

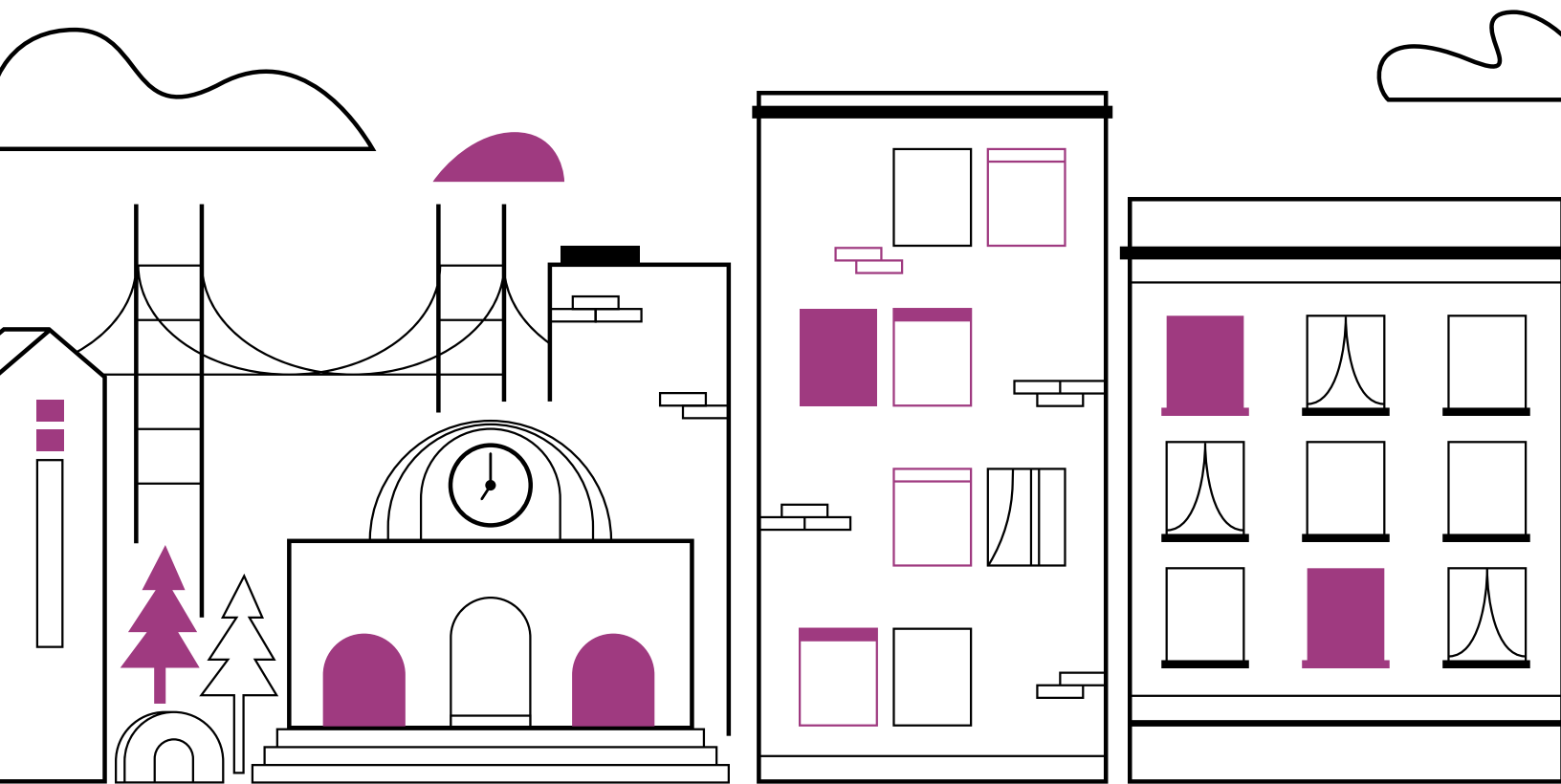
RAPPORT DU CAUCUS SUR LE LOGEMENT ÉTUDIANT



STUDENT HOUSING CAUCUS REPORT

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What is the Student Housing Exploratory Caucus?

The Student Housing Exploratory Caucus (SHEC) is a student-led caucus of the Board of Directors of the University of Ottawa Student Union (UOSU). It was struck by a motion of the Board of Directors of UOSU on June 2nd, 2024, with the mandate of exploring and developing a report by the end of the current UOSU term on the state of student housing in Ottawa with particular focus being given to the dense student area of Sandy Hill. The purpose of this report is to consolidate the findings of the SHEC survey, explore the issues faced by student renters at the University of Ottawa, and develop concrete policy recommendations for relevant authorities including the University of Ottawa, the City of Ottawa, the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada. SHEC also completed an awareness-raising campaign in Winter 2024, distributing over 3000 bilingual pamphlets providing tenant resources and outlining tenant rights. An online copy of the pamphlet can be found on the [UOSU website](https://www.seuo-uosu.com/programs/housing-caucus) (<https://www.seuo-uosu.com/programs/housing-caucus>). This research project and related campaigns by SHEC have been fully financed and led by UOSU.

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Ottawa and its students reside on the traditional, unceded, and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people. We recognize that the models of property ownership and tenancy that fuel the current student housing crisis are colonial modes of ownership and are detached from the traditional relationship with the land that Indigenous peoples have practiced on this land since time immemorial. Homelessness and housing insecurity also overwhelmingly affect and harm Indigenous people. In Ottawa, 19 per cent of homeless people surveyed in a 2024 Point-in-Time report by the City of Ottawa identified as First Nations, Metis, Inuit or having Indigenous ancestry (City of Ottawa, 2024). And the number of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness increased by 12 per cent, from 428 to 479 individuals (City of Ottawa, 2024). SHEC and UOSU are committed to reconciliation and alleviating homelessness through an intersectional lens.

Solidarity Statement

This report makes up just one part of a growing dialogue in Canada around tenant rights and the housing crisis, which has been led first and foremost by tenants themselves. We approach housing as a rights-based issue and emphasize that all human beings deserve adequate and affordable housing as a right. We hope that this report can serve in assisting the housing movement, especially in Ottawa, and contribute to the growth of research on the issue of student housing and financialization. We conduct this research in solidarity with student tenants and tenants across Ottawa who are affected by unhealthy and unlivable housing

conditions, face rising rents and struggle to find adequate housing while struggling with the cost-of-living crisis and rising tuition costs.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the following community members who have contributed their time, insight and support to this report and our policy recommendations.

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- Sneha Sumanth, PhD candidate at Carleton University
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Thank you to the University of Ottawa Student Union for funding and supporting this project, the Board of Directors for voting on its approval, and to the numerous staff who translated, made graphics, and assisted in countless other ways.

Key Findings

This report examines the experiences of student tenants, highlighting affordability concerns and challenges. **The average rent paid by students surveyed is \$926.8, with 95% (n= 310) identifying rent prices as a primary challenge. Students in Ontario face a higher average rent (\$935.4) compared to those in Quebec (\$830.1).** Financially, **25% (n= 106) of respondents rely solely on employment income.** A student earning the minimum wage in Ottawa (\$17.20/h) would **need to work 54 hours per month** just to cover the average rent cost, excluding tuition, food and transportation costs.

Additionally, **students renting from corporate landlords pay an average of \$1019.6 a month** – a price significantly higher than others – \$75.26 more than small-scale renters and \$160.7 more than medium-scale renters. **7.07% (n=29) students reported paying illegal rental application fees**, 37.93% (n=11) of whom rent from corporate landlords. The distribution of landlords among students shows that 38.8% (n= 159) rent from medium-scale landlords, 33.2% (n= 136) from corporate landlords, and 17.1% (n= 70) from small-scale landlords. The increasing financialization and corporatization of Sandy Hill where 44% (n= 182) of students live raises concerns for the potential of ongoing rent increases on students.

Commenting on rent increases, one student living in Byward Market said, *“they tried to force us to sign an N11 saying that it was for our safety, but I did research and learnt that it was just so that they increase our rent as much as they’d like next year without rent control.”*

Finding housing is also a significant issue facing student tenants, as **52% (n= 213) of students reported it was “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to secure accommodations**. 62% (n= 255) report that their housing situation has **negatively impacted their mental health**. As one student commented, *“it’s difficult not to think about the money.”*

36.3% (n=127) of students face issues with **poor air ventilation and/or air quality**, 34.9% (n=122) face issues of **pests** such as mice, rats, cockroaches, beetles and more, and 30% face issues with **mold** in their places of residence. **54.2% (n=222) students do not have air conditioning in their place of residence**. In the context of increasing warm summers, this can raise concerns with whether student places of residence meet the City of Ottawa bylaw standard of a maximum temperature of 20°C in the daytime (Ottawa Public Health, n.d.).

62.7% of respondents would describe their community as safe, 78.5% feel secure in their place of residence and 52.7% feel safe walking home after dark. Very little differences were observed when the three safety questions were cross analyzed by gender or race. Larger differences were observed when results to the question “I would describe my community as a safe one” were analyzed by community. Nepean, Old Ottawa East and Gloucester were the safest communities, with a Likert score above 4, and Lowertown, Vanier and Byward Market described as the least safe with a Likert score under 3.5. Students mentioned lack of lighting, presence of crime and illegal substance use as barriers to feeling safe, with more community services, better lighting and more security and patrolling as potential solutions to security issues.

Introduction

From September 19th, 2024, to December 6th, 2025, the Student Housing Exploratory Caucus conducted a survey on the status of rental housing for University of Ottawa undergraduate students. This report covers an overview of the literature on student housing in Ottawa and Canada, quantitative and qualitative results from the survey, and two non-structured interviews with five survey respondents. It concludes with a discussion of the results, suggestions for future research directions and policy recommendations to the University of Ottawa, the City of Ottawa, the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada on how issues of student renters can be alleviated. The survey focused on eight different topics that cover a variety of aspects of student rental housing. These eight categories are **Rent and Utilities** (including analysis of both provinces, bedroom counts, communities, method of payment and the ease of finding a home), **Tenant-Landlord Relationships** (including type of landlord and issues with landlords), **Quality of Home** (pests, A/C, cleanliness and more), **Access to Services, Accessibility of Homes, Safety** and **Challenges as a Student Tenant**.

Literature Review

The student housing crisis and its effects on students remain chronically understudied (Powell, 2013, p. 109). This incuriosity may be, as one paper theorized, in part due to a belief that students should “[e]ndure poor housing conditions for a few years to “pay their dues” as they

are destined for well-off lives after graduation. [There exists a tendency to] romanticize the student digs or ghetto as a “rite of passage” or claim that “it was like that in my day, and that’s how it should be” (Sotomayor et al., 2022, p. 2). Despite this belief, the situation for students has worsened, with the demand for housing outpacing supply and the quality of housing stock degrading (Norman & Bartlett, 2024, p. 2).

Analyzing the existing literature, key themes emerged in studies on post-secondary student tenants living off-campus: housing insecurity, negative health and academic outcomes, and the increasing financialization of the student housing market while the demand for housing outpaces supply. Existing studies of Sandy Hill, the most common student neighbourhood due to its proximity to the University, allow us to understand the geography and situation students are facing more deeply.

Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity itself lacks a widely agreed upon definition, but as Kornbluh, Mariah, et al. (2024), explain, it encompasses “several dimensions of housing challenges college students may experience including: affordability, physical safety, quality of shelter, instability, crowding, as well as loss of housing” (p. 680). A holistic definition which considers all of these factors is necessary to fully understand the crisis.

In Canada, housing is considered “affordable” if it costs 30% or less of a household’s before-tax income (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022). Students exist in a unique situation where school is treated as a full-time expectation, inherently incompatible with the realities of many students who work part-time or full-time during school to afford their education (Sotomayor et al., 2022, p. 3). International students, for example, are also systemically limited in the number of hours they can work, and the wave of homelessness and horrendous living conditions facing international students have become common media stories (Bhugra, 2024). Sotomayor et al, in their analysis of Toronto post-secondary students state that “Although student status is assumed as a full-time occupation, many students spend an inordinate amount of time in the “hustle economy” juggling multiple part-time jobs, complex responsibilities, and trying to address their housing insecurity and financial stress” (p. 3).

Even with working a full-time minimum wage job, in much of Ontario, a student would be paying more than 30% of their income for a shared two-bedroom apartment (Norman & Bartlett, 2024, p. 3). Norman & Bartlett state in a report published by Desjardins, that “at best, unaffordable housing means that many students are forced to settle for homes that don’t meet their needs”, where nearly half report that they can’t afford other necessities, including food. “In the worst cases, students who can’t find suitable housing may experience periods of homelessness or couch-surfing” (Norman & Bartlett, 2024, p. 3). One study at Thompson River University reported that over 55% of students reported difficulties finding housing, with many experiencing systemic racial discrimination in the rental market (Howe et al., 2023, p. 123). Students, increasingly facing an unstable and poor housing market are forced to adapt by “(1)

coping by working extra hours; (2) [finding] innovative strategies in finding a place to live; (3) overcoming predatory practices; and (4) managing long commutes.” (Sotomayor et al., 2022, p. 8). All of these contribute to worse outcomes altogether, including resulting in a lack of time and capacity to focus on academics.

