

# Douglas County Tenant Experiences Report

2024



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## About the Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group

Since 1972, The Sexual Trauma and Abuse Care Center (The Care Center) has supported survivors of sexual violence and promoted a culture of consent. In the last decade, The Care Center has strengthened and expanded its education and prevention programming.

To support this work, The Care Center applied for and was selected as one of the subgrantees of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's (KDHE) Rape Prevention and Education (1902) initiative supported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in February of 2019.

The Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group that was created as a result of this funding used the approach in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence." This approach underscores the interconnectedness of different forms of violence, including sexual violence, and the importance of moving upstream to address risk and protective factors to prevent sexual violence from occurring.

To better advance primary prevention efforts, The Care Center and LiveWell Douglas County partnered to convene the Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group, a member workgroup of LiveWell Douglas County. By nourishing cross-sector partnerships and emphasizing strategies with a community-wide impact, the Sexual Violence Work Group has led Douglas County's sexual violence prevention efforts. Guided by a community needs assessment, the SVP Workgroup has implemented strategies promoting access to affordable housing, reduction of inequitable working conditions, and community education programs focusing on bars and restaurants.

The initiative received technical assistance and evaluation supports from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development. Members of the workgroup include representatives from Douglas County, the City of Lawrence, Lawrence Community Shelter, Family Promise, the Willow Domestic Violence Center, DCCCA, Justice Matters, Tenants to Homeowners, Lawrence Memorial Hospital, Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority, the University of Kansas Sexual Assault Prevention and Education Center, and other community stakeholders.

## Background

In February 2023, the City of Lawrence passed an ordinance prohibiting source of income discrimination. This policy prevents landlords from denying someone tenancy based on how they pay their rent, making housing easier to access and keep for renters and improving processes for legal recourse for tenants. Source of income protections make housing easier to access for people who are using Housing Choice Vouchers, emergency rental assistance, mutual aid funds, familial support, or other “non-traditional” forms of income. While over a hundred states and municipalities have source of income anti-discrimination policies, this was the first of its kind in the State of Kansas and a landmark win for renter’s rights.

In the years leading up to the passage of this ordinance, the Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group was heavily involved in advocating for improved rental protections. While researching local housing market conditions, the work group identified gaps in data. Much of the existing research was designed to inform the development of affordable housing, and was not always inclusive of the experience of residents who have affordable housing needs. Community engagement indicated that residents who live in rental housing have valuable perspectives but are often unsure how to engage in planning processes or are left out entirely. Common challenges tenants may face aren’t well documented.

The Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group decided to conduct the Tenant Experience Survey to gather information about experiences and perspectives of renters in Douglas County. Despite making up almost half the population, there have been no centralized attempts to gather information about the experiences and challenges of those living in rental housing. Renters face unique challenges finding and keeping housing that often are unreported and unaddressed. The Tenant Experience Survey was designed to give renters the opportunity to share their perspectives with housing stakeholders, decision makers, and community members. By researching and learning from renters who may experience barriers to housing, Douglas County can improve future efforts to ensure that the community is affordable, safe, and welcoming to all.

## Community Context

Rising housing costs have been burdensome on renters, who represent almost half (48%) of all households in Douglas County.<sup>1</sup>

Douglas County, Kansas includes the cities of Lawrence, Baldwin City, Eudora, and Lecompton.

- Approximately 120,000 residents<sup>2</sup>
- Median household income of \$66k<sup>3</sup>
- Minimum wage: \$7.25<sup>4</sup>
- 16% of residents experience poverty<sup>5</sup>
- Three universities (about 29k student population)<sup>6</sup>
- Slightly over 48% of homes are renter-occupied<sup>7</sup>
- Median rent is \$1,070 for 2-bedroom<sup>8</sup>
- Median value of owner-occupied homes is \$276,900<sup>9</sup>
- “A ‘housing wage’ is what a household must earn to afford rent at fair market value without spending more than 30% of income in housing expenses. The housing wage in Douglas County for a two-bedroom apartment is \$18.27 an hour — more than double the state minimum wage. This means that even working full time, many community members cannot afford the cost of housing. Almost half of renters and almost a quarter of homeowners in Douglas County experience housing insecurity, meaning that many of these households are one emergency away from homelessness.”<sup>10</sup>

- In Lawrence, close to 37% of households experience housing problems as defined by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): lacking complete kitchen, lacking plumbing facilities, overcrowding (more than one person per room), or being cost burdened (spending over 30% of monthly income on housing costs)<sup>11</sup>
- Approximately 49% of renters are cost-burdened (paying 1/3 or more of their income towards rent)<sup>12</sup>
- In 2021, there were approximately 815 active Housing Choice Voucher users with a wait list of over 320 people at 1.5-2 years<sup>13</sup>
- From April 2021 - August 2022, over 1,050 households received rental assistance<sup>14</sup>
- The Lawrence Community Shelter is consistently understaffed and overburdened; other sheltering programs such as our local DV shelter and Family Promise are also often at capacity

## Methods

From June 2023 - October 2023, 1,051 responses were collected from tenants of varying backgrounds. The survey sought information on residents' demographics, housing basics, experiences finding housing, housing quality, housing conditions and maintenance, housing accessibility, current living situations, rental payment methods, risk of displacement, rental application processes, lease non-renewals and evictions, safety, and ideas for improving housing conditions in Douglas County. The group was intentional to reach community members who experience housing instability to inform efforts to improve housing for all in Douglas County.

Because all survey questions were voluntary (participants could skip questions), the number of people who answered each question varies. Additionally, most questions had an open response area for respondents to provide additional information if they wished to do so.

Surveys were created and distributed by Sexual Violence Prevention Work Group members and community partners. To reduce barriers, respondents could complete a physical copy or a virtual copy. Paper copies were distributed to community partners and, when completed, were collected and entered into Qualtrics. Handouts with a QR code to the survey were also distributed. Partners that helped with survey distribution included:

- The Lawrence Public Library
- Lawrence Tenants
- Independence Inc.
- Bert Nash
- Lawrence Humane Society
- East Heights Family Care
- First Med
- Justice Matters
- Ecumenical Christian Ministries (ECM)
- Community Children's Center
- Ballard Center
- Just Food
- Willow Domestic Violence Center
- Checkers
- Dillons on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street
- The Lawrence Laundromat
- Get It, Give It, Inc.
- Family Promise
- Black Lawrence

- Tenants to Homeowners
- The Jaxx Project

Please refer to Appendix A for the survey measures and Appendix B for complete graphs and quantitative results.

## Survey Highlights

- It took survey respondents an average of **three months** and **five applications** to secure a rental.
- **Two-thirds** of respondents indicate having experienced an **increase in rent** in the past 24 months, with 48% of those whose rent increased having had an increase of \$100 or more per month.
- **45.5%** of residents reported feeling unsafe in their rental home at some given time. Residents from 66044 are more likely to:
  - Feel unsafe in their neighborhood and current living arrangement
  - Feel unsafe walking in their neighborhood
  - Feel threatened by their landlord and management
  - Fear being wrongfully cited by law enforcement
- Households with a member with a disability or who require accommodations are likely to have lower incomes and trouble finding accessible housing.
- Renters with lower incomes are more likely to experience eviction and subsequent homelessness. Of those surveyed, **20 became homeless following eviction.**
- Focus groups' findings further supported survey results. Residents shared struggles with affordability, lack of code enforcement, and power imbalances renting in Douglas County.

*“Lawrence claims to be an art-friendly, creative, and compassionate community yet businesses and investors have been able to exploit property allocation in way that increases homelessness, drives out creatives, and lowers the quality of life for families.”*

## Housing Availability and Affordability

- **Financial affordability is a barrier** to quality housing. Two-thirds of respondents reported increasing rent. Additional challenges are wages not increasing commiserate with the cost of living, inability to provide evidence of income equal to 3x rent, co-signer requirements, and credit score ineligibility. More details about rent increases and resident income are available in Appendix B.
- The rental market is **limited and competitive**, often due to the timeline that aligns with the student housing cycle and a perceived influx of student-occupied housing.
- Residents report challenges with steady income and struggles with paying rent.
- Residents report not being able to obtain or renew leases due to barriers including income and credit requirements, pet restrictions/fees, and property ownership changes.
- Tenants report that deposits are generally withheld with little recourse.

*“This rental market is hell. You have to look 6 months out to find a place.”*



## Housing Quality and Safety

- Residents describe a **lack of available quality housing** in Douglas County, and report that it is hard to find affordable housing without compromising safety.
- Housing often **lacks regular inspections or code enforcement**, and many landlords are **neglectful of fixing problems. Hazardous conditions of low-income housing** in Douglas County include mold, foundation and plumbing issues, and pests.
- **Power imbalances** exist between tenants and landlords. Some tenants report landlords/maintenance who enter their home without notice, **fear retaliation**, report disturbing interactions, and avoid contact with landlords. 337 renters reported they were less likely to submit a maintenance request for fear of retaliation, 52% of which reported household incomes below \$35,600. In-depth results are available in Appendix B.
- **Residents report feeling unsafe** due to issues including dark streets, trespassing, domestic violence, disputes among neighbors, noise disruption, transient population, heavy police presence, shootings, vandalism, car break-ins, and drug use. Additionally, some residents report living with a roommate or having a neighbor or landlord they feel unsafe around, but that they cannot get out of the lease.

*“The place I've been the past 7 years I routinely performed maintenance to avoid my landlord's intimidating ways.”*

## Discrimination and Housing Accessibility

- **Residents report discrimination** due to ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identification, disability, age, and parental status by landlords and community members. Graphs are available in Appendix B.
- 31% of renters surveyed indicated they have a member with disability in their household. Tenants with physical disabilities report housing **often lacks accessibility features or fails to meet ADA standards.**
- Individuals who do not have visible disabilities also need accommodations, inclusivity, and mindfulness.
- Pet restrictions make housing less accessible for residents, especially those who have support animals. Approved applications are often associated with high non-refundable fees.
- Better public transportation is needed for residents to expand their search, get around, and make connections.

*“As a person with a disability, this is one of the most frustrating things I realized while looking for rental housing, **there's an inverse relationship between affordable and accessible housing.**”*

## Resident Recommendations

- Stabilize rent with regulations on how much a landlord can raise rent, how often, and for what reasons.
- Create more affordable housing and develop a plan to help low-income families become homeowners.
- Provide more financial assistance programs and options.
- Provide support, education, and legal assistance for renters' rights and decision-making.
- Create community-based renters' advocacy groups.
- Conduct more code enforcement to hold landlords responsible.
- Improve transparency and communication, such as with an accessible landlord/ rental database.

- Become a more inclusive community by increasing tenant eligibility (e.g., lower credit score requirements).
- Increase wages in the community to match the high cost of living.

*“We need to make a controlled rent ordinance or something so rates don’t skyrocket on people trying to get back on their feet again.”*

## Survey Demographics and Limitations

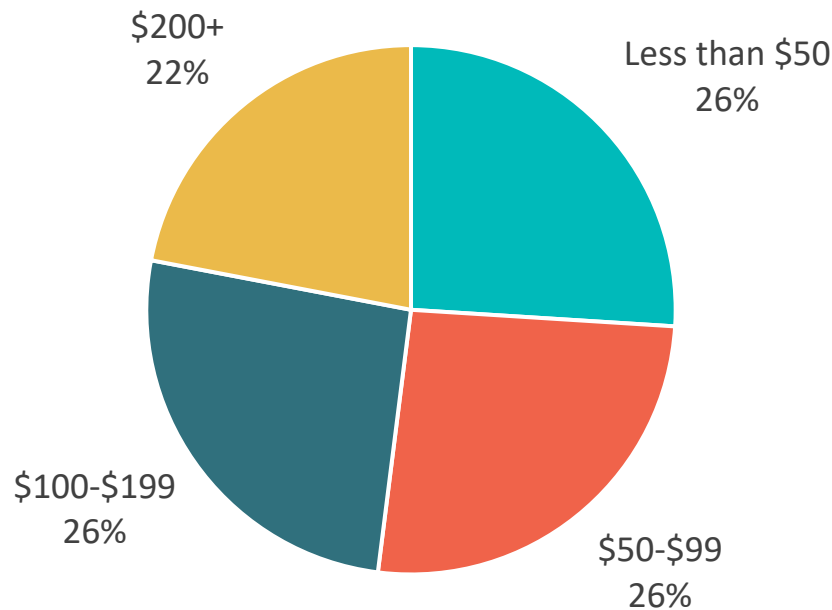
Survey respondents’ racial and ethnic demographics were mostly representative of the county, with the exception that Asians were under-represented. Because there was a special emphasis on reaching and learning from those who may experience barriers to housing, there was an over-sampling of residents of lower income. There was also a higher proportion of those identifying as women and LGBTQ+ that completed the survey. More details about respondent demographics are depicted in the graphs in Appendix B.

## Residents’ Voices: Challenges

### Affordability / Employment

For the 67% of residents who reported rent increases, the graph below depicts the distribution of how much monthly rent has increased in the past 24 months. For 26%, it was less than \$50 per month, for another 26% it was between \$50-\$99 per month, for 26%, the increase was \$100-199, and for 22%, the increase was \$200 or more per month.

### Monthly Rent Increase in the Past 24 Months



*“The sharp increase of renting in this city is out of control. It feels like living on a knife’s edge.”*



*"It is **becoming untenable**, and I may have to **leave Lawrence permanently** because I can no longer afford to live here."*

*"I had to move out after my rent was increased. Rent is very high. **Due to covid I lost my job and had a hard time finding both work and a reasonably priced rental.** This left me homeless for a while."*

*"I've lived in Lawrence my whole life. And it has amounted to nothing. I'm going nowhere. **I can never make enough money. I don't think I'm ever going to own a house or home.** The student life is catered to here and the locals are neglected. I wish I could move away, but I can't afford to do that. It makes myself and peers depressed. **Everyone I know is working so hard and feels like they're treading water.**"*

*"Housing is not a luxury it is a **NEED.**"*

*"The application fees are like \$200-250 each. If you have to apply for 2 or 3 times, that's at least a month of rent."*

*"I will put up with a not so wonderful landlord if it's affordable."*

*"Moved in 2019 paying \$999 now they are increasing to \$1850 with no upgrades."*

*"Sometimes I have to sell stuff online to help pay rent."*

*“Most places require that you can hypothetically pay 3X the monthly rental cost based on your income...**The poor literally do not have equal access to housing opportunities** based purely on their economic status.”*

*“I don’t want to move again. **It’s traumatic.**”*

*“We were struggling to pay 845/month, I think about 75 of it were extra fees so the rent wasn't officially that high. Then we got a letter that the rent was going up 95 dollars. We had to move before the lease was up and now have that in our records because **we couldn't afford to eat.**”*

## Availability

Nearly 70% of participants rated the ease of finding rental housing in Douglas County as “Very Difficult” or “Somewhat Difficult.”

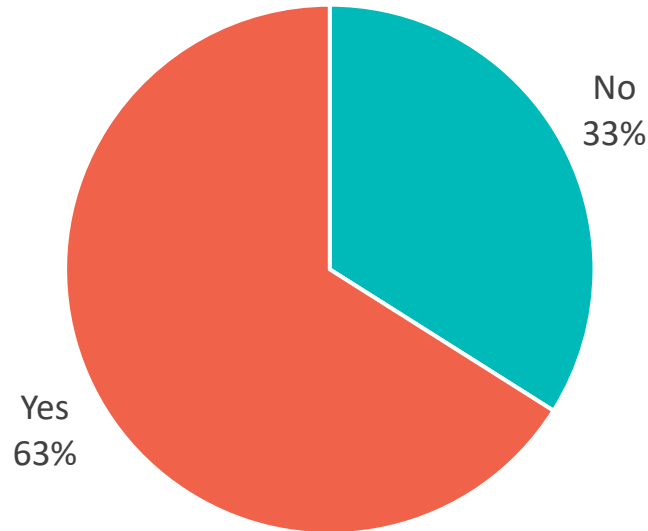
*“**Many places had limits on the maximum number of pets, weight restrictions, and/or breed restrictions.** In addition, many places that we would be able to have our pets then had **large costs associated with that including non-refundable deposits and pet rent.**”*

*“There are many rental properties in Lawrence but **few which meet the needs of a retired single person on a fixed income:** affordable monthly housing costs (rent, utilities), accessibility for people with limited mobility (no or few stairs, one level, bathroom with easily accessible shower, etc.), reasonable access to public transportation...and/or basic shopping needs (grocery, pharmacy).”*

*“There's just **not enough supply for the demand...There are buildings. What are we doing with them?**”*

## Quality of Housing

The majority of survey participants (63%) reported that there had been times when they had submitted a maintenance request, and it was not resolved



*“If the **apartment is affordable**, you can bet that the quality of the appliances, the quality of the building materials, and the quality of the outdoor areas **will be very poor.**”*

*“This house was **not up to code** at all. There were like trumpet vines growing up through the sink drains there. There was one time I almost got carbon monoxide poisoning. And the short circuiting at one point. When we were worried that the pipes were going to freeze one winter, the management guy had just put like a heat lamp under the house in the crawlspace. And we're like, **we're going to die in a fire.**”*

*“The attitude is like, if they ignore long enough, we would **just stop asking.**”*

*“We got moved units because our first unit had many problems. The kitchen sink and dishwasher drained into the walls due to faulty plumbing; our fridge was leaking freon; the heater in our unit stopped working during winter; and our shower didn't work. Our second unit also had problems...The shower stopped working again; our new fridge started leaking freon again; and our windows were incorrectly installed, which lead to substantial amounts of water leaking into our unit when it rained. This led to mold growing everywhere in our unit which posed **many health problems** for us and our cats.”*

*“Our unit is one that they consistently offer to **"show"** the city for **inspections**...Because of this they are more responsive to our maintenance requests...**It's not that fair...when my neighbor has a pipe that's been leaking for years and a basement that floods.**”*

*“No one cares since not enforcing.”*

*“My AC would **go out several times** throughout my experience renting. It would become **84 degrees inside my apartment** and often take over a **week** for my AC to be **fixed**. I would often have to **sleep in my office or at a friend's place when this would happen**. Maintenance and my leasing office would consistently **gaslight me** by saying "AC can only cool off apartments 20 degrees from the outside temp", which is clearly false. Often times maintenance would "fix" my AC only for it to break the next day. Multiple residents in my community experienced the same thing and we contemplated going to the **Lawrence Times**.”*

*“My house had a vent cover that **wasn't screwed down**. I fell through it in October, got stuck in the floor, **busted my leg** really bad and had **hospital bills**, and it **still took my landlord a month and a half** just to come **replace** the vent cover and **secure** it.”*

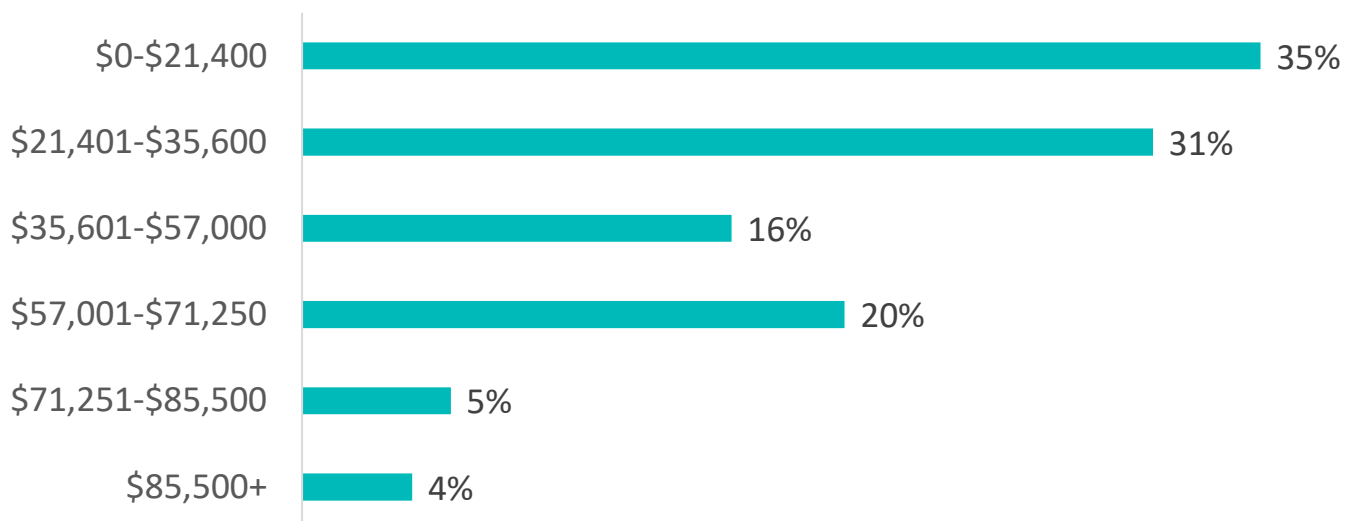
*“There has been **black mold** in this house **the entire 10 years** we've lived here, **city inspector didn't care**. **Landlord will not return calls/respond to msgs**. **Eventual maintenance happens with no warning or heads up**. **Have had to replace appliances myself at my own expense**. **Water line to meter was replaced in January and there is still an open mud trench 3ft wide through the middle of the driveway.**”*

*“Constant **plumbing & sewage emergencies - broken pipes**, water inside the walls/ceilings, **MOLD**, patching pipes only to have them burst causing sewage to rain down from units above. **Huge holes** left in walls from maintenance **"repair work"**, which has led to a **rodent/bug problem**. **No working stove for 10 months**. **Constant heating/cooling issues, 18 months with no AC.**”*

## Risk of Displacement and Eviction

As shown in the following graph, our Douglas County neighbors who feel at greatest risk for eviction are those of lower income. Those who have an annual income between \$0 - \$21,400 were **7.7 times more likely** to feel at risk of eviction than those who make more than \$85,500 annually.

