



Voices of Loudoun Women

2026



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.



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

Over the years, the Loudoun Coalition on Women and Girls (LCWAG) has made incredible strides. Thanks to our generous community of donors and supporters, we continued to expand opportunities for women and girls across Loudoun County. We welcomed seven extraordinary women into the Loudoun Women's Hall of Fame in 2025, building on the inaugural class established in 2023 and continuing to preserve and amplify the stories of women whose leadership, service, and contributions have shaped our community. We empowered girls to build confidence, resilience, and leadership skills through Girl emPower, while supporting women in strengthening their economic independence, advancing their careers, and pursuing entrepreneurship through Women emPower.

Through our Research & Impact Hub, we continued to elevate the voices and experiences of Loudoun women. Our fifth annual Voices of Loudoun Women community assessment provided important insights into the challenges, needs, and priorities of women across our county. In 2026, we continue this work through the Voices of Loudoun Women Survey, listening to our community and building on more than five years of research to identify emerging needs, track persistent challenges, and help inform programs, partnerships, resources, and community investment.

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, Women emPower, Women's Health & Safety 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 2025-26	Priority for 2026-27
LCWAG Research & Impact Hub	Expanded outreach to include Spanish-language responses; publicized survey findings; identified new partnerships; and continued to elevate the needs, challenges, and priorities of women across Loudoun County.	Expand multilingual outreach, strengthen community partnerships, and continue developing programs and initiatives informed by survey findings and the evolving needs of Loudoun women and girls.
Girl emPower	Hosted the annual Girl emPower Summit and continued programming focused on confidence, resilience, leadership, self-care, STEM, media literacy, and life skills.	Continue expanding Girl emPower programming and engagement opportunities through the annual summit and pop-up events.
Woman emPower	Hosted the annual Loudoun’s Entrepreneurial Women’s Business Summit	Continue strengthening opportunities for women through career development, entrepreneurship, business education, wellness, resources, and community connections.
Women’s Hall of Fame	Hosted the second Loudoun Women’s Hall of Fame celebration and inducted seven extraordinary women in 2025, building on the inaugural class established in 2023.	Host the third Loudoun County Women’s Hall of Fame Inductee & Award Luncheon.
Women’s Health & Safety	Expanded LCWAG’s focus on health, wellness, safety, and awareness, including human trafficking awareness and prevention. Hosted well-attended Human Traffic event in 2026.	Continue strengthening health and wellness programming that addresses safety, well-being, awareness, and access to community resources.



VOICES OF LOUDOUN WOMEN 2026

The 2026 community assessment highlights the needs, challenges and opportunities for women and families in Loudoun County.

OUR SURVEY SNAPSHOT



224

Loudoun County
residents
participated



97%

identified
as female



54%

live in the
Eastern region
of Loudoun



28.6%

household income
above \$200,000

KEY FINDINGS



CONNECTION IS A TOP NEED

42%

identified community
and social connections
as the most important
resource for their
household.



MENTAL HEALTH REMAINS A PRIORITY

44%

needed mental health
care in the past year.

Top barriers: cost,
insurance not accepted
and providers not
accepting new clients.



CHILDCARE AFFORDABILITY CONTINUES TO CHALLENGE FAMILIES

27%

of parents said cost
is their top childcare
challenge.



WOMEN WANT OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW PROFESSIONALLY

Strong interest in
workshops, online
training and certificate
programs, with growing
interest in STEM,
AI and emerging
technologies.



MORE AWARENESS AND EASIER ACCESS TO SUPPORT ARE NEEDED

52%

know where to find
domestic violence
resources.

14.7%

know where to find
human trafficking
resources.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES



COST IS A COMMON CONSTRAINT

Affordability is a barrier
across health care,
childcare, mental health
services and basic needs.



AWARENESS IS NOT ACCESS

Knowing services exist
doesn't always mean
they are easy to find,
navigate or afford.



LANGUAGE ACCESS MATTERS

Language and cultural
barriers impact whether
services are understood
and used.



CONNECTION IS ESSENTIAL

Community and social
connection is a vital part
of women's well-being
and should be treated as
infrastructure.



A ROADMAP FOR ACTION

These findings point to clear opportunities for our community: expand affordable services, strengthen mental health access, improve navigation and awareness of resources, support survivors and provide flexible workforce development opportunities.

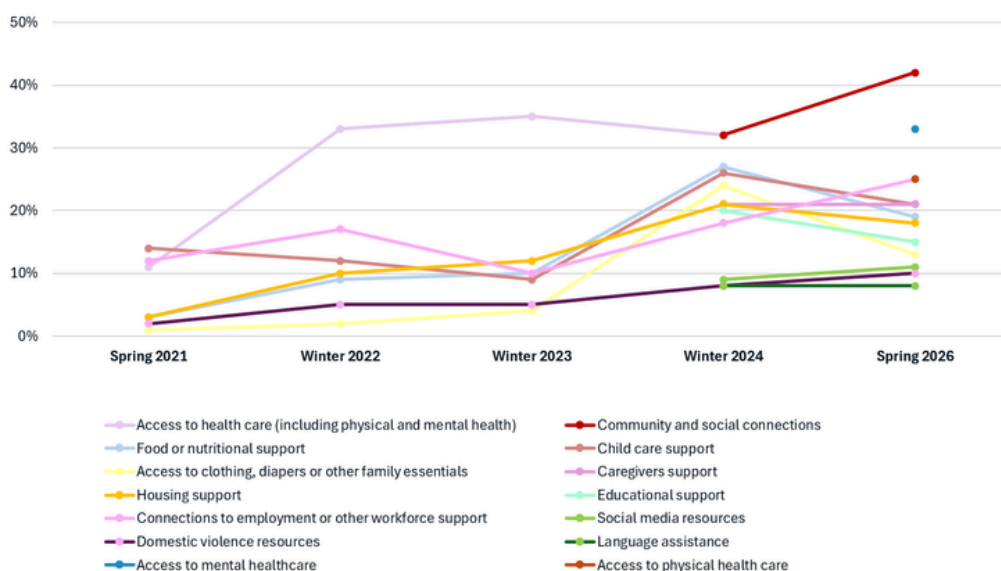
TOGETHER, WE CAN HELP LOUDOUN WOMEN AND GIRLS THRIVE.

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 1,440 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 2026 confirms that **this heightened rate has persisted**.

The latest data show **a shift in the top four major challenges**: community and social connections; access to mental health care; connections to employment or other workforce support; and access to physical health care.

