

Sonoma County  
Community  
Development  
Commission



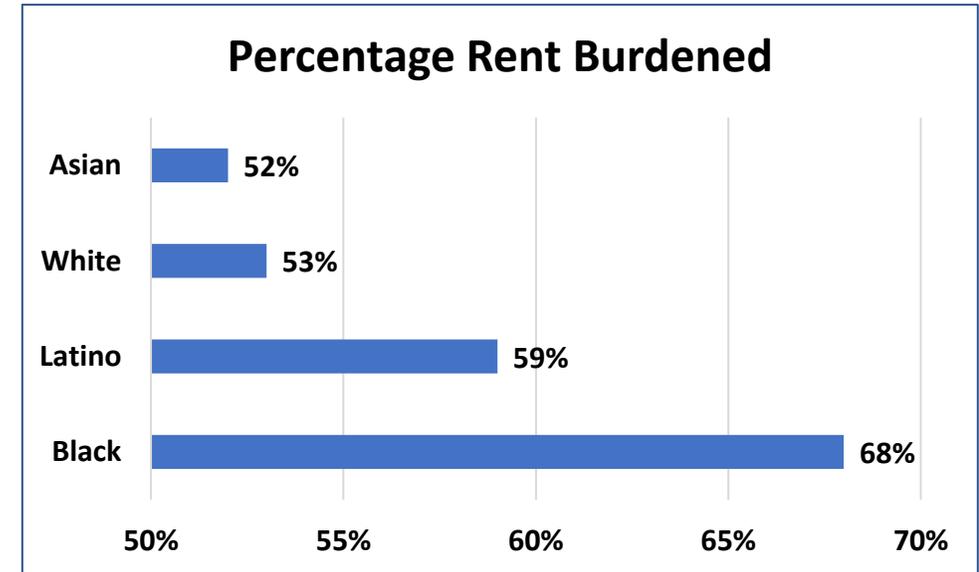
# Analysis of Impacts of Ending Sonoma County's Just Cause Ordinance

Michelle Whitman, Executive Director  
August 15, 2023



# Sonoma County Renter Data

- 38.6% of housing units are occupied by renters (US Census Bureau, 2022 estimate).
- Black and Latino households are more likely to occupy rented units, with over 50% of those households renting, compared to 33% of White and Asian households (Portrait of Sonoma, 2021).
- 52% of all renters are rent burdened, spending more than 30% of income on rent (Portrait of Sonoma, 2021).
- The level of burden is disproportionate, varying by race and ethnicity (Portrait of Sonoma, 2021).



# Sonoma County's COVID-19 Tenant Protections

COVID-19 tenant protections started in March 2020, expired on September 30, 2022.

- County Ordinance 6301, no eviction for COVID-19 associated non-payment of rent (effective March 2020).
- County Ordinance 6337, no evictions unless “Just Cause” (effective February 2021). Allowable causes:
  - Tenant poses an imminent threat to health or safety (e.g., violence)
  - Landlord removing the property from the rental market (via a state law called the Ellis Act)
  - Nonpayment of rent under limited circumstances

COVID-19 tenant protections intent: Preventing displacement due to pandemic health or job impact.

