

Northwest Arkansas Community Survey:

2010

A Quality-of-Life Assessment
of NWA Residents



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<http://sociology.uark.edu/1876.htm>

<http://www.nwacf.org>

<http://www.unitedwaynwa.org/community.asp>

Northwest Arkansas Community Survey:

A Quality-of-Life Assessment of NWA Residents

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Community and Family Institute
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The Community and Family Institute

About the Institute

The Community and Family Institute is located in the University of Arkansas' Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice. The Institute was founded in 1997 based on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment of needs, evaluation of community goals and the development of appropriate and pragmatic responses to problems. The Institute is dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom research strategies for exploring important social issues in the Northwest Arkansas region and beyond.

The Northwest Arkansas Community Indicators Project is an ongoing project. The first indicators report was published in 2008 and is a prime example of a comprehensive evaluation of community needs. The goal of that project was to stimulate dialogue about developing issues in the region and to encourage informed strategies for shaping future policies and effective actions. This new project, The Northwest Arkansas Community Survey, is an effort to continue our work that examines critical issues impacting the quality-of-life for residents living in Northwest Arkansas.

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There are a number of individuals who provided input to this project in its earliest stages. Their insights and suggestions are found throughout this report. In addition, though acknowledged as authors, the Community and Family Institute and Justice Center research staffs worked tirelessly on this project; their long hours and commitment to this project is reflected in its quality, scope, and insights. We hope that this report represents an important extension of what started as a lengthy conversation on the social issues confronting Northwest Arkansas and how resources might be leveled to address solutions and develop pragmatic plans for growing and prospering through the 21st Century. What people think continues to be important to the shaping and future of our region.

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Introduction

Asking questions and telling a story...it's a way to assess attitudes, understand behavior, and aggregate those perceptions into a larger story about community. The intent of this report is to tell a story about attitudes and perceptions regarding life in Northwest Arkansas.

Trying to portray accurately the pulse of any community is a formidable task regardless of who is asking the questions or how they are being asked. This report highlights the quality-of-life in the region by asking residents a number of important questions about their neighborhoods, friends, civic engagement, and attitudes toward living in this region.

Why Now and Why This?

In November 2007, the Community and Family Institute at the University of Arkansas began a community-wide discussion with stakeholders about how best to design an ongoing assessment of the quality-of-life in Northwest Arkansas.

That group – comprised of over 200 individuals representing more than 60 public, private, and non-profit community service organizations – met and identified ten policy domains essential for advancing quality-of-life in Northwest Arkansas. In addition, the group formulated a comprehensive plan to measure and assess progress in each of these domains. The first step identified in the comprehensive plan was to develop a set of community indicators to provide a “snapshot” of life in Northwest Arkansas that could be used as a baseline for assessing progress in each domain over time. The Community and Family Institute agreed to lead this research effort, and in 2008 released its findings in a report titled “Northwest Arkansas Community Indicators: A Quality-of-Life Assessment.” This report compiled detailed information within each domain and compared Northwest Arkansas to the state as a whole, as well as to the rest of the country.

While the Northwest Arkansas Community Indicators report provided important information



about the current state of affairs within each policy domain, the data presented in the report were aggregated to the county-level. As a result, the individual perspectives and experiences of Northwest Arkansas residents were not well represented. The purpose of the Northwest Arkansas Community Survey 2010 was to fill-in this informational gap by directly asking residents about life in Northwest Arkansas. This report presents a summary of what nearly 1,300 residents had to say about their neighbors, communities, and life in Northwest Arkansas.

Study Focus

Northwest Arkansas is made up of a variety of small and medium-sized cities located within Benton, Carroll, Madison, and Washington Counties. The region continues to experience population growth, increased ethnic and cultural diversity, and economic expansion, despite the recent economic downturn. While the Northwest Arkansas Community Indicators report focused on the entire four-county region, the Northwest Arkansas Community Survey is more limited in

scope, targeting only those households located in Benton and Washington Counties. The survey was limited to Benton and Washington Counties because these two counties are the region's population centers, containing approximately 90 percent of the region's total population, 90 percent of all Hispanic residents, and more than 98 percent of all Black/African American residents.

Benton County population estimates in 2009 showed 225,504 residents. The largest city in Benton County is Rogers, though the city of Bentonville continues to grow rapidly as more in-migrants are attracted to the opportunities related to Walmart Corporate headquarters in Bentonville.

Washington County population estimates showed 200,181 residents in 2009. The largest city in Washington County is Fayetteville.

Northwest Arkansas Community Survey

The Northwest Arkansas Community Survey (NWACS) provides a comprehensive picture of residents' views about quality-of-life in Northwest

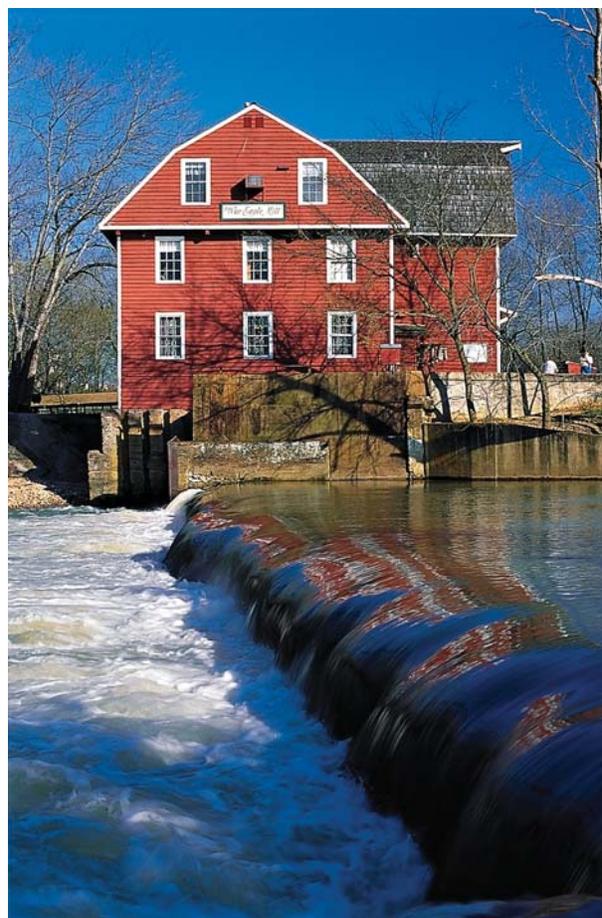


Arkansas. The survey asked respondents to provide their views on a variety of topics ranging from their overall assessments of Northwest Arkansas as a place to live, to their evaluations of core services like health care, education, and transportation. The bulk of the survey, however, was directed toward the measurement of what social scientists call “social capital.” In general terms, social capital refers to people’s inter-personal connections, the various networks of informal and formal associations that people maintain. Though there are a number of formal definitions of social capital, what unites them all is their recognition of the importance of social ties. Like physical capital (money and goods) and human capital (individual training and skills), social capital is thought to be important because of its impact on the ability of people to achieve their individual and collective goals, whatever those goals might be.

The NWACS measured social capital in a variety of ways. Community social capital was explored through a number of items that asked respondents about their relationships with neighbors—for example, the frequency and nature of interactions. Survey participants were also asked about their level of civic engagement—that is, the activities they undertake in their day-to-day lives to improve their communities, such as volunteering their time, getting involved in public service organizations, and donating money to specific causes or organizations. Respondents were also asked about their experiences with, and perceptions of, the level of social cohesion and trust in their respective communities.

Part I of this report presents the results of those survey items designed to measure residents’ perceptions of life in Northwest Arkansas *in general*. Figures 1.01–1.05 pertain to those survey questions addressing general quality-of-life issues in Northwest Arkansas.

Part II presents results for the survey questions assessing community social capital. Figures 2.01–2.06 depict respondents’ perceptions of neighborhood social cohesion (feelings of shared commitment and values). Figures 2.07–2.12 summarize respondents’ neighborhood social ties (connectedness to others). Respondents’ feelings



of trust are depicted in Figures 2.13–2.21. Finally, respondents’ perceptions of race and ethnic relations are presented in Figures 2.22–2.26.

Part III of the report summarizes findings for respondents’ levels of civic engagement. Table 3.01 details respondents’ membership and participation in local organizations, and Table 3.02 summarizes their recent political activities. Volunteerism and charitable giving are summarized in Figure 3.01. Finally, results pertaining to respondents’ sources of information about public affairs are presented in Table 3.03a and 3.03b.

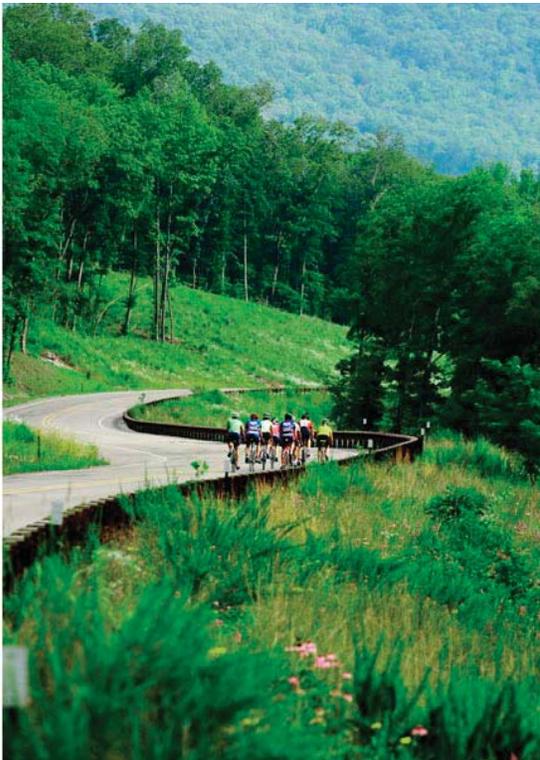
Voluntary comments provided by respondents are presented (verbatim) in Section IV (English) and Section V (Spanish to English translation). Some of these comments—highlighted in bold, blue text—are also provided throughout the body of the document.

The results for each survey item are provided separately for Benton and Washington Counties for purposes of comparison.



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Part I. Life in Northwest Arkansas





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Part I: Life in Northwest Arkansas

The first section of the Northwest Arkansas Community Survey (NWACS) probed respondents' overall perceptions of life in Northwest Arkansas. Included in this section were respondents' assessments of Northwest Arkansas as a place to live in general, their feelings about how things are

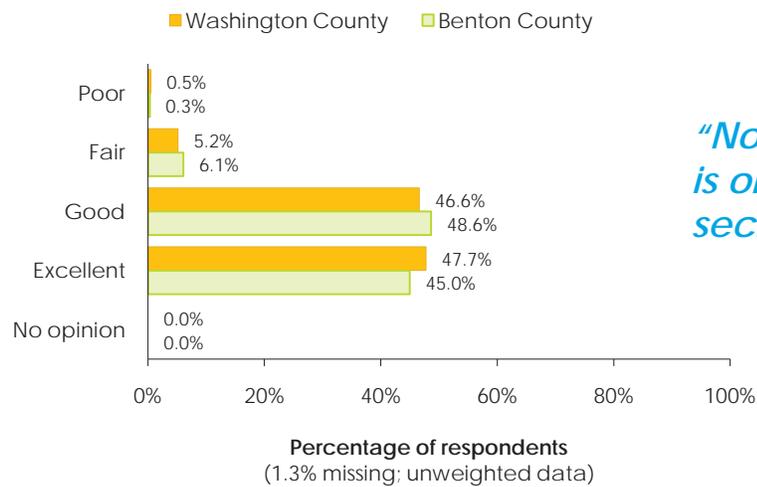
going overall in their communities, as well as their evaluations of the quality of the region's health care, their evaluations of local schools, and their ratings of public transportation in Northwest Arkansas.

Northwest Arkansas as a place to live

Regardless of their county of residence, nearly all of those who participated in the NWACS rated Northwest Arkansas as a "good" or "excellent" place to live (see Figure 1.01).

Figure 1.01. Northwest Arkansas as a Place to Live

How would you rate Northwest Arkansas as a place to live?



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

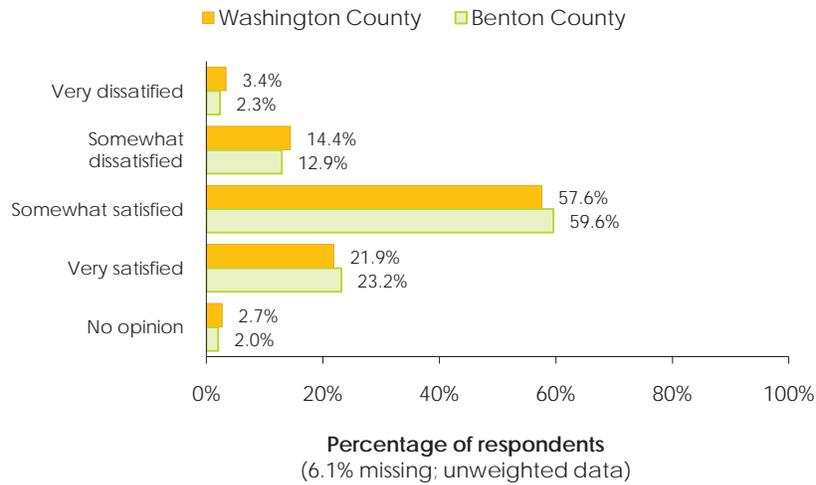
“Northwest Arkansas is one of the best kept secrets on the planet!”



