

FY2026 Budget Engagement Update & Survey Findings



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
North Carolina

FY2026 Budget Engagement Strategy

Representative
Budget Survey

Opt-in Budget
Survey

Outreach to
High-Traffic
Areas & Events

Student
Outreach &
Education

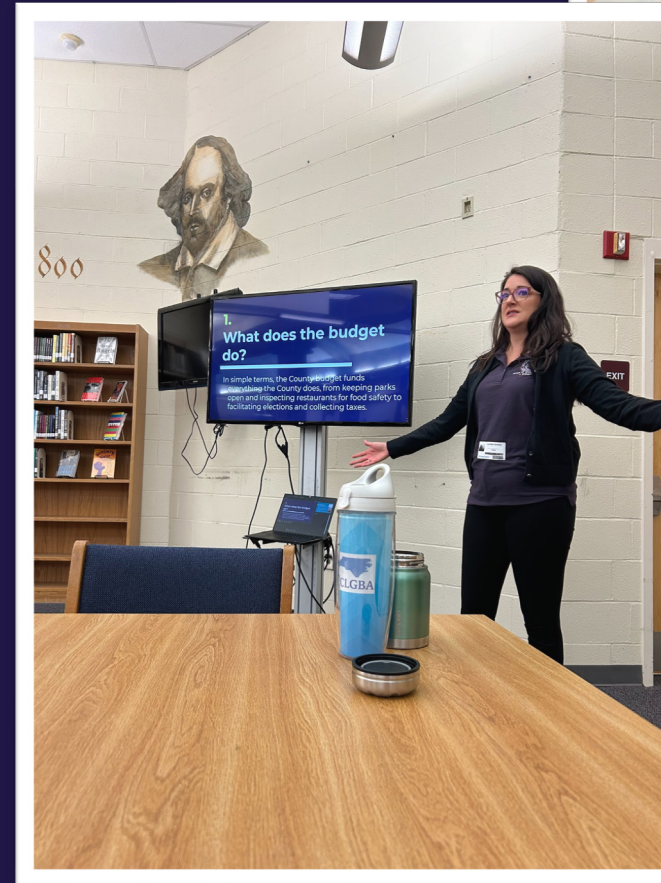
Advisory Board
Feedback

Online Budget
Simulator

Two Public
Hearings

Student Outreach and Education

- OMB staff hosted 13 outreach sessions to youth with approximately 460 total participants, which is an increase from 9 sessions with approximately 250 participants in the previous year
- Staff presented an overview of County government and budget, then students were given the opportunity to participate in an activity



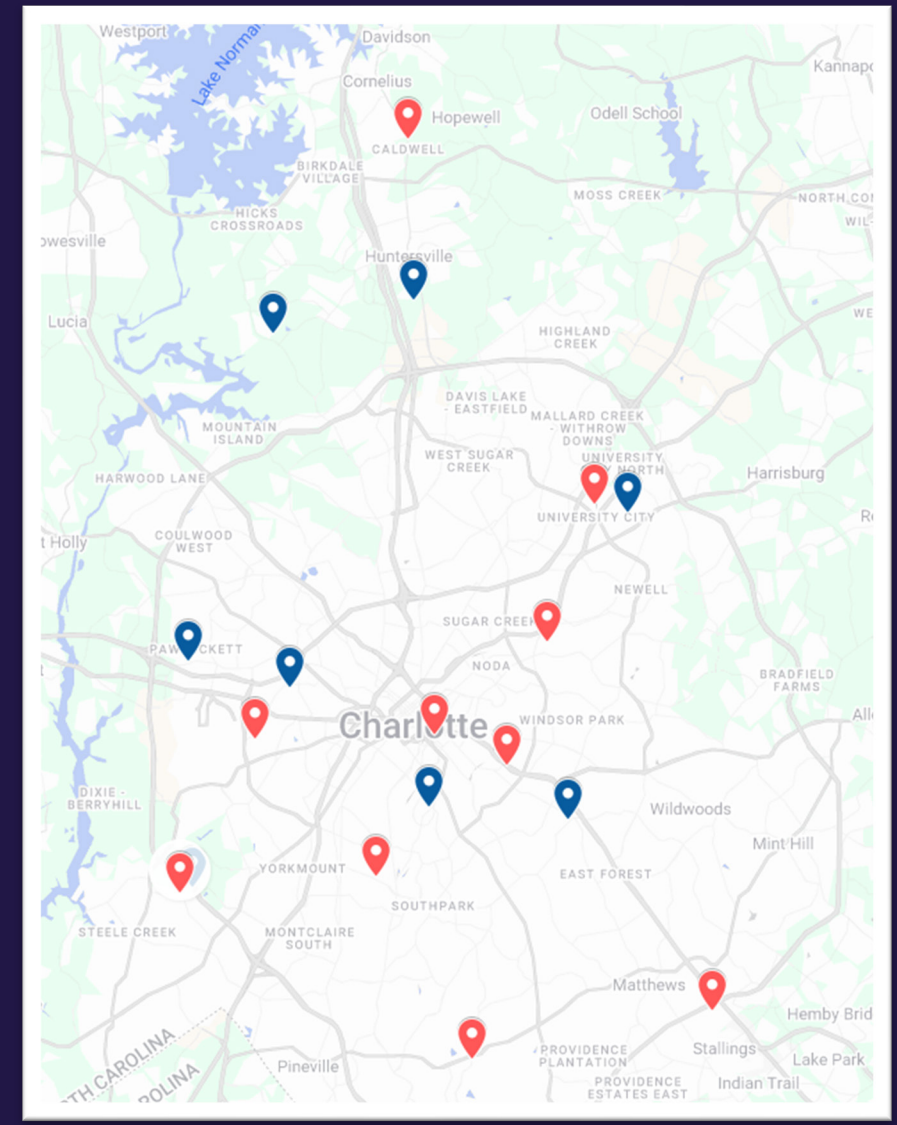
Student Outreach and Education

- Carolina Youth Coalition (2 sessions)
- Generation Nation
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools
 - West Mecklenburg High School (3 sessions)
 - Harding High School (3 sessions)
 - Hopewell High School (3 sessions)
 - All CMS high and middle school teachers were offered the opportunity for OMB presentation
- CPCC Macroeconomics course
- UNCC MPA Budgeting
- Queens University Community Engagement



