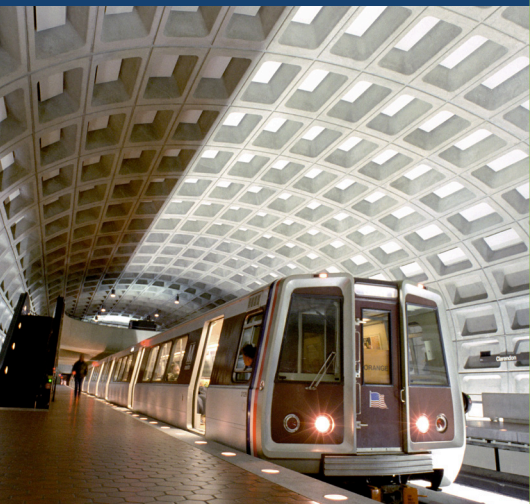




**VoicesDMV**  
COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

# Voices of the Community: DC, Maryland, Virginia

Community Insights





## Foreword From the Greater Washington Community Foundation

The Greater Washington Community Foundation is proud to release key findings from our *VoicesDMV Community Insights* survey. *VoicesDMV* is a community listening initiative designed to help us keep a finger on the pulse of the community by deeply and authentically listening to the voices, experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of people who live here, especially across jurisdictions.

In 2017, our first *VoicesDMV* survey revealed deep disparities in income and opportunity preventing many of our neighbors from accessing the region's economic growth and prosperity. The insights gleaned from this survey helped to shape our Building Thriving Communities framework with updated priorities for our community investment work focused on preparing for the future of work, disrupting poverty, and deepening culture and human connection. We also deliberately centered racial equity and community voice in our community leadership efforts and in our grantmaking.

Through *VoicesDMV*, we have committed to engaging our community every few years to ensure our information stays fresh and that we continue to listen to voices in our community that are generally not heard from in philanthropy. Our 2020 *Community Insights* survey, conducted in partnership with Gallup, asked many of the same questions from 2017 to provide us with longitudinal information on how attitudes and perceptions have shifted in the past few years. We also asked new questions on topics that have impacted our community since 2017, including the impact of the recent government shutdowns.

The 2020 survey offers a snapshot and insight into how the region looked and felt in the months immediately preceding the COVID-19 pandemic and massive civil unrest following the killing of George Floyd. Even before these crises,

much of our region was struggling. Nearly one in five of our neighbors reported that they could only make it by for less than one month if they lost their current sources of household income. Even more worrisome, nearly one-third of residents reported being very or slightly worried about being able to pay their rent or mortgage on a good day.

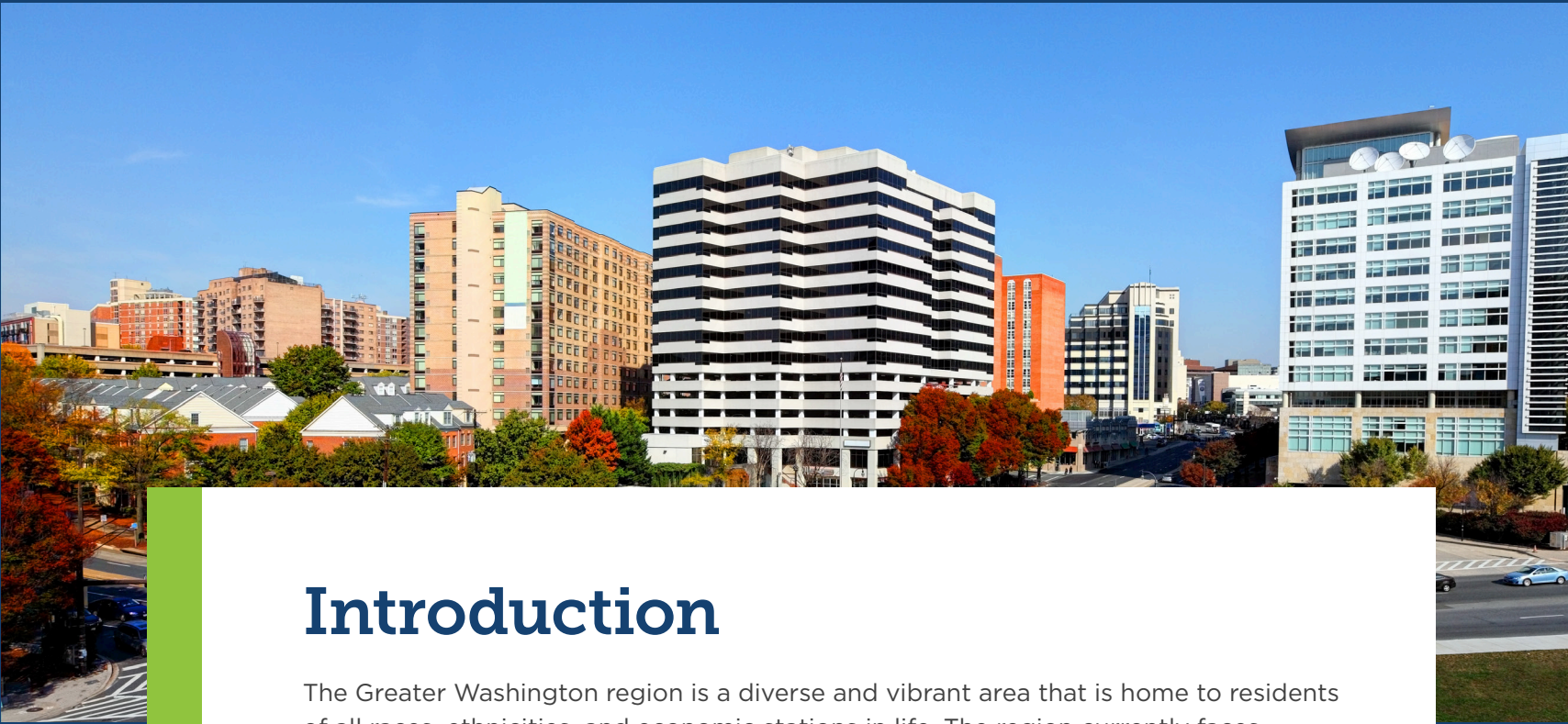
Now as we face the ongoing impact of the pandemic and systemic racism, these statistics are a stark reality for so many. We are seeing this playing out with devastating effect as our region's low-income households and communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Due to pre-existing inequities, they are more vulnerable to the health and economic shocks exacerbated by this crisis. We delve into these inequities with greater detail in the companion piece, *Charting a New Path Forward*.

