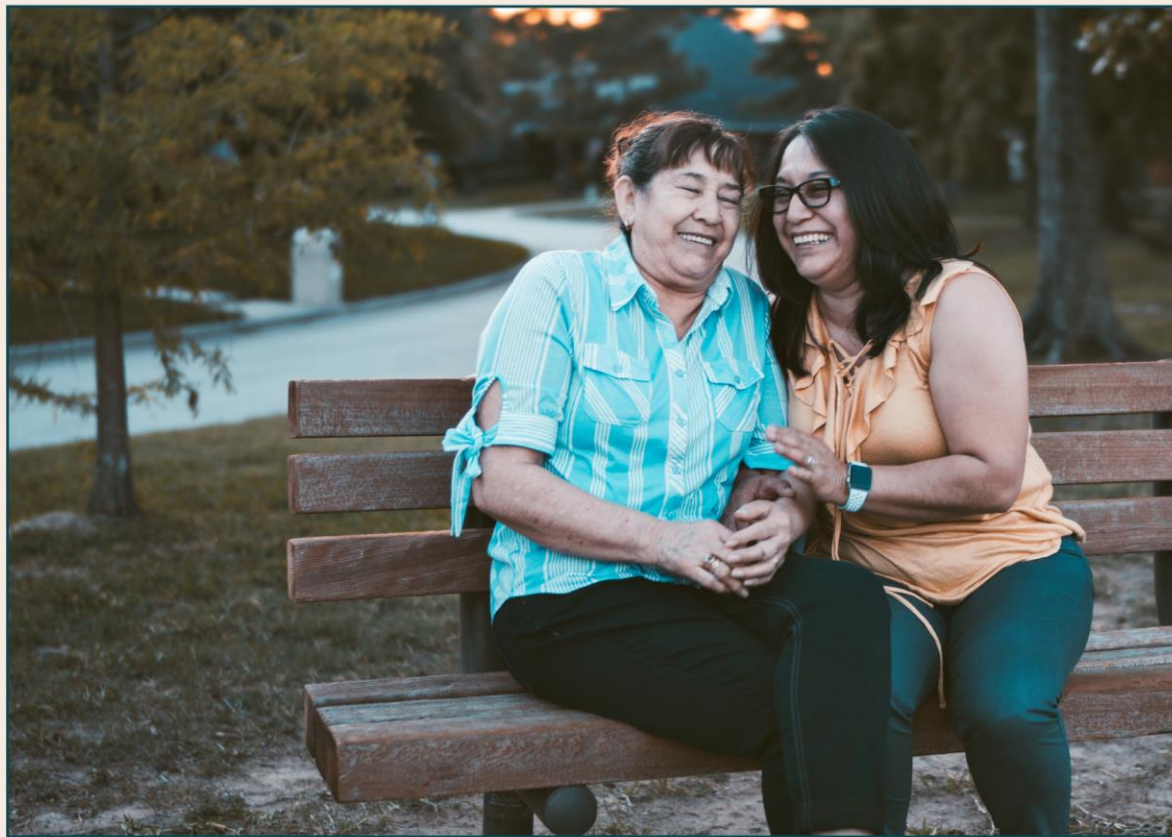


RentRight SA

Data Snapshot *January - June 2023*



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Key Findings



Largest ever number of enquiries from tenants for advice and support in May 2023 (961 enquiries)

Tenants seeking support and advice are getting older, with the largest increase amongst people aged 40-49



"You haven't got that security, have you? And there's no loyalty... that's the thing that really upsets me, because I'm just the dollar sign. I'm looking after your property. Now I'm looking after your investment. I have more value than just the money I bring it into your pocket... we need to be treating people like humans."

-Person with lived experience



Increases in financial concerns

Increase in tenants presenting with **debt-related issues**

4.6%

Jul-Dec 2022

5.8%

Jan-June 2023

1.3%

Jul-Dec 2022

2.3%

Jan-June 2023

Increase in tenants provided with **financial support**

Increase in tenants provided with **emergency support**

4.2%

Jul-Dec 2022

5.6%

Jan-June 2023

Increases in legal concerns

1.8%

Jul-Dec 2022

2.4%

Jan-June 2023

Increase in tenants presenting with **legal issues**

Increase in tenants referred to **legal processes**

69%

Jul-Dec 2022

73.8%

Jan-June 2023

CEO Message

We're very pleased to be able to present our second bi-annual Data Snapshot about the scope, scale and type of issues facing South Australian tenants.

