



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL



HARVARD
MEDICAL SCHOOL

HOUSING REPORT 2020

Dear MGH trainee,

In the following pages, you will find a simple housing resource designed to provide you with a glimpse into current MGH trainees' living situations. Included is a compilation of data and advice gathered from current residents and fellows in anesthesiology and general surgery. Though the Boston metropolitan housing and rental markets may be aptly described as complex—if not a bit daunting—our hope is that this report will help reduce any stress surrounding your housing search or, at the least, arm you with advice that might prepare you for it.

At the end of this document, you will find a list of email addresses from current residents and fellows whom you may feel free to contact for advice. Some of these trainees will also be vacating their current residences in the coming months and may be amenable to passing them on to you.

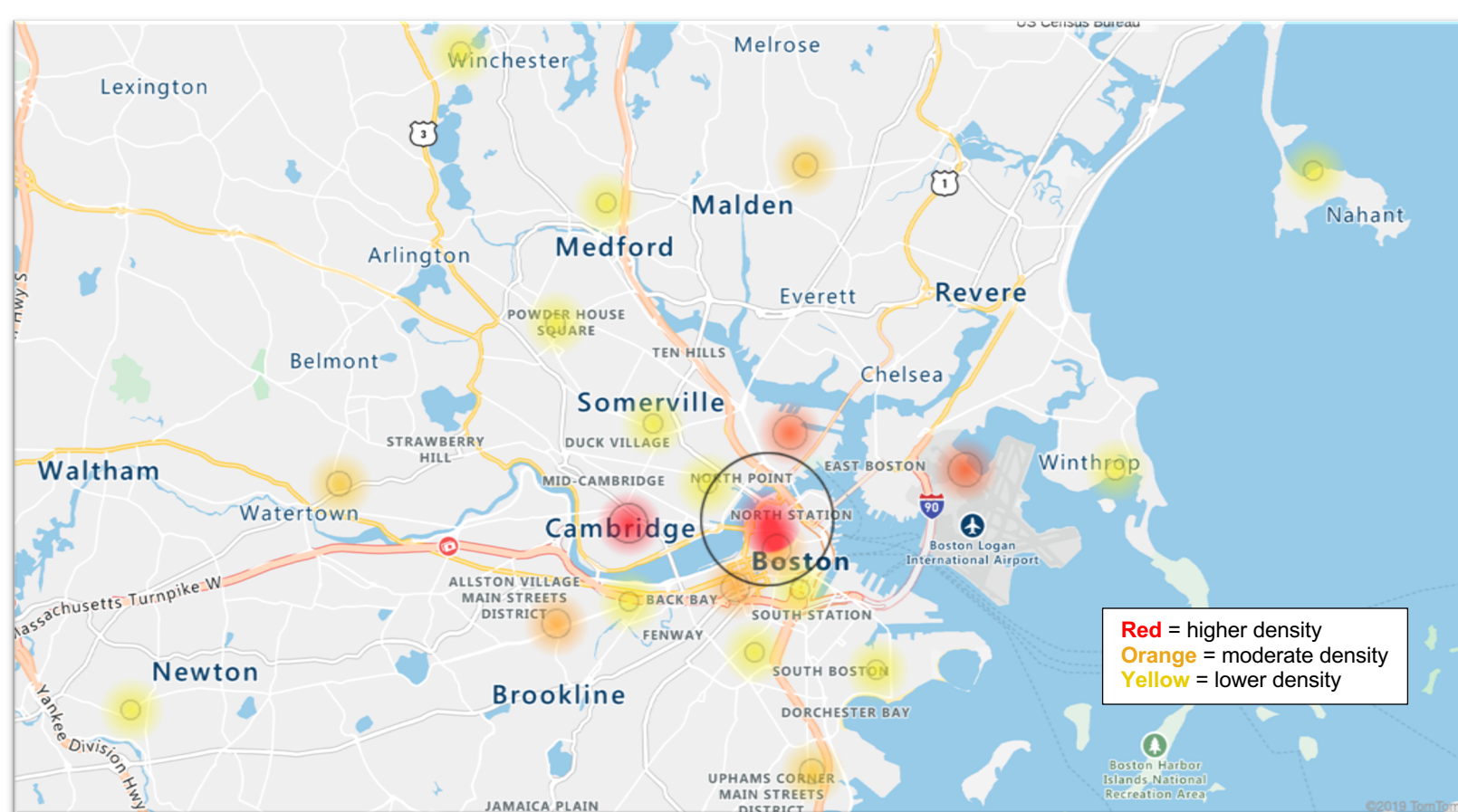
Finally, please feel welcome to direct any questions regarding this resource to the MGH Anesthesia Chief Residents (AnesChiefRes@partners.org) or to Lukas Matern (lumatern@gmail.com).

We wish you a safe move and happy home-hunting, and we look forward to welcoming you to our community and institution here in Boston.

LOCATION

Where do current MGH trainees live?

- Approximately 37% of responding residents and fellows reside in the West End, Beacon Hill, and North End neighborhoods adjacent to the MGH main campus.
- Other popular towns and neighborhoods include Cambridge, East Boston, and Charlestown. However, trainees are relatively dispersed, suggesting that it is certainly possible to live comfortably in any of multiple areas as a resident or fellow.



