

The Housing Situation in London

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 London. It provides a general summary of the data and highlights some of the most interesting findings.

The survey data shows that renters have to dedicate more of their household income to housing costs than homeowners. On average, renters also report shorter lengths of stay in their current apartment. We also found that concerns for involuntary housing relocations are mainly related to housing affordability and that these concerns have been amplified due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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>

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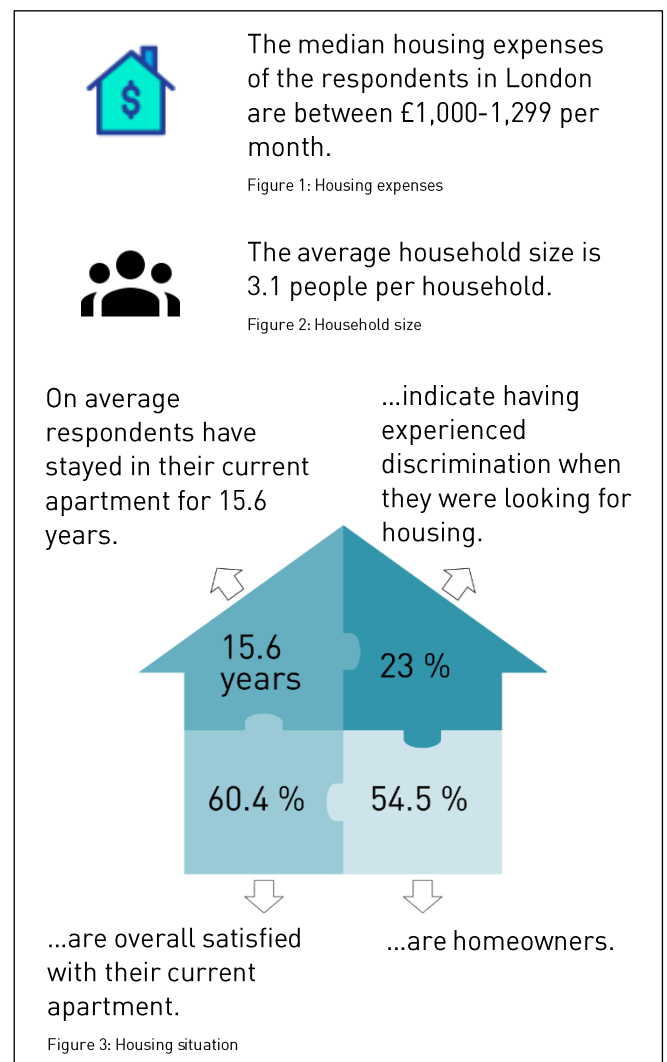
Introduction

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 London. This data brief thus reflects the answers of the 2,329 survey respondents in London. 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 the well-known high share of homeowners in London (54.5%). The rest of the sample either classify themselves as renters (32.2%) or living in other housing arrangements (13.3%), including social housing and housing cooperatives. Across the sample, participants display relatively high satisfaction with their current housing situation. The results show that 60.4% are



either satisfied or highly satisfied with their apartment. The level of satisfaction with the location of their residency being at 67.2%, and with their neighborhood at 62.6%. The lowest level of satisfaction is related to housing costs. Here, only 43.3% said that they were satisfied or very satisfied. Despite these high satisfaction levels, almost a quarter (23%) 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 boroughs for many years. 56.3% of the survey respondents said they have lived in their apartments for more than ten years. This number is higher than the figures in the Housing in London 2020 report, where 44% of the respondents indicated that they had lived in their current homes for more than ten years².

Length of stay in their residential borough seems to be even longer with 68.9% of our sample indicating they have lived in their residential borough 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 Inner London stay for shorter periods of time in their boroughs than people living in Outer London (Figure 4). For example, respondents living in Tower Hamlets have on average lived in this borough for 14.1 years. In contrast, residents living in Harrow situated in Outer London, have been living there for 25.7 years on average.

