Live Baltimore's City Homebuyer Survey, Wave 3 (2025)

Survey and reporting by Federal Hill Research Group for Live Baltimore.

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Executive Summary

WHERE HOMEBUYERS LIVED AND LOOKED BEFORE THEY BOUGHT

Understanding where homebuyers lived before purchasing their current home provides insight into the city's ability to retain residents, attract newcomers, and compete with surrounding jurisdictions. This section explores homebuyers' previous locations, housing situations, and the scope of their home search before settling in Baltimore City.

Before buying their current home in Baltimore City . . .

. . . **64%** of homebuyers lived within the city, **19%** lived in another Maryland county, **16%** lived in another state, and 1% lived in another country.

- Among respondents who previously lived in another Maryland county, the vast majority came from Baltimore County, followed by Montgomery, Prince George's, Anne Arundel, and Howard counties. Smaller numbers of homebuyers moved from Carroll, Harford, Charles, Frederick, Cecil, and St. Mary's counties.
- Among homebuyers who moved from outside Maryland, the most common states of origin were New York, Virginia, Florida, Texas, North Carolina, California, and Pennsylvania. Several respondents also relocated from Washington, DC.

. . .**67%** of homebuyers moved from an urban area, **28%** from a suburban area, and **4%** from a rural area.

. . .**68%** of homebuyers were previously renting, **28%** owned their previous home, and **4%** reported another living arrangement (e.g., living with parents, relatives, or friends).

. . . **62%** of homebuyers only considered homes in Baltimore City, while **37%** considered buying a home in a surrounding county.
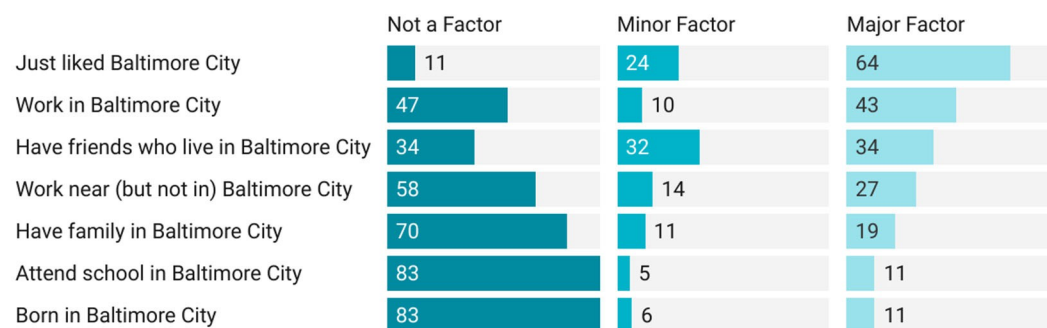
. . . **49%** of homebuyers looked in 1–3 neighborhoods before settling on their current home in Baltimore City, **28%** looked in 4–6 neighborhoods, and **12%** looked in 7 or more neighborhoods.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION TO BUY A HOME IN BALTIMORE CITY

Homebuyers were asked to identify which factors played a major or minor role in their decision, as well as select the single most important factor. Additional questions explored anticipated work arrangements (such as remote or hybrid schedules), the location of respondents' workplaces, and the extent to which these job-related factors influenced their decision to buy in the city.

Q5: Next, we'd like to know more about your decision to buy a home in Baltimore City. The following is a list of reasons people sometimes give for moving to or staying in Baltimore City. For each one, please indicate whether it was a major, minor, or not a factor at all in your decision.

Graph 1: Factors Influencing the Decision to Buy a Home in Baltimore City (Percentage)

	Not a Factor	Minor Factor	Major Factor
Just liked Baltimore City	11	24	64
Work in Baltimore City	47	10	43
Have friends who live in Baltimore City	34	32	34
Work near (but not in) Baltimore City	58	14	27
Have family in Baltimore City	70	11	19
Attend school in Baltimore City	83	5	11
Born in Baltimore City	83	6	11

Key findings:

Personal affinity for the city drove many purchases.

- **64%** of homebuyers said that "just liking Baltimore City" was a major factor in their decision
- Liking the city was also the most frequently selected single most important reason.

