

Fact Sheet
Public Opinion Polling on Housing Affordability
March 28, 2019

The [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) campaign commissioned a national public opinion poll through Hart Research Associates to assess the public’s opinions and perspectives on issues related to housing affordability. The poll surveyed 1,201 adults nationwide between February 25 - March 4, 2019.

Over the past year, nearly 100 multi-sector organizations have joined together through *Opportunity Starts at Home*, an unprecedented campaign to advocate for stronger federal housing policies. Stakeholders from many different sectors are increasingly recognizing the importance of affordable housing to their own priorities and goals, and through the campaign, powerful new partners are working shoulder-to-shoulder to broaden the housing movement. The campaign is led by a Steering Committee, chaired by the National Low Income Housing Coalition and including: Catholic Charities USA, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Children’s Defense Fund, Children’s HealthWatch, Community Catalyst, Food Research & Action Center, JustLeadershipUSA, NAACP, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of Social Workers, National League of Cities, National Education Association, and UnidosUS.

Poll Findings:

- **91% of people in the United States say stable affordable housing is very important or one of the most important things that affect people’s security and well-being in the United States.** 49% say it is “one of the most important things” and 42% say it is “very important.”
- **76% believe that, compared with previous generations, it is harder today for people to find stable housing they can afford.** 34% say it is “much harder today” and 42% say it is “somewhat harder today.”
 - The sense that it is harder today to find stable affordable housing spans the entire country and is high regardless of the kind of community in which people live.

<i>Proportion saying it is harder today to find stable affordable housing</i>			
Northeast	78%	City	72%
South	74%	Suburb	78%
Midwest	74%	Small town/rural	78%
West	82%		

- **73% say housing affordability is a problem in the area where they live, with 60% saying it is a serious problem – up 21 points from 2016.** Only 27% of the public says that housing affordability is not a problem in the area where they live.
 - High levels of concern about housing affordability span the country as well as the political spectrum.

<i>Proportion saying housing affordability is a serious problem where they live</i>			
Northeast	64%	Democrats	69%
South	57%	Independents	57%
Midwest	47%	Republicans	51%
West	75%		

- **91% say it is important for communities to have affordable, quality rental housing.** 65% say it is “very important” and 26% say it is “fairly important.”
 - The belief that it is very important for communities to have affordable, quality rental housing is the majority view across the public and is especially pronounced among renters (76% very important), adults with incomes under \$40,000 (76%), city dwellers (72%), those who spend more than 30% of their income on housing (71%), adults age 35-49 (71%), Hispanics (71%), and women (71%).
- **72% think the average cost of rent in the area where they live will increase over the next year.** 19% say it will “increase a lot” and 53% say it will “increase somewhat.”
- **75% report that there are people experiencing homelessness in and around the area where they live.** 33% say it is a “very big concern,” 26% say it is a “fairly big concern,” 13% say it is “just somewhat of a concern,” and 3% say that it is “not that much of a concern.”
- **Research from the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that 71% of extremely low income households spend more than 50% of their income on rent.** And this poll finds that 89% of people nationwide say that is a big problem – 57% say it is “a very big problem” and 32% say it is “a fairly big problem.”
- **61% report that they have had to make at least one sacrifice in the past three years because they were struggling to pay for housing,** such as taking on an additional job or working more at their current job (27%); cutting back on healthy, nutritious food (27%), accumulating credit card debt (26%), stopping to save for retirement (24%), cutting back on activities that support their child’s learning (19%), skipping paying important bills like electricity and water (18%), cutting back on healthcare (15%), moving to a neighborhood that they feel is less safe (11%), and moving to a place where the schools are not as good (5%).
 - People under age 50 (74%), African Americans (69%), Hispanics (79%), and renters (79%) are among those most likely to have had to make sacrifices in the past three years to afford their housing.
- **85% agree that ensuring that everyone has a safe, decent, affordable place to live should be a “top national priority.”** This is the majority point of view across the country as well as the political spectrum:

<i>Proportion agreeing it should be a “top national priority”</i>			
Northeast	90%	Democrats	95%
South	86%	Independents	87%
Midwest	81%	Republicans	73%
West	84%	Conservative Republicans	69%

- **78% believe government has an important role to play in making sure there are enough affordable places for people to live.** This is the majority view across the political spectrum, even among conservative Republicans: Democrats (91%), Independents (76%), Republicans (62%), and conservative Republicans (58%).
- **78% agree that the president should “take major action” to make housing more affordable for low-income families.**
- **80% agree that Congress should “take major action” to make housing more affordable for low-income people.**
 - Majorities of Democrats and Republicans alike believe that our elected leaders in Washington should “take major action” to make housing more affordable for low-income households.

	Congress should “take major action”	The President should “take major action”
Democrats	93%	93%
Independents	80%	76%
Republicans	65%	61%
Conservative Republicans	61%	56%

- **83% agree that elected officials are not paying enough attention to the cost of housing and the need for more affordable housing.**
- **76% are more likely to vote for a candidate running for office in their state with a detailed plan on making housing more affordable** – 39% are “much more likely” and 37% are “somewhat more likely.”
 - Across the political spectrum, candidates with a detailed plan to make housing more affordable are more likely to garner support at the ballot box from Democrats (91%), independents (70%), Republicans (63%), and even conservative Republicans (59%).
- **90% agree that as one of the most prosperous nations in the world, we should do more to prevent homelessness** – 62% strongly agree and 28% somewhat agree.

- **People overwhelmingly support concrete policy solutions and increased investments for affordable housing.**
 - 82% favor expanding funding for rental assistance to ensure that the approximately 17 million households who currently qualify for rental assistance (but are not receiving it) actually get it. (94% of Democrats, 79% of Independents, 71% of Republicans, including 67% of conservative Republicans favor.)
 - 90% favor ensuring that families with young children who are receiving rental assistance can live in neighborhoods that are safe, have good schools, and have job prospects. (96% of Democrats, 85% of Independents, 84% of Republicans, including 83% of conservative Republicans favor.)
 - 80% favor expanding funding for federal housing policies to ensure that households with the lowest incomes receive rental assistance for their housing costs. (93% of Democrats, 73% of Independents, 69% of Republicans, including 63% of conservative Republicans favor.)
 - 81% favor giving renters a tax break, similar to the federal tax break homeowners currently receive when they deduct the interest they pay on their mortgage. (89% of Democrats, 80% of Independents, 72% of Republicans, including 70% of conservative Republicans favor.)
 - 86% favor expanding investments in housing development programs that will build more housing units that are affordable for low-income people. (96% of Democrats, 83% of Independents, 76% of Republicans, including 75% of conservative Republicans favor.)
 - 88% favor ensuring that many newly constructed housing units are affordable for households with the lowest incomes and are located in neighborhoods that are safe, have good schools, and job prospects. (93% of Democrats, 82% of Independents, 83% of Republicans, including 81% of conservative Republicans favor.)
 - 88% favor providing emergency crisis assistance for households with the lowest incomes to help cover the rent if they experience an unexpected economic hardship, such as losing a job or medical emergency that is not covered by insurance. (96% of Democrats, 83% of Independents, 82% of Republicans, including 81% of conservative Republicans favor.)
 - 89% favor expanding stability services for households experiencing an unforeseen economic crisis so that they can avoid eviction and homelessness. (94% of Democrats, 87% of Independents, 83% of Republicans, including 80% of conservative Republicans favor.)

Methodology:

On behalf of the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign, Hart Research Associates conducted an online survey of 1,201 adults nationwide. These interviews were conducted from February 25 to March 4, 2019. The sample is consistent with demographic and geographic Census figures for adults ages 18 and over.



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Infographics:

