

9-2001

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2001 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey Results

September 10, 2001

Prepared by:

Donna VanIwaarden, Ph.D.

Community Research Institute

www.gvsu.edu/philanthropy/cri





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The Community Research Institute (CRI) at Grand Valley State University, a partnership between the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership and the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, serves the Greater Grand Rapids nonprofit and philanthropic community. CRI's mission is to assist nonprofit organizations with acquisition of information and technical skills that will help to understand the evolving needs of the community, plan programs and solve problems, and measure outcomes.

CRI engages in original applied research and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) projects and is a clearinghouse for community data. The CRI web site provides a comprehensive overview of community indicators at www.gvsu.edu/philanthropy/cri.

Questions about the **2001 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey Results** may be directed to Dr. Donna VanIwaarden at 336-7585 or vaniwaad@gvsu.edu.

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Executive Summary

The Community Research Institute (CRI) collaborated with The Delta Strategy, Heart of West Michigan United Way, Area Agency on Aging, and the City of Grand Rapids to develop a survey to assess citizen opinions, perceptions, and behaviors about the quality of life in the Greater Grand Rapids area.

The survey was sent to a random sample of 10,000 households in Kent County, and 1472 were returned and analyzed. Responses were examined to determine if there were statistically significant differences between various demographic groups. Data were also compared to last year's Delta/CRI telephone survey.

Most of the respondents gave the area a grade of A or B as a place to live. They describe their neighborhoods as safe and desirable places to live, although they are not sure if the neighborhood children have enough activities for after school hours. Seventy-two percent of households have Internet access at home, school or work (including nearly 16% of those aged 80 and over).

Two issues emerged as top priorities for the community – education and crime/public safety. Health care and poverty were a distant third and fourth priority.

Parental involvement in school activities remains high. Parents identified academic quality and good teachers as the best things about their child's school. There was less agreement about the worst qualities, but over-crowding, lack of diversity, and poor student behavior or values were cited. Minorities were 3.4 times more likely to mention the condition of school buildings.

Racial inequality remains at a high level, with 68% of minorities saying they experience racial discrimination. Other forms of discrimination – age, gender, appearance, for example, were also reported by some residents.

Although most respondents use private transportation, minorities are 3.6 times more likely than non-minorities to use public transportation. Carpooling has remained static since last year (11.7%), but observation of ozone action days has increased from 39.7% last year to 59.4%.

While citizens are receiving good medical care, 14% have trouble paying for needed medication. Half are exercising regularly, and one-quarter are eating the recommended 5 servings/day of fruits and vegetables.

Area citizens (37%) are providing help for elderly friends and relatives, sometimes missing work to do it. For most of the care providers, this assistance involves less than four hours per week and consists of errands, transportation, yard work, housework, and handling financial matters. Half of those aged 25 to 44 who provide elder care are also caring for children.

Respondents aged 60 and over report a strong preference for remaining in their homes as they grow older. Less than half of them report needing assistance. Those who do need help, primarily for yard work and housework, are typically receiving it from their adult child.

Introduction

Background

In summer 2001, representatives of The Delta Strategy, Heart of West Michigan United Way, Area Agency on Aging, the City of Grand Rapids, and GVSU's Community Research Institute (CRI) developed a survey to assess citizen opinions, perceptions, and behaviors. Forty-seven questions addressed issues such as overall community livability, community priorities, neighborhood safety and sociability, education, employment, health, equality of opportunity and treatment, childcare, eldercare, and Internet access.

A random sample of 10,000 household addresses was obtained from Wirthlin Worldwide, and on August 6 the surveys were mailed to households in Kent County. The four-page questionnaire was accompanied by a letter of explanation and support, signed by representatives of the five organizations. The research was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee of Grand Valley State University.

By September 5, nearly 15% (1472) of the surveys had been returned to CRI for analysis.

The results, which will be used for program planning, needs assessment, and indicators of community status, are described in this report.

Respondent Demographics

The majority of respondents are non-minority (92.0%), between 18-59 years of age (71.5%), and have a household income of less than \$75,000 (69.5%). Two percent reported Hispanic origin. Slightly more males (53.5%) than females (45.7%) responded.

Over half live in six school districts: Grand Rapids (27.0%), Kentwood (9.3%), Forest Hills (8.6%), Wyoming (5.8%), Grandville (5.6%), and Rockford (5.6%). Twenty-eight percent live in the other 14 school districts. Ten percent of the respondents did not indicate their school district.

As a group, survey respondents vary from the Kent County population in several categories. Notably, the respondent population has a greater proportion of adults over age 60, a smaller proportion of people of color, a smaller proportion of Grand Rapids residents, and a slightly higher proportion of males (see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Survey Respondents and Kent County Demographics

	Survey Respondents	Kent County Census 2000
Age		
18-59 years	71.5%	71.7%
60 and over	27.6%	13.5%
Gender		
Males	53.5%	48.4%
Females	45.7%	51.6%
Race		
White	92.0%	85.0%
Black/African American	3.3%	9.8%
Asian	0.9%	2.2%
American Indian	0.5%	1.1%
Multi-racial	1.6%	2.2%
Hispanic Origin	2.1%	7.0%
Household Income*		
Less than \$25,000	18.9%	22.2%
\$25,000-\$34,999	13.0%	11.1%
\$35,000-\$49,999	16.2%	16.0%
\$50,000 and over	44.3%	50.6%
Average Household Size	2.6	2.6
Community Residence**		
Grand Rapids	27.0%	35.0%
Geographic Location***		
Urban	27.0%	
Suburban	49.9%	
Rural	13.5%	

*U.S. Census data for Household Income for Kent County has not been released.
Data in the table are 1999 estimates from Market Statistics.

**Public School District is used as a proxy for community residence and geographic location in this survey.

***Urban: Grand Rapids Public Schools.

Suburban: Comstock Park, East Grand Rapids, Forest Hills, Godfrey-Lee, Godwin Heights, Grandville, Kelloggsville, Kenowa Hills, Kentwood, Northview, Rockford, and Wyoming.

Rural: Byron Center, Caledonia, Cedar Springs, Kent City, Lowell, Sparta, and Thornapple-Kellogg.