Working in or near Baltimore City was a commonly cited factor, especially among homebuyers with children.
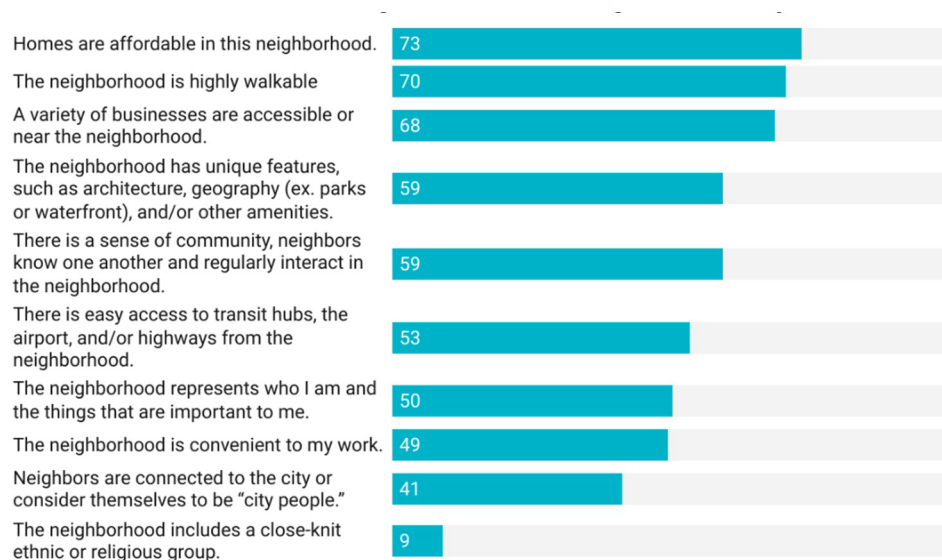
- **43%** of homebuyers said working in Baltimore City was a major factor.
- **27%** of homebuyers cited working near the city as a major factor, with minimal demographic variation.
- Working in the city was the second most frequently cited "most important factor" overall **(22%)**.

BALTIMORE CITY HOMEBUYERS' "MUST-HAVES" FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

Homebuyers were asked which neighborhood features were "must-haves" in their homebuying decisions.

Q9: Neighborhoods appeal to homebuyers for various reasons. The following is a list of benefits some residents associate with their neighborhoods. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means it "wasn't important" and 5 means that it "was an absolute must-have," please rate how important each neighborhood characteristic was in your homebuying decision.

Graph 2: "Must-Haves" for Neighborhoods Among all Homebuyers (Percentage)

Characteristic	Percentage
Homes are affordable in this neighborhood.	73
The neighborhood is highly walkable	70
A variety of businesses are accessible or near the neighborhood.	68
The neighborhood has unique features, such as architecture, geography (ex. parks or waterfront), and/or other amenities.	59
There is a sense of community, neighbors know one another and regularly interact in the neighborhood.	59
There is easy access to transit hubs, the airport, and/or highways from the neighborhood.	53
The neighborhood represents who I am and the things that are important to me.	50
The neighborhood is convenient to my work.	49
Neighbors are connected to the city or consider themselves to be "city people."	41
The neighborhood includes a close-knit ethnic or religious group.	9

Bars represent the percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 4 or 5 on the scale.
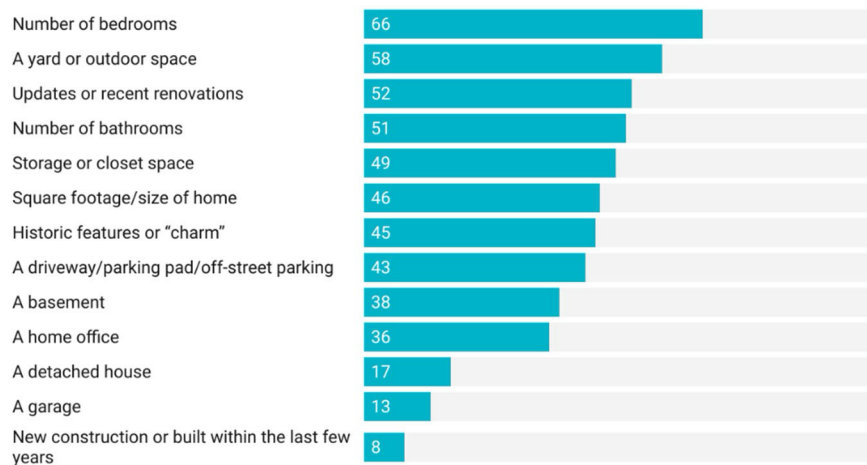
Key findings:

- 73% were looking for a neighborhood where homes were affordable.
- 70% wanted a highly walkable neighborhood.
- 68% wanted a neighborhood where a variety of businesses were accessible or close by.
- 59% wanted neighbors to know one another and regularly interact in the neighborhood.
- 59% preferred neighborhoods with unique features, such as architecture, geography (ex., parks or waterfront), or other amenities.
- Only 9% were looking for a home in neighborhoods that include a close-knit religious or ethnic group.