Opt-In Survey Outreach in High-Traffic Areas

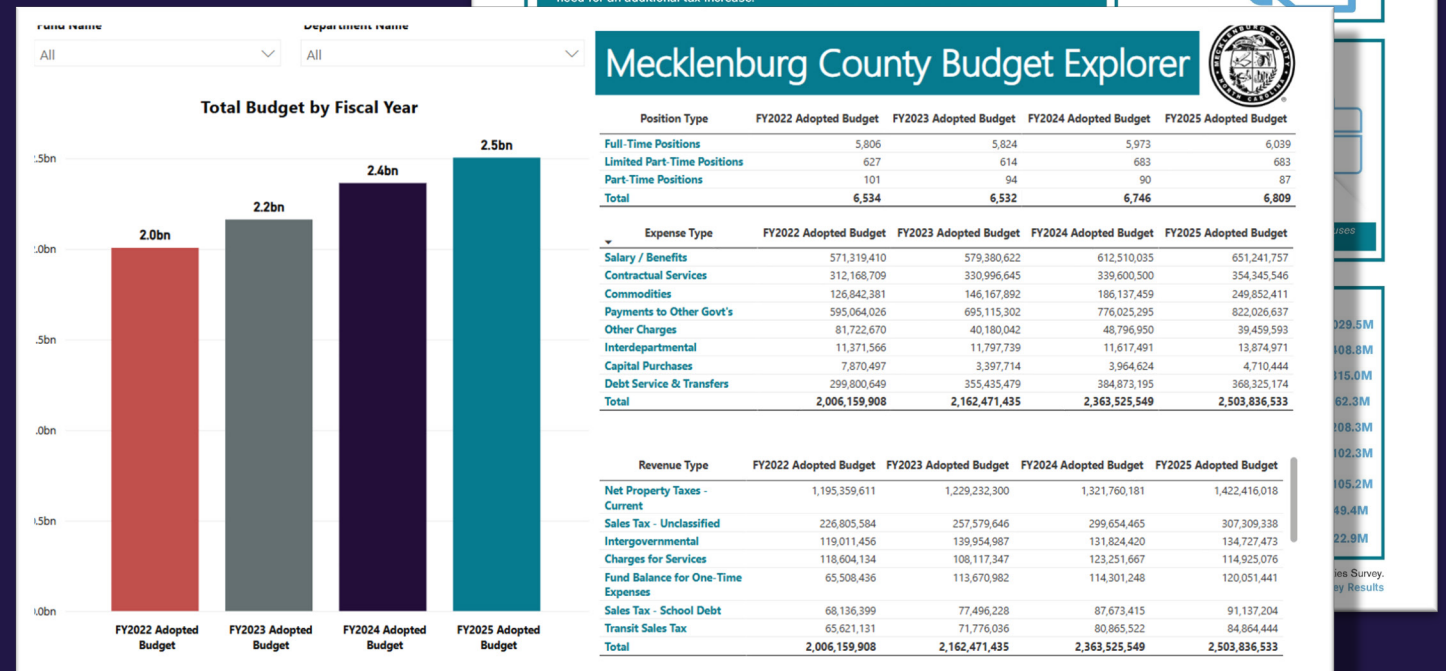
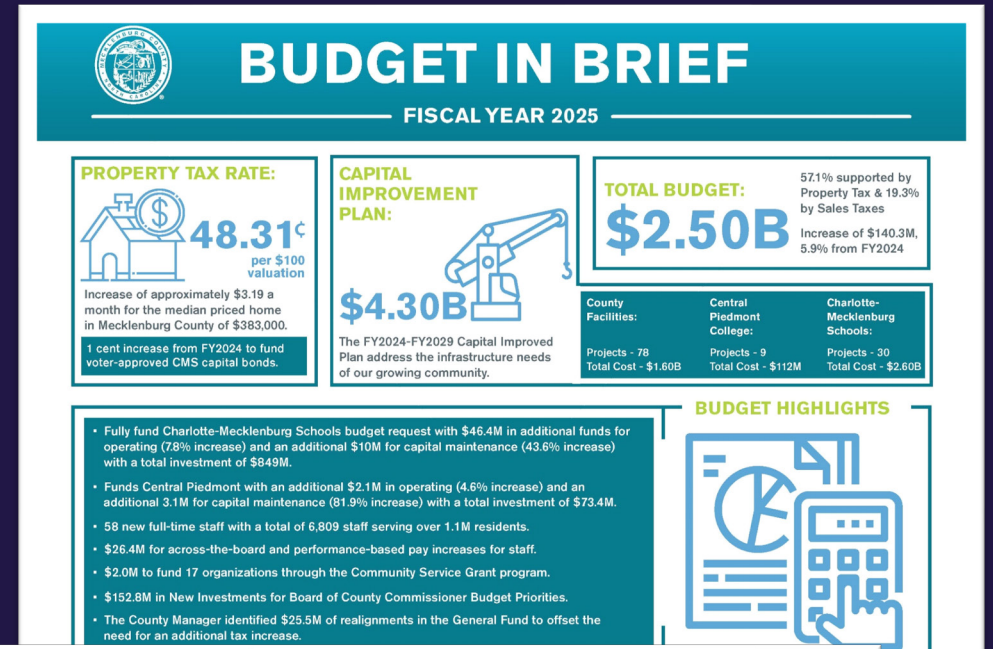
- OMB staff reached approximately 1200 residents across 14 events around the County, an increase from 10 events and 500 residents last year:
 - Charlotte Checkers game
 - Eastway Recreation Center
 - Northern Regional Recreation Center
 - Central Piedmont Community College
 - Levine Campus
 - Harris Campus
 - Central Campus
 - Jury Pool (2)
 - Tyvola Senior Center (2)
 - South County Library
 - University City Regional Library
 - Steele Creek Resident Association
- Staff engaged directly with residents, answering questions and facilitating discussion about the County budget
- Staff handed out postcards with links to the budget survey as well as giveaways for residents



- *survey outreach*
- *student session*

Budget Education

- For FY2026, OMB added two new methods by which residents can engage more accessibly with the budget.
- The [Budget In Brief](#) infographic to the website, as well as provided printed copies at all our tabling events
- The [Budget Explorer](#) is an interactive tool produced by OMB to allow residents to engage more fully with the budget.



Advisory Board Outreach

- In fall 2024, 16 advisory boards were given the opportunity to respond to a questionnaire
- 8 boards submitted responses:
 - Air Quality Commission
 - Board of Equalization and Review
 - Domestic Violence Advisory Board
 - Historic Landmarks Commission
 - Human Resources Advisory Committee
 - Information Services & Technology Committee
 - Park and Recreation Commission
 - Women's Advisory Board
- Results from the questionnaire were provided to the Board at the annual Board Budget Retreat in January
- 4 advisory boards elected to present their priorities to the Board:
 - Air Quality Commission
 - Historic Landmarks Commission
 - Park and Recreation Commission
 - Women's Advisory Board



Public Hearings

- On January 22, 2025, the Board hosted a budget public hearing providing residents the opportunity to speak on the upcoming FY2026 budget
- This is an additional hearing beyond the one required by N.C. General Statute §159-12
- 42 individuals and groups registered to speak
- The public appearance portion of the meeting was 4 hours, 15 minutes
- A second public hearing will be held on May 22, 2025





Budget Survey

Purpose



Gather feedback from residents to help inform decisions related to the FY2026 budget



Hear directly from residents on how their needs are being met by County services



Identify residents' priorities for new funding

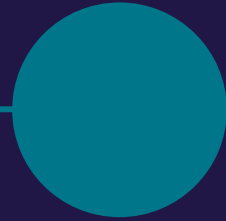
Methodology



Survey

Department Directors and County Staff identified public-facing areas of potential Investment

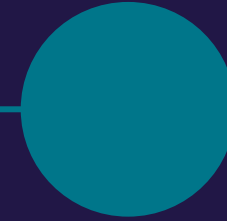
Conducted by ETC Institute, which has conducted more than 20 surveys for the County during the past 2 decades



Administration

Administered by mail, phone and online

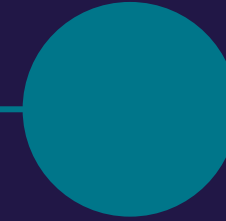
Participation was encouraged via texts, emails and social media ads



2 Samples

Representative Sample designed to ensure results are statistically valid for each of the County's 6 commission districts

Opt-in Sample was open to anyone in the County



2,515 Completes

Representative Sample 1,191 surveys with at least 180 in each commission district; error of +/- 3% at the 95% level of confidence

Opt-in Sample 1,324 surveys were completed by residents who opted-in

Opt-In Survey Marketing Strategies

- Strategy of broad and targeted marketing to maximize awareness and participation.
- Goal to increase total surveys completed and continue targeted outreach to historically underrepresented groups.

