

Tulane Apartments Resident Survey

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Executive Summary

This report contains the results of survey of residents at the Tulane apartments in Memphis, TN. The purpose of the survey was to answer 4 basic questions:

- 1. *What are resident perceptions of their housing conditions and maintenance of their housing?***
 - **70% residents surveyed were very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with the maintenance of their apartments.**
 - **Long wait times for repairs.** Sixty-three percent of the residents in the survey had work orders in for repairs; 25% reported waiting more than six months for their repairs.
 - **Resident perceived that management was less responsive since HUD cut funding.** Some residents reported that repairs had become very slow after the HUD made the decision to abate funding for the Tulane site based voucher.
- 2. *What are resident perceptions regarding crime and public safety at the apartments?***
 - **Residents perceive the environment to be very unsafe.** Eighty-seven percent of residents in the sample reported violence and shootings as a big problem at the Tulane apartments. About half of respondents said they felt very unsafe outside on the apartment grounds at night.
 - **Residents reported that much of the criminal activity is from outsiders** coming into the apartment complex, particularly gang members.
- 3. *Do residents desire to stay or move from the apartments, and under what conditions?***
 - **At the time the survey was conducted, HUD had already made the decision to relocate the residents. That said 51 out of 52 respondents said that they wanted to move.**
 - **Crime is the biggest factor for wanting to move, followed by desire for better housing.** Ninety percent of respondents reported for wanting to move was to get away from crime; 67% reported that they wanted a bigger or better apartment.
 - **Even with the hypothetical of new ownership, 79% of residents want to move.** We posed this as a hypothetical question saying “what if Tulane came under new ownership and they fixed the place up?” Still 79% of residents said that they would move. When probed about this many believed that conditions would not improve under new owners. Others just said that they were “done” and wanted a fresh start somewhere else.
- 4. *What are residents’ perceptions about the relocation process?***
 - **Most of the residents had not yet begun searching for new housing at the time of the survey.** At the time the survey was conducted many were waiting to hear about the specific amount of their vouchers and thus had not yet begun searching since they did not know what they could afford.
 - **Findings from residents who had begun searching or who had already found a new apartment.** As mentioned in the introduction to this sections, almost all of the residents interviewed had not yet begun their search for new housings. However, a few had begun searching and some had already found places that they were looking into, though none had yet signed a lease. Below are some of the things that were said by this group:

- **Websites for housing search were out of date.** Those who had begun the search reported that the website provided to them for Section 8 housing (Tnhousingsearch.com) was out of date. Those that had contacted the properties on the lists on the website said many told them that they were not accepting vouchers.
- **Many of those searching are doing it on their own.** Because the website was out of date, those that were searching were using word of mouth and Internet searches to try to find new housing. None had received any type of special assistance from HUD in carrying out their search and most felt like they were on their own.
- **Spots are filling quickly.** Some of residents said that with the flood of applications coming from residents at both Tulane and Warren, that spots were filling quickly and some perceived that applicants were using personal connections with associates at apartment complexes around town to gain favor in the approval process.

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Survey Methodology

The City of Memphis contracted with the University of Memphis to conduct a survey of residents at Tulane Apartments. In determining the final sample size, three factors were considered: cost, depth of interviews and representativeness. Balancing all of these factors a target sample size of 50 residents was agreed upon. While such a sample is small in terms of its statistical significance, it does afford a large qualitative sample. In addition, reliable geographic representativeness to the sample was ensured by interviewing at least one resident from each structure in the complex. In all, 52 residents were surveyed and a supplemental focus group of eight residents was also conducted.

Figure 1 provides a map of the site with addresses; below each address is the number of interviews conducted with residents from each structure.

A pretest of the survey was conducted on April 26, 2016. The remaining surveys were administered over a period of two weeks from May 2 to May 13, 2016. Interviews were conducted between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. at various outdoor locations around the complex. Each interview, on average, took approximately 45 minutes to complete. The focus group was held on May 12, 2016. Interviewees were compensated with a \$25 Visa gift card for their participation in the survey/focus group.

The quantitative survey data was compiled into a database for analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed by developing a series of themes from the interviews. The data analysis was approached in a holistic manner, using both quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure resident opinions and perceptions.

The main questions addressed in the survey were:

5. What are resident perceptions of their housing conditions and maintenance of their housing?
6. What are resident perceptions regarding crime and public safety at the apartments?
7. Do residents desire to stay or move from the apartments, and under what conditions?
8. What are residents' perceptions about the relocation process?

Figure 1: Map of Tulane Apartments and Number of Respondents per Unit



Results

Maintenance and Repairs

Most of the residents in the sample were not satisfied with the overall maintenance of the apartment complex or with the maintenance of their individual residences. Some of the main themes that emerged in the interviews follow:

- **Not doing maintenance.** Several residents complained that once the owner of the complex was informed that they would no longer be receiving HUD funds, that maintenance had largely stopped.
- **Bathroom leaks.** Several residents mentioned problems with leaks from bathrooms in upstairs units leaking water down into lower units. In some cases, more chronic leaks created mold issues in some units.
- **AC.** Many residents talked about unresolved issues with AC saying that management told them that it was not yet warm enough to warrant AC repairs.
- **Trash.** There were many complaints about trash. Some residents reported that trash pickup from the dumpsters is not consistent. This resulted in dumpsters overflowing with trash that then blows around the complex.
- **Bugs and vermin control.** The residents repeatedly raised concerns about mice, mosquitoes, cockroaches, rats, and bedbugs in their apartments and throughout the grounds. It was thought by many of the residents that the maintenance staff simply do not have the proper resources to stop or prevent the problem. Residents said that they were often left to their own devices to prevent or stop the infestations in their apartments. They said while the bedbugs, mosquitoes, and cockroaches remain an intractable problem, the mice and rats largely stay out of apartments after traps and poison are set.
- **Raw sewage coming into kitchen pipes.** A few of the residents in the sample indicated that they had experienced problems with raw sewage from upstairs bathrooms coming up into their kitchen sinks.

Figure 2 below shows resident satisfaction with maintenance of their buildings and apartments. The top half of the figure shows satisfaction with the resident's building overall. Forty-eight percent of residents were very dissatisfied and another 17% were somewhat dissatisfied with the maintenance of their building over the past 12 months. The bottom half of the figure shows satisfaction with maintenance of resident's individual apartments. Fifty-eight percent of residents were very dissatisfied with the maintenance of their individual apartment units; 12% were somewhat dissatisfied. In each case, a majority of the residents expressed some level of dissatisfaction with maintenance.

