

Mississauga Tenant Survey 2023



PEEL ACORN
STATE OF REPAIR
REPORT

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Summary



Peel ACORN has been fighting for healthy homes since we started organizing. Along the way, ACORN members were successful in winning the Peel Rent Safe program in 2021, now called the Mississauga Apartment Rental Compliance Program or MARC.

While this was a major win for tenants struggling to access healthy homes free of roaches, mice, and mould, thousands of tenants continue to live with issues that are harming their physical and mental well-being. Moreover, the program is fraught with issues severely limiting its potential to help tenants realize their right to adequate housing.

Given that the city started implementing the MARC program in July 2022 as a 5-year pilot program, Peel ACORN conducted a survey to understand the state of repair of housing in Mississauga as well as the extent to which tenants are aware of and using the MARC program to get repairs done. The findings are based on 125 responses. The last chapter covers the changes tenants would like to see to ensure that the program works better for tenants.

Some of the key findings are as follows:

State of repair

- 45% of the respondents said that their unit needed repairs when they first moved in.
- 20% of respondents see cockroaches every day.
- 50% of respondents have experienced lack of heat during winters in the past 12 months.
- 23% of respondents feel it's too hot in summer.
- 44% of respondents say their appliances work but are old and have problems.
- 28% of respondents say their elevators are often out of order, another 20% have unreasonably slow elevators.

MARC program

- 67% of respondents said that they are not aware about the MARC program. 25% of people said that they are aware of the program because of ACORN.
- 81% of the respondents said that they don't know if their building is registered under the program.
- 80% of the respondents don't know if their building was inspected in the last 12 months.
- 30% of the respondents don't have a tenant notification board.

Getting repairs done

- 70% of respondents faced problems getting repairs done in the last 12 months.
- 43% of respondents submit work orders monthly, 8% do it weekly. Another 8% do not submit at all as they don't see any point doing it.
- 65% of respondents do not get work done in a timely manner.
- 65% of people do not know what to do if their complaints are not addressed by their landlords. Only 10% said that they called 311.
- In fact when asked if they called 311 in the last 12 months, 56% of respondents said they don't know what 311 is.
- 33% of respondents said that they rarely get quality work done. Only 14% of people get quality work done always.

Vital service disruption

- 20% of respondents see vital service disruption very often. Slightly more than half of respondents see this kind of disruption often.
- 35% of respondents said that the response from the landlord/property management company is very slow in case of a vital service disruption.

Introduction

Peel ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) is an independent organization of low and moderate income people. ACORN believes that social and economic justice can best be achieved with a city-wide membership who are invested in their organization and focused on building community power for change.



Peel ACORN members have been pushing property owners, management companies, and the City of Mississauga Municipal to ensure that all Mississauga tenant families have basic health and safety standards upheld in their rented homes. As various studies show, housing is an extremely important social determinant of health.



For several years, Peel ACORN healthy homes campaign demanded the city of Mississauga to implement the Mississauga RentSafe program on the lines of Toronto RentSafe program which is a proactive bylaw enforcement program that ensures apartment building owners and operators comply with building maintenance standards. Given that tenants face a number of hurdles in getting any work done and there is fear of retaliation by the landlords, ACORN pushed for proactive enforcement which would shift the onus of making the complaint from tenants to ensuring that the city makes effort to hold landlords accountable. After a series of actions, petitions and deputations by ACORN members, Peel ACORN won the program in December 2021.



The city approved the program as a five year pilot. The program covers 337 buildings, representing 30,322 units, that are two stories or more and six or more units.

The objective of the pilot program is to ensure apartment buildings are well-maintained, for a more liveable community.

Main Features of the MARC program

- All purpose-built rental buildings that contain two or more storeys and six or more residential units that share a common area have to register with the city. If they fail to, there is a maximum penalty of \$100,000. The 2023-2024 registration fee is \$18.25 per residential unit (HST exempt).
- Once they are registered, building owners are required to ensure apartment buildings meet a series of minimum standards and practices such as tenant service requests, waste management, tenant notification boards, pest management etc.
- Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEO) schedule proactive inspections, known as evaluations of all common areas and assign a score based on state of repair, cleanliness, pest prevention and compliance with the program requirements.
- Based on the evaluation, an overall score is generated which determines the timeline for the next evaluation. Score above 50% is considered a passing score. If the score is between 0-50%, the building needs to go through an audit.
- A tenant notification board is required to be posted in an accessible location in the building which is supposed to carry information such as emergency contact, building inspection score, any scheduled service disruptions etc.
- To submit a complaint, tenants can submit it online through an online form or call 311.



