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Resident Survey

Rural Maryland Council

UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE
Schaefer Center for Public Policy

Resident Survey

Rural Maryland Council

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UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE
Schaefer Center for Public Policy

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Rural Maryland Council
Resident Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent agency within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. RMC serves residents in 18 counties classified as "rural" by the Annotated Code of Maryland as well as residents of the remaining jurisdictions' semi-rural areas. RMC works with residents, local organizations, government at all levels, and others to serve the needs of Maryland's rural communities.

RMC contracted with the Schaefer Center for Public Policy at The University of Baltimore to design and conduct a resident survey to assess the needs of rural communities and gain insights into how to retain residents in rural communities. The survey was open from October 21, 2025, to January 14, 2026. RMC recruited survey respondents at public events and conferences, through e-mail blasts, and via a link posted on its website. While 206 people clicked on the survey link or QR code, 178 of those individuals reported that they lived, worked, or lived and worked in a rural community in Maryland and subsequently answered questions related to issues in their rural communities.

The key finding of the survey was the importance of jobs and the economy in rural communities. Specifically:

- The **most important issue in the rural communities** where survey respondents live and/or work was job opportunities, which was selected by 28% of respondents.
- The **most important agricultural issue** was keeping and making farming profitable, which was selected by 42% of respondents.
- Fifty-six percent of respondents said their local rural economy was not thriving. With respect to **economic development**, 41% said the most important economic development issue is recruiting new employers with well-paying jobs, and respondents said more job opportunities would be the improvement that would most benefit their community.
- When asked what the number one reason is that **people are leaving their rural communities**, almost half (49%) of survey respondents said it was because of the lack of good job opportunities.

Other key findings included:

- Almost seven in ten (69%) of respondents said there was not enough **housing** available in their community to meet the needs of all residents.

- Respondents were mixed in their assessment of community **infrastructure**: 38% of respondents rated quality as *good*, 39% as *fair* or *poor*, and only 21% as *very good* or *excellent*.
    - Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents rated the public transportation in their community as *poor*.
    - Forty-seven percent of respondents said their community did have adequate high-speed internet access, while 43% of respondents said it did not.
- Respondents were fairly split on the most important **community development** issue. The top four issues selected, by 19% to 24% of respondents each, concerned poverty and low-income residents and families, the aging population, engagement opportunities for younger residents, and more transportation options. Respondents also said there were not enough community centers or spaces for social engagement in their communities, especially for younger residents but also for senior citizens.
- Most respondents rated the quality of **health care** in their rural communities *good* (30%) or *fair* (40%); only 13% rated it *excellent* or *very good*, while 13% also rated it *poor*. They generally felt that health care options in their communities met their needs, while they were less likely to feel that they had sufficient access to mental health care services. The most important health care issue in respondents' rural communities is securing more quality health care providers, which was selected by 36% of respondents.

INTRODUCTION

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent agency within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. RMC serves residents in 18 counties classified as "rural" by the Annotated Code of Maryland as well as residents of the remaining jurisdictions' semi-rural areas. RMC works with residents, local organizations, government at all levels, and others to serve the needs of Maryland's rural communities.

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This report details the results of the survey. It begins with information on the methodology of the survey and the demographics of survey respondents. It then has separate sections on the most important issues in rural communities, then the state of agriculture, economic development and the economy, housing, infrastructure, community development, and health care in rural areas, followed by questions on why people are leaving Maryland's rural communities and the results of an open-ended question on what makes respondents' rural communities great.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

RMC provided the Schaefer Center with the previous version of the Rural Issues Survey, used to collect information on the most important issues to rural residents, to use as a guide to create the needs assessment survey. In collaboration with RMC, the Schaefer Center developed a survey instrument, available in Appendix A: Rural Maryland Council Survey, that incorporated the previous questions and collected additional information to provide a more robust understanding of rural Maryland residents.

The online survey was open from October 21, 2025, to January 14, 2026. The Schaefer Center provided RMC with both a URL link and a QR code to the survey to distribute to individuals who lived and/or worked in rural communities in Maryland.

RMC distributed the survey link and QR code through multiple channels.[1] This included posting a link to the survey on their website and sending emails with the link to their contact list of approximately 8,000 individuals on October 21, 2025, and November 24, 2025. In addition, RMC handed out flyers with information about the survey, including the QR code, at rural events in Maryland in Fall 2025.

A total of 206 individuals accessed the survey via link or QR code. Of these, 199 answered the screening question on whether they live or work in a rural area; five indicated they neither live nor work in rural Maryland. The analytic sample for key findings includes 178 respondents (86% of those who accessed the survey) who live or work in a rural community and completed at least one substantive survey item. Because the survey was distributed via an open link/QR code without a defined sampling frame, a response rate cannot be calculated.

Table 1: Summary of Survey Responses by Method of Response

Responses	Survey Link	QR Code	Total
Ineligible Responses (n)	26	2	28
Ineligible Responses (%)	14%	13%	14%
Valid Responses (n)	164	14	178
Valid Responses (%)	86%	88%	86%
Total Responses (n)	**190**	**16**	**206**
Total Responses (%)	**92%**	**8%**	**100%**

Notes: n = 206. Ineligible respondents are those that did not respond to any substantive survey questions or reported that they did not live or work in a rural Maryland area. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

[1] See Appendix B: Survey Distributions for examples of these distributions.

Over 90% of respondents accessed the survey via the survey link in the email or on the RMC website, while 8% used the QR code.

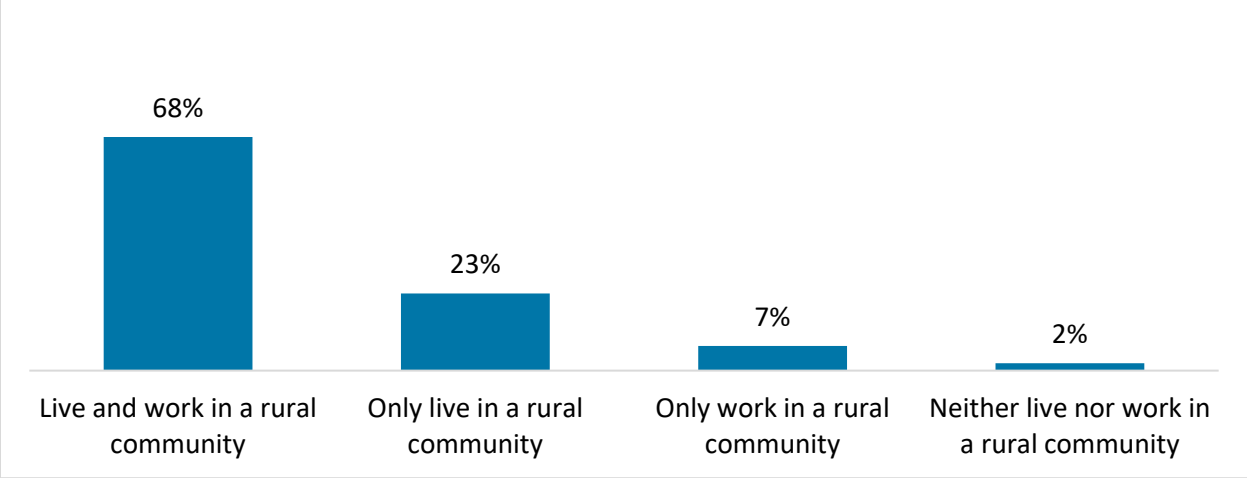
Throughout this report, the results are only shown for those respondents who indicated they either lived and/or worked in a rural Maryland community. In addition, the results are based on the number of eligible responses received; thus, the number of respondents, which is shown as "n," varies for each question.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

This section provides basic information about the survey respondents and their demographics (e.g., gender, race, highest education level attained).

Over two-thirds of respondents (68%) reported both living and working in a rural Maryland community (Figure 1). Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) reported only living in rural community, while 7% only worked in a rural community. Only responses from those who indicated they lived and/or worked in a rural community in Maryland are shown in the rest of this report.

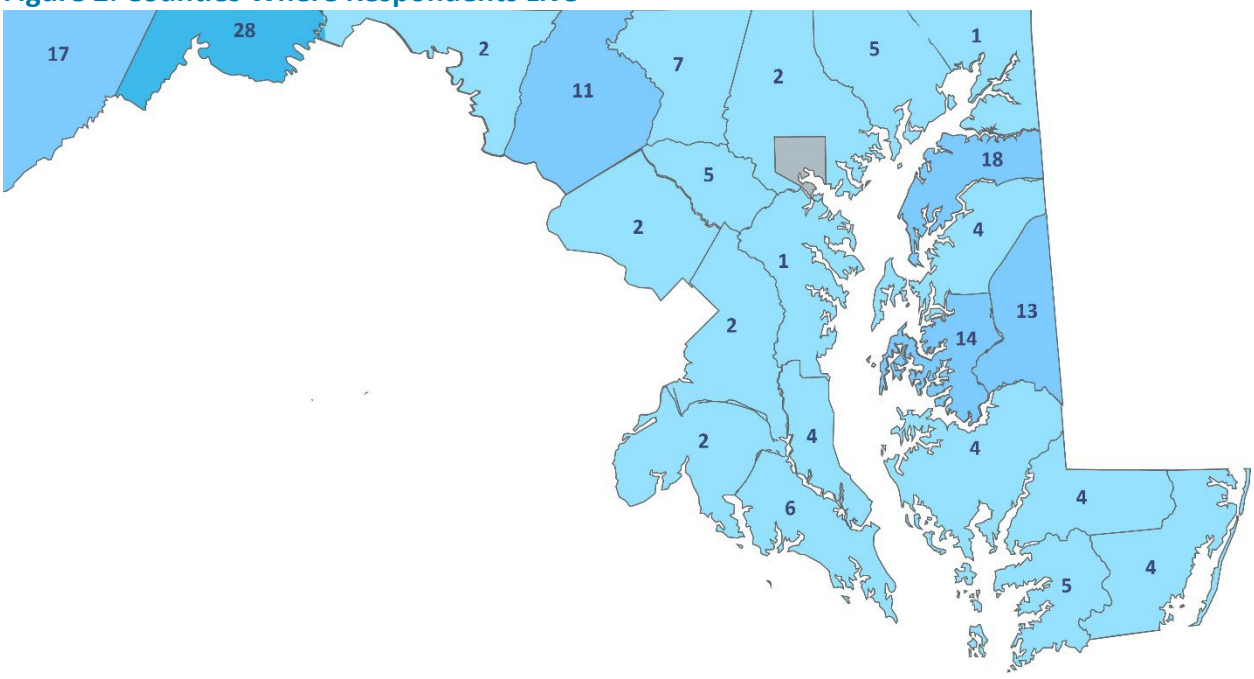
Figure 1: Survey Respondents' Residence and Workplace in Rural Communities



Note: n = 182.

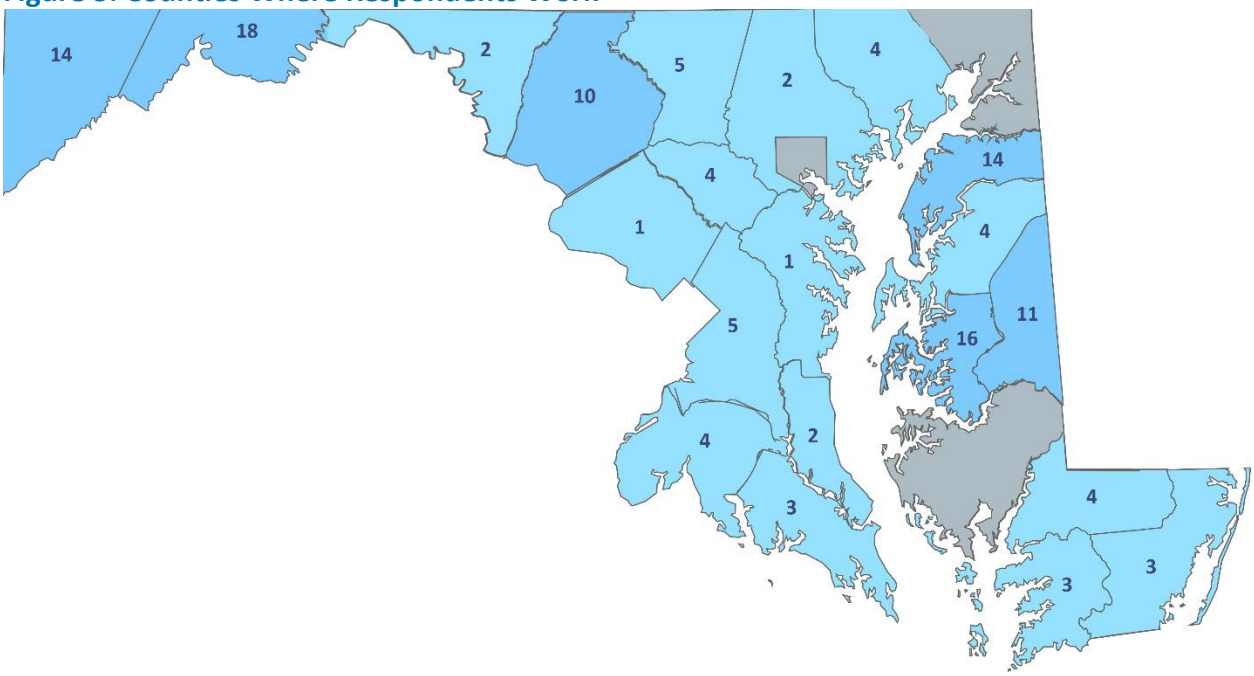
Respondents were asked to provide the zip code where they lived and the zip code where they worked. These zip codes were mapped to the rural counties where respondents live (Figure 2) and work (Figure 3). The largest number of respondents lived and worked in Allegany County (28 and 18 respondents, respectively).

Figure 2: Counties Where Respondents Live



Notes: n = 161. Three respondents provided zip codes outside Maryland, which are not included in the count or shown in the map. There were no respondents from Baltimore City.

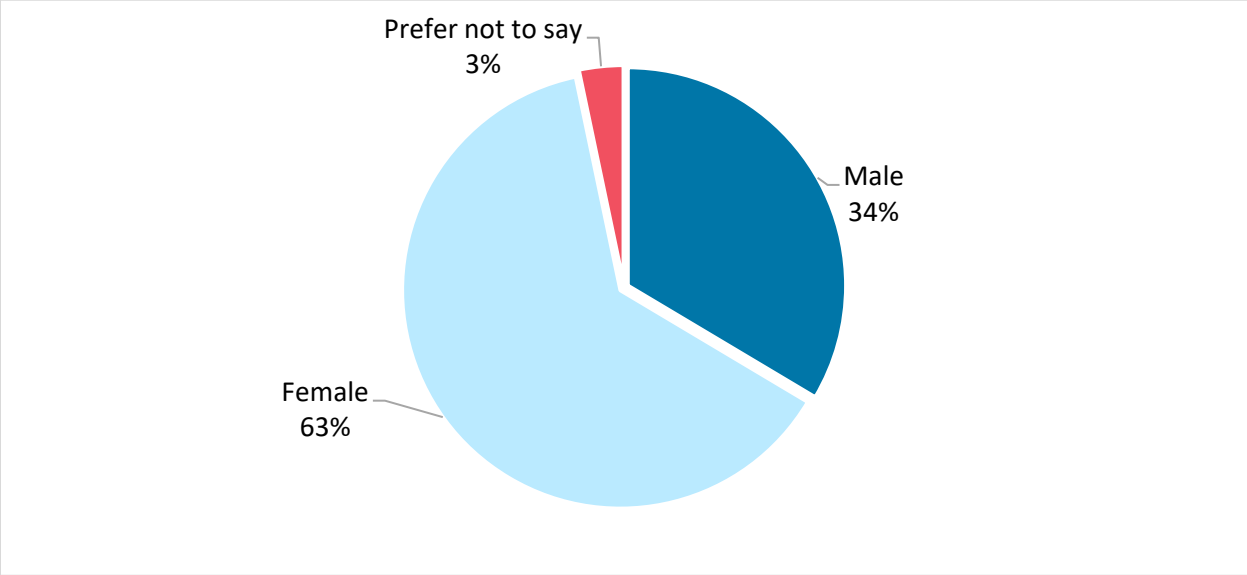
Figure 3: Counties Where Respondents Work



Notes: n = 130. Two respondents provided zip codes outside Maryland, which are not included in the count or shown in the map. There were no respondents from Baltimore City.

