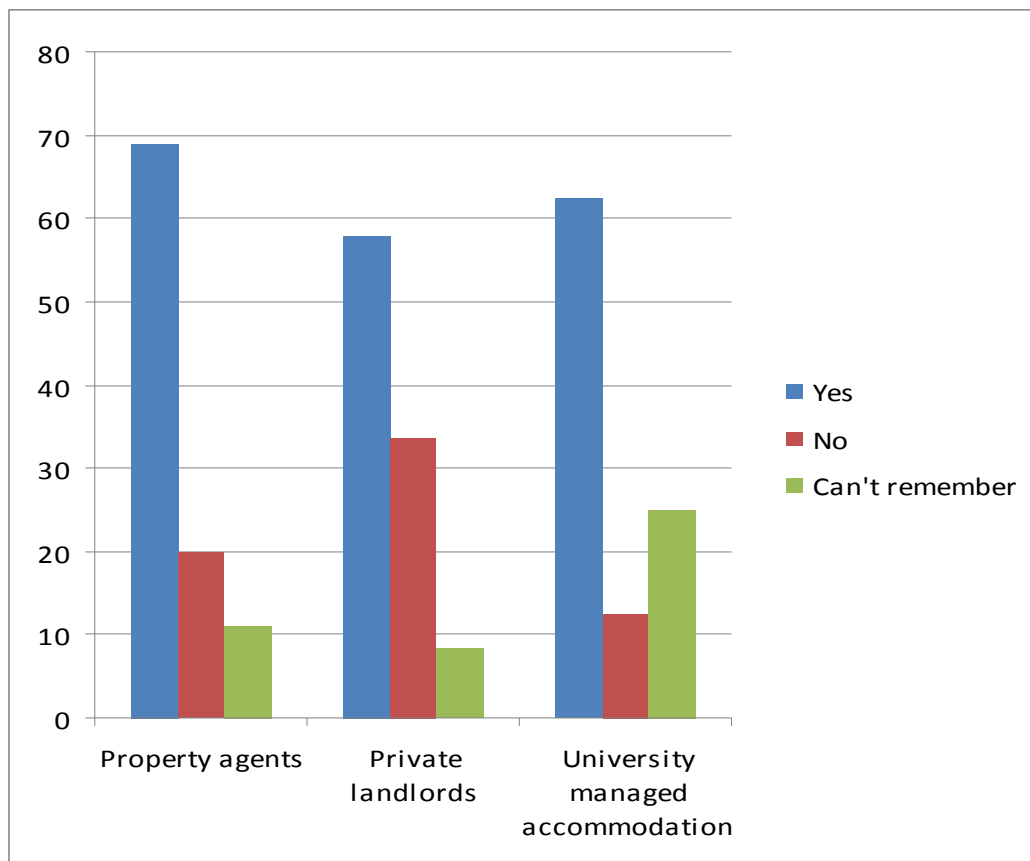
Those renting from private landlords:

- Yes – 55 (57.9%)
- No – 32 (33.7%)
- Can't remember – 8 (8.4%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Yes – 10 (62.5%)
- No – 2 (12.5%)
- Can't remember – 4 (25%)

It can be noted that a healthy proportion of landlords/agents allow the tenants the correct length of time to check over their leases. However, within this there is a concern that the private landlords, in general allow less time for the checking process. 1 in 5 students are not afforded their 7 days by agents compared to a significant 1 in 3 in the private sector.



7. "My landlord/agent requested payment (deposit/administration) prior to signing a lease"

Total:

- Yes – 164 (49%)
- No – 141 (42%)
- Can't remember – 30 (9%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Yes – 117 (54.1%)
- No – 79 (36.6%)
- Can't remember – 20 (9.3%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Yes – 36 (37.9%)
- No – 53 (55.8%)
- Can't remember – 6 (6.3%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Yes – 7 (43.8%)
- No – 6 (37.5%)
- Can't remember – 3 (18.8%)

Half of all respondents reported that they had to pay a fee prior to the signing of their lease. This number was significantly higher with agents over private landlords. The University-managed accommodation figure here is to be looked at. These numbers are significantly higher than last year – although the long time period between signing a lease and then filling in the survey could lead to some confused results. Agents have risen from 34% yes to 54% and private landlords from 26% to 37.9%.



8. "I paid a deposit of..."

Total:

- Less than 1 month's rent – 37 (11%)
- 1 month's rent – 259 (77.3%)
- 2 month's rent – 28 (8.4%)
- More than 2 month's rent – 4 (1.2%)
- No deposit – 7 (2.1%)
- Can't remember – 0 (n/a)

Those renting from property agents:

- Less than 1 month's rent – 24 (11.1%)
- 1 month's rent – 171 (79.1%)
- 2 month's rent – 17 (7.9%)
- More than 2 month's rent – 4 (1.9%)
- No deposit – 0 (n/a)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Less than 1 month's rent – 4 (4.2%)
- 1 month's rent – 76 (80%)
- 2 month's rent – 10 (10.5%)
- More than 2 month's rent – 0 (n/a)
- No deposit – 5 (5.3%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Less than 1 month's rent – 8 (50%)
- 1 month's rent – 7 (43.8%)
- 2 month's rent – 1 (6.3%)
- More than 2 month's rent – 0 (n/a)
- No deposit – 0 (n/a)

It would appear that most students are asked to pay one month's rent or less as a deposit (88.3%). Only 1.2% are asked to pay more than two months, and those cases should be looked into. The university-managed figures are very good here. Property agents also score well with less than 10% of students paying more than one month's rent as a deposit. Very few students, however, pay no deposit at all.