As we begin to look beyond responding to the immediate crisis at hand, our region's recovery cannot be a return to the status quo as previously captured by our survey. While the sentiments expressed by respondents in the survey have certainly shifted in these last few tumultuous months, the data provides us with signals for what we can do differently as we look beyond emergency recovery and relief toward rebuilding a more equitable and resilient region.

We all have a role to play in shaping a new normal and rebuilding as a community that offers equal opportunity for all residents to thrive. Our hope is that this information helps to prompt conversations on how we can work together to improve our region moving forward. We look forward to capturing ideas for solutions through *On the Table* conversations and encouraging community change projects through *Community Action Awards*. More information is available at [VoicesDMV.org](https://VoicesDMV.org).







# Introduction

The Greater Washington region is a diverse and vibrant area that is home to residents of all races, ethnicities, and economic stations in life. The region currently faces substantial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic impact. Rebuilding the region in the wake of this upheaval in a manner that ensures all members of the community benefit and have the opportunity to live successful lives is essential to building the inclusive, thriving community that everyone can be proud to call home. Doing so will require an understanding of the lived experiences of residents and challenges prior to the crisis.





## To tap into community insights, the Greater Washington Community Foundation commissioned its second survey of residents in the region, including:

- Washington, DC
- Montgomery County, Maryland
- Prince George's County, Maryland
- Fairfax County, Virginia
- Loudoun County, Virginia
- Alexandria and Arlington, including the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church, Virginia

The goal of the survey is to measure outcomes related to the Greater Washington Community Foundation's Building Thriving Communities Framework<sup>1</sup>, which includes three focus areas. The first, Addressing Poverty, examines basic needs, such as food, shelter, education and health, as well systematic approaches to dismantling the impact of poverty. Second, the survey addresses Deepening Culture and Human Connection by capturing outcomes and experiences related to fostering diverse and inclusive community connections through philanthropy and civic engagement, arts and culture, and equity, inclusion and justice. Finally, Preparing for the Future of Work, looks at how workers and entrepreneurs can be assisted in obtaining the skills and resources they need to succeed in the region's rapidly evolving economy.

The first VoicesDMV survey was conducted online in late 2017, covering topics ranging from well-being and economic security to social inclusion and community change. While the 2020 survey captured many of the same measures as the initial survey, it also expands upon it by covering more areas of the region, specifically Loudoun County, and capturing residents' voices related to emerging issues, such as

housing, homelessness and government shutdowns. The survey was conducted via mail in December 2019-January 2020 and resulted in 1,677 completed surveys from across the Greater Washington region. This total includes actionable data in all six jurisdictions listed above.

The 2020 survey generated 115 separate indicators that local organizations, policymakers, researchers, and community members can use to make informed decisions about the future of the region. The full data from this survey are available in an online dashboard, allowing for stakeholders to explore the complete results in a more in-depth fashion that would not be possible in a traditional report. This report discusses a few of the key findings and provides specific, valuable insights into the current state of communities in the Greater Washington region, including both the challenges and opportunities they face. Those issues include perceptions of housing and homelessness, the 2019 government shutdown, top priorities for local governments, barriers to quality employment, experiences with discrimination, as well as topics that have substantially changed since the 2017 survey.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thecommunityfoundation.org/building-thriving-communities>

<sup>2</sup> Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% +/-1% throughout the report.



# The Voices of Housing and Homelessness

Community residents were asked about their personal experiences related to the housing situation in the Greater Washington region. Perceptions on this issue are particularly important given the lack of affordable housing in the fast-growing region, with an estimated shortfall of 264,000 low-cost housing units throughout the area.<sup>3</sup> The shortage of affordable housing is only projected to worsen in coming years.<sup>4</sup> Connected to this lack of affordable housing, residents were specifically asked about their perceptions of the problem of homelessness in the region.

Personal connections to homelessness are widespread. A third of residents (33%) across the region indicated they personally knew of someone who had experienced homelessness or was at risk of becoming homeless. Those residing in Prince George’s County, Maryland were most likely to say they knew someone who experienced or was at risk of homelessness (38%), while residents of Montgomery County, Maryland were least likely, with 25% saying so.

Beyond geographic differences, there were clear gaps between different racial groups, with nearly half of black residents (48%) saying they knew someone who had experienced homelessness or was at risk of being homeless. This was nearly twice the proportion of white residents (27%), Asian residents (25%), and Hispanic residents (29%) who reported knowing a person who has experienced

homelessness, or was at risk of being homeless.

Residents provided additional insights about policy solutions to address this widespread issue. Specifically, residents were asked if they believed a solution to homelessness in the region would be to increase the supply of housing and if they would be willing to pay higher taxes to do so. Over two in five (43%) of the region’s population somewhat or strongly agreed that increasing the supply of affordable housing was a solution to homelessness. Additionally, 41% of the overall population somewhat or strongly agreed that they would pay higher taxes to ensure more affordable housing was built.

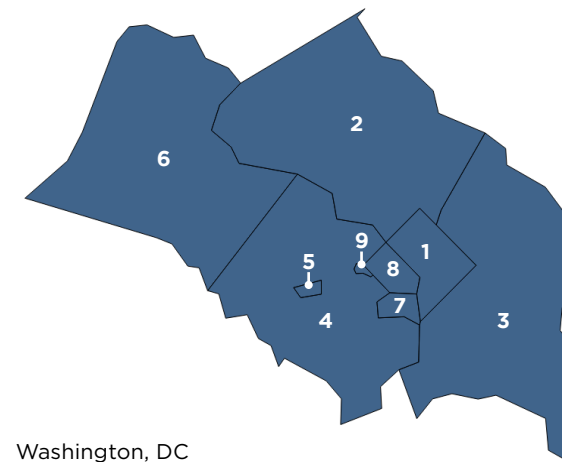
Looking at local geographic differences, Washington, DC residents were most likely to say increasing the supply of housing would be the solution to homelessness, with 55% somewhat or strongly agreeing with this policy solution. There was a similar pattern in agreement to pay higher taxes to build additional affordable housing. Six in 10 DC residents agreed they would pay higher taxes to support this, the most of any of the areas in the region.

