

How Zillow is Leveraging Tech + Data to Expand Access to Housing

Housing WA 2025

Two stylized house shapes are positioned in the bottom right corner. The front house is light blue, and the house behind it is a darker blue. Both have a simple triangular roof and a rectangular base.

Introducing: Zillow Panelists



Anna Boone
Senior Government
Relations Manager
(moderator)



Samantha Holcomb
Social Impact
Director



Alana Outlaw
Public Policy
Manager



Kara Ng
Senior
Economist

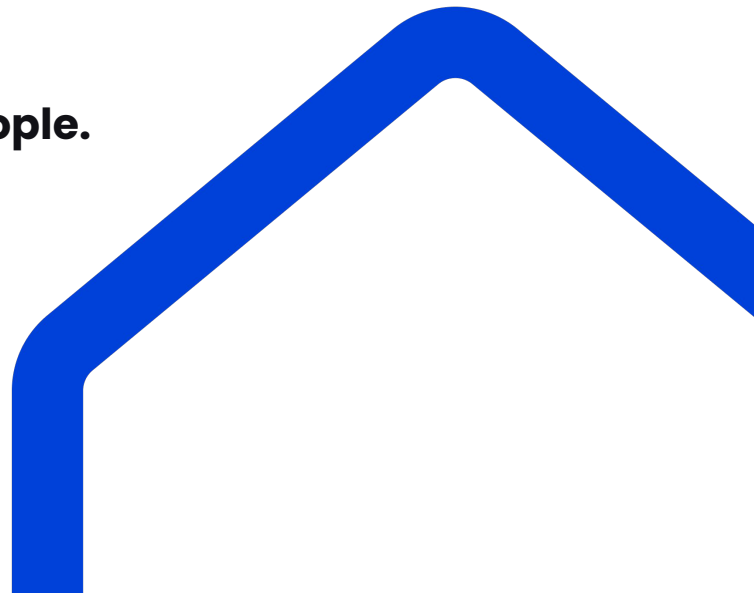


Our Belief

Home should be more than just a dream.

Our Purpose

To make home a reality for more and more people.



The data world of economic research



Affordability numbers to know



National income needed to afford rent: \$80,000

- *Up \$20,000 over the past five years*



Raise needed to afford the typical home: \$17,000

- **Seattle: \$75,000**



Mortgage rate to afford the typical home: 4.4%

- **Seattle: <1%**

Most renters want to buy

63%

Millennials

64%

Gen Z

58%

Overall



National headlines:

HOUSINGWIRE

Zillow: US housing shortage hit 4.7 million in 2023

Sunset

The State of the Housing Market Has Forced Millennials to Get Creative

**BUSINESS
INSIDER**

A 'silver tsunami' of boomer home sales won't fix the housing affordability crisis, Zillow says

Local stats:

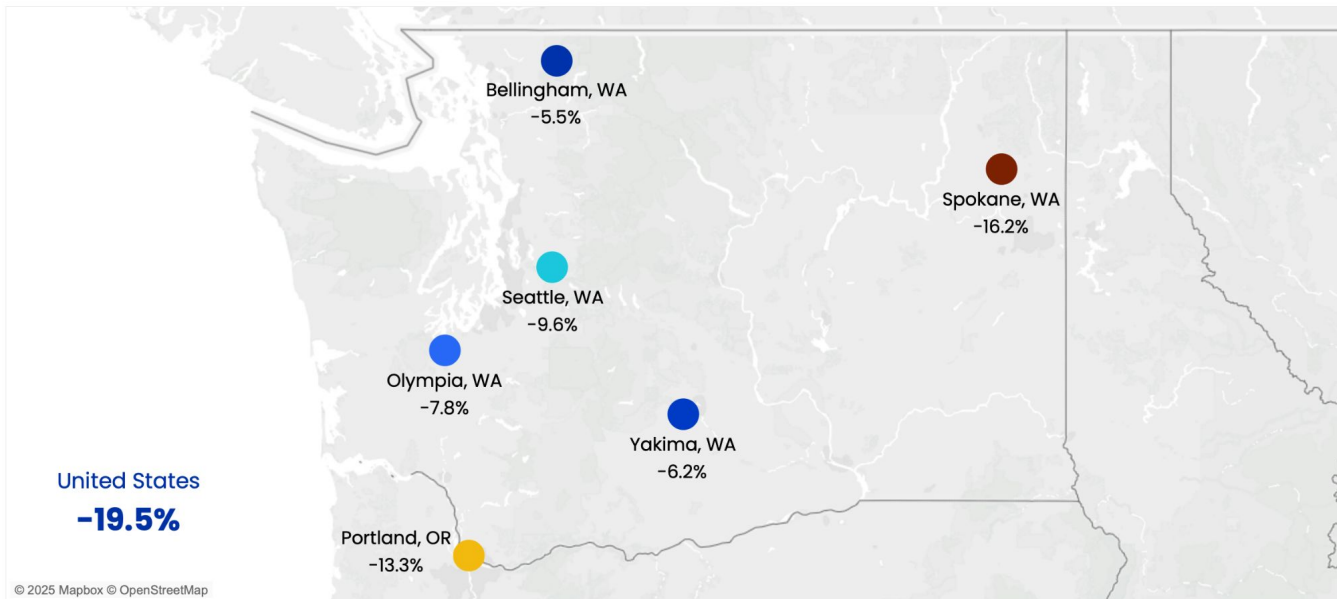
102,000: Housing deficit in Seattle metropolitan area

