

The Crisis in America's Housing:

Confronting Myths and Promoting a Balanced Housing Policy



January 2005

Center for Community Change
www.communitychange.org

Center for Economic and Policy Research
www.cepr.net

Children's Defense Fund
www.childrensdefense.org

Community Learning Project
www.communitylearningproject.org

National Low Income Housing Coalition
www.nlihc.org

This publication was funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Fannie Mae Foundation. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this publication are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the foundations, or their officers or directors.

Authors: Dushaw Hockett (Center for Community Change), Patrick McElwee (Center for Economic and Policy Research), Danilo Pelletiere (National Low Income Housing Coalition), Diane Schwartz (Center for Economic and Policy Research). State-level analysis compiled by Mark Treskon (National Low Income Housing Coalition).

Editor: Lisa Raghelli

Design: connolly design

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction page 2

Housing in America:

Myths and Rebuttals page 4

Myth 1 page 5

Myth 2 page 9

Myth 3 page 13

Housing Indicators:

A State-level Analysis page 17

Resource Organizations:

Where to Go for More Information page 19

INTRODUCTION

A BALANCED HOUSING POLICY: WHAT IS IT? WHY DO WE NEED IT?

A balanced, comprehensive housing policy requires pulling a variety of levers simultaneously to address the broad range of housing needs and challenges facing low- and moderate-income families. This means ensuring that both rental housing and homeownership opportunities are 1) available, decent and safe, and 2) affordable to all families regardless of income.

A balanced housing policy means ensuring that both rental housing and homeownership become synonymous with economic security, safe and stable communities, access to quality jobs, schools and services, and wealth building. In other words, they both contribute to achieving the American Dream.

A balanced housing policy means redefining “homeownership” so that all kinds of housing options are considered “homes,” and “ownership” is not just about property deeds and mortgage payments, but about having pride in one’s home, whether rented or owned.

A balanced housing policy involves investing in people just as much as we invest in property. That means developing strategies that address housing needs from the income side, by improving the economic capacity of families so that they are able to climb up the housing ladder, including to homeownership if it is appropriate. If incomes are insufficient, it means providing adequate supplemental supports, such as health insurance and child care, to enable families to become economically self-sufficient.

Emphasizing one housing option — homeownership — at the expense of other options does not work for all people, at every point in their lives, at all times in an economic cycle and in all communities across the country.

The unique nature of local housing markets confirms this point and illustrates the housing crisis now facing the country. When housing prices are hyper-inflated, homeownership is out of reach for millions of middle- and low-income people. When housing markets collapse, homeowners can be crushed if they have to sell before prices have rebounded and they can recoup their investments. When other housing options are scarce, unaffordable, of substandard quality or not convenient to decent jobs, services and schools, a local housing crisis is created or exacerbated. And when local crises occur across the country, they become a national crisis, such as we face today. Evidence of the housing crisis is found in the growing levels of homelessness, the rising share of household incomes that must be dedicated to meet housing needs and the climbing levels of mortgage foreclosures and predatory lending.

Across the country, examples of a balanced housing policy exist. These success stories need to be replicated, supported, translated into federal policy and adequately funded. At a minimum, federal policy should not stand in the way of innovation and success.

THE MYTHS SAY ONE THING, BUT THE REALITY IS QUITE DIFFERENT

Three myths, deeply embedded in America's consciousness, rhetoric and policies, sustain the notion that a narrow focus on homeownership is the answer to the nation's housing needs.

MYTH 1 Subsidized housing is unnecessary; left on its own, the market will provide safe, decent and affordable housing for everyone.

MYTH 2 Today, federal government housing subsidies go disproportionately and "unwisely" to "undeserving" low-income renters in urban areas.

MYTH 3 Homeownership is the best housing option for everyone, all the time, everywhere.

But the reality disproves these myths and is well documented:

FACT: As the federal government has been reducing its direct role in providing low-income housing, incomes are not keeping up with the rising costs of renting, purchasing and/or maintaining decent housing and providing other basic needs, such as health care, child care and even food.

FACT: Federal subsidies for homeownership among middle- and upper-income households via homeownership-related tax deductions greatly exceed those for public and subsidized housing, and the funding gap is widening.

FACT: Now, more than at any time in recent memory, housing is an investment with risk; low-income families need to fully understand that homeownership is a place- and time-specific investment, and that alternative ways exist to accumulate financial assets, whether on the way to homeownership or to achieve other goals in their lives.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This fact book grew out of discussions with organizations and institutions involved with a wide range of social and economic issues. They sought to call attention to the housing crisis in America, explode the myths and stereotypes that promote a skewed housing system and sustain the crisis, and provide a framework and resources for reframing policy debates and outcomes. (See page 19 for more information about these and other organizations.)

By dispelling these myths, we hope that policymakers, journalists, foundations, housing developers, advocates and others will think about the housing debate in a more comprehensive, nuanced and constructive way. We hope that the information provided in this fact book increases understanding of America's housing crisis and the need for a balanced housing policy, and spurs actions toward that goal.

HOUSING IN AMERICA: MYTHS AND REBUTTALS

Myth 1

*Subsidized housing is unnecessary;
left on its own,
the market will provide safe,
decent and affordable housing for everyone.*

Myth 2

*Today, federal government housing
subsidies go disproportionately and
"unwisely" to "undeserving"
low-income renters in urban areas.*

Myth 3

*Homeownership is the best housing
option for everyone,
all the time, everywhere.*



Myth 1

Subsidized housing is unnecessary; left on its own, the market will provide safe, decent and affordable housing for everyone.

REALITY: TODAY, EXISTING HOUSING SUBSIDIES HELP MILLIONS, BUT MANY MILLIONS MORE STILL FACE SIGNIFICANT HOUSING PROBLEMS. Nearly 95 million people in the United States, in cities, suburbs and rural areas — a third of the nation — have housing problems. These problems include: high housing costs relative to income, overcrowding, inadequate living conditions, and homelessness.¹

Table 1: People in Households with Housing Problems

	People (in millions)	Percent with Any Housing Problem	Percent with Unaffordable Housing
Central City	78	43%	33%
Suburbs	154	32%	27%
Rural	40	29%	21%
Total	272	35%	28%

Source: NLIHC tabulations of 2001 American Housing Survey (AHS)

The number of people with housing problems remains considerably higher than the number without health care or who face food insecurity. Indeed, it is paying for housing that often forces families to skimp on food and other necessities including medical insurance. Up to 3.5 million people, including 1.35 million children, experience homelessness each year.²

Of the nearly 95 million people with housing problems in 2001, nearly 65 million lived in low-income households, earning less than 80 percent of the area’s median income. Of these, 23 million people lived in extremely low-income households earning less than 30 percent of their area’s median income. Nearly one-half of the low-income people in households with housing problems owned their own homes.

REALITY: ONLY AROUND 6 MILLION RENTER HOUSEHOLDS, ROUGHLY 15 MILLION PEOPLE, LIVE IN HOUSING SUBSIDIZED BY FEDERAL, STATE OR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

In other words, about five percent of all Americans live in government-sponsored housing.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has found that without subsidies, these households would be considered to have “worst case needs,” i.e. unsubsidized, very low-income renter households living in severely unaffordable or inadequate housing.³ As it stands, though they fare far better than their unsubsidized counterparts, 55 percent of those receiving subsidies still live in unaffordable, inadequate or crowded housing.⁴ Not only do current subsidies not reach all who need them, they often are not sufficient to completely relieve recipients of their housing problems.

