



VoicesDMV
COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Voices of the Community: DC, Maryland, Virginia

Community Insights



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Executive Summary

In 2017, the Greater Washington Community Foundation set out to answer a simple question: What is it like to live in this region? Not the economic indicators or the policy reports, but the lived experiences of the people who call this region home. We called it Voices of the Community (or VoicesDMV for short) because it is, at its core, a community listening and engagement tool to inform decisions about this region.

What we heard then was a region of genuine pride and persistent contradiction. Residents loved the diversity, the opportunity, the sense that this place had something for everyone. They also told us that the cost of living was squeezing them, the lack of affordable housing was a serious problem, and that the region's prosperity wasn't reaching everyone.

In the years since, we've periodically surveyed residents, in partnership with Gallup, tracking the same questions — as well as new ones relevant to the ongoing changes taking place in the region — to measure progress and understand what our communities truly need. We surveyed in early 2020, just before the pandemic transformed all areas of life in Greater Washington, and again in 2023 as the region worked to recover. We know from this research that the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequities from 2017. The region has made progress since then but has not fully recovered. Now, our latest survey illuminates the disruptions caused by recent federal actions which have further compounded challenges the region was already struggling to overcome.

Each survey has informed how the Greater Washington Community Foundation invests its resources and focuses its programs to address community needs to strengthen this region today and in the future. It also informs how we work with our donors, funders, nonprofits, and regional leaders to make smarter, more informed decisions that align strategies and investments toward a more equitable and thriving region.

Today, the DMV is at an inflection point. The decisions that elected leaders, funders, nonprofits, and community organizations make in the coming years will shape for whom this region works. These findings are a tool for making those decisions with community voices at the center.



SECTION 1:

The DMV is a resilient region, but where you live still shapes your odds.

Wellbeing in the DMV

The region is resilient, but residents are living through a uniquely turbulent chapter.

Just over half of residents (52%) say they are thriving in their overall wellbeing, which is slightly higher than the national average of 48%.

Behind that lies a harder truth: About half of the region’s residents are struggling (44%) or suffering (4%), based on Gallup’s Life Evaluation Index.

In the DMV, where you live matters, as jurisdictions vary in terms of their thriving index. Residents of Arlington County and Alexandria City (61%) and Loudoun County (59%) are most likely to be thriving in the region.

On the lower end, less than half of those in Prince George’s (47%) and Fairfax Counties (48%) are thriving in their lives. That 14–point range across jurisdictions reflects differences in income, housing costs, and access to employment that have shown up consistently across all four survey waves.

Gallup classifies Americans as “thriving,” “struggling,” or “suffering” according to how they rate their current and future lives on a ladder scale with steps numbered from 0 to 10, based on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale. Those who rate both their current and future lives a “4” or lower are classified as suffering. Those who rate their current life a “7” or higher and their anticipated life in five years an “8” or higher are classified as thriving.

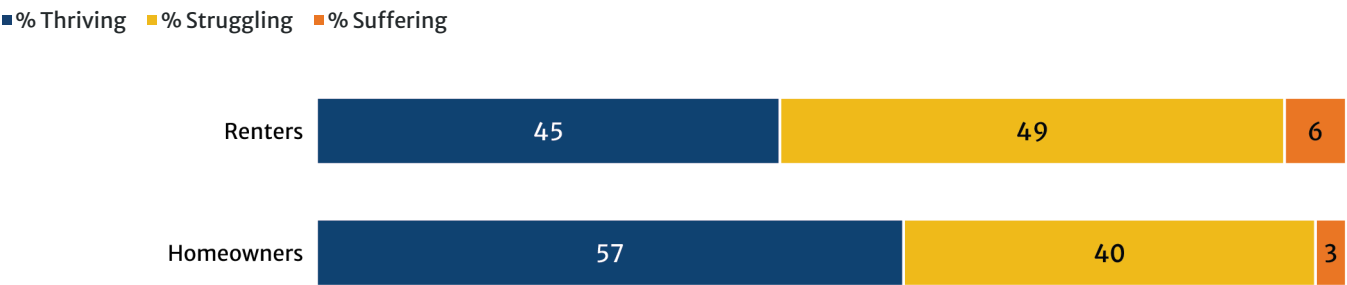
FIGURE 1

Overall Life Evaluation by Jurisdiction

	DMV	DC	Montgomery County	Prince George’s County	Arlington County and Alexandria City	Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and Falls Church City	Loudoun County
Thriving	52%	53%	52%	47%	61%	48%	59%
Struggling	44%	44%	43%	49%	36%	46%	39%
Suffering	4%	2%	5%	5%	3%	7%	2%

Housing status provides another lens into these differences. Across the DMV, homeowners are significantly more likely to report thriving than renters (57% vs. 45%), a 12-point gap.

FIGURE 2
Overall Life Evaluation, Renters vs. Homeowners



The Conditions Contributing to Wellbeing

When analyzing all measures in the survey, four of the five largest drivers of whether or not residents are thriving tie back to two major themes of this report: jobs and housing.

Further sections of this report will detail more on each item, but residents who rate the availability of jobs and affordable housing as “excellent” are nearly twice as likely to be thriving.

Similarly, residents are about twice as likely to be thriving if they have not struggled to afford healthcare or housing — or if they say they are “not at all worried” about paying their rent or mortgage.

FIGURE 3
Top Drivers of Wellbeing in the DMV Region

	Times More Likely to Be Thriving
Those who say they did not come upon times in the past year when they did not have enough money to pay for shelter or housing	1.8x
Those who say they did not come upon times in the past year when they did not have enough money to pay for needed healthcare or medicine	1.8x
Those who rate the availability of good jobs as "excellent"	1.7x
Those who rate the availability of affordable housing as "excellent"	1.7x
Those who say they were "not at all worried" about paying their rent or mortgage	1.7x

The conditions that predict thriving, access to good jobs, stable and affordable housing, and freedom from stress over affording basic needs are exactly the conditions that the findings in this report document as being out of reach for a significant share of residents.

SECTION 2:

The federal disruption is a regional crisis, and some communities are bearing far more of the burden.

The federal disruption is the defining force of this moment. No other major metropolitan region in the country is as directly tied to the federal government as Greater Washington. Federal agencies, contractors, and the businesses and nonprofits that support them form the backbone of much of our regional economy. As a result, the DMV has been uniquely affected by federal actions — including federal workforce reductions, deployment of the National Guard to patrol DC, increased immigration enforcement, and significant reductions in federal grants. The effects have reverberated throughout neighborhoods, households, and communities across the region.

