

LABarometer

Wildfire Survey

WAVE 1 - KEY FINDINGS

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Background and Methods

The Palisades and Eaton wildfires of January 2025 were among the largest wildfires in Los Angeles history, burning over 37,000 acres and 16,000 structures and causing over \$50 billion in damage. This survey was designed to evaluate the immediate impact of the January wildfires on residents and to understand residents' protective strategies, risk perceptions, and policy preferences in the aftermath.

The survey covers the following topics: physical and mental health, housing hardships, work hardships, financial impacts, food insecurity, social support, community resilience, disaster preparedness, protective behavior, risk perceptions, and policy attitudes.

This report presents key findings from the survey, with select outcomes broken down by pre-wildfire housing security¹ and housing tenure. All results are rounded to the nearest percentage point and weighted to ensure adequate representation of the L.A. County population.

Survey Methodology

This survey was fielded to the LABarometer Panel, a probability-based Internet panel – and sub-panel of the Understanding America Study (UAS) – that includes approximately 2,000 adults living in households throughout Los Angeles County. Following UAS protocols, all LABarometer surveys are fielded in English and in Spanish. To participate in a survey, panel members can use any computer, cell phone, or tablet with Internet access. The majority of panel members have their own internet access. Panel members who do not have access to internet are provided with an internet-enabled tablet to ensure their regular participation in our surveys.

Survey and Sample Information

The LABarometer Wildfire Survey was fielded to panel members from February 1 – March 30, 2025. A total of 1,360 panel members participated, resulting in a survey participation rate of 72%. Variable names and question wording are not provided in this report. To see the full set of variables and questions, please refer to the survey [documentation](#) or [topline](#).

Survey Weights

The method for creating sample weights for LABarometer surveys follows the general procedure for UAS surveys described [in CESR's online methodology documentation](#). Sample weights are constructed in two steps. First, we calculate a base weight that corrects for unequal probabilities of selection of

¹For ease of interpretation, this report relies on a single measure of pre-wildfire (perceived) housing insecurity included in LABarometer's 2024 Livability/Affordability survey (fielded from July 24 – Oct 15 2024). Respondents were asked: "Over the last 12 months, how often have you worried that you might lose your housing?" Response options included: not at all, sometimes, often, very often. Of the Wildfire Survey's 1,360 respondents, 1,045 had participated in the 2024 Livability/Affordability survey and answered this question. Any respondent who answered "not at all" was coded as "housing secure" prior the fires (71%); any respondent who answered "sometimes," "often," or "very often" was coded as "housing insecure" prior to the fires (29%). This measure is highly correlated with other key dimensions of housing insecurity measured in the survey, including cost burden, difficulty paying rent/mortgage, and poor housing quality.

different households into the UAS. Second, we generate post-stratification weights, which align sample distributions of key demographics, namely gender, race/ethnicity, age, education, and geographic location, with their population counterparts. Population benchmarks are derived from the Basic Monthly Current Population Survey (CPS). The provided sample weights bring the sample in line with the L.A. County adult population.

About the Panel

The LABarometer Panel is a probability-based, Internet panel of approximately 2,000 adults living in households throughout Los Angeles County. It is a sub-panel of the Understanding America Study (UAS), a national Internet panel of ~15,000 Americans maintained by the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research. Following UAS procedures, LABarometer panel members are recruited in batches and refreshed through address-based sampling using postal codes. Eligible individuals are all non-institutionalized adults aged 18 and older living in a contacted household in Los Angeles County.

About LABarometer

LABarometer is a research center housed at the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR). We conduct basic and applied social science research on issues affecting Los Angeles County residents, with the aim of informing academic research, public discourse, and policy. At the heart of our research is the LABarometer Panel, a probability-based Internet survey panel of approximately 15,000 adults randomly selected from households throughout Los Angeles County.

LABarometer surveys are fielded to the LABarometer Panel on a biannual basis to monitor social and economic conditions in Los Angeles County. These longitudinal surveys focus on four dimensions of individual and community well-being: livability, affordability, mobility, and sustainability. LABarometer surveys include questions about residents' lives, their attitudes and behaviors, and the challenges they encounter in their communities, filling data gaps on topics ranging from housing insecurity and climate resilience, to transportation behavior and the economy.

Survey Team

Thank you to Drs. Margaret Gatz, Emily Smith-Greenaway, Doerte Junghaenel, Michalle Mor Barak, Eric Rice, and Andrew Parker for their valuable contributions to this survey.

Kyla Thomas, Ph.D., is the Director of LABarometer and a Sociologist at CESR.

Evan Sandlin, Ph.D. is the Data Analyst for LABarometer and a Research Manager at CESR.

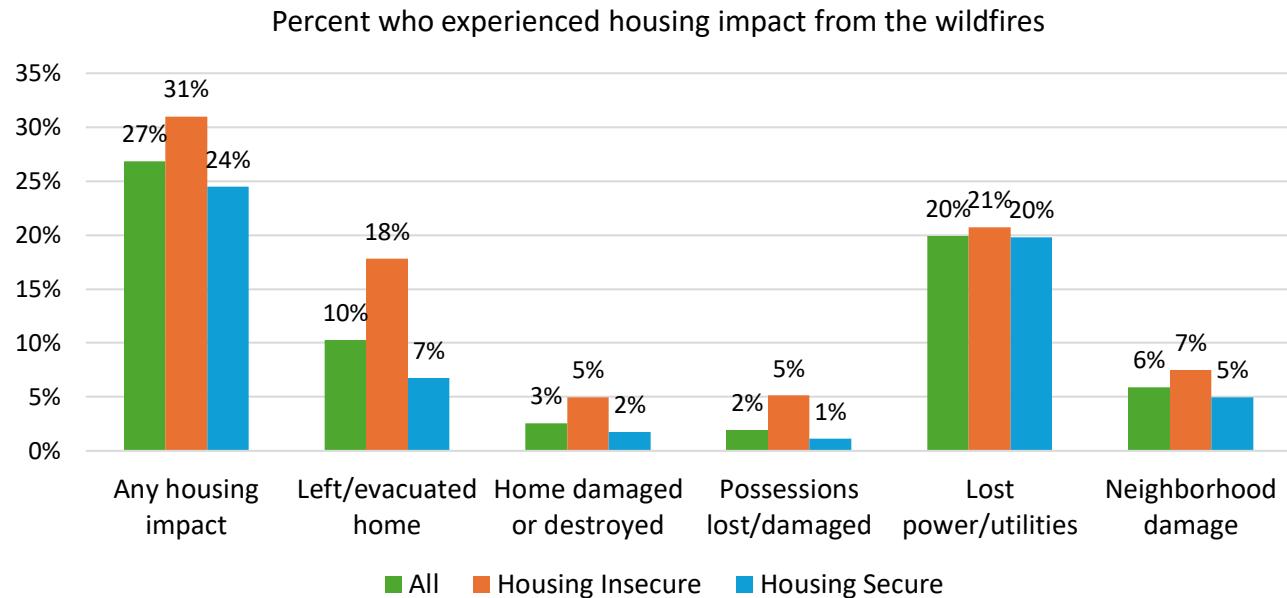
Marco Angrisani, Ph.D., is the Survey Methodologist for LABarometer and a Senior Economist at CESR.

Michele Warnock is Center Assistant for CESR.

