



Voices of Loudoun Women

2025



This report is developed by **LCWAG's Research & Impact Hub Committee** as part of our ongoing effort to generate actionable insights in support of women and girls in Loudoun County. The work reflects the collective expertise, time, and commitment of the individuals below.

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We extend our thanks to each member for their thoughtful input and dedication throughout the assessment series. This work would not have been possible without their leadership and collaboration.



NO T C O U D O U N W O M E N

Thank you, Loudoun! Your support powers us to empower our community.

Over the past years, the Loudoun Coalition on Women and Girls (LCWAG) made incredible strides. Thanks to our generous community of donors and supporters, in 2023, we introduced Loudoun to eight phenomenal women leaders, who were inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame. We inspired confidence in women considering to take the leap into entrepreneurship, as well as for emerging leaders in local middle and high schools. Before closing out 2024, we also surpassed 1,200 responses to the Voices of Loudoun Women survey. Together with you, we celebrated the honor of being awarded **Nonprofit Organization of the Year** by the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce.

Our annual report is designed to share what we did; what we learned; and what's next for Loudoun women and girls. Our team prioritizes **publicizing our data in order to support the informed investment** of state and local funds, as well as resource alignment for other nonprofit organizations. These insights also inform the strategic direction of our signature programs — the LCWAG Research & Impact Hub, Girl emPower, Woman emPower, and the Loudoun Women's Hall of Fame.

We hope that you will join us in advancing our vision to ensure that every Loudoun County woman and girl will have equitable opportunities to achieve personal and professional growth. **Consider this report an invitation to attend an event, connect with us on social media, or volunteer your expertise.** Here's to what's next!

LCWAG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonpolitical organization that promotes leadership development and fosters an inclusive community for Loudoun's women and girls through education, collaboration, and empowerment. LCWAG is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization independently funded through grants and private donations.

ELEVATING OUR IMPACT

LCWAG sets strategic goals informed by Loudoun women and girls — their insights power our program evaluations and annual surveys, enabling us to empower our community more effectively. The matrix below outlines the previous year's organizational commitments. We analyzed data on areas of success as well as growing demand to determine the priorities for elevating our impact in the year ahead.

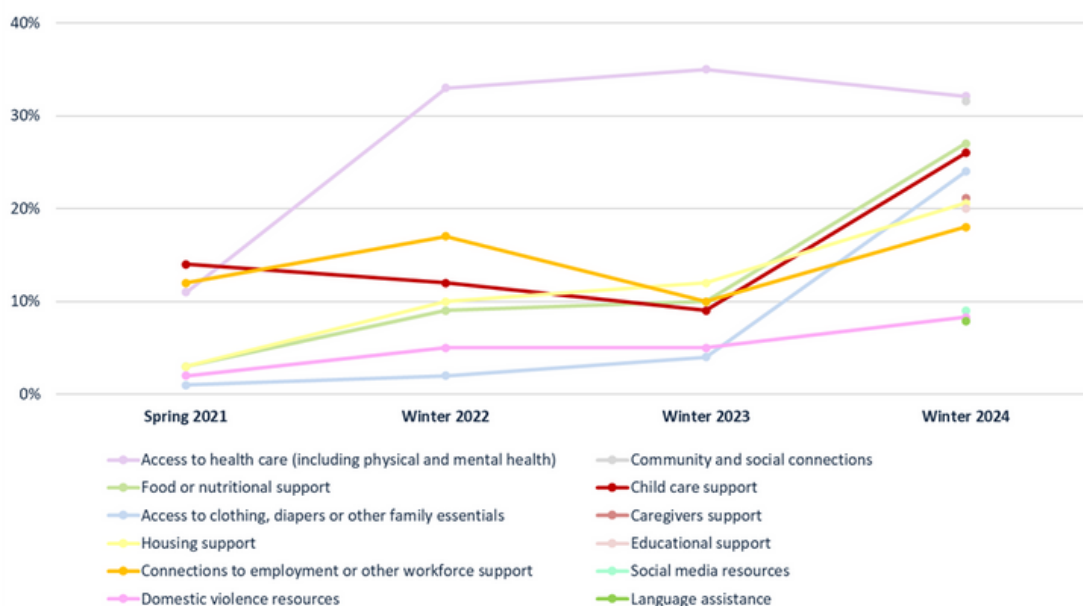
Program	Achieved in 2024	Priority for 2025
LCWAG Research & Impact Hub	Publicized survey findings and identified new partnerships.	Reach a demographically representative population of Loudoun County women in our annual survey.
Girl emPower	Focused on mental health, broaden the quarterly pop-up events, and hosted the fifth annual Girl emPower Summit on September 21, 2024	Continue quarterly pop-up event's outreach. Host the sixth annual Girl emPower Summit.
Woman emPower	Hosted the third year of Loudoun's Entrepreneurial Women's Business Seminar.	Support women's personal and professional ambitions throughout the year. Create new partnerships.
Women's Hall of Fame	Hosted the first-ever Loudoun County Women's Hall of Fame Inductee & Award Luncheon in 2023. Established the program as a biennial event.	Host the second Loudoun County Women's Hall of Fame Inductee & Award Luncheon.

LCWAG Research & Impact Hub

The LCWAG Research & Impact Hub periodically conducts the **Voices of Loudoun Women** community assessment series to identify and monitor the issues in our community that impact women residing in Loudoun County.

Programs women view as important for meeting challenges in their households

Percentage of all Loudoun women surveyed in each sample period.



The Voices of Loudoun Women series has generated **over 1,200 total responses** from local women over five years of data collection. In December 2022, the rate of women surveyed who reported experiencing one or more major challenges rose from 1 in 3 Loudoun women to **1 in 2 Loudoun women**. New data collected in December 2024 confirms that **this heightened rate has persisted**.

The latest data show **a shift in the top four major challenges**: access to health care (including mental health); community and social connections; food or nutritional support and child care support.

While women continue to value personal and professional growth, it appears that there is **a growing demand for basic needs support**. These results may be influenced by national factors, such as inflationary pressures affecting household budgets; regional factors, such as the high cost of living in Northern Virginia; and other factors, including LCWAG's efforts to engage more demographically representative survey samples.