9. "My property had an HMO licence"

Total:

- Yes – 193 (57.6%)
- No – 21 (6.3%)
- Not required for property – 62 (18.5%)
- Can't remember – 59 (17.6%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Yes – 130 (60.2%)
- No – 15 (6.9%)
- Not required for property – 35 (16.2%)
- Can't remember – 36 (16.7%)

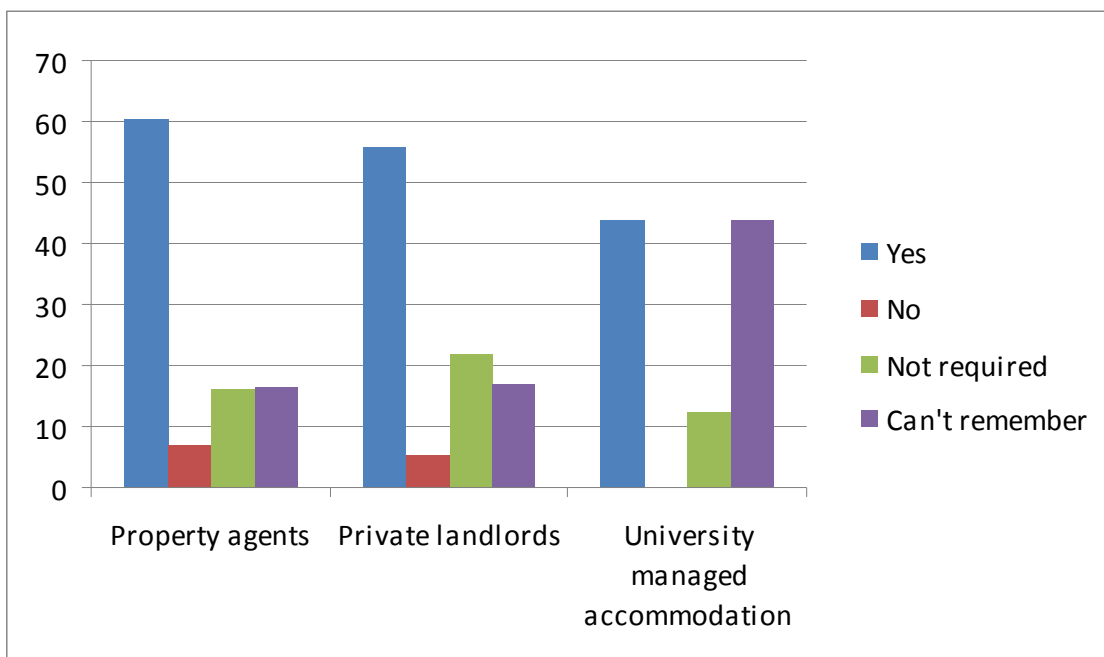
Those renting from private landlords:

- Yes – 53 (55.8%)
- No – 5 (5.3%)
- Not required for property – 21 (22.1%)
- Can't remember – 16 (16.8%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Yes – 7 (43.8%)
- No – 0 (n/a)
- Not required for property – 2 (12.5%)
- Can't remember – 7 (43.8%)

In general, it would appear 75-80% of properties are complying with HMO regulations. A further 15-20% of respondents are unsure about the state on their property last year in relation to this, but by seeing how many do comply, we could reasonably assume that around 90-95% are in compliance. We must continue to push the laws around HMO requirements to the student body so that they know what to look out for and what the reporting procedure is for those not following the restrictions. It is possible that there was some confusion between the answer of 'No' and the answer 'Not Required for Property' if people selected the 'no' answer too soon. This could be looked into for next year.



UPON MOVING IN

10. "My accommodation was well maintained"

Total:

- Strongly Agree – 98 (29.3%)
- Agree – 152 (45.4%)
- Disagree – 59 (17.6%)
- Strongly Disagree – 26 (7.8%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Strongly Agree – 50 (23.1%)
- Agree – 100 (46.3%)
- Disagree – 44 (20.4%)
- Strongly Disagree – 22 (10.2%)

