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VOICES *of* EXPERIENCE

**What works, what frustrates, and what
to do to strengthen the Massachusetts
Rental Voucher Program**

*Prepared by: The Boston Foundation, MassINC Polling Group, United
Way, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, Metro Housing
Boston, The Regional Housing Network, BAMSI, and La Colaborativa*



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to do to strengthen the Massachusetts
Rental Voucher Program**

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ABOUT THE MASSINC POLLING GROUP

The MassINC Polling Group (MPG) is a nonpartisan public opinion research firm serving public, private, and social-sector clients. MPG elevates the public's voice with cutting-edge methods and rigorous analysis. Based in Boston, MPG serves a nationwide client base.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Healey-Driscoll administration's housing plan, A Home for Everyone, calls for expanded funding for rental vouchers. As the plan is considered in the legislature, it is important to take stock of the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP). A truly comprehensive analysis of the program must bring in the voices of program participants. This report undertook to add those insights to the quantitative understanding of MRVP's impact. The research design was broad in scope—comprising surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews—providing an unprecedented, holistic look at MRVP and how it is experienced.

Fundamentally, this research confirms earlier findings that vouchers provide crucial stability for renter households and for landlords, and that expanding the program would also extend its benefits to additional participants. At the same time, this report's findings highlight areas where the experience of obtaining and using vouchers could be greatly improved. In response to these findings, project stakeholders have identified recommendations for expanding not just the number of vouchers, but the capacity of the program to deliver voucher benefits, falling primarily in the areas of communication with tenants and landlords and helping tenants increase their economic mobility.



FINDINGS

1

MRVP vouchers work well for tenants.

Individuals who receive MRVP vouchers and have found housing generally report that it is safe and stable, and that they benefit tremendously from it. These benefits are not limited to the immediate benefits of a place to live but include secondary effects such as better educational access and outcomes, better ability to maintain employment, better ability to save and improve credit, and being more active in the community.

2

Landlords see a range of benefits from vouchers.

Landlords describe benefits from the program as well, including guaranteed payment of a portion of rent, making a positive contribution to their community, and having a pool of prospective tenants. Most landlords who rent to voucher tenants do not, by and large, express a strong preference between voucher and non-voucher tenants.

3

Navigating the system is challenging for both tenants and landlords.

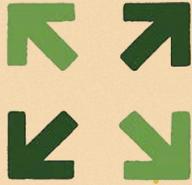
Many challenges in using vouchers or renting to voucher holders stem from administrative complexity and communication gaps, including long wait times, unclear requirements, or being unable to get questions answered.

4

Tenants still have difficulty making ends meet and achieving economic mobility.

Despite the enormous benefits of holding a voucher, tenants are still in economically precarious situations and have little opportunity to achieve economic mobility. These difficulties include both being unable to pay essential bills and being unable to build wealth as income increases. The benefits are also delayed by the length of the process. It took most respondents many months to obtain a voucher, on top of the challenge of finding an apartment.

RECOMMENDATIONS



The Commonwealth should **codify** and **expand** support for state vouchers.

Operational improvements should focus on better **accountability** to applicants, tenants, and landlords, with a particular focus on communication.



The Commonwealth should invest in broad **outreach** and **education** for applicants, tenants, and landlords.

The Commonwealth should create pathways to **economic mobility** for tenants by addressing cliff effects and gaps in assistance coverage and promoting opportunities for asset-building.



ABOUT THE MASSACHUSETTS RENTAL VOUCHER PROGRAM

The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) is the oldest rental voucher program in the United States, providing rental assistance to more than 10,000 low-income Massachusetts households.

The basic principle of a voucher is that it covers the difference between a fixed percentage of the tenant's income and the rent that a landlord charges. With MRVP, the tenant pays 30 percent of their income, and the MRVP voucher covers the remainder (the tenant rent share was reduced from 40 to 30 percent in 2023). Meanwhile, the landlord receives full rent payments, split between a contribution from the tenant and a contribution from the state. These are similar in principle to federal Housing Choice Vouchers, commonly known as Section 8.

MRVP vouchers come in two forms: mobile vouchers, which can be used by the voucher holder anywhere in Massachusetts, and project-based vouchers, which are attached to specific properties. About half are administered through nine Regional Administering Agencies (RAAs), most of which are nonprofit community-based organizations (CBOs), and half through approximately 100 Local Housing Authorities (LHAs). In this report, "housing agency" is used to refer to both LHAs and RAAs.

Households who make less than 80 percent of the Area Median Income where they live are eligible to apply for MRVP vouchers. Prospective voucher recipients can apply online, but they may also receive assistance with their application from housing agencies or CBOs. As of 2023, applications come into the program through the Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Programs (CHAMP). Prior to the move to CHAMP, many mobile vouchers were issued via direct referral to specific populations, including homeless individuals and families. The combined waitlist for mobile MRVP vouchers is approximately 168,000 people as of February 2025.

INTRODUCTION

Housing vouchers are an important tool to help residents afford safe, stable housing. They offer stability to people in Massachusetts whose incomes have not kept pace with the cost of housing, as well as those with the lowest incomes, who are mainly youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and those with significant caregiving responsibilities.

The Healey-Driscoll administration's housing plan, A Home for Everyone, calls for expanded funding for rental vouchers. As the plan is considered in the legislature, it is important to take stock of the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), which is both crucial to the many families and communities that rely on it and much smaller than the existing need.

A [2022 report](#) from the Center for State Policy Analysis lays out many of the policy benefits and challenges embedded within the state voucher system. Above all, the system protects families from some of the worst effects of poverty, especially homelessness. Families with safe, stable housing enjoy improved outcomes in health, education, and employment. These benefits are also benefits to community institutions such as hospitals and schools, requiring them to dedicate fewer resources to crisis response. At the same time, vouchers can stabilize the housing market in times of market uncertainty and increase residents' geographic mobility. Challenges include landlord discrimination against voucher holders and organizational complexity.

A comprehensive analysis of the program, however, must bring in the voices of program participants. This report complements prior research by centering tenant and landlord experiences in order to identify pain points and areas for improvement.

The Boston Foundation engaged The MassINC Polling Group (MPG) to study this question, in close collaboration with EOHLC, Metro Housing | Boston, CHAPA, United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Regional Housing Network and community-based organizations (CBOs) that regularly interact with residents utilizing MRVP. This collaboration itself is noteworthy for bringing together a wide array of stakeholders to discuss ways to protect, improve, and expand the program and to bolster housing stability across the region.

The research design was broad in scope, providing an unprecedented, holistic look at MRVP and how it is experienced. In December 2024, MPG conducted one survey of tenants, one survey of landlords, 11 individual landlord interviews, and two tenant focus groups. For more information on how these were conducted, and for demographic information about the survey groups, please see the methods section on page 32.



FINDINGS

The surveys, focus groups, and interviews offer deep insight into the experiences of both landlords and tenants. The remainder of the report is organized to follow the key findings, with more detailed exploration and data related to each.

MRVP VOUCHERS WORK WELL FOR TENANTS

Most tenants who receive MRVP vouchers say their living conditions are adequate or better, whether they are asked generally or in terms of specific issues. When giving an overall assessment, 64 percent say their home is in excellent or good condition; 26 percent say it is just OK; and only 9 percent say it is bad. Similarly, 59 percent say they like their home, and only 16 percent do not. Even larger proportions agree that their home is comfortable (82 percent) and that there is enough space for themselves and their family (76 percent). In focus groups, tenants described their current apartments compared to their prior living situations, such as one who moved into a new apartment from a condemned building. Another explained, “I have working heat here. My last apartment, the heat didn’t work good, and we were freezing, but I am grateful we could be warm.”

When asked about how MRVP has impacted their lives, tenants report life-changing impacts, which are also underscored dramatically in focus group discussion. In one tenant’s words, “My kids aren’t living in a shelter apartment. My kids are with me. I’m not in fear that my children are going to be taken by DCF because I can’t provide stable living.” The most significant impacts are on employment and education: 78 percent of tenants find it easier to keep a job and 86 percent of school-age parents find that their child is doing better in school. Smaller majorities agree that it is easier to improve their credit score (62 percent) and to save money for essentials (56 percent), and 62 percent are more active in their communities.

