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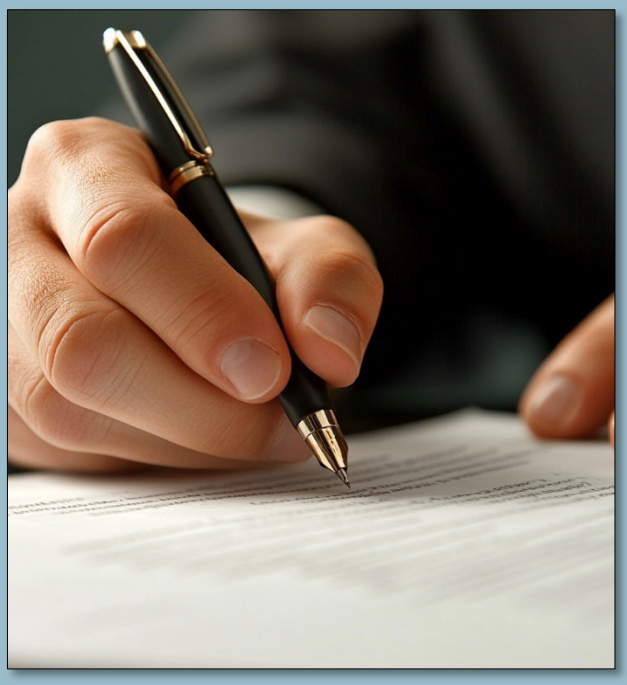

RETIREMENT VILLAGE CONTRACTS

FINAL REPORT

MARCH 2025

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Executive Summary

This report examines the experiences of 4,115 retirement village residents across Australia, providing valuable insights into the benefits of village living as well as areas where improvements can enhance resident satisfaction and financial security.

The study aimed to explore the decision-making process, contractual understanding, financial obligations, and overall resident satisfaction. A key strength of this study is its large sample size and broad representation, with respondents from all Australian states, ensuring that the findings reflect a diverse range of experiences and perspectives.

The findings highlight the overwhelmingly positive aspects of retirement village living. Many residents report that their decision to move into a village has improved their quality of life, providing a strong sense of community, increased security, and access to convenient services and social activities.

Reduced home maintenance responsibilities and the availability of support services were also cited as significant benefits. The structured nature of village living allows residents to maintain independence while enjoying a more connected and socially fulfilling lifestyle.

While the benefits of village life are clear, the study also identified areas for improvement. A significant proportion of residents reported difficulties in understanding their contracts, particularly in relation to financial obligations such as exit fees and capital gains entitlements.

The complexity of these agreements has led to uncertainty for some residents, particularly those who moved into a village over a decade ago, before recent legislative reforms improved disclosure requirements. The findings suggest that clearer contract explanations and improved financial transparency would help new and existing residents feel more secure in their financial commitments.

There were also notable differences in resident experiences across states. Residents in NSW and Victoria, where consumer protections have been strengthened in recent years, reported higher levels of understanding regarding their financial obligations.

In contrast, residents in South Australia and Western Australia expressed more concerns about contract clarity and financial transparency, though recent legislative changes in these states are expected to improve protections.

Long-term residents, particularly those who have lived in a village for more than 11 years, were more likely to express dissatisfaction with financial aspects of their contracts, highlighting the need for operators to proactively engage with this group to provide support and greater clarity.

Reforms in several states have introduced clearer Disclosure Statements, more standardized contract terms, and stronger consumer protections. These changes are contributing to a more transparent and equitable retirement village industry.

Continued efforts by policymakers, advocacy groups, and village operators will further enhance these improvements, ensuring that all residents benefit from clearer financial structures and fairer contractual terms.

Based on these findings, the report outlines practical recommendations for village operators, policymakers, advocacy groups, and residents.

Operators can enhance contract clarity by providing plain-language summaries and financial literacy workshops, while policymakers should continue strengthening consumer protections and enforcing uniform disclosure standards across all states.

Advocacy groups can use these findings to push for further regulatory reforms and increase public awareness of resident rights.

Residents themselves are encouraged to seek independent legal and financial advice before signing contracts and to remain engaged in village governance to advocate for transparency and fairness.

Overall, the outlook for the retirement village sector is positive. With increasing regulatory oversight, improved financial transparency, and a stronger emphasis on consumer protection, retirement villages will continue to offer a secure and enriching lifestyle for older Australians.

By working together, operators, policymakers, advocacy groups, and residents can build a fairer and more sustainable model for village living, ensuring that future generations benefit from the best possible retirement village experience.

Introduction

Deciding to move into a retirement village is a significant life transition that carries long-term implications for an individual's personal and financial wellbeing. This decision is often influenced by a range of factors, including the desire to downsize, reduce home maintenance responsibilities, and access a community that offers social engagement and support.

Given the complexity of retirement village living in Australia, it is crucial that prospective residents fully understand the operational framework of these communities, the legal and financial commitments involved, and the implications of their decision before signing a contract.

This research survey aims to explore the process individuals go through when considering a move into a retirement village. It examines the extent of their knowledge about how retirement villages operate in Australia, the research they conducted prior to making their decision, and their understanding of the contractual obligations they must adhere to.

The study also investigates the primary motivations for making the transition, such as seeking a lifestyle change, ensuring access to care and support services, or alleviating concerns about home upkeep and security.

A central aspect of this research is the level of awareness and comprehension prospective residents have regarding the legal and financial structures underpinning retirement village contracts.

These agreements typically include detailed provisions concerning ongoing fees, exit fees, and other financial obligations that may have lasting consequences.

Recurrent charges, which cover the ongoing costs of maintaining communal facilities and services, can vary significantly between villages and may impact long-term affordability.

Exit fees, often structured as deferred management fees, can be substantial and influence the financial return an individual receives if they choose to leave the village.

Despite the importance of these financial considerations, there is concern that many individuals do not fully grasp the implications of these charges when entering into an agreement.

The survey also examines residents' understanding of the rules and regulations governing retirement village living. These communities operate under specific legislation that varies by state and outlines residents' rights, obligations, and dispute resolution processes. However, the complexity of these regulations can be a barrier to comprehension, particularly for those unfamiliar with legal terminology.

A lack of awareness or misunderstanding of these rules can lead to unforeseen challenges, including restrictions on property modifications, limitations on visitors, or unexpected costs associated with village services.

By investigating these key areas, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the decision-making process of prospective retirement village residents. It aims to identify common gaps in knowledge and areas where additional support or clearer information may be needed to assist individuals in making informed choices.

Understanding how people navigate this process can help policymakers, retirement village operators, and advocacy groups improve the transparency of information and ensure that prospective residents are well-equipped to make decisions that align with their personal and financial goals.

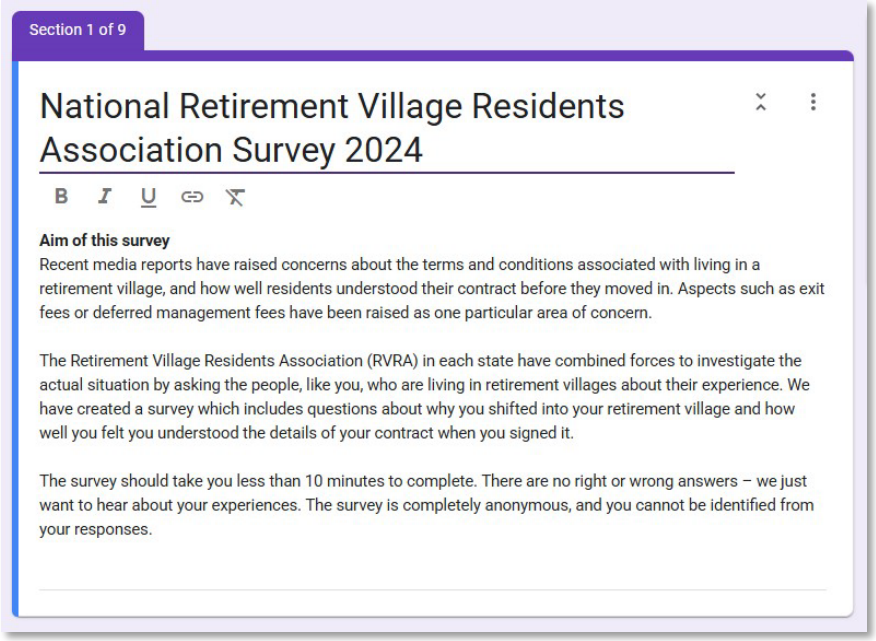
Ultimately, moving into a retirement village is a major life choice that requires careful consideration and thorough understanding of all associated obligations. This study highlights the importance of informed decision-making and seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion about how best to support older Australians in planning for their future housing and lifestyle needs.

Key issues addressed in this survey

- Did residents sign their contract without understanding what they were signing?
- Did residents understand that buying into a retirement village is different than purchasing a home through the real estate process?
- Were residents aware that there may be a Deferred Management Fee or exit fee payable when the villa/unit was sold?
- Were residents aware they may get none, some, or all, of the capital gain after sale of the villa/unit?

Methodology

This study was conducted in collaboration with the Residents Associations from New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory to ensure broad representation across all Australian states. An anonymous online survey was developed and distributed to residents of retirement villages nationwide, providing an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and perspectives.


Section 1 of 9

National Retirement Village Residents Association Survey 2024

Aim of this survey

Recent media reports have raised concerns about the terms and conditions associated with living in a retirement village, and how well residents understood their contract before they moved in. Aspects such as exit fees or deferred management fees have been raised as one particular area of concern.

The Retirement Village Residents Association (RVRA) in each state have combined forces to investigate the actual situation by asking the people, like you, who are living in retirement villages about their experience. We have created a survey which includes questions about why you shifted into your retirement village and how well you felt you understood the details of your contract when you signed it.

The survey should take you less than 10 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers – we just want to hear about your experiences. The survey is completely anonymous, and you cannot be identified from your responses.

The survey was designed to capture detailed information about the resident experience, including the decision-making process when moving into a village, understanding of contractual agreements, and overall satisfaction with village life. To ensure a comprehensive analysis, the survey incorporated both closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Demographic information was gathered, including gender, age, state of residence, and the length of time the respondent had lived in the village.

The survey was structured into seven main sections:

1. Demographic Information
2. Planning to Move into a Retirement Village
3. Understanding of Contracts
4. Contract Conditions
5. Exit Fees – Deferred Management Fees
6. Capital Gains
7. Additional Costs

A total of 35 questions were included in the survey, with a mix of multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions to provide a well-rounded dataset. The survey took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete.

Prior to full implementation, a pilot study was conducted with a sample group, including representatives from each state's retirement village association. The pilot phase helped refine the questionnaire by identifying ambiguous wording and assessing the estimated completion time. Based on participant feedback, minor adjustments were made to improve clarity and ensure that the final survey was user-friendly and accessible to all respondents.

Data was collected using the Google Forms online platform, which allowed for anonymous data capture.

The Retirement Village Association in each state sent an invitation to their members via email and through newsletters, bulletins and on association websites.

Participating retirement village associations

- Australian Capital Territory – ACT RVRA
- New South Wales - RVRA
- Queensland – ARQRV
- South Australia SRVA
- Tasmania - TARRV
- Victoria - RRVV
- Western Australia - WARVRA

Email invitations were also distributed by retirement village operator organisations via their internal communication channels.

The survey was open for a period of three weeks, from November 10th to December 11th, 2024.

Participating operator organizations

- Ageing Australia (ACCPA)
- Retirement Living Council/Property Council
- RLC/PC0DoComeMonday (DCM)

Data Analysis

Survey responses were exported from Google Forms into IBM SPSS Version 30 computing software package for analyses. All analyses were conducted and interpreted by an independent data analyst.

To assist in easy interpretation of results, responses to the survey questions using a 4-point scale (measuring satisfaction, understanding, concern) were collapsed to a 2-point scale representing low vs high levels of the characteristic. The original 4-point scale responses are presented in Appendix A.

Results

Who completed the survey?

A total of 4115 residents of Australian retirement villages completed the online survey in November/December 2024.

There was a higher proportion of females, who made up 55.6% of the sample.

While there was a spread of ages from 55 to 90+ years, the majority of the sample fell into the categories from 71 to 80 yrs (48%) and 81 to 90 yrs (36.5%) (see Table 1).

Just over one half of the sample were living with someone (51.4%). The majority of the respondents had lived in their retirement village for less than 10 years (1 – 5 yrs: 42%, 6 – 10 yrs: 29%).

Responses were received from all participating states, with the largest contribution from NSW (n=1313), making up 32% of the sample.

Fewer respondents were located in ACT (n=223, 5%) and Tasmania (n=137, 3%) reflecting their smaller population.

Seventy percent (70%) of the sample indicated that they were a member of retirement village association in their state. This is consistent with the fact that surveys were distributed through the various state retirement village associations.

Table 1: Characteristics of the sample (n = 4155)

Gender		**n**	**%**
	Male	1800	44
	Female	2251	55
Age group		**n**	**%**
	50 to 60 yrs	21	0.5
	61 to70 yrs	435	11
	71 to 80 yrs	1978	48
	81 to 90 yrs	1493	36.5
	Over 90 yrs	160	4
Living situation		**n**	**%**
	Living with someone	2105	51
	Living alone	1955	48
	Other (carer/friend)	36	0.8
Years in the village		**n**	**%**
	1 to 5 yrs	1721	42
	6 to 10 yrs	1177	29
	11 to 15 yrs	718	17.5
	16 to 20 yrs	334	8
	Over 20 yrs	143	3.5
State		**n**	**%**
	NSW	1313	32
	QLD	637	16
	SA	631	15
	WA	617	15
	VIC	535	13
	ACT	223	5
	Tasmania	137	3
Member of state retirement village association		**n**	**%**
	Yes	2822	70
	No	1211	30

How satisfied did residents feel living in their retirement village?

Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were living in their retirement village.

84% of the sample reported high levels of satisfaction.

16% reported low levels of satisfaction.

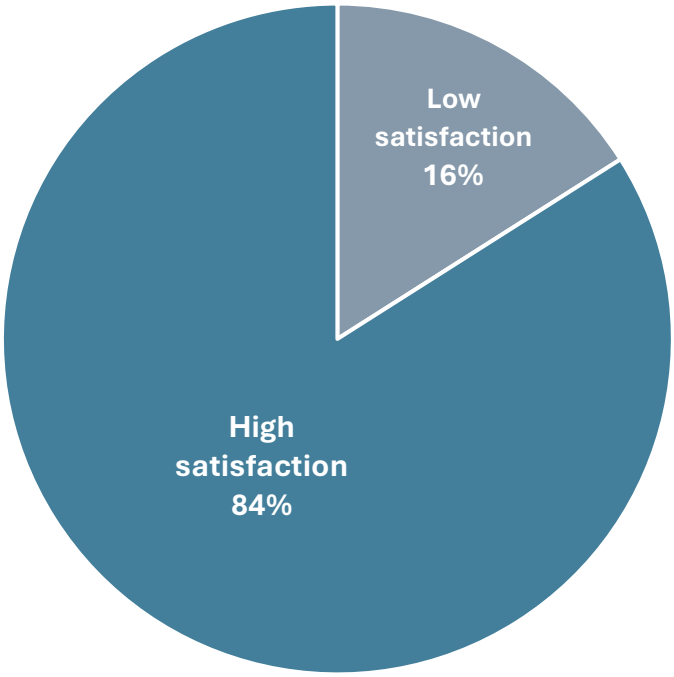


Figure 1: Percentage of the sample reporting low versus high levels of satisfaction with living in their village

Would respondents recommend living in a retirement village to others?

Respondents were asked if they would recommend living in a retirement village to others.

60% of respondents ticked *Yes* indicating they would recommend living in a retirement village, while 30% ticked *Maybe*.

Only 10% indicated that they would not recommend living in a retirement village.

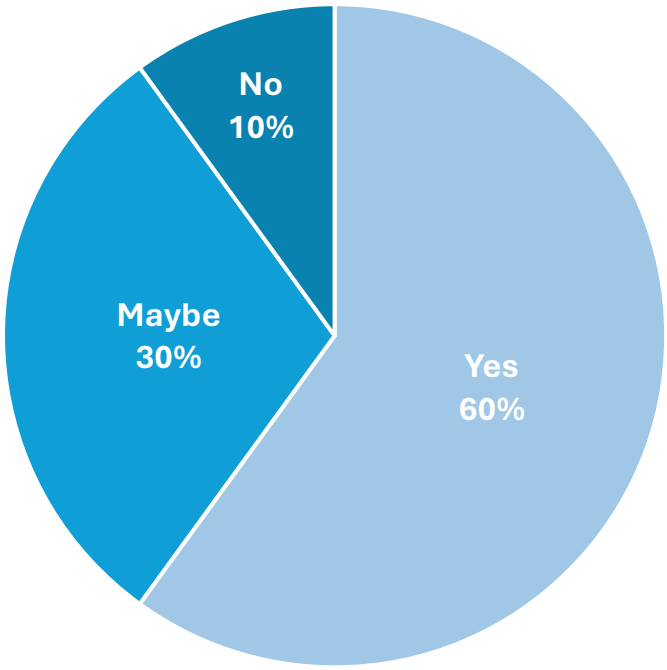


Figure 2: Percentage of responses to the question: "Would you recommend living in a retirement village to others?"

An additional open-ended question asked respondents to describe the reasons for their decision to recommend or not recommend living in a retirement village. Over 4,000 detailed responses were obtained to this question and this data was subjected to qualitative analysis to identify the key themes.

Themes identified from respondents who responded Yes – they would recommend living in a retirement village

Five key themes were identified from the comments provided by the 60% of respondents who indicated they would recommend living in a retirement village. Each of these themes highlight the positive aspects of living in a retirement village.

Recommend - Positive Theme 1: Community Life

Residents often emphasized the sense of community and social interaction as a key benefit of living in a retirement village. They appreciated the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and engage in community activities.

> *"Living in a retirement village is perfect, privacy, security, make friends, community involvements, entertainment, and still enjoy family and friends outside the village."*

> *"You become part of a vibrant, caring community, make new friends, enjoy social interaction, have access to a variety of lifestyle facilities, in which you can participate or not as you choose. It's far better than spending your retirement years in a large home (which you have to maintain). You retain your independence and increase your life expectancy and live a better life."*

> *"You need never be lonely. No repairs, all done for you. A pendant that works as long as you wear it!! We say "aren't we lucky" every day."*

Recommend - Positive Theme 2: Safety and security

Safety was a recurring positive theme. Residents valued the secure environment provided by the village, contributing to peace of mind and comfort.

> *"We feel very safe - we have neighbours the same age and our children are very happy to see us settled - and safe. The staff are very good and keep an eye on us."*

> *"Living in a retirement village offers privacy and security."*

> *"A gated community makes you feel safe."*

> *"Having lived in my Village for 24 years I have always felt very secure and have no problem recommending living here to all who ask."*

Recommend - Positive Theme 3: Friendliness and support

Many residents praised the friendly environment and the supportive nature of their peers and staff, highlighting these as critical reasons for their satisfaction.

> *"As a widow it takes a lot of the worry out of running a large home on your own. There is support if I need it and the village provides a good social life with a chance to join in many activities. I have made some lovely friends since coming to live here."*

> *"Make friends, enjoy community involvements, and still connect with family and friends outside the village."*

> *"We love it here, we have met lovely people, it is well located and well maintained."*

> *"As a widow, I no longer feel so alone. I am surrounded by caring people and am involved in many activities. It is a very caring and supportive community and my villa is perfect for my needs."*

Recommend - Positive Theme 4: Activities and engagement

Residents appreciated the variety of activities offered, which enhanced their social lives and provided opportunities for engagement.

> *"The community life is great, and activities are a big part of it."*

> *"Enjoy entertainment and community involvement."*

> *"The community centre gives you something close to go to join in activities & form friendships within the village."*

Themes identified from respondents who responded No – that they would not recommend living in a retirement village

From the comments provided by the 10% of respondents who indicated they would not recommend living in a retirement village, five areas of dissatisfaction were identified.

Negative Theme 1: Fees and Financial Concerns

This theme captures dissatisfaction with the cost structure, including recurring fees, exit fees, and perceived lack of transparency in financial dealings. Some residents feel the costs are too high and not commensurate with the services provided.

> *"No one explained how much the deferred management fee would cost us over time."*
>
> *"Maintenance fees keep increasing, but the quality of work doesn't justify it."*
>
> *"I had no idea how much they would charge for simple things like repairs."*
>
> *"Monthly charges are above CPI, and we get nothing extra in return. The charges are higher than initially promised during the sales process."*
>
> *"I understood my yearly increase would be the CPI amount but last year and this years add up to 21.6 percent. For me that's far too much . If this continues I will not be able to afford to stay."*

Negative Theme 2: Management and Leadership

Comments under this theme express dissatisfaction with the competence, honesty, and responsiveness of management. Some residents feel that managers prioritize profit over resident welfare, make decisions without consultation, and lack transparency.

> *"Management constantly changes rules without consulting residents."*
>
> *"The manager seems unapproachable and unresponsive to concerns."*
>
> *"Our requests for help are ignored or delayed indefinitely."*
>
> *"The sales team misled us about the village's features."*
>
> *"Staff turnover is so high that no one knows what's happening."*
>
> *"The village manager ignores our complaints about basic issues."*

Negative Theme 3: Community and Social Life

This theme encompasses issues related to social interaction and community engagement. Some residents feel isolated due to a lack of organized activities or inadequate communal spaces. Others cite tensions between residents and limited support for social initiatives.