BALTIMORE CITY HOMEBUYERS' "MUST-HAVES" FOR HOMES

Homebuyers were asked which home features were "must-haves" in their homebuying decision.

Q12: Every homebuyer also has a different list of "must-haves" when choosing a home. The following is a list of individual home characteristics. Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means it "wasn't important to me" and 5 means that it "was an absolute must-have," rate how important each characteristic was in determining your choice of home.
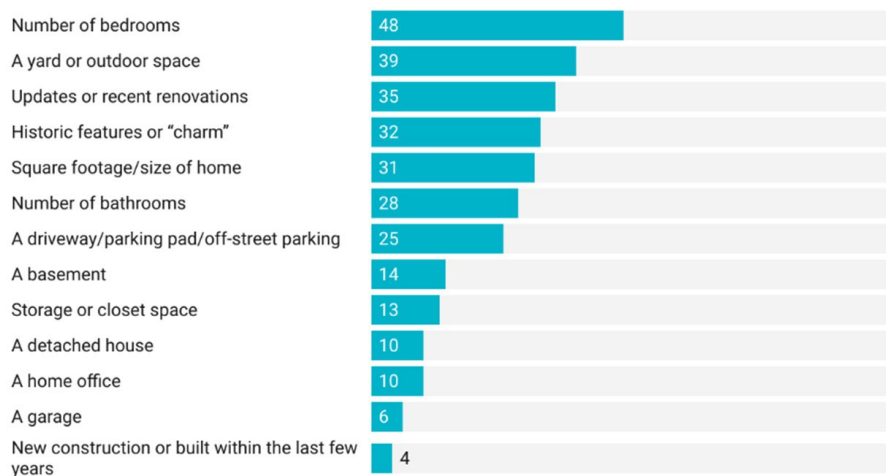
Graph 3: "Must-Haves" for Homes Among all Homebuyers (Percentage)

Feature	Percentage
Number of bedrooms	66
A yard or outdoor space	58
Updates or recent renovations	52
Number of bathrooms	51
Storage or closet space	49
Square footage/size of home	46
Historic features or "charm"	45
A driveway/parking pad/off-street parking	43
A basement	38
A home office	36
A detached house	17
A garage	13
New construction or built within the last few years	8

Bars represent the percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 4 or 5 on the scale.

Following the question above, where homebuyers rated how important individual home features were in their decision- making, Q13 asked respondents to select the three most important factors in choosing their home. This was a multi-item response question, so percentages do not sum to 100.

Graph 4: Top Three "Must-Haves" for Homes Among all Homebuyers (Percentage)

Feature	Percentage
Number of bedrooms	48
A yard or outdoor space	39
Updates or recent renovations	35
Historic features or "charm"	32
Square footage/size of home	31
Number of bathrooms	28
A driveway/parking pad/off-street parking	25
A basement	14
Storage or closet space	13
A detached house	10
A home office	10
A garage	6
New construction or built within the last few years	4

This question allowed multiple responses; percentages will not total to 100%.

HOW LONG HOMEBUYERS EXPECT TO STAY

Homebuyers were asked how long they planned to live in their home, as an estimate of resident retention. This was a single-selection response question.

Q18: Life can always change in unexpected ways. But as of right now, how long do you plan on living in your current home?

- **6%** of homebuyers selected 1 to 2 years
- **15%** of homebuyers selected 3 to 4 years
- **21%** of homebuyers selected 5 to 6 years
- **54%** of homebuyers selected More than 6 years
- **3%** of homebuyers preferred not to answer

Methodology Statement

This survey represents the third wave of Live Baltimore's City Homebuyer Survey. The previous waves were conducted during the following periods:

- Wave 1: December 8, 2020 to February 26, 2021
- Wave 2: April 20 to June 9, 2023

Wave 3 was conducted online between May 5 and June 23, 2025. Respondents were invited to participate via either an email invitation or a push-to-web mailer containing a QR code. Each invitation included a unique access code that expired after one use, ensuring that only one response could be submitted per participant.

