

**Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
2003 Assisted Housing Survey**

December 2003

Prepared by



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I. INTRODUCTION

The Assisted Housing Survey was developed at the request of members of the Regional Housing Choice Voucher Directors Committee. Data collected through the survey, and from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Resident Characteristic Reports, have been compiled in this report and present an overall picture of the Housing Choice Voucher Program in the Washington metropolitan region. This report is not intended as an analysis of the Assisted Housing Survey data, but is simply a presentation of regional program activity.

The Assisted Housing Survey was distributed to ten housing agencies in the Washington metropolitan area. This report contains information collected from three housing agencies in suburban Maryland (Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, Prince George's County Housing Authority, and Rockville Housing Enterprises), six agencies in Virginia (Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Arlington County Department of Human Services, Fairfax County Department of Housing*, Loudoun County Housing Services, City of Manassas Department of Social Services, and the Prince William County Office of Housing and Community Development), and the District of Columbia Housing Authority.

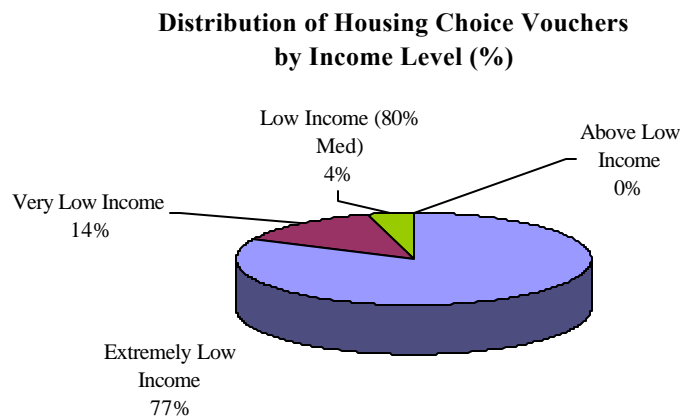
Unless otherwise noted, all information contained within this report is current as of June 30, 2003 and represents Housing Choice Voucher program activity for fiscal year 2003.

** Fairfax County Department of Housing manages the Housing Choice Voucher program for the cities of Fairfax, Falls Church and Herndon.*

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The following data was collected from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Resident Characteristics Report (RCR)¹. The RCR summarizes demographic and income information about households receiving federal housing assistance. A sampling of this data is presented below. Unless other indicated, information is current as of July 31, 2003, and represents the period February 1, 2002, through July 31, 2003.

Distribution of Housing Choice Vouchers by Income Level



Housing Choice Voucher Programs primarily provide housing assistance for extremely low-income households. Overall, 77 percent of voucher recipients have household incomes below 30 percent of area median family income (MFI), which is \$84,800² for the Washington metropolitan region. The remaining vouchers are distributed among moderate-income households with 13 percent of vouchers assisting very low-income households (50 percent of MFI), four percent helping low-income families (80 percent of MFI). No vouchers have been issued to households earning more than 80 percent of MFI. Voucher distribution rates among individual jurisdictions reflect regional averages, with the majority of housing choice vouchers assisting extremely low-income and very low-income households.

Distribution by Annual Income as of July 31, 2003

Jurisdiction	Distribution by Annual Avg Income (%)			
	Extremely Low Income (>30% Med)	Very Low Income (50% Med)	Low Income (80% Med)	Above Low Income
Alexandria	100%	0%	0%	0%
Arlington County	76%	17%	4%	0%
District of Columbia	76%	10%	3%	0%
Fairfax County	73%	17%	6%	0%
Loudoun County	70%	17%	5%	0%
Manassas*				
Montgomery County	73%	16%	5%	0%
Prince George's County	73%	16%	6%	0%
Prince William County**	80%	19%	2%	0%
Rockville	76%	12%	3%	0%
Total	77%	14%	4%	0.0%

* The Virginia Housing Development Authority oversees the City of Manassas Housing Choice Voucher Program; separate RCR data is not available for the City of Manassas. Prince William County became a Public Housing Agency on July 1, 2002. RCR data for Prince William County will be available for future reports.

** Distribution of Housing Assistance by Annual Average Income for Fiscal Year 2004.

Average Annual Income of Housing Choice Voucher Recipients

Average annual household incomes for Housing Choice Voucher recipients range from \$9,452 in the City of Alexandria to \$15,182 in Fairfax County. Overall, the average annual household income for voucher recipients in the Washington metropolitan area is \$13,168, approximately 15.5 percent of area MFI.