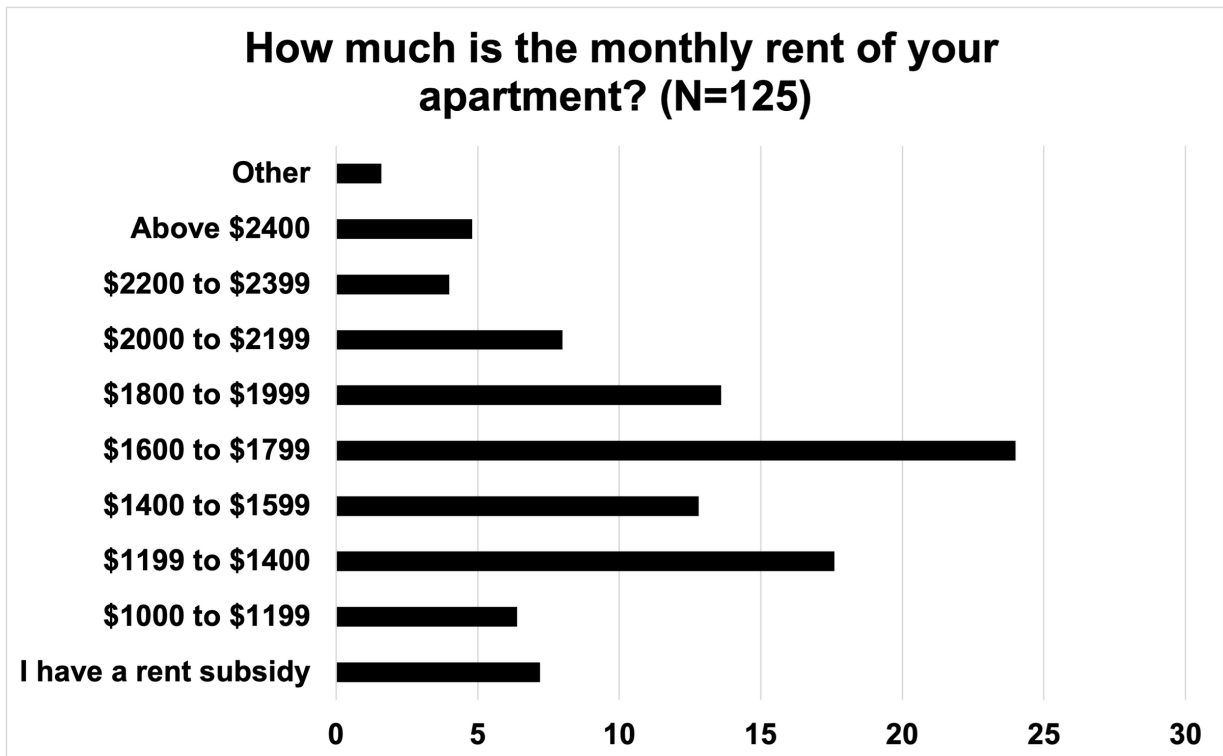
Peel ACORN Survey Findings

Peel ACORN conducted a survey to assess the state of repair of buildings in the city and the extent to which tenants are aware of and are using the MARC program to file complaints and get repairs done. The survey was sent out to all the contacts in Peel ACORN database. A total of 125 responses were received.

The survey included sections such as rent/type of building, quality of the unit and building, experience getting repairs from the owner and the city, and awareness about the MARC program.

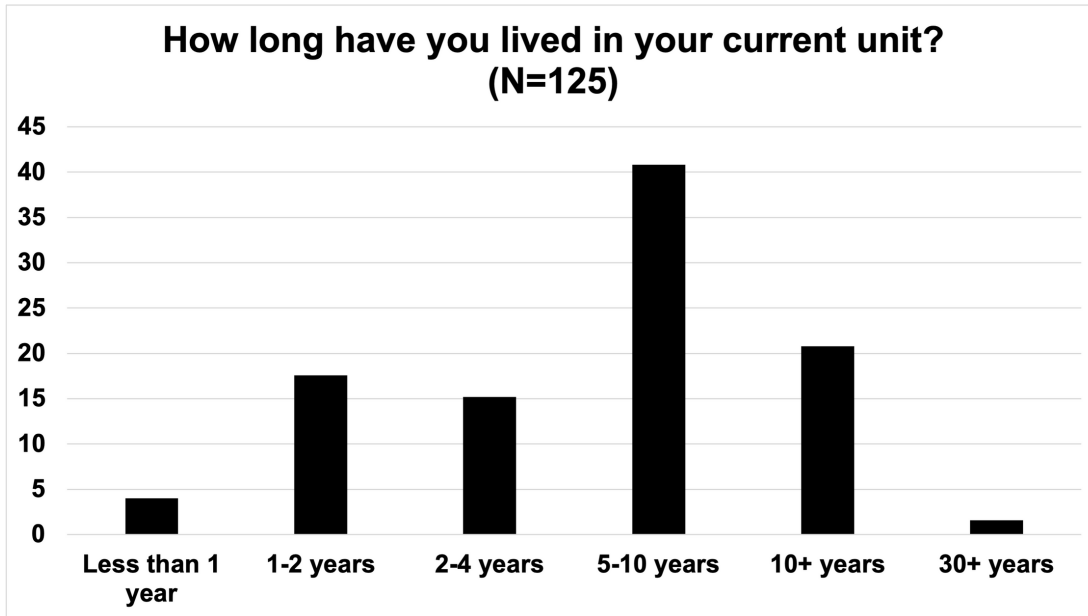
Monthly rent

- Very few tenants reported their average monthly rent less than \$1,000 or more than \$2,200.
- Roughly 40% of respondents pay a monthly rent between \$1001-\$1,400.
- 28% of respondents pay a monthly rent between \$1,401-\$1,800.
- One in ten respondents pay monthly rent between \$1,801-\$2,200.



