

# What do Americans say about their own community associations?

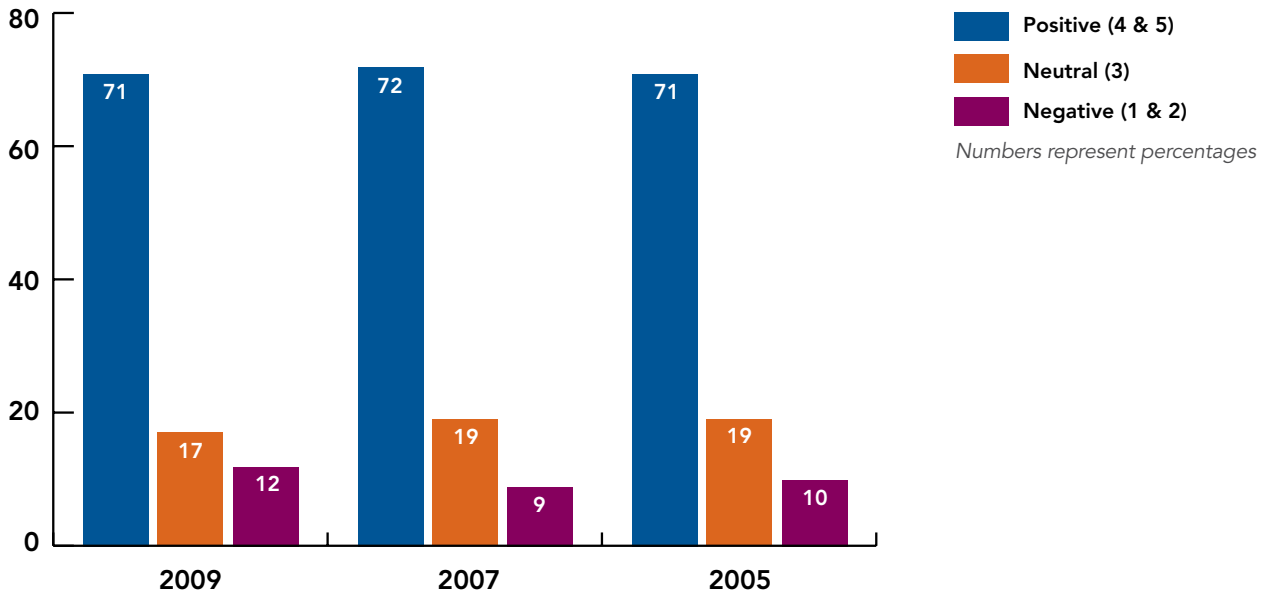


You might be surprised.

NATIONAL RESEARCH BY ZOGBY INTERNATIONAL

## OVERALL RESIDENT SATISFACTION

On a scale of one to five, with one being very bad and five being very good, how would you rate your overall experience living in a community association?



## Affirmation

December 2009 national research by Zogby International affirms what we learned from similar national surveys in 2005 and 2007:

- Residents are satisfied with their community associations.
- Association board members strive to serve the best interests of the community.
- Community managers provide value and support to associations.
- Association rules protect and enhance property values.
- Homeowners value the return they get for their association assessments.
- Residents do not want additional government intervention in their communities.

The Zogby International research was sponsored by the Foundation for Community Association Research (see back cover).

This brochure can be downloaded at [www.cairf.org/research](http://www.cairf.org/research).

# What Residents Say about their Community Associations

Like millions of Americans, many of the nation's 300,000-plus community associations have struggled during the current housing and economic downturn. Many owners have lost their homes. Others are unemployed or underemployed. That has put added pressure on associations to continue providing services and amenities that residents expect—but with fewer resources.

Difficult economic times normally create more negative views toward most institutions, such as business and government. But that hasn't happened in the case of community associations or the homeowner volunteers and professionals who lead and support them. Despite economic challenges—despite the hardships faced by millions of community association homeowners—community associations continue to earn high approval ratings from their residents.

