



ISSUE BRIEF

USING AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDS TO MEET DETROITERS' HOME REPAIR NEEDS

OVERVIEW

This report is part of a series of reports highlighting findings from the most recent survey of the Detroit Metro Area Communities Study (DMACS). The survey was fielded between June 2 and July 9, 2021, and captures the views of a representative sample of 1,898 Detroiters. [Other reports in this series](#) focused on findings related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as residents' experiences with crime and perspectives on policing. This report focuses on the issue of housing quality in Detroit and the need for home repairs among renters and owners in the city. Results have been weighted to reflect the population of the City of Detroit.

[See full results from DMACS surveys here.](#)



KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly 38,000 households in Detroit lived in inadequate housing—housing with major issues with exposed wires or electrical problems, broken furnace or heating problems, or lack of hot or running water—in the past year.
- Sixteen percent of households making less than \$30,000 per year, and 15% of households earning between \$30,000 and \$60,000 per year were living in inadequate housing.
- While the vast majority of higher-income individuals living in inadequate housing undertook home repairs, only 33% of low-income individuals did.
- Renters (16%) were more likely to live in inadequate housing than homeowners (12%).
- Households with children (18%) and residents of color (14%) are among the groups more likely to be living in housing classified as inadequate.
- The most commonly reported home maintenance issues were related to plumbing (39%). About one-third of Detroit residents reported problems with mice, rats, roaches, and other pests (34%); structural problems with their porches (33%); and/or unsafe or damaged trees (31%).

INTRODUCTION

In June 2021, Detroit received the first of two disbursements of funding—which will ultimately total \$826 million—from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The funding is intended, in part, to aid local governments and communities hit hard by the financial toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. [When soliciting input from residents](#) on how best to spend ARPA funds, the City found that Detroiters' top priority was investing in neighborhoods, including funding home repairs for seniors, disabled, and low-income households.¹ In response, the [Duggan administration announced plans](#) to invest the first \$400 million in ARPA funds directly into Detroit's neighborhoods, launching the \$30 million [Renew Detroit](#) program that will provide home repair grants to low-income senior citizens and homeowners with disabilities.²

Evidence suggests such investments are greatly needed. [Past research](#) conservatively estimates that 24,000 homes in Detroit may be of inadequate quality, meaning they are substandard accommodations for habitation based on the condition of their maintenance, electrical wiring, heating, or plumbing.³ Low-income residents, residents of color, and renters are especially likely to live in substandard conditions, which can have major implications for their physical, emotional, and financial health.⁴ Using ARPA funds to address home repair needs could not only address these inequities and ensure a safer home for residents but also fills a critical funding gap. Few existing programs direct funds to home repair and these programs are often over-subscribed, are out of financial reach for many low-income homeowners, provide too little funding to cover major repairs, and are generally inaccessible for renter households.^{5,6}

