



January 8, 2026

Planning for Housing and Transportation in a Regional Context

Results from the National Metropolitan Housing Planning Survey





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- 1) Housing and transportation planning and investment happen on two separate planes with different funding, decisionmakers, and incentives*
- 2) Metropolitan Governance and Planning Organizations have too little authority and/or too little funding available to ensure affordable and equitable access to housing across jurisdictions and effectively link transportation and land use planning*
- 3) Though they possess the resources and would benefit from resolving these challenges, MGPOs do not often seek to influence housing planning*

Background to the National Metropolitan Housing Planning Survey

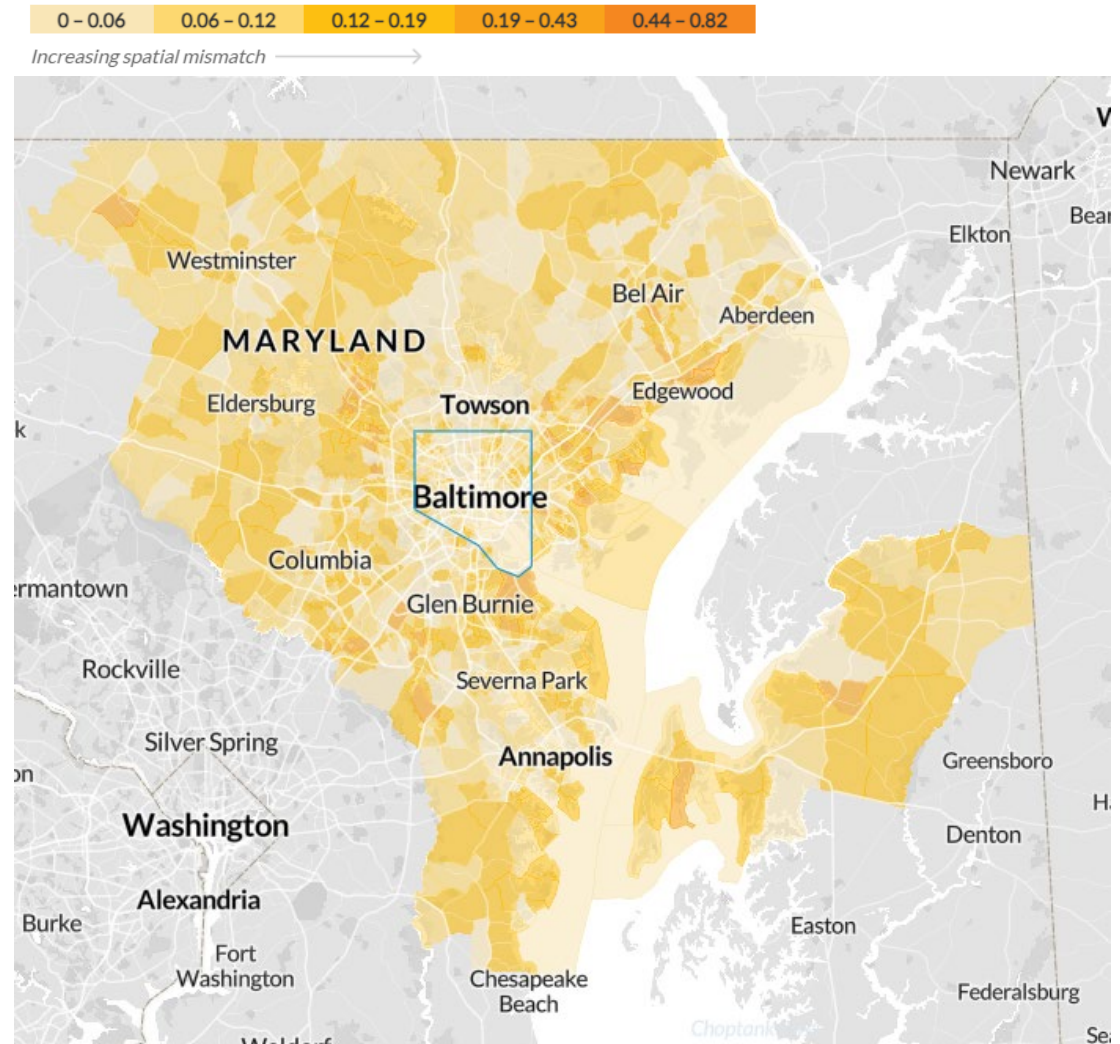


Study Motivation

- Housing shapes transit patterns, demand, and cost
- Transit shapes access to jobs and amenities
- Regional (lack of) coordination affects:
 - Personal finance, the environment, health, and the regional economy
 - Public expenditure equity
 - Income or racial segregation

Where Low-Wage Workers Need Better Access to Jobs in Baltimore

Higher levels of spatial mismatch mean neighborhoods have more low-wage workers and worse access to jobs.