The target population included recent Baltimore City homebuyers, defined as individuals who purchased a home between January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2024. Live Baltimore identified 13,109 eligible households, including 2,054 with a known email address, by combining publicly available real estate transaction records with internal organizational data. Properties purchased by corporations were excluded to focus on likely owner-occupied homes.

To encourage participation, Live Baltimore offered incentives including a branded bumper sticker, ten $50 Ace Hardware gift cards, and one $1,000 Visa gift card. Winners were selected at random, and prize registration was voluntary and not linked to survey responses.

A total of 720 completed surveys were received—541 via mailer and 179 via email—resulting in an overall response rate of 5%. A survey was considered complete if the respondent answered at least 70% of the questions.

For purposes of longitudinal comparison, a significant number of the questions in Wave 3 of Live Baltimore's City Homebuyer Survey were identical to those administered in Waves 1 and 2. One notable change in Wave 3 was the removal of questions related to working conditions, which were introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Wave 2.

Respondents could skip questions or indicate "prefer not to answer."

For questions concerning the survey methodology, please contact:

Mileah Kromer
Principal, Federal Hill Research Group
mkromer@federalhillresearchgroup.com

TOPLINE RESULTS

Note: Questions appear in the order in which they were administered to the respondent. Column percentages may not add up to exactly 100 due to rounding.

Q1: In which year did you purchase your home?

	Frequency	Percent
2022	78	11
2023	359	50
2024	246	34
Before 2022	20	3
Prefer not to answer	16	2
Total	719	100

Q2: Which best describes where your immediate previous residence was located?

	Frequency	Percent
Baltimore City	460	64
Another county in Maryland	137	19
Another state in the United States	115	16
Another country outside of the United States	5	1
Prefer not to answer	3	0
Total	720	100

Q3: Did you own or rent your previous residence?

	Frequency	Percent
Own	200	28
Rent	488	68
Other	26	4
Prefer not to answer	6	1
Total	720	100

Q4: Was your previous residence in a mostly urban, suburban, or rural area?

	Frequency	Percent
Urban	484	67
Suburban	202	28
Rural	27	4
Prefer not to answer	7	1
Total	720	100

Q5: Next, we'd like to know more about your decision to buy a home in Baltimore City. The following is a list of reasons people sometimes give for moving to or staying in Baltimore City. For each one, please indicate whether it was a major, minor, or not a factor at all in your decision.

	Not a Factor	Minor Factor	Major Factor	N/A	n=
Have family in Baltimore City	70	11	19	1	718
Have friends who live in Baltimore City	34	32	34	0	719
Work in Baltimore City	47	10	43	0	719
Work near (but not in) Baltimore City	58	14	27	1	719
Attend school in Baltimore City	83	5	11	0	719
Just liked Baltimore City	11	24	64	0	719
Born in Baltimore City	83	6	11	1	718

Q6: Which of the reasons listed below was the most important in the decision to purchase a home in Baltimore City?

	Frequency	Percent
Have family in Baltimore City	52	7
Have friends who live in Baltimore City	50	7
Work in Baltimore City	160	22
Work near (but not in) Baltimore City	81	11
Attend school in Baltimore City	21	3
Just liked Baltimore City	299	42
Born in Baltimore City	31	4
Prefer not to answer	22	3
Total	716	100

Q7: Did you consider buying a home in a surrounding county before settling on your current home in Baltimore City?

	Frequency	Percent
No, I only considered homes in Baltimore City.	446	62
Yes, I considered buying a home in a surrounding county.	264	37
Prefer not to answer	10	1
Total	720	100

Q8: In your own words, why did you decide to buy a home in Baltimore City?
Open-end response

Q9: Neighborhoods appeal to homebuyers for various reasons. The following is a list of benefits some residents associate with their neighborhoods. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means it "wasn't important" and 5 means that it "was an absolute must-have," please rate how important each neighborhood characteristic was in your homebuying decision.