We also see differences in the length of stay between different tenure types. While 70% of the homeowners indicate having lived in their apartments for more than ten years, only 32.8% of the tenants reported the same length of stay. Roughly half of the respondents who rent their accommodation (50.2%) through the private rental market indicate that they have lived in their apartments between one and five years. In comparison, 59.9% of the people living in social renting households and cooperatives indicated that they have lived in their apartments for more than ten years. Renters thus appear to have higher mobility than homeowners, whereas there is a difference in fluctuations between the private and the non-profit rental sector.

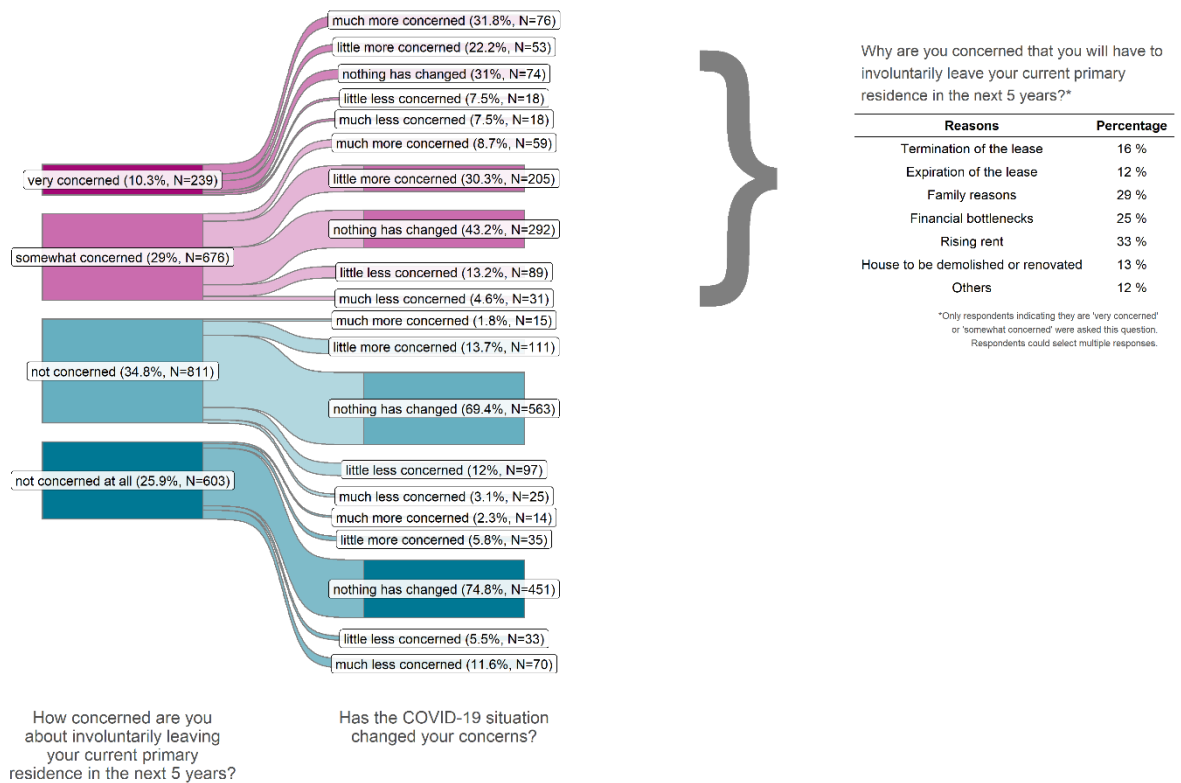
Figure 4: Average length of stay in respondents' residential borough



Since what year have you lived in your residential borough?

Average length of stay in residential borough in years 152025

Figure 5: Housing concern and change due to COVID-19, N= 2,329



Concern for involuntary relocation

39.3% of the respondents are concerned about being forced to involuntarily leave their current homes within the next five years (29.0% of the respondents indicate somewhat concerned, and 10.3% are very concerned). Reasons for being concerned are mainly due to housing affordability. Of those who indicated being concerned, one third (33%) stated rising rents and 25% mentioned financial bottlenecks as a reason for their concern. 29% of the concerned respondents also referred to family reasons causing their concern. Other reasons are linked to the termination or expiration of leases or renovations and demolitions.