Average Annual Income as of July 31, 2003

Jurisdiction	Avg. Annual Income (\$)
Alexandria	\$9,452
Arlington County	\$14,205
District of Columbia	\$10,930
Fairfax County	\$15,182
Loudoun County	\$14,445
Manassas*	
Montgomery County	\$13,862
Prince George's County	\$14,598
Prince William County**	
Rockville	\$12,673
Total	\$13,168

Average Total Tenant Payments

Average total tenant payments range from a low of \$222 in the District of Columbia to \$344 in Fairfax County for an overall average monthly payment of \$299. This amount is 27.2 percent of the average annual household income of voucher recipients cited above and 2.6 percent lower than the average total tenant payment of \$307 for the six month period ending September 30, 2002.

Average Monthly Total Tenant Payment as of July 31, 2003

Jurisdiction	Avg. Monthly Total Tenant Payment (\$)
Alexandria	\$222
Arlington County	\$329
District of Columbia	\$254
Fairfax County	\$344
Loudoun County	\$318
Manassas*	
Montgomery County	\$319
Prince George's County	\$328
Prince William County*	
Rockville	\$279
Total	\$299

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** Information not available.

Race and Ethnicity of Housing Choice Voucher Program Participants

Head of Household Race & Ethnicity (% of Voucher Recipients) as of July 31, 2003

Jurisdiction	Head of Household Race (%)				Head of Household Ethnicity (%)	
	White	African/ American	Asian	Other	Hispanic	Non- Hispanic
Alexandria	20%	80%	0%	0%	20%	80%
Arlington County	35%	52%	12%	1%	19%	81%
District of Columbia	2%	97%	0%	0%	2%	98%
Fairfax County	42%	46%	11%	0%	6%	94%
Loudoun County	52%	45%	3%	0%	8%	92%
Manassas*						
Montgomery County	30%	62%	7%	1%	12%	88%
Prince George's County	3%	97%	0%	0%	2%	98%
Prince William County**						
Rockville	36%	56%	7%	0%	10%	90%
Total	28%	67%	5%	0%	10%	90%

African-American households account for 67 percent of voucher program participants, followed by White households (28 percent). The remaining housing choice vouchers (five percent) are distributed among Asian families in the region. Voucher distribution by ethnicity shows that the majority of vouchers (90 percent) are issued to non-Hispanic families with the remaining vouchers (10 percent) being assigned to Hispanic households.

Average Size of Housing Choice Voucher Program Households

Average Household Size as of July 31, 2003

Jurisdiction	Avg. Household Size
Alexandria	2.0
Arlington County	2.2
District of Columbia	2.7
Fairfax County	2.8
Loudoun County	2.5
Manassas*	
Montgomery County	2.6
Prince George's County	3.1
Prince William County**	
Rockville	2.9
Total	2.6

The average size of Housing Choice Voucher program households is 2.6 persons. Household size of voucher recipients in the City of Alexandria averages 2.0 persons (the smallest average size) while households in Prince George's County average 3.1 persons per unit (the largest average household size in the region).

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** Information not available.

Distribution by Bedroom Size

Distribution of Housing Choice Vouchers by Bedroom Size as of July 31, 2003

Jurisdiction	Distribution by Number of Bedrooms (%)					
	0	1	2	3	4	5+
Alexandria	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
Arlington County	0%	46%	31%	20%	3%	0%
District of Columbia	1%	23%	38%	28%	8%	2%
Fairfax County	1%	24%	34%	32%	7%	2%
Loudoun County	0%	16%	50%	30%	4%	1%
Manassas*						
Montgomery County	1%	28%	35%	30%	5%	1%
Prince George's County	0%	15%	34%	41%	9%	1%
Prince William County**						
Rockville	6%	22%	22%	34%	11%	4%
Total	1%	24%	38%	29%	6%	1%

Sixty-seven percent of Housing Choice Voucher program households reside in two- and three-bedroom units. Another 24 percent occupy one-bedroom units. Only seven percent of area voucher recipients live in larger, four- and five-bedroom units.

