

# METRO ATLANTA SPEAKS

## *Perceptions of Life in Metro Atlanta*

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## Transportation stays the #1 concern, with same share as 2018

## Transit support remains strong but support for funding slips

- Nearly **49 percent of respondents chose “expand public transit” as the best long-term fix to traffic challenges**, which is comparable to the highest percentage in the five years of asking this question.
- **46 percent of respondents would be willing to pay more in taxes to expand public transit**, a decline from 50 percent in 2018 and 51 percent in 2017.

## Economy is in good shape broadly, but there are problems related to inequality

- Just **7 percent of respondents ranked the economy as the biggest problem**, which is up a tad from 6 percent last year but down from 24 percent in 2013.
- **Some 30 percent of respondents would struggle paying for an unexpected financial emergency of \$400.**
- There is **growing concern about adequacy of low-income services and programs.**

## Workforce Willing to Grow, if they know (how to and where to)

- **75 percent feel their skills and education are used in their present job**; only 9% fear automation.
- **Training is the preferred alternative for workforce investment**, followed by affordable housing and transportation.
- Over **8 in 10 respondents would seek training for a better job**, but a lower share (six in ten) know where to find that training.

## Neighborhood Change (Linked to Housing Affordability) = Stress Point

- General **affordability is declining** over time.
- Only **11 percent (last year)** thought they were **NOT paying too much for housing**.
- Nearly **75 percent** are seeing **at least some neighborhood change** in the past three to four years.
- **68 percent** live in areas experiencing **property flipping**, in which homes are being remodeled to be sold or rented at higher prices.
- **57 percent** of respondents said **older homes in their communities are being replaced** by new, more expensive housing.
- **Nearly half (46 percent)** of metro Atlanta residents said that if they had to move today, they could not afford to stay in their communities.
- A much **lower share** is seeing a rapidly shifting business environment.

## Core Strengths Remain and Optimism “Looking Up”

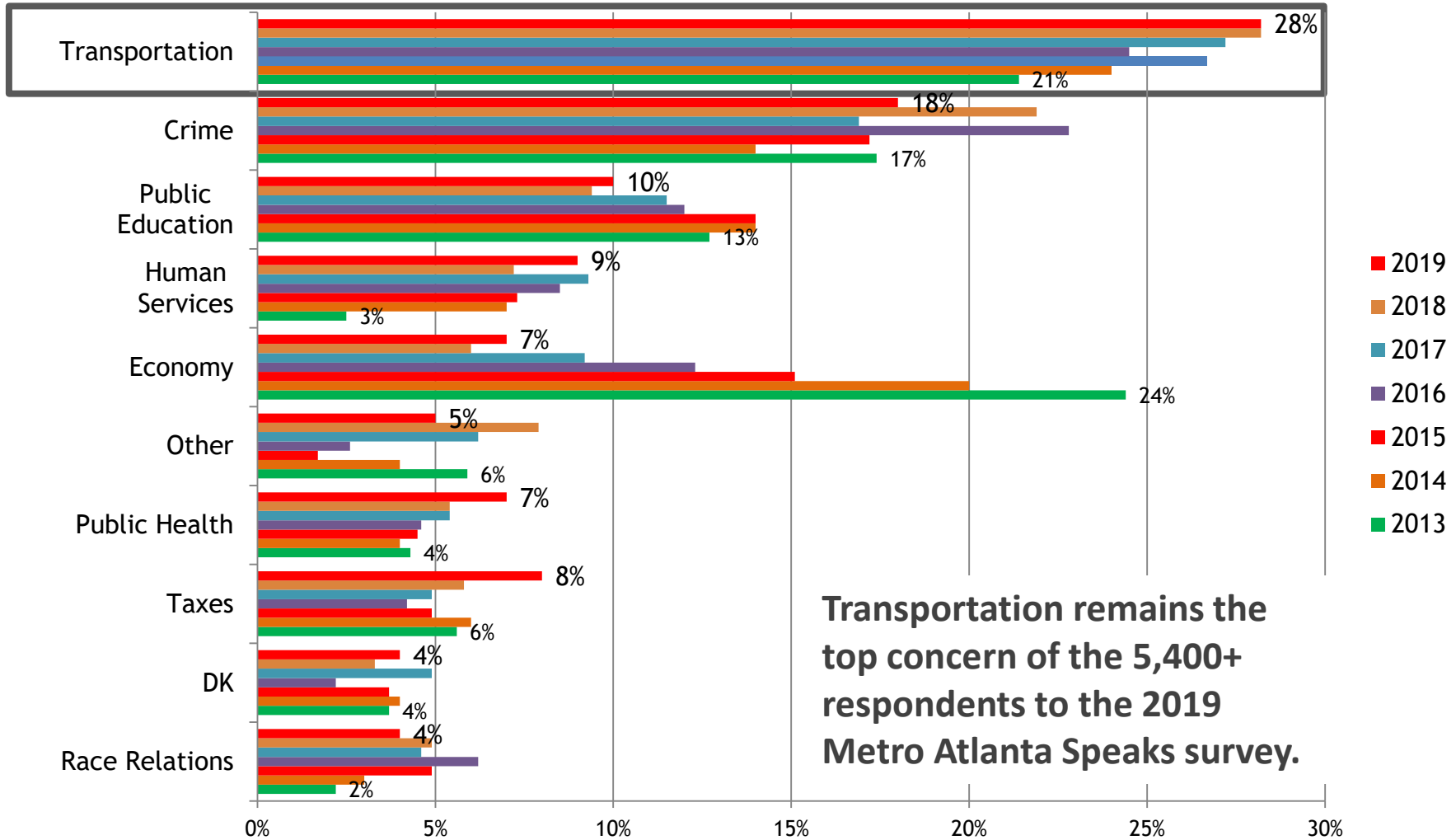
- With the changes (see above), still very little tension between neighbors.
- Neighbors are seen as willing to help each other, and there are reports of stable community involvement.
- Crime is down as a stated “biggest problem”, and perception of community safety generally stable.
- Atlanta metro is still seen as a good place to raise kids (2 in 3), and the share is ticking up.
- Share that think things will be better in the next 3-4 years is up, compared to last year.

# TRANSPORTATION



- Transportation stays the #1 concern, with same share as 2018
- In 2019, a quarter of respondents indicated that they frequently lack transportation to get where they need to go.
- Nearly 49 percent of respondents chose “expand public transit” as the best long-term fix to traffic challenges, which is comparable to the highest percentage in the five years of asking this question
- 46 percent of respondents would be willing to pay more in taxes to expand public transit, a decline from 50 percent in 2018 and 51 percent in 2017.

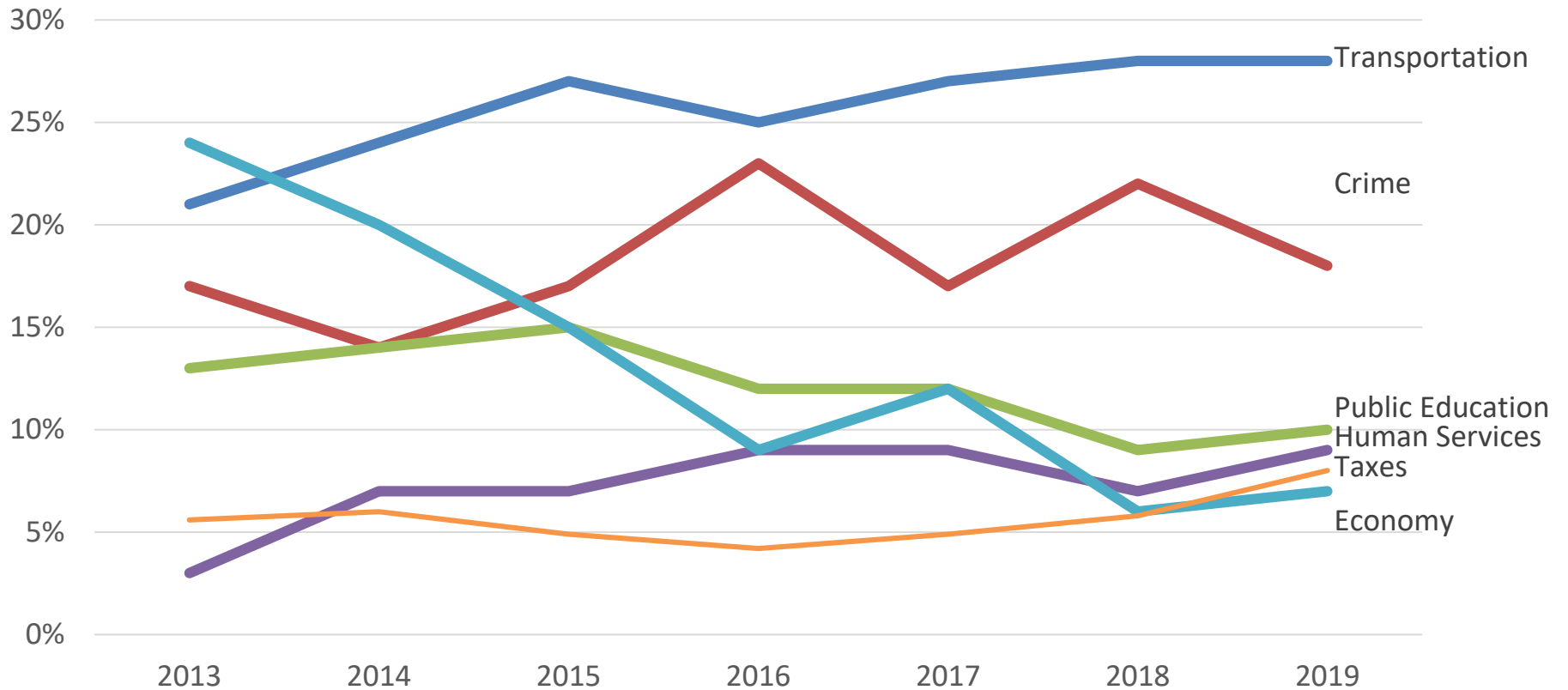
# Biggest Problem Facing Residents of Metro Atlanta in 2019



Transportation remains the top concern of the 5,400+ respondents to the 2019 Metro Atlanta Speaks survey.

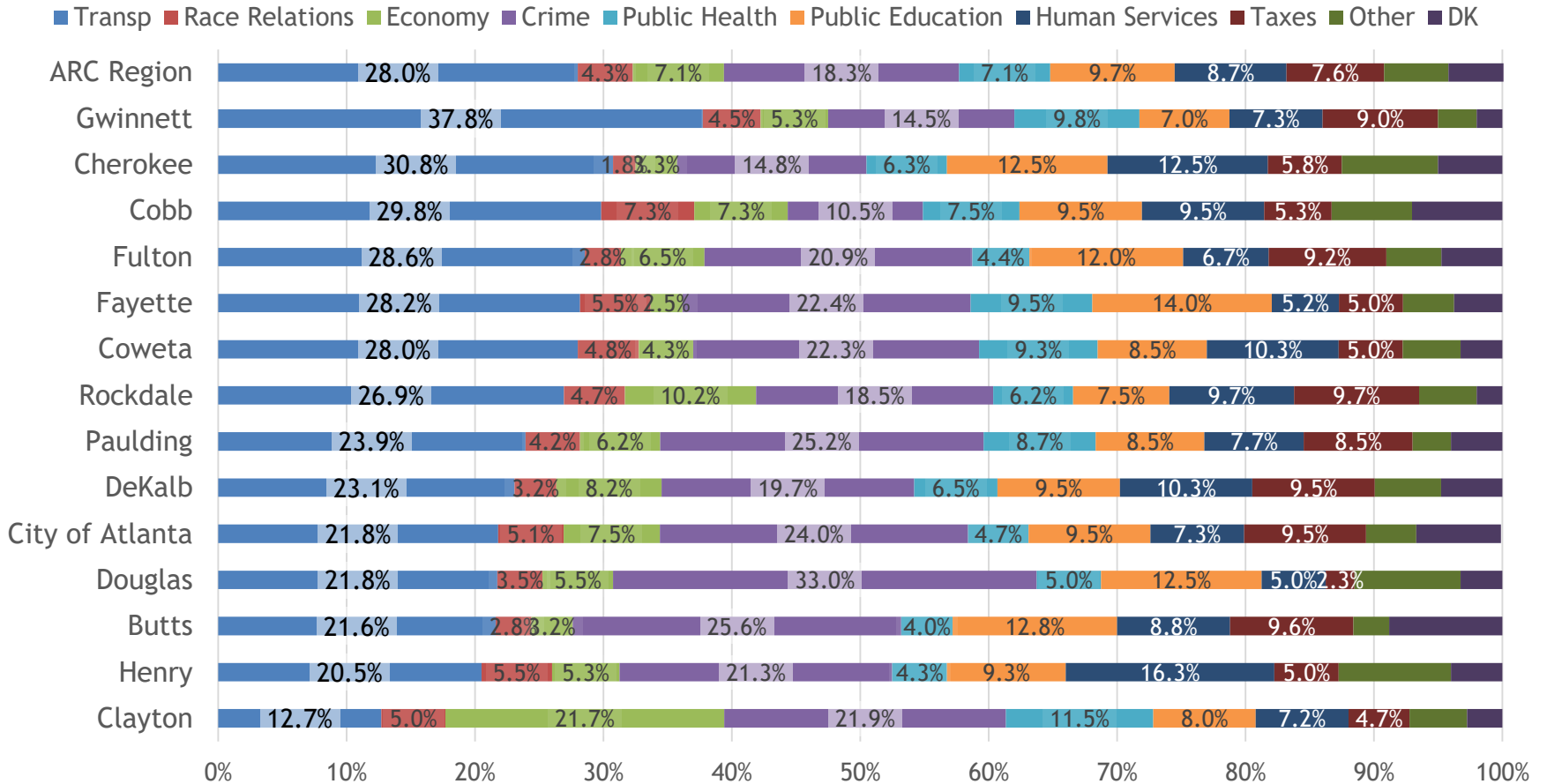


# Change in Perceptions of the Region's Biggest Problem: 2013 to 2019



The decline of concern about the local economy has been the biggest change over the history of the survey. **In 2013, almost 25 percent of respondents chose economy as the top concern. This year, 7 percent chose it — a lower share than those (8 percent) choosing taxes.**

# Biggest Problem Facing Residents of Metro Atlanta in 2019 (by County) (Sorted by “Transportation” Responses)



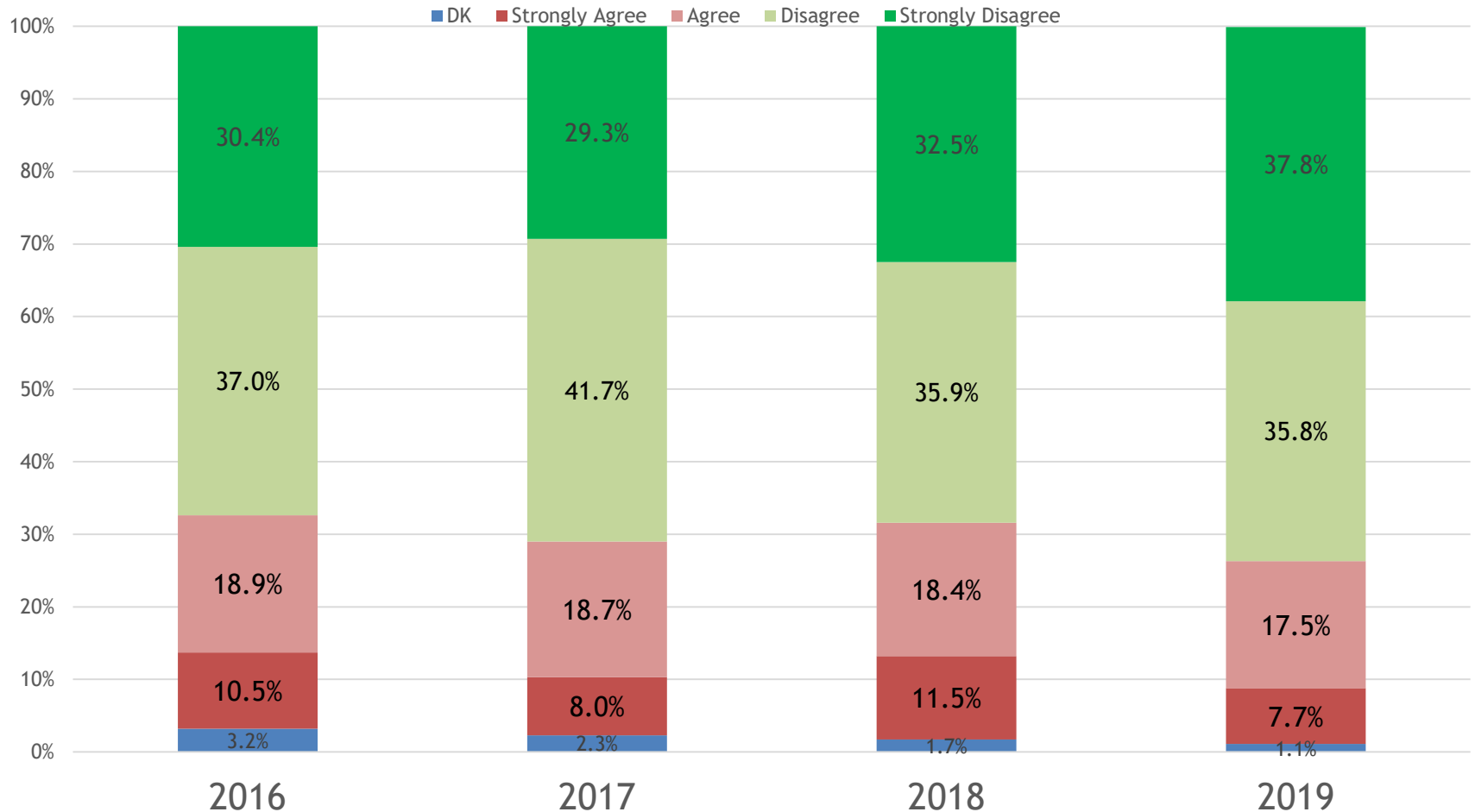
Eight of the 14 jurisdictions in the survey ranked transportation as the biggest problem. Gwinnett’s high share is particularly notable. For the other six counties, crime was rated the biggest problem, though in the case of Clayton, “crime” and “the economy” are in a statistical dead heat for the biggest problem.