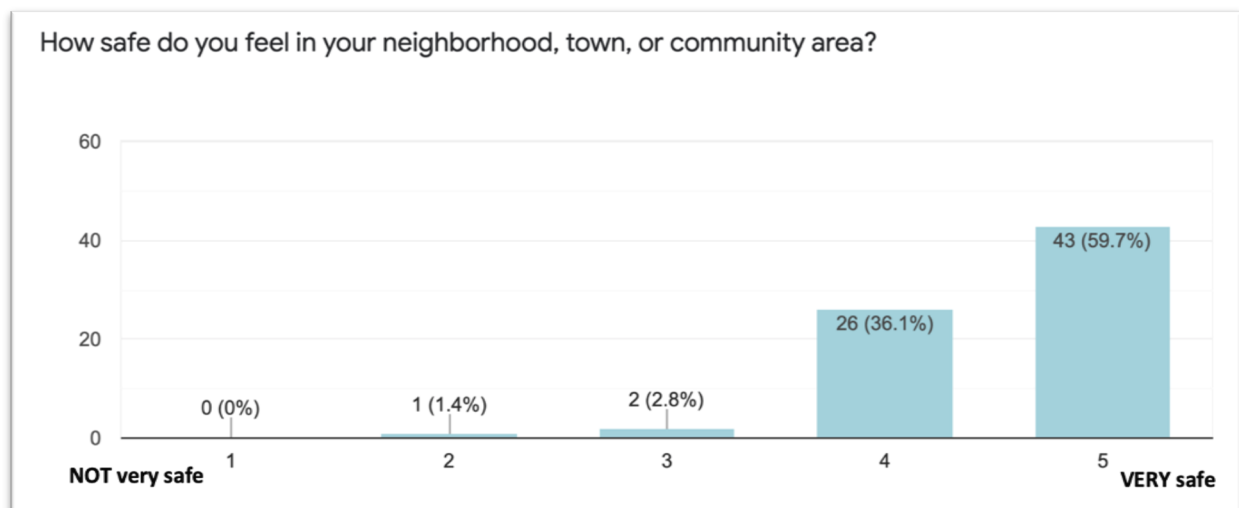
What do MGH trainees look for when choosing a Boston-area community?

- The leading consideration among trainees is proximity to the hospital, with 85% of residents and fellows citing this factor as most important in deciding where to live.
- A significant proportion of responding residents and fellows also note the following as highly important:
 - Partners', spouses', or roommates' preferences (51%)
 - Affordability of available housing (49%)

- Proximity to public transportation (48%)
- Walkability of the neighborhood (45%)
- Neighborhood safety (45%)
- Smaller percentages of trainees (< 25%) place emphasis on proximity to family or friends, parking availability, nightlife and leisure opportunities, pet-friendliness, neighborhood bike-friendliness, childcare and school options, proximity to grocery stores, and specific types of housing and amenities available.

How safe do MGH trainees feel in their communities of residence?

- Overwhelmingly, MGH trainees feel safe in their Boston-area communities, with > 95% reporting that they would feel safe walking alone most hours of the day near their residences.



How walkable are MGH trainees' communities of residence?

- Most Boston communities and neighborhoods are moderately to highly walkable, which may be defined as the ability to complete most chores and errands on foot. However, residents/fellows living beyond the city or in suburban areas may require car trips to accomplish most errands.
 - For more information about specific neighborhoods, trainees may refer to the following resource: <https://www.walkscore.com/>



What general thoughts and advice do MGH trainees have about their communities and finding a neighborhood in which to live?

As suggested above, many trainees feel that proximity to their work remains a primary consideration in deciding where to live. However, many also view housing options as potentially more comfortable and more affordable in regions removed from the hospital and city center.

- *“Consider your values first (or make a list of priorities). Then research potential areas that will best fit your needs. Don’t be afraid to compromise in a few less important areas if you find a decent spot that fits your essential criteria.”*
- *“Dorchester has affordable/roomy housing and is on the Red Line and 93, which makes it easy to commute elsewhere in the city if needed! It’s up and coming so not as many attractions per se, but has all the basics (Target, Home Depot, groceries) very close by as well as a bomb brewery and two great distilleries. Viet food is on point.”*
- *“I love that my building is a ten-minute walk to work and next to some outdoor space.”*
- *“If looking further from MGH, find a place with easy red line access or 93 access if you plan to drive.”*
- *“I live in Fenway, which is a great neighborhood and easy to get to MGH by the D line. It’s a great neighborhood, but I probably would live closer to MGH if my wife were not at BWH.”*
- *“Most enjoyable is convenience of proximity to MGH.”*
- *“[Most enjoyable is] distance to work, commute (East Boston).”*
- *“North Shore areas offer an affordable area with great housing opportunities for those with children. You can easily find 2-3 bedroom condo/townhouse with a yard and private driveway. If not driving, areas along the commuter train lines (only those that end at North Station, not South Station) will help with the commute for most rotations. Recommended commuter rail lines are Haverhill, Lowell, and Newburyport. But commuter rails only run about twice an hour (which helped me become a very efficient worker). Towns along those lines that can be recommended are, in order of distance to MGH, Melrose, Winchester, Wakefield, Reading, Wilmington, Andover, Swampscott, Billerica, Salem, Beverly. If in order of schools, my best guess is as follows: Winchester, Andover, Billerica, Beverly, Wakefield, Reading, Wilmington, Swampscott, Melrose,*

Salem. Housing options are nicer and cheaper than the traditional areas where most people live such as Arlington, Belmont, Watertown, Waltham, Newton, where the commute is not even better despite the shorter distance despite having to rely on bus+red line for commute. In conclusion, North Shore areas are amazing areas for families with young children in terms of opportunities, schools, and finance, but you will sacrifice your commute and proximity to the city life."