## No News in Harmony

Surprised? You might be given anecdotal reports in the media about associations. Conflict makes headlines, and that's what most Americans read in newspapers and see on television about community associations.

Unfortunately, there is little news in harmony. We don't see stories about the tens of millions of homeowners who are satisfied and content in their communities. We don't read many media profiles about association board members who lead their associations quietly and effectively. We don't see stories about managers and other professionals who provide invaluable guidance and support to their community association clients.

But when you ask residents about their own community associations, the news is overwhelmingly positive. Almost two million Americans serve on community association boards. Independent, national research leaves little room for doubt: The vast majority of these volunteers are doing their best to build community, serve their neighbors faithfully and protect property values. In the overwhelming majority of communities, they are succeeding! That's why we don't hear about them!

## Exceptions Everywhere

But there are exceptions, not just in community associations, but in our workplaces, schools, athletic venues and even our places of worship. There are countless reasons for conflict in our communities.

Some association board members can be unreasonable or worse. Some residents don't bother to understand the rules they are contractually obligated to follow. Others think established rules don't apply to them; still others refuse to pay their fair share of assessments that fund the services and amenities provided by their associations. Communication can be insufficient and contentious. Decisions are not always unanimous. Individual preferences can conflict with the best interests of the community as a whole.

## Positive Reality

Still, while all associations do not function as well as we might like, reality is much more positive than some HOA critics would have us believe.

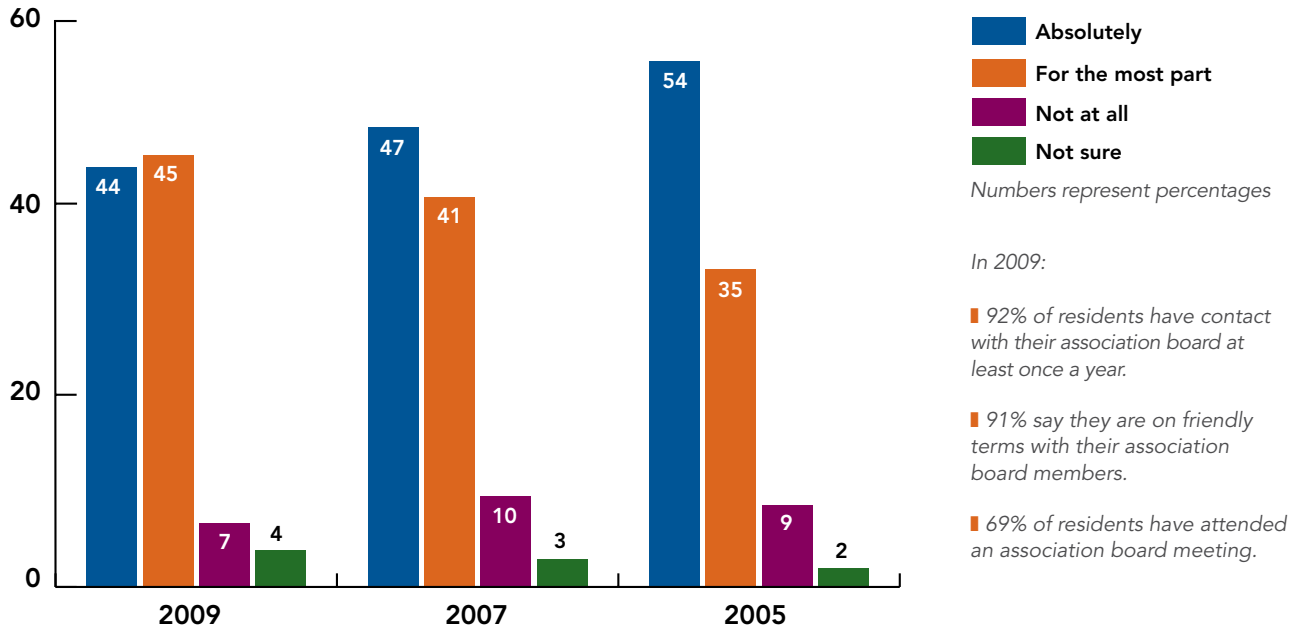
We encourage homeowners who are unsatisfied to step up and play a positive role in their associations. There's no substitute for active and constructive homeowner involvement and no better way to build a true sense of community.