Proactive Comm's

- Story on MeckNC.gov
- News release to all local media, including newspapers, radio, TV
- Employee News Now
- Board Bulletin, encouraging them to share link
- Cabinet Update with link

Digital

- Broad Social Media posts and paid ads
- Email blast to Community Relations email list (4,000+)
- Ads on MeckTV
- 4th Street Billboard
- Other digital billboards across the County
- Email blasts from LIB and PRK

Printed

- Postcard with QR code link to survey
- Distributed at high-traffic County facilities (Park Facilities, Congregate Meal sites, Libraries)
- Water bill inserts with QR code link to survey

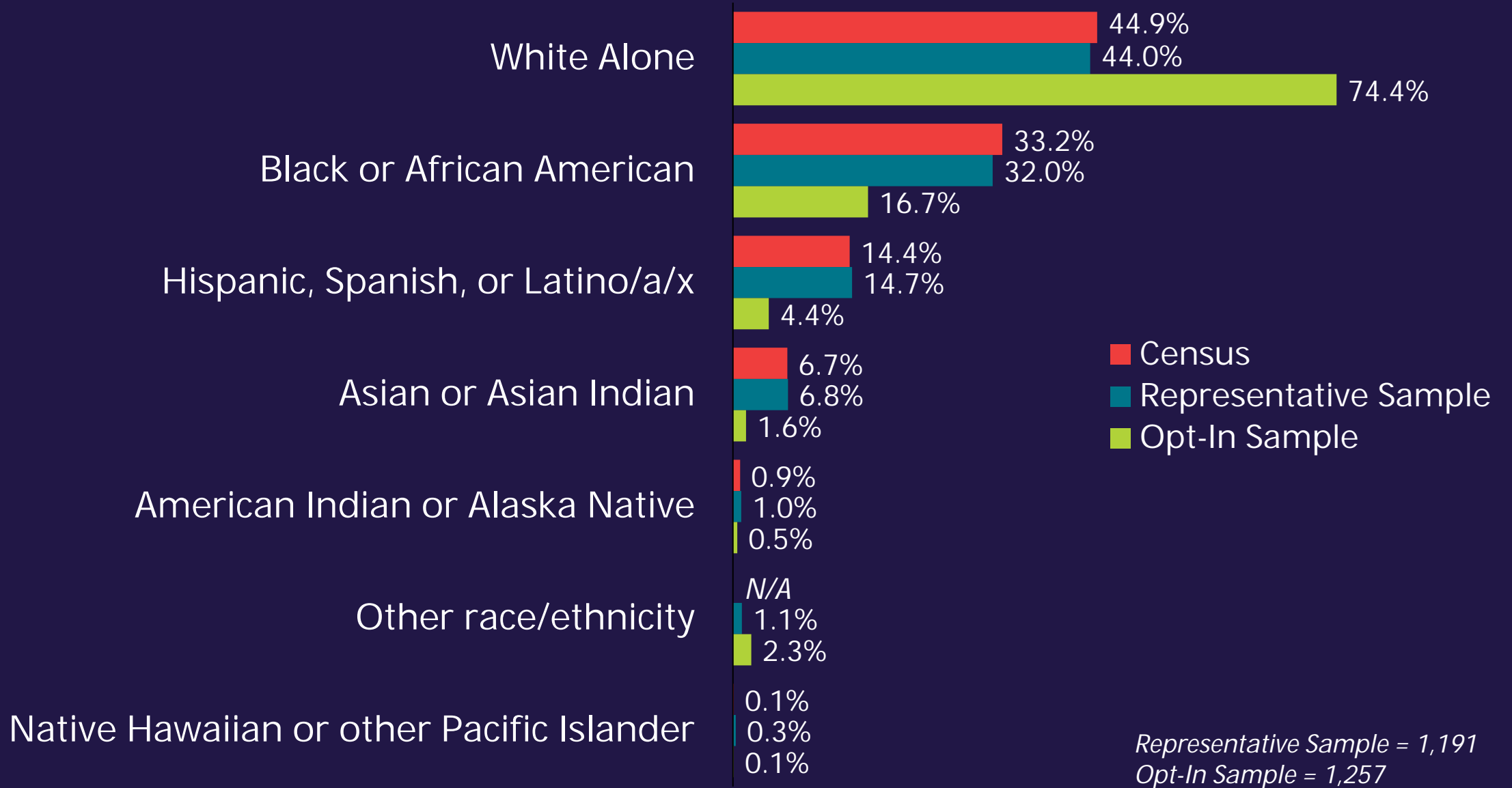
Outreach & Partners

- Public Health & CFAS community-facing staff were provided postcards
- OMB staff attended community events to distribute postcards and encourage survey participation
- OMB provided swag in the form of cups and bags for residents that take a postcard