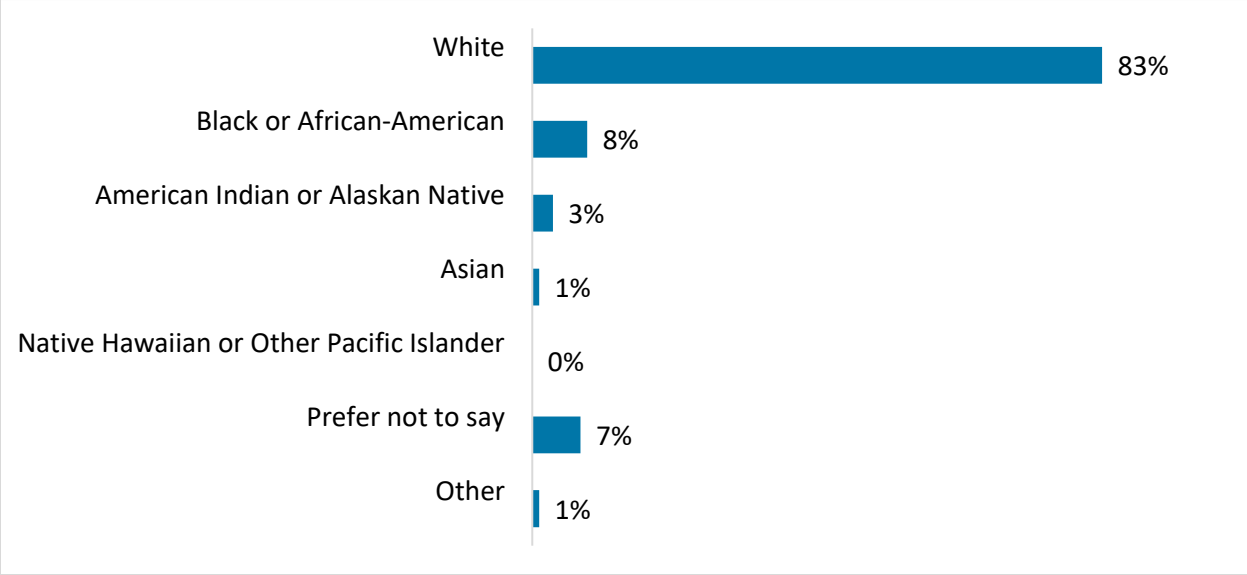
Of the respondents who answered the gender and race/ethnicity questions, survey respondents were more likely to identify as female (Figure 4), White (Figure 5), and not Hispanic or Latino (Figure 6).

Figure 4: Survey Respondents' Gender



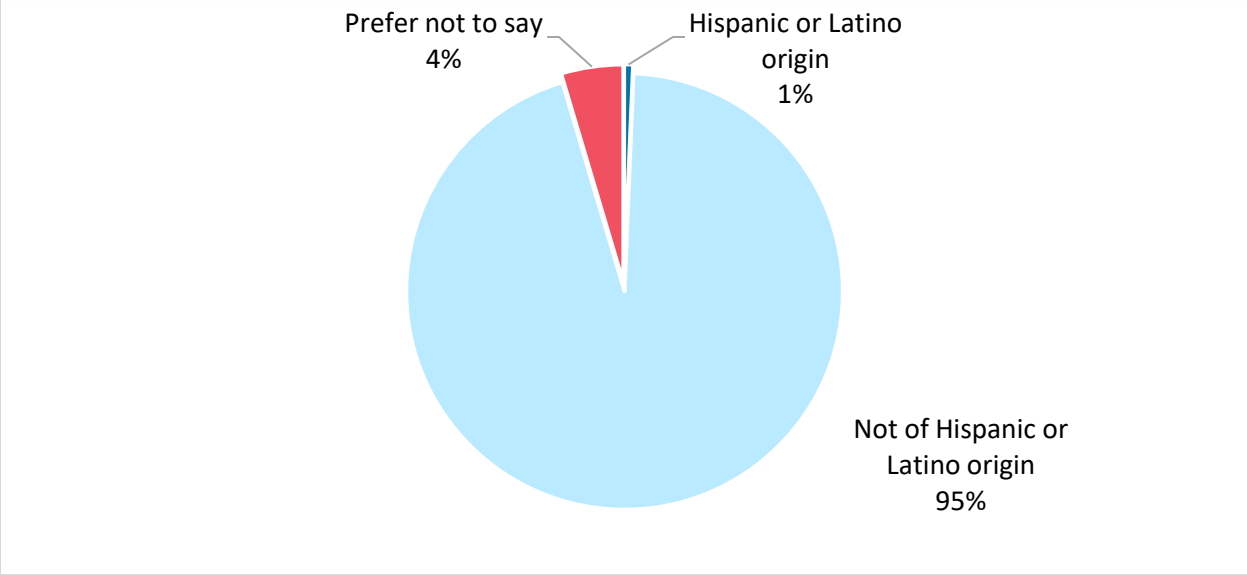
Note: n = 152.

Figure 5: Survey Respondents' Race



Notes: n = 152. Respondents could select more than one race.

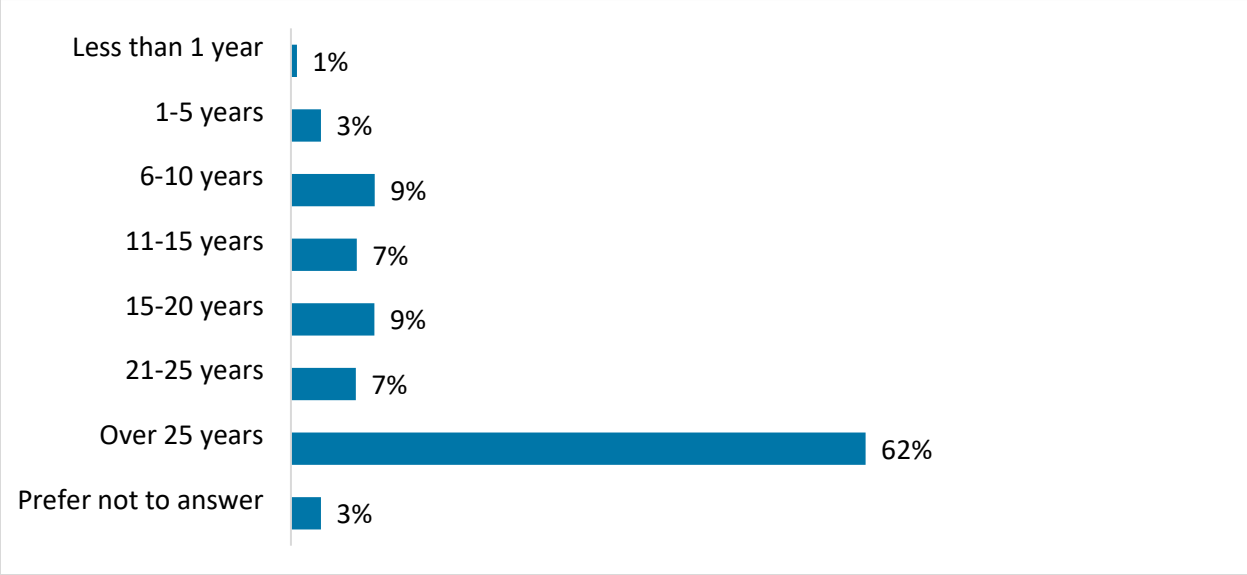
Figure 6: Survey Respondents' Ethnicity



Note: n = 152.

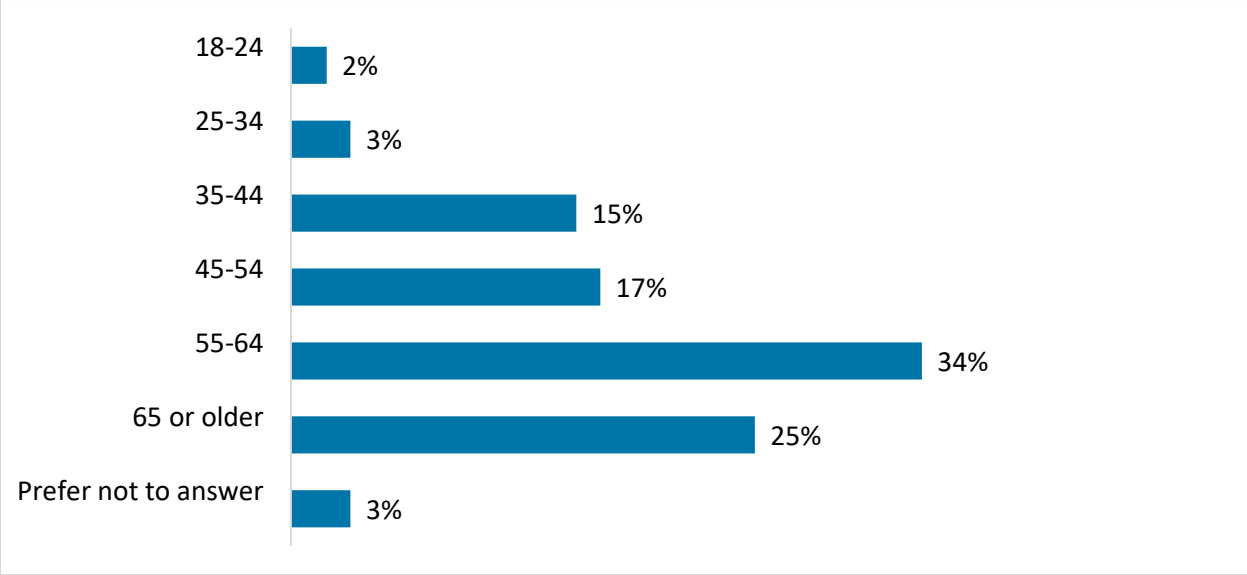
Most (62%) respondents have lived in rural Maryland for over 25 years (Figure 7). One-third (34%) of survey respondents were between the ages of 55 and 64, and one-quarter (25%) were 65 years or older (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Survey Respondents' Living Tenure in Rural Maryland



Notes: n = 151. Total does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

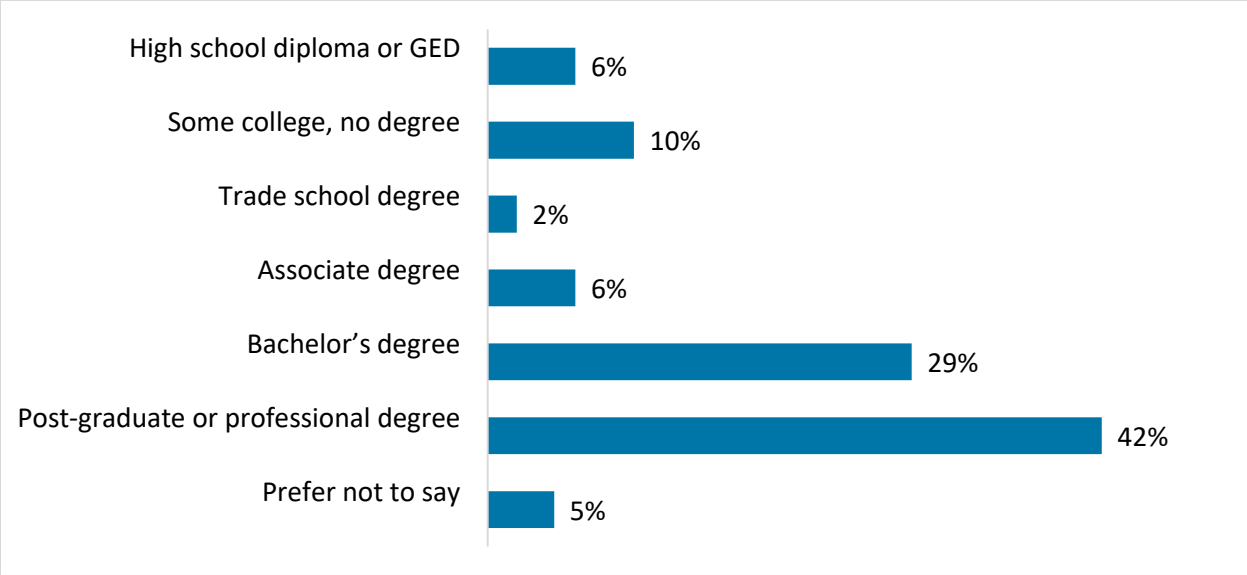
Figure 8: Survey Respondents' Age



Note: n = 152.

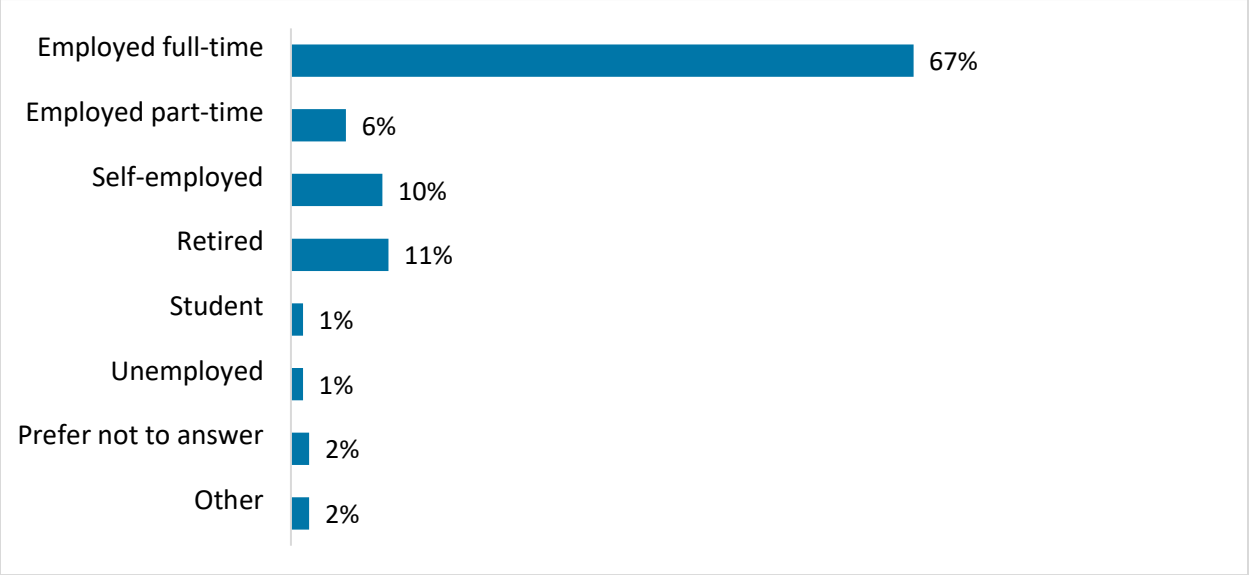
Most survey respondents had a bachelor's degree (29%) or a post-graduate or professional degree (42%; Figure 9), and over two-thirds (67%) were employed full-time (Figure 10). Almost one-quarter (24%) reported household incomes over $150,000, another 24% reported household incomes $100,000 to $149,000, and 23% reported incomes $75,000 to $99,999 (Figure 11).

Figure 9: Survey Respondents' Educational Attainment



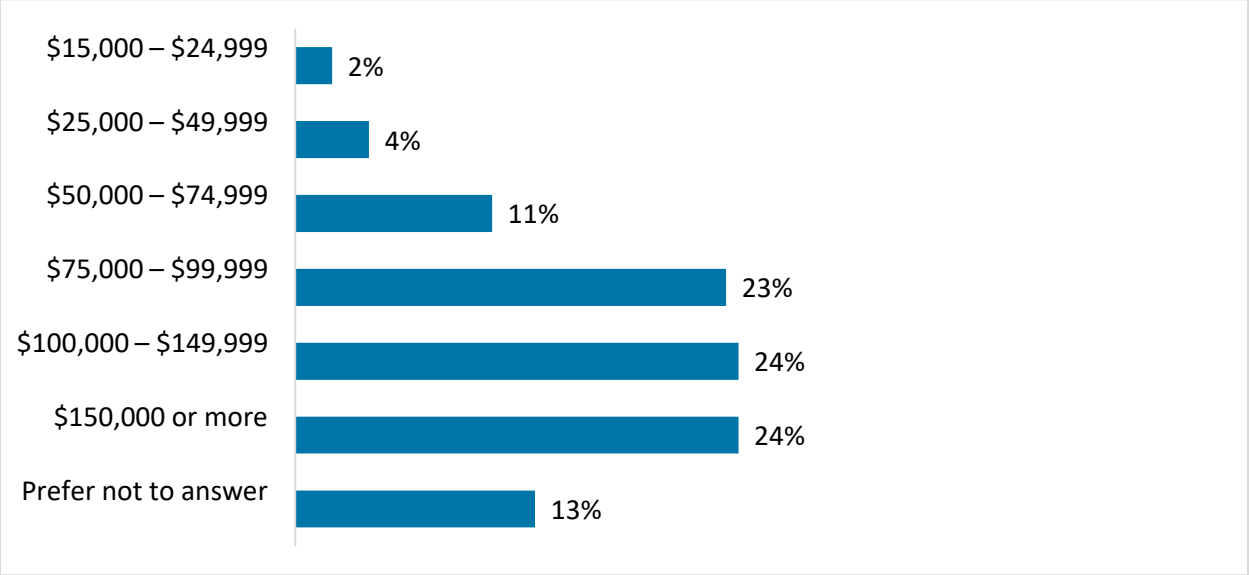
Note: n = 150.

Figure 10: Survey Respondents' Employment Status



Note: n = 152.

