

Community Needs Assessment

2005 SURVEY RESULTS

*Perceptions of priority among
residents regarding housing,
education, health care,
child care, transportation, and
other program services*



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INTRODUCTION

A generalizable needs assessment survey was conducted in June 2005 of residents in Otter Tail County, Minnesota. The study was conducted by staff at the North Dakota State Data Center at North Dakota State University. A total of 408 respondents completed the survey.

Survey questions were grouped into seven categories that consisted of community concerns, housing issues, healthcare issues, educational issues, childcare issues, public transportation issues, and other program services. Respondents were asked to rate the level of priority (i.e., not a priority, low priority, medium priority, or high priority) for each topic within the seven categories. A majority of respondents placed a high priority rating on issues and concerns within the categories of community concerns, healthcare issues, childcare issues, and educational issues. None of the public transportation issues received a majority high rating.

Below is a listing of the issues or concerns where the majority of respondents gave ratings of high priority. Survey results, graphics and data tables, and respondent comments by theme are presented in the rest of this report. The survey instrument is at the end.

Issues or concerns considered to be “high priority” by the majority of respondents

Theme	Issues/concerns	Percentage of respondents
Healthcare	Meth or other illegal drug use	86.3
Community Concerns	Abuse or domestic violence of children and adults	74.3
Housing	Shelter for victims of neglect, abuse, or domestic violence	62.5
Community Concerns	Crime and law enforcement	60.8
Healthcare	Availability of health services	58.1
Education	Threat of violence at school	55.9
Healthcare	Alcohol abuse	55.9
Community Concerns	Overall needs of the elderly	55.4
Education	Literacy and reading programs	55.4
Other Program Services	Availability of jobs that match job skills	54.9
Education	Parent-teacher communication	53.7
Childcare	Childcare for children with special needs	51.5
Childcare	Adequate, safe childcare services	51.5

SUMMARY BY THEME

Community Concerns: A large majority of respondents said the abuse or domestic violence of children and adults was a high priority. A majority of respondents said crime and law enforcement and the overall needs of the elderly were high priorities. Respondents had mixed views with respect to whether promoting diversity was a high, medium, or low priority.

Housing Issues: A majority of respondents said shelter for victims of neglect, abuse, or domestic violence was a high priority. Respondents had mixed views with respect to whether elderly living facilities was a high or medium priority. Respondents also had mixed views with respect to whether affordability of housing repairs and access to shelter for the homeless were high, medium, or low priority issues. Regarding access to financing for buying houses, affordability of rents, availability of housing, and availability of rental assistance, respondents said the issues were high, medium, or low priorities, or they did not know. Respondents indicated that temporary housing was either a medium or low priority.

Healthcare Issues: A large majority of respondents said meth or other illegal drug use was a high priority; a majority of respondents said availability of health services and alcohol abuse were high priorities. Respondents had mixed views with respect to whether mental health was a high or medium priority, and whether tobacco and secondhand smoke and transportation to and from health services were high, medium, or low priorities.

Educational Issues: A majority of respondents said threat of violence at school, literacy and reading programs, and parent-teacher communication were high priorities. Respondents had mixed views with respect to whether school preparedness, help for families of children with disciplinary problems, availability of parenting skills education, before and after school programs, and school drop out rate were high or medium priorities.

Childcare Issues: A majority of respondents said childcare for children with special needs and adequate, safe childcare facilities were high priorities. Respondents had mixed views with respect to whether employer support of family childcare needs and availability of after-hours childcare services were high or medium priorities.

Public Transportation Issues: Respondents had mixed views with respect to whether public transportation for people with special needs was a high or medium priority, and whether public transportation and after hours public transportation were medium or low priorities.

Other Program Services: A majority of respondents said availability of jobs that match job skills was a high priority. Respondents had mixed views with respect to whether availability of skills training, disaster relief, promoting physical activity, access to respite care services for caregivers, promoting volunteerism, nutrition education, consumer protection programs, and money management programs were high or medium priorities. Respondents viewed cultural activities and clothing and furniture assistance as medium or low priorities.

SURVEY RESULTS

Community Concerns

Reference Figure 1, Table 1.

- Approximately three in four respondents (74.3 percent) rated abuse or domestic violence of children and adults a **high** priority.
- Approximately six in 10 respondents (60.8 percent) rated crime and law enforcement a **high** priority and three in 10 rated this concern a **medium** priority (29.9 percent).
- More than one in two respondents (55.4 percent) rated overall needs of the elderly a **high** priority and more than one in three rated this concern a **medium** priority (37.5 percent).
- More than four in 10 respondents (42.2 percent) rated promoting diversity a **medium** priority and one in four respondents rated this concern a **low** priority (24.5 percent).

Figure 1. Community concerns

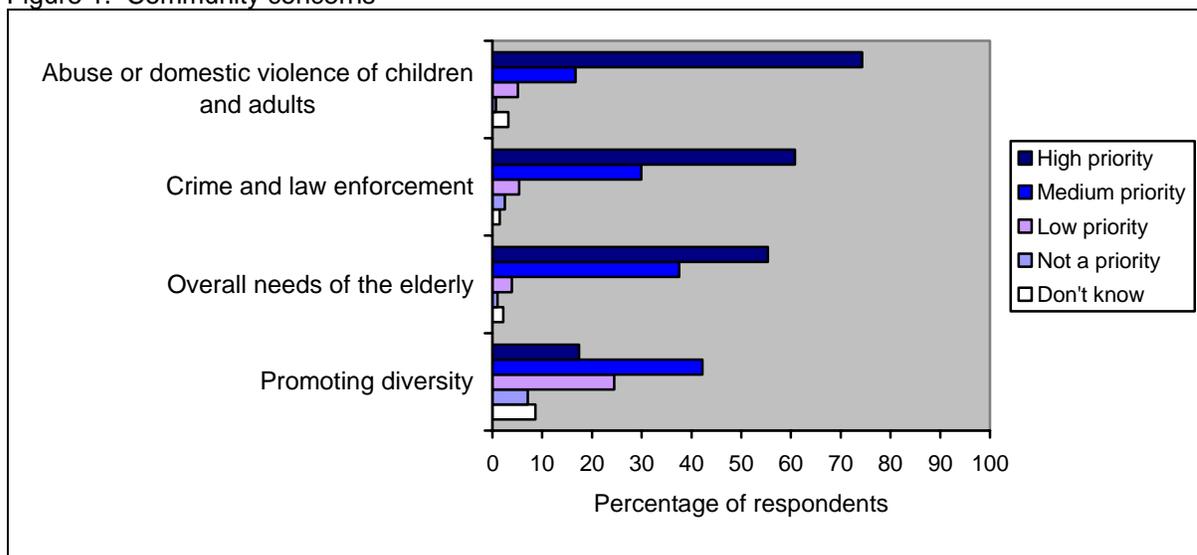


Table 1. Community concerns

Community concerns	Percentage of respondents						Total %
	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Don't know	Refused	
Abuse or domestic violence of children and adults	74.3	16.7	5.1	0.7	3.2	0.0	100.0
Crime and law enforcement	60.8	29.9	5.4	2.5	1.5	0.0	100.1
Overall needs of the elderly	55.4	37.5	3.9	1.0	2.2	0.0	100.0
Promoting diversity	17.4	42.2	24.5	7.1	8.6	0.2	100.0

N=408

Housing Issues

Reference Figure 2, Table 2.

- More than six in 10 respondents (62.5 percent) rated shelter for victims of neglect, abuse, or domestic violence a **high** priority and more than two in 10 rated this issue a **medium** priority (21.6 percent).
- More than four in 10 respondents (44.1 percent) rated elderly living facilities a **high** priority and more than one in three rated this issue a **medium** priority (35.8 percent).
- Nearly one in two respondents (47.1 percent) rated affordability of housing repairs a **medium** priority and nearly one in four rated this issue a **high** priority (23.3 percent).
- Four in 10 respondents (40.0 percent) rated access to financing for buying houses a **medium** priority and one in four rated this issue a **high** priority (25.5 percent).
- Nearly four in 10 respondents (38.5 percent) rated affordability of rents a **medium** priority and one in four rated this issue a **high** priority (24.5 percent).
- More than one in three respondents (36.0 percent) rated access to shelter for the homeless a **medium** priority and nearly one in three rated this issue a **high** priority (31.9 percent).
- More than four in 10 respondents (43.6 percent) rated availability of housing a **medium** priority and nearly one in four rated this issue a **low** priority (22.5 percent).
- Four in 10 respondents (39.0 percent) rated temporary housing a **medium** priority and three in 10 rated this issue a **low** priority (31.1 percent).
- One in three respondents (33.6 percent) rated availability of rental assistance a **medium** priority and two in 10 respondents rated this issue a **low** priority (19.9 percent).

