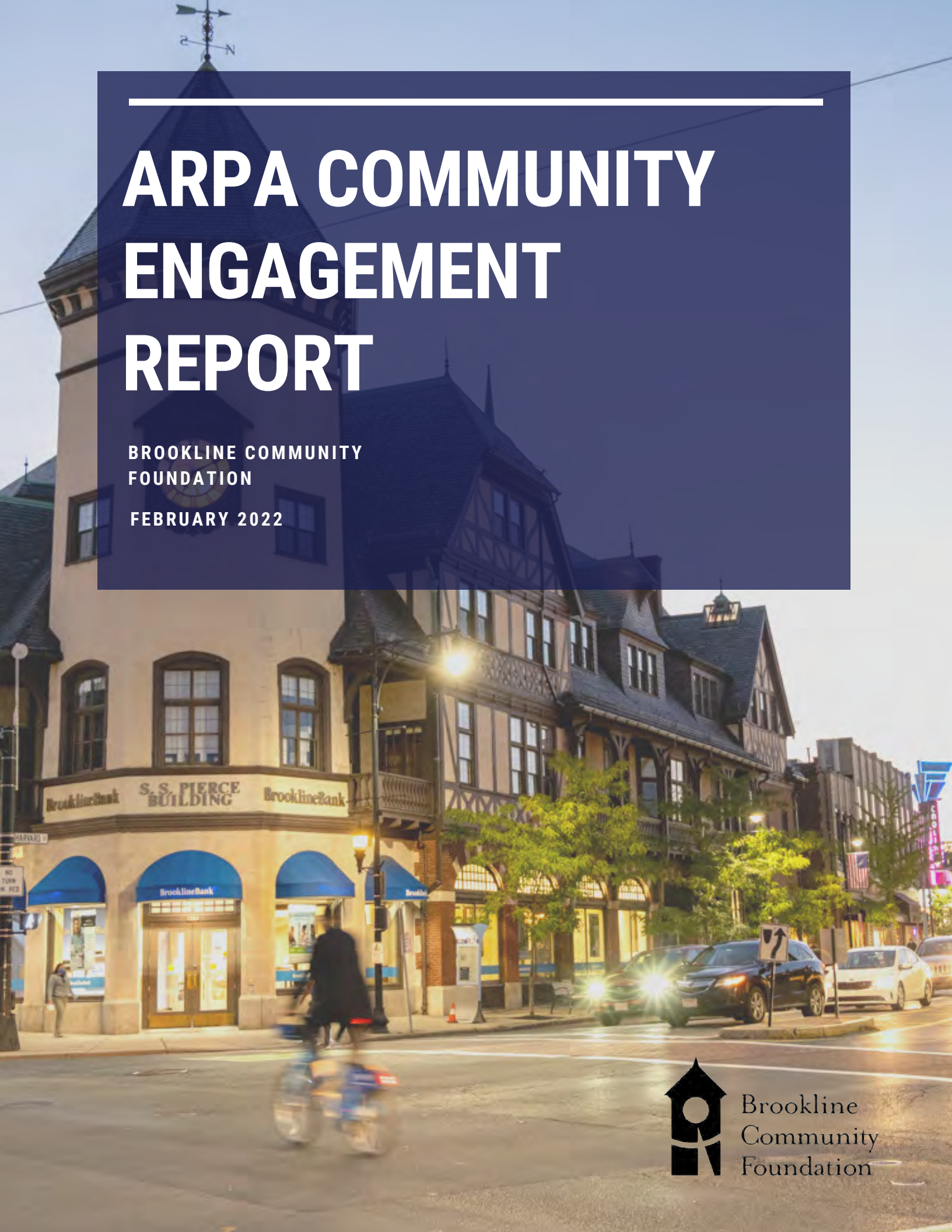

ARPA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

BROOKLINE COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

FEBRUARY 2022



Brookline
Community
Foundation

“The participation of Brookline community members has been invaluable as we gain insights to understand how people have been most affected by the pandemic and how we can invest in solutions. I deeply appreciate the community partners who worked through 2021 to support this community engagement process and continue to stay resilient in the face of compounding challenges locally.”

Giselle Ferro Puigbo
Executive Director
Brookline Community Foundation



ABOUT THE BROOKLINE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For over 100 years, The Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) has been a trusted partner—supporting Brookline by addressing community needs, facilitating community research and convenings, building philanthropic partnerships, and leading grantmaking to support nonprofits and community efforts. From our origins as the Brookline Friendly Society in the early 1900s to our strategic shift toward grantmaking and capacity building over 20 years ago, BCF has helped shape and implement a shared agenda for community well-being for over a century.

BCF is pleased to share the following report, which details the community engagement process and findings pertaining to community members' perspectives on needs and opportunities for investing ARPA funds.



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BACKGROUND

The Impacts of Covid-19

As we approach two years of living with COVID-19, the impact of the pandemic has touched all members of the community, in many cases disproportionately. While the pandemic's effects have been widespread, the health and economic impacts have not fallen equally among different communities. The pandemic further exposed deeply entrenched inequities - disparities in health and economic outcomes by race, ethnicity, age, gender, physical ability, and other factors.

The Brookline Community Foundation, the Town of Brookline, and generous individuals in the community responded to this by deploying resources for impacted community members, in particular funding was provided to various nonprofit organizations that support individuals in Brookline via Safety Net Funds.

"Significant investments are needed to address disparities in the wake of the pandemic."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, thanks to the generosity of many, the BCF Safety Net Fund has deployed more than \$800,000 to 22 community organizations. This support has helped improve access to essential community resources like healthy food, housing assistance, child care, emergency services, and more. However, demand for these essential services is still high and projected to grow as federal pandemic relief programs end. Moreover, the extent of the pandemic and the toll on public health has left lasting impacts on communities and the economy, and significant investments in programs are needed to address the large disparities that are left in the wake of the pandemic. Many in our community are also thinking about how we can recover in ways that are more inclusive and equitable.

The American Rescue Plan Act

Signed into law on March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provides substantial and transformational funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments in their pandemic rescue and recovery efforts to bolster their response to the COVID-19 emergency and its impacts. Brookline was allocated approximately \$43 million, with a portion of the funding received in 2021 and the remainder anticipated to be disbursed in 2022. Funds must be obligated by 12/31/2024, and spent by 12/31/2026.

While these funds can be used for broad purposes, the federal government encouraged local governments to “take time and careful consideration” of how ARPA funds will be used as these funds present an opportunity to make strategic community investments that address the immediate needs of residents, employees, business owners, community organizations, and students, particularly those most impacted by COVID, while also addressing the economic fallout and underlying systemic inequities.



Community Engagement for Equitable Recovery

In September of 2021, the Town of Brookline began working with the Brookline Community Foundation in an effort to integrate community voices into Brookline's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The goals of this transparent process were to educate the public on ARPA funds (eligibility, guidelines, timelines) and to hear the ideas of community members, especially the voices of individuals who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, hard-to-reach and underrepresented groups, and those who don't typically have the opportunity to engage in critical decision-making processes, in order to inform how Brookline uses its share of ARPA funding to ensure the greatest impacted community members are prioritized in the recovery.

This means that community members' needs and ideas are transformed into new programs and efforts - or increased support for existing programs and efforts - to create long-term impacts that help Brookline avoid the burdens we experienced during this pandemic.

BCF designed and executed a replicable community engagement model to support this - and future - efforts. In September 2021, BCF worked for 4 weeks to understand how the foundation could work in partnership with others to create an engagement process that would build assets, strength, and resilience to address the disparities that have resulted in disproportionate impacts. To ensure that this process was inclusive, BCF invited organizations that reflected the diversity of the communities most impacted, with strong grassroots reach, with the ability to connect to the hardest-hit communities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

To ensure an open and equitable process that included as many voices, perspectives, and lived experiences as possible, BCF deployed a five-step engagement strategy comprised of: planning & implementation; communications & grassroots outreach; engagement opportunities (community conversations, focus groups, and an online survey available in five languages); analysis & synthesis, and; publication & presentation of key findings and community recommendations. In total, this process took 20 weeks (9/15/2021 - 1/15/2022).

1

Implementation & Planning

Engage Town, nonprofits, community leaders, and more in designing process.

2

Communication & Outreach

Confirm focus group host organizations; promote efforts through BCF & local media.

3

Engagement Opportunities

Host 4 community listening sessions, 15 focus groups, & conduct online survey.

4

Analysis & Synthesis

Analyze data & identify key themes & ideas from all community engagement events.

5

Present & Publish

Present key findings & recommendations to Select Board; publish full report online.

AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES

"We need to invest in strategies and approaches to help remedy this and help people heal from isolation, trauma, and anxiety."

"At a minimum, we should strive to ensure those who are the most impacted are at least back at their pre-pandemic baseline, but ideally we should be working towards getting folks further ahead."

"I hope we're thinking of going beyond just returning to normal. We should be eliminating hunger and the opportunity gap. It should not be a return to the status quo where there was just a baseline of suffering."

"Address the social isolation which has disproportionately affected the town's older residents by funding programs that meet their needs."



KEY FINDINGS

Through 4 live community conversations, 15 focus groups discussions, and 438 survey responses, BCF heard many perspectives and ideas. Importantly, we heard several key themes, issues, and ideas shared frequently by community members. What follows is a presentation of key findings from the engagement process and from each engagement activity.