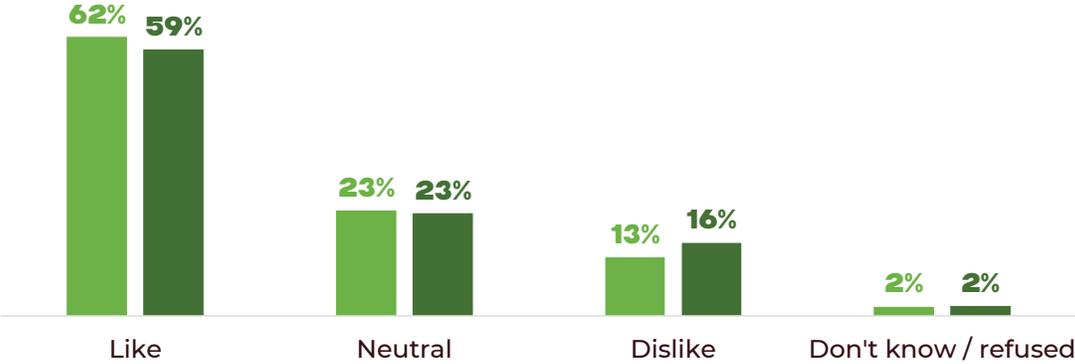
Even when describing challenges or complaints, focus group participants recognized tremendous improvements in their lives as a result of being able to stay off the streets, move out of abusive situations, or find an apartment big enough for their family. One tenant recalled the moment their application was approved: “The letter came in, and I could have jumped for joy.”

Tenants’ feelings about their neighborhoods are similar, with 62 percent saying they like their neighborhood compared to 13 percent who dislike it. More concretely, 87 percent say they are close to necessities such as doctors and groceries; 86 percent live within walking distance of public transit; 82 percent have felt safe in their neighborhood over the past year; and 70 percent do not find it too noisy where they live.

Figure 1: Most say they like their neighborhood / home

% of tenants who say they like / dislike their:

■ NEIGHBORHOOD ■ CURRENT HOME



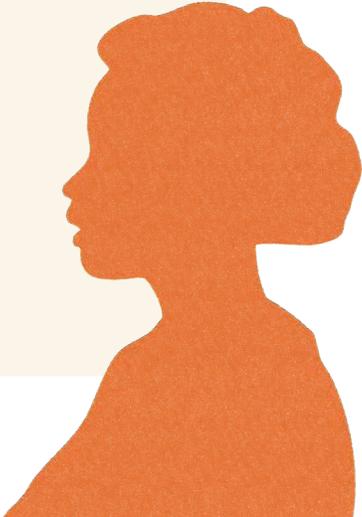
Q: Which of the following best describes your feelings about your current neighborhood?

Q: Which of the following best describes your feelings about your current home?

Source: MassINC Polling Group, 2024.

🗣️ My kids aren't living in a shelter apartment. My kids are with me. I'm not in fear that my children are going to be taken by DCF because I can't provide stable living.

MRVP Tenant



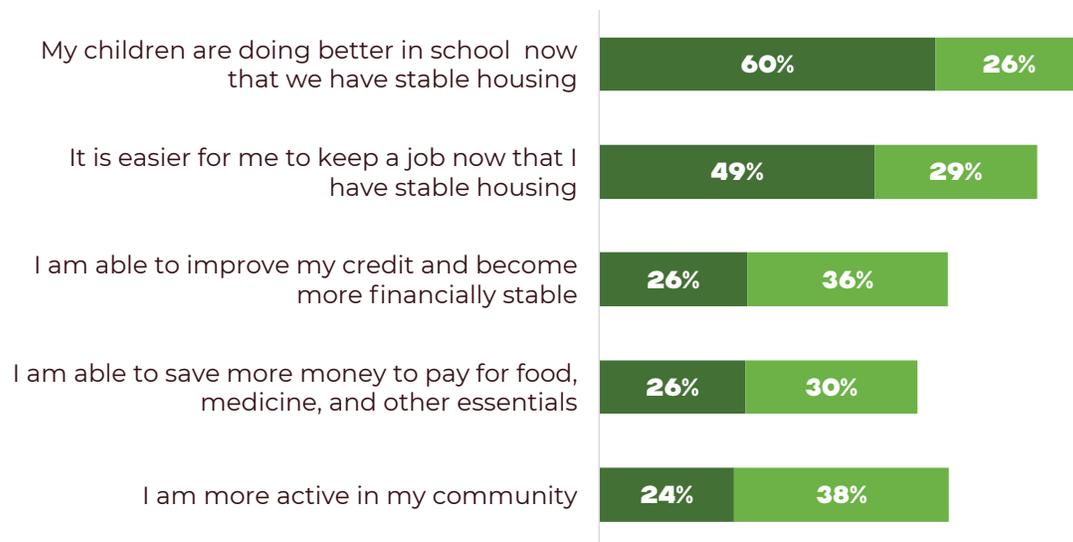
The vast majority of voucher recipients say their apartments are adequate when it comes to specific functions. Very large majorities report that basic utilities work always or most of the time: 95 percent for electricity, 93 percent for water, and 86 percent for heat. While it is very concerning that some tenants rent units without reliable utilities, it is not known how this compares to non-voucher tenants, and it does not seem that substantially large numbers of voucher recipients are living in unsafe housing. Those who have air conditioning, laundry machines, and dishwashers also largely report that those appliances work all or most of the time (84 percent for air conditioning, 75 percent for laundry, 73 percent for dishwashers).

While tenants still face challenges, they deeply appreciate having an apartment for themselves and their family. One tenant, whose apartment was not the unit they were supposed to be in and had not been cleaned before move-in, nonetheless said, “I’m super grateful, right? Despite all the issues.” Another tenant compared their situation to the alternative: “For those of us who experienced homelessness... if I can put a roof over my kid’s head, no matter how much pain it may cause me... I’m gonna say that my life has improved because my children live indoors.”

Figure 2: Majorities note positive impacts from MRVP beyond housing stability

% of tenants who say they that MRVP has impacted them in each way:

■ **STRONGLY AGREE** ■ **SOMEWHAT AGREE**



Q: Thinking about the ways the rental voucher program has impacted you, please rate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. If a statement does not apply to you, please select “not applicable.” *N/A excluded

Source: MassINC Polling Group, 2024.

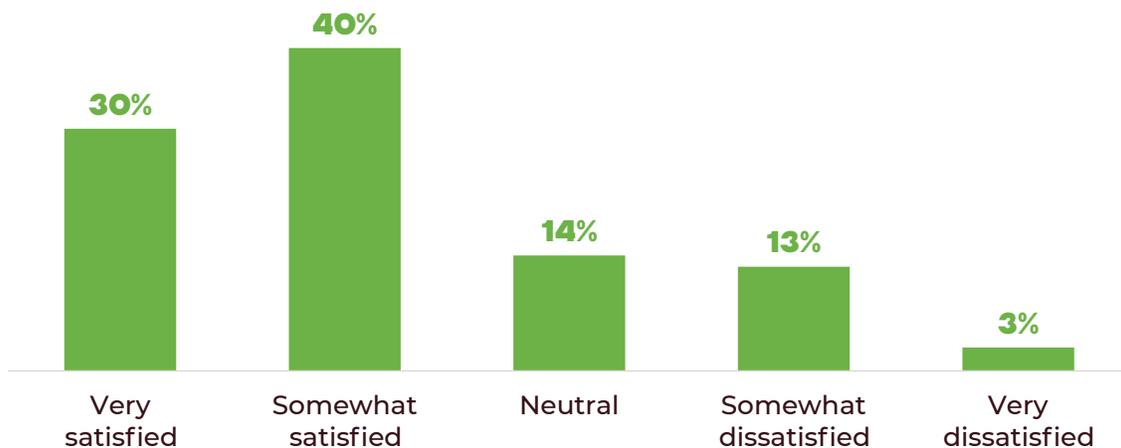
LANDLORDS SEE A RANGE OF BENEFITS FROM VOUCHERS

As with tenants, the landlord survey and interview samples include only those who are in the program, that is, those who rent to at least one voucher holder. MRVP and Section 8 are by far the most common voucher types reported by landlords, with 80 percent of landlords saying they have tenants with MRVP vouchers, and 76 percent having tenants with Section 8 vouchers.

