

A Deliberative Polling Exercise on the Housing Crisis in the Netherlands

Abstract

The Netherlands has a serious housing crisis. Addressing the housing problems faced by young people requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses local, national, and European policy initiatives. During the Deliberative Democracy Days on 27 and 29 May 2024, two meetings were held with a before & after poll which was conducted using an online questionnaire consisting of 15 questions. The survey was completed by participants both before and after the deliberative process. Out of the initial 32 respondents, only 24 completed both the pre- and post-surveys, making their responses viable for comparative analysis. The questionnaire included demographic questions to collect basic participant information and content questions to gauge expectations, current housing situations, knowledge, and concerns about the housing market for young people in the Netherlands, and opinions on potential solutions to the housing crisis. This methodology allowed for the measurement of changes in participants' opinions and knowledge, providing insights for recommendations to public authorities, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Subsequently fifteen suggestions are made that highlight various strategies policymakers can implement to improve housing affordability and accessibility for young people. These recommendations range from specific housing policies to broader economic and social measures, each aiming to create a more equitable and sustainable housing market for the younger generation.

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Introduction

During two meetings, we conducted a "before & after" poll using a Google Forms questionnaire with 15 questions. The questionnaire was completed by participants before and after the deliberative process. A total of 32 respondents completed the surveys, but some respondents completed only a pre- or post-questionnaire, making it impossible to compare their responses for the purpose of analysis. Therefore they were filtered out, and after filtering out incomplete polls, 24 unique respondents remained.

The questionnaire consisted of both demographic and content questions. The demographic questions focused on obtaining basic information about the participants, such as their age, gender, and education level. The content questions focused on understanding the participants' expectations, their current housing situation, their knowledge and concerns about the housing market for young people in the Netherlands, and their opinions about possible solutions to the housing market crisis.

This methodology allowed us to measure changes in participants' opinions and knowledge, and to gain insights that could help formulate recommendations for public authorities, policymakers and other stakeholders.

The respondents

The respondents were a diverse group in terms of gender, age and education level. Of the 24 respondents, there were 7 women, 16 men and 1 non-binary person. The ages ranged from 21 to 74, with an average age of 35.6 years. Specifically, there were 9 respondents younger than 30 years, 12 respondents between the ages of 30 and 40 years, and 3 respondents older than 40 years. In terms of educational level, currently attending or finished previously, 2 respondents had a High School education (middelbaar onderwijs), 3 respondents had a Community College / vocational education (MBO), 8 a College education (HBO) and 11 respondents had a university education. This demographic variety among participants is important to ensure a wide range of perspectives when interpreting the poll results and formulating representative conclusions and recommendations.

Question: What do you expect to learn or accomplish during these meetings?

The question "What do you expect to learn or accomplish during these meetings?" (multiple choices possible) revealed that participants had different expectations and learning goals. The most frequently chosen options were:

- 1. Networking and knowledge sharing: 15x respondents expected to network and share knowledge during the meetings.
- 2. Discuss current topics about the housing market: 14x of participants wanted to discuss current topics about the housing market.
- 3. Information about financing and mortgages: 3x participants wanted to obtain information about financing and mortgages.
- 4. All of the above: 10x respondents chose that they wanted to pursue all of the listed goals.
- 5. OTHER: 3x participants indicated their own specific expectations, which we categorized under "OTHER."

The participants that chose OTHER further specified that they wanted to learn or accomplish the next during these meetings:

- How can we legally approach this issue (1x)
- Especially how we can expedite it and what my rights are (1x)
- Activation (1x)

These results show that most participants were primarily interested in sharing knowledge and networking, as well as discussing current housing issues. However, a small group also had specific legal and practical expectations from the meetings.

Question: What is your current housing situation?

From the data collected, the respondents' current housing situation is as follows:

Owner of a house	3 respondents
Tenant of a private residence	4 respondents
Tenant of social housing	10 respondents
Free sector house	2 respondents
Lives with parents/family	5 respondents

This distribution gives a clear picture of the different living situations respondents are in, with a majority living in social rented housing.

