Who Stays, Who Moves? Determinants of post-renovation (im)mobility in the Swedish rental sector

Forthcoming in *Housing Studies!*

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Background

- Universal and integrated rental system with strong tenure security.
- Rents are not market based but negotiated between the Union of Tenants and property owner associations. The negotiation concerns the use-value of apartments in properties (standard, location, rents in the local area).
- Renovation-related rent increases can reach 50% as the standard is raised.
- Many properties are in need of large and structural renovations – at the same time, directives from the EU regarding an energy efficient housing stock necessitates renovations in the near future (EU-directive 2024/1275).

Previous research

- Qualitative case studies have found that processes associated to extensive renovations are experienced as traumatic, anxiety-inducing and violent (Polanska & Richard, 2019; Pull & Richard, 2021; Polanska *et al.*, 2022) and that there is a displacement (pressure) associated with renovations (Baeten *et al.*, 2017).
- Quantitative studies find that low-income tenants tend to stay in comparison to higher-income tenants, reflecting a 'locked-in displacement'. Also, tenants in the private rental sector tend to relocate more than those in the public rental sector (Borg et al, 2026).
- Reasons for relocation: life events, upsizing, realising location preferences (Granath & Femenías, 2022; Femenías, Widmark & Granath, 2024).

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Research gap and aim of the study

- Few studies focus on the whole group of affected tenants; i.e. both the movers and the stayers
  - Exception: Borg et al (2026) focus on who moves after renovation, but show that it is the high-income households that move, challenging the 'renoviction' narrative.
  - Exception: Winke (2021) finds that low-income households stay and bear higher housing costs after rent increases in Germany (and that low-income movers move to neighbourhoods further away from the city)
- In this study, I focus my attention to both stayers and movers.
- The primary aim is to nuance the understanding of post-renovation (im)mobility by shedding light on staying as a meaningful outcome. I do this by analysing three groups of factors: economic capabilities, life-course and demographic characteristics, and property and municipal context.

Research questions

- To what extent does housing renovation affect tenants' likelihood of moving out in the years following renovation?
- Does the effect of renovation on (im)mobility vary by residential context and tenants' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics?

Theoretical perspectives on post-renovation (im)mobility

An aspirations-capabilities lens

(im)mobility = aspiration × capability, within macro-structural constraints. Staying is active: a choice, or being "locked-in".

(Carling 2002; Carling & Schewel 2018; Schewel 2020; de Haas 2021)

Economic & macro

Financialisation renovation as value extraction; economic resilience to displacement pressure

(Aalbers 2016; Wijburg et al. 2018; Gustafsson 2021; García-Lamarca 2021)

Life-course & place attachment

Household type, duration, age as "social anchors"; insider advantages raise aspiration to stay

(Coulter et al. 2016; Fischer & Malmberg 2001; Clark et al. 2017)

Context & institutions

Landlord type & tight markets narrow options; allowances & social assistance buffer displacement

(Blackwell & Bengtsson 2023)

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Data

- Swedish administrative registers
  - Property Tax Register (for renovations)
  - The Longitudinal Integration Database for Health Insurance and Labour Market Studies (for socioeconomic and demographic population data)
  - The Total Population Register linked with geographic information (for geographic population data)
- Event (treatment): renovations
  - 2013
  - Robust data basis
- Tenants are movers if they had moved in the 4-year period post-renovation, and stayers if they had not.

