

## HOW HAPPY IS MY LIFE IN UNIVERSITY HILLS?

AND OTHER TAKEAWAYS FROM THE

2025 UNIVERSITY HILLS SURVEY OF RESIDENT SATISFACTION

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University Hills homeowners expressed high levels of satisfaction in an online survey fielded early this year (n = 427, xx percent of households). In response to the question “***All things considered, how is your life in University Hills?***”:

- 53 percent said, “I’m happy” (the high end of the satisfaction scale).
- 37 percent said, “Not perfect but pretty good” (next highest on the scale).
- Seven percent said “Neutral,” whereas three percent said either “Not so hot” or “Get me out of here.”

If ***homeowners are generally satisfied, renters express comparable levels of satisfaction***. Sixty-one out of 67 (or 91% of) responding rental households replied on the positive end of the scale. A caution about the renter respondents, who skew heavily towards the townhome complexes (Alturas and Miramonte) as distinct from the apartment complexes (Santiago and Gabrielino). In future surveys, higher response rates will be needed among Santiago and Gabrielino to enable a more nuanced cross-section of renter households.

***To what extent does living in detached housing, townhomes, or condos influence homeowner happiness?*** Very little, if at all.

Comparable levels of happiness are expressed across all three housing types. Though detached housing remains an aspiration for some, housing type is just one of many factors (including employment, domestic relations,

social milieu, and even climate) that shape life satisfaction. An overwhelming majority (95 percent) of respondents responded “yes” to the question elsewhere on the survey, “Does the physical design of your home work well with your current lifestyle?”

***Among homeowners, are long-time residents any more satisfied than relative newcomers?*** Yes, but a little slice and dice uncovers a surprise. Newcomers and veterans overall are happy but there is a sharp upward jump toward even higher satisfaction as one crosses a 10-year residency threshold. One plausible explanation: faculty members below that 10-year line are pre-dominantly pre-tenure, above that line, they are pre-dominantly post-tenure. The achievement of tenure is arguably the foremost milestone in any academic biography.

If we then examine respondent age rather than length of residency in University Hills, another facet of the happiness differential—between “I’m happy” as distinct from “Not perfect, but pretty good”—becomes evident. Respondents aged 65 or older were about twice as likely as respondents in the next lower age group (41-64) to straight out report “I’m happy.” This aligns with research on the general population indicating that happiness peaks in late middle age and early old age. The overwhelming majority in all respondent age groups (including the youngest, 25-40) report some degree of happiness, but the declarations of those 65+ are notably less likely to include ifs, ands, or buts.

### **Who uses the University Hills Mailing List ([uhills.group.io/g/main](https://uhills.group.io/g/main))?**

A good majority of survey respondents, it turns out, with fully 71% reporting use at least “once in a while.” Longer-term residents are heavier users than shorter term residents. For example, 63% of respondents living in the neighborhood for 30+ years characterized themselves as “daily users,” compared to 22% among those living in the neighborhood for five years or fewer. The overall daily use rate was 41%. Are animal lovers, alarmists, inquiring minds, do-gooders, complainers, recyclers, and gossips, not to mention people in struggle with their plumbing or appliances,

overrepresented among residents who post? Yes, although the survey can't confirm this. The survey asks only about "use," with no distinction between posting and reading. What it does show, nonetheless, is that **users represent the full spectrum of those expressing** happiness or unhappiness about their "life in University Hills." Indeed, users represent a cross section of everything else the survey measured, from housing type to neighborhood activities participation.

**What makes these survey results believable?** Four factors increase our confidence:

- Although our pool of respondents was self-selected rather than the product of statistical sampling, it was reasonably large and represented every street in University Hills. Comparison with US Census and ICHA administrative data suggests that no major age, housing unit type, or length-of-residence subgroup was grossly under- or over-represented. (The exception might be for residents of the Santiago and Gabrielino rental apartment complexes, whose modest response rate makes inferences about that group hazardous.)
- To compensate for the foregoing limitations in the sample, we present here only findings that are pronounced enough to pass a rigorous screen for statistical resolution (chi-square < .001).
- The anonymity of respondents was (and is still) protected, with no connection whatsoever between any individual's response and that same individual's subsequent transactions with ICHA. In short, we believe respondents who answered the survey did so honestly.
- Despite significant differences in their wording and total length, the present results closely reflect those of ICHA's 2022 University Hills Resident Survey.

**Questions about this analysis?** Please e-mail Ken Chew, [chew@uci.edu](mailto:chew@uci.edu).