

THE LANDLORD

VOL 11 • ISSUE 7 JULY 2026 *You've Got Questions — I Have Answers*



If the last decade taught Irish landlords anything, it is that **the world has a remarkable ability to reinvent instability.** In 2011, the threats were familiar: collapsing banks, falling house prices, and a political class insisting that everything was “on track” while the country quietly haemorrhaged talent and capital. In 2026, the threats are different in shape but identical in substance: systems we rely on are far more fragile than advertised.

Take the recent wave of AI-driven disruptions. Every major newspaper has run some version of the same headline: **“Automation to reshape the workforce.”** The phrasing is polite, almost soothing, as if “reshape” were a gentle massage rather than a structural shock. But the underlying data tells a sharper story. Analysts quoted across multiple outlets have warned that sectors employing hundreds of thousands — administration, logistics, customer service — are facing rapid transformation. And when employment becomes uncertain, rent becomes uncertain. It does not take a central bank model to understand that.

Ireland’s rental market has always been a mirror held up to the wider economy. When incomes wobble, arrears rise. When confidence dips, mobility stalls. When uncertainty becomes the national mood, tenants cling to leases longer, landlords delay decisions, and policymakers promise stability they cannot deliver. The new twist in 2026 is that the uncertainty is no longer cyclical — it is technological, structural, and accelerating.

Layer onto this the increasingly visible fragility of Ireland’s physical infrastructure. In the last year alone, the national grid has issued multiple warnings about capacity strain. Data centres — the temples of our digital age — now consume a significant share of national electricity, a fact widely reported and debated. Politicians insist that the grid is “robust,” but the frequency of alerts suggests otherwise. Landlords do not need to be electrical engineers to understand the implications: when a country’s energy system is stretched, everything from heating to broadband becomes a variable rather than a constant.

And broadband, ironically, has become the new heating oil. **Tenants will tolerate many things** — rising rents, shrinking living rooms, even the occasional boiler tantrum, **but they will not tolerate unreliable internet.**

Remote work, online education, telemedicine, and digital administration have made connectivity a basic utility. I speak as someone who has even went as far as to install a Starlink in my car to aid productivity. The modern Irish household is now dependent on a system that is both essential and imperfect. That is not a reassuring combination.

Meanwhile, the property sector itself has been dragged into the digital era whether it wanted to be or not. **Tenants expect online applications, digital signatures, instant communication, and real-time updates.** Landlords are now part-operator, part-administrator, part-IT support. The days of paper leases and handwritten receipts are as distant as the Celtic Tiger. And yet, despite all this technological sophistication, the fundamentals remain stubbornly unchanged: too few homes, too much demand, and a political system that continues to treat housing as a philosophical debate rather than a national emergency.

What makes 2026 particularly interesting is the collision of old and new vulnerabilities. On one side, we have the traditional pressures: construction delays, planning bottlenecks, and a rental market stretched to its limits. On the other, we have digital fragility: cyber-attacks on public services, AI-driven job displacement, and an energy grid struggling to keep pace with the demands of a data-heavy economy. The result is a landscape where **landlords must navigate both physical and digital risk simultaneously.**

In 2011, I wrote that the only model a landlord truly needed was the relationship between rents and house prices — the yield. In 2026, that remains true, but it is no longer sufficient. A second model has emerged: **the resilience model.** How resilient is your tenant’s income? How resilient is your property’s energy supply? How resilient is your own operational system if the digital tools you rely on suddenly fail? These questions are no longer theoretical. They are practical, immediate, and unavoidable.

And yet, despite all this, the Irish rental market continues to defy gravity. **Demand remains high. Supply remains constrained.** Prices remain elevated. Policymakers continue to promise solutions that remain permanently just over the horizon. It is a familiar pattern, almost comforting in its predictability.

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What is Fair Wear and Tear?