The survey also revealed concerning data on women's mental health and safety. Critically, **8% of Loudoun women surveyed** stated that **domestic violence resources** are important for meeting challenges in their household and **23% of Loudoun women surveyed** reported that they are unaware of **human trafficking resources**.

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Introduction

It is well established that the conditions in which people live, work, eat, and play significantly influence the health and well-being of communities (social determinants of health).¹ Despite ongoing efforts to address these social determinants of health, disparities persist, especially in historically underserved communities.² Women continue to face inequities in education, income, healthcare access, and employment opportunities.³ They are also disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, which is closely linked to socioeconomic status, cultural norms, substance use, and other social factors.⁴ Acknowledging and addressing these enduring challenges is essential to improving the lives of all women and girls.

Recognizing these challenges at the local level, the Loudoun Coalition on Women and Girls (LCWAG) has been at the forefront of assessing and improving conditions for women and girls in Loudoun County. LCWAG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that “promotes leadership development and fosters an inclusive community for Loudoun’s women and girls through education, collaboration, and empowerment. Founded in 2017 and established as an independent 501(c)(3) in 2021, LCWAG remains an all-volunteer coalition funded by grants and private donations. The coalition’s work spans community programs and research initiatives, with a vision that “every Loudoun County woman and girl will have equitable opportunities to achieve personal and professional growth. In line with this mission, LCWAG’s Research & Impact Hub periodically conducts the Voices of Loudoun Women community assessment series to identify and monitor key issues affecting local women. Insights from these assessments inform LCWAG’s programs and efforts, amplifying the coalition’s impact on the community.

Recent assessments underscore persistent gaps in Loudoun County. For instance, the INOVA 2022 Loudoun Community Health Needs Assessment found that women most frequently identified mental health care services as a critical unmet need.⁵

Similarly, LCWAG’s 2023 Voices of Loudoun Women survey series revealed that approximately 40% of women cited access to healthcare as the most significant need for their household.⁶ While these findings are valuable, continued investigation is necessary to fully understand the spectrum of health and social challenges faced by Loudoun’s women, as well as the barriers that hinder access to essential services. To that end, LCWAG carried out the 2024 Voices of Loudoun Women Survey to dig deeper into these issues. The survey focused on both challenges and strengths within the community, with the goal of developing targeted strategies to improve the quality of life for women and girls. This report presents a summary of the 2024 survey findings, emphasizing the coalition’s data-driven approach to advancing equity and well-being for Loudoun’s women and girls.

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Methodology and Sample Characteristics

The Voices of Loudoun Women Survey is an annual community survey initiative led by LCWAG's Research & Impact Hub. The 2024 survey was designed to explore a broad range of social, economic, and health needs of women in Loudoun County. During the 2024 survey cycle, a total of 228 responses were collected from a diverse group of participants, providing a substantial sample to inform a comprehensive action plan. The survey was disseminated in both English and Spanish, to ensure more inclusive participation across the county.

Respondent Demographics: The demographic distribution of survey respondents is summarized in Table 1 (see Appendix). In brief, the majority of the 228 participants resided in Eastern Loudoun, about 57% of respondents. Most respondents identified as female (95%), and about half identified as Non-Hispanic White (50%). A wide range of age groups participated; the largest age cohort was 45–54 years (22% of respondents). Nearly half of all respondents reported being employed full-time (49%), and 23% reported an annual household income over \$200,000. Notably, a significant portion of respondents (59%) had at least one child under the age of 18 living in their household. These figures indicate that the survey captured perspectives from women across various life stages, income levels, and family situations in Loudoun.

In 2024, LCWAG offered a Spanish-language version of the survey for the first time, in parallel with the English version. This effort was intended to better reach Loudoun's Hispanic community, which has historically been underrepresented in needs assessments.⁷ Approximately 15% of all survey responses were collected through the Spanish version. These Spanish-language respondents were demographically distinct in important ways. The vast majority resided in Eastern Loudoun, 91% of the Spanish-language respondents. Most were young adults – over half were between the ages of 25 and 34 (54%) – and were employed part-time (37%). A large share of this subgroup reported lower household incomes; 60% had an annual household income between \$10,000 and \$49,000. Nearly all (97%) of the Spanish-language respondents had at least one child under 18 at home.

The sections below detail the key findings from the 2024 Voices of Loudoun Women survey, organized by major topic areas. Each section highlights the primary challenges identified by respondents, notable demographic patterns, illustrative comments from participants, and, where relevant, comparisons to external data or studies. All data refers to Loudoun County respondents unless otherwise noted.