Figure 2. Housing issues:

- A: Shelter for victims of neglect, abuse, or domestic violence
- B: Elderly living facilities
- C: Affordability of housing repairs
- D: Access to financing for buying houses
- E: Affordability of rents
- F: Access to shelter for the homeless
- G: Availability of housing
- H: Temporary housing
- I: Availability of rental assistance

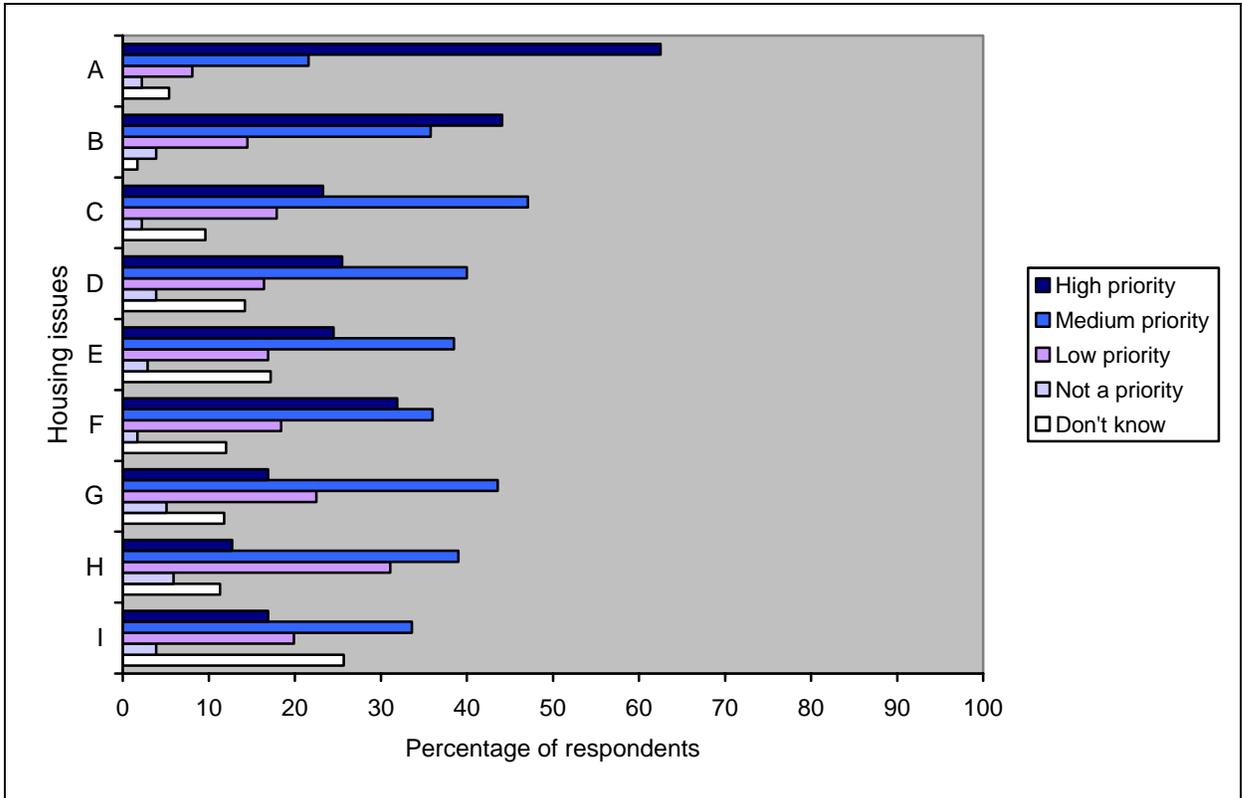


Table 2. Housing issues

Housing issues	Percentage of respondents						
	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Don't know	Refused	Total %
Shelter for victims of neglect, abuse, or domestic violence	62.5	21.6	8.1	2.2	5.4	0.2	100.0
Elderly living facilities	44.1	35.8	14.5	3.9	1.7	0.0	100.0
Affordability of housing repairs	23.3	47.1	17.9	2.2	9.6	0.0	100.1
Access to financing for buying houses	25.5	40.0	16.4	3.9	14.2	0.0	100.0
Affordability of rents	24.5	38.5	16.9	2.9	17.2	0.0	100.0
Access to shelter for the homeless	31.9	36.0	18.4	1.7	12.0	0.0	100.0
Availability of housing	16.9	43.6	22.5	5.1	11.8	0.0	99.9
Temporary housing	12.7	39.0	31.1	5.9	11.3	0.0	100.0
Availability of rental assistance	16.9	33.6	19.9	3.9	25.7	0.0	100.0

N=408

Healthcare Issues

Reference Figure 3, Table 3.

- Nearly nine in 10 respondents (86.3 percent) rated meth or other illegal drug use a **high** priority.
- Nearly six in 10 respondents (58.1 percent) rated availability of health services a **high** priority and one in four rated the issue a **medium** priority (24.0 percent).
- Nearly six in 10 respondents (55.9 percent) rated alcohol abuse a **high** priority and one in three rated the issue a **medium** priority (34.1 percent).
- Four in 10 respondents (40.2 percent) rated mental health a **high** priority and more than one in three rated the issue a **medium** priority (36.3 percent).
- Respondents were mixed in their rating of tobacco and secondhand smoke. Nearly four in 10 respondents (37.3 percent) rated the issue a **high** priority. Similar proportions of respondents, more than one in four each, rated the issue either a **medium** or **low** priority (26.2 percent and 27.9 percent, respectively).
- Nearly one in two respondents (45.8 percent) rated transportation to and from health services a **medium** priority and more than one in four rated the issue a **high** priority (27.0 percent).

Figure 3. Healthcare issues

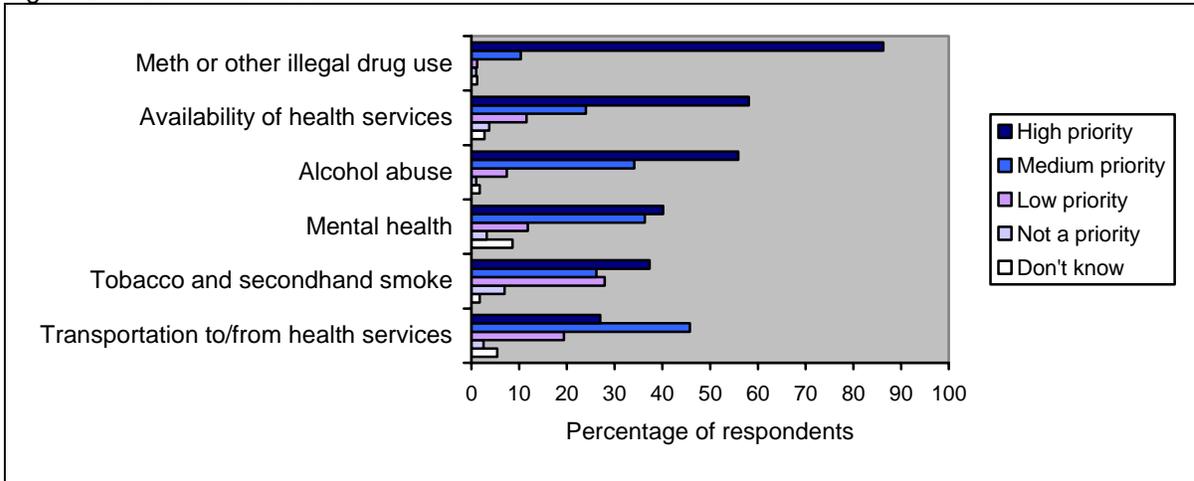


Table 3. Healthcare issues

Healthcare issues	Percentage of respondents						Refused	Total %
	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Don't know			
Meth or other illegal drug use	86.3	10.3	1.2	1.0	1.2	0.0	100.0	
Availability of health services	58.1	24.0	11.5	3.7	2.7	0.0	100.0	
Alcohol abuse	55.9	34.1	7.4	1.0	1.7	0.0	100.1	
Mental health	40.2	36.3	11.8	3.2	8.6	0.0	100.1	
Tobacco and secondhand smoke	37.3	26.2	27.9	6.9	1.7	0.0	100.0	
Transportation to and from health services	27.0	45.8	19.4	2.5	5.4	0.0	100.1	

N=408

Educational Issues

Reference Figure 4, Table 4.

- Nearly six in 10 respondents (55.9 percent) rated threat of violence at school a **high** priority and nearly three in 10 rated the issue a **medium** priority (27.7 percent).
- More than one in two respondents (55.4 percent) rated literacy and reading programs a **high** priority and three in 10 rated the issue a **medium** priority (29.9 percent).
- More than one in two respondents (53.7 percent) rated parent-teacher communication a **high** priority and nearly three in 10 rated the issue a **medium** priority (28.2 percent).
- Approximately four in 10 respondents (41.4 percent) rated school preparedness a **high** priority and one in three rated the issue a **medium** priority (33.1 percent).
- Approximately four in 10 respondents (41.9 percent) rated help for families of children with disciplinary problems a **medium** priority and more than one in three rated the issue a **high** priority (35.0 percent).
- Similar proportions of respondents, approximately four in 10 each, rated availability of parenting skills education either a **medium** or **high** priority (39.7 percent and 36.8 percent, respectively).
- Four in 10 respondents (39.5 percent) rated before and after school programs a **medium** priority and more than one in three rated the issue a **high** priority (35.3 percent).
- More than one in three respondents (37.0 percent) rated school drop out rate a **medium** priority and nearly one in three rated the issue a **high** priority (31.6 percent).