Among landlords who rent to MRVP voucher holders specifically, 70 percent are very or somewhat satisfied with the program, with 14 percent neutral and 16 percent dissatisfied. Among all landlords, 70 percent say they are likely to seek out voucher tenants in the future, and only 8 percent unlikely.

Figure 3: Most landlords say they are very or somewhat satisfied with MRVP

% of landlords who say they are _____ with MRVP



Q: How would you describe your satisfaction with the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?
Source: MassINC Polling Group, 2024.

Among landlords who rent to MRVP voucher holders specifically, 70 percent are very or somewhat satisfied with the program.

Landlords see a number of benefits in renting to voucher holders, but far and away the most common is guaranteed consistent rent payments.

Landlords see a number of benefits in renting to voucher holders, but far and away the most common is guaranteed consistent rent payments, cited by 81 percent. The 11 landlords interviewed all agreed that the voucher's share of the rent was effectively guaranteed, and that this was an advantage of renting to voucher holders when compared to other tenants. Several landlords said this guarantee balances out more frequent late or missed payments from voucher tenants. In one landlord's telling, "Of course, the portion that I get from the housing authority is guaranteed. The portion that the tenant pays—sometimes they pay, sometimes they get delayed and we have to go back and forth, but I think there is a positive to it." Even though some landlords see the tenant portion as less reliable, the state portion's regularity is enough to make the lease worthwhile.

The second most important benefit of renting to voucher holders is making a positive contribution to the community, which 50 percent of landlords cite. In interviews, this appeared to manifest as a split between landlords who saw renting to voucher holders as a public service and those who tended to see the relationship as mainly transactional. Two interviewees both used the phrase "people are people" to explain that they saw no difference between voucher and non-voucher tenants and that they treated applications the same. One of them, who described directing tenants to RAFT and HomeBASE as needed, also expressed support for affordable housing programs as a policy. This interviewee explained their practice of soliciting referrals from medical rehabilitation centers, first by pointing out that "it saves me a lot of time in having to find tenants. If we were to just post on the open market and say, OK, let's see who we get, it's gonna be a lot of advertising, a lot of communicating." They closed more simply, however, by saying, "And I just like helping people." Another interviewee was not aware of many local organizations that could provide support but expressed openness to learning more in order to pass on the information to tenants, "because... people may need the help, but they just don't know about it.... It's good for people to know, especially if they need it." In general, this interviewee wanted to help tenants in ways that were mutually economically beneficial.

After community contribution, substantial minorities of landlords point to reduced turnover rates, cited by 38 percent, and access to a wider pool of tenants, cited by 20 percent. Landlord interviews suggest that these benefits are not just about having more tenants available, but also distinctive features landlords see in voucher holders. These tenants do have lower turnover rates than tenants without vouchers and tenants with higher incomes, according to one landlord: “A voucher holder, when they move into the unit, they tend to stay for a very long time.... Some of my tenants have been there for almost 10 years.”

Figure 4: Majority of landlords say guaranteed rent is benefit of vouchers

% of landlords who say _____ is a main benefit of renting to a voucher holder



Q: Which of the following do you see as the main benefits of renting to rental voucher holders? Select all that apply.

Source: MassINC Polling Group, 2024.

“A voucher holder, when they move into the unit, they tend to stay for a very long time.... Some of my tenants have been there for almost 10 years.”

MRVP Landlord



NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM IS CHALLENGING FOR BOTH TENANTS AND LANDLORDS

While both tenants and landlords report broad satisfaction with vouchers, the number-one problem for both groups is navigating the program's administrative requirements. When asked on an open-ended basis for the one thing they would change about MRVP, 40 percent of tenants do not offer specific suggestions. Instead, they either say they are happy with it, that it needs no changes, or they don't know what they would change. Of the substantive changes, the suggestions most commonly given (by 16 percent of tenants) have to do with housing agency interactions, including wanting more accountability, communication, customer service, and case management.

Landlords, similarly, most want to see administrative and communications changes: 26 percent would prioritize improving communication with housing agencies, and 13 percent most want help with or streamlining of the leasing and renewal process. Housing agency coordination, communication, and accountability also feature prominently among specific challenges landlords have faced in leasing and renting. Coordinating with the housing agency is the second most common difficulty of leasing to a voucher-holding tenant reported by landlords (52 percent), second only to paperwork delays (59 percent).

Many landlords also express a need for more information about the program. In interviews, there was generally low understanding of the differences between state and federal voucher programs and their relationship to different housing agencies. Speaking candidly, one landlord admitted, "I honestly don't even know the difference between a lot of the programs. Sorry."

While both tenants and landlords report broad satisfaction with vouchers, the number-one problem for both groups is navigating the program's administrative requirements.

Figure 5: Landlords seek better communication with housing agencies

% of landlords who respond to each question with each response option

Question	Response option	Percent
What are some of the challenges you have faced getting a rental voucher-holding tenant leased up?	▶ Coordinating with the housing agency	52%
What are some of the challenges you have faced renting to a rental voucher-holding tenant?	▶ Lack of communication from the housing agency	43%
	▶ Lack of accountability on the part of the housing agency	35%
What is one thing you would change to improve the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?	▶ Communication with housing agency	26%
	▶ Help with and streamlining of leasing and renewal process	13%
	▶ Help landlords with late or no rent / communication about rent change to tenants	12%

Differing levels of communication and assistance produce very different experiences for people in applying for vouchers. About half (54 percent) of tenants say the process of applying for a voucher is easy, and 41 percent say it is difficult. These differences came out sharply in focus group discussions. One of the more positive application experiences came from a participant who received sustained assistance from a case manager while staying in a shelter. This case manager “wrote a letter and added it to my portal, and that’s how I got the subsidy, but also she sent out that same letter that she wrote me, and she sent it over to [housing agency], the local surrounding towns that offered Section 8 or the MRVP voucher.” On the other hand, one participant connected their difficulty applying with not having that sort of assistance. They had “no idea what to do, because I was absolutely 100 percent lost.... It was impossible to reach anybody... and because of that it created so much anxiety.” Adding to the confusion and anxiety, they felt disrespected by staff who expected them to understand the system better despite being unfamiliar with it. As they explained it, “To literally be told this is an easy thing to figure out... it was a nightmare for me.”

Focus group participants and interviewees both emphasized that not being able to talk to someone at a housing agency dramatically increases their frustration and confusion. In addition, they feel uncertain that their outreach is even being received. One landlord suggested that “having a direct phone line would have been a lot easier just to answer quick questions rather than an email going to perhaps a shared inbox, not sure who it goes to.”

One tenant’s experience attempting to get recertified underscores how the inability to connect with a person produces confusion about program requirements, frustration with the system, and doubt that they are being listened to. As with the landlord interviewee, this focus group participant wanted a direct point of contact: “We don’t have workers or caseworkers, so we can’t speak to anyone. We’re speaking to an operator like we’re at a call center when I call them regarding any of my paperwork.” Instead of an inbox, they recounted multi-hour holds on the phone, including being disconnected. “We have to sit on hold for like five hours. Then the call will get disconnected. Once you get to number one, you have to sit on hold for another three hours.” These frustrations about hold times flowed into frustration that “no one will ever get back to you. I’ve sent in my recertification package last year. No one ever got back to me. Now it’s time for me to recertify, and I’m still waiting on paperwork.” This silence in turn provoked uncertainty in the tenant that they properly understood the program requirements. “With this voucher, I thought we recertified yearly,” they said, “but I’m thinking mine is just biannually, because now I’m just waiting on them to send me the paperwork, and it’s just really hard to even speak to anyone.” To top things off, they added, “They lose a lot of our information, too.... Even when I go down to the office. The office is so packed they’re still losing all my information.”

“We have to sit on hold for like five hours. Then the call will get disconnected. Once you get to number one, you have to sit on hold for another three hours.”

