

To: Interested Parties
Fr: Lake Research Partners
Re: Findings from a Nationwide Survey on Housing and Renter Protections¹
Date: July 11, 2023

Survey Overview

Recent polling conducted by Lake Research Partners on behalf of HouseUS shows the power of housing as an issue for voters. This is a personal issue for many voters, as over two thirds of voters have a connection to housing instability, and as such, voters see housing affordability, including for renters, as a problem in the U.S.; over half say it is a very big problem.

Voters express concern about housing affordability, including the cost of rents, and they see this issue as impacting the economy. While the blame for the increased costs around housing and rents is diffuse, voters say the federal government has the responsibility to address the problem.

Voters are also clear that current laws do not protect renters and instead benefit landlords. Across partisan lines, voters say it is important for the federal government to ensure basic protections for renters. Reflecting the core values and priorities of voters, top testing federal policies around housing call for stability, anti-discrimination, and affordability in housing.

This can be a voting issue, as voters say they will reward candidates who support policies to protect renters and punish those who oppose these policies.

Key Findings

- **Housing is competitive, with healthcare and education as top issue priorities voters would like elected officials to address.** Across subgroups, those more likely to rate housing as a top priority over healthcare include mothers (66%), women under 50 (65%), voters who struggled to make mortgage or rent payments in the last 12 months (60%), non-college women (57%), Black voters (55%), voters who didn't vote in 2020^{^2} (55%), lower-income voters (55%), Independents (54%), and voters under 50 (53%).
- **This issue is personal to voters.** A whopping seven in ten voters (69%) have a connection to housing instability, defined as having trouble paying rent, overcrowding, moving frequently because of cost, staying with relatives, or spending the bulk of your household income on housing. In the last 12 months, a third of voters (32%) say they have had difficulties making their monthly mortgage or rent payments.

¹ Methodology: Lake Research Partners designed and administered an online survey that was conducted from June 1-9, 2023. The survey reached a total of 1,000 registered voters nationwide. The margin of error for total likely voter sample is +/- 3.1%.

Survey respondents were contacted from a panel sample of US residents and screened to be registered voters. The data are statistically weighted to ensure the sample's demographic and political composition reflects that of all registered voters nationally. Specifically, weights were applied to the following variables: age, race, region by gender, race by gender, gender by age, party identification, education, and 2020 presidential vote.

² Throughout this report, ^ indicates small sample size; less than 100 people within that subgroup answered the question.