### Those with lower income are more likely to feel at risk of eviction



*"I like living here but I'm pretty **much always living with the anxiety** that I won't be able to afford rent."*

*"Our second month payment was really late because **my checks are bi weekly and we need food.**"*

*[ After being evicted and getting homeless] "We were forced to stay in a hotel."*

*[After being evicted and becoming homeless, the] "Landlord had my car picked up with all my belongings inside."*

*"[Landlord] did not use the court, they used their in-house 'lawyer' to **bully and harass me out of the private arrangement.**"*

*"One eviction was because we were a week late on rent after three years without being late. It was a big surprise. The second, we never received the notice. We got a phone call asking if we would be in court the following day. **That time we [ended] up homeless for a little over a month with 2 kids (3 & 11).**"*

*"Short pay checks led to a few months where I had to **pick up payday loans** to make up the shortfall."*

*"I have been **traumatized by my experiences renting** in Lawrence. I just try to lie low with the property managers and go unnoticed. I am reluctant to report maintenance issues because I don't want them to*



*come in and decide that I'm doing something they don't like to evict us again."*

## Security Deposit Withholding

Nearly 40% of participants reported having their security deposit withheld.



***"It's the norm here.** I have never rec'd my deposit back after renting here for over a decade. Some landlords name specific damages, often pre-existing. Others claim it is for cleanup, carpet replacement, and painting. This is the norm in my experience."*

***"I expect my security deposit to be withheld in August when I move out. I expect the reason will be whatever the management chooses to say... It's just a way of getting more money."***

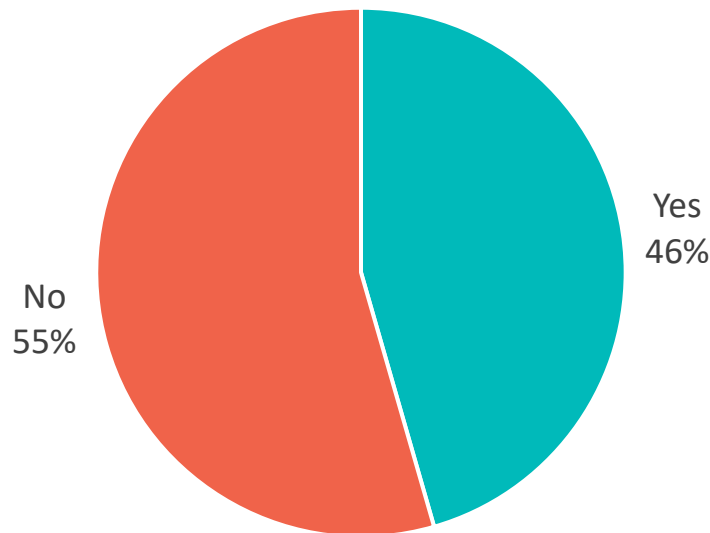
***"It seems to be a universal policy here to keep the deposit until the renter gets legal."***

*“Security deposits are designed to be withheld. Landlords like to hang lawsuits over people so they don't question or demand proper answers to the withholding.”*

## Safety

A number of residents feel or have felt unsafe in their home or neighborhood. The graph below depicts that 45.5% of Douglas County renters have felt unsafe in their rental home.

### The proportion of Douglas County renters who have felt unsafe in their rental home



*“I had a scary experience while being shown an apartment by a man. It seemed like **he wasn't going to let me out of the apartment until I started video recording.** I have a long history of trauma and this has made it even more stressful [to the point where I need assistance from others] to look at new apartments and fill out applications.”*

*“A former landlord **broke open my bedroom window and climbed onto my bed** while I was sick and asleep in my bed. I called the police they did nothing. I had already had to change the locks to stop him from coming in whenever he wanted. **He evicted me.**”*

*“I almost wanted to get a restraining order. But I'm thinking **how do you get a restraining order from your landlord?**”*

*“Maintenance man and landlord was found hiding in my attic and used recording devices.”*

*“3 Maintenance men knocked on my door- needing to check something- **no notice from management-** no identification on the workers clothing- **I live alone** and was **not comfortable.**”*

*“I was **living with a roommate that I did not feel safe around and the landlord would not let me out of the lease** even after expressing my personal safety concerns. I ended up paying double rent for several months just to get out of that living situation.”*

A number of people also expressed neighborhood safety concerns.

*“2 people [were] shot right around the corner.”*

*“Significantly too much law enforcement. They make me **feel in danger more than anything else does.**”*

*“It is not me I fear being overly policed, ticketed or harmed where I live. I'm white. It is the Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Middle Eastern folks in my communities that I am concerned about being overly policed and harassed where I live.”*

*“Tending to live next door to drug users/dealers who are erratic and sketchy while being extremely noisy is **frustrating** and **disruptive** but we **worry that calling cops will get someone harmed.**”*

## Power Imbalance

Some tenants report that power imbalance with the landlord leads to harassment, intimidation, and unresolved requests.

*"I feel a lot of renters are **afraid to ask for repairs** or maintenance because the **property owners** just due the **bare minimum** and don't want to spend money fixing anything or **blame you for what needs fixed.**"*

*"I haven't been **afraid of retaliation** from a **maintenance request** until **recently**. Last week I asked my landlord to **fix** a clogged toilet (which they did fix after a few days) but afterwards they posted a letter on my door threatening to not renew my lease."*

*"**We don't want to cause any waves**. Because when we do, then [the landlord] starts to get belligerent, and he's saying he's not going to give us another lease. **He could just up and say, 'you have to get out now.'** So, we just don't cause any waves."*

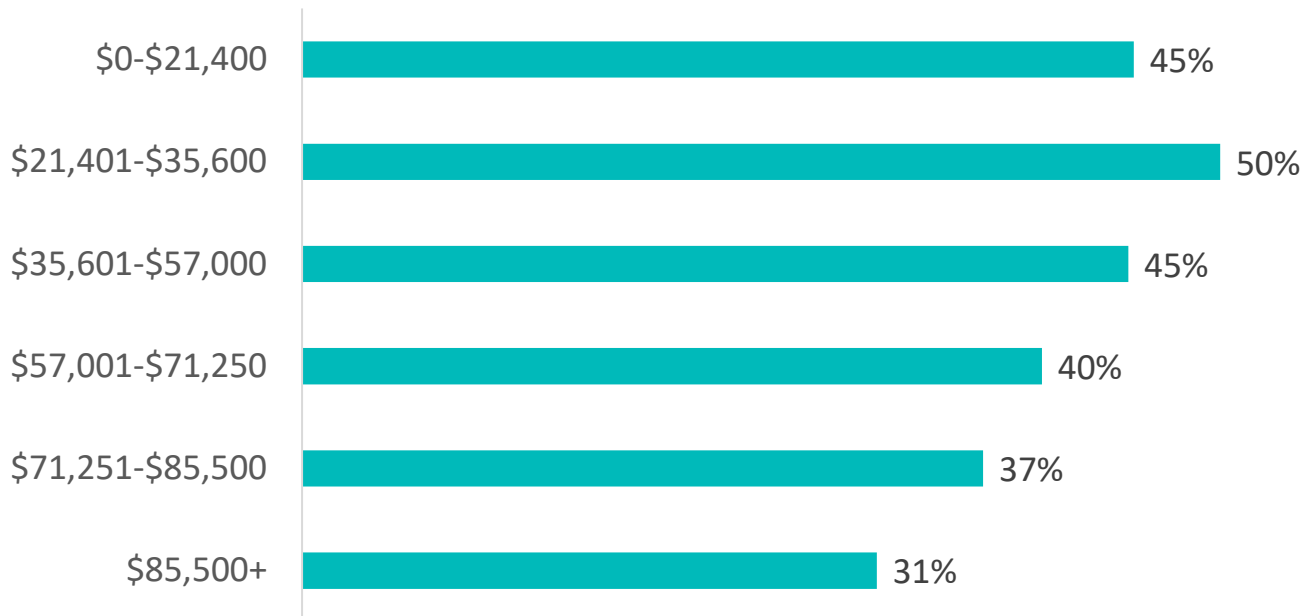
*"I'm **always afraid to submit a maintenance request** because I feel like my landlord will use it as an excuse to kick me out and get someone else in my apartment for more money."*

*"There is a current **imbalance of power with the landlords controlling everything** through the lease and parent guarantee agreement. There isn't any regulation of what the lease contains so the students are forced to sign the legal document as-is if they want housing. There isn't any resource for tenants except non-payment, which isn't an option."*

*"**You are stuck and they know it**, because you can't afford to move."*

The following graph illustrates residents who were less likely to submit a maintenance request for fear of retaliation by their landlord had lower annual incomes.

### Renters of lower annual income are more likely to not submit a maintenance request for fear of retaliation



*“We have to accept whatever...**It was truly an abusive relationship**; the managers are toxic. That really makes it hard to get out of that mindset. If a roommate put this kind of barriers on you, you can file charges.”*

*“Landlord **retaliation and bullying** is a big problem. LDC provides tenants **no protection from mistreatment of landlords**. The Landlord-Tenant Act is only enforced on behalf of landlords, **NOT** tenants. we are powerless against the unlawful practices of some landlords because **no one holds them accountable.**”*

*“The way he was talking to us...kind of threatening, you know, my daughter was very scared. She's like, **when is he going to kick us out? Do we have any rights?**”*

*“Transparency - Landlords keep adding clauses to leases that are not attainable for tenants to live and leave without anxiety.”*

*“I have definitely **experienced anxiety** when there is a **problem** with something at the **house**, wondering if the **property manager** will say **it's my fault.**”*

*“Their attitude is just like, you should be grateful that I'm that I'm giving you a place to live.”*

*“I think [landlords] have to see tenants as people, **not just your side hustle, a side income.**”*

## **Lack of Accessibility**

*“Landlords need training in order to work better with the disabled community. Our incomes are generally fixed and guaranteed, meaning we actually provide more stable assurance we will have the rent paid each month. Our paycheck doesn't vary like those who are paid hourly and may not be guaranteed hours. There also needs to be more awareness of accessibility needs and complexes need to work to solve them with tenants.”*

*“I am in transitional housing. I have not done anything wrong. I have not broken any lease agreement. **landlords do not understand how IMPOSSIBLY hard it is for a disabled person to find a new place to live.**”*

*“All the units have steps. Either to get to the front door, or inside. I cannot always walk or use stairs, but this was one of very few properties I could afford.”*



*“The biggest things I need are more space and a bathtub that’s level and therefore safe for me to take a bath in (to help with pain on bad pain days, a whirlpool tub would be super helpful too for the same reason) but landlord won’t pay for the tub to be leveled and I can’t afford to pay for that out of pocket.”*

*“More apartments ADA compliant. Wider doorways, threshold for wheelchair access. Not willing to make reasonable accommodation to shower or go to the bathroom.”*

Residents also described challenges with accessible housing beyond physical disabilities.

*“I do not have a physical disability. I think this question **should also take mental/neurodivergent disability into account** by way of sensory issues (noise level, doors, etc.)”*

When asked what needs improvement, one resident shared:

*“More affordable housing and a deeper understanding of accessibility needs in housing that goes beyond wheelchair accessibility.”*

## Domestic Violence

*"I had to move due to domestic violence because **my abuser was on my lease and refused to leave and I had no way to get out of the lease unless he agreed and I paid a fine.** I stayed on friends couches for a few weeks during this time (in 2022). I received emergency funding through KU Endowment so I could move but my property management company would not accept the third-party check and told me they only accepted KERA. I applied for KERA in Sept 2022 and stopped paying rent, per my property management companies recommendation. I was notified in Jan 2023 that KERA ran out of funds before my application was processed and received a notice **I would be evicted if I did not pay the almost \$3,000 in rent in full within 3 days.**"*

*"We are **fleeing domestic violence.** It is hard to find a place because of our credit score being low...my abuser found out where I lived..."*

*"I was nearly evicted when **my abusive ex withheld his portion of rent to punish me,** he knew I didn't have anywhere else to go, and my landlord did not care that I continued to pay my portion of the rent."*

## Discrimination

People shared experiences of discrimination based upon gender, sexuality, being a single mother, age, source of income, disability, and income.

*"I have experienced so much discrimination in Douglas County in the last 10 years obtaining housing because of my gender identity."*

*[My rental application was denied because I am a] "Single mother with a child."*

*"Discrimination based on Latinx last name."*

*“Being a same sex couple has proven to be an issue. The current property manager is forcing us out of a place that I’ve lived in for 2 years with no issues, prior to my wife moving in six months ago. Lawrence is not as accepting & liberal as it’s portrayed.”*

*“The application for **senior housing** asked for ‘**source of income**’ in addition to social security.”*

*“They only wanted families.”*

*“My lease is up and I’m looking for more affordable housing. And have found it...but now [they are] **being discriminating about my income and sexual orientation.**”*

*“When I first took this place, he was like, **where’s your man?** Don’t you have a man?...It creeps me out. That’s why I don’t like to have him around. If something comes up that I have to call him, I get nervous.”*

*“I didn’t take my husband’s last name when we got married for professional reasons. Because of that, it struck me...**we had to file separate applications and pay separate deposits because we don’t share the same last name...We were legally married.**”*

*“I am **low income** with help from friends. And find **discriminatory practices** all over Lawrence Kansas. If you are **mentally ill** or in **need of a break**, Lawrence is **not** for you.”*

# Residents' Recommendations for Improvement

## Environmental Changes

*"[We need] more street lighting."*

*"Make it more affordable and provide better public transportation thought the town."*

## Policy & Enforcement

*"A cap needs to be put on how much rent can be increased."*

***"There should be more housing provided by the city/state and federal agencies for people who cannot afford private rentals. Government should not throw their hands up and then say 'you have to provide affordable housing for everyone but we will do nothing to accomplish that'."***

***"Create and ENFORCE a renter's bill of rights. Hold property managers and landlords accountable. Create some kind of system to limit rent prices and ensure affordable housing is available to all. Make it harder for investment firms to come in and turn single-family houses into expensive student housing. Stop giving tax subsidies to Doug Compton. Tax the rich instead of giving them tax breaks and subsidies."***

*"If places choose to no longer accept section 8, more than 60 days notice should be given."*

***"Use the county/city's rainy day fund to help resolve the housing crisis."***

*“**Landlord accountability**, review board for rent increases and legality of lease conditions.”*

*“**We need a mold ordinance NOW.** Why does Manhattan have one and we don’t. Do you realize how many slum lords like mine take advantage of that and let us get sick?”*

*“**Imposing work-order completion time limits** on landlords. Require in-writing reasons for not giving back deposit and photography evidence of claims.”*

*“Encourage good behavior from landlords by providing tax breaks or financial incentives to landlords that that [perform] their job and duties well. This can be **measured possibly by tenant feedback or audits conducted by an outside source.**”*

*“If they **just went with the laws that are literally in place in the state of Kansas**, but nobody is enforcing them. Nobody says, are you doing repairs in a timely manner? Are you doing actual repairs other than just a band aid on something? I would love an idea of annual inspection. If they got a fine because they did not keep things up, maybe things would change. They can’t just hold them accountable. **They have to hold them accountable on a lot of levels.** This is a whole system or vision that have to happen to change the reality.”*

## Housing Development

***“We need to build properties for people who aren't dirt poor, but who also aren't rich - you know... most of us. People like me. I've worked hard my whole life, I'm educated, and I'm making the most \$\$\$ I have in my entire life, but I'm 54 years old and I can't keep up with the prices of things. All I can say is, in the late 80s through like 2010 or so - rents did NOT go up like this, landlords DIDN'T raise the rent at every renewal, and landlords actually gave back deposits. The profit margin they are making must be well over 50% on these properties - most are old and paid off and it's frankly criminal what they are charging!!”***

## Renters' Rights Support & Legal Assistance

***“Renters need support from the city to mediate problems and have assistance understanding and maintaining our rights.”***

*“Let everyone have a fair chance.”*

*“We could not afford legal aid/ legal guidance to pursue action.”*

***“Some type of board or agency that can advocate for tenants.”***

*“Having more free legal advisors for the tenants. I ran into an issue with my current landlord...and I wasn't able to find a free public legal advisor or tenant advocacy group in Douglas County to get advice.”*

***“I'd love to see more resources and services available to support tenants in holding their landlords accountable to their lease agreements and providing the promised maintenance and returned security deposits.”***



*“Create a **community driven renters advocacy group** that convenes with the **council of the City of Lawrence**. If there already is such a thing, I am unaware. Prices need to be **adjusted** to match the **low wages young people** are making (my rent takes half of my yearly income..)”*

*“There has to be a place to go when this happens. Otherwise, you have to pay for a lawyer, or move somewhere else. I don’t think it’s ever going to be feasible for the city or county to keep tabs on every repair, but **having something that tells you - yes it’s your tenants’ rights, if they are not doing that, we will enforce [so that] it won’t cost you even more.**”*

## Engagement and Education

*“Increased community engagement & education with Lawrence tenants union, increased accountability for shady & abusive landlords.”*

*“There is a speaker talked about **homelessness - you are 6 decisions away from being that person**. I think people in charge would think it would never happen to them, but **it can happen to anyone**. It is ridiculous that to call yourself a community leader when you **don’t want to hear the voice from people from that community.**”*

*“**Allow future tenants to interview current ones**. Make landlords transparent about rental and fixed utility pricing.”*

*“Publicly accessible database of units/owners/issues.”*

*“Need to get people with real world experience involved in your meetings.”*

*“Do **a roundtable of social workers in the community**, from schools, to the hospital, to the library, etc.”*

*“**Stronger distribution of city contacts and resources**. For example, if I notice all the street lights down while grabbing coffee at 5 am (before sunrise), who do I call to report the issue before things escalate? It’s difficult to pro-actively problem-solve when given the run-around.”*

*“**Landlords need training** in order to work better with the **disabled community**. Our incomes are generally **fixed** and guaranteed, meaning we actually provide more **stable assurance** we will have the rent paid each month. Our paycheck doesn’t vary like those who are paid hourly and may not be guaranteed hours. There also needs to be more **awareness of accessibility needs** and complexes need to work to **solve them with tenants**.”*

*“[There should be] open line of communication, professional way of talking. Not feeling like you are making unreasonable demand or feel like you can’t contact them, or fear of retaliation.”*

## Transition to Homeownership

*“I wish we could incentivize my situation for other landlords to replicate. Let tenants **pay rent temporarily and allow that rent they pay to knock off the purchase price** to something more reasonable for a first-time homebuyer.”*

*“More funding for programs like tenants to homeowners.”*

*“Increase opportunities to purchase homes.”*

*“Landlords need to be kept in check when it comes to the amount of properties they own and how much they rent them out for. **I would love to buy a house in Lawrence, but most of the decent houses get bought by landlords.**”*

*“**More options to move from renting to buying.** Focus on families and students equally.”*

*“**Purchase option for all units.**”*

## Policy Recommendations

1. Tenant Opportunity to Purchase ordinance
2. Tenant Right to Counsel ordinance
3. Just Cause Eviction ordinance
4. Junk Fees Prohibition ordinance (prohibit Tenant Application & Screening Fees)
5. Proactive Rental Inspections program
6. Public rental registry policy/program
7. Tenant Bill of Rights ordinance & education
8. Landlord/Tenant Remediation ordinance for inhabitable units
9. Eviction Record Sealing & Expungement policy
10. Rent Stabilization/Rent Control ordinance (would require reversing state pre-emption)
11. Create more inclusive tenant screening practices. For example:
  - a. Limit the number of screening criteria and avoid tools or methods that include extraneous information.
  - b. Create a clear, easily accessible application process.
  - c. Limit the types of criminal activity that can be considered in the screening process.
  - d. Reduce look back periods for all offenses to less than 5 years.
  - e. Consider mitigating factors, including any focus on rehabilitation or time since crime.
  - f. Provide applicants with an opportunity to contextualize or respond to information prior to decision.
  - g. Provide rejected applicants with an explanation for denial.

