

The Housing Situation in Berlin

As part of a comparative housing research project, the Spatial Development and Urban Policy (SPUR) research group collected data on the housing situation in six metropolises (Berlin, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, New York, and Paris). This data brief provides an overview of the housing situation in Berlin. It provides a general summary of the data and highlights some of the most interesting findings.

The survey data shows that respondents in Berlin are satisfied with their current housing situation, but almost half of the respondents indicated that they intend to move within the next five years. Concerns for involuntary housing relocations have been amplified due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also found that half of these concerns are triggered by the fear of rising rents.

All data and the codebook are free to use and available on the website of the ETH research collection: <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000513683>

December 2021

Kauer Fiona, Hofer Katrin, Wicki Michael, Kaufmann David

Introduction

Cities worldwide face a worsening housing crisis – supply shortages, speculations, and rising rents lead to housing insecurities for an increasing share of urban dwellers in many metropolises. The spread of COVID-19 has further worsened the situation for many urban residents and amplified their precarity.

In order to gain a better understanding of housing insecurities and the housing situation in global cities, we have launched a survey in early 2021 in six metropolises (Berlin, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, New York, and Paris). Here, we focus on the data from Berlin. This data brief thus reflects the answers of the 1,820 survey respondents in Berlin. Similar data briefs have been produced for other metropolises (for an overview, see <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000514013>). All data is free to use and can be found on the website of the ETH research collection (Dataset: <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000513683>).

Housing Situation

Considering the type of tenure, the data indicates a high share of renters in Berlin (69.9%). The rest of the sample either classify themselves as homeowners (20.7%) or living in other housing arrangements (9.4%), including social housing and housing cooperatives. Across the sample, participants display relatively high satisfaction with their current housing situation. The results show that 68.8% are either satisfied or highly



The median housing expenses of the respondents in Berlin are between € 400-699 per month.

Figure 1: Housing expenses

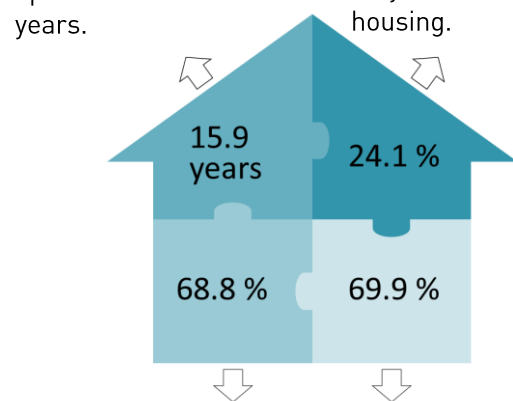


The average household size is 2.4 people per household.

Figure 2: Household size

On average respondents have stayed in their current apartment for 15.9 years.

...indicate having experienced discrimination when they were looking for housing.



...are overall satisfied with their current apartment.

...are renters.

Figure 3: Housing situation

satisfied with their apartment. The level of satisfaction with their residency location was at 72.4%, and with their neighborhood at 68.3%. The lowest level of satisfaction is related to housing costs. Here, only 53.0% said that they were satisfied or very satisfied. Despite these high satisfaction levels, almost a quarter (24.1%) of the survey respondents report having experienced some form of discrimination when looking for new housing.

Length of stay

Fluctuation seems to be relatively low, as people have lived in their apartments and their residential districts for many years. 60.1% of the survey respondents said they have lived in their apartments for more than ten years.