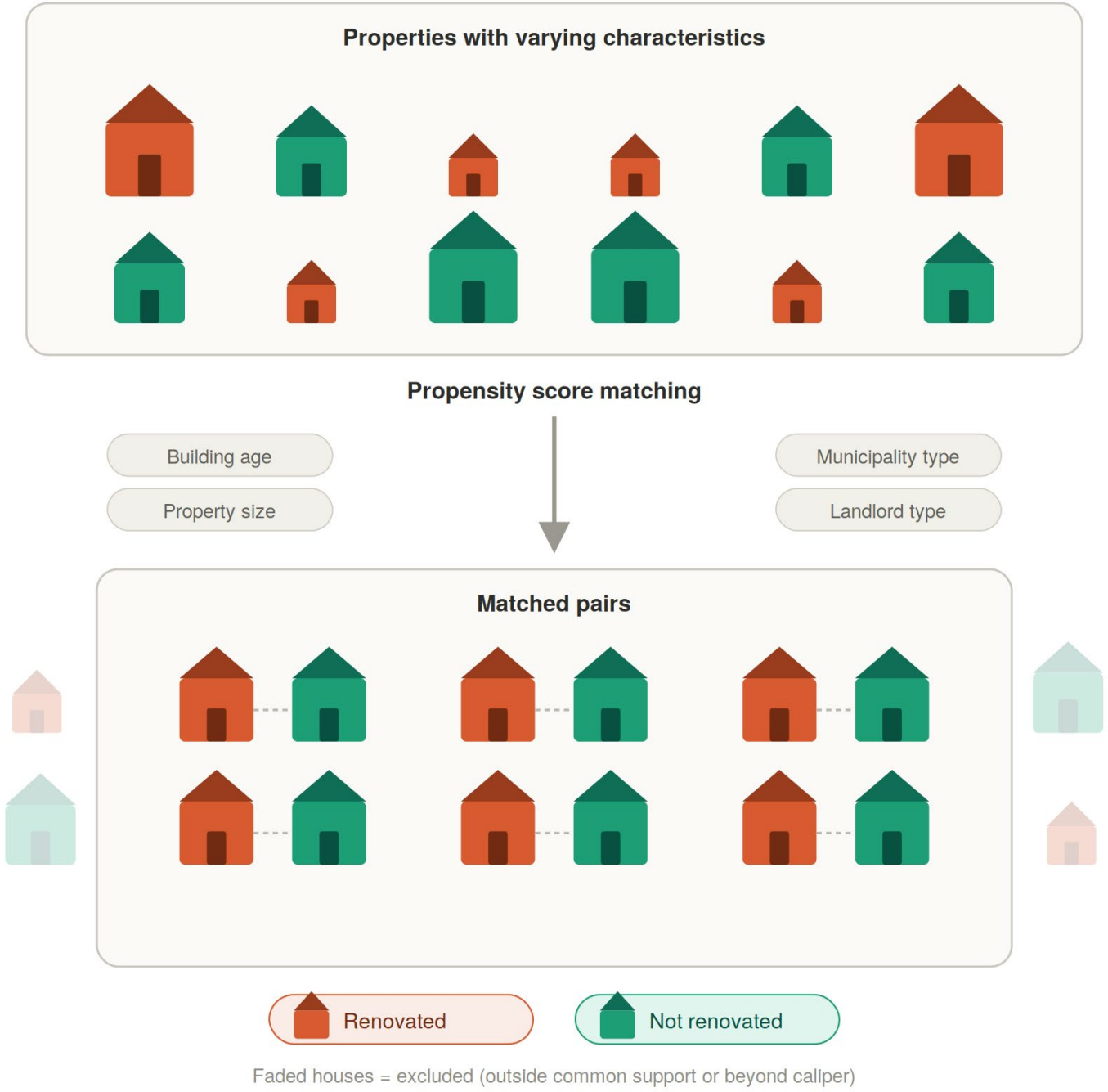


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Methodology

Propensity score matching (PSM)

- Observational data, properties do not face the same random chance of treatment → introduces bias if compared directly.
- PSM balances treatment and comparison groups on observed and confounding variables.
- Psmatch2 command in Stata (Leuven and Sianesi, 2018) on the property level.
  - Construction year, municipality and municipality types, landlord type, property size.
  - Logistic regression models, treated properties matched to the nearest eligible control property.
- Post-matching diagnostics indicate successful balance across all covariates.
- 16 treated properties were excluded as they did not find a suitable match.
- Final sample size: 514 renovated, 514 control properties



Analytical strategy

After matching, all analysis is individual-level, building from economic to contextual capabilities

After PSM, I match tenants to renovated (treated) & control properties → unit of analysis shifts from property to individual

Step 1 · **Describe four groups** (event year 2013)

	Stay	Move
Renov.	**Reno-stayers**	Reno-movers
Control	Control-stayers	Control-movers

Reno-stayers = focal group

Step 2 · **Logistic regression models:** nested, propensity score-weighted

M1	**Economic** · income quantiles, housing allowance, social assistance		
M2	**Economic**	**+ Life-course** · age, household type, duration	
M3	**Economic**	**Life-course**	**+ Context** landlord, Million Program, municipality type

M3 covariates also used in PSM → doubly robust

Outcome = moved / stayed 4 years post-renovation · cluster-robust SEs at property level (treatment assigned there)

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Who stays, who moves?

