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## A notice on the door

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**I**t starts with a note on the door. What that piece of paper says and how a tenant must respond to it varies based on the situation. Did they not pay the rent on time? Did they destroy property? Did they violate their lease agreements?

Depending on the answers to these questions, a tenant may have three to 10 days to pick up sticks and leave their unit. It is a process that will damage their credit, uproot their lives and, in many cases, leave them homeless and marked with a scarlet E: eviction.

Eviction, the legal process by which a landlord forces a tenant to leave a property, is at the root of a crisis in the United States, which is a country in which many residents can't weather even a minor financial setback as wages stagnate and wealth continues to flow upward. One car repair, one medical crisis, or one traffic ticket can take an individual or family from stable housing and throw them into a spiral from which they may not recover.

According to new data released by Princeton University's Eviction Lab, that crisis has grown precipitously since the turn of the century.

Matthew Desmond led the research team in their work, scouring court records and other private data sources to compile one of the most complete records of formal eviction proceedings available. It was published in April on the organization's website, EvictionLab.org. Desmond is also the scholar responsible for the book *Evicted*, which broaches the subject of the

Evictions have doubled in the United States since 2000 and, given the current economic climate, it is unlikely that these rates will fall any time soon. In a time when many individual families live from one paycheck to the next, it is marginalized groups who are facing heightened risks of being evicted.

scope and impact of evictions on the most marginalized groups in the United States.

The results demonstrate a near doubling of evictions in the United States between 2000 and 2016, from 518,873 to 898,479. The total number of evictions peaked at more than 1 million in 2006.

The data shows a shocking geographic distribution concentrating evictions in the more diverse, more impoverished southeast United States, with evictions filed against 16.5 out of every 100 households in the hardest hit major city of North Charleston, South Carolina, in 2016.

Portland has an eviction rate of just over 1 percent. That's just over 3 evictions for every 100 households.

The methodology included only evictions

that involved a court, thus ignoring economic evictions or people who know they will be evicted and leave housing before their record gets tarnished. No-cause evictions, which have been used in Portland to clear out entire buildings for redevelopment, do not get counted.

Seattle, in contrast, had an eviction rate of .63 out of every 100 households.

"These local numbers are probably too low," said Xochitl Maykovich, a spokesperson for Washington Community Action Network. "I love that they're doing the research, but it needs to be more in depth."

Even proportionately small numbers of evictions have a devastating effect on the households involved, potentially tearing children from their parents and leaving people homeless. Studies show that these have a particularly hard impact on marginalized groups, particularly families with children headed by a single woman of color.

"People lose jobs. People have their kids taken away," explains Adam Protheroe, the head of the Housing Unit and staff attorney with South Carolina Legal Services, the statewide legal aid organization. "Whatever organized life you have comes apart at the seams."

As concerns about housing affordability grow in thriving urban areas like Seattle, nonprofit and governmental agencies are working to find ways to keep people in place or prevent an eviction from staining their records. And, while tenant-friendly laws do some of the work, experts say that

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