

Strathcona County



Health & Lifestyle Checkup for Strathcona County

2002 Study Results

A Joint Project of
Strathcona Community Social Services Advisory Committee
Strathcona County, Corporate Planning
Strathcona County Family and Community Services

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In September 2002, the Strathcona Family and Community Services Department undertook a county-wide telephone survey to assess residents' perceptions about health and lifestyle issues within Strathcona County. The basis for this survey was to establish a benchmark for measuring the following health and lifestyle issues:

- Life and safety in one's neighborhood;
- Affordability levels for housing and household expenses;
- Perceived physical and mental abuse in schools and within families;
- Rating overall health; assessment of issues potentially creating personal stress; identifying family problems;
- Obtaining information on key lifestyle issues;
- Assessing lifestyle information in Strathcona County;
- Sources of information for lifestyle concerns; and
- Smoking, alcohol and drug usage (prescription and illegal drugs) and the impact that use has had on residents.

In future years, Family and Community Services plans to do follow-ups to this study in order to measure trends and changes of the lifestyles of people that live in Strathcona County.

Obtaining primary data from residents will provide Family and Community Services with information that will enable County officials to make decisions that accurately reflect the perspectives and attitudes of residents. This report will provide a comprehensive review of all steps undertaken in the development and implementation of the survey, as well as a detailed summary of the results. A review of the methodology associated in the development and implementation of the survey can be found in the next section of this report.

II. METHODOLOGY

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was an original design initially created by Corporate Planning, in conjunction with the Strathcona Community Social Services Advisory Committee (SCSSAC) and the Manager of Family and Community Services. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Sampling Design and Data Collection Procedure

The sample frame used in this study were residents of Strathcona County who were 18 years of age or older. The sample frame incorporated a statistical proportion estimate of 0.5, which assumes that there is a homogeneous mixture of attitudes and opinions about the quality of life in Strathcona County. A 95% confidence interval was established for this study, which is standard for any public opinion study that utilizes a random sample of residents.

The sample frame consisted of 400 people living in urban¹ and rural parts of Strathcona County. The number of urban and rural residents was reflective of the proportionate distribution of residents living in Strathcona County: 65% of the sample were drawn from the urban area; 35% from the rural area. The sample frame provided overall results² accurate to within $\pm 4.9\%$, 19 times out of 20.

A telephone survey research design was used to collect the data for this study. Respondents were contacted by telephone between September 20th and September 27th, 2002. Strathcona County derived telephone numbers from the Select Phone Canadian Edition database and randomized them for this study. Trained interviewers from Banister Research & Consulting Inc. made all telephone calls under supervised conditions. Each questionnaire took an average of 10 minutes to complete. The data was analyzed by Strathcona County's Corporate Planning Secretariat using SPSS for Windows.

¹ In this report, the urban component of Strathcona County is Sherwood Park.

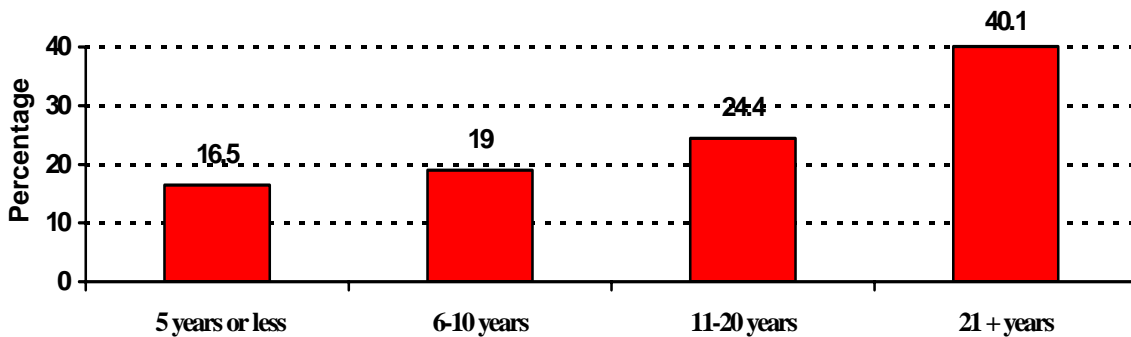
² The $\pm 4.35\%$ is the *margin of error* associated with this study and refers to the potential percentage spread that exists within answers to particular questions. This means that an answer could be up to 4.35% higher or lower than what is reported.

Who Answered the Survey – Demographic Highlights

This section of the report presents an overview of the type of residents who responded to the survey. Part of the sampling criteria was to survey the county by population density so 64.9% of the sample was derived from Sherwood Park, while the remaining 35.1% were living in other parts of Strathcona County. The other sampling criteria was to obtain answers from approximately equal numbers of males and females. As such, in the sample, responses to the survey came from 50.1% of males and 49.9% of females. Almost all of the people were homeowners (94.7%), while the remaining 6.3% were renters.

The majority of people who took part in the survey indicated that they were long term residents in the County. Figure 1 presents a breakdown of length of residence. The average number of years that people lived in Strathcona County was 18.5 years.

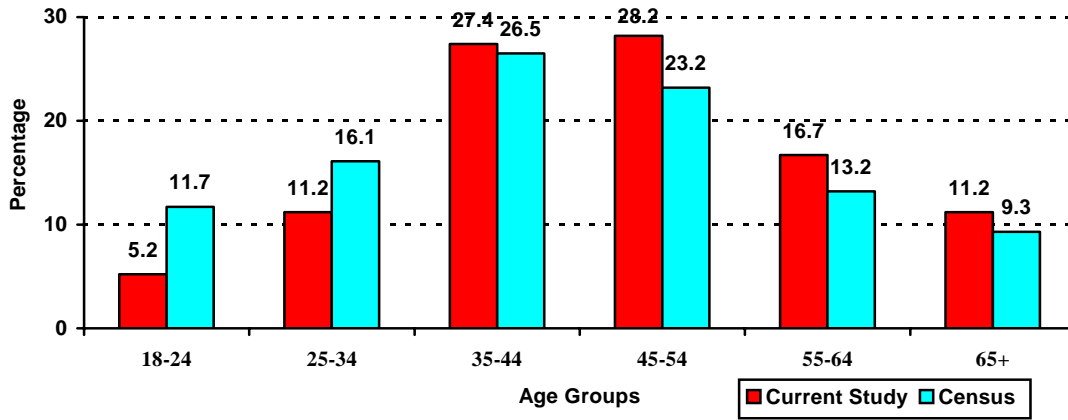
FIGURE 1
Length of Time in the Living in Strathcona County



The majority of people who answered the survey owned their home (94.7%). This was slightly higher than the 2000 census (where the percentage of homeowners is 92.4%).

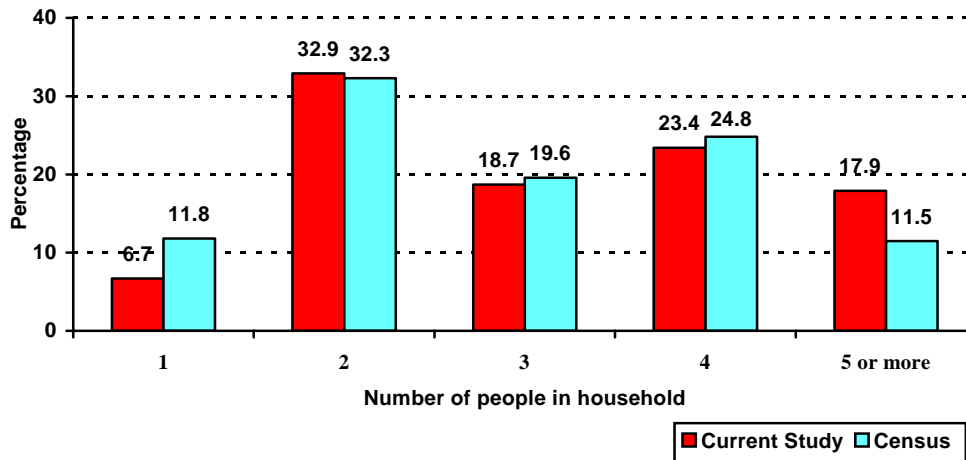
A breakdown of the age of the respondents by location in the County is shown in Figure 2. There was a relatively good representation from all age groups, though in comparison to the 2000 census, the 18-24 year age group was under-represented.

FIGURE 2
Age of Respondents
 (Current Study and 2000 Census Comparison)



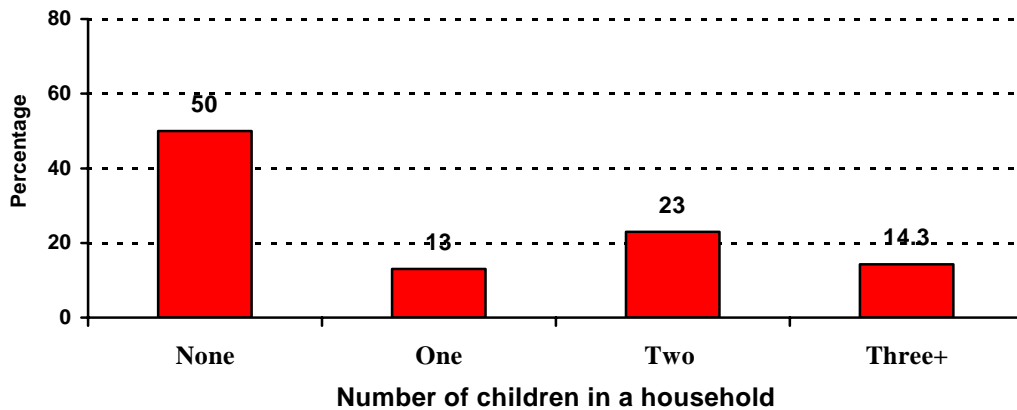
The household size of the respondents is shown in Figure 3. It can be seen that the household size in sample frame corresponds to the findings from the 2000 census, though there was less input from single person households and slightly higher responses from large households (5 or more people).

FIGURE 3
Household Size
 (Current Study and 2000 Census Comparison)



A breakdown of children in the household is shown in Figure 4. It can be seen that the sample has an even split between households did not have children living at home and households that do. Figure 5 shows that 29.7% had children who were 15 or younger, 11.7% had children who were 16 or older, and 8.7% were households that had children from both age groups.