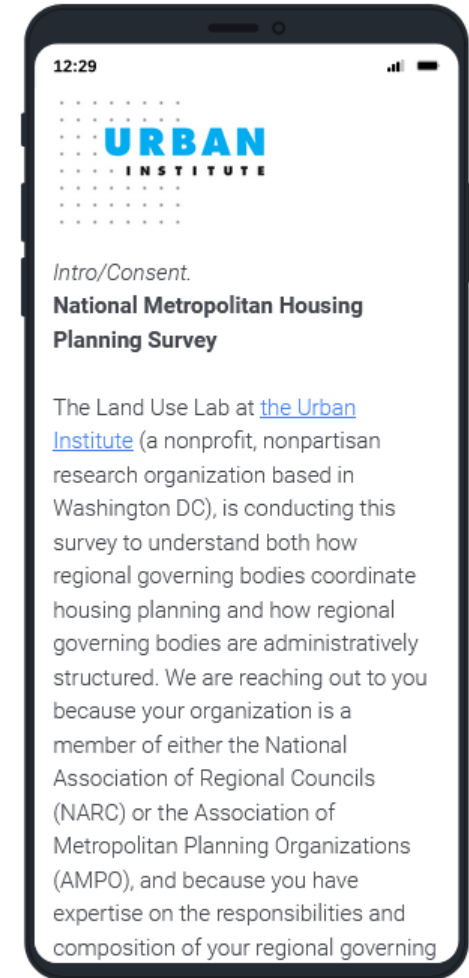
Housing and transportation: Two planes and functions

Sector	Project Initiators	Primary actors	Primary funding sources
Housing investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Private actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Private developersCity zoning/planning departmentsLocal housing authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Private capital, limited and prescriptive public subsidies from HUD, localities, philanthropy
Transportation investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Public agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">MPOsTransportation agenciesTransit agenciesLocal departments of public works	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Federal DOT funds, local or state tax revenues, bonds



Background on the NMHPS

- Goal: Understand Metropolitan Governance and Planning Organizations' (MGPOs') housing planning activities, authorities, challenges, and climates
- National survey of 473 MGPOs
 - NARC + AMPO + other MPOs
 - Populations >50,000
- Ran from February 14 – March 29, 2024
- Q's: Organization type, size, and funding; legal authority; housing-related activities; board structure + preferences
- Number of respondents: 143

