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From August 21st to August 26th, we tested 40 unique Democratic messages on housing and the affordability crisis. These messages were tested via web panel with 5,045 respondents to see how effective they were at moving voters to support a Democratic candidate for Governor. Overall, we find Democratic messages focused around housing were *extremely* effective at persuading voters to vote for Democrats.

**The most persuasive Democratic messages focused on the cost of living, lack of housing, and expanding renters' and owners' rights.** The two messages in the 100th percentile center rent relief, tenant protections, supply expansion, and mortgage help. These messages show that concrete housing fixes tied to cost of living deliver the strongest overall persuasion.

- **100th percentile:** *"Democrats know rent costs are crushing working families. They want to pass laws that cap sudden rent hikes, expand rental assistance, and protect tenants from unfair evictions. By standing with renters instead of powerful landlords, Democrats will make sure families can stay in their homes and neighborhoods remain stable. Renters deserve the same security and fairness as homeowners—and Democrats are fighting to deliver it."*
- **100th percentile:** *"Housing costs are one of the biggest drivers of today's high cost of living. Democrats have plans to lower rent, help families afford mortgages, and build more homes so supply meets demand. Unlike Republicans who protect developers and corporate landlords, Democrats will fight for working families. Lower housing costs mean more money for groceries, childcare, and savings — making life more affordable for every American."*

Notably, many real world messages we tested also did extremely well, including these proposals from [Bernie Sanders](#), [Zohran Mamdani](#), and [Harris' 2024 campaign](#).

While nearly all of the housing messages we tested positively, the three messages that were less effective (below the 50th percentile) focused heavily on process changes (zoning rules, permitting, fees). These messages are likely to resonate more with policy-savvy audiences than with voters broadly motivated by immediate cost-of-living concerns.

a voter to support a Democratic governor. **We recommend utilizing above-average talking points, i.e. those above the 50th percentile.**

Democratic Message Source/Topic	Democratic Message Content	Governor Vote Choice Percentile*
"Renters deserve same security and fairness as homeowners"	Democrats know rent costs are crushing working families. They want to pass laws that cap sudden rent hikes, expand rental assistance, and protect tenants from unfair evictions. By standing with renters instead of powerful landlords, Democrats will make sure families can stay in their homes and neighborhoods remain stable. Renters deserve the same security and fairness as homeowners – and Democrats are fighting to deliver it.	100%
"Democrats have plans to lower rent, help families afford mortgages, and build more homes"	Housing costs are one of the biggest drivers of today's high cost of living. Democrats have plans to lower rent, help families afford mortgages, and build more homes so supply meets demand. Unlike Republicans who protect developers and corporate landlords, Democrats will fight for working families. Lower housing costs mean more money for groceries, childcare, and savings – making life more affordable for every American.	100%
"No veteran should struggle to find housing"	No veteran or service member should struggle to find housing after serving our country. Democrats will expand veteran housing assistance, fight homelessness among former service members, and guarantee affordable options for military families. America owes more than thanks – it owes respect and security. Democrats believe honoring service means ensuring those who sacrificed for us have a safe place to call home.	99%
Bernie Sanders	Democrats know the US faces a massive housing crisis. 800,000 Americans are homeless; millions are paying 50-60% of their limited incomes on housing. It is insane that in the richest country in the world, millions cannot afford a home and hundreds of thousands are homeless every night. We need major investments in affordable housing, not tax breaks for billionaires.	99%
"Lower housing costs by building more homes"	Every American deserves a safe, affordable place to live. Democrats want to lower housing costs by building more homes, expanding affordable housing programs, and cutting red tape that drives prices up. Their plan helps working families, seniors, and young people alike by making sure housing is within reach – not just for the wealthy few, but for everyone.	99%
"Housing should be for people to live in, not Wall Street"	Too many corporate landlords are driving up rents and squeezing families. Democrats want to stop big investors from buying up homes and turning neighborhoods into profit machines. By putting people before profits, Democrats will make sure families can buy homes, communities stay strong, and rents don't spiral out of control. Housing should be for people to live in, not Wall Street portfolios.	99%