While women continue to value personal and professional growth, it appears that there is **a growing demand for social 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, approximately **10% of Loudoun women surveyed** stated that **domestic violence resources** are important for meeting challenges in their household and **17%** of Loudoun women surveyed reported that they are unaware of **human trafficking resources**.

Voices of Loudoun Women Community Assessment Report

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; the social determinants of health.^{1,2} Despite sustained efforts to address these determinants, disparities persist, particularly in historically underserved communities. Women continue to face inequities in education, income, health care access, and employment opportunity.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 worked since 2017 to assess and improve conditions for women and girls in Loudoun County. LCWAG's Research & Impact Hub periodically conducts the Voices of Loudoun Women community assessment series to identify and monitor the issues affecting local women. Insights from these assessments inform LCWAG's programs and advocacy, and are published so that other organizations and public agencies can align their own resources against demonstrated need.

What Prior Cycles Established

Recent assessments have documented persistent gaps in Loudoun County. The INOVA 2022 Loudoun Community Health Needs Assessment found that women most frequently identified mental health care services as a critical unmet need.⁵ LCWAG's 2023 Voices of Loudoun Women survey found that approximately 40% of women cited access to health care as the most significant need for their household.⁶ In December 2022, the share of surveyed women reporting one or more major household challenges rose from one in three to one in two, and the December 2024 cycle confirmed that this heightened rate had persisted.

The 2024 cycle also surfaced findings that shaped the design of the current Survey instrument tool. Access to health care ranked highest among household resource needs (32%), closely followed by community and social connections (32%). Cost was the most frequently cited childcare problem. Among women who sought mental health care, the dominant barriers were systemic rather than attitudinal, insurance acceptance (59%), provider availability (50%), and cost (44%) with no respondent citing stigma or personal hesitancy in open-ended comments. Nearly one-third (30%) reported knowing someone who had experienced domestic violence, and 23% reported being unaware of any human trafficking resources in the community.

Voices of Loudoun Women Community Assessment Report

Purpose of the 2026 Assessment

The 2026 survey was designed to extend this longitudinal record while sharpening the instrument in three ways. First, health care access was disaggregated into mental health care and physical health care, allowing the series to distinguish between two needs that had previously been measured as one. Second, professional development questions were expanded to capture interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) careers and in emerging technologies. Third, questions on domestic violence and trafficking were structured to separate awareness of resources from ability to reach them. This report presents the 2026 findings by topic area. Each section describes the primary challenges identified by respondents, notable demographic patterns, illustrative participant comments, and, where relevant, comparisons to external data and published research.

Voices of Loudoun Women Community Assessment Report

Methodology and Sample Characteristics

The Voices of Loudoun Women survey is an annual community assessment conducted by LCWAG's Research & Impact Hub to examine the social, health, and environmental needs of women in Loudoun County. The survey is designed to identify both the needs and the strengths of the community, in order to inform programs, services, and advocacy efforts that enhance the well-being and quality of life of women and girls.

The 2026 survey was administered between May 3 and June 1, 2026. A total of 245 survey responses were received. Following data cleaning, 20 surveys were excluded due to incomplete responses, and 1 survey was excluded because the respondent did not reside in Loudoun County. The final analytic sample consisted of 224 respondents. All findings presented in this report are based on these 224 respondents.

Respondent Demographics

The demographic characteristics of survey respondents are summarized in Table 1 (see Appendix). Among the 224 respondents, approximately 54% resided in the Eastern region of Loudoun County. Most respondents self-identified as female (97.3%) and Non-Hispanic White (57.1%), and were between 45 and 54 years of age (29.5%). Nearly half (49.1%) reported being employed full-time, 28.6% reported an annual household income exceeding \$200,000, and 53.0% had at least one child under the age of 18 living in their household.

Language Accessibility

LCWAG distributed both English- and Spanish-language versions of the questionnaire to increase accessibility and encourage participation among a diverse population of Loudoun County residents. Among respondents included in the final analysis, 4.4% completed the Spanish-language survey, while 95.6% completed the English-language version. This represents a decline from the 2024 cycle, in which approximately 15% of responses were collected through the Spanish version, a change addressed in the Limitations section of this report.

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Key Findings

Childcare Challenges

The distribution of all responses regarding childcare challenges is presented in Table 2 (see Appendix). Access to affordable child care emerged as a significant concern for many respondents, particularly those with young children.

Among survey participants who had at least one child under the age of 18 living in their household (n = 118), the cost of child care was the most frequently reported childcare-related challenge experienced during the past year (27%). This finding is consistent with results from the Winter 2024 Voices of Loudoun Women survey cycle, in which the cost of child care also emerged as a leading concern. The persistence of this finding across survey cycles suggests that affordability remains an ongoing barrier for families seeking child care in Loudoun County. Concerns about child care cost were highest among respondents who lived in the Eastern region of Loudoun (see notes in the Appendix, Table 1) were employed full-time, and were between 25 and 44 years old.

Scheduling child care to match work schedules (18.6%) and finding care for a sick child (11.8%) were the next two most frequently reported concerns.

Regional and Statewide Context

When compared across the state, Northern Virginia stands as the most expensive region for child care. Georgetown University reports that median child care costs in Arlington County are nearly \$147,000 for five years of care, the most expensive in the country.⁷ Loudoun County is not far behind, with childcare costs ranging from \$15,000 to \$30,000 per year. Northern Virginia parents are paying roughly 20% of their income toward childcare, compared with 15–18% paid by other Virginia families.

A statewide assessment by the Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) found that childcare costs in Virginia far exceed the federal affordability benchmark, with infant and toddler care consuming more than 7% of household income for approximately 80% of Virginia families.⁸ In addition to these high costs, Virginia has an estimated shortage of at least 140,000 childcare slots, making care difficult to obtain for many families.⁸

A considerable number of families in Loudoun County fall into a middle-income bracket earning too much to qualify for subsidies, but not enough to comfortably afford care. Even among those who do qualify, only 17% of Loudoun childcare providers accept childcare subsidies, greatly limiting available options.

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Child Safety as a Related Concern

Respondents also reported qualitative challenges. Concerns related to child safety emerged as a theme among some survey respondents, encompassing both the safety of children within educational settings and safety risks in the broader community. One respondent from the Eastern region of Loudoun emphasized the importance of a "reliable school system that will not harm [their] children." Another respondent identified "poor traffic control in school zones" as a concern, highlighting potential safety risks for children traveling to and from school.

Although these comments represent individual perspectives, they suggest that some residents view child safety as a multifaceted issue extending beyond school environments to include community infrastructure and transportation safety. Notably, "Safe Routes to School and Traffic Safety" and "Childcare Access and Family Support" appeared as write-in categories in the 2026 cycle for the first time.