**FIGURE 4
Number of Children in Household (Year 2001)**



**FIGURE 5
Household Composition based on Age of Children**

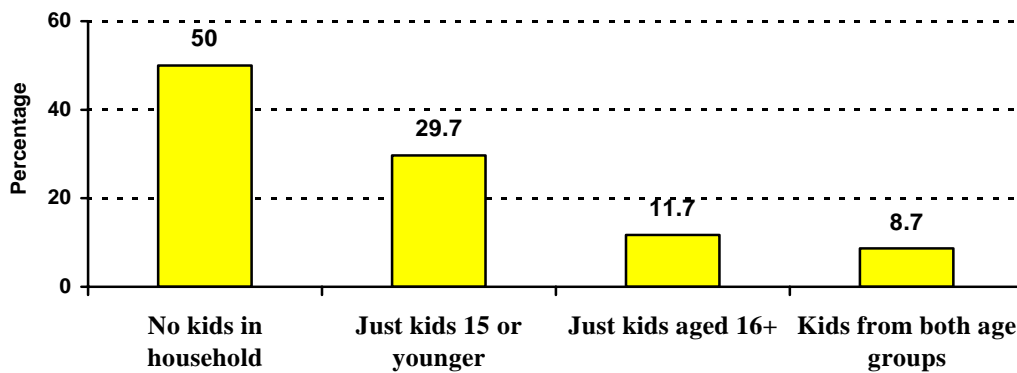


Figure 6 presents a breakdown of the family status of households. It can be seen that the majority of households can be classified as “parents with children living in the household.” The next common category was people who were married or common law but had no children living at home.

**FIGURE 6
Family Status**

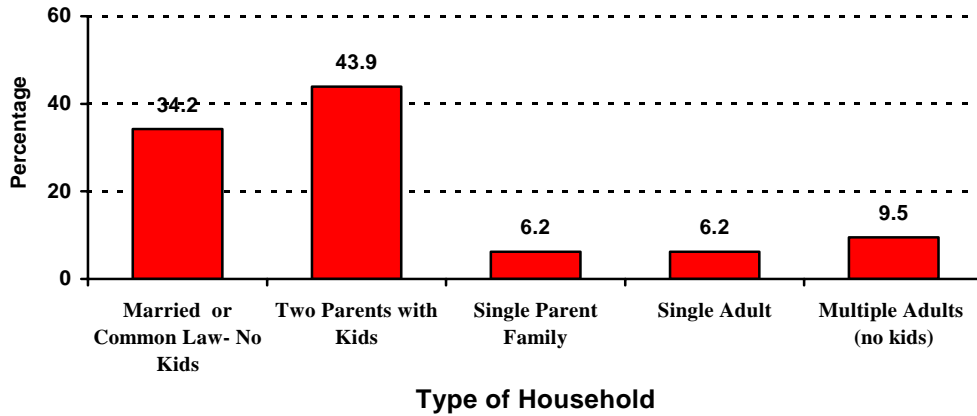


Figure 7 presents a breakdown of the employment status of respondents. The majority of people are working full-time, though an additional 21% are either self-employed or working part-time.

**FIGURE 7
Employment Status**

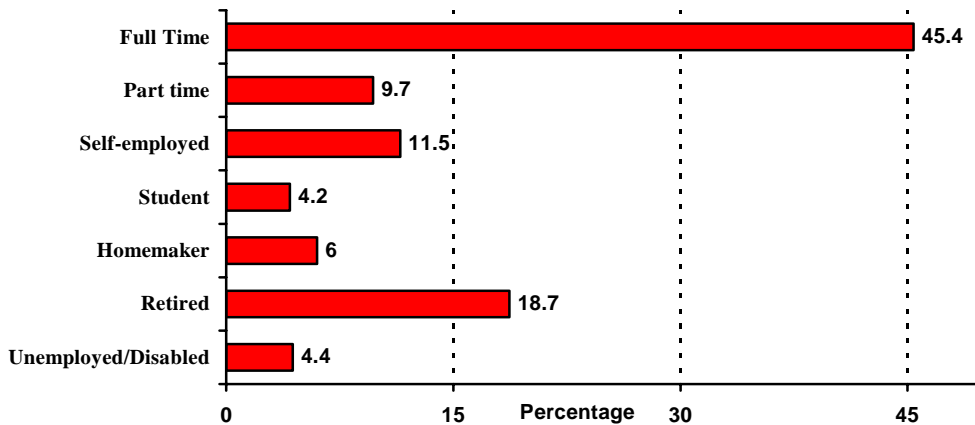


Figure 8 shows a breakdown of the number of hours that people are putting into their jobs, while Figure 9 shows a breakdown of the number of hours per week by the working status of their jobs. It can be seen that the majority of people are working more than 35 hours per week at their job, especially those employed full time.

FIGURE 8
Hours of Work per Week
(For that working full time, part time or self-employed)

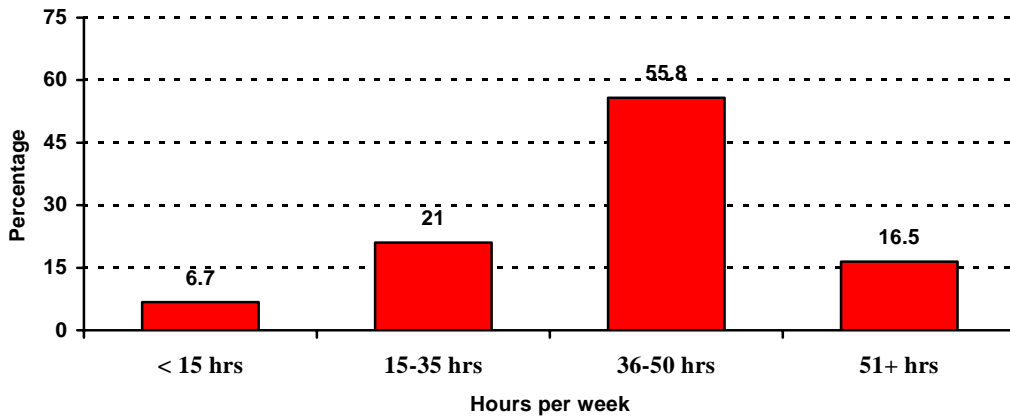
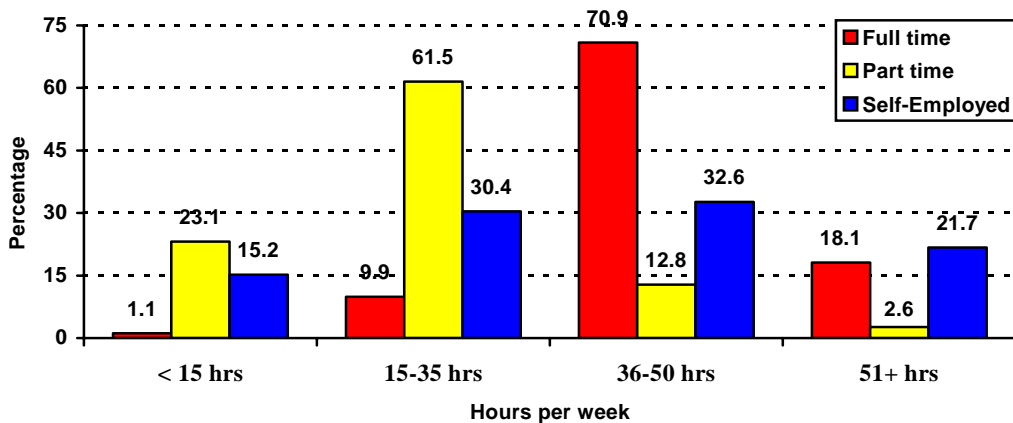


FIGURE 9
Hours of Work per Week by Status of Employment

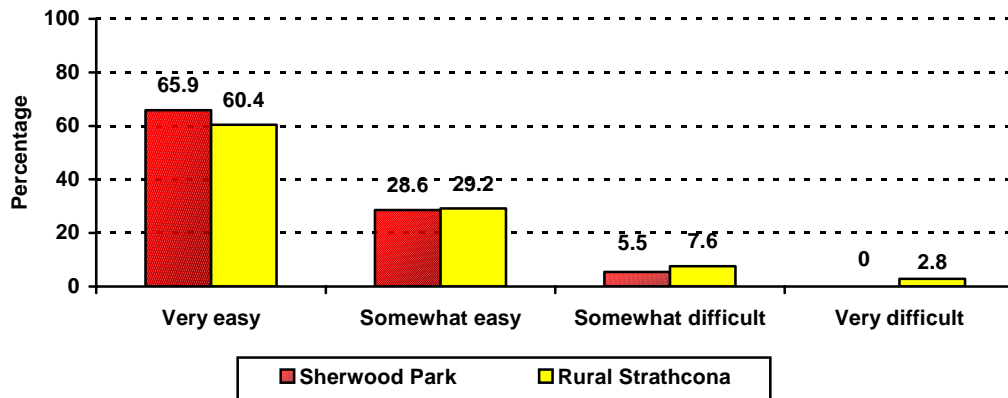


III. RESULTS

A. Living in Strathcona County

Respondents were asked how easy it was to transport themselves to different places from their home. As seen in Figure 10, the majority of respondents found it easy or very easy to transport themselves.

FIGURE 10
Ease of Transporting One’s Self from Home
 (By Location of Resident within Strathcona County)



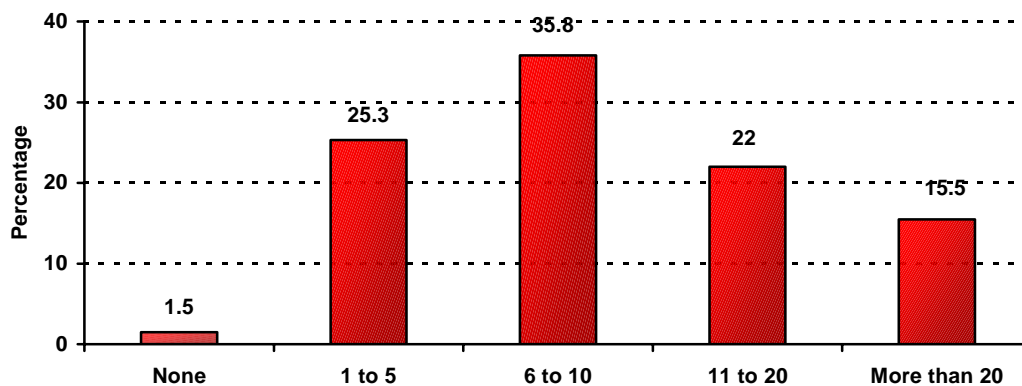
There were 29 people surveyed who found getting to different places from their home difficult (5.5% Sherwood Park; 10.4%, Rural Strathcona). Reasons they indicated:

- In Rural Strathcona the absence of public transportation was cited. A few people living in Sherwood Park thought that the local transit service was poor and that there were not enough buses.
- There was some perception that “roads can’t accommodate the high growth of the area.” A couple of other people felt that there was “high traffic volume at certain times of the day.”
- Other comments included a perception of “too much construction,” “poor road planning” and “too many lights.”

B. Life in the Neighborhood

Respondents were asked a series of questions about living in their immediate neighborhood. The number of adults that residents know by name within their neighborhood is shown in Figure 11.