Community Associations Institute (CAI) and the Foundation for Community Association Research will continue to provide education, tools and resources to help board members, community managers and other professionals make associations the best they can be.

This objective is realized when community associations become better—even preferred—places to call home.

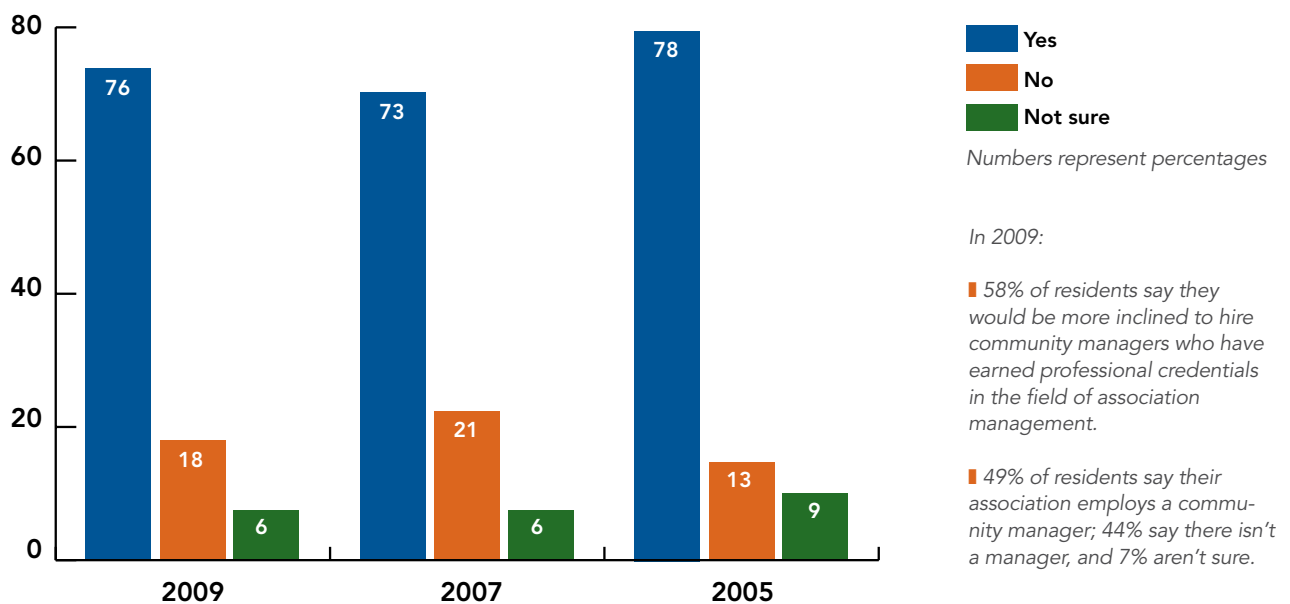
## ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS

Do you think the members of your elected governing board strive to serve the best interests of the community as a whole?