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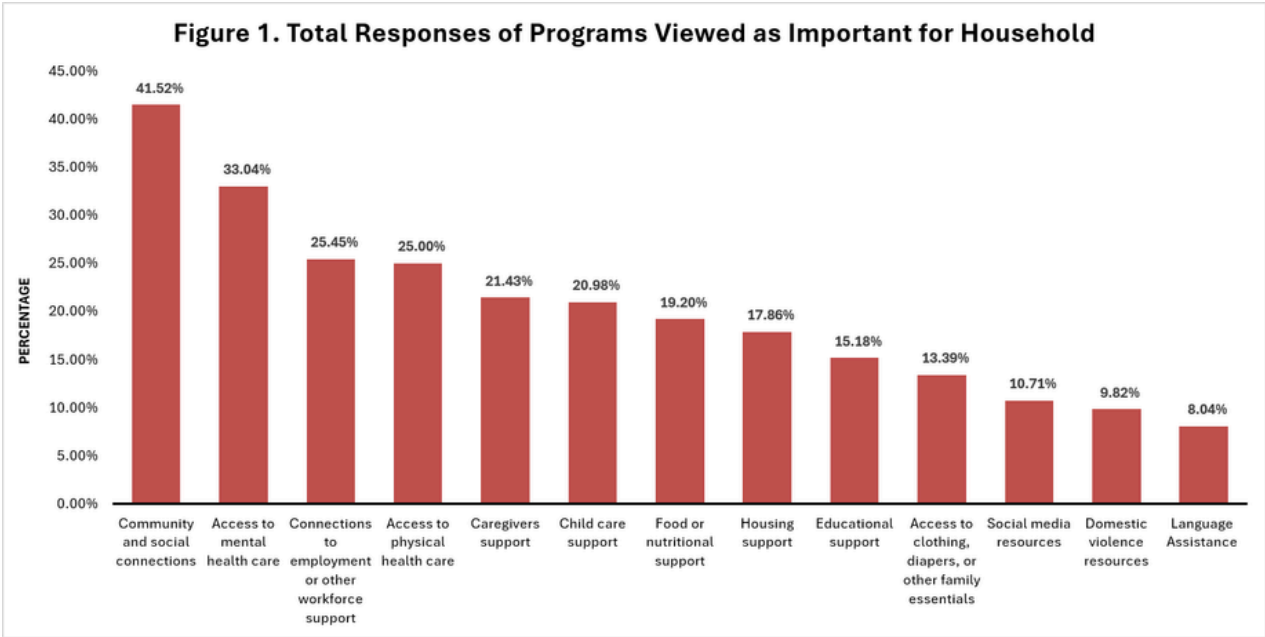
Access to Healthcare and Basic Needs

Access to support services including health care and other essential needs was a significant concern among respondents (Figure 1).

Roughly 42% of respondents identified community and social connections as an important resource for addressing challenges within their households. Access to mental health care was the second most commonly reported resource need (33%), followed by connections to employment or other workforce support (25.4%) and access to physical health care (25%).

Community and social connections were most frequently identified as an important household resource among respondents aged 55–64 years, those with annual household incomes of \$200,000 or more, individuals employed full-time, and residents of the Eastern region of Loudoun County. Access to mental health care was also a prominent concern, particularly among respondents aged 45–54 years and those employed full-time.

Although food and nutritional support was not among the most frequently reported resource needs overall, it was identified more often by respondents residing in the Eastern region of Loudoun County and those aged 35–44 years.



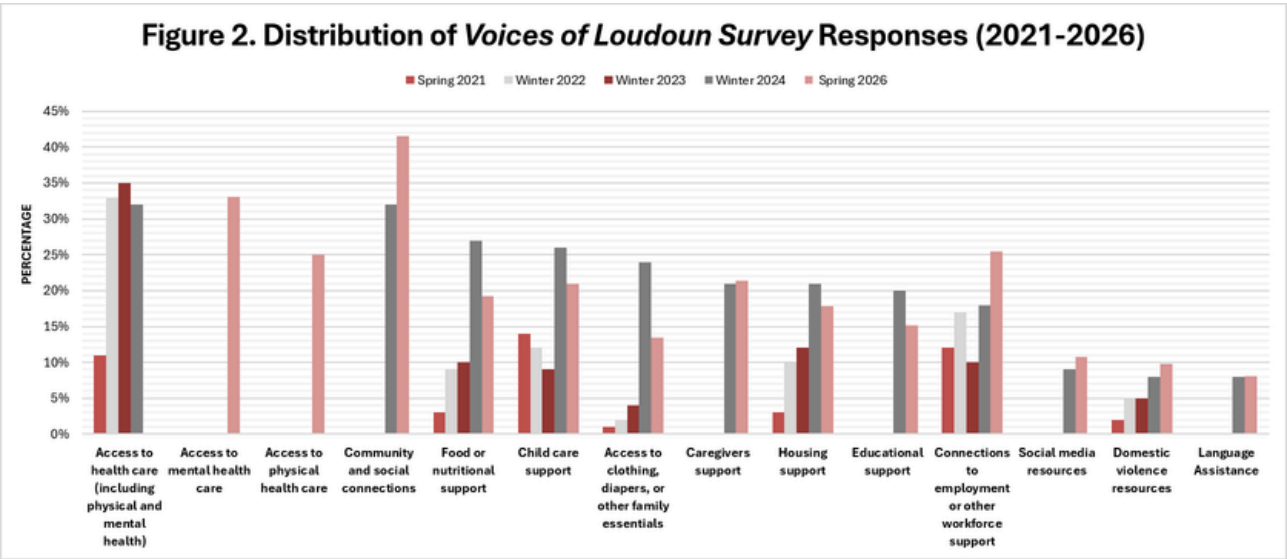
Trends Across Survey Cycles

The distribution of resource needs reported across the Voices of Loudoun Women survey cycles is displayed in Figure 2. Access to health care services has consistently been identified as a major need across all demographic groups throughout each survey cycle. In the 2026 survey, health care access was separated into mental health care and physical health care. Notably, respondents reported access to mental health care as a greater need than access to physical health care services.

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Additionally, needs related to employment and workforce support, social media resources, and domestic violence resources have increased considerably across the five survey cycles (2021–2026). In contrast, needs related to food and nutritional support, childcare support, and access to family essentials have generally declined in the 2026 survey cycle compared with previous survey years.