Figure 2: Overall Resident Satisfaction with Maintenance

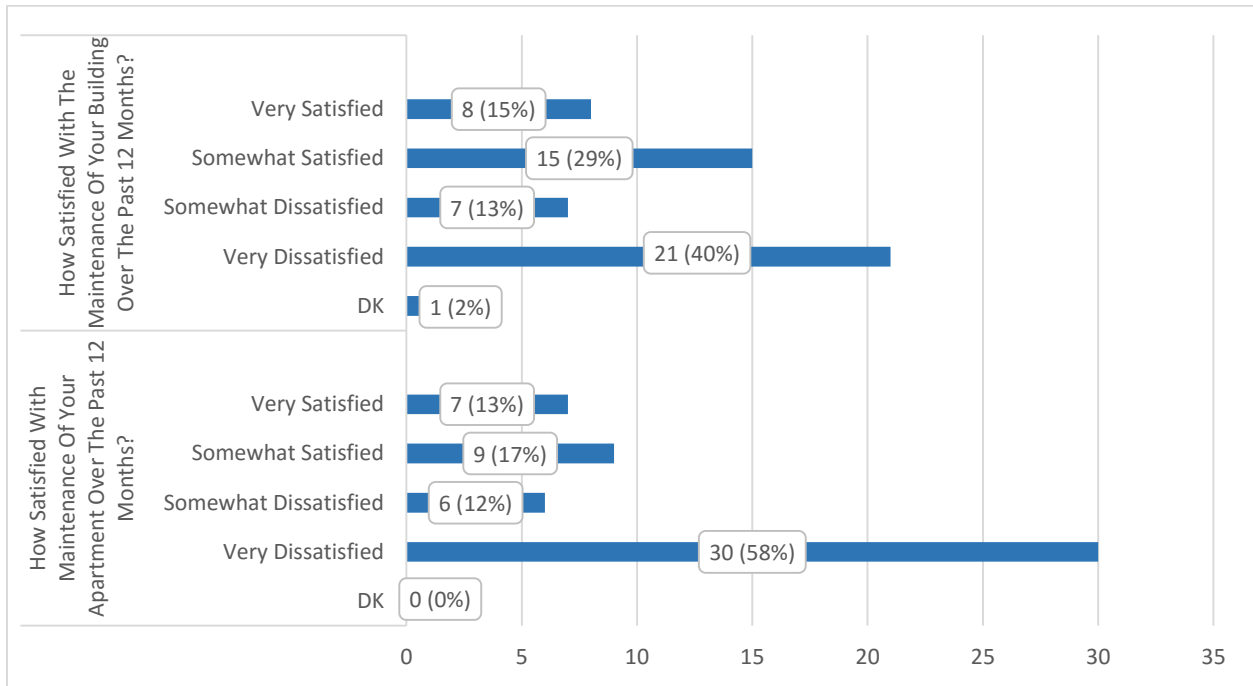
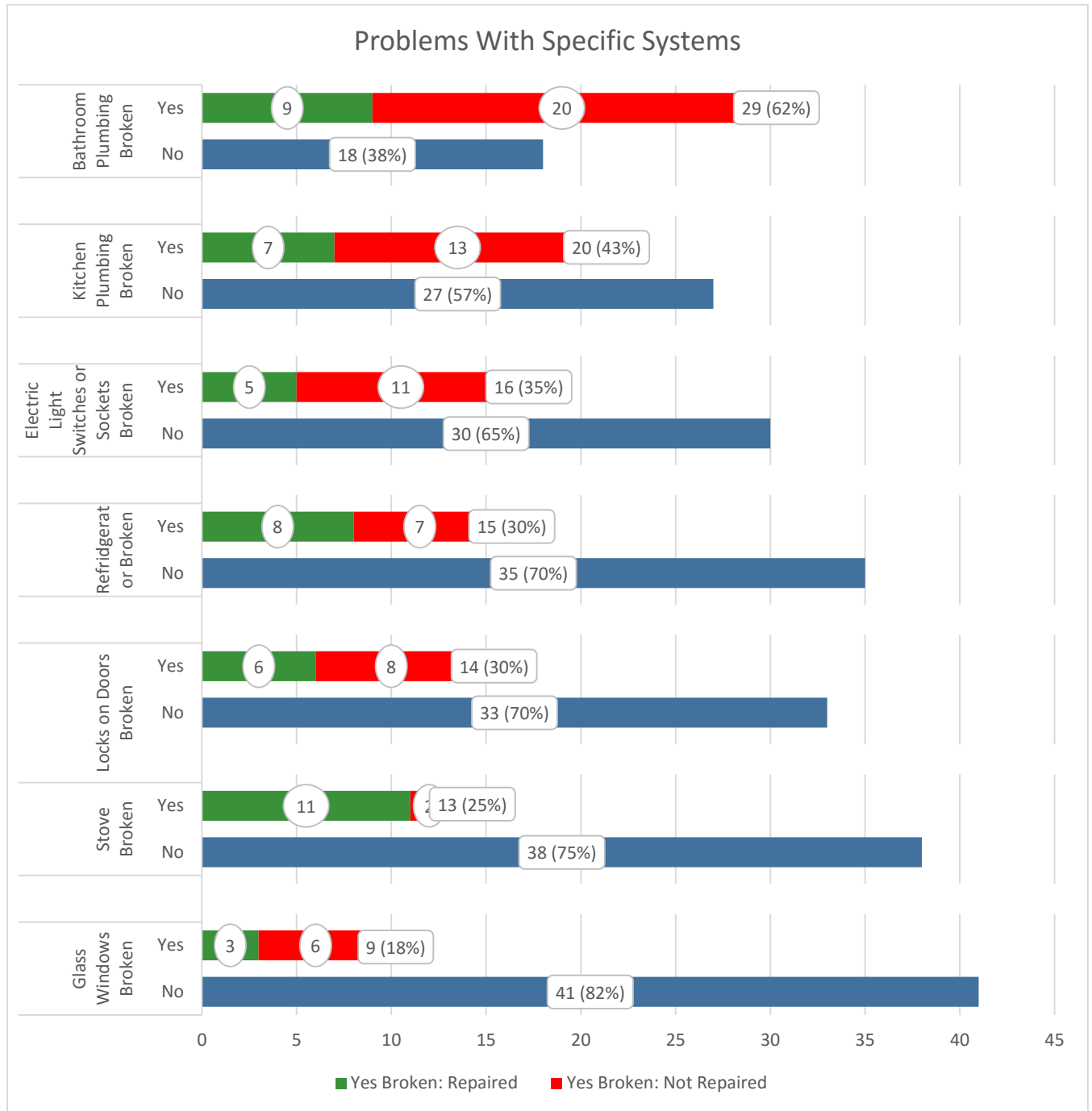


