

Research update

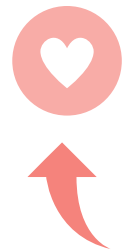
Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)
Residential Preferences survey results



May 2025 | Darcie Vandegrift, Matt Schroeder, Zhu Gong

Review of study objectives

Preferences and priorities



Individual household's preferences and tradeoffs in housing

Differences in preferences by social characteristics

How to meet preferences



Effects of program parameters and barriers compared with effects of individual preferences



Programs to help voucher holders satisfy their residential preferences

Satisfaction



Outcomes of voucher holder efforts to meet neighborhood and housing unit preferences



How outcomes vary across social characteristics

Source: October 2023 Community Development Committee Information Item Presentation

Council research shifting to a person-centered view of opportunity

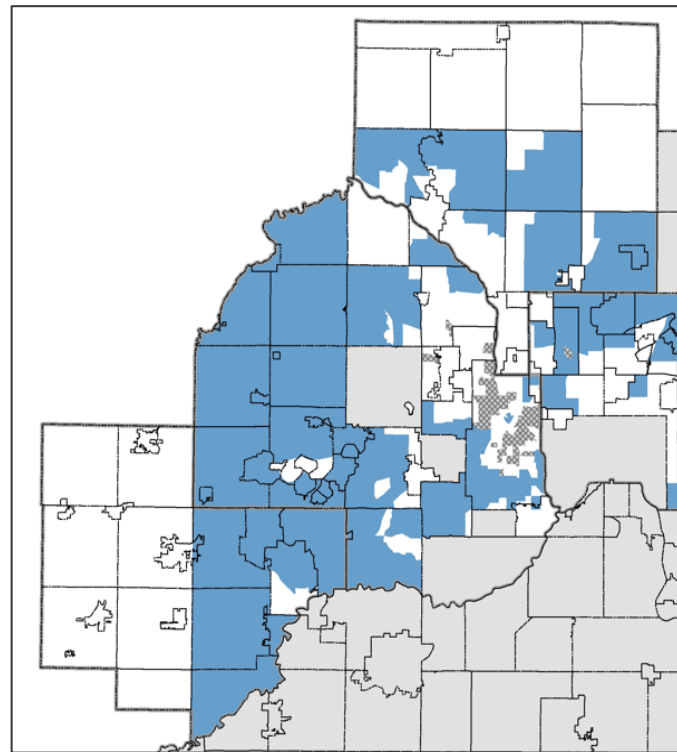
Place-centered view

What places offer opportunity to voucher holders?

Places are higher or lower in opportunity

Distills “opportunity” to a single, one-size-fits-all number

Conflates opportunity with neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics



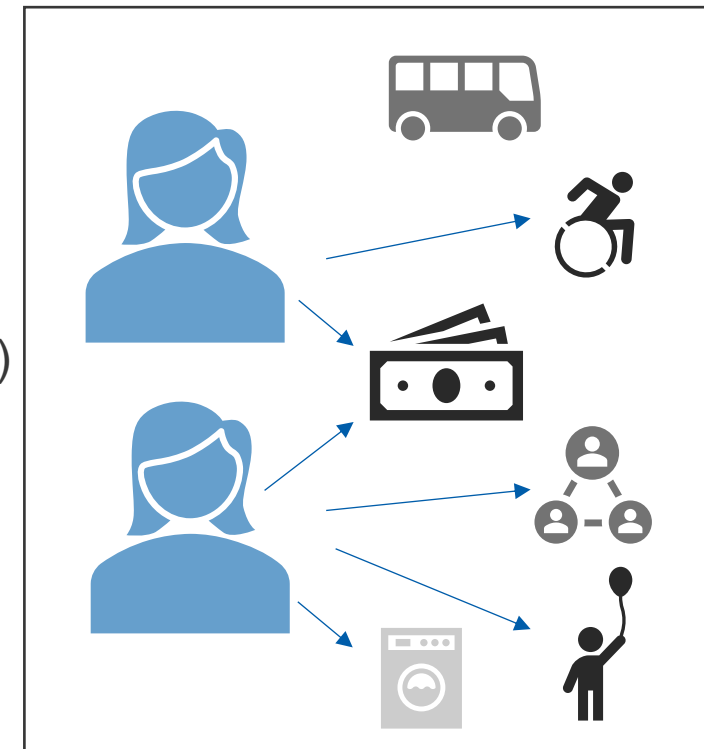
Person-centered view

What kinds of opportunities do voucher holders value?

