

6.07 – Sticking the Landing on Homelessness Messaging



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In this session, learn what framing and messages work, what messages don't, and how to make your organization's needs known in a way that will have greater impact on ending homelessness in your community.



Welcome!

- Slides will be available in the app
- We will do Q&A at the end



What we'll discuss

- Public perceptions of homelessness: nationwide and in your community
- Working with your community members and appealing to a public safety approach
- Getting the broader community on board with initiatives on homelessness

What we hope you'll take away

- What stakeholders find most persuasive in our narratives and appeals on homelessness
- Practical insights about common messages and assumptions that fall flat with key stakeholders
- Skills for tying homeless advocacy to broader policy priorities

Ready to dive in?

Let's go!



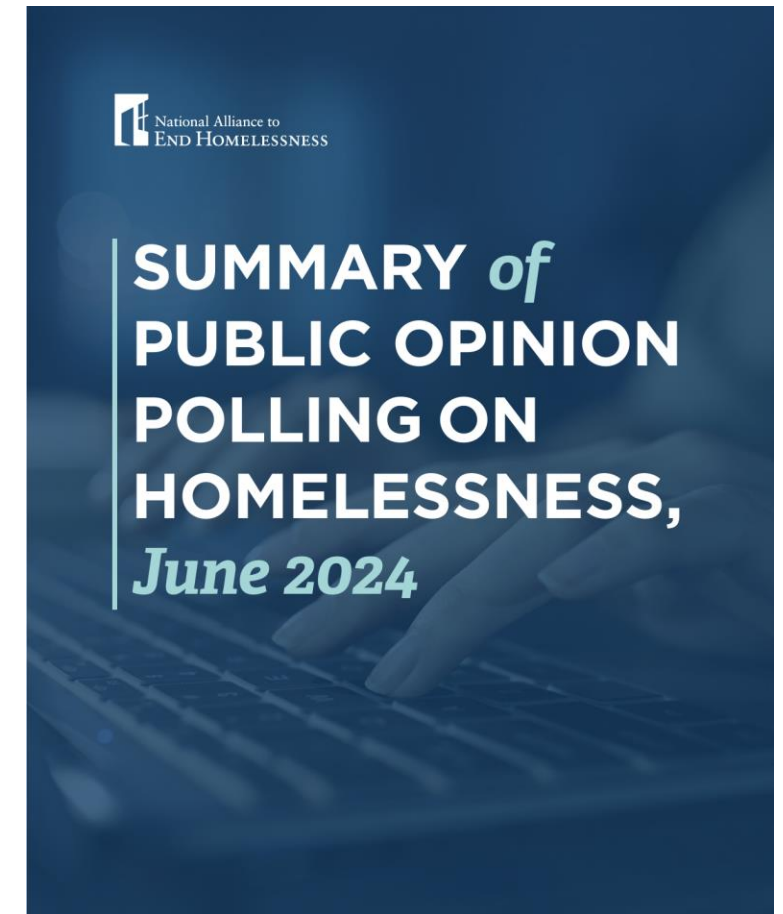
Show of hands

- Who has heard someone in your community say something negative about people experiencing homelessness?
- Who has struggled to explain the value of your program to someone who doesn't want to listen?
- Who has successfully explained the value of your program to someone who doesn't want to listen?
- Who wants to learn how to do this better?

A glimpse into public opinion - #1

People have divergent opinions about the root causes of homelessness.