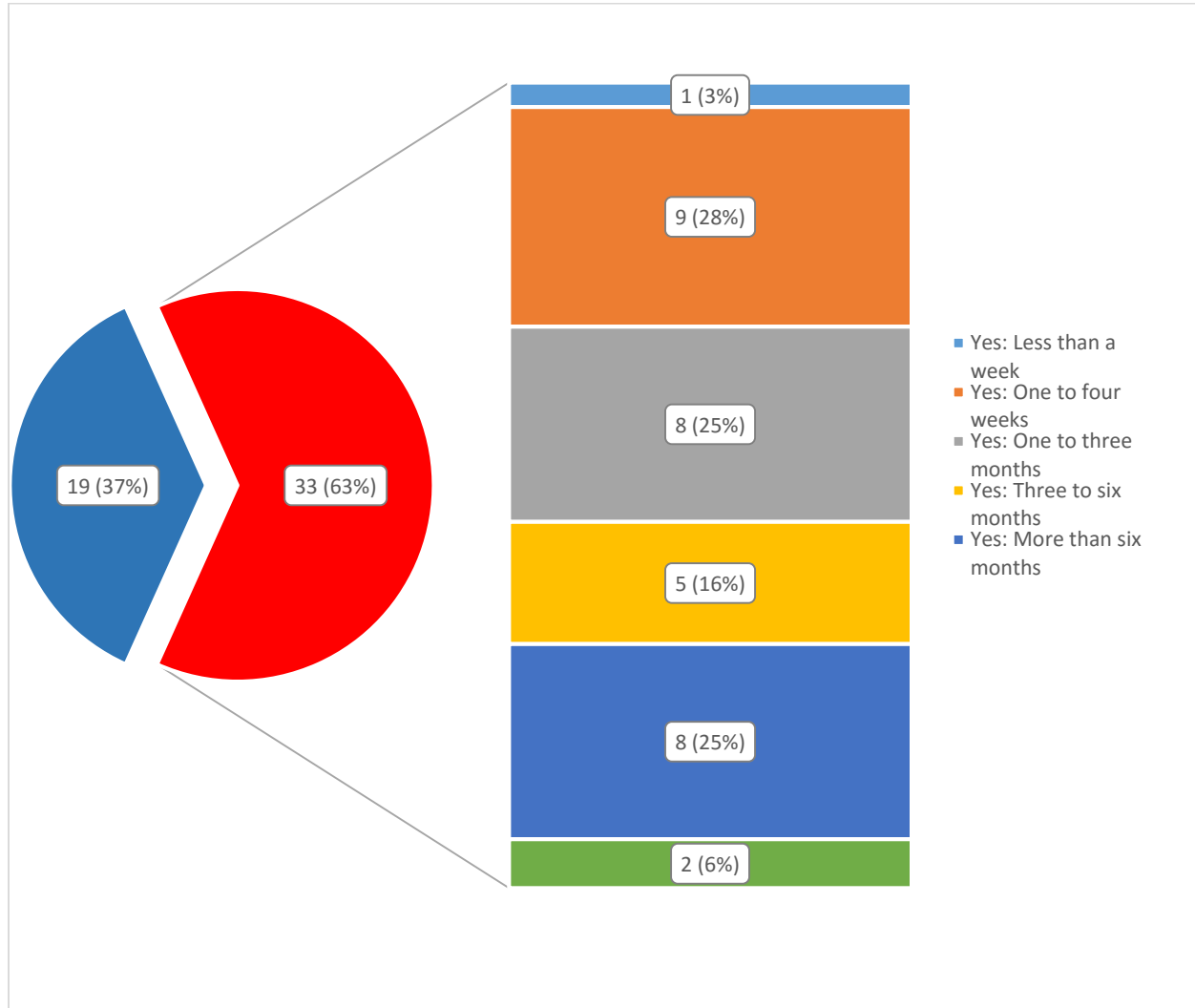
Figure 3 provides a more detailed analysis of specific systems within the residential units. The bars in the chart represent a yes or no to having a problem with a specific system. The yes column is then further broken down to indicate whether or not the system was repaired. For example, the most common issue residents had was with their bathroom plumbing. Of the 29 residents that said they had experienced a problem with their bathroom plumbing over the past 12 months, 20 said that it had not been repaired. Other common problems included kitchen plumbing (43%), electrical systems (35%), refrigerators (30%) and doors/locks (30%).

Figure 3: Maintenance of Specific Systems



Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference. presents results for work order turnaround. Sixty-three percent of the residents in the sample reported that they had at least one work order outstanding. Of those who had outstanding work orders, 3% had been waiting for less than a week, 27% had been waiting one to four weeks, another 24% had been waiting one to three months, 16% had been waiting three to six months, and 25% had been waiting for more than 6 months for their issue to be addressed.

Figure 4: Work Orders and Waiting Time



Crime and Safety

Most of the people in the sample with thought that crime and safety were big issues at the Tulane apartments. Fresh on the minds of many was a double murder that took place on January 9, 2016 where a pregnant woman and her companion were shot to death during a home invasion.

- **Fearful of being outdoors.** Many of the residents are fearful of going outside in the evenings because the area is occupied by men who are non-residents. Although curfew is enforced at 9:00 p.m., many come back out after security leaves at 11:00 pm.
- **Gang activity and outsiders are fueling crime.** Residents reported that most of the criminal activity at Tulane is from outsiders who come to the complex to hang out or engage in drug sales.

Figure 5 provides general resident perceptions of safety. Within their own apartments, 42% of residents felt very safe and 25% felt very unsafe. Outside their apartments, however, residents felt more unsafe. Fully 46% of residents felt very unsafe outside their apartments and only 15% felt very safe. In speaking to residents about why they felt safer within their apartments than outside, many indicated that they had some sort of means for self-defense in their apartment such as a Taser or firearm.

