

University of Iowa Graduate and Professional Student Government Housing Survey Report 2026

This document summarizes the results of a housing survey conducted by the Government Relations Committee of Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) for the 2025–26 academic year at the University of Iowa. The survey had a 2.45% overall response rate with 200 respondents from a target population of approximately 8,156 graduate and professional students¹. The survey results suggest that housing affordability is a central concern for graduate and professional students at the University of Iowa. Nearly 38% of respondents spend greater than or equal to 51% of their after-tax income is spent on housing, and 79% cite housing costs/affordability as the primary barrier to securing their ideal housing. Perceptions of current housing were generally positive with respect to safety and maintenance, and housing perceived as affordable was positively correlated with overall satisfaction.

While findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative, due to low response rate and its sampling method, the survey results call for further investigation and research into housing policies aimed at alleviating financial burdens upon graduate and professional students. It is recommended that University of Iowa carry out this further research while concurrently exploring options such as expanding affordable housing options for graduate students, increasing research and teaching assistantship stipends, and/or developing other university-mediated housing resources.

Methodology

The population of interest for this survey includes all currently registered graduate and professional students at University of Iowa (totaling 8,156 students). Responses were obtained via convenience sampling by an email sent to all currently registered graduate and professional on March 30, 2026; participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. The survey was developed with multiple rounds of input and development by the Government Relations Committee of GPSG. The Qualtrics-hosted questionnaire covered demographics, housing costs, commute modes and duration, perceptions of property management company practices, and Likert items on housing quality. After data processing and interpretation, all original data was permanently deleted.

Given the response rate and the convenience sampling method, the results of the survey may bias toward students with strong housing concerns. All findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative.

Demographics

The majority of respondents indicated they were currently renters (88%) rather than owners (12%) of their property. The sample was distributed across colleges, with majority of respondents from Graduate College (54%) followed by Carver College of Medicine (15%), College of Public Health (5.5%), College of Education (5.0%) and the College of Law (4.5%). Small proportions also came from College of Pharmacy, Nursing, Engineering, Tippie College of Business, Dentistry and other units. Most respondents were in the first (41%) or second (30%) years of their program, with declining rates for successive years (13.5%, 9.0%, and 6.5% for third, fourth, and fifth or greater year of study). Approximately 86.4% indicated they were domestic students and 13.6% of international students. Most students live in off-campus apartments, condos, or home (90.5%), not including 4.0% who live in university-affiliated housing at Aspire.

¹ Including 6,269 graduate students and 1,887 professional students, according to “Iowa’s 2025 incoming class, by the numbers”, September 11, 2025, <https://stories.uiowa.edu/2025-incoming-class-infographic>.

