

CPW Town Hall on Housing

What we want to ask Columbia to improve in our contract

By the end of this town hall, we hope you...

- Understand how bargaining works.
- Know our first bargaining offer to improve housing.
- Know how you can provide feedback throughout the process.
- Understand how we will be able to win the rights and protections we collectively determine.
- Know how you can get involved!

Follow us on Social Media!



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@Columbia Postdoc Union

How to engage during this Town Hall:

- Via the chat
- Respond to polls
- Breakout session
- Via this feedback form:

<https://forms.gle/nVeEzGUconfuaLDC6>

Roles:

- **Tom Donoghue** (he/him), postdoc at Department of Biomedical Engineering > presenting
- **Stefano Cataldi** (he/him), associate research scientist at the Department of Psychiatry > facilitating

We begin Bargaining on April 20th

What does that mean?

- April 20th: **Introductions** of the Bargaining Committee (BC) of our Union and Columbia Representatives. The BC presents **Contract Demands** and **proposes rules** for Bargaining (including hybrid!).
- Over the next sessions:
The BC will **open Articles** of our Contract and **present changes**.
Columbia will ask questions, **oppose** some of the changes and propose **counteroffers**.
>> this will continue back and forth..

How can we gain ground during negotiations?

- Show Columbia that a majority of us want to win these Contracts improvements.
>> need to **campaign!**

Why are we here today?

- To discuss our **first offer** we will present regarding Housing.



Bargaining Session of Academic workers at UConn

Rent Burden = paying over 30% salary on rent

The New York Times

The Typical American Renter Is Now Rent-Burdened, a Report Says

Moody's Analytics finds that renters in the U.S. now pay 30 percent of the median income for the average rent.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development has defined rent-burdened families as those who spend more than 30 percent of their household income on housing and "may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care."

We collected information from a majority of Postdocs/ARs (>800 Bargaining Surveys).

Source:

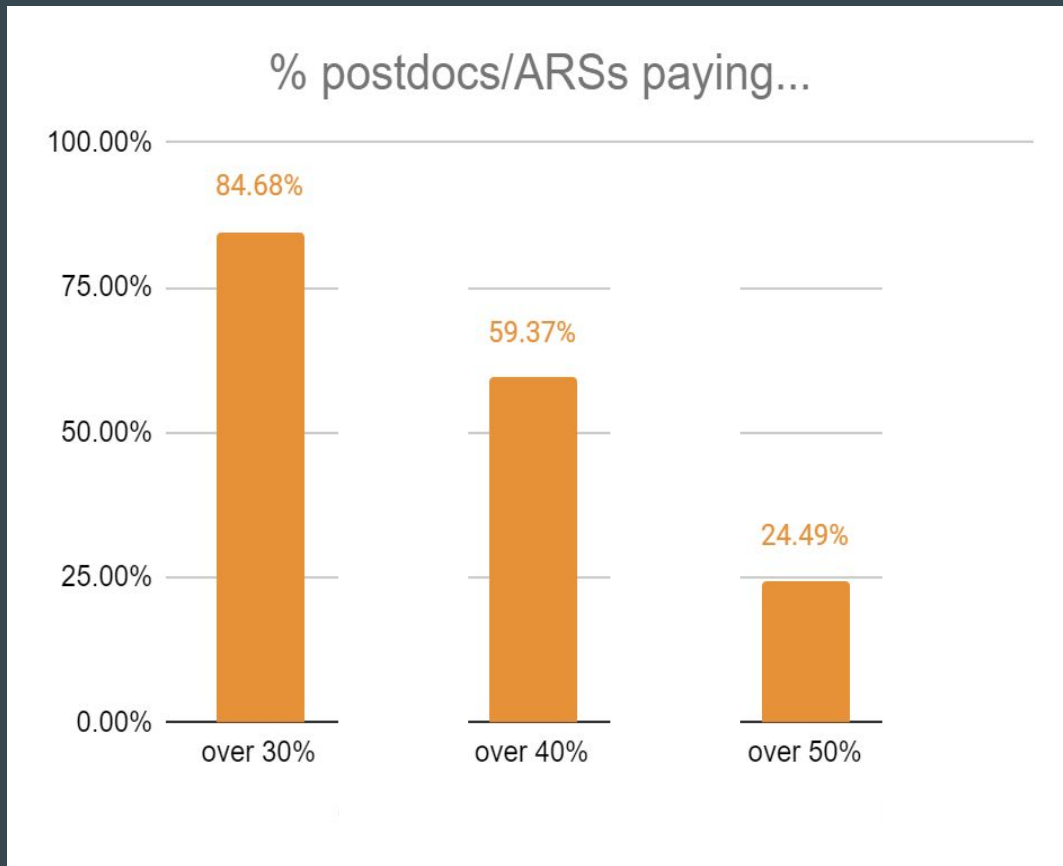
NYT Jan. 25, 2023,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/25/realestate/rent-burdened-american-households.html>

How much do we pay on rent?