Places have different kinds of opportunity

Considers diversity in voucher holders' preferences and needs (including housing units)

Values things found in many places, including social connection and belonging



Survey was designed to include key groups for accurate results

Sample

- 1,500 voucher holders in Metro HRA and Minneapolis
- Designed to be representative by agency, household size, race

Survey

- Online and paper options
- Responses gathered March - May 2024
- 454 responses (30.3% response rate)

Data

- De-identified to preserve respondents' privacy
- Data include closed-ended and open-ended questions

Research questions guiding survey

Preferences and priorities



What do voucher holders want?



What do they prioritize?

How to meet preferences



Are voucher holders getting what they want?



What would help voucher holders get what they want?

Satisfaction

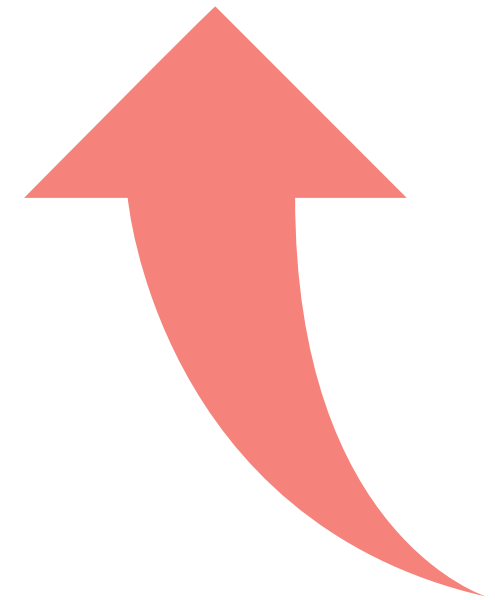
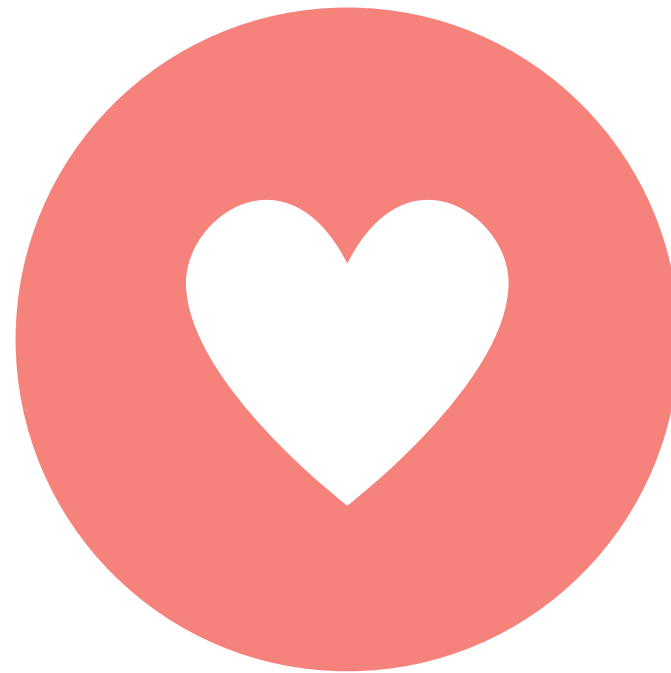


How satisfied are voucher holders with their neighborhood?



How satisfied are voucher holders with their homes?

Findings: Preferences and priorities



Preferences: Voucher holders wanted many amenities. On average, home unit amenities were rated as important by more people than neighborhood amenities were.



Percent who rated amenity “important”:



>75%

- Safe from crime
- Groceries, medical services other amenities
- Welcoming schools
- Non-prejudiced neighbors



50-75%

- Retail & social services
- Green space
- Jobs
- Good transit
- Culturally specific things



