



## Voices of the Community: Washington, DC

### Overall, DC Residents Less Satisfied, but More Optimistic than Other Areas

As a whole, Washington, DC residents express greater optimism than their neighbors in Maryland and Virginia, but are currently less satisfied than these other areas: While the number of residents in DC who believe that living conditions will be better in five years is 10 to 25 percentage points higher than all other areas, DC residents are also the second-most likely to say that economic conditions in the area are getting worse, and are among the least likely to recommend their area as a place to live.

This is especially true among Black respondents: about one quarter (24%) of Black residents believe living conditions will be worse in five years, and one third (33%) say that economic conditions are already declining. Perhaps more importantly, more than half (56%) of Black residents say that DC is “changing a lot,” and that those changes are benefiting people that are not like them (53%). Any resolutions to these perceptions will have to consider the intersection of Black residents’ current negative views of the District, and the belief that sweeping changes in the area will not improve these residents’ outlooks.

### DC Residents Among the Most Active in Their Community

One area where Washington, DC stands out – and perhaps some of its reason for optimism – is its residents’ participation in their communities. Though formal membership in various community organizations (such as religious institutions, parent-teacher organizations, and neighborhood groups) is lower than surrounding regions, DC residents are more likely than nearly every other area to say that within the last year, they volunteered in an organized issue campaign (24%), worked with others to make a change in the community (34%), performed volunteer work (47%), and attended a meeting to discuss local issues (28%). As a result, engaging and mobilizing DC residents may be best achieved through frequent and individualized outreach to these community-building resources, rather than permanent association with an organization.

### Few DC Residents Have Children, Majority Say Area is “Fair” or “Poor” Place to Raise Them

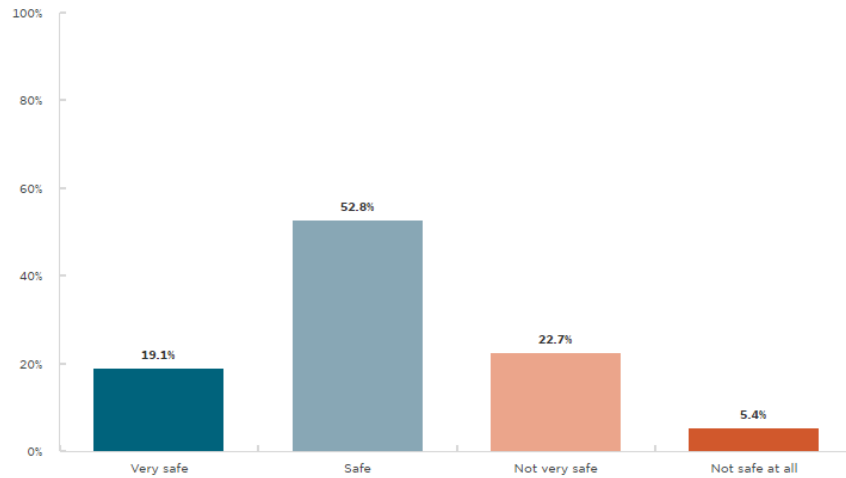
Eighty-seven percent of DC residents have no children under 18 in their household, which may be related to the fact that more than half say it is a “fair” (40%) or “poor” (13%) place to raise children, the highest percentage of any jurisdiction. This may also be due in part to the 28% of respondents who said DC is “not very safe” or “not safe at all” for children – more than ten points higher than every other area in the region – and the 63% who rate the quality of public schools in the area as “fair” or “poor.” As a result, it is possible that parents will explore relocating to any of the surrounding areas, all of which are perceived to have higher degrees of safety and school quality than DC.

## How safe do you feel the place where you live is for children?

Washington, D.C.

**71.9%**  
Safe

Breakdown of Responses



## Accessibility of Basic Needs Exceptionally Poor, Especially for Black Residents

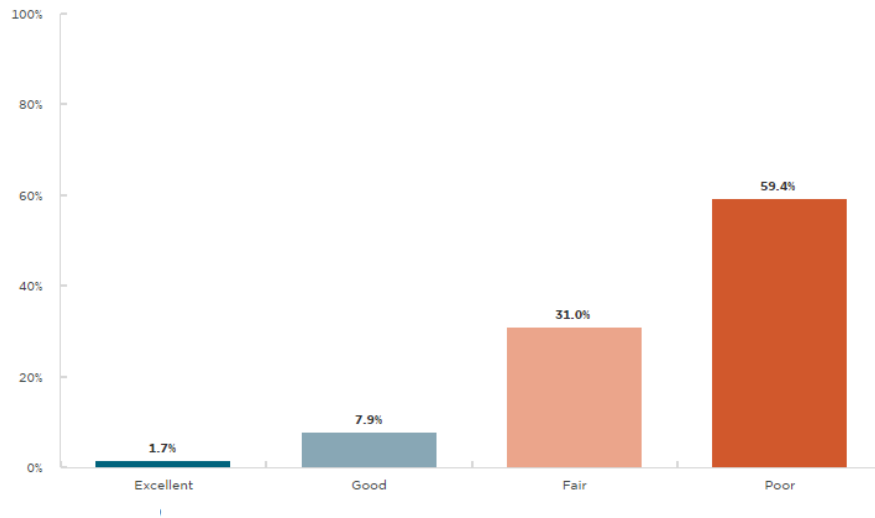
Aside from the finding that 28% of DC residents – including 48% of those who are Black – could not afford their expenses for one month if they were to lose their current source of income, DC also poses additional challenges to its most vulnerable populations that exacerbate the difficulties they already face. Though this starts with housing – 59% of residents say that the availability of affordable housing in DC is “poor” – it extends to other day-to-day needs: 37% of all residents say that availability of grocery stores is “fair” or “poor,” 38% say the same of the availability of healthcare, and 29% say that the area is “bad” or “very bad” for those with disabilities. All of these are the lowest scores in the region, and also represent intersectional vulnerabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## The availability of affordable housing

Washington, D.C.

**9.7%**  
Satisfaction

### Breakdown of Responses



Black residents' ratings of each of these areas - grocery stores, healthcare, and quality of life for those with disabilities - as "poor" or "very bad" are at least 16 points higher than their white counterparts. That said, all racial groups are about equally satisfied with access to public transportation, with 50% of all respondents rating it "excellent."