



THE RENTAL LANDSCAPE OF ST. LOUIS 2023

Results of the We The Tenants Housing Survey

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INTRODUCTION



THE We The Tenants campaign is a grassroots organizing campaign, supported by **Action St. Louis** and **Arch City Defenders**. Before having a name, the campaign found its start in 2021, with renters, organizers, and lawyers, gathering to host a community town hall with the purpose of addressing the many issues renters faced through the pandemic. We are a community of renters, organizers, and advocates, building a movement to transform St. Louis from a region that enables landlords and developers to exploit residents, to a place where everyone has safe and stable housing.

In an effort to drive this mission, in 2022, Action St. Louis conducted a survey inquiring about tenant experiences in St. Louis City as part of the We The Tenants Campaign. Our survey identified many tenant concerns related to living conditions and eviction. These concerns highlighted the need for additional tenant protections in St. Louis City. Further research was undertaken to comprehend the racial and financial characteristics of the housing market in St. Louis City along with general demographics of St. Louis renters and property owners. This additional information is crucial to understanding the gaps and government failures in providing safe and affordable housing to renters.

Our final report aims to identify the many benefits of tenant protections and the compelling need for their implementation in St. Louis City.

WHEN TENANTS HAVE RIGHTS, ST. LOUIS CITY THRIVES

The majority of occupied residential units in St. Louis are renter-occupied. As of 2021, St. Louis City comprises 78,030 renter units. This represents an increase of over 5% since 2010. Renters contribute \$2.7 billion to the St. Louis economy every year. However, 44% of renters pay too much for housing. The National Low Income Housing Coalition defines "cost burdened" as households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs and utilities and those spending more than half of their income are "severely cost burdened."

If renters were to pay only up to 30% of their income on rent, they would have an additional \$203 million dollars to contribute to the St. Louis economy (National Equity Atlas (n.d.). Eliminate rent burden.). For a household with two adults and two children, where one person is working, this additional income could cover one of the following:

- 44% of their food costs
- 55% of their medical costs
- 37% of transportation costs
- 100% of tuition for one full year at a two -year Missouri state college/university
- 53% of a year at a four year Missouri state college/university

“
I would probably save more. I would probably give a little bit more away, you know to charity or somebody who really need help.” Get a car. “I would just save up you know as much as I can with fix income.” “I would probably by house, so I can get out of the renting market, if possible.
Linda Brayboy, We The Tenants Leader

St. Louis Occupied Units

■ Renter
■ Owner

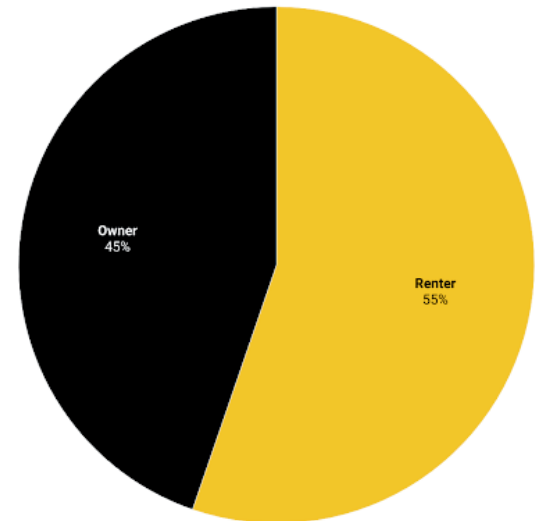


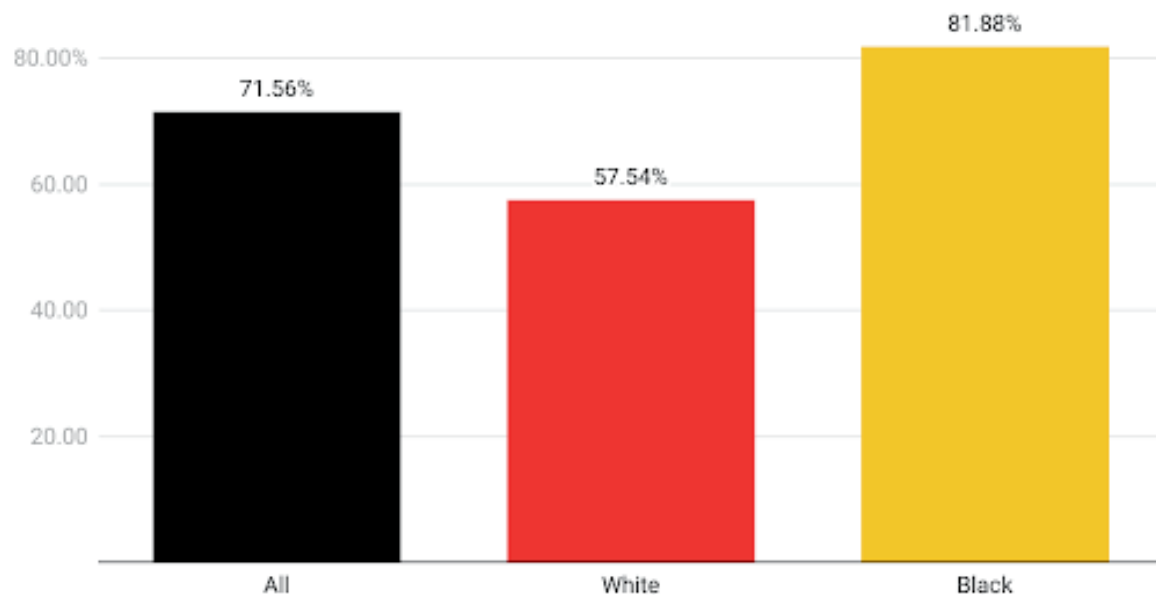
Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: Census: 2021 5 year acs survey • Created with Datawrapper

1. Renters refer to renter occupied households. Dollars refer to 2021 dollars. Renter contributions to the local economy are defined as income minus housing costs (disposable income).

2. Expenses calculated using MIT's Living Wage Calculator

Living in poverty has adverse impacts on children's future earnings. Research has shown that moving from high- to low-poverty neighborhoods has a significant impact on children's long-term outcomes, such as increases in college attendance and earnings (Chetty, R., 2016). However, moving homes creates instability and additional financial costs that are not feasible for the 44% of households burdened by rent (Affordable Housing Trust Fund Coalition (2021.)). Obtaining affordable housing helps families escape poverty. If all renters were to only pay 30% of their income on rent, all rent burdened households would have an additional 70% of disposable income. Affordable housing can lift many renters from poverty without destabilizing their lives or removing them from their communities. Lack of affordable housing production, combined with soaring housing prices and stagnant wages for low-wage workers, has led to an increased housing burden for low-income renters, (National Equity Atlas, n.d. Eliminate Rent Burden).

Average Percent Gain in Disposable Income per Rent Burdened Household with No Rent Burden



Created with Datawrapper

The housing burden disproportionately impacts Black, Native American, and Latinx households due to income inequality and a long history of racial segregation enforced through practices such as racially restrictive housing covenants, redlining, and discriminatory lending (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2019, April 15). Affordable housing could help address some of this inequity, with Black renters experiencing the greatest gains (over 80%) in disposable income when they pay 30% of their income on rent.

Affordability is not the sole important indicator of stable, safe, and secure housing. Housing impacts every aspect of an individual's life including, but not limited to, mental and physical health, educational attainment, and employment. According to a literature synthesis from Columbia University, living in unaffordable housing has been associated with hypertension, arthritis, and poorer self-rated physical and mental health (Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D. (2019)).

70% If all renters were to only pay 30% of their income on rent, all rent burdened households would have an additional 70% of disposable income.

Dilapidated housing also facilitates entry for pests, which can cause allergy attacks and eventually asthma (Do et al., 2016; Olmedo et al., 2011, as cited in Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D., 2019). Black, people of color and low-income residents are more likely to suffer these catastrophic consequences because they have higher rates of poor living conditions and are more likely to live in dilapidated housing (Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D., 2019). “The home is the second-most-common location for unintentional fatal injuries” (Runyan et al., 2005, as cited in Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D., 2019). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, unintentional injury has been the leading cause of death for people ages 1–44 from 2001 to 2020. Malfunctioning or missing smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire suppression systems can lead to injury or death. Additionally, inadequate lighting, lack of window guards, and structural deficiencies can increase risk of dangerous and potentially fatal falls.

Often, due to high rent, costly and inaccessible transportation, rising food costs, and stagnant wages, renters will acquire roommates to the point of overcrowding the residence. Overcrowding has been linked to adverse health outcomes like tuberculosis (Braubach et al., 2011, as cited in Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D. (2019)) and increased hostility (Chambers et al., 2015, as cited in Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D., 2019). Overcrowding significantly affects children’s educational outcomes, as they lack access to quiet spaces to concentrate on school work and have limited exposure to the world outside of the home (Solari and Mare, 2012, as cited in Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D., 2019). Additionally, children and adolescents experiencing housing insecurity are more likely to have poorer overall health, developmental and behavioral problems, as well as lower school readiness and worse educational outcomes (Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D., 2019).

Many of these health conditions and injuries can be avoided by ensuring renters have access to affordable, safe, and stable housing. Costs associated with decent housing are typically offset with long term savings in healthcare, energy, and education (Braubach et al., 2011 as cited in Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D., 2019). For example, many of these unstable housing conditions contribute to asthma, leading to preventable emergency room visits and lost productivity at work (Akinbami et al., 2011, as cited in Swope, C. B., & Hernández, D., 2019). In 2018, Missouri spent \$114 million on childhood asthma, with \$34.2 million attributed to childhood asthma resulting from environmental risk factors (Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, 2019, August).

