



2003 Public Satisfaction Survey



Research Results

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	1
II. METHODOLOGY	2
A. The Questionnaire	2
B. Sampling Design and Data Collection Procedure	2
III. RESULTS	3
A. Demographic Overview	3
B. Quality of Life in Strathcona County	8
C. Quality of Services Provided by Strathcona County	17
Road Maintenance in Strathcona County	18
Helping Services in Strathcona County	21
Water and Waste Management Services in Strathcona County	27
Transit Services in Strathcona County	30
Library Services in Strathcona County	32
Volunteer Center Services in Strathcona County	34
Permit & Inspection Services in Strathcona County	40
Bylaw Enforcement Services in Strathcona County	42
Agricultural Services in Strathcona County	45
Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Services in Strathcona County	48
D. Perceptions toward New Residential, Commercial and Industrial Developments in Strathcona County	50
E. Question on Quality of Services Now Compared to Two Years Ago.....	53
F. Question on Taxes within Strathcona County	55
G. Services Provided by Strathcona County Employees	57
H. Other Methods of Collecting Census Information	62

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2003 Public Opinion Survey on Services and Life in Strathcona County was undertaken in December 2003 to obtain perceptions on the quality of life of residents living in Sherwood Park and rural parts of Strathcona County. This is the sixth year that a formal satisfaction study of residents has been conducted. Overall, the following information was extracted from the data:

1. Residents of Strathcona County continue to have very positive perceptions toward the quality of life that they have for themselves and for their families, particularly since almost all of the people interviewed would recommend Strathcona County as a place to live. With respect to four broad aspects of life in Strathcona County, *a place to raise children* was the highest overall (90.5% rated very high or high). This was followed by *a safe community* (80.2% rated very high or high), *the quality of the natural environment* (65.6% rated very high or high) and *balancing needs and interests of people living throughout the County* (60.8% rated very high or high).
2. The positive views that people had toward the living in the County as a whole extended to the general satisfaction level for 19 specific services offered by County staff. The overall results, sorted by mean score, are shown in Table A on the next page. Services that residents were particularly rated highly included the *indoor recreation facilities, fire & ambulance services* and *the parks, green spaces and sports fields*. The services that received lower satisfaction ratings were *land use planning, building permit & inspection services, bylaw enforcement* and *weed control & other agricultural services*.
3. It should be noted that in this survey, residents rated all 19 services as a whole. There were no additional questions asked about other aspects of these county services. Individual departments can utilize the results from this survey as an overall perceptual measurement. However, individual departments may wish to consider customized detailed surveys in order to get feedback from the users and/or residents

in the County on specific aspects of their departments, and many departments are doing this now as the need arises.

Table A
Overall Satisfaction Levels with Municipal Services by County Residents¹

	Mean Score ²	Level of Satisfaction				
		Very low	Low	Average	High	Very high
Indoor recreation facilities (arenas and pool)	4.40	0.4%	2.7%	6.5%	37.2%	53.2%
Fire and ambulance services	4.29	0.2%	1.7%	10.9%	42.8%	44.4%
Strathcona County Library	4.18	---	2.7%	12.9%	48.5%	35.9%
Parks, green spaces and sports fields	4.16	---	4.1%	12.8%	45.7%	37.4%
Information and Volunteer Centre	4.05	0.3%	0.3%	24.3%	44.7%	30.4%
RCMP services	4.05	1.1%	4.8%	15.9%	44.5%	33.6%
Family support services	3.91	1.0%	2.7%	26.0%	45.0%	25.3%
Garbage collection	3.90	1.6%	8.1%	19.1%	41.0%	30.3%
Water and sewer services	3.79	2.2%	5.5%	23.5%	48.5%	20.2%
Urban street maintenance in summer	3.77	1.0%	3.1%	29.7%	50.0%	16.1%
Economic development	3.75	1.3%	6.0%	28.1%	45.5%	19.0%
Public transit services	3.66	3.1%	10.7%	26.6%	35.6%	23.9%
Waste recycling services	3.65	2.5%	11.9%	23.4%	41.8%	20.3%
Rural road maintenance in summer	3.59	1.6%	7.4%	32.4%	47.6%	11.0%
Bylaw enforcement	3.58	2.5%	7.7%	34.3%	40.5%	15.1%
Agricultural services (weed control and wildlife mgmt)	3.52	2.1%	9.0%	32.8%	46.6%	9.5%
Winter road maintenance, snow removal and ice control	3.37	4.8%	15.0%	32.3%	33.9%	14.0%
Permit and inspection services	3.37	5.4%	12.1%	33.1%	39.2%	10.2%
Land use planning	3.12	5.2%	17.9%	42.4%	28.2%	6.3%

¹ Please note that in this table, percentages add up to 100% for each item (by rows).

² The mean score is based on a five point scale, where the higher the mean score, the higher the satisfaction level with the particular service.

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 with residential developments. Commercial and industrial developments were also positively perceived, but to a lesser extent than residential developments. The majority of people felt that the number of developments in the County was about right at the present time, though there were a substantial number of residents who felt that there may be too many residential developments occurring within the County.
5. In terms of perceived value of services for the tax dollars paid, it was found that the perception that one is getting very good or good value for the tax dollars is holding steady among urban residents compared to previous years. The percentage of residents who felt this way was 56.2% in the 2003 survey, compared to 56.3% in 2001 and 48.1% in 2000.
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 3 years of tracking this item. For rural residents, the perception that one is getting very good or good value for the tax dollars has fluctuated from 29.8% in 1999, dipped to 21.3% in 2000, bounced back to 28.4% in 2001 and increased slightly to 29.4% in 2003. The percentage of rural residents who believe they are getting poor or very poor value for their tax dollars was 26.4% in 2003, which is slightly lower than what was seen in 2001 (when 30.4% of rural residents were very dissatisfied).
7. Ratings of County staff on the provision of services to the public were favorable on all methods of service delivery, particularly *courtesy*. Moreover, the positive ratings for each of these have reached a record high in the 2003 survey, compared to previous years.

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In December 2003, Strathcona County conducted a satisfaction survey of its residents in order to obtain perceptions on the quality of life of residents living in Sherwood Park and rural parts of Strathcona County. This is the sixth year that a formal satisfaction study of residents has been conducted. 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.

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

II. METHODOLOGY

A. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was a modification of the same instrument used in 2000 and 2001. The questions in the survey were retained in order to make valid comparisons with the previous year. Two additional questions were added to this year's survey: one was on volunteerism patterns of County residents; the other was on residents' reactions to alternative ways of taking part in the municipal census.

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 503 people living in urban¹ and rural parts of Strathcona County. The number of urban and rural residents was reflective of the proportionate distribution of residents living in Strathcona County. As such, 64.6% of the sample were drawn from the urban area, while 35.4% came from rural parts of Strathcona County. The sample frame provided overall results² accurate to within \pm 4.35%, 19 times out of 20.

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

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

A telephone survey research design was used to collect the data for this study. Respondents were contacted by telephone between December 1st and December 8th, 2003. Strathcona County derived telephone numbers from the Select Phone Canadian Edition database and randomized them for this study. Trained interviewers from Banister Research & Consulting Inc. made all telephone calls under supervised conditions. Each questionnaire took an average of 10 minutes to complete. The data was analyzed by Strathcona County's Corporate Planning Secretariat using SPSS for Windows.

III. RESULTS

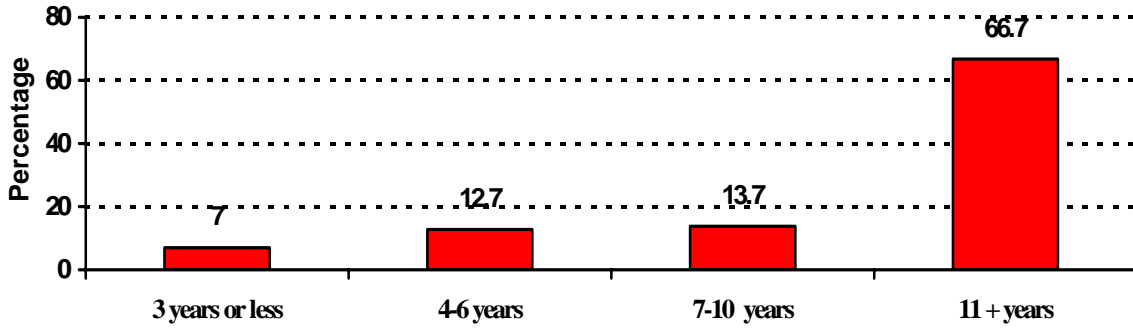
This section of the report presents a summary of the results associated with the perceptions and awareness of residents. Socio-demographic comparisons, where significant, are also highlighted. Comparisons will also be made with data previously collected in 2000 and 2001 when significant differences occur.

A. Demographic Overview

This section of the report presents an overview of the type of residents who were surveyed in the year 2003. As indicated in the previous section of this report, part of the sampling criteria was to survey the county by population density. The other sampling criteria was to obtain answers from approximately equal numbers of males and females. As such, in the sample, responses to the survey came from 47.5% of males and 52.5% of females. Almost all of the people interviewed were homeowners (90.5%), while the remaining residents were renters.

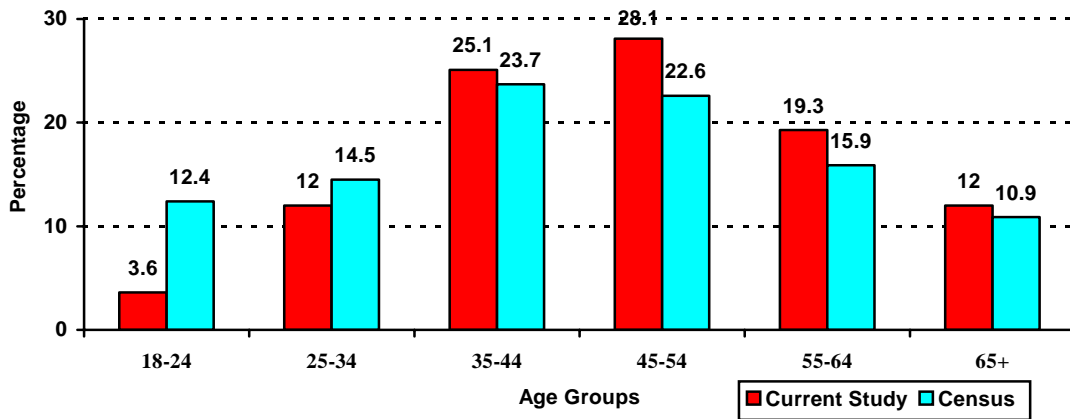
The majority of people who took part in the survey indicated that they were long term residents in the County. Figure 1 presents a breakdown of length of residence. It can be seen the majority of residents have lived in the county for more than 10 years. The average number of years that people lived in Strathcona County was 18.8 years.

FIGURE 1
Length of Time in the County (2003 Respondents)



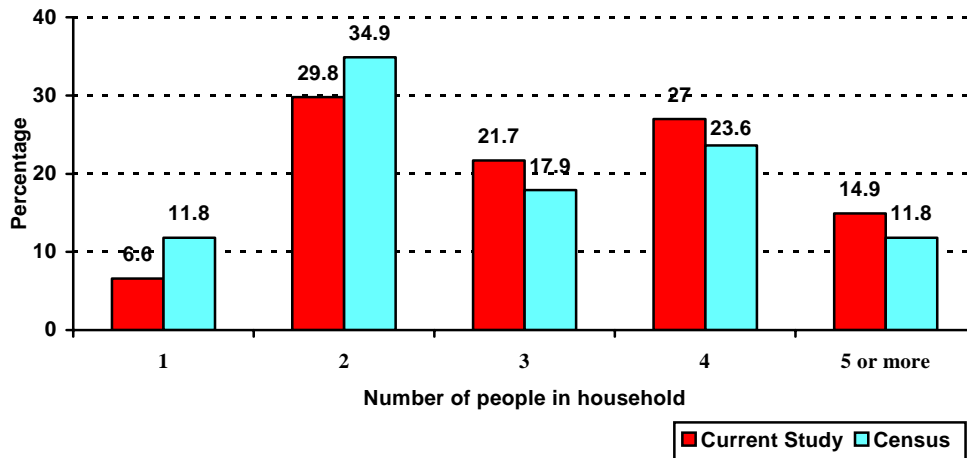
A breakdown of the age of the respondents by location in the County is shown in Figure 2. There was a relatively good representation from all age groups, though in comparison to the 2003 census, the 18-24 year age group was under-represented.

FIGURE 2
Age of Respondents
(Current 2003 Study and 2003 Census Comparison)



The household size of the respondents is shown in Figure 3. It can be seen that the household size in sample frame corresponds to the findings from the 2003 census, though there was less input from single person households and slightly higher responses from three or more person households.

FIGURE 3
Household Size
(Current 2003 Study and 2003 Census Comparison)



A breakdown of children in the household from the current study is shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4
Number of Children in Household (2003)

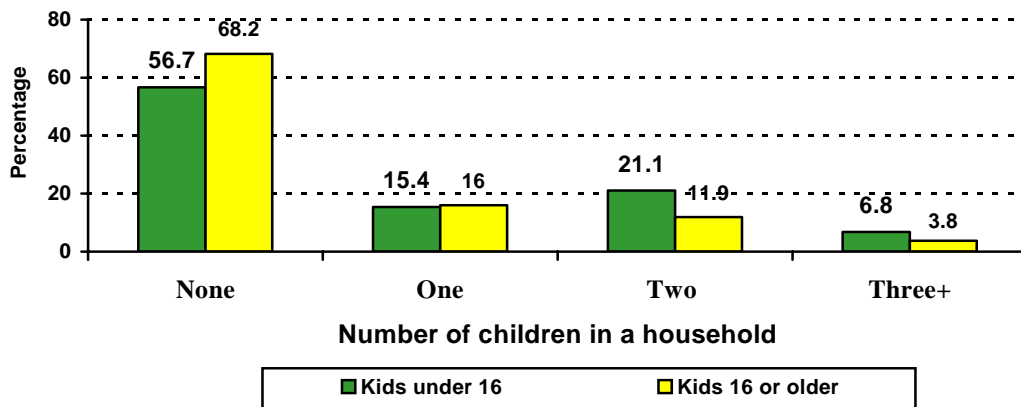
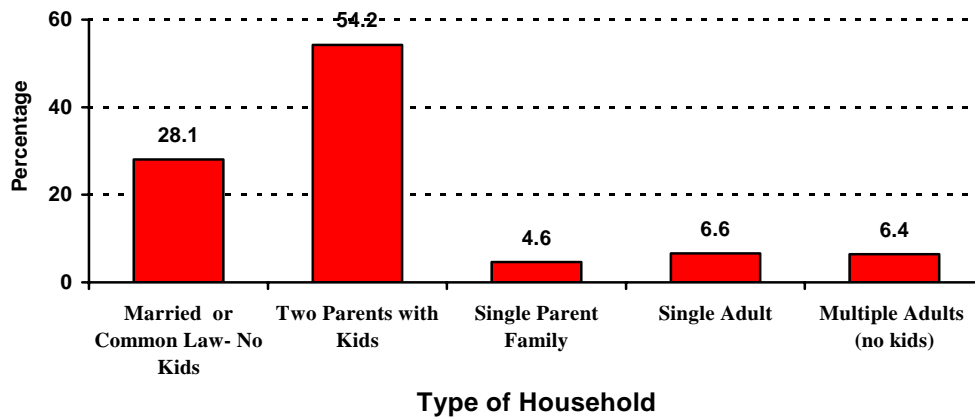


Figure 5 presents a breakdown of the family status of households. It can be seen that the majority of households can be classified as “parents with children living in the household.” The second most common category was people who were married or common law but had no children living at home.

FIGURE 5
Family Status (2003 Study)



In this year’s survey, respondents were asked if they presently did any volunteer work in Strathcona County. Overall, it was found that 31.8% of residents are volunteers. A further analysis revealed the following:

- On the basis of geographic location, 33.8% of Sherwood Park residents volunteer compared with 28.1% of rural residents;
- Of the basis of gender, 34.5% of females said they volunteered, while 28.9% of males volunteered; and
- Volunteers came from all age groups.

In the latest study, it was found that 83.9% of Strathcona County residents had one or more members of the household who had access to the Internet. This is up almost 10% from two years ago, when 74.5% of residents had internet access. Figure 6 shows the internet access trends from 2000 to 2003, where it can be seen that internet access has increased for both Sherwood Park and Rural Strathcona residents.

FIGURE 6
Internet Access Trends (2000-2003)

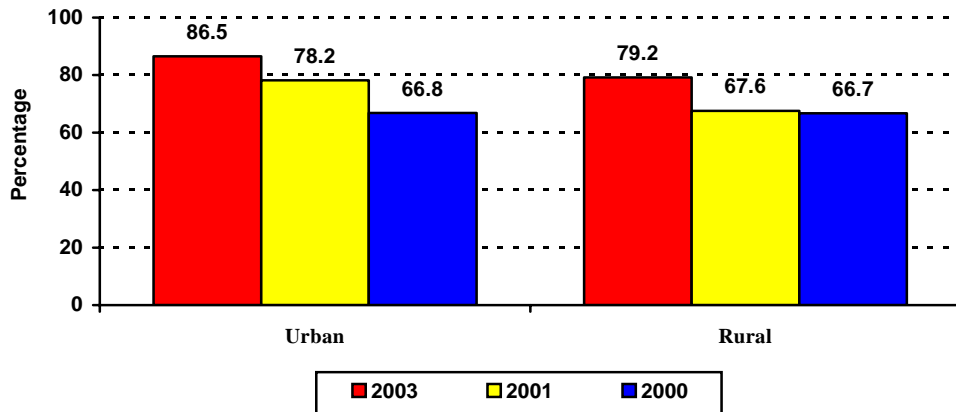
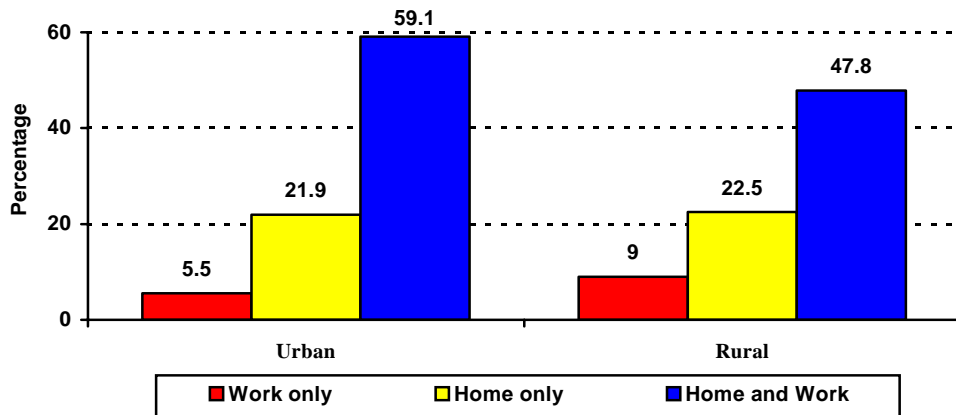


Figure 7 shows where residents are accessing the internet. It can be seen that most residents access the internet from both work and home settings.

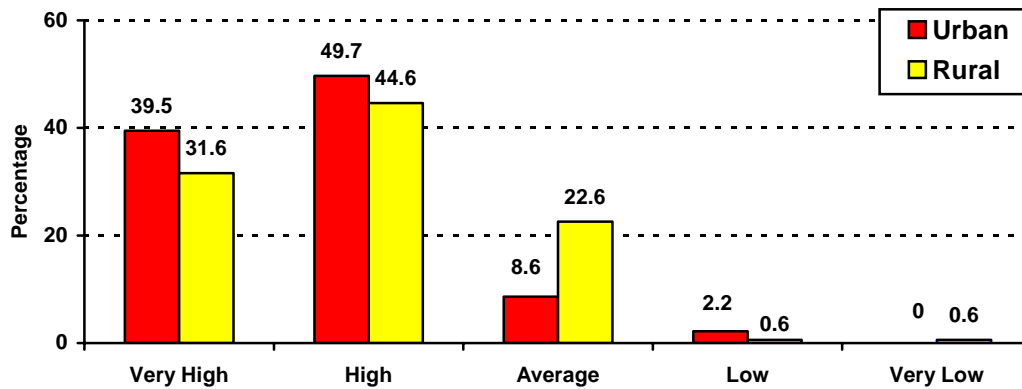
FIGURE 7
Where are Residents Using the Internet (2003)



B. Quality of Life in Strathcona County

Respondents were initially asked to indicate the extent that they were satisfied with life in Strathcona County. A breakdown by region is shown in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8
Quality of Life in Strathcona County
Urban & Rural Comparisons - Year 2003



Highlights from Figure 8

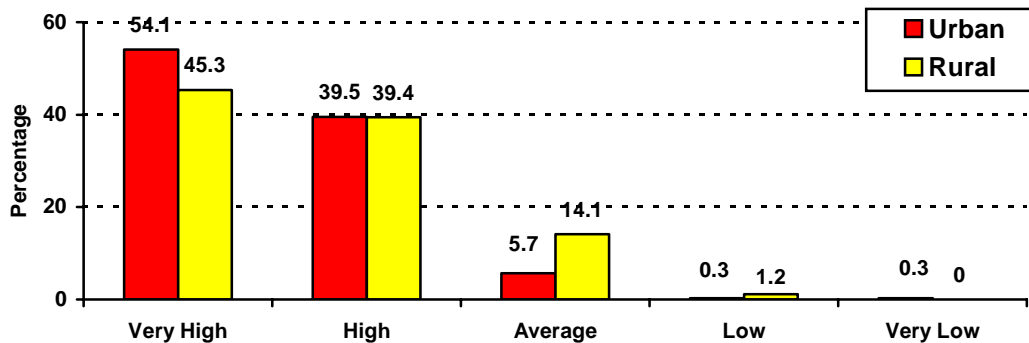
- Although the overall rating of Strathcona County was very positive regardless of where one lived in the County, it can be seen in Figure 8 that the “very high” and “high” quality of life ratings were higher for urban residents than rural residents.
- While considerably smaller, on a proportionate ratio, it was seen that almost three times as many rural residents felt the quality of life was “average” compared to those living in the urban center.
- A further analysis revealed that no significant differences were found among gender or family status for this item, with only a minor significant difference seen among age.³
- A further analysis revealed that the level of satisfaction with the quality of life in Strathcona County for all residents was slightly higher in 2003 compared to the 2001 and 2000 surveys.

³ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between one’s age and how satisfied one is with the quality of life in Strathcona County ($\chi^2 = 42.12$, 20 df). Further breakdowns are estimated based on a one-way anova procedure [$F(5,494) = 3.93$, $p = .002$], where those aged 65 or older felt that the quality of life in Strathcona County was average to high, compared to those aged 35-44, who felt that the quality of life was high to very high.

- 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 life in the County in this manner, the nine residents (1.8% of the sample) who did made the following comments:
 - Slow response rates from county, they need to be quicker;
 - No main street, we need a map for a drive, very fragmented, if streets were numbered, it would be easier to get around;
 - Infrastructure in regards to traffic has to be improved;
 - There's no area in Sherwood park that is conducive to window shopping – it's very utilitarian;
 - They could take into consideration the lower single income families with regards to housing and programs for children so they can afford to participate;
 - Get rid of the pollution;
 - I think seniors deserve better treatment thru taxation by removing the school tax (like it used to be) also better treatment for long term care seniors who have had a 40% increase in their accommodations this past year;
 - Have more things to do, like more shopping malls, more theatres;
 - Separate the town and county for use of tax dollars;
 - Stop growing.

Figure 9 presents a breakdown of people's ratings of Strathcona County as a place to raise children by region.

FIGURE 9
Strathcona County as a Place to Raise Children
Urban & Rural Comparisons - Year 2003

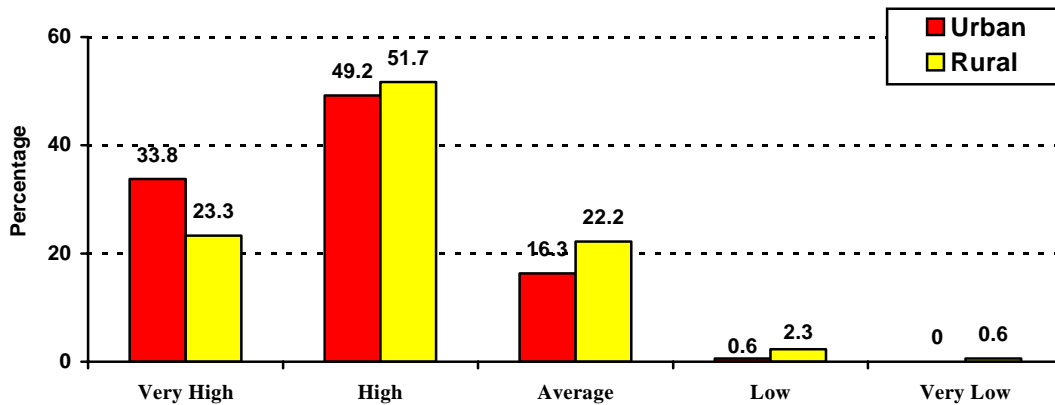


Highlights from Figure 9

- The majority of people, regardless of where they live, perceive that Strathcona County was an excellent place to raise children, as the majority felt it was “high” or “very high.”
- Even though the ratings are high for this item, it can be seen in Figure 9 that slightly more Sherwood Park residents give a “very high” rating for this item compared to those living in rural Strathcona.
- No significant differences were seen within age groups or between gender groups for this item. Furthermore, no significant differences were seen on the basis of family status. Regardless of whether or not they have children in their household, adults perceive Strathcona County to be a very positive, family oriented community. This has been a consistent pattern over the past three years that this survey has been conducted in Strathcona County.
- Less than 1% of residents overall gave Strathcona County a low rating as a place to raise children. Of the four who did, when asked why, the main reason was a fear that the community was getting too large and that children could potentially be subjected to overcrowded classrooms in the school settings.

Figure 10 presents a breakdown by region pertaining to people's ratings of Strathcona County as safe community to live in.

FIGURE 10
Strathcona County as Safe Place to Live
Urban & Rural Comparisons - Year 2003



Highlights from Figure 10

- The majority of people felt that Strathcona County was a safe community to live in. However, it can be seen that people living in the urban center were more inclined to give this a “very high” rating compared to those living in rural regions. Conversely, more people living in the rural area gave this an “average” rating than those living in the urban center did. This year’s findings are very similar to results found in the 2001 and 2000 surveys. Furthermore, the majority of residents, regardless of gender or age, felt quite safe living in Strathcona County.
- Suggestions on how to make the County safer (from the seven people or 1.4% of the sample who gave safety in Strathcona County a “low” rating) included having an increased number of RCMP in the County, associated with a perception of increased vandalism and break-ins. It should be noted that very few residents had suggestions in this regard.

It can be seen from Figure 11 that there has been a small but steady increase in perceptions of safety in Strathcona County being “very high” between 1999 and 2003.

FIGURE 11
Strathcona County as Safe Place to Live
Study Comparisons (1999-2003)

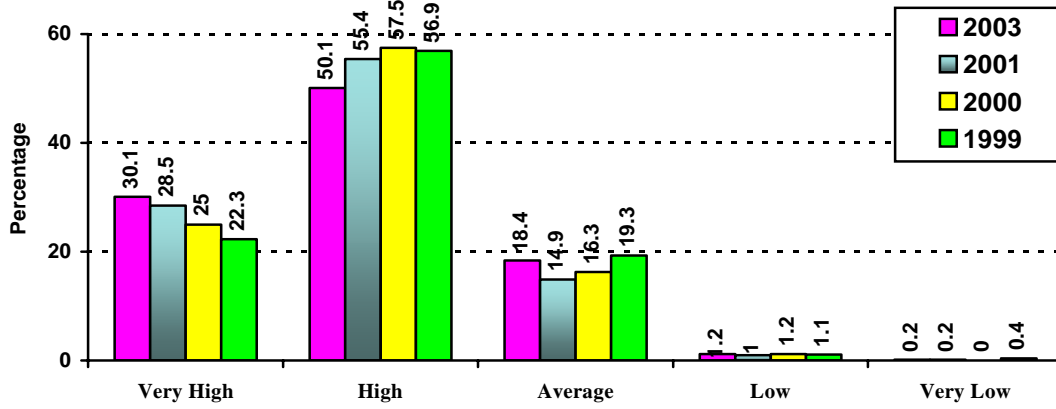
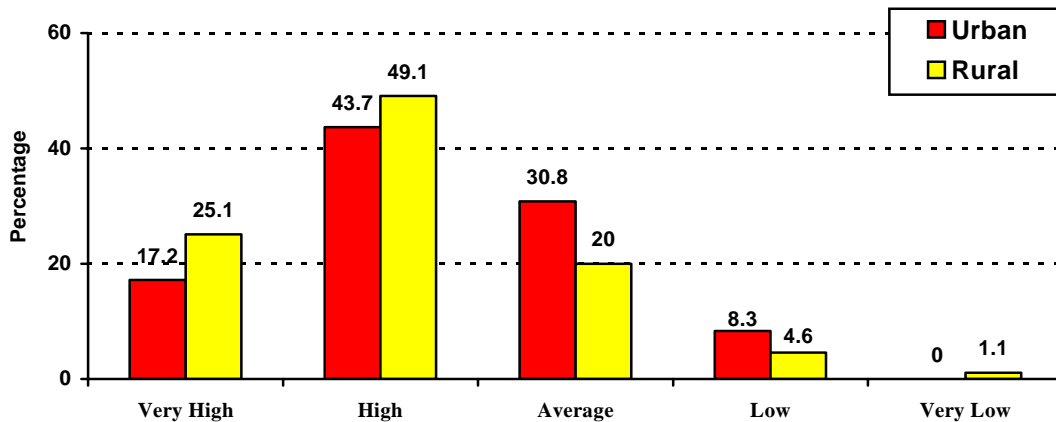


Figure 12 presents a breakdown by region pertaining to people's ratings of the quality of Strathcona County's natural environment.

FIGURE 12
Rating Strathcona County's Natural Environment
Urban & Rural Comparisons - Year 2003



Highlights from Figure 12

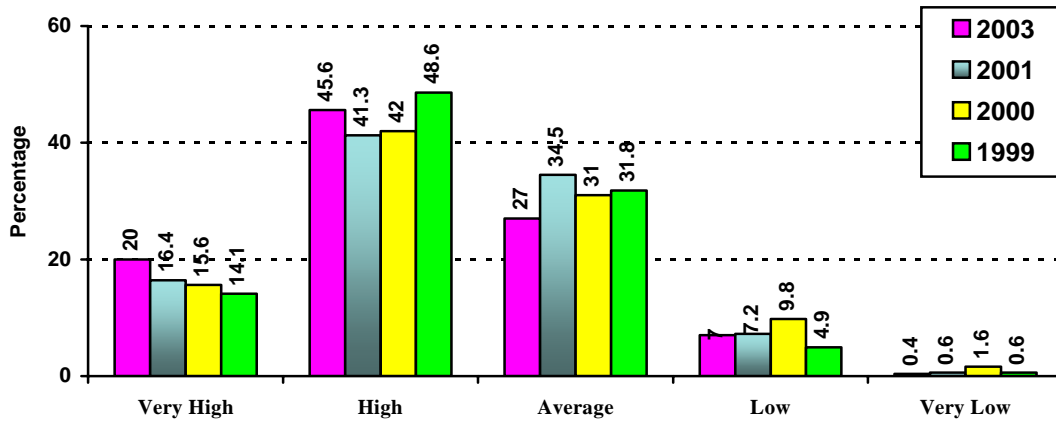
- There was a difference in perception between rural and urban residents as to how the quality of Strathcona County's natural environment was rated.⁴ People living in rural Strathcona County gave the "natural environment" aspect of the County a higher rating than those living in the urban area did. This pattern was similar to what was seen in the 2001 satisfaction survey.
- Outside of residence location, the other demographic characteristics were not factors in influencing how people rated the quality of the natural environment in Strathcona County.
- The 7.4% (or 37 residents) who gave "low" or "very low" ratings were asked to indicate their reasons for the rating. The most common concern conveyed by these residents was that there were too many trees being cut down throughout the County, and that existing natural areas were being sacrificed for the sake of development. The quality of the air, especially around the

⁴ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between location and how satisfied one is with the quality of the natural environment in Strathcona County ($\chi^2 = 15.17, 4 \text{ df}$).

industrial developments (particularly the refineries) was also a concern for some residents.

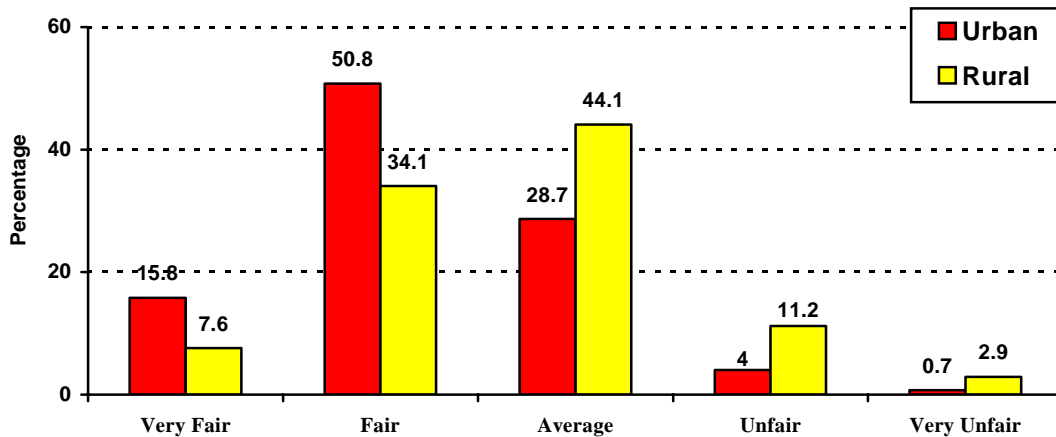
It can be seen from Figure 13 that the way people rate the quality of Strathcona County’s natural environment has steadily increased since 1999.

FIGURE 13
Rating the Quality of Strathcona County’s Natural Environment
Study Comparisons (1999-2003)



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 are shown in Figure 14.

FIGURE 14
Balancing the Needs and Interests of People Living in Strathcona County
Urban & Rural Comparisons - Year 2003

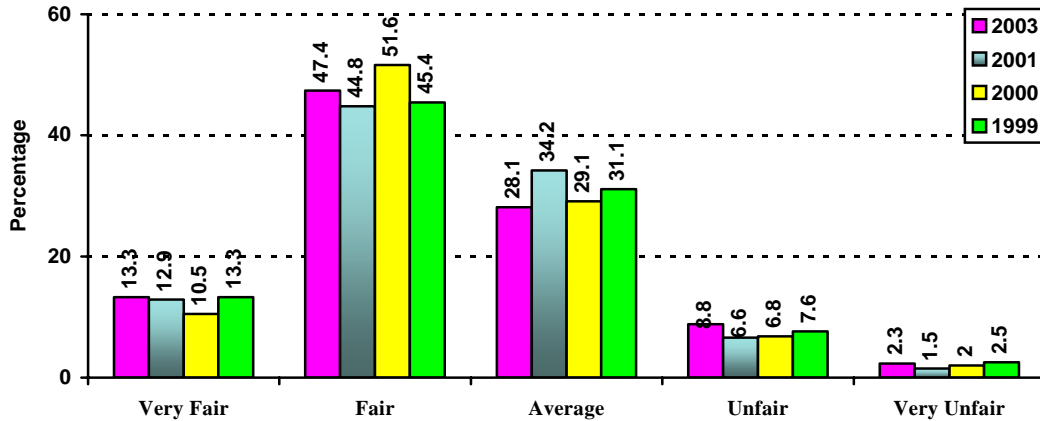


Highlights from Figure 14

- There was a difference in perception between rural and urban residents as to how fairly they believe people are treated in the County. It can be seen that considerably more people living in the urban area believe that they are treated fairly by County Council and staff compared to those living in rural regions.
- Outside of residence location, the other demographic characteristics were not factors in influencing how people perceived the fairness of County Council and staff toward people living in different parts of Strathcona County.
- Residents who felt the County was unfair on this issue were asked to comment on why they felt that way. A variety of reasons were put forward by the 54 residents (11.1% of the sample), including a recurring perception that rural residents are not getting the same value for the tax dollars compared to urban residents. However, there were some urban residents who felt that the County was ignoring lower income families who were in need of resources. There were also some concerns about maintaining the streets and roads (e.g. paving, street lights, road signage, etc.) in both rural and urban areas of the County.

Some people also mentioned the additional service fees that exist for recycling, library cards, and utility assessments.

FIGURE 15
Balancing the Needs and Interests of People Living in Strathcona County
(1999-2003 Comparisons)

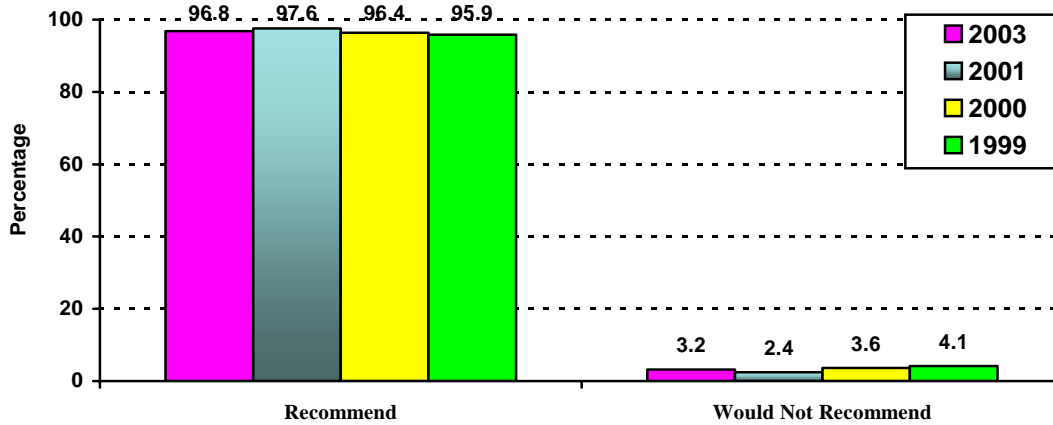


Highlights from Figure 15

- There has been an increase in positive perception among County residents as a whole between 1999 and 2003 on the issue of balancing the needs and interests of people living in Strathcona County. The “average” rating has dropped, while the percentage of those feeling the County is “unfair” or “very unfair” has increased minutely.

It can be seen in Figure 16 that almost all of the respondents would recommend Strathcona County to others as a place to live. This was almost identical to the satisfaction surveys done in previous years. The small percentage of people (3.2% or 16 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 given. Some mentioned the rate and amount of growth occurring throughout the County. A couple of residents felt that those who were “wealthy” were getting better treatment compared to those who were not.

FIGURE 16
Recommendation of Strathcona County as a Place to Live
Study Comparisons (1999-2003)



C. Quality of Services Provided by Strathcona County

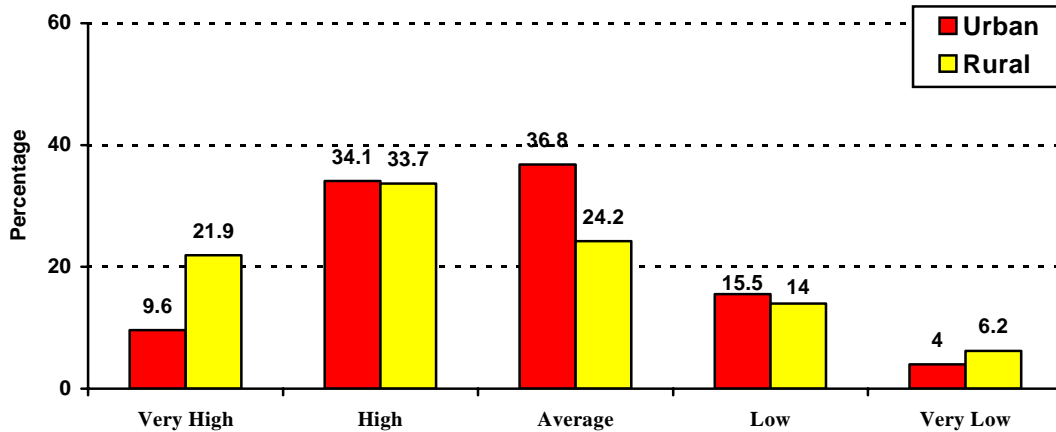
Residents of Strathcona County were asked a series of questions about what they thought of various services provided to them. Overall, respondents were asked to rate 19 different services. For each question, respondents rated the service using a 5 point Likert Scale, where a score of 1 was designated as “very high” and a score of 5 was designated as “very low.” Unless otherwise noted, the level of satisfaction that was found in 2003 for these services was similar to the data collected in 2001.

It should be noted that 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. The overall results are depicted in Figure 17.

FIGURE 17
Quality of Winter Road Maintenance
Urban & Rural Comparisons - Year 2003



Highlights from Figure 17

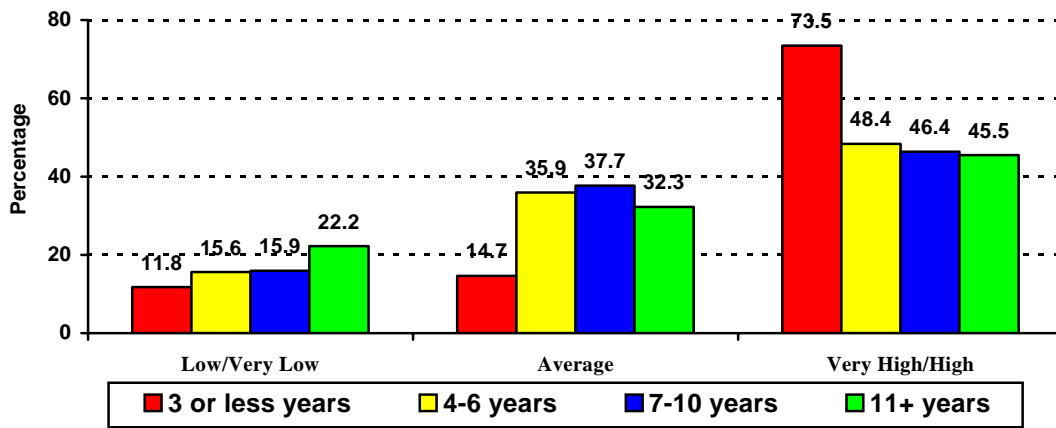
- There was a difference in perception between rural and urban residents on winter road maintenance.⁵ People living in rural Strathcona County were more satisfied with the service than those living in the urban area.
- Outside of residence location, none of the other demographic characteristics influenced how people felt about winter road maintenance.
- Overall, 19.5% of urban residents (N=63) and 20.2% of rural residents (N=36) were not happy with the winter road maintenance, and were asked to suggest ways on how this could be improved. The main complaint was that the residential side streets in Sherwood Park (and some rural roads) should be done more than once a year. A few people also commented that more sanding and scraping of ice should be done, especially on steep hills and major intersections. In this regard, many residents were concerned with the icy conditions of the roads and sidewalks throughout the County. There were also

⁵ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between one's age and how satisfied one is with the quality of life in Strathcona County ($\chi^2 = 19.44, 4 \text{ df}$).

those who thought that the snow should be cleared more quickly after a snowfall.

A further analysis of the data revealed some differences in perception of winter road maintenance on the basis of length of time people lived in the County. The results are shown in Figure 18. It can be seen that residents who had lived in the County for a short time (3 or less years) has a higher level of satisfaction with winter road maintenance than those who had lived in the County for a longer period of time.

FIGURE 18
Quality of Winter Road Maintenance
Comparisons by Length of Residence - Year 2003

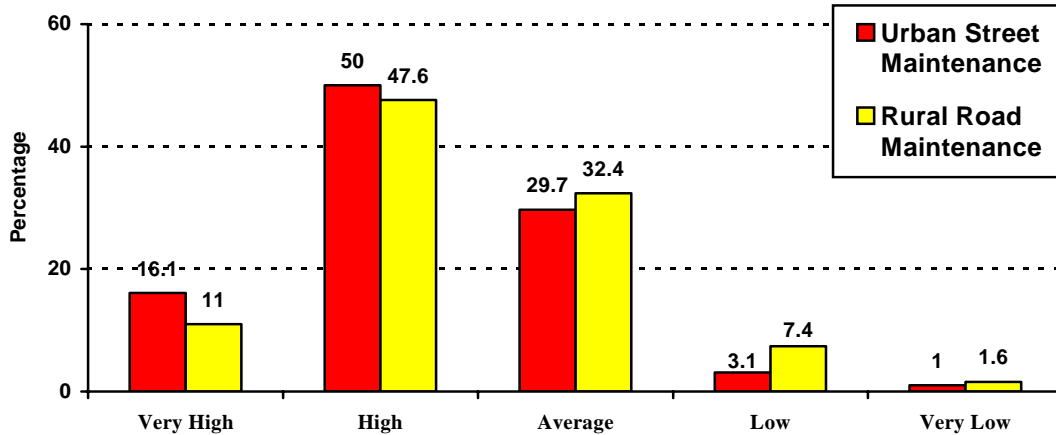


There was a difference in perception between rural and urban residents on winter road maintenance.⁶ People living in rural Strathcona County were more satisfied with the service than those living in the urban area. People were then asked to rate the quality of summer road maintenance in the urban area (Sherwood Park) and for rural areas.⁷ The overall results are depicted in Figure 19.

⁶ A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between one's age and how satisfied one is with the quality of life in Strathcona County ($\chi^2 = 19.44, 4 \text{ df}$).

⁷ Overall, 24 people (4.8%) did not provide a rating for the urban summer road maintenance and 77 people (15.3%) did not provide a rating for the rural summer road maintenance.

FIGURE 19
Quality of Summer Road Maintenance of Urban and Rural Roads
in the Year 2003 – All Residents



Highlights from Figure 19

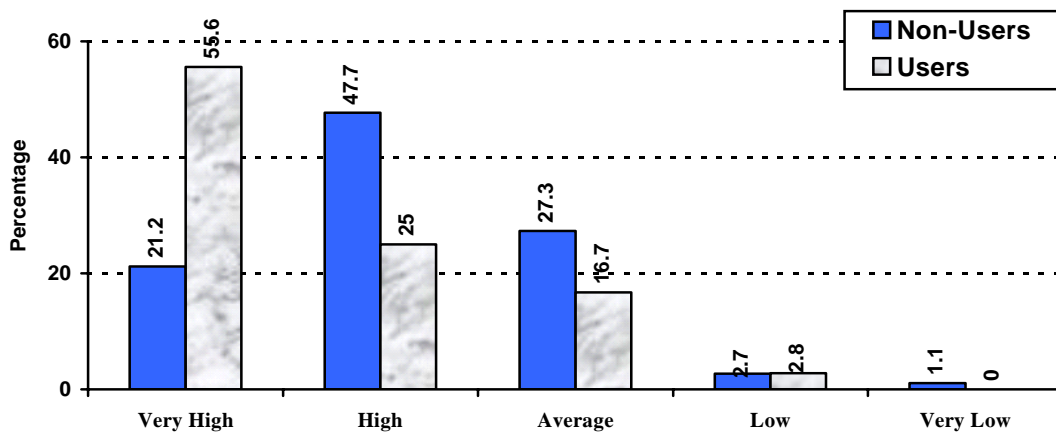
- Overall, people living throughout Strathcona County feel that summer road maintenance is better in the urban area than in the rural area. This is similar to last year's findings.
- It should also be noted that satisfaction ratings with summer maintenance among residents are higher in 2003 compared to 2001. In 2001, the combined "very high/high" ratings were 61.9% for urban streets and 53.7% for rural roads). In 2003, the combined "very high/high" ratings were 66.1% for urban streets and 58.6% for rural roads.
- None of the demographic characteristics were factors in influencing how people felt about summer urban and rural road maintenance.
- Overall, 4.1% of residents (N=20) were unhappy with the summer maintenance of urban roads. Almost all the residents who provided a comment felt that more attention should be paid to filling potholes in the roads.
- Overall, 9.0% of residents (N=40) were unhappy with the summer maintenance of rural roads. A variety of suggestions were put forward for ways on how this could be improved. Improved grading of roads and potholes were common complaints for these roads. Some people also felt that removal of dust and sand needed to be done in some areas. There were

several people living in rural areas who felt that there was no maintenance done on any of the roads near their residence.

Helping Services in Strathcona County

People were also asked to rate the quality of family and emergency services in Strathcona County, including family support services, fire and ambulance services and the RCMP. Figure 20 presents the satisfaction level that people have for family support services, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample that utilized these services⁸ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should be noted that 203 respondents (40.4% of the sample) did not comment on the quality of the family support services because they did not know anything about them.

FIGURE 20
Quality of Family Support Services



Highlights from Figure 20

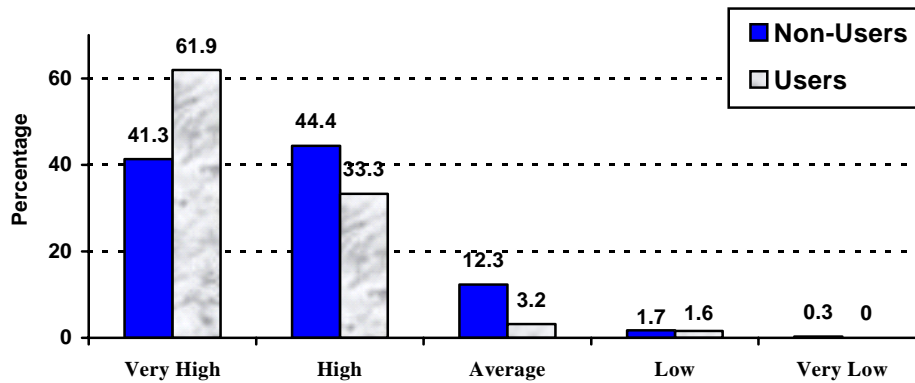
- It can be seen from Figure 20 that most residents (users and non-users) have a positive view toward family support services in Strathcona County. A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between one's use and how satisfied one is with family services County ($\chi^2 = 20.17$, 4 df). A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = 3.28$, 298 df, $p < .001$) confirms that users of family support services rated these services higher than non-users.

⁸ Overall, 5.2% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had used family support services within the past 12 months. This is about 4% lower than the user rates found in 2001.

- Although the actual number of residents who used the services in the past 12 months was low (N=36), it can be seen that among these people, many noted that their satisfaction with the services was average, high or very high.
- In comparison to last year's survey, the percentage of users rating the service as *low or very low* continues to drop. In 2003, only 3.8% of users felt this way, compared to 4.8% in 2001 and 16.1% in 2000. Moreover, the percentage of users who gave the service a *very high* rating increased in 2003 to 55.6% from 35.1% in 2001 and 22.6% in 2000.
- No differences were found for any socio-demographic characteristics for this item.
- The 11 people (3.7% of the sample) who gave family support services a low rating were asked to suggest ways on how this could be improved. A common concern was that more resources were needed for families, especially for youth and teens. A couple of people wanted more programs available for those living in rural areas. One person felt that another woman's shelter is needed.

