



2011 Public Satisfaction Survey



Research Results

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2011 public opinion survey on services and life in Strathcona County was undertaken in December 2011 to obtain perceptions on the quality of life of residents living in Sherwood Park and rural parts of Strathcona County. This is the 14th annual formal resident satisfaction study. Overall, the following information was extracted from the data:

1. Residents of Strathcona County continue to have very positive perceptions of the quality of life for them and for their families; almost all of the people interviewed would recommend Strathcona County as a place to live. With respect to five broad aspects of life in Strathcona County measured, *a place to raise children* was rated highest overall (84.8% rated very high or high), followed by *a safe community* (76.9% rated very high or high), *the quality of the natural environment* (67.1% rated very high or high), *County staff balancing needs and interests of people living throughout the County* (64.9% rated very fair or fair) and *Mayor and Council balancing needs and interests of people living throughout the County* (61% rated very fair or fair).
2. The positive views that people had of living in the County as a whole extended to the general satisfaction level for 18 specific services offered by County staff. The overall results are shown in Figures A through E. Services that residents rated particularly high included *fire & ambulance services* (Figure A), *indoor recreation facilities, parks, green spaces and sports fields* and *the County Library* (Figure B). The services that received lower satisfaction ratings were *permit & inspection services, land use planning* and *agricultural services* (Figure D), and *winter road maintenance* (Figure E). **Even here, residents still tended to rate these services as “average” rather than “low.”** Overall, the rating of services by residents this year is very similar to findings from 2010, with the following exceptions: *Economic Development* and *Winter Road Maintenance* both showed a 6% higher satisfaction between 2010 and 2011; and *Library Services* had an 11% increase over 2010. Please note the ratings of some services may be dependent on whether residents lived in urban or rural

Strathcona County and/or whether residents actually used a particular service. Details of these types of breakdowns can be found in the main body of the report.

FIGURE A
Overall Ratings of Different County Services – Helping Services

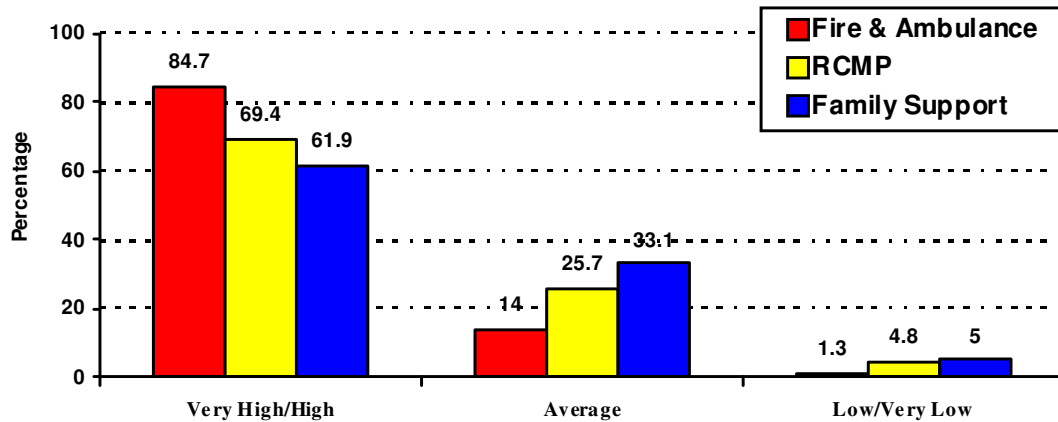


FIGURE B
Overall Ratings of Different County Services – Recreation, Library & Volunteer Information Services

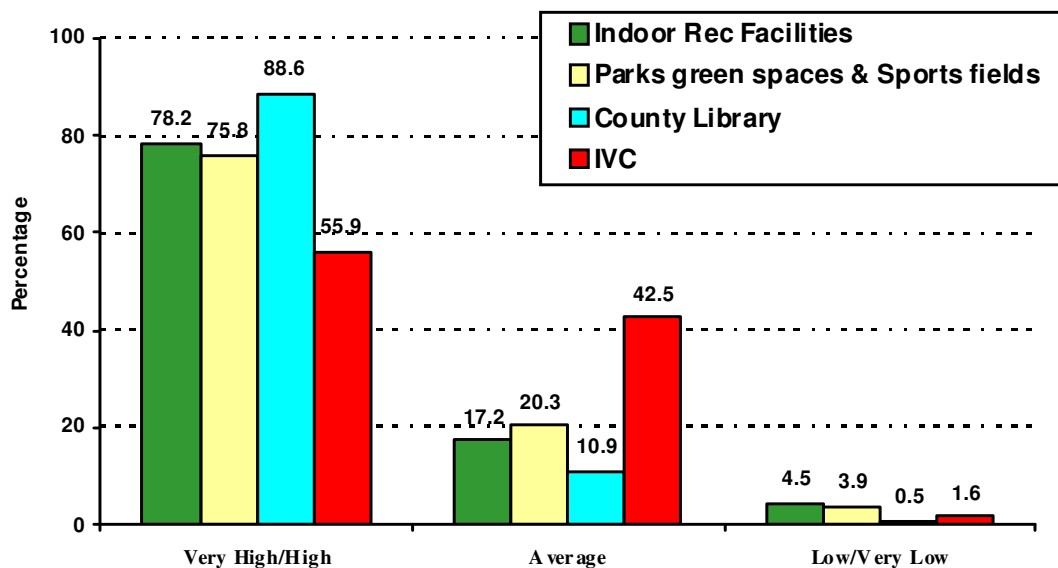


FIGURE C
Overall Ratings of Different County Services – Waste & Water Services

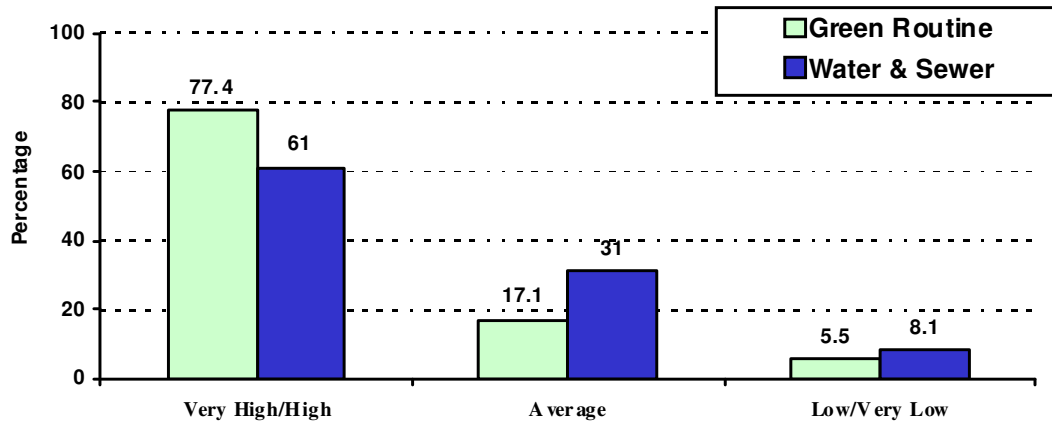


FIGURE D
Overall Ratings of Different County Services – Different Inspection, Planning and Land Related Services

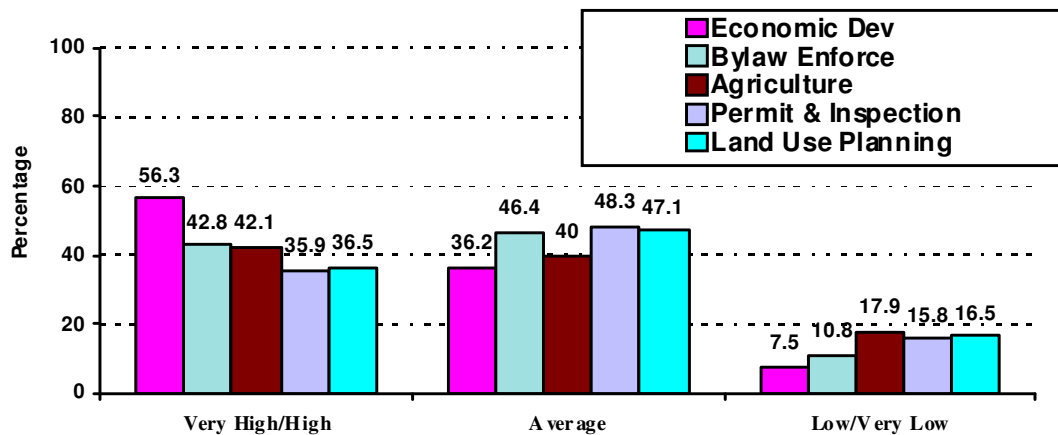
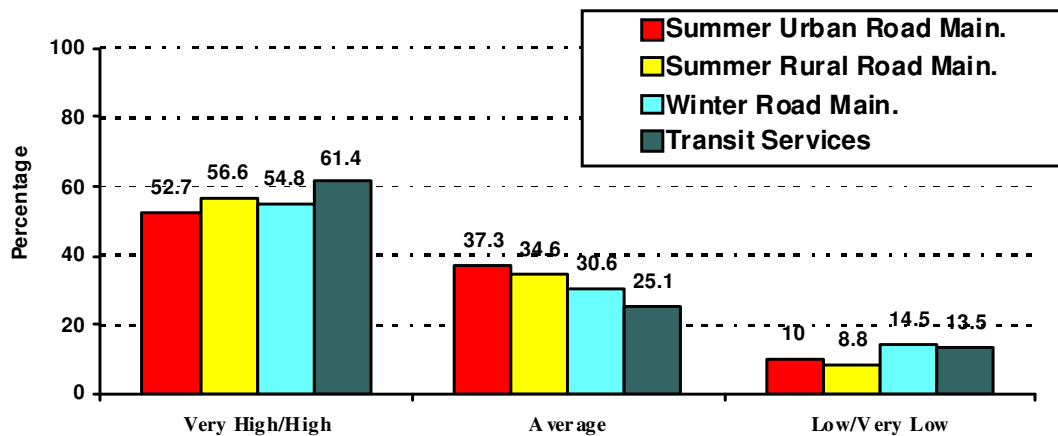


FIGURE E
Overall Ratings of Different County Services – Roadwork and Transit Services

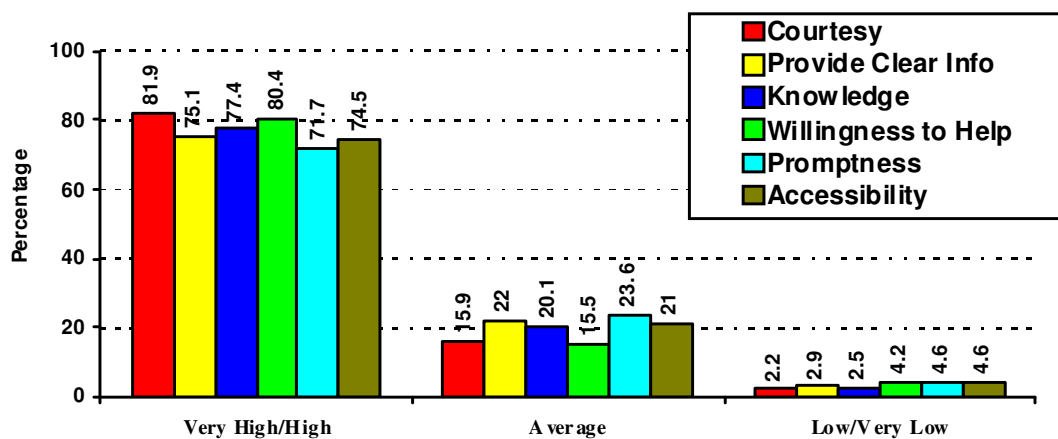


3. In this survey, as in previous years, residents rated all 18 services, but no additional questions were asked about other aspects of these County services. Individual departments can utilize the results from this survey as an overall perceptual measurement. Individual departments may also wish to consider customized detailed surveys to get feedback from County users and/or residents on specific aspects of their departments. Many departments are now doing this as the need arises.

4. Residents were generally satisfied with the quality of new residential, commercial and industrial developments in the County, with the highest level of satisfaction resting evenly between commercial developments (55.8% *very high/high* ratings) and residential developments (48.6% *very high/high* ratings), while 39.6% of residents gave industrial developments a positive rating in 2011. The majority of people felt that the quantity of commercial and industrial developments in the County was about right at the present time. However, a large percentage of residents (25.8%) felt that there may be too many residential developments occurring within the County as of 2011, though it should be noted that this perception was 10% lower this year compared to 2010. The other findings with respect to quality and quantity have been similar to those found in previous satisfaction surveys.

5. In terms of perceived value of services for the tax dollars paid, the perception that one is getting *good* or *very good* value for the tax dollars is holding steady among urban residents when compared to previous years. The percentage of residents who felt this way was 55.1% in 2011, which is the highest that it's been since 2005 (55.2%).
6. In terms of perceived value of services for the tax dollars paid, there was much greater dissatisfaction among rural residents, and this pattern has not changed over the past 6 years. For rural residents, the perception that one is getting *good* or *very good* value for the tax dollars was 36.9%, which is the highest it's been since tracking began in 2000. The percentage of rural residents who believe they are getting *poor* or *very poor* value for their tax dollars was 23.4% in 2011, and while this is the lowest that it's ever been since tracking began in 2000, it should still be recognized that close to a quarter of rural residents continue to be dissatisfied.
7. It can be seen in Figure F that ratings of County staff on the provision of services to the public were favorable on all aspects of service delivery, particularly *courtesy*. The positive ratings for each of these were about the same or slightly higher than what was found in 2010, with the exception of *promptness of staff*, which was 4% lower this year compared to previous years. Even here, the satisfaction level was 71.7%, which is quite high.

FIGURE F
Quality of Services provided by County Staff



8. Residents were asked to rate some existing sources of information about Strathcona County. In 2011, most of the methods received positive ratings from residents (*County website, newspapers, info via the utility bill, and newsletters or brochures*). *Open houses* were less popular and *pre-recorded telephone messages* only received minimal ratings. This was also the pattern found in 2010, 2009, 2008 and 2007.
9. Overall, 70.8% of residents took the time to visit the County website, which is about 5% lower than what was recorded in 2010. Of those who visited the site, 65.7% of residents gave the website *very high or high* ratings, which is 6% higher than what was found in 2010.
10. Residents were also asked to indicate what online methods they may have used to get information about Strathcona County. Overall, 49.4% of Internet users had used various online methods, with the most prominent methods being *online forums* or *Facebook*.
11. Overall, 57.1% of residents gave Strathcona County a positive rating on its communication with residents in 2011 (which was slightly lower than the 60.4% rating given in 2010 and almost the same as the 57.5% reported in 2009), while

50.7% were satisfied with having opportunities to express opinions about municipal issues, which was slightly higher than findings seen in the 2010, 2009 and 2008 surveys.

12. In 2010, outside of the satisfaction survey, 22% of residents took the time to give the County feedback on a municipal initiative or issue, either through a telephone or online survey, a discussion group or at an open house. This is slightly lower than the 24% participation rate seen in 2010 and the 26.6% participation rate found in 2009.
13. The majority of residents (60.4%) were satisfied with how well Strathcona County works with other levels of government.
14. Overall, 28.4% of residents were aware of Strathcona County's Strategic Plan. This is slightly higher than the awareness levels reported in 2010.

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In December 2011, Strathcona County conducted a satisfaction survey of its residents to obtain perceptions on the quality of life of residents living in Sherwood Park and rural parts of Strathcona County. This is the 14th annual satisfaction study of residents.¹ The main purpose of this research was to identify and measure a series of factors (or impact of County services) that contribute to a person's satisfaction with the quality of life in Strathcona County.

Obtaining primary data from residents directly will provide Strathcona County departments with information, and 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

A. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was a similar instrument to that used in 2000 and subsequent years. Most of the questions from previous surveys were retained to allow valid comparisons with the previous year. Since 2008, a variety of questions have been incorporated into the survey pertaining to how well the County conveys information to its residents.

¹ There was no satisfaction study conducted in 2002 due to a county-wide Community Consultation project.

B. 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 500 people living in urban² 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. As such, 65% of the sample was drawn from the urban area, while 35% came from rural parts of Strathcona County. The sample frame provided overall results³ accurate to within $\pm 4.32\%$, 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 December 2nd and December 8th, 2011. Strathcona County derived telephone numbers from the Select Phone Canadian Edition database along with the *Telus Telephone Directory* 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 12 minutes to complete. The data was analyzed by Strathcona County's Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs using SPSS for Windows.

² In this report, the urban component of Strathcona County is Sherwood Park.

³ 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.

III. RESULTS

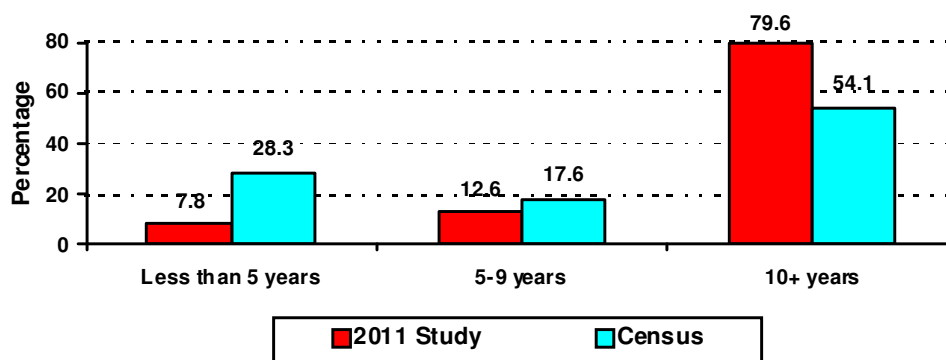
This section of the report presents a summary of the results associated with the perceptions and awareness of residents. Socio-demographic comparisons, where significant, are also highlighted. Comparisons will also be made with data collected from the previous year's survey, when significant differences occur.

A. Demographic Overview

This section of the report presents an overview of the type of residents who were surveyed in 2011. As indicated in the previous section of this report, part of the sampling criteria was to survey County residents, based on the percentage of people living in rural and urban areas. The other sampling criteria was to obtain answers from equal numbers of males and females. Almost all of the people interviewed were homeowners (93%), while the remaining residents were renters.

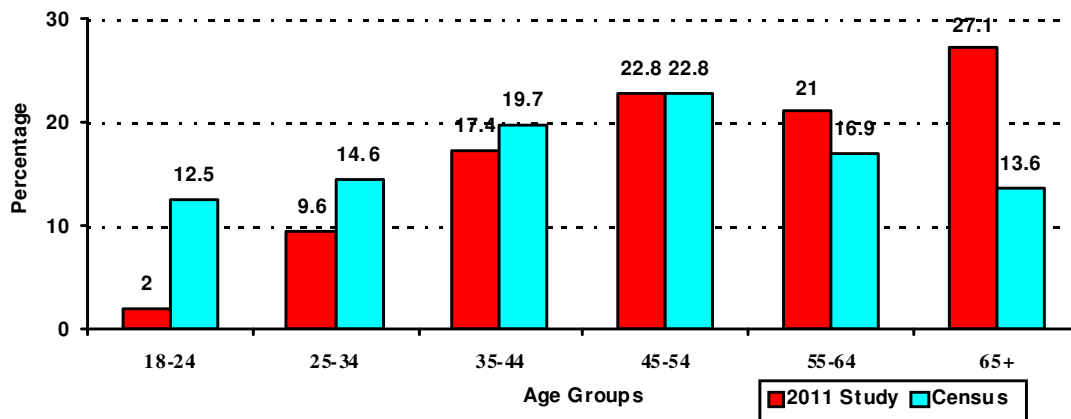
The majority of people who took part in the survey indicated they were long-term residents in the County. Figure 1 presents a breakdown of length of residence. It can be seen the majority of respondents have lived in the County for more than 10 years. The average number of years that people lived in Strathcona County was 22.7 years. In terms of sampling, it can be seen that relative to the Municipal Census, fewer newer residents to the County were interviewed compared to longer term residents.

Figure 1
Length of Time Living in the County



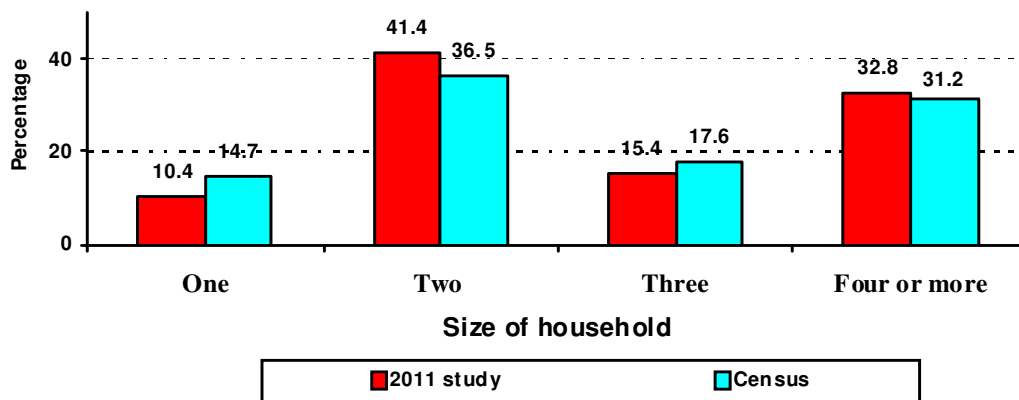
A breakdown of the age of the respondents is shown in Figure 2. There was a relatively good representation from most age groups, though in comparison to the 2009 census⁴, the 18-24 and 25-34 year age groups were under-represented and the 65 or older category was over-represented.

FIGURE 2
Age of Respondents



A breakdown of household size is shown in Figure 3. The sample frame for this study was comparable with the 2009 census. The average household size was 2.9 people

FIGURE 3
Size of Household



⁴ These percentages are adjusted to reflect a 100% total of those residents 18 and older (excluding younger residents).

Household composition is shown in Figure 4 and a breakdown of the number of children in the household is shown in Figure 5. These findings have been consistent over the past few years when conducting the satisfaction survey.

FIGURE 4
Household Composition

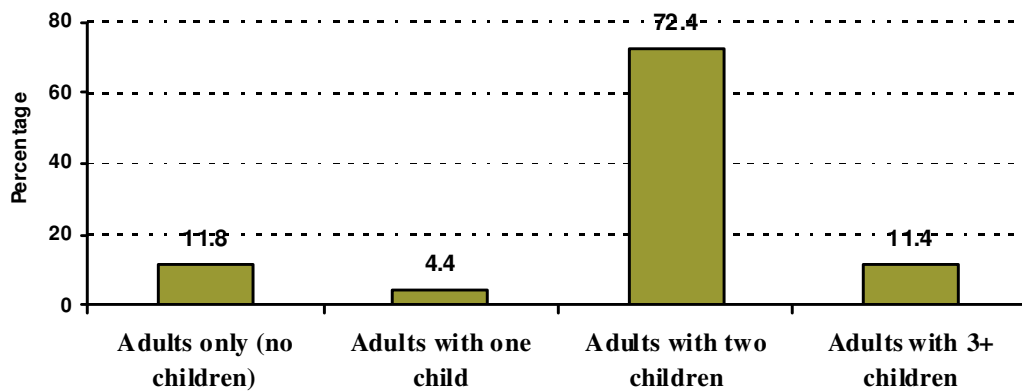
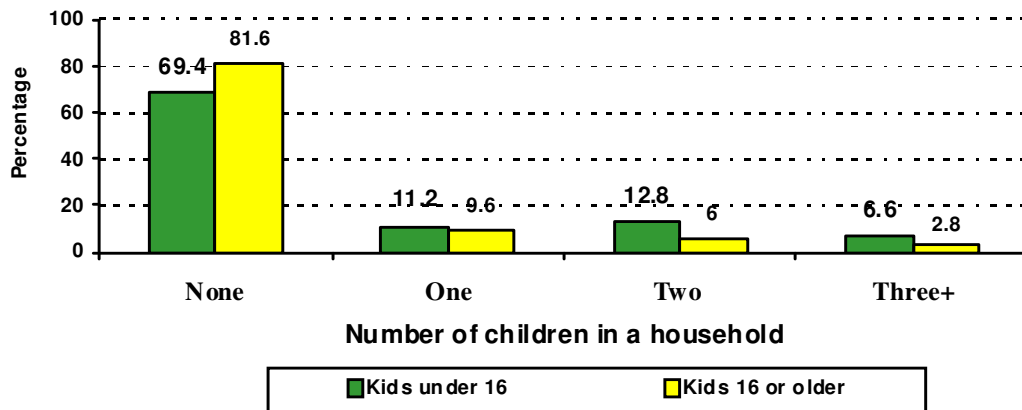


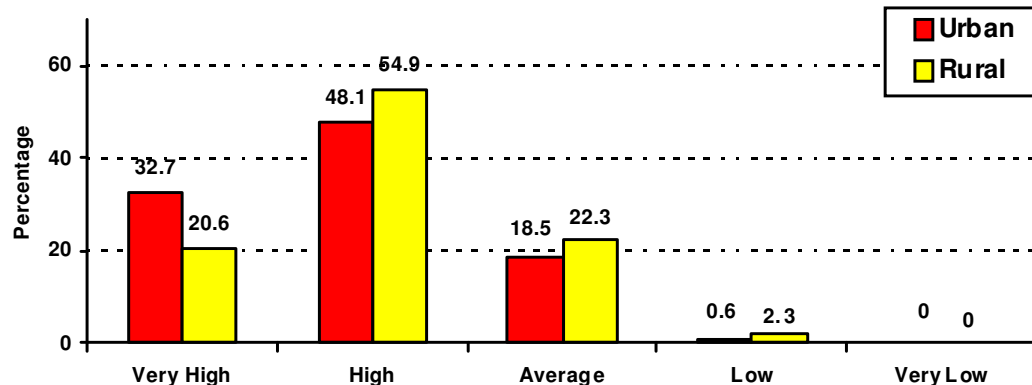
FIGURE 5
Number of Children in Household (based on ages of children)



B. Quality of Life in Strathcona County

Respondents were initially asked to indicate the extent to which they were satisfied with life in Strathcona County. A breakdown by region is shown in Figure 6.

