

Annual Town Survey 2021 Results

April 2022



Town Survey

- The Town survey is performed annually in partnership by Envision Arlington
- The survey has been performed for over 30 years with previous reports available on EA's website: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/boards-and-committees/envision-arlington>
- Town Departments and Committees contribute questions, and the focus shifts each year
- The 2021 survey includes topics on community wellness, DEI, education, and seniors
- Over 3300 complete surveys were received in the first quarter of 2021 with the following headline demographics:
 - 60% female
 - 85% white
 - 78% own residence
 - 27% 200K+ income

Access to Routine Medical care and Mental Health suffered during the Pandemic

- The 2021 Arlington Town Survey was conducted in the midst of one of the darkest times of the Covid-19 pandemic. The winter of 2021 saw a significant surge in Covid-19 related illnesses in Massachusetts.
- During the first year of the pandemic, residents reported better levels of overall physical health and economic well-being than mental health
 - Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents reported that their overall physical health was either excellent or good
 - Eighty-seven percent (87%) reported excellent or good financial health
 - While only 66% said their mental health was excellent or good
- **Routine medical** was difficult to access for nearly half of respondents (45%), followed by mental health care (14%) and prescriptions (10%)
- **Urgent care**, home health care, and medical transportation were more difficult for less than 10% of the people for whom it was applicable

The impacts of the pandemic on employment and work were widely experienced by Town residents

- Thirty percent (30%) of respondents reported fearing they would lose their job and 24% reported an adverse impact on their employment by early 2021
- A third of respondents' finances were negatively impacted by the pandemic by the first quarter of 2021
 - By early 2021, **twelve percent (12%)** of respondents had filed for unemployment
 - Six percent (6%) of respondents tapped into retirement savings
 - Two percent (2%) of respondents began some form of food assistance and less than 1% of respondents received assistance from the Town
- Six percent (6%) of respondents reported fearing they could lose their home as a result of the pandemic
 - Only five respondents (<1%) reported being evicted from their home during the pandemic by the first quarter of 2021

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

- The 2021 Town survey included a section on diversity, equity and inclusion
- With the renewed attention on DEI in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in 2020 and local protests, the Envision Arlington Standing Committee sought to assess views on the experiences of residents
- Envision Arlington worked together with the Arlington Human Rights Commission to formulate questions in this section

How welcoming is Arlington varies by group

Six dimensions of welcoming

- **Physical/mental disability:** 58% see Arlington as usually welcoming or always welcoming
- **Race/Ethnicity or Gender Identity:** 67% see Arlington as usually or always welcoming
- **Sexual orientation, religious views, or national origin:** 70%-73% see Arlington as welcoming or usually welcoming

How welcoming is Arlington varies by group

- Hispanic and Black residents see Arlington as less welcoming than white and Asian residents
- Females consistently rated Arlington less welcoming than males
 - Arlington's male residents rated the Town more welcoming than any other gender identification
- Higher income individuals generally perceive Arlington as more welcoming
- Renters find Arlington as welcoming as homeowners

Perceptions of Safety vary by race

- Respondents were asked how personally safe they feel in Arlington against Prejudice/intolerance/bigotry, Unlawful discrimination/ unfair treatment, Intimidation/threats/coercion, and Violence/assault in home or community
- The majority of Arlington residents feel safe in their home and community with 90-94% of respondents reporting they are always or usually safe
- The feeling of safety varies meaningfully by race
 - Asian, Black, Hispanic, Jewish, and Middle Eastern have lower than expected percentages of *Always Safe* responses and higher than expected percentages of *Not Safe* responses
 - 20.6% of responses are *Always Safe* for Black residents vs 54% *Always Safe* for white residents
 - 12% of responses are *Not Safe* for Black residents vs 1% of responses for white residents

Perceptions of safety vary by gender identity

- We find statistically significant differences in perceptions of safety based on **gender identity**
- Non-binary, agender, and non-gender responses show a lower than expected percentage of *Always Safe* responses and higher than expected percentage of Not safe responses (i.e., 30-44% report *Always Safe*)
- Female respondents show a similar pattern but somewhat higher levels of safety with 54% reporting *Always Safe*
- Two-thirds of males (66%) report being *Always Safe*
- Nineteen (19) in the survey group of 3366 total respondents reported they were *Not Safe* from violence/assault in the home or community
 - The respondents in this group were from a range of income groups, race/ethnicities, age groups, and precincts
 - The majority identified as female (10 of 19 or 52%) and a quarter (5 or 26%) identified as non-binary

Comfort calling the police

- A final question in this section explored residents' comfort calling the Arlington Police Department if a resident or household member were a victim or witness to a violent crime, non-violent crime, hate crime, medical emergency, or mental health crisis
- **While 93% of respondents report they are very comfortable reporting a medical emergency, only 65% of respondents are very comfortable reporting a hate crime and 61% are very comfortable reporting a mental health emergency**
- **The non-white residents were less comfortable with calling the Arlington Police** (Note: Statistically significant .01 level)

How has COVID-19 affected your need and use for childcare?

Response Option	Had to change work schedule or decrease hours	Difficulty finding childcare	Had to pay more for childcare	Schedule not affected	Had to stop working	Not applicable
Response Count	672	302	218	183	95	2360
Response % of Total Response	20%	9%	6%	5%	3%	70%
Response % of 1470 non-NA Responses	46%	21%	15%	12%	6%	N/A

How many hours per week on average, if any, are adults in your household supporting remote education for a k-12 child/children during the pandemic?

Response Option	< 5 Hours	6 to 10 Hours	11 to 20 Hours	20+ Hours	N/A
Response Count	547	282	254	194	2089
Response % of total Response	16%	8%	8%	6%	63%

Note: Higher income was associated with spend less time with remote schooling (small correlation)

Have any APS students in your household made use of any of the following mental health services?

Response Option	Guidance Counselors and Teachers	Faith-based Counseling	Arlington Youth programs	Other Psychotherapy or Clinical Resources	Other or N/A
Response Count	223	17	57	208	932
Response % of total Response	7%	1%	2%	6%	28%

Arlington's Council on Aging modified its programs and services to keep Arlington seniors safe, supported, and connected throughout the pandemic

- The Council on Aging worked with Envision Arlington to shape questions to help guide the types of activities offered. These questions were directed to respondents 60 years of age or older.
- Overall, 992 or 29% of survey respondents were 60 or older
- The first question asked respondents which programs they expect to participate in in 2021
 - The top five responses are SHINE counseling (11%), outdoor services (10%), legal or financial services (7%), transportation to medical appointments (7%), and COA van services within Arlington (5%)
- The Council on Aging has offered a range of virtual programs during the pandemic. Respondents were asked which virtual programs they expect to participate in over the next year
 - The most frequently selected option was fitness classes (20%) followed by legal or financial workshops (15%), arts or crafting classes (8%), shared interest socials (7%), and concerts/sing-alongs (6%)