



VCU

School of Business



Richmonders' Response to Covid-19: Survey and Report

A study by RVA Views reveals the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the residents of Richmond, shedding light on their perceptions of the city, alterations in their lifestyles, and providing insights on uniting as a community in 2024 and beyond.

Executive Summary

Understanding Richmond: A Community's Journey Through COVID-19

In the latter part of 2023, RVA Views undertook an extensive survey initiative to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of Richmond residents. This project, a collaborative effort between Virginia Commonwealth University and the communities it serves, aimed to explore the diverse ways our lives, health, and views on the future have shifted following the pandemic.

Reaching out through proprietary email lists, social media platforms, and targeted ads, we encouraged a wide range of residents to share their insights. Each participant brought forward their experiences, contributing to a meaningful dialogue about our collective path forward.

With carefully crafted questions aligned with Virginia Commonwealth University's Quest 2028 vision, we investigated the changes in behaviors and attitudes toward public health, education, economic conditions, and the sense of community.

We invite you to delve into the insights gathered from 810 diverse voices across our community, offering a glimpse into how we've navigated the pandemic and our hopes for a resilient, united, and better future.

Survey Methodology

When was the survey done?

In the fall of 2023, capturing responses during a pivotal time as we embraced a new normal following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Where did the survey take place?

Across Richmond and Central Virginia, reaching a wide demographic to ensure diverse insights into the pandemic's effects.

How did people participate?

Through an online questionnaire hosted, designed for ease of access and broad participation.

Why did people participate?

To share their views and have a chance to win one of six \$50 gift cards.

How many people participated?

Eight hundred ten individuals, providing a rich and varied dataset for analysis.

What did the survey include?

Twenty-six questions, each crafted to explore the nuanced changes in attitudes, behaviors, and expectations following the pandemic.

What was the focus?

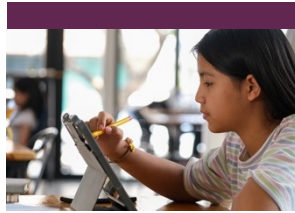
Changes in perceptions of health, education, technology, economy, and community dynamics post-pandemic, aligning its themes with VCU's Quest 2028 Vision.



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PART 1: Health

Health and Healthcare Service Engagement

The opening segment of RVA Views' comprehensive survey dives into the intricate behaviors of Richmonders regarding healthcare following the pandemic.

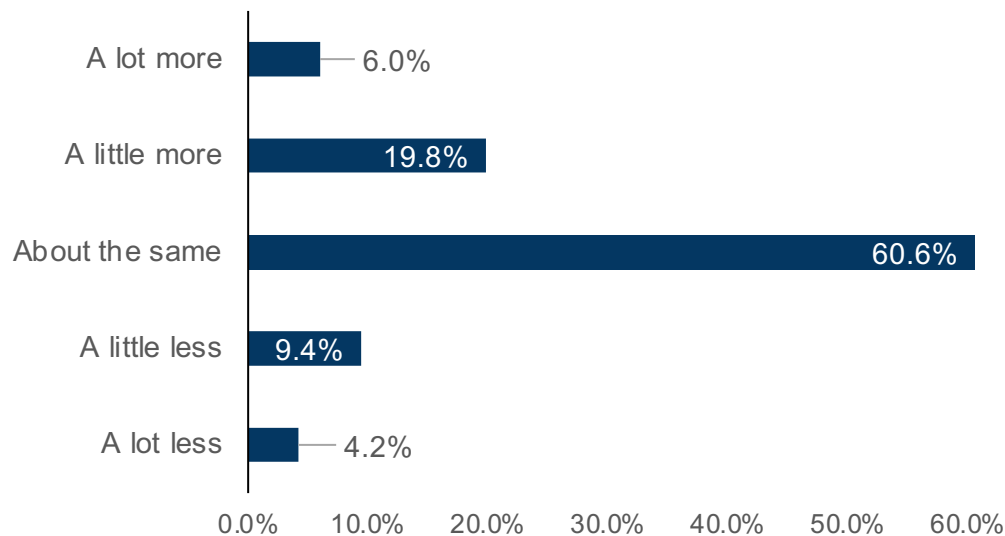
Respondents were prompted to reflect on their frequency of healthcare service utilization, their perceptions of the quality of these services, personal and mental health considerations, and their future intentions regarding seeking healthcare services.

This inquiry not only captures the immediate reactions to health post-pandemic but also gauges the evolving healthcare landscape as we navigate through these unprecedented times.

As we highlight at the end of this section, RVA Views uncovers a community in transition, grappling with the health implications of a global crisis while demonstrating resilience and adaptability. Our health, more than ever, demands attention, empathy, and collective action to navigate the path to recovery and resilience.

Seeking Healthcare Services

Indicate if you engage more, less, or the same in seeking healthcare services as before the COVID-19 pandemic.



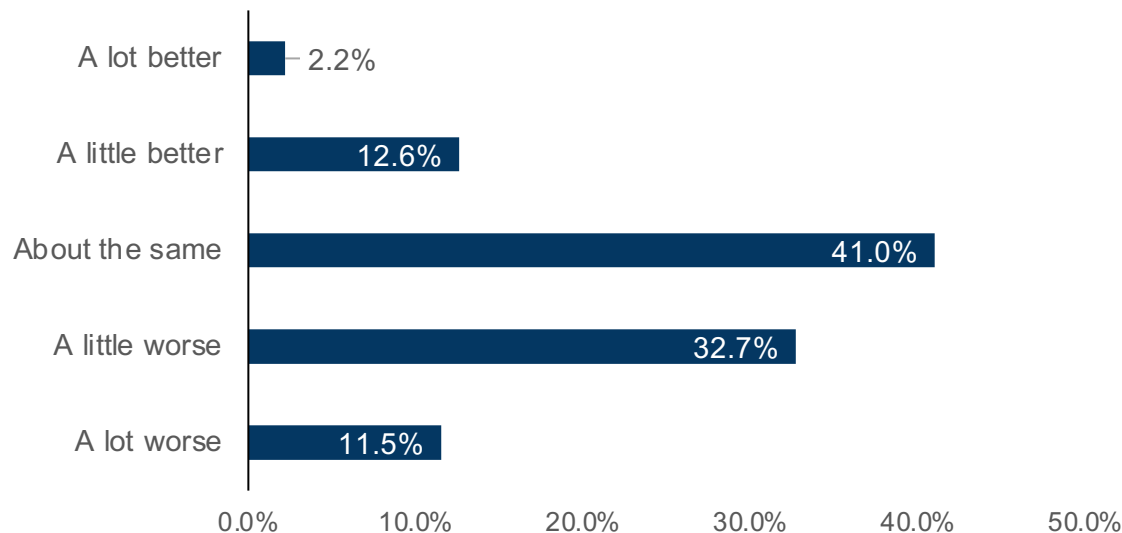
Nearly 26% of Richmonders are seeking healthcare services **more frequently** than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is a common phenomenon during a global epidemic, as individuals and families become more concerned about their health and seek professional help for ailments that may have been previously ignored or self-treated.



Quality Perceptions of Healthcare Services

Indicate if you feel better, worse, or about the same regarding the quality of healthcare services as before the COVID-19 pandemic.



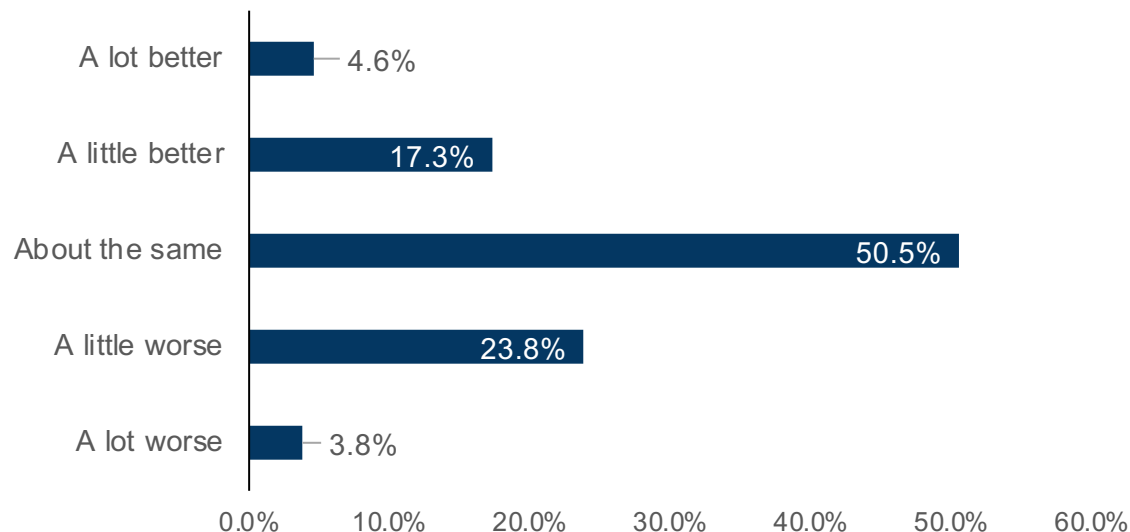
Over 44% of Richmonders believe that the ***quality of healthcare services has deteriorated***.