<50%

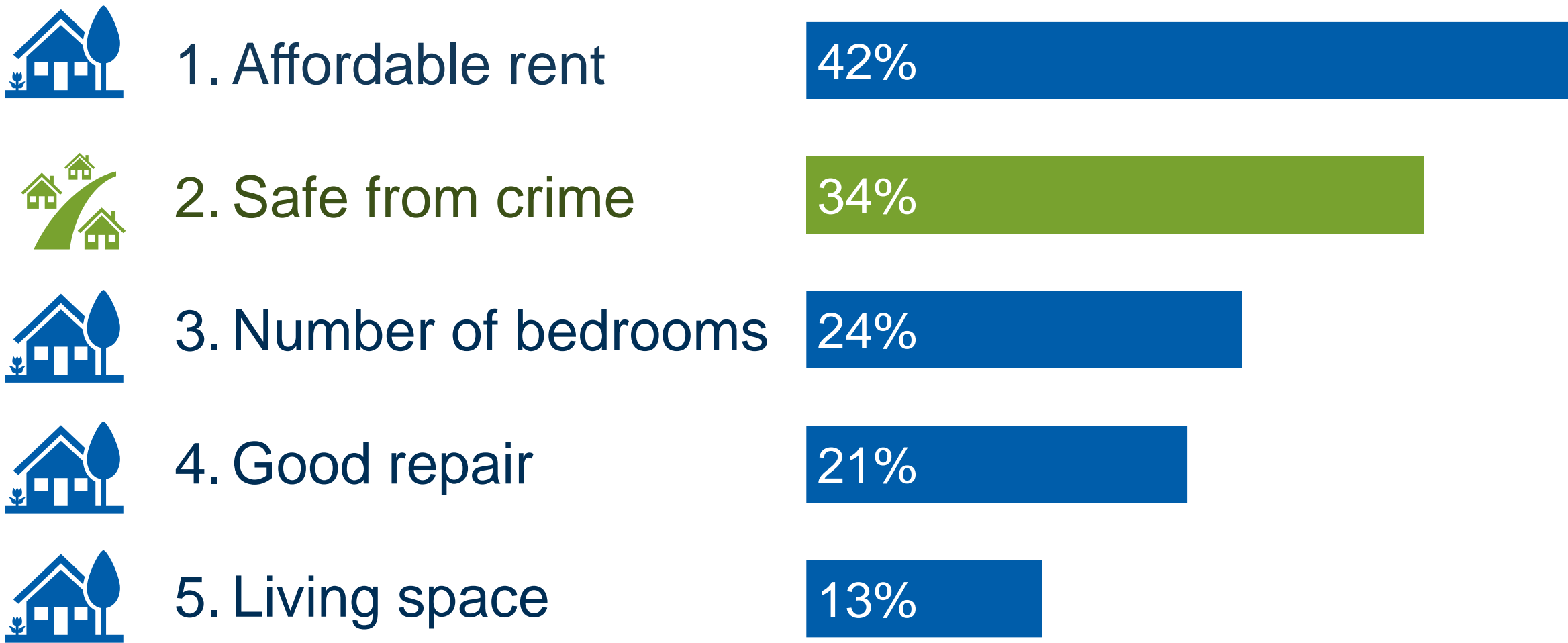
- High income neighborhood

- Affordable rent
- Number of bedrooms
- Home and appliances in good repair
- Living space
- Respect from property manager
- Amenities like laundry and parking
- Type of building
- Storage
- Smoking status
- Private outdoor space
- Accessible
- Pets allowed