Figure 21 presents the satisfaction level that people have for fire and ambulance services, based on the perspective of the portion of the sample that utilized these services⁹ in the past 12 months, and those who did not use these services. It should be noted that 82 respondents (16.3% of the sample) indicated that they “did not know” enough about these services to rate them.

FIGURE 21
Quality of Fire and Ambulance Services



Highlights from Figure 21

- It can be seen from Figure 21 that most residents (regardless of use) have a positive view toward the fire and ambulance services in Strathcona County. However, the strong positive feelings were more prevalent among users than non-users. This demonstrates that recipients were pleased with the quality of the services that they received when these services were needed. A chi-square procedure determined that there is a relationship between one's use and how satisfied one is with family services County ($\chi^2 = 10.89$, 4 df). A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = 3.04$, 419 df, $p < .002$) confirms that users of fire and ambulance services rated these services higher than non-users.

⁹ Overall, 12.5% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had used the fire and ambulance services within the past 12 months. This reported usage is almost the same as patterns reported in the 2001 and 2000 surveys.

- In comparison to last year’s survey, the percentage of users rating this service as *very high* was almost the same as the 2001 results (61.4%).
- Only 8 people (1.9% of the sample) were not satisfied with the services. Most of these people (especially those in rural Strathcona County) felt that response time needs improving, especially for ambulance services.

As seen in Figure 22, a further analysis of this service revealed that more Sherwood Park residents (regardless of use) were satisfied with the service (90.1% *very high or high*) compared with those living in rural areas (80.0% *very high or high*). A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = 3.48, 419 \text{ df}, p < .001$) confirms this difference.

FIGURE 22
Quality of Fire and Ambulance Services
Urban & Rural Comparisons - Year 2003

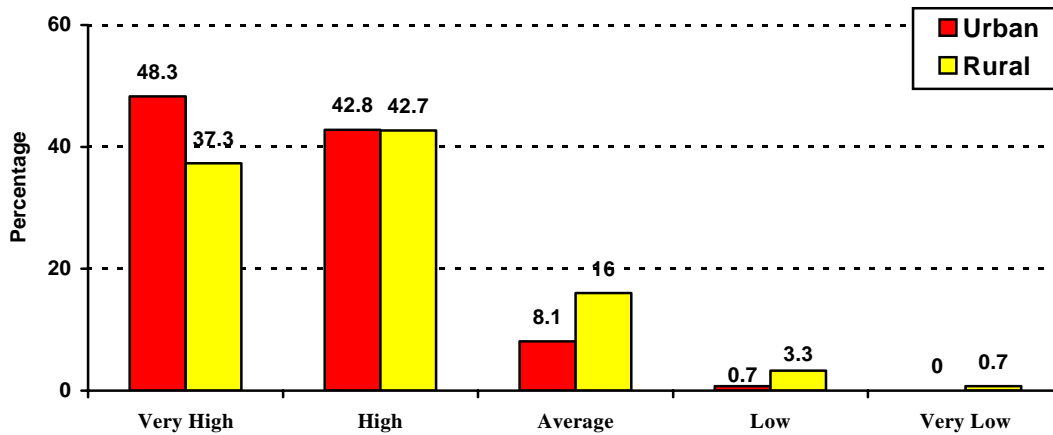
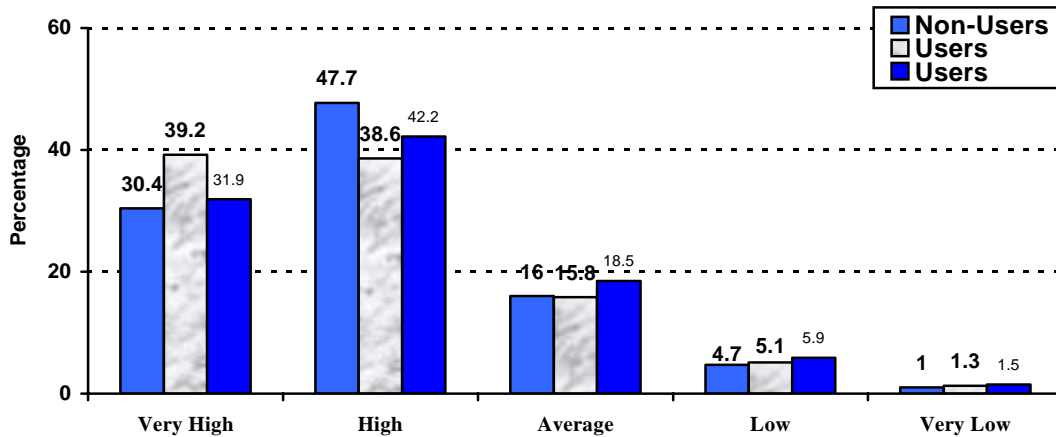


Figure 23 presents the satisfaction level that people have RCMP services, based on those who used these services¹⁰ in the past 12 months and those who did not.

FIGURE 23
Quality of RCMP Services



Highlights from Figure 23

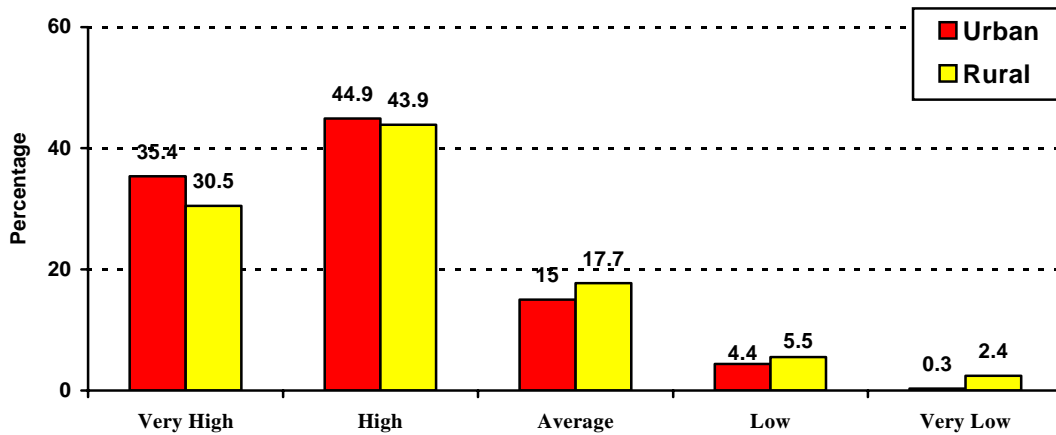
- It can be seen from Figure 23 that most residents have a positive view toward the RCMP in Strathcona County, regardless of whether or not they used the service in the past 12 months. A *chi-square* measurement test between users and non-users revealed no differences in perceptions on how users and non-users rated the service.
- The percentage of users who gave the service a *very high* rating increased in 2003 to 39.2% from 31.9% in 2001.
- The 27 users and non-users (or 5.9% of the sample) who rated RCMP services as *low* or *very low* were asked to comment on ways that the service could be improved. A variety of reasons were put forward, with the most criticism being a perceived emphasis on photo radar and traffic tickets compared to dealing with other types of crime. Some people felt that more RCMP were

¹⁰Overall, 31.4% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had used RCMP within the past 12 months. This reported usage is almost 9% higher than the user rates noted in the 2001 survey. It should also be noted that 45 people (8.9%) did not rate the service on the basis that they did not know enough about the RCMP to give a rating.

needed for the community, and that there should be a greater presence of RCMP in the rural areas. Some residents also felt that there should be more neighborhood patrols done in Sherwood Park, particularly at night.

- A further analysis of this service revealed that slightly more Sherwood Park residents were satisfied with the service (80.3% *very high or high*) compared with those living in rural areas (74.4% *very high or high*), though this difference was not statistically significant. It should be noted, however, that rural residents who gave the RCMP a *very high or high* rating has increased substantially in 2003 (74.4%) compared to 2001 (60.9%). Comparative results for both areas in 2003 are depicted in Figure 24 below.

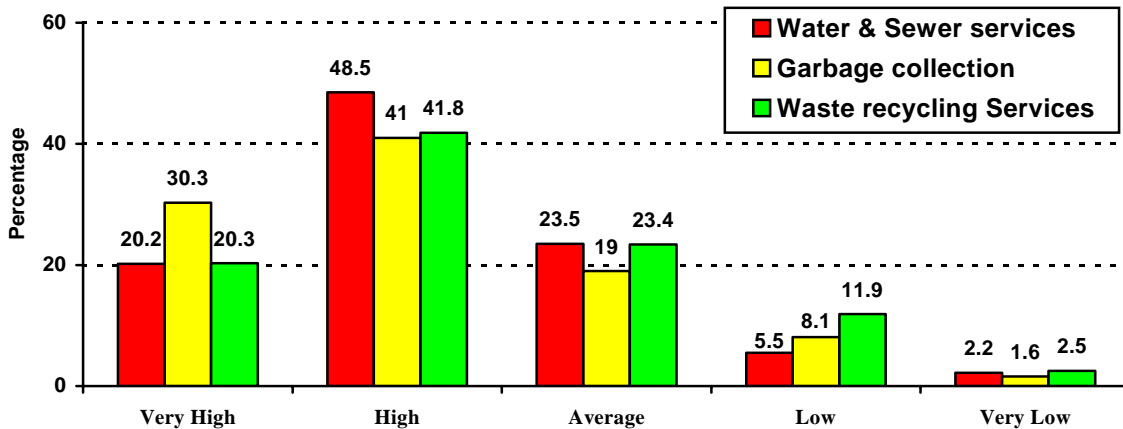
FIGURE 24
Quality of RCMP Services – Urban and Rural Comparisons (2003)



Water and Waste Management Services in Strathcona County

People were also asked to rate the quality of water, garbage and recycling services in Strathcona County. Figure 25 presents the satisfaction level that residents have for these services, regardless of where they live.¹¹

FIGURE 25
Level of Satisfaction with Water and Waste Management Services



Highlights from Figure 25

- It can be seen from Figure 25 that residents were generally satisfied with these services. A further examination of the “very high” and “high” ratings revealed that 71.3% gave these ratings for garbage collection, compared to 68.9% for waste recycling services and 62.1% for water & sewage services.
- In a comparison with the last survey conducted in 2001 (based on the combination of “very high” and “high” ratings), it was found that the positive ratings for water & sewage services dropped marginally by 3%. Similarly, garbage collection ratings dropped marginally by almost 2%, while waste recycling services stayed the same.
- A further analysis by geographic area revealed that rural residents in the County were not as satisfied with their water service and garbage collection

¹¹ Overall, 142 people (28.2%) did not rate water & sewer services, 57 people (11.3%) did not rate garbage collection and 25 people (5.0%) did not rate waste recycling services. Furthermore, for each of these services, the majority of those who did not rate these services lived in rural parts of Strathcona County. These patterns are similar to the number of residents who did not rate these services in the 2001 survey.

compared to those living in Sherwood Park. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between where one lived and how one rated these services.¹² A depiction of the differences in perception is shown in Figures 26 and 27. Perception toward waste recycling services was very similar in both urban and rural areas in 2003 and is shown in Figure 28. These trends (for all three services) by region of the county were similar to what was seen in 2001.

FIGURE 26
Level of Satisfaction with Water Services
Urban & Rural Comparisons - 2003

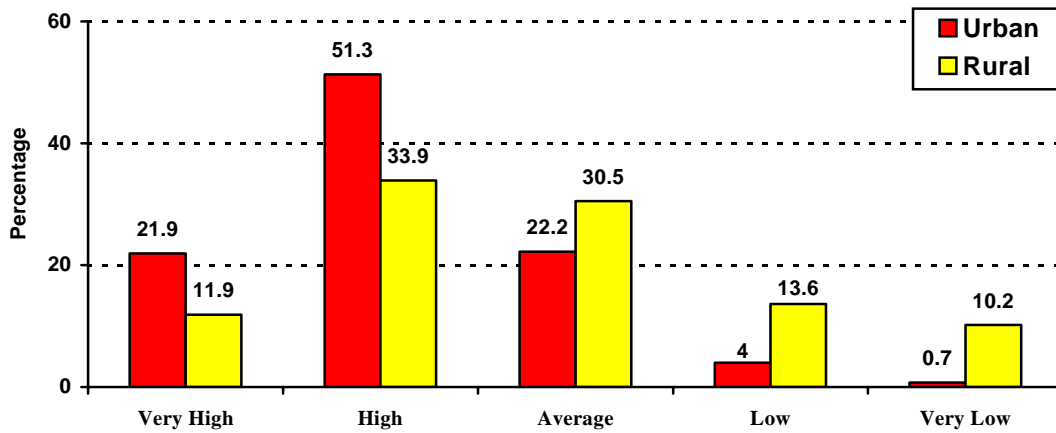
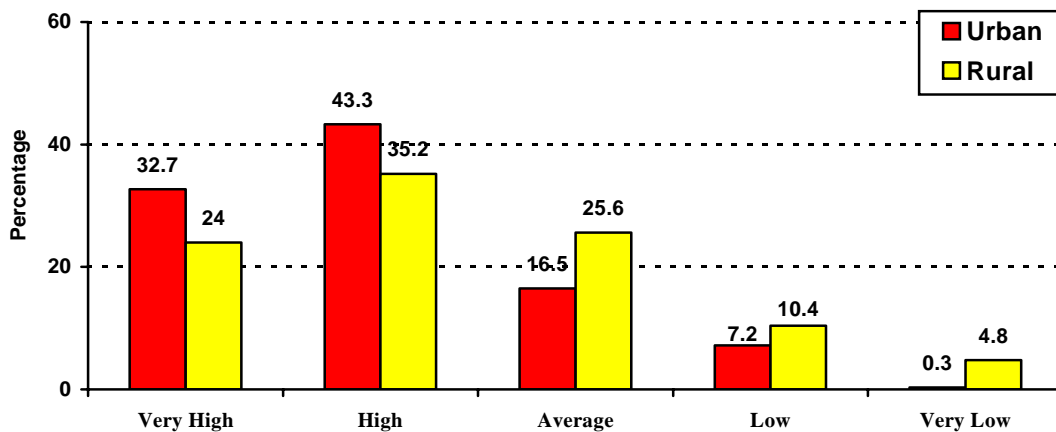
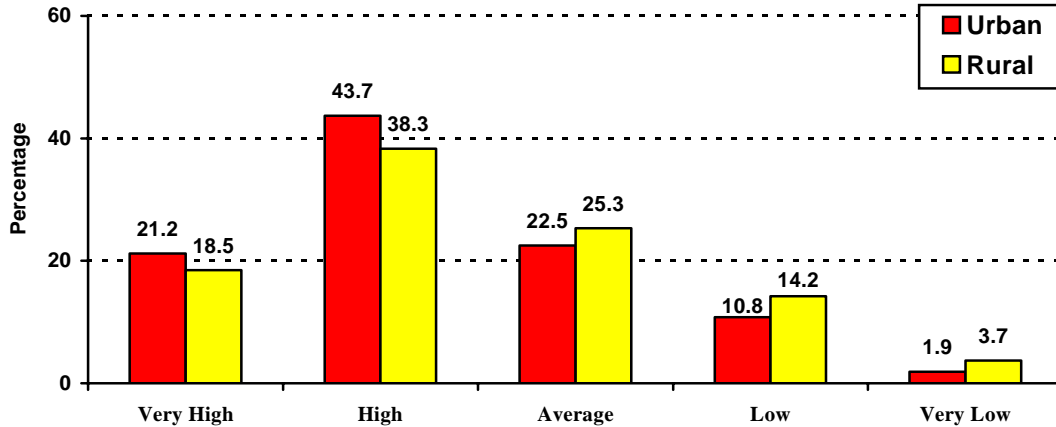


FIGURE 27
Level of Satisfaction with Garbage Collection Service
Urban & Rural Comparisons - 2003



¹² For water and sewage services ($\chi^2 = 35.30, 4 \text{ df}$); for garbage collection, ($\chi^2 = 20.31, 4 \text{ df}$).

FIGURE 28
Level of Satisfaction with Waste Recycling Service
Urban & Rural Comparisons - 2003

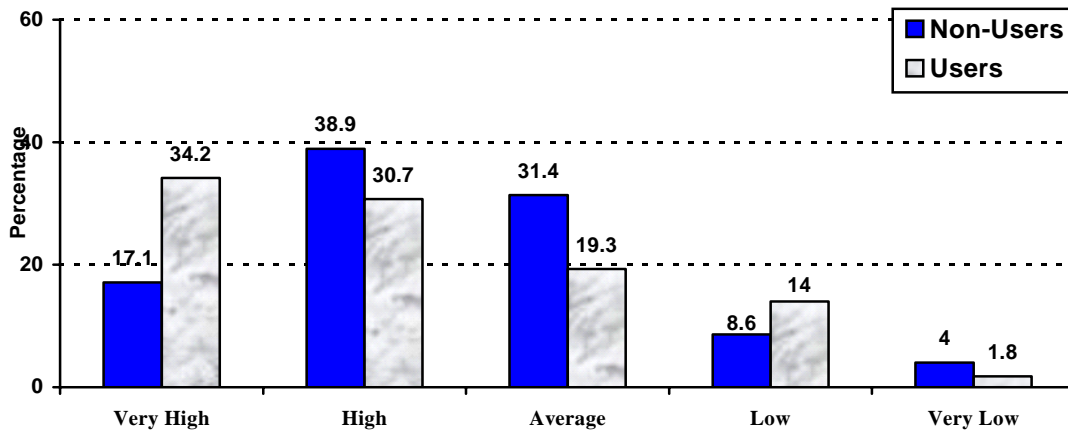


- The people who rated these services as “low” or “very low” were asked to comment on ways that the services could be improved. With respect to water services, 28 people (7.8% of the sample) made comments. Many residents were concerned about rising costs for water. A few concerns centered on the lack of water service in some rural areas and the cost for sewage hookups.
- With respect to garbage collection services, 43 residents (9.6% of the sample) who rated the service as “low” or “very low” had comments. Many of residents were upset with having to paying extra for this service and either not having garbage pickup in their part of the county or having to pay a private contractor to haul it away. Many residents did not like the rotating day system in place, and felt that they were sometimes missed by the collectors. Some residents also noted some sloppiness in the collection process.
- With respect to recycling services, 69 residents (14.4% of the sample) who rated the service as “low” or “very low” had comments. The major complaint noted by many of these residents is the County dropping plastics from the items that are able to be recycled. A couple of people wanted the recycling depot on Wye Road to be restored. Some other residents would like the County to consider a blue box or blue bag curbside recycling service similar to what is done in Edmonton. A few residents would also like the County to also recycle tree branches and lawn clippings.