And, despite the current downturn in the economy, Benton County and Washington County residents indicated that they are optimistic about the future. Approximately 80 percent of those in each county reported that they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the way things are going in their communities (see Figure 1.02).

Figure 1.02. Community

How do you feel about the way things are going in the community where you live?

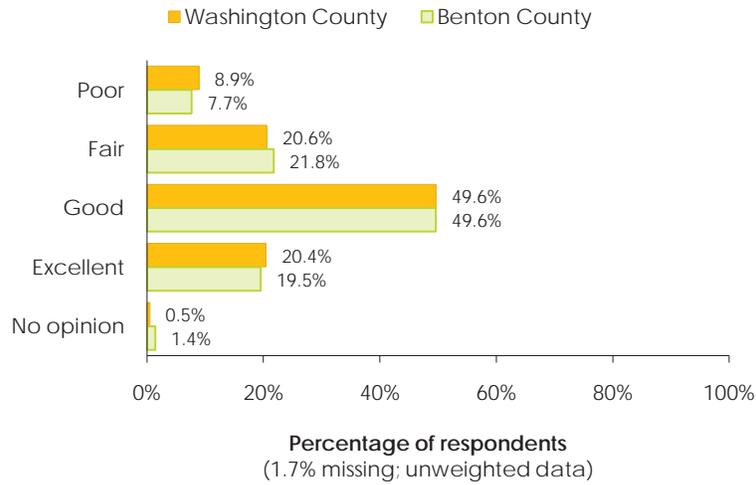


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Figure 1.03. Quality of Health Care

How would you rate the quality of health care available to you and your family?

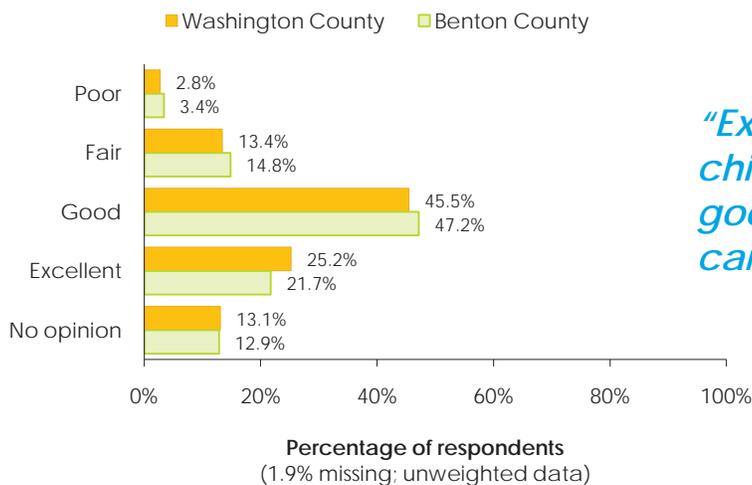


Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Why are the residents of Northwest Arkansas so hopeful about the future at a time when there are so many challenges facing the region and the country as a whole? Results from the NWACS provide some clues. Survey respondents gave high marks to the quality of health care available to them and their families (see Figure 1.03), and gave relatively high ratings to local schools (see Figure 1.04).

Figure 1.04. Schools

How would you rate the schools in your neighborhood with respect to the job they are doing?



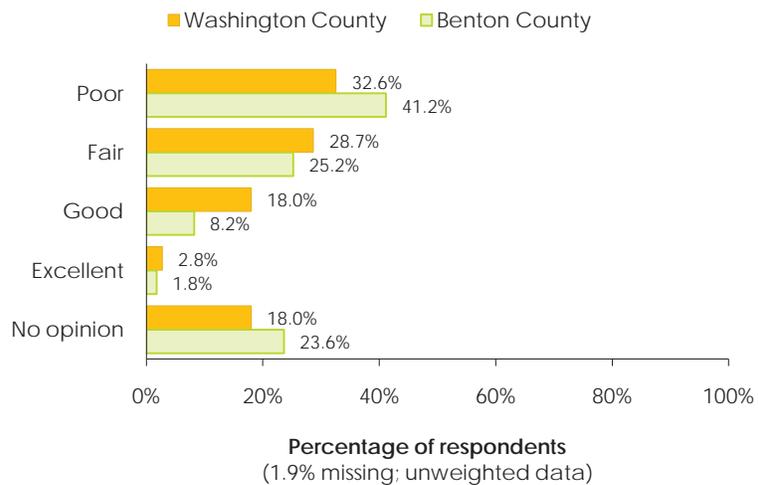
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

“Excellent place to raise children. Great schools, good people who genuinely care about each other.”

Despite the generally high levels of satisfaction expressed by respondents, one aspect of life in Northwest Arkansas that served as a source of discontent was public transportation (or lack thereof) (see Figure 1.05). Strong majorities in both Benton and Washington Counties rated the public transportation system in the region as only “fair” or “poor.” In contrast, only one out of five Washington County respondents, and less than ten percent of Benton County residents rated the public transportation system as “good” or “excellent.” (Readers are directed to Part IV of the report, where respondents’ comments about public transportation are detailed.)

Figure 1.05. Public Transportation System

How would you rate the public transportation system in Northwest Arkansas?



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

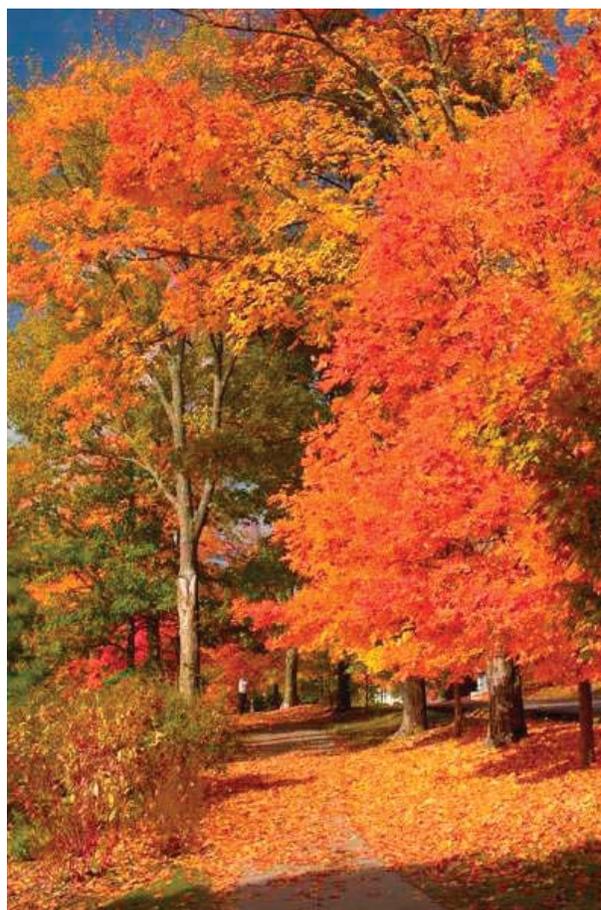
“Due to the rapid growth of Northwest Arkansas, mass transit (i.e. train system) needs to be put in place to reduce the traffic congestion, which will only get worse.”



Summary

What people are saying about their communities and the quality-of-life they are experiencing right now in Northwest Arkansas is not that surprising. In the Community Indicators Report (2008) we noted that in both 2000 and again in 2008, the majority of respondents in those two surveys rated Northwest Arkansas as an “excellent” place to live; another 40 percent saw it as a “good” place to live. Less than 10 percent saw Northwest Arkansas as a “fair” or “poor” place to live. Those results are very similar to the most recent 2010 survey, with fewer than 10 percent of respondents in either Benton or Washington County describing the region as undesirable.

As discussed earlier, sharpening the quality-of-life focus and asking questions about specific elements of communities (education, health, safety, transportation, etc.) are important parts of any comprehensive assessment of life in a region. This 2010 report, as well as earlier surveys (2000, 2008) described in the Community Indicators Report (2008), points out that the overwhelming majority of Northwest Arkansas residents were pleased with the schools in their communities. In 2000, nearly 80 percent of the respondents said they thought their local schools were “excellent” or “good.” By 2008, the level of satisfaction declined somewhat, and similar to the 2010 survey, about 15 percent of respondents thought their schools were only just “fair” or “poor.” Likewise, little has changed in attitudes toward health care. Over 70 percent of respondents in 2000 thought their medical care was “excellent” or “good.” While the shifts were modest between 2000 and 2008, Northwest Arkansas residents were slightly less satisfied with their medical care in 2008. In the 2010 survey nearly 30 percent of both Benton and Washington County residents felt that their health/medical care was either “fair” or “poor.”

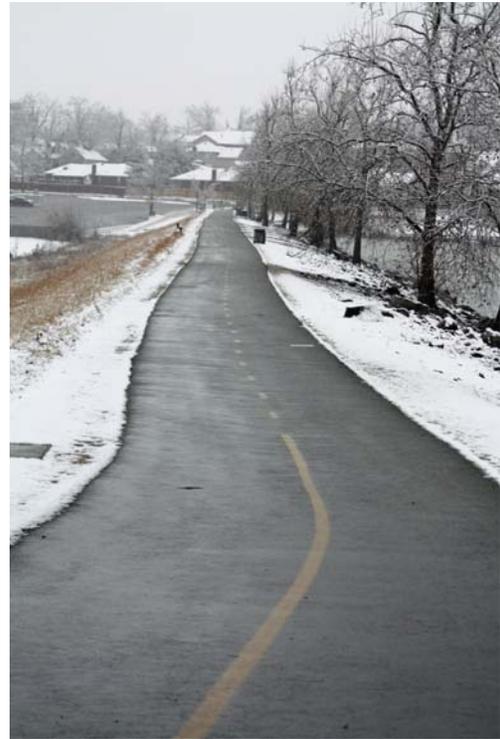


There is little doubt that transportation is one of the biggest challenges facing the Northwest Arkansas region. When asked about public transportation in the region, 66 percent of Benton County respondents and more than 60 percent of Washington County respondents thought that the transportation was only “fair” or “poor.” Interestingly, nearly 20 percent in both counties had no response—perhaps the result of no available services in large parts of both counties. Coupled with the respondent comments found in Parts IV and V, this issue is going to be an important one in the future development of the region.



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Part II. Community Relationships





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Part II: Community Relationships

Respondents were asked about four dimensions of their community relationships: neighborhood social cohesion and trust, social ties, trust of community members and institutions, and race relations. To assess social cohesion, respondents were asked about the degree to which their neighborhood is “close-knit,” their trust of others who live in their neighborhood, how well residents in their neighborhood get along with one another, shared values among neighborhood residents, and the willingness of their neighbors to help others in need. Survey participants were also asked to assess their own ability to positively impact their community.

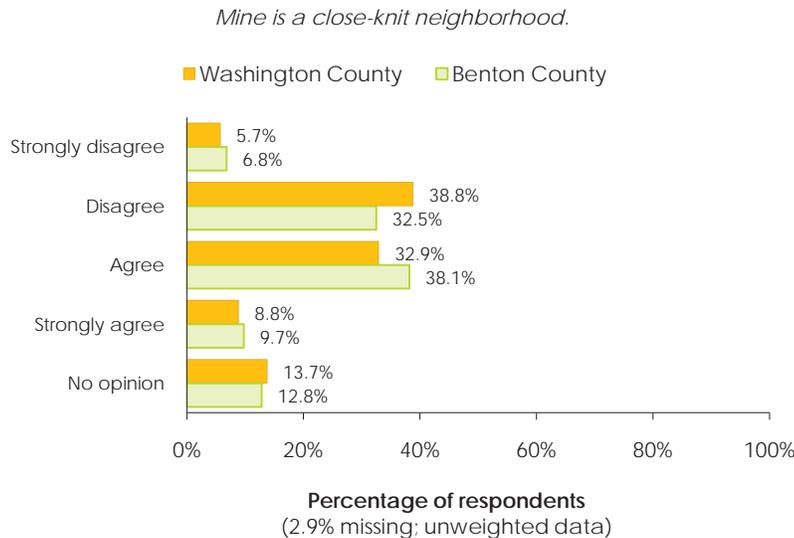
Social ties were measured by asking respondents a series of questions pertaining to their interactions and relationships with neighbors. Feelings of trust were explored across a number of dimensions: people, in general; people in their neighborhood; those with whom they worship; people of various races/ethnicities; and governmental institutions.