Data Analysis and Format of Report

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Responses were also examined by sub-groups to determine if responses varied by demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, race, income, and geographic location within the county. Demographic categories were collapsed, when necessary, to conduct statistical tests. For example, there are too few respondents in the racial categories to be analyzed separately as African American, Asian, American Indian, or Multi-racial; therefore, race is analyzed using minority or non-minority categories. Similarly, age is sometimes analyzed as “under age 60” and “over age 60.” Income groups are sometimes identified as “low-mid income” (household incomes under \$50,000) and “high income” (household incomes over \$50,000). Significant differences are reported and displayed in tables. (Test statistic and statistical significance level {p-value} are shown below the tables where appropriate.)

Responses are also compared to results from the 2000 Delta Strategy/CRI telephone survey of 406 Kent County residents.

It is important to note that all respondents did not answer each question. Response percentages are provided based on the whole sample (n=1472) except as noted.

The results of the study are divided into 13 sections:

- Community Livability
- Community Priorities
- Education
- Financial Stability
- Employment
- Child Care
- Public Transportation
- Equality/Discrimination
- Neighborhood Vitality and Safety
- Environmental Concerns
- Health and Medical Care
- Elder Care: Care Giving, Care Needs, and Housing Preferences of Senior Adults
- Internet Access

Survey Results

Community Livability

Question: *Overall, what grade would you give to the Greater Grand Rapids area as a place to live?*

Kent County residents gave high marks to their community as a place to live. Most (87.2%) gave the area a grade of “A” or “B.” Only 2.1% gave the community a grade of D or F. The proportion of respondents giving high marks was greater this year than last year (79.6%).

There were no differences in the grades based on age or gender. However, there were differences based on race, income, and location.

⇒ *Non-minorities gave higher grades than minorities.* 89.5% of non-minorities and 74.2% of minorities gave an A or B grade.

Table 2. Community Grade by Race

Grade	Non-Minorities	Minorities
A – Excellent	29.9%	9.0%
B – Good	59.7%	65.2%
C – Fair	8.6%	20.2%
D – Poor	1.0%	4.5%
F – Failing	0.7%	1.1%

(n=1430)

Chi-square = 33.4, df=4, p=.0

⇒ *Those with higher household incomes were more likely to give a grade of A or B than those with lower incomes.*

Table 3. Proportion of A/B Grade by Income

Income	% Grading A or B
Less than \$25,000	77.4%
\$25,000-\$34,999	89.2%
\$35,000-\$49,999	92.0%
\$50,000-\$74,999	94.4%
\$75,000 or more	95.3%

(n=1347)

Chi-square = 52.0, df=16, p=.0

⇒ *Suburbanites gave higher grades than either urban or rural residents.*

Table 4. Community Grade by Location

Grade	Urban	Suburban	Rural
A or B	87.5%	91.2%	84.5%
C or lower	12.5%	8.8%	15.5%

(n=1313)

Chi-square = 27.9, df=8, p=.01

Community Priorities

Question: *What should be the number one priority of our community?*

Respondents are most concerned about education and crime/public safety, followed distantly by health care, and poverty. Table 4 shows the priorities receiving at least a 1% response. Some respondents (6.8%) listed more than one priority and some (5.4%) did not respond to the question.

Table 5. Number One Priority

Priority	%
Education	29.2%
Crime and Public Safety	21.2%
Health Care	8.8%
Poverty	6.8%
Child Abuse and Neglect	4.5%
Racism	3.6%
Elder Care	2.8%
Transportation	2.6%
Substance Abuse	1.9%
Child Care	1.5%

There are statistically significant differences in priorities based on age, race, gender, income, and location. Differences of 1% or more between the groups are shown in the tables below.

⇒ *The biggest differences in priorities between older adults and younger adults are health care and poverty. More of those under age 60 are concerned about poverty, education, racism, and child care. More of those over 60 are concerned with health care and elder care. See Table 6.*

Table 6. Differences in Priorities by Age

Priority	Under Age 60	Over Age 60
Health Care	7.5%	14.2%
Poverty	8.2%	4.5%
Child Abuse and Neglect	5.3%	3.5%
Elder Care	2.3%	4.5%
Child Care	1.9%	0.8%

(n=1383)

⇒ *The biggest differences in priorities between minorities and non-minorities are racism, crime, and poverty. More minorities are concerned about racism and poverty than non-minorities while more non-minorities are concerned about education, crime/public safety, and health care.*

Table 7. Differences in Priorities by Race

Priority	Non-Minorities	Minorities
Education	31.1%	27.3%
Crime and Public Safety	23.2%	11.4%
Health Care	9.5%	6.8%
Poverty	6.7%	13.6%
Child Abuse and Neglect	4.9	3.4
Elder Care	3.0	1.1
Racism	2.8	18.2
Substance Abuse	2.1	0.0
Child Care	1.7	0.0

(n=1368)

⇒ *The biggest differences in priorities between men and women are crime and child abuse. A greater proportion of men are concerned about crime, transportation, and racism. A greater proportion of women are concerned with health care, child abuse and neglect, and child care.*

Table 8. Differences in Priorities by Gender

Priority	Males	Females
Education	30.5%	31.5%
Crime and Public Safety	24.3%	19.7%
Health Care	8.8%	10.1%
Racism	4.3%	3.3%
Child Abuse and Neglect	3.5%	6.3%
Transportation	3.2%	2.4%
Substance Abuse	2.5%	1.4%
Child Care	1.1%	2.2%

(n=1383)

⇒ *The biggest differences between those with lower incomes and those with higher incomes are education, health care, and crime. A greater proportion of the low-mid income group (incomes under \$50,000) are concerned with health care and crime than those with higher incomes (over \$50,000).*

Table 9. Differences in Priorities by Income

Priority	High Income	Low-Mid Income
Education	39.6%	23.9%
Crime and Public Safety	20.3%	24.0%
Health Care	7.6%	11.6%
Child Abuse and Neglect	4.1%	5.3%
Substance Abuse	2.5%	1.5%
Child Care	2.2%	1.0%
Elder Care	2.2%	3.4%

(n=1306)

⇒ *The biggest differences by location are crime and education. A greater proportion of urban residents are concerned about education and crime than other groups. More rural residents are concerned about health care and substance abuse than others. A greater proportion of suburban residents are concerned about child abuse and neglect and transportation than other groups.*

Table 10. Differences in Priorities by Location

Priority	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Education	33.7%	31.2	29.1
Crime and Public Safety	26.1	22.6	17.0
Health Care	8.4	8.3	11.5
Racism	3.9	3.9	2.7
Child Abuse and Neglect	2.6	6.2	3.8
Transportation	1.8	3.5	1.1
Substance Abuse	1.6	2.0	4.9
Child Care	1.3	1.3	3.8

(n=1260)

Education

As noted in the previous section, education was the number one priority of most respondents. The survey addressed several specific questions related to education – type of school attended, best and worst thing about the school, parental involvement in school, and whether the school district had high or low expectations for student achievement.

