



VoicesDMV
COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Voices of the Community: DC, Maryland, Virginia

Community Insights



GALLUP®

 GREATER WASHINGTON
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Table of Contents

2	Executive Summary
4	Wellbeing
6	Economic Precarity <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Money for Basic Necessities-Worries About Rent or Mortgage-Achieving Financial Goals-Barriers to Employment-Perceptions of Generational Financial Improvement-Wealth and Inheritance-Distribution of Wealth in the U.S.-Restitution for Black People Who Have Experienced Historical Harms
20	Life in the Region <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Perspectives About the Future-Who Benefits From the Changes?-The Region as a Good Place to Live-Perspectives on the Issue of Homelessness-Resources and Amenities in the Region-Safety-Unfair Treatment
33	Perspectives on Local Government <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Influence on Local Decision-Making-Responsibility for Issues Facing Communities
36	Priority Areas of the DMV Region
40	Methodology

Executive Summary

The Greater Washington Community Foundation is pleased to once again offer leaders and residents in the DMV a look into regional findings, as captured through the Voices of the Community (VoicesDMV): Community Insights survey. This iteration of the survey (VoicesDMV) is designed to keep a finger on the pulse of the community by engaging and listening closely to the voices, experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of people who live here, across jurisdictions.

At its heart, this survey is a community listening and engagement tool that seeks to ascertain how residents in the region are experiencing key quality of life indicators related to economic opportunity, wellbeing, safety, influence in our democracy, and general perceptions about livability in the region.

Previous surveys in 2017 and 2020 revealed wide disparities in income and opportunity, preventing many from accessing the region's economic growth and prosperity. Our last survey documented disparities and hardships in the Greater Washington region just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, many of these disparities and hardships remain — some exacerbated by the health and economic trauma of the past few years. The vast majority of DMV residents say the pandemic changed their lives, and this report details the many challenges ahead — including access to basic needs, combating homelessness, barriers to employment and more.

But there are also rays of optimism that offer hope to those seeking to move the region's residents from stability to economic mobility. These data help us get on a path to a future where all of our community members are thriving.



Distinct from previous years, this iteration of the report features oversampling our survey in communities of color in the region. Many of these neighborhoods have been identified as The Community Foundation’s priority neighborhoods. They represent people and areas experiencing the worst impacts of socioeconomic disparities in the region.

Many residents living in the Greater Washington region anticipate changes to the area in the coming years, but they have become less optimistic about what these changes will bring — and less likely to believe they, or people like them, will benefit from the changes. Relatedly, as rent and home prices continue to rise, residents have become increasingly worried about whether they will be able to afford to live in this region. All the while, many continue to struggle to afford basic needs. To this end, one in five residents have struggled to buy food; among Black and Hispanic residents, the rate is one in three.

Our team at the Greater Washington Community Foundation remains particularly eager to leverage these insights in pursuit of our commitment to advance economic mobility and close the racial wealth gap in our region. The insights revealed in the data about employment, access to capital in service to business ownership, and perceptions about wealth are of particular interest to us. We hope that you will likewise be challenged and inspired by these findings, receiving these data as a type of census of public opinions and on-the-ground life experiences that can incisively inform your own real-time understanding about how people are faring in our region. We expect that these insights will spark more informed conversation, honest assessments about the current state of our region, unbridled imagination, increased collaboration, and courageous solution making in the face of the challenges and opportunities before us.

If there was ever a time for us to pull together to address the greater issues impacting all of us — that time is now. If we are to prosper, we must do so — together.

Together We Prosper.



Wellbeing

Wellbeing encompasses the broader, holistic dimensions of a thriving life.

In the DMV, about half of the region's residents are struggling (44%) or suffering (4%), based on Gallup's Life Evaluation Index.

Slightly more than half of residents in the region (52%) say they are thriving in their overall wellbeing, which is on par with the national average of 51%.

The percentage of residents who were thriving in 2017 was slightly higher, at 56%¹ — which also matched the national figure at the time. The wellbeing of DMV residents appears to have fluctuated in line with Gallup's analysis of wellbeing in the broader U.S., with Americans' evaluations of their lives having varied widely in recent years amid a torrent of major political and economic events, in addition to the ongoing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Residents living in Loudoun County (57%) are slightly more likely than those in other regional jurisdictions to be thriving, while Montgomery County residents (49%) are least likely to be thriving. Notably, Montgomery County is the only county where fewer than half of residents are thriving. Half or more are thriving in Prince George's County (50%), DC (53%), Fairfax County (53%), and Arlington County and Alexandria (54%).

Overall, the biggest predictor of whether residents are thriving is their sense of belonging — if they feel the place they live is the perfect place for them.

For its **Life Evaluation Index**, 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.

¹ Prior Gallup research has determined that the placement of the Cantril ladder-of-life questions after other question items in the survey instrument can result in suppressed responses when compared to what is measured when the ladder items are asked at the onset of the survey. In 2017, the ladder items in this survey were the 41st and 42nd questions asked. As such, caution should be used in interpreting the results.

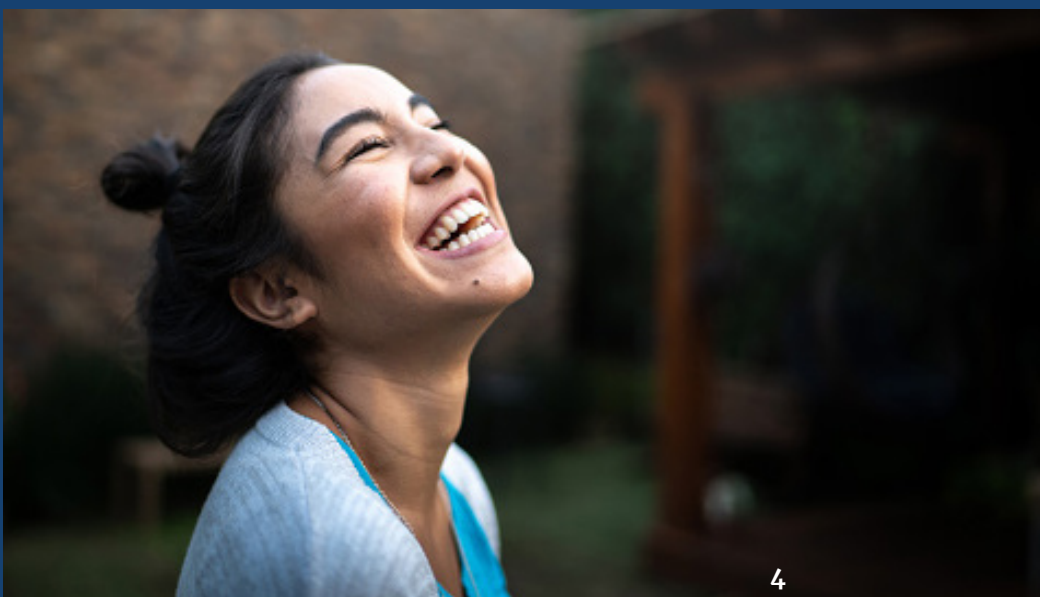


FIGURE 1

Overall Life Evaluation by Jurisdiction

	DMV	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Arlington & Alexandria*	Fairfax	Loudoun*
n Size:	2,832	823	727	346	275	519	142
Thriving	52%	53%	49%	50%	54%	53%	57%
Struggling	44%	41%	47%	43%	45%	45%	41%
Suffering	4%	6%	4%	7%	1%	2%	2%

* Figures for Arlington and Alexandria are based on interviews with 275 residents with a margin of error of ±7.97 percentage points. Figures for Loudoun are based on interviews with 142 residents with a margin of error of ±10.50 percentage points.

Across the DMV, majorities of White (56%) and Asian residents (56%) are thriving, compared with less than half of Black (48%) and Hispanic residents (47%). Compared with national thriving figures collected from the Gallup Panel, Black DMV residents fall below the national average for Black Americans by four percentage points (52%), while White DMV residents exceed the national average for White Americans by four points. Hispanic DMV residents are thriving at about the same rate as the national average for Hispanic Americans (48%).

Among age groups, nearly six in 10 residents aged 35 to 44 are thriving in their wellbeing (59%) — the highest percentage of any age group. Meanwhile, senior citizens aged 65 and older (43%) are the least likely age cohort to be thriving and the only age group to fall below the 50% mark. All other age groups range between 52% and 55% thriving.



Economic Precarity

Money for Basic Necessities

Nearly one in five residents in the DMV say there have been times in the past year when they did not have enough money to buy healthcare or medicine (18%), or food for themselves or their family (18%), and one in 10 say they were unable to provide adequate shelter (11%).

Experiences of struggling to afford food are highest in DC (30%) and Prince George’s County (27%), where more than one in four residents report having run out of money for food in the past year. One in four residents in Prince George’s County also report having experienced times when they could not afford healthcare or medicine (25%).

FIGURE 2

Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money...?

Percentage “yes”

	DMV	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Arlington & Alexandria	Fairfax	Loudoun
To buy food that you or your family needed	18	30	18	27	11	9	12
To pay for healthcare and/or medicines that you or your family needed	18	21	21	25	11	10	15
To provide adequate shelter or housing for you and your family	11	17	14	17	6	4	5



Black and Hispanic residents are more likely than other racial subgroups to report struggling to afford basic needs — including more than a third who say they have not had enough money to buy food and more than a quarter who did not have enough money for healthcare or medicine.

FIGURE 3

Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money...?

Percentage “yes”, by race

	Asian residents	Black residents	Hispanic residents	White residents
To buy food that you or your family needed	12	34	39	5
To pay for healthcare and/or medicines that you or your family needed	14	27	28	10
To provide adequate shelter or housing for you and your family	7	22	20	2

Even among residents who are employed full-time, about one in six report having experiences in the past year where they did not have enough money for food (15%) or healthcare (16%).

Among residents who have one or more part-time jobs, or are employed for seasonal or gig work, three in 10 say they have not had enough money for food (30%) or healthcare (30%).

Residents who are not employed but looking for work are even more likely to have reported issues affording food (45%) or healthcare (39%).

As featured in the pullout on residents of priority areas — those most acutely experiencing racially disparate impacts in income, education attainment, and homeownership — nearly a third of priority area residents say there have been times in the past year when they did not have enough money to buy food (31%). More than one in four say they did not have enough money for healthcare or medicine (27%) and 22% say they did not have enough money for housing.

