



Danville Region Social Capital Survey

REPORT OF RESULTS 2009

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Danville Region Social Capital Survey 2009

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| List of Figures | ii |
| List of Tables..... | iv |
| Acknowledgements | v |
| Executive Summary | vii |
| | |
| I. Introduction and Summary of Methods | 1 |
| II. Quality of Life in the Danville Region | 7 |
| III. Community Attachment | 9 |
| IV. Civic Participation..... | 14 |
| V. Political Participation | 18 |
| VI. People in the Economy..... | 21 |
| VII. Children and Schools | 24 |
| VIII. Health Issues..... | 27 |
| IX. Summary and Conclusion | 30 |
| | |
| Appendix A: <i>Questionnaire</i> | |
| Appendix B: <i>Survey and Sampling Methodology</i> | |
| Appendix C: <i>Crosstabulations/Mean Ratings by the Demographic Variables</i> | |
| Appendix D: <i>Frequencies</i> | |
| Appendix E: <i>Openends</i> | |

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure I-1: Danville Metropolitan Statistical Geographic Area xi

Figure I-1: Age of Respondents 5

Figure I-2: Race of Respondents 6

Figure I-3: Employment 6

Figure I-4: Household Income..... 6

Figure I-5: Educational Level..... 7

Figure I-6: Geographic Distribution 7

Figure II-1: Overall Quality of Life Ratings 8

Figure II-2: Overall Quality of Life Five Years Ago 8

Figure II-3: Overall Quality of Life Five Years from Now 8

Figure II-4: Mean Overall Quality of Life Ratings by Area..... 9

Figure III-1: Important to Feel a Part of the Community 10

Figure III-2: Feel at Home Where I Live 10

Figure III-3: Have a Lot in Common with People Who Live in this Community..... 10

Figure III-4: Feel it is Important to Live in this Particular Area 11

Figure III-5: Neighbors You Know 11

Figure III-6: Impact in Making the “Community a Better Place to Live 12

Figure III-7: Safety in the Neighborhood..... 12

Figure III-8: Safety in Shopping Areas 12

Figure III-9: Safety at Home and in Schools..... 13

Figure IV-1: Religious Service Attendance..... 16

Figure IV-2: Religious Service Attendance Comparison 16

Figure IV-3: Group Memberships 17

Figure IV-4: Types of Volunteering..... 18

Figure IV-5: Hours Volunteered Per Month..... 19

Figure IV-6: Civic Skills 19

Figure V-1: Attend Public or Political Meetings..... 21

Figure V-2: Voted in City or Local Elections 22

Figure V-3: Participation in Political Activities 22

Figure V-4: Trust in Government..... 23

Figure VI-3: Employment 24

Figure VI-2: Hours Worked 24

Figure VI-3: Perceptions of Work..... 25

Figure VI-4: Reasons for Special Training..... 26

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure VI-5: Affected by the Economic Situation..... | 26 |
| Figure VII-1: What is Best for Children..... | 27 |
| Figure VII-2: Change in Education Provided by Schools | 28 |
| Figure VII-3: Challenges for Children and Youth..... | 28 |
| Figure VII-4: Important Resources | 29 |
| Figure VIII-1: Overall Health Status | 30 |
| Figure VIII-2: Overall Health Comparisons..... | 30 |
| Figure VIII-3: Health Comparison to One Year Ago..... | 31 |
| Figure VIII-4: Waiting Time for a Doctor’s Appointment..... | 31 |
| Figure VIII-5: Level of Physical Activity for Children..... | 32 |
| Figure VIII-6: Hours Watching Television | 32 |

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Dr. Thomas M. Guterbock, Director of the Center and Professor of Sociology, was the Principal Investigator for this study, and was involved in all phases of the project, including budgeting, questionnaire drafting, logistical planning, data coding, data analysis, and writing this report.

Dr. Karl N. Stauber, President and CEO of the Danville Regional Foundation, served as project manager and as primary point of contact between CSR and the Foundation on all aspects of the project. He participated actively in the design of the questionnaire and in suggesting revisions to the survey report.

At CSR, Deborah Rexrode, M.A., served as the Project Coordinator. Dr. Abdoulaye Diop, Senior Research Analyst, prepared the analysis plan, and Deborah Rexrode, Staff Research Analyst, conducted the project analysis. Deborah Rexrode and Dr. Guterbock co-authored the report.

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The Center for Survey Research is responsible for any errors or omissions in this report. Questions may be directed to the Center for Survey Research, P.O. Box 400767, Charlottesville Virginia 22904-4767. CSR also may be reached by telephone at 434-243-5222; by electronic mail at surveys@virginia.edu, or via the World Wide Web at: <http://www.virginia.edu/surveys>.

Executive Summary

The 2009 Danville Region Social Capital Survey was conducted by the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Virginia, at the request of the Danville Regional Foundation. This telephone survey of 1,026 randomly selected individuals living in the City of Danville, Pittsylvania County and Caswell County, NC was conducted in April 2009.

Overall, the purposes of this survey were:

- To measure how people feel about the region and their future in it
- To measure people's attachment to their community
- To measure the region's social capital which includes civic engagement, political involvement, and connectedness to the community and serves as an indication of community strength and vitality
- To gather baseline data to be compared to results of future, bi-annual surveys

Previous research has shown that a community with abundant social capital is better able to meet the economic needs of residents, defend the area's political interests, fend off external threats, and protect the quality of life of its residents. Specialists in community development have long recognized that if social capital can be strengthened in a community, then the capacity of that community to provide for its residents is enhanced. For all these reasons, it is important to the long-range plans of the Danville Regional Foundation, and the communities it serves, to better understand the state of social capital in the Danville region.

One of the key design features of the survey was to use some measures that are comparable with national norms. Where possible, we present data that can be compared to national norms. For other items, we present comparison to data from regional, statewide, or local surveys that have similar purposes and identical questions, but may survey areas that differ from the Danville region in various ways. Whether or not directly comparable data are available from elsewhere, the data from this survey form a baseline of information for future comparisons to measure changes in the Danville region over time.

Survey Results

Overall Quality of Life

Residents of the Danville region were asked to rate the overall quality of life in their community. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents the worst possible community in which to live, and 10 represents the best possible community, residents of the Danville Region gave a mean rating of 7.30. This rating suggests that residents have a high regard for the quality of life in the region. However, compared to similar studies in other communities in the Commonwealth of Virginia, this rating is somewhat lower. The mean rating of overall quality of life in Albemarle County (2008) was 8.01, in Spotsylvania County (2007) 7.39, and in Bedford County (2001) 7.80. However, in Prince William County (2009) the rating was 7.30, the same as in the Danville Region.

Residents of Caswell County and Pittsylvania County rated the quality of life in their communities on average higher than those who live in Danville City (mean of 7.81 and 7.78 compared to 6.57). Long-time residents were concerned about the quality of life in the Danville Region in the future.

Community Attachment

Overall, the residents of the Danville Region have a strong sense of community. They feel a sense of belonging and feel it is important for them to live in this particular area. Most residents have neighbors or relatives in their neighborhood or close by to support them. They also feel they have an impact in making their community a better place to live. However, some expressed concern for safety in shopping areas.

Compared to respondents in a national study done for AARP, the percentage of Danville residents who know 6-10 neighbors was significantly higher but the percentage of residents who know 11 or more neighbors was much lower. Danville residents appear to be somewhat connected in their communities, but there may be a certain threshold on the extent of that connectedness.

When asked about safety in the schools, 13.1% said they think schools are "unsafe" for students. Compared to a previous study conducted in a suburban area of Richmond, residents of the Danville Region show a higher concern for school safety. Danville respondents were three times

more likely to say the schools are unsafe than residents in the other study.

Research suggests that how well a resident is attached to their community has a significant impact on their perceptions of the quality of life within the community. We created a community attachment index to measure how attached residents of the Danville Region are to their community and to assess the impact that their community attachment has on the ratings of quality of life given by residents in the Danville Region.

Eight variables in the survey were combined to form the community attachment index. For each of these eight questions where respondents answered “yes” or “strongly agree,” one point was scored on the index for a total of up to eight points. People who answered “yes” or “strongly agree” for six or more of the variables also gave higher ratings when asked about the quality of life in the Danville Region. The overall average score was 4.15. This compared to a rating of 4.2 in a national study using this index conducted by AARP.

Civic Participation

Residents of the Danville Region are highly church-oriented. Nearly 60% of respondents said they attend religious services every week or almost every week, and only one out of ten indicated they seldom or never attend religious services. This is significantly higher than national trends measured in the 2008 General Social Survey (GSS). National studies indicate that 40% of adults attend religious services every week or almost every week, and four out of ten seldom or never attend.

Membership in community organizations was one measure of civic participation in this study. The average number of groups to which respondents indicate they belong was 3.5 compared to 3.3 in the national AARP study. Nearly 13% said they do not belong to any organization. By far the most common type of organizational membership was religious organizations. In addition to religious organizations, residents of the Danville Region belong to health and sports clubs, hobby and recreation groups, school support groups, organizations for older adults, and professional and trade organizations.

Compared to the AARP study, Danville residents show a higher percentage of people who belong to

religious organizations, organizations for older adults, and civic organizations, but a lower number who belong to labor unions, professional and trade associations, and neighborhood associations. Community attachment was a strong predictor of membership in religious organizations, older adult organizations, and civic organizations.

While organizational membership is strong, volunteering in community organizations is lower in the Danville Region compared to the national AARP study. Danville residents were less likely to be involved in foundations, fraternal associations, business associations, and housing associations. Overall, they were more likely to be involved in churches and other religious organizations. Further, compared to the Harvard-based Social Benchmark Survey data and the national AARP study, Danville residents were less likely to serve in leadership positions in the organizations to which they belong.

Political Participation

Voter registration and participation in the 2008 presidential election were extremely high and probably reflect the heightened rates of interest in that highly competitive and historic election. However, only one-third of respondents indicated that they have been actively involved in political activities such as petitions, political campaigns, and working with others in their community to solve problems. Nearly fifty percent of the residents in northwestern states, in a survey conducted there by the Northwest Area Foundation, said they worked together with members of their community to solve problems compared to only thirty percent of residents in the Danville Region.

Compared to the Social Benchmark study, Danville residents indicated a slightly higher level of trust in the government to do what is right. However, compared to the Northwest Area Foundation and the AARP studies, residents were less likely to say they always trust the government. One in five said they only trust the government to do what is right some of the time compared to one in three in the Northwest Area Foundation study and one in four of the AARP respondents.

People in the Economy

In light of the economic situation in our country, respondents were asked if they had been affected

by the recent economic downturn. More than fifty percent (51.6%) said they had been negatively affected. A significant number of residents are currently unemployed, temporarily laid off or disabled, and only working part-time. While most of employed residents said they derive meaning from their work and feel a sense of accomplishment, a significant number of those in the work force are working more than 40 hours a week and holding more than one job in order to make ends meet.

Children and Schools

More than three-fourths of respondents said that the Danville Region is a good place to raise children. However, compared to a previous study in a suburban area of Richmond, the rating of the Danville Region as a place to raise children is much lower. Nearly seventy percent of respondents said when a child is ready to leave home, it is better for them to move to some other area.

Compared to the 2006 Commonwealth Education Poll a survey of Virginians sponsored by the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute, residents of the Danville Regional were more likely to say that the schools have “gotten better” in terms of providing the education necessary for getting a job and also for going to college. However, when rating the education provided by schools, residents of Danville gave slightly lower ratings than residents in a previous study conducted in a suburban area of Richmond. They also expressed higher concern for safety in the schools.

Respondents with children were most likely to have their children in the public schools. Respondents whose children attend private schools or are homeschooled were much more critical of the education provided by the public schools.

The biggest challenges affecting children and youth in the Danville Region is the lack of jobs, drugs, and the lack of recreational activities. Respondents showed strong support for quality education to provide a better quality of life for their children and youth.

Health Issues

Overall perception of the health of residents in the Danville Region is lower than either state or national norms. In the 2008 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey sponsored by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, nearly sixty percent of respondents in the Commonwealth of Virginia rated their overall health status as excellent or very good and thirty percent rated it as good. In a recent nationwide study conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, 61 percent of adults 18 years of age and over were in excellent or very good health and 26 percent were in good health. Slightly more than fifty percent of Danville residents rated their overall health status as excellent or very good with another thirty percent rating it as good.

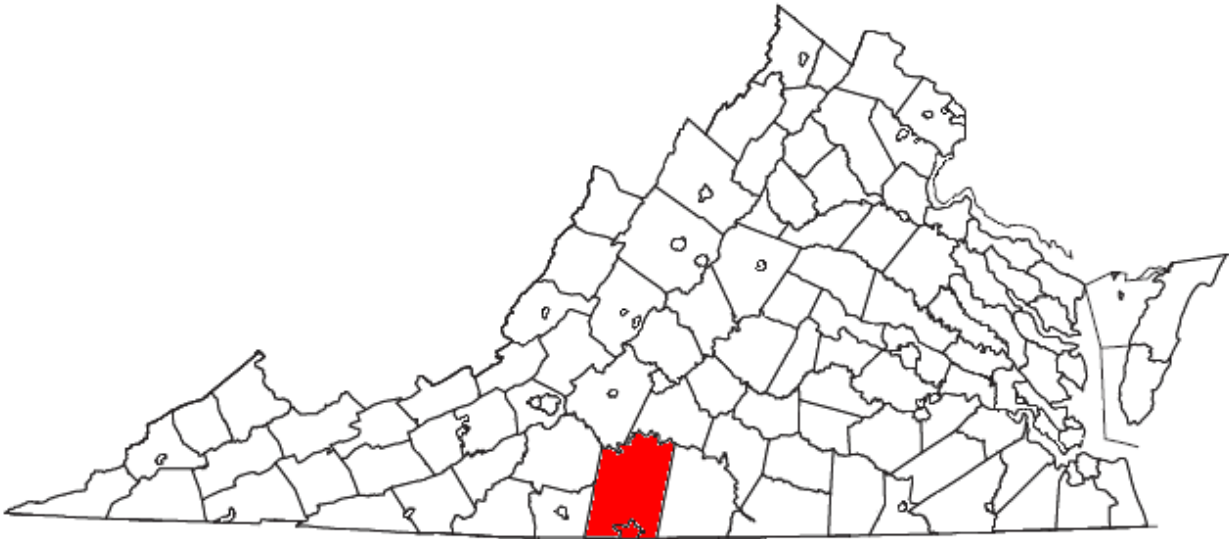
While some residents have difficulty getting healthcare, most indicated they are able to get doctor’s appointments when they need them. Respondents also indicated a need for more activities to keep their children active. Children and youth in the Danville Region spend a significant amount of time each day watching television.

Conclusion

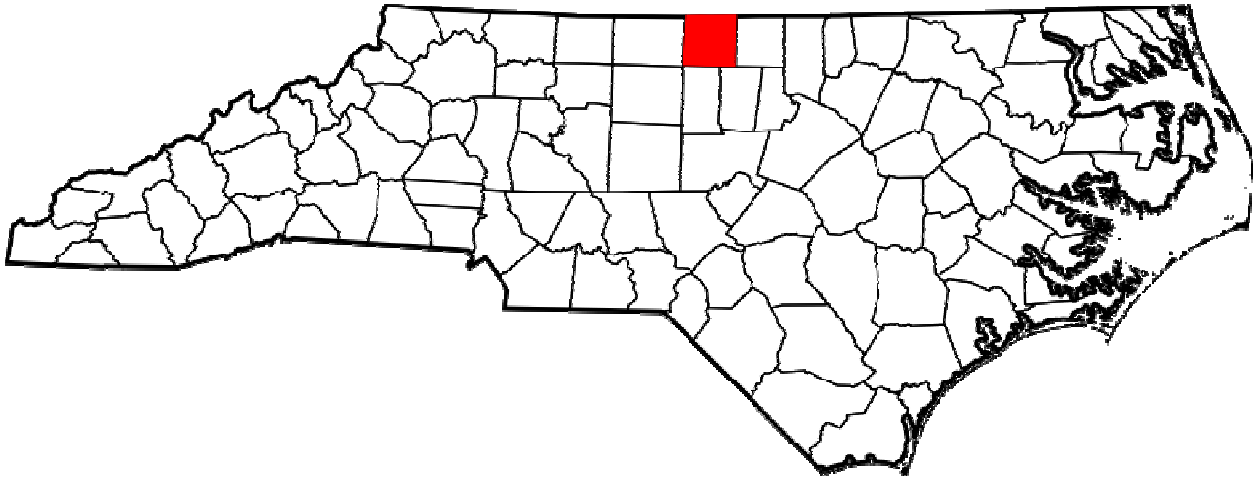
Any assessment of social capital in the Danville Region must recognize that some forms of civic engagement are closely correlated with socio-economic status. In a region suffering from economic setbacks, lack of education and income among residents will have an effect on how involved they are in civic life. Taking these factors into account, overall the level of social capital is fairly strong in terms of community attachment, social connectedness and religious involvement, but in need of development in areas of civic engagement. This survey thus points to areas, subgroups and arenas of activity where the Danville Region may be able to improve the level of civic engagement, the strength of social capital and hence the quality of life for its residents.

