



# **2020 TOWN SURVEY**

## **REPORT ON SURVEY RESPONSES**

### **TOPICS**

**Resilience to Climate Change • Housing**  
**Improving Town Elections • Net Zero Emissions**  
**Open Space & Recreation • Reducing Plastic Waste**

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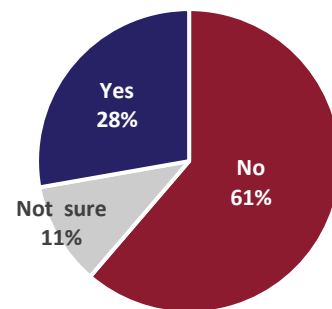
# OVERVIEW

Every year since 1992, the Envision Arlington Town Survey has invited people in Arlington to share their opinions about and experiences with select issues in Town. Issued annually between January and March, the survey helps to identify challenges, priorities, and expectations for the future of the Town. It has become an important tool for opening a dialogue with the community and providing education about how Town government works, as well as for collecting suggestions for improvement and future engagement.

The 2020 Town Survey explored community resilience, housing, parks and open space, Net Zero planning, elections, and single-use plastics. Envision Arlington’s goal is to gather responses from a broad range of community members to ensure that the diverse viewpoints of the Arlington community are represented. For this reason, a series of demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey so we could compare survey responses with what we know about Arlington’s population as a whole based on U.S. Census and American Community Survey data.

This report summarizes key findings from the data collected in the Town Survey. The survey was administered primarily online between January 1 and March 1, 2020, and received a total of 4,581 responses. This is roughly the same number of responses as received in 2019 (4,575), however in 2019 and prior, responses were gathered at a household level, meaning only one person per household could take the survey. In order to encourage greater representation, 2020 was the first year in which responses were solicited from individuals. This appeared to be effective as approximately 28% of respondents reported that this past year was the first time they had taken the Town Survey.

**Is this the first time you have taken the Annual Town Survey?**



Not all members of the Arlington community have internet access or feel comfortable taking online surveys. For that reason, paper copies of the survey were provided at Arlington’s two libraries and the Senior Center. Responses were entered into Survey Monkey by Envision Arlington volunteers. Forty-six individuals responded using printed surveys. Envision Arlington welcomes suggestions for how to bring the survey to more residents who lack access to computers. Volunteers who would like to assist in outreach to expand survey access should get in touch by emailing [envision@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:envision@town.arlington.ma.us).

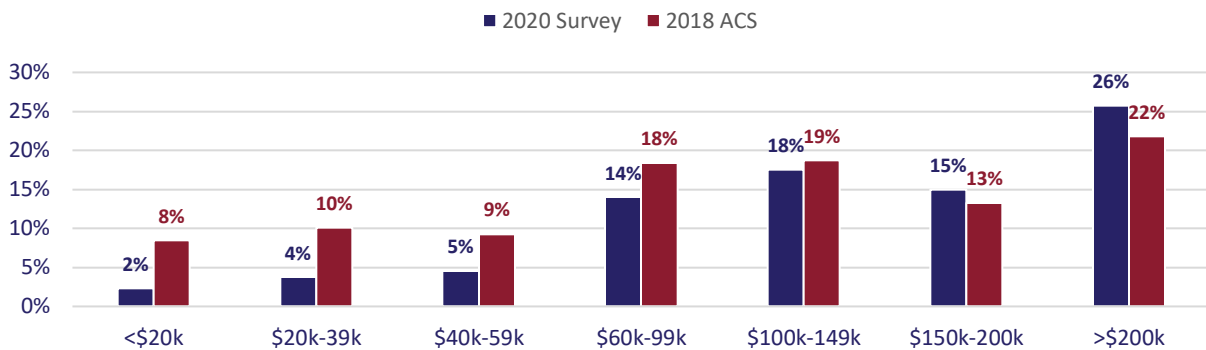
The survey is funded in part by the Town’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

Each year, the final section of the Annual Town Survey includes a series of optional demographic questions, which are compared with American Community Survey (ACS) data to assess the degree to which respondents represent the broader community. Compared to data from the 2018 ACS, certain populations were overrepresented in Town Survey results: households with an annual income greater than \$100,000, homeowners, middle-age cohorts, and households with children.

Around 17% of respondents did not report their annual income. Of those who did provide their annual income, 2% reported an annual income less than \$20,000 compared with 8% in the ACS, and 4% reported earning between \$20,000 and \$40,000 compared with 10% in the ACS.

**Household Income of Survey Respondents vs. 2018 ACS**



In the Town Survey, 76% of respondents reported owning their home, whereas ACS data indicates that 59% of Arlington residents own their home. And according to 2018 ACS data, approximately 31% of Arlington households have a child under 18 in the house; among respondents to the Town Survey responses, this proportion was 42%.

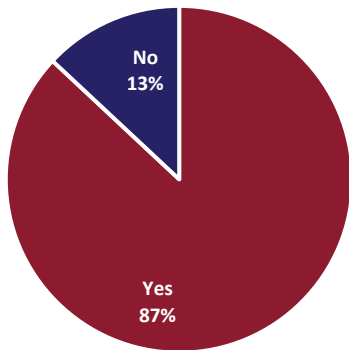
Because of the differences between Arlington’s ACS demographic profile and demographic data reported in the Town Survey, several of the topic areas in the following pages include a breakdown of how individuals from various cohorts responded to specific questions.

# RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

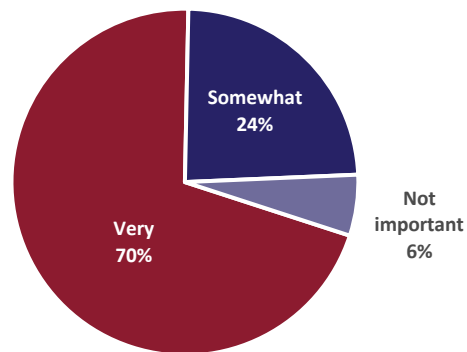
The impacts of severe weather are being felt around the country as well as in Massachusetts. As described in the Town’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan, Arlington is vulnerable to a variety of potential disruptions including heavy rainfall, ice and snowstorms, extreme heat, and sea level rise leading to storm surge from the Mystic River and Alewife Brook.<sup>1</sup> With this in mind, Sustainable Arlington, an environmental task group of Envision Arlington, developed a series of questions for the Town Survey. The questions aimed to ascertain how prepared the community is for the impacts of climate change, particularly in relation to extreme weather events.

Almost 90% of respondents expect climate change to affect them personally, and 94% reported that it is somewhat or very important to prepare for it.

**Do you expect climate change to affect you personally?**



**How important is it to you that the town prepares for climate change?**



Sustainable Arlington interprets these responses as a broad mandate for the Town to take a proactive role in reducing our carbon footprint, such as by implementing the Clean Energy Future Committee’s Net Zero Action Plan, and to continue to strengthen the Town’s climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation through initiatives like the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program.

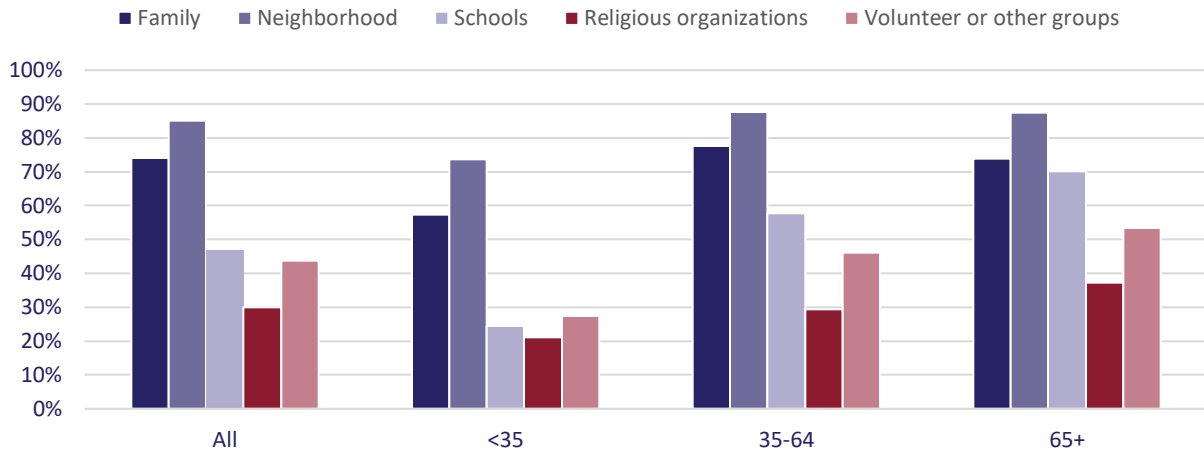
This section of the survey also asked how connected respondents feel to groups and resources in Arlington. Within the community, people reported that their strongest connections were to family and their neighborhood, followed by the school community. In an emergency, 86% of respondents had a neighbor they would feel comfortable asking for help, 74% had a neighbor they would check on, and over half would turn to neighbors for information. For those who felt well-connected to their neighborhood, everyday communication with neighbors occurred most frequently online, by chance meeting while out, and at block parties or regular meetings. In terms of social resilience these results are encouraging, but it also highlights existing gaps. These data suggest actions the Town may be able to take in order to encourage connectedness within neighborhoods.

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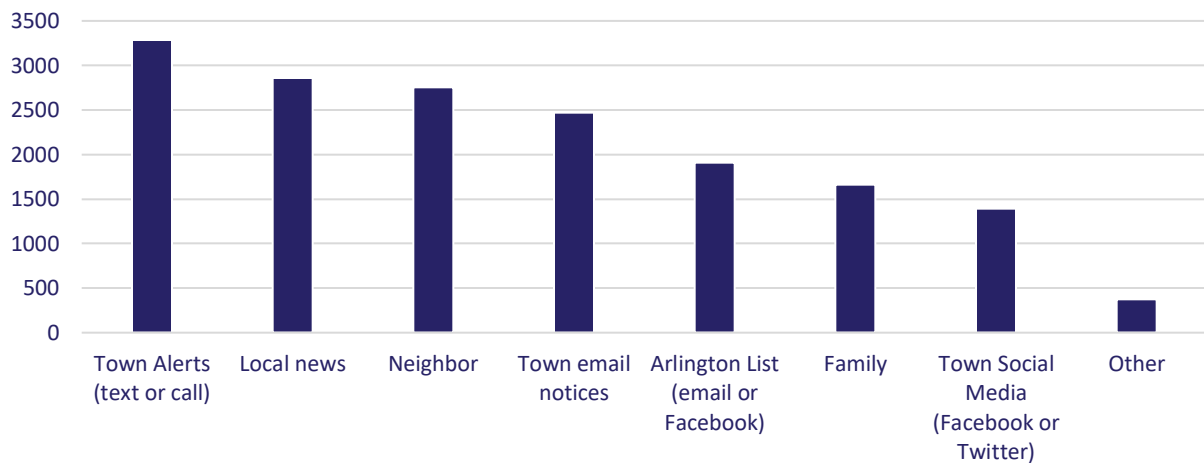
<sup>1</sup> *Town of Arlington Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings & Recommendations*, Kleinfelder. May, 2018: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=43409>

While existing metrics of connectedness were encouraging, there were significant differences in levels of connectedness based on age. Residents 35 and older reported being somewhat connected or well connected to various groups and resources and Arlington at rates eight to 33 points higher than residents younger than 35. It will be important in future work to better understand the sources of these differences and what the Town can do to help create a more resilient and connected Arlington.

**Respondents who reported being somewhat connected or well-connected to various groups and resources in Arlington**



**Who or what would you turn to for information and direction in case of an emergency?**



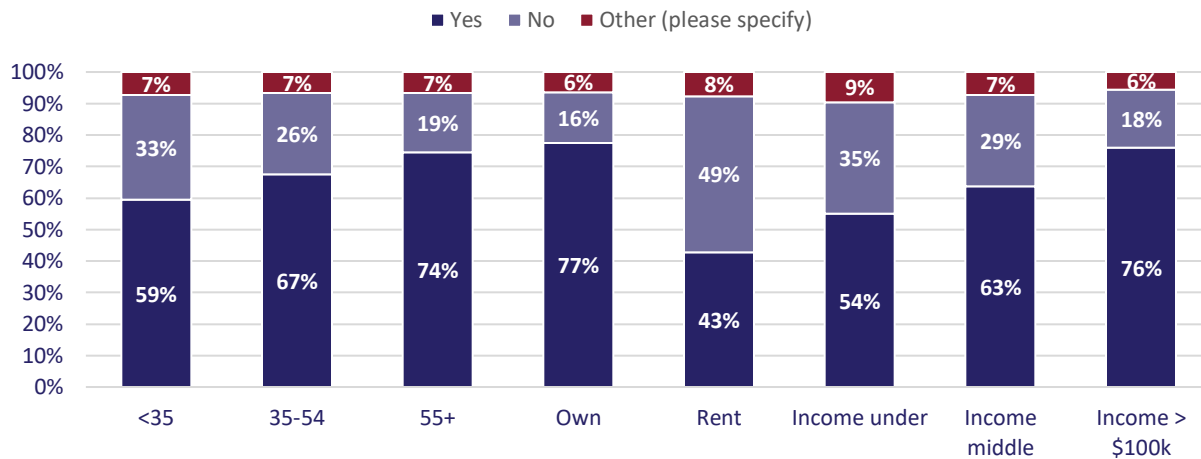
A final set of questions asked about connectedness in emergency circumstances, particularly in regard to extreme weather events. In an emergency, the top four sources of information most likely to be used were Town Alerts, local news, neighbors and Town Notices (email), selected in about 50% to 70% of answers. These data suggest that the Town’s existing communication programs are largely successful, although there is potentially bias in these responses due based on whether respondents learned about the Town Survey through the Town’s existing communication channels.

# HOUSING

Envision Arlington collaborated with the Department of Planning and Community Development to develop a series of questions to obtain a profile of the community’s current housing situation and understand respondents’ housing preferences. This topic area was part of an effort to engage Arlington residents in broad, inclusive outreach to understand and address housing needs.

The majority of all respondents (69%) indicated that they are satisfied with current housing options available to them. There was a significant correlation between satisfaction and higher income, older ages, and homeownership. As shown in the chart below, the proportion of residents earning an annual household income greater than \$100,000 who are satisfied with Arlington’s housing options exceeds households with annual incomes lower than \$60,000 by 21 points, and residents 55 and older who are satisfied with housing options exceeds their youngest cohort by 15 points. The gap in satisfaction is most significant when comparing households who own their homes with those who rent, with a 34 point gap in satisfaction.

**Are you satisfied with the housing options available to you right now?**



An open-ended question asking why respondents indicated they were satisfied or dissatisfied clarifies some of these distinctions. Homeowners who reported being satisfied with the housing options available to them overwhelmingly reported that their satisfaction was linked to the fact that they own their homes, and many commented on the proximity of Arlington to their workplaces, amenities, and transportation.

*“We are an example of a family fortunate enough to be able to purchase a house in Arlington. This was due to financial support from our extended family. Otherwise we would likely not be satisfied and would have to move out of Arlington.”*

*“I love my house and my neighborhood. MA in general is very expensive, and so is Arlington, but I’m glad the tax money is going towards important things like schools.”*

A large proportion of homeowners indicated that they were satisfied, but that they could not afford to buy in Arlington if they were looking to do so today, or that they fear that housing has become unaffordable for their adult children, those who rent, or those who earn a low or moderate income.

*“Though satisfied with our situation, my wife and I have concerns about the rapidly escalating cost of housing. Young families are being priced out of the town, a fact that soon will affect the vitality and diversity of the community.”*

*“The cost of housing is incredibly high. But that's not unique to Arlington. This needs to be tackled a regional basis.”*

*“We own our home and bought seven years ago. Today, we would not be able to afford to buy in Arlington and it is sad to me that many of my friends can't afford to live here any longer. It seems all the housing options that are available are very costly, and many older two-families (which we are in) are being gutted and sold at a high price. I wish there were more affordable options for middle-class families.”*

A number of older homeowners—both satisfied and dissatisfied—commented on real estate taxes and concern about the lack of options for downsizing within the community.

*“I own my home and like it very much but I am very concerned about the future. Will property taxes force me to sell my home when I retire? Will my children be able to afford to live in Arlington? These questions worry me.”*

*“I'm a homeowner since 1996 and satisfied with Arlington for now. As retirement approaches, and a fixed income, Arlington is less attractive in terms of finding a smaller, affordable place.”*

*“My house represents 75% of my nest egg. Crossing my fingers I get out at the right time.”*

*“Can't downsize in town: housing costs too high. Can't stay in my home: taxes getting too high. The assessment of my un-remodeled house increased \$100,000 last year.”*

The two largest reasons for dissatisfaction among homeowners were housing affordability and rising taxes. Although one satisfied homeowner noted that they felt there was sufficient housing diversity in town, many homeowners also expressed frustration at the limited supply of alternative housing options in town, whether based on their need find a larger home or to downsize:

*“Housing prices in Arlington have increased dramatically in the 15 years. We are fortunate to own a two-family home. We had planned to move to a single-family home, but cannot afford to at this point. We love living in Arlington so will not move to a less expensive community, especially while our kids are in school here. We do keep track of the housing market, and find that the homes for sale are too large (we don't need 2500 - 3000 square feet!) and over a million dollars. Homes that are less than a million dollars are typically too small, overpriced for the space or need significant renovation. Arlington really needs affordable housing!”*



*"I could not downsize my living arrangement and still afford to live in Arlington, despite selling my house for a profit"*

*"We are sort of stuck in house that on paper is very valuable but we are cash poor facing huge property tax increases. We could sell but then where would we move?"*

*"Like many Arlington seniors, looking ahead to downsizing, there aren't many options - especially affordable - and especially in East Arlington. Need a building with elevators (more than one because I've heard many people talk about their building's elevator being broken for weeks or even months at a time). Prefer a building with indoor parking and good other transportation options."*

These and other responses highlight the variety of ways in which the term "affordability" is interpreted. A large number of responses called for the need to increase the town's supply of affordable housing, although many others noted that exclusively focusing on affordable housing ignores the concerns and needs of households who earn a midrange income.

*"Not enough housing that is affordable for middle-income families who don't qualify for services and yet aren't millionaires."*

*"Arlington housing has become way unaffordable for middle-class and working-class people with household incomes under \$100,000. In our household we have a teacher and a librarian (both with two graduate degrees) with two kids under 18, and this town is very expensive for us because of our income level."*

*"Both me and my husband grew up in Arlington and were able to purchase a house in 1985 but unfortunately, my children may never be able to live in Arlington. Arlington used to be a middle-class community but in order to live in town now, you have to be very low-income or wealthy. There are very few options for the middle-class."*

Other reasons for homeowners' dissatisfaction was the impact of housing costs on the Town's diversity, concern about smaller, older houses being torn down and replaced by large houses, and concerns that their adult children cannot afford to live in town.

*"I am elderly living in my home of 42 years...I want to age in place, but taxes and upkeep are out of control. My adult son, college educated and working lives with me because he cannot afford an apartment in town. He works as an aide in the Arlington School system for a modest wage."*

*"I am a 62 yr-old single household / homeowner. My taxes are increasing, making my already challenging house payment more of a concern from an aging-in-place perspective. I think Arlington should cap taxes for all people once they reach full retirement age, allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and short-term rentals, to accommodate students and visitors (who spend money in our town), which could offer extra income for homeowners and help relieve unmet affordable housing demands. It's possible to create protective regulations that aren't so rigid that it's almost impossible to do anything creative with our*

*homes. Rich developers should not be the only ones who are allowed to change things (basically it seems like they can do whatever they want)."*

Respondents who rent their home who reported being satisfied with their options frequently commented on their happiness with their housing location, accessibility of transit, and proximity to schools and amenities. A number of comments alluded to concerns about the potential for rent increases:

*"I am only satisfied because our landlord is renting to us at significantly lower than the market rate. She could get \$2200 or \$2300 for this apartment, and we pay \$1550. If she raised the rent, we would have to leave Arlington, which is a shame, because we love it here."*

*"Yes in that I like the place we are living right now, although we have problems with mice throughout the building. Our building is affordable and in a great location. If the rent gets raised drastically here, I'm not sure if we'll find other good housing options in Arlington (since I haven't had to look yet)."*

*"I LOVE living in Arlington and have been renting here for the last 6 years. The rent prices are extremely expensive and keep rising. I have struck gold in finding a reasonable apartment that is under market price for rent, but if I needed to move out of this apartment, I think I would have to leave Arlington because I wouldn't be able to afford it. I know I would not be able to afford to buy in Arlington."*

Dissatisfied renters expressed frustration at limited apartment supply, rising rents, inability to purchase a home in Arlington despite their commitment to the town, and concerns about the attitude of residents toward new development:

*"We cannot afford to buy in Arlington. We are committed to our town, but we can't purchase a home."*

*"As you know the prices in Arlington are outrageous. It's a local crisis as well as a national crisis. We need more housing especially near transit and there are so many closed-minded people in Arlington that block any new construction projects or zoning changes out of pure selfishness. Times change, populations grow, you can't deny other people access to Arlington because you "got in" when it was affordable or you can afford to buy currently. The people running the town and its residents need to not only talk about being progressive and inclusive they actually have TO BE progressive and inclusive. And STOP calling anyone that wants to build housing greedy - so small minded."*

Others expressed frustration over the barriers to purchasing a house after multiple years of attempts:

*"We rent. We have tried twice over the past 6 years to purchase a two family. Each time we were outbid by contractors with no contingency bids. I'm okay being outbid by a regular person who has fabulous cash. But we have 20% and are outbid by no contingency contractors who gut these glorious two families with original wood. As a result we still rent. We are very active in school and community. I'm amazed Arlington doesn't legislate programs to encourage local ownership of two-family homes. I assume the city places a priority on tax revenue over local, long term investment. Other US cities have programs that help*

*individuals better compete in a fair bidding fight with contractors. I'd encourage Arlington to investigate such options along with finding other tax bases other than residential. It will help ensure the city maintains a multi-level socio-economic foundation."*

*"We're fine with our current place but we rent and would like to own; however the extremely high housing market in Arlington means that if we decide to buy we'll either be forced to buy a very small place or move to another town. My brother recently bought a home in Arlington and it seems like there is a significant difficulty to not be outbid by developers. In terms of even saving to own the rental rates are also very high."*

Echoing the concerns of many dissatisfied homeowners, a number of respondents who rent expressed frustration at earning too much to qualify for assistance, but having insufficient income to afford to rent or buy a home in Arlington.

*"As a middle-class person, I can't afford to buy a house or condo. I make too much to qualify for programs, and too little to qualify for a mortgage. Rents are terribly expensive. Not sure how long I can stay in this town that I love (where I raised my son) now that I am divorced"*

*"Make too much money to qualify for assistance, but with two kids in private daycare (Arlington's public preschool is NOT working parents friendly), we have limited housing options in Arlington based on cost."*

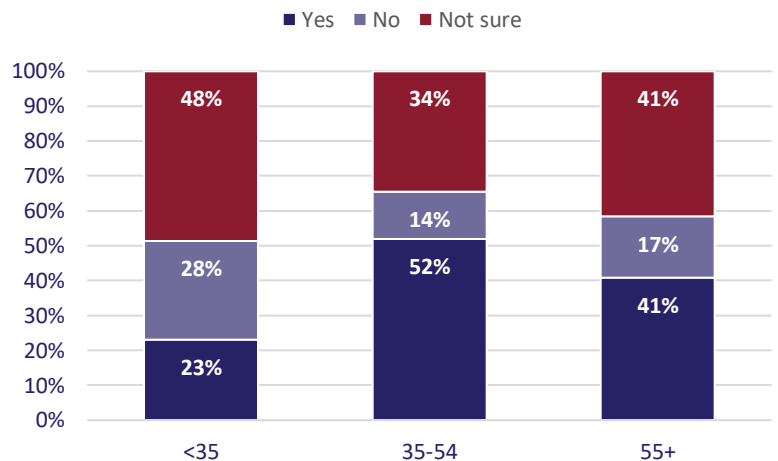
*"Housing costs are out of control. It's too expensive to even consider buying in this town I currently rent in town and am a teacher in town. The way the rent is increasing every year, I will be priced out of the Arlington rental market soon. It's terrible that town employees who are invested in the community are unable to afford to live here."*

Although a significant majority of respondents across all ages reported that it was very important or somewhat important to them to remain in Arlington (86%), respondents expressed uncertainty about living in town ten years from now. Roughly 52% of individuals between ages 35 and 54 expect to be in Arlington in ten years, while individuals under 35 reported the greatest proportion of uncertainty about where they would be (48% not sure).

Several themes emerged as to why respondents anticipated moving from Arlington in the next ten years; the most frequent reasons among individuals of all ages was affordability. Residents under age 35 cited the following issues most often:

- Cost or affordability of housing: many respondents younger than 35 cited high local and regional housing costs potentially prompting a move away from town.

**Do you think you will be living in Arlington ten years from now?**



*"We would love to stay. We currently pay \$2200/month in rent for a 100-year-old unrenovated house that costs \$250/month to heat in the winter. If our landlord raises the rent, we will probably have to leave Arlington for cheaper rent. We certainly don't quality for AHA, which is important. I don't think most people realize that Arlington isn't affordable to the middle-class either. We'd love to buy but can't even afford a condo, much less a single-family home."*

*"My family will leave Arlington (and likely the greater Boston area) in the next 3-5 years to be able to afford to buy a house."*

*"We may not be able to buy a house here on a 200k+ salary. We would try but would likely move to more affordable cities (West Mass, Maine, Vermont)."*

- Similarly, many expressed frustration with an inability to buy a home or upsize to a larger home in Arlington:

*"Prices. Current condo owner and would like to upgrade to a single-family home upon the arrival of our first child this summer. Most single-family homes under \$800k require significant structural upgrades."*

*"I love living in Arlington, but we are trying to start a family, and our apartment isn't particular situated for it, and we cannot afford any of the condo or single-family homes in the area."*

*"We live in a modest sized condo, and expect our family to grow. We will likely move to another home in the future, and it may or may not be in Arlington."*

- Transportation: several respondents referred to a preference for living in an area that would facilitate an easier commute or more transportation options.

*"I intend to move out of Greater Boston in 10 years, as I imagine housing availability and traffic congestion will be much worse then."*

*"I'm 30 years old and can't afford to buy here, and my company moved downtown. The commute from the center of Arlington to Downtown Boston can sometimes take an hour and a half using solely public transit."*

- Anticipation of a need to move due to graduate school, career changes, or relationships.