Health and Academic Outcomes

In an article titled “Environmental Health Risks Associated with Off-Campus Student-Tenant Housing”, Johnson et al. make it clear that “[t]here was a significant link between poor housing and poor health outcomes” (2009 p. 43), especially an association between “damp housing and disease”, a chronic problem in student rental housing (p. 47). Students are also more likely to face higher food insecurity than those living with parents, a statistic exacerbated among men (Mirabatur et al., 2016, p. 555). High food insecurity, a crisis among post-secondary students in Canada with almost 50% of all students reporting some level of it, is linked with worse health outcomes overall (Sing, 2021). Students facing housing insecurity are also more likely to report lower mental health overall, lower GPAs (Mirabatur et al., 2016, p. 555) and worse academic outcomes (Sotomayor et al., 2022, p. 3). To handle the housing crisis, students are placed under “...excessive time and cognitive pressures that encroach on study time, attending classes or labs and other university experiences” (Sotomayor et al., 2022, p. 3).

Financialization and Changing Neighbourhoods

Purpose Built Student Accommodations (PBSAs) are housing run by post-secondary institutions for students, commonly known as residence buildings (Norman & Bartlett, 2024, p. 1). Unfortunately, the pace of construction of new PBSAs has not kept up with the growing number of students. The report by Desjardins cites a recent survey by Bonard Global Market Research, which finds that residence spaces were only “available for 10.3% of total student enrollment [in Canada]” (Norman & Bartlett, 2024, p. 1. This falls far short of other developed countries, such as the U.S. (30%), U.K. (27%) or France (16%)” (p. 1). The reasons for this lag in the development of PBSAs are myriad but are mostly attributable to underinvestment from all levels of government, and the difficulty for alternative PBSA providers beyond post-secondary institutions to enter the market, such as co-operative housing as seen in other countries (Bartlett & Norman, 2024). Recently, students from the research project met with a student representative from the University of Guelph, where we were informed about a decision from the University of Guelph made in November 2024 to evict graduate students and postdoctoral schools from family housing to provide space for an over-enrollment of first-year students (CUPE 3913, 2024). Beyond our city of Ottawa, we are witnessing a deterioration of student housing protections and commitments made by university institutions.

When on-campus housing is not guaranteed for students, they move into surrounding neighbourhoods (Sotomayor et al., 2022, p. 3). In most cities, the rental vacancy rate is near zero and in Ottawa, it is at 2.5% city-wide (CMHC, 2024). A healthy vacancy rate is anything above 3% (Norman & Bartlett, 2024, p. 1). As demand rises due to the increasing number of students, there are also concerns, as Sotomayor et al. note, that students moving into

neighbourhoods “bring up rents and restrict access for other vulnerable tenants” (2022, p. 3). Since landlords can charge students who are restricted in their locality and often rent by the room more than they could a single family, they will over time come to own large amounts of the housing stock in a neighbourhood by outbidding, dividing, and displacing longstanding residents (p. 3). As Sotomayer states, the “emergence of a high-cost, low-quality housing niche [...] creates lucrative opportunities for small and medium-sized landlords” (2022, p. 3). This leads to a deeply financialized student housing market, poor living conditions, as well as inter-community tensions in these changing neighbourhoods (Powell, 2013, p. 120). Powell states, “what empirical literature there is reveals that such neighborhoods are frequently the site of ‘issueless riots’, a concentration of alcohol outlets, and crime.” (p. 109). In the context of Sandy Hill, this is demonstrated with the ongoing struggle of the “Panda Game”, which in 2021 became what has been described as a riot (Lord, 2021), the high presence of various student bars and drinking events, and could have correlations to the crime rate, a common complaint of long-term Sandy Hill residents. Students and long-time residents share a common place but not necessarily the same understanding of the place, existing in separate communities sharing often oppositional identities (Powell, 2013, p. 109).

Sandy Hill

Sandy Hill is the neighbourhood where most uOttawa students live. It is bordered on the west by the Rideau Canal and stretches east to the Rideau River. Its northern border is Rideau Street while to the south it is bordered by the Queensway highway. Sandy Hill has an intense amount of wealth disparity with poorer students, working class tenants and property owners which increasingly turn into wealthy property owners as they approach Strathcona park and the Rideau River. Much of the following information on Sandy Hill has been pulled from the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, an interdisciplinary population health study administered by the University of Ottawa (2021).

Looking at data from 2021, aggregated by the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study under their terms of use, Sandy Hill has the highest rate of households paying over 30% of their income for their housing in the city of Ottawa at an average of 40.1%. A plurality of housing stock in Sandy Hill is also apartment buildings with five or more story buildings, making up 45.7% of the housing stock, and fewer than five story apartment buildings making up 37.5% of the housing stock. 20.3% of renters in 2021 were in core housing need in Sandy Hill (Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, 2021).

Sandy Hill has also been a site of contention and violence, with four highly public deaths following a mass eviction of low-income tenants for the purposes of turning the apartments into student rentals on Osgoode Street in 2022, being followed by an alleged arson in 2024 (Osmond, 2024). Homelessness has also unfortunately become a fact of the neighbourhood and surrounding areas, where almost 3000 Ottawa residents were experiencing visible homelessness in October of 2024 (The Ottawa Citizen, 2025). The area around the uOttawa campus has also become the site of political engagement and tenant advocacy, with posters

targeting property management/landlord company Smart Living and the formation of a tenant organizing body Tenants of Sandy Hill emerging in the months since the end of our collection of data. Powell writes that in response to poor housing conditions in student ghettos, "...students lacked a larger consciousness about these matters and have made no attempts to organize any protest" (2013, p. 122). At least in Sandy Hill, this trend has seemed to be challenged.

Methodology

The survey received a total of 607 responses, of which 187 were eliminated due to a lack of pertinent data (the respondent did not complete the survey, the results were illegible, or the respondent did not provide a monthly rent number). Out of the remaining 420 responses, 10 responses were from duplicate student numbers and were subsequently removed. If different qualitative responses were submitted in the second response from one student number, they were kept to preserve students' opinions within this report. In total, 410 responses were used to determine the results in the following report. Further, 15 respondents were selected to participate in non-structured focus groups based on their answers to the open-ended qualitative questions in the survey, how these answers fit into the major coding themes and the participant's previously indicated willingness to participate in interviews. Five students chose to participate, and their answers are reflected in the qualitative analysis of the results. The survey asked 37 quantitative questions and 9 open-ended questions and took approximately 22.48 minutes on average to complete.

A wide range of methods were used to promote the survey over the course of the data collection period: the survey was promoted through multiple email blasts to the entire membership of UOSU, a \$500 tuition fee waiver awarded to one participant at random, poster on and off campus, tabling at the University Centre and promoting the survey to classes.

Data Limitations

Despite 32% of Undergraduate students at the University of Ottawa identifying French as their primary language, the survey only received 10% of its responses in French (n=41). This suggests a possible lack of outreach to French-speaking students, which results in a lack of representation of their experiences, as well as a lack of data from renters based in Quebec.

A technical error resulted in the questions on the topic of "safety" missing from the survey for the first few hours of the survey, resulting in a lack of data for that portion of the survey. Due to another technical error, the questions on "accessibility of home" were not set as mandatory, resulting in a lack of responses for that question as well.

Lack of clear wording in some survey questions led to uninterpretable data, which was subsequently not included in the report. For example, a question on rent increases did not clarify whether it was seeking a renter's individual rent increase, or the rent increase of the

entire place of residence. Responses were received ranging from \$20 to \$200, and the decision was made to exclude this data from the report to avoid spreading incorrect data.

Results

Respondent Demographics

Respondents were asked for their age, year of undergraduate study and self-identification with eight equity-seeking groups (Person of visible racial minority (not including Indigenous or Black persons), Person with disabilities, Women and gender diverse people, International Student, Black, Person with Dependents, 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigenous). The survey was also available in both official languages. This section will provide a breakdown of survey respondents by demographics.

Age and Year of Study

The average age of a respondent was 21 years old. Respondents' ages ranged from 17 to 50. The largest group of respondents was students in their third year (n=127) followed by students in fourth year (n=118). The smallest group of respondents was students in first year (n=33), likely due to the survey requirement that students be off-campus renters. The higher average age for first year students can be explained by the diversity of ages reflected in survey respondents, where seven first year respondents were of ages between 24 and 50.

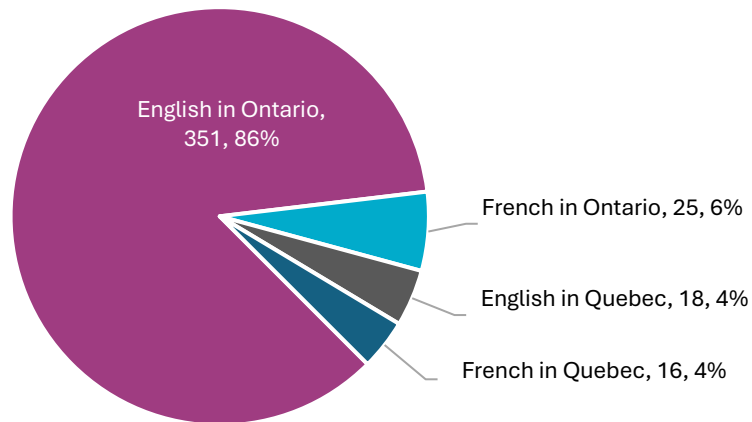
Count of Student Respondents by Year of Study Age and Age

Year of Study	Number of Respondents	Average Age (Mode)
First Year	32 (7.8%)	22
Second Year	93 (22.9%)	19.4
Third Year	125 (30.5%)	21.1
Fourth Year	116 (28.3%)	21.4
Fifth Year or Higher	44 (10.7%)	22.6
Total	420 (100%)	21

Language of Correspondence

We received a total of 369 (90%) responses in English and 41 (10%) in French. 351 (85.6%) English respondents live in Ontario, and 18 (4.4%) live in Quebec. 25 (6.1%) French respondents live in Ontario, and 16 (3.9%) live in Quebec.

Language of Correspondence by Province



Equity-Seeking Groups

93.2% of respondents identify as woman or gender diverse (n=246), 2SLGBTQIA+ (n=136), or both. Only seven (1.7%) respondents identified as Indigenous or a person with dependents.

When compared to statistics from the University of Ottawa Factbook (2024, p. 2), the demographic data of the survey aligns closely with the available demographic data for the University in terms of Women and Gender Diverse respondents. International students are slightly underrepresented within the survey, where the university reports 19.3% of undergraduate students as having international student status, yet only 13.4% (n=51) of survey respondents were international students.

Number of Respondents Belonging to Eight Equity-Seeking Groups

Equity-Seeking Group	Count of Respondents
Women and Gender Diverse People	246 (60%)
2SLGBTQIA+	136 (33.2%)
Person of Visible Racial Minority	102 (24.9%)
Person with Disabilities	74 (18.1%)
International Student	55 (13.4%)
Black Students	45 (11%)
Indigenous Students	7 (1.7%)
Person with Dependents	7 (1.7%)

Rent and Utilities

This report analyzes the amount of rent paid by an individual student, not the monthly cost of an entire unit. “Rent” in this report will refer to monthly payments made by individual tenants.

The average rent paid by all respondents was \$926.67. International students (n=55) pay \$11.74 more than domestic students with an average of \$936.84. Rent prices can be analyzed by province, bedroom count and location.

Rent for Respondents in Ontario

385 respondents live in Ontario, where the average rent is \$935.4. Most students live in three-bedroom (n=95) or two-bedroom (n=94) residences, where the average rents are \$879.7 and \$986.6 respectively. The average rents of other bedroom counts can be viewed in the table below.

Number of Bedrooms in a Place of Residence and the Average Rent for Respondents in Ontario

Number of Bedrooms	Number of Respondents	Average Rent
0 (I live in a studio)	19 (5.1%)	\$1,417.74
1	30 (8%)	\$1,177.72
2	94 (25%)	\$986.60
3	95 (25.3%)	\$879.73
4	74 (19.7%)	\$843.05
5	31 (8.2%)	\$797.85
6	24 (6.5%)	\$783.67
7+	9 (2.4%)	\$800.31
Total	376 (100%)	\$935.41

Rent for Respondents in Quebec

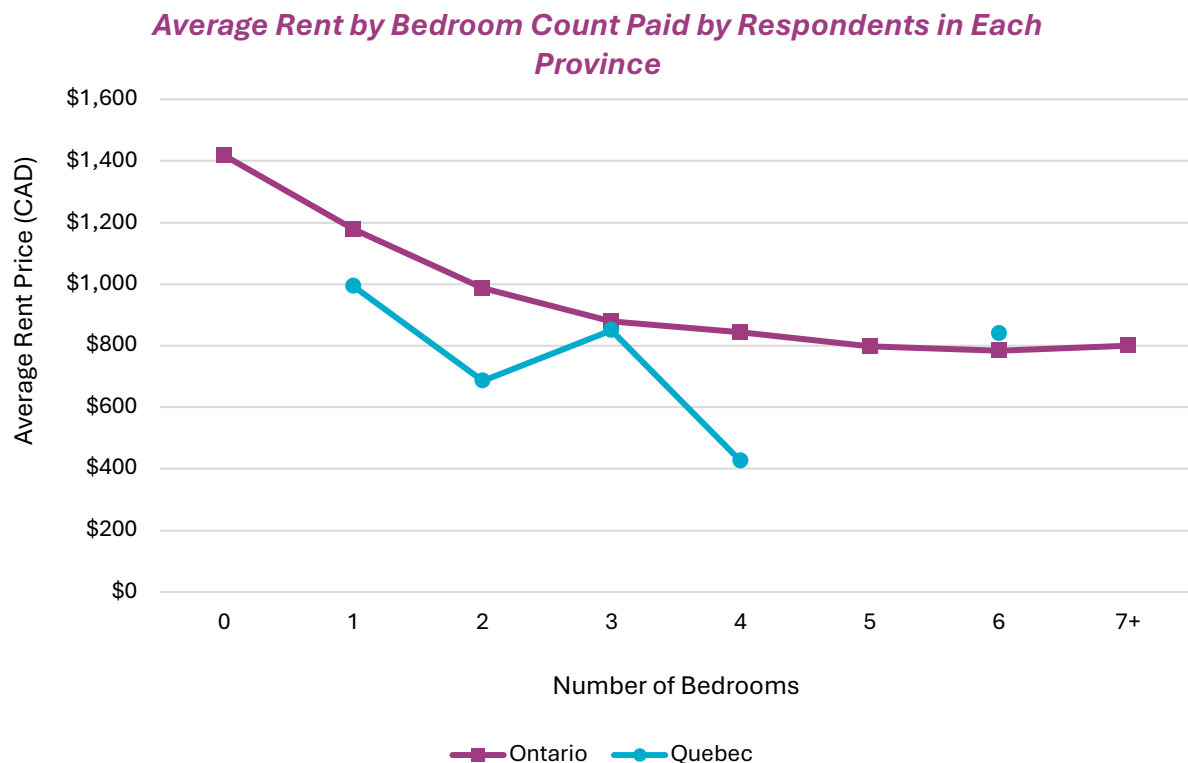
35 respondents live in Quebec, where the average rent is \$830.09. An equal number of respondents live in one-bedroom or two-bedroom residences (n=11 each) where the average rents are \$993.18 and \$684.82 respectively. The average rents of other bedroom counts can be viewed in the table below.