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*** Information not available.*

II. 2003 ASSISTED HOUSING SURVEY DATA

The following section contains information collected from local housing agencies via the 2003 Assisted Housing Survey³. The data reflect housing choice voucher activity for the period July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003. The survey was distributed to ten housing agencies in the Washington metropolitan area. Survey questions were designed to collect general information about local Housing Choice Voucher programs (such as the number of authorized vouchers, waiting list lengths, and program success rates) that may be of interest to Housing Choice Voucher program directors and others interested in assisted housing programs. Following is a summary of survey responses.

Number of Housing Choice Vouchers Authorized versus the Number Leased

Number of Housing Choice Vouchers Authorized as of June 30, 2003

Jurisdiction	Total Vouchers Authorized	# Proj.-Based	# Tenant-Based
Alexandria	1,722	25	1,697
Arlington County	1,175	40	1,135
District of Columbia	8,966	165	8,801
Fairfax County	3,146	278	2,868
Loudoun County	762	0	762
Manassas	194	0	194
Montgomery County	5,575	560	5,015
Prince George's County	4,438	104	4,334
Prince William County	1,893	0	1,893
Rockville	344	0	344
Total	28,215	1,172	27,043

Number of Housing Choice Vouchers Leased as of June 30, 2003

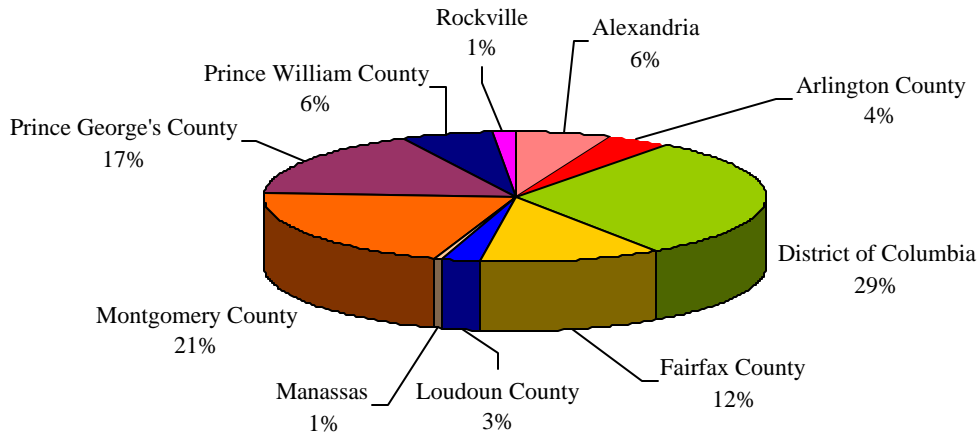
Jurisdiction	Total Vouchers Leased	# Proj.-Based Leased	# Tenant-Based Leased
Alexandria	1,591	25	1,566
Arlington County	1,181	40	1,141
District of Columbia	8,921	118	8,803
Fairfax County	3,146	0	3,146
Loudoun County	770	0	770
Manassas	197	0	197
Montgomery County	5,413	81	5,332
Prince George's County	4,186	92	4,094
Prince William County	1,900	0	1,900
Rockville	344	0	344
Total	27,649	356	27,293

Between July 1, 2002, and June 30, 2003, the Department of Housing and Urban Development authorized a total of 28,215 housing choice vouchers for use by local jurisdictions. Tenant-based vouchers accounted for 95.8 percent (27,043) of the total number of vouchers authorized with the remaining 4.2 percent (1,172) designated for project-based assistance.

By June 30, 2003, a total of 27,649 (or 97.9 percent of total authorized) housing choice vouchers had been leased. Of the total number of tenant-based vouchers authorized for use during this period, 27,293 (100.9 percent) had been leased. Slightly over thirty percent (30.4 percent or 356) of the project-based vouchers authorized for use were leased during this period.

The chart on the following page shows the distribution of authorized vouchers among local jurisdictions.

