

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

COMMITTEE Economic and Social Council
ISSUE Resolving Student Housing Crises
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Introduction

The Student Housing Crisis is a worldwide issue affecting plenty of countries. The term is used to define the current phenomena of housing insecurity among higher-educational students, meaning a large number of pupils are unable to find viable accommodation or get evicted from their homes. Demand for more student aimed housing has been around for some time, however, the COVID-19 pandemic held a new set of challenges. As a result of transferring classes onto virtual planes in 2020, numerous second-year undergraduates looked for adequate housing at the beginning of the 2021/2022 school term, along with the regular first-year admissions. This incidence heavily strained the housing resources of many universities while other ones experienced a major drop in admissions.

Definition of Key Terms

ICEF - This corporation aims to help international students find a place for higher education while also providing research and up-to-date news about the education industry.

Housing insecurity - The state when one lacks security in their home. This can vary from overcrowding and inadequate housing conditions to high rental prices.

Homelessness - The best way to define homelessness is by paraphrasing the OHCHR: “Experiencing homelessness means not having stable, safe and adequate housing, nor the means and ability to obtain it. International agencies, governments, researchers or civil society have adopted different definitions of homelessness depending on language, socioeconomic conditions, cultural norms, the groups affected and the purpose for which homelessness is being defined, such as persons living in the streets, in open spaces or cars; persons living in temporary emergency accommodation, in women’s shelters, in camps or other temporary accommodation provided to internally displaced

persons, refugees or migrants; and persons living in severely inadequate and insecure housing, such as residents of informal settlements.”

Purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) - Housing built for students by private developers. They usually consist of many rooms with shared living areas.

Structural racism - It affects the well-being and chances of people of colour. It normalises practices that benefit White people and causes disadvantages for non-White people, such as seemingly neutral recruitment policies, which leads to the exclusion of people of colour from organisations or positions of power.

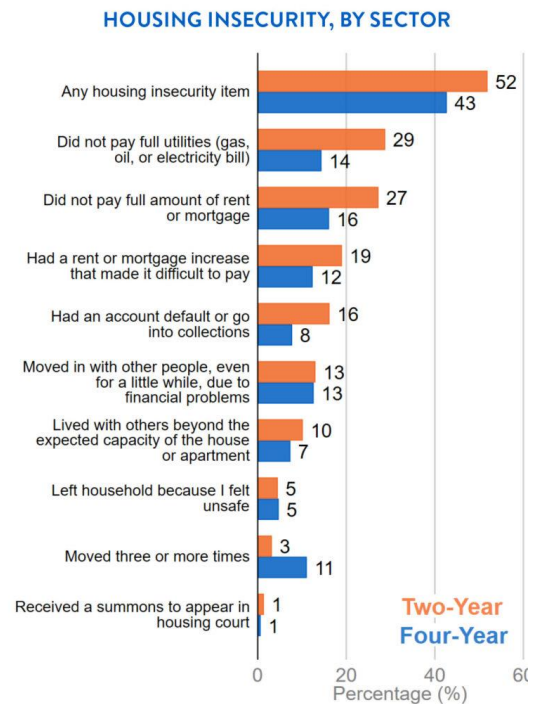
Redlining - It is a form of discrimination in which a mortgage lender or insurance provider denies services based on the community one is from. The name comes from the early 1900s when loan corporations would mark non-White neighbourhoods with a red line, deciding they were undesirable for lending.

General Overview

There is no worldwide data found about the student housing crisis because it is different in every country. Nevertheless, these situations can be traced back to the same core: unavailable housing and the effects of the pandemic.

UNAVAILABLE HOUSING

Unavailable student housing is one of the major causes of the current student housing crisis. Despite the fact that universities try to keep up with the demand, it is so fast-growing it is nearly impossible. An example of this is the situation in California, in the United States. Since 2015, the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) overall completed the construction of approximately 36,000 additional beds. Nonetheless, for fall 2021, CSU reported waitlisting 8,700 students while UC had more than 7,500 waiting for campus housing, both significantly higher rates than two years prior, in 2019.