# Most Likely to Say that Transportation is the #1 Issue?

- Residents of Gwinnett, Cherokee, and Cobb
- Those with at least a bachelor's degree
- Those with higher incomes
- Residents age 35-49 (barely)
- White Respondents

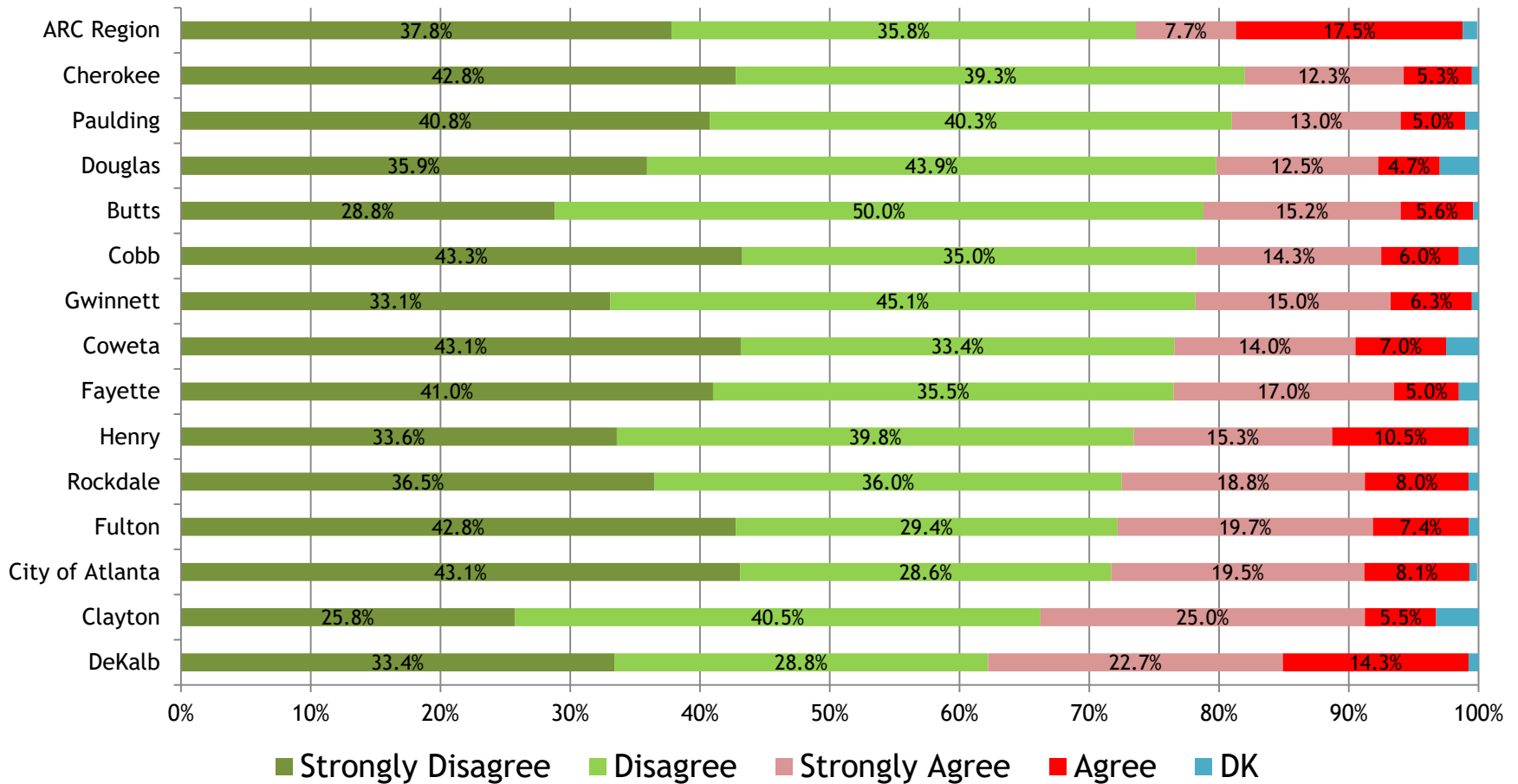


# "I Frequently Lack Transportation to Get to Places I Need to Go..." (2018)



From 2016 to 2019, a range of a quarter to 30 percent of respondents indicated that they frequently lack transportation to get where they need to go.

# "I Frequently Lack Transportation to Get to Places I Need to Go..." by Jurisdiction, 2019 (Sorted by Strongly Agree + Agree Responses)



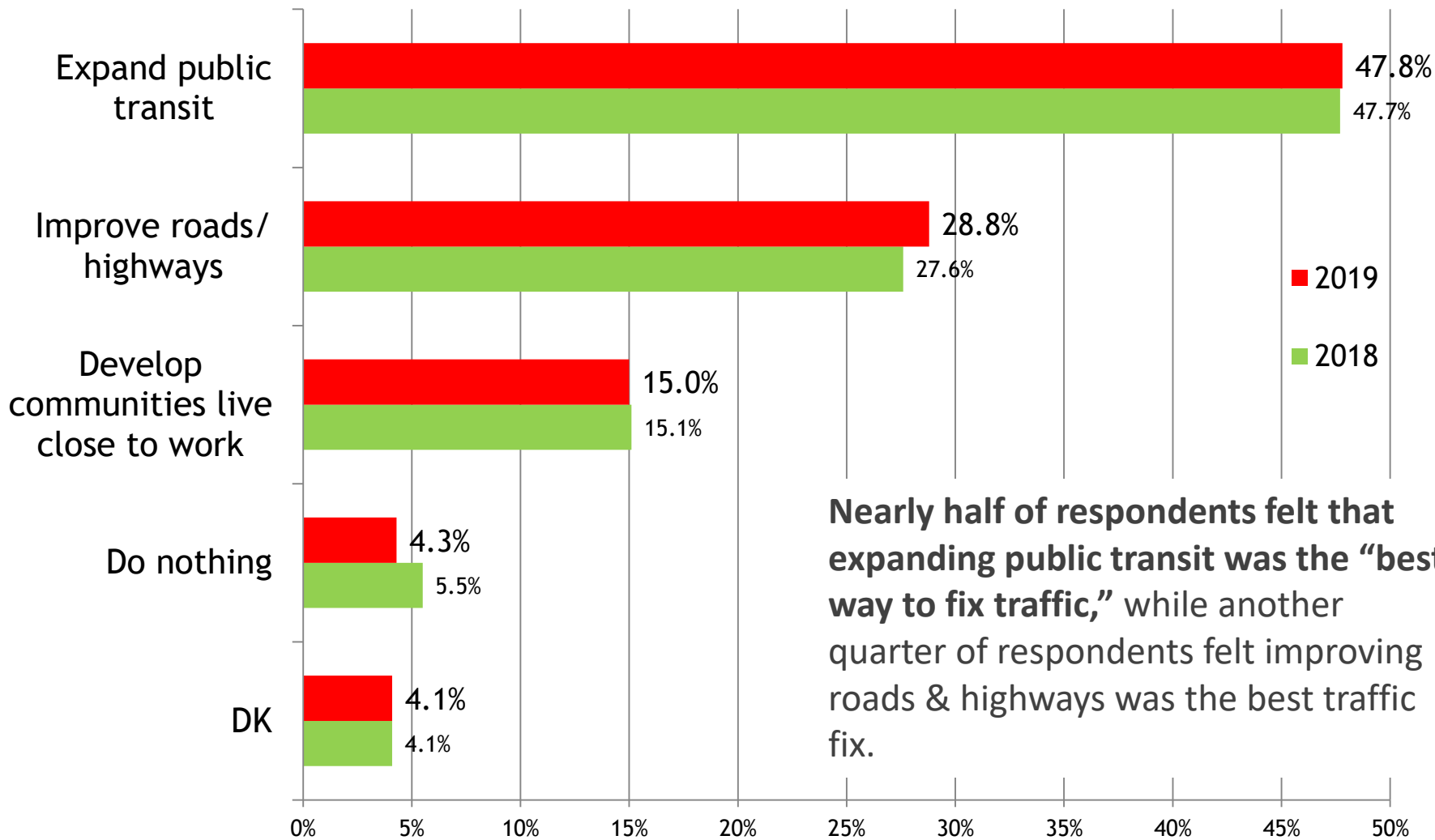
Overall, roughly 25 percent of respondents (down from 30 percent last year) indicated that they frequently lack transportation to get where they need to go, but in jurisdictions such as DeKalb County (37 percent) and Clayton (30.5 percent), the percentages are significantly higher.

# Most Likely to Indicate Having Problems with Accessing Needed Transportation (2019)...

- Residents of the City of Atlanta, Clayton, and DeKalb
- Seniors and millennials
- Those with lower levels of education, income
- Black respondents
- Renters
- The unemployed
- South of I-20



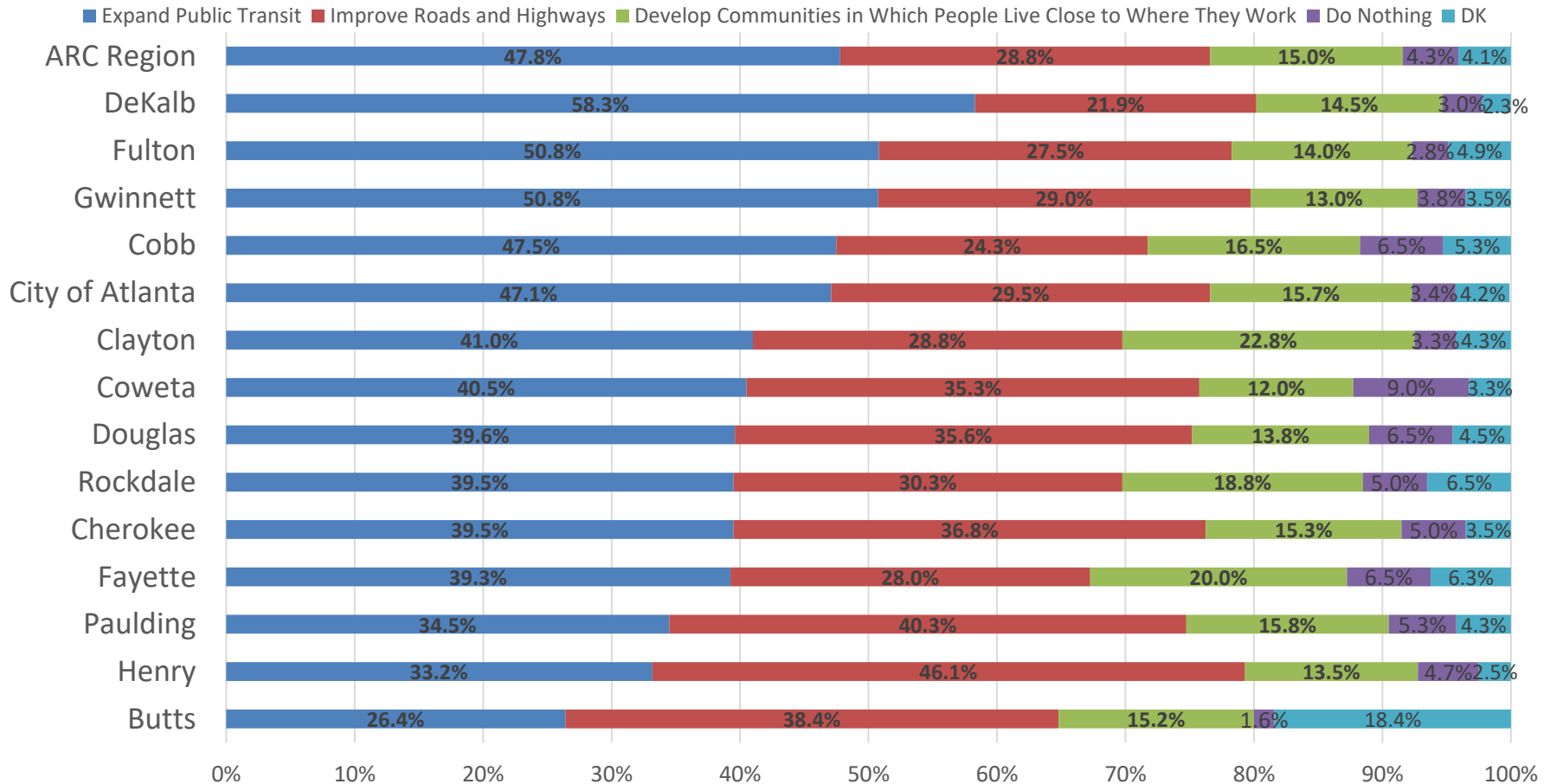
# Best Way to Fix Traffic? (2018-2019)



Nearly half of respondents felt that expanding public transit was the “best way to fix traffic,” while another quarter of respondents felt improving roads & highways was the best traffic fix.



# Best Long-term Solution to Traffic? (2019)



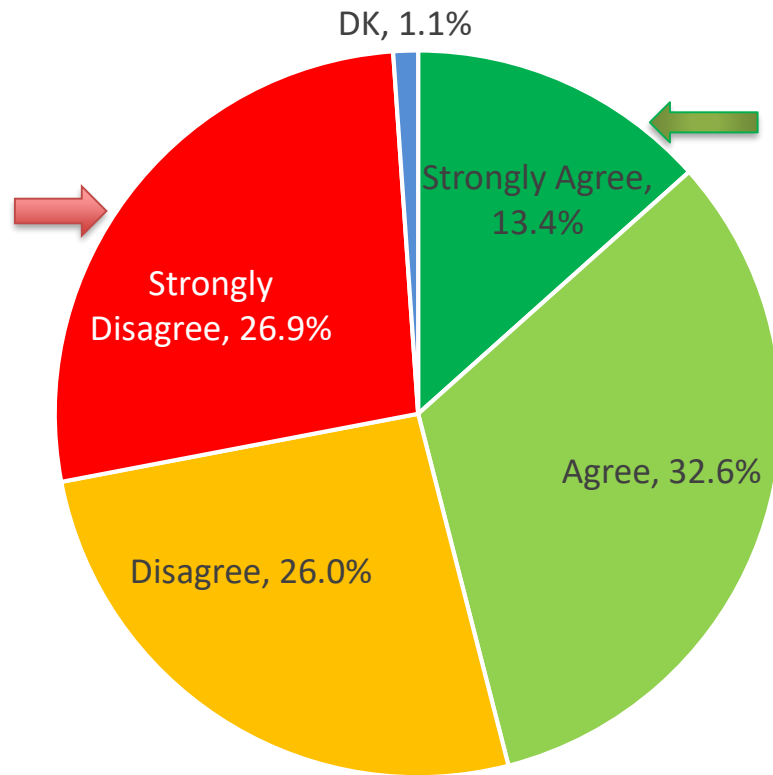
A plurality of regional respondents indicated that expanding public transit is the best long-term solution to traffic, with most of the region’s counties following the same trend, led by DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett at over 50 percent favoring transit. However, in Paulding, Henry, and Butts, the largest share felt that improving roads and highways was the best long-term solution to traffic.

# Most Likely to Indicate “Expanding Public Transit” as the Best Long-Term Fix to Traffic Problems...(19)

- Residents of DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett
- Minorities
- Shorter-Term Residents
- Higher Educational Attainment
- North of I-20



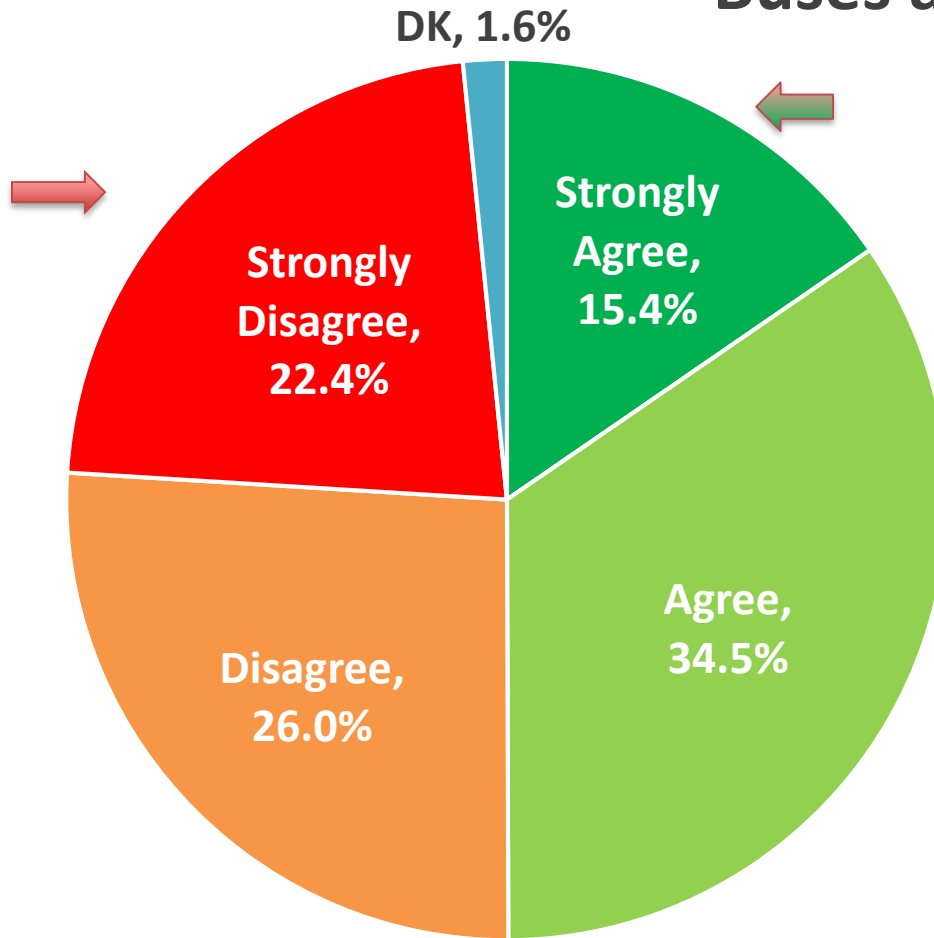
# “I am Willing to Pay More in Taxes to Fund Expanded Regional Public Transit that Includes Buses and Rail.” (2019)



46 percent of respondents indicated that they are willing to pay more in taxes to expand public transit that includes buses and rail. This year, the share strongly disagreeing has increased while the share strongly agreeing has decreased.

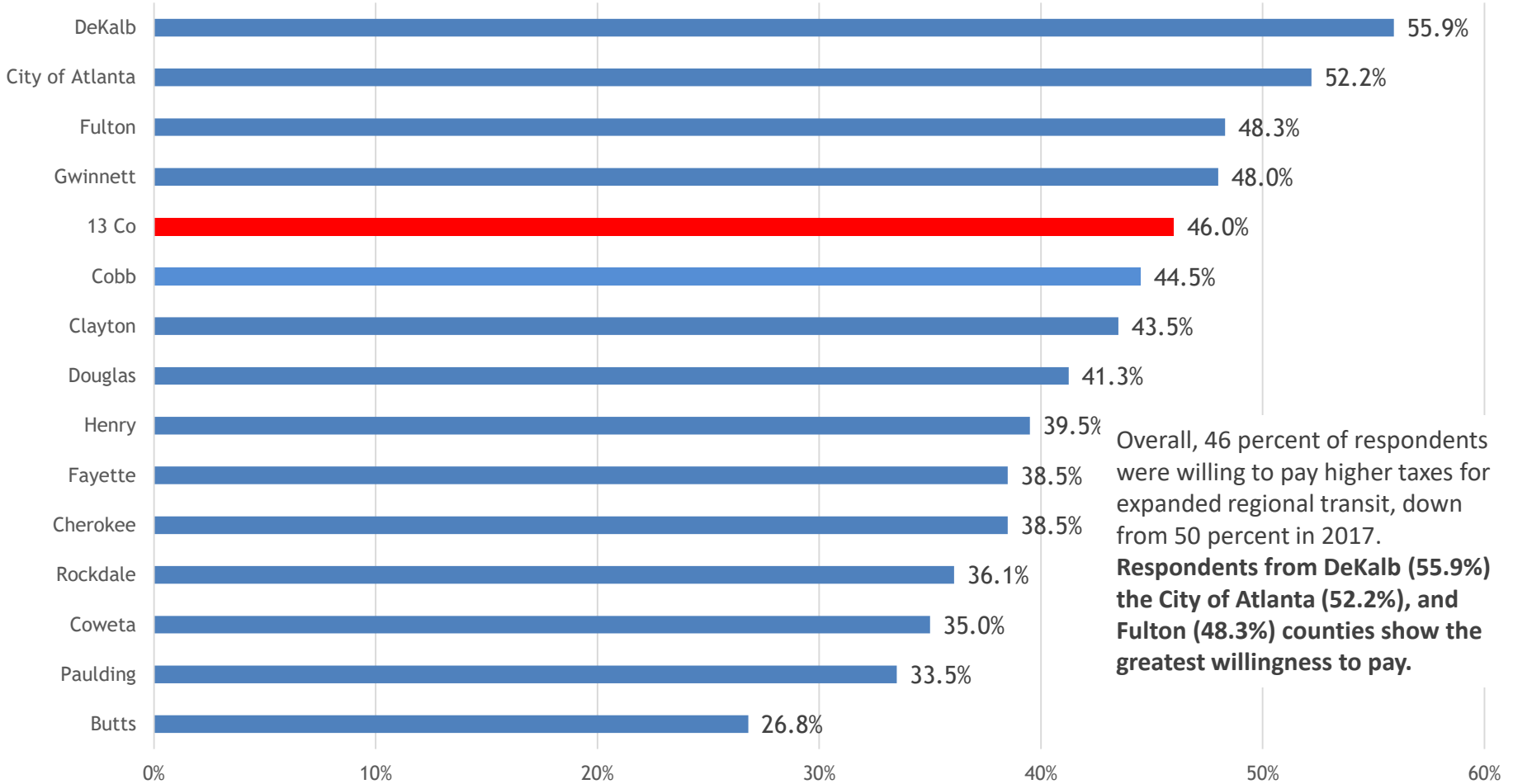
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ DK

# “I am Willing to Pay More in Taxes to Fund Expanded Regional Public Transit that Includes Buses and Rail.” (2018)



Almost half of respondents indicated that they are willing to pay more in taxes to expand public transit that includes buses and rail.

