



## Majorities Across Race and Ethnicity Support Policies to Allow More Housing\*

**Survey finds Asian, Black, Latino and White respondents back changes to allow more varied options**



As families nationwide struggle with the cost of housing, large majorities of Americans across races and ethnicities support [state](#) and [local](#) policies that would permit construction of more diverse types of homes to help lower costs. That's according to a nationally representative survey done for The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The majorities supporting the policies were usually greater than 60% and often times higher. For example, about 8 in 10 or more of Asian American, Black, Hispanic<sup>†</sup> and White respondents said they support simplified and faster permitting processes for new housing.

The survey, conducted in the fall of 2023, also shows that the policies enjoy widespread support across other demographic characteristics, including [geographic location](#), [political affiliation](#), [owner or renter status](#) and [income levels](#).

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<sup>†</sup> The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

Multiple factors have contributed to the steady rise in housing costs, including years of insufficient building, high construction costs, the resulting lack of homes for sale or rent and insufficiently funded housing assistance. Policymakers at all levels have been exploring strategies to help improve the supply.

Research shows that zoning and land-use regulations are key drivers of the lack of rental and for-sale homes available, pushing costs higher. That is because sellers and landlords can charge more when there are fewer homes for rent or sale. While rising housing costs have outpaced wage increases for decades, both [rent](#) and [home sale prices](#) sharply increased in recent years, making it more difficult for many low- and moderate-income households to afford decent and stable housing.



And America's housing crisis has a disproportionate impact on households of color. Part of that disparity has to do with the origins of zoning laws. When municipalities started to implement [zoning rules](#) a century ago, one impact was to create and maintain [economic](#) and racial segregation by restricting the creation of higher-density and rental housing in low-poverty, well-resourced neighborhoods that were disproportionately — or exclusively — populated by White residents. For example, zoning in these neighborhoods often allowed only [single-family](#) detached houses on large lots, limiting the number of homes available and making these houses too expensive for many families of color.

Such "[exclusionary zoning](#)," combined with the legacy of redlining, racial covenants and other forms of housing discrimination, has produced [racial residential segregation](#) and lower [income, wealth and homeownership levels](#) for many households of color. As a result, these households are more likely to be renters and more vulnerable to [housing insecurity and displacement](#) than White households.



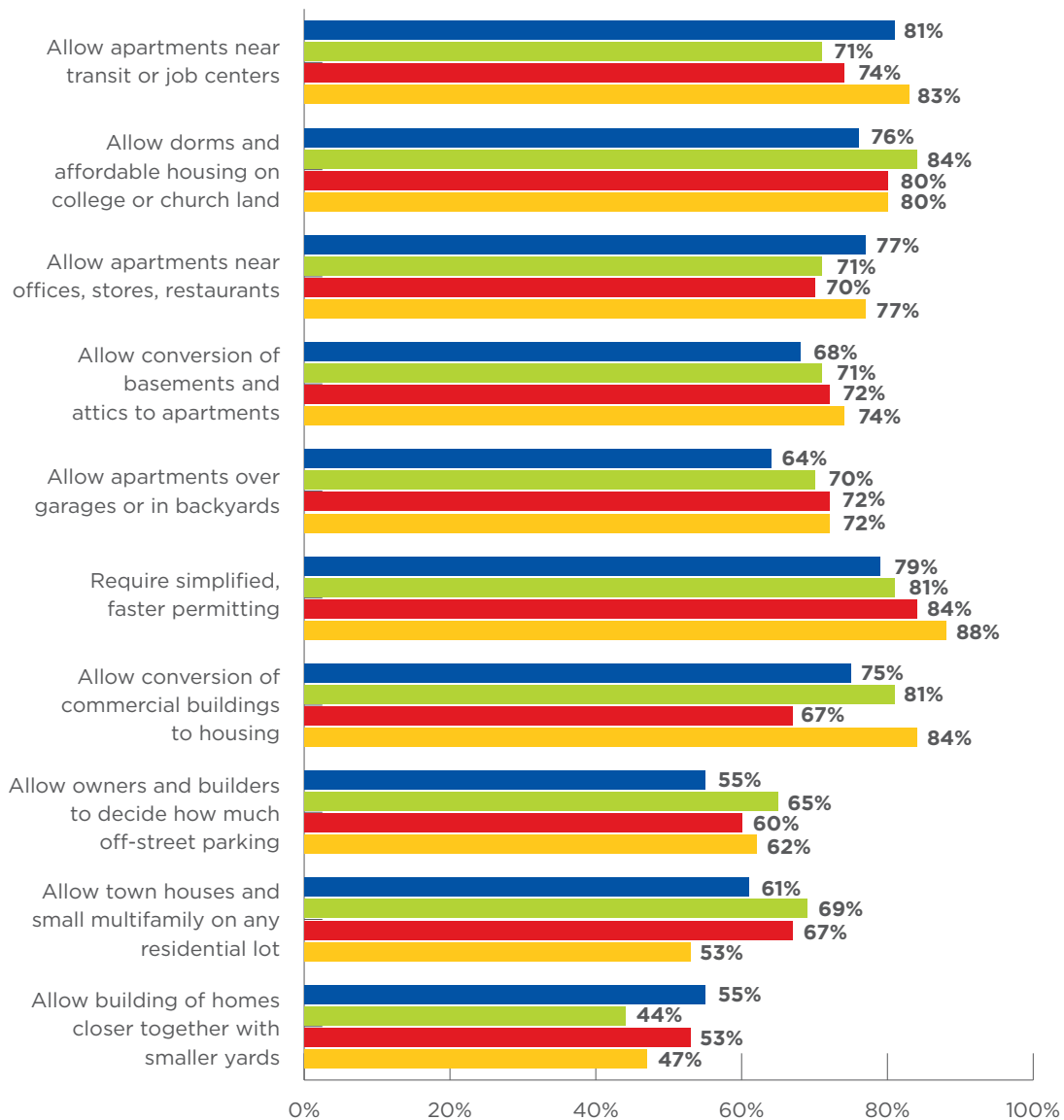
The survey shows broad support for changes that could help to reduce some of these disparities. Ipsos conducted the nationally representative survey of 5,051 people from September 8 to September 17, 2023. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for 10 policies that would allow more homes, of different types, to be built in the largest cities in their state and the towns nearest them where many people commute into those cities for work. They were also asked to indicate how compelling they found nine reasons for changing housing rules.