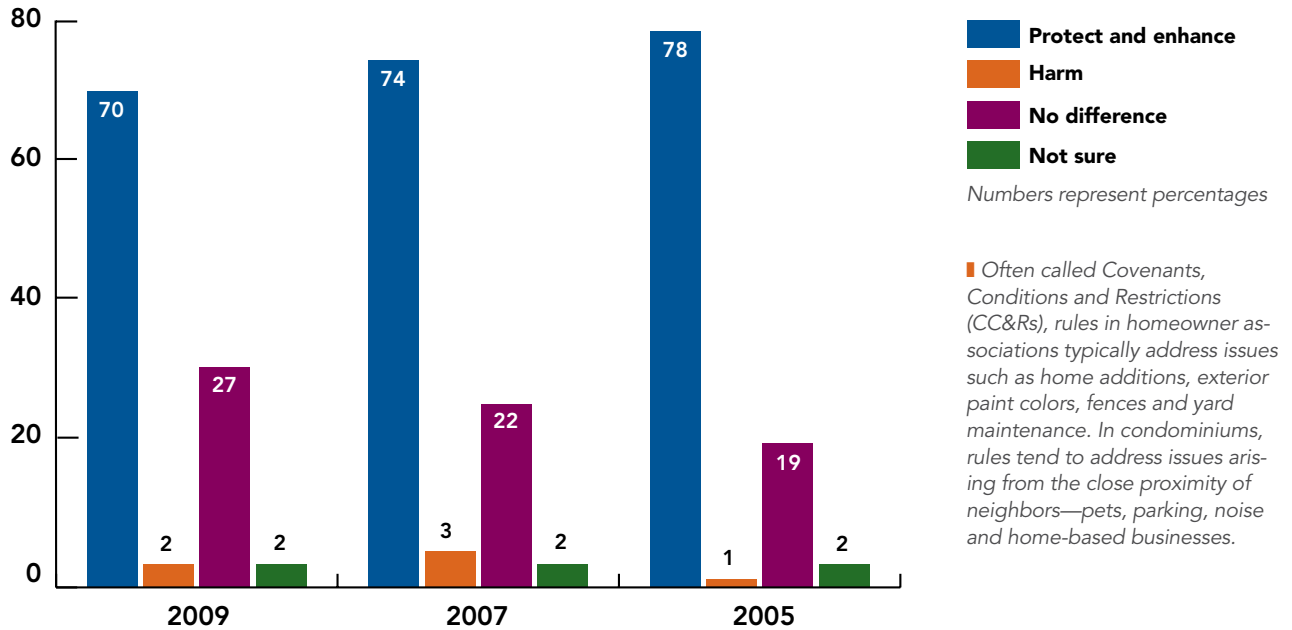
## COMMUNITY MANAGERS

Does the community manager provide value and support to residents and the community as a whole?