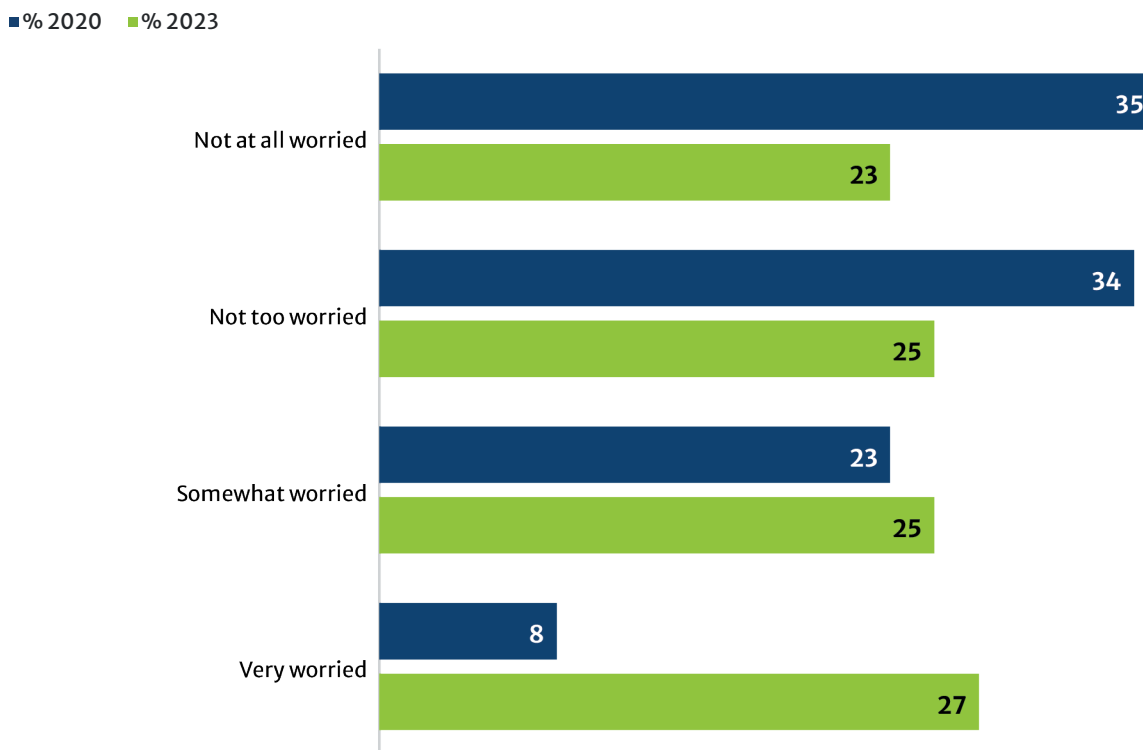
Worries About Rent or Mortgage

Slightly more than half of residents in the region say they are “very” (27%) or “somewhat” worried (25%) about not being able to pay their rent or mortgage.

The combined 52% worried is up considerably from the previous measure in 2020, when 31% reported this level of concern. The percentage “very” worried has jumped 19 percentage points from 2020 (8%) to 2023 (27%).

FIGURE 4

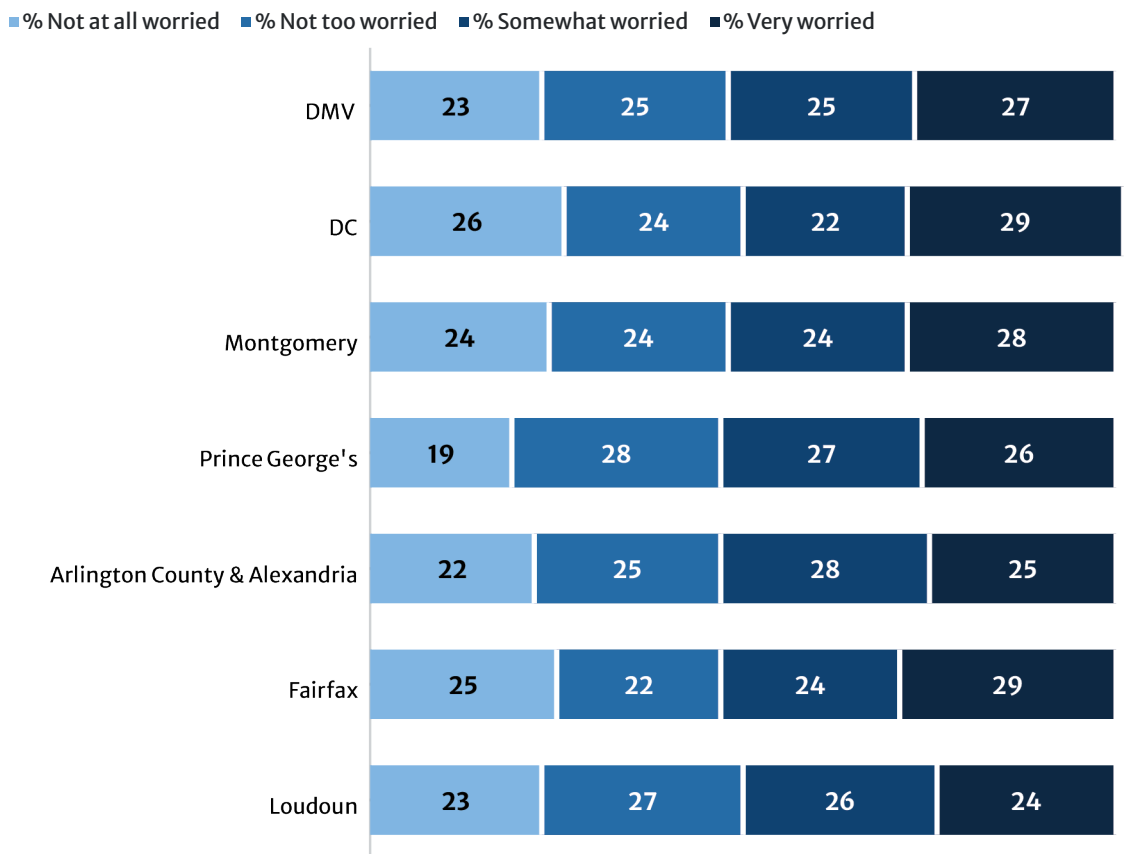
How worried are you about not being able to pay your rent or mortgage?



Worries about being able to pay rent or mortgage are consistent across all jurisdictions in the region.

FIGURE 5

How worried are you about not being able to pay your rent or mortgage?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1%.

Achieving Financial Goals

Residents of the DMV are most likely to describe available job opportunities as a “major” or “minor” barrier to achieving their financial goals, with about three in four residents (72%) describing the job market as a barrier to some degree.

Roughly two in three residents name the following as major or minor barriers: the ability to increase their income (69%), their ability to get loans, capital or other monetary resources (67%), and their credit score or financial history (63%).

FIGURE 6

Do you consider each of the following to be a major barrier, minor barrier, or not a barrier at all to achieving your financial goals?

Percentage who name each factor as a “minor” or “major” barrier

	DMV	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Arlington & Alexandria	Fairfax	Loudoun
Ability to increase your income	69	71	68	62	75	71	71
Available job opportunities	72	69	76	71	74	74	69
Your credit score or financial history	63	60	60	65	62	64	66
Ability to get loans, capital, or other monetary resources	67	63	68	66	68	69	70

Due to rounding, combined values may vary by ±1.

Forty-five percent of residents in the DMV say their credit score or financial history is a *major* barrier to reaching their financial goals. About half of Fairfax (50%) and Loudoun counties (49%) say their financial history is a major barrier.

Black residents in the region are slightly more likely than other racial groups to describe their ability to increase their income and the availability of job opportunities as major barriers to achieving their financial goals. White residents are most likely to describe their credit score or financial history and the ability to get loans, capital, or other monetary resources as a major barrier.

Across each measure, residents aged 65 and older are the most likely age group to describe each factor as a major barrier.

FIGURE 7

Do you consider each of the following to be a major barrier, minor barrier, or not a barrier at all to achieving your financial goals?

Percentage who name each factor as a “major” barrier, by race

	All residents of color	Asian residents*	Black residents	Hispanic residents*	White residents
n Size:	1,191	242	657	197	1,627
Ability to increase your income	27	23	31	26	27
Available job opportunities	32	22	37	34	31
Your credit score or financial history	41	42	39	43	49
Ability to get loans, capital, or other monetary resources	39	39	37	40	43

* Figures for Asian adults are based on interviews with 242 residents with a margin of error of ±8.35 percentage points; figures for Hispanic adults are based on interviews with 197 residents with a margin of error of ±9.38 percentage points. Due to rounding, combined values may vary by ±1.

FIGURE 8

Do you consider each of the following to be a major barrier, minor barrier, or not a barrier at all to achieving your financial goals?

Percentage who name each factor as a “major” barrier, by age group

	DMV	18-34	35-54	55+
n Size:	2,832	408	888	1,536
Ability to increase your income	27	19	28	31
Available job opportunities	32	20	30	42
Your credit score or financial history	45	40	42	51
Ability to get loans, capital, or other monetary resources	41	33	41	46



Barriers to Employment

Overall, DMV residents are most likely to say their prior work experience (20%) and level of education or training (19%) are barriers to finding and keeping a job, with about one in five residents saying they have personally experienced such barriers.

Fourteen percent name convenient public transportation as a barrier, and one in 10 residents name access to a car. An additional 10% name access to childcare. Fewer residents are kept from their employment goals by their credit history or financial problems (7%), or having a criminal background or past problems (3%).

Though access to childcare is a barrier to employment for just a tenth of the region's adults, it is the biggest barrier for residents who have children in their household. More than a quarter of DMV residents with children in their homes (27%) name access to childcare as a barrier to finding and keeping a job.

DC residents are slightly more likely than people in other counties in the region to name transportation factors, like convenient public transportation (19%) and access to a car (15%), as obstacles to employment. Meanwhile, residents of Prince George's County are slightly more likely than residents in other parts of the region to say their level of education or training (25%) is a barrier. Both DC and Prince George's County residents are slightly more likely than others in the DMV to say their credit history or financial problems hold them back from employment.

As is the case with the larger region, residents in Montgomery County, Arlington County and Alexandria, Fairfax County, and Loudoun County are most likely to say their past work experience and level of education or training are the greatest barriers they face to employment.



About one in five residents say their prior work experience and level of education or training are barriers to finding and keeping a job.