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Key Findings

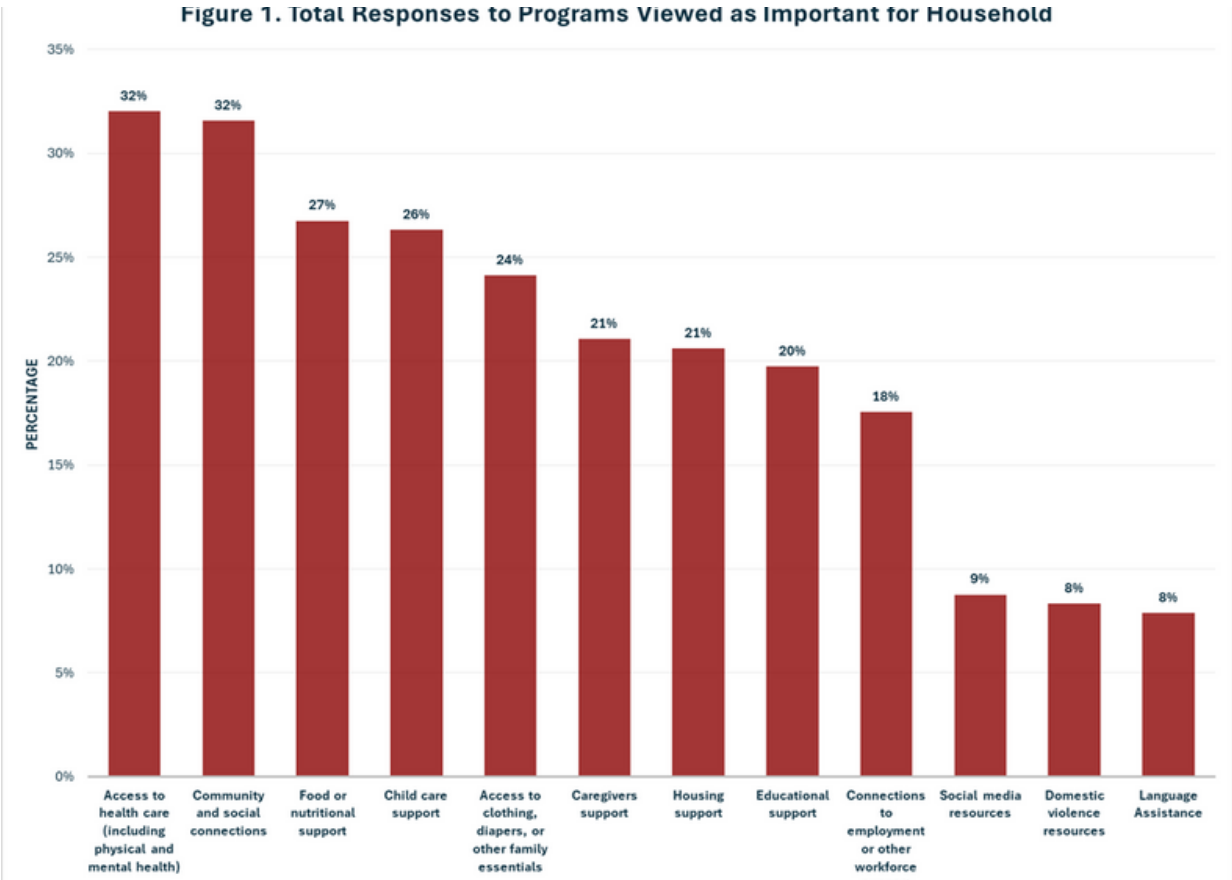
Childcare Challenges

Access to affordable, reliable child care emerged as a significant concern for many Loudoun women, especially those with young children. Among survey participants who had at least one child under 18 in their household, the cost of childcare was most frequently cited as the single biggest childcare-related problem in the past year. Approximately 15% of these respondents indicated that high childcare costs were the most significant issue they faced. The next most common concern was difficulty scheduling childcare to match work hours, reported by about 14% of respondents with children. Two other challenges; transportation to from childcare or school and finding temporary or backup care were tied as the third most frequently reported problems, each around 8% of respondents.

Qualitative responses reinforced how childcare costs and availability strain household resources. One mother from Eastern Loudoun expressed frustration with prices, stating, “Day care fee should be around \$600 per month but it’s too much.” Another respondent from Eastern Loudoun emphasized a broader lack of support for basic needs in the area, particularly affordable childcare options. A participant from the Northern region issued a clear call to action, noting that “Housing and childcare affordability are serious issues in Loudoun that require proactive policy making.” These voices highlight that the high cost of childcare is not just an economic burden but also a source of anxiety and lost opportunities for families.

This local perspective aligns with county-wide data. In 2024, Loudoun County’s Finance/Government Operations and Economic Development Committee conducted a Child Care Needs Assessment to identify the greatest needs for families regarding child care accessibility and affordability.⁸ The assessment found that in Eastern Loudoun, 45% of surveyed families reported needing help paying for childcare, compared to 39% in Western Loudoun. Moreover, more than half of respondents in both areas reported difficulty finding any childcare at all, underscoring a shortage of available options. These statistics mirror the challenges voiced by LCWAG survey participants. Nationally, families on average spend between 8% and 10% of their household income on child care, even though the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that child care consume no more than 7% of family income to be considered affordable [countyhealthrankings.org](https://www.countyhealthrankings.org). In other words, childcare in America often exceeds the affordability threshold, forcing many parents to make tough choices. Taken together, the data indicates that high costs and limited availability of childcare are pressing issues in Loudoun. Addressing these problems may require policy interventions such as subsidies or expanding childcare services to ensure that parents, especially mothers are not forced to choose between earning a paycheck and securing safe, affordable care for their children.

Access to Healthcare and Basic Needs



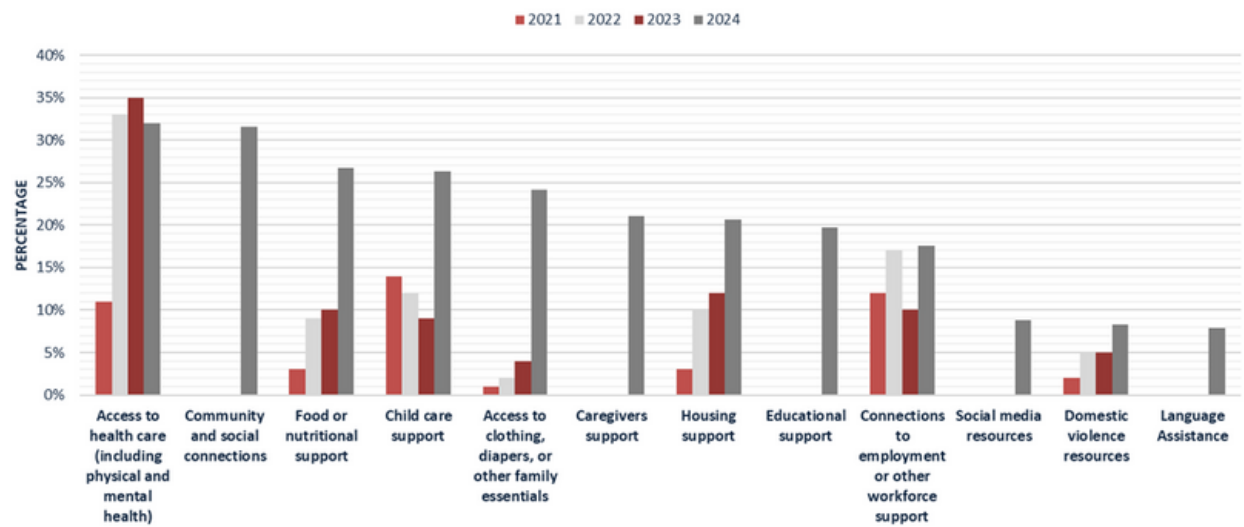
Access to health care and other basic needs was another significant challenge reported by the respondents in the 2024 survey results. When asked which types of community programs or resources were most important for helping with challenges in their household, respondents most frequently selected health care access including both physical and mental health care.