REALITY: RENTAL AFFORDABILITY HAS DECLINED FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

As shown in Figure 1, over the last three decades there has been a significant decline in rental affordability for those in the bottom two income quintiles.⁵

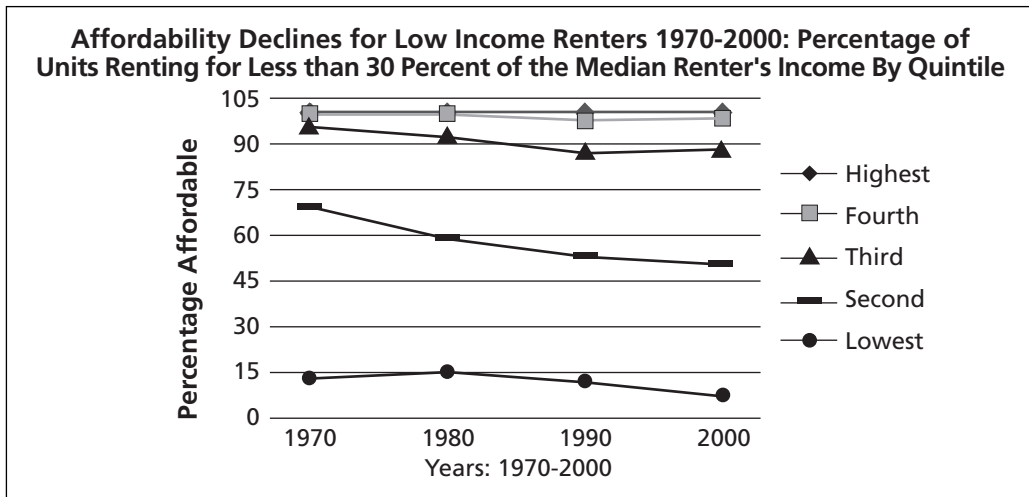


Figure 1. Source: Census Tabulations from Quigley and Raphael, 2004

REALITY: AFFORDABILITY PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN DUE PRIMARILY TO INCREASED RENTAL COSTS.

In the 1970s, declines in rental affordability for all renters were due almost entirely to the selective movement of upper income households to homeownership. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, the distribution of rental units shifted noticeably to higher priced units. In the 1980s, this was exacerbated by real income declines for renters. Slight increases in real incomes in the 1990s were insufficient to offset rent increases as the shift in the rental stock continued.

Low-income renters have been severely affected by these trends. After the early 1980s, income growth has never outpaced rents, as illustrated for the lowest income quintile in Figure 2.

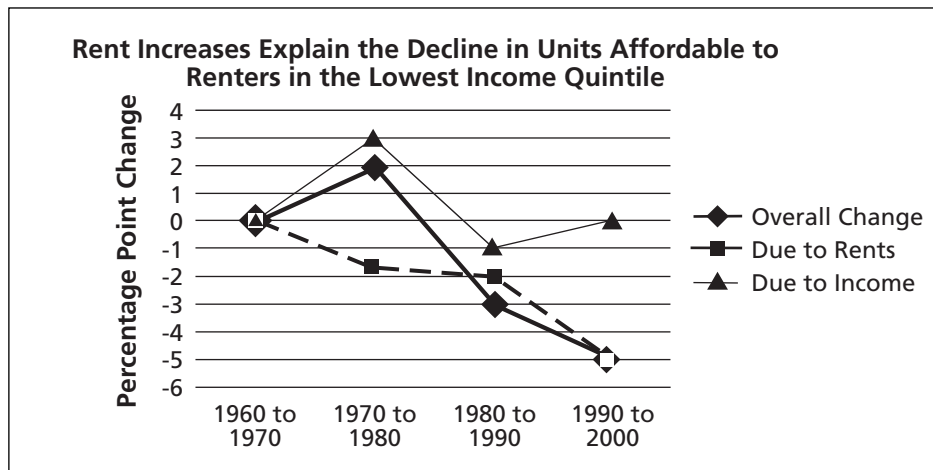


Figure 2. Source: Quigley and Raphael, 2004

During this period, in which government support for the production of low-income rental housing declined precipitously,⁶ there emerged a “substantial undersupply of rental dwellings available for low-income households, even those willing to devote a large fraction of income to rent.”⁷ Since 2000, the incomes of low-income renters have once again declined even as rents continue to rise.

REALITY: LOW-INCOME HOMEOWNERSHIP REQUIRES SUBSIDY. Though homeownership is a viable option for some, a number of recent reports based on emerging data are now finding that the costs and risks of homeownership for low-income people have been understated by policymakers and researchers alike while the benefits may have been overstated.⁸ It is now clear that low-income homeowners are at a disadvantage as they try to make the sorts of economic gains from homeownership that are used to justify the high upfront costs.

Many of the assumptions about low-income homeownership were projected by the experiences of the “average” homeowner in the last few decades. But the evidence emerging from new datasets that track households over time shows that the historical experience of the typically higher-income, average homeowner does not adequately describe the typical experience of low-income homeowners.⁹

For example, one recent report finds low-income households “achieve homeownership more slowly, they are less likely to maintain this status, and they are less able to move up to better homes over time,” and therefore they are less likely to build equity or leverage a first home into increased wealth.¹⁰ More pointedly, a study just completed for HUD concludes “that it is not true that ‘once an owner, always an owner.’”¹¹ The authors find that current policy often promotes “temporary spells of homeownership” for low-income households and that there is an urgent need to focus more resources on “sustaining the first spell of homeownership.” Homeownership may be a goal of the majority of Americans, but it does not always provide decent affordable housing in an economically efficient way.

REALITY: CURRENT REGULATORY BARRIERS ARE ONLY PART OF THE PROBLEM. There is little doubt that lowering barriers to affordable housing in the form of local land use and building regulations could have a significant impact on the cost of housing and the ability of low-income housing developers to provide housing. In particular, land use restrictions that limit housing density even in urbanized areas and so-called “growth boundaries” have both been subject to criticism.

There is equal evidence, however, that deregulation alone cannot solve the affordable housing crisis. Not only are some regulations that add to the cost of housing necessary to maintain the health, safety and identity of local communities, including affordable housing units, but many regulations and fees that limit affordability are considered economically efficient. Politically, experience has shown that current homeowners often see deregulation that maximizes housing affordability as reducing current home values, making such deregulation a

very difficult political proposition. Where regulations are necessary and desirable, or simply entrenched in the short term, subsidies are clearly called for to allow low-income people access to these communities and the benefits they provide.¹²

In sum, we find that the current housing market does not provide decent affordable housing for everyone:

- nearly a third of all Americans experience housing problems;
- rental costs have far outpaced incomes over the last four decades, particularly for low- and moderate-income families;
- homeownership is not necessarily an affordable alternative to rental housing, and may require substantial subsidies to be a viable, long-term option for low-income households; and
- creating a more favorable regulatory climate for housing developers will not necessarily result in more affordable housing production, absent other interventions.

If we are not to abandon our national goal of a “decent home and suitable living environment for all American families,”¹³ policies that better promote affordable private and publicly subsidized housing for rental and ownership are clearly necessary.

1 See Crowley, Pelletiere, Treskon, and Schaffer. 2004. *America’s Neighbors: The Affordable Housing Crisis and the People it Affects*. Washington, DC: National Low Income Housing Coalition. Inadequate housing units have significant maintenance problems or are lacking kitchens or bathrooms according to HUD and the U.S. Census.

2 Urban Institute, 2000.

3 HUD. 2003. *Trends in Worst Case Housing 1978-1999: A Report to Congress on Worst Case Housing Needs — Plus Update on Worst Case Housing Needs in 2001*. Washington, DC: Author.

4 These calculations represent initial NLIHC tabulations of the 2003 American Housing Survey.

5 Tabulations in Quigley and Raphael. 2004. “Is Housing Affordable? Why Isn’t It More Affordable?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* vol. 18 no. 1: 191-214.

6 Nationwide, there has been a net loss of all subsidized units since the 1980s. Dolbeare, C., I. Basloe Saraf and S. Crowley. 2004. *Changing Priorities: the Federal Budget and Housing Assistance 1976-2005*. Washington, DC: National Low Income Housing Coalition.