FIGURE 6
Quality of Life in Strathcona County
Urban & Rural Comparisons



Highlights from Figure 6

- The overall rating of Strathcona County was very positive regardless of where one lived in the County. It can be seen in Figure 6 that the combined *very high and high* quality of life ratings are slightly higher for urban residents compared to rural. In 2010, the spread was considerably higher for urban residents compared to rural residents.
- A further analysis revealed that no significant differences were found based on gender or age for this item.
- Respondents who rated the quality of life as low or very low were asked to indicate how the quality of life in Strathcona County could be improved. Although most people did not rate the quality of life in the County in this manner, a variety of reasons were given from the 6 residents (1.2% of the sample) who did. Ideas put forward were varied, and included concerns about the Heartland power lines, aspects of the Anthony Henday, traffic concerns, and more services and money for rural residents.

Figure 7 presents a breakdown of urban and rural residents' ratings of Strathcona County as a place to raise children. Gender comparisons are depicted in Figure 8.

FIGURE 7
Strathcona County as a Place to Raise Children
Urban & Rural Comparisons

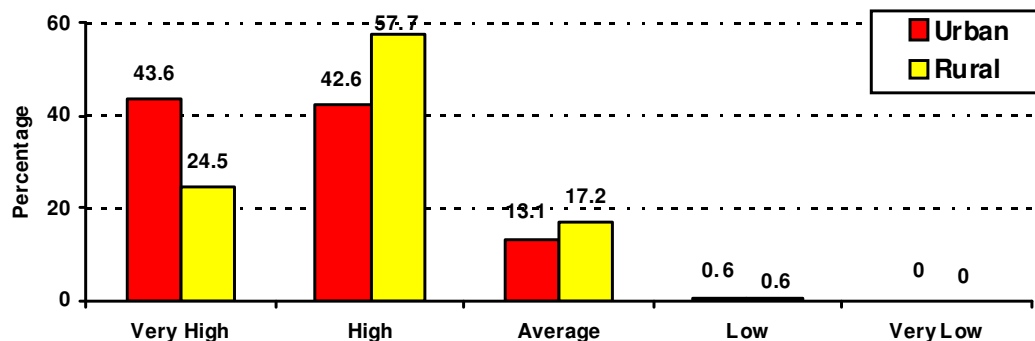
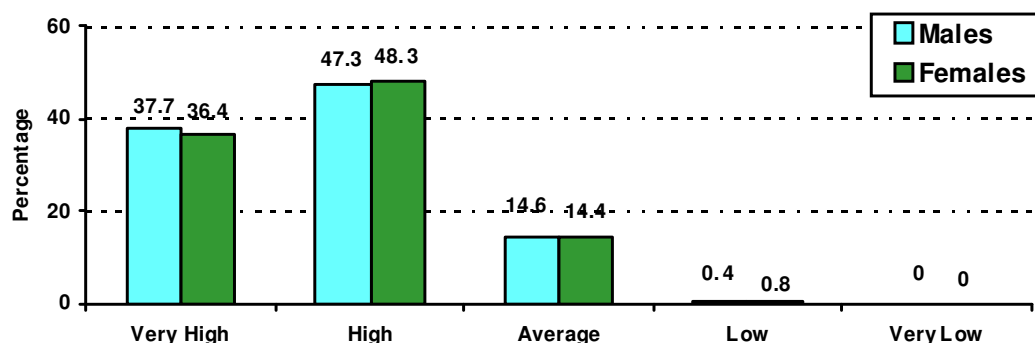


FIGURE 8
Strathcona County as a Place to Raise Children
Gender Comparisons

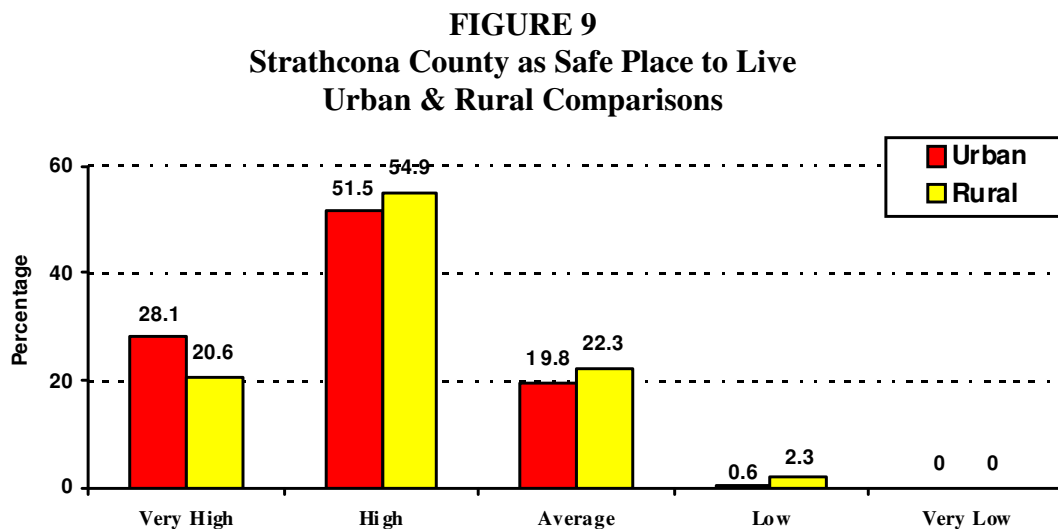


Highlights from Figure 7 & Figure 8

- The majority of people, regardless of where they live, rate Strathcona County as an excellent place to raise children. Those living in Sherwood Park have a stronger perception of this (i.e. “very high”) than those living in rural Strathcona County, but overall satisfaction based on the combined very high/high ratings shows no differences based on geography.
- In this year’s survey, there was no difference seen between males and females on this aspect of life in Strathcona County. The proportion of females who felt the County was a safe place to raise children (84.7% *very high/high*) was almost identical to males (85% *very high/high*).

- There were no differences among age groups for this item in 2011.
- Respondents who rated this item as low or very low were asked to indicate what improvements could be considered. Only 1.2% of the sample (3 respondents) felt this way based on perceptions that there were potential drug problems or lack of control over young children outside of school time.

Figure 9 presents a breakdown by region pertaining to ratings of Strathcona County as safe community.

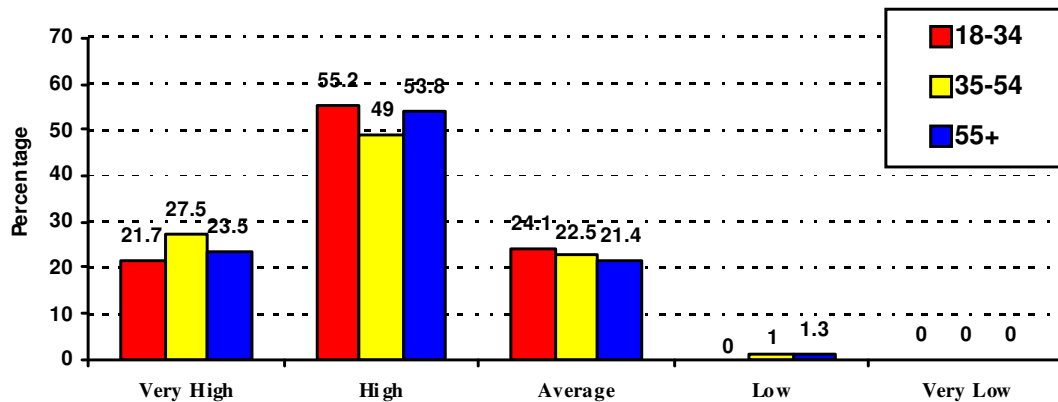


Highlights from Figure 9

- The majority of people felt that Strathcona County was a safe community in which to live, regardless of urban/rural location. The percentage of rural residents who gave this question a *very high* rating has increased slightly this year compared to previous years. Otherwise, the combined *very high/high* ratings have been consistent over the past few years.

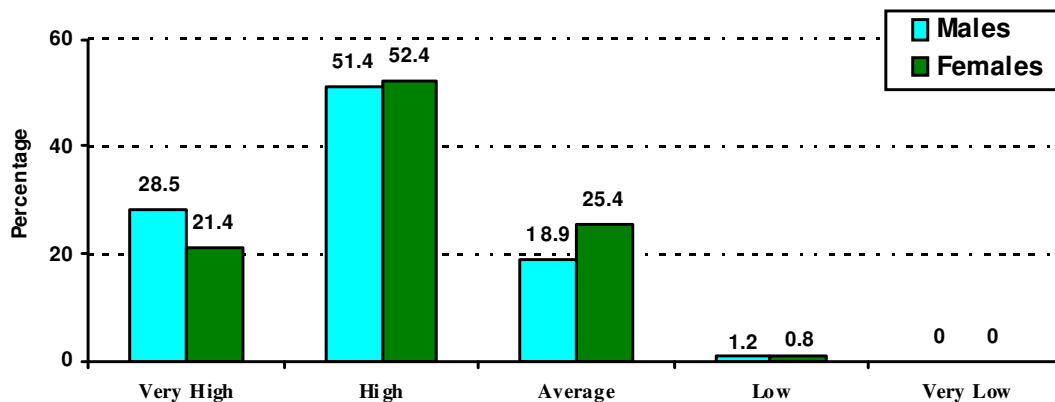
- The majority of residents, regardless of age, felt quite safe living in Strathcona County in 2011 (see Figure 10 below).

FIGURE 10
Strathcona County as Safe Place to Live
Age Group Comparisons



- In 2011, the overall percentage of residents who rated safety in the County as *very high or high* (76.9%) was slightly higher than results posted in 2010 (75.2%) and 2009 (69.4%).
- In 2011, females had a slightly lower perception of this compared to males, but the difference was not statistically significant.

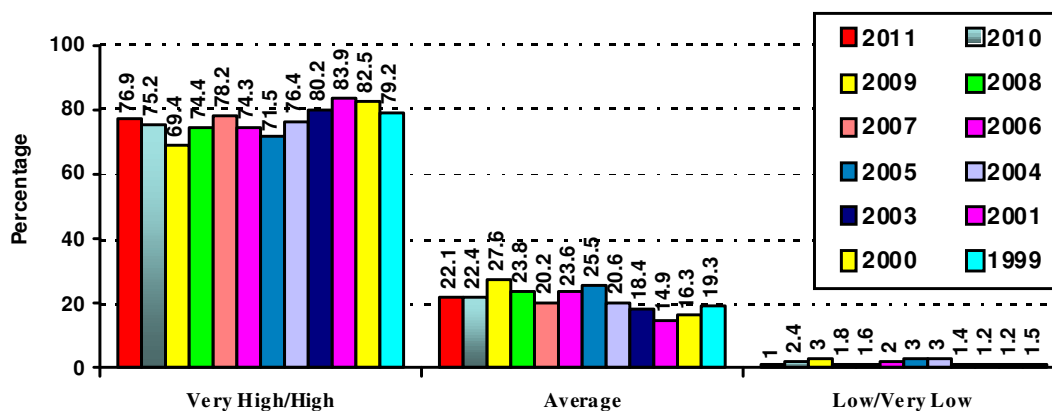
FIGURE 11
Strathcona County as Safe Place to Live
Gender Comparisons



- Overall, only 1% of residents (i.e. 5 respondents) gave safety in Strathcona County a low rating. All of the comments centered around a potential need for a greater presence of police in neighborhoods throughout the County.

It can be seen from Figure 12 that perceptions of safety in Strathcona County being “high or very high” has steadily increased to its highest level in four years (with the highest safety ranking occurring in 2001). Moreover, it can be seen that the percentage of people who gave safety in the community a low rating has been very small in every year where this has been monitored, with the lowest rating being reported in this year’s 2011 survey.

FIGURE 12
Strathcona County as Safe Place to Live
Study Comparisons (1999-2011)⁵



In Figure 13, the majority of residents indicated that they knew up to five other adults in their neighborhood. There is no difference seen between residents living in Sherwood Park and those living in rural Strathcona. In previous years, rural residents knew more neighbors than those living in Sherwood Park.

⁵ There was no satisfaction study conducted in 2002.

FIGURE 13
Number of Adults Known by Name within One's Neighborhood
Urban & Rural Comparisons

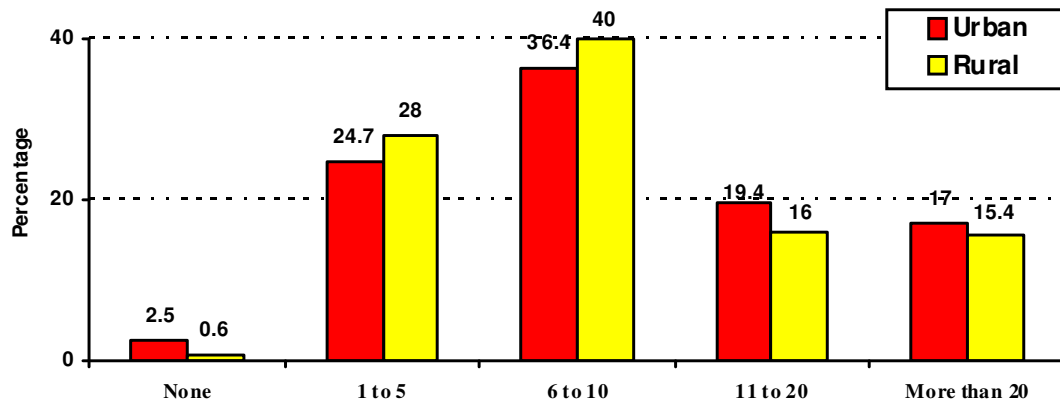
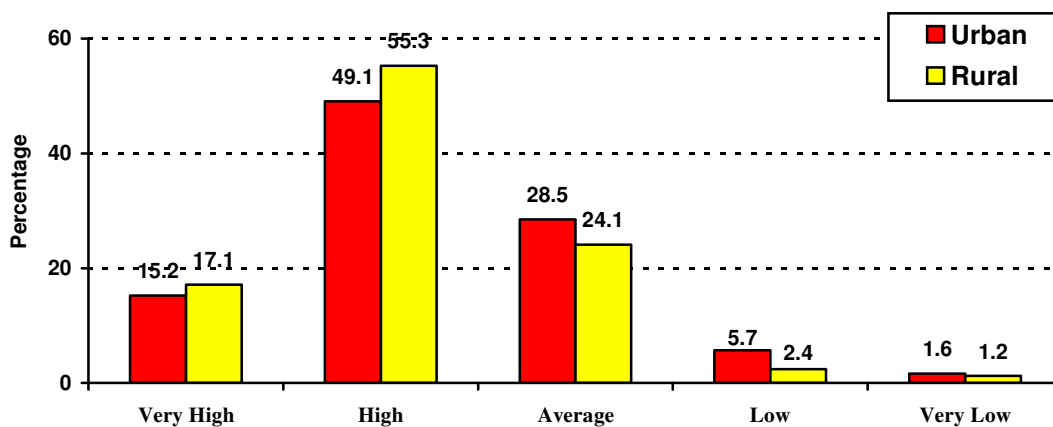


Figure 14 presents a breakdown by region of people's ratings of the quality of Strathcona County's natural environment.

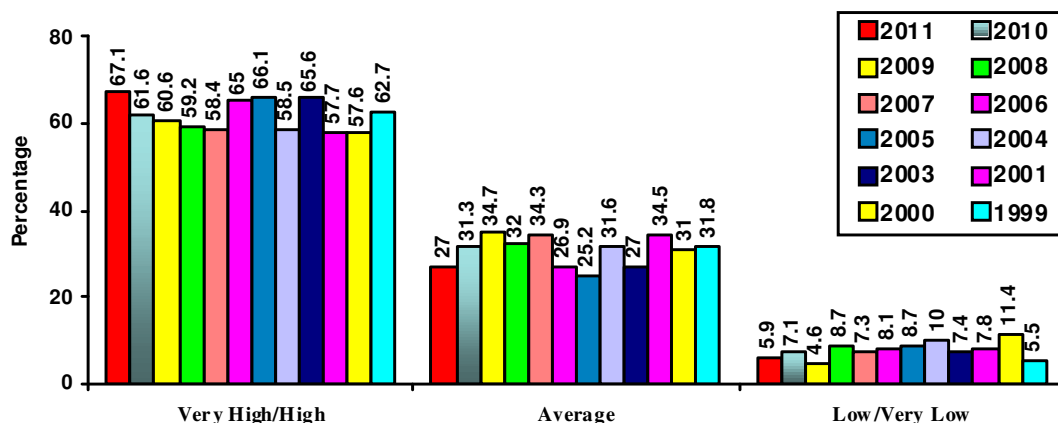
FIGURE 14
Rating the Quality of Strathcona County's Natural Environment
Urban & Rural Comparisons



Highlights from Figure 14

- It can be seen that 64.3% of the urban and 72.4% of the rural population gave *very high* or *high* ratings for the quality of the County's environment. This year's ratings are 8% higher in the rural area compared to 2010 ratings and 4% higher for urban residents.
- None of the demographic characteristics influenced how people rated the quality of the natural environment in Strathcona County.
- Overall results (depicted in Figure 15 below) show that the combined *very high* and *high* ratings that people gave to the quality of Strathcona County's natural environment has hit its highest rating since the question was asked back in 1999.
- The 5.9% (or 29 residents) who gave *low* or *very low* ratings were asked to indicate their reasons for the rating. The major concern raised by several residents pertained to the air quality in the County, particularly near the refineries. A couple of residents were concerned with the use of pesticides and the lessening of green space due to commercial development, and the ongoing issue associated with overhead transmission lines in the Heartland. Comments associated with refineries and the loss of natural areas have been consistent since 1999.

FIGURE 15
Rating the Quality of Strathcona County's Natural Environment
Study Comparisons (1999-2011)



Respondents were asked to rate how well the County Council and staff balanced the needs and interests of people living in different areas of the County. The results associated with the Mayor and Council are shown in Figure 16; County staff findings are depicted in Figure 17.

FIGURE 16
Balancing the Needs and Interests of People Living in Strathcona County
by the Mayor and County Council
Urban & Rural Comparisons

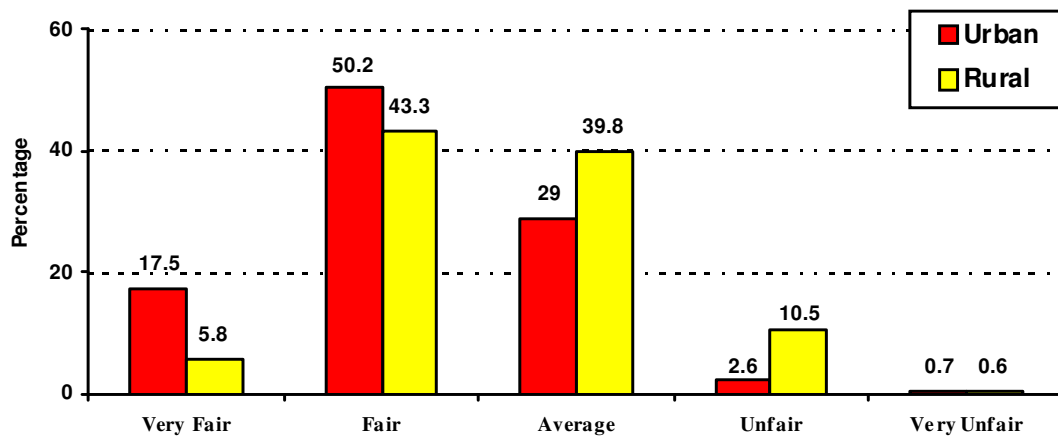
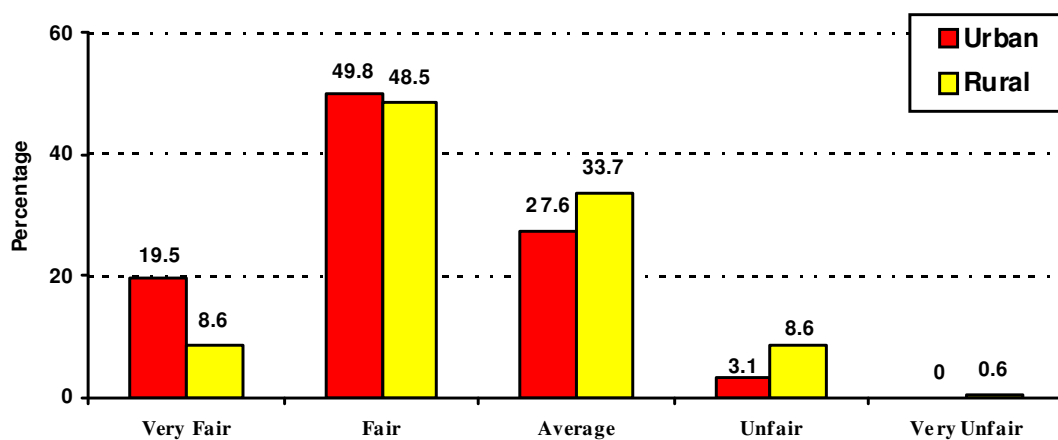


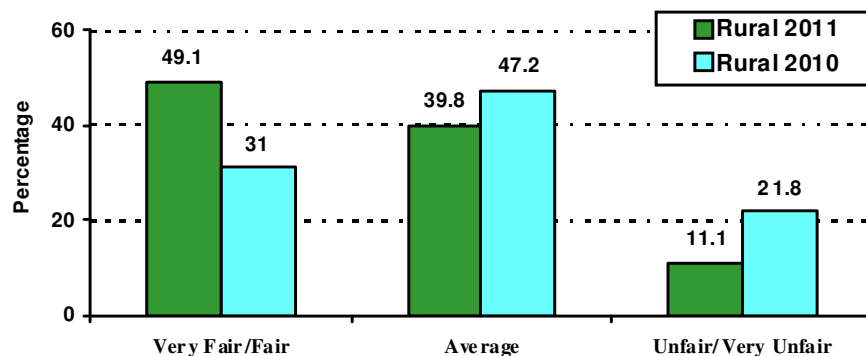
FIGURE 17
Balancing the Needs and Interests of People Living in Strathcona County
by County Staff
Urban & Rural Comparisons



Highlights from Figure 16 & Figure 17

- There was a difference in perception between rural and urban residents as to how fairly they believe people are treated in the County by the Mayor, Council and staff. Considerably more people living in the urban area believe they are treated fairly by the Mayor /Council and staff, compared to those living in rural parts of the County.⁶
- Although there continues to be a spread between urban and rural residents, in this year's study, the rural residents approval ratings for the mayor and council have increased sharply since 2010 (as seen in Figure 18). Approval ratings among urban residents also increased, but only slightly (*Very Fair/Fair* ratings in 2011 were 69.3%, up 8% from 61.3%).
- Outside of residence location, none of the other demographic characteristics influenced how people perceived the fairness of County Council and staff toward people living in different parts of Strathcona County.
- Overall, 29 residents (6.1% of the sample) felt that the Mayor and Council were unfair, and 24 residents (5.2% of the sample) felt that County staff were unfair. These individuals were asked to comment on why they felt that way. Many of the comments came from rural residents, who felt they were not getting the same level of services as urban residents for the amount of tax that they paid. This has been a consistent negative comment for a number of years. Some urban residents also expressed concerns associated with permits, the amount of winter road maintenance, and long range planning.

