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How many people are really evicted in SF every year?

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Survey of court data says thousands of landlords try to oust tenants annually

By **Adam Brinklow** | May 31, 2018, 8:35am PDT

A protester props up a sign during a 2014 demonstration outside of an apartment building that allegedly evicted all of the tenants to convert the units to AirBnb rentals. | Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

San Francisco City Hall released its annual estimate of how many eviction attempts happened in the city between 2016 and 2017, but now a local tenants' group alleges that the real number possibly exceeds official estimates by nearly one thousand incidents each year.

San Francisco-based renters' rights organization Tenants Together released a study Wednesday titled "California Evictions Are Fast and Frequent," which examines California court records and takes stock of unlawful-detainer notices in each county going back to 2014.

According to the Superior Court of California:

> An Unlawful Detainer action is a special court proceeding. It's a legal way to evict someone from the place where they live or work. This usually happens when a tenant stays after the lease is up, the lease is canceled, or the landlord thinks the tenant hasn't paid their rent.
>
> An Unlawful Detainer decides if the landlord can take the property back from the tenant. [...] If the defendant moves out before trial, the case is dismissed or, can be changed to a regular civil action.

Whereas the annual San Francisco Rent Board Report records "the number of eviction notices filed with the department," Tenants Together directors Aimee Inglis and Dean Preston alleged in Tenants Together's findings that this may disguise the number of actual oustings:

> In many cases, landlords serve a notice and tenants just move out. For every tenant facing a court filed eviction, there are others displaced from their homes who do not show up in court data because they moved by the end of the notice period. Currently, there is no statewide data on the number of notices to terminate tenancy.

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So what's the real figure? Well, possibly nobody knows for sure, but based on the detainer data Inglis claims that the city saw 3,004 attempted evictions in 2016. In contrast, the city's own report recorded only 1,881 that year.

In 2015, the detainer figure was 3,512, (the city's report estimates 2,376 for that year) and in 2014 3,310 (compared to the 2,120 filed with the Rent Board), for a three-year average of 3,275 citywide. No data is available for 2017.

It's worth noting that Inglis and Preston wrap up the report by pressing for changes to rental laws, including rolling back the Costa-Hawkins act and expanding rent control in the state for the first time in decades.

You can read their full report here, which includes breakdowns for Alameda County and other Bay Area communities.

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