Another problem pupils face is that even though in some places there are existing alternative housing options off-campus, more often than not, they are out of the affordable price range. In the United States, rent even rose 9% nationwide, making it difficult for students to pay for an off-campus residence. The increasing rent also makes them vulnerable to evictions, and evicted students are at an increased risk of dropping out of education.

International students are at an even higher risk of not being able to find housing. Domestic students, if their families live in the same area, could solve their problem by moving back home with their parents, while for obvious reasons international students are unable to do so. In the Netherlands, the situation is so grave that the University of Twente had to ask international students who up to that point could not find housing to look for another school. What also makes finding accommodation as an international student hard is that some landlords ask for in-country references of the students to prove they can pay the rent. In addition, in many countries, for instance in Canada, international students have a limited time to work a week, causing them to have little means to pay for the already high yet still rising rent.

It is an important addition that historically Black institutions in the United States have experienced a major increase in admissions due to the rising racial tensions in the country. An example of this is that Morgan State University had to close its waitlist early for the first time since instead of the regular 1,400 - 1,500 students, about 2000 new pupils enrolled. People of

colour, in general, are proved to be more affected by housing insecurity and homelessness as a result of structural racism. In the United States in 2020, 70% of Black and 75% of Indigenous students suffered food and housing insecurity, compared to 54% of White students. It is also important to note that in a research aimed to investigate why students that previously did academically well in school drop out of college, it was found that Black and Hispanic students were more likely to encounter financial and informational barriers compared to their White counterparts.

EFFECTS OF COVID-19

Because of the pandemic, students could not start their higher-education studies in a physical form instead, they studied at home in online classes. It also happened that students decided to postpone their education for a time, to be able to attend university in person. Consequently, when universities and colleges reopened their gates at the beginning of 2021, twice as many new people were looking for residence - second-year students who studied at home the previous year and first-year ones that either postponed their studies or just graduated from high school.

In 2020, the schools that kept their dormitories open had to reduce the occupant density by restricting how many students could live in one dorm room to somewhat shield undergraduates from getting infected. The same happened off-campus as well. Landlords offering single room accommodation to college attendants in their own homes decided to refrain from accepting new tenants because of the threat of the virus.

It is important to note that although many top universities are unable to provide housing, other post-secondary institutions fall on the other side of the scope - they have a surplus in dorm rooms and struggle to find students to fill them up. As an effect of COVID, there has been a significant drop in enrolment in second- and third-tier schools in the United States. What makes it even harder for these schools is the small amount of financial aid they get because the vast majority of school fundings go to top-tier schools.

IMPACT

Studies show that students who face housing insecurity are more prone to have poor health, depression and anxiety with the addition of lower GPAs than students who do not suffer from any form of housing insecurity. Moreover, people who had successful academic achievements

but ultimately dropped out of college claimed that high living expenses, such as tuition or housing, were the reason they could not finish their studies.

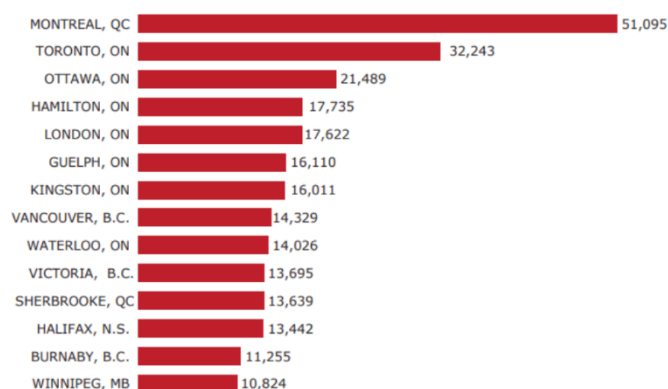
Major Parties Involved

The United States: In the United States, as stated in a survey done by The Hope Center, in 2020, 48 per cent of the asked over 195,000 students has struggled with housing insecurity out of which 14 per cent experienced homelessness.

