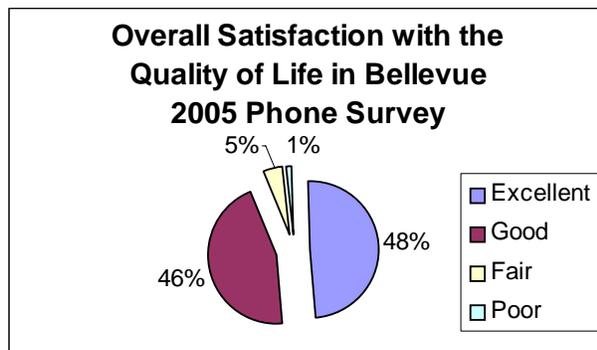


Quality of Life in Bellevue

What makes a community livable? For most people, it's usually a combination of factors — some very concrete, like quality parks and beaches, or good schools, and some that are part of a personal perception, such as feelings about safety, neighborliness, or civic engagement. During the data collection phase of the *Needs Update*, residents who participated in the phone and consumer surveys were asked to rate their satisfaction with living in Bellevue. Those participating in the phone survey were also asked to rate community-wide problems. This section of the *Needs Update* summarizes the key findings related to how residents perceive the quality of life in Bellevue, what makes the City “livable” for them, and also what community issues were of most concern.



Perception of the Quality of Life in Bellevue

Nearly all (94%) respondents to the 2005 phone survey said that the quality of life in their community was either “excellent” (48%) or “good” (46%). Just 5% rated it “fair” and only 1% rated it as “poor.” This is identical to the percentages reported in 2003. Surveys conducted by the City for other purposes found similar results. For example, in the 2004 Budget Survey, the majority of respondents (97%) rated the City as either a good or an excellent place in which to live, and 96% said that their neighborhoods were a good or excellent place to live. In the *City of Bellevue 2004 Performance Measures Survey*, more than one-quarter of respondents to a phone survey (29%) indicated that their neighborhood had a strong sense of community, and forty-two percent rated it as “average.” In the same survey, 92% rated their neighborhood as either “excellent” or “good.” The consumer survey also asked respondents the question about satisfaction with living in the

community. Between 1999-2005, about 80% of respondents rated living in Bellevue as good or excellent. The pervasive theme of the comments made on this survey was that Bellevue is safe, beautiful, a good place to raise a family and to work, and that the ethnic and cultural diversity in the City is valued.

Community Assets

Bellevue residents in several focus groups and in written comments on the consumer survey identified some of the community assets that they like best:

- Diversity
- Openness, kindness of people, “the way they treat people”
- Clean city
- Great trails and parks, “the park system is very good”
- Safety, low crime rate
- Good social services
- Good schools

Factors That Influence Respondents’ Choices

Not surprisingly, certain factors such as whether or not a respondent speaks English and their perception of problems in the community affect how people rate their community as a excellent place in which to live:

- Respondents who perceive that there are no moderate or major problems existing in the community are significantly more likely to say their community is an excellent place in which to

live when compared to those who perceive there to be one or more moderate or major problems in their community (55% compared to 38%). However, it is notable that a little more than half (52%) of residents who perceive that there are six to ten problems in their community also say their community is a good place in which to live.

- Those with incomes of \$75,000 or greater are significantly more likely to say their community is an “excellent” place in which to live (55%) than are those with lesser incomes (38%).
- Respondents whose main language is English are more likely than those whose main language is something other than English to give an “excellent” rating to their community (50% compared to 34%).

Perception of Community Problem Areas in Bellevue

In the phone survey, respondents were asked to rate 33 potential problem areas as to whether they felt these were problems for individuals and families in the community. In 2005, one new “community issue” question was added: *People not knowing how to manage their personal finances*. Results from this question have no comparable data from past surveys. When interpreting these ratings it is important to note that these reflect people’s perceptions, which may not necessarily reflect the actual prevalence of problems. A variety of factors such as local or national media attention or positive or negative personal experiences with an issue may have affected respondents’ ratings. Another factor to consider is that the term “your community” was not defined in the survey. The manner in which respondents interpreted this phrase likely varied from one person to another.

The majority of respondents to the phone survey (85%) rated at least one of the 33 problems mentioned as being a moderate or major problem in their community. This is very similar to the findings in 1999 (89%), 2001 (87%) and 2003 (88%). In

2005, most community problem areas were considered not a problem or a minor problem by a majority of residents, similar to 2003. Topping the list of unproblematic areas were homelessness, effects of gang activities, racial or ethnic discrimination, and hunger.