When St. Louis City provides expansive, inclusive, and equitable tenant housing rights and protections, the entire city will prosper. The benefits of stable housing extend far beyond the individual or family. Affordable, safe, and stable housing provides significant economic benefits for the entire region. Due to these positive externalities, or societal benefits, stable housing is a merit good. The free market has neglected the public benefits of housing in favor of short-sighted private gains, resulting in a lack of affordable and stable housing. In instances where there is a market failure such as this one, it is the government's responsibility to intervene and ensure all of the benefits of affordable and stable housing are maximized and experienced by the entire region.

TENANT PROTECTIONS IN OTHER REGIONS

Federal Government

The Executive Branch of the Federal government released a [Blueprint for a Renters Bill of Rights](#) in January 2023. The Blueprint describes 5 principles that aim to create a baseline for renter rights. A brief summary of these 5 principles follows:



01 — Safe, Quality, Accessible and Affordable Housing

This principle recognizes that “housing affordability, quality, safety, stability, and location affect people’s health.” It establishes a maximum rent of 30% of household income and requires owners and local governments to ensure the home is free of health and safety hazards. It also suggests renters should face minimal barriers when applying for housing or housing assistance.



02 — Clear and Fair Leases

This principle highlights that “a 2022 study of leases in Philadelphia found that over time, leases have increasingly used unenforceable terms (meaning a provision that would not hold up if contested in court), such as a disclaimer of liability of negligence”. Therefore, renters should have defined rental terms, rights, and responsibilities. Leases should provide transparency with security deposits and advance notice for entry. Leases should also be written in simple language.



03 — Education, Enforcement, and Enhancement of Renter Rights

All levels of government have a responsibility to ensure renters know their rights and to protect them from discrimination and exclusion. Property managers are less likely to respond to Black and Latinx tenants. People with disabilities face access barriers, harassment, and retaliation. Housing discrimination can also result from credit reports especially for Black, Latinx, and Asian Americans.



04 — The Right to Organize

Sufficient research describes housing providers retaliating against organizing through filing evictions or prohibiting the use of public space. Therefore, “Renters should have the freedom to organize without obstruction or harassment from their housing provider or property manager and should not risk losing their housing because of organizing”



05 — Eviction Prevention, Diversion, and Relief

Evictions have a broad set of negative short- and long-term impacts. This principle suggests that renters should have access to resources to avoid eviction and ensure there is a fair legal process. Tenants should be given 30 days notice of an eviction and the right to counsel. All eviction cases should be immediately sealed.

Local Government

Kansas City

Implemented a Tenant Bill of Rights in 2019, due in part to the organizing done by KC Tenant, which includes:

- All rental units must meet minimum health and safety standards. Units must also maintain utilities and renters cannot be discriminated against. Units must also allow modifications to meet accessibility requirements.
- Renters cannot be retaliated against for filing complaints or being victims of assault.
- Landlords cannot enter the residence by force or by threat.
- Renters have the right to organize and cannot be retaliated against for doing so.
- Renters have the right to relocation assistance if their home becomes uninhabitable.
- Landlords must give notice before entry and renters have the right to refuse entry if proper notice has not been given.

Portland

Implemented their Landlord-Tenant Law in 2016, updated in 2019.

- The law protects a tenant's right to organize a tenants' union or to be part of a tenants' union
- Landlords may not retaliate by increasing rent, decreasing services, serving an eviction notice, threatening eviction, or filing an eviction case
- The landlord must keep rental properties and common areas in good repair at all times.
- The landlord cannot legally change the locks, shut off the utilities, remove tenant property, threaten any of these actions, or take any other action to force a tenant to move without first getting a court order.

Detroit

Implemented the Rental Ordinance in 2017, updated in 2021.

- A Certificate of Compliance is required. The Certificate of Compliance means that the property was inspected and meets the minimum requirements of the Detroit Property Maintenance Code and/or Zoning Ordinance. The Certificate of Compliance is valid for three years for residential properties.
- Landlords must first review an applicant for tenancy without asking about criminal history.

Chicago

Implemented the Residential Landlord Tenant Ordinance (RLTO) in 1986 due in part to the organizing done by the Rogers Park Tenants Committee. The RLTO was updated in 2020.

- A tenant shall permit reasonable access to a landlord upon receiving two days' notice. In the event of emergency or where repairs elsewhere unexpectedly require access, the landlord must provide notice within two days after entry.
- It is illegal for a landlord to lock out a tenant, or change locks, or remove doors of a rental unit, or cut off heat, utility or water service.
- A tenant has the right to complain or testify in good faith about their tenancy to governmental agencies or officials, police, media, community groups, tenant unions or the landlord. A landlord is prohibited from retaliating by terminating or threatening to terminate a tenancy, increasing rent, decreasing services, bringing or threatening to bring an eviction action, or refusing to renew a lease agreement.

Academic Input

The University of Minnesota released a guideline for a Renter's Bill of Rights, describing it as a "suite of legal mechanisms that protect renters from landlord exploitation. These laws work to affirm the rights of renters against health hazards, harassment, and displacement" (University of Minnesota, n.d.). They suggest the following measures:

- Applying fee limitations and deposit restrictions.
- Landlords should provide relocation assistance if necessary.
- Applications should be accepted on a first come first serve basis.
- Renters should be allowed to make repairs to their home and charge the landlord accordingly.
- There should be an increase in city inspections to ensure the quality and safety of rental units.
- Landlords must give adequate notice of any rent changes. Lastly, all renters should have the right to organize.

TENANT RIGHTS ARE LACKING IN MISSOURI

The following are listed landlord limitations and responsibilities according to the State of Missouri Attorney General:

- Landlords should make the property habitable before tenants move in.
- Landlords should make and pay for repairs due to ordinary wear and tear.
- Landlords should refrain from turning off a tenant's water, electricity, or gas.
- Landlords should provide written notice to tenants when ownership of the property is transferred to a new landlord.
- Landlords should not unlawfully discriminate

The law adds additional ambiguity when it prefaces these requirements with "landlords should". Five out of the six examples of tenant's rights include the right to organize, which is excluded from any Missouri or St. Louis protections. Four of the six examples include maintaining a habitable living space, also excluded in any Missouri or St. Louis protections. Missouri is also missing protections around applications, fee limitations, rent limitations, retaliation restrictions, notice of entry requirements, and limitations around eviction notices.

Renting in St. Louis City Without Protections

Over 60% of homeowners are white, despite representing only 46% of the population. **Black residents represent 44% of the population however, under 30% of homeowners are Black, meaning the majority of Black residents in St. Louis City rent.** In 2020, white renters were least likely to be rent-burdened (35%), and Black renters were most likely to be burdened (59%).

“It's a stressor that tears at the bounds of what families are already under. If someone is concerned about families, than they would be concerned about evictions, 'cause all it does is weaken a family.”

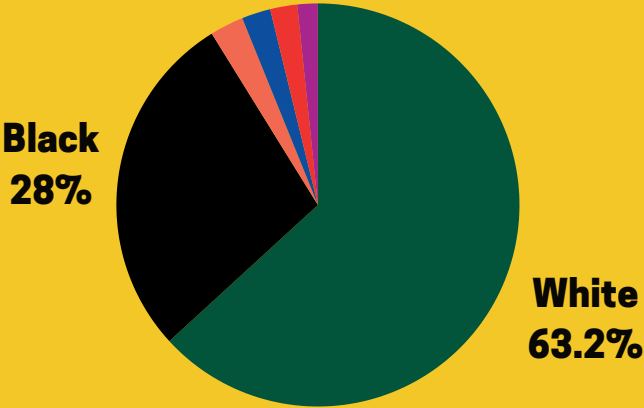
Eddie, We The Tenants Leader 7

ST. LOUIS HOMEOWNERSHIP BY RACE

- White
- Black
- Hispanic or Latino
- Two or More Races
- Asian
- Other

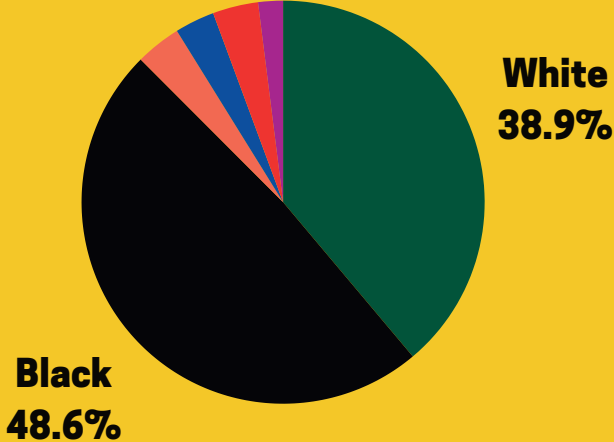
- White
- Black
- Hispanic or Latino
- Two or More Races
- Asian
- Other