Race and ethnic relations were examined by asking respondents to rate the current state of racial/ethnic relations, in general; to provide their level of satisfaction with the treatment of various racial/ethnic groups; and to provide their opinion on the equal rights claims of immigrant communities.

Social cohesion

A significant portion of respondents disagreed with the statement that theirs is a “close-knit neighborhood” (Figure 2.01).

Figure 2.01. Close-knittedness of Neighborhood



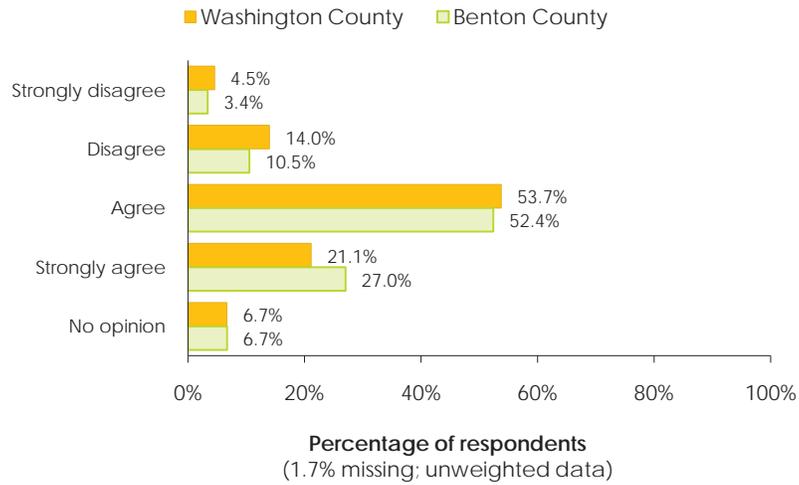
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

“People are very friendly, but reserved and not inclined to open up to people who have not lived here all their lives.”

Figure 2.02. Trust in Neighbors

People in my neighborhood can be trusted.

“People are very friendly and friendships and family is highly valued.”

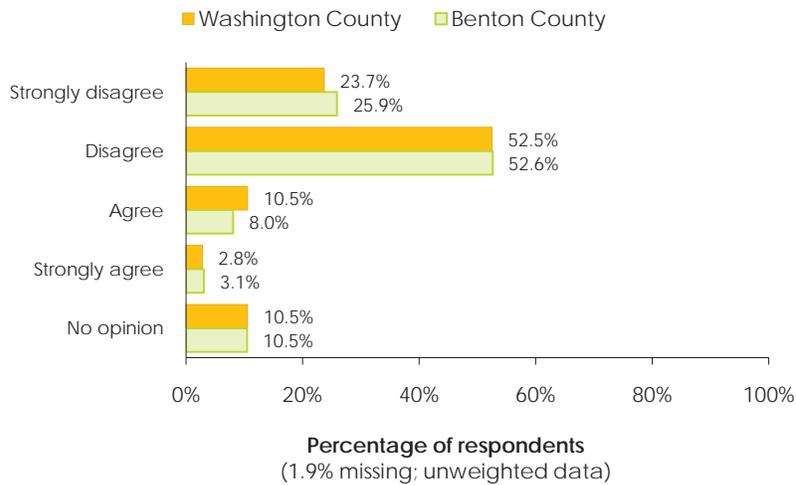


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However, large majorities reported that they trust (see Figure 2.02) and get along with their neighbors (Figure 2.03).

Figure 2.03. Neighbors Getting Along

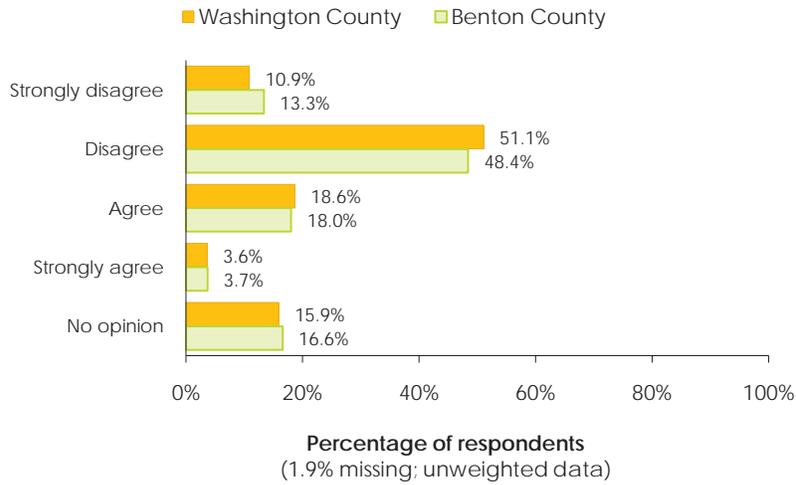
People in my neighborhood generally DO NOT get along with each other.



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 2.04. Shared Values Among Neighbors

People in my neighborhood DO NOT share the same values.

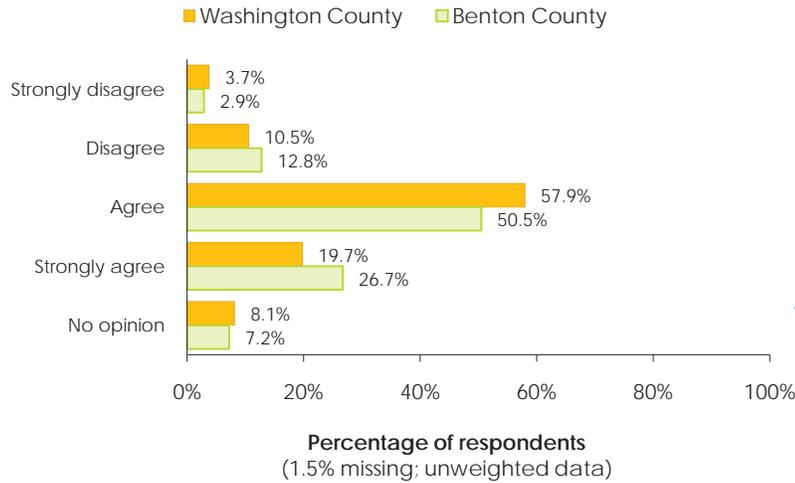


Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

They also reported that their neighbors share the same values as they do (Figure 2.04), and that the people in their neighborhood are willing to help neighbors in need (Figure 2.05).

Figure 2.05. Willingness to Help Neighbors

People in my neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors.



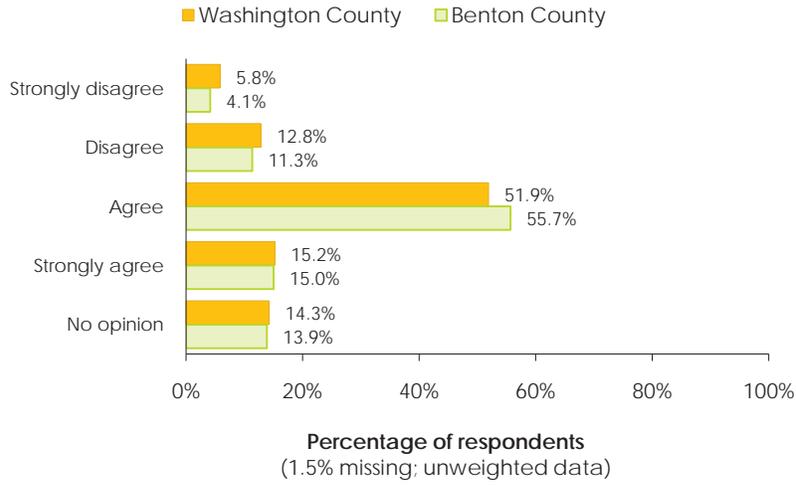
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

“For the most part I love living here. Friendly, beautiful, a wonderful place to raise kids. A wonderful place to live.”

Survey respondents also reported high levels of personal efficacy—the capacity for individuals to generate positive impact on their communities (Figure 2.06).

Figure 2.06. Individual Impact on Community

I think I can have an impact on my community to make it a better place to live.



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

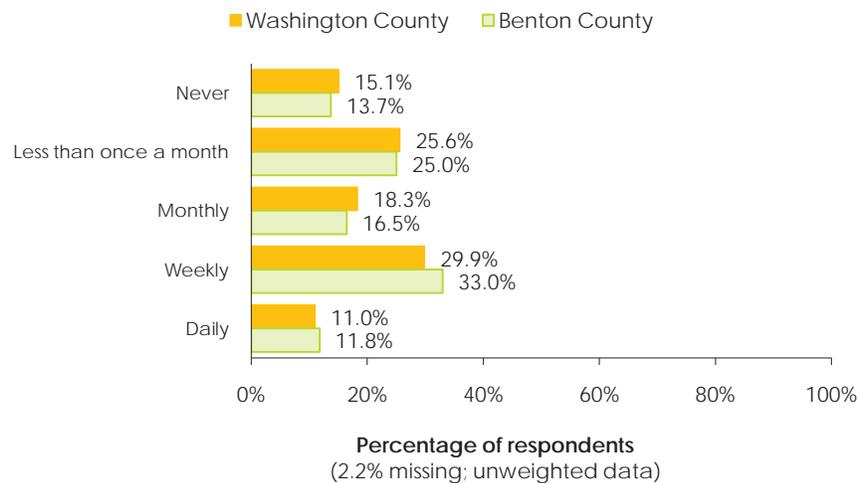


Social ties

In addition to being asked about social cohesion, survey respondents were also asked about the frequency and nature of their interactions with others in their neighborhoods. Results show that residents of Benton and Washington Counties maintain relatively frequent contact with their neighbors and that these interactions produce enhanced social connections and interpersonal ties. Approximately 40 percent of residents reported daily or weekly visits with others in their neighborhood; an additional 17 percent indicated monthly visits with their neighbors (see Figure 2.07).

Figure 2.07. Visiting with Neighbors

How often do you visit with a neighbor, out in the neighborhood or in one of your homes?



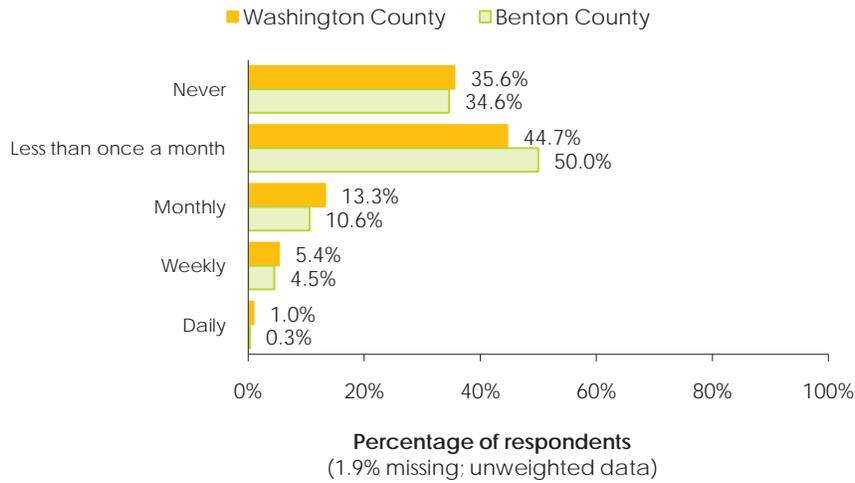
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



A majority of survey participants stated that they borrow something from, or loan something to, neighbors on occasion (Figure 2.08).

Figure 2.08. Borrowing from or Lending to Neighbors

How often do you borrow something from, or loan something to, a neighbor?