The scale of the survey allowed for breakdowns by Asian American, Black, Latino and White households, but there were not enough responses from Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders or multiracial households to report

margins of error of fewer than 10% because of their smaller share of the U.S. population. Nonetheless, capturing the opinions of these communities is important as well.

**Figure 1. Strong Majorities Across Race and Ethnicity Support Policies to Allow More Housing**

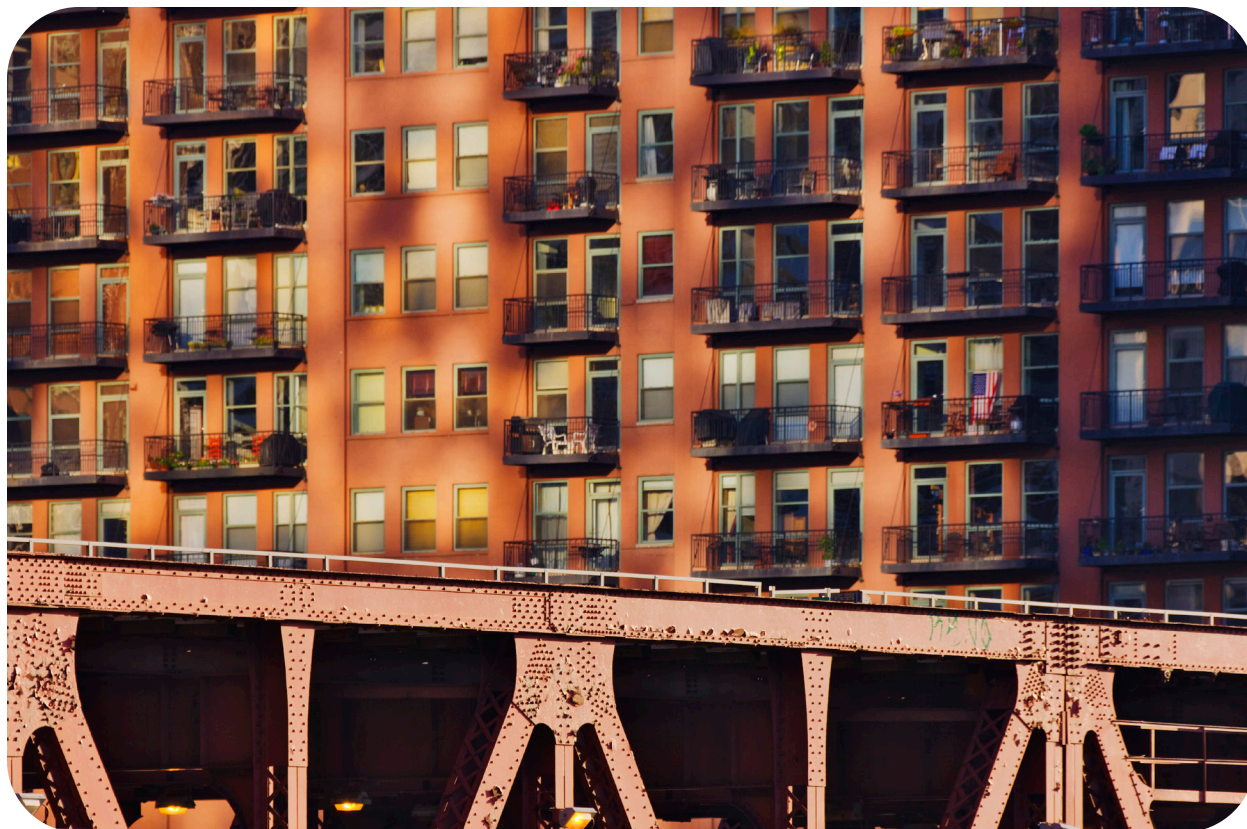
Share in favor of each approach



Notes: Results come from a nationally representative survey of 5,051 individuals conducted September 8-17, 2023, by Ipsos. The survey included 211 responses from Asian American respondents; 552 responses from Black respondents; 626 responses from Latino respondents; and 3,463 responses from White respondents.

Source: The Pew Charitable Trusts