"Our social club closed due to lack of support from management."

"Events are poorly organized and inaccessible for some residents."

"Social spaces are often overcrowded and poorly maintained."

"Few activities are suitable for less mobile residents."

"There's little effort to create opportunities for socializing."

"Newcomers often feel unwelcome due to cliques among long-term residents."

Negative Theme 4: Maintenance and Facilities

This theme covers complaints about the upkeep of the property and the quality of shared facilities. A number of residents report delays in repairs, poor-quality maintenance work, and a lack of attention to communal spaces.

"Repairs are done cheaply, leading to recurring problems."

"The common areas are poorly maintained and dirty."

"Lighting in shared areas is insufficient, making it unsafe at night."

"We often have to pay extra for basic repairs in our homes."

"The gardening team doesn't maintain the lawns properly."

Negative Theme 5: Village Rules

Some residents express frustration with the enforcement, fairness, or constant changes to village rules. Many feel the rules favour management over residents or are applied inconsistently.

"Management keeps changing rules to benefit themselves."

"We need more transparency in how rules are created and changed."

"Rules about garden maintenance are unfair and poorly communicated."

"Management won't make residents comply with the Village Rules and more and more things that should be done by contractors like gardening is being refused by the gardeners making residents do it themselves."

Themes identified from respondents who responded *Maybe*

Comments from the 30% of respondents who chose *Maybe* showed a mix of both positive and negative themes as described in the two previous sections.

A number of respondents also added comments indicating their opinion that village life may not suit everyone:

"What I like someone else may not. Everyone has a different outlook and experience."

"What suits us may not suit others."

"It works well for us but I would urge careful thought and comparison before others made the move - essentially I would say yes but with suitable thorough research."

"While I am generally happy with my situation, I can understand it would not be for everyone."

"I think the move to a Retirement Village is age and health dependant - if you are too impaired it would not be the best idea or if you were too advanced in years the integration process to the community may be more difficult."

"A qualified "yes": while we are thoroughly satisfied, I am aware that others have different circumstances and requirements."

"When you buy into a retirement village you are buying into a community. It is very different to just buying your own home. There are rules, expectations, different attitudes and values among the residents. To be able to make changes you need most residents to agree to the change. This is difficult to achieve. Advertising about downsizing and getting a nice small place that you can easily manage falls short of helping potential residents from making a well-informed choice."

Why did residents decide to move into a retirement village?

There were a variety of reasons that respondents gave for their decision to move into a retirement village. The most common reasons are shown in Figure 3 below.

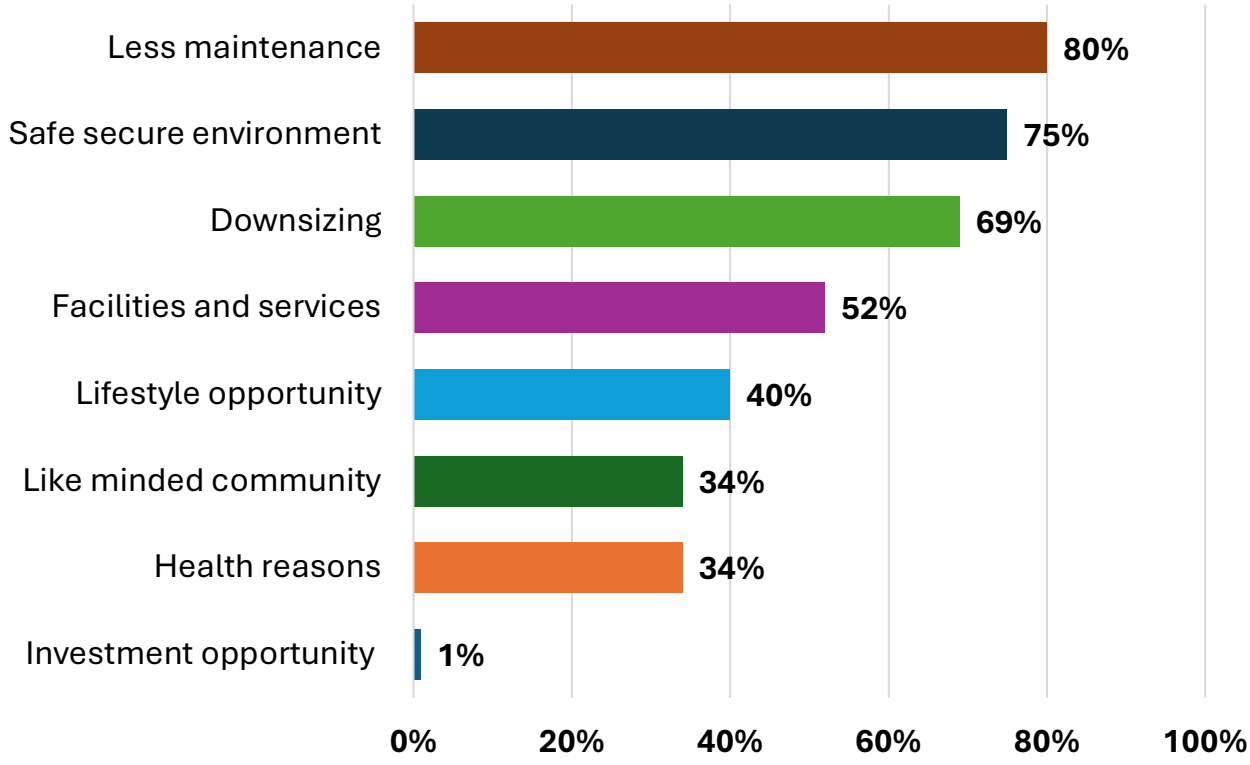


Figure 3: Respondents' reasons for deciding to live in a retirement village

The three most common reasons cited to move into a retirement village were: *Less maintenance* (80%), *Safe and secure environment* (75%) and *Downsizing* (69%).

The low percentage of respondents (1%) that selected *Investment opportunity* as a reason indicates that the sample as a whole understood that moving into a retirement village is primarily a lifestyle style choice.

How much knowledge did residents have about the way retirement villages operate?

Respondents were asked how much knowledge they had about the way that retirement villages operate before they moved into their village.

Only 48% of the sample indicated that they felt they had high levels of knowledge about how retirement villages operate.

The remaining 52% indicated that their level of knowledge was low.

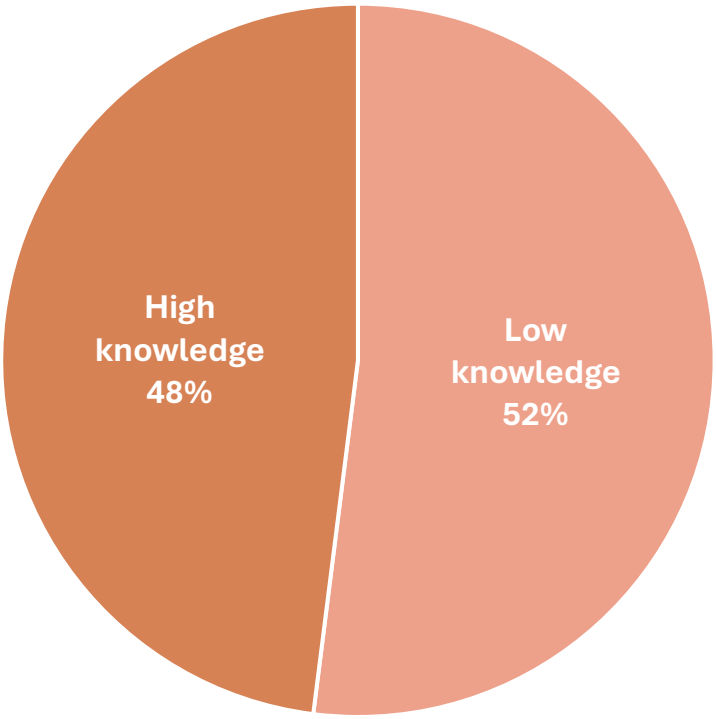


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents that had low vs high levels of knowledge about how retirement villages operate

How much research did residents conduct prior to making their decision?

Respondents were asked to rate how much research they did prior to making their decision to move into a retirement village.

61% of the sample indicated that they conducted moderate to extensive research prior to making their decision to move into a village.

The remaining 39% rated the amount of research that they did as low.

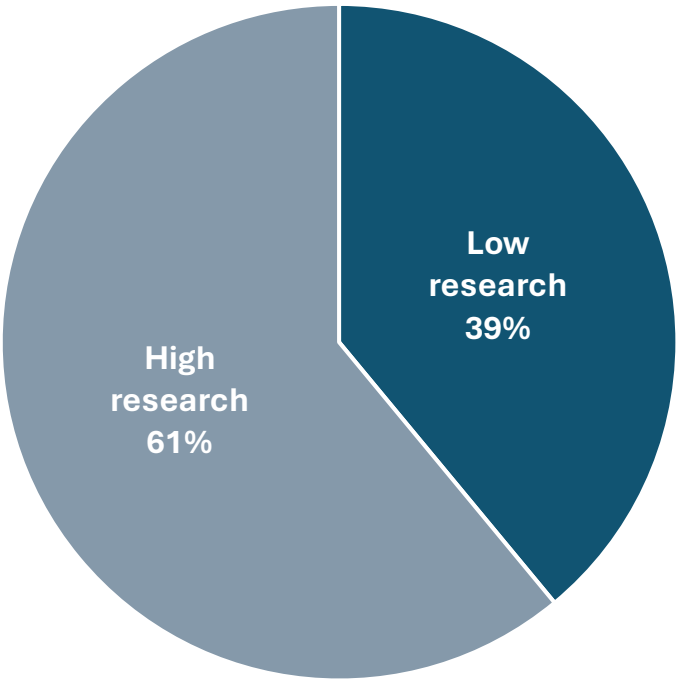


Figure 5: Amount of research respondents did before deciding to move into a retirement village

What type of research did residents undertake?

An open-ended question was included asking respondents to describe any research that they did prior to shifting into the village. Analysis of the open-ended responses to this question revealed three main themes:

Research Theme 1: Communication and Advice

This theme highlights how individuals relied on their social networks and professional advisors to gather insights and make informed decisions about retirement living. Many participants reached out to friends, family members, or acquaintances who had firsthand experience living in retirement villages.

Others consulted legal professionals, such as solicitors or lawyers, to understand the implications of contracts or financial commitments. This approach reflects a strong reliance on trusted sources to navigate the complexities of choosing a retirement village.

> *"Checked relevant legislation, handbooks and any general information available on the internet, visited a number of different villages, read all general information packages, attended retirement expos, open days and spoke with people living in villages or others with family living in villages."*
>
> *"We had an understanding of the lifestyle and various conditions that different organisations had in their contracts. We researched the various villages and were confident that our operator provided the best option."*
>
> *"Talked to friends who had already moved into other villages."*
>
> *"Basically, looked at villages in area and obtained information. Spoke to a couple of residents."*

Research Theme 2: Visiting and Experiencing Villages

In this theme, participants prioritized direct interaction with retirement villages. They visited multiple locations to assess their environment, amenities, and suitability for their needs.

Conversations with current residents helped them understand the day-to-day realities of living in the village. For some, these visits also included specific considerations, such as

whether pets were allowed, the quality of facilities, and the friendliness of staff. Personal exploration allowed participants to make more informed and confident choices.

> *"I visited this village many times before making a commitment, spoke in detail to the sales and maintenance people and also to residents."*

> *"We looked at 2 villages in our area and talked to management and also spoke to residents in both villages."*

> *"Visited a retirement village expo. Looked at several places. Sought recommendations from friends. Looked over the contract very carefully. Attended pre-buying workshops."*

> *"We visited a number of different villages with different concepts, ie retirement villages versus lifestyle villages."*

Research Theme 3: Researching Contracts or Documentation

This theme captures the careful approach some participants took in understanding legal and financial aspects before committing to a retirement village. Many reviewed contracts themselves or sought assistance from family members or legal advisors.

Key concerns included understanding exit fees, monthly charges, and the rights and responsibilities outlined in the contracts. Some participants found this process challenging due to confusing language or complexities in the documentation, highlighting the need for clear and accessible information.

> *"I discussed with my Financial Planner; I read the Disclosure Statement, Intention to enter into a Lease (we bought off the plan) and Final Lease personally and carefully and ensured answers to my questions from the operator."*

> *"Searched internet, carefully read all of the contract, advice from person who has involvement in industry, obtained legal advice."*

> *"Accessed a wealth of information on the web, visited 10 or more retirement villages and had legal advice regarding the contract."*

> *"Thoroughly read the contract and marked numerous items for further clarification."*

> *"I consulted others in village situations, sought legal advice re exit fee structures and generally read anything I could about village regulations and village life."*

> *"We sought advice from a solicitor specialising in these areas discussing the different concepts and then spoke with him at length about the types of exit fees etc."*

Did residents understand the difference between buying into a Retirement village compared to a house in the general community?

Respondents were asked if they understood the difference between buying into a retirement village, compared with buying a house in the general community.

The vast majority of the sample responded Yes (91%) – that they understood the difference

Only 9% indicating they did not understand this prior to shifting into their village.

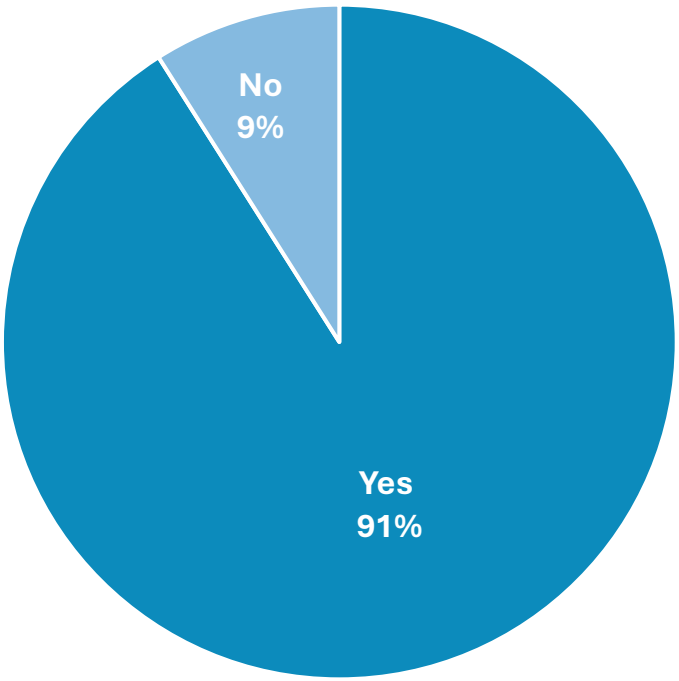


Figure 6: Percentage of the sample that understood the difference between buying into a retirement village and the general community

What type of contract?

Respondents were provided with a list of different types of contracts and were asked to indicate the type of contract that applied to them.

The most frequently reported contract type was *Leasehold,* with just over a half of the sample (51%) selecting this response.

9% of the sample did not know what type of contract they had.

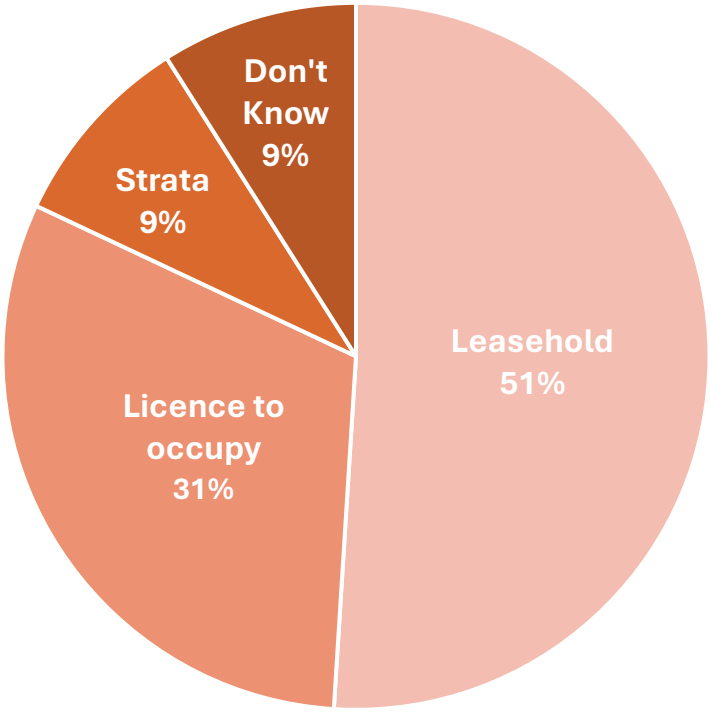


Figure 7: Percentage of different contract types

Did residents receive a Disclosure Statement?

Respondents were asked if they received a Disclosure Statement when they were first considering moving into a retirement village.

Over three-quarters of the sample (77%) answered *Yes* that they had received a Disclosure Statement.

7% answered *No*.

Sixteen per cent (16%) didn't know, or were not sure, if they had received one.

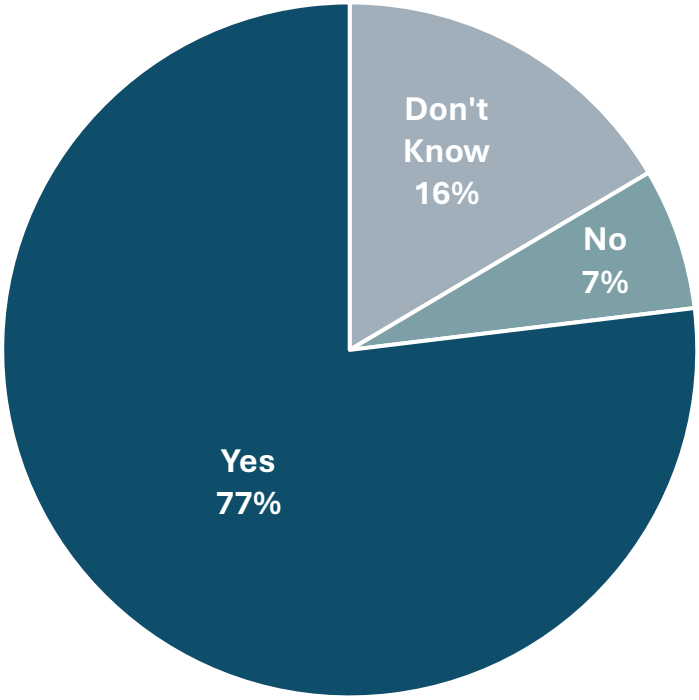


Figure 8: Percentage of the sample that received a Disclosure Statement

How well did residents understand the Disclosure Statement?

Those respondents who received a Disclosure Statement were asked how well they understood the information it contained.

73 % reported a very good or good understanding of the information.

The remaining 27% did not feel they had a good understanding of the document.

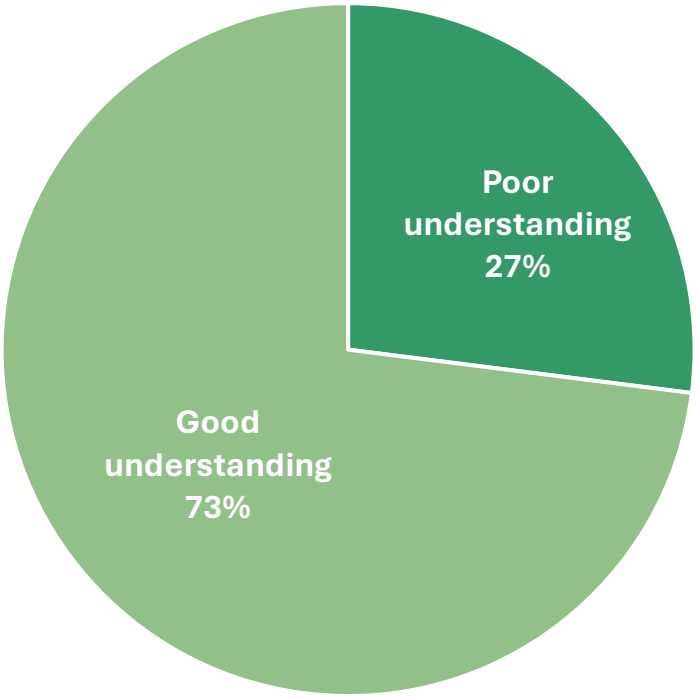


Figure 9: Percentage of respondents that had a good versus poor understanding of the Disclosure Statement

How well did sales staff explain the contract?

In this section of the survey respondents were asked to rate how well the sales staff explained details of the contract.

Over half of the sample (58%) rated sales staff's explanation as good.

42% rating sale staff's explanation as poor.