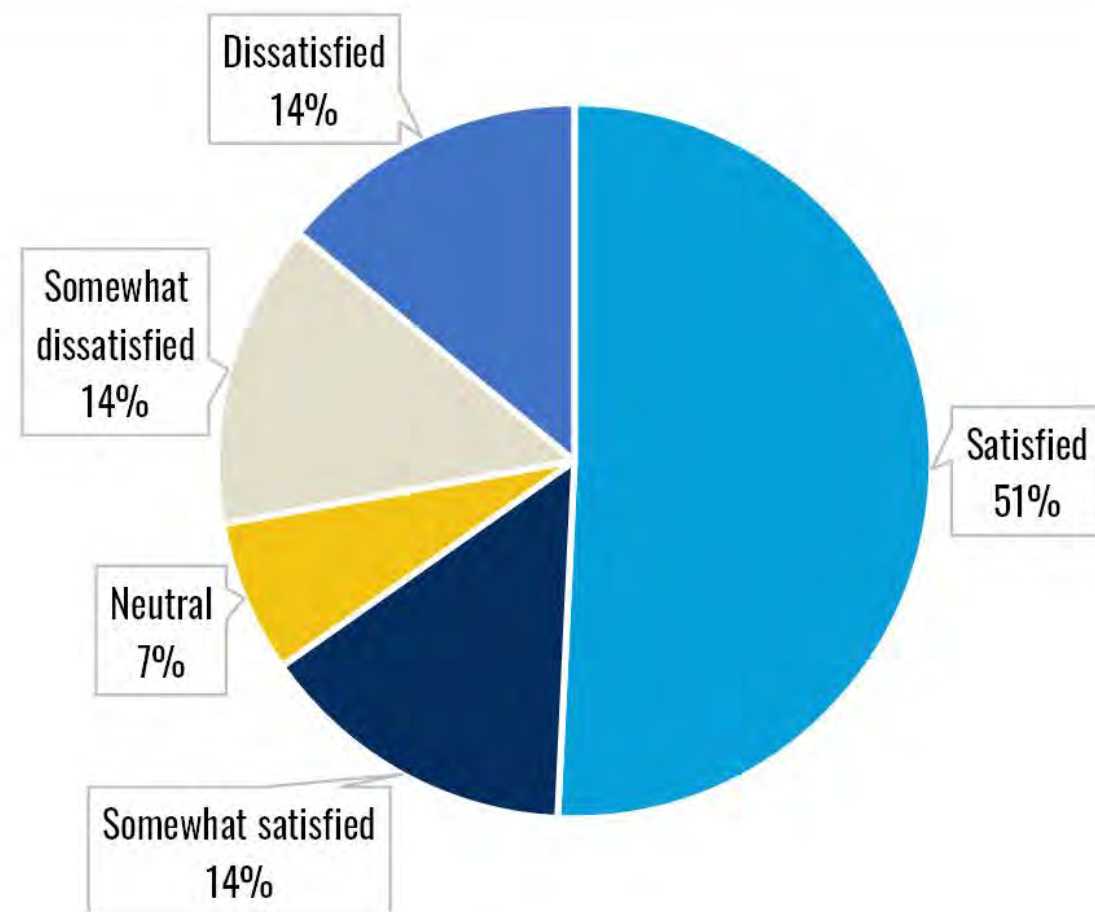
This report examines Detroiters' satisfaction with their home conditions and the demand for home repairs. It finds that the need for home repair may be even more widespread than previously estimated, suggesting that nearly 38,000 households live in inadequate housing conditions, that deferred maintenance is common, and that landlords whose tenants live in substandard quality housing are less likely to respond to requests for repairs. The report also suggests that while the Renew Detroit program is an important first step towards ameliorating the repair crisis for select residents, demand far exceeds the 750 homes annually slotted for home repair funds.⁷ More assistance is needed among renters and households with children who are less likely to fit the criteria for home repair grants but who experience some of the greatest needs for improved housing conditions.

JUST HALF OF DETROITERS ARE SATISFIED WITH THEIR HOME CONDITIONS

- Half (51%) of Detroit households report they are very or mostly satisfied with the condition of their home while 14% of households are mostly or very dissatisfied with the condition of their home.