*"I would like to, but I also have shorter term goal (higher education, traveling, etc.) that may require me to move temporarily in the meantime."*

*"We've lived in Arlington for 1.5-2 years and are raising a child here. While we love our neighborhood, it is possible that changing family or job pressures could lead us to move in the next 10 years."*

*"I'm a college student; at the rate prices in housing are increasing, I doubt I'd be able to afford to live here in 2030, and I'm not sure I'd want to."*

Residents between 35 and 54 voiced the same concern about affordability, adding a desire to upsize or downsize, lack of rental stability, and a need for additional community amenities to the list of reasons for potentially leaving Arlington as described below.

- Cost or affordability of housing: respondents expressed frustration with rent rates, two-family conversions, single-family homes, and frustration with cost of housing in the Boston region.

*"I don't think I will be able to afford it. Part of my family recently moved to Belmont, because they needed an apartment without stairs and just could not afford Arlington prices. I'm going to need a place I can manage with a sprained ankle or something like that. We'd love to live together (at least in the same building), but Arlington doesn't have that kind of rental housing. It's important for us to live near this end of the red line, but we don't care if it's Arlington specifically."*

*"Our son is within 8 years of graduating from high school. If we can't find a two-family to purchase, we'll move to another location. We know four families who rent but purchased other properties for retirement outside of Arlington. To me, this should concern city planners. I think it's less about affordable housing - we've been here 8 years and Arlington hasn't ever been affordable - but more about whether the city wants to encourage long-term residency. 30-40% of our elementary school friends inherited their house from parents. With so many two families converted by contractors to two individual condos, passing on property won't be as prevalent in Arlington. If we can't purchase a two family, our son will be less likely to settle here in Arlington. There won't be a reason. He is a fabulous kid who is worth trying to keep invested in Arlington."*

*"When friends who move away from Greater Boston tell me what they can rent/buy in other areas, I have misgivings about spending my life here putting an enormous amount of my resources towards housing costs. But if I do settle down here, I'm equally fond of Somerville and might move in that direction, depending on what options are available."*

*"As a single parent of one child, I am not certain that I will be able to afford living in this great town as our need to live in a space larger than 1 bedroom is currently out of price reach (I work full time, have an advanced degree and very stable employment, with a salary \$20K above state median)."*

- Concerns about the ability to buy a home or upsize to a larger home: others felt that there were few options for downsizing within Arlington.

*"We need a bigger home to accommodate our growing family plus house my soon to be retired mother. We love Arlington but may not fit our needs in terms of housing prices for the realistic space we need."*

*"We're not sure we can afford to get a larger house in town. We love it here and would really like to stay."*

*"I would like to I sell my house when my kids are grown in order to downsize. But I can't imagine where I would go in Arlington."*

*"Once the kids have grown up and left, we'll downsize. Our house has appreciated well, and we can sell and buy a smaller house in a less expensive area and have additional retirement money."*

- Indications about a lack of housing security or stability: a number of respondents who rent their homes expressed concern about recent or anticipated rent increases or a change in landlord.

*"I make a good salary and I'm already priced out of my own neighborhood. (Been renting too long.) Ready to buy, I thought, and now buying seems impossible for a single income household if you make less than 200k/yr. I don't know what I'll do or where I'll live when my landlord sells the 2-family that I share. You either bought in the 60's or 70's and got lucky because Arlington popped and your house is worth a million dollars. Or, you have two very good incomes in your household so you can afford the median house price of 3/4 million. What are regular people supposed to do? I have constant stress about what comes next. I don't want to leave Arlington. Where are the 400k condos that are not depressingly horrible?"*

*"I have been renting in Arlington for twelve years, and being able to stay in Arlington depends on my landlord. If the landlord sells or converts the property or increases the rent beyond what I can afford, I most likely will not be able to remain in the town. I pay significantly below market rate as a long-term tenant although I was paying well over the rate when I first moved to Arlington. There is nothing affordable for a single-income person with a moderate salary (i.e., slightly above what would qualify for housing assistance but not enough to compete with two-income households) either to rent or buy."*

- Community amenities: some indicated that they would like to live in a community with more amenities than what Arlington provides them in return for a high cost of living:

*"We are in Arlington now while our daughter is in school, but when she graduates in 2024 we plan to move out of Arlington into Boston. We want to reduce our commute times and be in an urban community with more immediate (and walkable) amenities such as retail, dining, and event venues."*

*"We live in a condo in east Arlington now and would like a single-family home. Moving to Arlington heights is unappealing because it is too far from alewife station. Hence we will likely be buying a house in another town (Newton or Needham where we can get a single family with close proximity to transport directly into the city)."*

Respondents age 55 and older again expressed concerns about affordability, although these were often intermingled with comments about Arlington's tax rates. Respondents in this age cohort also expressed a desire to downsize, desire to move closer to family, a desire to move on to something different, and aging and health being a factor in not knowing where they would be in ten years. One respondent noted the challenge of asking this question only of current Town residents:

*"I am answering the housing questions for my daughter. Since she cannot obtain housing here, she doesn't get the survey info in the mail, so wouldn't be filling it out except for me; however, she should be able to have a voice with regard to the town's housing. In fact, she's one of the most important types of people the town should hear from."*

- Taxes and affordability: for many respondents, affordability and rising taxes are a commingled concern as they age and begin to rely on a fixed income.

*“While I earn an excellent salary, as a single person I could not afford to purchase a home or condo in Arlington despite living here for 2 decades and the cost of rent is rising to levels that make it difficult to believe that I could continue to afford to live in the town for more than 5-10 years.”*

*“Housing prices will determine if we can afford to buy a place, which will impact if we are still here. As renters, within 10 years we could have paid for a place, at the current rental prices, which seem to keep going up! Also, unless the Red Line receives some well-deserved upgrades, it will be unusable in 10 years, which would make the commute to Boston very challenging. The job market in this area also will impact our decision.”*

*“Much too expensive for a retiree. Yes tax breaks are given to some but you have to be so poor that you wouldn't be living here in the first place. Retirees don't know how long their savings will need to last and they cannot afford tax hikes and overrides. We talk about helping people "age in place" but with the tax burden it's just talk. There should be a different property tax rate for homeowners over the age of 60.”*

*“We are senior citizens on a fixed pension. Our taxes went up 18% with no home improvements at all. The cost of taxes is barely affordable for us and an additional rise will force a move. Given that possibility, we are exploring housing options in other towns. We wouldn't stay in Arlington.”*

- Change: some respondents indicated feeling that Arlington is not what it used to be.

*“The town is getting to be too expensive, and it's not the pleasant suburban town it used to be. If you're 30, have an advanced degree, make an obscene amount of money, and are decidedly left of center politically, then you will feel right at home. That doesn't describe me, and I don't feel like I belong here anymore.”*

*“There are two reasons. I live on fixed income and I am finding it increasingly difficult to pay my real estate taxes as younger residents continually approve every tax override proposal. Also, in many ways I feel like I don't belong here anymore. Arlington seems to be catering more and more to people under 40, and I don't mean just town officials. Look at the number of ethnic restaurants, day care centers, and substance abuse counsellors along Mass. Ave. Arlington no longer resembles the attractive town I moved to forty years ago.”*

- Desire to downsize: a number of respondents 55 and older expressed a desire to downsize paired with concerns that suitable housing is not available in town.

*“We will likely want to downsize as we grow older, but choices in Arlington for suitable housing are not so plentiful. We would probably want to stay in Arlington, but not sure we'll find what we'll be looking for.”*

*“We consider downsizing, and though we love it here, we might decide to reside in a more urban setting. But we also have not ruled out staying here in Arlington, if we could figure out how to adapt our own house to have renters, as we enjoy our community very much.”*

- Aging and health: multiple respondents pointed out that at their age, health status, ability to navigate stairs, or even, as one wry commenter wrote, whether they would still be alive were significant factors in their uncertainty about where they would be in ten years.

*“Arlington has too few options for older people who were not VERY poor but not at all wealthy and need/want safe one-floor living, especially if they have pets... our income in the near future will be very limited, and so we cannot continue home maintenance/repairs while paying for other basic expenses, let alone healthcare. If we get universal health care/Medicare for All soon, that will change the equation somewhat. If Arlington could develop intergenerational, modest-priced housing units we would be more likely to stay.”*

*“Our age makes it possible that multi-floor living will not be feasible in 10 years. There is very little housing in Arlington that does not require negotiating stairs.”*

*“I will be looking for more of a community / co-housing/ retirement/ continuum of care situation. I would like to live in Arlington as an older person but honestly don't see many 'customizable' options here.”*

- Desire to move closer to family: several respondents noted wanting to move closer to their adult children and grandchildren.

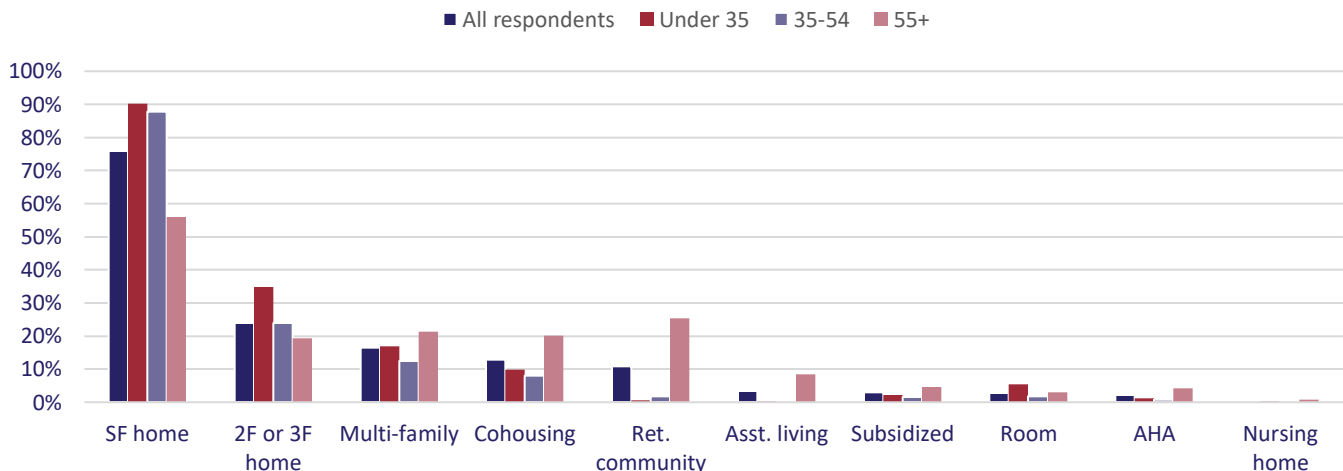
*“We had always planned to live here forever. But it is becoming so expensive and crowded. Also, we had hoped that our extended family members would be able to move here to be closer, and there is no way that any of them could afford it.”*

*“At some point my wife and I will move to wherever our son lives, so he can more easily manage our affairs as we age.”*

- A sense of being “done” with Arlington after retirement or wanting something different: some older respondents indicated that they would like to move elsewhere due to weather, politics, proximity to outdoor interests, or simply seeking a change of scenery.

In response to a question about what kind of housing respondents would prefer to live in ten years from now, a majority preferred a single-family home. Individuals 55 and older expressed the greatest preference for a wider

**What kind of housing would you prefer to live in ten years from now? (Check all that apply)**

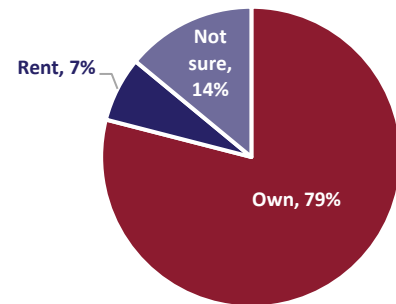




range of housing types, from single family, two- or three-family, multi-family, cohousing, retirement communities, and assisted living. Additional comments submitted under the “other” category varied by age group, with those 55 and older expressing interest in condos and townhomes (45 comments), aging in place (15 comments), or moving in with family members, seeking housing on a single floor, or moving to a warmer or vacation-like climate (seven comments each). Individuals younger than 55 shared fewer comments, although 11 reported wanting a condo or townhome, nine indicating they intend to stay where they are, and four hoping to be in an apartment or in a tiny house.

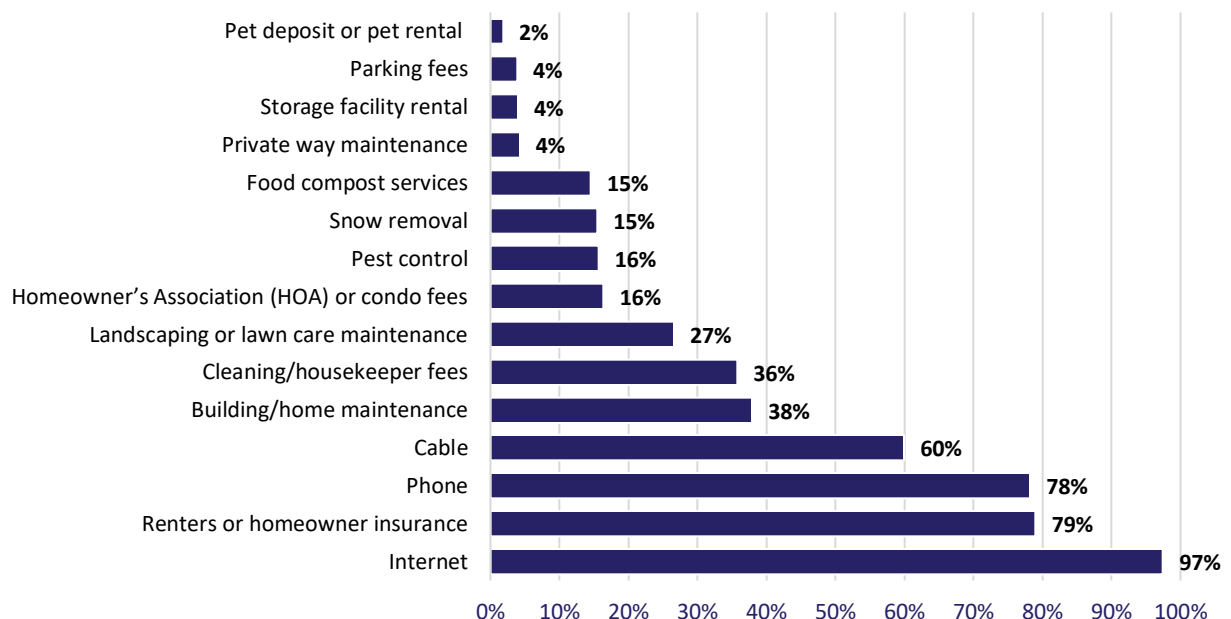
**Would you prefer to rent or own your next home?**

Around 79% of respondents indicated that they would prefer to own their next home, although this proportion is highest among those ages 35 to 54 (89%) and lowest among individuals 55 and older (65%). While the majority of individuals who currently rent and own both stated a preference for owning their next home, those who currently own a home had a higher proportion of respondents who wanted to own their next home (85%) than those who currently rent (60%).



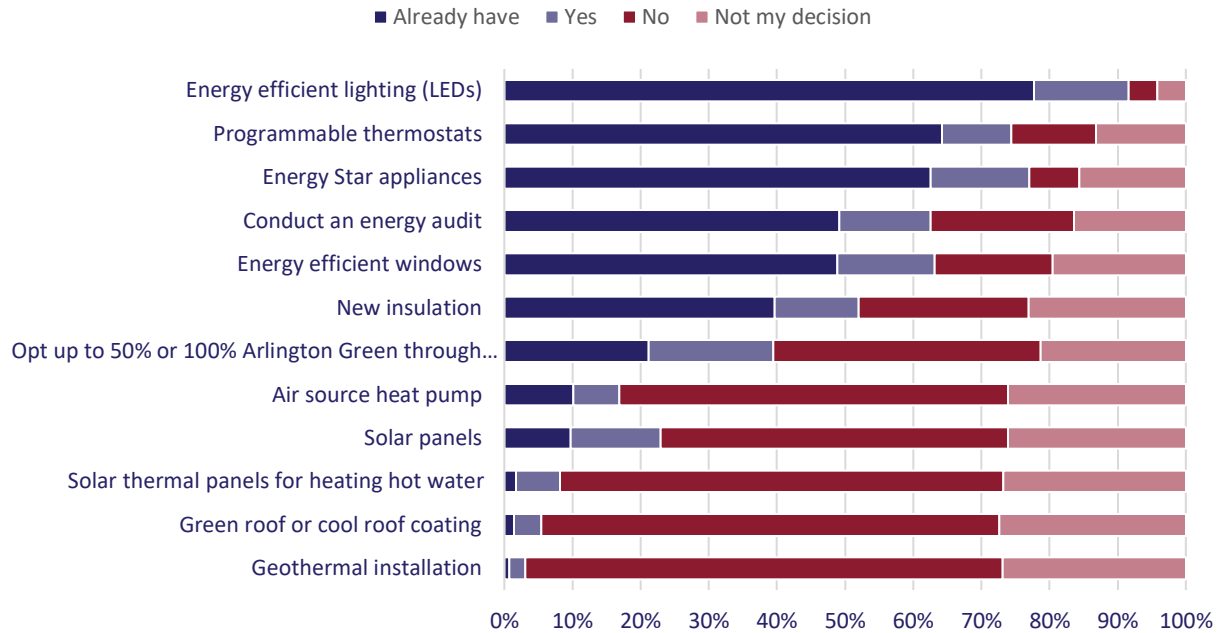
A separate question was designed to understand additional costs related to housing that Arlington households pay in addition to their rent, mortgage, and taxes. Evaluating the proportion of residents who pay various expenses helps gain a better picture of the items to consider when understanding what an average household in Arlington needs to attain a modest yet adequate standard of living. It also helps us to understand the secondary factors that may contribute to cost burdens. This question did not include additional monthly costs such as food, childcare,

**In addition to your rent or mortgage, which of the following housing costs do you pay on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly, annually)?**



transportation, or healthcare, all of which are also important in understanding a family budget and what is needed to support economic security.

**Do you currently plan to introduce any of the following renewable energy or energy conservation measures to your home?**



A final set of questions addressed renewable energy and conservation measures that a typical resident may be able to introduce into their home. Measures that can easily and inexpensively be taken were the most likely to have already been introduced or most likely to be introduced; these include energy efficient lighting, programmable thermostats, and Energy Star appliances. More costly measures or those requiring joint decision making by multiple households, such as solar panels, green roofs, and geothermal installation were least likely to have been adopted or considered in the future.

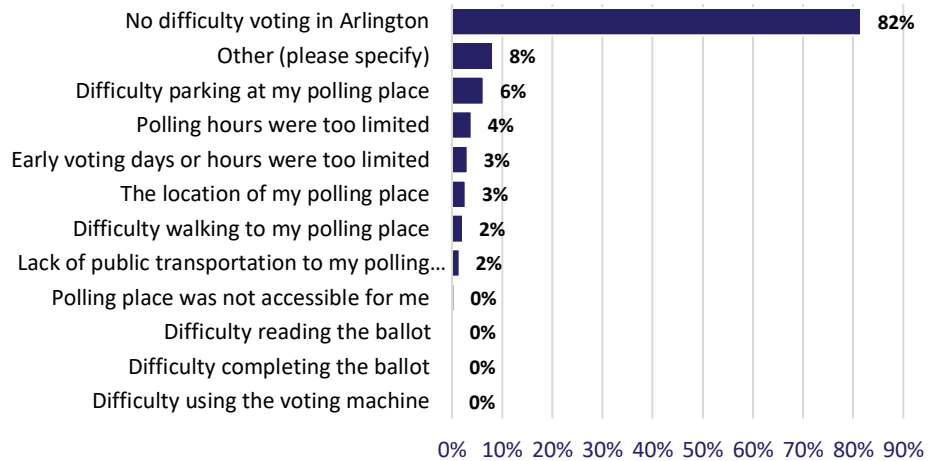
This information will be provided to the Arlington Redevelopment Board and used by the Department of Planning and Community Development and Envision Arlington to inform outreach and engagement on the topic of housing in Arlington.

# IMPROVING TOWN ELECTIONS

In Spring 2019 Town Meeting voted to form the Election Modernization Committee (EMC) to study possible improvements to voting in Arlington. The Election Modernization Committee has reported to Town Meeting with their recommendations based on studying our current systems and receiving input from residents about their experiences voting in Arlington. Data from the 2020 Town Survey will be used by the EMC to offer suggestions to the Town Clerk, and to propose additional warrant articles in 2021.

Most residents, 82% reported that they have “No difficulty voting in Arlington.” Six percent reported difficulty parking at their polling place, four percent reported that the polling hours were too limited, and three percent that the early voting days or hours were too limited.

## Have you had difficulty voting due to any of the following?



There were two polling locations, however, that were potentially of concern. One in five residents who vote at the Pierce School (precincts 17, 19 and 21) and Chestnut Manor (precincts 7 and 9) report difficulty voting due to poor parking, limited transit options, lack of walkability, or other issues with the polling place location, with the primary issue being parking. Less than five percent of residents voting at other polling locations reported transportation or location issues, although at the Bracket School (precincts 12 and 14) voters who do not drive noted difficulty walking up the hill.

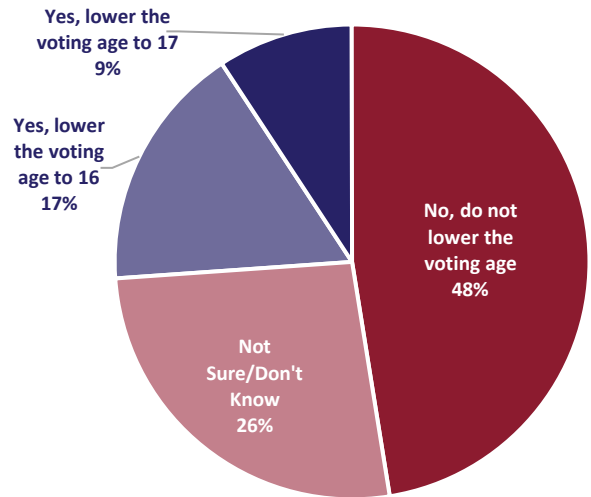
Besides problems with transit to, walking to, or parking at their polling location, commentators noted occasional long lines during national elections, inadequate snow removal on handicap ramps, broken machines, difficulty getting an absentee ballot, and accidentally being removed from the rolls. Others mentioned not knowing that a local election was happening, or having enough information about the candidates.

About 10% of those offering comments mentioned their frustration that non-citizen residents are not able to vote in local elections. Last spring Arlington’s Town Meeting voted 72% to give these resident aliens (e.g., green card holders) the ability to vote in local elections. The article is an example of a Home Rule Petition, which means it will need to be approved by the State House before Arlington can implement the rule change.

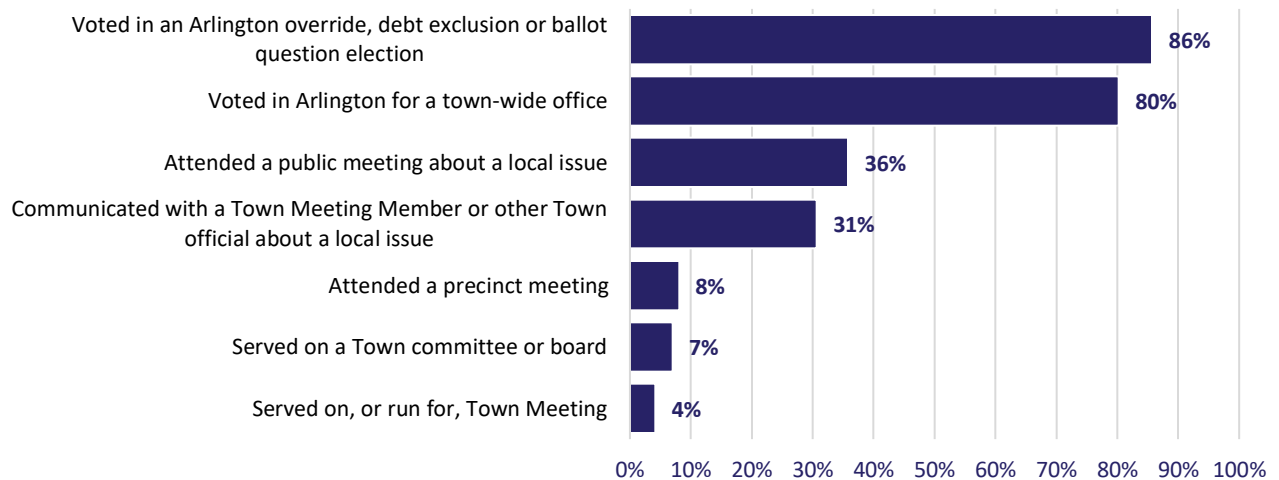
Perhaps the clearest result from the survey is that lowering the voting age to 16 or 17 is unpopular, with only 26% of respondents in favor, 47% opposed, and the remaining respondents unsure of their views.

Note, that the people who answered this survey tend to be more engaged than the general population. Although fewer than 20% of registered voters voted in the 2019 town election and fewer than 16% voted in the 2018 town election, over 80% of survey respondents reported voting in a town election in either 2018 or 2019, with 86% reporting voting on the June Debt Exclusion/Operating Override. Additionally, 36% of survey respondents reported attending a public meeting, 31% reported communicating with a Town Meeting member or other Town Official in the last two years, and 7% reported serving on a town board or committee.

