

Random Household Survey Report

Introduction

The COMPASS NOW 2012 community needs assessment included a random household survey to complement the data collected via focus groups and socio-economic indicators. The objective of the household survey was to increase the understanding of the community's needs and their perception of the main challenges facing the region.

Methodology

The COMPASS NOW household survey was developed and tested by a team of research experts in 2007. The same survey was used in 2011 with minor changes to allow for comparison. Some questions were added in 2011 to collect data on emerging issues. The survey included 90 items with questions covering major areas of community life including: health, income and the economy, public safety, care giving, education and lifelong learning, community environment, and community concerns. The majority of the survey questions asked respondents to rate certain aspects of their community. Each question had a 4-level response scale where 1 = poor, 2=fair, 3=good, and 4=excellent. There was no undecided, neutral middle or an 'I don't know' response.

The survey was mailed to 5,000 randomly selected households from La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, Vernon, and Houston counties that make up the Great Rivers Region. A mailing service was used to draw the sample and manage the mailing list. The number of surveys mailed in each county was proportional to the number of households in the county. The surveys were also sent proportionately to the male head of household and the female head of household according to the male/female distribution in each county. **Table 1** shows the geographic distribution of the household survey and response rate for each county.

Each randomly selected household received a postcard one week in advance to inform the recipients about the COMPASS NOW community needs assessment and encourage their participation in the forthcoming survey. The postcard also explained that the survey was available online via a Survey Monkey link. The 8-page survey included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and the confidentiality of participating, a return envelope and a drawing ticket for a free \$500 gift card to any grocery store in the region. The only requirement for entering the drawing was to return a completed survey. Two-weeks

after the survey was mailed, a reminder post card was sent to the entire sample to remind them to return the survey.

Table 1: Random Household Survey Sample

County	# of Households Received Survey	# of Households Returned Survey*	Response Rate
La Crosse	2416	515	21%
Monroe	894	167	19%
Trempealeau	621	139	22%
Vernon	627	159	25%
Houston	442	114	26%

Note: 12 surveys were returned without county identification.

Profile of the Respondents

The random selection of the household sample ensured that every household in the region had an equal chance of being selected to receive a survey. We compared the demographics of the survey respondents to US Census data to see how similar or different the sample was to the population in the region. In general, we found that the survey sample was representative of the Great Rivers Region with a few limitations.

Compared to the general population of the Great Rivers Region, the survey sample had more female respondents than male respondents. Sixty-seven percent of the survey respondents were female and 33% were male compared to the general population where women and men are represented equally. The age range of the respondents was 18-97. The median age was 59 which is considerably older than the median age of the Great Rivers Region. These differences between the sample and the general population did not surprise the COMPASS team as it has been our experience that older adults tend to fill out surveys more so than younger adults and women also tend to fill out surveys more so than men. We found that even though surveys were addressed to a male householder, female householders still tended to be the one who filled the survey.

Ninety-eight percent of the survey respondents were Caucasian compared to about 94% of the general population in the region who is Caucasian. Forty-nine percent of the respondents had been living in the community for 10 years or more and 30% have lived in their community their entire life. A majority of respondents owned their home (81.5%) relative to respondents who were renters. By

comparison 70% of the Great Rivers Region are home owners. Twenty-four percent of respondents had dependent children living at home compared to the regional average of 29%.

The educational attainment of the respondents tended to be higher than that of the general population. Among the respondents, 26% had a high school diploma, 30% had vocational school training or some college, and 36% were college graduates or had post graduate training. According to US Census by comparison, 35% of the Great Rivers Region has a high school diploma, 32% has an associate's degree or some college and 23% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

The last demographic question in the survey asked respondents to state the range of their household income. **Table 2** shows how closely matched with regard to income the survey sample was to the general population.

Table 2: Household Income

Household Income	Percentage of Survey Sample	Avg. Percentage Regional Population*
Less than \$10,000	6.7	6.6
\$10,000-\$25,000	22.2	18.5
\$25,001-\$50,000	30.2	27.6
\$50,001-\$75,000	20.5	21.5
\$75,001-\$100,000	13.2	13.1
Over \$100,000	7.3	12.7

*Based on ACS 2005-2009 estimates US Census.

Data Collection and Analysis

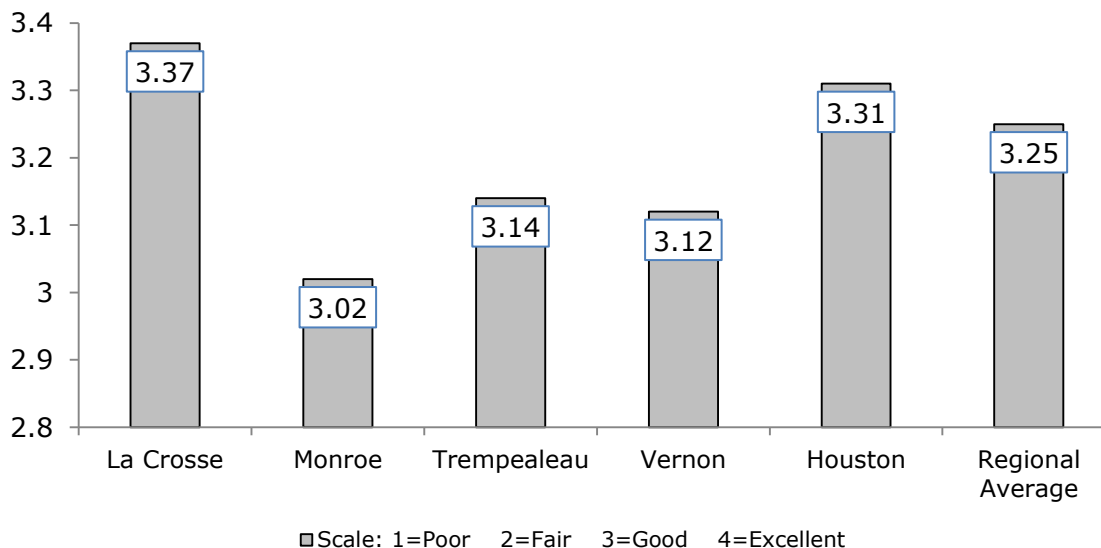
The household surveys were mailed out on February 25, 2011. Respondents were asked to return their survey in the enclosed postage paid self-addressed envelope by April 1. Survey responses were entered into a secure Survey Monkey data entry site and then transferred into SPSS for data analysis. The data was analyzed in aggregate and disaggregated by county. Data analysis was also carried out by particular demographic characteristics such as age, income level, and in a few instances education. Frequencies and mean scores for each survey item were calculated. Based on the calculated mean scores, survey items were ranked for discussion. County differences in mean scores were tested for significance in order to make inferences about a variety of issues at the regional and county level.