Approximately 32% of all respondents identified access to health care as a top priority for their household, making it the highest-ranked need overall (Figure 1). The second most prioritized resource was community and social connections (32% of respondents), followed by food or nutritional support (27%) and childcare support (26%). Notably, access to health care was especially emphasized by women aged 35–64 and those living in Eastern Loudoun, suggesting these groups feel strain in obtaining medical services. Meanwhile, respondents in the Northern region (especially ages 35–64) were somewhat more likely to emphasize the importance of community/social support networks to help meet their challenges.

Difficulty accessing health care has been a persistent concern across all reports of the Voices of Loudoun Women survey. Indeed, access to healthcare has ranked among the top challenges in every survey cycle to date (Figure 2).

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Figure 2. Distribution of *Voices of Loudoun* Survey Responses (2021-2024)



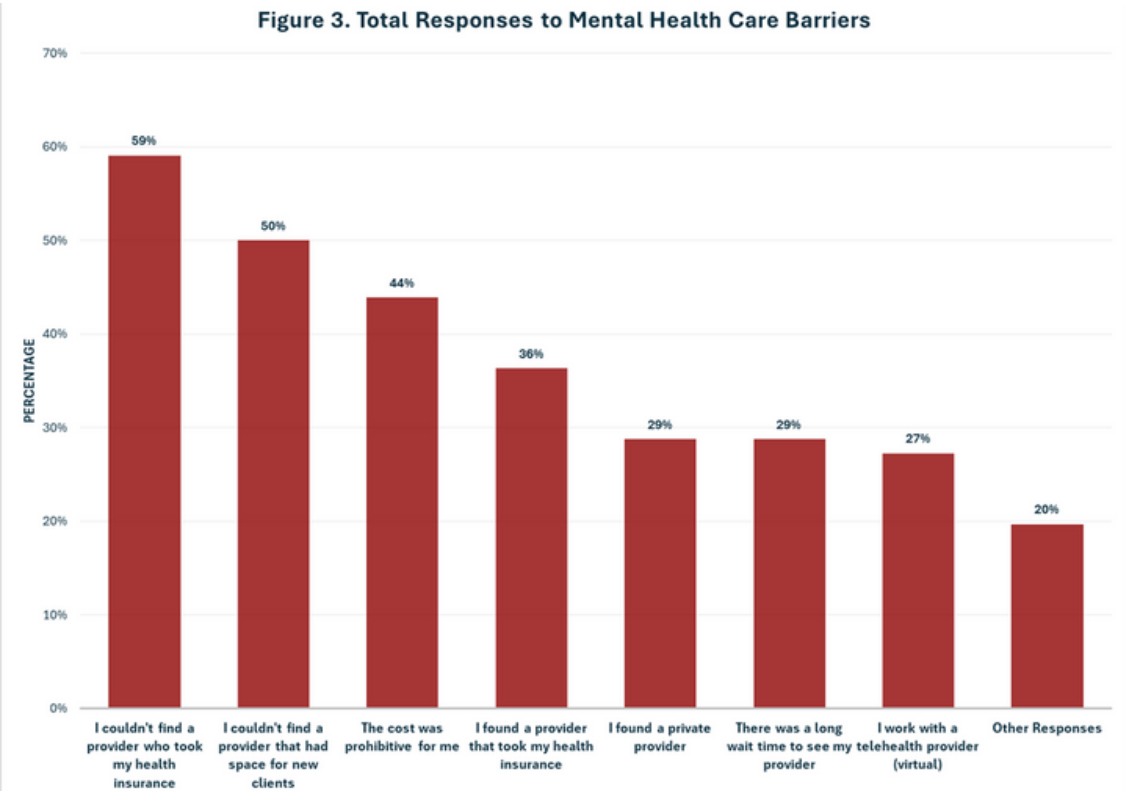
In 2024, many women elaborated on this issue in the open-ended comments. For example, one woman aged 65 or older wrote, “Challenges facing women my age are healthcare expenses – both premiums and physician expenses.” A Spanish-language survey participant similarly noted, “Nos enfrentamos al desempleo, acceso a la salud” (Translation: “We face unemployment, and access to health”). This suggests that in some communities, lack of jobs and lack of healthcare access are interconnected struggles. Additionally, a respondent from Northern Loudoun explained that women need “safe spaces” to address burnout, highlighting that mental health and stress relief resources such as support groups or wellness programs are also needed as part of comprehensive health access. Taken together, these remarks indicate that women in Loudoun are not only concerned about obtaining medical care and insurance coverage, but also about the broader support needed to maintain health, including financial affordability and community-based emotional support.

Challenges related to food and nutrition were also evident, though to a lesser extent. About one-quarter of respondents said that access to food, nutritional support (27%), or other essential goods like clothing, diapers, and family essentials (24%) was an important need for their household. However, certain groups reported these needs at disproportionately high rates. The need for food and nutrition support was more frequently reported by Hispanic women aged 25–44, and by those with household incomes between \$10,000 and \$49,000. Similarly, the need for help obtaining basic family essentials was most often cited by Hispanic women ages 25–34, those in the lower-income bracket (\$10–\$49k), and residents of Eastern Loudoun. These patterns suggest that economic insecurity particularly affecting younger, Hispanic women in the county’s eastern portion translates into difficulties affording food and other daily basic needs. It underlines the importance of culturally appropriate outreach and assistance programs to ensure all families can meet their basic needs.

Access to Mental Health

Mental health emerged as an issue in the survey results. On one hand, nearly half of respondents (48%) reported that they did not seek mental health services in the past year. On the other hand, among those who did need mental health support, many encountered obstacles in getting care. Respondents who indicated they needed mental health services (52%) in the past year were more likely to have certain characteristics: they tended to reside in the Northern region of the county, be Non-Hispanic White, be between 35 and 54 years old, have an annual household income over \$200,000, and to be employed. A very similar demographic profile was observed for those who both needed and received mental health services in the past year, suggesting that utilization largely mirrored need among the groups just described.

