Dakota County, Minnesota

Residential Survey

Report of Results

2011

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Executive Summary

Background

Understanding the needs of residents is important to Dakota County government, so it has conducted a regular, periodic survey of residents' opinions. This report includes Dakota County's results dating back to 2001. Scott and Dakota Counties first collaborated during the 2004 Residential Survey administration, with Washington County joining for the first time during the 2006 administration. Olmsted and Carver Counties joined the group administration for 2008. In 2011, St. Louis County partnered with Dakota and Scott Counties on the collaborative survey effort and worked together with NRC to develop a survey instrument with a set of shared questions, as well as questions unique to each county.

The Dakota County Residential Survey was administered by mail to 2,100 randomly selected households in February 2011 and was distributed equally among the seven County Commissioner Districts. Of the approximately 2,013 households that received a survey in the mail, 601 surveys were completed providing a response rate of 30%.

Because Dakota County has administered a resident survey before, comparisons could be made between 2011 responses and those from prior years. Generally, comparisons between surveys are made through the conversion of ratings to a 100-point scale. Dakota County also elected to have its results compared to those of other counties around the nation, comparisons made possible through NRC's national benchmark database. This database contains resident perspectives gathered in citizen surveys from approximately 500 jurisdictions, including cities and counties. Benchmark comparisons in this report are made to counties in the NRC database.

Findings

Residents of Dakota County continued to give high ratings to their quality of life. Over the years these ratings have remained steadily above national benchmarks derived from other counties. They also continued to approve of the job the Dakota County Government was doing.

There are many things that can make a county a premier place to live, and for Dakota County residents the two key ingredients were being in a convenient location and having ample opportunities for recreation. They also saw their county as a safe place and one that had good employment opportunities and affordable housing.

When asked about problems or concerns, Dakota County residents, like many people across the country, shared concerns related to the economy and personal finances. Taxes are an issue that has increased in concern for residents over the survey years. Taxes and jobs were the top two things mentioned as the most serious problems facing the county and, along with foreclosed properties, taxes were thought to be a moderate or major problem by more than half the respondents. Other serious issues mentioned with frequency were education and growth and economic development. On the less daunting end of the continuum of economic problems, poverty and homelessness were not thought to be as big of a problem in the county.

As for how the economy would affect their household going forward, residents were split; one-quarter thought things would improve in the next year, half expected it to stay the same, and one-quarter thought it would get worse. This was more pessimistic than in 2008.

As mentioned, most residents thought of the county as a safe place to live; respondents were well above the national benchmark in their ratings of safety from violent or property crime and how safe they felt in parks and open spaces in the county. Among safety issues, county residents' biggest concern was safety from distracted drivers on the road. Concern about drivers, in this case, people drinking and driving, was also on the top of the list of health concerns. Other top health concerns in the county included overweight adults and children, drug and alcohol abuse, and support for children, adults and older adults who are vulnerable to abuse.

Supporting the vulnerable was important to Dakota County residents. When asked to rate the importance of a wide variety of County services the three that were most frequently cited as being essential were enforce laws and prosecuting criminals, protecting water supplies and water quality, and protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect. Libraries, health care, economic assistance, transportation, and parks and recreation were also very important to many, but protecting people (and the water supply) were essential.

That some services are traditionally considered a high priority is common in all communities, but budget decisions have to be made, especially in tough economic times, and that requires understanding how residents value all their services, and which have the biggest influence on how they perceive their community as a place to live and the quality of the job their government is doing. In Dakota County, there was little strong support (7%) for increasing taxes to maintain current services, and 25% of residents strongly opposed it. Overall, half the community at least somewhat supported a tax increase but half somewhat or strongly opposed it. As discussed above, taxes were of great concern to many.

Residents for the most part said they would rather see a reduction in service than a tax increase, but they would prefer a general cut – reducing hours of service, the number of locations the county conducts business, or the response time for processing applications – rather than cutting specific services, especially road maintenance and sheriff patrols.

Protecting people was very important to Dakota County residents, and so was maintaining roads (including plowing). County roads were thought to be in excellent (16%) or good (46%) condition by most residents, and these ratings were well above the national benchmark. Only 12% of residents supported a reduction in the level of road maintenance. Other transportation related issues were also of concern in the county. While the quality of snow-plowing had ratings well above the national benchmark, the rating dropped from 2008 to 2011, and ratings for public transportation in the county remained below the national benchmark. There was significant support for improving public transportation, 31% strongly supported and 45% somewhat supported investing in projects that make transit more convenient to use, while only 12% somewhat and 12% strongly opposed this.

Snow plowing and public transportation were of particular concern because they are key drivers of resident's perception of overall County service quality. Key Driver Analysis examines the relationships between ratings of each service and ratings of the County's overall services. In Dakota County, the services that were found to have the greatest influence on overall ratings were self-service options on County Web site, County parks and recreation, public transportation/transit services, and snow and ice removal on County roads.

That parks and recreation was a key driver bodes well for Dakota County, because residents gave great ratings (well above the national benchmark) to County parks and recreation like Lebanon Hills or Lake Byllesby and the trail and bikeway system like Big Rivers Trail. When asked what

was most important for future investment in open space and parkland, residents were most interested in seeing natural areas remain natural. They asked that lakes, streams, and wetlands be protected from pollution, that natural areas and farmland be protected from development before resources are used to develop more parks, trails, or facilities. Residents were also most interested in participating in activities in parks that were best supported by having natural areas. Of possible activities, non-motorized recreation such as biking, hiking, canoeing, skiing and opportunities to hunt and fish were most important to them.

The self-service options on Dakota County's Web site were well rated (20% said they were excellent and 54% said they were good) and this will be important to maintain, especially in light of the level of interest in Internet-related interaction by County residents. In Dakota County, 87% of residents had Internet connections at home, 64% used the Dakota County Web site as a major or minor source of information about Dakota County government, and 45% prefer to use email to contact the County government to report a suggestion or concern.

Communication with residents in Dakota County is good, but there is always room for improvement. Ratings for the job the County does of informing its citizens increased from 2008 to 2010 and was well above the national benchmark. The job Dakota County government does at listening to residents remained steady and was also well above the national benchmark. But when residents rated the job Dakota County government does at listening to residents, their knowledge of the work of the Dakota County Board and the job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars a high percent of respondents (29% to 39%) reported that they "don't know." The rest gave Dakota County great marks for the job they are doing, and spreading this good news to an even wider audience may be a great way to introduce more people to the work the County is doing on their behalf.

Survey Background

Survey Purpose

The Dakota County Residential Survey provides residents the opportunity to rate the quality of life in the county, as well as service delivery, and their satisfaction with local government. The survey also permits residents to provide feedback to the government on what is working well and what is not, and share their priorities for community planning and resource allocation.

In 2011, Dakota County collaborated with neighboring Scott and St. Louis Counties on this survey project. The three counties worked together with National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) to develop a survey instrument with a set of shared questions, as well as questions unique to each County. This report presents Dakota County's results. Comparisons of results by the three participating counties can be found in *Appendix D: Comparison with Other Participating Counties*.

Methods

The Dakota County Residential Survey was administered by mail to 2,100 randomly selected households within the county in February 2011 and was distributed equally among the seven County Commissioner Districts. Of the approximately 2,013 households that received a survey in the mail, 601 surveys were completed providing a response rate of 30%. The survey instrument itself appears in *Appendix F: Survey Instrument*.

Survey results were weighted so that respondent age, gender, housing tenure, and housing unit type were represented in the proportions reflective of the entire county, and then adjusted to maintain the appropriate proportions by County Commissioner District. (For more information see *Appendix A: Detailed Survey Methodology*.)

Responses to any open-ended questions and "other" responses appear verbatim in *Appendix B: Verbatim Responses to Open-end Questions*.

How the Results Are Reported

"Don't Know" Responses and Rounding

On many of the questions in the survey, respondents could give an answer of "don't know." The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in *Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies* and is discussed in the body of this report if it is 20% or greater. However, the "don't know" responses have been removed from the tables and analyses presented in the body of the report. In other words, the tables and graphs only display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

For some questions, respondents were permitted to select multiple responses. When the total exceeds 100% in a table for a multiple response question, it is because some respondents are counted in multiple categories. When a table for a question that only permitted a single response does not total to exactly 100%, it is due to the customary practice of rounding percentages to the nearest whole number.

Precision of Estimates

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a "level of confidence" (or margin of error). The 95% confidence level for this survey is generally no greater

than plus or minus four percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample (601 completed surveys).

Putting Evaluations onto a 100-point Scale

Although responses to many of the evaluative or frequency questions were made on four- or five-point scales with "1" representing the best rating, the scales had different labels (e.g., "essential," "excellent," "very safe"). To make comparisons easier, many of the results in this summary are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported "excellent" for quality of life, then the result would be 100 on the 0-100 scale. If the average rating for quality of life was "fair," then the result would be 33. The new scale can be thought of like the thermometer used to represent total giving to United Way: the higher the thermometer reading, the closer to the goal of 100. In this case, a score of 100 would be the most positive response possible. The 95% confidence interval around a score on the 0-100 scale based on all respondents typically will be no greater than plus or minus two points on the 100-point scale.

Comparing to Previous Survey Results

Dakota County survey data were collected by phone in 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2008. In 2011, the County switched data collection from phone to mail to save costs, allow for more precise geographic sampling, cost-efficiently include cell phone-only households, gather more candid feedback and avoid interrupting residents with unwanted phone calls. The growing rate of county households with only a cell phone challenged the County to ensure their inclusion, which is easier, less expensive and more accurate by mail than phone.

Research is clear that a change in the method of survey data collection, by itself, will result in a change in results if the shift is from telephone administration to self-administration or vice versa. The change occurs even without change in resident perspectives and is attributed to the different environment that a survey respondent confronts when providing answers to a person on the telephone compared to offering private anonymous opinions. Questions by phone elicit more positive, optimistic, socially-desirable responses than do the same questions asked on a written self-administered questionnaire. The self-administered questionnaire brings out more candid responses.

As a consequence of the switch in methodology, a decline in virtually all ratings was both expected and observed. In the previous survey administration by phone in 2008, a small sample of residents was surveyed by mail in order to explore the magnitude of the differences between phone and mail survey responses in Dakota County. Using 2008 survey research conducted by NRC in Dakota County that compared mail and phone responses, as well as NRC's analysis of national trends comparing phone and mail responses, NRC adjusted the findings from 2001 to 2008 in order to maximize the comparability of results over time. This way the reported trendline data are not influenced by the decline that is attributable to the change in data collection mode from phone to mail.

When results are reported as an average on the 100-point scale for a question that was asked similarly in previous years, a slight adjustment was made to permit direct comparison. (Results that are reported as percentages and compared over time were not adjusted.) While the adjusted findings for data prior to 2011 reasonably control for the expected change from phone to mail data collection, the comparability of data over time does have some limitations. Not only is there

sampling error in each survey administration, but also, the methods change occurred after a three-year gap in survey administrations and some question wording was inconsistent among survey years. Important historical differences are noted in the appropriate tables and figures. (NRC also was able to introduce statistical adjustments for the data prior to 2011 to account for any question and scale differences when possible. These adjustments are based on NRC's analysis of citizen surveys from across the nation.)

Because of the overall shift in the methodology and related survey changes, NRC recommends that any change in ratings or reported behaviors be viewed with caution and that Dakota County consider differences of nine points or more on the 100-point scale among average ratings from previous years and differences of eight percentage points or more for results reported as percentages to be large enough to signal a genuine change in opinion from 2008. Differences that do not reach this threshold should not be considered changes worthy of further interpretation.

Comparing Survey Results to Other Jurisdictions

Jurisdictions use the comparative information provided by benchmarks to help interpret their own citizen survey results, create or revise community plans, evaluate the success of policy or budget decisions and measure local government performance. Taking the pulse of the community has little meaning without knowing what pulse rate is too high and what is too low. When surveys of service satisfaction turn up "good" citizen evaluations, it is necessary to know how others rate their services to understand if "good" is good enough or if most other communities are "excellent." Furthermore, in the absence of national or peer community comparisons, a jurisdiction is left with comparing its sheriff services rating to its street maintenance rating. That comparison is unfair as street maintenance always gets lower ratings than sheriff services. More illuminating is how residents' ratings of sheriff services compare to opinions about sheriff services in other communities and to resident ratings over time.

A sheriff department that provides the fastest and most efficient service – one that closes most of its cases, solves most of its crimes, and keeps the crime rate low – still has a problem to fix if the residents in the county rate sheriff services lower than ratings given by residents in other cities with objectively "worse" departments.

Benchmark data can help that sheriff department – or any County department – to understand how well citizens think it is doing. Without the comparative data, it would be like bowling in a tournament without knowing what the other teams are scoring. Citizen opinion should be used in conjunction with other sources of data about budget, population demographics, personnel, and politics to help managers know how to respond to comparative results.

NRC's database of comparative resident opinion is comprised of resident perspectives gathered in citizen surveys from approximately 500 jurisdictions whose residents evaluated local government services. Conducted with typically no fewer than 400 residents in each jurisdiction, opinions are intended to represent over 30 million Americans. NRC has innovated a method for quantitatively integrating the results of surveys that we have conducted with those that others have conducted. These integration methods have been described thoroughly in *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, and in NRC's first book on conducting and using citizen surveys, *Citizen Surveys: how to do them, how to use them, what they mean*, published by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). Scholars who specialize in the analysis of citizen surveys regularly have relied on NRC's work [e.g., Kelly, J. & Swindell, D. (2002). Service quality variation across urban space: First steps towards a model of

citizen satisfaction, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 24, 271-288.; Van Ryzin, G., Muzzio, D., Immerwahr, S., Gulick, L. & Martinez, E. (2004). Drivers and consequences of citizen satisfaction: An application of the American Customer Satisfaction Index Model to New York City, *Public Administration Review*, 64, 331-341]. The method described in those publications is refined regularly and statistically tested on a growing number of citizen surveys in NRC's proprietary databases.

Jurisdictions in NRC's benchmark database are distributed geographically across the country and range from small to large in population size. Comparisons may be made to all jurisdictions in the database or to a subset of jurisdictions (such as only other counties), as in this report. Despite the differences in jurisdiction characteristics, all are in the business of providing local government services to residents. Though individual jurisdiction circumstances, resources, and practices vary, the objective in every community is to provide services that are so timely, tailored, and effective that residents conclude the services are of the highest quality. High ratings in any jurisdiction, like SAT scores in any teen household, bring pride, and a sense of accomplishment.

Comparison of Dakota County to the Benchmarking Database

Jurisdictions to which Dakota County is compared can be found in *Appendix E: List of Counties in the Benchmark Comparisons*. National county benchmark comparisons have been provided when similar questions on the Dakota County survey are included in NRC's database and there are at least five counties in which the question was asked.

Where comparisons for quality ratings were available, the Dakota County's results were generally noted as being "above" the benchmark, "below" the benchmark or "similar" to the benchmark. For some questions – those related to resident behavior, circumstance, or to a local problem – the comparison to the benchmark is designated as "more," "similar," or "less" (for example, residents contacting the County in the last 12 months). In instances where ratings are considerably higher or lower than the benchmark, these ratings have been further demarcated by the attribute of "much" (for example, "much less" or "much above"). These labels come from a statistical comparison of Dakota County's rating to the benchmark where a rating is considered "similar" if it is within the margin of error; "above," "below," "more," or "less" if the difference between Dakota County's rating and the benchmark is greater the margin of error; and "much above," "much below," "much more," or "much less" if the difference between Dakota County's rating and the benchmark is more than twice the margin of error.

Report of Results

Quality of Life and Community

Survey respondents were asked to rate their overall quality of life in Dakota County. About 3 in 10 respondents gave an "excellent" rating and nearly two thirds (64%) reported it as "good." On a 100-point scale where 0 equals "poor" and 100 equals "excellent," Dakota County's average rating was 74, similar to previous years. Dakota County's overall quality of life was much higher than ratings given by other counties in the benchmark data set.

Figure 1: Quality of Life

How would you rate your overall quailty of life in Dakota County?
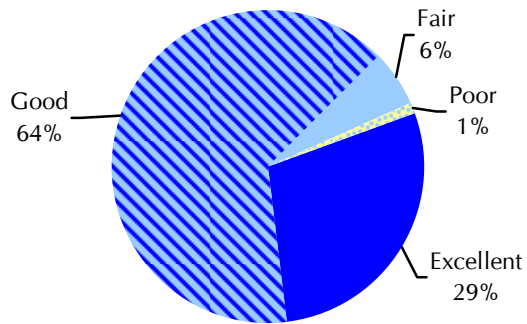
Figure 2: Average Rating of Overall Quality of Life Compared by Year
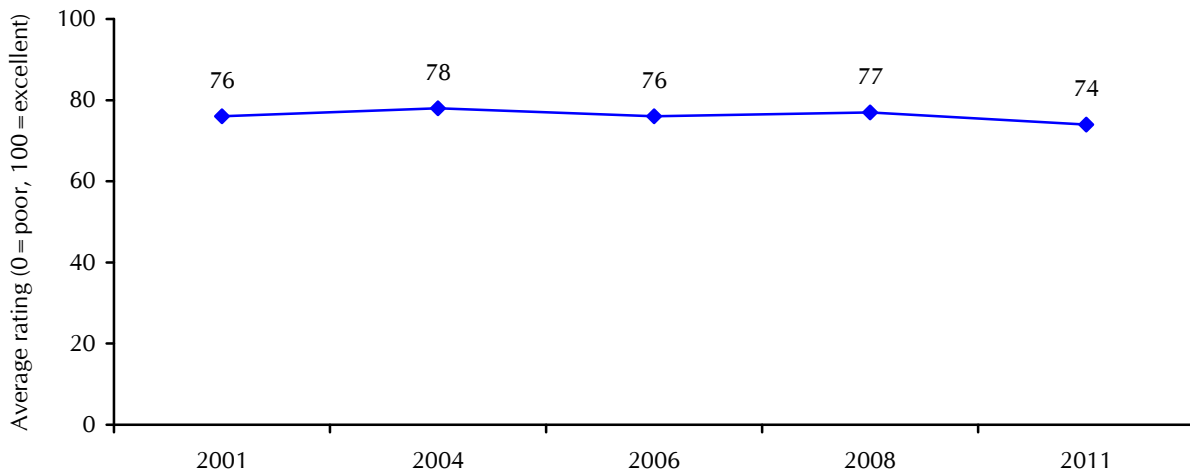
The scale on the 2001 survey was "Excellent," "Good," "Only fair," "Poor."

Residents were asked to identify one thing that they liked most about living in Dakota County. In previous survey iterations, this was an open-ended question where respondents were able to answer, in their own words, to the telephone interviewer, who then selected the one response from a list that best fit each response. The most frequently selected categories from 2008 comprised most of the response options on the 2011 survey, from which respondents were instructed to choose only one option. When a respondent identified an unlisted, or "other," reason, the response was captured verbatim. These responses appear in *Appendix B: Verbatim Responses to Open-end Questions*.

About a third of respondents cited the location of the county as the thing they liked most. Other more common responses were the quality of life in general (22%) and neighborhood (11%).

When compared to previous years, location remained the most liked characteristic of living in Dakota County. However, it is worth noting that in 2011, the question was presented as fixed response (i.e., respondents were shown a list of items from which to choose), whereas, between 2008 and 2001, this question was open-ended (i.e., no list was presented). When provided a list to choose from, a respondent may by-pass their first thought (say, "location") as the list reminds them of other things they value (like their neighborhood), while in an interview a respondent would more likely stay with their first thought. Thus, it is recommended that the reader make little of the differences between the 2011 responses compared to responses to the open-ended question posed in 2008 and earlier.

Table 1: Like Most about Living in County Compared by Year

What one thing do you like most about living in Dakota County?	2011	2008	2006	2004	2001
Location	31%	26%	28%	27%	31%
Quality of life in general	22%	5%	4%	3%	0%
My neighborhood	11%	4%	5%	4%	7%
Parks/lakes	9%	10%	8%	7%	4%
Schools	6%	6%	8%	6%	9%
Small town feel	6%	6%	3%	5%	5%
Open space	4%	4%	4%	3%	0%
Rural	3%	7%	4%	5%	22%
Low taxes	3%	0%	3%	4%	0%
People	2%	5%	4%	2%	6%
Home	1%	1%	2%	2%	0%
Good economy	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Job opportunities	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Libraries	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Peaceful	0%	2%	2%	2%	0%
Quiet	0%	3%	3%	3%	5%
Safe	0%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Services	0%	3%	4%	4%	3%
Shopping	0%	1%	3%	2%	4%
Weather	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Transportation system [includes roads and transit]	0%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Other	2%	9%	8%	15%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*In 2011, this question was presented as fixed response (i.e., respondents were presented a list of items from which to choose), whereas, between 2008 and 2001, this question was open-ended (i.e., no list presented).

County Characteristics

When asked to rate various community characteristics as they related to the County as a whole, most characteristics received average ratings that were between "good" and "fair" on a 100-point scale, where zero is equal to "poor," 33 equals "fair," 67 represents "good," and 100 is equivalent to "excellent."

Recreational opportunities and the overall image or reputation of Dakota County received the highest average ratings (67 on the 100-point scale, or "good"). Employment opportunities and ease of travel by public transit in Dakota County were rated least positively (44 points on the 100-point scale, or between "fair" and "good"). Note that approximately a quarter of respondents reported "don't know" when asked about the ease of travel by public transit in Dakota County (see *Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies*). Results presented in the report body are for those who had an opinion.

In general, Dakota County ratings were higher or much higher than ratings given in other counties across the country, although ratings for Dakota County as a place to retire received a rating that was similar to the benchmark.

All characteristics rated in 2011 were new to the survey, except for "availability of affordable housing," which has been rated similarly over time.

Table 2: County Characteristics

Please rate each of the following characteristics of Dakota County.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)	Comparison to benchmark
Recreational opportunities	24%	55%	18%	3%	100%	67	Above
Overall image or reputation of Dakota County	19%	64%	16%	1%	100%	67	Much above
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	16%	52%	28%	4%	100%	60	Much above
Dakota County as a place to retire	15%	51%	27%	7%	100%	58	Similar
Availability of affordable housing	7%	43%	38%	12%	100%	49	Much above
Employment opportunities	6%	37%	39%	18%	100%	44	Much above
Ease of travel by public transit in Dakota County	10%	33%	35%	22%	100%	44	Above

Table 3: Average Ratings of County Characteristics Compared by Year

Please rate each of the following characteristics of Dakota County.	Average rating (0=poor, 100=excellent)				
	2011	**2008**	**2006**	**2004**	**2001**
Recreational opportunities	67	NA	NA	NA	NA
Overall image or reputation of Dakota County	67	NA	NA	NA	NA
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	60	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dakota County as a place to retire	58	NA	NA	NA	NA
Availability of affordable housing	49	47	46	50	NA
Employment opportunities	44	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ease of travel by public transit in Dakota County	44	NA	NA	NA	NA

All questions were new in 2011 except for "Availability of affordable housing." Several question parts were worded differently in earlier surveys. In 2006 and 2004, "Availability of affordable housing" was "Affordable housing;" "Availability of affordable healthcare" was "Access to and availability of affordable, quality health care;" "Availability of affordable quality childcare" was "Access to affordable quality childcare;" "Availability of parks" was "Access to parks;" "Availability of trails" was "Access to trails;" "Availability of public transit" was "Access to public transportation/transit." In 2006 and 2004, "Preparedness for bioterrorism and natural disasters" was asked on the scale "Major concern," "Moderate concern," "Minor concern," "Not at all a concern," as was "Preparedness for communicable disease outbreak. These questions were not asked in 2001.

Best Things about Living in Dakota County

A new question was added to the 2011 survey asking residents to think about the next three years and to write, in their own words, what they believed the best thing would be about living in Dakota County. Of the 328 respondents who chose to write in a response, one in five respondents believed that the location or convenience (22%) and the quality of life (19%) in the county were the best things about living there. Twelve percent said that the best thing about living in Dakota County was the open space and natural areas such as parks, trails, and recreation. Less than 10% of respondents mentioned other things they liked best about living in the county. For a list of "other" responses and all verbatim comments, see *Appendix B: Verbatim Responses to Open-end Questions*.