Question: How do you estimate your current knowledge of the housing market for young people in the Netherlands?

These figures show how respondents' opinions about their knowledge of the housing market for young people in the Netherlands changed as a result of the meeting.

Opinion	Before the meeting	After the meeting
Very poor	2	2
Poor	8	8
Moderate	9	5
Good	5	9

The data show that respondents' opinions on their current knowledge of the housing market for young people in the Netherlands were divided as follows both before and after the meeting:

Before the meeting, a small number of respondents (2) described their knowledge as "very poor." This number remained unchanged after the meeting. The number of respondents who rated their knowledge as "poor" also remained constant, with 8 respondents both before and after the meeting.

A shift can be seen among respondents who rated their knowledge as "moderate." Before the meeting, 9 respondents rated their knowledge as "moderate," while this number dropped to 5 after the meeting.

Significant is the increase in the number of respondents who rated their knowledge as "good," from 5 before the meeting to 9 after the meeting.

These changes indicate that some of the respondents considered their knowledge improved after participating in the meeting.

Question: To what extent are you currently concerned about your ability to find affordable housing?

Opinion	Before	After
Not worried at all	3	3
Not so concerned	2	2
Neutral	5	2
Concerned	8	10
Very concerned	6	7

From the data collected, respondents' level of concern about their ability to find affordable housing is as follows:

Before the meeting, 3 respondents reported feeling "not at all concerned" about their ability to find affordable housing. This number remained unchanged after the meeting. The number of respondents who indicated they were "not that concerned" also remained constant at 2 respondents.

A significant shift was seen among respondents who considered themselves "neutral." Before the meeting, 5 respondents considered themselves neutral, but this number dropped to 2 after the meeting.

The number of respondents who considered themselves "concerned" increased from 8 before the meeting to 10 after the meeting. Similarly, the number of respondents who felt "very concerned" increased from 6 before the meeting to 7 after.

These shifts indicate that after the meeting, more respondents felt concerned or very concerned about their ability to find affordable housing, while fewer felt neutral on the issue.

Question: Have you had difficulty finding affordable housing?

Below are the responses to the question "Have you had difficulty finding affordable housing?":

Yes, some difficulty	17 respondents
No, no difficulty	3 respondents
Not applicable	4 respondents

The data show that the majority of respondents experienced difficulties in finding affordable housing. Of the respondents, 17 reported that they did have difficulty finding affordable housing. In contrast, only 3 respondents reported that they did not have difficulty finding affordable housing. In addition, 4 respondents indicated that the question did not apply to them. These results indicate that finding affordable housing is a significant problem for most survey participants.

Question: What factors do you think most affect your chances in the housing market? (Multiple answers possible)

Factors affecting housing market opportunities:

Income	mentioned 36 times
Housing availability	mentioned 25 times
Rising rents	mentioned 21 times
Location	mentioned 20 times
Public policy	mentioned 19 times
Market regulation	mentioned 10 times
Knowing 'a guy'	2 times mentioned
Subscription duration	mentioned 1 time

This enumeration gives a clear picture of which factors respondents feel most affect their chances in the housing market. Income, housing availability and rising rents are seen as the most important factors, while fewer respondents see market regulation and having a network as influential.

The data collected show that respondents consider several factors as influential to their chances in the housing market. The most frequently mentioned factor was income, which 36 respondents identified as important. Housing availability was also frequently mentioned, with 25 respondents considering it an influential factor. Rising rents were seen as a significant barrier by 21 respondents, followed by location, which was mentioned by 20 respondents.

Public policy was cited as important by 19 respondents, indicating that government actions have a significant impact on their chances in the housing market. Market regulation was mentioned by 10 respondents, while having a network or "wheelbarrow" was considered a factor by 2 respondents. Finally, registration length was indicated as important by 1 respondent.