“Expand affordable senior housing”	Older Americans deserve to age with dignity in homes they can afford. Democrats will expand affordable senior housing, support home repairs, and fund community services that help people stay in place. Rising rents and unsafe housing put too many seniors at risk. Democrats believe those who built this country deserve security, comfort, and respect – not uncertainty about where they will live.	98%
“Build more energy-efficient homes... cut utility bills with clean energy”	Housing should be affordable to buy and affordable to live in. Democrats’ plan to build more energy-efficient homes, upgrade older houses, and cut utility bills with clean energy. Families shouldn’t have to choose between rent, food, or heat. Democrats believe smart housing policy can lower costs, fight climate change, and create good-paying jobs – helping families save money while building a healthier future.	98%
Medicaid cuts + housing connection	Republicans’ push to slash Medicaid made housing insecurity worse. Families who lost health coverage also struggled to keep a roof over their heads, and seniors faced impossible choices between medicine, rent, and food. By cutting Medicaid, Republicans have made life harder for millions of vulnerable Americans. Democrats believe a secure home and access to healthcare go hand-in-hand – and Republicans are taking both away.	97%
“End homelessness by funding shelters... building affordable housing”	No one in America should be without a safe place to sleep. They want to end homelessness by funding shelters, expanding mental health and addiction services, and building affordable housing. By tackling root causes and providing real support, Democrats believe communities can be safer and healthier for everyone. A wealthy nation should not accept homelessness as normal – it’s time to act with compassion and solutions.	97%
“Help first-time buyers with down payment assistance”	Democrats want to make the American dream of owning a home possible again. They will help first-time buyers with down payment assistance, fairer mortgage rules, and lower closing costs. For too long, rising prices and unfair lending have locked out working families. Democrats believe everyone who works hard should have a fair shot at owning a home and building stability for their family.	96%
Harris Campaign Housing Plan - Taking	Democrats will crack down on Wall Street investors and corporate landlords who are driving up rents. They support ending tax breaks for big investors who buy homes in bulk and banning price-fixing rent algorithms that gouge families. These steps put people over profits and stop powerful corporations from squeezing renters. Democrats will fight to make renting affordable and fair again.	96%
on Corporate Landlords		

“Stable housing is the foundation for a healthy family”	Stable housing is the foundation for raising a healthy family. They want to expand child-friendly housing programs, protect renters with kids from unfair eviction, and build safe homes near good schools. Families shouldn’t have to bounce from place to place. Democrats believe when children grow up in stable homes, they do better in school, parents do better at work, and communities thrive together.	96%
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3

Harris Campaign Housing Plan - \$25,000 Down-Payment Help	Democrats will give first-time buyers up to \$25,000 in down-payment assistance. Families who pay rent on time but can’t save enough for a down payment will finally get a chance to buy a home. This support is even stronger for first-generation buyers. Democrats believe everyone who works hard deserves the chance to own a home and build lasting financial security for their family.	95%
“Trump gave tax breaks to the wealthy and let rents spiral”	During Donald Trump’s time in office, housing costs soared while families got little help. Instead of cracking down on corporate landlords, Trump gave tax breaks to the wealthy and let rents spiral out of control. Working families were left behind. Democrats believe housing should be affordable for everyone, and Trump’s record shows he only worked for the powerful few, not regular people.	93%
“Enforce fair housing laws... stop discrimination in lending”	Everyone deserves equal access to safe housing, no matter their background. Democrats will enforce fair housing laws, stop discrimination in lending, and invest in communities long denied resources. For too many families of color, the American dream of owning a home has been blocked. Democrats believe fair housing builds stronger neighborhoods and gives every family the chance to build wealth and security.	92%
“Housing policy should serve families, not powerful developers”	Housing policy should serve families, not just powerful developers. Too often, state and local governments hand out projects as favors to big insiders, while smaller builders and communities get shut out. Democrats will crack down on backroom deals, end giveaways to big developers, and focus resources on fair housing growth. By stopping corruption, Democrats will make sure housing projects actually lower costs for families.	92%
“Trump rolled back fair housing laws, making it easier for discrimination”	Donald Trump rolled back fair housing protections, making it easier for discrimination to happen in renting and lending. By weakening these laws, Trump put families of color and low-income communities at greater risk of being denied safe, affordable homes. Democrats believe everyone deserves equal access to housing, and Trump’s actions showed he didn’t care about fairness or opportunity for all Americans.	89%