There are nine areas that can be considered to be among the top tier of most frequent problem areas in the community. These areas, listed below, received a “major” or “moderate” problem rating from at least three out of ten respondents (30%):

- Lack of affordable housing (61% major/moderate)
- Lack of affordable medical insurance (53% major/moderate)
- Lack of affordable medical care (43% major/moderate)
- People having jobs that do not pay enough for the basics of food, shelter, and clothing (40% major/moderate)
- People not speaking English well enough to function in society (34% major/moderate)
- People not knowing how to manage their personal finances (34% major/moderate)
- Lack of affordable child care (33% major/moderate)
- Lack of affordable dental care (33% major/moderate)
- Unemployment (30% major/moderate)

Seven of the nine problem areas had also been rated as a major or moderate problem by 30% or more of respondents in the 2003 survey; one problem question was new this year, and two, *inadequate public transportation* and *drug abuse*, dropped to the second tier in 2005. With 31% of

respondents saying that lack of affordable housing is a major problem and 30% saying it was a moderate problem, this problem area received both the highest percentage of major ratings and the

“As you can see, as of this time I don’t have need for assistance but that doesn’t mean that I don’t support this or think [human services] are important. Our children are grown and I have been married for 34 years, however I do have family members who at times are in need of assistance in that our six-year-old grandson is autistic.”

Consumer survey respondent

| Community Problem Areas | Percentage of Respondents Rating Problem as Moderate or Major | | | | | | Statistically Significant Differences between Survey Years in Percentages Rating Problem as Moderate or Major |
|---------------------------------|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| | 1995 | 1997 | 1999 | 2001 | 2003 | 2005 | |
| Lack of Affordable Medical Care | n/a | 30.75% | 42.37% | 40.38% | 49.55% | 42.89% | Significantly higher in 2003 than 2005. |
| Unemployment | 30.40% | 13.75% | 12.35% | 13.46% | 51.36% | 30.25% | Significantly higher in 2003 than 2005. |
| Lack of Quality Child Care | n/a | 22.00% | 25.18% | 21.63% | 23.76% | 18.06% | Significantly higher in 2003 than 2005. |
| Effects of Gang Activities | 39.10% | 25.50% | 20.10% | 18.03% | 19.23% | 14.00% | Significantly higher in 2003 than 2005. |

highest percentage of combined moderate/major ratings in the 2005 survey, similar to the previous five surveys conducted.

A detailed table of community problem areas listed in descending order by rating is included in Appendix B.

Difference in Prevalence of Community Problems Between Survey Years

Between 2003, the year in which the last phone survey was conducted, and 2005, there were only four problem areas in which there were significant changes in the top tier in contrast to the period between 2001 and 2003 in which there were seven.

| Community Problem Areas | Percentage of Respondents Rating Problem as Moderate or Major | | | | | | Trend |
|--|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------|
| | 1995 | 1997 | 1999 | 2001 | 2003 | 2005 | |
| Lack of Affordable Medical Care | n/a | 30.75% | 42.37% | 40.38% | 49.55% | 42.89% | Slightly increasing* |
| People Having Jobs That Do Not Pay Enough for the Basics of Food, Shelter & Clothing | n/a | 34.50% | 42.62% | 36.54% | 37.33% | 39.50% | Slightly increasing |
| Lack of Parenting Skills | 38.10% | 36.75% | 31.96% | 31.97% | 27.38% | 37.99% | Slightly decreasing** |
| Drug Abuse | n/a | 39.00% | 31.48% | 33.65% | 29.86% | 26.19% | Slightly decreasing |
| Lack of Services for Children & Youth/Teens | 28.70% | 27.75% | 28.09% | 27.64% | 25.79% | 21.44% | Slightly decreasing |
| Alcoholism | n/a | 31.75% | 23.97% | 23.80% | 24.43% | 20.32% | Slightly decreasing |
| Domestic Violence | 32.70% | 26.50% | 22.76% | 20.43% | 20.81% | 19.64% | Slightly decreasing |
| Crime & Violence | 44.30% | 27.75% | 27.36% | 25.00% | 22.62% | 18.06% | Slightly decreasing |
| Racial or Ethnic Discrimination | 27.20% | 23.75% | 21.55% | 19.95% | 20.81% | 16.48% | Slightly decreasing |
| Teen Pregnancy | 35.10% | 28.50% | 22.76% | 17.55% | 16.74% | 14.90% | Slightly decreasing |
| Effects of Gang Activities | 39.10% | 25.50% | 20.10% | 18.03% | 19.23% | 14.00% | Slightly decreasing |
| Child Neglect | n/a | 19.50% | 14.29% | 14.42% | 14.93% | 11.29% | Slightly decreasing |
| Physical Abuse of Children | 30.20% | 15.75% | 14.04% | 14.18% | 13.12% | 11.06% | Slightly decreasing |

* Even though this problem area shows a significant decrease between 2003 and 2005, the overall trend has been slightly increasing since it was first asked in 1995.

** Even though this problem area shows an increase between 2003 and 2005, the overall trend has been slightly decreasing since it was first asked in 1995.

