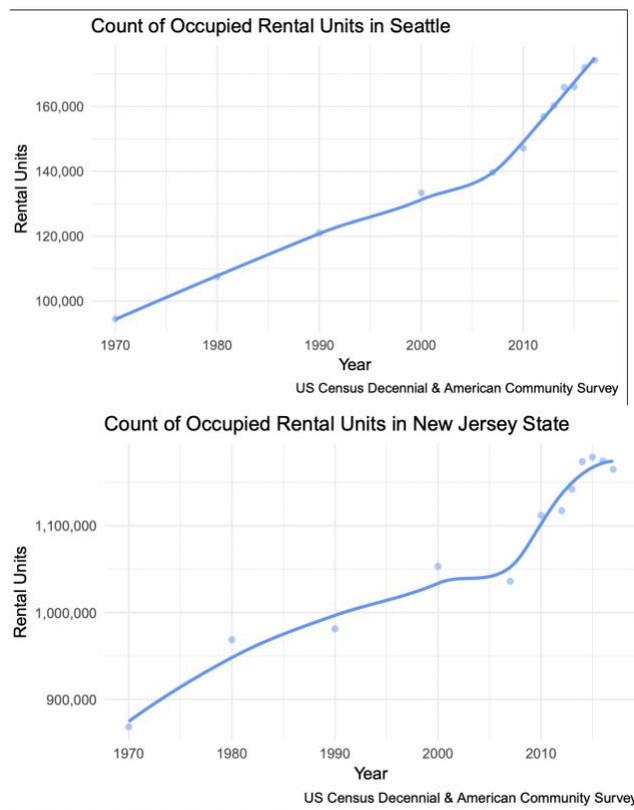


In two recent pieces in this publication, Cory Brewer has argued that recent tenant protection legislation will exacerbate our housing crisis by forcing “small-time landlords” to sell their rental properties. Putting aside the [policy reasons](#) for providing tenants basic rights, the impact of tenant protections on housing stock is not what Mr. Brewer claims.

Landlords have been claiming for years that tenant protections would lead to a massive housing shortage, [including 40% of landlords in a University of Washington survey in 2018](#), yet this has not happened. When [New Jersey](#) and [Seattle](#) passed Just Cause eviction measures in 1974 and 1980 requiring landlords to have a “good cause” before evicting a tenant, there was no adverse impact on rental housing stock (Washington State passed a [law](#) like this in 2021). As Mr. Brewer notes in his piece, when I showed this to him he insisted that the increase in rental housing stock is a result of population growth. While that may explain long-term increases, there was still no *immediate* impact on the rental housing stock in the years after Seattle or New Jersey passed their respective legislation, which is contrary to Mr. Brewer’s claims that tenant protections cause an immediate sell-off.



Even if we take Mr. Brewer’s claims on face value that there is a massive sell-off, blaming tenant protections ignores other explanations such as the fact that [thousands of homes are selling \\$100,000.00](#) above listing price or a worldwide pandemic is encouraging liquidation. In fact, Mr. Brewer has recognized those other explanations. Although he now warns that a roughly 7% decrease among *three*-bedroom apartment listings within the Northwest Multiple Listing Service

(NWMLS) must be attributed to tenant protection legislation, just a year ago, Mr. Brewer attributed a *15% overall* drop-off in NWMLS rentals between 2019 and 2020 to the reasonable conclusion that [“a lot more people have chosen to renew their leases instead.”](#) (It is hard to even say how reliable the NWMLS data given Mr. Brewer noted elsewhere that [“the vast majority of apartments in the region are not listed by NWMLS member brokerages.”](#)).

In decrying the passage of tenant protections, Mr. Brewer makes a number of false and misleading statements that merit correction. He falsely argues that recent tenant legislation is illegal despite the fact that the [Western District of Washington](#) already upheld the Fair Chance Ordinance limiting criminal background checks and found that the [eviction moratorium was likely legal](#); similarly, the [King County Superior Court](#) upheld Seattle ordinances requiring payment plans and limiting evictions after the moratoria ends. Mr. Brewer also wrongly states the Seattle moratorium prohibits evictions for behavior, which is inaccurate. He similarly misreads our own report when he claims that government entities are mainly responsible for evictions: King County Housing Authority is not the top evictor in the *state* based on our data as we only documented filed evictions in King County. In fact, King County Housing Authority has a low-ratio of evictions as they only [filed 58 eviction actions](#) in 2019 out of over [11,000](#) units. Further, Mr. Brewer would have you believe that landlords have been ignored by lawmakers, but he ignores the substantial subsidies provided to landlords for [their losses over the last year or for renting to subsidized tenants](#).