Figure 3: Best Things about Living in Dakota County
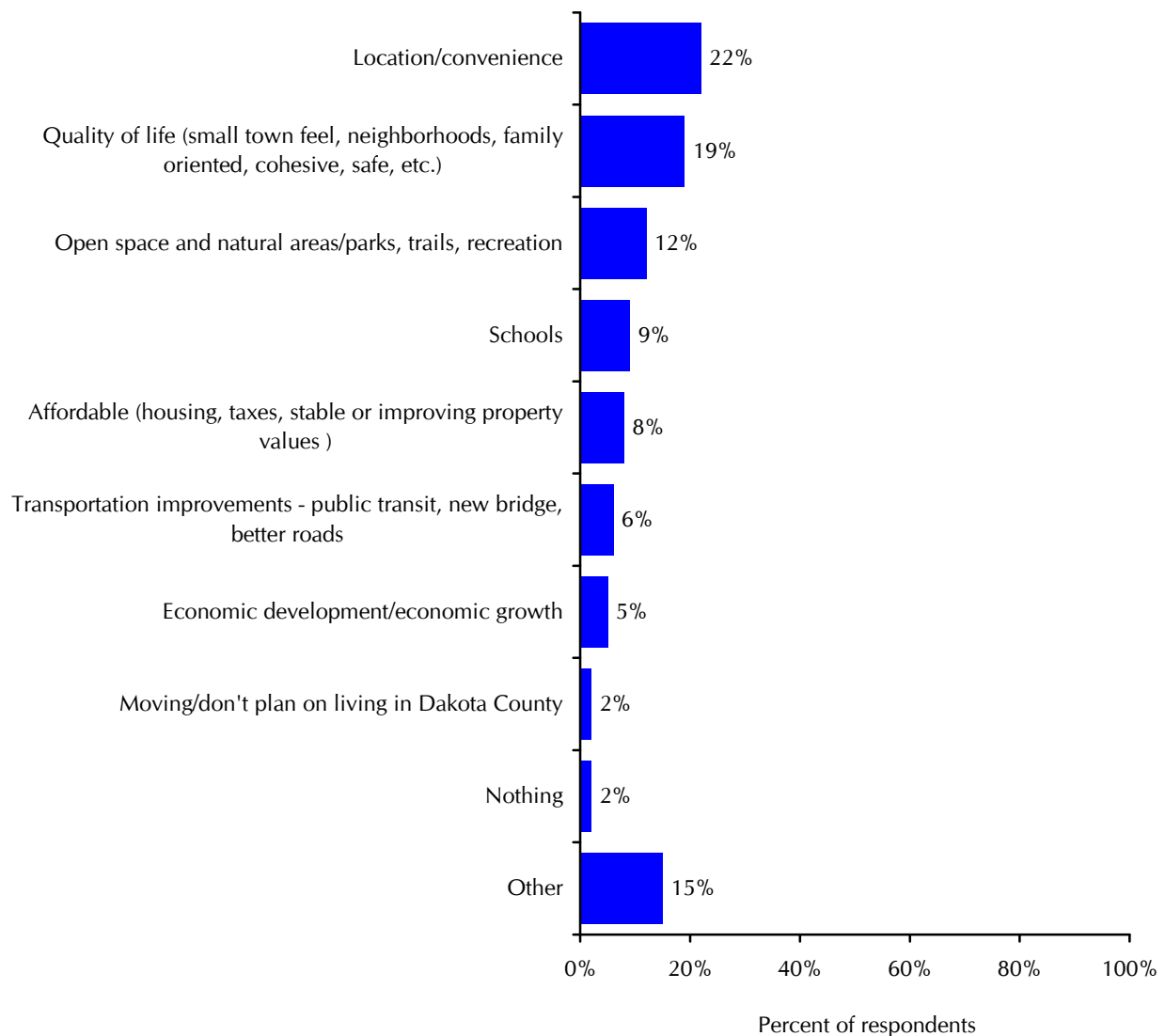
These percentages represent the 348 respondents who chose to write in a response. This was a new question in 2011.

Issues Facing the Community

To help assess issues the community may face, questions about safety, pressing issues and possible problems in the county were included on the survey, along with questions about health concerns in the county and household financial status.

Community Safety

Residents were asked how safe they felt from different types of crimes and drunk driving, as well as safety in different county locations. At least 9 in 10 respondents felt "very" or "somewhat" safe from violent crimes, from property crimes, on Dakota County parks and trails and in their neighborhood. Approximately three-quarters of respondents reported feelings of safety from illegal drug activity, from drunk drivers on County roads and from being injured while biking or walking on roads in the county. About half of respondents said they felt safe from distracted drivers on County roads when traveling within the county.

Responses to this question were converted to the 100-point scale where zero equals "very unsafe," 33 is equal to "somewhat unsafe," 67 represents "somewhat safe," and 100 is equivalent to "very safe." Each item received an average rating that was equal to "somewhat" safe or better, except for feelings of safety from distracted drivers (average rating of 48, or between "somewhat safe" and "somewhat unsafe").

Three of eight safety ratings were compared to safety ratings in other counties across the country; Dakota County was rated much above the benchmark for each item.

When compared to 2008 safety ratings, 2011 responses were similar.

Table 4: Perception of Safety

Please rate how safe or unsafe your feel from the following in Dakota County.	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Somewhat unsafe	Very unsafe	Total	Average rating (0 = very unsafe, 100 = very safe)	Comparison to benchmark
Violent crimes (e.g., rape, assault, robbery)	47%	48%	3%	1%	100%	80	Much above
On Dakota County parks and trails	43%	50%	6%	1%	100%	78	Much above
In your neighborhood	39%	49%	9%	3%	100%	75	Not available
Property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft)	29%	60%	9%	2%	100%	72	Much above
Illegal drug activity (e.g., manufacturing or selling drugs)	29%	49%	17%	5%	100%	67	Not available
From drunk drivers on County roads	17%	61%	19%	4%	100%	64	Not available
From being injured while biking or walking on roads in the county	23%	52%	19%	6%	100%	64	Not available
From distracted drivers on County roads	6%	46%	35%	13%	100%	48	Not available

Table 5: Average Ratings of Safety Compared by Year

Please rate how safe or unsafe your feel from the following in Dakota County.	Average rating (0 = very unsafe, 100 = very safe)				
	2011	**2008**	**2006**	**2004**	**2001**
Violent crimes (e.g., rape, assault, robbery)	80	80	73	79	NA
On Dakota County parks and trails	78	76	77	78	NA
In your neighborhood	75	83	84	86	78
Property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft)	72	72	67	72	NA
Illegal drug activity (e.g., manufacturing or selling drugs)	67	NA	NA	NA	NA
From drunk drivers on County roads	64	64	60	NA	NA
From being injured while biking or walking on roads in the county	64	NA	NA	NA	NA
From distracted drivers on County roads	48	NA	NA	NA	NA

Several question parts were worded differently in earlier surveys. "From drunk drivers on County roads" was "from drunk driving when traveling within the county" in 2008 and "traveling on county roads" in 2006; safety "in your neighborhood" was a separate question; "In Dakota County parks" and "on trails in Dakota County parks" were combined in 2006 as follows: "on Dakota County parks and trails." Safety from "drunk driving" and "safety on parks and trails" were not asked in 2004. In 2001, a question was asked about "How safe would you feel walking alone in your neighborhood in general?" with a response scale of "very safe," "reasonably safe," "very unsafe."

Potential Problems

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought various potential problems were a "major problem," a "moderate problem," a "minor problem," or "not a problem" in Dakota County. Foreclosed properties and taxes were viewed as most problematic, with at least half of respondents rating each as "moderate" or "major" problems in the county. Homelessness was viewed as least problematic, with about two in five respondents saying it was "not at all a problem."

Note that one in five or more of respondents said "don't know" when asked to rate how problematic poverty, foreclosed properties, and homelessness were in the county. The complete set of responses to this question appears in *Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies*.

When converted to the 100-point scale where zero equals "not a problem" and 100 equals "major problem", most items in the list of potential problems were thought to be between a "moderate" or "major" problem (between 67 and 33 points) except for homelessness (23) which was between "minor" problem and "not a problem."

Although comparisons between 2011 and 2008 were not meaningfully different, perceptions of traffic congestion as a problem in Dakota County have decreased over time and taxes as a problem have increased.

Table 6: Potential Problems

Please rate to what degree, if at all, each of the following is a problem in Dakota County.	Not a problem	Minor problem	Moderate problem	Major problem	Total	Average rating (0 = not a problem, 100 = major problem)
Foreclosed properties	7%	34%	40%	19%	100%	57
Taxes	16%	31%	37%	16%	100%	51
Traffic congestion	19%	42%	30%	8%	100%	42
Crime	15%	53%	31%	1%	100%	39
Poverty	24%	49%	23%	4%	100%	36
Traffic safety	21%	53%	22%	4%	100%	36
Homelessness	44%	45%	10%	1%	100%	23

Figure 4: Potential Problems Compared by Year

Average rating (0 = not a problem, 100 = major problem)
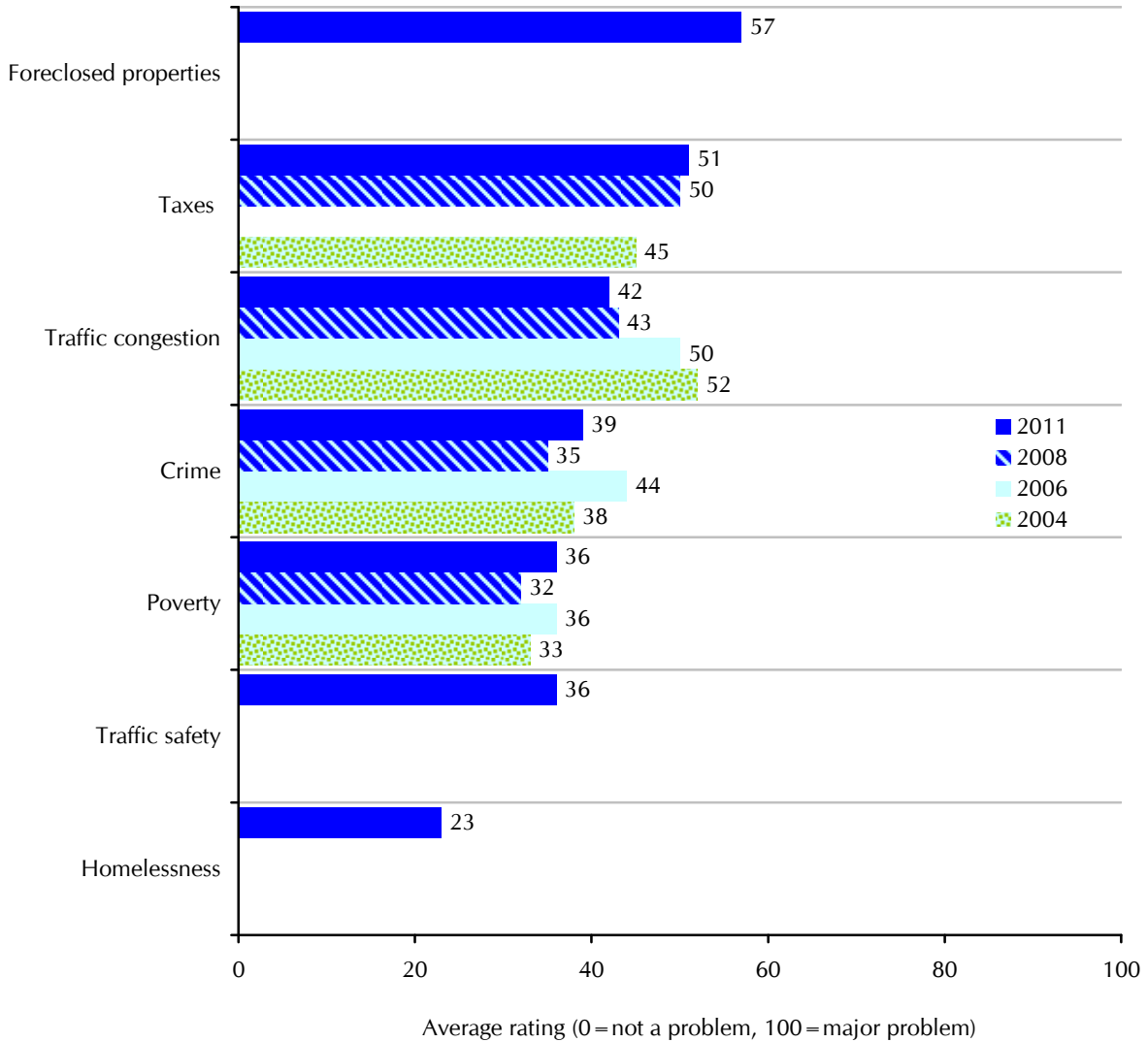
The scale differed between years. In 2008, the bottom of the scale read "Not at all a problem," whereas in 2004, 2006, and 2011, it read "Not a problem." These questions were not asked in 2001.

Most Serious Issue Facing Dakota County

When asked what they thought was currently the most serious issue facing Dakota County, taxes and jobs were considered top issues. In previous survey iterations, respondents provided unprompted responses where interviewers would code responses into categories that best fit each respondent's stated issue. When a respondent identified an unlisted, or "other," issue, the response was entered verbatim. Those categories were included as fixed response options in 2011. "Other" responses that could not be grouped into common themes appear in *Appendix B: Verbatim Responses to Open-end Questions*.

Growth and development and taxes topped the list in 2008, but in 2011, jobs, schools, and economic development were considered top issues, along with taxes and growth and development. Because of the methodological change (open-ended question by phone in previous years versus fixed response options in 2011), it is recommended that the reader make little of the differences between the 2011 responses compared to responses to the open-ended question posed in 2008 and earlier. When provided a list to choose from, a respondent may by-pass their first thought (say, "taxes") as the list reminds them of a more serious issue (like their jobs), while in an interview a respondent would more likely stay with their first thought.

Table 7: Most Serious Issue Compared by Year

What do you feel is the most serious issue facing Dakota County at this time?	2011	2008	2006	2004	2001
Taxes	20%	20%	16%	12%	16%
Jobs	17%	3%	2%	2%	0%
Schools	13%	9%	13%	14%	22%
Growth/development	12%	20%	30%	26%	27%
Economic development	12%	4%	2%	3%	0%
Condition of roads	8%	7%	5%	6%	4%
Traffic congestion	6%	8%	10%	11%	8%
Affordable housing	5%	5%	5%	3%	0%
Crime	3%	6%	8%	5%	8%
Loss of rural feel	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Pollution	0%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Safety	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	2%	17%	9%	16%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In 2011, this question was presented as fixed response (i.e., respondents were presented a list of items from which to choose), whereas, between 2008 and 2001, this question was open-ended (i.e., no list presented).

Health Concerns

As in previous years, respondents were asked to rate potential health concerns in Dakota County. Many items were rated as "moderate" or "major" concerns by at least half of respondents; two-thirds of respondents or more rated each as at least a "minor" concern. About three in five respondents reported being moderately or majorly concerned about overweight adults and children, drinking and driving, and underage alcohol use in the county. Respondents were least concerned about tobacco use, with 24% of respondents rating it as a "major" or "moderate" concern in Dakota County. Note that one in five respondents said "don't know" when asked if depression and unplanned pregnancies were of concern in the county and about a quarter of respondents gave the same response when asked to rate the level of concern about sexually transmitted diseases (see *Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies*).

The average ratings for all potential health concerns, where zero equals "not at all a concern" and 100 equals "major concern," fell between a "moderate" and "minor" concern.

Responses were similar between 2011 and 2008. However, concerns about tobacco use in the county have been lessening since this question was first asked in 2004.

Table 8: Health Concerns

Please rate to what degree, if at all, each of the following is a health concern in Dakota County.	Not at all a concern	Minor concern	Moderate concern	Major concern	Total	Average rating (0 = not at all a concern, 100 = major concern)
Drinking and driving	10%	29%	35%	26%	100%	59
Overweight adults and children	14%	25%	32%	29%	100%	59
Illegal drug use	11%	34%	35%	20%	100%	55
Underage alcohol use	11%	32%	38%	20%	100%	55
The health and support of the elderly	13%	33%	34%	20%	100%	53
Abuse and neglect of children	14%	35%	31%	20%	100%	52
Domestic violence	14%	38%	30%	18%	100%	51
Motor vehicle crashes	10%	40%	37%	13%	100%	51
Abuse and neglect of seniors	16%	38%	28%	18%	100%	49
The health and support of persons with disabilities	15%	38%	30%	16%	100%	49
Alcohol abuse among adults	14%	39%	35%	12%	100%	48
Unplanned pregnancy	17%	44%	28%	12%	100%	45
The adequacy of care and parenting for infants and young children	22%	39%	31%	8%	100%	42
Sexually transmitted diseases	23%	45%	22%	10%	100%	40
Depression	23%	44%	26%	7%	100%	39
Exposure to pollution in the water	27%	41%	23%	9%	100%	38
Tobacco use	35%	42%	17%	7%	100%	32

Table 9: Average Ratings of Health Concerns Compared by Year

Please rate to what degree, if at all, each of the following is a health concern in Dakota County.	Average rating (0 = not at all a concern, 100 = major concern)				
	2011	**2008**	**2006**	**2004**	**2001**
Drinking and driving	59	58	49	48	NA
Overweight adults and children	59	58	55	54	NA
Illegal drug use	55	57	63	NA	NA
Underage alcohol use	55	60	61	57	NA
The health and support of the elderly	53	47	56	NA	NA
Abuse and neglect of children	52	46	38	37	NA
Domestic violence	51	NA	NA	NA	NA
Motor vehicle crashes	51	46	NA	NA	NA
Abuse and neglect of seniors	49	NA	NA	NA	NA
The health and support of persons with disabilities	49	NA	NA	NA	NA
Alcohol abuse among adults	48	46	NA	NA	NA
Unplanned pregnancy	45	46	48	42	NA
The adequacy of care and parenting for infants and young children	42	38	46	37	NA
Sexually transmitted diseases	40	45	47	40	NA
Depression	39	45	48	40	NA
Exposure to pollution in the water	38	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tobacco use	32	40	52	49	NA

Several question parts were worded differently in earlier surveys. In 2006, "Tobacco use" was "Youth tobacco use;" in 2006 and 2004 "Underage alcohol use" was "underage drinking;" "Overweight adults and children" was "Obesity." Neither "Illegal drug use" nor "The health and support of our elderly and disabled" was asked in 2004. In 2004, "The adequacy of care and parenting for infants and young children" was "Inadequate care and parenting for infants and young children." In 2006 and 2004, "Abuse and neglect of children" and "Drinking and driving" were included in a different question set and used a different scale: "Major problem," "Moderate problem," "Minor problem," "Not a problem." These questions were not asked in 2001.

Household Financial Status

Survey participants were asked to indicate if they thought their household would be better off financially, worse off, or about the same a year from now. A quarter of respondents thought their household would be better off financially in a year, another quarter thought their household would be worse off, and about half thought their household finances would be about the same.

When compared to 2008, residents' outlook was similar in 2011.

Figure 5: Household Future Financial Status

Do you think that a year from now you and your household will be better off financially, or worse off, or just about the same as now?

Somewhat worse
16%

Much worse
8%

Much better
4%

Somewhat better
19%

About the same
53%
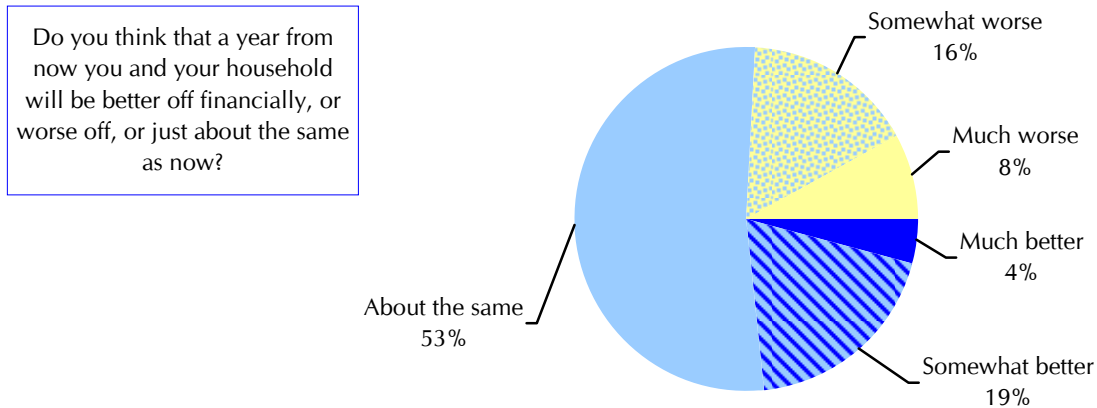
Figure 6: Household Future Financial Status Compared by Year

Better   Same   Worse

2011   23%   53%   24%

2008   27%   55%   18%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Percent of respondents
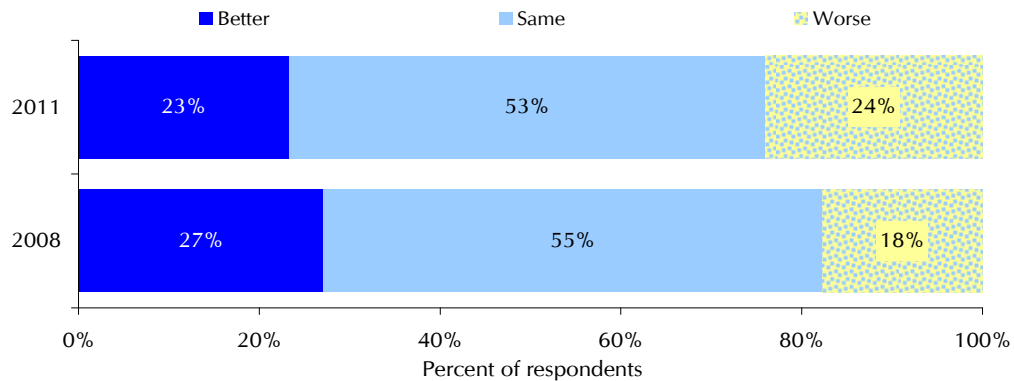
Evaluation of Government Services

Residents completing the survey were asked a series of questions related to Dakota County government performance and the quality of County services.

County Government

A majority of respondents (86%) approved of the job the Dakota County Board is doing, 12% somewhat disapproved and 2% strongly disapproved of Dakota County government performance. Please note that 44% of respondents reported "don't know" when asked this question (see *Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies*).

When converted to the 100-point scale where zero represents "strongly disapprove" and 100 equals "strongly approve," the average rating for how well the Dakota County Board is doing was 66, equivalent to or "somewhat" approve, on average.

This rating was similar to the 2008 rating (66 in 2011 versus 72 in 2008).

Figure 7: County Board

To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the job the Dakota County Board is doing?

Somewhat disapprove 12%

Strongly disapprove 2%

Somewhat approve 70%

Strongly approve 16%
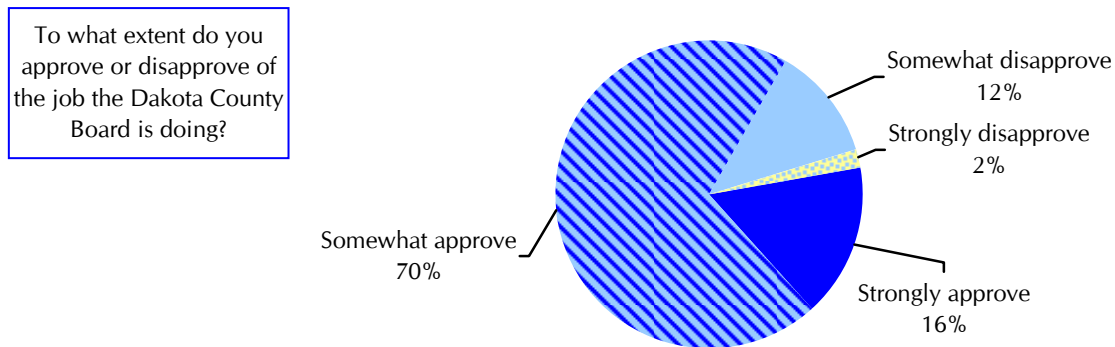
Figure 8: Average Approval Rating of County Board Compared by Year
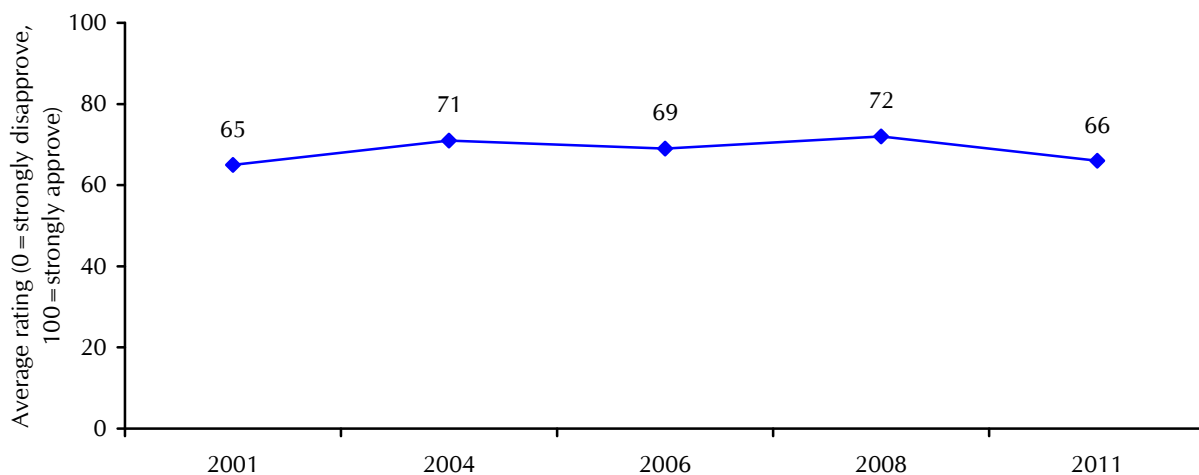
In 2001, this question was worded differently: "From what you know, do you approve or disapprove of the job the County Board is doing? And do you feel strongly that way?" and the response options were: "approve/strongly," "approve," "disapprove," "disapprove/strongly."