FIGURE 11
Number of Adults known by Name in the Neighborhood

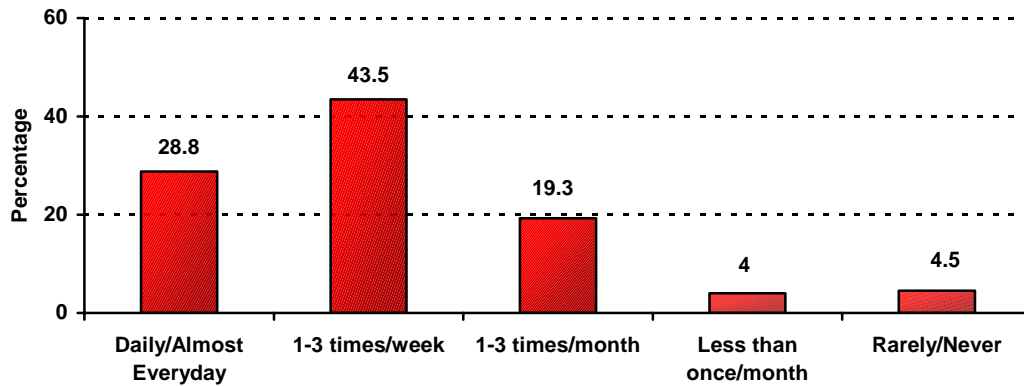


Highlights from Figure 11

- People living in various neighborhoods throughout Strathcona County are familiar with other people that live in their neighborhood. This awareness of neighbors is present regardless of whether persons lived in Sherwood Park or rural Strathcona County.
- Single parent families and multiple adult households tended to know fewer neighbors by name compared to married or common law residents (who may or may not have children).

Figure 12 shows a breakdown of how often residents talk to people who live in their neighborhood.

FIGURE 12
How often do Residents Talk to People in the Neighborhood

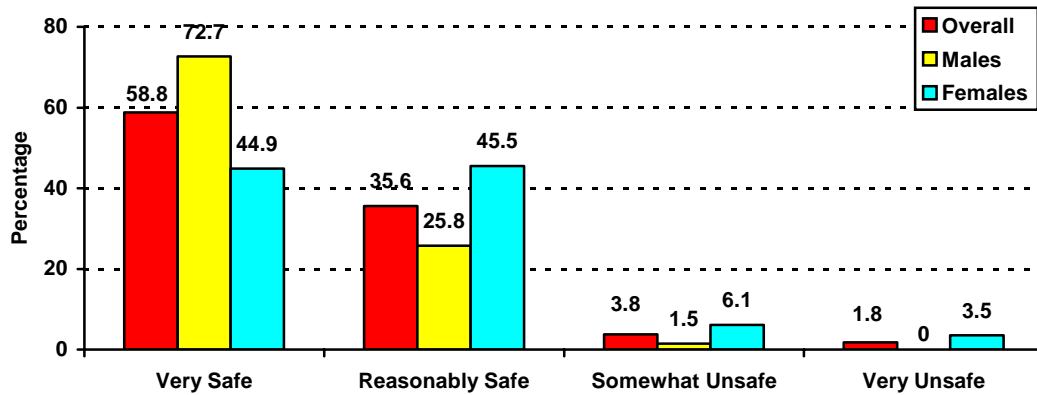


Highlights from Figure 12

- People living in various neighborhoods throughout Strathcona County are communicating with their neighbors on a regular basis.
- Over 70% are talking to others at least once a week, or more.
- People living in Sherwood Park talked to neighbors more frequently (78.7%) compared to those living in rural Strathcona County (61%). This difference may be attributed to rural residences being physically further apart geographically.
- Families with children are the most social within a neighborhood compared to other types of residents.
 - 80.7% of people with children talked to neighbors at least once a week.
 - 76% of single adults talked to neighbors at least once a week.
 - 68% of single parent families talked to neighbors at least once a week.
 - 66.2% of married couples with no children talked to neighbors at least once a week.
 - 55.3% of singles living with other adults talked to neighbors at least once a week.

- Figure 13 shows a breakdown of how safe residents feel in their neighborhood (as measured by how safe they feel walking alone in their neighborhood after dark).

FIGURE 13
How Safe do Residents Feel in their Neighborhood
 (Overall Results and by Gender)



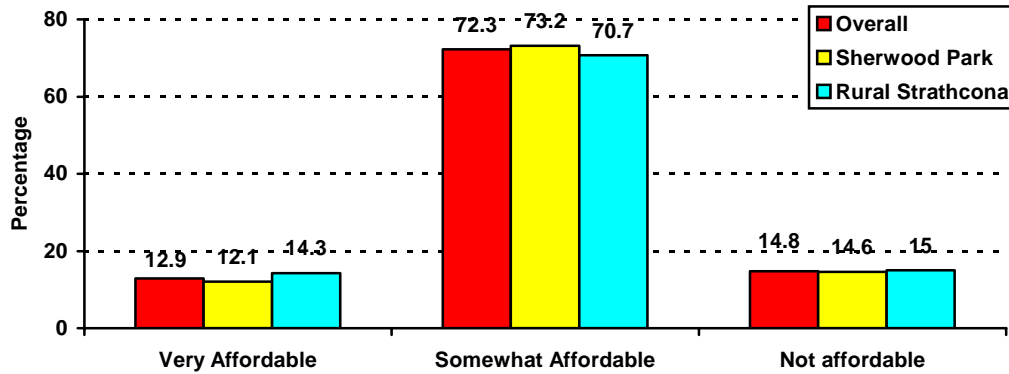
Highlights from Figure 13

- People living in various neighborhoods throughout Strathcona County feel that their neighborhoods are safe. Overall, over 90% felt very or reasonably safe, with the majority stating that they feel “very safe.”
- Perceptions of safety vary on the basis of gender. More males than females believe that the neighborhood is “very safe,” and just under 10% of females reported feeling somewhat unsafe or very unsafe walking in their neighborhoods alone after dark, compared to 1.5% of males who reported feeling this way.
- There were no differences of safety perception between people living in Sherwood Park or rural Strathcona. Family status was also not a factor

C. Affordability in the Neighborhood

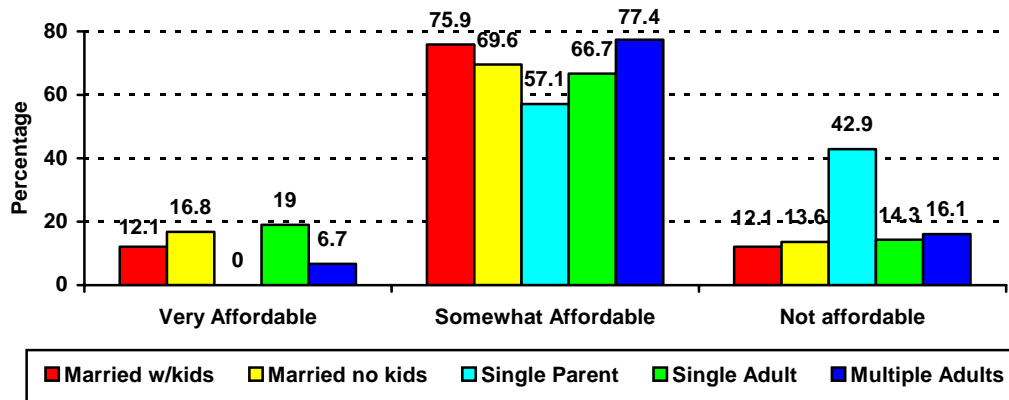
Figure 14 shows a breakdown of how affordable residents find the houses in Strathcona County. The majority of people, regardless of where they live in the County, believe that housing is “somewhat affordable.”

FIGURE 14
Affordability of Houses in Strathcona County



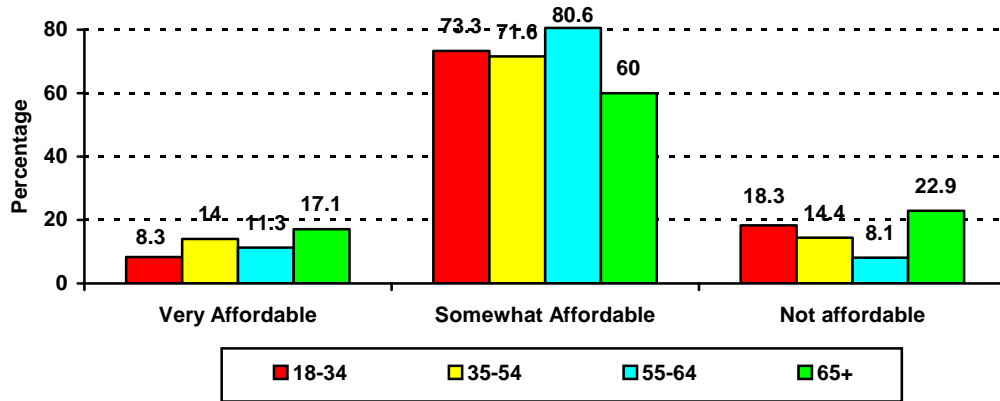
Perceptions of housing affordability vary on the basis of family status. As seen in Figure 15, those who are single parents or singles in multiple adult households are the least likely to feel that housing in the community is affordable.

FIGURE 15
Affordability of Houses in Strathcona County



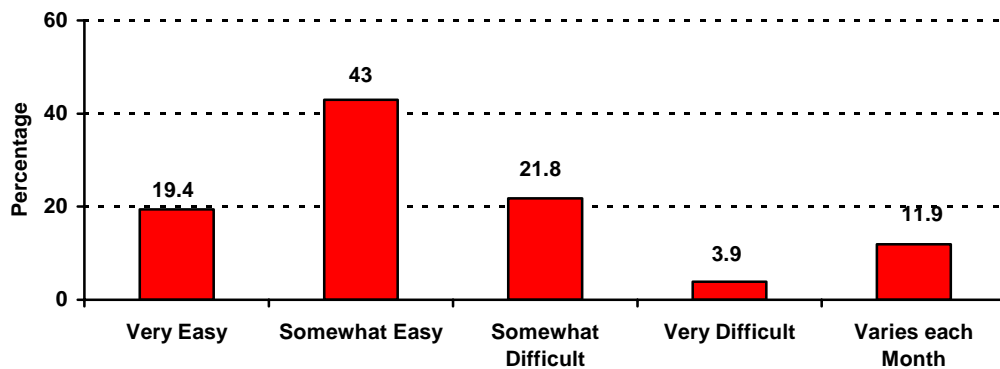
A further analysis revealed that perceptions of housing affordability vary on the basis of age. As seen in Figure 16, younger and older residents were more concerned about the affordability of housing than other age groups.