MRVP Tenant on the challenges of getting recertified



TENANTS STILL HAVE TROUBLE MAKING ENDS MEET AND ACHIEVING ECONOMIC MOBILITY

The financial support of a voucher is essential, but voucher holders still face challenges affording their rent share and paying other bills; as a consequence some renters are unable to fully reap the benefits. While safe, stable housing is a vast improvement on the alternative, they aspire to geographic and economic mobility. Voucher holders want to have a choice of decent places to live, to be able to save, and someday to be able to afford homeownership.

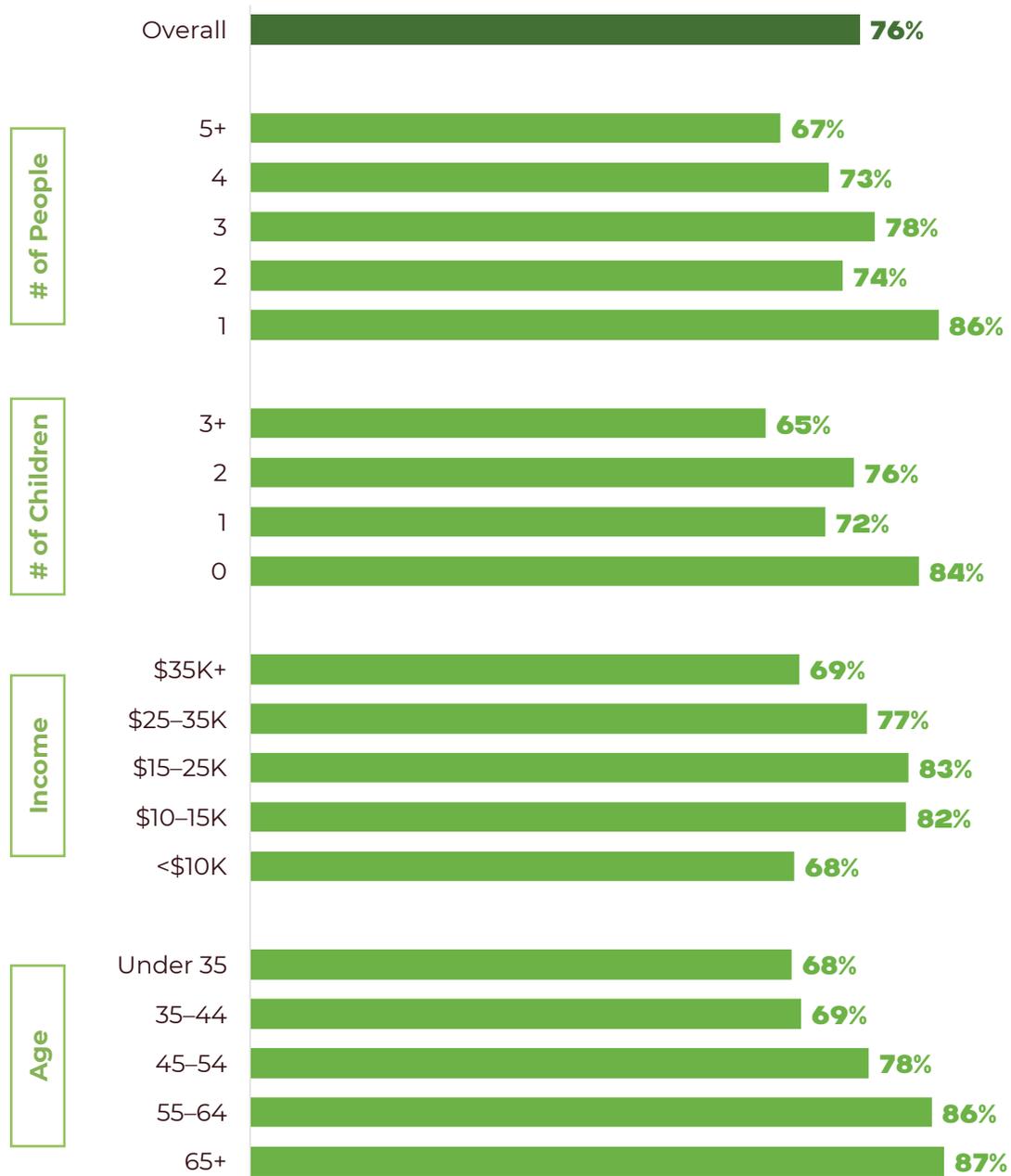
Vouchers limit the tenant's rent to 30 percent of their income. That does not necessarily mean it is easy for voucher holders to afford that share. State voucher recipients have very low incomes, with 80 percent making under \$25,000. Reflecting the high rate of poverty, only 44 percent of tenants can always afford their portion of the rent, and 21 percent can only afford it sometimes or less often. Most tenants (56 percent) do say they are more able to save for essentials because of the voucher, but this is one of the less commonly felt impacts tested in the survey. By contrast, 78 percent are more able to maintain employment. One focus group participant explained that "I have to kind of plan out paying my bills where I can pay my electric now and put off my gas, or I can pay my car insurance and put off whatever else."

Those who are less able to afford their rent portion are larger households, households with children, younger tenants, and those at both the lower and higher ends of the income spectrum. The difficulty at the higher end of the spectrum most likely comes from so-called cliff effects, where increasing incomes go along with increasing contributions, or trigger withdrawals of public assistance. Focus group participants especially emphasized this point, saying their assistance programs ate up any income increases they were able to get. One tenant who received a small raise at work experienced a cascade of effects, including losing SNAP benefits. "I need to find another job," they explained, "But if I get another job that means more money, everything's going to keep going up, so I'm just stuck at a standstill. Without trying to complain about it... that saying, rob Peter to pay Paul? I've left Peter and Paul behind, and I'm looking for Mark and Mike now."

Vouchers limit the tenant's rent to 30 percent of their income. That does not necessarily mean it is easy for voucher holders to afford that share.

Figure 6: Ability to pay rent varies by household size, age, income

Percent of tenants who say they can afford their portion of the rent “always” or “most of the time”



Q: How often can you afford your portion of the rent?

Source: MassINC Polling Group, 2024.

Inability to afford rent regularly is associated with worse living conditions and reduced positive impacts from having a voucher. The benefits of having a voucher decline for those who are less able to afford their portion of the rent. Among those who can always afford rent, 73 percent rate the condition of their home as excellent or good, while among those who can only afford rent some of the time or less, only 48 percent say the same. Meanwhile, 12 percent of those who can always afford rent say the quality of their home has gotten worse over time, and 35 percent of those who can only afford it sometimes or less say it has gotten worse. Differences in experiencing benefits to employment and child education are similarly stark, as well as in landlord helpfulness and discrimination, and neighborhood safety.

Figure 7: Those who struggle to afford rent also face other challenges

Percent of tenants who say they can/cannot afford rent who also say _____

Response item	Can afford rent always	Can afford most of the time	Can afford some of the time or less
Condition of home is excellent or good	73%	62%	48%
Like my home	68%	57%	42%
Repairs in 2 days or less	65%	52%	42%
Strongly agree children doing better in school	65%	66%	44%
Strongly agree easier to keep a job	61%	50%	31%
Feel very safe in neighborhood	58%	47%	40%
Landlord very helpful with concerns	56%	45%	35%
Treated unfairly during search process	18%	29%	40%
Home quality has worsened	12%	23%	35%

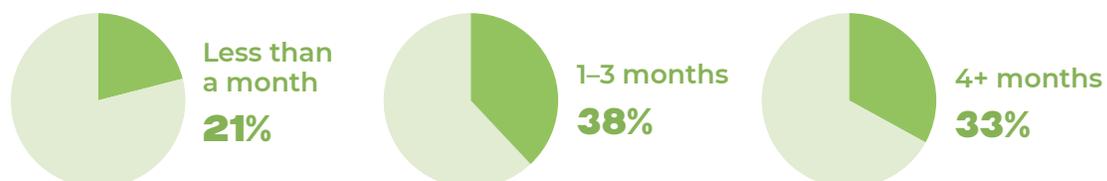
See topline for full questions wording
 Source: MassINC Polling Group, 2024.