Transit Services in Strathcona County

People were asked to rate their satisfaction with transit services in the County. Figure 29 presents the satisfaction level that people have for transit services, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample that utilized these services¹³ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 289 residents (57.5% the sample) did not rate transit service on the basis that they did not know anything about the service.¹⁴

FIGURE 29
Satisfaction with Strathcona County Transit Service



Highlights from Figure 29

- It can be seen from Figure 29 that a large number of residents (regardless of use) have a positive view toward transit services in Strathcona County. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between use and how one rated transit services.¹⁵ A further examination using a *t-test* measurement for mean score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels ($t = 1.99, 287 \text{ df}, p < .05$) between users and non-users.
- The majority of transit users (85.7%) live in Sherwood Park.

¹³ Overall, 23.7% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had used transit services within the past 12 months. This is almost the same use as the 2001 survey

¹⁴ The percentage of those who said “don’t know” was about 14% higher than the 2001 survey.

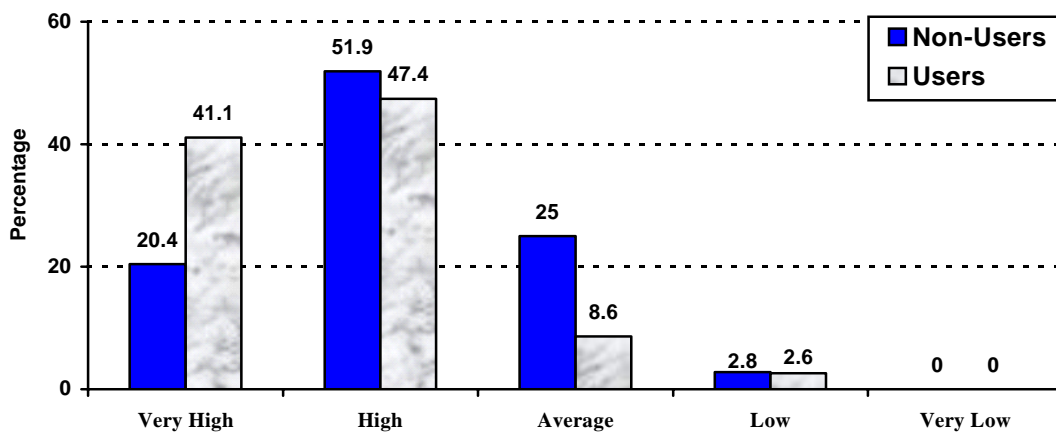
¹⁵ For transit ($\chi^2 = 16.56, 4 \text{ df}$).

- In comparison to last year's survey, the percentage of users rating this service as *very high* increased in 2003 to 34.2% compared to 22.8% in 2001 and 16.7% in 2000
- It can also be seen that almost 16% of users of the transit service have low or very low levels of satisfaction with the service (which is about the same as the 2001 study).
- The 40 people (13.8% of the sample) who gave transit services a low rating were asked to suggest ways on how this could be improved. A variety of ideas were put forward, though the majority of people wanted more buses at all times of the day, which would also help to have a reduced waiting time within the existing transit schedules. Some people also thought that more bus stops and routes should be added to make getting around Sherwood Park easier. Something also should be done to accommodate people living in rural areas, or at least those people living in outlying areas close to Sherwood Park. A couple of people wanted better transit service made available to disabled riders in the County.

Library Services in Strathcona County

Figure 30 presents the satisfaction level that people have with the Strathcona Public Library, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample that utilized these services¹⁶ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 91 people (18.1% of the sample) did not rate the library services on the basis that they did not know enough about the library to give it a rating.

FIGURE 30
Satisfaction with the Strathcona County Library



Highlights from Figure 30

- It can be seen from Figure 30 that most residents have a positive view toward 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.¹⁷ A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels between users and non-users ($t = 4.60$, 410 *df*, $p < .001$), where users are more likely to give the library a higher rating than those who did not use it.
- A further investigation revealed that overall “very high/high” satisfaction levels with the Strathcona Library had increased in 2003 (88.5%), compared with results obtained in 2001 (73.6%).

¹⁶ Overall, 61.0% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had used the library within the past 12 months. This is about the same user rate as 2001.

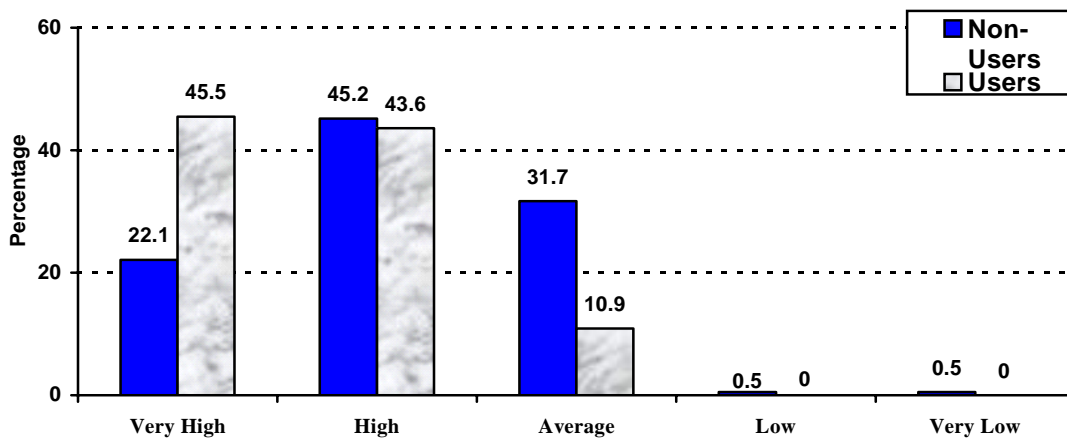
¹⁷ For library services, ($\chi^2 = 26.95$, 3 *df*).

- The majority of library users live in Sherwood Park (70.3%), while the remaining 29.7% live in other parts of Strathcona County. The satisfaction ratings of the library did not vary considerably between rural and urban area residents.
- With respect to socio-demographic variables, a chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between gender and how one rated library services ($\chi^2 = 10.83, 3 \text{ df}$). A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels between males and females ($t = -2.05, 410 \text{ df}, p < .05$), where females are more likely to give the library a higher rating than males.
- There were 11 people (2.7% of the sample) who rated the library service as “low.” These residents were asked to suggest ways on how the library could be improved. The main suggestions were to update their books, and increase the number of books and have a greater variety of books. Some people also thought that the existing library is still too small despite the renovation.

Volunteer Center Services in Strathcona County

Figure 31 presents the satisfaction level that people have with the Information and Volunteer Centre (IVC), based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample that utilized these services¹⁸ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 38.6% of residents (n=194) did not rate the Centre on the basis that they did not know anything about it.

FIGURE 31
Satisfaction with the Information and Volunteer Centre



Highlights from Figure 31

- It can be seen from Figure 31 that most residents have a positive view toward 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.¹⁹ A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels between users and non-users ($t = 5.34, 307 \text{ df}, p < .001$), where users are more likely to give the IVC a higher rating than those who did not use it.
- A further investigation revealed that overall “very high/high” satisfaction levels with users of the IVC had increased in 2003 (89.1%), compared with results obtained in 2001 (81.7%).

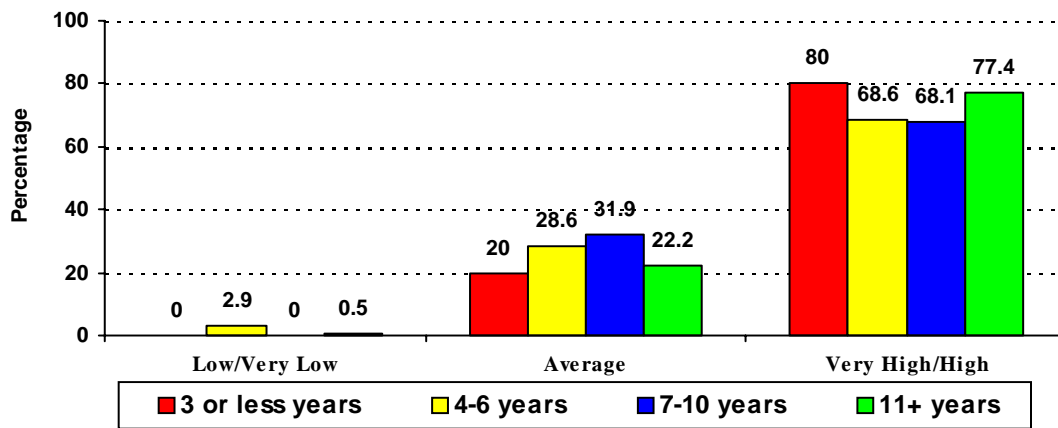
¹⁸ Overall, 23.5% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had used the Information and Volunteer Centre within the past 12 months. This is about the same as the 2001 survey.

¹⁹ For the IVC, ($\chi^2 = 26.40, 4 \text{ df}$).

- Among users of the IVC, the majority live in Sherwood Park (76.3%) while the remaining 23.7% live in rural parts of Strathcona County. The satisfaction ratings for the service did not vary considerably between rural and urban area residents.
- A total of 194 people (38.6%) did not rate the Information and Volunteer Centre because they did not know enough about it to provide a rating. This finding is an improvement than what was found in the 2001 survey, when nearly half of the sample (46.4% of the sample) did not rate the IVC. This implies that the Centre and its services are being profiled more than in previous years.
- With respect to socio-demographic variables, a chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between gender and how one rated the IVC ($\chi^2 = 19.02$, 4 df). A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels between males and females ($t = -4.14$, 307 df, $p < .001$), where females are more likely to give the IVC a higher rating than males.
- Only 2 people gave the Information and Volunteer Centre a “low” or “very low” rating. One felt that the volunteers needed to be better trained, while the other resident was simply not aware of the services.

A further analysis of the data revealed some differences in perception of the IVC on the basis of length of time people lived in the County. The results are shown in Figure 32. It can be seen that residents who had lived in the County for a short time (3 or less years) or for a long period of time (11+ years) has a higher level of satisfaction with the IVC than those who had lived in the County between 4 and 10 years.

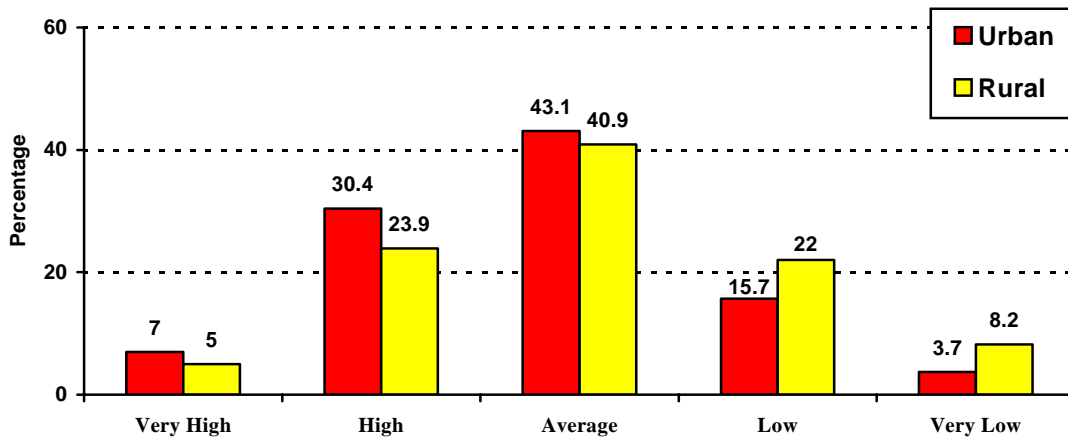
FIGURE 32
Satisfaction with the Information and Volunteer Centre
Comparisons by Length of Residence - Year 2003



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 33 presents the satisfaction level that people living in rural and urban parts of the County have for land use planning, which includes determining new residential, commercial and industrial development.²⁰

FIGURE 33
Satisfaction with Land Use Planning in Strathcona County - 2003



Highlights from Figure 33

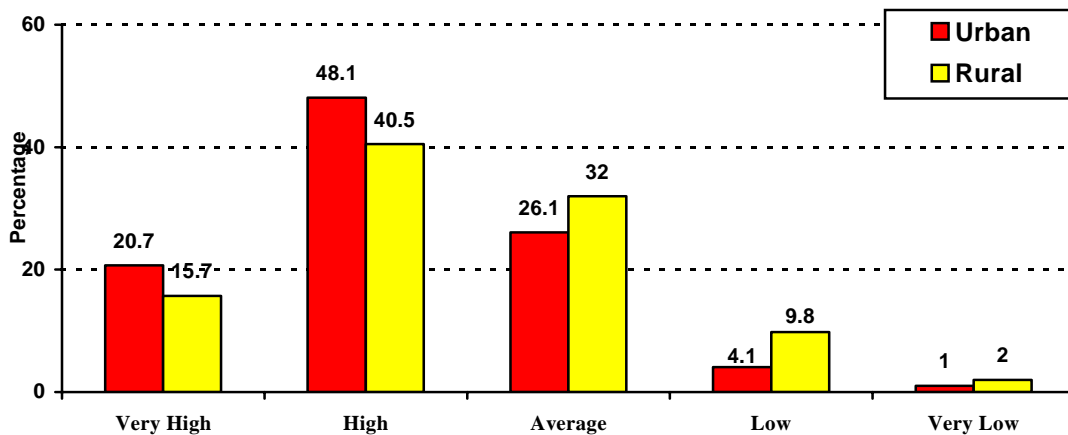
- It can be seen from Figure 33 that the perception of residents toward land use planning by the County is very similar, regardless of where people live. The majority of residents were relatively satisfied with existing land use planning. A slightly higher percentage of residents living in rural Strathcona were more dissatisfied with land use planning than those living in Sherwood Park were.
- The patterns found in this year's survey were almost identical to the results found in 2001 and 2000.
- Overall, 106 people (23.1% of the sample) gave a "low or very low" rating of the land use planning service and were asked to suggest ways on how this could be improved. A variety of suggestions and concerns were put forward, with the most common complaints revolving around "too much development /

²⁰ Overall, 45 people (8.9% of the sample) did not rate this service. This was about the same number of people as in the 2001 survey.

slow down development.” Associated with this, some people expressed concerns about increasing density in some urban neighborhoods. Several people had a perception that the County was decreasing the amount of green space or natural environments. Many people also thought that residents were not informed adequately about new development occurring in the County. There was also some concern about the effect that new developments were having on traffic flow in the County. In the rural areas, there were some people who were concerned about the decrease in farmland and agricultural operations.

Figure 34 presents the satisfaction level that people living in rural and urban parts of the County have for economic development, which includes attracting new businesses into the County.²¹

FIGURE 34
Satisfaction with Economic Development in Strathcona County - 2003



Highlights from Figure 34

- It can be seen from Figure 34 that the perception of residents toward economic development by the County is very similar, regardless of where people live. The majority of residents were relatively satisfied with economic development that is being done at the present time. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between use and how one rated the economic development in the County.²² A *t-test* measurement for mean

²¹ Overall, 55 people (10.9% of the sample) did not rate this service, which is about the same as the 2001 survey.

²² For this service, ($\chi^2 = 10.03, 4 \text{ df}$).