Survey respondents were asked to rate several aspects of Dakota County government performance. When asked to rate the job the County does of informing its citizens, about two-thirds of respondents (65%) reported "good" or "excellent" ratings, 30% said "fair" and 5% thought the County does a "poor" job at informing its residents. About three in five residents rated the importance of Dakota County services to the quality of life in their neighborhood as "good" or better. Between 42% and 49% of respondents gave positive ratings for the job Dakota County government does at listening to residents (49% said "good" or "excellent"), the value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County (45%), and the job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars (42%). About 3 in 10 residents reported positive ratings for their knowledge of the work of the Dakota County Board. Note that for a number of items a high percent of respondents reported "don't know" when asked to rate each item: the job Dakota County government does at listening to residents (34% said "don't know"), my knowledge of the work of the Dakota County Board (39%), the value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County (24%), and the job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars (29%).

Compared to counties across the nation, Dakota County was much above the benchmark for the job the County government does at informing and listening to residents. The value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County and the job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars were rated similarly to other counties in the benchmark database.

Compared to 2008, ratings in 2011 generally stayed the same or improved. Although any changes in ratings were not meaningfully different, residents felt the County had done better at informing residents and that their own knowledge of the work the County did had improved.

Table 10: Perception of Government

Please rate the following categories of Dakota County government performance:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)	Comparison to benchmark
The job Dakota County government does at informing residents	12%	53%	30%	5%	100%	57	Much above
The importance of Dakota County services to the quality of life in my neighborhood	9%	53%	32%	6%	100%	55	Not available
The job Dakota County government does at listening to residents	6%	43%	41%	10%	100%	48	Much above
The value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County	6%	39%	42%	12%	100%	46	Similar
The job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars	4%	38%	43%	14%	100%	44	Similar
My knowledge of the work of the Dakota County Board	3%	27%	36%	34%	100%	33	Not available

Figure 9: Average Rating of Perception of Government Compared by Year

The job Dakota County government does at informing residents
- 2011: 57
- 2008: 52
- 2006: 59
- 2004: 60
- 2001: 64

The importance of Dakota County services to the quality of life in my neighborhood*
- 2011: 55
- 2008: 64
- 2006: 53

The job Dakota County government does at listening to residents
- 2011: 48
- 2008: 48
- 2006: 44
- 2004: 47

The value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County
- 2011: 46
- 2008: 46
- 2006: 48
- 2004: 54
- 2001: 43

The job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars
- 2011: 44
- 2008: 45
- 2006: 48
- 2004: 51

My knowledge of the work of the Dakota County Board
- 2011: 33
- 2008: 26
- 2006: 26
- 2004: 25
- 2001: 28

Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)

*Indicates meaningful differences between 2011 and 2008.
Question and scale wording for all items, except for "The job Dakota County government does at informing residents," changed in 2011. Before 2011, respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with several statements. As with the response scale and question wording, the wording of the items also changed: "The job Dakota County government does at listening to residents" was "I feel Dakota government listens to citizens," "My knowledge of the work of the Dakota County Board" was "I feel I know about the work of the Dakota Board," "The value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County" was "I feel I receive good value for the Dakota taxes I pay," "The job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars" was "Overall, I feel that Dakota County does a good job of managing tax dollars" and "The importance of Dakota County services to the quality of life in my neighborhood" was "I feel that the services provided by Dakota County are important to the quality of life in my neighborhood." This last item was worded as "The services that the County provides improve the quality of life in my neighborhood" in 2006. This change in the wording of response options may cause a decline in the percent of residents who offer a positive perspective on public trust. It is advised to factor in the possible change due to question wording this way: if you show an increase, you may have found even more improvement with the same question wording; if you show no change, you may have shown a slight increase with the same question wording; if you show a decrease, community sentiment is probably about stable.

Overall Quality of County Services

In addition to asking residents about specific County services, the survey also asked residents to rate the overall quality of services provided by Dakota County. Approximately three-quarters of respondents rated the overall quality of services as "good" or better and only one percent gave a "poor" rating. The average rating of 64 on the 100-point scale was much higher than the national benchmark and similar to ratings in 2008.

Figure 10: Overall Quality of County Services
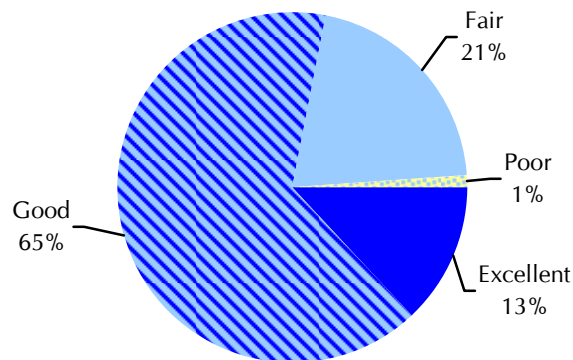
Figure 11: Average Ratings of Overall Quality of County Services by Year
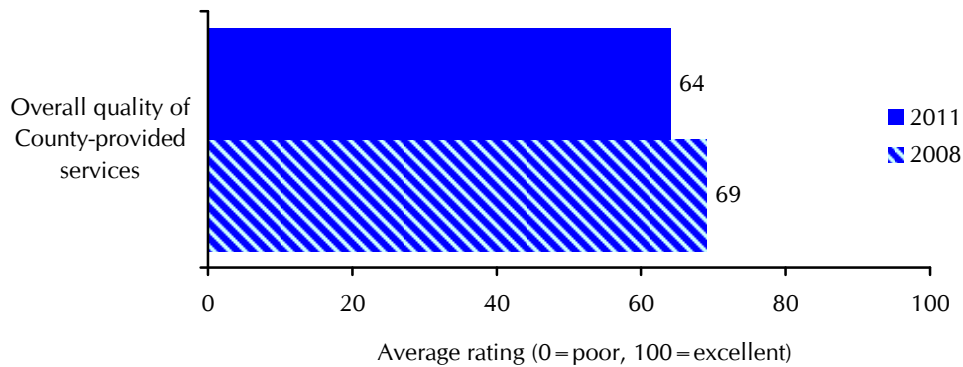
County Services

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of 14 County services and for each service at least half chose a "good" or "excellent" rating. The services rated most positively by residents were: County libraries (94%), County parks and recreation (94%), 911 dispatch services (91%), and the trail and bikeway system (88%). Services rated least positively were: condition of County roads (61% rating as "good" or better), services to veterans (60%), employment support services (50%), and public transportation/transit services (50%). Public transportation/transit services continue to be one of the lowest rated services by Dakota County residents. Note that a relatively large proportion of respondents said "don't know" when asked to rate the following County services: trail and bikeway system (21%), 911 dispatch services (38%), Sheriff services (47%), employment support services (51%), recycling and drop-off services at the Recycling Zone (23%), public transportation/transit services (27%), self-service options on County Web site (46%), disaster preparedness (59%), and services to veterans (67%). (See *Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies*.)

When converted to a 100-point scale where zero is equal to "poor" and 100 represents "excellent," average scores for five services were above 67 or "good": County libraries (average rating of 80), County parks and recreation (80), 911 dispatch services (76), the trail and bikeway system (75), and Sheriff services (70). Average ratings for other County services rated by 2011 residents were between "fair" and "good" on the 100-point scale.

Dakota County received ratings that were much higher than the county benchmark for 6 of the 7 services for which a comparison was available: County parks and recreation, the trail and bikeway system, Sheriff services, snow and ice removal on County roads, disaster preparedness, and the condition of County roads. One service was rated below the national benchmark: public transportation/transit services.

Nine of the 14 services could be compared to 2008, most of which were similar between the two years. Snow and ice removal on County roads was viewed less positively in 2011 than in 2008 (average rating of 70 on the 100-point scale in 2008 versus 61 in 2011).

Table 11: County Services

Please rate the following services provided by Dakota County.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating (0 = poor 100 = excellent)	Comparison to benchmark
County libraries	48%	46%	6%	0%	100%	80	Not available
County parks and recreation like Lebanon Hills or Lake Byllesby	47%	47%	6%	1%	100%	80	Much above
911 dispatch services	38%	53%	8%	2%	100%	76	Not available
Trail and bikeway system like Big Rivers Trail	39%	49%	12%	1%	100%	75	Much above
Sheriff services	30%	53%	13%	4%	100%	70	Much above
Recycling and drop-off services at the Recycling Zone	25%	52%	18%	5%	100%	66	Not available
Records, vital statistics, licensing, and vehicle registration	21%	56%	22%	1%	100%	66	Not available
Self-service options on County Web site (e.g., property information, program registration, meeting agendas/materials)	20%	54%	23%	2%	100%	64	Not available
Snow and ice removal on County roads	19%	48%	29%	4%	100%	61	Much above
Disaster preparedness	17%	47%	33%	3%	100%	60	Much above
Condition of County roads such as Cliff or Pilot Knob Roads, Kenwood Trail, or County Road 42	15%	46%	31%	8%	100%	56	Much above
Services to veterans	14%	46%	31%	9%	100%	55	Not available
Employment support services	10%	40%	37%	13%	100%	49	Not available
Public transportation/transit services	12%	38%	31%	19%	100%	48	Below

Table 12: Average Ratings of County Services Compared by Year

Please rate the following services provided by Dakota County.	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)				
	2011	2008	2006	2004	2001
County libraries	80	81	78	80	82
County parks and recreation like Lebanon Hills or Lake Byllesby	80	76	74	77	76
911 dispatch services	76	NA	NA	NA	NA
Trail and bikeway system like Big Rivers Trail	75	72	70	73	70
Sheriff services	70	69	70	70	72
Recycling and drop-off services at the Recycling Zone	66	NA	NA	NA	NA
Records, vital statistics, licensing, and vehicle registration	66	NA	NA	NA	NA
Self-service options on County Web site (e.g., property information, program registration, meeting agendas/materials)	64	60	NA	NA	NA
Snow and ice removal on County roads	61	70	67	65	73
Disaster preparedness	60	NA	NA	NA	NA
Condition of County roads such as Cliff or Pilot Knob Roads, Kenwood Trail, or County Road 42	56	53	57	59	63
Services to veterans	55	NA	NA	NA	NA
Employment support services	49	51	NA	58	NA
Public transportation/transit services	48	43	47	48	NA

Grey shading indicates meaningful differences between 2011 and 2008.
One question part was not included in 2006: "employment support services." In 2001, a few of these question parts were separate questions: "County libraries" was "overall, how would you rate the quality of services provided by the Dakota County libraries?" "County parks and recreation" was "in general, how would you rate the quality of the county park system?" "Trail and bikeway system" was "how would you rate the quality of the County trail and bikeway system?" "Sheriff services" was "in general, how would you rate the services provided by the Sheriff's department?" "Snow and ice removal" was "how would you rate the snow and ice removal operations on county roads?" In 2001, the scale for all was "excellent," "good," "only fair," "poor."

Key Driver Analysis

Knowing where to focus limited resources to improve residents' opinions of local government requires information that targets the services that are most important to residents. However, when residents are asked what services are most important, they rarely stray beyond core services – those directed to save lives and improve safety.

In market research, identifying the most important characteristics of a transaction or product is called Key Driver Analysis (KDA). The key drivers that are identified from that analysis do not come from asking customers to self-report which service or product characteristic most influenced their decision to buy or return, but rather from statistical analyses of the predictors of their behavior. When customers are asked to name the most important characteristics of a good or service, responses often are expected or misleading – just as they can be in the context of a resident survey. For example, air travelers often claim that safety is the primary consideration in their choice of an airline, yet key driver analysis reveals that frequent flier perks or in-flight entertainment predicts their buying decisions.

In local government, core services – like law enforcement – invariably land at the top of the list created when residents are asked about the most important County services. And core services are important. But the KDA digs deeper to identify the less obvious, but more influential services that are most related to residents' ratings of overall quality of local government services. Because services focused directly on life and safety remain essential to quality government, it is suggested that core services should remain the focus of continuous monitoring and improvement where necessary – but monitoring core services or asking residents to identify important services is not enough.

KDA was conducted for Dakota County by examining the relationships between ratings of each service and ratings of the County's overall services. Those key driver services that correlated most highly with residents' perceptions about overall County service quality have been identified. By targeting improvements in key services, Dakota County can focus on the services that have the greatest likelihood of influencing residents' opinions about overall service quality.

The 2011 Dakota County Key Driver Summary Chart on the following page combines three dimensions of performance:

- Trendline data. The arrows next to service boxes point up (black arrow) or down (white arrow) to indicate differences from the previous survey.

- Comparison to the county benchmark. When a comparison is available, the background color of each service box indicates whether the service is above the benchmark (green), similar to the benchmark (yellow) or below the benchmark (red).

- Identification of key drivers. A black key icon next to a service box notes a key driver.

Eleven services were included in the KDA for Dakota County. Four of these services were identified as key drivers for the County: self-service options on County Web site, public transportation/transit services, County parks and recreation, and snow and ice removal on County roads. Public transportation/transit services was rated below the benchmark; County

parks and recreation and snow and ice removal on County roads were rated above the benchmark, however ratings for snow and ice removal were lower in 2011 than in 2008.

Services with a high percent of respondents answering "don't know" (i.e., more than 50%) were excluded from the analysis and were considered services that would be less influential. See *Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies* for the percent "don't know" for each service.

Figure 12: Dakota County Key Driver Summary Chart
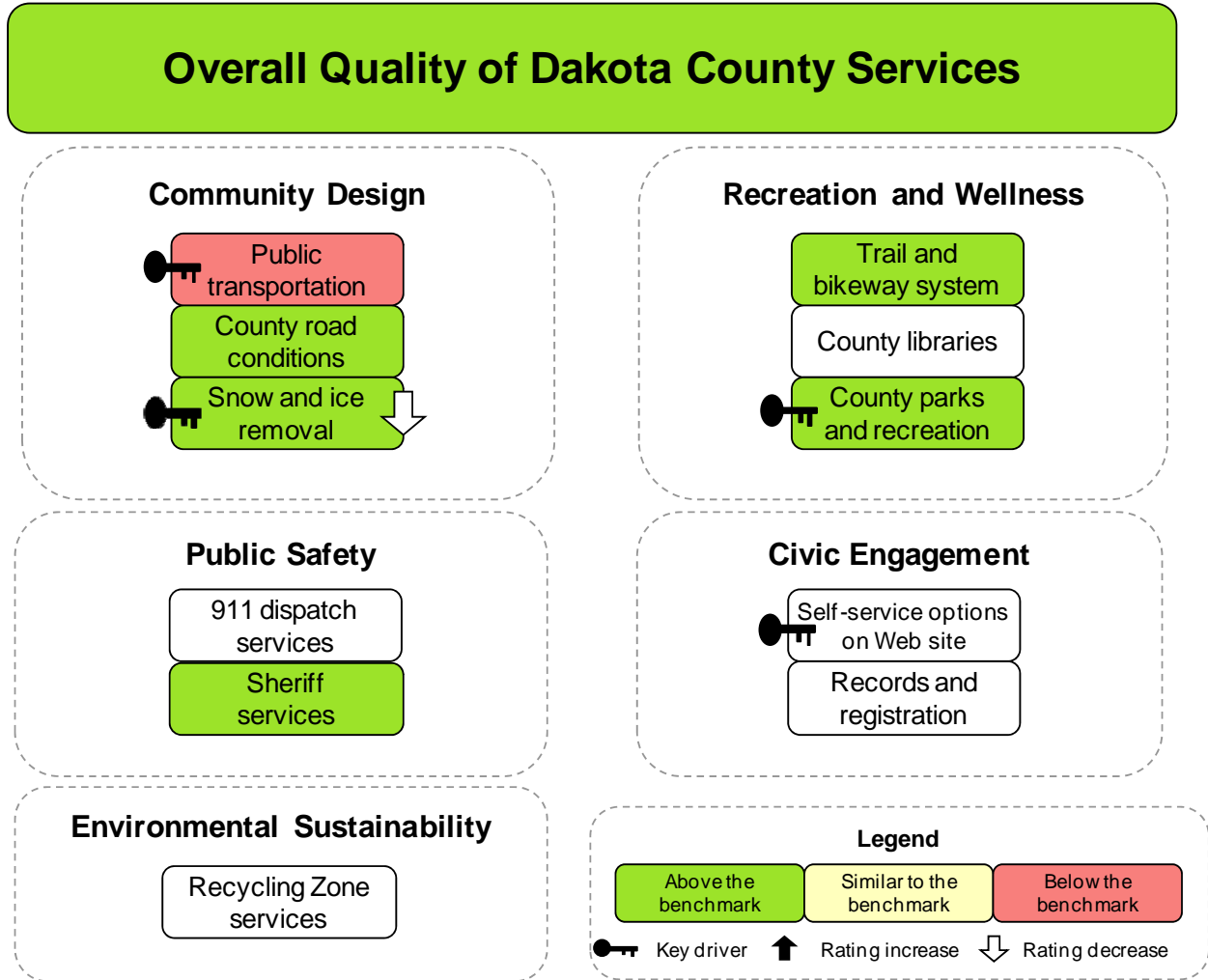
Recycling in Dakota County

Residents also were asked specifically about their recycling habits. When asked if they or a household member used services at the Recycling Zone facility in the previous 12 months, nearly twice as many respondents had not used services at the Recycling Zone as had used the services.

Residents who had not used Recycling Zone services were asked to identify the top reason their household had not used the facility. About a third of these respondents said they did not have anything to drop off (34%) or that they were not familiar with the Recycling Zone (32%). About 10% or fewer of respondents identified other reasons such as: used a different recycling location, did not want to pay fees at Recycling Zone, do not know what can be recycled at the Recycling Zone, inconvenient days/hours/location, and too far from my home. "Other" responses that could not be grouped into common themes appear verbatim in *Appendix B: Verbatim Responses to Open-end Questions*.

Figure 13: Use of Recycling Zone

Have you or any member of your household used the services at the Recycling Zone facility in the last 12 months?

Yes 36%

No 64%
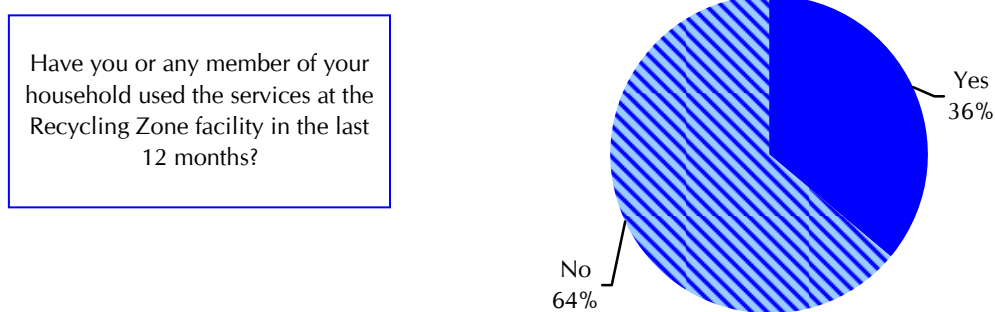
Figure 14: Reasons Why Household has not used the Recycling Zone

Reason	Percent
Did not have anything to drop off	34%
Unfamiliar with Recycling Zone	32%
Used a different recycling location	9%
Did not want to pay fees at Recycling Zone	5%
Don't know what can be recycled there	4%
Inconvenient days/hours/location	4%
Too far from my home	4%
Other/none of these	8%

Percent of respondents
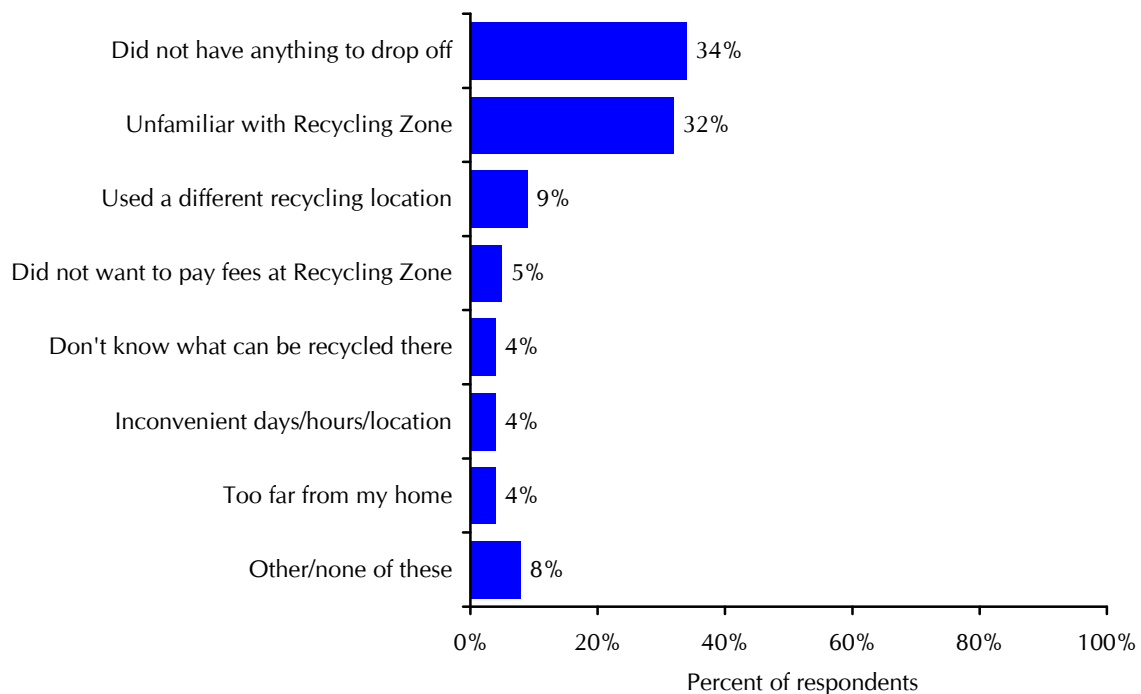
All respondents were asked to rate the recycling opportunities in various locations throughout the county. Respondents were more likely to give higher ratings to recycling opportunities near where they live than other locations and were more likely to say "don't know" when asked about other locations. Eighty-five percent thought recycling opportunities where they live were "good" or "excellent." Recycling opportunities in City or County buildings (73% said "good" or "excellent") and at athletic arenas (66%) received high evaluations, while malls (45%) and local businesses (39%) received the lowest ratings.

About 3 in 10 respondents said "don't know" when asked to rate recycling opportunities at parks, malls, and local businesses, and at least two in five said "don't know" when asked about these opportunities at City or County buildings, athletic arenas, and sites for community events.

On the 100-point scale, scores were generally between "fair" and "good," with the exception of where you live, which received an average rating of 74, or above "good."

Table 13: Ratings of Recycling Opportunities in Dakota County

Please rate the recycling opportunities in each of these locations in Dakota County.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)
Where you live	40%	45%	12%	3%	100%	74
In City or County buildings	18%	55%	22%	5%	100%	62
In athletic arenas (sports venues like hockey rinks, soccer, or softball fields)	14%	52%	25%	9%	100%	57
Sites for community events	14%	44%	34%	9%	100%	54
In parks	12%	45%	33%	11%	100%	52
At malls	9%	36%	37%	18%	100%	46
At local businesses	9%	30%	44%	18%	100%	43

Contact with County Government

As in past years, respondents were asked if they had visited, telephoned, or emailed any Dakota County government office within the previous 12 months. Fewer residents in 2011 than in 2008 reported contacting a government office (38% versus 48%, respectively). The proportion of residents contacting County government also was less than contact in Counties across the nation.

Figure 15: Government Office Contact Compared by Year
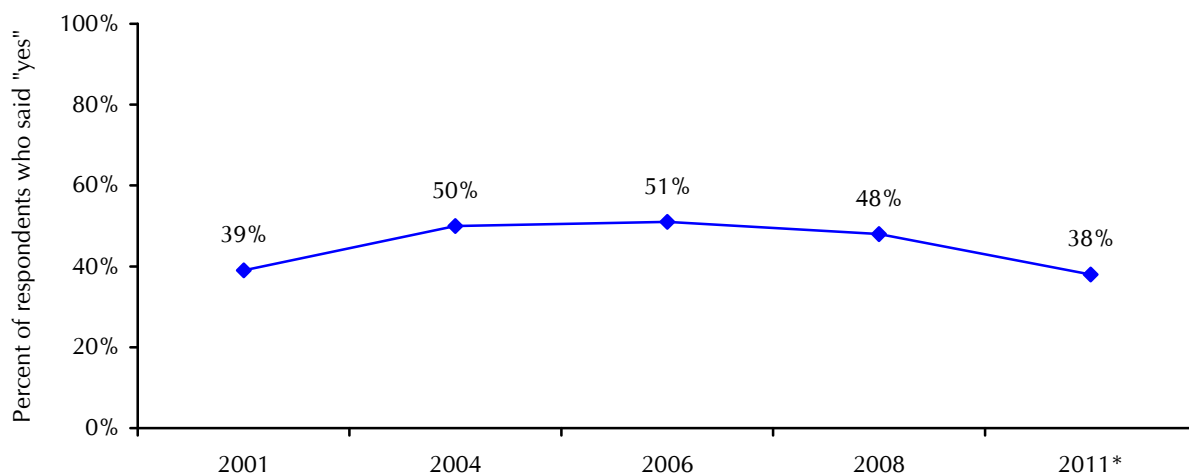
*Indicates a meaningful difference from 2011 to 2008.
In 2001, this question was "During the past year, have you visited or telephoned one of these service centers [locations preceded the question]? Response scale was: "no;" "yes, visited;" "yes, telephoned;" "yes, both." In 2011, "email" was added as an additional method of contact.