Having a safe and secure home is a crucial base from which people can work, play, and rest. The current rental market poses unprecedented pressures for tenants, which we see playing out in the information presented in this Snapshot.

This Data Snapshot is based on administrative information that we collect during the course of our important work supporting South Australian tenants. The format of this Data Snapshot has changed compared with our inaugural Snapshot. In particular, we have been able to include comparisons with information from the previous Snapshot.

This Snapshot shows the pressure that South Australian tenants are under. We've seen increases in demand for advice and support, as well as increases in financial and emergency support, showing us that there are an increasing number of tenants in crisis.

This Data Snapshot provides us with information that doesn't exist anywhere else, and provides SYC, Government, and other organisations with data to better address concerns facing tenants.



Mark Hoffman-Davis
SYC CEO

Summary

SYC delivers **RentRight SA**, a free and independent tenancy advice and advocacy service that helps people sustain their tenancies¹. In collaboration with the SYC Lived Experience Engagement Service (LEES), RentRight SA hears directly from thousands of tenants² each month about their needs and concerns.

This *Data Snapshot* presents a high-level summary of administrative data collected by RentRight SA tenancy advisors. Data reported herein includes call volume, selected demographic characteristics, primary presenting issues of callers, and advice and support offered during the reporting period.

The data and insights from callers to RentRight SA provide a unique lens into the South Australian rental market. It offers a clear, local understanding of the scope, scale and type of issues facing tenants, with the hope of informing and improving service and sector-level responses.

Data Snapshots are produced bi-annually and report on the previous six months of data. This Snapshot reports on data collected between January 1 and June 30, 2023.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we are located and where we conduct our business.

We pay our respects to elders past, present, and emerging, and are committed to honouring First Nations Peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationship with their country.

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of those with lived experience, RentRight SA tenancy advisors, and SYC staff who contributed to this Data Snapshot and have helped to share tenant experience.

¹ RentRight SA is funded by the Government of South Australia, SA Housing Authority.

² A small proportion of enquiries are received from landlord and real estate agents.