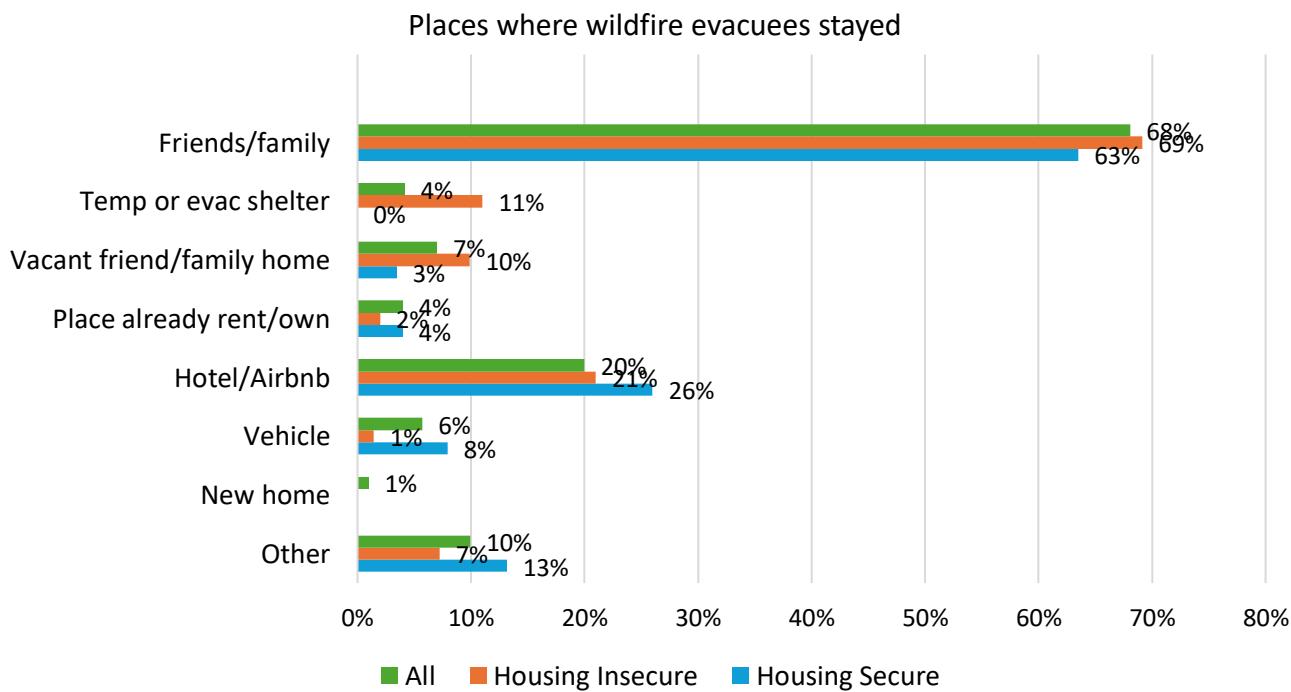
Greg Steigerwald, MPA Candidate, is a Research Assistant for LABarometer.

Housing Impacts

- **1 in 4 residents experienced a housing disruption during the wildfires, with housing-insecure residents disproportionately impacted.**

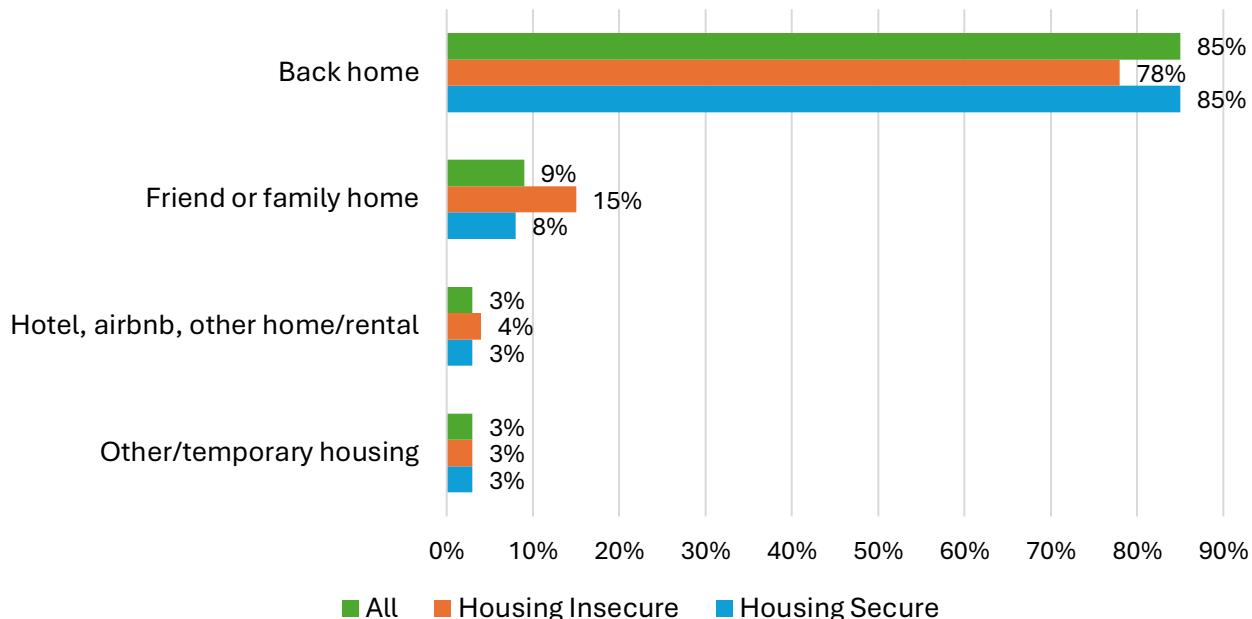


- **The majority of evacuees stayed with friends or family; one in ten housing-insecure evacuees used an emergency or evacuation shelter.**



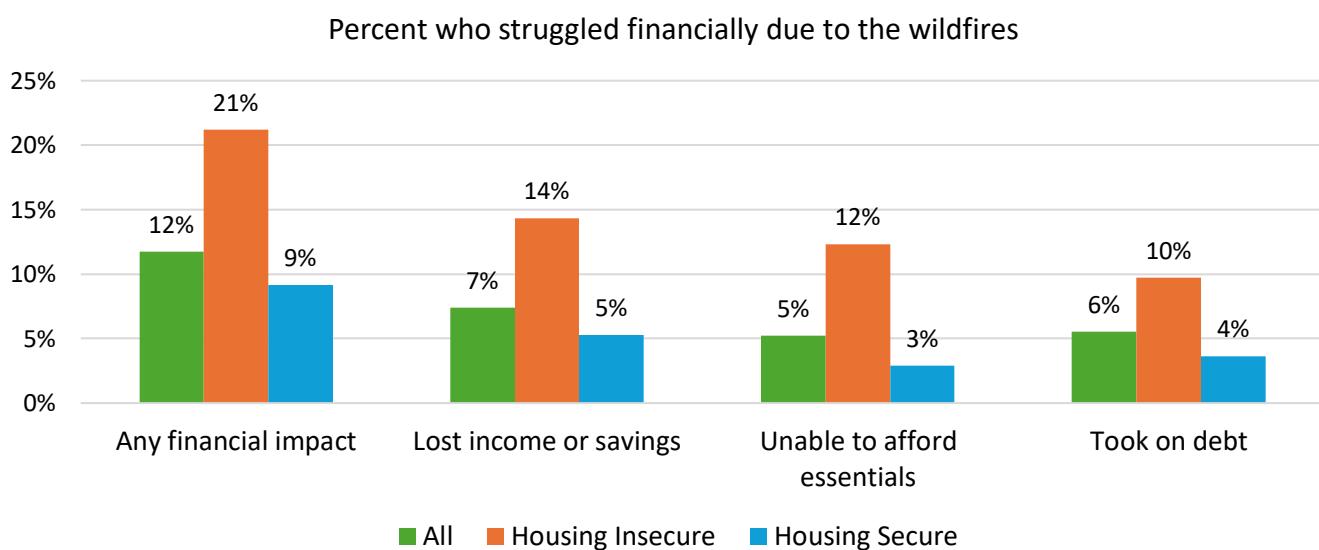
- At time of survey, 22% of housing-insecure evacuees were still displaced, compared to 15% of housing-secure evacuees.