Results

A total of **1106 surveys** were returned for a total response rate of 22%. Twelve respondents did not identify which county they lived in. Fifty-one surveys were completed online. The response rate for this COMPASS NOW survey was considerably higher than it had been in 2007. The higher response rate not only increases the participation of the community in the assessment process but also increases the validity of the survey results.

Before starting on the issues sections of the survey, respondents were asked in which county they lived and were asked to rate their community as a place to live. For the purposes of the survey, community was defined as the place where you live, work, and spend most of your time. Overall, respondents rated their communities highly, La Crosse and Houston counties were rated the highest and Vernon and Monroe counties were rated the lowest (see **Figure 1**).

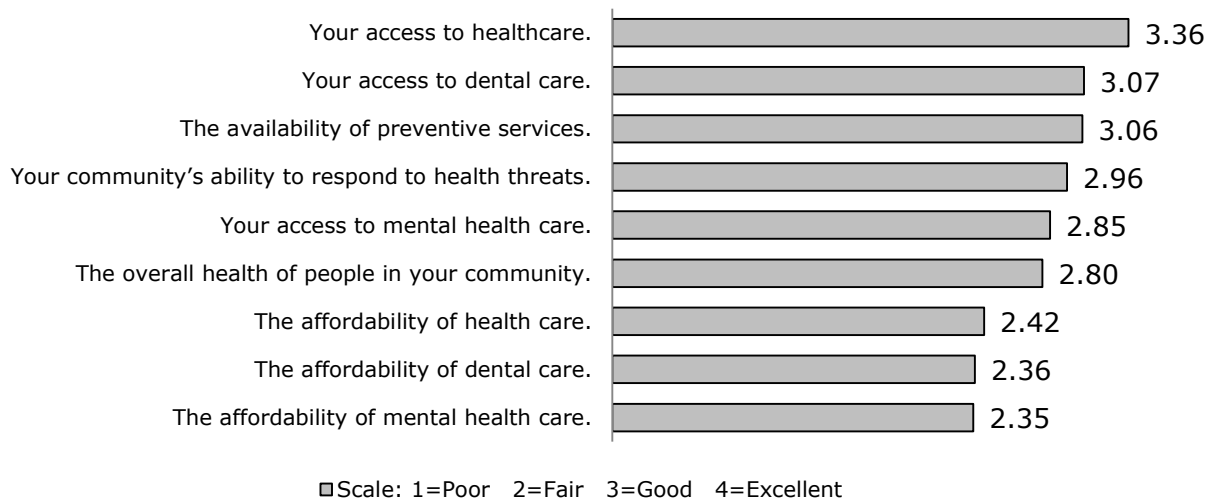
Figure 1: Thinking of the area in which you live and work, how would you rate the area as a place to live?



Health

The first section of the survey asked participants to rate their community with respect to a variety of aspects of health. **Figure 2** shows the mean scores for 9 items included in this section.

Figure 2: Perception of health aspects within the community



- The highest rated item in the health category was **access to healthcare** followed by **access to dental care**, with a mean score of 3.36 and 3.07 respectively. The **availability of preventative services** was rated just as high as access to dental care. Overall, 47.5% of survey respondents rated their access to healthcare as excellent in their community, 40% indicated it was good, 9% rated it fair, and 2% rated access as poor. Of the 5 counties, La Crosse respondents rated their access the highest with a county mean score of 3.57 and Trempealeau rated their access to healthcare the lowest with a score of 3.02. Older respondents tended to rate their access to healthcare higher than younger respondents. Respondents with lower income levels tended to rate their **access to health care, dental care and mental health services** lower than those respondents with higher incomes.
- The lowest rated items in the health section were all related to the **affordability of healthcare, dental care and mental health care** which raises the question of how can healthcare be perceived as accessible if it is also perceived as not affordable. Fifty-one percent rated the affordability of healthcare as fair or poor, 54% rated the affordability of dental care as fair or poor, and 51% rated the affordability of mental