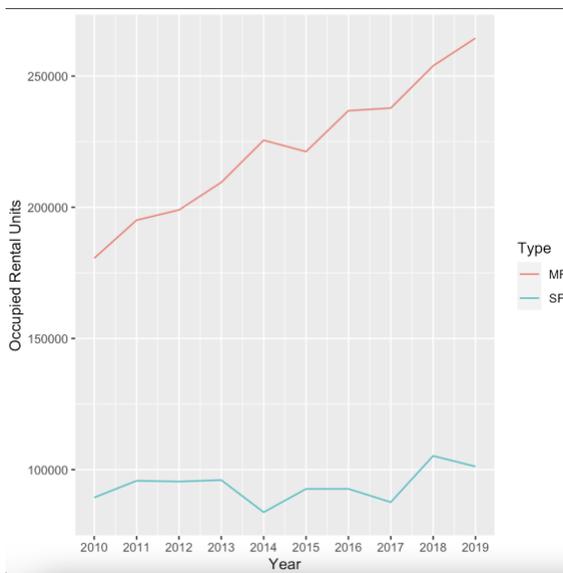
Probably the most misleading statement though is that he overemphasizes the role of single-family rental units in the rental market, which according to Mr. Brewer, we must choose to preserve over providing tenant protections; however, single-family rental housing increasingly makes up a small part of the rental market. While Mr. Brewer claims that “much of the rental housing in and around Greater Seattle comes in the form of single-family homes,” in reality in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue Metropolitan Area, [less than one out of every five renter households live in a detached, single-family dwelling unit](#) with about two-thirds of renter households living in a multifamily building of five or more units. On top of this, over the last decade the single-family rental inventory has been fairly flat despite some fluctuations.

2019 Seattle - General Housing Data - All Occupied Units
 Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA MSA (2013 OMB definition)
 Tenure Filter: Renter

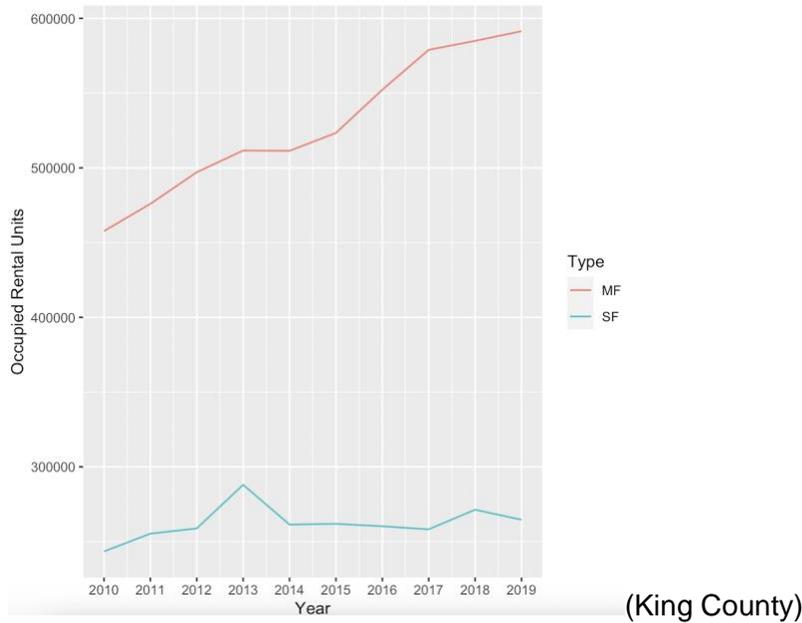
ed to four significant digits as part of disclosure avoidance protocol. Margin of Error is calculated at the 90% confidence standards or withheld to avoid disclosure]

