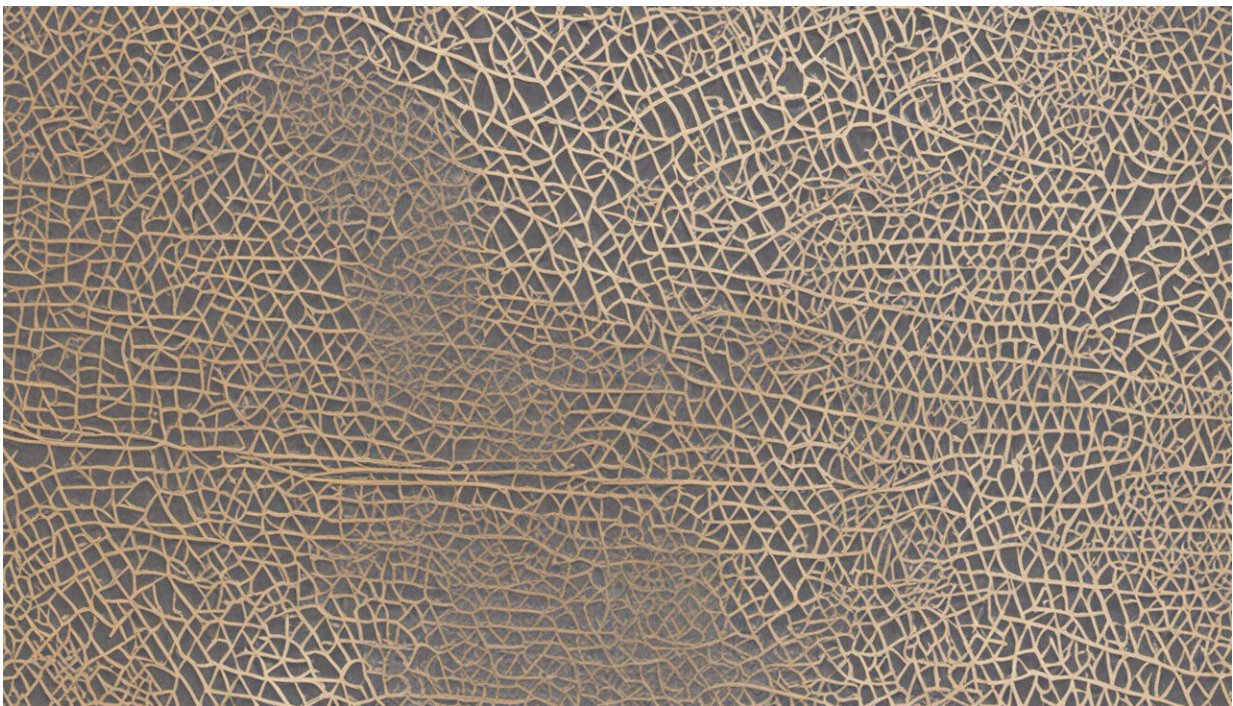


Rent burden strains more than three-quarters of low-income seniors in California, study finds

August 21 2018, by Venetia Lai



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

More than three-quarters of California's low-income seniors are financially burdened by rent, according to a [new fact sheet](#) from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

Low-income seniors who rent—numbering more than half a million—can be forced to move far from their established social and medical networks to find rentals they can afford; they may end up in substandard housing; or—at worst—homeless, according to authors of the study.

"Older Californians with limited incomes struggle to pay for shelter, food, medical care and other basic necessities. Escalating rent prices can push them out the door," said D. Imelda Padilla-Frausto, research scientist and co-author of the fact sheet. "If they're lucky, they can land at a relative or friend's home."

Rent that requires more than half a household's pretax income is identified as a "severe burden," while rent that consumes more than 30 percent but less than half is a "moderate burden," according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

According to the study, 55.8 percent of low-income seniors in California shoulder a severe rent burden and 22.6 percent are moderately burdened. California renters of all ages also feel the pinch, but not to the same extreme: 28.7 percent bear a severe rent burden, according to a [recent state housing report](#). The UCLA study uses the most currently available census data, the 2016 American Community Survey.

Regional and county differences

Sacramento-area counties have the highest proportion of severely rent-burdened low-income seniors, 63.7 percent. Combined with the 18.6 percent of low-income seniors who are moderately burdened, that region has the highest regional rent burden, affecting more than 8 in 10 low-income seniors, according to the study. Of the seven regions analyzed, the San Joaquin Valley area and Los Angeles County (counted as a region because of its large population) were close behind, at 80.3 percent

and 80 percent, respectively.

Counterintuitively, the high-cost Bay Area region has a slightly lower overall rent burden among low-income seniors, 77.1 percent, because some long-term tenants in the area live in rent-controlled units, which reduces their rents paid, the study reports. Still, 40.9 percent of low-income [senior](#) renters in this broad region have a severe rent burden.

The same held true when the authors studied the severe rent burden rate in specific large counties: Sacramento County has a severe rent burden rate that is 25 percent higher than San Francisco County, 68.2 percent to 43.3 percent, respectively. Other county variations: In Los Angeles County (excluding the city of Los Angeles), 61.5 percent of residents have severe rent burdens, compared to 53.7 percent in the city of Los Angeles. The other large counties analyzed in the study—Orange, San Diego, Santa Clara and Alameda—also have high rates of moderate burden and even higher rates of severe rent burden.

"In California, we have a rapidly aging population," said Steven Wallace, associate director of the center and lead author of the study. "The gap between many older adults' fixed incomes and increasing rents is likely to widen to a chasm unless changes occur in rental costs, incomes or both."

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

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