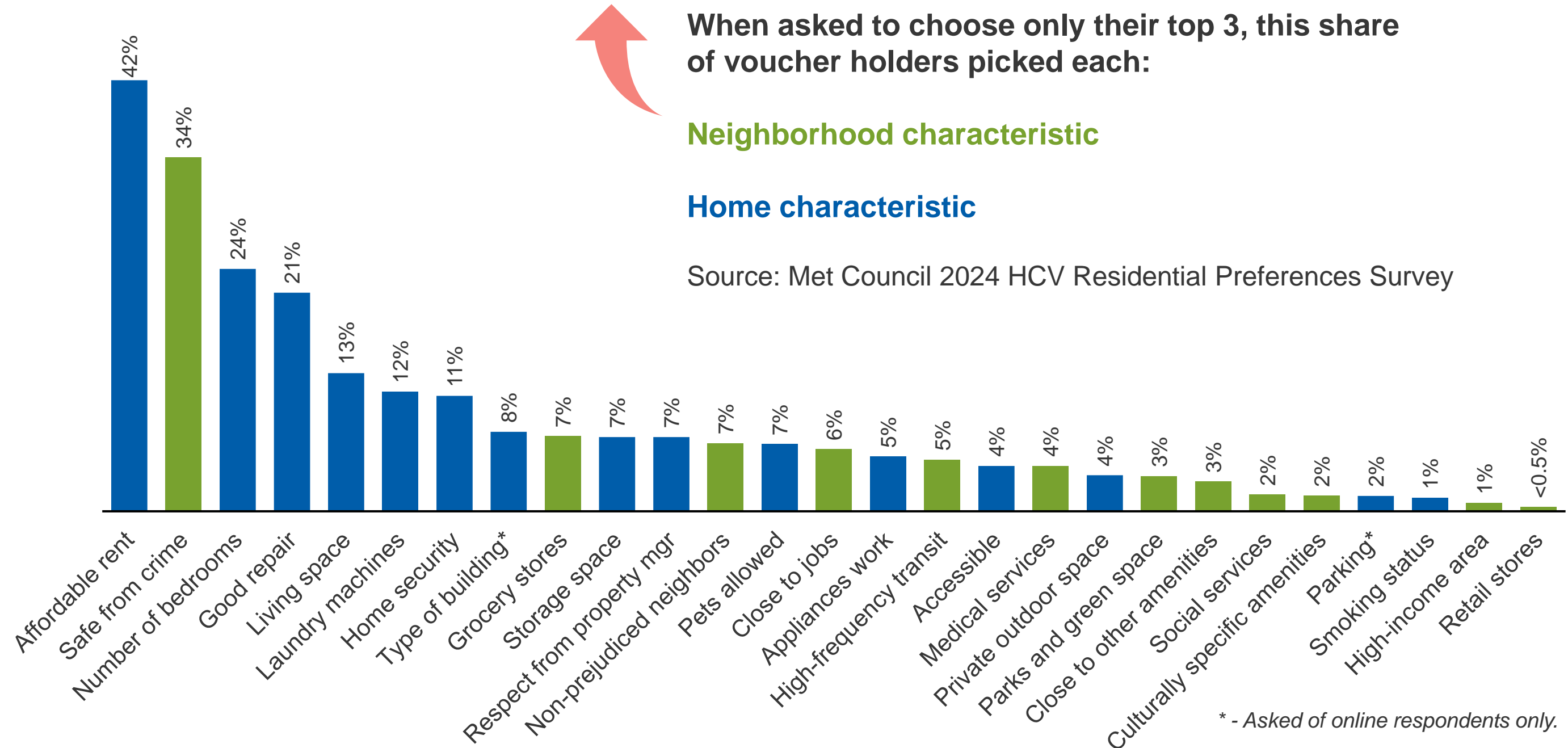
Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Home unit items more likely to be in the top 3 desired characteristics.

When asked to choose only their top 3, voucher holders listed these characteristics the most often:



Each characteristic is really important to *someone*.



Voucher holders describe amenity preferences like affordability and proximity to important places.



“I worry that uncontrolled rising rent amounts will force me to move or be unable to find affordable housing elsewhere.”

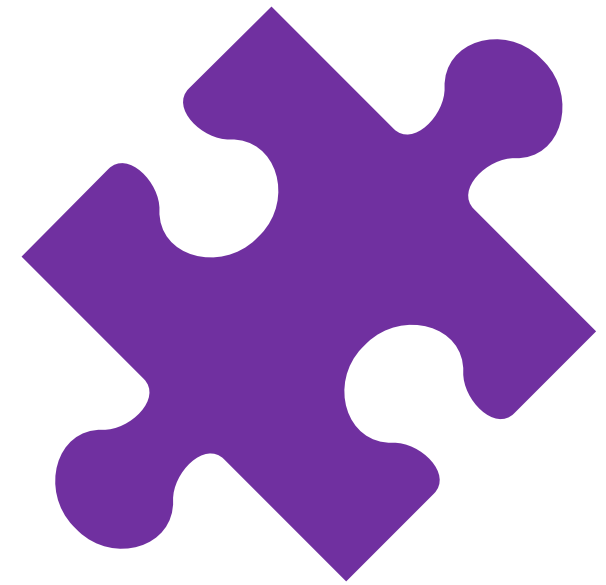


“Location, location, location. This is central to everything important to me. Work, child needs, groceries, shopping and retail, and highways.”