Impacts of Workforce Reductions and Furloughs

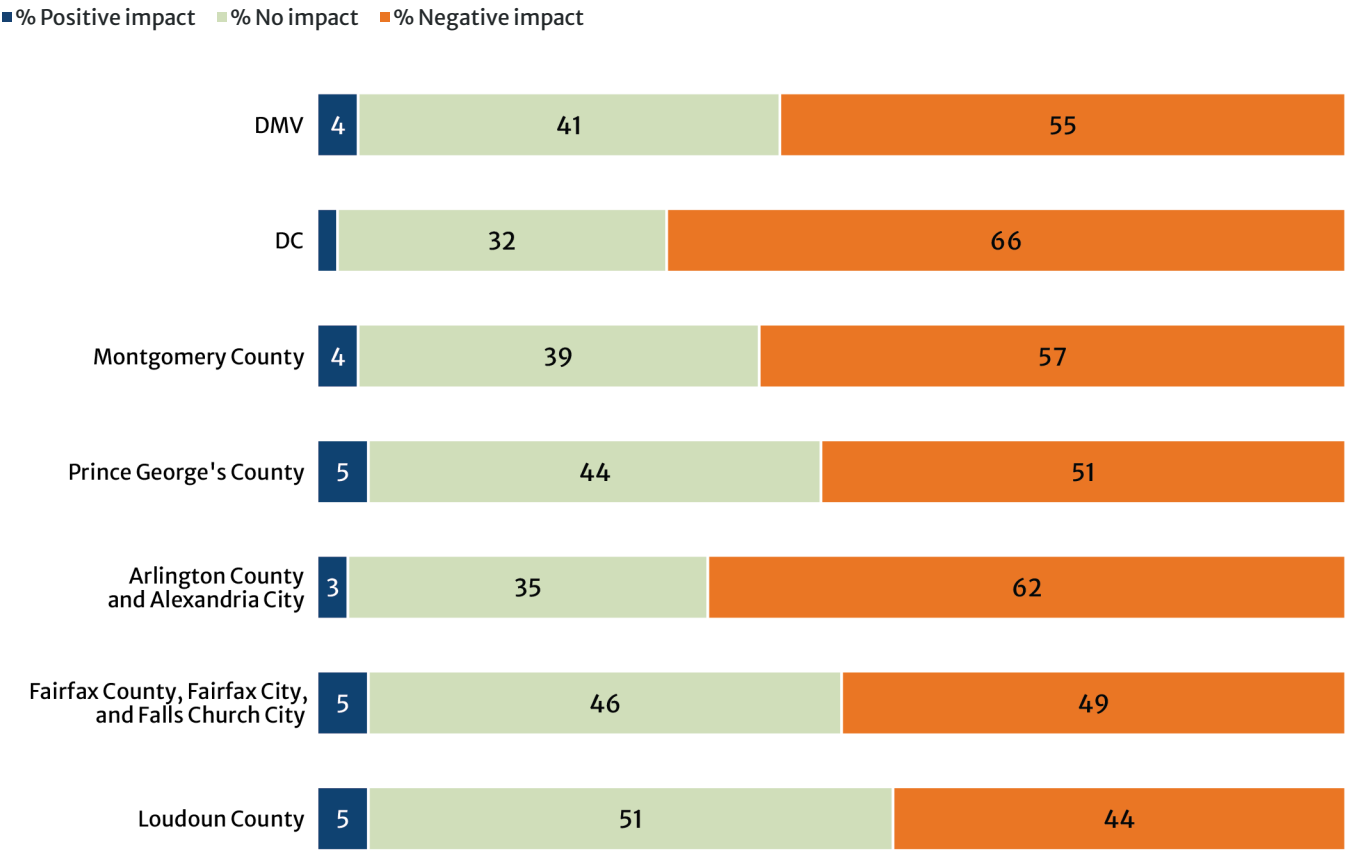
More than half of DMV households have been negatively impacted by federal job cuts, though the concentration of impact varies sharply by jurisdiction. That figure rises to 66% in DC, 62% in Arlington County and Alexandria, and 57% in Montgomery County. In Prince George's County, 51% of residents report negative household-level impact, a figure that sits just below the regional average.



FIGURE 4

In the past 12 months, have you or anyone in your household been impacted by any of the following?

Federal government job cuts or furloughs



Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed.

Most residents in households with annual earnings of \$90,000 or more say they were negatively impacted by the reductions in workforce, whereas about half (48%) of residents whose households earned less than \$90,000 report being impacted.

Accessing Social Services

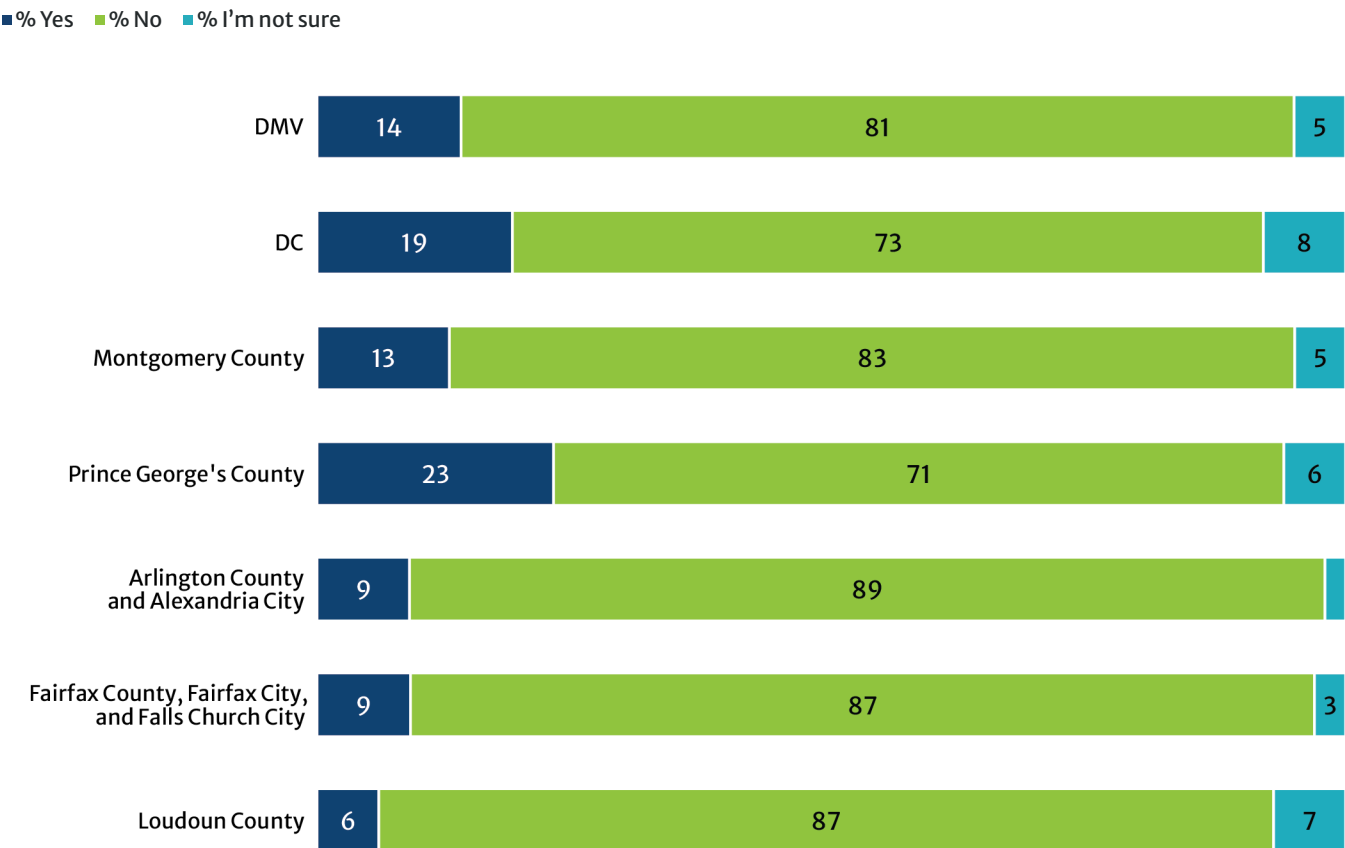
For a subset of residents, the disruptions of 2026 pushed them past a threshold they had not previously crossed.

Amid the major disruption to the local job market, about one in seven DMV residents (14%) report that they or someone in their household accessed social services for the first time in the past year, including food banks or pantries, job placement support, or other support services provided by the government or nonprofit organizations.

That rate rises to 19% in DC and 23% in Prince George’s County. In contrast, fewer than one in 10 residents in Arlington (9%), Fairfax (9%), and Loudoun Counties (6%) report having received such social services for the first time.

FIGURE 5

Have you or someone in your household accessed social services for the first time in the past year? For example, food banks or pantries, job placement support, or other support services provided by the government or a nonprofit organization.



Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed.