endhomelessness.org/polling

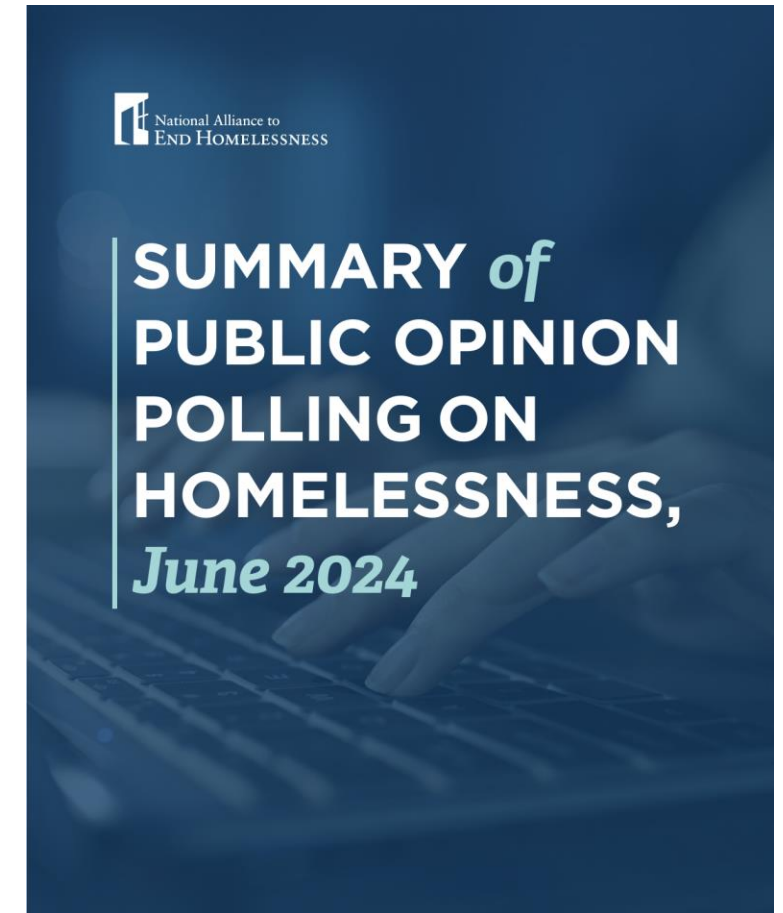


Bringing People Home.

A glimpse into public opinion - #2

Unsheltered homelessness is viewed as a chronic and increasing problem.

endhomelessness.org/polling

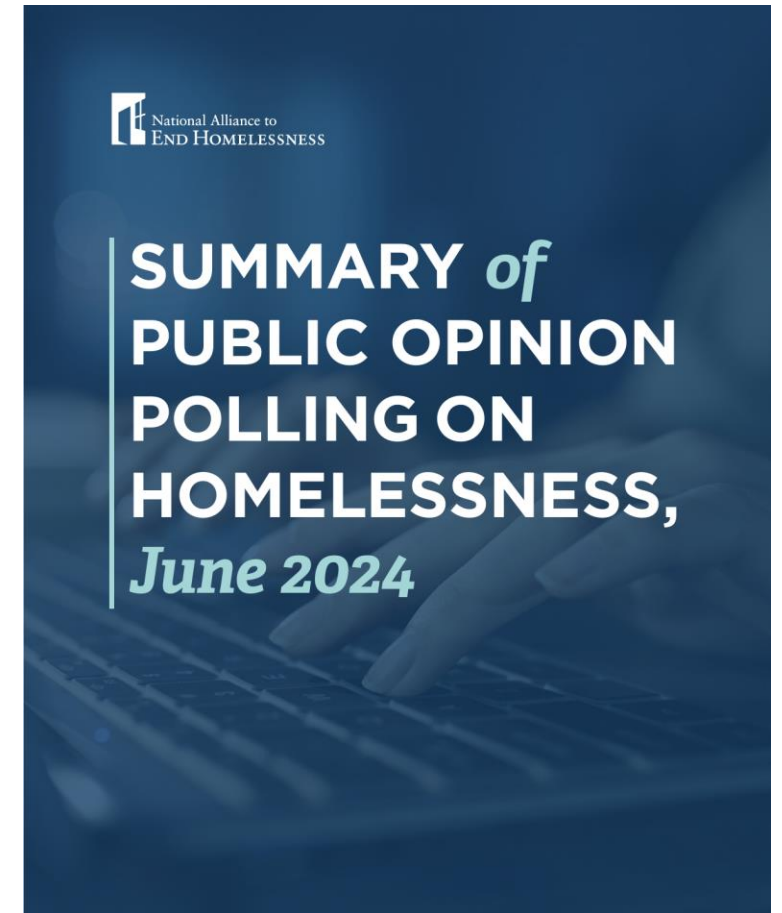


Bringing People Home.