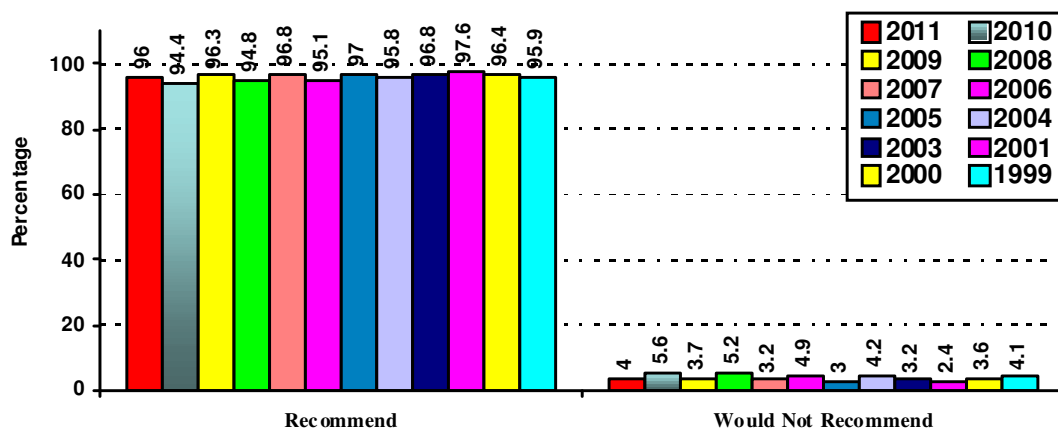
FIGURE 18
Balancing the Needs and Interests by the Mayor and County Council
Rural Perceptions (2011 and 2010 comparisons)



⁶ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between perception of balancing needs and interests of people within the County on the basis of where they live in Strathcona County – Mayor/Council ($\chi^2 = 28.46$, 4 df, $p=.000$) and staff ($\chi^2 = 17.40$, 4 df, $p=.000$).

Almost all respondents would recommend Strathcona County to others as a place to live (Figure 19), which was virtually identical to the previous satisfaction surveys. The small percentage of people (4% or 20 residents) who would not recommend the County as a place to live were asked to indicate why they felt that way. There were a variety of reasons put forward ranging from perceptions of over-population in Sherwood Park to air quality issues and the power line issue. There were a couple of residents who were concerned that the County had too many by-laws that they were enforcing which contrasted with other residents who felt the County was not enforcing by-laws (such as noise and/or nuisance controls).

FIGURE 19
Recommendation of Strathcona County as a Place to Live
Study Comparisons (1999-2011)



C. Quality of Services Provided by Strathcona County

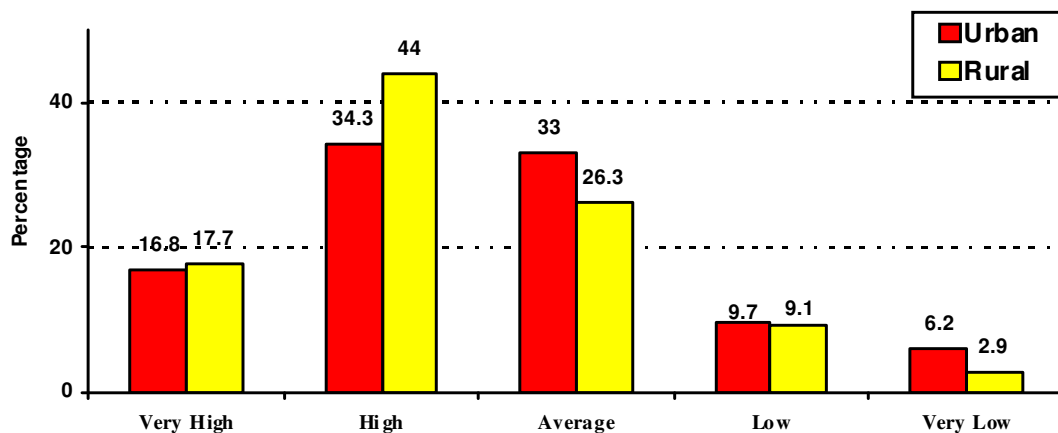
Residents of Strathcona County were asked a series of questions about what they thought of various services provided to them. Overall, respondents were asked to rate 18 different services. For each question, respondents rated the service using a 5 point Likert Scale, where a score of 1 was designated as *very high* and a score of 5 was designated as *very low*. Unless otherwise noted, the level of satisfaction in 2011 for these services was similar to the data collected in 2010.

For all of these services, the percentages noted in the report are based on those people who expressed an opinion. People who stated that they “did not know” enough to provide a rating were removed from the percentage calculations.

Road Maintenance in Strathcona County

People were first asked to rate the quality of winter road maintenance. Comparative results by geographic location of residence are depicted in Figure 20. Although more people living in the rural areas felt the quality of winter road maintenance was higher than those living in the urban area, the difference was not statistically significant.

FIGURE 20
Quality of Winter Road Maintenance
Urban & Rural Comparisons



Perceptions of winter road maintenance among residents varied slightly between 2011 and 2010. Figure 20 shows that the percentage of urban residents who felt the winter road maintenance work was *very high* or *high* increased to 50.1% in 2011, compared to 45.7% in 2010, 38% in 2009 and 33.7% in 2008. The combined *very high/high* score is the highest percentage noted since the County began its annual satisfaction studies back in 1999. It can be seen in Figure 22 that satisfaction with winter road maintenance among rural residents is at an all time high, with 61.1% of rural

residents in 2011 giving this service a combined *very high/high* rating, compared to 56.3% in 2010, 53.1% in 2009 and 58.9% in 2008.

FIGURE 21
Quality of Winter Road Maintenance as noted by Sherwood Park Residents
2008-2011 Study Comparisons

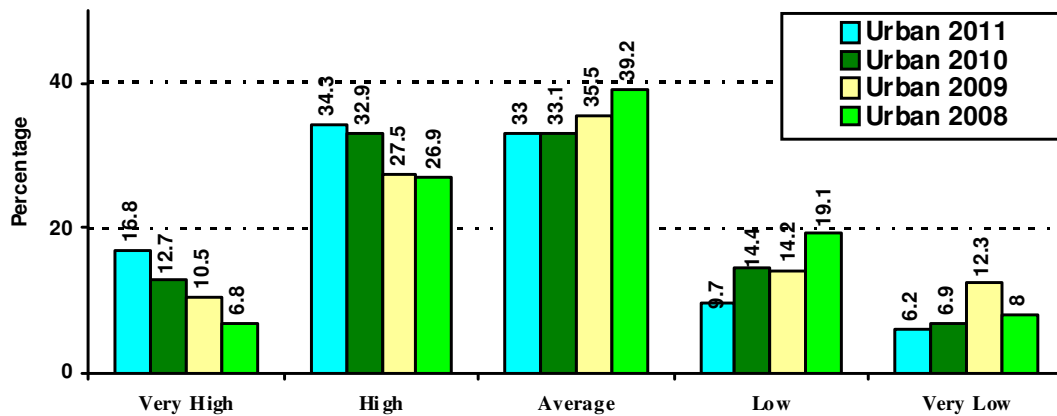
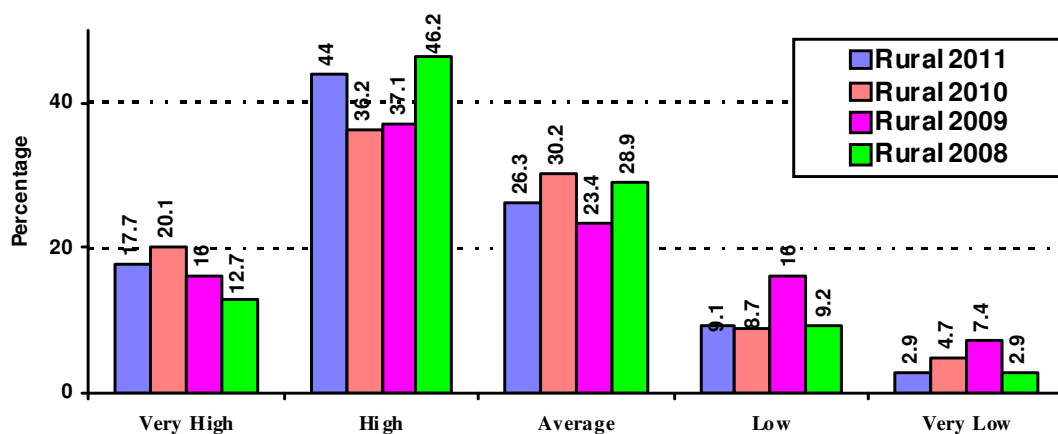


FIGURE 22
Quality of Winter Road Maintenance as noted by Rural Strathcona Residents
2008-2011 Study Comparisons

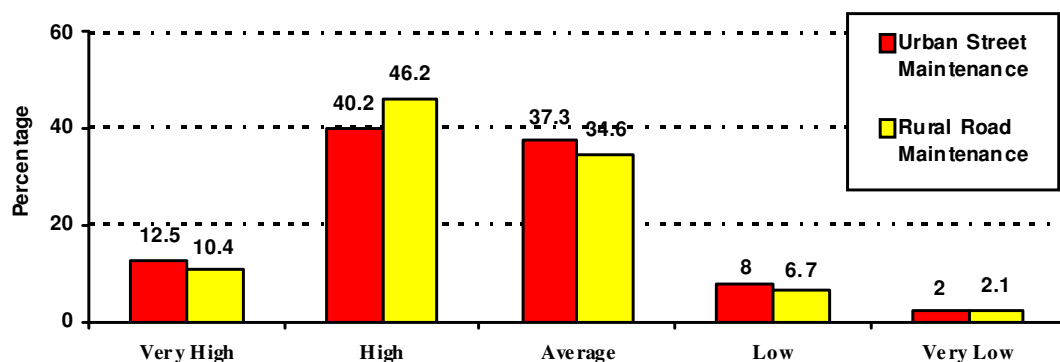


No differences for this service were seen between age groups or gender and a further analysis of the data revealed that length of residency did not have a measurable effect on perceptions of the quality of winter maintenance.

Overall, 72 residents (14.5% of the sample) were not happy with winter road maintenance, and were asked to suggest ways this could be improved. The main criticism among residents was for residential side streets to be cleared and sanded more often.

People were then asked to rate the quality of summer road maintenance in the urban area (Sherwood Park) and for rural areas. The overall ratings for both types of roads, regardless of where respondents lived, are depicted in Figure 23.

FIGURE 23
Quality of Summer Road Maintenance of Urban and Rural Roads:
All Residents



When each type of summer road maintenance is examined separately, however, there were statistical differences seen. In Figure 24, it was found that urban residents had a more positive perception of how well roads in Sherwood Park were maintained than those living in rural areas of Strathcona County.⁷ No differences in perception with respect to this question were seen with any other demographic variables.

Overall, 10% of residents (N=49) were unhappy with the summer maintenance of urban roads. Almost all of these residents reflected on the need to fill in the potholes in the roads, with many of the complaints centering on Wye Road. These comments were also echoed in last year's survey.

⁷ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between where a resident lives and their perception of summer urban road maintenance ($\chi^2 = 25.6$, 4 df, $p < .001$).

FIGURE 24
Quality of Summer Road Maintenance of Roads in Sherwood Park
Urban & Rural Comparisons

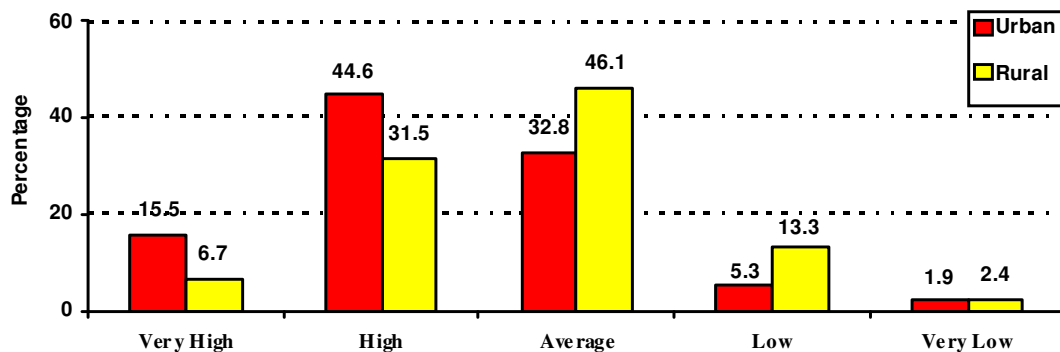
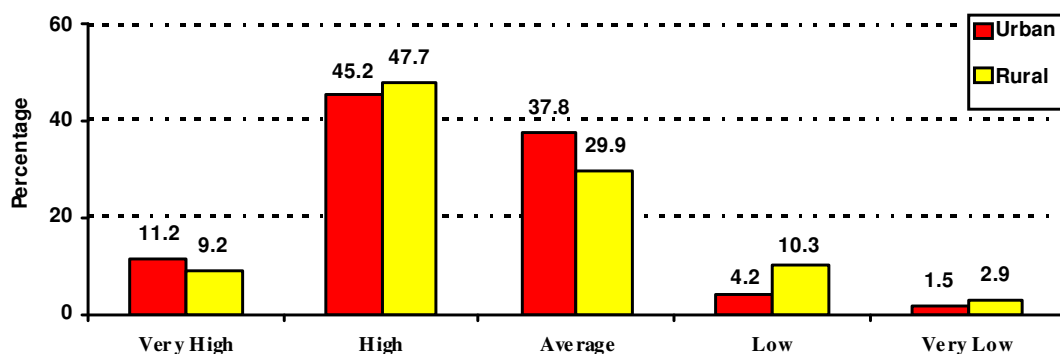


FIGURE 25
Quality of Summer Road Maintenance of Rural Roads
Urban & Rural Comparisons



It can be seen in Figure 25 that there was very little difference seen in perceptions of urban and rural residents with respect to how well the County maintains its rural roads in the summer. From a percentage basis, more rural residents were unhappy with the maintenance of their roads in the summer than those who lived in the urban area, but the difference was statistically insignificant.

Overall, 8.8% of residents (N=38) were unhappy with the summer maintenance of rural roads. As with the urban roads, a frequent complaint focused on the increased number of potholes on rural roads. However, there were also complaints that different rural roads need to be repaved and widened.

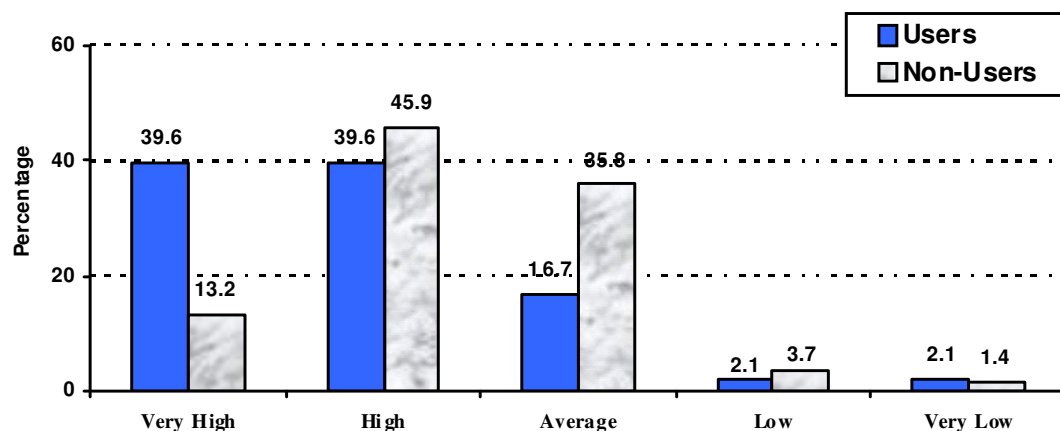
Specific roads mentioned by residents included:

- Make the road level with the railroad tracks on RR213;
- Widen Township Road 520;
- Numerous potholes near North Cooking Lake;
- An oil road leading to Birch Bay needs to be paved.

Helping Services in Strathcona County

People were also asked to rate the quality of family support services, fire and ambulance services and the RCMP. Figure 26 presents the satisfaction level for family support services, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample who utilized these services⁸ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should be noted that 156 respondents (31.2% of the sample) did not comment on the quality of family support services because they did not know anything about them.

FIGURE 26
Quality of Family Support Services



Highlights from Figure 26

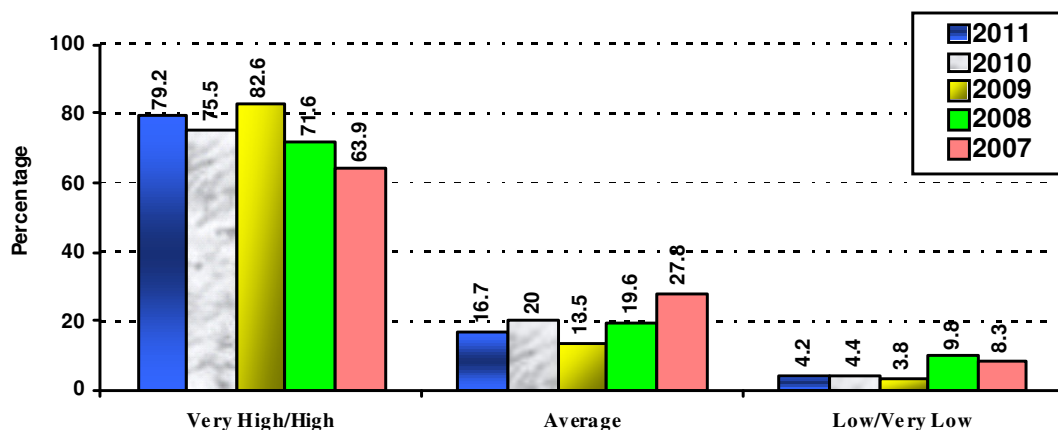
- Figure 26 shows that both resident users and non-users have a positive view toward family support services in Strathcona County. However, a chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between one's use and how

⁸ Overall, 10.6% of respondents indicated they had used family support services within the past 12 months. This is almost the same as what was reported in last year's survey

satisfied one is with family services ($\chi^2 = 22.49$, 4 df, $p=.000$). A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = -3.66$, 342 df, $p = .000$) confirms that users of family support services rated these services higher than non-users.

- The actual number of residents who used (and rated) the services in the past 12 months was low (N=48). It can be seen that just over 79% of the people who used Family & Community Services (FCS) gave the department *high* or *very high* satisfaction ratings. This is slightly higher than the 76% mark noted last year. User trends from 2007 to 2011 are depicted in Figure 27.

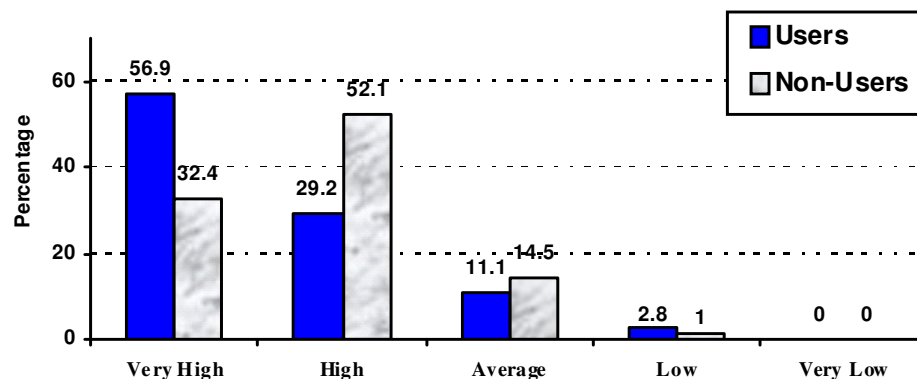
FIGURE 27
Quality of Family Support Services
User Trends 2007 - 2011



- As in previous surveys, the percentage of users rating the service as *low* or *very low* is small. In 2011, only 4.2% were dissatisfied.
- The 19 people who gave family support services a low rating in 2011 (5% of the sample) were asked to suggest how this could be improved. Almost all of the suggestions focused on additional programs for seniors.
- There were no differences found for any socio-demographic characteristic for this item in 2011.

Figure 28 presents the satisfaction level people have for fire and ambulance services, based on the portion of the sample who utilized these services⁹ in the past 12 months, and those who did not use these services. It should be noted that 42 respondents (8.4% of the sample) indicated that they “did not know” enough about these services to rate them.

FIGURE 28
Quality of Fire and Ambulance Services



Highlights from Figure 28

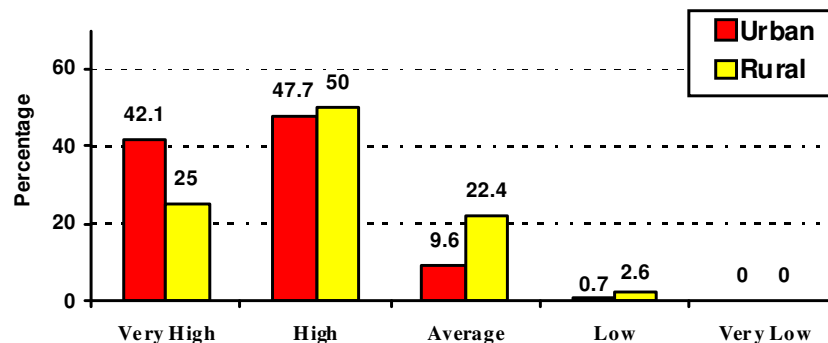
- It can be seen from Figure 28 that most residents (regardless of use) have a positive view of fire and ambulance services in Strathcona County, with strong positive feelings more prevalent among users than non-users.¹⁰ This demonstrates that recipients were pleased with the quality of services received when these services were needed.
- Overall, 6 people (1.3% of the sample) were not satisfied with the services. A couple of responses referred to the need for a hospital in Strathcona County. Only one response specifically referred to a slow response time.
- Apart from location (see Figure 29 - next page) there were no differences found for any other socio-demographic characteristic for this item in 2011.

⁹ Overall, 14.4% of respondents in 2011 indicated that they had used the fire and ambulance services within the past 12 months. This reported usage is about the same as surveys conducted in 2007-2010.

¹⁰ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between one's use and how satisfied one is with County fire and ambulance services ($\chi^2 = 18.57$, 4 df, $p = .000$). A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = -2.67$, 456 df, $p = .008$) confirms that users of fire and ambulance services rated these services higher than non-users.