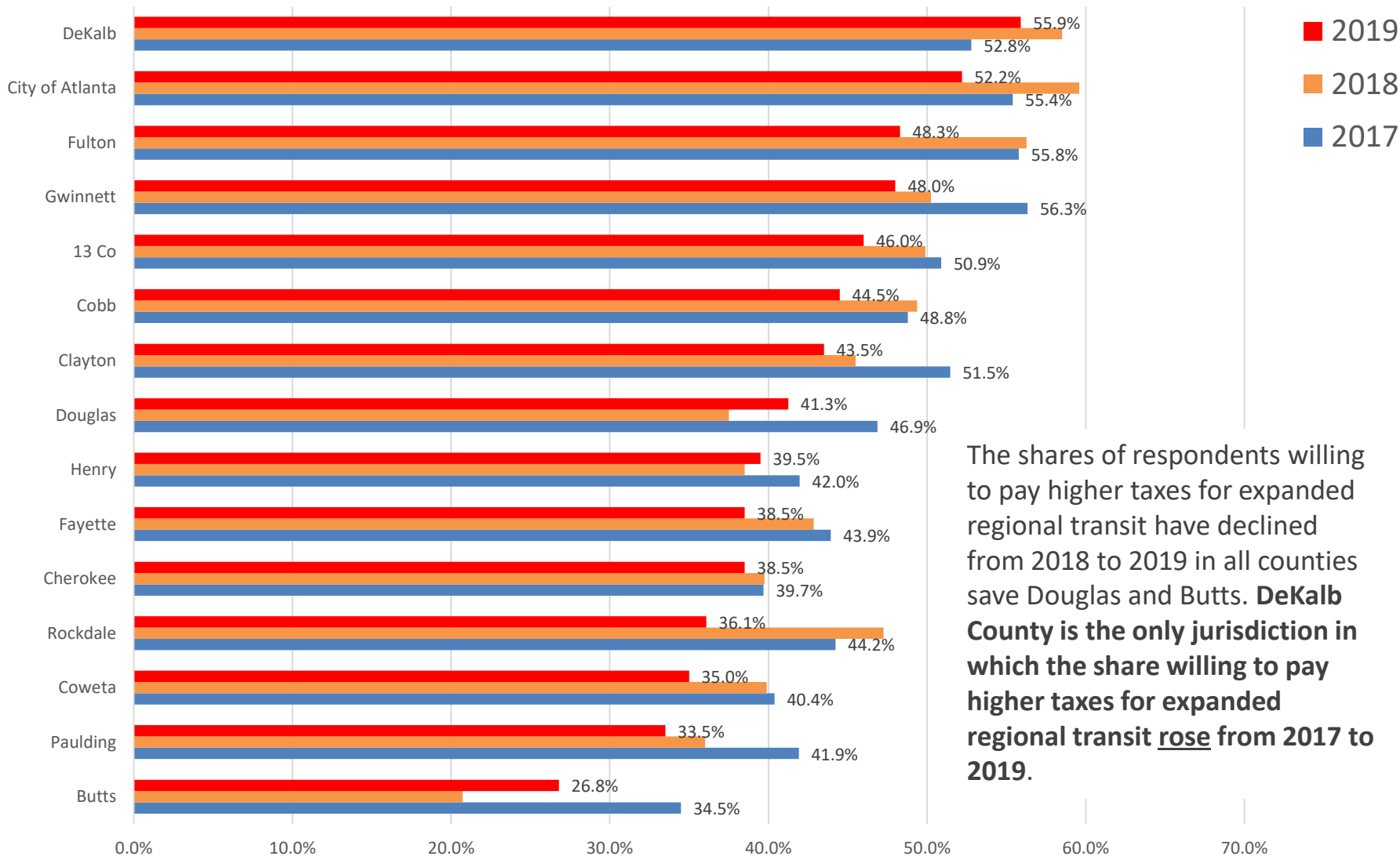
# “I am Willing to Pay More in Taxes to Fund Expanded Regional Public Transit that Includes Buses and Rail.” (2019, Strongly Agree or Agree, by Jurisdiction)



Overall, 46 percent of respondents were willing to pay higher taxes for expanded regional transit, down from 50 percent in 2017.

**Respondents from DeKalb (55.9%) the City of Atlanta (52.2%), and Fulton (48.3%) counties show the greatest willingness to pay.**

# "I am Willing to Pay More in Taxes to Fund Expanded Regional Public Transit that Includes Buses and Rail." (2017 to 2019)



The shares of respondents willing to pay higher taxes for expanded regional transit have declined from 2018 to 2019 in all counties save Douglas and Butts. **DeKalb County is the only jurisdiction in which the share willing to pay higher taxes for expanded regional transit rose from 2017 to 2019.**



# More likely to be willing to pay more taxes to fund expanded regional transit...

- Residents of the City of Atlanta, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett
- Younger cohorts
  - 58% willing in 18-34 age group
  - Down to 37% for age 65+
- More highly educated
- Residents newer to the metro area (<10 years)
- Renters

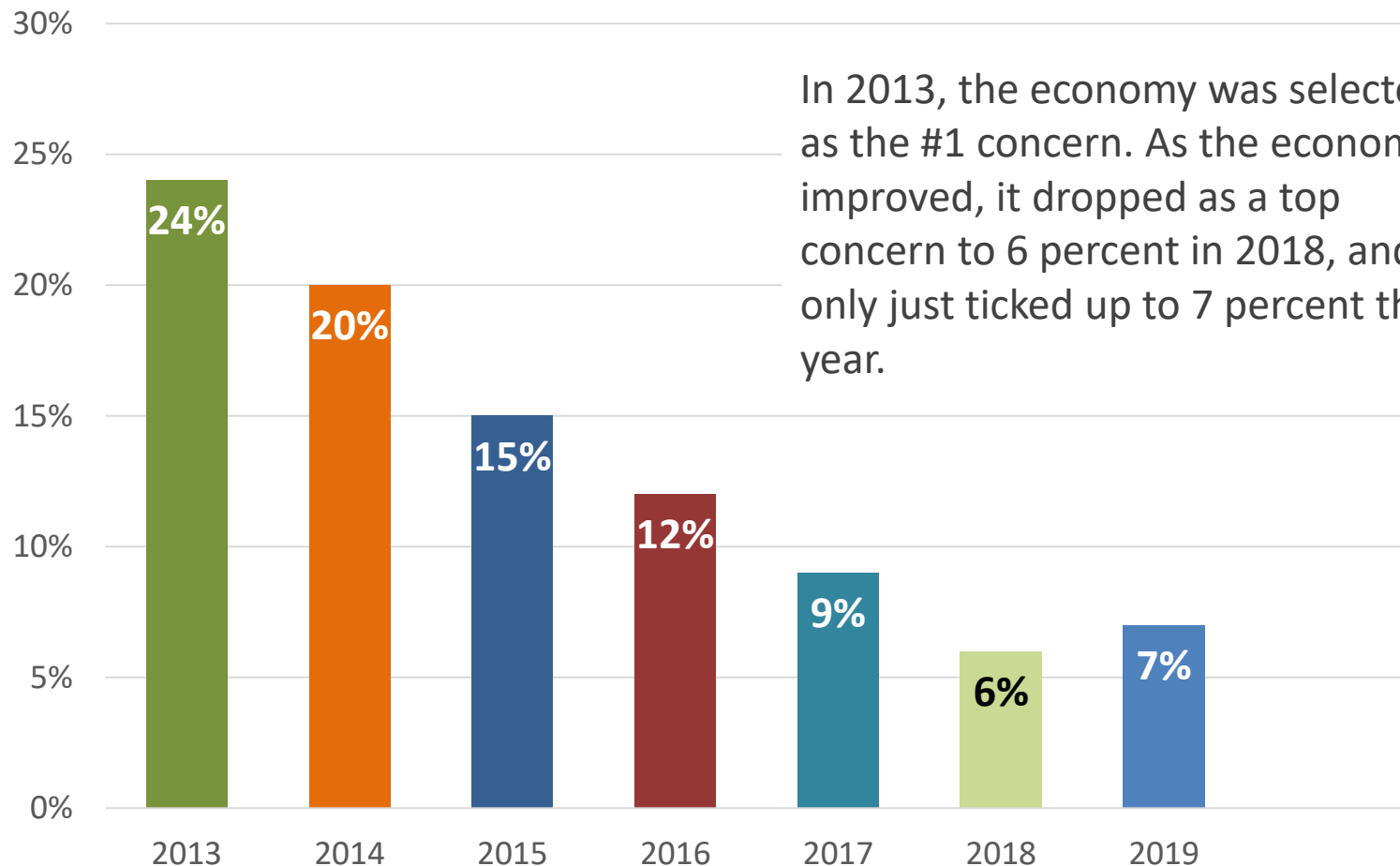


# ECONOMY AND WORKFORCE



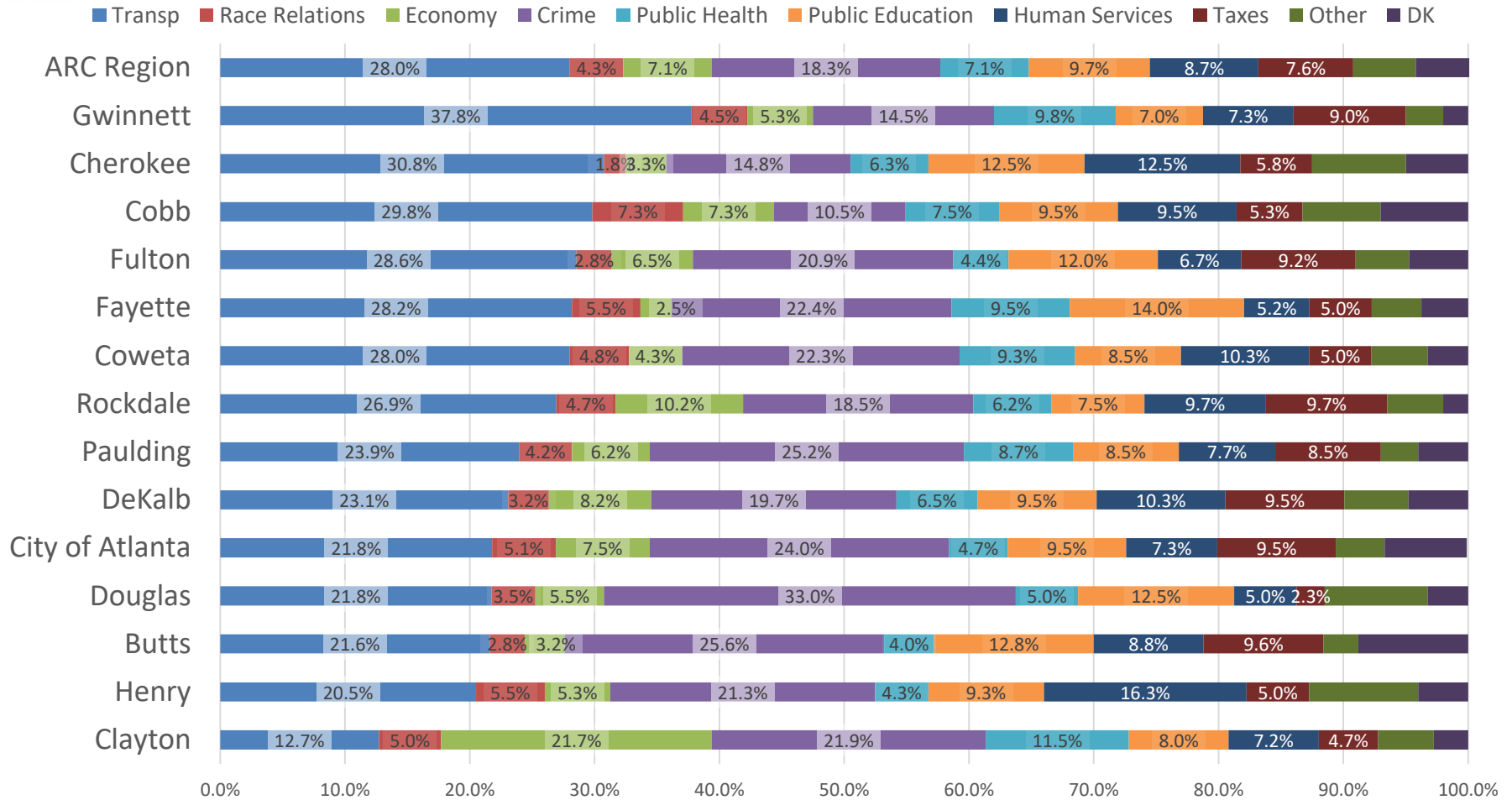
- 7% of respondents selected “the economy” as the region’s biggest problem, up from 6% last year, but down from 24% in 2013
- Some 30 percent of respondents would struggle paying for an unexpected financial emergency of \$400.
- There is growing concern about adequacy of low-income services and programs.
- 75 percent feel their skills and education are used in their present job; only 9% fear automation.
- Training is the preferred alternative for workforce investment, followed by affordable housing and transportation.
- Over 8 in 10 would seek training for a better job, but a lower share (60%) know where to find that training.

# Percent of Respondents Choosing “Economy” As Region’s Biggest Problem (2013-2019)



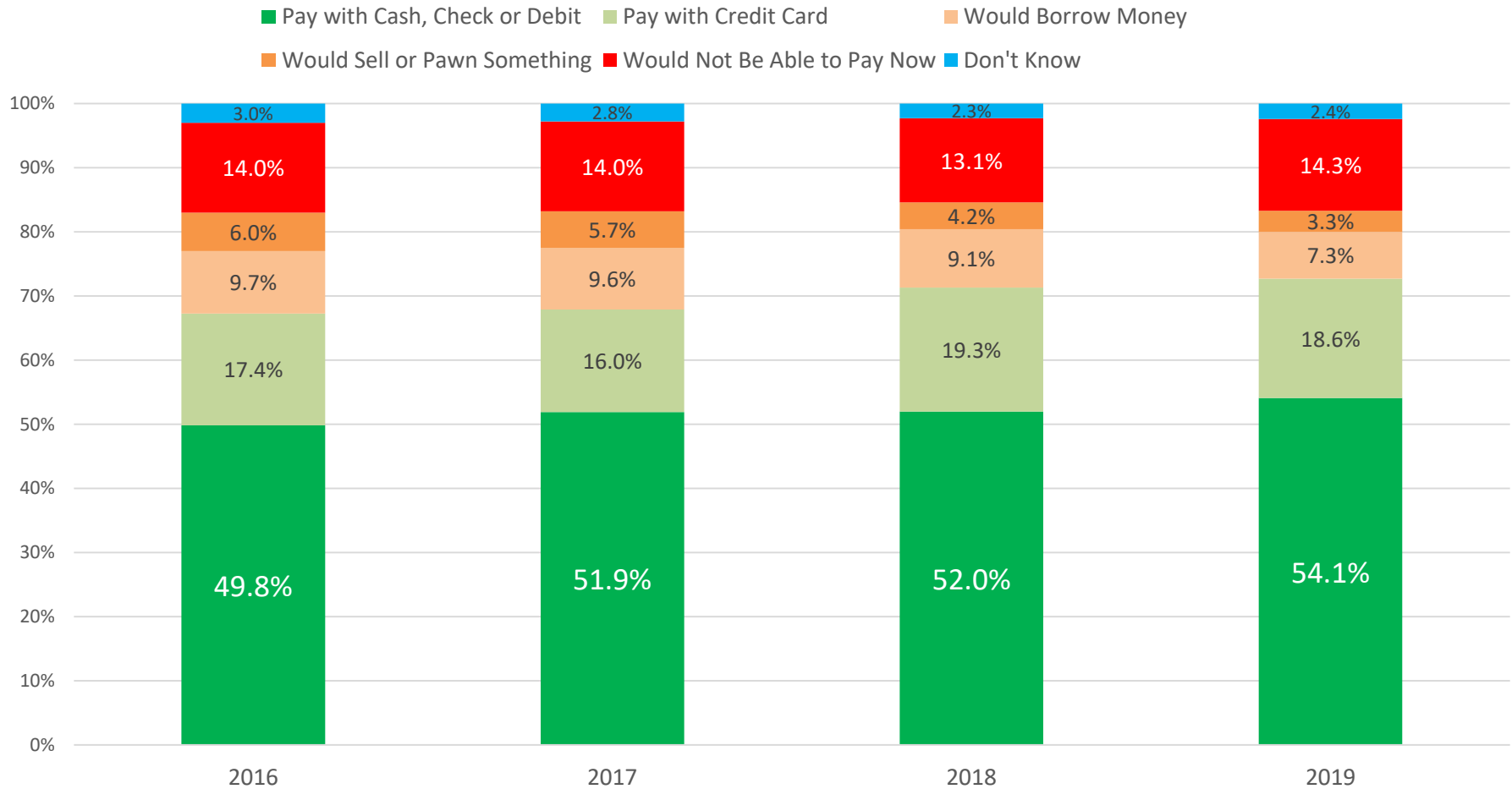
In 2013, the economy was selected as the #1 concern. As the economy improved, it dropped as a top concern to 6 percent in 2018, and only just ticked up to 7 percent this year.