Overall, these findings offer advocates for people experiencing homelessness and policymakers a clear opening in much of the region to potentially institute policies that would expand affordable housing, even by using local government funds to help support these efforts.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/meeting-washington-regions-future-housing-needs>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/meeting-washington-regions-future-housing-needs>

## 01

### General Regional Map

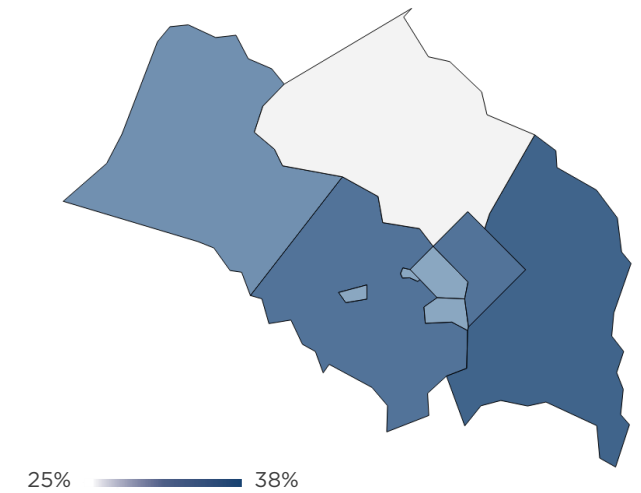


- 1 Washington, DC
- 2 Montgomery County, Maryland
- 3 Prince George’s County, Maryland
- 4 Fairfax County, Virginia
- 5 Fairfax City, Virginia
- 6 Loudoun County, Virginia
- 7 Alexandria, Virginia
- 8 Arlington, Virginia
- 9 Falls Church, Virginia

## 02

### Homelessness Heatmap

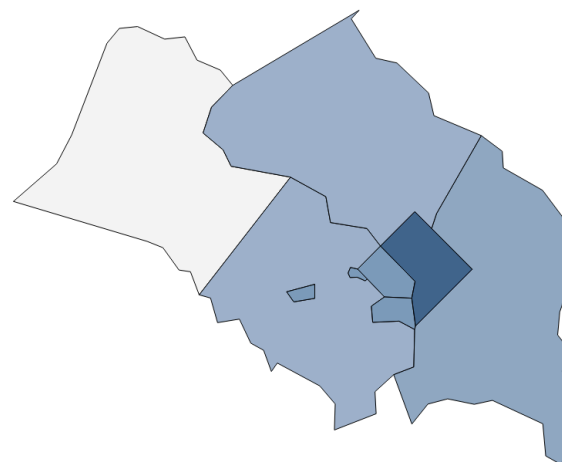
Do you personally know anyone who has experienced homelessness or who is at risk of becoming homeless?



## 03

### Housing Map

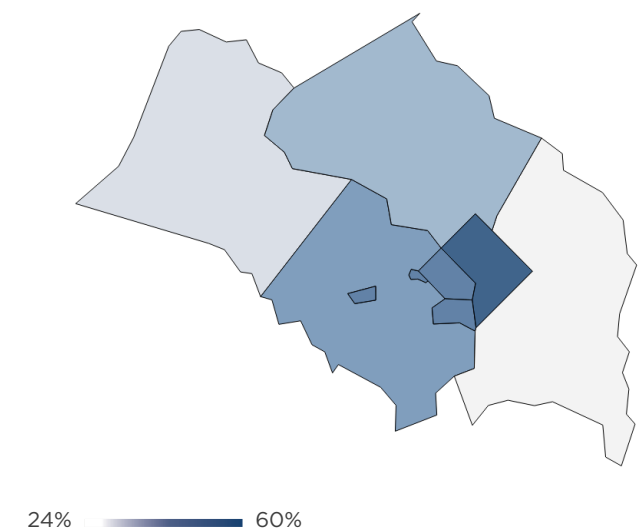
Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. The solution to homelessness is increasing the supply of housing.



## 04

### Taxes Map

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. I am willing to pay more taxes to help increase the supply of affordable housing.





# The Impact of Government Shutdowns

From December 22, 2018 through January 25, 2019, the U.S. federal government was in partial shutdown due to an impasse over the passage of an appropriations bill to continue to fund the government.<sup>5</sup> The 34-day partial shutdown was the longest in U.S. government history and the third in less than six years.<sup>6</sup> During the course of the shutdown, 800,000 federal government employees did not receive a paycheck.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, it resulted in a freeze on payments to nearly 10,000 companies with government contracts.<sup>8</sup> The impact of the shutdown was particularly hard on the Greater Washington region, where, as of 2018, federal workers made up 8.4% of the local workforce.<sup>9</sup> That number does not include the many thousands of employees who work for contractors in the region.