- *"I really like being able to walk to work, and convenient short distance to important amenities like grocery store. Also I have a dog, so finding a pet friendly area was a priority."*
- *"[Look for] proximity to work. My rent is ridiculous though and there is a mice problem."*
- *"We could afford to buy a house here (Nahant), and the area is beautiful. Not ideal commute."*
- *"Living right next to the hospital, it is very common to hear ambulance and helicopter noise."*
- *"Start to research early, look at a variety of places to research price. Proximity to work, public transport, safety, and comfort as top priorities."*
- *"Very family friendly (Charlestown)."*
- *"It's nice to be near public transportation. Unfortunately, I am not near the T but the buses are decent (South Boston). I have lots of food and drink options nearby and parks for walking my dog. I'm not so close to MGH. Proximity to MGH is nice the first year, but I didn't like the vibes in the West End."*
- *"If you're looking to buy a home, Winthrop is a great option. Affordable prices, several options (single homes, condos, multi-homes, etc). Target, CVS, Stop & Shop all nearby. Lots of restaurants and a few cafes. 15 mins driving in the AM during resident hours, 25-30 mins during normal hours (after 7:00 am or so), always 20 mins to get back home in the evenings. Town is super quaint, safe and friendly."*
- *"Live somewhere you'll be happy outside of work! Don't just be 30 seconds from the hospital."*
- *"Figure out what really matters to you. If being able to be home quickly and easily (to see your spouse for example) is most important, then spend more money to have a shorter commute. At the end of the day it's only three years."*
- *"I was looking for convenience, and I had the luxury of splitting my rent with my partner, so I was able to find a ton of options in the luxury buildings near the hospital."*
- *"Think what is most important for you and your family. I live in Beacon Hill and while the size of the apartments is small, I love how it "looks" different enough that I feel that I am away from work when I am at home but still close enough that it is easy to walk back and forth from the hospital after a long night of call."*
- *"Proximity to MGH is under-rated."*
- *"Too expensive, pay does not offset cost of living in Boston (West End)."*
- *"Quality of finishings. This includes drafts around windows, gaps in doors, flooring, central/window heat and air, sound proofing of walls, etc."*
- *"I live in East Boston, which is slowly being developed. There are areas that are notably unsafe, but my apartment building is in a safe area directly adjacent to the blue line (Maverick station)."*
- *"It's important to balance proximity/accessibility to work with home needs. For example, certain areas are less conducive to having a family, while others may require more commuting. Figuring out your needs before looking for housing may be helpful."*
- *"Utilize online searches and read reviews, touring apartments."*
- *"Consider the residential and neighborhood feel, walkability."*

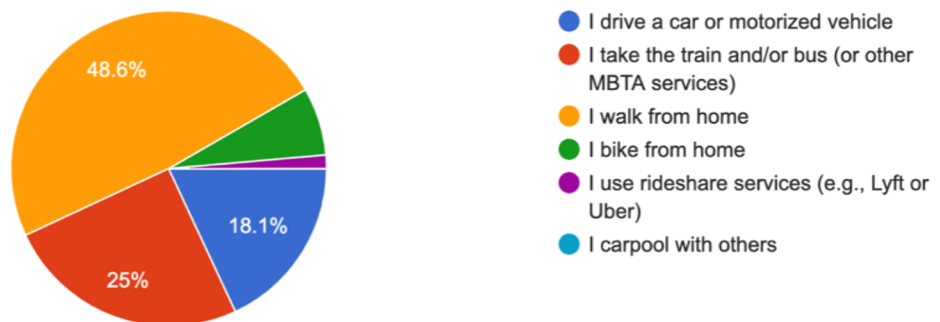
- *“Don’t be afraid to look in different sections of Boston besides beacon hill, downtown, and north end (where it seems like most of the residents live) - you can get a little more bang for your buck by being a little bit farther away but still in the city.”*
- *“Although they are building more around the hospital, it is not the most exciting place to live. The cost of living close to the hospital is quite crippling. I wish I lived in Cambridge and took the train in, the nightlife and vibe of Cambridge by Harvard is amazing.”*
- *“Walkable distance to MGH.”*
- *“If you don’t mind a short commute, (half hour bike ride or ten minute drive) Brookline is a great neighborhood. Great restaurants, grocery stores and excellent overall vibe and you can pay significantly less than the neighborhood surrounding MGH.”*
- *“I’m a little further from MGH than I would like, walkable to TJ’s and Whole Foods.”*
- *“Room in apartment for rent in Brookline is great for NWH folks.”*

TRANSPORTATION

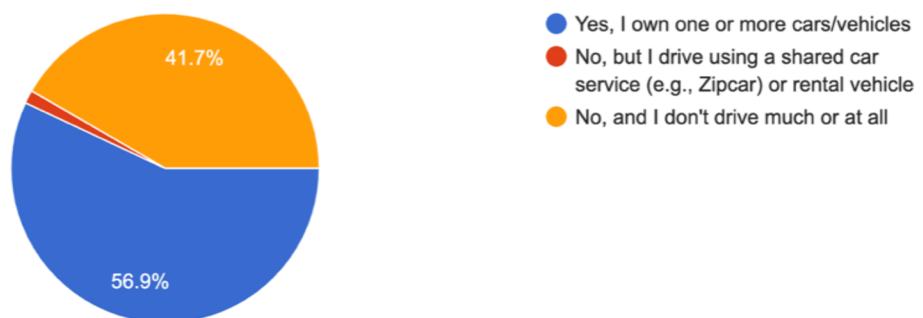
How do most MGH trainees travel to and from the hospital?

- A plurality of residents and fellows (~49%) walk from home, a fact that corresponds to the significant proportion of residents who live within walking distance of the hospital.
- Approximately 25% of residents and fellows report regularly taking public transit.
- A slight majority of responding residents and fellows (~57%) own personal cars or vehicles. However, only ~18% of trainees report regularly driving to and from work.

On most days, how do you travel to work?



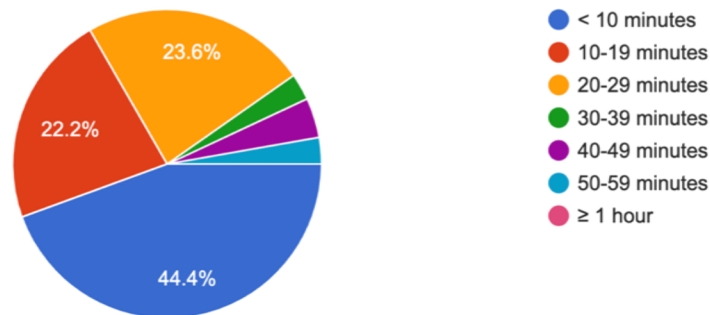
Do you own a car or motorized vehicle in the Boston area?