Figure I-1: Danville Regional Area

Pittsylvania County and the City of Danville



Caswell County, North Carolina



I. Introduction and Summary of Methods

Purpose

The 2009 Danville Social Capital Survey was conducted by the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Virginia, at the request of the Danville Regional Foundation. This telephone survey of 1,026 randomly selected individuals living in Danville City, Pittsylvania County and Caswell County, NC was conducted in the spring of 2009.

Overall, the purposes of this survey were:

- To measure how people feel about the region and their future in it
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Previous research has shown that a community that has abundant social capital is better able to meet the economic needs of residents, defend the area's political interests, fend off external threats, and protect the quality of life of its residents. Specialists in community development have long recognized that if social capital can be strengthened in a community, then the capacity of that community to provide for its residents is enhanced. For all these reasons, it is important to the long-range plans of the Danville Regional Foundation, and the communities it serves, to better understand the state of social capital in the Danville Region.

One of the key design features of the survey was to use some measures that are comparable with national norms. Where possible, we present data that can be compared to national norms. For other items, we present comparison to data from regional, statewide, or local surveys that have similar purposes and identical questions, but may survey areas that differ from the Danville Region in various ways. Whether or not directly

comparable data are available from elsewhere, the data from this survey form a baseline of information for future comparisons to measure changes in the Danville Region over time.

Background

Throughout this report reference will be made to the term "social capital," an abstract concept developed by the sociologist James Coleman as well as others. Like economic capital, social capital refers to something that is built up over time, often by collective effort, that may bring with it enormous benefit to those who have access to it.⁶

Coleman was referring to lasting systems of social relations—social networks, formal organizations, and tightly knit communal groups that can empower their members in ways that isolated individuals can never be. When we join an organization, get to know the members, take time to go to meetings, and work with others in a group to develop effective relationships, we are building social capital.

When this concept is applied to the consideration of how civic life is structured in a democracy, it focuses attention on a number of familiar types of relationships: communities, neighborhoods, social clubs, and religious affiliations. Putnam has extended this notion by focusing on civic orientations, particularly social trust. As he puts it:

"By 'social capital,' I mean features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. Social capital, in short refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust... [It] is closely related to political participation in the conventional sense, but these terms are not synonymous. Social capital refers to our relations with one another... I use the term 'civic engagement' to refer to people's connections with the life of their communities, not merely with politics."⁷

⁶ Coleman, James S. (1990) *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

⁷ Putnam, Robert D. (1995) *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*. *Journal of Democracy* 6:65-78.

It has been shown by Putnam and others that various communities differ in the amount of social capital that their residents have built up. It is also well known that individuals within any given community differ widely in the social capital they have available to them. It is clear that persons who have more social capital are more likely to be active, engaged, successful, and satisfied with their lives.⁸ Similarly, a community that has a rich social life and abundant social capital is better able to meet the economic and social needs of residents, defend the area's political interests, fend off external threats, and protect the quality of life of its residents. Specialists in community development, whether focused on communities in the United States or in the developing world, have long recognized that if social capital can be strengthened in a community, then the capacity of that community to provide for its residents is enhanced. For all these reasons, it is important to the long-range plans of the Danville Regional Foundation, and to the communities it serves, to better understand the state of social capital in the Danville Region.

In considering the survey results, it is important to keep in mind that some forms of social capital are closely tied to education and economic success. That is, education and income are highly predictive of organizational memberships, volunteering, and charitable giving.⁹ It is also well known from the research literature that socioeconomic status is strongly predictive of political participation.¹⁰ But social capital is not just for the elite and the well-off. The data suggests that several forms of commitment cut across socioeconomic categories in important ways and work to bring large segments of society, including the less privileged, into wider social contacts. Foremost among these is religious

commitment: people who often attend religious services or show other strong religious behavior are much more likely to be socially involved, communally attached, to join organizations, and to volunteer.

A second source of broader social commitments is community attachment, which is nearly as common among persons of little means as it is among those in high-income suburbs. People with strong community attachment have higher levels of group membership, enhanced levels of social trust and trust in government, are more likely to volunteer, and are more politically involved.¹¹ Both of these factors are important in understanding the patterns of social capital in an area like the Danville Region, where average levels of income and education are not as high as in some other parts of Virginia.

Survey Design

The Danville survey questionnaire deals with a large number of specific topics related to these broader concerns. Respondents were asked about:

Overall quality of life in the Danville Region

- Quality of life five years ago
- Expected quality five years from now
- Quality of life compared to other communities

Community Attachment

- Respondent's sense of community attachment
- Residents' perceived impact in making the community a better place to live
- Safety at home, in their neighborhood, in shopping areas, and in the schools

Civic Participation

- Attendance at religious services
- Organization membership
- Volunteering and giving
- Acquisition of civic skills

⁸ Andrew Kochera, Audrey Straight, and Thomas M. Guterbock (2005). *Beyond 50.05: A Report to the Nation on Livable Communities—Creating Environments for Successful Aging*. Washington, DC: AARP.

⁹ Verba, Sidney; Schlozman, Kay Lehman; and Brady, Henry E. (1995). *Voice and Equality*. Massachusetts: Harvard College

¹⁰ Verba, Sidney and Norman H. Nie. (1972). *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*. New York: Harper and Row.

¹¹ Guterbock, Thomas M. and John Fries (1997). *Maintaining America's Social Fabric: The AARP Survey of Civic Involvement*.

Political Participation

- Attendance at public meetings
- Voter registration and voter frequency
- Trust in government

People in the Economy

- Effect of economic downturn on the labor force
- Willingness to learn new skills and obtain training
- Current job situation, work rewards and commitment

Children and Schools

- Rating the Danville Region as a place to raise children
- Evaluation of schools in the Danville Region
- Biggest challenges facing children and youth in Danville

Health Issues

- Respondent's overall health
- Access to healthcare
- Perceptions of children's physical activities

Each section of this report provides a descriptive summary and interpretation of the results. Important significant differences among subgroups in the population are reported. The margin of error for the survey is ± 2.4 percentage points.

The complete 2009 interview script is found in Appendix A of this report. Appendix B details the survey and sampling methodology, Appendix C provides crosstabulations and satisfaction mean ratings by the demographic variables, and Appendix D includes the frequency distributions for all substantive questions. Appendix E presents the open-ended responses by respondents.

County, Regional, State, and National Comparisons

Some attempt was made in the design of this study and the development of the questionnaire to use comparable measures with other county, regional, state, and national studies. However, there is no

single source of information to use in comparing these survey results with broader results.

The following studies were some of the studies utilized in making comparisons to the 2009 Danville Social Capital survey results:

Maintaining America's Social Fabric: The AARP Survey of Civic Involvement (1997) conducted by Thomas M. Guterbock

Social Capital Benchmark Study (1995) conducted by Robert Putnam

Northwest Area Foundation Horizons Social Capital Survey (2005) conducted by the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory

Commonwealth Education Poll (2006) conducted by the VCU Center for Public Service/Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory for the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute

The General Social Survey conducted by NORC, A Social Science Research Center at the University of Chicago, since 1972

Although we are not able to compare each item in this study to a regional or national benchmark, we have a sufficient basis of comparison to make some overall assessments about social capital and community attachment in the Danville Region.

Subgroup Analysis

The responses were broken out and analyzed by several demographic categories. In discussing the results, we report those instances in which relevant *statistically significant* differences were found among demographic subgroups, such as, for example, between women and men, or between residents of different parts of the Danville Region. (Statistically significant differences are those that probably did not result merely from sampling variability, but instead reflect real differences within the population.¹²)

The demographic variables listed below were those principally used in our subgroup analysis. In some cases, categories were combined to facilitate comparison.

¹² Throughout this report, only those differences that reached statistical significance to the degree of $p < .05$ (a 95% level of confidence) will be discussed.

- Age. Age was divided into five categories for most analyses: 18-25, 26-37, 38-49, 50-64, and over 64.
- Education level. Comparisons were made between persons with some high school, high school graduates, some college, four-year degrees, some graduate work, and professional and doctorate degrees.
- Marital status. Respondents presently married were compared with those in other categories (separated, divorced, widowed, and never married).
- Household income. Four categories of self-reported annual household incomes were compared: Less than \$30,000; \$30,000 - \$49,999; \$50,000 - \$69,999; and more than \$70,000.
- Homeowner status. We also compared homeowners with renters.
- Gender. Women were compared with men.
- Race/ethnicity. Whites, Blacks, and “others” were compared. Hispanic respondents were also compared with non-Hispanic respondents. Two separate questions in the interview ask about race and ethnicity. Respondents are first asked if they consider themselves to be “of Hispanic origin.” They are then asked to say what category of race “best describes you,” using a list that does not include Hispanic as a race. This follows the definition in the U.S. Census, which considers Hispanic to be an ethnic category and makes clear that Hispanics can be of any race. However, many Hispanic respondents take a different view and when asked to state their “race” insist that they are Hispanic (or Latino). These respondents are classified in our survey as “other race” on the race question. As a result, the great majority of those labeled “other race” in the report are actually self-identified Hispanics.

In the graphs in this report that display race and ethnicity jointly, the “Hispanic” bar is based on the separate question about Hispanic origin, and this is displayed alongside the several categories from the race questions, thus including again many of the same Hispanic respondents categorized as “other” on race. But others who declared Hispanic origin are

included with Whites, Blacks or Asians based on their responses to the “race” question.

Summary of Methods

This survey was conducted by telephone in order to ensure the broadest possible representation of the region. The survey used a triple-frame sample design, combining a landline-based Random Digit Dial (RDD) sample, a sample of directory-listed landline households, and an RDD sample of cellphone numbers from the region. Research suggests that telephone surveys based on landline sampling frames have shown a strong decline in the number of respondents from the youngest age group. Results also have shown that more minorities, low-income groups, renters, never-married residents, and respondents with low levels of education are reached via cell-phone samples than via traditional RDD samples, which contact only households that have landline phone service. Augmenting the RDD and listed samples with cell-phone respondents allows for a better representation of the population in the targeted region.

For most households, CSR employed a random-digit dialing [RDD] method that ensures that all households in the region with landline telephones were equally likely to be selected for interviews; for most others we utilized the “electronic white pages,” a purchased sample of directory-listed households in the region. According to respondents, about 16.2 percent of calls in the RDD sample were to unlisted numbers; the majority of these (82.3%) had chosen an unlisted number, as opposed to other unlisted households whose number had simply not yet appeared in the latest phone book. Finally, 34% of the respondents were contacted via cell-phone.

We conducted all interviews from CSR's Computer-Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) laboratory in Charlottesville, Virginia. Production interviews were conducted from April 2 through April 27, 2009. The interviewing staff was composed of carefully trained personnel, most of whom had prior experience as CSR interviewers in similar studies. A total of 24,695 dialing attempts were made in the course of the survey, involving a sample of 7,063 different attempted phone numbers. All numbers were attempted at least once, but not all were working numbers and not all working numbers were those of residences located

within the study area. At least eight attempts were made before a working number was inactivated, and a portion of the initial refusals were contacted again after no less than three days. CSR completed a total of 1,026 interviews for a final response rate estimated at 22.7 percent of the number of qualified households in the original sample. The interview took an average of 20.6 minutes to complete.¹³

Based on 1,026 respondents, the survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points. This estimate of the margin of error takes into account the “design effect” associated with post-stratification weighting of the data (See Appendix B). This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size drawn from Danville City, Pittsylvania County, and Caswell County, the percentage results obtained for each question in each sample would fall in a range of ± 3.7 percent of what would have been obtained if every household in the this area with a working telephone (landline and cell-phone) had been interviewed. Larger sampling errors are present when analyzing subgroups of the sample and for questions asked of fewer respondents.

The collected survey responses were weighted before analysis to reflect the estimated distribution of phone service types in the region (that is, the percentages of landline-only households, cell-phone-only households, and those with both types of phone service), and the percentage of unlisted telephones among all those reached via landline was adjusted by weighting to match the percent unlisted in the RDD sample. The weighting also adjusted for respondent gender, homeownership, and percent of African-Americans, as reflected in the 2007 American Community Survey data for the region available from the U.S. Census Bureau. Details on this ‘post-stratification’ weighting are provided in Appendix B.

When comparing the results, T-tests were used to assess the difference in responses between demographic groups. Further details on the sample

and methodology may be found in Appendix B of this report.

All the T-tests performed this year were completed using SPSS Complex Samples, an add-on module for SPSS for Windows®, which is used by CSR for data analysis purposes. This module provides more statistical precision with respect to inferences for a population by incorporating the sample design into survey analysis. It also makes it possible to take into account the design effect, a by-product of post stratification weighting, when conducting the statistical tests. Consequently, some differences in means ratings could be found statistically insignificant that would not be so identified without the module.

Throughout the report, percentages may not total exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Demographic Profile

Respondents are asked some questions about themselves and their households to allow for analysis of the data by personal and social characteristics.

These data were weighted by gender and homeownership to more closely represent the population of the Danville Region. The weighting of the data also took into account our estimates of the percentages of the County’s adult telephone population that are served by cell-phone only, landline only, and by both types of phones. For more about the weighting procedure, see the Methodology Report in Appendix B.

Overall, 12.6 percent of the completed surveys consisted of cell-phone respondents and 87.4 percent consisted of land-line respondents. After weighting, 26.5 percent of the respondents were reached via cell-phone, and 12 percent were adults who have cell-phone service only. In general, this strategy of augmenting the traditional RDD samples with cell-phone samples improves the overall distribution of the completed surveys across several demographic variables.

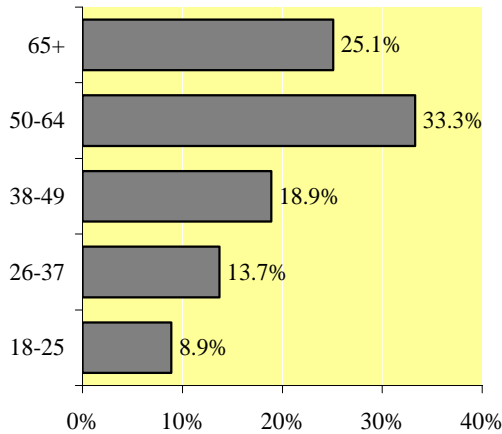
In the Danville Metropolitan Statistical Area, women slightly outnumber men (52.7% to 47.3%).¹⁴ Once the Danville data were weighted by gender and the other weighting factors, women accounted for 53.3 percent of respondents.

¹³ Response Rate 3 given above includes only completions. Response Rate 4 also includes partials and was 23.1% for this survey. The “completion time” indicates the time that it took the interviewer to complete the interview after selection of a qualified respondent.

¹⁴ American Community Survey, 2007 Census Bureau.

With regards to age, one-fourth (25.1%) of the sample were over 64; one-third (33.3%) were between 50 and 64; 18.9% were 38-49; 13.7% were 26-37; and 8.9% were 18-26. See Figure I-1. Compared to the census data, this sample slightly over-represents the over 64 age category and the 18-26 age category. The over-representation in the younger age category is quite possibly the result of reaching respondents by cell phone.

