

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE

Survey: 75% of Americans Worried About Losing Housing

The NHP Foundation finds job development and finance programs rank highest among resident services.

By [Donna Kimura](#)

Three out of four Americans are concerned that they or someone close to them could lose their housing, according to a new survey by The NHP Foundation (NHPF), a nonprofit affordable housing provider.

When asked how concerned they are that they or a friend or a relative could lose their housing, 30% of the respondents said they are “very concerned,” 27% are “concerned,” and 19% are “somewhat concerned.” In addition, 83% are worried about housing costs overall.



The poll comes at a time when there’s a significant shortage of affordable housing, and the fallout has been renters moving less frequently than they did a decade ago and a U.S. homeownership rate that’s fallen to a record low 62.9%, says Richard F. Burns, NHPF president and CEO.

“Given these facts, we thought it would be important to take the temperature of Americans and learn their feelings about housing in general and affordable housing in particular,” he says.

For Burns, the widespread fear of losing housing was one of the poll’s striking findings. “People are living on the edge financially,” he says. “They’re paying too high a percentage of their income for rent. With an uncertain economy, there’s a general fear of losing their jobs.”

Nearly 40% of the 1,000 respondents are worried that job loss will cost them their housing. People also feel that a lack of affordable options (28%), increased rents (24%), and retirement (21%) could lead them to lose their housing.

In addition to providing a good, safe place for people to live, many affordable housing owners, including NHPF, offer an array of programs to help residents improve their lives.

The survey asked respondents to rank different services in order of importance. Workforce development programs and financial education scored the highest. “This really reflects the source of the respondents’ concerns,” Burns says.

That was followed by after-school and summer youth programs, fitness and health programs, and community-building social events.

People who pay more than 30% of their income on housing are considered to be “cost burdened.” More than 65% of the people polled put themselves in that category.

With this many Americans feeling cost burdened, it’s no surprise that 80% welcome affordable housing, according to NHPF.

Nearly 40% of those polled welcome affordable housing simply because “everyone deserves” it, while 25% cite the opportunity for “people to live in the community where they work.” Nearly 20% agree that affordable housing lets a wider range of individuals share a community, and 16% acknowledge affordable housing’s ability to revitalize neighborhoods.

Only 20% of those polled were unlikely to welcome affordable housing in their neighborhoods.

Burns attributes this to **an outdated concept of affordable housing**. “Today’s affordable housing is comprised of new and upgraded garden apartments and high-rises, amenity-laden developments that look nothing like ‘projects’ of the past,” he says.