Question: *What type of school does your child attend?*

Nearly 29% of the respondents had children in school; most of them in public schools (see Table 11.)

Table 11. Type of Schools Attended by Respondents' Children

School	%
Public	70.2%
Private	21.0%
Charter	6.2%
Home-school	2.6%

(n=419)

While 70% of both minorities and non-minorities have their children in public school, there is a difference between the two groups for those children not in public school.

- ⇒ *Minority children who are not in public school are equally likely to be in charter or private schools while non-minority children who are not in public school are twice as likely to be in private schools.*
- ⇒ *Children in private school are more likely to be from higher income households. 52.4% of children in private schools are from families with incomes of \$75,000 or more. There are no children in private schools from families with incomes under \$15,000.*
- ⇒ *Nearly 40% of urban respondents are sending their children to private school. This compares to just over 15% of suburban and rural respondents who are sending their children to private school. It should be noted that there are more alternatives to public schools in the city of Grand Rapids than in the other suburban or rural districts.*

Table 12. Differences in Type of School Attended by Location

Type of School	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Public	45.8%	78.9%	78.8%
Private	39.6%	15.6%	15.2%
Charter	11.5%	3.0%	3.0%
Home-schooled	3.1%	2.5%	3.0%

(n=399)

Question: *What is the best thing about your child's school?*

Academic quality and teachers are “best” about their child’s school, followed distantly by religious education and parent-school communication. Over 55% of all groups, except minorities, cite them as “best” about their school. Academic quality and teachers are top responses for minorities also, but in a lesser proportion.

Of the other qualities:

- ⇒ *Religious education is slightly more important to those with higher incomes and parent-school communication is slightly more important to those with lower incomes.*

- ⇒ *Women are more concerned about diversity than men. Men are more concerned about good student behavior and religious education.*
- ⇒ *Minorities are more concerned than non-minorities about diversity, parent-school communication, and safety. Non-minorities are more concerned about religious education.*
- ⇒ *Urban residents are more concerned with diversity than suburban or rural residents. Rural residents are more concerned with extra-curricular activities than the other two groups. Urban and rural residents are more concerned than suburbanites about religious education.*

Question: *What is the worst thing about your child's school?*

There was less overall agreement about the “worst” thing about their child’s school. Most-often cited as the “worst” thing was over-crowded classes (21.3%) followed by lack of diversity (17.7%) and poor student behavior or values (14.9%). In last year’s survey, the worst things were over-crowded classes, lack of bus service, and poor student behavior.

Responses from men and women were similar, but there were substantial differences between other groups.

- ⇒ *16.7% of minorities compared to 4.9% of non-minorities cited “condition of the building” as the worst thing.*
- ⇒ *Between low-mid income respondents and high income respondents, the biggest differences were lack of diversity, over-crowded classes, poor student behavior or values, and condition of the building (Table 13).*

Table 13. “Worst” Qualities of School by Income

	Low-Mid Income	High Income
Over-crowded classes	14.3%	23.8%
Lack of diversity	10.7%	22.1%
Poor student behavior	21.4%	12.6%
Condition of building	10.7%	3.5%

(n=343)

- ⇒ *The biggest differences among urban, suburban and rural groups are overcrowded classes, condition of building, poor student values, lack of diversity, and lack of bus service. Suburbanites are more likely to cite overcrowding, poor student behavior, and lack of diversity. Rural residents are more likely to cite condition of building. Urban dwellers are more likely than the other groups to cite lack of bus service.*
- ⇒ *The biggest difference based on race is condition of building, with 16.7% of minorities citing this problem compared to 4.9% of non-minorities.*

Question: *In the past year, have you done any of the following?*
Attended a parent-teacher conference
Attended a general school meeting
Attended a school or class event
Volunteered at school or served on a school committee

Most parents are involved in their children's school – 92.9% have attended a school event, 92.5% have attended a parent-teacher conference, 63.9% have volunteered or served on a committee, and 57.2% have attended a general school meeting such as those sponsored by parent-teacher organizations. This is very similar to the numbers reported in last year's survey.

There are no differences in volunteering or attending a school meeting based on gender or location, but there are differences based on race and income.

⇒ *Minorities and lower income respondents are less likely to participate in either of these activities.*

Question: *Do you believe the school district where you live has high expectations for all students?*

Low expectations have been called a subtle form of discrimination, and research has shown that high expectations are associated with high achievement.ⁱ

Less than half of the survey respondents believe their school district has high expectations (see Table 14). This is considerably lower than last year's survey in which 65.6% believed their district had high expectations.

Table 14. Do You Believe Your School District Has High Expectations For All Students

	Response
Yes	44.5%
No	20.9%
Don't Know/No Response	34.6%

(n=1472)

The biggest difference in expectations is for respondents from different locations.

⇒ Urban respondents are far less likely than suburban or rural respondents to believe the school district where they live has high expectations for all students.

Table 15. Expectations for Students based on Location

High Expectations	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Yes	21.2%	59.0%	58.7%
No	43.4%	13.9%	15.3%
Don't Know	35.4%	27.1%	25.9%

(n=1280)

Chi-square=186.1, df=4, p=.0

- ⇒ *Adults under age 60 are twice as likely to believe that their school district does not have high expectations for all students.*
 - ⇒ *Lower income adults are more likely to believe their school district does not have high expectations.*
 - ⇒ *Non-minorities are more likely to believe their school districts have high expectations and minorities are more likely to say they don't know.*
-

Family Financial Stability

Question: *How often do you worry about running out of money for food, clothing, and shelter for you and your family?*

Although 60.0% of respondents do not worry about meeting their basic needs, respondents are slightly more worried this year than they were last year (see Table 16).