Figure 5: Resident Perceptions of Safety

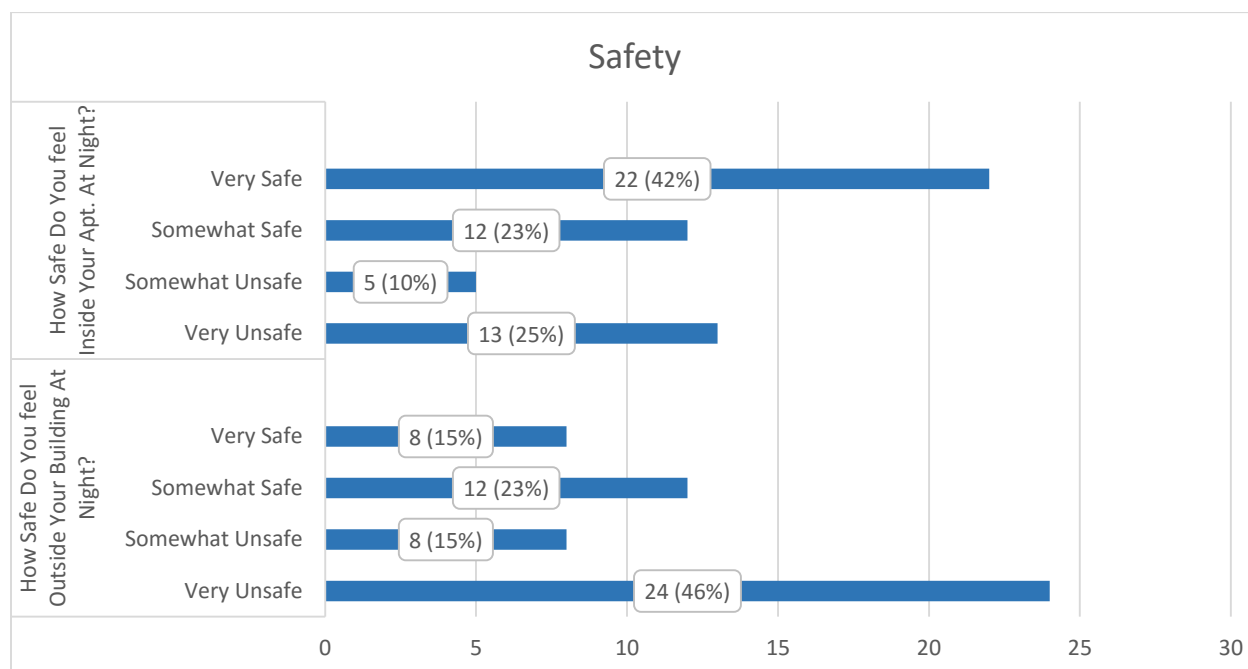
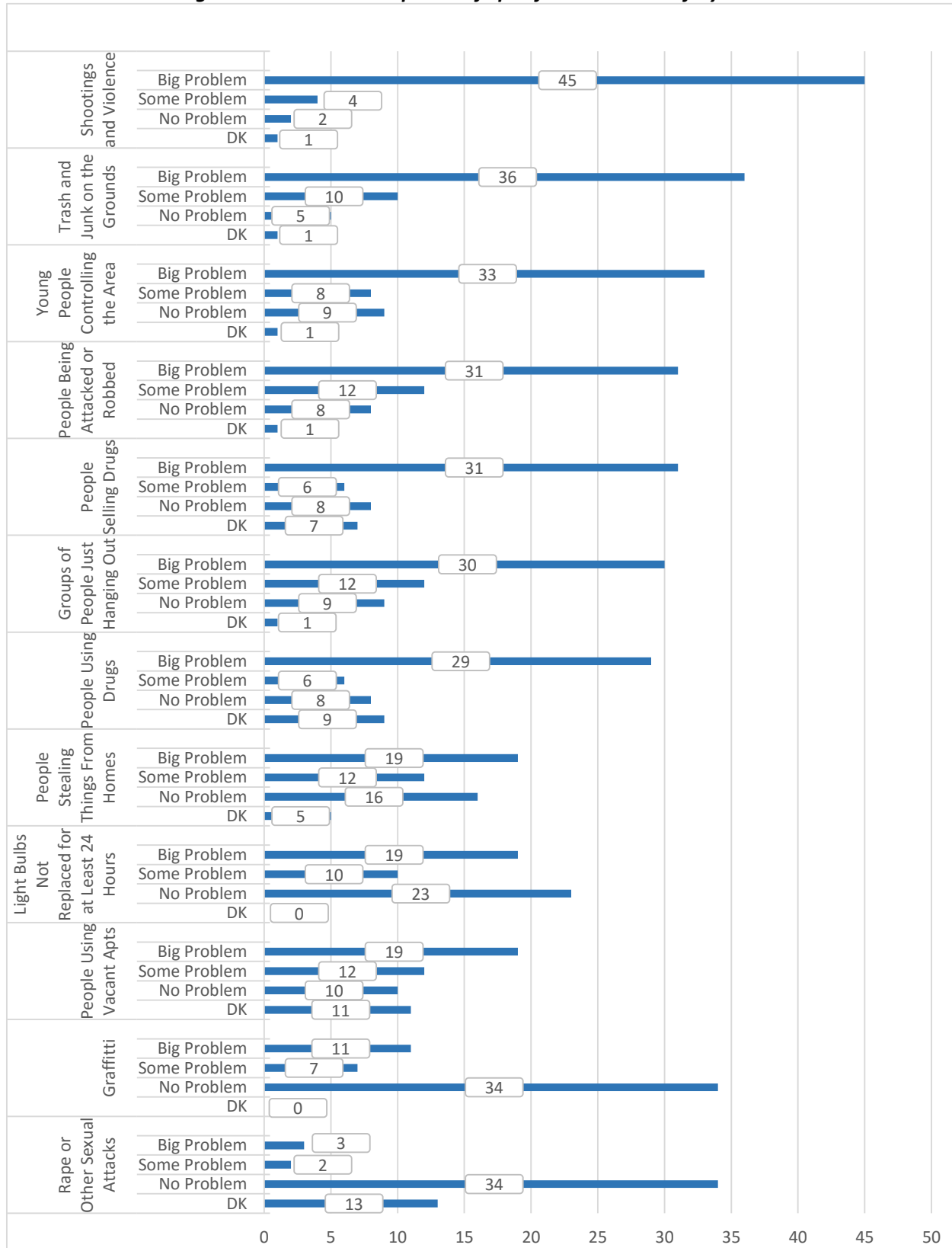


Figure 6 provides a more detailed view of specific safety issues. To facilitate comparison, the items are sorted by severity according to resident perceptions. The largest perceived problems include shootings and violence, trash and junk on the grounds, young people (gangs) controlling the area. Problems that were perceived to be less severe included rape and sexual assault, graffiti and squatting (people using vacant apartments)

Figure 6: Resident Perceptions of Specific Crime and Safety Issues



Desire to Move

When the survey was originally conceived, there had not yet been a firm decision on the part of HUD to relocate residents from the apartments, but in the intervening time leading up to the survey, a decision was made by HUD to relocate the residents from Tulane apartments. At the point in time when the survey was administered, residents had already been informed that they were going to be relocated (with no option of staying). Furthermore, many of the residents were either just about to receive their Section 8 housing vouchers, or had received the voucher in the last 24-48 hours. Therefore, results on the question about desire to move should be viewed in light of these circumstances. That is, residents already knew that they had no choice to stay.

- **Just about everyone wants to move.** Figure 7: **Desire to Stay or Move**Figure 7 shows that 51 out of 52 (or 98%) of the residents we spoke to says that they want to move.
- **Most residents want to move because of crime.** Most people said that their principal reason for moving was to get away from crime, violence and drugs.
- **Even with the hypothetical of new ownership, 79% of residents want to move.** We posed this as a hypothetical question saying “what if Tulane came under new ownership and they fixed the place up?” Still 79% of residents said that they would move. When probed about this many believed that conditions would not improve under new owners. Others just said that they were “done” and wanted a fresh start somewhere else.

