Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security

Community Service Society

BRIEF

What New Yorkers Want: Housing Stability, Diverse Communities, and Support for Immigrant Families

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Public housing and voucher-holding residents in New York and across the United States are under attack. The Trump Administration has set its sights on immigrant families living in subsidized housing, and the U.S. Congress has made significant cuts to funding for public housing. To understand how New Yorkers and people across the nation view these issues, the Community Service Society of New York (CSS) surveyed residents about diversity, their thoughts on individuals without documentation living in government-subsidized housing, and the impact subsidized housing has had on residents' lives. The results show strong support for inclusive housing policies and for the stabilizing role the federal government plays for so many families.

Policy Context

Much of the current threat to immigrant families in public housing is being advanced through changes in how existing federal law is interpreted and enforced—most notably, Section 214 of the Housing and Community Development Act. It is important to understand how Section 214 operates and how it is being used to justify new enforcement efforts. Although Section 214 has long governed eligibility for housing assistance, recent federal actions have re-framed this law as a pressing enforcement issue while funding for public housing agencies (PHAs) is slashed.

What is Section 214?

Section 214 restricts HUD financial assistance to U.S. citizens and eligible noncitizens. It provides the framework for "proration," allowing mixed-status families to live together while receiving subsidies only for eligible household members.

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On February 3rd, 2026, Congress finalized a budget that included a 17 percent cut to the Public Housing Operating Fund, money used to keep public housing buildings running. Just one month earlier—and seemingly without consideration of the impending cuts—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sent a letter to PHAs urging them to require proof of citizenship from families. Framed as a reminder of their legal obligation to verify citizenship and immigration status, the letter alerted PHAs to repercussions if they were found to have individuals with incomplete verifications of immigration status.

It should be noted, however, that PHAs already verify the immigration status of public housing applicants before they become tenants. For example, in New York City, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) confirms the immigration status of household members at least at two different points between application and tenancy: during an eligibility interview and before an apartment is offered. Additionally, when PHAs prorate subsidies for mixed-status families, the family's rent share is more than the typical 30% of household income because household members who do not meet HUD's immigration criteria are not eligible for HUD-subsidized housing (see Appendix B for details).

Following the "reminder" letter and under the pretense of "safeguard[ing] taxpayer resources" by eliminating "waste, fraud, and abuse," HUD ordered PHAs to dehumanizingly "clean house" with respect to immigrant individuals without eligible status who were "discovered" in an audit



> The new proposed rule would **prohibit mixed-status families** from living in federally-subsidized homes, **forcing** families to **choose between eviction** and **separation.**

by HUD and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as living in federally subsidized housing. In the directive, PHAs were notified to begin using an updated intergovernmental database that now cross-references HUD tenant files with data from DHS's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services portal.

HUD maintains that this new process will permit PHAs to simply reconcile discrepancies between tenant records and the database; yet they must do so expeditiously and under threat of penalization. PHAs have 30 days to learn an unfamiliar process in the updated database, verify the immigration status of individuals that appear on a report, and "initiate appropriate corrective action" or risk facing consequences that "may include but are not limited to issuance of a corrective action order; reimbursement from non-HUD sources; withholding or reducing funding, or any other available corrective action or sanction as HUD deems necessary."

Further escalating these actions and during the 30-day compliance window, HUD has proposed changes to the existing Section 214 rule to "align with the current Administration's priorities and regulatory reform efforts." Simply put, the new proposed rule would prohibit mixed-status families from living in federally-subsidized homes, forcing families to choose between eviction and separation, similar to the attempt in 2019 during the first Trump administration. As with the 2025 efforts to root out Social Security fraud under the guise of "moral hazard," these actions result in wasteful spending and increased bureaucracy in order to inflict significant harm on families and communities.

Finally, in February 2026, the administration advanced an additional set of onerous rules for federal housing programs: the first is to allow PHAs to impose a minimum work hours requirement for non-senior adult residents and the second is a time limit on the term one can stay in the programs, after which they would lose subsidy or be subject to eviction. These proposed changes, the mixed-status proposal, and the funding cuts directly affect the stability, safety, and well-being of families living in public (and other HUD-subsidized) housing. They also further exacerbate administrative burdens, requiring already-strained employees to navigate a haphazard array of mandates while increasing paperwork demands on families.