These results underscore the complexity of the housing market and the various factors affecting individuals' opportunities. Income, housing availability and rising rents appear to be the most critical factors according to respondents.

Question: What role should government play in addressing these challenges?

The roles the government should play in addressing housing challenges according to the respondents were as following:

- **Encourage new construction projects:** mentioned 23 times
- **Reduce transfer taxes for young buyers:** mentioned 19 times
- **Regulate rents:** mentioned 19 times
- **All of the above answers:** mentioned 21 times
- **Other**
 - o **Rearrange the whole situation for entire population:** mentioned 1 time
 - o **Make more social housing available for rent:** mentioned 1 time
 - o **Finding building sites:** mentioned 1 time
 - o **Enforce the vacancy law:** 1 time mentioned

The data show that respondents see different roles for government in addressing housing challenges. The most frequently mentioned role is encouraging new construction projects, which 23 respondents indicated as crucial. In addition, reducing the transfer tax for young buyers and regulating rents were mentioned by 19 respondents as important measures.

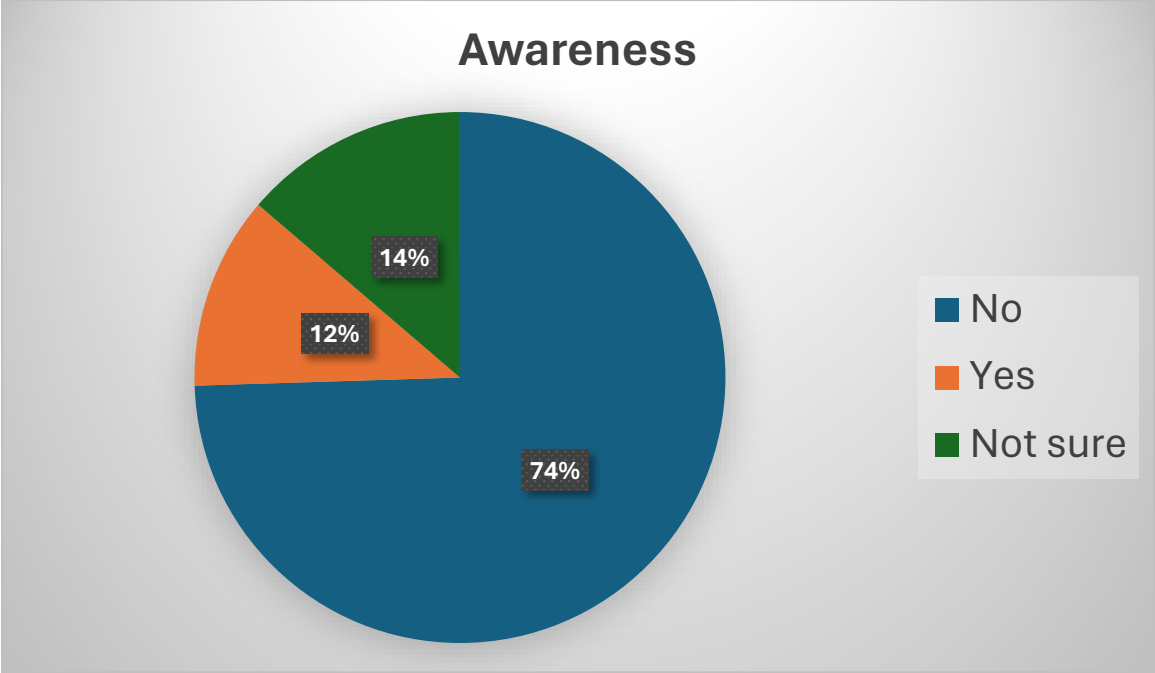
A significant number of respondents, 21, chose "all of the above answers," indicating the need for a multi-faceted approach by the government. Other specific suggestions included completely redesigning the situation for the entire population, making more social rental

housing available, finding building sites and enforcing the vacancy law, each mentioned by one respondent.