FIGURE 9

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

Percentage “yes”

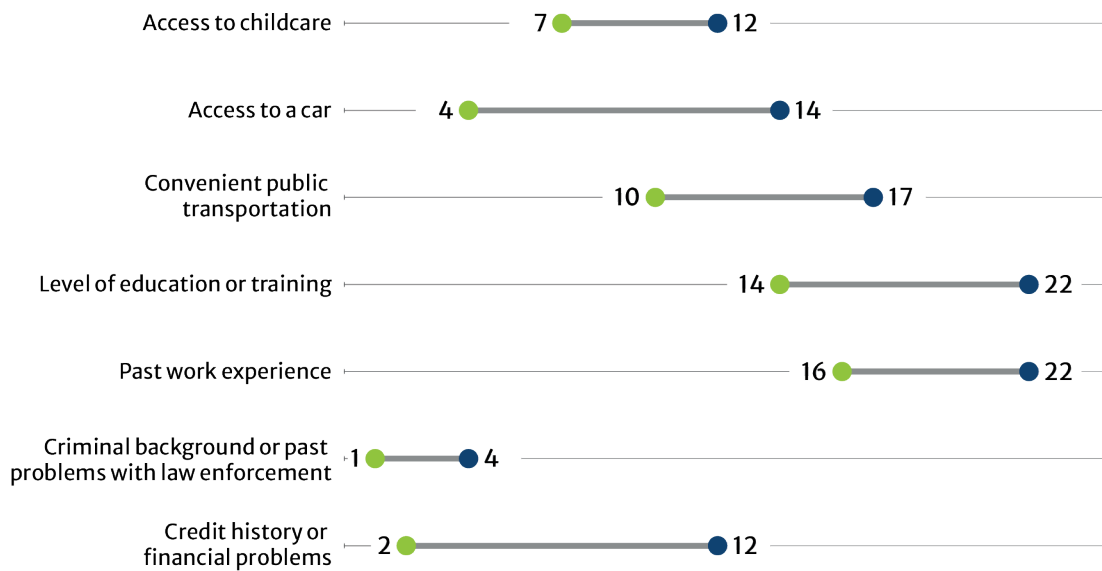
	DMV	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Arlington & Alexandria	Fairfax	Loudoun
	2,832	823	727	346	275	519	142
Past work experience	20	22	20	21	22	16	18
Level of education or training	19	19	15	25	19	16	18
Convenient public transportation	14	19	12	17	14	10	13
Access to childcare	10	9	10	13	12	8	5
Access to a car	10	15	9	14	10	5	4
Credit history or financial problems	7	13	7	12	6	4	2
Criminal background or past problems with law enforcement	3	4	3	5	2	2	1

DMV residents of color are **more likely** than White residents in the region to report experiencing each listed barrier to finding and keeping a job. The largest gap in experiences with employment barriers is on the credit history and financial problems item: While just 2% of White residents report this as a barrier, 12% of residents of color report having experienced this type of employment barrier.

FIGURE 10

Barriers to Finding and Keeping a Job

● % Yes, all residents of color ● % Yes, White residents



Intergenerational Progress and Wealth

Perceptions of Generational Financial Improvement

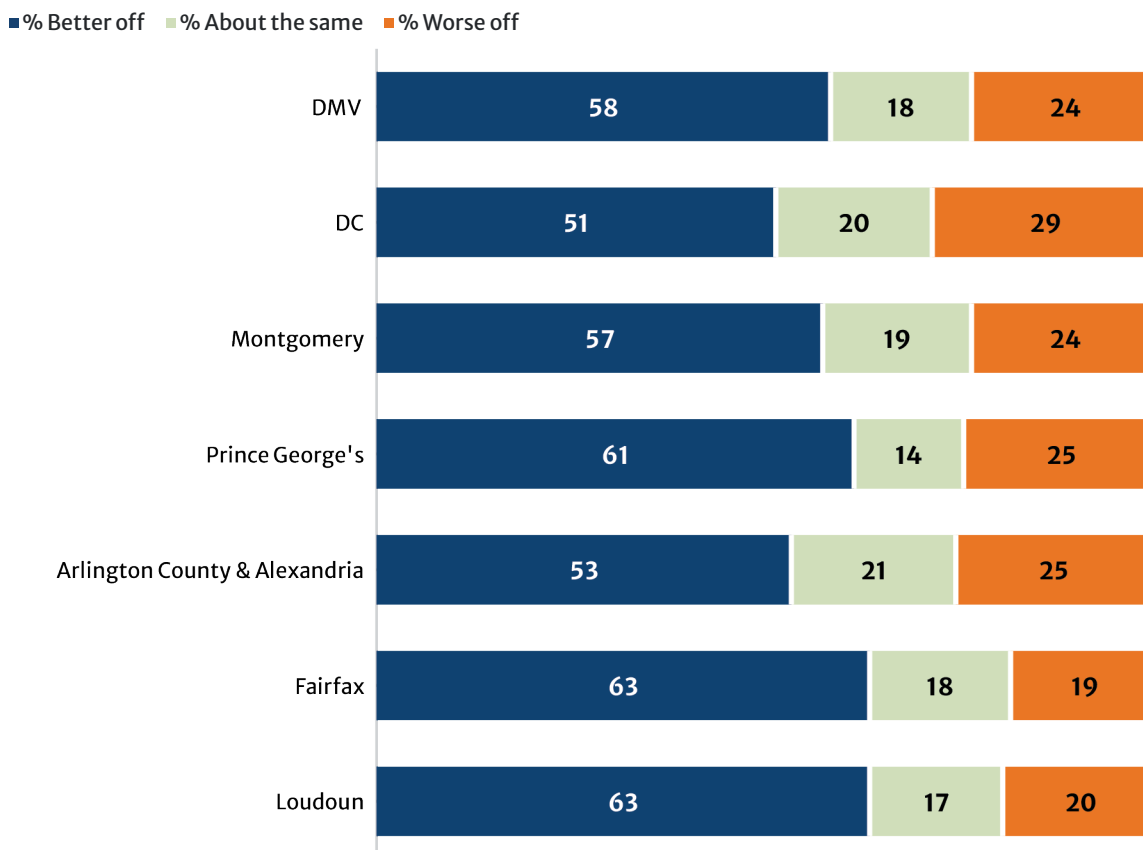
Most residents in the DMV (58%) say they are “better off” than their parents were when their parents were their age, while about a quarter (24%) say they are “worse off.” Eighteen percent say they are in “about the same” shape financially as their parents were.

The percentage saying they are better off than their parents (58%) is up slightly from the 52% recorded for the DMV in 2020.

Compared with other jurisdictions, smaller majorities of residents in DC (51%) and Arlington County and Alexandria (53%) say they are better off than their parents were.

FIGURE 11

Think of your parents when they were your age. Would you say you are better off or worse off financially than they were?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1%.



Across all racial subgroups, most residents say they are better off than their parents were at their age, with Asian residents (69%) most likely to report generational betterment.

In [Gallup's 2022 recent update of a trend dating back to 1995](#), it found that Americans have as little optimism as they have had at any time in nearly three decades about young people's chances of having greater material success in life than their parents. In all, 42% of U.S. adults think it is very (13%) or somewhat (29%) likely that today's youth "will have a better living standard, better homes, a better education, and so on." This marks an 18-percentage-point drop since 2019 and is statistically tied with the previous low in 2011.

Wealth and Inheritance

Poor communities and people of color have disproportionately been disadvantaged by a lack of generational wealth. Children of parents who are unable to leave an inheritance for the next generation are at a disadvantage, compared with children of parents who are able to leave some of their wealth behind. With one of the largest generational transfers of wealth underway — as Baby Boomers bestow their finances to their children — tracking residents' ability to transfer wealth will be key to monitor, as disparities can grow.

While a slight majority of the region's residents (54%) believe they will be able to pass on an inheritance to their children — such as money, land, a home, or other valuable assets — less than half of residents in Montgomery (49%) and Prince George's counties (38%) believe they will be able to pass on such assets.

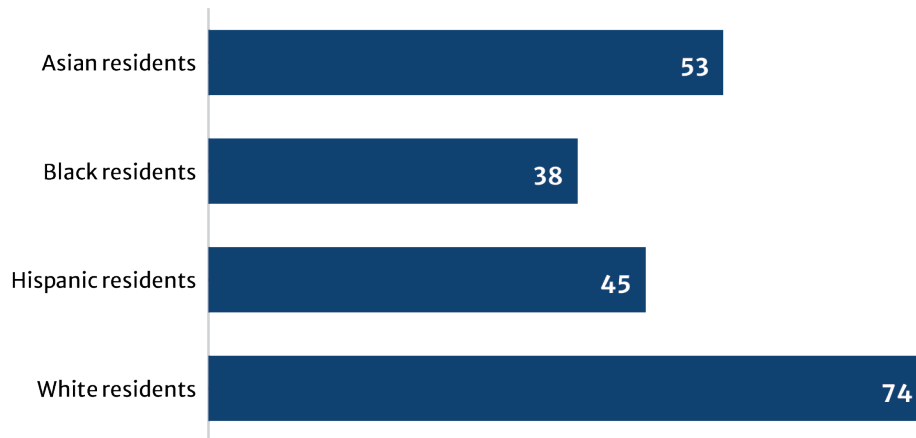
Meanwhile, solid majorities in Loudoun County (70%), Arlington County and Alexandria (66%), and Fairfax County (62%) think they will be able to transfer some of their wealth on to the next generation.

About three in four White residents (74%) expect to pass on an inheritance, while a small majority of Asian residents (53%) say the same. Less than half of Hispanic residents (45%) believe they will be able to pass on an inheritance. Black residents (38%) are the least likely racial group to say they will be able to do so.

FIGURE 12

If you wanted to, do you think you will be able to pass on an inheritance (e.g., money, land, a home, or other valuable assets) to your child(ren)?