7 Quigley and Raphael, 2004.

8 For more discussion of recent research into low-income homeownership see: Quigley and Raphael, 2004; Katz-Reid, Carolina. 2004. *Achieving the American Dream? A Longitudinal Analysis of the Homeownership Experiences of Low-Income Households*. Univ. of Washington CSDE Working Paper No. 04-04; and Boehm, T.P. and A.M. Schlottman. 2004. “The Dynamics of Race, Income, and Homeownership.” *Journal of Urban Economics* 55: 113-130.

9 The Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.

10 Boehm and Schlottman, 2004.

11 Haurin, D.R. and S.S. Rosenthal. 2004. *The Sustainability of Homeownership: Factors Affecting the Duration of Homeownership and Rental Spells*. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates. Presented at Fannie Mae Foundation’s Research Seminar Series, November 12, 2004.

12 For a more thorough review of these issues and the recent literature see Schill, Michael H. “Regulations and Housing Development: What We Know and What We Need to Know.” Prepared for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Conference on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing, April 2004.

13 The 1937 Housing Act.

Myth 2

Today, federal government housing subsidies go disproportionately and “unwisely” to “undeserving” low-income renters in urban areas.

REALITY: TODAY, GOVERNMENT HOUSING SUBSIDIES GO DISPROPORTIONATELY TO THE HIGHEST-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS. In 2003, the federal government spent \$57.2 billion in housing-related tax expenditures and \$100 million in direct housing assistance on households in the very top income category, those with an average annual income of \$148,138. This is nearly two times what the federal government spent that year on housing subsidies for the lowest-income households, those with incomes below \$18,500 (Figure 1).

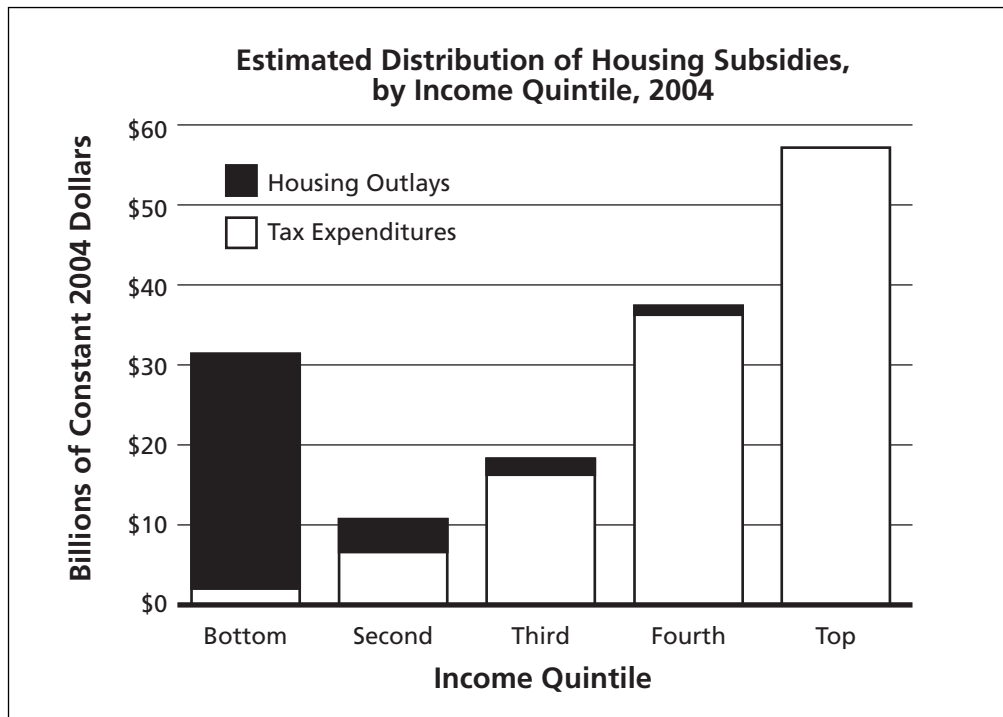


Figure 1. Source: Dolbeare, Basloe Saraf and Crowley. 2004. *Changing Priorities: the Federal Budget and Housing Assistance 1976-2005.* Washington, DC: National Low Income Housing Coalition

REALITY: TODAY, THE COST TO THE FEDERAL TREASURY OF FEDERAL LOW-INCOME HOUSING SUBSIDIES IS DWARFED BY THE COST OF HOMEOWNERSHIP INCENTIVES FOR MIDDLE- AND UPPER-INCOME HOMEOWNERS. Housing related tax expenditures amounted to \$121 billion in 2003; \$113 billion of these expenditures went to all the home-owning households with sufficient income to itemize their tax returns. The rest went to investors. It should be noted that many low-income homeowners do not earn enough income to itemize their tax returns; therefore they do not benefit from the mortgage interest deduction and

other homeowner tax benefits. In 2003, only \$36 billion went to low-income housing assistance. Of this, only \$23 billion went to funding public and assisted housing and vouchers, which are the primary ways in which the federal government directly subsidizes low-income renters.

REALITY: LOW-INCOME FAMILIES HAVE THE GREATEST DIFFICULTY FINDING HOUSING IN THE UNITED STATES. Report after report, using measure after measure,¹ has found that housing affordability problems are concentrated among the lowest-income households and that their problems are getting worse, not better, relative to the rest of the American population. According to HUD, in recent years the “shortages of affordable housing remained most severe for units affordable and available to renters with extremely low incomes...with 42 affordable and available units for every 100 ELI [extremely low-income] renters.” At the same time, the number of low-income owner households, those earning 80 percent of their area’s median income or less, who paid more than half of their reported income for housing, rose by over one million from 1999 to 2001 alone.²

REALITY: CURRENT LOW-INCOME RENTAL PROGRAMS HELP MILLIONS OF AMERICANS AFFORD HOUSING. As stated in Myth 1, without subsidies, most of the 6.6 million renter households receiving subsidies would be labeled “worst case needs,” by HUD, i.e. unsubsidized, very low-income renter households living in severely unaffordable or inadequate housing.³

REALITY: EVERY YEAR, MILLIONS OF LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WHO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE DO NOT RECEIVE IT BECAUSE THIS TYPE OF HOUSING SUBSIDY IS UNDER-FUNDED RELATIVE TO THE NEED. In 2001, HUD estimated that the number of people living in households with worst case needs was 11 million. More than half of these people were in families with children.⁴

REALITY: MOST HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FEDERAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE ARE ELDERLY, DISABLED OR WORKING. According to HUD, 31 percent of public housing residents have income from wages and 51 percent are elderly or disabled. Among voucher holders, 36 percent earn wages while 41 percent are elderly or disabled. Around 20 percent of the participants in either program receive welfare.⁵

REALITY: MOST HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FEDERAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAY MONTHLY RENT. The average tenant contribution to rent for public housing was \$241, and \$251 in the voucher program. Less than 6 percent of the participants in these programs pay less than \$25 a month.

REALITY: WHILE TAX-RELATED EXPENDITURES FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP ARE AN ENTITLEMENT — AVAILABLE TO ANYONE AND EVERYONE WHO MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS, REGARDLESS OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES — FEDERAL LOW-INCOME HOUSING ASSISTANCE IS NOT. In 2003, 54 percent of the households in the upper-income bracket reported

deductible housing-related expenses and received housing-related tax expenditures. That same year only 13 percent of the households in the bottom income quintile received federal housing assistance of any kind.⁶

REALITY: LOW-INCOME RENTERS IN RURAL AREAS ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO BE RECEIVING ASSISTANCE. According to HUD's most recent "Worst Case Needs" report to Congress,⁷ 32 percent of very low-income renters in rural areas reported receiving rental assistance, compared to 30 percent in cities and 25 percent in the suburbs. Throughout the 1990s, the numbers of renters receiving assistance grew fastest in the suburbs within western and southern states.