Where wildfire evacuees are living now (at time of survey)

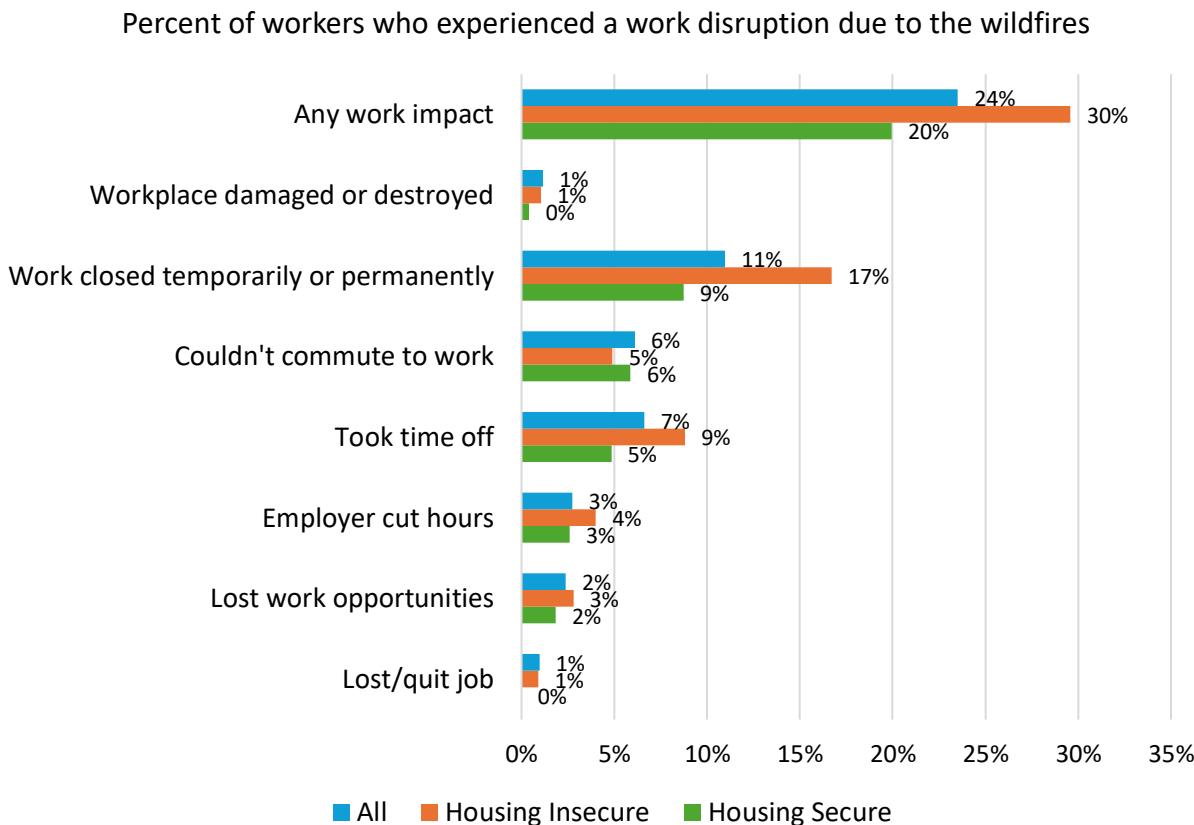


Social and Economic Impacts

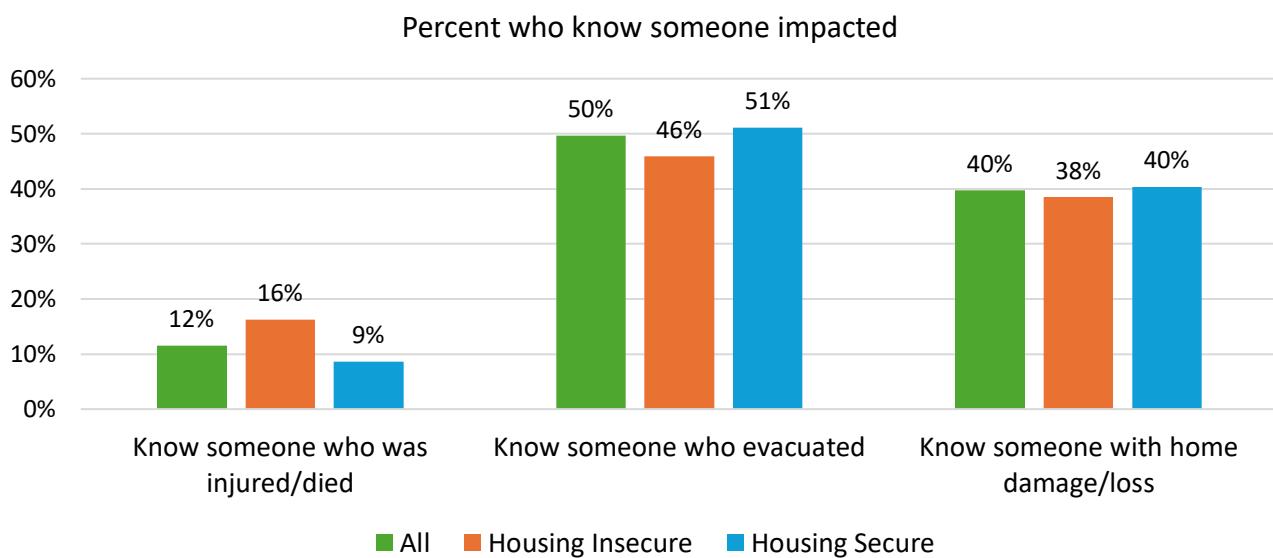
- Housing-insecure residents were twice as likely to struggle financially due the wildfires.



- **1 in 5 workers experienced a work closure or disruption, with housing-insecure workers disproportionately affected.**

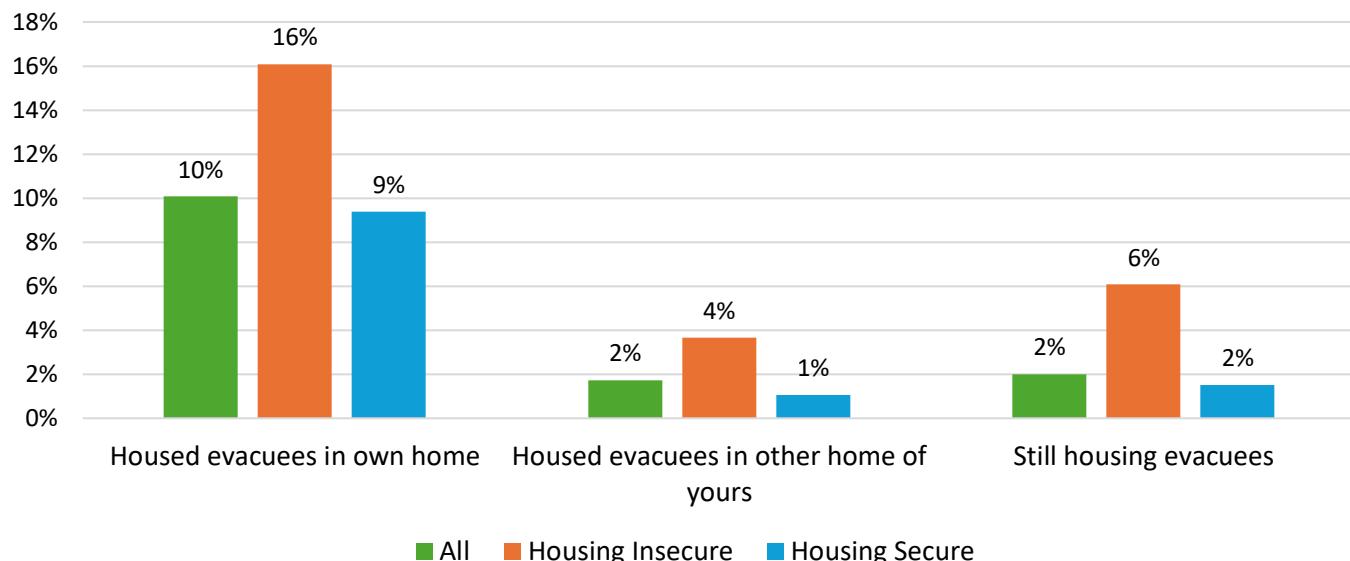


- **40% of residents know someone whose home was damaged or destroyed by the wildfires.**



- Among those who knew someone with home damage/loss, housing-insecure residents were more likely to house evacuees.