For the women who did seek mental health care, access barriers were common. The most frequently reported challenges when trying to get mental health services were finding a provider who accepts one's insurance, 59% of those who needed care reported this problem, finding a provider with availability for new clients (50%), and the high cost of services (44%). These three issues; insurance acceptance, provider availability, and cost, far outweighed other potential barriers in the survey (Figure 3). It is notable that no respondents explicitly mentioned stigma or personal hesitancy around mental health in the open-ended comments; the barriers cited were largely systemic, capacity and cost issues in the health system.



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Broad external data echoes these findings. In the 2024 State of Mental Health in America report by Mental Health America, Virginia was ranked 12th overall among states in mental health status, a composite ranking where 1 indicates lower prevalence of mental illness and better access to care.⁹ This relatively high ranking suggests Virginia performs somewhat well on average. However, even in Virginia, there are gaps: about 22% of adults in the state reported that they could not afford mental health services at some point when they needed them. Provider shortages are also a challenge, Virginia has roughly 450 people for every 1 mental health provider, indicating that provider capacity is limited in many areas. National analyses confirm that provider availability and cost are among the primary reasons women across the U.S. are unable to access mental health care when needed.¹⁰ This is especially true for women who are uninsured. In Virginia, 8% of women were uninsured as of 2023, with women of color and low-income women disproportionately represented in this uninsured group.¹¹

On average, women in Virginia reported about 5.5 days of poor mental health in the past month, a figure that did not vary greatly by race or ethnicity. Strengthening mental health infrastructure by providing educational programs on coping skills, increasing the provider network, ensuring insurance parity, and reducing cost barriers would likely improve access for Loudoun's residents who need care.

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Access to Professional and Career Development

The survey also explored women's interests in professional growth and economic opportunity. When asked about types of professional or career development they would be interested in, respondents expressed clear preferences. The most popular choices were career certificate programs and seminar workshops, closely followed by webinars and online training modules (Table 3). Younger respondents ages 25 to 44 showed a stronger preference for career certification programs, suggesting a desire for credentials or technical skills that could advance their careers. In contrast, women in the 45–54 age range were more likely to prefer seminars and webinars, which may reflect interest in continuous learning or networking opportunities that fit into busy schedules. Participants mentioned a wide range of specific career interests when given the chance to write in answers, including entrepreneurship, education, business management, healthcare/medicine, and project management. Notably, there were no topics that dominated the open-ended responses; the variety of interests suggests that development programs should be multifaceted or tailored to different fields. There were also no significant comments about career needs in the free-response section, aside from the interests noted.

These local preferences align with broader workforce trends for women. Nationally, women remain somewhat concentrated in specific industries and roles, and they face certain structural challenges in the labor market. Women continue to be overrepresented in lower-paying jobs, they are about 10% more likely than men to work in low-wage occupations, and they are most employed in education, healthcare, and other care-oriented fields. At the same time, women have been making significant strides in education and leadership. As of 2023–2024, women's labor force participation rate had climbed back to 58% after a pandemic-era decline, approaching its pre-2020 level.¹²

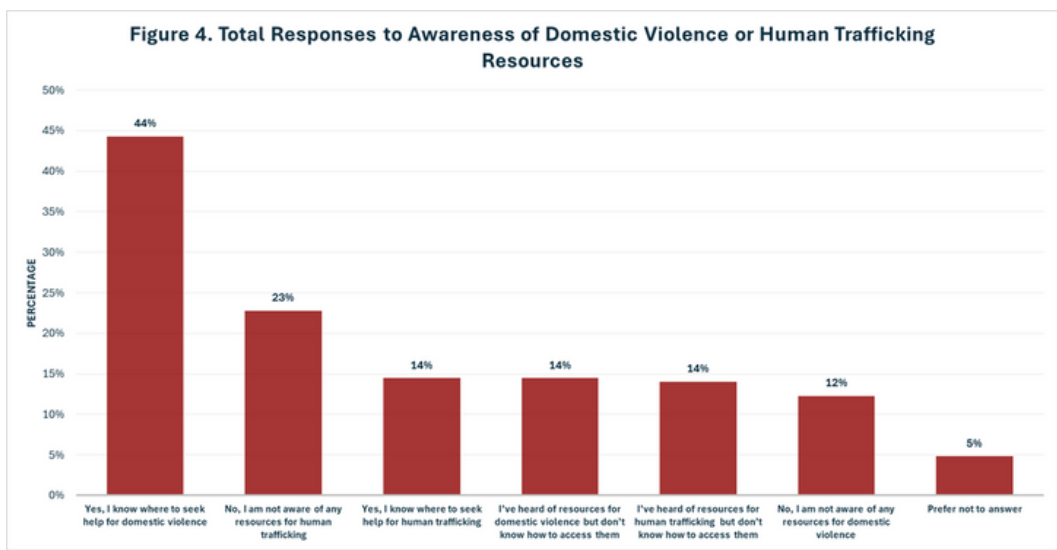
Women have also just recently become most of the college-educated workforce in the United States, reflecting decades of gains in higher education attainment. Despite these advancements, the pull of caregiving responsibilities continues to impact women's careers. Taking care of children or family remains the leading reason women, especially mothers, step away from the workforce. In many families, the high cost of childcare makes it impractical for both parents to work full-time, and it is often the mother who forgoes or limits employment to provide care. This dynamic is evident even in the Loudoun community: as noted earlier, childcare difficulties are a top concern for many survey respondents, and those difficulties can directly impede women's professional progress. Overall, the survey results on career development suggest that Loudoun's women are eager to advance their skills and careers, but supportive policies such as flexible work arrangements, affordable childcare, and mentorship or training programs are crucial to help translate their ambitions into reality.

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Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking

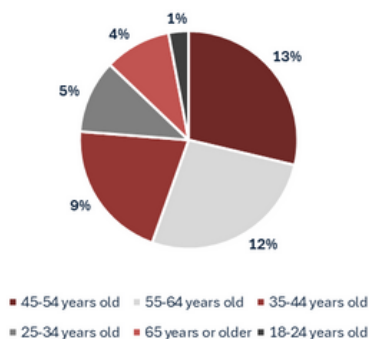
Nearly one-third of respondents (30%) reported that they personally know someone who has experienced domestic violence. Additionally, 13% of respondents stated that they themselves have experienced domestic violence at some point. These percentages suggest that domestic violence is not an isolated problem; it cuts across the community, affecting a significant number of women either directly or indirectly. Importantly, the survey data showed that personal experiences of domestic violence were about equally distributed across all demographic groups, in other words, women of all ages, ethnicities, and income levels reported similar rates of having experienced domestic abuse. This finding reinforces that domestic violence can affect anyone, regardless of background. In contrast, reports of experiences related to human trafficking were relatively uncommon among participants: very few women indicated that they or someone they knew had been affected by trafficking. This could mean that trafficking is less prevalent in the community, or it could reflect less awareness of trafficking signs; either way, the numbers were low.