Figure I-1: Age of Respondents



Five out of ten respondents were married (50.1%), 18.9 percent were divorced or separated, 11.6 percent were widowed, and 19.3 percent were never married. According to the American Community Survey, divorced, separated, and never married are somewhat under-represented in this sample.

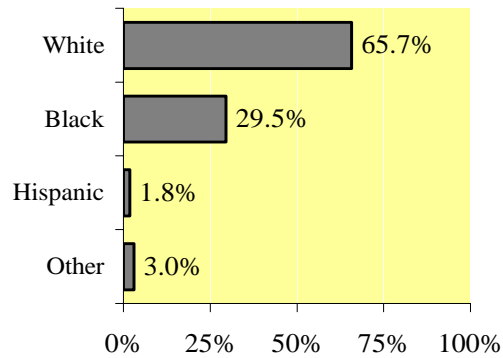
Nearly one-third (29.9%) of respondents had children under the age of 18 living in their home. Of those, 36.5 percent had children under the age of five, 64.7 percent had children between the ages of five and twelve, and 98.5 percent had teens from age thirteen to seventeen.

Most of the households with children send their children to public schools (87.1%). Two out of ten (20.4%) send their children to private schools. About one out of ten (9.5%) currently home-schools their children.

Respondents were asked (in separate questions) what race they considered themselves to be, and whether they considered themselves to be Hispanic. Almost two-thirds of the sample (65.7%) identified themselves as white, 29.5 percent black, 4.8 percent said they were something else (i.e., Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, etc.) or gave their race as

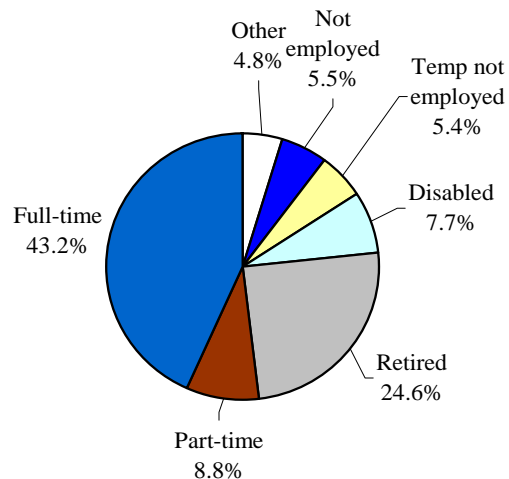
“Hispanic” or “Latino.” Not included in this breakdown are the 4.8 percent of our sample who refused to answer the question about race. See Figure I-2. These numbers are well matched to the census statistics.

Figure I-2: Race of Respondents



Only fifty-two percent of respondents indicated they are working full or part-time; 43.2 percent were working full-time and an additional 8.8 percent were working part-time. A significant number of respondents were retired (24.6%). Those not employed comprised 7.7 permanently disabled, 5.4 percent temporarily laid off or disabled, 5.5 percent currently unemployed, 2.3 percent homemakers, 2 percent students, and less than 1 percent who gave “other” as their response.

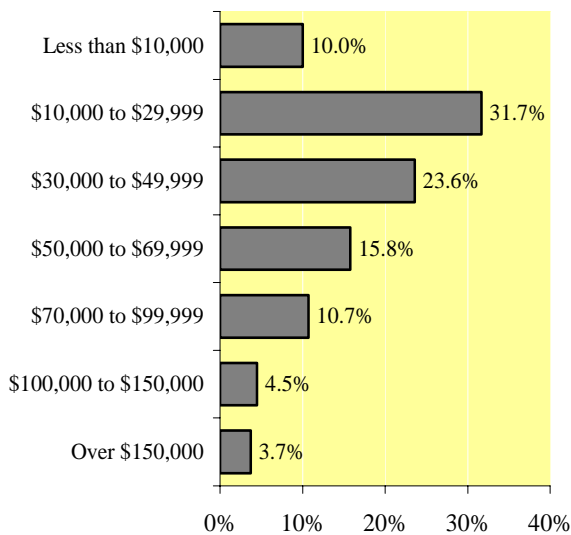
Figure I-3: Employment



The median annual household income for our sample was between \$30,000 and \$50,000. Over forty percent (41.7%) of the sample reported household incomes under \$30,000, 23.6 percent fell into the \$30,000 to \$49,999 range, 15.8 percent fell into the \$50,000 to \$69,999 range,

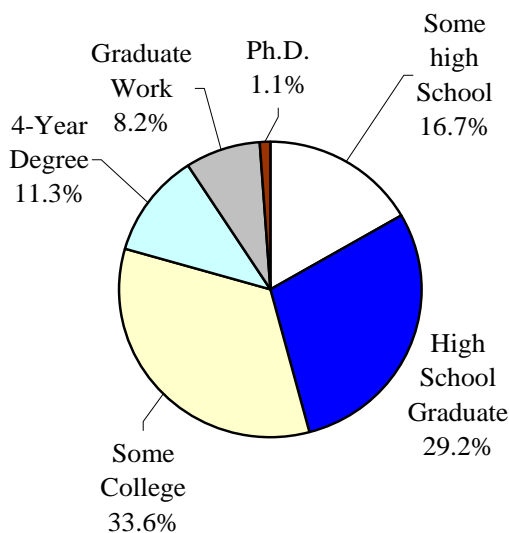
10.7 percent fell in the \$70,000 to \$99,999 range, and 9.2 percent reported incomes over \$100,000.

Figure I-4: Household Income



With respect to education, respondents were asked to report their highest level of academic achievement. As is illustrated in Figure I-5, 16.7 did not finish high school and 29.2 percent were high school graduates. Slightly more than one-third (33.6%) had attended some college or completed a two year degree. Only 11.3 percent had a four year degree. Less than ten percent (9.3%) had done some graduate work or earned a Ph.D. or some other advanced degree.

Figure I-5: Educational Level

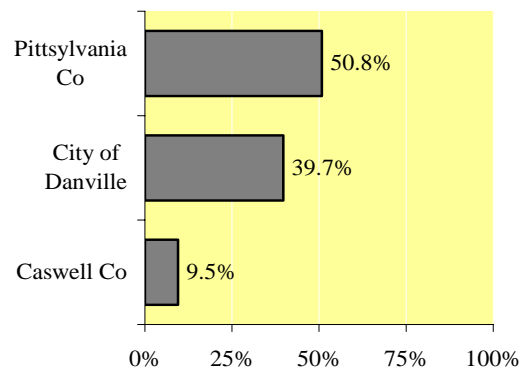


Slightly more than one percent (1.2%) of the respondents have lived in the Danville Region less

than one year, 5.6 percent have lived in the area 1 to 5 years, 19.3 percent have lived in the County 6 to 19 years, and 74.1 percent reported living in the County twenty years or more.

Fifty (50.8%) percent of the respondents were residents of Pittsylvania County. Nearly forty (39.7%) percent were residents of Danville City, and 9.5% of the respondents were residents of Caswell County, North Carolina.

Figure I-6: Geographic Distribution



Nearly one-third (31.4%) of the respondents described the type of community in which they live as being an urban area or a small city. One-third (32.1%) of the respondents described the area in which they live as being “out in the county.” The remaining respondents described their community as “suburban” (12%), a “small town” (15.4%), or a “rural village” (9%).

Nearly two-thirds (62.2%) of the respondents who live in Danville City described it as being an urban area or small city. Of those who live in Pittsylvania County, 62 percent described the area in which they live as being “out in the country” or a “rural village.” Those who live in Caswell County, NC, were more likely (78.9%) to describe the area in which they live as being “out in the country” or a “rural village.”

Most of the respondents live in a home that they own (69.3%), whereas 28 percent rent and 2.7 percent have some other arrangement, such as living with their parents. Most respondents live in single-family homes (80.8%), 2.7 percent live in duplexes or townhouses, and 8.1 percent live in apartments or condominiums. About 8.4 percent of respondents live in some other type of structure, such as a mobile home or trailer.

II. Quality of Life in the Danville Region

Overall Impression

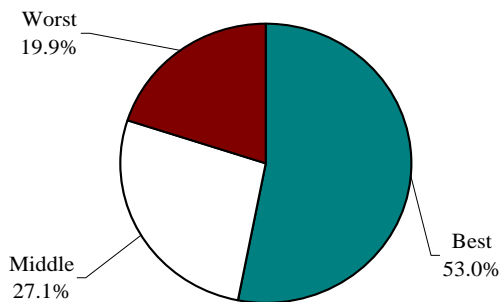
Respondents were asked about their overall impressions of the quality of life in the Danville Region.

“Please imagine a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents the worst possible community in which to live, and 10 represents the best possible community. Where on that scale would you rate Danville as a place to live?”

Residents of the Danville Region gave a mean rating of 7.30. This rating suggests that residents have a high regard for the quality of life in the region. However, compared to similar studies in other communities in the Commonwealth of Virginia, this rating is somewhat lower. The mean rating of overall quality of life in Albemarle County (2008) was 8.01, in Spotsylvania County (2007) 7.39, and in Bedford County (2001) 7.80. However, in Prince William County (2009) the rating was 7.30, the same as in the Danville Region.

Figure II-1 illustrates the distribution of ratings provided by respondents. The ratings were divided into three categories: “Best” includes ratings from 10 through 8, “Middle” is 7 and 6, and “Worst” is 5 through 1. More than one-half (53%) felt the best about the overall quality of life in the Danville Region, whereas 27.1 percent were in the middle, and 19.9 percent felt the worst.

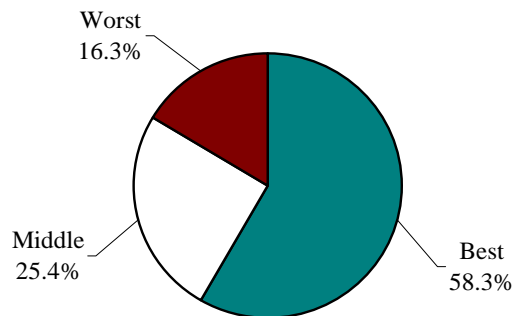
Figure II-1: Overall Quality of Life Ratings



Quality of Life over Time

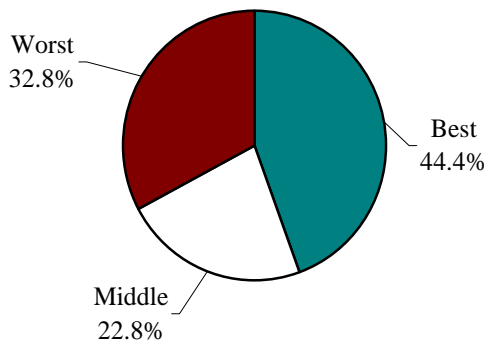
Residents who have lived in the Danville Region for over five years were asked to rate, on a scale of 1-10, where Danville stood five years ago. On this scale, 1 represents the worst possible community to live in and 10 the best. The comparative mean rating for quality of life five years ago is 7.55. Figure II-2 presents the results for this item with the same classification system as in Figure II-1, where “Best” was defined as those ratings from 8-10, “Middle” was 6-7, and “Worst” was 1-5.

Figure II-2: Overall Quality of Life Five Years Ago



In addition, residents were asked, on a scale of 1-10, where they think the area where they live will stand five years from now. As in the previous two items, 1 represents the worst possible community to live in and 10 the best. The rating for this item is 6.69, which means that residents feel that the quality of life will be slightly less in the future. Figure II-3 presents the results for this item with the same classification system as in Figure II-2, where “Best” was defined as those ratings from 8-10, “Middle” was 6-7, and “Worst” was 1-5.

Figure II-3: Overall Quality of Life Five Years from Now

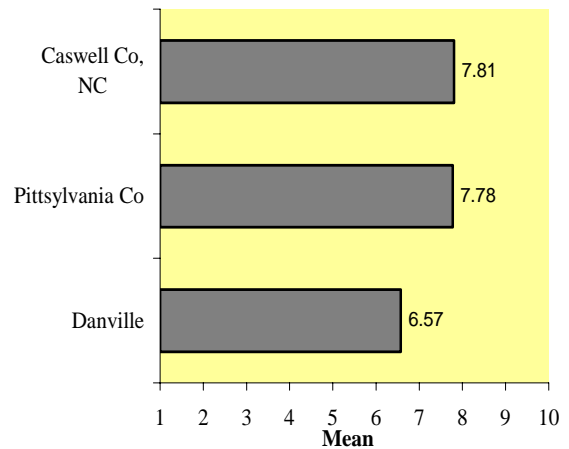


Long-time residents appear to be concerned about the overall quality of life in the future compared to the quality of life five years ago.

Finally, residents were asked to compare the area where they live as a place to live compared to other counties or cities where they have lived. More than one-fourth of the residents of the Danville Region indicated they have always lived in this area and did not make this comparison. Of those who did, more than three-fourths (77.9%) rated the Danville area as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good” compared to other areas where they have lived. Less than one-fourth (22.1%) rated the area as “only fair” or “poor” compared to others where they have lived.

The 7.30 satisfaction mean rating for quality of life in the Danville Region is an indication of the high regard the residents have for the quality of life in the Danville Region. Residents of Caswell County and Pittsylvania County rated the quality of life in their communities on average higher than those who live in Danville City (mean of 7.81 and 7.78 compared to 6.57).

Figure II-4: Mean Overall Quality of Life Ratings by Area



Demographic Summary

Residents with lower levels of education were more likely to give the County a lower rating than those with higher levels of education.

Age was positively related to quality of life ratings. Those over 64 gave significantly higher ratings than other age groups. Marital status was also positively related to the quality of life ratings. Married and widowed respondents gave higher ratings than those who have never married.

Residents who said they live out in the country gave higher quality of life ratings than those who live in the city or in suburban areas around the city. Those who have lived in the Danville Region for more than 20 years rated the past, current, and future quality of life higher than those who have been residents for less than two years.

Retired residents gave higher quality of life ratings; however, those working full-time were more likely to say the quality of life in the Danville Region is better compared to other regions.

See Appendix C for a more complete listing of demographic differences on these items.

III. Community Attachment

Community Attachment

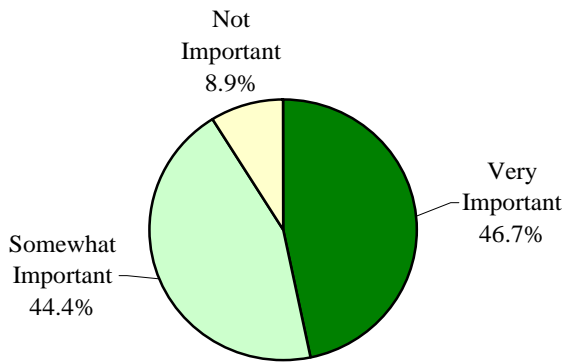
One of the main objectives of this survey is to measure people’s attachment to their community. Community attachment is a strong predictor of social capital and an important measure because it is not as closely tied to socioeconomic status as other predictors. Respondents were asked several questions about their place in the community in which they live. This chapter reports the general level of community attachment residents indicated in their responses to these questions.

The first community attachment question inquires:

“How important is it to you to feel a part of the community?”

Figure III-1 illustrates the response to this question. Almost one-half (46.7%) of the residents said it is “very important” to feel a part of the community. Another 44.4 percent said it is “somewhat important. Only 8.9% of the residents said it is “not at all important” to feel a part of the community.

Figure III-1: Important to Feel a Part of the Community

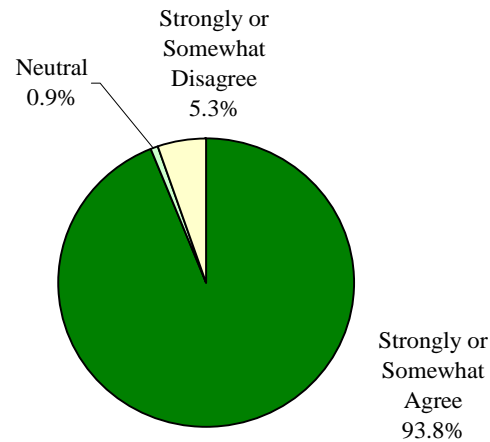


Respondents were also asked how often they feel a sense of belonging or membership in the community. More than one-half (58%) of residents said they “always” feel a sense of belonging in the community in which they live or “most of the time” they feel a sense of belonging. One-fourth of the residents (26.1%) said they “sometimes” feel a sense of belonging while 15.9% “rarely” or “never” feel they belong to the community.

