



Zeitwohnen Update

The Long-Term Flexible Housing Newsletter



Jan Hase

Jan Hase is the Co-founder and CEO of Wunderflats GmbH, the market leader for flexible housing in Germany. Wunderflats has its headquarters in Berlin.

Dear Readers, Dear Friends of Zeitwohnen,

When our family needs us most, proximity is what counts. Whether it's providing support after the birth of a grandchild or accompanying a loved one through a period of major upheaval, family support requires being there in person. Yet, especially in metropolitan areas, finding housing on short notice for those offering a helping hand often becomes an insurmountable hurdle. When one's own home is hundreds of miles away, the right infrastructure is needed that enables physical proximity without tedious administrative hurdles.

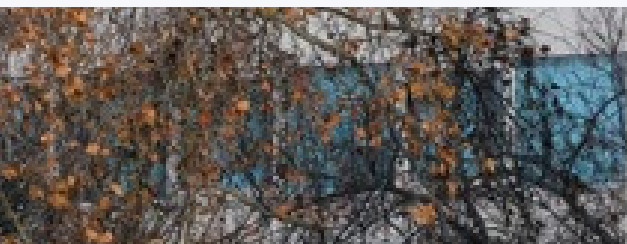
Long-term flexible housing could fill exactly this gap by offering relatives the necessary housing space to be there during crucial life stages without further straining the tight primary housing market. It would be the unbureaucratic infrastructure that strengthens family cohesion when the rigid system of open-ended housing leases offers no solutions or supply. In this briefing, we highlight why long-term flexible housing is an indispensable building block for a modern, mobile society.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Hase

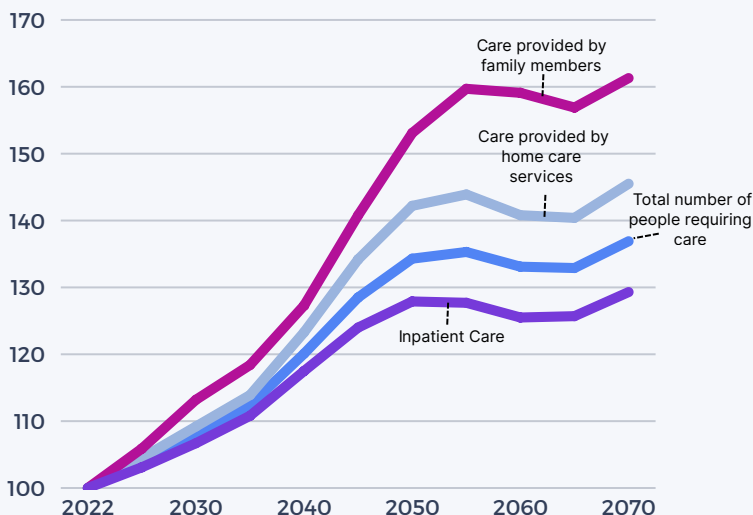
Housing Market and Temporary Rentals

Democratization of housing sustainably eases pressure on conventional housing markets



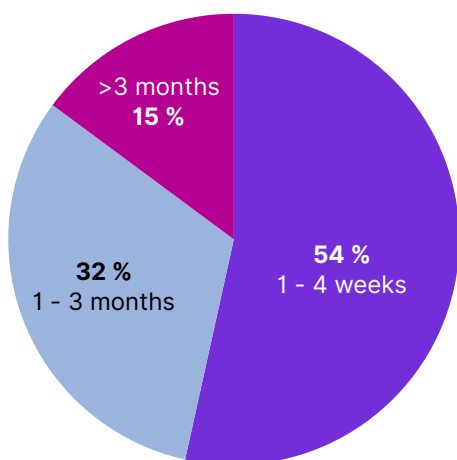
When proximity is lacking, housing becomes a matter of infrastructure

The number of people in need of care is set to rise significantly by 2070, and despite the growing availability of professional care services, caregiving in Germany remains primarily a family matter. At the same time, about half of those over 60 do not live in the same place as their relatives. If a sudden need for care arises, there is immediate pressure to act. More than half of all requests for long-term flexible housing come within four weeks of a major life event. Care is also an issue that can potentially affect any family and often arises unexpectedly. This is precisely where a structural gap becomes apparent: The traditional housing market is not designed to meet immediate and flexible needs. Long-term flexible housing therefore can be a systemically important solution that makes proximity possible in the first place and realistically supports family care.



