

# Evictions in Travis County and in the City of Austin

BASTA Austin, April 2024



BUSCANDO ACCIÓN Y SOLIDARIDAD QUE  
TRANSFORME EL ARRENDAMIENTO  
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BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING  
TENANT ACTION

# Executive summary

At Building and Strengthening Tenants Action or *Buscando Acción y Solidaridad que Transforme el Arrendamiento* (BASTA), we believe it is imperative to dismantle the systems that prevent Austin residents from living in dignified and healthy homes. A fundamental component of these systems is the imbalance of power in the landlord-tenant relationship, the root of which lies in the ability to evict. While many landlords may say that evictions are a tool of last resort, on the ground we routinely see managers and landlords wield the threat of an eviction as a weapon when tenants ask for repairs or speak up for their neighbors. Many Austin tenants are just one misfortune away from falling behind on rent, and a property manager has the power to decide whether to give the tenant more time to pay or whether to proceed with an eviction.

The first of its kind in Travis County, this report is based on the data and stories that BASTA has collected over the last two years. We begin by laying out the problem and discussing how evictions devastate the lives of Austinites, with stories that illuminate the issue. We break down the eviction process for tenants who live in the City of Austin and Travis County, from filing to writ of possession. Next, we share our methodology for collecting and analyzing eviction data from 2014 to present and lay out a number of different eviction prevention interventions that have been used locally and nationally. These include long-term rental assistance through vouchers, the right to counsel, rental registries, fines and fees regulation, as well as eviction prevention plans, which aim to change property management behavior to avoid an eviction filing in the first place. At the end of the report, we offer snapshots of evictions in each of the council districts and commissioner precincts to help better understand eviction filings by geography.

Along with the report, we have also launched a [dashboard](#) of eviction filings in Travis County where the public can explore real-time data. We describe this dashboard in detail in the report. It is important to note, though, that many evictions – informal evictions – are not captured in this data because there is no way to track when a tenant moves out before a formal eviction is filed. Up until now, there has not been a comprehensive dataset of eviction filings in Travis County with census tract level precision and breakdowns of case outcomes.

We hope this report and the accompanying dashboard start a dialogue in our community about how we can harness creative interventions to ensure that no Austinite or Travis County resident lives in fear of being unhoused.

## Key Findings

### 1. Evictions are growing in Travis County.

Evictions skyrocketed in the pre-pandemic period in Travis County, with 7,966 evictions filed in 2014 and 11,896 evictions filed in 2019. With pandemic-era protections in place, they plummeted in 2020 and 2021 – 3,402 and 1,683 filings, respectively – but began to rebound in 2022. By 2023, Travis County saw 10,524 eviction filings. While 2023 filings did not surpass 2019 filings, in October 2023 we saw the most filings per month ever recorded: 1,178. If the trends of the end of

2023 continue, 2024 will likely have the highest number of evictions on record. From 2014-2023, Austin's renter population also increased, which accounts, in part, for the increase in eviction filings numbers. However, because the incomes of new Austin renters trended higher (12.5% of Austin renters earned over \$100K in 2014 compared to 31.2% in 2022), it is likely that lower-income renters are more at-risk of eviction than ever before.

## **2. Evictions are disproportionately filed where people of color live.**

We were able to conduct property-level analysis of evictions in Travis County and, accordingly, were able to analyze the geographic breakdown of evictions. This allows us to show that evictions in Travis County, like in many other US locales, are filed disproportionately where people of color live. When one views the eviction filing rate map side by side with a map of census tracts with predominantly people of color (which corresponds to the Eastern Crescent), one can see the correlation.

## **3. The right-to-cure ordinance lowered eviction filing rates, especially in communities of color.**

An important intervention that affected evictions in the City of Austin was the city's right-to-cure ordinance passed in late 2022, which gave tenants extra time to resolve or "cure" lease violations like non-payment of rent before landlords were able to file an eviction with the courts. Using our property-level eviction data, we were able to compare the prevalence of evictions in the City of Austin, where the ordinance was in effect, with evictions outside the city, where tenants did not have this right to cure. We found that the ordinance had a substantial effect in communities of color in particular, reducing the number of evictions filed per 100 renter households by 27% in communities of color in Austin.

## **4. Twenty large properties are responsible for a disproportionate number of evictions.**

By analyzing evictions at the property level, we were able to determine which properties filed the most evictions in 2022 and 2023. In 2023, the top five evicting properties alone – Starburst Apartments, The Morgan, Falls on Bull Creek, Abelia Flats, and Orbit Apartments – accounted for 685 eviction filings. If each of the 685 filings corresponded to a unique household, this would represent filings at over a third of the units at these properties. The top 20 evicting properties of 2023 account for 16.9% of all filings in the year. These top 20 properties account for less than 1% of the properties that filed evictions in 2022 and 2023. The top 20 evictors, along with top evictors in each council district and commissioner precinct can also be viewed on [our dashboard](#).

## **5. The justice court a tenant is assigned influences the case outcome.**

In reviewing case outcomes by JP precinct, it is clear that a tenant's fate at an eviction hearing may be most impacted by which court they are sent to. For example, in 2023, JP 5 ruled in favor of tenants 7.9% of the time whereas JP 1 only ruled for tenants 0.1% of the time. The percent of cases where tenants received rulings in their favor in other precincts: JP 2 with 0.8%, JP 3 with 6.0%, and JP 4 with 3.9%. Dismissal and default judgment rates also differ by precinct.