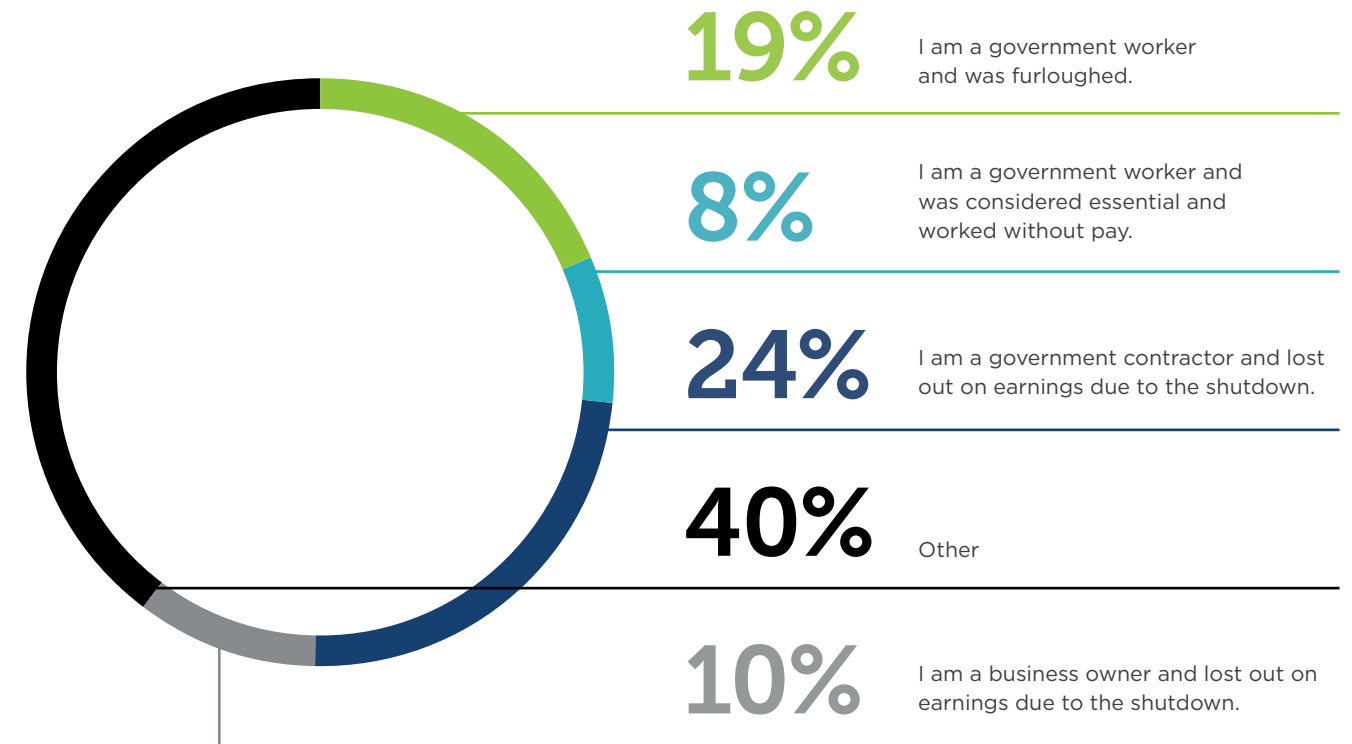
Nearly one in six (15%) residents indicated that they were negatively financially impacted by the shutdown. The percentages of the population who were negatively affected financially by the shutdown were not evenly distributed geographically across the region. The highest percentages of those negatively impacted were in Fairfax County and Alexandria and Arlington, Virginia where 20% of the population in both areas said they experienced a negative financial impact. DC residents experienced the lowest level of negative impact with 9% saying this had occurred and Prince George's County residents had nearly the

same level of impact with 10% reporting adverse financial effects of the shutdown.

In addition to the geographic gaps in negative impact of the shutdown, there were also age-based differences in how the shutdown affected the population. Older residents, but not the oldest, were most likely to be negatively impacted by the shutdown, with 21% of those aged 55-64 and 20% of those aged 45-54 saying they were negatively affected by the shutdown. Seventeen percent of those aged 35-44 and 15% of those aged 25-34 said the same. While the youngest, those aged 18-24 and oldest, those aged 65 or older were least likely to report negative impacts, with 5% and 4%, respectively, saying they had this experience.

Most people negatively impacted by the shutdown were not employed by the government. While 19% of those who said they were negatively affected reported they were government workers who were furloughed and another 8% reported they were essential government workers who continued to work without pay, 24% said they were contractors who lost earnings due to the shutdown. Additionally, 10% reported they were business owners who lost out on income because of it and 40% said they faced other impacts, such as those working in the service industry who may have received fewer tips or less demand for gig work.

Please mark the response below that most closely describes how you were impacted by the most recent government shutdown.



The impact of the 2019 government shutdown is still being felt. Those who were negatively affected financially by the shutdown were nearly twice as likely to currently feel very worried or somewhat worried about not being able to pay their rent or mortgage.<sup>10</sup>

The geographic differences in the impact of the shutdown offers insights for nonprofits and local government policymakers. Areas with higher levels of negative financial impact, such as Fairfax County and Alexandria and Arlington, may face further strain during and after another government shutdown. Additionally, stakeholders may also plan to expect potentially higher levels of social service usage during these periods.

## Gaps for Nonprofits in Responding to Government Shutdowns

Nonprofit organizations play a key role in responding to Greater Washington region residents' needs in the event of a government shutdown. However, among residents whose both parents were born outside of the U.S., 42% say they are unaware of any nonprofits that meet their needs. This compares with 31% with one parent born outside the U.S. and 22% among those with both parents having been born in the U.S.

5 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/01/09/us/politics/longest-government-shutdown.html>  
 6 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/01/09/us/politics/longest-government-shutdown.html>  
 7 <https://www.thecut.com/2019/01/government-shutdown-2019-effects.html>  
 8 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/business/contractors-shutdown/>  
 9 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/politics/federal-workers/>