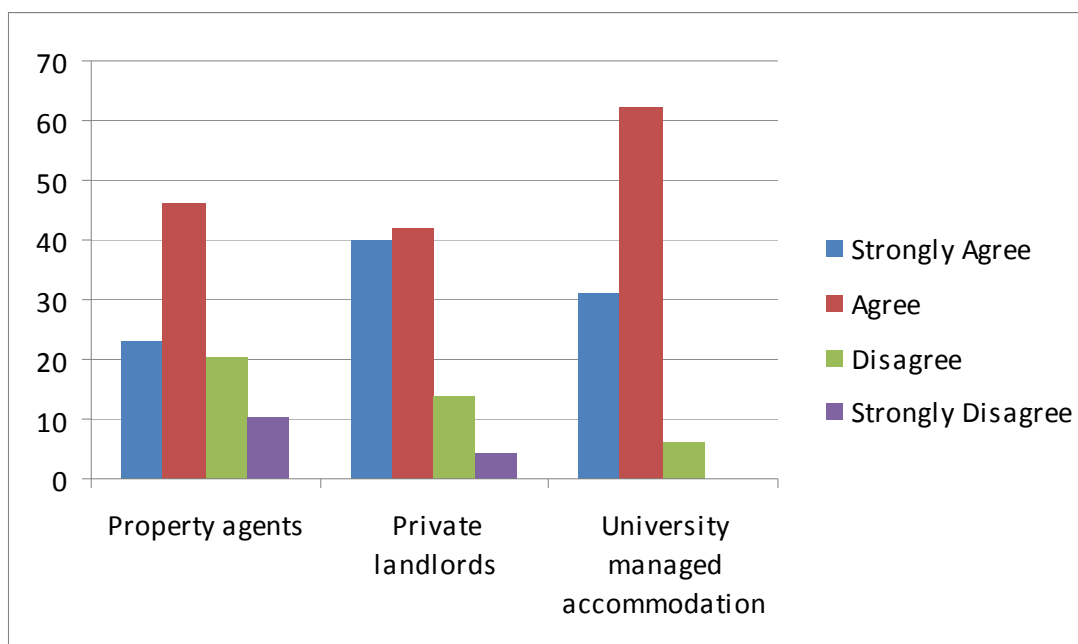
Those renting from private landlords:

- Strongly Agree – 38 (40%)
- Agree – 40 (42.1%)
- Disagree – 13 (13.7%)
- Strongly Disagree – 4 (4.2%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Strongly Agree – 5 (31.3%)
- Agree – 10 (62.5%)
- Disagree – 1 (6.3%)
- Strongly Disagree – 0 (n/a)

Around 95% of respondents in university-managed accommodation were satisfied with the maintenance of their accommodation. >80% of those renting from private landlords were equally happy. Two agents in particular dragged down the satisfaction rates within agents sector achieving only 50:50 satisfaction /dissatisfaction results. This contributed to 30% of respondents who selected disagree/strongly disagree. In general, figures slightly improved on last year.



11. "My accommodation was clean and well equipped upon arrival"

Total:

- Strongly Agree – 116 (34.6%)
- Agree – 121 (36.1%)
- Disagree – 67 (20%)
- Strongly Disagree – 31 (9.3%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Strongly Agree – 60 (27.8%)
- Agree – 78 (36.1%)
- Disagree – 50 (23.1%)
- Strongly Disagree – 28 (13%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Strongly Agree – 46 (48.4%)
- Agree – 31 (32.6%)
- Disagree – 15 (15.8%)
- Strongly Disagree – 3 (3.2%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Strongly Agree – 5 (31.3%)
- Agree – 11 (68.7%)
- Disagree – 0 (n/a)
- Strongly Disagree – 0 (n/a)

Private and university-managed accommodation again out-performed the agents here in general. There is a 40% higher-than-average number of those in agent-based accommodation who strongly disagreed to the statement (9% average, 13% for agents). In this case, there were three agents who scored over 50% dissatisfaction. It is important to remember that there are a number of agents who still scored well in this category.

12. "My landlord/agent provided a valid Inventory of Contents"

Total:

- Strongly Agree – 93 (27.8%)
- Agree – 129 (38.5%)
- Disagree – 65 (19.4%)
- Strongly Disagree – 48 (14.3%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Strongly Agree – 58 (26.8%)
- Agree – 97 (44.9%)
- Disagree – 39 (18.1%)
- Strongly Disagree – 22 (10.2%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Strongly Agree – 26 (27.4%)
- Agree – 21 (22.1%)
- Disagree – 24 (25.3%)
- Strongly Disagree – 24 (25.3%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Strongly Agree – 4 (25%)
- Agree – 9 (56.2%)
- Disagree – 2 (12.5%)
- Strongly Disagree – 1 (6.3%)

In general, this is an area that can be greatly and easily improved upon. Agents vastly outperform private lets in this case with there being a 50:50 split between agreement and disagreement over the quality of inventories in the private sector.

DURING THE YEAR

13. "My rent per calendar month (£) was:

Total:

- <300 – 41 (12.2%)
- 301-350 – 143 (42.7%)
- 351-400 – 84 (25.1%)
- 401-450 – 37 (11%)
- >450 – 30 (9%)

Those renting from property agents:

- <300 – 14 (6.5%)
- 301-350 – 87 (40.3%)
- 351-400 – 70 (32.4%)
- 401-450 – 27 (12.5%)
- >450 – 18 (8.3%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- <300 – 21 (22.1%)
- 301-350 – 47 (49.5%)
- 351-400 – 10 (10.5%)
- 401-450 – 10 (10.5%)
- >450 – 7 (7.4%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- <300 – 5 (31.25%)
- 301-350 – 8 (50%)
- 351-400 – 1 (6.25%)
- 401-450 – 0 (n/a)
- >450 – 2 (12.5%)

It would appear that the average wage (median) is somewhere in the £351-400 category. It also appears that agents are charging higher rents on average than private landlords with only 46% of rents in the lowest two sections. This compares to 71% in the private landlords. This is a question that can be monitored year on year to provide interesting results. It is important to note that no one agent stands out for having high rents. This indicates that there is a relatively even spread from our limited information.