## Additional Related Recommendations from “A Place for Everyone: Our plan to end homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County”

1. Establish ongoing roles in this work for people with lived experience.
2. Focus on equity in policy and budget decisions.
3. Make data-driven, targeted investments for increased housing.
4. Increase the supply of accessible and affordable rental housing units.
5. Establish policy and system changes that realign power imbalances that currently prevent access to, or development of, affordable housing.
6. Develop a long-term affordable housing plan.
7. Provide a grant subsidy for new development or rehabilitation of desired unit types.
8. Acquire parcels and units for the community land trust and future affordable housing development.
9. Provide recommendations for City code updates that allow for affordable housing development.
10. Establish the tenant’s right to legal representation in Douglas County.
11. Enforce the City’s protection against source of income discrimination.
12. Establish a City of Lawrence vacant and dilapidated structure registry.
13. Establish an incentive program for affordable housing development.
14. Establish funding resources.
15. Develop a plan for ongoing community engagement re: affordable housing.
16. Develop programs that increase racial equity in affordable housing access and land ownership.

[View the full report here.](#)

## Overview of Policy Implementation

Policy Recommendation	Overview
<b>Tenant Opportunity to Purchase ordinance</b>	A Tenant Opportunity to Purchase ordinance is a law that gives tenants in multifamily buildings the right to purchase their building when the landlord intends to sell it.
<b>Tenant Right to Counsel ordinance</b>	A tenant right to counsel (TRTC) ordinance is a law that guarantees tenants facing eviction legal representation provided by the government.
<b>Just Cause Eviction ordinance</b>	A just cause eviction ordinance, also known as a "good cause" ordinance, is a rule that limits the reasons a landlord can evict a tenant. These ordinances are designed to prevent arbitrary, retaliatory, or discriminatory evictions.
<b>Eviction Record Sealing &amp; Expungement policy</b>	Expungement removes the eviction record from the court system's public view, as if it never happened. This prevents an eviction from being on a tenant's rental history. Sealing obscures eviction records from the public but may allow access to key parties like a tenant's attorney or academic researchers. Local lawmakers can enact these protections through laws or administrative policies and orders.
<b>Junk Fees Prohibition ordinance</b>	"Junk Fees" can show up in all stages of the rental process, including during the application process, during tenancy, and post tenancy or during the eviction process. A Junk Fees Prohibition ordinance encourages transparency and fairness in the rental market, including capping or eliminating unnecessary rental fees.
<b>Tenant Bill of Rights ordinance &amp; education</b>	A Tenant Bill of Rights ordinance is a set of laws that protect tenants from landlord exploitation and ensures their rights.
<b>Rent Stabilization/Rent Control ordinance</b>	Rent stabilization and rent control are government-enforced policies that limit how much landlords can charge for rent and protect tenants from excessive rent increases. Unfortunately, Kansas state law currently prohibits rent control.
<b>Inclusive screening practices</b>	Tight screening standards can create barriers for potential renters who have a history of eviction filings, criminal offenses, or credit challenges. These potential renters are frequently screened out of a large majority of available rental housing. Policymakers can address the high barriers imposed by restrictive screening by releasing guidance and reports to support landlords as they develop and implement more inclusive screening protocols. Some states and cities have implemented laws that regulate tenant screening processes, such as Fair Chance laws that aim to reduce the degree to which a landlord can review an applicant's history of arrests and convictions. <sup>15</sup>

## Resources

Lawrence Public Library offers an up-to-date community resource guide: <https://lplks.org/community-resources>

United Way answers questions about resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 2-1-1.

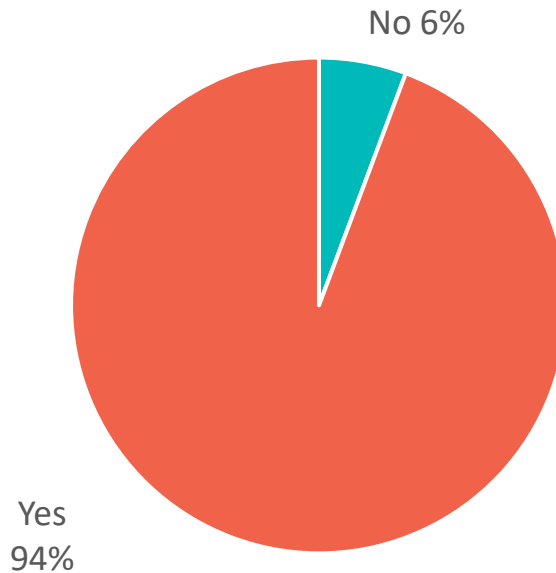
The Douglas County Crisis Line has trained counselors who can provide emotional and crisis support, and referrals to community and crisis resources. Call 785-841-2345 or 988.

# Appendix A

## Additional Survey Participant Data

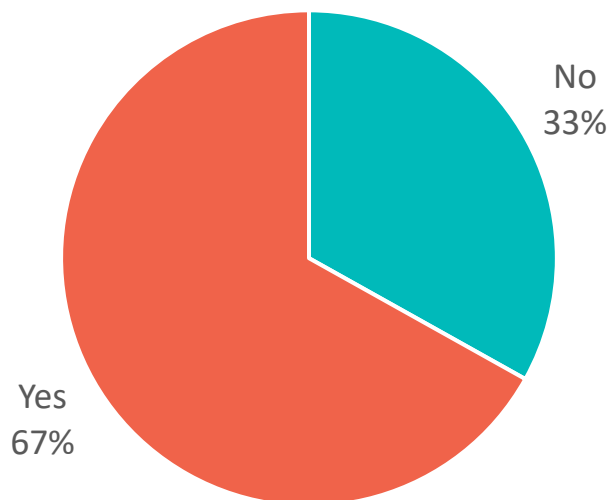
1,051 community members took the survey. Questions were optional; numbers of responses vary by question and percentages are based on total number of responses for each question.

### Most survey respondents had rented in Douglas County in the past 24 months

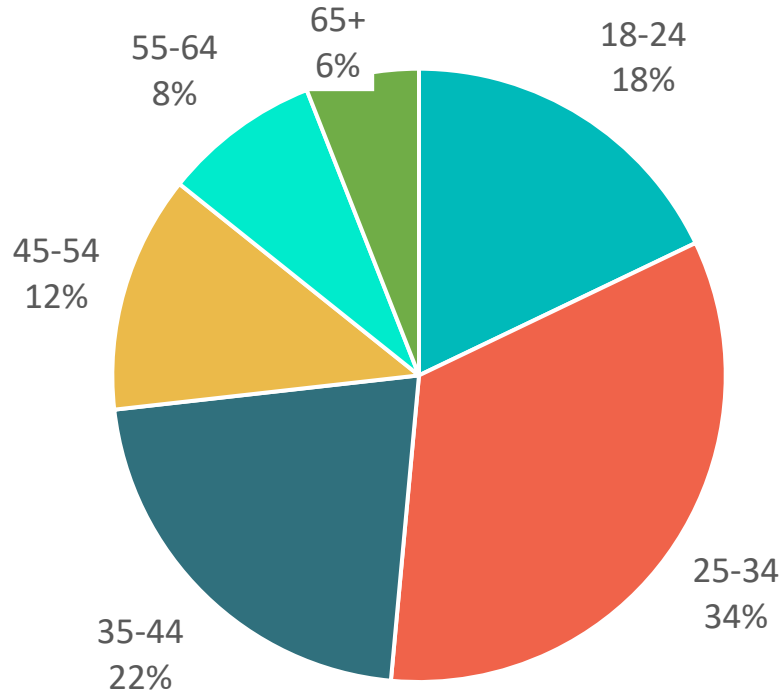


Some survey respondents reported they had not rented in Douglas County in the past 24 months because they had been experiencing homelessness, or they were trying to rent in Douglas County but had been unable to.

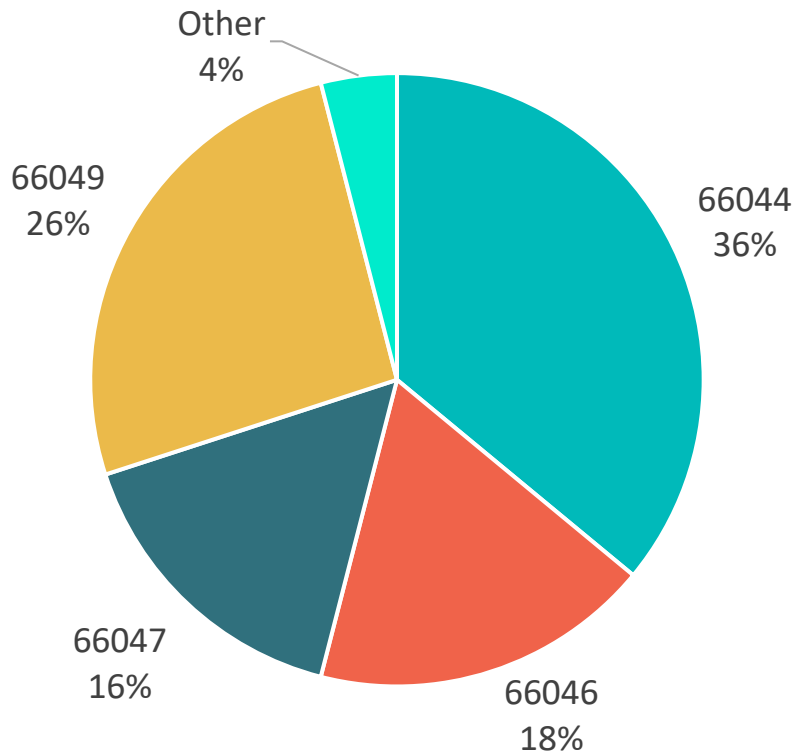
### Two-thirds of renters have experienced a rent increase in the past 24 months



## Survey participants by age group

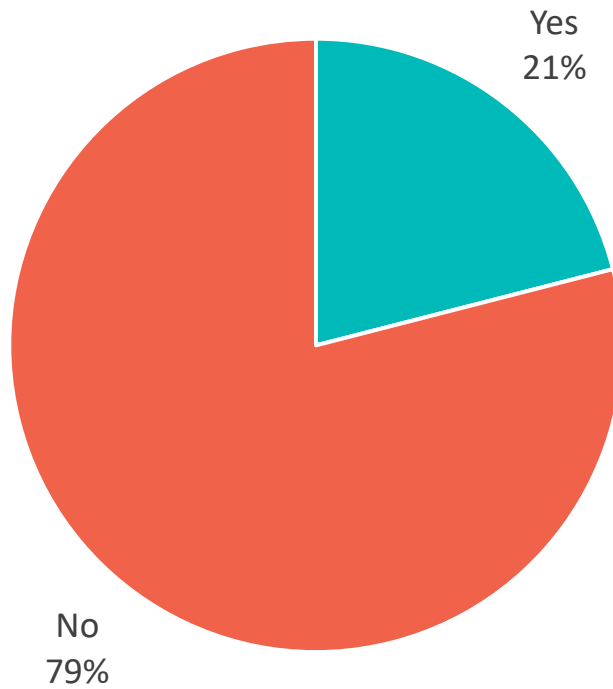


## Survey participants by zip code

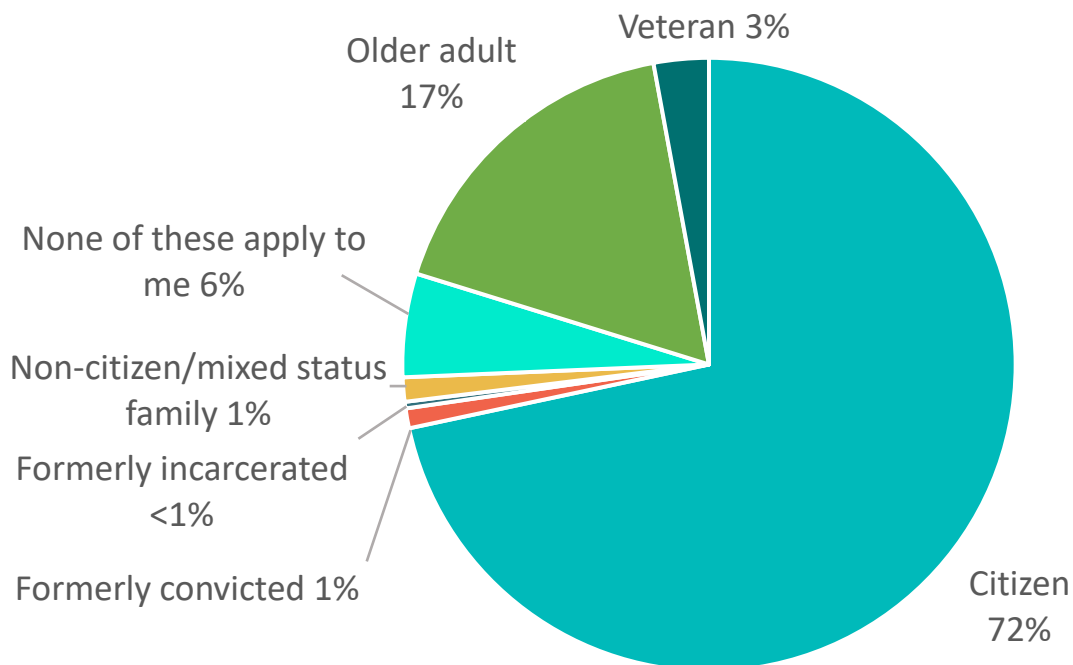




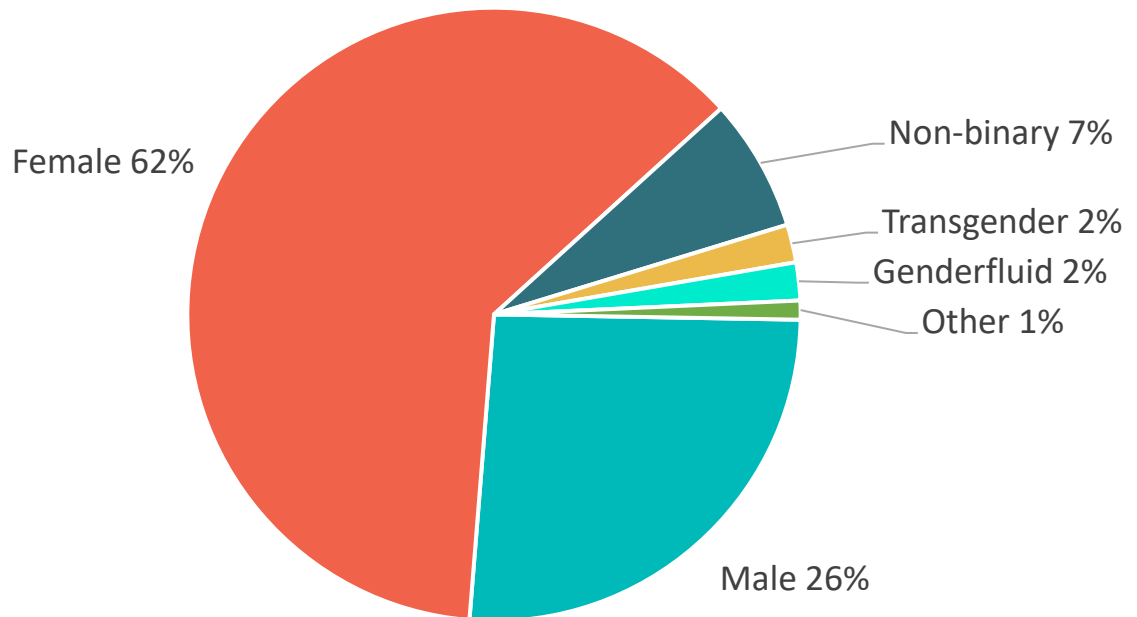
## Survey participants by student status



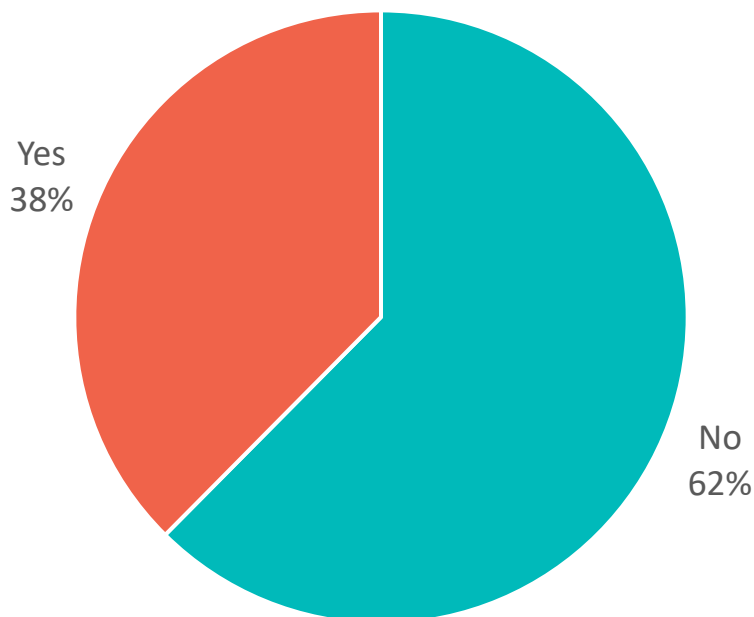
## Survey participants by social identity



## Survey participants by gender identity



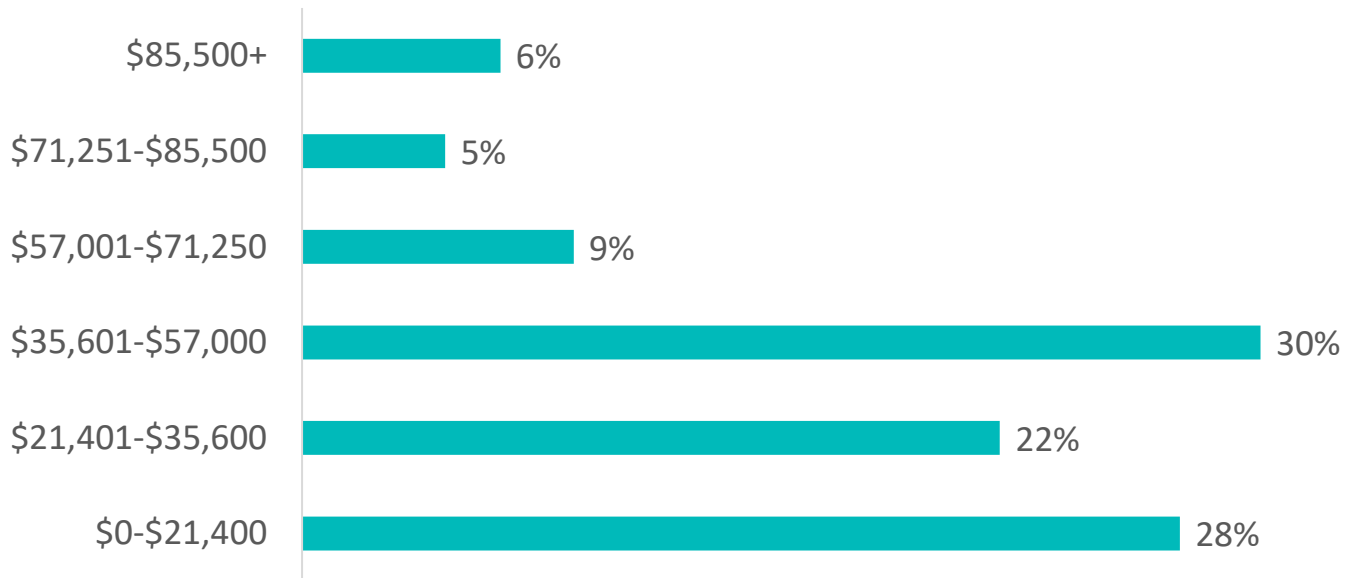
## Survey participants by LGBTQIA+ identity



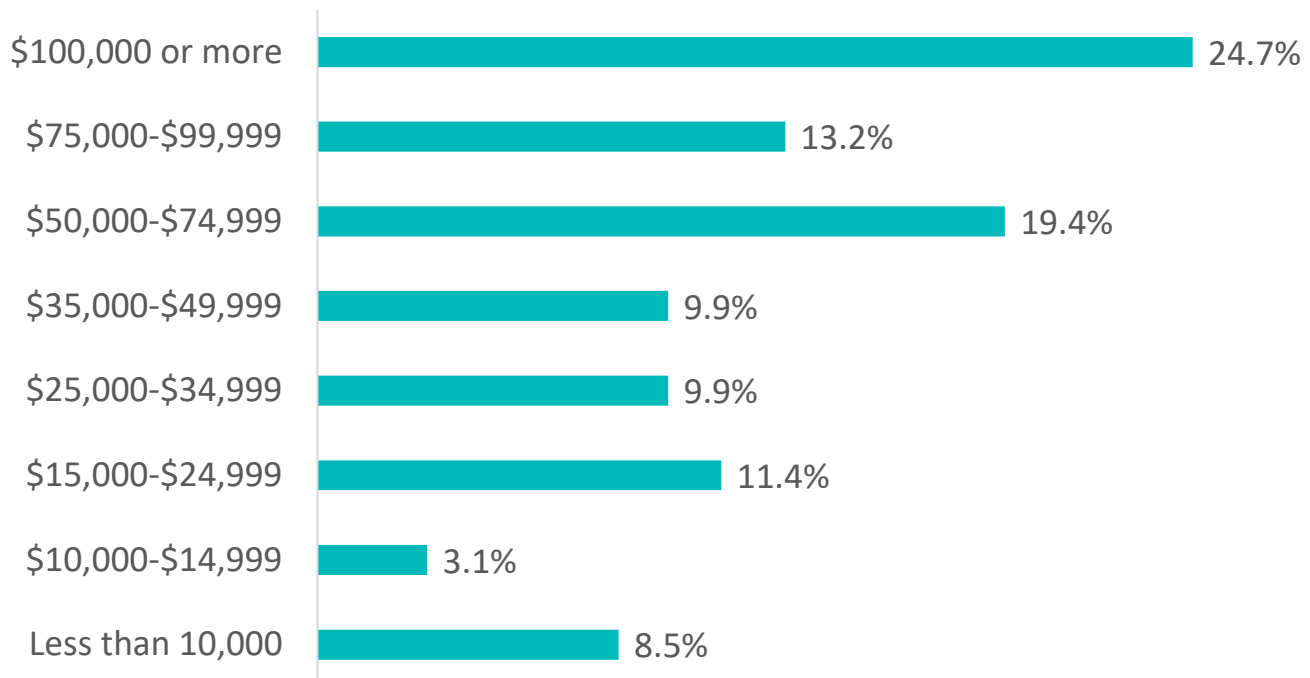
## Survey participation by race represented the county, with the exception that Asians were under-represented

Hispanic and Latino residents were well-represented in survey responses. (For comparison, Hispanic and Latino residents represent 7% of Douglas County residents.)