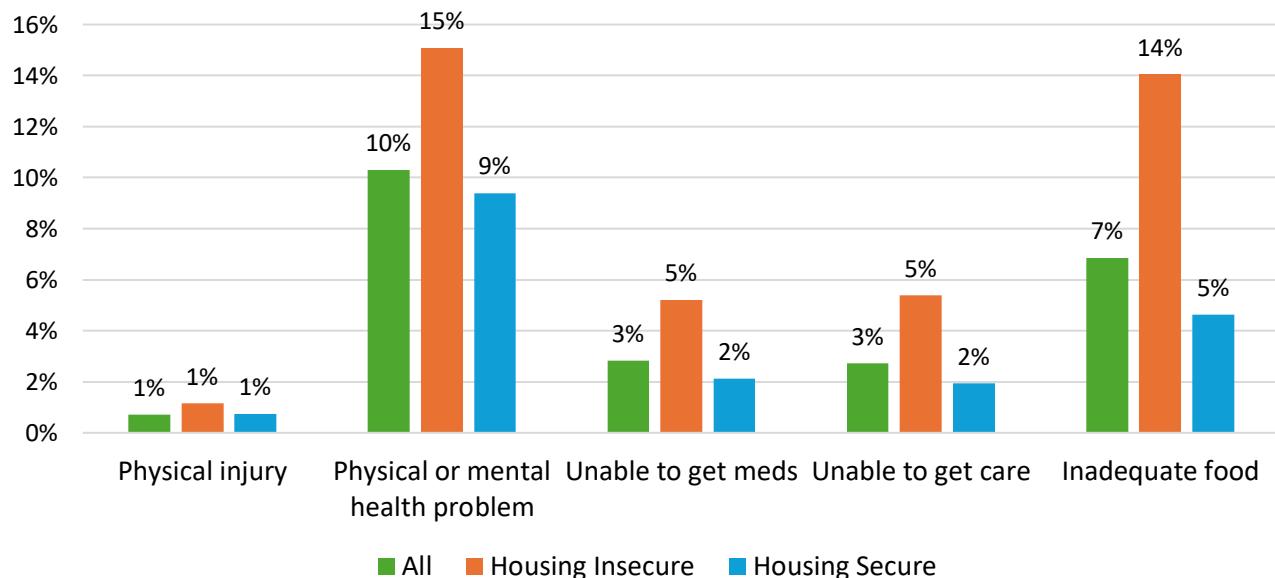
If knew someone who lost their home: Percent who housed evacuees



Health-Related Impacts

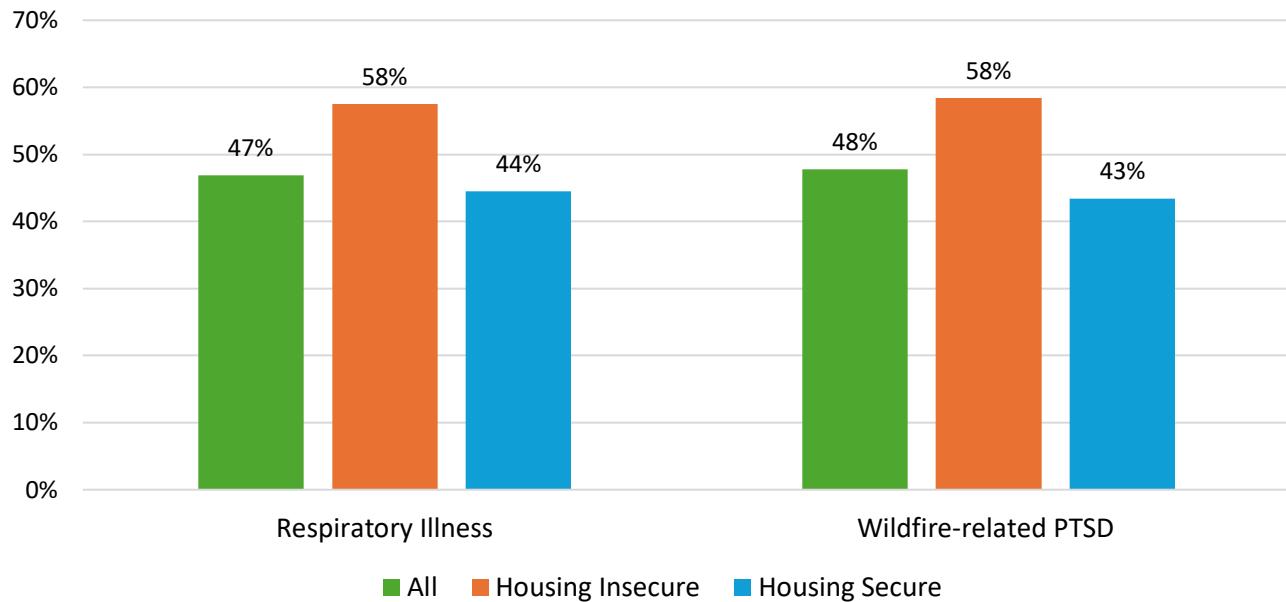
- Housing-insecure residents were more likely to experience health problems, food insecurity, and healthcare barriers due to the wildfires.

Percent who experienced health-related problem due to the wildfires



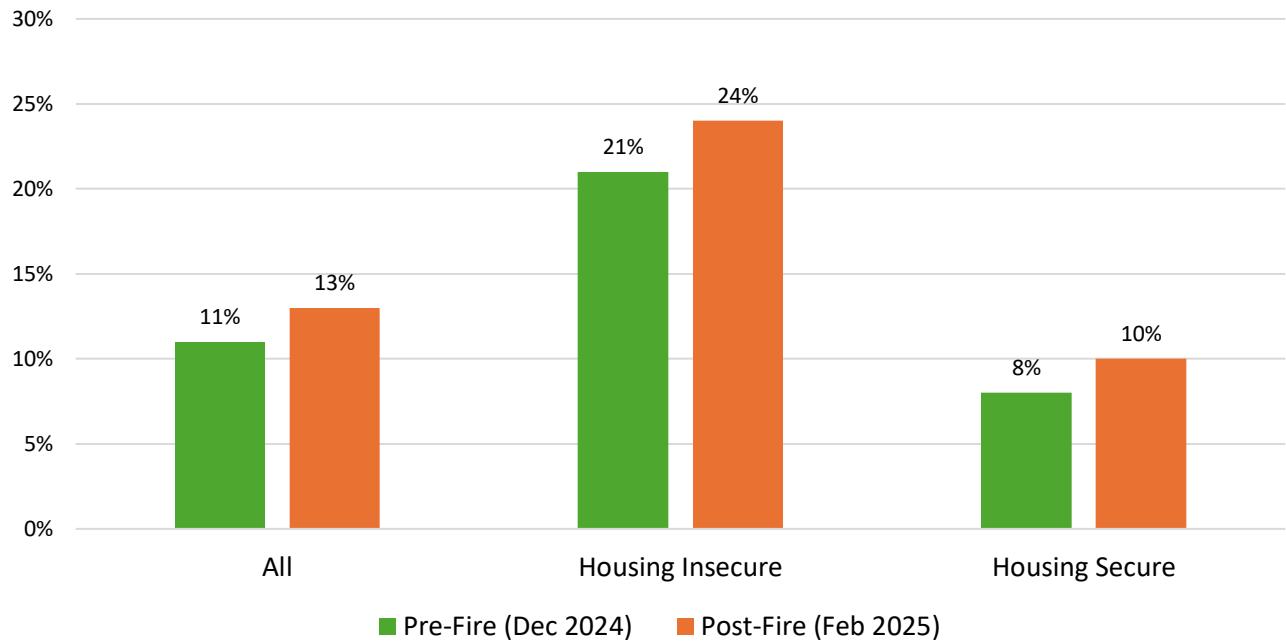
- Since January, nearly half of residents experienced symptoms associated with wildfire-related PTSD and a similar share experienced respiratory issues.