**Hispanic or Latino
2.7%**



Owner Occupied

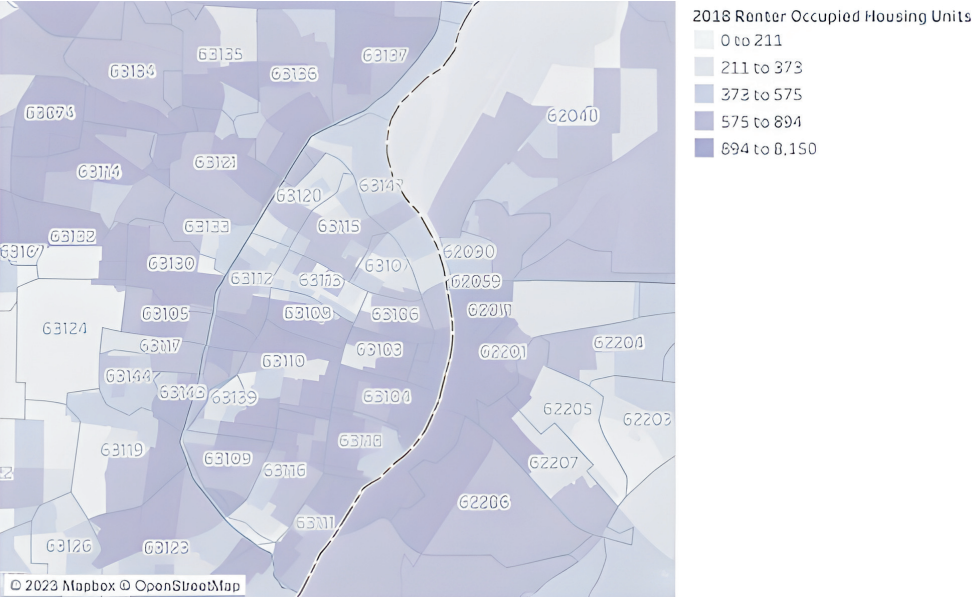
**Hispanic or Latino
3.7%**



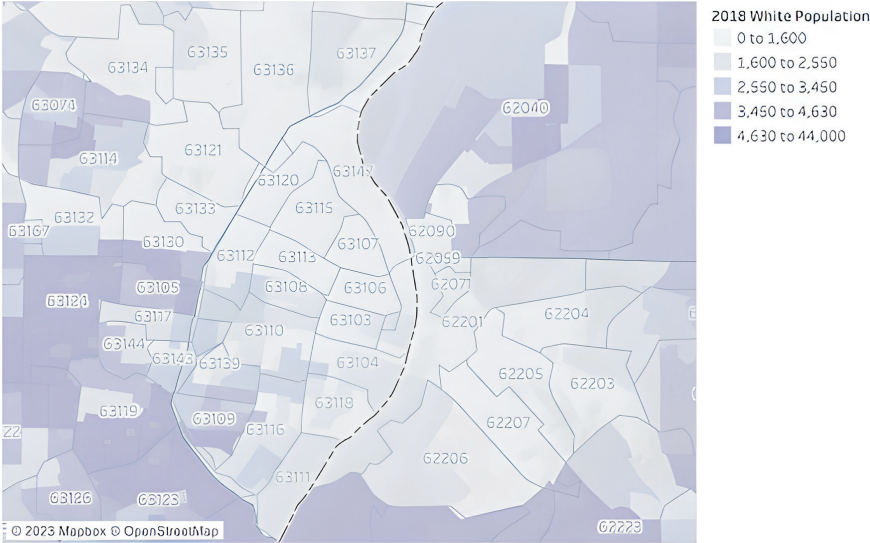
Renter Occupied

RESIDENTIAL DISTRIBUTION IN ST. LOUIS CITY

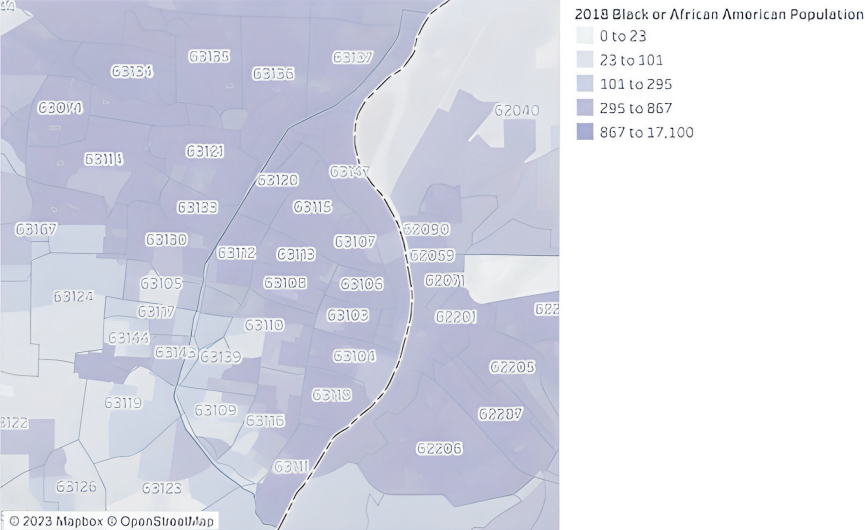
St. Louis Renters



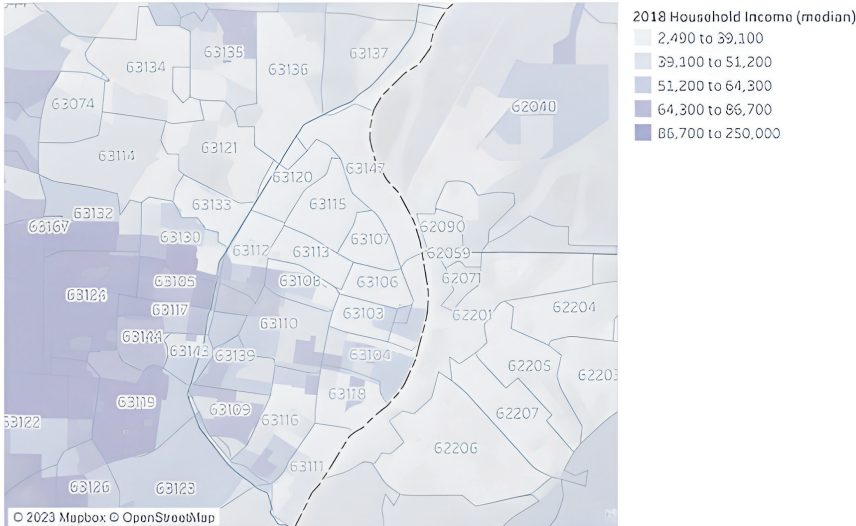
White Residents



Black Residents



Median Income



These disparities in who is rent-burdened can be primarily attributed to racial inequalities in median income over time. In 2014, the median household income in St. Louis City was \$49,334 for white residents and \$20,820 for Black residents. Before the pandemic, in 2019, white City residents had a median income of \$60,453, while Black City residents had a median income of \$28,603. In 2022, those median incomes increased to \$69,541 for white residents and only to \$32,255 for Black residents. The income gap remains consistent, with white residents **consistently earning double the income** of Black residents. In 2022, Black St. Louis residents had the lowest median income out of all residents.

Disproportionate changes in income growth have occurred across different household economic categories. From 1980 to 2020, the highest wage earners in St. Louis City experienced the highest percent increase in their wages, while those in the 20th percentile saw a 2% decrease in wages.

2022 St. Louis City Median Income by Race

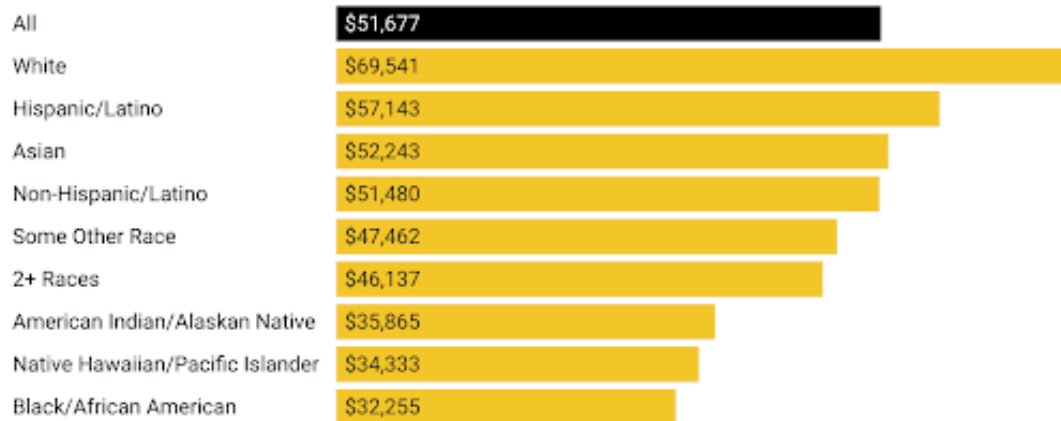


Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: American Community Survey 1-year estimates • Created with Datawrapper