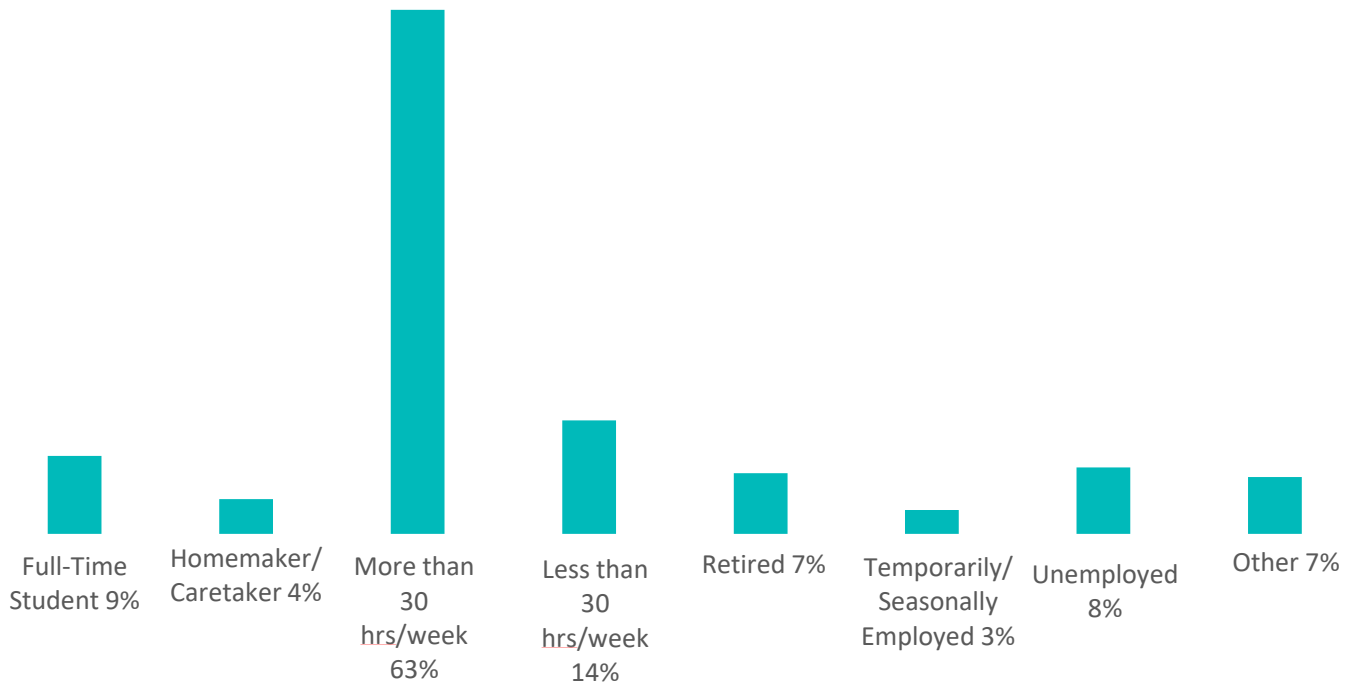
## Low-income residents were well-represented in survey participation



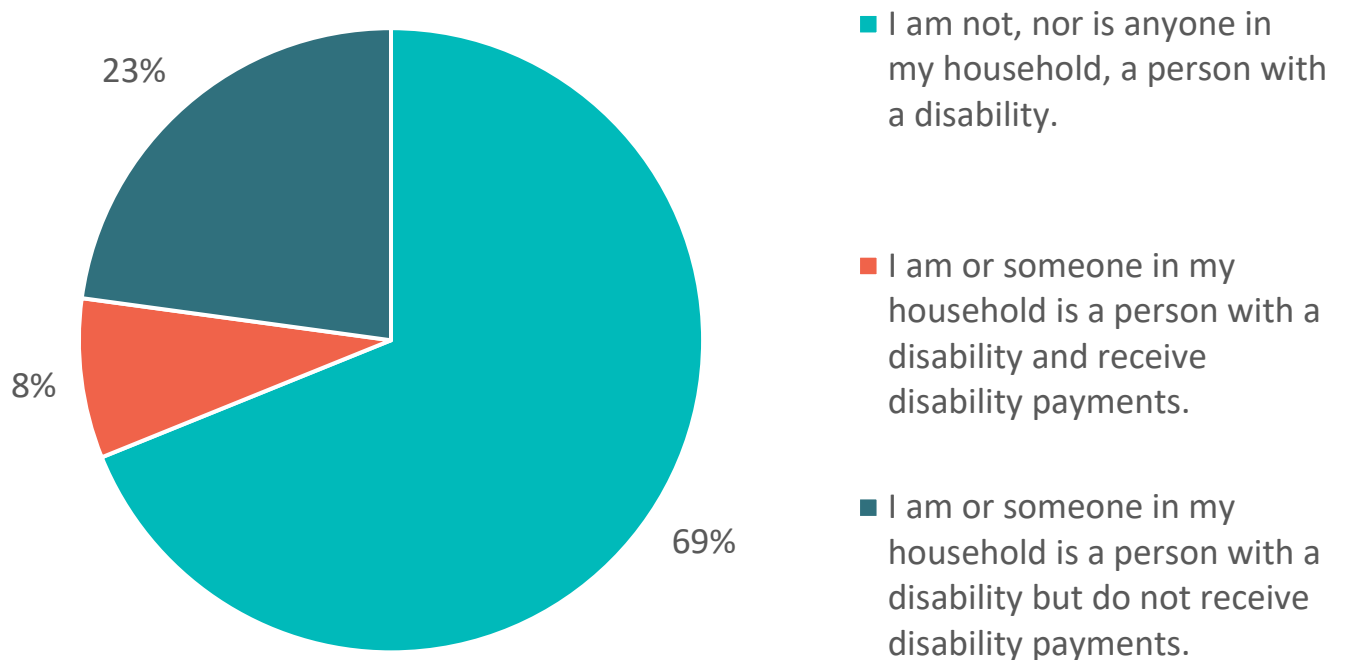
## For comparison: Douglas County residents' income overall



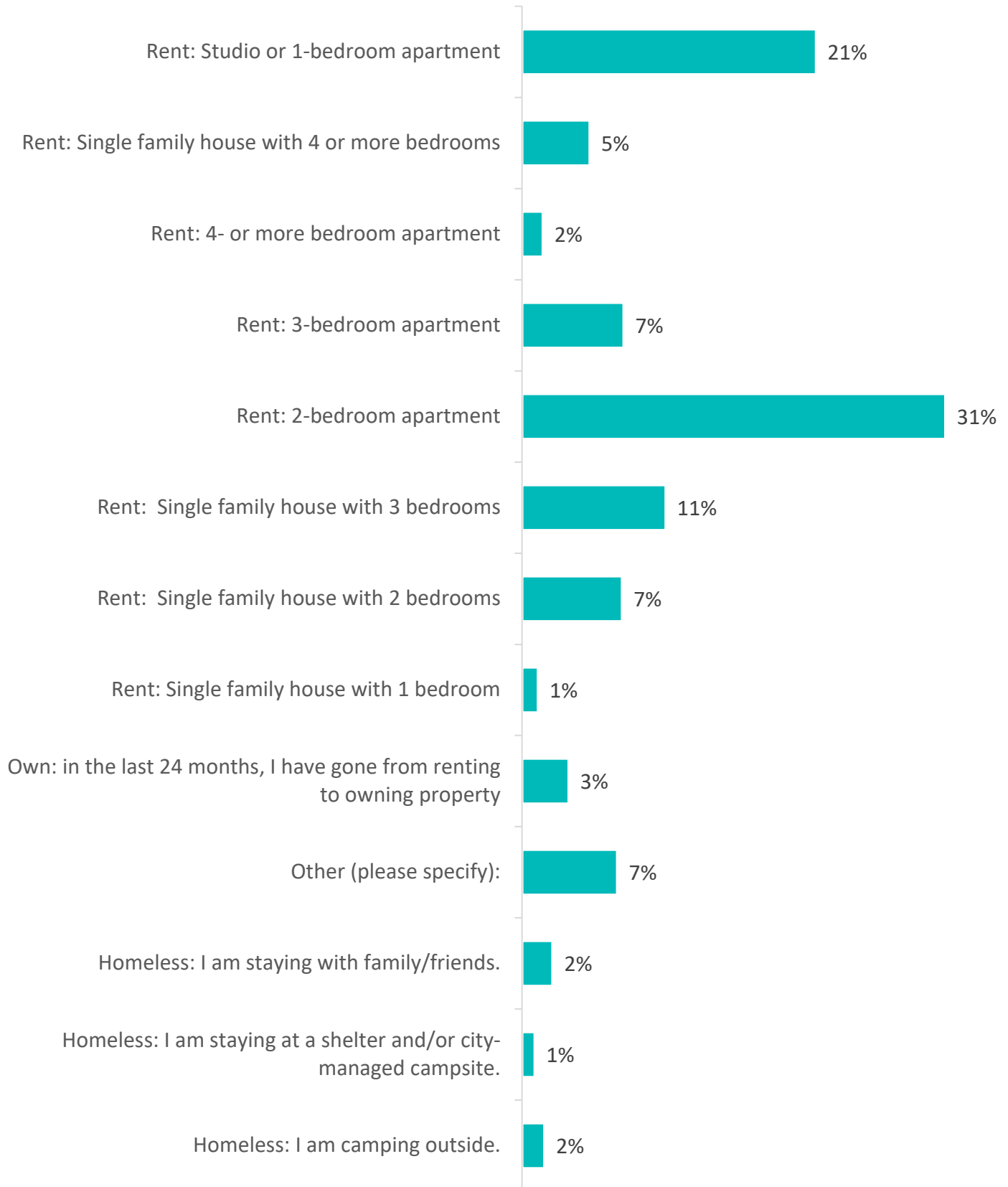
## Most survey participants were employed full-time



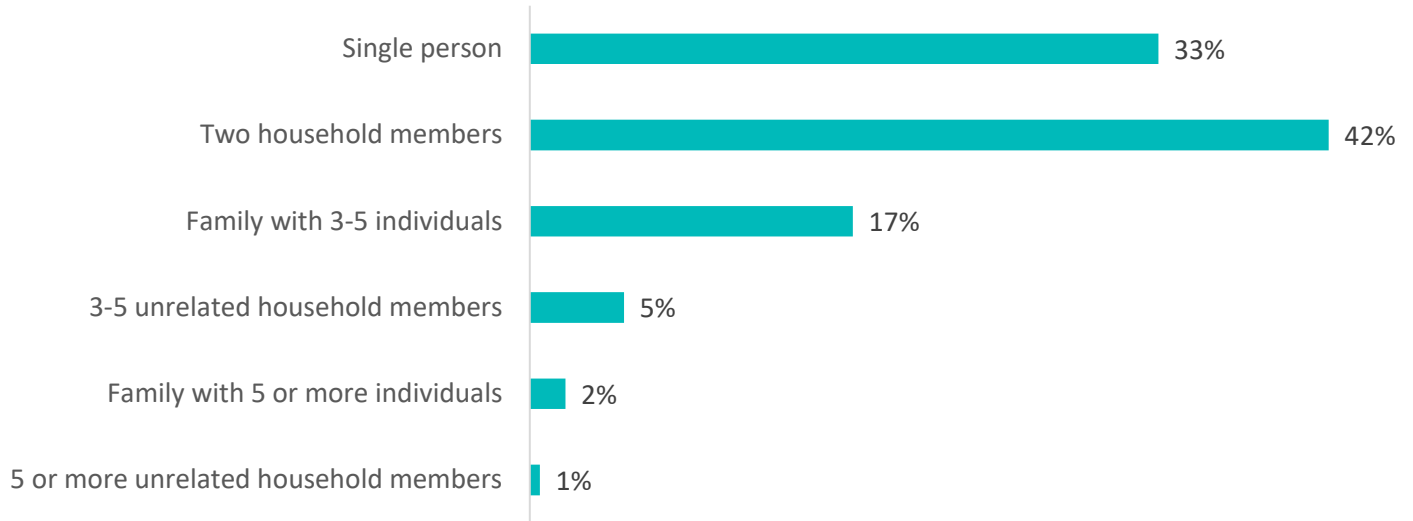
## Almost one-third of respondents have a household member with a disability



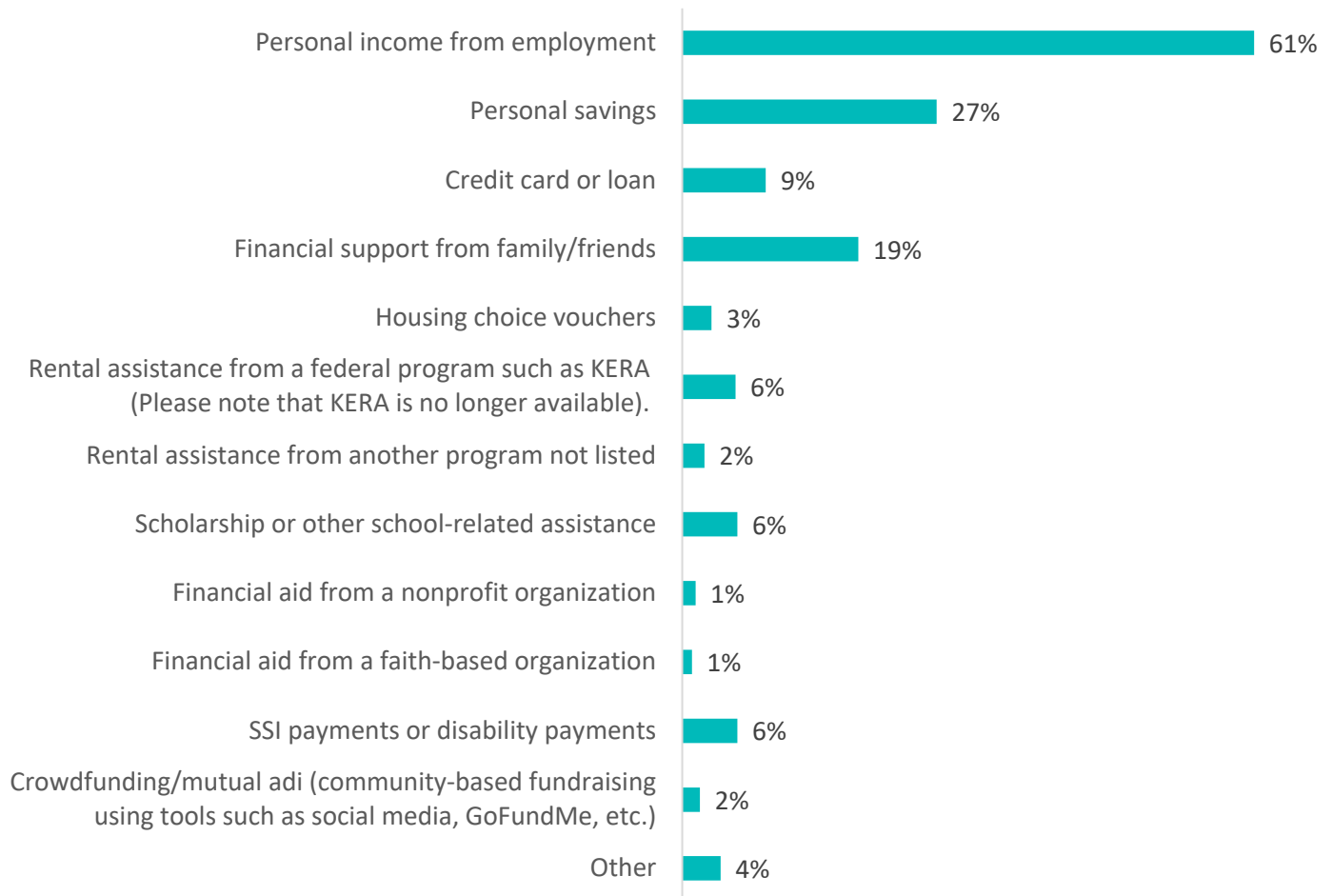
## Survey participants by living situation



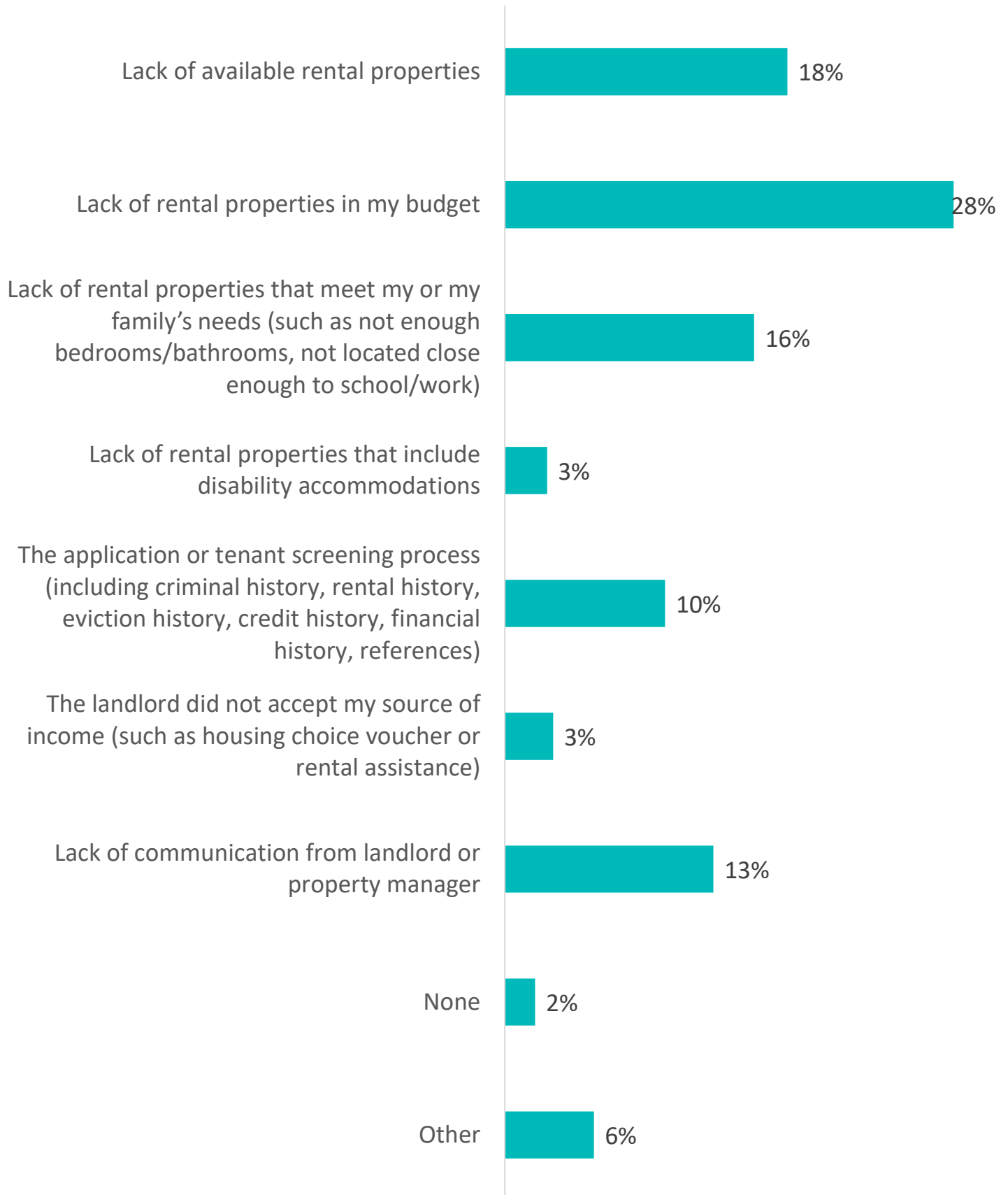
## Survey participants by current household size