	1 Wasn't Important	2	3 Somewhat Important	4	5 Must-Have	Prefer not to answer	n=
Homes are affordable in this neighborhood.	3	3	21	25	48	0	720
The neighborhood has unique features, such as architecture, geography (ex. parks or waterfront), and/or other amenities.	9	7	24	30	29	1	719
There is easy access to transit hubs, the airport, and/or highways from the neighborhood.	10	8	29	25	28	0	719
The neighborhood is highly walkable	6	3	20	23	47	1	719
A variety of businesses are accessible or near the neighborhood.	4	5	22	29	39	0	719
There is a sense of community, neighbors know one another and regularly interact in the neighborhood.	5	8	28	29	30	1	718
The neighborhood includes a close-knit ethnic or religious group.	62	13	15	5	4	1	719
Neighbors are connected to the city or consider themselves to be "city people."	22	10	26	26	15	1	719
The neighborhood represents who I am and the things that are important to me.	11	10	29	27	23	1	719
The neighborhood is convenient to my work.	21	6	23	23	26	1	719

Q10: Some homebuyers exclusively look in one neighborhood, while others consider many different neighborhoods throughout the city. About how many different neighborhoods did you consider before settling on your current home?

	Frequency	Percent
No other neighborhoods than the one I bought my home in	79	11
1-3 different neighborhoods	355	49
4-6 different neighborhoods	201	28
7-9 different neighborhoods	49	7
10 or more different neighborhoods	33	5
Prefer not to answer	3	0
Total	720	100

Q11: In your own words, what is the best thing about your neighborhood?
Open-end response

Q12: Every homebuyer also has a different list of "must-haves" when choosing a home. The following is a list of individual home characteristics. Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means it "wasn't important to me" and 5 means that it "was an absolute must-have," rate how important each characteristic was in determining your choice of home.

	1 Wasn't Important	2	3 Somewhat Important	4	5 Must-Have	Prefer not to answer	n=
Square footage/size of home	6	6	42	26	20	0	720
Number of bedrooms	2	4	27	27	39	0	719
Number of bathrooms	5	9	35	23	28	0	719
A detached house	61	11	10	6	11	0	719
A home office	27	11	25	14	22	0	720
A basement	23	12	27	17	21	0	719
Storage or closet space	5	9	37	24	25	0	719
A yard or outdoor space	12	9	22	20	38	0	719
A driveway/parking pad/off-street parking	25	12	20	13	30	0	720
A garage	59	14	13	6	7	0	719
New construction or built within the last few years	68	11	12	3	5	0	719
Updates or recent renovations	11	8	27	24	28	0	719
Historic features or "charm"	15	11	29	23	22	0	720

Q13: Which three factors were the most important in choosing your home?

	Frequency	Percent	n=
Square footage/size of home	225	31	719
Number of bedrooms	342	48	719
Number of bathrooms	199	28	719
A detached house	70	10	719
A home office	75	10	719
A basement	103	14	719
Storage or closet space	93	13	719
A yard or outdoor space	280	39	719
A driveway/parking pad/off-street parking	180	25	719
A garage	44	6	719
New construction or built within the last few years	26	4	719
Updates or recent renovations	254	35	719
Historic features or "charm"	229	32	719

*Multiple-item response

Q14: When you purchased your home, did you anticipate any of the following future work conditions for yourself or a member of your household?

	Frequency	Percent	n=
A remote job that requires full-time work from home	247	34	719
A hybrid job that requires a mix of working from home and at the job location/site	374	52	719
A fully on-location job that requires work at the job location/site on all or most days	266	37	719
Other anticipated work conditions	37	5	719
Prefer not to answer	45	6	719

*Multiple-item response

Q15: Even if you work remotely, what best describes the physical location of your current place of employment:

	Frequency	Percent
Located in Baltimore City	318	45
Located in Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Howard, Carroll, or Harford County	147	21
Located in Maryland but outside of Baltimore City and the counties listed above	67	9
Located outside of Maryland	119	17
I am not currently employed	35	5
Prefer not to answer	28	4
Total	714	100

Q16: To what extent did the work situations—either at the time or anticipated in the future—play in your decision to purchase a home in Baltimore City:

	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	92	13
Only a little	74	10
Somewhat	188	26
A great deal	359	50
Prefer not to answer	4	1
Total	717	100

Q18: Life can always change in unexpected ways. But as of right now, how long do you plan on living in your current home?