Income growth for full-time wage and salary workers 1980 - 2020

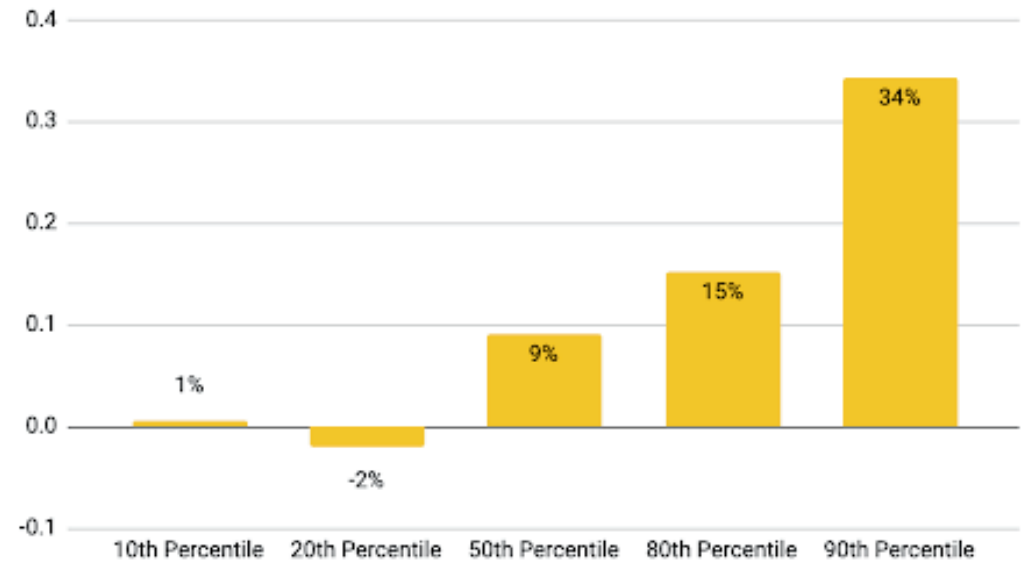


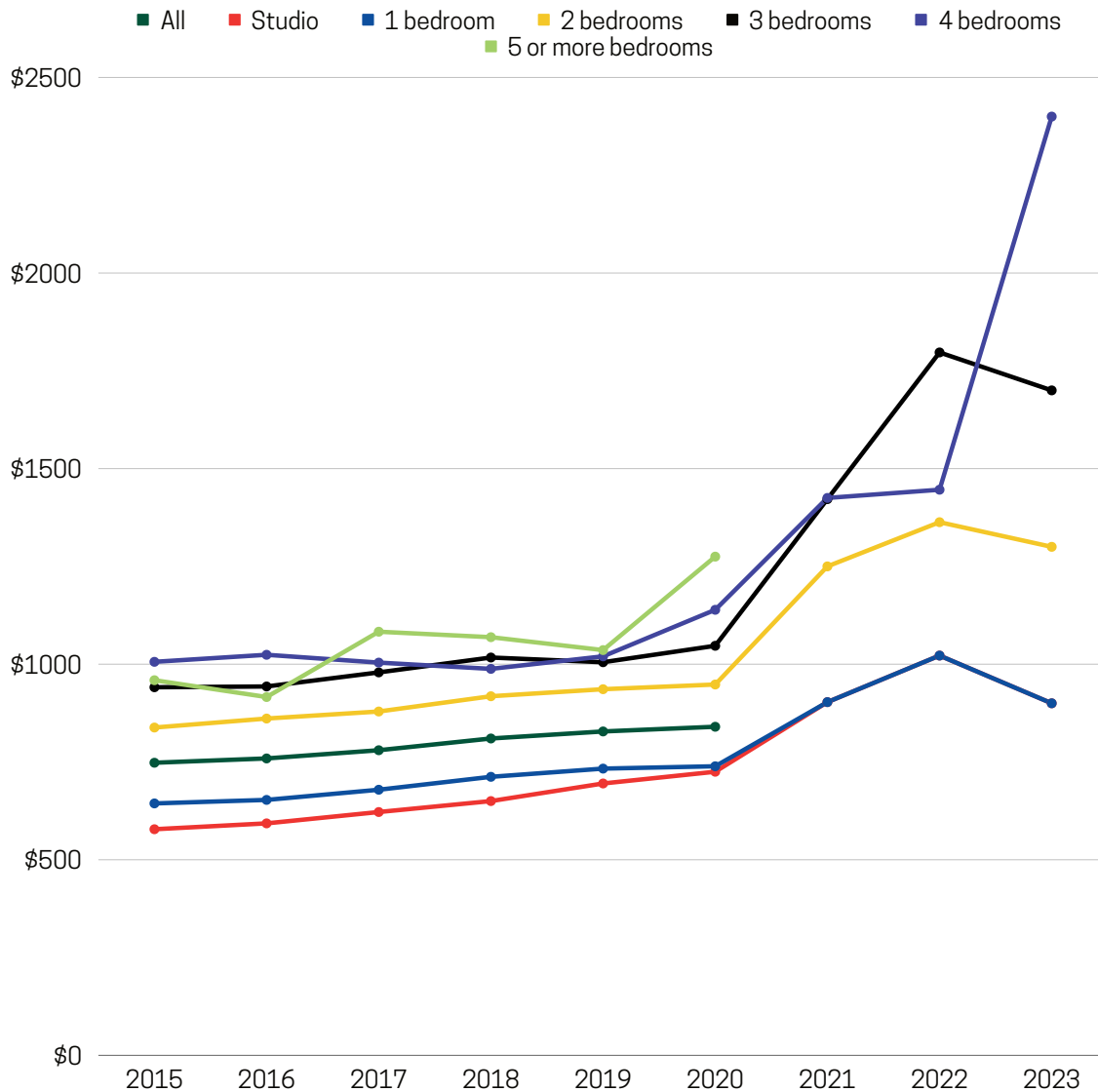
Chart: Action St. Louis Source: IPUMS USA | National Equity Atlas

Organizers across St. Louis City advocated to raise the minimum wage in the City to \$11 an hour over time. For just about a month in 2017, many residents experienced the benefits of a \$10 an hour minimum wage until the State of Missouri preempted local authority by passing a statewide minimum wage of \$7.90 an hour (Graham, D. 2017, August 29). The state overturned higher minimum wages set by St. Louis and Kansas City, essentially cutting many low-income workers' pay overnight. In response, multiple organizations, including Action St. Louis, have launched a statewide ballot initiative to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and guarantee paid sick leave for all Missouri workers.

Despite stagnant wages and severe income inequality, there has been a consistent increase in rent in St. Louis City. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in St. Louis increased by over 60% from 2015 to 2022.

The median rent price for a 2 bedroom apartment in St. Louis City in **2014 was \$1,000/ month, and by 2022, the same apartment would be listed at \$1,425/ month, a 42% increase.** Across the nation rent increases skyrocketed after the Covid-19 pandemic and continued to rise to unprecedented levels for 2 years following. In 2022, the median rent across the 50 largest US metropolitan areas reached \$1,876 in June, a new record level for Realtor.com. In 2023, the national median rent was \$1,745. Rent prices began to see less dramatic changes, with only a \$7 change from the previous month.

In 2014, Black residents spent 57% of their income on rent while white residents only spent 24% of their income on rent. More than seven years later, these numbers are still very similar.



In 2022, Black residents allocated 50% of their income on housing while white residents devoted 23% of their income on housing. Among these two demographics, only Black residents have been consistently faced with a severe cost burden.

A clear disparity exists between Black and white renters in St. Louis concerning their income and in the percentage of income spent on housing. Due to Black residents spending more of their income on rent, they are more likely to experience overcrowding. Census data indicates that white renters are more likely to have a spare room than any other race of renters.

“One of the biggest protections I would like to see is protections against being fiscally taken advantage of. I've known for a long time that if I could afford and be approved for a home loan that it is often cheaper to pay for the same amount of house as apartment, but it is impossible to save that much since rental prices are so expensive.
Seth, We The Tenants Leader

ST. LOUIS CITY PROPERTY OWNERS

Nationally, the most common type of property owner for those with fewer than 5 rental buildings is individual owners. On the other hand, LLC, LLP, and LP companies own the majority of other properties, particularly, **71% of properties with 20 or more units**. More notably, the majority of these properties are in low-income and predominantly Black neighborhoods, in St. Louis City.

With the end of the eviction moratorium, October 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, not only are more people facing eviction, but they owe more money and are experiencing greater uncertainty than ever before. Now there are even less resources available since the State Assistance for Housing Relief (SAFHR) ended in January 2023 after receiving more requests than funds available. Disproportionately, those facing eviction are Black, and particularly Black women. St. Louis was included in a study conducted by the Eviction Lab on gender and racial disparities in evictions in America. The study found that 1 in 25 renters were threatened with eviction every year, and 1 in 40 renters actually faced evictions. Of those renters, Black renters experienced the highest rates of eviction filings (6.1%) and eviction judgments (3.4%). Furthermore, the study revealed that the absolute and relative disparities in total evictions are most significant amongst Black people: 113,415 women evicted as compared to 83,182 men (Eviction Lab, n.d.). Black renters continue to experience eviction at a disproportionately higher rate, as represented by the number of cases filed in December of 2022. **Of the 1,210 filings submitted in December of 2022, 55% of filings were in neighborhoods where Blacks make up the majority, while 33% of filings came in predominantly white neighborhoods and 12% non-white or Black majority neighborhoods, respectively (Eviction Lab, n.d.).**

**Private Companies
Own 71% of multi-unit
properties**

**1 in 25 Renters
Threatened with Eviction**

**1 in 40 Renters
Faced Eviction**

**1 in 40 Renters
Faced Eviction**

There have been a total number of 35,179 eviction filings from March 2020 to June 2023 in St. Louis City and St. Louis County (Eviction Lab (n.d.)). This is a 71% increase from the same time period 1 year preceding the COVID-19 Pandemic. There were 1,618 filings in May 2023, a 112% increase from the same time period 1 year before the pandemic. 5,851 evictions were filed in the past year in St. Louis City, filing against over 7% of renters. In the last year, 18% of evictions were filed on the same address within the last 2 years.

St. Louis City Monthly Evictions vs. Monthly Average

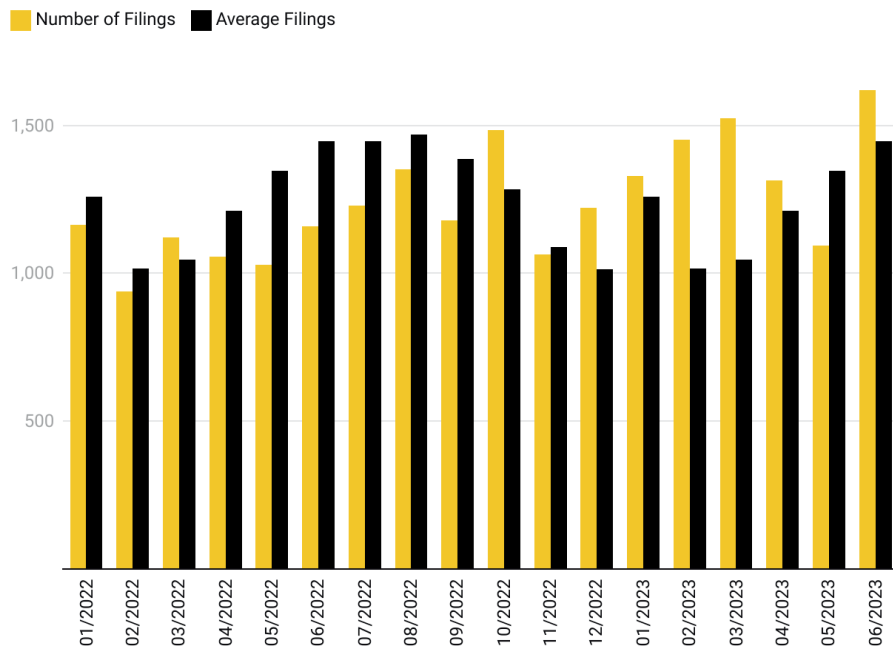


Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: Eviction Lab • Created with Datawrapper