Figure 7: Desire to Stay or Move

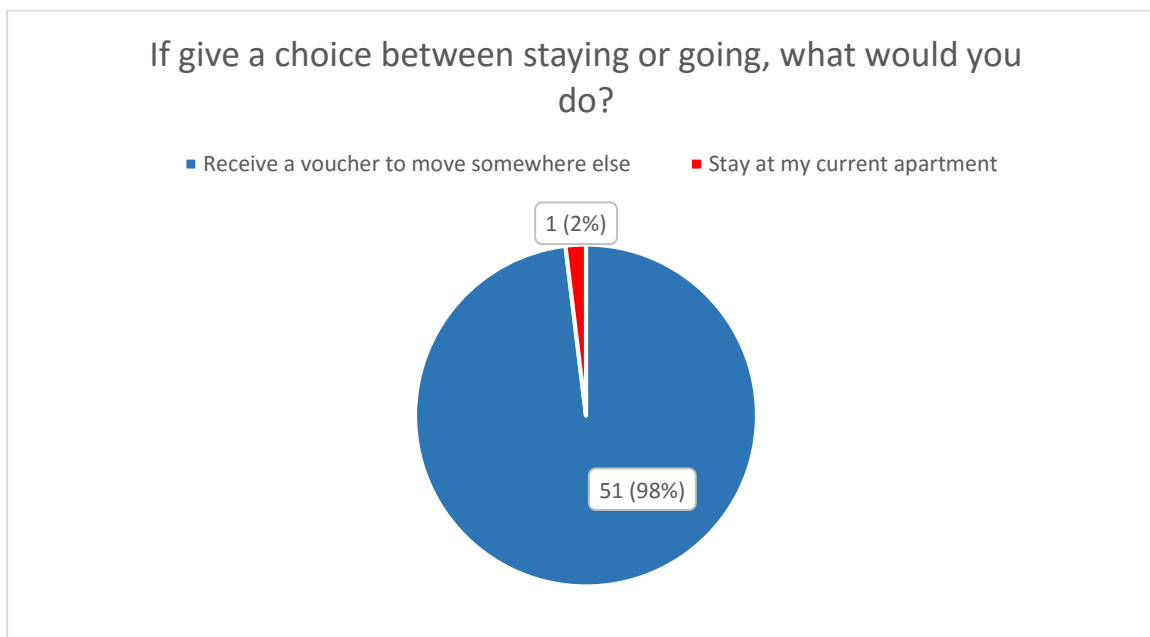


Figure 8 shows residents' reasons for wanting to move. As noted above, most people said that their principal reason for moving was to get away from crime, violence and drugs. Though not listed as an option, many residents said that they just wanted a better environment for their children. 67 percent of those we interviewed said that they wanted to move in order to get a bigger or better apartment.

Figure 8: Reasons for Moving

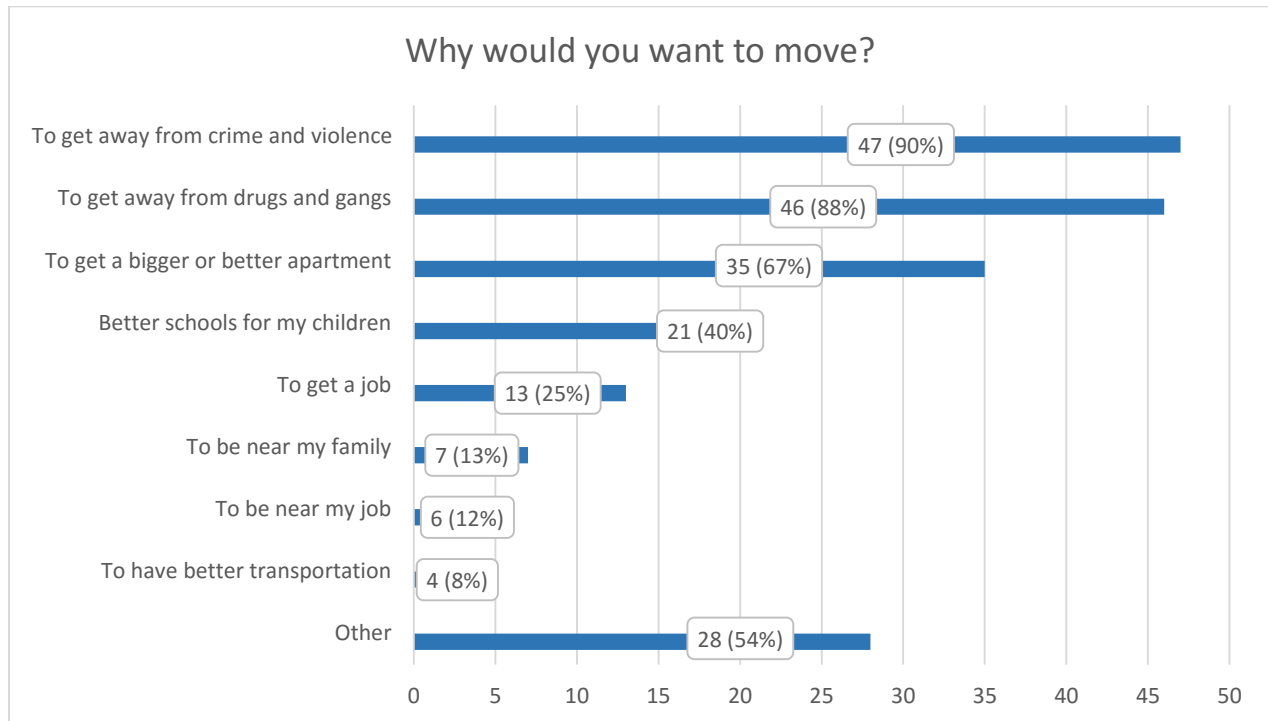
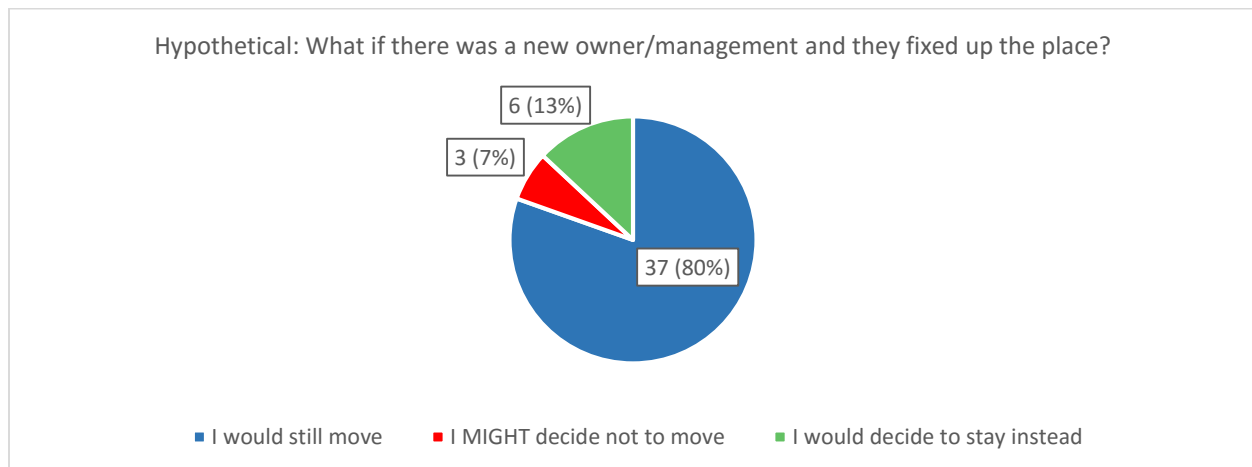


Figure 9 shows the results from asking a hypothetical question. The purpose of the question was to ascertain if resident desire to move was because the relocation was already a “done deal”, or because the residents wanted to move anyway. When posed with the scenario of new ownership taking over the Tulane apartments and fixing the place up, 79% of the respondents said they still would move, although 15% said they would decide to stay instead, and another 8.5% said that might decide not to move.