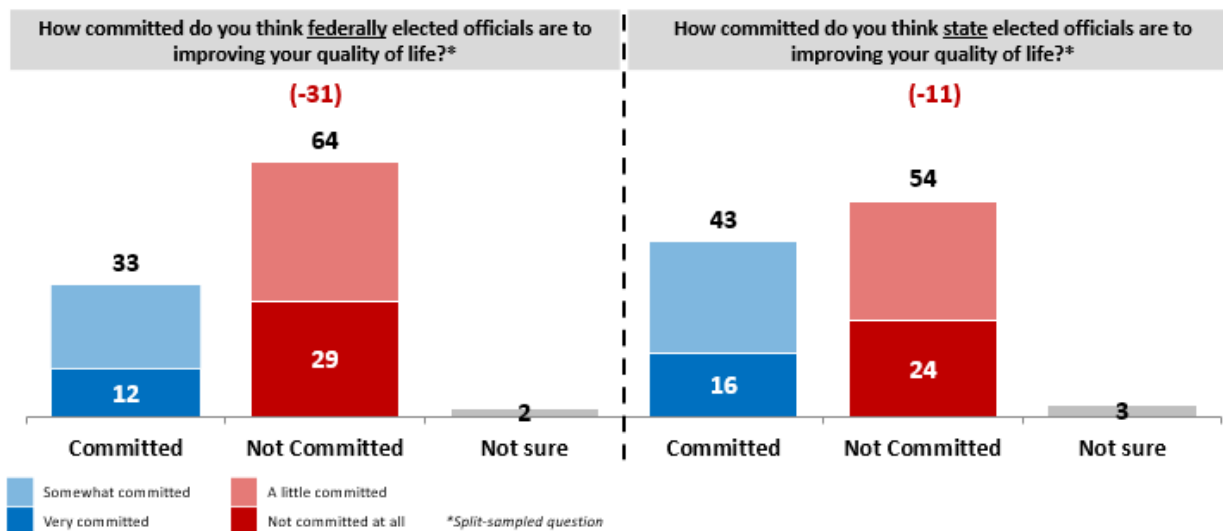
- o Those most likely to have had difficulties making their monthly mortgage or rent payments include younger Latinx voters^ (56%), younger Independent voters^ (55%), unmarried voters with a partner (52%), mothers (52%), voters in the Midwest with a household income below \$50K (52%), women in urban areas (50%), renters (48%), and parents (47%).
- Throughout the questions, the key constituencies who compose the base of support for renter-friendly policies include women, parents (especially mothers), Black voters, urban voters, Democrats, renters, voters in the West, and voters with low household income (below \$50,000).
 - o Across partisan lines, Independent voters are more likely to report having had difficulties making their monthly mortgage or rent payments (39%), are more likely to currently rent (44%), and are more likely to have personally experienced housing instability in the past (46%) or be connected to housing instability in some way (either personally, through a close friend or family member, or someone they know – 80%). As a result, in most cases, these voters respond more in line with Democrats than with Republicans.
- **Over eight in ten voters see housing affordability, including for renters, in the United States as a problem (86%), including 55% who say it is a very big problem.** Three quarters of voters also see housing affordability in their community as a problem (76%), though intensity is weaker at the local level (40% very big problem).
 - o Across regions, voters in the West (63%) and South (55%) are more likely to say housing affordability is a very big problem nationwide compared to voters in the Northeast (51%) and Midwest (49%). Voters in the West (47%) and Northeast (43%) are more likely to say housing affordability is a very big problem in their community than voters in the Midwest (39%) and South (35%). Across community type, urban (63%) and rural voters (57%) are more likely than suburban voters (46%) to say it is a very big problem nationwide. Similar numbers of voters across community types say it is a very big problem in their community: 44% of urban, 37% of suburban, and 38% of rural voters.
- **About two thirds of voters are concerned about housing affordability, including the cost of rents (64% concerned, 36% extremely concerned).** A solid majority of voters say people's inability to find affordable housing has a big impact on the economy – 87% total impact, 54% a large impact. Intensity in this belief varies across gender, parental status, partisanship, income, and homeowner status.
- **Blame for the increased cost of housing and increased cost in rents in the U.S. is diffuse** – from housing and land developers, federal government, and landlords, to investors and speculators or state government. However, **pluralities believe the federal government is most responsible for addressing these increased costs.**
- **Regardless of whether voters think about rent nationally or locally, pluralities say current laws offer more protections to landlords rather than renters.** Across partisan lines, at least six in 10 say it is important for the federal government to ensure basic protections for renters, including

63% of Republicans, 79% of Independents, and 88% of Democrats. This is a remarkably bipartisan issue.