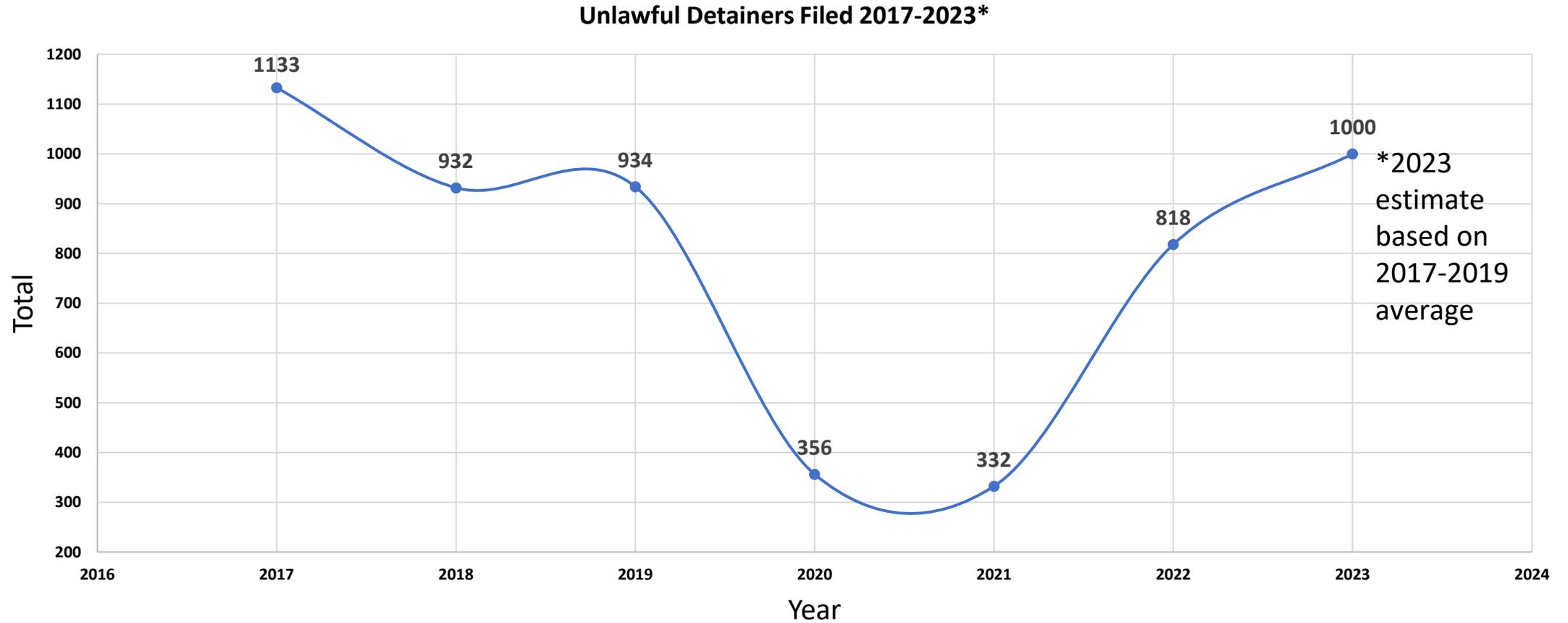


# Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

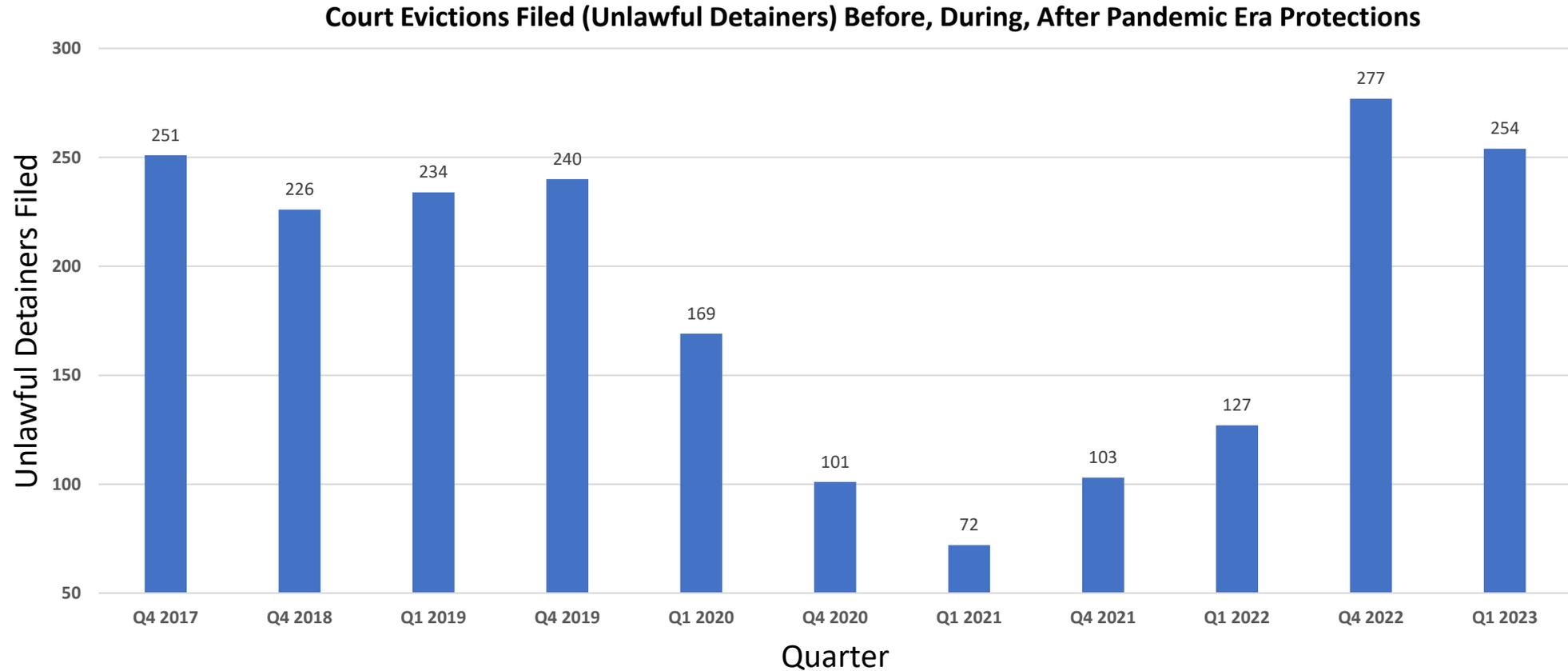
- Launched April 2021, stopped accepting applications in August, 2022, designed to help with back rent/utility debt accumulated between April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021.
- CDC administered funds in partnership with local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).
- ERAP has distributed \$39,602,623 so far to assist 2,827 Sonoma County households. Note: ERAP still has a backlog of applications under review or pending review – funds are still being distributed to eligible households that submitted applications within program parameters.