Financial burden helps explain the persistence of health care as a top-ranked need even in an affluent county. According to a 2019 statewide survey, 41% of adults in Northern Virginia reported experiencing one or more health care affordability burdens in the past year, despite the region reporting the highest median income and the fewest such burdens in Virginia.⁹ Among uninsured adults statewide, 74% cited cost as the primary reason they lacked coverage.⁹ Access to health care is shaped substantially by financial capacity, and may be improved through targeted assistance programs.



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Access to Mental Health

Approximately 44% of respondents reported needing mental health care services within the past year. Among those who identified a need for mental health care, 73% attempted to access services. This suggests a meaningful willingness to seek care among respondents who recognized a need. It also raises the stakes on supply: when help-seeking is high, the availability, affordability, and accessibility of services determine whether that willingness translates into treatment.

The need for mental health care was reported more frequently among respondents aged 45–54 years, those residing in Northern Loudoun, and those with household incomes of \$200,000 or more than among other demographic groups.

Barriers to Care

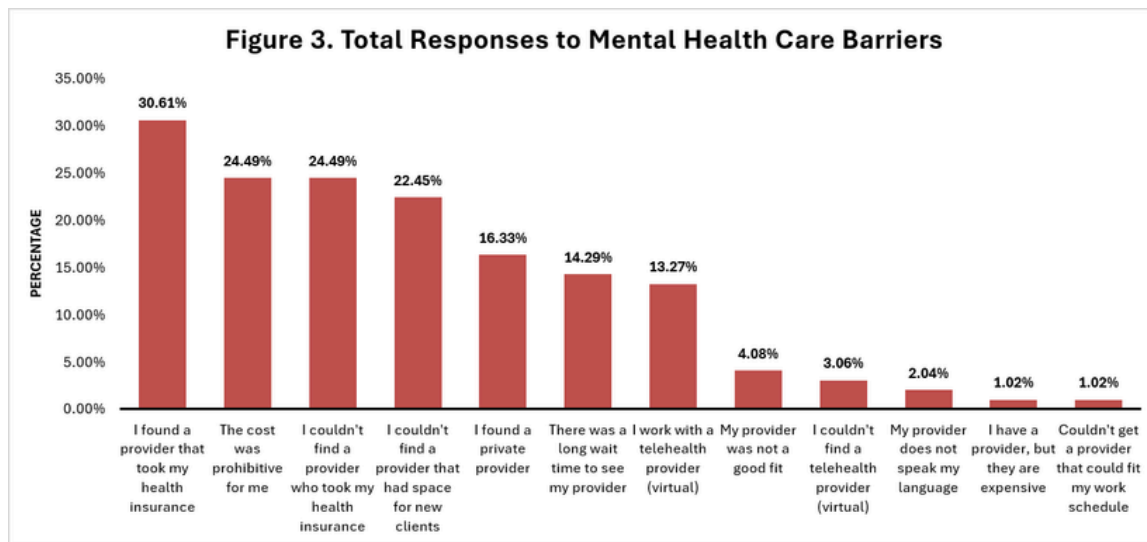
Among respondents who reported needing mental health services (n = 98), roughly 31% were able to find a provider who accepted their health insurance. Several notable barriers to care were identified. Cost of services and difficulty finding a provider who accepted their insurance were each cited by 24.5% of respondents as obstacles to receiving care. An additional 22.5% reported challenges finding a provider who was accepting new clients.

The remaining responses in Figure 3 divide into two groups. Some describe how respondents ultimately obtained care rather than obstacles to it: 16.33% found a private provider and 13.27% worked with a telehealth provider. Others describe further friction in the system a long wait time to see a provider (14.29%), a provider who was not a good fit (4.08%), inability to find a telehealth provider (3.06%), a provider who does not speak the respondent's language (2.04%), a provider who is affordable only with difficulty (1.02%), and inability to find a provider whose hours fit a work schedule (1.02%).

The language item is small in absolute terms but consequential in context. Because only 4.4% of the 2026 sample completed the Spanish-language questionnaire, respondents most likely to encounter a language mismatch are the group least represented in this dataset. The qualitative comments later in this section, and the Figure 6 findings on barriers to violence-related support, both suggest the underlying need is larger than 2.04% would indicate on its own.

These patterns closely track national findings. In Kaiser Family Foundation's Survey of Consumer Experiences with Health Insurance, 43% of insured adults reporting fair or poor mental health said there was a time in the past year when they did not receive mental health services or medication they believed they needed, and 45% rated their insurance negatively on the availability of mental health providers.¹⁰

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State-Level Context

Broader external data echo these findings. In the 2025 State of Mental Health in America report, Virginia ranked 22nd overall, a composite ranking in which 1 indicates lower prevalence of mental illness and greater access to care. This is a significant drop from Virginia's ranking of 12th in the 2024 report, indicating that the Commonwealth has moved out of the tier characterized by lower prevalence and greater access.¹¹

Provider shortages pose a major challenge to accessibility. Only 22.4% of the need for psychiatrists is met in Virginia, indicating a substantial workforce gap.¹² Insurance coverage compounds the problem: Virginia residents were 6.5 times more likely to go out-of-network for mental health care than for medical or surgical care.¹² The consequences fall hardest on those without coverage. In Virginia, 8% of women were uninsured as of 2023, with women of color and low-income women disproportionately represented in this group.¹³

Strengthening mental health infrastructure through educational programming on coping skills, expansion of the provider network, insurance parity enforcement, reduction of cost barriers, and increased awareness of available resources; including online mental health directories and local mental health nonprofit organizations, would likely improve access to and navigation of care for Loudoun residents who need support.

The Broader Cost of Unmet Need

Mental health continues to be a recurring subject of discussion at the local, national, and international levels. Among these discussions, cost, language barriers, stigma, and access to reliable care are the dominant themes. Research led by Yale economist Aleh Tsyvinski and colleagues estimates that mental illness costs the U.S. economy \$282 billion annually, roughly 1.7% of aggregate consumption, and approximately 30% higher than prior estimates.¹⁴ Framed this way, unmet mental health need is not only a health outcome but an economic one.

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Language Access and Provider Fit

Language barriers represent a significant and under-examined challenge in mental health treatment. In work described by psychiatric physician Pablo Richly, patients with limited English proficiency (LEP) were found to receive less mental health care than patients with fluent English proficiency.¹⁵ When trained interpreters were provided, the quality of care improved but interpreter use was often limited.

Qualitative responses from Loudoun respondents highlighted parallel barriers related to provider fit and accessibility. Several respondents indicated that previous providers were not a good match for their needs. One respondent shared that they "attempted multiple therapists online who made [them] feel like [they] weren't going to get anything out of their services," ultimately leading them to discontinue treatment and rely on self-care.