Residents were asked to indicate to what degree they agree or disagree with the following

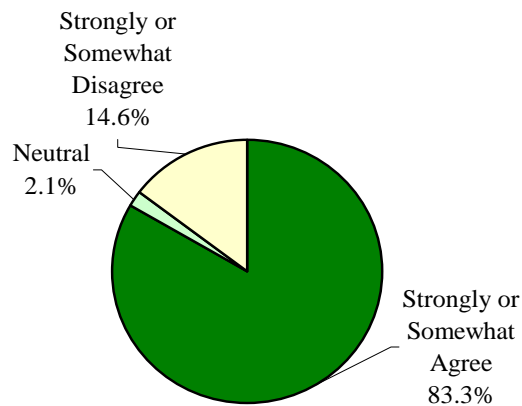
statements about the community or the area where they live: “I feel at home in the area where I live;” “I feel I have a lot in common with the people who live in this community;” and “It is very important to me to live in this particular area.”

Figure III-2: Feel at Home Where I Live



More than ninety percent (93.8%) of respondents “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” they feel at home where they live, and only 5.3% “strongly disagree” or “somewhat disagree.”

Figure III-3: Have a Lot in Common with People Who Live in this Community

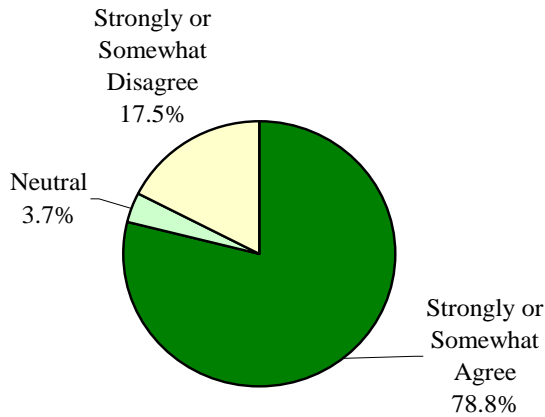


More than eighty percent (83.3%) of respondents said they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that they have a lot in common with people who live in their community and 14.6% said they “strongly disagree” or “somewhat disagree.”

Further, residents responded to the statement, “It is very important to me to live in this particular area.” More than two-thirds (78.8%) said they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with this

statement, and 17.5% said they “strongly disagree” or “somewhat disagree.”

Figure III-4: Feel it is Important to Live in this Particular Area

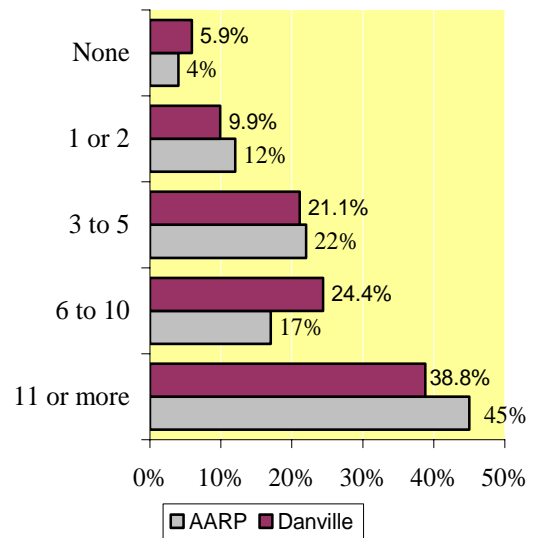


People often have a stronger sense of belonging in their community because they have established relationships with others who live in the community. Nearly two-thirds (63.2%) of the residents in the Danville Region said they have 6 or more neighbors they know on a first-name basis. Nearly one-third (31%) of the residents said they have one to five neighbors they know on a first-name basis. Only 5.9% said they do not have any neighbors they know on a first-name basis.

Knowing your neighbors is an indication of the degree to which people are connected to others in their community. Figure III-5 shows how well Danville compares to a national study done for AARP. Compared to respondents in a national study done for AARP, the percentage of Danville residents who know 6-10 neighbors was significantly higher but the percentage of residents who know 11 or more neighbors was much lower.

Danville residents appear to be somewhat connected in their communities, but there may be a certain threshold on the extent of that connectedness.

Figure III-5: Neighbors You Know



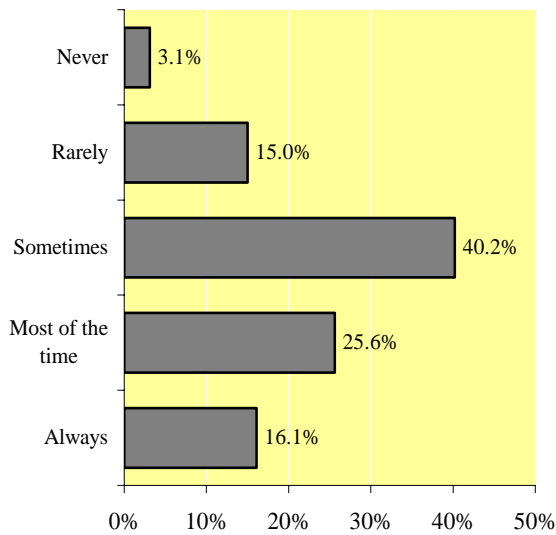
Having relatives who live close by also helps people feel a sense of belonging in their community. Three-fourths (77%) of residents in the Danville Region said they have close relatives within a fifteen minute drive of where they live, and 42.4% said they have close relatives within walking distance of where they live.

A very simple and direct indicator of community attachment can be captured by asking people if they would like to continue living in their community in the near future. More than two-thirds (76.6%) of the residents of the Danville Region said they would like to be living there five years from now. In response to a separate question, 78.7% said they *expect* to be living in the Danville Region five years from now.

Efficacy and Perceptions of Community

Residents were asked to rate their perceptions of the appearance of their community and what impact they have in making their community a better place to live. More than forty percent (41.7%) feel that they “always” or “most of the time” have an impact in making their community a better place to live. Another forty percent (40.2%) said they “sometimes” have an impact in making their community a better place to live. Less than twenty percent (18.1%) said they “rarely” or “never” have this type of impact.

Figure III-6: Impact in Making the “Community a Better Place to Live



In addition to asking residents whether they have an impact on making their community a better place to live, they were also asked to what degree they agree or disagree with the statements, “I care about what others in my community think of my actions” and “My neighborhood is being well kept up.”

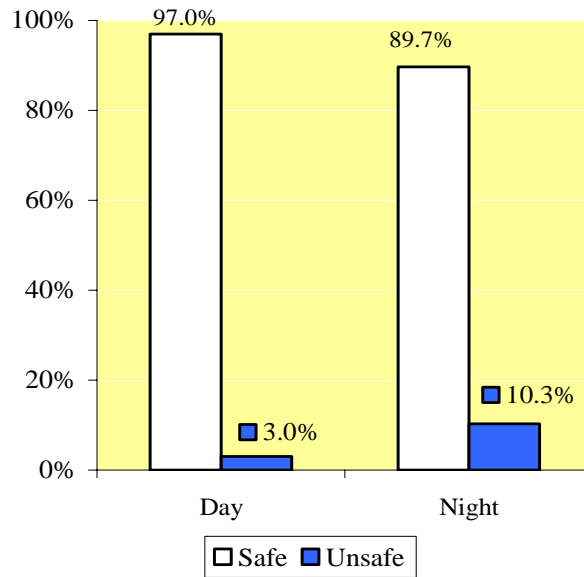
More than eighty percent (84.9%) said they care what others think of their actions, and 88.4% said they think their neighborhood is being well kept up.

Crime and Personal Safety in the Community

Feeling safe in the community is another factor in helping people maintain a sense of belonging in the community. Respondents were asked to describe how safe they felt in their home, in their neighborhood during the day and during the night, in shopping areas during the day and during the night, and in the schools in their community.

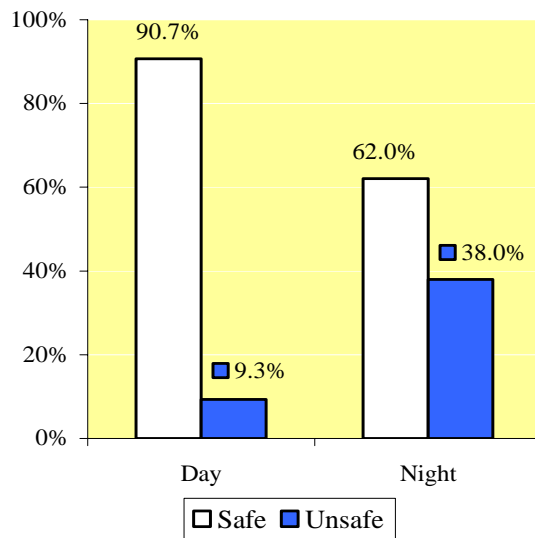
Overall, people indicated they feel safe in their neighborhoods. Only three percent (3%) indicated they felt “unsafe” during the day and 10.3% felt “unsafe” at night.

Figure III-7: Safety in the Neighborhood



In the shopping areas, people said they do not feel as safe during the night. Thirty-eight percent (38%) said they feel “unsafe” in shopping areas at night. In their homes, people indicated they feel safe. Only 1.6% said they feel “unsafe” at home.

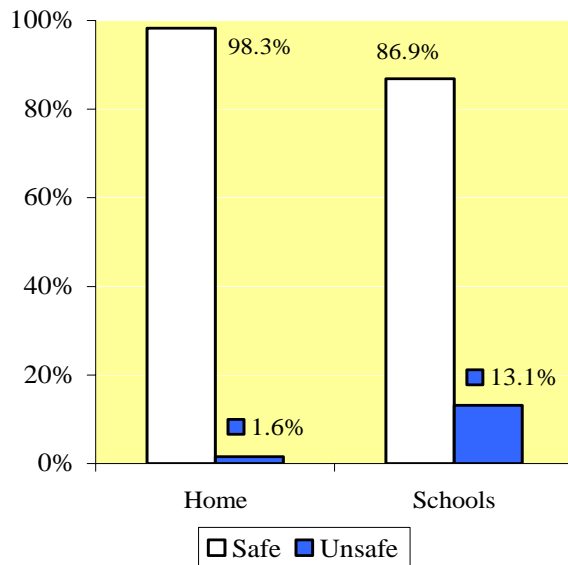
Figure III-8: Safety in Shopping Areas



When asked about safety in the schools, 13.1% said they think schools are “unsafe” for students. The school safety question was asked of all residents, regardless of whether or not they have children in the schools.

Compared to a previous study conducted in a suburban area of Richmond¹⁰, residents of the Danville Region show a higher concern for school safety. Danville respondents were three times more likely to say the schools are “unsafe” or “very unsafe” than residents in the other study.

Figure III-9: Safety at Home and in Schools



Impact on Quality of Life

Research suggests that how well a resident is attached to their community has a significant impact on their perceptions of the quality of life within the community. An index was created to measure levels of community attachment¹¹ and the index scores were used to assess the impact that community attachment has on the ratings of

¹⁰ Ellis, James M.; Diop, Abdoulaye; Guterbock, Thomas M.; Kim, Young; and Rexrode, Deborah. (2008). *Chesterfield County Citizen Satisfaction Survey*.

¹¹ For more on the concept of community attachment and its measurement, see Chavis, David M. and Wandersman, Abraham. (1990). “Sense of Community in the Urban Environment: A Catalyst for Participation and Community Development.” *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 18:1.

quality of life given by residents in the Danville Region. Community attachment can be thought of as a set of positive sentiments or orientations toward one’s area of residence, and also as a set of social relationships that attach a person to a local network of neighbors and/or kin. Our index incorporates both these dimensions of the community attachment concept.

The community attachment index consists of the following items:

- DRIVEREL – Do you have any close relatives who live within 15 minutes drive of your home?
- CLOSEREL – Do you have any close relatives who live within walking distance of your home?
- FEELPART – How important is it to you to feel a part of the community?
- BELONG – How often do you feel a sense of belonging or membership in your community?
- ATHOME – How much do you agree with the statement, “I feel at home in the area where I live?”
- COMMON – How much do you agree with the statement, “I feel I have a lot in common with the people who live in this community?”
- ACTIONS – How much do you agree with the statements, “I care about what others in my community think of my actions?”
- IMPLIVE – How much do you agree with the statement, “It is very important to me to live in this particular area?”

A factor analysis was conducted on these variables to determine how well they relate to one another. These eight variables formed one component so a community attachment index was computed by combining them into one variable. Answers to the questions above were taken to construct an overall index of community attachment for respondents. The index utilized a simple point system. Respondents were given one point if they have relatives who live within fifteen minutes driving distance; one point if they have relatives within walking distance; one point if they said they feel a part of the community; one point if they feel a

sense of belonging; one point if they feel at home in the area where they live; one point if they feel they have a lot in common with people; one point if they care what others think of their actions; and one point if it is important for them to live in this particular area. The scale varies from a minimum of zero to a maximum of eight points with more than half (56.6%) of the sample scoring four points or higher on the scale. The mean score was 4.15 compared to 4.2 in a national study conducted by AARP using this index.¹² The average level of community attachment in the Danville Region is at parity with the national average.

Using the community attachment index as an independent variable, an analysis was conducted on the impact of community attachment on the quality of life, rating of the community five years ago, rating of the community in the future, and rating of the community as a place to live compared to other counties or cities.

Higher levels of community attachment were positively related to residents' perception of quality of life within the Danville Region. People with scores of six or more on the community attachment index gave a mean of quality of life rating of 8 on a scale of 1 to 10 compared to a rating of 5 for people with no community attachment. The more attached residents are to their communities and neighborhoods, the higher their ratings of the quality of life.

Ratings of the community five years ago, expectations of how the community will be five years from now, and the comparison of Danville with other places were also directly impacted by community attachment. Higher levels of community attachment increased the rating people gave for quality of life in the Danville Region.

Demographic differences in community attachment indicators

Residents of Pittsylvania County and Caswell County were more likely than residents of Danville City to say they know their neighbors and have relatives who live close by. They were also more likely to say they expect to be living here five years from now.

Residents of Pittsylvania County and Caswell County were more likely than residents of Danville to say they feel at home and have a lot in common with people in their neighborhood. They also were more likely to perceive their neighborhoods as being well kept.

One hundred percent of respondents from Caswell County said they feel safe in their neighborhood during the day and nearly 100 percent feel safe in their neighborhood during the night. Residents of Pittsylvania County were more likely than Danville residents to feel safe in shopping areas.

Race was a significant factor in the level of community attachment. White residents know their neighbors and would like to be living in the Danville Region in five years. Black residents said they have close relatives and have been affected more by the economic downturn. White residents report a stronger sense of belonging in the community than black residents. Whites were more likely to say they feel safe in their neighborhood at night, but blacks were more likely to say the schools are safe for the students.

Education and income were positively related to residents feeling a sense of belonging in the community. However, those with less education and income have close relatives within walking distance who could provide support when needed. They were also affected more by the economic downturn. Education and income are also positively related to the safety people feel in their neighborhood, shopping areas, and schools.

Age and marital status are positively related to community attachment. Married residents and those over the age of 50 know their neighbors. They would also like to be living in the Danville Region five years from now and expect to do so. Older residents are more likely to say they have an impact in making their community a better place to live and feel a sense of belonging in their community. Younger residents under the age of 35 said they feel safe in their neighborhoods and shopping areas during the day.

Residents who have lived in the community for 20 or more years were more likely to know their neighbors and have relatives who live nearby. Length of residence was positively related to feelings of commonality with people in the community and feeling a sense of belonging in the community. Long-time residents were more likely

¹² Guterbock, Thomas M. (1997). *AARP: Maintaining America's Social Fabric: The AARP Survey of Civic Involvement*.

to say they care what others think of their actions and that it is important to live in this particular area.