70,500: Housing deficit in Portland / Vancouver metropolitan area

For-sale inventory recovering, but still lower than pre-pandemic

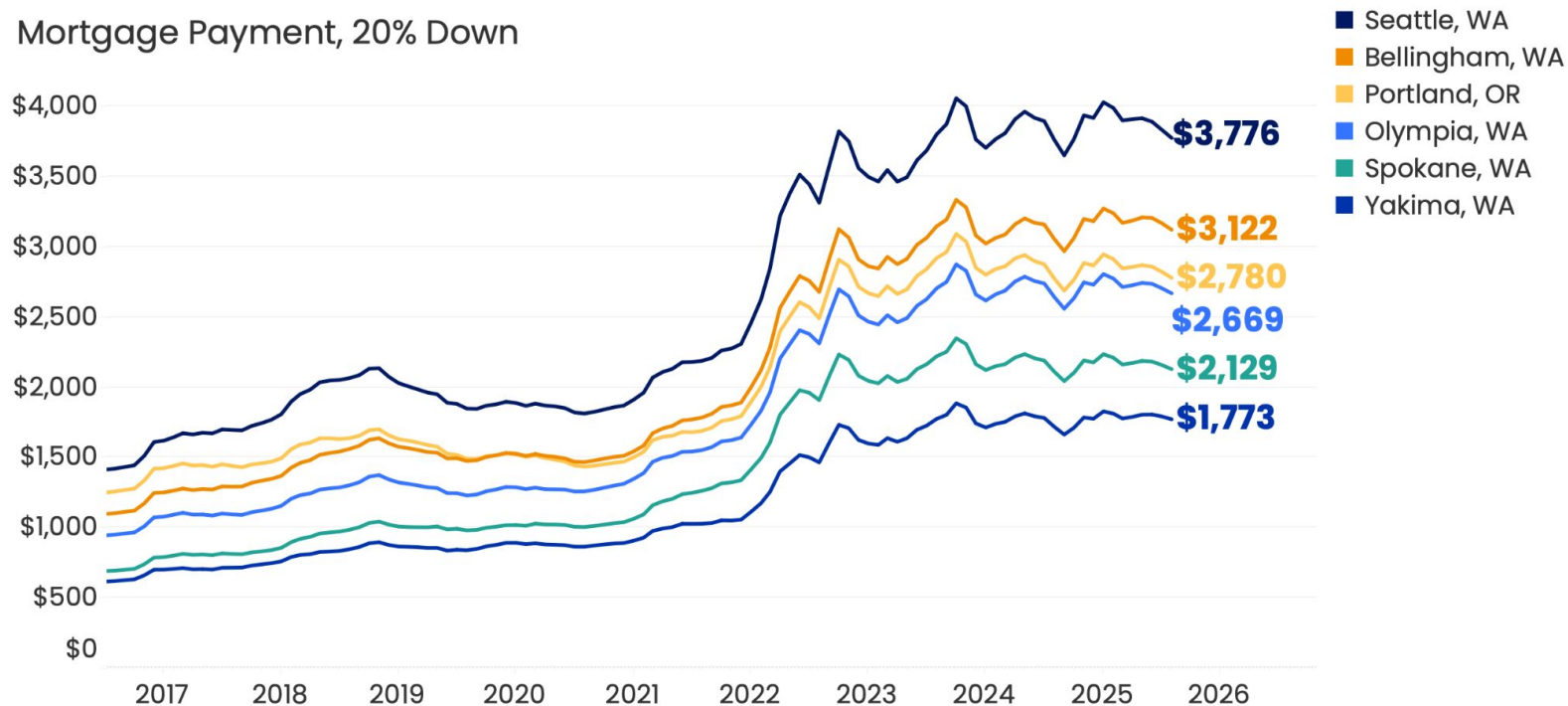
For-Sale Listings, Change Since Pre-pandemic, August 2025

