

## Abstract

Urban vehicle dwelling is a relatively new phenomenon that is growing, particularly in Bristol where housing affordability has been negatively impacted by a persistent shortage in housing. This research examines the complex reasons contributing to van dwelling in Bristol, with a particular focus on people who live in mobile vehicles (not stationary caravans). This research explores the housing pathways of people who live in vehicles as an alternative to house dwelling, discusses how the mediating processes of identity, autonomy and security influence vehicle dwelling, and evaluates critically the research gap using pertinent research on housing pathways, Travellers and the current housing situation in Bristol. The study applied a qualitative methodology. Data was derived from semi-structured interviews with 13 participants and analysed using a combination of the housing pathways framework and thematic analysis. This research presents graphical representations to illustrate the diversity of participants' pathways into vehicle dwelling. Housing pathways range from being relatively simple with few moves in or between normative and non-normative housing, to more complex pathways in and between the two types. Vehicle dwellers' housing pathways were found to be influenced by a complex interplay of structural drivers and personal agency such as flexible employment, low or intermittent income, difficulties in accessing homeownership, insecure private rented sector accommodation and high rents, in addition to self-efficacy leading to the self-provision of housing by living in a vehicle. It was found that vehicle dwelling is actively pursued to control precarious housing situations, as a goal in itself to engage in the lifestyle it creates, and/or to facilitate transition to a future ideal living situation. As more local authorities seek to unify and formalise their response to urban vehicle dwelling, this research could be used to inform van dwelling policies.