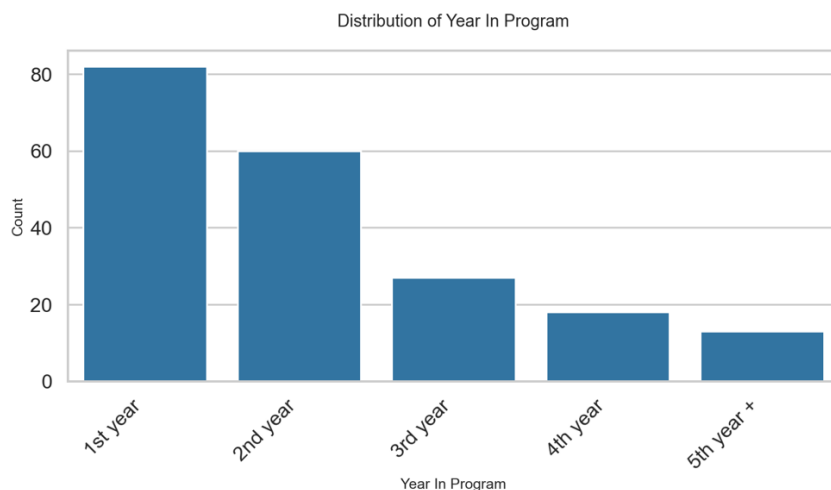


Chart of Survey Respondents by Year in Program

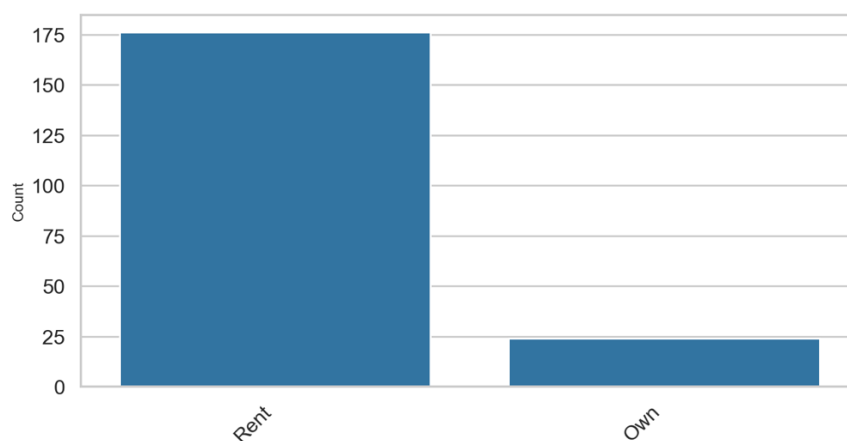


Chart of Renters and Owners among Respondents

Over a third of students live indicated they live alone (37.5%) while the remainder live with either one or more roommates (45% reported having one roommate, 8.0% having two or more roommates, and 9.5% reported having three or more roommates). The average rental amount was greatest among students who lived alone and lowest among students with two roommates. The greatest number of respondents shared housing with one other individual or lived alone.

Shared Housing Status	Count	Mean Rent (\$)	Median Rent (\$)
None (lives alone)	75	\$1048.69	\$775.00
One roommate	90	\$835.01	\$1050.00
Two roommates	16	\$647.00	\$651.00
Three or more roommates	19	\$845.05	\$558.91

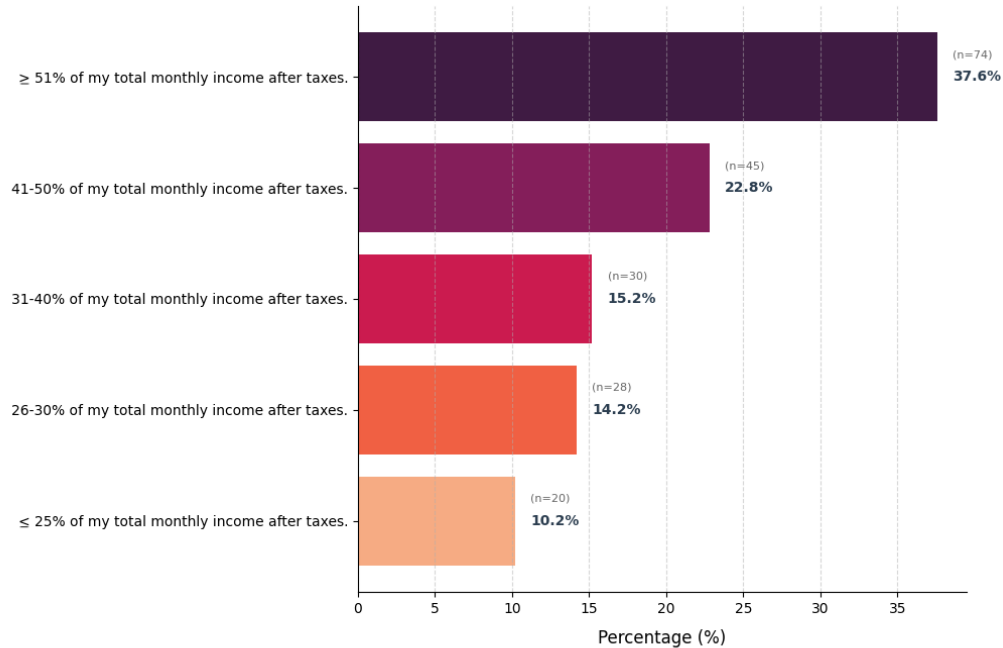
Table of Shared Housing Status and Mean & Median Rent

Housing Costs & Affordability

The overall mean rent share payment was $\$901.05 \pm \553.77 (SD), with a median \$850 and a range spanning \$0 to \$4,200. Respondents were asked to express their portion of rent share as a percentage of their overall income—37.6% of respondents allocated equal to greater than 51% of their

after-tax income to housing. The vast majority of respondents—89.8% were spending more than 26% or more of their net income on housing.