	Frequency	Percent
1 to 2 years	44	6
3 to 4 years	110	15
5 to 6 years	152	21
More than 6 years	391	54
Prefer not to answer	21	3
Total	718	100

Q19: Do you consider your current home to be a starter home, a forever home, or something in-between?

	Frequency	Percent
Starter home	179	25
Forever home	167	23
Something in-between	363	50
Prefer not to answer	10	1
Total	719	100

Q20: Have you renovated or updated your home since purchasing it?

	Frequency	Percent
No	208	29
Yes, minor/cosmetic renovations	378	53
Yes, major/structural renovations	125	17
Prefer not to answer	9	1
Total	720	100

Q21: Within the next five years, do you plan to renovate or update your home?

	Frequency	Percent
No	96	13
Yes, minor/cosmetic renovations	420	58
Yes, major/structural renovations	181	25
Prefer not to answer	22	3
Total	719	100

Q22: The following is a list of people or groups of people who can sometimes influence home-buying decisions. Please indicate whether each one encouraged or discouraged you, offered mixed opinions (some encouraged/discouraged), or offered no opinions at all on your decision to buy a home in Baltimore City.

	Discouraged	Encouraged	Mixed opinions	Offered no opinions	Prefer not to answer	n=
My partner/spouse	2	55	9	24	10	709
My friends	4	53	21	20	2	717
My family members	6	39	32	22	1	717
My employer or co-workers	4	28	19	47	2	715
My real estate agent	1	68	8	20	2	718

Q23: If someone tried to discourage you from buying a home in Baltimore City, what reasons did they give?
Open-end response

Q24: Former Baltimore Homebuyers point to a variety of different reasons that affected their decision to leave the city. Even if you have no plans to leave, can you tell us what factors might make you decide to leave the city? Please select all that apply.

	Frequency	Percent	n=
Changing personal/family circumstances	394	55	719
Changing occupational/job circumstances	377	52	719
City life is no longer an affordable option	222	31	719
Looking for a bigger home/more square footage	241	33	719
Lack of neighborhood amenities	133	18	719
Looking to upgrade to a better home	208	29	719
Deteriorating conditions in my neighborhood	328	46	719

Q25: What is your gender?

	Frequency	Percent
Male	248	35
Female	426	60
Transgender/non-binary/other gender identity	19	3
Prefer not to answer	22	3
Total	715	100

Q26: In what year were you born?

	Frequency	Percent
18 to 34	226	33
35 to 44	233	34
45 to 54	116	17
55 to 64	76	11
65+	41	6
Total	692	100

Q27: What is your marital status?

	Frequency	Percent
Single	247	35
Living with a partner but not married	89	12
Married	309	43
Divorced or separated	40	6
Widowed	7	1
Prefer not to answer	24	3
Total	716	100

Q28: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	Frequency	Percent
Less than high school	0	0
Completed high school or GED	28	4
Some college, but did not finish	45	6
Two-year college degree / A.A. / A.S.	38	5
Four-year college degree / B.A. / B.S.	214	30
Master's degree	271	38
Professional degree (e.g., M.D., J.D.)	56	8
Doctoral degree (Ph.D. or equivalent)	57	8
Prefer not to answer	7	1
Total	716	100

Q29: Which of the following describes your race or ethnic origin? You can select as many as apply.

	Frequency	Percent	n=
American Indian or Alaska Native	8	1	670
Asian or Asian American	41	6	670
Black or African American	204	30	670
Hispanic or Latino	38	6	670
White or Caucasian	409	61	670
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	0	0	670
Biracial or multi-racial	23	3	670

*Multiple-item response

Q0: Which category best describes your expected 2023 household income from all sources before taxes?

	Frequency	Percent
Under $36,499	18	3
$36,500 - $60,894	66	9
$60,850 - $94,649	143	20
$94,650 - $146,039	184	26
$146,040 and over	237	34
Prefer not to answer	59	8
Total	707	100

Q31: Including yourself, how many people live full-time in your household?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	More than 5	n=
Adult men	23	72	4	0	0	0	0	644
Adult women	17	73	8	1	0	0	0	663
Adult transgender/non-binary/other gender identity	95	3	1	0	0	0	0	549
Children under 5	81	14	3	0	0	0	0	562
Children between 5 and 17	83	9	5	2	1	0	0	556