

2026 Build-to-Rent Connectivity Report

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Costas Demetriou

CEO, Wifinity

Entering 2026 in a challenging economic climate, whether new build or retrofit, residential or commercial, the industry needs every property running at peak performance.

At a recent industry roundtable with senior leaders across the industry, we heard about serious investment in digital platforms and ‘day one’ smart building applications like access control, surveillance, building management tools, compliance sensors and resident-facing services. All of these need a stable network to work.

Yet, in some developments, the network still appears late on the agenda, with predictable gaps at handover, friction for operations and a scramble to fit something that should have been planned earlier. Digital infrastructure will influence how resilient, efficient and sustainable your portfolios become.

We sponsored this report not just to understand how developers and landlords need to use their connectivity infrastructure, but to highlight that connectivity should sit very early in your planning cycle, that every building you manage is different, and every group of residents, employees or guests uses your spaces differently - which is why connectivity needs a bespoke approach.

In the built environment, without digital infrastructure buildings and the people who live and work within them cannot function, writes Simon Creasey, Head of Content at BE News.

That's why digital infrastructure is increasingly viewed as the 'fourth utility' alongside water, gas and electricity.

However, all too often, despite its growing importance, digital infrastructure is an after thought, particularly in the build phase of projects.

Without digital infrastructure, construction sites and existing buildings do not have the connectivity that is necessary to enable these assets to function efficiently.

Q: What are your key considerations when you're choosing an internet or broadband supplier?

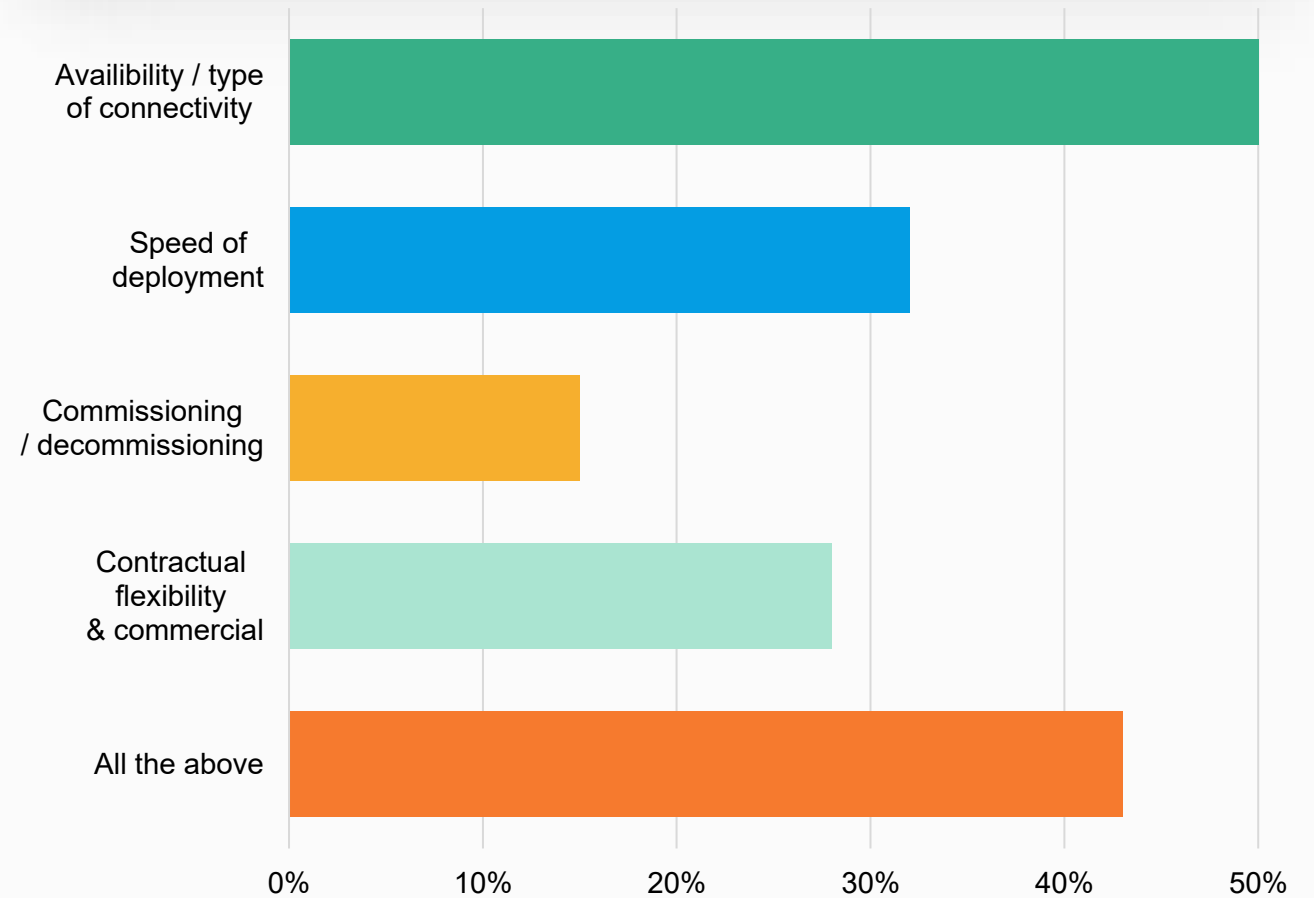
For me, it would have to be reliability, speed of the service and customer service.