**Housing Payment Statistics
(Housing payment as percentage of after-tax income)**



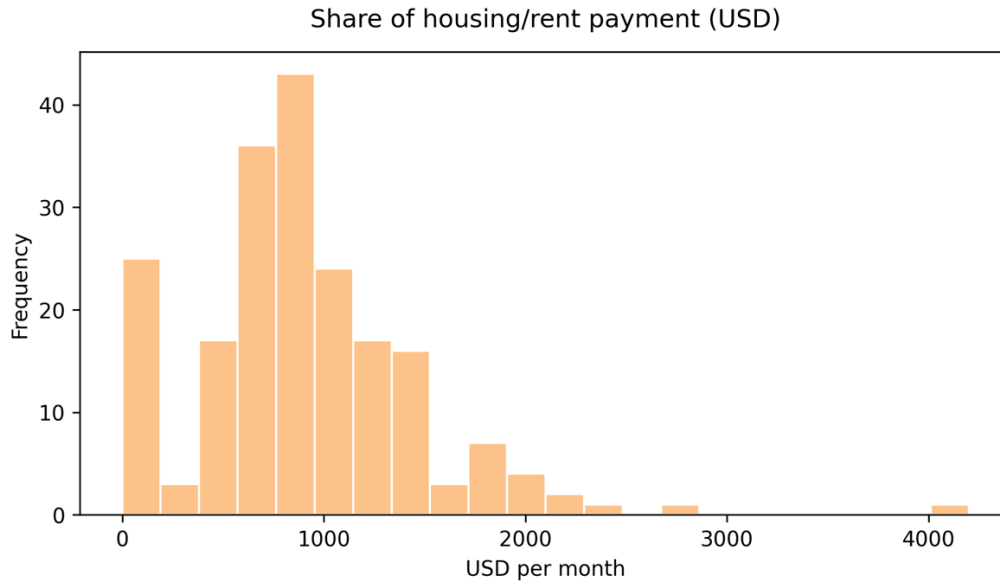
Total Respondents: 197

Notably, the survey asked after the perceived burden of housing payments. Analysis showed that as the percentage of income spent on housing increased, the perceived burden also increased ($r = 0.51$). The perceived cost burden score was constructed by taking the survey’s ‘affordability’ Likert scale value (ranging from 1 to 5) and inverting it so that higher numbers indicate greater perceived unaffordability of respondent’s current housing. By subtracting this inverted value from six (6), the constructed measure of burden was then measured against the binned percentage of income spent on housing by converting midpoints² to calculate Pearson correlation coefficient against the burden score.

Percentage of Income Spent on Housing	Count	Perceived Cost Burden Score
≤ 25%	20	1.68
26–30%	28	2.36
31–40%	30	3.00
41–50%	45	3.50
≥ 51%	74	3.69

Mean share of rent varied modestly by year in program peaking in the second year (\$1,039) before slightly declining and rising again in later years. While international students reported a slightly lower mean than domestic students, there was no statistically meaningful difference with overlapping confidence intervals.

² Midpoint values for 26–30, 31–40, and 41–50 and estimates for less than and greater than values (12.5 and 55%).