Language barriers also emerged directly. One Spanish-speaking respondent stated:

"La psicóloga solo habla inglés y hay un traductor de por medio, es muy incómodo." — "The psychologist only speaks English, and having a translator involved makes it very awkward."

This comment points to a distinction worth holding onto: the presence of interpretation is not the same as the presence of effective care. An exploratory national survey of both mental health clinicians and interpreters found that conveying precise clinical meaning to LEP individuals was persistently difficult, and that 84% of interpreters reported needing additional training to work effectively in a mental health setting.¹⁶ Insufficient training often led interpreters to relay information incompletely, or to remain uncertain about how to convey therapeutic terminology. This lack of uniformity can produce misinformation and inadequate care. The study recommends that patients be matched, where possible, with providers who speak the same language, and that professional interpreters be trained and versed in clinical terminology so that medical needs are translated precisely rather than approximately.

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Access to Professional and Career Development

Professional and career development opportunities were also explored in this survey, including interest in STEM careers and related training opportunities. Approximately 26% of respondents reported an interest in pursuing a STEM career. Respondents who expressed interest in STEM careers were more likely to be between the ages of 35 and 44, reside in the Eastern region of Loudoun County, and be employed.

The professional development opportunities of greatest interest were seminars and other in-person workshops (45.1%), webinars and other online training opportunities (42.4%), and career certificate programs (39.7%) (Table 3, see Appendix).

Format Preferences Vary by Age

Preferences varied by age. Respondents aged 55–64 were most likely to prefer in-person workshops, while those aged 45–54 were most likely to prefer webinars and online training. These differences have direct implications for programming. Offering both in-person seminars and online webinars could meet the needs of different age groups by providing flexible options for participation, and a hybrid approach may be particularly effective in increasing access to professional development across the community. No notable differences in professional development preferences were observed across other demographic characteristics.

Fields of Interest

Respondents identified a wide range of career fields in which they were interested in receiving professional development. One respondent wrote: "Me gusta el tráfico aéreo, actualmente trabajo en el Washington Dulles pero en limpieza me gustaría estar directa con alguna aerolínea." — "I enjoy the aviation environment. I currently work at Washington Dulles in cleaning, but I would like to work directly for an airline."

Another respondent shared that they "would love to find more ways to incorporate other [opportunities] in the [mental health] field in better meeting the needs of the community."

Interest in learning about artificial intelligence (AI) emerged as a common theme across responses. Several respondents expressed interest in understanding AI applications in governance and public policy, while others highlighted the relationship between AI and cybersecurity as an area for professional development. These findings suggest a growing demand for training on emerging technologies and their applications across a variety of professional fields and a natural point of alignment with the STEM interest reported above.

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Structural Context for Women in the Workforce

These local preferences sit within a broader set of structural conditions. Women who work remotely are less likely to secure sponsors and receive promotions, possibly due to flexibility stigma, the belief that people who use more flexible work options are less devoted to their jobs. This is one of the most significant barriers women face in the workplace. Women are more likely to view the workplace as unfair and to believe that their gender will affect their career opportunities. Entry- and mid-level women are less likely to feel comfortable or able to make their opinions known.

In the past year, both men and women have experienced higher rates of burnout and lower confidence in job security. While this is the case for both groups, women in leadership especially women of color face higher levels of burnout and job insecurity. Even though companies with greater representation of women perform better, women remain underrepresented in the workforce at every level, particularly women of color and women in senior-level positions.¹⁷

Read alongside the childcare findings earlier in this report, the picture is coherent: interest in advancement is high, and the constraints on acting on it are largely structural rather than motivational.

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Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking

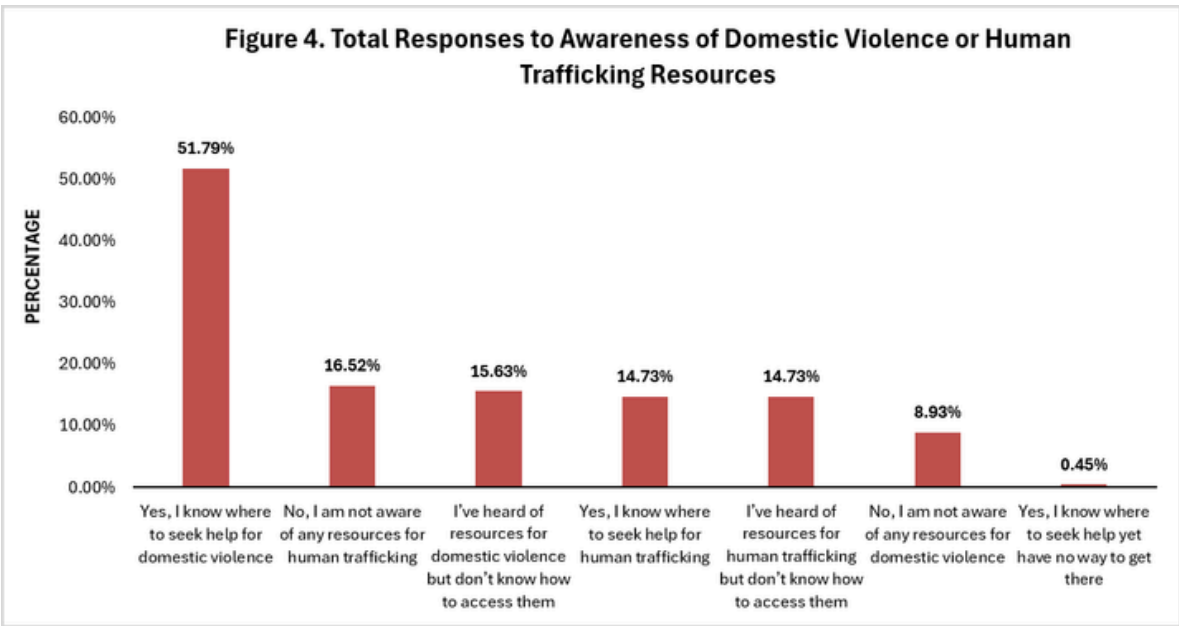
Approximately 35% of respondents reported knowing someone who had experienced domestic violence, while about 15% reported having experienced domestic violence themselves. Respondents who reported experiencing domestic violence were more likely to be Non-Hispanic White, have a household income of \$200,000 or more, and be between the ages of 45 and 64.

It is important to recognize that domestic violence affects individuals across all demographic groups and is not limited to the populations most frequently represented in this report. Similarly, although relatively few respondents reported either experiencing or knowing someone who had experienced human trafficking, these findings should be interpreted carefully. Both domestic violence and human trafficking are highly sensitive topics that are often underreported, meaning the true prevalence may be higher than these results reflect.