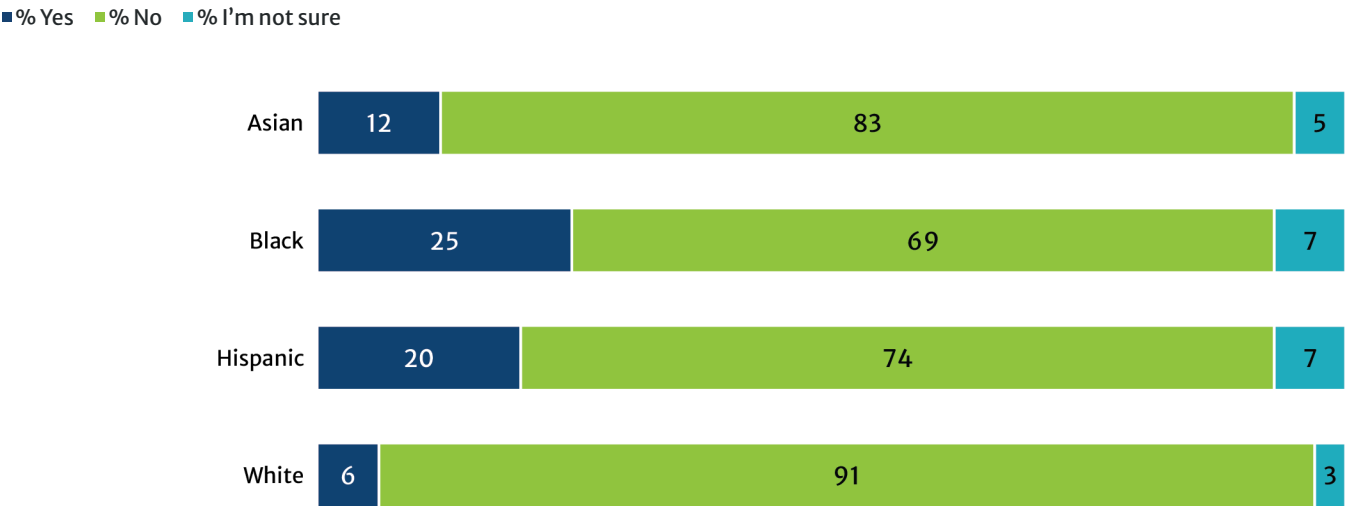
Residents with lower household incomes are much more likely than those with higher incomes to report having accessed social services. More than one in four people in households earning less than \$90,000 (26%) report having sought such services for the first time.

Black (25%) and Hispanic residents (20%) are far more likely than Asian (12%) and White (6%) residents to report having accessed social services for the first time in the past year.

FIGURE 6

Have you or someone in your household accessed social services for the first time in the past year? For example, food banks or pantries, job placement support, or other support services provided by the government or a nonprofit organization.

By race/ethnicity



Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed.

Impacts of Increased Federal Enforcement

Federal enforcement activity has affected a meaningful share of residents, with Hispanic households reporting a much greater negative impact.

These measures count direct household impact, not the broader strain of living under increased enforcement. The direct impact may go deeper than these numbers show, both because residents facing the most risk have reason to be cautious about responding to a survey and because increased enforcement activity may not be reaching every community with equal weight.

Increased immigration enforcement has affected some communities far more than others. About one in four DMV residents (24%) report negative impact, but Hispanic residents (43%) are nearly

twice as likely as the regional average, and DC residents (38%) report impact at more than 1.5 times the rest of the region.

Increased military activity or presence follows the same divide. Nearly one in four DMV residents (23%) report negative impact, while DC residents (44%) report nearly double the regional rate and Hispanic residents (31%) report notably higher impact than their Asian (23%), White (25%), and Black (17%) counterparts.

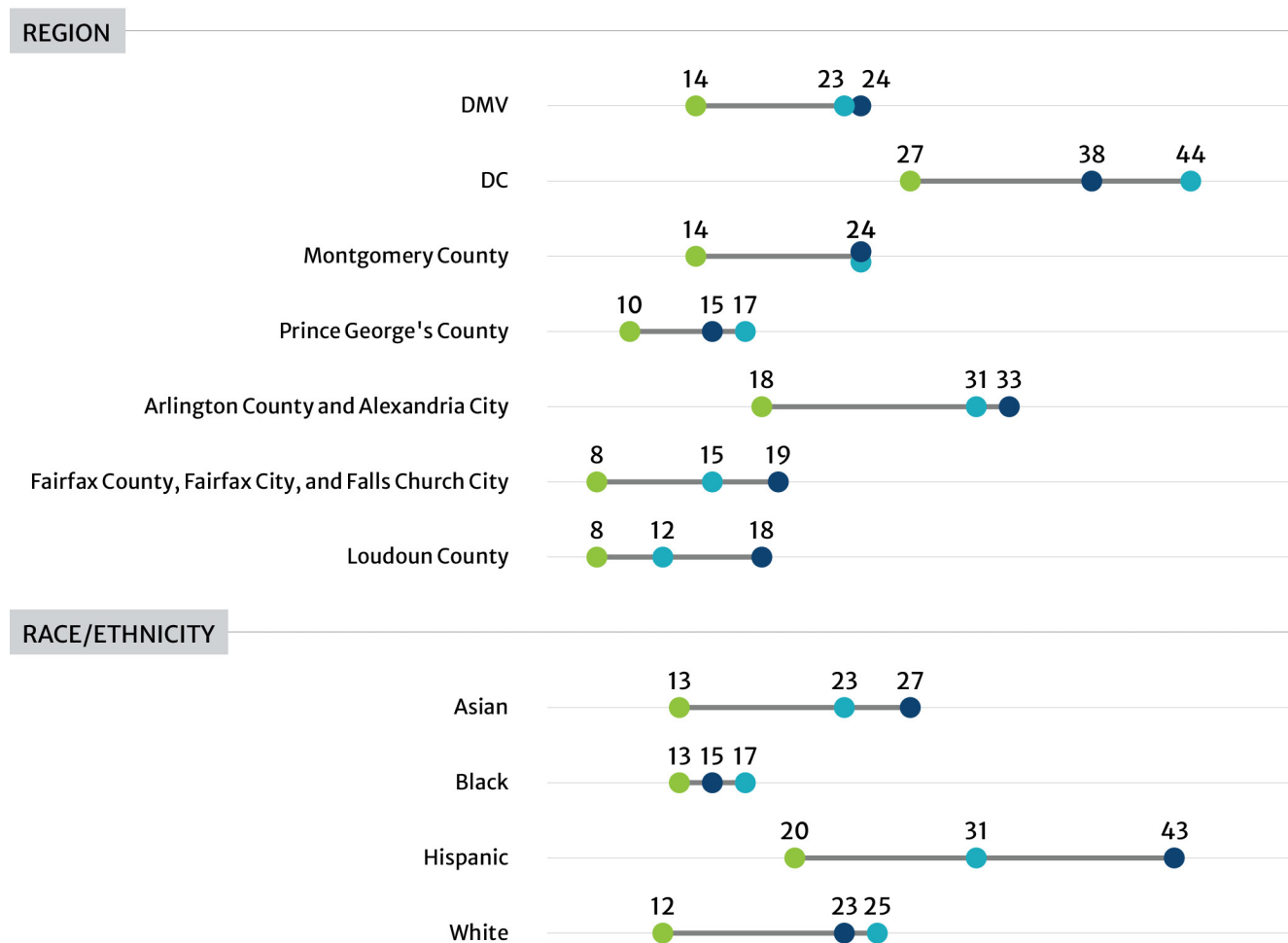
Increased law enforcement or policing also follows a similar pattern. DC residents report negative impact at nearly twice the regional rate (27% vs. 14%), and Hispanic residents (20%) are more likely than Asian (13%), Black (13%), and White (12%) residents to report being negatively impacted.

FIGURE 7

In the past 12 months, have you or anyone in your household been impacted by any of the following?

% Negative impact

● Increased immigration enforcement ● Increased law enforcement or policing ● Increased military activity or presence



SECTION 3:

Housing affordability is the one area where residents consistently say the region falls short.

Since 2017, the VoicesDMV: Community Insights survey has asked residents to rate key aspects of life in the region. Affordable housing has finished last every time. The cost, the scarcity, the sense that it keeps getting harder regardless of where you live or what you earn — that frustration has held steady across all four waves of this survey, and it shows no sign of easing.

Availability of Affordable Housing

In 2026, DMV residents continue to rate the availability of affordable housing (11%) lowest in the list of regional aspects, reflecting no improvement since 2023. The 11% rating for affordable housing as “excellent” or “good” is lower than ratings for public schools, jobs, healthcare, and transportation.

FIGURE 8

How would you rate these aspects of life in the place where you live?