-16.2%  -5.5%



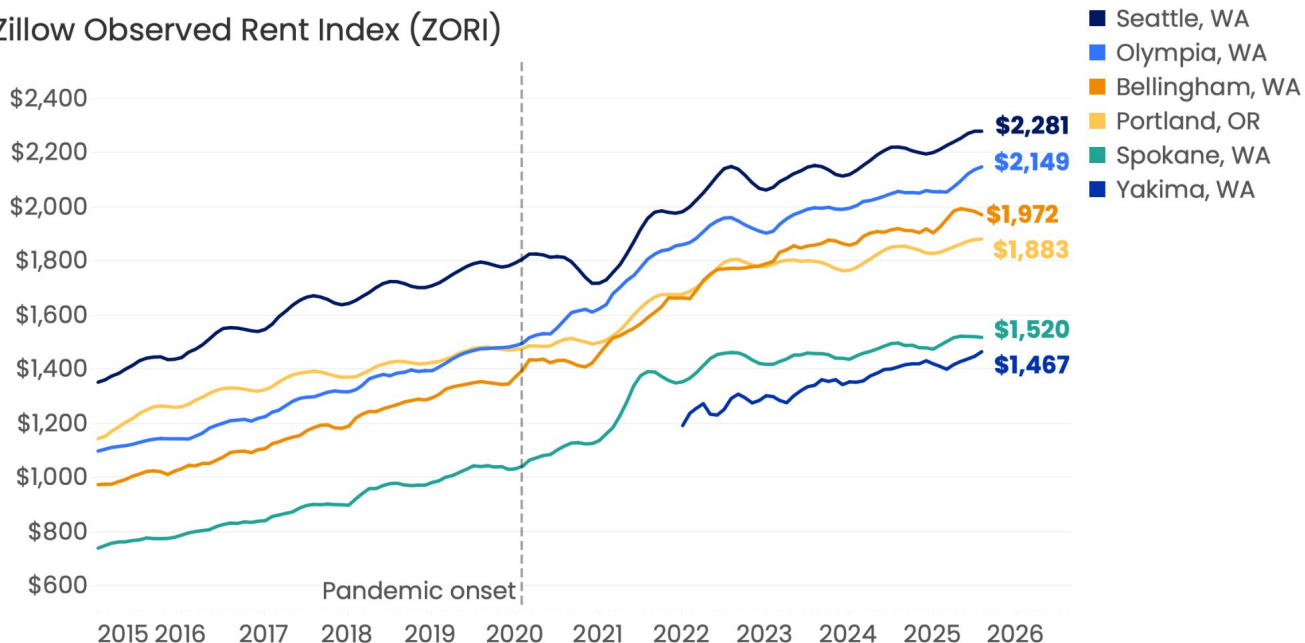
Mortgage payments in Seattle metro have doubled in five years

Mortgage Payment, 20% Down



Rent growth ticks up in Olympia, cools in Bellingham

Zillow Observed Rent Index (ZORI)



Build the Middle Playbook

By Zillow & The Casita Coalition



Key Elements of Effective Reform

Effective housing reform to build the middle requires a focused effort that delivers hearts, minds, and homes to the cause. Based on successful reform efforts across the country — and the world — we've identified common elements found in effective reform:

- 1** **Message matters.** Centering these policy conversations on human stories is what wins over hearts and minds — and ultimately, votes. Advocates for middle housing must bring communities along in the process to more fully embrace middle-housing reforms by showing examples, helping people visualize change, and communicating the connection to top-of-the-mind issues like helping families, reducing homelessness, and addressing climate change. Successful advocates tailor the messaging based on local values, from protecting middle-class families and workers to promoting stable homeownership with shared homes and “missing middle” units. Each of these value-based benefits can help persuade skeptics during these conversations.
- 2** **Effective coalitions have leadership and persistence.** Successful coalitions consist of members who cross political and other divides and remain committed through incremental wins and losses. Coalitions may begin on a housing task force convened by an elected official, a working group built to gather data on solutions, or a collection of shared conversations and institutions. Groups that remain flexible, expansive, and focused on long-range goals can realize meaningful progress toward increasing middle housing.
- 3** **All barriers must be addressed.** Zoning policy reforms must be comprehensive. Once zoning reforms are complete, systemic and institutional barriers to middle housing must be removed, likely requiring regulatory innovations and institutional changes. Barriers to be addressed may include timely permitting, uniform and easily accessible zoning, widely available lending, and the availability of professional services to deliver homes. This shift requires scale, widespread public awareness, and resources.
- 4** **Change may be incremental.** Building the middle is a step-by-step process that begins with small wins, such as ADU legislation, before moving to more comprehensive middle housing options. In some regions, innovative cities take action at the state level. This approach allows local jurisdictions to experiment with successful sustainable policymaking and implementation.

Build the Middle Playbook 11 Key Elements of Effective Reform

Case Studies: Overview

Since the early 2000s, cities, states, nonprofits, and academics have been searching and studying models for encouraging middle housing strategies and elevating best practices to guide their work and inspire others. Many of these organizations now know each other's work, learn from each other's successes and failures, and share models for others to follow — all to create what could be called a “middle housing movement.” The movement includes dozens of organizations and individuals in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and beyond, working, learning, innovating, networking, and collaborating. These dedicated people are pushing to improve the effectiveness of their own middle housing work and thereby increase the effectiveness of the entire movement, all across the globe.

The learning and action loop enabled by this growing coalition of academics, allies, nonprofits, and government leaders continues to deliver solid policy wins with demonstrated benefits. It also provides an expanding set of examples for others to follow. The brief case studies of successful reform efforts in this chapter are helpful, incomplete and immediately outdated, as new middle housing wins are announced almost every day. Still, they present useful considerations and analysis in our over-evolving efforts.

EFFECTIVE REFORM ESSENTIAL STEPS



Build the Middle Playbook 12 Case Study

Build the Middle Playbook

By Zillow & The Casita Coalition



Types of Middle Housing Options

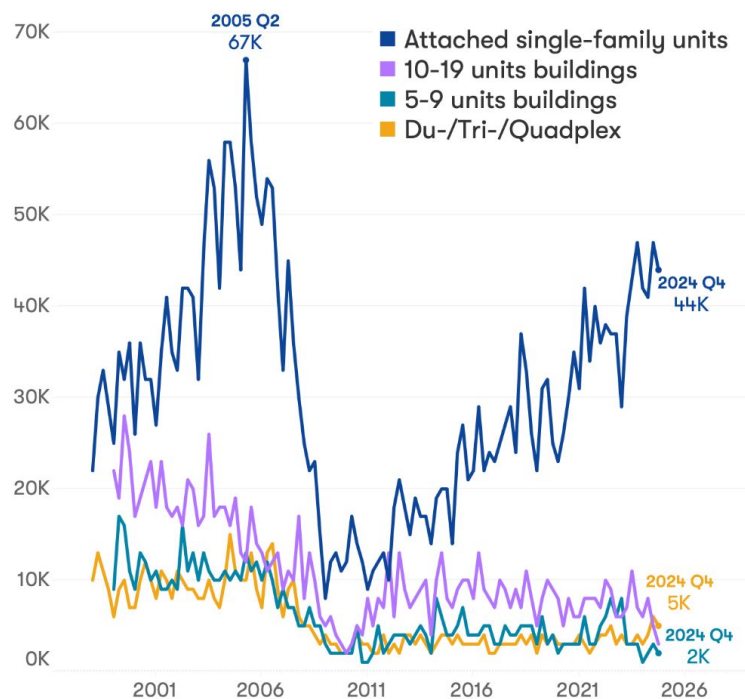
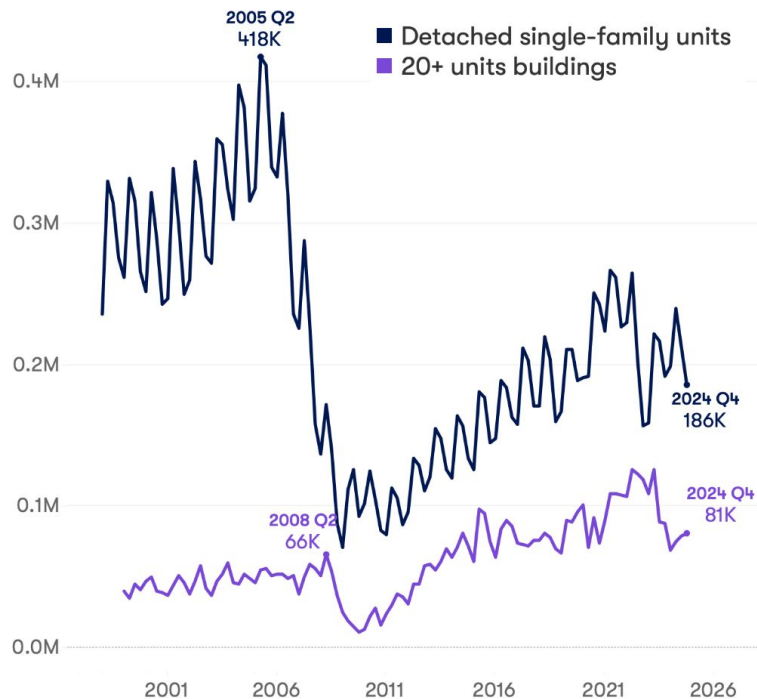
Throughout this playbook, we will discuss an expanded view of middle housing, a broad category encompassing many living situations and housing types. These housing types face unique barriers, and we will offer strategies to address them later in this playbook. Below is an overview of middle-housing types and common barriers:

Homesharing Sharing underutilized bedroom with a housemate under homesharing agreement. Barriers: Definitions and limits on non-family occupants; awareness; E-messaging; lack of support for nonprofit homesharing programs.		JADU Junior ADU Attached interior living space with own entrance and cooking facilities – may also bath with primary. Barriers: Zoning; occupancy and energy restrictions; financial requirements; unpermitted unit; regulation barriers.	
Moveable Tiny Home Allowed in ADUs in some regions; moveable tiny homes are classified as RVs but built with standards more suited to full-time living. Barriers: Limited locations to full-time legal living; lack of lower-cost finance options; stringent certification requirements; awareness; E-messaging.		Manufactured Homes Allowed as ADUs in primary homes, manufactured in HUD zone. Barriers: Local design and structural standards; delivery challenges; installer certification requirements.	
ADU Attached or freestanding, may be detached, detached or conversion of existing space. Barriers: Zoning prohibitions; owner occupancy; foundation, energy codes and other regulations; for larger homes, need of owner-occupied; high fixed construction charges; limited loan options.		ADU Condominiums Increasingly offering units on a lot sold separately from the primary home as a condo regime. Barriers: Many cities/counties do not get other cost of construction; lender approvals; Subdivision Map Act complexities.	
Duplex Two units on a lot, detached or attached; units can be stacked or side-by-side. Barriers: Zoning; inexperienced new developers or families need support to plan and build; may not pencil at affordable rents.		Fourplex Four homes on one lot, may be configured in several different ways. Barriers: Zoning; development standards such as open space; setbacks; height restrictions; complexity of approvals and permitting.	
Cottage Court Smaller detached homes on one lot with a shared common space or other amenities. Barriers: Zoning; minimum lot sizes; over 5 sides setbacks; parking requirements.		Townhome May be detached or attached. Typically don't share amenities beyond shared driveway. Barriers: Zoning; impact fees; parking setbacks; approval process uncertainties; higher demand to benefit larger units or higher unit counts.	
Houseplex A home divided into multiple independent living spaces, may be conversion or new construction. Co-living with shared spaces also in option. Barriers: Zoning; adding heating/cooling; the agreed, seating and sanitation facilities for each unit; parking; approval process; setback requirements.		Low-rise Multifamily Multifamily structures with 2-4 stories. Can offer design & wood framed, no elevator. Barriers: Zoning; building code; impact fees; soft costs of development; labor and construction costs; parking and other development standards.	

The missing middle. Townhouses, 2-4 units rising.