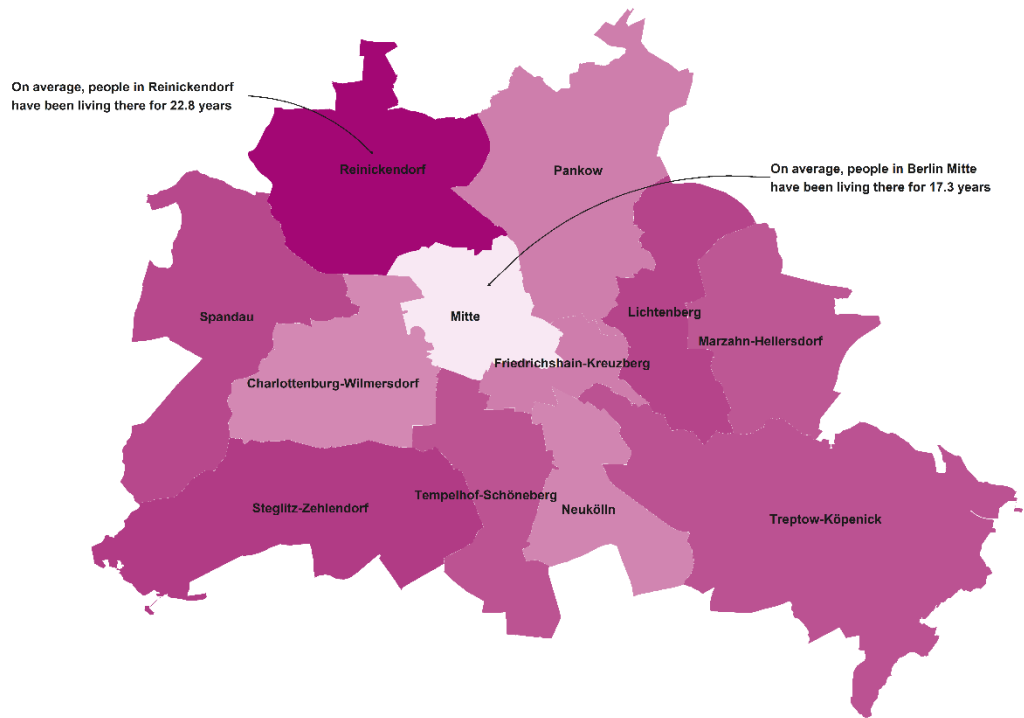
Length of stay in their residential district seems to be even longer, with 69.9% of our sample indicating they have lived in their residential district for more than ten years. Even though respondents tend to stay in their residential boroughs for a long time, there is spatial variance in our data: on average, respondents living in the city center of Berlin stay for shorter periods in their

district than people living in outer Berlin (Figure 4). For example, respondents living in Berlin Mitte have on average lived in this district for 17.3 years. In contrast, residents living in Reinickendorf situated in Outer Berlin, have lived there for 22.8 years on average.

We also see differences in the length of stay between different tenure types. While 66.2% of the homeowners indicate having lived in their apartments for more than ten years, 57.9% of the tenants reported the same length of stay. Roughly one-quarter of the respondents who rent their accommodation (23.5%) through the private rental market indicate that they have lived in their apartments between one and five years. Slightly fewer homeowners indicated the same length of stay (18%).

Although people seem to stay in their homes for a long time, nearly half of the respondents (46.5%) said they intend to change their residence within the next five years. 14.2% stated they have concrete plans for their relocation. Reasons to move are related to the location of the apartment (12.4%) and the property itself (10.6%).

