

Renter Support Fund 2021 Annual Report

Minneapolis Renters Coalition

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2021 RENTER SUPPORT FUND

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

335 RENTERS FUNDED

benefitting 862 people and 353 children



\$300,000+ DISTRIBUTED

each renter received \$900, for a total of \$301,500

OVER 1500 APPLICATIONS

from 1018 applicants



IMPROVEMENTS FOR 98% RENTERS

98% renters said the funds made a difference, allowing them to pay rent, bills, or other expenses

FUNDED BY GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS, LYNDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, PHILLIPS WEST NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION, AND INDIVIDUAL DONORS.

Learn more at www.ppna.org/renter-support-fund

OVERVIEW

The Renter Support Fund is a rental assistance program designed to improve housing stability for Minneapolis renters. Created by the Minneapolis Renters Coalition in 2018 and administered by the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association, the Renter Support Fund has so far provided assistance to **438 renter households** in Minneapolis.

How does it work? Renters apply online during our monthly application period. We randomly select around 25 applicants each month to receive three monthly payments of \$300, \$900 in total. We send payments directly to renters and do not restrict how renters can spend the money.

In order to be eligible, applicants must live in the City of Minneapolis, be a renter, and spend one-third or more of their income on housing costs. Renters can receive funding once per calendar year. Our program allows multiple people from one household to receive funding, as long as each person is an adult, files their taxes as an independent, and meets the criteria.

THE NUMBERS YEAR TO YEAR

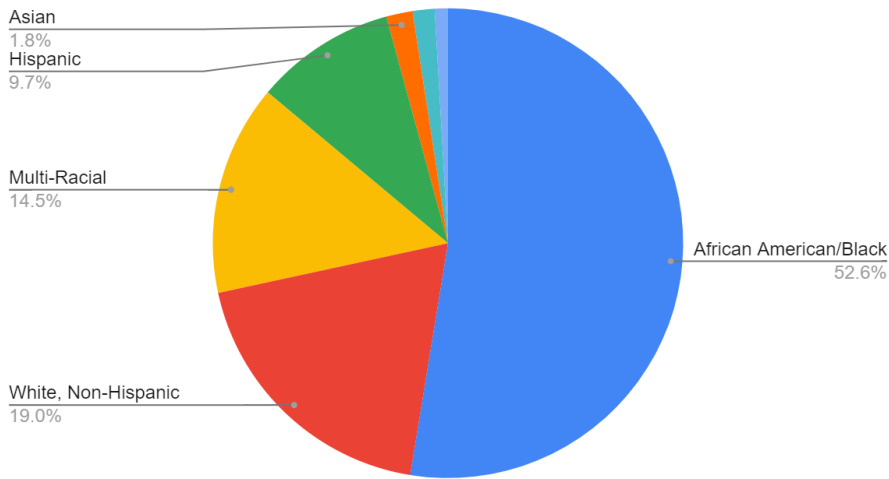
	Total	2021	2020	2019
Applications Received	2243	1552 (177 from outside Mpls)	404 (46 from outside Mpls)	287
Individual Applicants*	1462	1018 (136 from outside Mpls)	275 (approx)	169
Households Served	438	335 at \$900 each	55 at \$900 each	48 at \$500 each
People Served	1031	862	169	N/A
Children Served	440	353	87	
Dollars Distributed	\$375,000	\$301,500	\$49,500	\$24,000

**Several people applied multiple times. This number reflects the unique individuals who applied.*

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: WHO DID WE FUND IN 2021?