At least 8 in 10 residents who had contacted a government office in the previous 12 months rated each aspect of their most recent contact with a Dakota County employee as "excellent" or "good." Six percent or fewer rated each as "poor."

The average ratings for responsiveness, courtesy and overall impression were 71 on the 100-point scale and knowledge was rated with an average score of 75, all above "good." Ratings for the overall impression of County employees were similar in 2011 and 2008.

The average rating for employee courtesy was similar to the County benchmark and all other aspects were rated much above the national average.

Table 14: Dakota County Employees

What was your impression of the employee(s) of Dakota County in your most recent contact?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)	Comparison to benchmark
Knowledge	40%	48%	9%	2%	100%	75	Much above
Responsiveness	39%	38%	17%	5%	100%	71	Much above
Courtesy	40%	40%	14%	6%	100%	71	Similar
Overall impression	38%	43%	15%	5%	100%	71	Much above

Employee knowledge, courtesy and responsiveness were new survey items in 2011.

Figure 16: Overall Impression of Most Recent Contact with Dakota County Compared by Year
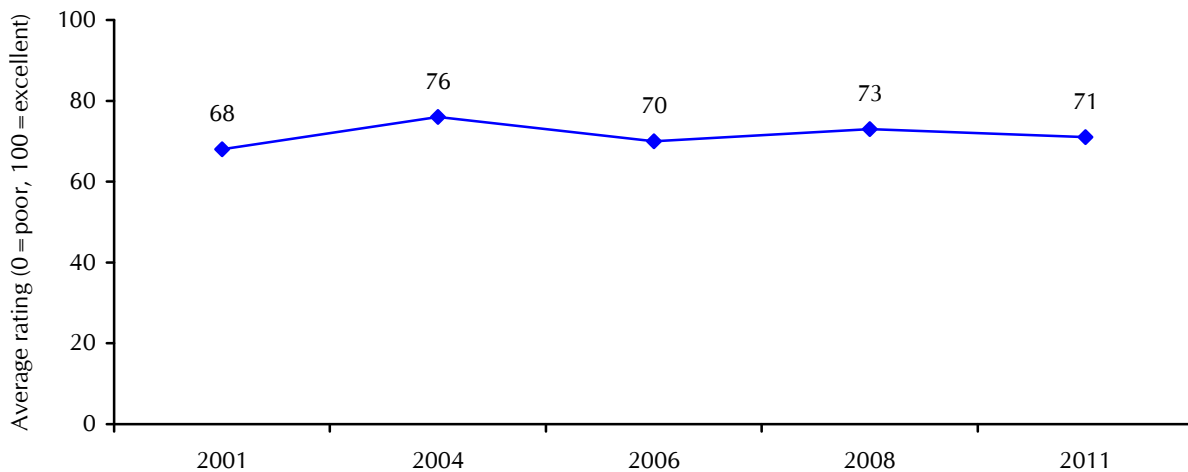
In 2001, the survey contained a question asking, "Which department [in a government service center] did you contact or visit?" This question was then followed by "How would you rate the service overall?" Overall service had a response scale ranging from 1 to 5, with only values 5 ("excellent") and 1 ("poor") labeled.

Fiscal Management and Planning

A number of questions on the 2011 survey were aimed at helping the County prioritize programs and services. Knowing where residents feel officials could trim and where resources should remain will aid the County government in making key decisions that affect the community.

Importance of Current Programs and Services

A new question was added to the survey in 2011 that informed Dakota County residents that the County does not have sufficient funds, without raising taxes, to continue all current programs and services. Residents were then asked to indicate the importance of maintaining each of nine different services. Maintaining current service levels for enforcing laws and prosecuting criminals was considered "essential" or "very important" by almost all respondents (92%). About four in five respondents felt similarly about protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect (81%) and protecting water supplies and water quality (80%). Of lower priority for residents were services for providing access to official records (33% said "essential" or "very important") and promoting healthy behaviors (22%).

Generally speaking, residents tend to evaluate core services as being the highest priority and more important to fund, while services that are less visible or serve fewer residents tend to be considered less important. Relative order over time may shift slightly in a given community and may be influenced by current budget circumstances, but broad patterns typically remain stable over time.

On a 100-point scale where zero represents "not at all important" and 100 is equal to "essential," average ratings for enforcing laws and prosecuting criminals (85), protecting water supplies and water quality (75), and protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect (74) fell between "very important" and "essential." Most other services received average ratings that were between "very important" and "somewhat important" and the average rating for promoting health behaviors (31) was equivalent to "somewhat important."

Table 15: Importance of Current Programs and Services

Dakota County does not have sufficient funds, without raising taxes, to continue all current programs and services. How important, if at all, is it to maintain each of the following service area?	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total	Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)
Enforce laws and prosecute criminals	63%	29%	6%	1%	100%	85
Protect water supplies and water quality	45%	35%	18%	2%	100%	75
Protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect	44%	37%	17%	2%	100%	74
Provide access to libraries	26%	38%	26%	9%	100%	60
Provide timely access to health care and economic assistance	26%	34%	32%	9%	100%	59
Assure safe, uncongested transportation options	15%	37%	41%	8%	100%	53
Provide access to parks, trails, and other recreational facilities	15%	33%	42%	10%	100%	51
Provide access to official records (e.g., driver licenses, birth/death certificates, real estate sales)	12%	21%	54%	13%	100%	44
Promote healthy behaviors (e.g., better nutrition, exercise)	8%	14%	39%	38%	100%	31

Figure 17: Importance of Current Programs and Services

Program/Service	Average rating
Enforce laws and prosecute criminals	85
Protect water supplies and water quality	75
Protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect	74
Provide access to libraries	60
Provide timely access to health care and economic assistance	59
Assure safe, uncongested transportation options	53
Provide access to parks, trails, and other recreational facilities	51
Provide access to official records (e.g., driver licenses, birth/death certificates, real estate sales)	44
Promote healthy behaviors (e.g., better nutrition, exercise)	31

Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)

Importance of Investing in Open Spaces and Parkland

Another new question in 2011 indicated that since 2002, Dakota County has emphasized setting aside open spaces and parkland, and asked residents to indicate how important, if at all, it is for the County to continue investing funds for various open spaces and parkland. Of highest importance to survey respondents was protecting lakes and streams, and wetlands from pollution (77% rated as "essential" or "very important"), followed by protecting remaining natural areas (67%) and protecting farmland from future development (49%). Least important to residents was developing more facilities in County parks (20% viewed as "essential" or "very important").

On the 100-point scale (0=not at all important, 100=essential), average ratings for protecting lakes, streams, and wetlands from pollution (72) and protecting remaining natural areas (63) were equal to about "very important" or higher. Protecting farmland from future development (50) was rated between "very" and "somewhat" important. Ratings for developing more facilities in County parks (30), developing more recreational trails or corridors (34), and expanding existing parks by adding acres as they become available (33) were equivalent to "somewhat important."

Table 16: Importance of Investing in Open Spaces and Parkland

Since 2002, Dakota County has emphasized setting aside open spaces and parkland. How important, it at all, is it to continue investing County funds for each of the following purposes?	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total	Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)
Protect lakes, streams, and wetlands from pollution	41%	36%	18%	4%	100%	72
Protect remaining natural areas	31%	36%	27%	7%	100%	63
Protect farmland from future development	20%	29%	31%	20%	100%	50
Develop more recreational trails or corridors	8%	18%	39%	34%	100%	34
Expand existing parks by adding acres as they become available	10%	16%	36%	38%	100%	33
Develop more facilities in County parks	7%	13%	43%	38%	100%	30

Figure 18: Importance of Investing in Open Spaces and Parkland

Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)
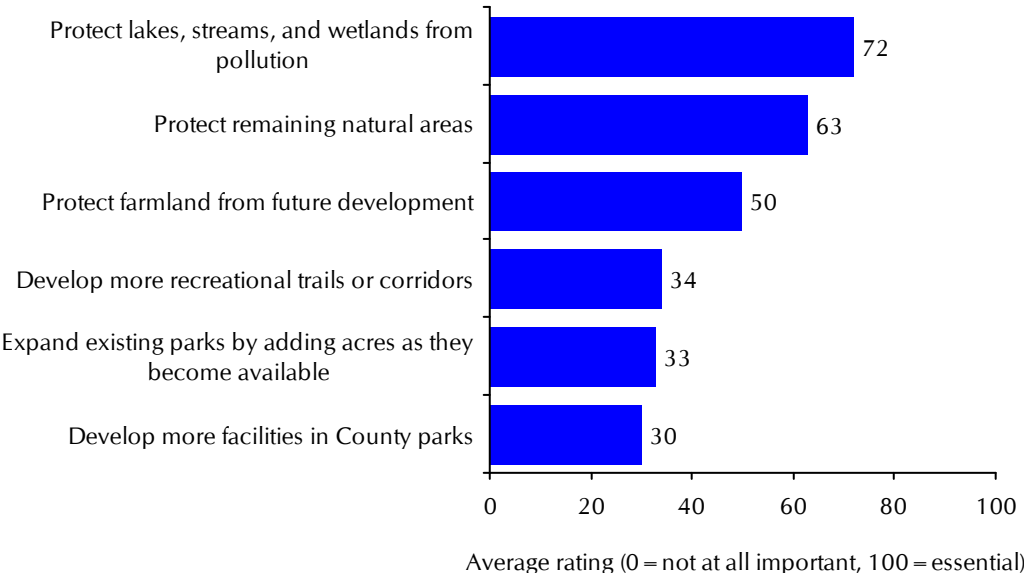
Importance of Activities and Services in Dakota County Parks

When asked about the importance of various activities and services in Dakota County parks, at least two-thirds of respondents rated each item as at least "somewhat important." Residents ranked non-motorized recreation such as biking, hiking, canoeing, and skiing at the top of the list, with about three in five rating it as "very important" or "essential." While other items on the list were considered at least "very important" by a quarter or more of respondents, each was also considered "not at all important" by a quarter or more of respondents. Respondents were permitted to write in an "other" activity or services that they would like to see in Dakota County Parks and rate the importance of it. The "other" responses appear verbatim in *Appendix B: Verbatim Responses to Open-end Questions*.

On the 100-point scale, average ratings were between "somewhat" (33) and "very important" (67).

Table 17: Importance of Activities and Services in Dakota County Parks

How important, if at all, is it for each of the following activities and services to be provided in Dakota County Parks, such as Lebanon Hills or Spring Lake Park?	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total	Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)
Non-motorized recreation such as biking, hiking, canoeing, skiing	19%	39%	34%	8%	100%	56
Opportunities to hunt and/or fish	12%	26%	40%	22%	100%	42
Local food production such as community gardens or orchards	8%	26%	33%	32%	100%	37
Equipment rentals such as canoes or snowshoes	5%	23%	48%	24%	100%	36
Overnight accommodations for tents, RVs, or camper cabins	5%	21%	40%	34%	100%	33
Skill-building or outdoor education classes	4%	17%	49%	30%	100%	32
Other	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100

Figure 19: Importance of Activities and Services in Dakota County Parks

Non-motorized recreation such as biking, hiking, canoeing, skiing	56
Opportunities to hunt and/or fish	42
Local food production such as community gardens or orchards	37
Equipment rentals such as canoes or snowshoes	36
Overnight accommodations for tents, RVs, or camper cabins	33
Skill-building or outdoor education classes	32
Other	100

Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)
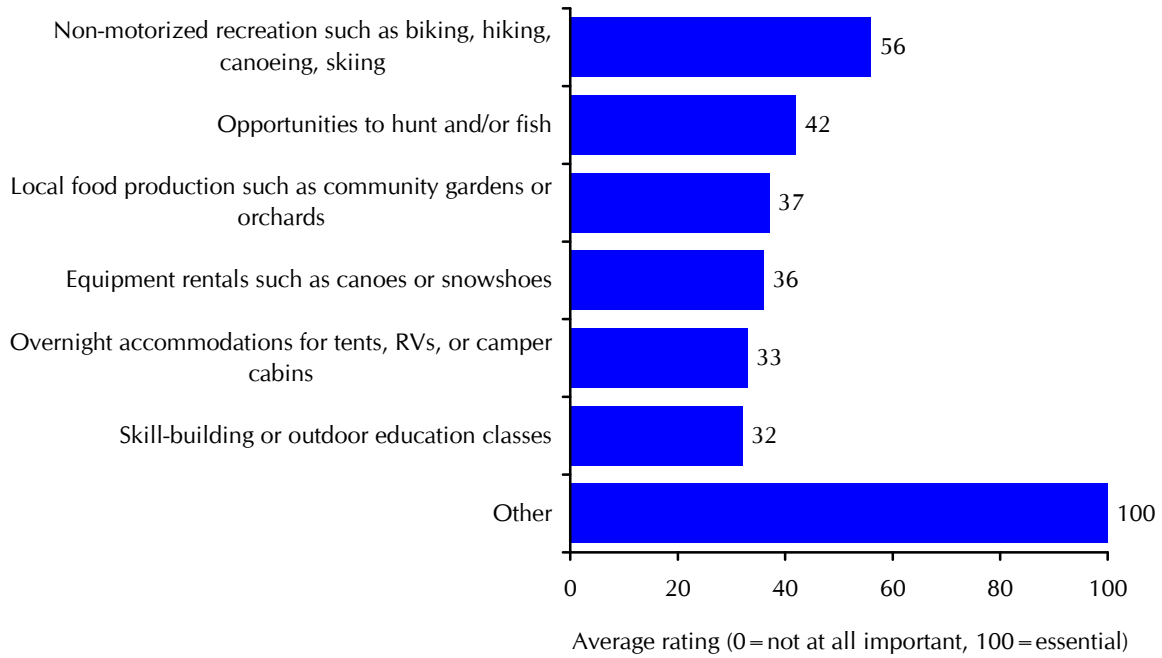
Investing in Transit Projects

Survey participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they would support or oppose Dakota County investing in projects that make transit more convenient to use. A majority (76%) "somewhat" or "strongly" supported this idea. More than twice as many respondents strongly supported the County investing in transit projects as strongly opposed such an investment.

Figure 20: Transit Projects

To what extent do you support or oppose the County investing in projects that make transit more convenient to use?

Somewhat support 45%

Somewhat oppose 12%

Strongly oppose 12%

Strongly support 31%
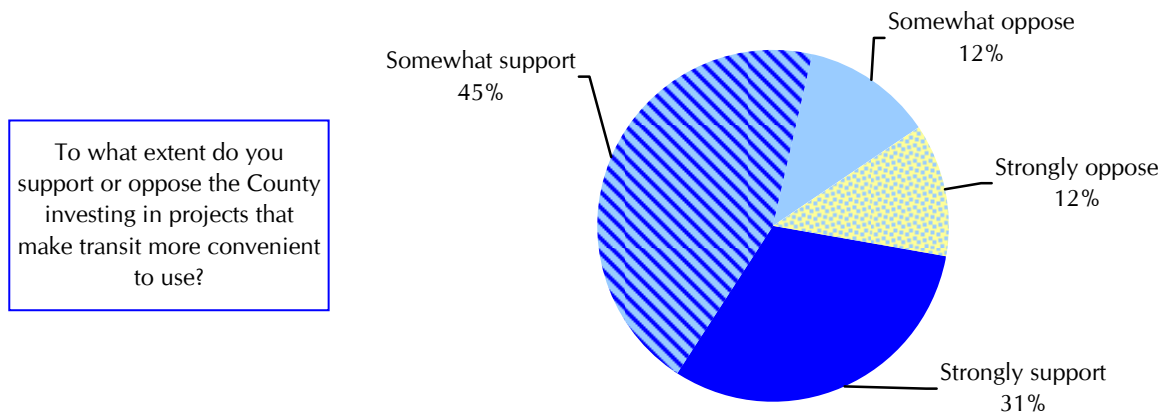
Hours of Operations at County Libraries

Residents were asked how likely or unlikely they would be to visit Dakota County libraries on specific days and times. Residents reported they would be more likely to visit County libraries on Saturdays, afternoons, and evenings. Generally, respondents were equally as likely to visit the libraries on the other days and times.

Table 18: Likely Visits to County Libraries

Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to visit Dakota County libraries on the following days and times.	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	Total	Percent "very" or "somewhat" likely
Sunday	21%	27%	8%	44%	100%	49%
Monday	13%	28%	24%	35%	100%	40%
Tuesday	12%	29%	25%	33%	100%	42%
Wednesday	12%	28%	25%	34%	100%	41%
Thursday	13%	30%	23%	34%	100%	42%
Friday	14%	30%	21%	35%	100%	44%
Saturday	32%	28%	12%	29%	100%	60%
Mornings	19%	22%	18%	41%	100%	41%
Afternoons	22%	34%	16%	28%	100%	56%
Evenings	28%	25%	14%	33%	100%	53%

Figure 21: Likely Visits to County Libraries

Sunday	49%
Monday	40%
Tuesday	42%
Wednesday	41%
Thursday	42%
Friday	44%
Saturday	60%
Mornings	41%
Afternoons	56%
Evenings	53%

Percent "very" or "somewhat" likely
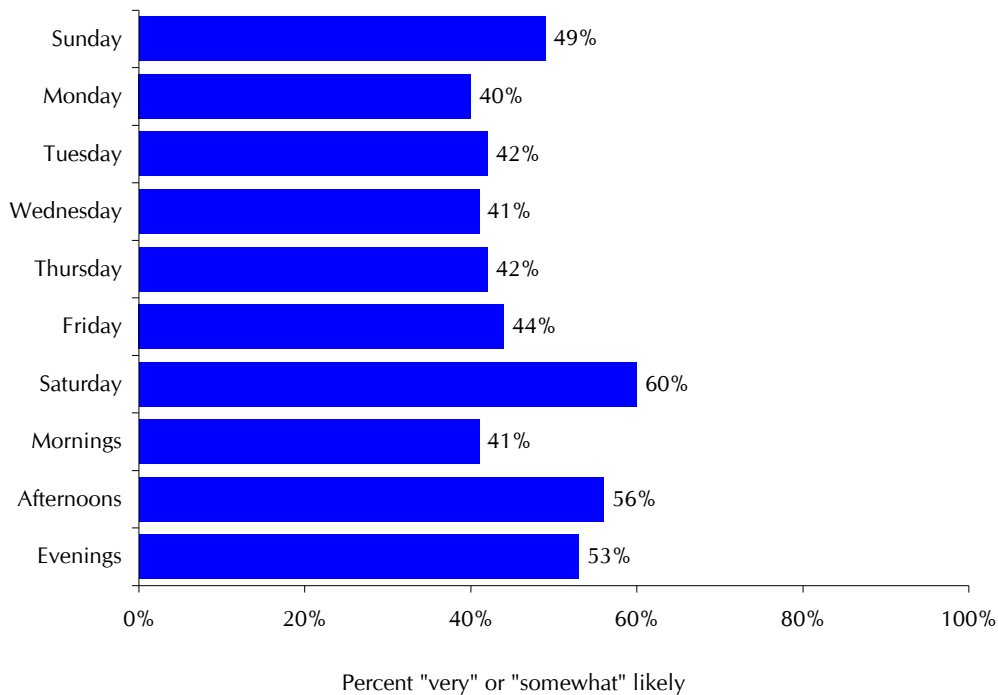
Dakota County residents also were asked their preference for reduced library hours. A slightly higher proportion of respondents indicated a preference for libraries to be open the same hours currently offered, but not all days of the week than did those who reported a preference for more days of the week, but for fewer hours (56% versus 44%, respectively).

Figure 22: Preference for Reduced Library Hours
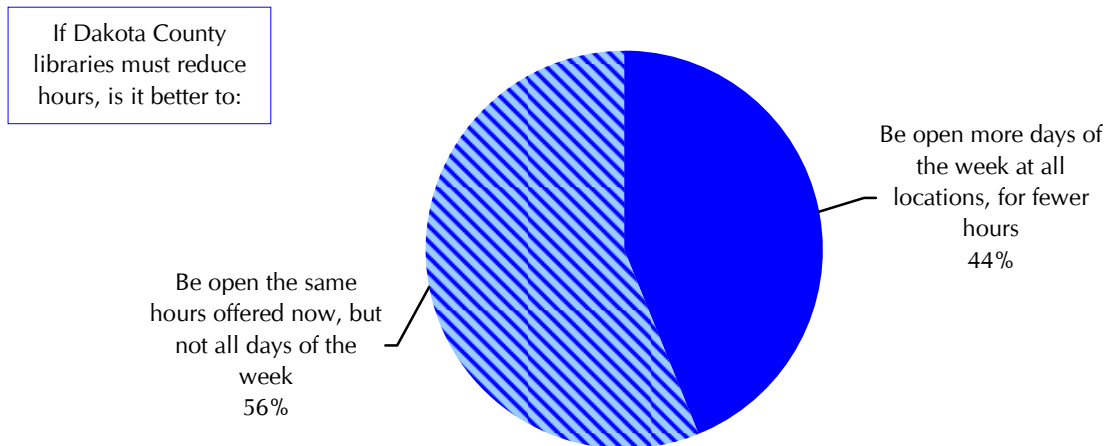
County Property Tax

When asked specifically whether they would support or oppose increasing their property tax to maintain services at current levels, responses were balanced; half supported the idea and half did not. However, about four times as many respondents offered strong opposition as strongly support. Responses have remained similar over time.

Figure 23: Support for or Opposition to County Property Tax

To what extent would you support or oppose an increase in your County property tax if it were needed to maintain County services at their current levels?

Somewhat oppose 23%

Strongly oppose 27%

Strongly support 7%

Somewhat support 43%
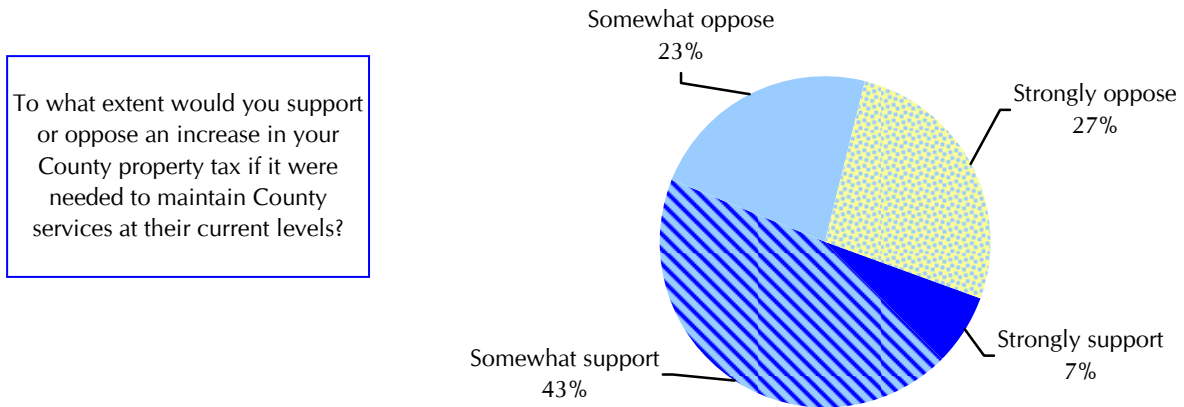
Figure 24: Level of Support for County Property Tax Increase Compared by Year

Percent "strongly" or "somewhat" support

54% (2001)
55% (2004)
45% (2006)
43% (2008)
51% (2011)
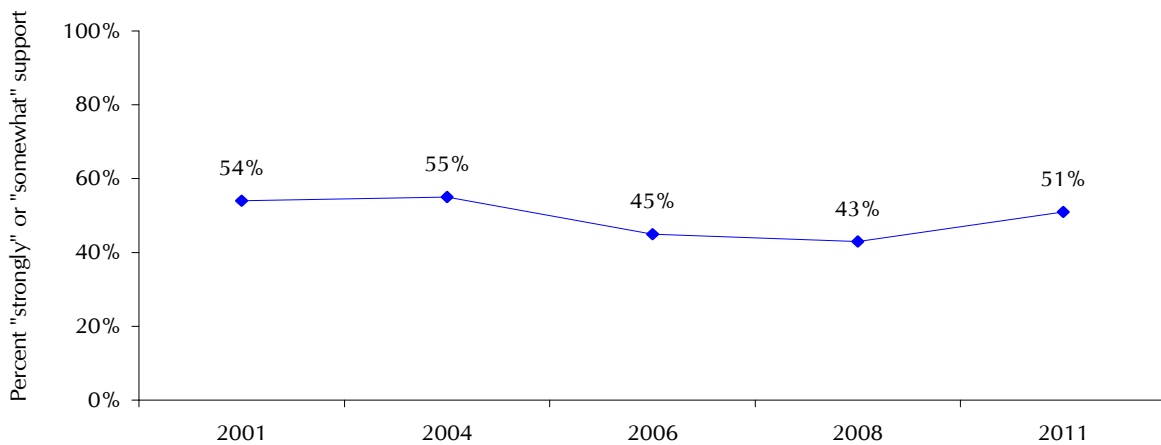
Balancing the Budget

Residents were asked to indicate their level of support for or opposition to various potential changes to the budget, if Dakota County needed to reduce services to balance the budget. Reducing hours of operation of County buildings/service centers and reducing the number of County buildings/service centers were supported by most respondents (80% and 77%, respectively). Three in five residents supported a delayed response time for license bureaus and processing applications (61%) and nearly half (47%) were in support of reducing park programs and maintenance. Least supported was reducing the level of road maintenance, including plowing, with 12% in support, 26% somewhat in opposition and 61% in strong opposition.

