

 DATA FOR *PROGRESS***PEOPLE'S
ACTION**

THE GREEN HOMES GUARANTEE IS POPULAR

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Data for Progress and YouGov Blue recently fielded a survey of registered voters, and posed a series of questions about support for ambitious housing policy reform with an emphasis on equity and sustainability. We find that, even accounting for partisan identification, there is a clear appetite for green housing reform in the United States.

Executive summary

- ▶ Each of the housing policies we polled had outright majority support across the full sample, including policies that explicitly involve large expenditures of federal revenue.
- ▶ While Republicans on net opposed the policies we surveyed, Independents and Democrats both favored each policy on net.
- ▶ New funding for green housing retrofits polled the most strongly among the overall sample and among Republicans and among Independents, while Democrats were about as enthusiastic across the full set of items we surveyed
- ▶ Even with opposition messaging and partisan framing, progressive housing policy that funds far greater affordability and green upgrades remains popular.

Background

On September 5, People's Action's #HomesGuarantee campaign released a [Briefing Book](#) that details a bold, grassroots-sourced housing justice agenda. This agenda was informed and finalized through a two-year long process led by people impacted by housing injustice, in consultation with housing organizers and a team of progressive policy thinkers from around the country.

The premise of People's Action's campaign is that everyone living in the United States should have safe, accessible, sustainable, and permanently affordable housing: a Homes Guarantee. Among the Homes Guarantee's core planks are the following:

- ▶ Build 12 million social housing units, overhaul zoning laws, and eradicate homelessness;
- ▶ reinvest \$150 billion in existing public housing;
- ▶ green upgrades to decarbonize public housing and low-income housing, eradicate lead and mold, and make all new social housing zero carbon;
- ▶ protect renters and bank tenants through a national tenant bill of rights, including universal rent control;
- ▶ pay reparations for centuries of racist housing policies; and,
- ▶ end land/real estate speculation and de-commodify housing.

Cutting across all these social commitments are points of intersection with a bold Green New Deal. A Green Homes Guarantee would upgrade existing public housing to eliminate carbon emissions and increase resiliency to climate change, build new no-carbon housing, retrofit low-income homes to save energy and reduce pollution, and link all forms of affordable housing to mass transit. Data for Progress has already shown how much support there is for [much of the Green New Deal agenda](#).

Many of these proposals dovetail with the "[Housing for All](#)" agenda put forth in late September by the Bernie Sanders campaign, which stated explicitly "We Need a Homes Guarantee." Sanders' [ambitious proposals](#) include a call for national rent control, greater tenant protections, ending racially discriminatory zoning in order to bring affordable apartments to more neighborhoods, and

the construction of nearly 10 million units of publicly financed housing, including 7.4 million units to address the current shortfall of homes for the lowest-income renters, and 2 million mixed-income social housing units. Sanders' plan also stands out for its robust Green New Deal intersections, including pledges to decarbonize existing and new public housing, increase affordable and transit-connected density, and fund massive numbers of green retrofits for lower-income households.

Also in September, building on advocacy by the Center for Popular Democracy, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez introduce a "[Just Society](#)" [package of laws](#), including far-reaching housing legislation. Ocasio-Cortez's housing proposals would guarantee a right to counsel in eviction proceedings, prohibit evictions without good cause such as failure to pay rent, and impose nationwide rent control with a limit of 3% on rent increases. Meanwhile, Ocasio-Cortez has repeatedly [celebrated](#) green affordable housing as an example of the intersectional promise and improvements to everyday life that would come from a Green New Deal. And in March, Representative Ilhan Omar proposed a bill that would incentivize owners of manufactured homes (also called mobile homes) to sell those homes to residents to form community co-operatives, thus stabilizing an important source of affordable housing.

Our polling asks, What do Americans think of the central pillars of this [emerging, green housing reform agenda](#)? Our polling finds that they support it.

Each of the housing policies we polled had outright majority support across the full sample. While Republicans on net opposed the policies we surveyed, Independents sided with Democrats across the board, favoring each policy on net. New funding for green housing retrofits polled the most strongly among the overall sample and among Republicans and Independents, while Democrats were about as enthusiastic for the full set of items we surveyed. Across the full sample and each party identification subset, new funding for social housing polled the lowest of the items in our housing battery.