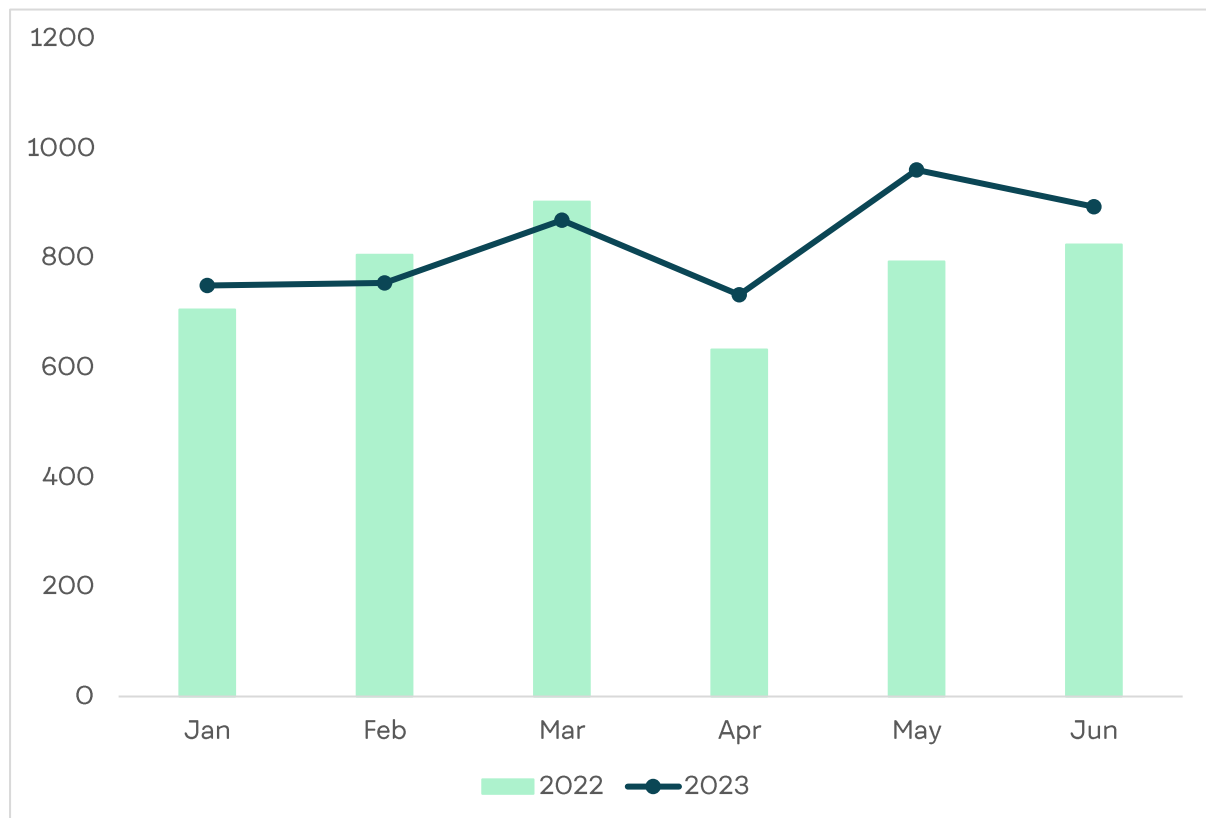
Call Volume

Between January 1 and June 30, 2023, there were a total of **5,495** enquiries received by RentRight SA. Of all enquiries received by RentRight SA, 90.3% were from tenants, and 7.5% were from landlords and real estate agents³. In this Data Snapshot, we report on enquiries received from tenants only⁴.

Figure 1 shows the volume of enquiries from tenants between January 1 and June 30, 2023, compared to the volume of enquiries from the same time period in 2022.

Overall, RentRight SA experienced a **6.3% increase in the volume of enquiries** from tenants in January to June 2023 compared with the same time period in 2022. May 2023 saw the largest ever number of enquiries from tenants for advice and support.

Figure 1: Total number of enquiries received from tenants between January 1 and June 30 in both 2022 and 2023.



³ The tenancy status of 1.1% of enquiries were unknown, and 1.1% of enquiries were from those who were experiencing homelessness.

⁴ In the current Data Snapshot, there has been a methodological change to the calculation of tenant enquiries. Previously those categorised as 'extra persons' or 'family members' were excluded from the tenant data. Consultation with RentRight SA identified that these categories should be counted as tenants. The impact of this methodological change is minimal, with extra persons and family members accounting for ~2% of tenants.

RentRight SA Tenancy Advisors say...

In May we responded to a record number of enquiries from tenants.

Enquiries frequently relate to:

- End of lease enquiries (includes situations like landlords selling or increasing the rent, so the tenant can't stay);
- Rent debt (comes about due to rent increases and rising cost of living putting tenants into arrears);
- Maintenance issues (where properties are not being maintained and tenants are faced with water leaks causing mould); and
- Bond disputes (tenants are needing to get bonds back to manage debt and costs of living).

These issues are playing out in South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) hearings. The number of hearings where our help is requested, has also increased.



Demographic Characteristics

Location

The majority (88.5%) of enquiries to RentRight SA came from tenants living in metropolitan areas and major cities. A smaller proportion of enquiries came from those living in regional and remote areas (8.9% and 2.6%, respectively)⁵.

Tenure type

The largest proportion of enquiries were received from tenants living in private rentals (77.9%), followed by those living in public housing (7.3%) and community housing (6.8%). A small proportion of enquiries were received from tenants who were marginally housed⁶ (5.2%), and 2.8% of enquiries were received from those living in a tenancy not covered by the *Residential Tenancy Act 1995 SA* ("RTA") or whose tenure type was unknown.