Table 19: Support for or Opposition to Changes to Balance Budget

If Dakota County needed to reduce services to balance its budget, to what extent would you support or oppose each of the following changes?	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Total	Percent "strongly" or "somewhat" support
Reduce hours of operation of County buildings/service centers	32%	48%	14%	6%	100%	80%
Reduce number (location) of County buildings/service centers	30%	47%	18%	5%	100%	77%
Delay response time for license bureaus, processing applications	13%	48%	28%	12%	100%	60%
Reduce park programs or park maintenance	9%	38%	34%	19%	100%	47%
Delay response times for low-income people applying for health, income, and food support	13%	30%	33%	23%	100%	44%
Reduce crime prevention programs	7%	29%	40%	24%	100%	36%
Build/maintain fewer roads	7%	23%	41%	29%	100%	30%
Delay service for disabled or elderly clients by increasing County staff workloads	5%	24%	38%	33%	100%	30%
Reduce sheriff patrols	6%	18%	38%	37%	100%	24%
Reduce the level of road maintenance, including plowing	3%	9%	26%	61%	100%	12%

Figure 25: Level of Support for Changes to Balance Budget

Change	Percent Support
Reduce hours of operation of County buildings/service centers	80%
Reduce number (location) of County buildings/service centers	77%
Delay response time for license bureaus, processing applications	60%
Reduce park programs or park maintenance	47%
Delay response times for low-income people applying for health, income, and food support	44%
Reduce crime prevention programs	36%
Build/maintain fewer roads	30%
Delay service for disabled or elderly clients by increasing County staff workloads	30%
Reduce sheriff patrols	24%
Reduce the level of road maintenance, including plowing	12%

Percent "strongly" or "somewhat" support

Preferred Relationship of Local Governments

The survey explained to respondents that Dakota County, area cities, and school districts already collaborate in many ways to improve quality or reduce the cost of services. Survey respondents were then asked to indicate which of three options best describes the relationship they thought these local governments should have. About three in five respondents (59%) thought local governments should partner more, just over a third (36%) thought local governments are doing the right amount of collaborating and few (5%) thought local governments should partner less.

Figure 26: Preferred Relationship of Local Governments

Dakota County, area cities, and school districts already collaborate in many ways to improve quality or reduce the cost of services. Which of the following best describes the relationship that you think these local governments should have?

Partner less to provide services
5%

Doing the right amount of collaborating to provide services
36%

Partner more to provide services
59%
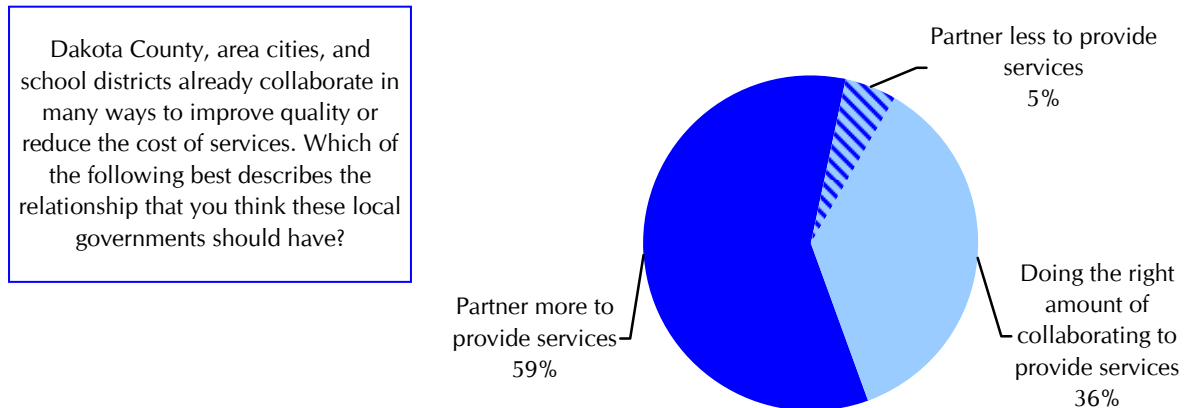
A follow-up question asked residents to indicate the level of importance of various goals when the County, area cities, and school districts collaborate or share services. At least 8 in 10 residents rated making the service more efficient, eliminating duplication with other service providers, and making the service more effective as "very important" or "essential." About 7 in 10 recommended doing more with less, reducing the cost of the service, and making the service higher-quality. About 6 in 10 rated the following as at least "very important": be more innovative, gain access to expertise in other government organizations, and better address changing needs.

Average scores on the 100-point scale were 55 points or higher, with eliminating duplication, making the services more effective, and making services more efficient receiving scores of 71 or higher (above "very important").

Table 20: Importance of Collaborative Goals

How important, if at all, are each of the following goals when the County, area cities, and school districts collaborate or share services?	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total	Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)
Eliminate duplication with other service providers	47%	39%	12%	2%	100%	77
Make the service more efficient	41%	46%	12%	1%	100%	75
Make the service more effective	34%	47%	17%	2%	100%	71
Do more with less	35%	39%	24%	3%	100%	68
Reduce the cost of the service	33%	37%	28%	2%	100%	67
Make the service higher-quality	25%	44%	27%	4%	100%	63
Be more innovative	19%	43%	32%	5%	100%	59
Gain access to expertise in other government organizations	20%	41%	31%	7%	100%	58
Better address changing needs	17%	43%	30%	11%	100%	55

Figure 27: Importance of Collaborative Goals

Figure 27: Importance of Collaborative Goals

Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)
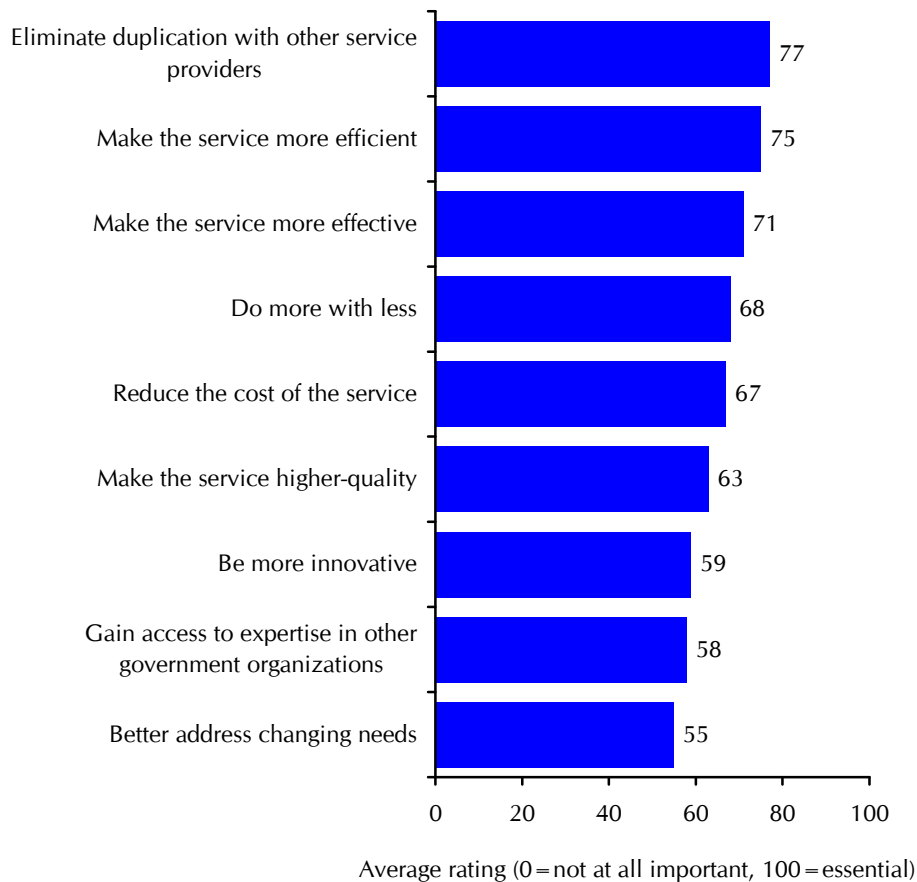
Public Information and Communication

To understand the best ways to communicate with and inform residents about Dakota County government and its services, a series of questions about public information sources and access to communication mediums was asked.

Potential Information Sources

Respondents were asked to indicate which potential sources of information about Dakota County government they used most often. Weekly community newspapers, Dakota County Newsletter, and daily newspapers were reported a major sources of information about the County by about a third of respondents. Fewer than half of respondents reported using the following sources of information: cable access programming, other online news sources, community meetings, phone calls to Dakota County, County listservs and other County electronic newsletters. One in five respondents said "don't know" when asked about County listservs and other County electronic newsletters (see full set of responses to the question in *Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies)*.

In general, reports of using most sources of information as either "major" or "minor" sources were down in 2011 from 2008. A smaller proportion of respondents in 2011 than in 2008 said they used television news broadcasts, cable access programming, other online news sources, phone calls to Dakota County, community meetings, and County listservs and other County electronic newsletters as sources for information about the County.

Table 21: Potential Information Sources

Please rate the extent to which you use each of the following as sources of information about Dakota County government, if at all.	Not a source	Minor source	Major source	Total
Weekly community newspapers	21%	43%	36%	100%
Daily newspapers	26%	43%	31%	100%
Dakota County Newsletter	26%	43%	32%	100%
Television news broadcasts	30%	43%	26%	100%
Dakota County Web site (www.dakotacounty.us)	36%	39%	25%	100%
Cable access programming	53%	35%	12%	100%
Other online news sources	54%	34%	12%	100%
Phone calls to Dakota County	66%	28%	6%	100%
Community meetings	70%	24%	7%	100%
County listservs and other County electronic newsletters	76%	19%	5%	100%

Table 22: Potential Sources of County Information Compared by Year

Please rate the extent to which you use each of the following as sources of information about Dakota County government, if at all.	Percent using as a minor or major source				
	2011	2008	2006	2004	2001
Weekly community newspapers	79%	82%	82%	80%	93%
Daily newspapers	74%	80%	79%	79%	NA
Dakota County Newsletter	74%	77%	79%	80%	87%
Television news broadcasts	70%	82%	79%	80%	NA
Dakota County Web site (www.dakotacounty.us)	64%	66%	59%	NA	NA
Cable access programming	47%	67%	60%	59%	47%
Other online news sources	46%	78%	71%	67%	38%
Phone calls to Dakota County	34%	50%	51%	50%	NA
Community meetings	30%	56%	50%	48%	43%
County listservs and other County electronic newsletters	24%	50%	42%	NA	NA

Grey shading indicates meaningful differences between 2011 and 2008.
In 2008, "Other online news sources" was "The Internet," "Cable access programming" was "Cable television programming," "Dakota County Web site (www.dakotacounty.us)" was "Dakota Web site on the Internet," and "Phone calls to Dakota County" was "Dakota County employees." In 2001, "The Dakota County newsletter" was "The county newsletter, 'The Dakota County Update.'" In 2001, the response scale was: "a major source," "a minor source," "not a source" of information.

Internet Access

About 9 in 10 Dakota County households (87%) had access to the Internet at home. When asked to indicate which Internet connection they have at home, about half of the 2011 respondents said they used a cable modem through cable TV connections. One-third reported having wireless Internet connection at home (33%) and a DSL connection (27%). Less common types of connections were direct fiber optic connections, dial-up modems, and T1 or T3 lines, with 5% or less saying they had this type of connection at home. A similar proportion of respondents in 2011 as in 2008 stated that they did not have Internet access from home.

Table 23: Internet Access from Home Compared by Year

Which of the following Internet connections do you have at home?	2011	2008	2006	2004	2001
Cable modem through cable TV connection	49%	NA	42%	NA	NA
Wireless connection (wi-fi) or hand-held wireless such as a smart phone	33%	NA	NA	NA	NA
DSL (direct subscriber line) though the local telephone network	27%	NA	27%	NA	NA
Satellite	5%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Direct fiber optic connection	4%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dial-up modem	2%	NA	25%	NA	NA
T1 or T3 line	1%	NA	1%	NA	NA
I don't have Internet access from home	13%	12%	21%	NA	NA
Don't know which options I have at home	2%	NA	4%	NA	NA

Grey shading indicates meaningful differences between 2011 and 2008.
In 2011, the total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option. In 2006, respondents only were allowed to select one type of Internet connection so these percentages total 100%.

Communication Preferences

The survey included a question that listed various methods of contacting County government and asked residents which method was their top choice for reporting a suggestion or concern.

As in 2008, sending an email was the top preference in 2011. Calling a staff person was the second most preferred choice for contacting Dakota County government for a suggestion or concern.

Table 24: Top Preference for Contact Compared by Year

Which one of the following methods would you prefer using if you wanted to contact Dakota County government for a suggestion or concern?	2011	2008
Send an email	45%	47%
Call a staff person	32%	42%
Call a commissioner	13%	
Go to an evening public meeting	6%	9%
Go to a daytime public meeting	1%	
Send a letter in the mail	1%	NA
Other	2%	2%
Total	100%	100%

Some of the response options changed from 2008 to 2011. In 2008, "Call a staff person" and "Call a commissioner" were one response option: "Call a commissioner or staff person." Also, " Go to an evening public meeting" and "Go to a daytime public meeting" were one response option in 2008: "Go to a public meeting."

Accessing Information on the Web

A majority of respondents (64%) said they had used the Dakota County Web site as a source of information. When asked what they would most like to see on the County Web site, information about parks was the most desired in both 2011 and 2008. Garbage and recycling information and renewing or applying for a license, permit, or other application were other highly sought services or information this year. About two-thirds also wanted information about garbage and recycling; renewing or applying for a license, permit, or other application, and general information about the County. Approximately three in five respondents said they wanted to access information about County services, researching property sales/information, or applying for a library card and/or utilize library resources. Few respondents (3%) reported having no computer or Internet access. Responses to the "other" types of information residents would like to access via the Internet can be found in *Appendix B: Verbatim Responses to Open-end Questions*.

In 2008 and earlier, this question was an open-ended question and in 2011 was converted to a set of fixed response options. As with a couple of other questions on the 2011 survey, this does limit the direct comparability of the data over time, so caution is advised regarding the interpretation of differences.

Table 25: Desired Internet Information Compared by Year

What kind of Dakota County service or information would you like to access via the Internet?	2011	2008	2006	2004	2001
Park information (e.g., reservation at a regional park facility)	79%	18%	30%	39%	NA
Garbage and recycling	68%	9%	3%	NA	NA
Renew or apply for a license, permit, or other application	67%	3%	3%	2%	NA
General information about the county	65%	8%	6%	13%	NA
Information about County services	62%	11%	7%	10%	NA
Research property sales/information	61%	3%	5%	5%	NA
Apply for a library card and/or utilize library resources	59%	3%	5%	6%	NA
Pay fees, fines, or property taxes	56%	8%	8%	4%	NA
Road/bridge construction projects	53%	5%	1%	NA	NA
Access public County records	49%	4%	4%	2%	NA
Online recording of vital records (birth, death, marriage)	44%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Meeting calendar, agenda, and/or minutes	41%	7%	6%	8%	NA
Budget documents	40%	3%	1%	4%	NA
No Internet/computer	3%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Other (please specify)	8%	26%	39%	NA	NA

In 2011, this question was presented as fixed response (i.e., respondents were presented a list of items from which to choose), whereas, between 2008 and 2001, this question was open-ended (i.e., no list presented).
Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option. This question was not asked in the 2001 survey.

Use of Social Media

Survey respondents also were asked about their use of social media (such as Facebook or Twitter). Just over half said they would not use social media, about a quarter said they would use social media but not for getting information about Dakota County and about one in five said they would use social media to get County information.

Figure 28: Use of Social Media

Which of the following best describes your potential use of social media (such as Facebook or Twitter)?

I would use social media, but not for getting information from or about Dakota County
26%

I would not use social media
55%

I would use social media to get Dakota County government information
19%
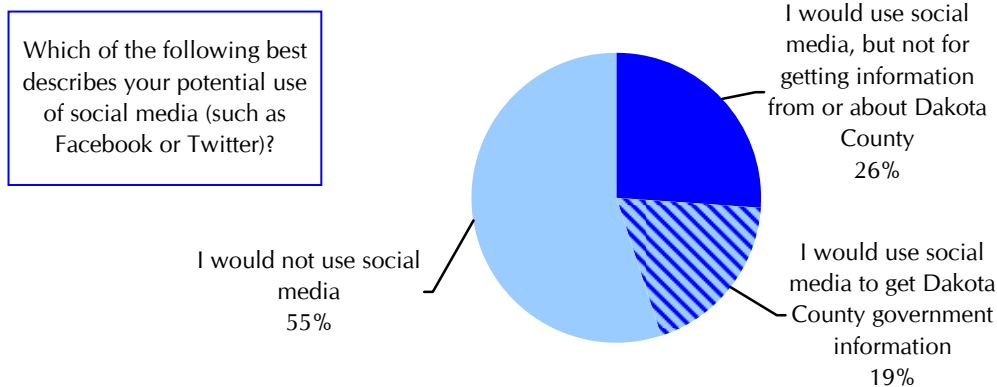
Respondent Demographics

Frequencies for demographic questions appear below and on the following pages. The tables below show the proportions of respondents from each Commissioner District who completed the 2011 questionnaire and their length of residency in Dakota County. About two in five survey respondents said they had lived in Dakota County for 20 years or more. About three-quarters of respondents reported being employed and 64% had an annual household income of $50,000 or more. Of those who reported being employed, about 1 in 10 reported working in the following locations: Eagan, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. Most respondents with children 17 or younger reported having 1 or 2 children. A quarter of respondents reported having at least 1 adult age 65 or older living in the household.

Respondent District		
	Percent of respondents	**Number of respondents**
District 1	16%	95
District 2	14%	86
District 3	15%	87
District 4	12%	75
District 5	13%	79
District 6	14%	86
District 7	15%	93
Total	100%	601

Length of Residency		
How long have you lived in the county?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Less than 2 years	8%	49
2 to 5 years	13%	79
6 to 10 years	16%	92
11 to 15 years	11%	68
16 to 20 years	13%	74
Over 20 years	39%	227
Total	100%	588

Housing Unit Type		
Which best describes the building you live in?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
One family house detached from any other houses	60%	347
House attached to one or more houses (e.g., a duplex or townhome)	12%	68
Building with two or more apartments or condos	27%	157
Mobile home	1%	4
Other	1%	7
Total	100%	583

Housing Tenure

Is this house, apartment, or mobile home...	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Rented for cash or occupied without cash payment?	22%	123
Owned by you or someone in this house with a mortgage or free and clear?	78%	441
Total	100%	564

Respondent Age

Which category contains your age?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
18-24	4%	25
25-34	25%	145
35-44	16%	94
45-54	27%	160
55-64	11%	64
65-74	9%	51
75 +	7%	43
Total	100%	582

Respondent Gender

What is your gender?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Female	52%	304
Male	48%	276
Total	100%	580

Employment Status

Which of the following best describes you?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Employed full-time	63%	359
Employed part-time	11%	65
Homemaker	5%	30
Retired	15%	84
Student	2%	12
Unemployed, looking for work	4%	21
Total	100%	571

City of Employment

In what city do you primarily work?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Apple Valley	5%	22
Bloomington	6%	27
Burnsville	9%	37
Eagan	14%	58
Eden Prairie	1%	6
Edina	1%	4

City of Employment		
In what city do you primarily work?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Farmington	3%	13
Hastings	3%	15
Inver Grove Heights	2%	7
Lakeville	5%	23
Maplewood	0%	0
Mendota Heights	2%	9
Minneapolis	11%	47
Minnetonka	2%	7
Northfield	1%	4
Prior Lake	0%	2
Richfield	2%	9
Savage	1%	6
Shakopee	1%	4
South St. Paul	2%	8
St. Louis Park	0%	2
St. Paul	10%	41
West St. Paul	2%	7
Woodbury	0%	1
Rosemount	2%	9
Cottage Grove	0%	2
Lake Elmo	0%	1
Oakdale	1%	2
St. Paul Park	0%	1
Stillwater	1%	3
Plymouth	0%	1
Golden Valley	0%	1
Metro area	1%	6
Other	10%	41
Total	100%	425

Presence of Children		
How many children age 17 years and under live in your household?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
1	22%	99
2	18%	82
3	5%	23
4	2%	8
5	0%	1
6	0%	1
8	0%	2
None	53%	243
Total	100%	459

Presence of Adults under Age 65		
How many adults under age 65 years, including yourself, live in your household?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
1	25%	135
2	53%	284
3	9%	46
4	2%	10
5	0%	1
6	0%	1
8	0%	1
None	11%	57
Total	100%	537

Presence of Older Adults Age 65 and Older		
How many persons age 65 years and over, including yourself, live in your household?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
1	14%	68
2	9%	44
3	1%	3
4	1%	2
5	0%	1
None	75%	355
Total	100%	473

Household Income		
Please indicate your household's annual income:	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Under $15,000	5%	27
$15,000-$24,999	7%	38
$25,000-$34,999	9%	47
$35,000-$49,999	14%	79
$50,000-$74,999	21%	113
$75,000-$99,999	17%	93
$100,000-$149,999	18%	100
$150,000-$199,999	5%	30
$200,000 or more	3%	19
Total	100%	546

Appendix A: Detailed Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument Development

Dakota County has conducted a general resident survey four times before the 2011 survey, most recently in 2008. The surveys ask recipients about their perspectives on the quality of life in the county, use of County amenities, opinion on policy issues facing the County, and assessment of County service delivery. These surveys permit County staff and elected officials to hear from a broad range of the population. The 2011 resident survey instrument development process began with a review of the 2008 survey, which served as the base for the new iteration. The 2008 survey was "converted" from a phone survey format to a mail survey format, which required some layout and wording modifications. A list of topics was generated for new questions; questions were developed and modified to find those that were the best fit for the 2011 questionnaire. In an iterative process between County staff and NRC staff, a final six-page questionnaire was crafted.

Selecting Survey Recipients

"Sampling" refers to the method by which survey recipients are chosen. The "sample" refers to all those who were given a chance to participate in the survey. All households located in the county boundaries were eligible for the survey. Because local governments generally do not have inclusive lists of all the residences in the jurisdiction (tax assessor and utility billing databases often omit rental units), lists from the United States Postal Service (USPS), updated every three months, usually provide the best representation of all households in a specific geographic location. NRC used the USPS data to select the sample of households.

A larger list than needed was sampled so that a process referred to as "geocoding" could be used to eliminate addresses from the list that were outside the study boundaries. Geocoding is a computerized process in which addresses are compared to electronically mapped boundaries and coded as inside or outside desired boundaries. All addresses determined to be outside the study boundaries were eliminated from the sample. A random selection was made of the remaining addresses to create a final list of 2,100 addresses, each identified as being within one of the seven County Commissioner Districts.

Attached units were over sampled as residents of this type of housing typically respond at lower rates to surveys than do those in detached housing units.

An individual within each household was randomly selected to complete the survey using the birthday method. The birthday method selects a person within the household by asking the "person whose birthday has most recently passed" to complete the questionnaire. The underlying assumption in this method is that day of birth has no relationship to the way people respond to surveys. This instruction was contained in the cover letter accompanying the questionnaire.

Survey Administration and Response

Each selected household was contacted three times. First, a prenotification announcement, informing the household members that they had been selected to participate in the Dakota County survey was sent. Approximately one week after mailing the prenotification, each household was mailed a survey containing a cover letter signed by the Chair of the County Board of Commissioners enlisting participation. The packet also contained a postage-paid return envelope in which the survey recipients could return the completed questionnaire to NRC. A

reminder letter and survey, scheduled to arrive one week after the first survey was the final contact. The second cover letter asked those who had not completed the survey to do so and those who had already done so to refrain from turning in another survey.

The mailings were sent in February 2011 and completed surveys were collected over the following six weeks. About 4% of the 2,100 surveys mailed were returned because the housing unit was vacant or the postal service was unable to deliver the survey as addressed. Of the remaining 2,013 households, 601 completed the survey, providing a response rate of 30%. This is a typical response rate; average response rates for a mailed resident survey range from 25% to 40%.

The following table shows the response rate for each district.