# Unlawful Detainers (Court Evictions) Filed, Annual Totals



# Unlawful Detainers (Court Evictions) Filed, Q1/Q4, 2017-2023



# Unlawful Detainers (Court Evictions) Geographical Distribution

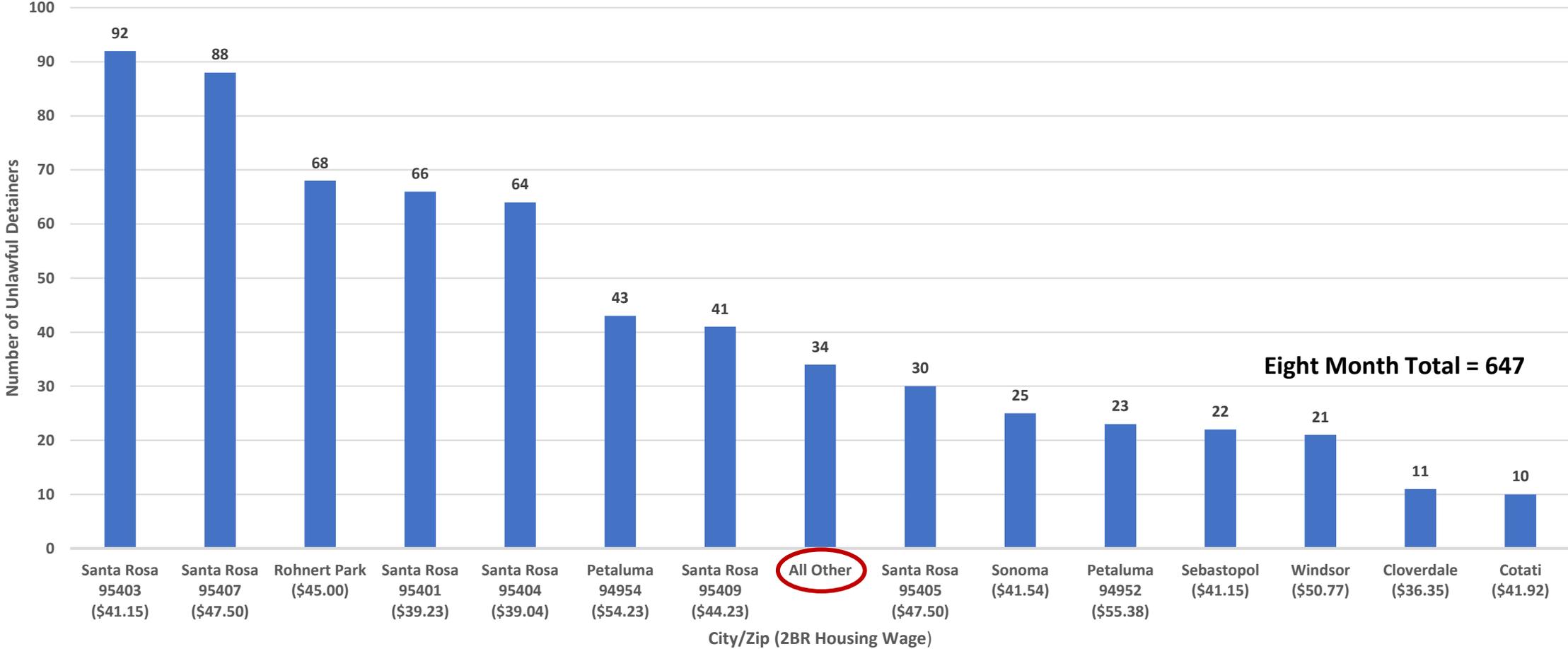
Description	Calendar 2017	Calendar 2018	Calendar 2019	Calendar 2020	Calendar 2021	Calendar 2022	Jan-May 2023
UDs in City Zip Codes (Including portions of unincorporated areas)	1041	872	852	317	292	751	356
Total UDs	1133	932	934	356	332	818	370

Percent in city/town zip codes (some unincorporated areas included)	91.87%	93.56%	91.22%	89.04%	87.95%	91.80%	96.21%
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# Geographical Distribution

October 2022-May 2023 Unlawful Detainers By Zip Code, (Plus Hourly Housing Wage Needed For 2 BR Apartment )



# Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA) Eviction and Housing Legal Services Study

## Objectives:

- Fill a critical gap in data and knowledge about evictions and the availability of housing legal services in the Bay Area;
- Help inform future policies and programs throughout the region;
- Focus on the entire region, with deeper research and policy solutions that are focused on specific geographies depending on data availability (e.g., rent registry data, right to counsel program data, or other local data sources); and
- Share results in October 2024.



# Tenant Issues and Homelessness

- The County’s 2022 Point In Time Count lists the following among primary causes of homelessness: lost job (23%); eviction (10%); landlord raised rent (7%).
- Toward a New Understanding, a June 2023 statewide study conducted by the Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative at University of California at San Francisco, found that high housing costs and low income left participants vulnerable to homelessness.

<u>Primary Cause of Homelessness</u>	<u>Percentage of Residents Rendered Homeless</u>
<b>Lost Job</b>	<b>23%</b>
Argument with Family/Friend	11%
Other	11%
Divorce/Separation/Break Up	10%
<b>Eviction</b>	<b>10%</b>
Alcohol or Drug Use	8%
Don't Know/Decline to State	8%
Incarceration	8%
<b>Landlord Raised Rent</b>	<b>7%</b>
Mental Health Issues	6%
Domestic Violence	5%
Illness/Medical Problems	5%
Fire	4%
Aging Out of Foster Care	2%
Foreclosure	2%
Probation/Parole Restrictions	2%
Hospitalization/Treatment	1%



# Policy Interventions for Discussion Purposes

1. Development of targeted Just Cause ordinances
2. Establishment of a rental registry to generate comprehensive data
3. Funding pre-eviction and eviction legal services, counseling, training and renter education
4. Funding emergency rental assistance
5. Updating/strengthening Mobile Home Rent Stabilization Ordinance
6. Providing relocation assistance
7. Collecting and tracking displacement data



# Questions?

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