Length of stay in the unit

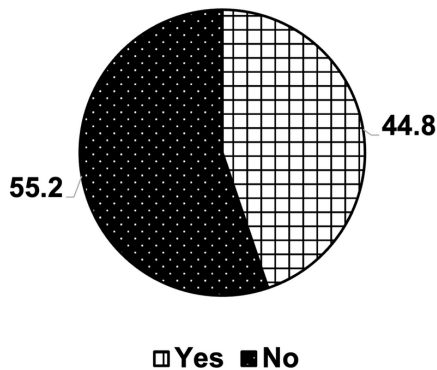
- 41% of respondents have lived in the unit for 5-10 years.
- 20% of respondents have lived more than 10 years in the unit.
- 36% of respondents have lived in the unit for less than 5 years



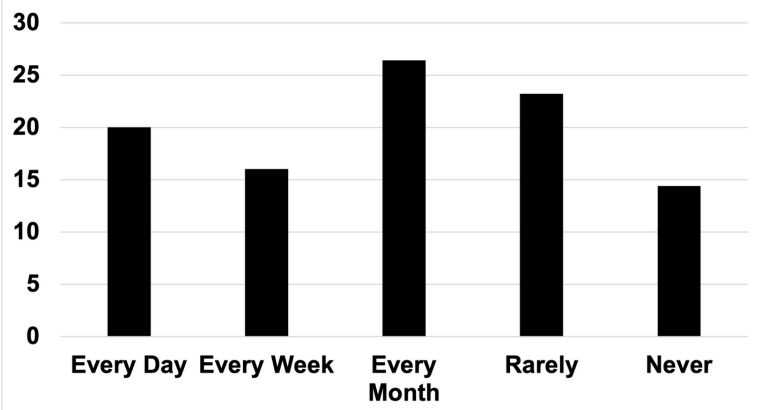
State of repair

- 45% of the respondents said that their unit needed repairs when they first moved in.
- 20% of respondents see cockroaches every day.
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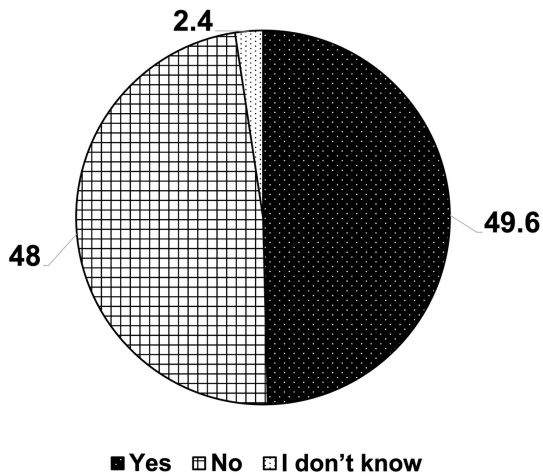
When you moved into your unit, were repairs needed? (N=125)



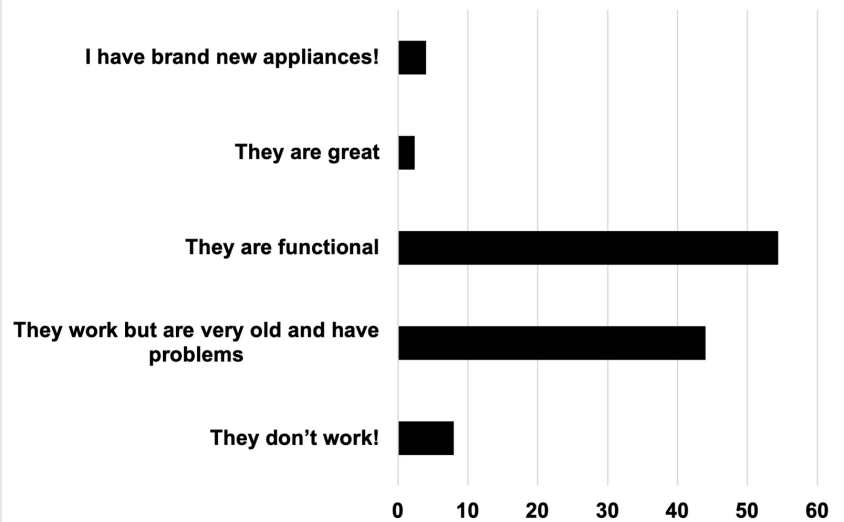
How often do you see cockroaches? (N=125)