KEY FINDINGS ACROSS ALL ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS



Need to support public health response by: investing in public health departments; investing in public health infrastructure, and; investing in crisis-intervention services to support key impacted groups (older adults, youth, families living on low or limited income, and community members most impacted by inequities).



Need to invest in equity-focused services by: investing in programs that address the social determinants of health; increasing access to in-school support and out of school programs for youth; investing in building more affordable housing and enhancing existing public housing, and; investing in programs that promote healthy childhood environments.



Need to address negative economic impacts by: providing assistance to households, workers, and families, particularly from key impacted groups, and; providing support for nonprofits and the small business sectors in Brookline.



Need to provide premium pay to essential workers, particularly low- and moderate-income workers.



Need to invest in infrastructure by Improving broadband access and technology training to unserved or underserved households and key impacted groups.

Who Was Most Impacted?

Key groups were frequently named as having been disproportionately impacted by and throughout the pandemic:

- Older adults faced increased health risks, isolation and loneliness, and did not have access to internet-ready technologies to stay connected.
- Youth faced intersecting hardships through losses in educational access, peer networks, and supportive services.
- Individuals living on low or limited income faced economic instability, job and income loss of jobs, and increased mental health needs.
- Individuals living in public housing or group/community living homes faced increased health risks and isolation.
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) faced increasing racism and racial bias, particularly the AAPI community.
- Nonprofits, small businesses, and Town Departments are experiencing disruptions and economic strain.

KEY FINDINGS: COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Across 4 community conversations engaging nearly 150 community members, the following answers, ideas, and insights were shared frequently, repeatedly, and by diverse groups of community members.

When asked *who in Town (at the individual level) has been most impacted by Covid-19 and how?* community members responded:

- **Children & Youth:** every dimension of children and youth's lives has been upended by the pandemic. Youth and their families need educational support, enrichment activities, reliable childcare, and mental health support.
- **Individuals & Families Living on Low or Limited Income:** individuals and families who were already struggling financially were further strained during the pandemic. Additionally, many in this group are essential workers who had to risk health and safety to maintain financial footing.
- **Older Adults:** older adults are at greater risk for serious illness and complications from Covid-19. As such, many in our community were (and remain) isolated. Additionally, technological barriers, loss of access to key services, and delays in medical care have negatively impacted our older neighbors.
- **People Living in Public Housing or Group/Community Home Settings:** many living in these settings were cut off from friends, family, community, and vital human services. Lack of internet access and communications technologies made remote learning difficult, and closer living quarters increased the risk of outbreak and infection.
- **Small Business Community:** the small business community was devastated by Covid-19's economic impacts and continue to struggle in response to new variants, changing local and federal regulations, and inconsistent public health guidance.

When asked about *what systems, institutions, and organizations in Town had been most impacted by Covid-19 and how?* community members responded:

- **Nonprofit Organizations:** as demand for services increased, nonprofits strove to meet skyrocketing community need with available, and in many cases, limited resources. Organizations referenced frequently by community members include: Brookline Housing Authority, Brookline Food Pantry, the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health, the Brookline Senior Center, and Steps to Success.

- **Childcare Programs & Facilities:** many community members named that childcare services became even more difficult to access during the pandemic, magnifying a pre-existing challenge of finding affordable, reliable childcare. Many named that this dearth is contributing to economic hardships as families are forced to make trade-offs between working and caring for their children.
- **Town Departments:** the Public Schools of Brookline, Brookline Parks & Open Spaces, Brookline Public Health Dpt., and Brookline Rec Dpt. have been deeply impacted.



When asked ***what suffering in our community was directly caused by Covid-19, and what was preexisting and exasperated by the pandemic?***

community members were able to separate some suffering that was directly caused by the pandemic and some that was preexisting, but shared that after almost two years of living in a pandemic, it has become difficult to distinguish between the two, as so much in our lives are interconnected.

Overwhelmingly, community members identified the following as areas of suffering that are having negative effects on our community:

- **Health Care:** even among the insured, many people lost access to medical care and were unable to access preventative or sick care or go into hospitals. Demand for mental health services and supports has increased, especially for youth and older adults.
- **Employment/Labor Market:** The pandemic had a significant effect on the labor market. The majority of jobs lost in the pandemic were in industries that pay low average wages.
- **continued:** Persons employed in the food industry, retail services, leisure and hospitality sectors were among some of the highest unemployment rates throughout the pandemic. Education and government sectors have also shown great job losses.
- **Secondary Education & Higher Education:** Education/opportunity gaps widened; college enrollment has declined.
- **Food Insecurity** increased for more people, especially key impacted groups, and continues to be a high need.
- **Impacted Communities:** Although all groups were affected, persons identifying as Black or Latinx and younger workers generally experienced higher peaks in unemployment and steep declines in labor force participation. People with lower educational attainment have generally experienced higher unemployment rates throughout the pandemic.
- **Housing:** Lack of affordable housing was cited as a significant problem pre-pandemic, and during the pandemic it was identified as an even more dangerous situation for families who were living in housing that was overcrowded.



When asked about ***specific investments that would focus support on groups and individuals who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 (e.g. BIPOC, older adults, essential workers, etc.) and contribute to an equitable recovery?*** community members responded:

- Direct cash assistance to impacted community members and frontline workers
- Climate action
- Education
- Essential needs
- Affordable housing
- Mental health care programs and services

- Public broadband and improving broadband access
- Green spaces
- Public spaces such as the rec center and building a community center
- Transportation

"Brookline needs a cohesive, comprehensive community center that serves as a central food pantry, provides social and residential services, child care, and mental health. Services and information must be available in multiple languages." ~ a community member during a community conversation.

AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES

WHAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT IN 3, 5, OR 10 YEARS IF WE AS A COMMUNITY INVEST THIS FUNDING WELL?

"Brookline has a safety net in place that is fully operational to support individuals most impacted."

"Everyone in Brookline has access to: healthy and nutritious food, mental health supports, high speed broadband, especially in public housing and group housing."

"There is greater access and participation by people with disabilities or non-English language speakers."

"No one in Brookline is living in substandard housing."

"There are new affordable housing units and existing units are in good repair."

KEY FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUPS

BCF worked with nonprofit organizations, community groups, Town government to conduct a series of 15 focus groups. The purpose of these focus groups was to engage community members through established, trusted channels, and learn from their perspectives what investment opportunities they would prioritize for ARPA funding.

We are grateful to following organizations, community groups, and Town agencies who hosted focus groups as part of this process.



Who Has Been Impacted by the Covid-19 Crisis?

Across all 15 focus groups, we heard several key observations about who has been most impacted by the pandemic, the effects of the pandemic locally, barriers to achieving equity, and opportunities for investments that would ensure an equitable recovery.

Focus group participants identified the following groups as being most impacted by the pandemic:

- **Children & Youth:** children and youth from families living on low or limited income – and their families & parents – have been impacted more and have experienced increased food insecurity, issues with access to technology or reliable wifi, and lack of access to mental health supports.
- **Older Adults:** older adults have experienced greater negative outcomes related to the pandemic given their increased isolation and risk for loneliness, health conditions and/or chronic illnesses, and excessive worry. Focus group participants reported that older adults were impacted economically, physically, mentally, and socially.
- **Individuals & Families Living on Low or Limited Income:** the pandemic has deeply strained this impacted group. Participants cited three main areas: 1) **Housing:** inequitable access to housing and housing quality was a recurring theme. Many Brookline residents are forced to make trade-offs because the cost of housing impedes their ability to pay for other everyday needs. Brookline employees and workers can't afford to live in the community they help; 2) **Food:** we heard concerns about food security, food access, distribution capacity, and; 3) **Mental Health Care:** many shared they are experiencing anxiety, stress, grief, depression, fear, and a lack of connection.
- **Financial Hardships:** Many community members cited financial hardships as a result of the pandemic and its economic aftershocks, especially individuals and families living on low or limited income. Financial hardships included but are not limited to: loss of jobs; having work hours reduced; having to make trade-offs between work, family, childcare, and personal safety needs; having to make trade-offs to afford basic needs and essential resources.

Who Has Been Impacted by the Covid-19 Crisis? (Continued)

The Impacts of Racism on Community Members

"If you do nothing, racial inequity persists."

Ibram X. Kendi

On April 8, 2021, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared racism a "serious public health threat," pointing to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. One year before, the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 while in police custody, ignited hundreds of protests and a racial reckoning that continues to this day. The aggregation of multiple pandemics (COVID-19 and structural racism) put many of our society's most egregious injustices on full display, demonstrating that structural racism results in racial disparities across a multitude of areas, including health,

*"I would like Brookline to change their way of treating children of minorities."
- Focus Group Participant*

housing, and education. Many in our community have asked whether racism exists in Brookline.

The voices of our community shed light on that question as community members of color continue to ask how has and will Brookline respond to racism and bring about systemic change?

Participants described personally experiencing racism in Brookline, from anti-Asian hate towards foreign-born Asians, Asian-Americans who grew up in Brookline, and AAPI students and Black youth expressing that they are treated differently, with few school supports in place to discuss experiences of racism. Some adult participants talked about the discrimination their kids experience in schools by peers and staff and the general experience that BIPOC community members are treated poorly in Brookline.



What Institutions Have Been Impacted by the Covid-19 Crisis?