### Do you support lowering the voting age for Town elections?



### Which of the following have you done in the last two years?



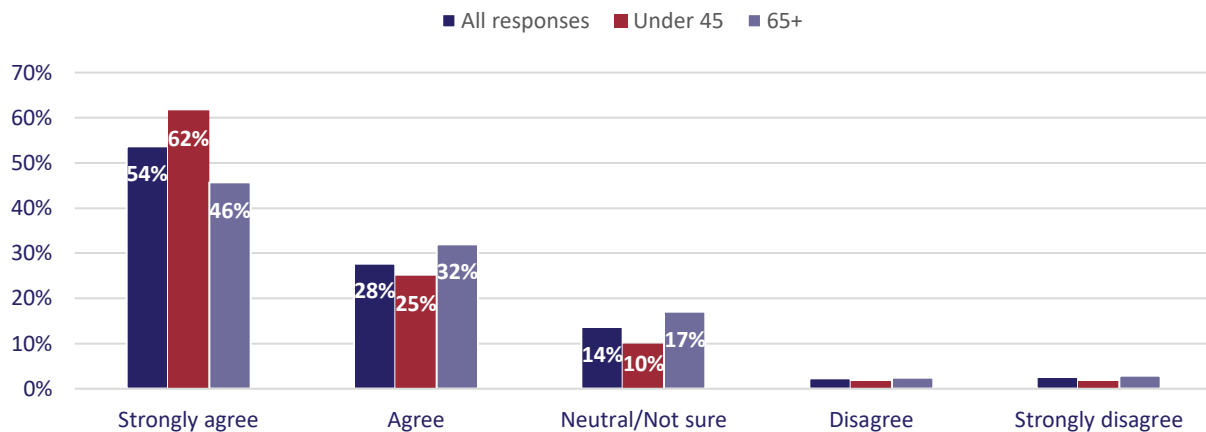
# NET ZERO EMISSIONS

In 2018, Arlington’s Select Board committed Arlington to becoming carbon neutral (net zero emissions of greenhouse gases) by 2050. The Town is developing a Net Zero Action Plan for the community, and administered a separate survey specific to the Net Zero plan in summer, 2020. The questions included in the 2020 Town Survey provided the Town with a baseline understanding of Arlington’s general interest in this commitment.

The survey asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with several statements about climate change and reducing carbon emissions. The charts below identify the overall responses, as well as how responses varied by age cohort of the respondent.<sup>2</sup>

In general, actions to address climate change and personal willingness to change one’s habits to achieve carbon neutrality were more favorable to respondents younger than 45 and less appealing to those older than 65. Even so, older respondents still expressed significant support for actions to address climate change, with at least 78% of those 65 and older agreeing that the Town should strive to become carbon neutral by 2050.

**Arlington should strive to become carbon neutral by 2050.**

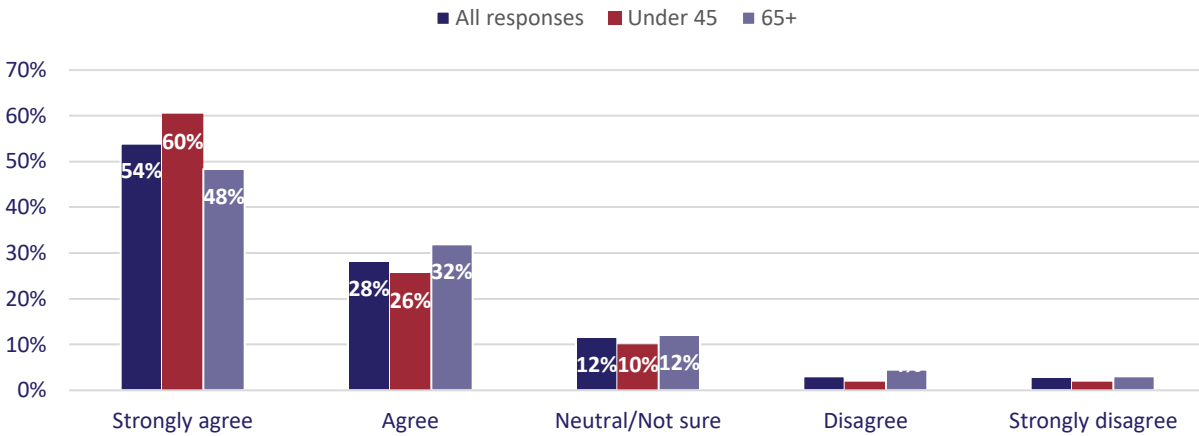


Two additional questions sought to determine respondents’ preference for top-down policy changes or taking personal actions to combat climate change. Overwhelmingly respondents were in favor of both, with 82% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement “I want the Town to take strong action to combat climate change”, and

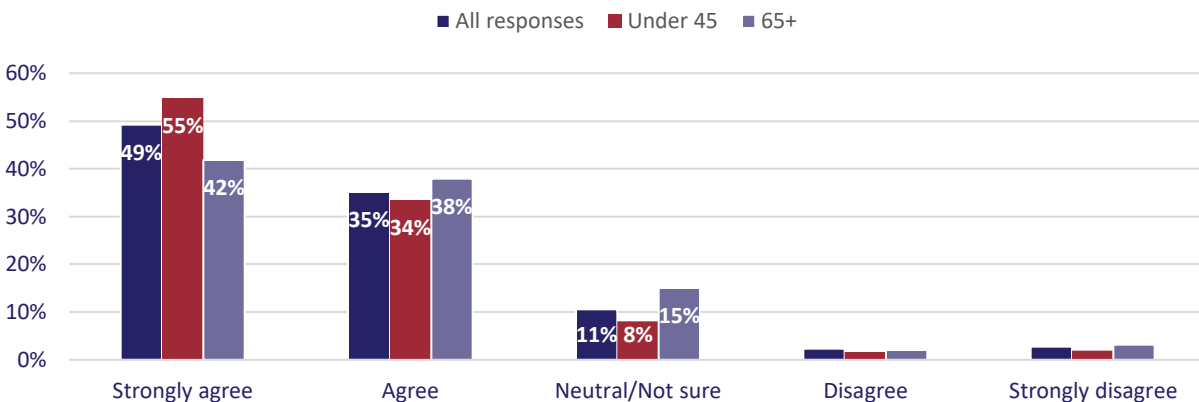
<sup>2</sup> Responses were also filtered by income and housing tenure, although these two factors had significantly less impact on a respondent’s position than their reported age.

84% indicating that they are willing to change their habits to help Arlington achieve the goal of carbon neutrality. A minority of respondents indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree with either statement.

### I want the Town to take strong action to combat climate change



### I am willing to change my habits to help Arlington achieve the goal of carbon neutrality.



The Town, working through the Clean Energy Future Committee, is developing a Net Zero Action Plan to identify specific strategies and actions by which to reduce carbon emissions and reach the Select Board’s goal for the town to be carbon neutral by 2050.

*“So glad you’re paying attention to climate change issues!”*

*“Climate change is a concern, but every decision requires a balancing of costs and benefits. Questions that do not attach a cost to an initiative are hard to interpret. For instance, I like the idea of green parking lots and driveways, so that water does not run off onto roads and into sewers. However, I don’t know whether the cost is worthwhile. A debate about the costs and benefits of going green(er) would be valuable.”*

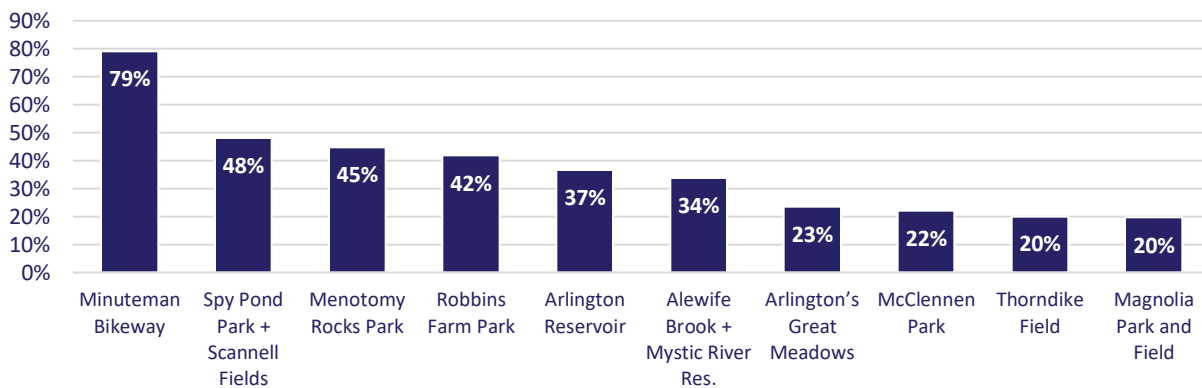
*“Carbon neutral by 2050 is completely against the science of how to keep the global temperature below 1.5C. Arlington needs to have a much more ambitious goal.”*

# OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

The Open Space Committee applied for and subsequently received FY2021 funding from the Community Preservation Act Committee to update the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which expires in the calendar year 2022. OSRPs need to be updated regularly in order for communities to remain eligible for State and Federal open space and recreation grants. Through the plan update process, Arlington will engage its residents to better understand its open space and recreation needs. To inform the update process, the Town Survey asked questions about residents' priorities for existing and future open spaces and parks.

In this topic area of the survey, respondents were first asked what parks and open spaces they visited most frequently, and were provided with a list of all parks and open spaces in town (see Appendix B for full question text). The top ten locations are shown in the graph below; notably, the Minuteman Bikeway is visited by 79% of respondents, and surpassed all other locations by a minimum of 30 points. The top ten list also represents Arlington's largest parks and open spaces in land area, while the locations that received the fewest votes are conservation lands and smaller neighborhood parks.

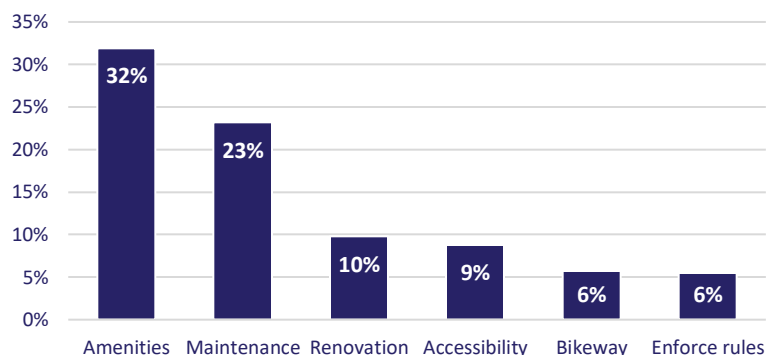
**Top 10 Parks Used by 2020 Town Survey Respondents**



*"I am surprised at the length of this list! I'm not sure that I know where all of these parks are... Some kind of more user-friendly resource online would be great."*

When asked for suggestions for how to improve the Town's parks and open spaces, 32% of respondents suggested improving or expanding available amenities, and 23% noted that maintenance should be improved or continued. Approximately 63% of those who took the survey did not answer this question, and 11% of those who did noted that they did not have suggestions for improvements.

**Top Suggestions for Improvement**

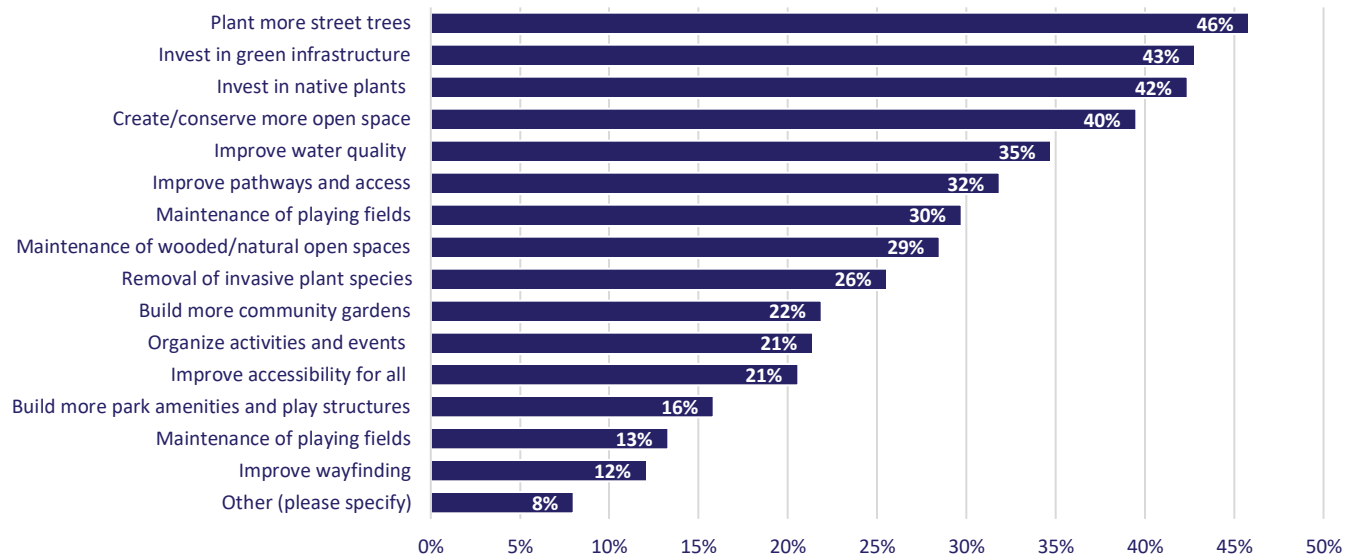


Another question asked whether respondents experienced any barriers to visiting Arlington’s parks and open spaces, and of those who answered, 30% said they experienced no barriers. The most commonly cited barriers included availability of restrooms, accessible walking paths or sidewalks, others allowing their dogs to run off-leash, a lack of parks that allowed off-leash dogs, finding nearby parking (for cars or bicycles), time, and weather. A number of respondents indicated that until taking the survey they were unaware that Arlington had so many parks and open spaces, and expressed interested in exploring more areas.

The final question in this topic area asked about respondents’ top priorities for investment in Arlington’s parks and open spaces. In general, respondents prioritized planting more trees (46%) and native plants (42%), adding more green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and porous pavement, in town (43%), and conserving or creating open space (40%). Respondents also stressed the importance of maintaining existing parks and open spaces in town. One respondent noted,

*“I found it almost impossible to limit myself to four choices about how to improve parks and outdoor spaces. Almost everything you listed seemed important!”*

**Top priorities for investment in parks and open spaces**



These results will guide public outreach for the OSRP update to ensure a comprehensive engagement process.

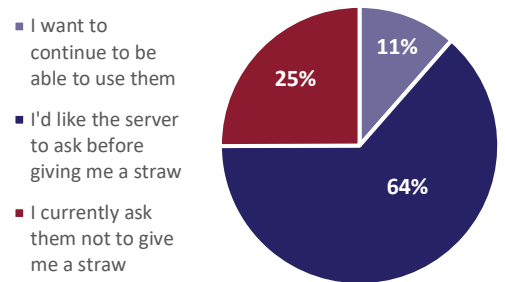


# REDUCING PLASTIC WASTE

Zero Waste Arlington (ZWA) is a Town Committee that promotes waste reduction initiatives to improve health and restore the environment. One of the focus areas for ZWA is to reduce the amount of single use plastics that are generated by Town residents and visitors that go into the recycling or waste stream or become litter. In the 2020 Annual Town Survey, ZWA included five questions regarding Arlington residents' opinions about single use plastics. In particular, ZWA asked about preferences regarding certain convenience items, including plastic straws, single use water bottles, plastic utensils, and plastic take out containers. ZWA will use the results of this survey to guide its future advocacy and policy efforts in the coming year.

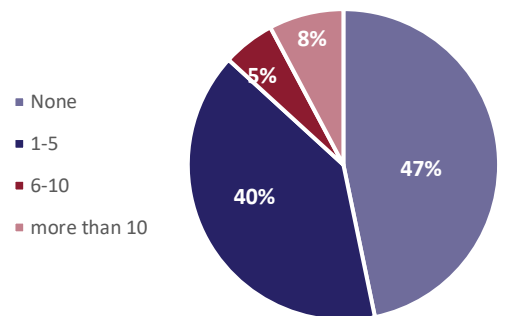
Asked about their opinion regarding plastic straws provided at restaurants, the majority of Arlington residents said they would like restaurant staff to ask patrons if they would like a straw rather than automatically providing one (63%). One quarter of respondents said they ask servers not to provide a plastic straw. Only around 11% indicated that they want to still be able to use plastic straws at restaurants. While Arlington could consider a ban on plastic straws at restaurants as some Massachusetts cities and towns have done, the results of this survey also suggest that a voluntary approach of asking restaurants to make it their policy to ask customers before providing plastic straws, coupled with education efforts aimed at patrons, might help reduce the amount of single use plastic straws used at Arlington restaurants.

**What do you think about plastic straws in restaurants?**



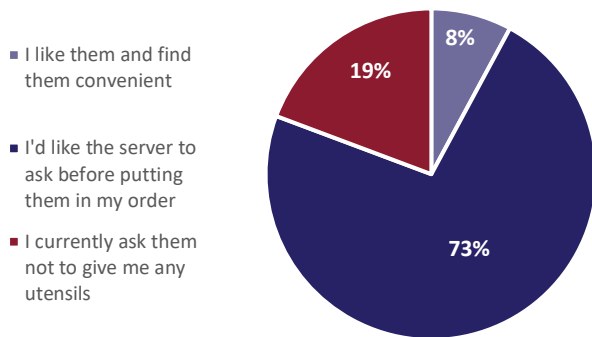
A question regarding single use plastic water bottles indicates that nearly 47% of respondents don't purchase single use plastic water bottles at all and another 40% use only around 1-5 bottles a month. The remaining minority of respondents used more than that each month. From these results, it appears that the purchase of single use water bottles may not be a major waste contributor in Arlington, but still there is room to reduce these numbers. A third question asked whether the presence of more water bottle re-filling stations in Arlington would reduce the number of single use water bottles residents purchased. The results here were a bit mixed with 42% saying yes it would and 37% saying no. ZWA has been promoting more water re-filling stations, like the one installed in Town Hall earlier this year, to encourage residents to use re-usable water bottles rather than single use disposable bottles. While demand for these water stations remains high, it appears that such stations will impact the buying habits of fewer than half of respondents.

**How many single-use bottles of water do you use in a typical month?**

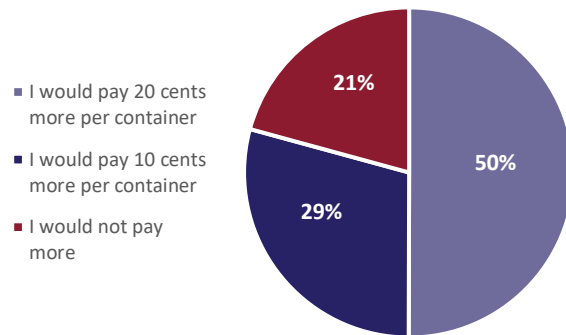


When asked about single use plastic utensils provided by restaurants with takeout orders, respondents overwhelmingly wanted restaurants to ask customers if they needed them before including them with their takeout order (73%). Nearly 20% of respondents indicated that they ask restaurants not to provide them and 8% said they like plastic utensils and find them convenient. ZWA had planned to launch “No Plastics Please,” a single-use plastics reduction campaign, in partnership with area restaurants prior to the start of the pandemic. The results of this survey strongly show that residents would be supportive of efforts to reduce the use of disposable plastic utensils by having restaurants only include them with a takeout order when requested. Many respondents noted that they usually bring takeout food home to eat and don’t need plastic utensils.

**What do you think about plastic utensils provided by restaurants with takeout orders?**



**Would you be willing to pay an extra charge in order to get takeout orders in compostable containers?**



Lastly, the survey asked respondents whether they would be willing to pay an extra charge in order to get takeout orders in compostable containers. 50% said they would pay an extra 20 cents per container and another 29% said they would pay an extra 10 cents per container. Only 21% indicated that they would not be willing to pay more for compostable containers. These results suggest that nearly three-quarters of respondents are supportive of restaurants using compostable containers and are willing to pay a little more for their food packaged in compostable containers.

Comments to the survey questions were wide ranging, including one respondent who wrote, “I would pay any price necessary to get single use plastics out of my life.” Several respondents supported outright Town bans on single use plastic items, like straws and water bottles. There appeared to be strong support to a switch from plastic takeout containers to compostable ones, but several respondents indicated that there needs to be more capacity to compost such containers in Town and education efforts to ensure that compostable containers don’t enter the curbside recycling bins. The Town is currently making efforts to expand opportunities for composting in Arlington.

While there is understandably a broad range of opinions on single use plastics in Arlington, the general preference from survey respondents appears to be that the Town continue to focus on efforts to reduce this abundant waste stream. ZWA will use these results to guide future efforts to support its mission to reduce the use and disposal of single use plastics in Arlington.



# APPENDIX A

## METHODOLOGY

Every year, Envision Arlington receives comments that respondents are confused about how the Annual Town Survey is developed. This note is intended to address some of these comments and provide more clarity to the public.

### How Topics Are Chosen

The topics for the survey are chosen every year by the Envision Arlington Standing Committee based on inquiries from town departments or committees. Our aim is to choose topics where input will help the organization posing the questions develop next steps. That means that topics may not reflect the most critical issues in town in a given year, but the ones where decisions are being made. This year, a number of topics were proposed by committees, boards, and departments at the beginning of planning processes, so establishing a baseline based on survey responses will help when results are evaluated in future years.

In other cases, collecting feedback from the public via a survey contributes to one component of public engagement required by state and federal programs. Envision Arlington also believes that the survey offers a valuable opportunity for organizations to get information about their programs out to the public. Examples include questions this year about parks around town. In the process of asking which parks people used the most, smaller parks that people may not have known about were brought to the attention of residents. Similarly, the Tree Committee's questions in 2018 led to increased applications for town trees and greater awareness of watering new street trees.

Because Envision Arlington strives to keep the process of responding to the survey under 15 minutes, we don't have the opportunity to ask questions on the same topics year after year. The most often that a topic tends to be featured in the survey is every three or four years. If an issue is important to you and you were happy to see it on the survey last year, it's not likely to be on the survey again this year but may reappear in several years.

### Demographic Information

This year we made a number of changes to how we collect demographic information and that prompted a number of comments. There are two reasons for asking these questions: first, we can compare the collective data on people who take the survey to census data. This tells us how where data from our survey may be skewed and helps us develop better communication about the survey to under-represented populations. Second, some questions help us better understand the answers. This year, by collecting information on age, income, and current housing, we could study the responses to the housing questions and compare answers given by people in various cohorts.

Every question on the survey is optional; no one is ever required to answer a question that makes them uncomfortable. We attempt to ask questions that are sufficiently broad so that no one can be identified by their answer.

### **How Envision Arlington Uses Written Comments**

We value the open comment section of the survey because it lets residents share thoughts on any topic and not only the ones in the survey. However, we have noticed that for every person who thinks the survey needs more detail and background, another person thinks the survey is too long and needs to provide fewer details so it's faster and easier to complete. When analyzing survey data, we read the comments to look for trends and try to find the middle ground.

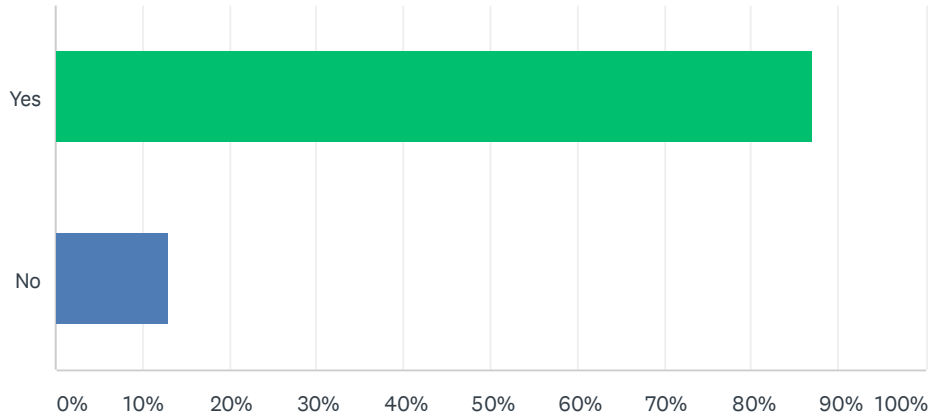
Envision Arlington survey volunteers tag written comments and share them with appropriate departments and committees. If themes are detected in the comments or someone writes a particularly helpful suggestion, those themes or feedback could contribute to questions on future surveys. Comments related to issues handled by various boards, committees, or Town departments are provided to those groups for further evaluation and consideration.