⁵ Metropolitan, regional, and remote areas have been determined using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA). The index divides areas into five categories of remoteness: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, and Very Remote. For reporting purposes, ARIA categories have been grouped as follows: Major Cities=metropolitan areas and major cities; Inner Regional and Outer Regional=regional areas; Remote, and Very Remote=remote areas.

⁶ Marginal housing includes those living in residential parks, rooming houses, and short-term accommodation.

Age

The largest proportion of enquiries to RentRight SA came from tenants aged 40–49, and the smallest proportion of enquiries came from those aged over 65 (30.4% and 4.2%, respectively). Overall, there has been an increase in enquiries from tenants aged 40 years and over, compared with data from July to December 2022 period.

"It was absolutely one of the most traumatic experiences I've had in my life! To enter potential homelessness at this stage of life, to navigate all these systems and to feel like I wasn't going to have anywhere to live at 51 years old was pretty devastating."

–Person with lived experience

Table 1: Ages of tenants making enquiries to RentRight SA

Age	Jul-Dec 2022 (%)	Jan-Jun 2023 (%)
17-24	6.3	6.7
25-29	7.4	7.6
30-39	28.0	25.3
40-49	24.0	30.4
50-65	21.3	22.9
>65	3.1	4.2
Unknown	9.9	3.0

Gender

A majority of enquiries were received from those identifying as female (65.6%), 33.6% identified as male, and 0.8% identified as other or preferred not to disclose their gender identity.



Presenting Issues

Presenting issues are the major concerns that tenants present with when calling RentRight SA for advice and support. As shown in *Table 2*, the top three primary presenting issues were the same as those reported in the previous Data Snapshot (the July to December 2022 period):

- Tenancy rights and responsibilities-related issues (44.8%)
- Property maintenance-related issues (13.6%)
- Bond-related issues (12.5%)

Table 2: Presenting issues of enquiries to RentRight SA

Issues	Definition	Jul-Dec 2022 %	Jan-Jun 2023 %
Accessing housing	Relates to enquiries from adults and young people trying to secure rental properties and facing challenges and barriers, including race and/or aged-based discrimination, lack of rental stock, increase in rent prices, increasing competition for available stock, and other micro- and macro-economic factors.	4.1	4.9
Rent-related issues	Relates to rent concerns, such as rent increases, bidding, rent review processes etc.	8.2	7.0
Bond-related issues	Relates to bond enquiries, including bond assistance, refunds, information and disputes.	13.8	12.5
Debt-related issues	Relates to rent, water and maintenance debt incurred by tenants	4.6	5.8
Specialist support-related issues	Relates to enquiries from those with primary concerns that require specialist support, such as independent living skills, budgeting, and domestic and family violence.	0.7	0.6
Other enquiries	Includes legal advice outside the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) scope and the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT).	2.4	2.3
Homelessness	Refers to those at imminent risk of homelessness.	5.6	3.8
Legal enquiries	Tenant databases; appeals and reviews; abandoned/access to property.	1.8	2.4
Property maintenance-related issues	Refers to maintenance requests and property conditions, including consequences of maintenance not undertaken or incomplete, disputes, compensation, and delays regarding maintenance.	15.7	13.6
Social housing-related issues	Relates to concerns, policies and procedures specific to social housing tenants, such as transfer/relocation, extra persons etc.	0.9	1.0
Rights and responsibilities-related issues	Refers to clarification and advice regarding the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords about water bills, inspections, property access, lease agreement terms and conditions, break lease etc.	40.4	44.8

Note. Only enquiries from tenants are included in the figures that inform Table 2. A small proportion of enquiries did not have a primary presenting issue recorded. Primary presenting issues are exclusive enquiries. Enquiries can only have one primary presenting issue recorded.



There was an **increase** in rights and responsibilities-related issues in the January to June 2023 period (44.8%) compared with the July to December 2022 period (40.4%) and **decreases** in property maintenance-related issues (15.7% in the June to December 2022 period, compared with 13.6% in January to June 2023 period), and bond-related issues (13.8% in the June to December 2022 period, compared with 12.5% in January to June 2023 period).