A landlord’s nightmare: Red wine on the carpets

There is a very fine line between what can be happily termed ‘fair wear and tear’ and what constitutes ‘damage’. In my experience it is quite evident that there is plenty of scope for landlords and tenants to be treated far from fairly if good practice is not followed. A meticulous and consistent approach to check ins / check outs / inventories and interim visits should be an absolute priority for landlord and letting agents.

Correctly undertaken, these will deliver the vital foundation for a successful and uncontested tenancy by providing all the necessary supporting documentation to avoid any dispute between the landlord and tenant in relation to discussions which refer to the condition of the property and its contents. An independent inventory management company is far better equipped to provide an unbiased and objective assessment of a property, and this applies throughout the period of the tenancy.

Tenants are likely to respond better to someone that is not linked to the landlord in any way and whose judgment is not clouded by any existing or historic business relationship. Extensive experience of the business which includes an in-depth understanding of the potential pitfalls associated with the ‘fair wear and ...tear’ debate will also pay dividends by protecting both the landlord’s property investment and reducing the risk of unscrupulous claims affecting the safe return of the tenant’s deposit.

Wear-and-tear disputes are rising — not

New National Rent Controls Rent Pressure Zones have been replaced by a national system of rent control covering all private tenancies across Ireland. Rent increases are now linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), with a 2% annual cap to protect tenants during periods of high inflation. Notably, new apartments where construction commenced from 10 June 2025 are exempt from the 2% cap — a measure aimed at encouraging new housing supply. Find out more here; <https://www.weblettings.ie/rent-reviews-national-rent-control-notice-periods>

Resetting to Market Rent For new tenancies created after 1 March 2026, landlords can reset rent to market value when a new tenancy begins, provided the previous tenant left voluntarily or breached their obligations. Resetting is also permitted at the end of the six-year cycle. Landlords must back up any market rent claim with evidence from the RTB Rent Register.

Existing Tenancies Unaffected The new rules apply only to tenancies created from 1 March 2026. Existing tenancies remain governed by the previous rules. With so many rules it is challenging and then some to stay atop of it all.

because tenants are worse, but rather because expectations are higher. Landlords who document condition properly at check-in and check-out are seeing far fewer disagreements and faster deposit resolutions. Independent inventories are becoming the norm rather than the exception, especially in competitive urban markets. A well-documented tenancy is now one of the strongest protections a landlord can have.

Whoever is responsible for determining fair wear and tear, it is essential that the landlord is appreciative of the need to make allowances for depreciation – whilst accepting that he / she cannot use the tenancy as a means of 'betterment' ie seeking out replacement of damaged / missing items with new ones (unless the items were brand new at the start of the tenancy).

The type of tenant for example family, professional couple, single occupancy, students, will have a huge bearing on the anticipated overall wear and tear on items in a property. For example, a family of four is likely to use a washing machine more often than a professional couple and therefore this needs to be considered and reflected in the decision.

Likewise, a medium quality carpet with a professional couple living at a property would last for typically 5 years, whereas a family occupancy would reduce the lifespan to typically 3 years.



The length of occupancy will also need to be taken into consideration – the impact of a two-year occupancy may vary enormously to the toll of a 6-month occupancy. Equally, when a tenant has enjoyed a five-year stay in the same property, it becomes very difficult to prove unacceptable wear and tear.

Consent for smokers or pets in the property will have implications on the expected condition of the property at the end of the tenure. The tenancy agreement may contain specific clauses relating to the required care and attention of items/amenities which the tenant has access to during the term of his / her stay.

Care of the external living area i.e. the garden represents a classic example of this and is so often the cause of heated debate between landlord and tenant. In the majority of cases the garden will be treated as an 'outdoor room' and as such, should be returned to the landlord in the same condition/state of maintenance as when the tenancy agreement / inventory is first signed.

This is an accepted requirement regardless as to whether the tenants have chosen to take advantage of the garden facilities.

