



Tenant Satisfaction and the “London Effect”

The Tenant Services Authority has a real opportunity to ensure that measuring tenant satisfaction is updated and improved in order to provide a more realistic assessment of the services being delivered. Without this change, tenant satisfaction ratings will remain limited in both their scope and credibility.

One example of factors that should be taken into account arises from recent research carried out by HouseMark and Ipsos MORI which found that regional variations have an impact on satisfaction levels, including a "London Effect". The research was based on three separate sets of research findings. First, the research looked at local authority 2006/7 BVPI tenant satisfaction data to see whether or not regional variations have an impact on both resident and tenant satisfaction levels. In addition, the research collected data on tenant satisfaction levels for the G15 housing associations, both inside and outside London. Finally, taking into account demographic and other factors influencing satisfaction levels, the research considered whether G15 housing associations actually perform better or worse in London than might be expected.

The Results

According to the findings, there is a "London Effect", with satisfaction levels for both housing and other public services lower than nationally.

Published local authority 2006/7 BVPI data shows that council tenant satisfaction with their local authority landlord, including ALMOs, has been consistently lower for London boroughs compared with other regions.

Although the research generally focused on housing, Ipsos MORI's own BVPI surveys show that London residents are generally less positive across a range of other public services compared with the rest of the country. For example, with the exception of London buses which are highly rated, satisfaction levels are not only lower for housing but also education, personal social services and waste collection in London than nationally. This could mean that either each of these services is worse in London, or Londoners generally give lower satisfaction scores for similar service levels.

In addition, HouseMark used the G15 housing associations' STATUS survey data to look at whether or not satisfaction levels are correspondingly lower for their tenants living in London compared with those outside the capital. This shows that most associations with stock only or almost only in London have lower satisfaction scores than those with a mix of London and out-of-London stock, generally “uplifted” by the more positive results outside London. This result is consistent with the research findings that the “London effect” does impact on satisfaction levels.

Finally, HouseMark used Ipsos MORI's Frontiers analysis, which compares an organisation's actual, recorded performance – satisfaction - with their predicted level,

derived from a model which takes into account a range of other demographic factors. The findings show that most G15 associations' "actual" satisfaction levels in specific London boroughs are higher than the "predicted" score for those boroughs – they are performing better than might be expected. The research also found that G15 associations generally outperform boroughs that have retained management of most of their housing stock, although are generally out-performed by London ALMOs, which have been set up to specifically improve council housing.

Conclusion

Measuring tenant satisfaction does require a more sophisticated method of assessment, which should include taking into account the impact demographic factors, such as regional variations, have on results. The research carried out by HouseMark and Ipsos MORI clearly highlights the particular effect London has on satisfaction levels, not only for housing but also other public services, and it is crucial that this is recognised and addressed by the Tenant Services Authority when comparing the tenant satisfaction performance of social landlords.

Victor DaCunha
Chair, Housing Directors Group, G15

Ross Fraser
Chief Executive, HouseMark

Toby Taper
HouseMark Associate and Visiting
Professor, Bristol University