Housing policy grid results

In our survey, we included a module describing a variety of housing reforms. For each of those reforms, respondents could report whether they strongly supported, somewhat supported, somewhat opposed, or strongly opposed that reform, or if they were unsure. Those reforms included:

Next, you will read about some policies being considered by some in Congress. For each of the policies below, please tell us whether you would (support or oppose) the policy.

A policy to prioritize green investment in housing retrofits and public transportation in communities of color and working class communities, especially those that suffer the most from pollution

A policy to invest \$50 billion annually in retrofitting public housing to reduce carbon pollution and eliminate toxic mold, and to fund career training opportunities and workforce training to people living in public housing and in neighboring communities

A policy to invest \$100 billion per year in new, sustainable "social housing," which is housing that also provides some social services including space for small businesses for its inhabitants and community members

A policy to provide a "Homes Guarantee," providing federal funding for millions of new social housing units to ensure everyone has accessible and affordable housing

A policy to target green investments in housing retrofits, sustainable affordable housing, environmental cleanup, and clean public transit to low-income and minority communities

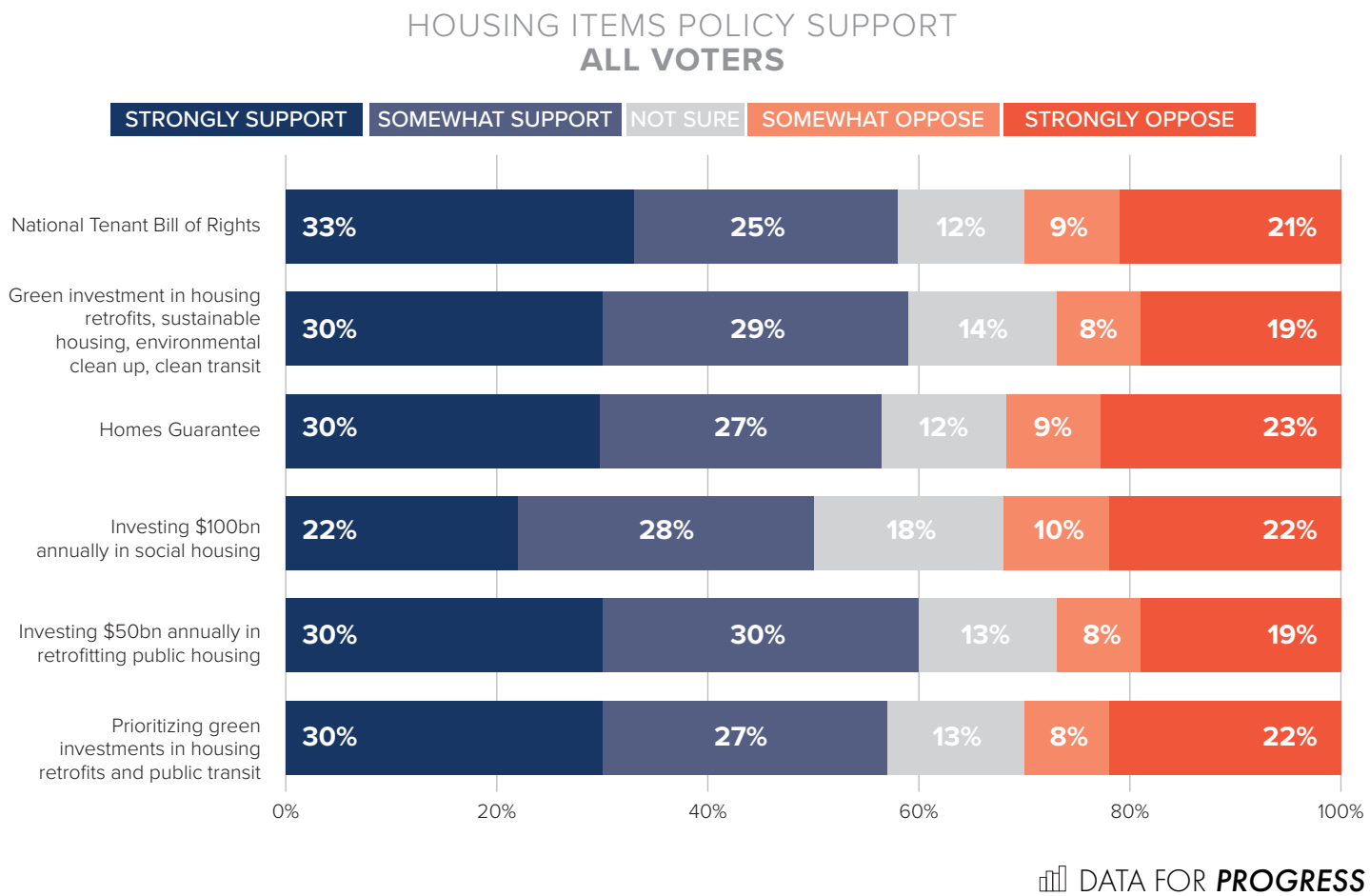
A policy to create a national "tenant bill of rights" that would protect tenants' rights to safe, accessible, sustainable, affordable housing; to organize tenants' unions; to universal rent control; to lease renewal protection; and to legal counsel in housing court