Figure 4. Educational issues:

- A: Threat of violence at school
- B: Literacy and reading programs
- C: Parent-teacher communication
- D: School preparedness
- E: Help for families of children with disciplinary problems
- F: Availability of parenting skills education
- G: Before and after school programs
- H: School drop out rate

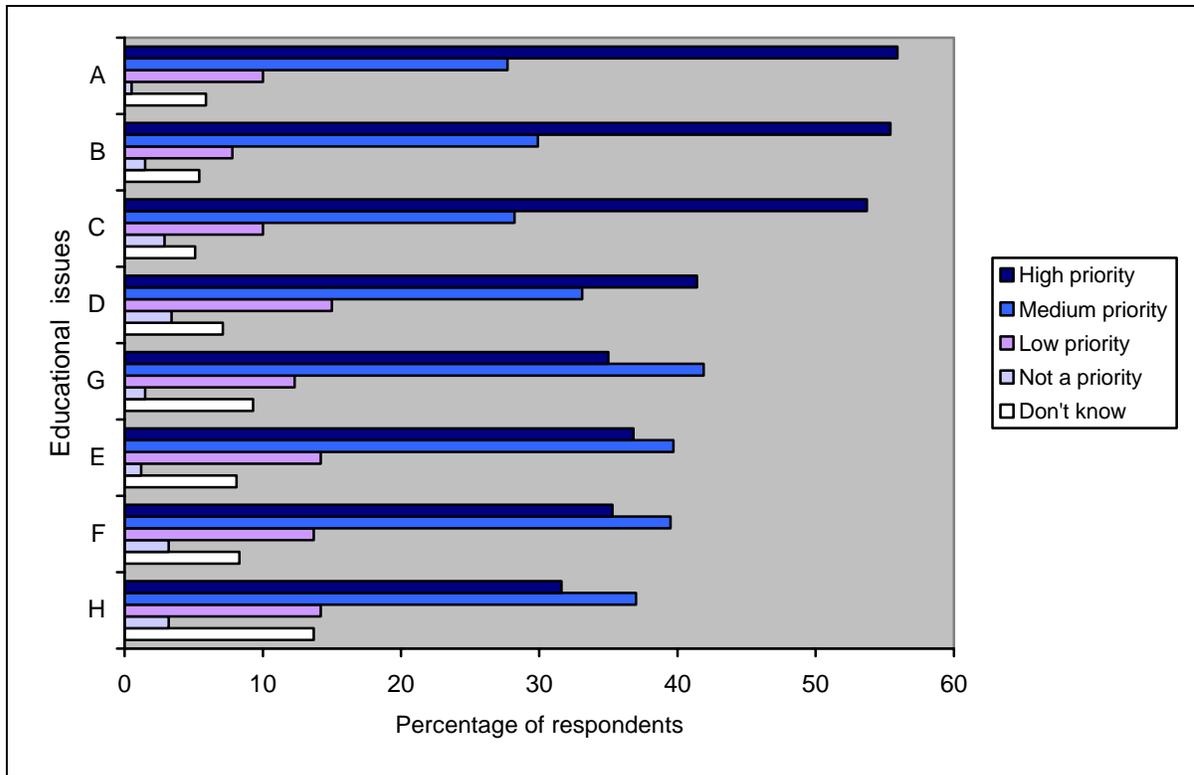


Table 4. Educational issues

Educational issues	Percentage of respondents						Total %
	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Don't know	Refused	
Threat of violence at school	55.9	27.7	10.0	0.5	5.9	0.0	100.0
Literacy and reading programs	55.4	29.9	7.8	1.5	5.4	0.0	100.0
Parent-teacher communication	53.7	28.2	10.0	2.9	5.1	0.0	99.9
School preparedness	41.4	33.1	15.0	3.4	7.1	0.0	100.0
Help for families of children with disciplinary problems	35.0	41.9	12.3	1.5	9.3	0.0	100.0
Availability of parenting skills education	36.8	39.7	14.2	1.2	8.1	0.0	100.0
Before and after school programs	35.3	39.5	13.7	3.2	8.3	0.0	100.0
School drop out rate	31.6	37.0	14.2	3.2	13.7	0.2	99.9

N=408

Childcare Issues

Reference Figure 5, Table 5.

- Approximately one in two respondents (51.5 percent) rated childcare for children with special needs a **high** priority and nearly three in 10 rated the issue a **medium** priority (28.4 percent).
- Approximately one in two respondents (51.5 percent) rated adequate, safe childcare services a **high** priority and one in four rated the issue a **medium** priority (25.2 percent).
- More than four in 10 respondents (43.4 percent) rated employer support of family childcare needs a **high** priority and three in 10 rated the issue a **medium** priority (29.9 percent).
- Regarding the availability of after-hours childcare services, respondents were evenly divided between rating the issue a **medium** or **high** priority (33.6 percent and 33.1 percent, respectively).

Figure 5. Childcare issues

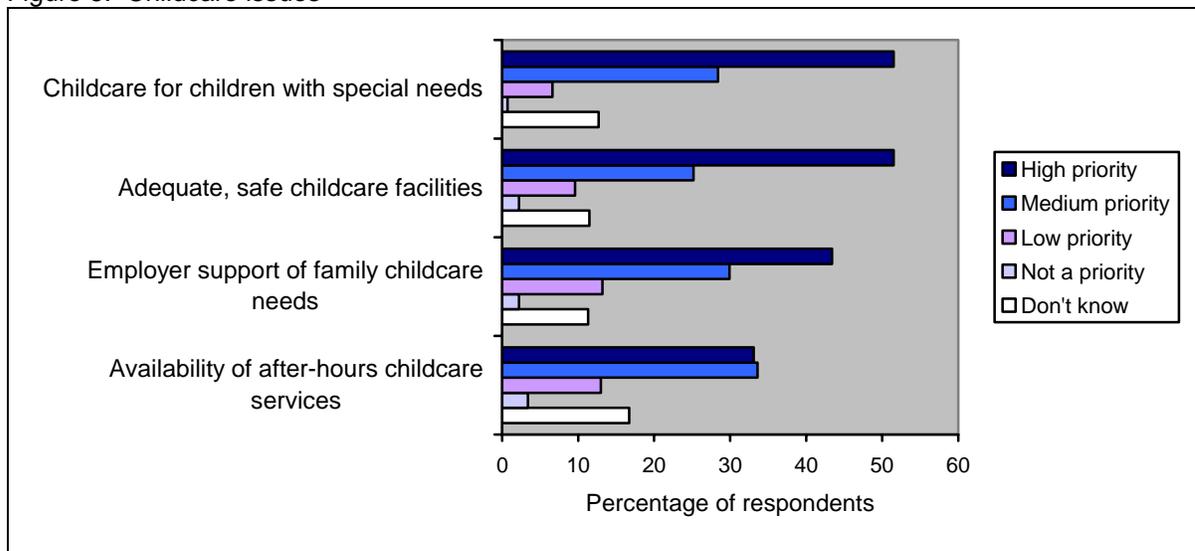


Table 5. Childcare issues

Childcare issues	Percentage of respondents					Refused	Total %
	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Don't know		
Childcare for children with special needs	51.5	28.4	6.6	0.7	12.7	0.0	99.9
Adequate, safe childcare facilities	51.5	25.2	9.6	2.2	11.5	0.0	100.0
Employer support of family childcare needs	43.4	29.9	13.2	2.2	11.3	0.0	100.0
Availability of after-hours childcare services	33.1	33.6	13.0	3.4	16.7	0.2	100.0

N=408

Public Transportation Issues

Reference Figure 6, Table 6.

- More than four in 10 respondents (43.9 percent) rated public transportation for people with special needs a **medium** priority and more than one in three rated the issue a **high** priority (37.0 percent).
- Approximately four in 10 respondents (41.2 percent) rated public transportation a **medium** priority and nearly three in 10 rated the issue a **low** priority (27.9 percent).
- More than one in three respondents (36.3 percent) rated after hours public transportation a **medium** priority and one in three rated the issue a **low** priority (32.6 percent).