Mandy Kelly
Contracts and Projects Officer



Q1

Specifically in the construction phase of a project, what are your key considerations when choosing a supplier of site-wide internet connectivity? (Choose all that apply)



To understand connectivity requirements across the built environment industry, leading provider of managed internet and guest broadband services, Wifinity, partnered with Ruckus Networks and BE News in 2025, to survey developers, managing agents, contractors, facilities directors and other third-party businesses involved in property development and responsible for thousands of residential units.

Q: At what stage in the build process do you require internet connectivity at your sites?

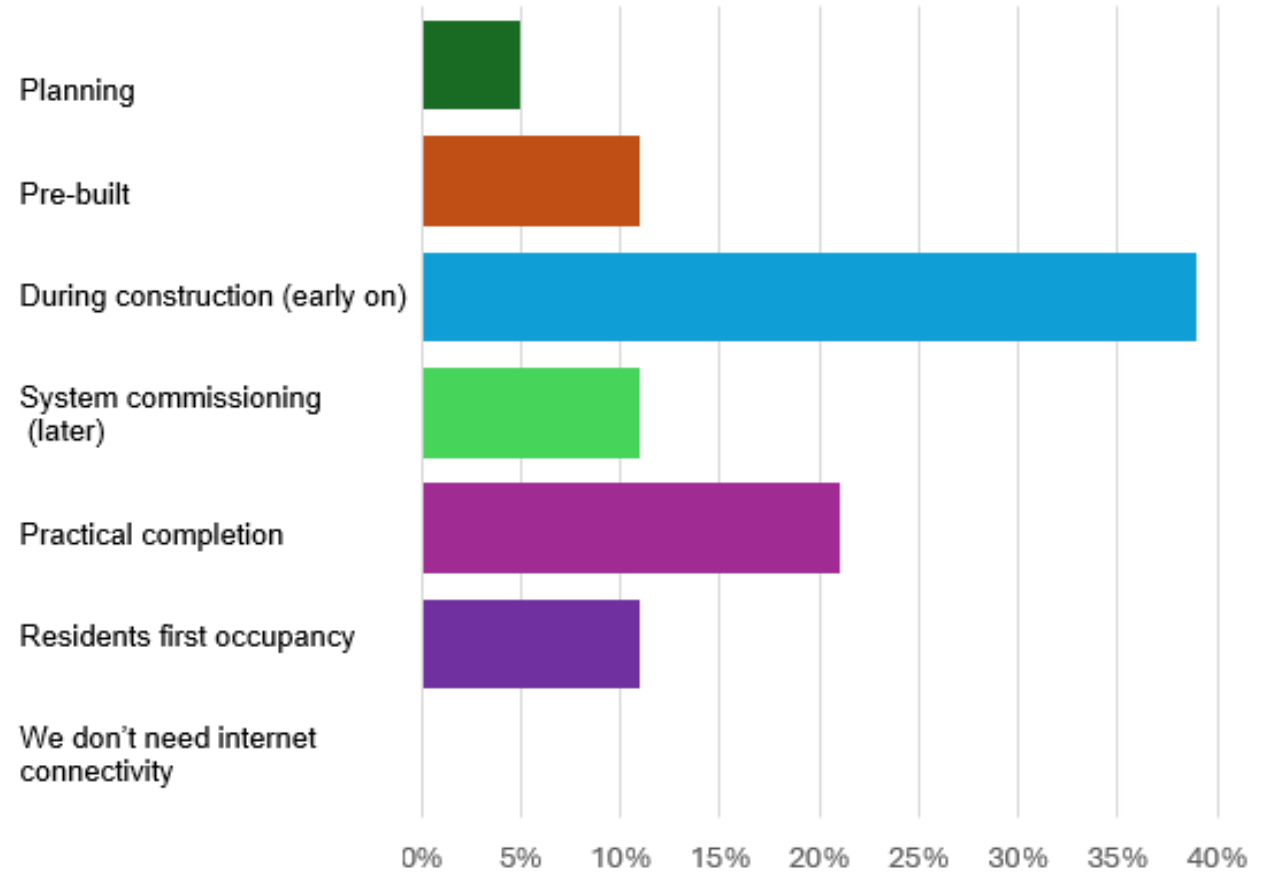
We like to make sure that it's all being implemented during the construction phase so that on day one handover from construction we've got a network that we can use as the operators step in and start managing the building, but also so there's no lag time between that PC date of construction and being able to have our first occupiers move in.