The order of the policies seen by each respondent was randomized. Additionally, we rotated the response options so that respondents were randomly assigned to see “strongly support” first and “strongly oppose” then “not sure” last, or to see “strongly oppose” first and “strongly support” then “not sure” last. The following chart summarizes the results for the full sample for each of the issues we polled.

Across the full sample, each individual policy polled at least at majority support. About 50 percent of respondents reporting supporting investments in social housing. Additionally, on net, each policy had positive overall support. Perhaps surprisingly, among the most popular policies included those implying significant new

government spending. For example, a \$100bn expenditure in social housing had a net 18-point support and a total of 50 percent support.

The policy with the highest support overall involved investing \$50 billion annually to retrofit housing to reduce carbon pollution and eliminate toxic mold, and to fund career training opportunities and workforce training to people living in public housing and in neighboring communities. 60 percent of respondents strongly or somewhat support this policy. Prioritizing investments in communities of color and targeting low-income communities had similar levels of support, with 59 percent and 57 percent respectively supporting these policies.

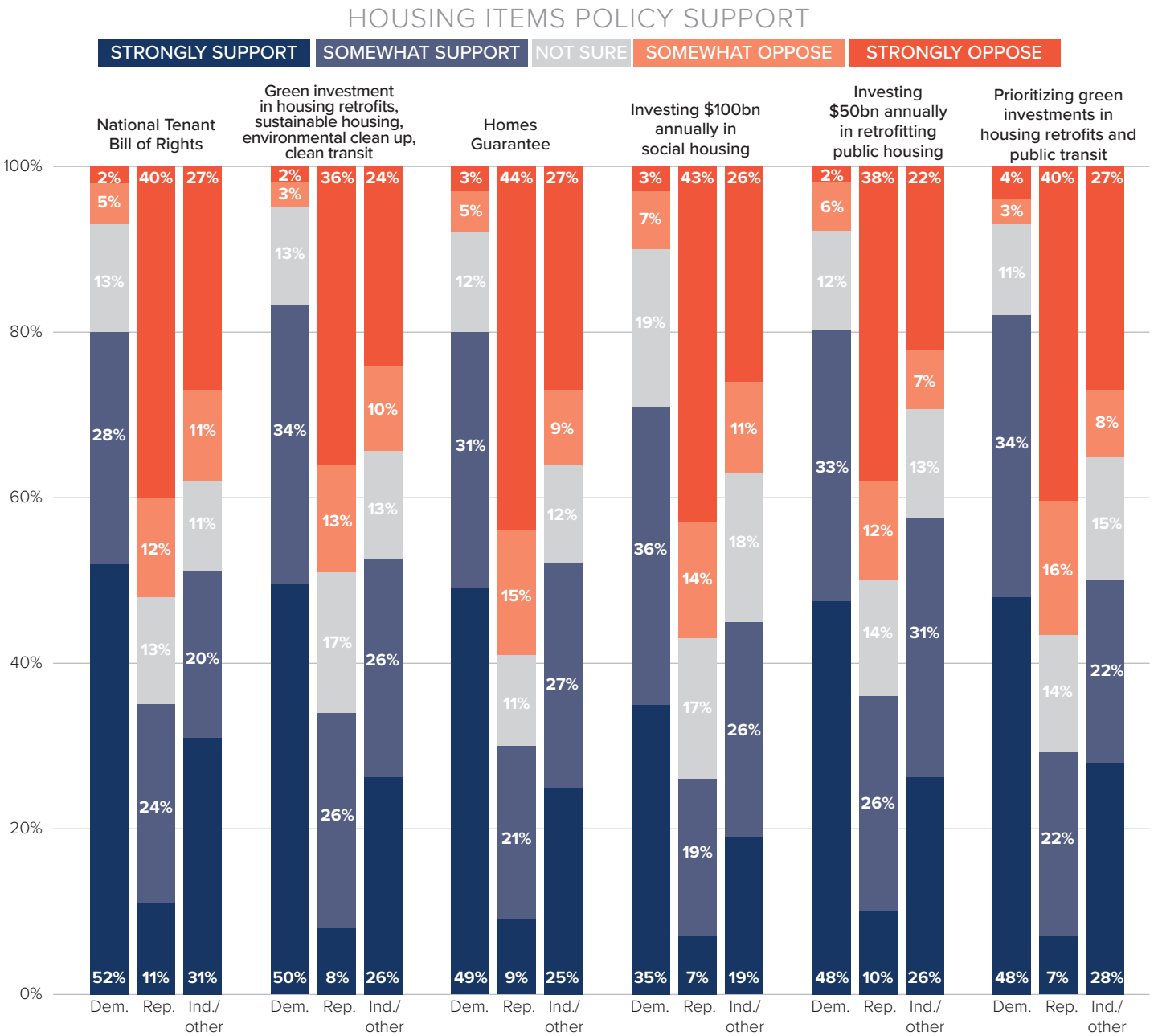