Seasonally adjusted, 1998 Q1 to 2024 Q4

Housing units starting construction in the United States



Growing support for 'missing middle' homes

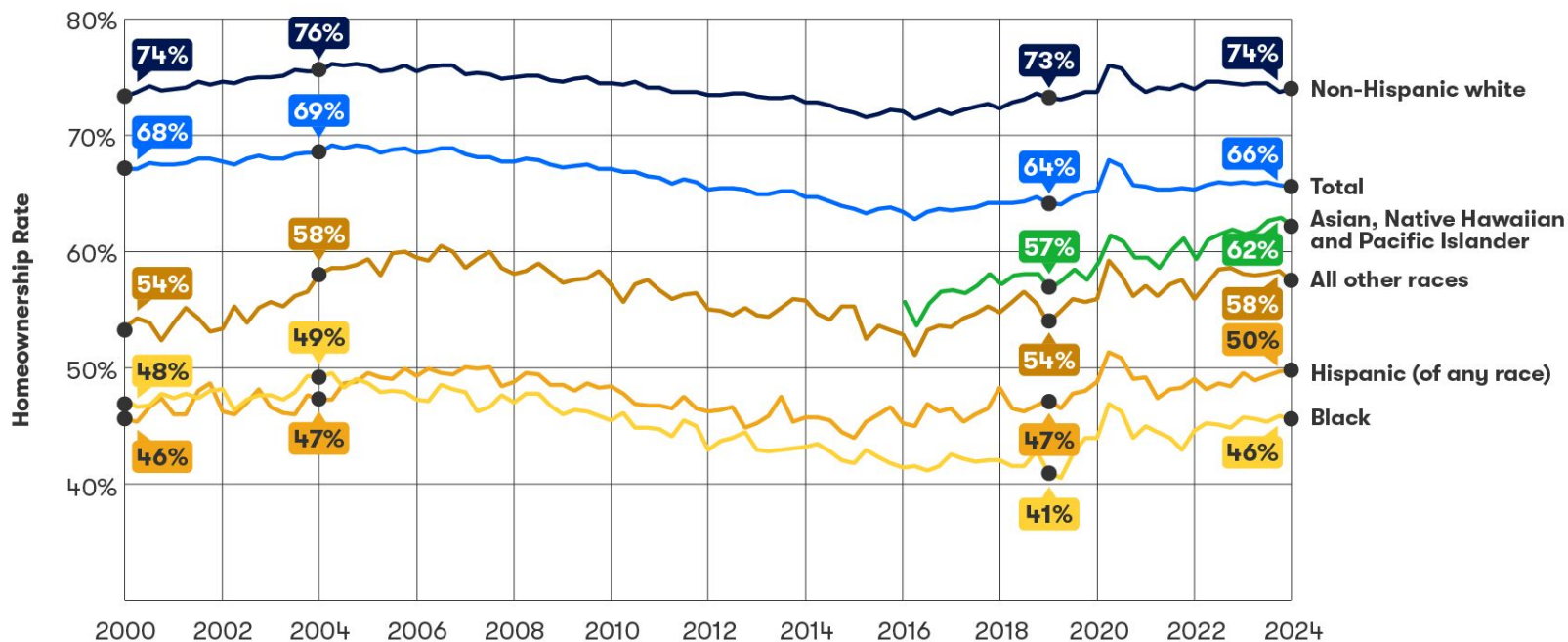
Nationwide

- 78% of homeowners support at least one middle housing option
- 91% of renters support at least one
- 68% of adults support ADUs in their neighborhood
- 59% support duplexes and triplexes

In the Seattle metro

- 92% of adults would support at least one higher-density home type in their neighborhood
- 88% support ADUs and duplexes, tied for the highest among unit types
- 75% say middle density options would help with housing affordability

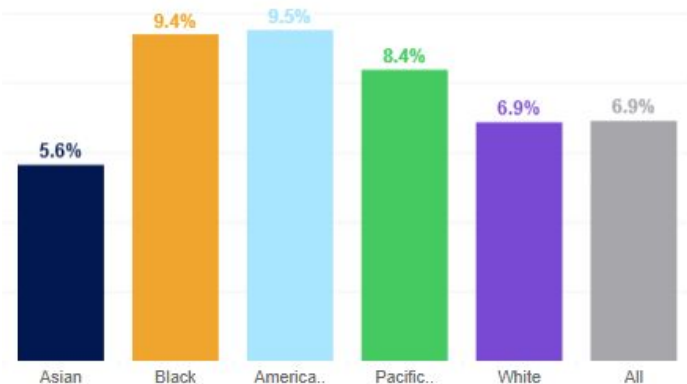
Gaps in homeownership by race remain nationwide