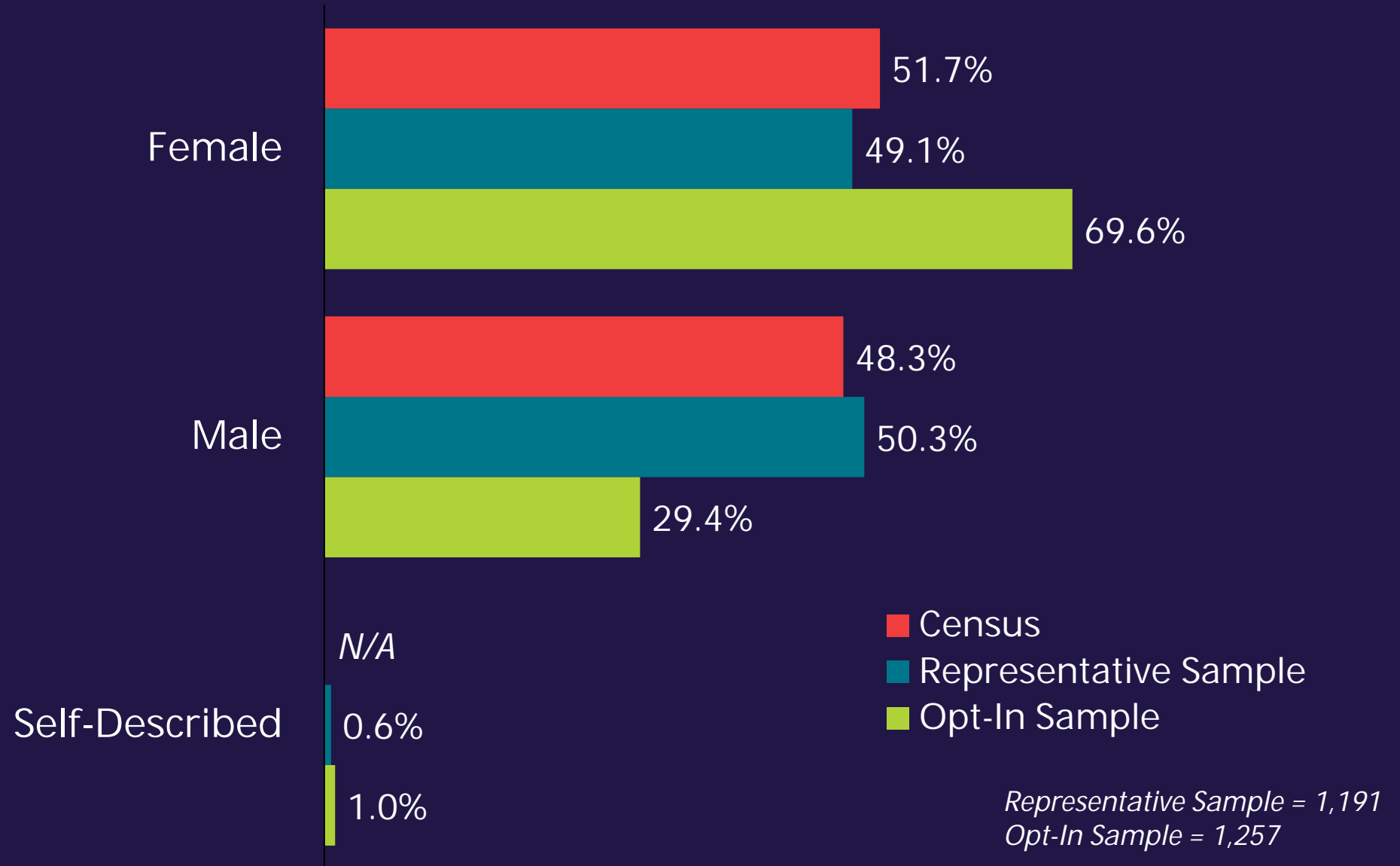


Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Response By Race/Ethnicity

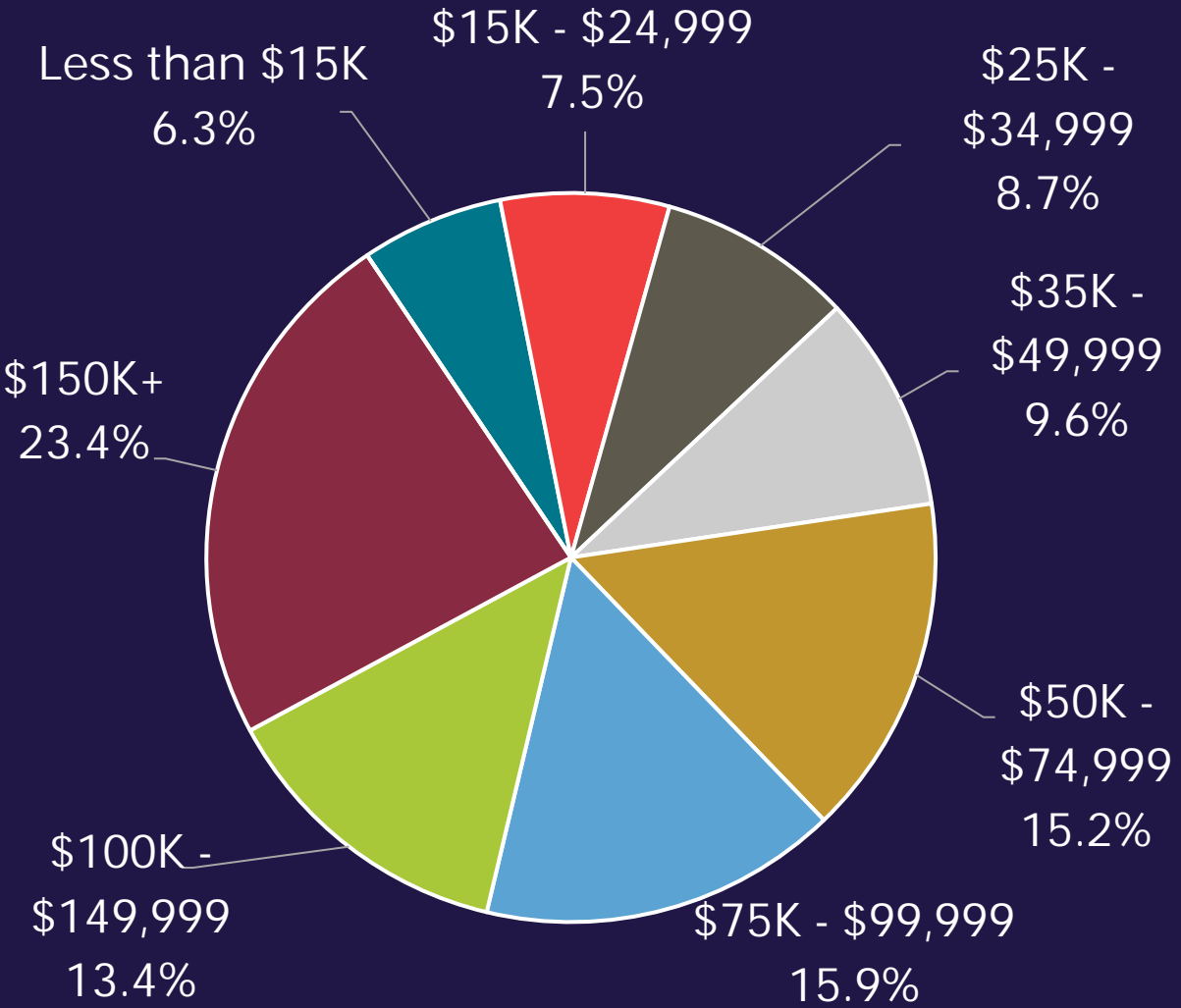


Response By Gender

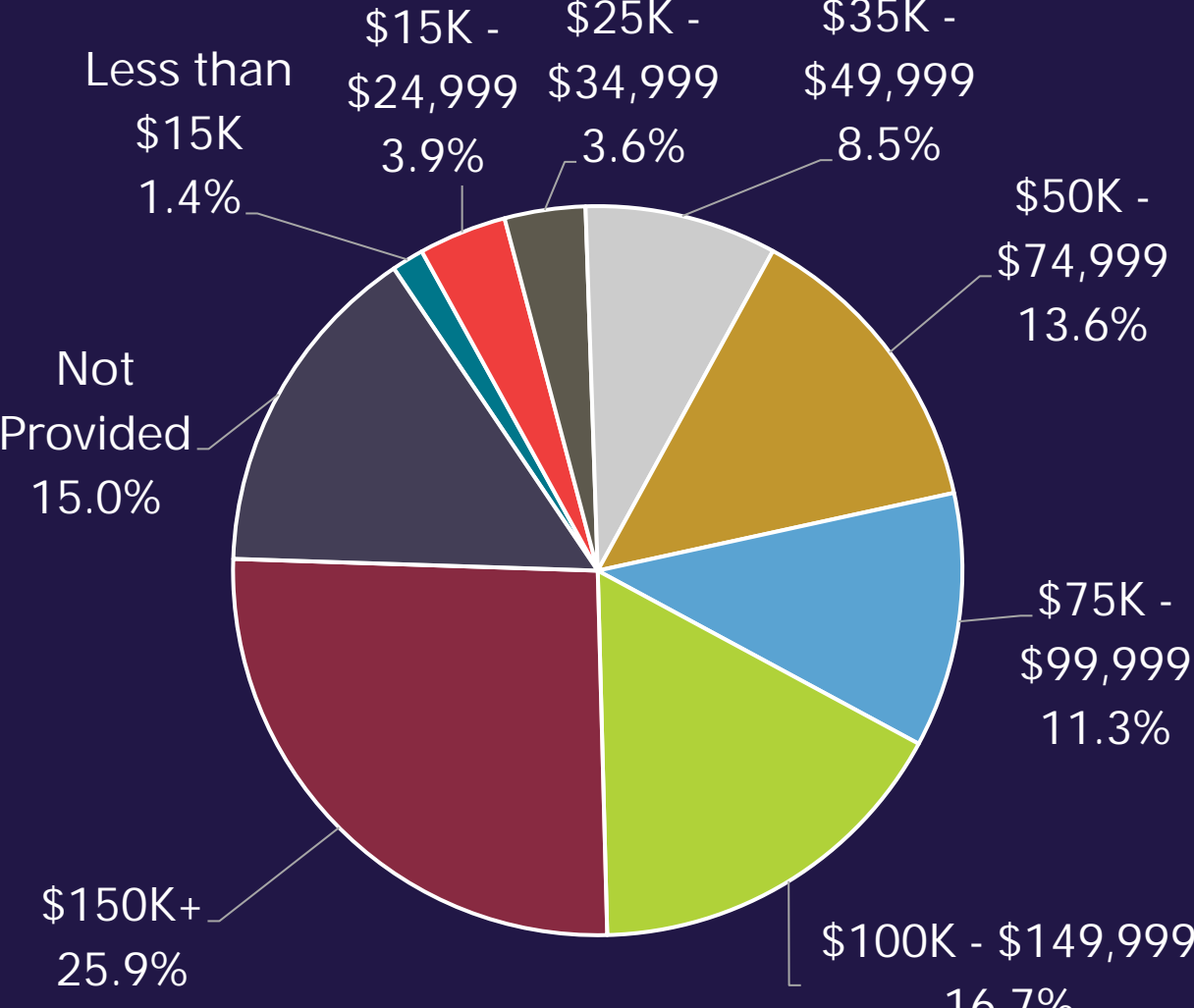