REALITY: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO LOW-INCOME HOUSING HAS BEEN LAGGING FOR MANY YEARS. Housing assistance outlays have not only remained roughly a third of housing-related tax expenditures, but federal support fell 70 percent from \$60 billion in 1980 to \$18 billion in 1983 and has never recovered, falling 49 percent over the entire period from 1980 to 2003. The remaining funding has served primarily to maintain existing public and assisted housing units and vouchers. Even so, there has been a net loss in subsidized units over this period due to public housing demolition and expiring subsidy contracts.⁸

To recap, we find that federal housing expenditures are directed overwhelmingly toward middle- and upper-income homeowners:

- low-income homeowners are much less likely to benefit from federal tax benefits for homeowners;
- federal low-income housing subsidies primarily benefit the elderly, disabled and working families, and increasingly those located in rural and suburban areas; and
- these subsidies have declined dramatically in the last 25 years, failing to keep pace with escalating need, while tax expenditures for homeowners continue to serve all who are eligible.

Decent, affordable rental housing is part of the American Dream for many of us. The image of moving to a new place, getting an apartment of your own, working and saving money to purchase a home, fund an education, create a business, or launch an adventure is not only how most people envision making the transition to adulthood, and establishing themselves in America, it is part of the reality for most adults. However, a declining supply of affordable rental housing in economic hot spots, rising rents and stagnating wages are growing obstacles to this dream. A balanced housing policy is needed to help address these challenges.

1 See among others, Crowley, Pelletiere, Treskon, and Schaffer. 2004. *America's Neighbors: The Affordable Housing Crisis and the People it Affects*. Washington, DC: National Low Income Housing Coalition; Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. *The State of the Nation's Housing, 2004*, p. 36. Available at: <http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/markets/son2004.pdf>; Quigley and Raphael. 2004. "Is Housing Affordable? Why Isn't It More Affordable?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* vol. 18 no. 1: 191-214; Nelson, K., M. Treskon and D. Pelletiere. 2004. *Losing Ground in the Best of Times: Low Income Renters in the 1990s*. Washington, DC: National Low Income Housing Coalition; HUD. 2003. *Trends in Worst Case Needs for Housing 1978-1999: A Report to Congress on Worst Case Housing Needs Plus Update on Worst Case Needs in 2001*. Washington, DC: Author.

2 HUD, 2003.

3 HUD, 2003. Current count of those receiving assistance from NLIHC tabulation of 2003 AHS.

4 HUD, 2003.

5 HUD "Resident Characteristics Report" as of November 30, 2004, accessed December 15, 2004, at pic.hud.gov/pic/RCRPublic/rcrmain.asp.

6 Dolbeare, Basloe Saraf, and S. Crowley, 2004.

7 HUD, 2003.

8 Dolbeare, Basloe Saraf, and S. Crowley, 2004.

Myth 3 *Homeownership is the best option for everyone, all the time, everywhere.*

REALITY: WHILE HOMEOWNERSHIP HAS BENEFITED TENS OF MILLIONS OF FAMILIES, THE RELATIVE WISDOM OF BUYING A HOME FOR EACH POTENTIAL PURCHASER DEPENDS ON MANY FACTORS, INCLUDING TIMING, LOCATION, CURRENT INCOME AND JOB SECURITY. Depending on these factors, rentals, public housing or other options may make better economic sense, particularly for low-income families who have more at stake in a home purchase.

For example, most financial advisors and housing counselors recommend that a family remain in its first home for at least five years to recapture its investment. Since the median period of homeownership for a low-income family is four years,¹ transactions costs such as mortgage fees and commissions often overshadow any equity the family has managed to acquire through principal payments. Figure 1 shows that low-income homeowners who stay in their home for the median period of four years typically will pay at least 25 percent more in overall housing costs than they would have paid in rent.²

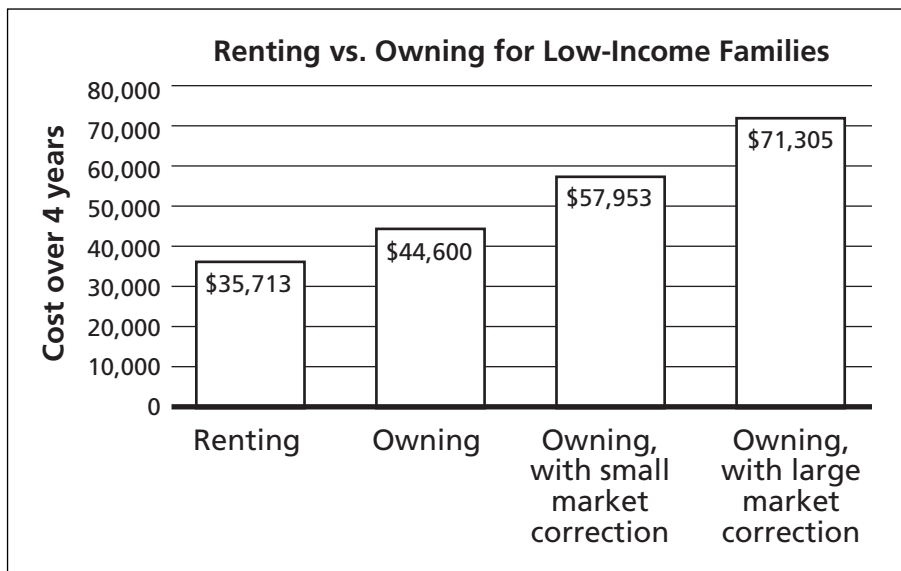


Figure 1. Source: Baker, 2005

REALITY: HOMEOWNERSHIP IS AN INVESTMENT INVOLVING RISK. Currently, housing investments are particularly risky due to the probability that a speculative bubble has emerged in many parts of the country. From 1975 to 1995, home prices increased an average of just 0.5 percentage points above the rate of inflation — not a stellar rate of return. Since 1995, that increase has jumped to over 40 percentage points above inflation, indicating the existence of a bubble and the prospect for serious losses in the future.

Columns 3 and 4 of the graph show the costs to low-income homeowners for four years in case there is a market correction during their period of ownership of 10 or 20 percent, respectively.

REALITY: MANY HOMEOWNERS ARE OVERBURDENED BY THEIR MONTHLY PAYMENT, PUTTING THEMSELVES AT RISK OF FORECLOSURE. About 57 percent of low-income homeowners — or 30.2 million people — are overburdened by monthly housing bills totaling more than one-third of their income.³ Cost burden rates are similar for rural and metropolitan homeowners.

Foreclosure carries substantial negative consequences, including loss of the home, loss of any built-up equity and damage to a family’s credit, making it difficult to even rent an apartment for several years. It is a risk that must be weighed by all prospective homeowners, underscoring the reality that homeownership is not a one-size-fits-all solution. A recent study on the economic costs of foreclosure finds that, on average, a foreclosure costs a family \$7,200, while all involved stakeholders lose \$73,300 for subsidized loans and \$26,600 for conventional loans.⁴ Thus, indications that more low-income homeowners are obtaining subprime and predatory loans are cause for real concern. Subprime loans are about 10 times more likely than conventional loans to go into foreclosure.⁵

