

From: YouGov

To: Welcoming Neighbors Network

Re: Survey results on key housing policies in Washington

Date: March 24, 2025

On behalf of the Welcoming Neighbors Network, YouGov fielded a survey of 800 Washington state registered voters to better understand their views on the subject of housing policy in Washington. The survey fielded from February 27 to March 7, 2025. The survey included measures of Washingtonians' priorities, their views toward the current state of the housing market, and their support for new policies that would expand housing availability and affordability in the state. This memo briefly summarizes the results.

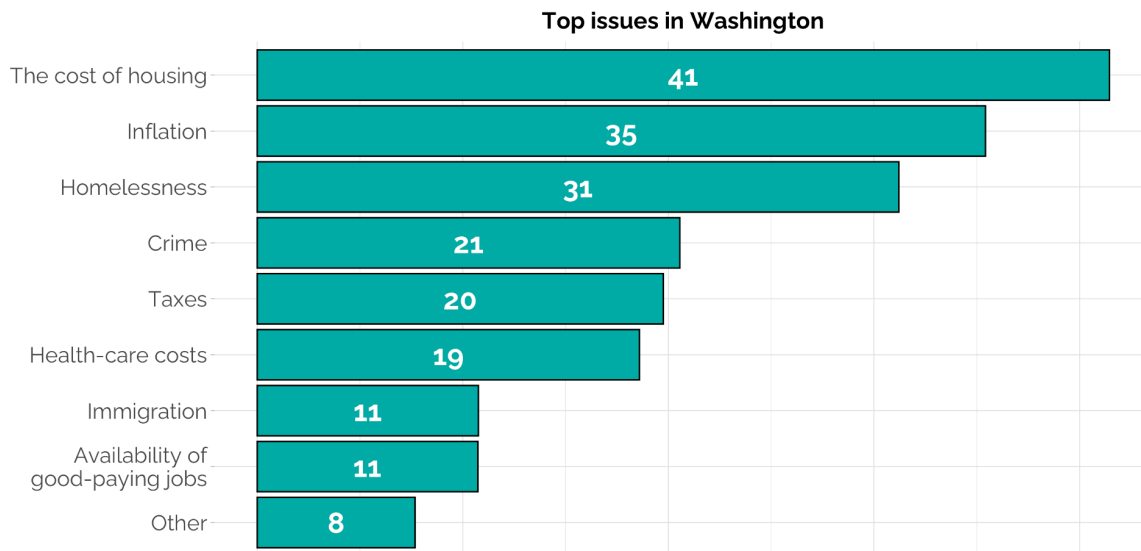
Executive Summary

- **The cost of housing is currently the biggest issue facing the state of Washington, with 41 percent of voters calling it their top issue.**
 - These concerns are not driven solely by voters living in areas where housing tends to be more expensive, such as in urban areas. Controlling for a variety of factors, voters across the state report housing is a top concern, whether they live in an urban area, the suburbs, or more rural areas.
- When asked to choose between prioritizing new housing or preserving neighborhood character, **Washingtonians believe that building more homes is more important than preserving neighborhood character by a significant margin**, including more than half of Republicans and Independents prioritizing more homes over neighborhood character.
- **Large bipartisan majorities of voters support key housing reforms.** This includes reforms that would prevent price gouging, allow more housing to be built near bus stops and train stations, and allow total flexibility to property owners to determine how much parking they need on their property.
 - This includes overwhelming net support among Democrats, Independents, and Republicans, as well as voters living in denser areas and less populated parts of the state.

Housing is the top concern in Washington

Washingtonians are concerned with rising housing costs and the general cost of living. At the beginning of the survey, prior to any information concerning the overall subject matter - i.e., before respondents knew the survey concerned the issue of housing - respondents were asked about their overall issue concerns. Fully 41 percent of voters in Washington said the cost of housing is one of the most important issues facing

the state. Even accounting for other major concerns across the state such as inflation and homelessness, voters feel housing is a major issue in their state.



From this list of issues, which two do you see as the most important issues facing [Washington] today?