Income Range

Representative Sample

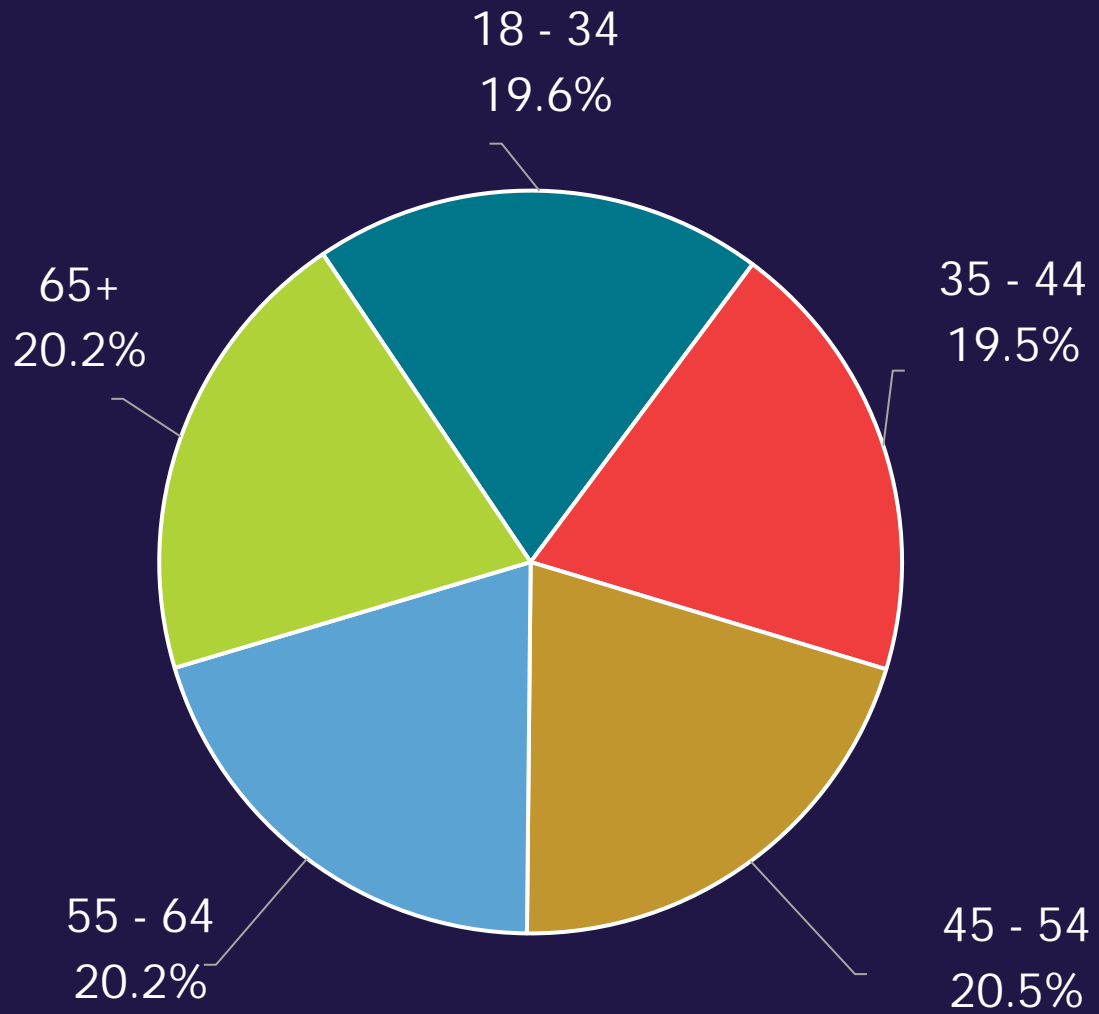


Opt-In Sample

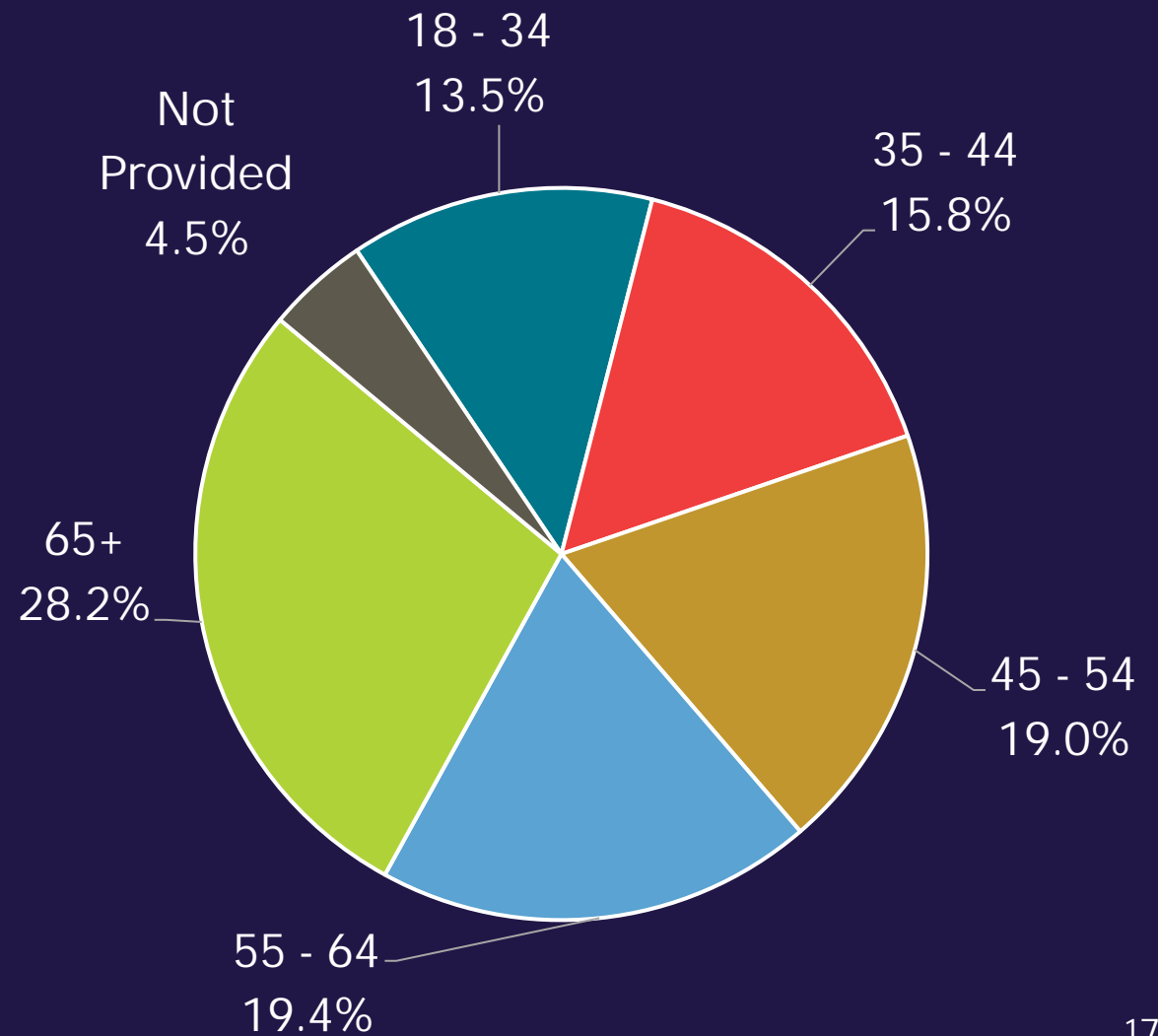


Age

Representative Sample



Opt-In Sample