Residents who live out in the country are more likely to know their neighbors and expect to be living there five years from now. They feel they have a lot in common with people and think it is important to live in this particular area. Homeowners are also more attached to their community. Retirees were also more attached to their communities, feel a sense of belonging in the community, and think it is important to live in this particular area.

See Appendix C for a more complete listing of demographic differences on these items.

IV. Civic Participation

Introduction

Social capital can be both a “public good” and a “private good.”¹³ Individuals participate in civic and community organizations for a combination of reasons. Volunteering and participating in community organizations are ways for people to develop connections with other people of “like minds,” to engage in social activities with others, and to form networks that link individuals in a community. This is the “private good” aspect of participating in civic organizations. At the same time, by volunteering in civic organizations, people engage in activities that benefit the community. For example, by belonging to the Lions Club, members are involved in fund-raising activities to help support a cause such as fighting a disease. This is the “public good” of organizational involvement. Examining the extent to which people engage in volunteer organizations can help to measure social capital within the community and the potential for both individual and collective benefits from these civic engagements.

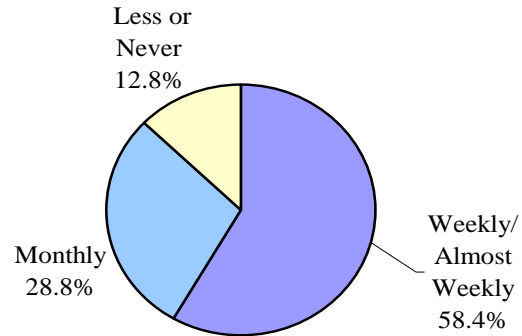
Religious Activities

Respondents were asked:

“Not including weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?”

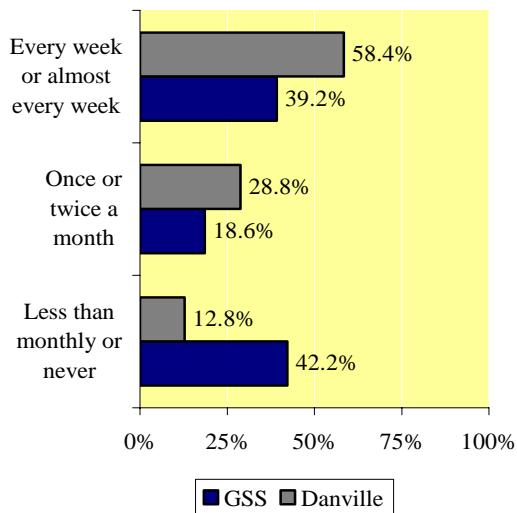
More than fifty percent (58.4%) said they attend religious services “every week” or “almost every week.” Less than one-third (28.8%) said they attend “once or twice a month” or only “a few times per year.” One out of ten (12.8%) indicated they attend religious services less than that or “never.”

Figure IV-1: Religious Service Attendance



Compared to the 2008 General Social Survey (GSS), a national survey of social trends, Danville residents are significantly more religious. In the 2008 GSS, slightly more than one-third of the respondents (39.2%) said they attend religious services “every week” or “almost every week.” Only 18.6 percent said they attend religious services “once or twice a month” or only “a few times per year.” Four out of ten (42.2%) said they attend religious services less than monthly or “never.”

Figure IV-2: Religious Service Attendance Comparison



When asked, “In the last 12 months, have you been involved in any activities related to religious spiritual, or church-sponsored groups (such as a homeless shelter, food bank, church committee, choir, or Bible study group)?” 58 percent said “yes” and 42 percent said “no.”

¹³ Putnam, Robert D. (1995) *Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital.* *Journal of Democracy* 6:65-78.

Organization Membership

Respondents were given a list of types of organizations and asked whether they have been a member of any of these types of organizations during the last twelve months. Some organizations could be categorized in more than one category so respondents were asked to count each membership in only one category. Membership was defined as having your name on a list of members for an organization which might carry certain privileges such as voting or getting a newsletter, and often involves having a membership card. Making a contribution or supporting an organization does not necessarily always include membership in the organization.¹⁴

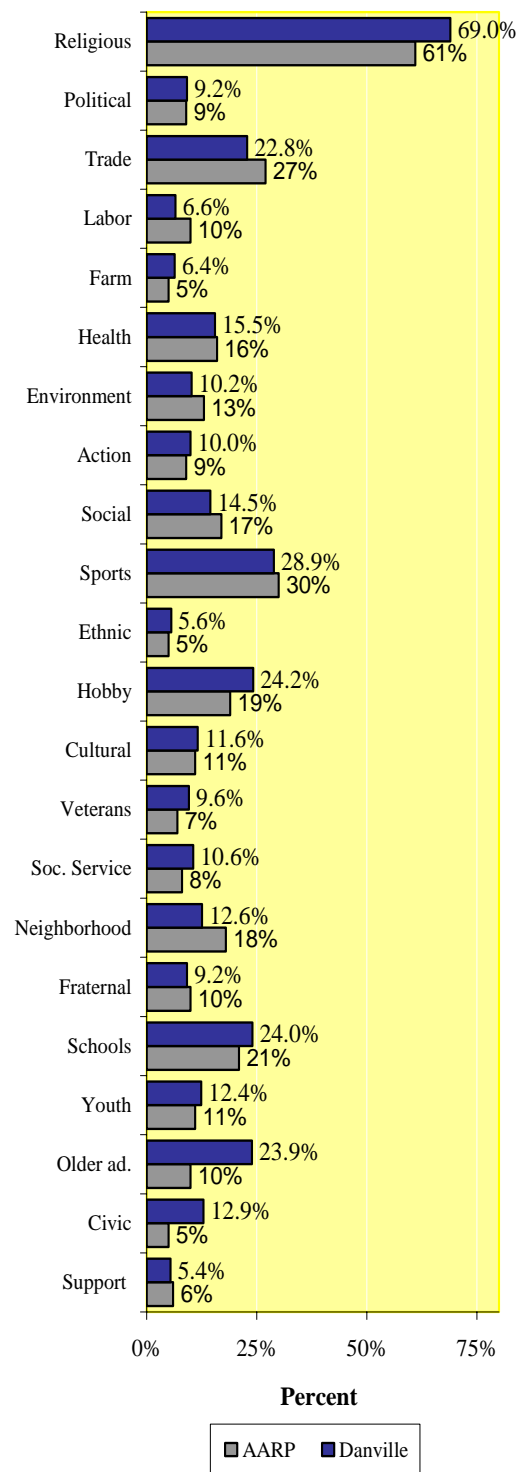
By far the most common type of organizational membership was religious organizations (69%). Other organization types in which people most frequently have membership are; health clubs, sports clubs, etc. (28.9%); hobby, garden, or recreation groups (24.2%); school support groups (24%); organizations for older people (23.9%); and professional and trade associations (22.8%). A total of 131 respondents (12.7%) indicated they do not belong to any of the groups.

Compared to the AARP study of a nationally representative sample, Danville residents show a higher percentage of people who belong to religious organizations, hobby, garden, or recreation groups, school support groups, organizations for older adults, and civic organizations; and a lower number of people who belong to labor unions, professional and trade associations, and neighborhood associations. The average number of group types in which respondents indicate they have membership was 3.5 compared to 3.3 in the national AARP study.

Using the community attachment index as an independent variable, an analysis was conducted on the impact of community attachment on group memberships. Community attachment was a strong predictor of membership in religious organizations, farm organizations, hobby and

recreation groups, organizations for older adults, and civic organizations.

Figure IV-3: Group Memberships



¹⁴ This elaborated measure of organizational memberships is adapted from the method developed by Guterbock and Fries (1997) *Maintaining America's Social Fabric: The AARP Survey of Civic Involvement*.

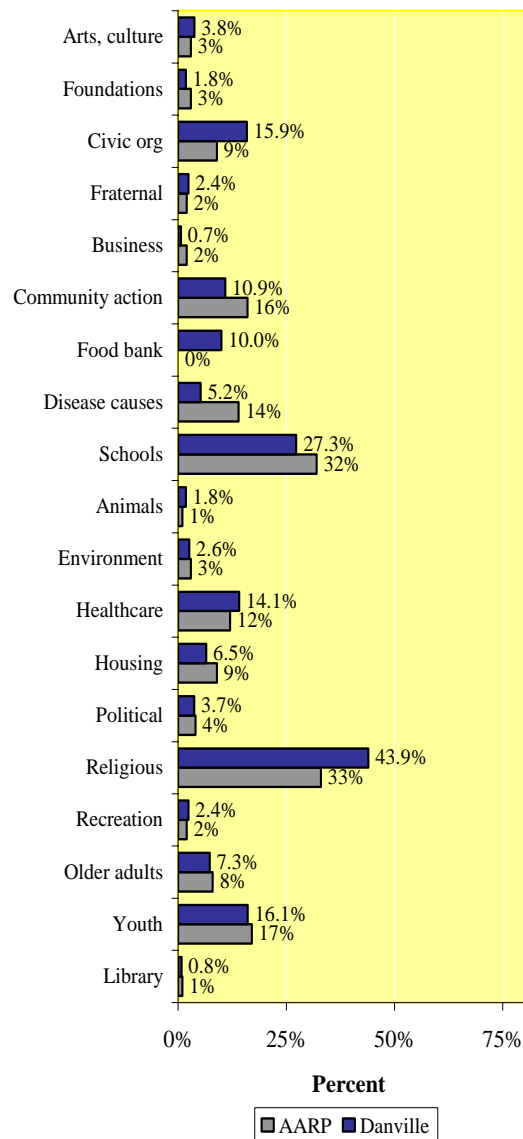
Volunteering

More than fifty percent (52.3%) of respondents said they have volunteered time to charities, schools, hospitals, religious organizations, neighborhood associations, and civic or other groups.

As is illustrated in Figure IV-4, of those who volunteered, the area where people are the most likely to volunteer is religious organizations or the church (43.9%). The second most likely area for volunteering is in the schools or doing some form of education or tutoring (27.3%). In addition, 16.1 percent volunteer in youth-related activities; 15.9 percent in civic organizations; 14.1 percent in healthcare organizations; 10.9 percent volunteer in community action groups, and 10 percent volunteer in food banks.

Figure IV-4 also shows the comparison between the Danville sample and the national AARP study. Overall, volunteering in community organizations is lower in the Danville Region. While people indicated they belong to various community organizations, a much lower percentage of respondents say they volunteer and give of their time to these organizations. Compared to the national AARP study, Danville residents were less likely to be involved in foundations, fraternal associations, business organizations, community action organizations, and housing associations. They were more likely to be involved in their churches and other religious organizations.

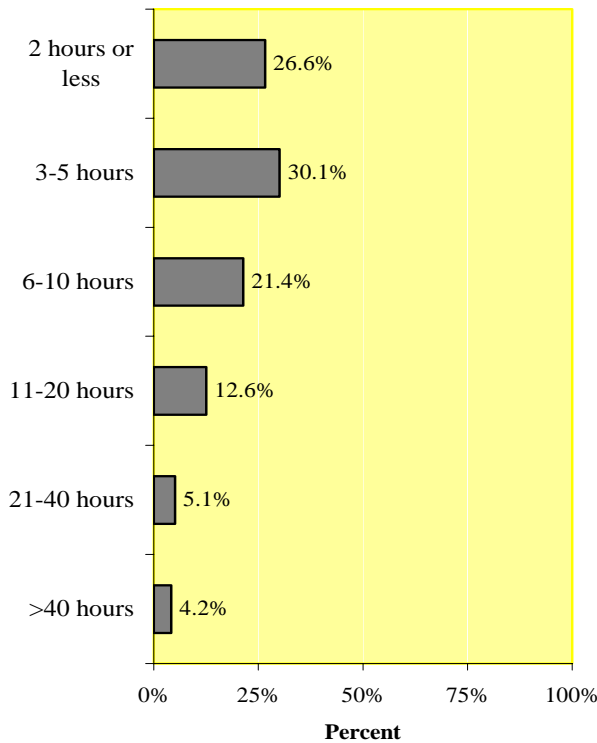
Figure IV-4: Types of Volunteering



Of those respondents who do volunteer, more than one-fourth (26.6%) said they volunteer 2 hours or less per month. Thirty (30.1%) of the volunteer respondents said they volunteer 3-5 hours per month. Twenty-one (21.4%) percent said they volunteer 6-10 hours per month. One out of ten (12.6%) said they volunteer 11-20 hours per month. Less than ten percent (9.3%) volunteer more than 20 hours per month. However, about half of the overall sample has not recently volunteered at all.

The median number of hours that respondents said they volunteer per month falls in the range of 3-5 hours per month.

Figure IV-5: Hours Volunteered Per Month



Civic Skills

Beyond membership and volunteering, people acquire many skills through participation in civic organizations. Research suggests that civic skills, communications, and organizational abilities are a valuable resource for communities. Citizens who can speak or write well or who are comfortable organizing and taking part in meetings are likely to be more effective when they get involved in their communities.¹⁵

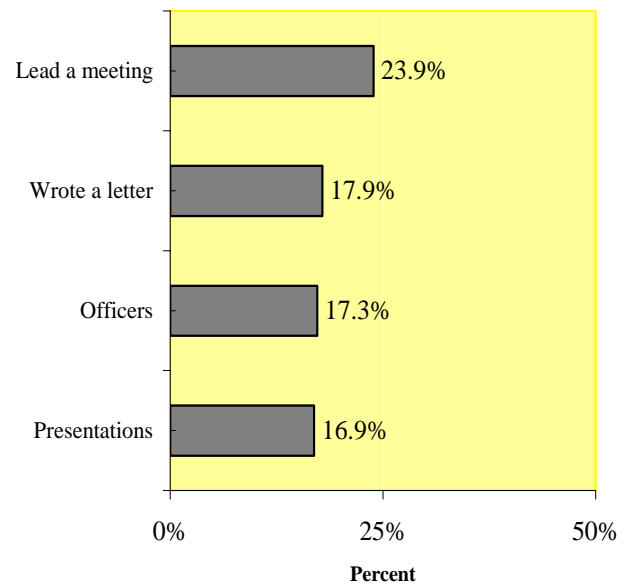
Respondents were asked whether they have ever served as an officer of an organization, helped plan or lead a meeting, written a letter or an e-mail for a group, or made a public presentation. Less than twenty percent of the respondents said they had served as officers, written letters, or made presentations. Nearly one-fourth of the respondents (23.9%) said they helped plan or lead a meeting. (See Figure IV-6.)

¹⁵ Verba, Schlozman, and Brady. (2002). *Voice and Equality: Civic voluntarism in American Politics*.

Figure IV-6 illustrates the percent of respondents who participated in these various types of activities. Compared to both the Social Benchmark data and the national AARP study, this study suggests that Danville residents are less likely to get involved in the organizations to which they belong and are less likely to serve in leadership positions.

Nearly twenty percent (19.5%) of respondents in the Social Benchmark study say they serve as officers and 26% of the AARP respondents say they serve as officers. In the Northwest Area Foundation study, nearly one-third of the respondents (32.8%) had served as officers and 40.5 percent had given a presentation.¹⁶

Figure IV-6: Civic Skills



Another way that respondents give back to their communities is through charitable giving. One-third (31%) of the respondents said they have given more than \$1,000 in the last twelve months to religious and non-religious organizations in their community. Thirteen (13.1%) percent gave \$500 up to \$1,000. Twenty-nine (29.4%) percent gave \$100 up to \$500, and thirteen (13.5%) gave

¹⁶ Comparison with Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1990) data was not possible due to restrictions on who was asked the questions. Their data excluded people who belonged only to a religious organization, and our survey makes no such exclusion when asking our series.

less than \$100. Thirteen percent also said they have not given any money to charitable organizations in the last twelve months.

Demographic Differences in Organizational Memberships

Women are more likely than men to attend religious services and participate in religious organizations. They are more likely to be involved in any type of church-sponsored activities. Women are also more involved in health organizations and school support groups; whereas men are more likely to be involved in political action groups and veterans' groups.