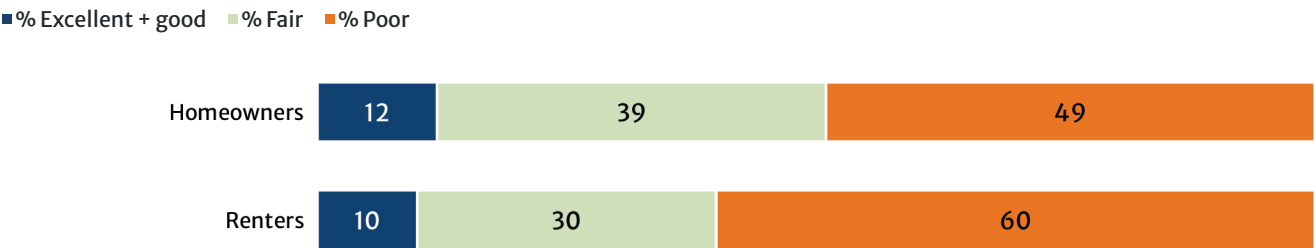
% Excellent + good

	DMV	DC	Montgomery County	Prince George's County	Arlington County and Alexandria City	Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and Falls Church City	Loudoun County
The availability of grocery stores or markets	84	74	93	64	92	92	92
The availability of healthcare	73	65	74	59	81	80	83
The availability of restaurants and nightlife	71	78	73	47	89	77	71
Access to transportation options	70	88	70	57	88	68	53
As a place to raise children	69	46	76	52	78	79	86
The availability of arts and cultural opportunities	63	74	62	41	80	67	64
The overall quality of public schools	63	42	75	33	80	76	76
The availability of good jobs	51	41	48	35	61	64	67
The availability of affordable housing	11	13	12	11	12	10	11

This is one of the few findings in the survey where opinions are remarkably consistent across demographic groups. Renters and homeowners, urban and suburban residents, and low- and high-income households all rate the region’s affordable housing availability poorly.

FIGURE 9

Ratings of Affordable Housing Availability, by Homeowners vs. Renters



Worries About Paying Rent or Mortgage

For a significant share of residents, the lack of affordable housing translates into real financial stress every month.

One in three DMV residents say they are “somewhat” (23%) or “very worried” (10%) about being able to pay their rent or mortgage. While the combined 33% is down from the 52% pandemic-related peak measured in 2023, worries about paying for housing remain concerning and unevenly distributed.

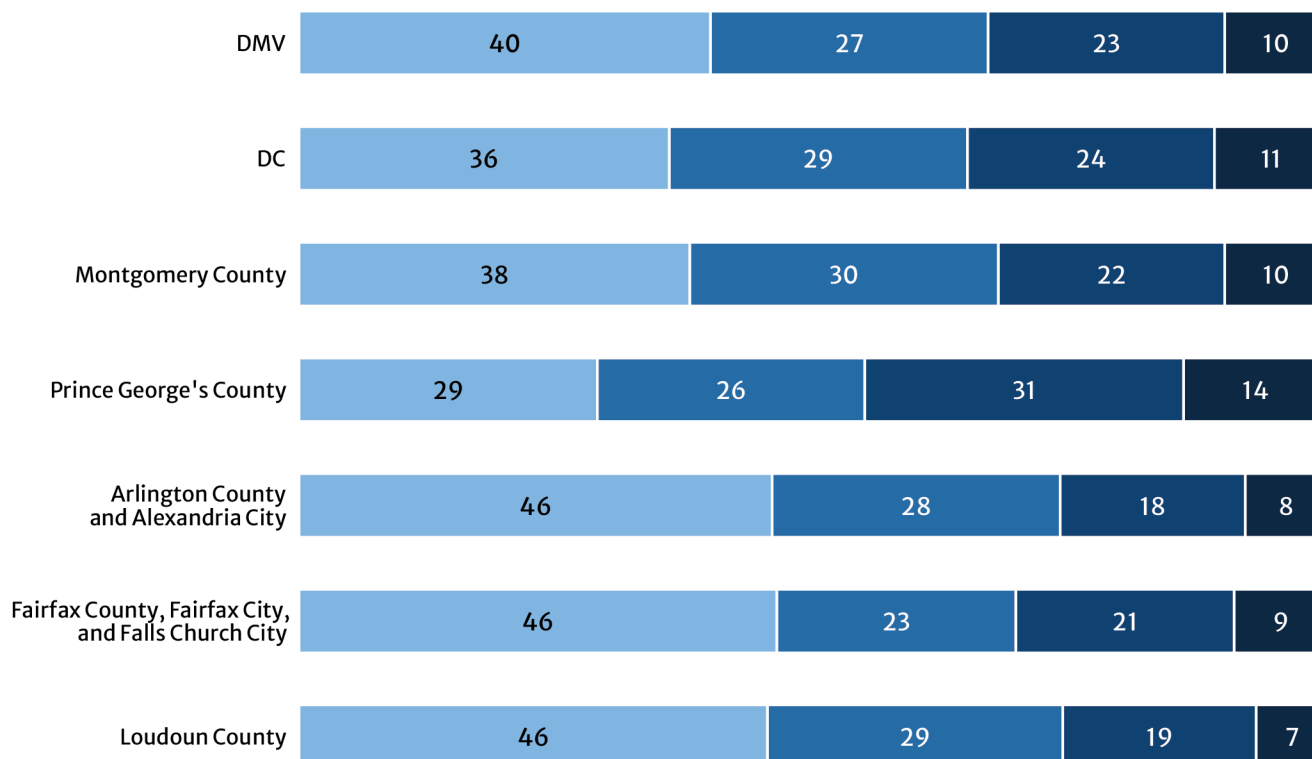
Renters carry the most acute anxiety, at 48%, compared with 25% among homeowners. Among those planning to leave the region, 58% cite rising housing costs as a major reason, nearly tied with the 59% who cite the broader cost of living.

However, homeownership does not shield residents from housing cost anxiety. For example, Prince George’s County has approximately 74% homeownership, the second-highest rate in the region behind Loudoun County at 79%. Though rent and mortgage payment worries have decreased across most of the region, they have not eased as much in Prince George’s County, where nearly half of residents (45%) report being worried about rent or mortgage payments — the highest of any subregion in the DMV. In 2023, Prince George’s County was broadly in line with its neighbors on this measure. The gap that has since opened up is one of the more consequential shifts in the survey.

FIGURE 10

How worried, if at all, are you about not being able to pay rent or mortgage?

■ % Not at all worried ■ % Not too worried ■ % Somewhat worried ■ % Very worried



The findings underscore the importance of addressing housing affordability as a regional priority. Residents consistently rate it poorly, identify it as a source of anxiety, and cite it as a factor in decisions to leave the DMV.

Solutions to Address Homelessness

More residents now believe homelessness can be solved, though broad support for solutions in principle has not yet fully translated into support for the investments those solutions require.

The region has a bit more optimism about tackling the issue of homelessness than in the recent past. DMV residents have become more likely to agree or strongly agree that homelessness can be eliminated, though only about half (51%) have this view, up from 43% in 2023.

Additionally, residents have become slightly more likely to agree that their local government cares about addressing the issue, rising to 32% today from 27% in 2023.

Other sentiments around the issue of homelessness are stable from 2023:

- Nearly half (47%) agree that the solution to homelessness is increasing housing supply.
- Four in 10 (40%) agree that extremely low-income housing should be built in their community.
 - Only in DC (56%) do a majority agree that extremely low-income housing should be built in their community. Less than half of residents in all other subregions agree.
 - Among those living in households that make \$90,000 or more per year, roughly one in three agree that extremely low-income housing should be built in their community, whereas residents whose household income falls below \$90,000 are much more supportive.
- About one in three (35%) agree that they are willing to pay more in taxes to help increase the supply of affordable housing.



FIGURE 11

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

% Strongly + somewhat agree

	DMV	DC	Montgomery County	Prince George's County	Arlington County and Alexandria City	Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and Falls Church City	Loudoun County
My local government cares about addressing homelessness in the area where I live.	32	29	35	29	38	32	26
Homelessness can be eliminated in the Greater Washington region.	51	62	46	57	44	46	48
The solution to homelessness is increasing the supply of housing.	47	59	42	46	50	48	36
I am willing to pay more taxes to help increase the supply of affordable housing.	35	51	32	26	45	35	29
Extremely low-income housing should be built in my community.	40	56	36	38	49	38	26



SECTION 4:

For many residents, the DMV's economic promise remains out of reach.

Greater Washington is one of the wealthiest metropolitan regions in the country, and yet a meaningful share of residents went without food, healthcare, or stable housing at some point in the past year. While some pressures may have eased since the pandemic peak, economic precarity still remains persistent and widespread throughout the region.

Struggles to Afford Basic Needs

Reports of going without food or healthcare in the past year have not improved since 2023, despite a period of economic recovery in between.

