

## Trust in Local Government

**Trust in local government,** perceptions of its effectiveness, and the belief that it has made a difference in people's lives are **lukewarm** among CA voters.

#### Research Goals

The Million Voters Project commissioned Avalanche Insights to help them develop foundational understanding of priorities, emotional associations, core values, and psychological dimensions driving attitudes, priorities, and beliefs on trust in local government. These insights helped to identify transformative framing to persuade and activate a winning coalition based on key concepts and framing emerging from the first phase of research. These insights are based on two rounds of deep listening. The first round was fielded to a sample of 3,847 registered voters in California. The second round was fielded to a sample of 4,006 registered voters in California.

#### Methodology

An Avalanche Listening Survey combines open and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions provide rich data sets that allow us to analyze beliefs, values, and emotions related to an issue. Closed-ended questions provide clarity and comparability with existing research. We work with industry leading data collection partners to gather targeted samples of respondents.

Though a strong majority believe **local government is responsible** for the well-being of their community, less than half agree local government **looks out for people like them.**

**40%**

say they somewhat trust their local government, while only **10%** **trust them**

**47%**

believe **local government is effective** in addressing challenges

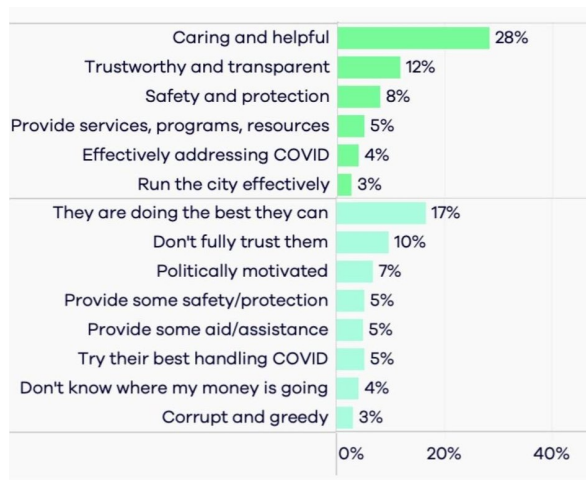
**83%**

say the local government has a **responsibility** to address community challenges because **we should care about the well-being of our whole community**

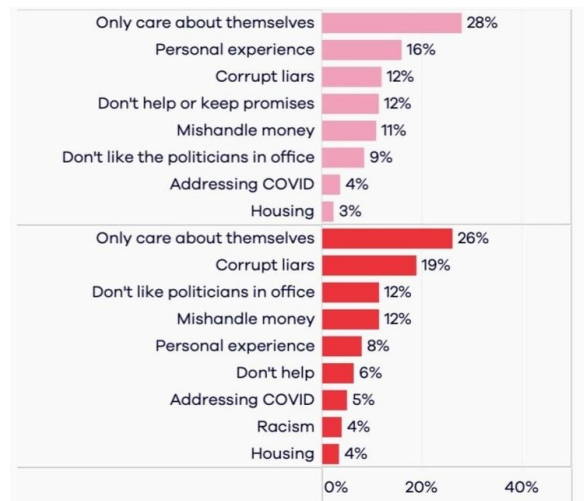
**48%**

believe local government looks out for the **best interests of people like me**

**When asked to describe, in their own words, why they trust local government,** respondents perceive them as caring, transparent, and 'trying their best.' Political motivations drive doubt among those who somewhat trust government.