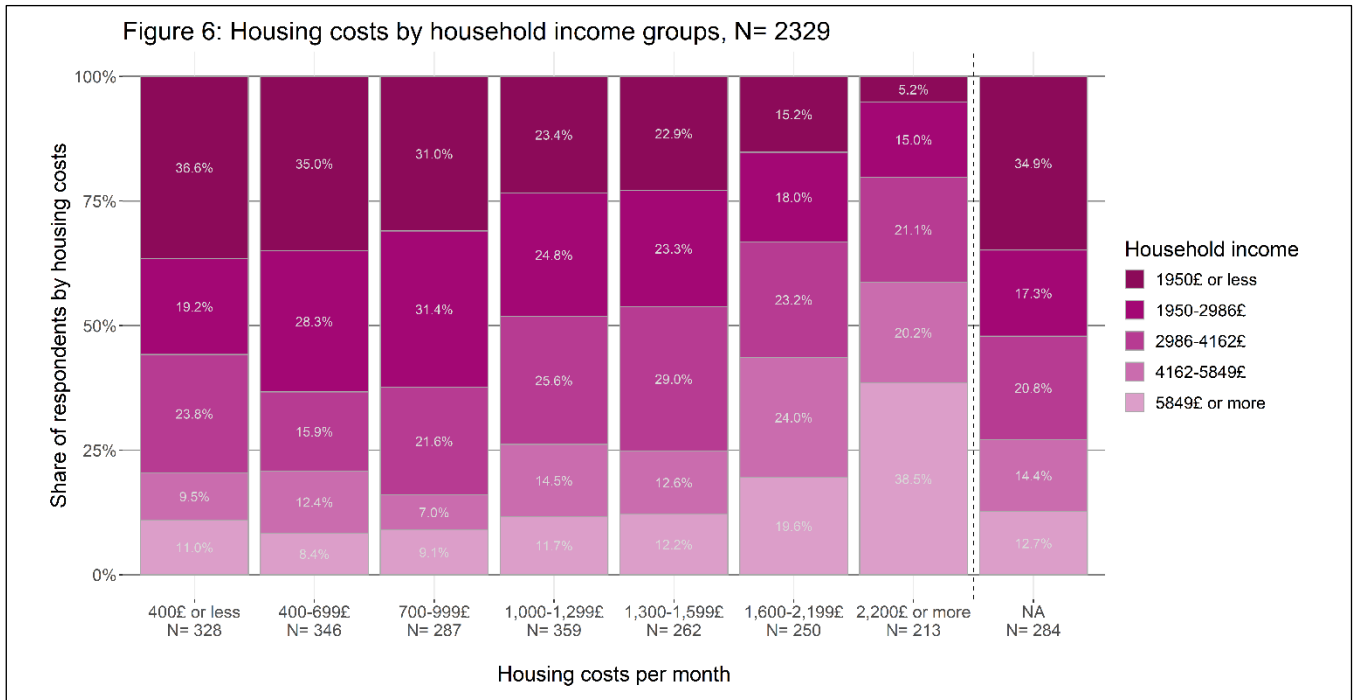
Our data also indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has further amplified precarity for some respondents and has rendered them even more vulnerable. Those who indicated being concerned about involuntary relocation have a higher likelihood to state that the COVID-19 situation has increased their concerns. At the same time, those who do not feel concerned have a higher likelihood to not feel 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 three 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. At the same time, non-homeownership leads to higher housing costs, as homeowners pay significantly less for housing than any other tenure type.

Housing is however not only an expense but for some households also a source of income. More than 20% of our sample indicated income from renting out (a part(s)) of their primary residence. Whereas 14.8% of the sample is renting out on short-term leases (less than a month at a time), 5.6% 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 (45.7%), personal contacts (25.5%), and online portals (25.1%). Also, almost 20% of the respondents said that they have at least one other official residence. Of those, 55.7% said that at least one of these additional residences are located within London.



Data information

The data of this housing situation brief on London 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>

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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>.
2. Cosh, Georgie and Gleeson, James (2020). *Housing in London – the evidence base for the London Housing Strategy*, London: Greater London Authority.

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