

Survey Results

American Attitudes About Homeownership

Attitudes About Homeownership

Homeowners and renters have generally positive views about homeownership and the financial and non-financial benefits it provides to families and communities. A large share of renters aspire to homeownership, despite the financial obstacles of buying a home including accumulating a down payment and concerns about job security. The tax benefits of homeownership are valued by both homeowners and renters with large percentages noting that it is important to keep these benefits in place.

Homeowners and renters agree that owning a home is a positive choice. A majority of homeowners and a sizable percentage of renters agree or strongly agree that owning a home provides a healthy and stable environment for raising a family (87 percent among homeowners and 64 percent among renters), that it helps them meet long-term financial goals (77 percent among homeowners and 55 percent among renters) and it helps them realize the American Dream (70 percent among homeowners and 48 percent among renters).

Most homeowners (95 percent) and renters (72 percent) believe that over a period of several years, it makes more sense to own a home than to rent.

More than 8 in 10 homeowners (82 percent) and half of renters (50 percent) would prefer to buy a home if they had to move in the next six months. Furthermore, 78 percent of homeowners consider now a good time to buy as do 58 percent of renters.

Homeownership is viewed as a positive experience while less so for renting. Eighty-eight percent of current homeowners report that owning a home has been a positive or very positive experience. About half of renters (51 percent) consider their experience as positive or very positive.

Many renters aspire to homeownership. More than 6 in 10 renters are at least somewhat likely to purchase a home in the future and 24 percent indicate that they are extremely likely. Among young adult renters, 74 percent say they are likely to buy at some point in the future. About one-third (35 percent) of renters plan to purchase a home in the next 3 to 5 years (43 percent among young adult renters).

For renters planning to purchase a home, many face obstacles to achieving their homeownership goal. Eighty percent of renters note that having enough money for a down payment and closing costs was an obstacle to homeownership. Other obstacles include finding a home that is affordable and having confidence in job security.

Both homeowners and renters recognize the financial and non-financial benefits of owning a home. Nearly two-thirds of homeowners (63 percent) and renters (65 percent) consider the financial and non-financial benefits of homeownership equally important.

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Homeowners and renters believe that it is important that the tax benefits of homeownership remain in place. For example, 74 percent of homeowners believe that it is extremely or very important to maintain the mortgage interest deduction; 62 percent of renters share this view as well.

For homeowners with a mortgage, more than one-third (34 percent) report that the mortgage interest deduction helps their family very much or a great deal in today's economy. Furthermore, more than half of homeowners with a mortgage (57 percent) report that owning a home would be less attractive to them if the mortgage interest deduction was no longer available.

Renters and homeowners believe that owning a home is more or much more difficult than it was in their parents' generation (55 percent among homeowners and 74 percent among renters). Both groups believe it will be even more difficult for the next generation (87 percent among homeowners and 82 percent among renters) to own a home.

Community and Social Benefits of Homeownership

A larger share of homeowners than renters describe their communities as safe and stable. Homeowners also report that they are more satisfied with their community and family life. While many factors contribute to a positive community environment, a large percentage of homeowners and renters believe a high rate of homeownership is one factor. Homeowners generally feel more connected to their communities, participate in community and civic activities more frequently and are more likely to know their neighbors well.

Homeowners are generally more satisfied with their community and family life. For example, 56 percent of homeowners are very or extremely satisfied with the overall quality of their family life compared to 36 percent among renters. Homeowners are also more satisfied with the overall quality of their community life (43 percent among homeowners and 30 percent among renters). Larger percentages of homeowners are satisfied with access to healthcare, access to education and access to outdoor and natural resource amenities.

Not only are homeowners more satisfied with their community, but a larger percentage also indicate that they feel their communities are safer and more stable. Many renters also have a positive view of their community and more frequently report that their communities are home to a diverse population.

It is not surprising that homeowner think that a high rate of homeownership strengthens a community. Sixty-nine percent of homeowners (compared with 47 percent of renters) believe that a high rate of homeownership strengthens a community a great deal or very much.

With homeowners more frequently reporting that they are satisfied with their communities, nearly one in five (18 percent) homeowners feel very or extremely connected to their community compared with fewer than 1 in 10 (9 percent) renters. This connection to community is also reflected in survey results showing that 25 percent of homeowners and 11 percent of renters know their neighbors very well or extremely well.

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Connection to the community is also shown by the fact that homeowners are engaged in nearly all community activities more frequently than renters. For example, 86 percent of homeowners vote in national elections often or always compared with 68 percent of renters. Homeowners also more frequently read or listen to local and national news, vote in local elections, attend religious services and volunteer their time for a charitable organization.

Homeownership is also correlated with a better self-assessment of health. Forty-four percent of homeowners rate their health as excellent or very good compared with 29 percent of renters.

Overall Attitudes: The American Dream and the Economy

Consistent with other national polling, a majority of homeowners and renters believe that the country is on the wrong track and that the American Dream, broadly defined, will be more difficult for the next generation to achieve. Some homeowners and renters report that they are experiencing financial distress and that making the monthly mortgage or rent payment strains their budget.

A majority of homeowners and renters believe the country is on the wrong track with roughly 4 in 10 believing that the economy will stay the same during the next year. A majority of homeowners (60 percent) and renters (59 percent) expect their personal financial situation to remain the same during the next year.

For some, paying the mortgage or rent is a concern. Nearly 1 in 10 homeowners (8 percent) and renters (9 percent) are extremely or very worried that they will have trouble making their mortgage payment during the next year.

Thirty-five percent of homeowners report that making their monthly mortgage payment is at least a moderate strain on their budget. For renters, 46 percent report that their rent payments are at least a moderate strain.

The financial stress that some homeowners and renters feel is reflected in their attitudes about the American Dream broadly defined. Although both homeowners and renters agree that their ability to achieve the American Dream is more or much more difficult compared with their parent's generation, renters believe it is even more difficult than homeowners. Looking ahead, 9 in 10 homeowners (91 percent) and only a slightly smaller percentage of renters (86 percent) believe that the American Dream will be more difficult for the next generation.

Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive for the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®. The survey was fielded during the period October 6 - 20, 2010. Results are based on a total of 3,793 total complete surveys split into three groups: Homeowners (N=1,880), Renters (N=1,115), and Young Adults (Age 18-29) (N=798)

All samples came from the Harris Poll online database and were weighted for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income to be representative of the US general population of adults 18+. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online