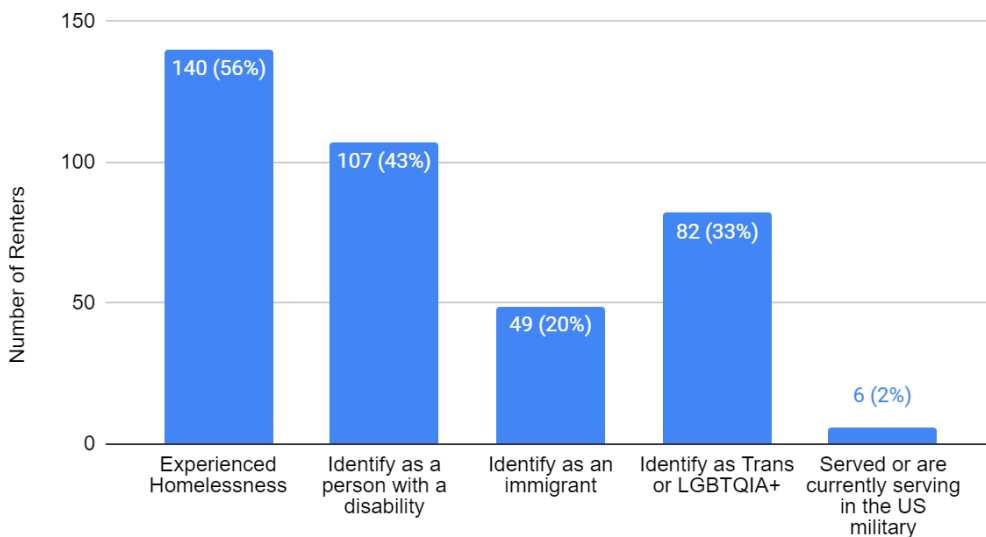
- **Race:** Around 81% of selected renters are People of Color, and a majority are Black women.
- **Experience:** One in two selected renters has experienced homelessness, two in five renters identify as having a disability, and one in three identifies as Trans or LGBTQIA+.
- **Cost-Burden:** 79% of selected renters spend more than half of their income on housing. 19% said they spend 100% or more of their income on housing, which indicates the accrual of significant rent debt.
- **Geography:** A majority of selected renters live in North or South Minneapolis, specifically in these areas: 55407, 55411, 55404, and 55408.
- **COVID Impacts:** A vast majority of renters who were selected to receive funding have lost income due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 82.9%.

Race & Ethnicity of Selected Renters



Note: We asked selected renters to complete an Intake Survey. In 2021, 249 renters answered a question about their identities or experience. Because some renters identify with multiple categories, the percentages in the following graph do not add up to 100%.

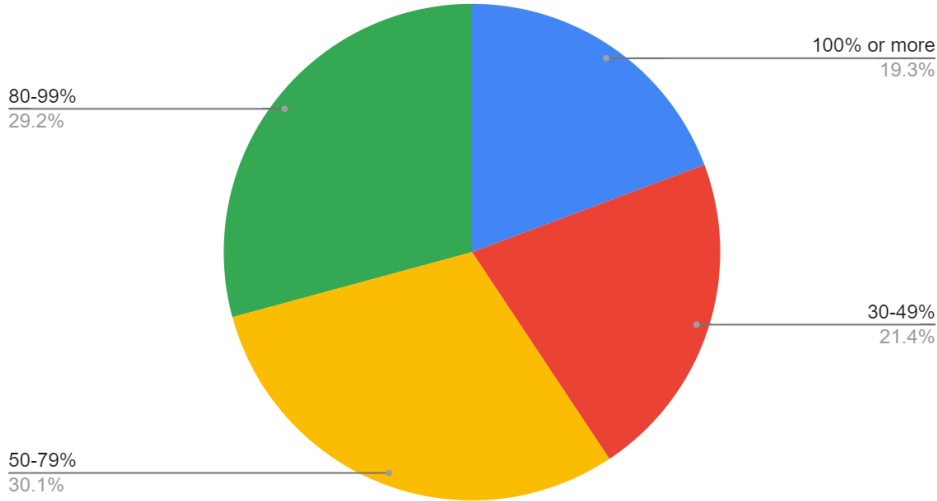
Identities of Selected Renters



Housing is considered affordable when it costs 30% or less of a residents' pre-tax income. If a renter spends more than 30% of their income on housing, they are considered cost-burdened. If a renter spends more than 50% of their income on housing, they are considered severely cost-burdened. The above chart shows levels of