Blacks in the Danville Region have a higher attendance at religious services and participate in religious organizations. Whites are more involved in professional and trade associations, farm organizations, and environmental or animal protection groups. Whites in the region have a higher participation in health clubs, sports clubs, athletic leagues, and country clubs. They have a higher involvement in cultural organizations and neighborhood associations as well.

Education and income are significant factors in the types of organizations to which people belong. Respondents with higher education and income are more affiliated with professional or trade associations, political action groups, social clubs, health clubs, cultural organizations, and social service organizations.

Overall, people over the age of 50 are more actively involved in all types of organizations. However, younger residents join social clubs, fraternities, sororities, and college clubs as well as health clubs, sports clubs, athletic leagues, country clubs, and swimming pools. Residents who are in their 40's are more likely to be involved in school support groups.

Residents who are married are more likely than those who have never been married to attend religious services, join religious organizations, and are generally more involved in any church-sponsored organizations. They also join neighborhood associations, school support groups, and civic organizations. Marital status is positively related to people acquiring civic skills in organizations such as leading a meeting, writing letters for a group, or making public presentations.

Length of residence is positively related to civic participation. Respondents who have lived in the area for more than twenty years are more likely to attend religious services and participate in religious organizations. Working part-time or full-time is also positively related to civic participation.

See Appendix C for a more complete listing of demographic differences on these items.

V. Political Participation

Political participation gives citizens an opportunity to communicate information to government officials about their concerns and preferences. People have several options for doing this. They can express their views with public officials or by influencing electoral outcomes. They may also give time and effort or money in various political activities. Political participation simply refers to any activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly or indirectly.¹⁷

General Interest and Attendance at Meetings and Rallies

Respondents were asked:

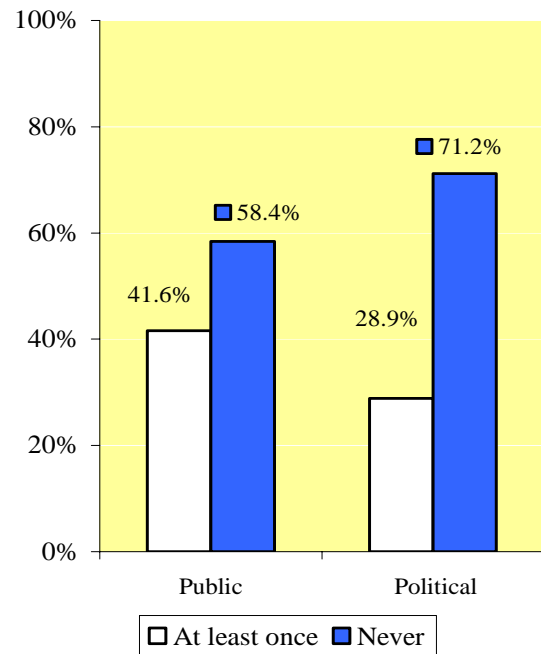
“How interested are you in politics and national affairs?”

More than seventy (71.9%) percent said they are “very interested” or “somewhat interested.” Another 17.8 percent said they were “slightly interested.” One out of ten (10.3%) said they have no interest in politics at all.

General interest in politics can be measured by considering the level of participation in public meetings where there is a discussion of community or school affairs or attendance at political meetings and rallies. Respondents were more likely to say they have never participated in these activities.

Thirty (30.5%) percent said they had attended public meetings “a few times,” and eleven (11.1%) percent said they had attended a public meeting at least once. Respondents were less likely to have attended a political meeting or rally. Fifteen (15.1%) percent said they had attended political meetings or rallies “a few times.” Almost fourteen (13.8%) percent said they had only attended a political meeting or rally once.

Figure V-1: Attend Public or Political Meetings



Voting Participation

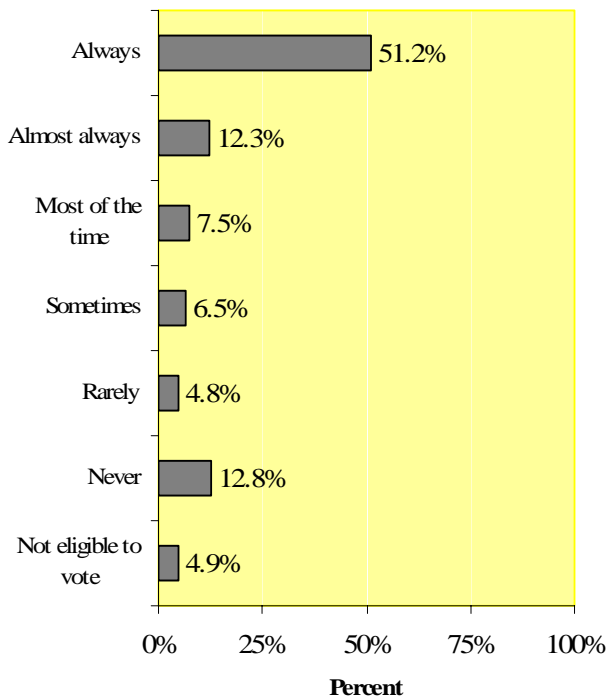
Elections are scheduled opportunities for citizens to officially register their preferences. Since each voter casts a single ballot and because each vote has equal weight, elections are an equalizing device.¹⁸ Everyone has the same opportunity to express their opinion. Nearly ninety (88.8%) of respondents said they were registered to vote, and almost 93 percent (92.7%) said they voted in the 2008 presidential election. These percentages are higher than those seen in most general population surveys, and they probably reflect the heightened rates of interest and participation that were generated by the highly competitive and historic 2008 presidential election campaigns.

When asked how often they voted in city or local elections, more than seventy (71%) percent said they voted “most of the time,” “almost always,” or “always.” More than fifty (51.2%) said they “always” vote in city or local elections. Some respondents (17.6%) said they “rarely” or “never” vote in city or local elections. (See Figure V-2).

¹⁷ Verba, Schlozman, and Brady. (2002) *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Figure V-2: Voted in City or Local Elections



This result does not differ greatly from other surveys considered in this report. In the national AARP study, nearly three-fourths of the respondents (74%) said they vote in local elections “always” or “almost always.” Eight percent (8%) said they rarely vote and sixteen percent (16%) said they “never” vote. In the Northwest Area Foundation study, 71.4 percent said they “always” or “almost always” vote; 10.6 percent said they vote “most of the time,” 5.7 percent vote “sometimes,” 7.4 percent vote “rarely,” and 4.5 percent say they “never” vote.

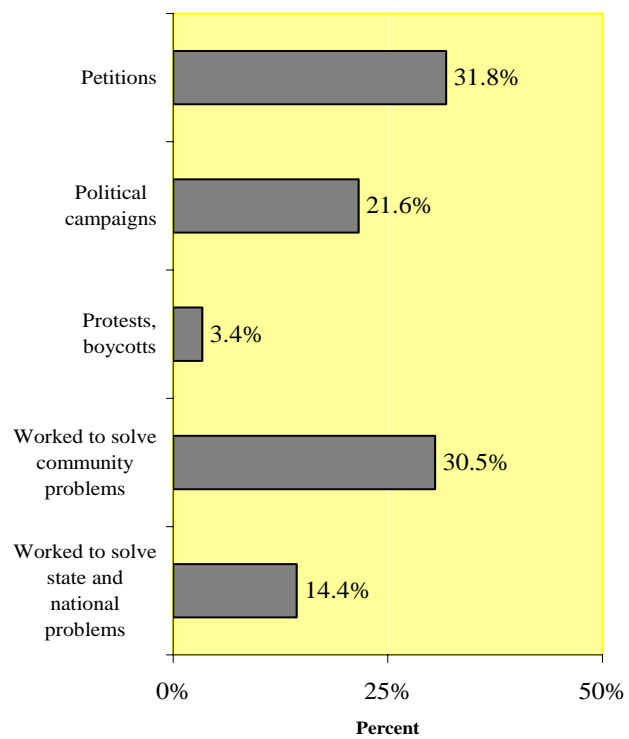
Other Political Activities

There are a number of additional ways in which citizens can be active in their communities and have an influence on governmental decisions. These would include activities such as signing petitions, participating in a political campaign, and participating in a demonstration, protest or boycott. People can also be effective in helping to solve neighborhood or community problems by working together with their neighbors rather than taking on issues individually. Some people also work together to solve problems at the state or national level.

Overall, the results of the survey suggest that people in the Danville Region are not likely to

participate in these types of political activities. In most cases, less than thirty percent said they had participated in any of these activities. (See Figure V-3). Compared to a previous study conducted in the Northwest Area Foundation, residents of the Danville Region indicated significantly less participation than residents in that area. Nearly fifty percent of the residents in northwestern states, in a survey conducted there by the Northwest Area Foundation, said they worked together with members of their community to solve problems compared to only thirty percent of residents in the Danville Region.

Figure V-3: Participation in Political Activities



Other Resources to Solve Problems

Respondents were asked:

“Do you have any connections or resources outside the community that you can draw on for help in solving community problems or issues?”

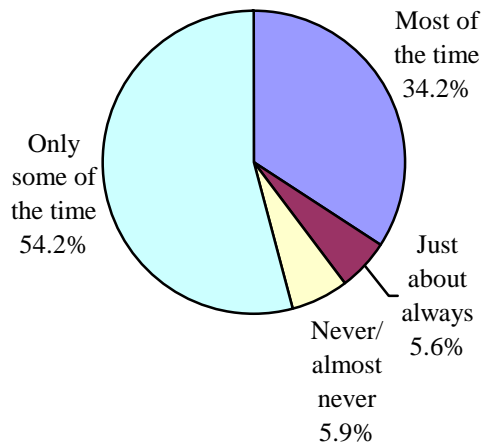
Just over one-fourth (26.9%) of respondents said they have connections or resources outside the community they can draw on for help in solving community problems or issues. Some of the things people mentioned were: friends and relatives, congressmen and elected

officials, the internet, local leaders, churches and religious leaders, and national organizations.

Trust in Government

Respondents were asked how much of the time they can trust the local government to do what is right. Only 5.6 percent said that “just about always” they can trust the government to do what is right. One-third (34.2%) of the respondents said they can trust the government “most of the time.” More than half (54.2%) of the respondents said they only trust the government to do what is right “some of the time.” Nearly six (5.9%) percent said they “never or almost never” trust the local government to do what is right.

Figure V-4: Trust in Government



Compared to the Social Benchmark study, Danville residents indicated a slightly higher level of trust in government. Nearly one in four said they trust the government “just about always” or “most of the time.” However a larger percentage of Danville residents said they only trust the government to do what is right “some of the time” compared to respondents in the Social Benchmark study and the AARP study. More than fifty percent (54.2%) of Danville residents trust the government to do what is right “some of the time” compared to 45.6% in the Social Benchmark study and 41% in the AARP national study.

Demographic Differences in Political Participation

Ninety-seven (97%) percent of Caswell County residents said they were registered to vote and “always” or “almost always” voted in local

elections. Residents of Pittsylvania County said they often sign petitions.

Gender and race were not significant factors in determining the level of political participation in the community. However, education and income were both positively related to levels of political participation. One hundred percent of respondents with a college degree said they voted in the 2008 presidential election. Residents with higher education are also more likely to work with the others to solve community as well as state and national level problems.

Age, education, and income are strong predictors of trust in government. Older residents are more interested in politics and national affairs, are more likely to be registered to vote, and say they “always” or “almost always” vote in local elections. Residents in their 30’s are more likely to sign petitions and attend public meetings. They also are more likely to work with others to try to solve problems at the state or national level.

People who are married show stronger interest in politics and national affairs. They attend public meetings and political rallies. Being married is a strong predictor of participation in political campaigns and voting frequency. Married residents are more likely to say that they trust the government to do what is right “just about always” or “most of the time.”

Home ownership is another strong predictor of interest in politics and national affairs. More than ninety-six (96%) percent of homeowners voted in the 2008 presidential election and more than eighty (82.7%) say they “always” or “almost always” vote in local elections.

Length of residence and employment status are both related to trust in the government and political participation. Long-time residents show a stronger level of trust in the government to do what is right than newer residents in the community. Retirees are more likely to say they trust in the government. Those who work full-time are more likely to say they work with others to try to solve problems at the state or national level. Retirees are also more likely to participate in activities at this level.

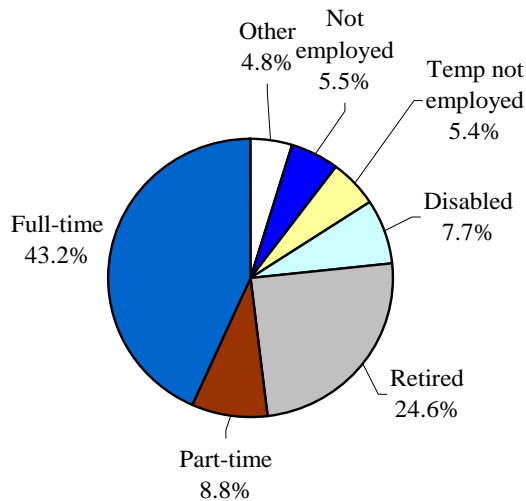
VI. People in the Economy

Employment is one aspect of community life that impacts the quality of life in the community and the perceptions residents have about their community. Meaningful employment and the satisfaction people experience in their job can often impact other aspects of community life. Relationships within the work community and the level of connectedness people have with others at work provide needed resources beyond simply compensation for work.

Employment

Only fifty-two percent of respondents indicated they are working full-time or part-time; 43.2 percent were working full-time and an additional 8.8 percent were working part-time. A significant number of respondents were retired (24.6%). Those not employed comprised 7.7 permanently disabled, 5.4 percent who were temporarily laid off or disabled, 5.5 percent currently unemployed, 2.3 percent homemakers, 2 percent students, and less than 1 percent who gave “other” as their response.

Figure VI-1: Employment

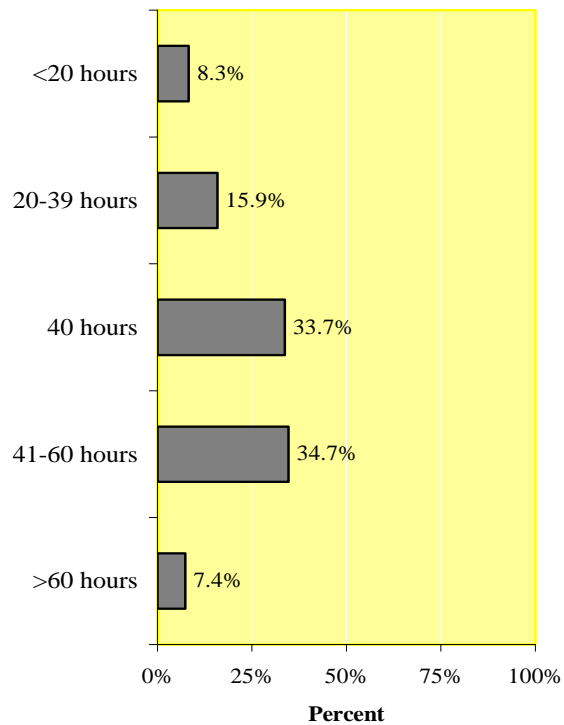


More than half (54.6%) of residents of the region were employed full-time or part-time work in Danville City. Eighteen (18.6%) percent said they work in Pittsylvania County and five (5.1%) percent said they work in Caswell County, NC. More than fifteen (15.4%) percent of respondents said they work more than one paid job.

Two out of ten (21.7%) said they work outside the Danville Region. Several indicated they work in Altavista, Campbell County, Greensboro, Lynchburg, Martinsville, and Rockingham County.

Seven (7.4%) percent said they work more than 60 hours per week on average. One-third (34.7%) average 41-60 hours per week in all jobs including any extra jobs or paid work they do at home, and one-third (33.7%) work an average of 40 hours per week. One-fourth (24.2%) of those who work average less than forty hours per week.

Figure VI-2: Hours Worked



When asked about their commuting time to work, respondents gave answers between one minute and 180 minutes. The average commuting time was approximately 19 minutes. Fifty-eight (58.8) percent said they commute fifteen minutes or less to work. Eighty-seven (87.8%) said they commute thirty minutes or less.

