## Measuring the 'housing squeeze' in high-income countries: simple measures for summarising household change

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## Abstract

In several high-income countries, housing affordability has worsened dramatically in recent years, placing housing at the top of the political agenda. It would be valuable to understand how household patterns are changing in the context of this deteriorating affordability. Unfortunately, the toolbox of available measures for describing household change remains under-developed compared to those for fertility, mortality and migration. One of the simplest measures, average household size, is easily interpretable but comparisons over time and space are hindered by the fact it is a crude measure which does not account for changing population composition, especially age structure. Age-specific household representative rates are more useful, but the literature lacks an easily-interpretable summary metric of these rates. Building on the work of Thomas Burch, we suggest two summary demographic measures to describe the distribution of the population across households, Age-standardised Average Household Size, and Potential Additional Households. Age-standardised Average Household Size is a directly standardised measure in which the age-specific household representative rates of a population of interest are applied to a standard private household population. Potential Additional Households is an indirectly standardised measure which describes the potential number of households there would be in a population of interest according to a set of Standard household representative rates. It indicates the extent to which there is unmet demographic demand for housing relative to the Standard. We also define extended versions of the measures which standardise for both age and partnership status. We apply the measures to selected case study countries to demonstrate how household patterns have shifted during the period of deteriorating housing affordability in recent years. They require modest amounts of data and are simple to calculate. We believe they could be useful in summarising household demography changes to policymakers and a wide range of audiences.