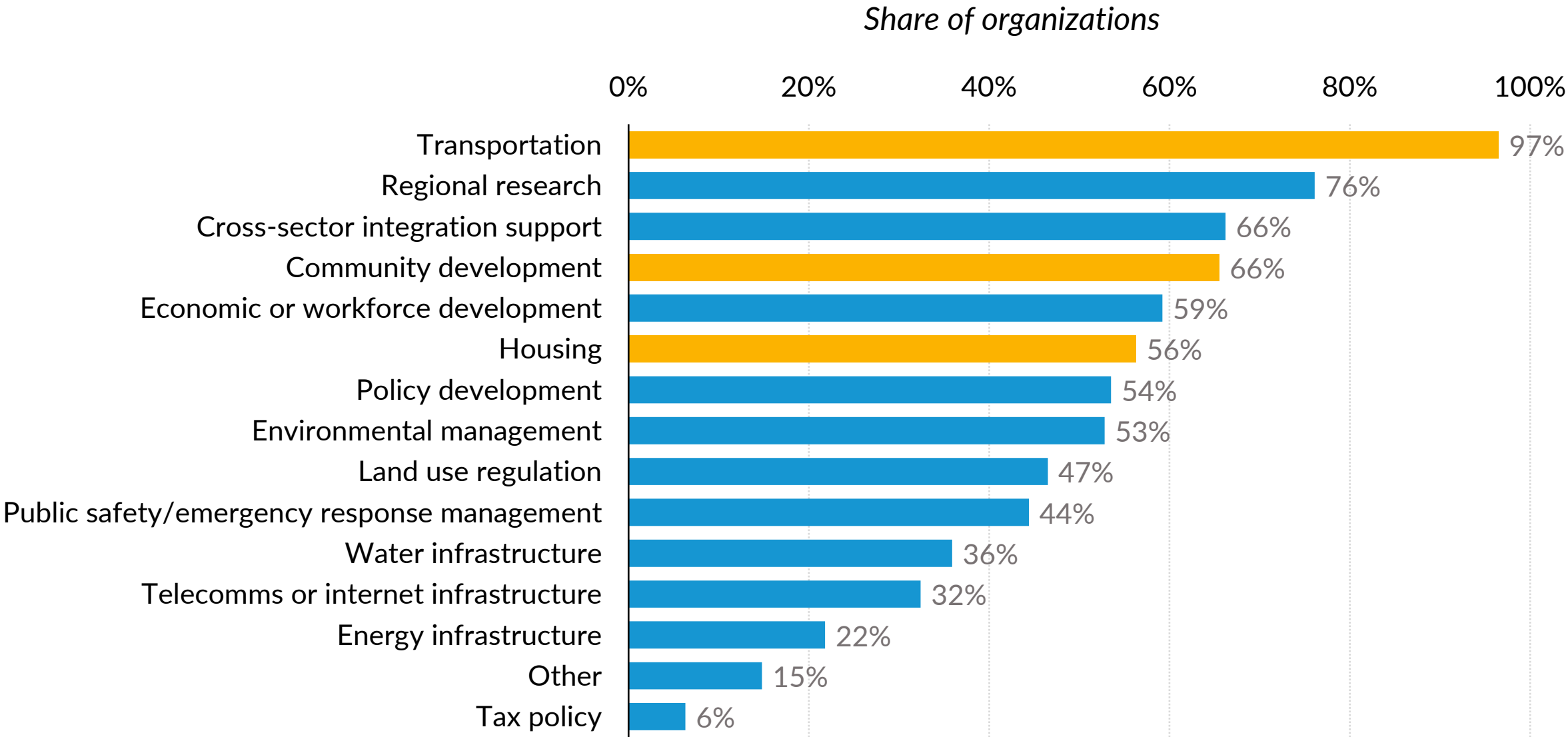




How do MGPOs influence housing?



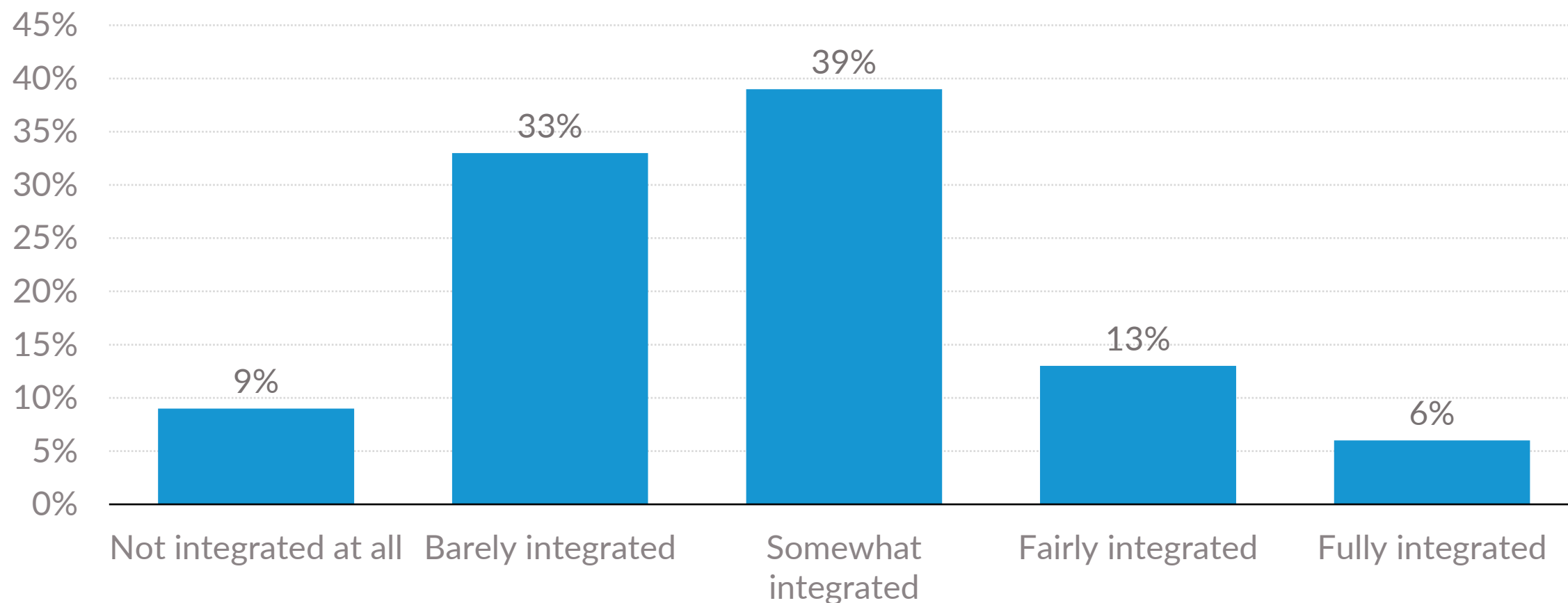
Roughly half to 2/3rds of MGPOs do urban planning work





MGPOs report low levels of integration between housing and transportation planning