# APPENDIX B

## SURVEY RESPONSES

# Q1 Do you expect climate change to impact you personally?

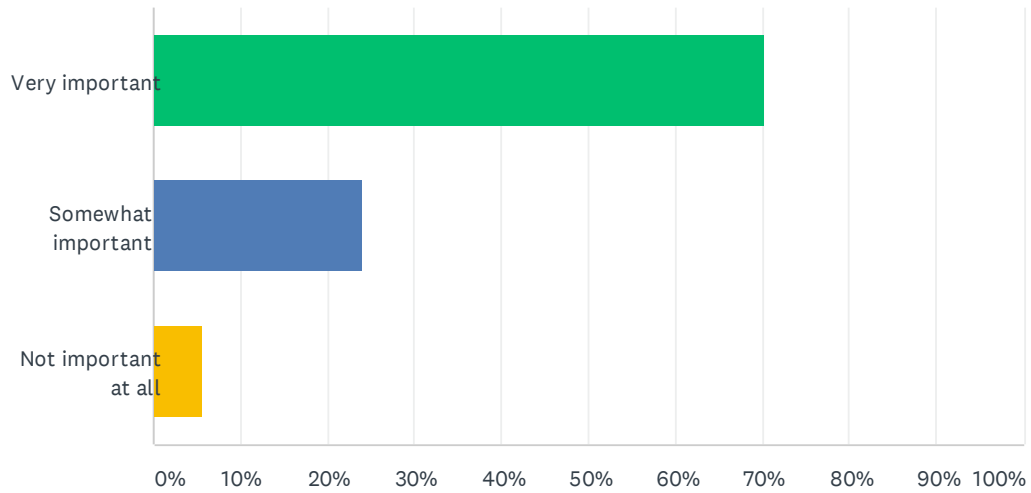
Answered: 4,573 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	86.97%	3,977
No	13.03%	596
TOTAL		4,573

## Q2 How important is it to you that the town prepares for climate change?

Answered: 4,576 Skipped: 6



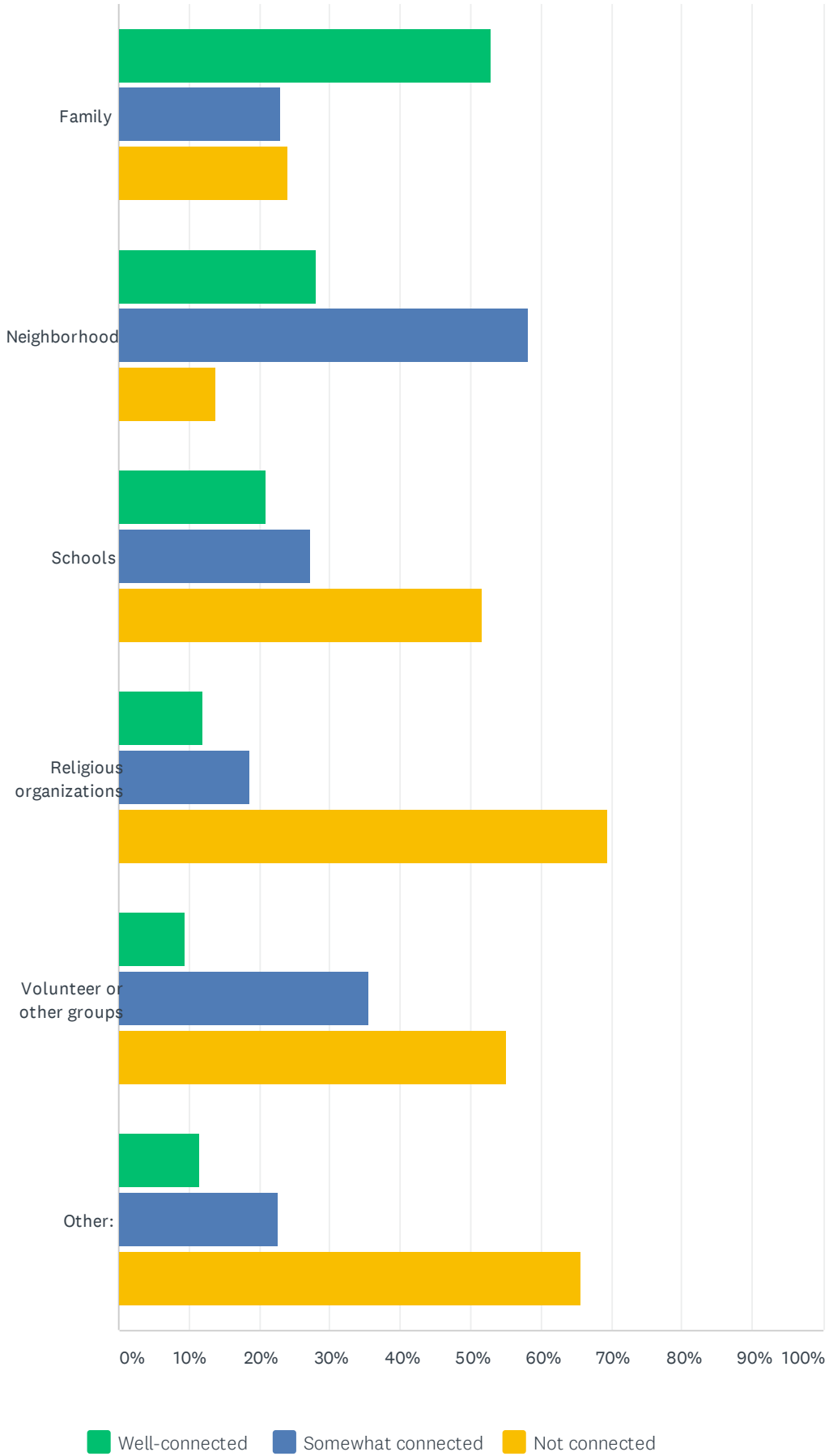
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very important	70.32%	3,218
Somewhat important	23.99%	1,098
Not important at all	5.68%	260
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,576</b>



Q3 One of the main factors in how well a community responds to disasters and emergencies is the extent to which its community members are connected to one another. How connected do you feel to groups and resources in Arlington?

Answered: 4,560 Skipped: 22

# 2020 Annual Town Survey



2020 Annual Town Survey

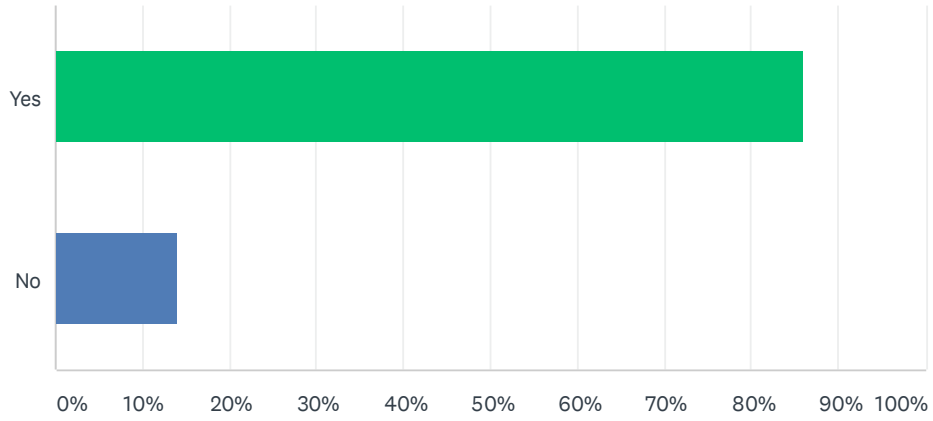
	WELL-CONNECTED	SOMEWHAT CONNECTED	NOT CONNECTED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Family	52.89% 2,363	23.10% 1,032	24.02% 1,073	4,468	1.71
Neighborhood	28.00% 1,267	58.10% 2,629	13.90% 629	4,525	1.86
Schools	20.99% 935	27.28% 1,215	51.73% 2,304	4,454	2.31
Religious organizations	11.94% 535	18.70% 838	69.37% 3,109	4,482	2.57
Volunteer or other groups	9.42% 420	35.56% 1,585	55.01% 2,452	4,457	2.46
Other:	11.54% 174	22.68% 342	65.78% 992	1,508	2.54

**Q4 In what ways do you and your neighbors bring people together or increase communication within your neighborhood?**

Answered: 2,711 Skipped: 1,871

### Q5 In case of a disaster or emergency, do you have a neighbor who you would feel comfortable turning to for help?

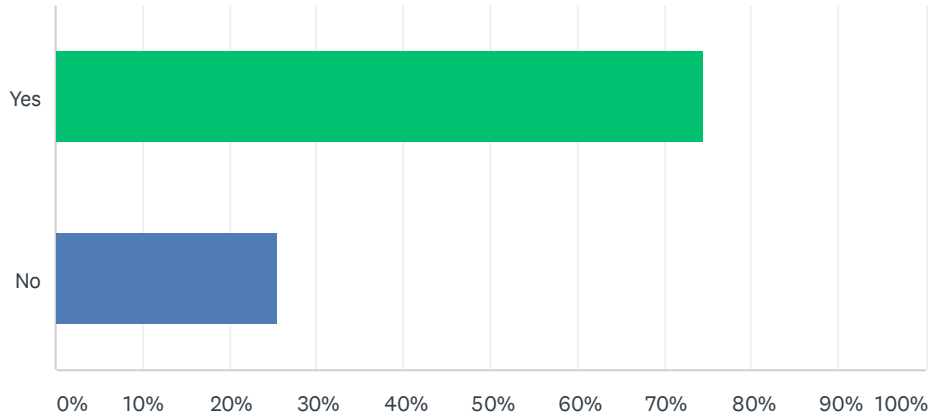
Answered: 4,551 Skipped: 31



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	85.94%	3,911
No	14.06%	640
TOTAL		4,551

### Q6 Do you have neighbors who you would check on in the case of an emergency during an extreme weather event, such as a heat wave or severe snow storm?

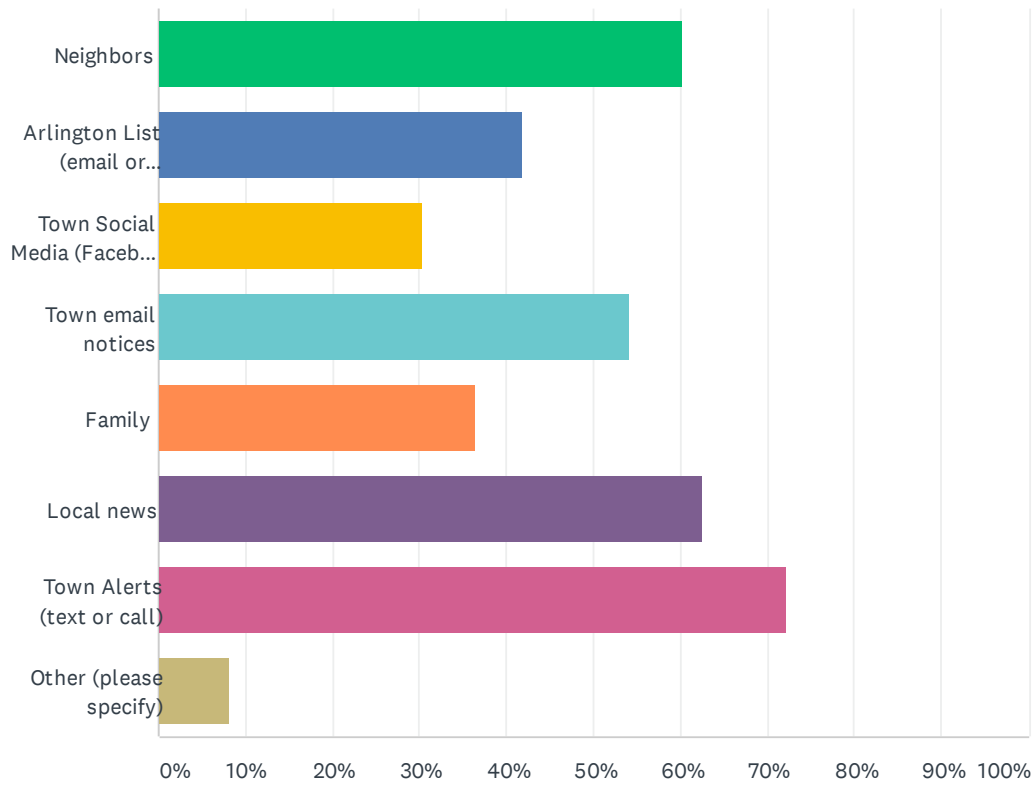
Answered: 4,546 Skipped: 36



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	74.46%	3,385
No	25.54%	1,161
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,546</b>

### Q7 Who are you likely to turn to for information and direction in case of emergency? (Check all that apply)

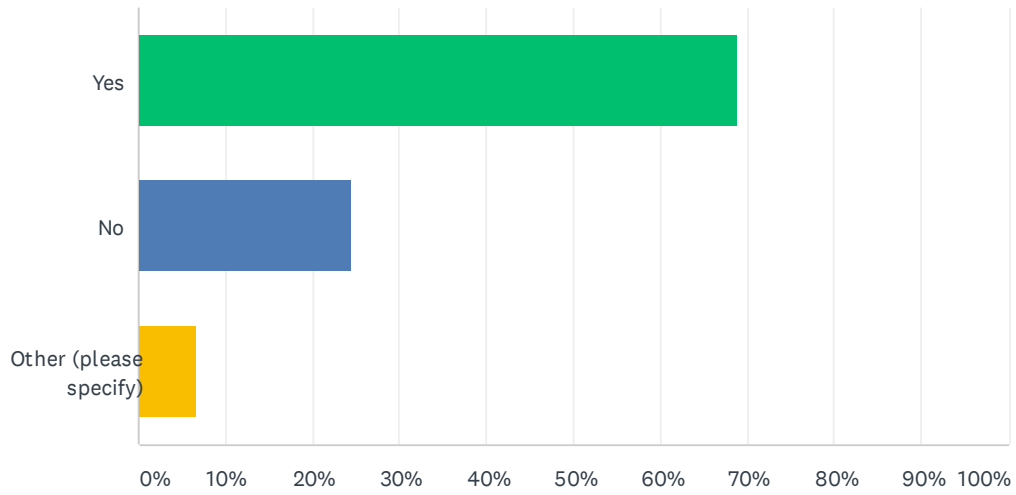
Answered: 4,564 Skipped: 18



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Neighbors	60.34% 2,754
Arlington List (email or Facebook)	41.76% 1,906
Town Social Media (Facebook or Twitter)	30.43% 1,389
Town email notices	54.18% 2,473
Family	36.37% 1,660
Local news	62.64% 2,859
Town Alerts (text or call)	72.09% 3,290
Other (please specify)	8.15% 372
Total Respondents: 4,564	

## Q8 Are you satisfied with the housing options available to you right now?

Answered: 4,404 Skipped: 178



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	68.85%	3,032
No	24.39%	1,074
Other (please specify)	6.77%	298
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,404</b>

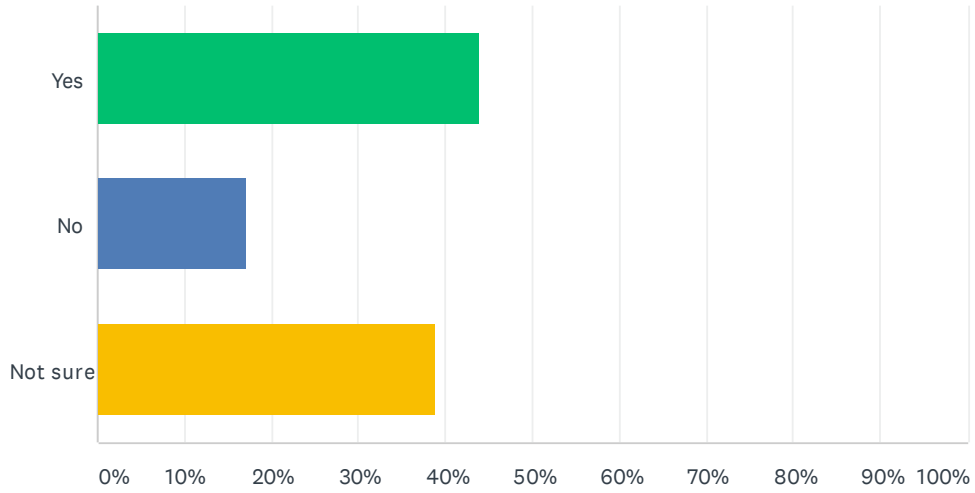


## Q9 Please share some reasons for your satisfaction or dissatisfaction

Answered: 2,618 Skipped: 1,964

### Q10 Do you think you will be living in Arlington ten years from now?

Answered: 4,427 Skipped: 155



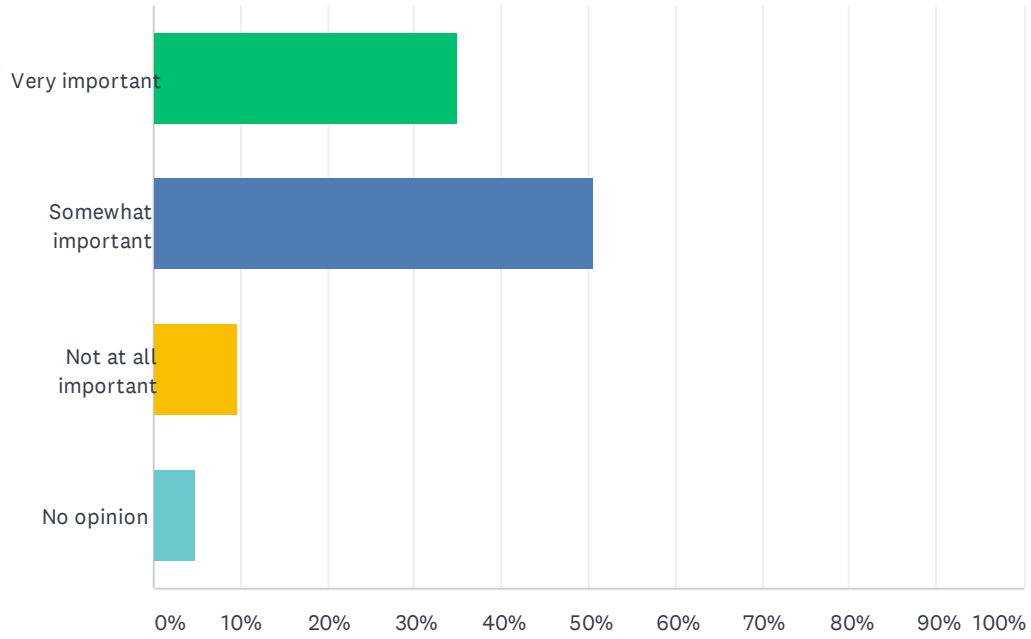
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	43.91%	1,944
No	17.14%	759
Not sure	38.94%	1,724
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,427</b>

**Q11 If no or not sure, please explain why:**

Answered: 2,155   Skipped: 2,427

## Q12 Is it important to you to remain in Arlington?

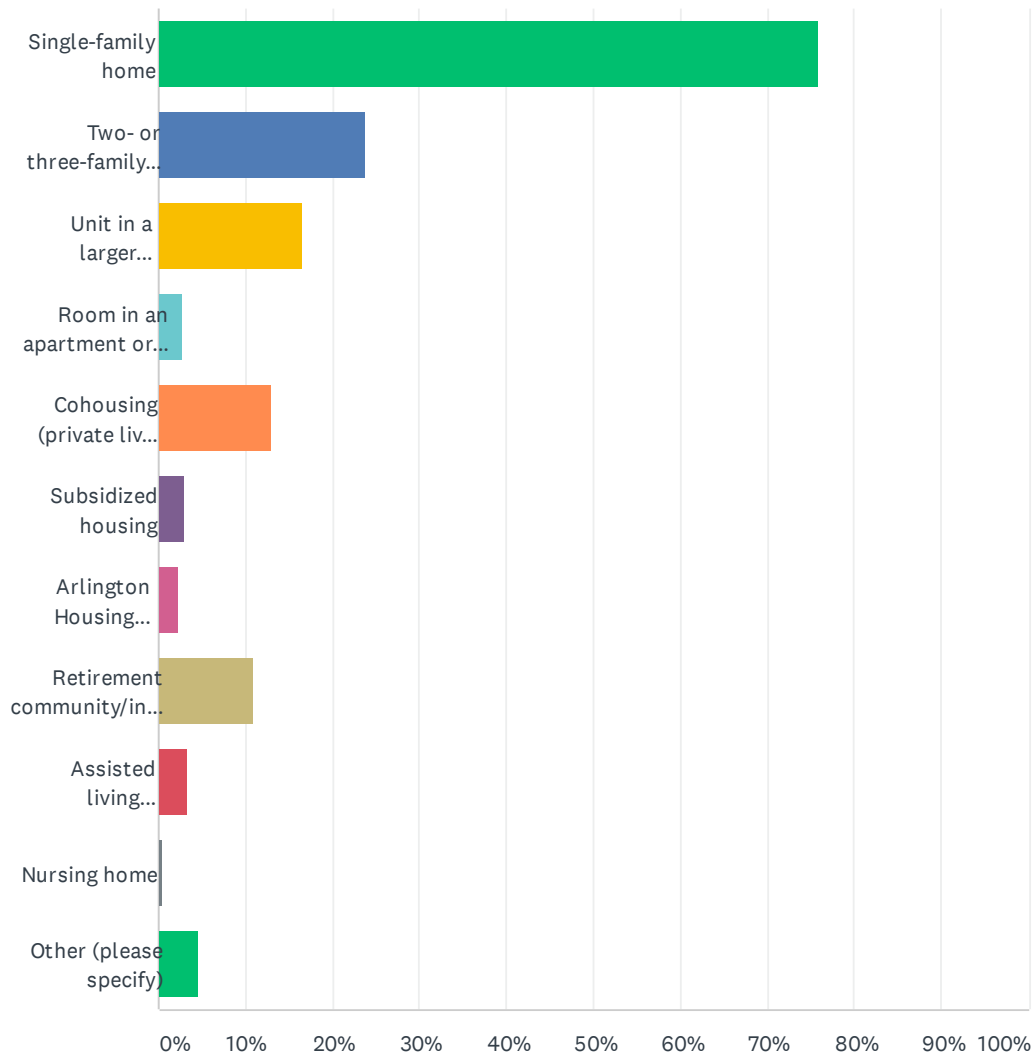
Answered: 4,430 Skipped: 152



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very important	34.85%	1,544
Somewhat important	50.70%	2,246
Not at all important	9.64%	427
No opinion	4.81%	213
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,430</b>

# Q13 What kind of housing would you prefer to live in ten years from now? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 4,399 Skipped: 183

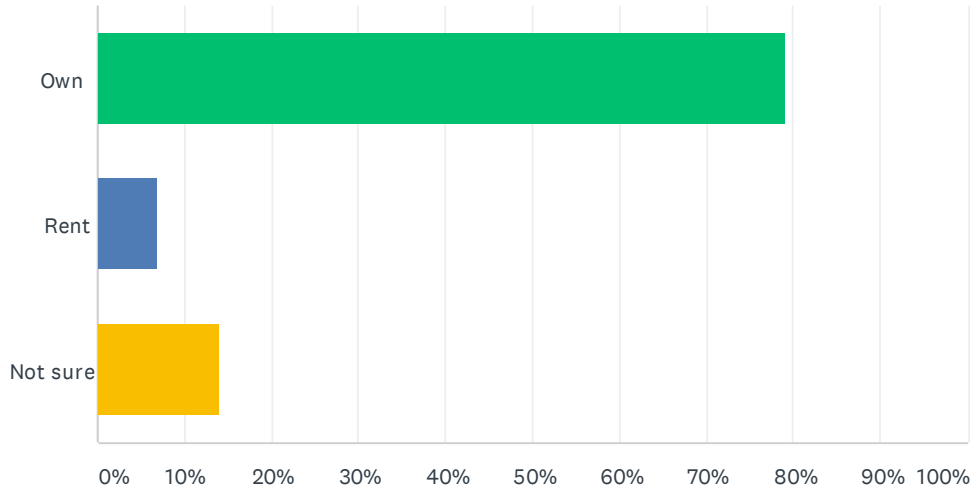


2020 Annual Town Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single-family home	75.95%	3,341
Two- or three-family home	23.94%	1,053
Unit in a larger multi-family building (four or more units)	16.48%	725
Room in an apartment or house	2.73%	120
Cohousing (private living units with shared community spaces)	12.87%	566
Subsidized housing	2.93%	129
Arlington Housing Authority	2.25%	99
Retirement community/independent living	10.89%	479
Assisted living community	3.43%	151
Nursing home	0.32%	14
Other (please specify)	4.64%	204
Total Respondents: 4,399		

## Q14 Would you prefer to rent or own your next home?

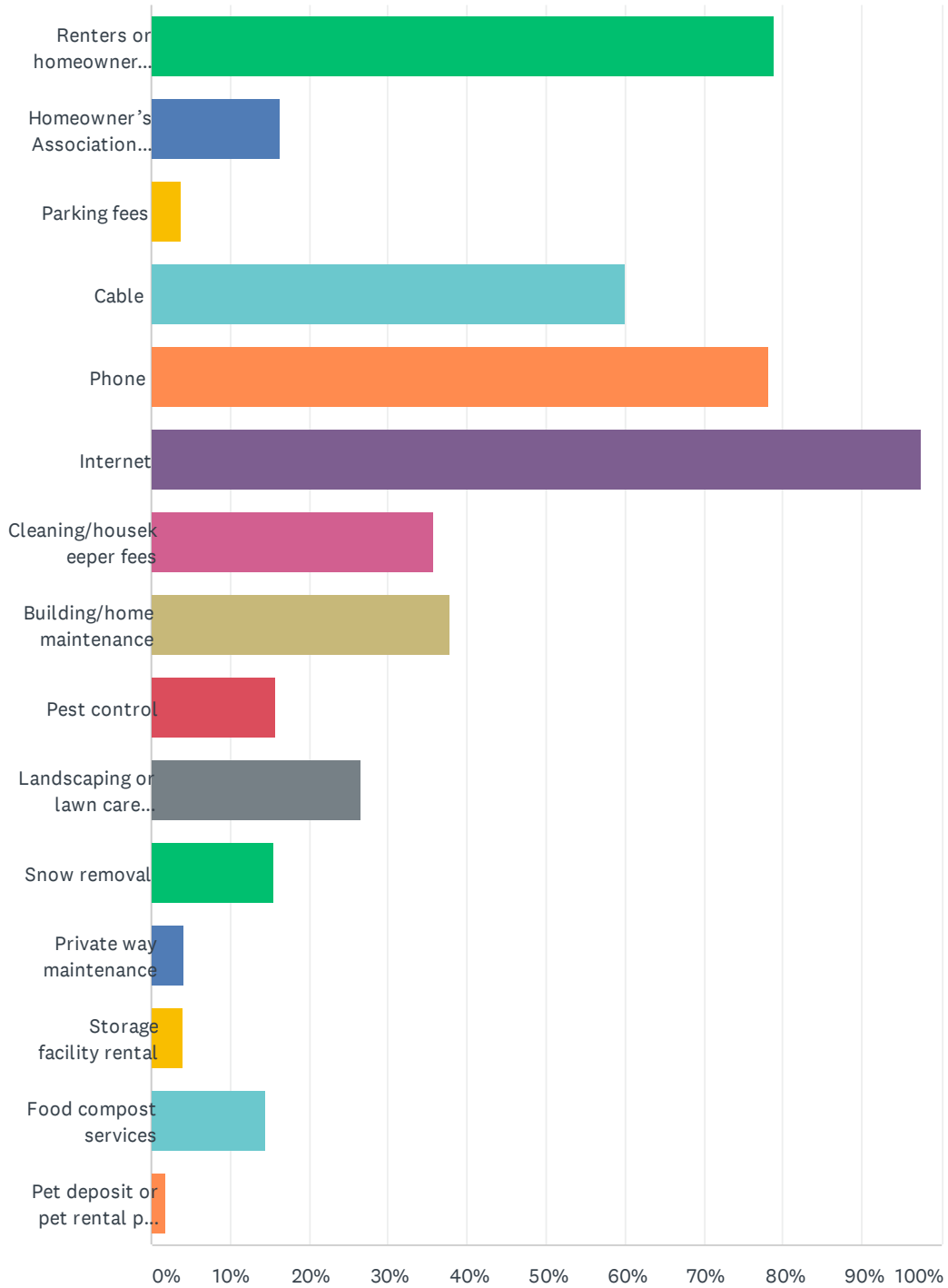
Answered: 4,397 Skipped: 185



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Own	79.01%	3,474
Rent	6.98%	307
Not sure	14.01%	616
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,397</b>

Q15 In addition to your rent or mortgage, which of the following housing costs do you pay on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly, annually)? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 4,389 Skipped: 193