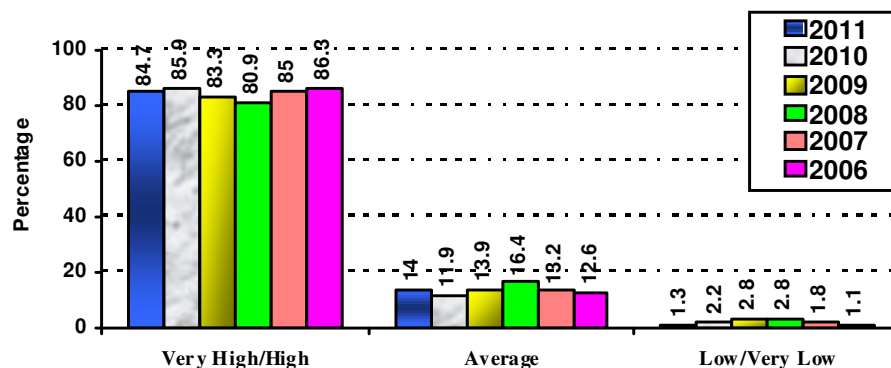
As seen in Figure 29, a further analysis of this service revealed that more Sherwood Park residents (regardless of use) were satisfied with the service (87.8% *very high or high*) compared with those living in rural areas (75% *very high or high*).¹¹

FIGURE 29
Quality of Fire and Ambulance Services
Urban & Rural Comparisons



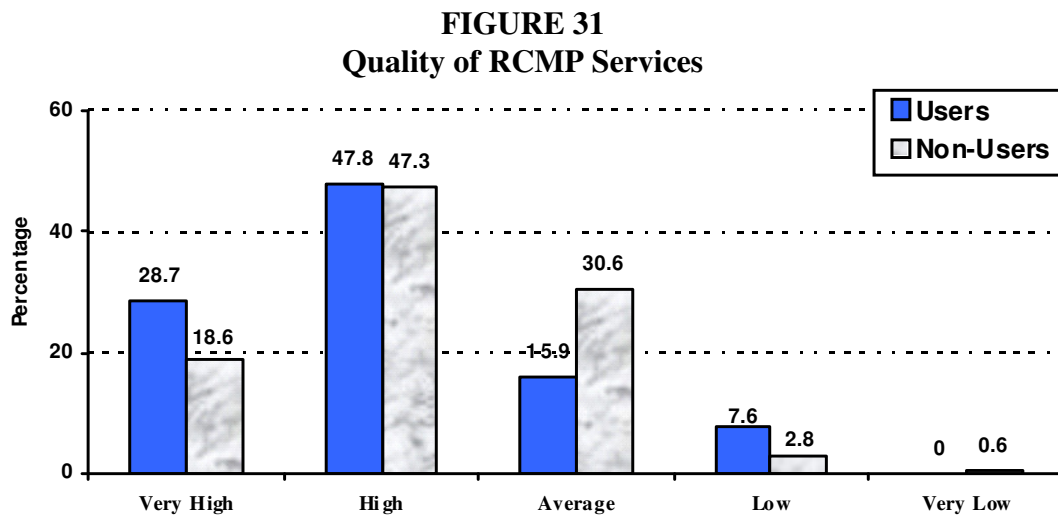
A further comparison with past satisfaction studies on this service revealed that the difference in the combined *very high/high* satisfaction scores noted for all residents have been constantly positive each year that the survey has been done (Figure 30).

FIGURE 30
Quality of Fire and Ambulance Services User Trends 2006 - 2011



¹¹ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between perception of fire and ambulance services on the basis of where they live in Strathcona County ($\chi^2 = 23.33$, 3 df, $p=0.000$).

Figure 31 presents the satisfaction level for RCMP services, based on those who used these services¹² in the past 12 months and those who did not.¹³



Highlights from Figure 31

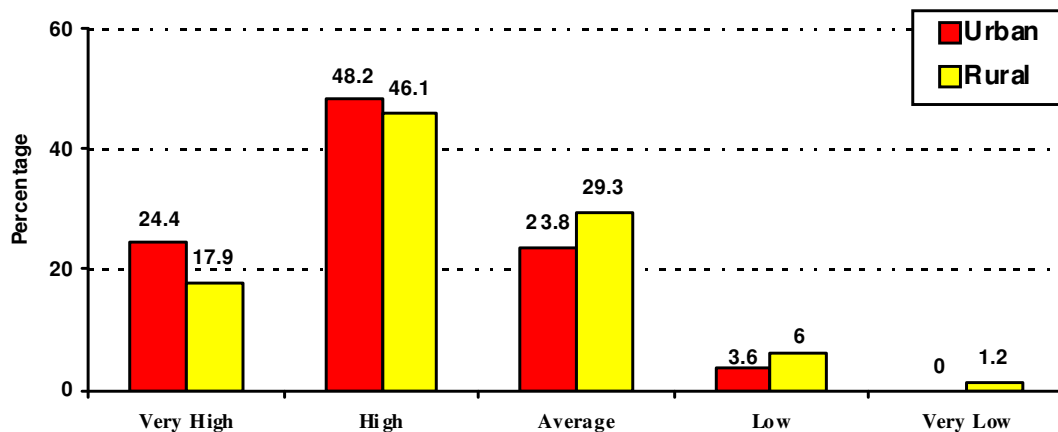
- As seen in Figure 31, most residents, regardless of use in the past 12 months, have a positive view of RCMP in Strathcona County. However, direct users gave stronger “very high” ratings than non-users.
- Ratings provided by both users and non-users in 2011 were very similar to trends found in previous years.
- Outside of users, no statistical differences were found when socio-demographic characteristics were measured for this service.
- Users and non-users (23 in all) who rated RCMP services as *low or very low* were asked to comment on ways that the service could be improved. Many of the comments centered on how much time the RCMP devoted to photo radar and handing out speeding tickets. There were also multiple comments directed to a perceived need for more presence from the RCMP in residential neighborhoods.

¹²Overall, 160 respondents (32% of the 2011 sample) indicated that they had used the RCMP within the past 12 months. This reported usage is almost identical to what was reported in both the 2010 and 2009 satisfaction surveys. It should also be noted that 26 people (5.2%) did not rate the service in 2011 on the basis that they did not know enough about the RCMP to give a rating.

¹³ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between users and non-users on how the RCMP is perceived ($\chi^2 = 20.09$, 4 df, $p=.000$).

- A further analysis of this service revealed that residents were relatively happy with the RCMP services, regardless of where they live (Figure 32). The 2011 trends were very similar to what was found in the last four satisfaction surveys with respect to urban/rural location. No statistical differences were found between urban and rural residents in 2011.

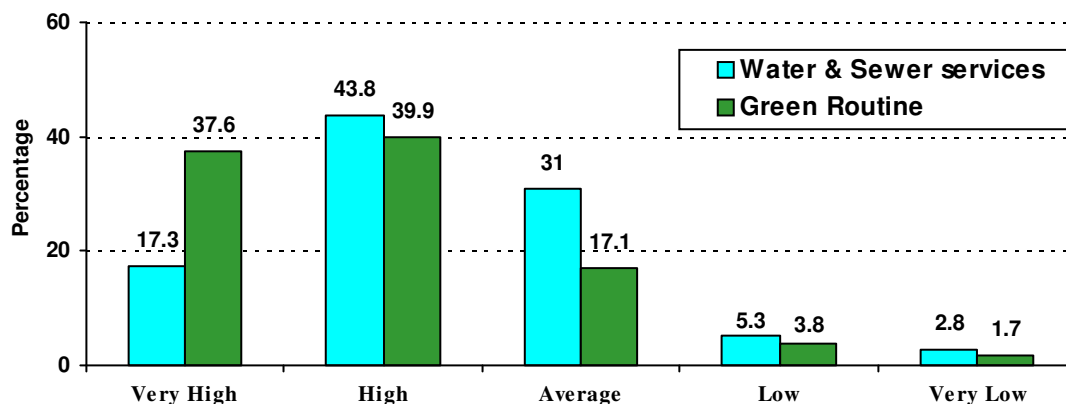
FIGURE 32
Quality of RCMP Services – Urban and Rural Comparisons



Water and Waste Management Services in Strathcona County

People were asked to rate the quality of the water and Green Routine system (waste collection and recycling program) in Strathcona County. Figure 33 presents the satisfaction level of residents for these services, regardless of where they live.¹⁴

FIGURE 33
Level of Satisfaction with Water and Waste Management Services



¹⁴ Overall, 100 people (20%) did not rate *water & sewer services* and 26 people (5.2%) did not rate the *green routine services* in 2011. These patterns are about the same as number of residents who did not rate these services in the 2009 and 2010 surveys. It should also be noted that the majority of those who did not rate *water & sewer* and *green routine services* live in rural parts of Strathcona County.

Highlights from Figure 33

- It can be seen from Figure 33 that residents were generally satisfied with these services. A further examination of the ratings revealed that 77.5% gave *very high/high* ratings for the Green Routine in 2011.¹⁵ On a year by year comparative basis, this is higher than the 73.7% rate found in 2010, 64.7% noted in 2009 and 63% found in 2008. The *very high/high* ratings for water and sewage services was slightly lower in 2011 (61.1%) than in 2010 (63%).

A further analysis by geographic area revealed that rural residents in the County were not as satisfied with either utility service compared to those living in Sherwood Park (Figures 34 and 35).

FIGURE 34
Level of Satisfaction with Water Services
Urban & Rural Comparisons

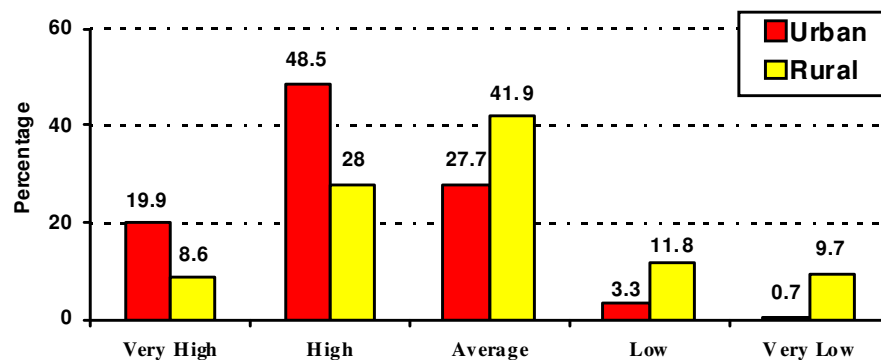
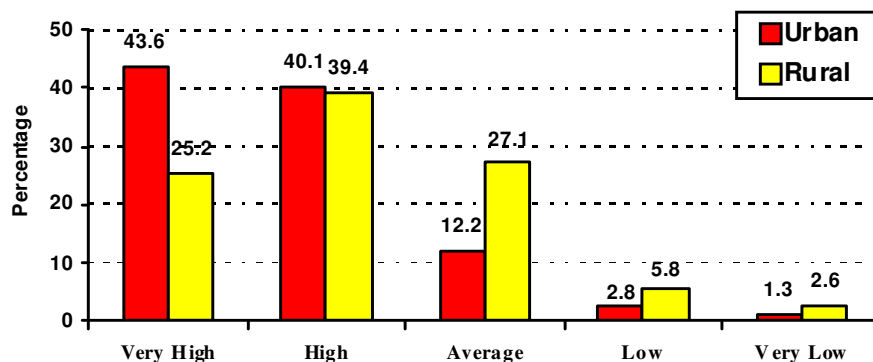


FIGURE 35
Level of Satisfaction with Green Routine Service
Urban & Rural Comparisons



¹⁵ This is the highest combined total recorded been since measurement began when the Green Routine service was implemented in the County in 2008.

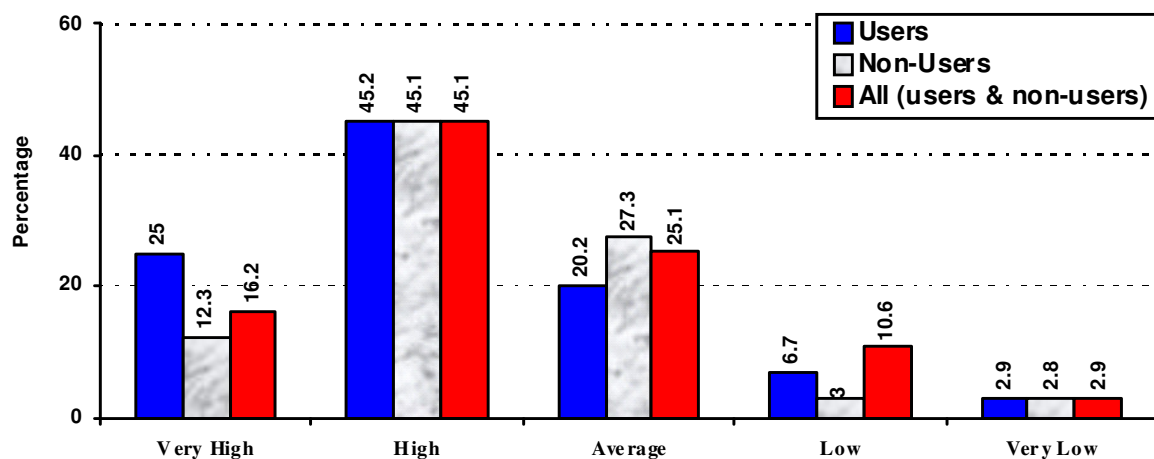
Highlights from Figures 34 & 35

- A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between where one lives and how one rated *water and sewage* ($\chi^2 = 47.97$, 4 df, $p = .000$) and the *Green Routine* ($\chi^2 = 26.47$, 4 df, $p = .000$).
- The people who rated these services as *low* or *very low* were asked to comment on ways that the services could be improved. With respect to water services, 32 people (6.4% of the sample) commented. Many of the comments focused on the cost for water and sewage; residents in the rural area lamented on the County not providing water services to them. There were also a few residents who required repairs to their water lines but were dissatisfied with the wait time for this to be done.
- With respect to the Green Routine, 26 residents (5.5% of the sample) who rated the service as *low* or *very low* had comments. As was the case in last year's survey, many residents were dissatisfied with having the garbage pickup limited to once every two weeks and with having to sort organics from other waste.
- It should be noted that the percentage of residents who were unhappy with the Green Routine service dropped to 5.5% in 2011 compared to 9% in 2010 and 17% in 2009.

Transit Services in Strathcona County

People were asked to rate their satisfaction with transit services in the County. Figure 36 presents the satisfaction level for transit services, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample who utilized these services¹⁶ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 161 residents (32.2% of the sample) did not rate transit service on the basis that they did not know anything about the service.

FIGURE 36
Satisfaction with Strathcona County Transit Service

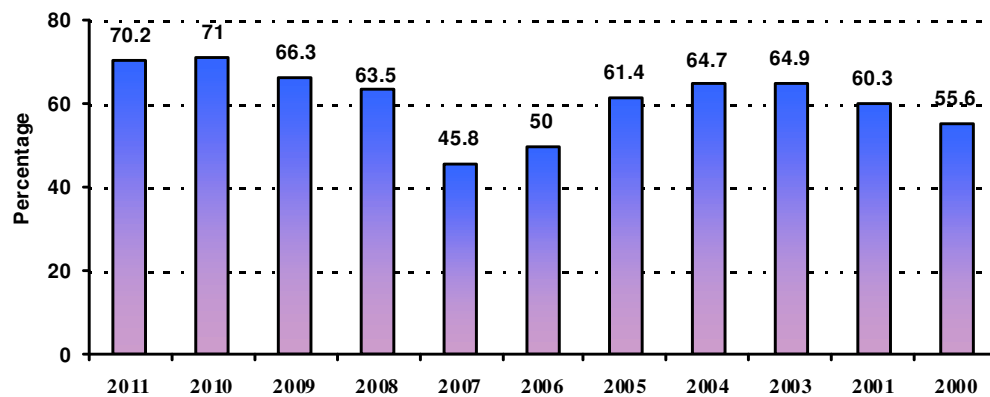


Highlights from Figure 36

- Figure 36 shows that 61.3% of residents (regardless of use) have a positive view of transit services in Strathcona County. This is almost identical to 2010's findings.
- It can also be seen that 9.6% of users of the transit service have low or very low levels of satisfaction with the service, which is about 3% lower than 2010.
- In comparison to previous surveys, it can be seen in Figure 37 that the percentage of users rating this service as *very high/high* has continually increased since 2007, and is almost at its highest level since annual measurement began in 2000.

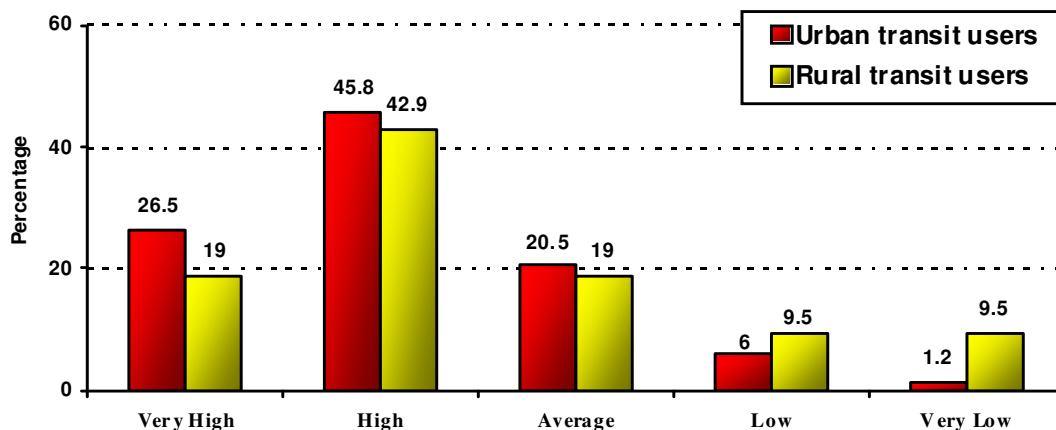
¹⁶ Overall, 21.4% of respondents indicated they had used transit services within the past 12 months. This is almost 8% lower than what was recorded in 2010.

FIGURE 37
“Very High/High” Combined Satisfaction Ratings with Strathcona County Transit Service by Transit Users 2000 – 2011 Comparisons¹⁷



- A further analysis found that majority of transit users (78.5%) live in Sherwood Park, while the remaining 11.5% lived in rural Strathcona County.
- It can be seen that the perceptions of **users of public transit** varied depending on where the resident lived (Figure 38). Overall, residents who lived in rural Strathcona County looked more favorably on the service than those who lived in Sherwood Park. A look at the combined *very high/high* ratings shows increased favorability noted by urban resident users (72.3%) compared to rural resident users (61.9%).

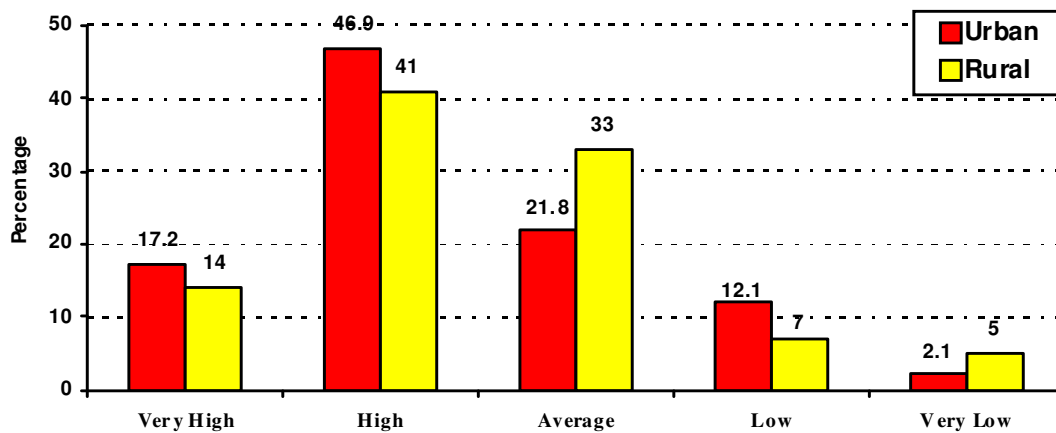
FIGURE 38
Satisfaction with Strathcona County Transit Service by users
Urban and Rural Comparisons



¹⁷ There was no satisfaction survey conducted in 2002.

The satisfaction rating of transit services from the total sample (which consists of ratings from both users and non-users) on the basis of where people lived in the County is shown in Figure 39. No statistical differences were found on perceptions toward transit use based on where a resident lived within the County.

FIGURE 39
Satisfaction with Strathcona County Transit Service
Urban and Rural Comparisons

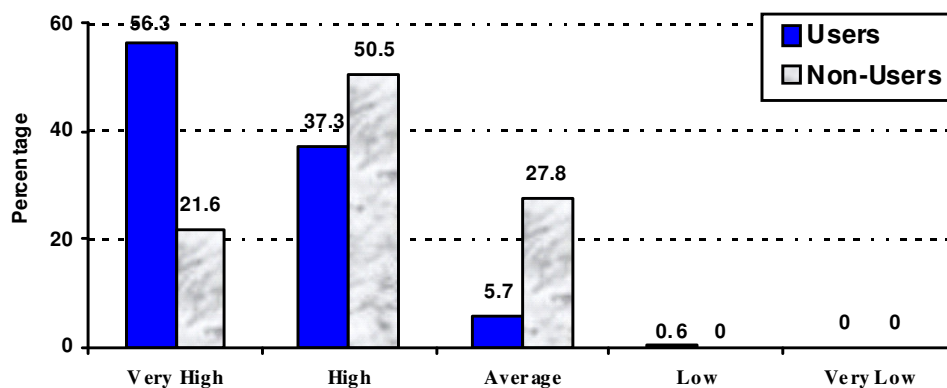


- There were also no statistically significant differences noted between any other demographic items and how residents rated transit services.
- The 46 people (13.2% of the sample) who gave transit services a *low/very low* rating were asked to suggest ways this could be improved. A variety of ideas were put forward, including increasing the number of buses running throughout Sherwood Park and decreasing the waiting times for a bus, particularly at peak times of the day. There were also multiple comments of more bus service to Edmonton from Strathcona County.

Library Services in Strathcona County

Figure 40 presents the satisfaction level with the Strathcona County Library, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample who utilized these services¹⁸ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 87 people (17.4% of the sample) did not rate library services on the basis that they did not know enough about the library to give it a rating.

FIGURE 40
Satisfaction with the Strathcona County Library by Use



Highlights from Figure 40

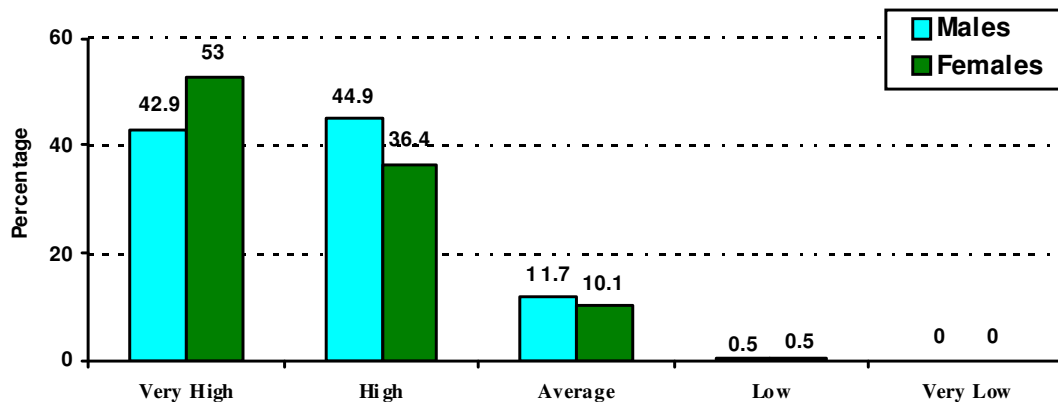
- Most residents (Figure 40) have a positive view of the library, regardless of whether they use it. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between use and how one rated library services.¹⁹ It can be seen that 93.6% users are more likely to give the library a combined *very high/high* rating compared to 72.1% who did not use it (but nonetheless gave the library a positive rating).
- There were 2 people (0.5% of the sample) who rated the library service as *low* or *very low*. It was felt by one individual that underground parking for the library should be free and that there should be more spots dedicated toward parents with young children.

In terms of demographics, it can be seen in Figure 41 that females were slightly more satisfied with the library service in 2011 compared to males, but the overall

¹⁸ Overall, 63.8% of respondents indicated they had used the library within the past 12 months. This is almost 10% higher than what was reported in 2010.

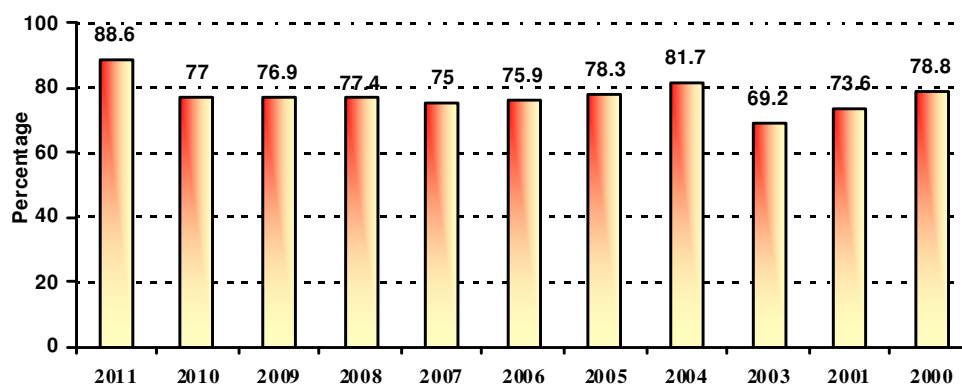
variance was not statistically significant. No differences were seen with the other demographic variables.