This decline in perception could be attributed to the limited resources and staff available to healthcare providers. Since the pandemic, there has been a surge in people seeking healthcare services, which may have further strained the already limited resources.



Feelings Toward Personal Health

Indicate if you feel better, worse, or about the same regarding your personal health as before the COVID-19 pandemic.



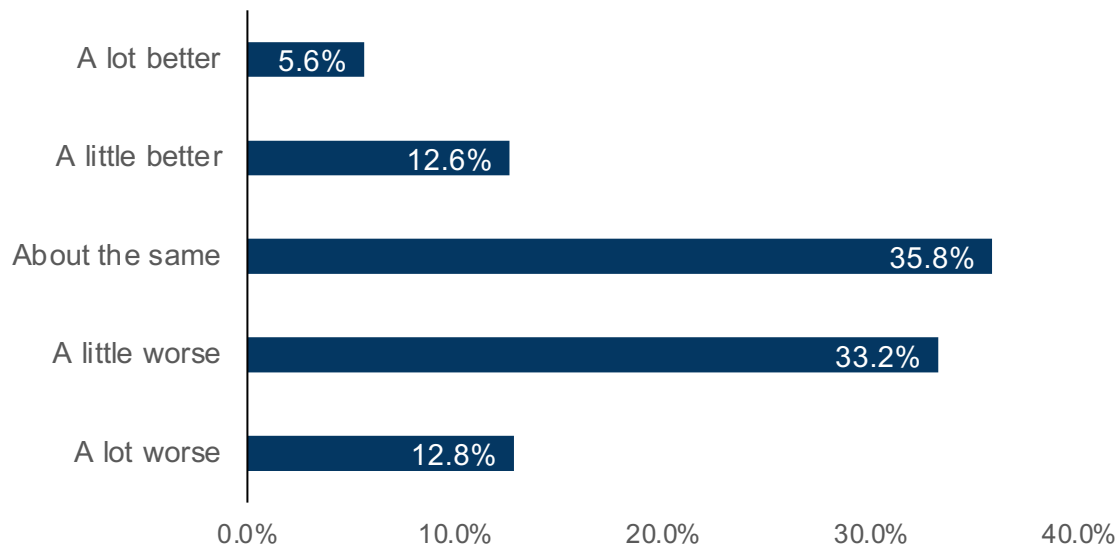
Although more Richmonders are seeking healthcare than before COVID, **27.6% are feeling worse** about their general health post-COVID compared to **21.9% feeling better**.

This information highlights the negative impact of the pandemic on the overall health of the people in Richmond.



Feelings Toward Personal Mental Health

Indicate if you feel better, worse, or about the same regarding your mental health as before the COVID-19 pandemic.



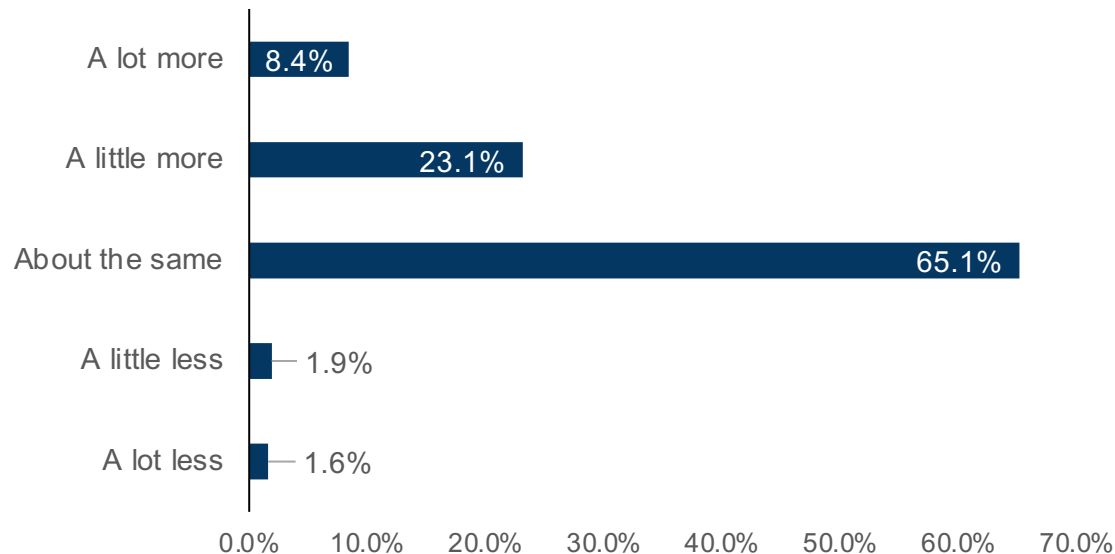
The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the mental health of Richmonders, with **46% reporting that their mental health had worsened.**

The pandemic has brought about unprecedented levels of isolation, uncertainty and fear, which has taken a toll on the mental health of many. It is important to prioritize mental health support during such times.



Pursuing Healthcare Services in the Future

To what extent will you pursue healthcare services in the next two years?



31.5% of Richmonders ***plan to seek healthcare services more frequently*** in the next two years.

As Richmonders become increasingly aware of the importance of maintaining good physical and mental health, the need for accessible and reliable healthcare options in the region is growing.



Navigating Our Health

The survey's findings reveal a community actively seeking to maintain its health amidst unprecedented challenges, as summarized below:

Increased Engagement

A significant revelation was that nearly 26% of respondents reported an uptick in seeking healthcare services compared to before the pandemic. This underscores a heightened concern for personal and familial health, driving individuals towards more proactive health management.

Quality of Healthcare Services

Over 44% of participants expressed concerns about the deteriorating quality of healthcare services. This perception could be attributed to the increased demand on healthcare systems, highlighting the strain on resources and personnel and its impact on service quality.

Personal Health

Despite increased healthcare utilization, a noteworthy 27.6% of respondents felt their general health had deteriorated post-pandemic, compared to 21.9% reporting an improvement. This disparity raises critical questions about the broader health implications of the pandemic beyond immediate medical concerns.

Navigating Our Health, continued

Mental Health

The survey also shed light on the mental health toll, with 46% indicating a decline in their mental health state. This statistic reflects the widespread psychological impact of the pandemic, underscoring the need for robust mental health support systems.

Future Healthcare Pursuit

Looking ahead, 31.5% of Richmonders plan to increase their engagement with healthcare services in the next two years, a decision likely influenced by ongoing health and mental health challenges.



PART 2

Education and Technology

Education, Technology, and the AI Frontier

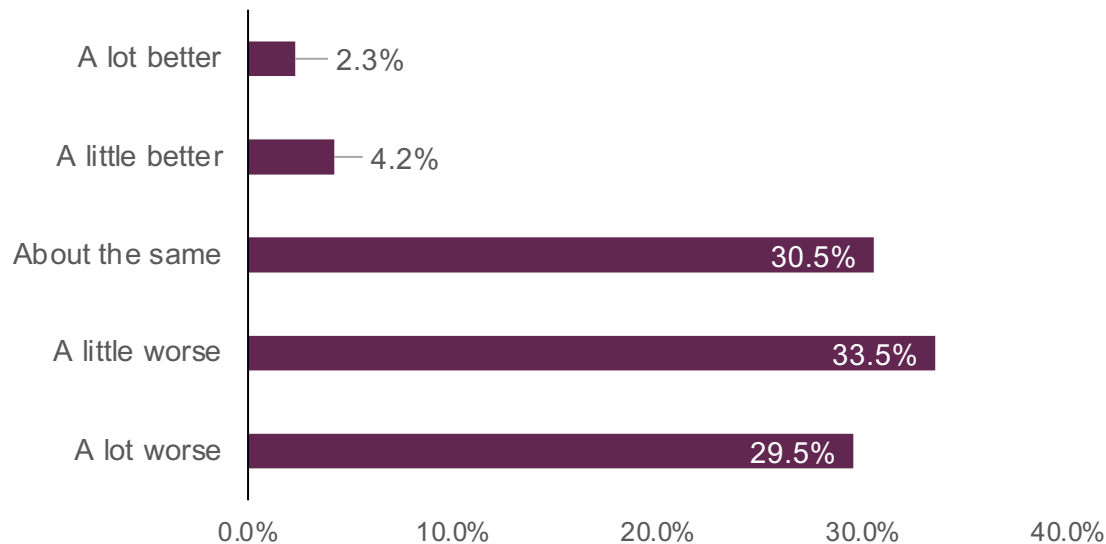
In this second segment, RVA Views explores the complex world of education, which, post-pandemic, is now intertwined with increasing technological capabilities, including artificial intelligence (AI).

Participants provided their candid perspectives on the efficacy of K-12 education, the comparative value of virtual versus in-person learning, and the anticipated role of higher education.

Integral to this discourse is the community's stance on the burgeoning presence of technology and AI in learning environments, and this section uncovers the balance between technology-enhanced education and traditional teaching methods.

Feelings Towards K-12 Education

Indicate if you feel better, worse, or about the same regarding K-12 Education as before the COVID-19 pandemic.