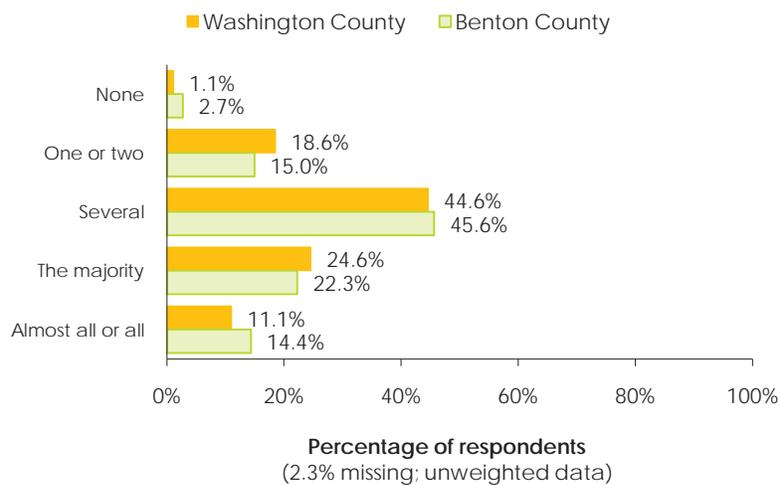


Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In addition, most respondents reported that they recognize many of their neighbors by sight (Figure 2.09), as well as by name (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.09. Knowing Neighbors by Sight

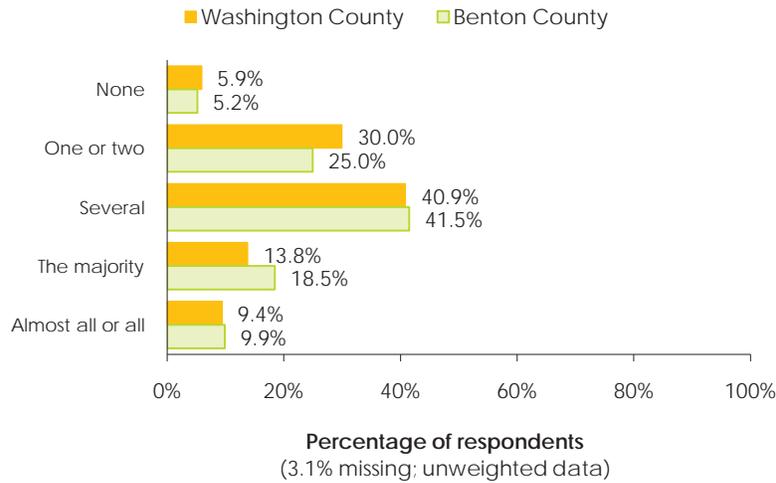
How many of your neighbors do you know by sight?



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 2.10. Knowing Neighbors by Name

How many of your neighbors do you know by name?

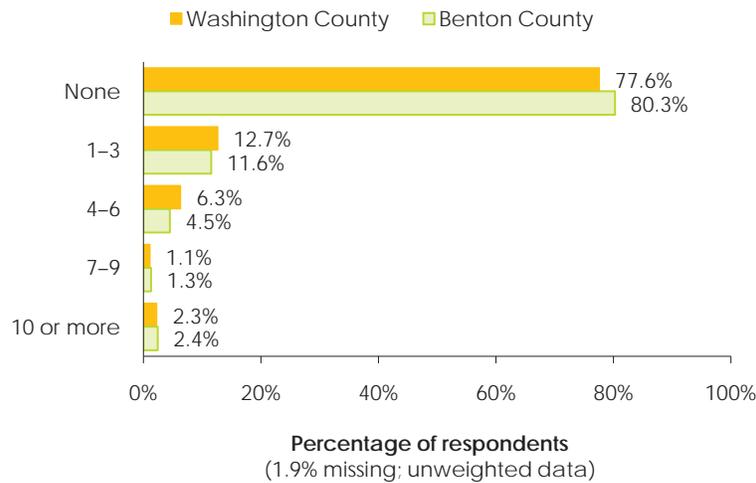


Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Importantly, these interactions do not appear to have been limited to established kin networks. While fewer than 25 percent of respondents reported having one or more relatives residing in their neighborhood (Figure 2.11), nearly two-thirds stated that they have at least one person they consider to be a friend living in their neighborhood (Figure 2.12). Taken together, these findings suggest that social interactions within the context of localized neighborhoods have produced meaningful social connections and interpersonal ties in Benton County and Washington County neighborhoods.

Figure 2.11. Number of Relatives in the Neighborhood

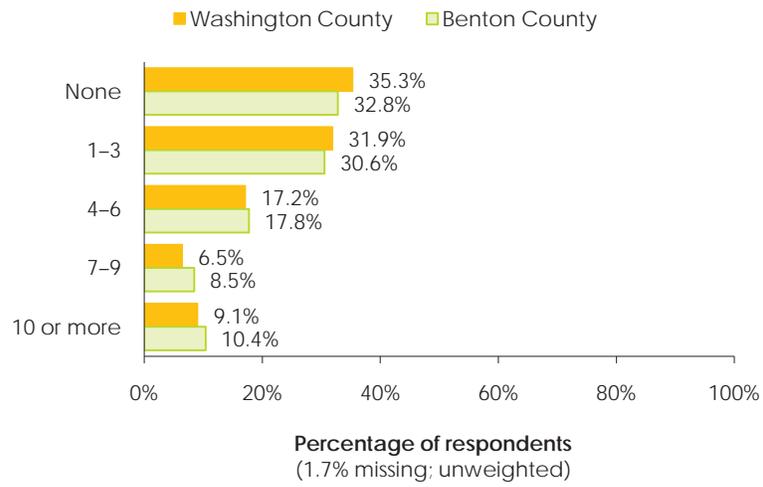
Not counting those who live with you, how many relatives do you have in your neighborhood?



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 2.12. Number of Friends in the Neighborhood

Not counting your relatives, how many friends live in your neighborhood?



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

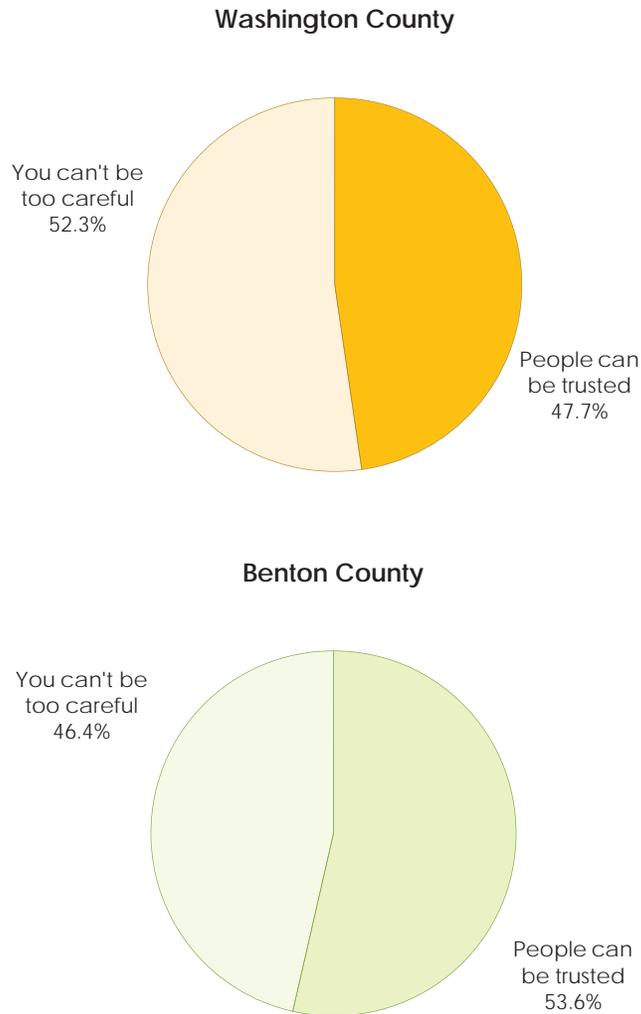


Trust

When asked about the trustworthiness of people, in general, Benton County and Washington County residents displayed some skepticism. A slight majority of Benton County residents and fewer than half of Washington County residents stated that “people can be trusted” (see Figure 2.13).

Figure 2.13. Trustworthiness of People, in General

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

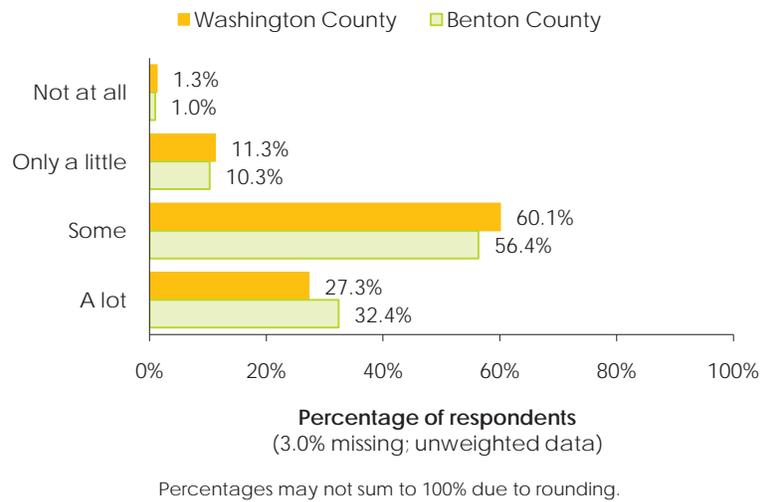


(2.8% missing; unweighted data)

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 2.14. Trusting People Who Work in Stores

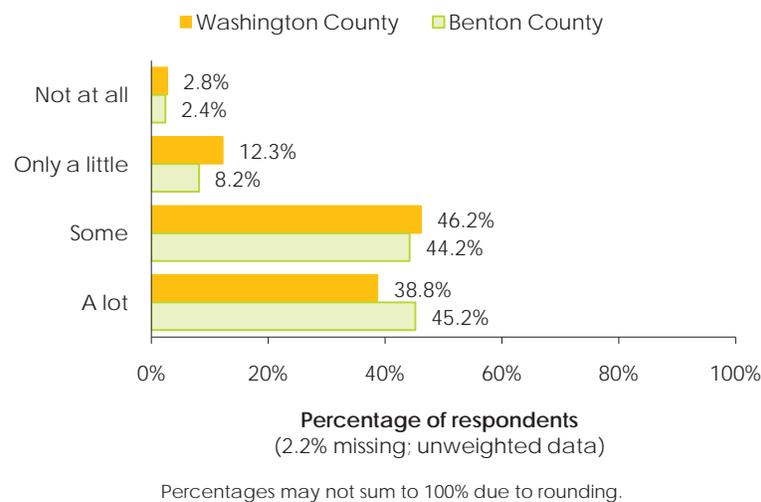
Please indicate how much you would trust each of the following groups of people: **People who work in stores where you shop**



And when asked how much they trust people who work in stores where they shop, less than a third of all survey participants reported that they have a “lot of trust” (Figure 2.14). However, when asked about their level of trust for people with whom they have more frequent, personal contact, residents’ outlooks were much more positive. More than a third of Washington County respondents and nearly half of all Benton County residents stated that they trust their neighbors “a lot” (Figure 2.15).

Figure 2.15. Trusting People in the Neighborhood

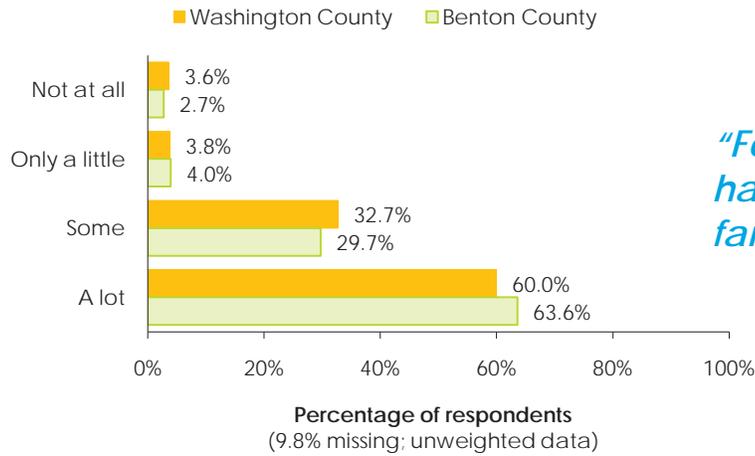
Please indicate how much you would trust each of the following groups of people: **People in the neighborhood**



When asked about the trustworthiness of those with whom they worship, these figures increased to 60 percent and 63 percent, respectively (Figure 2.16).

Figure 2.16. Trusting People at Church or Places of Worship

*Please indicate how much you would trust each of the following groups of people: **People at your church or place of worship***



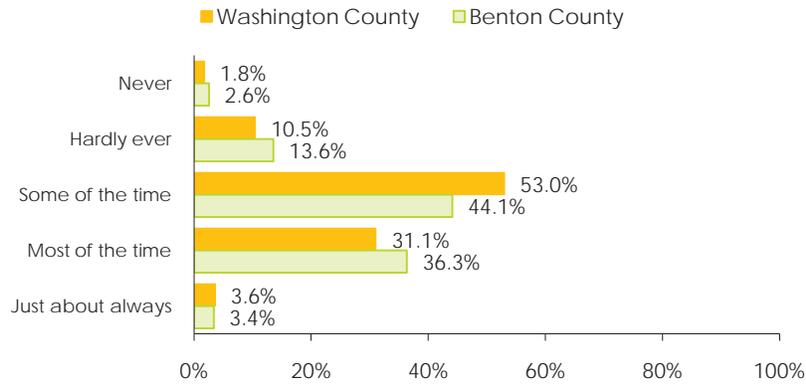
“Folks around here have a strong sense of faith & community.”

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Figure 2.17. Trusting Local Government

How much of the time do you think you can trust LOCAL government to do what is right?