Percentage “yes”, by race



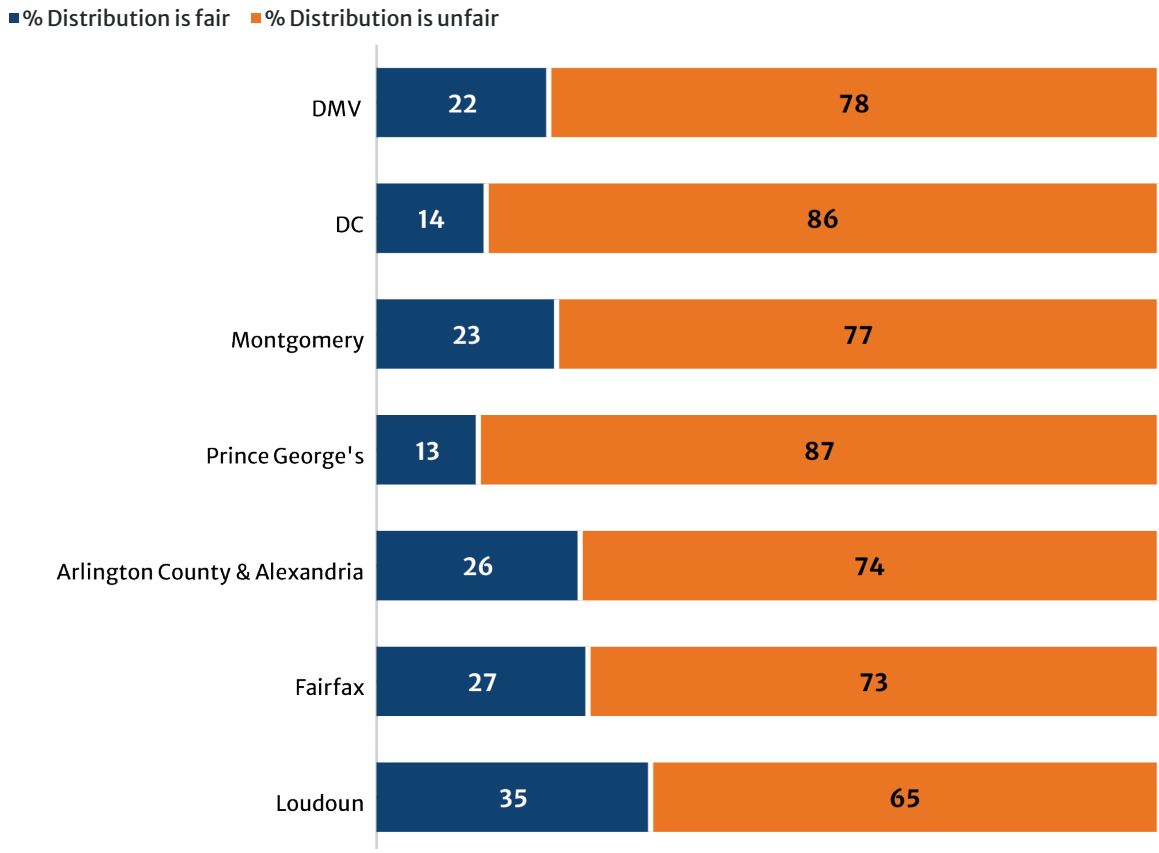
Distribution of Wealth in the U.S.

Perceptions about individual experiences with money and wealth, or lack thereof, and how the economic system works, are critical measures that are worthy of our closest attention. It stands to reason that if many residents feel the system is rigged against them, this lack of confidence reflects a systemic issue that goes beyond individual decision-making and may undermine their willingness to engage in activities that may advance economic progress. We expect that these insights offer us and our larger community an opportunity for renewed public debate about the nature of our economy — with an eye toward innovative approaches that produce broad economic participation, shared prosperity, and more solidarity about the fairness of America’s national and economic arrangements, and what it takes to make progress.

This research seeks to capture whether or not wealth is distributed fairly. Our findings reveal that a wide swath of the population does not view it as fair. In fact, more than three in four DMV residents (78%) say the distribution of money and wealth in the U.S. is *unfair*. Solid majorities hold this view across counties and jurisdictions.

FIGURE 13

Do you feel that the distribution of money and wealth in this country today is fair, or do you feel that the money and wealth in this country should be more evenly distributed?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1%.

Black residents (87%) in the DMV are more likely than White (75%), Hispanic (77%), and Asian (77%) residents to say the distribution of wealth in the U.S. is unfair.

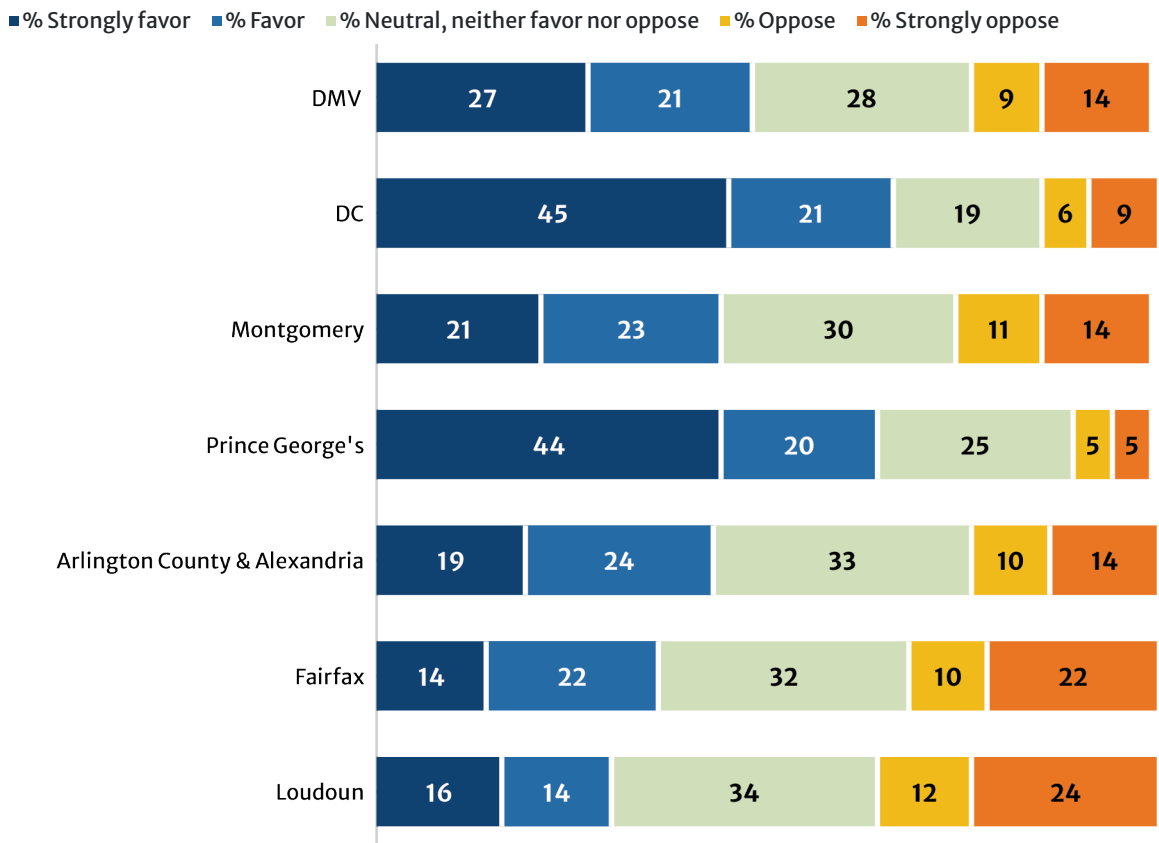
Restitution for Black People Who Have Experienced Historical Harms

Related to the subject of unfair wealth distribution, the public is mixed in its support for the U.S. making amends to Black Americans for historical harms. Support for the U.S. making amends to Black Americans for historical conditions has the support of nearly half (48%) of residents in the DMV. Twenty-eight percent are neutral and 23% oppose.

Support is strong in DC and Prince George’s County, with about two in three saying they favor or strongly favor making amends to Black Americans. In each of these jurisdictions, nearly half say they strongly favor making such amends. In Fairfax and Loudoun counties, views on such amends are about evenly spread between support, neutrality, and opposition.

FIGURE 14

Our nation should take steps to make amends to Black Americans for historical conditions.



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1%.

Black residents (78%) are **more than twice as likely** as White (38%), Hispanic (36%), and Asian residents (38%) to favor or strongly favor the U.S. making amends with Black Americans for historical conditions.

Life in the Region

The 2020 report captured residents' pre-pandemic views, while this latest report reflects perspectives on life in the Greater Washington region in the pandemic's aftermath. The vast majority of residents say the pandemic changed their lives in some way — including in Prince George's County, where nearly half of residents say their lives were changed in a *major* way as a result of the pandemic.

DMV residents acknowledge there are changes taking place where they live, but have become less optimistic about what the coming years will bring. They have also become less likely to say that changes to the area will benefit them or people like them.

Most say the area where they live is a good place for various groups of people, but perceptions vary across the region for some groups, such as LGBTQ+ people. Reports of discrimination and mistreatment are common among people of color and many — particularly women and Black residents — don't feel safe walking alone. At the writing of this report, organizations have reported an acute rise in Islamophobic and antisemitic incidents across the U.S.^{2,3} — as well as online.⁴

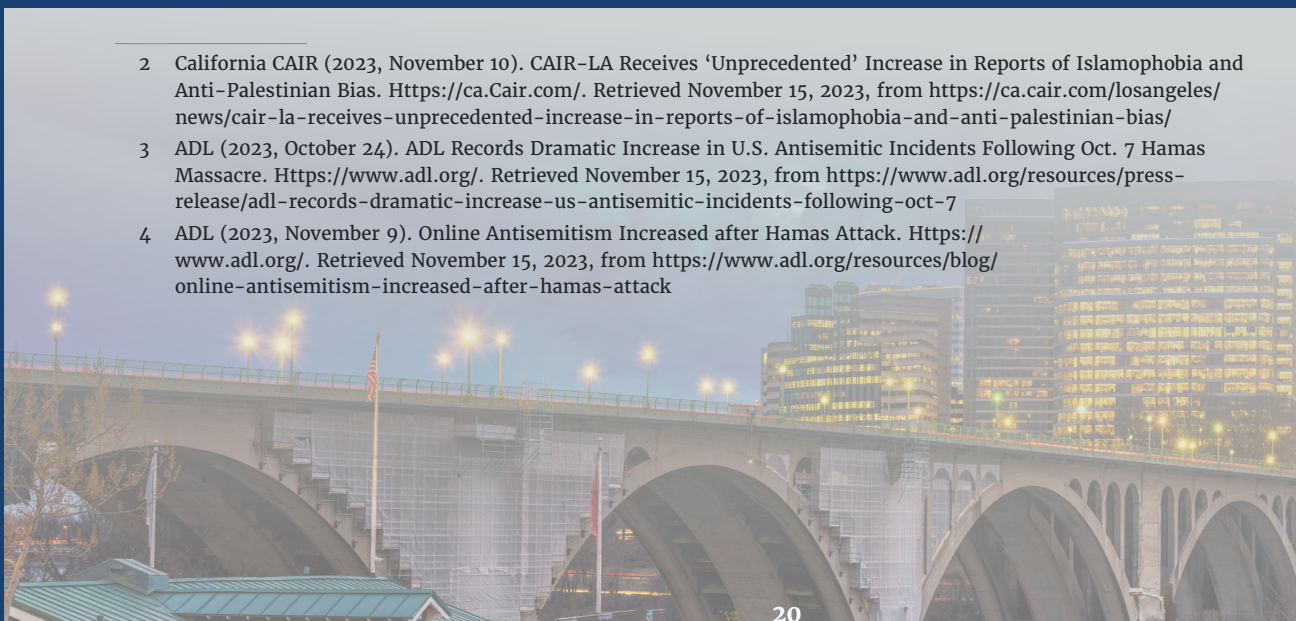
Perspectives About the Future

Compared with 2020, DMV residents are much less likely to expect living conditions in the Greater Washington region to get “better” in the next five years. Since the 2020 update, most now expect living conditions to be “about the same” or “worse.”