Focus group participants elevated institutions and organizations that have been impacted by the pandemic and are playing vital roles on the front lines of recovery:

- **Nonprofits, Small Businesses & Town Departments:** these orgs are on the front lines of the recovery and supporting key impacted groups. They address many aspects of everyday life for those who need it most, including housing, food, economic hardship, education, and more. Supporting these groups will have positive long-term impacts because of the key role they play in Brookline to support all, especially the vulnerable, during a crisis.

- **Education & Youth:** focus groups mentioned a variety of concerns about long-standing inequities that have undermined learning experiences and outcomes for students of color, students from families living on low or limited income, English learners, and students with disabilities. Of all the heartwrenching effects of COVID-19, its impact on young people could prove to be one of its most damaging legacies. Issues of access to high quality education and social emotional learning, increased strains and stress on the family unit, and social isolation are just some of the challenges many youth and those working with youth are grappling with.

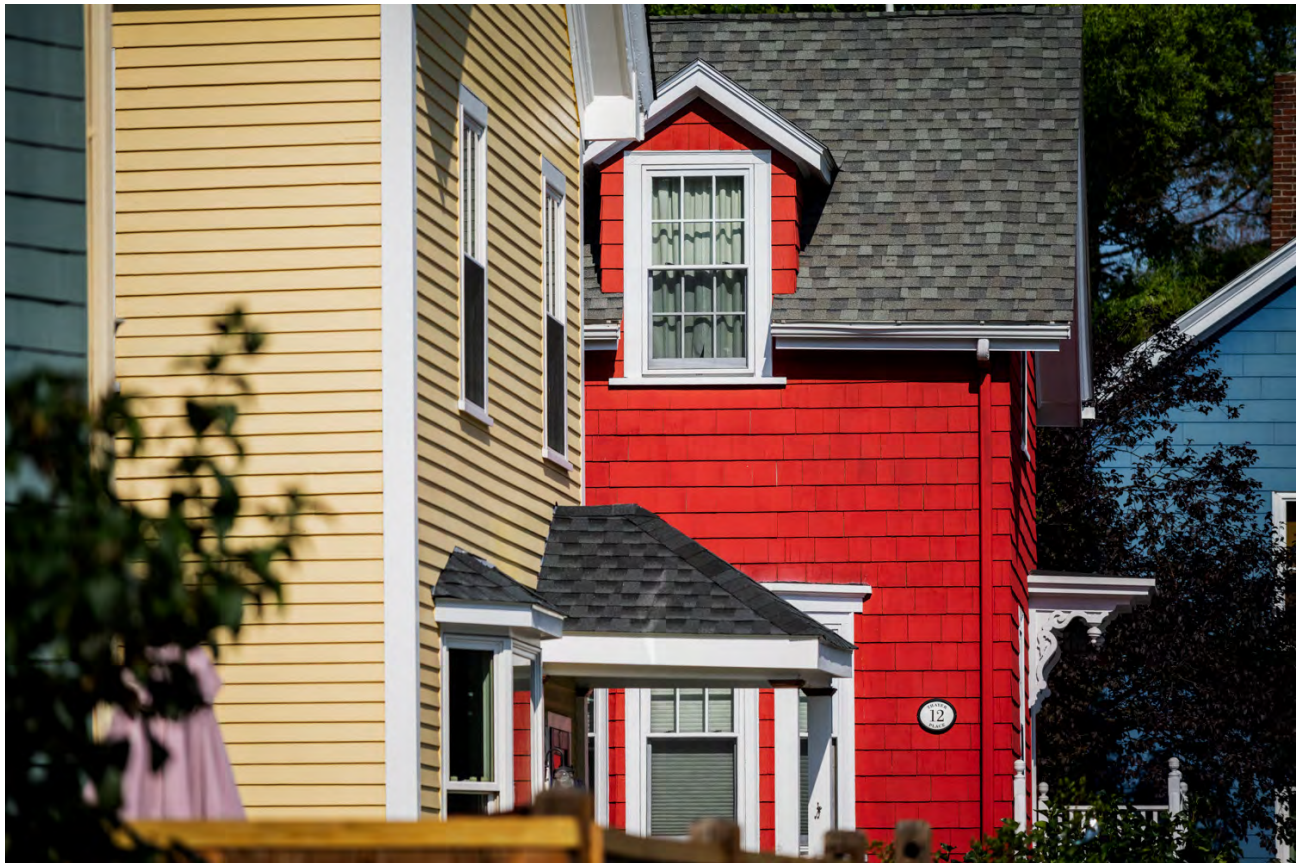
Investment Opportunities from Focus Groups

Focus group participants expressed support for investing in the public health response, especially for vulnerable populations; providing equity focused services for communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and; responding to the economic harms that families, workers, small businesses, and nonprofits have faced throughout the last two years. In specific issue areas, focus group participants uplifted the following investment opportunities:

- **Education:** invest in program addressing learning loss for key impacted groups; enrichment and out of school time programs; language access and supports; high quality, reliable, and affordable early childhood education and learning centers; scholarships for students with financial need; culturally-responsive programs and supports for BIPOC students, including AAPI students; workforce development, workshops, and job training for key impacted groups, including BIPOC, immigrants and foreign-born residents, English learners, and older adults, and; additional supports for teachers, school staff, administrators, and school nurses.
- **Children & Youth:** many focus group participants supported making investments in existing, effective programming for children and youth. The Brookline Teen Center was elevated as a trusted, welcoming space that supports all dimensions of teens development and is a crucial community space for BIPOC teens in Brookline.
- **Housing:** focus group participants are advocating for more affordable housing, public housing, and capital improvements and repairs to existing public housing so community members living there can live in high quality housing and with dignity. Some also advocated for onsite access to key services and supports, such as child care.
- **Mental Health & Social Isolation:** social infrastructure can be built through investing in programs and physical spaces that bring our community together, such as community engagement efforts, an engagement campaign for the Town, a community center, investments in parks and open spaces, youth services, social services departments etc. with particular focus on the harder to reach populations, including those without access to tech or those who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Investment Opportunities from Focus Groups Continued

Addressing and Dismantling Racism in Our Community: To respond to racism in Brookline, participants encouraged the Town to invest in programs that: promote anti-racist education and dialogue about racism, its causes and effects; support BIPOC students both academically and socio-emotionally and aim to standardize the opportunities they receive relative to their peers; provide financial support for BIPOC individuals and families through a reparations fund; increase resources for immigrants and refugees in Brookline; invest in wealth building programs that aim to increase the savings and income-generating capacities of individuals living on low or limited income, like a first-time home buyer program or economic development programs.



AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS' INSIGHTS & IDEAS

"Need for extra income to meet the needs of seniors. a little support goes a long way, so maybe a monthly stipend for seniors on fixed income."

"Anti-Asian racism really ramped up during the pandemic."

"We need to support AAPI students both academically and socio-emotionally."

"Education and assistance on technology needs to be given to those who are not tech savvy because there were people in isolation from the past year."

"No work, no money and no feeling that it is getting better anytime soon."

KEY FINDINGS: COMMUNITY SURVEY



To provide community members another opportunity for engagement, BCF fielded a quantitative online survey to understand which of the eligible uses of ARPA funding are a priority for community members in Brookline. We invited community members to fill out 7 questions (plus demographic information questions). The questions were formatted as select-all questions to ensure that BCF would receive a comprehensive range of responses and so that participants would not be limited in their choices.

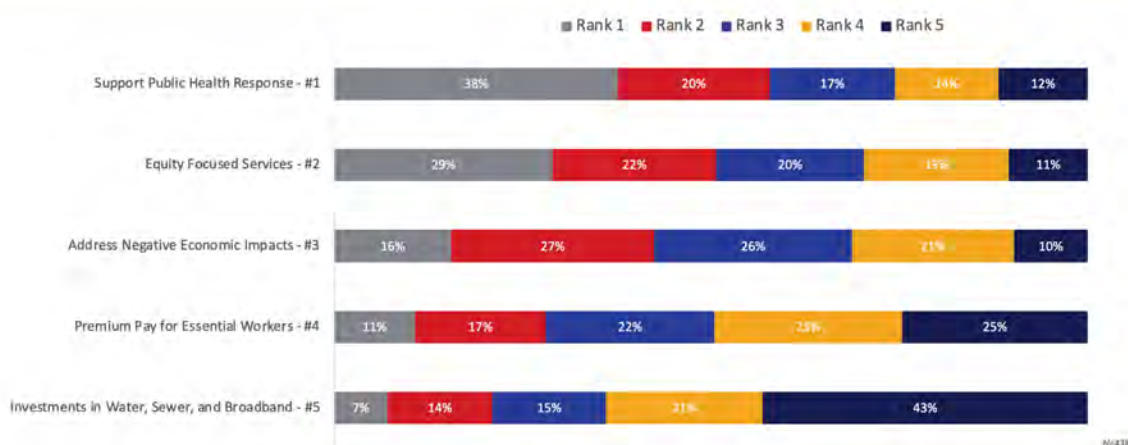
The survey was distributed via email, BCF's website, BCF's social media, and through our partners. The survey was made available in English, Russian, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese. Survey respondents must have had a connection to the Town of Brookline. Responses were collected from December 2, 2021 through January 4, 2022, and analyzed by our survey consultant. We received 438 completed survey responses, which is above the number of responses needed to ensure that our survey is reliable or statistically significant.