Distribution of Housing Choice Vouchers (% of Total)



Program Success Rates

Success Rates as of June 30, 2003

Jurisdiction	Total Issued July 2002 - June 2003	Total Leased July 2002 - June 2003	Success Rate
Alexandria	438	678	154.8%
Arlington County	151	154	102.0%
District of Columbia	3,712	1,773	47.8%
Fairfax County	461	317	68.8%
Loudoun County	168	168	100.0%
Manassas	67	96	143.3%
Montgomery County	1,520	1,215	79.9%
Prince George's County	344	253	73.5%
Prince William County	615	387	62.9%
Rockville	130	103	79.2%
Region	7,606	5,144	67.6%

Between July 2, 2002, and June 30, 2003, local jurisdictions issued 7,839 vouchers; 5,144 of those vouchers were leased for an overall success rate 65.6 percent. The success rate was lowest in the District of Columbia where only 47.8 percent of issued vouchers were actually leased. Several jurisdictions—the City of Alexandria, Arlington County and the City of Manassas—leased over 100 percent of their vouchers during this period. Success rates greater than 100 percent occur when vouchers issued at the end of the previous 12 - month period are leased after the new fiscal year begins. Although several jurisdictions were unable to achieve a 100 percent success rate, the general trend has been towards 100 percent lease-up between the end of the Fiscal Year 2003 and the present.

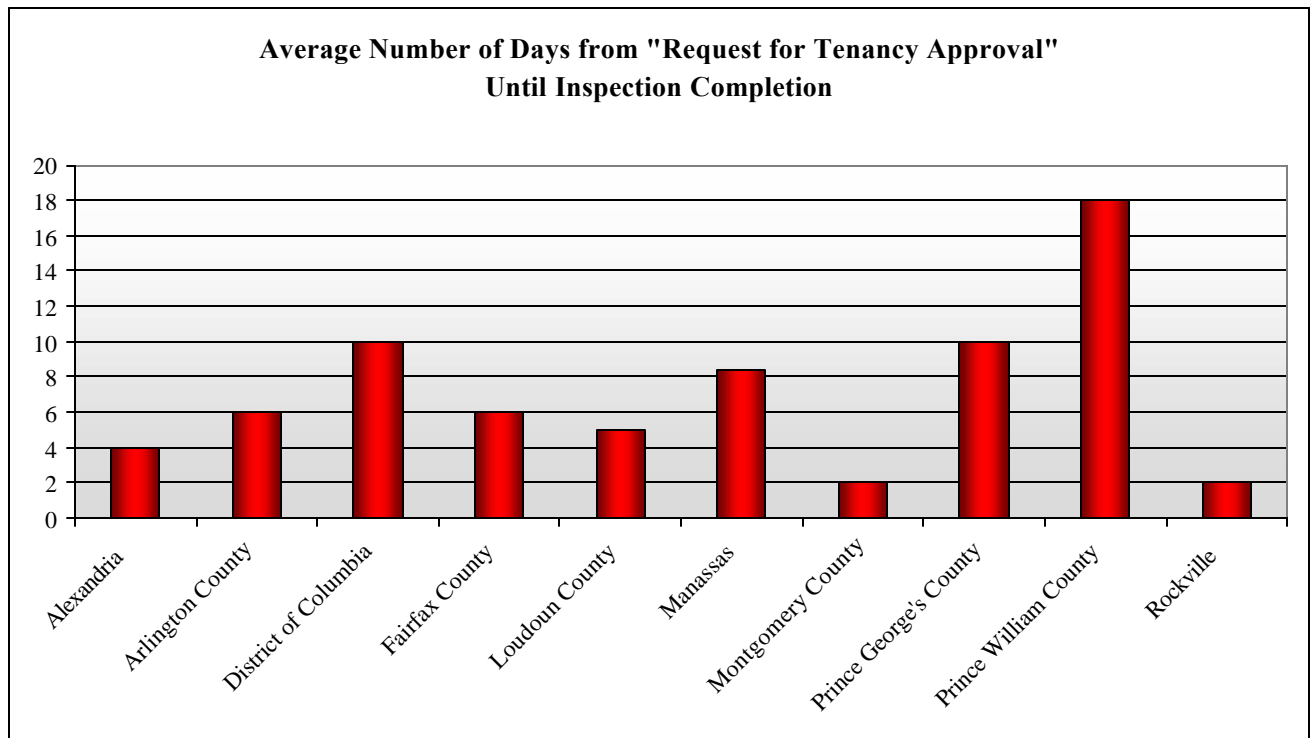
Housing Choice Voucher Program Waiting Lists

Housing Choice Voucher Waiting Lists

Jurisdiction	# Apps Waiting List	Avg. Wait (days)
Alexandria	1,384	913
Arlington County	4,267	913
District of Columbia	27,904	1,270
Fairfax County	6,909	1,825
Loudoun County	1,060	1,460
Manassas	282	730
Montgomery County	4,200	730
Prince George's County	2,801	730
Prince William County	3,191	760
Rockville	544	2,190
Region	52,542	1,082

As of June 30, 2003, local jurisdictions reported a total of 52,542 applicants waiting to receive housing choice voucher assistance. The District of Columbia has the highest number of applicants waiting for assistance (27,904) followed by Fairfax County (6,909) and Arlington County (4,267). Overall, applicants must wait an average of 1,082 days (approximately 36 months or 3 years) until a housing choice voucher is issued. The City of Rockville has the longest waiting period (2,190 days or approximately 6 years), while the wait is shortest in Prince George's County (30 days).