When it comes to awareness of resources, the survey revealed gaps that are significant. Just over one-third of respondents (44%) agreed that they know where to seek help for domestic violence in the community (Figure 4). However, that leaves many women who may not be sure where to turn. Awareness was especially low for young women ages 25 and under and older women over 65 were far less likely to know of available resources, only roughly 10% in these groups knew where to find help compared to middle-aged women, for instance, 25% of women 45–64 knew resources (Figure 5). This indicates a need for better outreach and education for younger and older populations about domestic violence services. Regarding human trafficking, about 23% of respondents, primarily from Eastern Loudoun, said they are not aware of any resources in the community for someone facing trafficking or exploitation. Although awareness of human trafficking support was limited among all age groups, awareness about trafficking support was particularly low among those aged 18–34 (Figure 6) and among both Non-Hispanic White and Hispanic/Latina respondents, suggesting targeted information may not be reaching certain demographics. These findings highlight that resource awareness is uneven: many Loudoun women, especially younger and underserved groups, may not know where to get help in situations of violence.



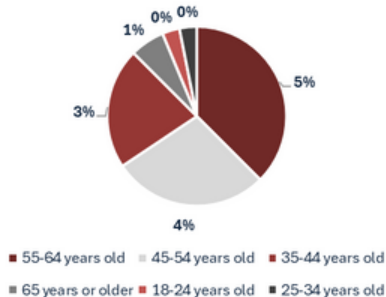
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Figure 5. Knowledge of Resources to Seek Help for Domestic Violence by Age



Consistently, respondents emphasized the need for greater community outreach and education on domestic violence and human trafficking. In open-ended answers, women called for more public awareness so that victims know how to seek help. One respondent simply urged for “more outreach in the community,” suggesting that information about support services should be more visible and proactive. Another participant from Eastern Loudoun proposed the use of “handy cards”, discreet, pocket-sized cards listing resources, to give individuals quick access to critical hotline numbers or support organizations.

Figure 6. Knowledge of Resources to Seek Help for Human Trafficking by Age

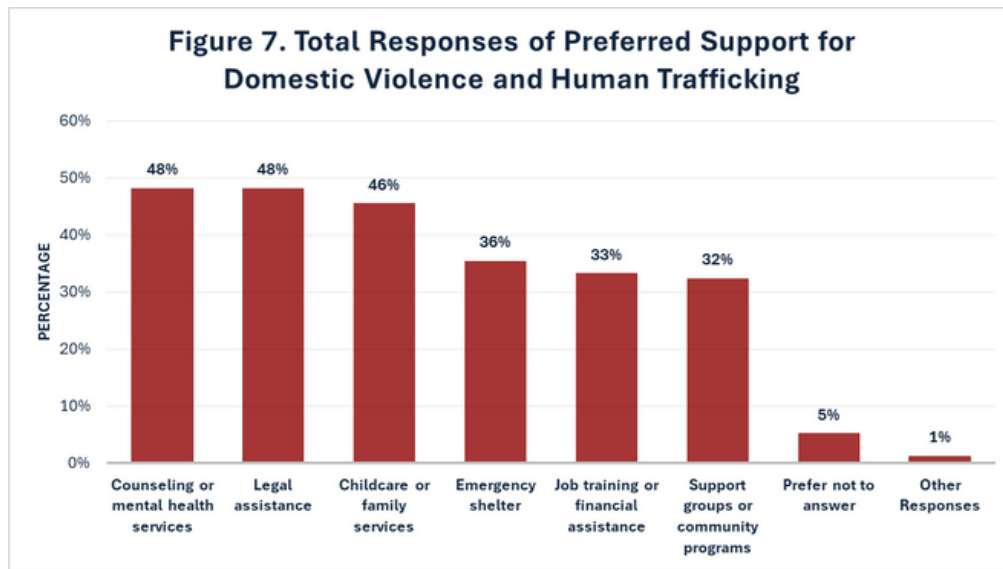


A Spanish-language survey respondent wrote, “Que den a conocer más sobre los programas de ayuda” (Translation: “Let it be known more about the aid programs”), underscoring that language-inclusive awareness campaigns are also needed. These comments converge on a clear point: increasing awareness of available support services is vital to helping victims of violence come forward and receive help. In Loudoun County, there are established resources to address domestic violence. The primary local program is LAWS (Loudoun Abused Women’s Shelter), which provides emergency shelter,

counseling, legal services, and advocacy for survivors of domestic violence. According to the Domestic and Sexual Violence in Virginia Annual Report, in a recent year 5,705 victims of domestic violence statewide were provided emergency shelter, and local programs offered transitional housing to 185 adults and 159 children.¹³ Even so, domestic violence cases remain underreported due to a variety of factors – stigma, fear, financial dependency, or lack of awareness. The same state report noted that the number of Emergency Protective Orders (court orders to protect victims from abusers) increased from 2022 to 2023, which could indicate rising reporting or incidence. Despite the available services, many survivors do not seek help, which is a pattern seen in communities everywhere.

When survey respondents were asked what types of support would be most useful if they or someone they know needed help for domestic violence or trafficking, legal assistance and mental health services topped the list. Each of these was selected by about 48% of respondents as a most useful form of support (Figure 7). Closely behind, childcare or family services were chosen by 46% of respondents as a key support need in such situations. Preferences for support did show some demographic tendencies: women aged 45–54 and Non-Hispanic White respondents were more likely to prioritize legal assistance and mental health services, whereas women aged 25–44 and Hispanic respondents more often noted a need for childcare or family services to address violence or exploitation situations. This suggests that younger women and women of color may feel additional family-support services (like childcare) are critical in enabling them to seek help or recover from abuse, while middle-aged and white women emphasized direct legal and counseling services. Nonetheless, across the board legal and counseling resources were highly valued.