Public Housing is Impactful

The FY26 budget cuts the Public Housing Operating Fund by 17 percent. While Congress increased the Public Housing Shortfall account (competitive grants), these funds do not replace the reliable baseline funding needed for operations. This budget decision, and the aforementioned rules to limit families' ability to stay, are out of step with the documented impact of public and subsidized housing. To understand what is at stake for residents, in our 2025 Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security, we asked 1,203 New Yorkers living in rent-regulated, public, and subsidized housing how housing assistance has affected their lives. The data confirms that subsidies are a primary driver of housing stability.

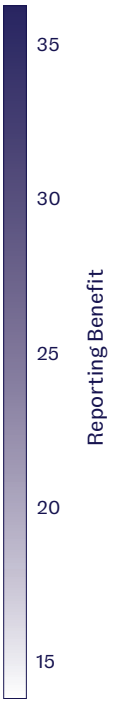
One third of New York tenants in subsidized housing explicitly credit their housing assistance with allowing them to stay in their homes. In addition, over a third reported that housing assistance reduced stress and anxiety about where they live, underscoring the role of stable housing in supporting overall well-being. A 17 percent cut to operations threatens the physical viability of the very units providing this physical and emotional stability.

These outcomes align closely with what New Yorkers believe housing policy should prioritize.

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF HOUSING SUBSIDIES: A STABILIZING FORCE

Share of respondents saying that subsidies helped them achieve these outcomes

Outcome	All Subsidized	NYC	The Bronx	Brooklyn	Black	Hispanic	White	Public Housing	Voucher Holders
Stay in home longer	35%	33%	30%	38%	35%	31%	35%	28%	37%
Less stress/ anxiety	34%	32%	31%	33%	32%	36%	36%	32%	36%
Stay in neighborhood	29%	31%	23%	36%	25%	30%	29%	22%	23%
Save/Plan for future	27%	25%	22%	25%	28%	27%	30%	26%	26%
Stay in city longer	24%	26%	19%	27%	21%	20%	27%	24%	20%
Stay housed during emergency	23%	23%	20%	28%	23%	21%	23%	22%	31%
Afford essentials (care)	20%	18%	15%	19%	20%	19%	23%	16%	30%
Support friends/family	19%	18%	11%	21%	17%	19%	23%	23%	22%
Speak up w/o fear	19%	17%	15%	21%	18%	16%	25%	20%	22%



Source: 2025 Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security, CSS, NY State

A Mandate for Inclusive Communities

As HUD moves to attack immigrant families by changing the mixed-status family rules, our polling shows that New Yorkers support keeping families together and oppose policies that would bar undocumented residents from subsidized housing. Respondents also expressed a strong preference for living in diverse communities.

We asked:

- How important is it that U.S. citizens can receive rental assistance even if they live with non-citizens (mixed-status families)?
- How important is it to live in a community with people from diverse backgrounds?

With more than 70 percent of those receiving federal housing subsidies and families with children supporting keeping mixed-status households together—and 70 percent of Republicans supporting the same view—this is a moral issue that crosses political and demographic lines. New Yorkers of all backgrounds and political ideologies want to keep mixed-status families together.

Importantly, these views are not unique to New York.

New Yorkers of all backgrounds and political ideologies want to **keep mixed-status families together.**

Group	% Supporting Mixed-Status Families	% Saying Diversity is Important
Statewide Total	72%	67%
Households With Kids	79%	76%
Democrats	82%	76%
Republicans*	70%	64%
NYC Residents	75%	70%
Public Housing Residents	79%	76%
Voucher Holders	83%	78%

*Support was lower among Independents and those who did not identify as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent.

Source: 2025 Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security, CSS, NY State

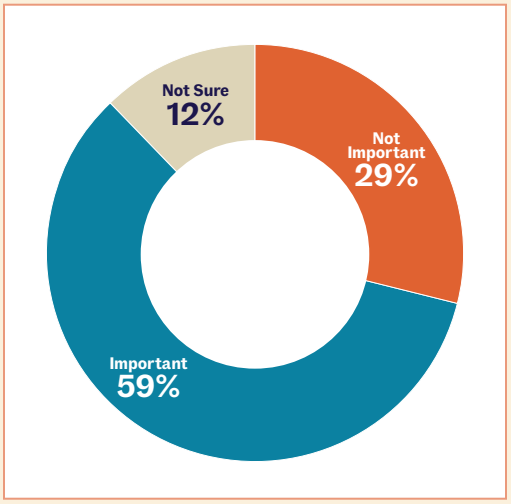
National Survey Findings

CSS also surveyed residents nationwide to understand their views on community, economic stability, and housing. Approximately 60 percent of Americans that were surveyed reported that it is important for them to live in a community with people from different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, or countries.