FIGURE 1

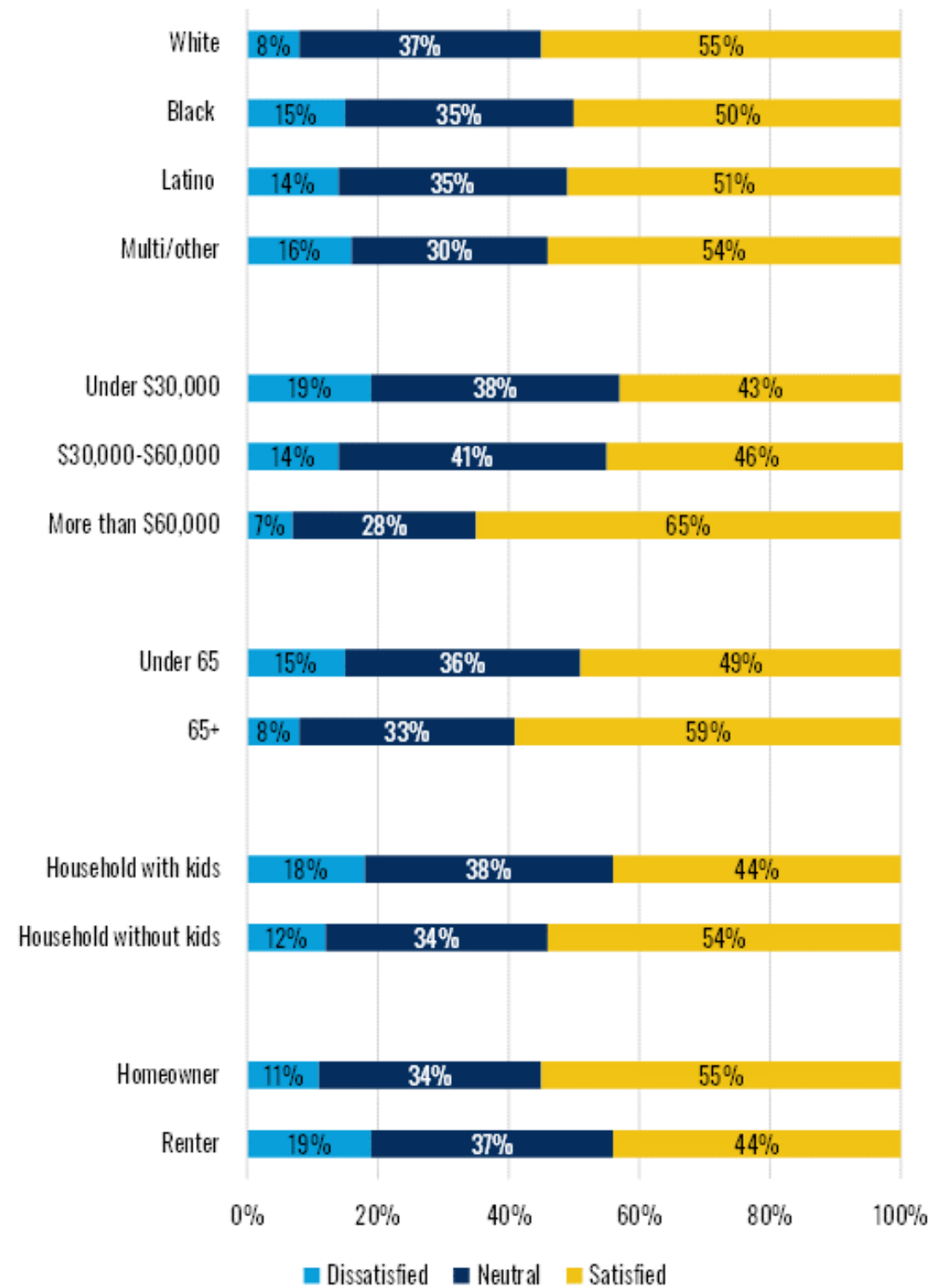
DETROITERS' SATISFACTION WITH HOME QUALITY



- Satisfaction with housing conditions varies considerably among subgroups:
 - White households are half as likely as households of color to express dissatisfaction with their housing conditions. One in six Black households report that they are dissatisfied with the condition of their housing.⁸
 - Low-income households (those earning less than \$30,000 annually⁹) also report substantially lower levels of satisfaction with their housing conditions compared to wealthier households. Nearly 20% of households earning \$30,000 or less are dissatisfied with their housing conditions compared to 7% of those earning more than \$60,000.
 - Younger residents (those under the age of 65) are twice as likely to report they are dissatisfied with the condition of their homes than seniors.
 - Households with children are more likely to report being dissatisfied with their housing conditions compared to those without children.
 - Renters are twice as likely as homeowners to be dissatisfied with their housing conditions. Nearly 20% of renters are dissatisfied with their housing conditions, and 11% of owner-occupied households are similarly dissatisfied with the conditions of their homes.
- Satisfaction with one's housing is strongly associated with desire to move. Residents who are not satisfied with the condition of their home are twice as likely (72%) to say they want to move compared to households who are satisfied with their housing conditions (39%).