# Percent of Respondents by County Choosing "Economy" As Region's Biggest Problem (2019)



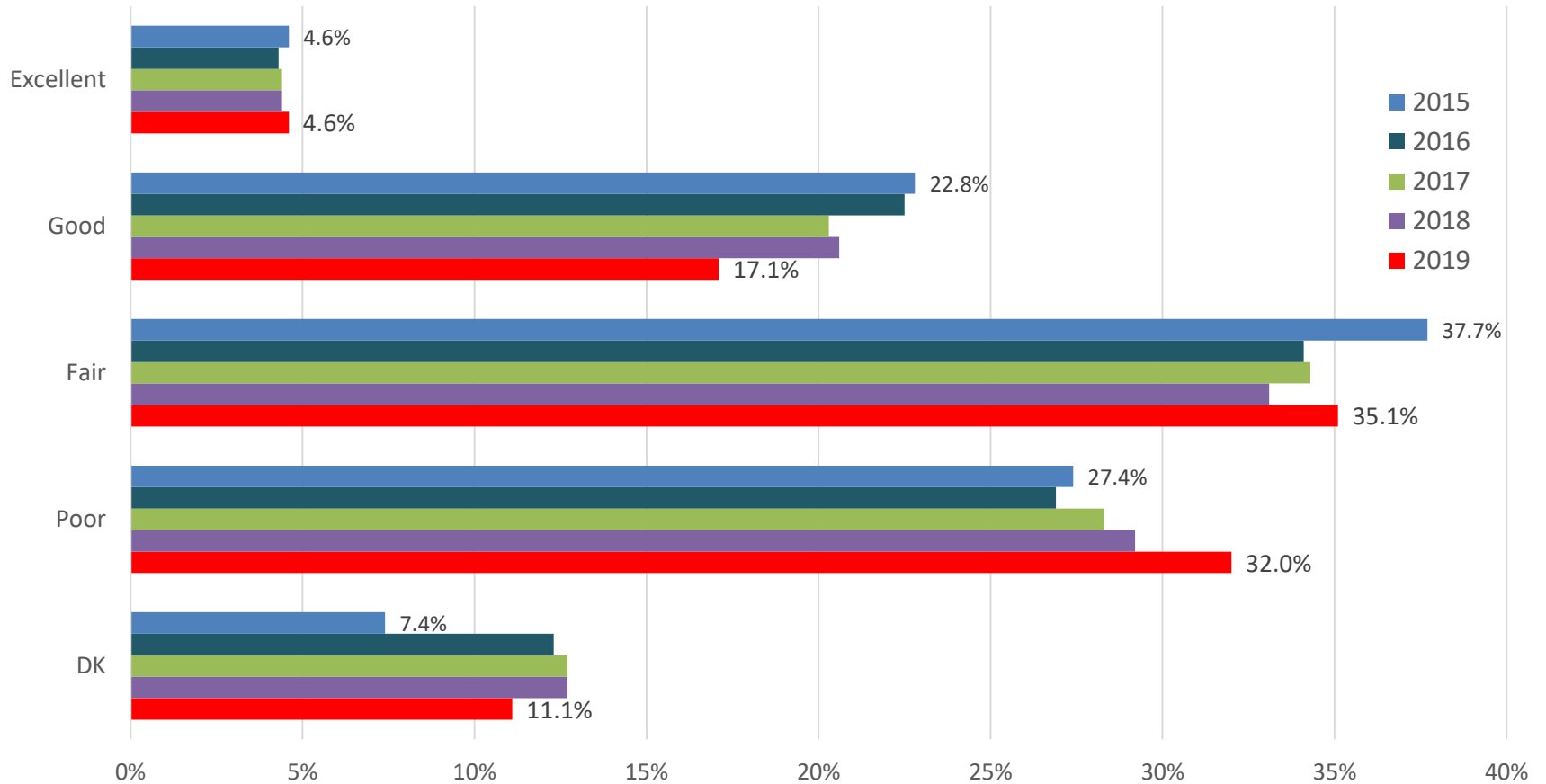
**In only two counties (Clayton and Rockdale) did double-digit shares of respondents select the economy as the #1 concern. In four counties — all suburban and exurban — less than 5 percent chose “the economy” as the biggest problem.**

## Methods of Paying for a \$400 Financial Emergency (2016-2019)



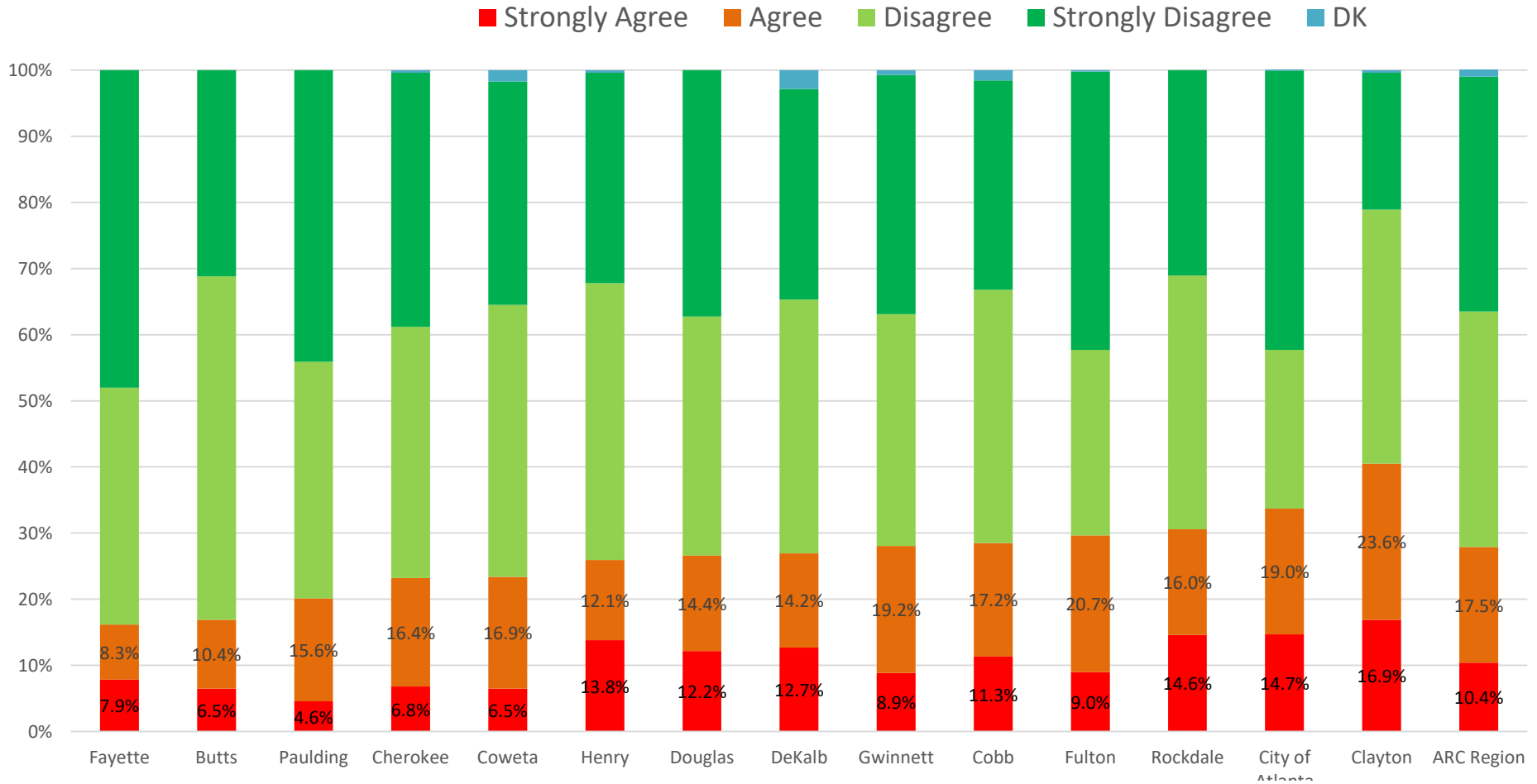
From 2016-2019, a slowly increasing share indicated they would be able to pay for an emergency with **cash, check, or debit**. The other half of respondents would not have resources on hand to pay. Nearly 20 percent would need to rely on credit, and another 14 percent would not be able to pay at all.

# Availability of Programs for Low-Income: MAS 2015-19



The answers to the financial emergency question point to a need for assistance for low-income populations. **However, the share of survey respondents rating such services good or better has consistently declined from 2015 to 2019.** This implies a need to increase economic security in our region through better jobs and higher wages.

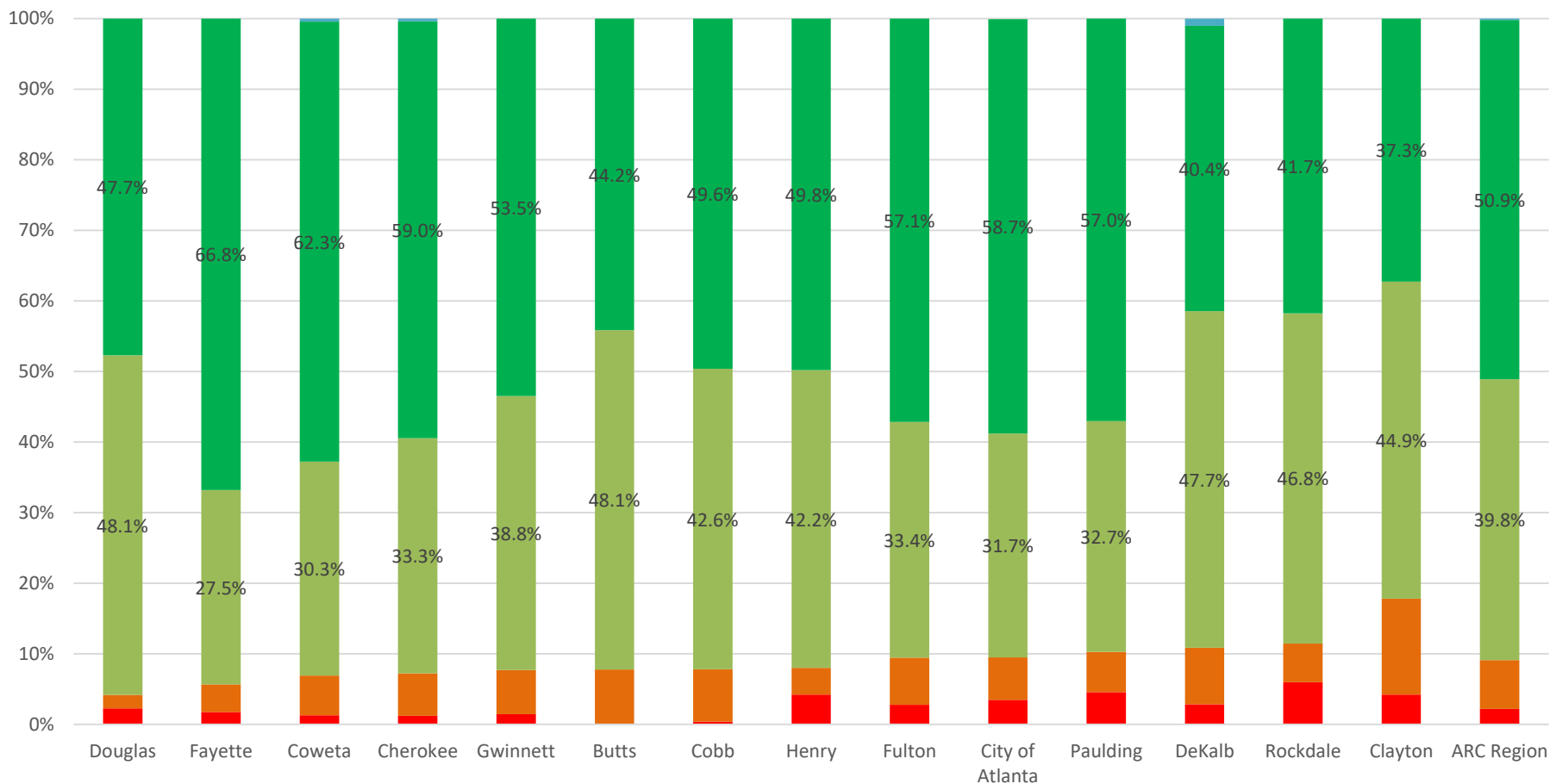
## My current job does not allow me to utilize education and skills to the fullest extent possible.” (2019 MAS)



This year’s survey included multiple workforce questions for that reason. Most of the region’s workers (over 70 percent) feel their skills and education are being used fully in their current job. **In counties with higher shares of low-wage workers, the rate of those feeling underutilized in their present job rises to nearly 40 percent.**

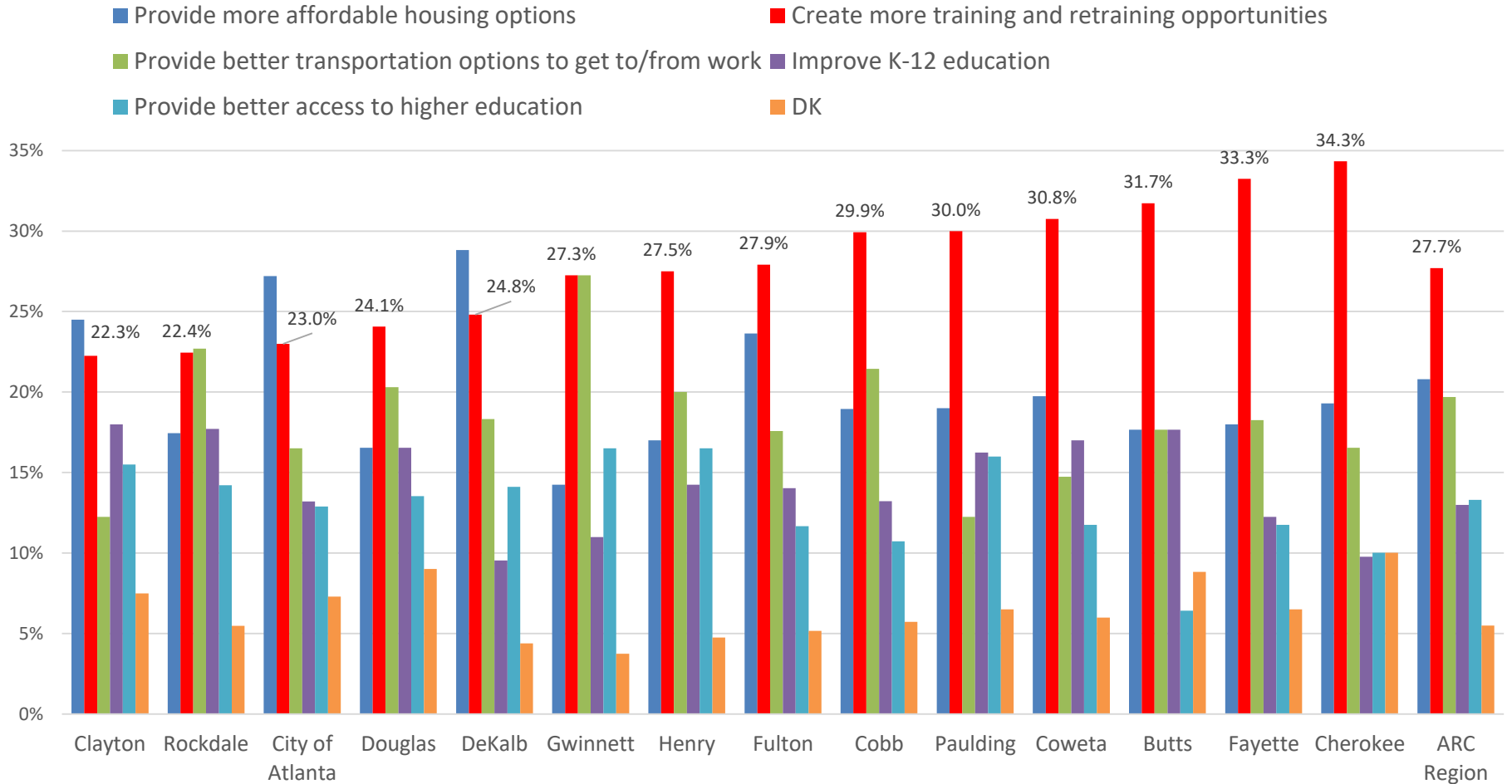
# I am worried that I may lose my job to some type of automated process... (2019 MAS)

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree DK



**A smaller-than-expected 9 percent regionally fear automation (and loss) of their job.** There is little variation among counties on the whole, but respondents in counties with relatively high concentrations of retail and service jobs (e.g. Clayton and Rockdale) have higher fear of automation.

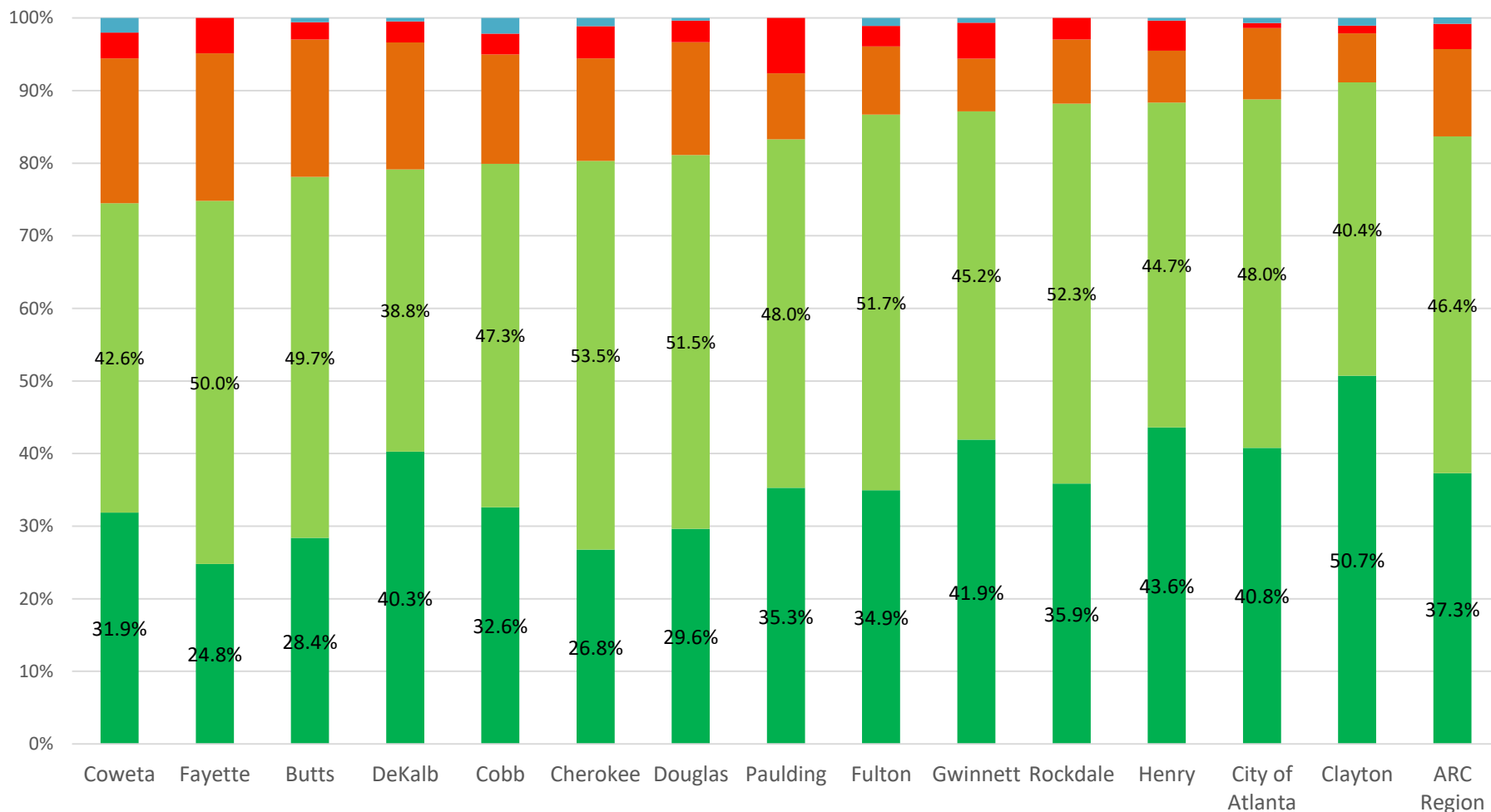
# Alternative Most Likely to Attract and Retain Skilled Workforce? (2019 MAS)



**A plurality in 10 of 14 surveyed areas believe that more training and retraining would be the best way to better our workforce**, and in all jurisdictions, 1 in 5 or more feel a focus on training would be the best option. In DeKalb, the City of Atlanta, and Clayton, respondents say that affordable housing is a greater need, and in Gwinnett, more transportation options ties with the need for training.