"I told the housing manager to have a look in my trailer to see multiple bed mattresses I've had to throw out because of mould...I'm not being heard. They're just getting their rent money and that's it."

-Person with lived experience

In the January to June 2023 period, there was:

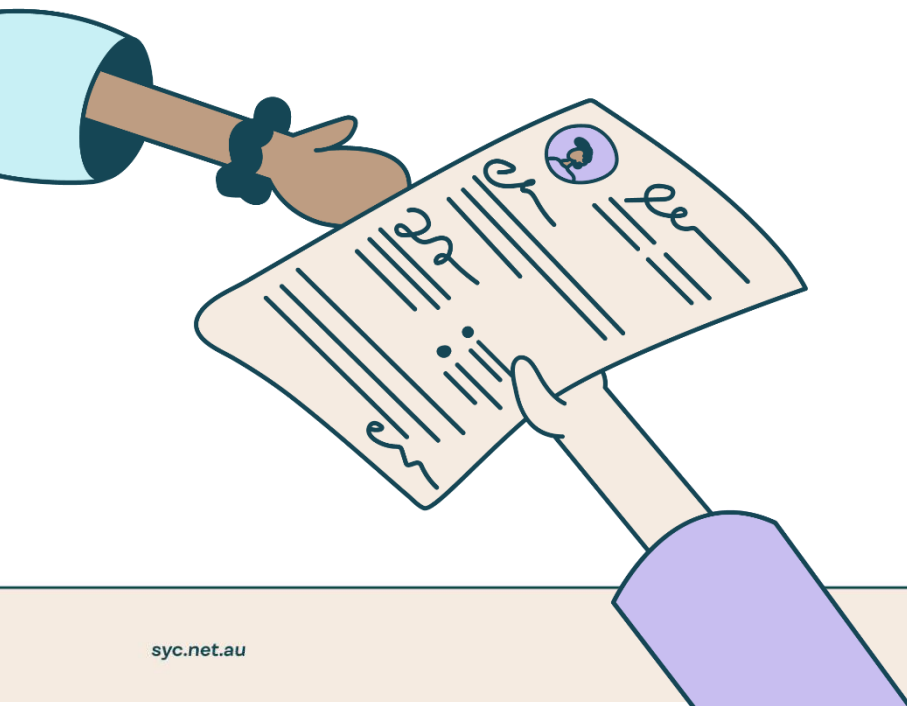
- A **reduction** in those presenting at imminent risk of homelessness
- An **increase** in those presenting with debt-related issues
- An **increase** in those presenting with legal enquiries


"It's always like a knife at your throat. You have to do right thing otherwise you'll be homeless...I don't ask for anything [from Landlord], as soon as you ask for something you're seen as a problem".

-Person with lived experience

Tenants who contact RentRight SA for advice and support often report multiple and interconnected issues. The most commonly co-occurring issues are:

- Rights and responsibilities-related issues and property maintenance-related issues
- Rights and responsibilities-related issues and issues accessing housing
- Rights and responsibilities-related issues and rent and bond-related issues





RentRight SA Tenancy Advisors say...

When tenants seek advice and/or support from RentRight SA they may present initially with one concern, but during the course of our discussion they will sometimes disclose other issues.

For example: a tenant might call because they've received a notice that the Landlord wishes to end their lease or not renew it. In this case, the enquiry is primarily about the end of lease/eviction process. However, it might emerge in discussion that maintenance and repairs weren't being done throughout the tenancy and that the Landlord would turn up without notice. These are breaches that the tenant didn't deal with at the time because they thought it might negatively impact on their lease. In this scenario it's unfortunately very difficult for the tenant to exercise their rights in relation to breaches by the landlord because they're already in an end of lease/eviction process.

Ideally, we would love to see tenants seeking support and advice early. The really difficult thing in our current rental market is that tenants are so fearful of rocking the boat due to the rental crisis and the overall power imbalance between tenants and landlords, that they are not willing to address or exercise their rights at the time they should, because they're worried the Landlord will just end the lease.