Survey Response Rate by Commissioner District			
District	Number of surveys mailed	Number of undeliverable surveys	Number of returned surveys	Response rate
District 1	300	5	106	36%
District 2	300	6	85	29%
District 3	300	22	94	34%
District 4	300	13	82	29%
District 5	300	17	57	20%
District 6	300	10	85	29%
District 7	300	14	92	32%
Total	2,100	87	601	30%

95% Confidence Intervals

The 95% confidence interval (or "margin of error") quantifies the "sampling error" or precision of the estimates made from the survey results. A 95% confidence interval can be calculated for any sample size, and indicates that in 95 of 100 surveys conducted like this one, for a particular item, a result would be found that is within plus or minus four percentage points of the result that would be found if everyone in the population of interest was surveyed. The practical difficulties of conducting any resident survey may introduce other sources of error in addition to sampling error. Despite best efforts to boost participation and ensure potential inclusion of all households, some selected households will decline participation in the survey (potentially introducing non-response error) and some eligible households may be unintentionally excluded from the listed sources for the sample (referred to as coverage error).

While the 95 percent confidence level for the survey is generally no greater than plus or minus four percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample and plus or minus 2.4 points on the 100-point scale, results for subgroups will have wider confidence intervals. Where estimates are given for subgroups, they are less precise. For each subgroup from the survey, the margin of error rises to as much as plus or minus 10% or 5.9 points (on the 100-point scale) for a sample size of 100 to plus or minus 5% or 2.9 points (on the 100-point scale) for 400 completed surveys.

Survey Processing (Data Entry)

Mailed surveys were submitted via postage-paid business reply envelopes. Once received, staff assigned a unique identification number to each questionnaire. Additionally, each survey was reviewed and "cleaned" as necessary. For example, a question may have asked a respondent to pick two items out of a list of five, but the respondent checked three; staff would choose randomly two of the three selected items to be coded in the dataset.

Once all surveys have been assigned a unique identification number, they are entered into an electronic dataset. This dataset was subject to a data entry protocol of "key and verify," in which survey data were entered twice into an electronic dataset and then compared. Discrepancies were evaluated against the original survey form and corrected. Range checks as well as other forms of quality control were also performed.

Weighting the Data

The demographic characteristics of the survey sample were compared to those found in the 2005-2009 American Community Survey Census estimates for adults in the county. Sample results were weighted using the population norms to reflect the appropriate percent of those residents in the county's population. Other discrepancies between the whole population and the sample were also aided by the weighting due to the intercorrelation of many socioeconomic characteristics.

In addition to weighting the data within the county, an additional weight was applied to include the correct proportion of residents living in each County Commissioner District.

The variables used for weighting were age, gender, housing tenure, and housing unit type. This decision was based on:

- The disparity between the survey respondent characteristics and the population norms for these variables

- The saliency of these variables in detecting differences of opinion among subgroups

- The historical use of the variables and the desirability of consistently representing different groups over the years

The primary objective of weighting survey data is to make the survey sample reflective of the larger population of the community. This is done by: 1) reviewing the sample demographics and comparing them to the population norms from the most recent Census or other sources and 2) comparing the responses to different questions for demographic subgroups. The demographic characteristics that are least similar to the Census and yield the most different results are the best candidates for data weighting. Several different weighting "schemes" are tested to ensure the best fit for the data.

The results of the weighting scheme are presented in the table on the following page.

2011 Dakota Resident Survey Weighting Table			
Characteristic	**Population Norm[1]**	**Unweighted Data**	**Weighted Data**
Housing			
Rent home	21%	28%	22%
Own home	79%	72%	78%
Detached unit	62%	50%	60%
Attached unit	38%	50%	40%
Sex and Age			
18-34 years of age	31%	16%	29%
35-54 years of age	44%	35%	44%
55+ years of age	25%	49%	27%
Female	51%	59%	52%
Male	49%	41%	48%
Females 18-34	15%	9%	15%
Females 35-54	22%	20%	22%
Females 55+	14%	30%	15%
Males 18-34	15%	7%	15%
Males 35-54	22%	15%	21%
Males 55+	12%	20%	12%
District[2]			
District 1	15%	18%	16%
District 2	14%	14%	14%
District 3	15%	16%	15%
District 4	12%	14%	12%
District 5	13%	9%	13%
District 6	15%	14%	14%
District 7	16%	15%	15%

[1] *Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey Census estimates*
[2] *Source: Dakota County*

Data Analysis

The surveys were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency distributions and averages are presented in the body of the report. Chi-square or ANOVA tests of significance were applied to breakdowns of selected survey questions by County. A "p-value" of 0.05 or less indicates that there is less than a 5% probability that differences observed between groups are due to chance; or in other words, a greater than 95% probability that the differences observed in the selected categories of our sample represent "real" differences among those populations. Where differences between subgroups are statistically significant, they are marked with grey shading in the appendices.

Appendix B: Verbatim Responses to Open-end Questions

Following are verbatim responses to the open-ended question on the survey. Responses are grouped by the theme to which they were coded. The verbatim responses were not edited for grammar but punctuation has been added for meaning or clarity.

Q5. What one thing do you like most about living in Dakota County? "Other (please specify)"

- A peace of mind
- Bike trails
- Close to all shopping
- Family
- Friends
- Home town
- I was born here.
- Library
- Live have most of my life
- Lived in Ramsey all my life much over these one
- Natural Environment
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Parks yet it's proximity to both metros.
- PCA availability
- Safety
- Things to do in this area.
- When you finally qualify from county you get great help.

Q7. What do you feel is the most serious issue facing Dakota County at this time? "Other (please specify)"

- Accessibility
- Apathy of public citizens
- Closed businesses
- Cops with to much time on there hands, cops killing people. Cops hitting people with cop cars and keeping their job.
- Drugs
- Home foreclosures
- I cant think of anything
- Illegal drugs
- Immigration of people of poverty.
- Importing 1,000s of Samelis county budget - Tax value going down.
- Lack of independent merchants
- Lack of Restaurants & Shopping & Entertainment in my neighborhood
- Loss of open space.
- More than one I could check.
- No stop signs on many corners vit out! pot holes!
- Over development - Leave some open spaces enough houses.
- Plowing of roads.
- Pot holes
- Public & residential water sucks.
- Safety
- School budget cuts
- Specifically your damn property tax on rural houses.
- There's getting to be less open space
- To much growth.
- Transportation
- Waiting list for help with housing is too long. I need help now not in 4 years! Help was housing and services for the poor and people
- Water quality
- We have too much of this

Q8. Thinking about the next three years, what do you expect will be the best thing about living in Dakota County?

- A good place to live, Quality of life.
- A safe, comfortable, happy place to live.
- A) Ease of getting to work via bike, walk or bus.
- Access to good recreational trail? Stability of county budget.
- Access to metro region & new bridge.
- Affordable housing and jobs.
- Affordable housing.
- Affordable housing.
- Affordable necessary for services, activities for seniors, libraries easily available
- Affordable taxes
- All races living & working together
- Antique shoping
- Attending the public schools.
- Attractiveness of area - Will maintained & beautiful green
- Avail. of Med. Facility's
- Availability of health care & every day needs.
- Availability of parks & park preserves.
- Availability of restaurants, movies, & shopping convenient.
- Beauty of the area - The trees - Lake - Hills- open spaces Parks etc
- Being close to the king of Diamonds.
- Being near my daughter.
- Being retired
- Being retired with a home that's paid for
- Being safe
- Being safe & secure where I live.

- Being, on the south side of river away from big city
- Better public transportation
- Better public transportation.
- Better roads.
- Better stores to shop & eat at less business's closing.
- Bike trails
- Boys win Hokey Tournament State.
- Bridge
- Bringing in more public transportation.
- Can't predict the future politicians screw everything up. They are out of touch with everyday people.
- Clean
- Close to everything
- Close to family.
- Close to jobs
- Close to metro
- Close to my immediate family relatives.
- Close to St Paul/Minneapolis but not that close.
- Closeness to Twin Cities.
- Continue to enjoy parks : walking paths near by
- Continued development of the Vermillion river corridor and joined parkways.
- Continued quality of service while keeping costs down.
- Continued standard of living
- Continued/at least fair county tax base, so we can stay in our home.
- Convenience
- Convenience
- Convenience - as far as apple valley is concerned. Seems to be having issues per a friend living there.
- County closing government funded homes in my neighborhood that decrease property values.
- Depending upon where I end up living the quality of life hopefully will be the best?
- Development of Riverfront.
- Diligent Government
- Disaster prep. Elderly care
- Do not know
- Do not no
- Don't know
- Don't know
- Don't know
- Don't know how to answer this one.
- Don't know.
- Ease of access to everything.
- Ease of access to Twin Cities.
- Ease of getting around.
- Easy access to parks, especially Lebanon Hills.
- Economic and development
- Economic and social growth in communities.
- Economic development.
- Economic growth
- Economy, Jobs, New development.
- Edge of Suburban/Urban area - close to "Country".
- Educational experience of our 3 children in ISD 196.
- Enjoying my new retirement time - finding ways to give by volunteering
- Every thing will be back to what it was 5 yrs ago
- Everything
- Excellent school districts
- Expansion of Spring Lake Park trails.
- Family
- Family atmosphere (recreation options/schools)
- Feeling safe
- General quality of life.
- Getting out of Dakota County.
- Good atmosphere.
- Good family environment.
- Good location for travel in Metro area
- Good location good neighborhood - schools
- Good location to Twin Cities
- Good location, Acceptable property taxes, good quality of life.
- Good place to raise my son.
- Good places to shop
- Good quality schools.
- Good roads, snow removal, easy access to bus service to downtown areas.
- Good schools
- Good schools, clean water and air
- Green space, protection of natural areas
- Green space-if left, easy access to airport & downtown areas, safer neighborhood.
- Hard to say, things change too quickly.
- Have senior citizens housing in one level building that is price and affordable.
- Having more entries, making better transportation available and in Lakeview
- Having places to go out and enjoy the outdoors.
- Home sales increase.
- Home town living.
- Hope that we get a new sheriff.
- Hope to be able to get out for rides-using good roads
- Hopefully being able to work for Dakota County in some way.
- Hopefully getting more recreational things for the kids
- Hopefully more wheel chair accessible parks.
- Hopefully not too populated. Small town feel.
- Hopefully taxes will be lower! Higher income and lower fore closure.
- Hopefully the housing market will improve
- Hopefully there will be new Industrial & business growth - providing jobs
- Hopefully traffic congestion will improve.
- Hopefully, keeping it clean
- Hopefully, less traffic
- Hopefully, on-going commitment to maintaining the high quality schools.
- Hopefully, same local government
- House will be said for.

- Housing
- How convenient things are that we use & need as to where we live
- I do not plan on living in Dakota County for much longer.
- I don't expect the next 3 years to be good.
- I don't follow politics enough to properly answer this question.
- I have little hope for this county or state
- I live in a friendly, helpful neighborhood.
- I plan on being long gone from this county in the most 3yrs - As usual the County doesn't give a crap about Rural Housing
- I still live in the country in Farmland.
- I will not be living here at that time.
- I wont be living here in three years due to college.
- If it stays like now. Keep up what you are doing
- Improved public transportation.
- Improved road conditions.
- Improvement of parks and recreation services.
- Improvement of the economy resulting in a better, less stressful way of living
- In the next 3 yrs. I hope to be long gone out of Dakota Co.
- It has everything I need in one area.
- It shouldn't be as much of a target for budget cuts ?
- It stays quiet, Peaceful, more good jobs.
- I've lived here my entire life - wouldn't change a thing!
- Job opportunities/creation
- Jobs - economy
- Jobs, housing
- Just a nice place to live.
- Keep the walks open.
- Keeping a job
- Keeping city out off south county
- Keeping it rural - no light rail & wind turbines.
- Keeping the small town feel.
- Keeping the small town feeling.
- Kids school
- Leadership
- Less crime, Affordable housing, money for schools.
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location

- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location
- Location - open yet close to ocean area.
- Location & availability for parks & recreation
- Location & schools
- Location to amenities needed & surrounding cities.
- Location to Metro
- Location to Mpls, St. Paul, and airport
- Location to services.
- Location, close to the cities + jobs
- Location, near many things
- Location, Parks, Lakes, Stores.
- Location, recreational opportunities.
- Location, Safety
- Location, school-educational quality,
- Looking for more senior housing & senior awareness.
- Low crime
- Low crime rate, improved main transit, Economic rebound.
- Low crime, good schools, small town
- Low taxes - Low crime - better water better roads & sewers
- Low taxes, close to downtown, good public schools for kids
- Lower crime then other counties.
- Lower property taxes
- Maintaining present quality of life.
- Mass transit opportunities - economic development
- Maybe property values will increase!
- More equity in my house
- More job opportunities, condition of roads.
- More people using public transit, reducing traffic congestion.
- Moving somewhere else.
- My daughter's access to quality public schools.
- My neighborhood
- My neighborhood.
- My neighborhood.
- Need a Menard's of Lowe's
- Neighbors
- No coment
- No crowding
- No idea
- No rundown housing
- Not as developed as inner metro area
- Not having made. Too many charges!
- Not sure
- Not sure.
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Nothing
- One the best county to living

- Open areas, parks and paths, taxes
- Open farm land - no conjection.
- Open space
- Open space
- Open space
- Open space available.
- Open space feeling
- Open spaces
- Open spaces.
- Orderly growth is coming & enhanced public transit.
- Our children are moving through the ISD 197 school system - maintaining educational opportunities is key.
- Our location
- Our neighborhood
- Overall quality of life
- Overall quality of life.
- Overall quality of life-safety.
- Parks
- Parks
- Parks
- Parks & rec
- Parks & Trails
- Parks & trails
- Parks, bike trails
- Parks/Lakes
- People
- Please finish fixing the streets!
- Population growth
- Preservation of rural atmosphere
- Property value increase
- Proximity of parks, trails, restaurants & retail
- Proximity to downtown Location.
- Proximity to Henna Ramsey counties without having to live in those counties
- Public transit
- Public transportation-light Rail, Buses, Train
- Quality of family/life.
- Quality of life
- Quality of life
- Quality of life
- Quality of life
- Quality of life
- Quality of life
- Quality of life in area
- Quality of life in general
- Quality of life in general.
- Quality of life, easier access to Mpls/St. Paul
- Quality of life.
- Quality of life.
- Quality of living including park & rec, schools, events.
- Quiet & good people.
- Raising a child
- Raising my kids here.
- Really don't know.
- Reasonable job opportunities.
- Recreation

- Recreational activities.
- Relaxed style of living
- Reliable stable government.
- Retail
- Retirement
- Retiring & volunteering
- Road conditions, fixing/maintenance.
- Safe community
- Safety
- Safety
- Safety, it's quiet here. The schools are decent, there's effort to make walking/biking safer, public transfer will be easier.
- Safety.
- Same as always
- Same as past - Location, Our views of the river, The great building we live in.
- Schools
- Schools
- Schools
- Schools
- Schools
- Schools
- Schools
- Schools, community
- Schools, Parks & Rec.
- Senior living availability.
- Small town feel
- Small town feel close to the big city.
- Small town living as opposed to large cities.
- Small town, Parks & Rec.
- So far the neighborhood is quiet and I expect still continue.
- Stable property values
- Tax my home - Not on its tax value - But what it can sell for.
- Tax relief
- That commissioners supporting and encouraging the development of expanded public transportation will be elected instead of the current cabal.
- That depends on whether residents choose to support needed school funding & services. Plowing has already deteriorated over former years.
- That I'm not living in the middle east (But its comming)
- That it will continue to have a more "Small town" feel than Hennepin or Ramsey counties.
- That they might create more job opportunities.
- The area we live in.
- The community!
- The fact that my family and I will still be living here and sending our son to school in this district.
- The gateway the new bridge will give the County.
- The general location, very central to where I travel.
- The growth and development.

- The increase of more restaurants-higher quality ones
- The location of my home.
- The medical facilities, Shopping facilities, Transportation. My home is here and paid, my church, friends + some family.
- The natural environment
- The neighborhood
- The new ball fields at the Vo tech area, hopefully housing prices will be better, more jobs created, more low income housing in the area.
- The new bridge over the Mississippi - Hwy 61
- The new mass transit system
- The parks and trails.
- The parks will get even better.
- The people
- The roads - they can take you anywhere.
- The schools and being able to go to college.
- The schools.
- The way management negotiate w/ public (civil servant) workers. Keep jobs and prevent further.
- The wonderful services, Darts transportation, Social & Health
- There is a lot of organizations - volunteers to help those get thru the low employment economic situation.
- Things will stay the same unless we get more business's.
- To have a community that lives together with happiness, peace and safety.
- To keep on living.
- Transportation
- Un sure
- Unknown
- Unknown
- Unsure - I feel it is moving in a negative direction
- Very good balance of stuff you need - retail, recreation activities & work location
- Very nice parks, walking/hiking trails for all ages.
- Water
- Water, instant a water treatment plant.
- Will be retired in another state.
- Yes, I will

Q16. Which one of the following methods would you prefer using if you wanted to contact Dakota County government for a suggestion or concern?

- And put through to someone who understands and can answer the question (s).
- Call
- Call Dakota county office
- County Adm bldg
- Dont know
- Don't Know
- Don't Know
- Facebook
- News letter
- None
- Receive a response.
- Show up ask for real person.
- Snail mail
- Speak in person to appropriate authority.
- Telephone book
- Why contact anyone county board doesnt listen anyway
- Write a letter
- Write a letter

Q18. What kind of Dakota County service or information would you like to access via the Internet ? "Other (please specify)"

- All info!!
- All of the above.
- Arrests for drunk driving.
- Commissioner salaries and benefits
- Do not have internet
- Do not have Internet
- Do not have Internet
- Do not have Internet.
- Dont have a computer
- Don't have a computer.
- Don't have a computer.
- Dont have internet
- Don't have internet
- Dont know
- Don't know
- Don't own a computer
- Dont use internet
- Don't use Internet
- Dont-Use-Internet
- I do not have a computer
- I have no computer.
- Info about county boundary decisions & voting trends.
- Live chat w/staff
- Local events/activities.
- No computer
- No computer
- No computer
- No computer
- No computer
- No computer
- No Int
- No Internet
- No Internet
- No Internet
- No Internet
- No Internet
- No internet

- No internet access
- None
- None
- Not everyone has a computer
- Other demographic info.
- Park development plans
- Police Reports/Activity
- Recreation
- Small business info. Lol culture unity

- Suggestions or concerns.
- That the county is going to deeply cut rural property because we dont use any of the crap describe in this survey
- The more info the better.
- Voting ballots
- Weather info
- Would not use.

Q29. How important, if at all, is it for each of the following activities and services to be provided in Dakota County Parks, such as Lebanon Hills or Spring Lake Park? "Other (please specify)"

- Animal catering
- Clean lakes & beaches.
- Full wheel chair accessibility.
- Get out of all of these.
- More paved trails for walking
- More toilets along paths.
- Park rangers/police-sheriff patrols
- Park safety from crime

- Recreation/Sports
- Restaurant facilities.
- Scout use
- Stop competing with business.
- We are retired & haven't used any of their services.
- You have got to be kidding stop run ding all this garbage

QD7. In what city do you primarily work? "Other (please specify)"

- Airport
- Airport
- All Metro
- All Metro area
- All over
- All over the Metro area.
- Allow over the Metro & sometimes beyond
- Arden Hills
- BC
- Bloom in
- Burnsville too
- Cannon falls
- Cannon Falls
- Carpet clean all over Metro
- Cottage Grove
- Cottage Grove
- Eden Prairie
- Eden Prairie
- Eden prairie
- Eden Prairie
- Eden Prairie
- Entire Metro area
- Fairbault
- Faribault
- Floater
- Golden Valley
- Hampton
- Home
- Hudson, WI
- Lake Elmo
- Lilydale
- Maple Grove
- Maplewood
- Metro area
- Minneapolis

- Minneapolis
- Minnetonka
- Minnetonka
- Minnetonka
- Mobile
- MPL & St Paul Airport
- MSP airport
- New hope
- Northfield
- Northfield
- Northfield
- Northfield
- Not 1 site
- Oakdale.
- Oakdale.
- On the road.
- Plymouth
- Prescott WI.
- Prior lake
- Real estate all
- Red Wing, MN
- Retired
- Retired
- Richfield
- Roseville
- Roseville
- Shakopee
- Shakopee
- SLP
- So. St, Paul
- So. St. Paul
- South Saint Paul.
- South St Paul
- South St. Paul
- SSP

- St Paul Park
- St. Louis park
- St. Louis Park
- Still water
- Still water
- Teleworker
- Travel

- Travel throughout cou.
- Welch
- West metro
- Where needed
- Woodbury
- Work out of home office.

Appendix C: Complete Set of Frequencies

The following pages contain a complete set of responses to each question on Dakota County's survey.

Question 1		
How would you rate your overall quality of life in Dakota County?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Excellent	29%	170
Good	65%	384
Fair	6%	34
Poor	1%	4
Total	100%	592

Question 2											
	Excellent		**Good**		**Fair**		**Poor**		**Don't know**		**Total**	
Please rate each of the following characteristics of Dakota County.	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Dakota County as a place to retire	13%	75	43%	257	23%	133	6%	35	16%	92	100%	592
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	14%	84	48%	283	26%	153	4%	23	8%	47	100%	591
Recreational opportunities	23%	135	53%	314	18%	105	3%	15	3%	19	100%	589
Employment opportunities	5%	29	31%	183	33%	195	15%	86	16%	93	100%	587
Ease of travel by public transit in Dakota County	8%	45	24%	142	26%	152	16%	94	26%	154	100%	586
Availability of affordable housing	6%	37	38%	218	33%	192	10%	59	12%	70	100%	575
Overall image or reputation of Dakota County	19%	112	62%	368	16%	94	1%	5	2%	13	100%	593

Question 3											
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following in Dakota County.	**Very safe**		**Somewhat safe**		**Somewhat unsafe**		**Very unsafe**		**Don't know**		**Total**	
	%	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
Property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft)	29%	171	59%	351	8%	50	2%	12	2%	11	100%	595
Violent crimes (e.g., rape, assault, robbery)	45%	269	47%	278	3%	20	1%	7	4%	21	100%	595
Illegal drug activity (e.g., manufacturing or selling drugs)	27%	159	45%	270	16%	96	5%	27	7%	42	100%	594

Question 4												
	Very safe		Somewhat safe		Somewhat unsafe		Very unsafe		Don't know		Total	
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel…	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
From drunk drivers on County roads	16%	93	57%	340	18%	105	3%	20	6%	34	100%	592
From distracted drivers on County roads	6%	36	44%	263	34%	202	13%	75	3%	19	100%	595
In your neighborhood	39%	224	49%	283	9%	50	3%	16	1%	8	100%	580
From being injured while biking or walking on roads in the county	22%	129	48%	287	18%	105	6%	33	7%	43	100%	597
On Dakota County parks and trails	38%	227	45%	268	6%	34	1%	5	10%	59	100%	593

Question 5		
What one thing do you like most about living in Dakota County?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Home	1%	4
Location	31%	187
Low taxes	3%	17
My neighborhood	11%	64
Open space	4%	25
Parks/lakes	9%	52
People	2%	12
Quality of life in general	22%	129
Rural	3%	21
Safe	0%	1
Schools	6%	38
Services	0%	1
Small town feel	6%	36
Other	2%	10
Total	100%	597

Question 6												
	Not a problem		Minor problem		Moderate problem		Major problem		Don't know		Total	
Please rate to what degree, if at all, each of the following is a problem in Dakota County.	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Crime	14%	83	50%	296	29%	174	1%	5	6%	37	100%	595
Taxes	15%	87	29%	169	35%	205	15%	88	7%	41	100%	591
Traffic safety	20%	118	52%	306	22%	129	3%	20	2%	12	100%	585
Traffic congestion	19%	112	42%	246	29%	172	8%	49	2%	13	100%	591
Poverty	19%	112	39%	226	18%	108	3%	21	20%	120	100%	586
Homelessness	33%	193	33%	194	7%	42	1%	6	27%	157	100%	592
Foreclosed properties	5%	32	28%	164	33%	194	15%	92	19%	113	100%	595

Question 7		
What do you feel is the most serious issue facing Dakota County at this time? (Please select only one option.)	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Affordable housing	5%	28
Condition of roads	8%	45
Crime	3%	19
Economic development	12%	72
Growth/development	12%	73
Jobs	17%	102
Pollution	0%	1
Schools	13%	76
Taxes	20%	120
Traffic congestion	6%	38
No issue	0%	0
Other	2%	12
Don't know/refused	0%	0
Total	100%	587

Question 8		
Thinking about the next three years, what do you expect will be the best thing about living in Dakota County?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Location/convenience	22%	73
Open space and natural areas/parks, trails, recreation	12%	38
Quality of life (small town feel, neighborhoods, family oriented, cohesive, safe, etc.)	19%	64
Affordable (housing, taxes, stable or improving property values)	8%	27
Schools	9%	28
Economic development/economic growth	5%	18
Nothing	2%	7
Transportation improvements - public transit, new bridge, better roads	6%	22
Moving/don't plan on living in Dakota County	2%	7
Other	15%	49
Total	100%	333