In 2023 — in the immediate aftermath of the global COVID-19 pandemic — nearly one in five residents (18%) reported that there were times in the past year when they did not have enough money to pay for healthcare or medicine that they or their family needed, while the same percentage of residents said there were times they did not have enough money to pay for food.

In 2026, those figures are nearly unchanged: 20% went without needed healthcare, 17% without food, and 9% without adequate housing at some point in the past year. Across all three affordability items, Black and Hispanic residents are far more likely than their Asian and White counterparts to say they have struggled to afford each basic necessity.

DMV residents in households earning less than \$90,000 annually are at least twice as likely as the regional average to say they have struggled to afford each of the basic necessities, with four in 10 saying they were short on money to buy food or needed healthcare and nearly one in four saying they struggled to afford shelter.



FIGURE 12**Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money ...?****By household income**

% Yes

	DMV	Less than \$90,000*	\$90,000 to \$179,999	\$180,000 to \$239,999	\$240,000 or more
To buy food that you or your family needed	17	40	9	5	5
To pay for healthcare and/ or medicines that you or your family needed	20	40	16	10	6
To provide adequate shelter or housing for you and your family	9	23	5	2	3

Among residents who are not employed and are looking for work, reports of not being able to afford basic necessities are about twice the regional average. Residents who are not employed full time but have a part-time job, seasonal work, or gig are no better off. Both groups are much more likely than full-time workers to say they've struggled to afford food, shelter, and healthcare needs.

FIGURE 13**Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money ...?****By race and ethnicity**

% Yes

	DMV	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
To buy food that you or your family needed	17	7	30	31	7
To pay for healthcare and/ or medicines that you or your family needed	20	16	29	40	10
To provide adequate shelter or housing for you and your family	9	8	15	20	3

Barriers to Employment

DMV residents' assessments of the local job market have deteriorated dramatically since 2023, directly affecting one of the primary conditions associated with thriving. In 2023, two in three residents (65%) rated the availability of jobs as “excellent” or “good.” Today, only half (51%) rate the local job availability positively — a 14-point drop.

Dimming views of the job market only compound the factors that already stand in the way of regional jobseekers.

As was the case in 2020 and 2023, DMV residents are most likely to report their past work experience (20%) and level of education or training (18%) as barriers to finding and keeping a job. But those persistent barriers now sit in a harder job market, particularly for residents without advanced credentials.

Smaller percentages of residents name convenient public transportation (15%), access to a car (12%), and access to childcare (9%) as barriers to employment. Childcare as a barrier is even higher among households with children: 22% of adults with children in their households say that access to childcare is a barrier.

FIGURE 14

Have you personally experienced any of the following barriers to finding and keeping a job?

% Yes

	DMV	DC	Montgomery County	Prince George's County	Arlington County and Alexandria City	Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and Falls Church City	Loudoun County
Access to childcare	9	7	11	8	7	10	9
Access to a car	12	16	12	16	9	9	8
Convenient public transportation	15	17	17	17	15	9	13
Level of education or training	18	19	15	21	17	20	14
Past work experience	20	25	17	20	21	21	17
Criminal background or past problems with law enforcement	2	3	2	2	1	1	1
Credit history or financial problems	8	9	5	14	2	7	5

Intent to Leave

About one in seven residents are considering leaving the region, and their reasons are almost entirely economic.

Despite most DMV residents thriving in their lives, 14% say they plan to leave the region in the next year, while 16% are unsure and two-thirds of the population (70%) say they do not plan to leave.

Intentions to move away are similar across regional jurisdictions. However, notable gaps include:

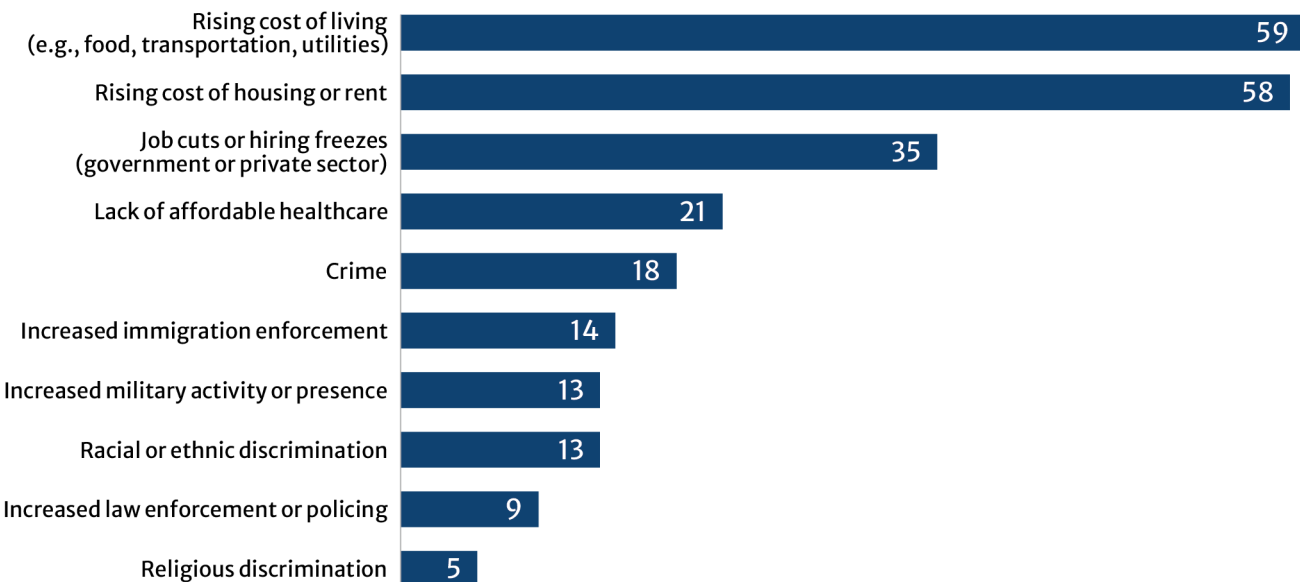
- Renters (21%) are more than twice as likely to say they plan to leave the area as homeowners (10%).
- Those who have lived in the area for five years or less (22%) are more likely than longer-term residents to say they plan to leave.
- One in four residents who are suffering in their wellbeing (25%) say they intend to leave — much higher than those who are struggling (17%) or thriving (10%).

When asked for the reasons they are considering moving, majorities of those who say they plan to leave express that the rising cost of living (59%) and housing or rent (58%) are driving their decision, followed by job cuts or hiring freezes (35%) and lack of affordable healthcare (21%).

FIGURE 15

Are any of the following a reason why you are considering leaving the Greater Washington region?

% Major reason



SECTION 5:

Residents hold local government responsible for the region’s future, but few believe they have a real say in it.