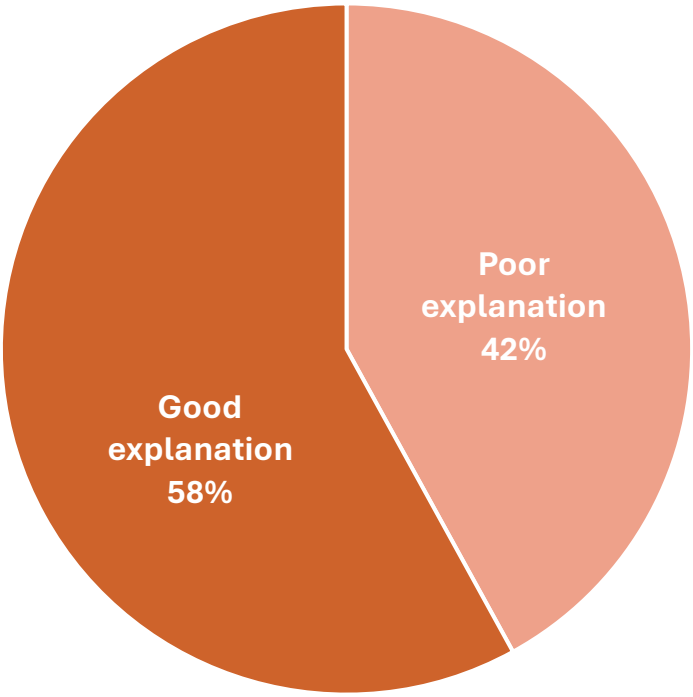


Figure 10: Percentage of respondents who rated sale staff's explanation of the contract as poor vs good

How easy was it for residents to understand their contract?

Respondents were asked to rate how easy or difficult it was for them to read and understand their contract.

Just over half the sample (52%) indicated that they found the contract easy to understand.

The remainder (48 %) reported difficulties in understanding the contract.

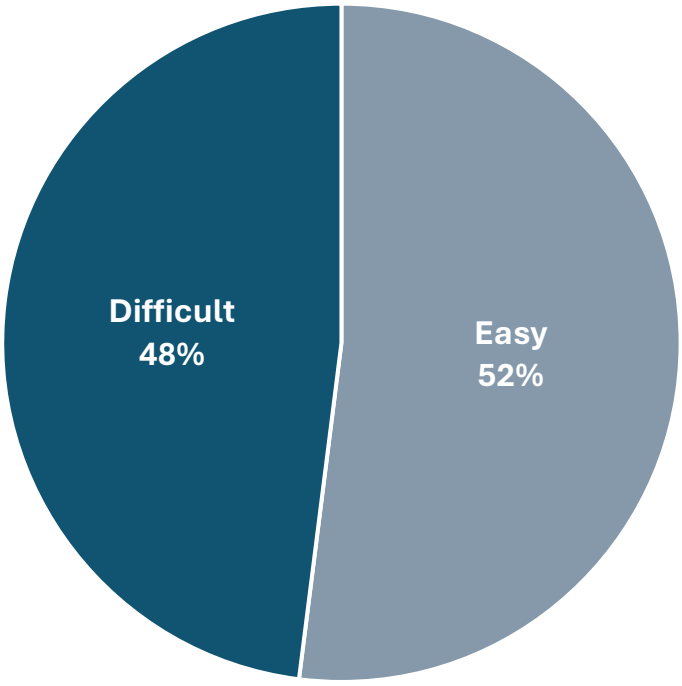


Figure 11: Percentage of respondents who found the contract easy vs difficult to read

Who did residents discuss the contract with?

Prior to signing the contract 57% indicated that they discussed the contract with their friends and family, and 54% discussed it with a solicitor or lawyer.

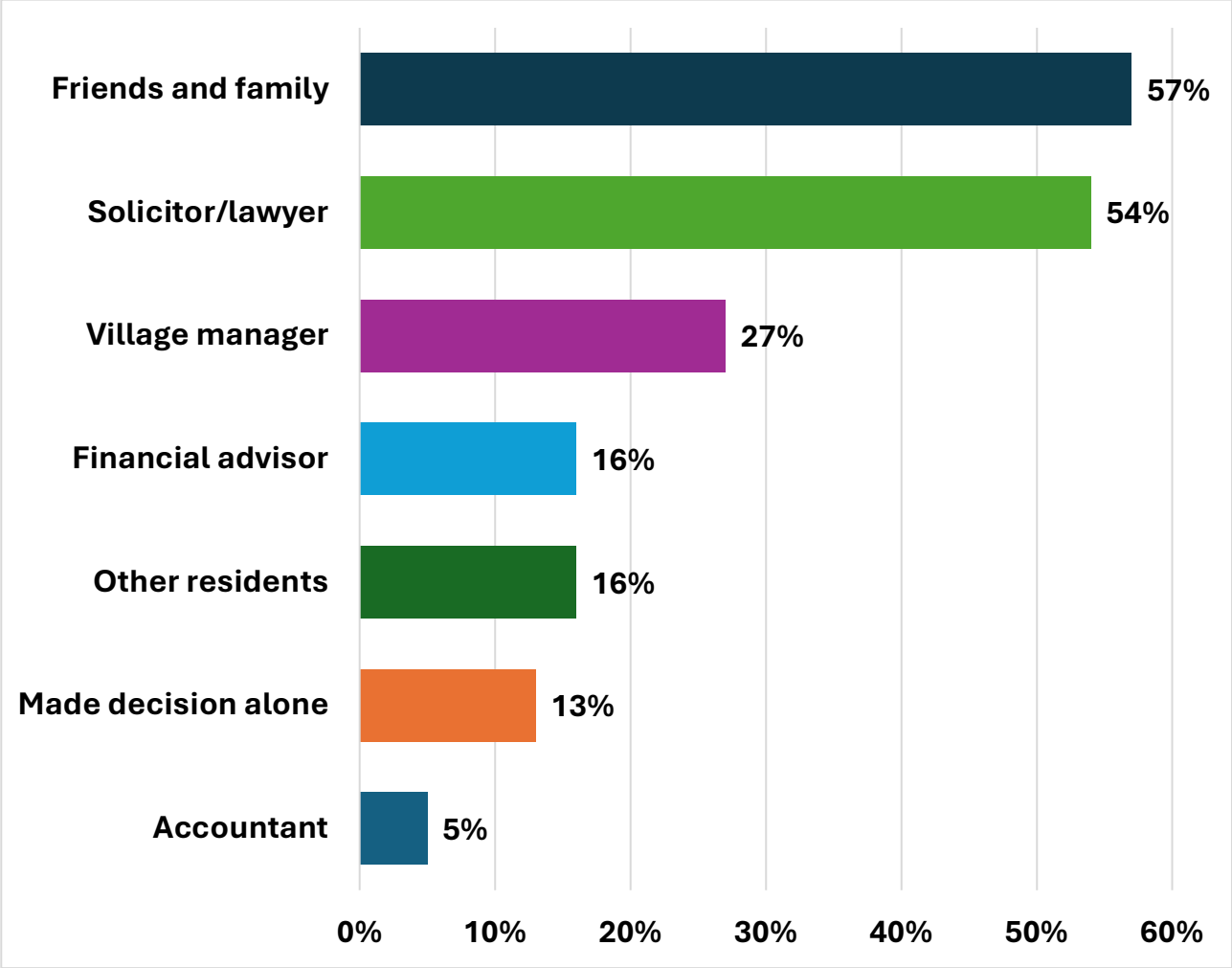


Figure 12: People that respondents discussed the contract with prior to deciding to move into a village

Did residents discuss their contract with family members?

Respondents were asked specifically if they had discussed the contract with their family.

41% of respondents indicated that they had discussed the contract in detail with family members.

A further 43% reported that they had general discussions with their family members.

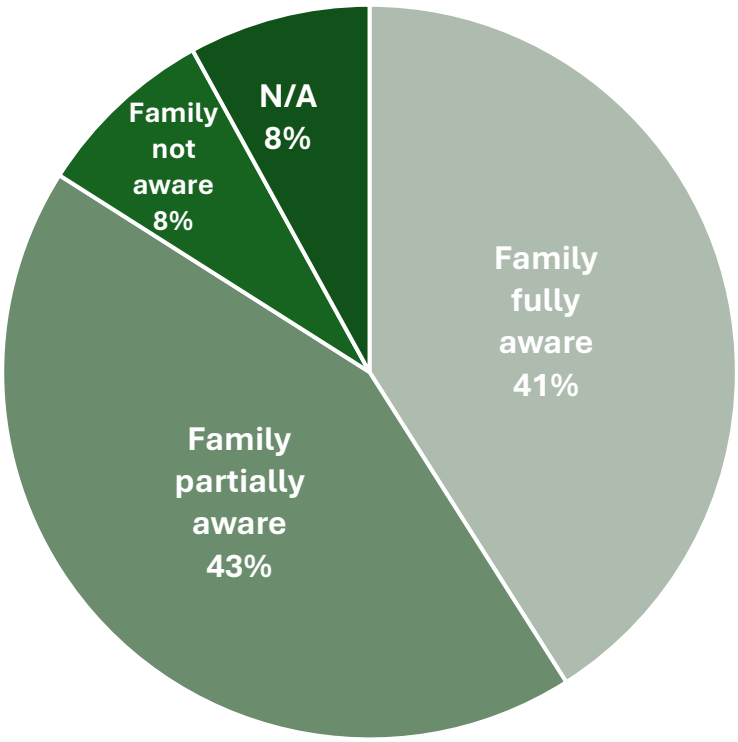


Figure 13: Percentage of respondents who have discussed their contract with family

How could the contract be improved?

An additional open-ended question gave respondents the opportunity to make suggestions for what could be done in the future to help potential residents to better understand the contract.

Suggestions were received from 952 respondents and this material was subjected to qualitative analysis to identify the underlying themes.

Improve Contract Theme 1: Simplifying Language

Contracts were described by some residents as overly complex, laden with legal jargon, and difficult for the average person to comprehend. Participants emphasized that many clauses were written in technical terms that required professional interpretation. This complexity not only created confusion but also increased reliance on costly legal assistance.

Clear and concise contracts written in layman's terms were seen by respondents as important to allow as prospective residents to make informed decisions without unnecessary barriers.

Key Issues:

- Overuse of legal jargon and complex phrasing.
- Lack of uniformity in contract language across regions.
- Lengthy and dense documentation.

Comments:

“Given that the contract must be sound it is inevitable that it has some complexity - a summary of dot points of main items would perhaps help with greater detail further in.”

"Please use phrases and words that the average person understands."

"Be clear in plain English. They should be uniform over Australia."

"It should be written in layman's terms. Too much legalese that the average person does not understand."

"The lease document is VERY long, although I can understand that, in some respects, it needs to be. Nevertheless, its length is a MAJOR OBSTACLE to comprehension. There needs to be a reliable summary of the main conditions imposed by the lease and their implications for the prospective resident."

"Put it in plain English and explain in simple terms."

"In a Loan/Lease contract it needs to be stated: You do not own your villa. You will never own your villa."

"Lack of consistency between Fact Sheet and Disclosure Statement and the Contract. Different information not explained clearly in all documents."

Improve Contract Theme 2: Financial Transparency

Some respondents expressed concerns about the lack of clarity regarding financial aspects of contracts. Hidden costs, such as exit fees and unclear maintenance charges, were a source of frustration. Respondents suggested providing a detailed breakdown of financial obligations and including upfront disclosures about potential costs over time. Concerns also extended to ambiguous language about capital gains and profit-sharing arrangements.

Key Issues:

- Clear breakdowns of financial obligations.
- Insufficient detail on financial obligations like exit fees and ongoing charges.
- Summaries or visual aids to simplify financial details.

Comments:

"Spell out any financial payout, profit (loss) to the resident and operator by year."

"The agreement is not written in layman's terms; even solicitors do not know the retirement act."

"Use plain info and have a glossary of meanings, e.g., does 'vacate' mean handing in keys or new settlement?"

"A summary of the key financial issues would help."

"More information needs to be provided about exiting the village. An example showing all the costs involved would be helpful."

"Add more about capital gain - and how the Deferred Management Fee (in our case) is calculated on the final sale price."

"The contract and the fact that one is buying into a lifestyle not an investment. Also, what you see is what you get, no extras without paying and what impact that has on exiting."

Improve Contract Theme 3: Availability of Assistance

Participants highlighted the need for direct, personalized support to help them understand complex contracts. Suggestions included having knowledgeable representatives available to explain contracts in detail, conducting workshops for prospective residents, and creating resources that address common concerns. This would help bridge the gap between the written contract and residents' understanding, reducing reliance on external legal advice.

Key Issues:

- Availability of knowledgeable individuals to provide guidance.
- Support for reviewing and understanding contracts in detail.
- Educational programs or awareness initiatives.

Comments:

"Someone to sit and talk to."

"Possibly get someone to explain the ins and outs of all the fees."

"Maybe Seniors Rights or the RVRA could conduct awareness seminars for intending residents."

"More time to have the operator explain details."

"In our case the document was extensive and required concentration and filtering of key points, then generating a list of questions for sales staff and solicitor to clarify. Many people would be overwhelmed with the info. The ability to appoint an advocate to assist in the process."

"Make it obligatory for prospective residents to consult a lawyer qualified in RV legislation."

Improve Contract Theme 4: Cost of Legal Advice

The cost of obtaining legal advice was a significant concern for many participants, who felt compelled to hire solicitors to interpret the contracts. The expense of legal consultations was especially burdensome for individuals on fixed incomes. Participants suggested that contracts should be simplified to reduce the necessity of professional legal assistance, thereby saving costs and increasing accessibility.

Key Issues:

- High cost of legal consultations required to understand contracts.
- Lack of clarity in contracts, increasing reliance on legal professionals.
- Limited availability of affordable legal support knowledgeable about retirement village laws.

Comments:

"MUST engage an independent solicitor or lawyer."

"Too much legalese that the average person does not understand."

"Get rid of the legal jargon."

Are there specific areas of the contract that could be improved?

In response to an open-ended question respondents gave suggestions for how they felt specific areas of the contract could be improved. Analysis of the responses revealed four key themes.

Specific areas of contract Theme 1: Exit Fees and Financial Terms

This theme reflects widespread concerns about the financial aspects of retirement village contracts, particularly exit fees and ongoing maintenance costs. Many participants highlighted a lack of clarity around how these fees are calculated, what they cover, and who is responsible for payment. The complexity and perceived unfairness of these financial terms often left residents and their families feeling confused or misled.

Key Issues:

- Lack of transparency about exit fees and maintenance costs.
- Complicated formulas for calculating long-term maintenance or refurbishment costs.
- Ambiguity about financial responsibilities between residents and operators.

Comments:

"Clarify the exit fee and refurbishment costs better."

“More certainty around restoration upon exiting the village. What is fair wear and tear?”

"Exit fees are the big one… The formula as shown in our contract is quite complicated."

“What is actually provided/available under the contract and more definite information on exit costs (as distinct from exit fees).”

“"Exit fees. How it can be explained to family."

“Deferred management fees. We pay monthly fees… I thought 'deferred fees' were fees not paid during occupation and were subsequently paid when exiting Village.”

“Exit fees should be fully explained in one place in the contract. Residents' rules should be supplied to prospective residents. Rules around maintenance should be better explained.”

“Vague areas around what constitutes a reasonable cost for "making good" modifications and refurbishment costs on exit of the village.”

“Need to clarify the exit fees and how they work it out and what happens after you move out until they find a buyer. Particularly if you need the money to move to a nursing home or if you want to buy into another place.”

Specific areas of contract Theme 2: Contractual Changes and Clarity

Participants frequently mentioned difficulties with unclear or inconsistent contract terms, particularly when contracts changed over time. They expressed concerns about ambiguous responsibilities for maintenance, repairs, and other obligations. Many also noted frustrations with a lack of uniformity in how residents are treated under different contractual terms.

Key Issues:

- Changes to contracts and rules after signing.
- Ambiguity around maintenance responsibilities and repair costs.
- Inconsistent treatment of residents under different contracts.

Comments:

"Contract terms should be spelled out clearly for Centrelink operators."

"Long-term maintenance funds, repair, and replacement cost responsibilities."

"Responsibility for maintaining and replacing equipment during occupancy and at exit."

“More information to confirm whether contract remains intact in the event of new village ownership. Can get impression that contract conditions change when there is new owner, yet never have had a new contract to sign, hence existing conditions should be unaltered.”

Specific areas of contract Theme 3: Resident Rights and Obligations

This theme highlights concerns about the clarity of residents' rights and responsibilities, including financial obligations, access to subsidies, and the scope of entitlements. Participants noted discrepancies between residents' understanding of their rights and the actual terms of their contracts.

Key Issues:

- Lack of clarity about residents' financial obligations and rights.
- Disparities in fees and entitlements among residents.
- Confusion about maintenance and refurbishment responsibilities.

Comments:

> *"Entitlements, e.g., rent assistance... entitlement to access part of exit sum."*
>
> *"The rights of the manager in areas such as when a resident moves out."*
>
> *"Maintenance responsibilities defined clearly—who pays for what."*
>
> *"It was never made clear to me if I qualified for Centrelink rental assistance in fact it was used in the sales pitch to say "depending on your financial position you may be entitled to rental assistance from Centrelink." This was not the case under current leasing and village regulations."*

Specific areas of contract Theme 4: Transparency in Management

Some participants expressed frustration with the lack of transparency in management practices, including how fees are calculated and how decisions are made. Concerns included deferred management fees, communication issues, and accountability for expenditures.

Key Issues:

- Lack of transparency about management fees and expenditures.
- Poor communication between management and residents.
- Ambiguity in management's obligations under the contract.

Comments:

"Remarketing clauses are very confusing and very unfair."

"Change in management needs to respect the contract."

"Deferred fees i.e., the sinking fund, remarketing costs."

"Justification for deferred management fees."

“Vague areas around what constitutes a reasonable cost for "making good" modifications and refurbishment costs on exit of the village.”

How well did residents understand specific aspects of the contract conditions?

A set of questions were included in the survey to explore resident's understanding of specific aspects of the contract. The percentage of respondents reporting a good versus poor understanding of these components are shown in Figure 14 below.

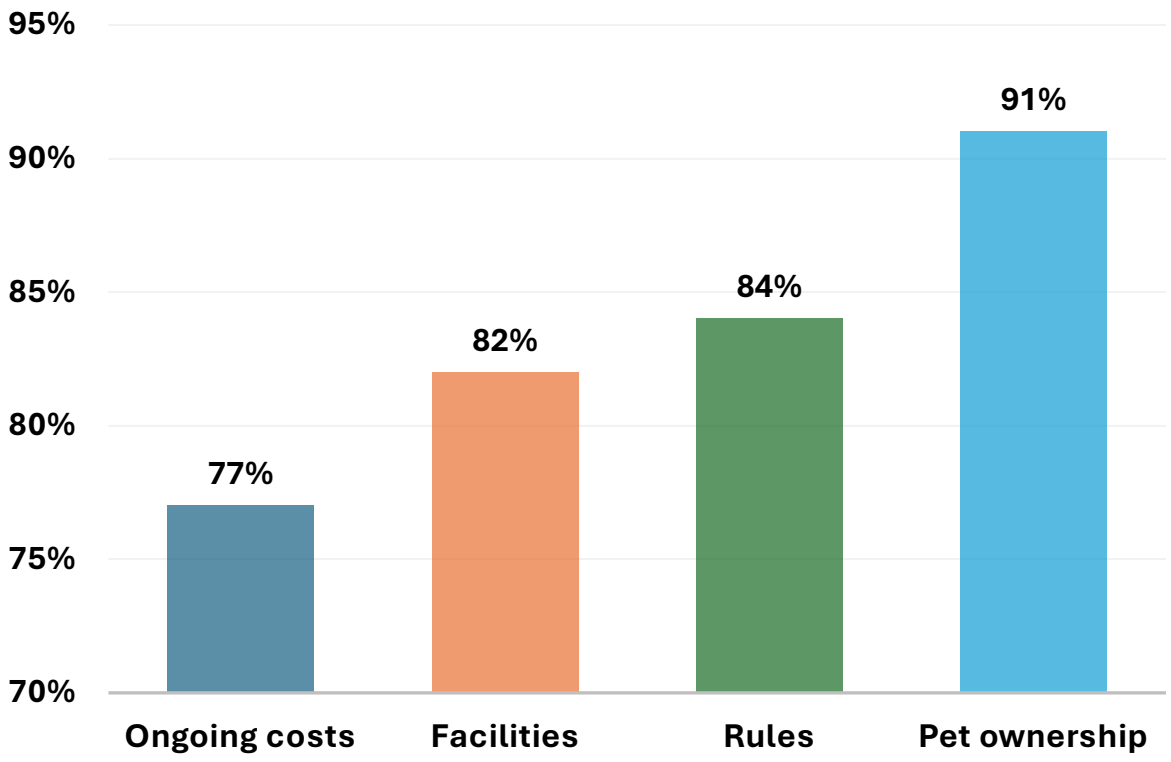


Figure 14: Percentage of the sample that reported a good understanding of various aspects of the contract

Over three quarters of the sample (77%) indicated they had a good understanding of the ongoing costs involved in living in the village, while 91% reported a good understanding of the rules associated with pet ownership.

Over 80% of respondents reported they had a good understanding of the rules dictating what they could or couldn't do, and what village facilities were available now or planned in the future.

Were residents aware that their recurrent fees may increase each year?

Respondents were asked if they understood that their recurrent fees were subject to annual increases.

85% of the sample responded *Yes*, and the remaining 15% indicated that they were not aware.