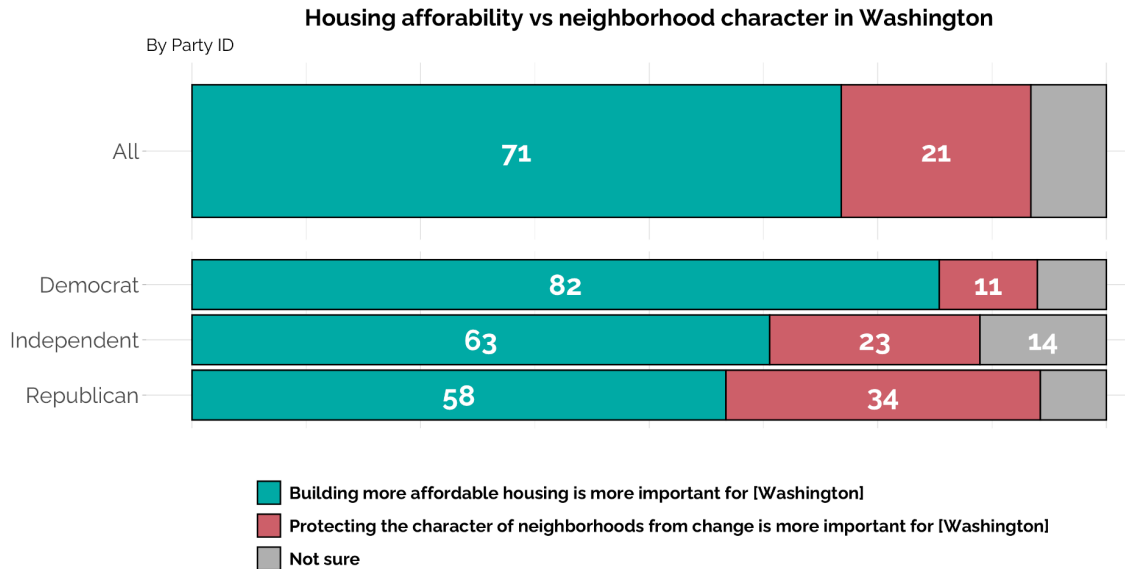
Similarly, the survey asked respondents about various elements of the housing market, including availability, cost, and quality of housing in the state. **Even if not their top issue, about 9 out of 10 respondents said the cost of housing in Washington was a problem, with 62 percent calling it a “major problem” and 30 percent calling it “somewhat a problem.”** These results are not driven only by voters in the urban areas where housing tends to be the most expensive. For example, 66 percent of respondents in the rural regions of Washington say the cost of housing is a “major problem,” as do 62 percent of respondents who reside in the suburban areas.

Washingtonians are dissatisfied with the current housing market. **Nearly 8 out of 10 Washington voters said there are not enough homes in their community that average people can afford**, with only 12 percent saying there are enough such homes. **Voters say housing is a top concern of theirs even when the goal of new housing is pitted against other key priorities such as preserving the historic character of Washington’s neighborhoods.** Later in the survey, voters were asked:

And even if it isn’t exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?

- *Building more homes is more important for Washington*
- *Protecting the character of neighborhoods from change is more important for Washington*
- *Not sure*

Majorities of voters across party lines said they prioritized more homes. Less than one-quarter of respondents said that “protecting neighborhood character” should take precedence over building more homes.



Voters say Washington state legislators are not doing enough to prioritize housing costs and the state’s housing shortage

Voters are not satisfied with state legislators’ handling of the housing shortage and the cost of housing. Almost three-fourths of voters said local governments, like city councils, mayors, or county commissioners, are not doing enough to reduce the cost of renting or buying a home. Respondents were also asked if it is more important for state legislators to prioritize building more homes and bringing down housing costs or prioritize preserving the power city governments have over what types of homes can be built and where. **Fully 66 percent of Washingtonians believe state legislators should prioritize building more homes and bringing down housing costs, even if it means reducing the power city governments have over what types of homes can be built.** Across party lines, there is strong net positive support for prioritizing building more homes (Democrats +59, Republicans +37, and Independents +41). Only 18 percent of voters preferred that state legislators prioritize preserving the power of local governments.

Given this, it is probably not surprising that fully **86 percent of Washingtonians strongly or somewhat agree that state legislators should take action to address Washington’s housing shortage and cost of housing in the state.** Controlling for a variety of factors, voters across the state agree that state legislators should take action, whether they live in an urban area, the suburbs, or more rural areas.