Buildings Responsible for the Most Eviction Filings in St. Louis City 2022- 2023

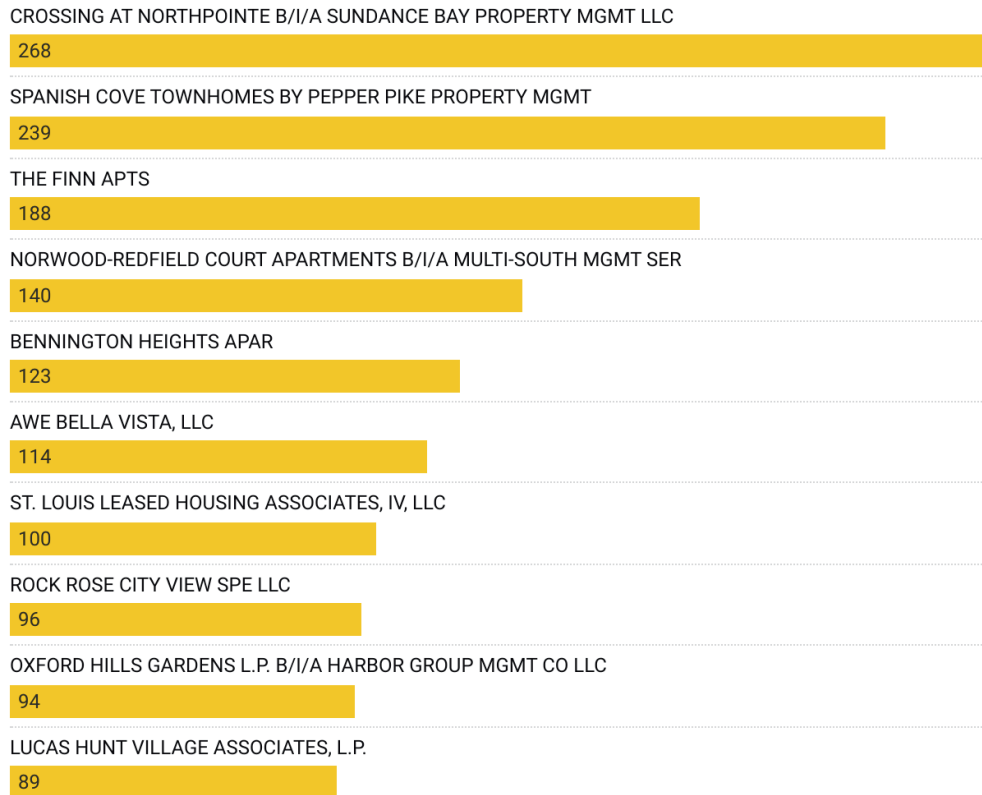


Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: Eviction Lab 2022-2023 • Created with Datawrapper

32.1% of all eviction filings come from the same 100 buildings. The majority of these buildings are large corporations with the resources and opportunity to harass and displace tenants. The same landlords are targeting Black and women tenants at an increasing rate.

WE THE TENANTS 2022 HOUSING SURVEY

This survey initiative began in August 2021, and the last survey submission occurred in August 2022, yielding in 151 responses with 143 corresponding addresses. Residents were given the opportunity to complete the survey independently or with the assistance of an Organizer during We The Tenant monthly meetings and during general eviction outreach. Conducted as a google form, the survey tracked contact information and elicited insight into the participants' experiences as renters in St. Louis. The survey consisted of 11 questions that covered their living experiences in their apartment, interactions with their landlords and financial challenges/barriers.

Respondents' addresses were leveraged to identify the correct property owners and their associated properties through public data like: STL Property Search, STL Recorder of Deeds, and County Property/ Owner Search. By integrating respondent addresses, their landlord or property owner

information, and public data, we identified common property owners within the survey, discerned the proportion of property owners in-state or out-of-state, and cataloged the extent and locations of their properties holdings. We were also able to distinguish between individual owners and property owners affiliated with LLC, trust, or companies. The responses were meticulously analyzed to identify property owners frequently mentioned in the survey concerning renters' apprehensions and experiences. Additionally, an open ended question was included to provide additional information to our organizers. Summary statistics and percentages were calculated to provide an analytical assessment of our findings.

The survey, completed by renters in St. Louis, significantly enhances our understanding of the housing landscape in the City of St. Louis. This imparts invaluable insight into housing conditions, landlord relationships, and property ownership.

Survey Respondents

The majority of our survey respondents were residents of South St. Louis City, Central St. Louis City, and North St. Louis City and



County. These areas are typically low-income and predominantly Black neighborhoods.

Respondent Landlords

The most frequently mentioned landlords or property owners identified in the survey were Carr Square Tenant Corp, Fountains at Carondelet Estates LLC, with at least 5 respondents residing in each of their properties. Out of the total 143 addresses provided in the survey there were 98 distinct property owners identified. Among these owners, 20 had mailing addresses outside of Missouri. The most common out-of-state property owner addresses were in California, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Their additional properties are primarily concentrated in South City, Downtown St. Louis, and North St. Louis City and County.

Out of all property owners, 66% were identified as an LLC, company, or trust. Three out of the 98 owners were either affiliated with the City or State while 30 owners were categorized as individuals or a part of a group. Reflecting national trends, the majority of landlords mentioned by our respondents were LLCs or LPs.

Average Respondent Rent by Neighborhood

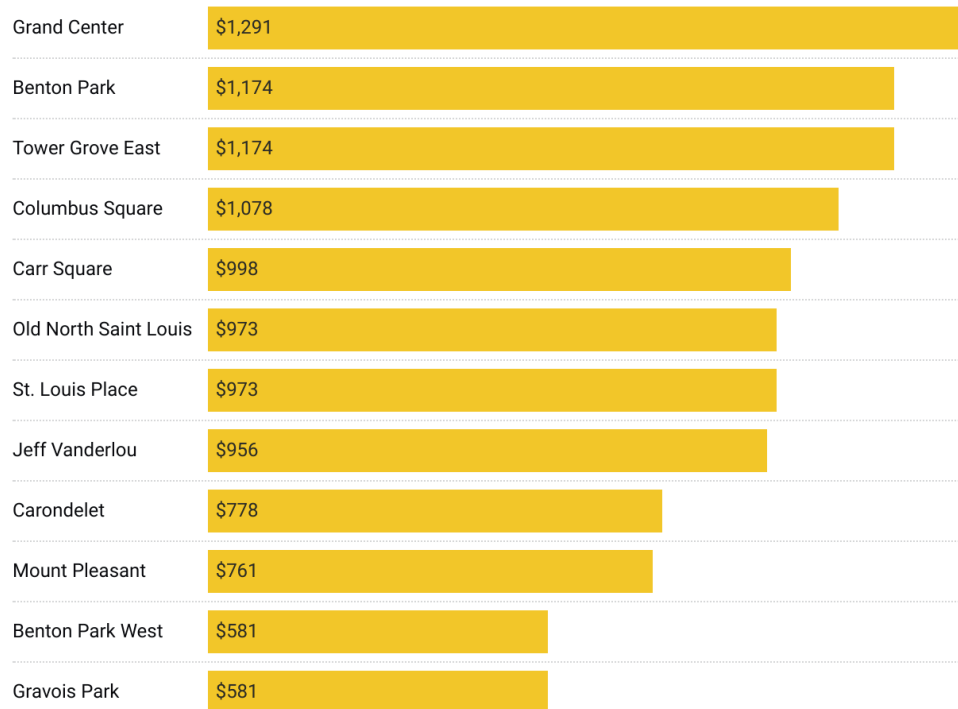


Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: 2022 Rent Cafe • Created with Datawrapper