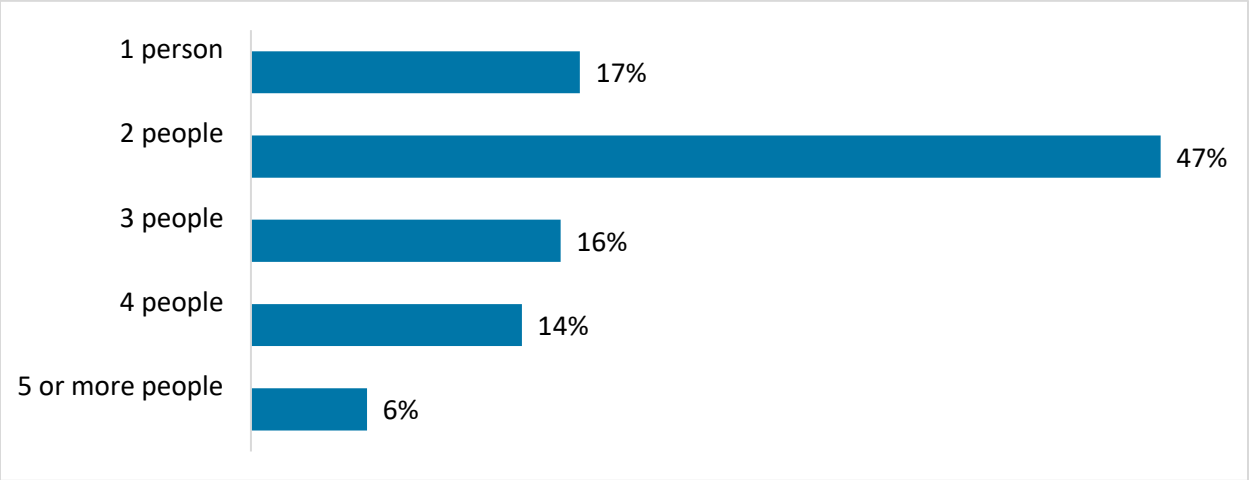
Figure 11: Survey Respondents' Household Income Level



Note: n = 150.

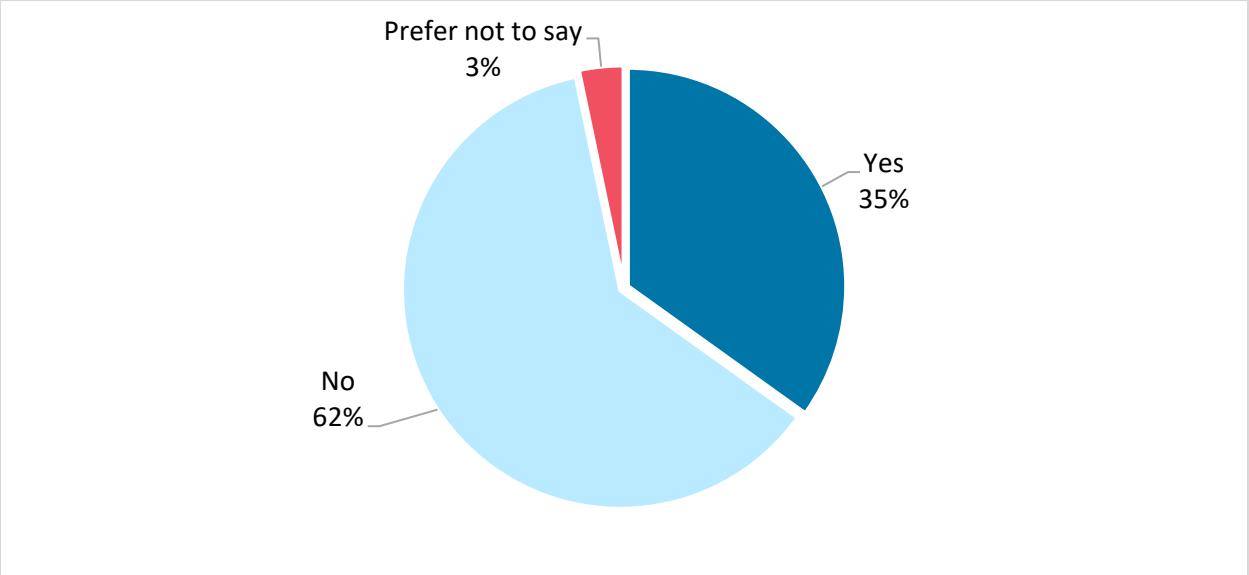
Almost half (47%) of respondents lived in a household with one other person (Figure 12), and most (62%) respondents did not have children in their household (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Survey Respondents' Household Size



Note: n = 158.

Figure 13: Survey Respondents' Presence of Children



Note: n = 127.

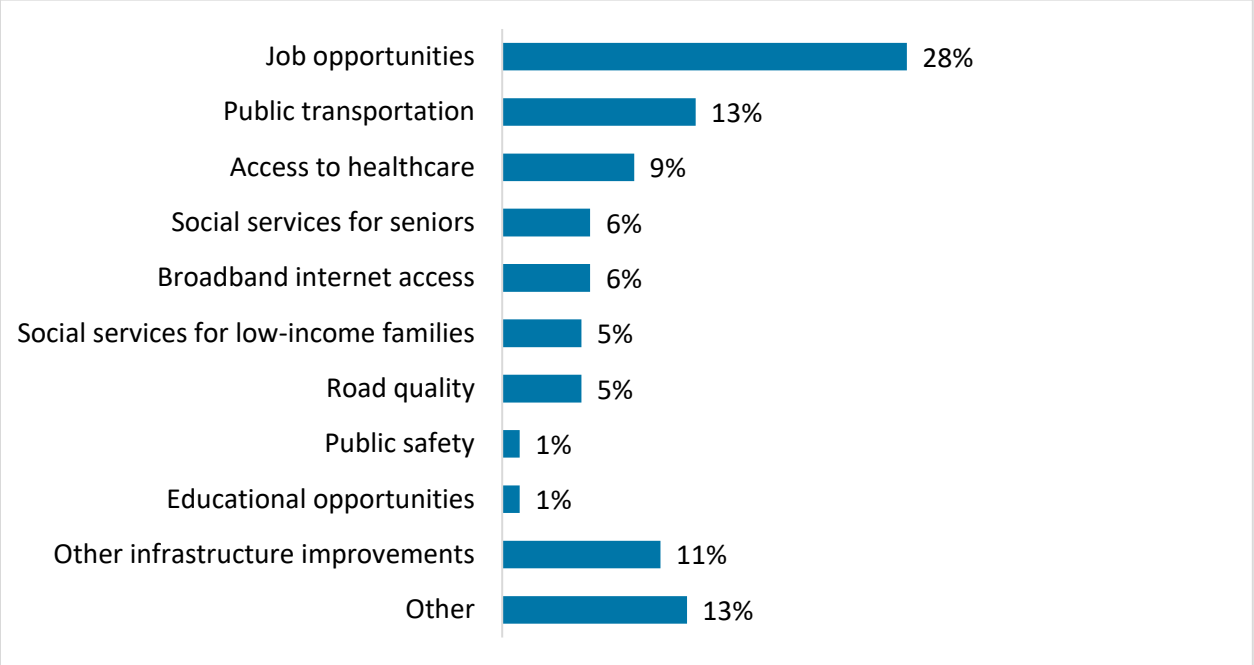
MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Respondents were asked to select the most important issue in the rural community in which they lived and/or worked. As shown in Figure 14, almost one in three respondents (28%) said job opportunities were most important, followed by public transportation (13%).

Respondents who selected *other infrastructure improvements* or *other* were provided the opportunity to write in the most important issues. The most common *other infrastructure improvements* related to water, sewer, and/or wastewater systems, which was suggested by 61% of those who selected *other infrastructure improvements*. Multiple respondents also referenced issues related to roads and housing.

The most common write-in response from respondents who selected *other* was housing, which was provided by 48% of these respondents. These responses largely concerned affordable housing, but there were also references to housing for seniors, abandoned or dilapidated housing, and available housing. Other issues cited by multiple respondents included concerns about the environment, sprawl or unsustainable growth, and references to all of the above.

Figure 14: Most Important Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities

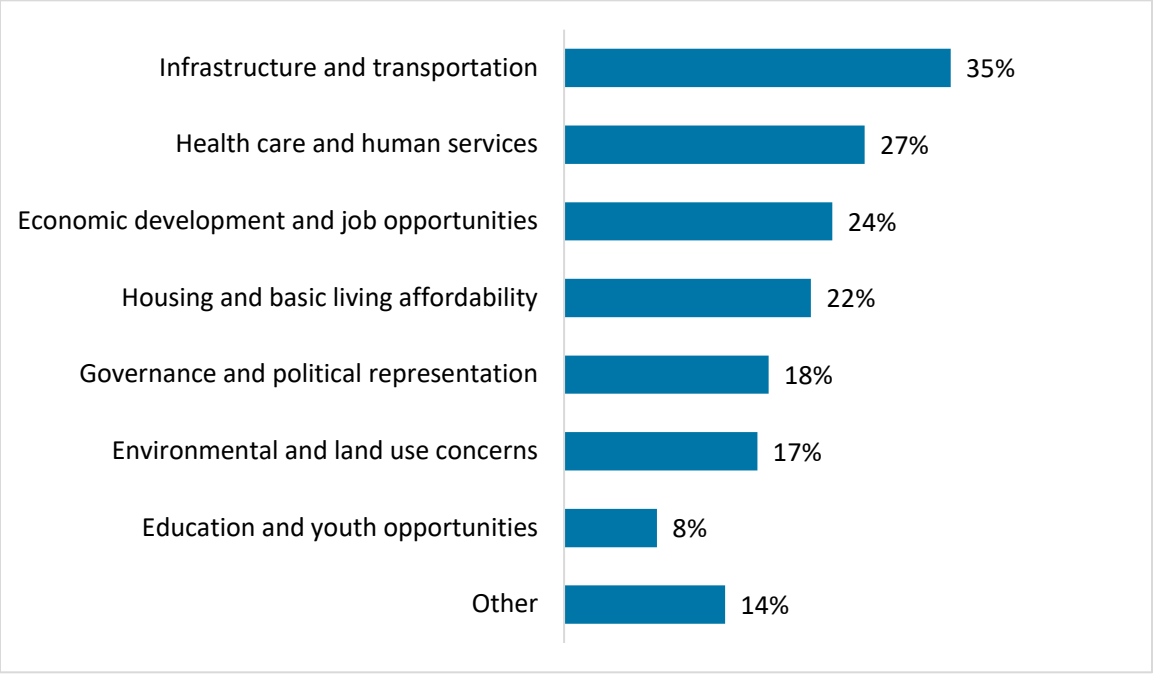


Note: n = 164.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked "Are there any other issues that you think are important concerns for people living in rural areas?" There were 104 narrative responses to the question. These responses were grouped into eight major categories as shown in Figure 15. The most common issues mentioned concerned infrastructure and transportation, which were raised in 35% of the comments. A sample of these comments includes:

- "Aging infrastructure is my largest concern. We keep building new developments but our curbs in old downtown are crumbling. Our pipes are failing. Not all of the pipes are documented in our online systems."
- "Good infrastructure leads to a better community. Cutting the budget on these things will come back and bite the community hard!"
- "I think the lack of airport transit is a serious detriment to our area; Salisbury is wonderful but limited and having to travel over 2 hours to an airport for most destinations makes it very hard to travel."
- "Lack of public transportation, especially for younger populations…"
- "Water sewer issues".

Figure 15: Other Major Concerns for People Living in Rural Areas



Notes: n = 104. Responses could include more than one category.

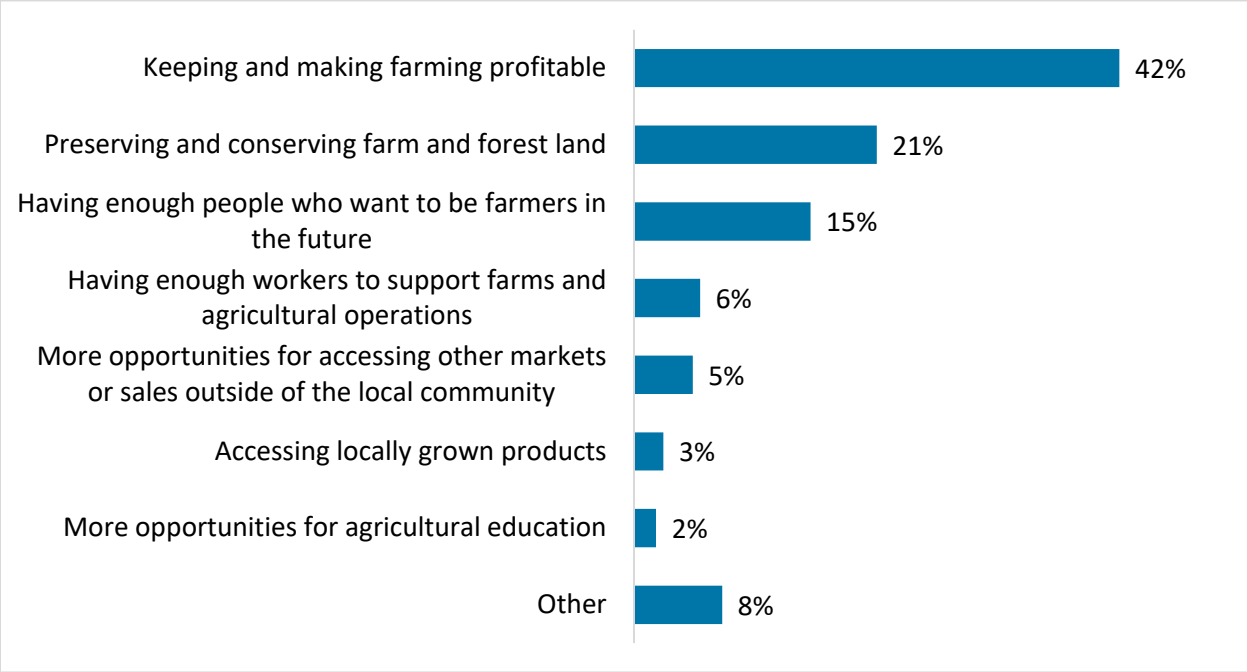
The second most common topic concerned health care and human services, which was discussed in 27% of comments. This category included food insecurity, addiction recovery services, health care, fire and ambulance services, non-emergency transportation, and services for older

residents. Economic development and job opportunities as well as housing and basic living affordability were the third and fourth most common issues, including concerns about job opportunities, job skills, jobs that pay a living wage, and the cost of living compared to income.

AGRICULTURE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

When asked what the most important issue was concerning agriculture in the rural community where they lived and/or worked, 42% of respondents said it was keeping and making farming profitable (Figure 16). Twenty-one percent of respondents said it was preserving and conserving farm and forest land, while 15% said the issue was having enough people who wanted to be farmers in the future.

Figure 16: Most Important Agricultural Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities



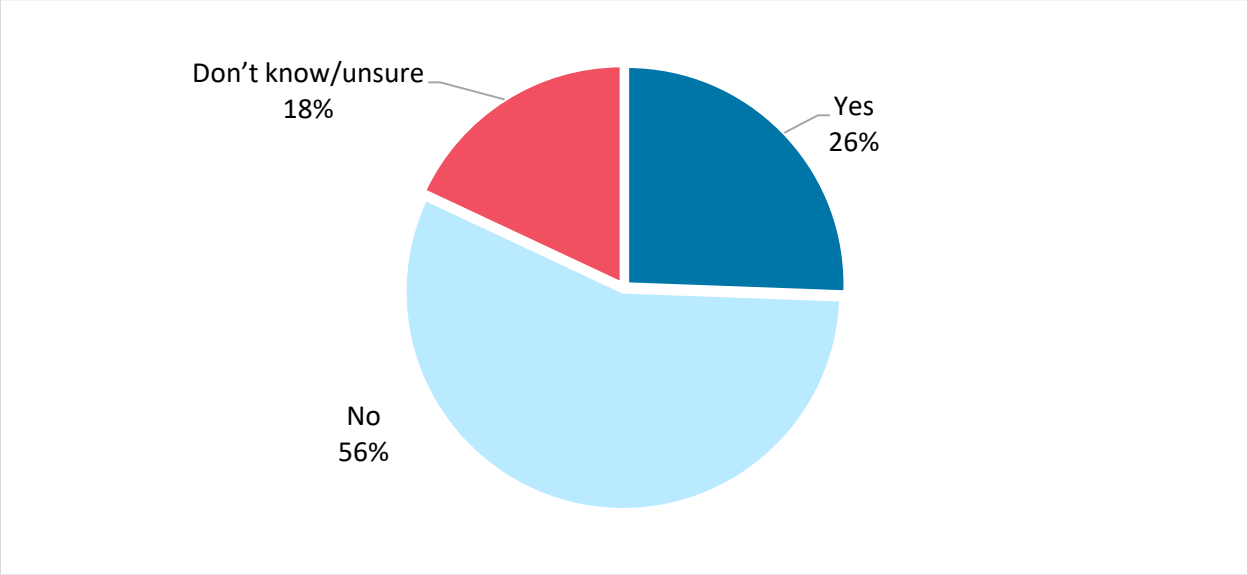
Note: n = 159.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions concerning the most important economic development issues in the rural communities where they live and work.