FIGURE 16
Affordability of Houses in Strathcona County
 (By Age of Respondent)



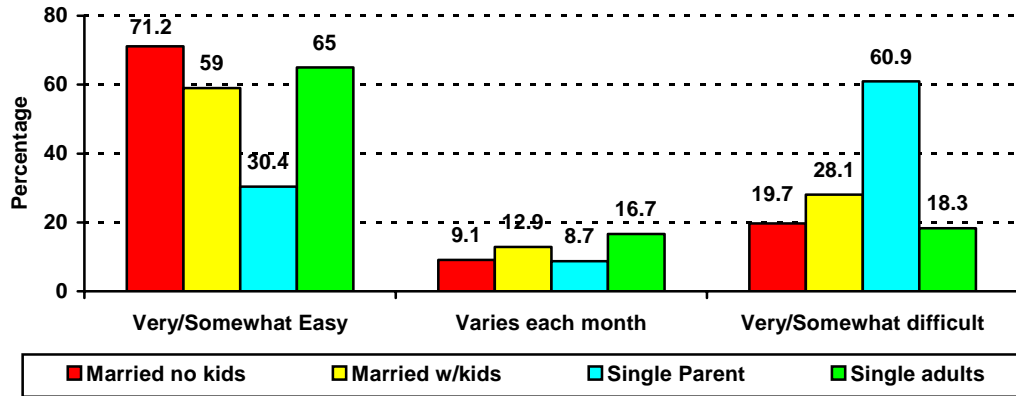
Respondents were then asked to indicate how well they were able to meet monthly household expenses. The overall results are shown in Figure 17. The majority of residents do not have difficulty meeting monthly household expenses. The patterns shown in Figure 17 were similar for people living in Sherwood Park or in rural Strathcona County.

FIGURE 17
Ability to meet Monthly Household Expenses



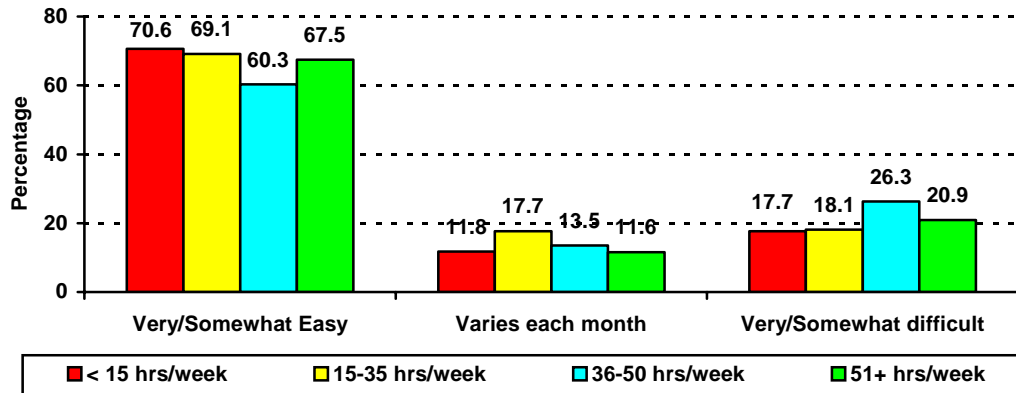
A breakdown of ability to meet monthly household expenses by family status is shown in Figure 18. The majority of single parents in the County are having difficulty meeting monthly household expenses.

FIGURE 18
Ability to meet Monthly Household Expenses
 (Family Status Comparisons)



A breakdown of ability to meet monthly household expenses by hours of work per week is shown in Figure 19. Hours per week was not a factor in perceptions of meeting monthly household expenses.

FIGURE 19
Ability to meet Monthly Household Expenses
 (Hours Per week Comparisons)



D. Perceptions of Bullying

Residents were asked to assess whether “bullying”/family violence/spousal abuse was a problem within Strathcona County. The purpose of this question was for people to assess the extent that they thought bullying/violence was a problem in schools or in the home, and not whether they had encountered such problems themselves.

The overall results are shown in Table 1 below. Generally, these forms of behavior were considered a problem by over 80% of those surveyed. Residents perceive that bullying and other forms of violence are a minor problem. There is a strong perception by residents that bullying in local **junior high schools** is a **major problem**.

Table 1
Perceptions of Bullying in Strathcona County*

	Major Problem	Minor Problem	Combined Total	No Problem
Bullying in elementary schools	27.0%	58.3%	85.3%	14.7%
Bullying in junior high schools	42.5%	50.0%	92.5%	7.5%
Bullying in senior high schools	27.8%	62.0%	89.8%	10.3%
Family violence	12.5%	69.9%	82.4%	17.6%
Spousal abuse	15.8%	67.0%	82.8%	17.2%

*Percentages in this table add up to 100% by rows for each type of issue.

Additional insight into these perceptions can be gained by looking more closely at demographic characteristics of the residents. Table 2 shows a breakdown of perceptions of bullying by the family status of residents. It can be seen from this table that people who did not have children saw the perceptions of bullying within schools as more of a major problem than those who did have children in schools. The issue with bullying within junior high schools remains high across all family groups, however.

Table 2
Perceptions of Bullying in Strathcona County – By Family Status

	Married no kids	Married with kids	Single parent family	Single adult(s)
Bullying in elementary schools	%	%	%	%
Major problem	33.8%	21.6%	30.4%	33.3%
Minor problem	55.4%	59.5%	69.6%	51.5%
Not a problem	10.8%	18.9%	0%	15.2%
Bullying in junior high schools	%	%	%	%
Major problem	44.4%	40.0%	40.9%	50.0%
Minor problem	48.6%	51.5%	59.1%	39.3%
Not a problem	6.9%	8.5%	0%	10.7%
Bullying in senior high schools	%	%	%	%
Major problem	27.7%	24.8%	27.3%	42.3%
Minor problem	63.1%	64.5%	72.7%	38.5%
Not a problem	9.2%	10.7%	0%	19.2%
Family violence	%	%	%	%
Major problem	12.0%	12.5%	11.1%	14.7%
Minor problem	75.0%	68.8%	77.8%	55.9%
Not a problem	13.0%	18.8%	11.1%	29.4%
Spousal abuse	%	%	%	%
Major problem	20.2%	11.5%	11.8%	21.6%
Minor problem	64.9%	71.0%	76.5%	54.1%
Not a problem	14.9%	17.6%	11.8%	24.3%

*Percentages in this table add up to 100% by columns for each type of issue.

Table 3 shows a breakdown of perceptions of bullying by gender, where it can be seen that females perceive bullying as a major problem more often than male residents. For each type of bullying problem, at least twice as many females perceived these to be major problems within Strathcona County compared to male residents.

Table 3
Perceptions of Bullying in Strathcona County – By Gender

	Males	Females
Bullying in elementary schools	%	%
Major problem	12.1%	40.4%
Minor problem	63.6%	53.4%
Not a problem	24.2%	6.2%
Bullying in junior high schools		
Major problem	25.4%	58.5%
Minor problem	61.5%	39.2%
Not a problem	13.1%	2.3%
Bullying in senior high schools		
Major problem	18.6%	36.4%
Minor problem	67.3%	57.0%
Not a problem	14.2%	6.6%
Family violence		
Major problem	7.3%	17.8%
Minor problem	66.4%	73.3%
Not a problem	26.3%	8.9%
Spousal abuse		
Major problem	8.8%	22.5%
Minor problem	65.7%	68.3%
Not a problem	25.5%	9.2%

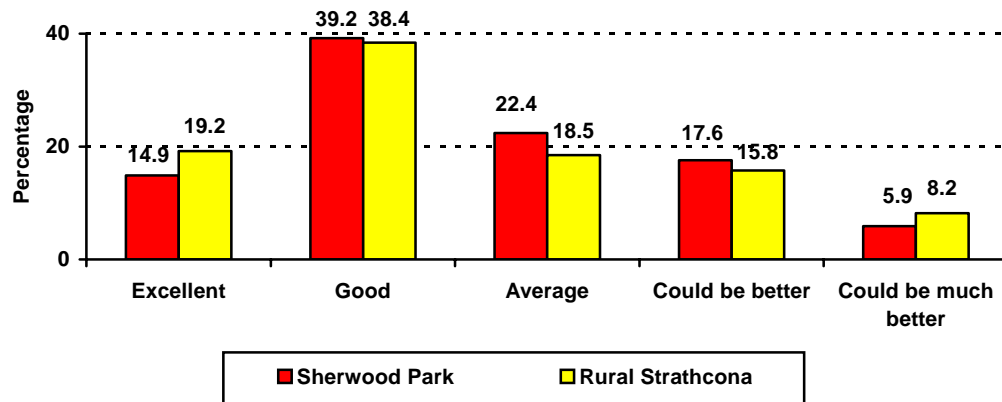
*Percentages in this table add up to 100% by columns for each type of issue.

Age was not a determining factor with respect to distinguishing perceptions of bullying in Strathcona County.

E. Aspects of Health

Residents were asked a series of questions with respect to their personal health. A rating of personal health by type of resident is shown in Figure 20 below. A further demographic profile revealed that people's health rating was similar to what is shown below, regardless of gender, age or family status.

FIGURE 20
Rating Personal Health
 (By Location of Resident within Strathcona County)

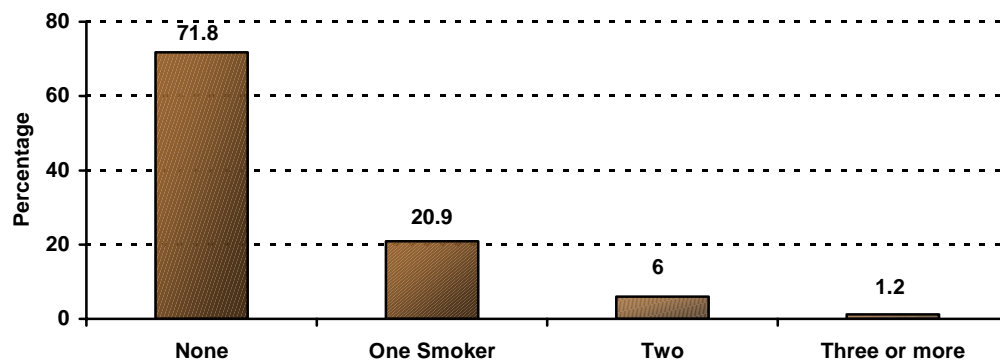


County residents were also asked about their tobacco smoking patterns as well as others within their households. The following patterns were found:

- 17.4% of respondents indicated that they were smokers (with two indicating that they were trying to quit).
- 19.4% of males and 16% of females were smokers.
- There was no differentiation in smoking patterns between age groups, or between those living in Sherwood Park and those living in rural Strathcona.
- The number of tobacco products smoked in a typical day ranged from 1 to 25 items; the average number smoked in a typical day was 12.

- It was also found that 20.2% of households had more than one member who smoked. Almost all were over 18 years of age (only 2 indicated that there were family members under 18 who were smokers). A breakdown of the number of smokers in Strathcona County households (including non-smokers) is summarized in Figure 21 below.

