

Why long-term housing affordability is a slippery issue

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New research led by the University of Adelaide has highlighted two distinct groups of people affected by housing affordability issues over time – those who slip in and out of poor housing affordability, and those who are perpetually stuck in a situation of not being able to afford their

own rents or mortgages.

The insight of these "Stickers" and "Slippers", as researchers have described them, has emerged from comparisons of housing affordability data over a period of five years. The results of the study have been published in the journal *Urban Policy and Research*.

"Sadly, Australia still punches well above its weight in international measures of poor housing affordability and a great number of Australians can't afford their rents or [mortgages](#)," says lead author Associate Professor Emma Baker, from the University of Adelaide's School of Architecture & Built Environment.

"In order to make recommendations about housing affordability issues, researchers and policy makers often rely on a snapshot only – a point-in-time collection of people's ability to afford their housing, for example taken on Census night. But this is a very blunt measure and we've now discovered it doesn't reveal the full picture."

Associate Professor Baker says that for a great many households, both income and housing costs – and where they sit relative to those of other households – change a lot over time, causing people to slip in and out of unaffordable housing.

"So while some Australians are slipping in and out of housing affordability, others appear to be stuck with poor housing affordability for long periods, or even a lifetime," Associate Professor Baker says.

"We found that the Slippers and Stickers are very different groups within Australian society, with different intervention and assistance needs. The Stickers have much lower incomes and employment rates, and many more have a disability.

"This points to what some might call a vulnerable group of people or even an 'underclass' perpetually facing housing affordability issues. In the bigger, long-term picture, it describes persistent social inequalities in Australia."

Associate Professor Baker says the study helps to highlight that a longer-term view of housing affordability issues should be considered for policy makers.

"Our priorities around addressing housing affordability should perhaps shift to understanding how people enter and exit unaffordable housing, the long-term influences and effects of this, and what we can do to prevent people becoming stuck in that situation," she says.

More information: "Measuring Housing Affordability: A Longitudinal Approach." [DOI: 10.1080/08111146.2015.1034853](https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2015.1034853)

Provided by University of Adelaide

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