14. "My landlord/agent was easy to contact"

Total:

- Strongly Agree – 140 (41.8%)
- Agree – 142 (42.4%)
- Disagree – 32 (9.6%)
- Strongly Disagree – 21 (6.3%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Strongly Agree – 82 (38%)
- Agree – 95 (44%)
- Disagree – 24 (11.1%)
- Strongly Disagree – 15 (6.9%)

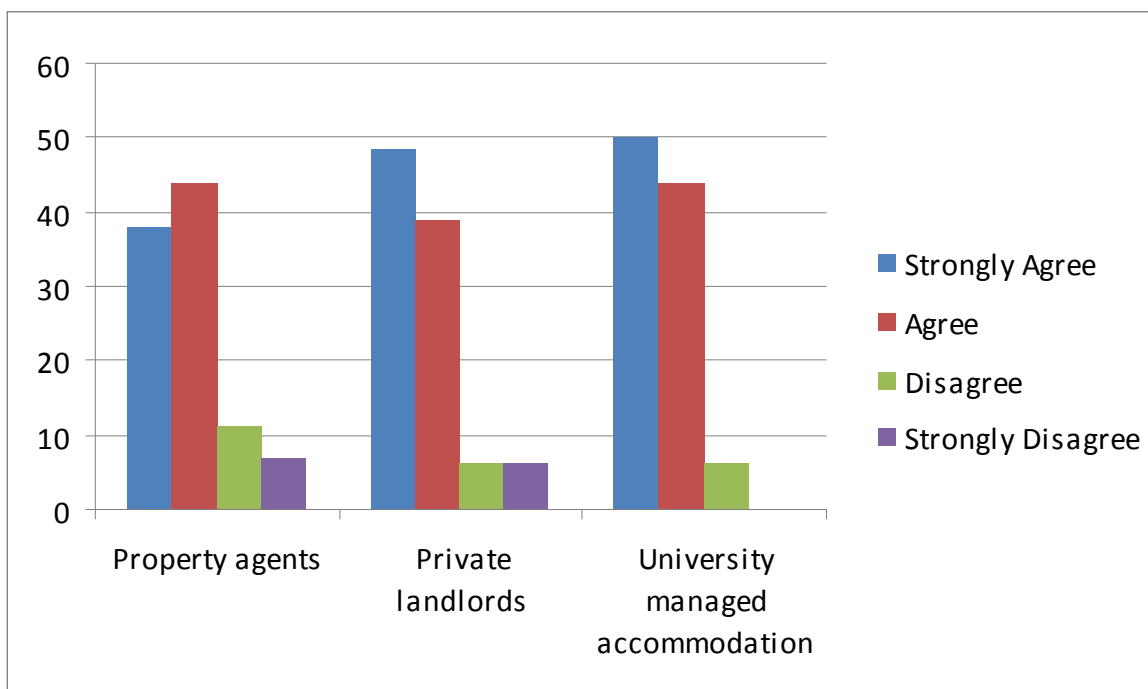
Those renting from private landlords:

- Strongly Agree – 46 (48.4%)
- Agree – 37 (38.9%)
- Disagree – 6 (6.3%)
- Strongly Disagree – 6 (6.3%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Strongly Agree – 8 (50%)
- Agree – 7 (43.7%)
- Disagree – 1 (6.3%)
- Strongly Disagree – 0 (n/a)

It would appear from our responses that the vast majority are able to contact their agent/landlord with relative ease. Private landlords have a slight advantage over agents, but the difference is minimal. Results are higher than previously.



15. *“My landlord/agent responded to any enquiry in a professional manner, fairly and quickly”*

Total:

- Strongly Agree – 112 (33.4%)
- Agree – 109 (32.5%)
- Disagree – 65 (19.5%)
- Strongly Disagree – 49 (14.6%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Strongly Agree – 64 (29.6%)
- Agree – 69 (31.9%)
- Disagree – 45 (20.8%)
- Strongly Disagree – 38 (17.7%)