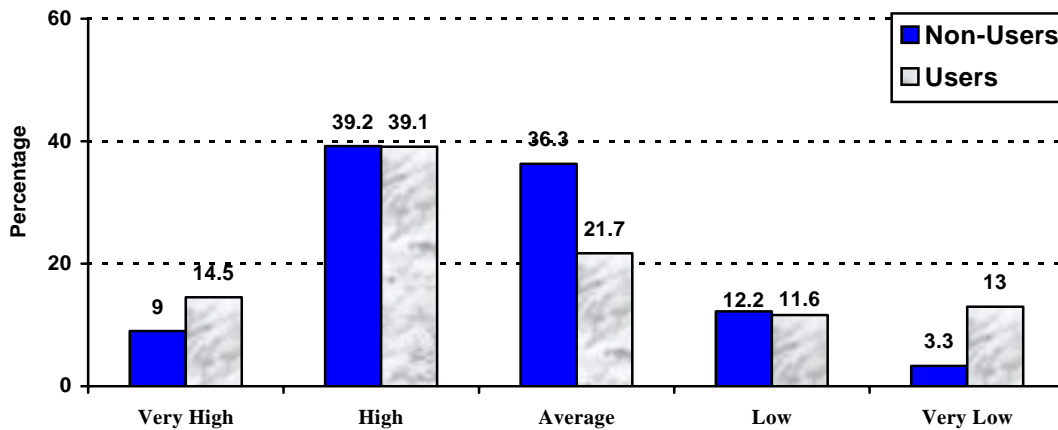
score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels between residents ($t = 2.91$, 446 df , $p < .005$), where urban residents are more likely to give economic development a higher rating than those living in rural Strathcona.

- A further investigation revealed that overall “very high/high” satisfaction levels with economic development by both urban (68.8%) and rural (56.2%) residents had increased in 2003, compared with results obtained in 2001 (60.9% - urban and 51.2% - rural).
- Thirty-three residents throughout the county (7.4% of the sample) expressed a low or very low level of satisfaction with economic development in the County. When asked to suggest ways on how this could be improved, the most common thoughts were either that there was too much development in the County as there was, or that there should be more retail services in the County, particularly larger businesses, such as established department stores or specific specialty stores (e.g. furniture, clothing, electronic) to the area.

Permit & Inspection Services in Strathcona County

Figure 35 presents the satisfaction level that people have with building permit and inspection services, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample that utilized these services²³ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 189 people (37.6% of the sample) did not rate this service on the basis that they did not know enough about it, which is about 12% lower than last year's survey.

FIGURE 35
Satisfaction with Building Permit and Inspections Services in Strathcona County



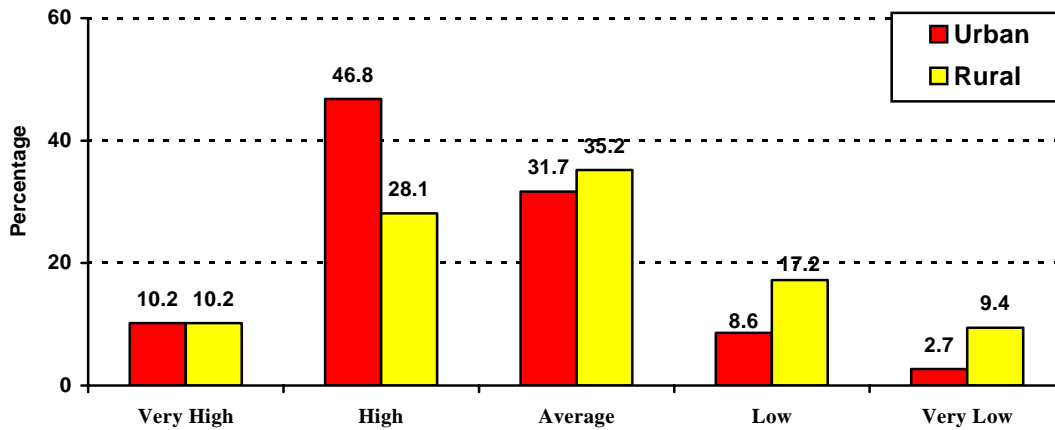
Highlights from Figure 35

- It can be seen from Figure 35 that the perception of residents toward building permit and inspection services was relatively similar, regardless of whether or not people used the services. A slightly higher percentage of people who had used these services in the past 12 months gave the services high ratings compared to those who did not.
- A comparison of trends between the 2003 and 2001 surveys revealed an increase in the percentage of users who gave the service “very high or high” ratings (53.6% in 2003 compared to 38.7% in 2001).

²³ Overall, 15.1% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had used the building permit and inspection services within the past 12 months. This is about 4% higher than the 2001 survey.

A comparison of perceptions by location (regardless of use/non-use of the service) is shown in Figure 36. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between where one lived and how one rated this Strathcona County service.²⁴ A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels between urban and rural residents ($t = 3.60$, 312 *df*, $p < .001$), where urban residents are more likely to give building permit and inspections services a higher rating than those living in rural Strathcona.

FIGURE 36
Satisfaction with Building Permit and Inspections Services in Strathcona County –
Urban & Rural Comparisons - 2003



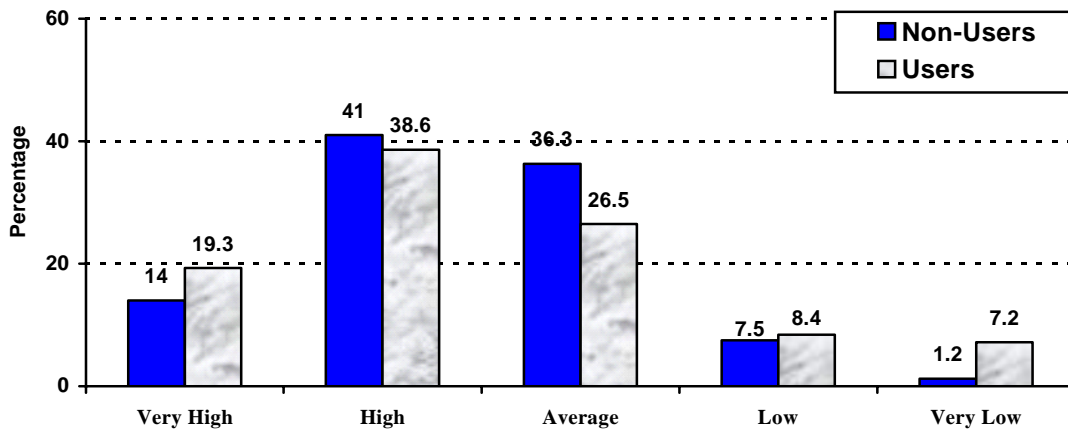
- The 55 people (17.5% of the sample) who rated this service as “low” or “very low” were asked to suggest ways on how this could be improved. Many people felt that the process for obtaining a permit or arranging for an inspection was too inflexible, slow or problematic due to inconvenient hours. Other comments that were reiterated by several people included: “have more inspectors” and “try to improve the attitude of permit staff and treat residents better.”

²⁴ For this service, ($\chi^2 = 17.88$, 4 *df*).

Bylaw Enforcement Services in Strathcona County

Figure 37 presents the satisfaction level that people have with bylaw enforcement, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample that utilized these services²⁵ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 98 people (19.5% of the sample) did not rate this service on the basis that they did not know enough about it.

FIGURE 37
Satisfaction with Bylaw Enforcement Services in Strathcona County

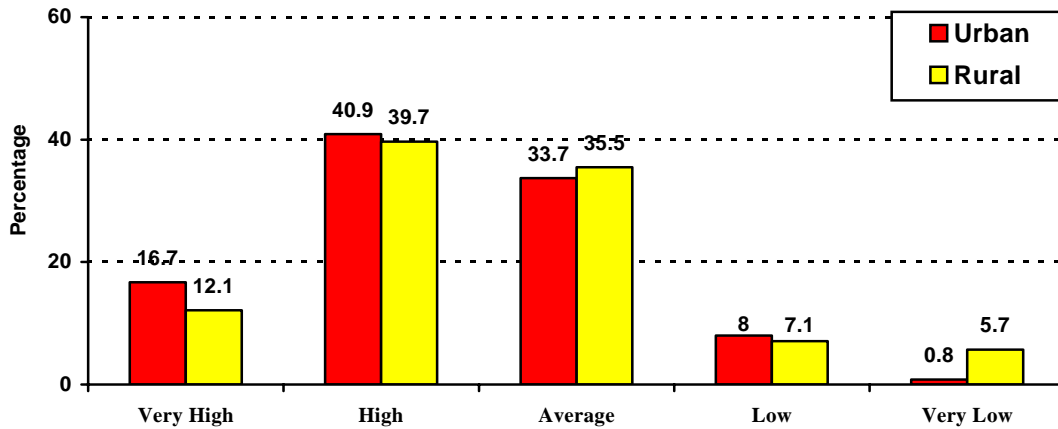


Highlights from Figure 37

- It can be seen from Figure 37 that the perception of residents toward bylaw enforcement services was somewhat dependent on past user patterns. It can be seen that many people who used the service **gave bylaw enforcement services a very low rating** more often than those who had not used the service were.
- The patterns shown in this figure were very similar to patterns found in the 2001 survey.

A comparison of perceptions by location (regardless of use/non-use of the service) is shown in Figure 38. It can be seen that a higher percentage of people living in the rural part of Strathcona County gave this service somewhat lower ratings than those living in Sherwood Park.

FIGURE 38
Satisfaction with Bylaw Enforcement Services in Strathcona County – Urban & Rural Comparisons - 2003

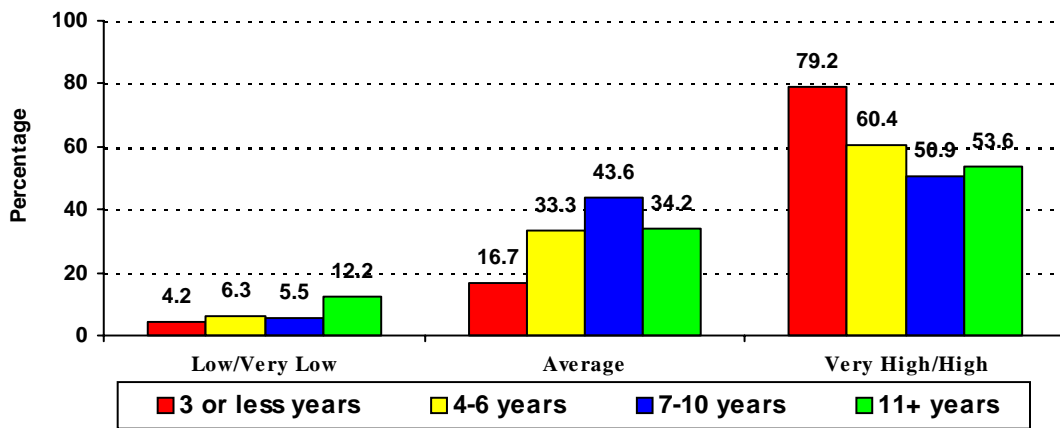


- The 41 residents (10.1% of the sample) who had a low level of satisfaction with this service were asked to suggest ways on how this could be improved. Many of these residents felt that there was an inconsistent enforcement of the bylaws, whereby the laws were enforced for one situation but not for another similar situation. There were some instances, however, where residents felt that even more enforcement was needed, such as with water use in the summer, with school zones, noise bylaws and dog bylaws.

²⁵ Overall, 17.3% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had utilized bylaw enforcement services within the past 12 months. This is about the same percentage as what was reported in the 2001 survey.

A further analysis of the data revealed some differences in perception of bylaw enforcement on the basis of length of time people lived in the County. The results are shown in Figure 39. It can be seen that residents who had lived in the County for a short time (3 or less years) had a higher level of satisfaction with bylaw enforcement services than those who had lived in the County for longer periods of time.

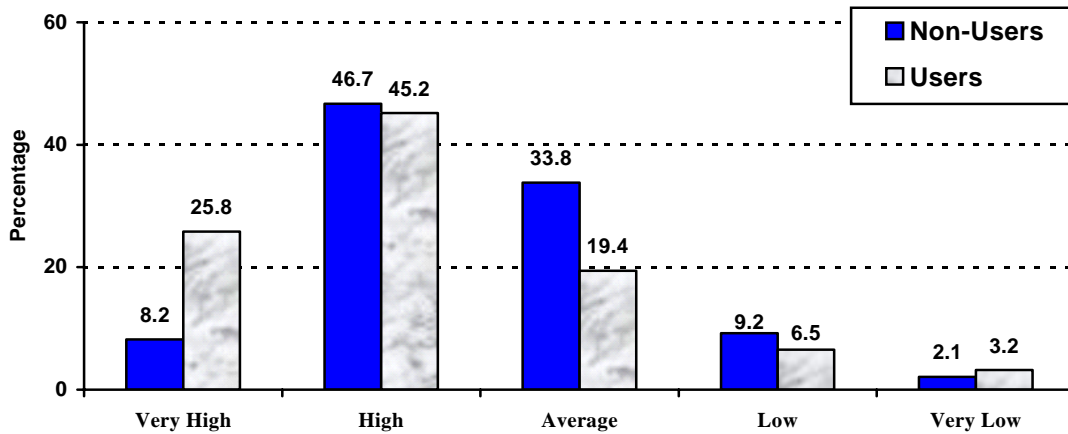
FIGURE 39
Satisfaction with Bylaw Enforcement Services in Strathcona County
Comparisons by Length of Residence - Year 2003



Agricultural Services in Strathcona County

Figure 40 presents the satisfaction level that people have with weed control and other agricultural services, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample that utilized these services²⁶ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 82 people (16.3% of the sample) did not rate this service on the basis that they did not know enough about it.

FIGURE 40
Satisfaction with Weed Control, Soil Management, Wildlife Problems
and other Agricultural Services in Strathcona County



Highlights from Figure 40

- It can be seen from Figure 40 that the users of agricultural enforcement services were much more positive on the service compared to those who did not use the service. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between where one lived and how one rated this Strathcona County service.²⁷ A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels between urban and rural residents ($t = 2.12, 419 \text{ df}, p < .05$), where users are more likely to give agricultural services a higher rating than those who didn't use the services.

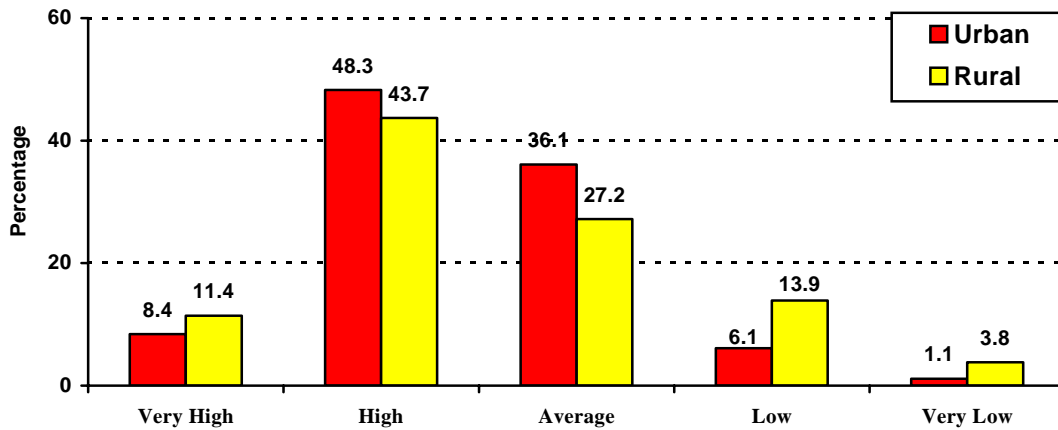
²⁶ Overall, 6.2% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had utilized agricultural services within the past 12 months. This is a similar percentage of users that was seen in the 2001 survey.

²⁷ For this service, ($\chi^2 = 11.65, 4 \text{ df}$).

- A comparison of this year’s results with the 2001 study revealed that the percentage of users who gave the service a “very high” or “very high” rating has increased by 31% in 2003 (with a 71% approval rating) compared to 2001, (when 40% of users approved of the service).
- A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between how one rated this Strathcona County service and gender²⁸ ($\chi^2 = 10.27, 4 \text{ df}$) and one’s age ($\chi^2 = 33.68, 20 \text{ df}$). With respect to age, a one-way analysis of variance procedure ($F[5,414] = 4.99, p < .001$) determined that those aged 65 or older gave agricultural services a lower rating than those residents aged 34 or younger.

A comparison of perceptions by location (regardless of use/non-use of the service) is shown in Figure 41. It can be seen that a higher percentage of people living in the rural part of Strathcona County gave this service somewhat lower ratings than those living in Sherwood Park.

FIGURE 41
Satisfaction with Weed Control, Soil Management, Wildlife Problems and other Agricultural Services – Urban & Rural Comparisons 2003



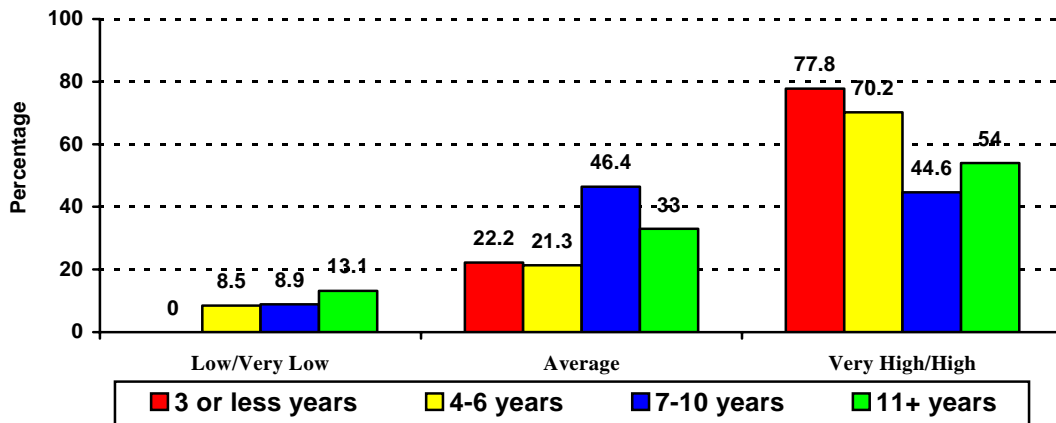
- Overall, the 47 residents (11.2% of the sample) who had a low level of satisfaction with this service were asked to suggest ways on how this could be

²⁸ A *t-test* measurement for mean score differences revealed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels for gender ($t = -2.78, 419 \text{ df}; p < .01$), where females are more likely to give agricultural services a higher rating than males.

improved. The majority of the comments came from people who feel that the County needs to do more with respect to weed control, particularly when residents are required to maintain their own properties. Another issue that was raised by a few people was with respect controlling deer in the County, particularly as potential road hazards.