Question 9												
Please rate to what degree, if at all, each of the following is a health concern in Dakota County.	Not at all a concern		Minor concern		Moderate concern		Major concern		Don't know		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Exposure to pollution in the water	25%	148	38%	219	21%	124	8%	48	8%	46	100%	585
Tobacco use	32%	183	38%	218	15%	88	6%	35	10%	56	100%	581
Depression	18%	105	35%	204	21%	120	6%	33	21%	120	100%	581
Underage alcohol use	9%	53	28%	160	32%	187	17%	98	14%	80	100%	579
Alcohol abuse among adults	12%	71	34%	194	30%	175	11%	61	13%	75	100%	577
Illegal drug use	9%	53	28%	166	30%	174	17%	101	15%	90	100%	583
Unplanned pregnancy	13%	76	34%	200	22%	130	9%	53	21%	121	100%	580
The health and support of the elderly	11%	67	29%	168	29%	172	17%	101	13%	78	100%	585
The health and support of persons with disabilities	13%	75	32%	188	25%	149	13%	77	16%	96	100%	587
The adequacy of care and parenting for infants and young children	18%	105	32%	185	26%	149	7%	39	17%	100	100%	578
Sexually transmitted diseases	17%	101	35%	202	17%	98	7%	43	24%	138	100%	581
Overweight adults and children	13%	74	22%	132	29%	170	26%	153	10%	58	100%	586
Abuse and neglect of children	12%	71	29%	171	26%	154	17%	99	16%	91	100%	585
Abuse and neglect of seniors	14%	79	31%	183	23%	134	15%	85	18%	104	100%	584
Drinking and driving	9%	52	27%	156	32%	189	24%	141	8%	47	100%	586
Motor vehicle crashes	9%	53	37%	216	34%	198	12%	69	8%	50	100%	586
Domestic violence	12%	68	31%	181	25%	147	15%	87	18%	105	100%	587

Question 10											
	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Don't know		Total	
Please rate each of the following services provided by Dakota County.	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
County libraries	45%	265	44%	258	6%	33	0%	1	6%	33	100%	591
County parks and recreation like Lebanon Hills or Lake Byllesby	41%	242	41%	239	5%	29	0%	3	12%	73	100%	586
Trail and bikeway system like Big Rivers Trail	31%	175	39%	221	9%	53	1%	5	21%	118	100%	572
Condition of County roads such as Cliff or Pilot Knob Roads, Kenwood Trail, or County Road 42	14%	81	43%	250	29%	170	8%	44	7%	40	100%	585
911 dispatch services	23%	138	33%	193	5%	28	1%	6	38%	224	100%	589
Sheriff services	16%	93	28%	165	7%	40	2%	12	47%	277	100%	587
Employment support services	5%	28	20%	115	18%	105	7%	38	51%	295	100%	582
Recycling and drop-off services at the Recycling Zone	20%	114	40%	232	14%	79	4%	23	23%	133	100%	583
Public transportation/transit services	9%	52	28%	161	23%	132	14%	79	27%	158	100%	582
Snow and ice removal on County roads	19%	111	47%	272	28%	164	4%	24	2%	14	100%	584
Self-service options on County Web site (e.g., property information, program registration, meeting agendas/materials)	11%	62	29%	170	12%	72	1%	8	46%	270	100%	583
Records, vital statistics, licensing, and vehicle registration	18%	106	48%	282	18%	108	1%	4	15%	86	100%	586
Disaster preparedness	7%	42	20%	115	14%	80	1%	6	59%	342	100%	584
Services to veterans	5%	28	15%	88	10%	60	3%	17	67%	386	100%	579
Overall quality of services provided by Dakota County	12%	70	63%	366	20%	115	1%	4	5%	29	100%	583

Question 11		
Have you visited, telephoned, or emailed any Dakota County government office within the last 12 months?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Yes	38%	221
No	62%	367
Total	100%	588

Question 12											
	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Don't know		Total	
What was your impression of the employee(s) of Dakota County in your most recent contact? (Rate each characteristic below.)	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Knowledge	40%	88	48%	106	9%	21	2%	5	1%	1	100%	222
Responsiveness	39%	88	38%	85	17%	39	5%	11	0%	0	100%	223
Courtesy	39%	88	40%	90	13%	30	6%	14	1%	1	100%	224
Overall impression	38%	85	42%	95	15%	33	5%	10	0%	0	100%	223

Question 13											
Please rate the following categories of Dakota County government performance:	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Don't know		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
The job Dakota County government does at informing residents	10%	61	48%	277	26%	154	5%	28	11%	64	100%	584
The job Dakota County government does at listening to residents	4%	24	28%	164	27%	156	7%	39	34%	200	100%	583
My knowledge of the work of the Dakota County Board	2%	12	17%	98	22%	127	21%	120	39%	224	100%	580
The value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County	4%	26	30%	172	32%	185	10%	55	24%	135	100%	572
The job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars	3%	18	27%	155	31%	178	10%	58	29%	163	100%	571
The importance of Dakota County services to the quality of life in my neighborhood	8%	44	45%	261	27%	158	5%	29	15%	87	100%	580

Question 14		
To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the job the Dakota County Board is doing?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Strongly approve	9%	52
Somewhat approve	39%	230
Somewhat disapprove	7%	41
Strongly disapprove	1%	7
Don't know	44%	256
Total	100%	586

Question 15											
Please rate the extent to which you use each of the following as sources of information about Dakota County government, if at all.	Not a source		Minor source		Major source		Don't know		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Cable access programming	45%	265	30%	175	10%	57	15%	88	100%	586
Daily newspapers	24%	139	39%	230	29%	169	8%	48	100%	587
Dakota County Web site (www.dakotacounty.us)	31%	180	34%	196	22%	126	14%	81	100%	582
Weekly community newspapers	19%	110	39%	226	33%	190	10%	56	100%	583
Community meetings	57%	329	19%	111	5%	32	18%	102	100%	575
Dakota County Newsletter	23%	133	38%	221	28%	164	12%	68	100%	586
Phone calls to Dakota County	54%	313	22%	130	5%	29	19%	111	100%	584
Other online news sources	44%	259	28%	161	10%	57	18%	107	100%	583
Television news broadcasts	27%	157	38%	223	23%	136	12%	71	100%	587
County listservs and other County electronic newsletters	59%	349	15%	87	4%	21	22%	132	100%	589

Question 16		
Which one of the following methods would you prefer using if you wanted to contact Dakota County government for a suggestion or concern? (Please select only one option.)	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Call a commissioner	13%	78
Call a staff person	32%	189
Go to a daytime public meeting	1%	6
Go to an evening public meeting	6%	35
Send an email	45%	265
Send a letter in the mail	1%	4
Other	2%	11
Total	100%	589

Question 17		
Which of the following best describes your potential use of social media (such as Facebook or Twitter)?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
I would use social media to get Scott County government information	19%	112
I would use social media, but not for getting information from or about Scott County	26%	151
I would not use social media	55%	327
Total	100%	590

Question 18		
What kind of Dakota County service or information would you like to access via the Internet? (Please check all that apply.)	**Percent of respondents***	**Number of respondents***
Park information (e.g., reservation at a regional park facility)	78%	439
Garbage and recycling	68%	379
Information about County services	61%	344
Pay fees, fines, or property taxes	56%	313
General information about the county	64%	361
Meeting calendar, agenda, and/or minutes	41%	231
Budget documents	40%	222
Access public County records	48%	272
Online recording of vital records (birth, death, marriage)	44%	244
Road/bridge construction projects	53%	295
Renew or apply for a license, permit, or other application	66%	370
Apply for a library card and/or utilize library resources	59%	329
Research property sales/information	61%	340
Other	8%	42
No purpose/none	0%	2
No computer/Internet	3%	17
Don't know	0%	2

*Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one response.

Which of the following Internet connections do you have at home? (Choose the options that you believe come closest; please check all that apply.)	Percent of respondents*	Number of respondents*
I don't have Internet access from home	13%	77
Direct fiber optic connection	4%	25
Cable modem through cable TV connection	49%	292
DSL (direct subscriber line) though the local telephone network	27%	163
Wireless connection (wi-fi) or hand-held wireless such as a smart phone	33%	198
T1 or T3 line	1%	7
Dial-up modem	2%	12
Satellite	5%	30
Don't know which options I have at home	2%	12

Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one response.

Question 20

Dakota County does not have sufficient funds, without raising taxes, to continue all current programs and services. How important, if at all, is it to maintain each of the following service areas?	Essential		Very important		Somewhat important		Not at all important		Don't know		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Provide access to libraries	26%	150	38%	217	26%	150	9%	54	1%	8	100%	579
Enforce laws and prosecute criminals	62%	366	29%	170	6%	36	1%	9	1%	6	100%	586
Protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect	44%	255	36%	210	16%	96	2%	14	1%	8	100%	584
Provide timely access to health care and economic assistance	25%	145	33%	190	31%	180	9%	51	2%	14	100%	579
Assure safe, uncongested transportation options	15%	86	36%	212	40%	235	7%	44	2%	10	100%	587
Protect water supplies and water quality	45%	261	35%	203	18%	103	2%	10	1%	6	100%	583
Provide access to official records (e.g., driver licenses, birth/death certificates, real estate sales)	11%	66	20%	118	53%	306	13%	75	2%	12	100%	577
Provide access to parks, trails, and other recreational facilities	15%	85	33%	192	41%	240	10%	57	2%	10	100%	584
Promote healthy behaviors (e.g., better nutrition, exercise)	8%	48	14%	83	38%	225	37%	219	2%	11	100%	587

Question 21

To what extent would you support or oppose an increase in your County property tax if it were needed to maintain County services at their current levels?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Strongly support	7%	40
Somewhat support	41%	239
Somewhat oppose	21%	125
Strongly oppose	25%	146
Don't know	7%	41
Total	100%	590

Question 22											
If Dakota County needed to reduce services to balance its budget, to what extent would you support or oppose each of the following changes?	**Strongly support**		**Somewhat support**		**Somewhat oppose**		**Strongly oppose**		**Don't know**		**Total**	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Reduce hours of operation of County buildings/service centers	31%	178	46%	265	13%	77	6%	34	5%	27	100%	580
Reduce number (location) of County buildings/service centers	28%	163	44%	258	17%	96	5%	29	6%	36	100%	582
Reduce the level of road maintenance, including plowing	3%	17	9%	53	26%	151	60%	352	2%	12	100%	586
Build/maintain fewer roads	7%	41	22%	125	39%	225	28%	161	5%	28	100%	580
Reduce sheriff patrols	6%	34	18%	103	37%	214	36%	209	4%	23	100%	583
Reduce crime prevention programs	6%	36	28%	161	38%	220	23%	131	6%	32	100%	581
Reduce park programs or park maintenance	9%	52	37%	213	33%	191	18%	106	3%	20	100%	582
Delay response time for license bureaus, processing applications	12%	69	45%	261	26%	153	11%	63	6%	33	100%	579
Delay response times for low-income people applying for health, income, and food support	12%	72	28%	164	30%	176	22%	126	8%	44	100%	582
Delay service for disabled or elderly clients by increasing County staff workloads	5%	29	22%	130	35%	202	30%	177	8%	46	100%	584

Question 23											
Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to visit Dakota County libraries on the following days and times.	**Very likely**		**Somewhat likely**		**Somewhat unlikely**		**Very unlikely**		**Don't know**		**Total**	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Sunday	20%	112	25%	143	7%	39	40%	227	7%	41	100%	563
Monday	12%	66	26%	142	23%	126	33%	182	7%	39	100%	555
Tuesday	11%	64	27%	152	23%	129	31%	174	7%	42	100%	561
Wednesday	11%	64	26%	147	24%	132	31%	176	7%	41	100%	559
Thursday	12%	66	27%	155	22%	123	32%	179	8%	43	100%	565
Friday	13%	71	28%	155	19%	108	32%	181	8%	44	100%	558
Saturday	29%	164	26%	145	11%	61	27%	148	7%	39	100%	555
Mornings	18%	97	21%	112	17%	91	38%	210	7%	37	100%	547
Afternoons	20%	114	32%	180	15%	82	26%	146	7%	38	100%	560
Evenings	26%	150	24%	134	13%	75	31%	175	6%	33	100%	568

Question 24		
If Dakota County libraries must reduce hours, is it better to: (Please select only one option.)	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Be open more days of the week at all locations, for fewer hours	36%	203
Be open the same hours offered now, but not all days of the week	46%	260
Don't know	19%	107
Total	100%	570

Since 2002, Dakota County has emphasized setting aside open spaces and parkland. How important, if at all, is it to continue investing County funds for each of the following purposes?	Essential		Very important		Somewhat important		Not at all important		Don't know		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Protect lakes, streams, and wetlands from pollution	40%	235	35%	206	18%	103	4%	24	2%	13	100%	581
Protect farmland from future development	19%	112	28%	162	30%	172	19%	111	4%	24	100%	581
Protect remaining natural areas	30%	171	35%	200	26%	151	7%	38	3%	16	100%	575
Develop more facilities in County parks	6%	37	12%	71	41%	237	36%	207	4%	22	100%	574
Develop more recreational trails or corridors	8%	47	18%	102	38%	218	33%	189	4%	21	100%	576
Expand existing parks by adding acres as they become available	9%	55	15%	90	35%	200	36%	207	5%	27	100%	579

Question 26

Have you or any member of your household used the services at the Recycling Zone facility in the last 12 months?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Yes	36%	208
No	64%	366
Total	100%	574

Question 27

Which one of the following potential reasons best describes why your household has not used the Recycling Zone facility in the last 12 months? (Please select only one option.)	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Unfamiliar with Recycling Zone	32%	108
Too far from my home	4%	14
Inconvenient days/hours/location	4%	13
Did not have anything to drop off	34%	113
Don't know what can be recycled there	4%	12
Used a different recycling location	9%	31
Did not want to pay fees at Recycling Zone	5%	17
Other/none of these	8%	27
Total	100%	335

Question 28												
Please rate the recycling opportunities in each of these locations in Dakota County.	**Excellent**		**Good**		**Fair**		**Poor**		**Don't know**		**Total**	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Where you live	36%	199	40%	221	10%	57	3%	17	10%	54	100%	548
In City or County buildings	9%	50	29%	157	12%	64	2%	14	48%	262	100%	546
In athletic arenas (sports venues like hockey rinks, soccer, or softball fields)	8%	43	28%	154	14%	75	5%	26	45%	246	100%	543
Sites for community events	8%	44	26%	141	20%	108	5%	29	41%	223	100%	545
At local businesses	6%	32	20%	109	29%	160	12%	66	33%	180	100%	547
At malls	6%	34	25%	133	25%	135	12%	65	32%	175	100%	543
In parks	8%	44	31%	169	23%	123	8%	41	31%	168	100%	545

Question 29												
How important, if at all, is it for each of the following activities and services to be provided in Dakota County Parks, such as Lebanon Hills or Spring Lake Park?	**Essential**		**Very important**		**Somewhat important**		**Not at all important**		**Don't know**		**Total**	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Skill-building or outdoor education classes	4%	21	15%	85	43%	245	26%	150	12%	69	100%	571
Equipment rentals such as canoes or snowshoes	5%	27	20%	117	43%	246	22%	126	10%	58	100%	574
Opportunities to hunt and/or fish	10%	59	23%	133	36%	205	20%	113	11%	65	100%	574
Non-motorized recreation such as biking, hiking, canoeing, skiing	17%	100	35%	202	31%	179	7%	43	9%	52	100%	576
Local food production such as community gardens or orchards	7%	43	24%	137	30%	174	29%	166	10%	56	100%	576
Overnight accommodations for tents, RVs, or camper cabins	5%	28	18%	106	35%	203	30%	171	11%	65	100%	573
Other	100%	18	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	100%	18

Question 30		
To what extent do you support or oppose the County investing in projects that make transit more convenient to use?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Strongly support	29%	167
Somewhat support	40%	236
Somewhat oppose	11%	63
Strongly oppose	11%	66
Don't know	9%	50
Total	100%	582

Question 31		
Dakota County, area cities, and school districts already collaborate in many ways to improve quality or reduce the cost of services. Which of the following best describes the relationship that you think these local governments should have?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
The County, area cities, and school districts should partner more to provide services	59%	326
The County, area cities, and school districts should partner less to provide services	5%	30
The County, area cities, and school districts are doing about the right amount of collaborating to provide services	36%	197
Total	100%	553

Question 32												
How important, if at all, are each of the following goals when the County, area cities, and school districts collaborate or share services?	**Essential**		**Very important**		**Somewhat important**		**Not at all important**		**Don't know**		**Total**	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Better address changing needs	14%	77	36%	200	25%	138	9%	50	17%	92	100%	557
Be more innovative	17%	92	38%	209	28%	154	5%	26	13%	73	100%	554
Eliminate duplication with other service providers	43%	241	36%	202	11%	60	2%	9	9%	50	100%	562
Do more with less	31%	175	35%	196	21%	120	3%	14	10%	55	100%	561
Gain access to expertise in other government organizations	18%	99	36%	199	27%	152	6%	35	13%	73	100%	558
Make the service more effective	31%	172	43%	241	16%	89	2%	9	9%	50	100%	561
Make the service more efficient	37%	209	42%	234	11%	63	1%	8	8%	47	100%	561
Make the service higher-quality	22%	126	40%	224	24%	137	4%	21	9%	52	100%	560
Reduce the cost of the service	30%	168	34%	190	26%	144	2%	11	9%	51	100%	565

Question 33		
Do you think that a year from now you and your household will be better off financially, or worse off, or just about the same as now?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Much better	4%	23
Somewhat better	19%	108
About the same	51%	292
Somewhat worse	16%	91
Much worse	8%	44
Don't know	4%	21
Total	100%	579

Question D1		
How long have you lived in the county?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Less than 2 years	8%	49
2 to 5 years	13%	79
6 to 10 years	16%	92
11 to 15 years	11%	68
16 to 20 years	13%	74
Over 20 years	39%	227
Total	100%	588

Question D2		
Which best describes the building you live in?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
One family house detached from any other houses	60%	347
House attached to one or more houses (e.g., a duplex or townhome)	12%	68
Building with two or more apartments or condos	27%	157
Mobile home	1%	4
Other	1%	7
Total	100%	583

Question D3		
Is this house, apartment, or mobile home...	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Rented for cash or occupied without cash payment?	22%	123
Owned by you or someone in this house with a mortgage or free and clear?	78%	441
Total	100%	564

Question D4		
Which category contains your age?	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
18-24	4%	25
25-34	25%	145
35-44	16%	94
45-54	27%	160
55-64	11%	64
65-74	9%	51
75 +	7%	43
Total	100%	582

Question D5		
What is your gender?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Female	52%	304
Male	48%	276
Total	100%	580

Question D6		
Which of the following best describes you?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Employed full-time	63%	359
Employed part-time	11%	65
Homemaker	5%	30
Retired	15%	84
Student	2%	12
Unemployed, looking for work	4%	21
Total	100%	571

Question D7		
In what city do you primarily work?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Apple Valley	5%	22
Bloomington	6%	27
Burnsville	9%	37
Eagan	14%	58
Eden Prairie	1%	6
Edina	1%	4
Farmington	3%	13
Hastings	3%	15
Inver Grove Heights	2%	7
Lakeville	5%	23
Maplewood	0%	0
Mendota Heights	2%	9
Minneapolis	11%	47
Minnetonka	2%	7
Northfield	1%	4
Prior Lake	0%	2
Richfield	2%	9
Savage	1%	6
Shakopee	1%	4
South St. Paul	2%	8

Question D7		
In what city do you primarily work?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
St. Louis Park	0%	2
St. Paul	10%	41
West St. Paul	2%	7
Woodbury	0%	1
Rosemount	2%	9
Cottage Grove	0%	2
Lake Elmo	0%	1
Oakdale	1%	2
St. Paul Park	0%	1
Stillwater	1%	3
Plymouth	0%	1
Golden Valley	0%	1
Metro area	1%	6
Other	10%	41
Total	100%	425

Question D8		
How many children age 17 years and under live in your household?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
1	22%	99
2	18%	82
3	5%	23
4	2%	8
5	0%	1
6	0%	1
8	0%	2
None	53%	243
Total	100%	459

Question D9		
How many adults under age 65 years, including yourself, live in your household?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
1	25%	135
2	53%	284
3	9%	46
4	2%	10
5	0%	1
6	0%	1
8	0%	1
None	11%	57
Total	100%	537

Question D10		
How many persons age 65 years and over, including yourself, live in your household?	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
1	14%	68
2	9%	44
3	1%	3
4	1%	2
5	0%	1
None	75%	355
Total	100%	473

Question D11		
Please indicate your household's annual income:	**Percent of respondents**	**Number of respondents**
Under $15,000	5%	27
$15,000-$24,999	7%	38
$25,000-$34,999	9%	47
$35,000-$49,999	14%	79
$50,000-$74,999	21%	113
$75,000-$99,999	17%	93
$100,000-$149,999	18%	100
$150,000-$199,999	5%	30
$200,000 or more	3%	19
Total	100%	546

Respondent District		
	Percent of respondents	**Number of respondents**
District 1	16%	95
District 2	14%	86
District 3	15%	87
District 4	12%	75
District 5	13%	79
District 6	14%	86
District 7	15%	93
Total	100%	601

Appendix D: Comparison with Other Participating Counties

Questions asked by more than one Minnesota County in 2011 are included below for comparison. Cells with grey shading indicate statistically significant differences.

Aspects of Quality of Life			
	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)		
Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in the county.	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
The county as a place to live	NA	69	67
Your neighborhood as a place to live	NA	72	68
The county as a place to raise children	NA	69	65
The county as a place to work	NA	51	50
The county as a place to retire	58	52	56
The overall quality of life in the county	74	65	62

County Characteristics			
	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)		
Please rate each of the following characteristics of the county.	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	60	58	44
Overall quality of new development in the county	NA	49	37
Recreational opportunities	67	59	63
Employment opportunities	44	35	25
Ease of travel by public transit in the county	44	37	NA
Availability of affordable housing	49	48	44
Overall image or reputation of the county	67	58	53

Perceptions of Community Safety			
	Average rating (0 = very unsafe, 100 = very safe)		
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from each of the following in the county.	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft)	72	71	66
Violent crimes (e.g., rape, assault, robbery)	80	80	70
Illegal drug activity (e.g., manufacturing or selling drugs)	67	66	54
From drunk drivers on County roads	64	62	48
From distracted drivers on County roads	48	51	44
In your neighborhood	75	76	NA
On the county parks and trails	78	74	NA

Like Most about Living in County			
What one thing do you like most about living in the county?	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Home	1%	NA	NA
Location	31%	16%	NA
My neighborhood	11%	15%	NA
Open space	4%	7%	NA
Parks/lakes	9%	7%	NA
Peaceful	NA	11%	NA
People	2%	0%	NA
Quality of life in general	22%	NA	NA
Quiet	NA	8%	NA
Rural	3%	8%	NA
Safe	0%	NA	NA
Schools	6%	3%	NA
Services	0%	1%	NA
Small town feel	6%	12%	NA
No reason	0%	NA	NA
Low taxes	3%	NA	NA
Convenience, access	NA	8%	NA
Other	2%	3%	NA
Total	100%	100%	NA

Potential Problems			
Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in the county.	Average rating (0 = not a problem, 100 = major problem)		
	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Crime	39	38	57
Taxes	51	65	65
Traffic safety	36	38	60
Traffic congestion	42	46	NA
Poverty	36	37	69
Homelessness	23	25	61
Foreclosed properties	57	65	66

Most Serious Issue Facing the County			
What do you feel is the most serious issue facing the county at this time?	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Affordable housing	5%	NA	2%
Condition of roads	8%	10%	13%
Crime	3%	NA	7%
Economic development	12%	22%	6%
Growth/development	12%	16%	0%
Jobs	17%	NA	24%
Loss of rural feel	0%	NA	NA
Pollution	0%	NA	NA
Safety	0%	NA	NA
Schools	13%	8%	2%
Taxes	20%	31%	12%
Traffic congestion	6%	9%	NA
Budget/budget shortfalls	NA	NA	14%
Poverty/homelessness	NA	NA	5%
Other	2%	3%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Health Concerns

Please rate to what degree, if at all, each of the following is a health concern in the county.	Average rating (0 = not at all a concern, 100 = major concern)		
	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Exposure to pollution in the water	38	36	47
Tobacco use	32	33	46
Depression	39	37	61
Underage alcohol use	55	51	70
Alcohol abuse among adults	48	47	70
Illegal drug use	55	54	75
Unplanned pregnancy	45	42	61
The health and support of the elderly	53	50	69
The health and support of persons with disabilities	49	47	65
The adequacy of care and parenting for infants and young children	42	42	63
Sexually transmitted diseases	40	37	54
Overweight adults and children	59	56	69
Abuse and neglect of children	52	49	71
Abuse and neglect of seniors	49	43	66
Drinking and driving	59	59	74
Motor vehicle crashes	51	50	60
Domestic violence	51	51	68

County Services

Please rate each of the following services provided by the county.	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)		
	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
County libraries	80	71	NA
County parks and recreation	80	71	NA
Trail and bikeway system	75	64	NA
Condition of County roads	56	45	30
911 dispatch services	76	75	70
Sheriff services	70	68	64
Employment support services	49	47	42
Recycling and drop-off services	66	NA	NA
Public transportation/transit services	48	44	NA
Snow and ice removal on County roads	61	58	48
Self-service options on County Web site (e.g., property information, program registration, meeting agendas/materials)	64	61	56
Records, vital statistics, licensing, and vehicle registration	66	64	61
Land use services, including permitting (construction/septic)	NA	53	44
Disaster preparedness	60	57	48
Services to seniors	NA	53	49
Services to youth	NA	51	42
Services to low income residents	NA	50	44
Child protection services	NA	59	48
Services to veterans	55	53	43
Overall quality of services provided by the county	64	56	48

Contact with the County

	Percent who said "yes"		
	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Have you visited, telephoned, or emailed any the county government office within the last 12 months?	38%	50%	39%

Employee Characteristics

	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)		
What was your impression of the employee(s) of the County in your most recent contact?	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Knowledge	75	76	67
Responsiveness	71	73	63
Courtesy	71	77	65
Overall impression	71	73	63

Perceptions of Government

	Average rating (0 = poor, 100 = excellent)		
Please rate the following categories of the County government performance.	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
The job the county government does at informing residents	57	55	48
The job the county government does at listening to residents	48	44	37
My knowledge of the work of the county Board	33	33	34
The value of services for the taxes paid to the county	46	39	35
The job the county government does at managing tax dollars	44	37	32
The importance of the county services to the quality of life in my neighborhood	55	49	45

Approval of County Board

	Average rating (0 = strongly disapprove, 100 = strongly approve)		
	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the job the county Board is doing?	66	59	NA

Potential Information Sources

	Percent using as a minor or major source		
Please rate the extent to which you use each of the following as sources of information about County government, if at all.	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Cable access programming	47%	31%	43%
Daily newspapers	74%	72%	86%
The county employees	NA	37%	54%
The county Web site	64%	68%	44%
Weekly community newspapers	79%	87%	NA
Community meetings	30%	34%	53%
The radio	NA	37%	80%
The county Scene newsletter	74%	81%	NA
Phone calls to the county	34%	NA	45%
Other online news sources	46%	39%	NA
Television news broadcasts	70%	71%	NA
County listservs and other County electronic newsletters	24%	NA	NA

Top Preference for Contact			
Which one of the following methods would you prefer using if you wanted to contact the County government for a suggestion or concern?	**Dakota County**	**Scott County**	**St. Louis County**
Call a commissioner	13%	14%	21%
Call a staff person	32%	30%	35%
Go to a daytime public meeting	1%	2%	9%
Go to an evening public meeting	6%	5%	NA
Send an email	45%	46%	31%
Fill out an online survey	NA	0%	NA
Provide feedback online, during Web streams of meetings	NA	0%	NA
Other	2%	2%	3%
Send a letter	1%	0%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: St. Louis County did not delineate between day and evening public meetings; this item read "Go to a public meeting."