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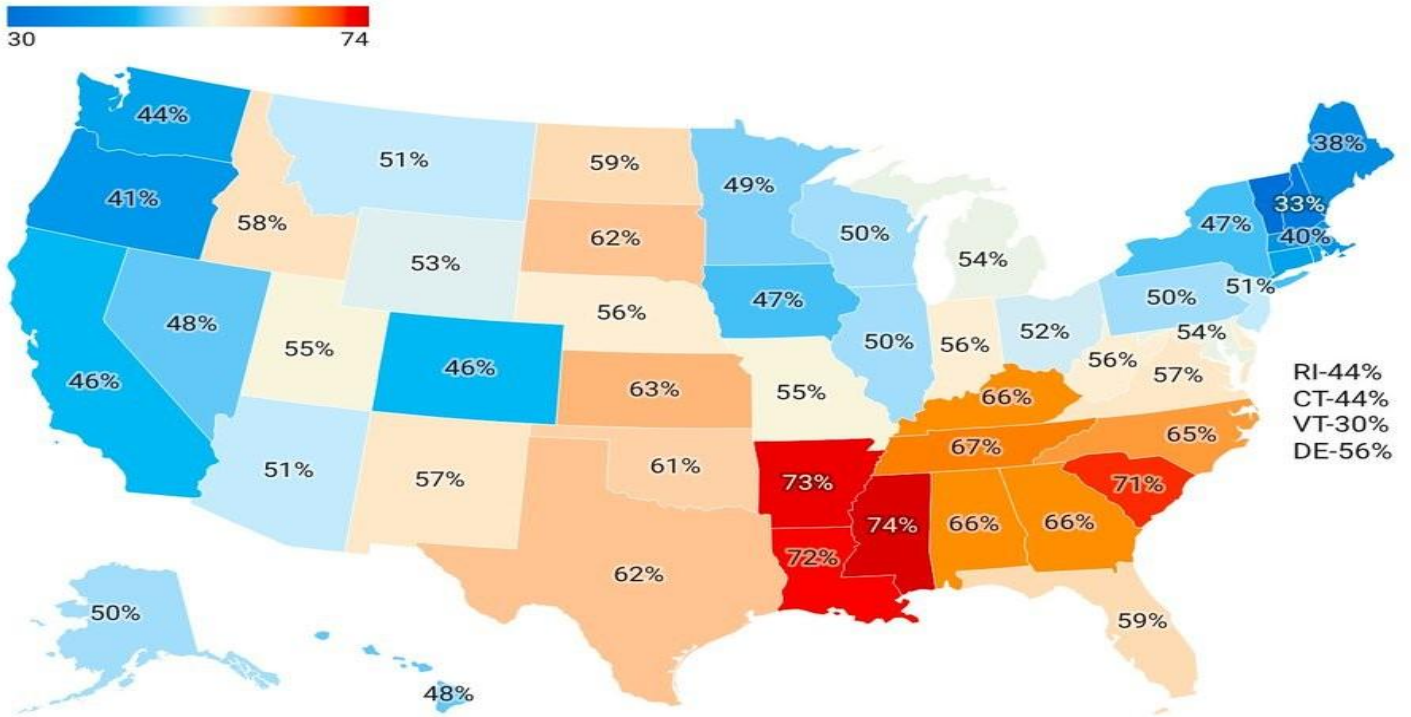
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How Safe Is Your Boiler... Really?

% of adults who say they believe in God (2025)



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NIGHT-TIME COMPANY

“WOULDN’T you know it?” sighed the doctor.
 “The worst storm in years. It’s 3 a.m. and I’ve just got a call from a patient.” Through the howling wind and snow, the doctor fought his way to the side of the stricken man. After examining him he shook his head gravely and said, “Get your solicitor, your family and friends over here at once!”

When he got home the doctor told his wife the instructions he’d given. “Poor man,” she sighed, “is he really that sick?”
 “Not at all,” the doctor replied with a grin. “He’ll be perfectly well in twenty-four hours....but I was darned if I was going to be the only person to go out on a night like this!”



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