

Biased RentSafe Toronto Housing Score Shows Improvement, but Fails to Account for Larger Issues*

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Abstract

Averages were taken of over eleven thousand apartment score from RentSafe Toronto, across three different Property Types, private, social and TCHC housing. The data reflects minor improvements on a 0-100 housing score over a five year period, but sampling size and institutional bias cast doubt on these results based on ever increasing instability in the Toronto Housing market. Without taking into consideration the opinions of the very people affected by this crisis, the data cannot truly be used to improve the situation that affects almost half a million Torontonians.

Introduction

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a pyramid which depicts five tiers of fulfillment, shelter, comes right at the foundation. Shelter, along with food and water is one of the things that we simply can't live without, but not all shelter is created equal. Thanks to OpenDataToronto Gelfand (2022), R R Core Team (2022), Tidyverse (Wickham et al. 2019), dplyr(Wickham et al. 2022), janitor (Firke 2021), ggplot2(Wickham 2016),and scales (Wickham and Seidel 2022) an investigation into how the city of Toronto treats its over 46% of Torontonians who rent as their primary means of achieving shelter can be launched (Toronto 2014).

Created in July of 2017 RentSafeTo claims to protect the interests of Toronto's large renting population. Now five years into that goal, data compiled by RentSafeTo can be graphed and patterns can be found: an increase in apartment score across all three property types, until 2019, and then a minor decline

*Code and data supporting this analysis are available at: <https://github.com/iwl-leitch/Analysis-of-Housing-Scores>

from there onwards. This report will first consider what the RentSafeTo data shows in terms of improvements and overall distributions of scores. Second, it will explore the biases of the RentSafeTo data. Lastly, it will discuss the impact of the limitations of the RentSafeTo data on Torontonians, and possible improvements for its data collection methods.

Examining the Data

Data taken from Gelfand (2022) is broken down by three Property Types, Private, Social Housing and TCHC. The scores are taken from housing evaluations done by the inspectors out of 100, with below a 50 incurring further inspections. Starting with Property type we can see the beginning of what will be common themes across the data. In Fig. 1. Changes in Score of Private Housing over a period of 5 years, we take the mean of the Private Housing scores for each of the 5 years and then use a line the increase or decrease in average score to better measure change over time. The red dots then mark the upper and lower most limits of the scores for any given year, and the size correlates to the frequency, giving each year a clearer picture of the distribution of any given score.

From this we can see that since the formation of RentSafe Toronto the score average shown here as the black line, has increased until 2019 before sliding back down again.