A majority of respondents (56%) feel the local economy in the rural community where they live and/or work is *not* thriving (Figure 17). Only one quarter (26%) of respondents said it was, and 18% were unsure.

Figure 17: Are Respondents' Local Rural Economies Thriving?

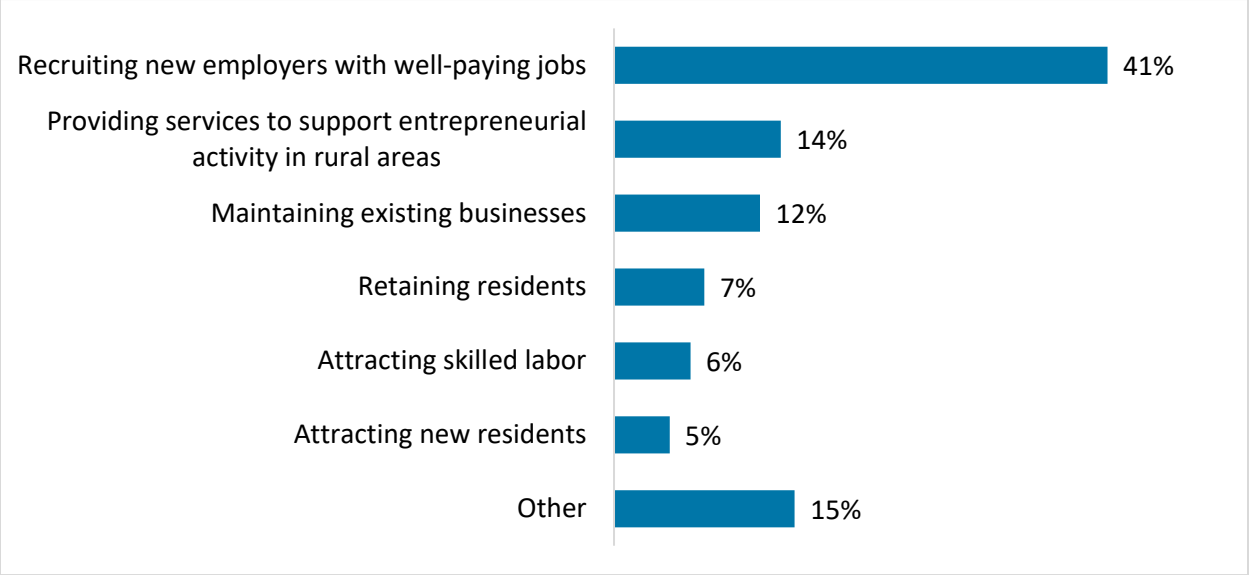


Note: n = 175.

For a significant portion of respondents (41%), the most important economic issue in their community is recruiting new employers with well-paying jobs (Figure 18Figure 18). The next frequently selected responses were providing services to support entrepreneurial activity in rural areas and maintaining existing businesses (14% and 12%, respectively).

Respondents who selected *other* were provided with the opportunity to write in an issue. Among their responses, the most common issues concerned economic development practices that would be relevant to the local community such as "Creating industry that focuses on the resources of the area including the community based assets" feeling left out of both RMC and "urban" funding programs. Other concerns mentioned by multiple respondents included housing, concerns about continued development, younger residents, maintaining the agricultural economy, and supporting existing businesses.

Figure 18: Most Important Economic Development Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities

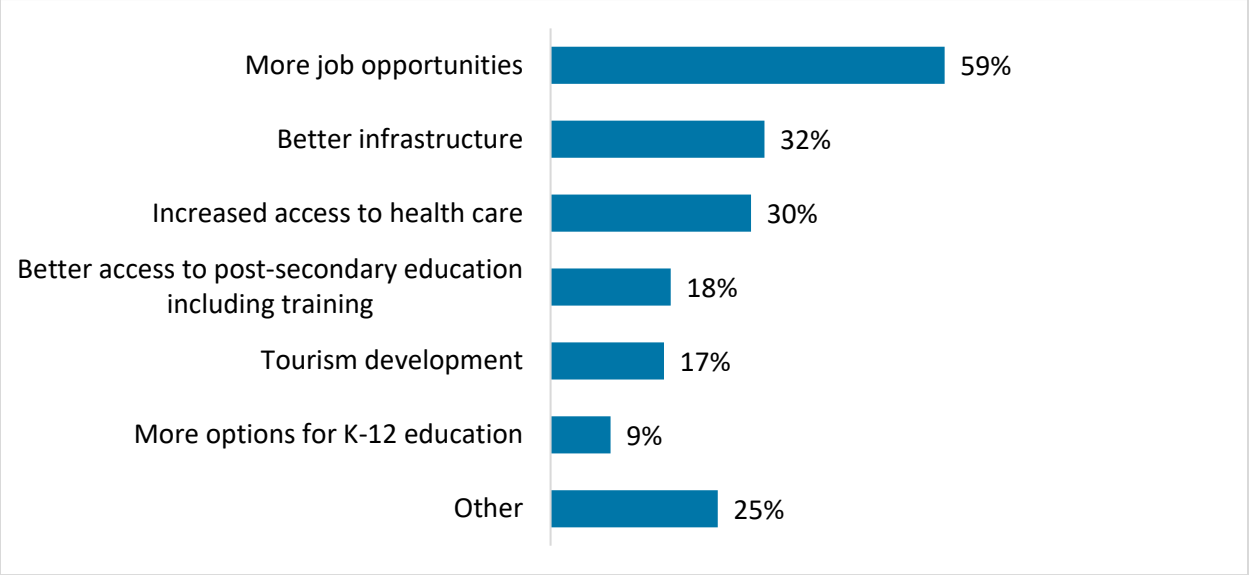


Note: n = 174.

When asked what improvements would benefit their economy most, almost six in ten (59%) of respondents selected more job opportunities, while 32% selected better infrastructure and 30% said increased access to health care (Figure 19).

Respondents who selected *other* provided many different types of improvements for their local communities. The most common suggestion, which was made by over 30% of those who selected *other*, was housing, primarily affordable housing but there were also references to the availability of housing and "housing across a continuum." The second most commonly mentioned topic was support for agriculture, including "an increase in active farms;" "new/beginning farmer support;" and "protection of farmland, ways for new and young farmers to start farming." Other common suggestions included support for seniors, child care, and post-secondary education and training.

Figure 19: Improvements That Would Most Benefit Respondents' Communities

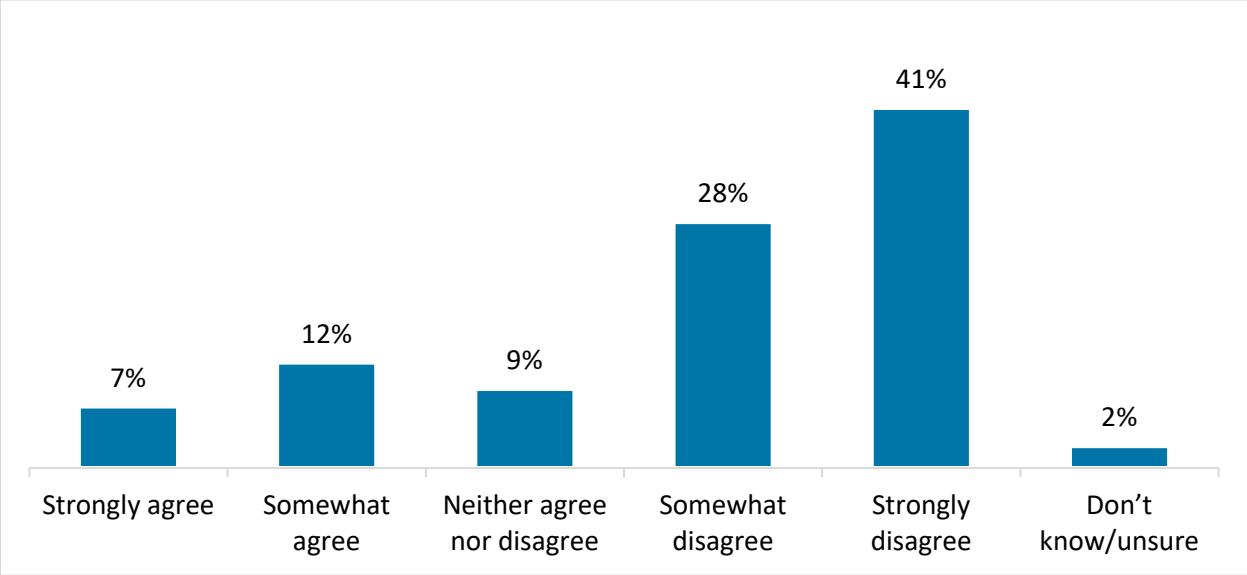


Notes: n = 169. Respondents could select more than one option.

HOUSING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Almost seven in ten (69%) of respondents said there was not enough housing available in their community to meet the needs of all residents, with the largest share strongly disagreeing (Figure 20). Only 19% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed there was enough housing available.

Figure 20: Is There Enough Housing Available in Respondents' Communities to Meet Needs?

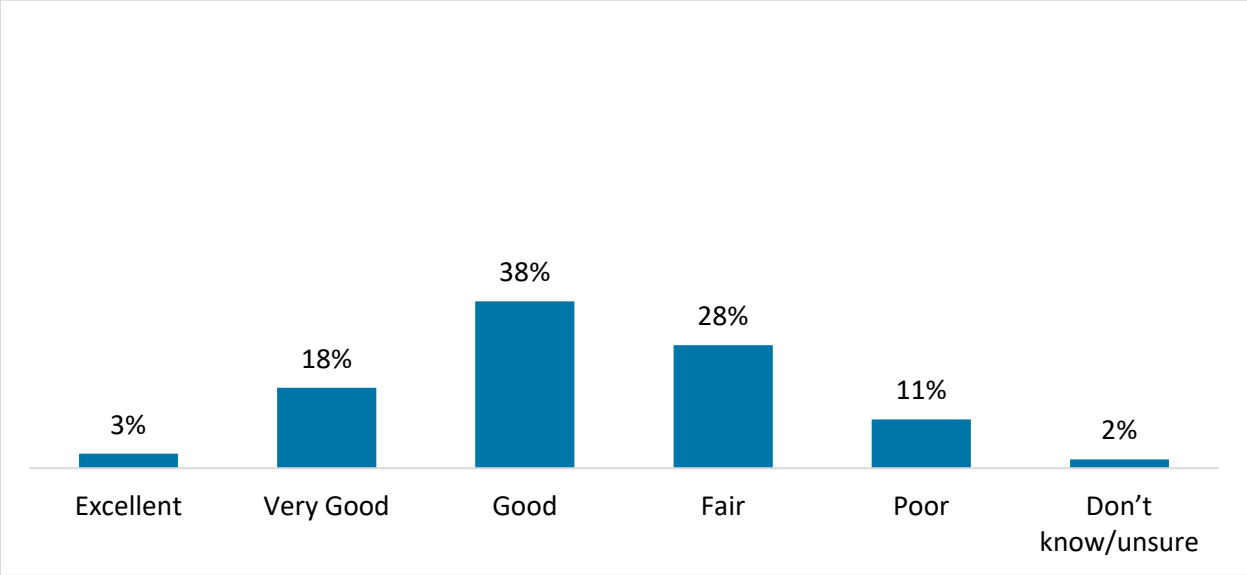


Note: n = 169.

INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Over a third (38%) of respondents rated the quality of their infrastructure as *good*, with 21% rating it as very *good* or *excellent* and 28% rating it as *fair* and 11% rated it as *poor* (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Rate Quality of Infrastructure in Your Rural Community

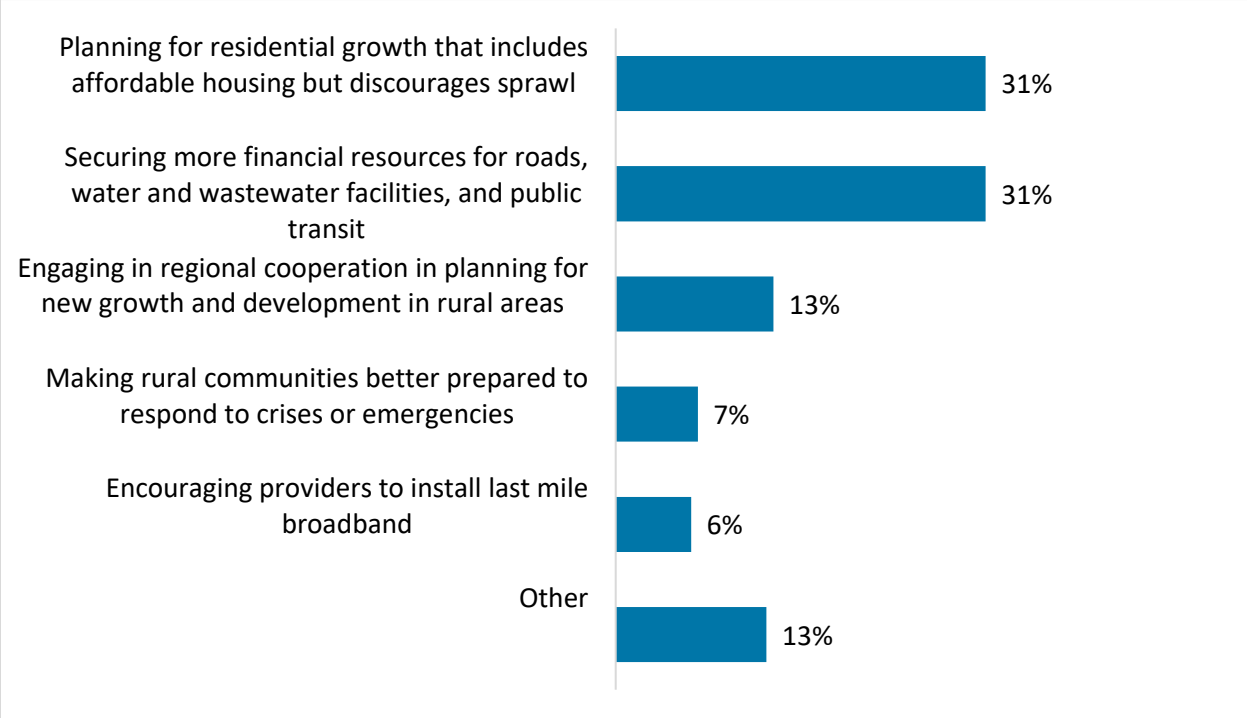


Note: n = 176.

Respondents were asked to identify the most important issue concerning infrastructure in the community where they live and/or work. Approximately one in three respondents (31%) said that planning for residential growth that includes affordable housing but discourages sprawl, while an additional 31% said that the most important issue was securing more financial resources for roads, water and wastewater facilities, and public transit (Figure 22).

Respondents who selected *other* could write in the most important issue concerning infrastructure in their rural community. The most common issue named was housing, with several references to affordable housing. Multiple respondents also mentioned discouraging growth, too much growth, or discouraging sprawl. There were also multiple references to concerns about health care, transportation, preserving land for agriculture, supporting rural lifestyles or economies, education and workforce development, and the role of government.

Figure 22: Most Important Issue Concerning Infrastructure in Respondents' Rural Communities

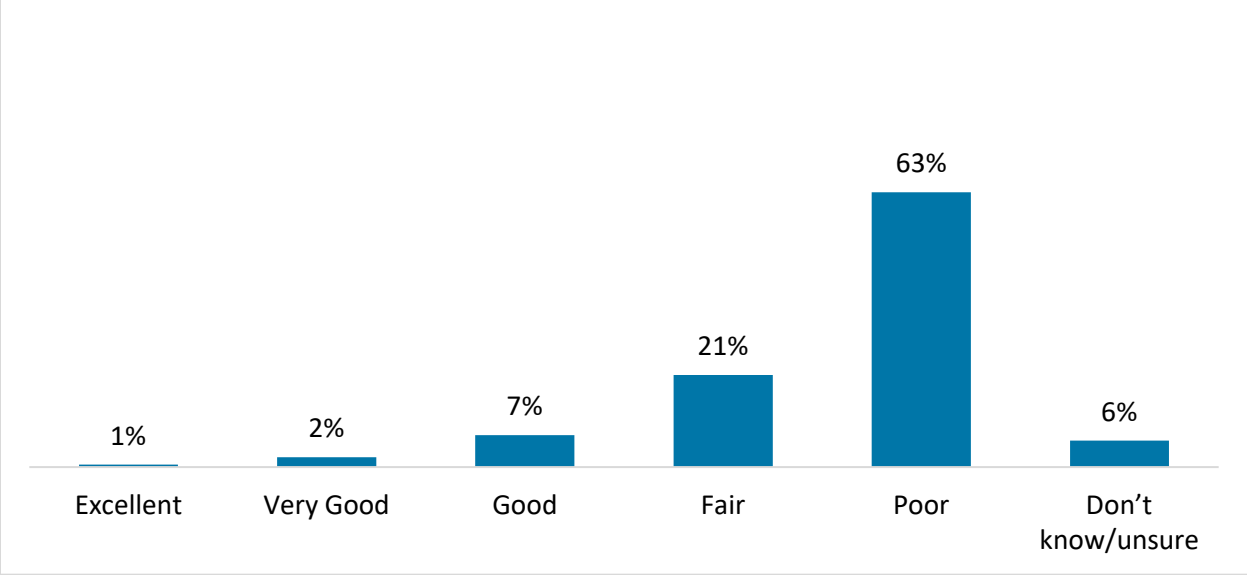


Note: n = 176.