Percentage of respondents
(2.6% missing; unweighted data)

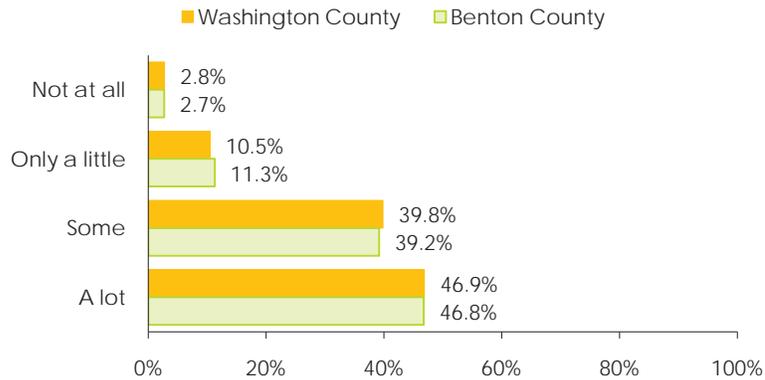
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Residents’ trust in local governmental institutions was more subdued. Fewer than 40 percent of the survey respondents in Benton and Washington Counties stated that local government can be trusted to do what is right “most of the time” or “just about always” (see Figure 2.17). The largest share of respondents reported that local government can be trusted to do what is right “some of the time.” Fewer than half of all respondents reported trusting local police “a lot” (Figure 2.18).

Figure 2.18. Trusting Police in the Local Community

*Please indicate how much you would trust each of the following groups of people: **Police in your local community***

“Northwest Arkansas is a very safe place to live.”

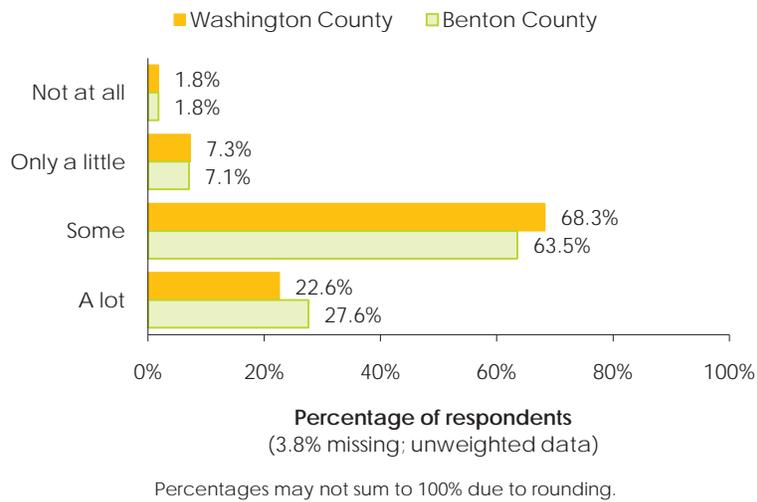


Percentage of respondents
(2.6% missing; unweighted data)

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 2.19. Trusting White People

Please indicate how much you would trust each of the following groups of people: **White people**



When asked about members of differing racial/ethnic groups, respondents typically reported “some” trust for each group (see Figures 2.19, 2.20, 2.21). Notably, however, respondents were more likely to report “a lot” of trust for Whites rather than for African Americans/Blacks or Hispanics/Latinos. Conversely, respondents were more likely to report trusting African Americans/Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos “only a little” or “not at all.”

Figure 2.20. Trusting African Americans or Blacks

Please indicate how much you would trust each of the following groups of people: **African American or Blacks**

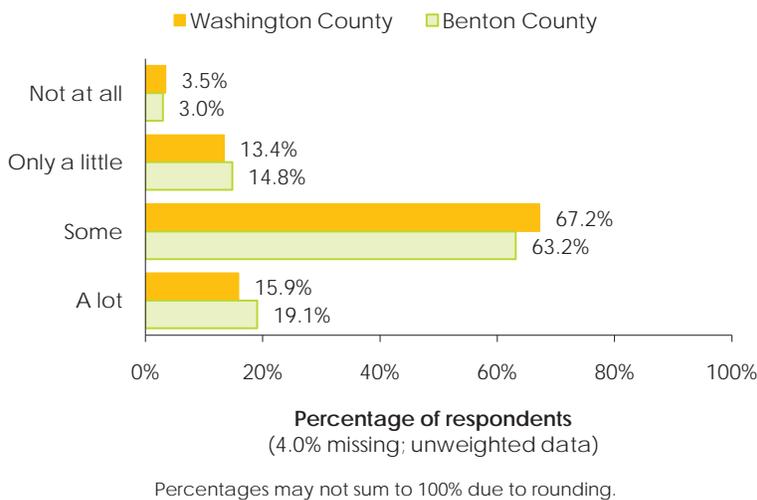
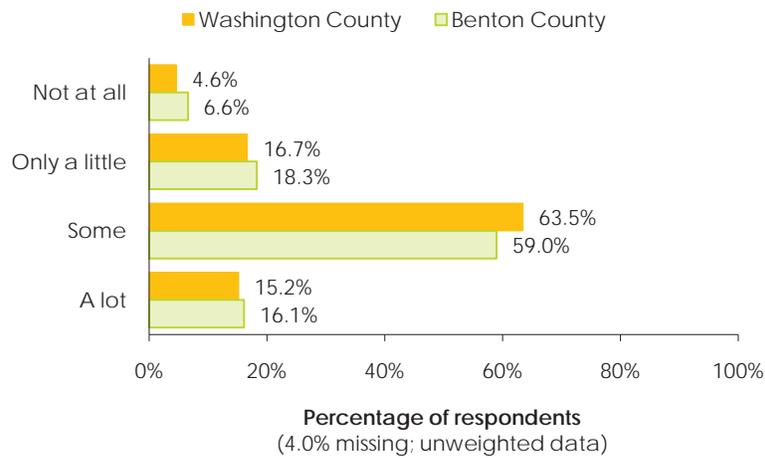


Figure 2.21. Trusting Hispanics or Latinos

Please indicate how much you would trust each of the following groups of people: *Hispanics or Latinos*



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

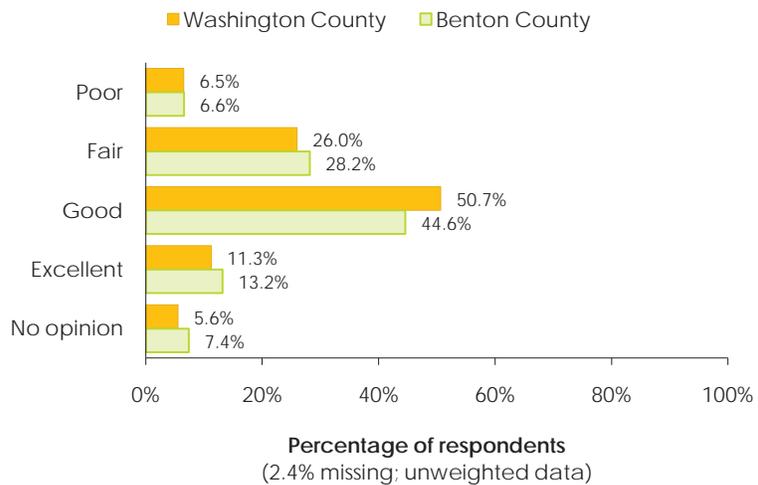
Race and ethnic relations

Between half and two-thirds of all survey respondents who rendered an opinion reported that the relationship between people of different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds in their communities is “good” or “excellent” (see Figure 2.22). Approximately one out of four respondents indicated that race relations are “fair,” and just over six percent stated race relations in their community are “poor.”

Figure 2.22. Race and Ethnic Relations

How would you rate the relationship between people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in your community?

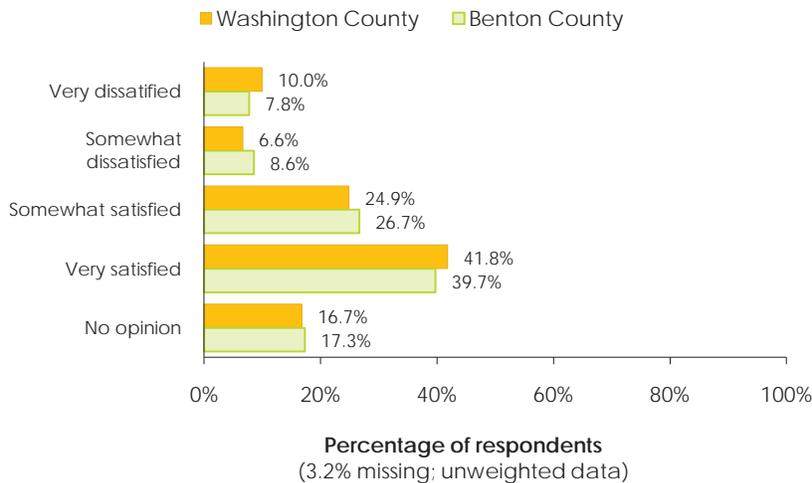
“Northwest Arkansas, the area of Rogers, Bentonville and Bella Vista is probably the most diverse part of all Arkansas. Because of this, in part, we have the least bigotry and the most inclusive neighborhood in the state.”



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 2.23. Satisfaction with Treatment of Whites

Next, please tell us how you feel about the way various groups in Northwest Arkansas are treated. For each of the following groups, please indicate how satisfied you are with the way they are treated: **Whites**

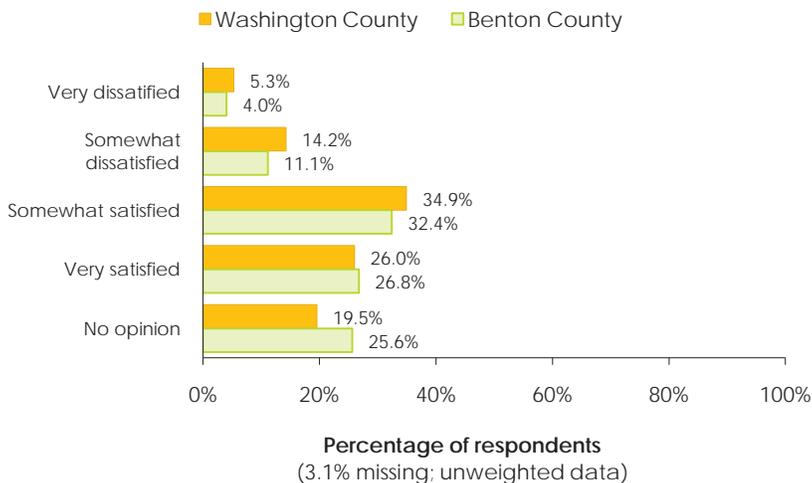


Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

A majority of respondents reported that they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the treatment Whites, African Americans/Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos in Northwest Arkansas receive (see Figures 2.23, 2.24, 2.25). Results also show, however, that respondents are, on the whole, less satisfied with the way African Americans/Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos are treated. This difference was particularly pronounced for Hispanics/Latinos in comparison to Whites. Whereas more than 25 percent of respondents indicated some level of dissatisfaction with the way Hispanics/Latinos are treated, approximately 16 percent are dissatisfied with the treatment of Whites.

Figure 2.24. Satisfaction with Treatment of Blacks

Next, please tell us how you feel about the way various groups in Northwest Arkansas are treated. For each of the following groups, please indicate how satisfied you are with the way they are treated: **Blacks**

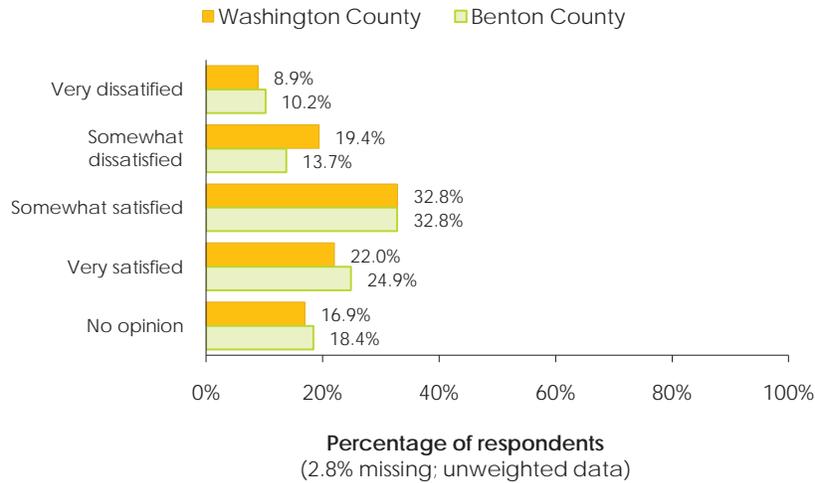


“There is still a fair amount of discrimination and ignorance.”