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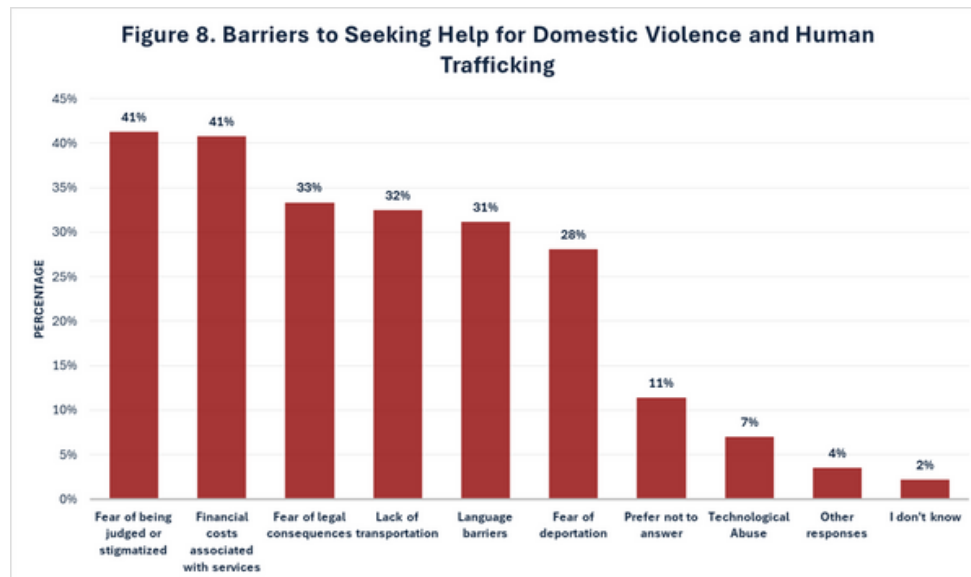


Feedback from participants reinforced the importance of these support types. Legal support and navigation of the justice system were recurring responses in the comments. One respondent stressed that “the legal system is not set up to provide adequate education for the abused,” highlighting how confusing and intimidating legal processes can be for survivors. She implied that providing clear guidance and education about legal options is necessary for empowering victims. Another woman from Eastern Loudoun pointed out the financial barriers to securing legal aid, reflecting a recurring theme that came up throughout the survey: many support services, while available, are difficult to access for those without sufficient financial resources. In terms of mental health services, one participant called for “better access to affordable therapy and psychiatry,” indicating that while counseling is crucial, cost and availability matter greatly. Another respondent echoed the need for “mental health counseling funding” and emphasized improving community awareness of these services, tying back to the earlier point about outreach. Interestingly, child care assistance was mentioned by one respondent in the context of violence; however, the quantitative results (and broader survey data) show that childcare is an ongoing concern that intersects with women’s ability to seek help, for instance, a mother cannot easily attend counseling or legal appointments if she lacks childcare. Providing childcare or family support can be an enabling factor for women escaping abusive situations.

Navigating support systems as a survivor of domestic violence can be extraordinarily difficult. Survivors often face psychological, physical, social, and economic barriers all at once. The data from this survey indicate that legal advocacy and mental health counseling are perceived as particularly valuable support for those in crisis. This is consistent with findings in broader literature. In a 2023 study, Bradshaw et al. analyzed interviews with women who had experienced intimate partner violence, focusing on what helped them navigate the family court system.¹⁴ Many survivors in that study pointed to formal support – assistance from therapists, attorneys, and domestic violence agencies – as key to coping and to learning about additional resources that could help them. The study also found that having a lawyer who truly understood domestic violence and could advocate on their behalf significantly improved women’s satisfaction with legal proceedings and outcomes.¹⁴ These insights suggest that a network-oriented approach, one that links survivors with knowledgeable professionals and

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wraparound services can greatly enhance a survivor's ability to successfully find justice and begin healing. For Loudoun County, strengthening the coordination among service providers (law enforcement, legal aid, shelters, counselors, etc.) could similarly improve survivors' experiences and outcomes. Ensuring that legal and mental health services are accessible and culturally competent may encourage more women to seek help, knowing they will be supported through each step of the recovery process.



The survey also shed light on perceived barriers to accessing support services for domestic violence or exploitation. The most common barriers identified were fear of being judged or stigmatized (41%), the financial cost of services (41%), and fear of potential legal consequences (33%) of coming forward (Figure 8). These concerns were most frequently reported by women in the 45–64 age range and by Non-Hispanic White women. Meanwhile, less commonly reported barriers included lack of transportation (32%), which was also emphasized in some free-response comments. In sum, although Loudoun has a range of services available for victims, factors like stigma, cost, legal fears, and transportation difficulties can prevent individuals from accessing help.

Many of these barriers are well-documented in research on intimate partner violence. Stigma remains a serious hurdle. A comprehensive 2013 review by Overstreet and Quinn identified multiple forms of stigma (anticipated stigma, internalized shame, and cultural stigma) that women experience when seeking help for domestic violence.¹⁵ The review found that fear of being judged or not believed can create uncertainty and silence, leading many women to delay or avoid disclosing abuse. Such stigma can be compounded by cultural norms, making it even harder for victims in certain communities to reach out. Beyond stigma, financial constraints are another major barrier. Even if free shelters or hotlines exist, legal action often requires an attorney, and mental health support may require insurance or fees.¹⁶ Some families fall into a gap where they are not eligible for free legal aid but cannot afford a private lawyer. As highlighted by Lee (2018), strict eligibility criteria for civil legal aid mean many low-income women do not qualify, leaving them without representation. That study also noted that many survivors simply do not know that resources like legal aid or victim compensation funds exist, which circles back to the issue of awareness.¹⁶ In combination, stigma, cost, and lack of information can trap survivors in a cycle of underreporting and under-utilization of services, ultimately perpetuating a lack of justice and support.

