

Decarbonization for Renters

Challenges and Recommendations

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STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR A JUST ECONOMY

Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE)



- Tenants' rights organization founded in 1996
- Based in South Los Angeles
- Organizing, outreach and education, and policy work
- Campaigns: Code Enforcement, Fareless Transit, Right to Counsel, Corporate Landlords, Social Housing



Los Angeles Building Decarbonization: Tenant Impact and Recommendations



- Saje published report in December 2021



Highlights from Focus Groups

Commissioned by the Climate
Emergency Mobilization Office

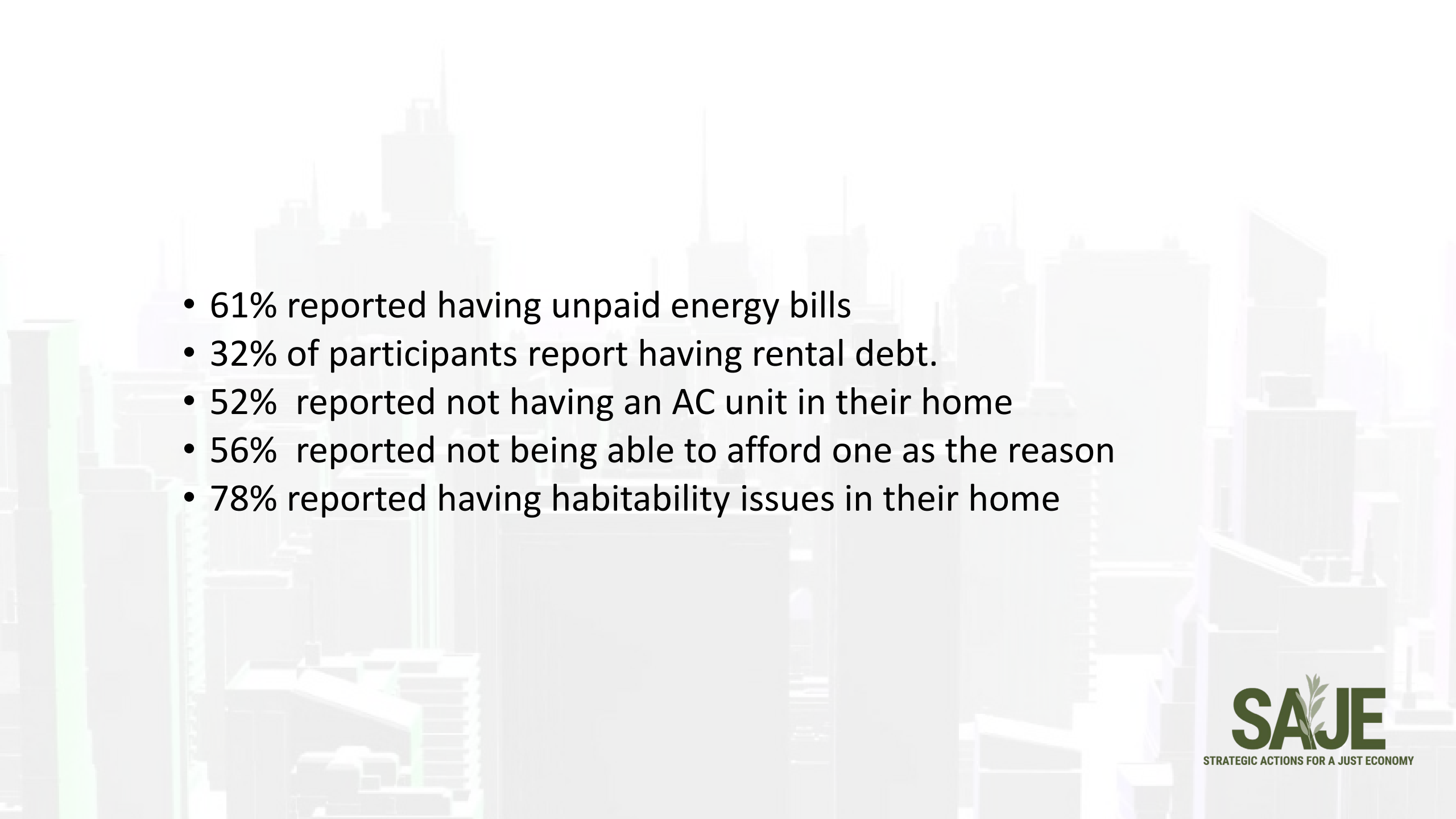


Greatest Benefit

- Improving health (50%)
- Fighting climate change (38%)
- Climate resilient housing (7%)
- Improving housing quality (4%)

Greatest Concern

- Cost (60%)
- Eviction (26%)
- Harassment (13%)
- Construction (0%)

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- 61% reported having unpaid energy bills
 - 32% of participants report having rental debt.
 - 52% reported not having an AC unit in their home
 - 56% reported not being able to afford one as the reason
 - 78% reported having habitability issues in their home

Quotes from Focus Groups

- *“What concerns me is that the owners will take advantage of this and kick us out. They use the excuse of having to construct the apartments to raise our rents. It’s beautiful all of this. But the cost is concerning. It’s going to affect us.” – Isabel*
- *“Everything sounds nice, but to be honest, we don’t know the economic impact it would take on us. The president said to slow down the climate crisis, but for us, the poor people, to buy the electric stove, imagine the bill. It will be so expensive.” – Rolando*

Quotes from Focus Groups (cont.)

- *“First and foremost, to take out the heater that we have, we have a very old heater, and to put in one that is electrical, there is going to have to be construction. Where I live, everything is older.” – Gloria*
- *“If he is going to install an appliance in the house, and it’s worth \$5,000, he is going to want me to pay \$2,500, which is not feasible for me. This is what they did here. They installed pipes underneath and each tenant had to pay \$500 and there are 30 tenants here.” - Betty*

Challenges

- Cost
- Accessibility
- Building characteristics
- Landlord-tenant dynamics



Challenge 1: High Cost

- Decarbonization is can cost ~\$20,000 per unit
- Most cities allow landlords to pass costs onto rent-controlled tenants
 - Los Angeles – up to 100% of costs
 - San Francisco – 100% of costs
 - Oakland — up to 70% of costs
 - Los Gatos -- up to 100% of the cost
 - San Jose –increase of 3% rent



Challenge 2: Accessibility

Programs often fail to reach low income-tenants

- Poor outreach
- Digital literacy
- Lease Agreements



Challenge 3: Building Characteristics

Older buildings present unique obstacles to decarbonization

- Technically challenging and expensive
- Possibility of demolition
- **Severe health and habitability issues**





Challenge 4: Landlord-Tenant Dynamics

Many tenants live under constant threat of harassment and displacement from landlords

- **Decarbonization as harassment**
- **Fear of participating**
- **Evicted under 1482 construction loophole**

Recommendations

- Partner with **community-based organizations** to do outreach, enrollment, and implementation
- Target funding and programs to low-income customers and disadvantaged communities
- Recognize the threats that tenants face and make robust tenant protections a design element of decarbonization



Recommendations (cont.)

- Engage local housing agencies
- Take holistic approaches to retrofit work
- Actively manage the execution of decarbonization work to prioritize skilled, professional work, high quality results, and low impact to tenants