Survey Question 1: Based on what you now know about each of the eligible use categories and examples of some of the ways funds could be spent, how would you prioritize ARPA funding for Brookline? Please rank each of the eligible use categories from 1 to 5, with 1 being the category you believe should be the highest priority for Brookline. [RANK]

Responses from the survey indicate the following overall rankings:

1. Support Public Health Response
2. Equity Focused Services
3. Address Negative Economic Impacts
4. Premium Pay for Essential Workers
5. Investments in Water, Sewer, and Broadband

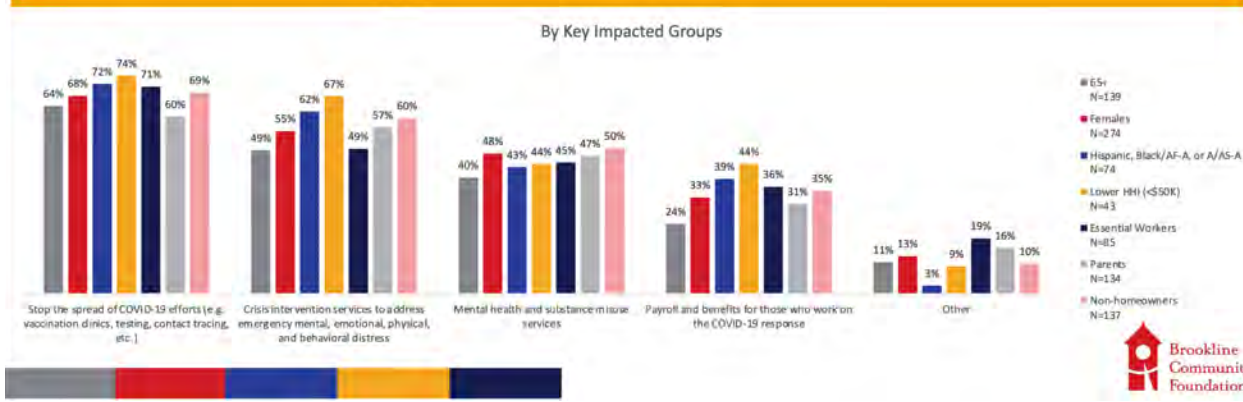
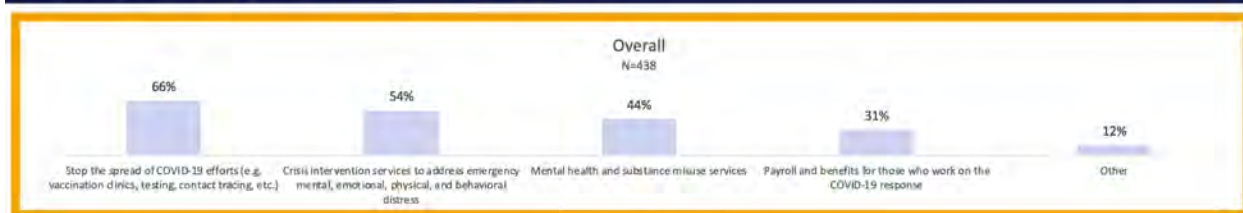
Support Public Health response was the #1 ranked ARPA eligible use category. The survey was fielded between December 2nd through January 4th, which coincided with the spike in COVID-19 cases due to the holidays and the Omicron variant. This rank is not surprising since much of this engagement process was done during a period of time when we went from responding to the Delta variant to responding to the Omicron variant and concerns about how spikes in COVID-19 infection would impact schools, work, and daily life. Providing Equity-Focused Services (within Addressing Negative Economic Impacts category) ranked #2 overall. Also, not surprising since these issues existed pre-pandemic, and were deeply exacerbated by extended lockdowns and closures to respond to the public health emergency.



Survey Question 2: Please select all of the examples you believe would make good use of the ARPA funds for the following eligible use category: Support Public Health Response. [SELECT ALL]

Responses from the survey indicate that for the majority of respondents (66%), stop the spread efforts (vaccination clinics, testing, etc.), are the top use of ARPA funds in this category. All key impacted groups chose this at higher rates than the other uses in this category. Again, a rise in COVID-19 cases likely influenced the performance of “stop the spread”. In addition, given the difficulties in accessing appointments and the availability of home test kits at the time, with the growing concerns we heard about in the listening sessions and focus groups about the lack of supports and capacity of the Brookline Public Health Department, these results are not surprising. The second most chosen (54%) use of funds in this category is crisis intervention services to address emergency mental, emotional, physical, and behavioral distress. Notably, respondents with lower reported household incomes chose crisis intervention services at higher rates than other key impacted groups, followed by people of color.

Which examples do you believe would make the best use of ARPA funds for the following eligible use category?: Support Public Health Response



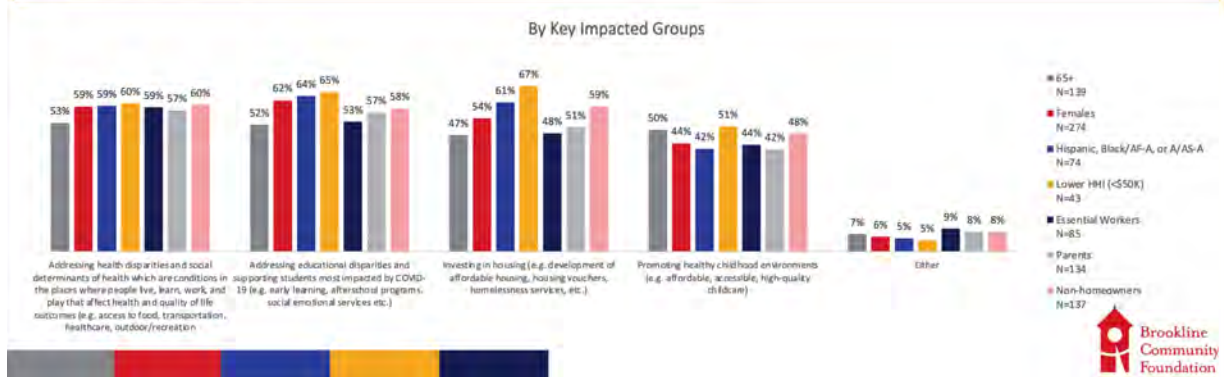
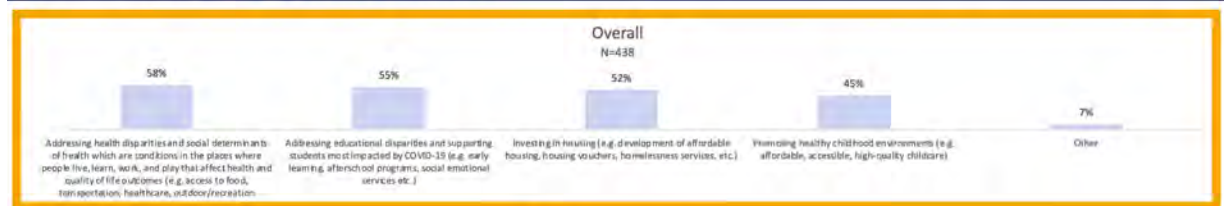
Survey Question 3: Please select all examples you believe would make good use of the ARPA funds for the following eligible use category: Equity-Focused Services. [SELECT ALL]

In Equity-Focused Services, all examples were generally evenly selected:

- 58% selected addressing health disparities and social determinants of health (e.g. access to food, transportation, health care, outdoor/recreation)
- 55% select addressing educational disparities and supporting students most impacted by covid-19
- 52% select investing in housing
- 45% selected promoting healthy childhood environments

These evenly selected responses could indicate that respondents feel that all of the initiatives under this eligible use category are important to move towards an equitable recovery in our community. Among the key impacted groups, lower household income respondents were more likely to select “investing in housing”.

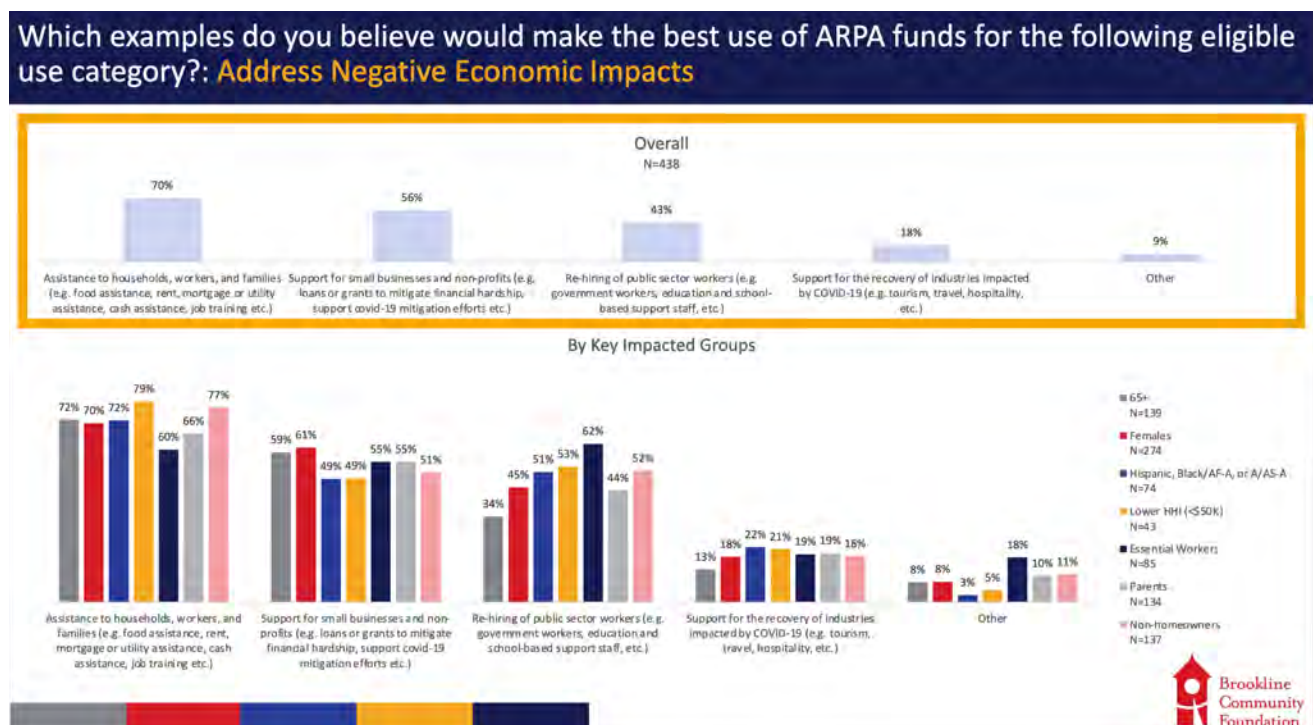
Which examples do you believe would make the best use of ARPA funds for the following eligible use category?: Equity Focused Services



