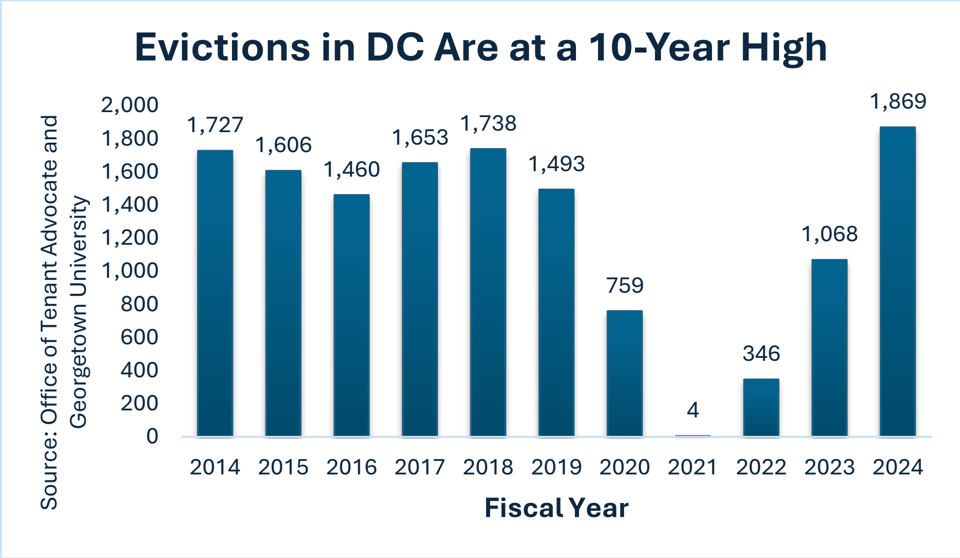
Evictions in DC Are at a 10-Year High:

DC Leaders Must Do More to Help Residents Avoid this Trauma

Nearly 2,000 DC renter households faced eviction from their homes in Fiscal Year 2024, the highest level in at least a decade. The number of evictions was 18% higher than the average in the five years before the pandemic. The increase in this deeply traumatic experience is troubling, especially since DC's leaders cut eviction prevention by 60% in the FY 2025 budget, to just $27 million, which means an estimated 6,000 fewer households will get much-needed emergency assistance.[i]

The rate of evictions in the first few months of FY 2025 was much higher than in FY 2024, suggesting that the number of households being evicted is continuing to rise. DC leaders should increase funding for ERAP and programs that provide ongoing affordable housing in the budget for FY 2026.



Eviction is a highly traumatic event. Beyond the risk of homelessness, it often forces families to lose material items and move to less desirable housing and neighborhoods. It often leads to job loss and damages a family's credit history. It is considered an "adverse childhood experience" because of the long-term damage it has on child mental well-being and educational success.

The high rate of evictions reflects severe financial pressures faced by renters with low incomes. There are 37,000 DC renter households with low incomes who spend more than half of their income on housing. These households' total rent in 2023 exceeded 50% of their income by a collective $94 million, which is more than 3x the total amount available through ERAP.[ii] The rise in rental burdens comes at a time when food costs and other expenses are also rising sharply.

Rent arrears in DC have risen sharply in recent years, which has put many landlords at financial risk, including owners of affordable housing. Without enough rent revenue to pay their bills, some affordable housing providers may be forced to sell their buildings. The growing number of severely rent-burdened households and evictions suggest that **the struggle to pay high and rising rents is a major factor** behind the rental arrears problem.

The figures in this analysis suggest that **any effort to reverse the trend in evictions must address the rental affordability crisis and also must ensure that ERAP funding is adequate** to help DC residents who get behind on their rent.

Evictions Rose to a 10-Year High in 2024

Some 1,869 DC renter households were evicted from their homes in Fiscal Year 2024. That is an increase of 75 percent from 2023, when 1,068 renter households faced eviction.[iii]

The 2024 eviction rate also is the highest in at least a decade. Evictions in 2024 were 18% higher than the average of 1,590 evictions between 2015 and 2019, the five years leading up to the pandemic.

Data for the first quarter of FY 2025 suggest that the rate of eviction continues to increase. Some 628 renters faced eviction between October 2024 and January 2025, compared with 320 in the same period in 2023. The number of evictions in early FY 2025 was nearly double the number from a year earlier. This suggests that evictions in FY 2025 will far exceed the number of evictions at any point in recent memory.

Evictions occur most commonly because renters get behind on their rent. And there are clear indications that rising costs for rent and other necessities are making it harder for DC residents with low incomes to pay rent.

- There are 37,000 DC renter households with incomes under twice the poverty line – less than about $50,000 for a family of three – who pay half or more of their income on housing.
- Severe housing cost burdens are an increasing problem for DC's renters with low incomes. 65% of renter households with incomes under $50,000 had severe housing cost burdens in 2022, up from 50% in 2014.[iv]
- Among renters with low incomes, their rental amounts exceeded 50% of their income by a collective $94 million in 2023. This suggests that ERAP funding, set at $27 million for FY 2025, is far too small to address the severe rent burdens faced by DC renters with low incomes.
- Increases in other expenses are pressuring residents with low incomes, making it harder to pay rent. Food prices, for example, increased 25% nationally between 2019 and 2024, and inflation affecting families with low incomes overall has been 2% higher than for the wealthiest households.[v]

DC Should Expand ERAP

With evictions at a 10-year high, Mayor Bowser and the DC Council should increase funding for ERAP and programs that provide ongoing affordable housing in the budget for FY 2026.

The Urban Institute estimates that ERAP needs $100 million in funding to limit evictions.[vi] While this would represent a substantial increase in funding at a time when DC's overall finances are declining, this level of need is a direct reflection of the severe affordability challenges faced by residents with the lowest incomes that must be addressed. Notably, the District also could address this issue by enhancing funding for affordable housing programs that meet the needs of residents with extremely low incomes. If needed, DC's leaders should consider ways to raise revenues to support this increase, such as those supported by the Just Recovery DC campaign.[vii]

If funding is not increased for ERAP or affordable housing, the number of residents facing the trauma of eviction will continue to break records.

[i] The DC Department of Human Services noted in responses to DC Council questions that the District spent $49.7 million on ERAP in FY 2023 and served 8,470 households. That represents an average of $5,867. This suggests that the $36 million cut in ERAP funding in FY2025 will result in serving 6,000 fewer households. Retrieved on July 2, 2024 from https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/239 (See Pre-Hearing Responses - DHS - 02.28.2024 (2).pdf)

[ii] DC Fiscal Policy Institute analysis of one-year data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

[iii] Figures provided by the DC Office of Tenant Advocate for 2019 through 2024. Figures for 2015 through 2018 provided by Brian McCabe, McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University.

[iv] United Planning Organization, "DC Is Not Making Progress on Affordable Housing for Those Who Need It Most," September 2023. See https://www.upo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Publications-Policy-Paper-Affordable-Housing-in-DC-2023.pdf

[v] See Lower income, higher inflation? New data bring answers at last| Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis (minneapolisfed.org)

[vi] Elizabeth Burton, Leah Hendey, Peter A. Tatian, "Combating Rising Evictions in the District of Columbia with Housing Subsidies," Urban Institute, June 2024. See https://www.urban.org/research/publication/combating-rising-evictions-district-columbia-housing-subsidies

[vii] See https://justrecoverydc.org/our-platform