Perceptions of Work

Respondents were read a list of statements regarding their perceptions of their work and asked to say if they “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” or “strongly disagree” with them. Overall, the response to these statements, aimed at finding out about people’s engagement with their work and the sense of meaning that they may gain from work, was very positive.

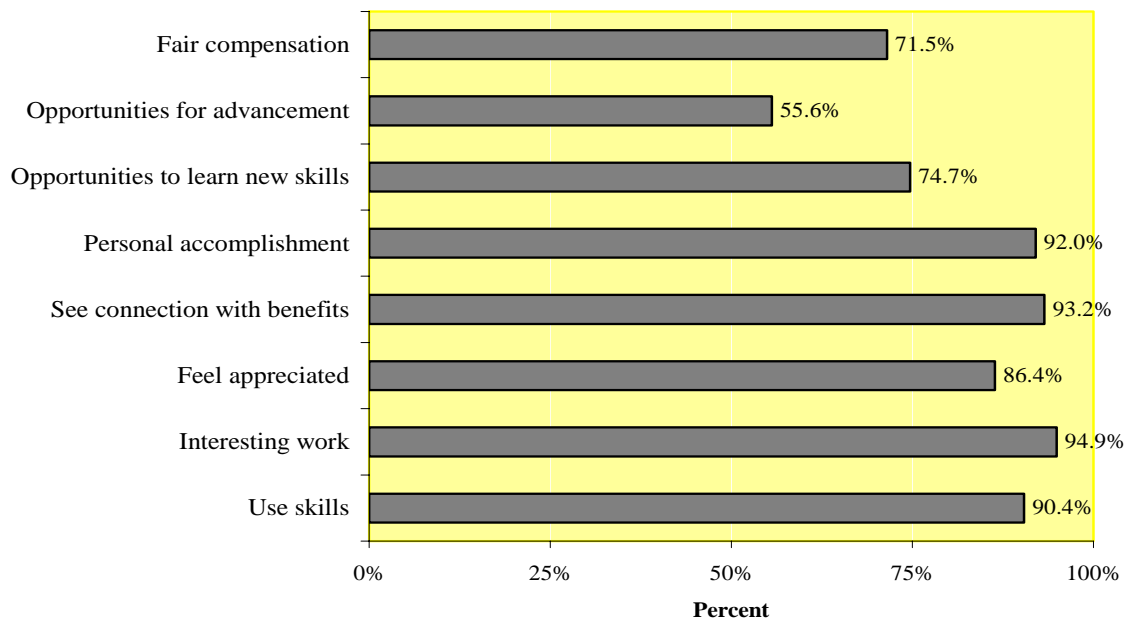
Most respondents agree that they find their work to be interesting (94.9%) and they see the connection between the work they do and the benefits received by others (93.2%). However,

respondents were not as positive about opportunities to learn new skills (74.7%) and fair compensation (71.5%). Satisfaction drops further with only half of the respondents (55.6%) saying they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that they have opportunities for advancement.

The following figure (Figure VI-3) shows the percent of respondents who “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statements regarding their perceptions of work.

The picture that emerges is of a somewhat underemployed labor force. Those who do have jobs are highly engaged with their work and most find their jobs to be personally rewarding.

Figure VI-3: Perceptions of Work

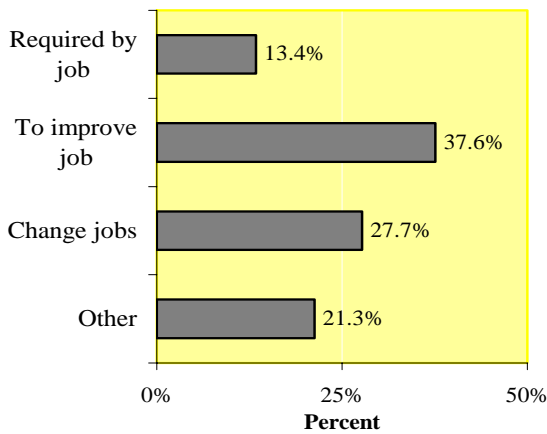


Respondents who are currently employed were asked if they were required to obtain a specific degree or certification other than a high school diploma for their current position. Forty-three (43.4%) percent said they did receive a specific degree or certification for their position.

When asked if they would be likely to take a special course if given the opportunity, 64 percent said they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to take advantage of an opportunity for additional training.

When asked what the one reason is that they might get special training, 37.6 percent said “to improve their current job.”

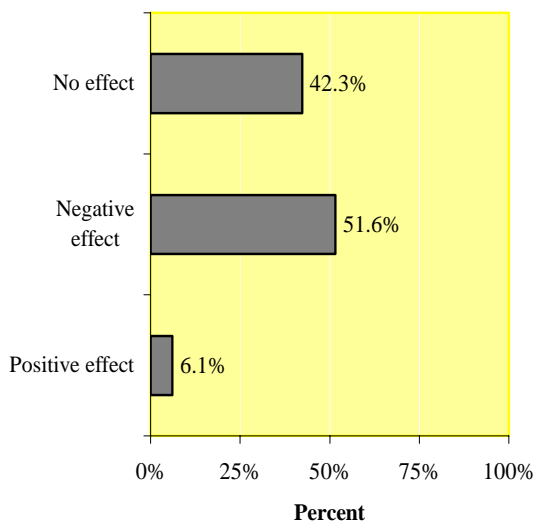
Figure VI-4: Reasons for Special Training



Economic Situation

In light of the recent economic situation in our country, respondents were asked if they had been affected by the recent economic downturn. More than fifty (51.6%) percent said they had been negatively affected; however forty-two (42.3%) percent said they had not been affected by the economic situation. Six percent said they have been positively affected in some way by the economic situation of the country.

Figure VI-5: Affected by the Economic Situation



The main reason respondents gave for how the economic downturn has affected them negatively was the “higher cost of living due to higher energy costs.” More than a third of the respondents (38.7%) percent said they were

affected by the higher cost of living. More than one-third (34.3%) of the respondents said they were affected by a “loss or reduction of income.” One-fourth (27.5%) said it had gotten “harder to pay bills and make ends meet.” “Loss of job” had affected 25.6 percent and 11.4 percent said they “cannot find a new job.” These high figures reflect the severity of the current economic crisis on the Danville Region.

Demographic Differences in Employment and Experiences with the Economy

Residents who work full or part-time were asked about their level of agreement with several statements about their work environment and the meaning they get from their work. One hundred (100%) percent of the residents from Caswell County said that their job gives them a feeling of personal accomplishment.

Females were more likely than males to say that a specific degree or certification was required for their current position. They were also more likely to say they would take a special course if given the opportunity.

Whites were more likely than blacks to say that their job makes good use of their skills and abilities. They also were more likely to say that their pay is about the same or better than they might receive elsewhere.

Higher education and income were positively related to job satisfaction by respondents. Higher education related to feeling appreciated, respected, and valued as well as feelings of personal accomplishment. Higher income was related to opportunities to learn new skills and opportunities for advancement.

Age and marital status were not significantly related to ratings of the work environment. Homeowners gave higher ratings for fair compensation and opportunities to learn new skills. Newer residents (less than 2 years) seemed to find work more interesting and found opportunities to learn new skills.

See Appendix C for a more complete listing of demographic differences on these items.

VII. Children and Schools

One of the concerns expressed by the Danville Regional Foundation was the perception of residents in the Danville Region about children. How do they rate the quality of education children are receiving, and do people feel that children have to move away from the area in order to make a good living when they have graduated from school?

Raising Children

More than three-fourths (75.1%) of respondents said that the Danville Region is a good place to raise children. Of those, twenty-eight (28.8%) said it is a “very good” place to raise children, and one out of ten said it is an “excellent” place to raise children. However, 24.9 percent rate Danville as being “only fair” or a “poor” place to raise children.

Compared to the 2006 Commonwealth Education Poll,¹⁹ a survey of Virginians sponsored by the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute, residents of the Danville Region were more likely to say that the schools have “gotten better” in terms of providing the education necessary for getting a job and also for going to college.

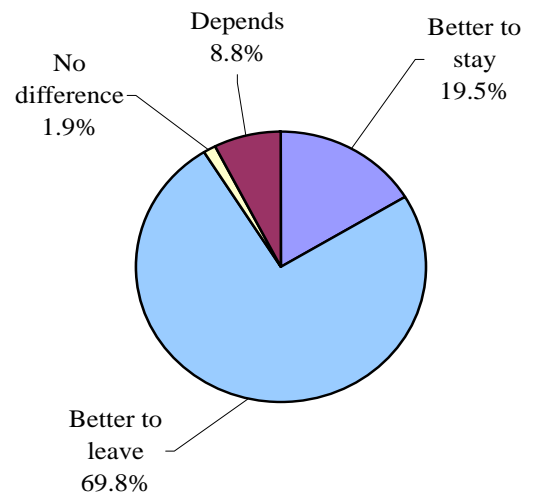
However, when rating the education provided by schools, residents of Danville gave slightly lower ratings than residents in a previous study conducted in a suburban area of Richmond.²⁰ The rating of the Danville Region as a place to raise children is also lower. Nearly ninety-three percent (92.9%) of respondents in the previous study rated their county as being an “excellent,” “very good,” or “good” place to raise children compared to 75.1% who gave this rating about the Danville Region.

¹⁹ Commonwealth Education Poll (2006) conducted by the VCU Center for Public Service/Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory for the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute.

²⁰ Ellis, James M.; Diop, Abdoulaye; Guterbock, Thomas M.; Kim, Young; and Rexrode, Deborah. (2008). *Chesterfield County Citizen Satisfaction Survey*.

Everyone hopes for a good life for their children. Nearly seventy (69.8%) percent of respondents said when a child from the Danville Region is ready to leave home, it is better for them to move to some other area. Almost twenty percent (19.5%) said it is better for them to stay in the area. About nine percent (8.8%) said it “depends.”

Figure VII-1: What is Best for Children

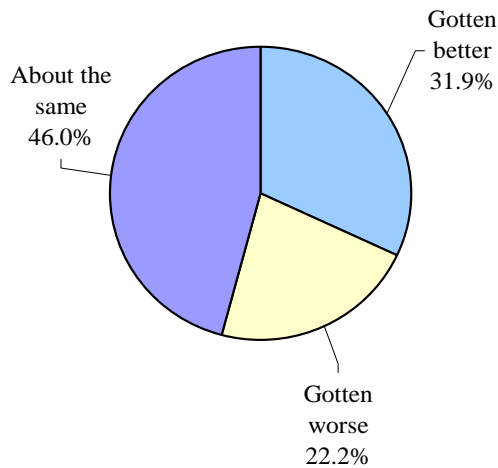


Schools

When asked to rate the education provided by schools in the Danville Region, more than three-fourths (78.2%) rated the schools “good,” “very good,” or “excellent.” More than twenty percent (21.8%) rated the schools as “fair” or “poor.”

Respondents were then asked whether the schools have “gotten better,” “gotten worse,” or “stayed the same.” One-third (31.9%) of the respondents said the schools had “gotten better,” and twenty-two (22.2%) said they had “gotten worse.” Almost half (46%) said the schools had “stayed about the same.”

Figure VII-2: Change in Education Provided by Schools

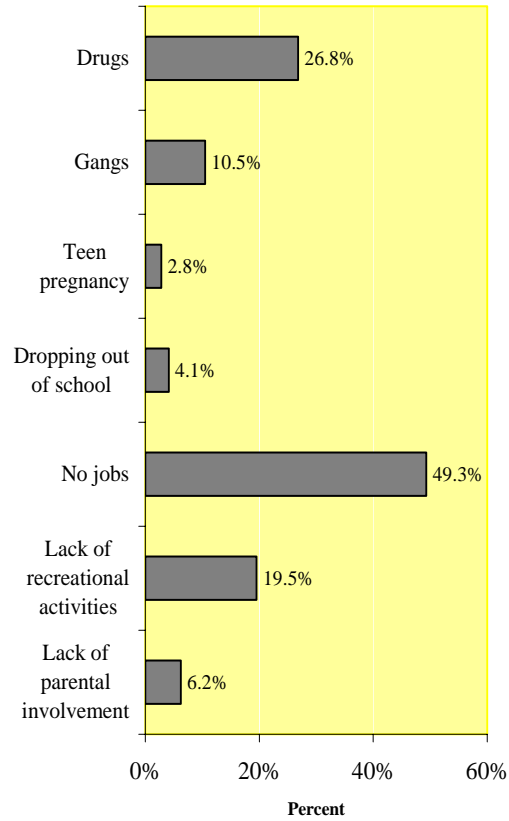


Respondents with children in the public schools were more likely (82.7%) to rate the public schools as “good,” “very good,” or “excellent,” than respondents with children in private schools or home-schooled. Thirty (30.8%) percent of respondents with children in private schools rated the public schools as “fair” or “poor.” More than two-thirds (66.7%) of the respondents who home-school their children rated the public schools as “fair” or “poor.”

Challenges

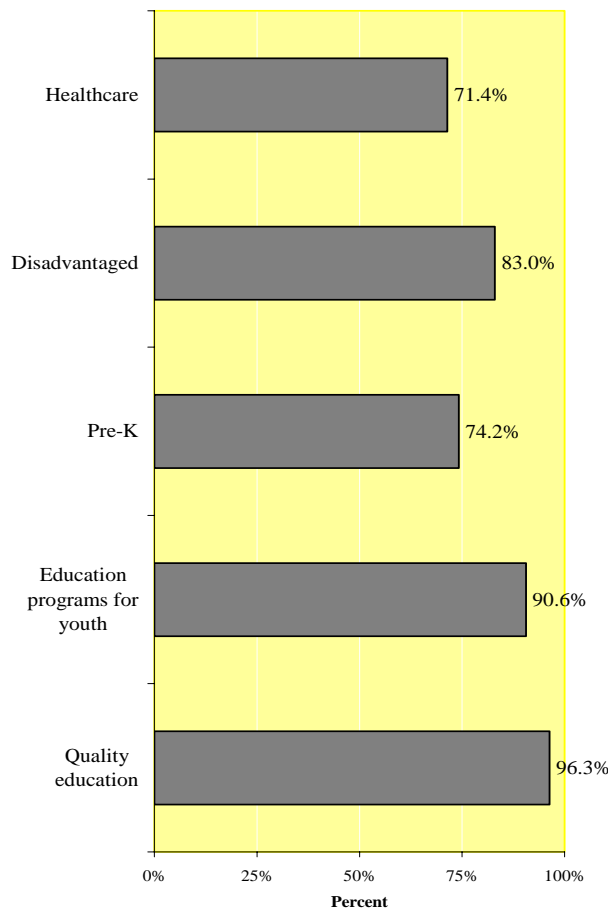
Respondents were asked to name the biggest challenges facing children and youth in the Danville Region. Of those responses, nearly 50 percent said that the biggest challenge is “no jobs.” One-fourth (26.8%) of the responses said that drugs are a significant challenge to the children and youth. About thirty percent selected “other” and listed peer pressure, not enough cultural activities, crime, the cost of getting a college education, guns and violence, lack of opportunities, and racism as some of the challenges facing the children and youth in Danville. Many said there is just not enough for children and youth to do outside the educational system. Figure VII-3 shows the items selected the most. (Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one challenge.)

Figure VII-3: Challenges for Children and Youth



Resources

Respondents were given a list of items concerning children and youth and asked to rate how important it is for their community to devote resources to these programs and opportunities. The list included support for quality education, support for educational programs for youth, support for affordable pre-Kindergarten opportunities, support for services to disadvantaged children and families, and support for opportunities for free healthcare for low-income families. Respondents were asked to rate each of these items as being “very important,” “somewhat important” or “not important” for their community. Figure VII-4 shows the percentage of those who said these were “very important.” Quality education and educational programs for youth topped the list of priorities for the survey respondents.

Figure VII-4: Important Resources

Demographic Differences in Opinions of Children and Schools

Residents of Caswell County have a higher percentage of children in public schools while residents of Pittsylvania County have a larger percentage of children being home-schooled. Caswell County residents were also more likely to rate the region as being an “excellent” or “very good” place to raise children.