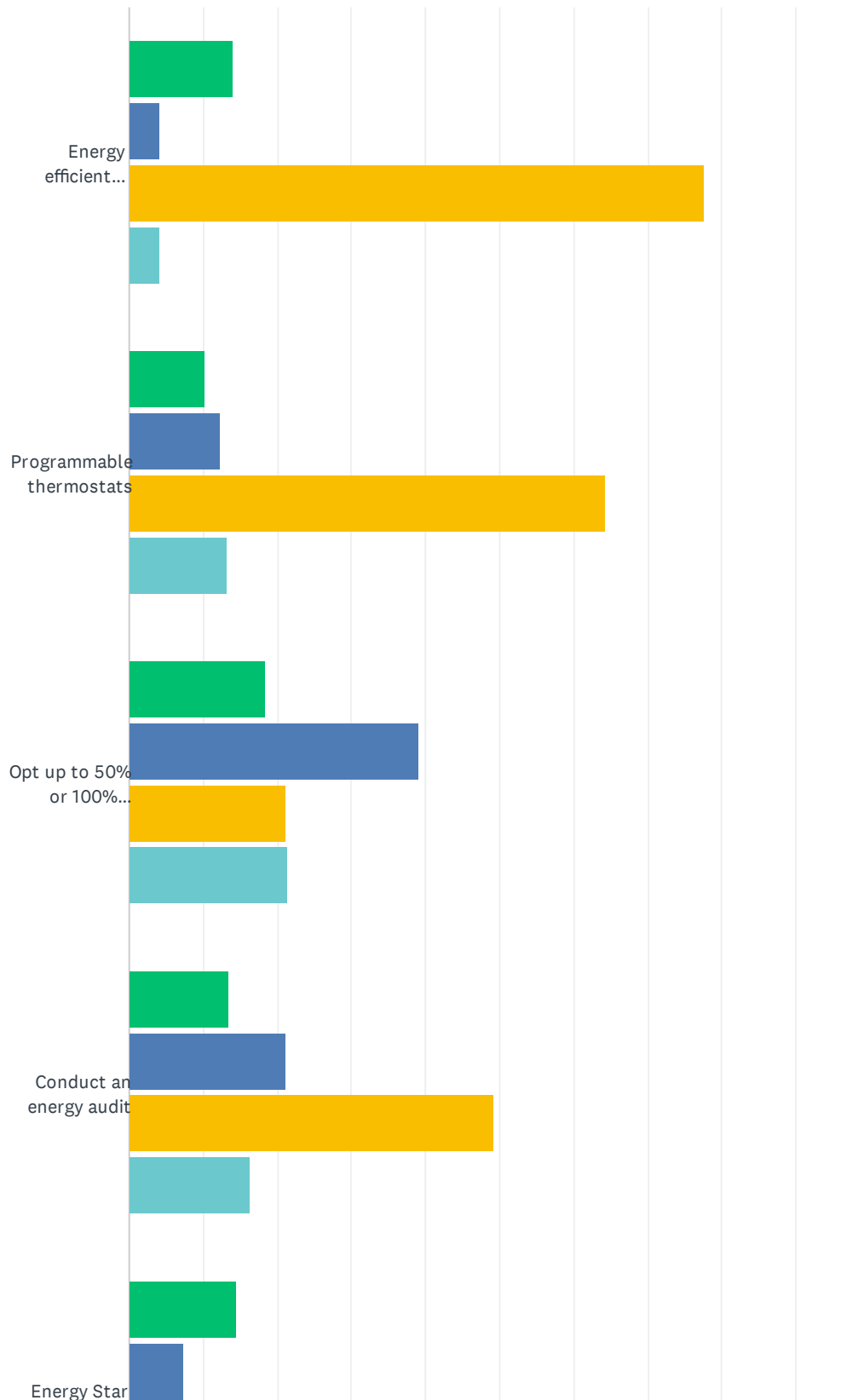


## 2020 Annual Town Survey

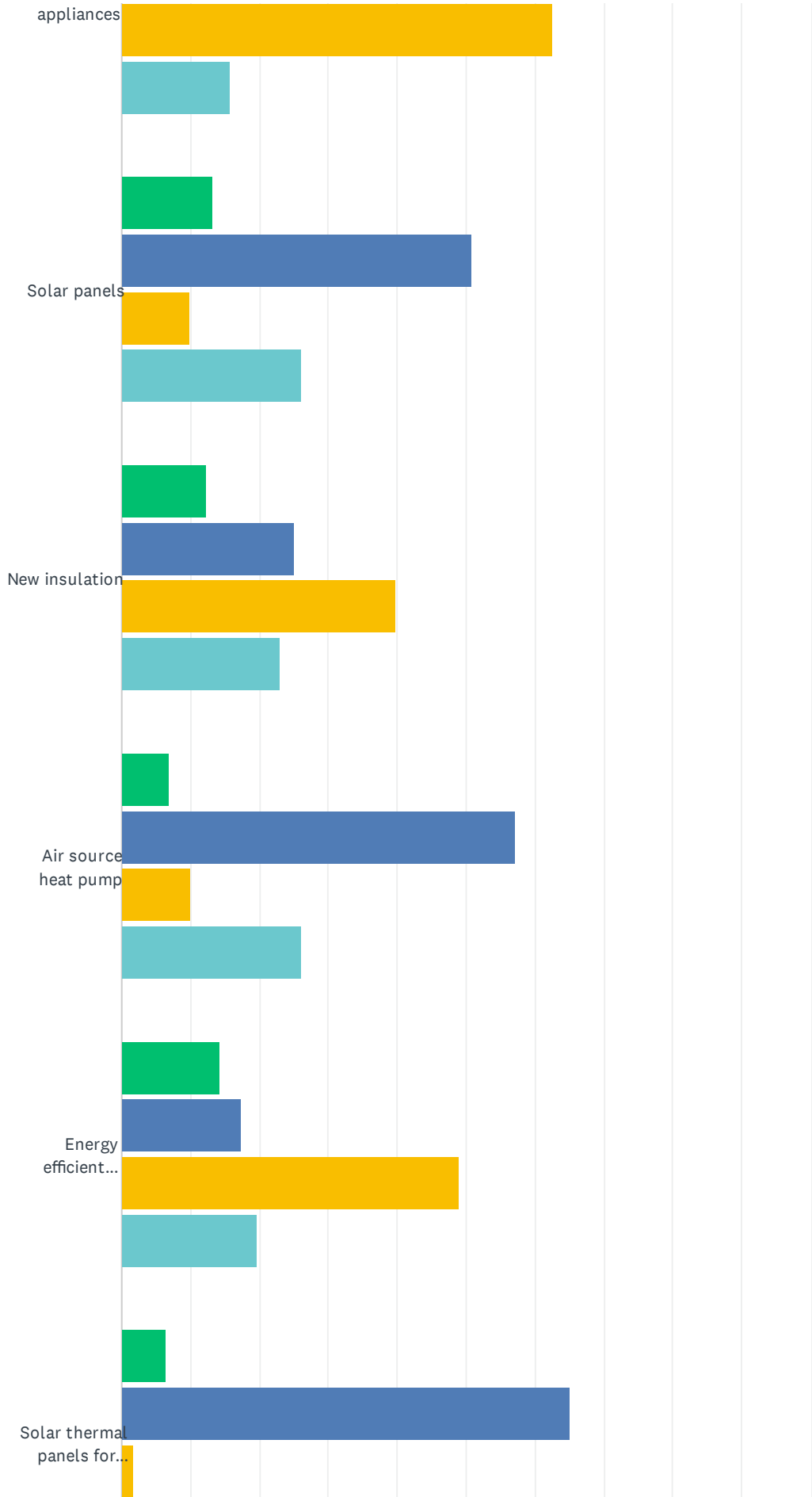
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Renters or homeowner insurance	78.95%	3,465
Homeowner's Association (HOA) or condo fees	16.38%	719
Parking fees	3.85%	169
Cable	59.95%	2,631
Phone	78.17%	3,431
Internet	97.45%	4,277
Cleaning/housekeeper fees	35.75%	1,569
Building/home maintenance	37.91%	1,664
Pest control	15.65%	687
Landscaping or lawn care maintenance	26.59%	1,167
Snow removal	15.47%	679
Private way maintenance	4.24%	186
Storage facility rental	3.99%	175
Food compost services	14.54%	638
Pet deposit or pet rental paid to landlord or homeowner's association	1.82%	80
<b>Total Respondents: 4,389</b>		

# Q16 Do you currently plan to introduce any of the following renewable energy or energy conservation measures to your home?

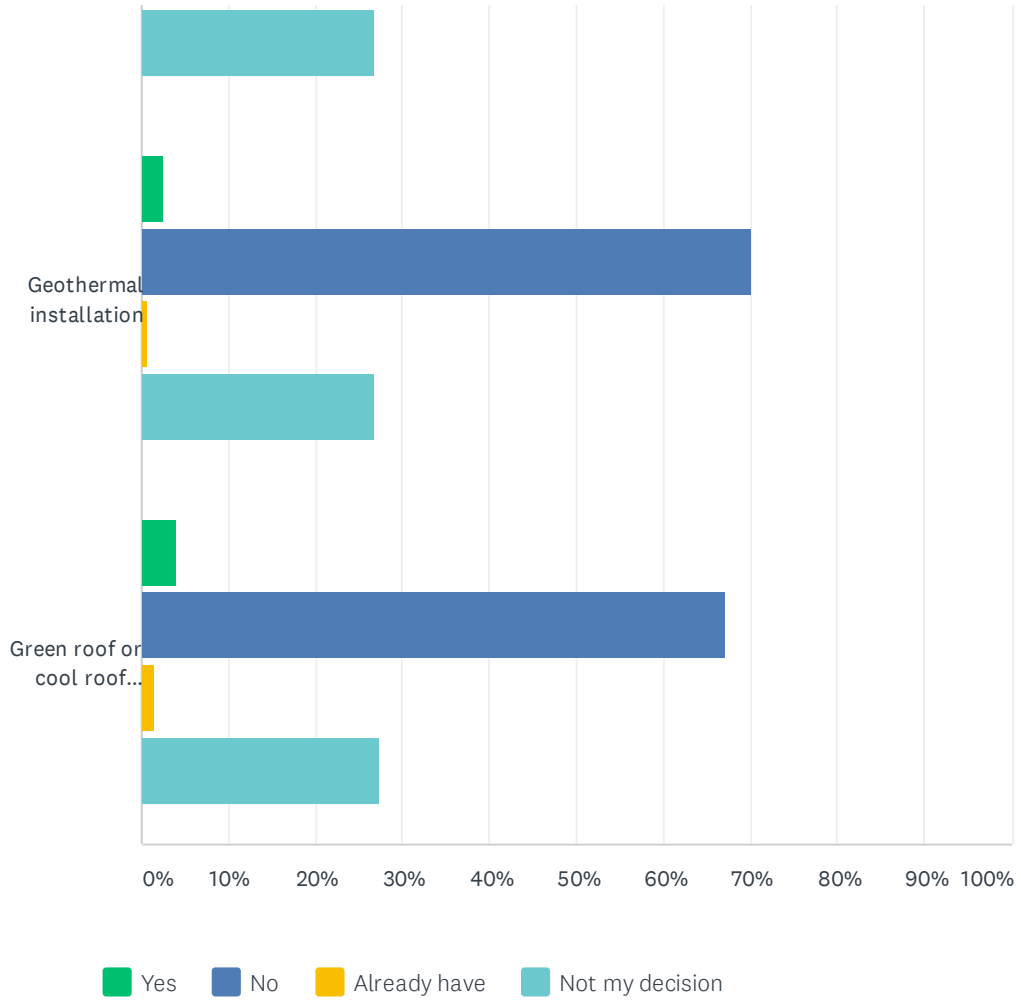
Answered: 4,414 Skipped: 168



# 2020 Annual Town Survey



# 2020 Annual Town Survey

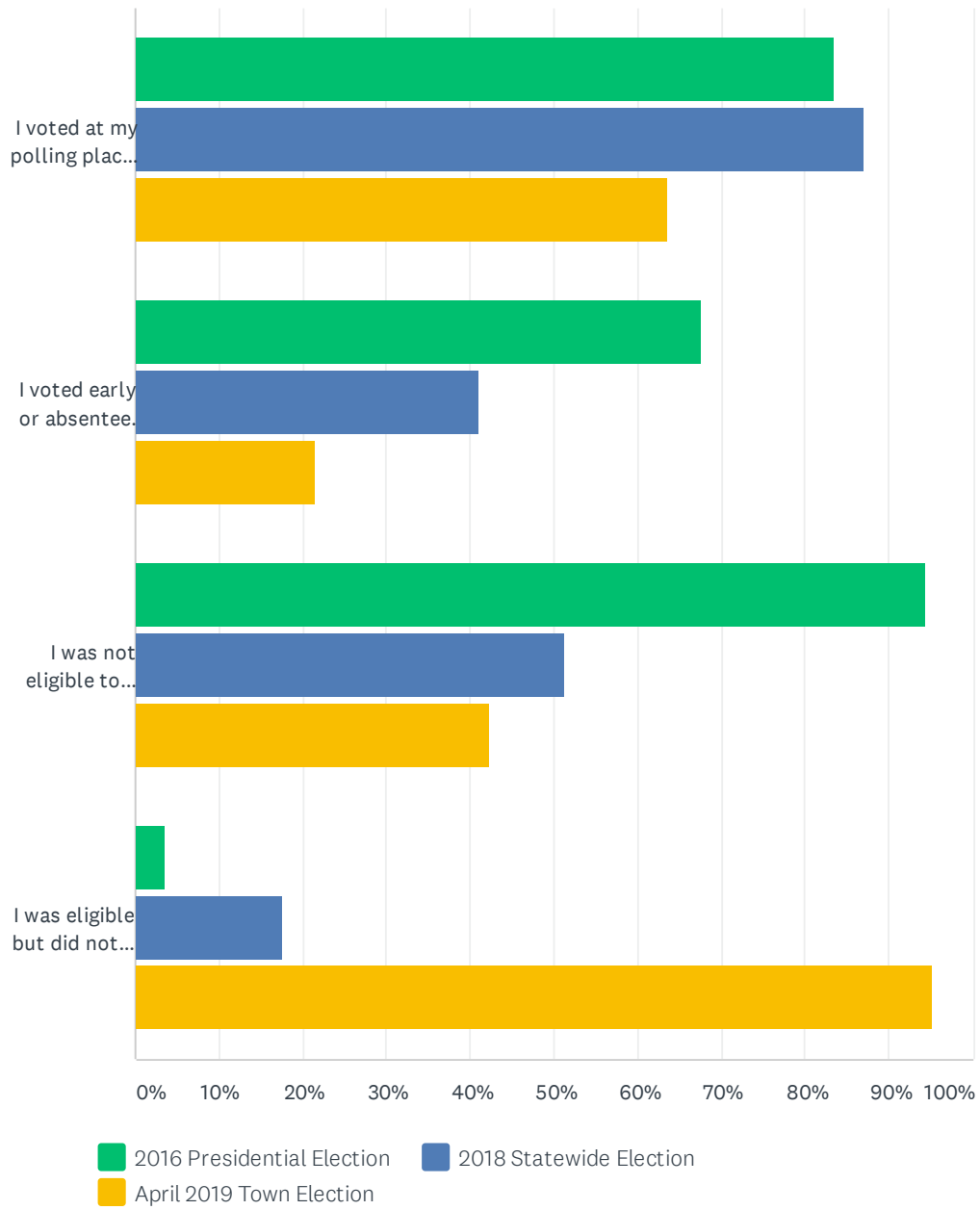


2020 Annual Town Survey

	YES	NO	ALREADY HAVE	NOT MY DECISION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Energy efficient lighting (LEDs)	13.98% 615	4.16% 183	77.68% 3,417	4.18% 184	4,399	0.00
Programmable thermostats	10.22% 440	12.40% 534	64.17% 2,764	13.21% 569	4,307	0.00
Opt up to 50% or 100% Arlington Green through Community Choice Aggregation	18.32% 733	39.22% 1,569	21.14% 846	21.32% 853	4,001	0.00
Conduct an energy audit	13.34% 569	21.06% 898	49.20% 2,098	16.39% 699	4,264	0.00
Energy Star appliances	14.49% 620	7.36% 315	62.54% 2,676	15.61% 668	4,279	0.00
Solar panels	13.20% 555	50.90% 2,140	9.75% 410	26.14% 1,099	4,204	0.00
New insulation	12.30% 520	25.01% 1,057	39.67% 1,677	23.02% 973	4,227	0.00
Air source heat pump	6.81% 278	57.03% 2,328	10.09% 412	26.07% 1,064	4,082	0.00
Energy efficient windows	14.25% 605	17.29% 734	48.89% 2,076	19.57% 831	4,246	0.00
Solar thermal panels for heating hot water	6.42% 265	65.02% 2,682	1.75% 72	26.81% 1,106	4,125	0.00
Geothermal installation	2.43% 99	70.00% 2,849	0.69% 28	26.88% 1,094	4,070	0.00
Green roof or cool roof coating	4.00% 164	67.12% 2,750	1.46% 60	27.41% 1,123	4,097	0.00

# Q17 Which of the following best describes your participation in the following recent elections?

Answered: 4,352 Skipped: 230

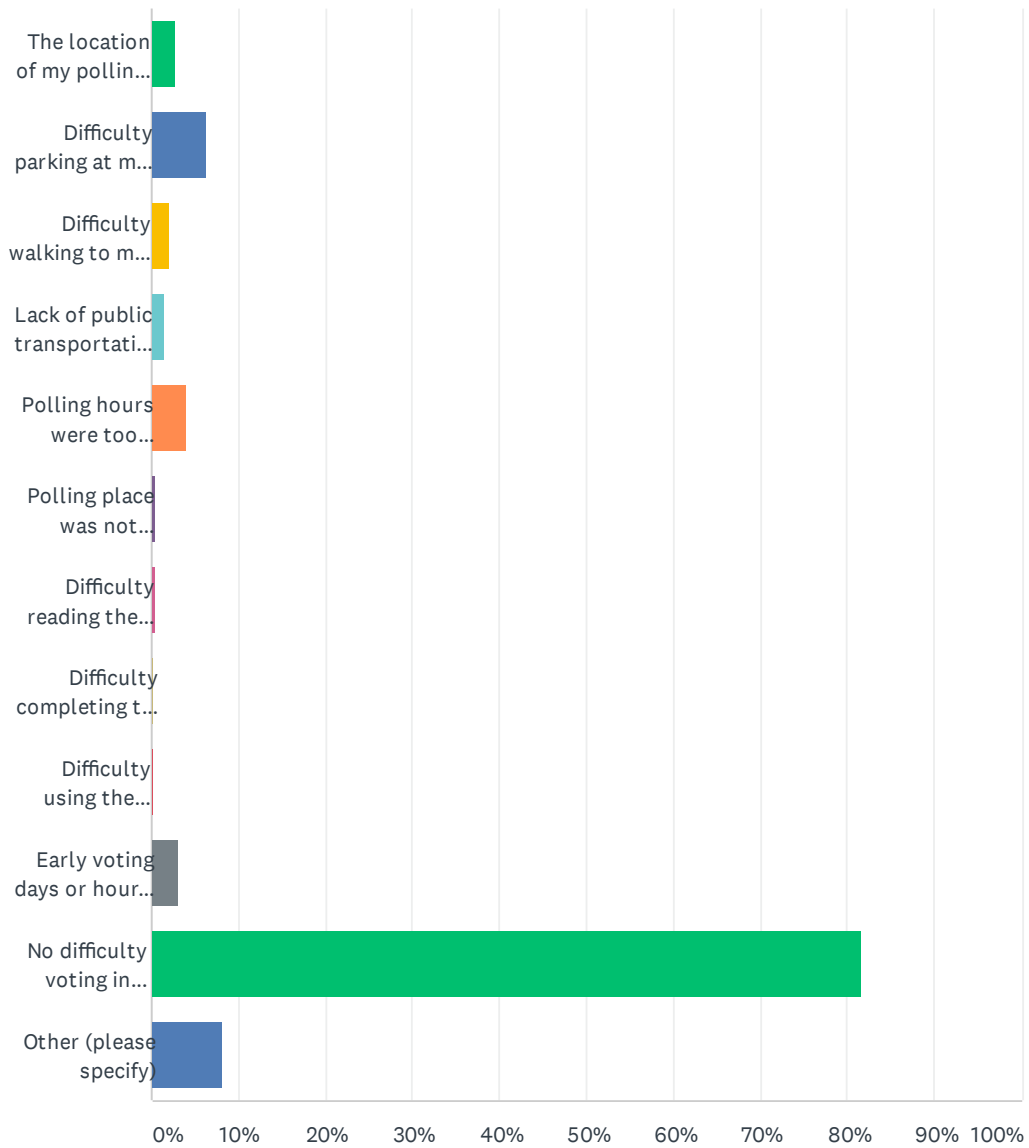


2020 Annual Town Survey

	2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION	2018 STATEWIDE ELECTION	APRIL 2019 TOWN ELECTION	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
I voted at my polling place on election day.	83.50% 3,274	87.10% 3,415	63.50% 2,490	3,921
I voted early or absentee.	67.63% 652	41.08% 396	21.58% 208	964
I was not eligible to vote in Arlington.	94.28% 626	51.36% 341	42.32% 281	664
I was eligible but did not vote.	3.60% 36	17.52% 175	95.10% 950	999

# Q18 Have you had difficulty voting due to any of the following? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 3,443 Skipped: 1,139



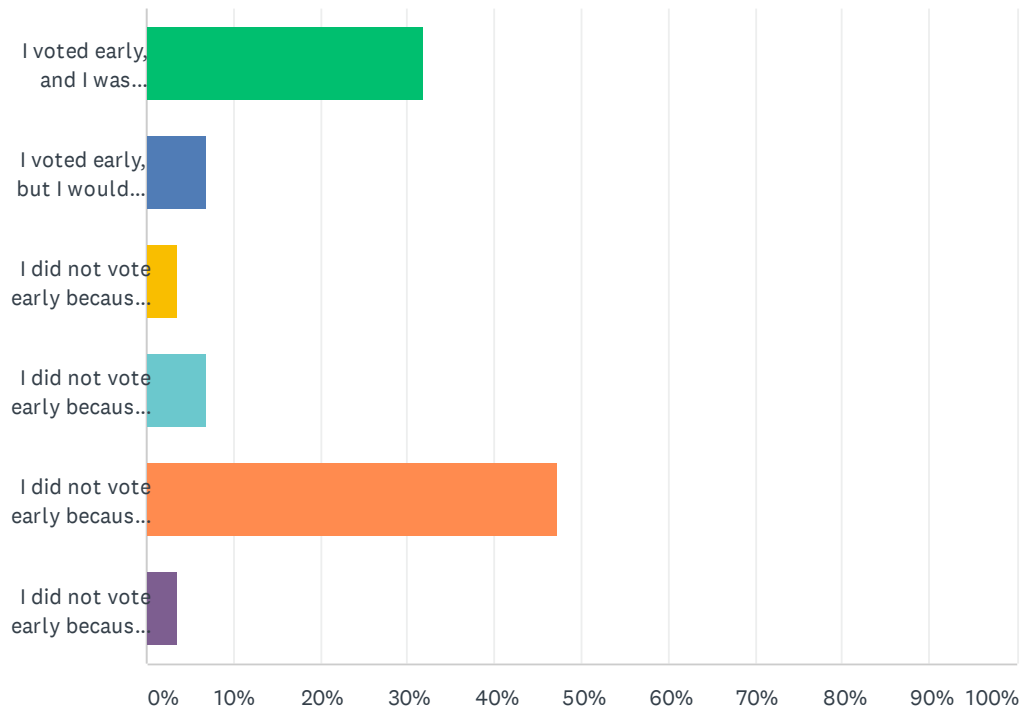


## 2020 Annual Town Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The location of my polling place	2.79%	96
Difficulty parking at my polling place	6.36%	219
Difficulty walking to my polling place	2.18%	75
Lack of public transportation to my polling place	1.51%	52
Polling hours were too limited	3.89%	134
Polling place was not accessible for me	0.46%	16
Difficulty reading the ballot	0.32%	11
Difficulty completing the ballot	0.23%	8
Difficulty using the voting machine	0.17%	6
Early voting days or hours were too limited	3.08%	106
No difficulty voting in Arlington	81.59%	2,809
Other (please specify)	8.22%	283
Total Respondents: 3,443		

### Q19 If you used early voting in recent federal or statewide elections, what best describes your experience in Arlington?