Republicans opposed every policy with Democrats supporting every policy. The key difference between the parties is strength in their convictions: Democrats overwhelmingly support all of these policies, while Republicans are more moderately opposed. Net support among Democrats by the policies tops 60 percent in each policy we polled, as the following chart suggests.

Meanwhile, Republicans are united in opposition to all of these policies, but their net opposition never tops 30

percent. While Republicans have majority opposition to all of these policies, the differences are not as stark compared to the Democrats.

Perhaps surprisingly, Independents clearly favored each of the policies we polled. Across the full set of items we polled, net support for each policy was above zero, and enjoyed an outright majority level of support among Independents for all issues except for the social housing item.



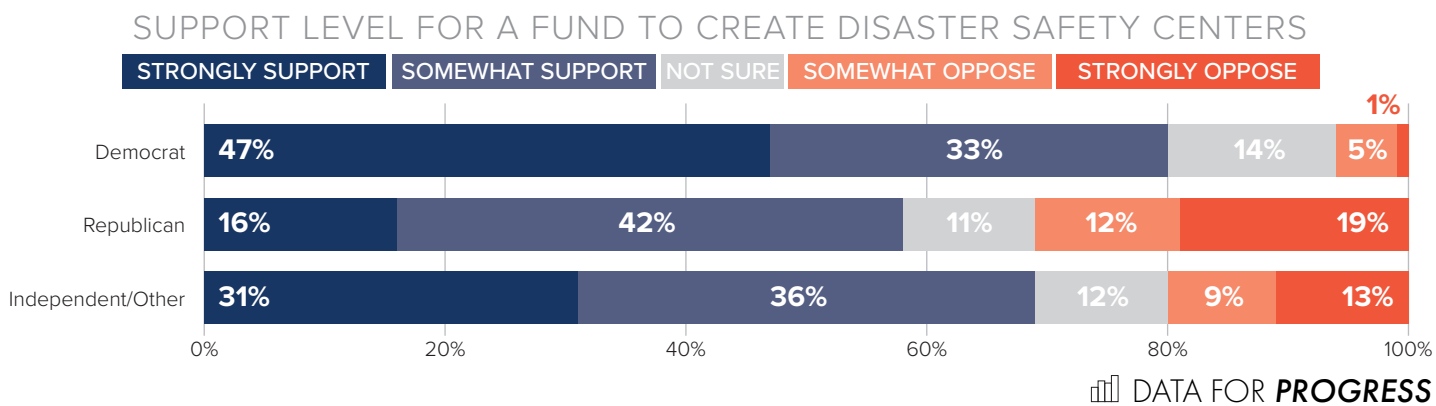
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Housing single-policy results

At the end of our housing module, we asked respondents two additional items peripheral to the subject of building new housing, but related to assisting those whose housing situation is in jeopardy. The first item read,

Would you (support or oppose) the creation of a \$10 billion fund to turn all public schools, libraries, and community centers into disaster safety centers to support their communities, by providing cooling during heat waves, shelters during storms, electricity during power outages, and hubs for disaster relief?