Figure 6. Public transportation issues

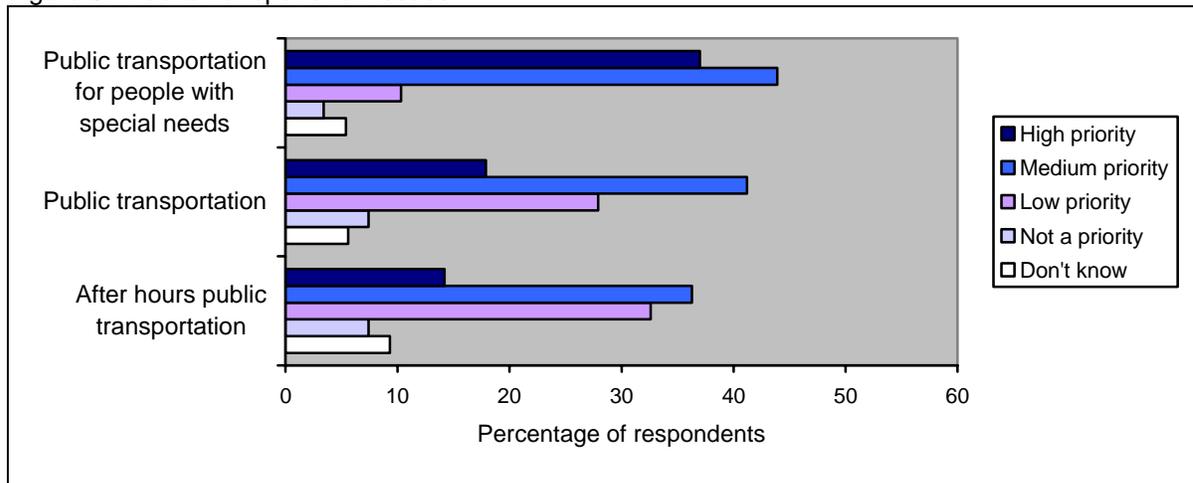


Table 6. Public transportation issues

Public transportation issues	Percentage of respondents						Total %
	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Don't know	Refused	
Public transportation for people with special needs	37.0	43.9	10.3	3.4	5.4	0.0	100.0
Public transportation	17.9	41.2	27.9	7.4	5.6	0.0	100.0
After hours public transportation	14.2	36.3	32.6	7.4	9.3	0.2	100.0

N=408

Other Program Services

Reference Figure 7, Table 7.

- More than one in two respondents (54.9 percent) rated availability of jobs that match job skills a **high** priority and nearly three in 10 rated the service a **medium** priority (27.7 percent).
- Approximately one in two respondents (48.8 percent) rated availability of skills training a **high** priority and more than one in three rated the service a **medium** priority (35.3 percent).
- Nearly one in two respondents (46.1 percent) rated disaster relief a **high** priority and one in three rated the service a **medium** priority (33.8 percent).
- Approximately four in 10 respondents (41.2 percent) rated promoting physical activity a **high** priority and nearly four in 10 rated the service a **medium** priority (36.8 percent).
- Regarding access to respite care services for caregivers, respondents were evenly divided between rating the service a **high** or **medium** priority (40.7 percent and 39.7 percent, respectively).
- Nearly one in two respondents (46.6 percent) rated promoting volunteerism a **medium** priority and one in three rated the service a **high** priority (33.1 percent).
- More than four in 10 respondents (43.1 percent) rated cultural activities a **medium** priority and three in 10 rated the service a **low** priority (30.1 percent).
- Four in 10 respondents (40.7 percent) rated nutrition education a **medium** priority and three in 10 rated the service a **high** priority (29.7 percent). Approximately two in 10 respondents rated the service a **low** priority (21.1 percent).
- Four in 10 respondents (39.2 percent) rated consumer protection programs a **medium** priority and three in 10 rated the service a **high** priority (28.9 percent). Two in 10 respondents rated the service a **low** priority (19.6 percent).
- Nearly four in 10 respondents (38.5 percent) rated money management programs a **medium** priority and one in three respondents rated the service a **high** priority (33.8 percent).
- Nearly four in 10 respondents rated clothing and furniture assistance either a **medium** or **low** priority (37.7 percent and 37.0 percent, respectively).

Figure 7. Other program services:

- A: Availability of jobs that match job skills
- B: Availability of skills training
- C: Disaster relief (fire/flood/storms)
- D: Promoting physical activity
- E: Access to respite care services for caregivers
- F: Promoting volunteerism
- G: Cultural activities
- H: Nutrition education
- I: Consumer protection programs
- J: Money management programs
- K: Clothing and furniture assistance

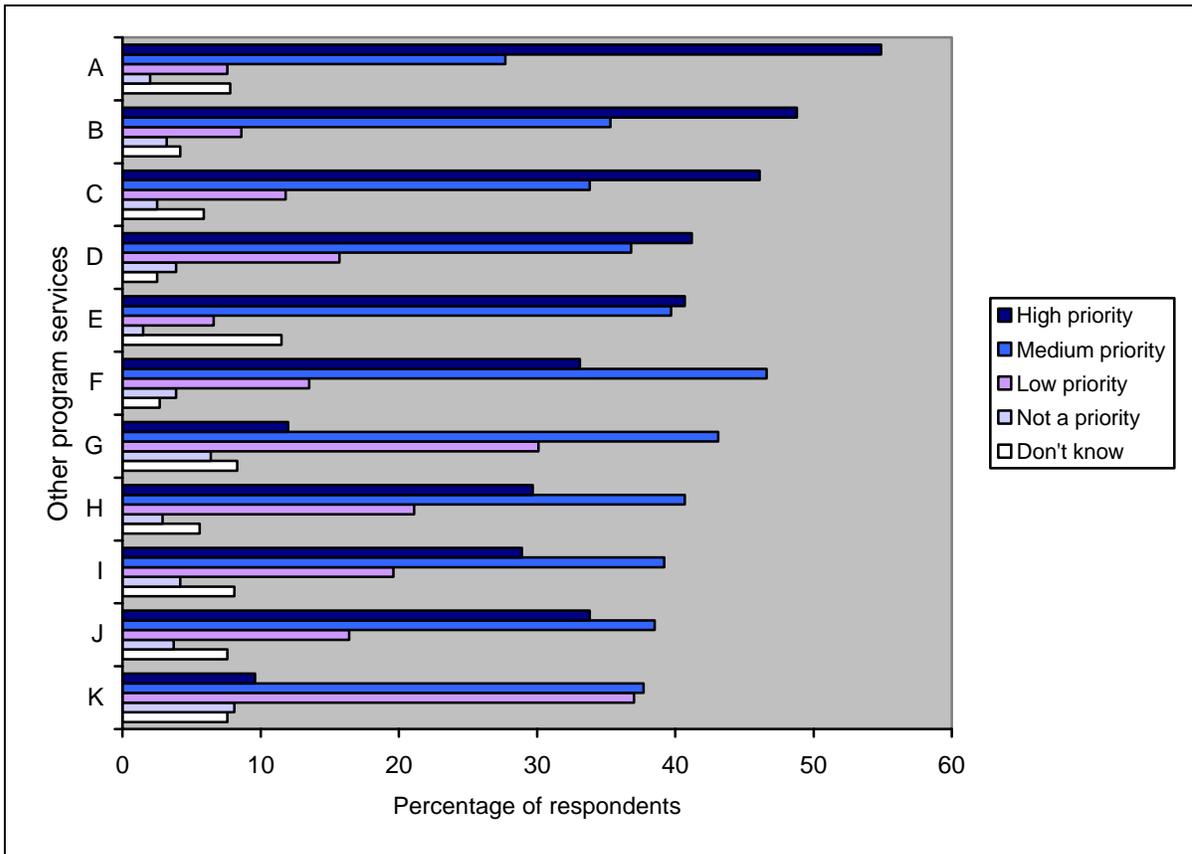


Table 7. Other program services

Other program services	Percentage of respondents						
	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Don't know	Refused	Total %
Availability of jobs that match job skills	54.9	27.7	7.6	2.0	7.8	0.0	100.0
Availability of skills training	48.8	35.3	8.6	3.2	4.2	0.0	100.1
Disaster relief (fire/flood/storms)	46.1	33.8	11.8	2.5	5.9	0.0	100.1
Promoting physical activity	41.2	36.8	15.7	3.9	2.5	0.0	100.1
Access to respite care services for caregivers	40.7	39.7	6.6	1.5	11.5	0.0	100.0
Promoting volunteerism	33.1	46.6	13.5	3.9	2.7	0.2	100.0
Cultural activities	12.0	43.1	30.1	6.4	8.3	0.0	99.9
Nutrition education	29.7	40.7	21.1	2.9	5.6	0.0	100.0
Consumer protection programs	28.9	39.2	19.6	4.2	8.1	0.0	100.0
Money management programs	33.8	38.5	16.4	3.7	7.6	0.0	100.0
Clothing and furniture assistance	9.6	37.7	37.0	8.1	7.6	0.0	100.0

N=408

Demographic Characteristics

Reference Figures 8-18, Tables 8-18.