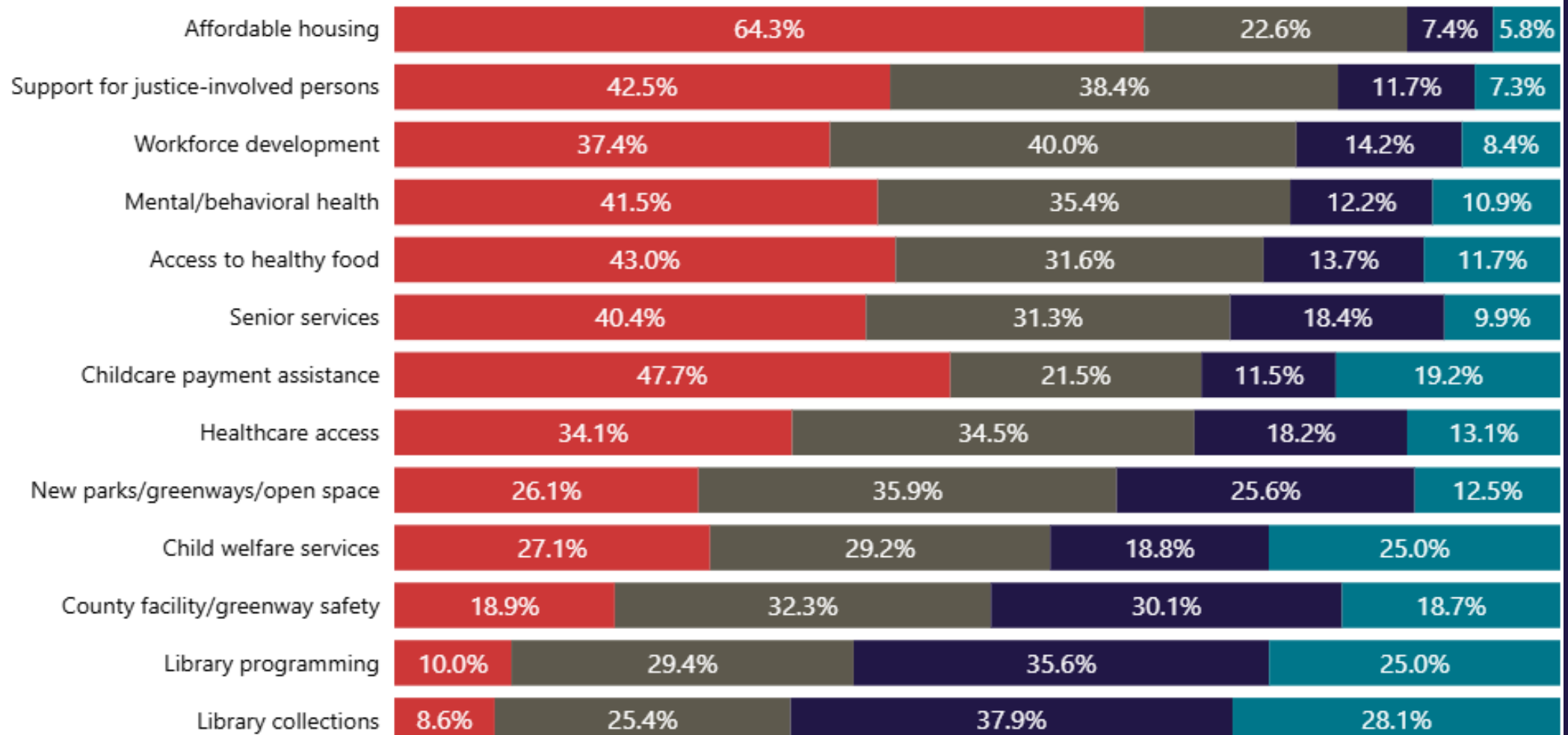
Survey Results

Please indicate how your household's needs for the programs, services, and facilities listed below are being met using a scale of "Fully Met" to "Not Met".