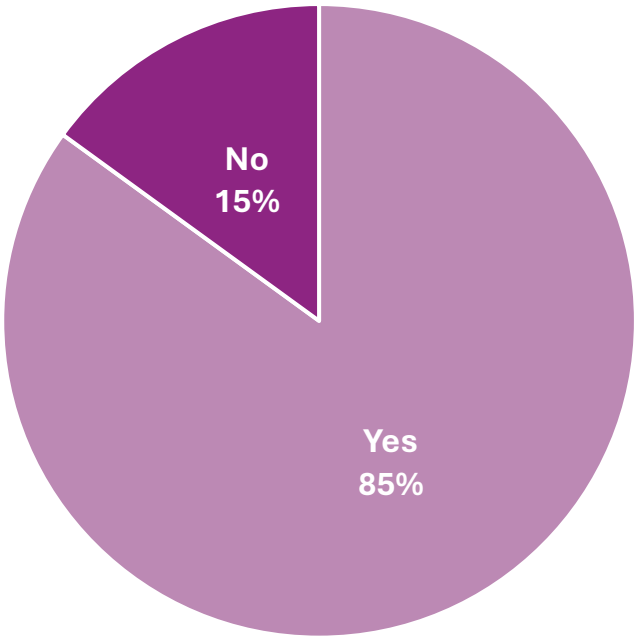


Figure 15: Percentage of respondents who were aware that their recurrent fees may rise each year

Were any aspects of the village services, rules, or costs a surprise?

An open-ended question was included in the survey asking respondents whether there were any aspects of the village services, rules, restrictions or additional costs that were a surprise after they shifted into the village.

Qualitative analysis of the responses revealed four underlying themes.

Suprise Theme 1: Changes in Promised Services

This theme reflects disappointment and frustration among residents when services promised at the time of moving in were reduced, altered, or discontinued. Some participants noted that essential services like nursing staff, transport, or dining facilities were changed after their initial agreements, often without consultation. These changes created mistrust and diminished the quality of life for residents.

Key Issues:

- Reduction in promised services (e.g., nursing staff, village buses, restaurants).
- Changes in operational rules benefiting the management.
- Alterations in maintenance or financial arrangements without consultation.

Comments:

> *"Operator stated Nurse would be available. However, eventually turned into a 'well-being person.' The operator reneged on providing a village bus after clearly stating in contract that a bus would be provided."*
>
> *"The facilities that existed when we moved in have changed. There is now no restaurant."*
>
> *"All these are changed and then the residents informed."*
>
> *"Change in services provided by change of ownership of village."*

Surprise Theme 2: Unexpected Maintenance or Costs

Participants expressed frustration about unexpected costs that were not disclosed upfront. These included sudden fee increases, additional maintenance charges, and unforeseen financial obligations. Such surprises erode trust in management and cause significant financial stress, especially for residents on fixed incomes.

Key Issues:

- Sudden and substantial increases in fees, often exceeding CPI.
- Additional charges for maintenance, repairs, or upgrades not previously agreed upon.
- Poor communication about financial obligations, leading to misunderstandings.

Comments:

> *"External maintenance of the unit was included in the Body Corporate fees, then it wasn't."*
>
> *"Discovered our electricity came from the Owner's Embedded network, and they charged the maximum allowed."*
>
> *"Fees went up by a lot, and now we have no gardeners or maintenance staff."*
>
> *"A huge increase in fees (above the CPI) promoted by manager and residents committee."*

Surprise Theme 3: Restrictions on Residents' Freedom

Several residents felt restricted by management-imposed rules that limited their autonomy. Complaints included the need for approval to leave the village or host guests, restrictions on making modifications to units, and inconsistent enforcement of rules among residents.

Key Issues:

- Rules requiring residents to report absences or seek permission for activities.
- Restrictions on who can reside in or visit the unit.
- Inconsistent application of rules, leading to perceptions of favouritism or unfairness.

Comments:

"Having to advise management when I was going away even for one night. Not being able to share my home with someone of my choosing."

"All of them. I didn't realize I'd be so restricted and ordered around."

"Although you are advised of the rules of living in an apartment village, there appears to be a reluctance to enforce some residents to comply."

Surprise Theme 4: Decline in Facilities or Amenities

Participants were surprised by the deterioration of facilities or amenities over time, despite paying higher fees. Some residents expressed dissatisfaction with reduced quality in communal amenities, declining maintenance standards, and lack of investment in improving the village environment.

Key Issues:

- Reduced maintenance and gardening services despite increased fees.
- Closure or decline of communal facilities like clubhouses, restaurants, and gardens.
- Inconsistent maintenance practices.

Comments:

"The facilities that existed when we moved in have changed. There is now no restaurant."

"Facilities & services to be offered declined rapidly."

"Our maintenance and gardening services have deteriorated badly. Fees go up, but the service declines."

What type of exit fee did their contract specify?

The survey included a set of questions designed to assess respondent's knowledge and understanding of the exit fees that may apply when they move out of the village.

Respondents were asked if their exit fee was based on a '*Set percentage*' or a '*Sliding scale*'.

60% reported their exit fee was based on a sliding scale and 28% indicated that their exit fee was a set percentage.

12% of the sample did not know what type of exit fee applied in their village.

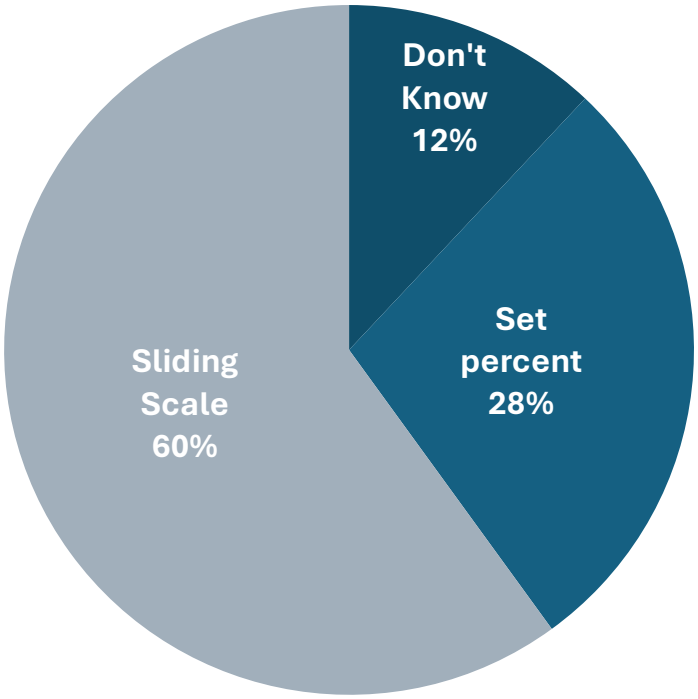


Figure 16: Type of exit fee

How is the exit fee calculated?

When asked to indicate what percentage per year was used to calculate their exit fee 63% either did not know or did not answer this question.

Only 37% of respondents were able to report the exit fee percentage that applied in their village. Exit fee percentage values ranged from 1 to 10%. The most commonly reported values were 3% and 5%.

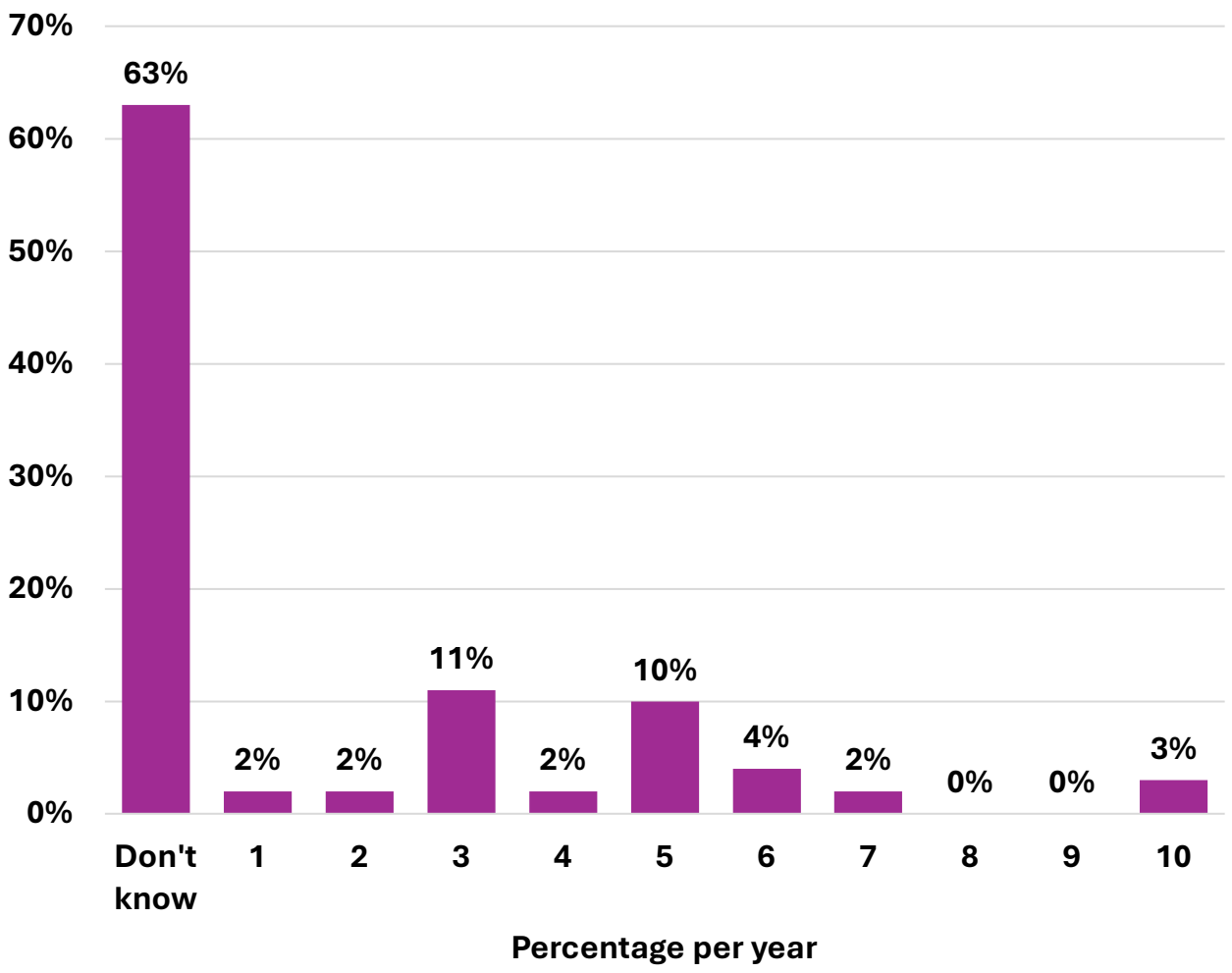


Figure 17: Percentage per year used to calculate exit fee

A substantial percentage of the sample were also unable to report the number of years that their exit fee continued to increase. Forty-five percent (45%) indicated they did not know or failed to answer this question. Ten years and five years were the most commonly reported responses.

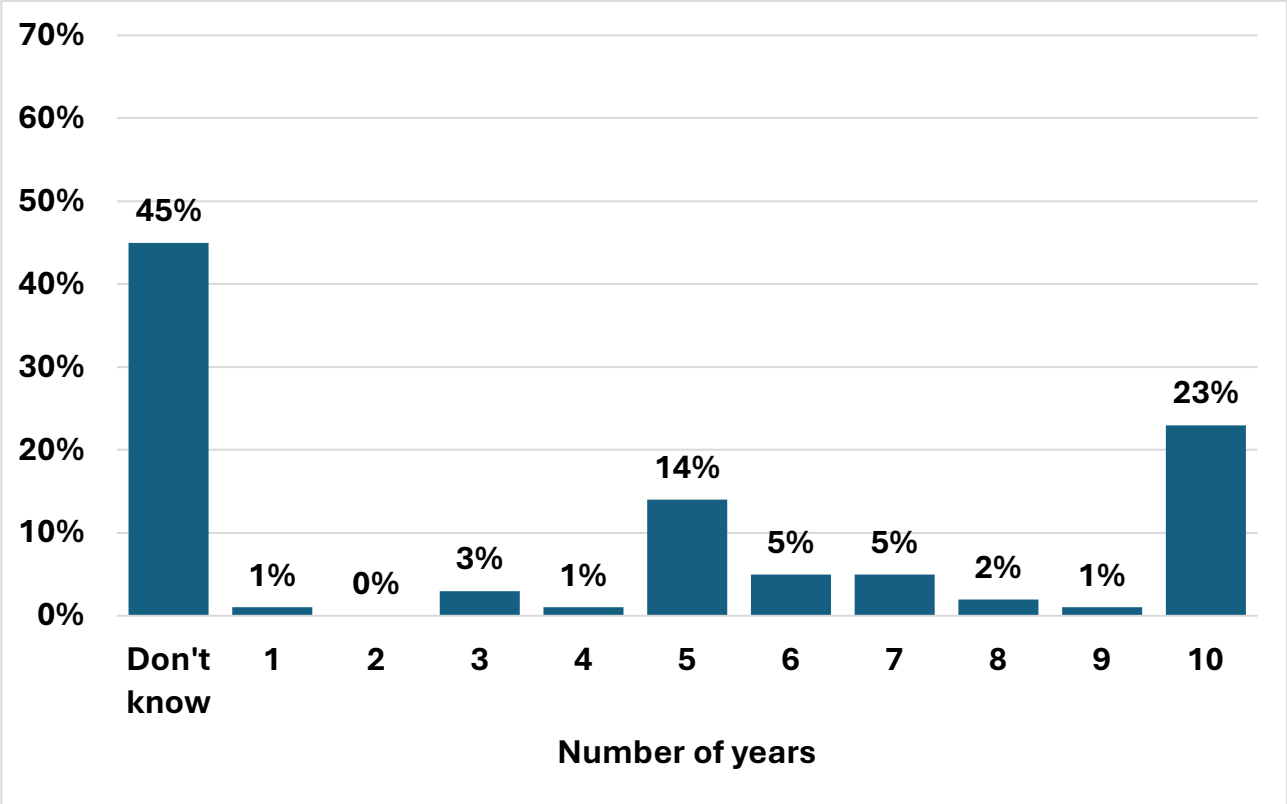


Figure 18: Number of years used to calculate exit fee

What value is the exit fee calculated on?

Responses to the question *"What value is your exit fee calculated on (original price versus sale price)"* indicated this was an area of considerable confusion for respondents.

37% indicated that their exit fee was based on the original purchase price.

33% believed that their exit fee was calculated on the final sale price.

30% percent of the sample did not know or did not answer the question.

Figure 19: Unit value used to calculate the exit fee

Comments made by respondents also indicated confusion and distrust about this part of their contract:

> *"The way I read it was based on the purchase price, but now the sales manager tells me it is the sale price – the contract seems ambiguous".*
>
> *"This seems to change between whom I ask".*
>
> *"I don't think they go by the book. The area is very grey. They don't use exit fees in the correct way".*

How well did respondents understand how the exit fee is calculated?

Respondents were asked to rate how well they understood how the exit fee is calculated in their village.

62% of the sample indicated they had a good or very good understanding of how the exit fee is calculated according to their contract.

The remaining 38% rated their level of understanding as poor.

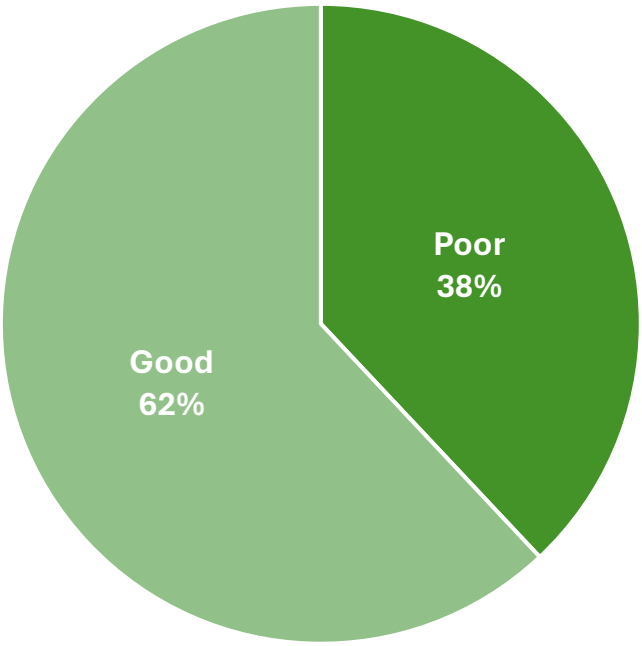


Figure 20: Percentage of respondents reporting low vs high levels of understanding of how exit fees are calculated

What aspects of the exit fee calculation were respondents not clear about?

In an open-ended question respondents were asked to indicate any areas of the exit fee calculation that they were not clear about. Analysis of these responses revealed four key themes.

Exit Fee Theme 1: Ambiguity in Fee Structure

Some residents struggled to understand percentage-based fees, capital gains sharing, and the overall structure of financial obligations. The complexity of fee calculations left some residents feeling uncertain and dissatisfied.

Key Issues:

- Confusion about percentage-based fees and how they are applied.
- Lack of clear explanations of capital gains sharing.
- Inconsistent or unclear fee calculation methods.

Comments:

> *"Not clear what % of the capital gain we receive, and how this relates to exit fee"*
>
> *"Additional percentage calculations e.g. 1% admin fee + 2.2% sales/marketing fee + $10K refurbishment."*

Exit Fee Theme 2: Lack of Transparency in Exit Terms

This theme highlights dissatisfaction with vague or poorly explained exit terms. Residents reported conflicting or incomplete information about how exit fees are determined, the resale process, and the timeline for payouts to families.

Key Issues:

- Conflicting or incomplete information about exit terms.
- Difficulty understanding resale processes and timelines for payouts.
- Lack of clear communication during onboarding.

Comments:

> *"Almost all of it is unclear. I understand that exit fees are in line with regular strata determination. But am not sure if, after how many years occupation, the exit fees cease to apply."*
>
> *"It was not clearly explained that the exit fee calculation is based on the sales price on exit."*

Exit fee Theme 3: Unexpected Additional Fees

Some residents reported frustration about additional fees that were not disclosed upfront. These fees included administrative costs, refurbishment expenses, and other hidden charges that appeared excessive and unfair.

Key Issues:

- Hidden or poorly disclosed fees.
- Unexpected charges for administration, refurbishment, or repairs.
- Perception of unfair financial practices by management.

Comments:

> *"All hidden in the detail."*
>
> *"Any extras they will charge for restoring the unit and gardens to the way they want them."*

How satisfied are respondents with the way the exit fee is calculated?

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were about the way in which exit fees were calculated according to their contract

Just over half of the sample (51%) indicated low levels of satisfaction.

The remaining 49% reported moderate to high levels of satisfaction.

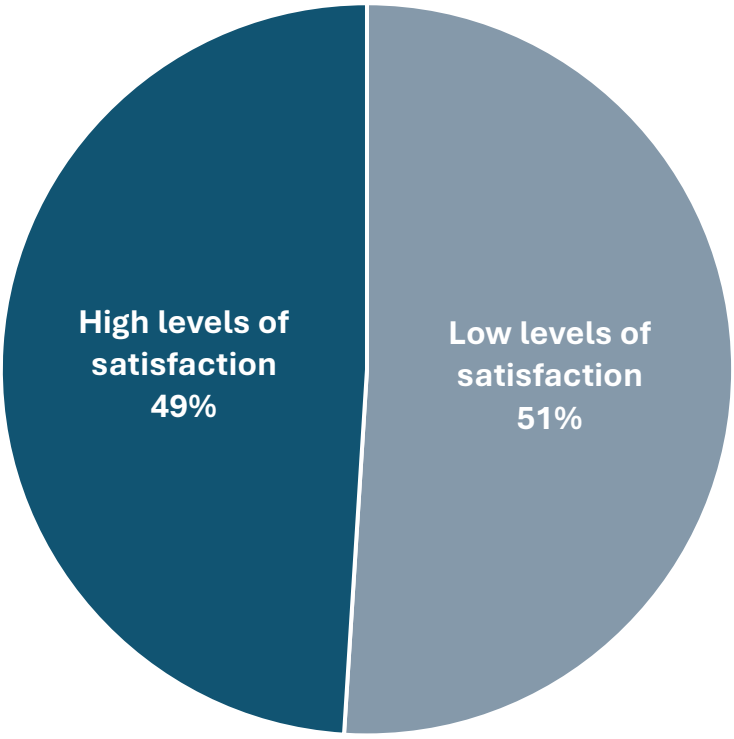


Figure 21: Percentage of respondents reporting low vs high level of satisfaction of how exit fees are calculated

What are the areas of dissatisfaction concerning exit fees?

Respondents were asked to describe any areas of dissatisfaction they may have concerning the exit fees charged in their village. Analysis of the comments revealed four key themes.

Dissatisfaction Exit Fees Theme 1: Concerns About Exit Fees

Respondents felt the fees were excessive, poorly explained, or increased disproportionately over time. Residents expressed confusion about how fees were calculated, particularly when additional costs for refurbishment or resale processes were included. A recurring concern was the lack of flexibility and transparency in fee structures, which made planning for future financial obligations challenging.

Key Issues:

- Unclear about how exit fees were determined and why they increased with length of stay.
- High exit fees a barrier to leaving the village, limiting residents' freedom to relocate or change living arrangements.
- Resident's personal improvements made to their units not adequately credited during the fee calculation process.

Comments:

"I don't understand how the exit fee increases the longer you reside in the village - if that is the case."

"I want to leave but lose too much and did not realise the implications when I signed up."

"Exit fees far too high."