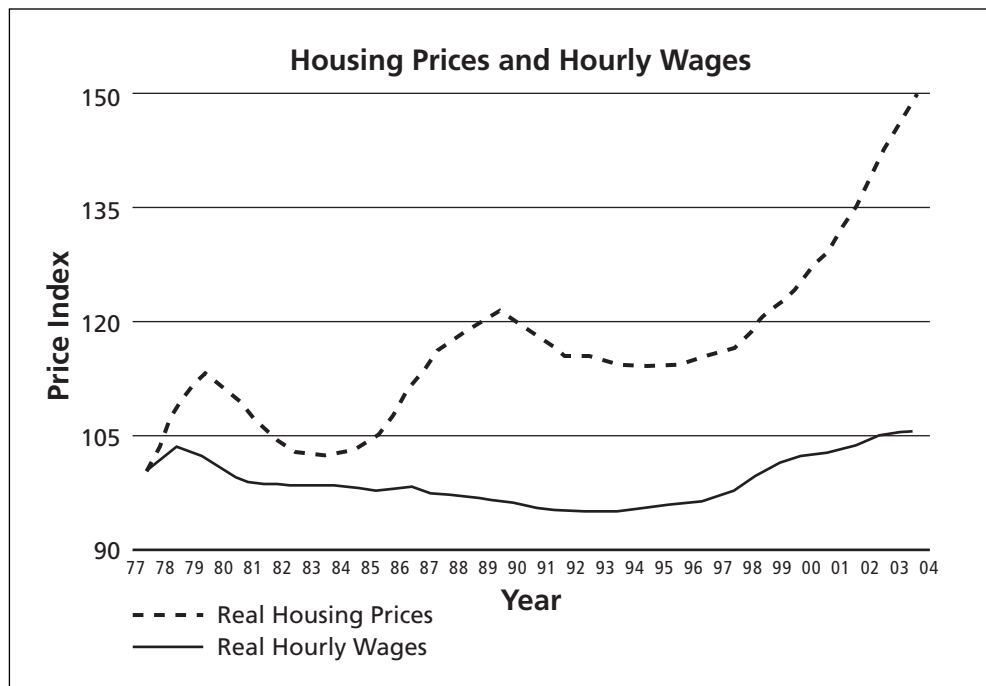


Figure 2. Source: Rosnick, David. Center for Economic and Policy Research's Analysis of the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight's House Price Index and the Bureau of Labor Statistic's Current Employment Statistics, various years.

REALITY: EXCESSIVE HOMEOWNERSHIP COST BURDENS ARE NOT LIMITED TO THE POOR. As Figure 2 shows, working families face higher housing costs each year while incomes have stagnated for the vast majority of such families. Families making more than a full-time minimum wage, but no more than 120 percent of the median income for their area, have seen homeownership costs increase by 14 percent since 1978. At the same time, their average income decreased in real terms by 2.2 percent, making it harder to sustain homeownership. Furthermore, in 2001, it is estimated that 1 in 8 homeowners with children in this income range either paid more than half their income for housing or lived in dilapidated conditions. For single parents, the rate is higher: 1 in 6 face a critical housing need.⁶

REALITY: UNJUST RACIAL AND GENDER BARRIERS CONTINUE TO DENY MANY FAMILIES ACCESS TO HOMEOWNERSHIP. The presence of discrimination only reinforces the need for minorities to fully understand their options and obligations in becoming a new homeowner.

Notwithstanding social factors such as lower incomes, family status and education levels, minorities are subject to significant racial discrimination. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies, nearly 26 percent of the homeownership gap between whites and minorities is attributable to such social factors.⁷ Meanwhile, government measures of discrimination facing homebuyers and renters reveal that minority groups face systemic barriers that are not explained by income gaps. Figure 3 shows in what percent of matched-pair tests whites were favored over minorities at various times during the home purchase process.

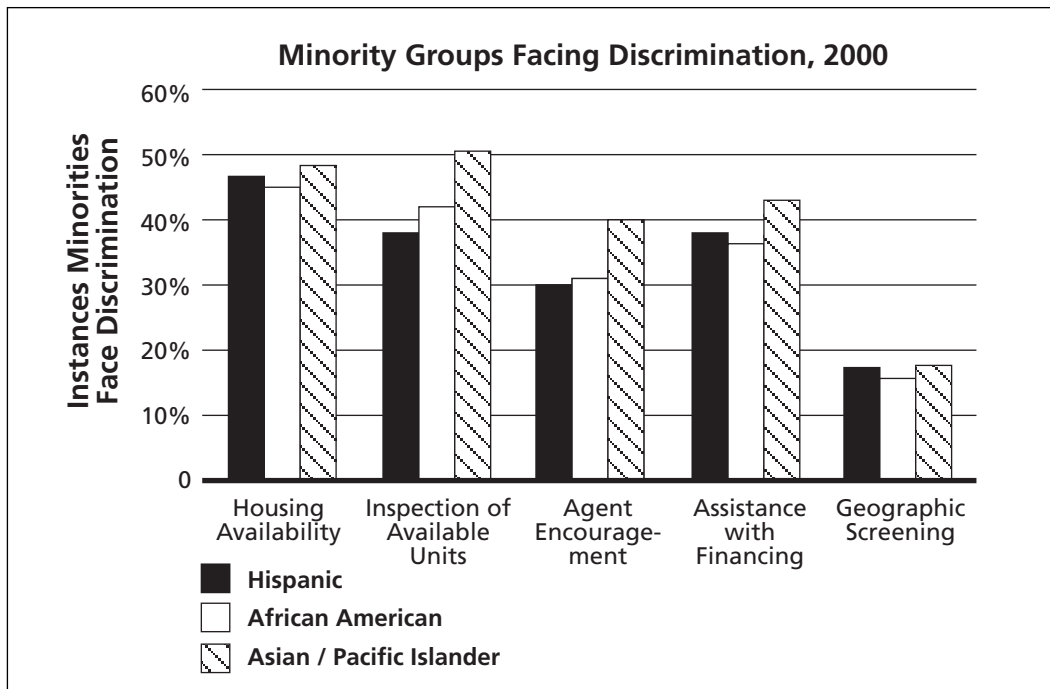


Figure 3. Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Discrimination in Metropolitan Housing Markets: Phase 1 and 2.* Washington, DC: GPO, 2002.

Minority status also continues to limit the kinds of credit to which households have access. Minority households consistently must take out riskier and more burdensome subprime mortgages at a higher rate than white households earning similar income. This is true for both low-income and high-income households.⁸

Unmarried female-headed households face much more difficult odds than men. The gender gap in income in 2003 meant that a female worker earned about \$0.76 for every dollar earned by a male counterpart, slightly worse than the year before when she earned about \$0.77 on the dollar. When it comes to housing, unmarried female homeowners were about twice as likely to have severe cost burdens as unmarried men who owned their own home.⁹

In summary, homeownership is not always the best option for all households:

- the financial risks are substantial and financial gains uncertain, especially during periods of housing speculation;
- foreclosure is a significant threat whose costs can be long term;
- stagnating wages for all but the highest-income workers make homeownership a difficult prospect; and
- racial and gender barriers to homeownership persist.

America needs a balanced housing policy, one that promotes access to homeownership for those who stand to benefit, but that recognizes that homeownership is not a magic bullet for all families in all situations. Families should be educated about homeownership as a place- and time-specific investment and about alternative ways to accumulate financial assets.

1 Estimate from Katz-Reid. 2004. "Achieving the American Dream? A Longitudinal Analysis of the Homeownership Experiences of Low-Income Households," Department of Geography, University of Washington. Katz-Reid defines a "low-income family" as one earning less than 80 percent of the median income for their county between 1982 and 1989.

2 Baker, Dean. 2005. *Who's Dreaming? Homeownership Among Low Income Families*. Washington, DC,: Center for Economic and Policy Research. Available at <http://www.cepr.net>.

3 Crowley et al. p. 14.

4 National Multi Housing Council and National Apartment Association. 2004. *Homeownership at Any Cost? Not So Fast*. Washington, DC: Author.

5 *The State of the Nation's Housing, 2004*. Cambridge, MA: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. pp. 17-19.

6 Center for Housing Policy. 2004. "Working Families with Children: A Closer Look at Homeownership Trends." *Center Pieces*. Washington, DC: Author. pp. 5-6. .

7 Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. *The State of the Nation's Housing, 2003*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

8 Center for Housing Policy, p. 19.

9 Center for Housing Policy, p. 14.

Housing Indicators: A State-level Analysis

- Across states between 23 percent of households in Minnesota and 46 percent of households in New York rented their homes in 2003.
- In 2003, median renter income was significantly below median owner income in all states.
- In 2003, median gross rent is below the median owner costs with a mortgage in all states.