Alastair Mullens
Managing Director –
Residential



Q2

At which stage in the build process do you require internet connectivity at your site?



The 'Connectivity Survey' also gauged industry views on the importance of connectivity on construction sites and how owners and managers of buildings deliver connectivity to their customers.

When it comes to the question of when internet connectivity is required at sites, 39% of respondents said they needed it 'during construction (early on)' with 22% requiring it at 'practical completion'. Some 11% of respondents said internet connectivity was required at 'pre-build', 'system commissioning (later) and also at 'resident's first occupancy'.

Q: What are your key considerations when you're choosing an internet or broadband supplier?

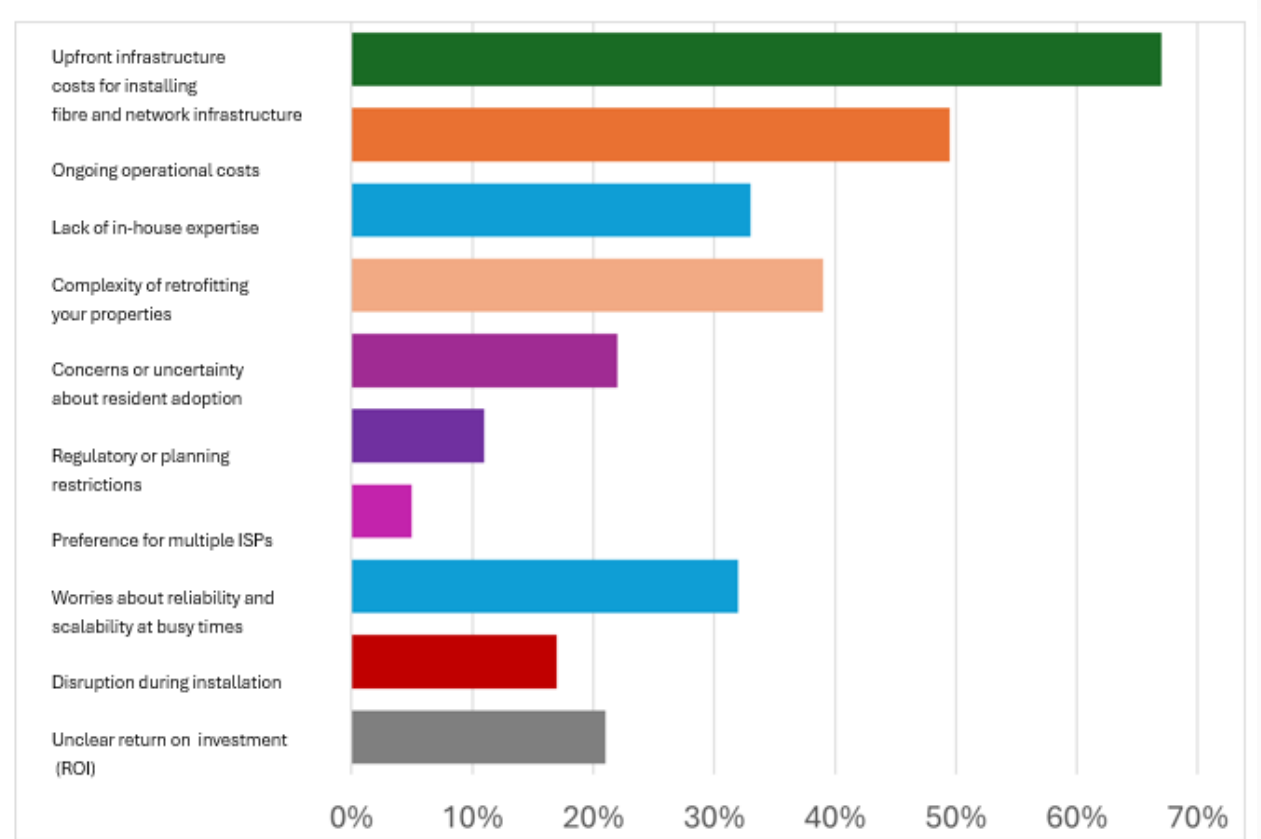
Reliability is the number one consideration, and the ability to have a mesh network so wherever you are, you're connected, but you're connected to your own private network within that mesh network. I think that's really important.