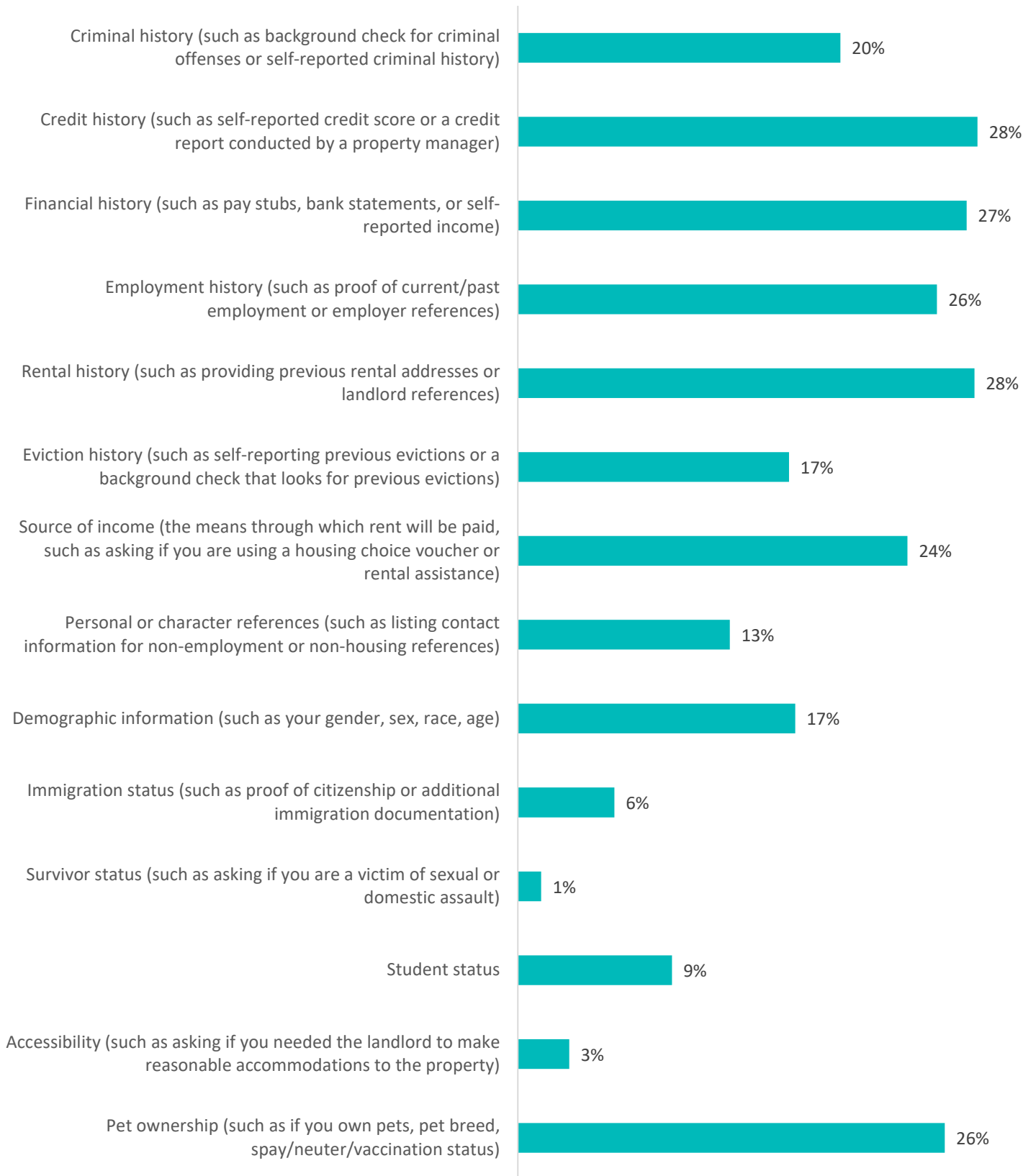
**The most frequently reported methods of payment for rent were personal income, personal savings, and financial support from family and friends.**



## Barriers to finding rental housing experienced by survey respondents

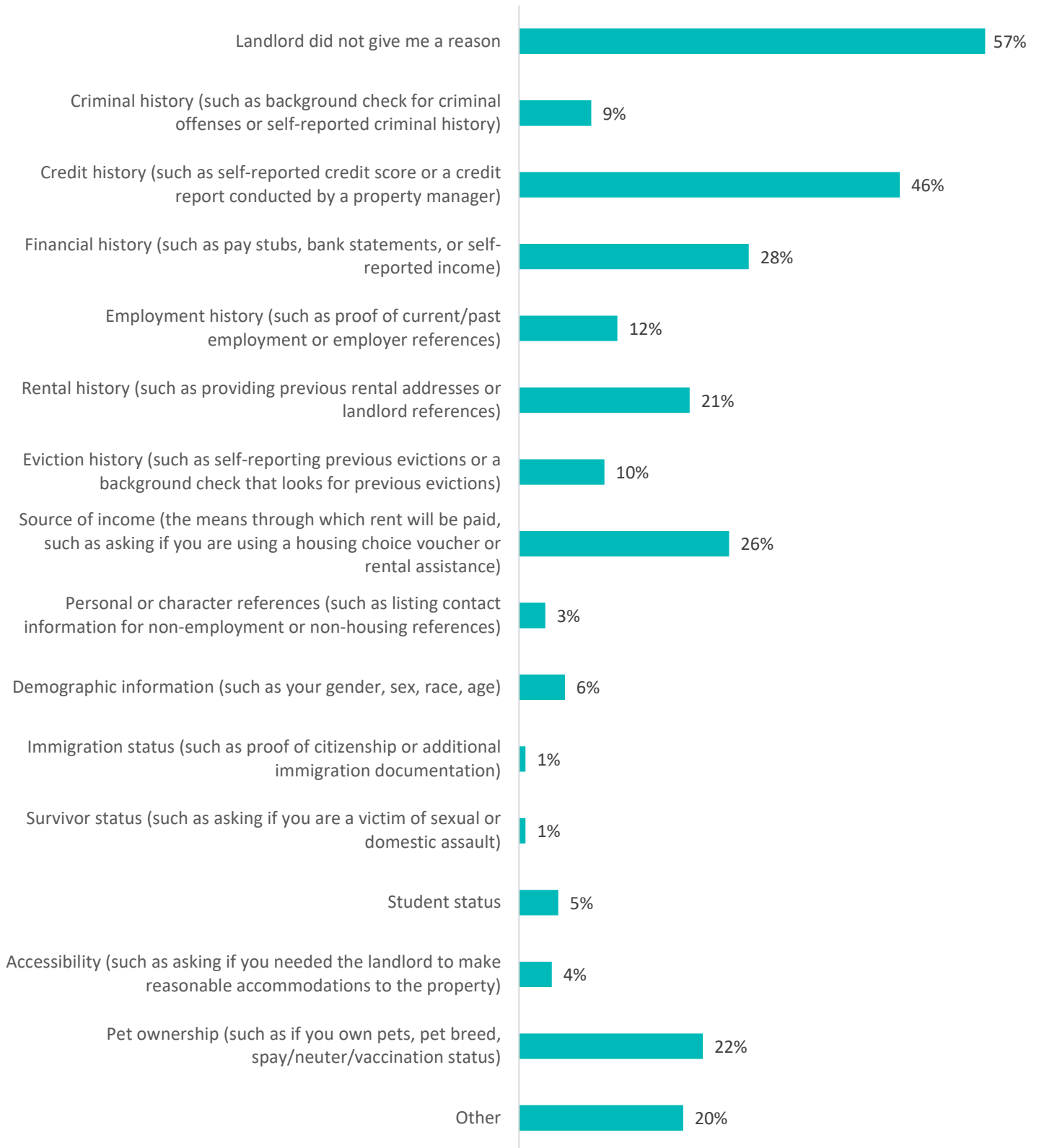


## Information survey respondents were asked to provide as part of the rental application process

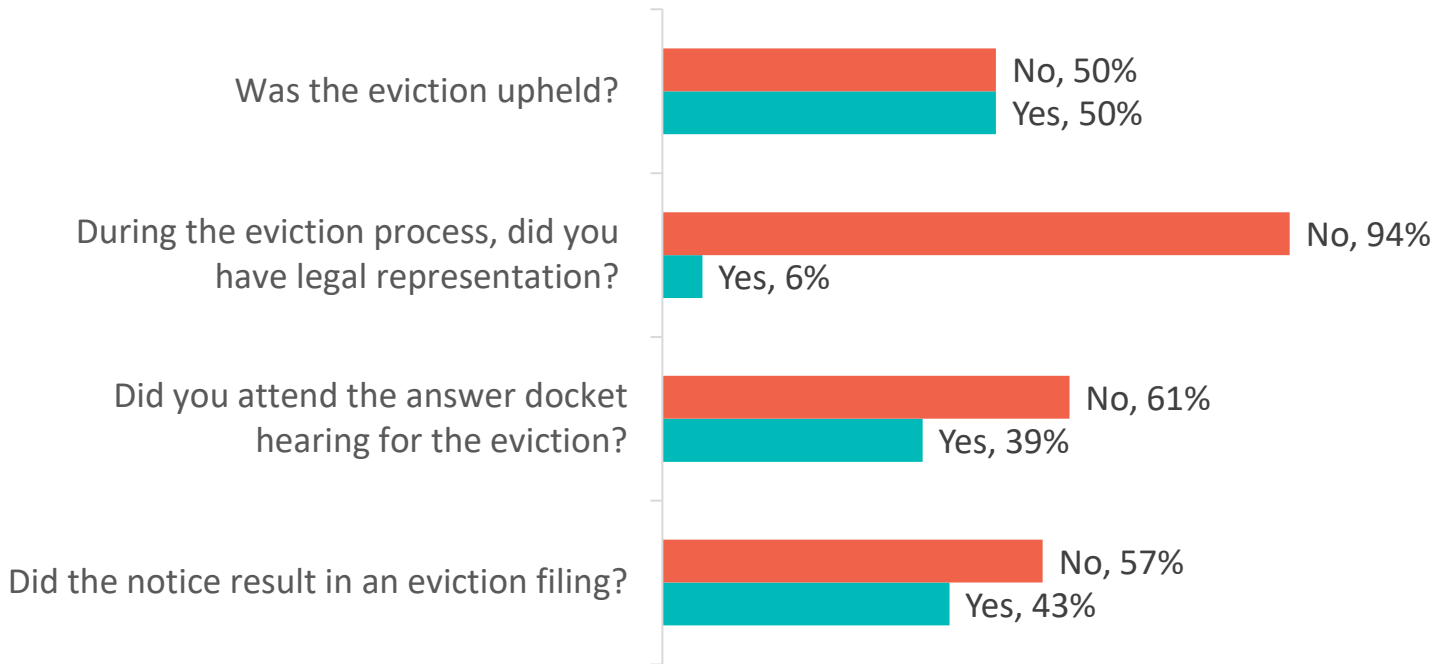




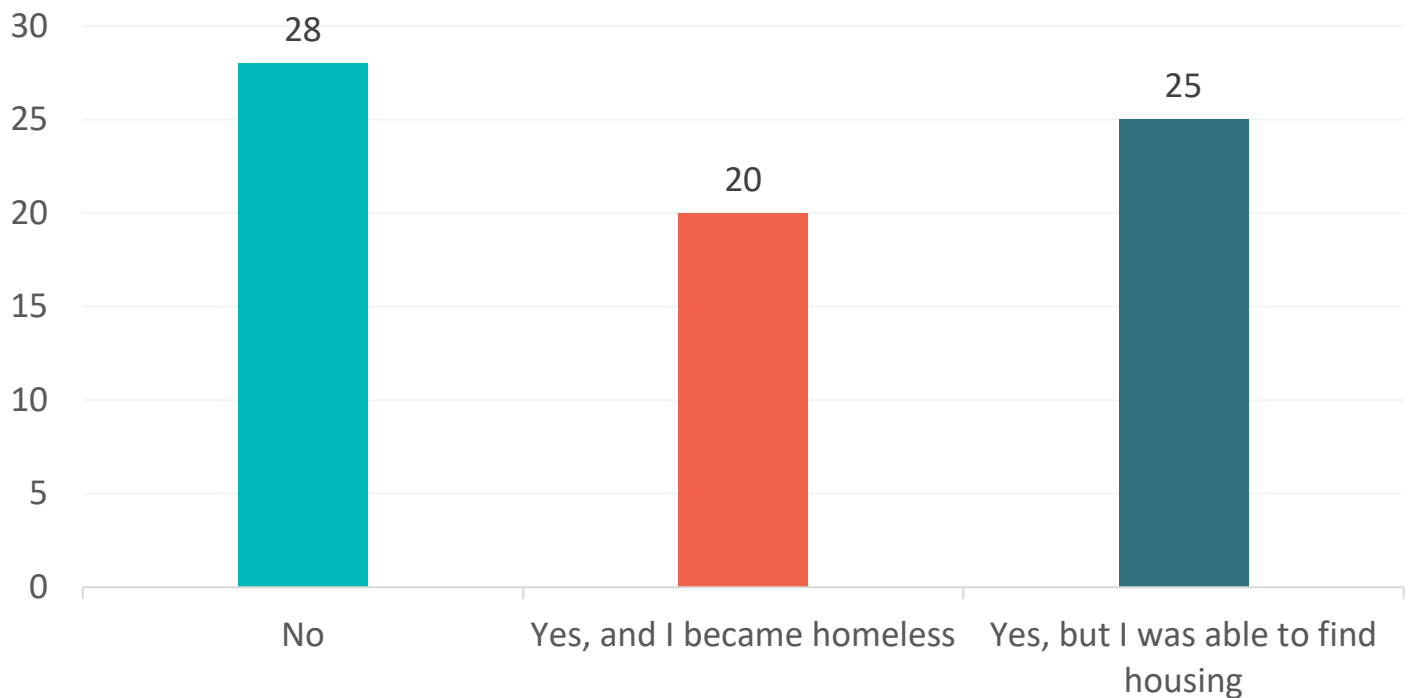
## Reasons rental applications had been denied by property managers or landlords (125 respondents reported that they had an application denial within the last 24 months)



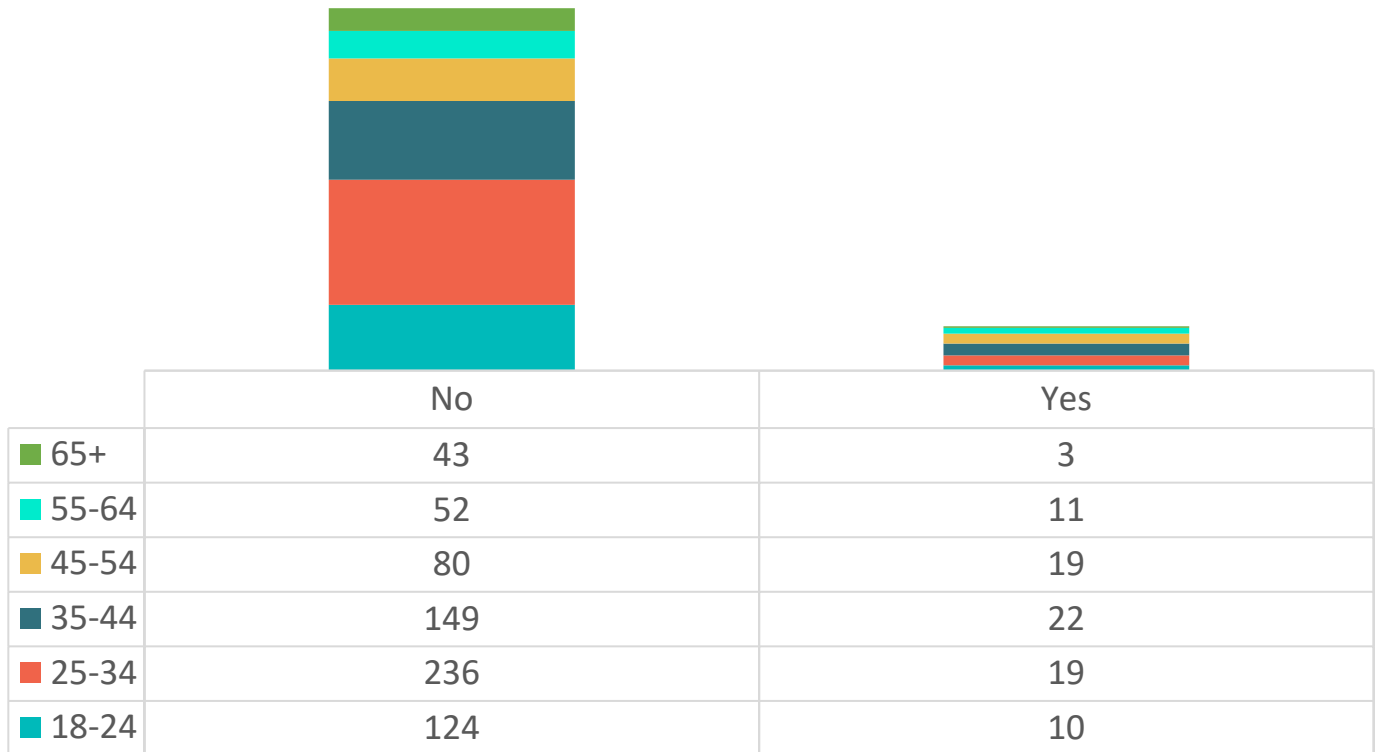
A total of 86 participants reported that they had received an eviction notice during their time as renters in Douglas County. The vast majority did not have legal representation during the eviction process.