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 2.25. Satisfaction with Treatment of Hispanics

Next, please tell us how you feel about the way various groups in Northwest Arkansas are treated. For each of the following groups, please indicate how satisfied you are with the way they are treated: **Hispanics**



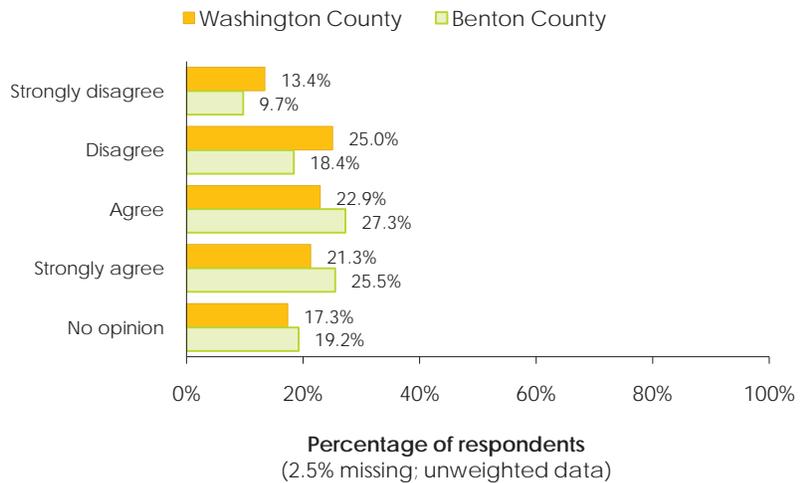
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The data presented in Figure 2.26 suggest that some of these differences in residents’ satisfaction with the treatment of Hispanics/Latinos may be attributable to current policy debates concerning immigration. Approximately 44 percent of Washington County respondents and nearly 53 percent of survey participants in Benton County agreed with the statement, “Immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.”

Figure 2.26. Immigrants and Equal Rights

Immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.

“There is nothing wrong with immigrants, as we all are from immigrants (the majority anyway), but illegal is a whole other issue.”



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Summary

How connected are we? Do we know, interact with, and rely on our neighbors? Robert Putnam in his seminal work, *Bowling Alone*, proposed that our connectedness to friends, neighbors, and the community is changing. Putnam suggests that the strength of our social connections is starting to weaken, and, as a consequence, Americans' overall levels of civic engagement (organizational membership, volunteerism, political participation) are beginning to decline. While there have been a number of studies both confirming and disputing Putnam's conclusions, it does appear we have slowly evolved from a front porch society to a back deck one. The question of course is, "What do neighborhood and broader community-wide relationships look like in Northwest Arkansas?"

Many of the results examined earlier suggest that residents of Benton and Washington Counties seem to be connected to their neighbors, and mostly see their communities as good places to live, places that are both neighbor- and family-friendly. Nevertheless, the results from the

survey also indicate a number of problems related to the development and maintenance of social connectedness. While social ties are certainly not absent in Northwest Arkansas communities, there appears to be some tentativeness on the part of residents to invest in relationships and to develop deeper connections with their neighbors. For example, more than one-third of the respondents in both counties said they never or rarely visited their neighbors; nearly 80 percent of respondents never or less than once a month either borrowed or loaned any item to their neighbors. In both counties, respondents were not very likely to recognize their neighbors by sight, and an even larger percentage in both counties was less likely to know their neighbors by name. The general impression from these social ties/relations results is that residents are, at best, cautiously connected to their neighbors and community.

With most people living in neighborhoods where they have no family (80% in Benton County and 78% in Washington County), and having only

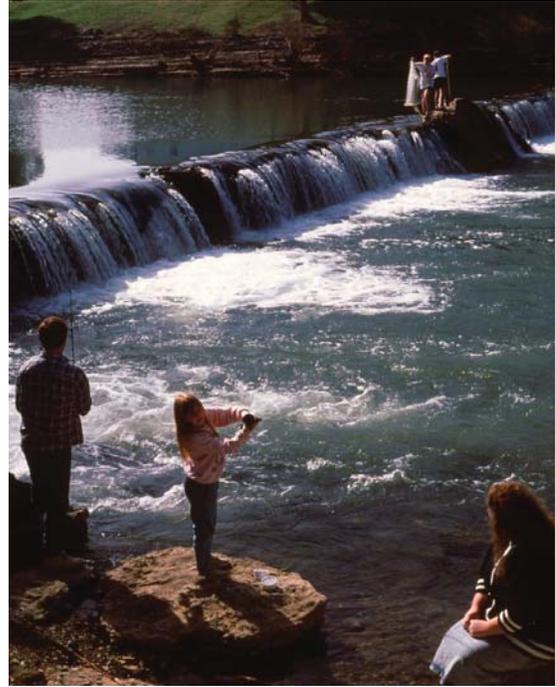




a limited range of friends, ties with neighbors become important and have the potential to impact the community's growth and development. In general, both Benton and Washington County residents say that people can be trusted; the majority of residents in both counties trust the people who work in the stores where they shop, who live next door in their neighborhood, and who worship with them in their churches, mosques, and synagogues. While still reporting moderately high levels of trust, residents were more likely to report they have no or limited trust in their local government, local police, and persons of different

race and ethnicity. Approximately one-third of respondents rated the relationship between people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in their communities as only "fair" or "poor." Between six and seven percent of respondents reported being dissatisfied with the way that Whites are treated. When asked about satisfaction with how Blacks and Hispanics are treated by others in Northwest Arkansas, the level of dissatisfaction *doubled*. Although most residents are connected—how they are connected and to whom seems to be an issue worthy of closer inspection.

Part III. Social Activities





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Part III: Social Activities

Civic engagement

In order to gauge the extent of civic engagement among Northwest Arkansas residents, NWACS participants were asked to indicate the organizations to which they belong, as well as their participation in events sponsored by those organizations (see Table 3.01). Of the 12 organization types examined in the NWACS, the most common organizational affiliation noted by survey respondents was membership in some sort of religious organization. Sixty-three percent of Washington County respondents and 68 percent of Benton County respondents reported membership in a local church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. Moreover, an additional 11 percent of Washington County respondents and nine percent of Benton

County respondents reported belonging to a religious organization besides their local place of worship. Rounding out the top five for Washington County participants was membership in a youth organization, a parents' organization, a business or civic group, and a senior citizens' organization or club. Among Benton County respondents, affiliation with a religious organization was followed by membership in a youth organization, a senior citizens' organization or club, a parents' organization, or veterans' organizations. Other organizations to which survey respondents belong included: neighborhood watch groups, block groups/tenant associations/community councils, local political organizations, literary art discussion

Table 3.01. Participation in Local Organizations

*Do you or any members of your household **belong to** any of the following **local** organizations?*

*In the past year, did you or any members of your household **attend an event** sponsored by any of the following **local** organizations?*

	Percentage answering "yes"			
	Washington County		Benton County	
	Belong	Attended an event	Belong	Attended an event
Church, synagogue, mosque, or temple	63.4 %	75.0 %	68.1 %	79.6 %
Besides your local place of worship, some other religious organization	11.6 %	30.9 %	9.5 %	35.6 %
Youth organization (sports leagues, scouts, 4-H)	22.2 %	47.7 %	22.4 %	47.7 %
Parents association (PTA or PTO)	18.2 %	33.2 %	12.8 %	27.8 %
Veterans organization	9.8 %	16.5 %	11.5 %	18.6 %
Local political organization	8.2 %	21.6 %	7.4 %	22.1 %
Senior citizens organization or club	11.6 %	19.4 %	15.3 %	24.0 %
A literary art discussion or study group	10.1 %	17.3 %	5.7 %	14.2 %
Block group, tenant association, or community council	8.2 %	13.0 %	8.1 %	20.6 %
Business or civic group (Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Elks/Moose Lodge, etc.)	13.5 %	24.2 %	11.2 %	23.9 %
Ethnic or nationality club	4.2 %	6.1 %	3.6 %	4.4 %
Neighborhood watch group	10.3 %	8.7 %	9.2 %	11.0 %
Some other group	12.8 %	29.0 %	12.8 %	29.7 %

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

groups, and ethnic/nationality clubs. Slightly less than 13 percent of respondents in both counties reported belonging to some other organization.

By and large the frequency with which respondents participated in events sponsored by the above mentioned organizations mirrored patterns of membership. Fully 75 percent of Washington County respondents and nearly 80 percent of Benton County respondents reported attending one or more events put on by churches, synagogues, mosques, or temples, and more than 30 percent of respondents in each county stated that they attended an event sponsored by some other religious organization. Events sponsored by youth organizations, parents' organizations, and business/civic groups were also frequently attended by respondents, as were local political events, veterans' organization activities, senior citizen happenings, and block group/tenant association/community council meetings. Participation in neighborhood watch groups, discussion groups, and ethnic nationality

clubs were much less common. Notably, almost without exception, organizational participation outpaced organizational membership among survey respondents.

Table 3.02 presents information on the political participation of respondents and their family members. Respondents were asked to indicate which political activities they themselves, or one or more of their family members, performed in the preceding 12 months. The most common activity reported by survey participants was a walk, run, or ride for some cause. This was followed by attending a meeting pertaining to local community affairs, a political rally or speech, and working with fellow citizens to address a community problem. Activities with relatively low rates of participation included volunteering for a political party or candidate, grass roots political groups, making a political speech, and attending a political protest. Roughly seven percent of respondents in each county engaged in some other form of political activity.

Table 3.02. Political Activities Participated In

Here's a list of activities some do and others do not. For each one, please mark if you or a family member have done this in the past 12 months.

	Percentage answering "yes"	
	Washington County	Benton County
Attended a political rally or speech	19.6 %	14.5 %
Attended an organized protest	7.9 %	5.8 %
Attended a political meeting on local, town, school affairs	20.4 %	19.7 %
Worked or volunteered for a political party or candidate	11.1 %	7.9 %
Made a speech about a community or political issues	7.9 %	6.0 %
Been an active member of any group that tries to influence public policy or government	10.5 %	8.7 %
Participated in a walk, run, or ride for some cause	25.9 %	27.6 %
Worked with fellow citizens to solve a problem in your community	13.5 %	14.5 %
Some other activity	7.6 %	6.9 %

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Volunteerism and charitable giving

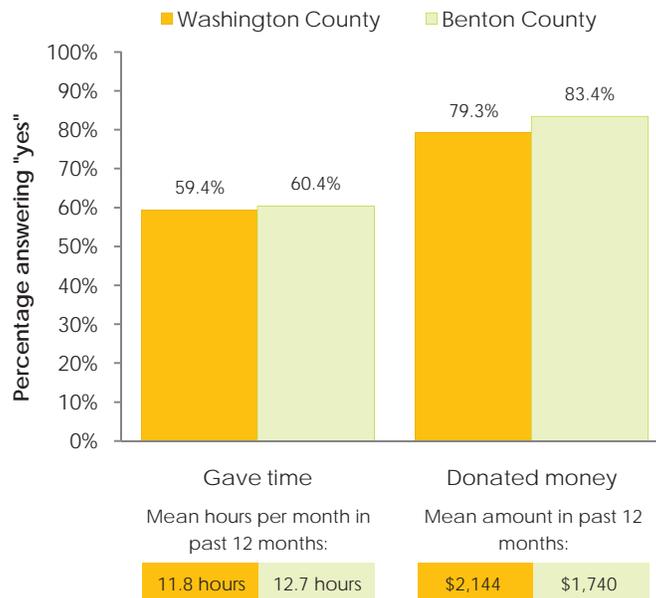
To assess the extent to which Northwest Arkansas residents volunteer, survey participants were asked whether or not they had given their time – without pay – to any charitable, civic, religious, or other organization in the preceding 12 months. If they had volunteered their time, respondents were asked to estimate how many hours per month they spent in service. Approximately 60 percent of respondents reported volunteering their time to local organizations in the past year (see

Figure 3.01). On average, these individuals spent 12 hours per month volunteering. In addition, respondents were asked if they donated money to charitable, civic, religious, or other organizations in the past year, and if they did, the total amount of money they gave. An estimated 80 percent of respondents stated that they donated money to these organizations. Washington County residents gave, on average, \$2,144 annually; Benton County residents donated an average of \$1,740.

Figure 3.01. Giving Time and Donating Money to Volunteer Organizations

*In the past year, have you **given your time** — without pay — to any charitable, civic, religious, or other volunteer organization?*

*In the past year, have you **donated money** to any charitable, civic, religious, or other volunteer organization?*



Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Sources of information about public affairs

In addition to inquiring about organizational memberships and civic participation, the NWACS also asked respondents about their sources of information about public affairs. Each survey participant was asked about the importance of each of the following as a source of information: television, newspapers, radio, news sites on the internet, community websites and blogs,

“[I] like the political conservatism of the area and the newspaper. It is a traditional value place to live.”

community newsletters, talking with other people, and social network sites like Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. Results are presented in Tables 3.03a and 3.03b.