- Nearly one in two respondents were between 45 and 64 years of age (45.1 percent). One in four were 65 or older (24.3 percent).

Figure 8. Respondent's age

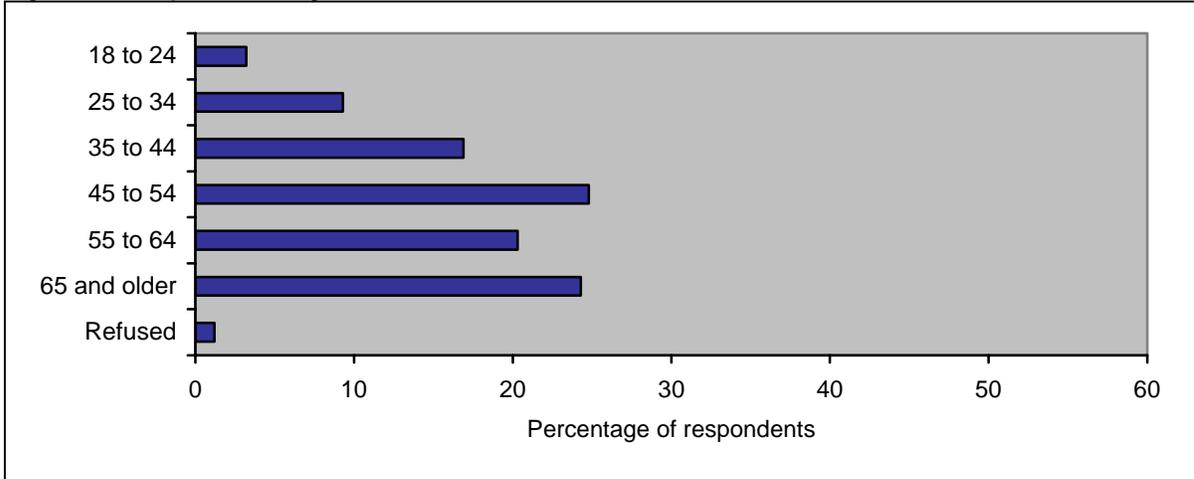


Table 8. Respondent's age

Age	Percentage of respondents
18 to 24	3.2
25 to 34	9.3
35 to 44	16.9
45 to 54	24.8
55 to 64	20.3
65 and older	24.3
Refused	1.2
Total	100.0

N=408

- Three in four respondents were married (77.0 percent).

Figure 9. Respondent's marital status

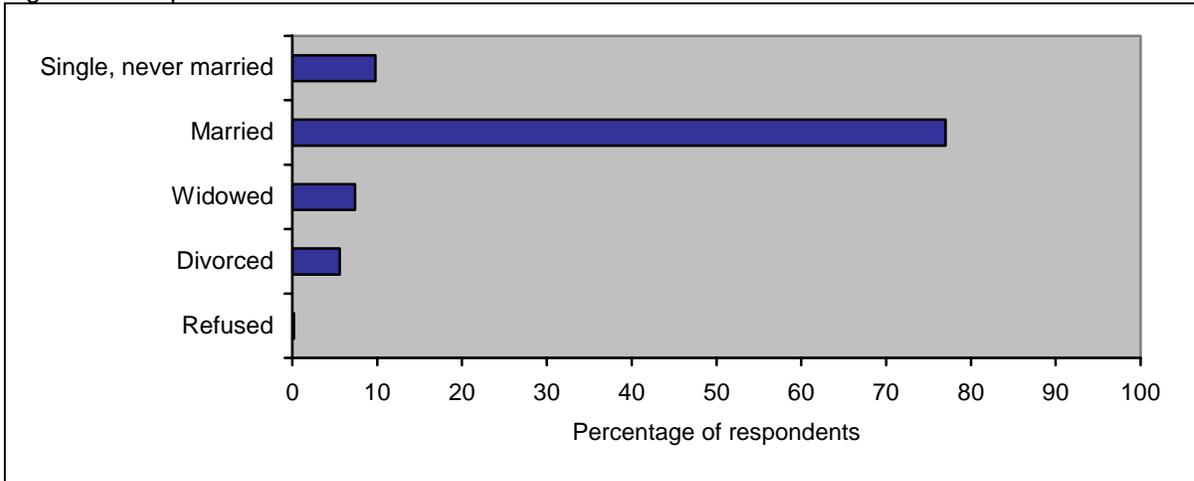


Table 9. Respondent's marital status

Marital status	Percentage of respondents
Single, never married	9.8
Married	77.0
Widowed	7.4
Divorced	5.6
Refused	0.2
Total	100.0

N=408

- Nearly one in two respondents (45.8 percent) said two people lived in their household.

Figure 10. Number of people living in respondent's household

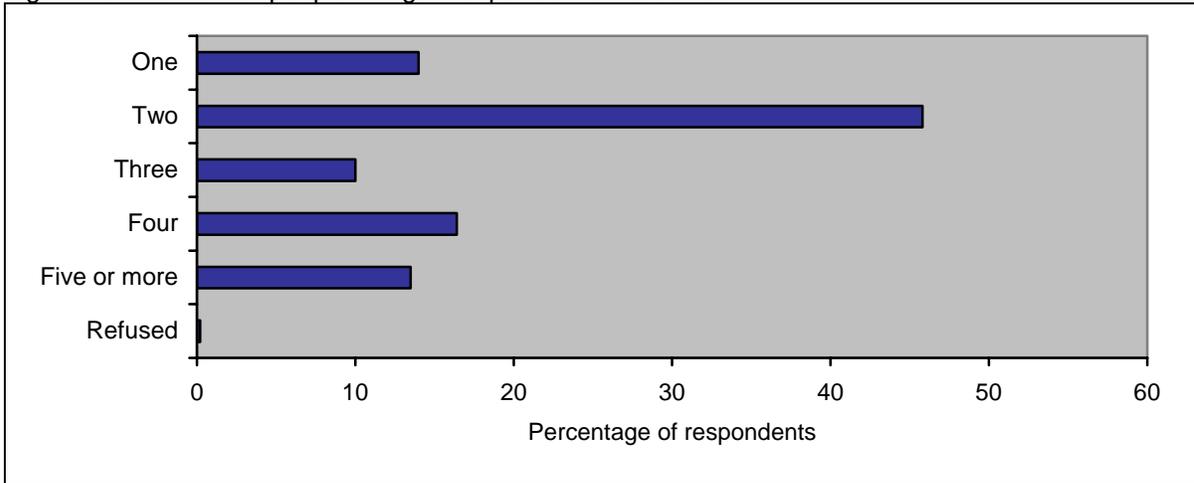


Table 10. Number of people living in respondent's household

Number of people	Percentage of respondents
One	14.0
Two	45.8
Three	10.0
Four	16.4
Five or more	13.5
Refused	0.2
Total	99.9

N=408

- Four in 10 respondents (39.0 percent) said they had children younger than 18 living in their household.

Figure 11. Whether respondent has children younger than 18 living in household

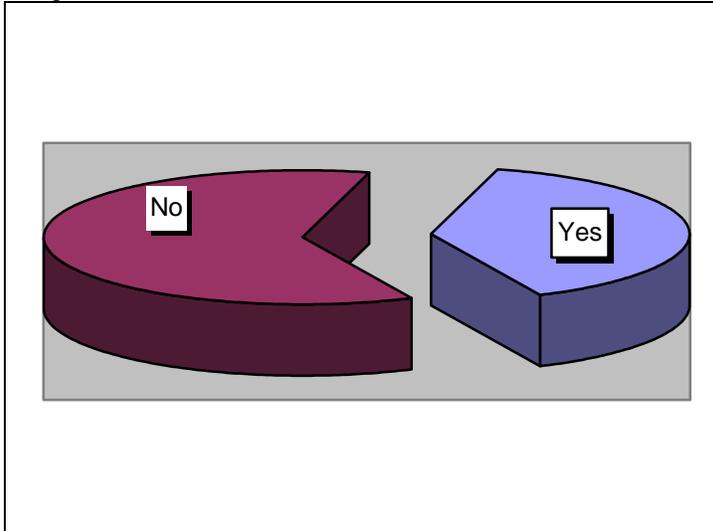


Table 11. Whether respondent has children younger than 18 living in household

	Percentage of respondents
Yes	39.0
No	61.0
Total	100.0

N=351

- Of those households with children:
 - Nearly four in 10 respondents had a child 0 to 5 years of age (36.6 percent).
 - Nearly one in two had a child 6 to 12 years of age (48.9 percent).
 - More than one in two had a child 13 to 17 (53.2 percent).