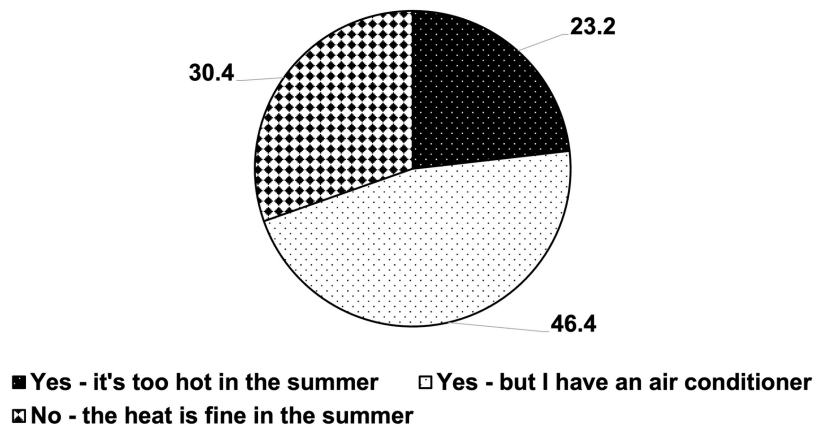
Have you experienced a lack of heat in the winter in your building in the past 12 months? (N=125)



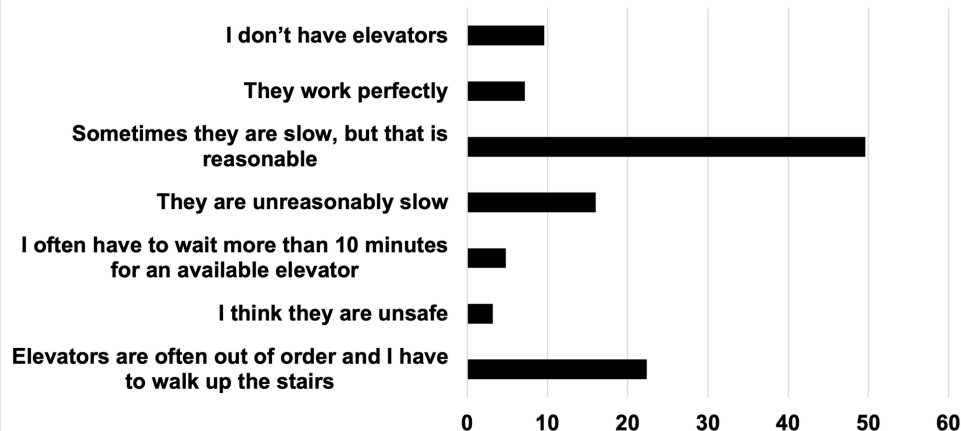
Rate your appliances (N=125)



Have you experienced a problem with heat in the summer in the past 12 months? (N=125)

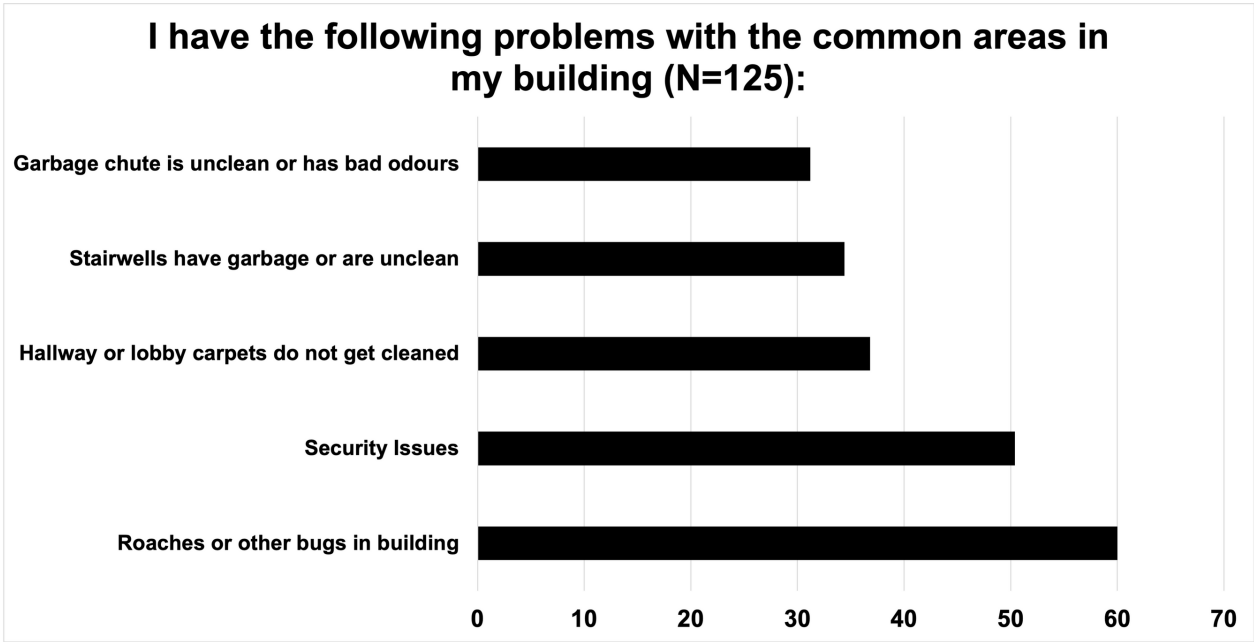


How would you rate the elevators in your building? (N=125)