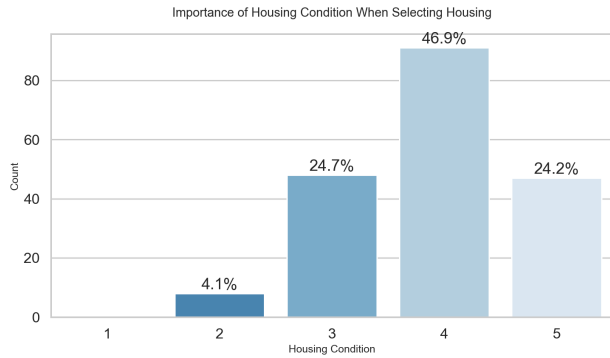
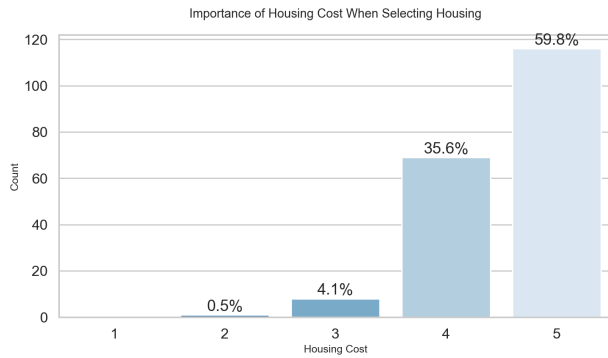
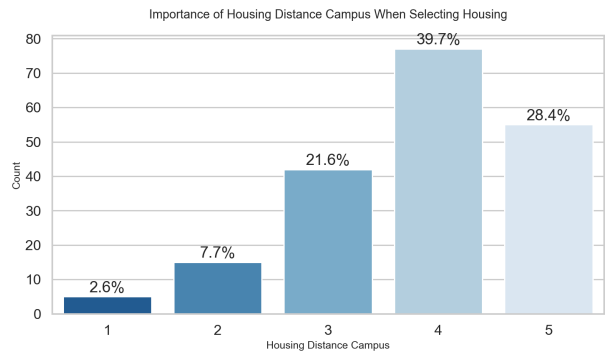
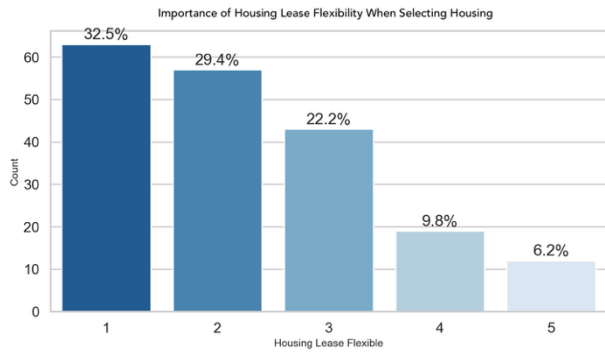
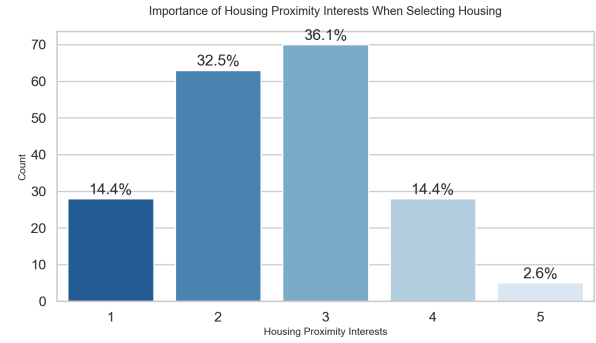
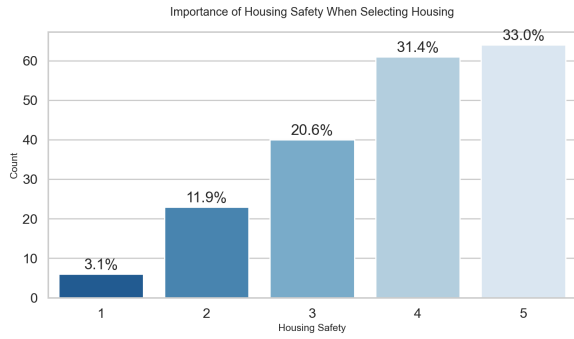
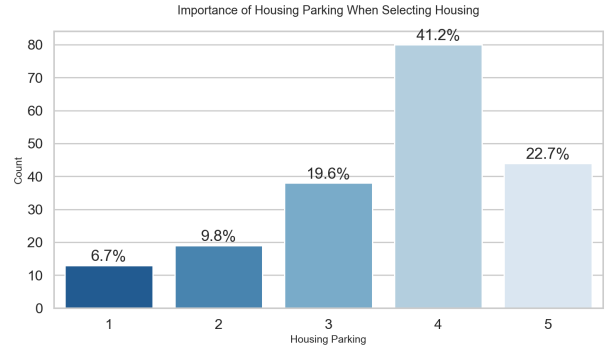
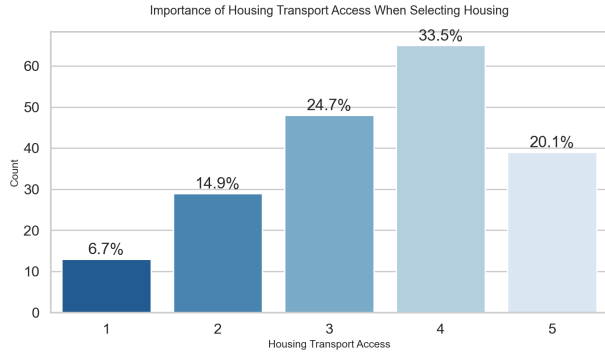
Property Management & Overall Housing Satisfaction