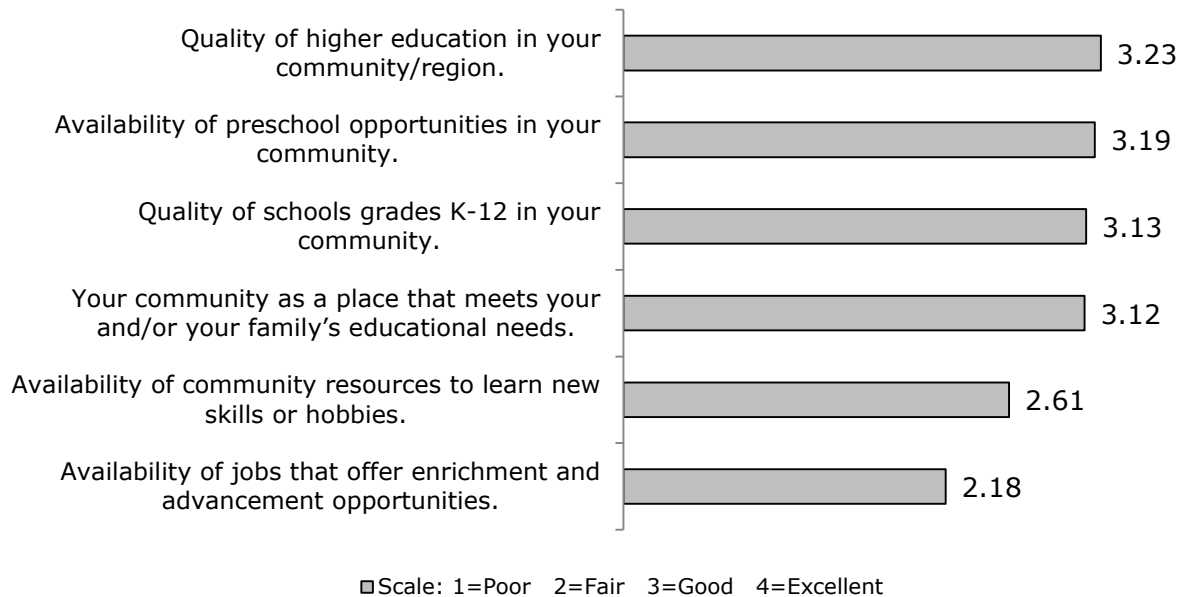
healthcare as fair or poor. Respondents with lower income levels tended to rate health care, dental care, and mental health care less affordable.

- The **community's ability to respond to health threats** was ranked fourth, and was rated good or excellent by 76% of the survey respondents (57% good, 19% excellent).
- Seventy-five percent of survey respondents rated the **overall health of the people of their community** as excellent or good. Houston County residents rated the people in their community healthier than the average, while Monroe and Vernon County residents rated the people in their community as a bit less healthy than the average. Older respondents rated the overall health of people in the community statistically better than did those respondents who were younger.

Education and Lifelong Learning

Another section of the household survey asked respondents to rate 6 aspects of education and lifelong learning in their community (see **Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Perceptions of Lifelong Learning in the Community



- Respondents rated the **quality of higher education in their community/region** and the **availability of preschool opportunities** the highest giving these items statistically equal scores of 3.23 and 3.19 respectively. Overall, 40% indicated that the quality of higher education in their community was excellent, 43% gave it a good rating, 12% fair, and 3% rated higher education as poor. It was not surprising that respondents with dependent children were more likely to rate the availability of preschool opportunities higher than those without dependent children.
- The **quality of schools grades K-12** was the third rated item with a mean score of 3.13. Of all the counties, respondents from La Crosse gave the highest score to the quality of schools in their community. However, respondents from Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon gave the quality of schools in their communities the second highest ranking out of all 6 items.

- The rating for a **community as a place that meets a family's educational needs** was ranked fourth; however, 82% of the respondents ranked the item as good or excellent (52% good, 30% excellent).
- The **availability of community resources to learn new skills or hobbies** ranked near the bottom in every county with an average rating of 2.61. Respondents from Trempealeau gave this item the lowest score of 2.23.
- The lowest rated item in this section and for respondents in every county was the **availability of jobs that offer enrichment and advancement opportunities**, with an average rating of 2.18. Sixty-five percent of the respondents rated the item as fair or poor. Respondents with lower incomes tended to rate this item lower.