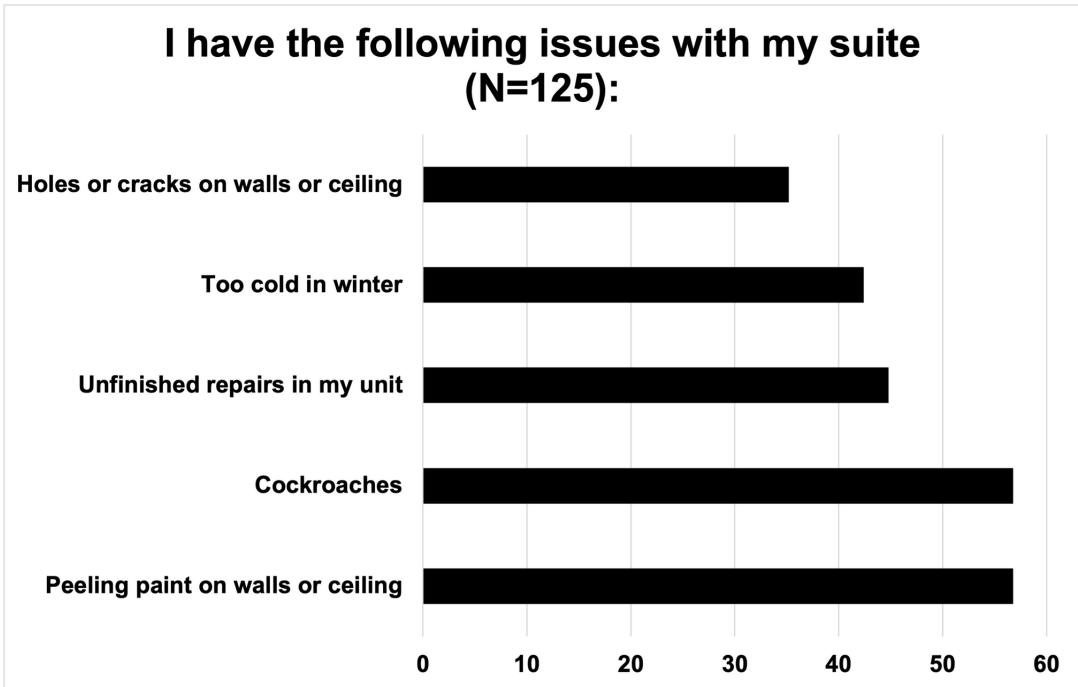
Top 5 repair/maintenance common area issues

- Roaches/other bugs - 60%
- Security - 54%
- Hallway/lobby carpets not cleaned - 37%
- Stairwells have garbage or unclean - 35%
- Garbage chute is unclean or has bad odour - 31%