Respondents could report whether they strongly supported, somewhat supported, somewhat opposed, strongly opposed, or were unsure how they felt about the policy. This was the only policy to have net support across party lines. Republicans and Independents were more likely than Democrats to indicate that they somewhat supported this policy vs. strongly support this policy, but support remained high across all groups:



And the last policy item read,

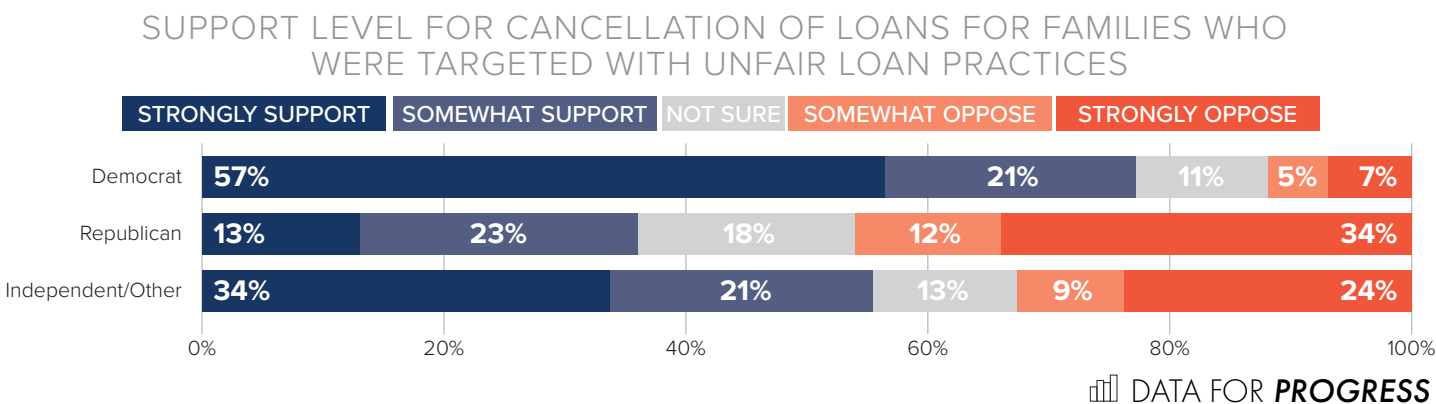
Next, you are going to read a statement some are saying about wealth inequality in the United States.

One estimate places average wealth of white Americans just over of \$134,000, compared to just \$11,000 for Black households.

Studies show that one reason for this situation is that Black households often only have access to complex mortgages that often come with high interest rates.

Do you (support or oppose) canceling or reducing loans that specifically targeted Black families with unreasonable terms or deceptive language?

Respondents could report whether they strongly supported, somewhat supported, somewhat opposed, strongly opposed, or were unsure how they felt about the policy.



With this policy as with the others, Independents sided with Democrats while Republicans opposed it. Republican opposition was still lower than Democratic support which matches the other results found on the previous items. Net Democratic support for this policy topped 60 percent, also matching previous findings in this survey. As with each of the items in our housing battery, Republicans clearly opposed the cancellation of loans targeted with unreasonable terms or deceptive language by insurance companies.

As these policies typically call for extensive new government action, it is not surprising that Republicans clearly oppose most of them. More surprisingly, Independent opposition is quite low and net support is positive and high even for policies that involve significant new government spending. Encouragingly, Independents sided with Democrats across the list of items. There is a clear appetite for housing reform among not just Democrats, but clear majorities of Independents and even in some cases, pluralities of Republicans.