Alastair Mullens
Managing Director –
Residential



Q3

What are the biggest barriers to deploying high-quality, internet connectivity across your sites? (Select up to three)



In the construction phase of projects, half (50%) of respondents stated their key consideration when choosing a supplier of site-wide internet connectivity was 'availability/type of connectivity options'.

Some 33% of survey respondents said their key consideration was 'speed of deployment', 27% selected 'contractual flexibility and commercial terms', 16% said 'commissioning/decommissioning' and 44% selected 'all of the above' as key considerations.

Q: What is your preferred approach to providing residential broadband at your properties?

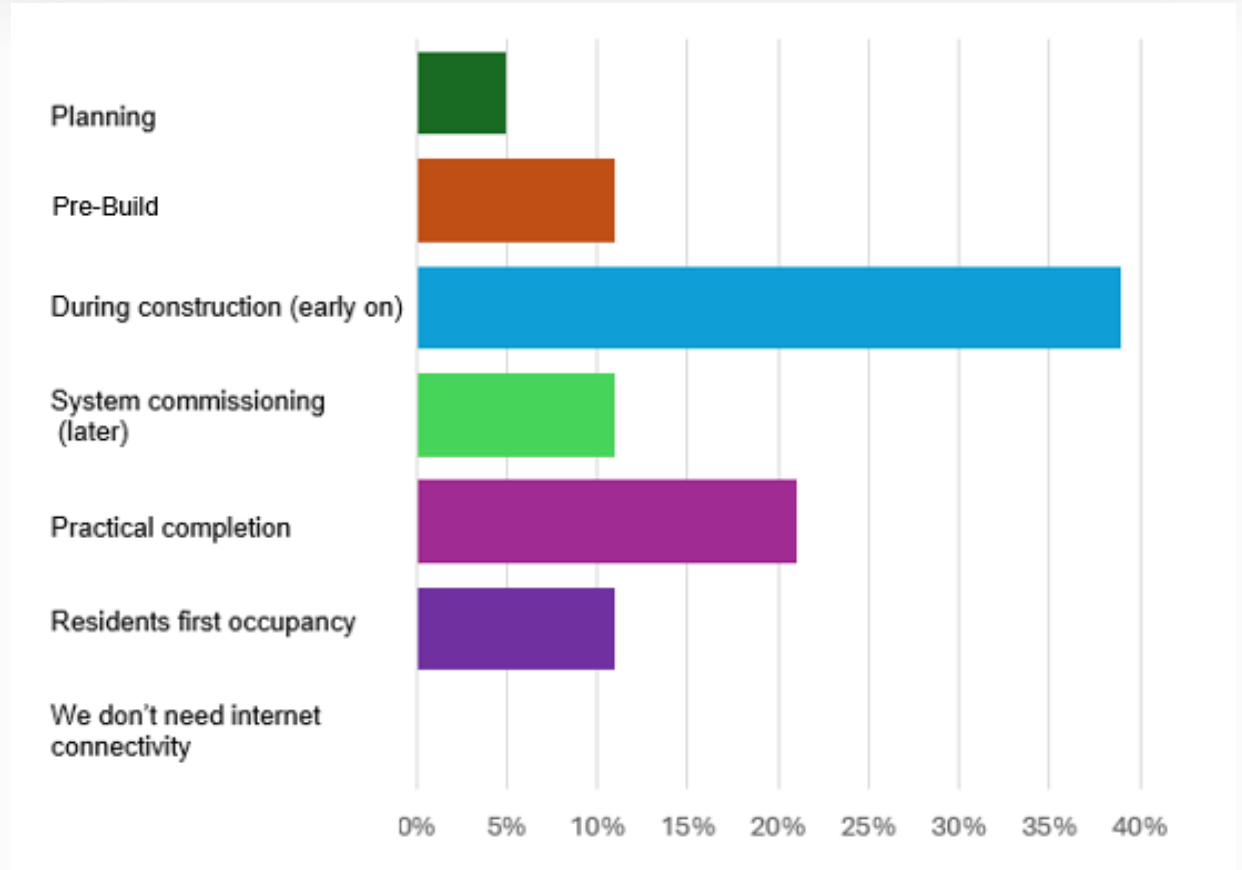