In 2023, a majority of DMV residents expect living conditions in the area to be “about the same” five years from now (52%), while about one in three (32%) expect them to be “worse.” Just 16% of residents now believe the living conditions will be “better.”

Residents are significantly more likely to be optimistic about living conditions in the future if they perceive changes happening in the region to be beneficial to everyone or people like them.

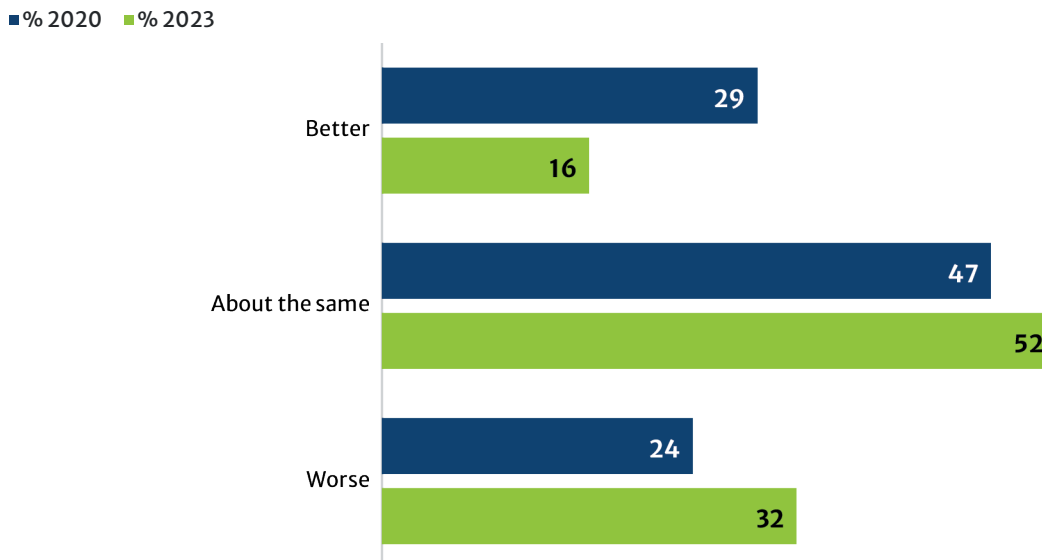
- 2 California CAIR (2023, November 10). CAIR-LA Receives ‘Unprecedented’ Increase in Reports of Islamophobia and Anti-Palestinian Bias. <https://ca.cair.com/>. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from <https://ca.cair.com/losangeles/news/cair-la-receives-unprecedented-increase-in-reports-of-islamophobia-and-anti-palestinian-bias/>
- 3 ADL (2023, October 24). ADL Records Dramatic Increase in U.S. Antisemitic Incidents Following Oct. 7 Hamas Massacre. <https://www.adl.org/>. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-records-dramatic-increase-us-antisemitic-incidents-following-oct-7>
- 4 ADL (2023, November 9). Online Antisemitism Increased after Hamas Attack. <https://www.adl.org/>. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/online-antisemitism-increased-after-hamas-attack>



Compared with 2020, fewer DMV region residents believe conditions in the Greater Washington region will get better, while more believe it will get worse.

FIGURE 15

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

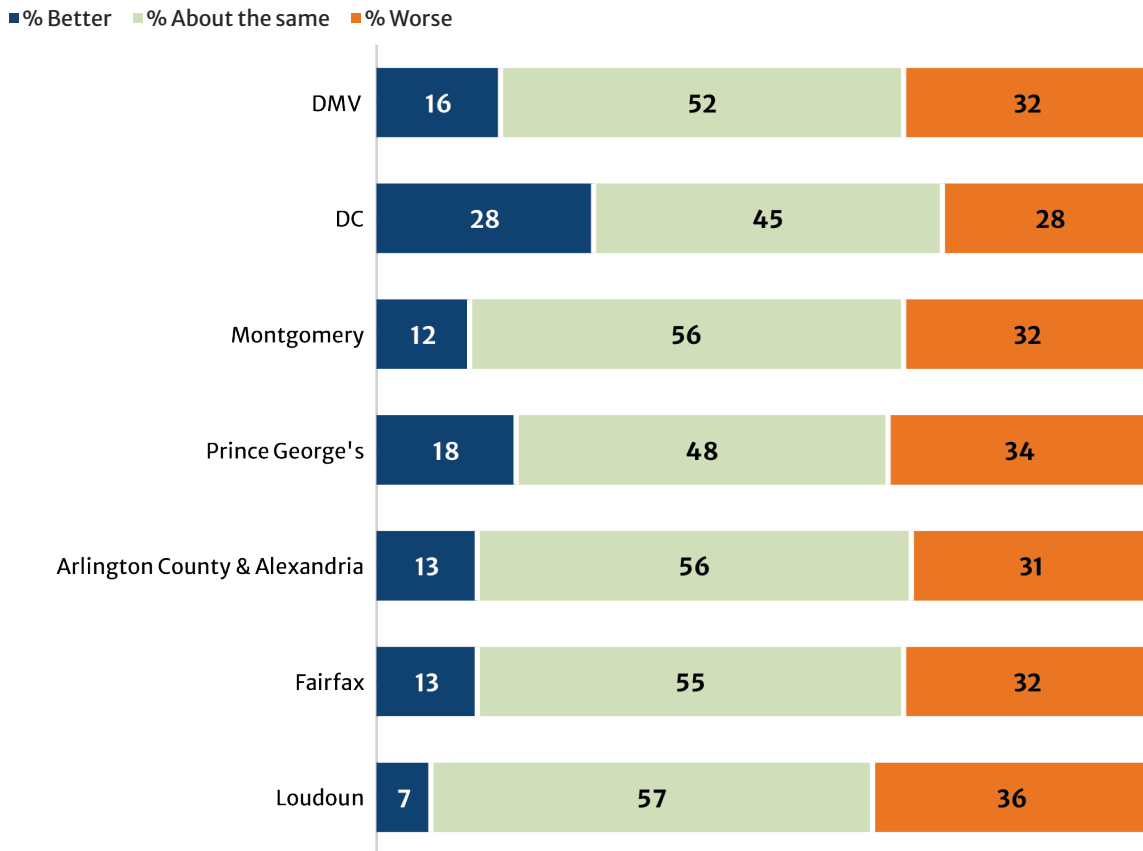


DC residents are net neutral in their assessments — they are equally likely to view future living conditions as better or worse. In the counties outside the city, residents skew more negative than positive in their expectations.



FIGURE 16

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



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1%.

People of color in the DMV are slightly more optimistic about living conditions in the next five years than White residents — though both groups are more likely to expect them to be the same or worse.

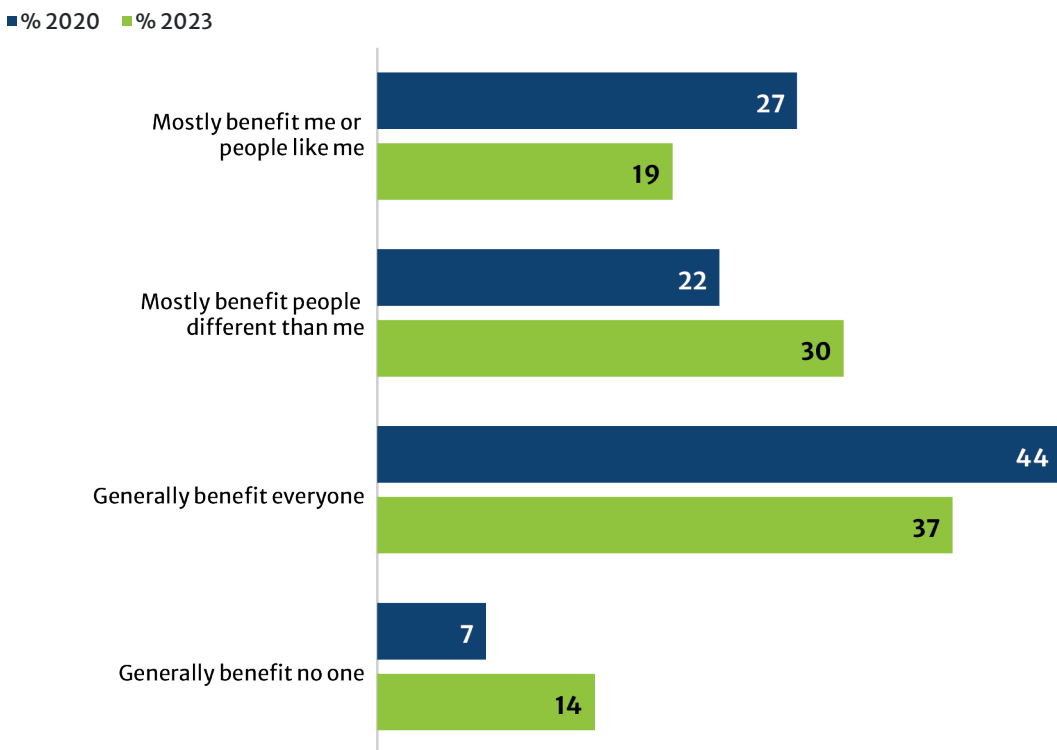
Who Benefits From the Changes?

Compared with 2020, DMV residents have become less positive in their views about who will benefit from changes in the area. In 2020, 27% said the changes would benefit “me or people like me,” but this is now down to 19%. And the 44% who said in 2020 that the changes would “generally benefit everyone” is now down to 37%.

Meanwhile, residents have become more likely to say “people different than me” will benefit: the current 30% is up eight points since 2020. Views that the changes will “generally benefit no one” have doubled from 7% in 2020 to 14% today.

FIGURE 17

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



One in four White residents (25%) believe changes in their area will benefit people like them, compared with 14% among people of color. Roughly four in 10 Black (37%) and Hispanic residents (41%) say the changes will mostly benefit people different than them, compared with 23% among White residents and 29% among Asian residents.

The Region as a Good Place to Live

Majorities of DMV residents say the area is a good place to live for families with children (73%), people like themselves (72%), women and girls (69%), racial and ethnic minorities (64%), LGBTQ+ people (63%), immigrants from other countries (63%), and religious minorities (62%).