These kinds of reduced positive outcomes are also strongly associated with difficulty applying for vouchers to begin with, suggesting that economic challenges reduce applicants' ability to manage the process from start to finish. Those who had difficulty applying for a voucher report longer housing searches, more unfair treatment, and being more likely to be unable to pay their rent share. While 28 percent of those who found it easy to apply for a voucher waited over four months to find an apartment, 39 percent of those who found it difficult had that long a wait. And while 39 percent of those who have difficulty applying say they were treated unfairly in the housing search, only 17 percent of those who found it easy to apply say they were treated unfairly. After their searches, 50 percent of those who found applying for a voucher easy can always afford their rent share, compared to only 35 percent of those who found it difficult. Finding it easier to maintain employment moves from 82 percent to 72 percent as ease of voucher application goes down, while being able to save more for essentials moves from 62 percent to 49 percent.

When asked about finding an apartment initially, 21 percent say they found an apartment in less than a month, 38 percent in one to three months, and 33 percent four or more months. Once they find a unit, voucher holders tend to stay in place. In all, 85 percent have been in their current unit for at least a year and 35 percent have been in their unit more than five years. This result also tracks with the 38 percent of landlords who cite lower turnover as a benefit of renting to voucher holders. According to focus groups, these extended stays are due to the difficulties of finding a new apartment, which aligns with the survey responses.

Focus group participants further explained that their apartments are not everything they would want, and they would look for a new place if it were easier to find one and move. In describing the difficulties of their housing searches, they mainly cited the expense, especially move-in deposits, and discrimination or being treated unfairly (against voucher holders, families with children, or people of color). One tenant, who wanted "something that's more up to date," explained that "everything is incredibly expensive. Rent, which goes by your gross income... but then, now we also have to come up with first, last, and security, and on top of that, finding an apartment with a landlord who wants to do business with [housing agency] or whatever place holds your voucher. So, I mean, I'm not here for six years because I am loving it."

How long it took MRVP tenants to find an apartment



According to focus group participants, many landlords are resistant to the voucher program and its requirements, making it challenging to move or find an apartment.

Among tenants, 26 percent say they were treated unfairly in the process of trying to use their voucher, while 61 percent say they were not. According to focus group participants, many landlords are resistant to the voucher program and its requirements, making it challenging to move or find an apartment. Participants report discrimination against rental applications from voucher holders, as well as rent increases based on housing agency market rate allowances. One tenant, describing voucher discrimination, said, “You wouldn’t believe the amount of phone calls and emails I sent out and it was ‘no’ once they found out. ‘No, no, no, no!’” Participants also report being treated unfairly in other ways, such as discrimination based on race or disability, reluctance to rent to families with children, unfair use of background or credit checks, and foot-dragging on reasonable accommodations.

In the survey, 70 percent of landlords say they are at least somewhat likely to seek voucher-holding tenants in the future, while only one of the 11 interviewed landlords expressed negative views of voucher holders. However, several others described “stereotypes” they felt were prevalent among their colleagues, which they nonetheless rejected. One such interviewee, both a property owner and realtor, said, “I try to tell my landlords as well. I know that there’s like this stereotype out there that voucher tenants cause more issues, and so on and so forth. I don’t agree with that whatsoever.” It seems plausible that landlords with more experience renting to voucher holders have more positive views of them.

While tenants often use their vouchers for extended periods, in the long run, many want stability through homeownership. While 40 percent of voucher holders say they would like to live in a house of their own in five years, only 19 percent think they will. One participant felt that “the way that this program is set up, there’s no real exit ramp.... Like with Section 8, there are some programs in the state that allow you to build equity by applying the payments toward home ownership.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the issues brought up by the surveys, focus groups, and interviews, the project stakeholders have offered a set of recommendations.



1. The Commonwealth should **codify** and **expand** support for state vouchers.

As this report's findings underline, many voucher holders depend on vouchers long-term, and many property owners rely on voucher holders to fill their units and provide steady rent payments. In addition, property developers rely on project-based vouchers when financing new housing construction. Currently, however, MRVP is renewed annually only as a line item in the state budget and does not exist in statute. Codifying the program is a simple step that would give everyone who relies on it confidence that it will remain in place and continue to serve a critical function in the housing ecosystem.

A more ambitious recommendation for the future is to expand the number of vouchers. Given the long waitlist, and the even larger number of eligible households, expansion would scale up the benefits outlined in this report: stable housing, reduced fear of living on the street or losing custody of children, and improved educational and employment outcomes. An additional policy benefit would be to ease demand for emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, child welfare, and other emergency response systems. An expanded voucher program would presumably also reduce wait times for applicants who are not in the emergency response system but spend long periods of time on the waitlist. With 45 percent of applicants waiting more than a year for a voucher, this is a major opportunity for improvement. Applicants who spend time waiting for a voucher continue to suffer the negative effects of unstable or unaffordable housing. Several focus group participants also described navigating multiple time-consuming and stressful application processes while waiting. More opportunities to provide stable and affordable housing for lower-income residents would mean less time those residents need to spend getting into this or other programs.

With 45 percent of applicants waiting more than a year for a voucher, this is a major opportunity for improvement.



2. Operational improvements should focus on better **accountability to applicants, tenants, and landlords, with a particular focus on communication.**

The most consistent problems raised by tenants and landlords have to do with “customer experience” when interacting with the program. Operational changes should work to improve agency accountability and transparency to participants and landlords, as well as sustainability for the agencies and their staff.

The issues they raised coalesce around one main theme: communication. Tenants and landlords both emphasized how much smoother their experiences were when dealing with a representative who they felt was competent and communicative. They also described frustrating situations with uncommunicative representatives, long hold times on the phone, missing information, or feeling lost when contact dropped off after move-in.

Clearly, many factors lie behind these problems, and there is not one solution to fix them. Given the different sizes and structures of different housing agencies, causes and solutions will not be the same in all cases. However, some of the things that tenants and landlords have said they want include short wait times to reach a staff person, individual case managers, to be informed when a contact person changes, advance communication about needed paperwork, an online portal to submit paperwork, and for agencies to follow up on paperwork submitted and to not lose paperwork.

While considering how to improve communication, agencies should prioritize transparency and accountability. Housing agencies should communicate expectations as clearly as possible at every stage of the process, so that participants can assess whether further action is needed. Internally, agencies should consider modifying or expanding communications training for staff who interact with program participants, stressing the need to treat people with sensitivity regarding their circumstances, value their time, and make them feel heard. They should also examine internal accountability mechanisms around functions like responding to inquiries. In addition, a possible external accountability mechanism would be an independent, accessible ombudsman office to respond to complaints and oversee investigations about issues like unreasonable delays or lost paperwork.

In some cases, the simplest means to improve participant experiences may be to expand housing agency staff and therefore capacity to respond to inquiries. Achieving these goals may also involve more complex changes to organization or procedure. It is especially important to emphasize that any changes need to be sustainable for the housing agencies affected, and changes of this sort would likely require increased resources.

A possible external accountability mechanism would be an independent, accessible ombudsman office to respond to complaints and oversee investigations about issues like unreasonable delays or lost paperwork.



3. The Commonwealth should invest in broad outreach and education for applicants, tenants, and landlords.

There is an information gap among applicants, participants, and landlords that could be addressed with educational resources and engagement.

For tenants, educational resources could include housing search preparation, assistance filling out applications, support appealing landlord decisions, preparing and sharing a list of landlords who frequently rent to voucher holders and of organizations offering emergency services. In some cases, these resources exist and need to be made more comprehensive or publicized and shared more effectively. What is most important, following recommendation #2, is for voucher holders to understand where to go to look for these resources, and for someone to be available to direct them to such resources in a timely manner.

Outreach is particularly significant for landlords. Large landlords with many voucher-holding tenants should have access to educational resources that give them a deeper understanding of voucher programs. A training program could be especially helpful for landlords who may need to process larger amounts of paperwork or work with multiple housing agencies. On the other hand, small landlords have significantly less understanding than large ones on how to find voucher tenants and partner with housing agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) to help them. The Commonwealth could partner with community development financial institutions (CDFIs), such as [Nectar Community Investments](#), that already work with landlords.

A single system to allow landlords to market units to voucher holders and CBOs to direct tenants to affordable units could efficiently scale up the kind of engagement that currently takes place between landlords and individual nonprofits. The Boston-based program [New Lease for Homeless Families](#) could be a model, as well as [Housing Connector](#), which operates in several metro areas around the United States. Such a program could also be a point of entry for landlords to connect to training programs.