The Homes Guarantee Can Stand Up To Scrutiny

In addition to testing the planks, in a separate survey we tested policies in the Homes Guarantee with partisan framing and messaging, to see how they would perform after partisan scrutiny. Each of those policies was preceded with some information about that policy's general contents. The first read,

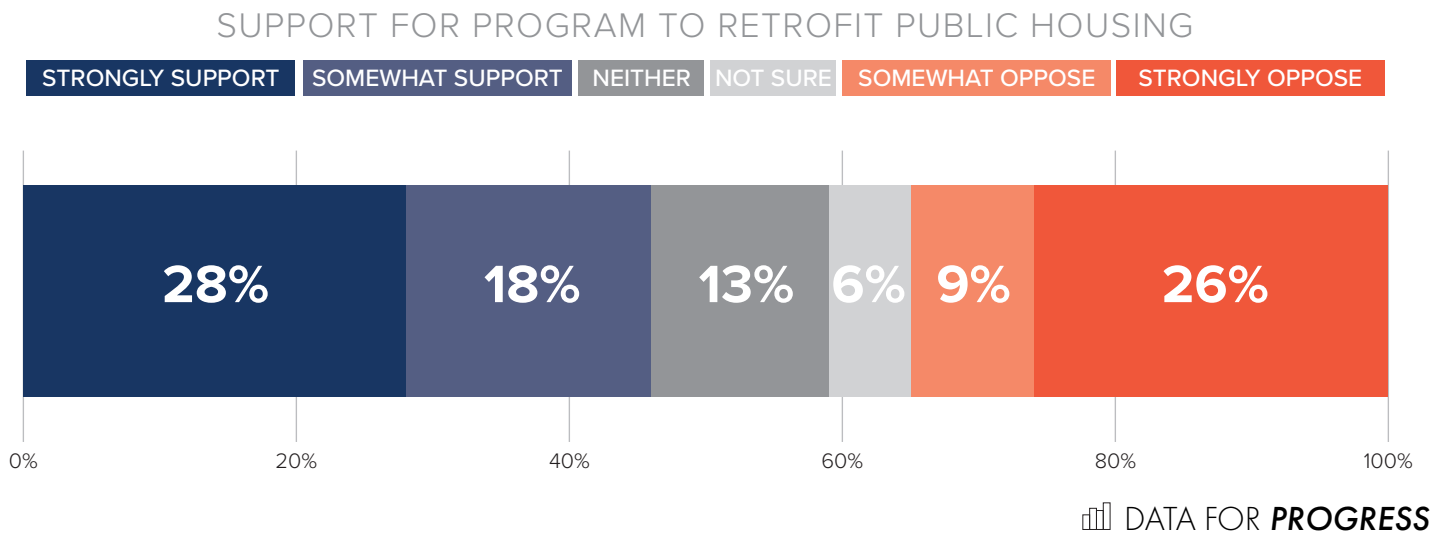
Some Democrats in Congress have proposed legislation that would invest \$10 billion retrofitting public housing to reduce carbon pollution and eliminate toxic mold. The program would also fund career training opportunities and workforce training to people living in public housing and in neighboring communities.

Democrats argue this proposal would combat climate change, improve access to clean air and provide upward mobility for low-income Americans.