Share of organizations





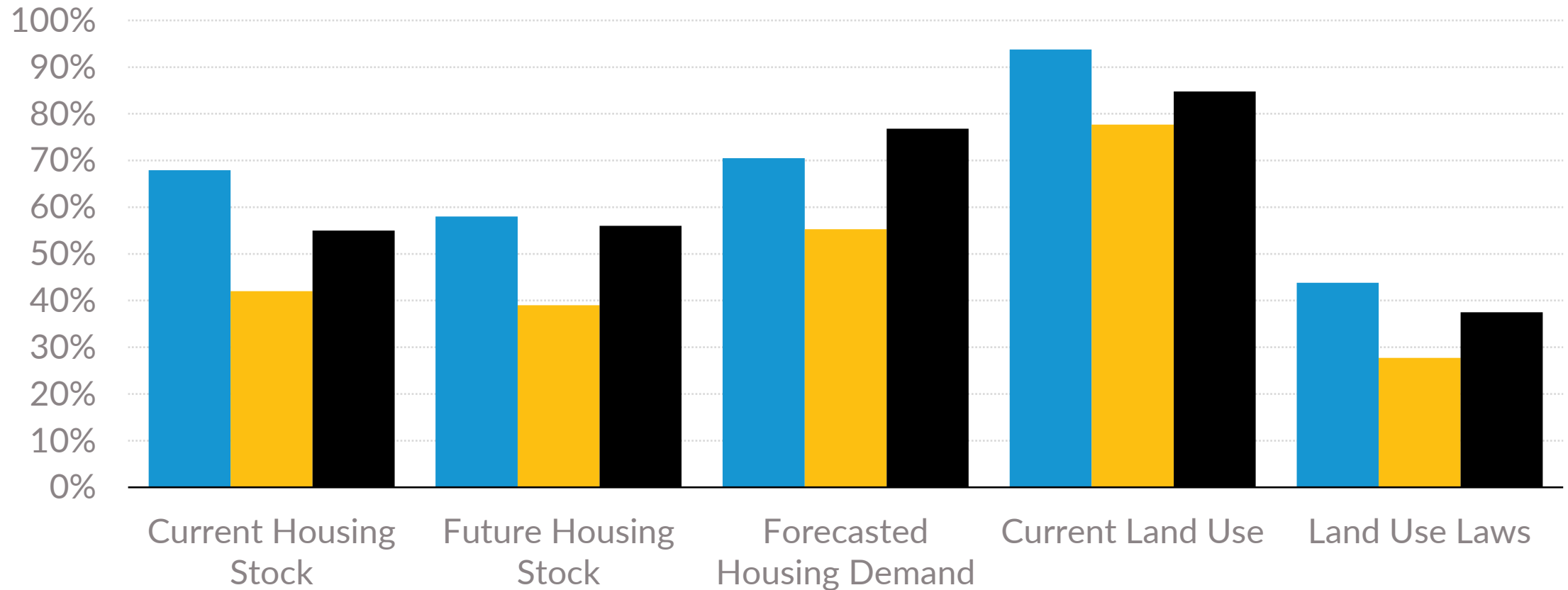
Just over half of MPOs' planning processes consider housing factors

