



Housing

Discussion Guide

Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.

And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so be prepared to hear a different point of view. Listen first, and focus on the facts.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- The national [price-to-income ratio](#) was 5.4 in 2021, meaning homes cost 5.4 times as much as the average annual income. Almost 21 million [renter households](#) and about 17 million [homeowner households](#) are cost-burdened.
- On any given night in 2020, 580,000 people experienced [homelessness](#) nationwide. More than half of all people experiencing homelessness are concentrated in four states: California (28%), New York (16%), Florida (5%), and Texas (5%).
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers almost [100 housing assistance programs](#). Section 8 is the largest, costing [\\$23.8 billion](#), more than one-third of HUD's budget.

Let's discuss

Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** Should owning a house be a life goal? Would you support low income housing in your community?
- **Government:** What, if any, is the right level of government encouragement or assistance in regard to providing affordable housing, subsidizing rents, and construction?
- **Business:** What do we need to understand about the private sector and nonprofit role of affordable housing and fighting homelessness?

Let's act

1. **Take it local.** Talk to neighbors, friends, and family for their views on affordable housing and homelessness. Consider hosting another conversation with community members who have experience with affordable housing, or who work in the housing market.
2. **Explore the impact of legislation related to housing and zoning in your community.** On your state or municipality's website you can find information pertaining to zoning ordinances. You can search the various departments, agencies, and programs related to these areas on your state's or municipality's website. You can try using search words such as "housing" in the search bar. These options may also be available in a dropdown menu.
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. See [Community Development Block Grants](#) and [Continuum of Care Program Grants](#) in your state. Find your [Local Public Housing Agency](#) or [State Housing Finance Agency](#).
4. **Research your elected representatives positions** on the state of the housing market, and their vision for how to tackle related financial challenges facing Americans and your community. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on affordable housing, zoning, or homelessness in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - [Poverty](#)
 - [Stitching the Fabric of Neighborhoods](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.