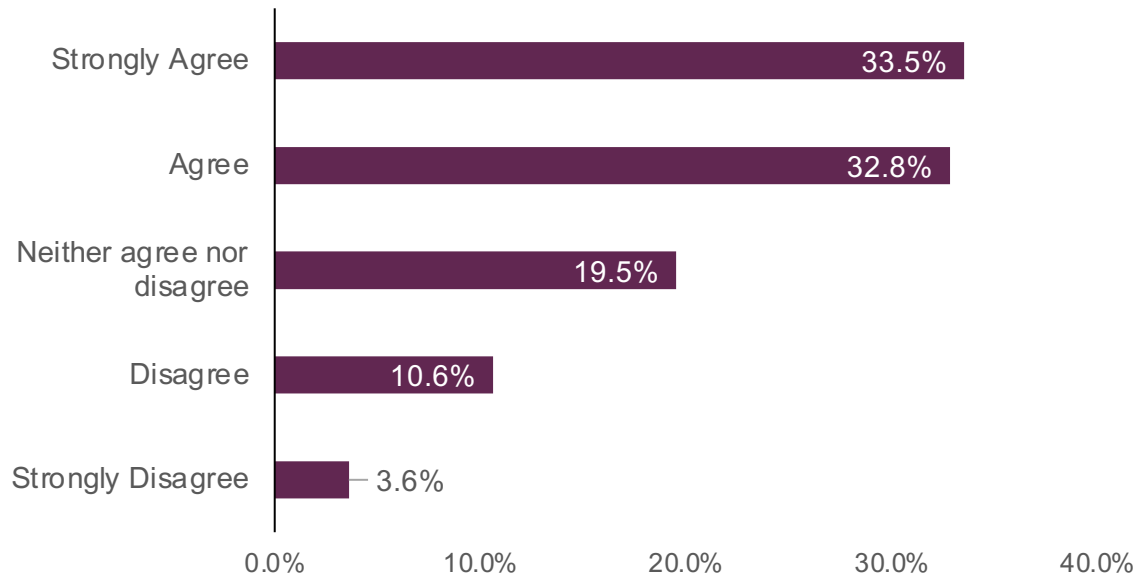
63% of Richmonders believe ***K-12 education has worsened*** since before 2020.

The survey underscore the need for a comprehensive analysis of the factors leading to the perceived decline in the quality of education and the implementation of effective measures to address the challenges faced by the K-12 education system in Richmond.



Attitudes Toward In-Person vs. Virtual Learning

Please indicate whether you agree that in-person learning is more effective than virtual or remote learning.



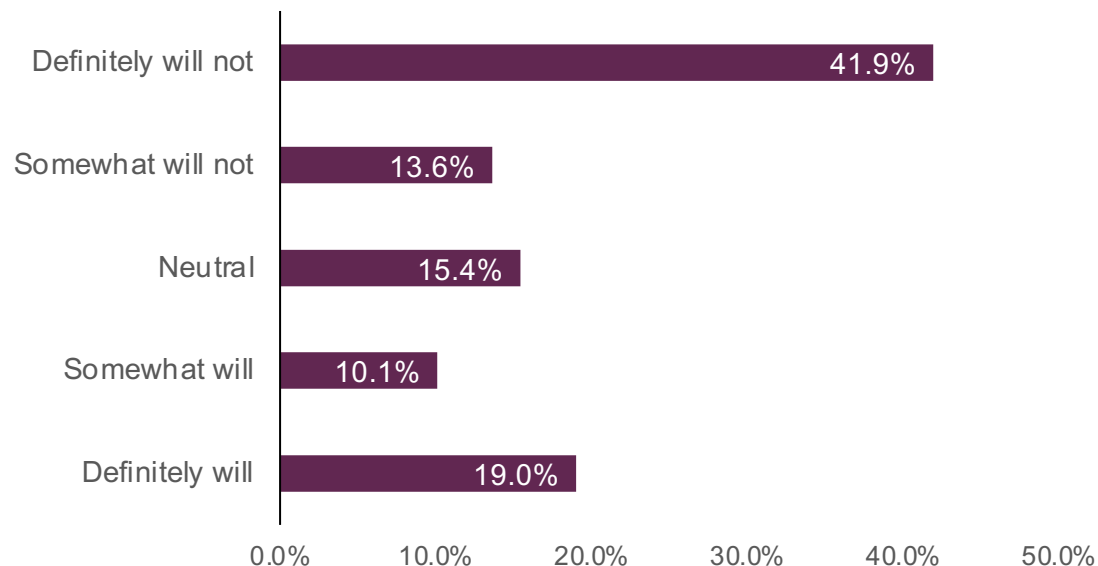
Over 66% of Richmonders believe that ***in-person learning is more effective than virtual learning.***

This finding indicates that Richmonders value face-to-face interactions and the benefits that come with traditional classroom settings.



Pursue Higher Education

What is your intention to pursue higher education in the next two years?



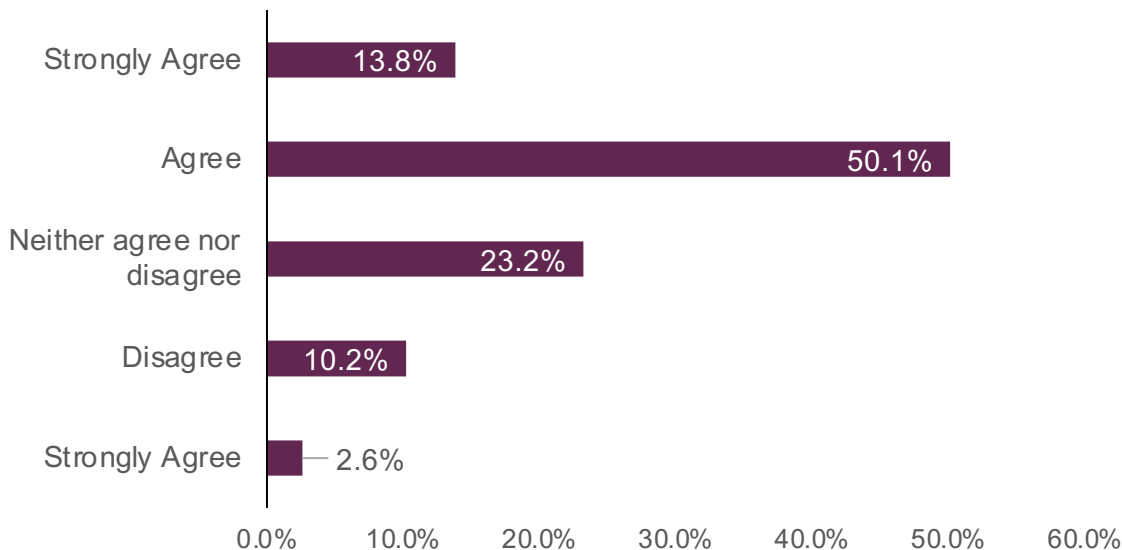
About 30% of Richmonders surveyed ***plan to pursue higher education*** within the next two years.

This indicates a positive trend towards personal growth and career advancement among the residents of Richmond.



Impact of Technology on Quality of Life

Please indicate whether you agree that technology has positively changed your quality of life.



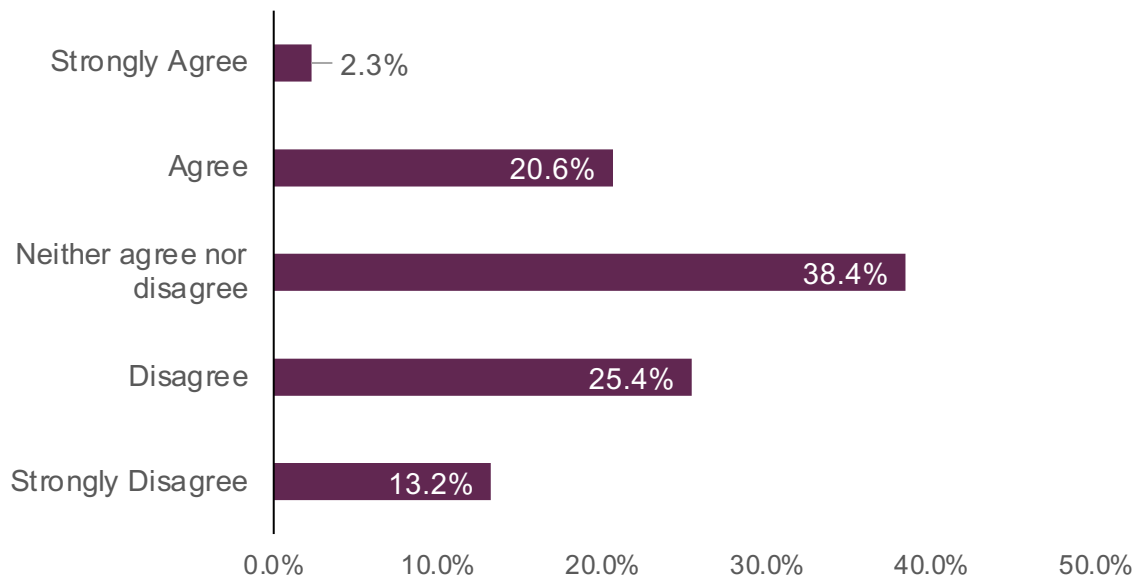
Approximately 64% of Richmonders consider technology as a positive force.