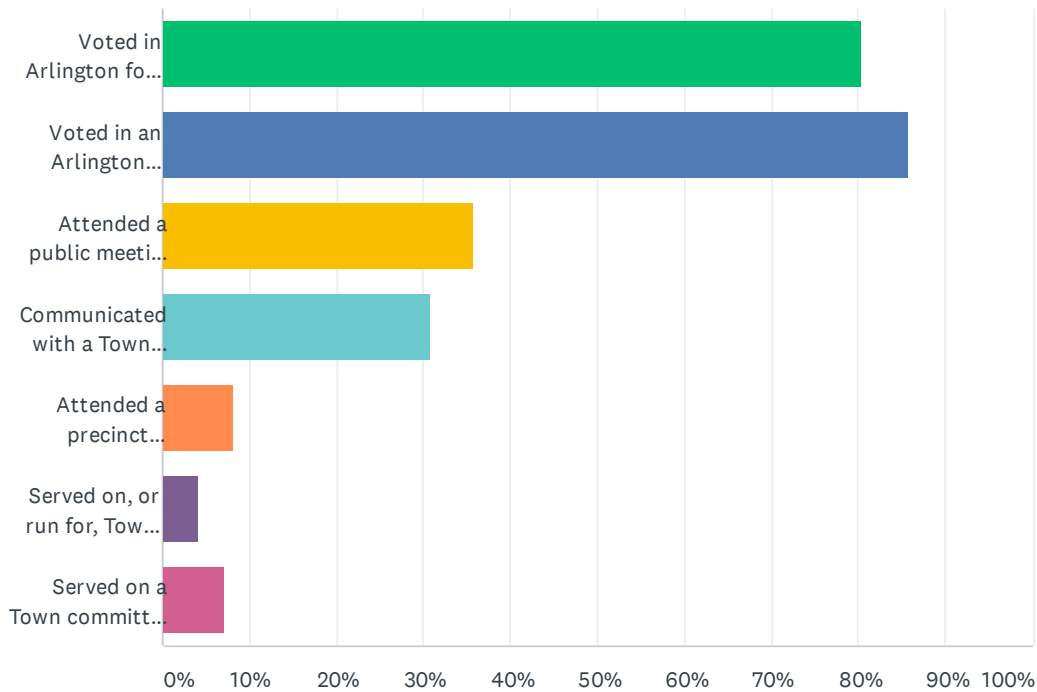
Answered: 3,086 Skipped: 1,496



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I voted early, and I was satisfied with the hours and availability	31.76%	980
I voted early, but I would prefer longer hours or additional days	6.87%	212
I did not vote early because the hours or days did not work for my schedule	3.50%	108
I did not vote early because I did not know about it	7.00%	216
I did not vote early because I prefer to vote on Election Day	47.28%	1,459
I did not vote early because I voted by absentee or mail ballot	3.60%	111
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3,086</b>

## Q20 Which of the following have you done in the last two years? (Check all that apply)

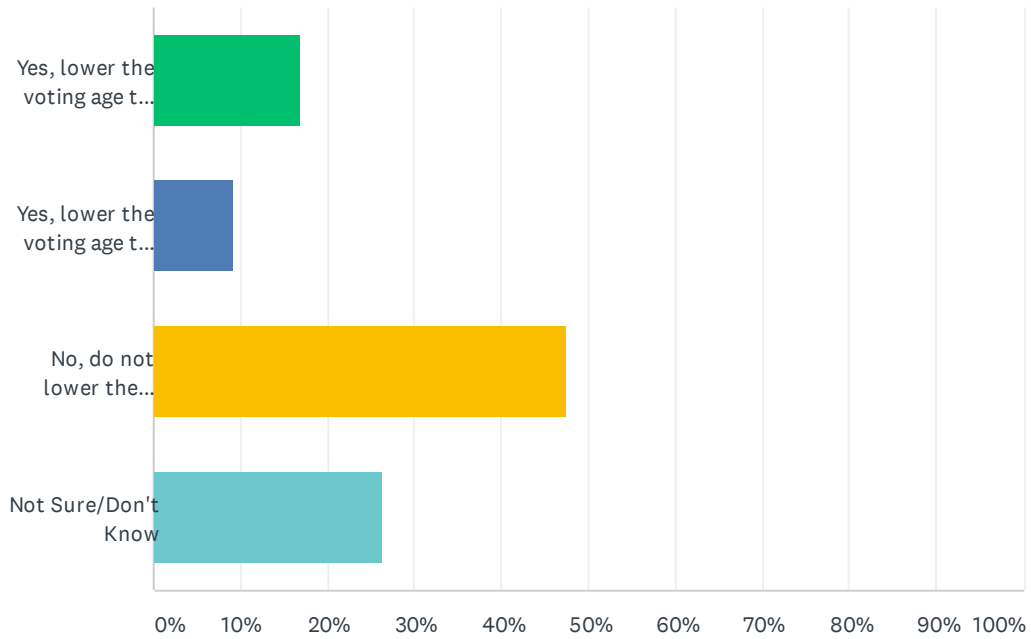
Answered: 3,332 Skipped: 1,250



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Voted in Arlington for a town-wide office	80.25%	2,674
Voted in an Arlington override, debt exclusion or ballot question election	85.74%	2,857
Attended a public meeting about a local issue	35.83%	1,194
Communicated with a Town Meeting Member or other Town official about a local issue	30.67%	1,022
Attended a precinct meeting	8.07%	269
Served on, or run for, Town Meeting	4.20%	140
Served on a Town committee or board	7.02%	234
Total Respondents: 3,332		

## Q21 Do you support lowering the voting age for Town elections?

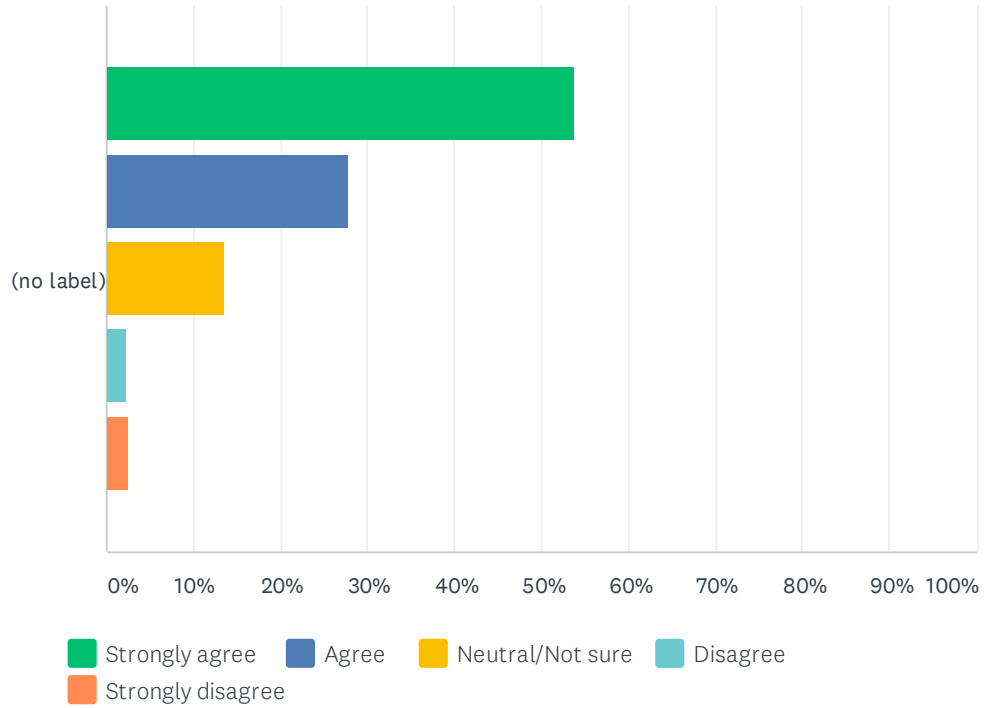
Answered: 4,324 Skipped: 258



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, lower the voting age to 16	16.86%	729
Yes, lower the voting age to 17	9.23%	399
No, do not lower the voting age	47.48%	2,053
Not Sure/Don't Know	26.43%	1,143
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,324</b>

## Q22 Arlington should strive to become carbon neutral by 2050.

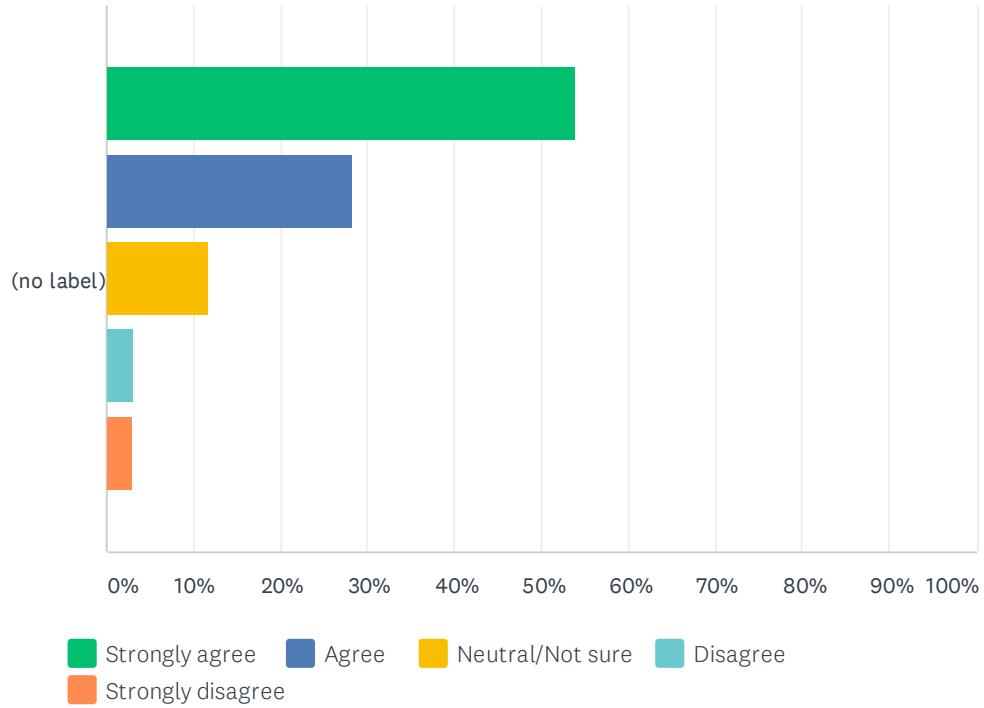
Answered: 4,342 Skipped: 240



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL/NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	53.71% 2,332	27.75% 1,205	13.63% 592	2.33% 101	2.58% 112	4,342	1.72

### Q23 I want the Town to take strong action to combat climate change.

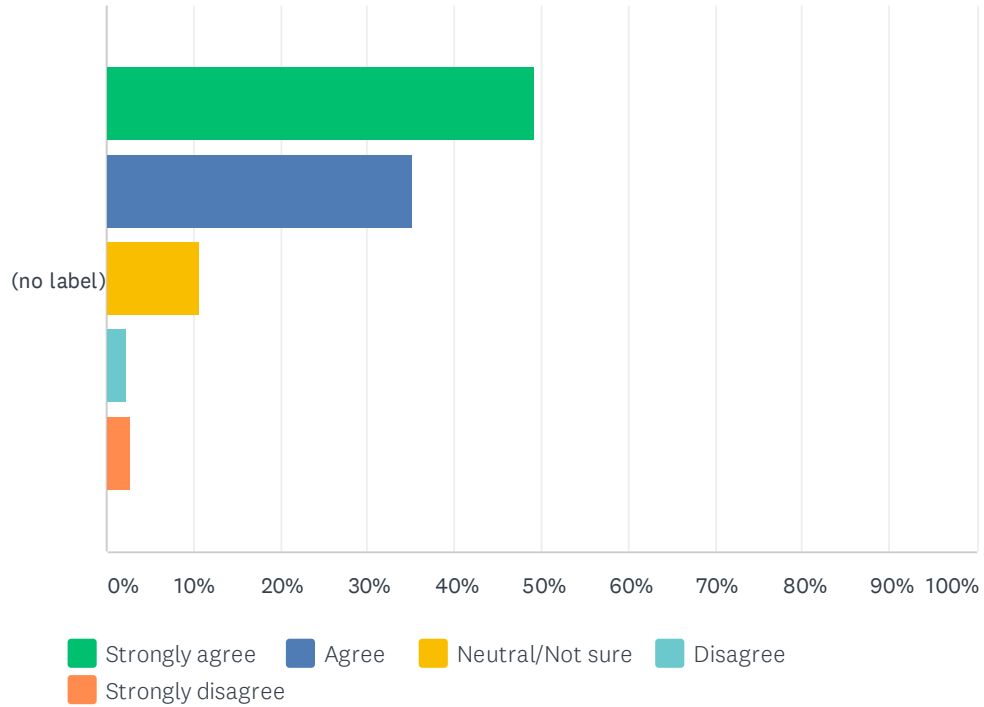
Answered: 4,340 Skipped: 242



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL/NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	53.96% 2,342	28.25% 1,226	11.73% 509	3.09% 134	2.97% 129	4,340	1.73

## Q24 I am willing to change my habits to help Arlington achieve the goal of carbon neutrality.

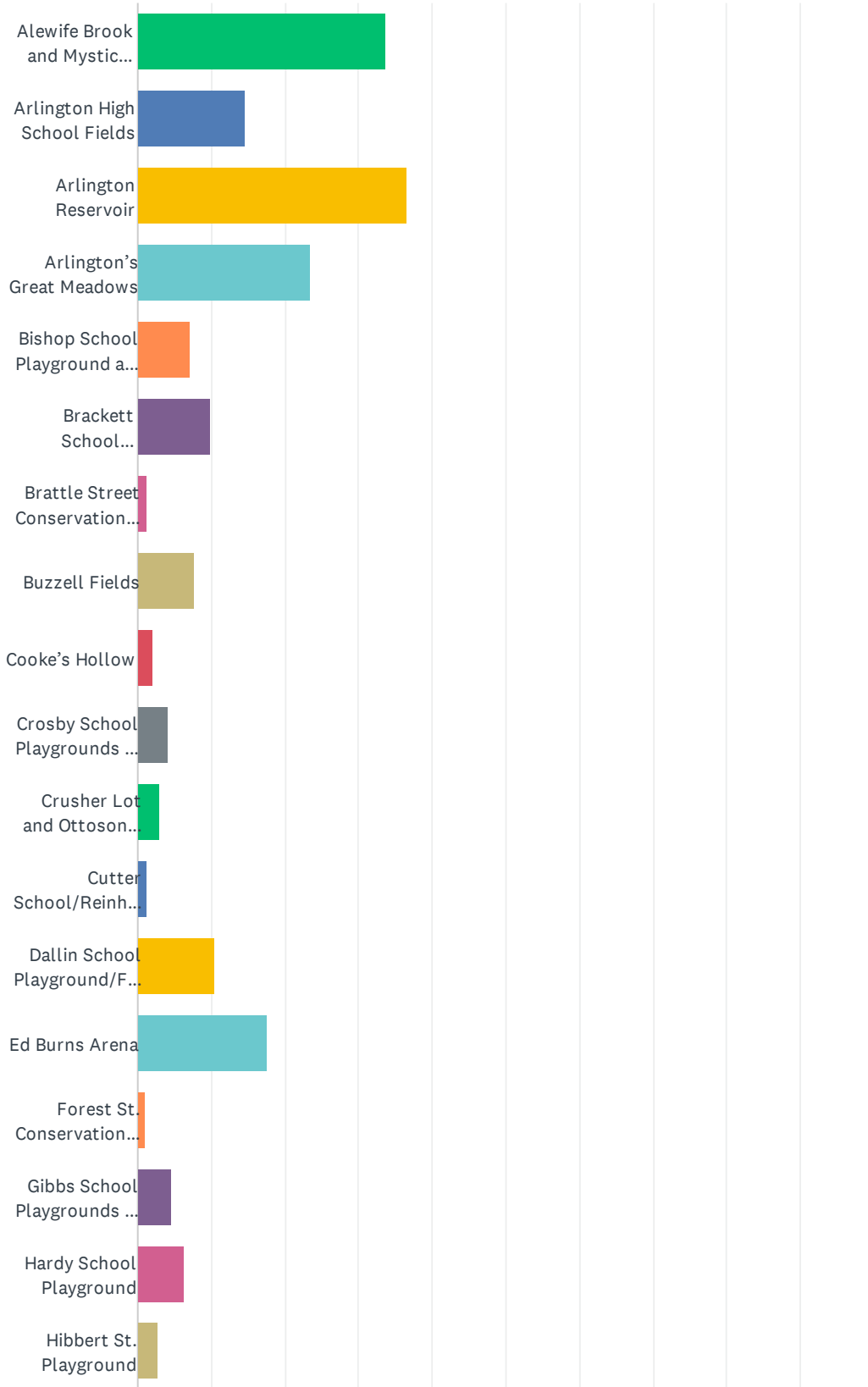
Answered: 4,339 Skipped: 243



	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL/NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	49.18% 2,134	35.12% 1,524	10.60% 460	2.33% 101	2.77% 120	4,339	1.74

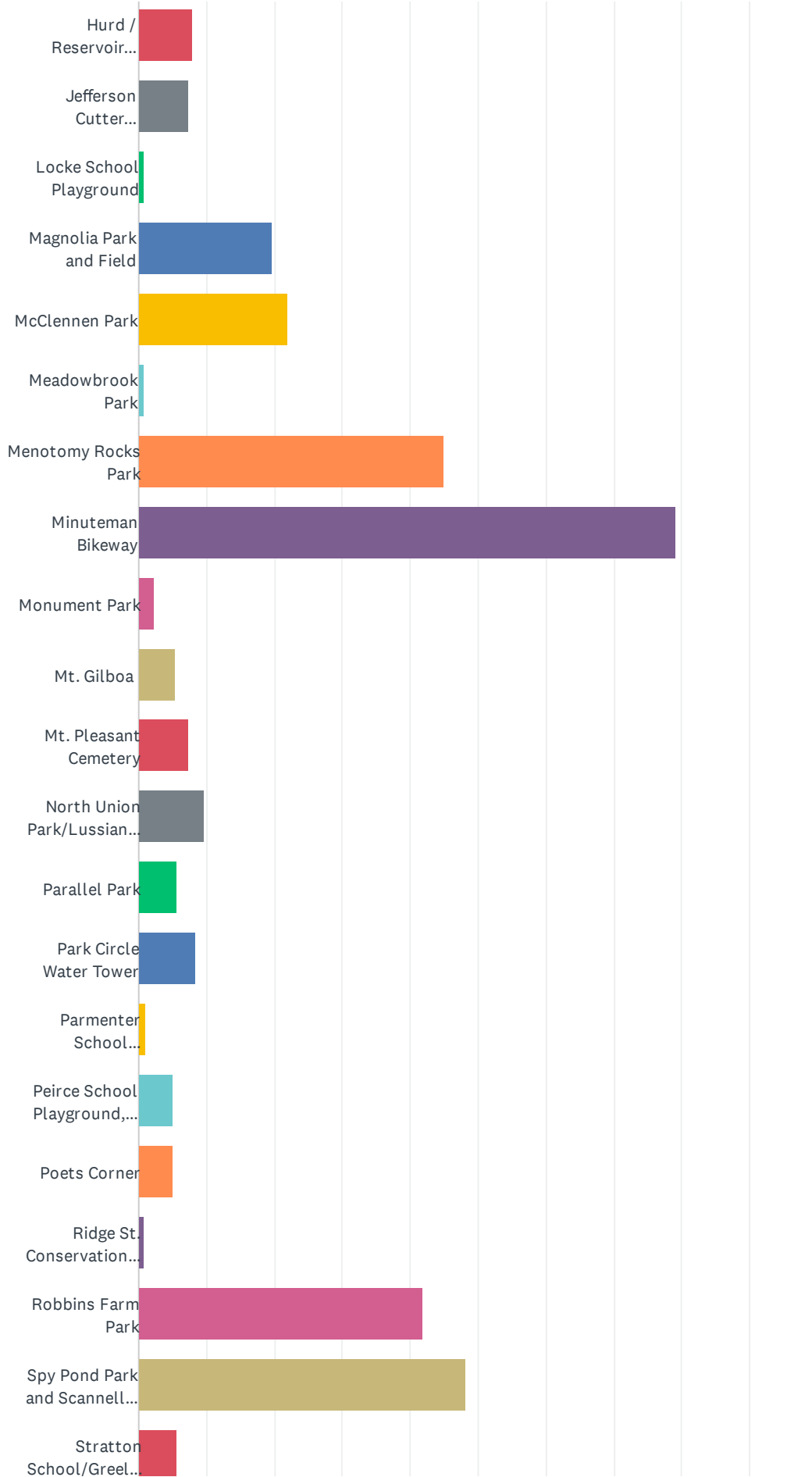
# Q25 Which parks and open spaces do you use most? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 4,165 Skipped: 417

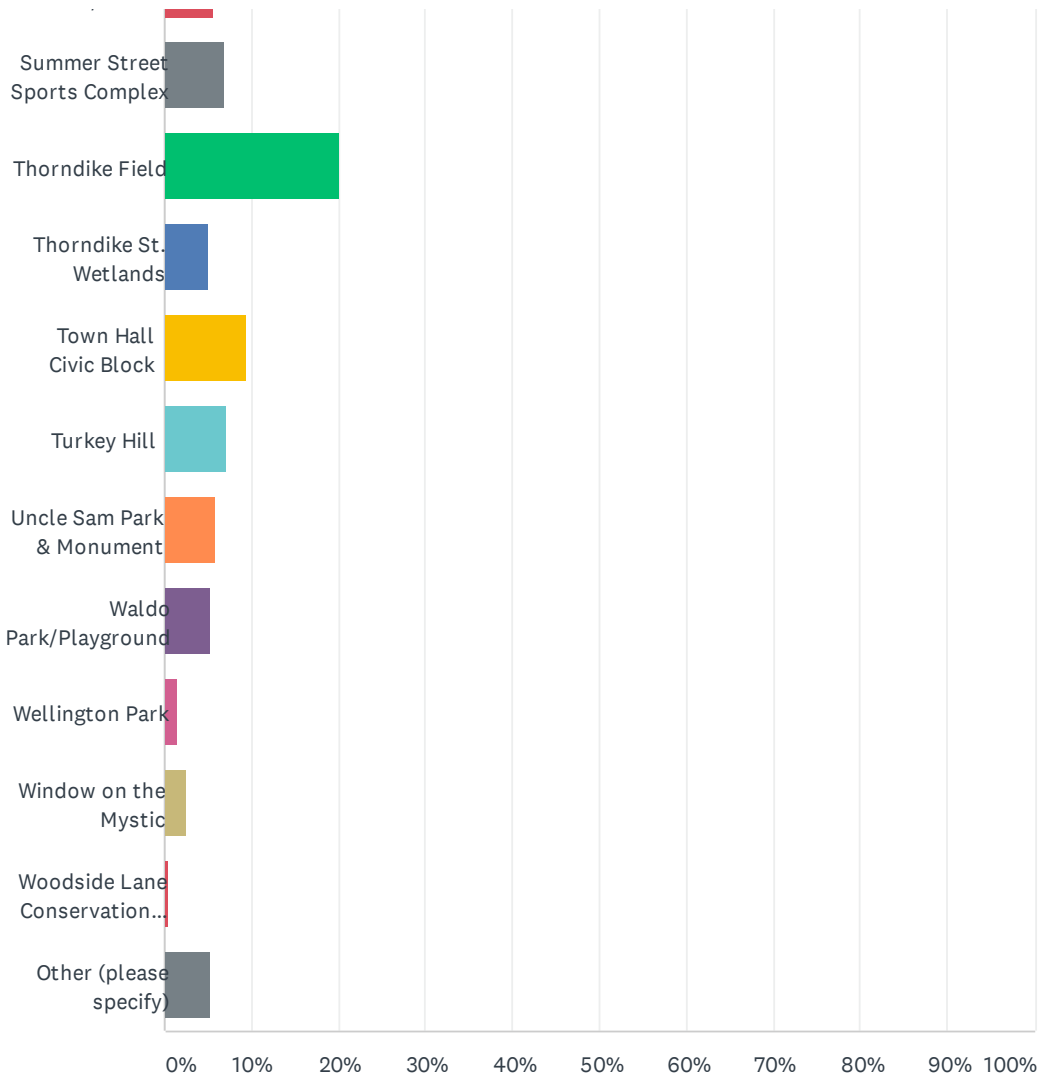




# 2020 Annual Town Survey



# 2020 Annual Town Survey



2020 Annual Town Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Alewife Brook and Mystic River Reservation	33.71%	1,404
Arlington High School Fields	14.74%	614
Arlington Reservoir	36.71%	1,529
Arlington's Great Meadows	23.46%	977
Bishop School Playground and Fields	7.13%	297
Brackett School Playground and Basketball Courts	9.77%	407
Brattle Street Conservation Land	1.18%	49
Buzzell Fields	7.73%	322
Cooke's Hollow	2.04%	85
Crosby School Playgrounds and Fields	4.13%	172
Crusher Lot and Ottoson Field	2.93%	122
Cutter School/Reinhart Playgrounds	1.27%	53
Dallin School Playground/Florence Field	10.54%	439
Ed Burns Arena	17.55%	731
Forest St. Conservation Land	1.13%	47
Gibbs School Playgrounds and Fields	4.68%	195
Hardy School Playground	6.31%	263
Hibbert St. Playground	2.64%	110
Hurd / Reservoir Fields	7.88%	328
Jefferson Cutter House/Whittemore Park	7.30%	304
Locke School Playground	0.86%	36
Magnolia Park and Field	19.69%	820
McClennen Park	22.02%	917
Meadowbrook Park	0.74%	31
Menotomy Rocks Park	44.90%	1,870
Minuteman Bikeway	79.14%	3,296
Monument Park	2.21%	92
Mt. Gilboa	5.50%	229
Mt. Pleasant Cemetery	7.39%	308
North Union Park/Lussiano Field	9.60%	400
Parallel Park	5.57%	232
Park Circle Water Tower	8.45%	352

## 2020 Annual Town Survey

Parmenter School Playground and Basketball Court	1.03%	43
Peirce School Playground, Basketball Court, and Green Space	4.97%	207
Poets Corner	4.92%	205
Ridge St. Conservation Land	0.77%	32
Robbins Farm Park	41.85%	1,743
Spy Pond Park and Scannell Fields	48.04%	2,001
Stratton School/Greeley Playground	5.59%	233
Summer Street Sports Complex	6.96%	290
Thorndike Field	20.07%	836
Thorndike St. Wetlands	4.95%	206
Town Hall Civic Block	9.41%	392
Turkey Hill	7.01%	292
Uncle Sam Park & Monument	5.91%	246
Waldo Park/Playground	5.14%	214
Wellington Park	1.39%	58
Window on the Mystic	2.55%	106
Woodside Lane Conservation Land	0.38%	16
Other (please specify)	5.21%	217
<b>Total Respondents: 4,165</b>		

