

AOBA PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

WASHINGTON DC & MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

The region's housing affordability challenge has become a top-of-mind concern for District of Columbia and Montgomery County residents, with an overwhelming majority calling it a major problem or crisis.

Drivers of the Affordability Challenge

A whopping 80% of all residents ranked stagnant wages and the high cost of land as the top two drivers of the housing affordability crisis.

More than 50% said the following were also drivers: 1) new people moving to the area; 2) government-imposed regulations; 3) aging apartments needing renovation; and, 4) opponents that delay or block new apartments.

Actions to Resolve the Challenge

Residents from both jurisdictions also agreed on the top two actions that government should take to resolve the problem:

1. Provide local-government-funded rental assistance to help more people afford their rent.
2. Build affordable housing on government-provided public land in partnership with the private sector, with a streamlined approval process.

In addition to the agreement on the top two solutions, a majority of all respondents also called on local government to: 1) establish a public comment process to prevent individuals from unreasonably blocking new housing; and, 2) reduce property taxes to offset housing preservation costs.

Affordable Housing and Growth Opponents are Outliers

Opponents to growth and mixed income apartment buildings in their neighborhoods are in a distinct minority that goes against community sentiment. Approximately eight out of 10 District residents and two out of three Montgomery County residents said it was appropriate to locate mixed income apartment buildings in their neighborhoods, while only 20% were opposed.

Two-thirds of all residents supported growth in the region, once again rendering opponents outliers.

District of Columbia Residents View Affordable Housing as More Compelling

While a majority of people from both jurisdictions agreed on the various issues, there is a significant disparity regarding how strongly each jurisdiction perceives the housing affordability challenge. When asked an open-ended question, District residents ranked housing as their most important issue, while Montgomery County residents ranked it third, after education and transportation.

Similarly, 82% of District residents described the supply and affordability of housing as a major problem or a crisis that needs immediate attention, as compared with 52% of Montgomery County residents.

About the Poll

The Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington worked with OpinionWorks to conduct a public opinion survey of District of Columbia and Montgomery County, MD residents to determine their attitudes about housing affordability.

A total of 428 interviews were conducted in D.C. and 425 in Montgomery County from October 16-November 2, 2019, among randomly selected registered voters. Live interviewers reached voters on both wireless and landline telephones, and an additional voter sample group were given the option of responding online to ensure the poll best represented all segments of the electorate.

Sampling targets were adhered to throughout the interviewing process to ensure that the sample represented the electorate geographically, by political party, and for key demographic indicators such as gender, age, and race or ethnicity. Following interviewing, statistical weights were applied to ensure the sample most closely mirrored the characteristics of each jurisdiction's electorate.

This poll produces a margin of sampling error no greater than $\pm 4.8\%$ in each of the two jurisdictions at the 95% confidence level, meaning that at least 19 times out of 20 the actual results would differ by no more than that margin if every registered voter had been interviewed.