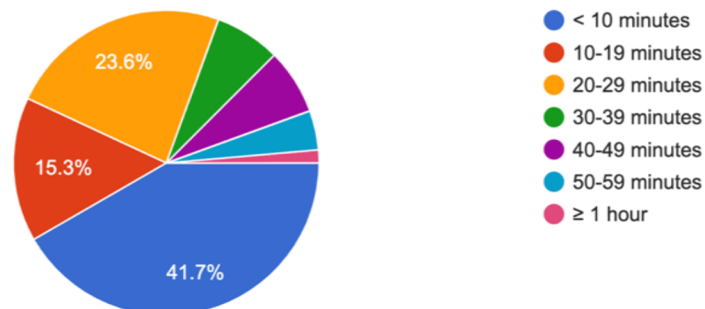
How do MGH trainees perceive their commutes?

- Most trainees (approximately 40-45%) require fewer than 10 minutes to get to and from the hospital. However, around 15% of residents report one-way commute times of 30 minutes or more, and commute times tend to increase during the afternoon rush hour period.
- Time spent commuting is relatively consistent for most trainees (~85%).
- The greater majority of residents and fellows do not find their commutes to be significantly stressful, though approximately 25% of trainees report moderate to high levels of stress from their commutes.
 - Those reporting significant stress often cite unpredictable traffic and living far from MBTA services as contributing factors.

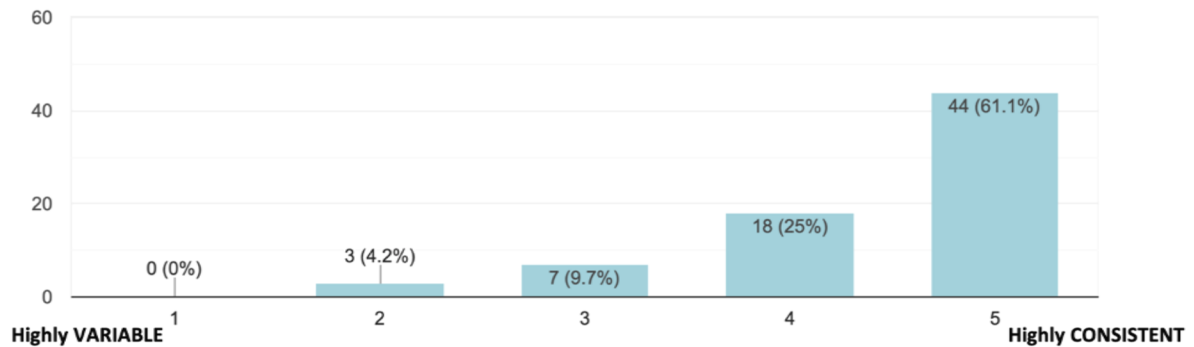
On average, how long is your one-way "morning" commute from home TO the MGH main campus?



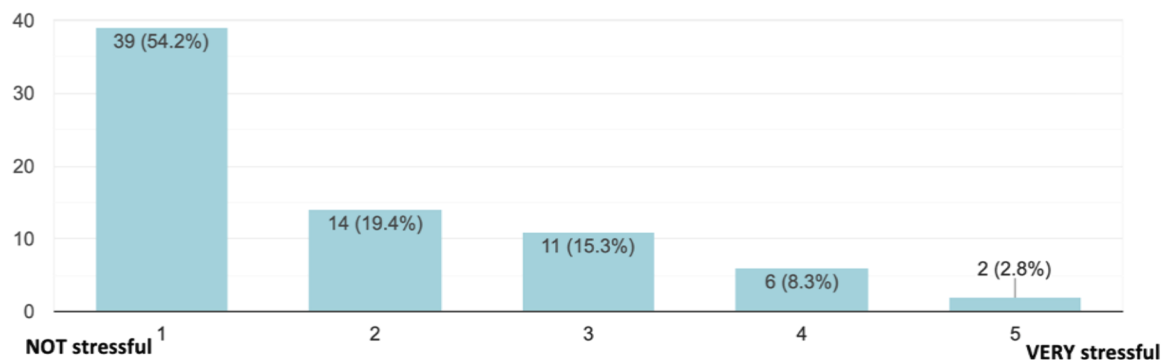
On average, how long is your one-way "afternoon" commute to home FROM the MGH main campus?



How consistent is the amount of time that you spend commuting between home and the MGH campus?



On average, how stressful or difficult is your commute?



What general thoughts and advice do MGH trainees have about transportation and commuting around Boston?

Many residents and fellows express satisfaction with walking and riding public transportation around the Boston area, while several voice frustration with suboptimal traffic conditions and parking options. A number do not feel that they require cars except to make trips out of the city.

- *“If you take the T to work, consider a few items: (1) Trains usually don’t start running in the morning until ~5:15 AM, so you may have to take the first train depending on your rotation and distance from the hospital. (2) Not all lines are created equal. The Green line has above-ground segments that are often severely slowed by traffic. The Orange (and, to a lesser extent, the Red) are undergoing almost continuous maintenance that may change off-peak schedules. (3) The MBTA gets extremely cramped during peak*

periods. Be prepared to be assertive or to skip a few trains if commuting during rush hour."

