

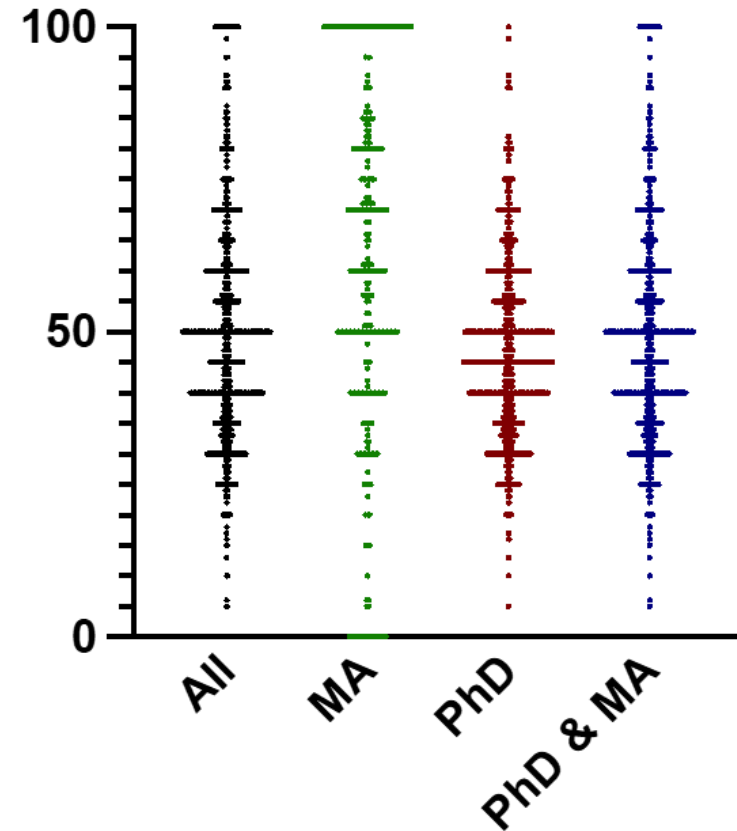
Student Housing and Cost-of-Living Survey

- Developed and distributed by the Graduate and Professional Student Government's Doctoral Student Affairs Committee
- Open April 28-May 17, 2022
- 2,008 responses, including 1,352 PhD students
- Limitations:
 - no dedicated question about utilities
 - did not specify pre-tax monthly income

Housing is unaffordable

- The mean and median percent monthly income spent on rent for all respondents was **50%**
- PhD and Master's students spent on average, **49.3%** of their monthly income on rent. The median was **49%**

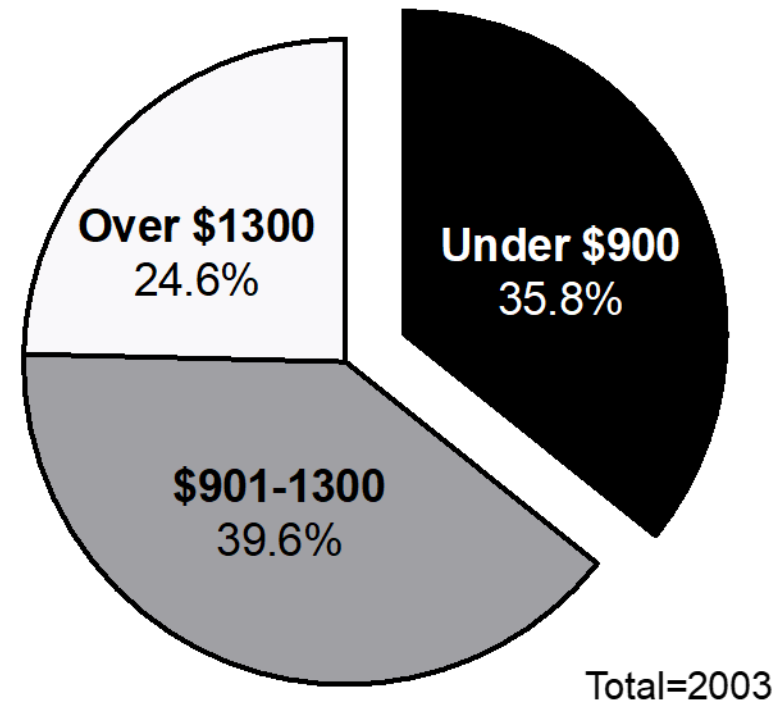
Percent Income Spent on Rent



Housing is unaffordable

- Approximately 2/3 of respondents pay **over \$900 in rent**
- **Over 45% of respondents listed rent increases** as the top reason why they chose not to renew their lease

How much do you pay in rent?