- Detroiters who are dissatisfied with their housing conditions are more likely to live near other blighted properties. Forty-two percent of dissatisfied households live in neighborhoods where they say blighted and abandoned homes, stores, and lots are "a big problem" in their neighborhoods, compared to 25% of households who are more satisfied with their housing conditions.

FIGURE 2

SATISFACTION WITH HOME CONDITION BY SUBGROUP

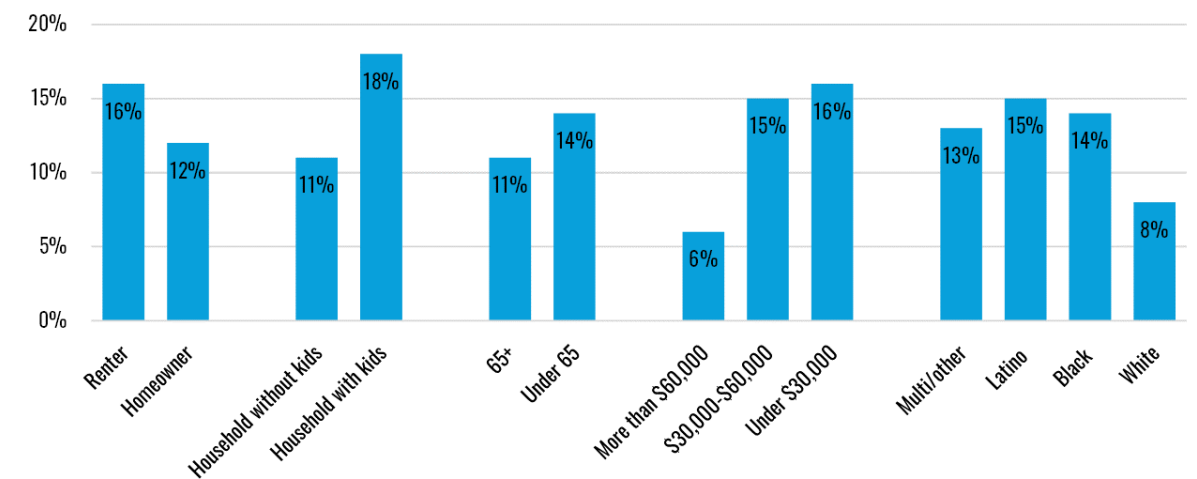


37,630 HOUSEHOLDS LIVE IN INADEQUATE HOUSING CONDITIONS

- Just 19% of households report experiencing no major or minor problems with the condition of their home in the past year.
- Eighty-one percent of Detroiters say they have had at least one problem with the condition of their home in the past year, and 43% report having at least one **major** home repair need.¹⁰
- Thirteen percent of Detroit households report living in housing that can be considered in inadequate condition—housing in which exposed wires or electrical problems, broken furnace or heating problems, or lack of hot or running water were a major issue in the past year.¹¹ By comparison, 3.2% of households in the Detroit Metro Area had inadequate housing conditions according to the 2019 American Housing Survey.¹²
- Based on DMACS estimates, 37,630 households—15,336 owner-occupied households and 22,294 renter-occupied households—in Detroit may be living in inadequate housing.¹³

FIGURE 3

INADEQUATE HOUSING AMONG DETROITERS



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Sharon Sand, DMACS project manager, at
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Learn more at www.detroiturvey.umich.edu