FIGURE 18

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

Percentage who say the area is a “good” or “very good” place for each group to live

	DMV	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Arlington & Alexandria	Fairfax	Loudoun
Families with children	73	46	83	63	75	86	90
People like me	72	61	78	58	78	81	80
Women and girls	69	57	75	54	77	79	77
Racial and ethnic minorities	64	49	72	58	72	73	56
Gay, lesbian and transgender people	63	65	72	43	75	68	56
Immigrants from other countries	63	46	72	54	63	73	63
Religious minorities	62	50	70	55	67	69	54

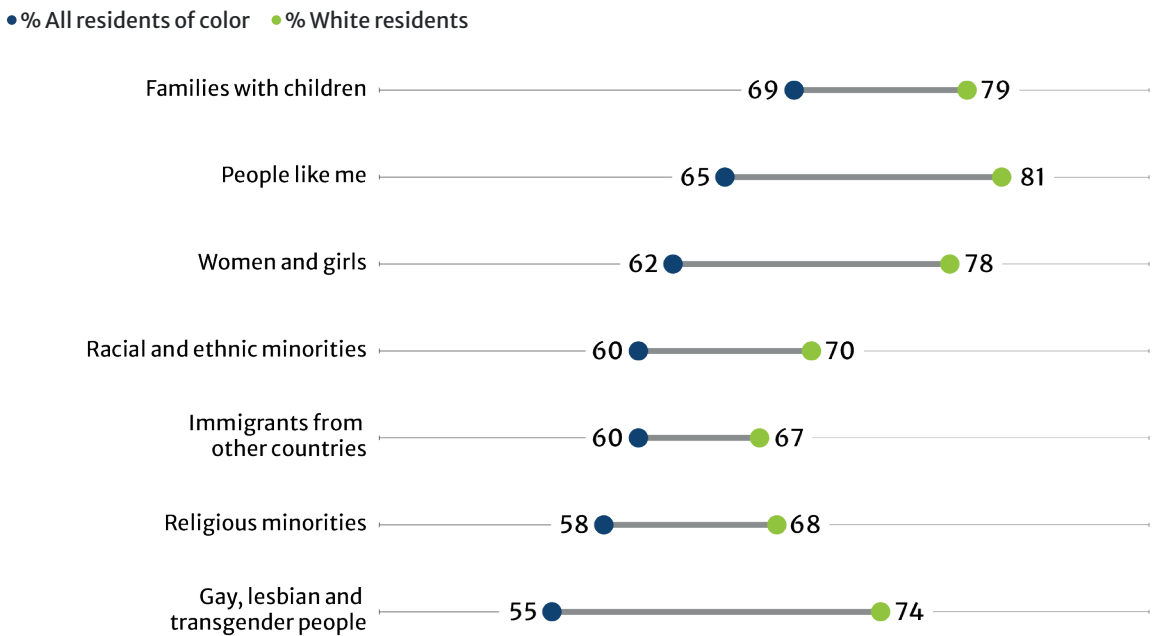
Note: Due to rounding, combined values may vary ±1.

White residents are more likely than residents of color to view the DMV as hospitable to each group. The largest gap is on whether it is a good place for LGBTQ+ people to live — while three in four White residents (74%) say it is a good place for LGBTQ+ people, a much smaller percentage of residents of color (55%) hold this view.

FIGURE 19

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

Percentage who say the area is a “good” or “very good” place for each group to live, by race



Note: Due to rounding, combined values may vary ±1.

As featured in the pullout, residents of priority areas (52%) — those most acutely experiencing racially disparate impacts in income, education attainment, and homeownership — differ most from the DMV average (73%) in saying the area is a “good” or “very good” place to live for families with children. In fact, they are less likely than the regional average to believe the area is a good place for any group in the survey — including “people like me,” which they rate 12 points below the DMV average.

Perspectives on the Issue of Homelessness

Perceptions on homelessness are a key community priority and are important to track given the lack of affordable housing in the fast-growing region, and as the shortage is projected to worsen. The 2020 report documented that one in three residents had a personal connection to someone who experienced homelessness or was at risk of becoming homeless, illustrating the widespread nature of the issue.

Nearly half of the DMV region’s residents “strongly” or “somewhat” agree that increasing the supply of housing is the solution to homelessness (47%). Meanwhile, roughly four in 10 agree homelessness can be eliminated in the Greater Washington region (43%) and that extremely low-income housing should be built in their community (39%). Small majorities of DC residents agree with these three statements, while less than half of residents in other jurisdictions agree with each.

FIGURE 20

Views on Homelessness by Jurisdiction

Percentage who “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement

	DMV	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Arlington & Alexandria	Fairfax	Loudoun
The solution to homelessness is increasing the supply of housing	47	58	45	49	49	42	34
Homelessness can be eliminated in the Washington area	43	51	44	48	43	33	44
Extremely low-income housing should be built in my community	39	53	39	36	46	31	33
I am willing to pay more taxes to help increase the supply of affordable housing	35	41	34	32	43	33	28
My local government cares about addressing homelessness in the area where I live	27	25	31	24	36	24	21

Note: Due to rounding, combined values may vary ±1.

About a third of residents agree they are willing to pay more taxes to increase the supply of affordable housing (35%), while slightly more than a quarter agree their local government cares about addressing the issue of homelessness (27%). It is also noteworthy that willingness to pay more in taxes to help increase the supply of affordable housing declined across most local jurisdictions, but the drop is sharpest in DC. In 2020, a majority of DC residents (59%) said they would take on additional taxes to increase affordable housing, but today, less than half (41%) report this.

Resources and Amenities in the Region

When asked about an array of resources and amenities, DMV residents are most likely to rate the availability of grocery stores or markets (82%), healthcare (73%), and restaurants and nightlife (72%) as “excellent” or “good.”

About two in three residents positively rate access to transportation options (67%), the availability of good jobs (65%), the region as a place to raise children (64%), and the availability of arts and cultural opportunities (64%). A smaller majority say the overall quality of public schools is excellent or good (59%). Conversely, relatively few residents (13%) rate the availability of affordable housing positively; in fact, residents rate this item the lowest across all jurisdictions.

FIGURE 21

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

Percentage who rate each item as “good” or “excellent”

	DMV	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Arlington & Alexandria	Fairfax	Loudoun
The availability of grocery stores or markets	82	65	90	63	93	94	95
The availability of healthcare	73	59	76	60	75	83	86
The availability of restaurants and nightlife	72	72	72	45	92	82	80
Access to transportation options	67	80	67	58	84	65	50
The availability of good jobs	65	60	67	38	81	78	73
As a place to raise children	64	39	72	48	72	78	82
The availability of arts and cultural opportunities	64	72	65	39	81	72	56
The overall quality of public schools	59	38	70	28	74	75	81
The availability of affordable housing	13	11	15	14	15	10	15

Note: Due to rounding, combined values may vary ±1.

In DC, about **four in 10 residents (38%) rate school quality positively**. In Prince George’s County, slightly less than half positively rate the area as a place to raise children (48%), the availability of restaurants and nightlife (45%), the arts and cultural opportunities (39%), the availability of good jobs (38%) and the quality of public schools (28%).

Across nearly all measures, White residents are more likely than residents of color to rate each aspect positively. The largest gaps between White residents and people of color are in their ratings of the availability of arts and cultural opportunities and the availability of good jobs.

Residents’ positive ratings of the area’s amenities and resources decreased on four of the measures since 2020. The percentage rating the availability of healthcare and affordable housing as “excellent” or “good” are each down five percentage points. Ratings of the area as a place to raise children and the overall quality of public schools are each down eight percentage points.

There is **only one** measure where positive ratings increased by a statistically significant degree: the **availability of arts and cultural opportunities**, which is up by nine points.

As featured in the [pullout](#), residents of priority areas rate several of these amenities much lower than the regional average. Less than half of priority area residents rate the availability of good jobs (48%) and the overall quality of public schools (45%) in their area positively. Similarly, less than half say their area is an “excellent” or “good” place to raise children (43%). Double-digit gaps exist between priority area residents’ ratings of the availability of grocery stores, restaurants and nightlife, and healthcare, and those of the DMV area overall.



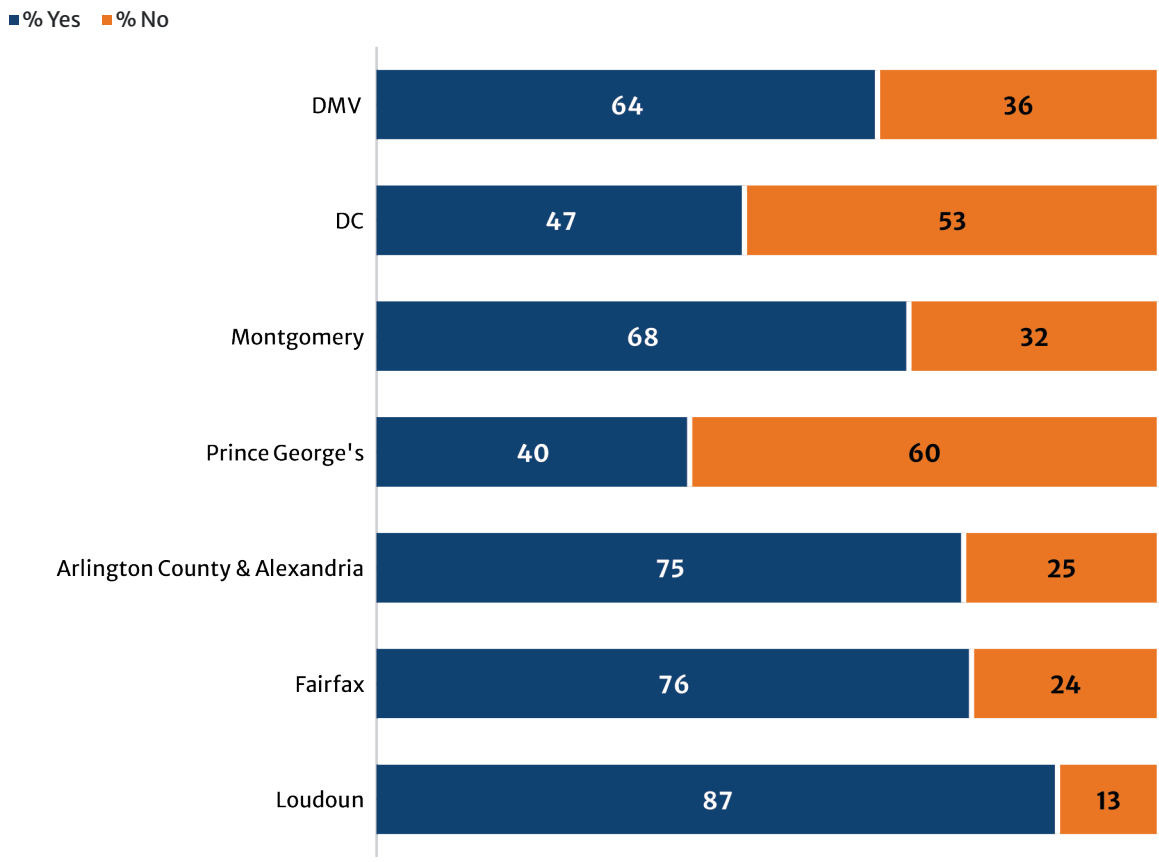
Safety

About **two in three** DMV residents (64%) say they **feel safe walking alone at night** where they live. This is lower than the 73% average recorded in both 2021 and 2022 in the U.S. at large.