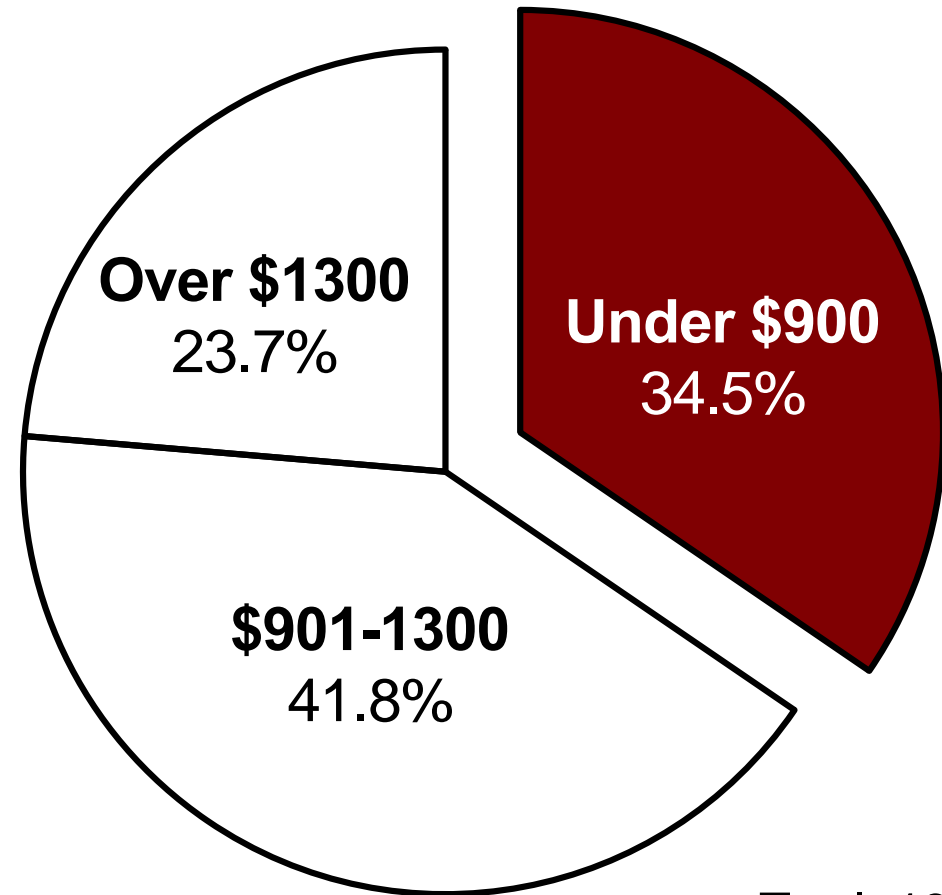
As defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

- Cost-burden: spending at least 30% of monthly income on housing costs including utilities
- Severe cost-burden: spending at 50% or more of monthly income on housing costs

Most PhD students are considered cost-burdened

- The current Duke stipend for 2021-2022 is **\$2,750** pre-tax for second year PhD students and beyond
- **Over 20%** of PhD students are spending **at least half of their monthly stipend** on rent and are considered **severely cost-burdened**

How much do you pay in rent?