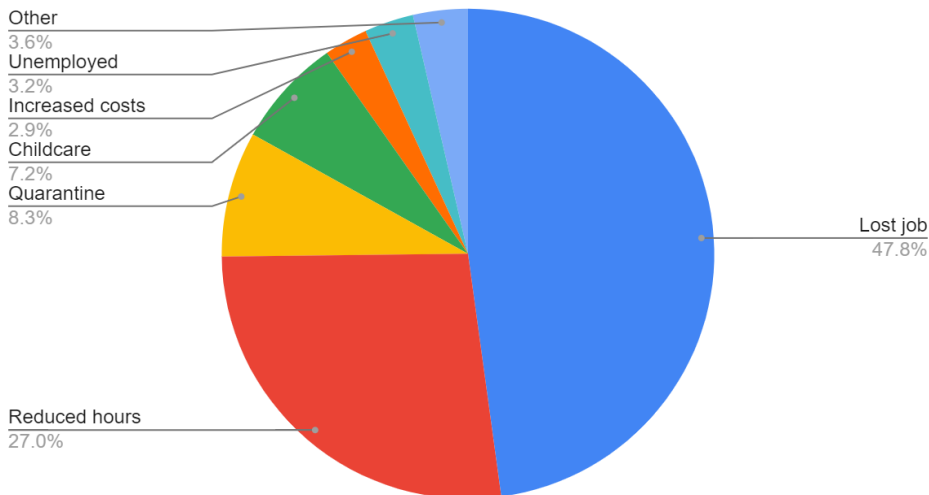
cost-burden among selected renters. For example, 19.3% of selected renters said they spend 100% or more of their income on housing each month.

Housing Cost-Burden Among Recipients



In our program Intake Survey, we asked renters how COVID impacted them. 83% of all selected renters said they lost income due to COVID-19. The graph below shows the various ways COVID impacted renters, broken down into various categories based on their responses.

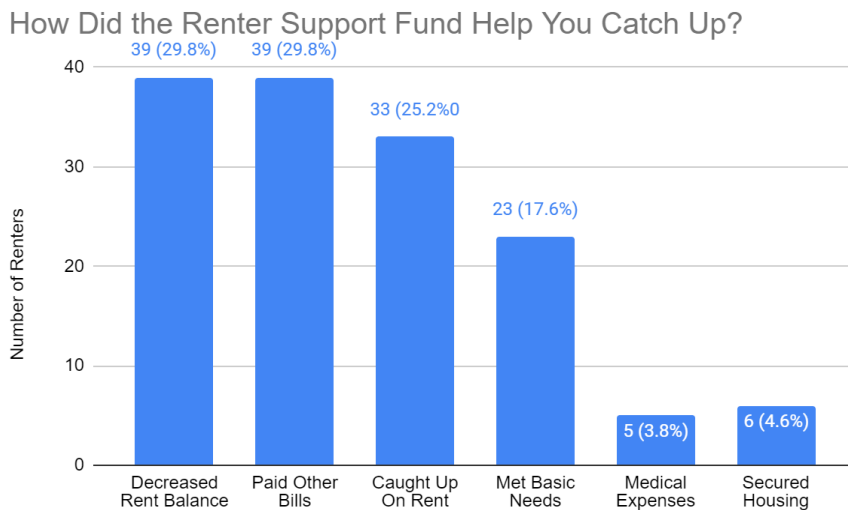
COVID Impacts on Selected Renters



PROGRAM IMPACT

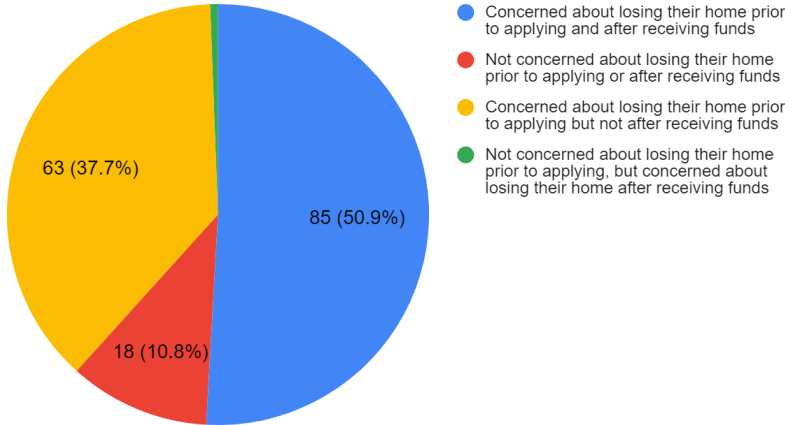
After they received the funds, we asked renters, “Do you still owe money towards your current lease or a previous lease?” 38% responded no, and 62% responded yes. This tells us that **\$900 can be the difference** between a renter having debt or paying their rent on time. But this also means that for 62% of the renters in our program, **\$900 is just not enough**. Especially given the impacts of COVID-19, many renter households have significant debts. A number of renters this year shared past-due statements or bills with us showing they owed hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

