

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting date: May 19, 2025

Topic

HCV Residential Preferences Study: Survey results and next steps

District(s), member(s):	All
Policy/legal reference:	N/A
Staff prepared/presented:	Darcie Vandegrift, Research Manager (651-602-1669) Matt Schroeder, Principal Researcher (651-602-1513) Zhu Gong, Researcher (651-602-8437)
Division/department:	Community Development / Research and Metro HRA

Background

The ***Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Residential Preferences Study*** details experiences and housing preferences of HCV recipients. The HCV Program is a federally funded rent assistance program in which eligible households find a unit on the open rental market while renting from a private landlord. Tenants pay 30% of their income toward rent, and housing authorities make up the difference through federal subsidy. Metro HRA Director Terri Smith and Researcher Zhu Gong presented an introduction and background of the study to the Community Development Committee (CDC) in [September 2023](#). This information item shares survey results from the completed Phase One of the study.

Many contemporary policy discussions take a “place-centered” view of how to best serve voucher holders. Voucher holders are encouraged to move to “high opportunity” areas to achieve the best long-term outcomes, where “opportunity” is typically defined with quantitative data rather than voucher holders’ expressed housing and neighborhood preferences. Recent Community Development-Research studies have found that a “person-centered” view more accurately considers what voucher holders themselves need. In this framing, opportunity is multidimensional, and different places have different kinds of opportunity. Additionally, the people-centered view acknowledges that different voucher holders prioritize different things. This study uses the person-centered view to carefully consider voucher holders’ preferences and experiences, which can help Metro HRA staff and HCV program policies better support voucher holders in attaining the kinds of opportunities they want.

Survey Methods

The team recruited participants from Metro HRA and Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (PHA) voucher holders. The sample was designed to be representative by agency, race of households, and household size. The survey results were weighted to reflect the actual population of HCV holders in terms of these characteristics. To help voucher holders feel more comfortable providing candid answers, we contracted with a

consultant to assist with survey design and execution, and the consultant de-identified the survey data to maintain survey respondent confidentiality. Surveys were completed from March to May 2024, with survey analysis completion in March 2025. A total of 454 respondents completed the survey, a 30% response rate, constituting 3.3% of all voucher holders.

In addition to close-ended questions where respondents chose from a defined list of answers, the survey included six open-ended questions that asked about voucher holder experiences with meeting preferences and perceived pros and cons of their housing units and neighborhoods.

Survey Results

The results of the survey found similar home and neighborhood satisfaction across household types and most racial/ethnic groups. Approximately two thirds of voucher holders were satisfied with their home units and neighborhoods. However, the analysis revealed three key differences in satisfaction. Somali voucher holders (15% of all voucher holders across both agencies) reported higher levels of satisfaction with both their neighborhood and home units. Households receiving a voucher in 2023 (12% of voucher holders across both agencies) were happier with their home units than longer-term voucher holders. Finally, Minneapolis Public Housing Administration voucher holders (51% of survey sample) were less satisfied with their neighborhoods than Metro HRA households were.

The amenities survey respondents ranked most important were affordable rent, safety from crime, desired number of bedrooms in a unit, a unit in good repair, amount of living space, and in-unit laundry. In general, voucher holders prioritized housing unit characteristics over neighborhood characteristics, though home characteristics were generally harder to satisfy than neighborhood characteristics. Voucher holders reported that the ability to find properties that accept vouchers and assistance with moving costs would most help them find the amenities they wanted.

Research Next Steps

A report on survey results will be finalized by the third quarter of 2025. This report will be presented to CDC at that time. In Phase 2 of the research, Council researchers will complete qualitative research to include interviews and focus groups with housing choice voucher recipients. This phase will focus on how people navigate among priorities and tradeoffs in housing, the importance of community ties in housing, and the common patterns in push and pull factors. Some findings from the survey require additional context that can be learned in focus groups. The qualitative research will provide Metro HRA and Minneapolis Public Housing Authority with information to guide questions of funding and program policy. An in-depth understanding of how personal histories and community values shape housing preferences will develop a more asset-based and nuanced framework to understand the issue of choice in voucher holder experiences. Interviews and focus groups are planned for summer and fall 2025. CDC will be informed of these results when the analysis is finalized in the first quarter of 2026. A second wave of interviews will be conducted with original interviewees in 2027 to learn how voucher holders' experiences change over time.