4. The Commonwealth should create pathways to economic mobility for tenants by addressing cliff effects and gaps in assistance coverage, and by promoting opportunities for asset-building.

Some of the biggest concerns that came up in the survey and focus groups have to do with economic mobility. These fit into two broad categories: an inability to pay bills despite voucher assistance, and an inability to build assets. There are a number of ways the Commonwealth could address voucher holders' concerns about economic mobility.

As outlined in the findings, many voucher holders report being unable to pay their share of the rent all the time, and these tenants also report fewer of the benefits of voucher holding generally. The participants most likely to report these difficulties are those at the lower *and* higher ends of the income scale, larger households and those with children, younger tenants, and tenants who initially had difficulty in applying for a voucher. Massachusetts should explore ways to target support at these groups.

For those at the higher end of the income scale, supplemental payments could address “cliff effects” that occur when income increases result in, and are outweighed by, lost assistance benefits. The [Bridge to Prosperity](#) cliff effect pilot in Springfield, for example, uses strategic cash payments to offset cliff effects for a period of time. Additionally, MRVP currently gives voucher holders who exceed the income threshold six months before removing them from the program. The program could consider giving recently exited voucher holders priority for re-entry if they fall back below the income threshold for specific reasons. For example, those who lose their income due to unemployment within a certain time frame might receive priority.

The Commonwealth could also support voucher holders' aspirations to move out of the program by enabling them to build assets and move toward eventual homeownership. MRVP's current path to asset building for voucher holders is the Self-Sufficiency Program (SSP), which is available to some voucher holders with some housing agencies. SSP participants work with case managers to develop an employment and skill-building plan; if their income increases, they place the increased portion of their rent share in an escrow account for use after program graduation. Expanding the number of agencies who offer SSP, and making it available to more voucher holders, could go a long way toward addressing the concerns about asset building expressed in the survey and focus groups. This expansion would require additional resources, both to fund expanded staff and to cover any reduction in the aggregate tenant rent portion.

If an expanded SSP encounters success, Massachusetts could also expand employment services more generally. Drawing lessons from HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency Program, Massachusetts could partner with CBOs to pilot a comprehensive integrated employment services program to provide skill development, financial planning education, job search assistance, and similar services. If successful, a comprehensive program could be universalized to be open to all voucher holders.

As our investigations with MRVP participants has shown, the program can be positively life-changing for some tenants and a boon to landlords as well. It is not without its inconveniences or frustrations, however. The four recommendations here suggest reforms and expansions in broad strokes, which pursued in detail and taken together could make the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program a pathway to economic mobility and a model for the nation.

The Commonwealth could also support voucher holders' aspirations to move out of the program by enabling them to build assets and move toward eventual homeownership.

METHODS

SURVEY OF MRVP PARTICIPANTS

The tenant survey results (Appendix I) described in this report are based on a survey of 989 MRVP participants. Contact information for participants was provided to MPG by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), which they collected from 25 different Local Housing Authorities. MPG sent text and email invitations to potential respondents containing links to an online survey. Respondents were paid \$20 each for completing the survey. Responses were collected December 2–15, 2024. The survey was offered in English, Bengali, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Igbo, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Results were weighted by race, age, gender, income, and county to reflect known and estimated population parameters for heads of households for MRVP voucher recipients. Weighting parameters were derived from figures provided by EOHLC. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, inclusive of the design effect. The response rate for this survey was 13.7 percent.



Figure 8: Comparison of demographics of MRVP participants and statewide residents

Where the difference between MRVP participants and statewide residents is 10 or more percentage points, the higher percentage is highlighted.

	MRVP Participants	Statewide Residents
Gender		
Men	24%	48%
Women	74%	52%
Age		
<35	20%	30%
35 - 44	25%	16%
45 - 54	18%	16%
55 - 64	18%	17%
65+	17%	22%
Race		
White alone	37%	72%
Black alone	23%	6%
Latino / Hispanic	29%	11%
Other	2%	11%
Individual income		
<\$10,000	29%	19%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	28%	7%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	22%	10%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	9%	9%
\$35,000+	11%	56%
Education		
HS or less	45%	33%
Some college	38%	25%
Bachelor's	6%	24%
Advanced degree	4%	18%
County		
Bristol	4%	8%
Essex	14%	11%
Hampden	13%	6%
Middlesex	12%	23%
Norfolk	11%	10%
Plymouth	6%	7%
Suffolk	26%	12%
Worcester	8%	12%
Western Mass (Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire)	2%	5%
Cape Islands (Barnstable, Dukes, Nantucket)	3%	4%

Source: MassINC Polling Group, 2024.

SURVEY OF LANDLORDS

The landlord survey results (Appendix II) are based on a survey of 175 landlords who use various rental voucher programs. Responses were collected using an online survey. Links to the survey were sent by EOHLIC and were collected December 4–15, 2024. Respondents were paid \$20 each for completing the survey. Contact information for landlords was collected by EOHLIC using landlords with a Regional Administering Agency and several Local Housing Authorities. Results were not weighted as population parameters are not available. The response rate for this survey was 5.8 percent.

Figure 9: Demographics of landlord survey participants

Position	
Property owner	75%
Property manager	44%
Number years owned / managed property	
0 - 10	39%
10+	61%
Property location	
Only Massachusetts	84%
National	16%
Ownership structure	
Owned individually	58%
Owned by an LLC	47%
Some other structure	8%
Number of units	
1	9%
2 – 4	30%
5 – 14	17%
15-49	13%
50 – 99	10%
100+	22%
Property type	
Multifamily properties	87%
Single-family homes	26%
Townhomes/ Condominiums	25%
Mixed-use buildings	11%
Senior or accessible housing	7%
Rooming or boarding houses	2%
Accessory dwelling units	1%
Some other type of property	1%

Source: MassINC Polling Group, 2024.

TENANT FOCUS GROUPS

Two focus groups of MRVP participants were conducted virtually on February 4 and 5, 2025, with nine and 12 participants, respectively. Participants were recruited from those who stated they would be interested in participating in a focus group and those who indicated that they had been treated unfairly in their housing search in the tenant survey. MPG staff planned and moderated each focus group. Participants received an incentive of \$150.

LANDLORD INTERVIEWS

MPG interviewed 11 landlords in February 2025. Interviewees were recruited from those who stated they would be interested in participating in an interview in the landlord survey. Interviewees received an incentive of \$150.

APPENDICES

Appendix I SURVEY OF MRVP PARTICIPANTS TOPLINE

THE MASSINC POLLING GROUP

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program - Rental Assistance Survey

Survey of 989 Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program Participants

Field dates: December 2 -15, 2024

How easy or difficult was the process of applying for a rental voucher?

Very easy	19%
Somewhat easy	36%
Somewhat difficult	28%
Very difficult	13%
Don't know/refused	5%

Which of the following best describes how you got a rental voucher?

I applied through CHAMP on mass.gov website	11%
I applied in person at a housing agency	32%
I received a direct referral for a voucher while living in a shelter	36%
Applied a different way – please specify:	12%
Don't know/refused	8%

ASK FOLLOWING QUESTION IF NOT ISSUED A DIRECT REFERRAL

How long after you applied did it take you to receive a rental voucher?

Less than a month	5%
1 to 3 months	13%
4 to 6 months	9%
7 months to a year	14%
More than a year	45%
Don't know/refused	15%

After you received your rental voucher, how long did it take you to find an apartment?

Less than a month	21%
1 to 3 months	38%
4 to 6 months	18%
7 months to a year	9%
More than a year	6%
Don't know/refused	8%

Did you receive any help in your housing search?

Yes	43%
No	53%
Don't know/refused	4%

In the process of trying to use your rental voucher after you received it, did you feel you were treated unfairly due to any of the following? (Select all that apply. ROTATE ORDER)

How much money I make	15%
My race	6%
The size of my family or the number of children I have	6%
My disability	5%
My age	4%
My gender	2%
The language I speak	2%
My sexual orientation	1%
My immigration status	1%
Other- please specify:	8%
I was not treated unfairly	61%
Don't know/refused	13%

How often can you afford your portion of the rent?