Since January, percent who experienced symptoms associated with:



- In the aftermath of the wildfires, there was a small uptick in reports of moderate to severe psychological distress

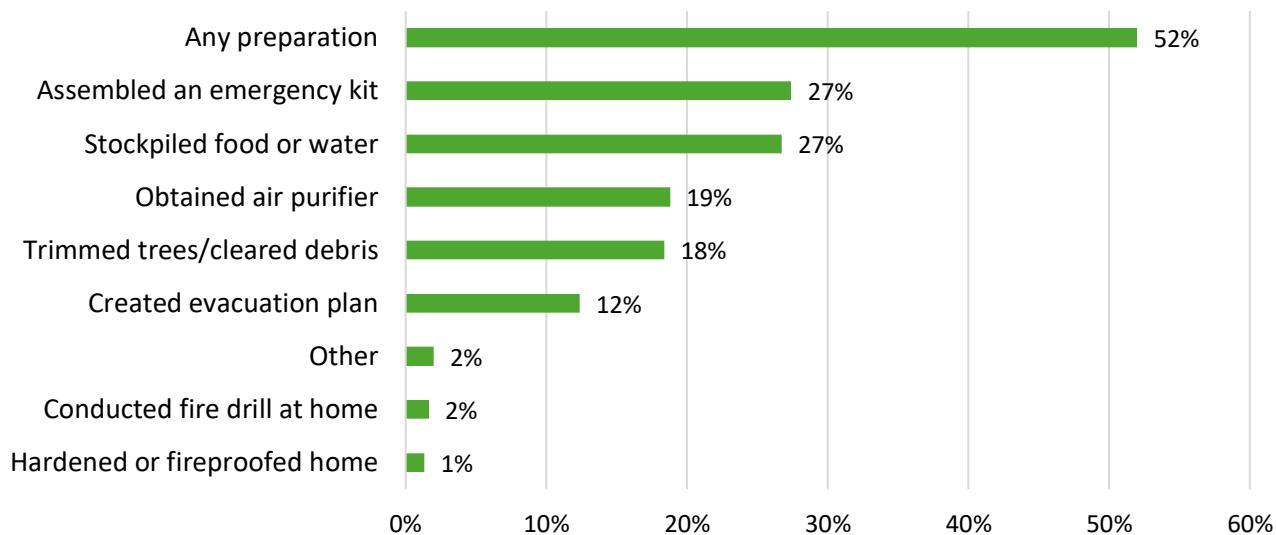
Percent reporting symptoms of moderate to severe psychological distress



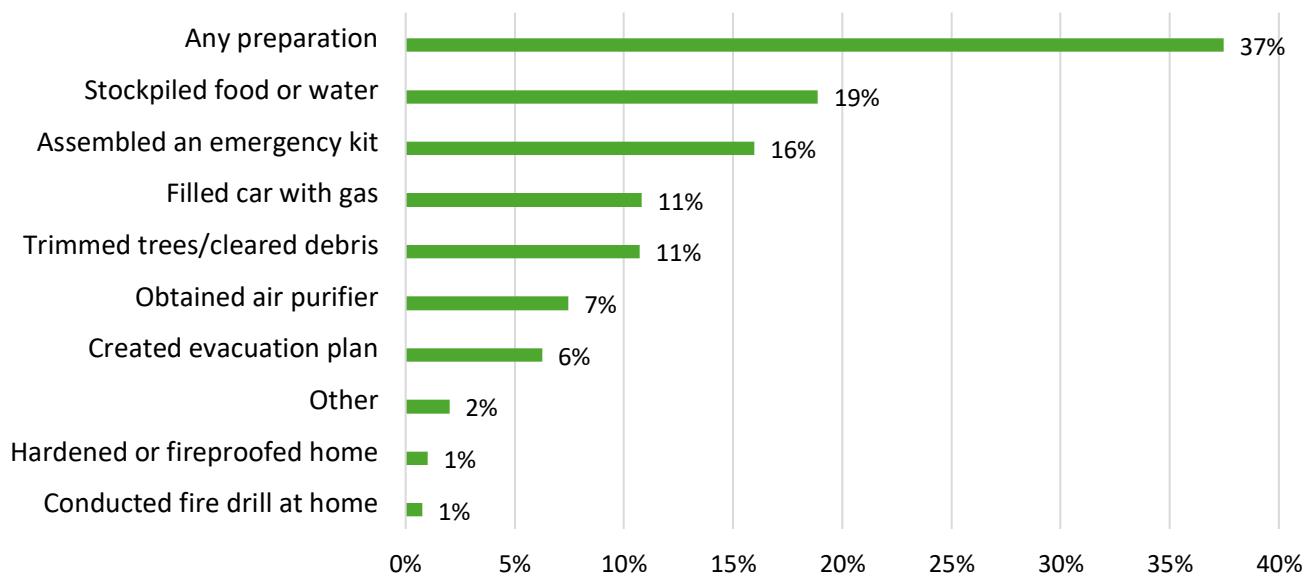
Protective Behavior

- Prior to the wildfires, half of residents had prepared their home in some way for a natural disaster; nearly 80% took protective measures during the wildfires.