Income

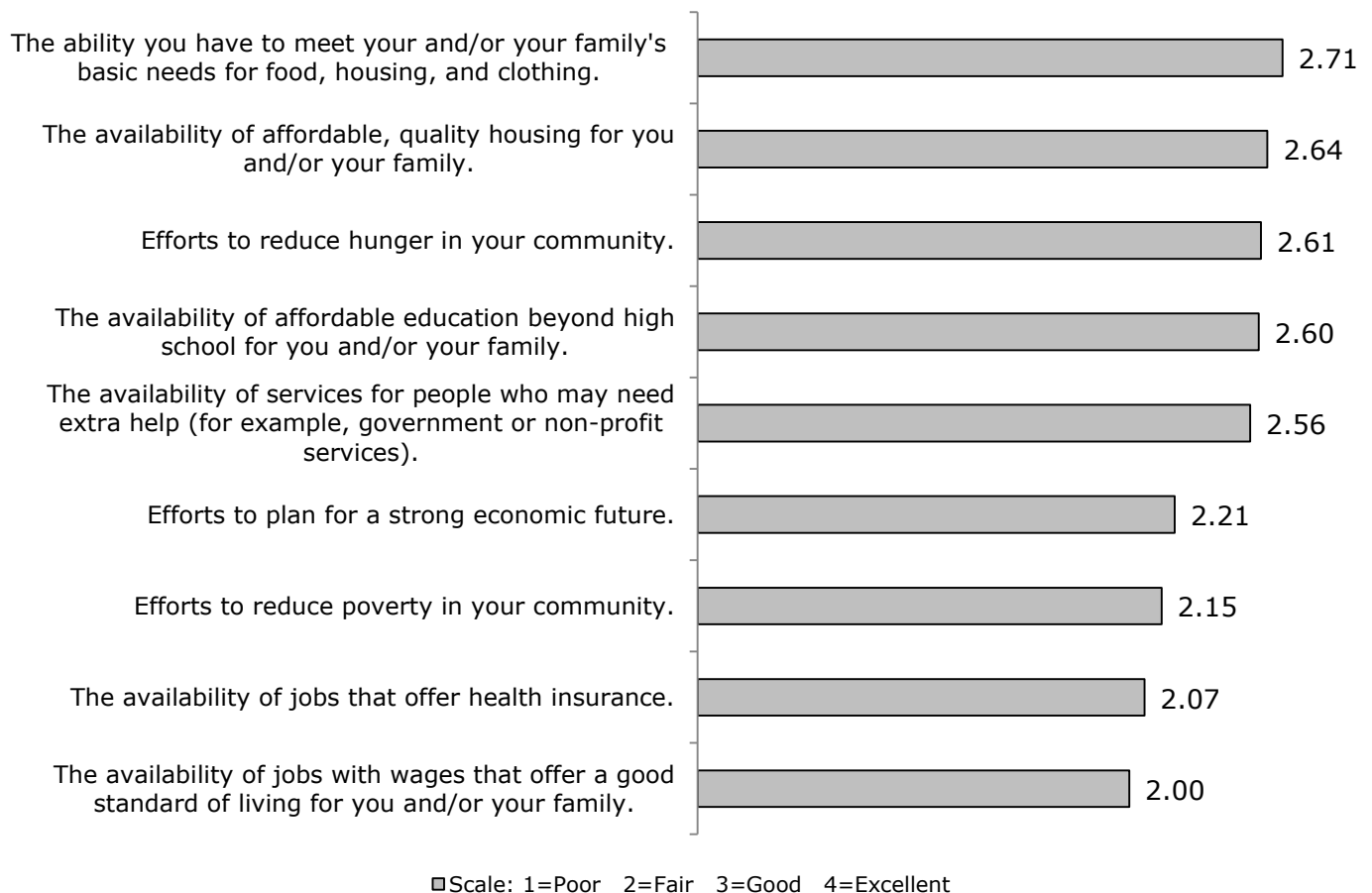
In the next section of the survey, respondents were asked to rate their community with respect to 11 items related to economic life in their community (see **Figure 4**).

- The highest rated item in the income category was the **ability to meet their family's basic needs for food, housing, and clothing**. The mean score for all counties was 2.71, with 65% of the respondents rating the item as excellent or good. However this item varied by income level. As respondent income levels decreased their rating of their ability to meet their basic needs decreased as well.
- The next three items rated in the income category were statistically rated the same. These were: the **availability of affordable and quality housing, efforts to reduce hunger, and the availability of affordable education beyond high school for you and your family**. These items were also highly rated throughout the 5 counties. However, as respondent income levels decreased, the rating of the availability of affordable education beyond high school also decreased.
- Of all the items in the income section, **efforts to reduce poverty, availability of jobs that offer health insurance, and availability of jobs with wages that offer a good standard of living** were rated the lowest. Sixty-five percent of respondents rated efforts to reduce poverty as fair or poor, 69% rated the availability of jobs that offer health insurance as fair or poor, and 73% of the respondents rated the availability

of jobs with wages that offer a good standard of living as fair or poor.

- The **availability of services for people who may need extra help** was ranked right in the middle of all the income issues. A slight majority of respondents rated their community as good or excellent (46.6% and 7.6% respectively) in this regard. Every county except La Crosse rated their community in the second quartile. In comparison to the other economic issues La Crosse respondents rated their community lower in this regard.

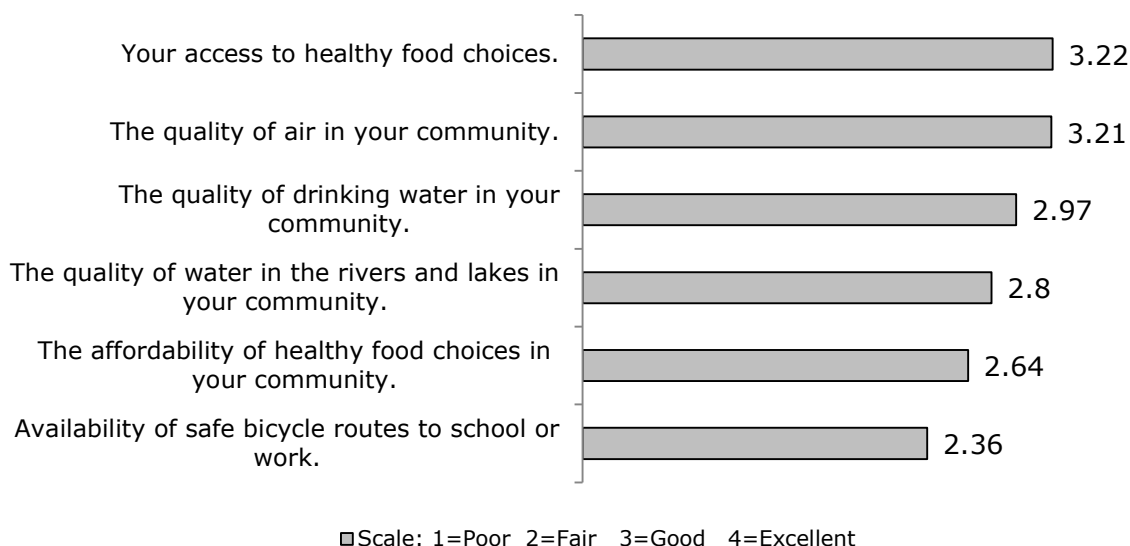
Figure 4: Perception of economic aspects of the community



Community Life

Several survey items asked respondents to rate various aspects related to quality of life in their community (see **Figure 5**). The following six items refer to food, air, water, and bike routes.