Our key worker customers are typically on a short-hold six-month tenancy and if they want to get connected through a typical broadband provider they have to sign up to a minimum term contract. So, we decided to partner with Wifinity because customers can choose to get internet for a day, or a month, or three months or six months, or whatever. There's no connectivity charge, and it just gives them a bit more flexibility.

Nick Lloyd
Head of Keyworker
Rented Housing



Q4

Which stage do you implement internet connectivity for your residents staff and visitors?



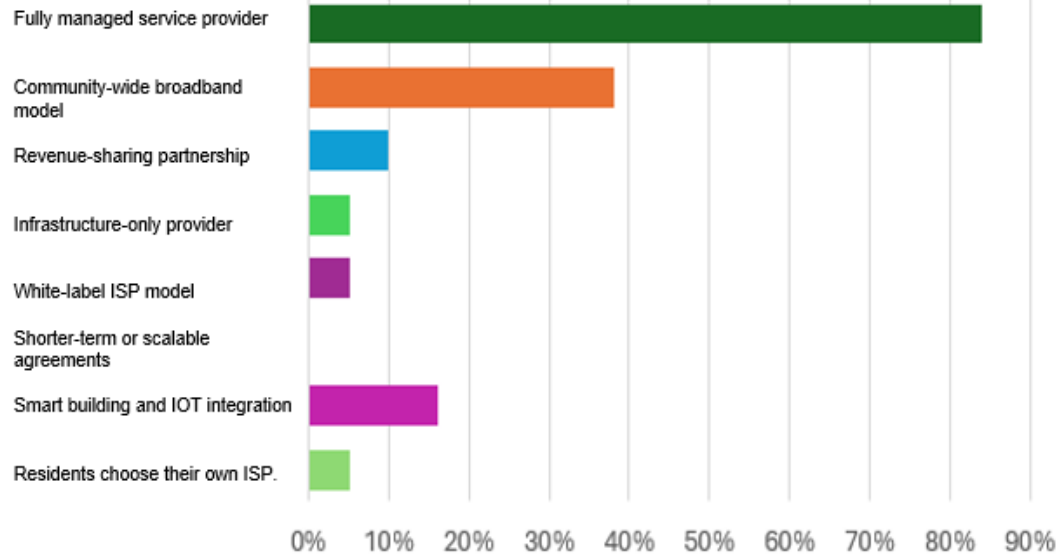
However, the survey showed there is frustration at how easily it is to roll out connectivity across construction sites and existing assets.