The findings highlight the growing importance of technology and how Richmonders are hopeful of leveraging its benefits to achieve a better standard of living and enhance their overall well-being.



Feelings Towards AI as a Positive Change Agent

Please indicate if you agree whether AI and other artificial intelligence technologies have a positive impact on society.



Richmonders have mixed opinions about the impact of artificial intelligence technology. While **nearly 23% believe AI is a positive force** for change, **38.6% disagree**.

Overall, the community's mixed views on AI reflect the complex and evolving nature of this technology, with its potential to bring both benefits and challenges to society.



Education in the AI Age

The survey's results demonstrate a community that is eager to explore new horizons in education and embrace cutting-edge technologies like AI, as summarized below:

K-12 Education Perceptions

The community's sentiment towards K-12 education reveals a considerable skew towards negativity, with 63% of respondents perceiving a decline in the quality of education since before 2020. This stark reflection underscores the challenges faced by the educational sector in maintaining standards amidst the tumultuous pandemic environment.

In-Person Vs. Virtual Learning

Richmonders have voiced a strong preference for in-person learning over virtual formats. An overwhelming 66% agree that in-person learning offers a superior educational experience, highlighting the perceived limitations of remote learning modalities in delivering comprehensive educational outcomes.

Higher Education Intentions

Looking towards the future, higher education remains a priority for many within the community. Nearly a third of surveyed individuals express at least a tentative plan to pursue higher education within the next two years, indicating an enduring belief in the value of continued academic engagement.

Education in the AI Age, continued

Technology's Role

The survey also tapped into perceptions of technology's impact on quality of life and its role as a societal change agent. The majority of respondents view technology positively, signaling an openness to the integration of technological advancements in enhancing educational delivery and accessibility.

Artificial Intelligence

Opinions on artificial intelligence (AI) as a positive force in society show a mixed response, with nearly 23% in agreement and 38.6% expressing disagreement. This division reflects the broader conversation on the implications of AI in educational settings and beyond, marking an area ripe for further exploration and dialogue.



PART 3

Economic Prosperity

Economic Prosperity and Financial Adaptation

The economic section of RVA Views' survey presents an in-depth look at the fiscal adjustments and realities faced by the citizens of Richmond during an era of economic turbulence.

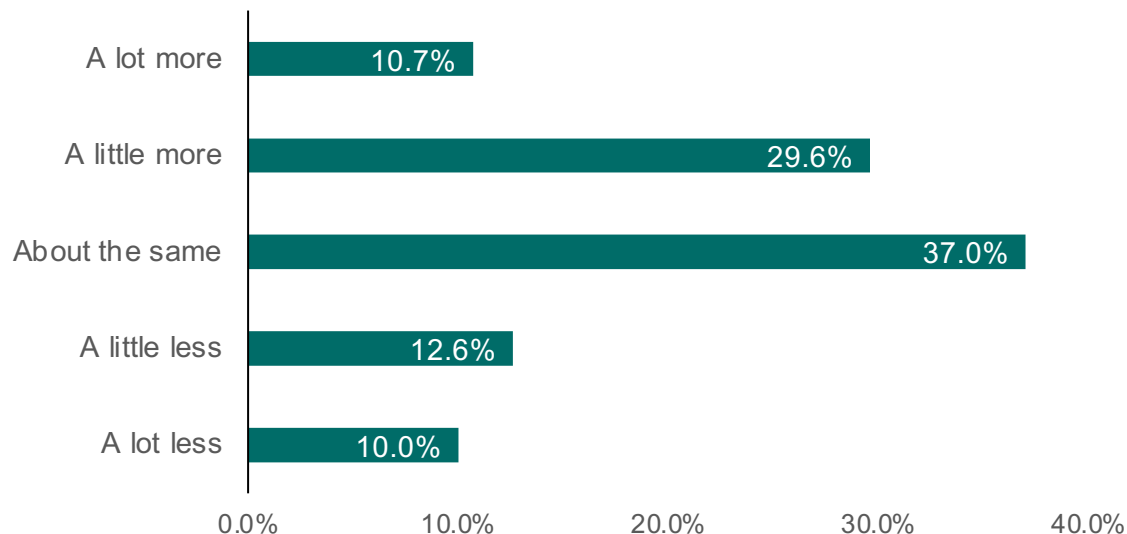
Respondents were encouraged to review their spending patterns, changes in income, job transitions, and overall economic outlook.

As such, this section highlights a community's economic resilience and the strategic shifts they made in response to the pandemic's financial impact.

In summary, RVA Views highlights a community's efforts to sustain and grow economic prosperity, emphasizing the need for financial empathy, adaptability, and collaborative action toward rebuilding a robust local economy that benefits everyone.

Saving Money

Indicate whether you are saving more, less, or the same amount of money compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic.



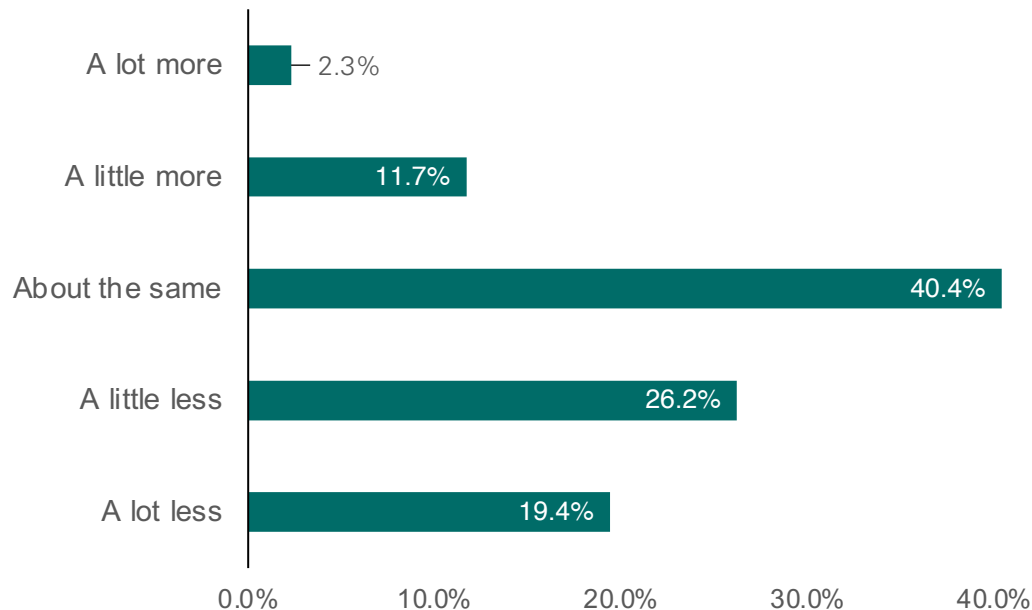
The pandemic has led to an increase in money-saving behaviors, with **over 40%** of Richmonders reporting that they **save more money** than before.

This change in financial behavior can be attributed to the increased awareness of the importance of financial stability and the need to prepare for any unexpected events that may arise in the future.



Shop for Leisure or Luxury Goods or Services

To what extent do you engage more, less or the same in shopping for leisure or luxury goods and services as before the COVID-19 pandemic.



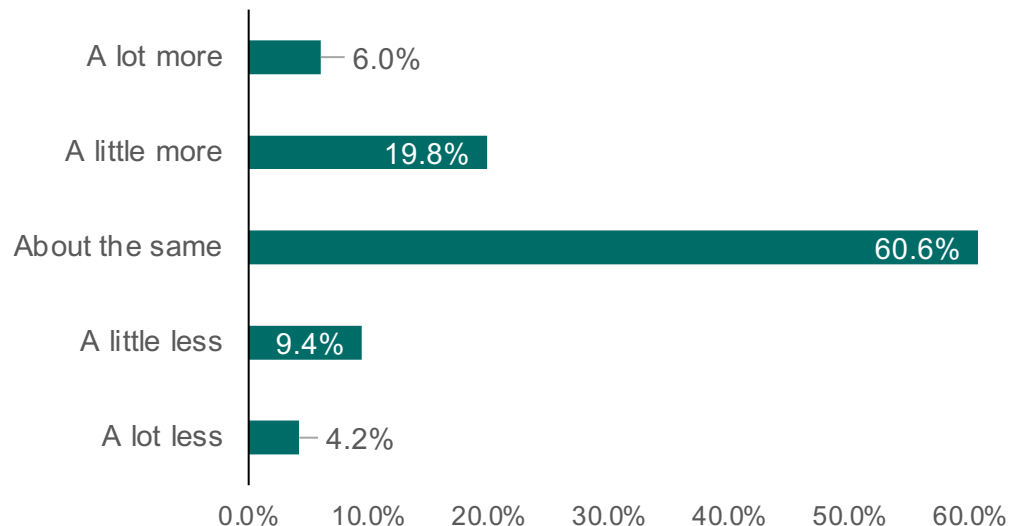
Over 45% of Richmonders said they have been ***spending less*** on leisure or luxury goods and services since before 2020.

This shift towards more responsible spending is a positive trend that will likely lead to a more stable and secure financial future for the people of Richmond in the short term.