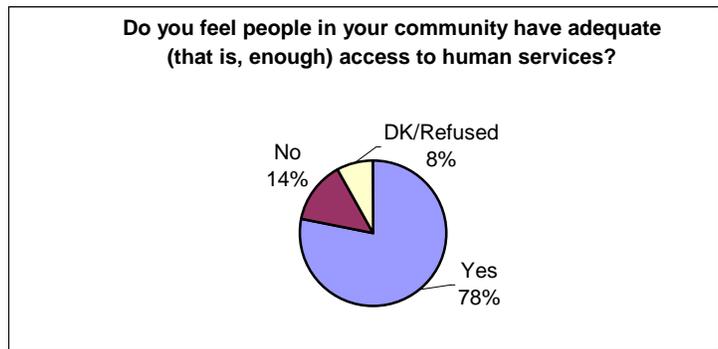
As the top table on the previous page illustrates, in all four areas that had significant changes, respondents felt they were more serious problems in 2003 than in 2005. These are lack of affordable health care, unemployment, lack of quality child care, and effects of gang activities. These issues will be explored in more depth in other sections of this report, but overall, one can only speculate why in each case, respondents felt less concerned this year than two years ago. The fact that there has been much in the news about the improved economy and declining unemployment rates both locally and nationally may have affected the change in perception about unemployment, making it a lower priority. Perhaps, as more people find employment, fewer people are concerned about a lack of affordable medical care. Less concern about the lack of quality child care in the community may be tied to progress in the many efforts made to provide training to child care providers and assist them with obtaining accreditation for their centers and homes. And less concern about the effects of gang activities is supported by an actual decrease in gang-related arrests reported by the Bellevue Police Department.

Increasing or Declining Trends

In addition to monitoring the significant changes between survey years, it is also important to monitor community problem areas that show increasing or declining trends. With data available from surveys since 1995, there is a rich source of information regarding community perceptions of problems. In the bottom table on the previous page, only two problem areas show increasing trends over time: *lack of affordable medical care* and *people having jobs that do not pay enough for the basics of food, shelter and clothing*. It's understandable that these two, though not significantly higher on the problem list perhaps due to the improved economy, are still on residents' minds as issues and warrant continued tracking.

Perception of Community Members' Accessibility to Services

Of the total 443 respondents to the 2005 phone



survey, over three-quarters (78%), believed that people in their community have adequate access to services. This was equal to the responses in 2003. In 2001, the responses were similar, with 76% responding that people had adequate access.

The 61 (14%) individuals who indicated that there is not adequate access in 2005 were asked what services they believe people have difficulty obtaining. The most commonly mentioned are lack of general information regarding services (23%) and health care, medical and dental insurance (21%). A detailed list is shown in the table on the next page.

In the past three surveys conducted, 2001, 2003, and 2005, lack of general information regarding services is mentioned among the top two areas that people have difficulty accessing.

Groups of Residents That Tend to Perceive More Problems in the Community

Based on the findings from the 2005 phone survey, certain segments of the population tend to perceive more of the problem areas as moderate or major problems in their communities. These include:

- residents in the 35-54 and 55-64 age groups,
- those in single-family households,
- those who have incomes under \$20,000,
- those who have experienced a large number of household problems, and
- those who have lived in Bellevue for eleven years or more.

There are various hypotheses that might be used to explain why such differences exist, but it would be better to plan further discussions with members of these specific groups to gain a better understanding of the issues. It will also be important to

Type of Services Repondents Indicated That People Have Difficulty Accessing

Note: May total more than 100% due to allowance of multiple responses

| Type of Service | % of Respondents (n=61) |
|--|----------------------------|
| - Lack of General Information Regarding Services | 23% |
| - Health Care/ Medical/ Dental Insurance | 21% |
| - Counseling / Mental Health | 11% |
| - Recreational Services | 10% |
| - Services for Immigrants or non-English speaking Residents | 10% |
| - Employment Services | 8% |
| - Income or Financial Assistance (DSHS/Welfare) | 8% |
| - Educational or School Services | 7% |
| - Transportation | 7% |
| - Child Care | 5% |
| - Family Health - domestic violence, divorce, parenting etc. | 5% |
| - Elder Care / Services for Seniors | 5% |
| - Food and Shelter for Homeless | 5% |
| - Housing Services | 5% |
| - Help with Drug / Alcohol Addiction | 3% |
| - Legal Services | 2% |
| - "All of them" | 2% |
| - Other | 5% |

get input from a larger number of these population groups, such as single parents, frail elderly, or people receiving public assistance who may have been under-represented in the phone survey.

Other Problem Areas Perceived to Exist in the Community

During the past four survey cycles, an increasing number of respondents reported that there were no other problems in the community than those listed in the survey. In 2001, 73% reported that there were no other problems, and in 2003 and 2005, roughly 80% stated this. When asked this same question in 1999, 55% said there were no additional problems.

Other Community Problems

Of the 74 respondents (17%) who said there were additional problems in the community, the most common responses related to traffic or

transportation problems (32%), which is consistent with findings from other Bellevue surveys. Though this is the problem area with the most mentions, it is important to note that this represents a declining trend from 63% in 1999, 45% in 2001 and 30% in 2003. The other top rated problem cited was lack of services or access to services, including lack of access due to expense (22%).

"Fund childcare, it is too expensive. My family struggles finding affordable childcare. I could not come to the group because I had to help my mom with childcare."

Focus Group-Latino Youth Group