Figure 12. Of respondents who had children younger than 18 living in household, number of children in various age groups living in household

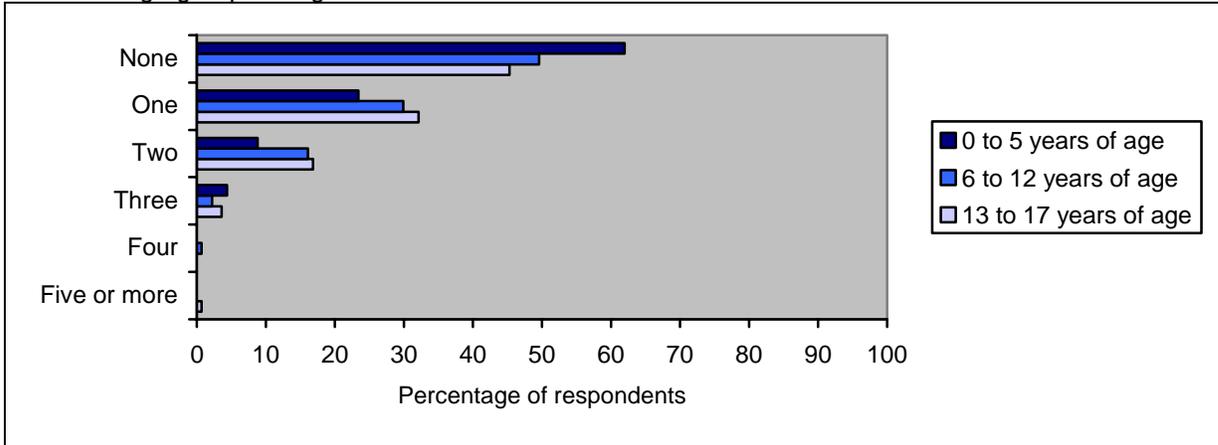


Table 12. Of respondents who had children younger than 18 living in household, number of children in various age groups living in household

Number of children	Percentage of respondents		
	0 to 5 years of age	6 to 12 years of age	13 to 17 years of age
None	62.0	49.6	45.3
One	23.4	29.9	32.1
Two	8.8	16.1	16.8
Three	4.4	2.2	3.6
Four	0.0	0.7	0.0
Five or more	0.0	0.0	0.7
Refused	1.5	1.5	1.5
Total	100.1	100.0	100.0

N=137

- More than four in 10 respondents said their annual household income before taxes in 2004 was less than \$50,000 (42.1 percent).

Figure 13. Respondent's annual household income before taxes

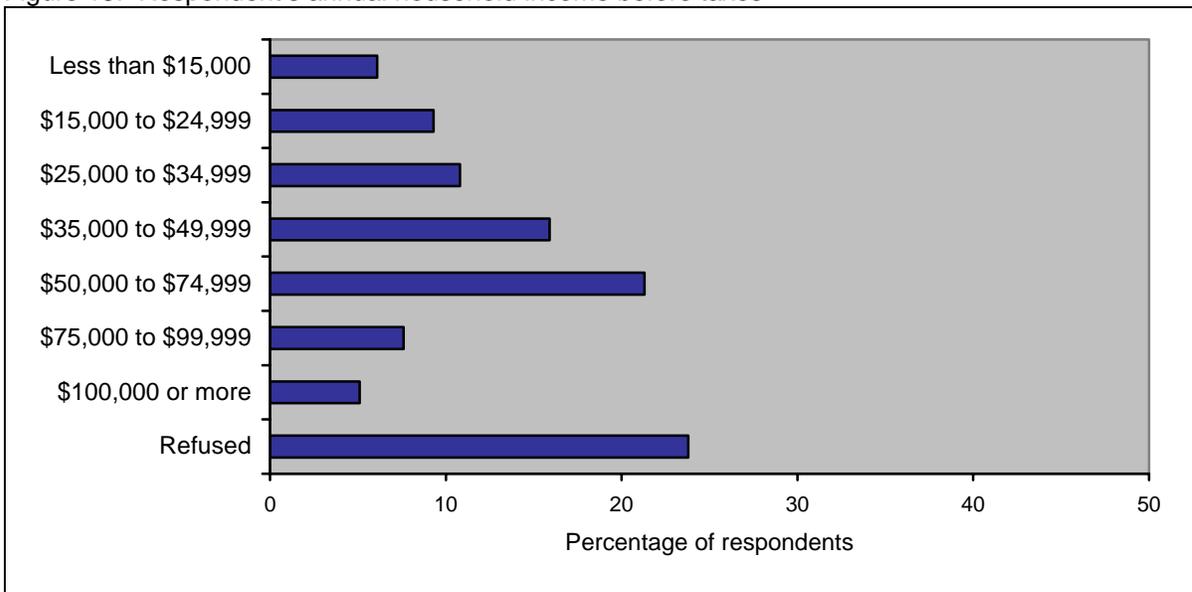


Table 13. Respondent's annual household income before taxes

Annual household income	Percentage of respondents
Less than \$15,000	6.1
\$15,000 to \$24,999	9.3
\$25,000 to \$34,999	10.8
\$35,000 to \$49,999	15.9
\$50,000 to \$74,999	21.3
\$75,000 to \$99,999	7.6
\$100,000 or more	5.1
Refused	23.8
Total	99.9

N=408

- One in four respondents indicated there were multiple job holders living in their household (24.0 percent).

Figure 14. Whether there are multiple job holders living in household

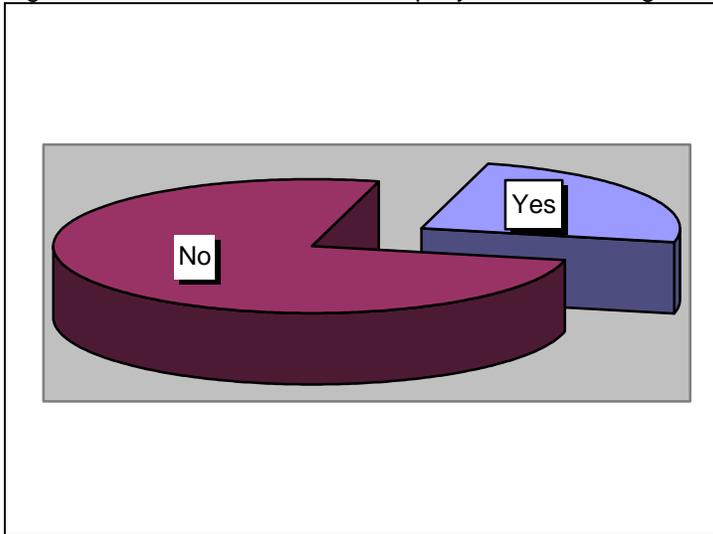


Table 14. Whether there are multiple job holders living in household

	Percentage of respondents
Yes	24.0
No	75.2
Refused	0.7
Total	99.9

N=408

- Regarding employment status, more than one in two were employed full-time (53.2 percent).

Figure 15. Respondent's employment status

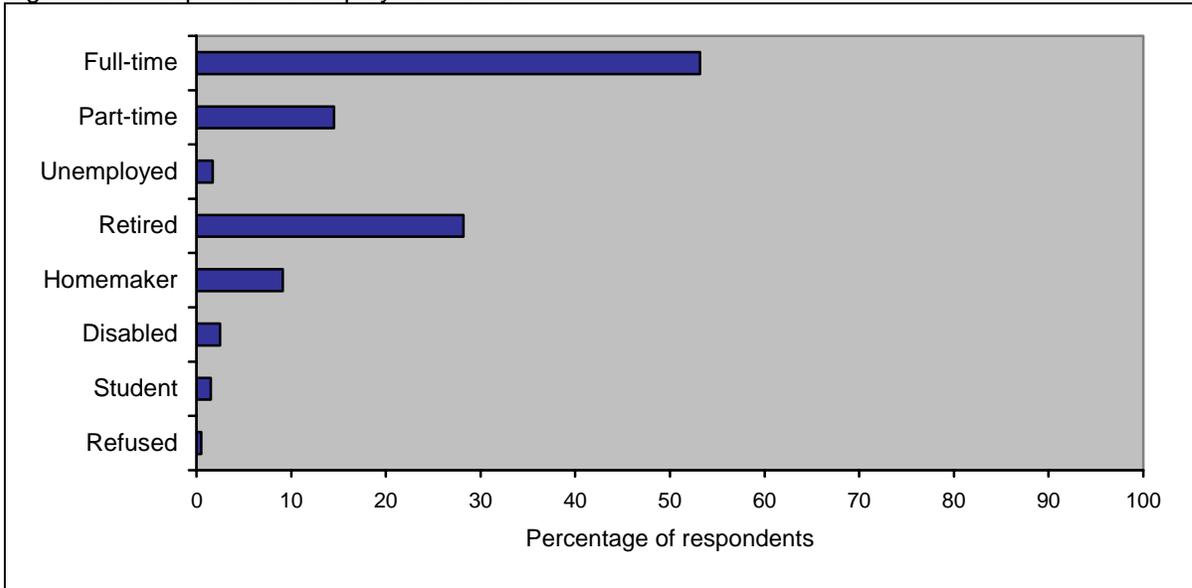


Table 15. Respondent's employment status

Employment status	Percentage of respondents*
Full-time	53.2
Part-time	14.5
Unemployed	1.7
Retired	28.2
Homemaker	9.1
Disabled	2.5
Student	1.5
Refused	0.5

*Percentages do not add to 100.0 due to multiple responses.