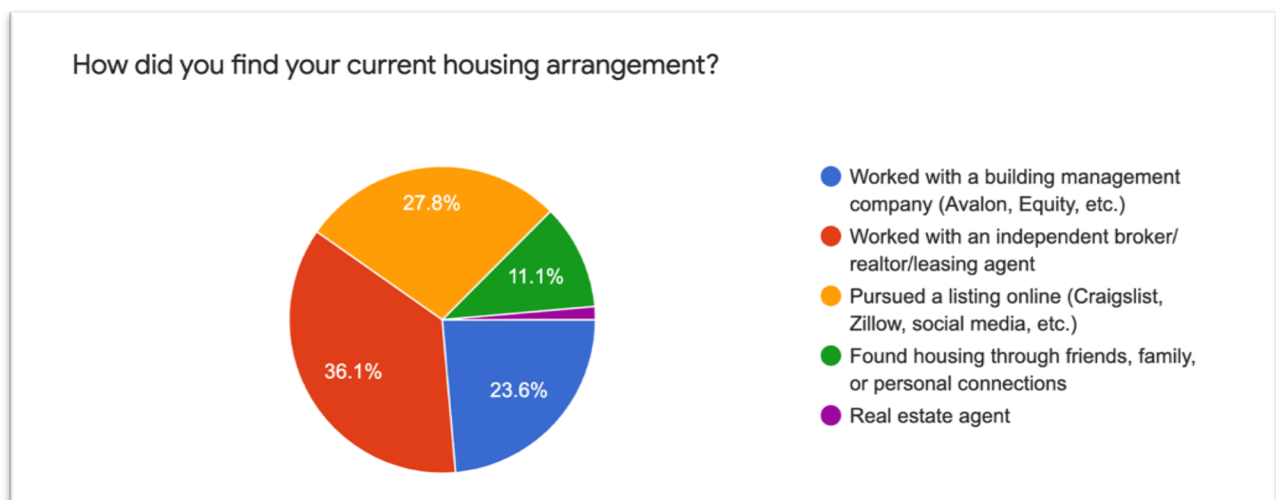
- "Timing is key for driving. If you have a flexible home schedule, it can be worth staying a little later at MGH and driving home after the major 5pm rush."
- "Live somewhere you don't need a car to get to work... but having a car can still be nice for weekends/trips."
- "Get the subsidized T pass from MGH. I either walk or Uber otherwise."
- "Taking the train is doable, but can be annoying and gets tiresome. Walking to work is a major upgrade- takes the same amount of time as my train ride used to take, but is less stressful (I can leave whenever I want)."
- "Traffic is terrible and can change dramatically based on construction."
- "Live walking distance to hospital (<10 min) or live on red line. Green line is not as reliable. People who live farther away typically have houses/children. Some people bike, but know that comes with a bit of risk in Boston."
- "Driving is stressful."
- "Nice to be bikeable or walkable. Biking works 9 months out of the year."
- "If you live in places like Beacon Hill or Charlestown, parking will likely be stressful. Parking in Winthrop is a breeze."
- "Beware the above-ground sections of the T - during big snowstorms they often break down."
- "I bike everywhere and love it!"
- "If you're gonna live in downtown and walk to work, you really don't need a car unless your spouse has to drive outside the city. I have had a car my whole life prior to moving to Boston, but it would only have been another expense. You can always rent a car for weekend trips (which we did and it was affordable)."
- "Make sure you only have to take one subway line/bus if you need public transportation."
- "If you're not directly on the subway and far away, the temptation to uber is extremely high at 5am - be aware of that."
- "Parking is a challenge."
- "Transportation is largely not needed. I've rented a car a few times to drive to Vermont or Maine."
- "Live in walking distance if you can find a place that isn't too expensive. Traffic and car make life more stressful."
- "Parking spots are very expensive in the city and it is often faster and cheaper to walk to T for transportation within the downtown area."
- "It would be difficult to ride a bicycle to work as Boston does not have many clear bike lanes. Public transit is often unreliable (depending on the line) and commuting via car is a nightmare. It would be best to be within walking distance to the hospital."
- "Traffic is real. If you're planning on living in the suburbs, try to test out the commute and get a sense of how the driving will be. It can be a real drain to work a full day then sit in traffic for an hour to get home."
- "Driving is highly variable and stressful. Walking is the most reliable way to get to work."
- "The red line is relatively reliable. I live 5 stops away (Andrew) and the commute is very easy."
- "Driving in Boston is difficult, especially around MGH due to lack/expense of parking and geography of the area with limited ingress/egress routes."
- "I have a 6 minute walk door to door so I am unable to comment."
- "I love within walking distance to the hospital and I love it. I strongly recommend living within walking distance."

- *"Driving and parking at MGH is a huge pain. I wish I lived closer so that I could walk or take the T."*
- *"If you take the T, realize that certain lines are more likely to have delays (green > red >> blue)."*
- *"Boston is small, lots of stuff in walkable distance. When the weather is bad I take an Uber (relatively cheap in Boston) or the T."*
- *"Don't be afraid to live away from downtown Boston if it affords you more space, as long as you are close to the highway or mass transit."*
- *"The stress level for me is almost zero when Boston is bikeable, it goes up during the winter when I take the green line which is often crowded and on the slower side."*
- *"Be easy walking distance to a T line or the hospital to make commute stress free."*
- *"Live near the red-line or walkable to MGH if possible."*

HOUSING OPTIONS

How do MGH trainees find housing?

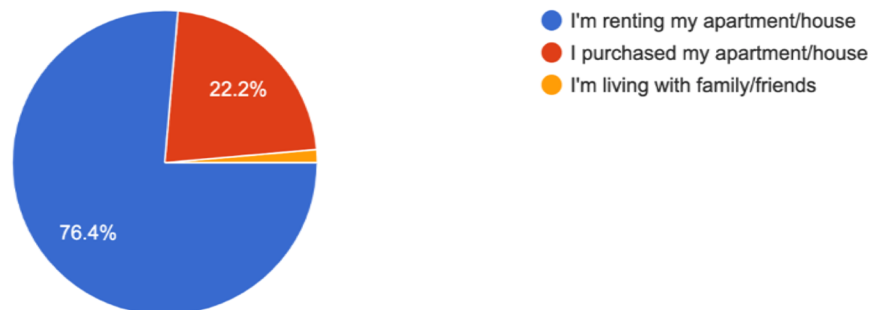
- A plurality of residents and fellows (~36%) work with brokerage, real estate, or leasing agents to secure housing.
 - Brokers and agents charge fees for their services, usually amounting to an additional month of rent at the time of lease signing.
- However, large numbers of trainees also contact management companies or pursue online listings. These may carry the advantage of bypassing broker or agent fees.
 - Craigslist in particular is frequently mentioned as a useful resource.
 - Social media outlets (e.g., <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gsdhousing/>) may contain helpful listings, especially for new trainees searching for roommates within the greater Harvard community.