A further analysis of the data revealed some differences in perception of agricultural enforcement on the basis of length of time people lived in the County. The results are shown in Figure 42. It can be seen that residents who had lived in the County for shorter periods of time (6 or less years) had a higher level of satisfaction with these services than those who had lived in the County for longer periods of time.

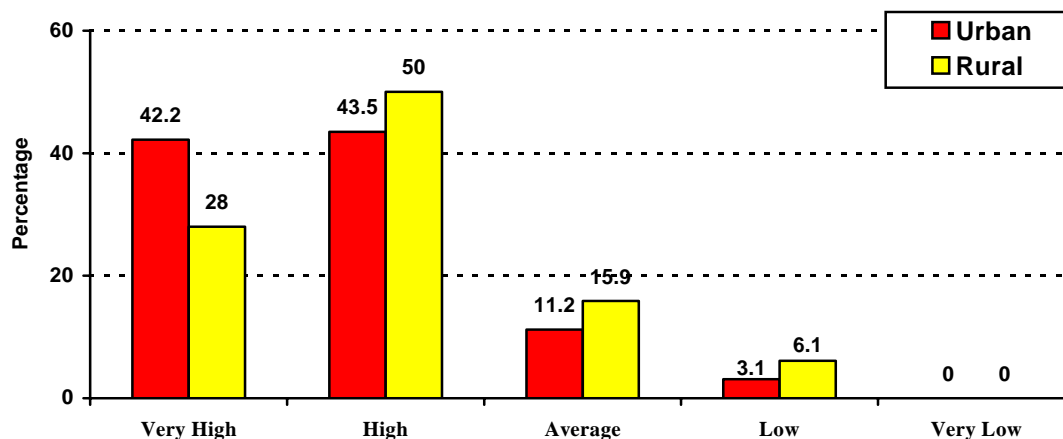
FIGURE 42
Satisfaction with Weed Control, Soil Management, Wildlife Problems and other Agricultural Services - Comparisons by Length of Residence - Year 2003



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 43 presents the satisfaction level that people have with the various parks, green spaces and sports fields.

FIGURE 43
Satisfaction with Parks, Green Spaces and Sports Fields in Strathcona County



Highlights from Figure 43

- It can be seen from Figure 43 that the perception of residents toward various outdoor green spaces was similar, though urban residents gave more favorable ratings compared to rural residents. A chi-square test of association reveals that there is a relationship between where one lived and how one rated Strathcona County green spaces²⁹ and was further confirmed a *t-test* measurement for mean score differences.³⁰
- A comparison of this year's results with the 2001 study revealed that the percentage of residents who gave the service a "very high" or "high" rating has increased in 2003 (85.7% urban and 78% rural) compared to 2001, (78.9% urban; 75.1% rural).
- The 20 people (4.1% of the sample) who gave the parks, green spaces and sport fields a low rating were asked to suggest ways on how this could be improved. Comments that occurred included a need for more green spaces,

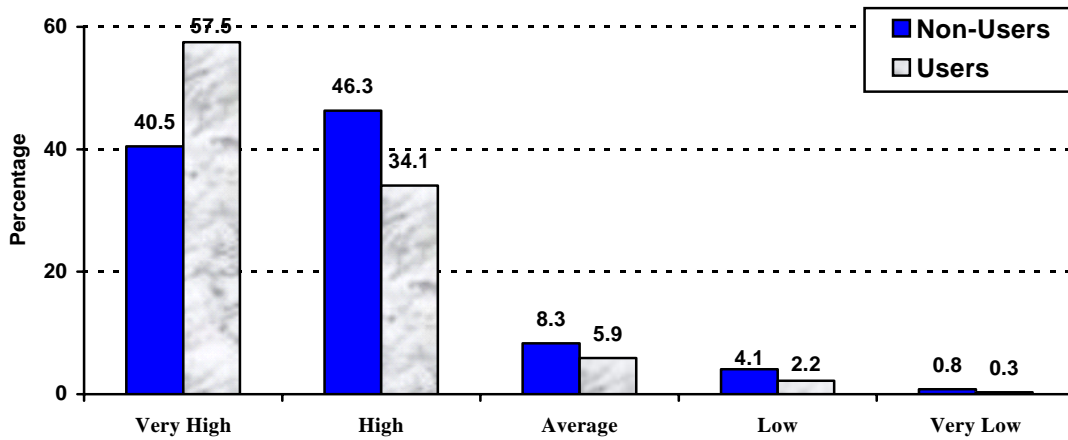
²⁹ For parks and green space, $\chi^2 = 11.08$, 3 df.

³⁰ The $t = 2.12$, 484 df, $p < .05$.

more trees on main roads, and more features on the existing sports fields, such as lights and rest rooms.

Figure 44 presents the satisfaction level that people have with indoor recreation facilities in the County, based on the perspectives of the portion of the sample that utilized these facilities³¹ in the past 12 months and those who did not. It should also be noted that 24 people (4.8% of the sample) did not rate these facilities on the basis that they did not know enough about it.

FIGURE 44
Satisfaction with Indoor Recreation Facilities in Strathcona County



Highlights from Figure 44

- It can be seen from Figure 44 that the perception of residents toward indoor recreation facilities was somewhat dependent on past user patterns. Overall, people who used indoor recreation facilities were more satisfied than those who had not used these facilities. This was confirmed by a chi-square procedure ($\chi^2 = 11.21, 4 \text{ df}$) and a *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = - 3.12, 477 \text{ df}, p < .003$).
- A further analysis revealed that 77.2% of Sherwood Park residents used the indoor recreation facilities at least once in the past 12 months, while 60.1% of rural residents made use of these facilities.

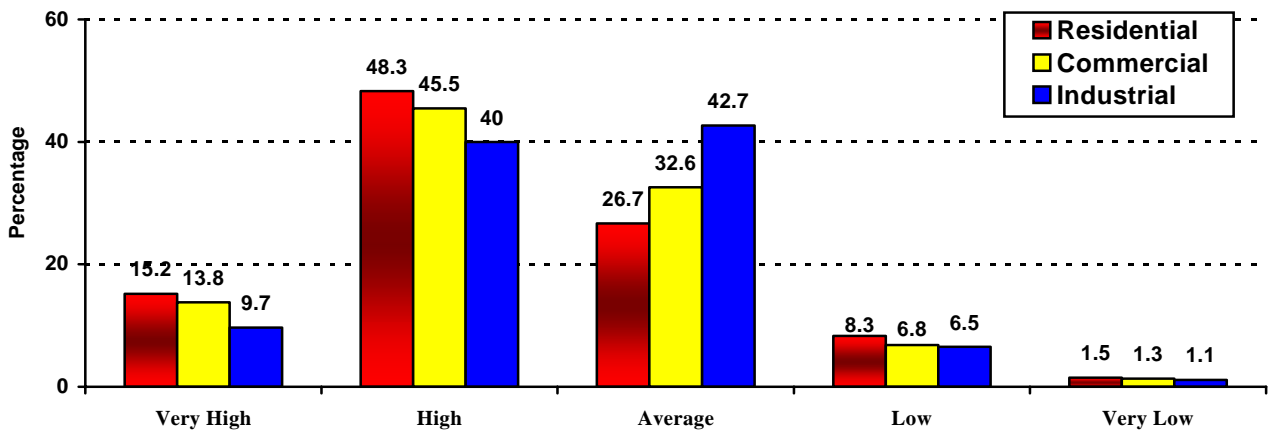
³¹ Overall, 71.3% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had been to an indoor recreation facility in the County of Strathcona within the past 12 months. This is a 6% increase over the 2001 findings.

- The 15 people (3.1% of the sample) who had a low level of satisfaction with the facilities were asked to suggest ways on how these could be improved. Most of the complaints focused on the increased costs for use of the facilities, particularly Millennium Place.

D. Perceptions toward 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 45 below.

FIGURE 45
Quality of Various Developments throughout Strathcona County



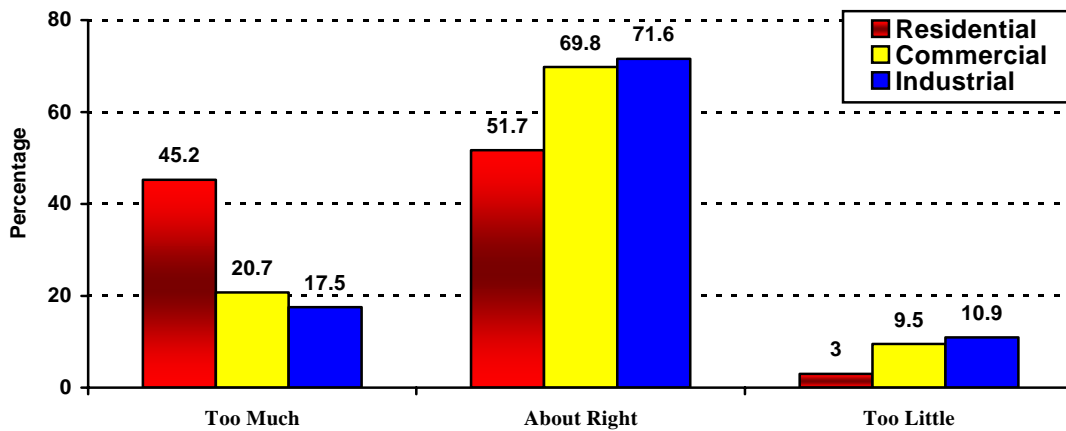
Highlights from Figure 45

- Overall, respondents were satisfied with the quality of residential development to a slightly larger extent than other types of developments in the County. Furthermore, it can also be seen that respondents had a higher level of satisfaction with the quality of commercial developments than they did with industrial developments.
- The trends noted in this figure are very similar to trends found in last year’s study, though perceptions of commercial and industrial development were slightly more favorable in 2003 compared to 2001.

- 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. Overall, 72 people (14.3% of the sample) gave a reason for their low rating. A common theme expressed among residents was that there was too much development of all three types. Other comments specific to each type of development are noted below:
 - A variety of concerns were expressed among those who rated the quality of residential developments as low. Some people felt that there was a lack of housing for young people who want to live in Strathcona County. Others wondered why the new lots for housing were as small as they were and so close together, particularly in Sherwood Park.
 - For commercial developments, a variety of concerns were put forward by those who rated the quality of development as low. Comments mentioned more often by residents who were dissatisfied included *lack of parking for new commercial developments, poor entrances and access to commercial businesses.*
 - For industrial developments, a common concern among those who rated the quality of development as low was the increased level of pollution generated by these plants (especially with respect to air quality). There were also those who wondered about the placement of the plants relative to residential developments.

A comparative rating pertaining to the perception of the quantity (i.e. amount) of new types of developments is shown in Figure 46 on the next page.

FIGURE 46
Quantity of Various Developments throughout Strathcona County



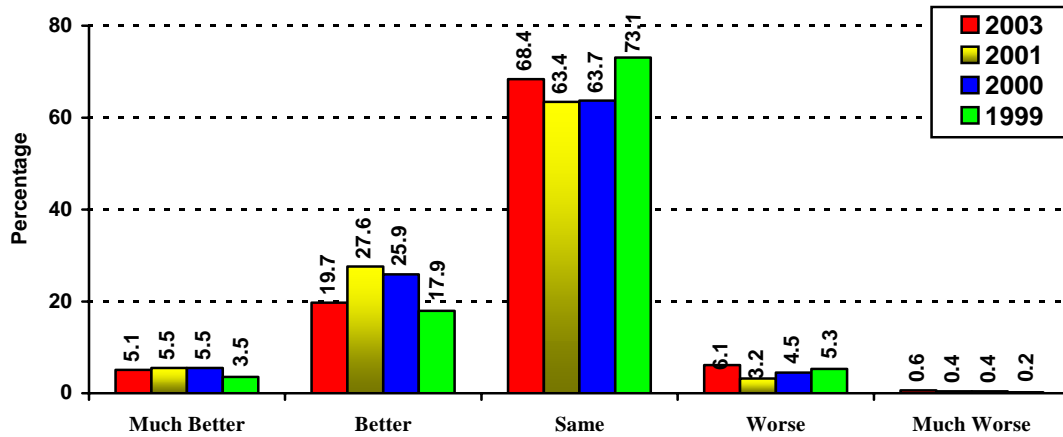
Highlights from Figure 46

- 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 2003 was almost identical to the 2001 results, with the exception of perceptions of residential development. Perceptions of *too much* residential development in the County were up almost 7% in 2003, compared to 2001.
- 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 development.
- This finding suggests a perception in the County right now that there is a good balance of commercial and industrial developments. However, almost half of the residents have a perception that there is too much residential development, which suggests that these people may have concerns about a potential loss of the “small town” atmosphere in the county. However, a further analysis revealed that these people **still gave similar high ratings** to the quality of life in Strathcona County as a whole. As such, while there are some concerns about continued development, it still has not gotten to the point where the quality of one’s life in Strathcona County has been adversely affected.

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 2003 survey results are compared with the results found in 2001, 2000 and 1999 when this same question was asked and are shown in Figure 47 below.

FIGURE 47
Quality of Services Now in Strathcona County Compared to 2 years ago

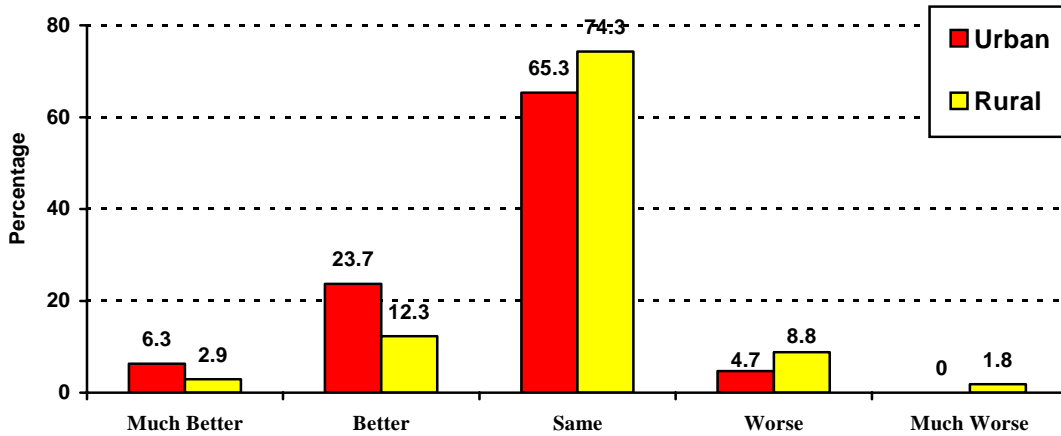


Highlights from Figure 47

- Overall, the majority of respondents were of the opinion that the quality of services offered by Strathcona County was the same as they were two years ago. However, it can be seen that there was a **slight decrease** in the percentage of people in 2003 who felt that things were *getting better* compared to the percentage of people who felt this way in 2001 and 2001.
- The 33 people (6.7% 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. Many concerns put forward by these people had to do with a feeling that the maintenance of the roads had worsened over the past two years, particularly in the winter. There were also people who felt that weed control in the summer had decreased. Other people did not specify particular services, but had the impression that services that they did get were not as frequent as they used to be.

A comparison of urban and rural residents with respect to perceptions of the quality of services is shown in Figure 48. It can be seen that people living in the urban area have a stronger perception of services being better than those living in the rural parts of the County. This was confirmed by a chi-square procedure ($\chi^2 = 19.61, 4 \text{ df}$) and a *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = -4.16, 486 \text{ df}, p < .001$).