- **>80%** of respondents to the rent burden question (n = 731) pay **more than 30%** towards rent.

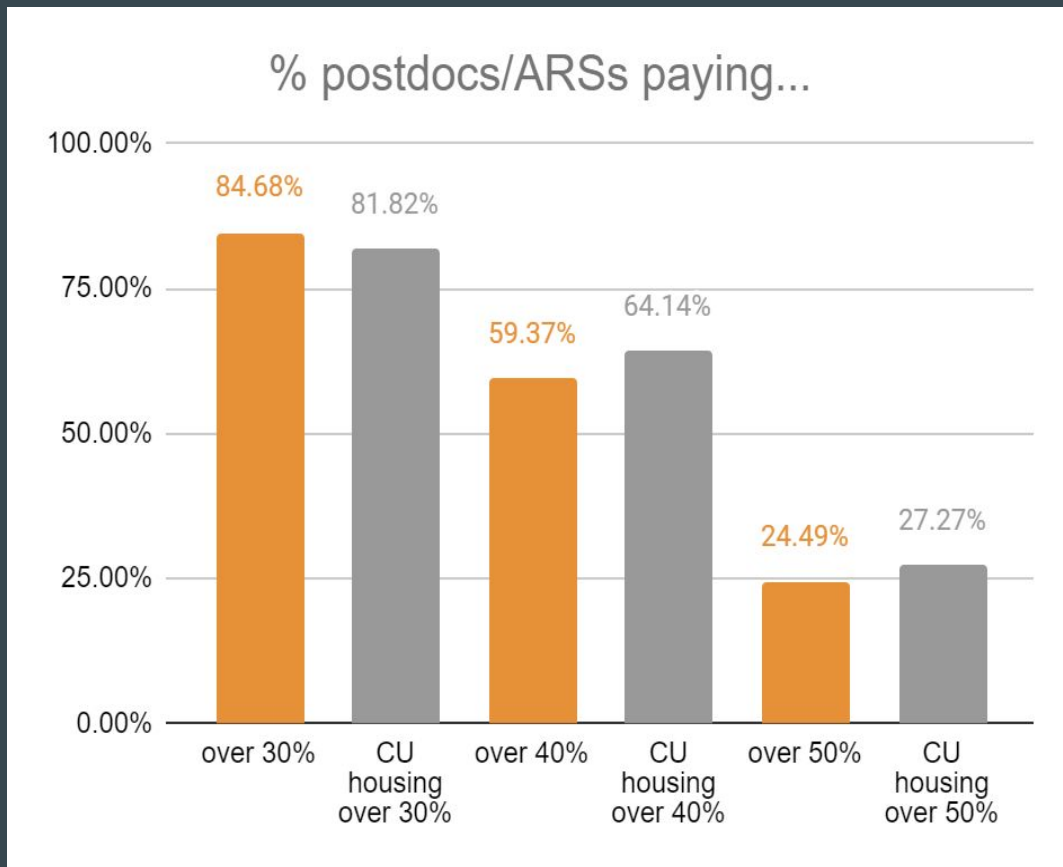
To get my apartment, my partner and I had to A) **pay a \$3k broker fee** on top of the first month's rent and security deposit, and B) get a **guarantor because we didn't met the 40x-monthly-rent criteria** for our combined annual rent. This was extremely stressful (especially because of the high competition for apartments) and financially debilitating.



How much do we pay on rent?

- **>80%** of respondents to the rent burden question (n = 731) pay **more than 30%** towards rent.
- Access to **Columbia Housing** does not solve the problem

*I am very **disappointed** with how the **university handles housing for postdocs**. I applied for university housing twice, and never made it off the lottery. I waited for over a year, and never received any positive news. This put me in terrible housing situations, that **affected my work and mental and emotional health**.*



How does Columbia Housing work?

COLUMBIA HOUSING

- **There are two different offices** - one for CUIMC and another for Morningside, that appear to work independently.
- **They have department quotas** - departments have an allocated (unknown) number of apartments available to their postdocs.
- **They use a lottery system** - eligible postdocs get entered into a lottery system to be able to pick from available apartments
- **Pricing is opaque** - there is a lack of clarity on pricing, including comparisons to “market” rates and level of subsidy (if any).

Overall, there is a lack of transparency, including about availability, quotas, lottery selection, and pricing.