FIGURE 21
Number of Smokers in Strathcona County Households



The Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, completed in 2002, showed that 21% of the population 15 years and older were smokers. 23% were men and 20% were women. The average number of cigarettes smoked per day was 16.

F. Rating Stress

Residents were asked a series of questions about sources of stress in their lives. Each situation was rated on a scale from 0 to 10. Overall patterns are plotted in Figures 22, 23 and 24. It should also be noted some stress situations did not apply to some residents, which are noted as follows:

- 92 residents (22.9%) excluded from *Job stress*
- 5 residents (1.2%) excluded from *stress from Money management*
- 182 residents (45.4%) excluded from *stress from Dealing with kids under 13*
- 216 residents (53.9%) excluded from *Stress from Dealing with kids 13 & older*
- 15 residents (3.7%) excluded from *Stress from Maintaining the residence*
- 43 residents (10.7%) excluded from *stress from Money management*

FIGURE 22
Stress Ratings – Job & Money Management

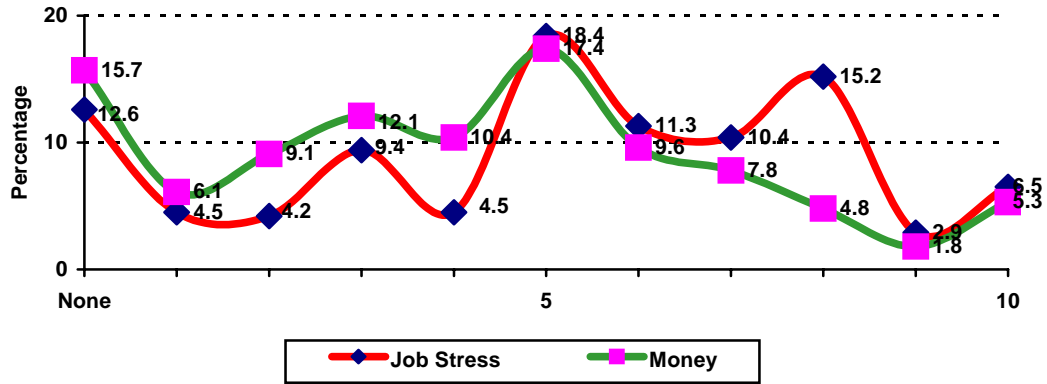


FIGURE 23
Stress Ratings – Dealing with Children

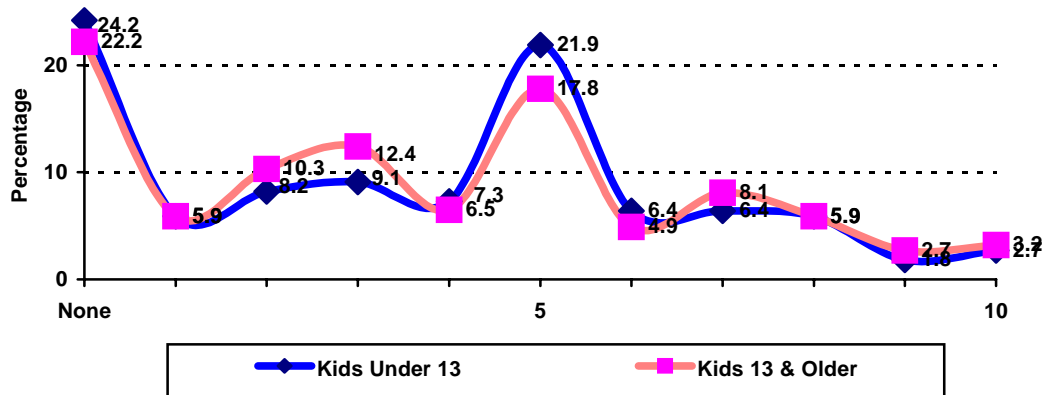
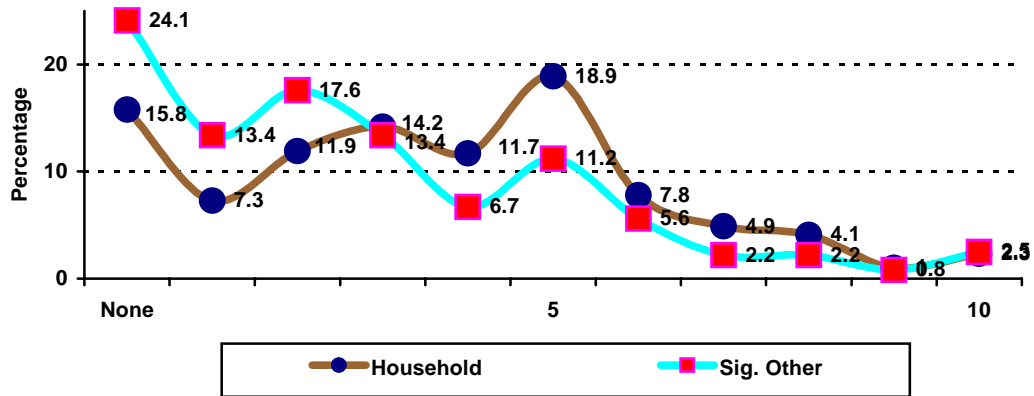


FIGURE 24
Stress Ratings- Household Maintenance & Significant Other



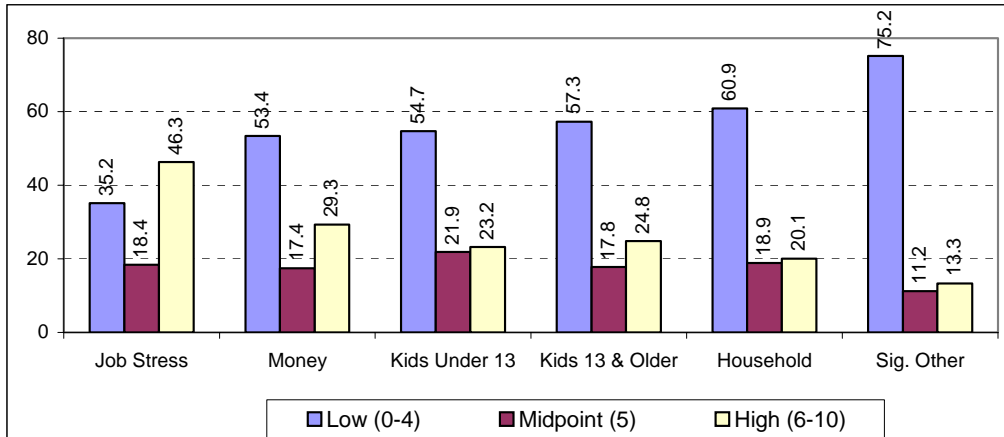
Highlights from Figures 22 through 24 and other trends associated with demographic characteristics

- 64.7% of residents reported stress levels of 5 or greater **related to their job**. This was the highest type of stressful situation reported;
 - There were no statistically different trends seen between gender or family status for this item, that is, one's perceived stress level was not dependent on gender, age or type of family within the household.
 - Those aged 65 or older had very low levels of job stress compared to the other age groups, particularly those aged 18-24, 35-44, and 45-54. Those residents between the ages of 18 and 54 had much higher stress levels than people aged 55 or older.
 - Self-related work stress as reported in the Statistics Canada, Canadian Community and Health Survey, Mental Health and Well-Being 2002:
 - 38.8% of Canadians 15 years and older rated work days a bit stressful
 - 25% rated work days quite a bit stressful
 - 5.4% rated work days extremely stressful
- With respect to **money management stress**, 46.7% of residents reported a stress level of 5 or greater.
 - With respect to one's age, the "no stress" level for money management stress was higher among those aged 55 or older than those residents younger than 55.
 - Females feel more stress from managing money than men do.
 - The presence of children in a household contributes to money management stress for County residents. Stress levels were higher among residents in "married with children" families and "single parent" families than for couples with no children or single adult(s) households.
- 45.2% reported stress levels of 5 or greater when **dealing with children** (under age 13). A similar percentage of residents (42.7%) reported stress levels of 5 or greater when dealing with children aged 13 or older.
 - "No stress" levels associated with children under 13 was considerably higher among residents aged 45 or older. The "no stress" levels associated with children aged 13 or older was considerably higher among residents aged 55 or older.
 - Females feel slightly more stress from dealing with children under age 13 than men do. Stress levels were similar between men and women in dealing with children 13 or older.

- As might be expected, people living in households with children had higher stress levels with this item than people living in other type of households. Furthermore, while this stress level was high for dealing with younger and older children, the difference was most pronounced when dealing with children younger than 13.
- 39.1% of residents reported stress levels of 5 or more resulting from **maintaining the household**.
 - “No stress” increased as the age of the resident increased. For example 5.9% of residents aged 18-34 did not encounter stress when maintaining their household, while 37.5% of residents aged 65 or older reported “no stress” for this item.
 - The “no stress” level for money management stress was higher among those aged 55 or older than those residents younger than 55.
 - Females feel slightly more stress from managing the household than men do.
 - Stress levels were higher among “single parent” families than for other family structures.
- 24.6% of residents, or approximately 1 in 4, reported stress levels of 5 or greater from **dealing with one’s significant other**. This was the lowest stressful situation out of the six that were queried.
 - There were no statistically different trends seen between gender or age for this item.
 - People living in single parent families had the highest stress level recorded for this item compared to other family situations. This is likely associated with the problems associated with spouses or ex-spouses who are no longer living in the household.
 - Those aged 65 or older had very low levels of job stress compared to the other age groups, particularly those aged 18-24, 35-44, and 45-54. Those residents between the ages of 18 and 54 had much higher stress levels than people aged 55 or older.

A summary of stress levels for these problems are grouped together in Figure 25. It can be seen that the highest form of stress experienced by residents is work stress, followed by money and stress from children.

FIGURE 25
Stress Ratings Summarized



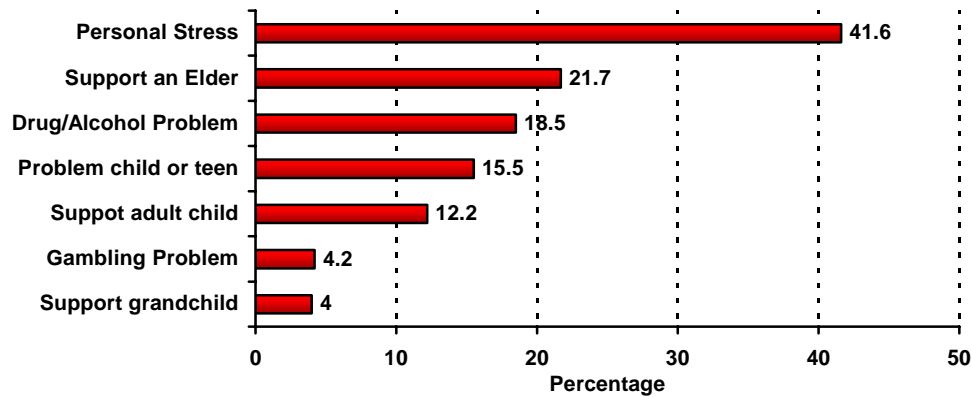
G. Presence of Family Problems

Residents were asked about potential family problems and whether they had had to take major steps to deal with them over the past 5 years.