A glimpse into public opinion - #3

Respondents tend to be more concerned about homelessness across the nation and in other parts of the state than in their own communities.

endhomelessness.org/polling

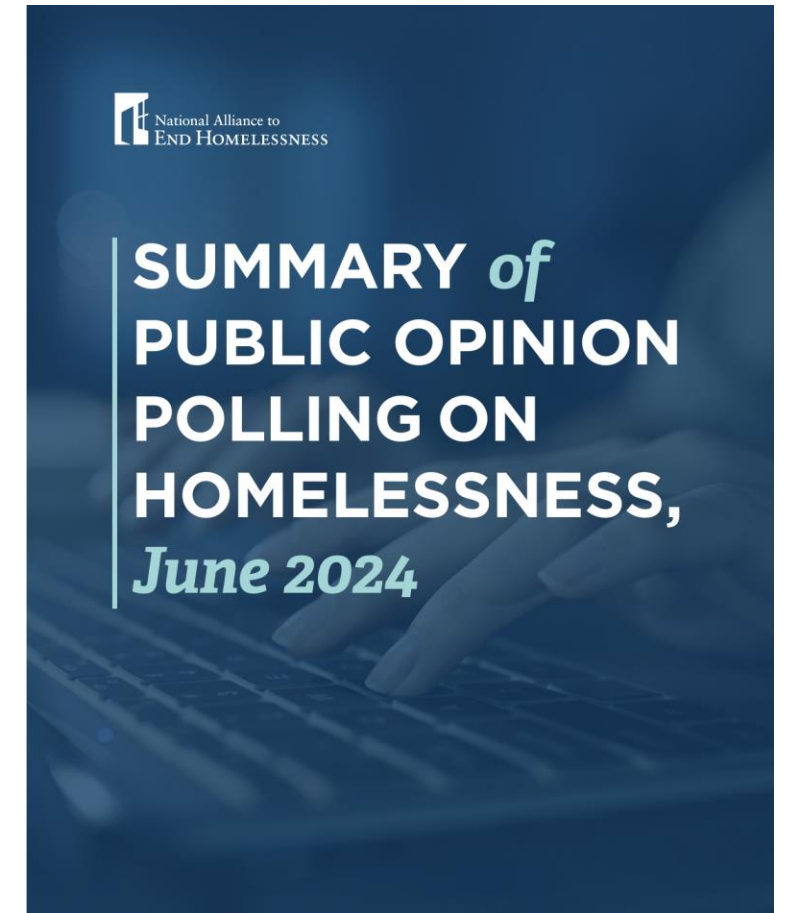


Bringing People Home.

A glimpse into public opinion - #4

Respondents see ALL levels of government as responsible for solving homelessness.

endhomelessness.org/polling



Bringing People Home.

A glimpse into public opinion - #5

Most Americans have limited engagement with the issue of homelessness.

endhomelessness.org/polling



Bringing People Home.

**How do we talk about
homelessness in a way that
we get people outside of
our field on board?**



Sticking the Landing on Homelessness Messaging

Tara Moss, Co-Executive Director




February 28 | 2025 Innovations and Solutions for Ending Unsheltered Homelessness Conference

Our Mission & Approach


Purpose Dignity Action (PDA) plants seeds for a world rooted in community and care instead of punishment and neglect.

We activate responses to public health and safety rooted in **radical compassion** and **systems coordination**.



A large yellow diagonal shape on the left side of the slide.

We build public understanding of and support for these new strategies by ensuring they are **responsive to the full complexity of problems** encountered in each community we work in.

A small dark blue graphic in the bottom right corner, resembling a stylized arrow or a small building.

Our Work



MODEL

The country's first pre-book jail diversion program, now in 80+ communities in US and abroad.



MODEL

Multi-partner, care centered response to encampments born of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Person-centered, trauma-informed alternative to sweeps.



PROGRAM

Intensive case management + emergency lodging for rapid and sustained stability. JustCARE provider.



PROJECT

Hyperlocal “hot spot” based nonviolent de-escalation and referral to specialty care teams.



WA found a better way to remove homeless encampments. Will it stick?

Oct. 9, 2024 at 10:00 am | Updated Oct. 9, 2024 at 10:00 am

Local governments have long removed tents and encampments. They have also long provided subsidized housing to formerly homeless people.

But the two rarely went hand in hand.