These results underscore the diversity of government expectations and highlight the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to effectively address housing challenges.

Question: Are you familiar with any EU policies or programs that may affect the housing market for young people in the Netherlands?

Awareness of EU policies or programs that may affect the housing market for young people in the Netherlands:



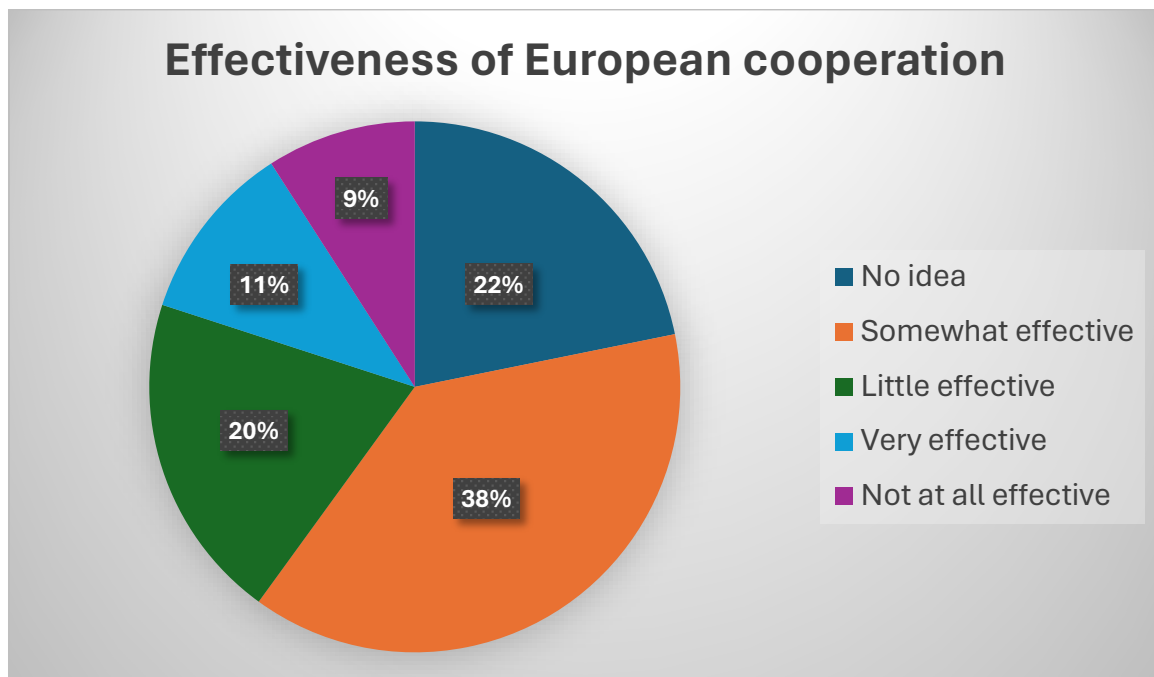
This distribution gives a clear picture of the level of familiarity, or rather the lack of familiarity, among respondents with EU policies or programs that may affect the housing market for young people in the Netherlands.

The data show that the majority of respondents are not familiar with EU policies or programs that may affect the housing market for young people in the Netherlands. As many as 74% of respondents indicated that they were not familiar with such policies. In addition, 14% of respondents were unsure of their familiarity with EU policies or programs. In contrast, only 12% of respondents indicated that they were familiar with relevant EU policies. These results highlight a clear gap in knowledge about European policies that may affect the housing market.

Question: To what extent do you think European cooperation can help solve housing problems for young people?

Effectiveness of European cooperation in solving housing problems for young people:

- No idea: (24%)
- Somewhat effective: mentioned 21 times (42%)
- Little effective: mentioned 11 times (22%)
- Very effective: mentioned 6 times (12%)
- Not at all effective: mentioned 5 times (10%)



These percentages give a clear picture of how respondents assess the effectiveness of European cooperation in solving housing problems for young people.