This graph shows how renters reported spending the money. Again, their qualitative responses were sorted into various categories of expenditures to give us an idea of how the funds were used. When asked how they used the funds, 98% of renters said the funds helped them pay their bills or make ends meet. Note: We do not require that tenants tell us how they use the funds. This question was optional.



The following graph illustrates renters’ perception of housing stability before and after receiving funding. Nearly 38% of renters were concerned about losing their home prior to applying but not after receiving funds. This number closely matches the percentage of renters who said they had no longer owed rent. A majority of renters were still concerned about their housing stability after receiving funds, which again suggests that **\$900 is not enough** and that **renters are experiencing extreme financial hardship**.

Renters Perception of Housing Stability, Before and After

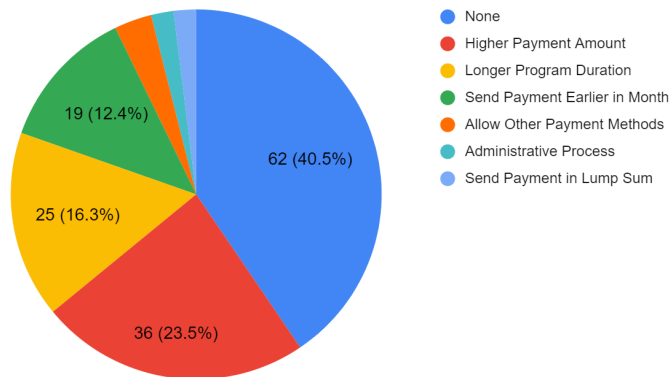


PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Our program is based on the assumption that renters are best able to identify and fix their own housing instability, provided they have the resources to do so. We strive to be low-barrier, flexible, and efficient in how we administer the program. To that end, we pay renters directly. Renters choose how to spend the funds. The application opens monthly and involves completing a simple Google form online. Renters are asked to provide just two documents, and we have workarounds for undocumented renters. On average, renters receive their first payment only 19 days after they apply.

When we asked renters for feedback on the program, we noticed several themes. First, many asked for a lump sum payment instead of three monthly payments. Many renters asked for more money, either higher monthly amounts or a longer program duration. Finally, renters wanted us to send payments earlier in the month. While we strived to mail payments by the 1st, sometimes it was later and renters had to pay a late fee.

Program Feedback from Renters



WHAT RENTERS TOLD US

“The renter support fund helped me to catch up and maintain my current housing situation and allowed me room to begin exploring options to become a small business owner!”

“Helped me catch up on bills I was behind on due to testing COVID positive and the birth of my baby.”

“This was a life saver for my family. I lost my job and my fiancé lost her job 2 weeks after, both without unemployment options...and now we both got back on our feet with this rent support! We both have new jobs and still have a ton of debt and are still drowning and scared but we are much more stable and are very grateful.”

“It helped me stay afloat.”

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The Renter Support Fund has a **critical impact on Minneapolis renters**. For those who receive funding, our program can often mean the difference between having rent debt or paying rent on time.

More resources are needed, especially for renters who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 or for whom \$900 is not enough.

The Renter Support Fund **primarily supports renters of color**, especially Black women. This reflects data that suggest renters of color are more likely to have low incomes and require resources, and also that the program is accessible to BIPOC renters.

The Renter Support Fund is a **low-barrier and efficient program**, especially when compared to state or federal programs that often have more restrictions or take longer. The Renter Support Fund has a high return on investment.

We should **continue to operate the Renter Support Fund**, as the need for rental assistance has not diminished and as the impacts of COVID-19 rage on.

We could **consider funding fewer renters** for a longer duration, to allow for deeper investment into a renter household. We should **adjust our program timeline** so that renters receive payments by the 5th of the month at the latest.