Number of Bedrooms in a Place of Residence and their Average Rent for Respondents in Quebec

Number of Bedrooms	Number of Respondents	Average Rent
1	11 (32.4%)	\$993.18
2	11 (32.4%)	\$684.82
3	10 (29.4%)	\$850.00
4	1 (2.9%)	\$425.00

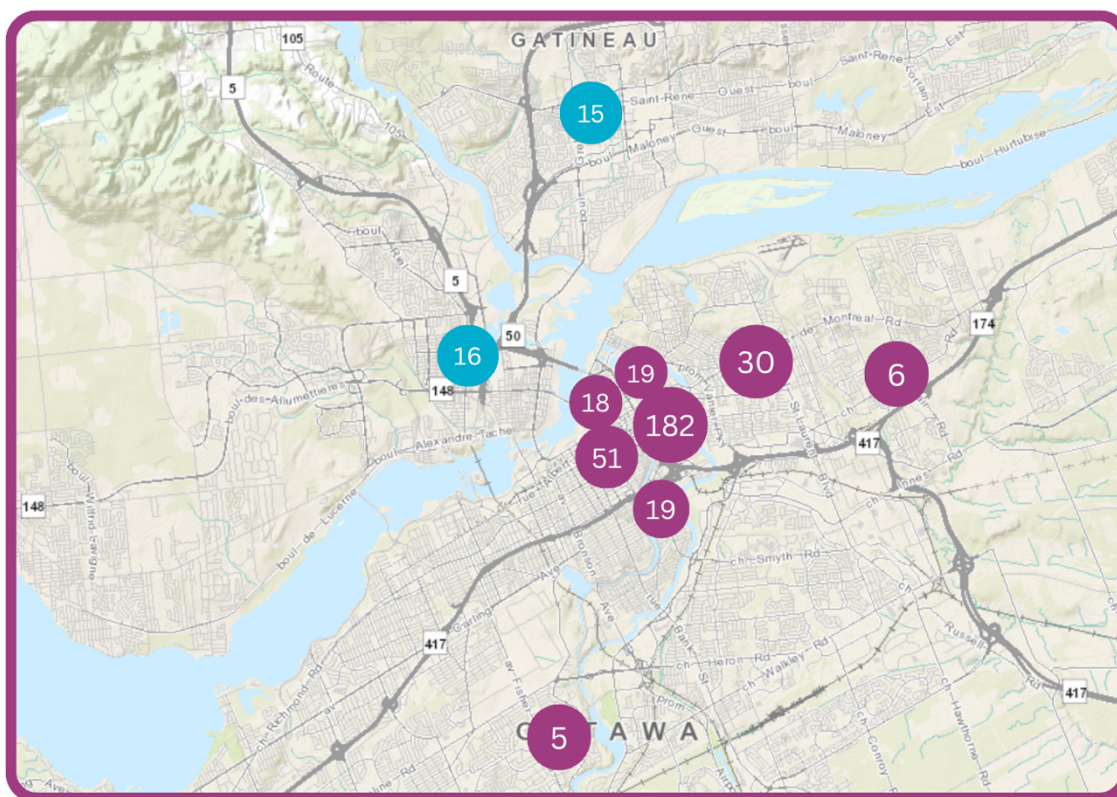
6	1 (2.9%)	\$840.00
Total	34 (100%)	\$830.09

Rent paid by students tends to decrease as the number of bedrooms or roommates increases. The difference in price between a studio and a 7+ bedroom residence (the highest and lowest average rents by apartment size, respectively) in Ontario is \$617.43, and the price difference between a 1-bedroom and a 4-bedroom (the highest and lowest average rents by apartment size, respectively) in Quebec is \$568.18.



Communities

All residents in Ontario who responded to the survey live within Ottawa. The top five most common communities in Ottawa were Sandy Hill (n=182), Centretown (n=51), Vanier (n=30), Lowertown (n=19) and Old Ottawa East (n=19). All residents in Quebec live in Gatineau. The two most common communities in Gatineau are simply “Gatineau” (n=15) and Hull (n=17). The map below shows the concentration of students in communities where five or more respondents live.



Map from [geoOttawa](#).

The average rents in each community, by province, can be seen in the tables below. Only communities where five or more respondents live have been included.

Average Rents in Ontario Communities Where Five or More Respondents Live

Location (Ontario)	Count of Responses	Average Rent
Sandy Hill	182 (44.4%)	\$935.98
Centretown	51 (12.4%)	\$978.27
Vanier	30 (7.3%)	\$825.06
Lowertown	19 (4.6%)	\$902.66
Old Ottawa East	19 (4.6%)	\$889.24
Byward Market	18 (4.4%)	\$1122.38
Gloucester	6 (1.5%)	\$794.67
Nepean	5 (1.2%)	\$880.40
Ontario	376 (91.7%)	\$935.41

Average Rents in Quebec Communities Where Five or More Respondents Live

Location (Quebec)	Count of Responses	Average Rent
Gatineau	16 (3.9%)	\$869.53
Hull-Gatineau	15 (3.7%)	\$830.50
Quebec	34 (8.3%)	\$830.09

Application Fee

Application fees for prospective tenants are illegal under Section 134 of the Ontario Residential Tenancies Act. **7.07% (n=29) of respondents reported paying an application fee for their apartments, with an average cost of the application fee being \$101.20.**

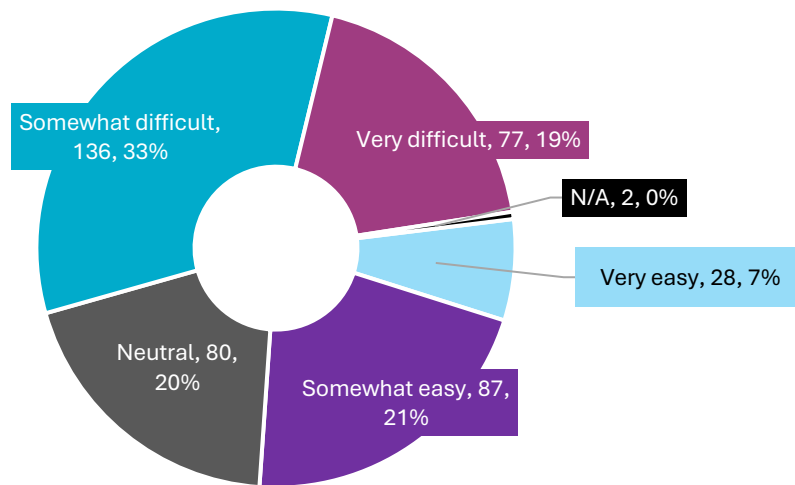
Responses above \$500 were removed due to the possibility that the term “application fee” was interpreted as a last months’ rent payment instead. The highest application fee payment kept in the responses was \$250. Interestingly, 37.93% (n=11) of respondents who reported being charged an illegal application fee rent from corporate landlords.

Ease of Find Apartment Compared to Rent

Respondents were asked to answer the question, “how easy was it for you to find and secure your current apartment?” by selecting one of five response options. **213 (52%) respondents said it was “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to find their housing.**

Respondents were also asked how they found their current place of residence. External Rental Websites (n=180, 43.9%) and Facebook Marketplace (n=107, 26.1%) were the most common responses, followed by recommendations by acquaintances/friends (n=84, 20.49%).

Responses to "how easy was it for you to find and secure your current place of residence?"



Responses to "How did you find your current place of residence?"

How did you find your current place of residence?	Count of Responses
External Rental Website (RentFaster, Zillow, Rentals.ca, Kijiji, etc.)	180 (43.90%)
Facebook Marketplace	107 (26.10%)
Recommendation from a friend/acquaintance	84 (20.49%)
University Rental Website (Student Housing Billboard)	17 (4.15%)
Social Media post	13 (3.12%)
Other	9 (2.20%)
Total	410 (100%)

300 (73.17%) respondents provided a qualitative response to the optional question, "would you like to elaborate on your experience finding your current apartment?" Responses have been categorized into six themes which can be viewed below.

Thematic Analysis of responses to “would you like to elaborate on your experience finding your current apartment?”

Theme	Count of Responses	Example Quote
Difficult Process	122	<i>“This was an extremely stressful process. I did not find a place until a week before I had to move in. My biggest obstacle was cost because I would be paying with a student line of credit. I had to ensure I was in a place that I could afford and in an area that was safe. I looked for almost 6 months (while I was still at my other place), until I finally came across a posting on Facebook marketplace.”</i>
Affordability	68	<i>“It is very competitive to find an affordable place, we had to settle for a place that was slightly out of budget.”</i>
Demand	58	<i>“Places go so fast that there were time we scheduled to see the place and within a few hours the tour was cancelled because someone else secured it, also lots of extra fees for bs services.”</i>
Easy Process	38	<i>“It was pretty simple as I know the owners of the unit.”</i>
Friends	29	<i>“I have a friend who lives here and it was the only place that could give me a viewing and a lease to sign as quickly as I needed it.”</i>
Location	29	<i>“Everything was expensive, especially the closer you get to campus, even if the place was decrepit. Landlords seem to know they can get away with charging insane rent so they do.”</i>
Issues with Landlords	25	<i>“Too many people lying about conditions/number of rooms/roommates/prices/etc.” (Translation)</i>
Family	13	<i>“A group of friends and I moved into a house together that one of their parents bought to rent out to us.”</i>
Housing Conditions	11	<i>“Very challenging, I got lucky. Beforehand I was paying over 1000\$ a month for a place with bedbugs and cockroaches infesting the place. I moved out and had to isolate my things for a year.”</i>
International Student Status	4	<i>“As an international student a guarantor is requited to find a place to live and if you cannot find one you have to pay 3 months worth of rent to secure the place. Renters tend to refuse international students applications especially when their only source of income is a part time job.”</i>

Method of Rent Payment

Respondents were asked to select how they paid their rent from three options: “I pay for my rent myself through employment (partly or entirely)”, “My parent(s) or guardian(s) pay for my rent (partly or entirely)”, and “I pay for my rent through student loans or scholarships (partly or

entirely)". Respondents were able to select more than one option. Results can be viewed in the table below.

Method of Rent Payment and Count of Responses

Method of Payment	Count of Responses
Through Parent(s) or Guardian(s) Entirely	110 (26.83%)
Through Employment Entirely	106 (25.85%)
Through Employment and Students Loans or Scholarships	68 (16.59%)
Through Employment and Parent(s) or Guardian(s)	61 (14.88%)
Through Student Loans or Scholarships Entirely	36 (8.78%)
Through All Three Options	19 (4.63%)
Through Student Loans/Scholarships and Parent(s) or Guardian(s)	10 (2.44%)
Total	410 (100%)

Lease

Respondents were asked their move-in month for their current place of residence and the length of their lease contract. The table below only shows the lease lengths that applied to more than one respondent.

Lease Lengths That Apply to More Than One Respondent

Lease Length	Count of Responses
12 months	294 (71.71%)
I lease on a month-month basis	75 (18.29%)
8 months	17 (4.15%)
13 months	3 (0.73%)
1 year, and then month to month	5 (1.22%)
24 months	2 (0.49%)
3 years	2 (0.49%)

A plurality of respondents reported having signed a new lease in 2024 (n=182, 43%), followed by 2023 (n= 125 30%). With 73% of all leases being signed within the past two years of when this survey was conducted, this indicates that the student population is highly mobile, with a large amount of turnover in the housing market.

Utilities

Respondents were asked to select all utilities that are included in their rent. The results can be seen below.

Common Utilities Included in Rent and Count of Responses per Utility

Utility	Count of Responses
Water	343 (83.66%)
Heat	303 (73.90%)
Hydro	185 (45.12%)
Wifi	139 (33.90%)
None	36 (8.78%)

Tenant-Landlord Relationships

In this section, respondents were asked what type of landlord they rented with, whether they felt their landlord responded to them in an appropriate time manner, and to elaborate on any issues experiences with their landlord.