Survey Question 4: Please select all of the examples you believe would make good use of the ARPA funds for the following eligible use category: Address Negative Economic Impacts. [SELECT ALL]

In this category, the overwhelmingly top response across all groups, selected by 70%, was assistance to households, workers, and families (e.g. food assistance, rent, mortgage, utility assistance, cash assistance, job training). Second to that was support for nonprofits and small businesses (56%).

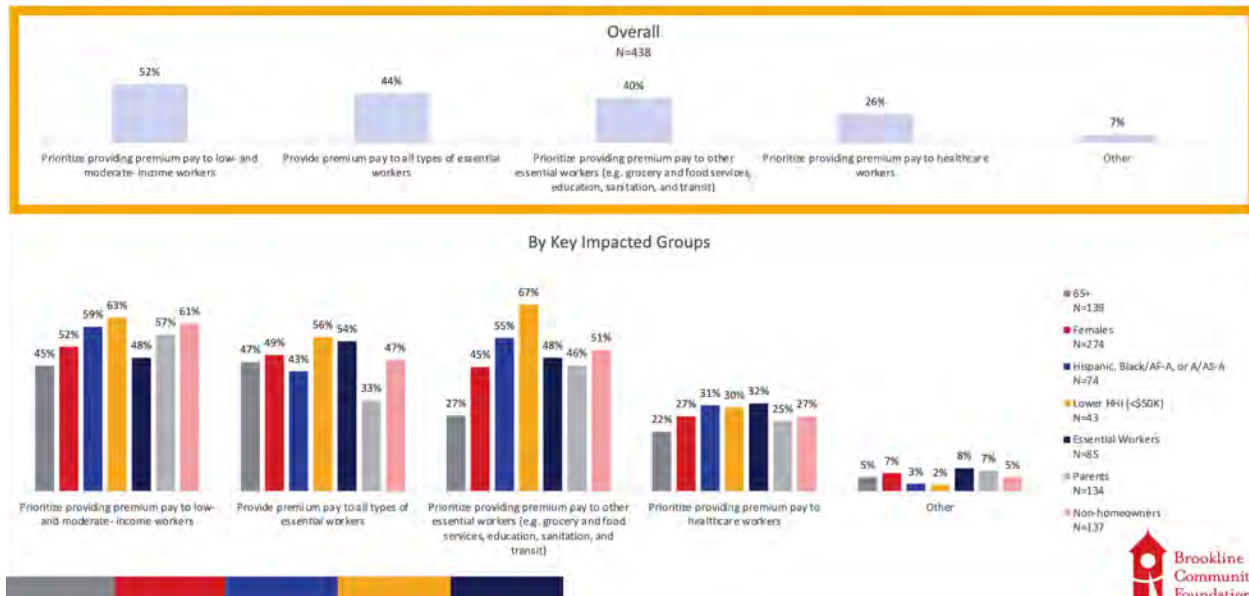
Essential workers were the most likely to select the example of re-hiring public sector workers. This is likely driven by the fact that this is their sector, and they may also be overworked and overwhelmed with the shortage of employees.



Survey Question 5: Please select all of the examples you believe would make good use of the ARPA funds for the following eligible use category: Premium Pay For Essential Workers. [SELECT ALL]

In this category, a majority of respondents selected to prioritize providing premium pay for low and moderate income workers. Notably, respondents with reported lower household incomes selected prioritizing premium pay to other essential workers such as those working in grocery and food services, education, sanitation, and transit at a much higher rate. And, essential worker respondents selected providing premium pay to all essential workers rather than prioritizing some.

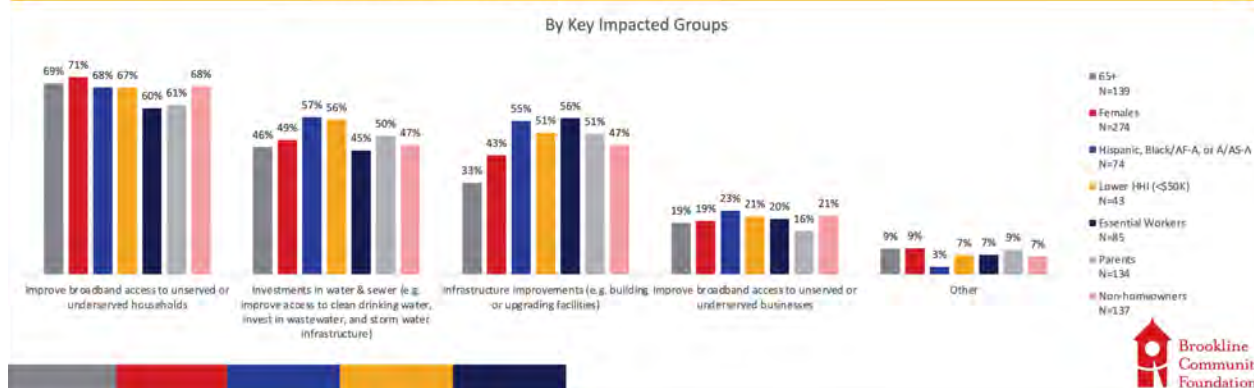
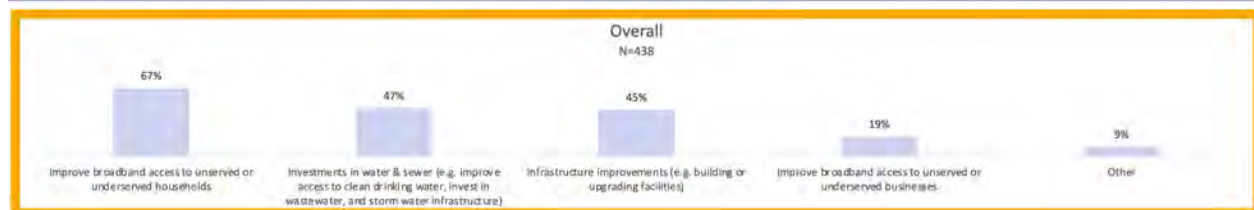
Which examples do you believe would make the best use of ARPA funds for the following eligible use category?: Premium Pay for Essential Workers



Survey Question 6: Please select all of the examples you believe would make good use of the ARPA funds for the following eligible use category: Investments in Water, Sewer, and Broadband. [SELECT ALL]

In this category, improving broadband access to unserved or underserved households was the top performer across all groups. While this eligible use category ranked last, a project or effort to improve broadband access to unserved or underserved households would be the type of investment that would likely get limited pushback from the community since all groups appear to be aligned.