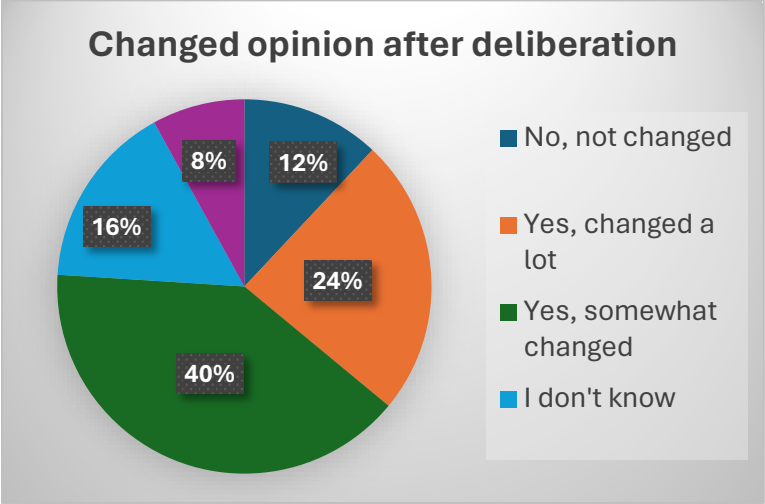
The data collected show that opinions on the effectiveness of European cooperation in solving housing problems for young people vary. A significant number of respondents, 42%, consider European cooperation to be "somewhat effective." About 24% of respondents said they had no idea about its potential effectiveness.

In addition, 22% of respondents consider European cooperation to be "not very effective," while 12% of respondents think it could be "very effective." Finally, 10% of respondents believe that European cooperation is "not at all effective" in addressing these problems.

These results show mixed feelings and uncertainty among respondents about the role European cooperation can play in solving housing problems for young people.

Question: Are there any specific points that came up during the consultation that influenced your opinion on the opportunities and crisis in the housing market for young people?

The self-reported changes in opinion on youth housing market opportunities and crisis are as following:



The data collected shows that 64% of respondents indicated that their views on the housing market opportunities and crisis for young people changed as a result of the consultation. This includes both those who changed their opinion significantly and those who changed their opinion somewhat. The remaining 36% of respondents indicated that their opinion has not changed or that they do not know.

Caveat

It is important to note that these findings are based on respondents' self-reported opinions. This means that responses are subjective and may vary depending on participants' personal perceptions and interpretations. While these insights are valuable, they should be interpreted with caution because they reflect respondents' personal experiences and feelings.

Long-term effects

It is essential to consider that the long-term effects of the changes in opinions and insights gained during the consultation have yet to be seen. Although a significant number of respondents indicated that their views on the housing market for young people have changed, the extent to which these changes will be permanent is uncertain.

The lasting impact of the consultation depends on several factors, including the implementation of policies, continued education and awareness campaigns, and overall housing market developments.

It is possible that the insights and changes in opinions observed now may evolve as respondents gain more experience and information. Therefore, it is important to conduct follow-up research and facilitate ongoing dialogues to understand how these opinions evolve and continue to shape appropriate policies.

Fifteen suggestions for how local, national or European policy makers can better address housing problems for young people:

Addressing the housing problems faced by young people requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses local, national, and European policy initiatives. Below are fifteen suggestions that highlight various strategies policymakers can implement to improve housing affordability and accessibility for young people. These recommendations range from specific housing policies to broader economic and social measures, each aiming to create a more equitable and sustainable housing market for the younger generation.

1. Leave elderly people alone in terms of income and encourage cohabitation to free up housing

This suggestion advocates for a policy that respects the financial independence of elderly individuals while encouraging shared living arrangements. By allowing older adults to live together without penalizing their income, more housing units can be freed up for younger populations. This approach not only helps in addressing housing shortages but also enhances social connections and mutual support among the elderly. Additionally, such arrangements can lead to more efficient use of healthcare resources, as older adults living together might better support each other's needs, reducing the burden on the healthcare system.