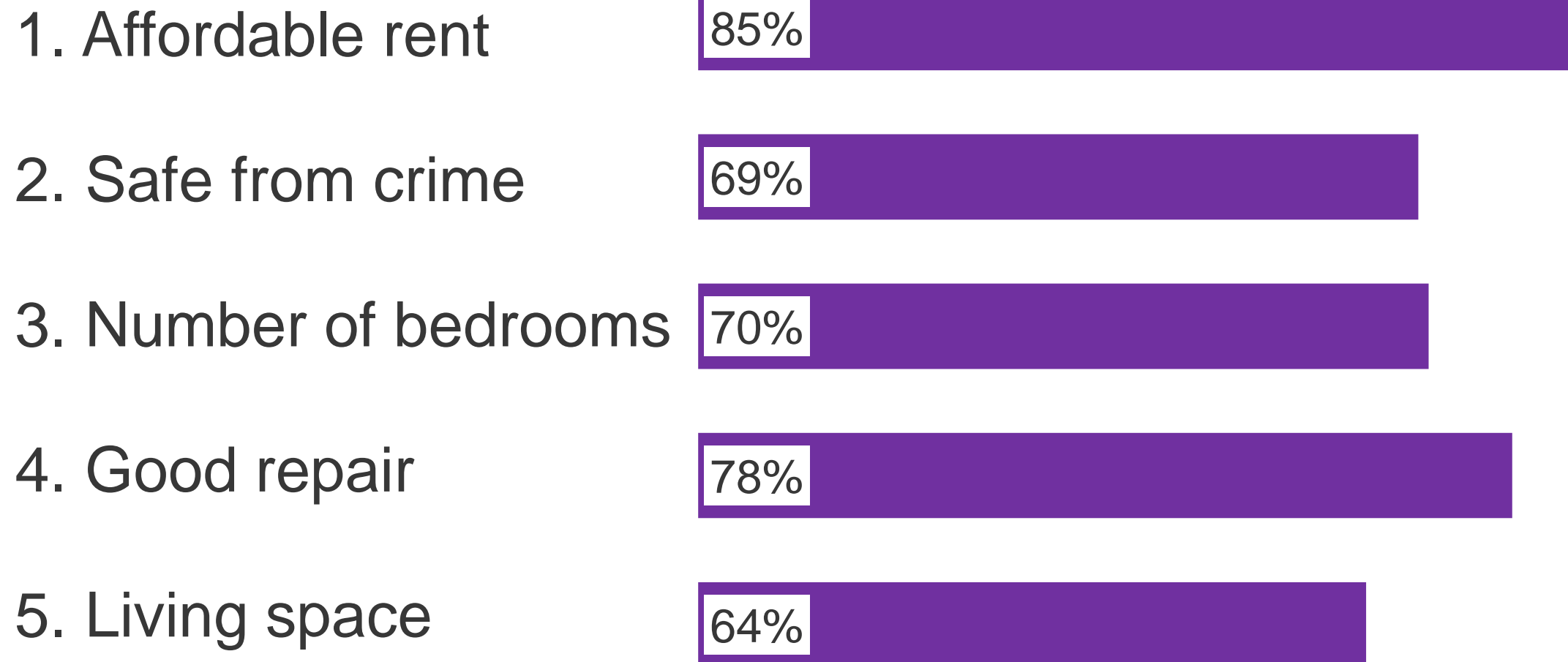
“Everything is close by, like the Mosque and grocery store. I’m able to socialize. I’m not isolated. The transportation is great.”

Findings: How to meet preferences



Affordable rent and well-maintained unit were easier to find while safety and space were more difficult.

Of voucher holders who listed the amenity as a top priority, this percent were able to find the amenity:



Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Most voucher holders found things they were looking for, but it wasn't easy.



Did you find what you were looking for? If so, how difficult was it?

Didn't find anything they were looking for

Found something they were looking for, but with some difficulty

Found something they were looking for easily



80% of households found some, most, or all of what they were looking for in a neighborhood...

... but only 22% of them said they had an easy time finding it.

86% of households found some, most, or all of what they were looking for in a home...

... but only 16% of them said they had an easy time finding it.

Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Voucher-eligible housing list, financial help with fees, increased payment standards are top suggestions.