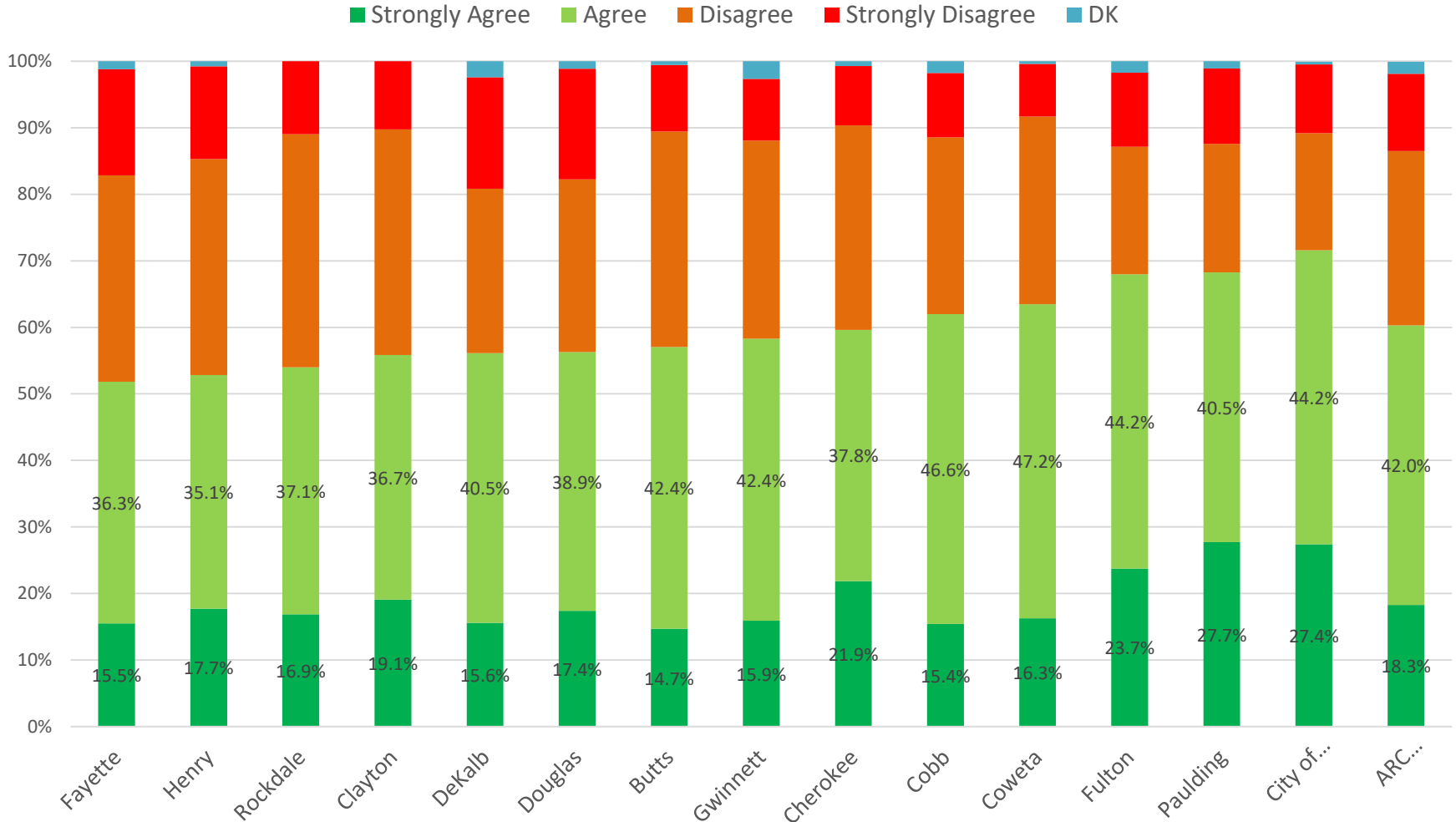
# Would Seek Out Training for Better Job Opportunities... (2019 MAS)

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree DK



**Regionally, almost 84 percent would seek out training if it might yield them better jobs.** County results are consistent, as Coweta and Fayette are the only counties in which anywhere close to as many as 1 in 3 workers suggest that they would not be interested in training.

# I Know Where to Find Job Training Program when I Need One... (2019 MAS)



A lower share know where to find a job program (60 percent) than would seek out training if it might yield them better jobs (84 percent). Knowledge does seem to lag in several more urban counties (e.g. Clayton, Rockdale, and DeKalb) where training needs might be greater than in suburbs and exurbs.

## “Most Likely to”: Workforce Questions

- **Not Have Skills Used**: Younger, lower-income, part-time, renters
- **Fear Automation**: Lower-income and education, south of I-20
- **See Training as Best Investment**: Older workers, those with more education
- **Seek Training**: Little demographic difference
- **Not Know Where to Find Training**: Older, longer-term residents, south of I-20 (barely)

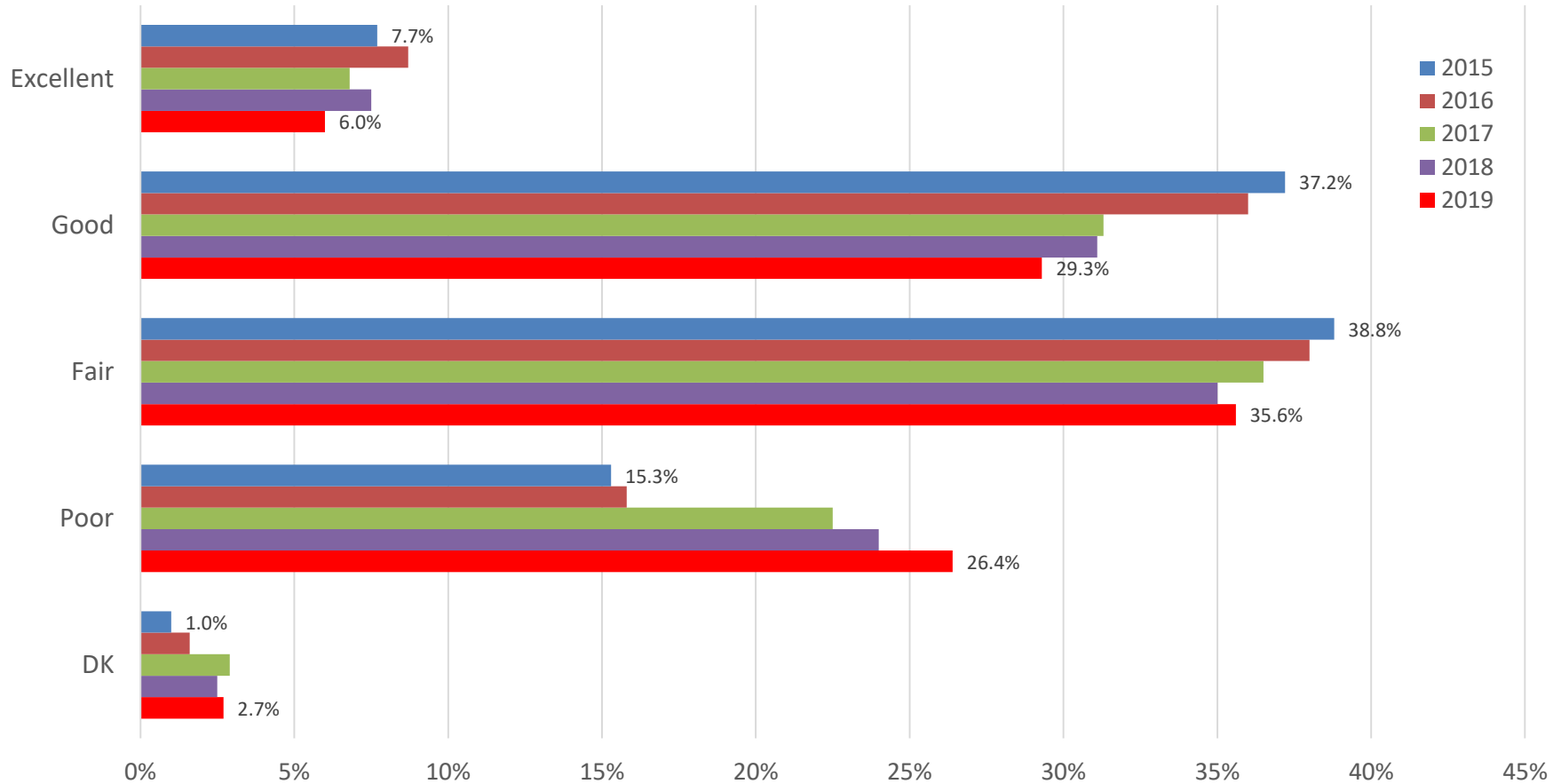


# HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE



- The public thinks that area affordability is declining over time.
- Only 11% (last year) thought they were NOT paying too much for housing.
- Nearly 75% are seeing at least some neighborhood change in the last 3-4 years.
- 68% live in areas experiencing “property flipping,” in which homes are being remodeled to be sold or rented at higher prices.
- 57% of respondents said older homes in their communities are being replaced by new, more expensive housing.
- Nearly half (46%) of metro Atlanta residents said that if they had to move today, they could not afford to stay in their communities.
- A much lower share are seeing a rapidly shifting business environment.

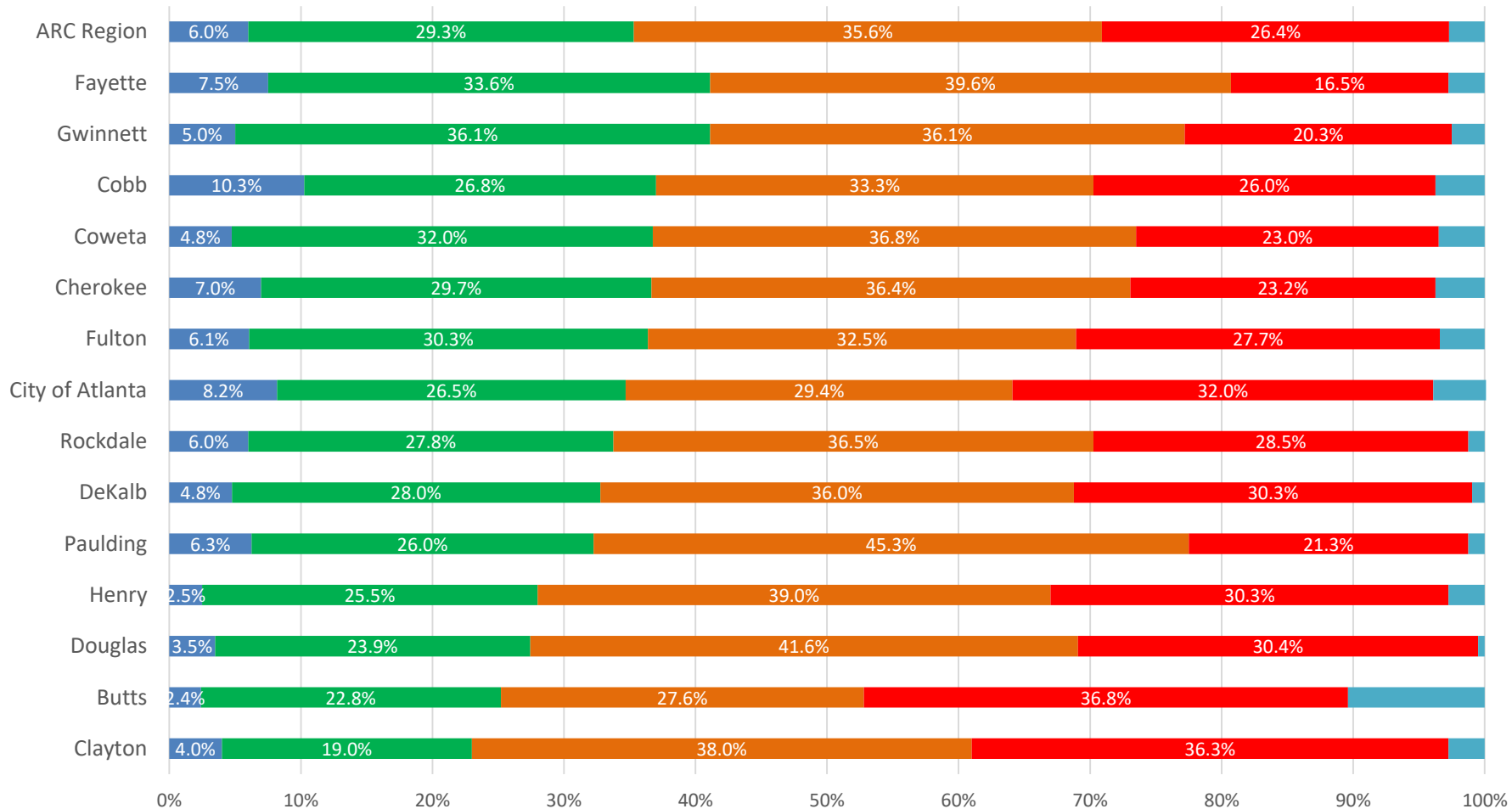
# Metro Affordability “As Place to Live”: MAS 2015-2019



A declining share of regional residents assess our general area affordability as excellent or good, and that’s from a low baseline in 2015. **By 2019, almost 2 in 3 respondents rated area affordability fair or poor, with the “poor” category increasing by 11 percentage trends in the five-year period.**

# Metro Affordability “As Place to Live”: MAS 2019

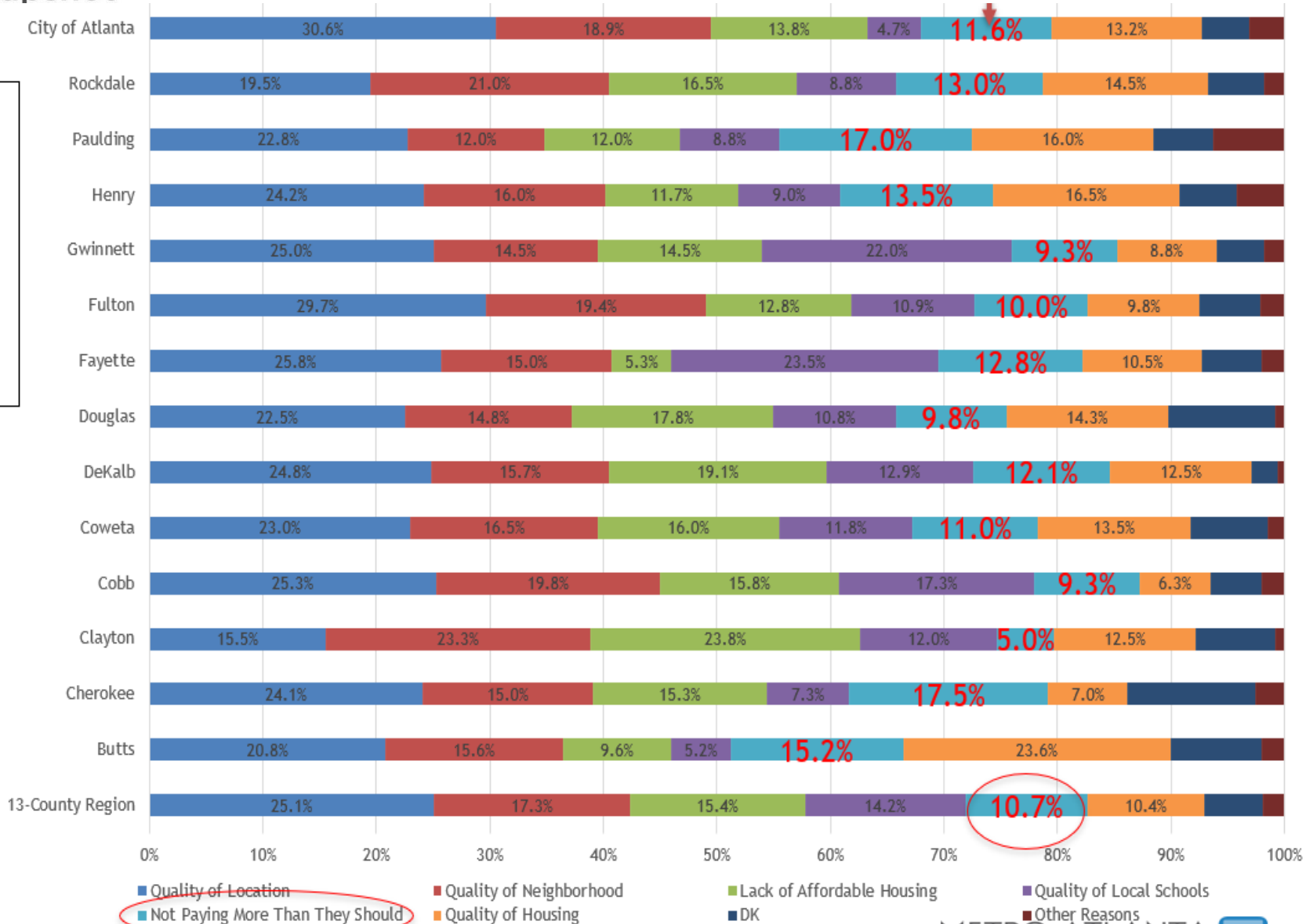
■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Fair ■ Poor ■ DK



Not surprisingly, affordability is rated more highly in wealthier counties (often suburban) and lower in more urban areas with higher density and (very often) prices and rents.