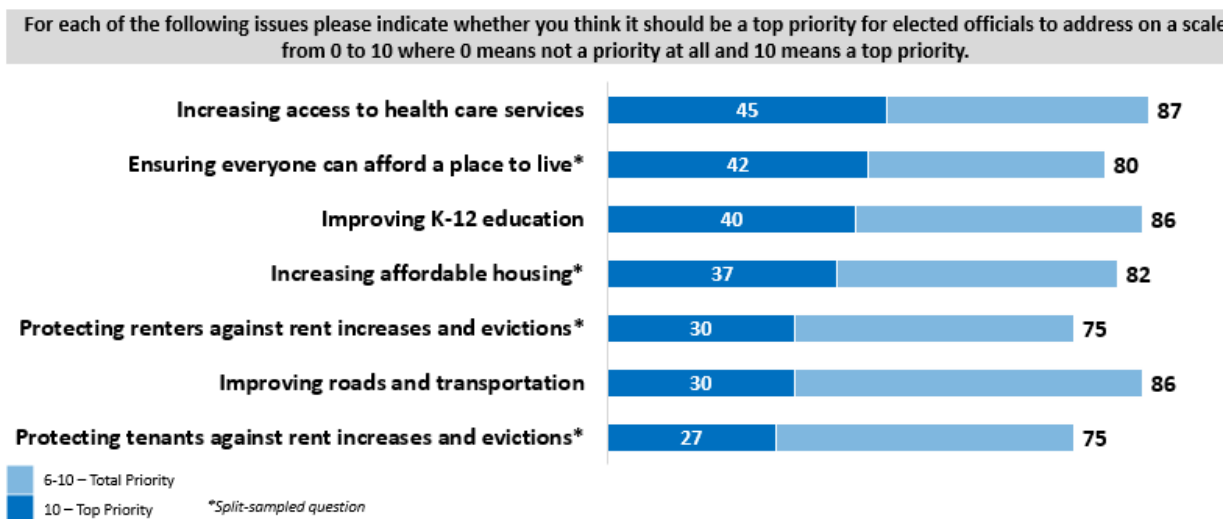
- **Voters strongly agree that the government should step in and regulate the corporate landlords it provides loans to – 78% agree, 56% strongly agree.** Voters are 11 points more likely to strongly agree that the government should step in and regulate the corporate landlords it provides loans to more than the small landlords it provides loans to, but voters see a role for government in both situations.
- Reflecting the core values and priorities of voters, **top-testing federal policies around housing call for stability, anti-discrimination, and affordability in housing.** They include passing laws so tenants cannot be evicted without a valid reason (62% strongly favor), making it illegal for landlords to deny a tenant rental housing based on a variety of factors (59%), limiting rent increases (58%), changing the law so that instead of being able to evict tenants at any time and for any reason, landlords must have good cause (56%), and passing a law to require corporate developers to meet additional fair lending requirements (55%).
- **Voters will reward candidates who support policies to protect renters and punish those who oppose them.** While Democrats are most likely vote for a candidate who supports such policies, about six in 10 Republicans and Independents are also more likely to vote for this candidate. A majority of Democrats (56%) and pluralities of Republicans (45%) and Independents (41%) would be *less likely* to vote for a candidate who opposed policies to protect renters. This is one of the few issues that works in both the positive and negative.

Issue Priorities and Housing Affordability Today

Voters do not see federally elected or state elected officials committed to improving their quality of life. They are 10 points more likely to say state elected officials are committed compared to federally elected officials, but intensity of views is similarly low.



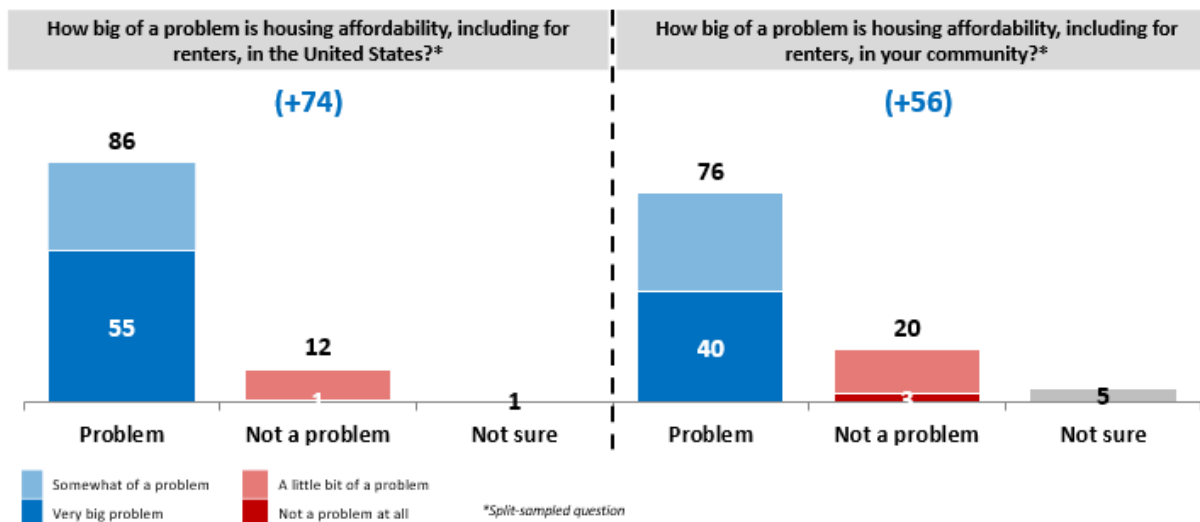
Healthcare, housing, and education are top-issue priorities voters would like elected officials to address. Ensuring everyone can afford a place to live and increasing affordable housing are ranked as priority issues by at least eight in 10 voters nationwide; three quarters of voters prioritize renter and tenant protections as well, but intensity around protections is 12 to 15 points lower than ensuring everyone can afford a place to live.