## Q26 What are your suggestions to improve Arlington's parks and open spaces?

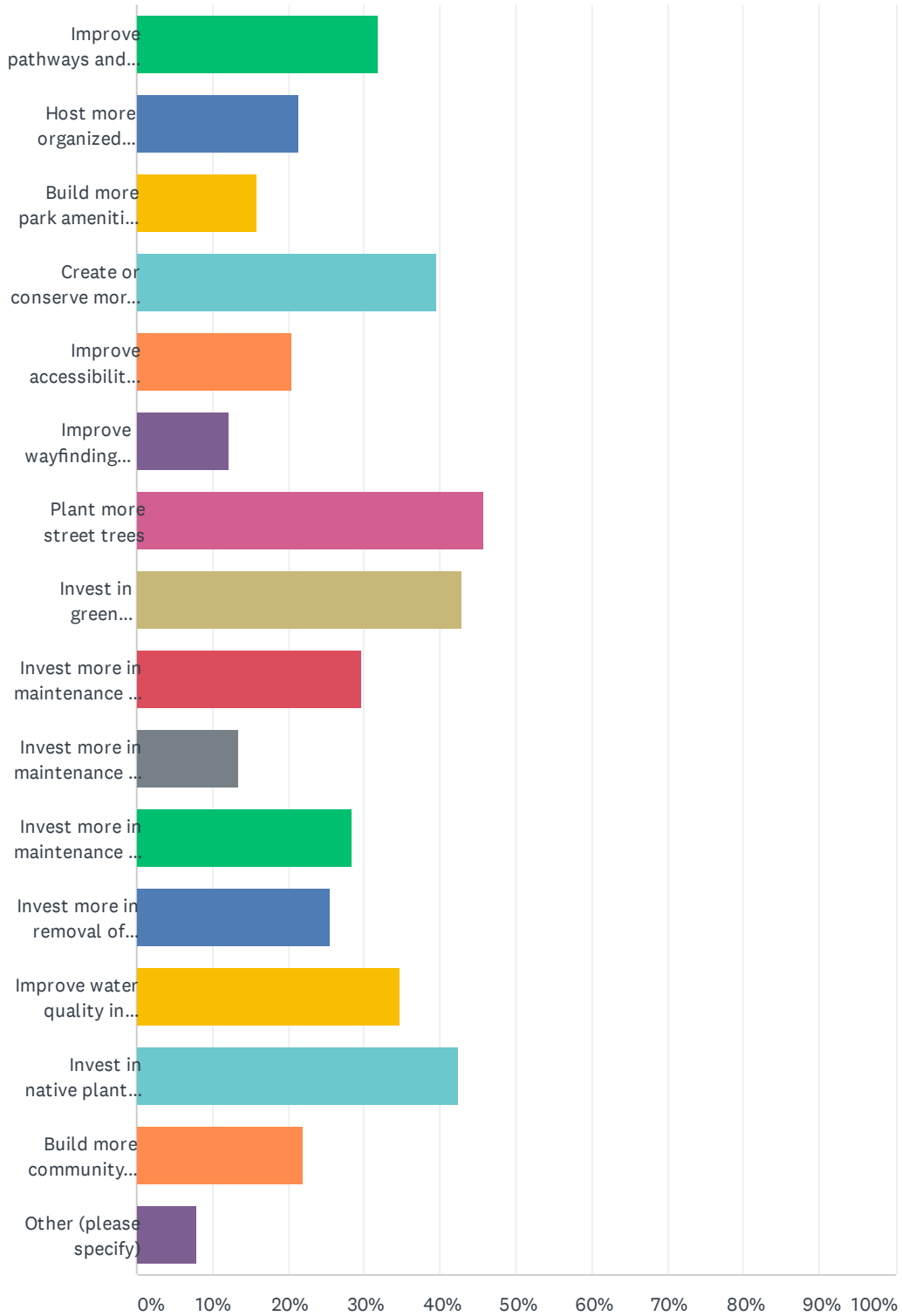
Answered: 1,657 Skipped: 2,925

## Q27 What barriers do you face when using parks and open spaces in Arlington?

Answered: 1,388 Skipped: 3,194

## Q28 What are your top priorities for investment in Arlington's parks and open spaces? (Select up to four)

Answered: 3,967 Skipped: 615



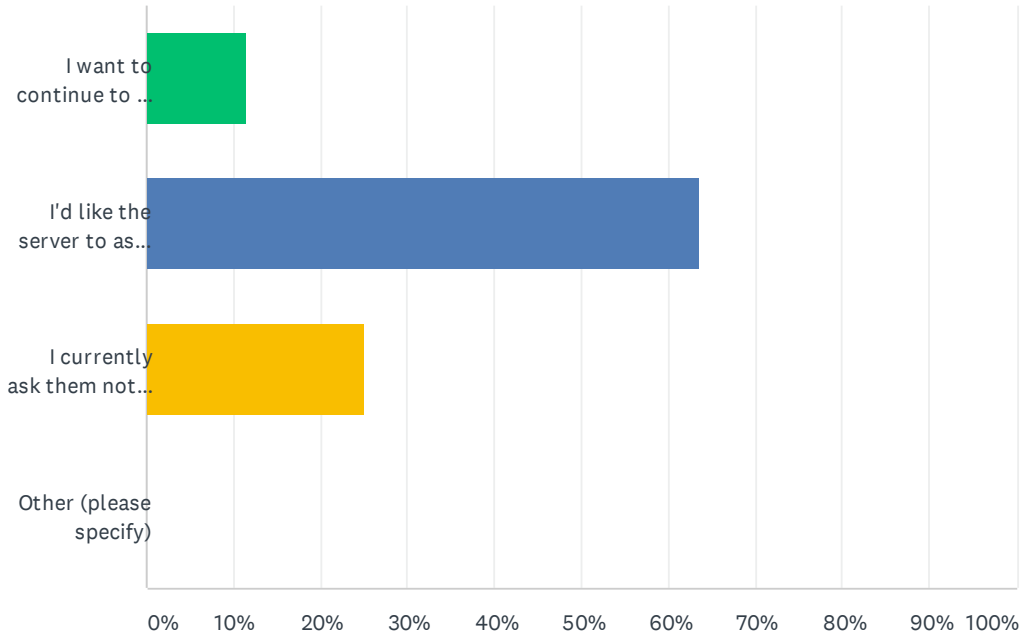
## 2020 Annual Town Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Improve pathways and access between open spaces and nearby neighborhoods	31.86%	1,264
Host more organized activities and events in local parks and open spaces	21.40%	849
Build more park amenities and play structures	15.86%	629
Create or conserve more open space	39.53%	1,568
Improve accessibility for all ages and abilities	20.57%	816
Improve wayfinding through maps and directional signs	12.10%	480
Plant more street trees	45.85%	1,819
Invest in green infrastructure (e.g. rain gardens, porous pavement)	42.80%	1,698
Invest more in maintenance of parks and playgrounds	29.72%	1,179
Invest more in maintenance of playing fields	13.31%	528
Invest more in maintenance of wooded/natural open spaces	28.51%	1,131
Invest more in removal of invasive plant species	25.56%	1,014
Improve water quality in local water bodies	34.76%	1,379
Invest in native plants to support pollinators and birds	42.40%	1,682
Build more community gardens	21.91%	869
Other (please specify)	8.02%	318
Total Respondents: 3,967		



## Q29 What do you think about plastic straws in restaurants?

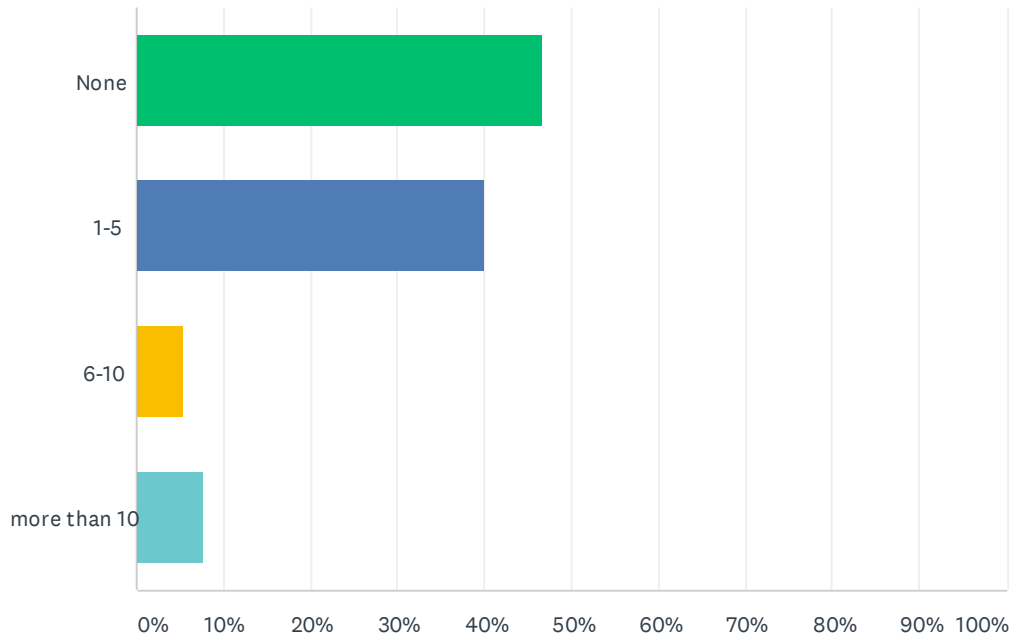
Answered: 4,241 Skipped: 341



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I want to continue to be able to use them	11.44%	485
I'd like the server to ask before giving me a straw	63.50%	2,693
I currently ask them not to give me a straw	25.06%	1,063
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,241</b>

### Q30 How many single-use bottles of water do you use in a typical month?

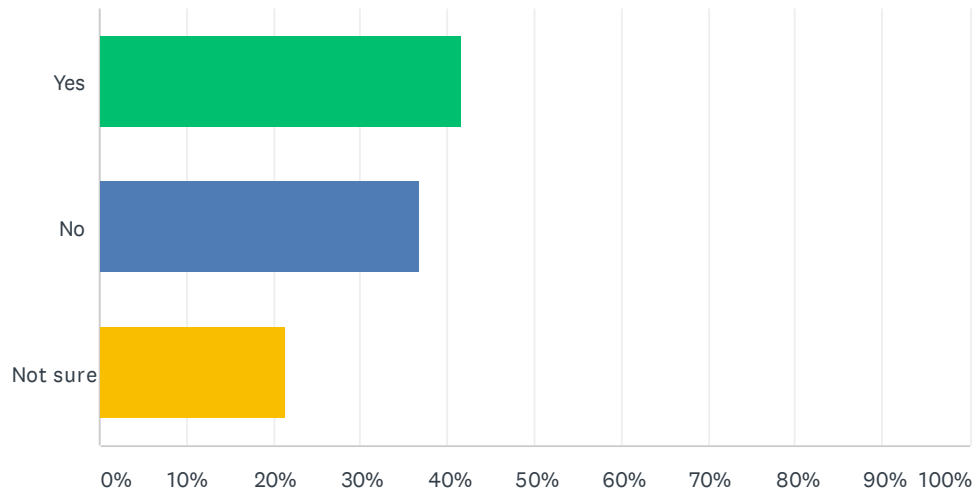
Answered: 4,293 Skipped: 289



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None	46.75%	2,007
1-5	40.04%	1,719
6-10	5.43%	233
more than 10	7.78%	334
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,293</b>

### Q31 Do you think you would buy fewer bottles of water if Arlington had more public access to water fountains or water stations?

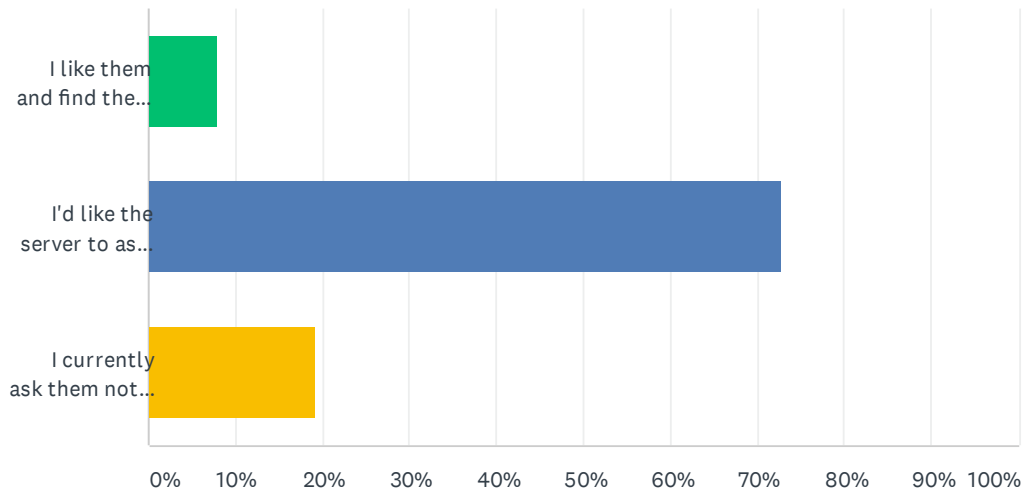
Answered: 4,184 Skipped: 398



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		41.73%	1,746
No		36.83%	1,541
Not sure		21.44%	897
TOTAL			4,184

### Q32 What do you think about plastic utensils provided by restaurants with takeout orders?

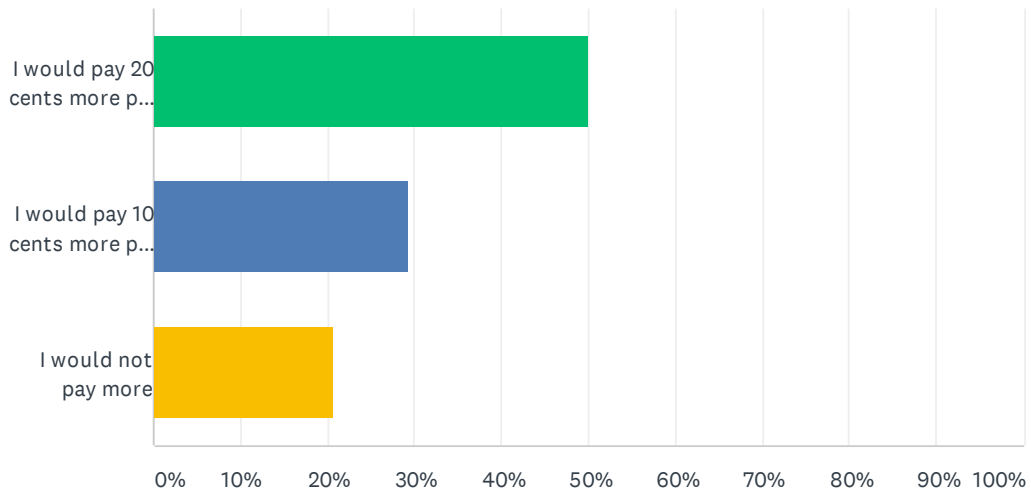
Answered: 4,255 Skipped: 327



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I like them and find them convenient	7.87%	335
I'd like the server to ask before putting them in my order	72.83%	3,099
I currently ask them not to give me any utensils	19.29%	821
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,255</b>

### Q33 Would you be willing to pay an extra charge in order to get takeout orders in compostable containers?

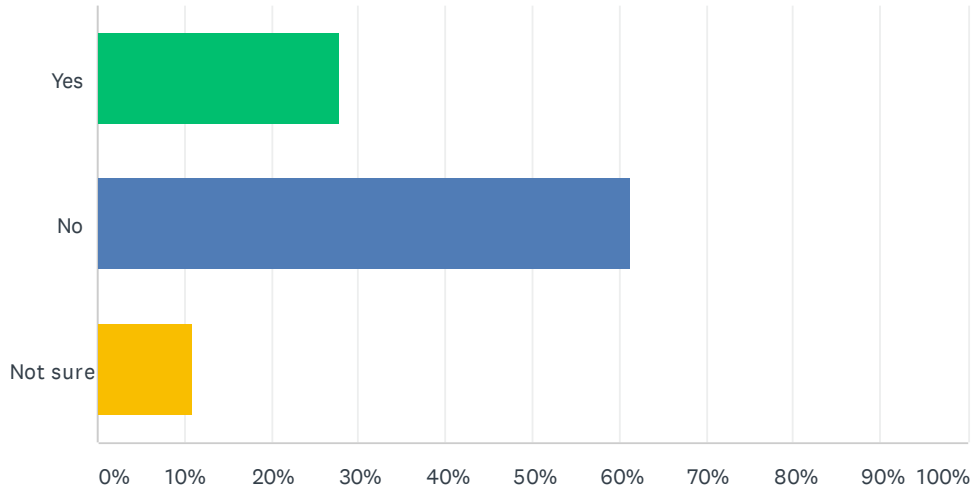
Answered: 4,263 Skipped: 319



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I would pay 20 cents more per container	50.04%	2,133
I would pay 10 cents more per container	29.20%	1,245
I would not pay more	20.76%	885
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,263</b>

### Q34 Is this the first time you have taken the Annual Town Survey?

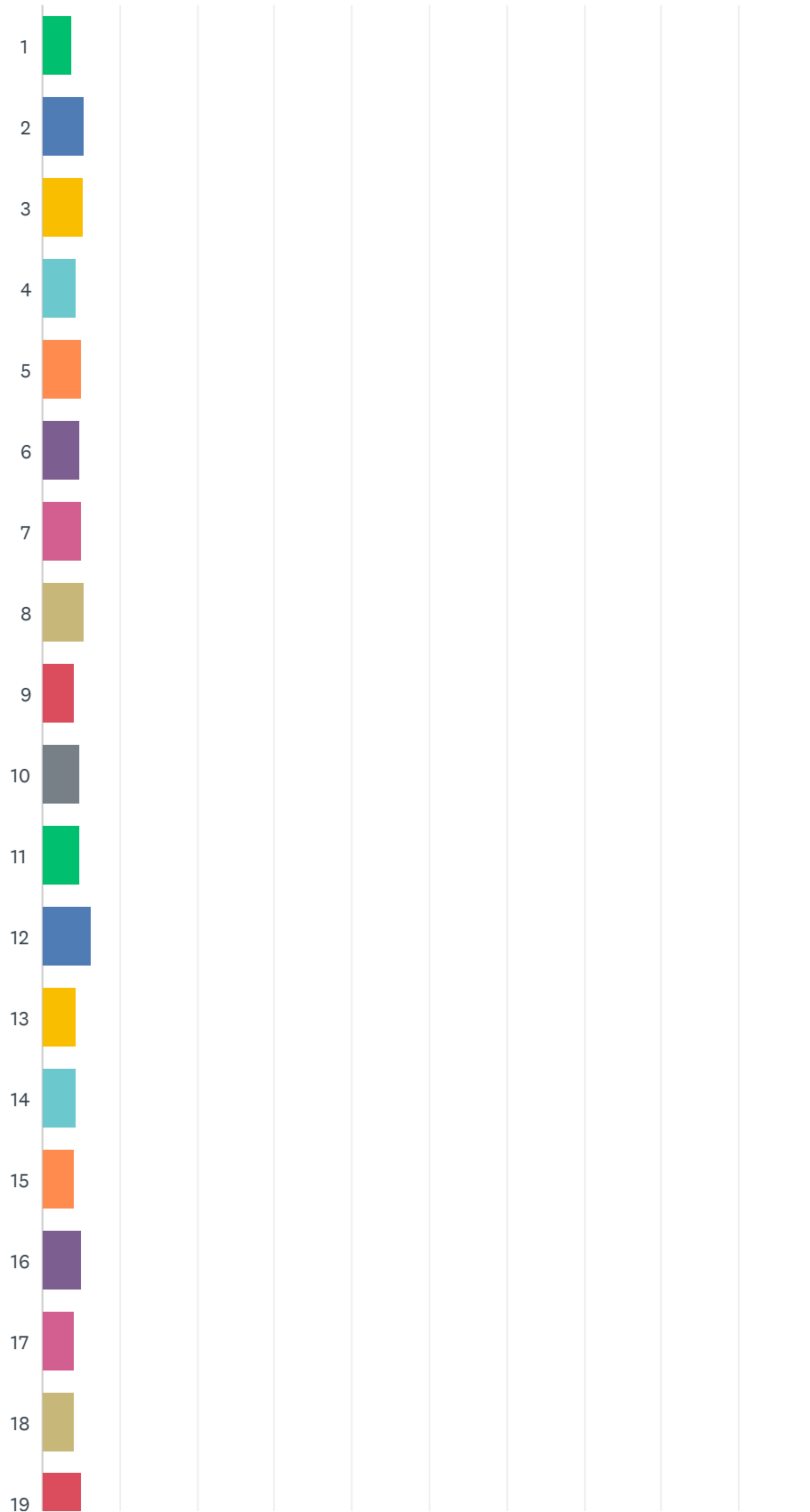
Answered: 4,190 Skipped: 392



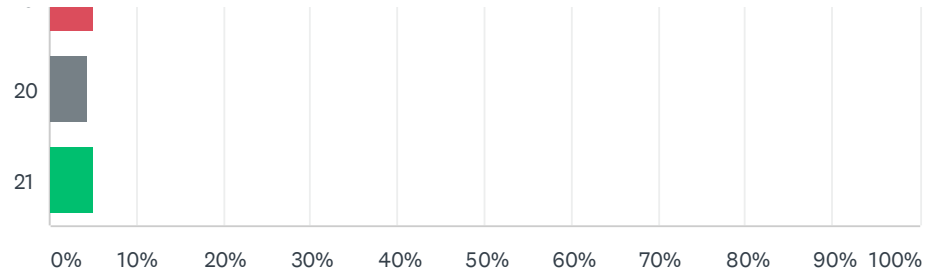
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	27.78%	1,164
No	61.26%	2,567
Not sure	10.95%	459
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,190</b>

### Q35 Please provide your precinct number (look up precinct number).

Answered: 4,020 Skipped: 562



## 2020 Annual Town Survey

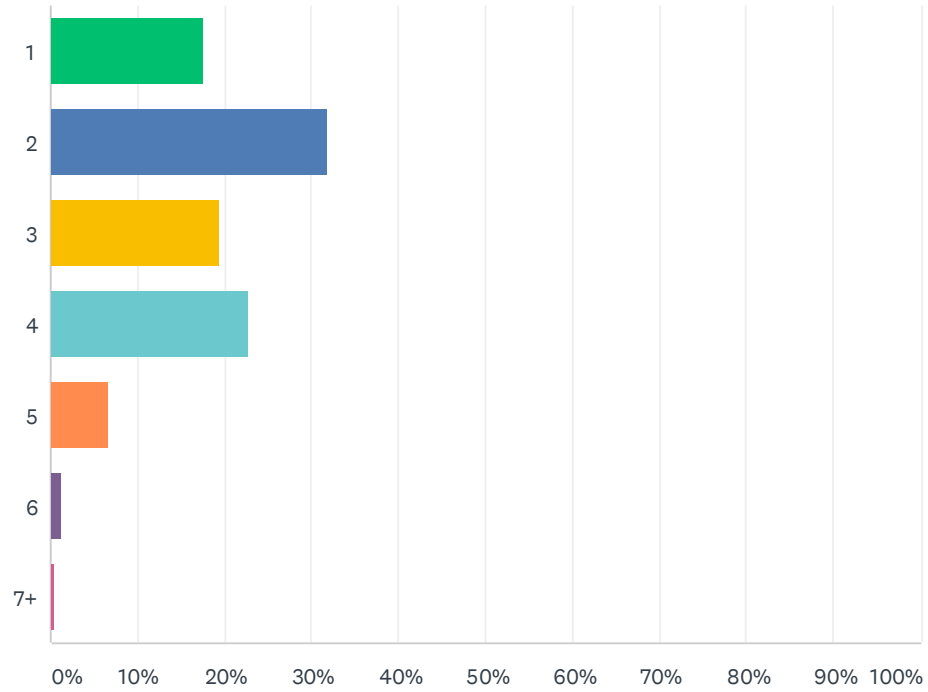


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	3.73%	150
2	5.40%	217
3	5.17%	208
4	4.33%	174
5	5.12%	206
6	4.85%	195
7	5.07%	204
8	5.42%	218
9	4.10%	165
10	4.90%	197
11	4.75%	191
12	6.37%	256
13	4.33%	174
14	4.45%	179
15	4.28%	172
16	4.93%	198
17	4.20%	169
18	4.15%	167
19	5.07%	204
20	4.30%	173
21	5.05%	203
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,020</b>



### Q36 How many people live in your household, including yourself?

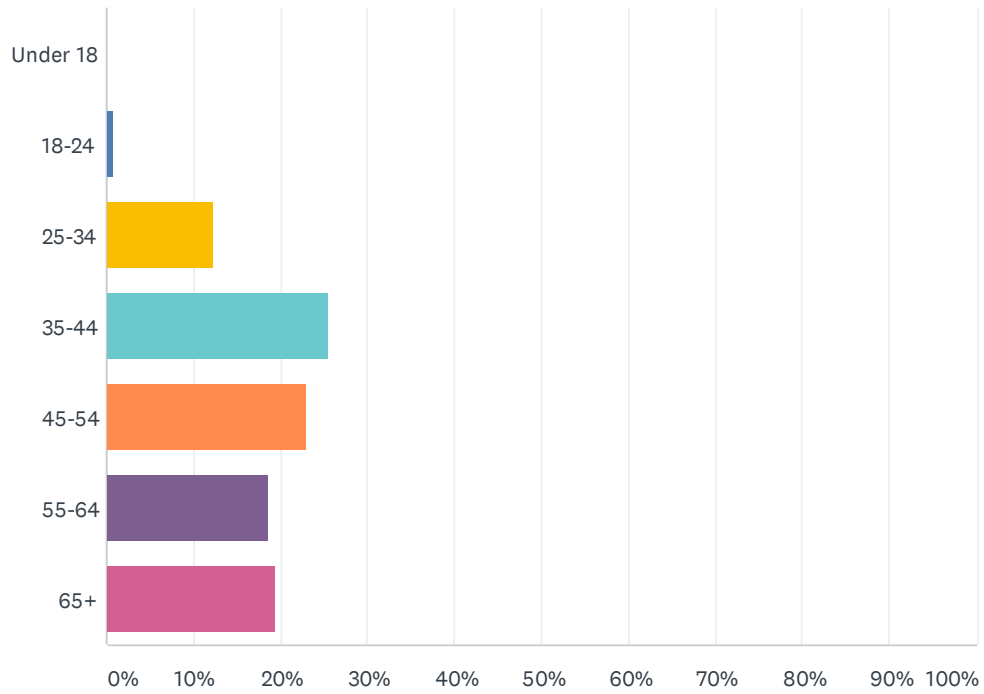
Answered: 4,171 Skipped: 411



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	17.60%	734
2	31.70%	1,322
3	19.42%	810
4	22.90%	955
5	6.67%	278
6	1.27%	53
7+	0.46%	19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,171</b>