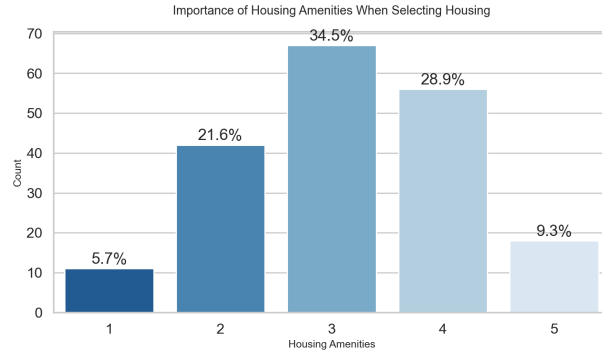
Respondents who were renters ($n=178$), when asked about their property management arrangements, 18.8% indicated that their rental was not managed by any rental company. The most frequently named property managers included Heritage Property Management (8%), Greystar Real Estate Partners (5.1%), M68 Property Management (5.1%), and MWACR Property Management (5.1%).

The mean score of overall housing satisfaction (Likert 1-5 scale) was 3.63 ± 1.06 , with 42.5% selecting “Agree” (4) and 19.5% selecting “Strongly Agree” (5) that they were satisfied with their current housing situation. An ANOVA comparing mean satisfaction across colleges/schools produced $F=0.766$, $p=0.673$, indicating there were no statistically significant differences between individuals from different colleges and schools with respect to their overall satisfaction with their current housing.

Factors Important to Housing Selection

Students rated the importance of various factors when selecting housing on a 1-5 scale. Housing cost was deemed extremely important (mean = 4.55 ± 0.60), with 95% of respondents rating it 4 or 5. Next items rated as most important were housing conditions (mean = 3.91 ± 0.80), followed by proximity to campus (mean = 3.84 ± 1.01). Safety (mean = 3.79 ± 1.12), parking (mean = 3.63 ± 1.13), transport access (mean = 3.45 ± 1.16), and amenities (mean = 3.14 ± 1.04) received moderate importance, whereas proximity to personal/entertainment interests (mean = 2.58 ± 0.99) and lease flexibility (mean = 2.28 ± 1.19) were rated low. In other responses, some students indicated that familial-relations proximity was of great importance, as well as proximity to childcare and children’s schools. These dimensions are suggested to be explicitly incorporated in future surveys (see Appendix A.).