Total=1349

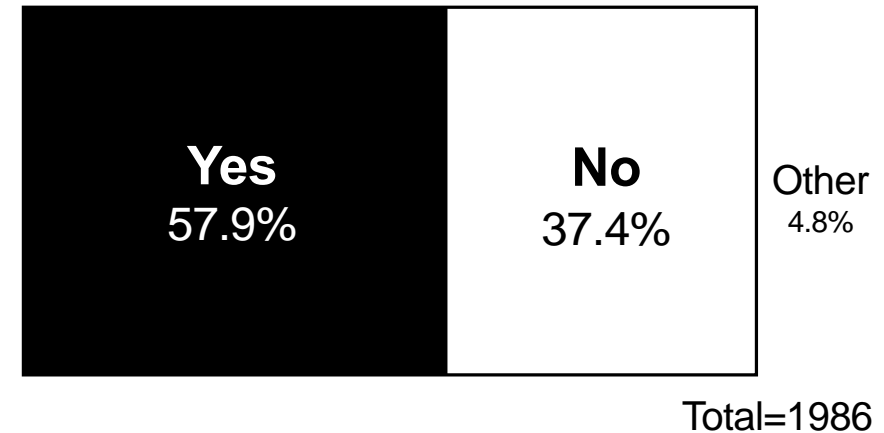
Students living with roommates still face significant expenses

- **58.2%** of all respondents **split their total rent** cost with at least one other individual
- However, respondents with roommates still reported paying on average **43.3%** of their **monthly income on rent**

Commuting is a significant expense for a majority of students

- **56.7%** of respondents commute by car
- It appears most **individuals who commute by car** consider commuting costs to be a significant monthly expense

Do you consider commuting costs to be a significant monthly expense?



Duke students are sacrificing their safety for more affordable rent

“I moved from an apartment where I felt safe to an apartment that has frequent crime because **I felt that I could not afford to live somewhere safer.**”

“I chose the cheapest apartment that can accommodate me as it **is all I could afford.** It is quite small and **does not make me feel secure.** My car has been broken into and there have been fights in the parking lot on multiple occasions. If I could afford it I would move instead of renewing my lease.”

“I have had to choose to live in low-quality, less safe housing during my graduate studies in **order for the rent to be affordable**”

“As a single young woman who lives by herself, when I went for cheaper rent prices, **my safety was compromised.**”

“It is very difficult to find safe, affordable housing that is close to campus. **I ended up using my savings to afford where I live now,** bc the only other option at the time were apartments with bars on the window, and I didn't feel safe. I think Duke should be more concerned with housing its graduate students.”

Financial burdens are causing the mental health of Duke students to suffer

“Cost of living and rent have increased (despite decrease in quality), it is nearly impossible to find a new place within given price range, reasonable commute, and fighting 100s of applications. This is not sustainable, especially with stagnant pay. **I am very worried about being unable to move and/or pay bills**”

“As a PhD candidate, I believe we should be allowed to come home to comfortable environments after our long work days in our labs...The looming thoughts of affordability, in addition to either uncomfortable living situations or lack of comfortable lifestyles, **adds to our stress and does, in some way, impact our performances in labs.**”

“Cost of living and financial issues are **causing me a lot of stress**. At the end of the month, I often **do not have enough money left for emergency expenses** (e.g fixing my car or paying for medical bills) or to travel back home.”

“durham is in a housing crisis. prices are increasing everywhere and cost of living is becoming unaffordable on a phd student stipend...**we are having to make choices financially that hinder our mental health**, work life balance, longer term retirement, etc.”

“My effective pay cut I am getting because of rising inflation [is] **impacting my mental health and quality of work** and forcing me to reconsider my housing situation.”

Duke must adapt to a changing Durham

- While North Carolina is generally considered an affordable place to live, the Durham-Chapel Hill FMR (fair market rent) area is **more expensive** than **93%** of the state
- A one-bedroom apartment **increased about 39%** from March 2020 to August 2021—from \$950 to \$1,321 per month
- Consequently, WRAL has reported that residents of the Triangle **must make at least \$20 per hour** to afford a standard apartment

<https://www.rentdata.org/durham-chapel-hill-nc-hud-metro-fmr-area/2021>

<https://wraltechwire.com/2021/09/29/rental-prices-soar-39-in-durham-22-in-raleigh-since-pandemic-began/>

<https://wraltechwire.com/2021/10/20/with-housing-supply-short-of-demand-raleigh-durham-rents-reach-records/>

Duke must adapt to a changing Durham

- **The living wage*** for Durham, NC is now **\$18.64**
- This equals \$38,771 yearly
- This is **\$5,111 (or 12%) greater** than the current PhD stipend

*living wage for one adult with no dependents