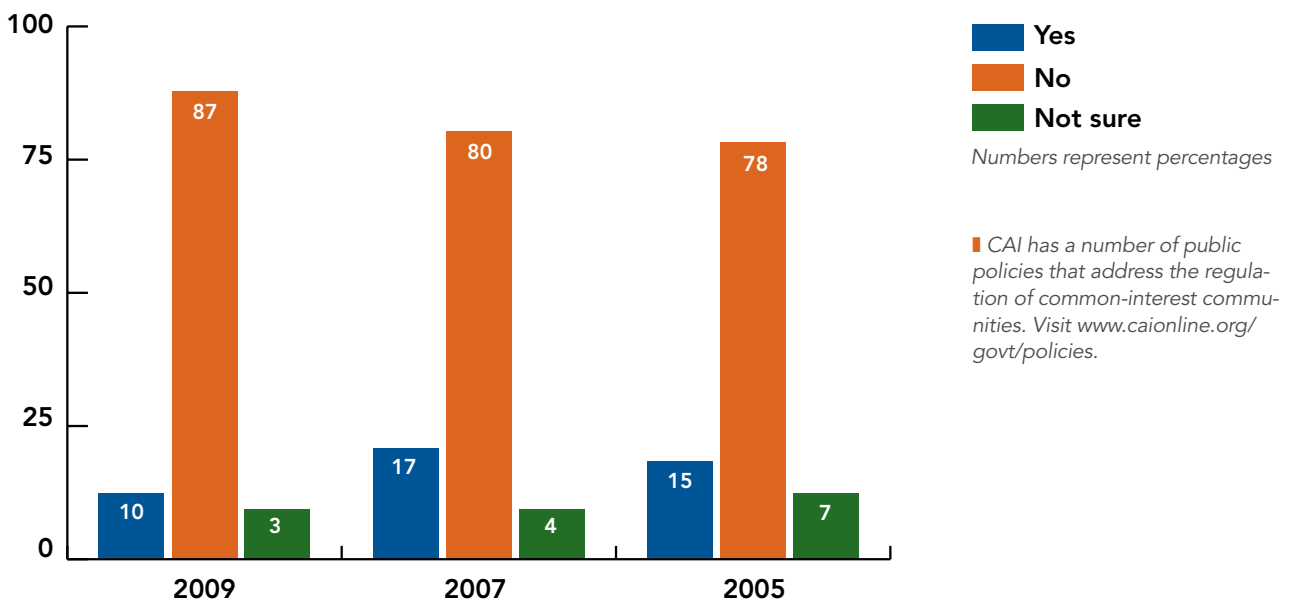
## RULES AND PROPERTY VALUES

Do the rules in your community protect and enhance property values, harm them or make no difference?



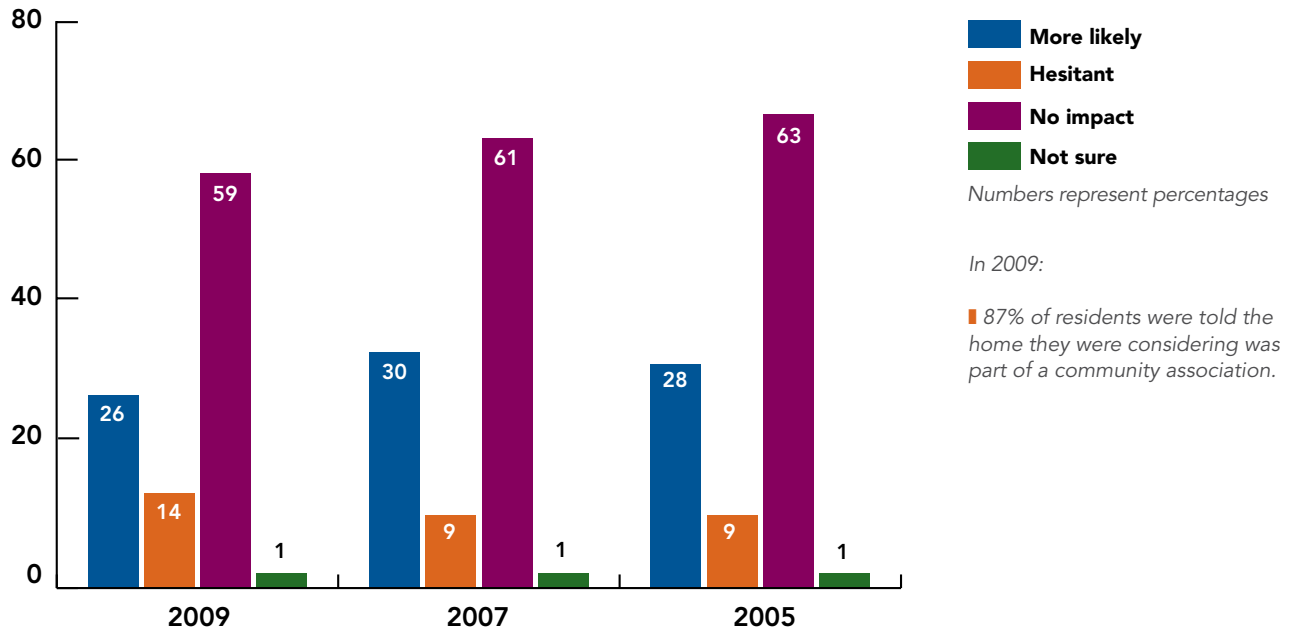
## GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

The governance of community associations is subject to differing state laws and regulations. Would you like to see more government control of these associations?