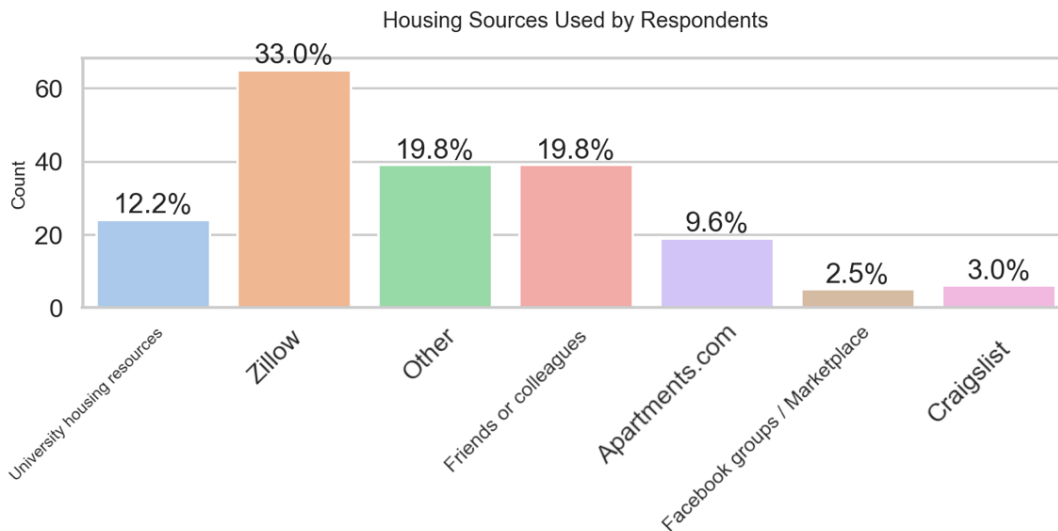


Current Housing Quality Perceptions

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree of their agreement/disagreement with various statements about their current housing. The results here indicated strong perceived safety (mean = 4.30 ± 0.80; 92% agree/strongly agree) and satisfactory maintenance (mean = 3.85 ± 1.10; 68% agree/strongly agree). Affordability, however, received a low mean rating (2.85 ± 1.28), with only 36.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing their current housing was affordable. Commute stress was minimal (mean = 2.02 ± 1.11), indicating that most students do not find their housing location a barrier to reliable travel. Mental-health impact scored 2.67 ± 1.33, with roughly half disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that stress related to my housing situation had negatively affected their mental health in the past month and 30.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Overall satisfaction was 3.63 ± 1.06, as described in the above section.

Sourcing Housing & Barriers to Ideal Housing

Most graduate and professional students located their current housing by means of some internet-mediated resource (Zillow, Apartments.com, Facebook, Craigslist; totalling 67.9%).



When asked about the primary barrier to securing their ideal housing, 79.3% cited cost/affordability. Additional barriers were each reported by less than 6% of respondents: need for family-friendly space (3.6%), lack of available units near campus (4.1%), poor quality or maintenance issues (5.2%), lease-flexibility concerns (0.5%), commute or transportation constraints (1.6%), distance to family/spouse (1.0%), disability/accessibility needs (0.5%), and other unspecified factors (1.6%). A small

fraction (2.6%) indicated they were either content with their current housing or had their ideal housing and faced no barriers.

Barrier	Count	Percentage
Cost/affordability	153	79.3%
Poor quality or maintenance issues	10	5.2%
Lack of available units near campus	8	4.1%
Need for family-friendly space	7	3.6%
None / I am content with my housing	5	2.6%
Commute time / transportation constraints	3	1.6%
Other	3	1.6%
Distance to family/spouse	2	1.0%
Disability accessibility needs unmet	1	0.5%
Lack of flexibility in lease terms	1	0.5%

Open-ended comments³ most frequently iterated the perception that rents are disproportionately high relative to stipends. Across the responses, graduate and professional students expressed the desire for a variety of resources to improve their housing situation, including higher stipends or living-wage assistantships, rent-control measures, and housing vouchers or lower market rents. Some students expressed interest such as a centralized, university-run housing portal and roommate matchmaking portal to simplify the search process⁴. A desire for increased guidance on tenant rights was expressed by eight respondents, with concerns expressed over predatory landlord practices, unfair lease terms, and insufficient governmental and/or university oversight. Students also expressed desire for additional supports for other living expenses, given housing expense burdens force students to cut essentials, including internet/hotspot affordability, more reliable transportation, and meal support. Interest in forming a graduate and professional student housing cooperative was also indicated by a few respondents.

Commute

Respondents largely travelled to campus/work via bus (33.5%), followed closely by travel by motor vehicle (30.5%), walking (23.4%), bicycle (10.7%), and scooter/motorcycle (2.0%). Two-thirds of respondents travel to campus primarily by motorized transport.

The majority of students reported commute times of 11-20 minutes (47.7%) or 5-10 minutes (31.0%). Shorter commutes (< 5 minutes) accounted for 6.6%, while 21–30 minutes represented 9.6% and trips exceeding 30 minutes constituted 5.1%. Based on the available data, cyclists overwhelmingly got to their campus destinations quickest with over 50% reporting a commute time of less than 10 minutes. The three shortest commute times, on average, came from individuals biking, walking, or bussing to their campus destination. Commute experiences were relatively short and low-stress, suggesting that housing location is not a primary source of transportation-related strain for most respondents.

³ These reflections represent student-expressed priorities, not informed policy assessments.