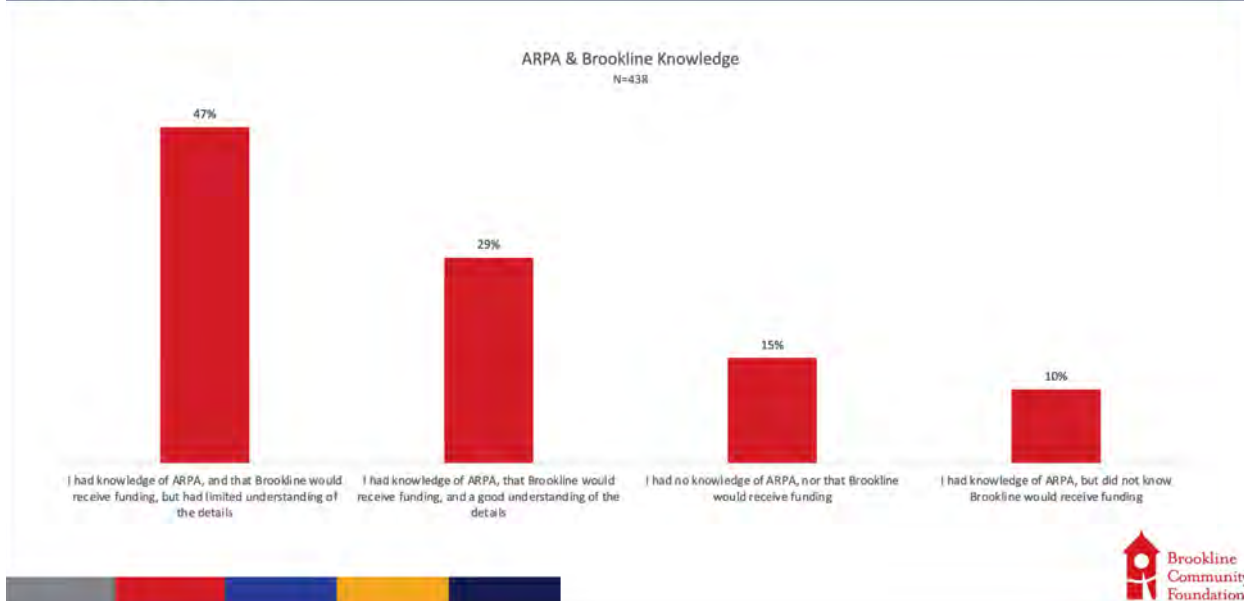
Which examples do you believe would make the best use of ARPA funds for the following eligible use category?: Investments in Water, Sewer, and Broadband



Survey Question 7: Before this survey, how much did you know about ARPA and about Brookline receiving funds? [SELECT ONE]

Finally, our last question was to better understand how much the community engagement effort and this survey helped respondents learn about ARPA and the funding. Over 70% of respondents were able to learn more about ARPA and Brookline by taking this survey. This survey played a direct role in further educating the Brookline community on ARPA and the impact it could have on our town.

Before this survey, how much did you know about ARPA and about Brookline receiving funds?



AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES

SURVEY RESPONDENTS' INSIGHTS & IDEAS

"Increase transportation vouchers for the needy. This cost has gone up from the pandemic and the state cut services."

"Premium pay for direct care workers, including home health aides; mental health professionals, clinicians and therapists; public housing staff; DPW workers; teachers and teacher aides; and all employees who worked tirelessly throughout Covid with many changing conditions, community needs and at great personal risk."

"Repairs to Brookline Public Housing, including upgrading infrastructure, so it's healthier for residents to stay at home. Provide housing subsidies. Invest in much needed improvements to public housing stock."

"Allocate funds to public institutions that have sustained cuts, like the Library and Rec departments."

"Support Universal Pre-K across the town for low-income families."

RECOMMENDATIONS & TOP AREAS FOR INVESTMENT

Based on our analyses of the findings shared on previous pages, the Brookline community recommends the following areas for investment of ARPA funding according to the allowable use categories. While this analysis is not a perfect science, these recommendations take into account the online survey, which is statistically significant and reliable, and the robust qualitative data from listening sessions and focus group discussions.

Support Public Health Response:

- Invest in **public health department and the public health response.**
- Invest in **crisis intervention services to support key impacted groups** with services that address mental, emotional, physical health and behavior distress.

Equity Focused Services:

- Invest in **programs that address the social determinants of health** and other essential needs
- Invest in **increased access to early learning services, academic supports, afterschool programs, and support for students' social, emotional, and mental health needs.**
- **Invest in housing** by developing more affordable housing and supportive housing, bringing existing affordable housing to conditions where people are living with dignity, and providing housing vouchers
- Invest in **programs that promote healthy childhood environments**, including increasing access to reliable, affordable and quality child care programs, and offer enhanced services for children

Addressing Negative Economic Impacts

- **Assistance to households, workers, and families** of key impacted groups to alleviate poverty (e.g. programs that offer direct cash assistance), with a preference for letting people decide for themselves how to spend the money
- Provide **support for nonprofits and small businesses** (grants to mitigate financial hardship, investing in operations, programs, and capacity building)

Premium Pay for Essential Workers

- Providing premium pay to **low and moderate income workers**

Investments in Water, Sewer & Broadband

- Improving broadband access and technology training to unserved or underserved households and key impacted groups

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Many in Brookline are still suffering. As we reflect on the results of this community engagement process, it's clear that Brookline is not "back to normal," and we may never be without key investments and a longer-term plan in place.

The challenges did not hit all of our communities the same. The purpose of this funding is to not only recover, but to create a more inclusive and equitable community. Those who suffered disproportionately cannot be ignored. We must move beyond investing in programs and interventions that address the pain points and struggles experienced by individual people and also make institutional/systemic investments that improve the conditions that influence those outcomes downstream. The Town, nonprofit organizations, the business sector, and individual community members must all support those who have been the hardest hit by the pandemic, and invest in policies, programs, and projects that will have long-term, trajectory-changing benefits to build assets, strength, and resilience for our neighbors who need it the most.

Throughout the community engagement process, we heard skepticism from community members and nonprofit groups that their opinion matters. We heard this skepticism particularly among people of color, people who are living on low or limited income, and people who live in public housing. We also began to see the positive effects of the engagement process, as Select Board members continued to publicly announce they would wait for the engagement process to be over before making key investment decisions, and people in our community started opening up more in the hopes that this was an indication they would be heard. Demonstrating that the Town is going to make decisions based on this input will be the real test and will determine whether we can hold up these ways of informing the public and inviting the community to participate in future processes to solve problems together.

ARPA funds present an opportunity to create equitable outcomes rooted in the concerns and creative insights from those most in need. As our community moves to the second phase of this work, it is our sincere hope that the Town of Brookline will respond to our community by prioritizing investment opportunities community members have said will contribute to an equitable recovery for Brookline.

Respectfully,
Brookline Community Foundation
February, 2022

APPENDICES & SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS



Brookline
Community
Foundation

Methodology

In September 2021, BCF embarked upon a 20-week outreach effort for ARPA community engagement and invited community members across Brookline to participate in community engagement events. As designed, the plan included 8 engagement opportunities with varied formats (informational & listening sessions, focus groups, and a community charrette) through which BCF would share information about ARPA funds and eligible uses and document feedback and insights.

At the beginning of the planning process, BCF identified key principles of engagement to foster transparency and inclusion. They include: sharing high-level goals of the engagement effort at every event; being clear about the role that BCF plays as a convenor and facilitator and the Town of Brookline/Select Board as decision-makers regarding funding; collaborating with organizations that the community trusts; creating multilingual materials, where possible; inviting people to participate to the extent they are comfortable; valuing community members' time, lived and learned experience; making sure all voices are heard; and listening.

Community Engagement Planning Process

Identify Key Partners:

- Identification and selection of a key organizations, groups, and individuals with deep reach throughout Brookline to help engage a broad range of community members with diverse perspectives

Design Process:

- Define principles of engagement
- Identify target populations most impacted by COVID-19
- Identify and design engagement events
- Invite nonprofits and other groups to host focus groups

Create Outreach Materials:

- Create promotional and outreach materials
- Create webpage on BCF website with ARPA content
- Create informational ARPA materials, including a recorded informational webinar
- Design survey
- Translate materials to other languages, where possible

Methodology Continued

Engage the Community

- Distribute joint press release with the Town of Brookline
- Distribute outreach materials to encourage organizations, groups, and individuals to get involved in the process
- Host engagement events, focus groups, field online survey and document what we heard

Analyze Results

- Analyze data from listening sessions, focus groups, and survey
- Present overview of findings to the Select Board
- Draft ARPA report for publication

Promotion & Outreach

BCF created and shared a communications toolkit for partners, individuals and organizations to help spread the word about engagement opportunities. BCF also received a generous donation of two full-page TAB ads to help promote these efforts.

To help reach communities not well represented historically in decision-making processes, BCF enlisted the support of key partners, organizations, and networks in Brookline that directly work and interact with key impacted community members to reach a diversity of voices within Brookline. BCF drafted a focus group guide, focus group script, and consent forms for the focus group discussions. We also worked with hosts to provide interpretation services for multilingual focus groups.

As part of our commitment to equity, BCF provided honorariums to community members who participated in focus group discussions as a demonstration that we value their time, expertise, and service to BCF and the Brookline community. We recognize that there are barriers to civic participation and it was important that we not limit participation to those who can afford to donate their time.

Community Demographics

We aimed to meet with community members from all walks of life: residents, workers, front line workers, community leaders, activists, advocates, nonprofit executives, organizers, entrepreneurs, working parents, teens, older adults, small business owners, residents of public housing, immigrants, and Town of Brookline employees. Recognizing that the pandemic magnified underlying vulnerabilities of many within Brookline, we also aimed to make special effort to include those individuals who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, hard-to-reach and underrepresented groups, and those who don't typically have the opportunity to engage in critical decision-making processes.

For reference, we have included data from the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) QuickFacts site on Brookline, Norfolk County, MA.

Brookline Demographics

- Population: 63,191
- Population over the age of 65: 16%
- Population under the age of 18: 18.6%
- Poverty rate: 12.3% (higher than the national average of 11.4%)
- Median household income: \$117,326 (almost double the nationwide median of \$62,843)
- Housing is owner-occupied: 48.9% (lower than the national average of 64%)
- Housing is renter-occupied: 51.1%
- Households with a language other than English spoken at home: 33.6% (higher than the national average of 21.6%)
- Foreign-born persons: 29.1% (higher than national average of 13.6%)

Engagement Demographics

In 20-weeks (September 15, 2021 - January 27, 2022), BCF engaged communities across Brookline through presentations, social media, eblasts, hosting listening sessions, focus groups, a collaboration workshop, and fielding an online survey.