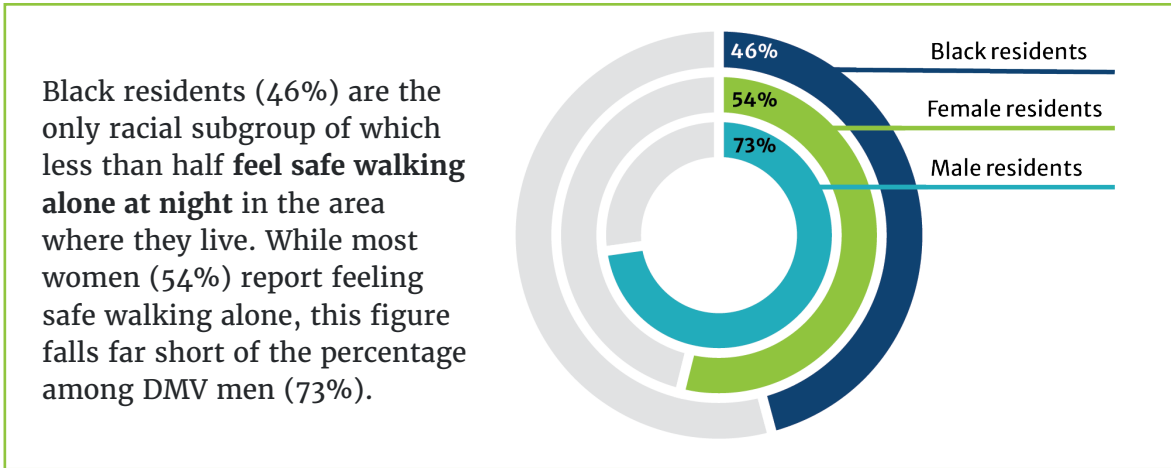
Less than half of residents in DC (47%) and Prince George’s County (40%) say they feel safe walking alone at night where they live. Residents in Loudoun County (87%) are the most likely to feel safe doing so.

FIGURE 22

Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the area where you live?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1%.



As featured in the [pullout](#), about **four in 10** priority area residents (42%) report feeling safe walking alone at night where they live — 22 points below the DMV average.

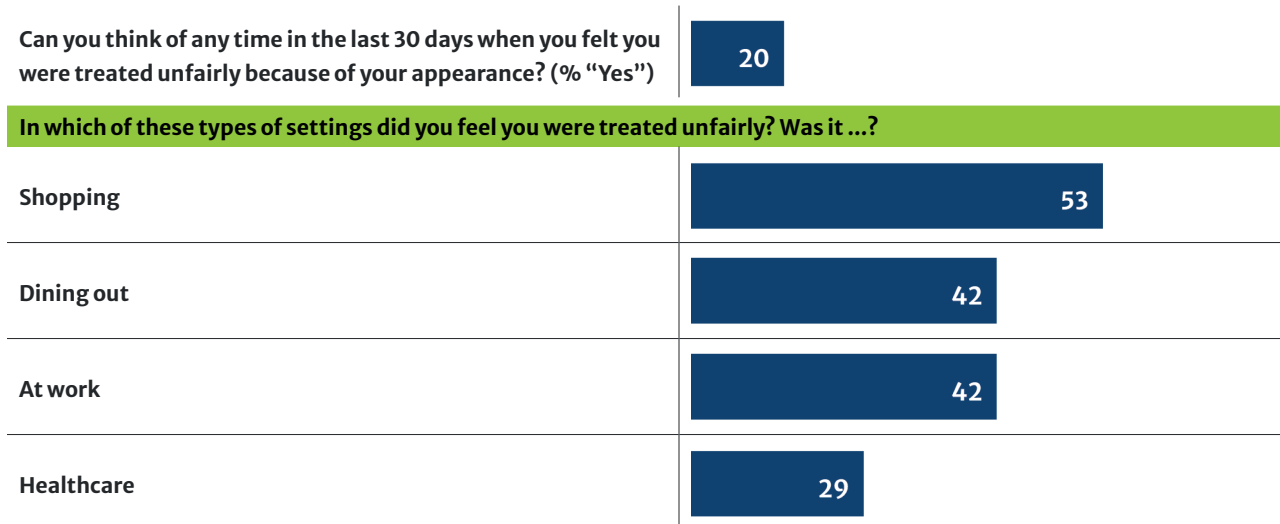
Unfair Treatment

One in five residents in the DMV (20%) report having been treated unfairly in the last 30 days because of their appearance.

When asked about where they were mistreated because of their appearance, residents were most likely to report having been treated unfairly while shopping (53%), while more than four in 10 residents who were treated unfairly say this happened at work (42%) or while dining out (42%). About three in 10 report this happening in a healthcare setting (29%).

FIGURE 23

DMV Percentage Who Report Unfair Treatment Due to Their Appearance

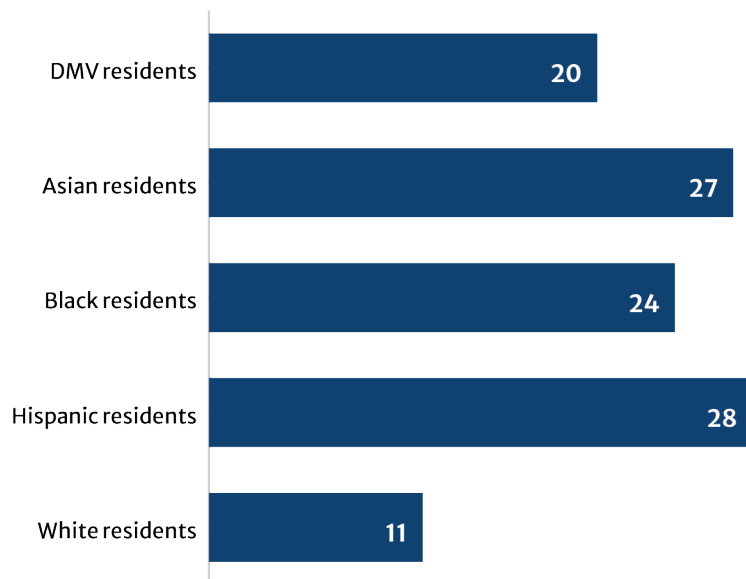


Black (24%), Asian (27%), and Hispanic residents (28%) in the DMV are each twice as likely as White residents (11%) to report having been treated unfairly because of their appearance.

FIGURE 24

Can you think of any time in the last 30 days when you felt you were treated unfairly because of your appearance?

Percentage "yes", by race



DMV residents are about equally likely to report being treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity as they are because of their appearance, with about one in five residents (19%) reporting such an experience in the past month, with a higher proportion among Prince George's County residents (28%).

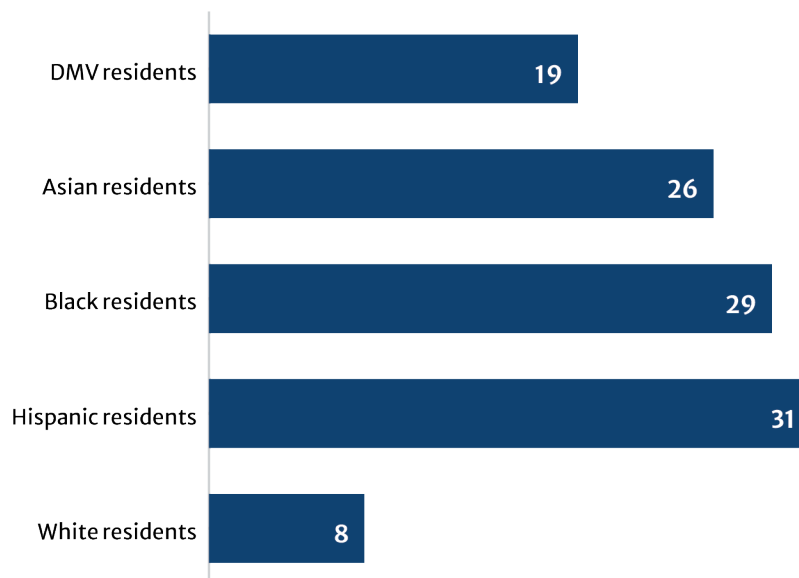
Residents who report having experienced racial discrimination are most likely to have this experience while shopping (46%), followed by while dining out (41%), or at work (39%). Twenty-eight percent report racial discrimination experiences in a healthcare setting.

Black (29%), Asian (26%), and Hispanic residents (31%) in the DMV are each more than three times as likely as White residents (8%) to report having been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity.

FIGURE 25

Can you think of any time in the last 30 days when you felt you were treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?

Percentage "yes", by race



Perspectives on Local Government

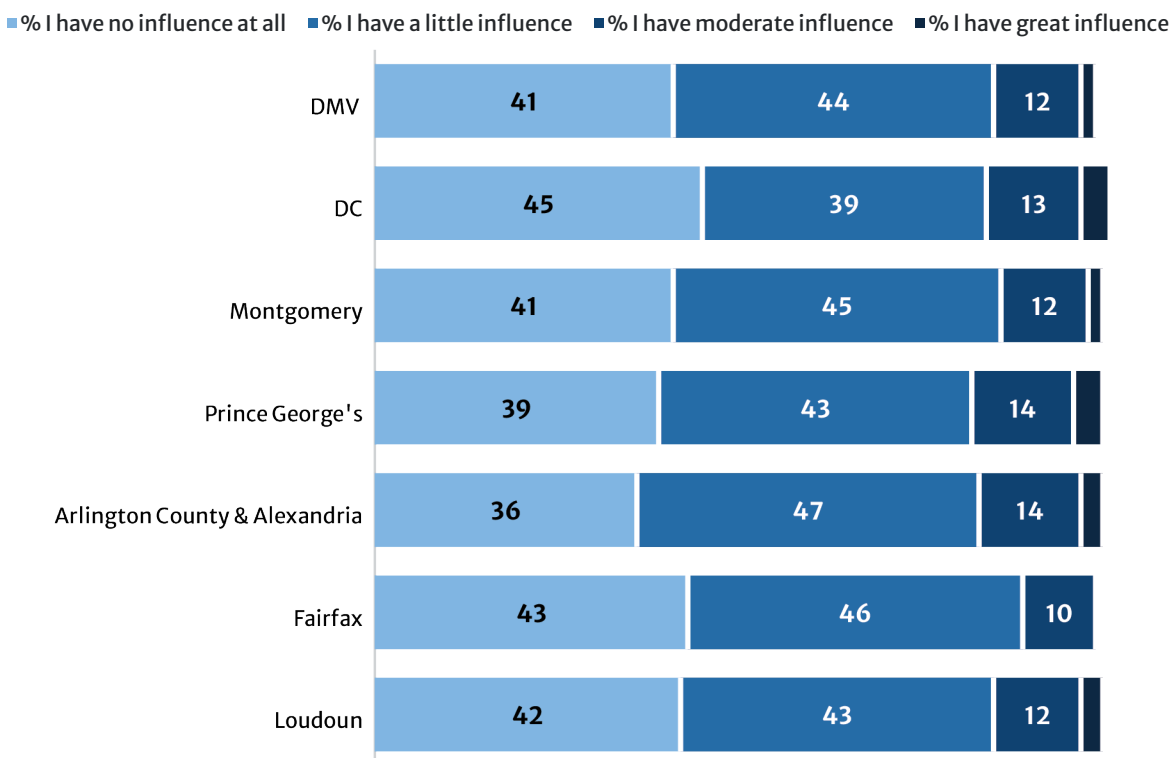
When it comes to issues facing their local communities, residents of the DMV are most likely to assign responsibility to mayors and other local government officials and state governments. However, residents feel limited in their ability to sway government decision-making. This latter finding likely has a major bearing on the quality of civic engagement and people’s trust in their elected officials.