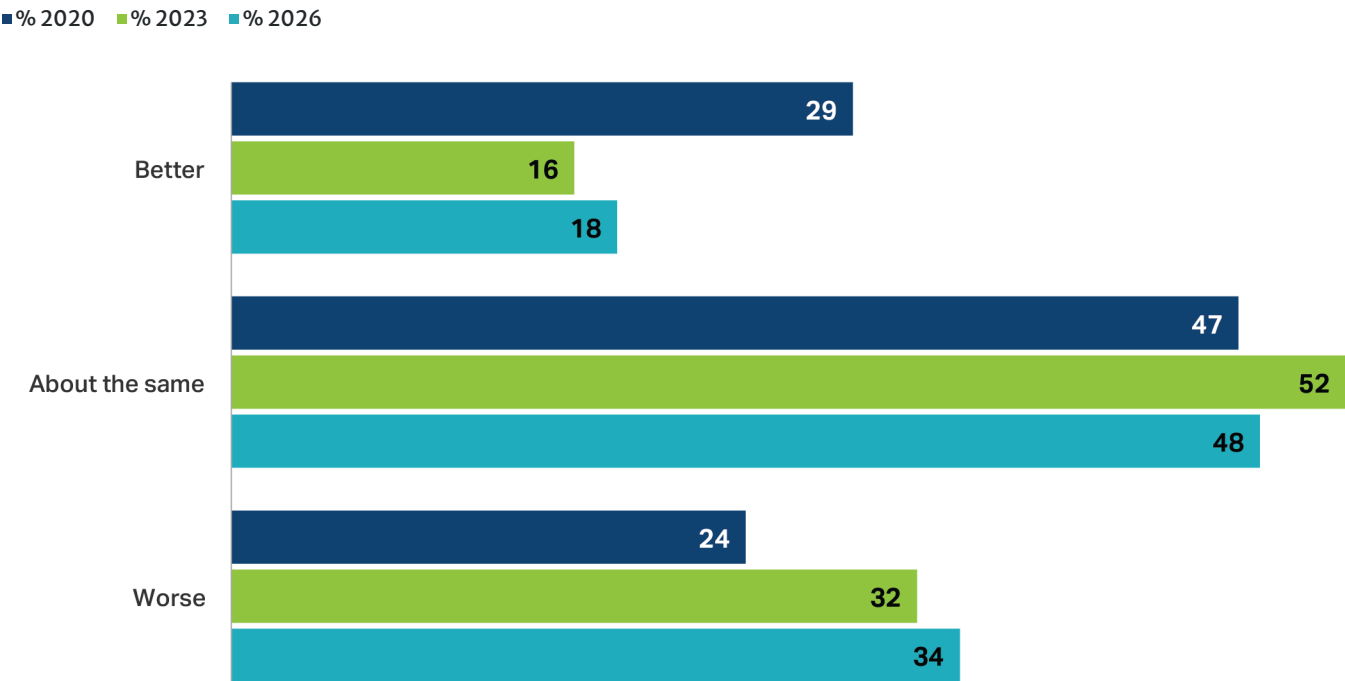
Skepticism about the region’s direction coexists with genuine attachment to it. Most residents don’t expect conditions to improve, and few feel their voice carries much weight in shaping what comes next. Yet their answers about what the region needs reflect investment in its future.

Outlook for the Next Five Years

The region’s challenges have left a mark on how residents see the future. DMV residents are about twice as likely to expect living conditions in the area to get “worse” (34%) as they are to expect them to get “better” (18%) in the next five years, while about half (48%) believe that conditions will remain about the same. That net-negative outlook has not changed since 2023. DC is the one exception: Residents there are evenly divided between those who expect living conditions to improve or to deteriorate (26% vs. 25%).

FIGURE 16

As you look ahead to the next five years, do you think living conditions in the Washington area will be ...?



Who Benefits From Changes in the Region

Residents are evenly split on whether the changes happening in the region are being shaped with their interests in mind.

About half of residents view the coming changes in the region as generally beneficial to everyone (33%) or else believe that they will “mostly benefit people like me” (16%). The other half are less positive: 32% say changes will mostly benefit people different from them, and 18% say changes will benefit no one. That split runs across jurisdictions and has not changed since 2023.

Black (42%) and Hispanic (41%) residents are more likely than Asian (28%) and White (25%) residents to say coming changes will mostly benefit “people different than me.”

FIGURE 17

When you think about the changes going on in the place where you live, would you say that those changes ...?

% Selected

	DMV	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Mostly benefit me or people like me	16	16	7	15	23
Mostly benefit people different than me	32	28	42	41	25
Generally benefit everyone	33	35	36	31	32
Generally benefit no one	18	21	15	13	21



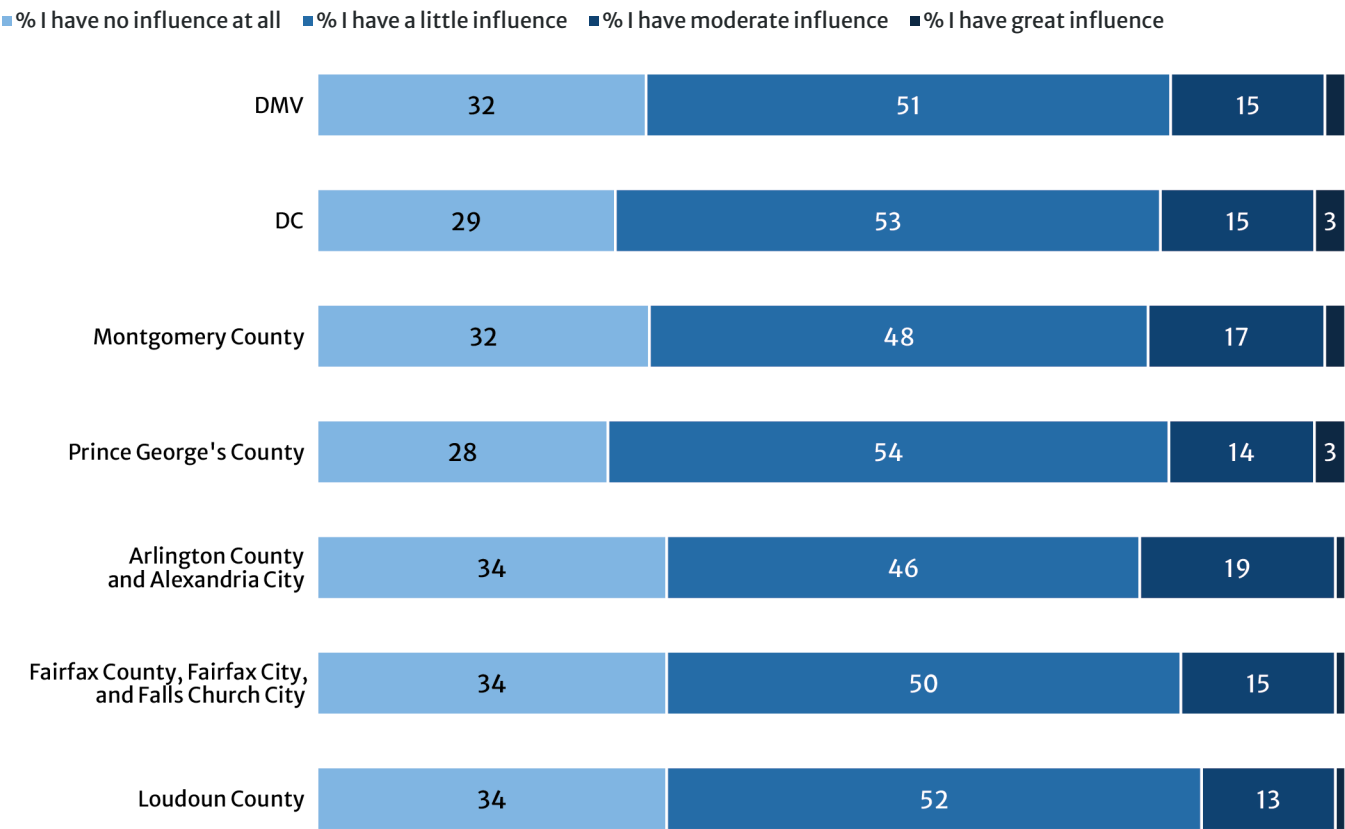
Civic Influence and Accountability

Most residents assign responsibility for regional challenges to a broad set of institutions, but very few feel like they personally have any influence over local decision-making.

Relatively few residents view themselves as having “great” (2%) or “moderate” (15%) influence in local government decision-making, similar to what was found in 2023. The other 83% feel they have little or no say.

FIGURE 18

How would you describe your ability to influence local government decision-making?



Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed.