FIGURE 41
Satisfaction with the Strathcona County Library
Gender Comparisons



A further investigation shown in Figure 42 reveals that an overall *very high/high* satisfaction level with the Strathcona Library (regardless of use) is the highest it has ever been since measurement began in 2000.

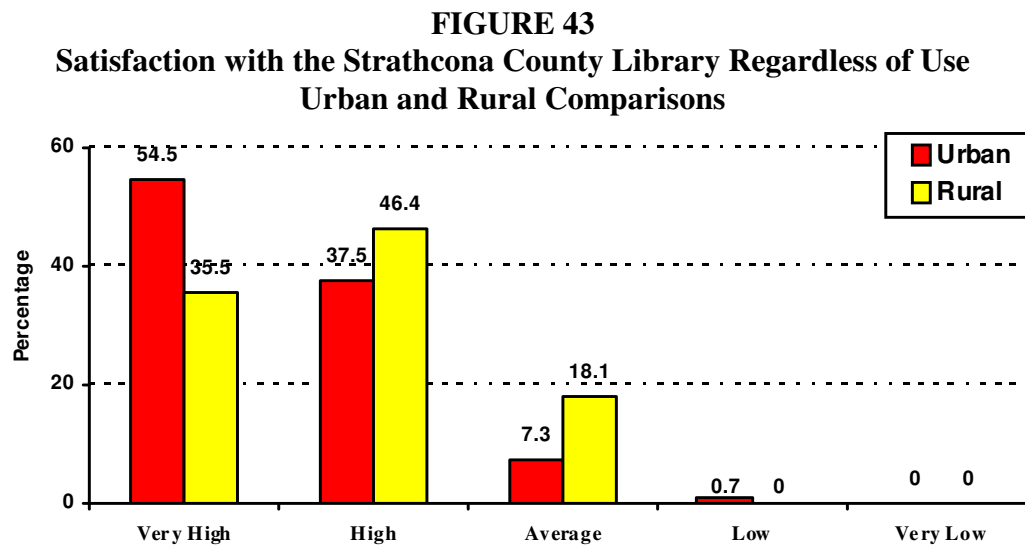
FIGURE 42
Combined “Very High/High” Satisfaction Ratings with Strathcona County Library
2000 – 2011 Comparisons²⁰



The majority of library users surveyed live in Sherwood Park (67.7%), while the remaining 32.3% live in other parts of Strathcona County. In comparison to last year, the

¹⁹ For library services, ($\chi^2 = 55.71$, 3 df, $p=.000$).

percentage of users who live in rural Strathcona has increased by 6%. A breakdown of the satisfaction ratings of the library by all urban and rural residents (regardless of use) is shown in Figure 43.



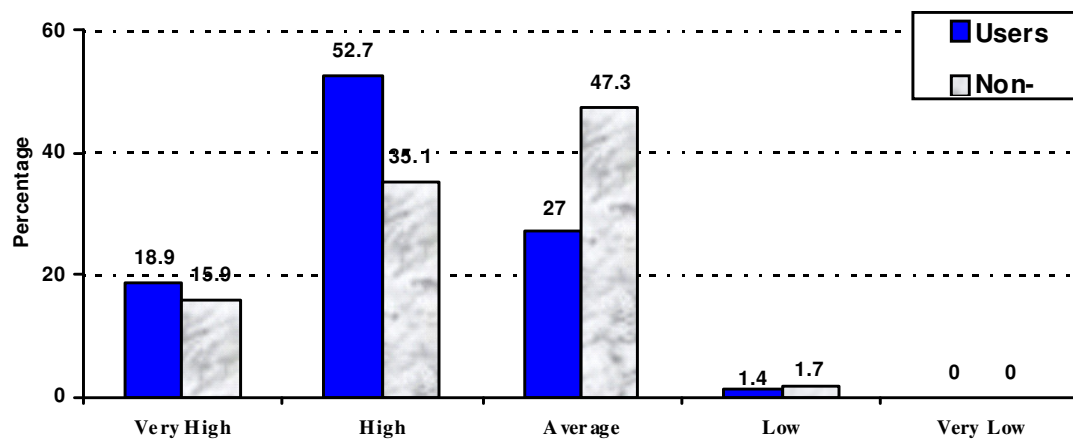
A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between where one lived and how one rated library services ($\chi^2 = 19.64$, 3 df, $p = .000$), with urban residents having a slightly higher positive perception of the library compared to rural residents. It can be seen that 92% of those living in Sherwood Park give the library a combined *very high/high* rating compared to 81.9% of those living in rural Strathcona County (but nonetheless gave the library a positive rating).

²⁰ There was no satisfaction survey conducted in 2002.

Information and Volunteer Centre Services in Strathcona County

Figure 44 presents the satisfaction level with the Information and Volunteer Centre (IVC), based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample who utilized these services²¹ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 37.4% of residents (n=187) did not rate the Centre on the basis that they did not know anything about it.

FIGURE 44
Satisfaction with the Information and Volunteer Centre



Highlights from Figure 44

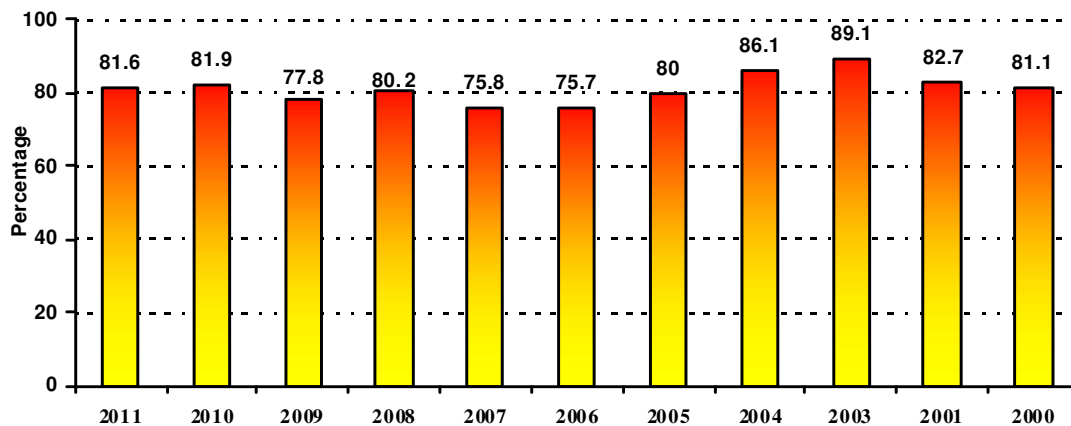
- It can be seen from Figure 44 that most residents have a positive view of the Information and Volunteer Centre, regardless of whether they use it. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between use and how one rated the IVC,²² where users are more likely to give the IVC a higher rating compared to those who did not use it.

²¹ Overall, 18% of respondents indicated that they had used the Information and Volunteer Centre within the past 12 months. This is about the same as 2010.

²² For the IVC, ($\chi^2 = 10.23$, 3 df, $p=.017$).

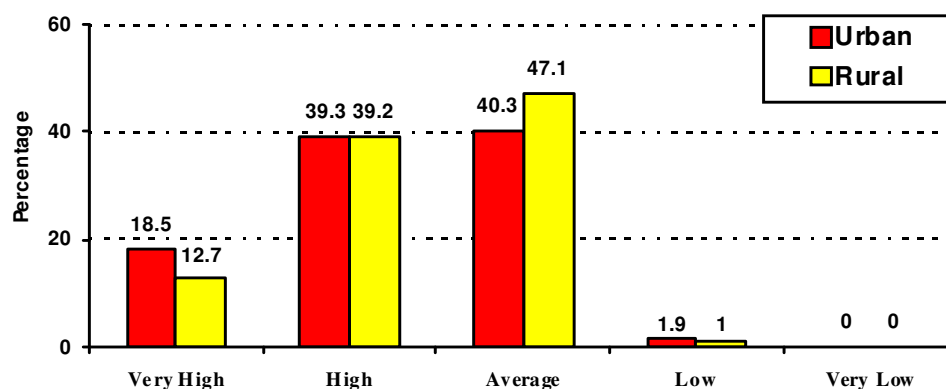
- A further investigation revealed that the combined *very high/high* satisfaction levels with users of the IVC was 81.6% in 2011, which is almost identical to last year's result. The *very high/high* rating provided by users of the IVC between 2000 and 2010 is shown in Figure 45.

FIGURE 45
Combined “Very High/High” Satisfaction Ratings for the Information and Volunteer Centre by Users 2000 – 2011 Comparisons²³



- The majority of IVC users live in Sherwood Park (67.4%) while the remaining 32.6% live in rural parts of Strathcona County. The satisfaction ratings for the IVC were about the same for both urban and rural area residents (Figure 46).

FIGURE 46
**Satisfaction with the Information and Volunteer Centre
 Urban and Rural Comparisons**



- A total of 187 people (37.4%) did not rate the Information and Volunteer Centre because they did not know enough about it to provide a rating. This

²³ There was no satisfaction survey conducted in 2002.

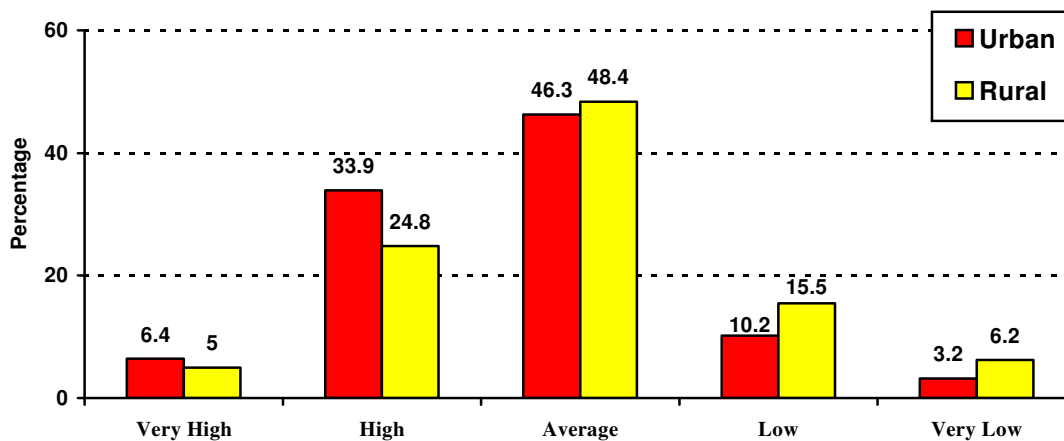
finding is somewhat higher than what was found in 2010, and may suggest more promotion of the IVC and how it contributes to life in Strathcona County.

- No differences were seen among any socio-demographic variables with respect to perceptions of satisfaction of the IVC.
- Only 5 people gave the Information and Volunteer Centre a *low* or *very low* rating. Some of the comments focused on the need for the IVC to improve its profile. There were others who found it difficult to get a response from staff with respect to questions they had about volunteer opportunities.

Land Use Planning & Economic Development Services in Strathcona County

People were asked to rate their satisfaction with various planning services performed by the County. Figure 47 presents the satisfaction level of people living in rural and urban parts of the County for land use planning, which includes determining new residential, commercial and industrial development.²⁴

FIGURE 47
Satisfaction with Land Use Planning in Strathcona County
Urban and Rural Comparisons

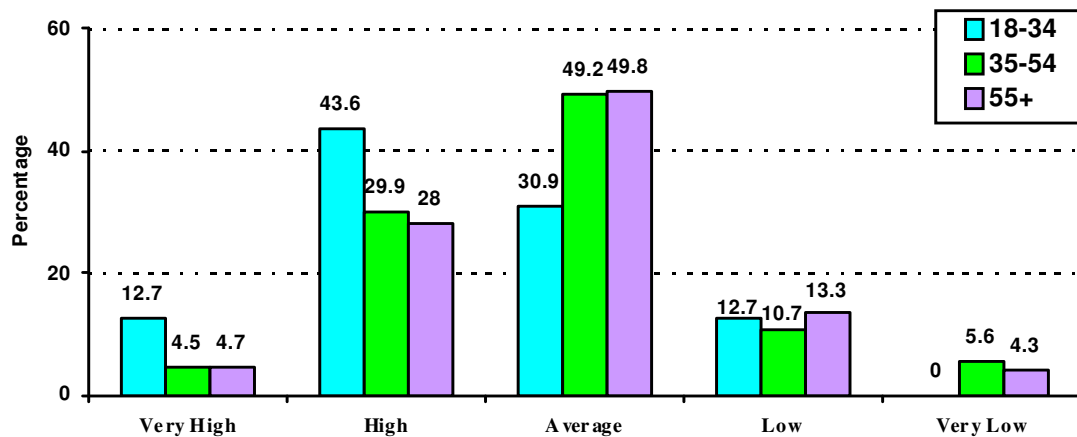


²⁴ Overall, 56 people (11.2% of the sample) did not rate this service. This was almost identical to 2010.

Highlights from Figures 47 & 48

- Figure 47 shows that the perception of residents toward land use planning by the County was slightly more negative among rural residents compared to urban residents. However, no statistical differences were found.
- In this year's satisfaction survey, there was a relationship between age groups with respect to perceptions about land use planning ($\chi^2 = 16.32$, 8 df, $p = .038$). It can be seen in Figure 48 (and augmented with a one-way analysis of variance, revealed that higher satisfaction was found among younger residents compared to those aged 35 or older, where $F(2,440) = 5.06$ $p < .008$).

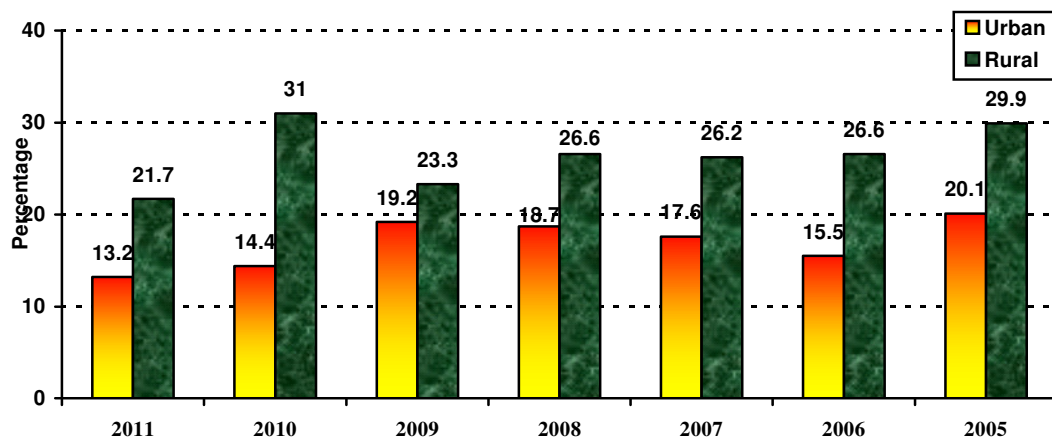
FIGURE 48
Satisfaction with Land Use Planning in Strathcona County
Age Group Comparisons



- No differences were seen among any of the other socio-demographic variables with respect to perceptions of satisfaction toward land use planning.

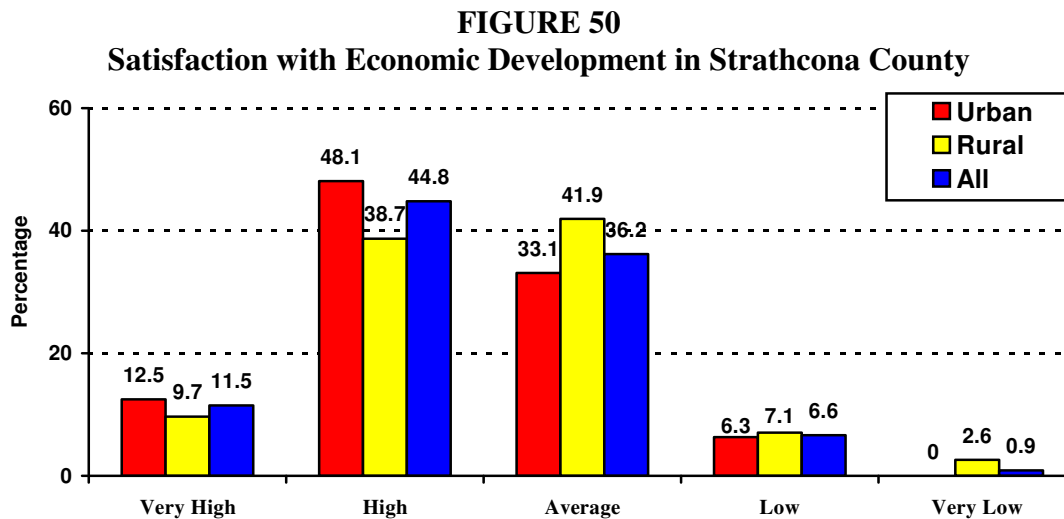
- The patterns found in this year's survey with respect to geographic location of residents were different than what was seen in previous satisfaction surveys. As shown in Figure 49, dissatisfaction was considerably lower among rural residents this year compared to last year, and was the lowest noted compared to results dating back to 2005. Urban residents also had lower dissatisfaction rates compared to previous years.

FIGURE 49
Combined “Very Low/Low” Satisfaction Ratings for Land Use Planning
2005 – 2011 Comparisons



- Overall, 73 people (16.5% of the sample) gave a *low* or *very low* rating of the land use planning service. Many of the comments centered on perceptions that the County was not listening to opinions that residents had about the County's planning strategies. Others felt that the County was growing too fast, with some people adding that the new developments (both residential and commercial) were not taking roadway access into consideration.

Figure 50 presents the satisfaction level of people living in rural and urban parts of the County with economic development, which includes attracting new businesses into the County.²⁵



Highlights from Figure 50

- As can be seen in Figure 50, the perception of residents toward economic development by the County was generally positive, regardless of where people live. Overall, 56.3% of all residents gave *very high/high* ratings for the economic development being done at the present time. This combined rating is almost 6% higher than what was posted in 2010.
- A follow-up analysis confirmed a relationship between the *Economic Development* service and where one lived in the County.²⁶ Those living in Sherwood Park gave this service a higher rating than those who lived in the rural sections of Strathcona County.²⁷
- No differences were seen among any other socio-demographic variables with one's satisfaction of economic development.
- Thirty-three residents throughout the County (7.5% of the sample) expressed a low or very low level of satisfaction with economic development in the County. In this year's study, many of the comments focused on a perception that high taxes and high rent were reasons why more small businesses were

²⁵ Overall, 58 people (11.6% of the sample) did not rate this service, which is almost identical to what was uncovered in the 2010 survey.

²⁶ For Economic Development, ($\chi^2 = 12.37$, 4 df, $p = .015$).

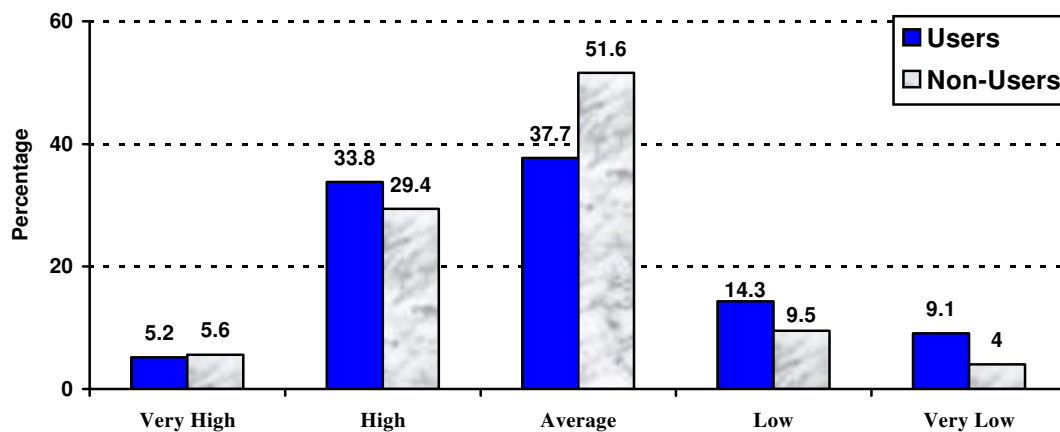
²⁷ A follow-up test of mean scores confirms this difference from a statistical perspective ($t = -2.62$, 440 df, $p = .009$)

not being set up in Sherwood Park. There was also an equal split between those who felt there were not enough businesses and those who thought there were too many businesses.

Planning, Building & Inspection Services in Strathcona County

Figure 51 presents the satisfaction level for planning, building and inspection services, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample who utilized these services²⁸ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 159 people (34.2% of the sample) did not rate this service on the basis that they did not know enough about it, which is about 3% higher than last year's survey.

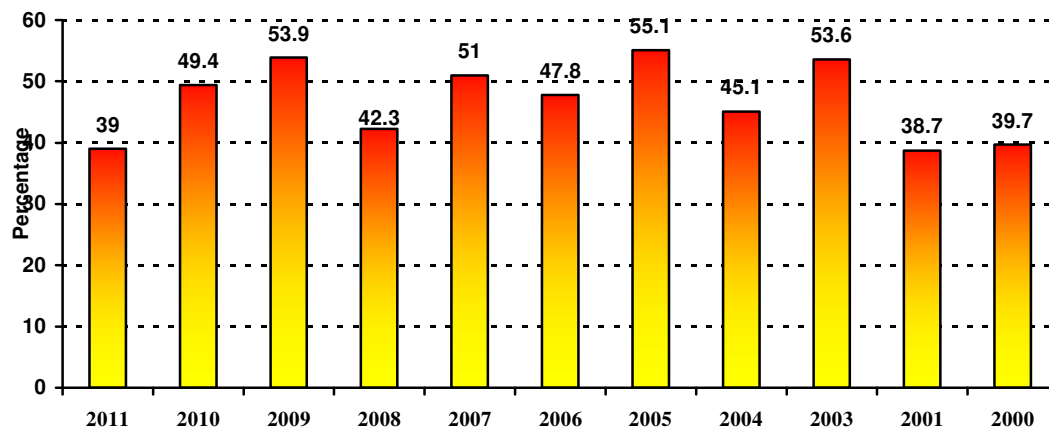
FIGURE 51
Satisfaction with Building Permit and Inspections Services in Strathcona County



No measureable differences were seen between users and non-users for this service. From a trending perspective, users who give this service a *very high/high* rating fluctuate over the years. It can be seen in Figure 52 that the summed rating is the lowest it's been in 2011 since 2001. This up and down pattern among users is something that seems to occur with this service from one year to the next.

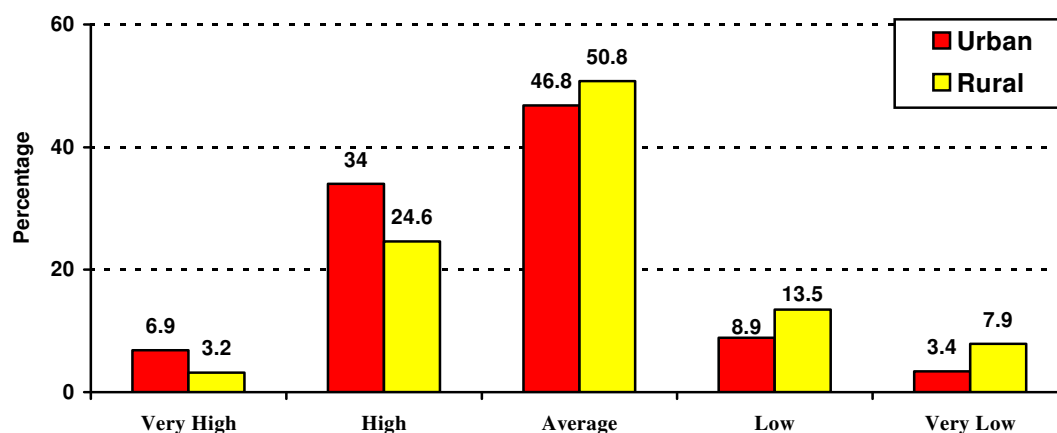
²⁸ Overall, 16.6% of respondents indicated that they had used the planning, building and inspection services within the past 12 months. This is slightly lower than last year's survey.