Through this, we reached 728 instances of participation through 22 engagement events (community conversations, focus groups, and the collaboration workshop) and 438 completed surveys.

What follows is a summary of engagement demographics for the two engagement event types we were able to collect demographic data for: focus groups and survey respondents.

Focus Group Demographics

Participants of focus groups were invited to fill in demographic information, including zip code, age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

- White or Caucasian: 20 (14%)
- Black or African American: 8 (6%)
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 1 (1%)
- Asian or Asian American: 26 (18%)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0 (0%)
- Multi-racial: 2 (1%)
- Prefer not to share: 2 (1%)
- Prefer to self-describe: 5 (4%)
- Unknown: 77 (55%)

Total: 141 individuals (100%)

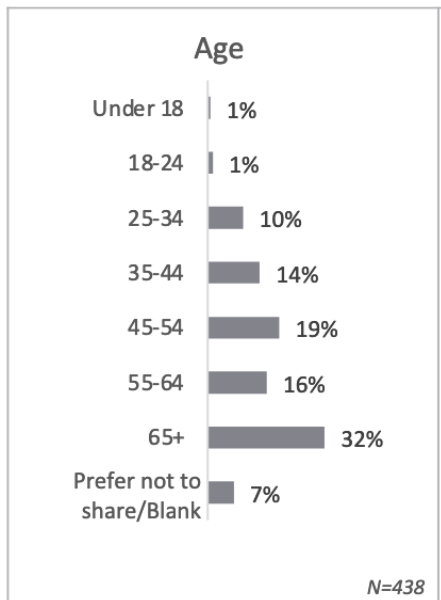
Engagement Demographics

Continued

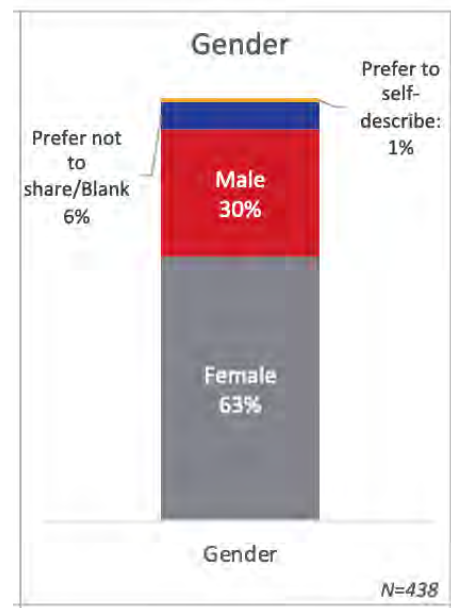
Survey Demographics

Participants of the survey were invited to fill in demographic information, including zip code, age, race/ethnicity, gender, marital status, household income, employment status, home ownership status, and other demographic dimensions.

Respondents provided some of this information, which can be broken down as follows:



Age: People aged 65 or older were our largest age category at 32%.

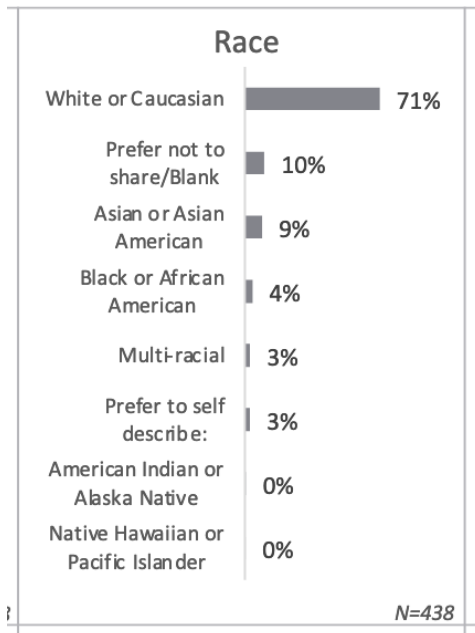


Gender: Far more women filled out the survey than any other gender.

Engagement Demographics

Continued

Survey Demographics Continued

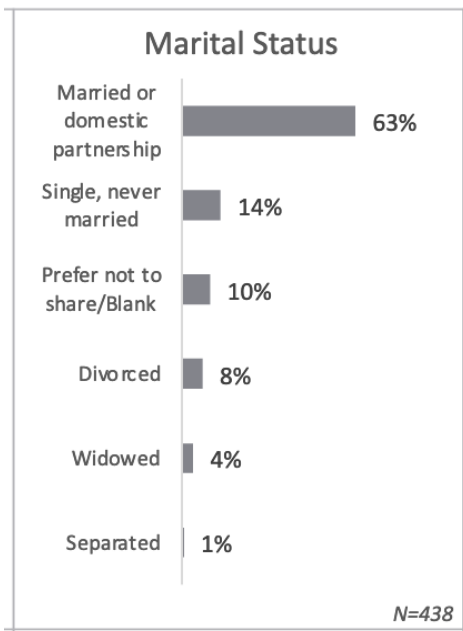


Race & Ethnicity: In some instances, the demographic breakdown of participants is fairly representative of Brookline's racial profile (according to US Census 2020 estimates). See table to the right for comparison.

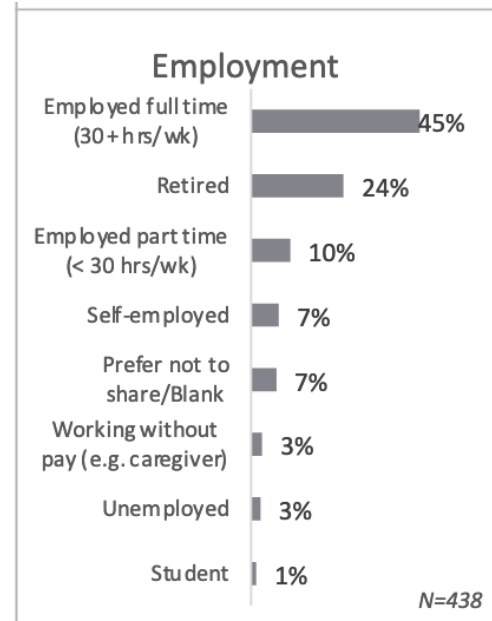
Brookline 2020 Census Population by Race	Brookline % Total population in 2020	ARPA Online Survey Demographics
White	66.8%	71%
Black or African American	3.3%	4%
American Indian	0.2%	0%
Asian	19.2%	9%
Pacific Islander	0%	0%
Other	2.1%	
Two or More	8.5%	3%
Hispanic or Latino	6.8%	5%
Prefer not to share		10%
Prefer to self-describe		3%

Engagement Demographics Continued

Survey Demographics Continued



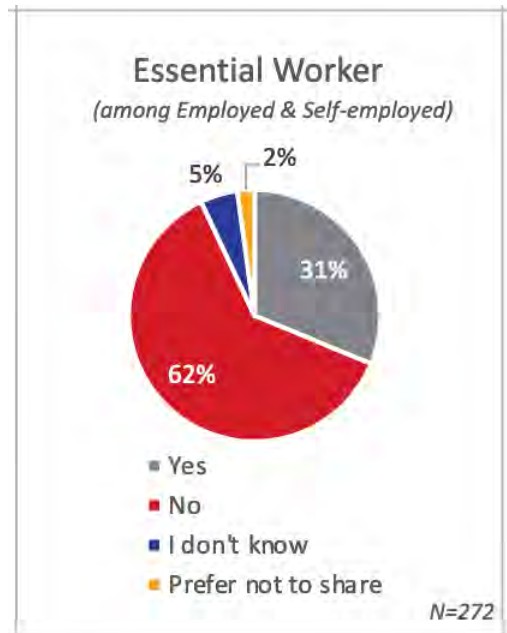
Marital Status: 63% of participants indicated they were either married or in a domestic partnership.



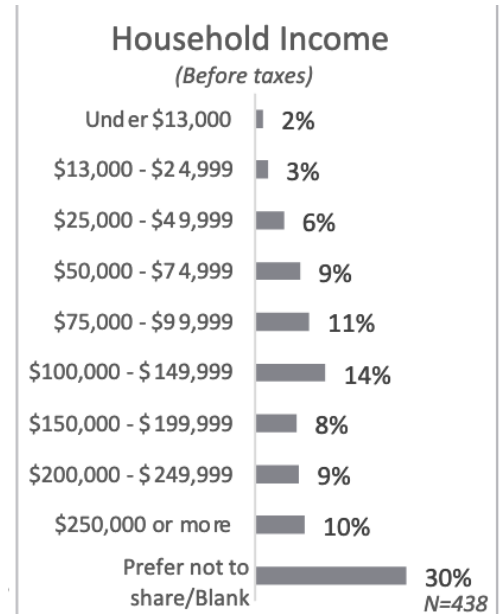
Of the participants who chose to respond to this question, 55% are employed either full time or part-time, 24% are retired, 3% are unemployed, and 3% are working without pay (e.g. caregiver).