[Subject Definitions](#)

| Characteristics | Estimate |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Total | 595.8 |
| Units in Structure | |
| 1, detached | 113.7 |
| 1, attached | 22.9 |
| 2 to 4 | 73.5 |
| 5 to 9 | 78.0 |
| 10 to 19 | 82.0 |
| 20 to 49 | 83.1 |
| 50 or more | 131.2 |
| Manufactured/mobile home or trailer | 11.3 |
| Other (Boat, RV, van, etc.) | . |



(Seattle)



The notion that these units are accessible to low-income renters is also inaccurate. Renters of single-family rentals earn [roughly \\$40,000 more than renters in multifamily units](#) (some [investors seek out these units for this reason](#)). Subsidized tenants relying on Section 8 are frequently unable to access these units as the [Section 8 households earn around \\$13,608 per year](#). While small-time landlords claim they provide the [“naturally affordable” housing in the area](#), those affordable single-family homes are often going to wealthier households.



2019 Seattle - Income Characteristics - All Occupied Units
 Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA MSA (2013 OMB definition)
 Tenure Filter: Renter

Variable 1: Units by Structure Type, Variable 2: NONE

[Estimates and Margins of Error in thousands of housing units, except as indicated. Medians are rounded to four significant digits as part of disclosure avoidance protocol. Margin of Error is calculated at the 90% confidence interval. Weighting consistent with Census 2010. Blank cells represent zero; ! represents not applicable or no cases in sample; S represents estimates that did not meet publication standards or withheld to avoid disclosure]

Subject Definitions

| Characteristics | Total | Units by Structure Type | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| | | 1, detached | 1, attached | 2 to 4 Units | 5 to 9 Units | 10 to 19 Units | 20 to 49 Units | 50 or more |
| | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate |
| Total | 595.8 | 113.7 | 22.9 | 73.5 | 78.0 | 82.0 | 83.1 | 131.2 |
| Household Income | | | | | | | | |
| Less than \$5,000 | 29.1 | S | S | S | S | S | S | 12.6 |
| \$5,000 to \$9,999 | 9.2 | S | . | S | S | S | S | S |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999 | 22.0 | S | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| \$15,000 to \$19,999 | 19.9 | S | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| \$20,000 to \$24,999 | 24.3 | S | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| \$25,000 to \$29,999 | 23.0 | S | S | S | S | S | 5.4 | S |
| \$30,000 to \$34,999 | 33.4 | S | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| \$35,000 to \$39,999 | 22.5 | S | . | S | S | S | S | S |
| \$40,000 to \$49,999 | 49.2 | S | S | 9.4 | S | S | S | 10.1 |
| \$50,000 to \$59,999 | 56.7 | 9.1 | S | 10.4 | S | S | S | 10.1 |
| \$60,000 to \$79,999 | 73.0 | 10.4 | S | 9.5 | 10.1 | 11.1 | 15.2 | 13.3 |
| \$80,000 to \$99,999 | 64.6 | 17.5 | S | S | 12.0 | S | S | S |
| \$100,000 to \$119,999 | 39.8 | 11.7 | S | S | S | S | S | 12.8 |
| \$120,000 or more | 129.3 | 38.8 | S | 12.7 | 13.2 | 15.0 | 14.2 | 29.4 |
| Median (dollars) | 60,000.0 | 89,400.0 | 53,000.0 | 50,680.0 | 56,000.0 | 58,200.0 | 59,000.0 | 55,900.0 |
| Mean (dollars) | 78,490.0 | 100,200.0 | 81,740.0 | 73,270.0 | 70,270.0 | 70,540.0 | 67,660.0 | 78,210.0 |

I agree with Mr. Brewer that we need more housing and that ending zoning restrictions would go far to achieve this, but the notion that we need to choose between basic rights for tenants

or save single-family rentals is more scaremongering than a concern grounded in fact. The pandemic has been difficult for everyone, there are substantial subsidies to landlords and tenants that have been [slow to](#) process, but it is not clear if Mr. Brewer would rather have had tenants evicted en masse or be deprived of protections because, [as Katie Wilson noted at Crosscut, 1.75% of Mr. Brewer's clients expressed an interest in selling due to](#) legal changes. Mr. Brewer seems to think that if even one landlord does not like a landlord regulation, policymakers should never consider it. Rather than forego tenant protections, policymakers would be better to ensure the increased supply of multifamily and subsidized housing, which is primarily all that is available for low-income renters.