Unit Inspections



Local housing agencies complete unit inspections within seven days (average) from the receipt of "Request for Tenancy Approval". All jurisdictions but one report inspection completion times of 10 days or less. The number of days until inspection for Prince William County equals 18.

Housing Search Assistance

Housing search assistance is available for housing choice voucher clients in most jurisdictions. Available property listings are the most common form of assistance offered.

Housing Search Assistance

Alexandria	Arlington County	District of Columbia
Landlord vacancy listing	Weekly listing of available units List of affordable units Landlord listings/Apartment referrals Phone calls to landlords	Housing Mobility Counseling
Fairfax County	Loudoun County	Manassas
Listing of available units	List of available units and properties	List of available units MRIS access
Prince George's County	Prince William County	Rockville
Landlord unit availability report	Landlord referrals	Listing of available units City Apartment Guide

Foreign Language Interpretation

Foreign Language Assistance

Jurisdiction	Interpreters	Materials
Alexandria	Spanish	Spanish
Arlington County	Spanish; Arabic; Laotian; others as needed	Spanish, Vietnamese
District of Columbia	Spanish	Spanish
Fairfax County	Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Farsi	Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Farsi
Loudoun County	Spanish	Spanish
Manassas	Spanish	
Montgomery County		
Prince George's County	Any requested	Spanish
Prince William County	Any requested	Spanish
Rockville	Spanish	

Most jurisdictions provide foreign language interpretation services for program participants. Spanish is the language most often provided but other languages, such as Korean, Farsi, Vietnamese and Laotian are readily available. Several housing agencies also translate written program materials into foreign languages.

Barriers to Housing Choice Voucher Client Success

Barriers to Client Success

Barrier	# of Housing Agencies Identifying Barrier
Credit/Rental History	10
Source of Income	2
Security Deposit	8
Payment Standard Low	0
Lack of Large Units	6
Tenant Payment Low	2

Local housing agencies have identified several barriers to successful leasing by housing choice voucher clients. Poor credit and/or rental histories are considered the biggest obstacles to voucher client success. Client difficulties obtaining security deposit funds are seen as the second biggest obstacle to obtaining housing. Jurisdictions also note that a lack of large, family-sized rental units, low tenant payment standards and source of income discrimination by local landlords contribute to the problems voucher clients experience in their search for a rental unit. Housing Choice Voucher clients in Prince William County must also contend with low rental vacancy rates.

Factors Aiding Client Success

Between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003, local housing agencies experienced an increase in the number of clients successfully finding and leasing a rental unit. Reasons for client success vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but an increase in the FY2003 Fair Market Rent for the metropolitan area is cited as being a particularly important factor. Other factors mentioned include higher payment standards, a softening of the rental market, increased landlord outreach efforts, clients leasing in place and increased client search activity accountability.

Aids to Client Success

Alexandria	Arlington County	District of Columbia
	Single rule Payment standards set at 110% of Fair Market Rent. Landlord outreach activities.	

Fairfax County	Loudoun County	Manassas
	Client counseling and rental guides. Clients are required to provide proof of contact with landlords if voucher expiration is extended beyond 60 days.	

Montgomery County	Prince George's County	Prince William County
Softening of local rental market. Large increase in Fair Market Rent in FY 2003. Clients leasing in place eliminating poor credit barrier.		

Rockville
Increase in Fair Market Rent during FY 2003. High level of customer service attracts and retains landlords in program. Ongoing tracking of lease-up rate.

¹ Housing agencies submit information electronically to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). RCR reports can be created and viewed from HUD's website at www.hud.gov. Information is updated regularly, but inaccuracies may occur.

² Median family income for the Washington DC MSA, effective February 20, 2003.

³ Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 2002.