TRANSPORTATION

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents rated the public transportation in their community as *poor*, and only 10% rated it as *good* or better (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Rate Availability of Public Transportation in Your Rural Community

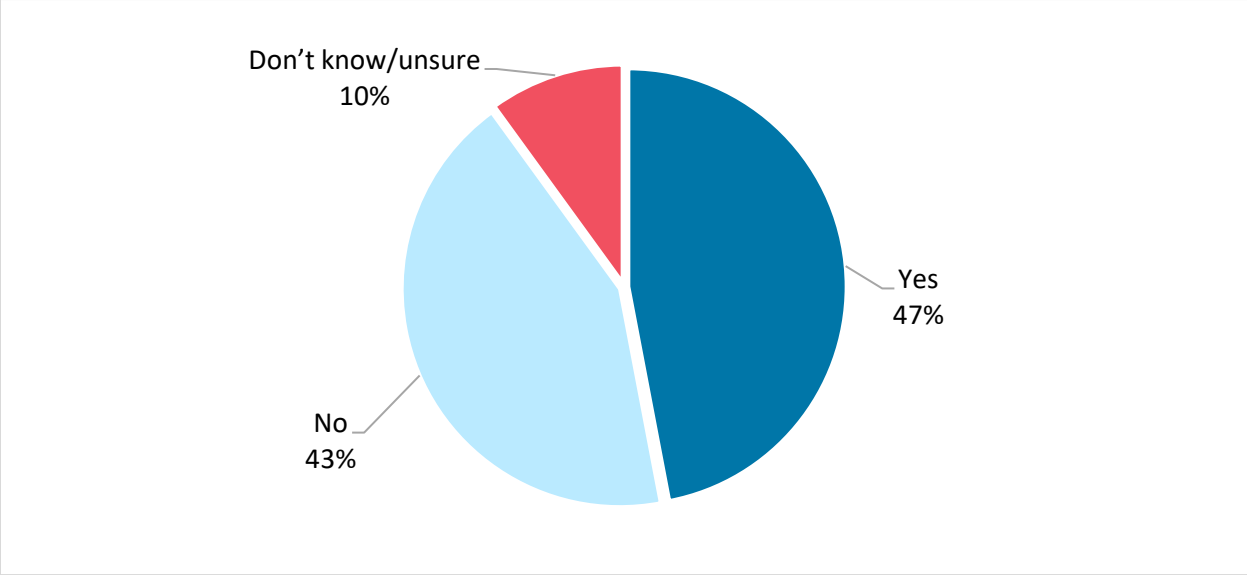


Note: n = 175.

HIGH-SPEED INTERNET ACCESS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Respondents were split as to whether or not their rural community had adequate high-speed internet access. As shown in Figure 24, 47% of respondents said their community did have adequate high-speed internet access, while 43% of respondents said it did not.

Figure 24: Respondent's Community Has Adequate High-Speed Internet Access

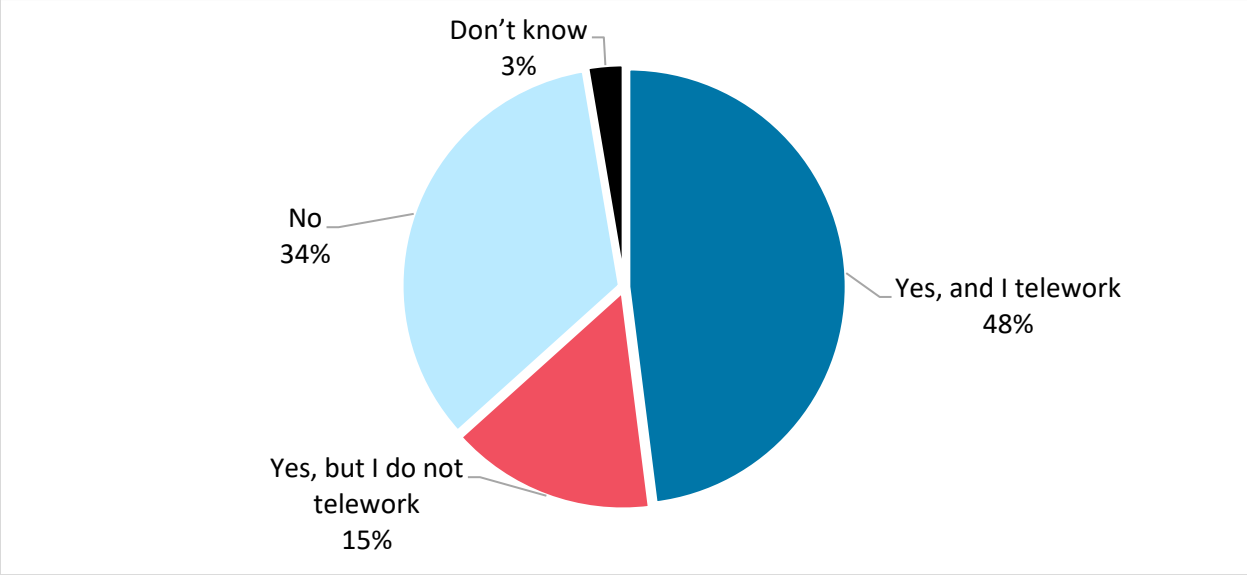


Notes: n = 175.

TELEWORK

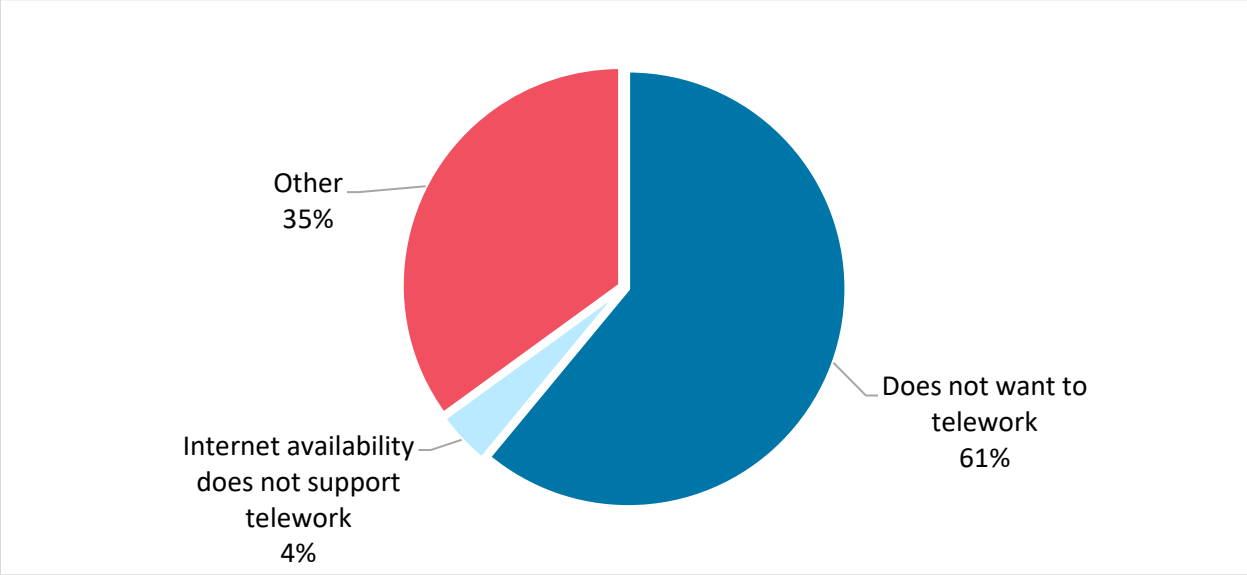
Over half of survey respondents have the opportunity to telework at their jobs, with 48% of respondents teleworking and 15% of respondents with the opportunity to telework not doing so (Figure 25). Approximately one-third (34%) of respondents' jobs do not offer teleworking. Most (61%) of those who do not take advantage of the opportunity to telework do not want to do so, while only 4% do not have the internet availability to telework where they live. Those who selected *other* said they do not telework for reasons including the preference or requirement to be in the office or because they own and work on a farm.

Figure 25: Telework Availability at Job



Note: n = 150.

Figure 26: Why Respondent Does Not Telework



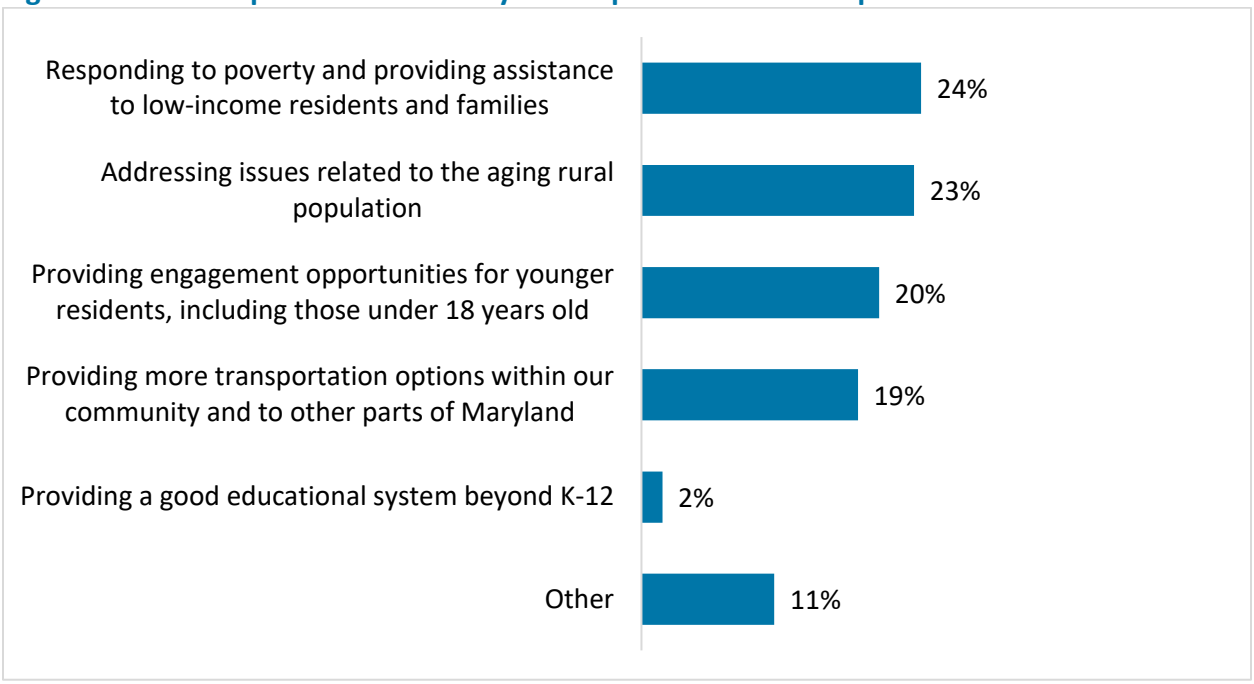
Note: n = 23.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Respondents were asked what the most important community development issue was in the rural communities where they lived and/or worked. The responses were relatively evenly distributed across four options, as shown in Figure 27. Responding to poverty and providing assistance to low-income residents and families was the most frequently cited community development issue (24% of respondents), followed closely by addressing issues related to the aging rural population (23%). Providing engagement opportunities for younger residents, including those under 18 years old (20%) and providing more transportation options within our community and to other parts of Maryland (19%) were the next most frequently cited issues.

Respondents who selected *other* wrote in a number of suggestions for other community development issues in their communities. The most common issue provided was housing, although transportation, infrastructure, engagement for young adults, and concerns about growth were also each cited by multiple respondents. Several respondents also said that all of the issues listed were a concern or were interconnected.

Figure 27: Most Important Community Development Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities

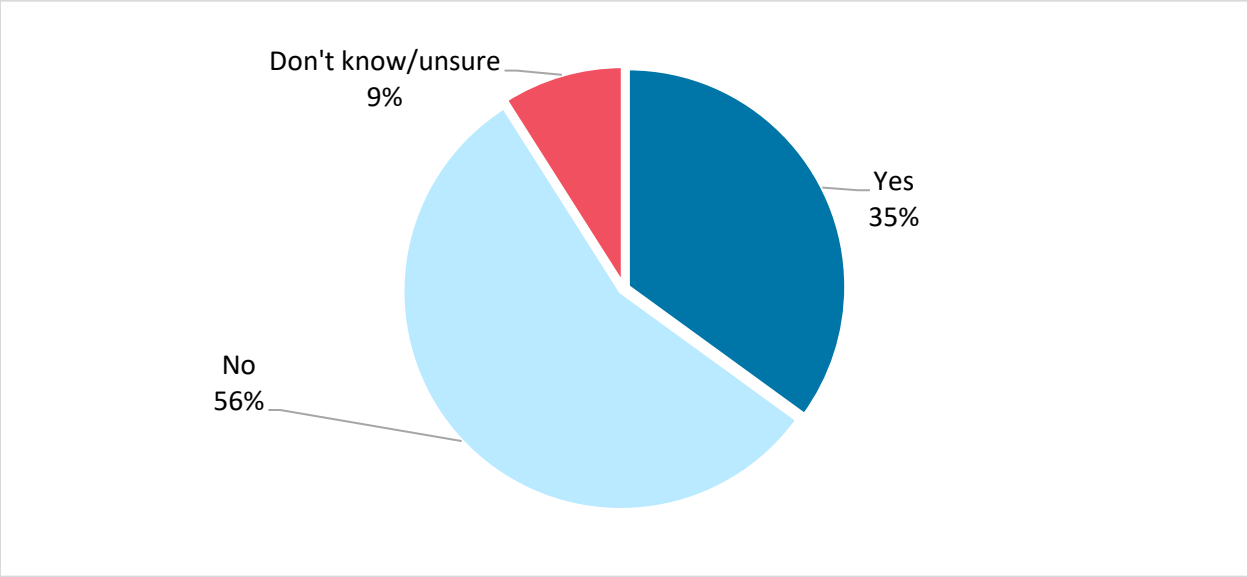


Note: n = 166.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Survey respondents were asked if they felt there were sufficient community centers or spaces for social engagement in their rural communities. A majority (56%) of respondents said there were not, while 35% said there were (Figure 28).

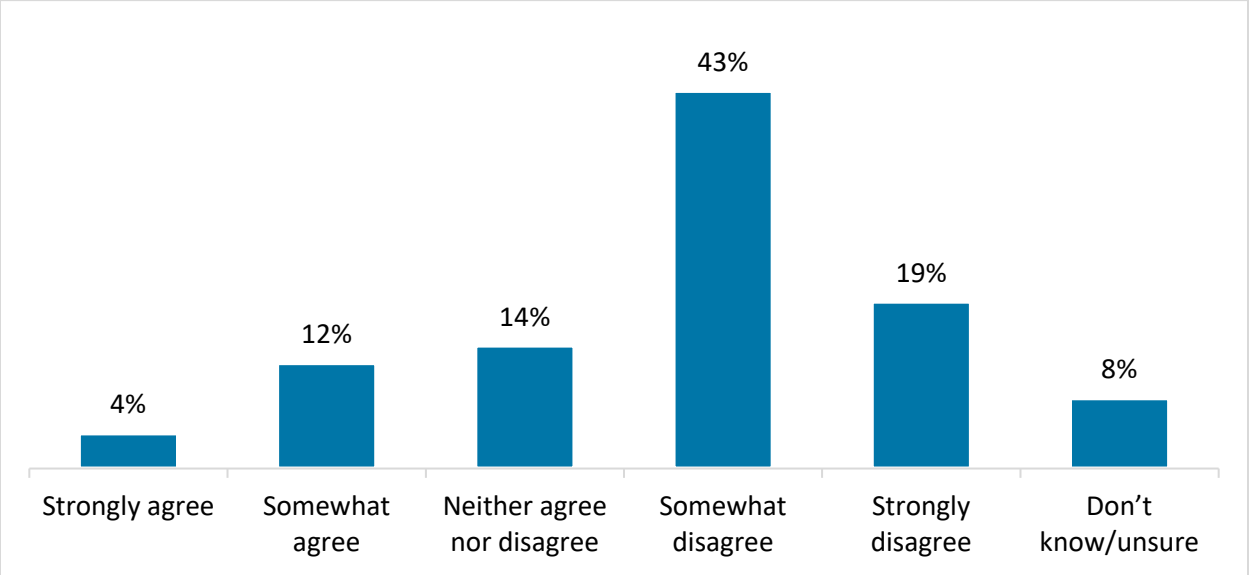
Figure 28: Sufficient Community Centers or Spaces for Social Engagement in Respondents' Rural Communities



Note: n = 168.