Type of Landlord

We defined a “corporate landlord” as an REIT or management company. A medium-scale landlord was defined as an individual landlord who owns multiple residential properties, and a small-scale landlord as an individual who owns one or two residential properties or rents part of their home. The table below shows the number of students renting from each type of landlord, and the average rent under each landlord type.

Landlord Type and Average Rent (Ontario and Quebec)

Landlord Type	Number of Respondents	Average Rent
Medium Scale Landlord	159 (38.78%)	\$858.93
Corporate Landlord	136 (33.17%)	\$1019.62
Small Scale Landlord	70 (17.07%)	\$944.36
Not Sure	23 (5.61%)	\$898.35
Rent from Friend or Family	17 (4.15%)	\$835.88
Subletting	5 (1.22%)	\$744.20
Total	410 (100%)	\$926.67

On average, students renting from a corporate landlord are paying \$75.26 more than students renting from small-scale landlords and \$160.69 more than students renting from medium-scale landlords. 42.65% of respondents (n= 58) who rent from a corporate landlord reside in Sandy Hill, and 19.12% (n= 26) reside in Centretown. 65.44% (n= 89) of respondents who rent from a medium-scale landlord reside in Sandy Hill.

Responsiveness of Landlords

The responsiveness of landlords was measured on a Likert Scale. Students were asked whether they “[felt] that [their] landlord responds in a timely manner when [they] reach out with requests”. The response options ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (right away), with the mean of the responses at 3.45.



Issues with Landlords

106 students provided a qualitative response when asked to elaborate on any major issues they may have experienced with their landlord. Responses have been categorized into six themes which can be viewed below.

Thematic Analysis of Responses to "If you have ever experienced major issues with your landlord, please elaborate here".

Theme	Count of Responses	Example Quote
Response Times	45	"Just takes forever to reply or never replies. We had to switch landlords and still I ask for things and they either forget or something else pops up."
Positive Experiences	40	"No issues! They are very cooperative and we are very lucky!"

Ignorant Towards Repairs, Safety and Housing Quality Concerns	38	<p><i>"He doesn't help us with any problems. He has pretty much stranded us on our own dealing with so many problems, some even affecting our health. I have to take medication for my severe allergies due to the poor ventilation and it took him months to come fix it, for example."</i></p> <p><i>"We experienced many major issues, leaky faucets, black mold, ceiling collapsed and security issues (our landlord would give random strangers that wanted to visit the rooms the entry code to our house)."</i></p>
Lack of respect for the rules/law	12	<i>"Frequently ignores emails, constantly threatens us with extra fines, has brought in your(sic) groups multiple times with less than 24h of heads up, violating the lease agreement"</i>
Interpersonal issues	9	<i>"He treats us like we know nothing, very condescending man"</i>
Interpersonal issues	9	<i>"They are often accusatory and impolite, and withheld key information about the apartment before we signed our lease."</i>
Additional fees/fines	4	<i>"They have strange rules when it comes to the disposal of garbage and old furniture. They charge extra for anything not thrown into a trash bag."</i>
Gender-based conflict	2	<i>"Our heat broke and he simply ignored us as females until we threaten him with a father."</i>

Quality of Home

In this section, respondents were asked about whether their place of residence was furnished/unfurnished, whether they had air conditioning in their home, the cleanliness of their home when they moved in, and concerns such as pests, mold, and more.

123 (30%) of respondents said their place of residence was furnished when they began renting. 222 of respondents (54.15%) do not have air conditioning in their place of residence.

136 (33.2%) of respondents were not satisfied with the cleanliness of their property when they moved in. 129 (31.5%) respondents left a qualitative response when asked to elaborate on why they were not satisfied. Below are a few example comments:

"The carpets are really old and even after cleaners came in it was still dirty. Also the kitchen appliances weren't cleaned after the old tenants left."

"We were promised in our lease to have it properly cleaned and sanitized prior to move in. However, when I moved in the place was trashed. Our door was broken, couch was broken and stained, chairs were stained, bathroom medicine cabinet was smashed and broken, blinds were ripped off the window. The leasing manager said that the previous tenant had to get evicted and refused to leave. However they explained that he moved out 2 days before we moved in which was still plenty of time to walk through and clean the unit. The previous tenants left his dirty dishes in the sink and dishwasher and left moldy mop water in a bucket in the closet. We still don't have a functional apartment after endless amounts of contacting them to fix it. We also had the smoke detector ripped out of our ceiling and no knob to use our oven."

"It was an emergency rental due to a family breakdown so I never got to see it in advance. Dog faeces and urine everywhere. Smells like rotting meat and garbage."

"When I moved in, there was over 200 dead fruit flies on the floor. It was very gross."

Pests, Mold and Other Quality of Home Issues

350 (85.37%) respondents provided an answer to a select-all-that-apply multiple-choice question about issues they may have experienced in their place of residence. The question provided an option for respondents to add other comments. The table below shows the results for the pre-written multiple-choice options.

Multiple Choice Responses to "Do you experience any of these issues inside your home? Check all that apply".

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Count of Respondents</i>
Poor air ventilation and/or air quality	127 (36.29%)
Issues with pests (Rats, cockroaches, beetles, bed bugs, silverfish, etc.)	122 (34.86%)
Frequent occurrence of loud noises and disturbances	118 (33.71%)
Issues with heating	114 (32.57%)
Mold	105 (30.00%)
Non-functional appliances	92 (26.26%)
Leaky faucets/toilets/shower	89 (25.43%)
No elevator in a multi-story building	81 (27.00%)

Lack of safety and security in the property (due to faulty door and window locks)	61 (17.43%)
Lack of smoke alarm or fire extinguisher	59 (16.86%)
Frequently malfunctioning elevators	25 (7.14%)
No issues experienced	58 (16.57%)

32 respondents provided an answer other than the ones offered in the survey. Those responses have been broken down by themes in the following table.

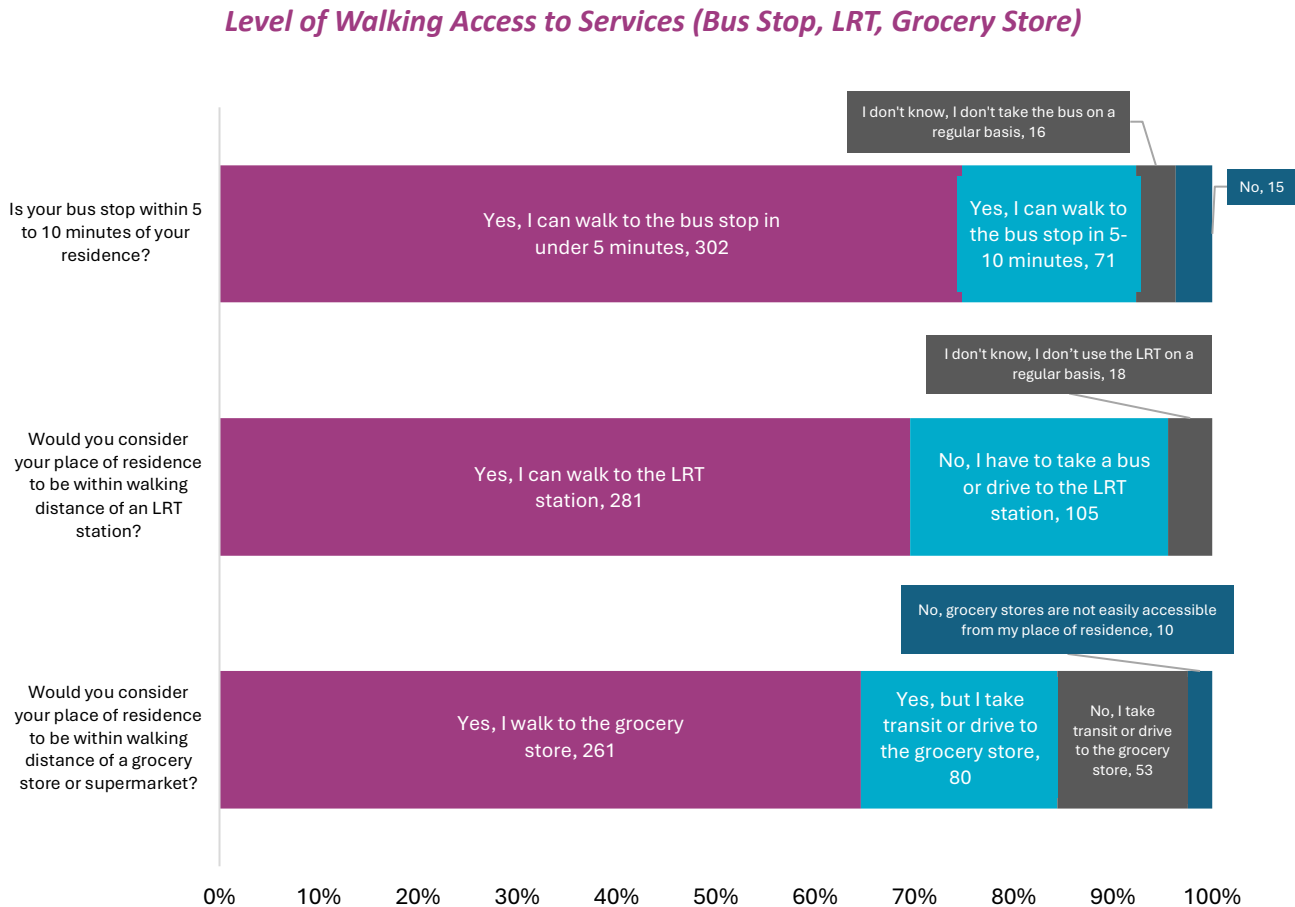
Thematic Analysis of “Other” Responses to “Do you experience any of these issues inside your home? Check all that apply”.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Count of Responses</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
Uncleanliness and Lack of Repairs	9	“Broken closet door, broken blinds. Asked maintenance to fix it but they come and don’t fix it properly so it breaks again the next day.”
Air Conditioning, Poor Insulation or Faulty Windows	7	“Poor insulation/humidity issues in the winter.”
Lighting	5	“Because it is basement, no light at all.”
Poor Construction of Home	4	“The apartment is crooked in every aspect. If I put a ball on the floor it will roll down it. The ground is very uneven it has peaks and valleys. Sometimes I feel like a sailor or something on a moving boat.”
Issues with Garbage	2	“Raccoons and issues with storing garbage outside.”
Safety	2	“Lack of safety due to next house being abandoned and used for drug exchanges.”
Wi-fi	2	“Wifi is bad.”
Issues with Mailing	1	“Issues with mailing.”

Access to Services

Students were asked to outline their level of walking access to the LRT, bus stops, and grocery stores. Level of walking access to a bus stop was defined by a length of minutes (under 5 minutes, between 5-10 minutes, or more than 10 minutes), but the level of walking access to LRT stations or grocery stores was left up to student interpretation, and a lack of walking access was defined as having to take a bus or drive. This choice was made due to higher prevalence of individual bus stops versus LRT stations or grocery stores within neighborhoods.

404 students provided an answer to the three questions on level of access to the LRT, bus stops and grocery stores. Most students are able to walk to their grocery store, LRT station or bus stop. A breakdown of results can be viewed below.

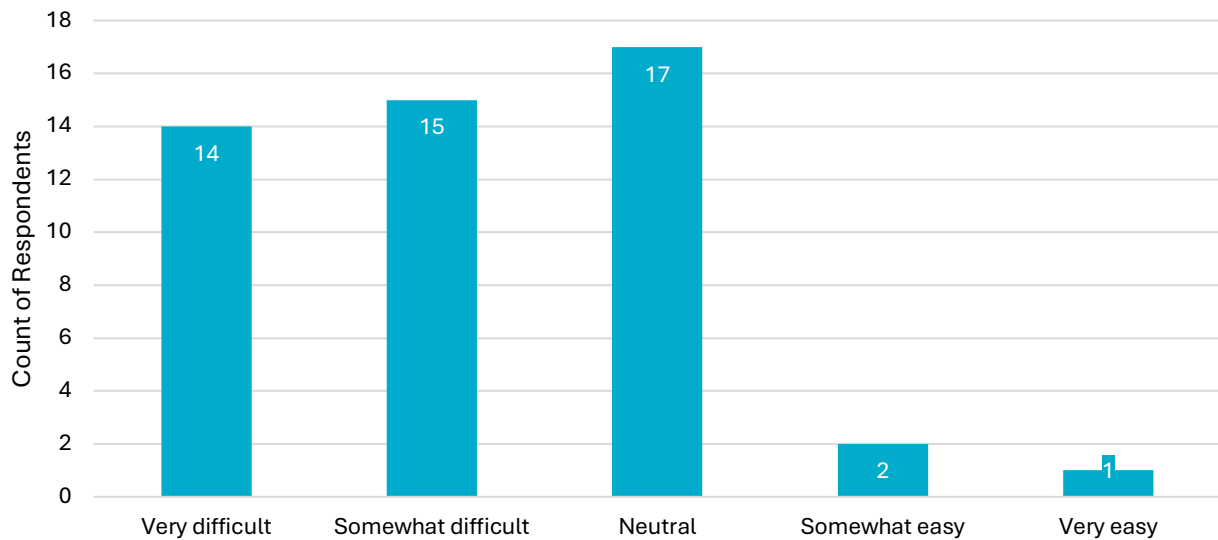


Accessibility of Homes

The question of accessibility was not a mandatory question and only received 136 responses. Of those who did provide a response, 123 (90.44%) said accessibility needs were *not* a contributing factor in their choice of housing. Six (4.41%) preferred not to answer, six (4.41%) said they were a *contributing* factor and one (0.74%) said they *were* a determining factor.