Always	44%
Most of the time	33%
Some of the time	16%
Rarely	4%
Never	1%
Don't know/refused	3%

How long have you lived in your current home?

Less than a month	1%
1 to 11 months	13%
1 to 3 years	32%
3 to 5 years	19%
More than 5 years	35%
Don't know/refused	1%

How has the quality of your home changed over time?

Has gotten a lot better	22%
Has gotten a little better	16%
Has stayed about the same	37%
Has gotten a little worse	13%
Has gotten a lot worse	8%
Don't know/refused	5%

Prior to finding housing with your rental voucher, which of the following best described your living situation?

I owned a house or apartment	2%
I rented a house or apartment	30%
I lived in a shelter	33%
I was sharing space with another household	13%
I did not have housing	11%
Other – please specify:	6%
Don't know/refused	4%

THANK YOU! NOW WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HOME AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE YOU LIVE.

Which of the following best describes your feelings about your current neighborhood?

I really like my neighborhood	35%
I like my neighborhood	27%
I am neutral about my neighborhood	23%
I dislike my neighborhood	9%
I really dislike my neighborhood	4%
Don't know/refused	2%

Over the past 12 months, how safe have you felt in your neighborhood?

Very safe	51%
Somewhat safe	31%
Not too safe	11%
Not at all safe	5%
Don't know/refused	2%

Thinking about your close friends, family, and community, how many of them live near enough for you to visit regularly?

All	8%
Most	17%
Some	22%
Just a few	24%
None	27%
Don't know/refused	1%

Which of the following best describes your feelings about your current home?

I really like my home	31%
I like my home	28%
I am neutral about my home	23%
I dislike my home	10%
I really dislike my home	6%
Don't know/refused	2%

Overall, how would you rate the condition of your home?

Excellent	27%
Good	37%
Just OK	26%
Bad	9%
Don't know/refused	1%

Please rate how often each of the following items in your home has been working over the last year. If you do not have any of these, please select “I do not have this utility in my home.”

ROTATE ORDER	Always works	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never works	I do not have this utility in my home	Don't know/refused
The air conditioning	48%	14%	7%	1%	27%	3%
The laundry machines	37%	17%	11%	3%	27%	4%
The dishwasher	34%	9%	7%	5%	40%	4%

Please rate how often each of the following items in your home has been working over the last year.

ROTATE ORDER	Always works	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never works	Don't know/refused
The electricity	83%	12%	4%	<1%	1%
The water	79%	14%	5%	<1%	1%
The heat	68%	18%	10%	2%	3%

How helpful would you say your landlord is when you bring up concerns with them?

Very helpful	48%
Somewhat helpful	28%
Not too helpful	12%
Not at all helpful	8%
I have not brought up concerns with my landlord	2%
Don't know/refused	2%

If an appliance or something else in your home needs to be fixed, how long does it usually take for your landlord to repair it?

Within the same day	17%
Within a day or two	35%
Within a week	18%
Within a month	8%
A month or more	12%
I have not had to have anything fixed in my home	6%
Don't know/refused	4%

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current living situation?

ROTATE ORDER	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know /refused
There is public transportation within walking distance	66%	19%	4%	7%	3%
The necessities I need are close enough for me to get to (doctor, groceries, etc.)	52%	35%	8%	3%	2%
My home is comfortable	49%	33%	11%	6%	1%
There is enough space in my home for me and my family	49%	27%	9%	14%	1%
My home is pest-free	43%	22%	14%	19%	3%
It is not too noisy where I live	38%	32%	15%	13%	2%
There are a lot of fun things to do nearby	22%	37%	19%	14%	8%

THANK YOU! NOW WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT ANOTHER TOPIC.

What type of home do you think you will be living in 5 years from now?

In the same housing unit I live in now	35%
In a different affordable or public housing unit	22%
In a unit I rent without using a rental voucher	4%
In a house I buy and own (not rented)	19%
Something else – please specify:	2%
Don't know/refused	18%

What type of home would you like to be living in 5 years from now?

In the same housing unit I live in now	22%
In a different affordable or public housing unit	21%
In a unit I rent without using a rental voucher	3%
In a house of my own (not rented)	40%
Something else – please specify:	2%
Don't know/refused	11%

THANK YOU! NOW WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RENTAL VOUCHER PROGRAM.

Thinking about the ways the rental voucher program has impacted you, please rate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. If a statement does not apply to you, please select “not applicable”.

ROTATE ORDER	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable	Don't know/refused
It is easier for me to keep a job now that I have stable housing	31%	19%	6%	4%	36%	4%
My children are doing better in school now that we have stable housing	29%	13%	4%	2%	52%	1%
I am able to save more money to pay for food, medicine, and other essentials	25%	29%	18%	20%	5%	3%
I am able to improve my credit and become more financially stable	23%	31%	15%	14%	12%	5%
I am more active in my community	19%	30%	13%	11%	22%	6%

What is one thing you would change to improve the rental voucher program?

Housing agency accountability, communication, customer service, and case management	16%
Lower or stable rent portion and market price matching	15%
Landlord accountability, quality, space, and accessibility of unit	9%
Assistance with application, process, finding unit, or moving	8%
Waiting time	7%
Paperwork and recertification process	6%
Switch to mobile voucher/Section 8/move anywhere	7%
Supplemental assistance (food stamps, child care, utilities, financial literacy, etc.)	4%
Pathway to homeownership	3%
Other	6%
Thankful and happy with program	15%
No changes needed/unsure	25%

THE LAST FEW QUESTIONS ARE ONLY FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES.

How many other people currently live with you?

Children:

0	43%
1	21%
2	17%
3	11%
4	4%
5 +	3%
Don't know/refused	1%

Adults:

0	41%
1	45%
2	10%
3	2%
4	1%
5 +	1%
Don't know/refused	1%

ASK FOLLOWING QUESTION IF HAVE AT LEAST ONE CHILD LIVING IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Are you a parent or caregiver to any of the children who live with you, or not?

I am their parent	92%
I am their caregiver but not their parent	4%
I am not their parent or caregiver	2%
Don't know/refused	2%

How long have you been a resident of Massachusetts?

Less than a year	<1%
1 – 2 years	1%
3 – 5 years	3%
6 – 10 years	5%
Over 10 years	88%
Don't know/refused	2%

Do you have access to a car you can use regularly?

Yes	53%
No	44%
Don't know/refused	4%

What languages are spoken regularly at home? Select all that apply.

English	89%
Arabic	<1%
Bengali	<1%
Cantonese	1%
Cape Verdean Creole	1%
Haitian Creole	1%
Hindi	0%
Igbo	<1%
Italian	0%
Mandarin	<1%
Pali	0%
Polish	0%
Portuguese	1%
Russian	<1%
Spanish	23%
Vietnamese	0%
Other – please specify:	1%
Don't know/refused	<1%

Have you ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces?

Yes	4%
No	95%
Don't know/refused	1%

Demographics

Gender:

Man	24%
Woman	74%
Don't know/refused	1%

Age:

<35	20%
35 - 44	25%
45 - 54	18%
55 - 64	18%
65+	17%
Don't know/refused	1%

Race:

White alone	37%
Black alone	23%
Latino/Hispanic	29%
Other	2%
Don't know/refused	9%

Education:

High school or less	45%
Some college, no degree	29%
Associate degree +	20%
Don't know/refused	6%

Income:

<\$10,000	29%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	28%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	22%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	9%
\$35,000+	11%

Region:

Suffolk	26%
Norfolk	11%
Essex	14%
Middlesex	12%
Central/West	24%
Southeast	13%

APPENDIX II

SURVEY OF LANDLORDS TOPLINE

THE MASSINC POLLING GROUP

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program - Rental Assistance Survey

Survey of 175 Rental Voucher Program Landlords

Field dates: December 4 -15, 2024

Are you a rental property owner or manager? Select all that apply.

Property owner	75%
Property manager	44%

How long have you owned or managed rental property?

Less than a year	1%
1 – 3 years	8%
4 – 6 years	11%
7– 10 years	19%
Over 10 years	61%
Don't know/refused	1%

Which best describes where your property or properties are located?

Only in Massachusetts	84%
In Massachusetts and in other states	16%

What is the ownership structure of the property or properties that you rent? Select all that apply.