- 33.9% did not experience these situations
- 66.1% had experienced these problems in decreasing order:
 - personal stress
 - caring for, or financially supporting, an elderly family member
 - dealing with someone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs.

See Figure 26.

FIGURE 26
Family Problems Encountered within the Past 5 Years



Other trends associated with demographic characteristics for these items

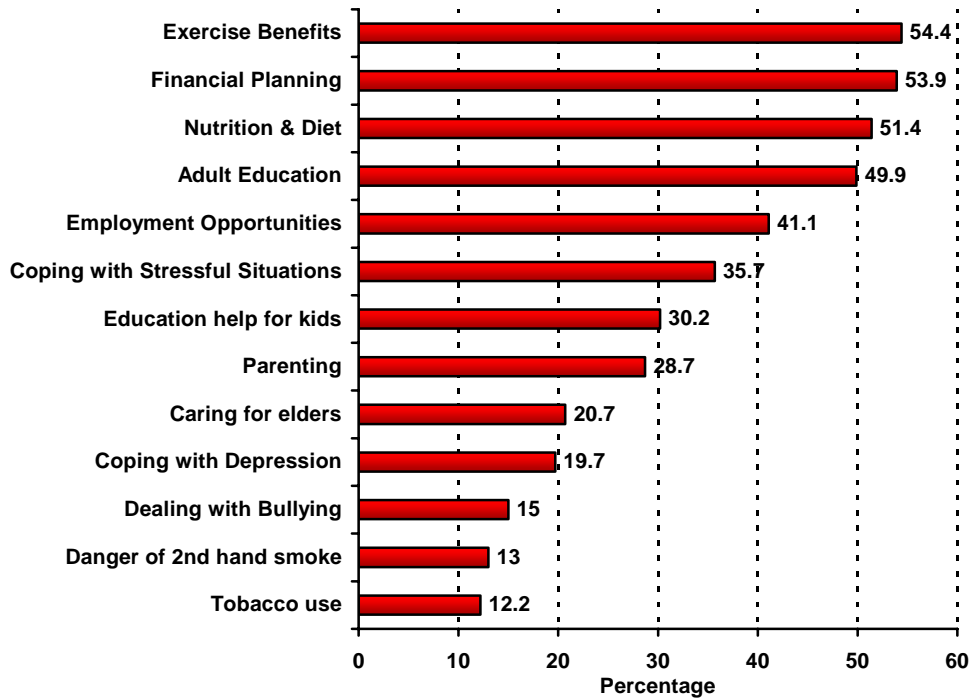
- *Dealing with a problem child or teen in the household* was higher in “single parent” households than in other households. People between the ages of 35 and 54 encountered this problem more often than other age groups.
- *Personal stress* was reported more often by people aged 18-24 and 45-54 than for other age groups. This occurred with 51% of females compared to 32.3% of males living in the County. Personal stress was very common among single parent families and was considerably higher than other family structures.
- *Dealing with someone with an alcohol or drug problem* was proportionately higher among those aged 18-24 compared with older age groups.
- No differences were seen among demographic characteristics for *dealing with someone with a gambling problem*.
- Slightly more females than males reported that they had to *care or financially support an elderly family member*. People between the ages of 45 and 64 dealt with elders more than those in other age groups.
- Slightly more females than males reported they had to *care or financially support an adult child in their household*. People between the ages of 45 and 54 dealt with adult children more than those in other age groups.
- Slightly more females than males reported that they had to *care or financially support a grandchild in their household*. People between the ages of 45 and 54 dealt with grandchildren more than those in other age groups.

95.5% of persons in this study indicated they knew someone living within 15 minutes of their home that they could turn to for help if they were faced with a personal emergency. This type of question is often used to identify social isolation.

H. Seeking Advice on Lifestyle Issues

Residents were asked to indicate whether they had looked for advice on various general lifestyle issues.³ Thirteen topics were read to respondents, with the results shown in Figure 27.

FIGURE 27
Seeking Advice on Lifestyle Issues within the Past 5 Years



³ Only 9.5% of residents never looked for advice on any of these issues.

Highlights from Figure 27 and other trends associated with demographic characteristics for these items

- The top areas where people looked for advice were *exercise, financial planning, nutrition and diet, adult education opportunities* and *employment opportunities*.
- Single parent households had a greater tendency to seek out advice on *employment opportunities, financial planning, coping with depression and coping with stressful situations* than people in other types of families.
- Households with children (both single family and nuclear families) looked for advice on *parenting, educational help for children, and dealing with bullying* to a greater extent than other households.
- Married couples (both with and without children) sought out advice on the *benefits of regular exercise* to a greater extent than those in other types of households.
- Females were more inclined to seek out advice on various issues than men were. Topics that were of greater interest to females included seeking information on *employment and adult education opportunities, parenting, dealing with bullying, coping with depression and stressful situations, and caring for an elderly family member*.
- The interest in *employment and education opportunities* dropped dramatically among people aged 55 or older compared to the younger age groups.
- Seeking advice on *bullying* was highest among those aged 18-34.

I. Availability of Information in Strathcona County for Lifestyle Issues

Residents were asked to indicate the extent that they believed information of particular lifestyle topics was available within Strathcona County. Eleven topic areas were read to respondents. The results are shown in Table 4. The first part of the table shows the perceived awareness level of information among residents, while the second part of the table shows the how accessible they thought the information was (among those who believed that the County had the information).

Table 4
Availability of Lifestyle Information in Strathcona County

	Awareness of Information		Rating of Available Information				
	Not Aware	Yes, Aware	Excellent	Very good	Average	Fair	Poor
Abusive situations in a household	50.9%	49.1%	6.6%	47.2%	29.4%	9.6%	7.1%
Help for teens	49.9%	50.1%	5.0%	44.8%	34.3%	9.0%	7.0%
Coping with depression	49.9%	50.1%	1.5%	41.8%	31.3%	12.4%	12.9%
Coping with stress	46.1%	53.9%	3.2%	43.1%	35.6%	8.3%	9.7%
Alcohol or drug abuse	45.4%	54.6%	3.2%	50.7%	32.0%	5.5%	8.7%
Parenting tips	44.4%	55.6%	6.7%	53.8%	28.3%	8.1%	3.1%
Help for seniors	43.9%	56.1%	9.8%	46.7%	29.8%	7.1%	6.7%
Financial planning assistance	42.6%	57.4%	3.0%	43.0%	38.3%	7.4%	8.3%
Dangers of tobacco	40.6%	59.4%	9.7%	50.8%	27.7%	5.0%	6.7%
Nutrition	34.7%	65.3%	8.4%	46.6%	31.3%	8.8%	5.0%
Benefits of regular exercise	20.7%	79.3%	14.2%	56.3%	23.9%	4.4%	1.3%

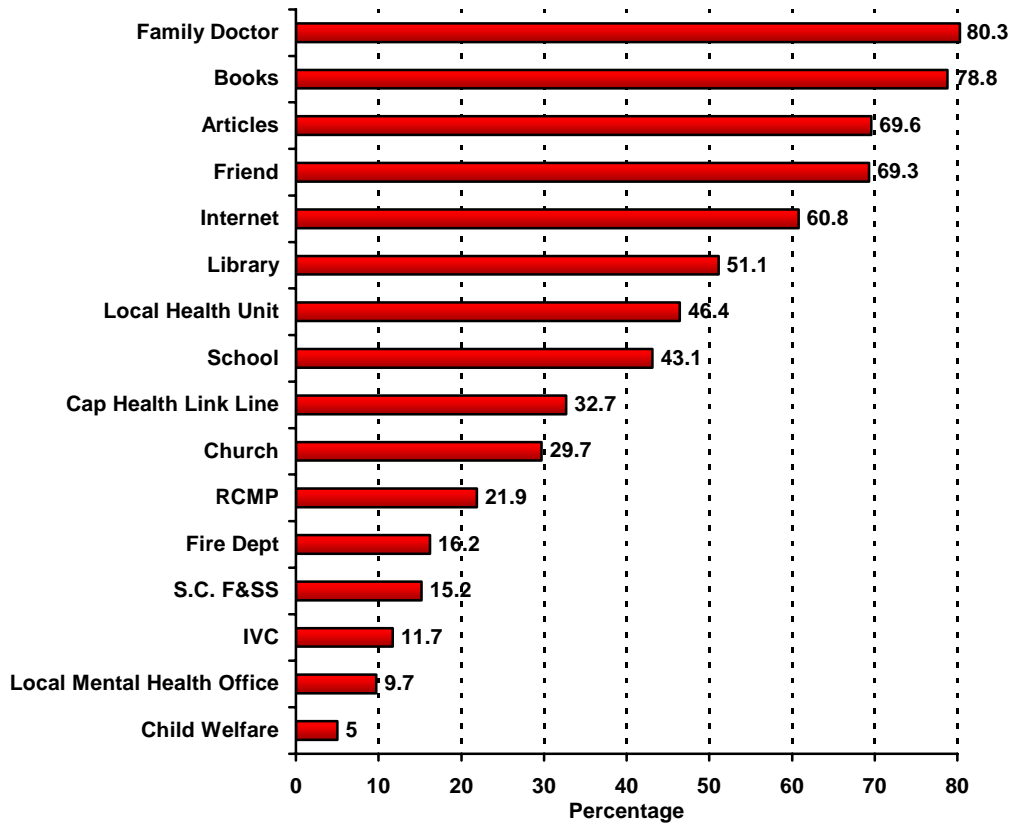
Almost half of the County residents were not aware that information on a number of topics, including dealing with abuse within households, help for teens, coping with depression, coping with stress, and alcohol or drug abuse, was available in the County. Highest levels of awareness were on availability of exercise and nutrition information.

Those residents who believed that information on lifestyle topics were available gave a rating on whether they thought the information on the topics was excellent, very good, average, fair or poor. Over half of residents who believed that information on these topics was available felt that the County had excellent or very good information. The topic with the lowest rating was with information on coping with depression. Over 25% of “aware” residents felt that available information on this topic was fair or poor.

J. Sources of Information for Lifestyle Issues

Residents were asked to indicate who they would turn to get information on different lifestyle issues. Sixteen potential sources were read to respondents. The results are shown in Figure 28.⁴ It should be noted that the source of information would be dependent on the type of lifestyle issue.