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Conclusion

The 2024 Voices of Loudoun Women survey has illuminated several critical themes affecting women and girls in Loudoun County. Across all topics, one overarching concern is clear: the financial cost of essential services and supports, from health care to childcare to legal aid – remains a primary barrier for many women. Even in a relatively affluent community, not everyone can afford the resources they need. Improving access to affordable programs and services is therefore a crucial first step. This could include expanding grassroots and government assistance programs, providing subsidies or sliding-scale fees for childcare and health services, and ensuring that information about existing help (like LAWS, food banks, or mental health clinics) is widely disseminated. Additionally, raising general awareness about available resources is key; many survey participants indicated they simply didn't know where to turn for help with issues like domestic violence or career development. Targeted awareness campaigns and community education can empower women with knowledge of how to get assistance before a crisis worsens.

In 2024, Fairfax County put out a report titled, “The Status of Women and Girls in Fairfax County Virginia” that interviewed a diverse group of women and girls across their county, similar to the LCWAG Report. The focus was on health, work-life balance and economic indicators in their county and, in comparison to this report, they found similar results in their health and work-life balance investigations.¹⁷ This can be used in the future to perhaps garner a relationship between Fairfax and Loudoun County which could promote more research and investment for women in the Northern Virginia area. On a larger scale, a national strategy has been developed to enhance economic security for women and girls.¹⁸ Ongoing policy efforts are essential to advancing financial stability and enhancing the overall well-being of women and girls in Loudoun County.

The voices captured in this assessment highlight both persistent needs and community strengths. Loudoun County benefits from a well-educated, civically engaged population, and organizations like LCWAG are leveraging data and collaboration to drive change. The findings from this survey provide a roadmap for stakeholders across sectors; non-profits, government agencies, healthcare providers, employers, and community groups, to work together in addressing the identified issues. Whether it's through policy changes, new programs, or public-private partnerships, ongoing efforts must focus on advancing financial stability, healthcare access, and personal safety for the women and girls of Loudoun. By doing so, we not only improve individual lives, but also foster a more resilient, equitable, and thriving community for all.

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Appendix

Table 1. Demographic Counts of Survey Respondents by ZIP Code Region				
Characteristic	Northern	Eastern	Western	TOTAL (%)
	75	130	23	228
Gender Identity				
Female	72	125	20	217 (95.2)
Male	2	5	3	10 (4.4)
Transgender	1	0	0	1 (0.4)
Race/Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic White	57	45	13	115 (50.4)
Non-Hispanic Black	5	17	2	24 (10.5)
Hispanic/Latino	4	43	2	49 (21.5)
Asian	1	13	1	15 (6.6)
Mixed Race	2	4	1	8 (3.5)
Middle Eastern	1	0	0	1 (0.4)
North African	0	0	1	1 (0.4)
South Asian	0	1	0	1 (0.4)
Prefer Not to Answer	5	6	3	14 (6.1)
Age Category				
18-24 years old	2	10	1	13 (5.7)
25-34 years old	8	38	3	49 (21.5)
35-44 years old	16	25	7	48 (21.1)
45-54 years old	20	25	6	51 (22.4)
55-64 years old	24	21	3	48 (21.1)
65 years or older	5	11	3	19 (8.3)
Employment Status				
Employed, working full-time	45	54	12	111 (48.7)
Employed, working part-time	5	32	3	40 (17.5)
Retired	9	10	4	23 (10.1)
Business Owner/Entrepreneur	8	6	1	15 (6.6)
Not employed, not looking for work	3	9	3	15 (6.6)
Not employed, looking for work	4	17	0	21 (9.2)
Disabled, not able to work	1	2	0	3 (1.3)
Annual Household Income				
Less than \$10,000	0	13	0	13 (5.7)
Between \$10,000 and \$49,999	7	42	0	49 (21.5)
Between \$50,000 and \$99,999	5	8	4	17 (7.5)
Between \$100,000 and \$149,999	7	11	3	21 (9.2)
Between \$150,000 and \$199,999	16	13	2	31 (13.6)
Over \$200,000	28	20	4	52 (22.8)
Prefer Not to Answer	12	23	10	45 (19.7)
Child in Household Less than 18?				
Yes	31	89	15	135 (59.2)
No	44	41	8	93 (40.8)
Notes: Zip region was defined using the American Community Survey Census districts. Zip codes in the Broad Run, Algonkian, Sterling, Ashburn and Dulles Districts were considered the Eastern Region, zip codes in the Leesburg and Catoclin Districts were considered the Northern Region, and zip codes in the Blue Ridge District were considered the Western region. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.				

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Appendix

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents who Reported Childcare Related Problems

	Eastern	Northern	Western	TOTAL (%)
Cost of care	21	11	3	35 (15.4)
Scheduling child care to match work schedule	23	8	2	33 (14.4)
Finding temporary care	12	5	1	18 (7.9)
Transportation to/from care/school	8	6	4	18 (7.9)
Quality of care/school	6	6	2	14 (6.1)
Finding care for sick child	7	3	3	13 (5.7)
Location of childcare/school	8	3	1	12 (5.3)
Finding care for child with special needs	8	2	0	10 (4.4)
Dependability of care/school	4	3	0	7 (3.1)
Quality and availability of mental health care for my child	1	0	0	1 (0.4)
Do Not Take Children to Childcare Services	1	0	0	1 (0.4)
Finding Daycare for a Child	1	0	0	1 (0.4)
Difficulties Navigating Childcare Services	1	0	0	1 (0.4)
Do Not Experience Issues Finding Childcare Services	1	0	0	1 (0.4)

Notes: Percentage represents count of responses divided by the total sample count (n=228). Percentage may not equal 100 due to rounding. Data does not include respondents who selected 'None of the Above'.

Table 3. Distribution of Responses for Career Development

	Eastern	Northern	Western	TOTAL
Career certificates (short-term, specialized credential programs)	40	29	9	78 (34.2)
Seminars or other in-person workshops	33	30	15	78 (34.2)
Webinars or other online training	28	30	11	69 (30.3)
Returnships (professional learning experiences for adults returning to work after a period of caregiving or other time outside of the workforce)	19	16	5	40 (17.5)
College degrees (two- or four-year programs at a higher education institution)	26	9	4	39 (17.1)
Apprenticeships (on-the-job training under a skilled expert)	17	10	0	27 (11.8)
Internships (professional learning experiences)	16	5	0	21 (9.2)
Networking Opportunities	1	0	0	1 (0.4)

Notes: Percentage represents count of responses divided by the total sample count (n=228). Percentage may not equal 100 due to rounding. Data does not include respondents who selected 'None of the Above'.



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