This suggestion emphasizes the importance of not disrupting the financial status of the elderly while promoting cohabitation. The underlying idea is that by not altering their income through punitive tax measures or reductions in benefits, older individuals will be more inclined to live together. This policy could help in releasing larger family homes into the housing market, thus providing more options for younger families and individuals seeking housing.

2. By new construction for young people, more rent controls (especially for super high rents due to expats and international students).

This approach suggests increasing the construction of new housing specifically targeted at young people, combined with stricter rent controls. High rents, often driven by the influx of expats and international students, create significant barriers for local young residents. Implementing rent controls can help stabilize prices and make housing more affordable. Moreover, focusing new construction efforts on the needs of young people ensures that this demographic has access to appropriate and affordable housing options.

3. Making more social housing available.

Expanding the availability of social housing is a crucial step in addressing housing affordability issues. Social housing typically offers lower rent compared to the private market, making it accessible to individuals and families with lower incomes. By increasing the stock of social housing, policymakers can ensure that more young people have access to affordable living spaces, thus reducing economic disparities and promoting social stability.

4. Stricter rules for social rental housing, e.g. no indefinite contracts.

Implementing stricter regulations on social rental housing, such as limiting the duration of contracts, can help ensure that these resources are used effectively. For example, by avoiding indefinite contracts, social housing can be made available to a larger number of people over time, as current tenants are encouraged to move on when their financial situation improves. This approach helps in maximizing the utility of social housing stock and ensures that those in need have access to affordable housing.

5. Stricter supervision of the entire housing market (renting, buying, building, etc.).

Enhanced oversight and regulation of the entire housing market can address various issues, including unfair rental practices, speculative buying, and construction standards. Stricter supervision ensures that all market participants adhere to fair practices, which can help stabilize housing prices and improve the quality and accessibility of housing. Effective market supervision also helps in preventing fraud and exploitation, thereby protecting vulnerable populations, including young people.

6. Make more houses available only for young people or students, which you can then use for 1-3 years as a graduate starter.

Designating certain housing units exclusively for young people or students, with a usage limit of 1-3 years, can help address the transitional housing needs of this demographic. This policy provides temporary yet stable housing solutions for recent graduates or young professionals, allowing them to establish themselves financially before moving on to longer-term housing options. Such targeted housing can ease the initial burden of high rental costs and provide a smoother transition into the housing market.

7. Push for more supply of cheap student housing and more social rental housing, including the use of container housing and tiny houses.

Increasing the supply of affordable student housing and social rental units, including innovative solutions like container housing and tiny houses, can significantly alleviate housing shortages. These alternative housing models are often more cost-effective and quicker to deploy, making them suitable for addressing urgent housing needs. By diversifying the types of affordable housing available, policymakers can cater to a broader range of preferences and requirements, thus improving overall housing accessibility for young people.

8. Stop the liberalization of rental housing; keep it affordable and accessible for starters.

Reversing or halting the liberalization of rental housing is essential to maintain affordability and accessibility. Liberalization often leads to increased rental prices, making it difficult for

young people and other vulnerable groups to secure housing. By keeping the rental market regulated, rents can be controlled, ensuring that housing remains within reach for a broader population. This approach helps prevent economic displacement and promotes stable communities.

9. Make countries aware of their own rules.

Raising awareness among countries about their own housing policies and regulations can foster better compliance and enforcement. When countries understand and adhere to their rules, it leads to more consistent and fair housing practices. This awareness can also encourage the sharing of best practices and cooperation among nations, leading to improved housing policies and outcomes across the board.