Harris Campaign Housing Plan - Tax Incentives for Starter Homes	Democrats will reward builders who create affordable starter homes for first-time buyers. For too long, young families and workers have been locked out of homeownership. By giving tax breaks to homebuilders who prioritize starter homes, Democrats will expand supply and bring down prices. This helps hardworking Americans buy their first home, start building wealth, and put down roots in their communities.	88%
"Public policy should serve the people – not enrich insiders"	Donald Trump's housing policies are driven by corruption and favoritism toward wealthy developers. Instead of helping families who needed affordable homes, he's given special deals and tax breaks to political allies. Regular Americans got stuck with higher housing costs, while Trump's friends made millions. Democrats believe public policy should serve the people – not enrich insiders and cronies the way Trump's administration repeatedly did.	87%

4

"Trump made it harder for working families to find a home"	Donald Trump's administration cut programs that helped communities build affordable housing. Instead of addressing the rising cost of living, Trump made it harder for working families to find a home. His policies kept millions stuck paying too much rent or living in unsafe conditions. Democrats believe leaders should solve problems, not make them worse – and Trump failed families struggling with housing.	87%
Zohran Mamdani	Democrats are proposing building hundreds of thousands of new affordable homes over the next 10 years and fast track the approval process for 100% affordable housing projects. The country has a responsibility to meet the urgency of this housing crisis by investing in affordable housing, and Democrats are supporting a plan to construct new permanently affordable, union-built, rent-stabilized homes over the next decade.	87%
"Republicans have sided with big developers and corporate landlords"	Republicans have made the cost of living worse by failing to act on housing. Prices for rent and homes climbed higher, but Republicans have sided with big developers and corporate landlords instead of working people. While families struggle, they give handouts to the rich. Democrats believe leaders should fight to lower housing costs – not make life harder for everyday Americans the way Republicans do.	86%
"Trump's reckless tariffs made housing more expensive"	Donald Trump's reckless tariffs made housing even more expensive. By driving up the cost of lumber, steel, and building materials, Trump's trade wars pushed construction costs through the roof. Families already struggling with high rents and home prices paid the price for his failed policies. Democrats believe leaders should lower costs, not raise them through careless decisions that hurt working families and communities.	83%

Harris Campaign Housing Plan - Innovation Fund for Housing	Democrats are ready to invest \$40 billion in a new housing innovation fund. This program will support creative building methods, repurpose federal land, and speed up construction in local communities. Builders will have to prove results – lowering costs and producing affordable homes families can actually live in. With this plan, Democrats will boost supply, create jobs, and give millions of families a fair shot at secure housing.	82%
“Cracked down on unfair barriers”	Too many state and local governments block new housing with needless regulations. These rules slow down building, drive up costs, and keep families priced out. Democrats will crack down on unfair barriers and push for smarter policies that make it easier to build. More homes means lower rents and mortgages, helping families get a fair shot at safe, affordable housing in every community.	80%
“Donald Trump is making the affordable housing crisis even worse”	Donald Trump is making the affordable housing crisis even worse. Recent economic reports have shown that construction is slowing, with homebuilder sentiment hitting multi-year lows amid falling construction permits and higher building costs due to Trump’s tariffs on basic materials like steel, aluminum, and copper.	78%

5

“Republicans’ budget cuts targeted housing programs”	Republicans’ budget cuts targeted housing programs that kept seniors and families safe. By slashing support for public housing and rental assistance, Republicans have made it harder for vulnerable people to stay in their homes. Democrats believe leaders should protect those who worked hard all their lives, not leave them at risk of eviction and instability. Republicans’ records show the wrong priorities for America’s families.	78%
“Homelessness is a problem that can be solved”	Donald Trump has ignored the growing homelessness crisis. His administration talks about punishing people instead of funding housing and services that work. Families, veterans, and children are left without help while Trump focuses on politics over solutions. Democrats believe homelessness is not inevitable – it’s a problem that can be solved with compassion and real investment, not neglect and cruelty like Trump is showing in office.	78%
Empty Lots to Housing Act	Democrats are working on a bipartisan bill, the Empty Lots to Housing Act, to repurpose underused land to build new homes. Throughout the United States, there are an estimated 276,000 acres of government-owned land in transit-rich urban areas that could be repurposed for much-needed housing. The Empty Lots to Housing Act would help cut bureaucratic red tape that has prevented local communities from developing housing on land that is no longer needed for its original purpose.	76%