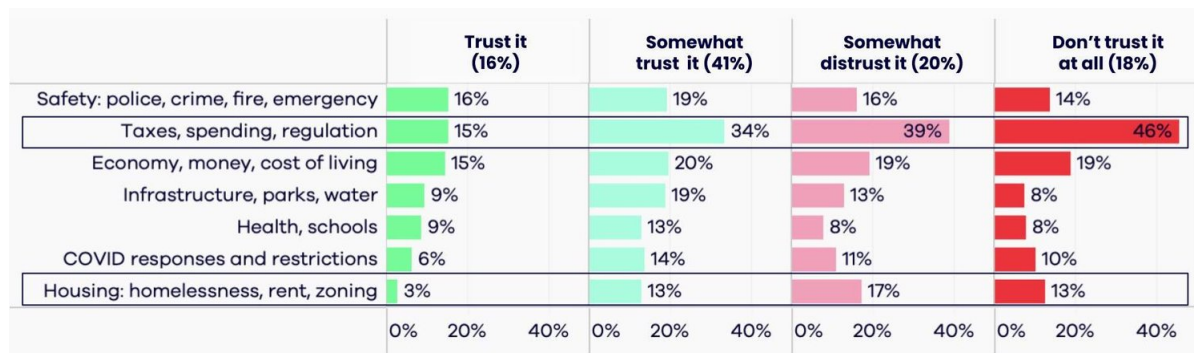


**When asked to describe, in their own words, why they distrust local government,** respondents are most likely to say government only looks out for themselves, politicians are corrupt liars, and that local officials don't keep their promises.



## Distrust in local government is driven by its role in taxes, spending, housing and homelessness

Open ended themes cited to describe effects of local government\*



Question (open-ended): What are three specific ways local government affects you and your community?

Respondents are most likely to say affordable housing is a big problem and a majority say they want to see “big, structural change.” This represents an opportunity to build trust in local government.

## Affordable Housing: In their own words

### Homelessness & risk of homelessness

*“Many people can not afford their rent! Increase in crime, homelessness, etc. It is unfair. People working **should be able to afford rent.**”*

-Trump, Latina Woman, 18-34, Central Valley

*“**Too many homeless** and too many working 3 or more jobs to live in a studio.”*

-Biden, White Woman, 35+, Los Angeles

*There is no rent control and most of the time people who have bad credit **are forced to be homeless** because they don't qualify for an apartment.”*

-Biden, Latina Woman, 18-34, Los Angeles

### Prohibitive housing costs

*“There is **no place for young families to move** and our schools are already shrinking.”*

-Biden, Asian Man, 35+, Bay Area

*“High housing costs **eliminates good people** from owning here.”*

-Biden, White Woman, 35+, Orange County

*“Apartment owners just **raise rents** without fixing apartments properly nor maintaining them.”*

-Trump, Latino Man, 35+, Los Angeles

### Being forced to move, or unable to move

*“The **cost of housing** makes it hard for people to not only have shelter, but also to keep themselves safe. For example, it is **harder to move out of relationships that are unhealthy or abusive** if one knows it will be impossible to afford housing.”*

-Biden, White Woman, 18-34, Inland Empire

*“That many **people are forced to move out** of larger cities because of lack of homes.”*

-Latino Man, 35+, Central Valley

*“I can **never afford to move** with rents rising.”*

-Biden, Latina Woman, 35+, Los Angeles

A majority of CA voters say that **the working class is affected most by rising cost of living**; fewer voters see a racial disparity.

**75%**

say rising costs of living, from food to housing, **affect working class Californians the most.**

**38%**

say rising costs of living, from food to housing, **affect Black and Brown Californians the most.**

## Drawing from these insights, we tested a series of messages advocating for a stronger local government role in addressing affordable housing.

Each message included the following components, with variations in message testing related to different versions of the Villain and the Hero.

1

### Shared value & problem

Unfairness of cost of living

2

### Relatable personal narrative

Impossible tradeoffs and sacrifices for families

3

### Villain

- V1 - Special interest
- V2 - Special interest + big business
- V3 - Special interest + big business with corruption

4

### Hero

- V1 -Diverse, innovative Californians
- V2 - People working with a local government that care
- V3 - People — of all backgrounds — working with a local government that cares

All 3 messages finished with a **call to action** that highlighted the **use collective local power to address housing, shelters and childcare**

**The messages resonated with 80%+ of CA voters** and outperformed an opposition message. There was no significant difference in resonance between the three messages.