2023 HMDA Data for Washington State: Denials by Race

Denial Rates

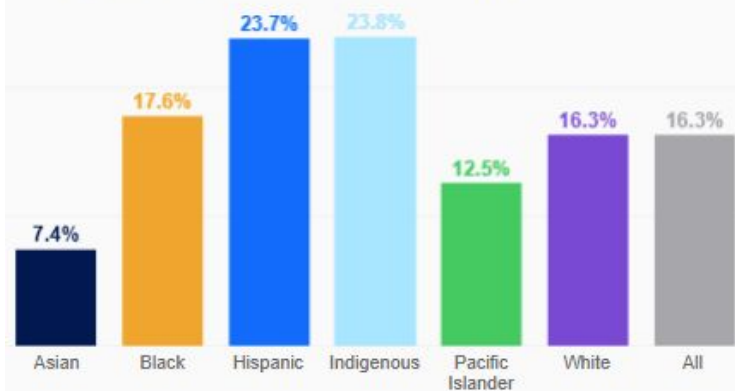
Percent of mortgage applications that are denied



Source: 2023 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act

Share Denial by Reason

Percent of mortgage denials that are denied for Credit history



Source: 2023 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act

Social Impact at Zillow

Connecting barriered customers with **tools, partners, and resources** that help them find a home.

Rent Reporting
to Build Credit



Housing
Counseling
Pilots



BuyAbility
Personalized
Next Steps



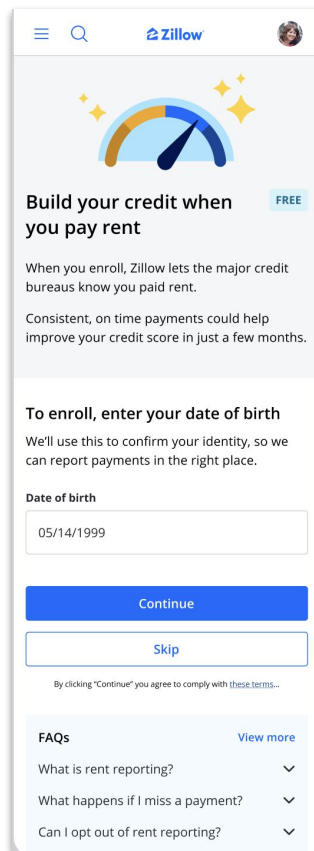
Down
Payment
Assistance
Module



Rent Reporting

79% of renters who report rent payments to the bureaus see a credit score improvement

>80,000 renters are currently building their credit through our rent reporting tool.



The image shows a mobile app screen for Zillow's rent reporting enrollment. At the top is a navigation bar with a menu icon, a search icon, the Zillow logo, and a user profile picture. Below the navigation bar is a large graphic of a speedometer with a needle pointing towards the right, surrounded by yellow stars. The text "Build your credit when you pay rent" is displayed, with a "FREE" badge to the right. Below this, a paragraph explains that enrolling allows Zillow to report rent payments to credit bureaus, and consistent payments can improve credit scores. A section titled "To enroll, enter your date of birth" follows, with a subtext explaining that the date is used for identity confirmation. A "Date of birth" input field contains the text "05/14/1999". Below the input field are two buttons: a blue "Continue" button and a white "Skip" button with a blue border. A small disclaimer states, "By clicking 'Continue' you agree to comply with these terms...". At the bottom, there is a "FAQs" section with a "View more" link and three questions, each with a downward arrow: "What is rent reporting?", "What happens if I miss a payment?", and "Can I opt out of rent reporting?".

Build your credit when you pay rent **FREE**

When you enroll, Zillow lets the major credit bureaus know you paid rent.

Consistent, on time payments could help improve your credit score in just a few months.

To enroll, enter your date of birth

We'll use this to confirm your identity, so we can report payments in the right place.

Date of birth

05/14/1999

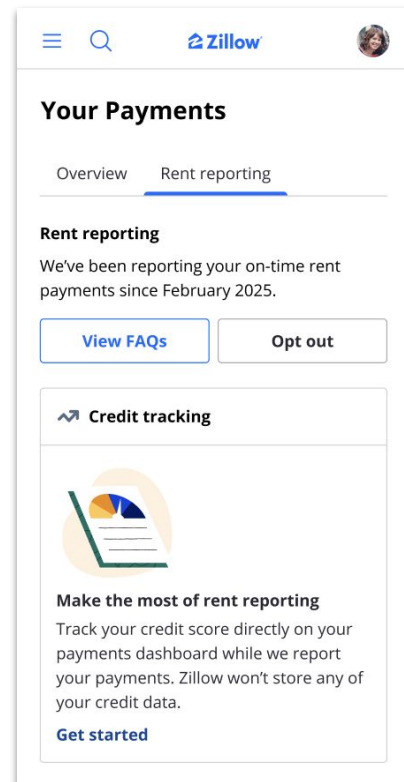
Continue

Skip

By clicking "Continue" you agree to comply with these terms...