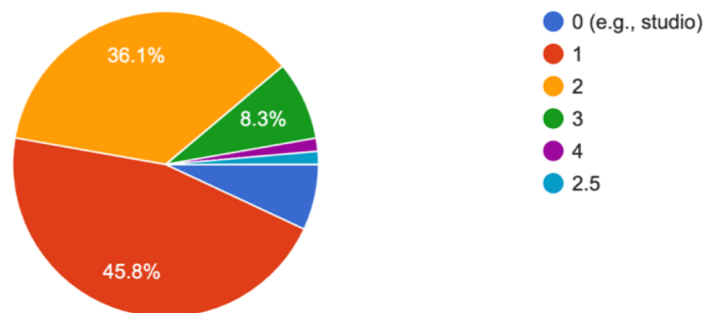
In what kinds of housing arrangements do most MGH trainees live?

- A significant majority (~75%) choose to rent, though nearly a quarter (~22%) opt for property ownership.
- Most trainees (~80%) live with at least one other individual, commonly a partner or spouse. Many recommend finding roommates to divide the costs of housing.
 - Most trainees reside in either 1-bedroom or 2-bedroom arrangements (> 80%). A smaller number inhabit studio apartments (~7%) or live in spaces with 3 bedrooms or more (~10%).
- The majority of residents and fellows (~70%) do not currently live with pets.
 - However, only ~20% of trainees indicate that their housing would not permit pet ownership. This may suggest that Boston-area housing options are generally welcoming of pets.

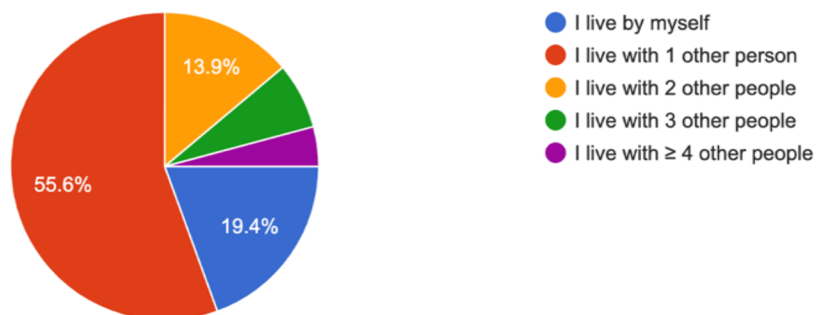
Which of these describes your current living situation?

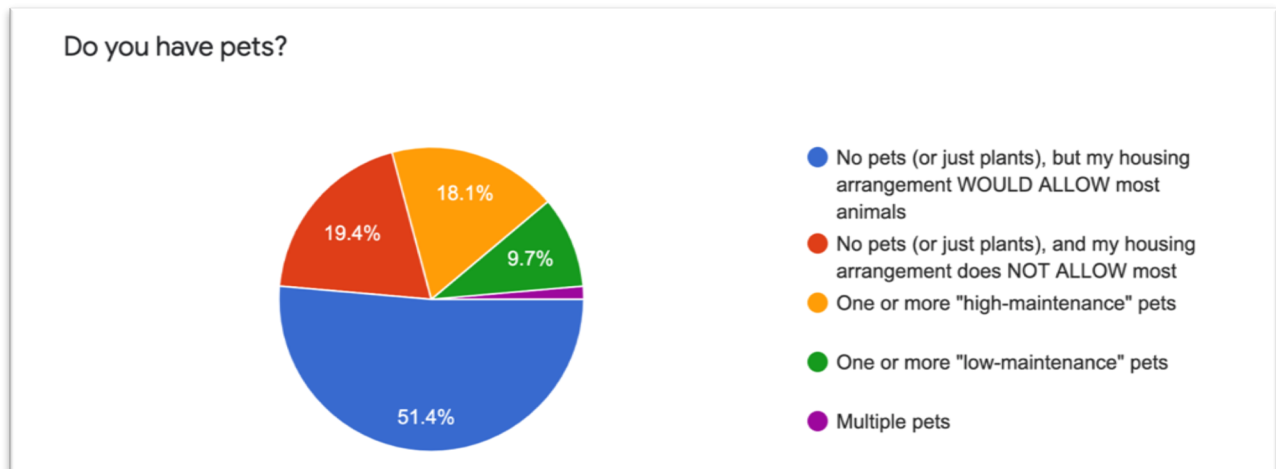


How many FULL bedrooms are in your apartment, house, or living space?



Including partners, children, other family/friends, and roommates, which best describes your living arrangement?





What kinds of amenities and features do MGH trainees' living arrangements have?

- The most common amenities reported by trainees include the following:
 - On-site (45%) or in-unit (55%) laundry appliances
 - Secured mail or package services (52%)
 - Covered or garage parking (48%)
 - Bike storage space (47%)
 - Maintenance staff or services (47%)
 - Concierge services (40%)
- Smaller but significant numbers of trainees report exercise space or equipment (27%), shared common space (32%), street (24%) or other uncovered (20%) parking, extra storage space (35%), and dedicated security staff (25%).
- Few trainees (< 10%) report on-site grocery or convenience stores or availability of guest rooms/suites.

What general thoughts and advice do MGH trainees have about the housing search in Boston?