49 students, including many of those who said accessibility needs were *not* a contributing factor, provided an answer to the question, “how easy was it for you to find information about accessibility features in your housing search?”. The Likert scale results, where the mean is 2.20, can be seen below.

Likert Scale Responses to "How easy was it for you to find information about accessibility features in your housing search?"



When asked to elaborate on their experience with the accessibility of rental properties, three respondents provided qualitative answers which can be viewed in the box below.

"Every single reasonable apartment has a three floor walk up of sketchy wooden stairs so while accessibility was important to me, I did not have much of a choice."

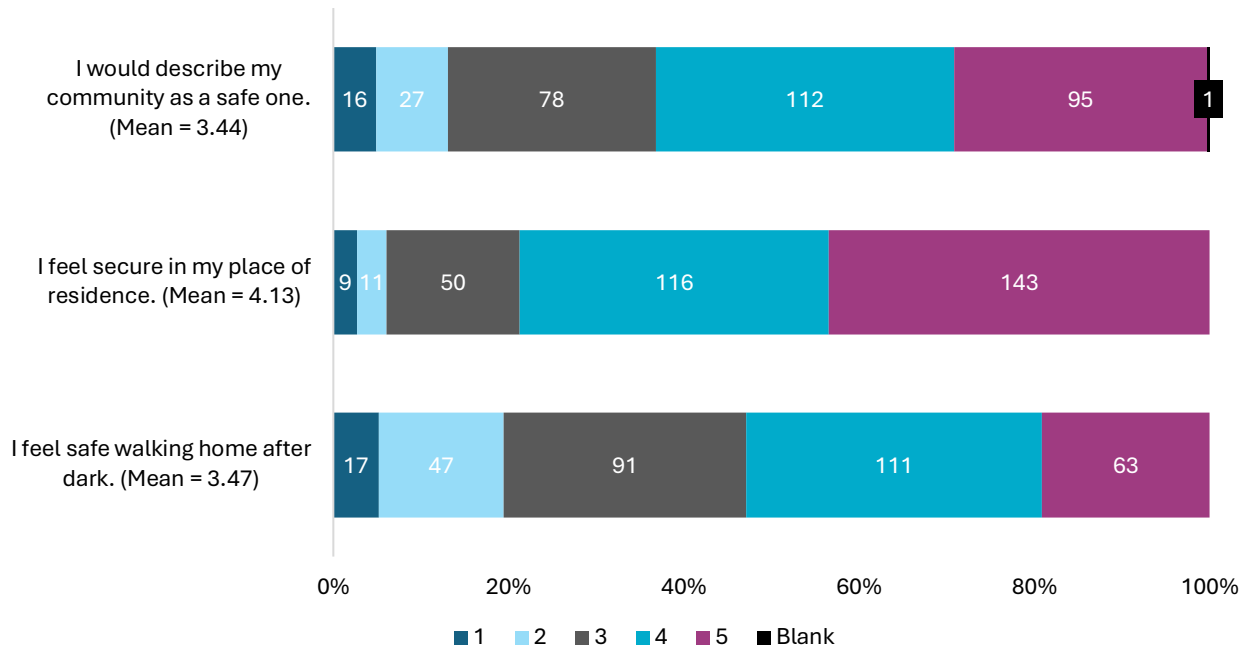
"Honestly I'm happy because I've found something very close to uni but I hate the price hike they've been doing every year since Covid." (Translation)

"I live in a 3-story house + basement with only stairs separating them. I'm not disabled in any way but find going up and down 3 floors everyday to be exhausting myself."

Safety

For the section on safety, students were asked to rank three questions on safety on a Likert scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (absolutely). The results and mean averages of each question can be seen below. These questions received 330 responses each.

Likert Scale Responses to Three Questions on Safety (1 - Not at all, 5 - Absolutely)



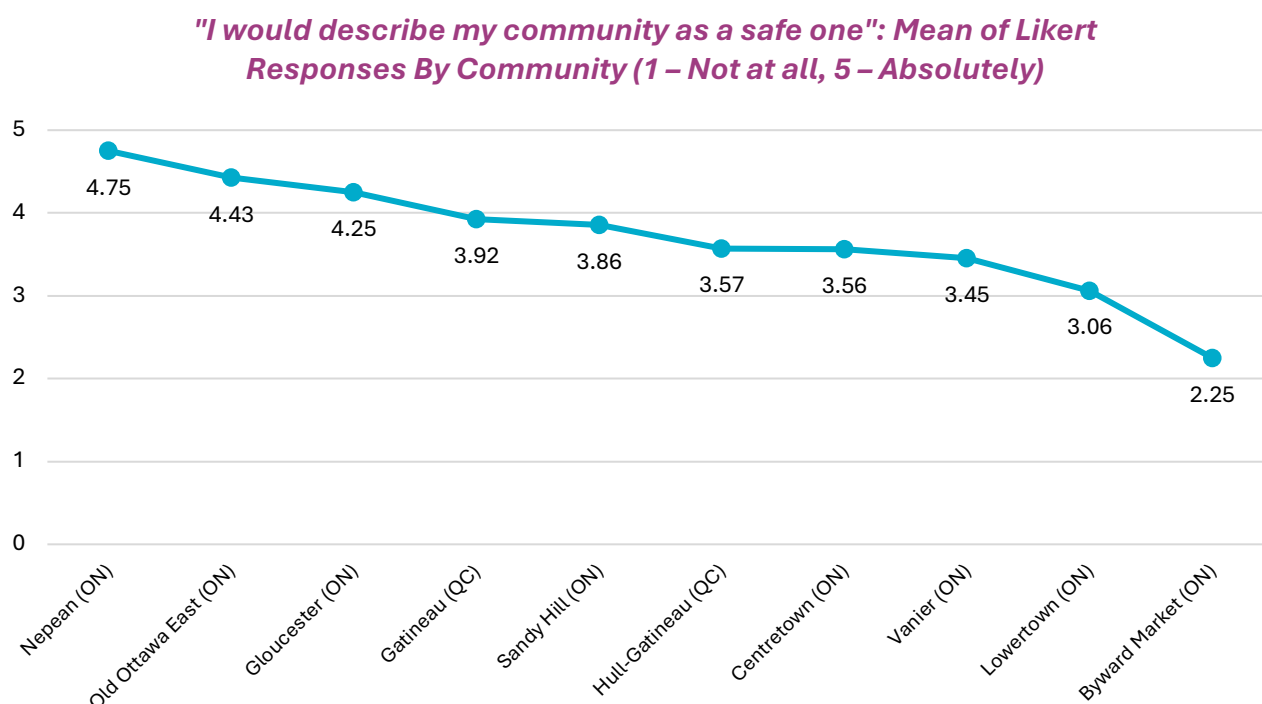
Of the 330 respondents who answered the questions above, 205 were from respondents who identified as women or gender diverse people, 37 were from respondents who identified as Black and 84 were from respondents who identified as a Person of Visible Racial Minority (excluding Black and Indigenous people). When safety questions were cross-tabulated with responses from respondents from these equity-seeking groups, very little difference was observed in results. Below are the results of the same questions but adjusted only to the responses from these groups.

Mean of Likert Responses from Three Equity-Seeking Groups (1 – Not at all, 5 – Absolutely)

Questions	Women and Gender Diverse Respondents (n=205)	Black Respondents (n=37)	Respondents of Visible Racial Minority (n=84)	All Respondents (n=330)
I feel safe walking home after dark.	3.34	3.54	3.36	3.44
I feel secure in my place of residence.	4.11	4.02	4.10	4.13

I would describe my community as a safe one.	3.72	3.70	3.57	3.47
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When the Likert results of the statement “I would describe my community as a safe one” are cross tabulated with the most common communities where respondents reside (five or more residents), three communities are ranked below the average Likert score from all responses (3.47). These communities are Vanier, Lowertown and Byward Market.



When asked to describe reasons why they may feel unsafe in their neighbourhood, respondents provided 211 responses that brought up topics such as homelessness, crime, lack of lighting in their area, and gender-based issues. Responses have been categorized into eight main themes in the table below.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Count of Responses</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
Explicit Mention of Unhoused People	64	<i>"My house backs onto the street where the mission is, and because of that and our closeness to rideau street, we sometimes get unhoused people staying on our porch, or approaching us outside our house."</i>

Proximity to Homeless Shelters or Services, Reference to a Street or Area	50	<p><i>"My neighborhood is right beside a homeless encampment."</i></p> <p><i>"Have seen individuals who are under the influence regularly; closeness to Rideau and the shelters and safe injection sites."</i></p>
Public Substance Use	36	<p><i>"I live near Rideau street and frequently encounter/need to respond to situations of potential overdoses."</i></p> <p><i>"It's not infrequent to see needles lying around or someone passed out from an overdose."</i></p>
Crime (Shootings, Break-ins, Robberies)	28	<p><i>"There was a shooting in the building several months ago."</i></p> <p><i>"Presence of gangs or disruptive groups."</i> (Translation)</p>
Poor Lighting	28	<i>"Poor lighting at night so walking in the dark can be uncomfortable as you can't fully see your surroundings."</i>
Aggressive Behaviour/Signs of Mental Unwellness	23	<i>"I always get woken up by people screaming, fighting, I am always dodging bodily fluids and needles when I walk, [...] I get yelled at and approached when walking which is especially scary at night when I'm alone."</i>
Gender-Based Harassment, Instances of Homophobia and Transphobia	19	<i>"I live very close to campus and have been targeted while on campus several times by what appeared to be sex trafficking schemes."</i>

When asked to describe what would make them feel safer neighbourhood, respondents provided 178 responses that brought up topics such as better lighting, more services for the homeless community, more police and more safe-walk programs. The most common have been categorized into eight main themes in the table below.

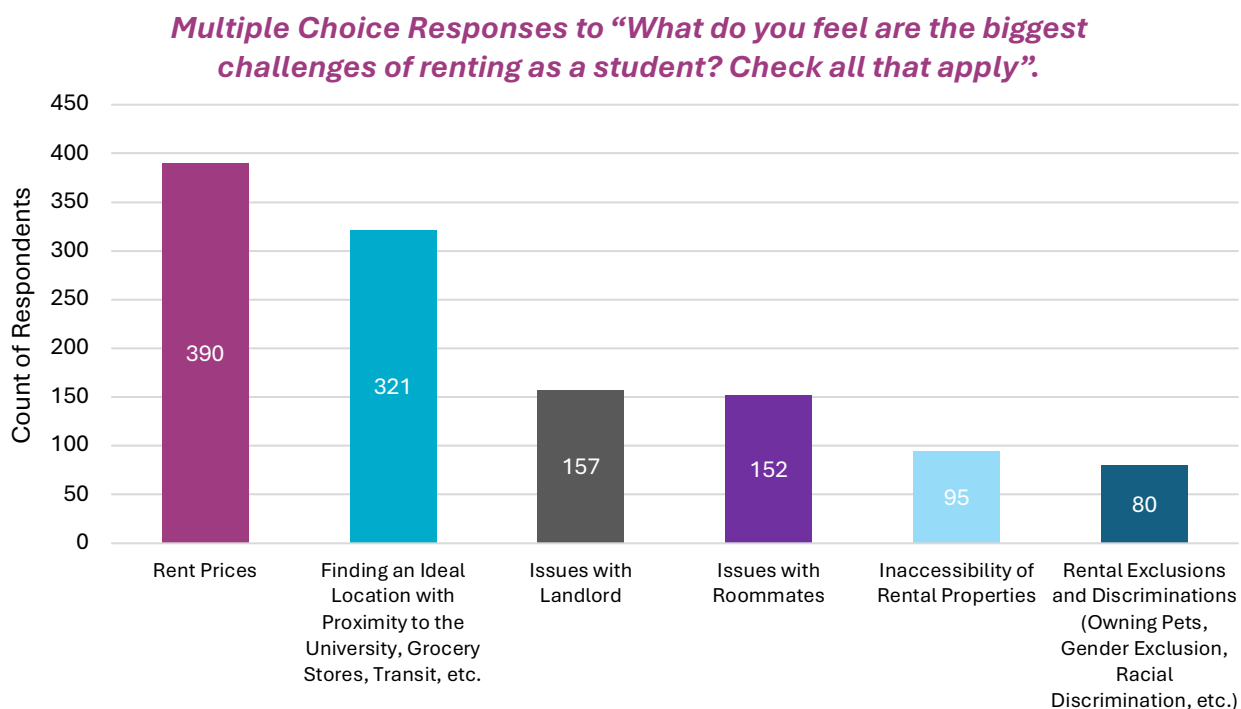
Thematic Analysis of Responses to "What would help make you feel safer in your community?"