Since 2022, Washington has closed 47 encampments in five counties, bringing more than 70% of people from them — 1,200 people — inside.

King County has done better, bringing inside 90%.

Where Washington has resolved encampments

The state has removed 47 encampments since 2022 by bringing the majority of people living in them inside.*

Washington State Department of Transportation, Washington State Department of Commerce (Fiona Martin / The Seattle Times)

10/23/24, 9:33 AM

The New York Times

Opinion | Seattle Shows We Can Do Better on Homelessness - The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/24/opinion/seattle-homeless-solutions.html>

OPINION
GUEST ESSAY

Something Better Than a Tent for the Homeless



By Maia Szalavitz

Ms. Szalavitz is a contributing Opinion writer. She covers addiction and public policy.

Aug. 24, 2022

The needs of homeowners and businesses and those of people who are unsheltered often conflict. Community leaders, faced with increasing crime and disorder, frequently see police sweeps as the only answer, while advocates for homeless people argue that this response is merely a stopgap that does more damage than good.

But what if there was a way to stop shifting people from encampments to jails to shelters to hospitals and back again? In Seattle a unique collaboration among businesses, neighborhood groups, the police, advocates and nonprofits is fighting cynics and misperceptions driven by politics to cut homelessness.



Photo credit: www.nytimes.com/2022/08/24/opinion/seattle-homeless-solutions.html

95%+ accept placement

70% obtain permanent housing

0 overdose deaths in 4 years

Latine & Black participants were most likely to exit to permanent or temporary housing.

Source: PDA (wearepda.org)