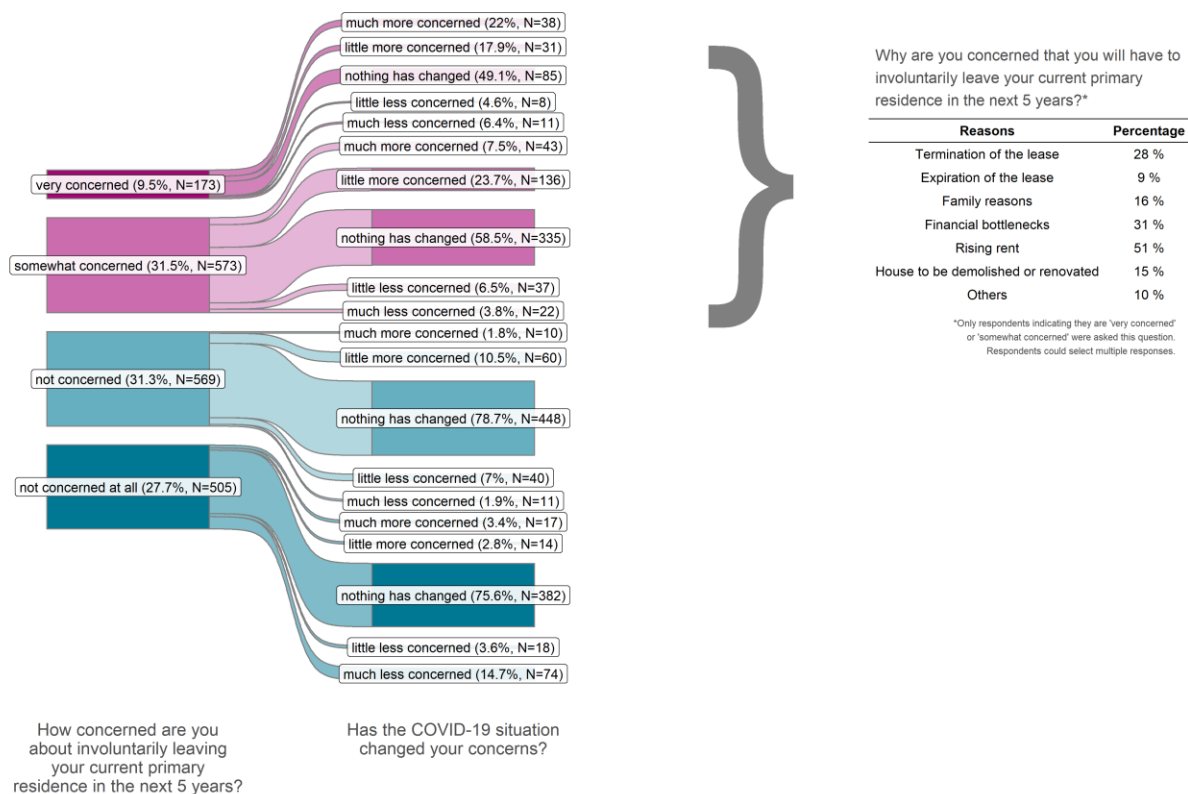
Figure 4: Average length of stay in respondents' residential district, N= 1820



Since what year have you lived in your residential district?