Engagement Demographics Continued

Survey Demographics Continued



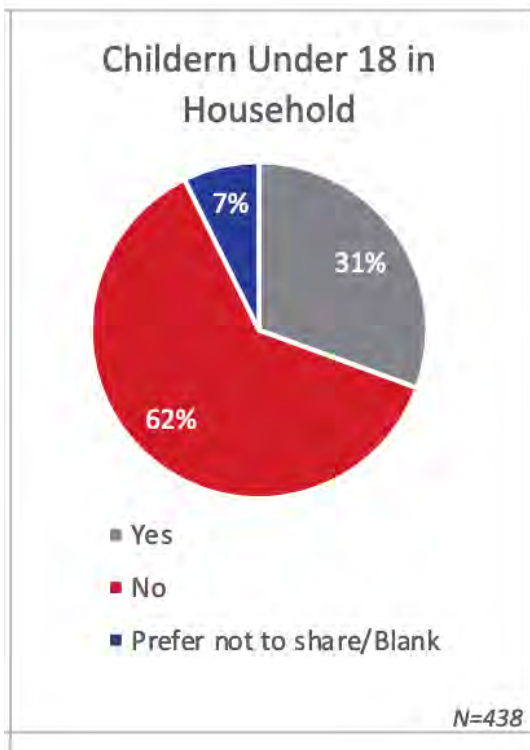
Essential Worker: Among employed and self-employed respondents, 31% indicated they are essential workers.



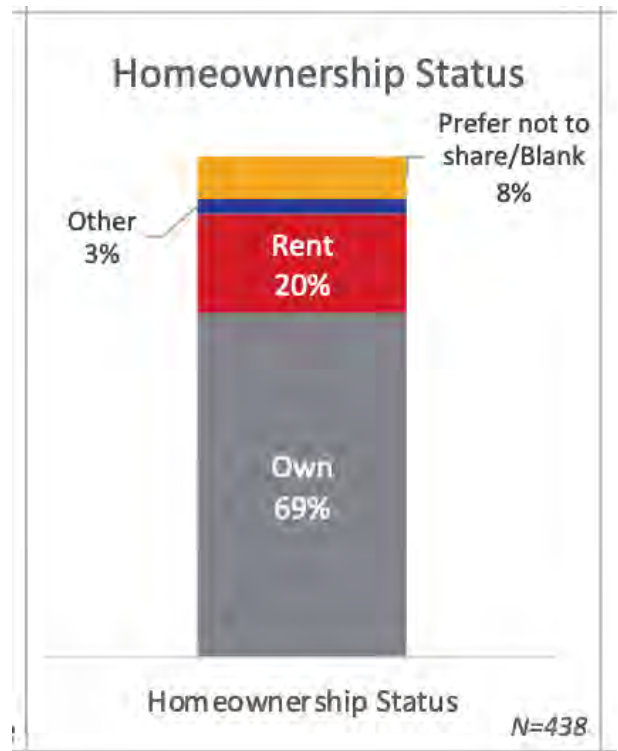
Household Income: Of the participants who shared their household income, 11% are living on income below \$50,000 annually, 20% are living on income between \$50,000-\$99,999 annually, and 41% are living on income above \$100,000 annually.

Engagement Demographics Continued

Survey Demographics Continued



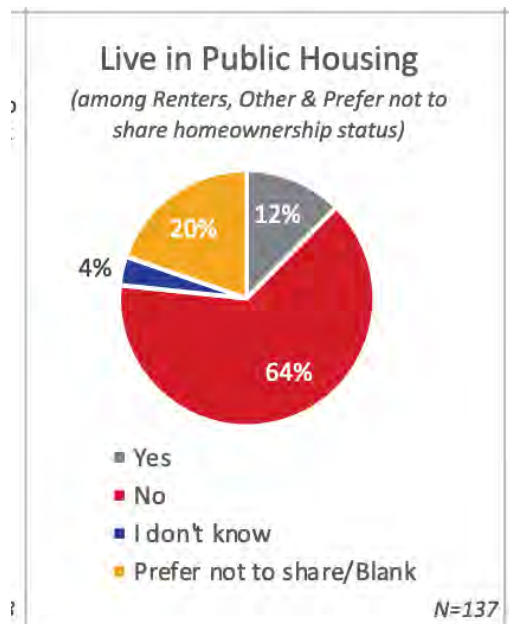
Children under 18 in the household: Of the participants who chose to respond to this question, 31% lived with children under 18 in the household.



Home Ownership Status: Of the participants who chose to respond to this question, 69% own and 20% rent.

Engagement Demographics Continued

Survey Demographics Continued

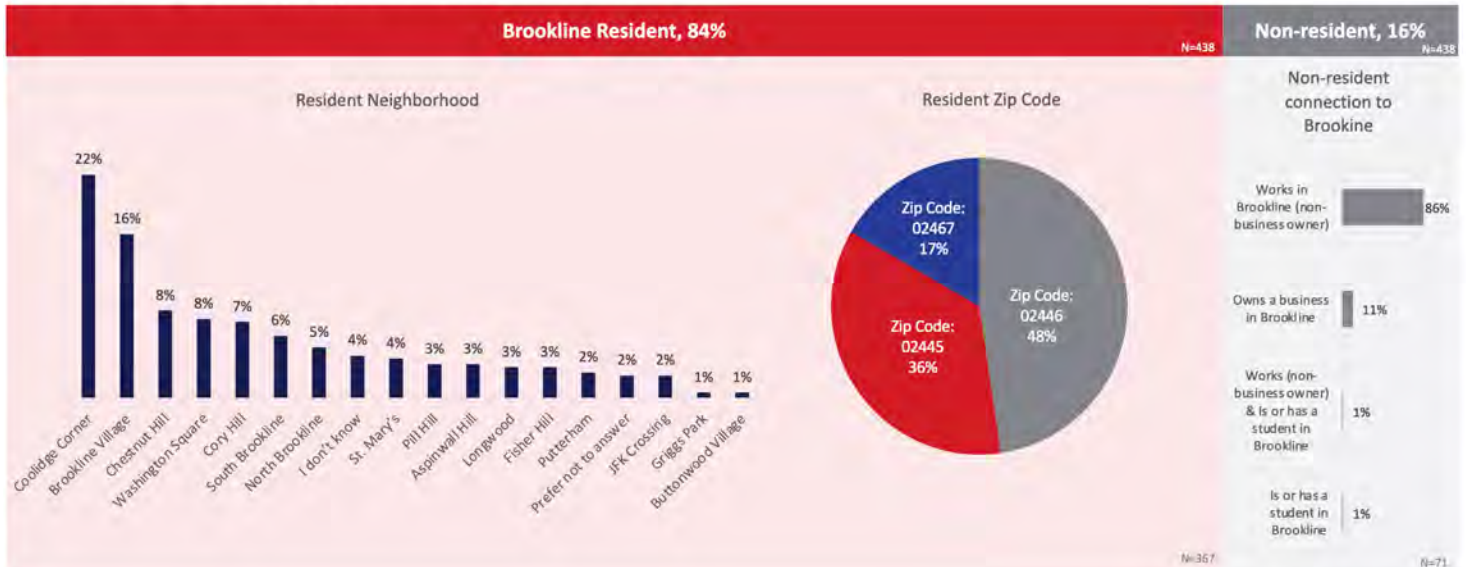


Live in Public Housing: Among Renters, Other, and Prefer not to share respondents, 12% indicated they live in public housing.

Engagement Demographics Continued

Survey Demographics Continued

Total Number of Survey Respondents: 438



Approximately 84% of respondents indicated they are Brookline residents, while 16% of respondents indicated they were non-residents with another connection to the Town (e.g. works in Brookline, has or works in a business in Brookline, or has a student in Brookline).

Brookline Disparity Report

At the same time as the ARPA community engagement process, from October - December 2021, the Brookline's **Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations Disparity Working Group** collected input from the community through a survey per a November 2020 Town Meeting vote.

The draft results of the survey are now available and included in the Working Group Draft Disparity Report and Recommendations. This report identifies disparities that exist in Brookline's programming, resources, and services among traditionally underrepresented groups, makes recommendations on fiscal allocations for the Town Budget, and identifies concrete actions that can be taken by the Town to address and remedy these disparities. A non-exhaustive list of disparities identified include: access to technology, access and availability to COVID-19 testing and vaccination, access to food, educational access and achievement, housing status and affordability, health, quality of life measures, language access, and childcare. Of note, the Report identifies that 51.5% of Brookline residents living below the poverty line identify as BIPOC.

It is BCF's recommendation that the Disparity Report also be used as an input into which communities within Brookline should be prioritized when making ARPA funding decisions. A full Working Group Draft Disparity Report and Recommendations can be found on the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations website under the ["Disparity Report"](#) tab.

Links & Resources

The following is a list of resources and links for learning more about ARPA, reviewing materials and information, and more.

- Brookline Community Foundation: www.brooklinecommunity.org
- Brookline Community Foundation ARPA Information: <https://www.brooklinecommunity.org/a-community-engagement-process-for-american-rescue-plan-act-funding>
- Brookline Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Community Relations Disparity Report 2021: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1898/Disparity-Report>
- U.S. Treasury ARPA Informational Page: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>
- Town of Brookline ARPA Informational Page: <https://stories.opengov.com/brooklinema/published/alukqInNI>
- OpenGov APRA Application Portal: <https://brooklinema.viewpointcloud.com/categories/1081/record-types/6430>

Publication Credits

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Most importantly, this report and the insights and ideas shared within it come from you, the Brookline community! Thank you for your partnership in this work and for sharing your perspectives, experiences, and hopes with us throughout this process.