"Better zoning lowers rent"	Democrats will update zoning so more homes can be built near jobs, schools, and transit. That means allowing modest apartments and backyard cottages while keeping safety and good design. With clearer rules and quicker yes-or-no decisions, builders can add homes people can afford. Better zoning lowers rent, shortens commutes, and keeps neighborhoods welcoming to teachers, seniors, and young families.	76%
Harris Campaign – Trump on housing	Donald Trump's Project 2025 agenda is making it more expensive to rent or buy a home. As a landlord, Trump used underhanded tactics to evict tenants from his properties, and he was sued by the JusticeDepartment for racial discrimination. Year after year during his presidency, Trump tried to gut rental assistance programs. New home construction slows down when Trump is in office – tightening the housing crunch and enabling his wealthy friends to profit.	76%
"Rural communities and small towns are being left behind as housing costs rise"	Rural communities and small towns are being left behind as housing costs rise. Democrats are proposing plans to invest in building homes in areas where young people too often move away because they can't afford to stay. By supporting small town housing and local jobs, Democrats will help families put down roots, strengthen communities, and keep opportunity alive across America – not just in big cities.	74%
Harris Campaign Housing Plan - 3 Million New Housing Units	Democrats are calling for the construction of three million new housing units to end the housing supply shortage. There's a serious housing shortage across America, and it's driving prices up. Democrats will work in partnership with industry to build the housing we need, both to rent and to buy, and to take down barriers that stand in the way of building new housing, including at the state and local levels. This will make rents and mortgages cheaper.	73%

6

<i>Defend America Action: 2008 Recession Connection</i>	Democrats know housing costs are continuing to rise even with housing unaffordability reaching new highs not seen since the 2008 recession. The reality is Donald Trump and Republicans are responsible for an anemic, expensive economy that is wreaking havoc on working families across America as his failed policies drive inflation higher and crush working families with soaring costs.	73%
"Ban lobbying by major developers and restore fairness in housing decisions"	Big developers shouldn't be able to buy influence with lobbyists. Their lobbying rigs the system to favor luxury projects instead of affordable homes, leaving working families behind. Democrats will ban lobbying by major developers and restore fairness in housing decisions. By taking special interests out of the process, Democrats will make housing policy work for people, not corporate insiders who profit at families' expense.	63%

“Small businesses and local builders should be free to help grow housing supply”	Small businesses and local builders should be free to help grow housing supply without drowning in red tape. Right now, complex rules keep small builders from contributing to the housing market, while big players exploit the system. Democrats will cut needless barriers and give small builders a fair chance to compete. This abundance-style growth will lower costs, strengthen communities, and create opportunity for families everywhere.	58%
Scott Wiener - Trump scam artists	The failure to build enough homes – leading to explosive housing costs – opened the door for grifters like Donald Trump to come in with destructive “solutions” like “if we deport 10m people, housing costs will go down.” When problems are allowed to fester, scam artists like Trump thrive.	45%
“Replace blanket single-family zoning with ‘missing middle’ homes”	Democrats support replacing blanket single-family zoning with “missing middle” homes, which breaks the big-developer monopoly on new housing. Today’s discretionary, slow process rewards those with lawyers and lobbyists. Simple, by-right rules with clear height and parking standards let homeowners and small builders add duplexes, triplexes, and courtyard apartments without pay-to-play. Transparent fees and firm timelines lower costs, widen choices, and keep neighborhood character while curbing speculative luxury-only projects.	42%
Duplexes, triplexes, and courtyard apartments give renters real choices	Democrats will update blanket single-family zoning with “missing middle” options – duplexes, triplexes, courtyard apartments – which gives renters and first-time buyers real choices. Clear parking and height standards protect neighborhood look and feel while allowing growth. One-stop online permitting and guaranteed timelines cut red tape that favors only big developers. This approach lowers rents, supports small builders, and helps seniors and young adults stay close to family.	40%