Respondent Homes by Ownership

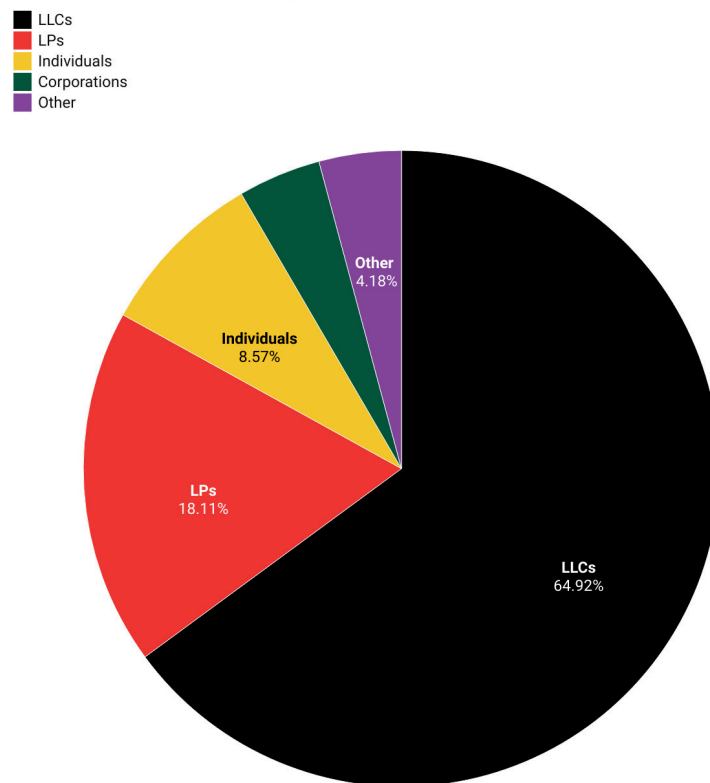


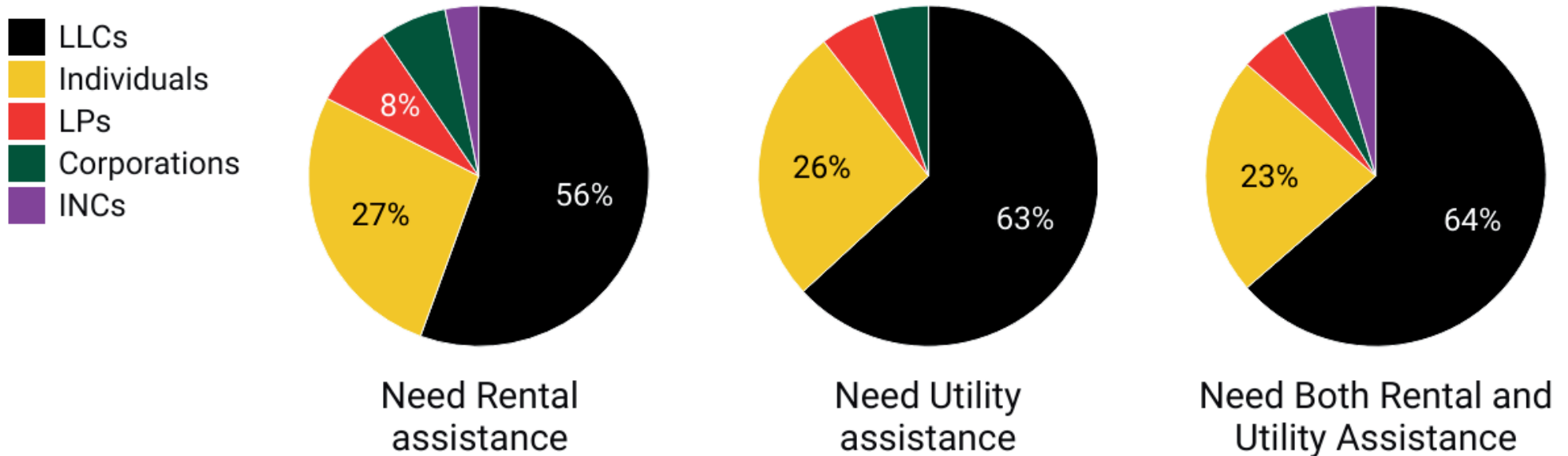
Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: 2022 Action St. Louis Housing Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Furthermore, most of our respondents pay an average monthly rent ranging from \$581 to \$1,291. Based on Census data our respondents earn an average annual income of \$41,300 a year. This means our respondents should spend a maximum of \$1,032 on housing costs. Assuming utilities cost around \$180/month, our respondents should only be paying a maximum of \$852 monthly. Regrettably, only **4 out of the 12 neighborhoods** listed by respondent landlords offer affordable options at the 30% income level.

Renter’s Needs

- 36% of respondents expressed a need for rental assistance, 17% needed utility assistance, and 18% needed both.
- 80 respondents applied for rental or utility assistance, in the past.
- Out of those who applied, 38 were unable to secure rental or utility assistance while 32 respondents successfully received assistance.
- The majority of respondents requiring assistance live in homes owned by LLCs.

Respondent Need for Assistance by Property Owner Type



Renter's Living Conditions

- 73% of respondents dealt with pests and rodents.
- 41% expressed concerns about leaks.
- 38% expressed concerns about mold
- 37% identified structural issues in their homes.
- LLCs were the primary owners of homes with poor living conditions, accounting for over 50% of homes with identified issues except for heating and cooling concerns.
- Heating and cooling concerns were primarily attributed to individual owners.

“

We had no hot water for over a month with no ability to deduct rent or have anything fixed. It was a serious health and safety issue being unable to shower to do dishes without boiling them. I injured myself multiple times trying to bring boiled water to heat the tub and attempt to get clean.

Mèlanie, St. Louis Resident

Respondent Living Conditions

Count Percent

Mold



Serious or dangerous structural issues (example: large cracks/holes in walls, ceilings)



Leaks



Serious plumbing issues (example: Flooding, sewage problems)



Electrical hazards



Pests: Bedbugs



Pests: Roaches



Pests: Rodents



Apartment/home is not adequately secure (operational doors, locks, etc)



Dwelling does not have adequate lighting



Heating / Cooling issue



Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: 2022 Action St. Louis Housing Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Respondent Living Conditions by Property Owner

LLCs
 LPs
 Corporations
 INCs
 Individuals

Issues with Mold



Serious or dangerous structural issues



Issues with Leaks



Serious plumbing issues



Electrical hazards



Apartment/home is not adequately secure



Dwelling does not have adequate lighting



Heating / Cooling issue



Pests



Pests: Bedbugs



Pests: Roaches



Pests: Rodents



Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: 2022 Action St. Louis Housing Survey • Created with Datawrapper

“

Renters need more protections because landlords just done ran rampant. It's like if they can do it, they will. Some go as high [with rent] as they possibly can. The units are not up to par, they don't care, they're just looking to increase their pockets.

Linda, We The Tenants Member



58% of respondents stated that their landlord or property management company was not responsive and slow in scheduling repairs. LLCs have the **highest rate of unresponsiveness at 60%**.

“

One of the biggest protections I would like to see is protection against being fiscally taken advantage of. I've known for a long time that if I could afford and be approved for a home loan that it is often cheaper to pay for the same amount of house as apartment, but it is impossible to save that much since rental prices are so expensive.

Seth, St. Louis County Resident

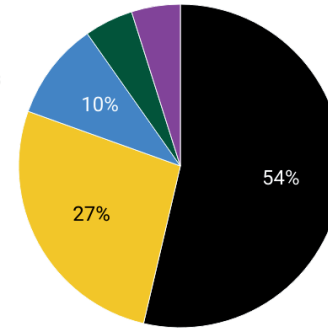
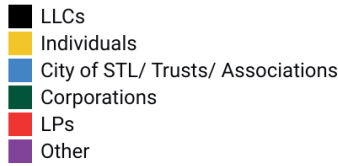
Renter's Experience with Property Owner

- 14 reported essential utility service disruptions by their landlord or property manager.
- 47% faced eviction threats.
- 9% were threatened with lock changes, and of those 7 have been locked out.
- Despite 86% listing a landlord, nearly 68% listed an incorrect property owner (29 out of 143 (20%) properly identified the property owner).
- LLCs are primarily responsible for all threats reported by respondents.

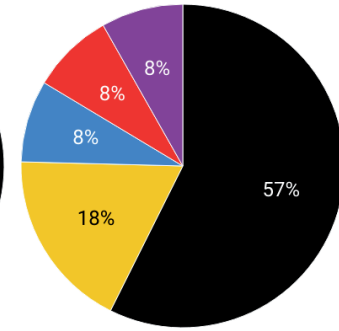
91%

Of all survey respondents said they have been threatened by their landlord or property management to change their locks.

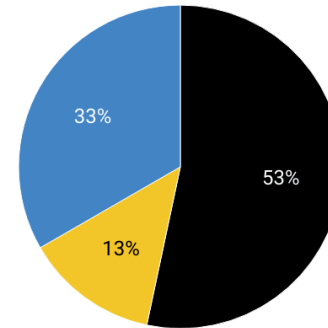
Respondent Experience with Harassment by Ownership



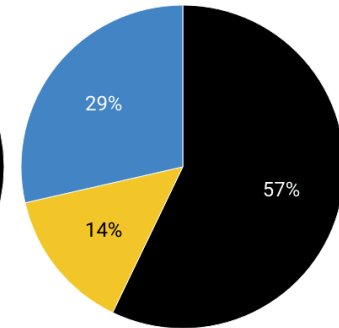
Been evicted for non-payment of rent



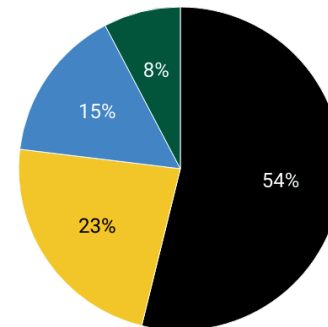
Current landlord/ owner threatened you with eviction for non-payment of rent



Current landlord or property management company threatened to change your locks



Been locked out of your apartment by your current landlord/property manager



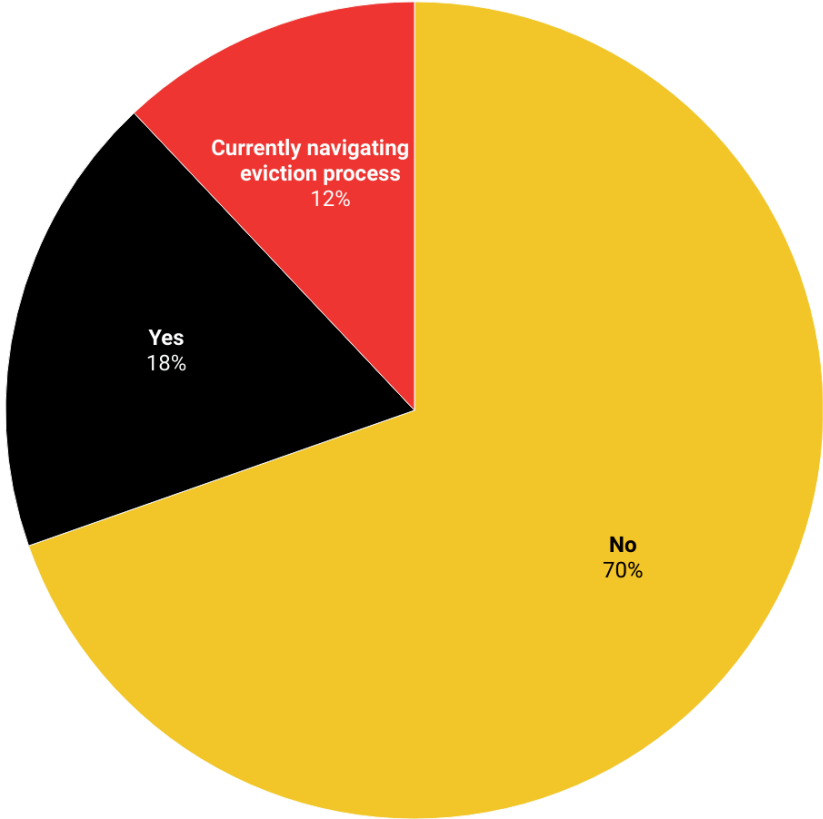
Landlord or property management cut or disrupted an essential utility service of yours

EVICTIIONS IN ST. LOUIS

- 48 respondents experienced eviction or are currently navigating the eviction process.
- 53% received eviction threats from their landlord due to non-payment of rent.
- Survey respondents reside in areas with high concentrations of evictions.
 - Some of these areas have eviction filings against 10% - 20% of renters.
- Within the survey, two identified property owners are listed on Eviction Lab's top 10 buildings responsible for the most eviction filings.
 - Between March 2020 and December 2022, **Awe Bella Vista LLC** made the list with 230 filings (D.C. mailing address/ 129 properties).
 - **Lucas Hunt Village Associates** also appeared on the same list with 162 filings (MO mailing address/ 99 properties).
 - From October 2022 to December 2022, **Awe Bella Vista LLC** reappeared on the list with 22 filings.