Dissatisfaction Exit Fees Theme 2: Operator Bias or Unfair Practices

Some respondents expressed concerns about perceived biases and unfair practices by operators. They felt the contracts and processes were structured to disproportionately benefit the operators at the expense of residents. Issues included arbitrary cost deductions, lack of accountability, and manipulative pricing practices.

Key Issues:

- Operators seen as having unchecked power to determine additional costs (marketing fees or refurbishment requirements).
- Contracts were seen as heavily favouring operators, with limited protections for residents.
- The lack of transparency and perceived manipulations eroded trust in operators.

Comments:

"Biased towards operator."

"Currently the scheme operator can manipulate the exit fee payable between the asking sale price and what they market it for with the new resident."

"Heavily weighted in favour of operator."

Dissatisfaction Exit Fees Theme 3: Transparency and Communication Issues

Poor communication and lack of transparency were identified as concerns for some residents. They felt inadequately informed about important policies, financial obligations, and changes to village operations. This lack of clarity created confusion and frustration, particularly regarding exit fee calculations and refurbishment standards.

Key Issues:

- Contracts ambiguous or lacking specific details.
- Frequent changes in management led to inconsistent communication practices.

- **Unclear Responsibilities with r**esidents told to "refer to their contract," which they found unhelpful.

Comments:

"Unclear from a legislative perspective what operator can deduct - requires a uniform, industry standard to be set for exit fees."

"The way it is run, lack of communication, and answers are always 'look it up in your contract'!!"

How anxious or concerned are residents about the impact of the exit fees on their financial position?

To better understand how concerns about exit fees affected respondents they were asked to rate how anxious or concerned they were about the impact that exit fees would have on their financial position when they left the village.

Just over a half (55%) of the sample reported low levels of concern.

A substantial number of respondents (45%) rated their level of concern about the impact of exist fees as moderate to high.

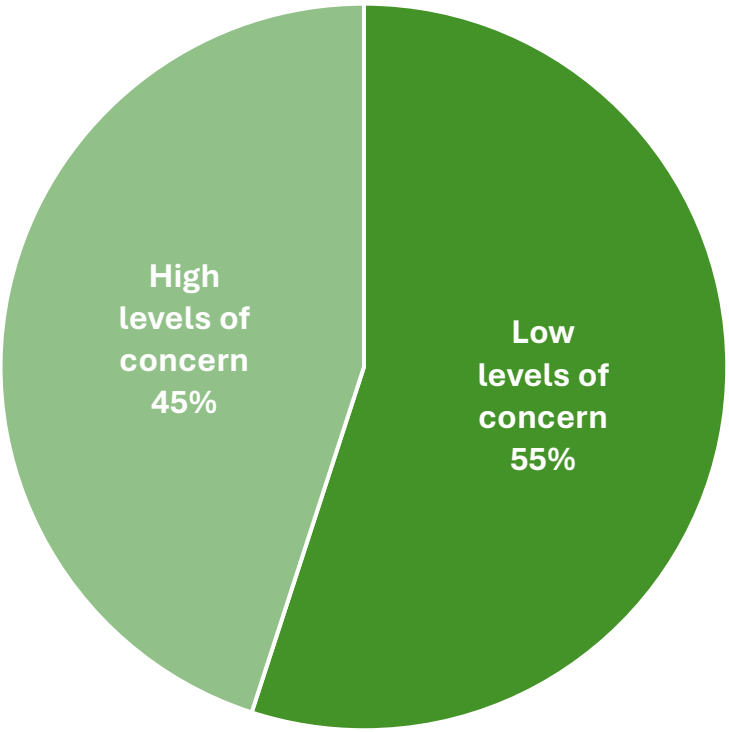


Figure 22: Percentage of respondents reporting low vs high levels of concern about the impact of exit fees

How much capital gain do residents get to keep?

A question was included in the survey asking respondents how much, if any, of the capital gain they get to keep when their unit is sold.

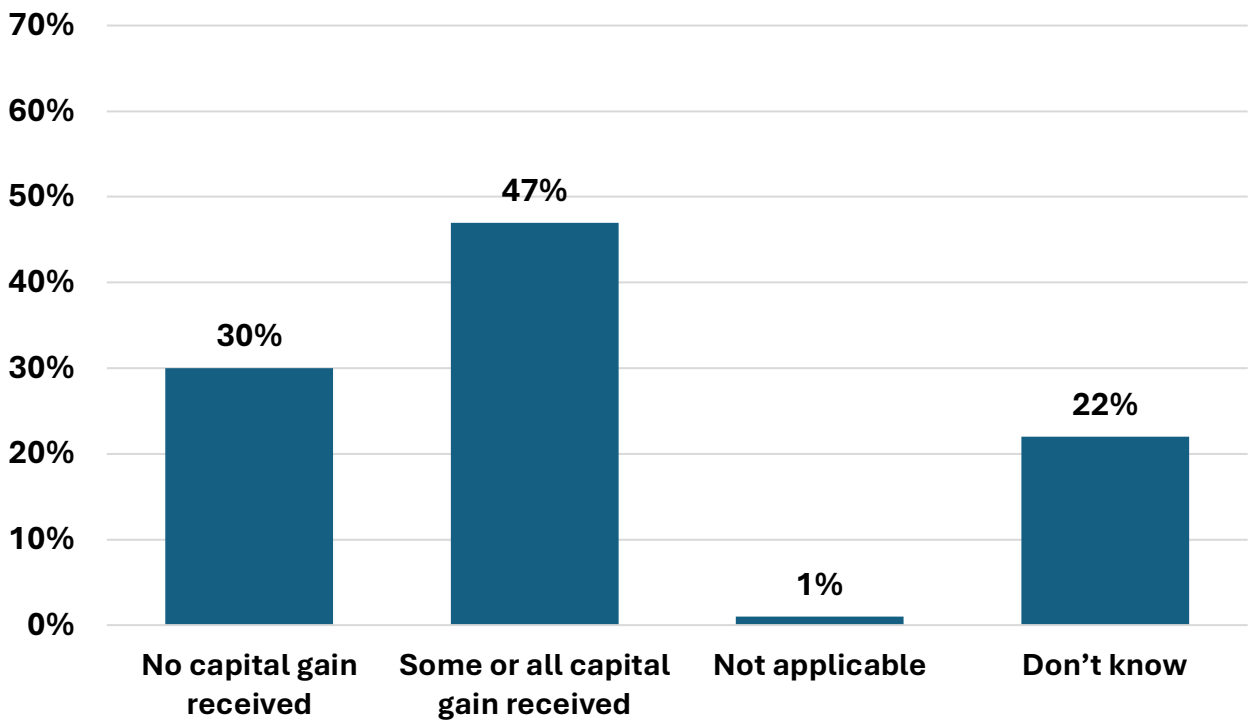


Figure 23: Amount of capital gain residents retain

Almost half of the sample (47%) indicated that they would receive some or all of the capital gain on their unit, compared with 30% who reported they would receive none of the capital gain.

Capital gain is clearly an area of confusion for a substantial proportion of the sample (22%) who indicated they did not know, were unsure, or failed to answer the question.

How well do residents understand the capital gain?

To further investigate residents' level of understanding concerning capital gain respondents were asked to rate how well they understood the capital gain they would get to keep on the sale of their villa/unit.

59% of the sample rated their level of understanding as good or very good.

The remaining 41% rated their understanding as poor or very poor.

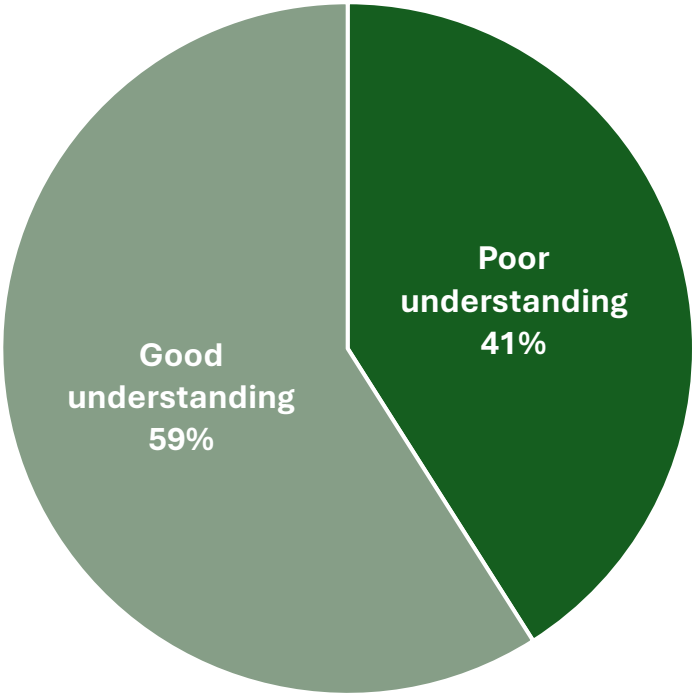


Figure 24: Percentage of respondents reporting poor vs good understanding of capital gain

Are residents required to pay additional fees to prepare their villa/unit for sale?

Respondents were asked whether they were required to cover the costs of refurbishment of their unit when they leave.

51% of respondents reported that they were required to pay refurbishment costs.

29% believed that they did not pay these additional costs.

20% indicated that they did not know the answer to this question.

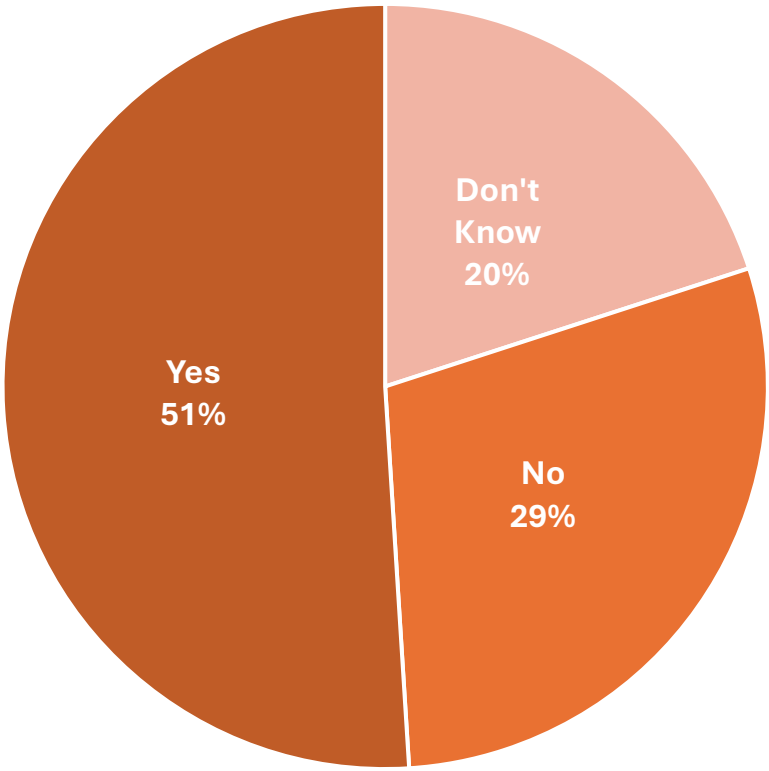


Figure 25: Percentage of residents required to pay additional fees to prepare villa/unit for sale

How well do residents understand the fees to prepare their villa/unit for sale?

In the survey respondents were asked to rate how well they understand the fees payable to prepare their villa/unit for sale.

Just over half of the sample (55%) felt that they had a good understanding of the fees they would be charged when preparing their villa/unit for sale.

The remaining 45% rated their level of understanding as poor or very poor.

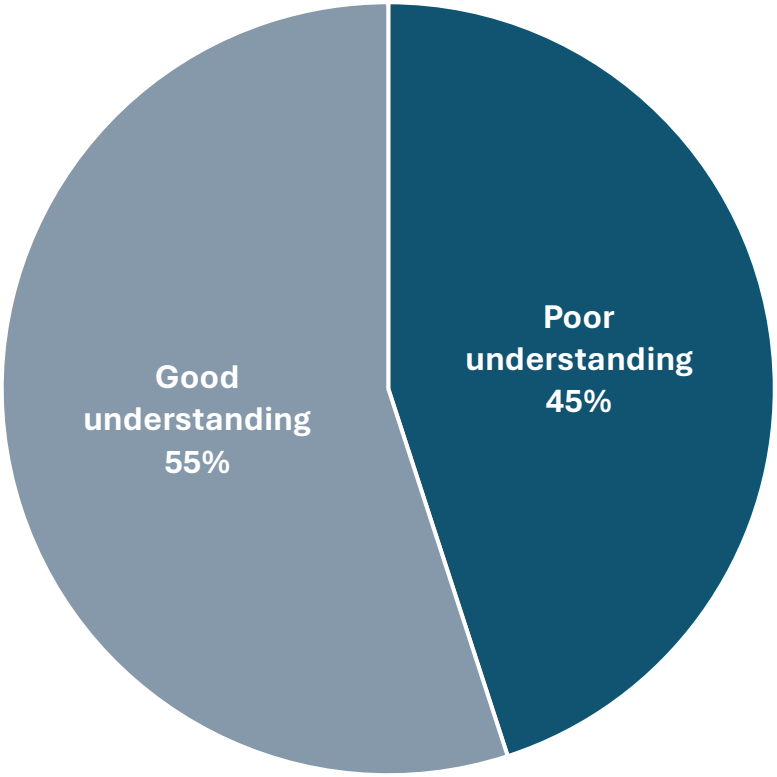


Figure 26: Percentage of respondents reporting poor vs good understanding of the fees to prepare their villa/unit for sale

Respondents' confusion about the additional charges to prepare a unit for sale is also reflected in the comments provided to some of the open-ended questions.

Residents expressed concern about refurbishment fees, often feeling these charges were poorly defined and excessive. They were unsure about what upgrades were required, who decided the scope, and how costs were shared between residents and management.

> *"I am confused about the relationship between the exit fee and the renovation fees. I understood that damaged appliances and fittings would be replaced, but now I am led to believe that it has to be renovated to the top of the range even if not damaged"*
>
> *"We were told we did not pay refurbishment, but we have heard differently now. Please explain what normal 'wear and tear' is."*
>
> *"What constitutes fair wear and tear in relation to refurbishment costs?"*
>
> *"Confused about how the refurbishment costs and Exit Fees may be combined; and how they are arrived at."*
>
> *"Need to be more clear about 'Refurbishment" fees - i.e. upgrades to meet the operator's market standard."*
>
> *"Refurbishment costs and selling agents fees which can be quite excessive."*
>
> *"Ambiguity of what constitutes items which must be renovated – very vague."*

How concerned or worried are residents about the charges to prepare their villa/unit for sale?

Respondents were asked to rate their level of worry and concern about the charges that may be applied to prepare their villa/unit for sale when they leave.

Over half the sample (51%) indicated a moderate to high level of concern.

The remaining 49% rated their worry or concern as low or very low.

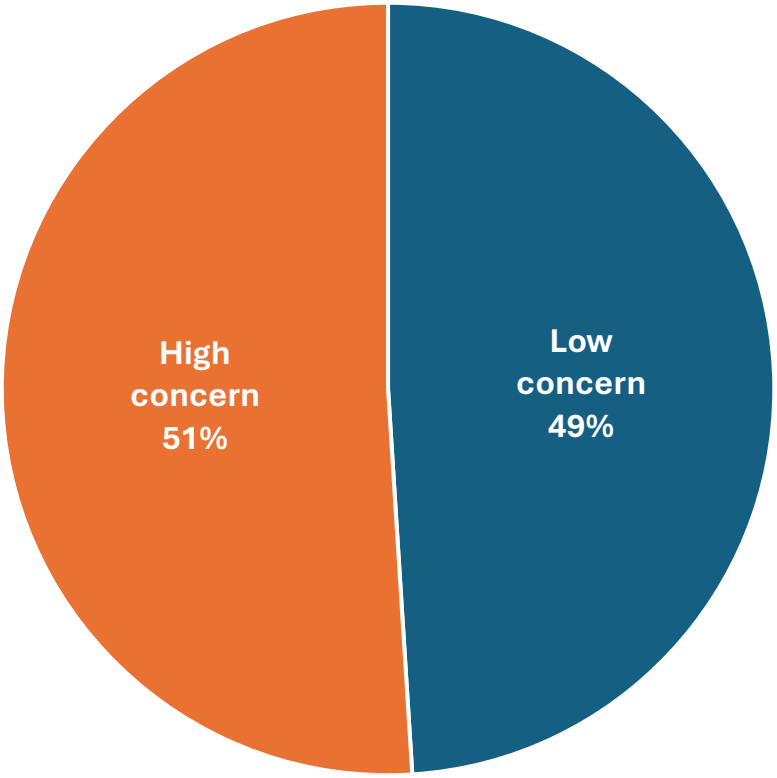


Figure 27: Percentage of respondents reporting low vs high levels of concern about the fees to prepare their villa/unit for sale

Group comparisons

In the previous sections of this report results are summarized for each of the survey questions for the sample as a whole. In this section additional analyses are reported with the sample broken into groups based on demographic characteristics. This segmentation allows us to compare levels of satisfaction and understanding for specific groups in the sample.

Are there differences in responses across states?

In Table 2 below the percentage of respondents giving the response shown in brackets (e.g. % Yes or % high satisfaction) to each survey question is shown separately for the various states. The lowest and highest values for each survey question is shown in bold.

Table 2: Responses to survey questions for each state separately

Survey question	**ACT**	**NSW**	**QLD**	**SA**	**TAS**	**VIC**	**WA**	**Total sample**
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Would you recommend your village to others (% Yes)	**97**	90	89	**88**	95	90	89	90
How satisfied are you with living in your village (% high satisfaction)	**90**	85	84	**81**	88	84	83	84
Did you understand that it was different when buying into a retirement village (% Yes)	**95**	92	91	**85**	93	91	88	90
Were you provided with a Disclosure Statement (% Yes)	79	**80**	79	69	**61**	75	82	77
How well did you understand the Disclosure Statement (% good understanding)	**80**	76	75	**64**	74	73	67	73
How well did sales explain the contract (% well explained)	**65**	64	61	**44**	55	59	53	58

Survey question	ACT	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total sample
How easy was it to understand your contract (% easy to understand)	59	55	51	**44**	**64**	49	49	52
How well did you understand the ongoing costs (% good understanding)	**84**	80	78	**74**	75	77	73	77
How well did you understand the rules about pets (% good understanding)	**94**	92	90	**88**	98	92	91	91
How well did you understand the rules about what you can and cannot do (% good understanding)	**89**	87	85	**76**	88	85	85	84
How well did you understand the facilities that were available (% good understanding)	**88**	84	**82**	**82**	83	79	**82**	82
Were you aware fees would increase (% Yes)	86	**89**	87	**81**	83	87	80	85
How well do you understand exit fees (% good understanding)	**71**	70	68	**46**	62	66	52	62
How satisfied are you with exit fees (% high satisfaction)	**63**	57	56	**31**	47	46	42	49
How well do you understand capital gain (% good understanding)	**76**	70	67	**36**	58	57	45	59
How well do you understand extra charges when leaving (% good understanding)	**63**	55	58	45	**39**	60	55	55

*Note. The highest and lowest values in each row are **bolded**.*

The two survey questions shown in Table 3 below are scored with high scores indicating high levels of anxiety and concern.

Table 3: Responses to questions about how concerned or anxious respondents felt

Survey question	ACT	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total sample
How concerned or anxious are you about the impact of exit fees (% high concern)	**35**	43	42	**56**	41	45	47	45
How concerned or anxious are you about the extra charges to prepare villa/unit for sale (% high concern)	**39**	45	53	**61**	40	57	55	51

Inspection of the pattern of scores shown in Table 2 and 3 indicate that the scores for ACT were consistently higher than values for each of the other states, while the scores for SA were lower across the majority of the survey questions. Lower percentage scores for South Australia indicate that respondents in that state have lower levels of satisfaction, poorer understanding of the contract and its conditions, and higher levels of concern about the impact of fees.

Substantial state-based differences were identified for a number of the survey questions. The questions with the greatest percentage point differences between the highest and lowest scoring states are listed below:

- **Understanding of capital gain:** 40-point difference between the highest scoring state (ACT: 76%) and the lowest scoring state (SA: 36%).
- **Satisfaction with exit fee**: 32-point difference between the highest scoring state (ACT: 63%) and the lowest scoring state (SA: 31%).
- **Understanding of exit fee**: 25-point difference between the highest scoring state (ACT: 71%) and the lowest scoring state (SA: 46%).
- **Understanding of extra charges when leaving**: 24-point difference between the highest scoring state (ACT: 63%) and the lowest scoring state (SA: 45%).

To further explore the pattern of differences among the states, graphs were generated for a select number of the survey questions.

Differences across states of respondents' satisfaction levels

Across states, the percentage of respondents who reported moderate to high levels of satisfaction with their village is shown in Figure 28 below.