Those more likely to rate housing as a top priority over healthcare include mothers (66%), women under 50 (65%), voters who struggled to make mortgage or rent payments in the last 12 months (60%),

non-college women (57%), Black voters (55%), voters who didn't vote in 2020[^] (55%), lower-income voters (55%), Independents (54%), and voters under 50 (53%).

Across all demographics, a majority of voters sees housing affordability, including for renters, in the United States as a problem.



Across partisan lines, majorities of Democrats (60%), Independents (51%), and Republicans (50%) see housing affordability, including for renters, in the United States as a very big problem. Overall, voters most likely to say this is a very big problem in the United States include renters (67%), voters in the West (63%), urban voters (63%), mothers (63%), voters with household incomes below \$50K (62%), 2020 Biden voters (61%), Democrats (60%), women (59%), and parents (59%).

- Across region, 51% of voters in the Northeast, 49% of voters in the Midwest, 55% of voters in the South, and 63% of voters in the West say housing affordability, including for renters, is a very big problem in the United States. Across community type, 63% of urban voters, 46% of suburban voters, and 57% of rural voters say the same.

Though intensity is weaker when the question is framed to focus on individual communities, voters continue to say housing affordability, including for renters, is a problem in their community (76% problem, 40% very big problem). Overall, voters most likely to say this is a very big problem in their community include renters (55%), fathers (52%), and parents (49%).

- Across region, 43% of voters in the Northeast, 39% of voters in the Midwest, 35% of voters in the South, and 47% of voters in the West say housing affordability, including for renters, is a very big problem in their community. Across community type, 44% of urban voters, 37% of suburban voters, and 38% of rural voters say the same.

About two thirds of voters are concerned about housing affordability, including the cost of rents (64%), and 36% of voters are extremely concerned. Those most likely to be extremely concerned include voters under 50 (40%), non-college voters (41%), parents (41%), mothers (45%), Independent voters (43%), lower-income voters (45%), and urban voters (42%).

Regardless of whether voters think about rent nationally or locally, pluralities say current laws offer more protections to landlords than to renters by 3 to 1.

	Thinking about renting <u>in your area</u> , do you think current laws offer more protections to...*				Thinking about renting <u>nationally</u> , do you think current laws offer more protections to...*			
	Landlords	Renters	Balanced	Not Sure	Landlords	Renters	Balanced	Not Sure
All Voters	48	17	15	20	48	17	18	18
Northeast	49	18	17	16	44	20	18	18
Midwest	47	10	16	27	58	14	14	14
South	52	18	12	19	48	13	20	19
West	42	22	15	20	41	22	19	18
Urban	53	16	12	19	54	14	16	15
Suburban	47	17	15	21	48	15	18	19
Rural	43	19	18	20	38	22	21	19

*Split-sampled question

More than three quarters of voters say it is important for the federal government to ensure basic protections for renters – 76% important, 47% very important. About one in five say it is not important (22%). Across partisan lines, Democrats are most likely to find this very important (59%), followed by 48% of Independents and 34% of Republicans. Ensuring basic protections for renters is very important to more than half of voters under 50 (54%), Black voters (56%), Latinx voters (52%), 2020 Biden voters (57%), voters with household incomes below \$50K (54%), voters in the Midwest (53%), urban voters (51%), and renters (63%).

A solid majority of voters across demographics say housing is a basic human need that we should ensure people can get (71%) rather than saying housing is a private responsibility that everyone must handle for themselves (26%). Since 2020,³ the percentage of voters nationwide who believe housing is a basic human need has increased six points, from 65% to 71% today.