Respondent Experience with Eviction

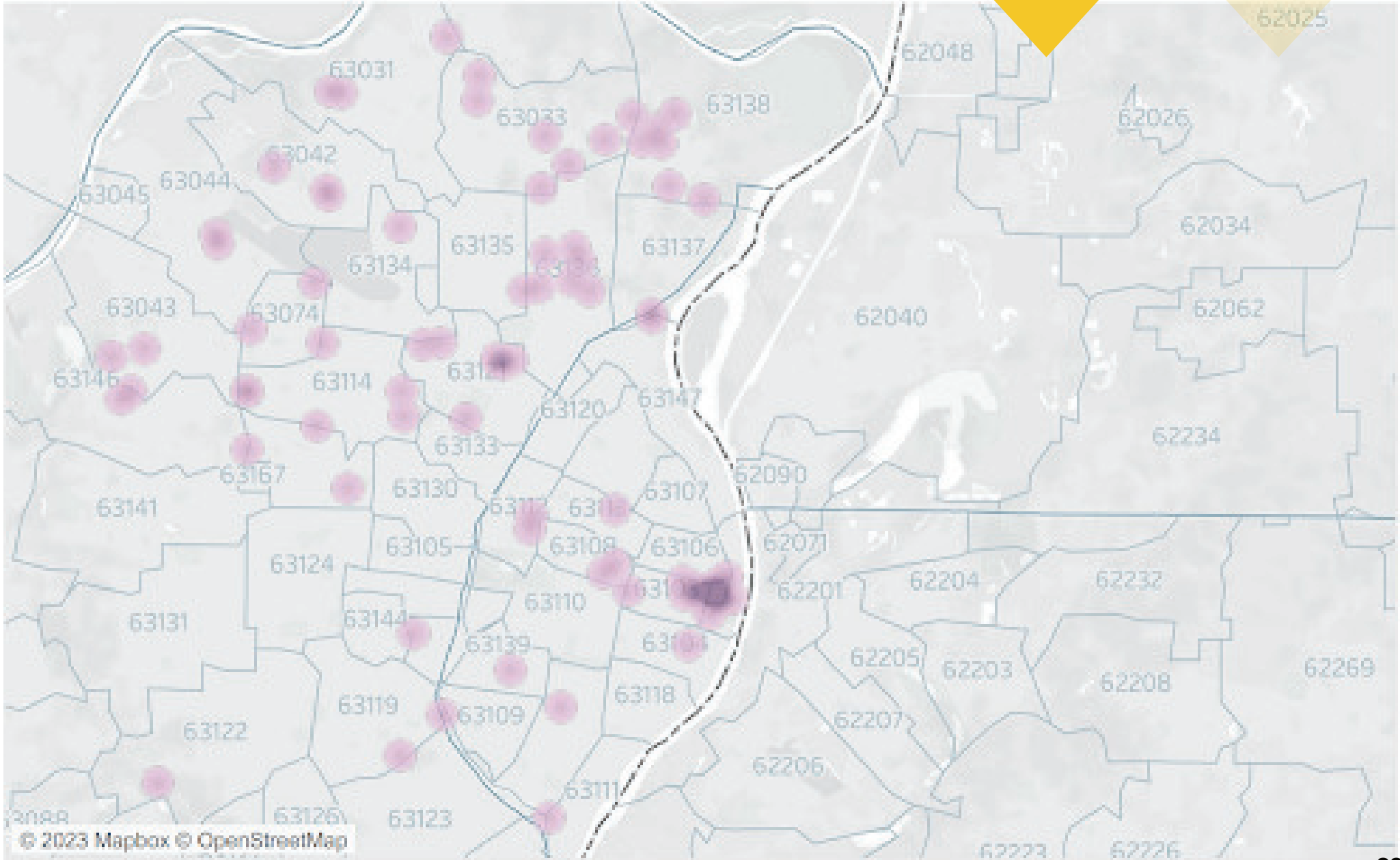
- No
- Yes
- Currently navigating eviction process



Eviction analysis in this section was based on evictions filed by landlords that were identified through renter's survey responses.

Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: 2020 Action St. Louis Housing Survey • Created with Datawrapper

ST. LOUIS EVICTION HOTSPOTS



ST. LOUIS EVICTION HOTSPOTS

33%

Survey respondent landlords filed **33% more evictions one year after COVID** than one year prior.

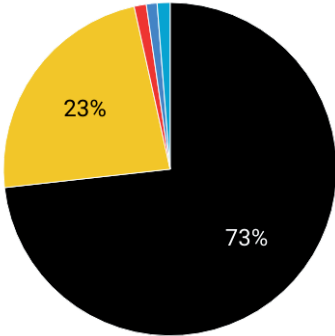
Evictions filed by respondent property owners have increased dramatically since 2020. There was a significant increase right after the pandemic started. While there was some decrease during the eviction moratorium, eviction filing rates increased to their highest following the end of the moratorium. Moreover, there is a notable surge towards the end of quarter 4 from 2020 to 2023, suggesting that evictions serve as a profitable strategy for property owners.

Of the 98 identified property owners, 46 of them had filed at least one eviction between 2000 and 2023, 32 property owners filed at least 1 eviction from 2020 to 2023. The majority of evictions are filed by LLCs or businesses of varying degree. LLCs are file evictions at a notably higher and faster rate compared to smaller businesses or individual property owners. Out of these 46 property owners that filed evictions, only 5 of them did not have an attorney. All of these property owners were individuals, and nearly 30% of these cases were dismissed.

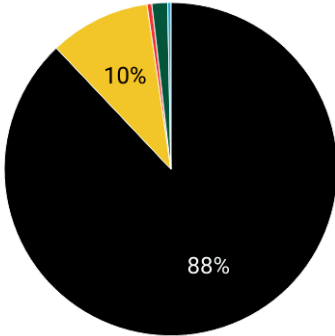
91% of all property owners had legal representation during eviction proceedings, while only **5%** of renters had legal representation. This severe disparity enables and perpetuates an inequitable power dynamic that leaves renters vulnerable to the various financial, physical and mental health consequences of evictions.

Observed Evictions by Property Owner

- LLCs
- Individuals
- LPs
- City of STL/ Trusts/ Associations
- Corporations
- Other



Total Evictions 2000-2023



Total Evictions 2020-2023

Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: 2022 Action St. Louis Housing Survey and CaseNet • Created with Datawrapper

Eviction analysis in this section was based on evictions filed by landlords that were identified through renter's survey responses.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR RENTERS

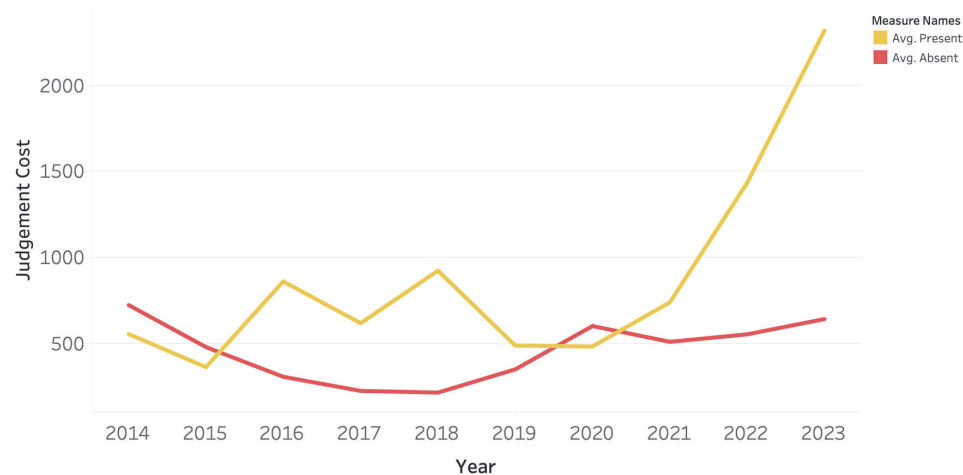
The average cost against the renter following the eviction preceding was \$1,321, although the yearly averages continue to rise at unprecedented rates.

In 2022, the average renter paid an additional \$1,766 in attorney fees, court costs, and past fees. One of the respondent property owners with the highest number of eviction filings owns 219 units.

Assuming renters pay the median rent of that area, this owner receives over \$160,000 a month in rent. These eviction court costs account for 1.1% of their monthly rental income.

Tenant Court Attendance (2014-2023)

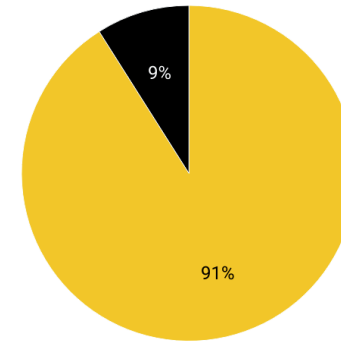
Average default versus average consent judgement costs associated with default and consent judgements.