10 Results from logistic regression model.

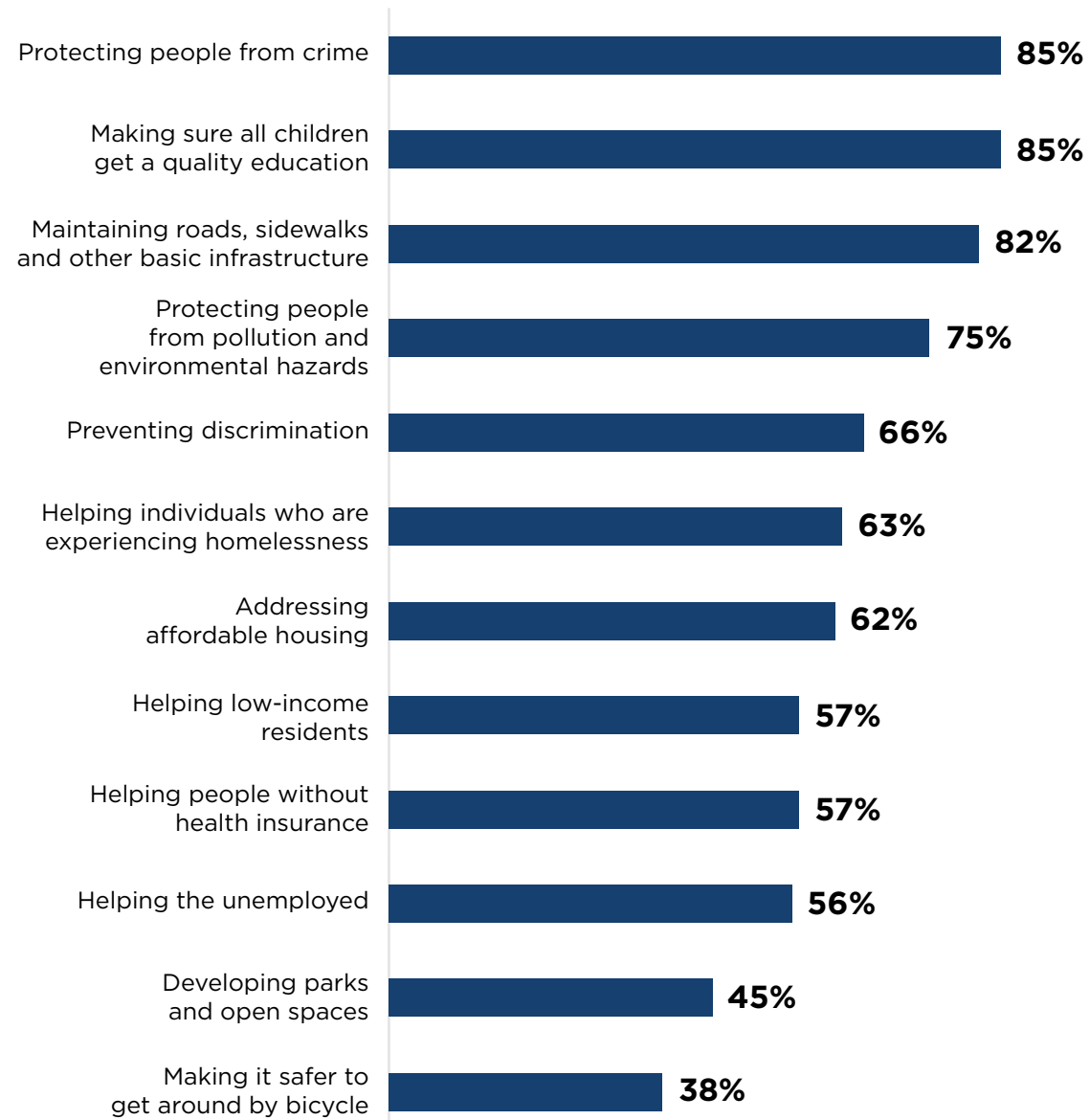


# Top Priorities for Local Government

When asked what local governments should prioritize, residents of the Greater Washington region favored traditional functions associated with local government. Residents across the region said they should focus on protecting people from crime (85%), making sure all children get a quality education (85%), and maintaining roads, sidewalks and other basic infrastructure (82%). Additionally, large percentages favored local government protecting people from pollution and environmental hazards (75%).

**The following questions ask about the role local government plays in various aspects of daily life. How much of a priority do you think each of the following should be for the local government in the place where you live?**

(% High/Extremely high priority)





Differences emerged when the priorities of the constituent counties and cities of the region were examined. For instance, Loudoun County residents' top priority for local government was the maintenance of roads, sidewalks and other infrastructure, with 93% saying this is a high or extremely high priority for local government, a higher percentage than any other area surveyed. Additionally, in DC, residents placed higher priority on local government acting to prevent discrimination, help individuals experiencing homelessness, address low-income housing and help the unemployed than any other locality.

A majority of all racial and ethnic groups throughout the region said local governments should make it a high or extremely high priority to combat discrimination. Three-quarters (76%) of black residents said this, followed by 67% of Hispanic, 62% of white and 59% of Asian residents. This emphasis on addressing discrimination is not limited to racial discrimination, though widespread. For example, 55% of LGBTQ residents felt discriminated against in the past year.



### Nearly One in 10 LGBTQ Residents Experiences Discrimination on a Daily Basis

When asked how often they have experienced discrimination over the last year, 7% of LGBTQ residents of the Greater Washington region say this has occurred to them on a daily basis. This is compared to just 2% of non-LGBTQ who say the same.

The following questions ask about the role local government plays in various aspects of daily life. How much of a priority do you think each of the following should be for the local government in the place where you live?

% High/Extremely high priority

	Fairfax	Loudoun	Montgomery	Alexandria and Arlington	Prince George's	DC
Protecting people from crime	87%	79%	88%	87%	81%	83%
Making sure all children get a quality education	87%	90%	93%	89%	71%	83%
Maintaining roads, sidewalks and other basic infrastructure	87%	93%	80%	88%	71%	76%
Protecting people from pollution and environmental hazards	75%	77%	74%	76%	76%	70%
Preventing discrimination	60%	67%	70%	68%	62%	75%
Helping individuals who are experiencing homelessness	61%	56%	63%	65%	61%	73%
Addressing affordable housing	60%	58%	63%	67%	56%	70%
Helping low-income residents	49%	50%	61%	63%	54%	69%
Helping people without health insurance	54%	49%	60%	54%	57%	63%
Helping the unemployed	51%	46%	61%	52%	54%	67%
Developing parks and open spaces	45%	55%	44%	50%	48%	36%
Making it safer to get around by bicycle	32%	39%	47%	33%	31%	47%





Since 2017, environmental issues saw the largest increase in prioritization among Greater Washington region residents. The share of residents rating protecting people from pollution and environmental hazards as an extremely high priority for local government increased by nine percentage points. Homelessness and education saw the next largest increase since 2017 (seven points). These increases could be partially attributed to the efforts of local groups to raise awareness regarding these issues, particularly concerning the impact of climate change.

Greater Washington region residents' priorities for local government can provide guidance to policymakers when setting their agendas for development. Additionally, for leaders of nonprofits, these priorities can help gauge support for advocacy work and policy development in the counties and cities throughout the region, as well as identify opportunities for public-private solutions, such as The Community Foundation's Partnership to End Homelessness.<sup>11</sup>

**Forty-one percent of residents felt discriminated against at least once in the past year —**

**nearly seven in 10 among these residents felt discriminated against because of their race.**

**% Change in Residents Rating Each Issue an "Extremely High Priority" Since 2017**



<sup>11</sup> <http://endhomelessnessdc.org/>



# Addressing Barriers to Quality Employment

Having a good job is key to residents' lives in the Greater Washington region and a good job requires more than just salary; it includes benefits that help contribute to employees' physical and mental wellness. The survey asked respondents if they received nine different benefits at their work.