Table 16. Worry about Basic Needs – Last Year and This Year

Level of Worry	2000	2001
Often	10.4	12.0
Occasionally	24.1	27.3
Never	64.9	60.0

(n=1462 in 2001 survey)

There are significant differences between some groups. Minorities, those with lower incomes, younger respondents, and women are more likely to worry about meeting basic needs.

- ⇒ 20% of minorities worry “all the time” about having enough money to cover basic needs compared to 5.6% of non-minorities.

Table 17. Worry about Basic Needs By Race

Level of Worry	Non-Minorities	Minorities
All the time	5.6%	20.2%
At least once a month	5.1%	11.2%
Occasionally	26.9%	32.6%
Never	62.3%	36.0%

(n=1436)

Chi-square=43.3, df=3, p=.0

- ⇒ *Those with incomes under \$50,000 are also much more likely to worry about meeting basic needs.*

Table 18. Worry about Basic Needs By Income

Level of Worry	Low-Mid Income	High Income
All the time	11.3%	1.7%
At least once a month	9.1%	1.7%
Occasionally	35.6%	19.8%
Never	44.1%	76.8%

(n=1358)

Chi-square=172, df=3, p=.0

⇒ *Younger respondents are more worried than older adults.*

Table 19. Worry about Basic Needs By Age

Level of Worry	Under Age 60	Over Age 60
All the time	7.2%	5.0%
At least once a month	6.0%	4.2%
Occasionally	28.4%	24.2%
Never	58.3%	66.6%

(n=1452)

Chi-square=9.0, df=3, p=.0

⇒ *65.2% of men and 55.3% of women never worry about running out of money for food, clothing, and shelter.*

Question: *How well are you and your family doing financially today compared to a year ago?*

Responses indicate that families are losing ground financially this year compared to last. Less than 15% of respondents report that they are better off this year and 19% are worse or somewhat worse. In last year's survey, 25.7% were better off and 11.1% were worse.

Table 20. How Well Are You And Your Family Going Financially Today Compared To A Year Ago?

	2000	2001
Better	25.7%	14.7%
Somewhat Better	18.7%	15.9%
About the Same	43.6%	49.6%
Somewhat Worse	6.9%	14.1%
Worse	4.2%	4.9%

(n=1460 in 2001 survey)

There are significant differences between groups based on race, income, and age.

⇒ *49.7% of minorities report that they are better off this year than last compared to 29.7% non-minorities.*

⇒ *39.1% of those with higher incomes and 25.4% of lower income respondents report that they are better off this year.*

⇒ *Older adults (60 years and over) are far more likely than those under 60 to report that they are staying “about the same.”*

Employment

Question: *How would you describe your current employment status?
If you are looking for a better job, what is the main thing
keeping you from getting the type of job you want?*

Slightly over half of the respondents are working and satisfied with their jobs, 28.4% are out of the workforce due to retirement or by choice, 2.9% are unemployed and looking for a job. About fifteen percent are working but want a better job. The main obstacle to a better job is a need for new skills or training. Twenty percent of those looking for a better job say that they cannot find one. There are no significant differences by race, location, or income.

Question: *Have you participated in some form of job training or
education in the last year?
If no, what was the main reason you didn’t participate in
training?*

Sixty-one percent of survey respondents have *not* participated in some form of job training in the past year. While most of them cited “no interest or no need” as the reason, the other top two reasons were lack of time and cost.

There are no differences in participation in job training by location and gender. However, there are differences by age, race and income. Younger, minority, and higher income adults are more likely to have participated in training last year.

⇒ *48.3% of minorities compared to 36.4% of non-minorities report that they have had training. (Note that minority respondents also tend to be younger than non-minority respondents.)*

⇒ *44.5% of those with higher incomes compared to 32.7% of those with lower incomes report that they participated in training last year.*

Child Care

Question: *Have you been able to find childcare that suits your family's needs?
If not, what is the reason?*

Over 80% of the respondents do not need childcare. Of those who do need childcare, 18.7% have not been able to find suitable care. The biggest obstacle is cost (56.8%) and the other major reason is that care is not available at the time it is needed (29.5%).

Equality

Question: *Do you believe you and your family experience equal opportunity and treatment compared to others?*

Eighty-three percent of survey respondents believe that their family experiences equal opportunity and treatment. This is a slight drop from last year's survey result of 87.1%.

As shown in Table 21, both minorities and non-minorities are feeling a decreased sense of equality of opportunity and treatment this year. However, the decrease is dramatic among minority respondents, dropping from 79.1% in 2000 to 51.8% in 2001.

Table 21. Respondents Who Do *Not* Believe They Experience Equal Opportunity And Treatment Compared To Others – 2000 and 2001 Survey Comparison

	2000 Survey	2001 Survey
Minorities	24.2%	48.2%
Non-Minorities	7.9%	11.9%

(n=1409 in 2001 survey)

An analysis of this year's survey shows that there are no statistically significant differences based on age, gender, or location although younger people and women are slightly less likely to believe they are treated equally. There are significant differences based on race and income.

⇒ *Barely half of minority respondents feel that they receive equal opportunity and treatment compared to 88.1% of non-minorities.*

Table 22. Believe that Family Receives Equal Opportunity And Treatment Compared To Others – by Race

	Minorities	Non-minorities
Yes	51.8%	88.1%
No	48.2%	11.9%

(n=1409)

Chi-square=87.5, df=1, p=.0

⇒ *The belief that one is experiencing equal opportunity and treatment increases as income increases although it drops slightly at the highest level. (see Table 23).*

Table 23. Believe that Family Receives Equal Opportunity And Treatment Compared To Others by Income Groups

	Under \$10,000	\$10,000-\$14,999	\$15,000-\$24,999	\$25,000-\$34,999	\$35,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$99,999	\$100,000 or more
Yes	57.8%	77.5%	80.8%	79.9%	84.7%	89.0%	93.9%	90.0%
No	42.4%	22.5%	19.2%	20.1%	15.3%	11.0%	6.1%	10.0%

(n=1329)

Chi-square=52.7, df=7, p=.0

Question: *In the past year, have you felt that you were discriminated against for any of the following reasons? Race or ethnicity, sex/gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, appearance, economic status*

Some Kent County residents report feelings of discrimination based on age, gender, race or ethnicity, appearance, economic status, religion, disability, and sexual orientation (see Table 24). Younger people are more likely to report all forms of discrimination than those over 60 years of age.