This table displays several key indicators that together paint an important picture of the state of rental and homeownership housing across the nation. To find additional data for additional jurisdictions please refer to the "Resource Organizations" on page 19.

STATE NAME	ACS (1) Number of Households, 2003	ACS Percent of Households that Rent	ACS Percent of Households that Own	ACS Median Renter Income, 2003	ACS Median Owner Income, 2003	ACS Median Monthly Gross Rent, 2003	ACS Median Monthly Owner Household Costs With Mortgage	ACS % of Owner Households with Mortgage	ACS % of Owner Households with Mortgage with Secondary Mortgage or Home Equity Loan
Alabama	1,743,476	28.3%	71.7%	\$19,506	\$42,323	\$498	\$871	64.6%	18.5%
Alaska	229,408	37.6%	62.4%	\$35,009	\$67,413	\$780	\$1,374	72.0%	13.5%
Arizona	2,048,918	31.7%	68.3%	\$25,955	\$50,425	\$662	\$1,146	76.5%	21.6%
Arkansas	1,075,918	32.2%	67.8%	\$22,173	\$41,819	\$513	\$806	61.1%	12.6%
California	11,856,538	41.9%	58.1%	\$33,453	\$65,774	\$890	\$1,660	78.5%	23.2%
Colorado	1,821,318	29.6%	70.4%	\$29,703	\$60,760	\$754	\$1,358	80.3%	23.4%
Connecticut	1,323,339	32.3%	67.7%	\$30,520	\$72,611	\$766	\$1,598	71.3%	25.4%
Delaware	303,790	27.2%	72.8%	\$31,015	\$58,952	\$718	\$1,184	73.1%	27.2%
District of Columbia	246,669	58.0%	42.0%	\$28,941	\$70,624	\$721	\$1,482	73.3%	25.3%
Florida	6,637,845	29.8%	70.2%	\$26,220	\$47,047	\$724	\$1,151	70.7%	20.4%
Georgia	3,152,672	31.7%	68.3%	\$26,987	\$52,874	\$687	\$1,155	74.8%	20.9%
Hawaii	419,441	43.4%	56.6%	\$35,558	\$64,536	\$863	\$1,666	68.3%	23.7%
Idaho	503,145	25.6%	74.4%	\$23,429	\$46,957	\$565	\$917	71.9%	22.1%
Illinois	4,624,605	31.4%	68.6%	\$28,816	\$59,290	\$699	\$1,340	69.4%	21.0%
Indiana	2,350,535	28.2%	71.8%	\$25,074	\$50,725	\$581	\$952	71.6%	24.0%
Iowa	1,158,018	26.4%	73.6%	\$24,095	\$48,681	\$531	\$913	62.3%	20.9%
Kansas	1,058,600	31.4%	68.6%	\$24,639	\$51,184	\$535	\$993	65.4%	17.9%
Kentucky	1,607,214	29.8%	70.2%	\$21,774	\$41,710	\$491	\$906	65.9%	24.8%
Louisiana	1,672,717	32.9%	67.1%	\$19,098	\$42,795	\$525	\$911	59.1%	15.1%
Maine	535,091	29.4%	70.6%	\$25,777	\$46,652	\$562	\$1,025	66.9%	23.2%
Maryland	2,048,134	30.6%	69.4%	\$33,360	\$71,382	\$817	\$1,395	76.6%	26.0%
Massachusetts	2,435,941	35.5%	64.5%	\$31,224	\$69,219	\$820	\$1,57	70.5%	22.5%
Michigan	3,884,081	25.5%	74.5%	\$25,813	\$52,896	\$608	\$1,122	70.1%	24.6%
Minnesota	2,011,984	23.4%	76.6%	\$26,443	\$59,053	\$657	\$1,212	73.5%	25.1%
Mississippi	1,055,591	29.9%	70.1%	\$19,990	\$39,147	\$525	\$849	63.0%	13.9%
Missouri	2,284,663	29.6%	70.4%	\$25,241	\$48,720	\$556	\$945	69.6%	16.9%
Montana	365,680	31.1%	68.9%	\$22,664	\$42,574	\$506	\$951	63.7%	18.7%
Nebraska	675,472	32.2%	67.8%	\$26,374	\$49,495	\$540	\$1,002	64.4%	20.4%
Nevada	833,679	38.1%	61.9%	\$31,103	\$55,556	\$771	\$1,279	78.9%	22.2%
New Hampshire	492,948	27.1%	72.9%	\$29,580	\$63,813	\$780	\$1,420	73.3%	23.3%
New Jersey	3,122,552	33.3%	66.7%	\$35,989	\$75,282	\$856	\$1,723	71.6%	22.9%
New Mexico	698,088	30.5%	69.5%	\$21,955	\$42,820	\$523	\$963	63.8%	15.8%
New York	7,118,706	45.8%	54.2%	\$30,451	\$62,580	\$770	\$1,474	66.7%	20.6%
North Carolina	3,270,705	31.7%	68.3%	\$24,333	\$46,627	\$601	\$1,079	68.5%	30.0%
North Dakota	254,464	32.8%	67.2%	\$22,726	\$46,407	\$456	\$904	57.0%	19.3%
Ohio	4,480,461	29.8%	70.2%	\$23,986	\$50,977	\$575	\$1,068	69.0%	27.1%
Oklahoma	1,341,376	32.0%	68.0%	\$22,400	\$43,155	\$519	\$861	64.0%	14.6%
Oregon	1,409,401	36.8%	63.2%	\$24,981	\$52,953	\$657	\$1,216	74.4%	24.7%
Pennsylvania	4,801,049	28.2%	71.8%	\$25,802	\$49,750	\$602	\$1,094	62.1%	23.8%
Rhode Island	411,579	37.0%	63.0%	\$27,146	\$62,839	\$686	\$1,381	71.8%	22.8%
South Carolina	1,567,798	30.2%	69.8%	\$22,676	\$47,155	\$586	\$1,037	68.4%	24.5%
South Dakota	299,280	30.8%	69.2%	\$23,591	\$45,765	\$490	\$918	62.0%	20.3%
Tennessee	2,295,640	30.7%	69.3%	\$23,159	\$47,009	\$548	\$963	66.9%	20.6%
Texas	7,634,767	35.6%	64.4%	\$26,520	\$51,774	\$639	\$1,166	64.0%	10.2%
Utah	752,030	26.7%	73.3%	\$26,952	\$55,684	\$632	\$1,173	76.8%	27.2%
Vermont	242,047	28.8%	71.2%	\$26,435	\$52,409	\$624	\$1,142	67.2%	23.7%
Virginia	2,790,262	30.9%	69.1%	\$31,968	\$61,141	\$751	\$1,278	75.1%	24.8%
Washington	2,382,320	35.7%	64.3%	\$28,987	\$59,285	\$734	\$1,380	75.5%	24.5%
West Virginia	731,690	26.1%	73.9%	\$16,815	\$37,149	\$432	\$783	54.6%	16.7%
Wisconsin	2,159,083	30.9%	69.1%	\$26,517	\$53,823	\$595	\$1,138	69.4%	26.7%
Wyoming	198,778	27.6%	72.4%	\$27,533	\$50,144	\$494	\$920	66.2%	19.2%

(1) ACS = U.S. Census, American Community Survey Supplementary Survey, 2003.

(2) CHAS = HUD, Special Tabulations of the 2000 Census.

(3) SOCDS = HUD, State of the Cities Data System OCDS Building Permits Database.

(4) The study estimates affordability based on the 30 percent of income standard set by federal housing policy and used in many subsidy programs. This standard is also a generally accepted measure of affordability in the housing industry at large.