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In addition to voicing support for faster permitting decisions, the four racial and ethnic groups for which there were sufficient respondents expressed across-the-board backing for allowing apartments near transit and job centers and allowing dorms and affordable housing on college or church land.

Some policies show modest variations in support. For example, Black and Latino respondents expressed stronger support for allowing town houses and small multifamily buildings in residential areas, while more Asian and White respondents favored allowing apartments to be built near transit stations, job centers, stores and restaurants. In addition, Black and White Americans expressed stronger support for allowing commercial buildings to be converted to housing.

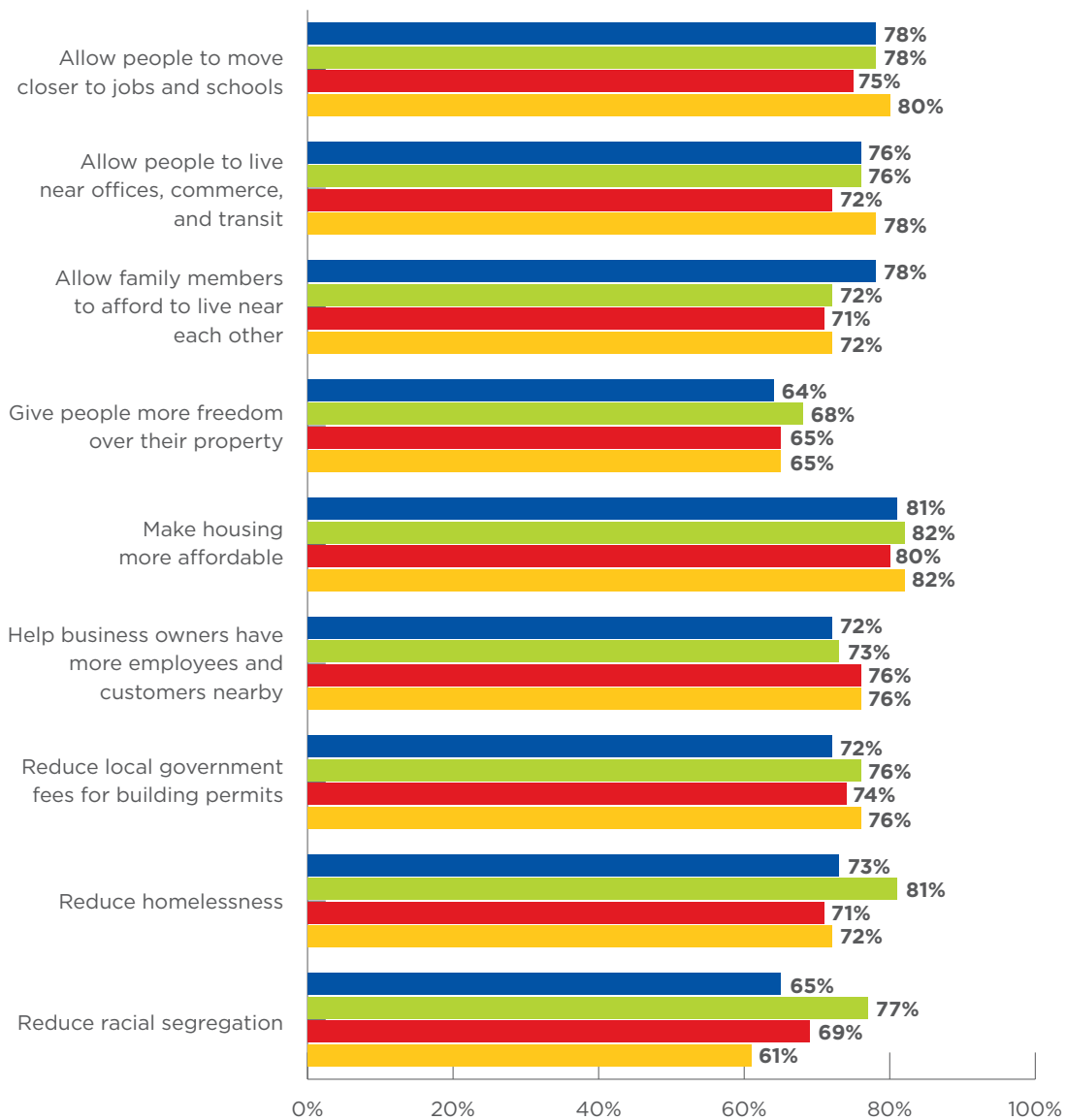
Across the 10 policies, however, the divergence was usually fewer than 10%. Nine measures received majority support from respondents overall; the one outlier was that less than half of Black and White respondents expressed support for allowing homes to be built closer together with smaller yards.