FIGURE 52
Combined “Very High/High” Satisfaction Ratings for Building Permit and Inspections Services among Users: 2000 – 2011 Comparisons



A comparison of perceptions by location (regardless of use/non-use of the service) is shown in Figure 53. Location was not a determining factor in differentiating residents' perceptions toward this service, though urban residents had more favorable views than those living in rural Strathcona.

FIGURE 53
Satisfaction with Building Permit and Inspections Services in Strathcona County – Urban & Rural Comparisons



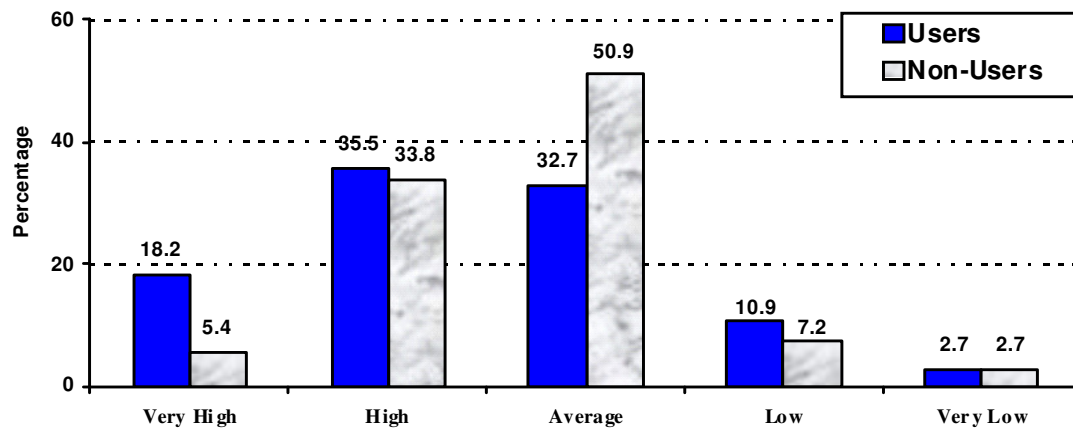
The 52 people (10.4% of the sample) who rated this service as *low* or *very low* were asked to suggest ways this could be improved. Like 2010, in this year's study, there

were repeated concerns voiced by residents called for faster times on issuing permits along with lower costs. For the most part, the comments noted in this year's survey mirrored concerns raised by residents in previous years.

By-law Enforcement Services in Strathcona County

Figure 54 presents the satisfaction level with by-law enforcement, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample who utilized these services²⁹ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 56 people (11.2% of the sample) did not rate this service on the basis that they did not know enough about it.

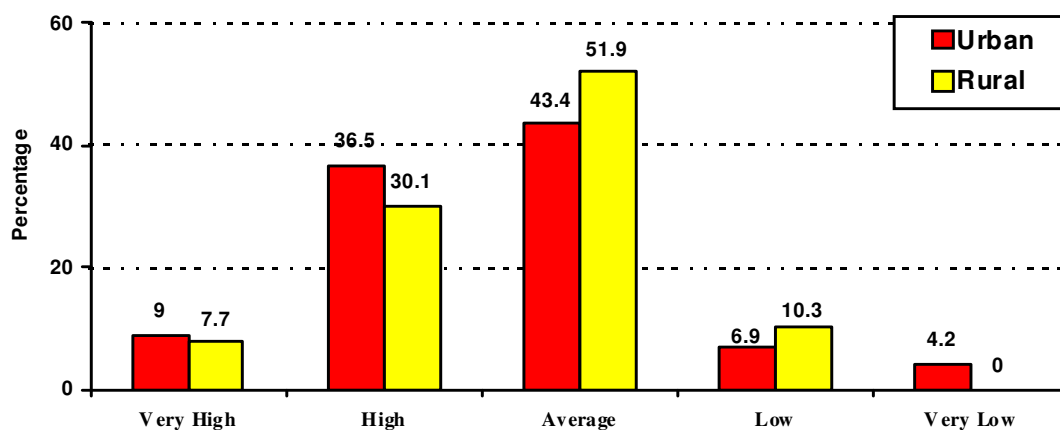
FIGURE 54
Satisfaction with By-law Enforcement Services in Strathcona County



²⁹ Overall, 22.6% of respondents indicated they had utilized by-law enforcement services within the past 12 months. This is almost 3% higher than what was reported in the 2010 survey.

Users had a stronger rating of by-law services than non users; this was confirmed by both a chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 23.19$, 4 df, $p=.000$) and a follow-up test of mean scores confirms this difference from a statistical perspective ($t = -2.50$, 442 df, $p = .013$). There were no statistical differences seen for this service when comparisons were done between those living in Sherwood Park and those living in rural Strathcona County (Figure 55).

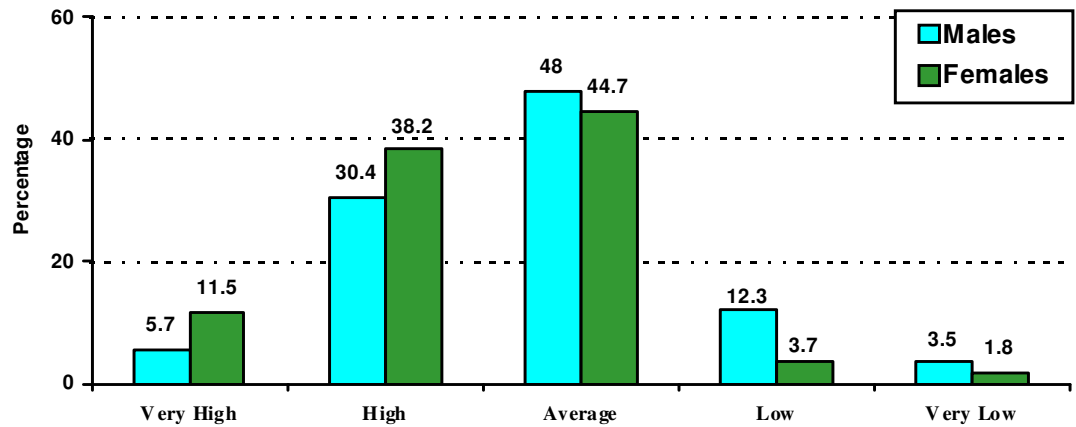
FIGURE 55
Satisfaction with By-law Enforcement Services in Strathcona County – Urban & Rural Comparisons



When making demographic comparisons, a chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 23.19$, 4 df, $p=.000$) determined that there was a relationship with how residents rated this service on the basis of gender. It can be seen in Figure 56 that females viewed the service more favorably than males.³⁰

³⁰ A test of mean scores confirms this difference from a statistical perspective ($t = 3.93$, 442 df, $p = .000$).

FIGURE 56
Satisfaction with By-law Enforcement Services in Strathcona County – Gender Comparisons

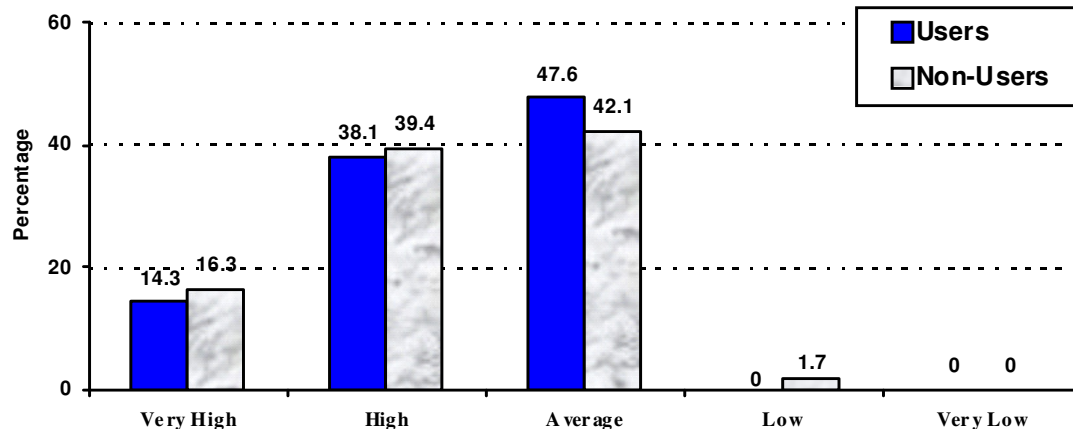


The 48 residents (10.8% of the sample) who had a low level of satisfaction with this service were asked to suggest ways this could be improved. Most of the responses this year centered on existing by-laws that were not being enforced, particularly those associated with dogs. There were also multiple mentions of the need for additional by-law officers throughout the County.

Agricultural Services in Strathcona County

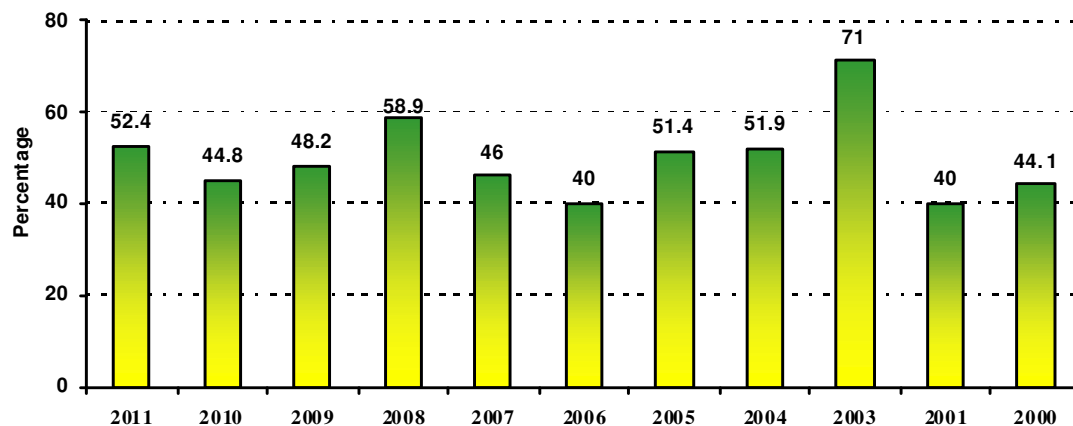
Figure 57 presents the satisfaction level with weed control and other agricultural services, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample who utilized these services in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 58 people (11.6% of the sample) did not rate this service on the basis that they did not know enough about it. There were no statistically significant differences with respect to users and non users with respect to perceptions toward agricultural services.

FIGURE 57
Satisfaction with Weed Control, Soil Management, Wildlife Problems
and other Agricultural Services in Strathcona County



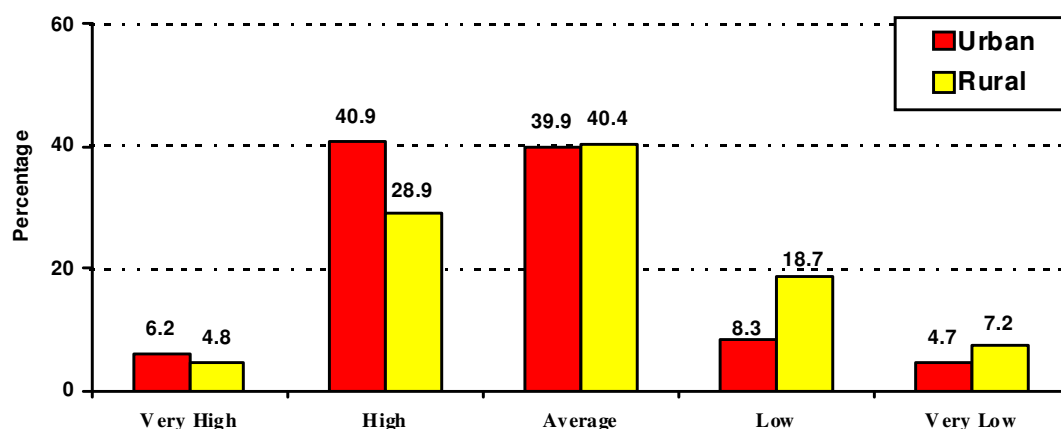
A comparison of this year's results with past satisfaction studies (Figure 58) revealed that the percentage of users who gave the service a *very high* or *high* rating this year has rebounded from the low rating posted in last year's survey.

FIGURE 58
“Very High/High” Combined Satisfaction Ratings with the Different Agricultural Services by Users of the Service-- 2000 – 2011 Comparisons³¹



A comparison of perceptions by location (regardless of use/non-use of the service) is shown in Figure 59. Both a chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 14.69$, 4 df, $p=.005$) and a follow-up test of mean scores ($t = -3.30$, 440 df, $p = .001$) confirmed that those living in Sherwood Park viewed Agricultural services more favorably than those who lived in rural parts of Strathcona County.

FIGURE 59
Satisfaction with Weed Control, Soil Management, Wildlife Problems and other Agricultural Services – Urban & Rural Comparisons



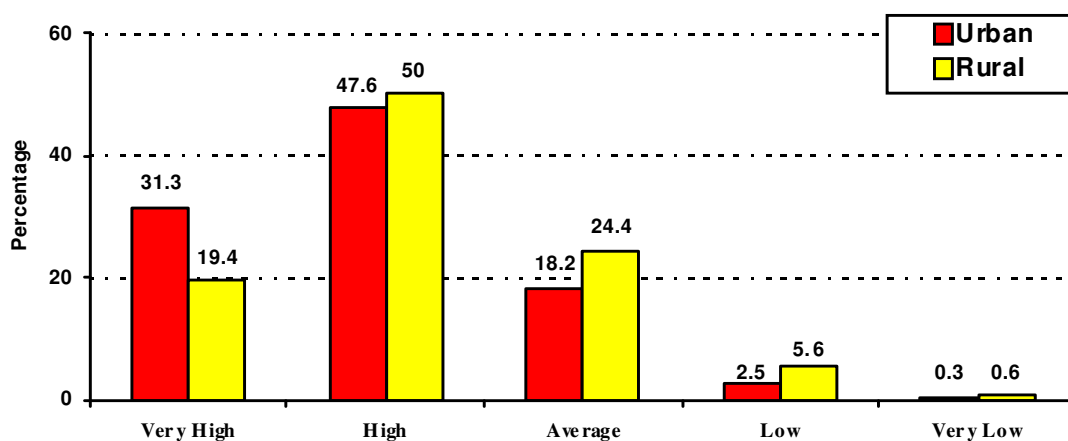
³¹ There was no satisfaction survey conducted in 2002.

Overall, the 79 residents (17.9% of the sample) who had a *low/very low* level of satisfaction with this service were asked to suggest ways this could be improved. As in previous years, the majority of the comments focused on weed control, especially thistles and dandelions. Several residents commented on the lack of weed control on County land itself, yet also noted how they were specifically told to control weeds on their own land. As in 2010, animal control concerns were mentioned by only a few residents.

Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Services in Strathcona County

People were asked to rate their satisfaction with the various outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities offered by the County. Figure 60 presents the satisfaction level with the various parks, green spaces and sports fields. Only a small handful of residents (21 people, or 4.2% of the sample) did not rate this item.

FIGURE 60
Satisfaction with Parks, Green Spaces and Sports Fields in Strathcona County



Highlights from Figure 60

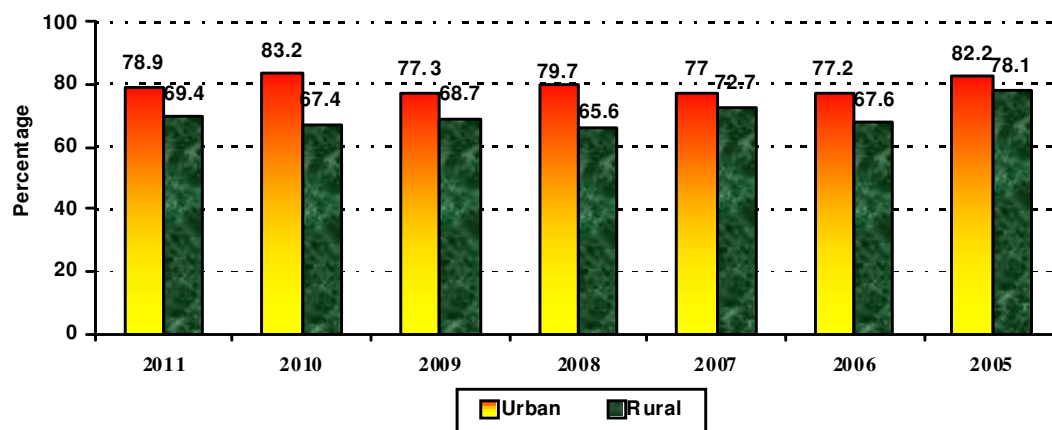
- As per Figure 60, residents living in Sherwood Park had a higher positive perception toward various outdoor green spaces than those living in rural Strathcona. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between where one lived and how one rated this.³² A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences confirmed a statistically significant difference in

³² ($\chi^2 = 10.89$, 4 df, $p=.028$).

satisfaction levels between urban and rural residents ($t = - 3.26, 477 \text{ df}, p = .001$).

- As seen in Figure 61, this year's combined *very high/high* rating for the urban area (78.9%) has dropped from last year to show similar ratings from previous years. For rural residents, their combined *very high/high* ratings this year (69.4%) is slightly higher than 2010.

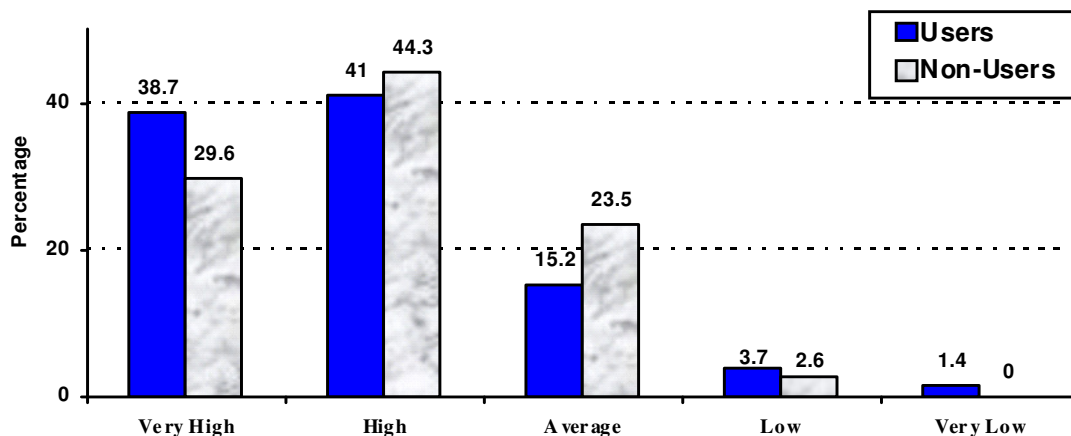
FIGURE 61
Combined “Very High/High” Satisfaction Ratings for Parks, Green Spaces and Sport Fields: 2005 – 2011 Comparisons



- The 19 people (3.9% of the sample) who gave the parks, green spaces and sport fields a low rating were asked to suggest ways this could be improved. Most of the comments in this year's study revolved around a need for more parks and green spaces. Two residents thought that the football field should have artificial turf instead of grass.

Figure 62 presents the satisfaction level with indoor recreation facilities in the County, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample who utilized these facilities³³ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 36 people (7.2% of the sample) did not rate these facilities on the basis that they did not know enough about them.

FIGURE 62
Satisfaction with Indoor Recreation Facilities in Strathcona County

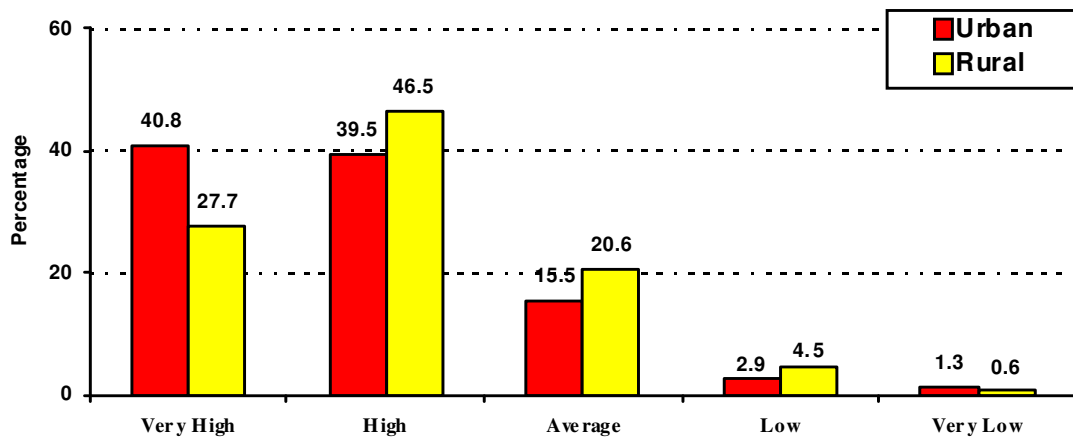


Highlights from Figure 62

- It can be seen from Figure 62 that the perception of residents toward indoor recreation facilities was somewhat dependent on past user patterns. Overall, people who used indoor recreation facilities were slightly more satisfied than those who had not used these facilities, but the differences were not statistically significant.
- A further analysis revealed that 73.2% of Sherwood Park residents used the indoor recreation facilities at least once in the past 12 months, while 65.1% of rural residents made use of these facilities.
- It can be seen in Figure 63 that, regardless of use, the combined *very high/high* satisfaction levels for urban residents (80.3%) was slightly higher than it was for rural residents (74.2%).

³³ Overall, 70.4% of respondents indicated that they had been to an indoor recreation facility in the County of Strathcona within the past 12 months. This is slightly lower than the 2010 survey results.

FIGURE 63
Satisfaction with Indoor Recreation Facilities in Strathcona County

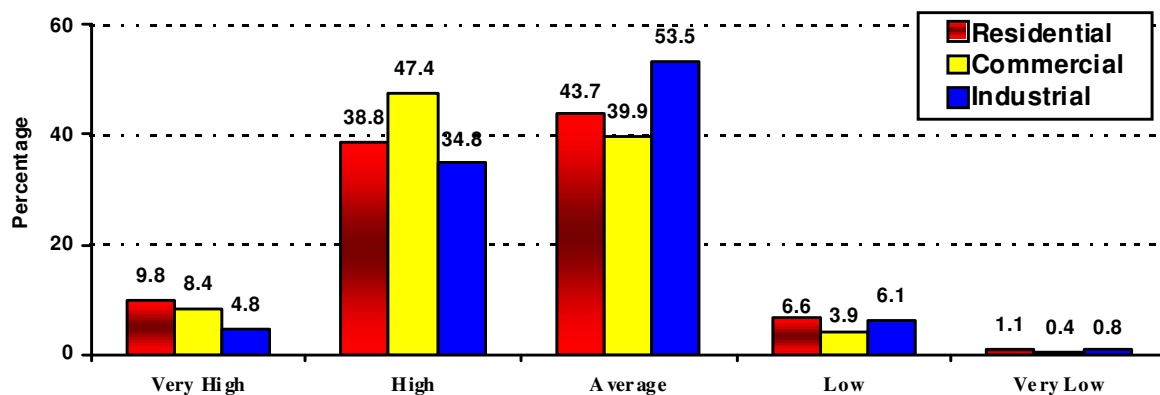


- The 21 people (4.5% of the sample) who had a low level of satisfaction with the facilities were asked to suggest ways these could be improved. Similar to last year's study, most of the concerns focused on the need for more ice arenas. A few residents felt that the existing indoor facilities were too crowded, and a couple of residents thought that the County should build another recreation facility similar to Millennium Place.

D. Perceptions of New Residential, Commercial and Industrial Developments in Strathcona County

Residents of Strathcona County were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of residential, commercial and industrial developments in the County. A comparative rating of the quality of all three types of developments is shown in Figure 64 below.