Share of respondents

■ Decision-making models

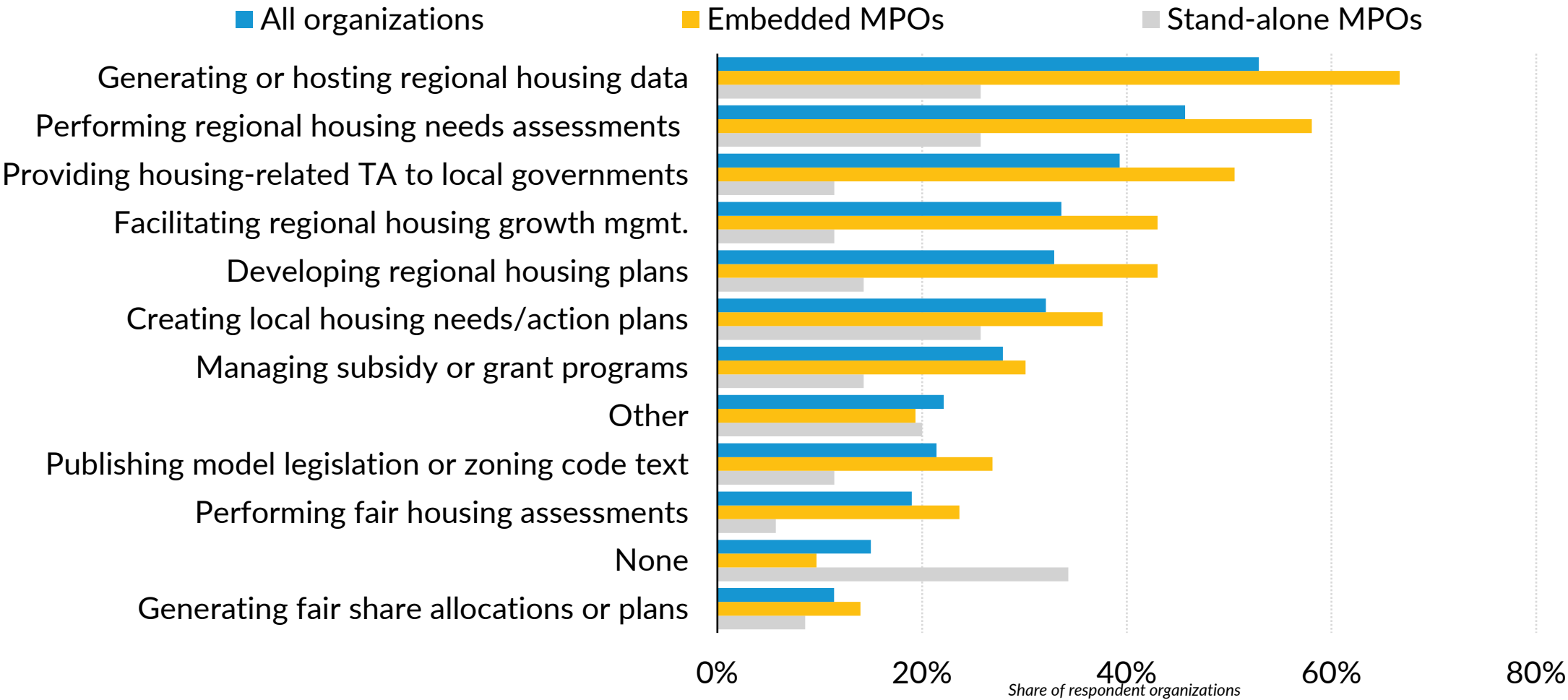
■ SRTIPs

■ LRTPs






MGPOs' housing activities are mostly data-oriented; Less than 1/3 do programming or influence fair housing





MGPOs lack statutory authority to influence housing

- Just **12 of 121** organizations (10%) affirmatively reported having **legal authority** to impose requirements related to housing activities
- Types of authority:
 - Distributing **grants** (5%)
 - Conducting **fair housing** assessments or assigning **fair share** housing allocations (3%)
 - Enforcing local **housing plan requirements** (2%)



MGPOs see subsidy and grant programs as most effective at solving regional housing challenges

Activity	Number of organizations reporting engaging in that activity	Share reporting it as one of the most effective activities
Managing subsidy or grant programs	39	46%
Providing technical assistance to local jurisdictions	55	38%
Generating regional housing data	74	23%
Performing Regional Housing Needs Assessments	64	22%
Developing regional housing plans	46	17%
Generating fair share allocations	16	13%
Publishing model legislation text	30	13%
Creating housing needs action plans for local jurisdictions	45	13%
Facilitating regional growth management planning	47	11%
Performing fair housing assessments	26	8%



On average,
just 5% of MGPOs' funding goes towards housing
activities



MGPOs need funding to influence address housing challenges

	Share of respondents
Federal or state funding for coordination and general housing planning/policy work	70%
Greater developer or government investment in subsidized affordable housing	61%
Greater local government support for and participation in regional coordination	59%
Technical assistance and/or peer learning opportunities	51%
Greater economic development investment	38%
Greater private developer investment in market rate housing	37%
State-vested authority for regional housing requirements	30%
Other	10%



Coordination Opportunity: Transit-Oriented Development



Coordination in action: Transit-oriented development

- State-level action offers an opportunity.

Summary of Recent Major State and Provincial TOD Legislation

Law and year enacted	Municipal applicability	Zone types	Transit areas
British Columbia bill 47 (2023)	Cities with transit access	All zones where residential is allowed	½ mile from metro; ¼ mile from commuter rail and bus hubs
California assembly bill 2011 (2022) *	Jurisdictions in metropolitan areas with at least 100,000 residents	Commercial zones and corridors	½ mile from major transit stops
California senate bill 79 (2025)	Jurisdictions in counties with at least 15 rail stations (8 counties statewide)	All zones where residential is allowed	½ mile from fixed-guideway transit in cities with at least 35,000 residents; ¼ mile elsewhere
Colorado house bill 24-1313 (2024)	Jurisdictions in metropolitan areas with at least 4,000 residents and at least 75 transit-adjacent acres	All zones (with minor exceptions)	½ mile from light and commuter rail; ¼ mile from frequent bus service
Massachusetts house bill 5250 (2020)	Cities, towns served by MBTA ***	Up to jurisdiction	50 acres or 1.5% of jurisdiction's land area, mostly within ½ mile of transit
Ontario Planning Act (2024) **	Municipalities served by fixed-guideway transit	All zones	½ mile from fixed-guideway transit
Washington house bill 1491 (2025)	Cities with transit access	All zones where residential is allowed	½ mile from light and commuter rail (¼ mile in cities with fewer than 15,000 people); ¼ mile from BRT

Source: Author analysis of state and provincial laws and regulations.

Notes: * Expanded by 2024's California assembly bill 2243; data presented here reflect that expansion. ** Rules related to this act are delineated in Ontario's Provincial Planning Statement. *** Except Boston. BRT = bus rapid transit; MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.