When asked to list the three biggest barriers to deploying high-quality connectivity across sites, 'upfront infrastructure costs for installing fibre and network infrastructure' (66%) topped the list, with 'ongoing operational costs' (50%) and 'complexity of retrofitting your properties' (38%) making up the rest of the top three.

Half of survey respondents said they look to implement internet connectivity for residents, staff and visitors at practical completion and in terms of the type of internet supplier model that appeals the most a 'fully managed service provider' came out of top, with more than 80% preferring this approach.

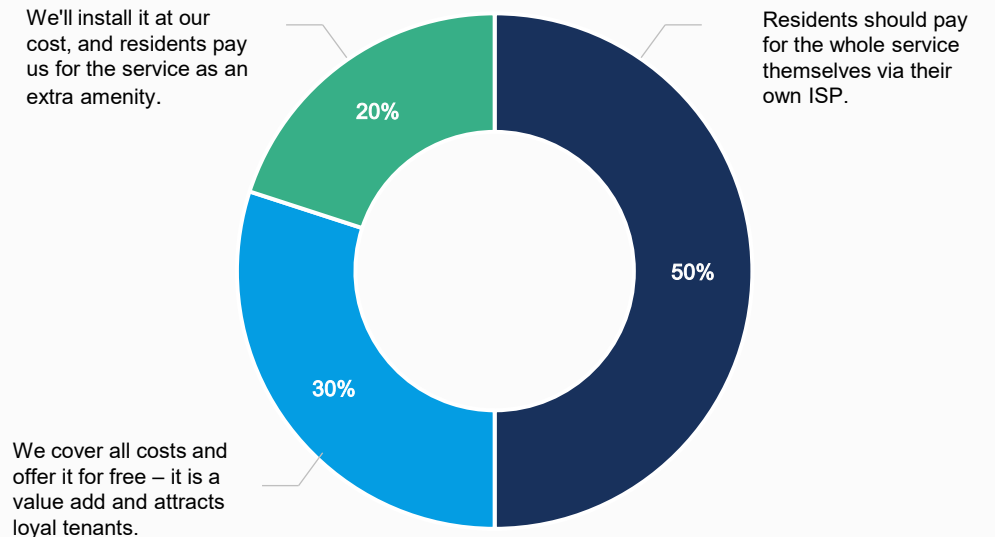
Q5

What type of internet supplier model appeals to you?
(Choose up to two)



Q6

Which best describes your attitude to offering residential broadband at your property?



A 'community-wide broadband model covering the entire development' was the second most popular option.

More than a third of respondents said their preferred approach was to allow residents to choose their own broadband at properties they managed and half said residents in their schemes pay for the whole service themselves via their own ISP.

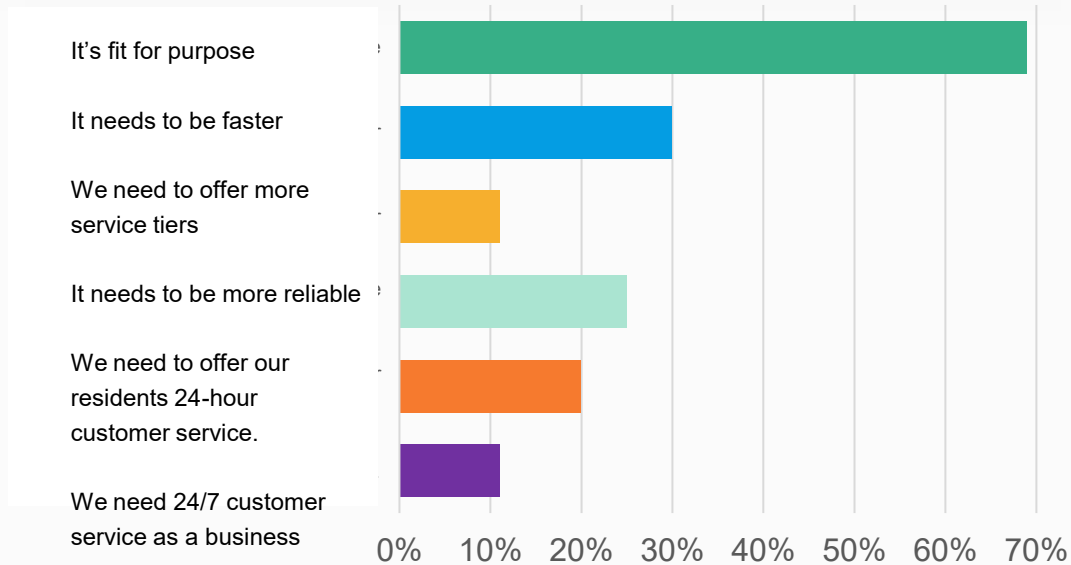
Q: What is your preferred approach to providing residential broadband at your properties?