N=408

- The vast majority of respondents said they own their home (90.9 percent).

Figure 16. Whether respondent owns or rents home

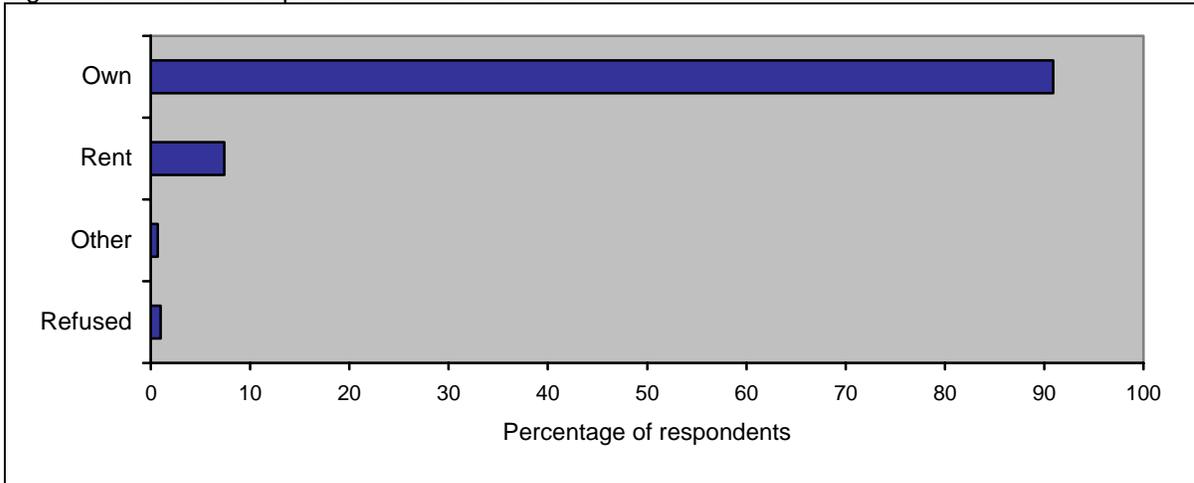


Table 16. Whether respondent owns or rents home

	Percentage of respondents
Own	90.9
Rent	7.4
Other	0.7
Refused	1.0
Total	100.0

N=408

- Six in 10 respondents said the building they live in was built prior to 1978 (59.6 percent).

Figure 17. Whether the building that respondent lives in was built prior to 1978

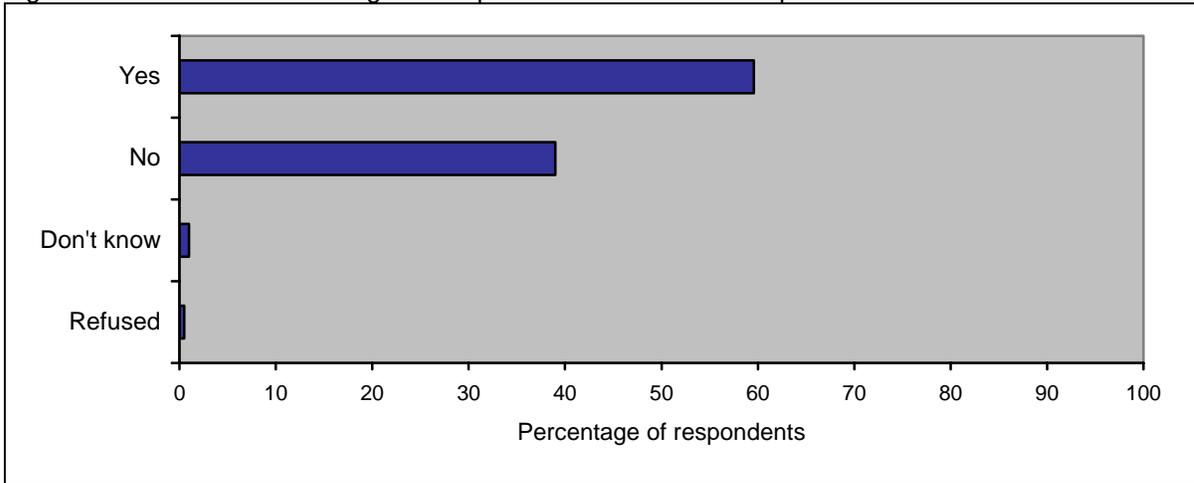


Table 17. Whether the building that respondent lives in was built prior to 1978

	Percentage of respondents
Yes	59.6
No	39.0
Don't know	1.0
Refused	0.5
Total	100.1

N=408

- Six in 10 respondents were female (61.2 percent).

Figure 18. Gender of respondent

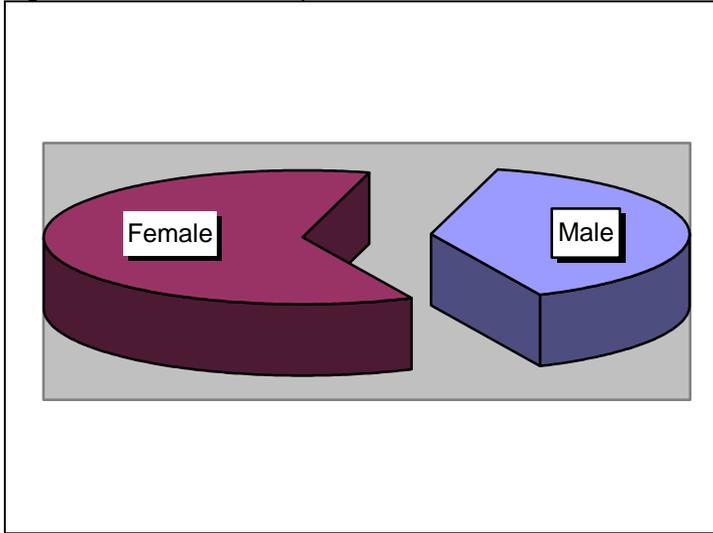


Table 18. Gender of respondent

	Percentage of respondents
Male	38.8
Female	61.2
Total	100.0

N=408

Respondent Comments by Theme

Respondents were asked at the end of each phone interview if they had questions or comments they would like to share. Their comments, organized by general themes, are presented here.

Programs/services:

- More government programs are not needed if issues can be handled by private sector.
- We need to pay attention to what we already have available.
- Specify the information on the application. Many items are the role of federal and state government.
- The county should be careful to stay out of services that other programs are already providing. Should avoid wasting money and resources.
- To be working hard and not qualifying for any assistance is disheartening. Mother needed help from county and migrant workers got as much help as they needed. She got none.
- This survey addresses the needs that people can pay for themselves rather than having the county pay for them. There are enough programs already for those who need them.
- A lot of services are used by a few. They need to be more publicized so the community knows they are there. The public can't use services that aren't made known to them.
- People who really need help should make sure that they have that help available; she doesn't know if the county can do that for them.
- Could use more support groups in local areas.
- I just like to see people work for their money. I don't like to give handouts for people who are healthy.
- My thinking is conservative – people should take care of themselves.
- It is important for the community to help those less fortunate.

Jobs/employment:

- She's very upset because she can't find a job. Seems she is discriminated against as elder abuse.
- School enrollment is dropping because younger families leave Fergus Falls because of no jobs available. Need some industry.
- If people such as single mothers get a job, they would lose all the help they get from the government. But the money they make isn't enough to make a living. Why doesn't the government let them get a job and provide whatever is needed to make a living, instead of not letting them work at all?
- Jobs need to have better pay. Everything is getting more and more expensive.
- Job availability - need more decent jobs.
- Compared to other towns they seem stagnant. Seem to be moving backwards instead of forwards, especially economically [Fergus Falls].
- The government said people need to get off assistance. Go out and get a job and get benefits there. But there are no jobs available, and those that do hire, hire two part-time instead of one full-time so they [employees] do not get benefits.
- I wish we had more employment opportunities greater than minimum wage.
- Interest in county economic development should have been an issue - and is an issue.

Education:

- Emphasize education, and not buildings, and focus on good teachers.
- Full support of interest in getting a new high school and taking care of problems with existing school [Fergus Falls].
- Early childhood education is a concern for me.
- Does not think home-schooling should be allowed.
- Home education is very important – mothers should take care of their kids.
- Teacher, child, and parent communication is very important – supervise your kids – raise your own kids.
- Prioritize education.
- Prioritize funds for special education.

- Educating our youth is important – getting help for students that are troublesome.
- Teachers need to be supported in all areas.
- County priority should be schools.