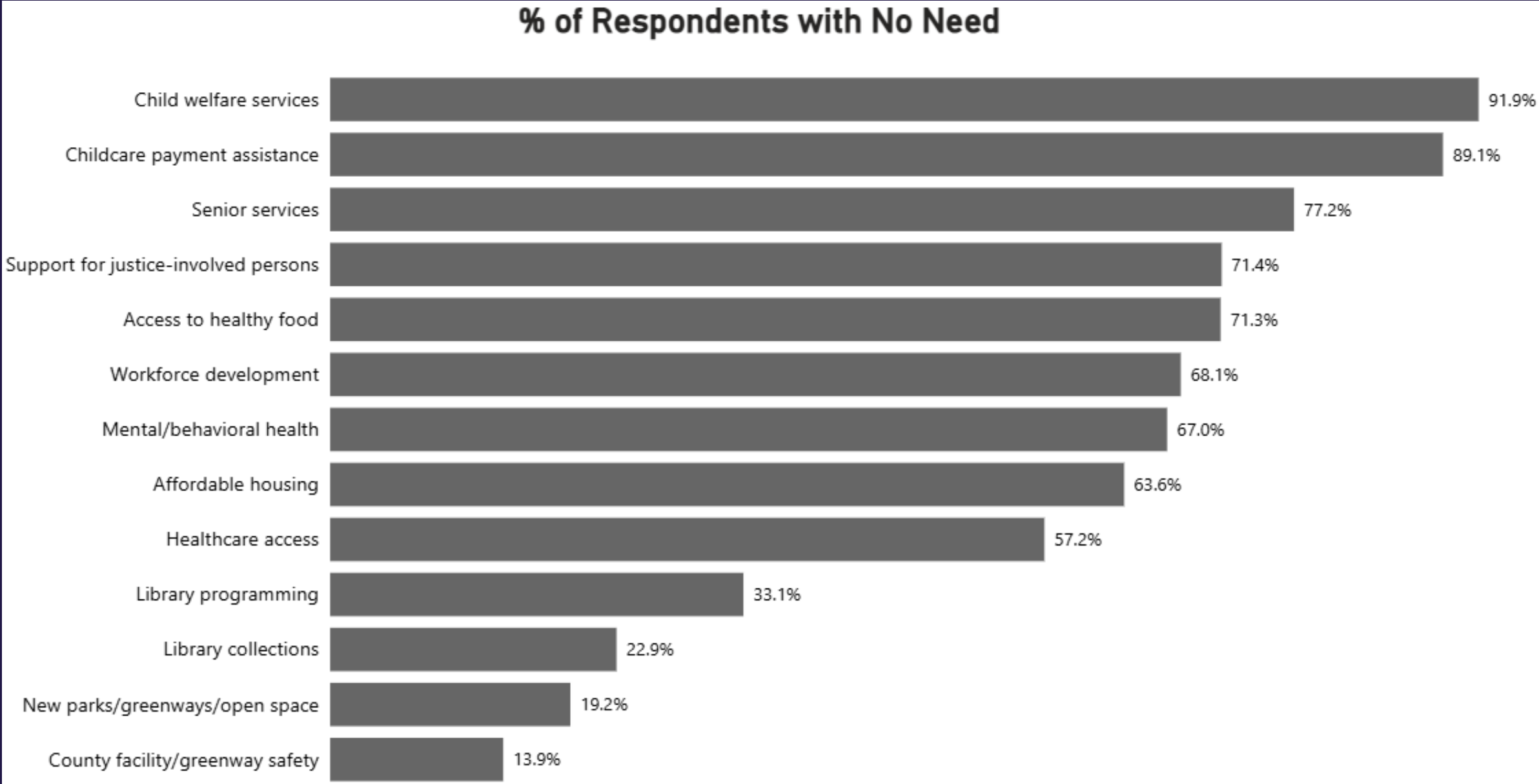
Needs Met By Service

Excluding responses with 'No Need'

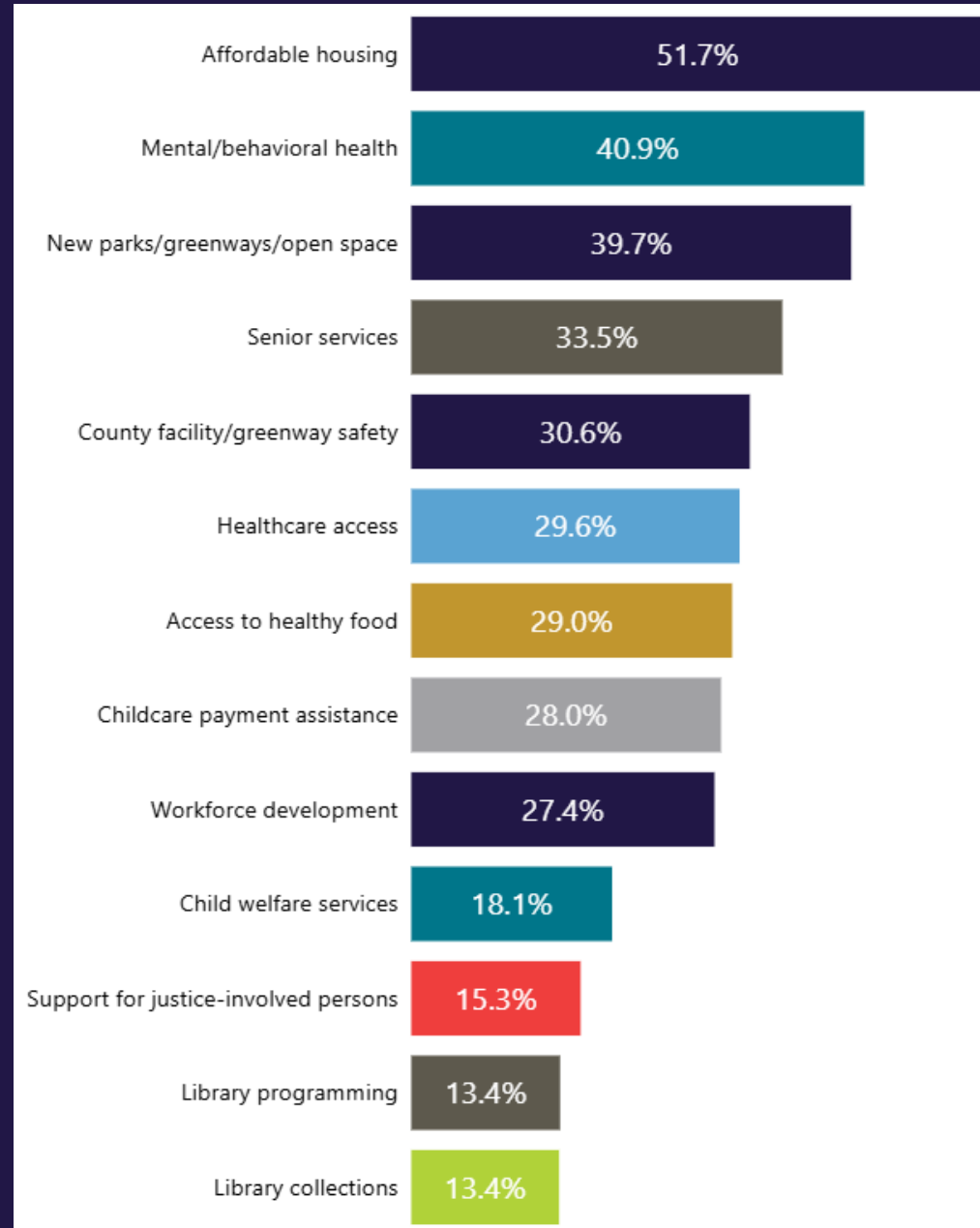
Response ● Not Met ● Partly Met ● Mostly Met ● Fully Met



Please indicate how your household's needs for the programs, services, and facilities listed below are being met using a scale of "Fully Met" to "Not Met".