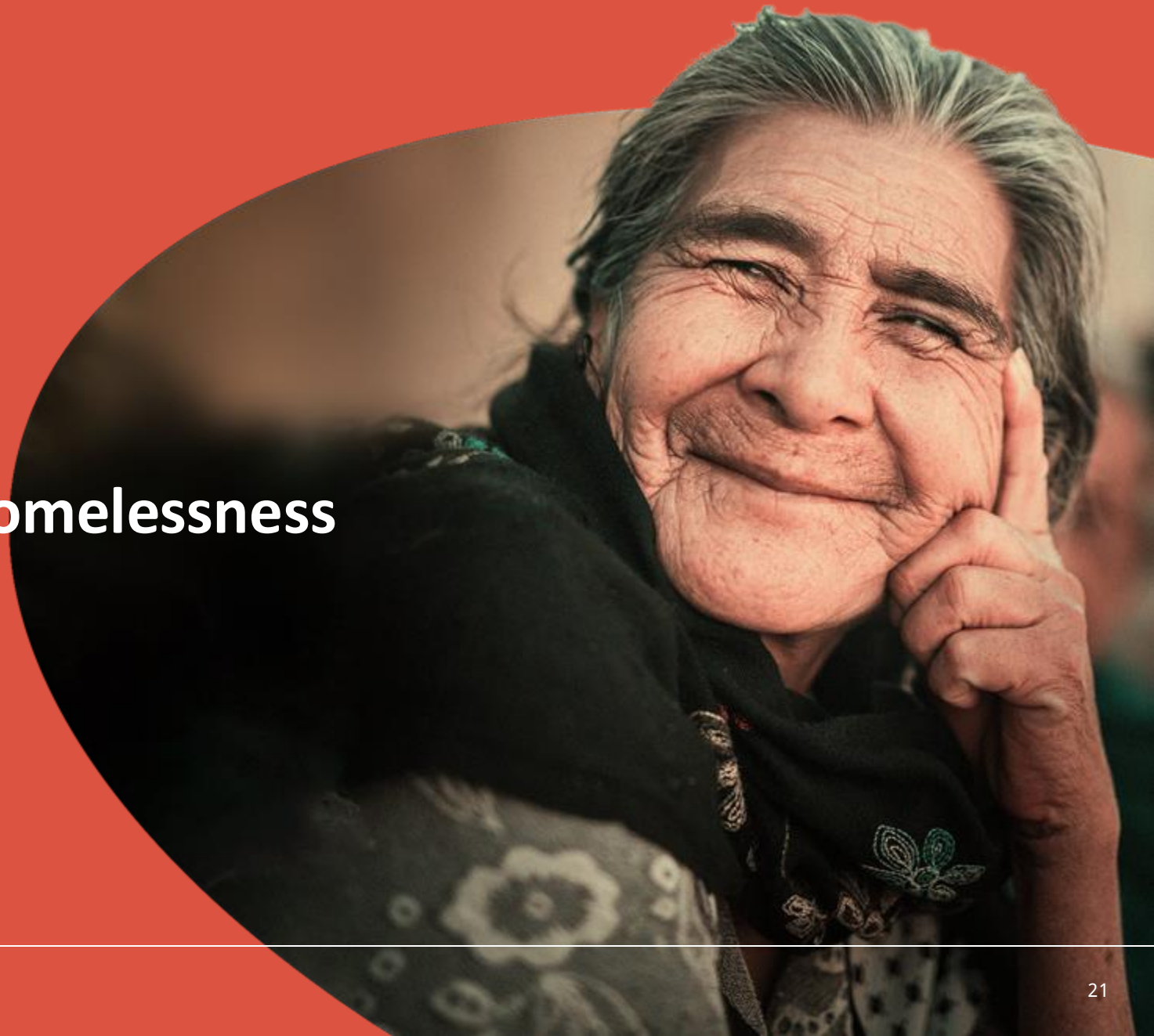
Key Takeaways

- Be radically curious, radically present
- Validate a diversity of perspectives; take them seriously
- Seek out bright spots of alignment in priorities or values
- Move at the speed of trust

NAEH

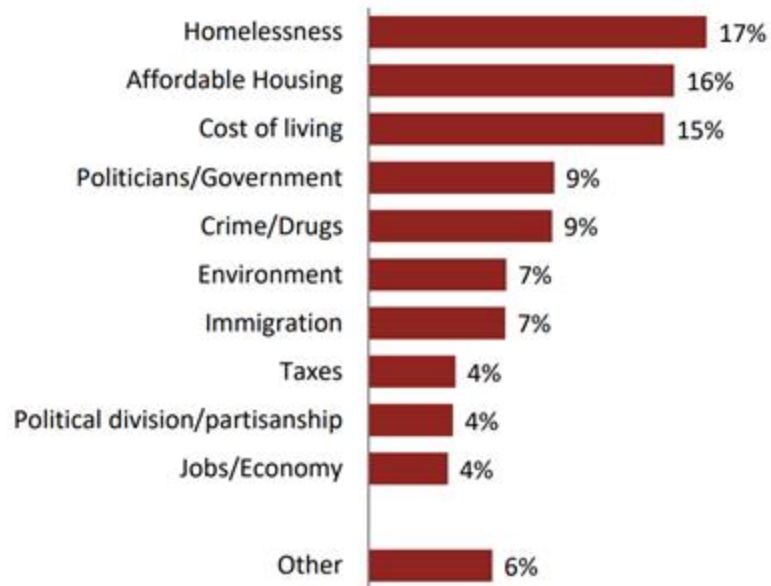
Sticking the Landing on Homelessness Messaging

February 2025

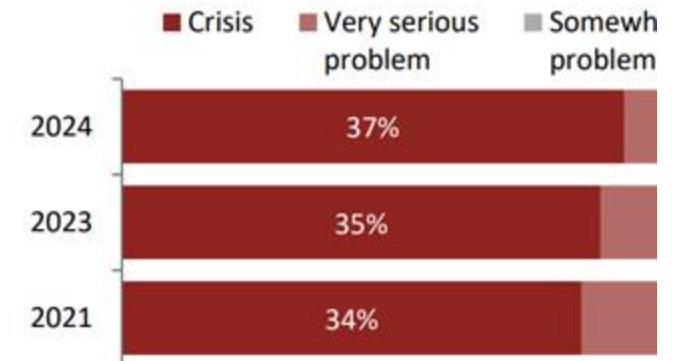


Homelessness & Housing affordability remain a big concern & priority

What do you think is the most important problem facing California today?
(Asked Open-Ended)