Influence on Local Decision-Making

Residents in the DMV view their influence on local government decision-making as limited. Just one in seven (14%) say they have “great” or “moderate” influence on decision-making; four in 10 say they “have no influence at all” (41%). Residents’ limited sense of influence in local government is consistent throughout jurisdictions.

FIGURE 26

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



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1%; numerical values not shown when <5%.

This sense of limited influence has been consistent across each of the three measures since 2017, and has slightly worsened over time. Residents in the region have consistently been much more likely to say they have little or no influence in government decision-making.

Responsibility for Issues Facing Communities

When it comes to issues facing their local community, residents of the DMV are most likely to assign “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of responsibility to..



**Mayors and other local
government officials**

95%

&



**State
government**

94%

More than three in four residents say responsibility falls on local business leaders (81%), major corporations (79%), and nonprofits and charitable organizations (76%). Smaller majorities assign responsibility to faith-based organizations (68%) and small businesses (55%). Percentages for each group are similar across regional jurisdictions.



FIGURE 27

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

Percentage who say each party bears “a fair amount” or “a great deal” of responsibility

	DMV	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Arlington & Alexandria	Fairfax	Loudoun
Mayors and other local government officials	95	93	93	96	96	96	95
State government	94	92	92	96	93	95	93
Local business leaders	81	78	81	86	77	80	82
Major corporations	79	80	77	83	75	80	78
Nonprofit/charitable organizations	76	80	75	73	74	80	64
Faith-based organizations	68	68	68	74	58	69	64
Small businesses	55	57	54	62	52	51	52

Note: Due to rounding, combined values may vary ±1.



Priority Areas of the DMV Region

The Greater Washington Community Foundation has identified key priority areas of great need in the larger DMV region. These areas are where residents most acutely experience racially disparate impacts in income, education attainment, and homeownership. Priority areas in DC were identified in Wards 7 and 8 as well as Columbia Heights and the Mt. Vernon/Shaw area. In Montgomery County, priority areas were identified in Takoma Park, Langley Park, East County, Upcounty, Wheaton, and Aspen Hill. In Prince George's County, priority areas were identified in Langley Park, Chillum, Adelphi, Seat Pleasant Largo Corridor, Suitland, Branch Avenue, and Pennsylvania Avenue.

Priority area residents have different perspectives and experiences — as well as greater hardships — than residents of the DMV region overall. However, these residents are just as likely to be thriving in their lives and have greater levels of optimism for the DMV area's future — and a larger proportion of them believe they can influence it.

Less than half of priority area residents rate the availability of jobs (48%) and the overall quality of public schools (45%) in their area positively. Similarly, less than half say their area is an “excellent” or “good” place to raise children (43%). Double-digit gaps exist between priority area residents' ratings of the availability of grocery stores, restaurants and nightlife, and healthcare, as well as those of the DMV area overall. However, their rating of the availability of affordable housing (14%) is on par with the DMV average (13%); both groups rate this local resource the lowest.

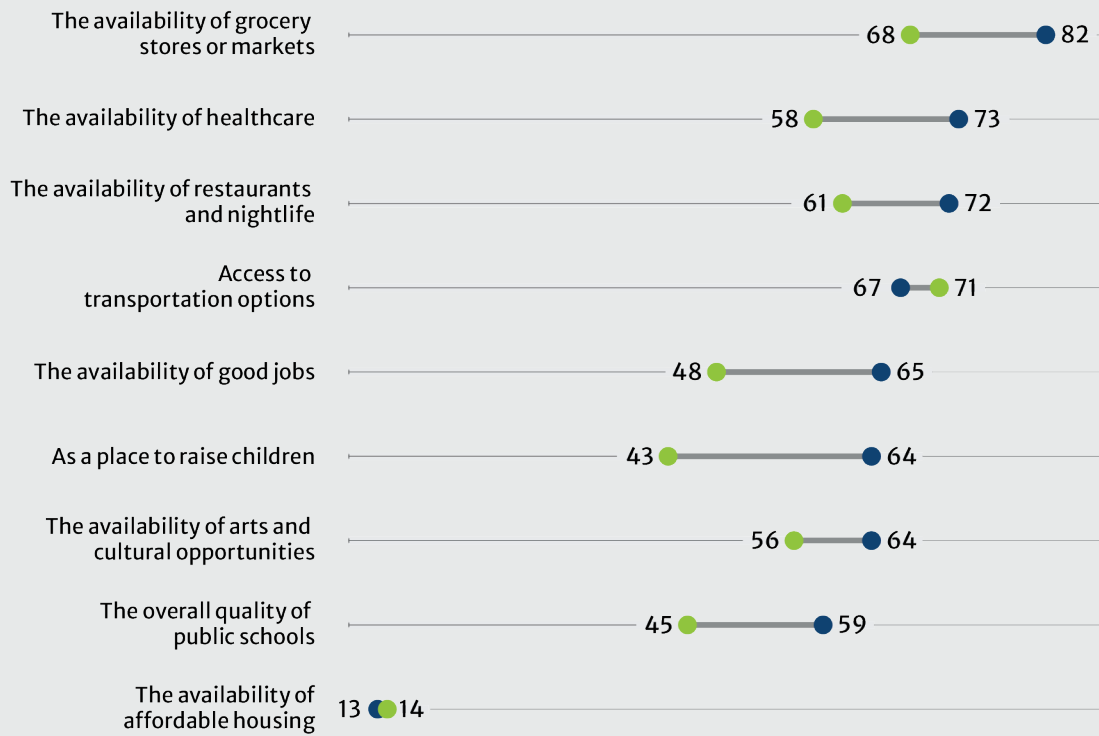


FIGURE 28

Perceived Availability of Resources Among Priority Area Residents

Percentage who rate each item as “good” or “excellent”

• DMV region overall • Priority area residents



Note: Due to rounding, combined values may vary ±1.

Priority area residents (52%) differ most from the DMV average (73%) in saying the area is a “good” or “very good” place to live for families with children. In fact, they are less likely than the regional average to believe the area is a good place for any group in the survey — including “people like me,” which they rate 12 points below the DMV average.

FIGURE 29

Perceptions of the DMV Region as a Good Place Among Priority Area Residents

Percentage who say the area is a “good” or “very good” place for each group to live



Note: Due to rounding, combined values may vary ±1.

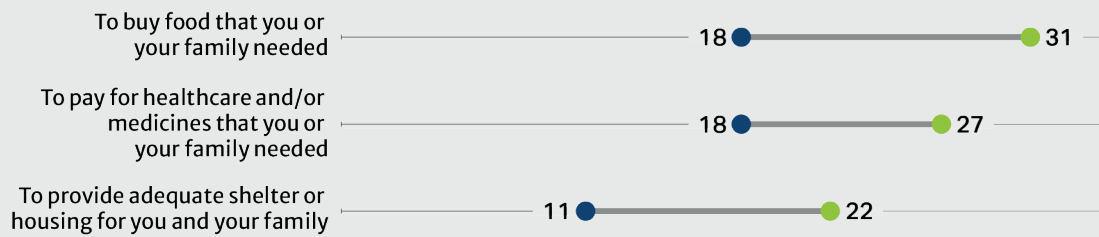
Nearly a third of priority area residents say there have been times in the past year when they did not have enough money to buy food (31%), while more than one in four say they did not have enough money for healthcare or medicine (27%). Twenty-two percent say they did not have enough money for housing.

FIGURE 30

Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money...?

Percentage who say they didn't have the money for each item in the past year

• DMV region overall • Priority area residents

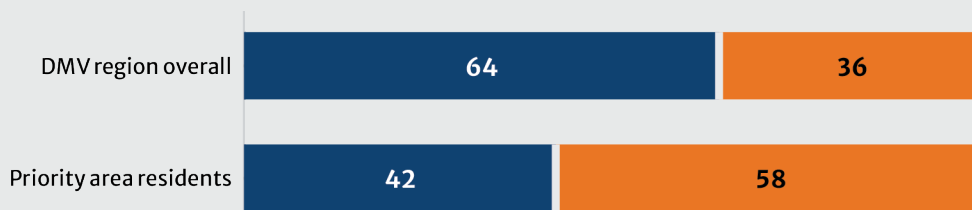


About **four in 10** priority area residents (42%) report feeling safe walking alone at night where they live — 22 points below the DMV region average.

FIGURE 31

Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the area where you live?

■ % Yes ■ % No



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1%.

Methodology

Results for the 2023 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 27,000 surveys, available in both English and Spanish. The survey was conducted May 5–June 26, 2023. In total, 2,832 residents completed the survey, yielding a 10% response rate. 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 sample with 2,832 respondents to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. Gallup weighted the final sample to match the Greater Washington region's population according to age, gender, county/city, education, race, Hispanic ethnicity, and proportion of population living in the priority area. The target for proportion of population living in the priority area is based on frame counts in the address sampling frame, while the targets for the other demographic variable are based on 18-and-older population figures from the 2017–2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates published by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Gallup also weighted the sample with 766 respondents from the priority area to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. Gallup weighted the sample to match the priority area's population according to race, Hispanic ethnicity and county/city. The demographic targets are based on population figures from ScanUS 2021 estimates provided by Dynata.

For results based on the total sample of 2,832 adults from the Greater Washington region, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For results based on the sample of 766 adults from the priority area, the margin of sampling error is ± 4.6 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.



1325 G Street NW, Suite 480
Washington, DC 20005

t +1.202.955.5890

voicesdmv@thecommunityfoundation.org

www.thecommunityfoundation.org