10. Give young people the opportunity to build their own homes from the age of 10.

Allowing young people to start building their own homes from a very young age, such as 10, introduces them to housing and construction concepts early on. While this idea might seem ambitious, it promotes education and engagement in housing issues from a young age. Practical implementation would likely involve educational programs and supervised projects rather than actual homebuilding at such a young age. This approach fosters a sense of responsibility and knowledge about housing, which can benefit young individuals as they grow older.

Opening more projects that focus on financing homes for young people can provide them with early opportunities to engage with the housing market. These projects could include educational initiatives, financial literacy programs, and simulated housing projects that prepare young individuals for future homeownership. By equipping young people with the knowledge and tools to navigate the housing market, policymakers can foster a generation that is better prepared to address housing challenges.

11. Transfer subsidies from polluting farmers to sustainable housing.

Reallocating subsidies from environmentally harmful agricultural practices to sustainable housing initiatives can address both environmental and housing issues simultaneously. By supporting sustainable housing projects, such as eco-friendly construction and energy-efficient homes, policymakers can promote environmental sustainability while addressing housing shortages. This approach encourages the development of green housing solutions that are beneficial for both people and the planet.

12. Join action groups protesting for the preservation of social housing, such as Not for Sale and New/West in Resistance.

Supporting and joining forces with action groups that advocate for the preservation of social housing can amplify efforts to protect affordable housing options. These groups often have grassroots support and can effectively raise awareness and influence policy changes. By

aligning with such movements, policymakers can demonstrate their commitment to maintaining and expanding social housing, ensuring that it remains accessible to those in need.

13. Stop seeing housing as a revenue model; housing should be considered a basic amenity.

Reframing housing as a basic amenity rather than a revenue-generating asset is crucial for ensuring equitable access. When housing is viewed primarily as a financial investment, it often leads to speculative practices and price inflation, making it less accessible to those with lower incomes. By treating housing as a fundamental right and basic necessity, policymakers can implement measures that prioritize affordability, stability, and inclusivity in the housing market.

14. Draft new policies and regulations.

Developing new policies and regulations tailored to current housing challenges is essential for addressing evolving issues. These policies should focus on affordability, accessibility, sustainability, and fair practices in the housing market. By continuously updating and refining housing regulations, policymakers can ensure that they remain relevant and effective in tackling emerging problems, ultimately improving housing outcomes for young people.

15. Express gratitude for the efforts.

Acknowledging and expressing gratitude for the efforts of those involved in addressing housing challenges is important for fostering a collaborative and positive environment. Recognizing the hard work and dedication of policymakers, activists, and community members can boost morale and encourage continued efforts. Gratitude helps build a sense of community and shared purpose, which is essential for tackling complex issues like housing.

These suggestions range from improving regulation and oversight, to encouraging new construction projects and reviewing subsidies, with the goal of better addressing housing problems for young people.

Conclusion

The findings from the "before & after" poll highlight several key insights into the housing issues faced by young people in the Netherlands and potential policy responses. The diverse group of respondents provided a wide range of perspectives, reflecting various demographic backgrounds and housing situations. The data revealed significant concerns about housing affordability and availability, with many respondents indicating a change in their knowledge and opinions as a result of the deliberative meetings.

The majority of participants expressed a need for more social housing, stricter rent controls, and increased supervision of the housing market. There was also strong support for targeted housing solutions for young people, such as affordable student housing and innovative housing models like container homes and tiny houses. Additionally, many respondents emphasized the importance of viewing housing as a basic necessity rather than a revenue-generating asset.

The suggestions collected provide a comprehensive set of strategies that local, national, and European policymakers can consider to address housing challenges for young people. These range from policy and regulatory changes to community and environmental initiatives. The collective input from the respondents underscores the need for a coordinated and multifaceted approach to create a more equitable and sustainable housing market.

Moving forward, it is crucial to continue engaging with stakeholders, conducting further research, and monitoring the long-term impacts of implemented policies. By maintaining an open dialogue and fostering collaboration, policymakers can ensure that the housing needs of young people are met and that sustainable solutions are achieved.