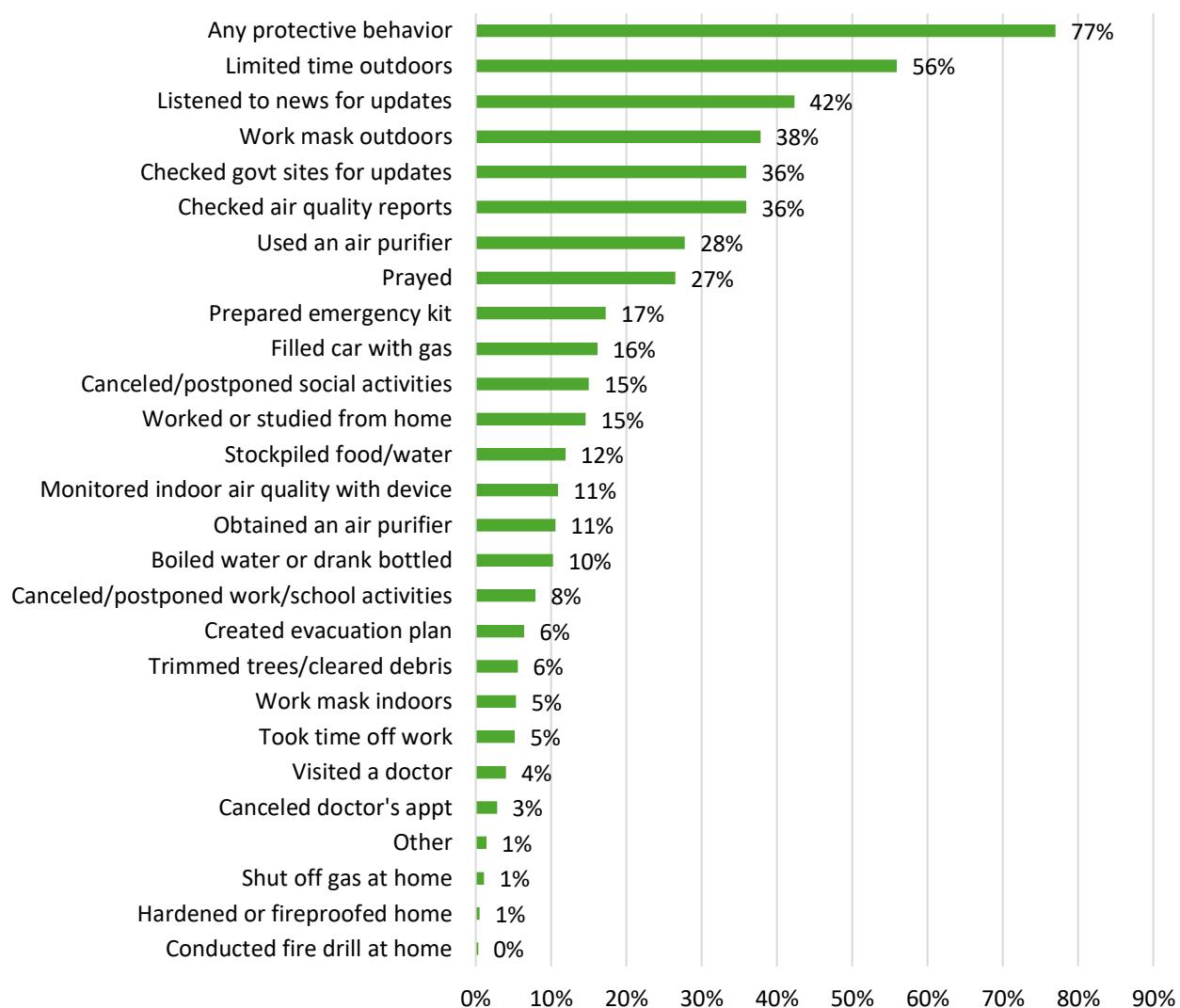
Percent who prepared their home prior to Jan 2025



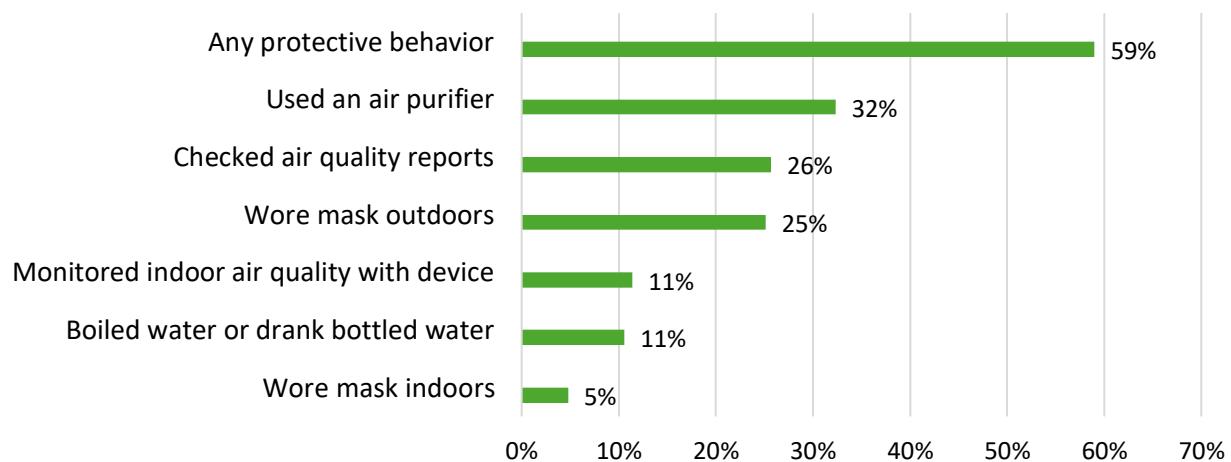
Percent who prepared home in response to Jan 2025 wind and fire advisories, before the wildfires began



Percent who adopted protective measures during the wildfires

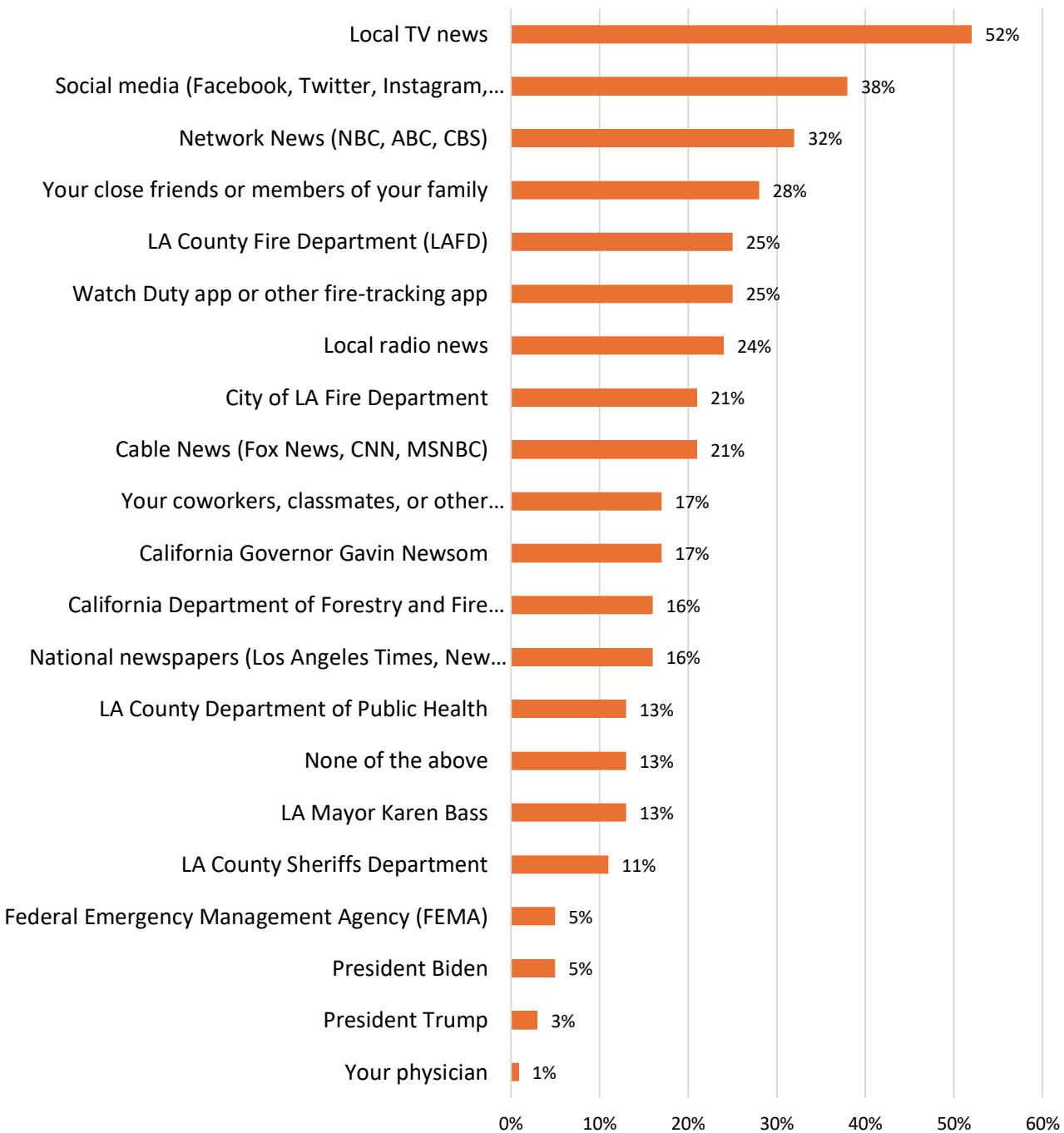


Percent adopting protective measures after the wildfires, in last 7 days



- **52% of residents relied on local TV news for information about the wildfires; 38% used social media.**