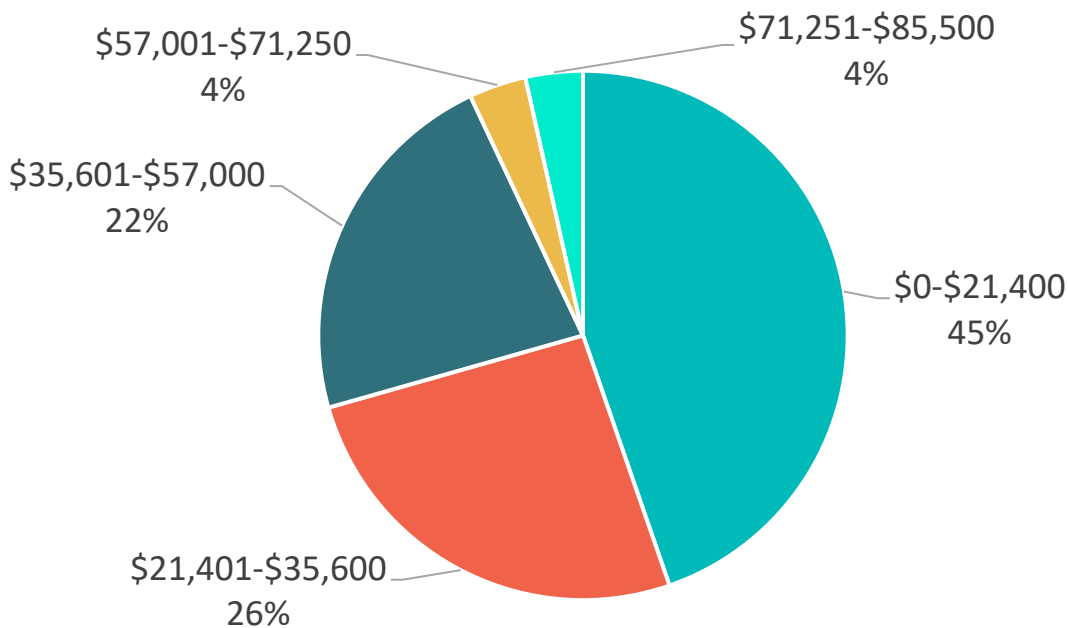
### Renters whose eviction resulted in a loss of housing, regardless of final court decision



## Renters who were served with an eviction notice, by age



**Those of lower incomes are at higher risk of being served with eviction notices. Nearly 50% of participants who had been served eviction notices in the past had an annual income of less than \$21,400.**

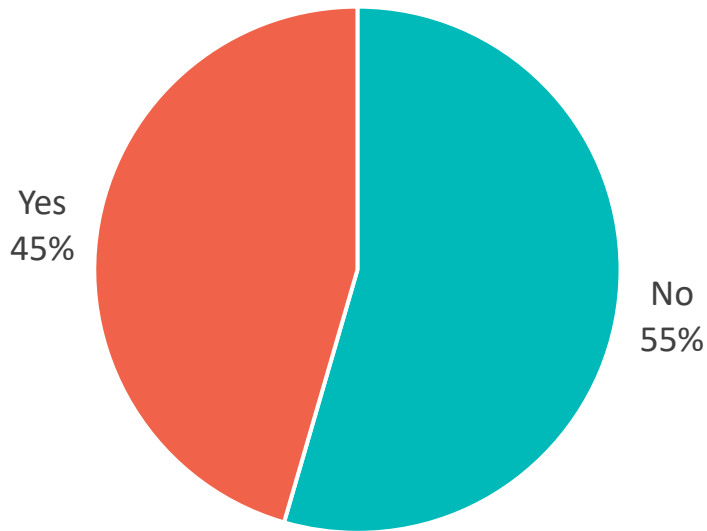


## Douglas County renters have mixed experiences with the quality of their neighborhood and relationships with their landlords

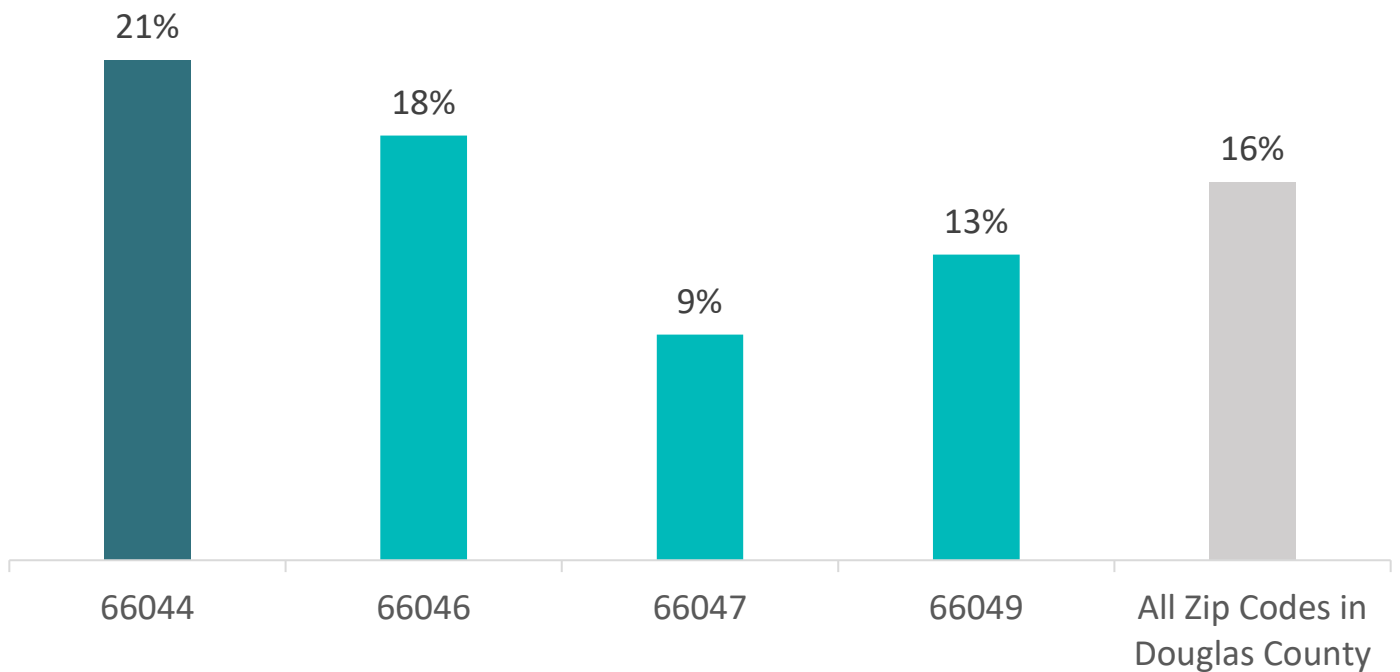
	True	False
My landlord and I have a positive respectful relationship.	72%	28%
My landlord and I have an open line of communication.	70%	30%
I know my neighbors.	57%	43%
I feel safe and comfortable walking around my neighborhood.	83%	16%
I feel at home in my neighborhood.	74%	26%
My neighborhood has adequate lighting.	56%	44%
My neighborhood feels like a community that I feel accepted and welcomed into.	57%	43%
There is an appropriate amount of law enforcement in my neighborhood.	66%	34%
My neighborhood has opportunities to connect with my neighbors, such as parks, community gardens, or neighborhood events.	49%	51%

	True	False
My landlord has entered my home without providing 24-hour notice.	26%	74%
My landlord or representatives of my landlord have verbally harassed me, called me names, threatened, or intimidated me.	13%	87%
My landlord or representatives of my landlord have verbally harassed me, called me names, threatened, or intimidated me.	13%	87%
My landlord or representatives of my landlord have physically harassed me or assaulted me.	2%	98%
I do not feel safe being in my home when my landlord, property management, or maintenance workers are present.	13%	87%
Law enforcement has too much of a presence in my neighborhood and I worry I will be wrongfully ticketed or cited.	18%	82%
Law enforcement has too little of a presence in my neighborhood, and I worry I will not be supported by emergency services.	13%	87%

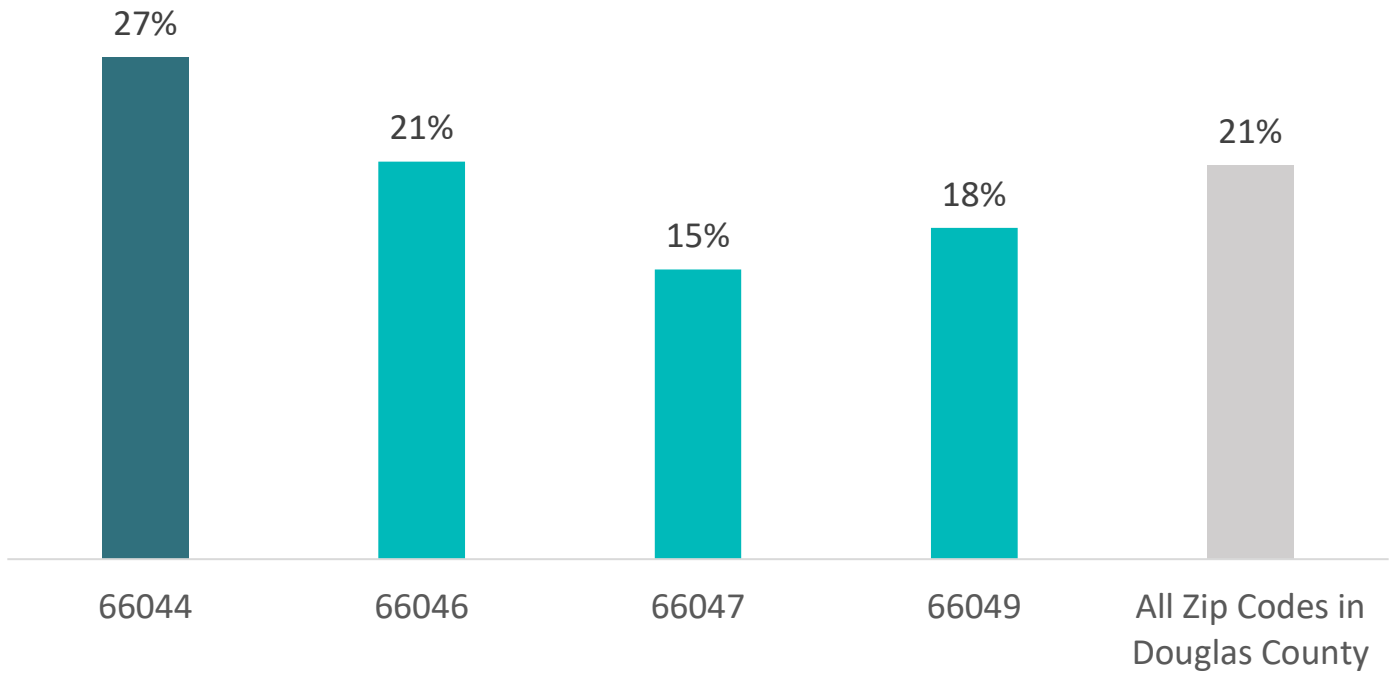
## The proportion of Douglas County renters who have felt unsafe in their rental home



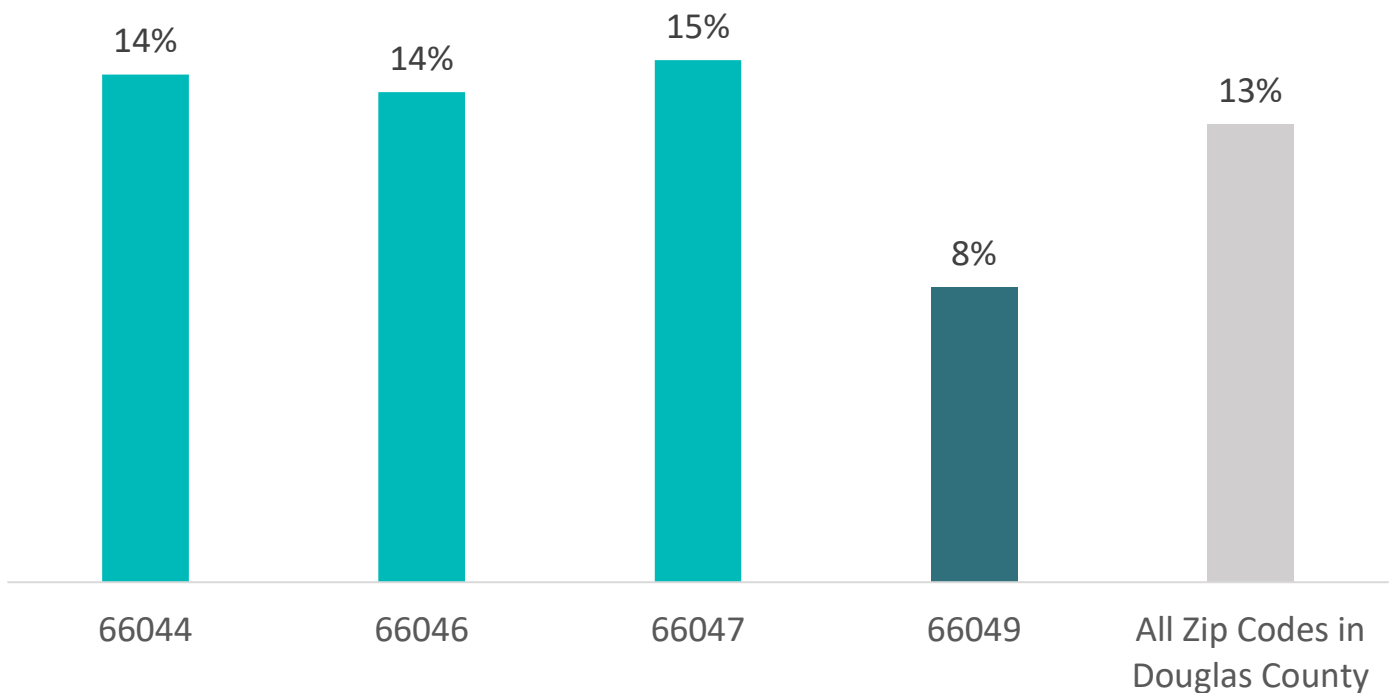
## The highest proportion of renters who do not feel safe in their current living arrangement live in 66044



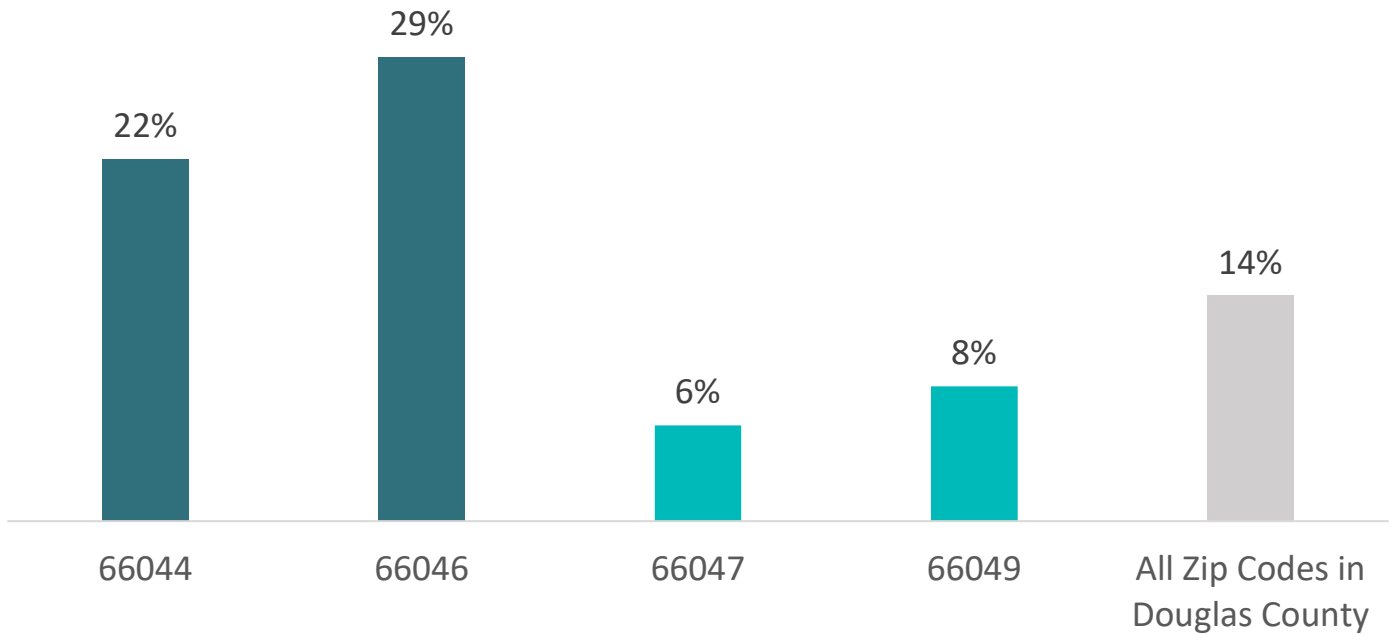
The proportion of Douglas County renters whose landlord or property manager has ever made them feel unsafe is highest in 66044



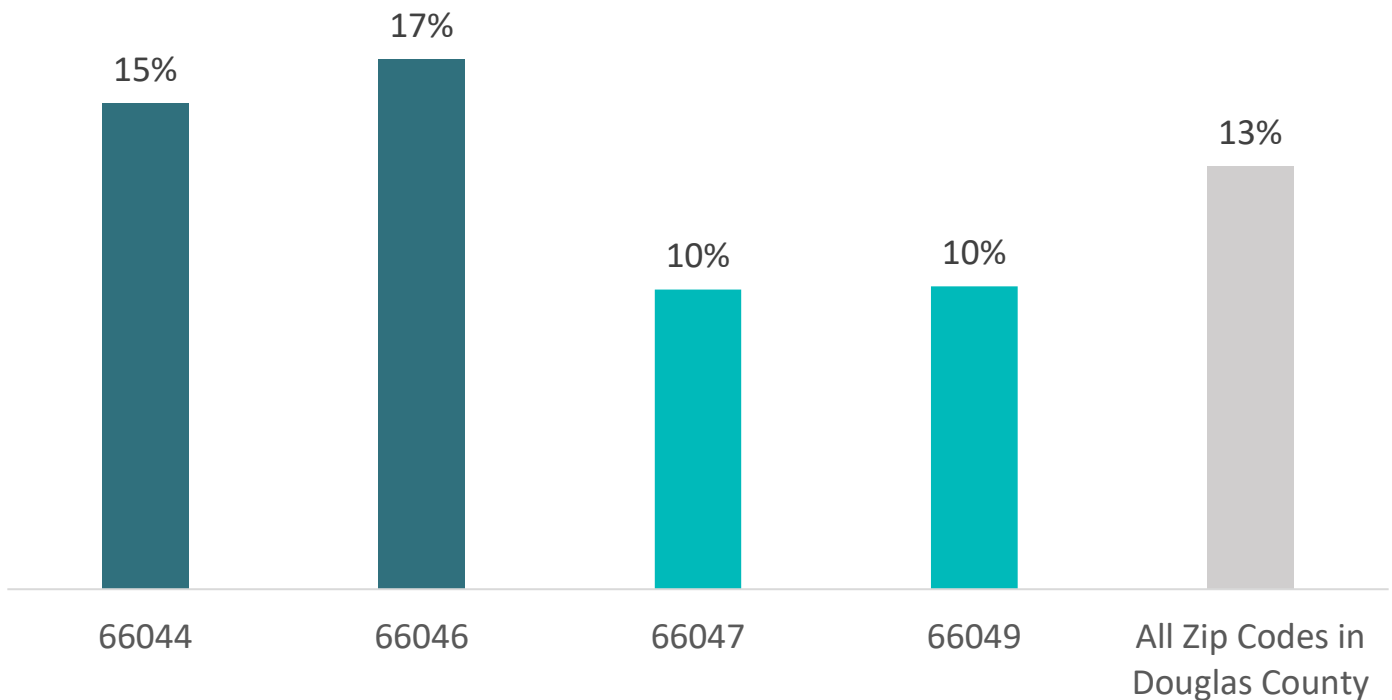
There are renters in all zip codes who have felt unsafe in their rental home due to landlord, property management, or maintenance workers being present; however, the proportion of residents is lowest in 66049



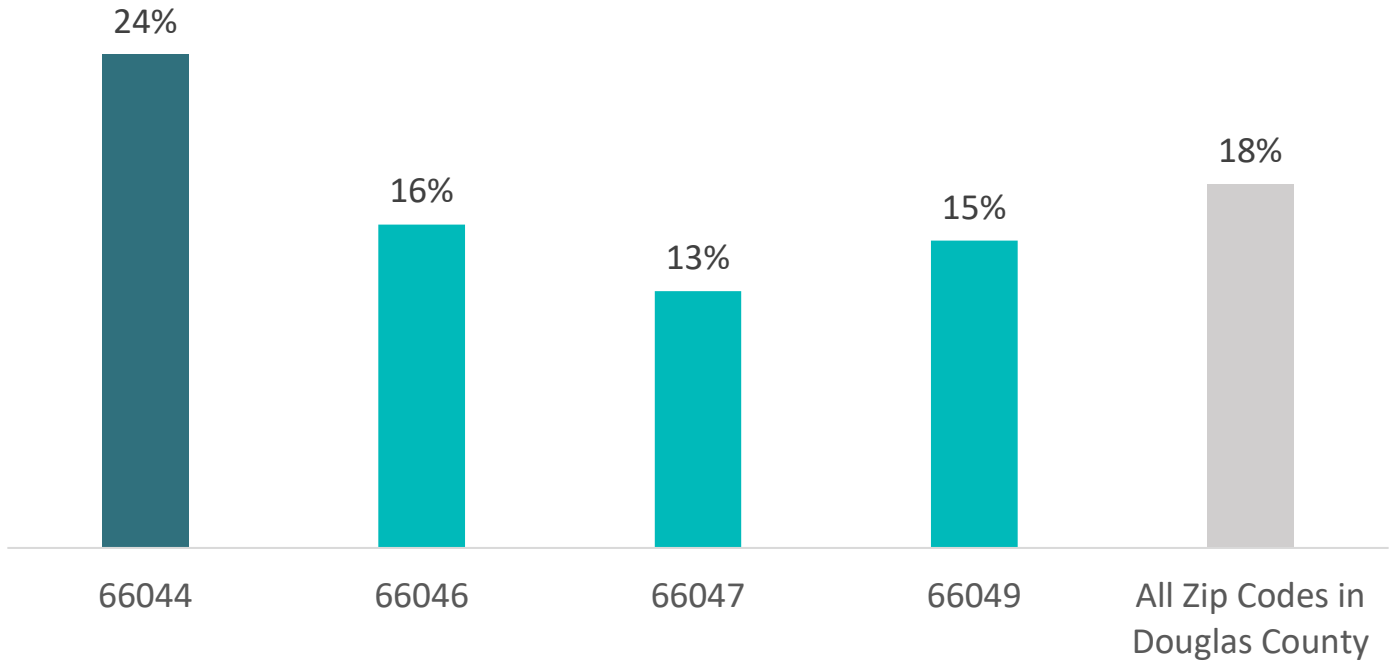
The proportion of renters who do not feel safe and comfortable walking around their neighborhood is highest in 66046 and 66044.