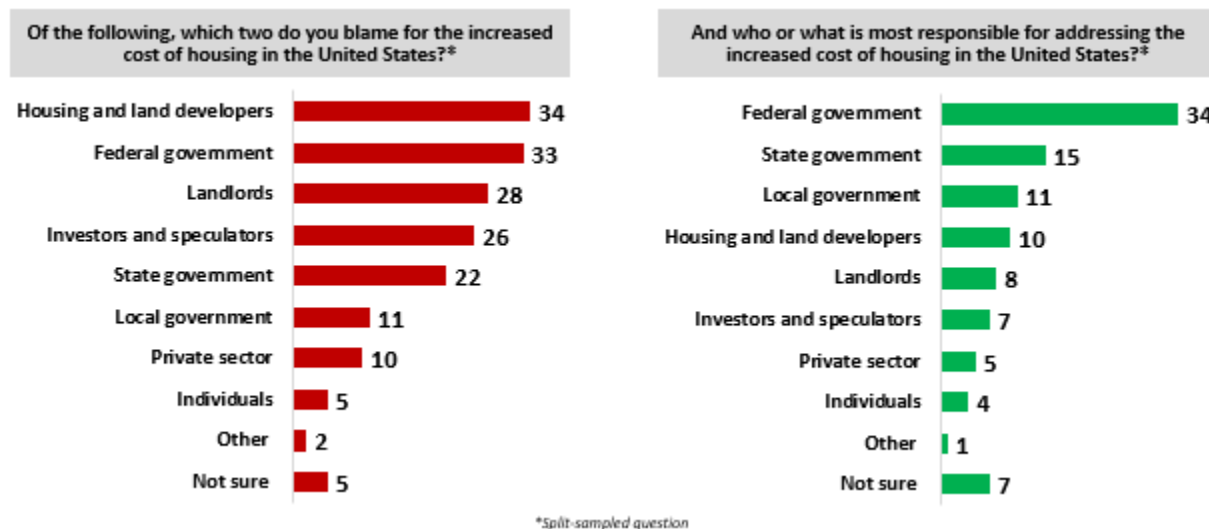
A solid majority of voters say people’s inability to find affordable housing has a big impact on the economy – 87% total impact, 54% a large impact. Less than one in 10 say this has no impact on the economy (9%). Intensity in this belief varies across gender, parental status, partisanship, income, and homeowner status.

- Across partisan lines, 62% of Democrats, 52% of Independents, and 47% of Republicans say people’s inability to find affordable housing has a large impact on the economy. 2020 Biden voters are 13 points more likely than Trump voters to say the same (62% vs. 49%), but a substantial number of both agree there is an impact. Among voters who did not vote in 2020[^], 86% say people’s inability to find affordable housing has an impact on the economy, including 52% who say it has a big impact.
- Renters are 21 points more likely than homeowners to say people’s inability to find affordable housing has a large impact on the economy: 67% of renters vs. 46% of homeowners.

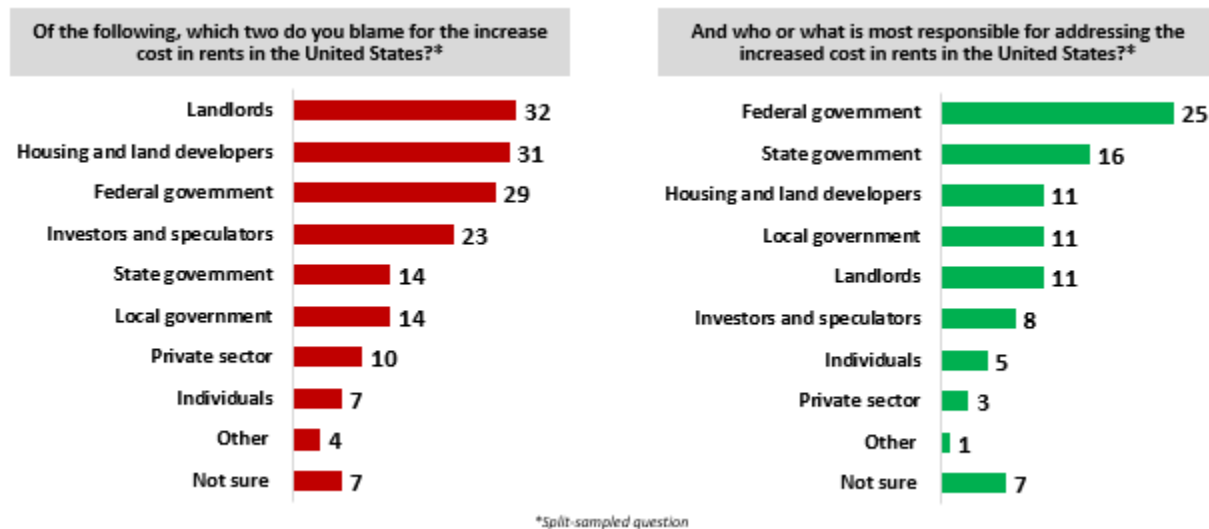
³ Housing Justice Narrative Initiative Research, May 2020: <https://housingnarrative.org/node/60896>