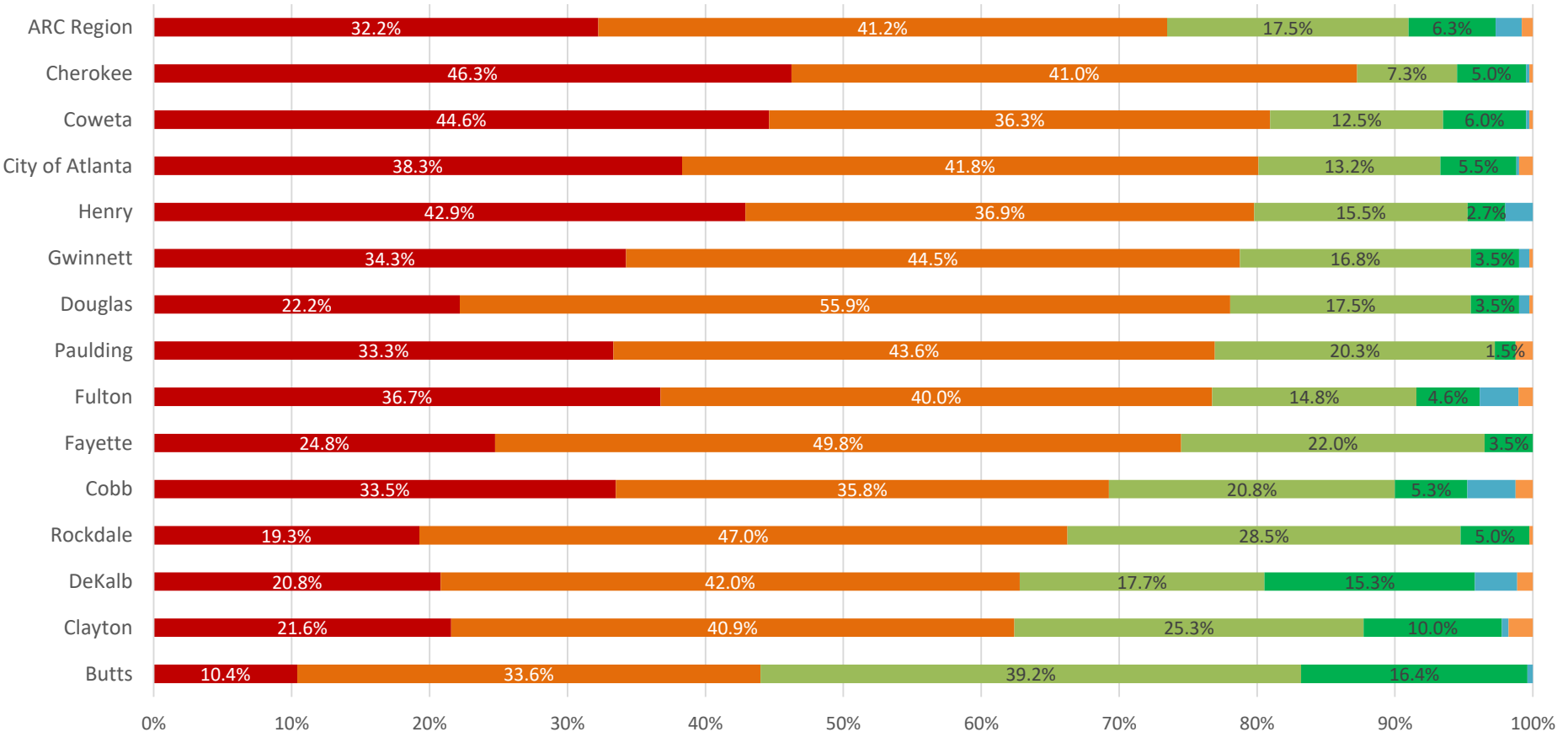
# Perceptions: Reasons for Paying Too Much for Housing MAS 2018

Last year, about 89% perceived they were paying too much for housing



# To What Degree Has My Area Changed Last 3-4 Years?...

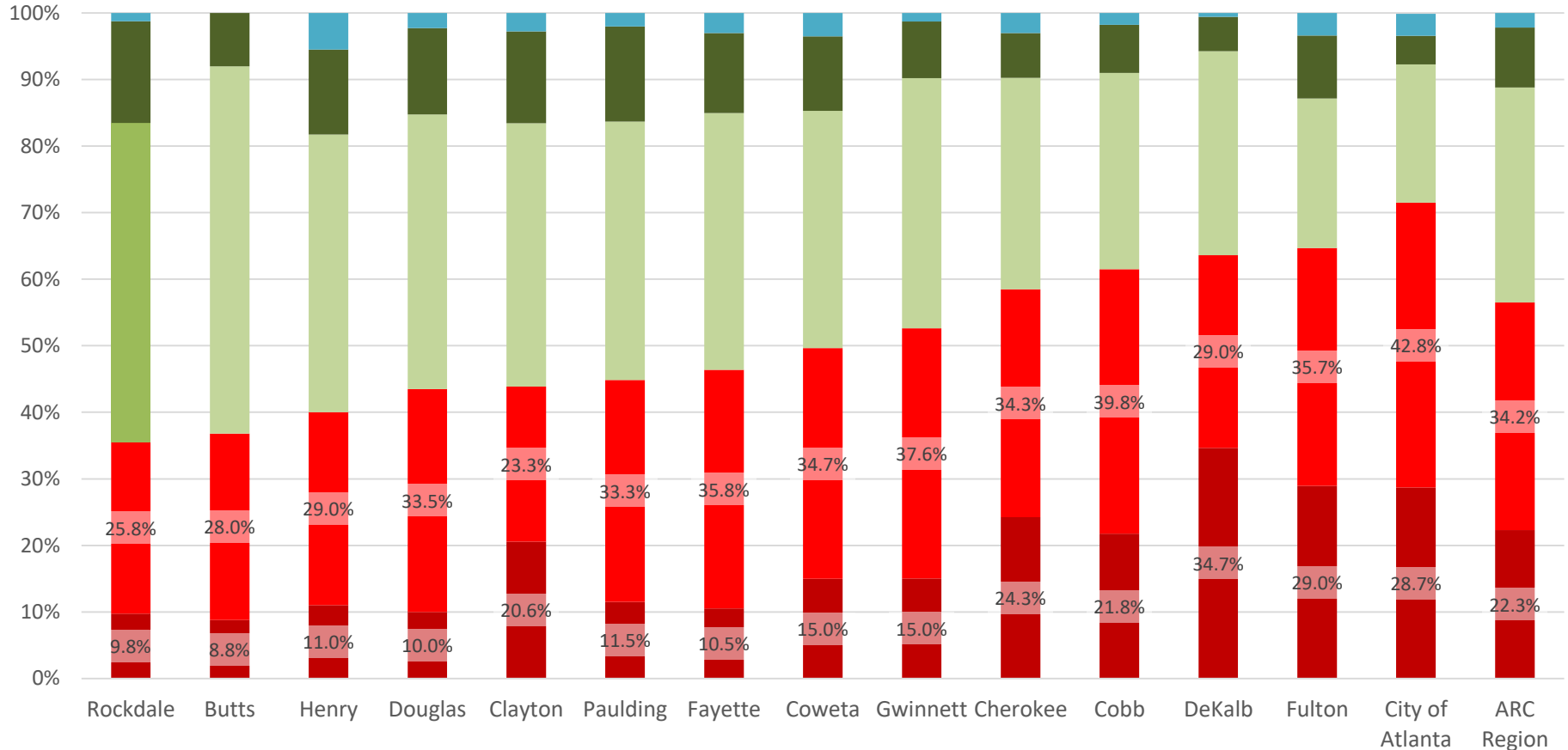
Very significant change    Some change    Very little change    No change at all    Haven't lived here long enough to say    DK



In all but Butts county, residents perceive some or very significant changes in their area. The greatest levels of change are in either rapidly growing suburbs (Cherokee, Henry) or in denser, developing or redeveloping urban areas (City of Atlanta, Gwinnett). **In eight of 14 areas, 75% of respondents see at least some change in the past few years.**

## "Older homes in the area where I live are being replaced by new, more expensive housing alternatives." (2019 MAS)

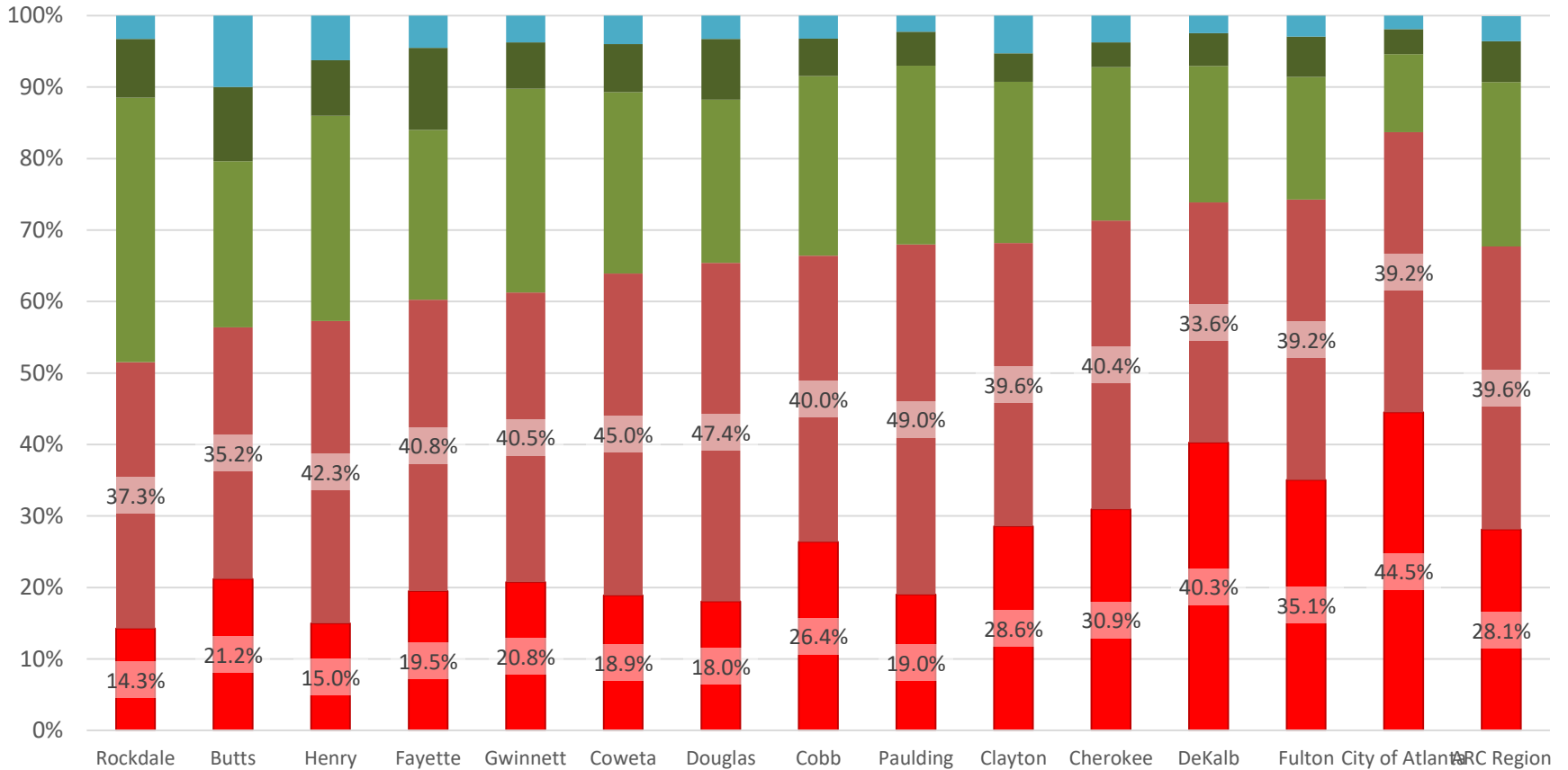
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree DK



When asked specifically about housing price increases change in their areas, a slightly lower share (57 percent regionally) agreed that older homes were being replaced by more expensive ones. Over 60 percent of residents in the City of Atlanta, Fulton, and DeKalb saw this happening; under 40 percent said that it was occurring in Henry, Butts, and Rockdale.

# "Properties in the area where I live are being bought and remodeled so that they may be sold or rented for a higher price." (2019 MAS)

■ Strongly Agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly Disagree 
 ■ DK

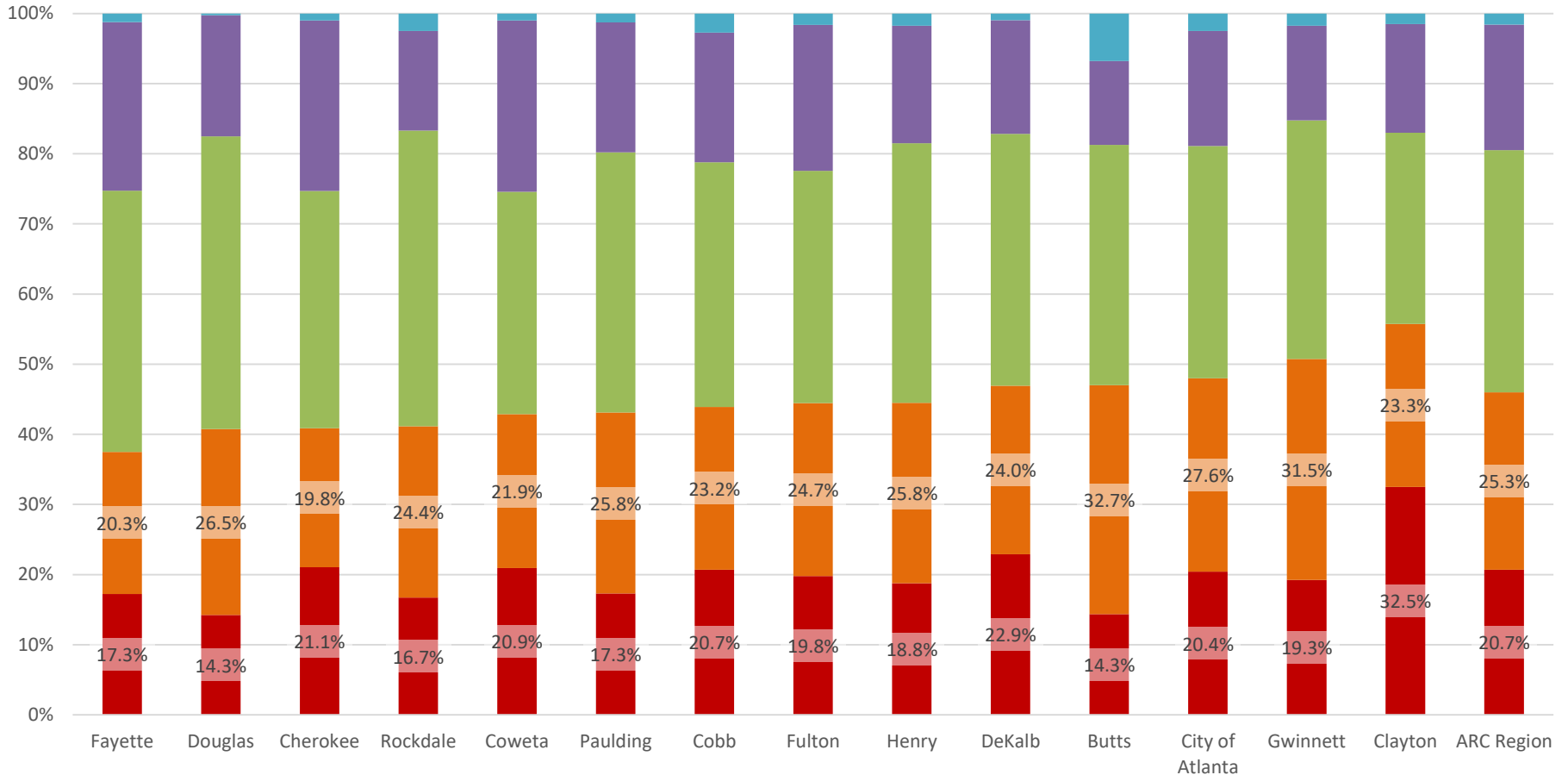


**“Flipping”** seems more prevalent than home replacement, as 68 percent across the region saw homes being remodeled and sold for a higher price. In the City of Atlanta, over 8 in 10 saw flipping happening. Even in counties with relatively low levels of permitting (e.g. Fayette, Butts, and Rockdale) over 50 percent said that remodeling and reselling was occurring.



# "If I had to move right now, I could not afford to move to another house or apartment in the area where I currently live." (2019 MAS)

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree DK

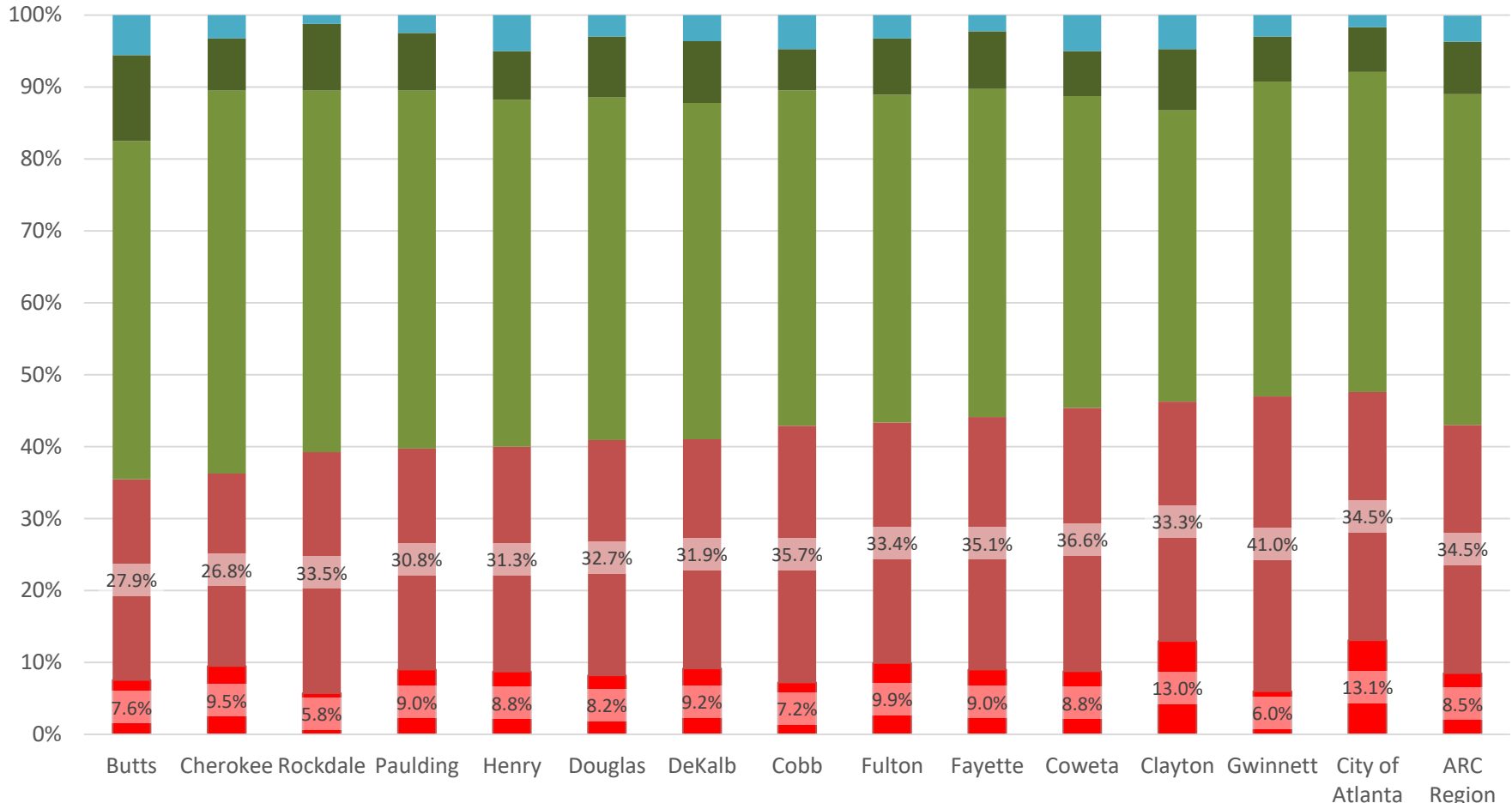


When it comes to an individual respondent's ability to afford a move in their current area, a surprisingly high share (45 percent regionally) said that they could NOT afford such a move, ranging from 56 percent in relatively lower-income Clayton down to 37 percent in comparatively wealthier Fayette.