Table 24. Proportion of Respondents Who Report Feelings of Discrimination

Discrimination	%
Age	15.3%
Gender	11.1%
Race or Ethnicity	8.2%
Appearance	6.5%
Economic Status	6.3%
Religion	4.8%
Disability	2.9%
Sexual Orientation	1.4%

Age Discrimination

Over 15% of survey respondents report feelings of age discrimination. Those most likely to report this form of discrimination are aged 18-24 or over 45 years, have lower household incomes, or live in rural areas. There are no differences based on race.

⇒ *Age discrimination has a bipolar distribution; that is, it appears at both ends of the age continuum. Nearly half (46.9%) of those between 18-24 years of age report age discrimination. The trend then drops for those between 25 and 44, and begins to rise again at 45 (Table 25).*

Table 25. Age Discrimination by Age Groups

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	60-69	70-79	80 or over
Yes	46.9%	13.3%	6.3%	24.6%	29.8%	33.0%	28.0%

(n=1028)

Chi-square=69.0, df=7, p=.0

⇒ *Age discrimination is also reported most frequently by those with lower incomes and diminishes as income increases.*

Table 26. Age Discrimination by Income Groups

	Under \$25,000	\$25,000- \$34,999	\$35,000- \$49,999	\$50,000- \$74,999	\$75,000 - over
Yes	33.0%	21.8%	18.7%	17.5%	10.7%

(n=968) Chi-square=26.5, df=4 p=.0

⇒ *More rural residents report age discrimination than suburban or urban residents.*

Table 27. Age Discrimination by Location

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Yes	19.3%	20.1%	31.9%

(n=937) Chi-square=10.0, df=2, p=.0

Sex/gender Discrimination

Those most likely to say they experience sex discrimination are female, under age 60, minority, and have household incomes under \$75,000.

⇒ *Three times more women (24.9%) than men report sex discrimination.*

⇒ *Twenty percent of those under age 60 report sex discrimination compared to 5.3% of those over age 60.*

⇒ *Minorities are twice as likely to report sex discrimination than non-minorities.*

Race or Ethnicity Discrimination

⇒ *Sixty-eight percent of minorities report racial discrimination. This compares to 71% last year.*

Appearance Discrimination

Nearly 7% of respondents report discrimination because of appearance. They are more likely to be minority, young, report poor health status, and be less sociable than other respondents.

⇒ *Twenty percent of minorities report appearance discrimination compared to 8.3% of non-minorities.*

Economic Discrimination

Just over 6% of respondents report economic discrimination. They tend to be younger and have lower incomes.

⇒ *Minorities are nearly three times as likely as non-minorities to report economic discrimination.*

Neighborhood Vitality And Safety

Several questions addressed issues around desirability of the neighborhood as a place to live, feelings of safety in the neighborhood, social interaction, and activities for children.

Neighborhood Desirability

Question: *How do you rate your neighborhood as a place to live?*

The majority of Greater Grand Rapids residents report that their neighborhood is desirable or very desirable as a place to live (Table 28).

Table 28. Desirability of Neighborhood

	%
Very Desirable	37.9
Desirable	41.4
Acceptable	17.5
Undesirable	2.3
Very Undesirable	0.8

(n=1472)

- ⇒ *Minorities are more likely to rate their neighborhoods as desirable (34.1%) or acceptable (41.8%). Non-minorities are more likely to rate their neighborhood as very desirable (39.5%) or desirable (42.2%).*
- ⇒ *Desirability of the neighborhood is directly correlated with income. As income increases, a greater proportion of respondents report their neighborhood as very desirable.*
- ⇒ *72.1% of urban respondents describe their neighborhood as very desirable or desirable, compared to 83.5% of suburban and 86.9% of rural residents.*

Safety

Question: *Do you feel safe walking in your neighborhood?
Do children ages 5-18 living in your neighborhood feel safe?*

Over 90% of respondents report feeling safe or very safe in their neighborhoods. Most of them (68.5%) also believe that children in their neighborhood feel safe.

This is notable since crime/safety was the second most-often cited issue that should be the number one community priority.

- ⇒ *Those who feel unsafe in their neighborhoods are more likely to be minority, low income, female, younger, and live in the city.*

Social Interaction

Question: *Do you frequently talk to your neighbors?*

Question: *During the past two weeks, did you get together socially with friends or neighbors?*

Question: *During the past two weeks, did you get together socially with any relatives not including those you live with?*

Most respondents report frequent social interaction with neighbors, friends, and relatives.

Table 29. Social Interaction

	%
Frequently talk to neighbors	71.1%
Got together with friends or neighbors in the past two weeks	65.8%
Got together with relatives in the past two weeks	83.6%

(n=1472)

There are some differences in social interaction based on age, race, and income.

⇒ *Those over age 60 are more likely than those under 60 to frequently talk to their neighbors, but those under 60 are more likely to have had a social gathering with their neighbors in the past two weeks.*

⇒ *Minorities are less likely than non-minorities to talk to neighbors or get together with friends, neighbors, or relatives.*

Table 30. Social Interaction by Race

	Non-minorities	Minorities
Frequently talk to neighbors	72.6%	54.9%
Got together with friends or neighbors in the past two weeks	66.8%	59.3%
Got together with relatives in the past two weeks	84.2%	75.8%

(n=1439)

p=.0

⇒ *Social interaction on all three measures increases as income increases.*

Neighborhood Activities for Children

Question: *Do the children in your neighborhood have enough activities for after school, weekends and during the summer?*

Question: *Which of the following activities are available for children in your neighborhood? Places for sports activities like baseball or soccer, community youth center, community swimming pool, tennis courts, basketball courts, library, other*

Nearly half (46.9%) of the respondents report that they don't know whether the children in their neighborhood have enough activities. Thirty-six percent say there are enough activities, compared to 58.6% last year. Fewer urban residents than suburban or rural residents believe there are enough activities in their neighborhoods (see Table 31.)