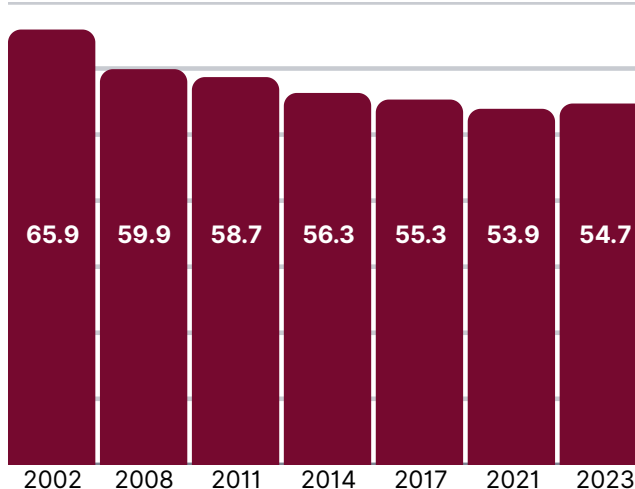
Trends in the Number of People in Need of Care in Germany Through 2070 by Type of Care (Index 2022 = 100)

Projections of the number of people requiring long-term care in Germany through 2070, broken down by care provided by family members, outpatient services, and inpatient care.



Short notice for housing inquiries

The time it takes to find suitable housing for people who are looking for a place to live due to a life event.



Percentage of parents with at least one child living in the same town or city

Percentage of people aged 60 to 90 who have at least one child living in the same town or city (in percent).

Sources: Federal Statistical Office, prognos, data from the www.wunderflats.com platform, DZA – German Center for Aging Research.

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When proximity matters – Long-term flexible housing as social infrastructure for family cohesion

In a modern, mobile society, family histories are rarely tied to a single location. Children move to major cities to attend university, parents stay behind in their hometowns, and siblings are scattered across the country or abroad. As long as daily life runs smoothly, this model of long-distance living works. But life has moments when digital communication is no longer enough: The weeks following the birth of a child, providing support during a serious illness, or the urgent need to organize care require a physical presence. During these sensitive phases, family closeness is not a luxury, but an essential source of both practical and emotional support that often determines the stability of an entire family system. However, the reality in metropolitan areas like Berlin, Munich, or Hamburg presents families with an almost insurmountable hurdle, as the scarcity of housing space in the city rarely offers room for helping relatives who travel to provide support for several weeks or months. Hotels are neither financially viable for such emotionally challenging phases nor equipped with the necessary domestic infrastructure. Long-term flexible housing could assume a crucial function as social infrastructure that makes intergenerational cohesion possible in the first place. To distinguish these real-life needs from purely regulatory categories, the current Prognos study provides the necessary empirical evidence. The study breaks with the often politically exploited narrative that long-term flexible housing is a purely preference-driven luxury segment for expats in leadership roles. Rather, the study identifies, among other things, a user group whose housing needs are structurally compelled and deeply shaped by personal life events. The political takeaway from this data is clear: for this group, long-term flexible housing is not a loophole in tenancy law, but could be the only functional solution for unpredictable life-changing situations.



Key Questions

Doesn't long-term flexible housing encourage high turnover in the neighborhood?

On the contrary. Long-term flexible housing allows people who already have a connection to the neighborhood (e.g., the parents of local residents) to live there temporarily. Without this option, they would have to stay in anonymous hotels. Long-term flexible housing strengthens existing social networks by enabling physical proximity during critical life phases. It is a tool for more stable neighborhoods, not against them.

Wouldn't it be better if these apartments were available on the regular housing market?

That is a common misconception. The Prognos study shows that many of these apartments are not available on the long-term market at all, for example because owners intend to use them later themselves or because they are only vacant for limited periods. Long-term flexible housing makes this "dormant" housing stock available to society. If this segment were banned, not a single new long-term lease would be created, while families in emergency situations would suddenly be left without any options.

Isn't long-term flexible housing just a disguised form of Airbnb after all?