FIGURE 64
Quality of Various Developments throughout Strathcona County



Highlights from Figure 64

- Overall, respondents who rated the different types of developments were slightly more satisfied with the quality of residential and commercial development than industrial developments. It should be noted, however, that a considerable number of residents (n=126 or 25.2% of the sample) did not rate the quality of industrial developments.³⁴
- The trends noted in this figure are similar to trends found in studies conducted in 2008, 2009 and 2010.
- No differences in perceptions were seen between those living in Sherwood Park and those living in other parts of Strathcona County with respect to quality of residential, commercial or industrial development.
- Those who rated the quality of any of these developments as *low* or *very low* were asked to indicate why they felt that way. Many residents used this section

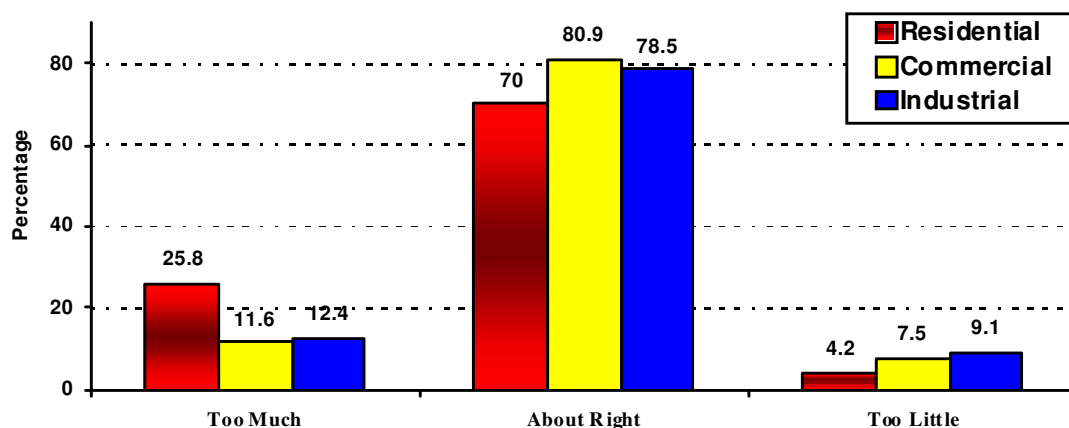
³⁴ Overall, 31 residents (6.2% of the sample) did not rate the quality of residential developments and 36 residents (7.2% of the sample) did not rate the quality of commercial developments.

to comment on increased traffic problems in all parts of the County. Comments specific to each type of development are noted below:

- A variety of concerns were expressed among the 33 people (6.6% of the sample) who rated the quality of residential developments as low. A common concern was that the houses seemed cramped too close together with a lack of green space and trees in new neighborhoods.
- Overall, 17 people (3.4% of the sample) who rated the quality of commercial development as low felt that there was too many commercial developments being allowed in Sherwood Park, and not enough in other parts of Strathcona County, particularly near Ardrossan.
- For industrial developments, among the 18 people (3.6% of the sample) who rated the quality of development as low, most of the comments centered on safety and pollution concerns for residents, particularly with respect to air quality. Among dissatisfied residents, this view was also expressed in previous satisfaction surveys.

A comparative rating on the perception of the quantity (i.e. amount) of new types of developments is shown in Figure 65.

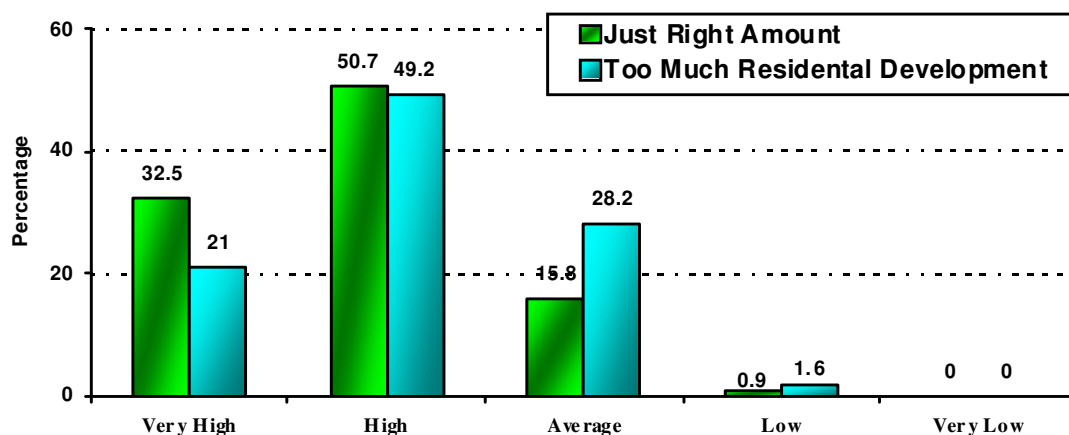
FIGURE 65
Quantity of Various Developments throughout Strathcona County



Highlights from Figure 65

- Overall, the majority of respondents were of the opinion that there were about the right amount of developments in the County at the present time. The percentage of people who felt this way in 2011 was almost identical to results found in studies dating back to 2003.
- The findings with respect to quality and quantity of development suggest a perception in the County right now that there is a good balance of commercial and industrial developments. Furthermore, while 25.8% of residents believe there is too much residential development, this finding is about 10% lower than what has been seen in previous years.
- A further analysis (as seen in Figure 66) revealed that those who felt there was too much residential development³⁵ **had a strong positive rating** on the quality of life in Strathcona County as a whole (70.2% *very high/high*) though it was lower than those who felt that the amount of residential development was about right (83.2% *very high/high*). As such, while concerns about continued residential development remain, it has not adversely affected the perceived quality of one's life in Strathcona County.

FIGURE 66
Perception of the Quality of Life in Strathcona County as a Whole – Comparisons
Based on Perceptions of Amount of Residential Growth



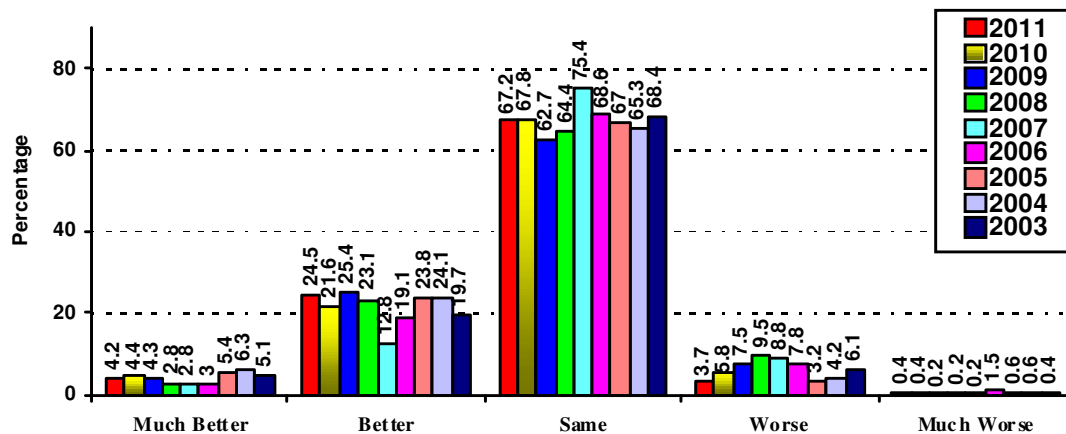
³⁵ The percentage breakdowns for perceptions of the quality of life in Strathcona County among those who thought there were just the right amount of residential development is very similar to what was found in the last five satisfaction surveys. Among those who thought there was too much residential development, the combined very high/high ratings (70.1%) for 2011 was slightly higher than 2010 (69.4%) but lower than 2009 (76.2%).

- No differences in perceptions were seen between those living in Sherwood Park and those living in other parts of Strathcona County with respect to amount of industrial development, residential or commercial development.

E. Question on Quality of Services Now Compared to Two Years Ago

Respondents were asked to compare the current quality of services offered by Strathcona County with the quality of services offered two years ago. The 2011 survey results are compared with the results found in the previous surveys dating back to 2003, as shown in Figure 67 below.

FIGURE 67
Quality of Services Now in Strathcona County Compared to 2 years ago 2003-2011

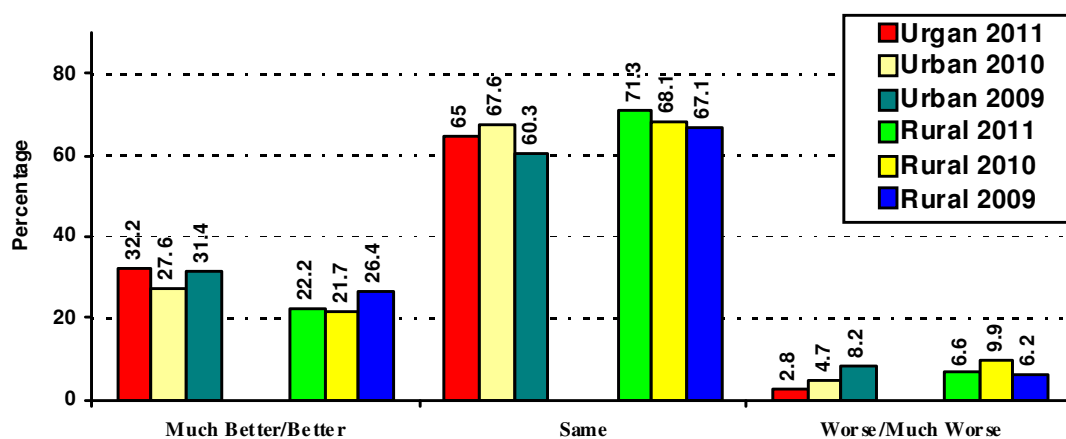


Highlights from Figure 67

- Overall, the majority of respondents were of the opinion that the quality of services offered by Strathcona County was the same as it was two years ago. It can be seen from Figure 67 that this percentage has been quite consistent over the past 9 years (with the exception of 2007).
- The 20 people (4.1% of the sample) who felt that the quality of services had gotten worse or much worse were asked to indicate what changes they noticed about the quality of service. Nothing in particular stood out, though there were some concerns about the services being the same as two years ago even though the population has grown. There was also some reiteration about road maintenance in the winter not being as good as it was in previous years.

A comparison of urban and rural residents with respect to perceptions of the quality of services is shown in Figure 68. There was no statistically significant difference between the urban and rural sectors in 2011. However, a comparison between 2011 and previous years shows an increase in the *much better/better* ratings for urban residents compared to 2010 and 2009. For rural residents, 2011's combined *much better/better* results is virtually the same as 2010.

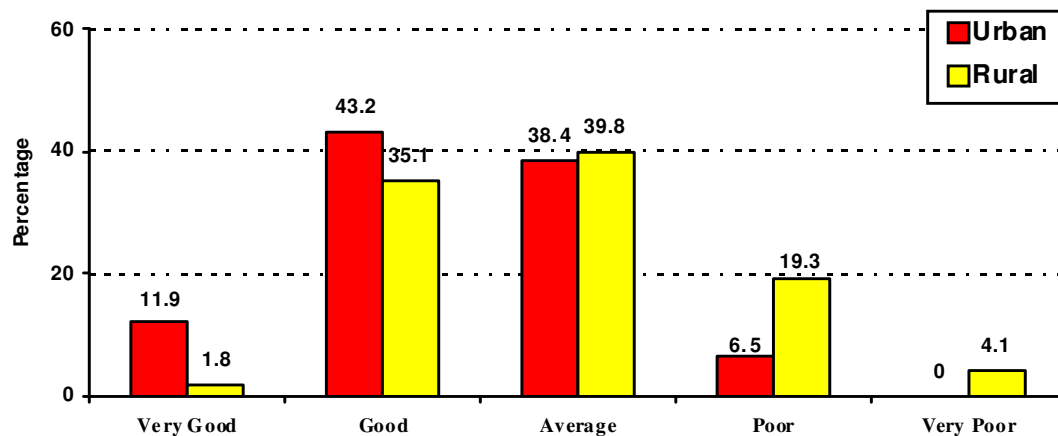
FIGURE 68
Quality of Services Now in Strathcona County Compared to 2 years ago
Urban and Rural Comparisons – 2011, 2010 & 2009 Results



F. Question on Taxes within Strathcona County

Strathcona County taxpayers³⁶ were asked to rate the value they receive for their tax dollars. Residents were told that 61% of their taxes were earmarked for municipal services. Knowing this, residents were asked to what extent they felt they were getting good value for their tax dollars. The results to this question are shown in Figure 69 below.

FIGURE 69
Value for Tax Dollars Spent in Strathcona County
- Urban and Rural Comparisons



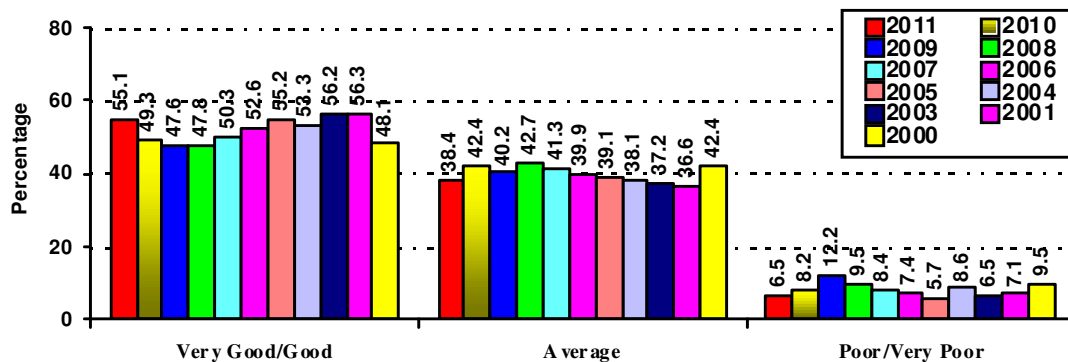
Highlights from Figure 69

- Statistically, there was a difference between urban and rural residents with respect to how people felt about the value of tax dollars spent on municipal services. This was confirmed by a chi-square procedure ($\chi^2 = 43.41$, 4 df, $p = .000$) and a *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = -6.29$, 463 df, $p = .000$). It can be seen that a higher percentage of people living in the urban area felt that they were getting very good or good value for their tax dollars compared to those living in rural areas.
- Those people (12.7% of the sample, N=59) who felt that they received poor value for the taxes paid were asked to indicate why they felt that way. As was the case in previous surveys, many of these comments came from rural residents who felt that there was an inequity between the amount of money they paid in taxes and the limited amount of services they were receiving in return.

³⁶ In 2011, 93% of respondents owned property in Strathcona County and as such, were taxpayers.

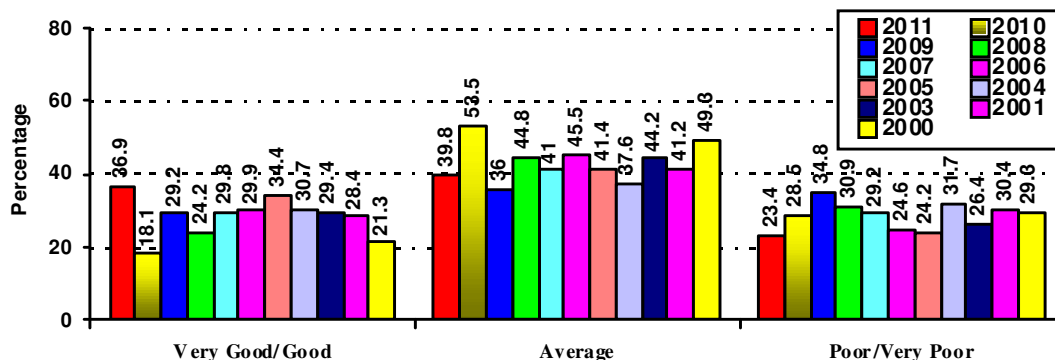
A comparison of trends from 2000 - 2011 with respect to perceptions of the value of services for tax dollars are shown in Figure 70 (urban) and Figure 71 (rural). One can see that for urban residents, the perception that residents were getting very good or good value for their tax dollars has solidly rebounded after being on a downswing since 2005.

FIGURE 70
Value of Tax Dollars Spent in Strathcona County – Urban Residents (2000-2011)



Rural residents have consistently had a much higher negative perception of the value they get for their tax dollars compared to urban residents each year this has been measured. However, positive perceptions of value for tax dollars in 2011 is the highest it has been since measurement began in 2000. Furthermore, the *poor/very poor* perceptions indicated by rural residents have also dropped to their lowest point since 2000.

FIGURE 71
Value of Tax Dollars Spent in Strathcona County – Rural Residents (2000-2011)



F. Services Provided by Strathcona County Employees

Residents were asked to indicate which County services they had used in the past 12 months. Most survey respondents had used at least one County service during this time period.³⁷ It can be seen in Table 1 that *recycling depots* were the most frequent service used in 2011 among those surveyed. Other services utilized by a number of County residents include *indoor recreation facilities*, the *County Library* and the *RCMP*.

Table 1
County Services in Strathcona County Used by Residents
in the Past 12 Months – 2011 vs. 2008 to 2010

Type of Service	N of Users (2011)	% Use 2011	% Use 2010	% Use 2009	% Use 2008
Recycling Depots	404	80.8%	85.0%	86.4%	86.8%
Indoor Recreation Facilities	352	70.4%	71.8%	71.5%	74.0%
Strathcona County Library	319	63.8%	54.4%	59.7%	63.0%
RCMP	160	32.0%	32.0%	33.3%	38.8%
By-law Enforcement	113	22.6%	20.0%	17.1%	19.6%
Public Transit Services	107	21.4%	29.6%	22.9%	26.8%
Information & Volunteer Centre	90	18.0%	17.6%	17.6%	21.0%
Building Permit & Inspection Services	83	16.6%	17.2%	16.7%	22.6%
Fire & Ambulance Services	72	14.4%	13.8%	15.1%	15.4%
Family Support Services	53	10.6%	9.8%	11.8%	11.4%
Agriculture Services	32	6.4%	8.6%	6.6%	7.0%

Most of the municipal services noted above had minor decreases or increases with respect to use by residents in 2011 compared to previous years. The three exceptions were public transit, which had an 8% decrease in usage between 2011 and 2010; recycling depots, which had a 4% decrease and the Strathcona County Library, which had an increase in use of just over 9% in the same period.

³⁷ 32 respondents (6.4% of the sample) mentioned other municipal services they used (water & sewer, garbage, parks, road maintenance, taxation), while another 6 residents (1.2% of the sample) indicated items that were not municipal services (e.g. health care and ESL services).

A comparison of services used by urban and rural residents for 2011 and 2010 is shown in Table 2.³⁸ It can be seen that among residents who were surveyed in 2011, urban residents used *recycling depots*, *indoor recreation facilities*, the *County Library* and *public transit services* to a greater extent than rural residents. Rural residents, on the other hand, made greater use of *agricultural services* compared with urban residents.

Table 2
County Services in Strathcona County Reportedly Used by Urban and Rural Residents in the Past 12 Months – 2010 vs. 2009

Type of Service	2011		2010	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Recycling Services	<u>86.8%</u>	<u>69.7%</u>	85.1%	<u>84.7%</u>
Indoor Recreation Facilities	<u>73.2%</u>	<u>65.1%</u>	75.7%	62.7%
Strathcona County Library	<u>66.5%</u>	<u>58.9%</u>	<u>57.4%</u>	<u>47.3%</u>
RCMP	34.5%	27.4%	33.1%	29.3%
Public Transit Services	<u>25.8%</u>	<u>13.1%</u>	35.1%	16.7%
By-law Enforcement	24.6%	18.9%	21.1%	17.2%
Information & Volunteer Centre	20.0%	14.3%	17.7%	20.0%
Planning, Building & Inspection Services	16.3%	17.7%	16.6%	18.7%
Fire & Ambulance Services	14.2%	14.9%	13.7%	14.0%
Family Support Services	11.4%	9.7%	10.3%	8.7%
Agriculture Services	4.9%	<u>10.3%</u>	5.7%	<u>15.3%</u>

In terms of changes between years for urban residents, there was a decrease in the use of *transit services* in 2011 compared to 2010. There was an increase in the use of the *public library*. Among rural residents, there was an increase in the use of the *public library* and a decrease in the use of *recycling depots*, the *IVC* and *agriculture services* in 2011 compared to 2010.

Respondents were asked to think of the most recent contact they had with County staff³⁹ and to rate the service they received on the basis of six criteria. The services

³⁸ All respondents were read a list of municipal services and were asked to indicate which ones they had used within the past 12 months.

³⁹ In this year's study, 28 respondents reported having no contact with any County staff in the past 12 months.

residents based their ratings on are shown in Table 3. The overall rating results for all six criteria (regardless of the service used) are shown in Figures 72 and 73.

Table 3
County Departments in Strathcona County Used as the Basis for Rating the Service of County Staff in 2011

Type of Service	N	%
Indoor Recreation Facilities	140	29.7%
Strathcona County Library	130	27.7%
Recycling Depot	72	15.3%
RCMP	30	6.4%
Fire & Ambulance Services	18	3.8%
Public Transit Services	16	3.4%
Building, Permit & Inspection Services	14	3.0%
Family Support Services	12	2.5%
By-law Enforcement	10	2.1%
Agriculture Services	3	0.6%
Information & Volunteer Centre	2	0.4%

FIGURE 72
Quality of Services provided by County Staff

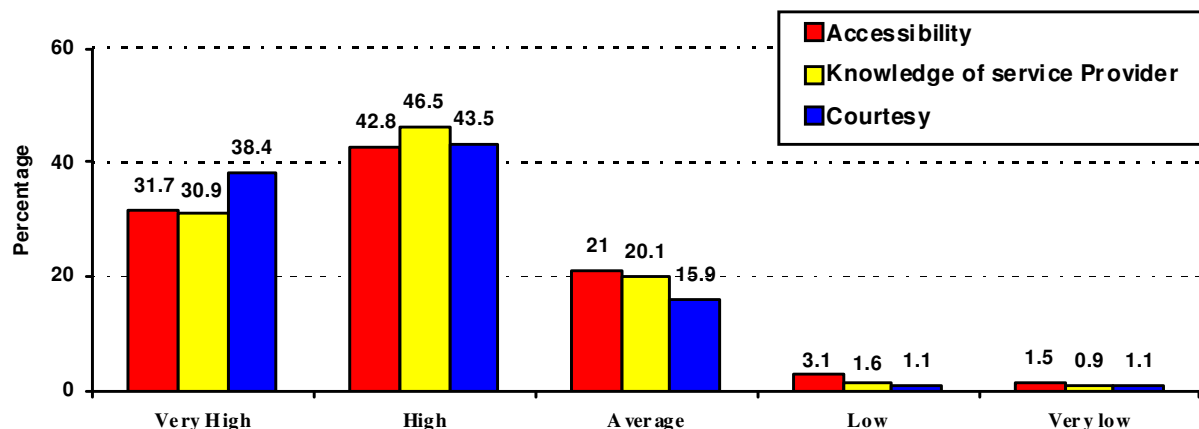
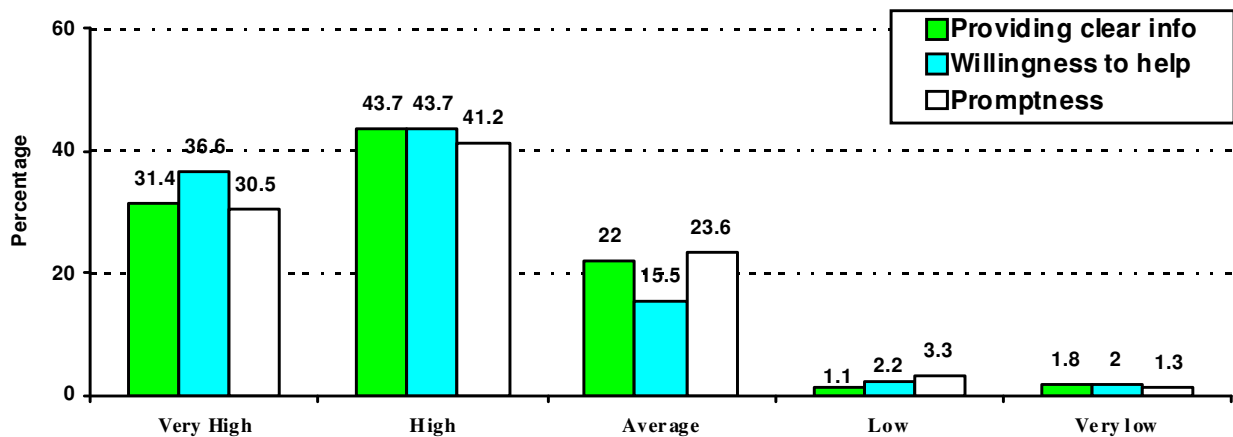


FIGURE 73
Quality of Services provided by County Staff



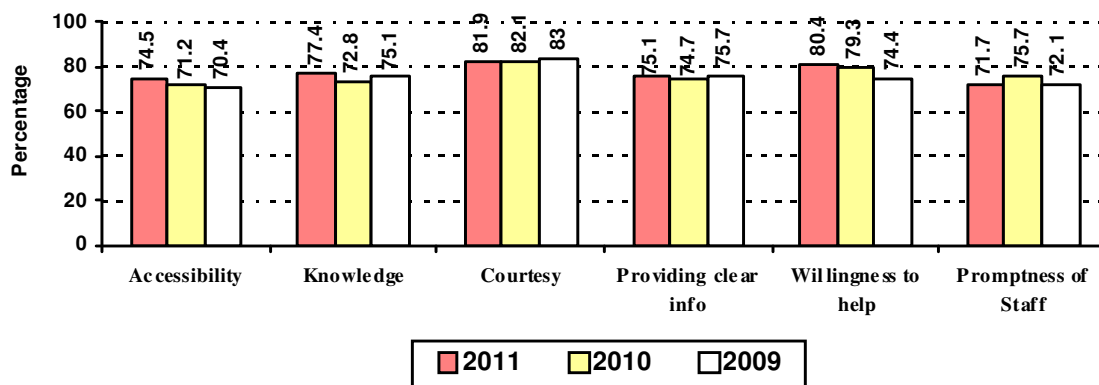
Highlights from Figure 72 and Figure 73

- Overall, residents had a very positive perception of County staff on the basis of all six criteria.
- Based on the combination of the *very high* and *high* scores, the strongest criterion was *courtesy* (81.9%). The remaining attributes of service were all rated relatively similar, with *willingness of the staff to help you* the second highest at 80.4%, followed closely by *knowledge of the service provider* (77.4%), *being able to provide clear information and explanations* (75.1%), *accessibility of staff* (74.5%) and *promptness of staff* (71.7%).
- All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments about the service they had received from County staff. Overall, 34.6% of the respondents (N=168) provided additional comments. Of these 168 residents, the majority of comments (128 or 76.2% of the 168 residents) were positive descriptors, including *good and/or helpful*, *professional knowledgeable staff*, *efficient* and *friendly/courteous*. Many of these residents had additional positive perceptions toward departments that were particularly helpful to them. The County Library and recreation staff were mentioned numerous times.
- Not everyone was pleased. Overall, 23.8% of the 168 residents were not happy with aspects of the service they received. The comments in this year's survey were quite varied, and included:
 - Some encounters with staff that the resident felt were rude or not knowledgeable;

- Residents who complained about having to make multiple calls to staff to get a response;
- Some felt that certain departments were understaffed;
- Other complaints weren't necessarily directed to staff, but to circumstances associated with the County, such as insufficient parking near the library, the need to recycle plastic, and the need to do more with respect to weed and pest control.