Awareness of Resources

Awareness of available resources differed substantially between domestic violence and human trafficking. Nearly 52% of respondents reported knowing where to seek help for domestic violence, whereas only 14.7% reported knowing where to access resources for human trafficking (Figure 4).

Geographic and age-related differences in awareness were also observed. Respondents living in the Northern and Western regions of Loudoun County and those between the ages of 45 and 54 were more likely to report knowing where to seek help for human trafficking. These findings suggest that efforts to increase awareness of human trafficking resources may be particularly beneficial for residents in the Eastern region of Loudoun County, as well as for younger adults and older adults.

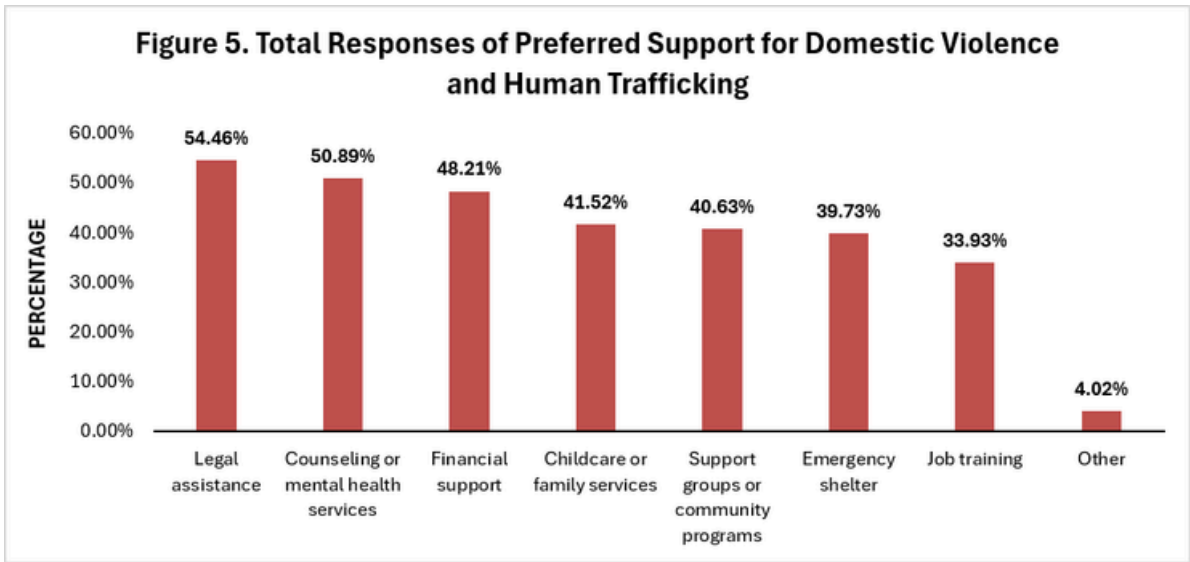


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Preferred Forms of Support

Respondents were also asked to identify the types of support they believed would be most beneficial for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. The most commonly selected forms of support were legal assistance (54.5%), counseling or mental health services (50.9%), and financial support (48.2%) (Figure 5). Preferences for these services were relatively consistent across demographic groups, suggesting broad agreement on the importance of these forms of support.

Qualitative responses reinforced these findings. One respondent stated plainly, "Believe the women and GET THE LAWS changed to support women." Another emphasized the importance of legal services, writing "Legal help is very important," and noted that they had previously worked in the field investigating domestic violence.



Barriers to Seeking Support

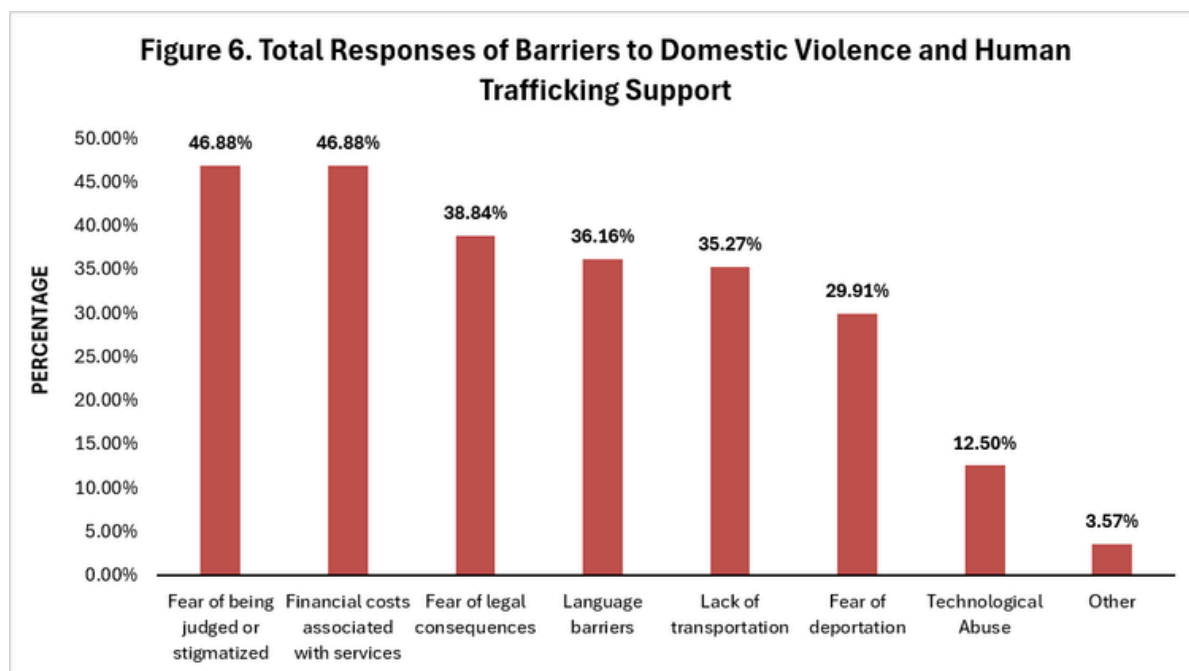
This survey also highlighted barriers that survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking may face when seeking support. Consistent with findings from the previous survey cycle, the most commonly identified barriers were fear of being judged or stigmatized (46.9%), the financial cost of services (46.9%), and fear of potential legal consequences (38.8%) associated with coming forward (Figure 6).