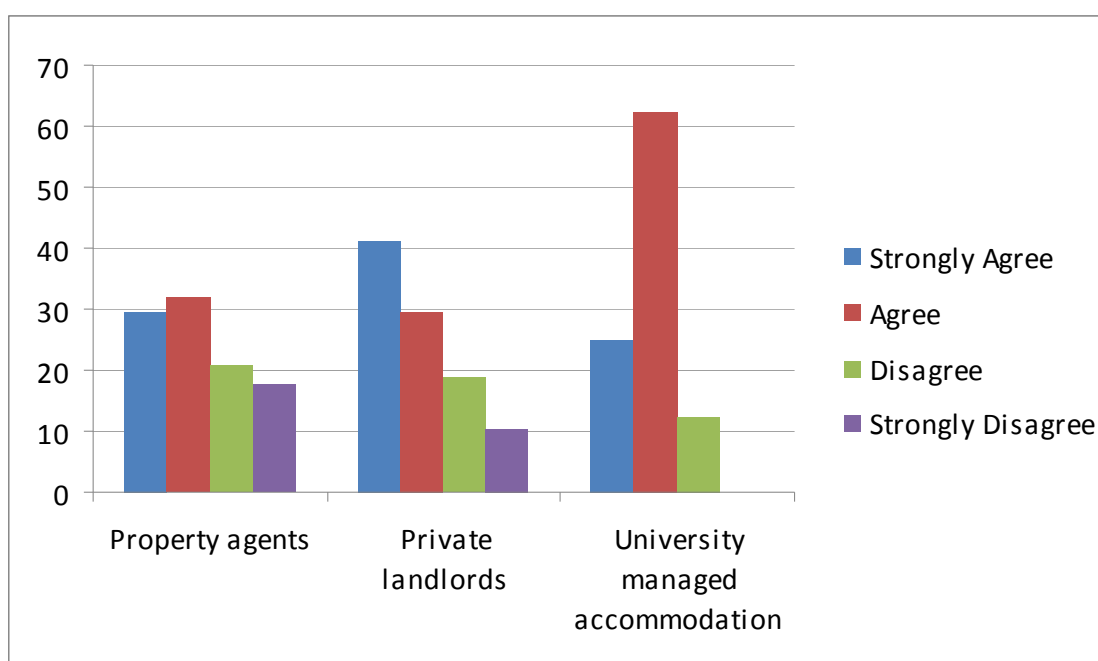
Those renting from private landlords:

- Strongly Agree – 39 (41.1%)
- Agree – 28 (29.5%)
- Disagree – 18 (18.9%)
- Strongly Disagree – 10 (10.5%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Strongly Agree – 4 (25%)
- Agree – 10 (62.5%)
- Disagree – 2 (12.5%)
- Strongly Disagree – 0 (n/a)

The results indicate more of a disparity here between agents, landlords and the university. Around 65% of respondents believe that the manner and time in which their problems were dealt with by agents or landlords whereas for the university managed accommodation it is closer to 90%.



16. *“My landlord/agent provided at least 24 hours notice for access/inspections (not including emergencies)”*

Total:

- Yes – 262 (78.2%)
- No – 73 (21.8%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Yes – 174 (80.6%)
- No – 42 (19.4%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Yes – 67 (70.5%)
- No – 28 (29.5%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Yes – 14 (87.5%)
- No – 2 (12.5%)

It appears that for the most part (four in five) sufficient notice is given as per the terms of most leases. However, it must be noted that private landlords are more likely to simply turn up at their properties without notice (30%). This could be due to a lack of an agent to keep an eye on things and that many landlords live out of town and drop in on their properties on the random days they end up in St Andrews. However, this must be discouraged so that proper notice is observed.

17. “I felt secure in my accommodation (i.e. fully working locks on doors/windows & fire safety equipment provided)”

Total:

- Strongly Agree – 150 (44.8%)
- Agree – 132 (39.4%)
- Disagree – 40 (11.9%)
- Strongly Disagree – 13 (3.9%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Strongly Agree – 89 (41.2%)
- Agree – 92 (42.6%)
- Disagree – 26 (12%)
- Strongly Disagree – 9 (4.2%)

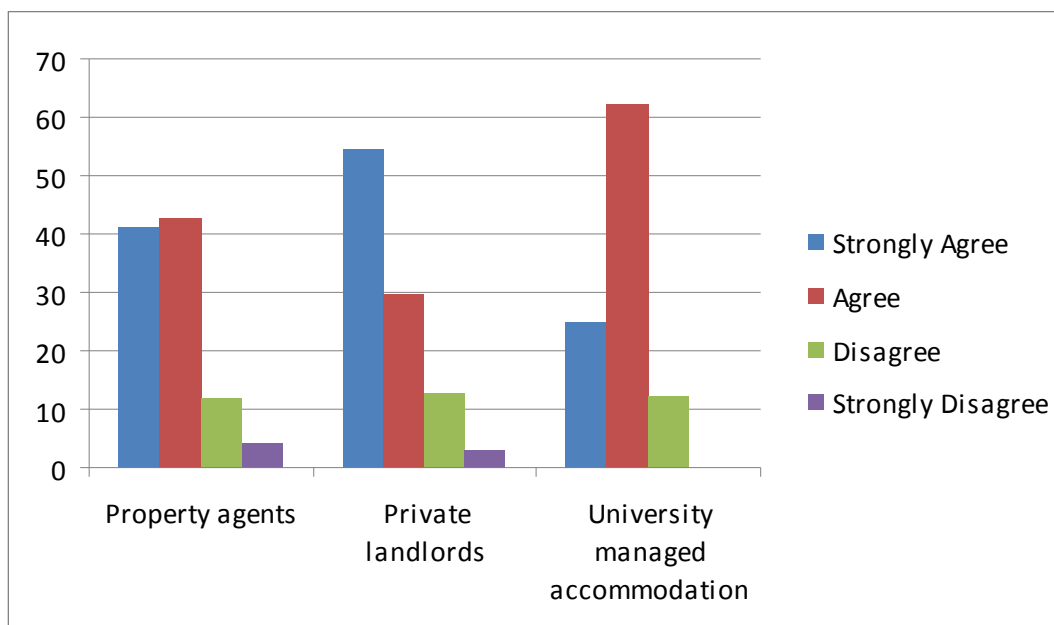
Those renting from private landlords:

- Strongly Agree – 52 (54.7%)
- Agree – 28 (29.5%)
- Disagree – 12 (12.6%)
- Strongly Disagree – 3 (3.2%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Strongly Agree – 4 (25%)
- Agree – 10 (62.5%)
- Disagree – 2 (12.5%)
- Strongly Disagree – 0 (n/a)

Again, the 80% majority reported feeling secure. This figure did not really alter over the different letting methods.