Most residents of the Greater Washington region receive key benefits at their jobs. However, there are still substantial percentages of the population left without essential benefits from their jobs. Perhaps most important is health insurance. Nearly one in five, 18%, of residents said they do not receive health insurance at their job. Additionally, a quarter, 25%, said they do not receive paid sick time off at their job. Among residents earning less than \$24,000 a year, less than a quarter (22%) receive health insurance through their jobs, compared to 86% of those workers earning \$48,000-\$89,999.

The lack of these benefits at work can severely impair residents' health and financial wellness. The lowest-earning workers are likely to be particularly affected by the lack of health insurance and paid time off during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has ravaged the Greater Washington region. Policymakers and leaders in the region may use these data to help provide residents with other options for some of these benefits, as well as advocating for expansions of benefits with local employers.

However, not all workers have equal access to key benefits. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to maternity/paternity leave. Less than half of all workers with less than \$48,000 in annual household income reported having maternity/paternity leave, while over 70% of all workers in households earning \$48,000 or more said they receive this benefit. These results will serve as valuable baseline information as Washington, DC implements its Paid Family Leave policy in July 2020.<sup>12</sup>

## Optimism on the Future of the Region's Economy

There are substantial differences by race when it comes to optimism about economic conditions in the region. Among white residents, 36% say economic conditions are improving, compared to 27% of black residents. For black residents, there has been little change in perceptions that economic conditions were improving between the 2017 and 2020 surveys.

**Black residents (14%) are now substantially more likely to say they are finding it difficult or very difficult than white residents (4%) to get by financially.**

<sup>12</sup> <https://does.dc.gov/page/dc-paid-family-leave>

## Does your current job(s) offer any of the following benefits? By annual household income.

% Yes

	Total	Less than \$24,000	\$24,000-\$47,999	\$48,000-\$89,999	\$90,000-\$119,000	\$120,000 or more
Health insurance	82%	22%	76%	86%	83%	89%
Dental insurance	78%	19%	71%	82%	78%	86%
Vision/Optical insurance	76%	6%	75%	78%	75%	85%
Vacation (paid time off)	83%	33%	84%	85%	87%	89%
Paid sick time	75%	25%	86%	71%	80%	80%
Unpaid sick time	64%	33%	39%	63%	73%	71%
Maternity/Paternity leave	69%	38%	45%	79%	77%	74%
Life insurance	73%	16%	56%	76%	77%	82%
Retirement	77%	33%	61%	80%	82%	85%





Parents also face a number of barriers to work once their child is born — 67% of parents with children aged five or younger said they find it difficult or very difficult to pay for high-quality childcare for their child/children. Additionally, 11% of all workers reported access to childcare is a barrier to finding and keeping a job.

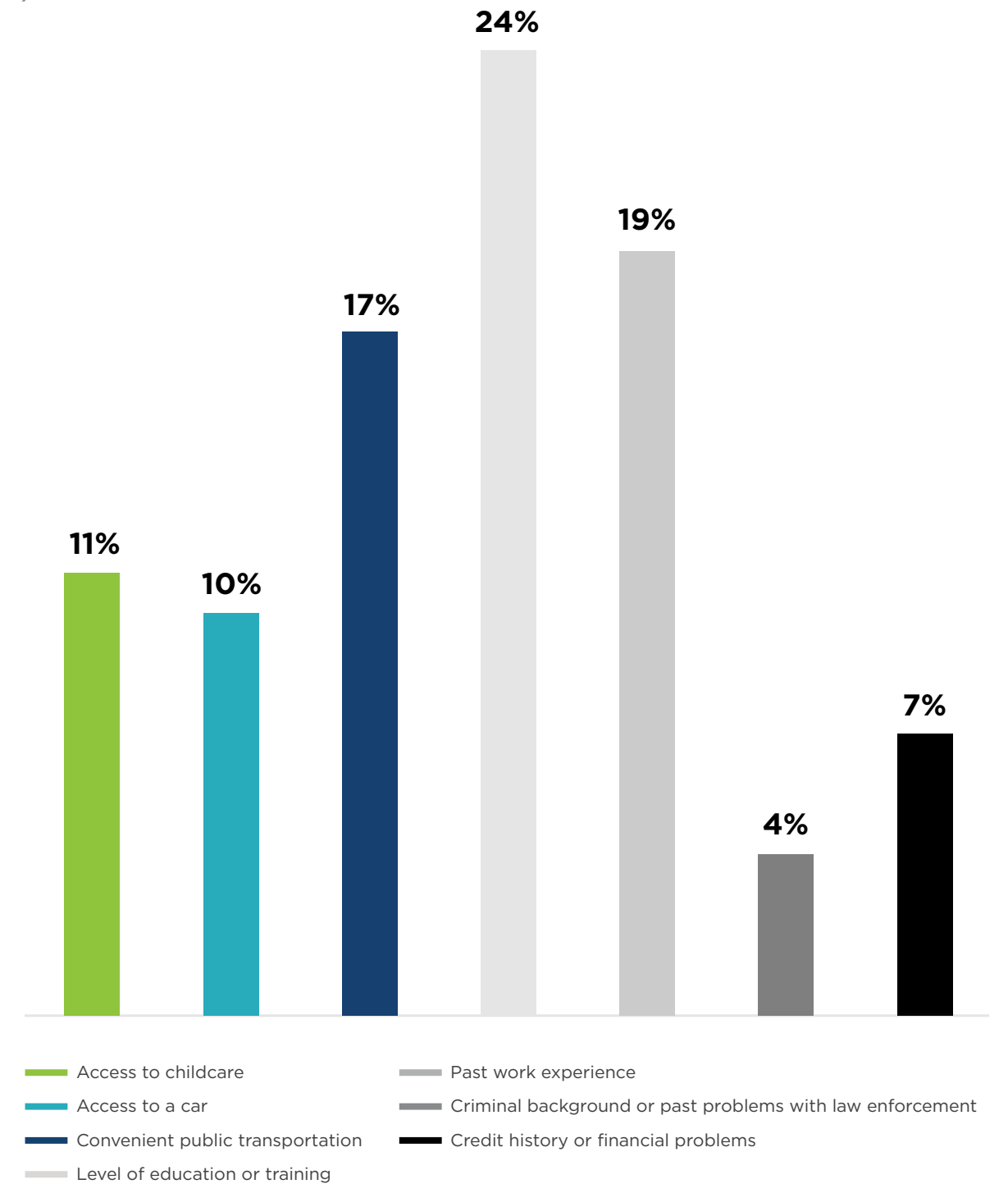
The most significant barrier workers said they face when finding and keeping a job is their level of education and training. Nearly a quarter of all workers (24%) and nearly half of the unemployed who are looking for work (49%) cited level of education as a barrier to finding and keeping a job. The Greater Washington region has one of the highest percentages of college-educated residents of any region in the country, which poses a challenge for those who need additional education or training to find a job. This is a significant opportunity for education providers, government agencies, nonprofits and employers to assist workers in obtaining the skills that they need to be successful in the job market.