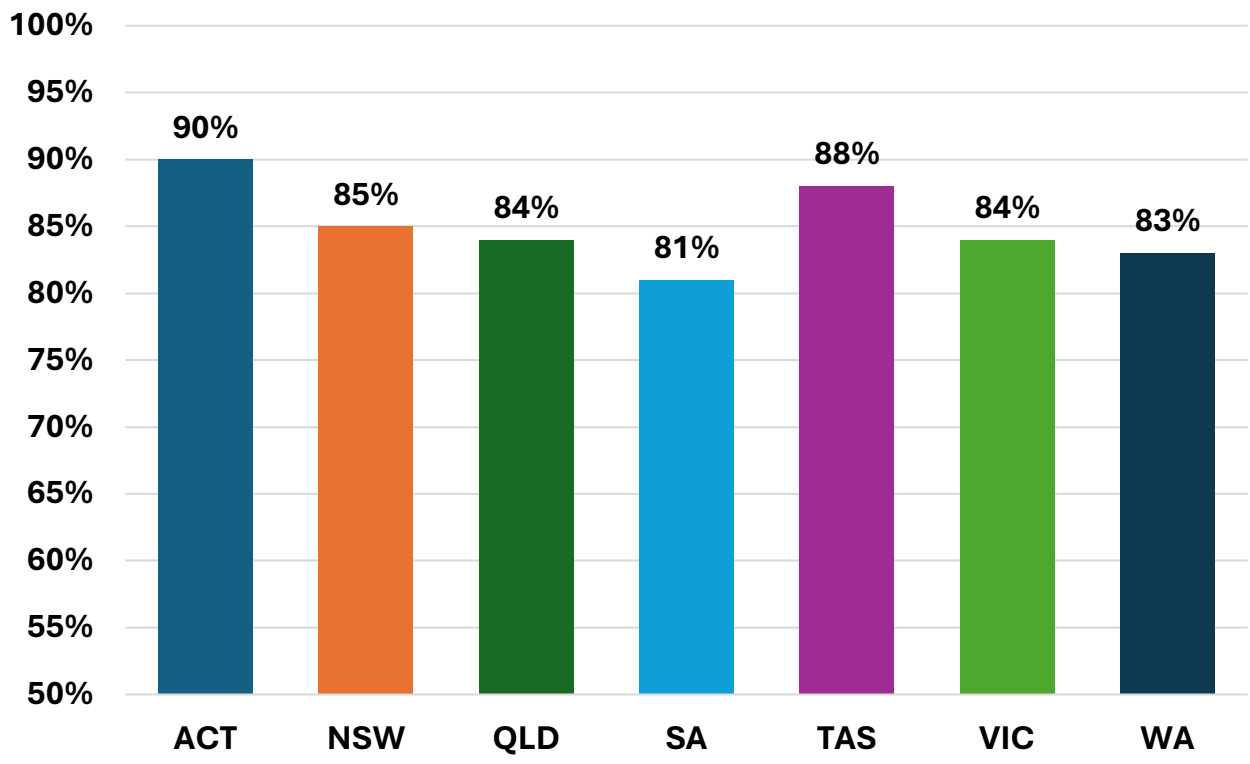


Figure 28: Comparison across states of the percentage of respondents reporting high satisfaction with their village

A higher percentage of residents of villages in the ACT reported high satisfaction scores (90%) than the other states, closely followed by Tasmanian residents (88%).

The lowest percentage of satisfied respondents was recorded by South Australia (81%).

Provision of Disclosure Statement across states

In Figure 29 below the percentage of respondents who reported receiving a Disclosure Statement across each of the states is shown.

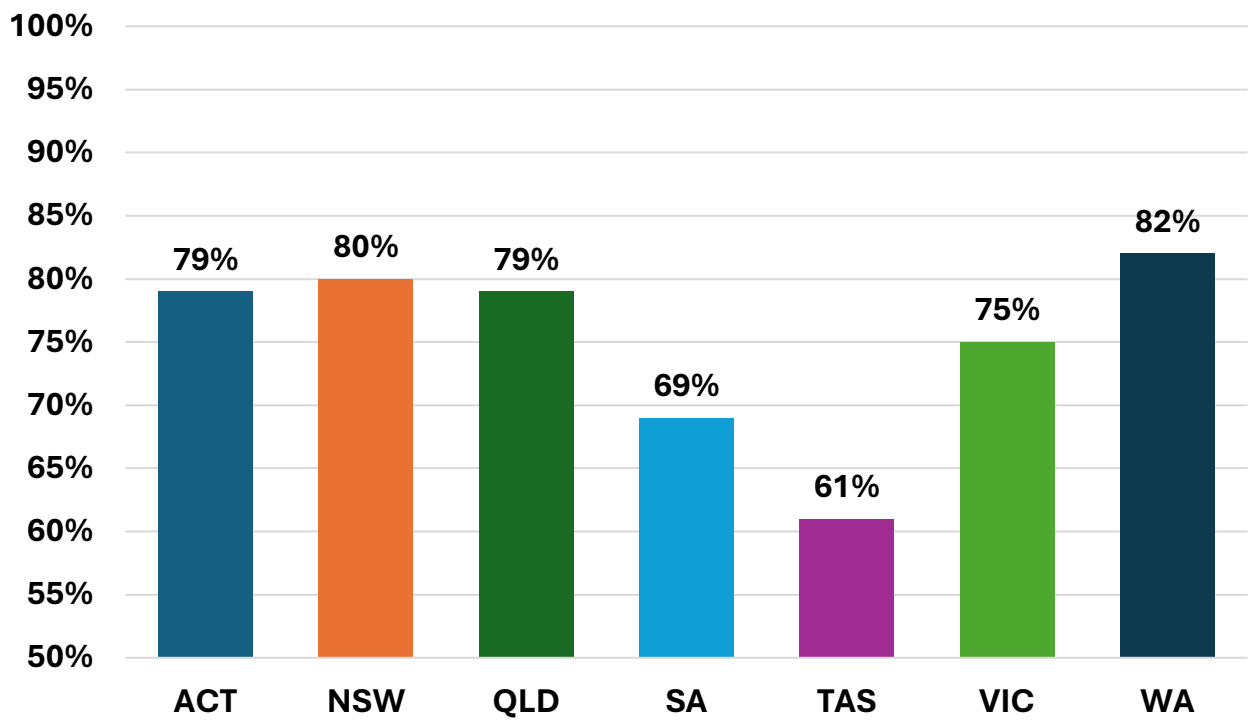


Figure 29: Percentage of respondents in each state who indicated that they received a Disclosure Statement

The state with the highest percentage of residents reporting that they received a Disclosure Statement was Western Australia (82%), compared with only 61% in Tasmania and 69% in South Australia.

How well sales staff in each state explained the contract

Figure 30 shows how well respondents in each state felt that the sales staff explained the contract.

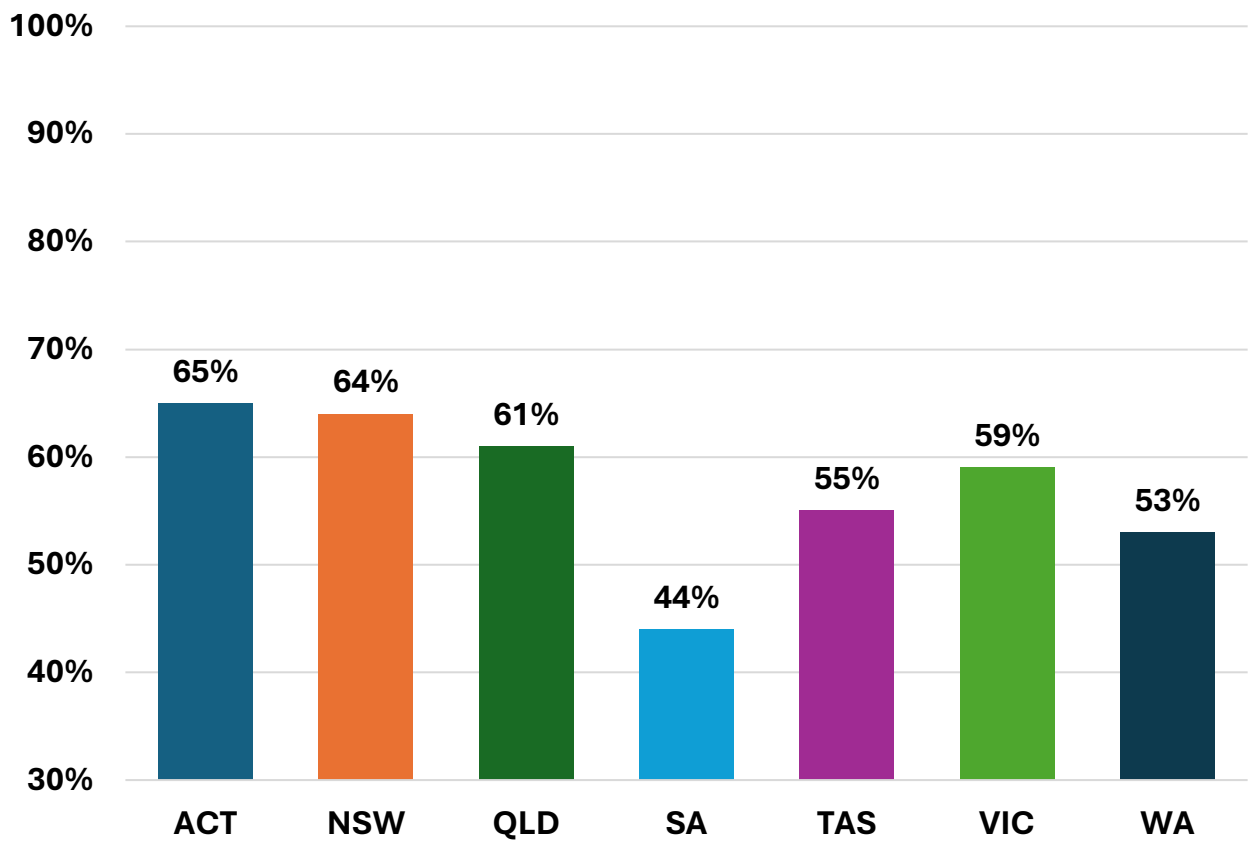


Figure 30: Comparison across states of the percentage of respondents that felt that the sales staff explained the contract well

The lowest value was recorded for respondents in South Australia, where only 44% indicated that they felt that the sales staff explained the contract well.

Even among the better performing states (ACT: 65%, NSW: 64%), only two-thirds of the sample rated their sales staff's explanation as good, with the remaining one-third rating it as poor .

How easy to understand respondents in different states found the contract

In Figure 31 below the percentage of respondents in each state who reported found the contract easy to understand.

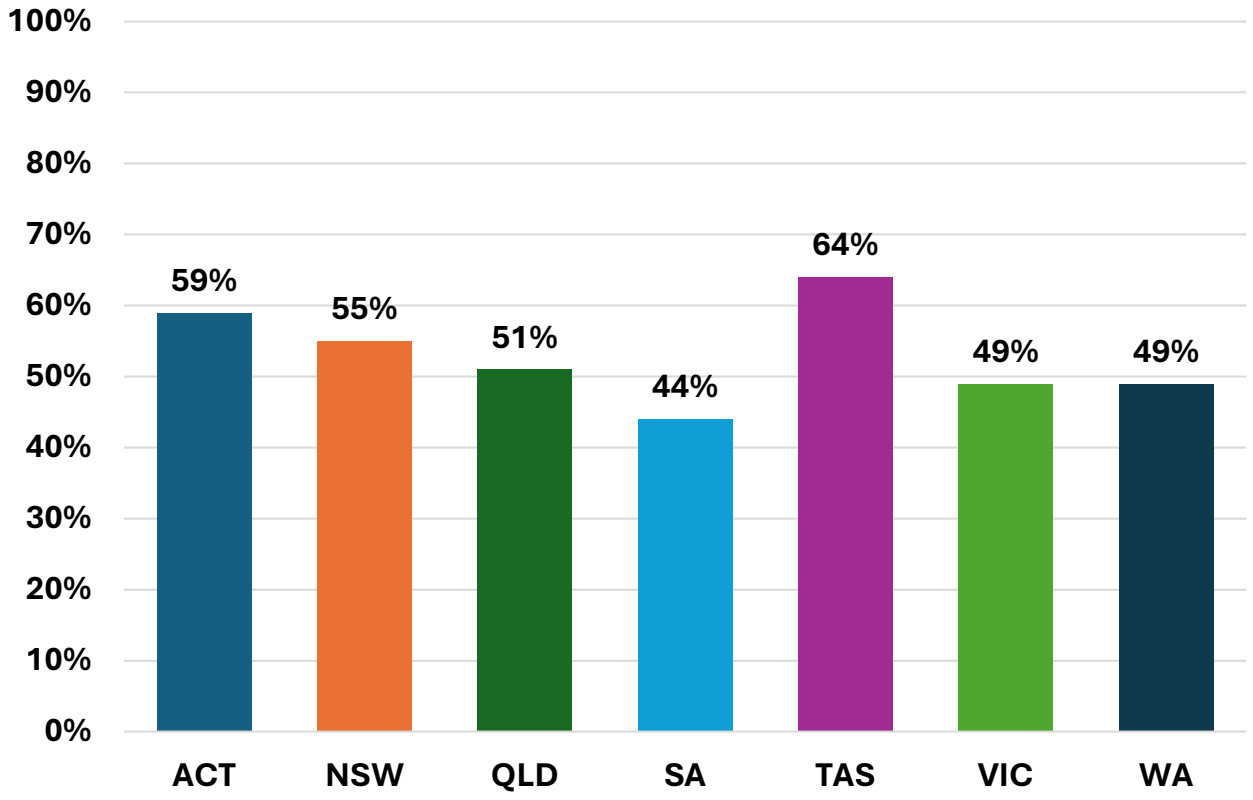


Figure 31: Comparison across states of the percentage of respondents who found it easy to understand their contract

The results shown in the graph above suggest that a substantial proportion of respondents found their contract difficult to read and understand.

In South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria less than one-half of respondents indicated that they found the contract easy to read. The highest value was recorded for Tasmania (64%) where two-thirds of respondents reported their contracts as easy to read.

How well respondents in different states understand exit fees

In Figure 32 below the percentage of respondents in each state who indicated they had a good understanding of exit fees is shown.

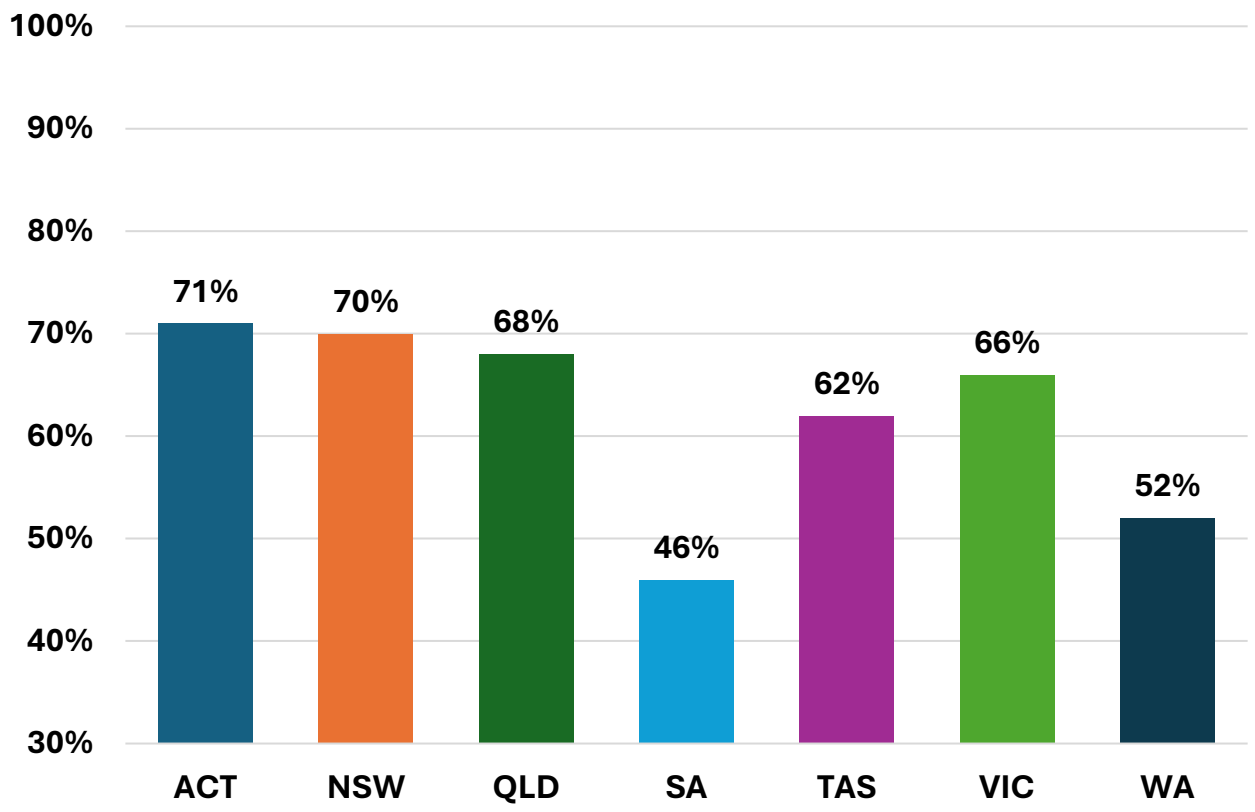


Figure 32: Comparison across states of the percentage of respondents who felt that they had a good understanding of how their exit fees were calculated

The ACT and NSW recorded the highest percentage of respondents who felt that they had a good understanding of exit fees (71% and 70% respectively).

In contrast, less than half (46%) of respondents of retirement villages in South Australia reported having a good understanding of exit fees and how they were calculated in their contract.

How well respondents in different states understand capital gain

Figure 33 shows the percentage of respondents in each state who reported a good or very good understanding of how capital gain was calculated in their contract.

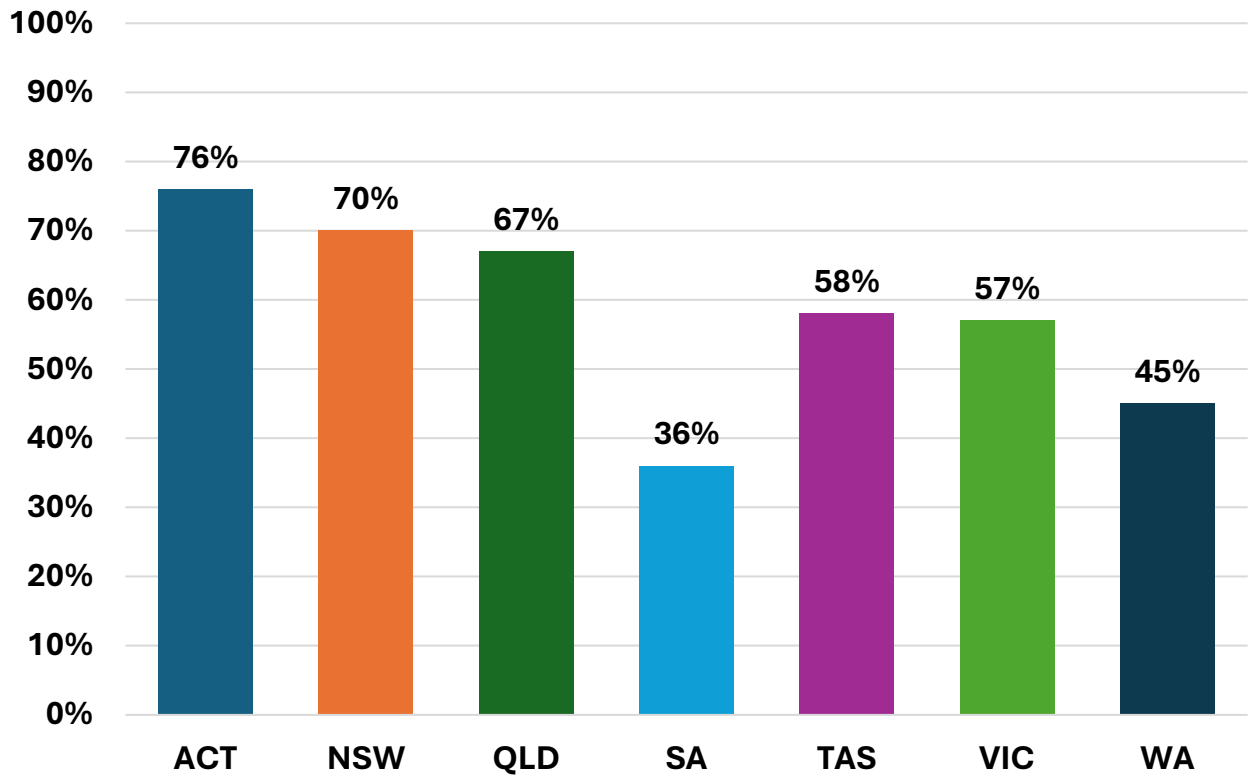


Figure 33: Comparison across states of the percentage of respondents who felt that they had a good understanding of how capital gain was calculated

The state with the highest percentage of respondents with a good understanding of capital gain was the ACT (76%) while the lowest percentage was recorded in South Australia (36%).

The very low value for South Australia indicates that almost two-thirds of residents have a poor or very poor understanding of how capital gain is calculated. This is substantially lower than the majority of other states.

How does length of time in the village impact responses to the survey?