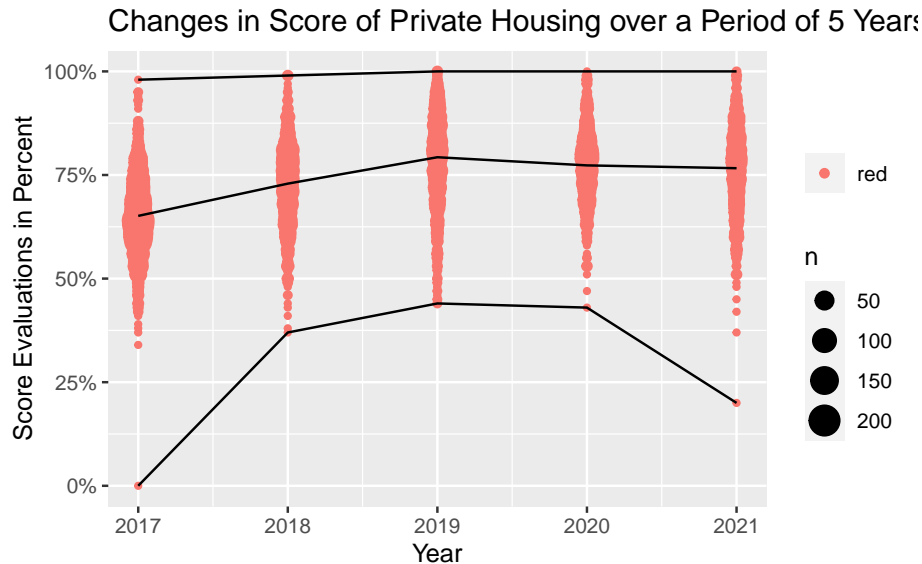


Figure 1: Min, max, and mean scores over time of Private Type Housing

Other housing related datasets exist though. In total OpenDataToronto has

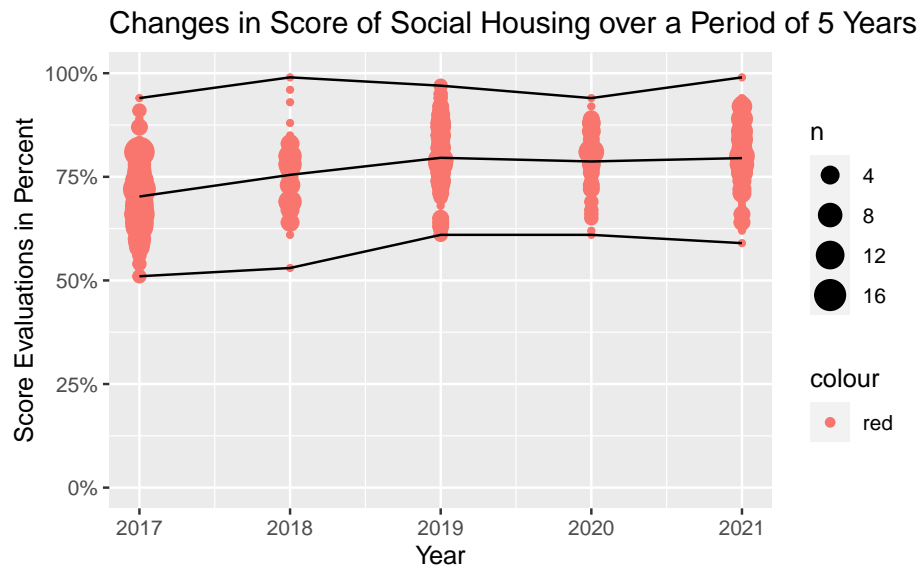


Figure 2: Min, max, and mean scores over time of Social Type Housing

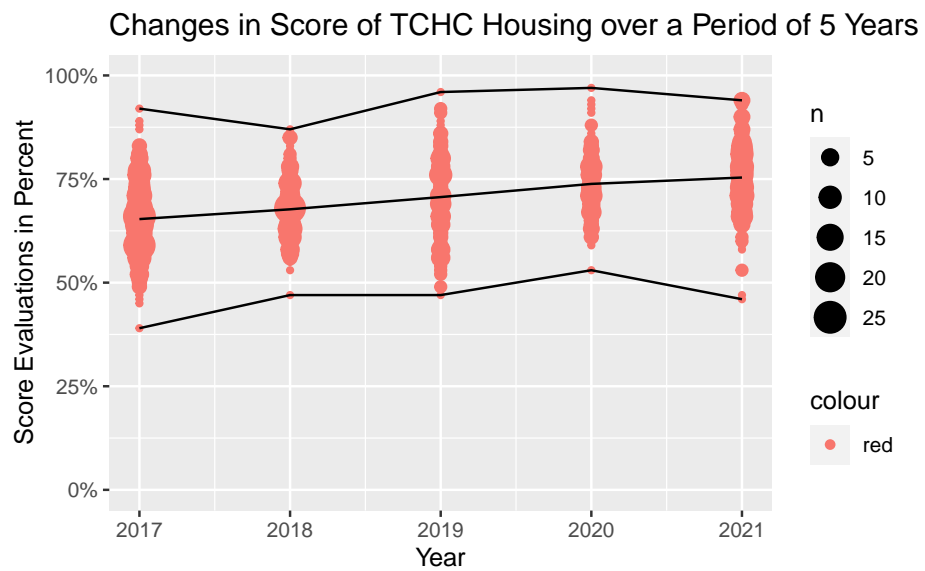


Figure 3: Min, max, and mean scores over time of TCHC Type Housing

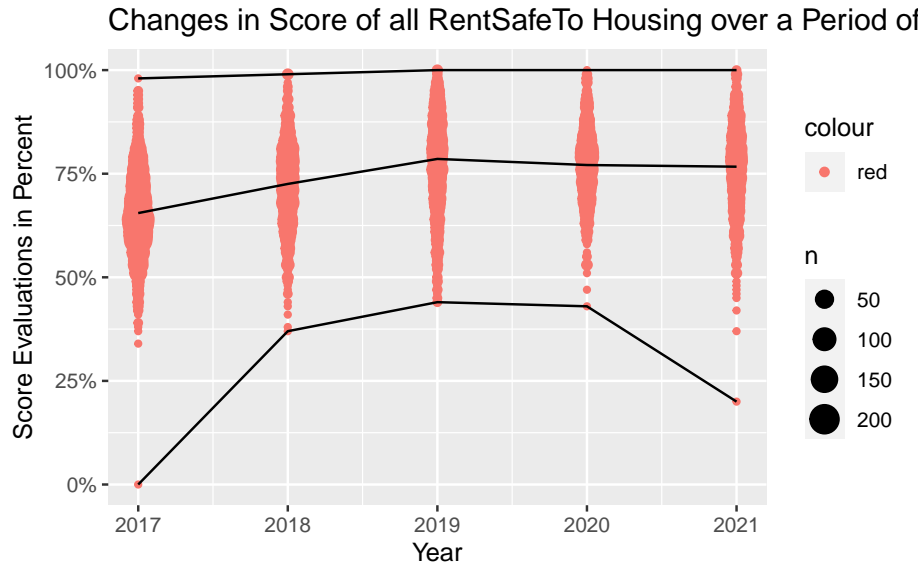


Figure 4: Min, max, and mean scores over time for all Housing Types

[TODO: add number]datasets under the tag affordable housing, but not all of them track as many buildings as the RentSafeTo one. ##Bias in the Data Set

References

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