The Netherlands: According to Kences National Student Housing Monitor, 22,000 students were unable to find student housing in 2020. This amount is projected to rise to at least 50,000 in the year of 2024/25. What also affects this number is that ICEF has reported a 13% increase in international enrolment into Dutch universities despite the pandemic.

Canada: It is estimated that Canadian Universities are short of 300,000 beds as a result of counting students improperly. When conducting a census in Canada, a student that moves back home in the summer but lives away for school counts as “living at home,” causing the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp (CMHC), which considers the housing demand in the country, not to include these students in their data collection. What further intensifies the situation is that there has been a heavy increase of international students. In fact, in 2018, there were over 500,000 international undergraduates studying in Canada.

Cities with the largest shortage of student beds



UNITE Group: Established in 1991, Bristol was the first company to provide purpose-built student accommodation facilities.

Global Student Accommodation Group: Established in 2013, it works in 9 countries in 65 cities to build purpose-built student accommodations.

Timeline of Events

859 AD - The world's first university, the University of Karueein, was founded in Fez, Morocco.

1991 - the UNITE Group is established in Bristol.

2013 - Global Student Accommodation Group is launched.

2018 - National Student Housing Action Plan 2018-2021.

2019 - The start of the COVID-19 pandemic derailing many students from attending any post-secondary education

2020 - Schools with open dormitories have to decrease student density in order to minimise virus infections among the student body

27th March 2020 - The United States Congress passes the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act to help Americans who were negatively affected by the coronavirus

2021 - Post-secondary educational institutions reopen after the pandemic; the student housing crisis hits new levels

2021 - Morgan State University, a historically Black university, has to close its waitlist early for the first time due to the increased enrolments

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

CARES ACT

Short for Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, the bill was created to provide aid to Americans poorly affected by COVID-19, out of which 14 billion dollars were given to the Office of Post-secondary Education. The act was passed by the United States Congress on March 27th, 2020.

PBSA FACILITIES

In the UK, private developers have been investing in building student accommodations as an answer to the fast-growing demand. However, these facilities proved to be controversial, with people claiming it is

priced beyond the reach of students and the focus was misplaced from what is good for undergraduates to profits.

NATIONAL STUDENT HOUSING ACTION PLAN 2018-2021

The plan was created by Dutch housing associations and private investors to permanently balance supply and demand for housing by assessing and constructing as many homes as the cities need.

Possible Solutions and Approaches

There are many possibilities to examine when trying to solve student housing crises, for instance, tackling the issue of high rental prices. Lowering and regulating prices on apartments specifically built to house students could minimise the number of forced evictions college and university attendees face, thus decreasing the risk of students dropping out.

Another solution could be to invent creative ways to house students. Building housing complexes could take years, but the issue of student housing insecurity becomes more pressing with time, this is why it is important to also think of new innovative ideas to solve the problem even for a short term. The best example of this is the parking program Long Beach City College in the United States has been experimenting with. Even though it can only accommodate 15 people, it provides a safe place for housing insecure students when their only remaining option is to sleep in their cars while also providing nearby restrooms and power outlets.

A different solution could be to make applying for financial aid easier and clearer. A survey conducted by The Hope Center showed that 52% of students lacking basic needs have not applied for aid because they did not know the means. When considering this solution, it is also advised to think about how to make the application easier, for instance, whether or not there should be help centres or mobile phone hotlines or a wholly different solution.

Helping international students to find housing is worth a thought as well since international students contribute to a country's economy and socio-cultural diversity. It is also proven that many international students stay in their host country after graduation, which means their acquired knowledge stays in the country with them and benefits the host country's people. In the U. S. alone, 1.5 million foreign graduates obtained work visas from 2004 to 2016 and in Canada, between 2008 and 2009, 33 per cent of international graduates changed their student visas to stay in the country after graduation.

Another idea to consider is to help the situation of people of colour. In the United States, Black and Latinx groups are prone to live in deep poverty because of the decades-old redlining that differentiated Black and Brown communities from White ones. Education could help them break out of poverty, but only if they do not drop out of university as a result of not being able to afford housing.

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