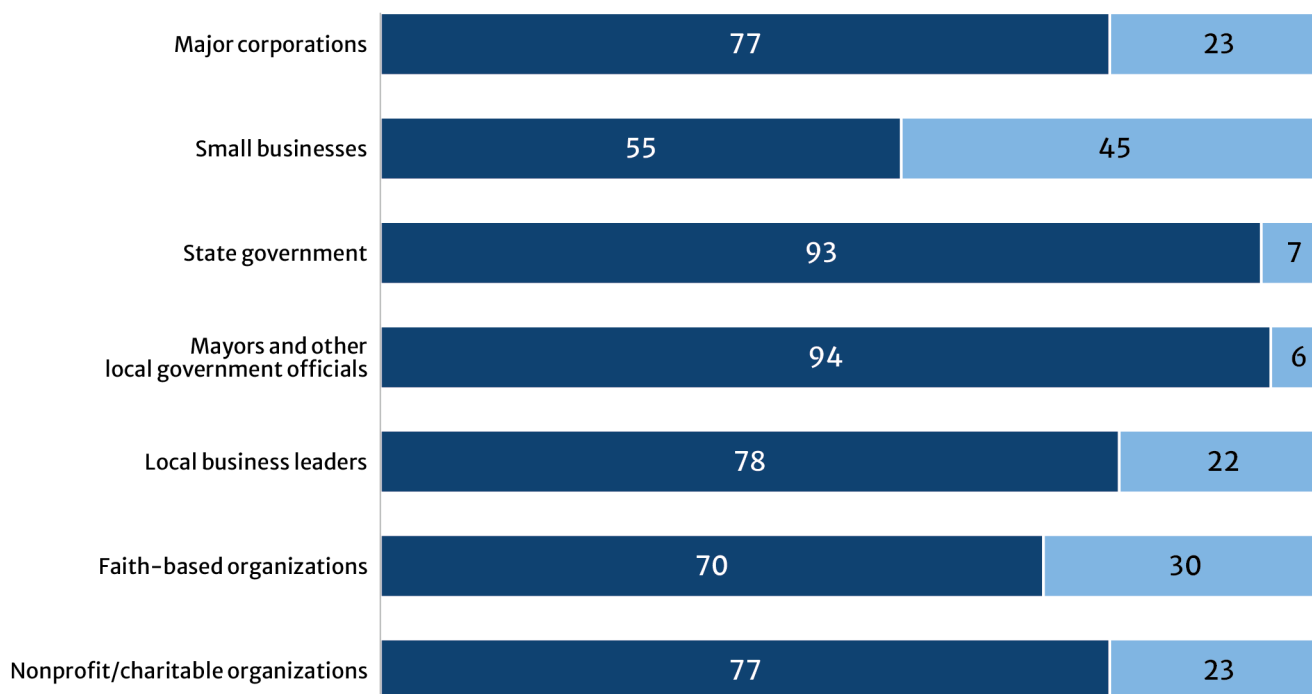
When asked who bears responsibility for addressing community challenges, residents spread the accountability widely. DMV residents are most likely to assign responsibility to mayors and other local government officials (94%) and state governments (93%).

More than three in four assign responsibility to local business leaders (78%), major corporations (77%), and nonprofits and charitable organizations (77%). Many also assign responsibility to faith-based organizations (70%) and small businesses (55%).

FIGURE 19

Now thinking about issues facing your community, how much responsibility should each of the following groups have in helping to fix local problems?

■ % A great deal + fair amount ■ % Not much + none at all



SECTION 6:

DMV residents see real strengths in their communities and want leaders to prioritize social and economic investment.

Despite the pressures documented in this report, residents value this region's diversity, feel connected to their neighborhoods, and see strengths in their communities that they want to protect and build on. They also have specific, practical ideas about what investments would make the region work better for more people.

A Good Place to Live for Diverse Groups

Most DMV residents across all jurisdictions say Greater Washington is a good place to live for a wide range of people.

Residents are most positive in their assessments of the area as a good place to live for families with children (73%), women and girls (71%), and “people like me” (71%), with more than seven in 10 rating the area positively for these groups.

About six in 10 residents say the area is an “excellent” or “good” place for gay, lesbian, and transgender people (61%); racial and ethnic minorities (61%); immigrants from other countries (60%); and religious minorities (60%).



FIGURE 20**How good is the place where you live for the following groups of people?**

% Very good + good

	DMV	DC	Montgomery County	Prince George's County	Arlington County and Alexandria City	Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and Falls Church City	Loudoun County
Families with children	73	57	80	55	82	83	89
Women and girls	71	70	71	57	80	77	82
People like me	71	73	71	56	78	75	75
Gay, lesbian, and transgender people	61	67	65	47	76	61	59
Racial and ethnic minorities	61	55	63	55	59	69	66
Immigrants from other countries	60	52	64	55	60	64	67
Religious minorities	60	53	61	55	61	64	65

Compared with Asian and White residents, Black and Hispanic residents are less likely to say the area is a good place for racial and ethnic minorities and gay, lesbian, and transgender people. Black residents are less likely than all other racial groups to say the area is a hospitable one for families with children, women and girls, and “people like me.”



Approaches to Community Safety

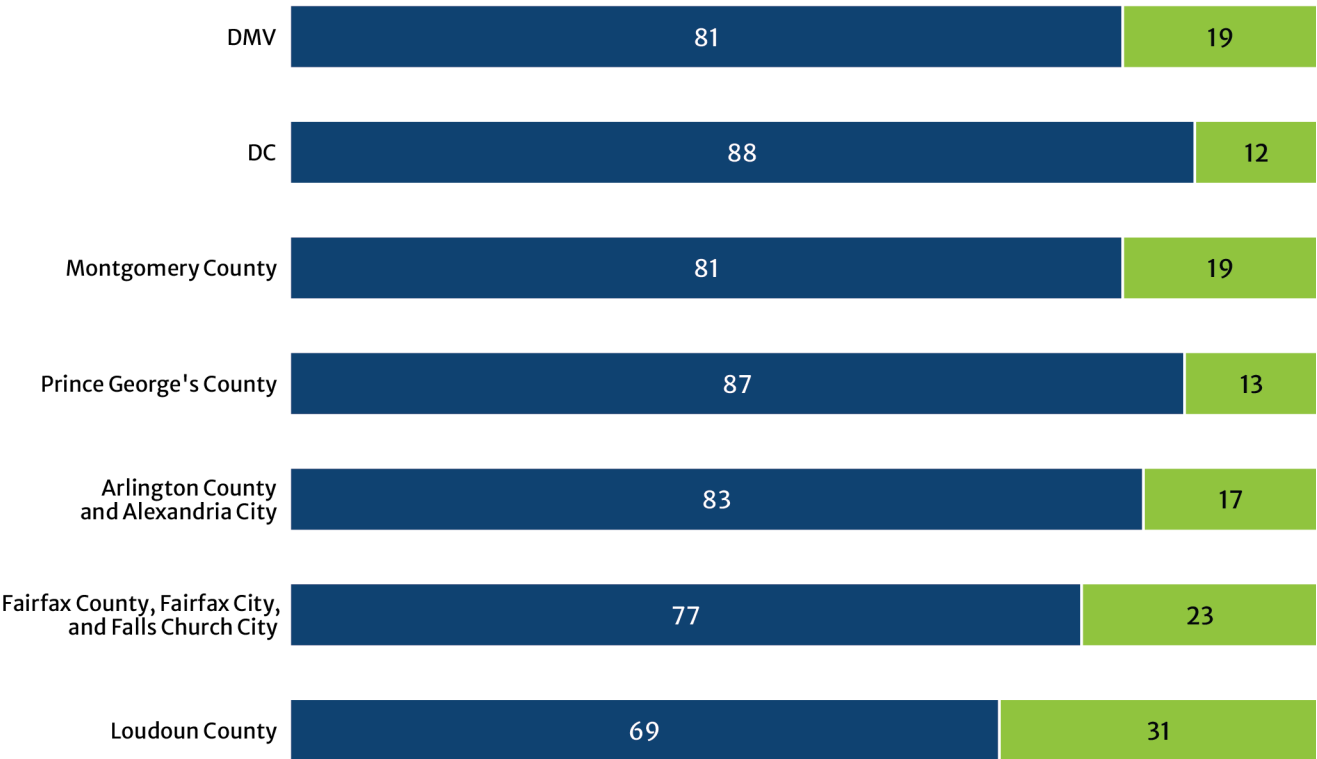
Residents favor addressing crime through social and economic investment over increased enforcement.

When it comes to addressing crime, DMV residents are more than four times as likely to prefer spending money and directing efforts toward addressing social and economic problems such as drug addiction, homelessness, and mental health (81%) than spending money and effort on strengthening law enforcement (19%).

FIGURE 21

Which of the following approaches to addressing crime in the United States comes closer to your own view?

- % More money and effort should go to addressing social and economic problems such as drug addiction, homelessness, and mental health
- % More money and effort should go to strengthening law enforcement



The vast majority of residents say they would prefer local police spend “about the same amount of time” (70%) in their area. Importantly, this desire by residents only speaks to local police forces, which are under the control and jurisdiction of locally elected officials. This is an important distinction given the presence of federal law enforcement in local communities for more than a year.