### Past Problems With Law Enforcement as a Barrier to Employment

When asked if criminal background checks or past problems with law enforcement were a barrier to finding employment, 7% of black residents say this has been the case for them, the highest of any racial group. Among white residents, 3% say the same, as do 4% of Asian and 2% of Hispanic residents.

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

(%Yes)





## Implications

Each of the areas explored in this report offer insights for leaders in government, business, nonprofit, and education. The data provide a clear picture of the challenges and opportunities that faced residents and communities in the Greater Washington region prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. They also allow for examination by a variety of demographic and geographic options. These options give leaders the opportunity to target specific groups and areas where issues are most pressing, and needs are the greatest. Using these data to help drive policies and programs can ensure they are aimed at the specific residents of the region who may benefit most.

The challenges have not disappeared in the wake of the pandemic and have likely only been exacerbated by the economic and physical health pressures that have resulted from it and the associated economic issues. The snapshot of the state of the region prior to this disruption provides government, business, academic, and nonprofit leaders with insight into where to begin focusing their efforts as recovery and economic reconstruction begin in earnest.



## Methodology

Results for the 2020 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 and Prince George's County, Maryland and Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Arlington County and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church. A total of 13,340 surveys were mailed, available in both English and Spanish. This survey was conducted December 9, 2019-January 13, 2020. In total, 1,677 residents completed the survey, yielding a 13% response rate. To ensure random sampling of the adult population in the Washington region, the person aged 18 and older with the next birthday within a household was asked to fill out the survey.

Gallup weighted the sample to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. Gallup weighted the final samples to match the Greater Washington region's population according to gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, and education. Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent current population figures for the aged 18 and older resident population in the region published by the United States Census Bureau. For results based on the total sample size of 1,677 adults, the margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error reflects the computed design effects for weighting. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

This report was commissioned by the Greater Washington Community Foundation. The VoicesDMV initiative is funded through the generous support of donors to The Community Foundation's Fund for Greater Washington. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for us to advance our mission to Build Thriving Communities. We would also like to thank our Steering Committee and partners — from American University, Gallup, Jasculca Terman Strategic Communications, and mySidewalk — for their strategic guidance and support.