At the same time, housing costs are a significant burden. Across the nation, more than one in three residents in our survey (37 percent) needed assistance to pay their rent, mortgage, or utilities. (New York households face similar pressures.) The housing affordability crisis affects households across political affiliations and regions—no matter who people voted for or where they live. Rather than reducing federal housing investments, these findings underscore the need to not only protect Section 9 and 8 funding but increase these investments. Evictions driven by federal funding cuts will only make this housing unaffordability worse by forcing more families in need to compete for an ever-shrinking supply of units available to low-income buyers and renters.

Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of maintaining stable, baseline investments in public housing at a time of widespread housing hardship.

"How important is it to live in a community with diverse backgrounds?"



Source: 2025 Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security, CSS, National

NATIONAL HOUSING HARDSHIPS IMPACT ALL US RESIDENTS

Share of respondents needing help with rent, mortgages, or utilities

Group	% Yes
National Average	37%
Urban	45%
Rural	34%
Suburban	30%
Replublican	42%
Independent	33%
Democrat	33%
Trump Voter	41%
Harris Voter	34%

Source: 2025 Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security, CSS, National

Save Section 9

The FY26 budget provides meaningful wins for Section 8, including a nine percent increase in contract renewals and a 78 percent increase in Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPVs). The boost in TPVs is critical for PHA preservation efforts, including NYCHA's RAD/PACT pipeline (a program converting public housing to privately managed project-based vouchers to raise money for repairs) and modernization through the Preservation Trust. However, while TPVs help transition units *out* of Section 9, the remaining public housing stock—and the residents living in it today—will suffer immediate consequences from the 17 percent operating cut. We cannot modernize the future by defunding the present.



Conclusion

The evidence is clear: federally subsidized housing stabilizes families and strengthens well-being, and voters support policies that allow mixed-status families to remain housed together. At a time of widespread housing insecurity, cuts to public housing operations and expanded enforcement efforts threaten both housing stability and family unity.

As the Senate looks to vote on this legislation, members of Congress must listen to their constituents:

1. **Reverse the 17 percent operating cut:** Restore the baseline funding that provides stability for over a quarter of the public housing resident population.

2. **Push back on any rule change to Section 214 that harms immigrant families:** Align federal policy with the clear majority—72 percent—of New Yorkers who support allowing mixed-status families to live together in federally subsidized housing.

3. **Oppose the work requirements and time limit for federal housing programs:** Agencies are having trouble administering federal programs, and the U.S. housing crisis is making an affordable life difficult. Oppose policies that add to these problems and increase homelessness.

4. **Maintain Section 8 momentum:** Continue the robust funding for renewals that has garnered bipartisan support.

Finally, as PHAs consider recent communications and actions from the federal government, they must take steps to ensure the safety and stability of all residents while following the law:

1. Carry out tenancy as the law dictates for all families and individuals living in public and voucher housing, and instruct landlords receiving vouchers to do the same. This includes continuing the lawful practice of proration for mixed-status families continues and ensuring that building-level staff understand and apply the law correctly. Given the significant amount of misinformation circulating about immigration status and subsidized housing, PHAs must ensure that their actions—and those of their building managers and staff—do not validate or spread such false claims.
2. Carry out intensive training sessions for building-level staff on residents' constitutional rights, specifically regarding Fourth Amendment protections, and connect residents with related informational sessions.

Appendix A: Federal Housing Programs and Immigration

When applying for federal housing assistance—such as a unit in Section 9 Public Housing and/or a Section 8 housing choice voucher—residents must provide public housing agencies with information for all household members, including names, dates of birth, income, and, if applicable, employer or job details. In addition, households must declare the citizenship or immigration status of each household member.

At least one member of a household must fall into an "eligible immigrant" category in order for the household to live in public housing or receive a housing voucher. In addition to U.S. citizenship, eligible categories include:

- Lawful permanent residents
- Asylees and refugees
- Survivors of human trafficking
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitioners
- Persons granted withholding of removal
- Public interest or humanitarian parolees
- Individuals lawfully residing in the United States under compacts between the U.S. and the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, or Palau.

Household members who are U.S. citizens or have an eligible immigration status must provide Social Security numbers or immigration documents to the housing authority. Household members who do not fall within an eligible category and who are not U.S. citizens may state that they "do not contend" to have eligible status, and do not have to provide any other information about their immigration status. Non-eligible household members may continue to live in the unit; however, the housing subsidy is prorated and does not cover these members.