Females were more likely to say that over the past five years, the schools have gotten better. They were most supportive of support services for the disadvantaged.

Race was definitely a factor in relation to the support of public schools. One hundred (100%) percent of the children of black respondents in our sample attend public schools. One-fourth of white residents attend private schools and one out of ten has children who are home-schooled.

Black residents support affordable pre-kindergarten (100%).

Children of residents with lower income and education were more likely to be attending public schools, and were more likely to rate the education provided by public schools as “excellent” or “very good.” Residents with higher income strongly supported education programs for youth while residents with lower income support free healthcare.

Older residents gave higher ratings to the Danville Region as a place to raise children and rated the education provided by public schools as “excellent” or “very good.” Younger residents showed strong support for services for the disadvantaged.

Married respondents rated the Danville Region as a good place to raise children and rated the education provided by the schools as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good.” Widowed and separated respondents show strong support for affordable pre-Kindergarten, education programs for youth, support services for the disadvantaged, and support for free healthcare.

Length of residence is positively related to thinking the region is a good place to raise children and to higher ratings of the education provided by public schools. Long-time residents were more likely to say the schools have gotten better in providing job skills for students.

Residents who are temporarily laid off or disabled or currently unemployed showed strong support for affordable pre-Kindergarten, support services for the disadvantaged, and support for free healthcare.

See Appendix C for a more complete listing of demographic differences on these items.

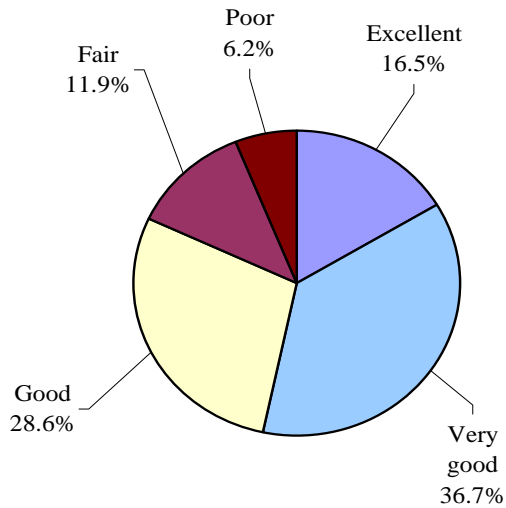
VIII. Health Issues

One supplemental purpose of this survey was to get an overall picture of the health of people in communities within the Danville Region. The first step was to get the respondents' perspective on their overall health now and compared to one year ago.

Overall Health

Respondents, for the most part, are in good health. More than fifty percent (53.3%) said they were in "excellent" or "very good" health. Another one-fourth of the respondents (28.6%) said they were in "good" health. Eighteen percent rated their health as "fair" or "poor."

Figure VIII-1: Overall Health Status

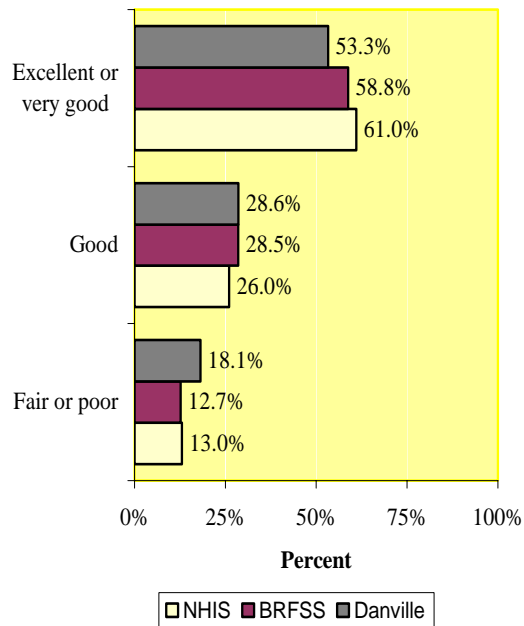


The overall health status of residents in the Danville Region is lower than either state or national norms. In the 2008 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey, sponsored by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, 58.8% percent of respondents in the Commonwealth of Virginia rated their overall health status as "excellent" or "very good;" 28.5 percent rated their health as "good;" and 12.7 percent rated their health as "fair" or "poor."

In a recent nationwide survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, 61 percent of adults 18 years of age and over were in

excellent or very good health, 26 percent were in good health, and 13 percent were in fair or poor health.²¹

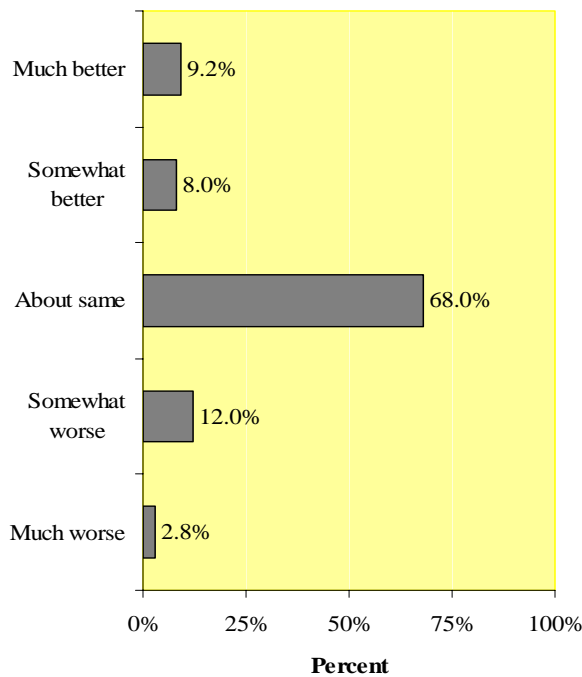
Figure VIII-2: Overall Health Comparisons



Compared to one year ago, sixty-eight (68%) percent said their health was about the same as one year ago, and 17.2 percent said their health was "somewhat better" or "much better" than one year ago. Twelve (12%) percent said their health was "somewhat worse" than one year ago.

²¹ Pleis, Jr., Lucas J.W. (2009) *Summary health statistics for U.S. adults: National Health Interview Survey*.

Figure VIII-3: Health Comparison to One Year Ago

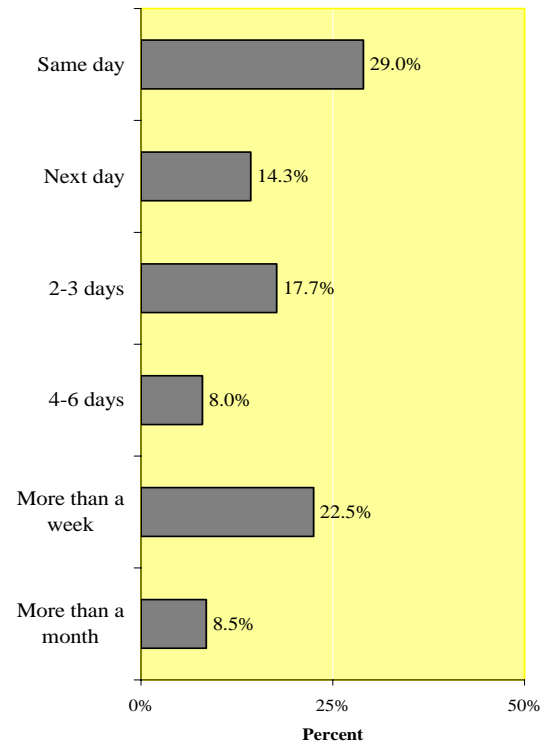


Access to Doctors

More than two-thirds (66.5%) of respondents said they had called a doctor’s office in the Danville Region for an appointment. Those who had contacted a doctor for an appointment found it fairly easy to get an appointment when needed. Eighty-seven (87.6%) percent said it was “very easy” or “somewhat easy” to get an appointment when needed. Only 12.4% found it “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to get an appointment.

Just under fifty percent (43.3%) were able to get an appointment the same day or the very next day. One-fourth (25.7%) of the respondents had to wait anywhere from two to six days to get an appointment. One-fourth (22.5%) had to wait more than a week, but less than a month to get an appointment. Only 8.5 percent had to wait longer than a month.

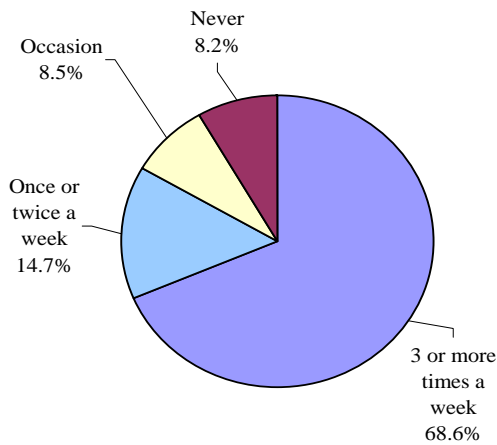
Figure VIII-4: Waiting Time for a Doctor’s Appointment



Children’s Activities

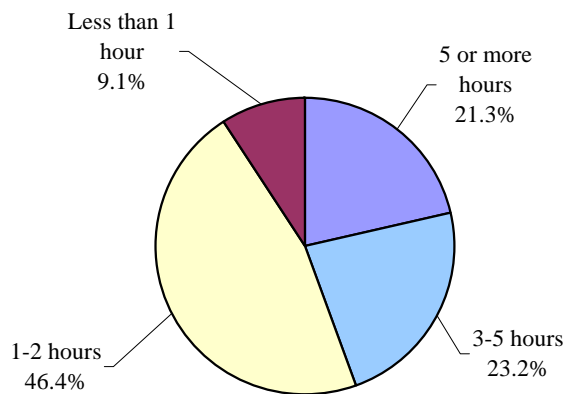
Some concern has been expressed about the overall health of the children in the Danville Region. In order to make a quick assessment of that, respondents with children were asked to describe the level of activity of one child selected (at random) by the interviewer. More than two-thirds (68.6%) of the respondents indicated that their child participates in some type of physical activity “three or more times a week.” Nearly fifteen (14.7%) percent participate in physical activity “once or twice a week.” This would suggest that children are somewhat active. To assess this further, it would be necessary to determine the body mass index for children to determine if the level of activity is enough to keep children at the appropriate weight for their age and height.

Figure VIII-5: Level of Physical Activity for Children



However, one indirect test of a child’s physical activity is to measure the number of hours the child spends watching television. These numbers were a little more disconcerting. One-fourth (21.3%) of the children, about which respondents reported, spend 5 or more hours a day watching television. Another one-fourth (23.2%) spend 3-5 hours a day watching television. More than fifty percent (55.5%) of the children discussed in this survey spent less than 3 hours per day watching television.

Figure VIII-6: Hours Watching Television



In the 2008 General Social Survey (GSS), a national survey of social trends, only 11.2 percent of the respondents said they watch television for 5 or more hours; 34.9 percent watch television 3-5 hours a day; and 54 percent watch television less than 3 hours a day.

Demographic Differences in Health Indicators

There were no significant differences regarding overall health status by geographic areas. Nearly eighty percent (82.1%, 82.4% and 78.2%) of respondents in all three geographic locations said their overall health status was “excellent,” “very good,” and “good.”

Females are more likely to call for doctor’s appointments. There were no other significant differences by gender and none by race. Education and income are positively related to higher ratings of overall health status. Respondents with higher education were also more likely to call for doctor’s appointments and say that it is “very easy” or “somewhat easy” to get appointments.

Married respondents gave higher ratings of overall health status than divorced or widowed respondents. Work status is also positively related to better overall health status. Those who are working full-time were more likely to say they have “excellent,” “very good,” or “good” overall health than respondents who have been laid off or are retired.

IX. Summary and Conclusion

The preceding sections of this report describe the various factors that have been identified as contributing to the level of social capital residents perceive in the communities in which they live, and to the vitality and capacities of the community as a whole.

The 7.30 satisfaction mean rating for quality of life in the Danville Region (rated on a scale from 1 to 10) is an indication of the high regard the residents have for the quality of life in the Danville Region. Residents of Caswell County and Pittsylvania County rate the quality of life higher than those who live in Danville City. Long-time residents are concerned about the quality of life in the Danville Region in the future.

Social Capital Indicators

Overall, the residents of the Danville Region have a strong sense of community. They feel a sense of belonging and feel it is important for them to live in this particular area. Most residents have neighbors or relatives in their neighborhood or close by to support them. They also feel they have an impact in making their community a better place to live. Some expressed concern for safety in shopping areas. Overall, their level of community attachment is at parity with the national average.

Residents are actively involved in religious organizations and support school activities. However, only a small percentage of residents participate to the level of acquiring civic skills such as leading a meeting, giving a presentation, or writing a letter for an organization. This finding points to a possible need for programs in the area that directly foster leadership and civic involvement.

While the 2008 presidential election generated a significant amount of interest in politics, most residents are not significantly involved beyond registering and voting. Only one-third of respondents indicated that they have been actively involved in political activities such as petitions, political campaigns, and working with others in their community to solve problems.

Economic Situation

In light of the economic situation in our country, respondents were asked if they had been affected by the recent economic downturn. More than fifty (51.6%) percent said they had been negatively affected. A significant number of residents are currently unemployed, temporarily laid off or disabled, and only working part-time. While most of employed residents said they derive meaning from their work and feel a sense of accomplishment, a significant number of those in the work force are working more than 40 hours a week and holding more than one job in order to make ends meet.

Schools and Children

More than three-fourths (75.1%) of respondents said that the Danville Region is a good place to raise children. However, compared to a previous study in a suburban area of Richmond, the rating of the Danville Region as a place to raise children is much lower. Nearly seventy percent of respondents said when a child is ready to leave home, it is better for them to move to some other area.

In the opinion of our respondents, the biggest challenge affecting children and youth in the Danville Region is the lack of jobs. Respondents showed strong support for quality education and youth education programs to provide a better quality of life for their children and youth.

Health indicators

Overall perception of the health of residents in the Danville Region is good, but falls short of state and national norms. While some residents have difficulty getting healthcare, most indicated they are able to get doctor's appointments when they need them. Respondents also indicated a need for more activities to keep their children active. Children and youth in the Danville Region spend a significant amount of time each day watching television.

Comparisons

The results of the 2009 Danville Social Capital Survey have been compared to some county, regional, state, and national studies. These comparisons suggest that the residents of the Danville Region have a strong sense of connectedness to their communities and neighborhoods evidenced by the number of neighbors they know.

However, compared to a national study conducted in 1997 for AARP, Danville residents do not appear to be as connected. While they have between 6 and 10 neighbors they know, they were not likely to say they knew 11 or more as in the AARP study.

Further comparisons suggest that while residents of the Danville Region are somewhat connected to their community or neighborhood by belonging to various community and civic organizations, they are not as involved in these organizations as the AARP study respondents. They are also less likely to be taking leadership positions and getting involved in community action or working to help solve problems in their community. They feel connected but are not civically engaged in the community.

Compared to the Commonwealth Education Poll²², residents of the Danville Region were more likely to say that the schools have “gotten better” in terms of providing the education necessary for getting a job and also for going to college. However, when rating the education provided by schools, residents of the Danville Region gave slightly lower ratings than residents in a previous study conducted in a suburban area of Richmond²³. They also expressed higher concern for safety in the schools.

Conclusion

Any assessment of social capital in the Danville Region must recognize that some forms of civic engagement are closely correlated with socio-economic status. In a region suffering from economic setbacks, lack of education and income among residents will have an effect on how involved they are in civic life. Taking these factors into account, overall the level of social capital is fairly strong in terms of community attachment, social connectedness and religious involvement, but in need of development in areas of civic engagement. This survey thus points to areas, subgroups and arenas of activity where the Danville Region may be able to improve the level of civic engagement, the strength of social capital and hence the quality of life for its residents.

²² Commonwealth Education Poll (2006) conducted by the VCU Center for Public Service/Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory for the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute.

²³ Ellis, James M.; Diop, Abdoulaye; Guterbock, Thomas M.; Kim, Young; and Rexrode, Deborah. (2008). *Chesterfield County Citizen Satisfaction Survey*.