The property/properties are owned individually	58%
The property/properties are owned by an LLC	47%
Some other structure - please specify:	8%
Don't know/refused	3%

What type of property or properties do you rent? Select all that apply.

Multifamily properties	87%
Single-family homes	26%
Townhomes/Condominiums	25%
Mixed-use buildings	11%
Senior or accessible housing	7%
Rooming or boarding houses	2%
Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)	1%
Mobile homes	0%
Some other type of property - please specify:	1%
Don't know/refused	0%

Approximately how many units do you lease in total?

1 unit	9%
2 – 4 units	30%
5 – 14 units	17%
15 – 29 units	7%
30 – 49 units	6%
50 – 99 units	10%
100 – 499 units	17%
500 – 999 units	2%
Over 1000 units	3%
Don't know/refused	1%

**Where do you go to find tenants?
Select all that apply. ROTATE ORDER.**

Rental listing websites (Zillow, apartments.com, etc.)	53%
Word of mouth	52%
Local housing authorities	40%
Affordable housing websites	34%
Social media (Facebook Marketplace, neighborhood groups, etc.)	29%
Direct referrals from nonprofit and housing organizations	27%
Craigslist	22%
Community based organizations (CBOs)	11%
Yard signs	7%
Community bulletin boards	5%
Local newspapers or magazines	2%
Some other way - please specify:	15%
Don't know/refused	1%

THE REMAINING QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT RENTAL VOUCHER HOLDERS AND TENANTS RESIDING IN MASSACHUSETTS.

As you may know, rental vouchers are a government-funded subsidy that help low-income individuals or families pay for housing. It covers a portion of their rent, with the tenant paying the remainder.

Which of the following best describes the proportion of rental units you lease to rental voucher holders versus other tenants in Massachusetts?

All my units are leased to voucher holders	22%
Most of my units are leased to voucher holders	19%
Approximately half of my units are leased to voucher holders and half are not	36%
Most of my units are leased to non-voucher holders	21%
None of my units are leased to voucher holders	0%
Don't know/refused	2%

Which of the following programs have your tenants gotten their rental vouchers from? Select all that apply.

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)	80%
Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program	76%
Department of Mental Health Rental Subsidy Program	14%
Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP)	10%
Don't know/refused	6%

ASK FOLLOWING 2 QUESTIONS IF TENANTS GET RENTAL VOUCHERS THROUGH MRVP

As you may know, the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) is a state-funded housing assistance program that provides rental vouchers in Massachusetts.

Which housing agency or agencies administer your MRVP rental vouchers? Select all that apply.

Metro Housing Boston	57%
Boston Housing Authority	41%
NeighborWorks Housing Solution	16%
Community Teamwork, Inc.	14%
Way Finders	10%
Worcester Housing Authority	9%
RCAP Solutions, Inc.	9%
Springfield Housing Authority	8%
South Middlesex Opportunity Council	4%
Another agency - please specify:	22%
Don't know/refused	3%

How would you describe your satisfaction with the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?

Very satisfied	30%
Somewhat satisfied	40%
Neutral	14%
Somewhat dissatisfied	13%
Very dissatisfied	3%
Don't know/refused	0%

ASK ALL

How likely are you to seek out rental voucher-holding tenants in the future?

Very likely	47%
Somewhat likely	22%
Neutral	21%
Somewhat unlikely	5%
Very unlikely	3%
Don't know/refused	1%

Which of the following do you see as the main benefits of renting to rental voucher holders? Select all that apply. ROTATE ORDER.

Guaranteed consistent rent payments	81%
Having a positive impact on my community by helping provide housing to people and families in need	50%
Reduced tenant turnover rates	38%
Access to a wider pool of tenants	20%
Inspection and maintenance incentives, such as support for maintaining property	16%
Tax and financial incentives	10%
Some other reason - please specify:	3%
None of the above	2%
Don't know/refused	2%

What are some of the challenges you have faced getting a rental voucher-holding tenant leased up? Select all that apply. ROTATE ORDER.

Delays processing paperwork (e.g., W9, EFT, etc.)	59%
Coordinating with the housing agency	52%
Delays getting the unit inspected	31%
Complexity of inspection requirements	28%
Cost of required inspections and certifications (e.g., de-leading certification)	22%
Getting my municipality to inspect the property prior to lease up	14%
Some other challenge - please specify:	25%
None of the above	10%
Don't know/refused	3%

What are some of the challenges you have faced renting to a rental voucher-holding tenant? Select all that apply. ROTATE ORDER.

Lack of communication from the housing agency	43%
Missed or irregular rent payments from the tenant	38%
Lack of accountability on the part of the housing agency	35%
Cost of repairs	29%
Frequency of repairs	28%
Cost of renovations	20%
Missed or irregular rent payments from the housing agency	14%
Frequency of renovations	11%
Language barriers	7%
Missed housing inspections	7%
Some other challenge - please specify:	15%
None of the above	14%
Don't know/refused	4%

How often do your rental voucher holding tenants submit late rent payments?

Never	11%
Rarely	14%
Sometimes	34%
Often	23%
Almost always	11%
Always	5%
Don't know/refused	1%

How often do your non-rental voucher holding tenants submit late rent payments?

Never	17%
Rarely	30%
Sometimes	34%
Often	9%
Almost always	2%
Always	2%
Don't know/refused	5%

On average, how does rent from leasing a unit to voucher-holding tenants compare to the market rental rate you would receive for the same unit?

Well below the market rate	11%
Somewhat below the market rate	37%
About the same as the market rate	43%
Somewhat more than the market rate	5%
Well over the market rate	1%
Don't know/refused	3%

When considering a potential tenant, what are the factors that help you decide whether to lease to them or not? Select all that apply. ROTATE ORDER.

Rental history	78%
Credit check	65%
References from previous landlords	63%
Criminal background check (CORI)	60%
Employment status	53%
Household size	47%
Income level	46%
Pet ownership	42%
Communication style and responsiveness	38%
Citizenship or immigration status	8%
Something else - please specify:	7%
None of the above	2%
Don't know/refused	2%

To the best of your knowledge, do your tenants need other resources in order to remain in stable housing, such as Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) or Local Community Action Programs (CAPs)?

Yes	50%
No	15%
Don't know/refused	35%

ASK FOLLOWING QUESTION IF TENANT NEEDS OTHER RESOURCES TO REMAIN STABLY HOUSED

Do you assist your tenant(s) who qualify with accessing these additional resources?

Yes	83%
No	10%
Don't know/refused	7%

Do you currently collaborate with any local organizations such as nonprofits or community-based organizations to do any of the following? Select all that apply. ROTATE ORDER.

Helping existing rental voucher tenants navigate the program	27%
Supporting tenants in getting their other basic needs met such as food, childcare, clothing, etc.	20%
Identifying or referring potential rental voucher tenants	16%
Getting non-rental voucher tenants into a rental voucher program	11%
Another form of collaboration - please specify:	5%
None of the above	49%
Don't know/refused	15%

Would you like to collaborate more than you currently do with local organizations (e.g. non-profits or community-based organizations) to do any of the following? Select all that apply. ROTATE ORDER.

Getting non-rental voucher tenants into a rental voucher program	31%
Identifying or referring potential rental voucher tenants	29%
Supporting tenants in getting their other basic needs met such as food, childcare, clothing, etc.	26%
Helping existing rental voucher tenants navigate the program	25%
Another form of collaboration - please specify:	4%
I am not interested in collaborating more than I currently do	31%
Don't know/refused	22%

What is one thing you would change to improve the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program? OPEN END.

Communication with housing agency	26%
Accountability of tenants for behavior and care of units	17%
Help with and streamlining of leasing and renewal process	13%
Help landlords with late or no rent/communication about rent change to tenants	12%
Low rental rates	8%
Expanded eligibility and resources for tenants/ reduced waitlists	7%
Inspection standards and fees	7%
Accountability of housing agency	5%
Other	7%
Nothing/unsure	12%

DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender:

Man	42%
Woman	51%
Don't know/refused	7%

Age:

18-29	39%
30-44	36%
45-59	23%
60+	2%

Education:

Associate degree or less	26%
Bachelor's degree	33%
More than a bachelor's degree	35%
Don't know/refused	6%