Cost:

- Pay for application fees and deposits (3)
- Raise payment standards (4)



Supply:

- More property managers accepting vouchers (2)



Information:

- List of properties that accept vouchers (1)
- Help me understand payment standards (5)

Findings: Satisfaction



Respondents generally satisfied with their homes and neighborhoods

Share of voucher holders happy with their living situation



64%

Of all households reporting happy or extremely happy with neighborhood



65%

Of all households reporting happy or extremely happy with home unit

Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Voucher holders describe satisfaction in open-ended survey comments.

“For the first time in my entire life, my house feels like I am home. It is a clean environment and safe for my children.”

“This is an awesome apartment. It’s got great communal amenities. My unit has laundry, a dishwasher, and garbage disposal inside. It’s spacious and has good weather insulation and an HVAC system. Management is professional. I feel lucky and would like to see everyone with a voucher be able to live in a place like this.”

“Maintenance fixes things quickly. The neighborhood is quiet. We are allowed companion dogs. I have a space in the connected garage and a private balcony that is screened-in. I have a dishwasher which is very good because I’m disabled and cannot stand too long. And my apartment is spacious.”

Voucher holders describe dissatisfaction in open-ended survey comments.

“I was lucky enough to find a house instead of an apartment. I like having privacy. But the home is small and outdated. I don’t want to give notice to move and try to find something that accommodates us better just to not be able to find anything.”

“Having 3 teenagers and 2 school-age children makes it hard to live in this house. It is only 3 bedrooms. It feels very cramped.

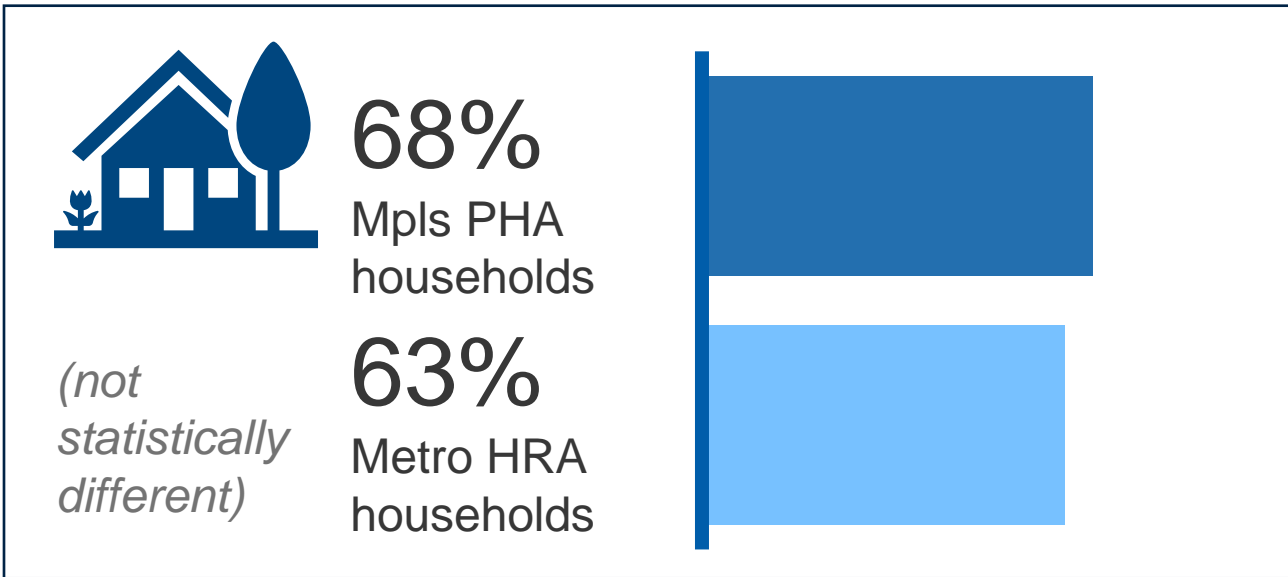
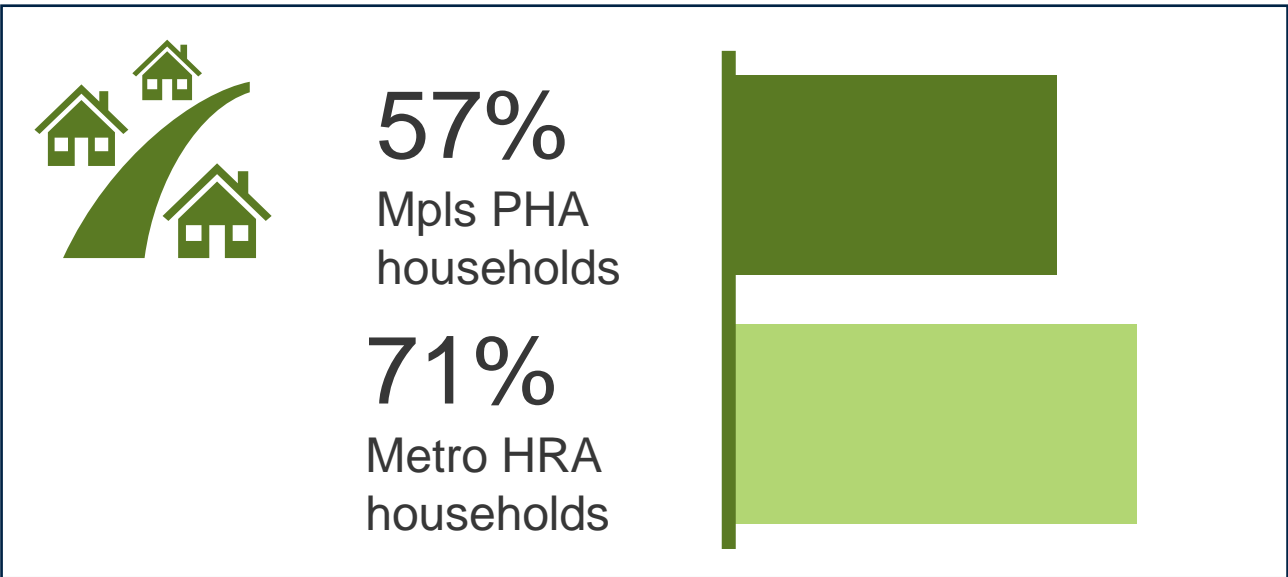
Some analyses did not show meaningful differences in satisfaction