Which FOUR of the services/programs/facilities listed above do you think should be the top priorities for additional funding in the County's FY 2026 Budget?

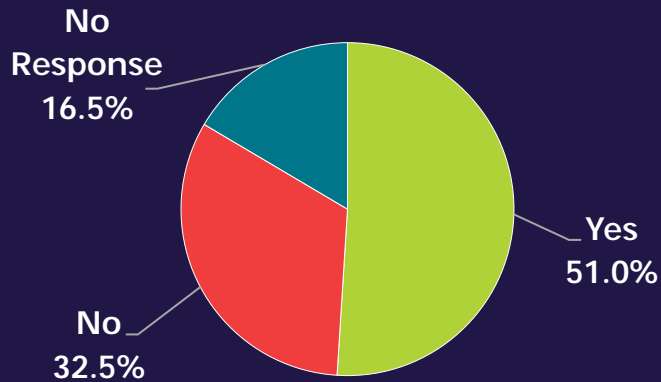


FY2026 Survey Results

Service	1st Priority	2nd Priority	3rd Priority	4th Priority
Efforts by the County to improve access to affordable housing	23.4%	15.2%	9.4%	7.0%
Efforts by the County to acquire land for the development of parks, greenways, and open-space preservation	18.6%	8.8%	8.4%	6.5%
Safety and security at County facilities like libraries, parks, greenways, recreation centers, and County offices	10.0%	9.4%	6.5%	7.0%
Services for senior adults	9.4%	10.0%	8.5%	8.3%
Mental health, behavioral health, and substance use services.	8.4%	13.1%	12.8%	9.9%
Assistance with paying for childcare for low-income families	8.3%	7.2%	6.5%	8.2%
Foster care, adoption, and child protection services	4.9%	4.2%	4.4%	6.2%
Programs/services that help residents get access to healthy food	4.5%	9.1%	8.9%	9.0%
Efforts by the County to improve access to healthcare	4.2%	7.8%	10.8%	9.5%
Workforce development services that provide training and support to residents	3.7%	6.1%	9.3%	10.9%
Programs and services that help justice-involved residents after they have had interactions with the criminal justice system	2.3%	2.8%	4.5%	7.1%
Library collections	1.2%	4.0%	4.9%	4.5%
Library programs for children, teens, and/or adults	1.1%	2.5%	5.2%	6.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

FY2026 Survey Results

Would you be willing to pay a slight increase in taxes to help fund the services you selected as your top priority?

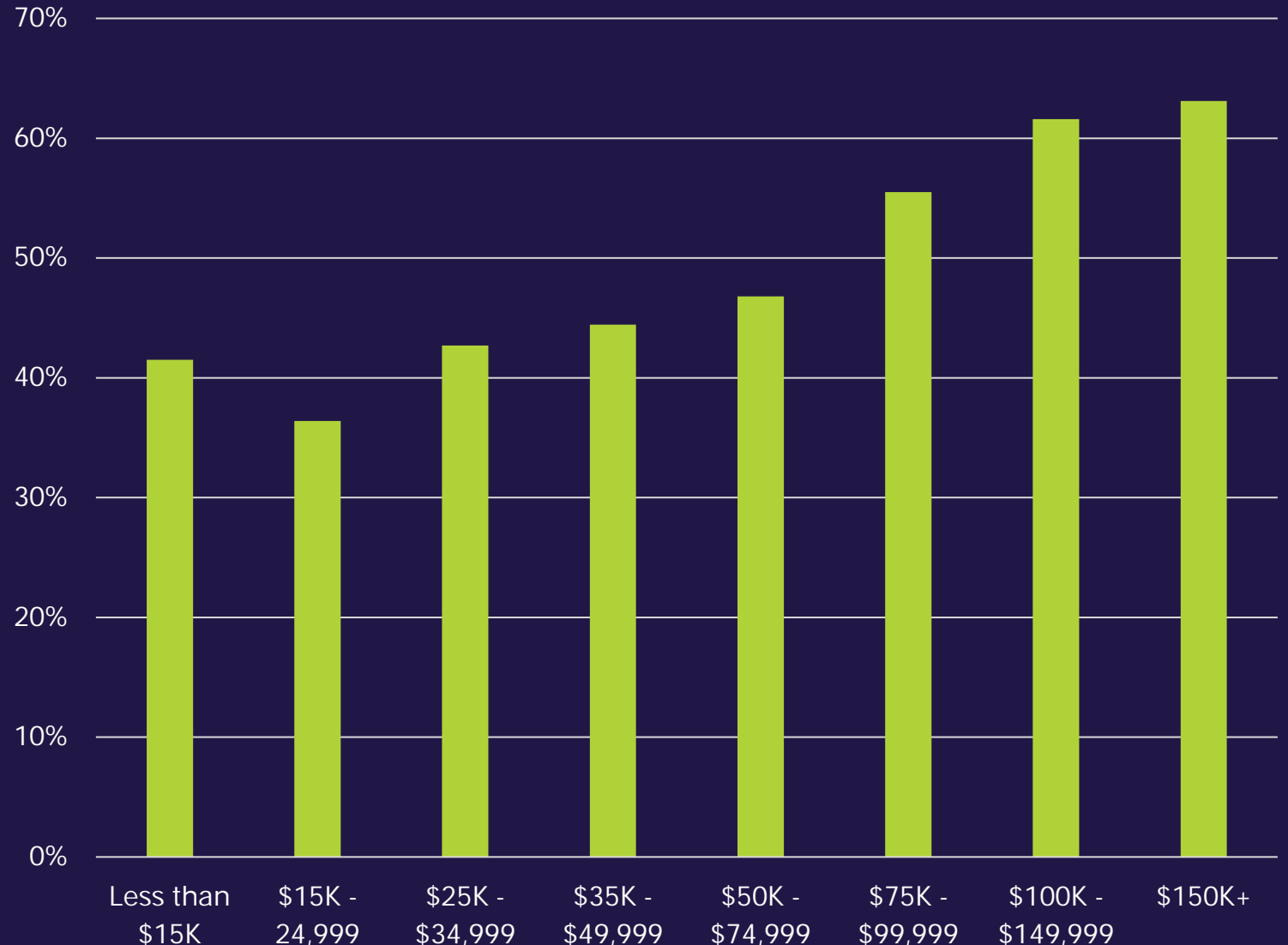


Economic Data

- Tax Rate: 19th lowest in the state
 - Lower than Wake, Guilford, Forsyth, Gaston, Lincoln, Union, and Cabarrus
- Per-Capita Income: 3rd highest in the state
- % Children Living in Poverty: 15th lowest in state
- Effective Tax Rate*: 38th lowest in the state
 - Lower than Wake, Guilford, Gaston, Lincoln, and Cabarrus

*The effective tax rate is a counterfactual rate calculated to attempt to account for differences in revaluation cycles.

Respondents Answering "Yes" By Income Bracket



Summary

Ranking	FY2025 Service
1	Efforts by the County to improve access to affordable housing
2	Behavioral health resources
3	Programs/services that help residents get access to healthy food
4	Services for senior adults
5	Workforce development

Ranking	FY2026 Service
1	Efforts by the County to improve access to affordable housing
2	Mental health, behavioral health, and substance use services
3	Services for senior adults
4	Assistance with paying for childcare for low-income families
5	Programs/services that help residents get access to healthy food



Questions ?