Actions

Actions relate to the information, advice, referral, and/or support provided to those accessing RentRight SA. As shown in *Table 3*, the top three actions recorded were the same as those reported in the previous Data Snapshot (the July to December 2022 period):

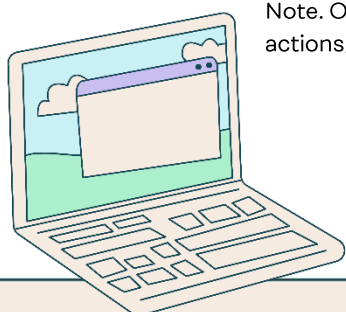
- Advice and education provided (98.0%)
- Referral to legal processes and services (73.8%)
- Referral to landlord/agent (61.0%)

Table 3: Actions and referrals provided to tenants

Actions	Definition	Jul-Dec 2022 %	Jan-Jun 2023 %
Advice/Education provided	Refers to advice and information provided by RentRight SA, including forms, policies etc.	97.5	98.0
Support provided	Refers to additional support provided by RentRight SA, including group work, file work, and one to one appointments.	6.7	8.5
Referral to specialist support services	Includes referral to specialist support services, including mental health, domestic and family violence, health and youth specific services	1.2	1.5
Referral to financial support services	Includes referral to financial support services, including Government concession supports, SYC's financial capability service, and external financial counselling supports.	1.3	2.3
Referral to emergency assistance services	Includes referral to homelessness and emergency brokerage services.	4.2	5.6
Referral to legal processes and services	Includes information about, referral to, and/or requests for RentRight SA assistance regarding legal processes and services, including Consumer and Business Services (CBS), South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT), and legal support.	69.0	73.8
Referral to Government authorities	Includes referral to Government bodies, including the SA Housing Authority, the Housing Minister, the Housing Safety Authority etc.	6.1	7.2
Referral to landlord/agent	When tenants are referred to speak to their landlord, agent or housing provider.	61.2	61.0

One quarter (26.5%) of financial referrals and supports were to SYC's financial capability service

Note. Only enquiries from tenants are included in the figures that inform *Table 3*. Enquiries from tenants to RentRight SA will often result in multiple actions, therefore, proportions do not add up to 100%.



There was an **increase** in referrals to legal processes and services in the January to June 2023 period (73.8%) compared with the July to December 2022 period (69.0%).

In the January to June 2023 period, there was:

- An **increase** in those being provided with support from RentRight SA
- An **increase** in those being referred to financial support services
- An **increase** in those being referred to emergency assistance services

"I've got a child who has respiratory troubles. It's in the letter that I had from the doctor to get a Cat. 1 [Housing SA category for urgent housing needs placement] house. I said [to the person in maintenance] would you like to live in black mould? So why should your tenants have to?"

-Person with lived experience

"I kind of didn't realize it was as bad as what it was, but when I got here, they hadn't even cleaned it. It took me all day to scrub the floors, and as I'm scrubbing the floors you could actually see the mites coming out of in between the tiles."

-Person with lived experience

73.8% of tenants were provided with information about and/or referral to legal processes and services, which included:

- Information, referral, and tenant requests for RentRight SA assistance with a SACAT Hearing (66.2%)
- Information about and/or referral to Consumer and Business Services (CBS) (29.9%)
- Information about and/or referral to general legal services (3.7%)

There was an increase in information, referral, and tenant requests for RentRight SA assistance with SACAT Hearings in the January to June 2023 period (66.2%) compared with the July to December 2022 period (63.2%).

RentRight SA Tenancy Advisors say...

Increasing rents are putting tenants under more pressure than ever before, and in the current market it's much more difficult than it's ever been to find another rental property. When rents increase and tenancies end in the pressurised environment we're in, we're seeing increasing demand for financial and emergency supports as a result.

These issues are compounded by the rising costs of living and contribute to the tendency of many tenants to not want to 'rock the boat' by following up on maintenance issues for example, the results of which can be seen in the increase in tenant access to legal processes and services when a tenancy ends.



For more information about RentRight SA, please contact:
1800 060 462 or syc.net.au/rentrightsa

For any other enquiries, please contact:
(08) 8405 8500 or syc.net.au/contact