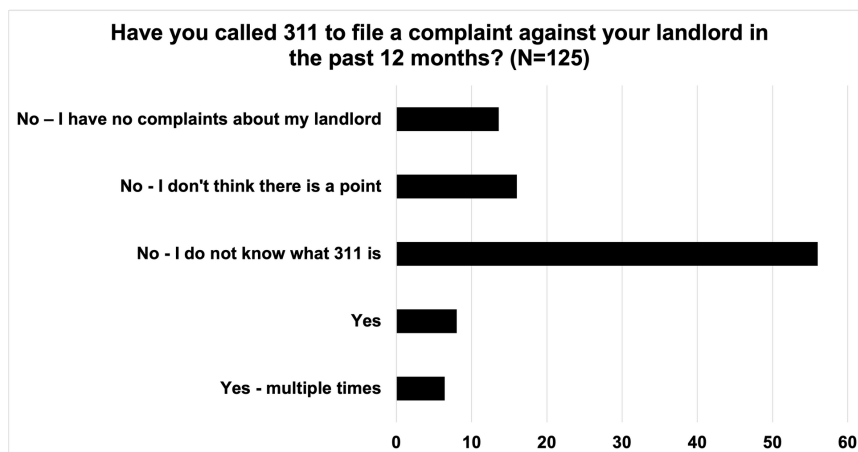
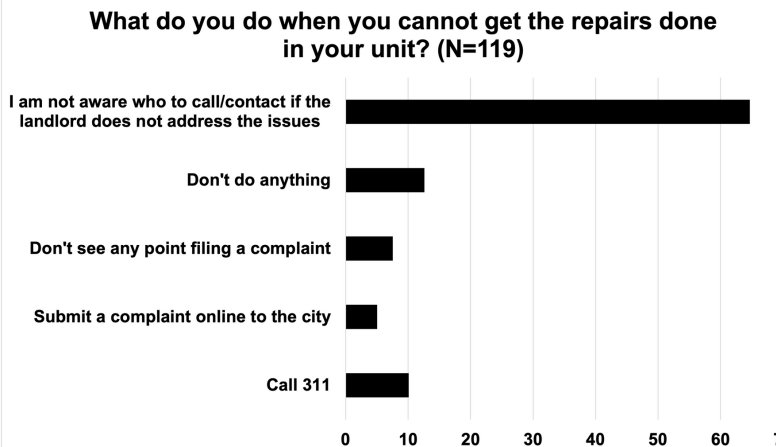
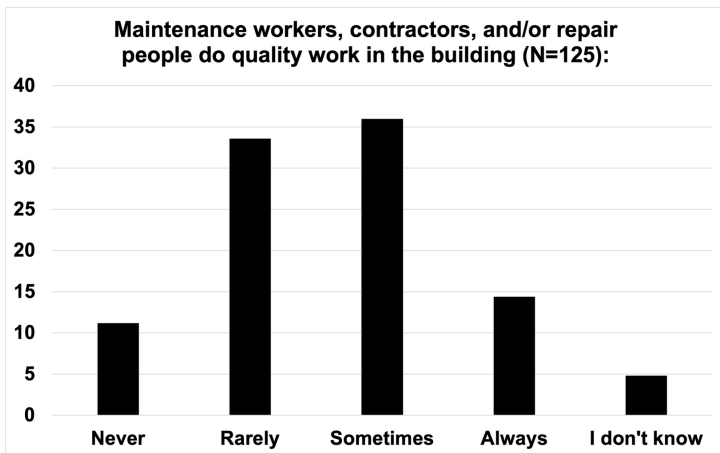
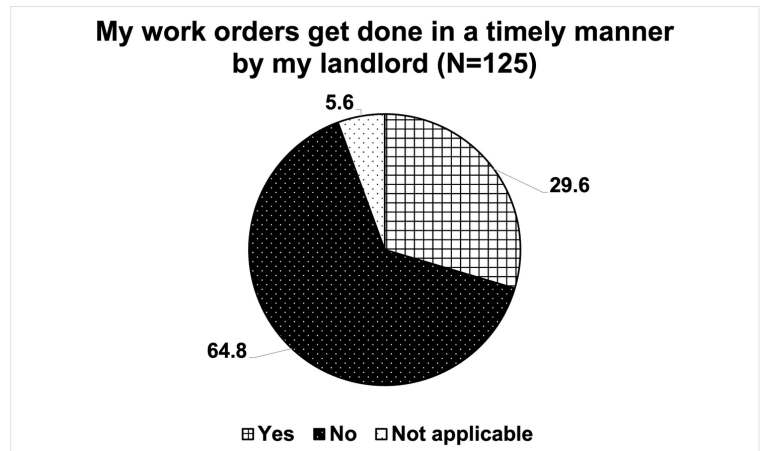
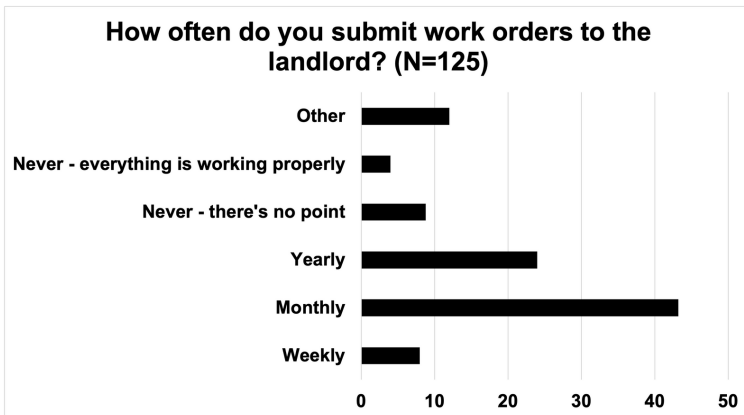
Top 5 repair/maintenance in-suite issues

- Roaches/other bugs - 57%
- Peeling paint on walls/ceilings - 57%
- Unfinished repairs in the units - 45%
- Too cold in winter - 42%
- Holes or cracks in walls/ceilings - 35%