# "In the area where I live, long-established businesses are being replaced by new businesses." (2019 MAS)

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree DK



Residents are not as likely to perceive that the business environment is changing (around them) as rapidly as the residential landscape is shifting. . Regionally, 43 percent see a new business influx, compared to 56 percent noting new, more expensive homes and 68 percent saying that flipping is prevalent



- **Perceive General Affordability Challenges:** Younger, lower-income, part-time, renters
- **Think Area’s Changing:** Younger residents, whites, more education, longer-tenured, owner, north of I-20
- **Think Flipping Prevalent:** Little demographic diffs, fewer 65+ see
- **See Home Replacement:** Older workers, those with more education
- **Have Trouble (\$) Moving in Area:** Younger, Minority, lower-income and education, renters
- **Assess Businesses as Shifting/ being Replaced:** Older, longer-term residents, south of I-20 (barely)

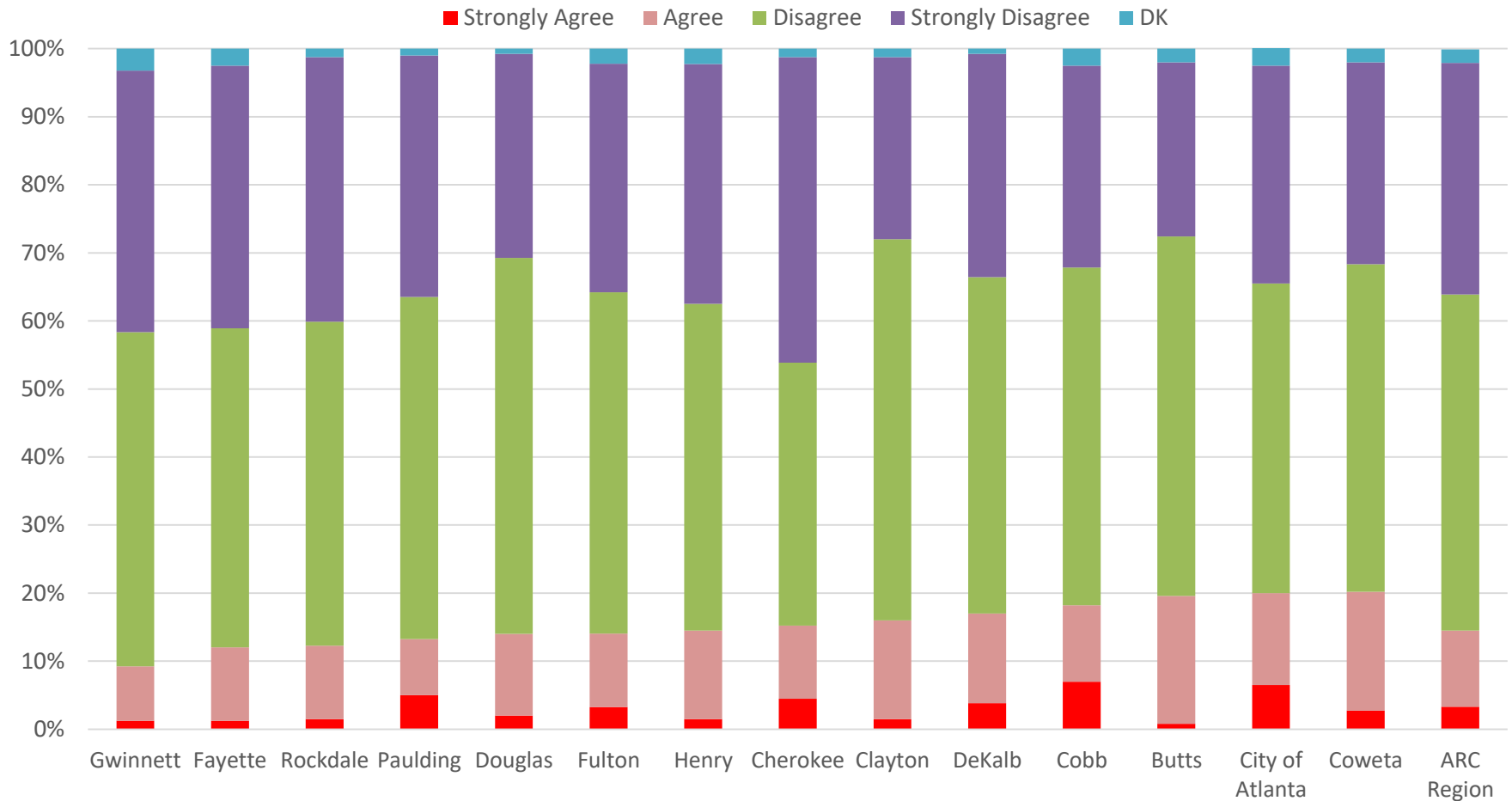


## Core Areas of Strength



- Even with rapid change widespread, people perceive very little tension between neighbors.
- 80% believe that neighbors are seen as willing to help each other, and indications of stable levels of community involvement.
- Crime is down four percentage points as a stated “biggest problem”, and perception of community safety is generally stable or declining.
- Atlanta metro is seen as a good place to raise kids (by 2 in 3), and the share is ticking up.
- The share of respondents that think things will be better in the next 3-4 years is up some to 30%, compared to last year’s 28%.

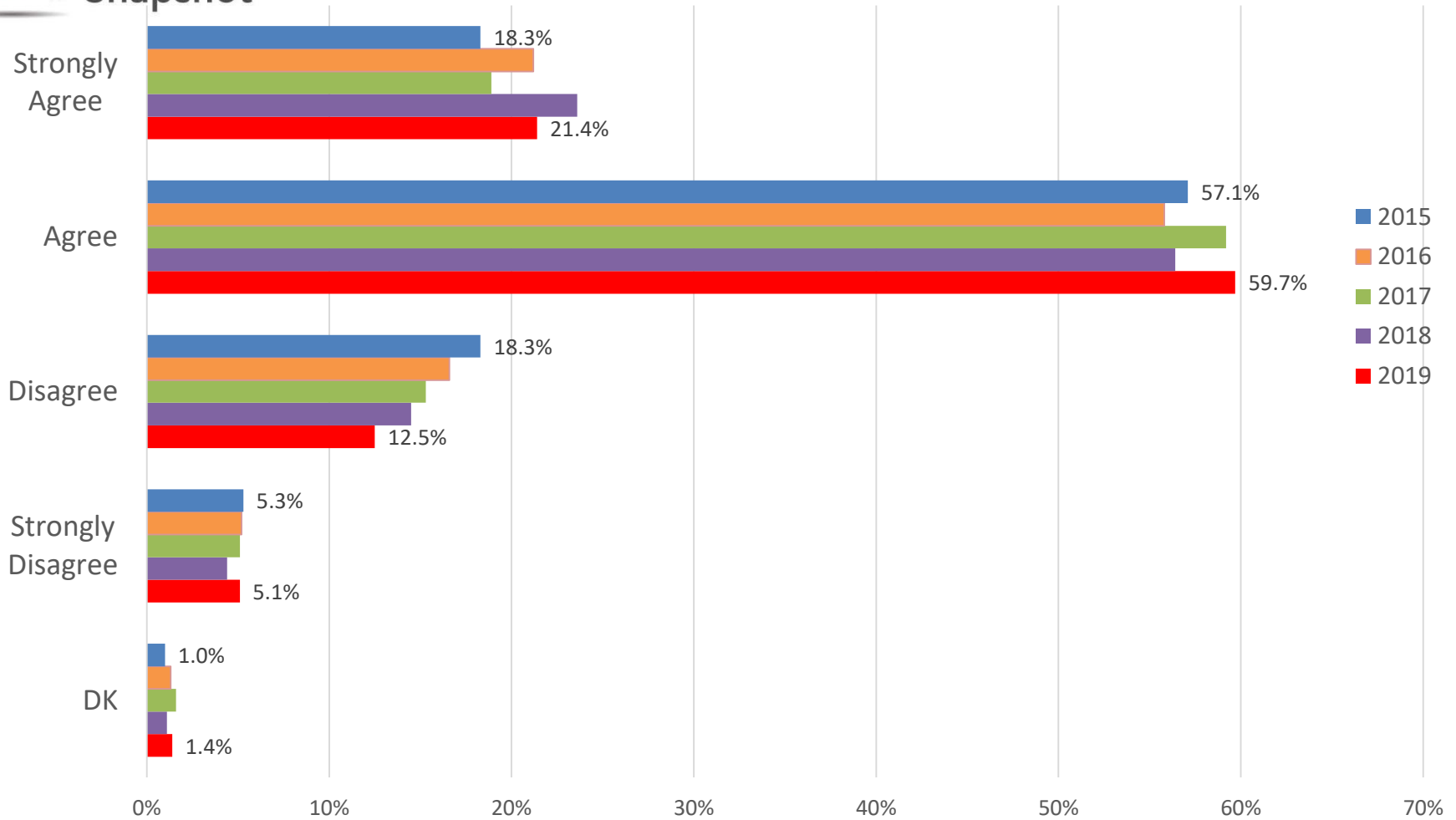
# Changes in the area where I live are leading to tension between me and my neighbors.” (2019 MAS)



Significant change is apparent to almost everyone, and there seems to be stress in the residential market, though somewhat less in commercial markets. **However, these somewhat unstable environments do not seem to have led to feelings of conflict among people** — as only 15 percent see the changes causing tension among neighbors.



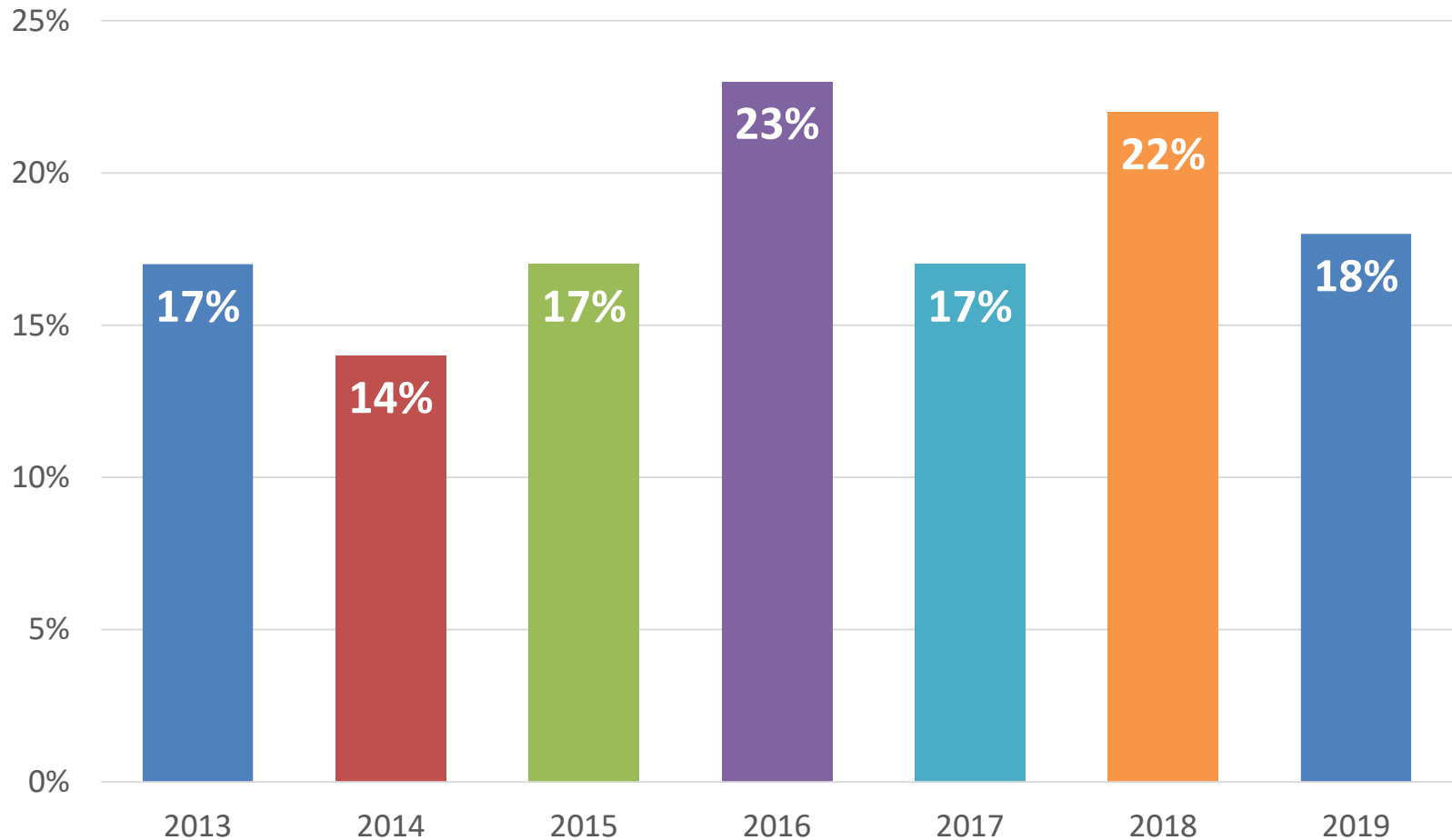
# Neighbors Willing to Help Each Other?: MAS 2015-19



**In 2015, 3 out of 4 us felt that our neighbors would be there when we needed them. By 2019, this share had increased to 8 in 10 of us.** Confidence in our neighbors are somewhat lower only in a few areas that are not only developing quickly, but experiencing rapid demographic change at the same time.



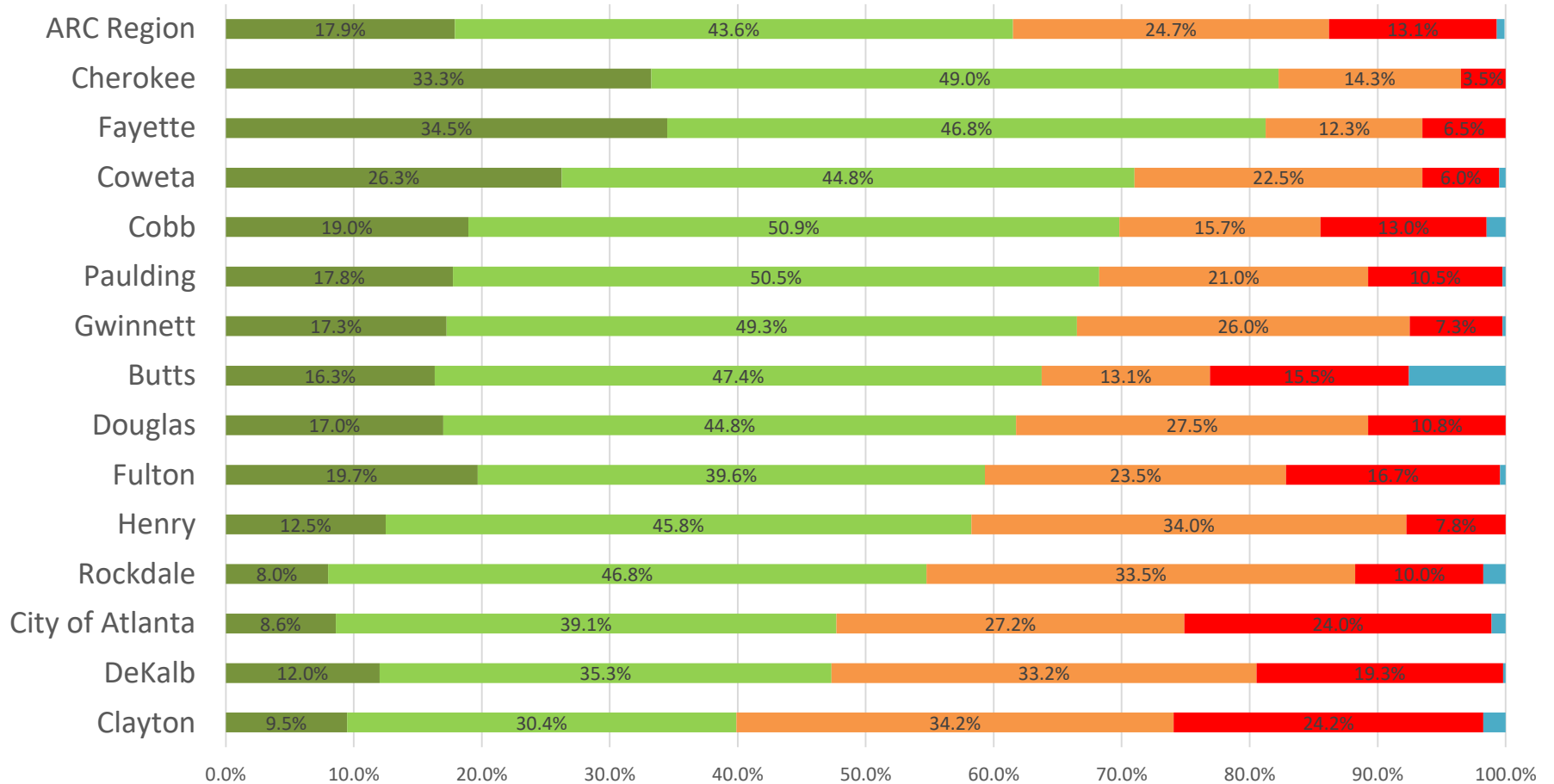
## Crime as Biggest Problem Facing Residents in Metro Atlanta: Shares - 2013-2019



**Crime has continued to drop in this decade, though attitudes have bounced up and down.** Lately, perception is improved. After increasing to 22 percent share as a top concern in 2018 (on par with 2016 levels), crime fell back to 18 percent as a top concern in 2019.