**VoicesDMV**  
COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

# Voices of the Community: Charting a New Path Forward

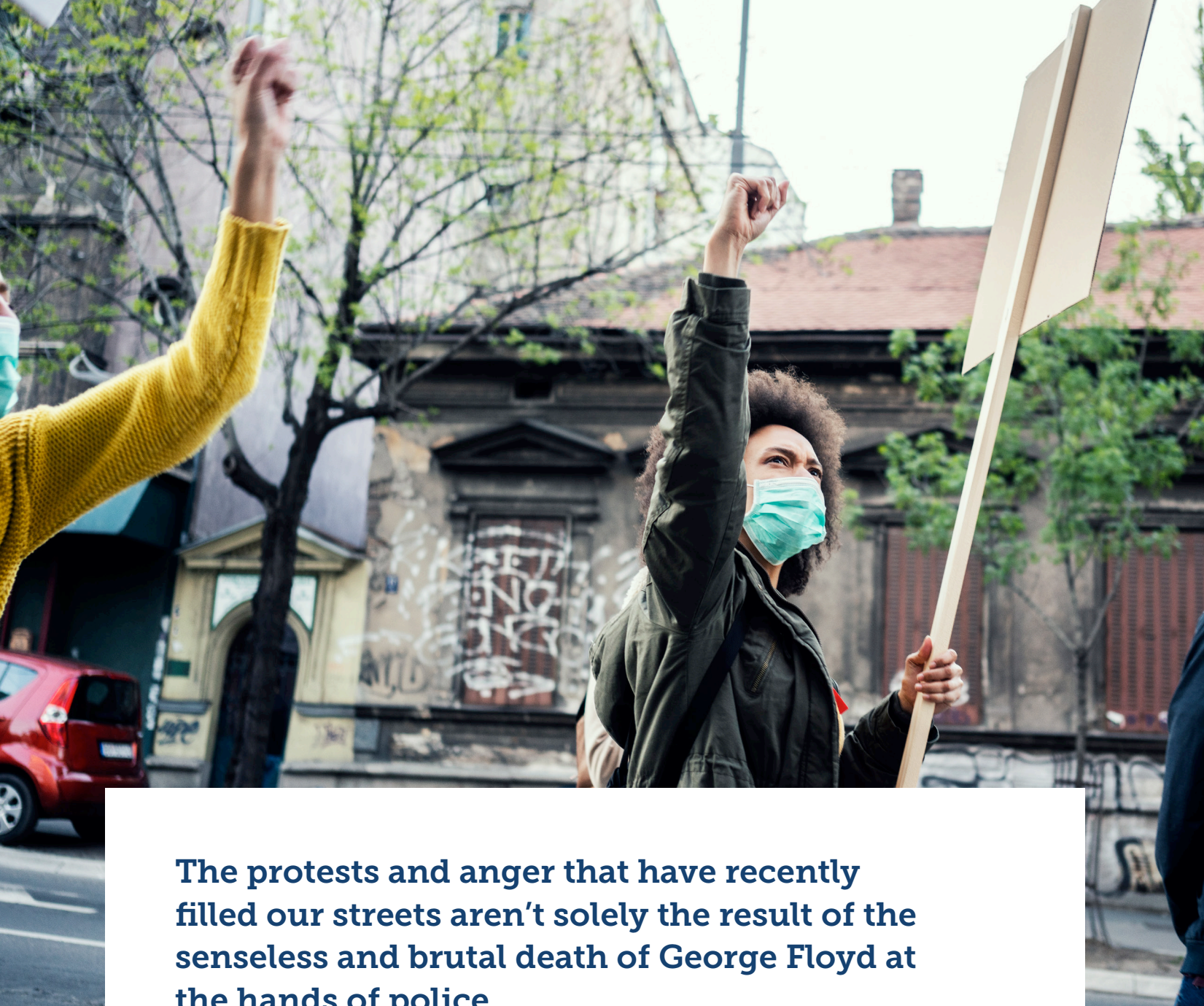
By Tonia Wellons



GREATER  
WASHINGTON  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

GALLUP®





**The protests and anger that have recently filled our streets aren't solely the result of the senseless and brutal death of George Floyd at the hands of police.**

**They are also the product of long-simmering frustration — frustration that is rooted in the fact that the DMV's black community faces a much different reality than their white neighbors.**

When we first began reviewing the results of this latest iteration of the VoicesDMV survey in February 2020, the disparity in the responses offered by our black and white neighbors jumped off the page. While it's not news that the black and white experiences are much different in our community — and, really, in all U.S. communities — these findings nonetheless were startling.

We live in a region that prides itself on being inclusive, yet these results make clear that our community has a long way to go before that pride can be fully justified and realized.

Just how far we still need to travel is apparent in the responses to the VoicesDMV survey, which captured sentiments in our region right before the COVID-19 crisis disrupted daily life in our community. Consider:

Nearly one in 10 black residents (9%) felt discriminated against in interactions with the police in the past year compared with less than one in 100 white residents (0.7%).

During the past 12 months, six times the percentage of blacks relative to whites in the DMV said they experienced discrimination when trying to obtain housing and nearly four times the percentage of black residents compared to white residents reported facing discrimination when banking or applying for a loan.

Even before COVID-19 plunged our region into the worst recession of most of our lifetimes, more than one in three black residents reported that the overall economic conditions in the Greater Washington region were getting worse. By comparison, more than four in five white residents said the local economy was getting better or staying the same.

Keep in mind, the survey responses came during a time of economic prosperity and relative calm in our region. It was before COVID-19 began threatening the lives of black people at a disproportionate rate. It was before our economy plunged into free fall. It was before anti-lockdown protests, the tragic and preventable death of George Floyd, and unrest across the country.

In the short period since then, all of these events have combined to make conditions much worse for many families, particularly black residents in the DMV. In fact, the VoicesDMV data also provide clues about just how severely COVID-19 is impacting the black community.

Before the pandemic, 17% of the DMV's black households said they were already "very worried" about being able to pay their rent or mortgage. By comparison, fewer than 3% of white households indicated they had that same fear.

Even more troubling, 35% of black households reported that if they lost all sources of household income they could "continue to live as they live today" for less than a month — a figure that is 2.5 times the percentage reported by their white neighbors.

These findings highlight the preexisting inequities facing our region's black community — inequities that have only widened in the face of a public health and economic crisis, and then further amplified during the 8 minutes and 46 seconds captured on video on a Minneapolis street.



## So how do we move forward?

It begins with using these latest data to shine a bright spotlight on how systemic racism permeates our community, and to take real actions to ensure that these gaps get closed.

At the Greater Washington Community Foundation, it means the continuation of our effort to center our work in racial equity. It means prioritizing our community investments in a way that yields real change — by being population focused and more intentional about supporting leaders of color. It means listening to the Voices of the Community and allowing lived experience to drive our agenda. And finally, there is an opportunity to share our platform so that our donors, partners, grant recipients, and others in our sphere of influence can learn and act together.

### **It also means our region must begin by addressing racism in law enforcement.**

“Racism in law enforcement obstructs our country’s pursuit of true equality,” says Dr. Rashawn Ray, David M. Rubenstein Fellow at The Brookings Institution. “Insights from the VoicesDMV data offer a pathway for our region to be a leader in police reform by establishing accountability and restoring trust.”



## But we won't stop there.

We must also address it in our local economy, in our neighborhoods, in our arts and cultural institutions, in our healthcare system, and in our schools. In each of these areas, the VoicesDMV survey shows a significant gap between our white and black communities.

VoicesDMV was designed as a way to gather Community Insights that will inform community conversations and lead to community action. We will use the data to elevate community voice and explore solutions to address these deep-rooted issues in our region through the lens of people impacted by inequity and at the front lines of addressing it. Through *On the Table* conversations, we will bring the entire community together to discuss how these issues impact their families and communities. We will then fund *Community Action Awards* to help transform ideas sparked during these conversations into community change projects, committing at least \$100,000 in microgrants for organizing, community action, and social justice projects that can be implemented individually or collectively.

Some of the important work toward closing these gaps is already underway. In 2018, following our first iteration of VoicesDMV, we updated our community investment strategy with our Building Thriving Communities framework — an approach that connects the dots between the amazing work of our donors, nonprofit partners, and our own work to make the Greater Washington region a better place for all residents to live, work, and thrive.

Building Thriving Communities focuses our investments on supporting neighbors to find pathways out of poverty, creating diverse and inclusive spaces to build stronger connections between neighbors, and preparing workers to succeed in our region’s changing economy.

But achieving meaningful long-term change will require an even bigger and more sustained effort; one that will evolve from what we’ve learned during the early days of our Building Thriving Communities work, what we’re seeing in this new survey, and what we hear from our community during our virtual conversations.

All of this will play a key role in shaping The Community Foundation’s next strategic plan as we chart a new path forward for our region. We will be innovative in our pursuit to close the racial gaps highlighted by the VoicesDMV data.

You can expect this new strategy to be big and bold — and to outline an agenda for how The Community Foundation can play a more prominent role in confronting systemic racism in our community and ensuring that all of our neighbors have the same ability to thrive.





1325 G Street NW, Suite 480  
Washington, DC 20005

t +1.202.955.5890

f: 1.202-955-8084

[www.thecommunityfoundation.org](http://www.thecommunityfoundation.org)