Shop at Local Businesses

Indicate if you shop more, less, or the same at local businesses compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic.



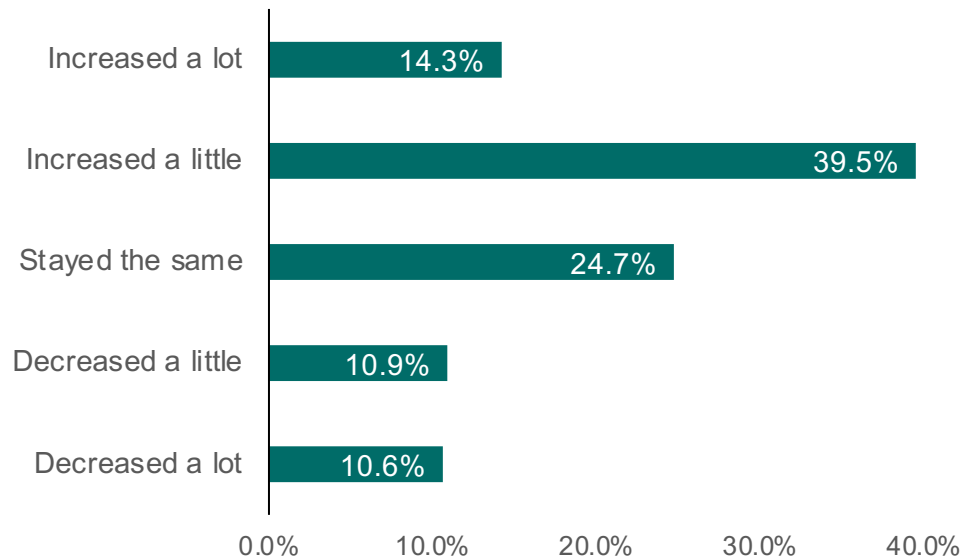
Over 86% of Richmonders have continued to ***shop at local businesses*** or increased their patronage of them.

Following the pandemic, Richmonders have shown an admirable commitment to supporting local businesses. This dedication to the community has likely helped to sustain the local economy post-pandemic.



Household Income Change

To what extent has your household income changed compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic?



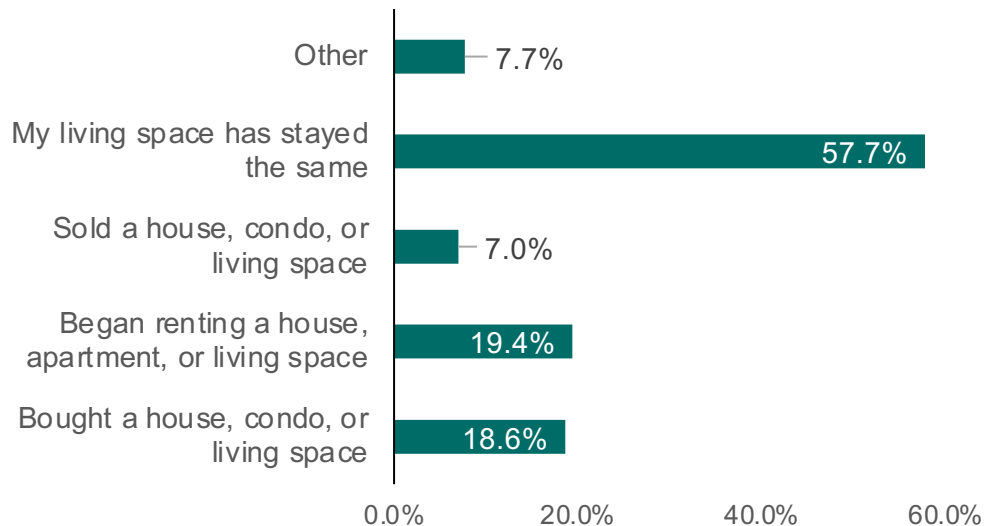
53.8% of Richmonders reported an ***increase in their household income*** since before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Despite the financial setbacks caused by the pandemic, this news provides a ray of hope amidst a challenging economic climate. It highlights the resilience and adaptability of individuals and families who have persevered through these trying times.



Home Situation

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you done any of the following? Please select all that apply.



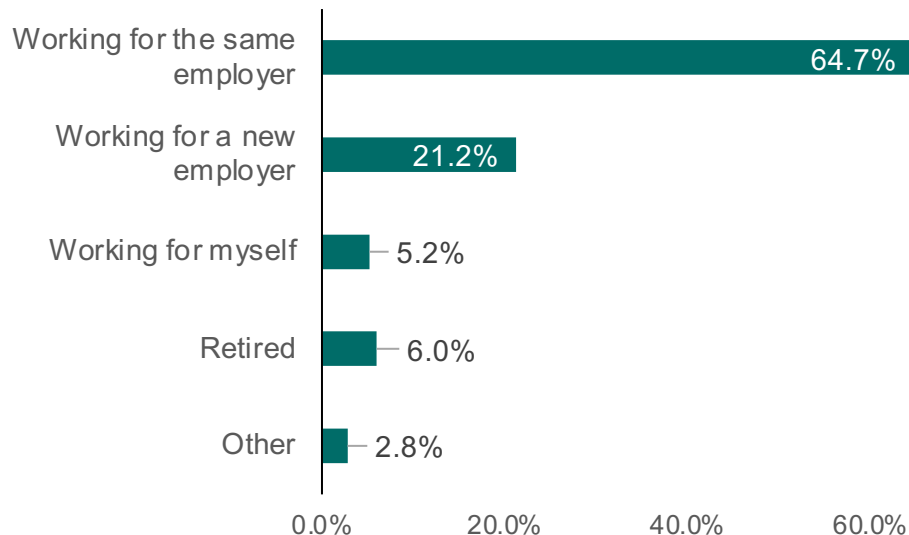
57.7% of Richmonders ***stayed in the same living space*** as before the pandemic began.

These decisions may have been influenced by factors such as the desire for stability and familiarity, financial considerations, or the availability of suitable alternative housing options.



Employed in the Next Two Years

Where do you think you'll be employed in the next two years? Select the one option that best answers the question.



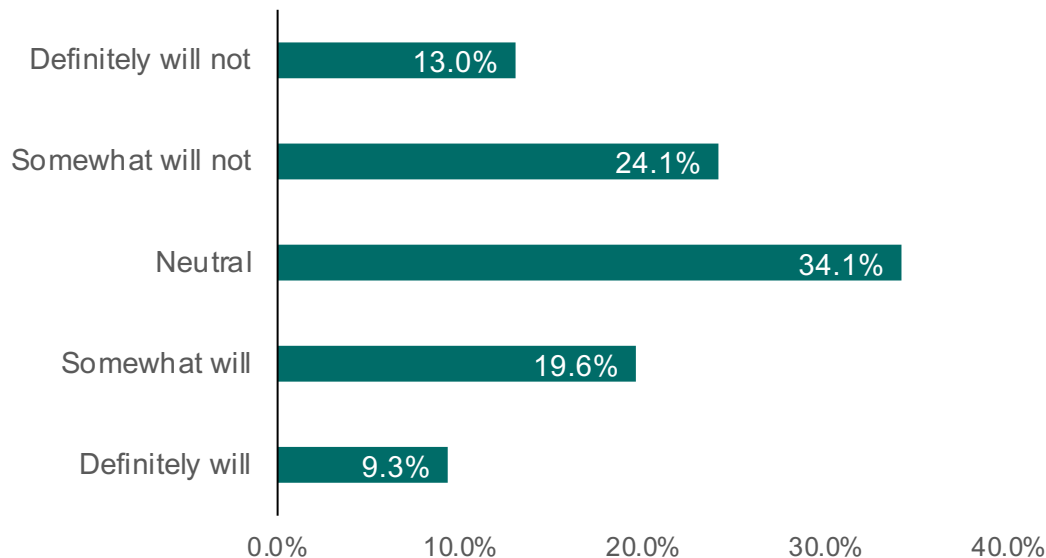
One in five Richmonders are ***looking to make an employment change*** in the next two years.

This finding implies that there is a moderate level of dissatisfaction among Richmonders with their current work situations, which could lead to an influx of new job seekers in the near future.



Work Routines Returning to Normal

To what extent do you think work routines will return to “normal” in the next two years?



Over 37% of Richmonders think ***work routines will not return to normal*** compared to 28.9% who think they will.

These findings suggest that many people in Richmond are skeptical about the possibility of a swift recovery from the disruptions caused by the pandemic, especially as it relates to their work routines.



Economic Outlook

The RVA Views survey casts a spotlight on economic prosperity, exploring how the pandemic has influenced Richmonders' financial behaviors, employment outlooks, and perceptions of the job market's future, as summarized below:

Saving Money and Shopping Behaviors

Amid the pandemic, an impressive shift towards frugality emerged, with over 40% of respondents enhancing their savings efforts, a testament to heightened financial prudence. Conversely, the survey unveiled a notable restraint in leisure and luxury spending, with 45% of participants curtailing such expenditures, highlighting a collective shift towards financial conservatism.