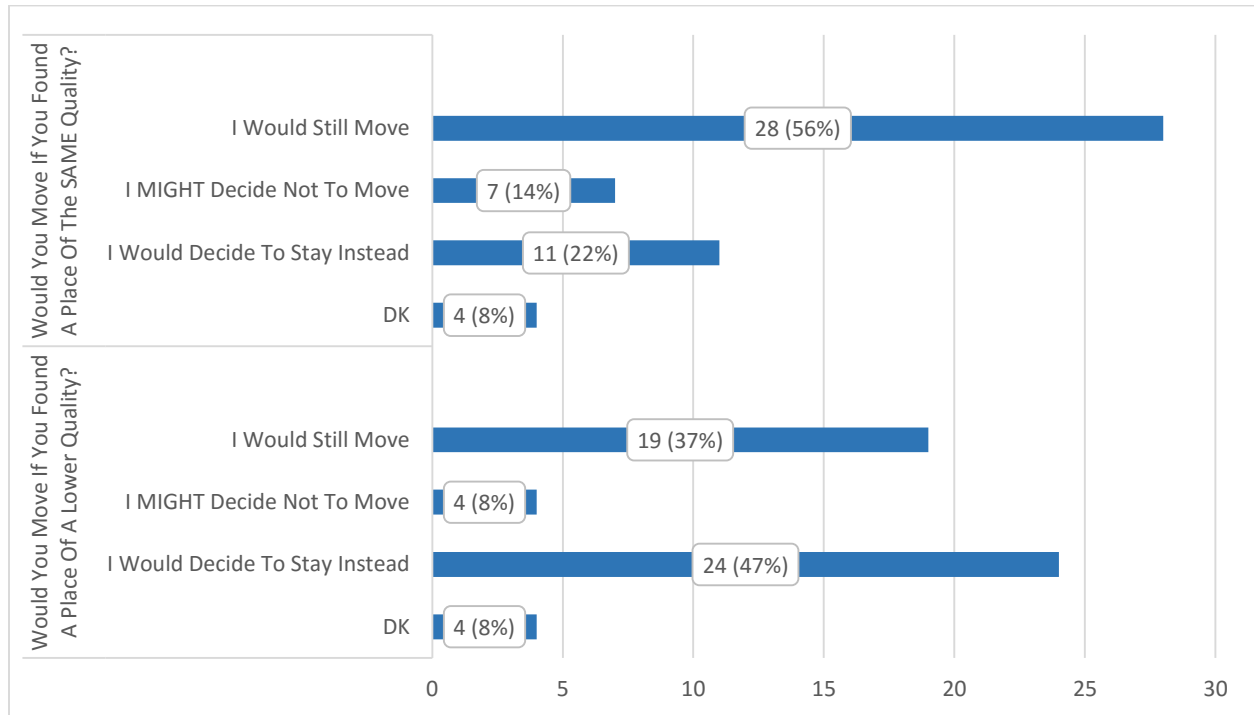
Figure 9: Hypothetical of New Ownership



Residents Might Reconsider Moving if No Better Housing Available. Another hypothetical question was this: “if you could only find housing of the SAME quality as you have now, would you still move?” And residents were asked, “if you could only find housing of LOWER quality as you have now, would you still move?”. Both of these scenarios are reported in Figure 10.

- Same Quality Housing. On the first hypothetical of finding only the SAME quality housing, 56% said they would still move, 14% said that they might decide not to move, and 22% said that they would stay.
- Lower Quality Housing. With the second hypothetical of only being able to find housing of LOWER quality, 37% said they would still move, 14% might decide not to move and 47% would decide to stay instead. Of course these are only hypotheticals, but these findings do have policy implications. If there is a shortage of quality housing stock, many residents would prefer to stay.

Figure 10: Hypothetical Given Housing Quality Levels



Relocation Process

To fully contextualize our findings with the relocation process, it is important to note the point in time when these interviews were conducted. The survey was conducted after HUD had already made the decision to relocate the residents from the Tulane apartments. At the same time, most of the people in the sample were still in the midst of the Section 8 voucher process and did not know the amount of their voucher and were waiting to hear back. For those who were still waiting to hear back, many had not yet begun the search for new housing because they did not know what price range their vouchers would afford them. Accordingly, when asked about the relocation process, the majority of the residents we spoke with were providing speculative answers about the ease or difficulty of finding new housing since they have not yet begun to search in earnest at the time of the survey.

Most of the residents had not yet begun searching for new housing at the time of the survey. As mentioned above, many were waiting to hear about the specific amount of their vouchers and thus had not yet begun searching since they did not know what they could afford.

Findings from residents who had begun searching or who had already found a new apartment. As mentioned in the introduction to this sections, almost all of the residents interviewed had not yet begun their search for new housings. However, a few had begun searching and some had already found some options that they were looking into, though none had yet signed a lease. Below are some of the things that were said by this group:

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- **Spots are filling quickly.** Some of residents said that with the flood of applications coming from residents at both Tulane and Warren, that spots were filling quickly and some perceived that applicants were using personal connections with associates at apartment complexes around town to gain favor in the approval process.

Figure 11 shows the results of the question about how easy residents thought it would be to find a place that accepts housing vouchers. A slight majority of respondents thought that it was going to be very easy (17%) or somewhat easy (another 37%). Fifteen percent thought it would be very difficult and 21% thought it would be somewhat difficult.