⁴ Note that such a resource of listings as roommate matching service is hosted on a University website at: <https://offcampushousing.uiowa.edu/listing>. However, the resource is not exclusive to graduate and professional students and does not appear to be well-publicized or utilized.

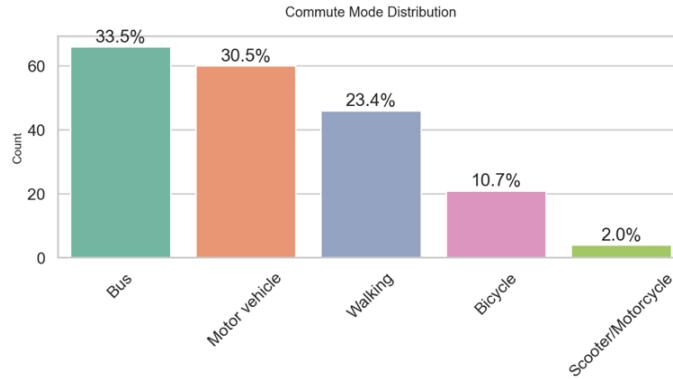


Chart of Commute Mode Distribution

Discussion

The survey results suggest that affordability may be a central issue facing graduate and professional students at the University of Iowa. However—as noted in the Methodology section above—the low response rate and method may bias toward respondents who are disproportionately facing housing-related issues and stress than the greater population of graduate and professional students. A survey with a larger sample and improved sampling methods should be conducted for sufficient evidence to guide policy and decision-making.

Approximately three-quarters of respondents indicate they spend more 30% of their after-tax (net) income on housing, with a substantial portion (37.6%) indicating they spend more than half of their net income, indicating high-cost burden of housing for graduate and professional students. A correlation matrix indicated a strong positive relationship between affordability and overall satisfaction ($r=0.57$). Data suggested that for a minority of students, the financial pressure of securing shelter extended beyond merely budgeting concerns and impacted their psychological well-being.

It is worth noting that affordability concerns exist alongside generally positive perceptions of housing safety and quality. Respondents rated safety (mean = 4.30) and maintenance responsiveness (mean = 3.85) highly, whereas affordability received the lowest rating (mean = 2.85) among items. This suggests that the primary perceived failure of the current market is not attributable to the perceived safety of available units, but rather their price point relative to graduate and professional student stipends. While many students appear to be willing to share housing to mitigate costs—with mean rent dropping from \$1,048 for those living alone to \$647 for those with two roommates, the strategy is not accessible to all graduate students due to space constraints, family needs, and/or personal preferences. Commute stress appeared to be minimal (mean = 2.02), suggesting that students are successfully locating housing within reasonable travel time. While this need is largely being met based on available data, it should be noted that proximity to campus ranks high in importance to students in considering units (in addition to housing condition and cost).

The barriers identified by students further reiterated the primacy of financial constraints to students achieving their ideal housing. Issues such as commute time and maintenance quality and lease flexibility were lesser concerns. Open-ended feedback highlighted specific desires for various structural interventions, including need for higher stipends or living wages; centralized university-run housing portals to reduce search friction, roommate matching services to facilitate cost-sharing. Some students appear to be either unaware of existing university housing portals and roommate matching or, perhaps, find these inadequate. There was interest in tenant rights education and additional oversight regarding predatory leasing practices. Poor city inspection of code violations was noted by some respondents.

The data supports the recommendation that the University carry out further research into housing policies and resources aimed at alleviating these burdens.

Appendix A. Survey Questionnaire

Graduate & Professional Student Housing Survey

Introduction & Consent

The Government Relations Committee of GPSG is conducting a survey regarding graduate and professional student housing. The information you provide will help university administrators and city officials develop policies, improve resources, and plan new housing that better meets the needs of our community.

This survey is completely voluntary; takes approximately 5–7 minutes to complete; and no personally identifying information is linked to your responses.

Demographics

College / School

- Graduate College
- College of Engineering
- College of Education
- College of Law
- Carver College of Medicine
- College of Nursing
- College of Public Health
- College of Veterinary Medicine
- Tippie College of Business
- Other (please specify)

Year in program

- 1st year
- 2nd year
- 3rd year
- 4th year
- 5th year +

Are you an international student? (optional)

- Yes
- No

Current Housing Situation

Which of the below describes where you currently live?