Housing proposals under consideration by the legislature are popular

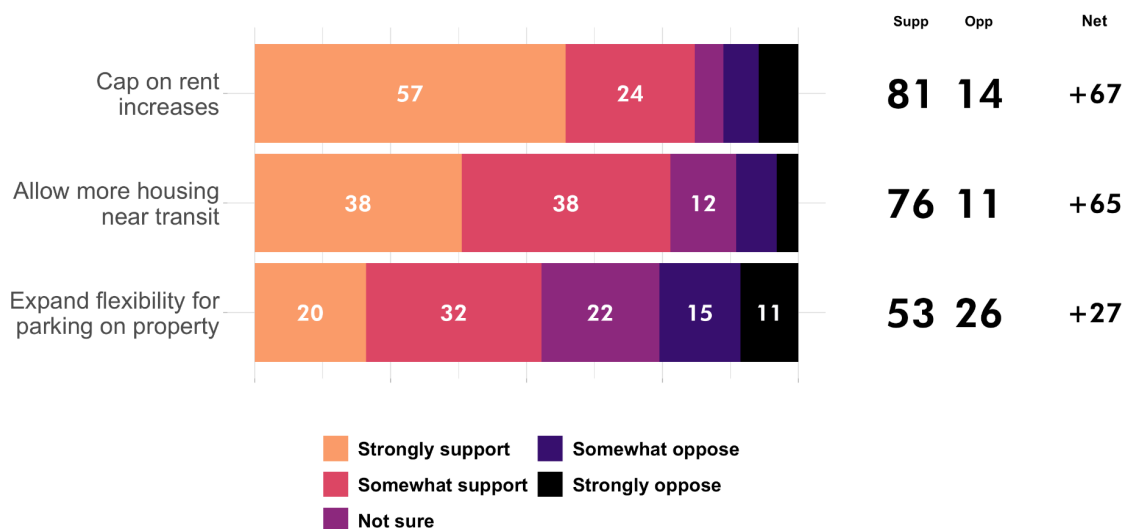
Respondents were asked about several housing proposals that the state legislature is considering to address Washington's housing shortage. They were shown a brief introduction about the extent of the housing shortage. Specifically, they were shown:

The Washington State Department of Commerce has estimated that we will have a housing shortage of 1,000,000 homes over 20 years. In light of this, the state legislature is considering proposals to address this problem. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal?

- *The state legislature is considering a proposal to allow more housing to be built near bus stops and train stations in communities across Washington*
- *The state legislature is considering some changes to make it easier and less expensive to build a home. One idea they're considering is to set a standard that property owners have total flexibility to determine how much parking they need on their property, so long as they provide at least one parking space for every two homes*
- *The state legislature is considering some changes to prevent price gouging in rents. One idea they're considering is to set a price cap on how much rent can be increased each year*

Each proposal produced strong support among voters. The strongest proposal is “The state legislature is considering some changes to prevent price gouging in rents. One idea they're considering is to set a price cap on how much rent can be increased each year”, with over 80 percent of voters expressing support for this policy. Overall support for each policy met or surpassed 50 percent support among Washington voters, and all of them drew about or less than a quarter of opposition from Washington voters.

Support for new housing policies in Washington



The Washington State Department of Commerce has estimated that we will have a housing shortage of 1,000,000 homes over 20 years. Generally speaking, do you [support or oppose] this proposal?

Notably, these policies are popular across both party lines and geographies. The following table shows that overall each of these policies are popular across various key demographics, including across partisanship and across geography. Democrats, Independents, and Republicans overall support these policies. Washingtonians residing in urban, suburban, and rural areas support these policies as well.

Net policy support									
	WA voters		Democrats	Independents	Republicans		Urban	Suburban	Rural
Allow more housing near transit	+65		+79	+67	+45		+66	+67	+57
Expand flexibility for parking on property	+26		+36	+16	+15		+44	+25	+4
Cap on rent increases	+68		+88	+65	+39		+78	+66	+50

Voters throughout the state, controlling for a variety of other key demographic and political factors, are concerned about the availability of housing in Washington. According to this survey, they support a variety of reforms that would make housing more abundant and affordable.

Conclusion

Voters across the state of Washington say housing availability and affordability are serious issues for the state. These concerns are felt among voters who live in all parts of the state, not just in more dense or urban areas. Perhaps not surprisingly, these same voters also say they support a variety of key reforms that would help address the housing crisis in Washington. Support for these policies remains high even controlling for key factors like geography and partisanship.

Even when facing the trade-off between new housing and the historic character of current neighborhoods, voters strongly say they prioritize new housing. This includes overwhelming support for new housing policies among the state's urban, suburban, and rural areas as well as net positive support for new housing over "neighborhood character" across party lines. Washingtonians are more concerned about being able to afford to live and own a home in Washington than they are with preserving its housing status quo.

Methodology Statement

This survey is based on 800 interviews conducted by YouGov on the internet of Washington state registered voters. The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and Washington state region based on voter registration lists, the U.S. Census American Community Survey, and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey, as well as 2020 Presidential vote and approximate 2024 Presidential vote based on available results. Some questions withheld for future release. Respondents were selected from YouGov to be representative of registered voters. The weights range from 0.26 to 5.16 with a mean of 1 and a standard deviation of 0.35.

The margin of error (a 95% confidence interval) for a sample percentage p based upon the subsetting sample is approximately 3.7%. It is calculated using the formula:

$$\hat{p} \pm 100 \times \sqrt{\frac{1 + CV^2}{n}}$$

where CV is the coefficient of variation of the sample weights and n is the sample size used to compute the proportion. This is a measure of sampling error (the average of all estimates obtained using the same sample selection and weighting procedures repeatedly). The sample estimate should differ from its expected value by less than margin of error in 95 percent of all samples. It does not reflect non-sampling errors, including potential selection bias in panel participation or in response to a particular survey. Some questions withheld for later release.