NWACS respondents in both Washington and Benton Counties cited television as the most

important source of information about public affairs. More than half of respondents in each county stated that television is a “very important” source of such information; an additional 40 percent in each county said that television is “somewhat important.” Newspapers and informal grapevines (i.e., talking with other people) were also rated highly by large proportions of respondents in both counties. Radio and internet news sites occupied the second tier of information sources for survey participants, with roughly a third of respondents in each county indicating that these are “very important” sources of community information. Community newsletters and email lists were rated as only marginally important, as were more technologically advanced modes of information dissemination—community websites and blogs, and social network sites—by NWACS participants.

Table 3.03a. Sources of Information about Public Affairs/Community: Washington County

We would like to ask you about where you get your information about public affairs and your community. How important is each of the following as a source of information about public affairs/community?

	Television	Newspapers	Radio	News sites on internet	Community websites/blogs	Community newsletter/email list	Talking with other people	Social network sites (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace)
Not at all important	3.9 %	5.5 %	6.4 %	10.4 %	23.6 %	22.5 %	2.6 %	28.0 %
Not too important	8.3 %	15.4 %	18.1 %	17.9 %	25.7 %	23.6 %	9.3 %	19.0 %
Somewhat important	32.3 %	35.3 %	37.6 %	29.5 %	23.0 %	26.8 %	39.2 %	21.6 %
Very important	54.0 %	41.6 %	33.8 %	32.7 %	13.1 %	10.7 %	45.9 %	16.8 %
No opinion	1.5 %	2.2 %	4.0 %	9.5 %	14.6 %	16.4 %	2.9 %	14.6 %

Table 3.03b. Sources of Information about Public Affairs/Community: Benton County

We would like to ask you about where you get your information about public affairs and your community. How important is each of the following as a source of information about public affairs/community?

	Television	Newspapers	Radio	News sites on internet	Community websites/blogs	Community newsletter/email list	Talking with other people	Social network sites (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace)
Not at all important	3.6 %	6.3 %	7.8 %	9.0 %	19.3 %	17.1 %	2.5 %	26.7 %
Not too important	6.9 %	11.5 %	14.7 %	19.9 %	27.9 %	26.6 %	12.6 %	19.7 %
Somewhat important	35.4 %	37.5 %	44.2 %	31.0 %	21.7 %	25.1 %	42.6 %	22.6 %
Very important	53.0 %	42.0 %	29.8 %	31.2 %	13.1 %	15.8 %	39.6 %	13.6 %
No opinion	1.1 %	2.7 %	3.5 %	9.0 %	17.9 %	15.3 %	2.7 %	17.4 %

Summary

From the overview provided, it seems clear that Northwest Arkansas residents are engaged in their community. Their rates of participation are extremely high with over two-thirds of respondents answering yes to attendance at a variety of events (religious, youth, and parent groups); however, there seems to be a major gap between respondents saying yes to participating/attending events compared to those who said they belong to an organization. Robert Putnam underscores the importance of this distinction and further notes that often times even membership can be obligatory and expected, yet little engagement goes along with that membership. Organizations vary in types and expectations of member participation; for example, belonging to a club that you joined on-line is different from belonging to a service organization like Lions Club or Rotary that is locally organized to engage members in community service.

Table 3.02 highlights political engagement, and tells an important part of this social capital story. We know that a large majority of registered voters in both Benton and Washington Counties vote in their national and state elections. Nevertheless,

other forms of political engagement that require commitment, time, and broader service involve approximately 25 percent or less of the population. Voting in an election versus working on a political campaign are really two different levels of engagement. A further indication of commitment and how deeply involved citizens are in their local communities is reflected in Figure 3.01. Volunteering nearly 12 hours of service per month and annually donating as much as \$2,000 to charitable organizations suggest that this region's residents are involved in a significant form of social capital—giving of one's time and money.

In summary, the results from all three sections of the survey reflect a community that is engaged. These communities provide ample opportunities for citizens to participate in the growth and development of the region. Nevertheless, considerable work needs to be done in developing social capital that makes these opportunities available to everyone, connects communities to one another, and identifies common problems with regional solutions. While quality-of-life remains high in the region, growth and development are having profound effects on residents' satisfaction

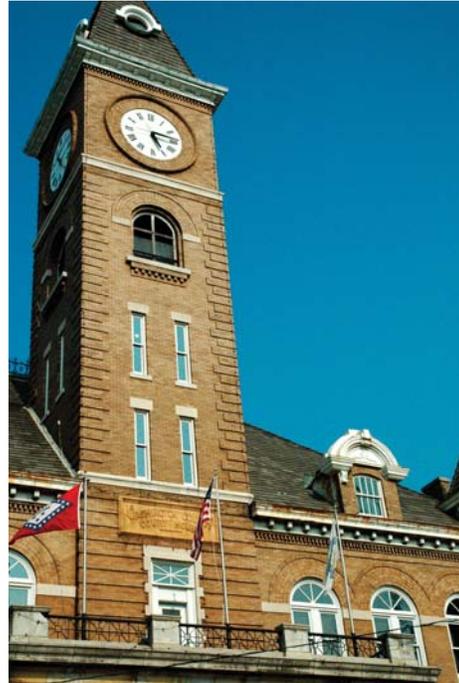


and general attitudes towards the region. While not indicative of the sample, a recurring theme in the comments provided by respondents seems to be an important factor to consider: “*Northwest Arkansas is just growing too fast.*” This is a fact supported by the

earlier Community Indicators reports and one that will continue to challenge planners, stakeholders, and government officials as they attempt to chart a path for the region’s future.



Part IV. Respondent Comments—English





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Part IV: Respondent Comments—English

In addition to asking NWACS participants questions with pre-defined response categories, space was also provided for respondents to write comments about subjects they felt were not addressed in enough depth in the questionnaire, or not mentioned at all. Each of the written comments submitted by respondents was transcribed and analyzed. In all, 404 respondents provided comments either in the margins of the questionnaire or in the dedicated comments section.

While the topics addressed by respondents were wide-ranging, comments tended to coalesce around ten distinct (but not necessarily mutually exclusive) themes: Northwest Arkansas as a place to live; immigration; diversity; transportation; economic development; morals and values; libraries, arts, and entertainment; trails and parks; crime and public safety; and, health care. In the sections that follow, each theme is summarized and discussed. Respondents' comments are noted after each thematic summary.

Theme #1: Northwest Arkansas as a place to live

In general, respondent comments fell into one of two broad categories – those conveying satisfaction with life in Northwest Arkansas, and those highlighting aspects of life in Northwest

Arkansas in need of improvement. Typically, each of the topical themes was subsumed under one of these two categories. As might be expected given respondents' consistently high ratings of various aspects of life in Northwest Arkansas presented in Part I of this report, respondents' voluntary comments about life in Northwest Arkansas were overwhelmingly positive:



“No better place to live. We travel extensively but have not found any place we had rather live.”

“I love it here and I think we are on the right path.”

“Northwest Arkansas is my first choice of residence.”

“I love this town!”

“Northwest Arkansas is still one of the best kept secrets on the planet!”

“Couldn't find a better place to live.”

“I love living in Northwest Arkansas!”

“There is not a better place to live in the world!”

“I really love Northwest Arkansas.”

“To me living in Northwest Arkansas has been wonderful.”

“Love it Here!”



“God bless Northwest Arkansas!”

“We truly are blessed to live in Northwest Arkansas!”

“We love Northwest Arkansas. Go! Hogs! Go!”

For many respondents, their enthusiasm for living in Northwest Arkansas was grounded in their love of a specific city:

“I love Northwest Arkansas, specifically Bentonville!”

“Bentonville is a wonderful place.”

“Fayetteville and Farmington are great places to live.”

“Fayetteville has something to offer to just about anyone.”

“I’m happy, thankful and blessed to be living here in Bella Vista.”

“We live in the old part of Rogers. We love it here!”

There was, however, one respondent who singled out a Northwest Arkansas city for another reason entirely:

“Love everywhere but Rogers! Rogers needs a lot of work.”

A number of respondents’ assessments of Northwest Arkansas were based on family concerns, specifically child-rearing:

“Excellent place to raise children. Great schools, good people who genuinely care about each other.”

“Overall, it is a great place to live, work, and raise our children.”

“For the most part I love living here. Friendly, beautiful, a wonderful place to raise your kids.”

“Schools, churches, industry, many jobs available for our young families and bode well for the future.”



Still others took a more holistic approach in their evaluations of life in Northwest Arkansas, focusing not on any single thing, but rather a variety of things that collectively enhance their overall quality of life:

“Northwest Arkansas has everything. All the big city things but also beautiful lakes and great culture. Best of both worlds.”

“Northwest Arkansas offers some luxuries of a big city, while still providing some small-town feel.”

“Northwest Arkansas has beautiful scenery, good weather, good people, close to a major university... What’s not to like?”

“It is great because there is a pretty steady economy, everyone is nice, it’s easy to get around and it is gorgeous here.”

“I think life in Northwest Arkansas is a good mix of opportunity, small town and city living, a good mix of races/ethnicities.”

Not all respondents provided glowing commentaries on life in Northwest Arkansas, however. Some respondents, for example, expressed deep concern about the diminishing quality of life due to rapid population growth:

“Northwest Arkansas grew too fast.”

“It has grown too fast!”

“Our community is changing too much, too fast. It’s not a hometown area like it used to be.”

“Northwest Arkansas has changed too much since I was born in Fayetteville. The neighborhood bond has dissolved with the influx of people.”

Some dissatisfaction was expressed by newcomers to the region who have struggled to integrate into the community:

“Northwest Arkansas is a difficult society to penetrate. What you know isn’t as significant as who you know.”

“People are friendly, but reserved and not inclined to open up to people who have not lived here all their lives.”

Others were more ambivalent – hopeful for the future, but aware of the steps forward that have yet to be taken:

“Still a work in progress.”



Theme #2: Immigration

By far, the topic generating the most comments from NWACS respondents was the issue of immigration, particularly illegal immigration. The following general sentiments were shared by respondents:

“There is nothing wrong with immigrants, as we all are from immigrants (the majority, anyway), but illegal is a whole other issue.”

“The really negative thing about living in Northwest Arkansas is the number of illegal Mexicans here.”

“The Hispanics are moving in too fast!”

“Rogers needs a lot of work. Nothing like what it was years ago before it was overrun by immigrants. Not taken care of. Really sad.”

“Illegal immigrants are the leading threat to the viability of our local communities.”

“Quality of life has been reduced by influx of immigrants with customs and standards of their countries of origin.”

“There is nothing wrong with immigrants, as we all are from immigrants (the majority, anyway), but illegal is a whole other issue.”

A sentiment shared by a number of those respondents who expressed concern about illegal immigration was that something more should be done:

“We do need more control over the influence of illegal aliens from other countries.”

“Someone needs to take a stand and enforce our [immigration] laws.”

“The illegal entrance into our country should be corrected. Illegal aliens should be given a path to citizenship and if not taken should be returned to their country.”

“I am not for racism but wish illegals were dealt with more harshly.”

“I believe we should not give amnesty to illegal immigrants. We should deport all illegals.”

“I think our local government should be more aware of the problems with Hispanics.”

For some respondents, the state of Arizona provides a model policy response to illegal immigration:

“I do have a big problem with illegal aliens. The police and INS need to step it up several notches. Get all of the illegal aliens out of Northwest Arkansas! If other states would take an example from Arizona and make it illegal to live in the United States of America illegally, the country would be a better place.”

“The influx of illegal immigrants needs to be addressed and the laws strictly enforced. Arkansas should adopt a law similar to Arizona. New law.”

Respondents also expressed frustration about immigrants’ access to public services. Of particular concern was the feeling that immigrants – both legal and illegal – are granted services not available to native-born residents:

“Most people (white) are friendly. Mexican and Marshallese want things given to them.”

“I think that the government gives Mexicans and Asians ‘free rides’ for certain things. How is that right to us, the people who have lived here our whole lives? Can’t the government cut us some slack too?”

“Why does the governor cater to Hispanics more than taking care of our own race? I know of white people that need help and can’t get it.”

“Send illegal immigrants back due to taking Americans’ jobs causing homelessness, starvation and needs. White people who need help can’t get it.”

“We make it so easy to enter this country illegally. They get to stay here and receive all the benefits all our citizens do not receive.”

“The Hispanic people come here to have a better life and they sure do. They get their kids paid for, WIC. If they can’t pay for hospital bills, they get



it free. We have to have insurance and then pay the balance. They don't pay taxes. They claim 10 dependents, so taxes don't come out of their checks. They have it made, and I'm not the only one that feels this way."

"I don't like the fact that all the illegals living and working in this area can get more rights and benefits than I can, and I have lived and worked here most of my life. I have seen this. It is not just repeating rumors and gossip."