The sample was split according to how long the respondent had lived in their village. Group 1 included respondents who had lived in the village for 10 or less years, and Group 2 for 11 or more years. Responses for each of these groups are reported in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Comparison of responses for residents who had lived in the village 1 to 10 years versus 11 + years

Survey question	***Years in village***	
	10 or less	***11 or more***
	%	***%***
Would you recommend village to others (% Yes)	91	88
How satisfied are you with living in village (% high satisfaction)	85	83
Did you understand that it was different when buying into a retirement village (% Yes)	92	89
Were you provided with a Disclosure Statement (% Yes)	80	69
How well did you understand Disclosure Statement (% good understanding)	74	69
How well did sales explain contract (% well explained)	62	49
How easy was it to understand your contract (% easy to understand)	53	47
How well did you understand the ongoing costs (% good understanding)	78	76
How well did you understand the rules about pets (% good understanding)	91	91
How well did you understand the rules about what you can and cannot do (% good understanding)	85	84
How well did you understand the facilities that were available	83	82
Were you aware fees would increase (% Yes)	85	85
How well do you understand exit fees (% good understanding)	64	58
How satisfied are you with exit fees (% high satisfaction)	52	42
How concerned or anxious are you about the impact of exit fees (% high concern)	43	50
How well do you understand capital gain (% good understanding)	61	52
How well do you understand extra charges when leaving (% good understanding)	56	51
How concerned or anxious are you about the extra charges to prepare villa/unit for sale (% high concern)	49	58

When comparing responses of residents who had lived in the village for 11 or more years, with those who had lived for 10 or less years, clear differences were detected on many of the survey questions.

Most notably, residents who entered their village 11 or more years ago:

- Were less likely to have received a Disclosure Statement
- Reported poorer understanding of capital gain and exit fees
- Felt that the sales staff had not explained the contract well
- Were more concerned about the extra charges to prepare a villa/unit for sale
- Found it more difficult to understand the contract
- Reported feeling more concerned or anxious about the impact of exit fees

Are there differences in responses between village operators?

In the survey respondents were asked to indicate who the operator was for their village. Over 100 different operators were represented in the sample. For those operators with 30 or more respondents, comparisons were made for a select number of the survey questions.

Comparison of satisfaction levels across operators

Figure 34 shows the percentage of respondents for each operator that indicated that they were moderately or very satisfied with living in their village.

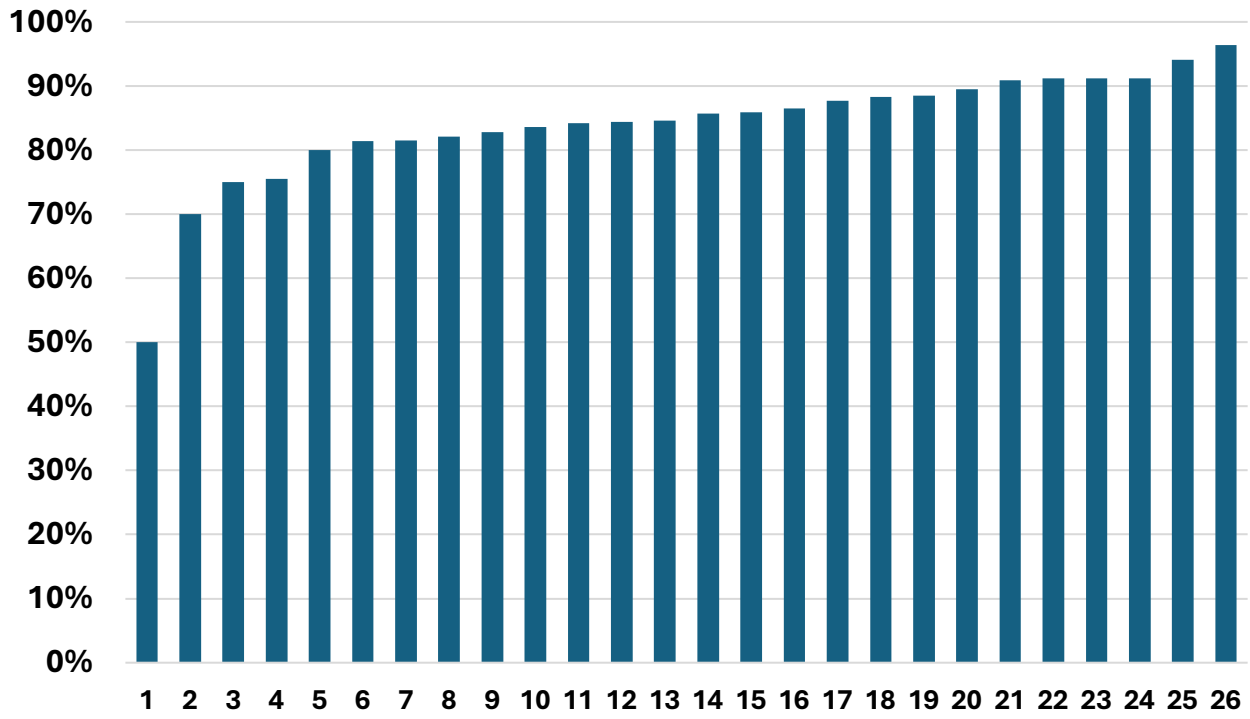


Figure 34: Comparison across operators of the percentage of respondents reporting high satisfaction

Satisfaction levels showed substantial variation across the different village operators. The operator with the lowest satisfaction percentage of 50% is shown in Figure 34 as Operator 1. The highest satisfaction level is shown for Operator 26 with 96% of their respondents reporting high levels of satisfaction.

Differences across operators in how well sales staff explained the contract

Figure 35 shows the percentage of respondents, across operators, that felt that the sales staff explained the contract well.

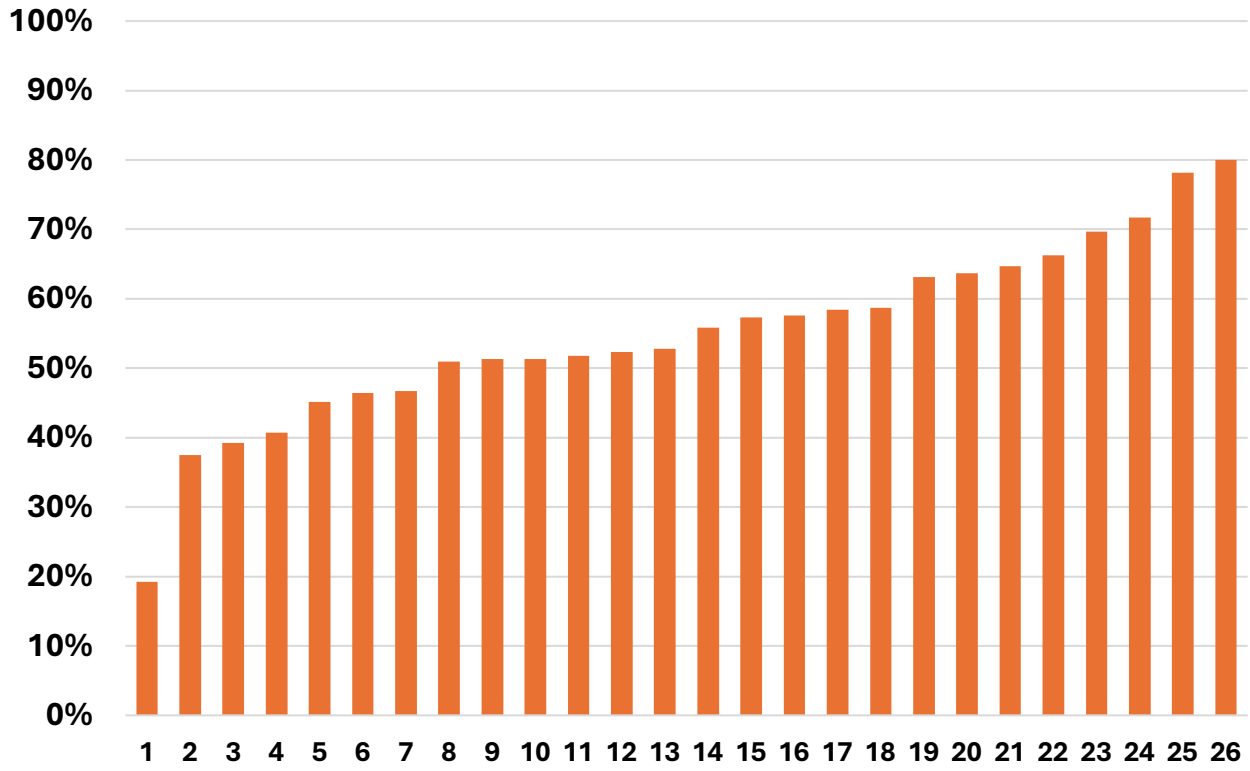


Figure 35: Comparison across operators of the percentage of respondents indicating their sales staff explained the contract well

Across states, values varied from a high of 80% to a low of 19%. Seven of the operators fell below 50%, with a further eleven falling between 50% and 60%.

These results suggest that respondents in many of the villages are dissatisfied with the explanations about the contract that they received from the sales staff when they were originally deciding to move into their villages.

Differences across operators in how easy it was to understand the contract

In Figure 36 below the percentage of respondents who indicated that they found it easy to understand their contract is shown across operators.

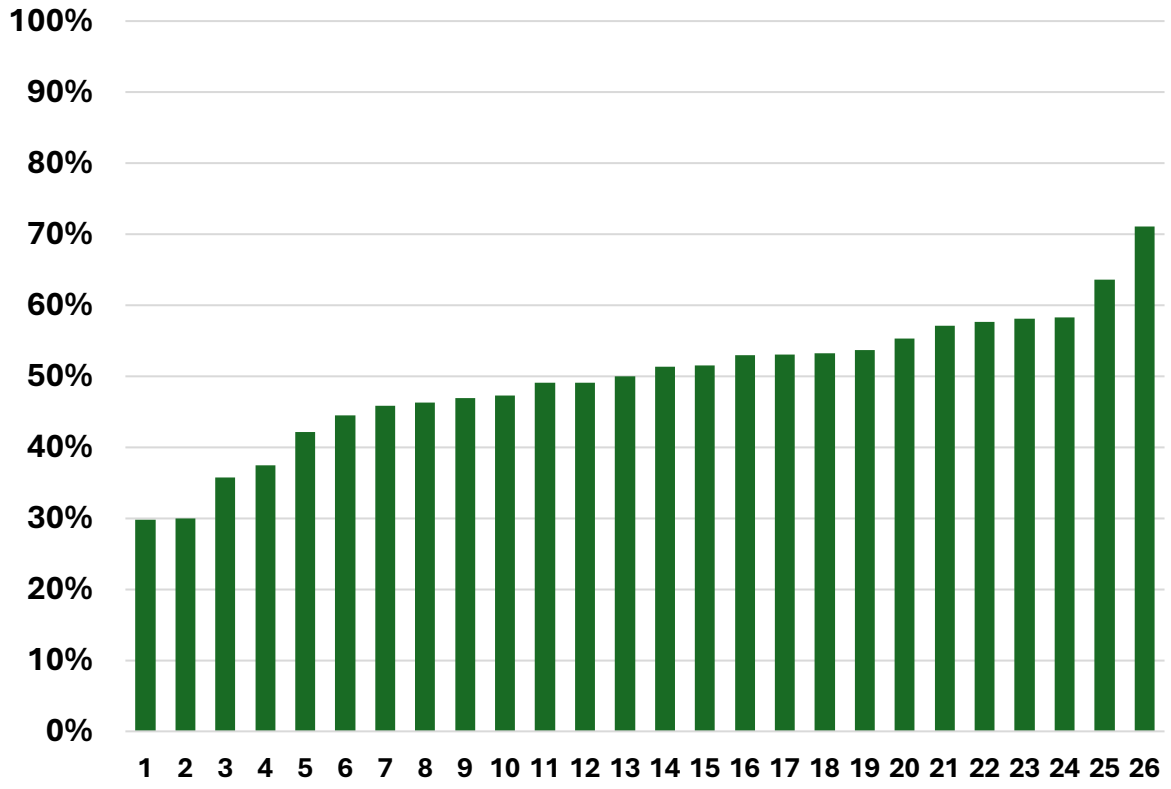


Figure 36: Comparison across operators of the percentage of respondents who rated the contract as easy to understand

The percentage of respondents that reported their contract was easy to understand ranged from a high of 71% to a low of 30% across the various operators. Values less than 50% were recorded for 12 of the operators, indicating that over half of their respondents had difficulty understanding their contract.

Differences across operators in how easy it was to understand exit fees

In Figure 37 below the percentage of respondents who indicated that they had a good understanding of how exit fees are calculated is shown across operators.

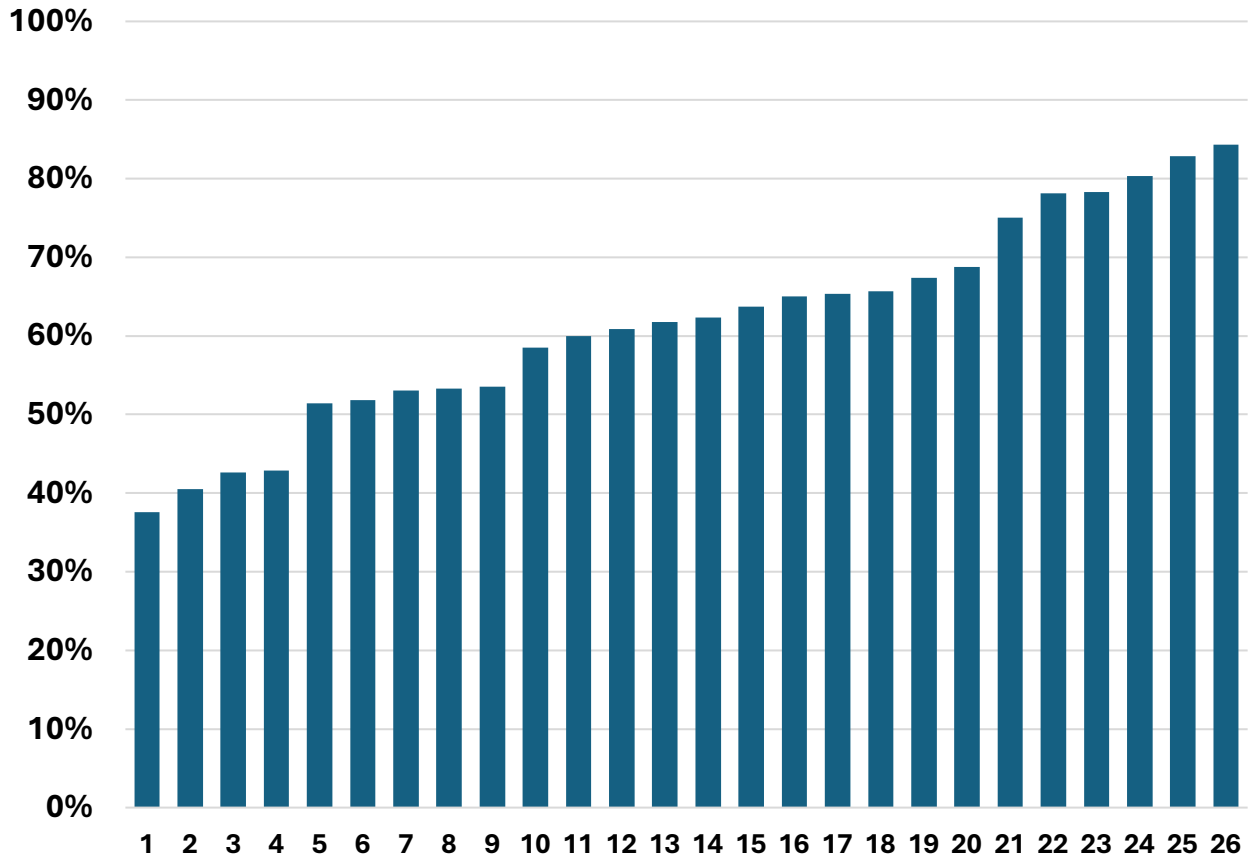


Figure 37: Comparison across operators of the percentage of respondents who had a good understanding of exit fees

The percentage of respondents that had a good understanding of exit fees ranged from a low of 38% to a high of 84% across operators.

Differences across operators in concern about impact of exit fees

In Figure 38 below the percentage of respondents who indicated that they had a good understanding of how exit fees are calculated is shown across operators.

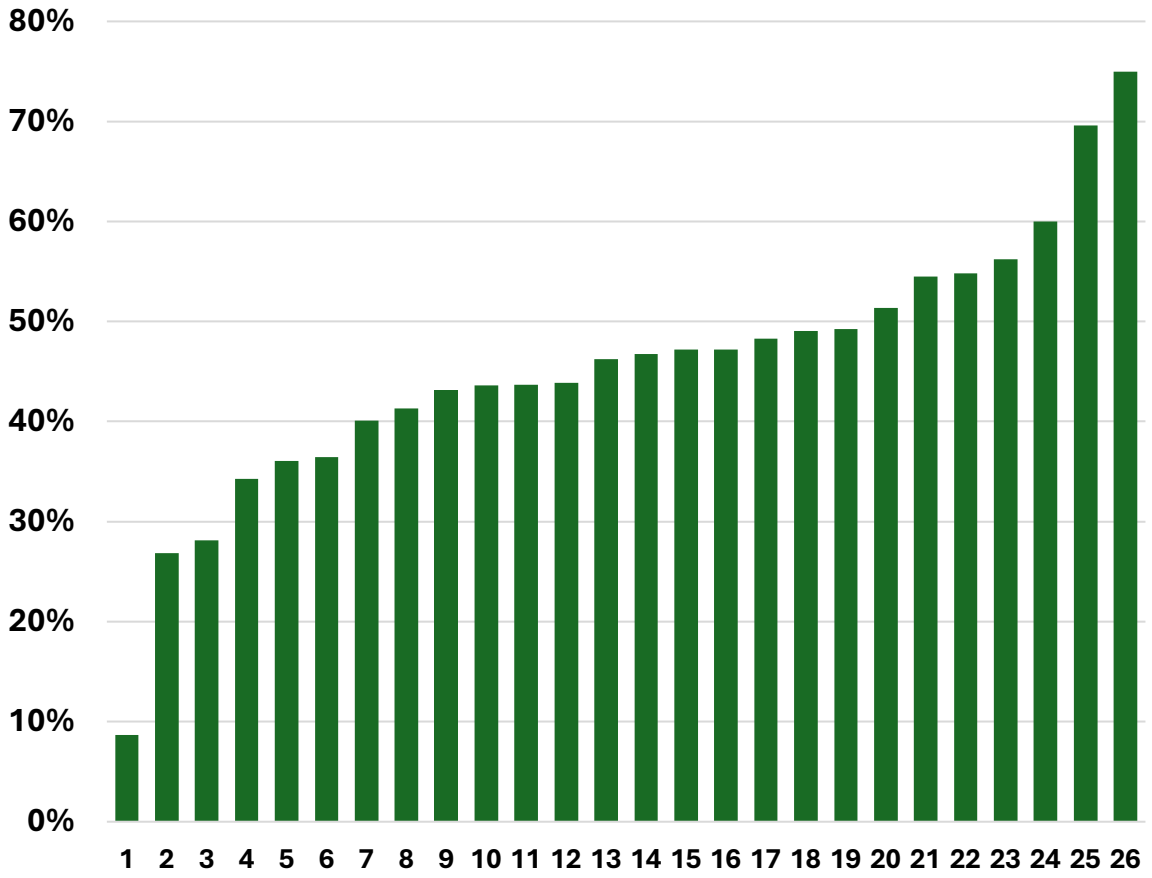


Figure 38: Comparison across operators of the percentage of respondents who reported a high level of concern about exit fees

The percentage of respondents who reported high levels of concern or worry about exit fees ranged from a low of 9% to a high of 75% across operators.

Differences across operators in understanding of additional fees to prepare villa/unit for sale

In Figure 39 below the percentage of respondents who indicated that they had a good understanding of the additional charges that may be applied when preparing their villa/unit for sale is shown across operators.