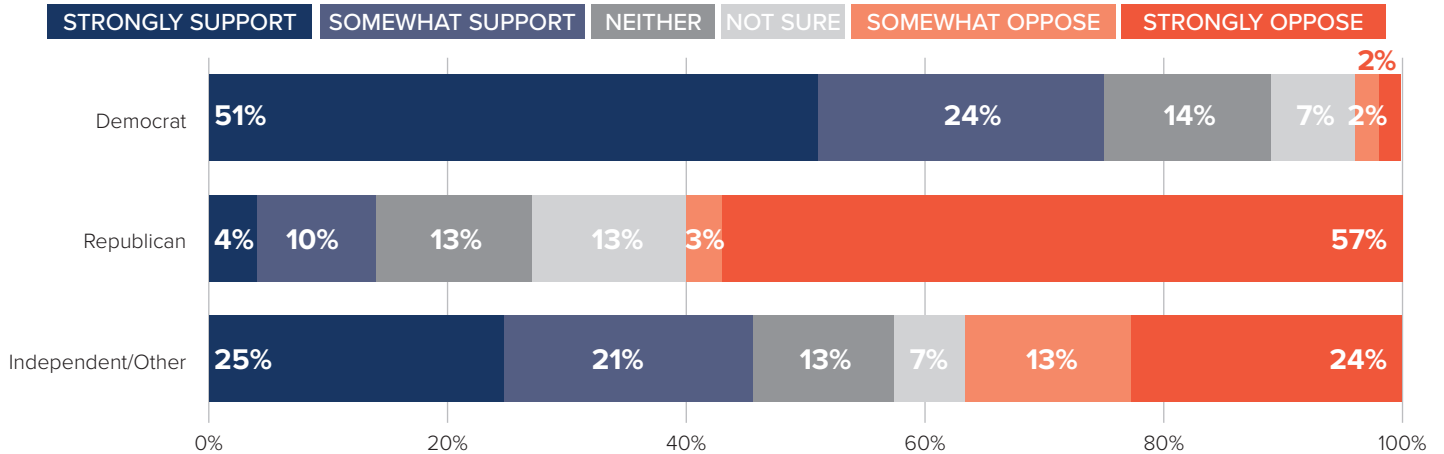
Republicans argue that this proposal would end up being a waste of taxpayer money and that the free market will do a better job providing jobs to low-income people.

Do you (support or oppose) this proposal?

Across the full set of voters, 46 percent supported and 35 percent opposed the item. Despite the seeming complexity of the item, only 19 percent reported having no opinion or being unsure how they felt about the idea. Partisanship drove responses to this item, with Democrats overwhelmingly favoring the policy by a 75-9 margin and Republicans opposing the policy by a 70-14 margin. Independents were in favor of the issue by a 46-37 margin, with 20 percent of Independents undecided. The following plot breaks out support for a housing retrofit program by party identification.



SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM TO RETROFIT PUBLIC HOUSING **BY PARTY ID**



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Partisanship drove responses to this item, with Democrats overwhelmingly favoring the policy by a 75-9 margin and Republicans opposing the policy by a 60-14 margin. Independents were in favor of the issue by a 46-29 margin, with 26 percent of Independents undecided. The following plot breaks out support for a housing retrofit program by party identification.

We also asked respondents whether they would support or oppose new social housing. Specifically, our item read,

Some Democrats in Congress have proposed legislation that would invest \$100 billion in new, sustainable “social housing,” which is housing that

also provides some social services including space for small businesses for its inhabitants and community members. The housing would be designed to cause no carbon emissions.

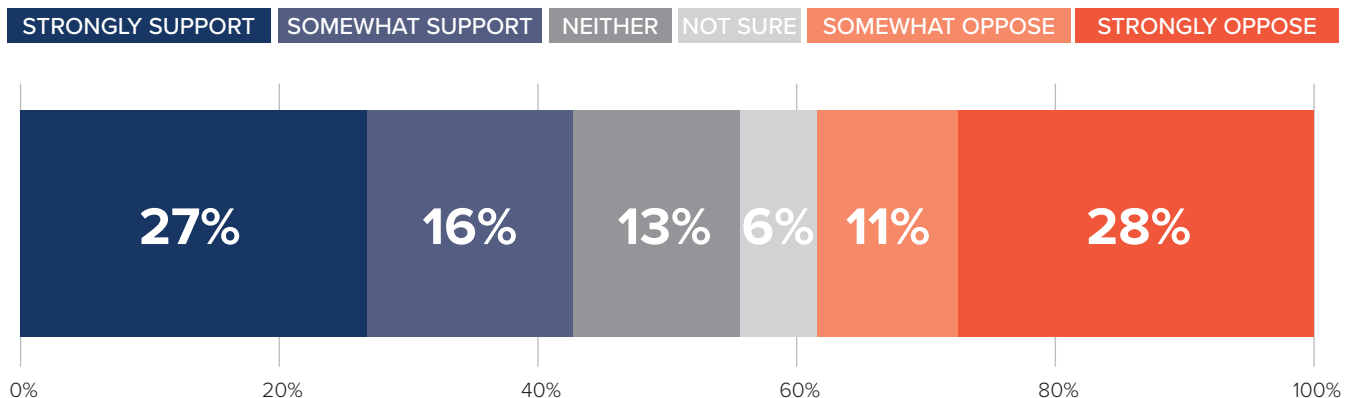
Democrats say that the cost of housing has gone up so fast that many Americans can’t afford rent.