Getting repairs done

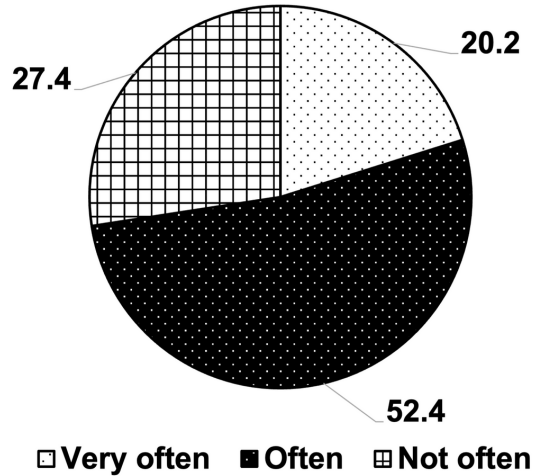
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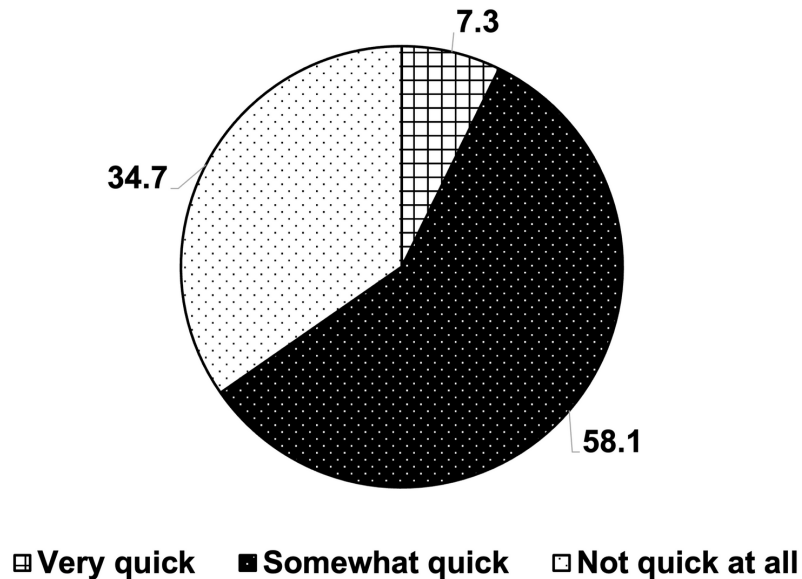
Vital service disruption

- 20% of respondents see vital service disruption very often. Slightly more than half of respondents see this kind of disruption often.
- 35% of respondents said that the response from the landlord/property management company is very slow in case of a vital service disruption.

How often do you see vital services such as elevator, water, electricity etc. get disrupted in your building? (N=124)

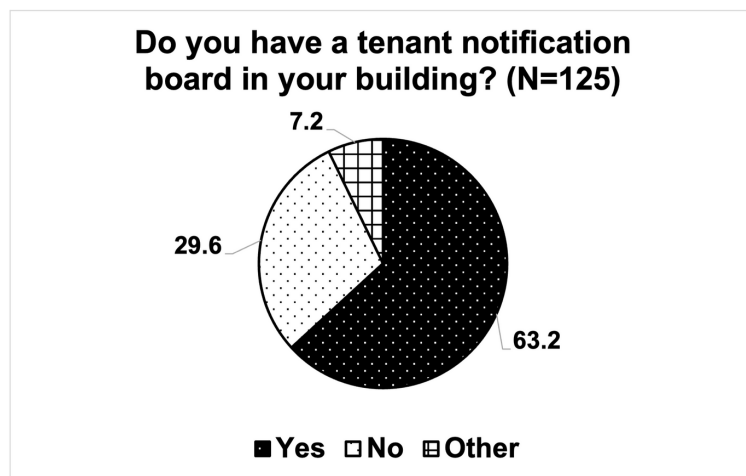
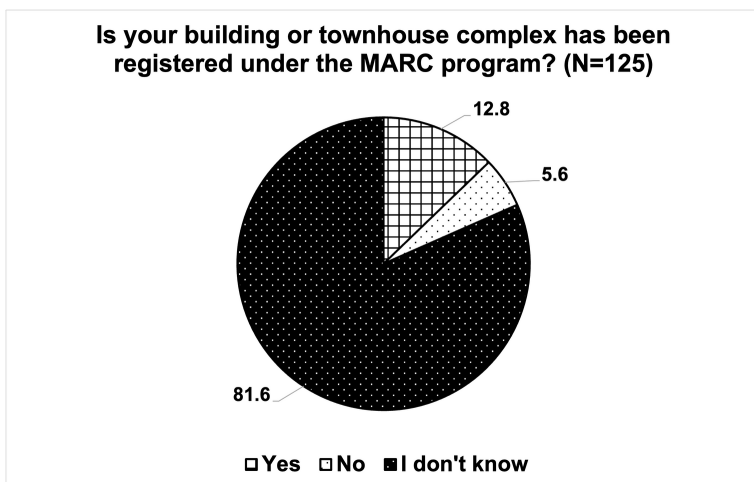
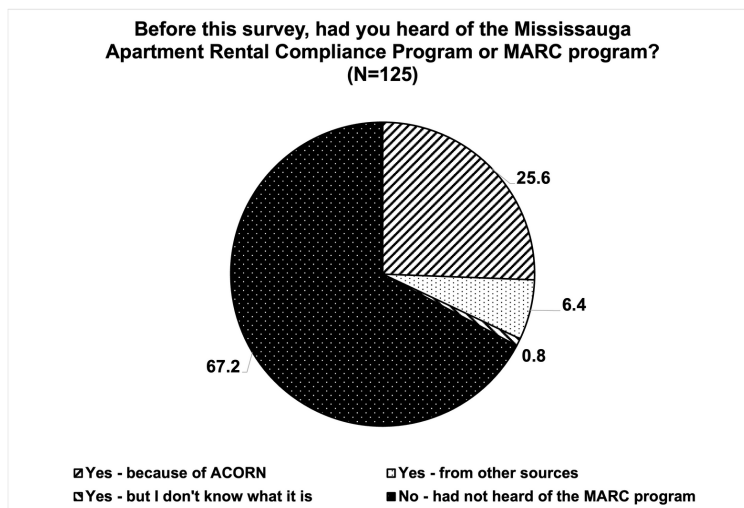