Local Business Support

A heartening trend emerged in the support for local businesses, with over 86% of Richmonders either maintaining or increasing their patronage, signifying a strong community commitment to sustaining local enterprises through turbulent times.

Economic Outlook, continued

Household Income and Employment Changes

The economic landscape, as painted by the survey, reveals a complex picture of household income dynamics, with over half of the participants reporting an increase in household income since the onset of the pandemic. This finding intersects intriguingly with the employment sector, where a notable 21% of respondents are contemplating a job change within the next two years, hinting at a workforce in flux yet poised for transformation.

Housing and Work Routines

The housing market has witnessed its share of pandemic-induced upheavals, yet a majority have maintained their living situations, illustrating stability amidst uncertainty. However, perspectives on the return of 'normal' work routines skew towards pessimism, with a significant portion doubting a full resurgence of pre-pandemic work life within the near future.



PART 4:

Thriving Communities

Community and Collective Solidarity

The thriving communities section of RVA Views' survey delves into the heart of communal bonds, examining how the pandemic has reshaped the fabric of local solidarity.

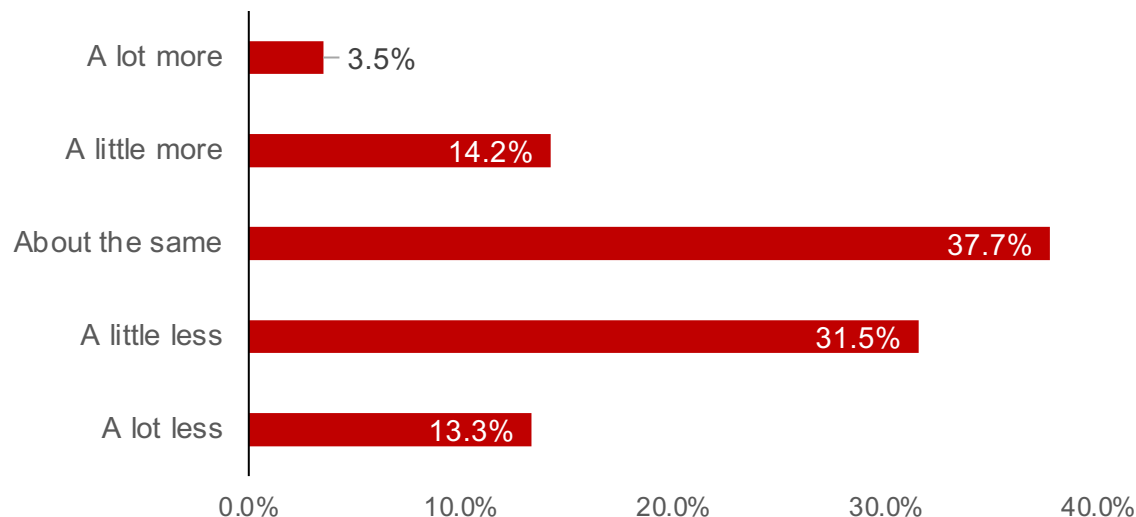
Participants reflected on their sense of belonging, the performance and adaptability of local businesses, the effectiveness of government responses, and their engagement in philanthropic activities.

This exploration paints a portrait of a community striving to find its footing on the shifting ground of post-pandemic reality.

In essence, RVA Views uncovers the undercurrents of collective strength, underscoring the paramount importance of nurturing community spirit, responsive governance, and active civic participation for a resilient future.

Connection to Community

What is your level of connection to the community since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
Do you engage more, less, or the same as before?



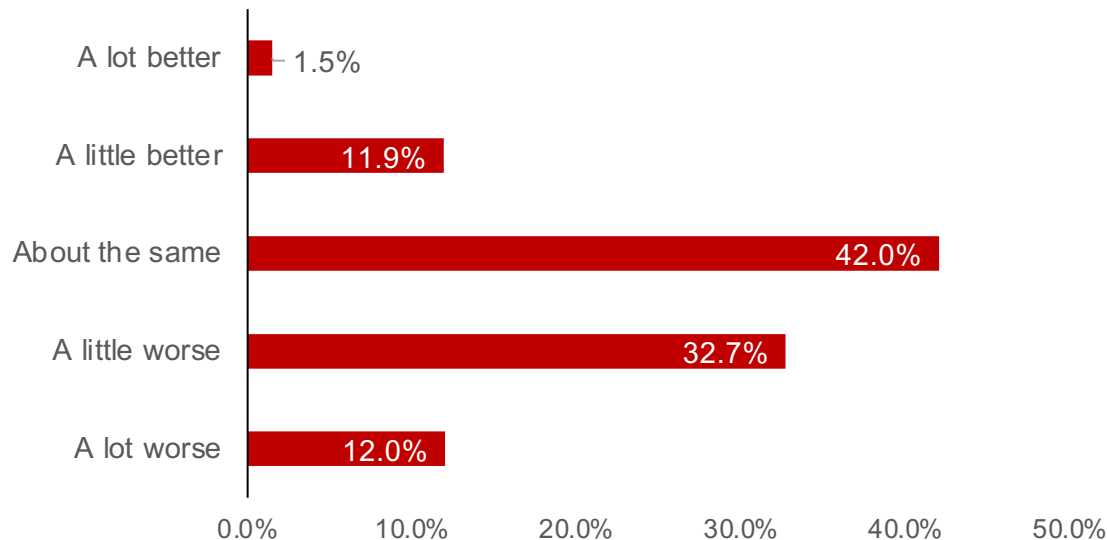
45% of Richmonders say they ***feel less connected*** to the community than before the pandemic started.

A significant number of Richmonders are facing difficulty in feeling a sense of connection with their community since the outbreak of the pandemic. This could have a notable impact on the social fabric of the city and the overall well-being of its residents.



Businesses Meeting Product and Service Needs

In terms of businesses meeting your needs with products and services, do you feel better, worse, or about the same as before the COVID-19 pandemic?



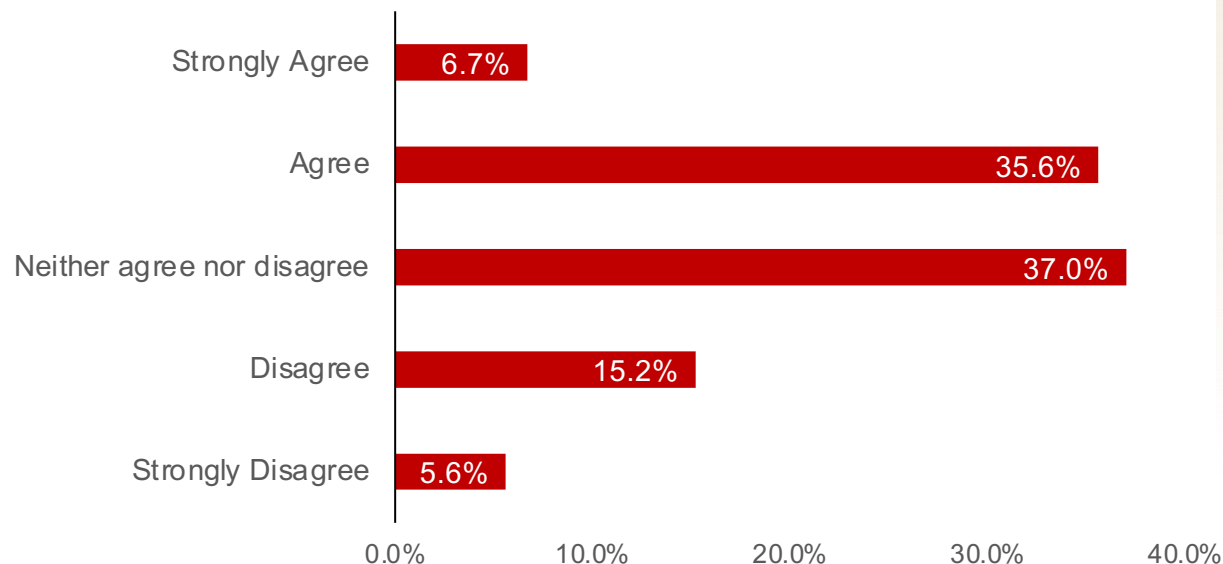
Nearly 45% of Richmonders say ***businesses are worse at meeting their needs*** with products and services post-pandemic.

This negative attitude may be due to changes in business operations, inflationary pressures, and pandemic-related distribution delays. Almost 45% of Richmonders share this sentiment.



Business as a Positive Change Agent

What is your level of agreement with the notion that businesses play a positive role in bringing about change in society?