Use of Social Media			
Which of the following best describes your potential use of social media (such as Facebook or Twitter)?	**Dakota County**	**Scott County**	**St. Louis County**
I would use social media to get County government information	19%	22%	NA
I would use social media, but not for getting information from or about the County	26%	24%	NA
I would not use social media	55%	54%	NA
Total	100%	100%	NA

Desired Internet Information			
What kind of County service or information would you like to access via the Internet?	**Dakota County**	**Scott County**	**St. Louis County**
Park information (e.g., reservation at a regional park facility)	79%	73%	NA
Garbage and recycling	68%	74%	NA
Information about County services	62%	67%	NA
Pay fees, fines, or property taxes	56%	64%	NA
General information about the county	65%	NA	NA
Meeting calendar, agenda, and/or minutes	41%	51%	NA
Budget documents	40%	NA	NA
Access public County records	49%	NA	NA
Online recording of vital records (birth, death, marriage)	44%	NA	NA
Road/bridge construction projects	53%	NA	NA
Renew or apply for a license, permit, or other application	66%	NA	NA
Apply for a library card and/or utilize library resources	59%	NA	NA
Research property sales/information	61%	NA	NA
Other (please specify)	8%	6%	NA
No purpose	0%	1%	NA
No Internet/computer	3%	3%	NA

Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

Internet Access from Home

Which of the following Internet connections do you have at home?	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
I don't have Internet access from home	13%	13%	25%
Direct fiber optic connection	4%	3%	2%
Cable modem through cable TV connection	49%	35%	31%
DSL (direct subscriber line) though the local telephone network	27%	37%	24%
Wireless connection (wi-fi) or hand-held wireless such as a smart phone	33%	34%	29%
T1 or T3 line	1%	1%	0%
Dial-up modem	2%	3%	6%
Satellite	5%	4%	7%
Don't know which options I have at home	2%	3%	3%

Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

Importance of Continuing Programs and Services

How important, if at all, is it to maintain each of the following service areas?	Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)		
	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Enforce laws and prosecute criminals	85	NA	83
Protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect	74	NA	83
Provide timely access to health care and economic assistance	59	NA	73
Provide access to official records (e.g., driver licenses, birth/death certificates, real estate sales)	44	NA	51
Promote healthy behaviors	31	NA	51

Level of Support for County Property Tax

	Percent "strongly" or "somewhat" support		
	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
To what extent would you support or oppose an increase in your County property tax if it were needed to maintain County services at their current levels?	51%	43%	50%

Level of Support for Changes to Balance Budget

If the County needed to reduce services to balance its budget, to what extent would you support or oppose each of the following changes?	Percent "strongly" or "somewhat" support		
	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Reduce hours of operation of County buildings/service centers	80%	77%	74%
Reduce number (location) of County buildings/service centers	77%	78%	70%
Reduce the level of road maintenance, including plowing	12%	17%	12%
Build/maintain fewer roads	30%	39%	27%
Reduce sheriff patrols	24%	32%	26%
Reduce crime prevention programs	36%	40%	31%
Reduce park programs or park maintenance	47%	50%	NA
Delay response time for license bureaus, processing applications	60%	58%	NA
Delay response times for low-income people applying for health, income and food support	44%	43%	28%
Delay service for disabled or elderly clients by increasing County staff workloads	30%	27%	20%

Household Future Financial Status			
Do you think that a year from now you and your household will be better off financially, worse off, or just about the same?	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Better	23%	24%	16%
Same	52%	49%	49%
Worse	24%	27%	35%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Preferred Relationship of Local Governments			
The county, area cities, and school districts already collaborate in many ways to improve quality or reduce the cost of services. Which of the following best describes the relationship that you think these local governments should have?	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
The County, area cities, and school districts should partner more to provide services	59%	NA	67%
The County, area cities, and school districts should partner less to provide services	5%	NA	3%
The County, area cities, and school districts are doing about the right amount of collaborating to provide services	36%	NA	30%
Total	100%	NA	100%

Importance of Collaborative Goals			
	Average rating (0 = not at all important, 100 = essential)		
How important, if at all, are each of the following goals when the County, area cities, and school districts collaborate or share services?	Dakota County	Scott County	St. Louis County
Better address changing needs	55	NA	55
Be more innovative	59	NA	61
Eliminate duplication with other service providers	77	NA	74
Do more with less	68	NA	63
Gain access to expertise in other government organizations	58	NA	59
Make the service more effective	71	NA	71
Make the service more efficient	75	NA	74
Make the service higher-quality	63	NA	65
Reduce the cost of the service	67	NA	64

Appendix E: List of Counties in the Benchmark Comparisons

When possible, comparisons of results were made to other counties in NRC's benchmark database. The counties included in these comparisons are listed below.

Albemarle County, VA	79,236	Kitsap County, WA	231,969
Arapahoe County, CO	487,967	Lee County, FL	454,918
Archuleta County, CO	9,898	Mecklenburg County, NC	695,454
Arlington County, VA	189,453	Mesa County, CO	116,255
Baltimore County, MD	754,292	Montgomery County, MD	873,341
Botetourt County, VA	30,496	Multnomah County, OR	660,486
Boulder County, CO	291,288	Olmsted County, MN	124,277
Brevard County, FL	476,230	Ottawa County, MI	238,314
Carver County, MN	70,205	Palm Beach County, FL	1,131,184
Charlotte County, FL	141,627	Pasco County, FL	344,765
Chittenden County, VT	146,571	Pinal County, AZ	179,727
Clark County, WA	345,238	Pinellas County, FL	921,482
Clay County, MO	184,006	Pitkin County, CO	14,872
Clear Creek County, CO	9,322	Prince William County, VA	280,813
Cococino County, AZ	116,320	San Francisco, CA	776,733
Collier County, FL	251,377	San Juan County, NM	113,801
Cumberland County, PA	213,674	San Luis Obispo County, CA	247,900
Dakota County, MN	355,904	Santa Barbara County, CA	399,347
Daviess County, KY	91,545	Scott County, MN	89,498
Denver, CO	554,636	St. Louis County, MN	200,528
Escambia County, FL	294,410	Stafford County, VA	92,446
Grand County, CO	12,442	Summit County, CO	23,548
Gunnison County, CO	13,956	Teton County, WY	18,251
Hanover County, VA	86,320	Volusia County, FL	443,343
Hillsborough County, FL	998,948	Walton County, FL	40,601
Honolulu, HI	876,156	Washington County, MN	201,130
Jackson County, MI	158,422	Washoe County, NV	339,486
Jackson County, OR	181,269	Yuma County, AZ	160,026
James City County, VA	48,102		
Jefferson County, CO	527,056		

Population source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

Appendix F: Survey Instrument

The following pages contain the 2011 survey instrument.

Dakota County Resident Survey 2011

Please complete this questionnaire if you are the adult (age 18 or older) in the household who most recently had a birthday. The adult's year of birth does not matter. Your responses are anonymous and will be reported in group form only.
Thank you.

1. **How would you rate your overall quality of life in Dakota County?**
   ❑ Excellent   ❑ Good   ❑ Fair   ❑ Poor

2. **Please rate each of the following characteristics of Dakota County.**

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
Dakota County as a place to retire	I	2	3	4	5
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	I	2	3	4	5
Recreational opportunities	I	2	3	4	5
Employment opportunities	I	2	3	4	5
Ease of travel by public transit in Dakota County	I	2	3	4	5
Availability of affordable housing	I	2	3	4	5
Overall image or reputation of Dakota County	I	2	3	4	5

3. **Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following in Dakota County.**

	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Somewhat unsafe	Very unsafe	Don't know
Property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft)	I	2	3	4	5
Violent crimes (e.g., rape, assault, robbery)	I	2	3	4	5
Illegal drug activity (e.g., manufacturing or selling drugs)	I	2	3	4	5

4. **Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel…**

	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Somewhat unsafe	Very unsafe	Don't know
From drunk drivers on County roads	I	2	3	4	5
From distracted drivers on County roads	I	2	3	4	5
In your neighborhood	I	2	3	4	5
From being injured while biking or walking on roads in the county	I	2	3	4	5
On Dakota County parks and trails	I	2	3	4	5

5. **What one thing do you like most about living in Dakota County? (Please select only one option.)**
   ❑ Location   ❑ Schools
   ❑ Open space   ❑ Small town feel
   ❑ Parks/lakes   ❑ Low taxes
   ❑ Rural   ❑ People
   ❑ Quality of life in general ❑ Other (please specify) _____
   ❑ My neighborhood

6. **Please rate to what degree, if at all, each of the following is a problem in Dakota County.**

	Not a problem	Minor problem	Moderate problem	Major problem	Don't know
Crime	I	2	3	4	5
Taxes	I	2	3	4	5
Traffic safety	I	2	3	4	5
Traffic congestion	I	2	3	4	5
Poverty	I	2	3	4	5
Homelessness	I	2	3	4	5
Foreclosed properties	I	2	3	4	5

7. **What do you feel is the most serious issue facing Dakota County at this time? (Please select only one option.)**
   ❑ Growth/development   ❑ Crime
   ❑ Taxes   ❑ Affordable housing
   ❑ Schools   ❑ Economic development
   ❑ Traffic congestion   ❑ Jobs
   ❑ Condition of roads   ❑ Other (please specify) _____

8. Thinking about the next three years, what do you expect will be the <u>best</u> thing about living in Dakota County?

_____

_____

9. Please rate to what degree, if at all, each of the following is a health concern in Dakota County.

	Not at all a concern	Minor concern	Moderate concern	Major concern	Don't know
Exposure to pollution in the water	1	2	3	4	5
Tobacco use	1	2	3	4	5
Depression	1	2	3	4	5
Underage alcohol use	1	2	3	4	5
Alcohol abuse among adults	1	2	3	4	5
Illegal drug use	1	2	3	4	5
Unplanned pregnancy	1	2	3	4	5
The health and support of the elderly	1	2	3	4	5
The health and support of persons with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5
The adequacy of care and parenting for infants and young children	1	2	3	4	5
Sexually transmitted diseases	1	2	3	4	5
Overweight adults and children	1	2	3	4	5
Abuse and neglect of children	1	2	3	4	5
Abuse and neglect of seniors	1	2	3	4	5
Drinking and driving	1	2	3	4	5
Motor vehicle crashes	1	2	3	4	5
Domestic violence	1	2	3	4	5

10. Please rate each of the following services provided by Dakota County.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
County libraries	1	2	3	4	5
County parks and recreation like Lebanon Hills or Lake Byllesby	1	2	3	4	5
Trail and bikeway system like Big Rivers Trail	1	2	3	4	5
Condition of County roads such as Cliff or Pilot Knob Roads, Kenwood Trail, or County Road 42	1	2	3	4	5
911 dispatch services	1	2	3	4	5
Sheriff services	1	2	3	4	5
Employment support services	1	2	3	4	5
Recycling and drop-off services at the Recycling Zone	1	2	3	4	5
Public transportation/transit services	1	2	3	4	5
Snow and ice removal on County roads	1	2	3	4	5
Self-service options on County Web site (e.g., property information, program registration, meeting agendas/materials)	1	2	3	4	5
Records, vital statistics, licensing, and vehicle registration	1	2	3	4	5
Disaster preparedness	1	2	3	4	5
Services to veterans	1	2	3	4	5
Overall quality of services provided by Dakota County	1	2	3	4	5

11. Have you visited, telephoned, or emailed any Dakota County government office within the last 12 months?

❑ Yes → Go to question 12   ❑ No → Skip to question 13

12. What was your impression of the employee(s) of Dakota County in your most recent contact? (Rate each characteristic below.)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Responsiveness	1	2	3	4	5
Courtesy	1	2	3	4	5
Overall impression	1	2	3	4	5

13. Please rate the following categories of Dakota County government performance:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
The job Dakota County government does at informing residents	I	2	3	4	5
The job Dakota County government does at listening to residents	I	2	3	4	5
My knowledge of the work of the Dakota County Board	I	2	3	4	5
The value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County	I	2	3	4	5
The job Dakota County government does at managing tax dollars	I	2	3	4	5
The importance of Dakota County services to the quality of life in my neighborhood	I	2	3	4	5

14. To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the job the Dakota County Board is doing?
    ❑ Strongly approve   ❑ Somewhat approve   ❑ Somewhat disapprove   ❑ Strongly disapprove   ❑ Don't know

15. Please rate the extent to which you use each of the following as sources of information about Dakota County government, if at all.

	Not a source	Minor source	Major source	Don't know
Cable access programming	I	2	3	4
Daily newspapers	I	2	3	4
Dakota County Web site (www.dakotacounty.us)	I	2	3	4
Weekly community newspapers	I	2	3	4
Community meetings	I	2	3	4
Dakota County Newsletter	I	2	3	4
Phone calls to Dakota County	I	2	3	4
Other online news sources	I	2	3	4
Television news broadcasts	I	2	3	4
County listservs and other County electronic newsletters	I	2	3	4

16. Which one of the following methods would you prefer using if you wanted to contact Dakota County government for a suggestion or concern? (Please select only one option.)
    ❑ Call a commissioner   ❑ Go to a daytime public meeting   ❑ Send an email
    ❑ Call a staff person   ❑ Go to an evening public meeting   ❑ Other (specify) _____

17. Which of the following best describes your potential use of social media (such as Facebook or Twitter)?
    ❑ I would use social media to get Dakota County government information.
    ❑ I would use social media, but not for getting information from or about Dakota County.
    ❑ I would not use social media.

18. What kind of Dakota County service or information would you like to access via the Internet? (Please check all that apply.)
    ❑ Park information (e.g., reservation at a regional park facility)   ❑ Access public County records
    ❑ Garbage and recycling   ❑ Online recording of vital records (birth, death, marriage)
    ❑ Information about County services   ❑ Road/bridge construction projects
    ❑ Pay fees, fines, or property taxes   ❑ Renew or apply for a license, permit, or other application
    ❑ General information about the county   ❑ Apply for a library card and/or utilize library resources
    ❑ Meeting calendar, agenda, and/or minutes   ❑ Research property sales/information
    ❑ Budget documents   ❑ Other (please specify) _____

19. Which of the following Internet connections do you have at home? (Choose the options that you believe come closest; please check all that apply.)
    ❑ I don't have Internet access from home   ❑ T1 or T3 line
    ❑ Direct fiber optic connection   ❑ Dial-up modem
    ❑ Cable modem through cable TV connection   ❑ Satellite
    ❑ DSL (direct subscriber line) though the local telephone network   ❑ Don't know which options I have at home
    ❑ Wireless connection (wi-fi) or hand-held wireless such as a smart phone

20. Dakota County does not have sufficient funds, without raising taxes, to continue all current programs and services. How important, if at all, is it to maintain each of the following service areas?

	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Don't know
Provide access to libraries	1	2	3	4	5
Enforce laws and prosecute criminals	1	2	3	4	5
Protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect	1	2	3	4	5
Provide timely access to health care and economic assistance	1	2	3	4	5
Assure safe, uncongested transportation options	1	2	3	4	5
Protect water supplies and water quality	1	2	3	4	5
Provide access to official records (e.g., driver licenses, birth/death certificates, real estate sales)	1	2	3	4	5
Provide access to parks, trails, and other recreational facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Promote healthy behaviors (e.g., better nutrition, exercise)	1	2	3	4	5

21. To what extent would you support or oppose an increase in your County property tax if it were needed to maintain County services at their current levels?

❑ Strongly support ❑ Somewhat support ❑ Somewhat oppose ❑ Strongly oppose ❑ Don't know

22. If Dakota County needed to reduce services to balance its budget, to what extent would you support or oppose each of the following changes?

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
Reduce hours of operation of County buildings/service centers	1	2	3	4	5
Reduce number (location) of County buildings/service centers	1	2	3	4	5
Reduce the level of road maintenance, including plowing	1	2	3	4	5
Build/maintain fewer roads	1	2	3	4	5
Reduce sheriff patrols	1	2	3	4	5
Reduce crime prevention programs	1	2	3	4	5
Reduce park programs or park maintenance	1	2	3	4	5
Delay response time for license bureaus, processing applications	1	2	3	4	5
Delay response times for low-income people applying for health, income, and food support	1	2	3	4	5
Delay service for disabled or elderly clients by increasing County staff workloads	1	2	3	4	5

23. Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to visit Dakota County libraries on the following days and times.

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know
Sunday	1	2	3	4	5
Monday	1	2	3	4	5
Tuesday	1	2	3	4	5
Wednesday	1	2	3	4	5
Thursday	1	2	3	4	5
Friday	1	2	3	4	5
Saturday	1	2	3	4	5
Mornings	1	2	3	4	5
Afternoons	1	2	3	4	5
Evenings	1	2	3	4	5

24. If Dakota County libraries must reduce hours, is it better to: (Please select only one option.)

❑ Be open more days of the week at all locations, for fewer hours
❑ Be open the same hours offered now, but not all days of the week
❑ Don't know

25. Since 2002, Dakota County has emphasized setting aside open spaces and parkland. How important, if at all, is it to continue investing County funds for each of the following purposes?

	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Don't know
Protect lakes, streams, and wetlands from pollution..	I	2	3	4	5
Protect farmland from future development...	I	2	3	4	5
Protect remaining natural areas	I	2	3	4	5
Develop more facilities in County parks..	I	2	3	4	5
Develop more recreational trails or corridors	I	2	3	4	5
Expand existing parks by adding acres as they become available	I	2	3	4	5

26. Have you or any member of your household used the services at the Recycling Zone facility in the last 12 months?
   ❑ Yes → Skip to question 28   ❑ No → Go to question 27

27. Which one of the following potential reasons best describes why your household has not used the Recycling Zone facility in the last 12 months? (Please select only one option.)
   ❑ Unfamiliar with Recycling Zone   ❑ Don't know what can be recycled there
   ❑ Too far from my home   ❑ Used a different recycling location
   ❑ Inconvenient days/hours/location   ❑ Did not want to pay fees at Recycling Zone
   ❑ Did not have anything to drop off   ❑ Other/none of these

28. Please rate the recycling opportunities in each of these locations in Dakota County.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
Where you live	I	2	3	4	5
In City or County buildings..	I	2	3	4	5
In athletic arenas (sports venues like hockey rinks, soccer, or softball fields) ...	I	2	3	4	5
Sites for community events	I	2	3	4	5
At local businesses	I	2	3	4	5
At malls	I	2	3	4	5
In parks	I	2	3	4	5

29. How important, if at all, is it for each of the following activities and services to be provided in Dakota County Parks, such as Lebanon Hills or Spring Lake Park?

	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Don't know
Skill-building or outdoor education classes	I	2	3	4	5
Equipment rentals such as canoes or snowshoes......................................	I	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to hunt and/or fish...	I	2	3	4	5
Non-motorized recreation such as biking, hiking, canoeing, skiing.................	I	2	3	4	5
Local food production such as community gardens or orchards	I	2	3	4	5
Overnight accommodations for tents, RVs, or camper cabins..........................	I	2	3	4	5
Other (please specify) _____	I	2	3	4	5

30. To what extent do you support or oppose the County investing in projects that make transit more convenient to use?
   ❑ Strongly support   ❑ Somewhat support   ❑ Somewhat oppose   ❑ Strongly oppose   ❑ Don't know

31. Dakota County, area cities, and school districts already collaborate in many ways to improve quality or reduce the cost of services. Which of the following best describes the relationship that you think these local governments should have?
   ❑ The County, area cities, and school districts should partner more to provide services
   ❑ The County, area cities, and school districts should partner less to provide services
   ❑ The County, area cities, and school districts are doing about the right amount of collaborating to provide services

32. How important, if at all, are each of the following goals when the County, area cities, and school districts collaborate or share services?

	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Don't know
Better address changing needs	1	2	3	4	5
Be more innovative	1	2	3	4	5
Eliminate duplication with other service providers	1	2	3	4	5
Do more with less	1	2	3	4	5
Gain access to expertise in other government organizations	1	2	3	4	5
Make the service more effective	1	2	3	4	5
Make the service more efficient	1	2	3	4	5
Make the service higher-quality	1	2	3	4	5
Reduce the cost of the service	1	2	3	4	5

33. Do you think that a year from now you and your household will be better off financially, worse off, or just about the same as now?

❑ Much better ❑ Somewhat better ❑ About the same ❑ Somewhat worse ❑ Much worse ❑ Don't know

Our last questions are about you and your household. Again, all of your responses to this survey are completely anonymous and will be reported in group form only.

D1. How long have you lived in the county?
❑ Less than 2 years ❑ 11 to 15 years
❑ 2 to 5 years ❑ 16 to 20 years
❑ 6 to 10 years ❑ Over 20 years

D2. Which best describes the building you live in?
❑ One family house detached from any other houses
❑ House attached to one or more houses (e.g., a duplex or townhome)
❑ Building with two or more apartments or condos
❑ Mobile home
❑ Other

D3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home...
❑ Rented for cash or occupied without cash payment?
❑ Owned by you or someone in this house with a mortgage or free and clear?

D4. Which category contains your age?
❑ 18-24 ❑ 55-64
❑ 25-34 ❑ 65-74
❑ 35-44 ❑ 75 +
❑ 45-54

D5. What is your gender?
❑ Female
❑ Male

D6. Which of the following best describes you?
❑ Employed full-time → Go to D7
❑ Employed part-time → Go to D7
❑ Homemaker → Skip to D8
❑ Retired → Skip to D8
❑ Student → Skip to D8
❑ Unemployed, looking for work → Skip to D8

D7. In what city do you primarily work?
❑ Apple Valley ❑ Lakeville
❑ Bloomington ❑ Mendota Heights
❑ Burnsville ❑ Minneapolis
❑ Eagan ❑ Richfield
❑ Edina ❑ Rosemount
❑ Farmington ❑ Savage
❑ Hastings ❑ St. Paul
❑ Inver Grove Heights ❑ West St. Paul
❑ Other (please specify) _____

D8. How many children age 17 years and under live in your household?

_____

D9. How many adults under age 65 years, including yourself, live in your household?

_____

D10. How many persons age 65 years and over, including yourself, live in your household?

_____

D11. Please indicate your household's annual income:
❑ Under $15,000 ❑ $75,000-$99,999
❑ $15,000-$24,999 ❑ $100,000-$149,999
❑ $25,000-$34,999 ❑ $150,000-$199,999
❑ $35,000-$49,999 ❑ $200,000 or more
❑ $50,000-$74,999

Thank you very much! Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope to:
National Research Center, Inc., PO Box 549, Belle Mead, NJ 08502