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Count of Responses</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
Better Lighting	55	<i>"More lighting in parks." (Translation)</i>

Community Services for Vulnerable Neighbours	33	<i>"Better safe consumption services. Their funding got cut and a couple weeks later people were passed out on my street[...]."</i>
More Security Guards, Police Presence and Patrolling	29	<i>"More police patrol. Faster responses from police. Easier ways to report unsafe situations."</i>
Resolving Systemic Issues, More Affordable Housing and Addressing Homelessness	23	<i>"The city addressing systemic issues underlying social services and rising costs of living that drive people to do dangerous things like robbery."</i>
Safe-Walk Programs	12	<i>"Anything really just to make it more safer for us students (especially females) to walk to home."</i>
More Transit and Safer Driving	7	<i>"Traffic calming measures: speed bumps, speed cameras etc to prevent excess speed on my street."</i> <i>"Reliable public transit that does not require me to gamble on the arrival of buses or trains."</i>
More Cameras	8	<i>"More camera surveillance through the neighbourhood."</i>
Less Police Presence	6	<i>"Less cops. Better infrastructure. The city seems to think that throwing police at a low-income neighborhood is helpful, when in reality, it makes the area feel unsafe and tense and overpoliced without any actual positive impact on crime. I don't feel any safer in my area as a non-man with the current level and type of policing in the area."</i>

Challenges as a Student Tenant

All (n=410) respondents provided an answer to a select-all-that-apply multiple-choice question challenges faced by student renters. The question provided an option for respondents to add other comments. The table immediately below shows the results for the pre-written multiple-choice options.



95.12% (n=390) of respondents cited rent prices as a challenge faced by student renters, and 78.29% (n=321) cited finding an ideal location with proximity to the University, grocery stores and transit. Issues with landlords and roommates followed at 38.29% (n=157) and 37.07% (n=152) respectively.

Four respondents mentioned their struggles of finding housing as international students. Their comments can be seen below.

“Finding a place where they are ok with you being an international student is also a hassle [sic]. I think they feel like they don't have any guarantee with international students with is ridiculous.”

“Access for international students.” (Translation)

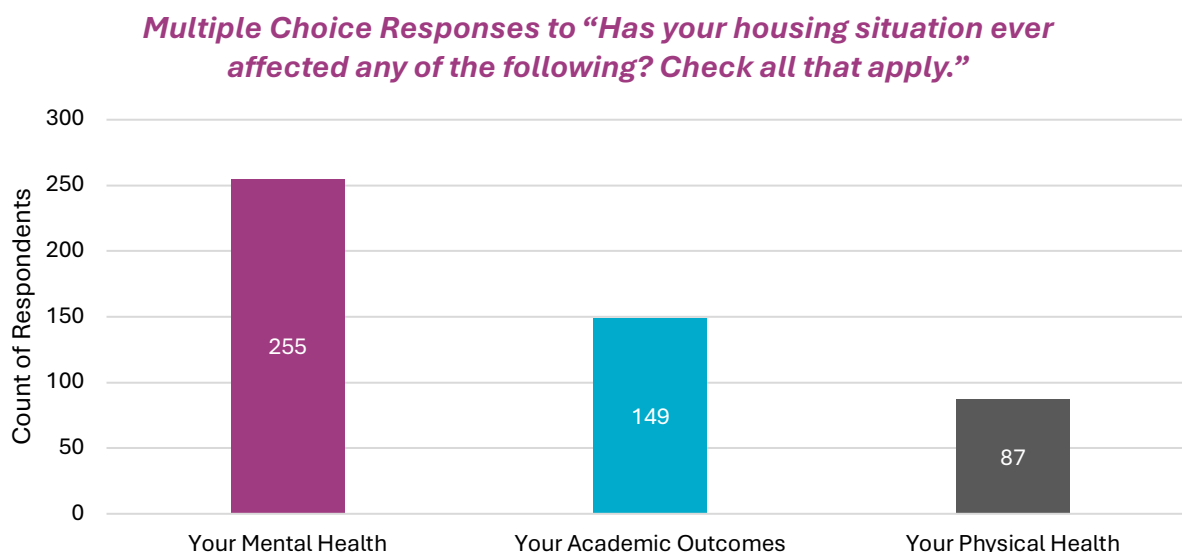
“Canadian guarantors as an international student.” (Translation)

“Sometimes, landlords ask for deposits of several months to make sure that the person can pay. Also, I've met landlords who ask me for papers proving that I'm working, even though I've never worked since I've been here. They ask for credit checks. When you're a student and a foreigner, it's hard to meet all these criteria.” (Translation)

Other respondents mentioned the necessity of finding a co-signer or guarantor in order to rent (n=4) and utilities and laundry (n=1).

Effects of Students' Housing Situation

281 (68.54%) respondents provided an answer to a select-all-that-apply multiple-choice question about whether their housing situation has ever affected their academic outcomes, their mental or physical health. The question provided an option for respondents to add other comments. The table immediately below shows the results for the pre-written multiple-choice options.



Students also mentioned the impact of their housing circumstance on their friendships and relationships (n=2) and finances (n=2), where one student commented *“it’s difficult not to think about the money”* (Translation).

When asked if respondents would like to elaborate on any of their responses from the previous question, 160 responses were received. Responses have been thematically analyzed and sorted into nine categories shown below.

Theme	Count of Responses	Example Quotes
Stress and Mental Health	78	<i>“I’m a full-time student with 2 part-time jobs. I barely have a full day off where I can take care of myself, and yet I still have friends wanting to hang out every time. I’m tired every day of the week because the home is supposed to be this quiet place that I come to [...] recharge my batteries, but living with strangers in a house that barely has any modern</i>

		<i>and functioning appliances doesn't feel like home. The environment makes me feel miserable."</i>
Conflicts with Roommates	55	<i>"I've had issues with roommates previously that made me feel really anxious and dread coming home at times. I only began to feel much more comfortable in my own space once that roommate moved out but it was definitely very draining wanting to spend extra time on campus or at my partner's place just to avoid interacting with this person who was occupying my living space"</i>
Impact on Academic Performance	44	<i>"My grades have plummeted since I've had to work two jobs in addition to my five courses in order to feed and house myself; The responsibility of housing costs is a very big mental burden. Since I have no financial support and almost no loans or grants, I'm forced to work two jobs to support myself. This affects my school results." (Translation)</i>
Financial Strain	34	<i>"When rent and tuition has to take priority, groceries and other expenses fall behind. Some months I have had to eat less or make other compromises to my physical/mental health in order to pay my bills."</i> <i>"There were times where I had to skip school to pick up extra shifts to pay rent when there were unexpected bills. The stress throughout the month about rent can occur sometimes too."</i>
Difficulty Finding a Home	23	<i>"Around last year, I urgently needed a place, since my contract in residence was expiring. It turned more difficult with landlord not responding, or too much documents asked. I was honestly desperate and was crying nearly everyday even in transport."</i> <i>"When I was looking for my current home, I was very stressed by the idea of not finding one and ending up homeless in a foreign country where I don't know anyone." (Translation)</i>
Negative Interactions with Landlords, Landlords Ignore Issues with Pests or Repairs	26	<i>"My previous apartment before my current place was soo dirty and the landlord was very mean and aggressive and never fixed problems on time. There was so many leakages, mold, mice problem, holes in walls and the landlord did nothing to fix any of the problems. It affected my physical health and mental health at times. Absolutely disgusting."</i>

Mold and Health Issues	14	<i>"In my previous home, where there was a lot of mold in our bedroom, especially under the bed, I had difficulty breathing." (Translation)</i>
Issues with Pests	10	<i>"Having bedbugs and cockroaches in second year destroyed my academic performance and my social life. No efforts were made by the landlord to help, other than to gaslight us. I couldn't meet friends, my family, and was constantly afraid of going to the library and potentially infecting another person."</i>
Living too Far from the University	8	<i>"I usually take the lrt that's a 20 min walk away total time to get to campus is 30mins if I were to directly walk to campus it'd be 40mins. On days where my back is hurting or I'm just plain tired it's not really great. It just feels like a hurdle in my day and whenever I have gaps between my question I either have to face an hour of commuting or just suck it up on campus which is always packed. Since my mental is just drained I feel I don't have as much room in my head for academics."</i>

When asked to provide any final comments, 53 responses were received. The most common responses were regarding unaffordable rent prices and price gouging (n=21). Some students commented on the importance of educating students on their rights as tenants, especially that the university should provide these resources (n=2). There were several comments making suggestions to the University of Ottawa, which can be viewed below.

"The university owns a large number of vacant houses in Sandy Hill which they do nothing with, such as the ones across the street from me on Henderson Ave. I wish they would do something with these houses, either redevelop the sites, demolish the vacant houses, or rent them out. Vacant houses attract vandalism and squatters and are not good for communities."

"Would love if the University provided student housing that wasn't mainly for first years and still too expensive to be fully covered by OSAP. Maybe the Student Union ought to take things into their own hands with providing socially oriented community housing."

"Adding student residences for freshmen and sophomores would be beneficial." (Translation)

Student Interviews

The data collected from student interviews was analysed using a thematic analysis, a method that offers a way of identifying repeated patterns of meaning across a dataset. A more semantic approach was taken throughout the analysis, by which the themes that were identified were based on explicit and surface meanings of the text analysed. This approach was utilized to provide emphasis on the perspectives of interviewees themselves upon providing the interpretation to the public. This method has proven to be beneficial upon investigating the current housing crisis, an area that is currently under-researched.

To conduct the thematic analysis, we began by familiarizing ourselves with the data via repeated active reading of data and associated transcripts collected. Then we transitioned to the generation of initial codes of the data, where codes refer to the most basic segments and/or elements of the raw data which can be assessed in a more meaningful manner regarding the current research of interest. NVivo - a qualitative content analysis software, was used throughout the coding of this project. A total of 11 themes (n=9) were identified across datasets provided from surveys and interviews, with 2 (n=2) of those themes being common across both data sets. For our analysis, the coded data extracts were assigned to as many different “themes” as they fit into. The themes were then refined by rereading all the collated extracts for each theme and considering whether they formed a coherent pattern. The validity of each theme and whether it accurately reflected the meanings evident in the data set as a whole. Finally, each theme was titled using phrases that properly summarized the direct quotations and data collected in-vivo.

A total of six main themes were identified within the two focus groups conducted in February of 2025 on assessing the current housing crisis in Ottawa. The first theme highlights the level of housing affordability in the Ottawa region as reflected by students attending the University of Ottawa and the associated limitations mental, social, and physical limitations imposed on residents by needing to afford housing. The second theme captures content relating to the overall maintenance and/or satisfaction of the place of residence as implicated by tenants and those who rent. The third theme captures all information relevant to the process of searching for housing and factors that cause the housing search to be limited and/or difficult for students searching for residence. The fourth theme focuses on the overall safety and security of residence, including the presence of criminal activity and/or unsafe housing infrastructure. The fifth theme denotes all content related to the knowledge and mention of tenant rights and its implications during the tenant’s time in residence. The sixth and final theme captures all content related to addressing the housing crisis and the presence of university involvement in the provision of housing and/or housing support to students.

Theme I: Housing Affordability

Throughout both focus group interviews, there were various statements indicating that students struggled with finding affordable housing that also met their needs. This resulted in

students having to make sacrifices (financial, physical, and mental) to combat limitations imposed by unaffordable housing. For example, some students indicated they had to maintain income at part-time and/or full-time work to afford their place of residence whilst still taking a full-time undergraduate course load. Many expressed having to sacrifice their summer-terms to work full-time jobs, which also led to additional stress during the school year, by which they would be unable to retake courses or reduce their course load by taking courses in the summer due to needing to work. One student quoted:

"I work full time all summer, but it does get quite hard, especially being in undergraduate studies. I really have the pressure of "I can't fail anything because I can't afford to take something in the summer time", and even when I had worked all summer, I still had to work [during the school year] to get tuition paid, utilities and groceries. And on top of that, rent seems to be the biggest burden [...] I was paying more in rent a month than I did for my most recent semester."

To many students, the cost of rent has become an explicit burden on their costs, making up more than what they are currently paying in tuition. This translates to the idea that current housing costs have forced students to de-prioritize their education and ultimately abandon their role as a "student" as their primary focus. Presently, to afford necessities such as food, water, and shelter, students must sacrifice their studies and physical and mental health to work multiple jobs and maintain income. This poses an intense burden on many students' physical wellbeing.

This theme also encapsulates the utilization of external subsidiaries, funding, and/or government loans for students to afford housing. One student expressed that without the usage of government-subsidized loans (such as OSAP) and family assistance, they likely would not have been approved in their application for their current place of residence:

"So my dad is my cosigner and basically his name and my roommate's name are on the lease. Without that we were like, 90% sure we weren't going to get through with our application, but other than that, really just parts of OSAP that we leftover from our tuition and having a co-signer."

Theme II: Maintenance and/or Satisfaction of Residence

Students noted that they often experienced poor maintenance and cleanliness of their place of residence, which was often influenced by lack of cooperation and responsiveness from landlords and/or corporate agencies in maintaining and resolving present issues, and a lack of accountability and transparency from said individuals. These factors imposed a huge decline in the quality of life of students living in residences, where mold, poor air ventilation, the presence of pests and broken infrastructure became a common occurrence. Students expressed a consistent struggle in locating a resolution to these issues due to little to no cooperation or dedication to maintaining a clean property from landlords. One student stated:

We started with a request through the resident portal and we've had to put about 5 requests before we actually got someone... and we're still dealing with the roaches. We're still putting in the demands that they finish the job... cause it's not proper living conditions and still to this day it has not been resolved, it's been going on since September."

Another student also commented on how their landlord consistently does not respond to messages, indicating poor communication and involvement in the overall maintenance of the property which they reside in.