FAQs [View more](#)

- What is rent reporting? ▾
- What happens if I miss a payment? ▾
- Can I opt out of rent reporting? ▾



The image shows a mobile app screen for the Zillow rent reporting dashboard. At the top is a navigation bar with a menu icon, a search icon, the Zillow logo, and a user profile picture. Below the navigation bar is a section titled "Your Payments" with two tabs: "Overview" and "Rent reporting", with "Rent reporting" being the active tab. Below the tabs, a section titled "Rent reporting" states, "We've been reporting your on-time rent payments since February 2025." Below this text are two buttons: a blue "View FAQs" button and a white "Opt out" button with a blue border. Below the buttons is a section titled "Credit tracking" with a green upward arrow icon. Below this is a graphic of a speedometer with a needle pointing towards the right, surrounded by yellow stars. Below the graphic, a section titled "Make the most of rent reporting" states, "Track your credit score directly on your payments dashboard while we report your payments. Zillow won't store any of your credit data." Below this text is a blue "Get started" button.

Your Payments

Overview Rent reporting

Rent reporting

We've been reporting your on-time rent payments since February 2025.

View FAQs Opt out

Credit tracking

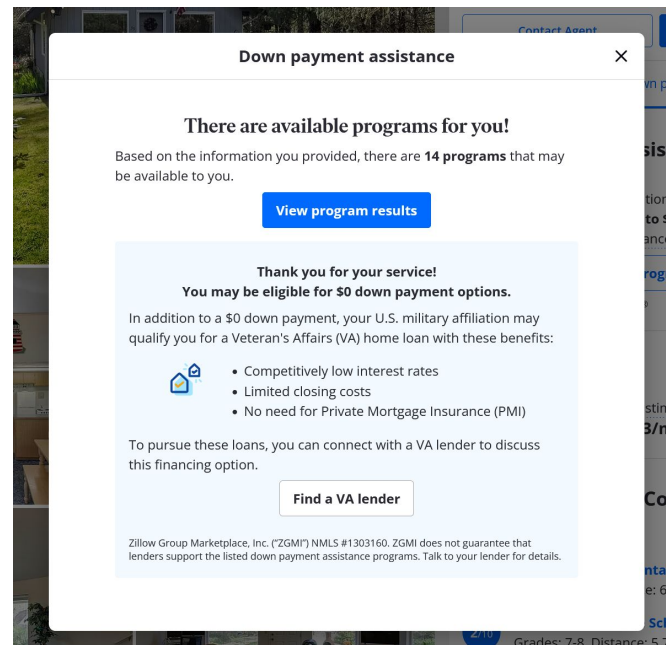
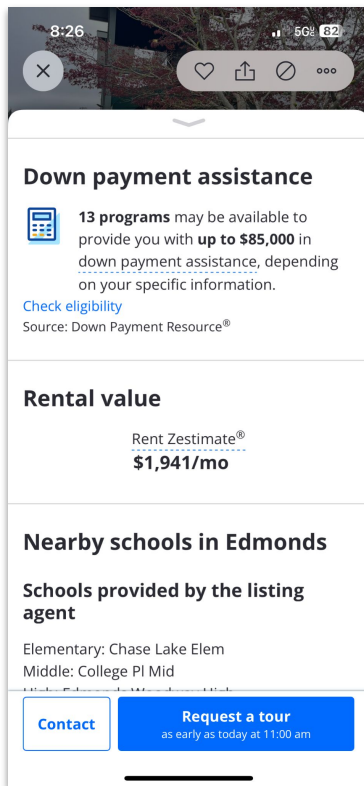
Make the most of rent reporting

Track your credit score directly on your payments dashboard while we report your payments. Zillow won't store any of your credit data.

Get started

Down Payment Assistance Module

Over **5M** users have been connected to personalized down payment assistance resources through our module since 2021.



Gov. Jay Inslee signing HB 1474, the Covenant Homeownership Act (2023)



Keep up with Zillow research & download the latest data



Housing Snapshot

Up-to-date local market knowledge to help set buyer and seller expectations



Market Heat Index

Up-to-date local market knowledge to help set buyer and seller expectations



Affordability Dashboard

Shows the impact of mortgage rates and down payments on first-time buyer affordability