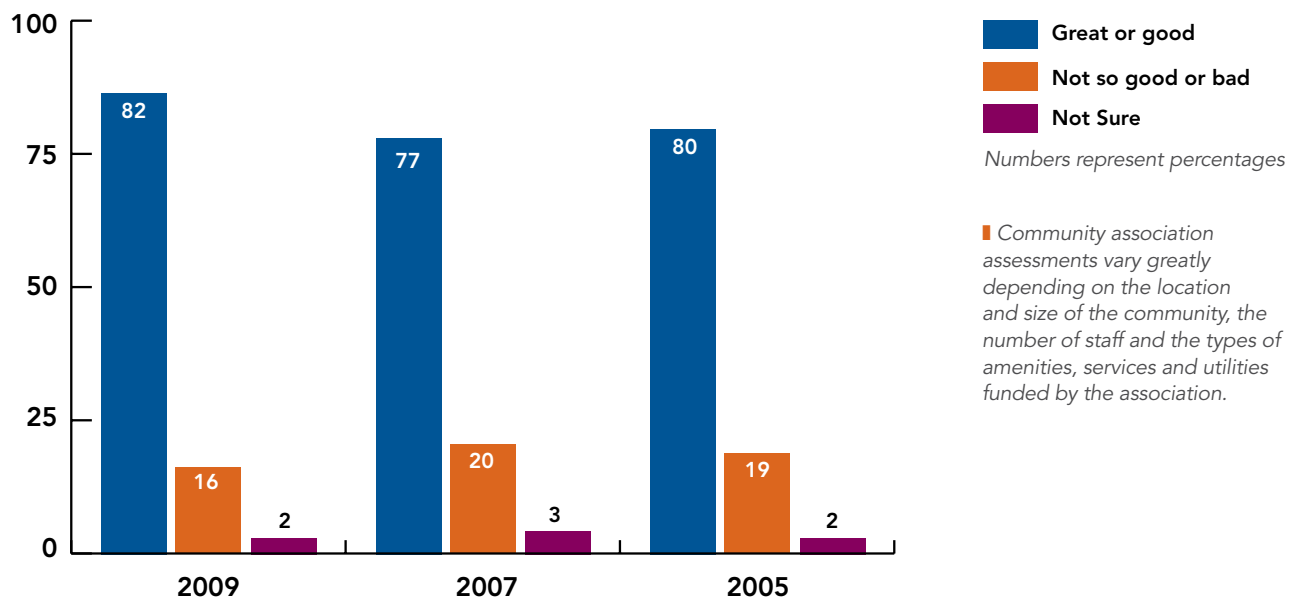
## PRE-PURCHASE AWARENESS

Did the fact that your current home is in a community association make you more likely to purchase or rent your home, make you hesitant about purchasing or renting your home or have no impact?