Figure 74 presents a comparison of overall results between this year's survey and the 2010 and 2009 surveys for these six items. The combined *very high/high ratings for staff* were the same or slightly higher in 2011 compared to 2010 and 2009 for almost all of items, except for *promptness of staff*, which showed a decrease in 2011 compared to the last two years.

FIGURE 74
Quality of Services provided by County Staff - 2011 with 2010 & 2009 comparisons
on the combined *Very High/High* percentages



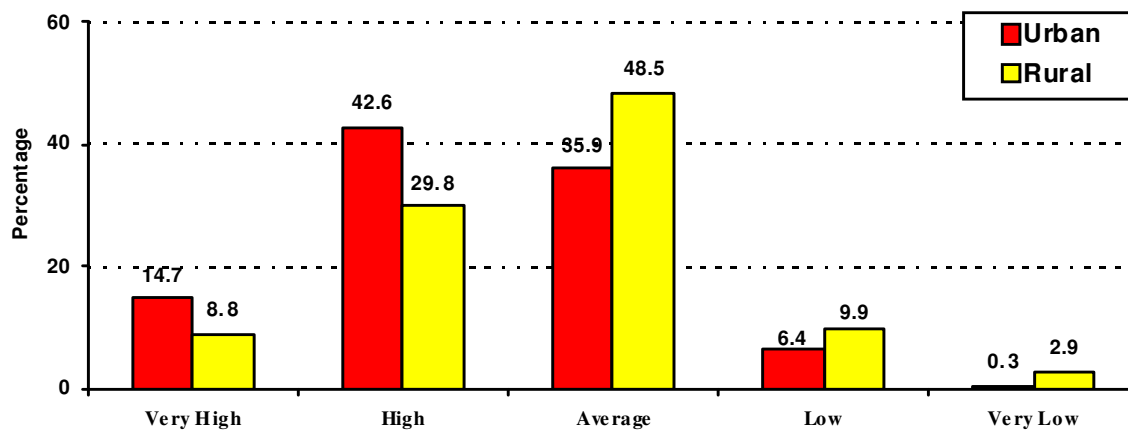
Respondents were also given the opportunity to add additional comments about the services provided by county staff. Overall, 33.8% did this, and of these people, the majority of them (70.4%) had positive things to say. While some residents made general comments pertaining to the helpfulness of staff, other residents identified specific departments, including those who worked in the library, fire and emergency services and some transit operators. Negative comments primarily focused on services that residents were not happy with (such as slow bus service or lack of snow clearance), rather than poor service from specific County departments or employees. There were some people who

were concerned about the speed at which calls made to the County were returned or that their questions were not immediately answered, but these comments were minimal.

G. Assessment of County Communication and Information Services

Residents were asked a series of questions about how they get information from Strathcona County. Early in the survey, residents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with opportunities to express opinions about municipal services or municipal issues in Strathcona County. A breakdown by residence is shown in Figure 75.

FIGURE 75
Rating Opportunities to Express Opinions



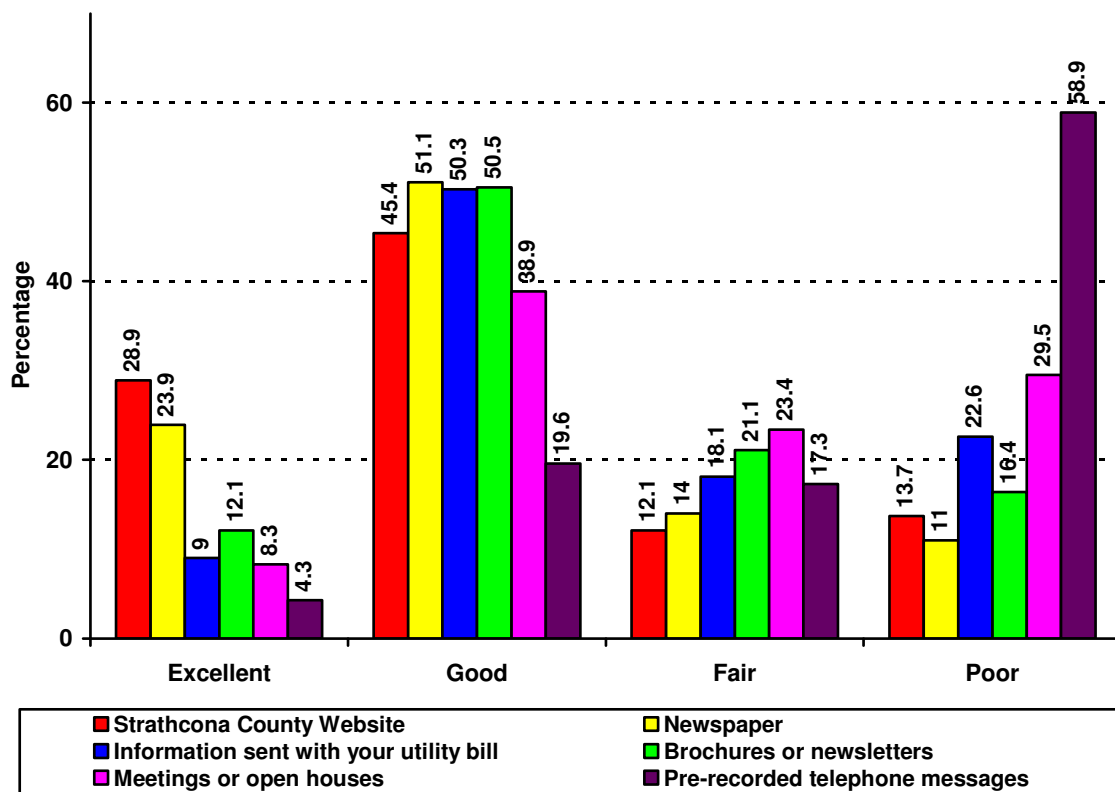
Highlights from Figure 75

- Those living in Sherwood Park were more satisfied with the opportunities to express opinions compared to those living in rural Strathcona. This was confirmed by a chi-square procedure ($\chi^2 = 20.07$, 4 df, $p=.000$) and a *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = -4.19$, 481 df, $p = .000$). There were no differences found with respect to any other demographic characteristic for this item.
- The positive level of satisfaction with respect to expressing opinions was considerably higher in 2011 among urban residents (57.3% *very high/high*) compared to 2010 (48.7%). Rural residents perceptions of this were also higher in 2011 (38.6% *very high/high*) compared to 2010 (27.6%).
- Overall, 43 people (8.9% of the sample) were not satisfied with the opportunities for expressing opinions in Strathcona County. Many of these

residents were not aware that such opportunities existed. Of those that did (and were dissatisfied), many felt that their ideas and opinions were falling on deaf ears. There were also some people who felt that members of council were very concerned with resident feedback prior to getting elected, but were slow to react once they got into office.

Residents were also read a list of different methods the County currently has in place for providing information about municipal services to its residents. For each method, respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought these were excellent, good, fair or poor methods. An overall rating of the methods is shown in Figure 76.

FIGURE 76
Rating Existing Methods Used to Inform the Public about Municipal Services



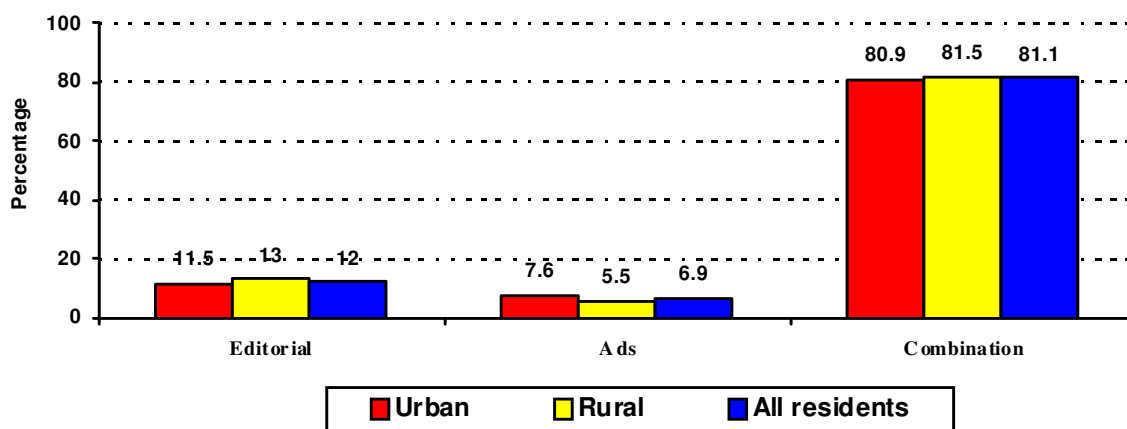
It can be seen in Figure 76 that the *County newspaper* and the *County Website* received solid ratings from residents. Overall, 75.1% of residents gave the *newspaper* an excellent or good rating; similarly, 74.2% of residents gave the *County website* a combination excellent/good rating. The 2011 newspaper ratings were almost 5% lower than 2010; however, the County website ratings were almost 10% higher this year

compared to last year. Other sources of information were considerably lower in 2011 compared to 2010. For example, 50.5% gave *newsletters and brochures* an excellent or good rating, but this was 12.6% lower than 2010. Lower ratings were also seen for *information sent to residents through the utility bill* (50.3% excellent/good in 2011, which was 11.5% lower than 2010).

Two other methods that received lower ratings from residents compared to other methods were *meetings/open houses* (47.2% excellent/good, 4% lower than the 2010 ratings) and *pre-recorded telephone messages* (23.8% excellent/good, about the same as 2010).

With respect to the local newspaper, it can be seen in Figure 77 that the majority of residents got their county information from a combination of editorial and advertisements. There were no differences on the basis of where the resident lived.

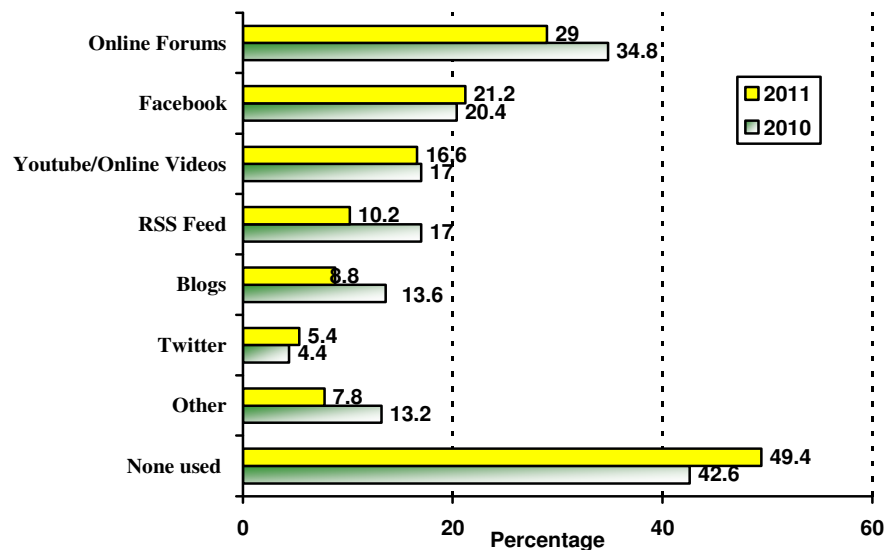
FIGURE 77
Source of County Information from the Local Newspaper comes from...



In this year's survey, Strathcona County also asked residents what sort of different online social media methods they would like to use to get information about people and events pertaining specifically to Strathcona County. Overall, it can be seen in Figure 78 that *online forums* were the most prevalent, followed by *Facebook, Youtube and other online videos, RSS Feed and Blogs*. Very few residents were making use of *Twitter*. Other

methods mentioned by residents included receiving information from email or online digital newspaper/radio sites.

FIGURE 78
Use of Different Online Methods by Strathcona County Residents in 2010 & 2011



With the exception of *Facebook*, fewer residents considered the different forms of social media in 2011 compared to 2010 as methods for Strathcona County to communicate with residents. There was no difference seen in online usage of these methods based on where the resident lived.

Figure 79 presents a comparison of urban and rural residents with respect to the percentage of residents who visited the Strathcona County website. From a proportion basis, It can be seen that a slightly larger percentage of residents living in rural Strathcona County have accessed the website compared to those living in Sherwood Park. This is the first time that a larger proportion of rural residents over urban residents accessed the County Website since measurement of this began back in 2003. On an overall basis, the percentage of residents who visited the County website decreased by 4.4% between 2010 and 2011.

FIGURE 79
Percentage of Residents who visited the County Website

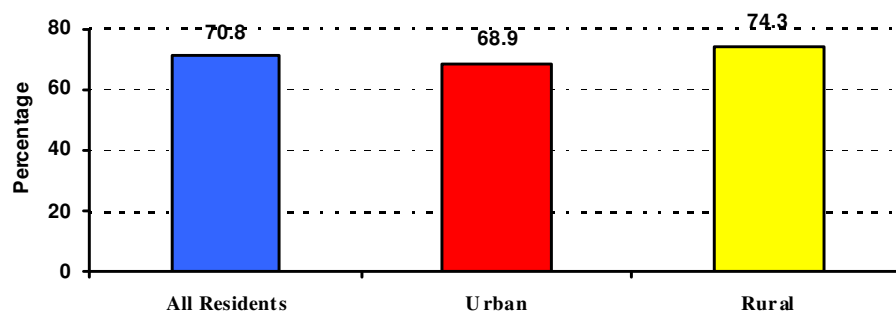
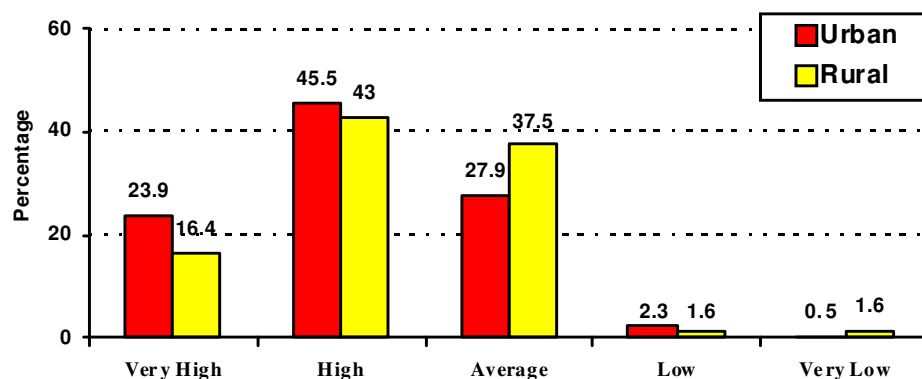


Figure 80 presents the satisfaction level with the Strathcona County website.⁴⁰ It can be seen that the satisfaction level was slightly higher among urban residents compared to those living in rural Strathcona, but the spread was not statistically significant.

FIGURE 80
Satisfaction with the Strathcona County Website



Although the percentage of residents who visited the Strathcona County website was lower than 2010, the satisfaction level with the site was actually higher in 2011. In 2011, the combined *very high/high* rating of the site was 69.4% for urban residents (7.6% greater than 2010) and 59.4% for rural residents (15.2% greater than 2010).

All residents were asked what step(s) they would take to get information about Strathcona County. The most popular answer was to go online either directly to the

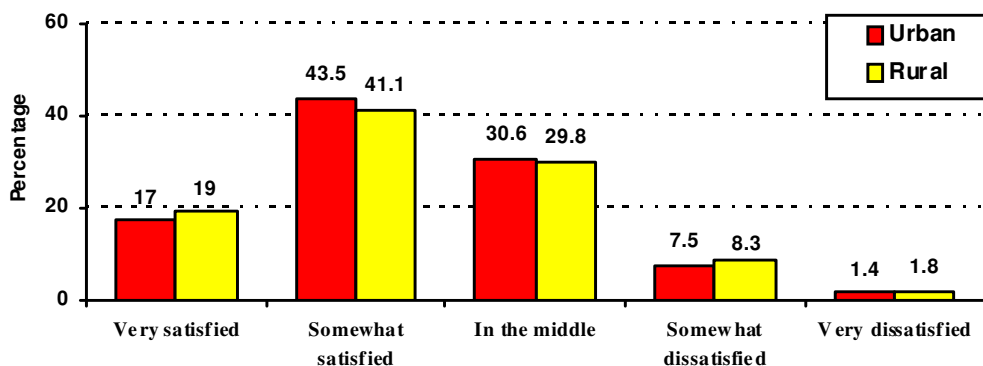
⁴⁰ This figure excludes 29.2% of the residents who never went to the County website.

website or via Google to find the answer (or who to talk to). A very strong second and third choice was for residents to either phone the County or visit County Hall in person. Another option mentioned by many residents was to contact their counsellor directly. Other options included looking up information through the library or checking the local newspaper. There were a couple of residents who indicated that it was difficult to find information through the website, as they had trouble navigating through the menus to find what they wanted.

H. Relationship with Other Municipalities

All respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the way Strathcona County worked with other levels of government, including municipalities, the Alberta provincial government and the Federal Government.⁴¹ It can be seen in Figure 81 that the combined *very/somewhat satisfied* ratings reveal that the majority of Sherwood Park (59.5%) and rural residents (59.1%) are satisfied with the County's efforts.

FIGURE 81
Satisfaction with Strathcona County working with other levels of government
Urban & Rural Comparisons



The 43 people (9.3% of the sample) who were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the County's efforts were asked to indicate why they felt this way. Many of the comments centered on the County's fight with the Province pertaining to the power line issue, as

⁴¹ The wording associated with this question changed between 2010 and 2011. As such, no comparisons will be made with previous studies, as this is essentially a new question for 2011. Figure 81 excludes 38 respondents (7.6% of the sample) who did not answer the question.

well as with the lack of a hospital in the County. There were also a few comments pertaining to a perceived lack of cooperation with Edmonton with respect to improving local transit between the two centres.

I. Awareness of the Strategic Plan

Overall, 139 residents (or 28.4% of the sample) were aware of Strathcona County's strategic plan, regardless of where they lived. This is almost a 1% increase over 2010. Those who knew of the existence of the strategic plan were asked to indicate what aspects of the plan they were aware of. Overall, many of the residents were mistaken about the contents of the strategic plan, and thought that it discussed:

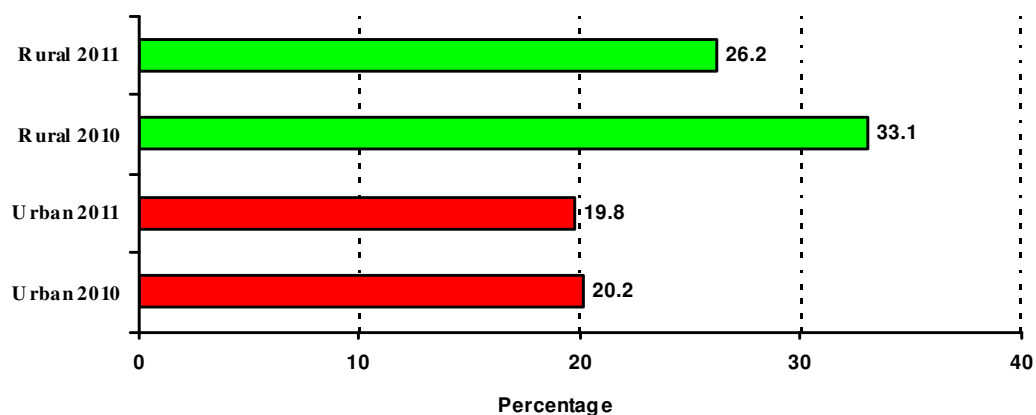
- Plans for a hospital
- Specific plans for new recreation facilities, trails and horses;
- Dealing with the power line/transmission line issue;
- Specific strategies for transit services.

Other residents, however, recognized that the strategic plan dealt with present and future commercial, industrial and residential growth as well as economic growth and social sustainability for both the urban and rural components of the County.

J. Public Engagement Opportunities

Residents were also asked whether they had given feedback on a County initiative or issue anytime in the past 12 months, either through a telephone or online survey, a discussion group or at an open house, outside of the 2011 Satisfaction Survey. Overall, 19.8% of Sherwood Park residents and 26.2% of rural residents had done so. In comparison with 2010, the percentage of Sherwood Park residents was virtually the same between 2009 and 2010, while participation by those in rural Strathcona County decreased by almost 7%.

FIGURE 82
Public Engagement Participation
(Urban & Rural Comparisons: 2011 & 2010)



Those who had given feedback were asked how they did so. Methods mentioned most often were open houses, telephone surveys or online surveys. A few of the residents indicated that they had been part of discussion groups as well. Other methods mentioned by a few residents included sending emails directly to their counsellor or serving on a committee or advisory board for the County.

K. Final Thoughts

The closing question directed to all residents was a general one that allowed people to provide comments about any Strathcona County service or how the County is managed. Overall, 187 respondents (37.4% of the sample) provided additional comments. Of these,

27.8% of the 187 residents had positive things to say about the County. Although the majority of these did not elaborate, of those who did, most associated their satisfaction with how municipal services are run, citing (among other things), the library and the green routine.

Of the remaining 73.2% of the residents who provided comments, a small percentage (3.7%) expressed disappointment that there was no hospital located in the County (even though this is actually a provincial issue), although one is currently being constructed. Another 5.9% expressed concerns about the power line issue, with many of them believing that the lines should be underground. The remaining residents had a variety of comments which reiterated concerns already mentioned elsewhere in the survey, including a desire for more arenas and other recreation facilities, better winter road maintenance, better control of weeds and mosquitoes, better transit service and better enforcement of existing by-laws.