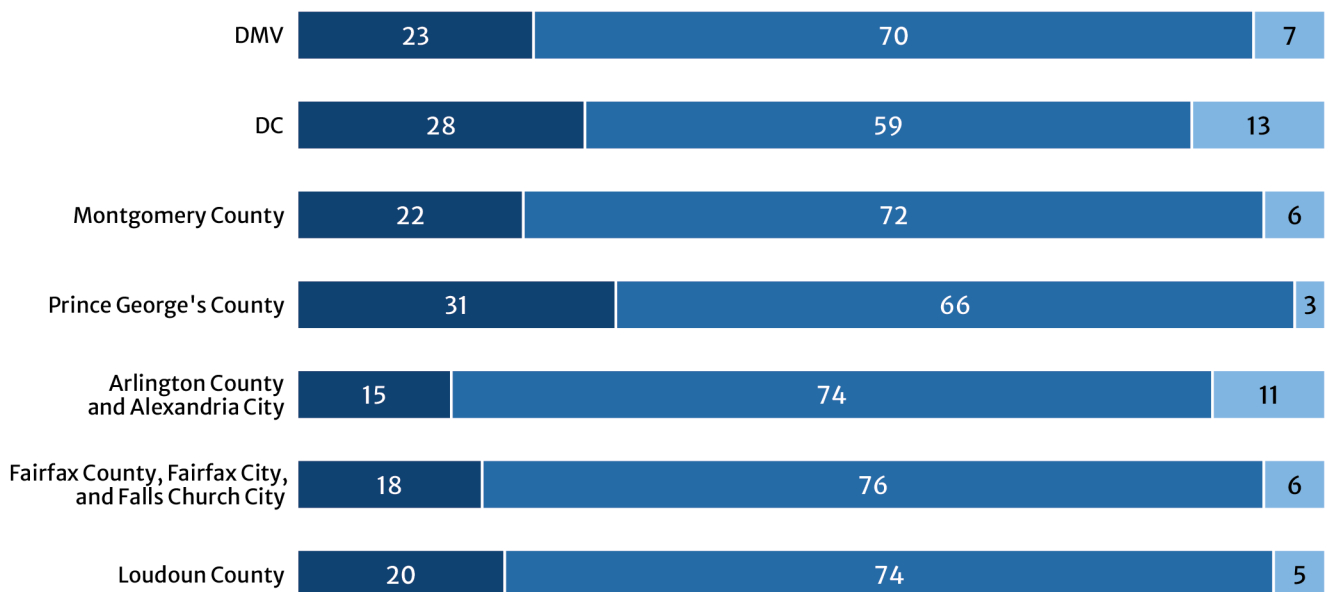
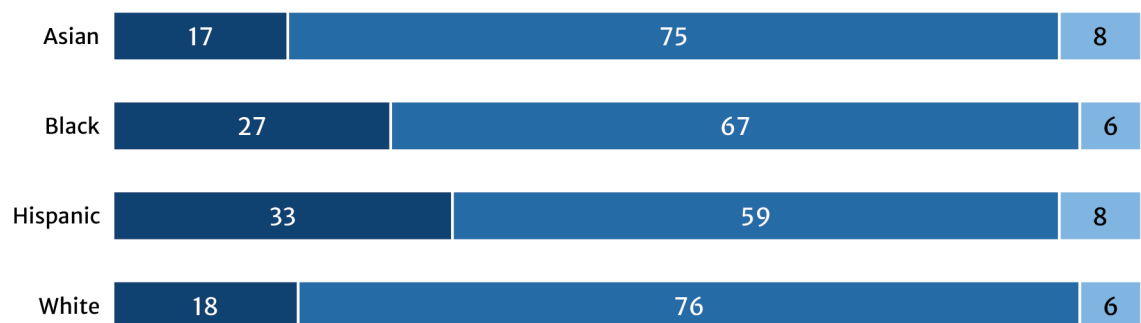
Hispanic (33%) and Black (27%) residents are more likely than White (18%) and Asian (17%) residents to say they wish local police spent “more time” in their area.

While still a minority viewpoint, DC residents are about twice as likely as the regional average to say they wish police spent “less time” in their area (13%).

FIGURE 22

Would you rather the local police spend more time, the same amount of time, or less time than they currently spend in your area?

■ % Spend more time ■ % About the same amount of time ■ % Spend less time

REGION**RACE/ETHNICITY**

Community Investment Priorities

Residents were clear about what their communities need, and those priorities align closely with the conditions identified as predictors of thriving.

When asked about the types of support services most needed in their community, DMV residents identified gaps related to access to mental and physical healthcare (66%) and youth programs or enrichment opportunities (63%).

Additionally, across racial groups, Black residents are the most likely to identify youth programs (76%) and housing assistance (70%) as much needed.

Most residents also say it is “much needed” to have assistance for people to find safe and stable housing or buy their own home (58%), financial literacy training on how to manage money and plan for the future (56%), and job training and support to find a well-paying job (55%).

About half say it is “much needed” to have programs that increase civic engagement and democracy (51%) and free or low-cost legal services (50%).



FIGURE 23**What type of support services, if any, do you think that people in your community need from the government or nonprofit organizations?**

% Much needed

	DMV	DC	Montgomery County	Prince George's County	Arlington County and Alexandria City	Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and Falls Church City	Loudoun County
Access to mental and physical healthcare	66	80	64	69	69	62	50
Youth programs or enrichment opportunities	63	76	60	78	60	51	48
Assistance for people to have safe and stable housing or buy their own home	58	76	53	66	59	52	37
Training on how to manage money and plan for the future	56	67	50	64	57	49	52
Job training and support to find a well-paying job	55	68	51	61	53	51	44
Programs that increase civic engagement and democracy	51	59	48	60	56	45	42
Free or low-cost legal services	50	64	46	57	52	44	40
Violence-prevention services or programs	42	63	38	48	41	35	26
Help for people to start their own business	32	38	31	42	33	25	23
Cash assistance to help cover basic needs	29	45	26	35	30	23	15

Methodology Statement

Results for the 2026 VoicesDMV survey are based on a mail survey of adults living in the Greater Washington region. Using address-based sampling, Gallup mailed surveys to a random sample of households in Washington, DC; Montgomery County; Prince George's County; Fairfax County; Loudoun County; Arlington County; Alexandria City; Fairfax City; and Falls Church City.

Gallup mailed a total of 25,125 surveys, available in both English and Spanish. The survey was conducted Feb. 9–April 6, 2026. In total, 2,801 residents completed the survey, yielding an 11.2% response rate (AAPOR RR3).¹ To ensure random sampling of the adult population in the Greater Washington region, the person aged 18 and older with the next birthday within a household was asked to complete the survey.

Gallup weighted the final survey data to correct for unequal selection probabilities and differential nonresponse. This approach produces a single set of survey weights. This single weight allows the dataset to simultaneously represent the population living within the priority area, the population living outside the priority area, and the overall adult population of the Greater Washington region. Using a single weight simplifies analysis and ensures consistent estimates across geographic levels. This approach is made possible by the definition of the priority area, which uses ZIP codes.

Population weighting targets were developed using Claritas 2025 demographic estimates. ZIP codes within the Greater Washington region were identified using county FIPS codes and classified as either inside or outside the priority area based on the study's ZIP code definition. Population targets were created for age, gender, education, county/city (FIPS), race, and Hispanic ethnicity for the priority area and non-priority area separately.

Sampling base weights were calculated to account for unequal probabilities of selection resulting from the stratified sampling design and the within-household random selection of one adult respondent. The base weight for each respondent was calculated as the inverse of the probability of selection, incorporating both the sampling fraction within each sampling stratum and the number of eligible adults in the household.

To improve weighting performance while maintaining representation for both geographic levels, respondents from the priority area and non-priority area were first weighted separately to their respective demographic population targets. The two weighted datasets were then combined, and a final raking step was applied to align the weighted distribution of respondents with the population proportion living inside and outside the priority area. This approach produces a single set of survey weights that simultaneously represents both the priority-area population and the overall Greater Washington region.

For results based on the total sample of 2,801 adults from the Greater Washington region, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For results based on the sample of 834 adults from the priority area, the margin of sampling error is ± 4.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error takes into account the estimated design effects for weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce non-sampling error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

1 American Association for Public Opinion Research. (2023). *Standard definitions*. <https://aapor.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Standards-Definitions-10th-edition.pdf>



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