- Women are 10 points more likely than men to say people’s inability to find affordable housing has a large impact on the economy: 59% of women vs. 49% of men.
- While parents overall are 11 points more likely than non-parents to say people’s inability to find affordable housing has a large impact on the economy (61% vs. 52%), mothers are 21 points more likely than fathers (70% vs. 49%).
- Voters with lower household incomes are 11 points more likely than voters with higher household incomes to say people’s inability to find affordable housing has a large impact: 61% of households making <\$50K vs. 50% of household making \$50K+.

Blame for the increased cost of housing in the U.S. is diffuse – from housing and land developers, federal government, and landlords, to investors and speculators or state government. However, voters are more likely to say the federal government is most responsible for addressing the increased costs of housing, followed distantly by state and local government.



Blame for the increased cost in rents is also diffuse, with voters splitting between landlords, housing and land developers, and the federal government. Similar to housing costs, the federal government rises to the top as being most responsible for addressing increased rent costs, followed distantly by state government.



Voters strongly agree that the government should step in and regulate the corporate landlords it provides loans to – 78% agree, 56% strongly agree. More than seven in 10 also agree that the government should step in and regulate the small landlords it provides loans to – 72% agree, 45% strongly agree.

Regulating corporate landlords that receive government loans is especially popular among Democrats (73% strongly agree), 2020 Biden voters (73%), Black voters (68%). About four in 10 Republicans (39%) and Trump voters (40%) also strongly agree. Regulating small landlords that receive government loans is especially popular among Latinx voters^ (60%), renters (58%), and parents (57%). Independent voters^ are more likely to strongly agree when corporate landlords are singled out (48%) than small landlords (41%).

Voters’ Support for Federal Policies

Voters see an active role for government in housing and support a broad range of federal policies.

Reflecting the core values and priorities of voters, top-testing proposed federal policies around housing (highlighted in green below) call for stability, anti-discrimination, and affordability in housing. Second-tier policies, like passing rent control measures, regulating housing costs so they reflect the economic needs of a local community, and providing incentives for landlords to lease apartment to low-income families are also strong, but receive slightly weaker intense numbers from voters. The two policies that dip below 50% intensity focus on the right to renew leases and renters having the right to form tenant unions.

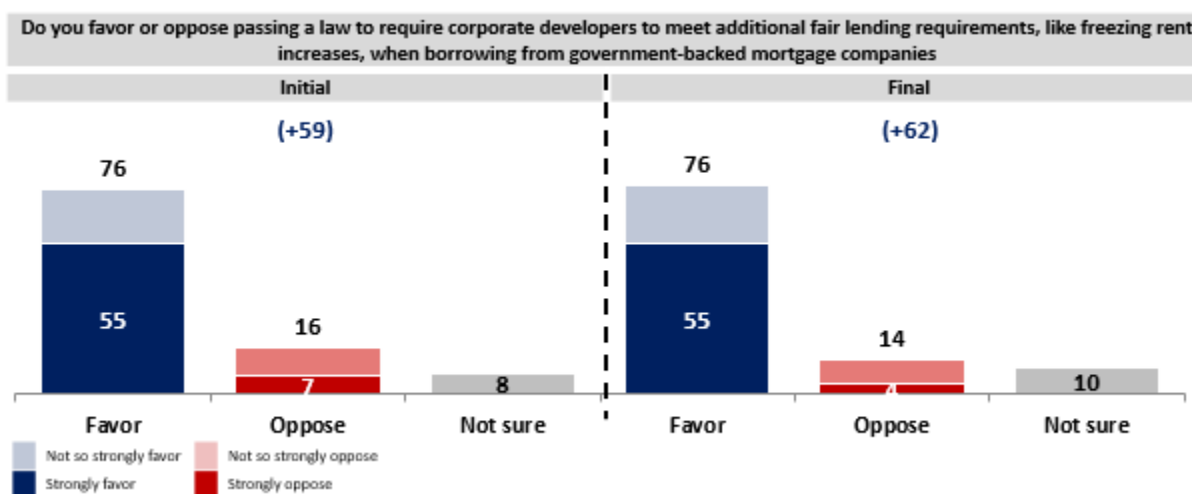
	% Favor (% Strongly Favor)
Pass laws so tenants cannot be evicted without a valid reason*	79 (62)
Make it illegal for landlords to deny a tenant rental housing based on race, family make-up, physical and mental ability, source of income, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, or conviction or arrest history*	76 (59)
Limit rent increases*	79 (58)