This comparison is flawed both factually and legally. While (short-term) tourist accommodation (Airbnb) is part of the tourism infrastructure that strains the housing market, long-term flexible housing of one month or more constitutes genuine residency, with a lease agreement, a doorbell nameplate, and the option to register one's residence. The tenants are not tourists but people who make this their home, whether for a project, professional development, or family support. Long-term flexible housing strengthens the local community rather than burdening it with tourism.

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Since, according to Prognos, over 50 percent of those affected need housing within four weeks, the regular housing market, with its lead times, simply does not exist for these emergencies. Rigid regulations limit this supply and thus directly impact citizens' ability to care for one another. This realization underscores the call for a dedicated temporary housing law that reflects the social reality of the 21st century. Long-term flexible housing should be viewed as a functional component of a modern social infrastructure in order to meet the demands of mobility and family care. It follows logically that long-term flexible housing should no longer be understood as an isolated market phenomenon, but rather as a complementary pillar within the social safety net architecture that offers flexible support in unpredictable life situations. A housing policy that promotes mobility but bureaucratically hinders a temporary return to the family home is contradictory. There is therefore a need for a transparent clarification in federal tenancy law that recognizes family assistance and social emergencies as legitimate grounds for long-term flexible housing. Only in this way can we prevent well-intentioned measures, such as prohibitions on misuse of property, from becoming social barriers that deny people in crisis access to adequate, long-term flexible housing. Flexible furnished leases are not a regulatory loophole, but a prerequisite for social resilience. Rigid minimum and maximum lease terms, as are often called for in the political debate, would destroy precisely those flexible support models that today provide massive relief to the public social sector. When grandparents help with childcare or relatives organize care after an operation, they make an invaluable contribution to society. Modern legislation must protect this contribution by defining the legal framework for long-term flexible housing not as an exception, but as the standard for a functioning, mobile, and mutually supportive society. Long-term flexible housing is thus far more than an economic niche product; it is the necessary safety valve for a housing market that must not lose sight of the human dimension of housing during times of upheaval.

Political Recommendations

Maintain flexibility for life's unexpected events.

Rigid minimum and maximum lease terms fail to take into account the realities of life during times of acute upheaval. To ensure that long-term flexible housing remains a viable safety net for family assistance or sudden emergencies on short notice, it is crucial to maintain regulatory flexibility. Modern regulation should enable such solutions rather than making them inaccessible to those in need through bureaucratic hurdles.

Promote transparency through digital documentation.

The use of digital platforms offers significant potential for legally compliant market regulation. By comprehensively documenting housing purposes and identities, it is possible to clearly distinguish between illegal (short-term) touristic accommodation and legally compliant long-term flexible housing. This creates a reliable data foundation for local governments while also protecting the integrity of the housing market.

Integrate long-term flexible housing into public service concepts.

In times of housing shortages, proactively incorporating long-term flexible housing into housing policy strategies, for example, in response to labor shortages or social crises, is an effective approach. As a flexible pillar alongside permanent rentals, this model contributes to more efficient utilization of the housing market and provides rapid support when the regular housing system reaches its capacity limits due to inflexibility.

The Wunderflats Team

Shape the future of housing with us



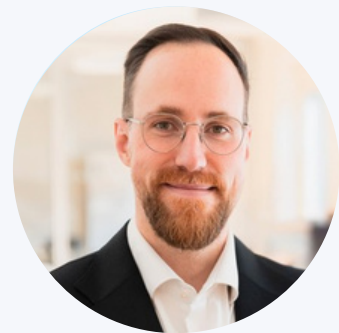
Join us on the road to the future of housing

Wunderflats is a digital platform for flexible housing that brings together the demand and supply of landlords and tenants.

While vacation rentals take away housing space from cities, long-term flexible housing helps relieve the pressure on the traditional housing market. This is because specialists, project workers, and highly specialized experts often request apartments that are rented out temporarily in a manner that conforms to the intended use, but are not currently available to the permanent housing market.

At the same time, long-term flexible housing is still too little known in terms of its importance and the many opportunities it offers, among other things, for a fair housing market and its contribution to economic promotion by solving the shortage of skilled workers.

Therefore, it is necessary to create a framework that recognizes long-term flexible housing as a pillar of support and a solution to the problem.



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As a digital scale-up from the heart of Berlin, Wunderflats welcomes any dialogue on digital and housing policy issues.