FIGURE 28
Where would People Seek Advice on Lifestyle Issues
 (All residents)



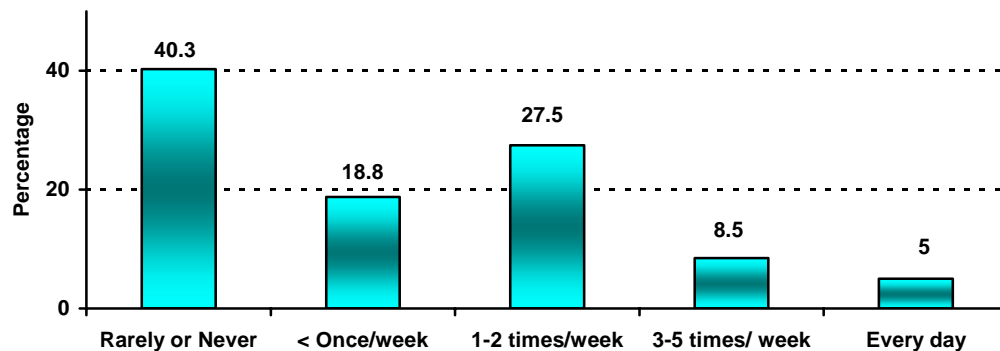
⁴ Only 2.6% of residents would not consult anyone with respect to a lifestyle issue.

The family doctor was considered the primary source of information. Books or articles from magazines or newspapers were next as a source, followed by friends and the internet.

K. Alcohol and Drug Use within Strathcona County

The last set of questions concerned alcohol and drug use. Average alcoholic beverage consumption in a typical week is depicted in Figure 29. It can be seen that just over 40% of residents rarely drank alcohol.

FIGURE 29
Weekly Alcoholic Consumption within Strathcona County Households



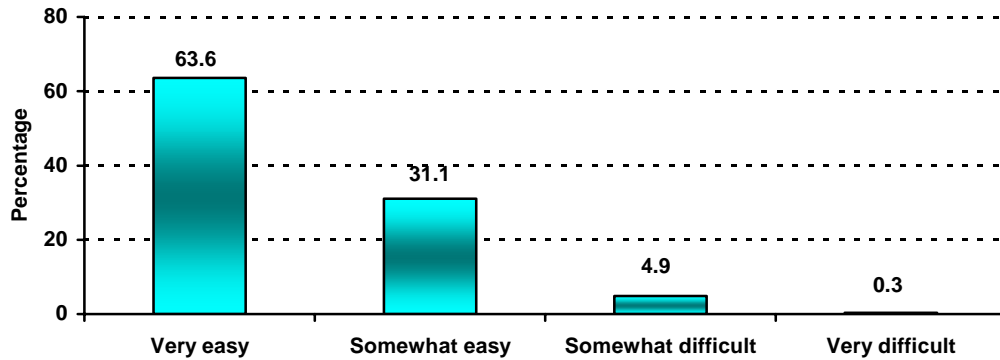
Among those who consumed alcohol one or more times a week:

- The majority of these residents were between the ages of 35 and 54 (57.3%).
- More males (62.2%) than females (37.8%) indicated that they consumed alcohol regularly.
- Only 2.4% of residents who consumed alcohol one or more times a week had family or friends who expressed concern about their use of alcohol.
- The 1996-97 National Population Health Survey found that 77% of Albertans aged 15 years and older had consumed alcohol in the previous year. 10% reported never having used alcohol. Among people 12 – 19 years, 55% had consumed alcohol in the previous year.

37.2% of residents indicated alcohol use by themselves or others had had a negative impact on their lives. This occurred more with females (47.5%) than males (26.9%). Age and family status were not influencing factors in this regard.

All respondents were asked to indicate how easy it would be for someone to obtain illegal drugs in Strathcona County. The results are depicted in Figure 30. Virtually all residents believed that obtaining illegal drugs in the County would be very or somewhat easy. It should be noted that this figure excludes 96 residents (23.9% of the sample) who didn't know or wouldn't answer the question.

FIGURE 30
Perceived Availability of Illegal Drugs within Strathcona County

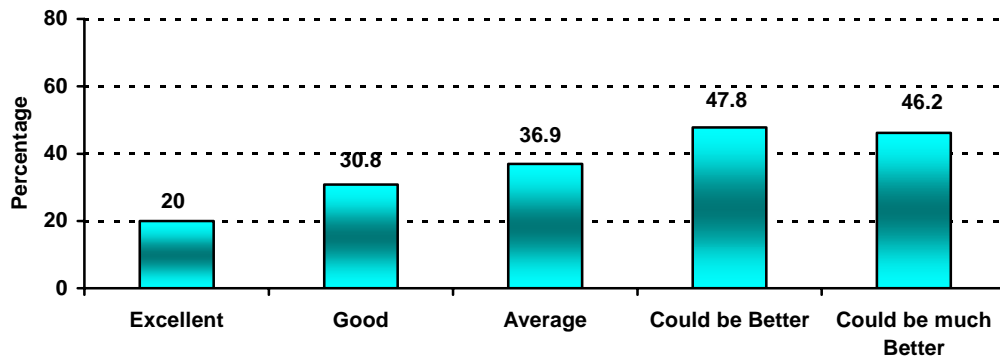


Apart from over-the-counter drugs, residents were also asked whether they had used “prescription or other drugs for control of pain or for pleasure” anytime within the past year. Overall, 34.2% of residents indicated such use, with 6.6% of these indicating that their family or friends had expressed concern over their use of these drugs.

Residents who used “prescription or other drugs for control of pain or for pleasure” was relatively equal across age and gender, as well as equally spread across different types of families within the County.

A breakdown of the perceived state of one's health of those using prescription drugs is depicted in Figure 31. It can be seen that more people in poorer health are using prescription drugs compared to people who classify their health as excellent or good.

FIGURE 31
Rating One's Health
(based on residents who use prescription or other recreational drugs)



All residents, regardless of whether or not they had used prescription or other drugs within the past, were asked to indicate whether the use of prescription or illegal drugs by themselves or others had ever had a negative impact on their life. Overall, 11.3% of residents indicated that there were past problems with drug abuse, either through personal use or by the abuse of others. Slightly more females (13.6%) than males (9%) indicated this as negatively affecting them in the past. Single parent families reported this as being a problem more than those in other family settings.

IV. HIGHLIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The research methodology used in this study resulted in a statistically representative sample of people living in the County. The questionnaire used in this study and the data that has been collected establishes a foundation from which changes in perceptions for future research can be measured. It is recommended that the majority of items contained in this survey be retained for future measurement, particularly once some public information strategies have been implemented.
2. Transportation was not an issue for most residents, regardless of where they live. This issue does not appear to be one that is inhibiting residents and, as such, could be removed from future measurements.
3. People living in Strathcona County know many of their neighbors and interact with them on a regular basis. Families consisting of adults with one or more children are the most social. Single parent families tend to know fewer neighbors than other family structures, which suggests that the family status may be somewhat of a constraint for single parents getting to know and socializing with their neighbors.
4. There was the high degree of safety felt by residents living in Strathcona County neighborhoods. Overall, 90% of residents felt very safe or reasonably safe walking alone in their neighborhoods after dark. This trend was seen among people living in Sherwood Park and in rural Strathcona.
5. There are variations among family types with respect to the affordability of the housing in Strathcona County. While a majority of residents perceive that housing is “somewhat affordable,” a large percentage of single parent families (almost 43%) indicated housing in the County is “not affordable.” Approximately 20% of young people (aged 18 to 34) and older residents (age 65 and older) also indicated that housing in the County is “not affordable.”

6. There are individuals in Strathcona County who reported having difficulty in meeting monthly household expenses. Almost 61% of single parents in the County are having difficulty in this regard.
7. Perceptions of bullying in schools was reported as an issue among people living in Strathcona County. While the degree of the perception varies, between 85% and 93% of residents feel that bullying exists in the schools and is a problem, particularly in Junior High schools
8. While Strathcona County is perceived to be a safe place to live, there is a perception that family violence and spousal abuse exists to some degree. While the majority of residents feel that such acts are a minor problem, just under 82% believe it exists in the County. As with the bullying in schools, more females see these issues as problems compared to males.
9. In terms of self-rating of health, approximately 60% of residents in the County consider themselves to be in excellent or good health. Approximately 25% felt that their health could be somewhat or much better than what it was.
10. Overall, the majority of residents in Strathcona County (approximately 72%) are non-smokers. Among smokers, the average number of tobacco products used in a typical day was ½ a pack. Respondents were also asked to indicate if anyone under the age of 18 smoked in their household, almost all replying “no,”. It is likely this indicates a lack of awareness as the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, 2002 reported the proportion of smokers aged 15 – 19 years was 22%.
11. 65% of Strathcona County residents are experiencing moderate or heavy stress related to their work. Money management and dealing with kids in the household affected about half of the households. Managing one’s household affected about 40% of households, and affected women more than men. Dealing with one’s significant other was the least stressful of the factors measured and affected about 25% of households.

12. Approximately one-third of residents did not have to take major steps in dealing with family problems. For the remaining households who did experience one or more family problems, the most prominent one was dealing with personal stress, which affected 41.6% of residents. Supporting an elder was something experienced by just under 22% of residents, while drug and alcohol problems existed for just under 19% of residents. Just over 15% of residents had to take major steps in dealing with a problem child or teen. Gambling issues or supporting a grandchild were problems that only a handful of residents had to deal with.
13. Most residents do not feel isolated. Almost every resident (just under 96%) could turn to someone living within 15 minutes of their home to help with a personal emergency if no family member of the household was available to help.
14. Most residents in the County are prepared to seek advice on aspects of lifestyle. In particular, over half of the residents have looked for information pertaining to exercise, financial planning, nutrition and diet or adult education opportunities for themselves or for a family member within the past 5 years. Females tended to seek advice on various lifestyle topics more often than men.
15. Almost half of County residents did not think that the County had information on dealing with abusive situations in a household, help for teens, coping with depression or coping with stress. Other topics that were not perceived to be available within the County included alcohol or drug abuse, parenting tips, help for seniors, financial planning assistance or the dangers of tobacco. The only subjects that the majority of residents felt were available were for exercise benefits and nutrition tips.
16. With respect to where people would go to seek help, the majority would seek assistance from their family doctor, books or written articles, friends and the internet. Only small percentages of residents would think to turn to the

RCMP, the Fire Department, Strathcona County Family and Social Services, IVC, a local mental health office or child welfare for advice.

17. In this study, very few residents perceived that they had a drug or alcohol problem. However, just over 37% of residents indicated that alcohol consumption, either by themselves or by others has had a negative impact on their lives. Abuse with prescription of recreational drugs had less negative impact, as only 11% of residents noted this as being a past concern.
18. There is high perception of availability of illegal drugs in the County. Over 90% of residents felt that obtaining illegal drugs would be very easy or somewhat easy to get.

APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Strathcona County Health & Lifestyle Questionnaire – 2002 Final

Hello. My name is _____ of *Banister Research*. We are doing a survey of adult residents on behalf of Strathcona County to get your opinions about health and lifestyle trends. The results of this study will be used in the development of a national strategy on enhancing health and lifestyles of Canadians. Can you spare me about **15 minutes** of your time right now to take part in this important survey?

(Use if Respondent says “No”)

IF NO: When could I call you back to answer this survey?...Note time for follow-up
Is there someone else in your household who could answer this survey?)

ONCE AN ADULT MEMBER OF THE HOUSEHOLD IS ON THE LINE, CONTINUE.

The survey will ask for your opinions about health and lifestyle trends in Strathcona County. The County will use these results to evaluate its services and help make the best use of its resources.

I'd like to start off with some general questions about living in Strathcona County.

A. On an overall basis, how easy do you find it is to transport yourself to different places from your home? Would you say it was:

1. Very easy
2. Somewhat easy
3. Somewhat difficult, or
4. Very difficult
9. Don't know/Refused

Why do you find it difficult? (*note answers below*)

I'd now like to ask you some general questions about life in your immediate neighborhood, which we're defining as the portion of the community where your home is located.

B. How many of the adults in your neighborhood do you know by name? Would you say:

1. None
 2. 1 to 5 adults
 3. 6 to 10 adults
 4. 11 to 20 adults, or
 5. More than 20 adults
-
9. Don't know/No answer

C. How often do you talk to your neighbors? Would you say:

1. Daily or almost everyday
 2. 1 – 3 times a week
 3. 1 – 3 times a month
 4. Less than once a month
 5. Rarely or never
-
9. Don't know/No answer

D. How safe do you feel walking alone in your immediate neighbourhood after dark? Do you feel:

1. Very safe
 2. Reasonably safe
 3. Somewhat unsafe, or
 4. Very unsafe
-
9. Don't know/Wouldn't answer

E. How affordable do you find the housing in this community? Would you say that it's:

1. Very affordable
 2. Somewhat affordable, or
 3. Not affordable
-
9. Don't know/Wouldn't answer

F. A challenge that many families face each month is having adequate money to meet the monthly household expenses. In general, for the family, is it:

1. Very easy to meet monthly expenses
 2. Somewhat easy to meet monthly expenses
 3. Somewhat difficult to meet monthly expenses
 4. Very difficult to meet monthly expenses, or
 5. It regularly varies between easy and difficult to meet monthly expenses
-
9. Don't know/Wouldn't answer

G. Some people in a community may be involved in situations where they are physically and or mentally abused by another person or persons. I'm going to read a short list of potential situations that might exist in our community, and for each, please tell me if you think this is a major problem, a minor problem or not a problem here in Strathcona County. There are no right or wrong answers.

What about _____? <u>In the County</u> is this a...	Major Problem	Minor Problem	Not a Problem	Don't Know
Bullying in elementary schools?	3	2	1	9
Bullying in junior high schools?	3	2	1	9
Bullying in senior high schools?	3	2	1	9
Family violence?	3	2	1	9
Spousal abuse?	3	2	1	9

I'd now like to ask you some general questions about your health. To begin with...

H. Considering your present weight, eating habits, exercise patterns and present lifestyle, I'd like you to rate your overall health. Is it:

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Average
4. Could be somewhat better, or
5. Could be much better
9. Don't know/Wouldn't answer

I. Do you smoke?

1. Yes
2. Trying to quit
3. No
9. Refused

How many tobacco products do you smoke in a typical day?

J. Does anyone else in your household smoke?

1. Yes
2. No
9. Refused

Including yourself, how many smokers in your household are:
 a) Under 18 years of age?
 b) Aged 18 or older?

K. Life can be stressful. I'd like you to select a number between zero and ten, where **zero** means the situation is not

at all stressful to you and **ten** means you find the situation very stressful. If the situation doesn't apply to you, please tell me. There are no right or wrong answers.

What about _____?

	Not at all Stressful										Very Stressful	Doesn't Apply
Job Stress?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99
Stress from maintaining the residence?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99
Stress from dealing with kids under 13?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99
Stress from dealing with kids 13 or older?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99
Stress from managing money?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99
Stress from interactions with my significant other?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99

- L. There may be instances when family problems emerge. I'm going to read a short list of potential problems, and for each, please tell me if you've **had to take major steps** to deal with them within the past 5 years. There are no right or wrong answers.

Read list – Circle all that apply

Within the past 5 years have you had to:

1. Deal with a difficult/problem child or teenager in your household?
2. Deal with personal stress?
3. Deal with someone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs?
4. Deal with someone who had a gambling problem?
5. Care or financially support an elderly family member?
6. Care or financially support an adult child in your household?
7. Care or financially support a grandchild in your household?

M. Do you have someone living within 15 minutes of you that you could turn to for help if you were faced with some sort of personal emergency and there was no one in your household that could help?

1. Yes
2. No _____
9. Don't know/ Wouldn't answer

N. The next part of our survey is about some general lifestyle situations that may be encountered by people like yourself who live in Strathcona County. I'm going to read a series of general subjects to you and for each, tell me if you have ever looked for any advice on the subject for yourself or another family member within the past 5 years. OK?

(Read list, circle all that apply) Please note that final list will be randomized.

Within the past 5 years, have you ever looked for advice on:

1. Proper nutrition and diet?
 2. Employment opportunities?
 3. Adult education opportunities?
 4. Financial planning strategies?
 5. Benefits of regular exercise?
 6. Tobacco use?
 7. Dangers of second hand smoke?
 8. Parenting a child or grandchild?
 9. Educational help for children in your household?
 10. How to deal with bullying?
 11. Personally coping with depression?
 12. Personally coping with stressful situations?
 13. Caring for an elderly family member?
-
0. None of the above

- O. I'd now like you to rate the present availability of information in Strathcona County for some of the lifestyle situations I've just read to you. For each one I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you think the County has excellent, very good, average, fair or poor information available. If you're not sure, please tell me. There are no right or wrong answers.

What about _____? In the County, is the available information:	Excellent	Very Good	Average	Fair	Poor	DK
Nutrition?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Help for seniors?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Financial planning assistance?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Benefits of regular exercise?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Dangers of tobacco?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Parenting tips?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Help for teens?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Abusive situations in a household?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Alcohol or drug abuse?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Coping with depression?	5	4	3	2	1	9
Coping with stress?	5	4	3	2	1	9

- P. There are different sources that people can access to get information about various lifestyle concerns. I'm going to read you a list of possible sources of information. Please tell me which of these sources you've used to help you deal with any lifestyle concerns: (**Read list, circle all that apply**)

What about from _____:

1. Your family doctor?
2. A family friend?
3. Books?
4. The RCMP?
5. A local Health Unit?
6. A local Mental Health office?
7. Newspaper or magazine articles?
8. Capital Health Link Line?
9. The internet?
10. A school or educational institution?
11. Strathcona County Family and Social Services?
12. A church?
13. The library?
14. The Information and Volunteer Centre?
15. Child Welfare?
16. The Fire Department?
17. Any other sources? (**Please indicate:**) _____
0. None of the above

I'd now like to ask you some general questions about alcohol and drug use. We recognize that this may be a sensitive issue for some people, but the information that we are gathering on this is going to be of tremendous help in the development of a Canada-wide campaign on helping people and households who have difficulties with alcohol and drugs.

Q. Over the course of a typical week, how often do you have alcoholic beverages, that is, beer, wine or spirits? Would you say:

1. Usually every day
2. Three to five times a week
3. One or two times a week,
2. Less than once a week, or
3. Rarely or never

9. Don't know/ Wouldn't answer

Have your family or friends ever expressed concern about your use of alcohol?

1. Yes
2. No

9. Don't know/ Wouldn't answer

R. Personal alcohol use, or the use of alcohol by others can have a negative impact in a household. Has alcohol ever had a negative impact on your life?

1. Yes
2. No

9. Don't know/ Wouldn't answer

S. How easy do you think it would be for someone to obtain illegal drugs here in Strathcona County? Would you say it would be:

1. Very easy
2. Somewhat easy
3. Somewhat difficult, or
4. Very difficult

9. Don't know/ Wouldn't answer

T. Almost everyone has used over-the counter drugs such as Tylenol at one time or another. However, there are some people who constantly use prescription drugs for control of pain, to help them sleep or to help them stay awake. Other people might use drugs such as marijuana for relaxation or pleasure. In the past year, apart from over-the-counter drugs, have you used prescription or other drugs for control of pain or for pleasure?

1. Yes
2. No

9. Don't know/ Wouldn't answer

Have your family or friends ever expressed concern about your use of these particular drugs?

1. Yes
2. No

9. Don't know/ Wouldn't answer

- U. Personal drug use, or the use of prescription or illegal drugs by others can have a negative impact in a household. Have these type of drugs ever had a negative impact on your life?
1. Yes
 2. No _____
 9. Don't know/Refused to answer

In finishing up this survey, I'd like to get some basic information about your household so that we may better understand how your answers compare to others that we've talked to. This information will remain confidential. To begin with...

- V. How many years have you lived in Strathcona County? _____
(Note: IF LESS THAN ONE YEAR, ENTER 0)

W. Do you live:

1. In Sherwood Park, or
2. In other parts of Strathcona County?

X. Including yourself, how many people live in your household? _____ *(If "One" Go to Q22)*

- a) How many of these people are children aged 15 or younger? _____
- b) How many are children aged 16 or older? _____

Y. And as I read a list of age groups, please stop me when I mention the group that includes your age....

1. 18 to 24
2. 25 to 34
3. 35 to 44
4. 45 to 54
5. 55 to 64
6. 65 years of age or older
9. Refused

Z. Do you own or rent your home?

1. Own
2. Rent
9. Refused

AA With respect to marital status, are you:

- 1. Single
- 2. Married or Common Law
- 3. Separated
- 4. Divorced, or
- 5. Widowed

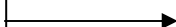
- 9. Refused

BB. Are you presently...**[READ]**

- 1 A student
- 2 Self-employed
- 3 Employed full-time
- 4 Employed part-time

- 5 A homemaker
- 6 Retired, or
- 7 Unemployed

- 9. Refused



At the present time, how many hours in an average week are you working in your job?
Would you say:

- 1. Less than 15 hours per week
- 2. 15 to 35 hours per week
- 3. 36 to 50 hours per week
- 4. More than 50 hours per week

- 9. Would not answer

CC. **DO NOT READ. NOTE GENDER**

- 1. Male
- 2. Female

Could I please get your first name or initials in case my supervisor wants to verify that we completed this survey? _____

Thank you for your help in completing this survey, and have a very pleasant evening.

DO NOT READ: Phone #: _____