Figure 11: Ease of Finding Place that Accepts Housing Vouchers

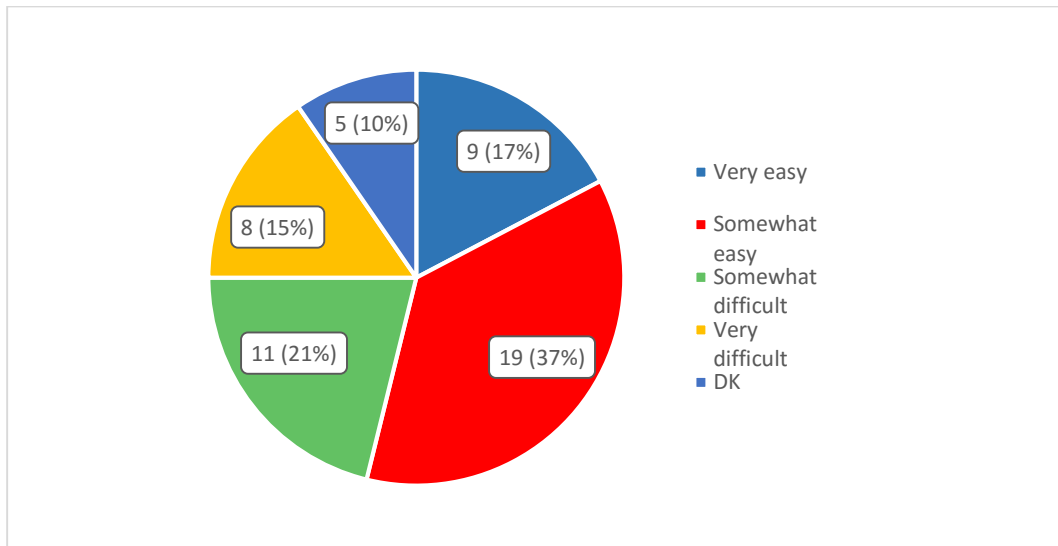
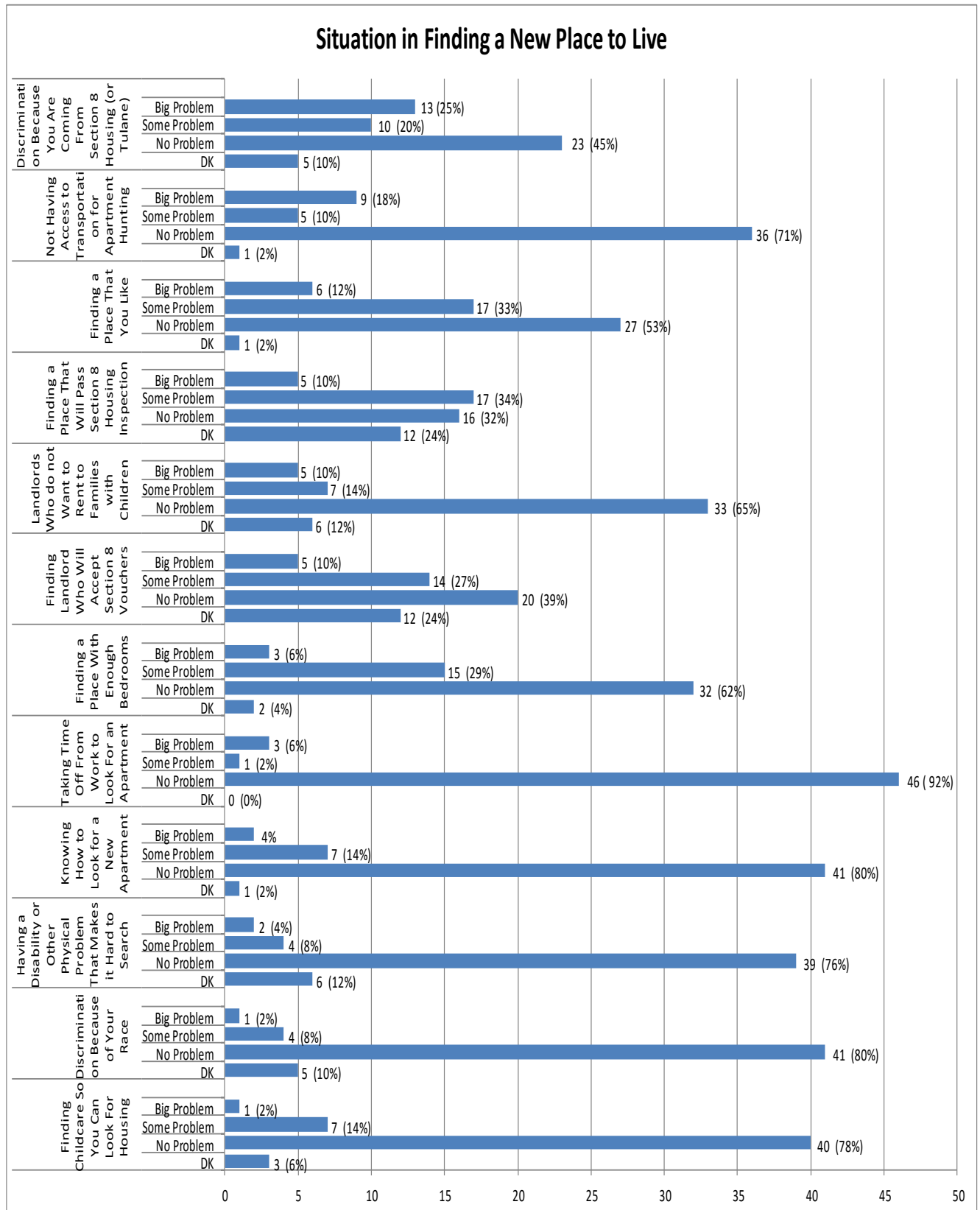


Figure 12 shows a more detailed account of specific issues that residents may encounter in their search for new housing. The issue that was most frequently cited as a big problem was potential discrimination due to coming from Section 8 housing. In fact, many gave a more nuanced answer saying that they feared that they would be stigmatized because they were coming from the Tulane apartments, which has received a lot of negative media attention. There were a few areas that residents thought would be some problem, including finding a place they would like (33%), finding a place that would pass Section 8 inspection standards (34%), and finding a landlord who will accept Section 8 vouchers (39%). At the same time, there were many areas where residents thought the issue would be no problem, such as taking time off of work (96%), knowing how to look for an apartment (80%), discrimination because of race (80%), finding childcare so could look (78%) and having a disability or problem with mobility (76%).

Figure 12: Potential Problems with Relocation



Demographics

- 100% of the persons we interviewed self-identified as African American/Black.
- 50 (96%) were female and 2 (4%) were male.
- 50% of the sample had lived at Tulane for more than 3 years (**Figure 13**).
- More than half of the sample had 4 or more people living in the household (**Figure 14**).
- About 75% of the sample had 2 or more children under age 18 living in the household (**Figure 15**).
- 85% of the sample did not currently work for pay (**Figure 16**).
- 75% of the sample had at least completed high school or had a GED, only 25% had not completed high school (**Figure 17**).