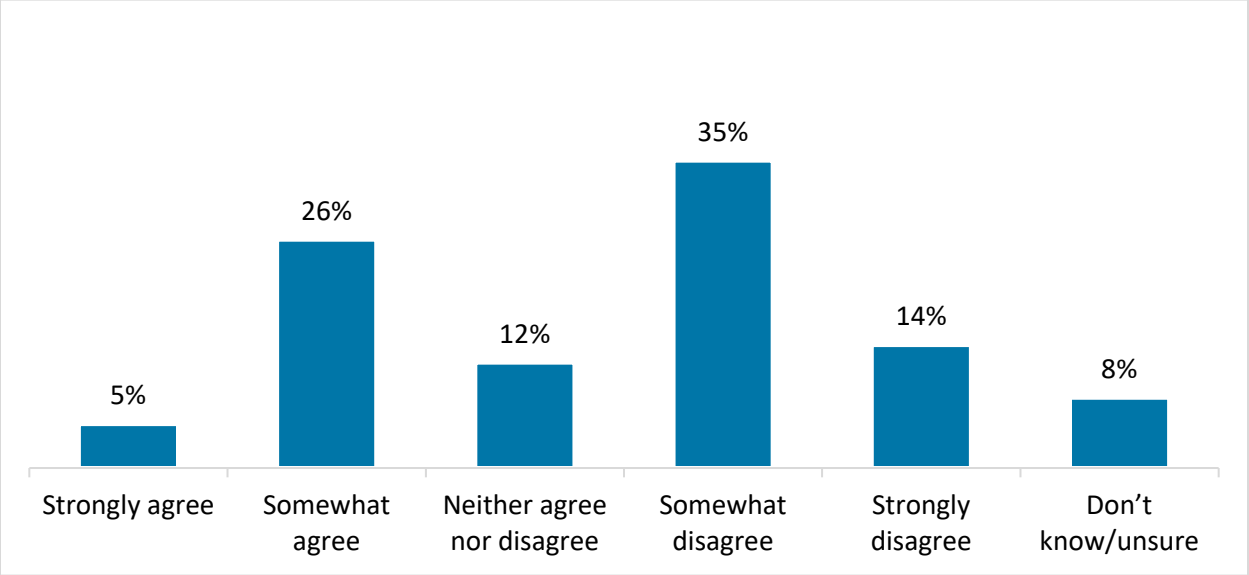
Almost two-thirds (62%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that there were enough community programs and services to support younger residents in their rural communities (Figure 29), and almost half (49%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that there were enough programs or services for senior citizens (Figure 30). Only 16% agreed or strongly agreed there were enough programs or services for younger residents, while 31% said there were enough programs or services for older residents.

Figure 29: Are There Enough Community Programs and Services for Younger Residents in Respondents' Rural Communities?



Note: n = 155.

Figure 30: Are There Enough Community Programs and Services for Senior Citizens in Respondents' Rural Communities?

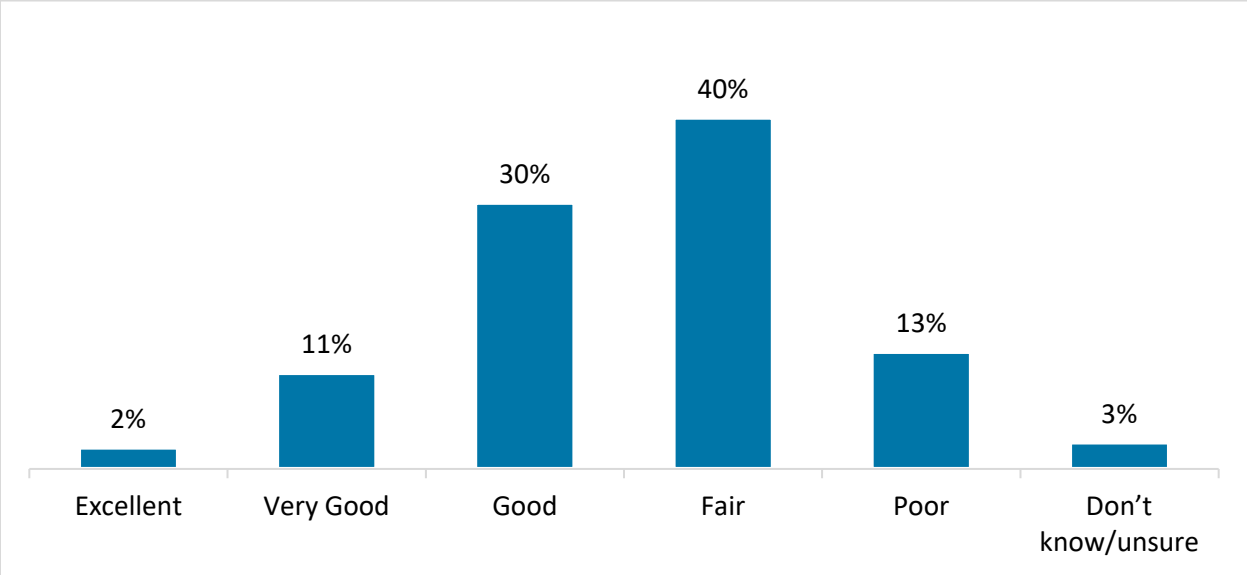


Note: n = 155.

HEALTH CARE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Respondents were asked questions about the health care services in their rural communities. Respondents were mixed on the availability of health care in their rural communities. Only 13% of the respondents rated the availability *excellent* or *very good*, while 13% also rated it *poor* (Figure 31). Most rated it *good* (30%) or *fair* (40%).

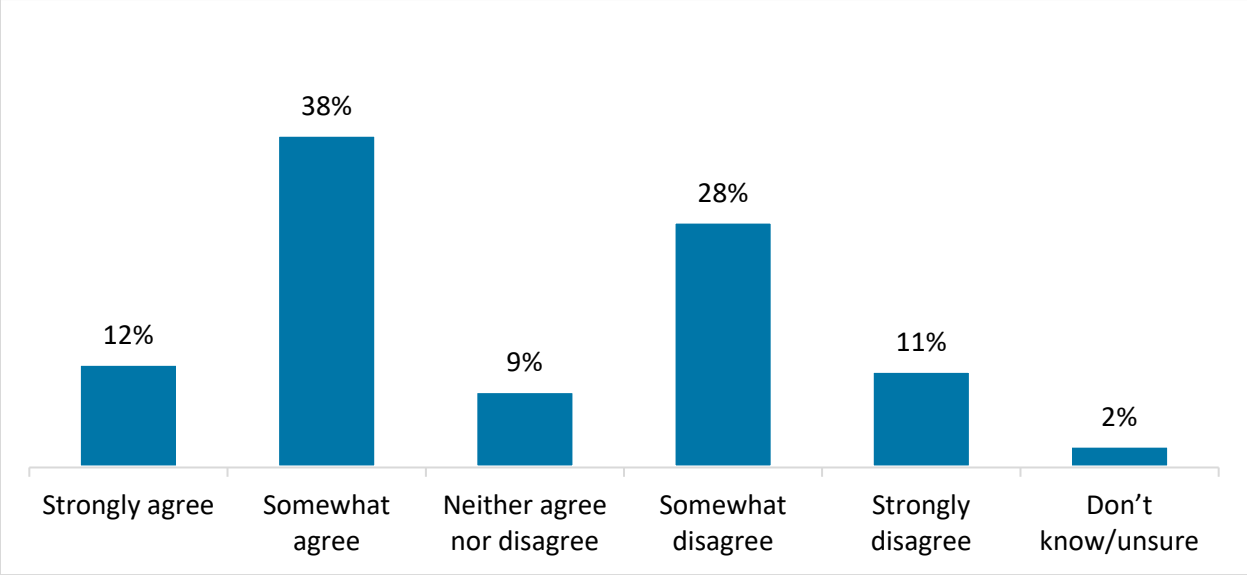
Figure 31: Availability of Health Care Services in Respondents' Rural Communities



Note: n = 161.

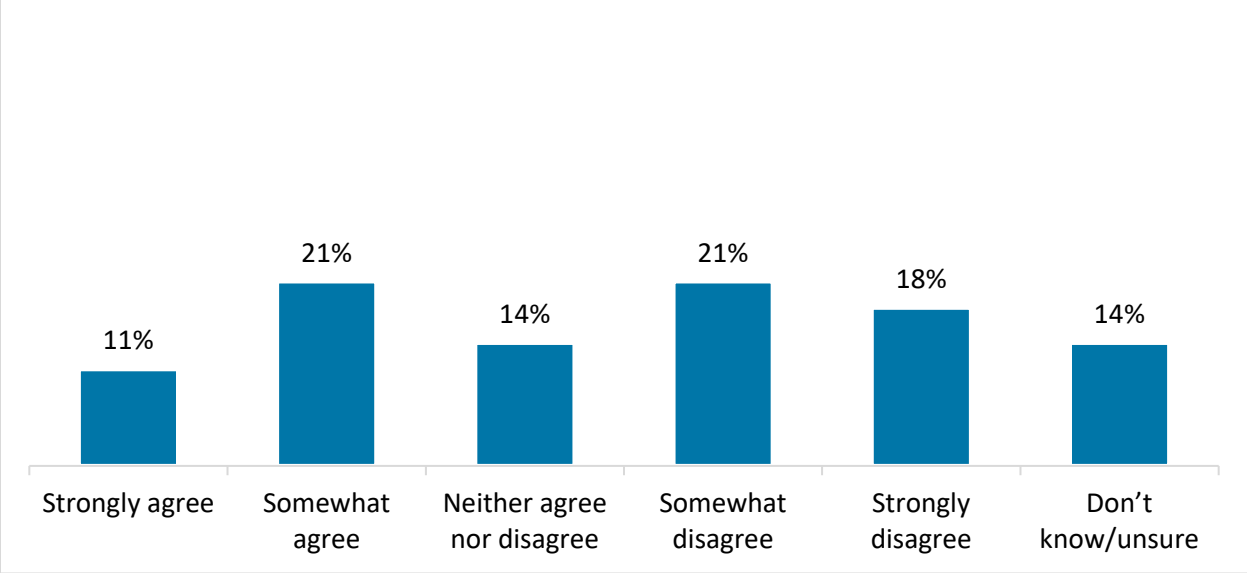
Respondents were slightly more likely to feel that health care options in their community met their needs, with 50% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they did and 39% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they did not (Figure 32). They were less likely to feel they had sufficient access to mental health care services, with only 33% agreeing or strongly agreeing they did and 39% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (Figure 33).

Figure 32: Health Care Options in Respondents' Rural Communities Meet Their Needs



Note: n = 157.

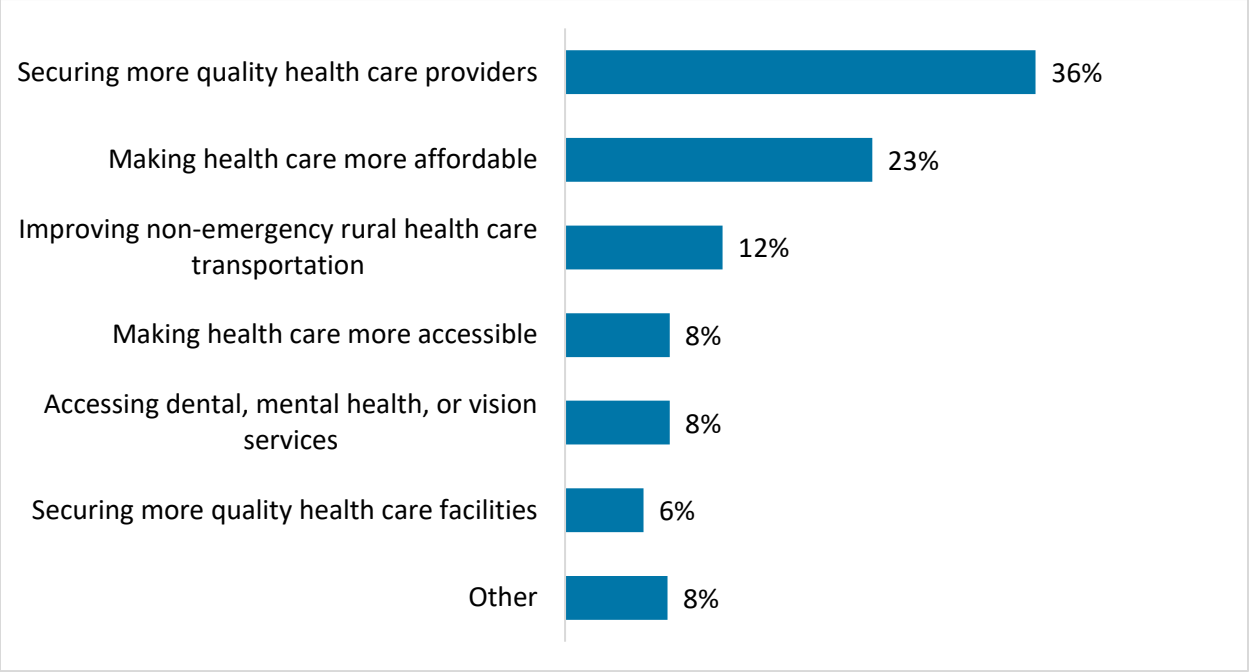
Figure 33: Sufficient Access to Mental Health Services in Respondents' Rural Communities



Note: n = 155.

One-third (36%) of respondents said the most important issue concerning health care in rural communities in which their live and/or work was securing more quality health care providers (Figure 34). The second most commonly selected issue was making health care more affordable, which was chosen by 23% of respondents, followed by improving non-emergency rural health care transportation (12%). Respondents who selected *other* provided write-in options, and the only one offered by more than one respondent was all of the above.

Figure 34: Most Important Health Care Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities



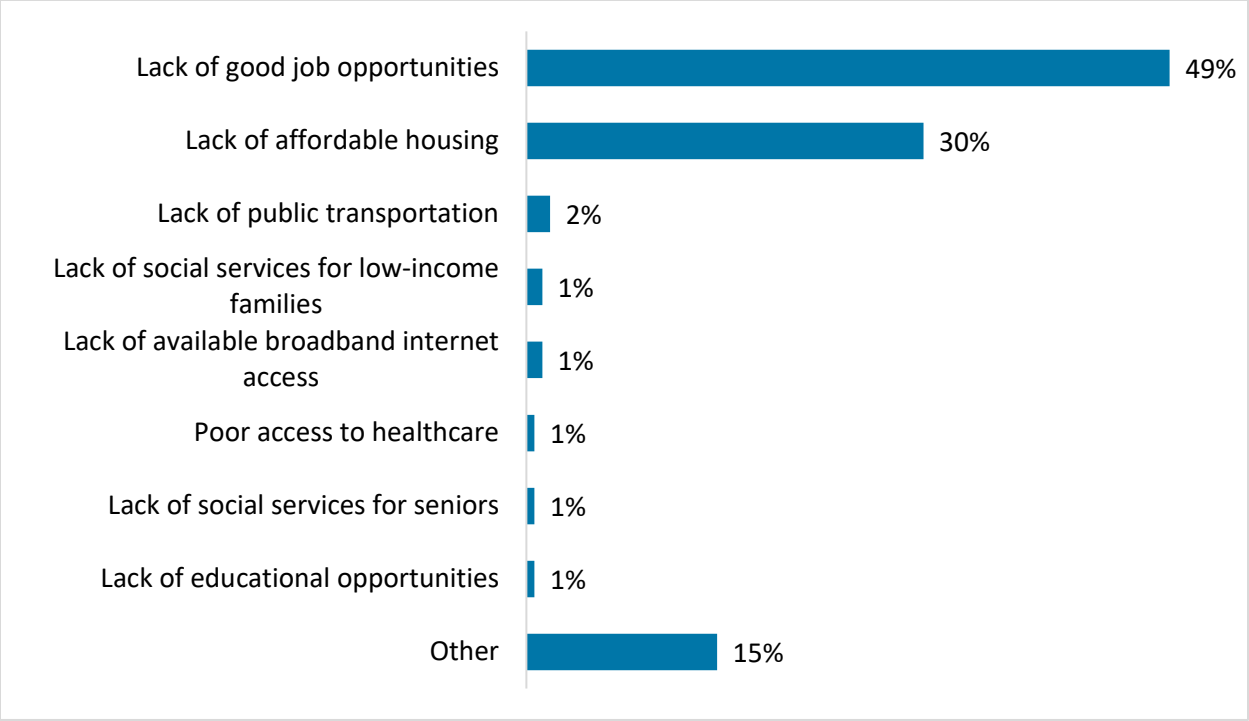
Note: n = 162.

LEAVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

When asked what the number one reason why people are leaving their rural communities, almost half (49%) of survey respondents said it was because of the lack of good job opportunities (Figure 35). The other major reason selected was a lack of affordable housing, which was selected by 30% of respondents.

Respondents who selected *other* primarily said that people were moving out because of taxes or fees, which was mentioned by 38% of the respondents who selected *other*. Cost of living was also mentioned by multiple respondents, as were concerns about housing, changes in the character of rural communities, and jobs. There were also multiple respondents who said that all of the listed concerns were the primary reasons, while multiple respondents also pushed back against the idea that people are leaving their community.

Figure 35: Primary Reason People Are Moving Out of the Rural Community

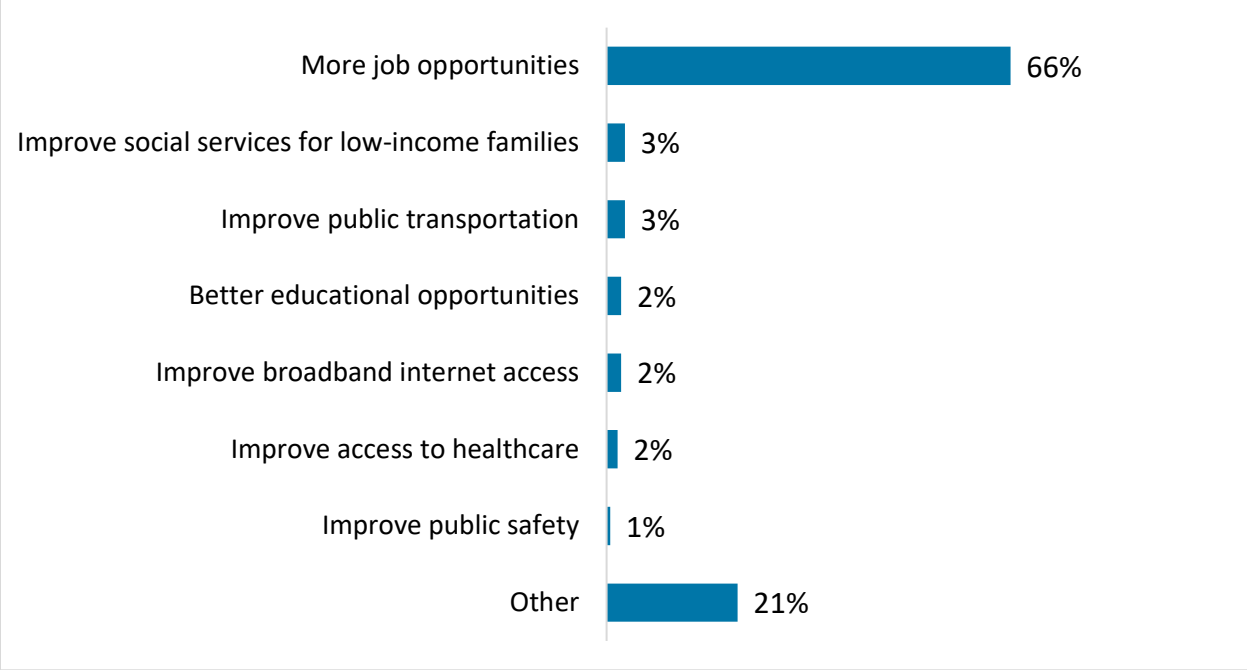


Note: n = 161.

Survey respondents were asked what could be done to keep younger people in their rural communities. The overwhelming majority, which was selected by 66% of respondents, said more job opportunities. No other option besides *other* was selected by more than 3% of respondents.

Those who selected *other* primarily referenced housing, which was suggested by 59% of those who selected *other*. This included affordable housing, entry level housing, housing in walkable communities, housing for varying income levels, and helping people become homeowners. Other suggestions made by multiple respondents included more job opportunities, more events or social activities, development that is relevant to the community, and making farming affordable.

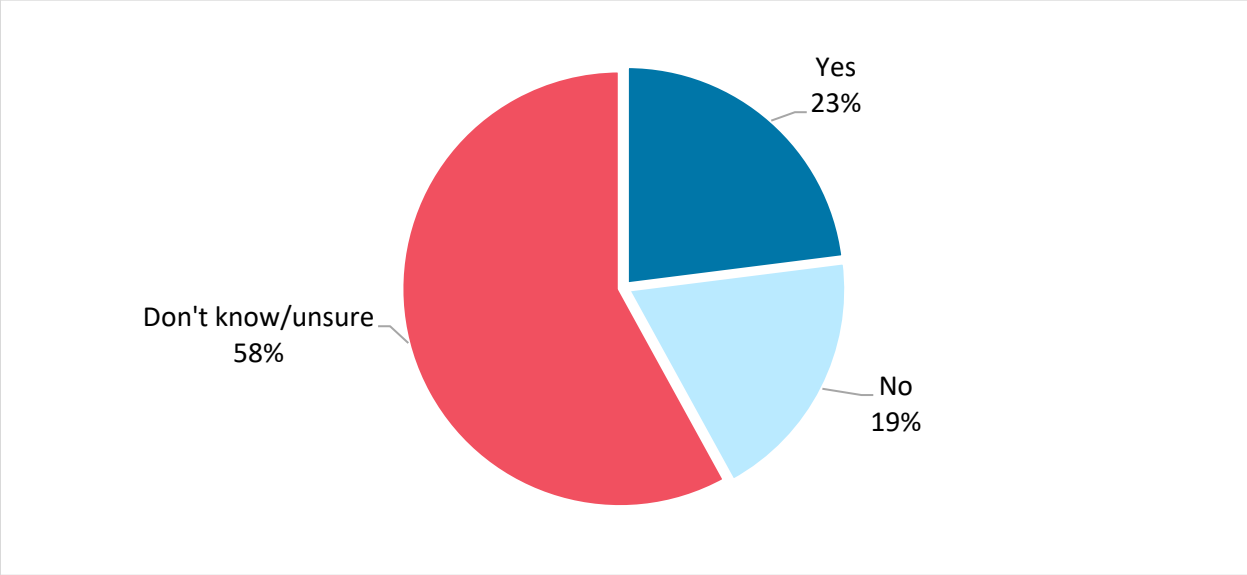
Figure 36: What Can Keep Younger People in Rural Community



Note: n = 164.

Survey respondents with children were asked if they thought their children would continue to live in a rural area in Maryland. Over half (58%) of respondents did not know or were unsure (Figure 37). The remaining respondents were split, with 23% saying that their children would stay in rural Maryland areas, while 19% said they would leave.

Figure 37: Will Respondents' Children Continue to Live in a Rural Maryland Area?



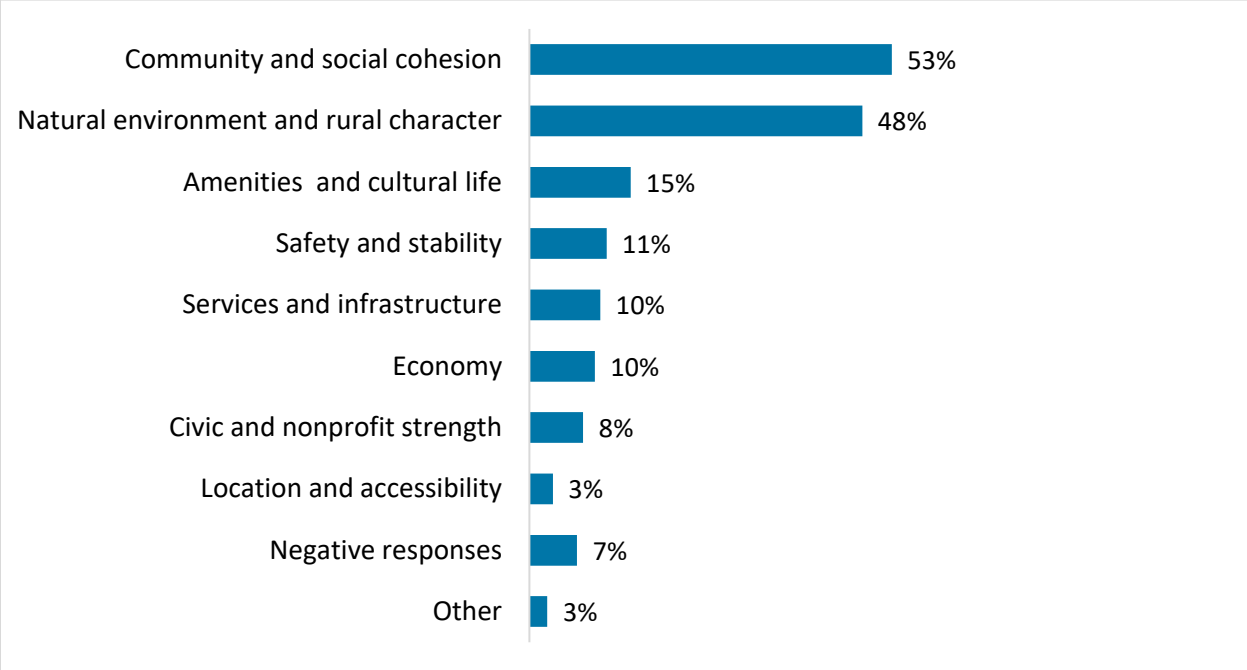
Note: n = 43.

WHAT MAKES THEIR RURAL COMMUNITIES GREAT

One of the open-ended questions on the survey asked, "What makes your rural community great?" There were 116 responses, and they are shown in Figure 38 grouped by themes. Over half (53%) of the responses related to topics such as community and social cohesion, which focused on the strong relationships and shared identity found in these communities. Representative comments included:

- "Strong culture and connection to the place and a resilient community when we are brought together."
- "The people and organizations that come together and help those in need."

Figure 38: Summary of What Makes Respondents' Rural Communities Great



Notes: n = 116. Responses could be included in more than one category.

The second most common theme, which was expressed in almost half (48%) of the comments, related to the natural environment and rural character found in rural areas. One such comment was "Natural beauty, public safety, low density/lack of traffic, thriving arts community, lots of volunteer opportunities, cultural events." Approximately 15% of comments referenced amenities and cultural life in rural communities, which concerned the things to do and the cultural richness there, and three topics each had 10%-11% of comments: safety and stability, essential services, and infrastructure, and the economy (including the strong business community, tourism, or affordability). Approximately 7% of comments were negative remarks about the community such

as “...In recent years our small town feel is disappearing with investors/developers coming from cities are coming in and developing pushing our citizens out with overpriced housing. Homes are being built on top of one another, it's turning into a small suburb/city ...”

CONCLUSION

Rural residents in Maryland are generally happy in their communities. They appreciate the sense of community and social cohesion and the natural environment available there. However, their primary concerns are the lack of job opportunities in the community and feeling that their rural economy is not thriving. These also affect related issues— insufficient housing availability, concerns about the quality of the infrastructure, insufficient spaces for social engagement for younger and older residents, and health care that is only *good* or *fair*. Survey respondents overwhelmingly think lack of job opportunities are why people are leaving rural areas, and those with children do not know if those children will stay in rural Maryland.

APPENDIX A: RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL SURVEY

The Schaefer Center for Public Policy at The University of Baltimore is conducting this survey of residents in rural areas of Maryland on behalf of the Rural Maryland Council (RMC). The RMC is an independent agency within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. RMC serves residents in 18 counties classified as "rural" by the Annotated Code of Maryland as well as residents of the remaining jurisdictions' semi-rural areas. RMC works with residents, local organizations, government at all levels, and others to serve the needs of Maryland's rural communities.

Your input is valuable and will help guide the RMC's legislative and funding priorities for two grant programs – the Maryland Agriculture Education & Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) and the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF).

Participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. There are no risks to participating. You may skip any question you prefer not to answer and may stop the survey at any time without penalty. The survey should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

No personally identifying information, including your name, will be collected. Your responses will not be linked to you in any way in the survey data or in any reports and the data may be used by future researchers.

If you have any questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Cantave, Survey Research Manager at the Schaefer Center, at mcantave@ubalt.edu or 410-837-6099.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject participating in this survey, please contact the University of Baltimore Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@ubalt.edu or 410-837-4057.

We appreciate your help in this important effort.

SUMMARY

- **Your participation is voluntary.**
- **You can refuse to participate without penalty.**
- **You can skip questions or stop the survey at any time without penalty.**

Q1. Please select below if you agree to participate in this survey.

- ○ Yes, I am 18 or older and I agree and want to take the survey.
- ○ No, I do not wish to participate in this survey.

Q2. Do you live or work in a rural community in Maryland?

- ○ I live in a rural community
- ○ I work in a rural community (Go to Q4)
- ○ I live and work in a rural community
- ○ I neither live nor work in a rural community (Go to Q5)

Q3. What is your home zip code? _____

Q4. What is your work zip code? _____

Q5. What is the most important issue concerning infrastructure for the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Encouraging providers to install last mile broadband.
- ○ Engaging in regional cooperation in planning for new growth and development in rural areas.
- ○ Securing more financial resources for roads, water and wastewater facilities, and public transit.
- ○ Making rural communities better prepared to respond to crises or emergencies.
- ○ Planning for residential growth that includes affordable housing but discourages sprawl.
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q6. How would you rate the current condition of the infrastructure in the rural community where you live/work? This includes roads, bridges, and utilities.

- ○ Excellent
- ○ Very Good
- ○ Good
- ○ Fair
- ○ Poor
- ○ Don't know/unsure

Q7. Do you feel the rural community where you live/work has adequate access to high-speed internet?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know/unsure

Q8. How would you rate the quality of cell phone reception in the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Excellent
- ○ Very Good
- ○ Good
- ○ Fair
- ○ Poor
- ○ Don't know/unsure

Q9. What is the most important issue concerning economic and community development for the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Maintaining existing businesses
- ○ Recruiting new employers with well-paying jobs
- ○ Providing services to support entrepreneurial activity in rural areas
- ○ Retaining residents
- ○ Attracting new residents
- ○ Attracting skilled labor
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q10. Do you feel the economy in the rural community where you live/work is thriving?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know/unsure

Q11. What improvements would most benefit your local economy?

- ○ Better infrastructure
- ○ More job opportunities
- ○ Increased access to healthcare
- ○ More options for K-12 education
- ○ Better access to post-secondary education including training
- ○ Tourism development
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q12. What is the most important issue concerning community development for the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Responding to poverty and providing assistance to low-income residents and families
- ○ Addressing issues related to the aging rural population
- ○ Providing engagement opportunities for younger residents, including those under 18 years old
- ○ Providing more transportation options within our community and to other parts of Maryland
- ○ Providing a good educational system beyond K-12
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q13. Do you feel that there are sufficient community centers or spaces for social engagement in the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know/unsure

Q14. How much do you agree or disagree that there is enough housing available in your community to meet the needs of all residents?

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Don't know/unsure

Q15. What is the most important issue that needs to be addressed in the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Road quality
- ○ Public transportation
- ○ Broadband internet access
- ○ Other infrastructure improvements (please specify) _____
- ○ Access to healthcare
- ○ Job opportunities
- ○ Educational opportunities
- ○ Public safety
- ○ Social services for seniors
- ○ Social services for low-income families
- ○ Other (Please specify) _____

Q16. What do you think is the number one reason people in the rural community where you live/work are moving out of the area?

- ○ Poor roads
- ○ Lack of public transportation
- ○ Lack of available broadband internet access
- ○ Poor access to healthcare
- ○ Lack of affordable housing
- ○ Lack of good job opportunities
- ○ Lack of educational opportunities
- ○ Poor public safety
- ○ Lack of social services for seniors
- ○ Lack of social services for low-income families
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q17. What do you think can be done to keep younger people in the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Improve roads
- ○ Improve public transportation
- ○ Improve broadband internet access
- ○ Improve access to healthcare
- ○ More job opportunities
- ○ Better educational opportunities
- ○ Improve public safety
- ○ Improve social services for low-income families
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q18. What is the most important issue concerning agriculture for the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Preserving and conserving farm and forest land.
- ○ Keeping and making farming profitable.
- ○ Accessing locally grown products.
- ○ More opportunities for accessing other markets or sales outside of the local community.
- ○ Having enough people who want to be farmers in the future.
- ○ Having enough workers to support farms and agricultural operations.
- ○ More opportunities for agricultural education.
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q19. What is the most important issue concerning health care for the rural community where you live/work?

- ○ Securing more quality health care providers.
- ○ Securing more quality health care facilities.
- ○ Making health care more accessible.
- ○ Making health care more affordable.
- ○ Accessing dental, mental health, or vision services.
- ○ Improving non-emergency rural health care transportation.
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q20. How would you rate the availability of healthcare services in the rural community where you live/work such as doctors, hospitals, clinics, access to medications)?