SINCE MOVING OUT

18. Please specify the length of time between the date your lease terminated and the date your deposit was returned:

Total:

- Less than 28 days – 51 (15.2%)
- More than 28 days – 98 (29.3%)
- Still not returned – 19 (5.7%)
- N/A (i.e. no deposit due back or carried over to current year) – 167 (49.8%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Less than 28 days – 31 (14.4%)
- More than 28 days – 78 (36.1%)
- Still not returned – 10 (4.6%)
- N/A – 97 (44.9%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Less than 28 days – 17 (17.9%)
- More than 28 days – 18 (18.9%)
- Still not returned – 7 (7.4%)
- N/A – 53 (55.8%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Less than 28 days – 1 (6.25%)
- More than 28 days – 2 (12.5%)
- Still not returned – 1 (6.25%)
- N/A – 12 (75%)

A much lower number of respondents reported that their deposits were still not returned than may be anticipated. As with last year's results, it still seems as if there is a problem with deposits taking more than 28 days to be returned to the tenants. It is also important to note that there is a very high number of N/A results here. This is likely because many students decided to remain in the same property for this year and so rolled over their payment. There also may still be confusion from students as to what counts as 28 days – and may count from when they left rather than at lease termination. Last year around 50% of renters from property agents and 45% from private landlords had received their deposits back whereas now it's slightly down on that. The drops in both of these are countered by the increase in N/A answers.

19. *“Any deductions from my deposit were justified and receipts were provided”*

Total:

- Strongly Agree – 25 (7.6%)
- Agree – 60 (17.9%)
- Disagree – 36 (10.7%)
- Strongly Disagree – 45 (13.4%)
- No Deductions – 169 (50.4%)

Those renting from property agents:

- Strongly Agree – 13 (6%)
- Agree – 45 (20.8%)
- Disagree – 32 (14.8%)
- Strongly Disagree – 28 (13%)
- No Deductions – 98 (45.4%)

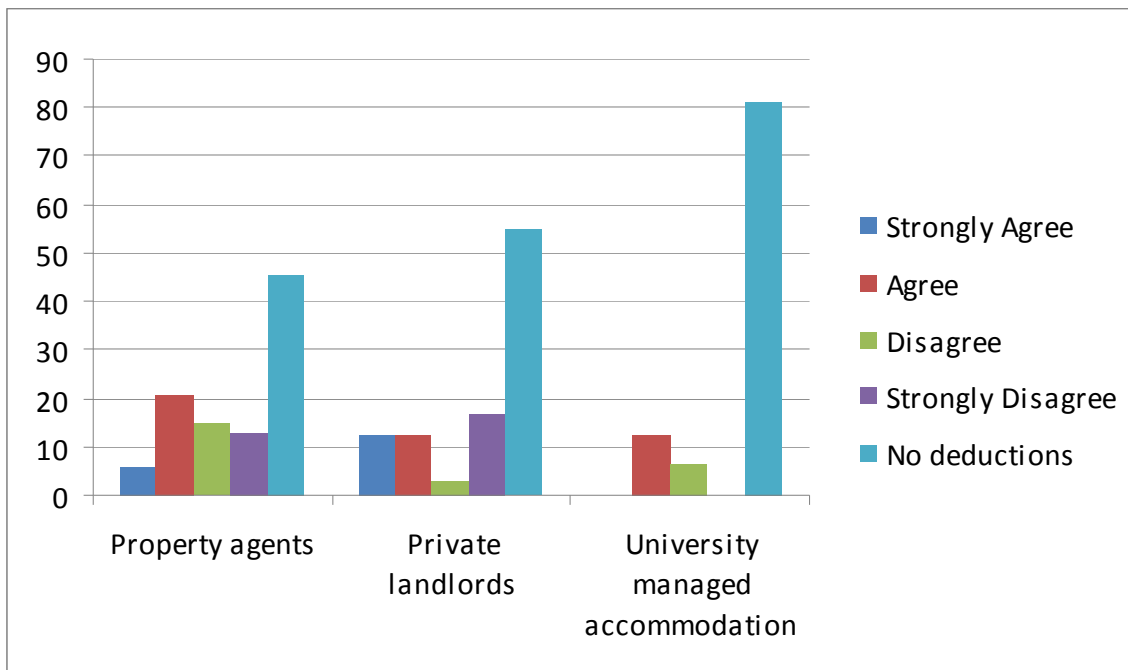
Those renting from private landlords:

- Strongly Agree – 12 (12.6%)
- Agree – 12 (12.6%)
- Disagree – 3 (3.2%)
- Strongly Disagree – 16 (16.8%)
- No Deductions – 52 (54.7%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Strongly Agree – 0 (n/a)
- Agree – 2 (12.5%)
- Disagree – 1 (6.3%)
- Strongly Disagree – 0 (n/a)
- No Deductions – 13 (81.2%)