Figure 13: Years Living at Tulane Apartments

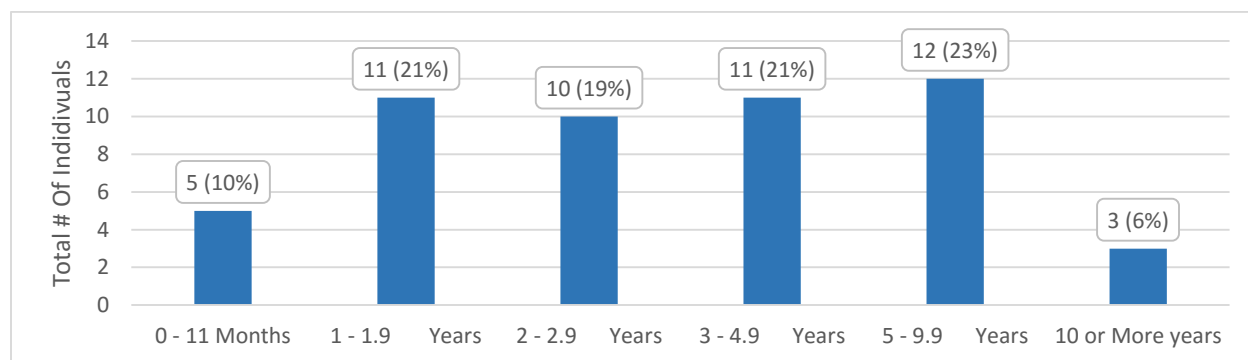


Figure 14: Number Living in Household

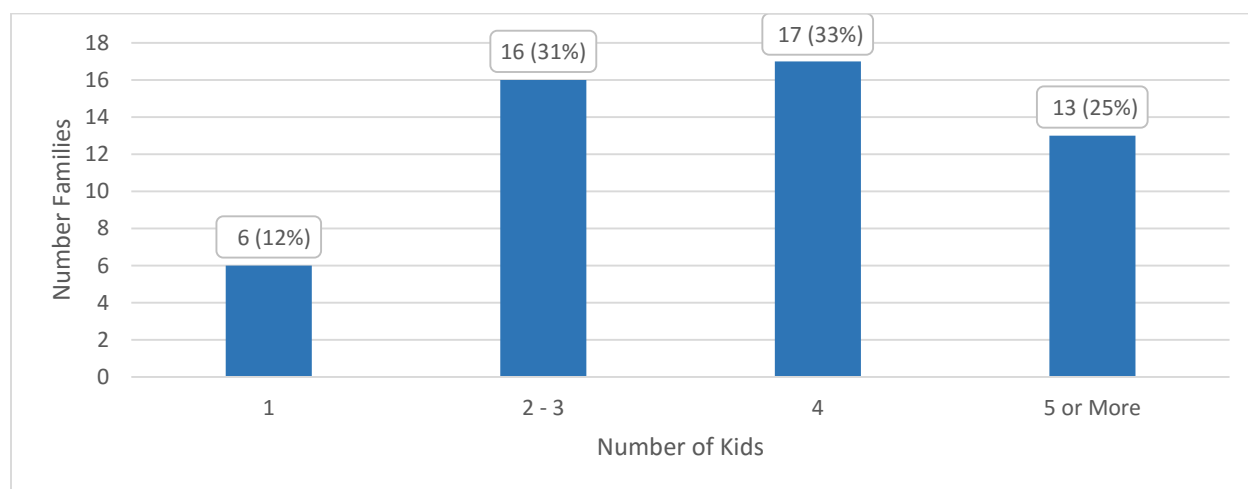


Figure 15: Number of Children under 18

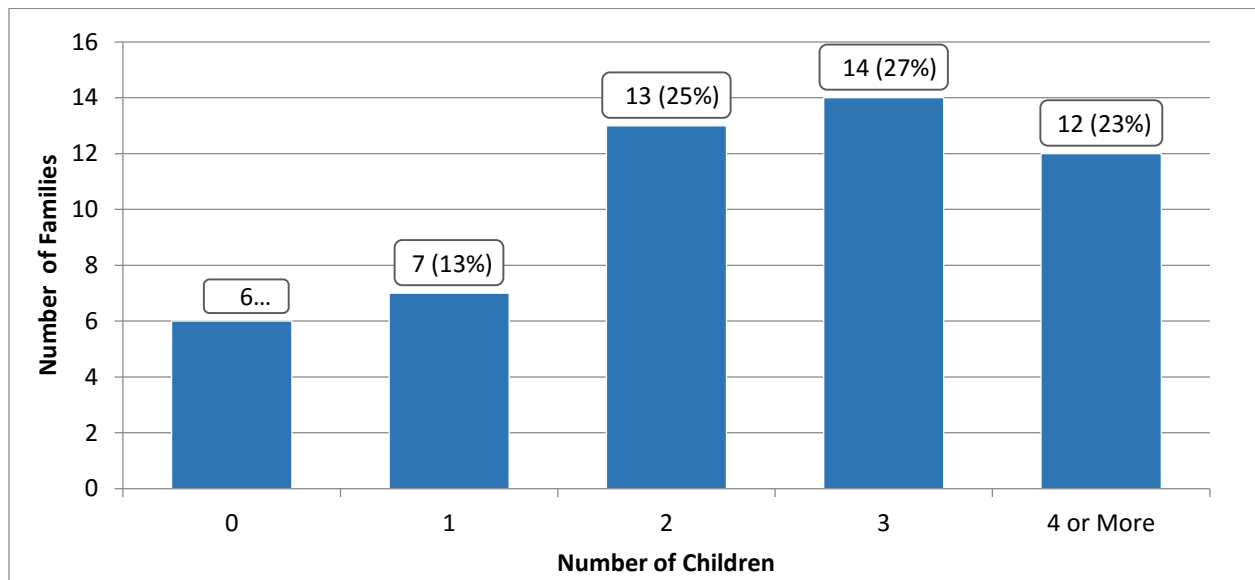


Figure 16: Work Status of Respondent

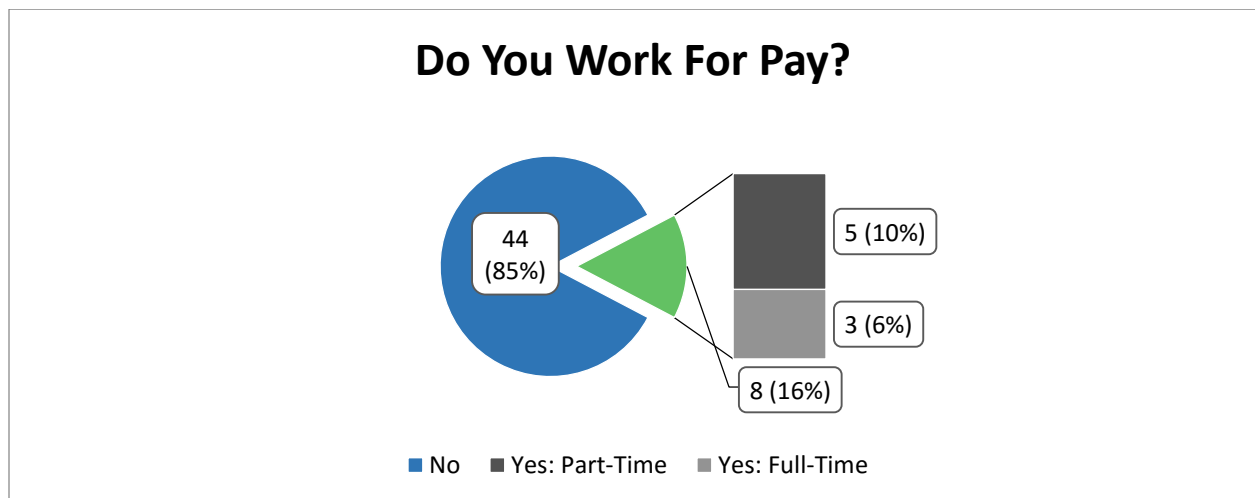


Figure 17: Educational Status of Respondent