Average length of stay in residential district in years 18 20 22

Figure 5: Housing concern and change due to COVID-19, N= 1820



Concern for involuntary relocation

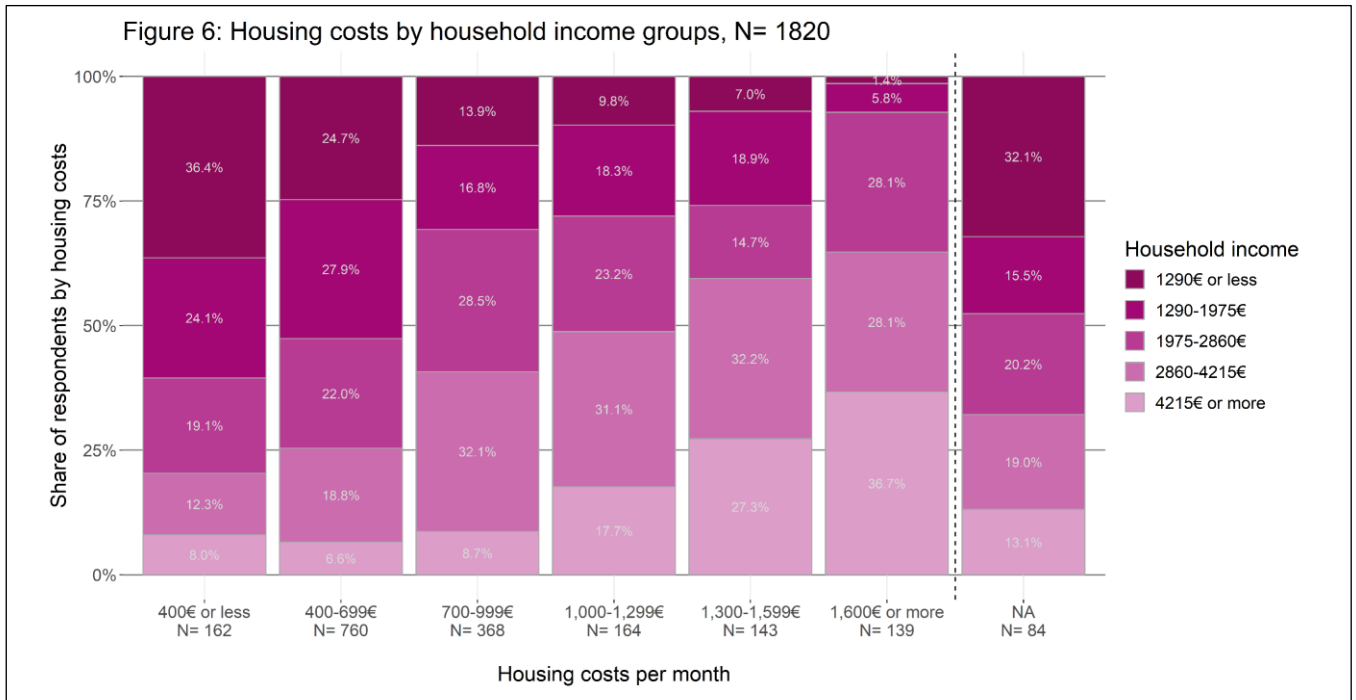
41.0% of the respondents are concerned about being forced to leave their current homes involuntarily within the next five years (31.5% of the respondents indicate somewhat concerned, and 9.5% are very concerned). Reasons for being concerned are mainly due to housing affordability. Of those who indicated being concerned, more than half (51%) stated rising rents and 31% mentioned financial bottlenecks as a reason for their concern. 28% of the concerned respondents also referred to termination of the lease causing their concern. Other reasons are linked to family reasons or renovations and demolitions or expiration of the lease.

Our data also indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has further amplified precarity for some respondents and has rendered them even more vulnerable. Those who indicated being concerned about involuntary relocation have a higher likelihood to state that the COVID-19 situation has increased their concerns. At the same time, those who do not feel concerned have a higher likelihood of not feeling differently because of COVID-19.

Housing finances

Housing expenditures vary across different tenure types, rendering some residents particularly vulnerable to increasing costs. We can see that homeowners predominantly belong to the two highest household income quintiles, whereas lower-income respondents have a higher probability of being non-homeowners. Lower-income groups thus have a lower probability of homeownership.

Housing is, however, not only an expense but, for some households also a source of income. More than 10% of our sample indicated income from renting out (a) part(s) of their primary residence. Whereas 8.4% of the sample is renting out on short-term leases (less than a month at a time), 3.3% is receiving income through long term sublets (more than a month at a time). Sublets of both types are mainly done through real estate agencies (37.1%), personal contacts (34.3%), and online portals (23.0%). Also, almost 12.1% of the respondents said that they have at least one other official residence. Of those, 51.6% said that at least one of these additional residences are located within Berlin.



Data information

The data of this housing situation brief on Berlin is derived from a survey conducted by the Spatial Development and Urban Policy research group in spring 2021.

Research project: spur.ethz.ch/research/housing-situation

Data Brief Overview: <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000514013>

Dataset: <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000513683>

Citing suggestion: Kauer Fiona, Hofer Katrin, Wicki Michael, Kaufmann David (2021). *The Housing Situation in Berlin*, Data Brief, Zurich: Spatial Development and Urban Policy (SPUR), <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000514015>

References

1. Kauer Fiona, Hofer Katrin, Wicki Michael, Kaufmann David (2021). *Survey Data of the Housing Situation in Six Global Metropolises*, Data Brief, Zurich: Spatial Development and Urban Policy (SPUR), <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000514013>.