Percent who used following sources for wildfire information:

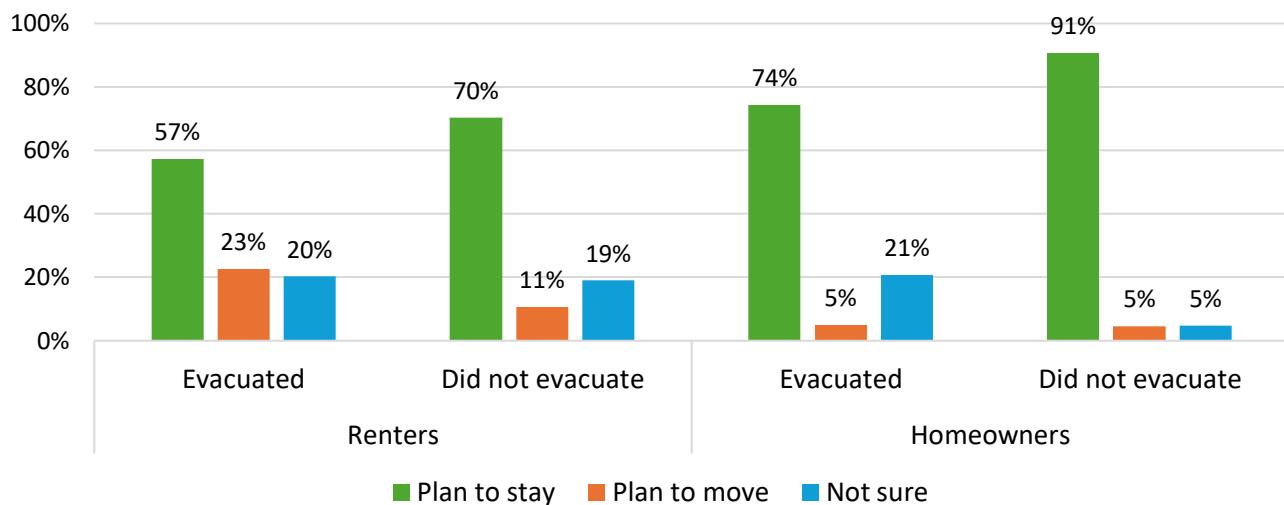


Future Plans and Risk Assessment

Among those who did not experience housing damage or loss:

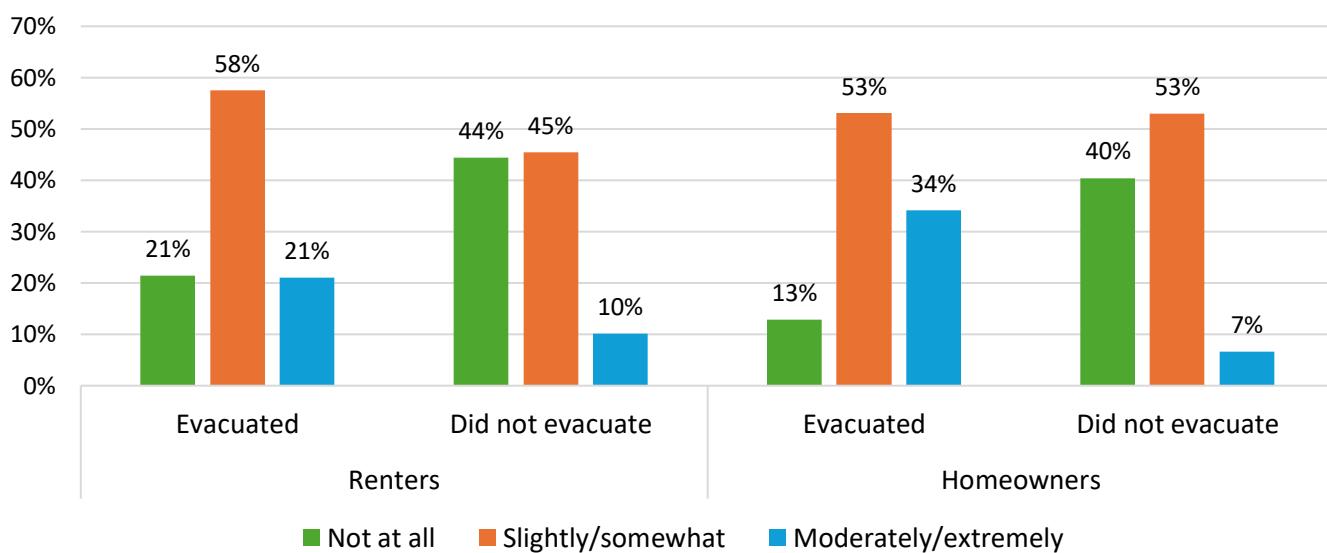
- **1 in 4 renters who evacuated during the fires plan to move this year; 1 in 5 homeowners who evacuated are unsure of their housing plans.**

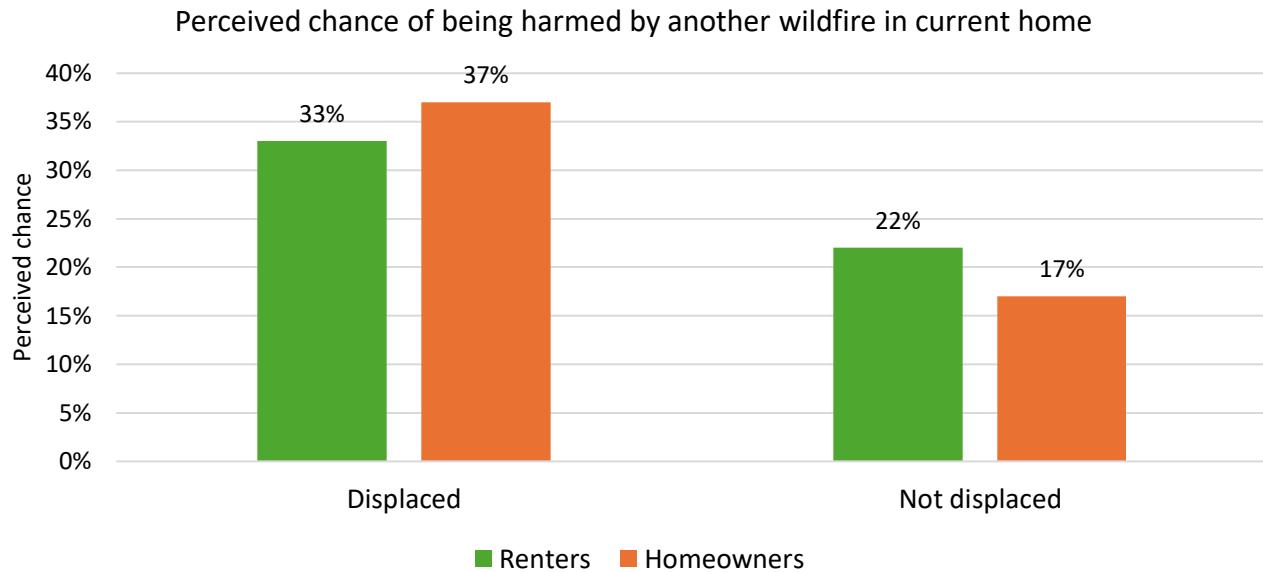
Percent who plan to stay in or move from current home this year,
by housing tenure and evacuation experience