- Homelessness status at admission
- Length of time in program
- Race/ethnicity except as noted here
- Household type (children present, older adults, other household)

Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Difference 1: Metro HRA residents are more satisfied with neighborhood than MPHA residents

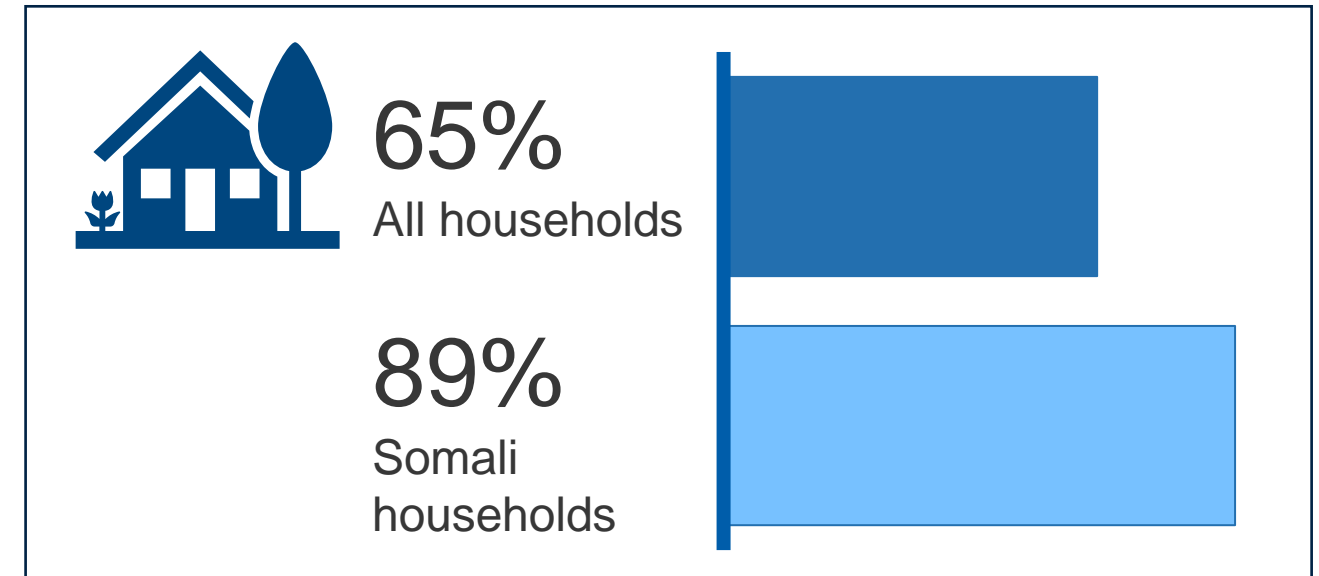
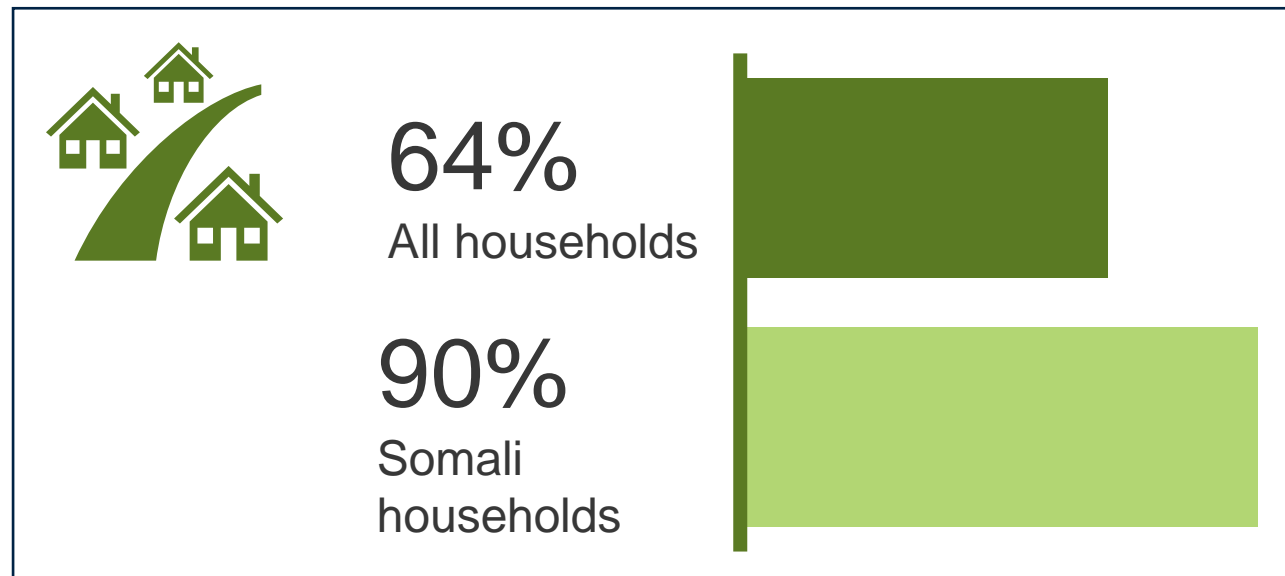
Share of voucher holders who are happy with their living situation



Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Difference 2: Somali respondents are much more satisfied

Share of voucher holders who are happy with their living situation



Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Difference 3: Respondents issued recent vouchers are more satisfied with their homes

Share of voucher holders who are happy with their living situation:



Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Key survey results summary

Preferences and priorities



Affordable rent, safe from crime, number of bedrooms, good repair, living space, and in-unit laundry were top preferences.



Voucher holders prioritized housing unit characteristics higher than neighborhood characteristics

How to meet preferences



Home characteristics were generally harder to find than neighborhood ones.



Ability to find properties that accept vouchers, assistance with moving costs would help.

Satisfaction



Similar home and neighborhood satisfaction across most groups.



Satisfaction differences for Somali respondents (higher), newer program participants (higher for housing unit) and MPHA (lower neighborhood satisfaction).

Source: Met Council 2024 HCV Residential Preferences Survey

Study Timeline and Next Steps

2025 Q2

- Share results with CDC, Council Staff, MPHA staff

2025 Q3

- Publish report, additional presentation
- Kickoff first wave of qualitative research (individual interviews and focus groups)

2025 Q4

- Analysis of first wave of qualitative research

2026

- HRA reflection of policy/program implications of qualitative research
- CDC presentation on qualitative research results and study as a whole

2027

- Second wave of qualitative research (interviews with original interview participants to understand changes across time)



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Community Development – Research