Change the law so that instead of being able to evict tenants at any time and for any reason, landlords must have good cause, which is defined as a serious or repeated violation of the lease*	75 (56)
Pass a law to require corporate developers to meet additional fair lending requirements, like freezing rent increases, when borrowing from government-backed mortgage companies	76 (55)
Pass rent control measures*	71 (52)
Regulate housing costs so they reflect the economic needs of a local community	75 (52)
Provide incentives for landlords to lease apartments to low-income families who are using housing vouchers to help pay their rent	78 (52)
Make it illegal for landlords to deny a tenant rental housing based on race, family make-up, physical and mental ability, source of income, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, conviction or arrest history, bankruptcy history, eviction history, or credit score*	72 (51)
Give renters the right to purchase the property where they live before a landlord puts the property up for sale	75 (50)
Pass bipartisan legislation in Congress to build more homes and improve housing affordability	74 (50)
Ensure every renter has the right to renew their lease	72 (46)
Ensure renters the right to form tenant unions free from fear of retaliation from the landlord	66 (44)

*Split-sampled question

Support for Additional Requirements on Corporate Developers

- Voters are solidly in favor of passing a law to require corporate developers to meet additional fair lending requirements when borrowing from government-backed mortgage companies.



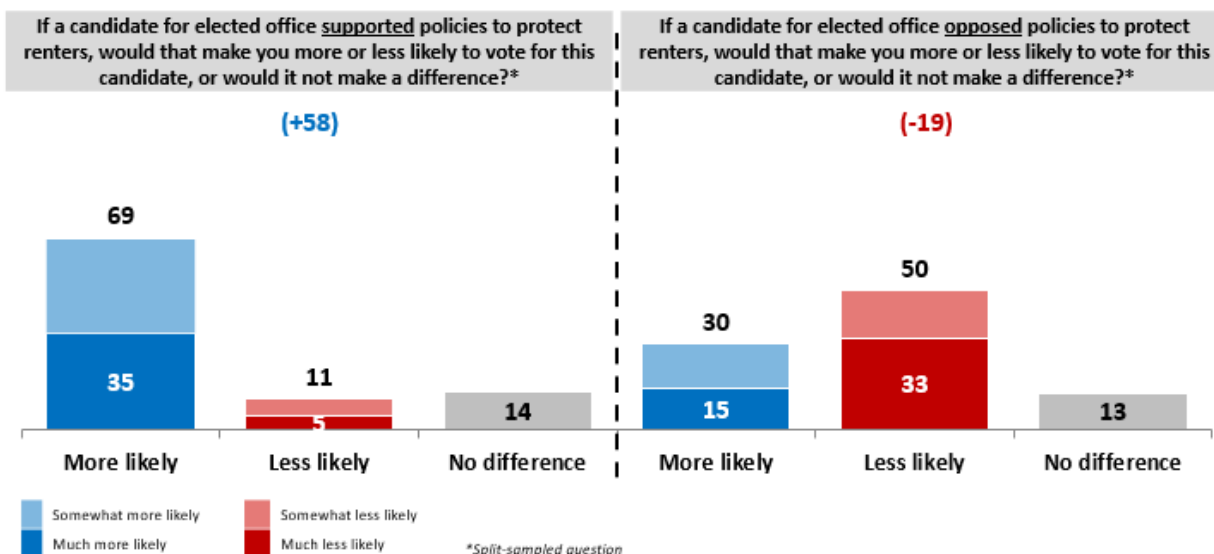
- More than two thirds of voters solidly favor passing a law to require corporate developers to meet additional fair lending requirements (67%), meaning they either strongly or not so strongly favor the law over the course of the survey. Divorced voters (82%), 2020 Biden voters (79%), Democrats (77%) – especially strong Democrats (80%) and older Democrats (81%), voters who

struggled in the last 12 months to make a mortgage or rent payment (77%), voters in New England^ (76%), voters with housing instability experience (74%), post-graduates (74%), Black men^ (73%), fathers (73%), voters in smaller cities (73%), voters in the West (72%), renters (72%), and voters with household incomes below \$50K (72%) are most likely to be solidly in favor of this law.