Respondents were also broadly aligned in their reasons for allowing more homebuilding (see Figure 2). The argument that received the strongest support among all groups was making housing more affordable. Affordability remains at the forefront for many Americans, with half of renters spending [30% or more](#) of their income on rent and one-quarter [spending more than 50%](#), all with [median home prices](#) continuing to reach record highs. Notably, Black respondents cited two issues

at significantly higher rates than other respondents: reducing homelessness and reducing racial segregation.

**Figure 2. Respondents Across Race and Ethnicity Cite Consumer Choice, Economic and Social Reasons to Allow More Homebuilding**

Share who view each reason as excellent or good for changing housing rules



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Reforming land-use regulations to allow the building of more and more diverse, types of homes allows poorer residents and people of color to move to neighborhoods with better schools, jobs, grocery stores, parks, hospitals and other opportunities and amenities. That also can help moderate the rising housing costs that often displace lower- and middle-income residents. For example, [Houston lowered its minimum lot size](#) from 5,000 square feet to as little as 1,400 square feet in the central city in 1998 and then across the whole city in 2013. Since then, nearly [80,000 homes](#) have been constructed in Houston.



The new Houston town houses sold at prices that were mostly affordable for middle-income households. Furthermore, these new homes largely avoided displacing existing residents: More than 80% were built on sites that used to house commercial, industrial, or multifamily properties, while those that replaced existing detached single-family houses were predominantly located in areas where property values were above average in 2000 and had below-average percentages of Black residents. Adding housing has kept Houston's costs reasonable compared with those of other large cities; from 2000 to 2021, the city also gained more Asian and Hispanic residents than other large U.S. cities and gained Black residents as other large cities lost them.

Relaxing rigid zoning rules also will spur more inexpensive housing options for low-income Americans. It is often infeasible for the private sector to build or operate housing that is affordable for low-income households because the rents that they can afford are insufficient to cover property owners' costs. Zoning reforms can expand the number of locations where government-subsidized, income-restricted apartments can be built, including in low-poverty, well-resourced neighborhoods and reduce the costly [red tape](#) that affordable housing developments must navigate.

Many organizations that focus on the needs of lower-income residents have [recommended](#) pairing zoning changes with federal and state investments in affordable housing, continued enforcement of civil rights and fair housing protections, policies to help existing residents build and retain wealth and tenant protections to help families at risk of displacement because of high housing costs.

The broad support for the policies in the survey can be obscured by vocal participants at public meetings who object to zoning reforms, especially when they involve adding less-costly housing options like town houses to neighborhoods of single-family homes. However, studies have shown that other community members are usually [less negative](#) toward allowing more [housing](#).

Support for building more homes of different types unites a strong majority of Americans. Research demonstrates that properly implemented land-use reforms will reduce housing costs while increasing economic opportunity for all Americans — including low-income households of color.

### **About UnidosUS**

UnidosUS is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that serves as the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Since 1968, we have challenged the social, economic and political barriers that affect Latinos through our unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs and an [Affiliate Network](#) of more than 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico. We believe in an America where economic, political and social progress is a reality for all Latinos and we collaborate across communities to achieve it.

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