Table 31. Enough Neighborhood Activities Available for Children by Location

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Yes	28.8%	40.9%	41.0%
No	16.7%	13.6%	20.0%
Don't Know	54.5%	45.6%	39.0%

(n=1313)

Chi-square=23.2, df=4, p=.0

The activities most cited as available for neighborhood children are places for sports and libraries. Only 13.7% report that their neighborhood has a community youth center. (See Table 32.)

Table 32. Neighborhood Activities Available for Children

	%
Places for sports activities	65.2%
Library	62.2%
Basketball courts	53.7%
Tennis courts	53.5%
Community swimming pool	38.5%
Community youth center	13.7%
Other	9.3%

(n=1472)

Public Transportation

Question: *Do you ever use public transportation?
If no, what is the main reason?*

Most (88.2%) Greater Grand Rapids residents do not use public transportation. Those most likely to report using public transportation are urban residents, minorities, low income, between 18-24 years of age or 80 and over.

Table 33. Public Transportation Use by Race, Location, Income and Age

	%
Race	
Minorities	34.8%
Non-minorities	9.5%
Location	
Urban	14.9%
Suburban	9.8%
Rural	7.1%

Income	
Under \$25,000	22.4%
\$25,000-\$34,999	12.1%
\$35,000-\$49,999	6.7%
\$50,000-\$74,999	4.9%
\$75,000 and over	7.0%
Age	
18-24	17.7%
25-34	9.5%
35-44	10.1%
45-59	14.0%
60-69	8.1%
70-79	8.3%
80 and over	12.5%

(n=1472)

The main reason given for not using public transportation is “I use private transportation.” However, nearly 20% of those who do not use public transportation say that buses don’t run where then need to go or buses don’t serve their area. Reasons vary by race and location (see Table 34).

Table 34. Reasons for Not Using Public Transportation by Race

	Minorities	Non-minorities
I use private transportation	67.2%	69.4%
Public transportation doesn’t serve my area	3.3%	14.0%
Buses don’t run where I need to go	11.5%	8.8%
I don’t feel safe on the bus	6.6%	1.7%
Cost	1.6%	0.5%

(n=1272)

⇒ *Minorities who don’t use public transportation are more likely to say that the buses don’t run where they need to go; non-minorities say public transportation doesn’t serve their area.*

Table 34. Reasons for Not Using Public Transportation by Location

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
I use private transportation	81.3%	68.2%	45.6%
Public transportation doesn’t serve my area	2.4%	12.9%	36.8%
Buses don’t run where I need to go	9.2%	10.2%	6.6%
I don’t feel safe on the bus	2.4%	2.1%	0.5%
Cost	0.9%	0.5%	0.5%

(n=1176)

⇒ *Rural residents are most likely to report that public transportation doesn't serve their area.*

⇒ *Cost is the least important factor in not using public transportation.*

Environmental Issues

Question: *How would you rate the natural environment of the Greater Grand Rapids area?*

Most (70.6%) respondents rate the natural environment of Greater Grand Rapids as “somewhat clean;” 13.7% say “very clean;” and 13.5% say it is “not clean” or “somewhat not clean.”

There are differences in opinion on this issue based on race, income, and age as shown in the tables below.

⇒ *Minorities are more likely than non-minorities to have a negative opinion about the cleanliness of the environment.*

Table 35. Opinions about the Cleanliness of the Natural Environment by Race

	Minorities	Non-minorities
Very clean	8.8%	14.1%
Somewhat clean	64.8%	71.9%
Somewhat not clean	17.6%	9.7%
Not clean	5.5%	3.2%
Don't know	3.3%	1.2%

(n=1434)

Chi-square=11.7, df=4, p=.0

⇒ *Those with lower incomes are more likely to have a negative opinion about the cleanliness of the environment.*

Table 36. Opinions about the Cleanliness of the Natural Environment by Income

	Under \$50,000	\$50,000 and over
Very clean	11.2%	15.7%
Somewhat clean	69.3%	74.4%
Somewhat not clean	13.4%	7.3%
Not clean	4.1%	2.5%
Don't know	2.0%	0.2%

(n=1352)

Chi-square=31.4, df=4, p=.0

⇒ *Younger people are more likely to have negative opinions about the cleanliness of the environment.*

Table 37. Opinions about the Cleanliness of the Natural Environment by Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	60-69	70 - over
Very clean	6.6%	8.5%	12.8%	16.6%	13.4%	16.5%
Somewhat clean	62.3%	73.9%	72.3%	69.7%	73.3%	72.3%
Somewhat not clean	23.0%	13.7%	10.9%	8.8%	7.6%	6.9%
Not clean	8.2%	3.4%	2.6%	3.4%	5.2%	1.3%
Don't know	0.0%	0.4%	1.5%	1.5%	0.6%	3.0%

(n=1448)

Chi-square=54.3, df=28, p=.0

Question: *Do you and/or your family recycle on a regular basis?*

Question: *Do you and/or your family observe ozone action days?*

Question: *Do you and/or your family carpool on a regular basis?*

Recycling

There has been no improvement in the proportion of families who regularly recycle in the past year. Last year's survey revealed that 57% recycled and this year it is 56%.

⇒ *Those over 35 years of age are more likely to recycle than those under 35.*

⇒ *Non-minorities are more likely to recycle than minorities.*

⇒ *Urban residents are more likely to recycle than suburban or rural residents.*

Table 38. Differences in Regular Recycling by Age, Race, Location

	% who recycle
Age (n=1453)	
Under 35	36.0%
Over 35	58.5%
Race (n=1438)	
Minority	33.0%
Non-Minority	57.7%
Location (n=1325)	
Urban	71.3%
Suburban	52.9%
Rural	43.4%

Observing Ozone Action Days

More respondents are observing ozone action days this year (59.4%) than last year (40.0%). *Those most likely to observe ozone action days are female, over the age of 35, urban, have an income of \$50,000 or more, and non-minority.*

Carpooling

About the same proportion of families is carpooling this year (11.7%) as last year (10%). *Minorities are twice as likely as non-minorities to carpool; those under the age of 60 are*

three times as likely to carpool; and rural residents are slightly more likely to carpool than urban or suburban residents.