# Assessment of Community Safety by County: MAS 2019

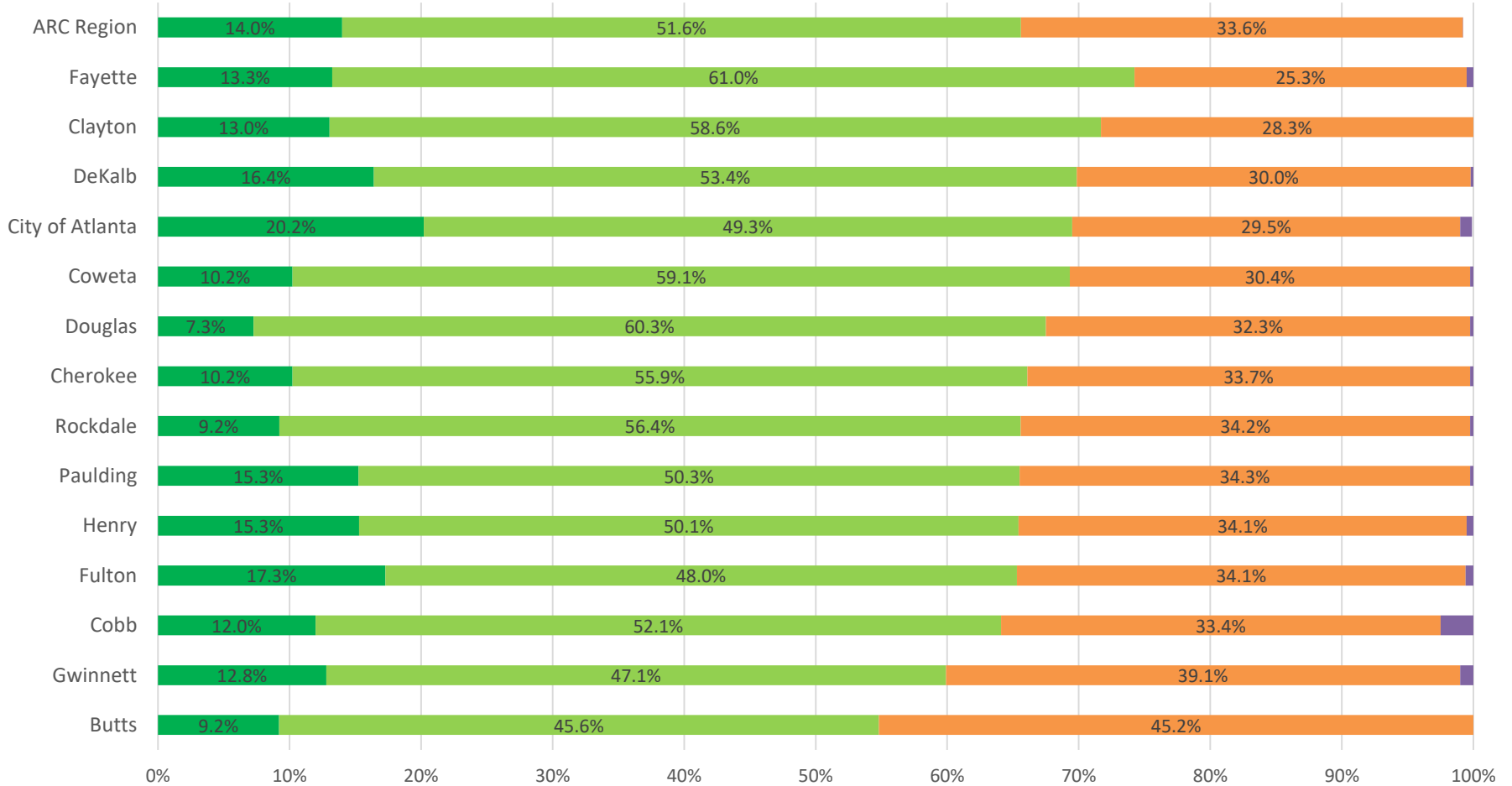
■ Excellent 
 ■ Good 
 ■ Fair 
 ■ Poor 
 ■ DK



Across the region, nearly 60% of respondents rated resident safety in their community as “excellent” or “good.” In only three jurisdictions (City of Atlanta, DeKalb, and Clayton County) did a majority of respondents rate their community’s safety as “fair” or “poor.”

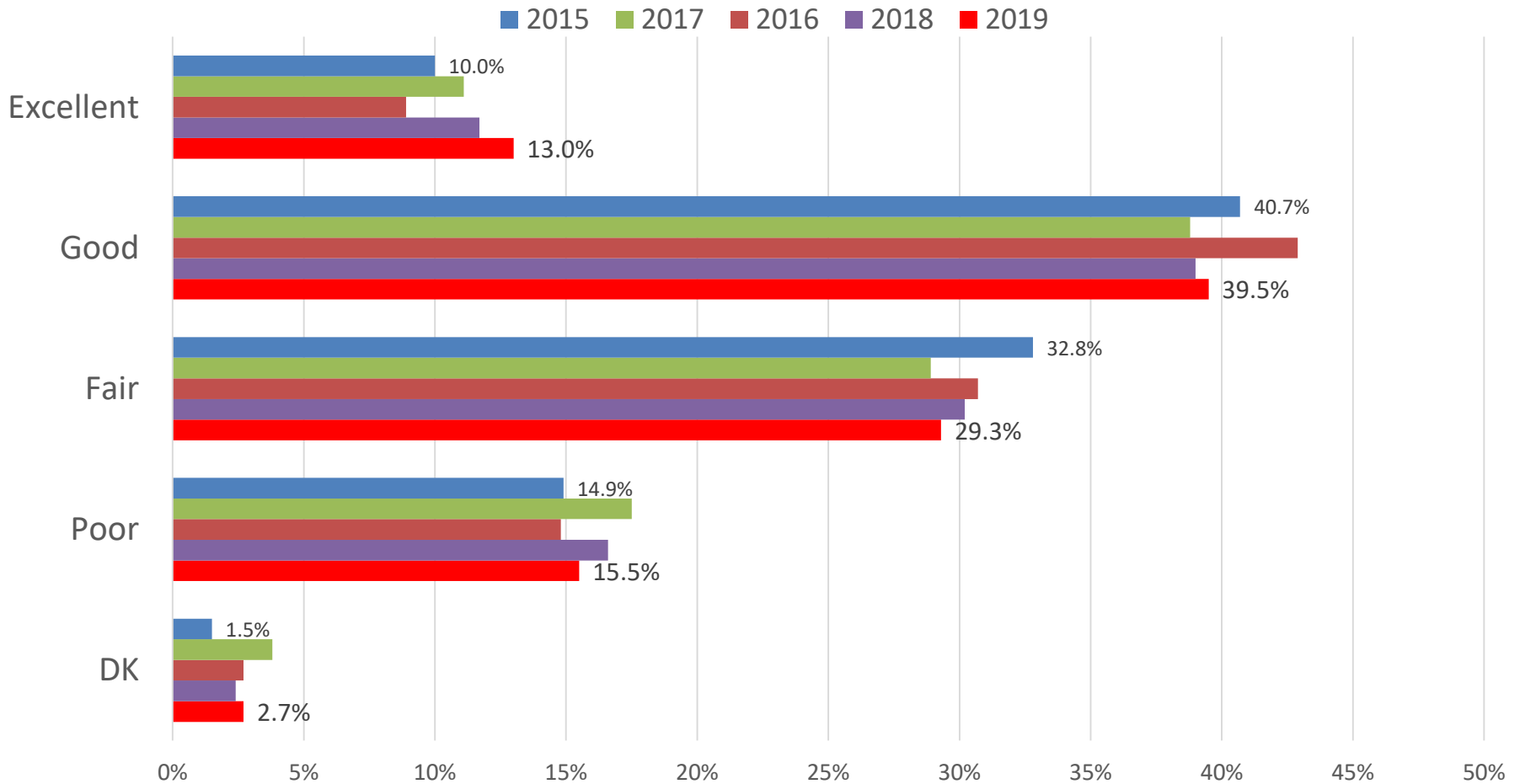
# How Involved in Community? (by County): MAS 2019

■ Very Involved   
 ■ Somewhat Involved   
 ■ Not Involved at All   
 ■ DK



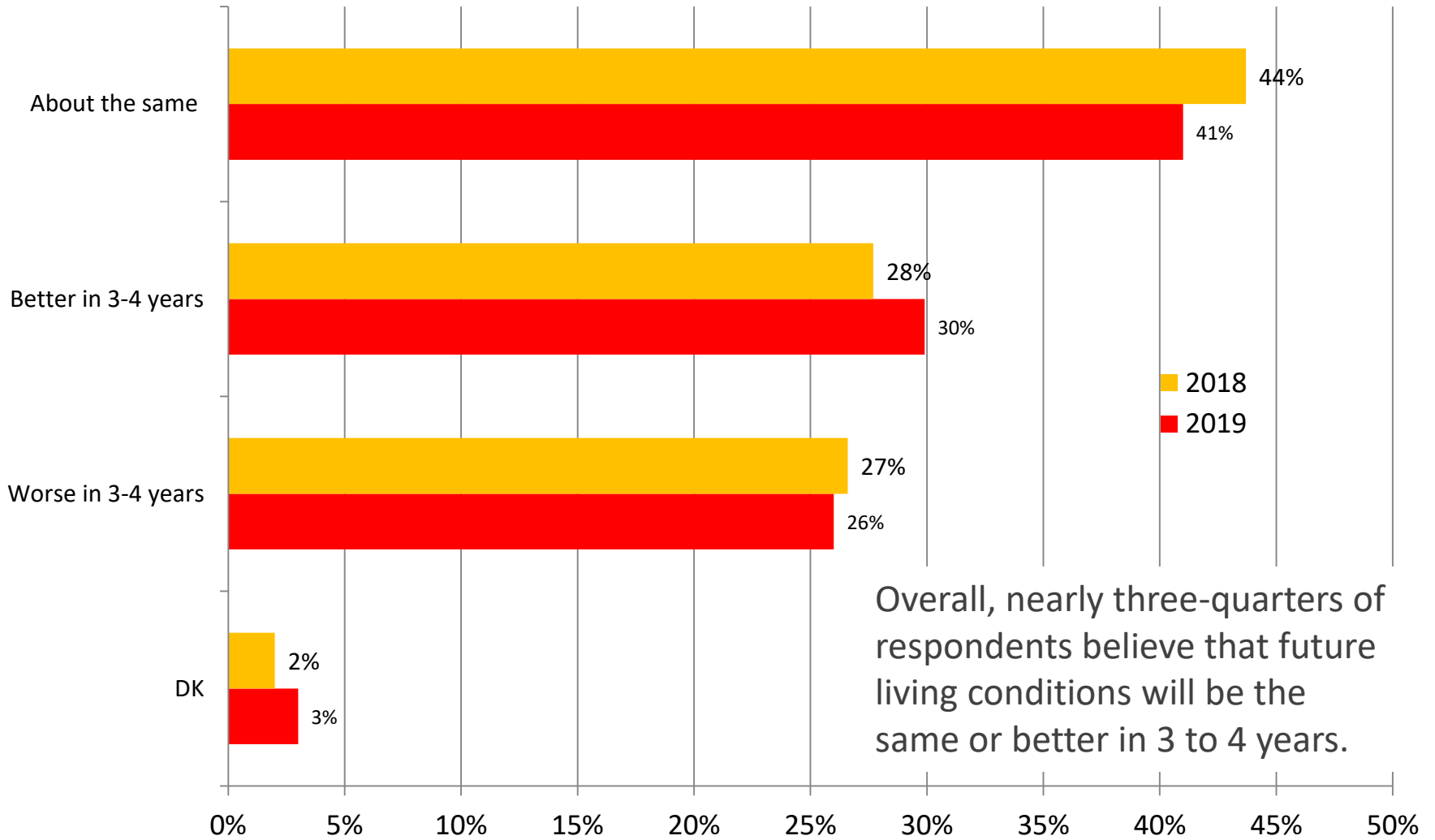
**Regionwide, 2 in 3 respondents said that they were involved to some extent in their community.** Even in lower socioeconomic areas, involvement levels remain strong.





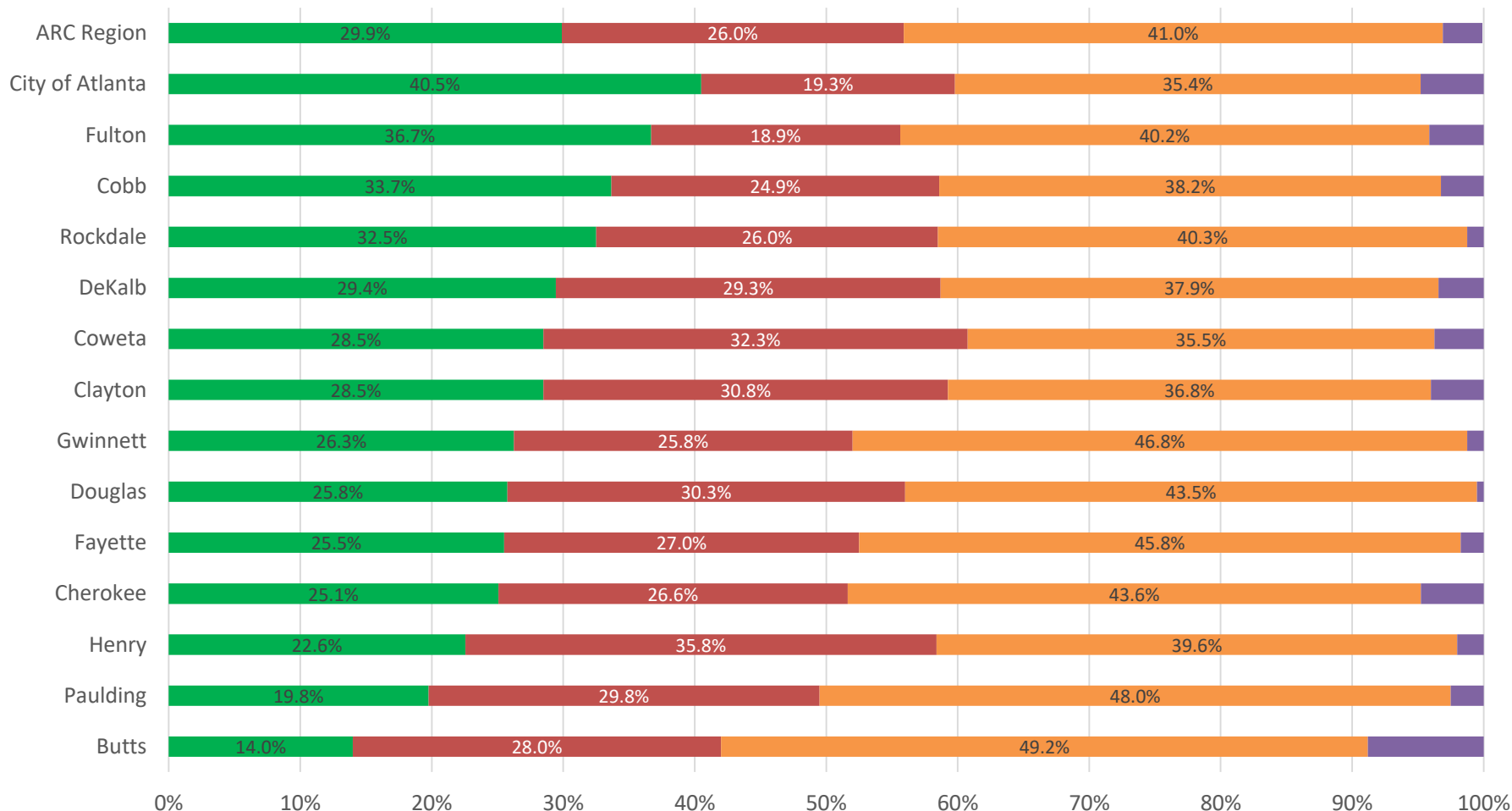
Despite all the “big problems,” challenges in access to services, discomfiting neighborhood change, and affordability stressors, only 16 percent think this is not a good place to raise kids. **The share rating the metro as good or excellent has ticked up over the last five years, to 52 percent in 2019.**

## Future Assessment of Living Conditions: Responses 2018 and 2019



# Future Assessment of Living Conditions by County 2019

■ Better in 3-4 years   
 ■ Worse in 3-4 years   
 ■ About the Same   
 ■ DK



For the first six years of this survey, respondents in lower-income jurisdictions like City of Atlanta, Clayton, and DeKalb have among the highest levels of optimism for the next three to four years. **This year, optimism dropped back a little for DeKalb and Clayton while increasing in Fulton and Cobb.**

# Most Likely to Say That Things Will Be Better in 3 to 4 Years

- Residents of City of Atlanta, Fulton and Cobb
- Millennials (38% better cf: 65+ at 20% better)
- Blacks and Latinos
- Middle-income households and middle education levels
- Those who recently moved to the region
- South of I-20



# Explore the [2019 MAS Tableau Dashboard](#)

Of the following, which issue is the biggest problem facing residents in the metro Atlanta area today?

How important for metro Atlanta's future is an improved public transit system, including buses and trains (not asked in 2019)?

Please tell me if you agree, or disagree with this: "I frequently lack the transportation I need to get need to go."

**Choose by Year**

- 2019
- 2018
- 2017
- 2016

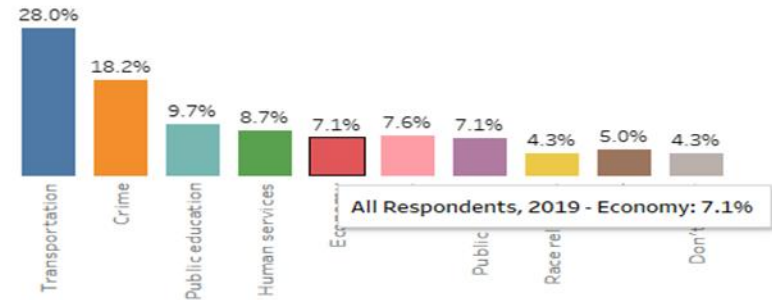
**Choose by Subset**

- County
- Race/Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Income
- Education
- Children in household
- Employment status
- Years in metro Atlanta
- North/South of I-20
- Own/Rent house

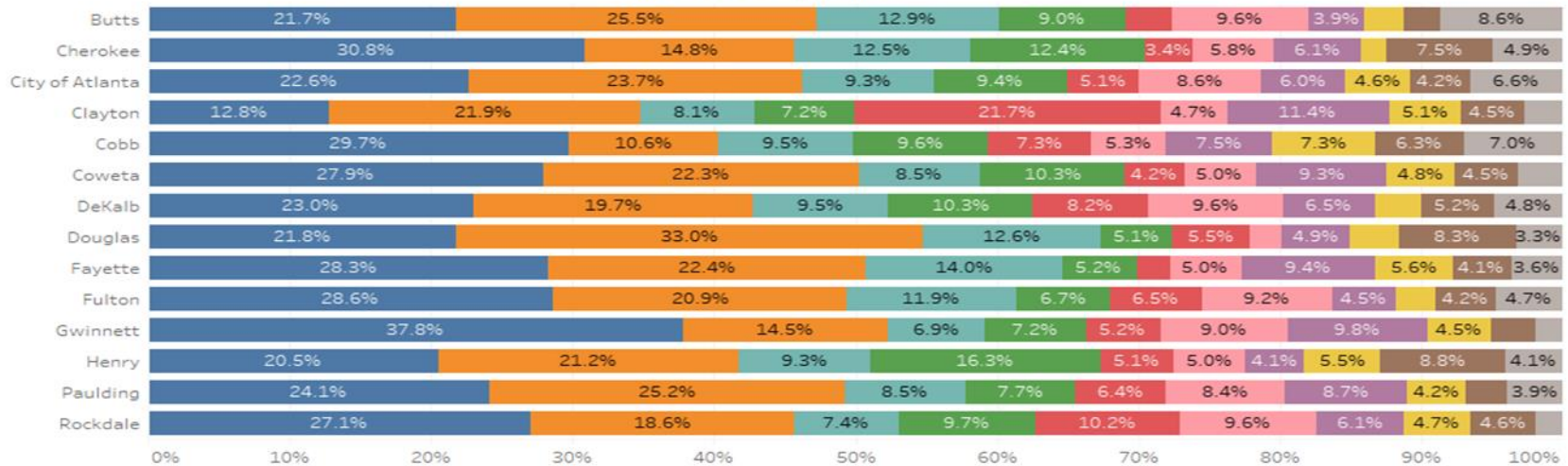
**Possible Answers**

- Transportation
- Crime
- Public education
- Human services
- Economy
- Taxes
- Public health
- Race relations
- Other
- Don't know

**Regional Snapshot**  
(All Respondents, 13 County-Region)



**Results by Year and Subset**



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