How quick is the response by the landlord/property management company if there is a disruption in vital service? (N=124)



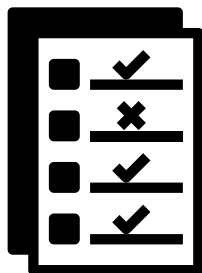
MARC program

- 67% of respondents said that they are not aware about the MARC program. 25% of people said that they are aware of the program because of ACORN.
- 81% of the respondents said that they don't know if their building is registered under the program.
- Again, 80% of the respondents don't know if their building was inspected in the last 12 months.
- 30% of the respondents don't have a tenant notification board.



Peel ACORN Demands

Based on the findings of the survey and experiences of the tenants, here are some of the main Peel ACORN demands that will make the program work better for tenants.



Calculation of building scores

- There needs to be stricter criteria for the buildings to achieve the passing score. Currently, many buildings are being given 50% despite having significant issues.
- The passing score needs to be pegged higher, currently it's too low at 50%.



Scope of inspection

- The MARC program is only limited to the inspection of common areas. The in-suite inspections do not affect the scoring given to the building. Buildings with low scores or repeated violations must trigger in-suite inspections automatically.
- If parts of the building are inaccessible during an evaluation, (i.e., sidewalks due to snow, laundry room in renovation), either the building should not be inspected at the time or the inspection must be scheduled again to cover all the areas.
- The inspections must be done randomly with no prior information to the landlords.



Transparency of information

- The building inspection scores must be available in the public domain. Currently, landlords are required to share the building inspection scores on a tenant notification board but that is rarely done. Toronto has an interactive web map which shows the building scores, present and past. This should be replicated in Mississauga.
- The list of all buildings that have been registered under the MARC program also needs to be available publicly.



Tenant Communication and engagement

- The program can be successful only if the tenants are aware of the program and use it. As the report shows, very few tenants are aware of the program. The city needs to invest much greater effort and resources to ensure that tenants are aware of the MARC program and how to use the program to get repairs done.
- Further, given that many tenants face language barriers to access information, it is critical that information about the program is made available in different languages.
- The city staff needs to talk to tenants directly going door to door to understand the issues tenants are facing especially in buildings that have very low scores.



Budget & More Bylaw Inspectors

Currently, fee that the registered landlords need to pay is \$18.25 per residential unit. This fees can be increased to ensure that there are more bylaw inspectors to inspect the buildings and units. Hamilton's new Safe Apartment Bylaw is considering a fee of \$60 per unit.



Program evaluation

There needs to be periodic evaluation of the MARC program to assess the effectiveness of the program and take corrective action. Peel ACORN recommends that the program be evaluated annually and a report presented to the council.

Tenant Testimonies

I have 2 large garbage bins directly under my 2nd storey balcony. Cannot sit on balcony because of the smell, especially during hot summer months, and flies. Stairwells, lobby, hallways, laundry room, elevators are not cleaned regularly. Always garbage around the outside of building, including large piles of bread, bones, pizza slices, etc.

It's very cold in winter, have to run extra heat source to stay warm in my unit, extra hydro in winter, and extra hydro in summer to stay cool on a limited income.

Over the past few years they have taken away the pool, the playground, the security guard, the tennis/basketball courts, and one elevator is permanently out of order. But meanwhile we still pay the same (and higher) rent even though all the amenities are taken away.

Starlight Investments/Forest Hill Kipling Staff is abusing/hurting residents & they have taken over many buildings in Mississauga & evicting people & creating environment around & in our apartment so that we leave & they can increase the Rent. Rent is already increased by \$700/month in just 1 year. They are also targeting those tenants who are living here for more than 5+ years & paying \$1000 - \$1200/month because the current rent in those apartments is \$2100/Month.

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