Non-eligible immigration statuses can include:

- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders
- Individuals with pending applications for:
  - Temporary Employment Authorization
  - Not Temporary Employment Authorization
  - Form I-589 Asylum
- Individuals with Deferred Action Status (DAS)
- Individuals with Deferred Enforced Departure (DED)
- Individuals with no current immigration status, including those released on an Order of Supervision or with Employment Authorization

HUD traditionally collects and stores the name, date of birth, and immigration document number of all HUD-eligible household members for verification purposes. This information has always been available to other federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security.

Throughout a household's time in federal housing programs, individuals who have verified their immigration status may be required to re-verify that status upon request from their housing agency, HUD, or landlord—typically during recertification. Those who have never claimed eligible status and who do not receive subsidy are not required to verify their immigration status and can continue to state that they "do not contend" to have eligible status.

Appendix B: How Subsidy Proration Works in NYCHA

NYCHA's General Rule for Determining Rent*

The rent amount a household pays will be the lower of



OR



Income-Based Rent

The income-based rent amount is the highest of:

- The cash assistance maximum shelter allowance, if the household is in receipt of cash assistance, or
- 10% of gross household income, or
- 30% of adjusted household income. *(Adjusted income is countable income after any applicable deductions.)*

Flat Rent

The flat rent amount is the maximum rent for NYCHA apartments based on a % of HUD's fair market rent (FMR).

NYCHA's FY25 Flat Rent Amounts	
Studio	$1,925
1 Bedroom	$2,009
2 Bedrooms	$2,224
3 Bedrooms	$2,772
4 Bedrooms	$2,991
5 Bedrooms	$3,440
6 Bedrooms	$3,888

Source: New York City Housing Authority

*Exception: NYCHA's Over-Income Policy. Click here.



SCENARIO 1

Family of 5: All household members meet the immigration criteria.

Josie and Mark live in a 3-bedroom apartment with their 3 children (16-year-old son, 14-year-old daughter, and 7-year-old son).

- Josie and Mark work and have an annual gross income of **$85,000**.
- They are entitled to the $480 dependent deduction per child, for a total deduction of **$1,440**.
- Their adjusted annual income is $85,000 - $1,440 = **$83,560**.
- The income-based rent calculation will be calculated as follows:
  - Gross Income: 10% x $85,000 = 8,500/12 = **$708**
  - Adjusted Income: 30% x $83,560 = $25,068/12 = **$2,089**

Their rent will be **$2,089** because it is less than the flat rent for a 3BR apartment, **$2,772.**



SCENARIO 2

Family of 5: Four household members meet the immigration criteria. One household member does not.

All else is the same as Scenario 1, except 1 household member does not meet the immigration criteria.

- First, we subtract **$2,089** from the flat rent of a three-bedroom apartment, **$2,772**, to determine NYCHA's subsidy.
- $2,772 - $2,089 = **$683**, NYCHA's subsidy.
- Then, we calculate the pro-rated subsidy for this household.
- Because only 4 of the 5 household members are immigrant eligible, the family receives only 4/5 (80%) of the subsidy or **$546.40** ($683 x .80).
- Lastly, let's find the difference between the flat rent, **$2,772**, and the pro-rated subsidy, **$546.40**.
  - $2,772 - $546.40 = **$2,225.60**.

This family will pay **$2,225.60** instead of **$2,089** as their NYCHA rent.

Survey Methodology

New York State Survey: For more than 20 years, the Community Service Society of New York has surveyed New Yorkers on housing, employment, benefits, finances, and policy views. The 2025 Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security surveyed 4,000 adults statewide, including 2,000 New York City residents, between September 9 and October 2, 2025. Surveys were offered in English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Haitian Creole via online panels, phone, and text recruitment. Results were weighted by region to reflect the demographic composition of New York State adults. The margin of error is +/- 1.55% at the 95% confidence level.

National Survey: A survey of 1,000 adults nationwide was fielded September 9-28, 2025 with a margin of error of +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. The survey was conducted online of a sample of American adults with quotas in place to ensure that the survey was reflective of the population among demographics such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, region, and household income. Respondents were recruited from a blend of online panels, and interviews were completed on a multi-device-optimized platform (laptop, tablet, and smartphone). Respondents come from opt-in research panels including: Dynata, Ipsos, Kantar, Walr, Nielsen, and a few specialty sources. Pre-provided demographics were used for screening and targeting as well as blending multiple panels to avoid single-source bias.

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