On average, a very healthy 50% of students received no deductions to their deposits. Roughly equal proportions of people in private and agent-based believe that their deductions were fair and proportionate whereas there is a difference between those who disagree that deductions were fair (28% in agents and 20% in private landlords). The percentage with no deductions fell overall from last year's totals



20. "Bearing in mind my answers to all the above questions, I would recommend the landlord/agent to other students"

Total:

- Strongly Agree – 116 (34.6%)
- Agree – 117 (34.9%)
- Disagree – 47 (14.1%)
- Strongly Disagree – 55 (16.4%)

Those renting from property agents:

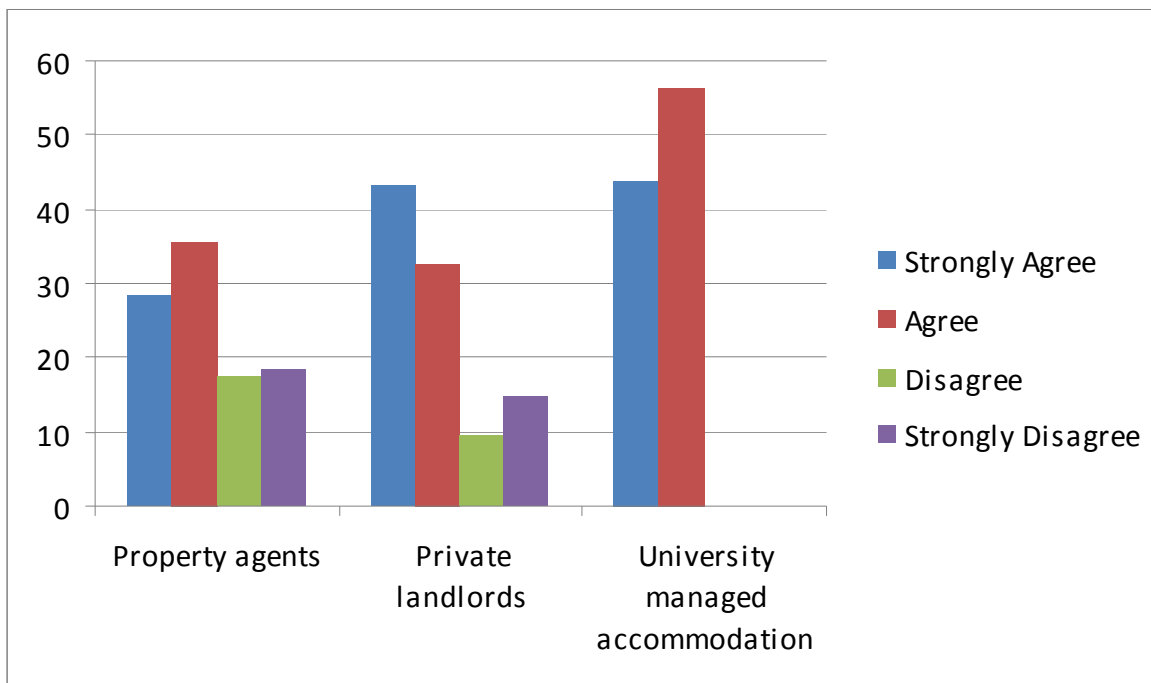
- Strongly Agree – 61 (28.2%)
- Agree – 77 (35.6%)
- Disagree – 38 (17.6%)
- Strongly Disagree – 40 (18.6%)

Those renting from private landlords:

- Strongly Agree – 41 (43.2%)
- Agree – 31 (32.6%)
- Disagree – 9 (9.5%)
- Strongly Disagree – 14 (14.7%)

Those in University managed accommodation:

- Strongly Agree – 7 (43.8%)
- Agree – 9 (56.3%)
- Disagree – 0 (n/a)
- Strongly Disagree – 0 (n/a)