- **Renters and homeowners who evacuated during the fires are far more worried about another wildfire harming their current home if they stay**

How worried about harm from a wildfire this year if stay in current home

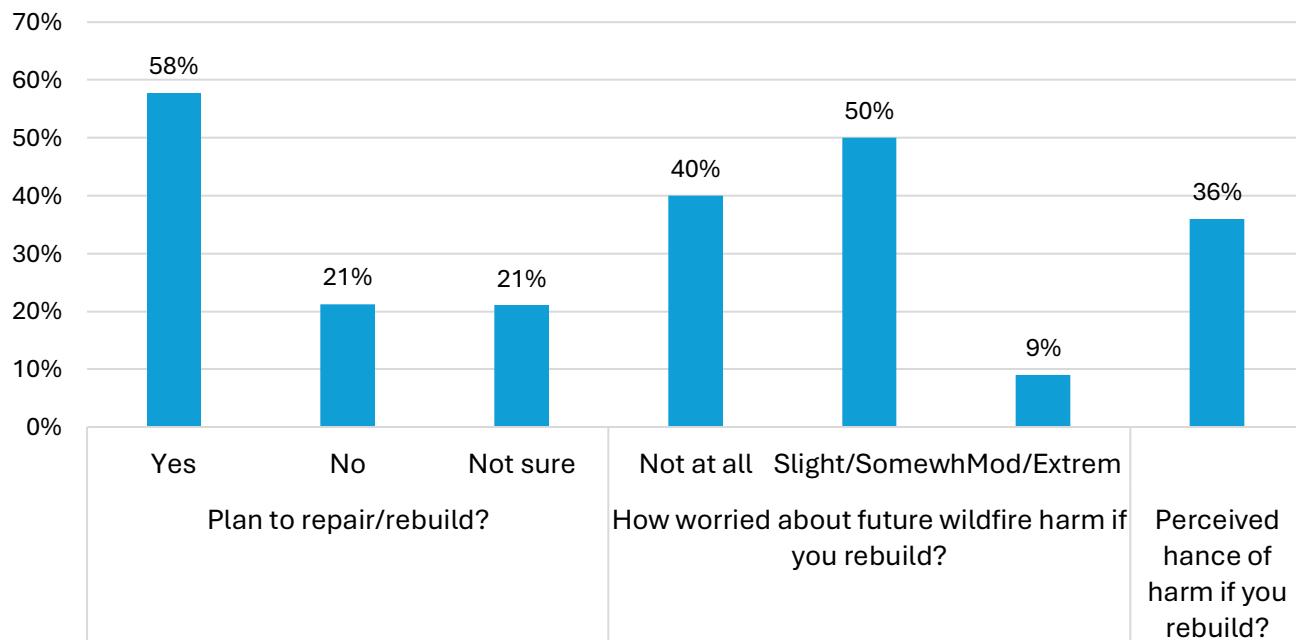




Among those experienced housing damage or loss:

- **About half of the residents who suffered housing damage or loss plan to repair or rebuild their home.**

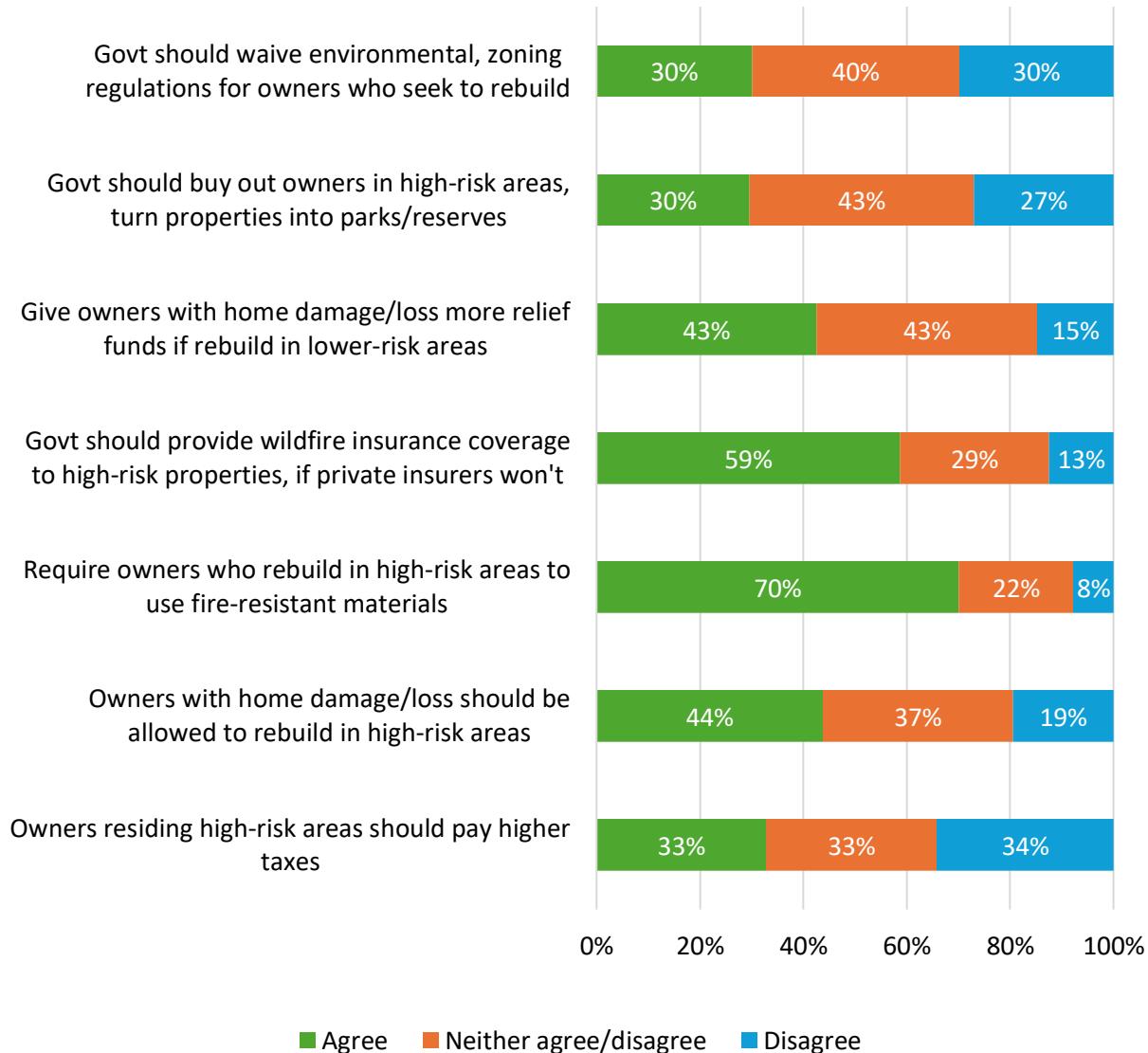
Housing plans and concerns:



Policy-Related Attitudes

- **A majority of residents support state-sponsored wildfire insurance and fire-resistant materials in high-risk areas, but residents are mixed in their attitudes towards other policies.**

Percent who agree/disagree with varying policy responses



- Residents lack consensus when asked to identify the factors that contributed most to the January wildfires

Percent who attribute wildfires to: (allowed to select up to three)