Healthcare/insurance issues:

- Costs of healthcare and medications are getting out of hand. Those issues are important to me.
- Mental health services are needed more.
- Health insurance needs to be looked at. Can't get on health insurance.
- Healthcare is a huge priority.
- Health insurance. Something has to be done for the cost of health insurance, especially for self-employed.
- Prescription drugs and drug coverage are high priorities.
- Health insurance is way too high.
- Transition support for adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. Help kids find a way to get back in the community after any drug treatment.
- The regional treatment center – the building should be more productive.
- Health insurance for the uninsured.

Meth:

- The meth epidemic. How are we going to protect the community and children from it? Recognize the users. Education. The cost to the community to rehab the users.
- Houses are being rented out by people who have meth labs and growing pot.
- Meth is a concern.
- Meth.
- Meth is an extremely high priority, as so many awful crimes occur because of it.
- Otter Tail community is a very rich county with many services. Meth is the big challenge.

Housing/utilities:

- Rent is too high in the Silver Leaf government housing [program].
- Otter Tail County should do something about the high rate of the utilities.
- Electricity prices.
- Need to concentrate on affordable housing.
- Help with building or management so it's done right with permits.
- They should have programs on these old homes to help people fix them up.

Children/youth:

- Children should have parenting, reading, to be successful.
- Issues dealing with children are high priorities because they are our future.
- Children should not be raised by the county. Mothers are needed at home.
- Youth activities, not much for them to do.
- Outdoor pool/water park for the children of the community.

Law enforcement:

- County priority should be law enforcement.
- Most important priority is law enforcement.
- I wish there were more law enforcement around to control traffic. People speed around the area.
- More law enforcement on the eastern end of the county.

Miscellaneous comments:

- Otter Tail land management is too regulated. Planning commission charges and oppresses the people. No one is willing to stand up for themselves. Gestapo measures. Like ordering people around. County commissioners appoint their friends and are cowards.
- County should not be involved in some issues, e.g., banking or getting a home loan. Please have a reply [in survey] of "not a county issue."
- Would have liked to rate everything as high priority.

- Emphasize God more, don't kick the 10 Commandments out of government. Have the same zeal for Jesus as Muslims have for Mohammed.
- Stop abortion.
- We should concentrate on the high priority issues and the low priority issues would take care of themselves.
- Thinks Otter Tail does an adequate job overall.
- Feels like this survey is directed towards city residents more than rural residents.
- County tried to opt out of zoning. Feels they shorted the county when they made sure they could opt out of zoning.
- The sneaky fee increases that are being mandated for the county to pass on because of the entire LGA [Local Government Associations] for the small towns. That should be looked at.
- Get off the GOP "save money" thing because it doesn't save money.
- County needs to recognize what they can and can't do.
- Otter Tail offers a lot to people finishing college.
- Shutting down the state is kind of ridiculous.
- Legislators' paychecks should be held until they get something done.
- Watch the tax increases.
- Thirty-two years in law enforcement helped me to see the needs of the community. I don't have the awareness [now] that I did have.
- Good job with recycling program.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Otter Tail County Needs Assessment
June 2005

Hello, my name is _____, and I'm calling from the Center for Social Research at North Dakota State University. We are conducting a research study to find out the views of Otter Tail residents regarding where the county should place its energies and resources. May I please speak to someone in your household who is 18 years of age or older?

This research study will help agencies and organizations across the country determine where to place their energies and resources by learning more about what residents view as priorities.

The survey is voluntary and will take about 10 minutes. It is being sponsored by the Otter Tail County Needs Assessment Committee and United Way of Otter Tail County. If you have questions about the research study, you may call Lynne Olson at 218-736-5147 or Dr. Richard Rathge at 701-231-8621. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may call the Institutional Review Board 701-231-8908.

Qset_up_a

To begin, please tell me where the county should place its energies and resources by prioritizing the following list of COMMUNITY CONCERNS using a scale from "not a priority", to a low, medium, or high priority.

If you do not know about the topic or you do not want to answer the question, simply respond "don't know".

Q1

How would you prioritize...

- Crime and law enforcement
- Promoting diversity
- Abuse or domestic violence of children and adults
- Overall needs of the elderly
- Homelessness

1. Not a priority
2. Low priority
3. Medium priority
4. High priority
5. Don't know
6. [Refused]

QSet_up_b

Next, please prioritize the following list of HOUSING ISSUES using the same scale, from "not a priority", to a low, medium, or high priority, or say "don't know".

Q2

How would you prioritize...

- Availability of housing
- Affordability of rents
- Availability of rental assistance
- Access to financing for buying houses
- Affordability of housing repairs
- Access to shelter for the homeless
- Shelter for victims of neglect, abuse, or domestic violence
- Elderly living facilities (e.g., retirement, assisted living)

Temporary housing (refugees, people from prison, mental hospitals)

1. Not a priority
2. Low priority
3. Medium priority
4. High priority
5. Don't know
6. [Refused]

QSet_up_c

Next, please prioritize the following list of HEALTHCARE ISSUES using the same scale, from "not a priority", to a low, medium, or high priority, or say "don't know".

Q3

How would you prioritize...

Alcohol use
Meth or other drug use
Tobacco and secondhand smoke
Mental health
Transportation to and from health services
Availability of health services

1. Not a priority
2. Low priority
3. Medium priority
4. High priority
5. Don't know
6. [Refused]

QSet_up_d

Next, please prioritize the following list of EDUCATIONAL ISSUES using the same scale, from "not a priority", to a low, medium, or high priority, or say "don't know".

Q4

How would you prioritize...

School drop out rate
Before and after school programs
Help for families of children with disciplinary problems
Literacy and reading programs
School preparedness
Threat of violence at school
Availability of parenting skills education
Parent-teacher connections

1. Not a priority
2. Low priority
3. Medium priority
4. High priority
5. Don't know
6. [Refused]

QSet_up_e

Next, please prioritize the following list of CHILDCARE ISSUES using the same scale, from "not a priority", to a low, medium, or high priority, or say "don't know".

Q5

How would you prioritize...

Availability of after-hours childcare services
Adequate, safe childcare facilities
Childcare for children with special needs
Employer support of family childcare needs

1. Not a priority
2. Low priority
3. Medium priority
4. High priority
5. Don't know
6. [Refused]

QSet_up_f

Next, please prioritize the following list of PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ISSUES using the same scale, from "not a priority", to a low, medium, or high priority, or say "don't know".

Q6

How would you prioritize...

Public transportation
After hours public transportation
Public transportation for people with special needs

1. Not a priority
2. Low priority
3. Medium priority
4. High priority
5. Don't know
6. [Refused]

QSet_up_g

Next, please prioritize the following list of OTHER PROGRAM SERVICES using the same scale, from "not a priority", to a low, medium, or high priority, or say "don't know".

Q7

How would you prioritize...

Nutrition education
Promoting physical education
Promoting volunteerism
Access to respite care service for caregivers
Availability of jobs that match job skills
Availability of skills training
Money management
Clothing and furniture assistance
Disaster relief (fire/flood/storms)
Consumer protections programs
Cultural activities

1. Not a priority
2. Low priority
3. Medium priority
4. High priority
5. Don't know
6. [Refused]

QSet_up_h

Finally, it is important to know some general characteristics about the people who responded to the survey.

Q8

Could you please tell me your age?

Q9

What is your marital status?

1. Single (never married)
2. Married
3. Widowed
4. Divorced
5. [Refused]

Q10

How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

1. One [skip to Q12]
2. Two
3. Three
4. Four
5. Five or more
6. [Refused] [skip to Q12]

Q11

Do you have any children younger than 18?

1. Yes
2. No [skip to Q12]
3. [Refused] [skip to Q12]

Q11a

How many, ages 0 to 5, live in your household?

Q11b

How many, ages 6 to 12, live in your household?

Q11c

How many, ages 13 to 17, live in your household?

Q12

What was your annual household income before taxes in 2004?

1. Less than \$15,000
2. \$15,000 to \$24,999
3. \$25,000 to \$34,999
4. \$35,000 to \$49,000
5. \$50,000 to \$74,999
6. \$75,000 to \$99,999
7. \$100,000 or more
8. [Refused]

Q13

Are there any multiple job holders living in your household?

1. Yes
2. No
3. [Refused]

Q14

What is your employment status? [check all that apply]

Full time employed
Part time employed
Unemployed
Retired
Homemaker
Disabled
Student

Q15

Do you own or rent your home?

1. Own
2. Rent
3. Other
4. [Refused]

Q16

Was the building you live in built prior to 1978?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. [Refused]

Q17

Do you have any additional questions or concerns?

QEnd

That completes our survey. Thank you for taking the time to help us with this important study.
Goodnight.

Q18

Record gender based on voice.

1. Male
2. Female

Q19

Record zip code from calling sheet.