Coordination in action: Transit-oriented development

But, there remain gaps in application:

- Restrictions on transit agency authority prevent effective acquisition of land for coordinated housing development and agency-specific funding restrictions hamper collaboration
- Cities often consider state-mandated coordination as a burden or imposition rather than opportunity
- Even with state mandates, developers seeking to work across regional transit hubs face considerable variation in the restrictiveness of zoning, tax, and fee policies across jurisdictions, perpetuating uneven regional development



Recap: Key takeaways

- Housing and transportation are siloed on two different planes with no funding or policy mandates bringing them into coordination
- To solve some of the housing challenges in their regions MGPOs report needing:
 - Funds for affordable housing and housing planning
 - Mandates and authority for fair share allocations and regional housing needs assessments
- Even with state-mandated TOD laws, transit and housing coordination (even if a MGPO is facilitating the law's implementation) will not happen without changes to funding and development authorities, infrastructure investments, right-sized-zoning and tax policies, and better coordination between local planning and regional transit planning processes.



Thank you!

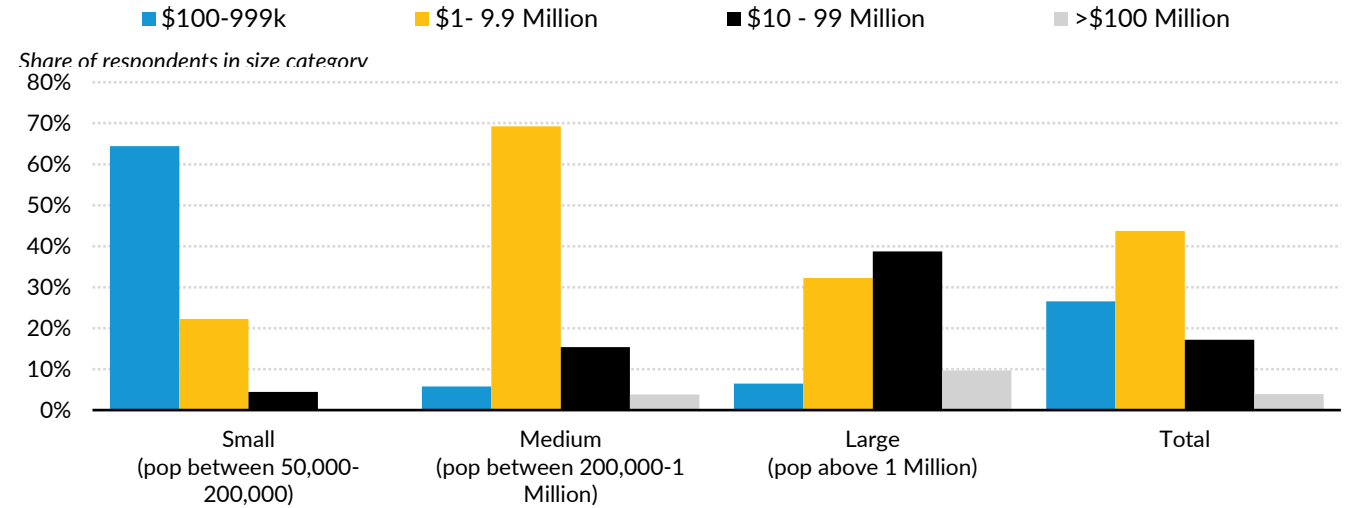
For questions or future research, contact: Lydia Lo (llo@urban.org)

Discussion Questions

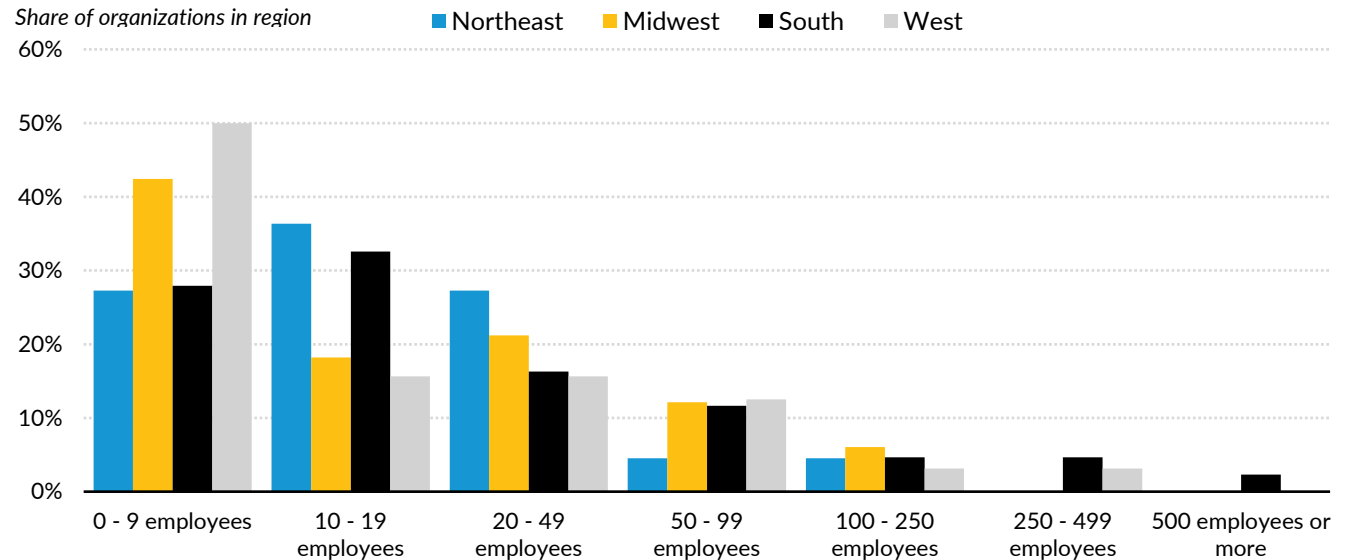
- What strategies are you undertaking, if any, to think about the link between housing, land use, and transportation in your metropolitan area?
- Is the link between housing, land use, and transportation being integrated into your planning processes? What are the challenges of making this integration feasible?
- Can you give some examples of innovative work being done at the local or regional level, in your area or another, either currently or in the past, that attempts to coordinate planning between transportation, housing, and land use planning?
- What tools from the federal government, or from state governments, would enable you to improve the connection between these policy areas?