Housing Indicators: A State-level Analysis, *continued*

- In 2000, the percentage of very low-income homeowner households (earning 50 percent of their area's median income or less) living in unaffordable housing far exceeded the percentage among very low-income renters. This simple fact highlights the degree to which the current policy emphasis on homeownership for low-income families must be justified by their ability to build significant equity and receive other benefits from homeownership not available from renting. This also highlights the risk for low-income families if these benefits do not materialize whether due to conditions in their local real estate market, their own economic condition and opportunities, the specific qualities of the home they purchased, or sub-prime or predatory lending.
- Despite the need for affordable housing and interest in reducing barriers to development across the states, single family building permits still far exceed multifamily permits and the multifamily sector remains considerably more volatile.

This table displays several key indicators that together paint an important picture of the state of rental and homeownership housing across the nation. To find additional data for additional jurisdictions please refer to the "Resource Organizations" on page 19.

STATE NAME	CHAS (2)	CHAS	SOCDS (3)	SOCDS	SOCDS	SOCDS
	% of Renter Households Earning 50% or Less of Area Median Income Living in Unaffordable Housing (4)	% of Owner Households (with Mortgage) Earning 50% or Less of Area Median Income Living in Unaffordable Housing	2003 Units of Single Family Permits	2003 Units of Multifamily Permits	2002-2003 % Change in Single Family Permits	2002-2003 % Change in Multifamily Permits
Alabama	58%	86%	19,938	4,605	45.6%	23.3%
Alaska	68%	85%	1,740	1,791	8.3%	231.7%
Arizona	72%	84%	65,845	9,151	34.8%	-27.6%
Arkansas	62%	88%	10,189	4,777	47.0%	109.9%
California	76%	88%	139,870	52,078	33.2%	28.4%
Colorado	72%	91%	33,894	5,732	-12.2%	-64.2%
Connecticut	65%	86%	8,180	2,255	0.8%	85.1%
Delaware	67%	83%	6,748	1,012	72.4%	45.4%
District of Columbia	57%	87%	152	1,275	-18.7%	106.0%
Florida	73%	86%	156,852	56,715	47.4%	16.2%
Georgia	66%	86%	81,270	16,023	18.0%	-30.2%
Hawaii	64%	86%	6,213	1,071	46.0%	64.8%
Idaho	66%	88%	12,709	2,490	30.3%	101.8%
Illinois	66%	84%	45,823	16,834	21.2%	19.2%
Indiana	64%	83%	32,111	7,532	5.6%	0.6%
Iowa	61%	83%	11,975	4,241	40.0%	5.2%
Kansas	63%	85%	11,605	3,555	24.5%	9.4%
Kentucky	59%	83%	17,591	2,982	19.1%	-17.7%
Louisiana	63%	89%	18,776	3,744	43.2%	132.4%
Maine	63%	88%	7,495	629	30.3%	46.6%
Maryland	66%	90%	23,398	6,516	-6.9%	24.7%
Massachusetts	62%	83%	13,037	7,220	-8.2%	90.0%
Michigan	66%	84%	44,726	9,187	4.1%	-3.6%
Minnesota	62%	84%	32,929	9,431	28.6%	27.5%
Mississippi	60%	84%	10,348	1,872	29.2%	-50.4%
Missouri	63%	86%	23,636	6,694	31.6%	4.7%
Montana	63%	83%	2,340	1,427	49.5%	41.7%
Nebraska	61%	87%	8,780	1,687	34.8%	-34.9%
Nevada	76%	90%	33,090	10,276	28.6%	56.6%
New Hampshire	67%	92%	6,583	2,058	8.0%	253.0%
New Jersey	70%	84%	22,163	10,821	-12.3%	16.0%
New Mexico	67%	90%	11,865	1,894	44.9%	178.9%
New York	72%	85%	24,257	25,532	1.4%	26.1%
North Carolina	64%	80%	66,883	12,343	13.2%	-36.1%
North Dakota	57%	87%	2,355	1,377	87.1%	58.1%
Ohio	65%	81%	43,039	10,346	13.2%	-11.8%
Oklahoma	63%	89%	12,887	2,243	43.5%	3.3%
Oregon	75%	87%	17,875	7,140	14.4%	67.7%
Pennsylvania	65%	92%	38,619	8,789	11.9%	33.7%
Rhode Island	60%	83%	1,948	338	-13.7%	-0.6%
South Carolina	62%	84%	31,609	6,638	27.1%	-16.5%
South Dakota	54%	86%	4,148	934	31.7%	-11.4%
Tennessee	63%	83%	33,364	5,351	36.3%	-31.1%
Texas	67%	88%	137,493	43,081	26.4%	32.1%
Utah	70%	89%	18,595	4,110	26.0%	40.5%
Vermont	68%	87%	2,430	413	9.9%	40.5%
Virginia	67%	89%	46,263	9,673	16.4%	11.9%
Washington	73%	84%	33,309	9,812	30.5%	-28.2%
West Virginia	59%	85%	4,763	472	44.6%	0.9%
Wisconsin	65%	84%	28,999	12,140	20.6%	19.8%
Wyoming	59%	85%	2,329	549	63.0%	258.8%

RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

Countless local, state and national organizations and institutions across the country conduct research, public education, advocacy and/or policy development on housing issues. The organizations listed here are just a sampling of the national organizations that address housing and related policy concerns.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

DESCRIPTION: The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities conducts research and analysis to inform public debates over proposed budget and tax policies and to help ensure that the needs of low-income families and individuals are considered in these debates. The Center develops policy options to alleviate poverty, particularly among working families. In addition, the Center examines the short- and long-term impacts that proposed policies would have on the health of the economy and on the soundness of federal and state budgets.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUES: Section 8 vouchers; implications of overall budget policy on housing programs; interaction between housing and welfare.

CONTACT: Barbara Sard, 617-566-1154

WEB SITE: <http://www.cbpp.org>

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "Introduction to the Housing Voucher Program"; "The Myth of Spiraling Voucher Costs"

Center for Community Change

DESCRIPTION: The Center for Community Change is a progressive social justice organization whose central project is to support the emergence of one or more movements for social and economic justice in the United States. The Center strives to transform the national debate and national politics as well as the institutions, economic systems and policies that affect low-income people and working class people, especially people of color.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUES: Housing Trust Funds (local and state-level); working with community groups to understand and use community organizing as a strategy for tackling housing problems.

CONTACT: Dushaw Hockett, 202-342-0519, dhockett@communitychange.org

WEB SITE: <http://www.communitychange.org/issues/housing>

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: *Housing Organizing* (quarterly newsletter); *Housing Trust Fund Project News* (quarterly newsletter); "HOPE Unseen: Voices from the Other Side of HOPE VI"; "Winning at the Local Level: 5 Housing Trust Fund Campaigns Tell Their Stories"

Center for Economic and Policy Research

DESCRIPTION: The Center for Economic and Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan think tank that was established to promote democratic debate on the most important economic and social issues that affect people's lives. CEPR serves as an economic "truth squad" and a media watchdog that can correct the record on economic issues. We confront the myths, policies and institutions that perpetuate economic and social inequality by using professional research findings and analysis both to fill important gaps in the public's, media's and policy-makers' understanding and to frame issues.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUES: Macroeconomic issues and housing; speculative housing bubble.

CONTACT: Patrick McElwee, 202-387-5084, mcelwee@cepr.net

WEB SITE: <http://www.cepr.net>

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "Who's Dreaming? Homeownership Among Low Income Families"; "The Housing Bubble: A Time Bomb in Low-Income Communities?" *Shelterforce*. May/June 2004; "Who to Blame When the Next (Housing) Bubble Bursts"

Children's Defense Fund

DESCRIPTION: Since 1973, the Children's Defense Fund has worked toward, and made great progress in, reducing the numbers of neglected, sick, uneducated and poor children in the United States. CDF's research, public education campaigns, budget and policy advocacy and coalition-building have contributed to millions of children gaining immunizations; health care; child care; Head Start; a right to education; adoptions; a chance to escape poverty and protections in our child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice systems. The Family Income and Jobs Division works to create policies that address family and child poverty such as welfare, minimum wage, unemployment insurance, tax policy, housing and child support.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUES: Section 8; affordable housing production; aggregate funding for HUD programs.