In another instance, a student how upon deciding on their current residence, their landlord explicitly did not show the entirety of their unit to hide portions of the unit that were poorly maintained. Instead, during a tour over video call, they were shown a different unit.

"We were offered video tours of each unit that we were interested in [...] And then looking back at it now, I go through the video and I realize they didn't show [some parts of the unit] on purpose. Maybe something was broken when they took the video. But it almost looked like the video that was sent to us was from a unit that looked like ours, but not our unit. And I think that's where things get tricky. When you have an apartment complex and units are very similar, landlords are able just to take videos of units that look like the one you're moving into and market you off of it [...] But in reality you come in and things are broken and things are a mess and the building itself is deteriorating."

This quote demonstrates what is unfortunately a common occurrence for many students desperately searching for a place of residence, by which oftentimes, landlords and corporate agencies demonstrate a lack of transparency when leasing to new tenants. Often, students find themselves moving into properties that are not as they were advertised, rather, they find the property to be neglected, rundown, or in disrepair. Combined with the lack of effort they receive from property managers and/or landlords in resolving these issues, students must often settle for a home that is severely declined in quality and condition, despite the amount they pay to afford such a residence.

Theme III: Housing Search

This theme encapsulates the experience of students when searching for housing. Students expressed that the primary method of searching for housing was the usage of online media and listings posted by landlords/corporate agencies, and/or individuals looking to transfer their lease. However, this also meant that students were regularly exposed to housing scams and/or fraud via fake advertisements, or prices ranges that were off budget.

"I struggled looking around for a place to live [...] One of the biggest issues was that there were a lot of scams on Facebook marketplace. So then when we went to actual

agencies, then the price range was a lot different and completely off budget. But we had no choice since we were not finding a place without there being a scam, and I couldn't be homeless."

Presently, the overall student population has become increasingly vulnerable to housing scams and fraud, which forces them to have to expand their budgets to rent housing beyond their affordable budgets. As a result, students are compelled to either a) risk being victimized by fraud and/or scams in hopes of retrieving an affordable residence, or b) make sacrifices (ie. financial, mental, physical) to afford housing in the first place.

Theme IV: Safety of Place of Residence

This theme focuses on the overall safety of the place of residence, involving the presence of criminal activity in the community and/or neighborhood, and if and when proper security measures are considered in the student's place of residence. Throughout the interviews, students expressed multiple instances where their personal health and safety was on the line due to exposure to multiple factors, such as unsafe housing infrastructure that poses a security risk. Students noted the absence of proper security measures in their place of residence, often which makes them feel unsafe: *"One thing I noticed is the lack of streetlights in Sandy Hill. It is so dark in this neighborhood."* In one instance, a student denoted consistent ignorance from their landlord on their personal safety, by which their window was boarded with plywood upon expressing concerns of individuals breaking into their room, which eliminates a potential fire exit for the student. In addition, many students also noted the lack of fire alarms and carbon monoxide monitors in their place of residence, which is an extreme violation of current Ontario laws.

"I didn't have a smoke alarm in my room, which isn't legal. They [landlord] ended up boarding my window with plywood and so not only do I not have a window, but in case there was a fire outside my room I really wouldn't have an exit."

Students also noticed the presence of persons experiencing homelessness in their neighbourhood and/or residence community. However, they did not state that it made them feel unsafe. Rather, it was more so the lack of security measures around their building that prompted many experiencing homelessness to use their place of residence as temporary shelter, which leads to a severe lack of personal security in their own homes.

"I think there's been a homeless person on the roof once, which is also right by my window."

Overall, there is a persistent lack of regard for student safety in housing. Students expressed having to constantly advocate for their safety and often felt ignored despite feeling as if they were under persistent threat from external sources. This demonstrates that students are having to sacrifice more than just their school and finances - but also their safety and security - to afford shelter.

Theme V: Tenant Rights

The overall familiarity that students had with their rights as tenants was brought into question, and a majority of students expressed moderate familiarity with their rights - by which they continued to gain more knowledge once they began renting. However, despite this, it was revealed that landlords and/or corporate agencies continuously violate the rights of tenants as stated in the *Tenants Rights Act* and make no effort in maintaining or adhering to Ontario law. Violations of the *Tenants Rights Act* as performed by landlords/corporate agencies include:

- Illegally entering a unit without 24 hours' notice
- Withholding vital services necessary for residence to be habitable (ie. water, heating) without notice
- Unreasonable interference on tenant enjoyment to unit
- Requiring unnecessary and unreasonable fees and rent payments
- Maintain habitable living spaces that is clean, safe, and free from hazards

A primary example of tenant right violation as expressed by students were landlords/corporate managers entering their apartment without notice: *"we had people who were coming in unannounced to work on things to which I was very fed up with..."* Students are persistently exploited and uninformed in the housing environment, where they have to sacrifice their rights to living in a comfortable space. Students are often offered no support when tackling repercussions on landlords/corporate agencies that only violate their rights in return.

In addition, for students to report their landlords only becomes yet another financial and mental burden. Currently, the *Landlord and Tenant Board* require a payment of a \$45 fee upon completing an application to report landlords and their unlawful acts. Furthermore, court hearings, and other orders may be required when reporting a landlord - making such an event a long and arduous task that is ignorant of the student's time and energy. For students to commit to such a process, they must miss classes, work, or other responsibilities to advocate for rights that should already be non-negotiable to begin with. Presently, within the housing community, no respect or support is offered towards students, and no effort has been made by local communities and support groups to resolve this.

Theme VI: Addressing the Housing Crisis

Students were inquired on what they believe to be necessary solutions and/or methods in addressing the present housing crisis, and most answers following the question circled to the lack of university involvement in addressing the present crisis. Multiple students noted the overall decline in available university housing in the past few years.

"Not that we should be looking at America as an example for a lot of things, but for them they are guaranteed housing throughout their [students] time at school. And I

think it's kind of crazy that uOttawa and a lot of other universities don't offer that same thing."

In summary, students believe that university institutions should be offering more resources for students to understand their rights as well as accessible means in reaching affordable housing. On multiple occasions, the burden falls on students themselves to afford shelter and remain informed whilst searching for housing. Students feel as if they must negate their role as a student to battle poor housing, law violations, and rising prices - despite being in an institution that claims to offer students the utmost financial and mental support for their well-being. Presently, students feel ignored, undervalued, and forgotten by their educational institutions, and believe that the scope of how badly the housing crisis is affecting them is not understood.

"I think at the very least the university could be offering resources to help people learn about their rights and understand what's wrong and what they can do about it. The only housing resource I've seen straight from the university was the housing billboard, and unfortunately there's scams on there too [...] So I think the university should take this more seriously as a whole and address this issue that they see going on rather than just push it off to the side..."

Discussion of Results

Of the 410 results analyzed from the survey, it can be determined that the average rent paid by University of Ottawa student renters is **\$926.67**. Rent is \$105.89 cheaper in Gatineau than in Ottawa. 44% of respondents live in Sandy Hill, reaffirming this community as the primary off-campus student neighbourhood and highlighting the importance of further research and action on student housing in this area.

Most students live in a three-bedroom (n=95, Ontario) or two-bedroom (n=94 Ontario, n=11 Quebec). When analyzing qualitative comments on the effects of housing challenges on students, the topic of conflicts with roommates was a recurring theme with 55 separate comments out of 160 comments in total. Students spoke of roommates who did not respect their privacy or shared spaces, as well as the stress and anxiety associated with living with people you do not get along with. While sharing houses with others has long been a reality for university students, it can be argued that the increasing cost of housing, as well as the financialization of housing that incentivizes landlords or housing providers to fit too many rooms in one unit, is pushing students to live with too many people or to live with people they do not get along with out of necessity.

The highest rent price by landlord type is paid by students renting from corporate landlords at an average of \$1092.62 monthly. On the topic of financialized housing, one respondent commented, *"I'm part of the students who live under fahel and co/ smart living properties*

rental units. These people routinely price gouge the markets in and around sandy hill. I have a discount on my rent, but there are people in my building paying 1550 a month. It's insane and unethical. The property management have a monopoly on the housing around the university and sandy hill." Operating under an assumption that parents are paying students' rent or taking advantage of the lucrative and deeply unregulated sphere of student housing, landlords, corporate and individual are charging prices that are oppressive and unreasonable for the average student's salary or savings.

The lack of quality in homes is a massive barrier to the health and quality of life for students. Students repeatedly mentioned black mold and its effects on their health, rodents, bed bugs, cockroaches and other pests, as well as fires and floods. Some students have been living away from their homes while these issues are fixed by landlords that are reportedly slow to respond or ignorant of these issues. One student commented they have been living *"out of a suitcase for the majority of [their] second year"*, which evidently will impact a student's ability to focus on academics. Another student was displaced from their home due to a fire, without tenant's insurance, and their roommate got frostbite while facing a lack of a home while another was sick due to smoke inhalation.

Despite a wide range of reported problems with homes, most students still reported an okay relationship with their landlord. In interviews, students reported issues with their landlords, but also a feeling of not wanting to complain out of fear of worsening their relationship with their landlord or jeopardizing their housing. One student commented in the survey, *"[...] since [landlords] know they're in a better position than us, they abuse. They don't take care of the housing. Housing is scarce, and on that basis, if there's a problem and you tell them, they instantly threaten to kick you out at the end of the month."* Most complaints about landlords pointed to their slow response times, bad communication, cheapness with repairs, and lack of attention to the quality of the home.

54.15% of students do not have air conditioning in their homes, aligning closely with survey results from ACORN Ottawa showing 60% of low to middle income tenants do not have air conditioning in their units (ACORN Ottawa, 2024, p. 7). As temperatures rise, and with two heat waves over the past two summers, with record breaking heat last summer (Greco, 2024), the lack of A/C in most units will continue to be a growing problem that will affect the physical well-being of students.

International students commented on their fears of not being able to find a place to live on time and being stranded in a foreign country, the difficulty of finding co-signers and making sense of complicated demands for documents and proof of income when applying to rentals and facing discrimination from landlords for their status. High tuition costs and systemic barriers to working hours contribute to this stress of finding affordable, safe housing. One international student commented that when they reached out to the University for help, they were told the University *"cannot help everybody"*, and to *"go 'part-time' instead of 'full-time' because of the amount of classes [they were] missing"* due to their inability to find

housing, “which [they] couldn't obviously because of [their] international student permit.” The high acceptance of international students yearly without adequate planning for housing or acknowledgement of the high cost of living in Ottawa sets international students up to face more challenges and creates extra barriers to their success.

Almost 100% of students claimed that rent prices were one of the biggest barriers faced by student renters. Most students rely on employment to pay for rent, despite the time and mental energy this can take away from studies. Many students commented on how the necessity to work while studying takes away from their time to focus on academics, limits their time to foster relationships and friendships, and adds to the already burdensome weight of stresses and responsibilities. Several students admitted in the survey that they work more than one job at a time to afford rent, food and tuition. The inequality in time, money and energy between students who pay for their rent through parent(s) or guardian(s) entirely and those who pay through employment entirely will contribute to inequalities in grades, class attendance and participation in student life on campus. As one student commented, *“It is hard on mental health when rent anywhere is expensive for a horrible apartment and you’re essentially living pay cheque to pay cheque. Also the fact that there’s no way to get a decent apartment means you’re stuck in a horrible one and a poor environment degrades on mental health.”*

In terms of safety, generally most students feel a sense of safety in their community and at home. Very little difference was observed in the differences of safety felt between all respondents and three equity-seeking groups (women and gender diverse people, Black people and people of visible racial minority). Very noticeable differences were observed in student sense of safety in different neighbourhoods, particularly in Vanier and Byward Market. When discussing what made students feel unsafe, many respondents brought up the homeless population that resides in Downtown Ottawa, due to the many services in the neighbourhood for those facing homelessness or substance use issues. When discussing solutions to safety issues, a few students mentioned heightened police presence and patrolling, while a few respondents mentioned that more police would make them feel unsafe. One respondent commented, *“The city seems to think that throwing police at a low-income neighborhood is helpful, when in reality, it makes the area feel unsafe and tense and overpoliced without any actual positive impact on crime. I don't feel any safer in my area as a non-man with the current level and type of policing in the area.”*

Elaborating on their view of the higher density of services in Downtown Ottawa for those struggling with lack of shelter or substance use issues, one respondent wrote, *“More affluent neighbourhoods have money and powerful community engagement, whereas Sandy Hill has a transient student population that is not engaged in municipal affairs, so generally shelters pop up in areas like Sandy Hill where they see less objection from the community. This high concentration of shelters in our neighbourhood, while necessary as a bandaid to the homelessness crisis, manifests itself worse in neighbourhoods like Sandy Hill.”*

In Sandy Hill, several groups of people, like the student population, working population, homeless population and families coexist in a shared space, and systemic issues that continue to be worsened by the housing and cost of living crisis are evidently threatening the social dynamics between community members, eroding trust and leading to feelings of insecurity. Some comments implied or assumed a level of universal understanding of the issues facing our community, simply naming streets or neighbourhoods when asked what made them feel unsafe. This could imply that students have accepted the polycrisis of poverty, housing unaffordability and illegal substance use in Downtown Ottawa as the nature of the area, already visible to all, where further nuance is not needed. There is certainly potential for the University and its student to engage more directly with vulnerable populations in order to heal these dynamics, bridge communities and create a stronger sense of ownership over the safety of our neighbourhoods.

