

# WHAT MATTERS+

## YOUR GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA POLICY AND POLITICS



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### 3 The gender politics of housing



Demonstrators surround Los Angeles Superior Court to protest an upcoming wave of evictions on Aug. 21, 2020. Photo by Lucy Nicholson, Reuters

The burden of [California's housing affordability crisis](#) falls most squarely on the shoulders of women, particularly women of color, single mothers and the elderly, according to [a report released this morning](#) by the Gender Equity Policy Institute. The report was developed at the request of Democratic Assemblymember Buffy Wicks of Oakland, leader of the Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development and author of [a contentious affordable housing bill](#) that has divided labor groups.

**Wicks:** “This report is a rallying cry for action. Unless lawmakers act on reforms now to unlock a wave of new affordable housing construction and access, we now know in shocking detail which women will be left behind.”

**According to the report,** “Women are at greater risk of housing insecurity ... for three primary reasons. One, women enter the housing market with lower incomes and less accumulated wealth. Two, women are more likely than men to be heading a household or family on only one income. Three, gender bias and discrimination in housing and in the broader society place additional obstacles in the way of women’s efforts to secure safe, affordable and convenient housing.”

**Here’s a look at some key takeaways:**

Statewide, 49% of women are rent-burdened – meaning they spend more than one-third of their income on housing – compared to 42% of men.

59% of Black women are rent-burdened, compared to 52% of Latina women, 49% of both white and Native American women and 45% of Asian American and Pacific Islander women.

73% of California’s more than 600,000 head-of-household single mothers are rent-burdened, compared to 56% of approximately 150,000 head-of-household single fathers.

Women make up 55% of Californians 65 and older, and many of them live alone or below the poverty line.

Women accounted for about 41% of California’s estimated homeless population in 2021. One in five of them reported experiencing domestic violence.