- University-owned on-campus housing
- Aspire
- Other university-owned off-campus housing
- Off-campus apartment/condo/house
- Living with family or parents
- Other (please specify)

Are you currently renting or do you own your primary dwelling place?

- Rent

- Own

Which of the following utilities are NOT included in your rent?

- Electricity
- Gas
- Heat
- Water
- Internet
- Other
- None of the above
- Not sure

How much do you pay per month for internet?

- Amount in dollars
- I do not have/use internet at home

How much are you responsible for paying each month toward your share of rent/mortgage and utilities?

Is your landlord one of the following property management companies?

- Assurance Property Management
- AM Management
- Barker Apartments
- Greystar Real Estate Partners
- Hawks Ridge
- Haverkamp Properties
- Heritage Property Management
- J&J Apartments
- Keystone Property Management (Aspire)
- KMB Property Management
- M68 Property Management
- McLaughlin Rental Properties
- MWACR Property Management
- Nest Apartments
- Penningroth
- Prestige Properties LLC
- SouthGate Companies
- Tailwind Man. (The Quarters)
- TM Commercial Services
- Watts Groups Rentals
- Westwinds Real Estate
- Other (please specify)
- My rental property is not managed by a property management company
- I don't know

How many other people share your housing with you, including any partner/spouse?

- None (I live alone)
- One roommate
- Two roommates
- Three or more roommates

How do you primarily pay for your housing?

- Graduate assistantship (TA/RA)
- Fellowship / grant
- Personal savings
- Family support
- Student loans
- Part-time employment
- Other (please specify)

My current housing payment is...

- $\leq 25\%$ of my total monthly income after taxes.
- 26-30% of my total monthly income after taxes.
- 31-40% of my total monthly income after taxes.
- 41-50% of my total monthly income after taxes.
- $\geq 51\%$ of my total monthly income after taxes.

In which city or town do you currently reside?

- Iowa City
- Coralville
- North Liberty
- Tiffin
- Cedar Rapids
- Other

Typical one-way commute time to campus

- < 5 min
- 5–10 min
- 11–20 min
- 21–30 min
- > 30 min

Which mode of transportation do you primarily use to commute to and from campus?

- Walking
- Bicycle
- Bus
- Rideshare
- Scooter/Motorcycle
- Motor vehicle

Housing Search Resources

Which resources did you use to find your current housing?

- Craigslist
- Zillow
- Facebook groups / Marketplace
- Friends or colleagues
- University housing resources
- Other

Have you used any resources from the University of Iowa to help search for housing?

- Yes
- No

- I was not aware there were UI resources for graduate students to find housing

Please rate the importance of the following factors for you when selecting housing.

(Scale: Not at all important, Slightly important, Moderately important, Very important, Extremely important)

- Distance from campus
- Cost
- Amenities
- Safety
- Condition of housing
- Access to transportation
- Proximity to locations of interest (such as entertainment, venues, outdoor spaces, etc.)
- Proximity to locations of familial interest (such as children's school, spouse's work location, relatives for childcare, etc.)¹
- Flexible lease terms

Housing Satisfaction, Well-being, & Barriers

For each of the below statements, select 1-5 to reflect your degree to which you disagree or agree with the statement. (1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree)

- My housing is affordable relative to my income/assistantship.
- The build and surrounding area feel safe.
- Maintenance (regular or emergency-related) issues are addressed promptly.
- The location of my housing makes it difficult for me to reliably commute to classes, labs, and/or clinical rotations.
- Stress related to my housing situation has negatively affected my mental health in the past month.
- Overall, I am satisfied with my current housing situation.

What is the biggest barrier that prevents you from obtaining your ideal housing?

- Cost / affordability
- Lack of available units near campus
- Poor quality or maintenance issues
- Need for family-friendly space (multiple bedrooms, pet policy)
- Disability/accessibility needs not met
- Commute time / transportation constraints
- Lack of flexibility in lease terms
- Discrimination or bias in the rental market
- Other (please specify)

What additional resources/assistance would you like to see for graduate and professional student housing?

Please share any additional thoughts, suggestions, or concerns regarding graduate and professional student housing at the University of Iowa.