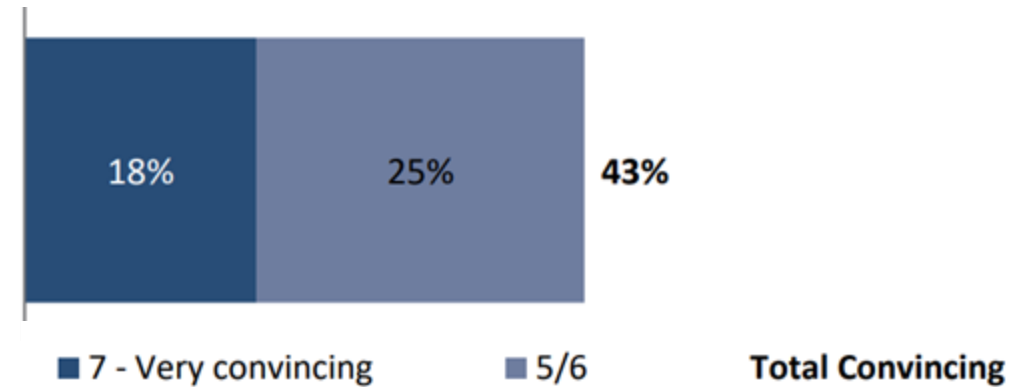
Which of the following
do you think best
describes the housing
situation *in California*
today?



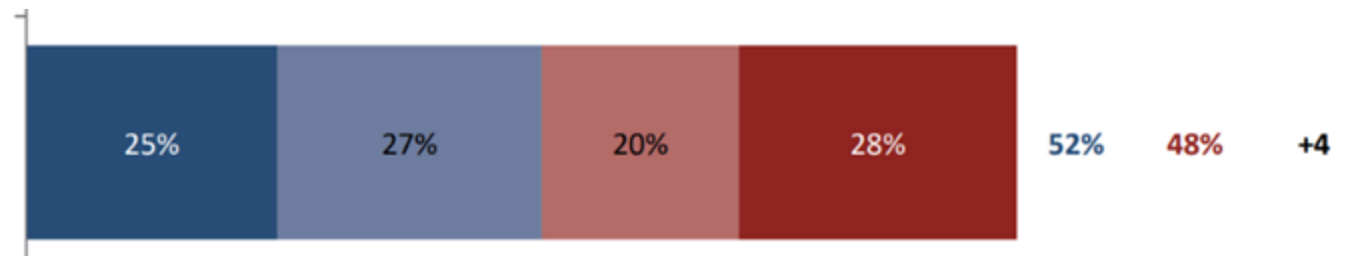
1,000 Likely CA Voters, Summer 2024

But the belief that affordability is tied to homelessness is not strongly held

(Encampments) Out of reach housing costs have led to tents and encampments throughout our communities. It's time for an approach to housing that creates safe and affordable homes for everyone.



The main reason homelessness has increased is because there is not enough affordable housing.



1,000 Likely CA Voters, Summer 2024

Voters see a lack of mental health services as at the core of the problem, even more so than a lack of affordable housing.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your perspective on the root cause of homelessness?

Homelessness is primarily a result of the lack of available mental health and social service resources for the most vulnerable in our community.

44%

Homelessness is primarily a result of the lack of housing people can afford. Spikes in rent have forced people out of their homes and onto the streets.

28%

Homelessness is primarily a result of a decline in society's willingness to enforce the law and maintain public order, and it should be handled primarily by law enforcement.

12%

Mixed/some of each (VOLUNTEERED)

12%

	Mental health	Housing costs	Enforce law
Homelessness:			
Directly affected	37%	26%	17%
Indirectly affected	50%	30%	8%
Not affected	45%	29%	10%
Owners	46%	21%	16%
Renters	42%	37%	8%

900 Likely L.A. County Voters, Fall 2019

But we have the facts!

Los Angeles Times

Focus mode ☐

CALIFORNIA

Cause of homelessness? It's not drugs or mental illness, researchers say

The researchers looked at homelessness in West Virginia and Arkansas, **which were hit hard by the opioid epidemic, and found the homeless rate was low.** Housing prices in those states also are lower than in many cities with higher homeless rates, Colburn said.

Poverty also is a contributing factor of homelessness, **but the researchers found areas with high poverty rates don't necessarily have high homelessness rates if housing costs are lower.** As an example, Colburn said Detroit is one of the most impoverished cities in the country, but it has one-fifth the homelessness of West Coast cities on a per capita basis.