Figure 5: Perceptions about the built environment



- **Access to healthy food choices** was rated the highest, with an overall rating of 3.22. 83% of the respondents rated the item as excellent or good. However, respondents rated the **affordability of healthy food choices** much lower with an overall score of 2.64. Forty percent of respondents rated affordability of healthy food choices in your community fair or poor. Older respondents tended to rate their communities higher than younger respondents in this regard but respondents in each county similarly gave lower ratings to affordability of healthy food than to accessibility of healthy food, raising the question if healthy food is considered unaffordable is it really accessible?
- The **quality of air in your community** was rated statistically the same as access to health food choices sharing the highest rating among quality of life items. Every county except La Crosse rated their community's air quality the highest. Overall, 88% of respondents rated their community's air quality as good

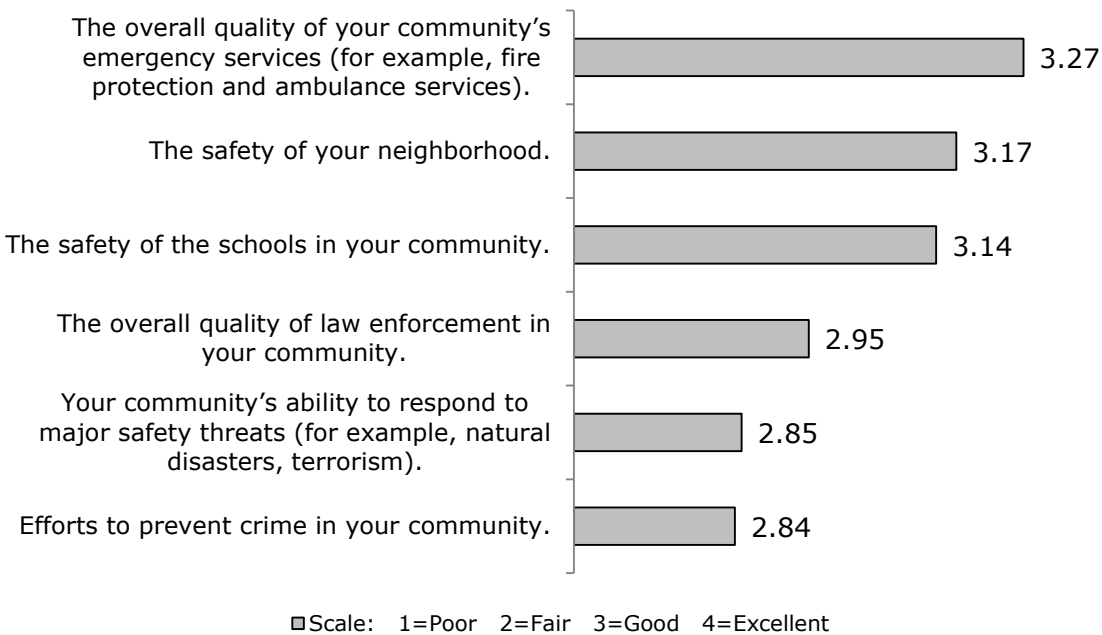
or excellent. The **quality of drinking water** was rated somewhat lower with an overall rating of 2.97, 75% of respondents rated the quality of the drinking water in their community as good or excellent. Only 66% percent of respondents rated the **quality of water in the rivers and lakes** in their community as good or excellent.

- The **availability of safe bicycle routes to school or work** was rated the lowest overall and in every county. Trempealeau and Vernon counties gave this item the lowest average scores with 2.14 and 2.07 respectively.

Public Safety

The COMPASS household survey also asked respondents to rate their communities with regards to various aspects of public safety (see **Figure 6**). Overall respondents rated the Great Rivers Region highly with regards to public safety issues.