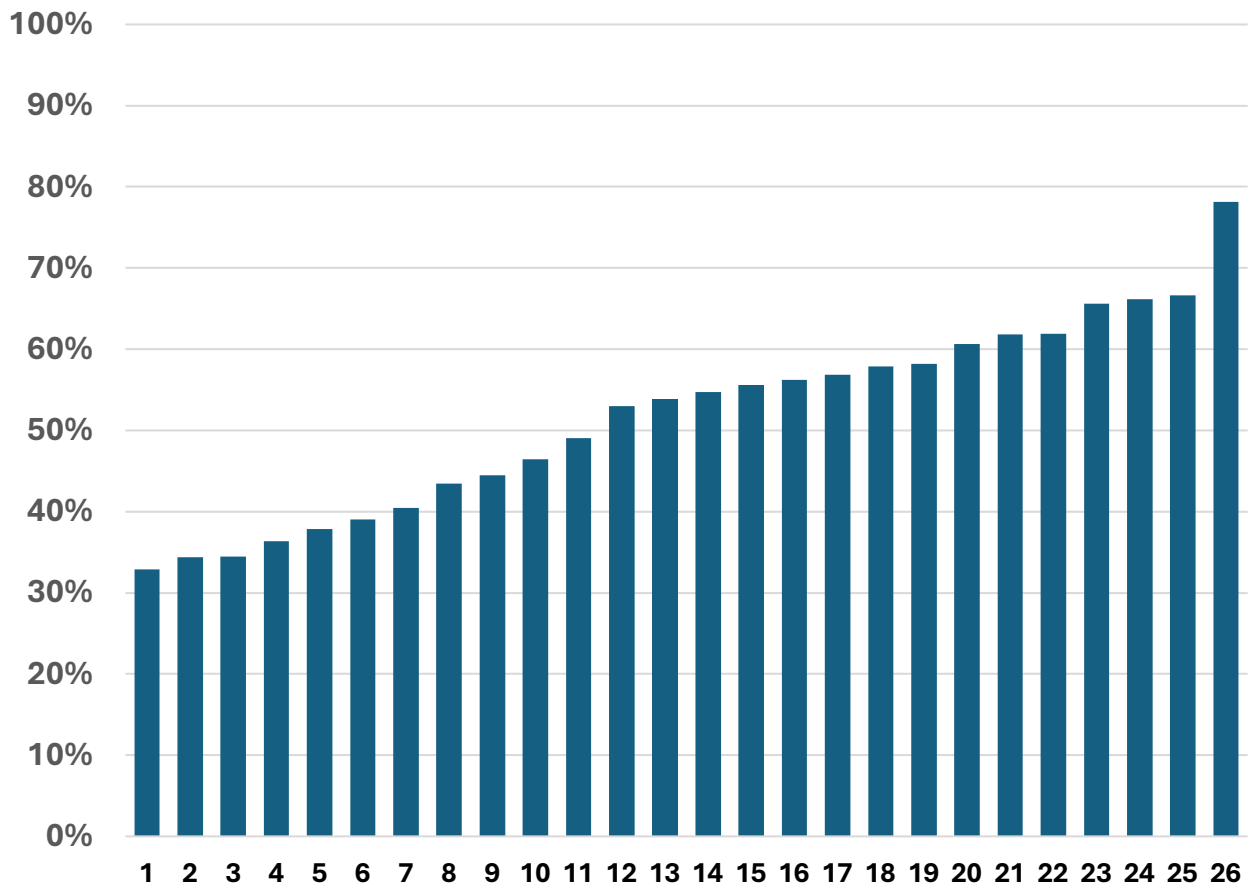


Figure 39: Comparison across operators of the percentage of respondents who reported a good understanding of the additional charges to prepare their villa/unit for sale

The percentage of respondents who reported a good understanding of the charges that may apply when preparing their villa/unit for sale ranged from a low of 33% to a high of 78% across operators.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the experiences of residents living in retirement villages across Australia.

The survey explored key aspects of the decision-making process, contractual understanding, financial commitments, and overall satisfaction with village living.

While the majority of residents reported positive experiences, the results also highlighted areas for improvement, particularly in relation to financial transparency, contract clarity, and dispute resolution.

Variations across states and differences between newer and longer-term residents further emphasize the need for ongoing reforms and standardization across the sector.

> *"You become part of a vibrant, caring community, make new friends, enjoy social interaction, have access to a variety of lifestyle facilities, in which you can participate or not as you choose. It's far better than spending your retirement years in a large home (which you have to maintain). You retain your independence and increase your life expectancy and live a better life."*

Resident Satisfaction and Key Reasons for Moving into a Village

The majority of residents reported being satisfied with their decision to move into a retirement village. The key reasons cited for making the transition included reduced maintenance responsibilities, increased security, access to social activities, and a sense of belonging within a community.

Many residents believed that village living allowed them to maintain independence while enjoying the benefits of a supportive environment. The structured nature of village life, with organized events and shared amenities, was seen as a significant advantage compared to living alone.

These findings highlight the many positives associated with retirement village living, reinforcing that for many older Australians, moving into a village is a beneficial and well-considered choice.

Understanding of Contracts and Financial Obligations

Despite overall satisfaction, the survey revealed that a significant proportion of residents experienced difficulties understanding their contracts and financial commitments.

Nearly half of respondents reported that their contracts were complex and difficult to interpret, with some feeling that they had not received adequate explanations before signing.

One of the most misunderstood aspects of village contracts was exit fees, or Deferred Management Fees (DMF).

Many residents were unaware of how these fees were calculated or the extent to which they would impact their financial position upon leaving. Capital gains entitlements were another area of confusion, with some residents expecting to retain a share of capital appreciation, only to later discover that their contracts specified otherwise.

> *"When you buy into a retirement village you are buying into a community. It is very different to just buying your own home. There are rules, expectations, different attitudes and values among the residents..... Advertising about downsizing and getting a nice small place that you can easily manage falls short of helping potential residents from making a well-informed choice."*

State-Based Differences in Resident Experiences

The survey identified notable variations in resident experiences across different states, with factors such as contract transparency, satisfaction levels, and financial awareness differing significantly. States such as NSW and Victoria, where consumer protection regulations have been strengthened in recent years, reported higher levels of understanding regarding financial obligations.

Residents in these states were more likely to have received detailed Disclosure Statements before signing their contracts and had greater awareness of exit fees and capital gain entitlements.

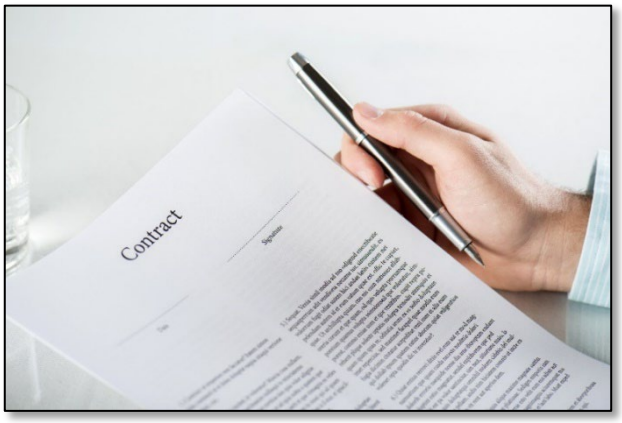
In contrast, South Australia and Western Australia had lower levels of contract clarity and financial transparency, which may be linked to historically weaker regulatory oversight. However, legislative changes in these states are expected to improve protections and ensure residents are better informed in the future.

Differences Between Newer and Longer-Term Residents

Another key finding was the difference in experiences between residents who had lived in a village for 10 years or less compared to those who had been residents for 11 or more years. Newer residents generally reported higher levels of satisfaction, which may be attributed to recent legislative reforms that have improved contract disclosure and financial transparency.

In contrast, longer-term residents were more likely to report dissatisfaction, particularly in relation to financial commitments. Many of these residents signed contracts under older regulations and were unaware of financial conditions such as rising ongoing fees, capital loss provisions, or changes to village management structures over time.

This finding suggests that village operators should proactively engage with long-term residents to review their contracts and provide additional support to ensure they fully understand any changes that may affect them.



Recent Legislative and Policy Changes

Over the past decade, legislative changes across various states have aimed to improve protections for retirement village residents. In NSW and Victoria, for example, there have been significant reforms requiring clearer Disclosure Statements and standardized contract terms.

The introduction of mandatory disclosure documents has helped prospective residents make more informed decisions before entering a village. In Queensland and South Australia, additional consumer protections have been introduced to regulate fee structures and improve dispute resolution processes.

These reforms have contributed to improved resident confidence in some states, but ongoing efforts are needed to ensure all residents, regardless of location, receive the same level of transparency and protection.

> *"I have security, companionship, and loved the low-entry cost - I'd hate to think seniors would deny themselves these things based on misinformation generated by certain areas of the media. If you understand your contract, there are no surprises at the end."*

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

This study has several strengths that enhance the validity and relevance of its findings. With a large sample size of 4,115 participants, it provides a comprehensive overview of resident experiences across all Australian states. The inclusion of both male and female residents, a wide range of age groups, and a mix of both newer and long-term residents ensures that the survey results represent a diverse cross-section of retirement village residents.

This breadth of participation strengthens the validity of the findings and provides a balanced view of both the positive and challenging aspects of retirement village living.

Despite these strengths, the study does have some limitations. The survey was conducted online, meaning that only residents with access to a computer and sufficient digital literacy were able to participate. This may have excluded some older residents who are less comfortable with technology, potentially skewing the results toward those who are more digitally engaged.

Additionally, while efforts were made to promote the survey widely, participation was reliant on retirement village associations, operators, and managers to advertise its availability. As a result, not all villages across Australia were equally represented in the data.

Conclusion

The findings of this survey provide valuable insights into the experiences of retirement village residents, highlighting both the benefits and challenges associated with village living.

While many residents appreciate the social connection, security, and convenience of village life, there are areas where improvements are needed, particularly in relation to financial transparency and contractual understanding.

Differences between states and between newer and longer-term residents underscore the need for ongoing reforms to ensure all residents receive clear, accessible, and fair information about their financial commitments.

The survey was conducted independently with the support of retirement village associations in each state, ensuring an unbiased and balanced perspective. The data was analysed by an independent expert, reinforcing the credibility of the findings.

Overall, this study serves as an important resource for policymakers, village operators, and advocacy groups working to improve the retirement village sector and enhance the experience of all residents.

Recommendations

The findings of this study highlight several key areas where improvements can be made to enhance the experiences of retirement village residents.

These recommendations are directed towards village operators and managers, policymakers and legislators, advocacy groups, and residents themselves. Implementing these practical and achievable actions will contribute to greater transparency, financial security, and resident satisfaction across the retirement village sector.

Recommendations for Village Operators and Managers

Operators and managers play a crucial role in ensuring that residents feel secure, informed, and valued in their villages.

To improve resident experiences, it is recommended that village operators:

- **Enhance contract clarity and financial transparency** by providing plain-language summaries of contracts, including clear explanations and worked examples of exit fees, capital gains entitlements, and ongoing charges.
- **Ensure prospective residents receive comprehensive pre-signing education** by offering financial literacy workshops, hosting Q&A sessions, and encouraging legal and financial consultation before signing.
- **Standardize sales practices** to ensure that all sales staff provide consistent, transparent, and ethical explanations of financial obligations.
- **Improve dispute resolution mechanisms** by establishing clear, accessible complaint-handling procedures and providing independent mediation options.
- **Increase support for long-term residents** by proactively reviewing older contracts, addressing concerns about changing financial models, and offering tailored financial counselling.
- **Enhance communication with residents** through regular information sessions, resident advisory committees, and digital portals to ensure ongoing dialogue between management and residents.

Recommendations for Policymakers and Legislators

State and federal governments must continue strengthening protections for retirement village residents to ensure fairness and financial security. Legislative reforms should focus on:

- **Mandating uniform disclosure requirements** across all states to ensure that residents receive comprehensive, standardized information before signing contracts.
- **Regulating exit fees** to prevent excessive financial burdens on departing residents and improve clarity on refund and resale policies.
- **Expanding independent legal and financial support services** to help residents better understand their rights and obligations.
- **Enhancing enforcement of consumer protections** by ensuring compliance with retirement village regulations through increased oversight and penalties for non-compliance.
- **Monitoring the impact of recent legislative changes** to assess whether reforms are effectively improving resident experiences and making adjustments where necessary.

Recommendations for Advocacy Groups

Advocacy groups such as the state-based retirement village associations play a crucial role in protecting residents' rights and pushing for legislative improvements. The results of this report can be used by advocacy groups in the following ways:

- **Lobby for stronger consumer protections** by using the survey findings to advocate for enhanced legislation and regulatory reforms that address financial transparency, contract clarity, and dispute resolution.
- **Increase public awareness and education** by developing resources based on the report's findings to inform prospective and current residents about their rights and obligations.
- **Engage with village operators** to encourage the adoption of best practices in transparency, contract explanation, and resident engagement.
- **Provide tailored support for long-term residents** by advocating for financial counselling services and policy changes that address disparities between newer and older contracts.
- **Strengthen partnerships with policymakers** by presenting the survey

results as evidence of areas requiring government intervention and reform.

- **Develop targeted advocacy campaigns** to highlight key issues such as exit fees, Disclosure Statements, and unfair financial practices, ensuring that resident concerns remain at the forefront of policy discussions.

Recommendations for Residents

While village operators and policymakers have a responsibility to improve transparency and fairness, residents themselves can take steps to ensure they make informed decisions about retirement village living. Residents should:

- **Seek independent legal and financial advice** before signing a contract to fully understand their rights and financial commitments.
- **Request clear explanations of all fees** and ensure they understand how exit fees, capital gains entitlements, and ongoing costs will affect them in the future.
- **Engage in village governance and decision-making** by participating in resident committees, attending meetings, and advocating for transparency and fair treatment.
- **Stay informed about legislative changes** that may affect their rights and protections.
- **Provide feedback to operators and advocacy groups** to help drive improvements in policies and practices within the retirement village sector.

Conclusion

By implementing these recommendations, village operators can enhance resident satisfaction and trust, policymakers can ensure fairer protections for older Australians, advocacy groups can drive meaningful reforms, and residents can make better-informed decisions about their future. A collaborative effort between all stakeholders will lead to a more transparent, fair, and supportive retirement village sector that benefits both current and future residents.

Acknowledgements

This independent survey of over 4,000 retirement village residents across Australia was the result of a collaborative effort with the goal to better understand residents' decision-making process, their understanding of the contracts, and their overall satisfaction with village life.

The project was unfunded, and relied on the generous donation of time, energy, and expertise from a number of individuals and organisations.

As the project team leader, Roger Pallant, the Vice President of the NSW RVRA, sought and obtained the cooperation of the retirement villages associations across Australia:

- Australian Capital Territory – ACT RVRA
- New South Wales - RVRA
- Queensland - ARQRV
- South Australia – SARVRA
- Tasmania – TARRV
- Victoria – RRVV
- Western Australia – WARVRA

Board/Committee members from each of these advocacy groups contributed ideas for issues to be addressed and the types of questions to be included in the survey.

Dr Julie Pallant generously donated her time and expertise in the design of the survey, analysis of the data, and preparation of the report. Julie recently retired as Associate Professor, Director of Research and Graduate Studies in the School of Rural Health, University of Melbourne. She is the author of an international best-selling textbook on data analysis, and now runs her own consulting company, providing statistical and research consulting and training to organisations in Australia, New Zealand, UK and Europe. Her knowledge and skills in the areas of questionnaire design and analysis have ensured that the survey, and the insights obtained from it, are of the highest quality.

To ensure that the survey reached as many residents as possible, a variety of distribution channels were utilised. A big thank you to the state-based Retirement Village Associations who sent survey invitations to their members via email and raised awareness through newsletters, bulletins and on association websites.

Thanks also go to other organisations who helped with the distribution of email links to members through their databases.

- The Retirement Living Council (RLC)
- State Property Councils (PC)
- DoComeMonday (DCM Group)
- Ageing Australia (ACCPA)
- Operators of retirement villages
- Village resident committees.

And finally, but most importantly a big thank you to the 4115 residents of retirement villages across Australia who participated in the survey and provided an insight into their experience of living in a retirement village. Many respondents took the time to write long, thoughtful, and detailed comments – providing information, feedback and suggestions for improvement to enhance the lives of current and prospective retirement village residents.

Appendices

Appendix A: Original data using 4-point scales

Throughout the online survey, questions were included that asked the respondent to rate their level of satisfaction, understanding, and concern in relation to an issue using a 4-point scale (1 to 4). To improve the interpretability of the survey responses in the main body of the report these 4-point scales were collapsed to form 2-point scales representing low (1, 2) vs high (3, 4) levels of the characteristic being measured. In Table 5 below the results of the original 4-point versions of the scales are presented.

Table A-1: Results for the original 4-point scale versions of the satisfaction, understanding, and concern items in the survey

	Low		***High***	
Survey question content	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***
How satisfied are you living in your retirement village?	171 (4%)	465 (11%)	1392 (34%)	2058 (50%)
How much knowledge did you have about retirement villages?	840 (21%)	1271 (31%)	1446 (35%)	512 (13%)
How much research on retirement villages did you conduct?	519 (13%)	1077 (26%)	1593 (39%)	879 (22%)
How well did you understand Disclosure Statement?	325 (9%)	648 (18%)	1497 (42%)	1083 (30%)
How well did sales staff explain contract?	717 (18%)	984 (24%)	1209 (30%)	1134 (28%)
How difficult was it for you to understand your contract?	833 (20%)	1265 (31%)	1428 (35%)	551 (13%)

How well do you understand the ongoing costs?	319 (8%)	601 (15%)	1406 (35%)	1735 (43%)
How well did you understand the rules about pets?	140 (3%)	214 (5%)	862 (21%)	2847 (70%)
How well did you understand the rules about what you can and cannot do?	191 (5%)	445 (11%)	1327 (32%)	2117 (52%)
How well did you understand what facilities were available?	222 (5%)	495 (12%)	1490 (37%)	1877 (46%)
How well do you understand how exit fees are calculated?	711 (18%)	736 (19%)	1101 (29%)	1294 (34%)
How satisfied are you with the way exit fees are calculated?	874 (24%)	997 (27%)	1154 (31%)	648 (18%)
How anxious are you about the impact of exit fees?	1115 (29%)	981 (26%)	826 (22%)	902 (24%)
How well do you understand how much capital gain you keep?	904 (23%)	707 (18%)	896 (23%)	1391 (36%)
How well do you understand extra fees to prepare villa/unit for sale?	972 (24%)	838 (21%)	1117 (28%)	1064 (27%)
How concerned are you about the charges to prepare the villa/unit for sale?	1015 (25%)	932 (23%)	853 (21%)	1199 (30%)

Note. The actual wording of the survey questions has been shortened for presentation in this table.

Appendix B: Resources

Current framework for the regulation of retirement villages

Retirement village legislation in Australia is governed by individual states and territories, each enacting laws to regulate the operation and management of retirement villages.

The primary goal of this legislation is to define the rights and responsibilities of both residents and operators. It aims to protect residents, including potential residents, from unfair or misleading practices, establish mechanisms for resolving disputes between residents and operators, and promote the growth of the retirement village industry through the encouragement of 'best practice' standards by operators.

Each jurisdiction periodically reviews and amends its legislation to address emerging issues, enhance protections, and ensure the well-being of retirement village residents.

Below is a summary of the legislative developments over time for each state and territory, listed from the most recent to the oldest:

Australian Capital Territory (ACT):

Retirement Villages Act 2012 Republication No. 23 Effective 27 February 2025.

Retirement Villages Act 2012: Notified on 4 September 2012 and effective from 4 March 2013, this Act established a statutory framework for retirement villages in the ACT, detailing the rights and responsibilities of residents and operators.

New South Wales (NSW):

Retirement Villages Act 1999 No 81: This Act outlines the rights and obligations of residents and operators, establishes mechanisms for dispute resolution, and repealed the previous 1989 Act.

Retirement Villages Act 1989: The initial legislation providing a framework for the establishment and operation of retirement villages in NSW.

Queensland (QLD):

Housing Legislation Amendment Act 2023: Passed on 28 March 2023, this Act amended the Retirement Villages Act 1999 to enhance consumer protections and ensure transparent financial reporting within retirement villages.

Health and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019: Enacted on 3 April 2019, this legislation introduced amendments to the Retirement Villages Act 1999, focusing on improving consumer protections and operational transparency.

Housing Legislation (Building Better Futures) Amendment Act 2017: Assented on 10 November 2017, this Act strengthened the regulatory framework for retirement villages, mandating improved disclosure processes and operational standards.

Retirement Villages Act 1999: Established comprehensive regulations for the operation of retirement villages, including resident rights and operator responsibilities.

South Australia (SA):

Retirement Villages (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024: This Act introduced significant reforms to enhance consumer protections, reduce exit entitlement periods, cap capital fund contributions, and improve dispute resolution mechanisms.

Retirement Villages Act 2016: Commencing on 1 January 2018, this Act replaced the 1987 legislation, aiming to clarify rights and obligations, enhance information disclosure, and establish effective dispute resolution processes.

Retirement Villages Act 1987: The original legislation governing retirement villages in South Australia, setting foundational regulations for the sector.

Tasmania (TAS):

Retirement Villages Act 2004: This Act governs the operation of retirement villages in Tasmania, focusing on the protection of residents' interests and the regulation of village operations.

Victoria (VIC):

Retirement Villages Act 1986: The primary legislation regulating retirement villages in Victoria, outlining the rights of residents and the obligations of operators.

Western Australia (WA):

Retirement Villages Amendment Regulations 2016: Part of the stage one reforms, these regulations addressed issues such as exit entitlements and introduced clearer guidelines for operators and residents.

Retirement Villages Amendment Act 2012: This Act implemented significant changes following the 2010 statutory review, focusing on improving transparency and resident protections.

Retirement Villages Act 1992: The principal legislation providing the legal framework for the establishment and management of retirement villages in WA.

Retirement Village Legislation

The relevant statutes and regulations for each jurisdiction are as follows:

	Statute	Regulations
ACT	Retirement Villages Act 2012	Retirement Villages Regulation 2013 Retirement Villages (Fees) Determination 2024 Retirement Villages (Capital maintenance and replacement) Guidelines 2019
NSW	Retirement Villages Act 1999	Retirement Villages Regulation 2017
Queensland	Retirement Villages Act 1999	Retirement Villages Regulation 2018
South Australia	Retirement Villages Act 2016	Retirement Villages Regulations 2017
Tasmania	Retirement Villages Act 2004	Retirement Villages Regulation 2015
Victoria	Retirement Villages Act 1986	Retirement Villages (Contractual Arrangements) Regulation 2017 Retirement Villages (Records and Notices) Regulations 2015 Retirement Villages (Infringements) Regulations 2018
Western Australia	Retirement Villages Act 1992	Retirement Villages Regulation 1992 Fair Trading (Retirement Villages Code) Regulations 2022