Health and Medical Care

The survey asked for a self-rating of health status, the practice of various healthful behaviors, level of satisfaction with medical care, and ability to pay for prescriptions drugs.

Self-assessment of Health

Question: *How would you rate your health?*

Most (85.8%) respondents rate their health as “excellent” or “good.” Another 11.8% rate it fair; 2.0% rate it poor. Minorities, young and old, are twice as likely as non-minorities to report their health as “fair.” Health ratings also decline with age and income (see Tables 40 and 41). There are no differences by gender or location of residence.

⇒ *Fewer minorities than non-minorities rate their health as excellent. Nearly twice as many minorities than non-minorities rate their health as fair (see Table 39).*

Table 39. Personal Ratings of Health by Race

	Minorities	Non-minorities
Excellent	22.2%	30.3%
Good	55.6%	57.0%
Fair	20.0%	10.9%
Poor	2.2%	1.9%

(n=1438)

Chi-square=8.0, df=3, p=.05

⇒ *Respondents, regardless of income, are most likely to rate their health as good. However, those with incomes over \$50,000 are twice as likely to rate their health as excellent while those with incomes under \$50,000 are three times as likely to rate their health as fair.*

Table 40. Personal Ratings of Health By Household Income

	Under \$50,000	Over \$50,000
Excellent	21.1%	40.2%
Good	58.9%	53.9%
Fair	16.6%	5.4%
Poor	3.4%	0.5%

(n=1355)

Chi-square=94.6, df=3, p=.0

Healthy Behaviors

- Question:** *Do you get a physical exam once a year?*
Question: *Do you see a dentist at least once a year?*
Question: *Do you exercise at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes?*
Question: *Do you eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day?*

Respondents are more likely to see a dentist every year than have a physical exam. Half are exercising regularly and one-quarter are eating their fruits and vegetables. Table 42 displays the proportion of respondents engaging in these healthful behaviors.

Table 41. Proportion of Respondents Practicing Healthful Behaviors

	Respondents
Annual dentist visit	85.1%
Annual physical exam	70.7 %
Exercise at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes	49.6%
Eat at least 5 servings of fruits/vegetables each day	26.1%

Annual Physical Exam

Seventy percent of respondents report that they get a physical exam every year. There are no differences in this rate by race, income or location. However, there are statistically significant differences between men and women and between those under and over age 60.

- ⇒ *Older respondents are more likely to get a physical exam each year; 82.5% of respondents aged 60 and over compared to 66.7% of younger respondents.*
- ⇒ *Women are more likely to get a physical exam each year than men; 82.5% of women compared to 61.1% of men.*

Annual Dentist Visit

Eighty-five percent of respondents report that they see a dentist at least once a year. There are significant differences in rates by race, age, income, and gender. The demographic group with the lowest rate (43.5%) of annual dental visits is those with incomes under \$10,000.

- ⇒ *Minorities are significantly less likely to see their dentist than non-minorities; 67.8% of minorities compared to 86.9% of non-minorities.*
- ⇒ *Adults under 35 years of age are less likely than all other age groups to see their dentist annually except for those 80 and over.*
- ⇒ *The probability of seeing a dentist at least once a year increases with income (see Table 42).*

Table 42. Annual Dental Visits by Income

	Under \$10,000	\$10,000- \$14,999	\$15,000- \$24,999	\$25,000- \$34,999	\$35,000- \$49,999	\$50,000- \$74,999	\$75,000- \$99,999	\$100,000 or more
Yes	43.5%	60.8%	74.3%	84.4%	86.2%	93.0%	95.7%	94.8%

(n=1355)

Chi-square=159.0, df=7, p=.0

Regular Exercise

There has been no improvement from last year in the level of regular exercise reported by area residents. About half of the respondents exercise at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes. This amount of exercise is considered to be minimal for maintaining good health.ⁱⁱ

There are no statistically significant differences based on demographic characteristics.

Healthy Diet

National dietary guidelines recommend eating 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.ⁱⁱⁱ Fewer respondents this year report meeting this goal, 26.1% compared to 35% last year. This rate is slightly than the national average (20%) as measured in a recent national poll.

The demographic group with the highest rate of healthy eating was the “age 60 and over” at 37.6%. Those in the income category of “\$75,000 and over” had a rate of 33.7%. Urban residents (31.5%) had a high proportion of healthy eaters compared to rural

(22.8%) and suburban (24.0%). The group with the lowest rate was the “25-34” age group at 16.6%.

There were no differences in healthy eating by gender or race.

Medical Care

Question: *Do you feel that you get good medical care?*

Question: *If not, why?*

Ninety percent of respondents believe that they are getting good medical care. Of those who are not satisfied with their medical care, 32.4% don’t have health insurance, 23.9% don’t like their doctor or doctors in general, and 17.6% don’t have a regular doctor. Six percent cited their HMO or PPO as the cause of their dissatisfaction.

There were demographic differences in those who are not happy with their medical care. More women, minorities, respondents under 35 years of age, and those with incomes under \$35,000 report dissatisfaction.

Question: *Do you have trouble paying for medication when you need it?*

Nearly 14% of respondents have trouble paying for their medication. Minorities are twice as likely as non-minorities to have trouble paying for medicine. Thirty-nine percent of those with incomes under \$25,000 and 14.3% of those with incomes from

\$25,000 to \$34,999, 19.5% of rural residents, and 24.3% of those aged 70 or over also report this difficulty.

Table 43. Groups Needing Help in Paying for Medication

	%
Under \$25,000 household income	38.5%
Minorities	27.0%
Adults aged 70 or over	24.3%
Rural residents	19.5%
\$25,000-\$34,999 household income	14.3%

Elder Care Issues

Care Giving

Question: *Do you regularly provide help for a parent or elderly friend or relative?*

Thirty-seven percent of survey respondents provide help for an elderly relative or friend, and over one-quarter (28.9%) miss work occasionally in order to provide that help.