The best solution for us is to just have one main provider into the building, and then people can choose whether or not they want to opt into having connectivity.

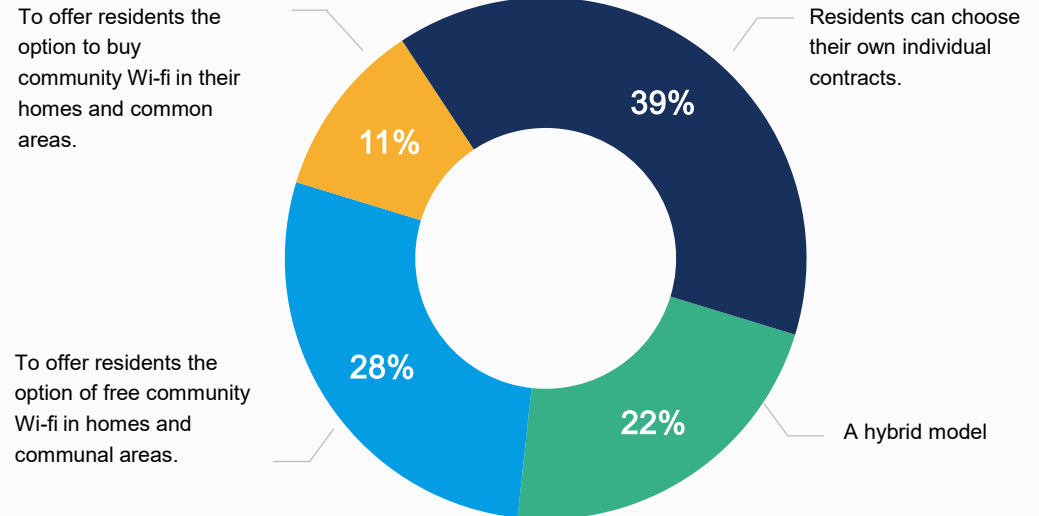
Alexandria Morgan
Digital Inclusion Officer



Q7 If you already offer community WiFi, how does your current broadband offering compare with tenant and occupier expectations? (Choose all that apply)



Q8 What is your preferred approach to providing residential broadband at your properties?



Just over a quarter said they cover the cost of residential broadband and offer it for free because it is a value add and attracts loyal tenants and 22% said they install broadband at their own cost and residents pay for the service as an extra amenity.