Accessibility difficult for Internationals

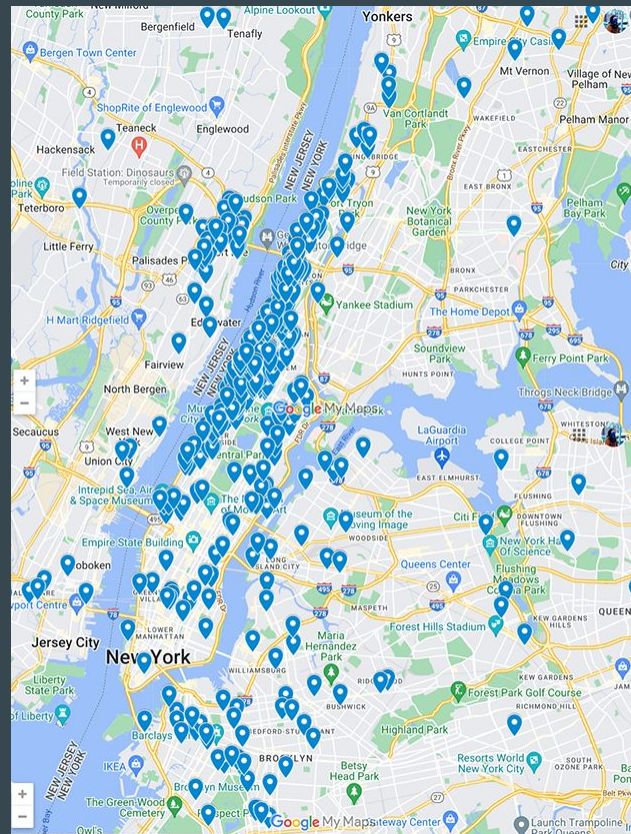
“Finding a guarantor as a foreigner is impossible, leading to expensive services”

“As an international scholar, housing was a very difficult part when I first came to the US.”

Common Real Estate Practice => **x40 cost of rent in salary if you have no guarantor**
West Harlem rentals average \$2,275 studio apartment => **Need \$91,000/year to get someone to rent to you!**

“With a PostDoc salary, it is basically impossible to afford housing, unless you live 1.5h away from campus.”

To afford rent we live further away from campuses



To improve access to Housing

ARTICLE ____ COLUMBIA HOUSING

Section 1: The University shall guarantee access to University housing for employees during their first year of appointment for up to 12 months.

Section 2: During each month, rent for University housing shall not be due prior to an employee's paycheck.

Section 3: All University-owned properties and on-campus housing shall be fully accessible as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Section 4: Rent charged to an employee for University housing shall not exceed thirty (30) percent of gross income.

Section 5: Employees shall have the right to elect to co-rent University housing units without an increase in the total rent for the unit.

Section 6: Employees shall have the right to keep pets in University housing.

Section 7: The University shall ensure equal access to all employees when applying for renewal of university housing lease after the initial 12-month period.

Section 8: The University shall offer to provide a letter of employment and salary validation to employees for the purpose of opening a credit account at an accredited financial institution.

To improve affordability of Housing

ARTICLE 3 BENEFITS

Section 1: Employees shall be entitled to the same access to healthcare and other benefits as per the University policies for Officers of Research and as required by law and independently of the source of funding. The University reserves the right to modify benefits after bargaining with the Union, and provided that such benefits are substantially equivalent to those currently provided.

Section 2: The University shall pay the full premium for coverages in Section 1. Unless waived, such coverage shall begin on the first day of employment.

Section 3: The University shall establish a Health Insurance Support Fund. Employees may apply for money from the fund to help defray the cost of healthcare expenses. Distribution of any funds shall be made in accordance with procedures, policies and requirements established by the Union.

Section 4: The University shall provide a newly-appointed employee with full reimbursement of costs of relocation for work purposes.

Section 5: **Columbia Housing:** During each month, rent for University housing shall not be due prior to an employee's first paycheck.

Section 6: **Housing supplement:** The University will pay an annual housing supplement of \$10,000 to each employee.

Section 7: **MTA/Transportation reimbursement:** The University will reimburse for a monthly unlimited MTA pass to each employee.

Challenges from the previous Bargaining...

COLUMBIA DOESN'T WANT TO NEGOTIATE ON HOUSING >>

“housing is a non-mandatory topic of bargaining” [Session on 02/26/2020]

Converted Subjects of Bargaining – a non-mandatory subject of bargaining (not directly related to the work) becomes mandatory once it is placed within a collective bargaining agreement and cannot be changed unless negotiated out of the contract. *Greenburgh Eleven UFSD, 32 PERB 3024(1999)*



Mt. Sinai administration has expressed intention to negotiate with their postdoc union over housing

What comes next?

Share with us your **thoughts, ideas, suggestions!!** > Don't forget to fill in the **Feedback Form**: <https://forms.gle/nVeEzGUconfuaLDC6>

Join the **Organizing Committee** and help the Bargaining Committee building a strong case to present to Columbia > let's start bargaining **strong!**

Help **collect signatures** for our Contract demands > we will present the first day of Bargaining.

SPREAD THE WORD! Be sure everyone you know is up to date with the Contract campaign. And put them in touch with us if they want to know more or get more involved.

THANK YOU

From your
Friendly
Neighborhood
Bargaining
Committee



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Join our Slack Channel! <https://bit.ly/CPWslack>