Lay of the Land: MGPOs across the US

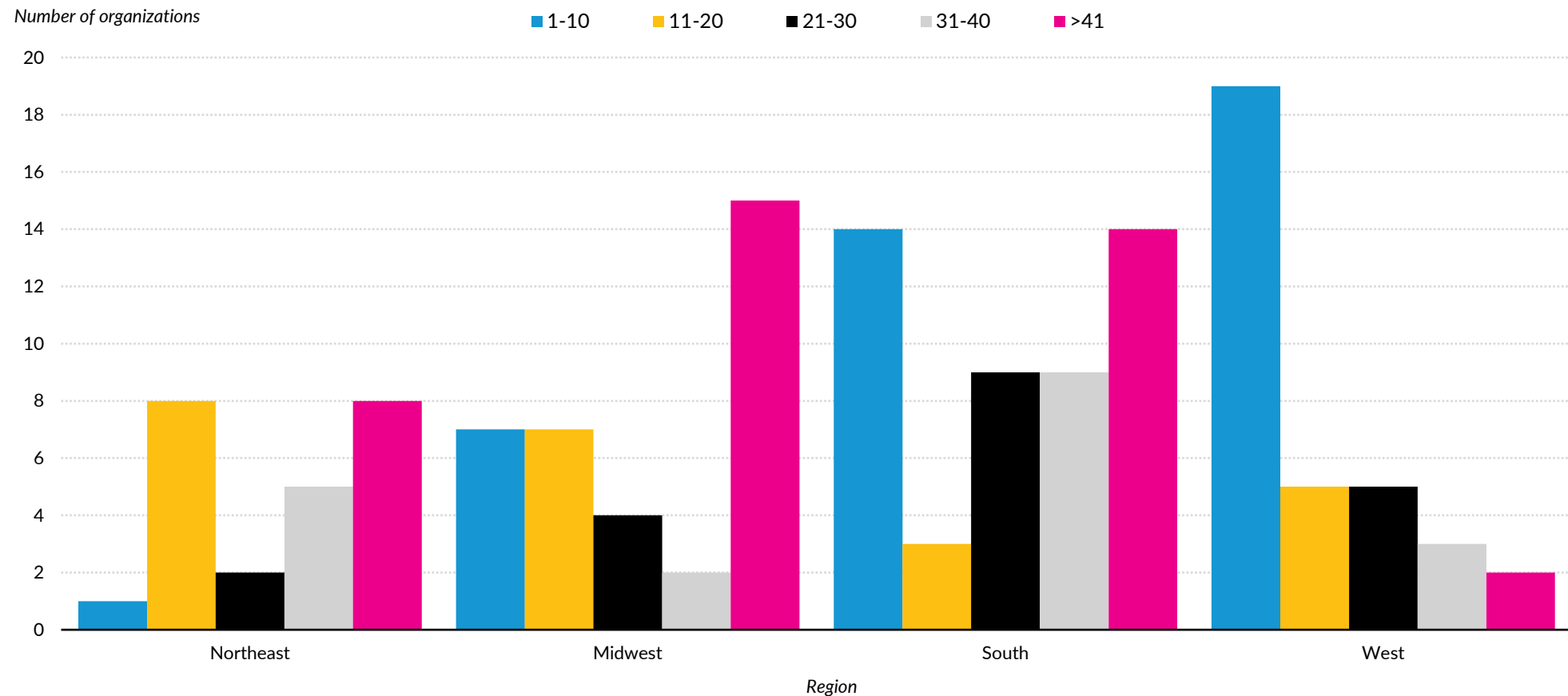
Organization budgets scale with size of population served