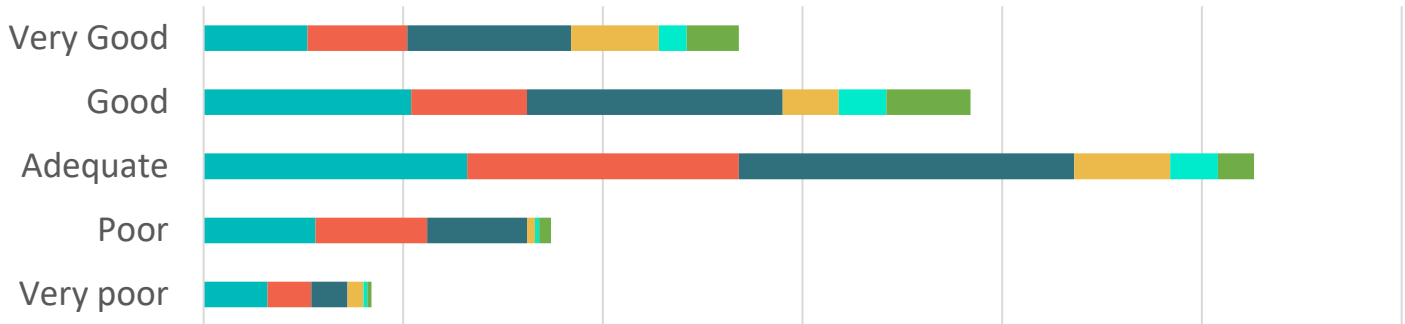
Those in 66046 and 66044 had the highest proportion of residents who do not feel there is an appropriate amount of law enforcement in their neighborhood and worry that they will not be supported by emergency services



Those in 66044 had the highest proportion of residents who feel law enforcement has too much of a neighborhood presence and worry they'll be wrongfully cited



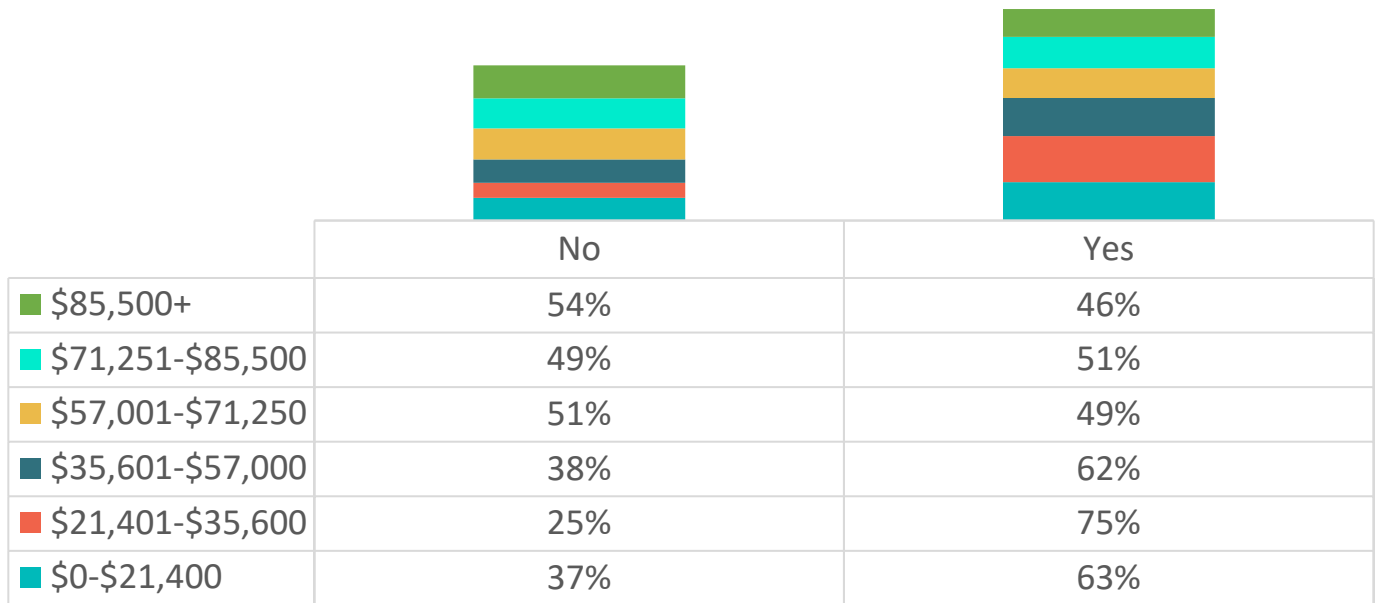
### Annual income by quality of housing



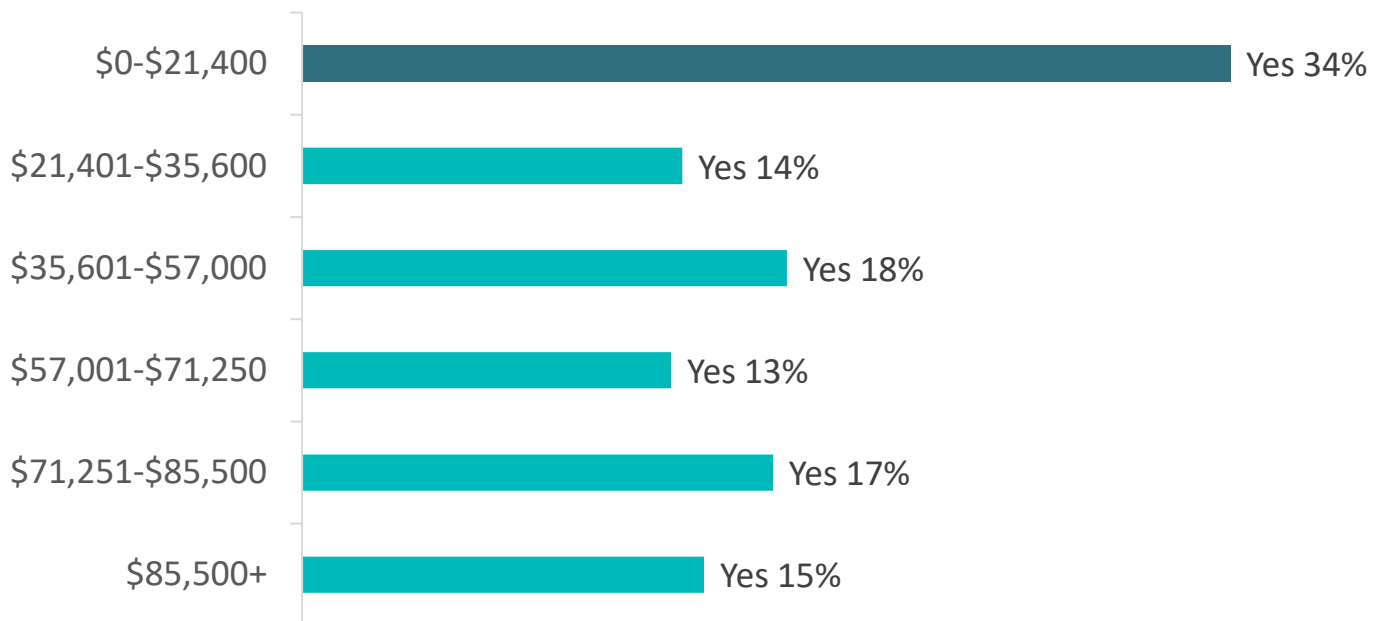
	Very poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
■ \$0-\$21,400	16	28	66	52	26
■ \$21,401-\$35,600	11	28	68	29	25
■ \$35,601-\$57,000	9	25	84	64	41
■ \$57,001-\$71,250	4	2	24	14	22
■ \$71,251-\$85,500	1	1	12	12	7
■ \$85,500+	1	3	9	21	13



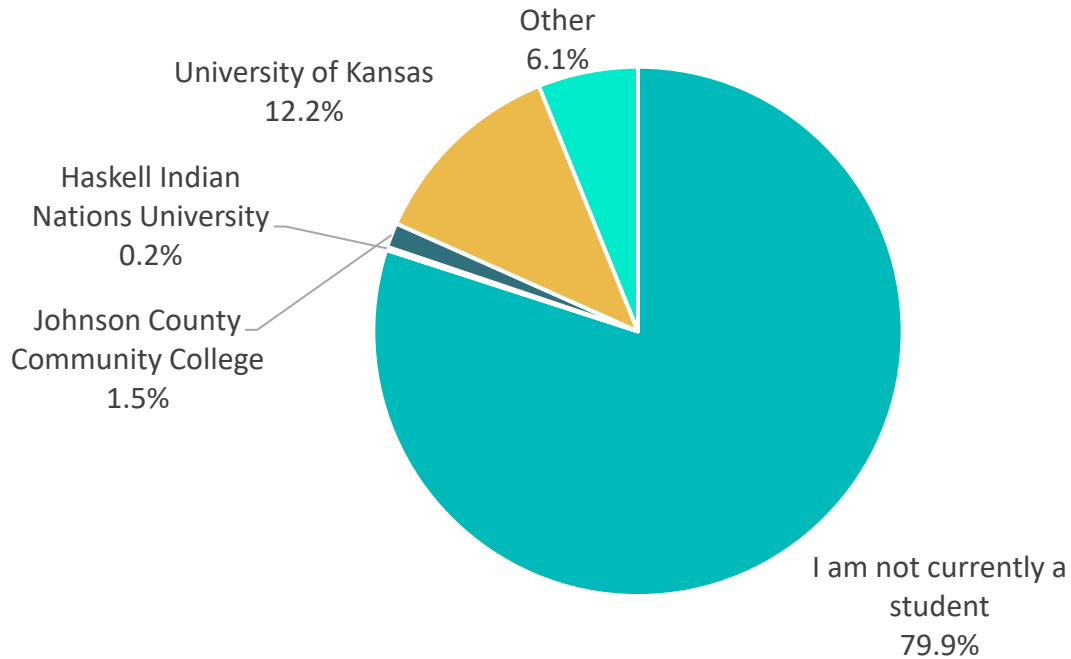
## Renters of lower annual income are more likely to have submitted a maintenance request that was not resolved



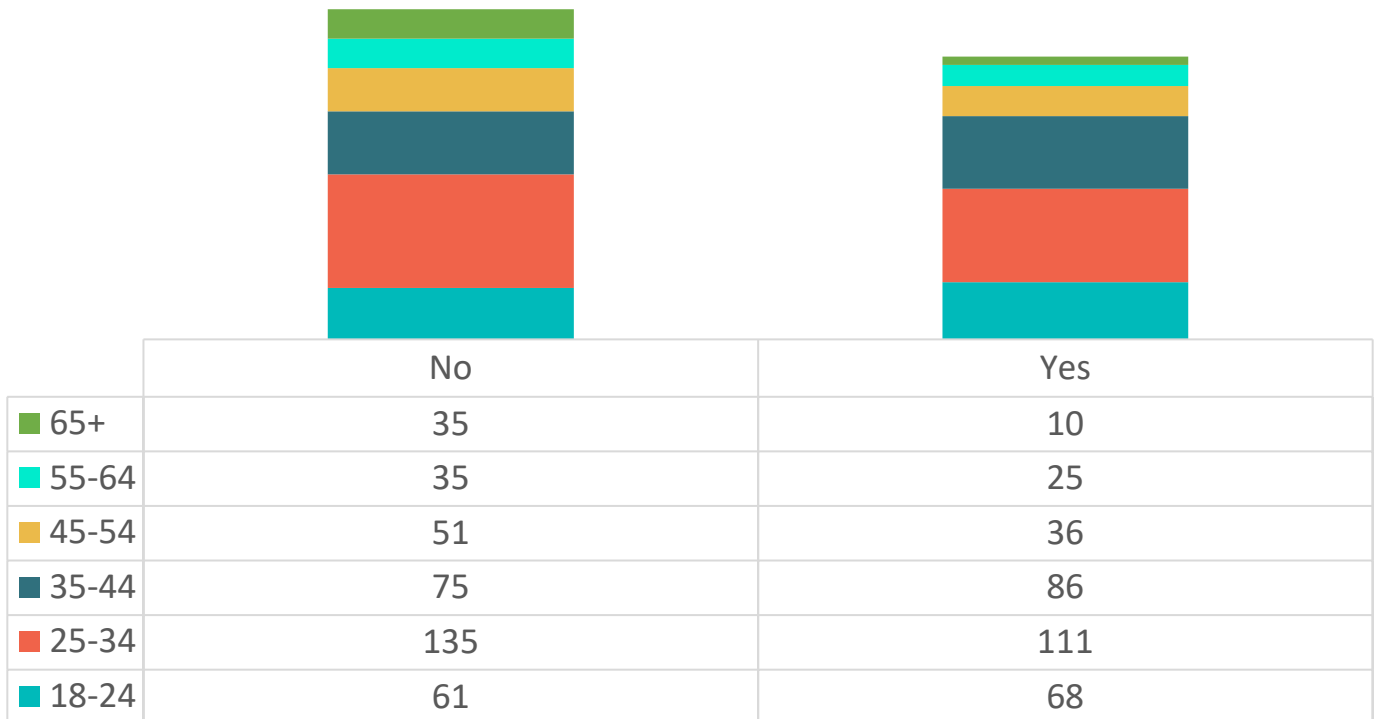
## Households who require accommodations/identify with having a disability are likely to have lower annual income



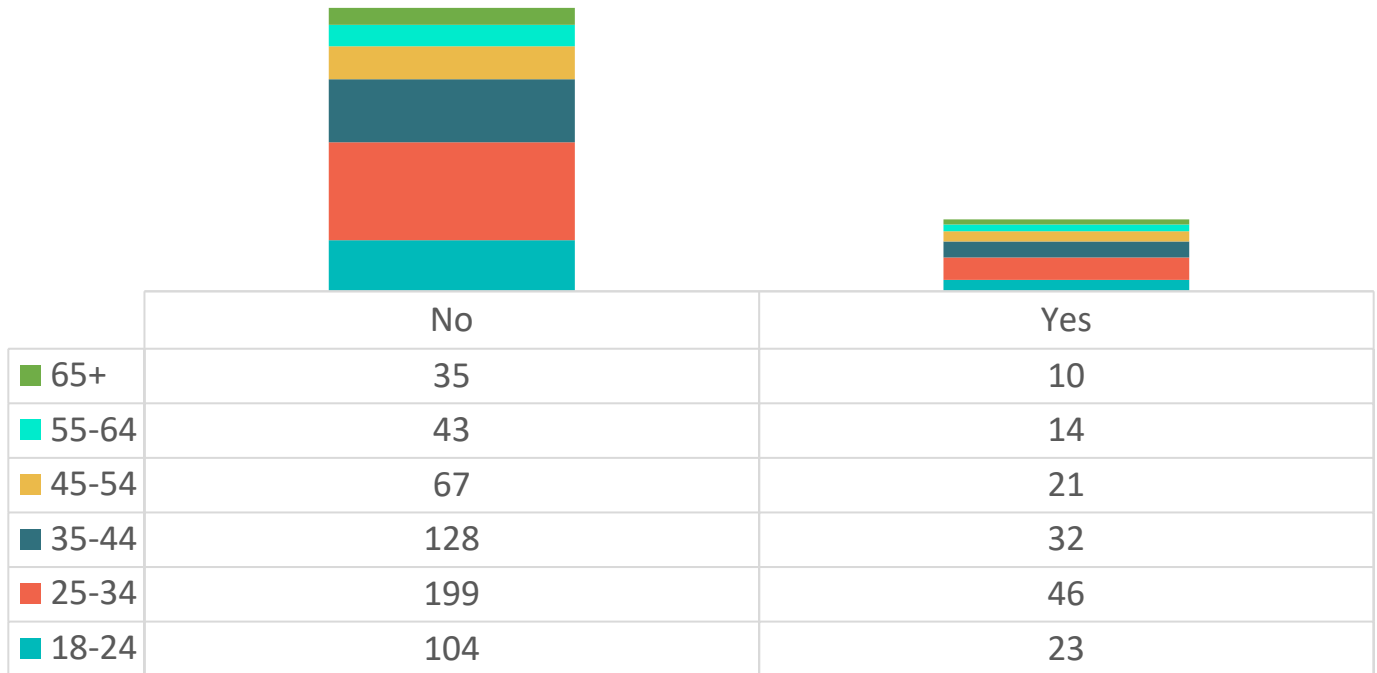
## Most of those surveyed were non-students, aged 25-34



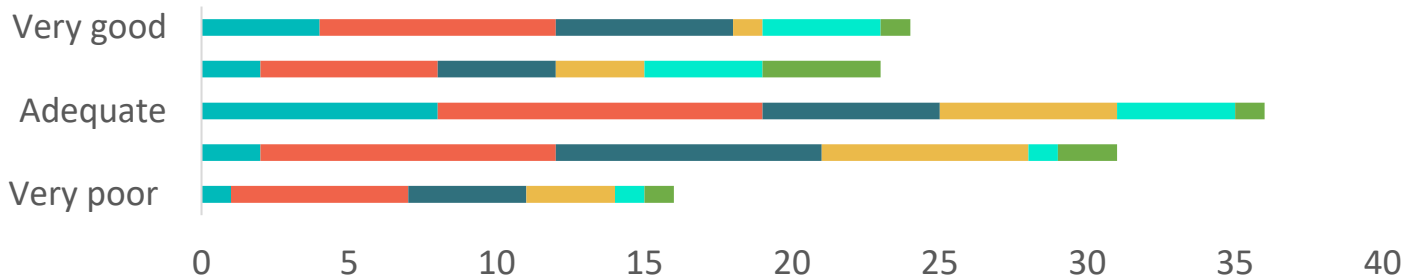
## Renters who have not submitted a maintenance request for fear of retaliation from the property manager, by age



## Households who require accommodations/report having a disability, by age

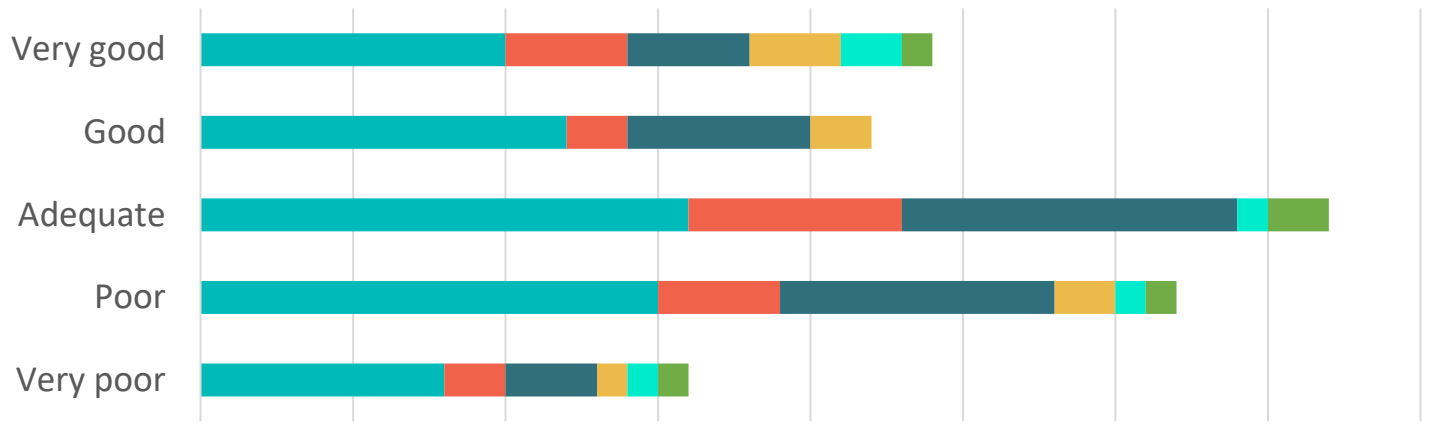


## Accessibility of housing, by age



	Very poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very good
18-24	1	2	8	2	4
25-34	6	10	11	6	8
35-44	4	9	6	4	6
45-54	3	7	6	3	1
55-64	1	1	4	4	4
65+	1	2	1	4	1

## Annual income by accessibility of housing



	Very poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very good
■ \$0-\$21,400	8	15	16	12	10
■ \$21,401-\$35,600	2	4	7	2	4
■ \$35,601-\$57,000	3	9	11	6	4
■ \$57,001-\$71,250	1	2		2	3
■ \$71,251-\$85,500	1	1	1		2
■ \$85,500+	1	1	2		1

## Appendix B

### Tenant Experience Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect experiences of those who have rented and/ or would like to rent in Douglas County. Information gathered will be used to raise awareness about current housing problems, and to inform change and improvement efforts in our community.