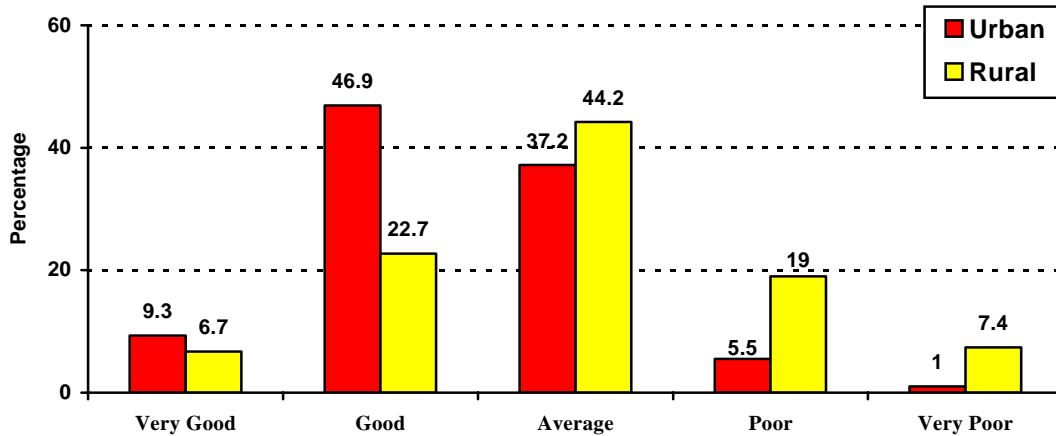
FIGURE 48
Quality of Services Now in Strathcona County Compared to 2 years ago
Urban and Rural Comparisons - 2003



F. Question on Taxes within Strathcona County

Residents of Strathcona County who were taxpayers³² were asked a series of questions the value of their tax dollars as well as the sort of balance that should be considered between the taxes that are paid and the services that are received. Residents were told that 58% of their taxes paid 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 49 below.

FIGURE 49
Value of Tax Dollars Spent in Strathcona County
- Urban and Rural Comparisons 2003



Highlights from Figure 49

- Statistically, there was a difference between urban and rural residents with respect to how people felt about the value of tax dollars that was spent on municipal services. This was confirmed by a chi-square procedure ($\chi^2 = 49.03$, 4 df) and a *t-test* measurement for mean score differences ($t = 6.58$, 451 df, $p < .001$). It can be seen that considerably more 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.

³² It was found that 90.6% of the respondents owned property in Strathcona County and as such, were taxpayers

- Those people (10.4% of the sample, N=62) who felt that they received poor value for the taxes that they paid were asked to indicate why they felt that way. A variety of reasons were given, with the most common answer being that they felt that there was an inequity between the amount of money they paid in taxes and the amount of services they were receiving in return. People living in rural parts of the County particularly pointed this out, especially with respect to things like waste disposal and a perception of lack of RCMP services. Other complaints were directed toward having to pay for services that were no longer used or not used to a large extent (such as school taxes and recreation facilities such as Millennium Place).

A comparison of trends from 1999- 2003 with respect to perceptions of the value of services for tax dollars are shown in Figure 50 (Urban) and Figure 51 (rural). One can see that for urban residents, the positive perceptions that residents were getting very good or good value for their tax dollars has remained constant since 2001. Rural residents, on the other hand, have a much higher negative perception of the value that they get for their tax dollars. Furthermore, it can be seen that this trend has not changed dramatically since 1999.

FIGURE 50
Value of Tax Dollars Spent in Strathcona County – Urban Residents (1999-2003)

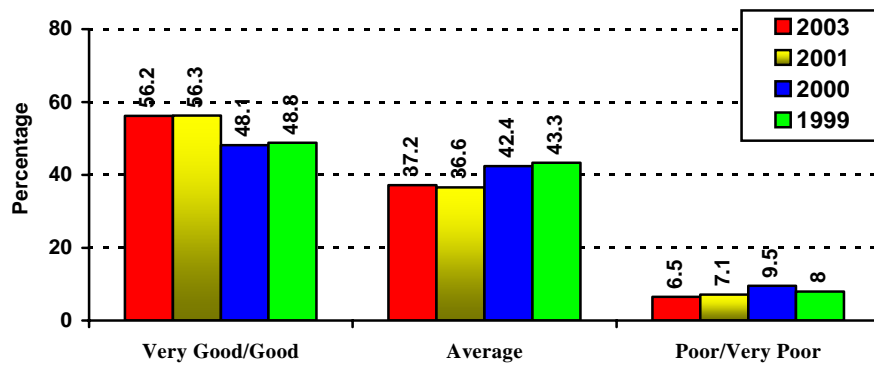
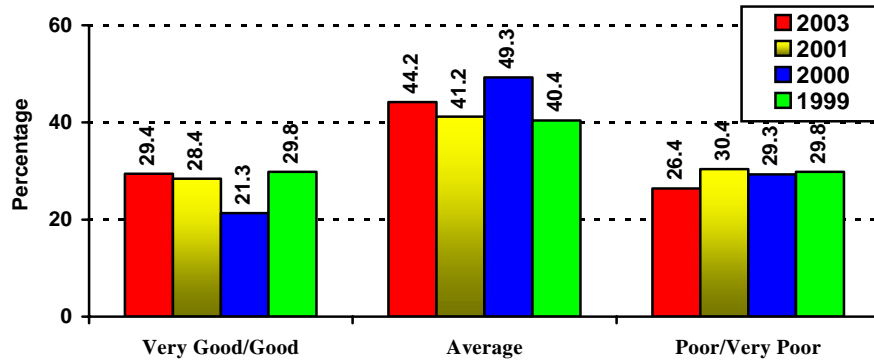


FIGURE 51
Value of Tax Dollars Spent in Strathcona County – Rural Residents (1999-2003)



G. 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.³³ It can be seen in Table 1 that *recycling services* were the most frequent service used in 2003, followed by *indoor recreation facilities*, the *public library*, *RCMP*, *public transit services* and the *Information and Volunteer Centre*.

Services in 2003 that experienced greater usage than 2001 were the *indoor recreation facilities*, the *RCMP* and *building permit and inspection services*.

A comparison of services used between urban and rural residents is shown in Table 2. It can be seen that urban residents used *recycling services*, *indoor recreation facilities*, the *public library*, *public transit services* and the *Information and Volunteer Centre* to a greater extent than rural residents. Rural residents, on the other hand, made greater use of *agricultural services* and *bylaw enforcement services* than urban residents.

³³ 21 respondents (4.2% of the sample) indicated that they had not used any county services in the past 12 months.

Table 1
County Services in Strathcona County Used by Residents
in the Past 12 Months – 2003 vs. 2001

Type of Service	N of Users	% Use in 2003	% Use in 2001
Recycling Services	405	80.7%	83.5%
Indoor Recreation Facilities	358	71.3%	65.9%
Strathcona County Library	306	61.0%	61.8%
RCMP	160	31.9%	27.9%
Public Transit Services	119	23.7%	25.1%
Information & Volunteer Centre	118	23.5%	23.7%
Bylaw Enforcement	87	17.3%	16.5%
Building Permit & Inspection Services	76	15.1%	11.8%
Fire & Ambulance Services	65	12.9%	11.8%
Family Support Services	43	8.6%	9.2%
Agriculture Services	31	6.2%	6.6%

Table 2
County Services in Strathcona County Used by Urban and Rural Residents
in the Past 12 Months - 2003

Type of Service	Urban Users	Rural Users
Recycling Services	86.8%	69.5%
Indoor Recreation Facilities	77.2%	60.5%
Strathcona County Library	66.2%	51.4%
RCMP	33.5%	28.8%
Public Transit Services	31.4%	9.6%
Information & Volunteer Centre	27.7%	15.8%
Bylaw Enforcement	13.8%	23.7%
Building Permit & Inspection Services	13.2%	18.6%
Fire & Ambulance Services	13.2%	12.4%
Family Support Services	8.3%	9.0%
Agriculture Services	4.0%	10.2%

Respondents were asked to think of their most recent contact that they had with County staff and to rate the service that they received on the basis of 6 criteria. The services that the residents based their ratings on is shown in Table 3. The overall rating results for all 6 criteria (regardless of the service used) are shown in Figures 52 and 53.

Table 3
County Departments in Strathcona County Used as the Basis for Rating the Service of County Staff in 2003

Type of Service	N	%
Indoor Recreation Facilities	147	30.7
Strathcona County Library	110	23.0
Recycling Services	93	19.4
RCMP	31	6.5
Public Transit Services	23	4.8
Fire & Ambulance Services	18	3.8
Building Permit & Inspection Services	16	3.3
Bylaw Enforcement	13	2.7
Information & Volunteer Centre	10	2.1
Family Support Services	7	1.5
Agriculture Services	2	0.4

FIGURE 52
Quality of Services provided by County Staff -2003

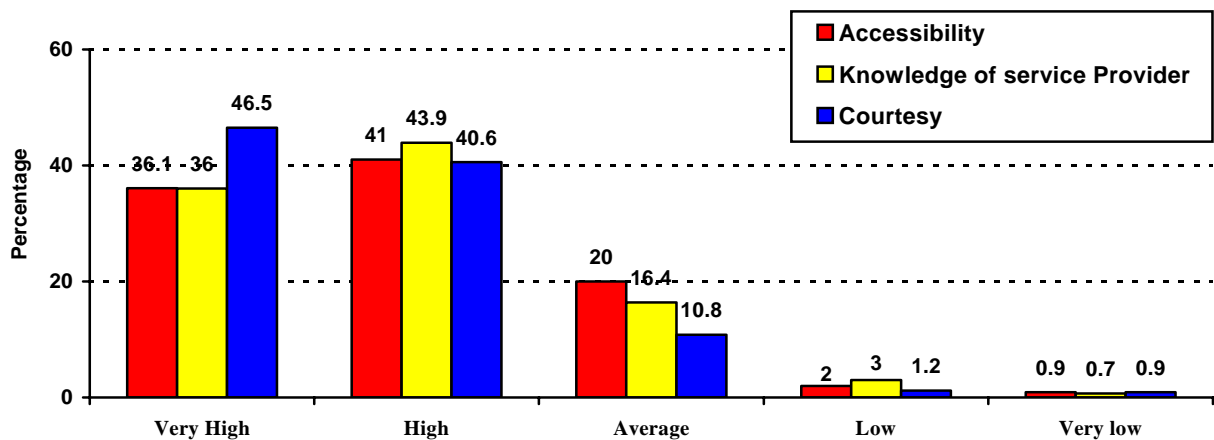
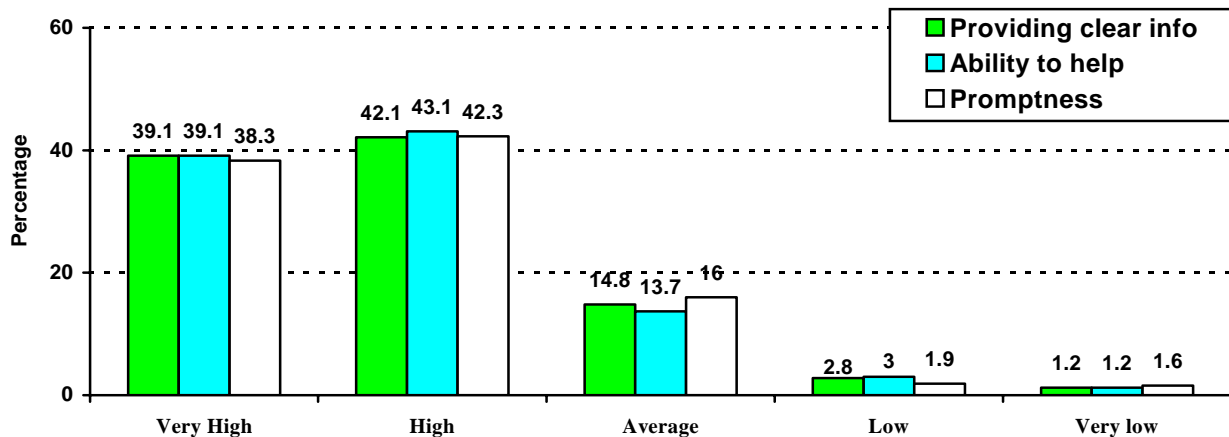


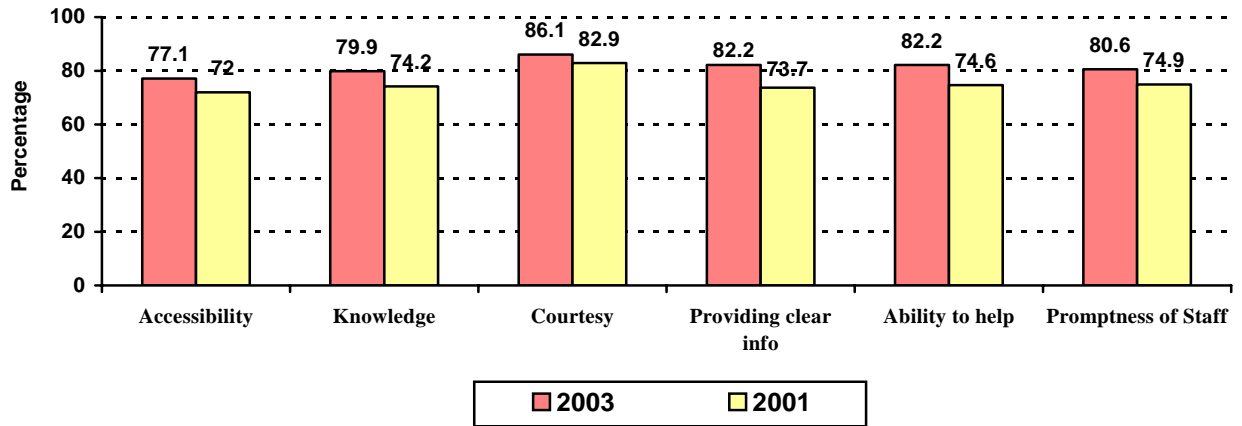
FIGURE 53
Quality of Services provided by County Staff - 2003



Highlights from Figure 52 and Figure 53

- Overall, residents had a very positive perception of county staff on the basis of all 6 criteria.
- Based on the combination of the “very high” and “high” scores, the strongest criteria were *courtesy* (86.1%), followed closely by the *ability of the staff to help you* and *being able to provide clear information* (each at 82.2%) *promptness of staff* (80.6%), *knowledge of the service provider* (79.9%), and *accessibility* (77.1%).
- All respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments about the service that they had received from County staff. Although there were some specific comments directed to particular departments, for the most part, comments made by residents about the various services were positive, particularly with respect to staff being knowledgeable and helpful. Some people were particularly complimentary of the RCMP, the library staff and various recreation staff. There were a couple of incidents where residents had disagreements with bylaw enforcement officers. In addition, a few residents were dissatisfied that the recycling station was a self-service with no staff on-site to assist residents.
- A comparison of overall results between this year’s survey and the 2001 survey for these 6 items revealed that the combined *very high/high ratings for staff* was higher in 2003 for all items than in 2001. This is shown in Figure 54 on the next page.

FIGURE 54
Quality of Services provided by County Staff - 2003 & 2001 comparisons on the combined *Very High/High* percentages

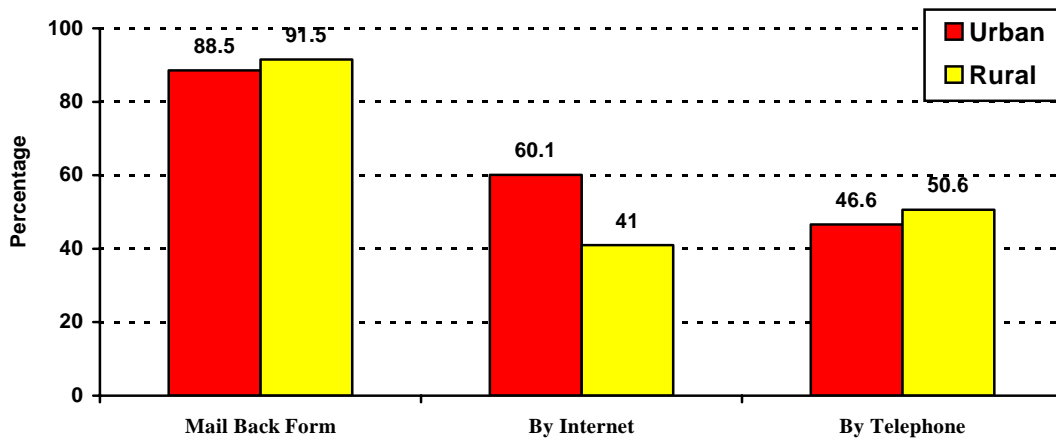


The closing question directed to all residents was a general one that allowed people to provide comments about any Strathcona County service or the way that the County is managed. Overall, the majority of residents (48.3%) had no further comments about the County, while 11.9% reiterated how satisfied they were with the services provided by the County. Comments and suggestions were put forward by 39.7% of the sample. Many of the open-ended comments were associated with not being able to recycle plastic material in the County or with the lack of snow removal services. There were also some residents who felt that the County needed a hospital or medical facility. Other individual comments were directed toward library services, particular bylaws, increasing public transportation services to outlying areas in the County, and having more affordable housing in the County for young people and seniors.

H. Other Methods of Collecting Census Information

A new question asked in this year's survey had to do with alternative methods for collecting census information from residents. All respondents were told about the current method used by the County when collecting municipal census information (which is door-to-door interviews at residence households). Three alternative methods were presented to respondents as ways of collecting census information if the door-to-door method was not successful. The results are shown in Figure 55 for urban and rural residents.

FIGURE 55
Alternative Methods of Census Data Collection
- Urban and Rural Comparisons 2003



Highlights from Figure 55

- It can be seen that of the three alternative methods presented to residents, the most popular method favored by both urban and rural residents was to complete the census with a form that would be mailed by to the County in a postage-paid envelope.
- Providing census information via a secure internet website was popular among 60.1% of urban residents, but by only 41% of rural residents.

- Calling a special telephone number and completing the census by telephone was an option considered by 50.6% of rural residents and 46.6% of urban residents.