CONTACT: Deborah Cutler-Ortiz, 202-662-3645, dortiz@childrensdefense.org

WEB SITE: <http://www.childrensdefense.org>

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "The State of America's Children 2004"; "Bush Administration Policies Exacerbate Growing Housing Crisis for Families with Children"; "Defining Poverty and Why It Matters for Children"

Community Learning Project

DESCRIPTION: The Community Learning Project explores ways of building a stronger infrastructure for learning in the field of community and social change. It works to expand writing, research, evaluation, teaching, training and learning opportunities that give grassroots community groups and their supporters easier access to helpful and provocative lessons from the extraordinary efforts and experience of their peers.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUES: Public housing; assisted housing; preservation.

CONTACT: Andrew Mott, 202-822-6006, andymott@communitylearningproject.org

WEB SITE: <http://www.communitylearningproject.org>

EXAMPLE OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "Moving to Scale: Organizing, Developing and Advocating for America's Housing"

Consumer Federation of America

DESCRIPTION: The Consumer Federation of America (CFA) is a national nonprofit association organized in 1968 to advance the interests of consumers through public education, research and advocacy. Day in and out, CFA's professional staff gathers facts, analyzes issues, and disseminates information to the public, policymakers, and the rest of the consumer movement. The size and diversity of its membership — some 300 nonprofit organizations from throughout the nation with a combined membership exceeding 50 million people — enables CFA to speak for virtually all consumers. In particular, CFA looks out for those who have the greatest needs, especially the least affluent.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUES: Curbing predatory lending; access to affordable home insurance; strategies for building and preserving home equity.

CONTACT: Allen Fishbein, 202-387-6121, afishbein@consumerfed.org

WEB SITE: www.consumerfed.org

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "Lower-Income and Minority Consumers Most Likely to Prefer and Underestimate Risks of Adjustable Rate Mortgages"; "Most Consumers Do Not Understand Credit Scores According to a New Comprehensive Survey"

Economic Policy Institute

DESCRIPTION: The Economic Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that seeks to broaden the public debate about strategies to achieve a prosperous and fair economy.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUE: Housing and family budgets.

CONTACT: Sylvia Allegretto, 202-533-2560, sallegretto@epinet.org

WEB SITE: <http://www.epinet.org>

EXAMPLE OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: Family Budget Calculator

Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University

DESCRIPTION: The Joint Center for Housing Studies is Harvard University's center for information and research on housing in the United States. The Joint Center analyzes the dynamic relationships between housing markets and economic, demographic and social trends, providing leaders in government, business and the nonprofit sector with the knowledge needed to develop effective policies and strategies.

CONTACT: Elizabeth England, 617-495-7650, eengland@gsd.harvard.edu

WEB SITE: <http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/>

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "State of the Nation's Housing, 2004"; "Opportunity and Progress: A Bipartisan Policy for National Housing Policy"; "Rethinking Rental Housing"; "Middle Market Rentals: Hiding in Plain Sight, 2004"

National Alliance to End Homelessness

DESCRIPTION: The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to mobilize the nonprofit, public and private sectors of society in an alliance to end homelessness. The Alliance represents a united effort to address the root causes of homelessness and challenge society's acceptance of homelessness as an inevitable by-product of American life.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUES: Documenting effective strategies to prevent and end homelessness; Section 8 and other federal low-income housing programs; securing funding and services for supportive housing.

CONTACT: Steve Berg, 202-638-1526, ext.111, sberg@naeh.org

WEB SITE: <http://www.endhomelessness.org>

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness"; "Ten Essentials Toolkit"; "Housing First for Families"; "Research to Support the Development of a Housing First For Families Training Curriculum"; "Sourcebook on Family Homelessness: Problems and Solutions." NAEH also distributes a weekly newsletter and co-sponsors the Leadership to End Homelessness Audioconference Series

National Council of La Raza

DESCRIPTION: The National Council of La Raza — the largest national constituency-based Hispanic organization and the leading voice in Washington, DC, for the Hispanic community — is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization established to reduce poverty and discrimination and improve life opportunities for Hispanic Americans.

CONTACT: Janis Bowdler, 202-776-1748, jbowdler@nclr.org

WEB SITE: <http://www.nclr.org>

National Housing Conference, and its research affiliate, the Center for Housing Policy

DESCRIPTION: The National Housing Conference is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership association dedicated to advancing affordable housing and community development causes. A membership drawn from every industry segment forms the foundation for NHC's broad, nonpartisan advocacy for national policies and legislation that promote suitable housing in a safe, decent environment across the nation. NHC members consist of nationally known experts in affordable housing and housing finance, including state and local officials, community development specialists, builders, bankers, investors, syndicators, insurers, owners, residents, labor leaders, lawyers, accountants, architects and planners, and religious leaders. NHC is the United Voice for Housing.

The **Center for Housing Policy** is the research affiliate of the National Housing Conference. The Center works to broaden understanding of America's affordable housing challenges and examines the impact of policies and programs developed to address these needs. Combining research and practical, real-world expertise, the Center lays the groundwork for the development of concrete and politically viable policies and programs that can be used to promote affordable housing across the country. Nationally recognized housing experts, including academics, advocates and practitioners as well as distinguished specialists from other fields are involved in the Center's work.

CONTACT: Maria Fiore, 202-466-2121, ext. 222, mfiore@nhc.org

WEB SITE: <http://www.nhc.org>

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "Paycheck to Paycheck: Wages and the Cost of Housing in America" (CHP); "Private Sector Partnerships: Investing in Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization" (NHC); "Working Families with Children: A Closer Look at Homeownership Trends" (CHP).

National Housing Institute

DESCRIPTION: The National Housing Institute is a 30-year-old independent nonprofit organization that examines the issues causing the crisis in housing and community in America. NHI examines the key issues affecting affordable housing and community development practitioners and their supporters. These issues include housing, jobs, safety and education, with an emphasis on housing and economic development, as well as poverty and racism, disinvestment and lack of employment, and breakdown of the social fabric. NHI searches for what does and does not work in community building.

PRIMARY HOUSING ISSUES: Affordable and subsidized housing, homelessness prevention.

CONTACT: Harold Simon, 973-509-2888, hs@nhi.org

WEB SITE: www.nhi.org

SAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: Shelterforce (a bi-monthly magazine), "Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Redefining Community Development," "Saving Affordable Housing, What Community Groups Can Do and What Government Should Do"

National Low Income Housing Coalition

DESCRIPTION: The National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated solely to ending America's affordable housing crisis. We believe that this is achievable, that the affordable housing crisis is a problem that Americans are capable of solving. While we are concerned about the housing circumstances of all low-income people, we focus our advocacy on those with the most serious housing problems, the lowest income households.

CONTACT: Danilo Pelletiere, 202-662-1530, danilo@nlihc.org

WEB SITE: <http://www.nlihc.org>

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PUBLICATIONS: "Out of Reach, 2004"; Local Area Low Income Housing Database; "Changing Priorities: The Federal Budget and Housing Assistance 1976-2005." These and other NLIHC publications can be found at www.nlihc.org/pubs/index.htm. Additional research can be found at www.nlihc.org/research.

National Urban League

DESCRIPTION: The Urban League is the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. The National Urban League, headquartered in New York City, spearheads the nonprofit, nonpartisan movement, while Urban League affiliates operate in more than 100 cities in 34 states and the District of Columbia.

CONTACT: Cy Richardson, 212-558-5453; crichardson@nul.org

WEB SITE: www.nul.org