- Fifteen percent of voters fall into the ‘persuadable’ category when it comes to passing a law to require corporate developers to meet additional fair lending requirements when borrowing from government-backed mortgage companies, meaning they either shift toward being unsure or in support of the policy by the end of the survey. Unlikely 2024 voters (31%), voters who live with parents/relatives^ (27%), Republicans under 50 (23%), 40–49-year-old voters (21%), strong Republicans (21%), Republican women (21%), younger women under 50 (20%), voters under 30 (20%), Latinas^ (20%), and white voters under 50 (20%) are more likely than others to be ‘persuadable.’
- Few across demographic subgroups oppose the proposed law, as only 8% solidly oppose and another 10% shift toward opposing the law by the end of the survey. Though numbers are quite low, subgroups of men – including older men (13%), college-educated men (15%), Republican men (17%), and suburban men (13%) – 2020 Trump voters (15%), Republicans overall (14%), and voters in Mountain states^ (15%) are most likely to solidly oppose the law.

Protecting Renters as a Voting Issue

Policies to protect renters is a voting issue. Voters across partisan lines will reward candidates who support policies to protect renters and punish those who oppose them.



Across partisan lines, Democrats are most likely to reward a candidate who supports policies to protect renters. About six in 10 Independents and Republicans are also more likely to support a candidate who supports policies to protect renters, but intensity is weaker.

- Democrat: 44% much more likely to vote for this candidate (80% more likely)
 - Strong Democrats are 12 points more likely than weak Democrats to vote for this candidate (49% much more likely among strong Democrats vs. 37% of weak Democrats).
 - Democratic men are 10 points more likely to vote for this candidate than Democratic women (49% much more likely among Democratic men vs. 39% of Democratic women).
- Independent^: 27% much more likely (60% more likely)
- Republican: 28% much more likely (59% more likely)

Additionally, nearly half of renters (49%) and urban voters (49%) are much more likely to vote for a candidate who supports policies to protect renters.

Voters across partisan lines will also punish candidates who oppose policies to protect renters, including pluralities of Independents (41% less likely, 24% much less likely) and Republicans (45% less likely, 26% much less likely) and a majority of Democrats (56% less likely, 42% much less likely). Voters across gender, race/ethnicity, partisanship, income, homeownership, and region are net-unlikely to vote for this candidate. The only subgroups net-likely to vote for this candidate are men under 50 (+17) and fathers^ (+16).

Voters' Personal Connections to Housing Issues

At the end of the survey, voters were asked a series of demographic questions to capture their housing experiences. A majority of voters own their current home, with a mortgage (35%) or without a mortgage (23%). Another third of voters rent (33%), and 6% live with their parents or relatives and do not pay rent.

- While 84% of homeowners say they are almost certain to vote in 2024, 71% of renters say the same. Mobilization efforts for housing advocacy need to target renters, a key constituency of base supporters, heading into the election cycle.

In the last 12 months, while two thirds say they have not had difficulties making their monthly mortgage or rent payments, about a third of voters (32%) say they have. Those most likely to have had difficulties making their monthly mortgage or rent payments include younger Latinx voters^ (56%), younger Independent voters^ (55%), unmarried voters with a partner (52%), mothers (52%), voters in the Midwest with a household income below \$50K (52%), women in urban areas (50%), renters (48%), and parents (47%).

Nearly seven in 10 voters (69%) have a connection to housing instability, defined as having trouble paying rent, overcrowding, moving frequently because of cost, staying with relatives, or spending the bulk of your household income on housing. A plurality of voters has personally experienced housing instability in the past (34%).

Have you, a family member or close friend, or someone you know ever experienced housing instability, for example having trouble paying rent, overcrowding, moving frequently because of cost, staying with relatives, or spending the bulk of your household income on housing? [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