⇒ Elder assistance is provided by all age groups, especially those in the middle (see Table 44).

Table 44. Percent In Each Age Group Providing Elder Assistance

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	60-69	70-79	80 -over
36.8%	25.9%	44.3%	49.7%	46.3%	35.9%	21.6%

There are no differences in the provision of assistance based on race, income, gender or location.

Respondents report that they provide many forms of assistance, such as running errands, transportation for doctor visits, yard work, and companionship. Table 45 displays the type of assistance and the proportion of respondents who provide it.

Table 45. Types of Assistance Provided to Elderly Relatives or Friends

	%
Errands	67.6%
Transportation to doctor	46.5%
Yard work	38.8%
Transportation for shopping	36.3%
Housework	34.1%
Handling financial matters	31.3%
Meal Preparation	23.3%
Medications	17.0%
Bathing or personal care	11.2%
Other: companionship, home repair, etc.	11.4%

(n=546)

Most (68.5%) assistance providers spend less than four hours per week giving help to their elderly relatives or friends. Twenty-six percent spend between 4 and 20 hours a week and 5.5% spend more than 20 hours/week.

- ⇒ *Minorities are more likely than non-minorities to spend more than 20 hours/week providing assistance.*
- ⇒ *Adults with incomes under \$25,000 are twice as likely as others to provide more than 20 hours of help.*
- ⇒ *Women and men are equally likely to provide assistance, but women are more likely to provide more hours of help.*

About one-third of the assistance providers also provide care to children. Half of those aged 25 to 44 who provide elder care are also caring for children.

Elder Living Preference and Needs

Nearly 28% of the respondents were over 60 years of age. Most of them live in houses (72.6%), apartments (10.1%), assisted living facilities (1.0%), and “other” (16.0%) such as a condo or mobile home.

Question: *As you grow older, how important is it for you to remain in your own home or apartment?*

The majority (75.3%) say that it is very important for them to remain in their own home or apartment as they grow older. Twenty-one percent say it is “somewhat important” and 3.7% say it is not important. Most of those who say it is not important are 70 years of age or over.

Question: *Do you regularly need help with any of these activities?
preparing meals, bathing or personal care, errands, handling
financial matters, yard work, transportation, housework, taking
medications*

Yard work and housework are the activities most often mentioned as being needed, but very few older respondents report that they need assistance. In all cases, those most typically needing assistance are 70 years of age or older. Those in their sixties appear to be quite self-sufficient.

Question: *If you regularly receive help, who provides it?
Spouse, adult child/children, community service agency, private
agency, neighbor/friend*

Nearly half (46.0%) of those aged 60 and over report receiving regular help. The adult child is most likely to provide the assistance, followed by spouse, and neighbor (see Table 46).

Table 46. Who Provides Regular Help for Respondents Over Age 60

	%
Adult child/children	41.0%
Spouse	21.9%
Neighbor/friend	18.2%
Private agency	14.3%
Community service agency	1.1%

(n=187)

Internet Access

Question: *Do you have access to the Internet at home, school, or work?*

The majority (72.3%) of respondents have access to the Internet either at home, school or work. Minorities and non-minorities reported access in nearly equal proportions. More men reported access than women.

⇒ Internet access decreased with increasing age, but even 15.7% of those 80-89 years old reported they had access.

⇒ Internet access increases with increasing income, from a low of 44.2% of those with incomes under \$25,000 to a high of 97.7% of those with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

Summary

Most of the 1472 respondents gave the Greater Grand Rapids area high marks for overall livability. They describe their neighborhoods as safe and desirable places to live, and they frequently talk to their neighbors and get together with friends and relatives.

Despite this apparent sense of well-being, crime and public safety emerged as one of the “number one” priorities that the community should address, second only to education. Less than half (44.5%) believe the school district in which they live has high expectations for all students.

Seventy percent of those with school-aged children send them to public schools. Most parents agree that academic quality and good teachers are the best qualities of their schools. There is less overall agreement about the worst qualities. The most-often cited worst qualities are over-crowding and lack of diversity. Seventeen percent of minorities, compared to 4.9% of non-minorities, cite the poor condition of school buildings.

Parents report a high level of involvement in their child’s school, attending school events and parent-teacher conferences. Nearly 64% have volunteered or served on a committee at school in the past year.

Some families appear to be losing ground financially compared to last year, while half are staying about the same. Twenty percent of minorities, compared to 5.6% of non-minorities, say they worry all the time about having enough money to cover basic needs.

About fifteen percent of workers want a better job, but most say they need new skills or training. Over one third of the respondents have participated in some form of job training last year. Minority and higher income adults have a higher rate of job training.

Nearly half of minority citizens do not receive equal opportunity and treatment compared to others. This is up from 24% last year. Sixty-eight percent of minorities say they experience racial discrimination.

Although most respondents use private transportation, minorities are 3.6 times more likely than non-minorities to use public transportation.

Concern for the environment is demonstrated by those who recycle (56%), observe ozone action days (59.4%), and carpool (11.7%). The rate of recycling and carpooling has remained static since last year, but observing ozone action days has increased from 40%.

While 85.8% of area residents rate their health as excellent or good, these ratings decline with age and income. Most citizens have an annual visit to their doctor and dentist. Half say they exercise regularly, and one-quarter say they eat their fruits and vegetables. They are getting good medical care, but 14% have trouble paying for their medication.

Thirty-seven percent of area citizens are providing help for an elderly relative or friend, and 28.9% miss work occasionally to do so. For most of the care providers, this assistance involves less than four hours per week and consists of errands, transportation,

yard work, housework, and handling financial matters. Half of those aged 25 to 44 who provide elder care are also caring for children.

Elders themselves report a strong preference for staying in their own homes as they grow older. Few of those under age 70 report a need for assistance. Those who do need help, primarily for yard work and housework, are typically receiving it from their adult child.

ⁱ Lumsden, Linda. "Expectations for Students." ERIC Digest, Number 116.
www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed409609.html

ⁱⁱ www.surgeongeneral.gov

ⁱⁱⁱ www.health.gov/healthypeople/Document/html/uih/uih_4htm