

Rent Control and Inequality - An Overview of Policies in Action and Potential Alternatives

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Homelessness disproportionately impacts people of color, with a rate of homelessness for Black Americans and Native Americans more than four times and two times as high as the prevalence rate for white Americans, respectively. While historical and systemic reasons behind this trend exist, studies show one of the main factors contributing to the rate of homelessness in an area is the condition of the area's housing market. Many findings indicate that homelessness is due, in part, to a market failure – short supply of housing, affordable or not, to meet demand. Federal and local governments in the US have attempted to address the shortfall in availability of affordable housing in various ways throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, often enacting legislation that places regulations on the rental rate landlords can charge. In this memorandum, we discuss the history of rent control in the US, present the current landscape of rent control laws by state, assess whether rent control laws achieve their stated policy goals through an examination of case studies spanning geographic locations and through points in time, and discuss potential alternatives and improvements to rent control.

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Working Groups

Homelessness

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