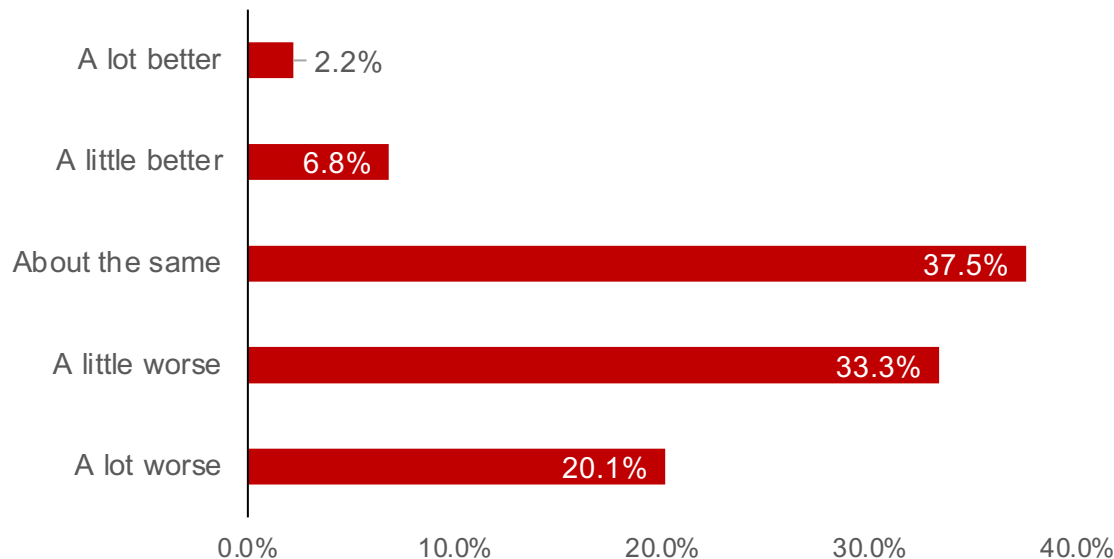
Richmonders attitudes towards ***businesses that aim to improve society are generally positive (42.3%)*** rather than negative (20.8%).

This highlights the importance of corporate social responsibility for businesses operating in Richmond and the potential for them to gain the trust and support of the local community by contributing towards its betterment.



Government Serving Community Needs

Do you feel that local governments in Richmond and surrounding counties are serving the same, better, or worse after the COVID-19 pandemic?



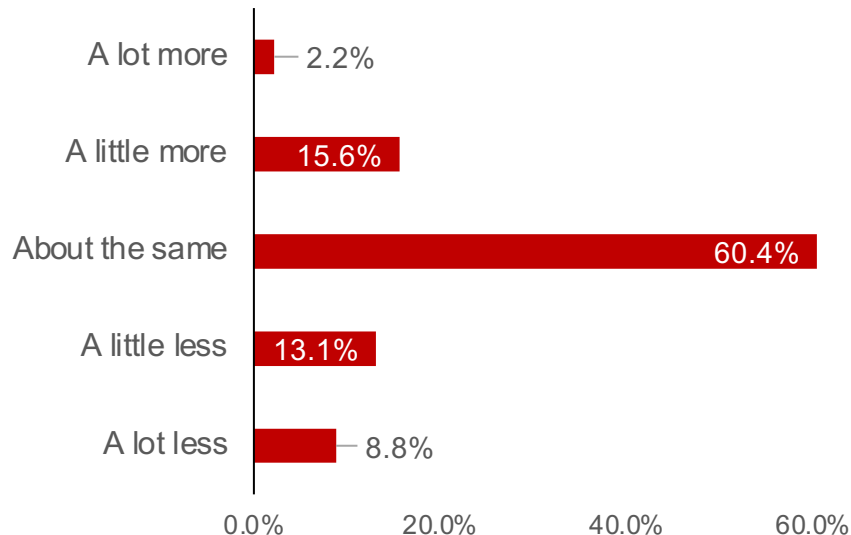
Over 50% of Richmonders ***feel worse about local governments*** serving the needs of Richmond and surrounding counties.

This indicates a significant lack of confidence in the ability of these governments to serve their communities effectively.



Donate to Charitable Causes

Do you engage more, less, or the same in donating to charitable causes as before the COVID-19 pandemic?



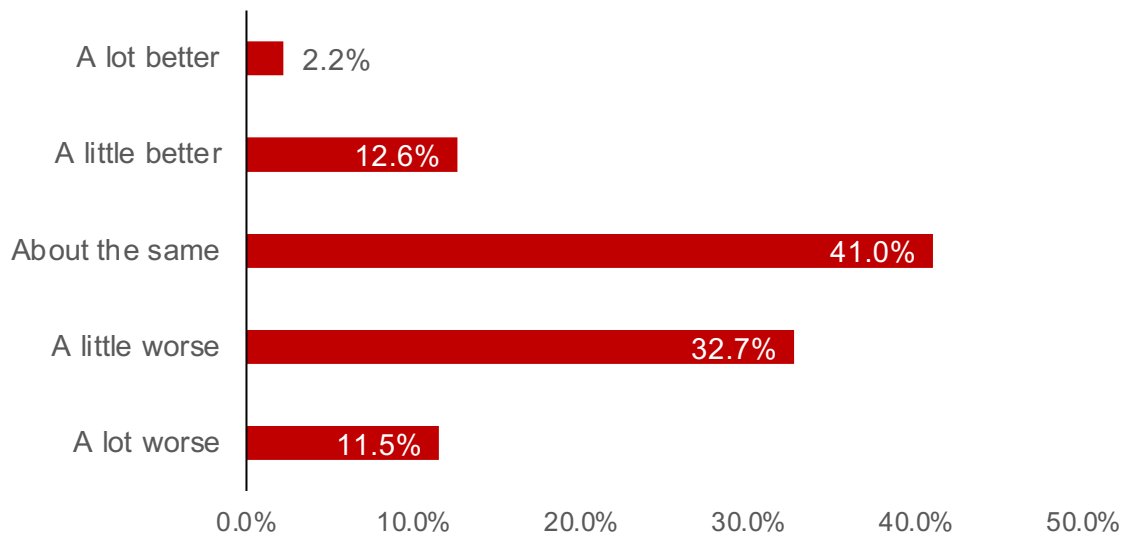
The majority of Richmonders, **over 60%**, reported that they ***continue to donate*** to charitable causes at the same rate as before the pandemic.

This is a testament to their unwavering commitment to giving back to their community and helping those in need, even in challenging times.



Volunteering

Indicate the extent to which you engage more, less, or the same in volunteer activities as before the COVID-19 pandemic?



Volunteering behaviors have declined since the pandemic ***with over 44% of Richmonders volunteering less.***

Due to the pandemic, there has been a significant shift in volunteering behaviors among Richmonders. While donating behaviors have remained fairly consistent, volunteering behaviors have declined.



Helping Communities Thrive

The RVA Views survey included a section on community matters such as belonging, local businesses, government efficacy, and involvement in donations and volunteering. Key insights are summarized below:

Connection to Community

A notable concern revealed from the survey is the diminished sense of community connection post-pandemic, with nearly 45% of respondents feeling less connected than before COVID-19. This decline underscores the pandemic's profound impact on social cohesion and the urgent need for initiatives that rebuild and strengthen community ties.

Views on Local Businesses

Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with how well local businesses have adapted to meet their needs during the pandemic, with 45% indicating that businesses have fallen short. This sentiment highlights the challenges faced by local enterprises in navigating the pandemic's economic disruptions and underscores the importance of supporting these businesses in their recovery efforts. On a positive note, the survey also revealed that 42.3% of respondents recognized the potential of businesses to contribute positively to community development. This suggests that Richmonders are ready to support businesses that align with community goals and view them as agents of positive change within society.



Helping Communities Thrive, continued

Government Response to Community Needs

Over half of the participants expressed concerns about local governments' responsiveness to community needs during the pandemic, signaling a perceived gap in governance and community support. This feedback calls for enhanced communication and collaboration between local authorities and residents to effectively address community concerns.

Charitable Donations and Volunteering

The survey also looked into charitable behaviors, finding that the majority of respondents maintained their donation levels, indicating a sustained willingness to support charitable causes. However, volunteering saw a decline, with over 44% participating less in volunteer activities, reflecting the pandemic's limitations on physical engagement but also pointing to the potential for growth in virtual volunteering opportunities.





Conclusion

Conclusion



This RVA Views report provides a comprehensive exploration of the pandemic's multifaceted impact on the Richmond community, encompassing health, education, technology, economic prosperity, and community solidarity.

The study reveals a community adapting to unprecedented challenges, with significant shifts in perceptions tied to healthcare engagement, education formats, the role of technology, economic behaviors, and community connections.

While the pandemic has strained healthcare perceptions and education quality, it has also catalyzed a reevaluation of economic priorities and a reinforced commitment to local businesses and charitable activities.

Conclusion, continued

Despite these challenges, there's a palpable sense of resilience, with Richmond residents poised to engage more actively in their community's economic and social recovery.

Moving forward, it's clear that fostering community bonds, supporting local enterprises, and addressing the educational and healthcare systems' needs will be crucial for Richmond's enduring recovery and prosperity.

This report underscores the importance of collective efforts and adaptability in navigating the path toward a stronger, more connected Richmond in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.



About RVA Views

RVA Views is a center located in the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Business that was established in 2020 with a Presidential Research Quest Fund Award from VCU. The center is committed to promoting research excellence and research-service innovation within Richmond, the central Virginia region, and beyond.

As a research hub, it aims to be the premier registry for scholarly exploration, offering the School of Business faculty state-of-the-art physiological data collection capabilities through its Customer Experience Lab.

Simultaneously, as a service entity, RVA Views promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, providing vital resources such as participant panels, research design consultancy, and strategic marketing insights to both internal and external partners.