In general, current residents and fellows suggest prioritizing living needs carefully, contacting multiple agents or exploring a variety of housing resources and avenues, and acting decisively once you find an arrangement that suits your needs. In a pinch, several well-known management companies (such as the Avalon and Equity groups) maintain properties near the MGH campus; though often more expensive, some trainees recommend living in these properties initially and exploring other housing options only after moving to Boston.

- *"Living alone in the city is very difficult on a resident/fellow salary. Its best to live just outside the city and take public transit."*
- *"It's expensive, be flexible."*

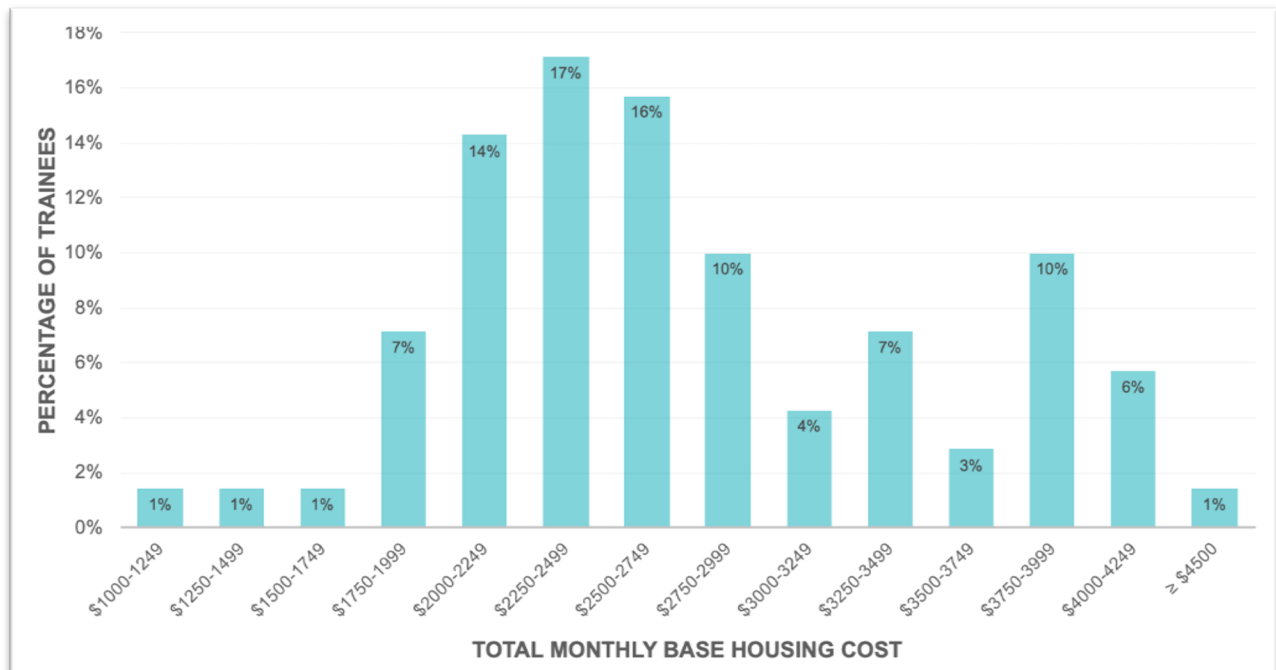
- *"Look early; the housing cycle is heavily driven by the academic year, so there will be a big crop of places up for rent on June 1 and Sept 1 with a relative dearth the rest of the year."*
- *"Look online at Padmapper, Hotpads. Most apartments come with a broker fee which is half or full month rent (like a realtor fee). You can look for apartments that pay your broker's fee for you. If you found an apartment yourself and communicated directly with the building, you may be able to avoid the fee. Make sure you love your space! It's worth the bit of extra money if needed. It makes coming home so much better."*
- *"The market moves FAST- if you wait to see if there is something better, the place you were looking at will probably be taken. When you go to view places, do it with a checkbook in hand and be prepared to move quickly on any place that you like."*
- *"I wish I knew how small Boston was and there is amazing public transportation. You don't need to live within 3 blocks of the hospital to have easy access to work."*
- *"If you don't have to use real estate agent and you're renting and not buying, then don't. They cost you (not the seller) a whole month's rental fee. Which is a lot."*
- *"There's an MGH-associated real estate agent that we contacted after looking on Zillow."*
- *"Most places will charge you first and last month's rent, broker fee (one month's rent) and deposit (one month's rent). As a result, you may pay ~\$10,000 before move-in day. However, many of the large apartments around MGH will waive all of these fees. This gives you more freedom to move in the future."*
- *"Contact multiple agents and see at least a dozen places before deciding. Too many people settle for 1 or 2 agents and see too few places. The problem is that no single agent will give you a listing of all those that match your criteria in the MLS database that real estate agents use. They will only select for those for which they receive commissions. In order for you to discover all possible listings that match your criteria, the only way is to contact as many real estate agents as you can and compare the listings that you get. + Craigslist and other online sources where non-MLS housing options show up."*
- *"Paying a premium for proximity to MGH may outweigh the stress of the commute."*
- *"I found my place online. We were the first tenants, so we didn't even look at the place in advance. It worked out well!"*
- *"Don't use Zillow, filled with a bunch of fake listings. If you want to do housing outside of the major complexes in this area you either need a real-estate agent or a friend who knows the area very well."*
- *"Places go very fast, so know what your requirements are before you go searching. If buying, be ready to make an offer on the spot."*
- *"It's expensive, and you do pay for proximity to MGH."*
- *"Be prepared to pay one month's rent up front for a brokerage fee even if you find the place yourself on an online listing. There is rarely any way out of this unless you live in a fancy managed high rise. You likely will also have to pay one month's rent up front for security deposit. And then first month's rent will be due up front so you may need upwards of \$8,000-10,000 available when you find a new place."*
- *"When you use a broker, your out-of-pocket expenses are high. I was expected to pay first, last, security, and broker fee at lease signing. There are apartment complexes around the city that do not require these move in fees."*
- *"Managed buildings are generally billed as 'luxury' or 'deluxe' apartments and will include amenities at a significant increase in price. Also note that the location of your apartment relative to the T or other major access points will significantly increase its cost. In-unit laundry is difficult to find, and some (esp. older) neighborhoods are notorious for having fewer on-site laundry services in general."*