While the accessibility of homes did not affect a large percentage of respondents, it is evident that a lack of elevators or safe staircases is damaging to the health of many students and can severely restrict the ability of disabled students to find adequate housing in a tight market.

Policy Recommendations

The University of Ottawa Students' Union's Student Housing Exploratory Caucus (SHEC) puts forward the following recommendations, based on findings from this report as well as the literature review, consultation with public officials and broader housing justice goals for students and tenants in Ottawa.

1) Recommendations to the University of Ottawa

- a) The University of Ottawa develop, repurpose, and utilize vacant houses, unused land, and unoccupied residence buildings for student housing.
- b) The University of Ottawa collaborate with municipal, provincial, and federal governments as well as the Student Union to transparently share enrollment forecasts, collaborate with developers, and create a five-year enrollment and development plan to support sustainable growth. This plan is to be shared with municipalities and the private sector in order to plan for growth.
- c) The University of Ottawa ensures an adequate supply of student residences for both domestic and international students, offers flexible lease options, and develops summer housing solutions to accommodate student need.
- d) The University of Ottawa, through research on innovative building materials and construction methods, keeping curriculum up-to-date, integrating emerging technologies and sustainable practices into programs, collaborating with industry leaders, and providing hands-on training opportunities, help create a more efficient and skilled workforce capable of tackling housing affordability, supply challenges, housing policy, development and construction innovation, and creating solutions.

2) Recommendations to the City of Ottawa

- a) The City of Ottawa's new bylaw should establish Student Housing Affordability Incentive Zones within a 5 km radius of major post-secondary institutions.
- b) The City of Ottawa allocates municipal funds to support Community Land Trusts which can provide the necessary capital for acquiring land and properties, enabling the development and preservation of affordable housing units.
- c) The City of Ottawa provides financial and zoning incentives for nonprofits and housing cooperatives to create affordable, sustainable, and community-driven student housing projects.

3) Recommendations to the Government of Ontario

- a) The Government of Ontario removes the rent control exemption on new rental units and reinstating rent control on all rental units which will allow students and their communities to have stability, security, and fairness.
- b) The Government of Ontario re-establishes vacancy control, providing incoming tenants with a rent price similar to the outgoing tenants' and creating price stability and predictability in the housing market.
- c) The Government of Ontario creates a new dedicated capital and operating fund to construct and maintain non-profit PBSAs.

4) Recommendations to the Government of Canada

- a) The Government of Canada expands their National Housing Strategy program eligibility and offer cost-effective measures for students.
- b) The Government of Canada takes an active but consistent role with setting aside adequate funding for constructing purpose-built student housing.
- c) The Government of Canada proposes that the Renter's Bill of Rights include legislation covering all private rental units, including those occupied by students and young Canadians.

Future Research Directions

If the SHEC were to conduct a report in the next UOSU term, which is the recommendation of the current SHEC team, the following questions are recommended to be added to the survey:

1. Did your rent increase? How much did your rent increase? Please write the amount that you pay individually, and not the increased cost for the entire space.
2. Have you sought guidance from the University of Ottawa in finding a place of residence off-campus? What was your experience? What could be improved?
3. What kind of home do you live in? (Townhouse, duplex, apartment, etc.)

Future research on the topic of student housing could further explore the role of the University of Ottawa in student housing, possibly through interviewing professors,

administration and the uOttawa Off-Campus Housing office. A research survey targeted to residents of University of Ottawa on-campus residences on their experiences could also provide valuable insight. Further research on the increasing financialization of Sandy Hill would allow for stronger policy recommendations in terms of regulating and managing corporate housing providers and their relationships with tenants. Research into the relationships between long-time Sandy Hill tenants, students and the homeless population could provide valuable insight into the social dynamics that occur within our diverse community. Comparative research between student housing realities at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University would also provide great insight into the diverse realities of student renters across the city. International students are one of the populations most vulnerable to housing insecurity, especially due to a lack of a support system in Canada, high cost of living and discrimination due to their status and income. Further inquiry into the experiences of international students and ways to support their housing needs is encouraged.

Conclusion

This report was developed by students and for students, in the hope that it can aid the developing conversation around housing and shed light on the often underheard perspective. We reject the common belief that these struggles, like unaffordability, disrespect from landlords or health concerns due to a poor quality of home are the “nature” of student housing. Students, just as everyone does, deserve dignified, affordable, and suitable accommodations.

We acknowledge that the housing crisis is in fact the housing market working as intended for the very wealthiest stakeholders in our city, but in its current heightened form, students have become the canary in the coal mine for the housing crisis facing everyone. Students face some of the worst effects of the housing crisis and face an increasingly financialized housing market. In many ways students are on the frontlines of the future of the housing market in Canada; high rents, corporate control, and worsening conditions. For students to take on this massive burden during their studies threatens their ability to focus on their academics and careers, demotivates them and adds new layers of difficulty to already challenging student life.

Finally, it would be impossible to ignore the role that Universities and post-secondary institutions play in worsening the housing crisis, in displacement, and in gentrification. Students have had a long history of resisting their complicity in displacement, a history we hope to see continue at the University of Ottawa, where uOttawa is the leaseholder for the Sandy Hill Co-Op and St. Georges Co-op, affordable housing for primarily low-income tenants (Grigon, 2022). While the University renegotiates their lease with these co-ops we ask them to consider the cost of displacement, the cost of losing that affordable housing stock, and the reputational cost. We also hope to see the University of Ottawa acknowledge directly the concerns of students as highlighted by this report, offer further resources in finding affordable and safe housing, tackle the safety concerns of students, and commit to building more student housing on its available land.

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Annex

Survey Questions

uOttawa Student Housing Survey

This survey is being conducted by the University of Ottawa Student Union to study and assess the state of housing rental for uOttawa students. This survey is intended for undergraduate students at the University of Ottawa who are renting their current place of residence off-campus. The survey will take up to 10 minutes to complete.

Your information will be kept strictly confidential and your identity will be protected when the results of the survey are shared publicly.

Thank you for your participation! All participants will automatically receive a 10% discount coupon at PIVIK when you show confirmation of completing this survey and be entered in a draw to win a \$500 tuition credit.

* Required

Demographics

1. uOttawa Student Number* _____
2. Are you an undergraduate student at the University of Ottawa? *
 - ☐ Yes, in first year
 - ☐ Yes, in second year
 - ☐ Yes, in third year
 - ☐ Yes, in fourth year
 - ☐ Yes, in my fifth year or higher
 - ☐ No
3. How old are you (enter in number form) * _____

Rent and Utilities

4. Do you rent the place you live in currently? *
 - ☐ Yes, I rent
 - ☐ Yes, I am subletting
 - ☐ No, I live in a University of Ottawa residence (90U, Stanton, etc)

- ☐ No, I own my own home (parents own my home, etc)
- ☐ Other

5. How much do you pay in rent currently? Please write the amount that you pay individually, and not the monthly cost of the entire space. (Enter a number with no symbols) *

6. Has your rent increased since you moved in? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. How much has your rent increased by since moving in? (Enter the dollar amount, not percentage, with no symbols)

8. Did you have to pay an application fee when applying to rent your place of residence? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. If you said yes, how much was the application fee? (Enter a number with no symbols)

10. How do you pay for your rent? *

- ☐ I pay for my rent myself through employment (partly or entirely)
- ☐ I pay for my rent through student loans or scholarships (partly or entirely)
- ☐ My parent(s) or guardian(s) pay for my rent (partly or entirely)
- ☐ Other

11. When did you move into your current place of residence? (MM/YYYY) *

12. How long is your lease contract? *

- ☐ I lease on a month-month basis
- ☐ 4 months
- ☐ 6 months
- ☐ 8 months
- ☐ 12 months
- ☐ Other

13. Which utilities are included in your rent price? Check all that apply. *

- ☐ Hydro
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Heat
- ☐ Wifi
- ☐ Other

14. Which community do you rent in?*

- ☐ Sandy Hill
- ☐ Centretown
- ☐ Lowertown
- ☐ Byward Market
- ☐ Other

15. Does your property have parking? *

- ☐ Yes, it is included in my rent
- ☐ Yes, I pay an additional price for it
- ☐ No

16. If you pay for your parking, how much is it per month?

17. How many bedrooms are in your place of residence? *

- ☐ 0 (I live in a studio)
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7+

18. How many roommates do you live with (excluding yourself)? *

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7+

19. How did you find your current place of residence? *

- ☐ Facebook Marketplace
- ☐ Social Media post
- ☐ Recommendation from a friend/acquaintance
- ☐ University Rental Website (Student Housing Billboard)
- ☐ External Rental Website (RentFaster, Zillow, Rentals.ca Kijiji, etc.)
- ☐ Other

20. How easy was it for you to find and secure your current apartment? *

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat difficult
- ☐ Very difficult
- ☐ Other

21. Would you like to elaborate on your experience finding your current apartment?*

Housing Quality

22. Was your place of residence furnished or unfurnished when you began renting? *

- ☐ Furnished
- ☐ Unfurnished

23. Does your property have AC?*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

24. Do you experience any of these issues inside your home? Check all that apply. *

- ☐ Mold
- ☐ Issues with pests (Rats, cockroaches, beetles, bed bugs, silverfish, etc.)
- ☐ Non-functional appliances
- ☐ Issues with heating
- ☐ Poor air ventilation and/or air quality
- ☐ Leaky faucets/toilets/shower
- ☐ Lack of smoke alarm or fire extinguisher
- ☐ Frequent occurrence of loud noises and disturbances,
- ☐ Lack of safety and security in the property (due to faulty door and window locks),
- ☐ Frequently malfunctioning elevators
- ☐ No elevator in a multi-story building
- ☐ Other

25. Were you satisfied with the cleanliness of your property when you moved in? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

26. If you responded no, please explain:

Accessibility of Home

27. How well does your housing accommodate physical accessibility needs (e.g., wheelchair access, elevator availability, accessible bathrooms?) *

1 2 3 4 5

28. Were accessibility needs a determining factor in your choice of housing? *

- ☐ Yes, they were a determining factor
- ☐ They were a contributing factor
- ☐ They were not a factor
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

29. If they were a factor in your decision, how easy was it for you to find information about accessibility features in your housing search?

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

30. Would you like to elaborate on your experience with the accessibility of rental properties?

Proximity to Services

31. Would you consider your place of residence to be within walking distance of a grocery store or supermarket? *

- ☐ Yes, I walk to the grocery store
- ☐ Yes, but I take transit or drive to the grocery store
- ☐ No, I take transit or drive to the grocery store
- ☐ No, grocery stores are not easily accessible from my place of residence

32. Would you consider your place of residence to be within walking distance of an LRT station? *

- ☐ Yes, I can walk to the LRT station
- ☐ No, I have to take a bus or drive to the LRT station

- I don't know, I don't use the LRT on a regular basis

33. Is your bus stop within 5 to 10 minutes of your residence? *

- Yes, I can walk to the bus stop in under 5 minutes
- Yes, I can walk to the bus stop in 5-10 minutes
- No
- I don't know, I don't take the bus on a regular basis

34. Would you like to elaborate more on your level of access to essential services like the LRT, buses or grocery stores?

Tenant - Landlord Relationship

35. Who is your landlord? *

- A corporate landlord (Real estate investment trust, management company, apartment building)
- Medium scale landlord (owns multiple residential properties)
- Small scale landlord (owns one residential property or rents part of their home)
- I rent from a friend or family member
- I am subletting
- I am not sure
- Other

36. Do you feel that your landlord responds in a timely manner when you reach out with requests? (1 never - 5 right away) *

1 2 3 4 5

37. If you have ever experienced major issues with your landlord, please elaborate here

Safety

38. I feel safe walking home after dark. (1 - Not at all, 5 - Absolutely) *

1 2 3 4 5

39. I feel secure in my place of residence. (1 - Not at all, 5 - Absolutely) *

1 2 3 4 5

40. I would describe my community as a safe one. (1 - Not at all, 5 - Absolutely) *

1 2 3 4 5

41. What are some reasons you may feel unsafe in your neighbourhood?

42. What would help make you feel safer in your community?

Final Questions

Important: If you want to receive the PIVIK discount, click *Send me an email receipt* of my response and show that to the cashier within two weeks.

43. Do you belong to one or more of the following equity-seeking groups? Check all options that apply.

- ☐ Indigenous
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Person of visible racial minority (not including Indigenous or Black persons)
- ☐ International Student
- ☐ 2SLGBTQIA+
- ☐ Person with disabilities
- ☐ Women and gender diverse people
- ☐ Person with dependents

44. What do you feel are the biggest challenges of renting as a student? Check all that apply. *

- ☐ Rent prices
- ☐ Rental exclusions and discriminations (owning pets, gender exclusion, racial discrimination, etc.)
- ☐ Finding an ideal location with proximity to the university, grocery stores, transit, etc.
- ☐ Issues with roommates
- ☐ Issues with landlord
- ☐ Inaccessibility of rental properties
- ☐ Other

45. Has your housing situation ever affected any of the following?

- ☐ Your academic outcomes
- ☐ Your mental health
- ☐ Your physical health
- ☐ Other

46. Would you like to elaborate on your response to the previous question?

47. Do you have anything else to add? Anything you can provide is valuable information.

48. Would you like to participate in an interview to provide more information about your housing experience? Your identity will remain confidential. Interviewees will be paid an honorarium of \$25.

- Yes, I would like to be contacted to participate in an interview. I understand that due to capacity restraints, not everyone who says yes will be selected
- No, I would not like to participate in an interview