Largest organizations in the South and West



Most fragmented metro regions in the Midwest and South; most unified in the West

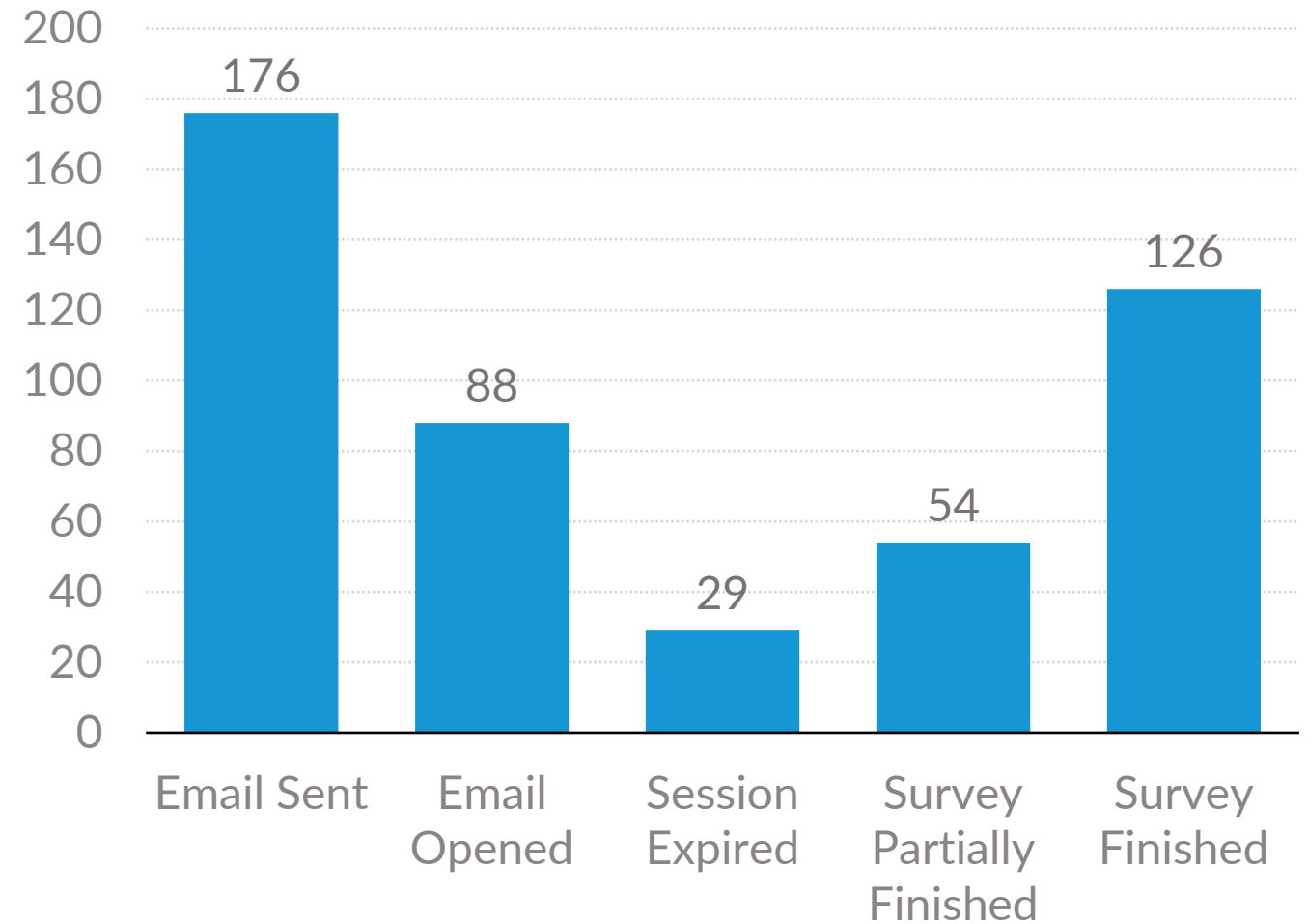


Methods

Response Rate

- Full responses partial responses (exempting those <60% completed) = **143 usable responses**.
- Survey completion rate = 27% (127 of 474),
- Overall response rate = 30% (143 of 474).

Number of respondent



Respondent status

Non-Response Bias Analysis

- Lower average response rate from MPOs
- Larger share of responses from Western orgs
- Lower share of responses from Southern orgs

	Respondent share	Non-respondent share	P Value	Significance
N	143 (30%)	330 (70%)	-	-
MPOs	49%	61%	0.0132	*
In South	34%	44%	0.043	*
In Northeast	17%	14%	0.478	
In Midwest	25%	25%	0.996	
In West	24%	16%	0.03	*
MSA Population	1,312,615	1,013,869	0.154	
MSA Share non-Hispanic white	67%	67%	0.886	