Beyond these three, the survey identified a second tier of barriers that has not previously been discussed in the narrative of this series: language barriers (36.2%), lack of transportation (35.3%), fear of deportation (29.9%), and technological abuse (12.5%). Taken together, these describe obstacles that are practical and situational rather than attitudinal and that fall unevenly on immigrant, non-English-speaking, and lower-income residents.

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Comparison with the previous survey cycle is instructive, because every barrier measured in both cycles increased. Fear of being judged rose from 41% to 46.9%, financial cost from 41% to 46.9%, fear of legal consequences from 33% to 38.8%, lack of transportation from 32% to 35.3%, fear of deportation from 28% to 29.9%, and technological abuse from 7% to 12.5%. The sharpest movement in rank belongs to language barriers, which rose from 31% to 36.2% and moved ahead of transportation to become the fourth most frequently identified barrier. No barrier declined.

While stigma remains a well-documented barrier to accessing support, respondents also identified challenges related to navigating available services. One respondent wrote, "Once you find a place for support services, there is a lack of an actionable plan that you can take," suggesting that barriers extend beyond simply locating resources. Even when individuals can access services, they may encounter difficulty navigating the system or receiving clear, coordinated guidance on next steps limiting the effectiveness of the support that does exist.



Affluence as a Barrier to Visibility

Qualitative responses also suggested that characteristics of the local community may themselves influence access to services. One respondent commented:

"Because [Loudoun] [is] so wealthy, nonprofit and social services seem much more hidden than in other places I've lived with lower and more moderate incomes. I think the fact that seeking help seems hidden makes it harder to seek help."

This perspective suggests that perceptions about the visibility and accessibility of services within Loudoun County may constitute a barrier in their own right, underscoring the importance of increasing awareness of available resources alongside efforts to expand access.

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Statewide Service Context

In Loudoun County, the primary local program addressing domestic violence is LAWS (Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter), which provides emergency shelter, counseling, legal services, and advocacy for survivors. Statewide, according to the Domestic and Sexual Violence in Virginia Annual Report, 5,705 victims of domestic violence were provided emergency shelter in a recent year, and local programs offered transitional housing to 185 adults and 159 children.¹⁸

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 increased from 2022 to 2023, which could indicate rising reporting or rising incidence. Despite available services, many survivors do not seek help, a pattern seen in communities everywhere.

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Cross-Cutting Themes

Read together rather than section by section, the 2026 findings converge on four themes.

1. Cost is the common constraint

Affordability appears as the leading or co-leading barrier in childcare, mental health care, and seeking help after violence. In each domain, the problem is not primarily that services do not exist, it is that the households who need them cannot reach them at the prevailing price. This has a direct programmatic implication: sliding-scale structures, subsidies, and coverage navigation may move outcomes more than additional service capacity alone.

2. Awareness and navigation are separate problems

The survey distinguished between not knowing that a resource exists, knowing it exists but not knowing how to reach it, and reaching it without receiving actionable guidance. Roughly 15.6% of respondents had heard of domestic violence resources but did not know how to access them, and open-ended comments described reaching services only to find no clear plan of action. Awareness campaigns address the first problem; they do not address the second or third. Warm handoffs, coordinated referral pathways, and follow-through are distinct interventions.

3. Language access determines whether care works, not just whether it exists

Spanish-language respondents and the supporting literature both indicate that interpretation quality shapes clinical outcomes. Providing an interpreter is a floor, not a ceiling. Matching patients to language-concordant providers where possible, and training interpreters in clinical terminology where matching is not possible, are the substantive versions of this commitment.

The quantitative data reinforce this across two independent sections of the survey. Language barriers ranked fourth among obstacles to seeking help for domestic violence or trafficking (36.2%), and fear of deportation ranked sixth (29.9%). Both rose relative to the previous cycle. A resident who cannot describe her situation in her own language, or who fears that disclosure carries immigration consequences, faces a barrier that no amount of service capacity resolves on its own.

4. Connection registered as a top-tier need

Community and social connections ranked first among household resource needs at 41.5%, and was most frequently cited by respondents aged 55–64, employed full-time, with incomes of \$200,000 or more. This is a population that is unlikely to appear in traditional needs assessments, and the finding suggests that social infrastructure; convening spaces, peer networks, structured community programming, belongs alongside material support in how the county thinks about well-being.

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Implications for Programming and Policy

The findings suggest several directions for LCWAG, partner organizations, public agencies, and employers.

- **Address affordability directly.** Expand grassroots and government assistance, and pursue subsidies or sliding-scale fees for childcare and health services. The subsidy-acceptance rate among Loudoun childcare providers is a specific, addressable lever.
- **Make services visible.** Loudoun's affluence appears to obscure the social service infrastructure that exists. Proactive, plain-language, multi-channel outreach — including discreet, portable resource formats — addresses this directly.
- **Close the human trafficking awareness gap.** The 52% / 14.7% split between domestic violence and human trafficking resource awareness is the largest single awareness gap in the dataset, and is concentrated in Eastern Loudoun.
- **Build actionable next steps into referral.** Respondents described reaching services without receiving a plan. Coordination among law enforcement, legal aid, shelters, and counselors converts availability into usable support.
- **Invest in language-concordant and culturally responsive care.** Prioritize provider language matching where feasible; where it is not, ensure interpreters are trained in clinical terminology.
- **Design workforce programming as hybrid by default.** In-person seminars and online webinars were nearly tied in demand and split cleanly by age cohort. Offering both is the low-cost way to serve the full range.
- **Meet the demand for STEM and AI training.** Approximately 26% of respondents expressed interest in a STEM career, and AI, particularly in governance, public policy, and cybersecurity emerged as a recurring open-ended theme. This is an opening for new partnerships with local employers and education providers.
- **Treat social connection as infrastructure.** The top-ranked household need in 2026 was connection. Programming that convenes people is responsive to demonstrated need, not adjacent to it.

Regional collaboration also warrants attention. Fairfax County's 2024 report, *The Status of Women and Girls in Fairfax County, Virginia*, examined health, work-life balance, and economic indicators using a comparable approach and reached broadly similar conclusions on health and work-life balance.¹⁹ A working relationship between Fairfax and Loudoun could support shared research capacity and strengthen the case for regional investment in women across Northern Virginia.

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Limitations

Limitations in this study were largely related to the narrow demographics captured in the sample. Even in comparison with previous years of LCWAG reports, sample diversity decreased, potentially affecting the results. Spanish-language responses fell from approximately 15% of the 2024 sample to 4.4% in 2026, and the share of respondents identifying as Non-Hispanic White rose from 50.4% to 57.1%. Because several of the most acute needs documented in prior cycles were concentrated among Hispanic and lower-income respondents, the 2026 declines observed in food, nutritional, childcare, and family-essentials needs should be interpreted with this compositional shift in mind rather than read as unambiguous improvement.

