

Perceptions Around Affordable Housing in Arizona



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Arizona has experienced changing demographics, wages that haven't risen on pace with increasing housing prices, an inadequate supply of affordable housing, and a high eviction rate, particularly in its urban areas. Statewide, Arizona's rate of people experiencing homelessness has been increasing.

[The Out of Reach report](#) shows that a minimum wage worker in Arizona must work 68 hours per week to afford a modest one-bedroom apartment. In Maricopa County, which consists of 38% renters, the majority of low-wage workers are fast food workers, cashiers, retail salespersons, and customer service representatives. This means that full-time (and greater than full-time) workers cannot afford housing.

According to this same report, Arizona has only 45 affordable rental units for every 100 families who need affordable housing. Only two states – Nevada and California – have a similar or worse shortage of affordable housing. The problem is worsening. Arizona's inventory of affordable housing is shrinking while Maricopa County is among the country's fastest growing places. This combination will result in a continued rise of housing unaffordability and shortages.

This year, Arizona lawmakers approved a \$15 million, one-time infusion into the state's Housing Trust Fund. Yet, [according to Joan Serviss](#), the executive director of the Arizona Housing Coalition, "a one-time infusion of cash isn't the sustainable solution we need to address the ongoing challenges of housing insecurity and homelessness." The state's fund remains below its pre-recession level.

What are Arizonans' perceptions around affordable housing in their state? Recently, Morrison Institute conducted a statewide representative poll of Arizonans around their perceptions of various public policy topics. Arizonans' thoughts on affordable housing are described here.

Overall, two-thirds of Arizonans agree that affordable housing is an important policy issue for Arizona (69%). Less than one-third of Arizonans agree that there is enough affordable housing in their area (32%).

Yet less than half (46%) are willing to have low or moderate-income housing developed in their neighborhood. And well over half (59%) believe that government funding for affordable housing should be expanded for programs such as rental assistance.

Digging a bit deeper, however, some differences emerge among Arizonans in their perceptions of affordable housing.

While notable differences between Arizona's urban and rural residents didn't emerge, differences in perceptions of affordable housing did emerge among Arizonans of different political parties. These differences are shown in Figure 1.

Democrats were more likely to see affordable housing as an important policy issue than those with any other party affiliation. Republicans were more likely to think that there is enough affordable housing in Arizona compared to those with any other party affiliation. Interestingly, those who are not currently registered to vote had strong opinions on affordable housing, enough that their voice may shift balances if they were to vote.

Even more striking within the poll data are the strong differences in perceptions of affordable housing based on the respondents' annual income. To see this more clearly, the data were bifurcated into two income categories: respondents who earn more than \$50,000 per year in income, and respondents who earn less than \$50,000 per year in income. These differences are shown in the Figure 2.

The data reveal meaningful differences (Z-score test of proportions reveal statistically significant differences at the $\alpha=.05$ level) in perceptions of affordable housing between respondents in the lower category of annual earnings (less than \$50,000 annually) and respondents in the higher category of annual earnings (greater than \$50,000 annually). Those in the lower income category are less likely to think that there is enough affordable housing in Arizona compared to those in the higher income category. "Affordability" was not defined for poll respondents, and this concept is likely based on individual perception. As well, those with lower incomes are more likely

to be accepting of affordable housing in their neighborhood, and more likely to agree that government funding should be expanded to support affordable housing than their higher income counterparts.

those not registered to vote, 60% of them have annual incomes less than \$50,000. This suggests that Arizonans who are not registered to vote have different perceptions around affordable housing and government's role in supporting affordable housing than their voting counterparts.

Putting this together, the respondent data show that among

Figure 1. Perceptions of Affordable Housing by Political Affiliation

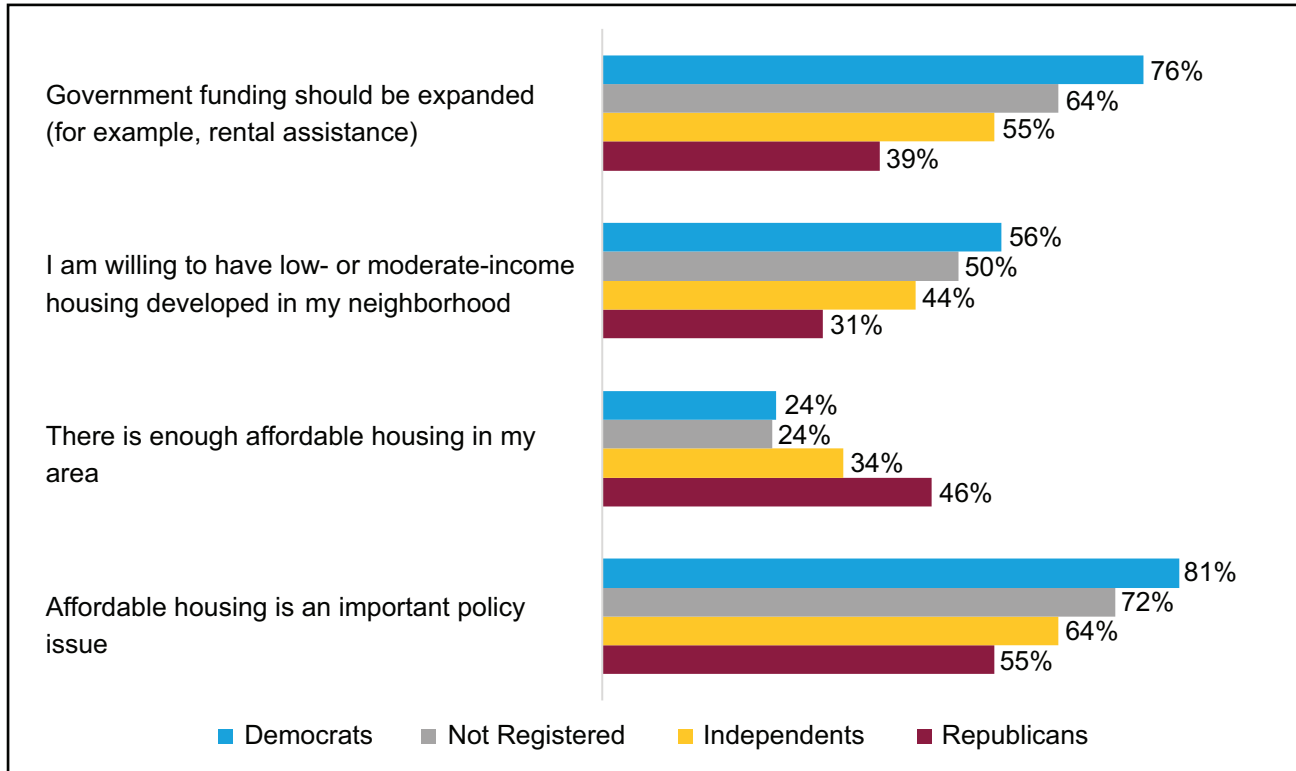


Figure 2. Perceptions of Affordable Housing by Income