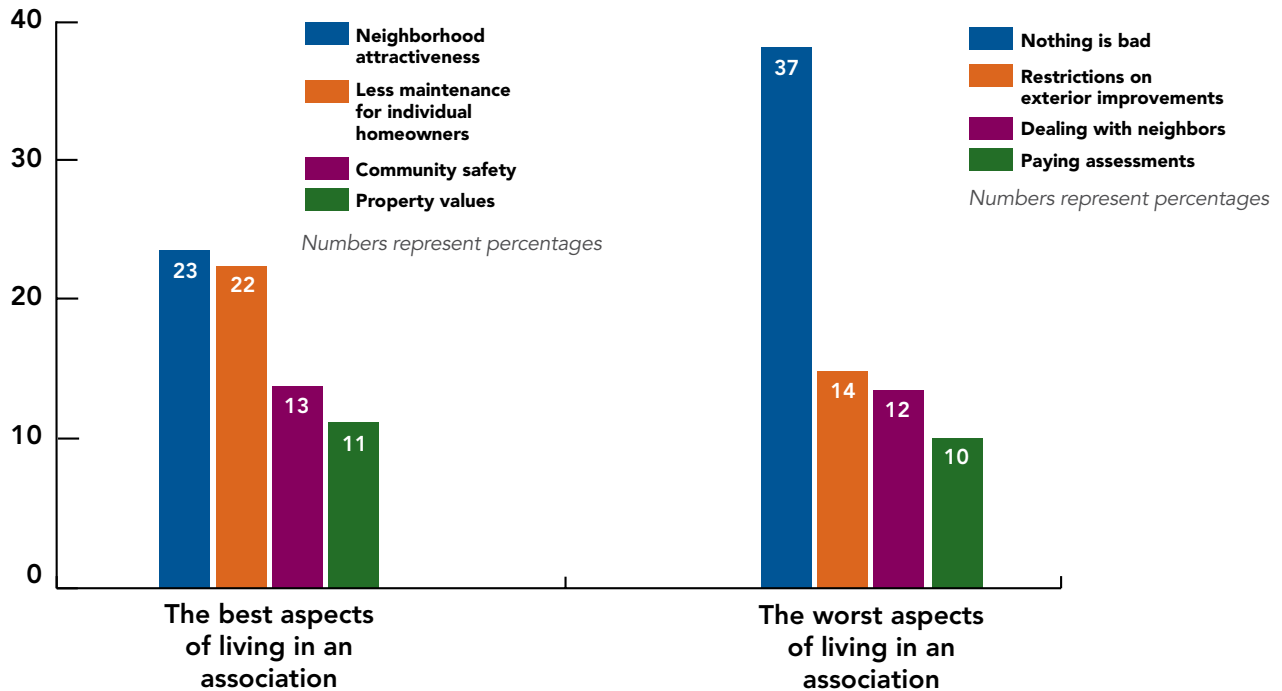


## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Considering your overall assessments and the services provided by your association, how would you describe the return for what you pay in assessments?



## BEST AND WORST IN 2009



## About the Research

Zogby International conducted telephone interviews in December 2009 with a random, nationally representative sample of 700 adults residing in homeowners associations, condominiums, cooperatives and other planned communities, collectively called “community associations” in this summary. The December 2009 survey is similar to research conducted by Zogby in 2005 and 2007. With few exceptions, the findings from all three surveys are within the 3.8 percent margin of error. This affirms the validity of the Zogby research as an effective measure of how residents perceive their community associations.

*Founded in 1984, Zogby International is a respected, independent public opinion research firm based in Utica, N.Y., and Washington, D.C.*

## About Community Associations

An estimated 60 million Americans live in more than 300,000 homeowner and condominium associations, cooperatives and other planned communities. Almost two million of these homeowners serve on association boards. They are not compensated for the countless hours they dedicate to the governance and management of their communities. They are volunteers, elected by their neighbors to preserve the nature and character of their communities, protect property values and meet the established expectations of owners. In many communities, homeowner volunteer leaders are supported by professionals—community managers, accountants, attorneys and others. While the services and counsel provided by these professionals are essential, the homeowners who serve on governing boards are ultimately responsible—and accountable—for their actions and decisions.

## **Foundation for Community Association Research**

The Foundation is a non-profit organization created by CAI in 1975 to keep the Institute at the forefront of scholarship, knowledge and insight pertaining to community association management and governance. Operating under the belief that community associations reflect a deep commitment to grassroots democracy, the Foundation is committed to providing research, publications and other resources that promote a better understanding of common-interest communities and give association leaders information they can use to make their communities better places to live.

*Visit [www.cairf.org](http://www.cairf.org) for information about research projects, publications, scholarships and more.*

## **Community Associations Institute**

CAI is a national membership organization dedicated to fostering vibrant, competent, harmonious common-interest communities. Founded in 1973, CAI provides education, tools and resources to the homeowner volunteer leaders who govern communities and the professionals who support them. CAI members include community association volunteer leaders (homeowners), professional association managers and community management firms and other professionals who provide products and services to associations. CAI is committed to being the worldwide center of knowledge and expertise for people seeking excellence in association governance and management.

*Visit [www.caionline.org](http://www.caionline.org) for information about professional education and designations, board member education, CAI public policies and more.*



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