Many voters say that their biggest concerns about homelessness revolve around safety and mental health

In a few words, what would you say is your single biggest specific concern about homelessness in Los Angeles County today?



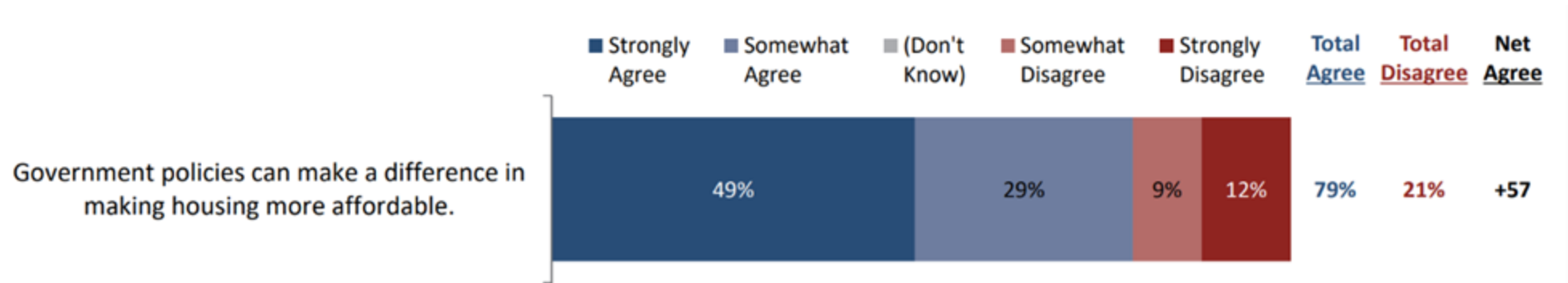
17% reference safety or crime

- *"It's completely out of control. Too many people are on the streets with addictions and mental health problems. Our neighborhood no longer feels safe."* –Latino Female Dem, 36
- *"Safety. There are countless stories citing people being attacked by homeless."* -Latino male NPP, 24
- *"It is worse than ever. Can't walk freely and safely anymore."* –White female Dem, 49

10% reference Mental Health

- *“That is getting worse leading to other worsening issues like declining mental health and substance abuse and crime.” –Latino Female Dem, 34*
- *“Many homeless people require mental health treatment and medication.” -Latina Democrat, 67*

Surprise? Voters believe that government can make housing more affordable



1,000 Likely CA Voters, Summer 2024

How should we interpret this?

The Goal Matters

- Are we trying to win a time-bound campaign, or are we trying to shift long term attitudes?
 - These attitudes are deeply held and stubborn
 - But there is still a strongly held belief that government has an obligation to take on the challenge- and we can't do nothing

Facts can't fix fears

- Avoid the trap: facts are not always the way out of this

Know your audience

- Don't try to connect with everyone using the same frame

Case Study: L.A. County Measure A

Union Station Homeless Services
Sponsored · Paid for by UNION STATION HOMELESS ...

Housing and mental health care help keep our neighborhoods safe by ensuring everyone feels secure and valued. It starts with compassion and understanding for all of our neighbors.

Confirmed organization



**Housing solutions.
Safer streets.**

unionstationhhs.org
Housing Ends Homelessness

Learn more

Everyone In LA
Sponsored · Paid for by UNITED WAY, INC.

When we talk about keeping our communities safe, Everyone In LA knows what works...

Confirmed organization



MENTAL HEALTH CARE
 HOUSING SOLUTIONS
 STREET SAFETY

everyoneinla.org
Are You In?

Learn more

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Los Angeles
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**Housing Solutions.
Safer Streets.**

Learn more

Paid for by HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF GREATER LOS ANGELES
Transforming empty lots into affordable homes offers safe, decent shelter for families in need.

Case Study: L.A. County Measure A

Yes on Measure A

Safer neighborhoods. Better care for those in need.

Yes on A



Moving homeless people with mental illness into care is the top priority.

777 S. Figueroa Street, Suite 4050, Los Angeles, CA 90017

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Thank you.

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Q&A



 February 26–28, 2025  Los Angeles, CA  #NAEH2025

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