Figure 6: Perceptions of Public Safety



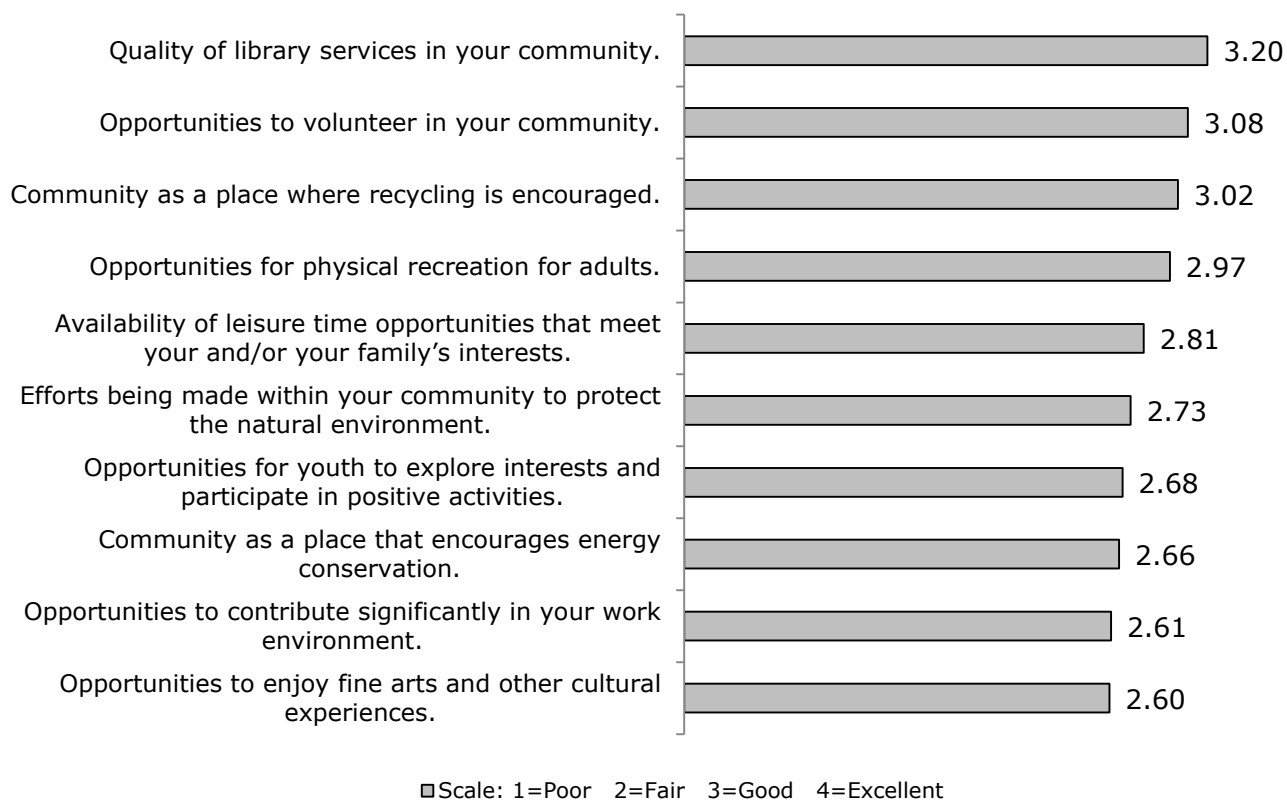
- The highest rated item with regards to public safety was the **overall quality of your community's emergency services, such as fire protection and ambulance services**. Overall, 89% of respondents rated the emergency services in their community as either good or excellent.
- The **safety of your neighborhood** received the second highest rating with an overall score of 3.17. Respondents from Houston County gave their communities the highest rating (3.25) with regards to safety of their neighborhood. Respondents in Monroe County rated the safety of their communities the lowest with a score of 3.02. However, less than 2% of respondents in Monroe County rated the safety of their neighborhood as poor and only 13% rated the safety in their neighborhood as fair. Overall we found that lower income respondents had a lower perception of safety in their community.
- The **safety of the schools in the community** was also rated quite high with an overall rating of 3.14. Eighty-eight percent of respondents rated the safety in schools as either good or excellent. Respondents from Trempealeau and Vernon counties rated their school's safety the highest with scores of 3.18 and 3.19 respectively.
- Your **community's ability to respond to major safety threats (for example, natural disasters, terrorism)** was rated near the bottom with an overall rating of 2.85. Although this rating puts the item near the bottom, overall the ratings in this section were still high. Seventy percent of respondents rated their community's ability to respond to major safety threats as either good or excellent.
- Within the public safety section of the survey, **efforts to prevent crime in your community** was rated the lowest, with an overall rating of 2.84. Twenty-eight percent of survey respondents rated their community as fair or poor in efforts to prevent crime. Respondents in every county except Vernon County rated this item the lowest as well.

Quality of Life

Respondents were asked to rate various items related to the quality of life in their community (see **Figure 7**). These issues related to the opportunities available to volunteer, for leisure and cultural activities, the quality of library services and efforts of conservation and recycling.

- The three highest rated items in this quality of life section were the **quality of library services in your community, opportunities to volunteer in your community, and your community as a place where recycling is encouraged**. Overall, 85% of respondents rated the library services in their community as excellent or good. Eighty-one percent of respondents rated opportunities to volunteer in your community as good or excellent, and 78% rated their community as good or excellent with regards to recycling being encouraged. All counties rated these items in their top three with exception of La Crosse County respondents who gave a higher rating to opportunities for physical recreation and family leisure time. Houston County rated their community the highest with regards to encouraging recycling.
- Other items rated in the top half were **opportunities for physical recreation for adults** and the **availability of leisure time opportunities for your family's interests**. Only respondents from Trempealeau rated these items in the bottom half of the items.
- The lowest rated items in this quality of life section were **opportunities to contribute significantly in your work environment** and **opportunities to enjoy the fine arts and other cultural experiences**. Only respondents from La Crosse rated their opportunities to enjoy the fine arts and cultural experiences right in the middle with a rating of 2.99. Trempealeau county respondents were the most critical of their community with 73% of them rating their community's opportunities for fine arts as either fair or poor.