All responses will be kept anonymous.

Survey questions are optional. At the end of the survey, there will be an open response section where you can describe additional experiences you've had as a renter in Douglas County that you did not have the opportunity to share in other portions of the survey.

If you need additional resources or support regarding housing, the Lawrence Public Library has created a comprehensive [Community Resource Guide](#).

1. Do you agree to participate in this survey which will collect information about your experience and understand that your answers will be kept confidential?
  - YES, I agree to participate in the survey.
  - NO, I do not want to participate in the survey.

#### **ABOUT YOU:**

This section will ask you some questions about yourself. These questions are designed so that we can better understand who is being most impacted by certain housing issues. All questions are optional, and you do not have to disclose any information you don't want to.

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Student status:
  - I am not currently a student.
  - I am currently a student at:
    - University of Kansas
    - Haskell Indian Nations University
    - Baker University
    - Johnson County Community College
    - Other (please specify):

5. Social identity (please mark all that apply):

- Veteran
- Older adult
- Formerly convicted
- Formerly incarcerated
- Citizen
- Non-citizen/mixed status family
- None of these apply to me

6. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?

- Yes
- No

8. What is your race? Mark one or more.

- White**
- Black or African American**
- Asian**
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**
- American Indian or Alaska Native**
- Other (please specify):** \_\_\_\_\_

9. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- Yes, Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish**
- No, not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish

10. Annual income:

- \$0-\$21,400
- \$21,401-\$35,600
- \$35,601-\$57,000
- \$57,001-\$71,250
- \$71,251-\$85,500

- \$85,500+

11. Employment (check all that apply):

- I am employed full-time (on average, 30 hours or more per week).
- I am employed part-time (on average, less than 30 hours per week).
- I am temporarily or seasonally employed.
- I am unemployed.
- I am retired.
- I am a full-time student.
- I am a homemaker/stay-at-home caretaker.
- Other (please specify):

12. Disability:

- I am or someone in my household is a person with a disability and receive disability payments.
- I am or someone in my household is a person with a disability but do not receive disability payments.
- I am not, nor is anyone in my household, a person with a disability.

## HOUSING BASICS:

This section will ask you some questions about your most recent rental housing experiences including household make up, rent payments, and experiences with homelessness. All questions are optional.

13. Please describe your current living situation:

- Homeless – I am staying at a shelter and/or city-managed campsite. *please skip to question 19*
- Homeless – I am camping outside. *please skip to question 19*
- Homeless – I am staying with family/friends. *please skip to question 19*
- Rent – Studio or 1-bedroom apartment
- Rent – 2-bedroom apartment
- Rent – 3-bedroom apartment
- Rent – 4- or more bedroom apartment
- Rent – Single family house with 1 bedroom
- Rent – Single family house with 2 bedrooms
- Rent – Single family house with 3 bedrooms
- Rent – Single family house with 4 or more bedrooms
- Own – in the last 24 months, I have gone from renting to owning property
- Other (please specify):

14. In the last 24 months, have you rented a residential property in Douglas County, KS?

- Yes
- No *please skip to question 16*

If yes, which of the following describes your current household?

- Single person
- Two household members
- Family with 3-5 individuals
- 3-5 unrelated household members
- Family with 5 or more individuals
- 5 or more unrelated household members

15. How much do you pay monthly in rent? \_\_\_\_\_



16. In the last 24 months, have you experienced a rent increase?

- No
- Yes

If yes, by how much? \_\_\_\_\_

17. In the last 24 months, have you experienced homelessness or were you at-risk of immediate homelessness?

- Yes
- No

18. In the last 24 months, what methods did you use to pay rent? Select all that apply.

- Personal income from employment
- Personal savings
- Credit card or loan
- Financial support from family/friends
- Housing choice vouchers
- Rental assistance from a federal program such as KERA (Please note that KERA is no longer available.)
- Rental assistance from another program not listed
- Scholarships or other school-related assistance
- Financial aid from a nonprofit organization
- Financial aid from a faith-based organization
- SSI payments or disability payments
- Crowdfunding/mutual aid (community-based fundraising using tools such as social media, GoFundMe, etc.)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

19. In the last 24 months, did you ever feel like you were at risk of eviction or displacement due to lease violations, nonpayment of rent, or other reasons?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please share what circumstances led you to feel at risk of displacement: \_\_\_\_\_

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## FINDING HOUSING

This section will ask you some questions about your experiences with the process of finding and applying for rental properties. All questions are optional.

20. In the last 24 months, have you applied to rent a new property?

- No *please skip to question 25*
- Yes

If yes, approximately how many properties did you apply to during your most recent housing search? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many months did it take for you to find housing? \_\_\_\_\_

21. In the last 24 months, what barriers to finding rental housing have you experienced? Please mark all that apply.

- Lack of available rental properties
- Lack of rental properties in my budget
- Lack of rental properties that meet my or my family's needs (such as not enough bedrooms/bathrooms, not located close enough to school/work)
- Lack of rental properties that include disability accommodations
- The application or tenant screening process (including criminal history, rental history, eviction history, credit history, financial history, references)
- The landlord did not accept my source of income (such as housing choice voucher or rental assistance)
- Lack of communication from landlord or property manager
- None
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. In the last 24 months, have you had to provide information about any of the following as a part of a rental application process? Please mark all that apply.

- Criminal history (such as background check for criminal offenses or self-reported criminal history)
- Credit history (such as self-reported credit score or a credit report conducted by a property manager)
- Financial history (such as pay stubs, bank statements, or self-reported income)

- Employment history (such as proof of current/past employment or employer references)
- Rental history (such as providing previous rental addresses or landlord references)
- Eviction history (such as self-reporting previous evictions or a background check that looks for previous evictions)
- Source of income (the means through which rent will be paid, such as asking if you are using a housing choice voucher or rental assistance)
- Personal or character references (such as listing contact information for non-employment or non-housing references)
- Demographic information (such as your gender, sex, race, age)
- Immigration status (such as proof of citizenship or additional immigration documentation)
- Survivor status (such as asking if you are a victim of sexual or domestic assault)
- Student status
- Accessibility (such as asking if you needed the landlord to make reasonable accommodations to the property)
- Pet ownership (such as if you own pets, pet breed, spay/neuter/vaccination status)

23. In the last 24 months, were any of your rental applications denied by any property managers or landlords?

- Yes
- No

24. If yes, please share the reason(s). Please mark all that apply.

- Landlord did not give me a reason
- Criminal history (such as background check for criminal offenses or self-reported criminal history)
- Credit history (such as self-reported credit score or a credit report conducted by a property manager)
- Financial history (such as pay stubs, bank statements, or self-reported income)
- Employment history (such as proof of current/past employment or employer references)
- Rental history (such as providing previous rental addresses or landlord references)
- Eviction history (such as self-reporting previous evictions or a background check that looks for previous evictions)

- Source of income (the means through which rent will be paid, such as asking if you are using a housing choice voucher or rental assistance)
- Personal or character references (such as listing contact information for non-employment or non-housing references)
- Demographic information (such as your gender, sex, race, age)
- Immigration status (such as proof of citizenship or additional immigration documentation)
- Survivor status (such as asking if you are a victim of sexual or domestic assault)
- Student status
- Accessibility (such as asking if you needed the landlord to make reasonable accommodations to the property)
- Pet ownership (such as if you own pets, pet breed, spay/neuter/vaccination status)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

25. On a scale of 1-5, how easy would you say it is to find rental housing in our community?

- Very easy.** I was able to find rental housing shortly after beginning my search and encountered no barriers during the process of searching for available properties, applying for properties, leasing a new property, and communicating with landlords.
- Somewhat easy.** It took me a little bit to find housing/I encountered a few barriers during the process, but nothing substantial and I ultimately leased a property.
- Neither easy nor hard/no opinion**
- Somewhat difficult.** It took me longer than I would have liked to search for available properties and I encountered barriers in the process of searching, applying for, and leasing a new property. I may have submitted multiple applications to multiple properties before being accepted, but ultimately, I was able to find rental housing.
- Very difficult.** During the process of searching for available properties, I have been able to find only very few housing opportunities that meet my needs. I have encountered many barriers in the process of communicating with landlords, applying for, and leasing a new property. I am unable to find housing and/or ended up living in inadequate housing.

Please feel free to share with any other comments regarding your experience finding rental housing in our community: \_\_\_\_\_

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## ENDING A LEASE

The following section asks about how your lease ended in rental properties. This includes questions about non-renewals of lease, evictions, and security deposits. Some of these questions are specific to the last 24 months; some questions ask about your history of renting in Douglas County generally. All questions are optional.

26. In the last 24 months, did your lease on a property end?

*please skip to question 27 if your current living situation is Homeless.*

- Yes
- No *please skip to question 27*

27. If yes, please select how your lease ended:

- I chose to not renew my lease at the end of the lease cycle.
- I broke my lease during the lease cycle.
- My landlord did not allow me to renew my lease at the end of the lease cycle.
- My landlord terminated my lease during the lease cycle without serving an eviction notice (i.e., the landlord told you that you must move out or threatened legal eviction action if you did not)
- My landlord served me an eviction notice.
- Mutual termination (My landlord and I agreed to end the lease early.)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

28. As a renter in Douglas County, have you ever experienced a non-renewal of lease? (while in a leased unit, your landlord notifies you that you will not be able to renew the lease for the next rental cycle)

- No
- Yes

If yes, what reason were you given a reason for non-renewal? \_\_\_\_\_

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29. As a renter in Douglas County, have you ever received an eviction notice?

- No *please skip to question 29*
- Yes

If yes, did the notice result in an eviction filing?

- No
- Yes

If yes, did you attend the answer docket hearing for the eviction?

- No
- Yes

During the eviction process, did you have legal representation?

- No
- Yes

Was the eviction upheld?

- Yes
- No

Did the eviction result in you having to move or experiencing a loss of housing, regardless of final court decision?

- No
- Yes, but I was able to find housing
- Yes, and I became homeless

Please share more details about your experience with evictions if you feel comfortable:

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30. As a renter in Douglas County, have you ever had your security deposit withheld at the end of a lease?

- No
- Yes

If yes, what reason were you given for the withholding of security deposit? \_\_\_\_\_

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Please share more details about your experience with withheld security deposits if you feel comfortable:

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## HOUSING CONDITIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The following section will ask you questions about your experience with property quality, condition, and maintenance as a renter in Douglas County. All questions are optional.

31. While renting a property, have you ever submitted a maintenance request that was not resolved? (for example, was not responded to, or maintenance claimed problem was solved but issue persisted without repair)
- No
  - Yes
  - Not applicable
32. While renting a property, have you ever chosen to not submit a maintenance request for fear of retaliation from the property manager?
- No
  - Yes
  - Not applicable
33. Please rate the quality of your current housing from a scale of 1-5.
- Very poor.** Utilities, appliances, and other housing features consistently are not working well. The quality of my housing affects my ability to bathe, eat, work, or otherwise affects my quality of life. My landlord does not communicate regarding maintenance of the property and issues remain unresolved.
  - Poor.** Utilities, appliances, and other housing features often break or do not work. My landlord does not communicate regarding maintenance of the property and/or communication is inconsistent, with issues remaining unresolved.
  - Adequate.** Utilities, appliances, and housing features are in working condition most of the time. My landlord is generally responsive to maintenance requests and mostly resolves issues.
  - Good.** All utilities, appliances, and housing features are in good working condition. My landlord is communicative regarding maintenance of the house, responds to issues promptly, and resolves issues.
  - Very Good.** All utilities, appliances, and housing features are in good working condition. My landlord conducts regular maintenance and has also made updates or improvements to my unit beyond regular maintenance.

Please share more details about your experience with housing quality if you feel comfortable:

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34. Does anyone in your household require any accessibility accommodations and/or identify as a person with a disability? *please skip to question 35 if your current living situation is Homeless.*

- No
- Yes

35. If yes, please rate the accessibility of your housing on a scale from 1-5. (Note: please complete this based on household members with long-term conditions, not temporary injury or illness.)

- Very poor**, meaning any of the following applies to any household member or the property:
  - Difficulties entering/exiting the house due to steps, narrow doorways, or other restrictive entryway features
  - Inability to freely move around the house due to narrow hallways, steps/stairs, or other mobility-restricting features
  - Basic activities and tasks such as bathing, preparing food, and getting in/out of bed are unable to be performed independently due to physical features of the property and/or its appliances.
  - No modifications have been made to the property to make it more accessible
- Poor**, meaning any of the following applies to any household member or the property:
  - Difficulties entering/exiting the house
  - Some parts of the house are inaccessible due to narrow hallways, steps/stairs, or other mobility restricting features
  - While some basic activities and tasks can be managed alone, others require assistance due to the physical features of the property and/or its appliances
  - No modifications have been made to the property to make it more accessible
- Adequate**, meaning any of the following applies to any household member or the property:
  - All members of the house are able to enter/exit the house with ease
  - May experience some difficulties moving around the house and performing basic tasks, but able to meet basic needs independently when possible
  - The property owner has not made any modifications to the property to improve accessibility, but most features of the property are accessible as-is



- **Good**, meaning any of the following applies to any household member or the property:
  - All members of the household are able to enter and exit the house with ease
  - The house is easily navigated, even by household members who use mobility devices or otherwise experience mobility difficulties
  - Everyone is able to perform basic activities independently when possible
  - Minor modifications have been made to the property to improve accessibility
  
- **Very good**, meaning any of the following applies to any household member or the property:
  - All members of the household are able to enter and exit the house with ease
  - The house is easily navigated, even by household members who use mobility devices or otherwise experience mobility difficulties
  - Everyone is able to perform basic activities such as bathing, resting, and eating without any difficulty
  - Minor or major modifications have been made to the property to improve accessibility
  - The property owner has plans to continue adding features that improve ease of movement and access throughout the house.

Please share more details about your experience with housing accessibility if you feel comfortable:

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## SAFETY + COMMUNITY

The following section will ask you questions about how safe you feel in your rental property. There will also be questions about your neighborhood and your experience with and perception of your neighborhood. All questions are optional.

36. In your history of renting in Douglas County, have you ever felt unsafe in your rental home?

*please skip to question 36 if your current living situation is Homeless.*

- Yes
- No

37. Do you feel safe in your current living arrangement?

- Yes
- No

38. In your history of renting in Douglas County, has your landlord or property manager ever made you feel unsafe?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please describe (if you are comfortable): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In your current housing, rate the following statements as true or false:

*please skip to 44 if your current living situation is Homeless.*

39. My landlord and I have a positive, respectful relationship.

- True
- False

40. My landlord and I have an open line of communication.

- True
- False

41. My landlord has entered my home without providing 24-hour notice.

- True
- False

42. My landlord or representatives of my landlord have verbally harassed me, called me names, threatened, or intimidated me.

- True
- False

43. My landlord or representatives of my landlord have physically harassed me or assaulted me.

True

False

44. I do not feel safe being in my home when my landlord, property management, or maintenance workers are present.

True

False

Please rate the following statements as true or false for your current situation:

44. I know my neighbors.

True

False

45. I feel safe and comfortable walking around my neighborhood.

True

False

46. I feel at home in my neighborhood

True

False

47. My neighborhood has adequate sidewalks.

True

False

48. My neighborhood has adequate lighting.

True

False

49. My neighborhood has opportunities to connect with my neighbors, such as parks, community gardens, or neighborhood events.

True

False

50. My neighborhood feels like a community that I feel accepted and welcomed into.

True

False

51. There is an appropriate amount of law enforcement in my neighborhood.

- True
- False

52. Law enforcement has too much of a presence in my neighborhood and I worry I will be wrongfully ticketed or cited.

- True
- False

53. Law enforcement has too little of a presence in my neighborhood, and I worry I will not be supported by emergency services.

- True
- False

54. If comfortable, please share any comments or experiences you have regarding your neighborhood or your safety in your rental housing: \_\_\_\_\_

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**OTHER EXPERIENCES**

55. What are your ideas to improve renting in Douglas County? \_\_\_\_\_

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56. Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding renting in Douglas County? \_\_\_\_\_

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## CLOSING

Thank you for participating in the survey. Your input is valuable and will help guide future changes to improve the accessibility and quality of rental housing in Douglas County.

If you need additional resources or support regarding housing, the Lawrence Public Library has created a comprehensive [Community Resource Guide](#).

To be entered in a raffle for a gift card and to opt-in to follow-up regarding this survey, please share your contact information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Other contact information/ best way to reach me if I win the raffle:

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I would like to be contacted to participate in a follow-up interview:

- Yes
- No

I would like to be contacted about upcoming opportunities to get involved with housing justice in my community. This will subscribe me to the Lawrence Tenants mailing list:

- Yes
- No

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey Census Data, 2022. Retrieved August 2024 from [censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks](https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks)

<sup>2</sup> American Community Survey Census Data, 2022. Retrieved August 2024 from [censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks](https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks)

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey Census Data, 2022. Retrieved August 2024 from [censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks](https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, 2024. Retrieved August 2024 from <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/minimum-wage/state>

<sup>5</sup> American Community Survey Census Data, 2022. Retrieved August 2024 from [censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks](https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks)

<sup>6</sup> Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2022. Retrieved September 2024 from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/douglas-county-ks/#education>

<sup>7</sup> Douglas County Community Health Assessment, 2019. Retrieved September 2024 from <https://ldchealth.org/DocumentCenter/View/1935/2019-Douglas-County-Community-Health-Assessment?bidId=>

<sup>8</sup> American Community Survey 1-Year estimates, 2023. Retrieved August 2024 from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACS1Y2023.B25031?q=B25031:%20Median%20Gross%20Rent%20by%20Bedrooms&g=050XX00US20045>

<sup>9</sup> American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2022. Retrieved September 2024 from <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/14000US20045000604-census-tract-604-douglas-ks/>

<sup>10</sup> A Place for Everyone: Our plan to end homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County, 2024. Retrieved October 2024 from <https://lawrenceks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/homelessness-report.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Assessment of fair Housing Update, 2023. Retrieved September 2024 from [https://assets.lawrenceks.org/pds/devservices/cdd/consolidated\\_plans/2023/Lawrence-Assessment-of-Fair-Housing-2023-Update-FINAL.pdf](https://assets.lawrenceks.org/pds/devservices/cdd/consolidated_plans/2023/Lawrence-Assessment-of-Fair-Housing-2023-Update-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> American Community Survey, 2016-2020. Retrieved September 2024 from <https://ldchealth.org/DocumentCenter/View/5018/LDCPHCHA-V12>

<sup>13</sup> Douglas County Homelessness Needs Assessment, 2022. Retrieved September 2024 from <https://www.dgcoks.gov/sites/default/files/media/groups/health-housing-and-human-services/pdf/douglas-county-homelessness-needs-assessment-2022.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Based on demographic reporting from the Housing Stabilization Collaborative and Kansas Housing Resources Corporation on applications for the Kansas Emergency Rental Assistance program.

<sup>15</sup> Creating More Inclusive Tenant Screening Practices: Emerging Practices for Tenant Screening in Rental Properties, 2024. Retrieved October 2024 from <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/creating-more-inclusive-tenant-screening-practices>