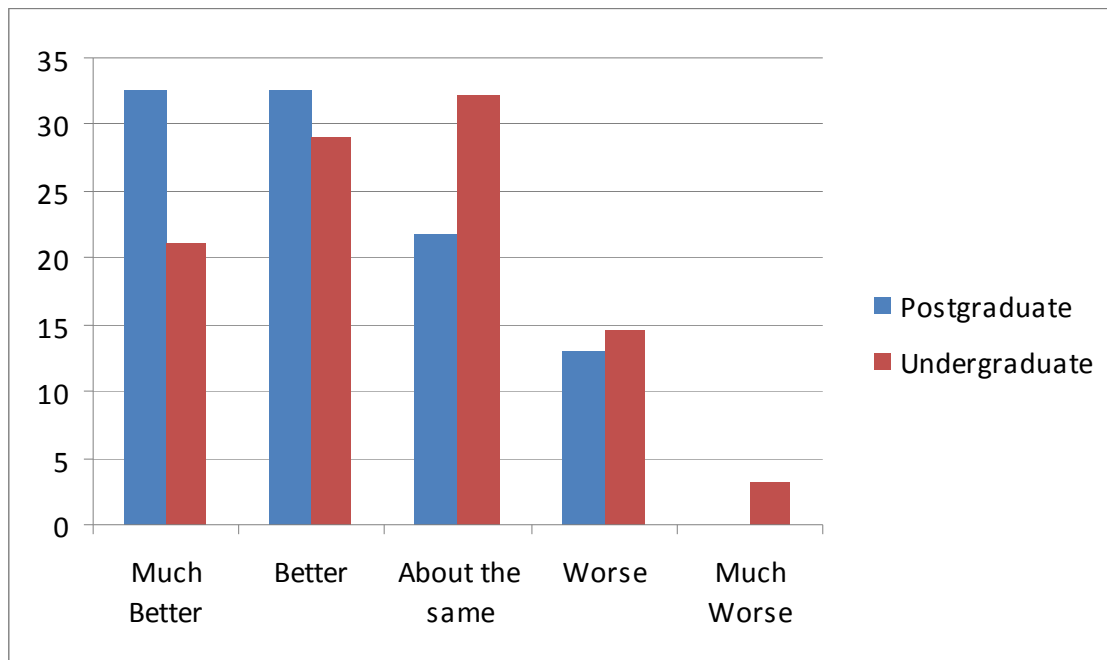


ABOUT YOU

21. How do you think the value for money of your current accommodation compares to the value for money of halls?

Total:

- Much Better – 76 (22.7%)
- Better – 99 (29.6%)
- About the Same – 103 (30.7%)
- Worse – 48 (14.3%)
- Much Worse – 9 (2.7%)



22. Which method of rent payment best suits your needs (bearing in mind the timing of any payments you may receive from the SLC/SAAS)?

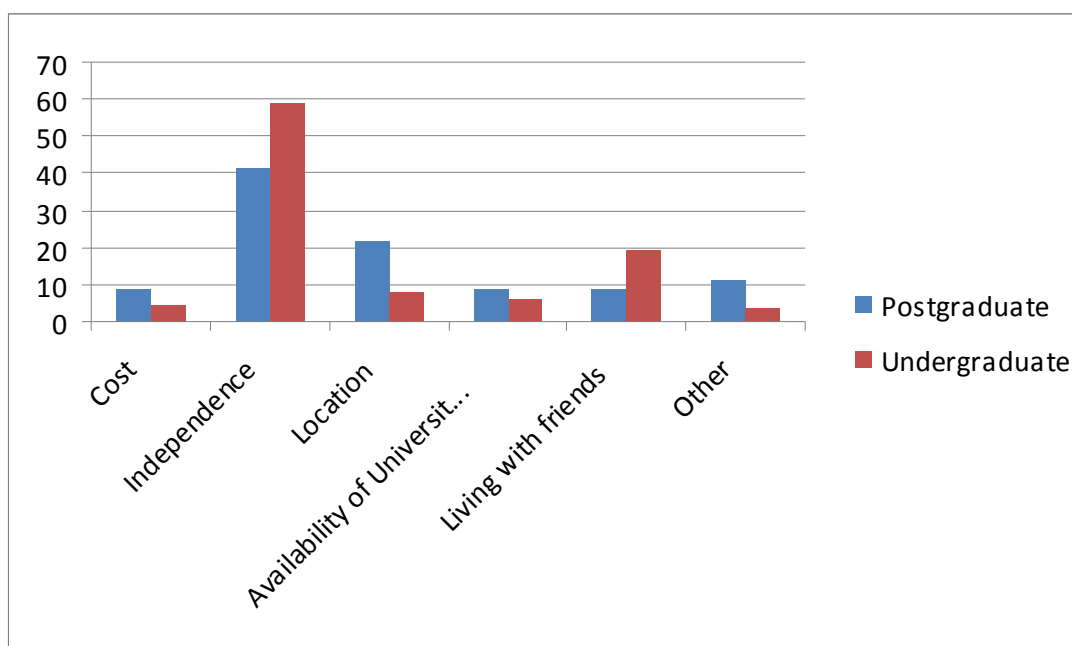
Total:

- Weekly – 3 (0.9%)
- Monthly – 218 (65.1%)
- Quarterly – 74 (22.1%)
- No Preference – 40 (11.9%)

23. What was the major factor behind your decision to live in private accommodation?

Total:

- Cost – 16 (4.8%)
- Independence – 189 (56.4%)
- Location – 34 (10.1%)
- Availability of University Accommodation – 22 (6.6%)
- Living With Friends – 59 (17.6%)
- Other – 15 (4.5%)



24. Where did you live last year?

Total:

- St Andrews – 317 (94.6%)
- Out of Town – 18 (5.4%)

All the results to the questions in this section are very similar when compared to last year's results. Value for money is rated the same as undergrads did on average last year; a monthly preference for rent payments again is the choice of the majority of respondents; independence scored almost identical to last year and the other factors scored in the same order; and we see a similar result again to last year with the split between St Andrews residents and those living out of town.

THE 2009/10 SURVEY

It is highly recommended that the survey be repeated in October 2009 by the SRC Accommodation Committee. Only positive results for property agents were published in 2007, in order to encourage a co-operative relationship with agents. The 2009 results were indeed published in full, as poor-performing agents will have had 12 months in order to improve standards. The 2009 Accommodation Committee should review this document in full and make modifications to the survey questions as required.

Phil Pass
SRC Accommodation Officer

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