Integral to RVA Views are students and faculty from VCU and its School of Business, who benefit from hands-on research opportunities and access to a diverse participant pool for cutting-edge scholarly studies and applied research. This synergy not only enhances the school's mission but also nurtures a collaborative environment for learning, discovery, and community impact.

By bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application, RVA Views is a cornerstone for fostering growth, innovation, and strategic partnerships that benefit the wider Richmond area and beyond.

Acknowledgement:

RVA Views wishes to express sincere thanks to Sarah Newman (VCU Brandcenter '24) and Sahithi Mudiganti (VCU BS Information Systems, expected '26) for their essential contributions to this project.

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Community members who are interested in learning more about RVA Views or are interested in joining its research registry are encouraged to visit www.rvaviews.com.

For Further Information, Contact:



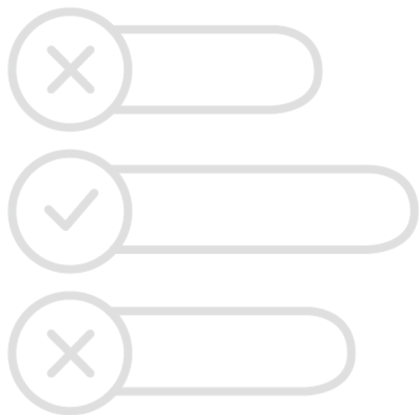
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APPENDIX

Respondent Characteristics

Sample Demographics

Age (N=810)

	Count	Percent
18-24	77	9.5
25-34	180	22.2
35-44	172	21.2
45-54	175	21.6
55-64	142	17.5
65 or above	64	7.9

Gender (N=793)

	Count	Percent
Female	599	74.0
Male	175	21.6
Other	8	1.0
Non-binary	11	1.4

Hispanic or Latino (N=793)

	Count	Percent
Yes	33	4.1
No	760	93.8

Annual Household Income (n=782)

	Count	Percent
Less than \$10,000	26	3.2
\$10,000-\$14,999	11	1.4
\$15,000-\$24,999	12	1.5
\$25,000-\$34,999	33	4.1
\$35,000-\$49,999	78	9.6
\$50,000-\$74,999	137	16.9
\$75,000-\$99,999	110	13.6
\$100,000-\$124,999	81	10.0
\$125,000-\$149,999	79	9.8
\$150,000-\$199,999	84	10.4
Over \$200,000	92	11.4
Not sure	39	4.8

Education (N=788)

	Count	Percent
Some High School	3	.4
High School Degree	39	4.8
Some College	124	15.3
Associate's Degree	64	7.9
Bachelor's Degree	214	26.4
Some Postgraduate Degree	71	8.8
Postgraduate Degree	273	33.7

Marital Status (N=803)

	Count	Percent
Single, never married	233	31.4
Single, living with partner	90	11.1
Married	386	47.7
Separated	13	1.6
Widowed	8	.9
Divorced	67	8.2
Other	6	.7

Race (N=793)

	Count	Percent
White	532	65.7
Black or African American	168	20.7
Asian/Chinese/Japanese	8	1.0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1	.1
Another Race	17	2.1

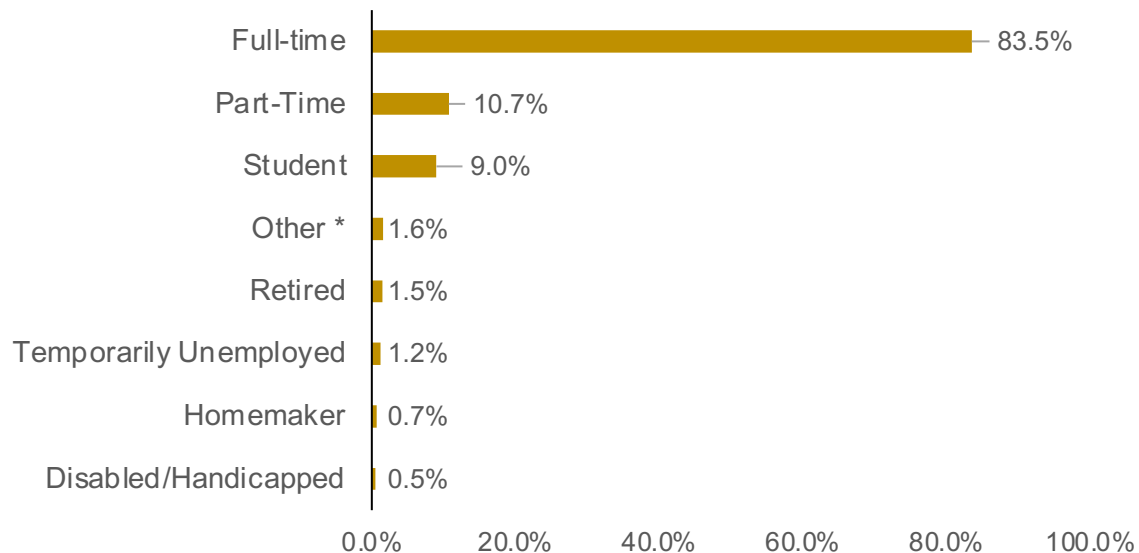
Number of Children (N=794)

	Count	Percent
0	343	42.3
1	137	16.9
2	201	24.8
3	68	8.4
4	24	3.0
5	10	1.2
6	7	.9
7 or more	4	.5



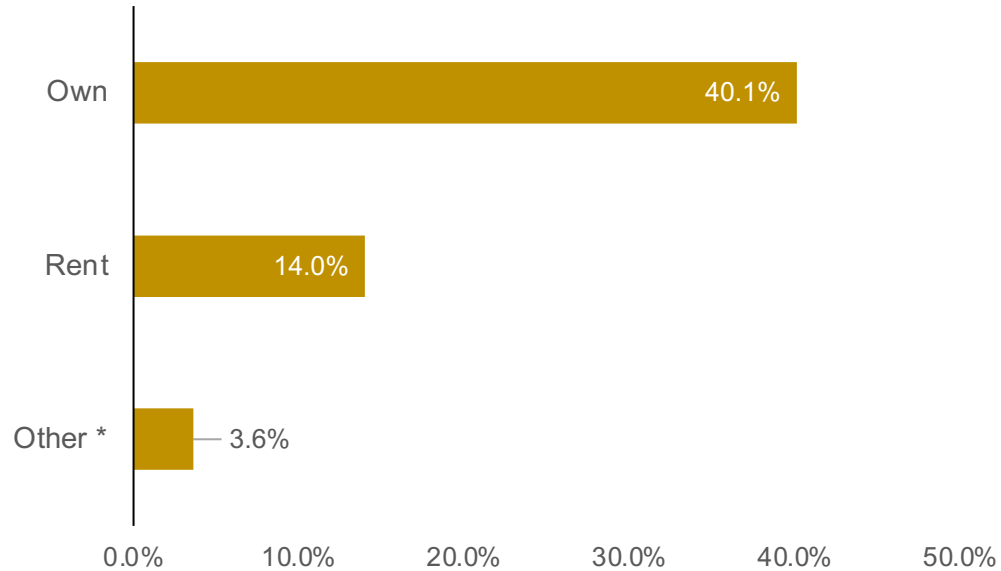
Current Employment

Currently, are you employed full-time, part-time, or not at all?



Own or Rent

Do you currently: *

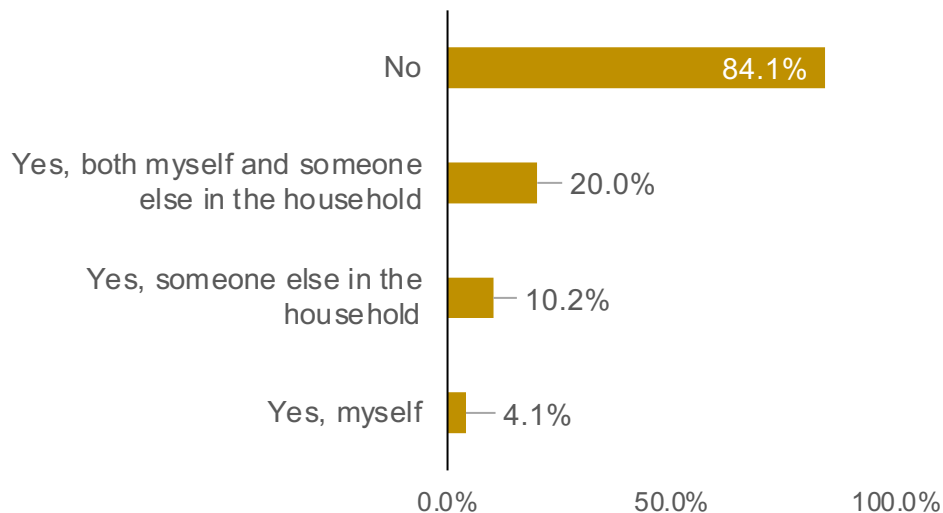


*N=475, for those who indicated their living space has stayed the same as before



Military

Have you or anyone in your household ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves or National Guard?



Branch	Number
Air Force	22
Army	34
Navy	24
Marines	7
Coast Guard	2
Air Force and Army	1
Army National Guard	2
Air Force National Guard	1





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