(mean / share, event year 2013)

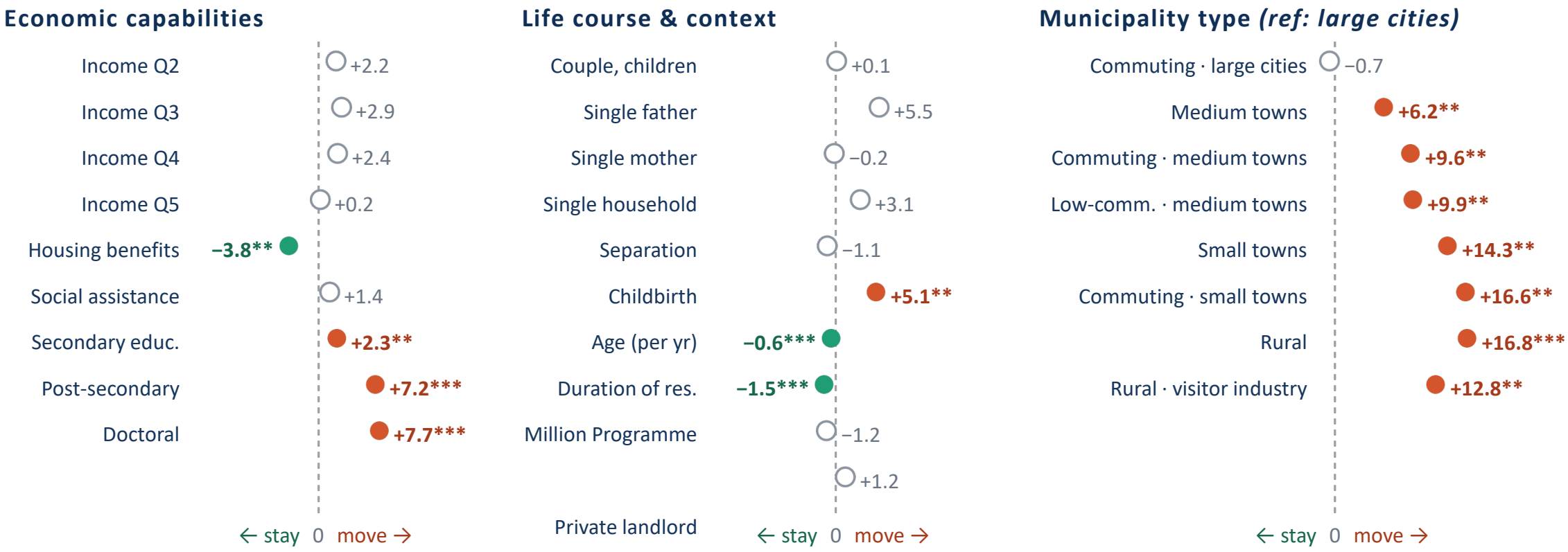
	Renovation		Control	
	Stayer	**Mover**	**Stayer**	**Mover**
Age, mean (years)	**49.2**	40.3	47.9	41.0
Duration of residence (years)	**6.6**	3.7	7.3	4.7
Lowest income quintile	**15%**	19%	19%	21%
Highest income quintile	**24%**	23%	17%	21%
Receives housing allowance	**23%**	20%	28%	20%
Single household	**53%**	59%	44%	52%
Private landlord	**21%**	27%	16%	29%
Built in Million Program	**26%**	26%	56%	45%

Stayers (both groups) are older and longer-resident; **renovation-movers** concentrate in private rental housing.

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What predicts moving vs staying

Full Model 3: change in the probability of moving within 4 years, in percentage points. Filled = significant (**stay** / **move**), open = n.s.



*Average marginal effects from Model 3 (logistic regression), N = 16,721; ** p<0.05, *** p<0.001. Age and duration of residence are per year. Reference categories: income Q1, primary education, cohabiting/married without children, large cities.*

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Staying as an active outcome: choice or constraint

Staying as a choice *voluntary immobility*

Housing allowances were more common among stayers, suggesting that social safety nets may facilitate staying despite renovation pressures and increased rents. Stayers also showed higher place attachment, measured by duration of residence; the 'location-specific insider advantages' that raise the aspiration to stay.

Staying as constraint *involuntary immobility*

In tighter housing markets, such as the large cities, the capability to relocate is often constrained by housing shortage rather than individual choice. Residents may be 'locked-in' despite a desire to leave; a form of in-situ marginalisation (Wang & Wu, 2019), displaced without making a move.

Contribution Staying emerges as a complex outcome shaped by the intersection of economic resilience, place attachment, and the macro-structural characteristics of the Swedish housing system. While the financialisation of rental housing is a global pressure (visible in movers' greater presence in private rental housing) national institutional arrangements can have a resilient impact on tenants' capabilities to navigate post-renovation housing cost burdens (Blackwell & Bengtsson, 2023).

Thank you for your attention

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