- *“Look early. Also no one regrets living close to the hospital in one of the managed apartments. You can always move in the future.”*
- *“Find a place that gives you what you need to escape the chaos of residency.”*
- *“Come visit for a weekend a few months before moving here and try and get a sense of exactly where you want to live and focus daily on looking for places thereafter.”*

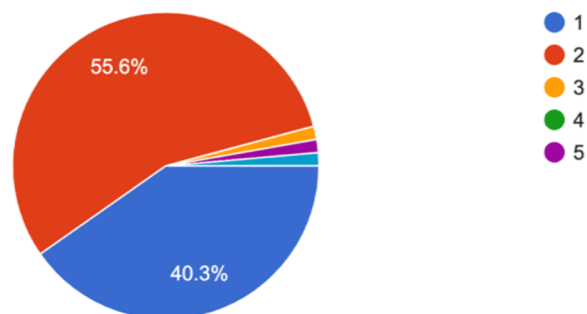
EXPENSES

How much do MGH residents and fellows spend monthly on housing?

- Before dividing the costs of recurring payments or rent or between roommates, partners, or spouses, a majority of trainees report base expenses between \$1750 and \$2999 per month for their housing arrangements.
 - This does not include utilities, parking, internet, or other monthly payments.
- Most residents and fellows (~56%) share the cost of rent or monthly payments with one other individual. However, approximately 40% of trainees pay for housing on their own.



How many people SHARE the total monthly cost of housing in your current apartment, house, or other living space?



Do most MGH trainees face significant up-front costs when signing leases or securing housing?

- The majority of residents and fellows (~60%) report significant up-front costs when finalizing their housing arrangements. These included additional months of rent (e.g., first and last), broker or agent fees, and down payments on mortgages.
- A small proportion of trainees (~8%) make use of the Partners Lease Guaranty program or other MGH resources when arranging their housing or planning their moves. However, nearly 50% of trainees were not aware of the Partners Lease Guaranty when moving in.

The Partners Lease Guaranty is a special program for residents and fellows intended to defray substantial up-front housing costs in the Boston area. Find more information about the Lease Guaranty here:

- <https://www.partners.org/Graduate-Medical-Education/Residents-Clinical-Fellows/Salary-Benefits/Partners-Lease-Guaranty/Default.aspx>

A unique pilot program was also recently established to provide trainees from economically disadvantaged backgrounds with a cost of living stipend. Details about this program can be found here:

- <https://www.partners.org/Graduate-Medical-Education/Residents-Clinical-Fellows/Prospective-Trainees/Match-Resident-Stipend-Pilot-Announcement.aspx>

Additional Partners housing resources, including a listing of potentially available spaces, can be found here:

- <https://www.partners.org/For-Employees/Housing/Default.aspx?id=1>

What general thoughts and advice do MGH trainees have regarding housing affordability and financing in the Boston area?

Numerous residents and fellows suggest living farther from the main campus and outside of Boston to reduce housing costs, though this often comes at the expense of convenience. Other trainees find that living close to the hospital is worth the higher rent prices. Most suggest sharing costs with a roommate and taking advantage of MGH resources if possible.

- *“Coming from the Midwest, I had no idea how difficult the housing search would be and was shocked at the cost of rent. I try to eat hospital food when I can to save money on groceries. I turn off the heat/AC when I leave to save on energy costs.”*
- *“The West End and Beacon Hill are very convenient but so overpriced. If willing to compromise, there is better value just a bit farther from the hospital.”*
- *“Some of the slightly older buildings near MGH (like Emerson Place) come with gigantic living rooms, way bigger than reasonable. You can spend a few hundred bucks to get a*

company to put up a temporary wall that creates a whole new bedroom, e.g. turn a 1-bed into a 2-BR (or create a nice new office/study) if you're living with others."

- *"Reach out to senior residents."*
- *"Further from Boston, the houses are cheaper."*
- *"I lucked out and was able to secure a studio next to MGH for \$1775. This was pure chance and found as an online listing. My landlord specifically looks for residents to minimize noise."*
- *"I have a roommate whom I knew ahead of time... it really cut the cost of living in a luxury high rise building. We paid \$1800 each the first two years and now \$1900 each. If we were willing to 'rough it' more then we probably could have paid less, but I am happy with what we got for the price."*
- *"Speak to senior residents to find out where they live, especially CA3s who are moving away and might be able to recommend you."*
- *"Get a roommate. Go on Craigslist. Get on the Harvard housing forums. I used to be on the Harvard housing forums on Facebook and there is a slew of affordable housing (~\$1000 a month) in the Cambridge/Boston/Back Bay areas that is constantly being offered up. The issue is that you need to be open to roommates and open to taking a spot in a house that someone already lives in. There is lots of affordable housing but it will never be the perfect \$3000 a month one-bedroom in Avalon. We aren't attendings or highly paid tech workers and shouldn't expect to live in expensive locations or in expensive apartments."*
- *"If you have friends in the area, that's a huge help in bypassing broker fees and finding affordable places to live! Partners also has a Lease Guaranty program that can help defray large up-front costs."*
- *"If you're relocating from far away, live close for the first year for convenience, once you get to know the Boston area, relocate to a more affordable neighborhood that fits your needs, or stay in the area if you believe the convenience outweighs the cost."*
- *"After a year, you get used to the crazy high cost."*
- *"You don't have to live right next to MGH. It's ok to put a little space between work and the rest of your life and you'll probably save a good deal of money if you try."*