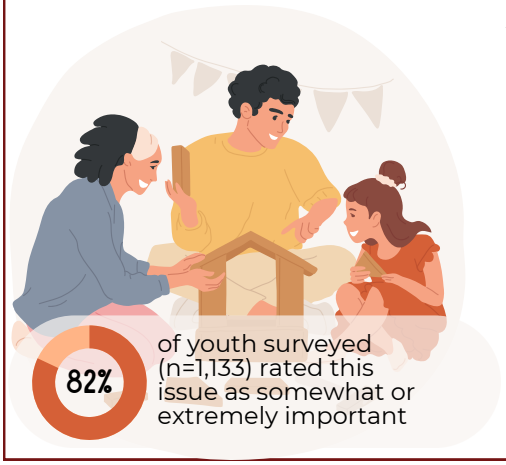


82% of youth surveyed (n=1,133) rated this issue as somewhat or extremely important

Youth Perspectives on:

Cost of Living

Overview

Cost of Living emerged over 500 times during 94 listening sessions with Alexandria students. Students described financial stress as a central concern affecting their families and peers. Rising prices, housing costs, healthcare inaccessibility, and visible poverty emerged as common themes. Youth highlighted a strong desire for a community where no one experiences homelessness or has to struggle to meet their basic needs.

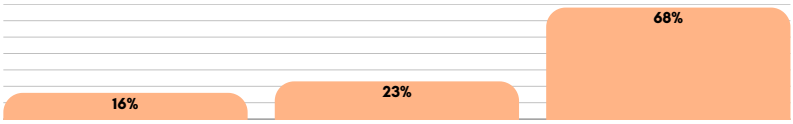
WHY IT MATTERS

When basic needs go unmet, such as food, housing, healthcare, and transportation, young people face significant challenges in learning, connecting, and planning for the future. Youth described how economic hardship and unreliable transportation create daily stressors that impact their well-being and development.

WHAT THE DATA SAY

Economic Conditions

Sources: 2024 Alexandria Resident Survey & VA Department of Education (2024)



Resident satisfaction with Alexandria's cost of living

Resident satisfaction with available affordable housing

ACPS students who qualify for free- or reduced-priced meals

WHAT YOUTH WANT

150+ mentions

"A community in which everybody has access to the things they need."

Economic Stability

A fairer economy where wealth and resources are distributed equitably and everyone gets their basic needs met and can thrive.

55+ mentions

"Housing for everyone (affordable housing)"

Housing for All

Housing costs are fair and everyone has access to safe, quality, and affordable housing/rent.

30+ mentions

"Healthy organic food that is affordable"

Food Justice

Everyone has access to healthy, affordable, and abundant food and no one goes hungry.

45+ mentions

"Access to great healthcare for free"

Greater Healthcare Access & Well-being

Everyone has access to high-quality, affordable, and compassionate healthcare and health and well-being are prioritized for all.

20+ mentions

"More free resources for youth."

"Help poor people."

More Social Services

Everyone has access to the support they need, including safe places to stay, help with basic needs, and programs that uplift low-income and unhoused individuals.

WHAT YOUTH EXPERIENCE

90+ mentions

"It is very expensive just to live here."

"A lot of people don't get paid much and can't afford a lot of things."

Economic Disparities

Students point to rising prices and inflation, stagnant wages, the financial strain their families experience, and a heavy tax burden as stressors.

50+ mentions

"Rent is too high."

"High rates of people experiencing homelessness."

Housing Instability

Many young people see their community as struggling with unaffordable housing, rising homelessness, unsafe living conditions, and a cost of living that makes it hard for families and youth to stay and thrive.

15+ mentions

"The prices of food are very high."

"Not enough food."

Food Insecurity

Many students experience food insecurity due to high grocery prices and limited access to enough food, leaving families unable to meet basic nutritional needs.

25+ mentions

"Expensive healthcare."

"People don't have healthcare."

"The Teen Wellness Center is not accessible and needs more funding."

Healthcare Inaccessibility

While the Teen Wellness Center was named as a valuable resource, many youth in our community struggle to access affordable, reliable healthcare, leaving their physical and mental health needs unmet and putting their well-being at risk.