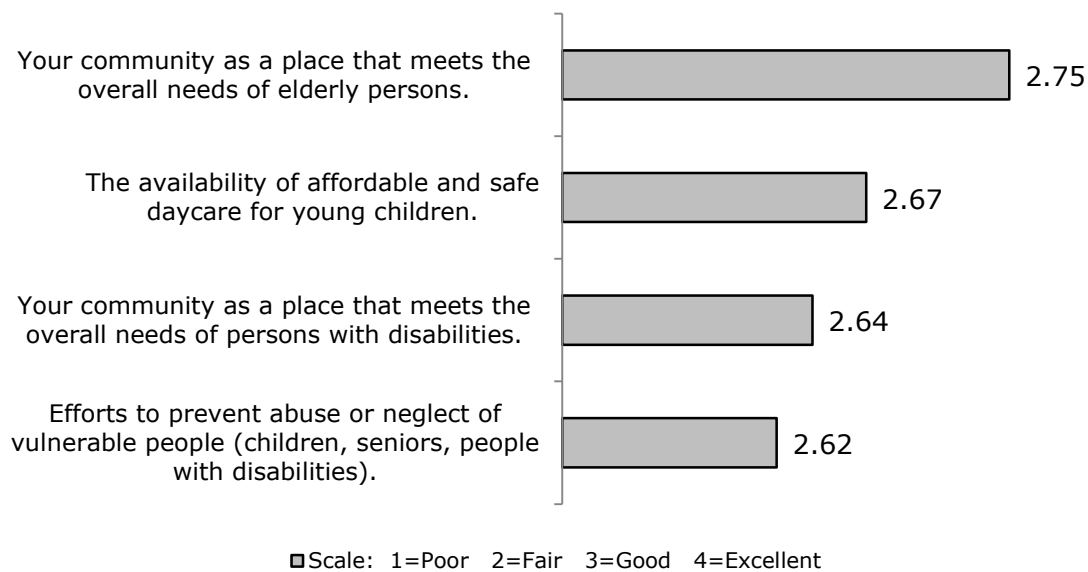
Figure 7: Perceptions of the Quality of Life in the Community



Vulnerable Populations

The COMPASS household survey also looked at the community's perception of how well the Great Rivers Region meets the needs of and protects the most vulnerable populations in the community, the elderly, the disabled and children. The range of responses in all five counties was quite similar although how each item ranked in the section was different in each county. The results of these four items are below in **Figure 8**.

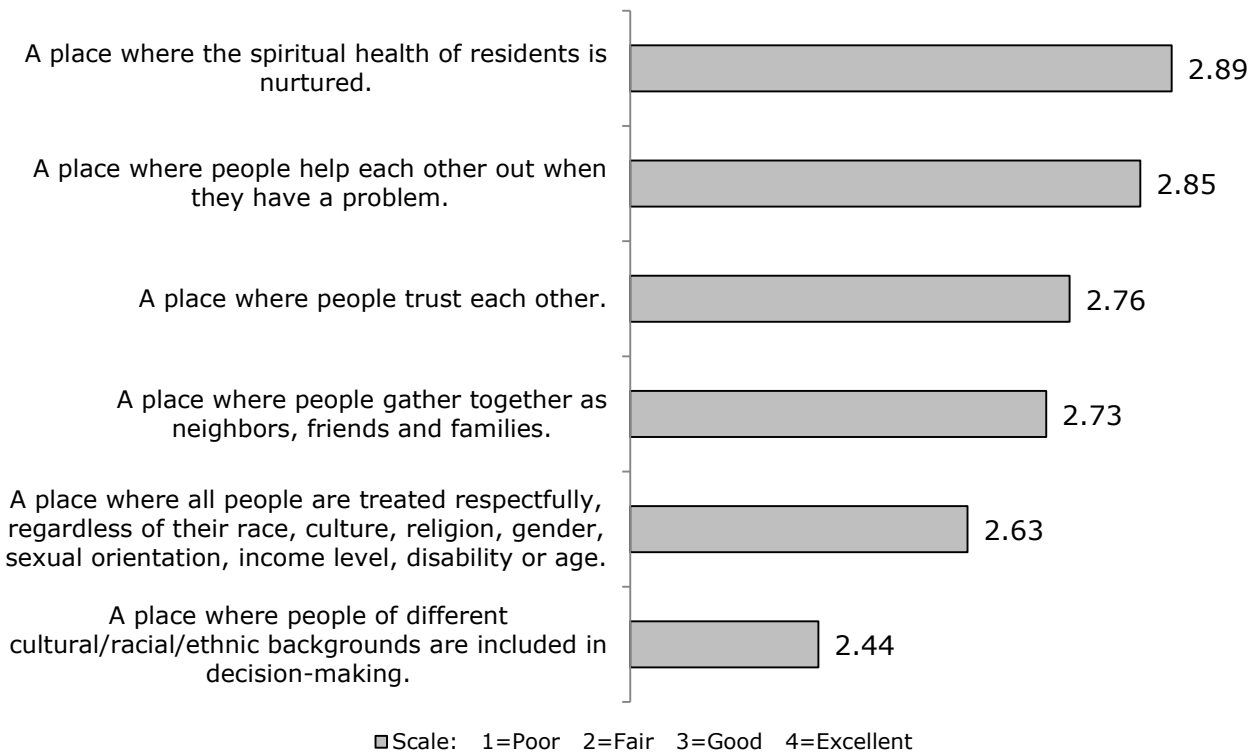
Figure 8: Perception regarding vulnerable populations



- The highest rated item in this section of the survey was **your community as a place that meets the overall needs of elderly persons**. Sixty-five percent of respondents gave a good or excellent rating in this regard. Older respondents tended to rate their communities higher than younger respondents.
- The second highest item rated was the **availability of affordable and safe day care for young children**. Fifty-seven percent of respondents rated their community as good or excellent in this regard. Respondents with minor children in the home tended to rate their community lower in the availability of affordable and safe day care. Respondents from Houston County rated their community the highest in this regard with

71% of respondents rating their community either good or excellent.

- Respondents also rated their communities with regards to how the **overall needs of persons with disabilities** were met. Overall the respondents gave an average rating of 2.64. Respondents from Houston and La Crosse counties rated their communities higher and the other three counties rated their communities lower.
- **Efforts to prevent abuse or neglect of vulnerable populations** were rated the lowest overall. La Crosse respondents gave the highest rating among the counties with 60 % of respondents rating their community as good or excellent for an average rating of 2.69. The lowest ratings were in Trempealeau and Monroe counties where both had an average score of 2.50.

Figure 9: Perceptions of caring in the community

Caring in the Community

Respondents were also asked to rate the caring nature of their communities including how certain populations are treated and included (see **Figure 9**).

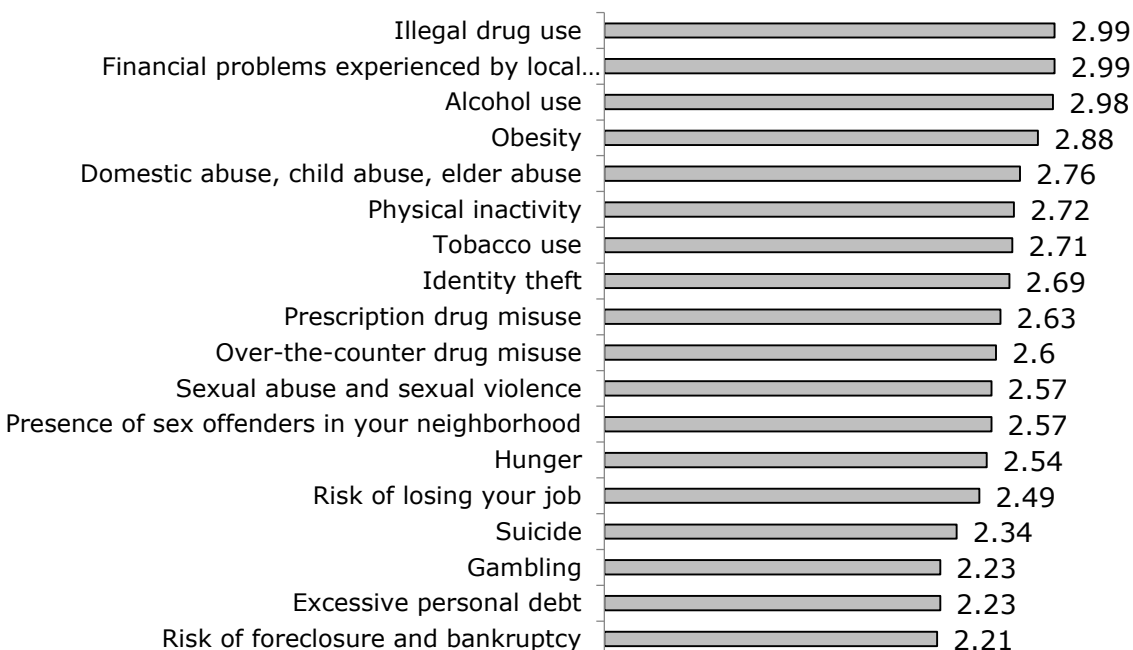
- Respondents rated their communities the highest with regards to being a **place where the spiritual health of the residents is nurtured, a place where people help each other out when they have a problem, and a place where people trust each other**. Respondents from Monroe County rated their community lower with regard to trust.
- Respondents gave the lowest ratings on the items **a place where all people are treated respectfully, regardless of their race, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, income level, disability or age** and **a place where people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds are included in decision-making**. Fifty percent of respondents rated their community as fair or poor in including cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds in decision-making.

Respondents in every community gave their lowest rating to this item. Respondents from Houston and Monroe counties rated their communities higher than the overall mean score.

Community Concerns

The last section of the survey asked respondents to rate their level of concern regarding 18 issues facing communities today (see **Figure 10**). The scale used for this section was 1 to 5 where 1 equalled no concern and 5 equalled very concerned.

Figure 10: Issues of Concern for the Community



Scale: 1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Excellent

- The highest rated community concerns were **financial problems experienced by local governments, illegal drug use, and alcohol use**. These three issues ranked in the top four in every county with La Crosse respondents rating the financial problem of local governments the highest. Overall, 34% of respondents indicated they were very concerned with the **financial problems experienced by local governments** and 37% indicated they were very concerned with the issue of **illegal drug use**. Forty-seven percent of respondents in Monroe County and 42% of respondents in Houston County

indicated the highest level of concern for illegal drug use in their community. Thirty-eight percent of respondents answered they were very concerned about **alcohol use** in their community. Statistically respondents were equally concerned about these three items.

- **Obesity and domestic abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse** were the next highest rated concerns for all respondents. Overall 65% of respondents indicated significant level of concern for obesity in their community (31% very concerned). At the county level, obesity was among the top four issues in all counties. Fifty-six percent of respondents indicated at least significant level of concern for **domestic abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse** (28% very concerned).
- In the second and third quartile, respondents were concerned about criminal issues such as **identity theft, sexual abuse and sexual violence, and the presence of sex offenders in your neighborhood**, behaviour issues such as **physical inactivity, prescription and over-the-counter drug misuse**. Older respondents tended to be more concerned about all of these issues than younger respondents except for identity theft where there were no differences by age of respondents.
- The items of least concern were **hunger, risk of job loss, suicide, gambling, excessive personal debt, and risk of foreclosure and bankruptcy**. Although younger respondents and lower income respondents tended to indicate higher levels of concern than older respondents and higher income respondents.