Republicans say that the government can’t manage housing and the private sector would do a better job of ensuring affordable housing.

Do you (support or oppose) the proposal?

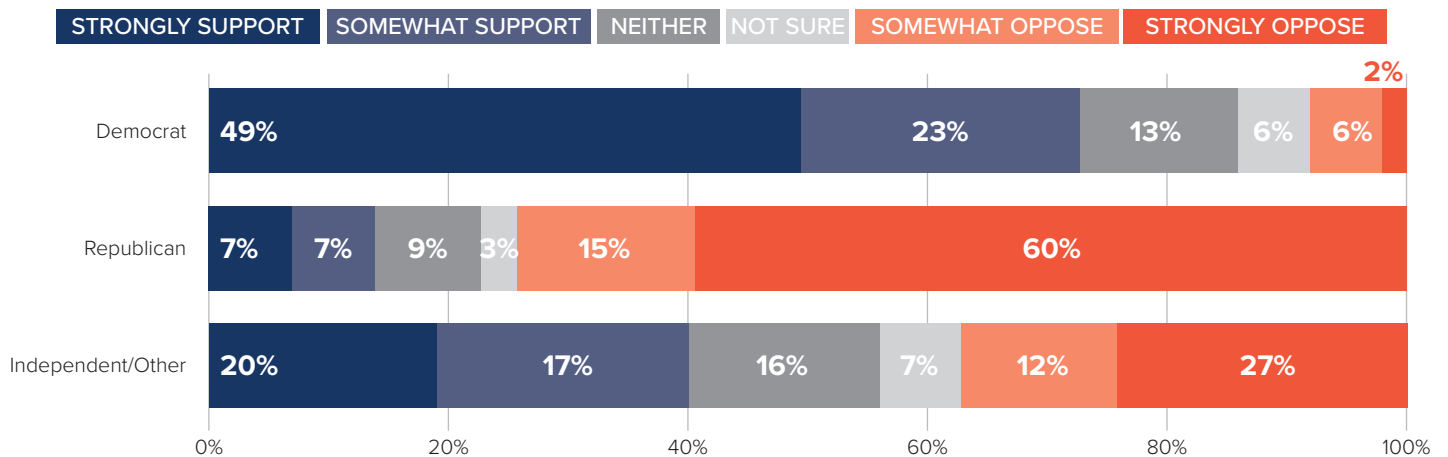
Across the full sample, 43 percent of voters supported and 39 percent opposed new social housing investments.

SUPPORT FOR DESIGNING SPECIAL HOUSING WITH NO CARBON POLLUTION EMISSION



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SUPPORT FOR DESIGNING SPECIAL HOUSING WITH NO CARBON POLLUTION EMISSION BY PARTY ID



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Similar to other items of this kind, partisanship was the driving motivator: Democrats were split 72-8 in favor of social housing, compared to 63-14 opposition among Republicans. Independents were split, with 40 percent supporting and 31 percent opposing the policy. The following plot summarizes the result for all voters in our sample, broken out by party identification.

Conclusion

The Green Homes Guarantee plan is a popular one. It has the potential to win swing voters, while also mobilizing the progressive base. After all, if renters [had voted at the same rate as](#) homeowners in 2016, Democrats would have easily won the election. We tested the Green Homes Guarantee in a neutral context and a partisan context and in both contexts support remains durable.

On behalf of Data for Progress, YouGov Blue fielded a survey on a sample of 1,280 registered voters using YouGov's online panel. The survey fielded between September 11 and September 13, 2019, and was weighted to be representative of the national population of US voters by age, race/ethnicity, sex, education, US census region, and 2016 Presidential vote choice. This survey included a module with various questions on housing policy, housing affordability, and new policies designed to address housing unavailability across the United States. This memo summarizes some of the results.

From August 29, 2019-September 1, 2019, YouGov Blue fielded an additional survey on 1,127 US voters as part of its Registered Voter Omnibus program. That sample was weighted to be representative of the population of US voters by age, race/ethnicity, sex, gender, US Census region, and 2016 vote choice. On that survey, Data for Progress included items on several recent policies designed to address housing in the United States.

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