### Q37 What is YOUR age?

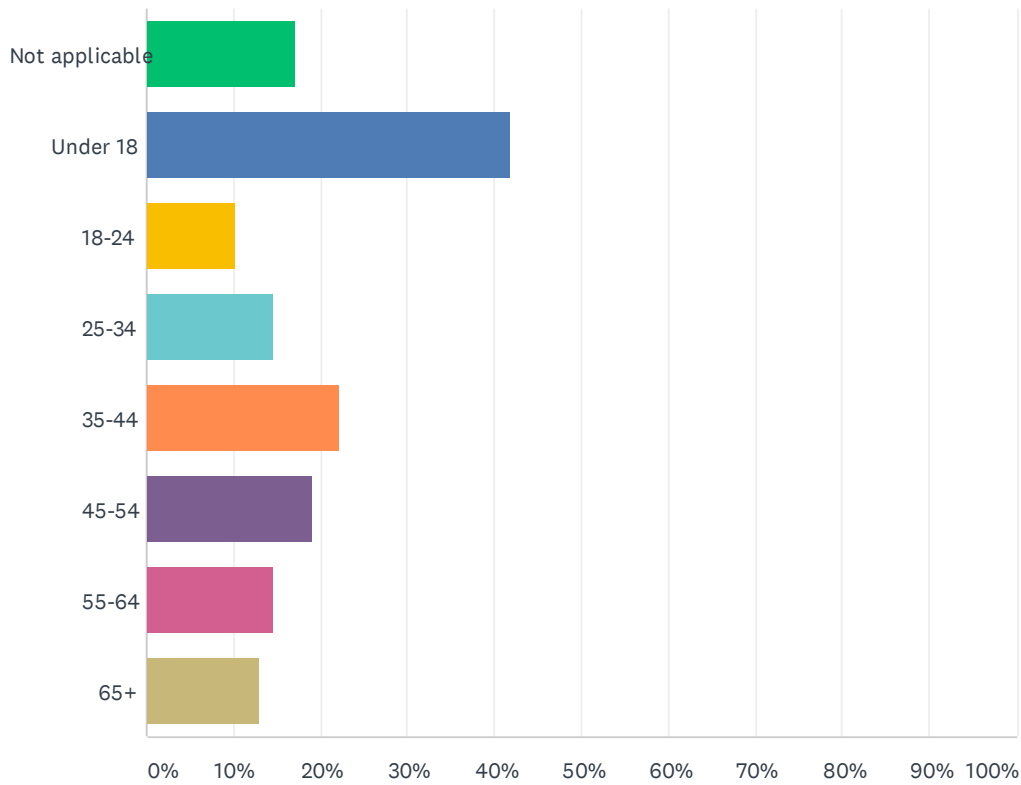
Answered: 4,148 Skipped: 434



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	0.05% 2
18-24	0.94% 39
25-34	12.32% 511
35-44	25.58% 1,061
45-54	22.95% 952
55-64	18.66% 774
65+	19.50% 809
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,148</b>

### Q38 What are the ages of the others in your household? (Check all that apply)

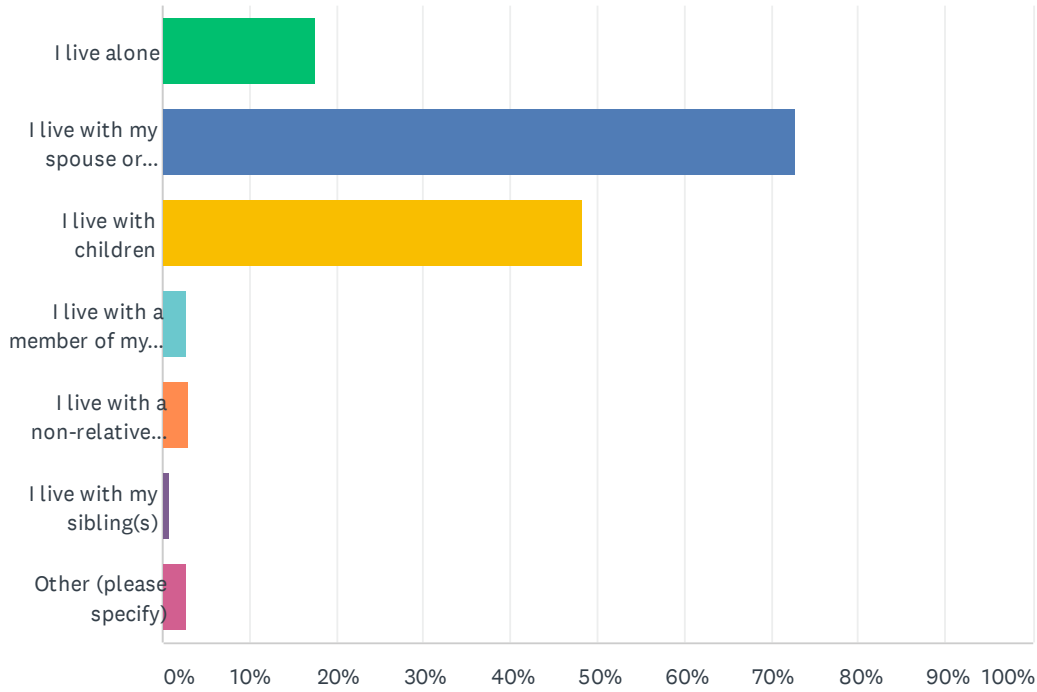
Answered: 4,095 Skipped: 487



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Not applicable	17.22%	705
Under 18	41.90%	1,716
18-24	10.21%	418
25-34	14.58%	597
35-44	22.10%	905
45-54	19.05%	780
55-64	14.65%	600
65+	13.06%	535
Total Respondents: 4,095		

### Q39 With whom do you live? (Check all that apply)

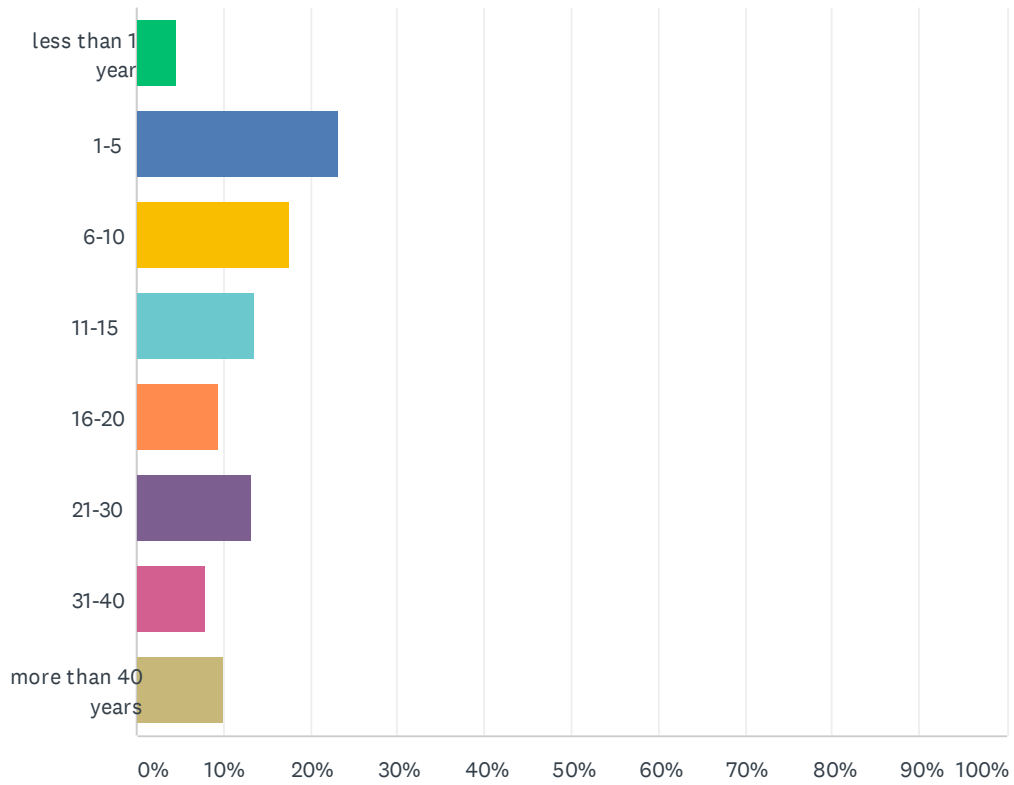
Answered: 4,159 Skipped: 423



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I live alone	17.65%	734
I live with my spouse or partner	72.85%	3,030
I live with children	48.23%	2,006
I live with a member of my extended family	2.74%	114
I live with a non-relative (friend or roommate)	2.84%	118
I live with my sibling(s)	0.94%	39
Other (please specify)	2.64%	110
Total Respondents: 4,159		

## Q40 How long have you have lived in Arlington?

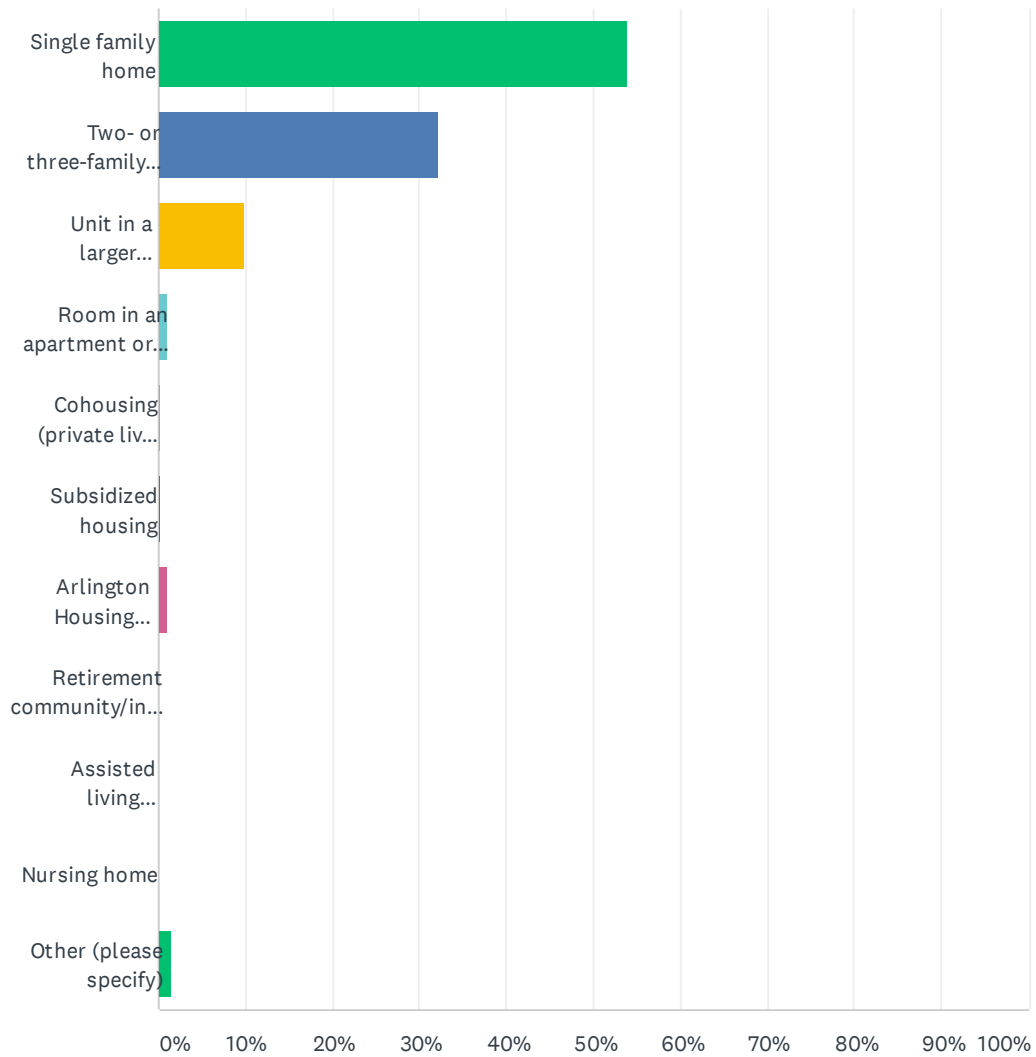
Answered: 4,189 Skipped: 393



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
less than 1 year	4.61%	193
1-5	23.30%	976
6-10	17.62%	738
11-15	13.68%	573
16-20	9.48%	397
21-30	13.27%	556
31-40	8.04%	337
more than 40 years	10.00%	419
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,189</b>

# Q41 Which best describes your current place of residence? (Check only one)

Answered: 4,181 Skipped: 401

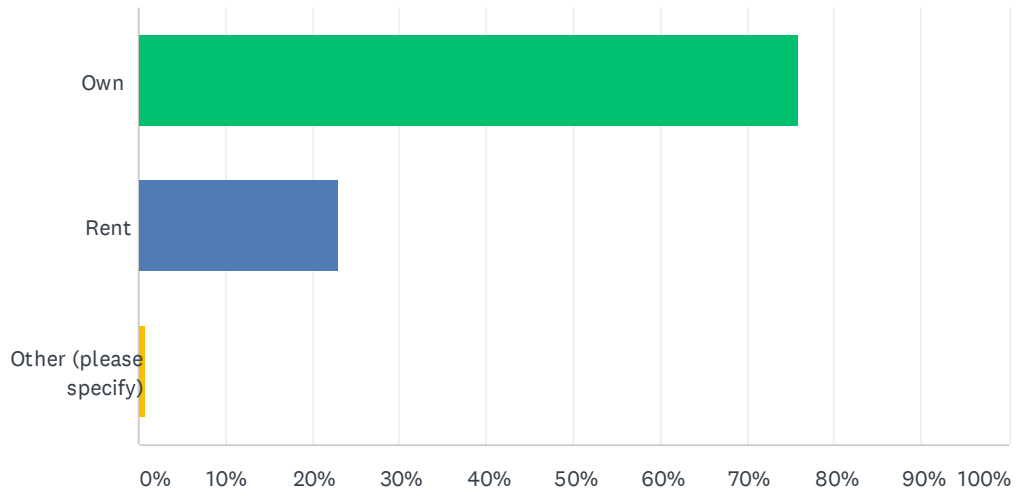


2020 Annual Town Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single family home	53.91%	2,254
Two- or three-family home	32.19%	1,346
Unit in a larger multi-family building (four or more units)	9.90%	414
Room in an apartment or house	1.08%	45
Cohousing (private living units with shared community spaces)	0.26%	11
Subsidized housing	0.29%	12
Arlington Housing Authority	0.98%	41
Retirement community/independent living	0.02%	1
Assisted living community	0.00%	0
Nursing home	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	1.36%	57
TOTAL		4,181

## Q42 Do you rent or own your current place of residence?

Answered: 4,170 Skipped: 412

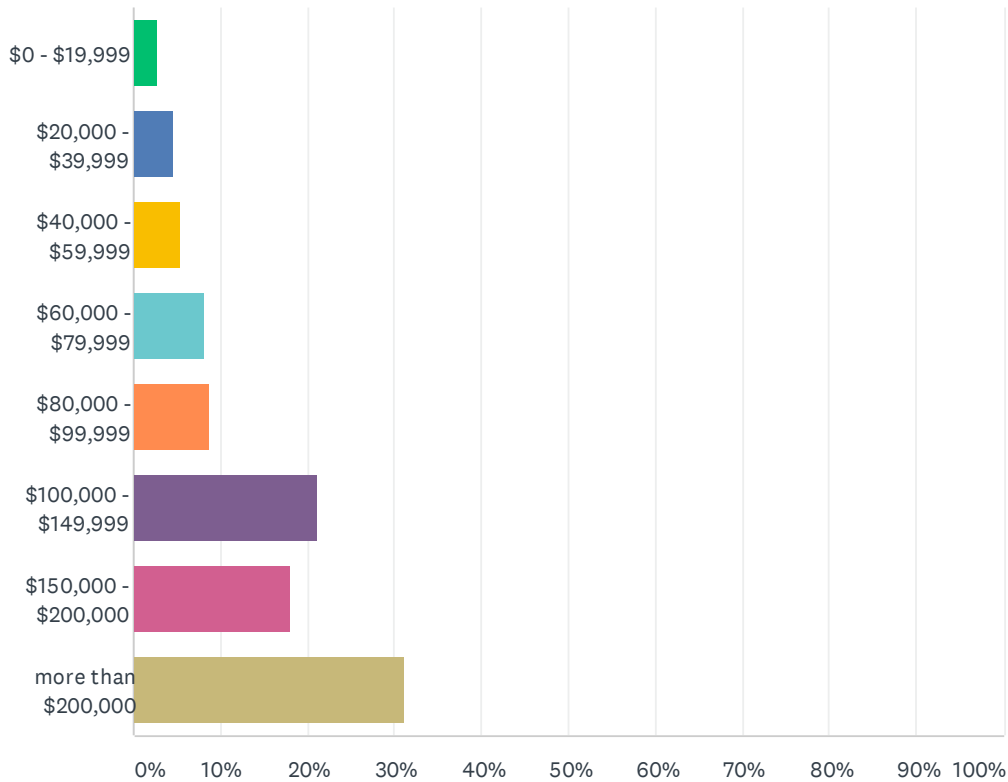


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Own	76.00%	3,169
Rent	23.07%	962
Other (please specify)	0.94%	39
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,170</b>



Q43 What was your annual household income in 2019? Note: if you live with roommates and do not combine finances, please report your individual income.

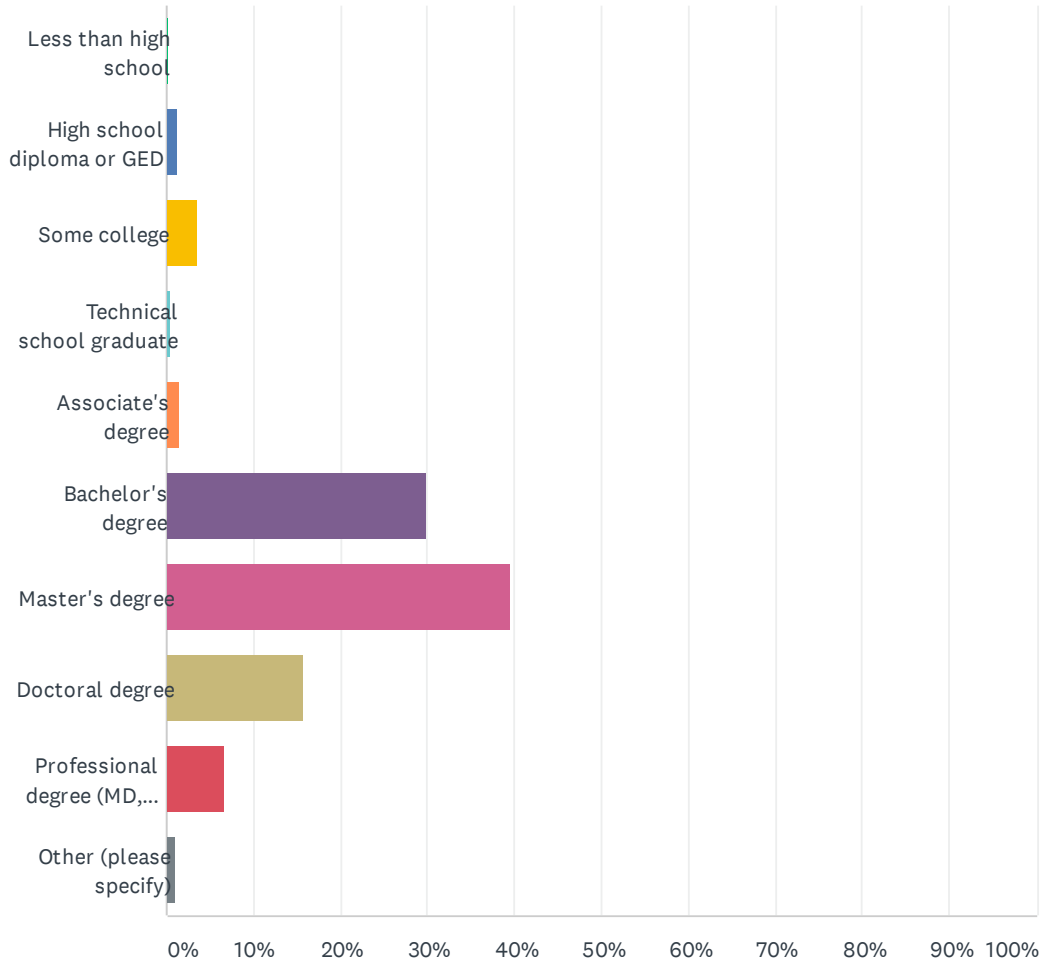
Answered: 3,799 Skipped: 783



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$0 - \$19,999	2.79%	106
\$20,000 - \$39,999	4.50%	171
\$40,000 - \$59,999	5.48%	208
\$60,000 - \$79,999	8.11%	308
\$80,000 - \$99,999	8.79%	334
\$100,000 - \$149,999	21.16%	804
\$150,000 - \$200,000	18.08%	687
more than \$200,000	31.09%	1,181
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3,799</b>

## Q44 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

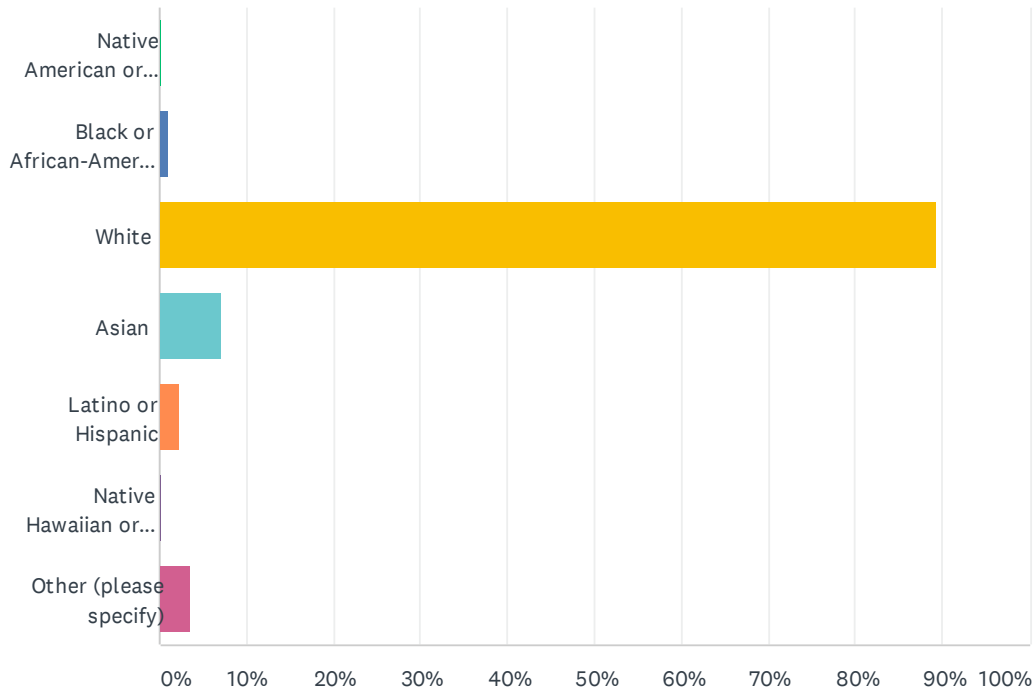
Answered: 4,149 Skipped: 433



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than high school	0.24%	10
High school diploma or GED	1.21%	50
Some college	3.64%	151
Technical school graduate	0.41%	17
Associate's degree	1.42%	59
Bachelor's degree	30.01%	1,245
Master's degree	39.58%	1,642
Doctoral degree	15.67%	650
Professional degree (MD, DDS, JD)	6.75%	280
Other (please specify)	1.08%	45
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,149</b>

### Q45 How do you identify your race or ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

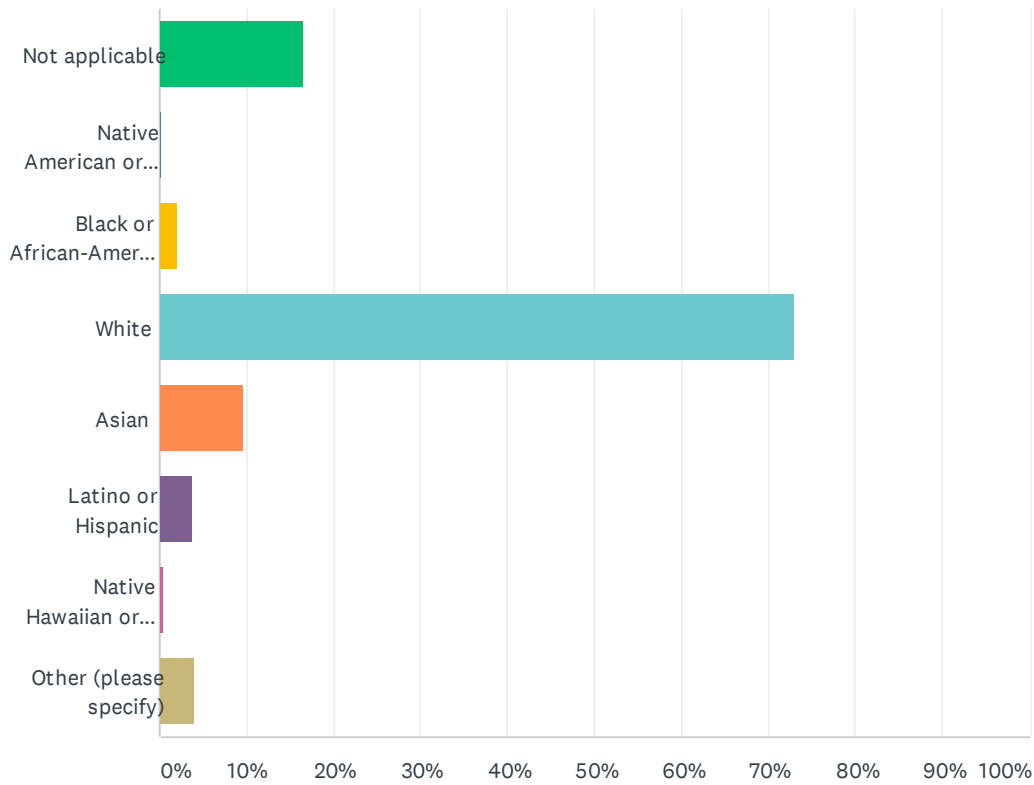
Answered: 4,079 Skipped: 503



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Native American or Alaska Native	0.29%	12
Black or African-American	1.13%	46
White	89.26%	3,641
Asian	7.09%	289
Latino or Hispanic	2.30%	94
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.29%	12
Other (please specify)	3.51%	143
Total Respondents: 4,079		

### Q46 How do you identify the racial and ethnic group(s) of other household members? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 4,023 Skipped: 559



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Not applicable	16.60%	668
Native American or Alaska Native	0.25%	10
Black or African-American	2.16%	87
White	73.10%	2,941
Asian	9.52%	383
Latino or Hispanic	3.85%	155
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.35%	14
Other (please specify)	3.93%	158
Total Respondents: 4,023		

## Q47 Do you have feedback on the survey?

Answered: 909 Skipped: 3,673

**Q48 Do you have any have any further comments about topics in the survey?**

Answered: 818 Skipped: 3,764

Q49 Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences and needs as a resident in Arlington? Note: We are particularly interested in the needs and concerns of underrepresented groups (e.g., people with disabilities, immigrants, racial minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with limited financial resources).

Answered: 1,083 Skipped: 3,499