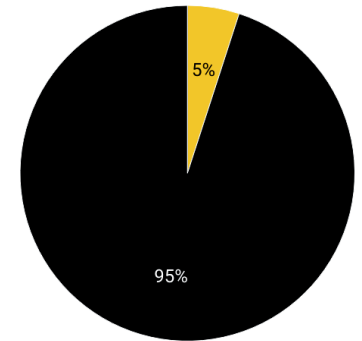
The trends of Avg. Present and Avg. Absent for Date Year. Color shows details about Avg. Present and Avg. Absent. The view is filtered on Date Year, which ranges from 2014 to 2023.

Legal Representation During Eviction Proceedings

Yes No



Property Owners



Renters

Chart: Action St. Louis • Source: CaseNet • Created with Datawrapper

When property owners have no limitations on rent increases, maintenance, or eviction filings, they are more likely to displace entire families to increase their monthly rental income by charging higher rents for incoming renters.

Renters are actually penalized financially for appearing at their eviction hearings without legal representation. In mid to late 2014, the housing market started to recover after the 2008 crisis (Zhu, M., 2014, June 11). Coincidentally, renters began encountering increased court costs for eviction hearings due to their self-representation.

THE NEED FOR A TENANT BILL OF RIGHTS (TBOR) IN ST. LOUIS CITY

Remarkably, even a year after the final survey included in this data set concluded, tenants at meetings and ongoing surveys continue to report the same aforementioned issues, leading to further complications. Campaign- involved tenants frequently express concerns related to rent burden, pests, mold, unresponsive maintenance, and poor contact with out-of-state or out-of-town landlords and property managers. Many of them are in dire need of rental and utility assistance which is no longer available in a centralized, city-wide effort. Renters are keenly aware of their lack of rights and the precarity this causes. One tenant testified that "over half of the housing units in St. Louis are for renters, which make[s] this a renter friendly city, but this cannot be a renter friendly city if the renters [have] no rights" (Starks, D. 2023, June 20). For many individuals, the inability to find safe housing at an affordable cost, or the inability to bear the burden of application fees and high deposits leaves them trapped in their current situation. Those with an eviction judgment must continue to grapple with the economic and housing inequalities highlighted earlier.

The state of Missouri lacks tenant protections. The limited laws in place are filled with vague phrases like "should". This ambiguous language leaves Black and low-income renters vulnerable to exploitation. Property owners face no clear and enforceable requirements regarding living conditions, harassment, and evictions. As a result, the majority of Black and low-income renters endure poor housing conditions, require but cannot receive rental and utility assistance, are subject to large corporate property owners who are unresponsive to repair requests and instead threaten renters with eviction and lockouts. These renters face severe rent burdens, and the consequences of costly evictions that predominantly benefit wealthy owners. These individual burdens reverberate throughout the entire city, impacting healthcare costs, work productivity and capability, and childhood outcomes.

Enforcing renter's rights at all levels of government benefits the entire city. St. Louis City has the capacity to ensure renters reside in affordable, safe, healthy homes, eradicating eviction as a solution. The transformation promises longer and healthier lives for the majority of our city's residents. Our City could experience prosperity with an additional annual influx of \$203 million across numerous industries. Furthermore, St. Louis City could effectively lower Missouri's overall asthma-related costs. The short and long-term advantages of providing tenant rights far outweigh any associated costs.

Tenants, supporters of tenants, government officials, and advocates should seize every opportunity to advance tenants rights. "Renters are hardworking people who are doing the most that they can to make ends meet... This is how you protect our communities.

THE NEED FOR A TENANT BILL OF RIGHTS (TBOR) IN ST. LOUIS CITY

This is how we keep people safe from corporate management companies and landlords by buying up what is affordable housing, extracting predatory rent, and utilize evictions against the people who want better conditions" (Starks, D. (2023, July 12).

Gaps in the Survey/Responses

This inaugural version of the Housing Survey has identified areas for improvement. Questions regarding past eviction experiences could have been more specific, leading to an overlap of responses that couldn't be used in this analysis. There are vast deficiencies in accessing public housing data in St. Louis City. Access requirements to the public data set could change without notice or explanation.

Areas to Explore more

As more cities implement tenant protections and time progresses, we can assess how our estimated benefits compare the actual benefits experienced.

Appendix

Please see the appendix for more data about the state of renting in St. Louis.



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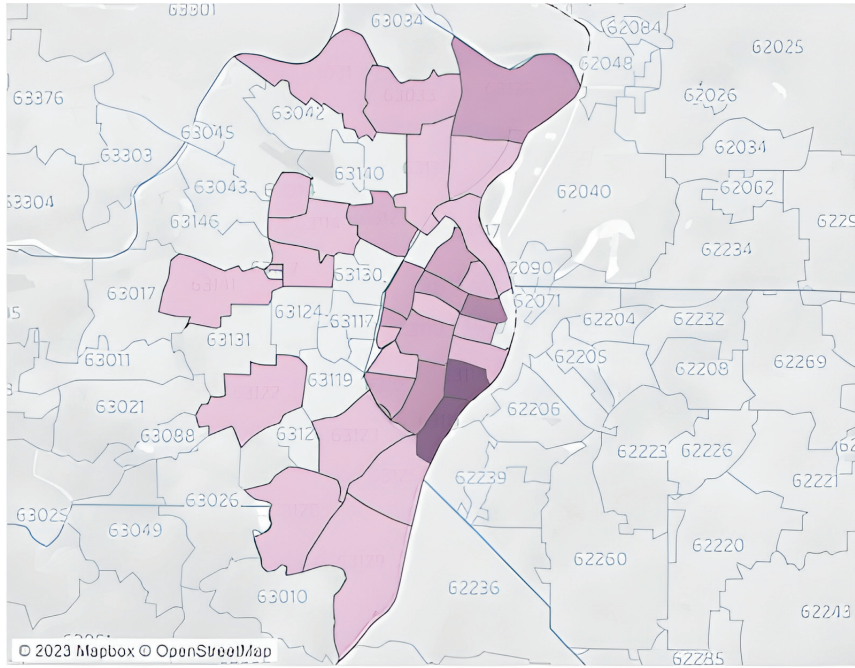
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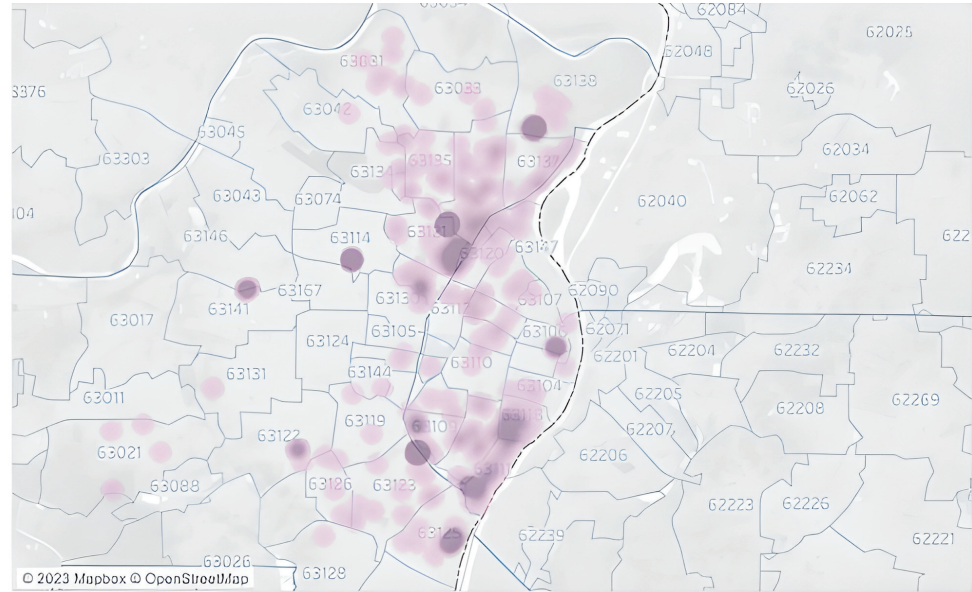
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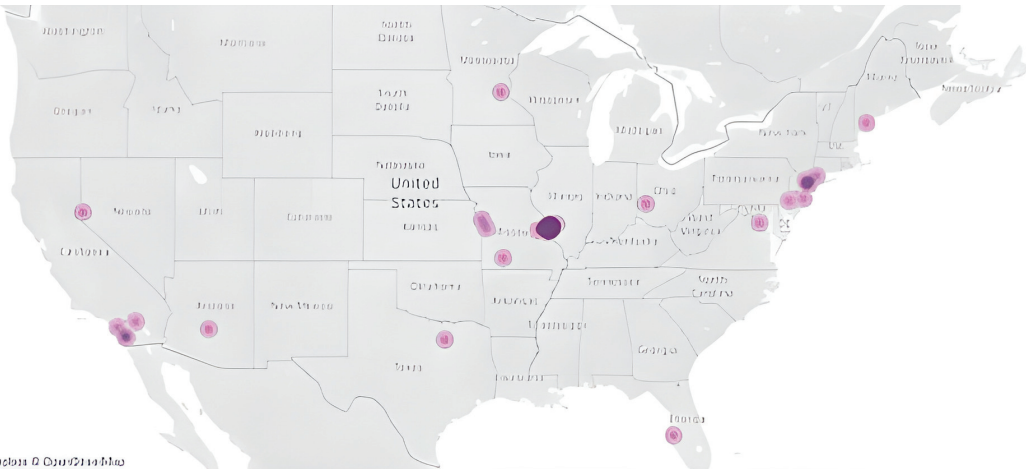
APPENDIX



Survey Respondents



Property Owners Locations in St. Louis



Property Owners Locations Statewide