- ○ Excellent
- ○ Very Good
- ○ Good
- ○ Fair
- ○ Poor
- ○ Don't know/unsure

Q21. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

(This cell intentionally left blank)	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/ unsure
The healthcare options in the rural community where you live/work meet my needs.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have sufficient access to mental health services in the rural community (where you live/work.	○	○	○	○	○	○
There are enough community programs and services to support senior citizens in the rural community where you live/work.	○	○	○	○	○	○
There are enough community programs and services to support younger residents in the rural community where you live/work.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q22. Does your job offer the ability to telework?

- ○ Yes and I telework as part of my job. *(Go to Q24)*
- ○ Yes but I do not telework as part of my job
- ○ No *(Go to Q24)*
- ○ Don't know *(Go to Q24)*

Q23. Why do you not telework? (Select all that apply)

- □ The internet availability where I live does not support telework.
- □ I do not want to telework.
- □ I do not have a place in my home where I can telework.
- □ Other (please specify) _____

Q24. What makes your rural community great? Please limit your response to less than 500 characters.

_____

Q25. Are there any other issues that you think are important concerns for people living in rural areas? Please limit your response to less than 500 characters.

_____

DEMOGRAPHICS

Q26. What is your gender?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Other (please specify) _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q27. What is your age?

- ○ Under 18
- ○ 18-24
- ○ 25-34
- ○ 35-44
- ○ 45-54
- ○ 55-64
- ○ 65 or older
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q28. How long have you lived in a rural community in Maryland?

- ○ Less than 1 year
- ○ 1-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ 11-15 years
- ○ 15-20 years
- ○ 21-25 years
- ○ Over 25 years
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q29. What is your current employment status?

- ○ Employed full-time
- ○ Employed part-time
- ○ Self-employed
- ○ Unemployed
- ○ Retired
- ○ Student
- ○ Prefer not to answer
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Q30. What is your highest level of education?

- ○ Less than high school diploma
- ○ High school diploma or GED
- ○ Some college, no degree
- ○ Trade School degree
- ○ Associate degree
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Post-graduate or professional degree
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q31. Are you of Hispanic or Latino Origin?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q32. What is your Race? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q33. What is your annual household income?

- ○ Less than $15,000
- ○ $15,000 – $24,999
- ○ $25,000 – $49,999
- ○ $50,000 – $74,999
- ○ $75,000 – $99,999
- ○ $100,000 – $149,999
- ○ $150,000 or more
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q34. How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

- ○ Number of people ____ *(If response =1 go to Q37)*
- ○ Prefer not to answer *(Go to Q37)*

Q35. Do any children live in your household?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No *(Go to Q37)*
- ○ Prefer not to answer *(Go to Q37)*

Q36. Do you think that your child(ren) will continue to live in a rural area in Maryland?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know/unsure
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q37. Would you like to get more information about the Rural Maryland Council? If yes, you will be redirected to a new page to give us your contact information. Your information will not be associated with your responses to the survey.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Your input is crucial to shaping the future of rural Maryland communities.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY DISTRIBUTIONS

Figure 39: RMC Website Link for Survey

Other Information

- Share your perspective and help shape the future of rural Maryland. Take the survey today.
- Are you interested in having the Council sponsor your initiative? Click here to submit your request!
- "Unlock a World of Learning" with the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD)
- Learn more about the Rural Maryland Foundation
- Get information about Partners for Rural America

Figure 40: RMC Email Distribution of Survey

Your Voice Matters: Help Shape Rural Maryland's Future

The Rural Maryland Council invites you to participate in a brief, 10-minute survey to share your experiences, concerns, and challenges living or working in rural Maryland.

Your feedback is essential — it will directly inform the Council's legislative and funding priorities for our two grant programs: the Maryland Agriculture Education & Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) and the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF).

Rural Maryland needs your input.
Your community needs your voice.
Share your perspective and help shape the future of rural Maryland.

Be part of the solution — **complete the survey today** and help us improve the quality of life for everyone in rural Maryland!

Click the link below or scan the QR code below to get started. It only takes 10 minutes, and your voice can make a lasting impact.

Help Shape Rural Maryland >>>

To learn more about RMC, visit rural.maryland.gov or contact us directly at 410-841-5772 or rmc.mda@maryland.gov.

UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE Schaefer Center for Public Policy

RMC Rural Maryland Council

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Figure 41: RMC Event Handout

Help Shape the future of Rural Maryland

The Rural Maryland Council is asking residents, business owners, and community leaders to share their experiences in a quick 10-minute survey. Your input will guide legislative advocacy, strengthen program priorities, and inform future MAERDAF and RMPIF grant funding decisions.

Why Your Voice Matters

- Rural communities face unique challenges
- Your lived experience is vital data
- RMC uses your input to create change

What Your Feedback Supports

- Local economic development
- Rural health and wellness
- Agriculture and natural resources
- Broadband & infrastructure investments
- Small business and workforce growth

Make an Impact in Minutes
Scan the QR code to take the survey.
Your response helps RMC champion policies and programs that truly reflect rural Maryland's needs.

Your voice. Your community. Your future.

APPENDIX C: DATA TABLES FOR FIGURES

Table 2: Data for Figure 1: Survey Respondents' Residence and Workplace in Rural Communities

Residence and/or Workplace	Percentage of Respondents
Live and work in a rural community	68%
Only live in a rural community	23%
Only work in a rural community	7%
Neither live nor work in a rural community	2%

Note: n = 182.

Table 3: Data for Figure 2: Counties Where Respondents Live

County	Number of Respondents
Allegany	28
Anne Arundel	1
Baltimore	2
Baltimore City	0
Calvert	4
Caroline	13
Carroll	7
Cecil	1
Charles	2
Dorchester	4
Frederick	11
Garrett	17
Harford	5
Howard	5
Kent	18
Montgomery	2
Prince George's	2
Queen Anne's	4
Somerset	5
St. Mary's	6
Talbot	14
Washington	2
Wicomico	4
Worcester	4

Notes: n = 161. Three respondents provided zip codes outside Maryland, which are not included in the count or shown in the map. There were no respondents from Baltimore City.

Table 4: Data for Figure 3: Counties Where Respondents Work

County	Number of Respondents
Allegany	18
Anne Arundel	1
Baltimore	2
Baltimore City	0
Calvert	2
Caroline	11
Carroll	5
Cecil	0
Charles	4
Dorchester	0
Frederick	10
Garrett	14
Harford	4
Howard	4
Kent	14
Montgomery	1
Prince George's	5
Queen Anne's	4
Somerset	3
Saint Mary's	3
Talbot	16
Washington	2
Wicomico	4
Worcester	3

Notes: n = 130. Two respondents provided zip codes outside Maryland, which are not included in the count or shown in the map. There were no respondents from Baltimore City.

Table 5: Data for Figure 4: Survey Respondents' Gender

Gender	Percentage of Respondents
Male	34%
Female	63%
Prefer not to say	3%

Note: n = 152.

Table 6: Data for Figure 5: Survey Respondents' Race

Race	Percentage of Respondents
White	83%
Black or African-American	8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3%
Asian	1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
Prefer not to say	7%
Other	1%

Notes: n = 152. Respondents could select more than one race.

Table 7: Data for Figure 6: Survey Respondents' Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percentage of Respondents
Hispanic or Latino origin	1%
Not of Hispanic or Latino origin	95%
Prefer not to say	5%

Note: n = 152.

Table 8: Data for Figure 7: Survey Respondents' Living Tenure in Rural Maryland

Tenure	Percentage of Respondents
Less than 1 year	1%
1-5 years	3%
6-10 years	9%
11-15 years	7%
15-20 years	9%
21-25 years	7%
Over 25 years	62%
Prefer not to answer	3%

Notes: n = 151. Total does not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 9: Data for Figure 8: Survey Respondents' Age

Age	Percentage of Respondents
18-24	2%
25-34	3%
35-44	15%
45-54	17%
55-64	34%
65 or older	25%
Prefer not to answer	3%

Note: n = 152.

Table 10: Data for Figure 9: Survey Respondents' Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Percentage of Respondents
High school diploma or GED	6%
Some college, no degree	10%
Trade school degree	2%
Associate degree	6%
Bachelor's degree	29%
Post-graduate or professional degree	42%
Prefer not to say	5%

Note: n = 150.

Table 11: Data for Figure 10: Survey Respondents' Employment Status

Employment Status	Percentage of Respondents
Employed full-time	67%
Employed part-time	6%
Self-employed	10%
Retired	11%
Student	1%
Unemployed	1%
Prefer not to answer	2%
Other	2%

Note: n = 152.

Table 12: Data for Figure 11: Survey Respondents' Household Income Level

Household Income Level	Percentage of Respondents
$15,000 – $24,999	2%
$25,000 – $49,999	4%
$50,000 – $74,999	11%
$75,000 – $99,999	23%
$100,000 – $149,999	24%
$150,000 or more	24%
Prefer not to answer	13%

Note: n = 150.

Table 13: Data for Figure 12: Survey Respondents' Household Size

Number of Individuals in Household	Percentage of Respondents
1 person	17%
2 people	47%
3 people	16%
4 people	14%
5 or more people	6%

Note: n = 158.

Table 14: Data for Figure 13: Survey Respondents' Presence of Children

Presence of Children	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	35%
No	62%
Prefer not to say	3%

Note: n = 127.

Table 15: Data for Figure 14: Most Important Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities

Issue	Percentage of Respondents
Job opportunities	28%
Public transportation	13%
Access to healthcare	9%
Social services for seniors	6%
Broadband internet access	6%
Social services for low-income families	5%
Road quality	5%
Public safety	1%
Educational opportunities	1%
Other infrastructure improvements	11%
Other	13%

Note: n = 164.

Table 16: Data for Figure 15: Other Major Concerns for People Living in Rural Areas

Concern	Percentage of Respondents
Infrastructure and transportation	35%
Health care and human services	27%
Economic development and job opportunities	24%
Housing and basic living affordability	22%
Governance and political representation	18%
Environmental and land use concerns	17%
Education and youth opportunities	8%
Other	14%

Notes: n = 104. Responses could include more than one category.

Table 17: Data for Figure 16: Most Important Agricultural Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities

Issue	Percentage of Respondents
Keeping and making farming profitable	42%
Preserving and conserving farm and forest land	21%
Having enough people who want to be farmers in the future	15%
Having enough workers to support farms and agricultural operations	6%
More opportunities for accessing other markets or sales outside of the local community	5%
Accessing locally grown products	3%
More opportunities for agricultural education	2%
Other	8%

Note: n = 159.

Table 18: Data for Figure 17: Are Respondents' Local Rural Economies Thriving?

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	26%
No	56%
Don't know/unsure	18%

Note: n = 175.

Table 19: Data for Figure 18: Most Important Economic Development Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities

Issue	Percentage of Respondents
Recruiting new employers with well-paying jobs	41%
Providing services to support entrepreneurial activity in rural areas	14%
Maintaining existing businesses	12%
Retaining residents	7%
Attracting skilled labor	6%
Attracting new residents	5%
Other	15%

Note: n = 174.

Table 20: Data for Figure 19: Improvements That Would Most Benefit Respondents' Communities

Improvement	Percentage of Respondents
More job opportunities	59%
Better infrastructure	32%
Increased access to health care	30%
Better access to post-secondary education including training	18%
Tourism development	17%
More options for K-12 education	9%
Other	25%

Notes: n = 169. Respondents could select more than one option.

Table 21: Data for Figure 20: Is There Enough Housing Available in Respondents' Communities to Meet Needs?

Availability of Housing	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	7%
Somewhat agree	12%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%
Somewhat disagree	28%
Strongly disagree	41%

Note: n = 169.

Table 22: Data for Figure 21: Rate Quality of Infrastructure in Your Rural Community

Quality of Infrastructure	Percentage of Respondents
Excellent	3%
Very Good	18%
Good	38%
Fair	28%
Poor	11%
Don't know/unsure	2%

Note: n = 176.

Table 23: Data for Figure 22: Most Important Issue Concerning Infrastructure in Respondents' Rural Communities

Issue	Percentage of Respondents
Planning for residential growth that includes affordable housing but discourages sprawl	31%
Securing more financial resources for roads, water and wastewater facilities, and public transit	31%
Engaging in regional cooperation in planning for new growth and development in rural areas	13%
Making rural communities better prepared to respond to crises or emergencies	7%
Encouraging providers to install last mile broadband	6%
Other	13%

Note: n = 176.

Table 24: Data for Figure 23: Rate Availability of Public Transportation in Your Rural Community

Availability of Public Transportation	Percentage of Respondents
Excellent	1%
Very Good	2%
Good	7%
Fair	21%
Poor	63%

Note: n = 175.

Table 25: Data for Figure 24: Respondent's Community Has Adequate High-Speed Internet Access

Has Adequate High-Speed Internet Access	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	47%
No	43%
Don't know/unsure	10%

Notes: n = 175.

Table 26: Figure 25: Telework Availability at Job

Telework Availability	Percentage of Respondents
Yes, and I telework	48%
Yes, but I do not telework	15%
No	34%
Don't know	3%

Note: n = 150.

Table 27: Figure 26: Why Respondent Does Not Telework

Reason	Percentage of Respondents
Does not want to telework	61%
Internet availability does not support telework	4%
Other	35%

Note: n = 23.

Table 28: Data for Figure 27: Most Important Community Development Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities

Issue	Percentage of Respondents
Responding to poverty and providing assistance to low-income residents and families	24%
Addressing issues related to the aging rural population	23%
Providing engagement opportunities for younger residents, including those under 18 years old	20%
Providing more transportation options within our community and to other parts of Maryland	19%
Providing a good educational system beyond K-12	2%
Other	11%

Note: n = 166.

Table 29: Data for Figure 28: Sufficient Community Centers or Spaces for Social Engagement in Respondents' Rural Communities

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	35%
No	56%
Don't know/unsure	9%

Note: n = 168.

Table 30: Data for Figure 29: Are There Enough Community Programs and Services for Younger Residents in Respondents' Rural Communities?

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	4%
Somewhat agree	12%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Somewhat disagree	43%
Strongly disagree	19%
Don't know/unsure	8%

Note: n = 155.

Table 31: Data for Figure 30: Are There Enough Community Programs and Services for Senior Citizens in Respondents' Rural Communities?

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	5%
Somewhat agree	26%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%
Somewhat disagree	35%
Strongly disagree	14%
Don't know/unsure	8%

Note: n = 155.

Table 32: Data for Figure 31: Availability of Health Care Services in Respondents' Rural Communities

Availability of Health Care Services	Percentage of Respondents
Excellent	2%
Very Good	11%
Good	30%
Fair	40%
Poor	13%
Don't know/unsure	3%

Note: n = 161.

Table 33: Data for Figure 32: Health Care Options in Respondents' Rural Communities Meet Their Needs

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	12%
Somewhat agree	38%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%
Somewhat disagree	28%
Strongly disagree	11%
Don't know/unsure	2%

Note: n = 157.

Table 34: Data for Figure 33: Sufficient Access to Mental Health Services in Respondents' Rural Communities

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	11%
Somewhat agree	21%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Somewhat disagree	21%
Strongly disagree	18%
Don't know/unsure	14%

Note: n = 155.

Table 35: Data for Figure 34: Most Important Health Care Issue in Respondents' Rural Communities

Issue	Percentage of Respondents
Securing more quality health care providers	36%
Making health care more affordable	23%
Improving non-emergency rural health care transportation	12%
Making health care more accessible	8%
Accessing dental, mental health, or vision services	8%
Securing more quality health care facilities	6%
Other	8%

Note: n = 162.

Table 36: Data for Figure 35: Primary Reason People Are Moving Out of the Rural Community

Reason	Percentage of Respondents
Lack of good job opportunities	49%
Lack of affordable housing	30%
Lack of public transportation	2%
Lack of social services for low-income families	1%
Lack of available broadband internet access	1%
Poor access to healthcare	1%
Lack of social services for seniors	1%
Lack of educational opportunities	1%
Other	15%

Note: n = 161.

Table 37: Data for Figure 36: What Can Keep Younger People in Rural Community

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
More job opportunities	66%
Improve social services for low-income families	3%
Improve public transportation	3%
Better educational opportunities	2%
Improve broadband internet access	2%
Improve access to healthcare	2%
Improve public safety	1%
Other	21%

Note: n = 164.

Table 38: Data for Figure 37: Will Respondents' Children Continue to Live in a Rural Maryland Area?

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	23%
No	19%
Don't know/unsure	58%

Note: n = 43.

Table 39: Data for Figure 38: Summary of What Makes Respondents' Rural Communities Great

Response	Percentage of Respondents
Community and social cohesion	53%
Natural environment and rural character	48%
Amenities and cultural life	15%
Safety and stability	11%
Services and infrastructure	10%
Economy	10%
Civic and nonprofit strength	8%
Location and accessibility	3%
Negative responses	7%
Other	3%

Notes: n = 116. Responses could be included in more than one category.