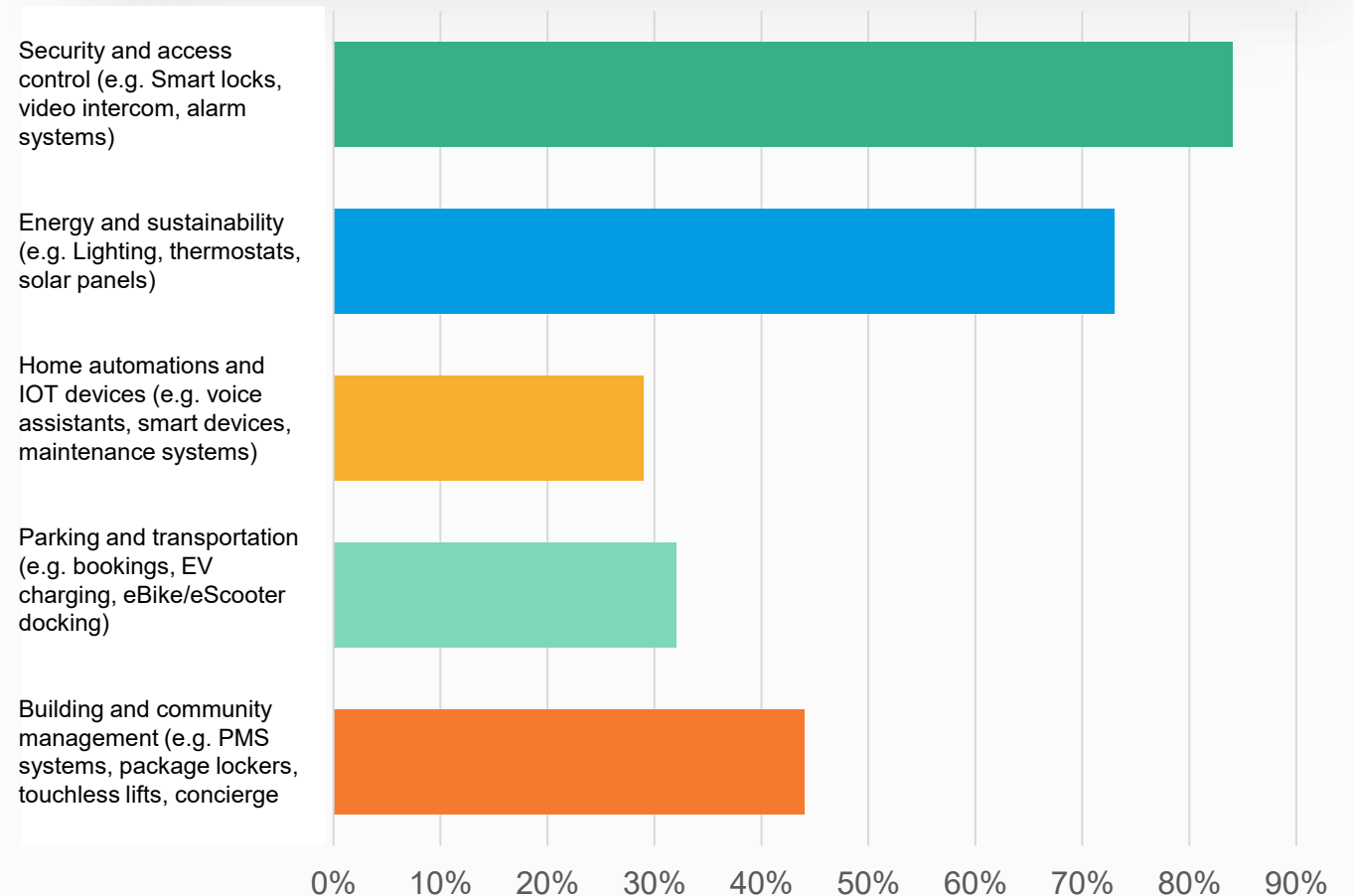
The overwhelming majority of survey respondents said their current broadband offer for tenants is fit for purpose, with the main issues that identified as being 'it needs to be faster' (31%) and 'it needs to be more reliable' (25%).

As buildings have increasingly get smarter thanks to remote monitoring and 'internet of things' (IoT) technology, it's clear that connectivity will play an ever more important role in the industry in the future, with 83% of survey respondents already rolling out 'smart' security and access control technologies. A significant number of respondents (72%) have also deployed smart energy and sustainability features in their schemes, such as thermostats and lighting, with 44% rolling out smart building and community management technologies.

The smart money is on buildings to get even smarter in the future, which means the connectivity demands of business owners, asset managers and occupiers are only going to increase.

Q9

Which smart technologies have you integrated or plan to integrate in your developments? (Choose all that apply)



About us

Wifinity is a managed connectivity provider, covering all sectors, including BTR and construction. It delivers large-scale, high performance networks projects for residential, corporate, later living, social housing and PBSA developments, to support every kind of user, platform and smart device from day one.

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