There was little regional or national literature available to explain this recent change in sample representation. It is unclear whether this trend is specific to this study or reflects a more significant shift in survey collection nationwide.

Furthermore, the study relied primarily on self-reported surveys, which may be affected by memory or response bias. Respondent bias may particularly affect portions of the questionnaire perceived as stigmatized, such as mental health concerns. This can affect results surveying mental health needs and obscure the true severity of mental illness within the county.

Finally, the survey uses a convenience sample rather than a probability sample. Findings describe the respondents who participated and should not be treated as precise population estimates for Loudoun County.

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Conclusion

While Loudoun is consistently recognized as one of the nation's most prosperous communities, the findings of the 2026 Voices of Loudoun Women Community Assessment demonstrate that many women continue to face significant barriers. These barriers range from health care access, affordability, and childcare to workforce development and support for survivors of gender-based violence.

Several themes were consistent across the survey. Affordability came up persistently, particularly around childcare and health care, with many respondents naming financial cost as a major obstacle to obtaining services. Mental health was also a priority, with many respondents emphasizing the need for services alongside the difficulty of accessing affordable and culturally responsive care. While many respondents actively sought mental health support, barriers such as insurance limitations and language accessibility prevented them from receiving appropriate care. These findings suggest that access to affordable mental health care remains one of the most pressing issues for the community.

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 provide a roadmap for stakeholders across sectors; nonprofits, government agencies, health care providers, employers, and community groups to work together in addressing the issues identified here.

Whether through policy change, new programs, or public-private partnership, ongoing efforts must focus on advancing financial stability, health care access, and personal safety for the women and girls of Loudoun. In doing so, we not only improve individual lives; we build a more resilient, equitable, and thriving community for all.

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Appendix

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition	Source
Childcare	The active care, supervision, or support of infants, toddlers, children, or adolescents between the ages of 0 and 18.	Virginia Polytechnical University
Domestic Violence	Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner.	United States Department of Justice - Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)
Human Trafficking	Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons, is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts.	United States Department of Justice
Technological Abuse	An act or pattern of behavior that is intended to harm, threaten, control, stalk, harass, impersonate, exploit, extort, or monitor another person that occurs using any form of technology.	United States Department of Justice - Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)
Stigma	The negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency.	American Psychological Association

Table 1. Sample characteristics of 2026 Voices of Loudoun Women respondents by region

Characteristic	Eastern	Northern	Western	Total (%)
Region total	121	76	27	224 (100)
Gender Identity				
Female	119	72	27	218 (97.3)
Male	2	2	0	4 (1.8)
Nonbinary	0	1	0	1 (0.5)
Transgender	0	1	0	1 (0.5)
Race/Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic White	59	50	19	128 (57.1)
Hispanic/Latino	26	10	2	38 (17.0)
Non-Hispanic Black	12	8	2	22 (9.8)
Asian	12	2	1	15 (6.7)
No Response	8	2	0	10 (4.5)
Mixed Race	1	2	2	5 (2.2)
American Indian/Alaska Native	2	2	0	4 (1.8)
African	1	0	0	1 (0.5)
Persian	0	0	1	1 (0.5)
Age Category				
18–24 years old	2	2	0	4 (1.8)
25–34 years old	16	17	1	34 (15.2)
35–44 years old	33	6	7	46 (20.5)
45–54 years old	34	21	11	66 (29.5)

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Characteristic	Eastern	Northern	Western	Total (%)
55–64 years old	26	23	7	56 (25.0)
65 years or older	10	7	1	18 (8.0)
Employment Status				
Employed, working full-time	54	43	13	110 (49.1)
Employed, working part-time	21	8	4	33 (14.7)
Business Owner/Entrepreneur	15	12	3	30 (13.4)
Not employed, not looking for work	10	7	3	20 (8.9)
Retired	9	5	2	16 (7.1)
Not employed, looking for work	9	0	2	11 (4.9)
Disabled, not able to work	1	1	0	2 (0.9)
Disabled, working	2	0	0	2 (0.9)
Annual Household Income				
Less than \$10,000	6	1	1	8 (3.6)
Between \$10,000 and \$49,999	15	3	2	20 (8.9)
Between \$50,000 and \$99,999	18	10	4	32 (14.3)
Between \$100,000 and \$149,999	11	12	3	26 (11.6)
Between \$150,000 and \$199,999	16	14	5	35 (15.6)
Over \$200,000	32	24	8	64 (28.6)
Prefer not to answer	23	12	4	39 (17.4)
Child in Household Less than 18?				
Yes	70	32	16	118 (52.7)
No	51	44	11	106 (47.3)

Notes: Loudoun County regions were defined using 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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Table 2. Distribution of survey respondents who reported childcare problems

Childcare problem	Eastern	Northern	Western	Total (%)
Cost of care	18	7	7	32 (27.1)
Scheduling child care to match work schedule	12	6	4	22 (18.6)
Finding care for <u>sick</u> child	8	5	1	14 (11.9)
Quality of care/school	9	3	1	13 (11.0)
Finding temporary care	6	4	2	12 (10.2)
Transportation to/from care/school	3	5	3	11 (9.3)
Finding care for <u>child</u> with special needs	0	4	1	5 (4.2)
Dependability of care/school	3	1	1	5 (4.2)
Location of childcare/school	1	2	0	3 (2.5)
Safe Routes to School and Traffic Safety	1	0	0	1 (0.9)
Childcare Access and Family Support	0	1	0	1 (0.9)

Notes: Percentage represents the count of responses divided by the count of respondents who reported having a child in their household under the age of 18 (n = 118). Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. Data does not include respondents who selected 'None of the Above'.

Table 3. Distribution of survey respondents regarding professional development opportunities

Opportunity	Eastern	Northern	Western	Total (%)
Seminars or other in-person workshops	50	40	11	101 (45.1)
Webinars or other online training	50	36	9	95 (42.4)
Career certificates (short-term, specialized credential programs)	46	35	8	89 (39.7)
Returnships (professional learning experiences for adults returning to work)	26	20	8	54 (24.1)
College degrees (two- or four-year programs at a higher education institution)	15	10	6	31 (13.8)
Apprenticeships (on-the-job training under a skilled expert)	14	9	5	28 (12.5)
Internships (professional learning experiences)	9	8	2	19 (8.5)
Other	6	2	0	8 (3.6)

Notes: Percentage represents the count of responses divided by the total sample (n = 224). Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. Data does not include respondents who selected 'None of the Above'.



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