"The Hispanic population is uncontrolled. Many undocumented people taking advantage of every possible loop hole in the system to gain health care and child support service."

"I myself am Hispanic, born and raised in Bentonville. I strongly believe that while we should be tolerant and accepting of other cultures, other cultures should be respectful of the area to which they migrate. Learn the language, work, pay taxes and don't expect preferential treatment just because you're a member of a minority."

"Invaders without papers have robbed our children of rights and options. So called 'liberal' rights defy the rights of community bonds."

"I do find illegal immigrants are too demanding for equal rights."

Besides perceived inequity in access to public services, a number of NWACS respondents also shared their anxieties about the linguistic assimilation of immigrants:

"We are overrun with Hispanics. Most are good people just trying to support their families. But we shouldn't be expected to learn their language and pay tax dollars for extra teachers to teach their kids!"

"We have so many Spanish or Mexican people whom cannot speak the English language, and we cater to them by hiring bi-lingual people to speak for them! They will never learn to speak English!"

"We need a law that if you want to be a citizen, speak English!"

"It sickens my husband and I both to drive around and see all Hispanic advertising signs."

"I believe if you put up a sign in a foreign language it should also be in English. This is an English-speaking country."

Still other comments focused on the economic impacts of immigration:

"Illegals are hurting our economy."

"The Hispanics are taking our jobs for less wages."

"I don't appreciate living where foreign nationals can take my neighbor's job."

A final concern raised by respondents was the perceived link between immigration and crime:

"Illegal immigrants often are involved in other criminal activities and need to be screened out of the pool of incoming immigrants."

"Crime rate is higher, neighborhoods are being run down and jobs are taken that should be going to citizens!"

Theme #3: Diversity

A substantial number of respondents provided comments about racial/cultural diversity not directly related to issues of immigration. Among those who commented, many were concerned about hostility toward members of minority racial/ethnic groups:

“Ethnic minorities are looked down upon and not appreciated for the diversity they bring to the community.”

“We moved from California to Northwest Arkansas. We, as a family, have encountered more racism and less acceptance. We were all born and raised in the United States of America, but we are Mexican descendants. That has made it hard in our neighborhood to be trusted or to obtain a job - even in a more professional environment. It is sad, but coming to this part of the United States is like going to a Third-world country.”

“My black husband and I have an inter-racial child. The only thing we have accepted is the ignorance Northwest Arkansas has.”

“Northwest Arkansas would not be such a bad place to reside if people weren’t ignorant, and when I use the term ignorant I mean oblivious to diversity. The population remains ‘unwelcoming’ to different cultures.”

“There is still a fair amount of discrimination and ignorance.”



“Most people in Northwest Arkansas are racist and ignorant. We can’t wait to get jobs that will move us. Hate it here!”

Other respondents mentioned other forms of antagonism, namely homophobia and preferential treatment for those at the upper end of the economic ladder:

“The treatment of Non-Heterosexuals is at times unsatisfactory, especially in law making.”

“Rich (well-connected) white people are treated better.”

Some NWACS respondents expressed the opposite view – that Northwest Arkansas communities are welcoming and tolerant places:

“I think life in Northwest Arkansas is a good mix of opportunity, small town and city living. A good mix of races/ethnicities.”

“Northwest Arkansas, the area of Rogers, Bentonville and Bella Vista is probably the most diverse part of all Arkansas. Because of this, in part, we have the least bigotry and the most inclusive neighborhood in the state. Of this I am very proud. We have our problems, but we are making strides to the right direction.”

“Our mostly White neighbors’ churches pulled together and made certain that our Hispanic neighbors had heat and food when they needed it. We also have a Black family, but have not heard any slurs against them or the family from India.”

“It’s not their color, it’s their character with me.”

Theme #4: Transportation

Besides immigration, the topic mentioned most often by NWACS respondents was transportation. By far, the two issues receiving the most attention from participants were traffic congestion and the quality of roads:

“Infrastructure needs serious work. Leaders of Northwest Arkansas communities have known for years the growth rate that was occurring. However, road construction and upgrades are always way behind, and still are. The various cities handed out both residential and commercial building permits, therefore they had to know that people will be driving cars. When we moved to Northwest Arkansas 30 years ago there was talk about the Bella Vista bypass. Thirty years later it is still being talked about. Very pitiful leadership and follow-thru.”

“Traffic congestion throughout Northwest Arkansas is a severe detriment to the quality of life in Northwest Arkansas. Motorists in Northwest Arkansas are among the rudest, most inconsiderate encountered in the south.”

“Traffic congestion on streets and highways, particularly at peak times (morning, noon, and evening hours) needs to be reviewed and corrected in order to relieve long delays.”

“Due to the rapid growth, our transportation system is falling behind. We need more roads and we could possibly benefit by building a rail system from Bentonville to Fayetteville.”

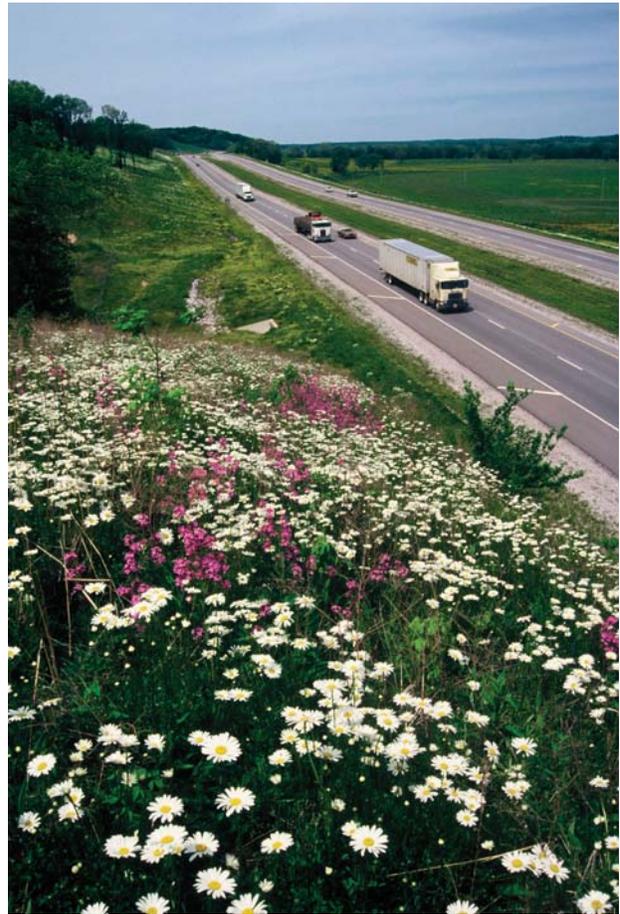
“Due to the rapid growth of Northwest Arkansas, mass transit (i.e. train system) needs to be put in place to reduce the traffic congestion, which will only get worse.”

“Roads and infrastructure in this area are horrible.”

“Traffic issues are compounding!”

“Traffic! Need more roads!”

“We are getting too large in population and have too much traffic.”



“Too many people, not enough roads.”

“Traffic is a problem. Community is very slow in confronting the problems.”

“Over Populated. Poor Roads.”

“Traffic is too BAD.”

“Do something about the traffic on 540.”

“We could use some better roads and dislike lanes in the community.”

“I would like to see better highways.”

“Traffic is impossible.”

“Something needs to be done to get the 412 Bypass, the Bella Vista Bypass, and the road to the airport (XNA) built.”

“Transportation (local) needs a lot of work!”

Not everyone was displeased, however:

“Road and highway maintenance is impressive.”

A substantial portion of those who made comments about transportation expressed their desire for more public transportation options:

“Transportation is an issue. It is hard for a single parent to get a job or further their education without adequate transportation.”

“I would love to see more public transport.”

“Public transportation is required to save fuel. A subway/ rail that covers Northwest Arkansas would be great. Most people would use it.”

“I wish there were better public transportation. People with disabilities that keep them from driving have to use hours of time to get to the few places the buses from the University go. Ozark Transit only goes to certain areas, too, and often not to doctors’ offices that are on the edge of town.”

“Lacks public transportation.”

One respondent expressed gratitude for the public transportation that is made available to Northwest Arkansas residents:

“Public transit allows me to commute to the University of Arkansas and I am deeply appreciative.”



Theme #5: Economic development

Many NWACS respondents commented on economic issues in Northwest Arkansas. Of particular concern to many are the wages currently offered by employers in the region:

“Wages in Northwest Arkansas as compared to other areas in the country, that I have lived in, are very low.”

“Northwest Arkansas needs more high level, good paying jobs.”

“Need more jobs. Need rate of pay increase.”

“There isn’t any good paying jobs. Prices have increased. In the last 23 years wages haven’t.”

“High income people have progressed; medium to lower incomes have declined.”

“I think local government caters to the well-to-do. I think the lower class should have the same consideration!”

Some participants focused not on wages *per se*, but on the overall cost of living in Northwest Arkansas:

“The cost of living in Northwest Arkansas is higher than other areas of the country I have lived in.”

“This is one of the most economical places to live.”

For other respondents, the effects of the current recession were taking a toll:

“You should have asked about the unemployed. When our children get out of school it is very hard for them to get work. This needs to be changed.”

“Jobs in this area are far and few. My husband was out of work for two years. His hourly wage is half of what he was making at the Black & Decker plant that closed two years ago.”

“I have been unemployed for five months. Have not been able to find a job. Got behind unemployment. Barely making it.”



Others expressed concern about the overall form of economic development in Northwest Arkansas:

“Poor development policy is destroying agriculture. Poor public policy on the environment favors developers at the expense of farmers. Uncontrolled growth has caused both rural and urban sprawl. The economy is too dependent upon Wal-Mart. There are too many banks with too few real bankers.”

“Northwest Arkansas is home to several big companies that employ thousands. It saddens me to see so many more. Workers are brought in from other states to work for these major companies. Although I grew up here, I know very few of the ‘big names’ at these companies. A smaller, more family friendly and more blue collar jobs available is where I would prefer to raise my children. Northwest Arkansas used to stand behind its farmers and family owned businesses. It’s more about backing big companies, where the rest of the mom and pop shops are now few and far between.”

“Fayetteville is anti-business.”

Theme #6: Morals and values

A portion of survey respondents used the opportunity to provide comments to communicate their concerns about morals and values. Of particular importance to some was the belief that Northwest Arkansas is experiencing a troubling shift in religiosity:

“We need more conservative ideas and family and religious ties.”

“Spiritual values wane.”

“I see fewer and fewer dedicated religious people as time passes. That’s a bad precedent.”

“The church is losing its primary place in the lives of adults and their children. Thus we have more people who socially accept couples living together outside marriage, youth pregnancy outside marriage, gays and lesbians trying to force a new way of life upon our communities.”



“The area we live in is still somewhat conservative. Lots of liberal people have moved into our area over the past 10-15 years.”

On the other hand, some survey participants stated that they appreciated the level of religiosity of Northwest Arkansas communities:

“Larger number of people who are followers of Christ.”

“Folks around here have a strong sense of faith and community.”

“Like the political conservatism of the area and the newspaper. It is a traditional value place to live.”

“People are very friendly and friendships and family is highly valued.”

Meanwhile, the religiosity and/or conservative politics of the region was problematic for some NWACS respondents:

“Too WASPy.”

“Too much conservative bias politically.”

Still others felt that that Northwest Arkansas provides a nice variety of worldviews and political orientations:

“I think it is a good mix of liberal and conservative ideas here.”



Theme #7: Crime and public safety

A number of NWACS respondents used their opportunity to provide comments to discuss issues of crime and public safety. In general, these respondents indicated that Northwest Arkansas is a safe place to live:

“Northwest Arkansas is a very safe place to live.”

“I feel safe in the Bubble of Northwest Arkansas.”

“I feel safe where I work and live in Rogers.”

“Where I live, it’s nice and quiet. Police keep it that way.”

“We are lucky to live in a low crime area.”

However, several respondents perceived a measurable degradation in public safety due to increased gang activity and drug use:

“Drugs and drug related activity is becoming a real problem. There has been an increase in crime since I moved here in 1991. Safety for our students in the University area should be a big concern. Police protection, especially in the old neighborhoods should be a priority. Gangs and gang activity should be identified and eliminated immediately.”

“Northwest Arkansas used to be one of the safest places to live. With all the gang activity going on, I’m uneasy about safety or allowing my kids to go outside alone. Authorities are in denial about the reality of real gangs in this area.”

“It does appear that crime is slowly increasing in the past 10 years.”

“Crime rate is higher.”

“There have been disputes between households involving the police and some of my neighbors make me feel unsafe in my neighborhood.”

Some respondents expressed concern over the administration of justice in Northwest Arkansas:

“I know from experience that it is not uncommon to be pulled over in Benton County for being Black/Brown on Tuesday.”

“The competency of our police officers in Northwest Arkansas has become an issue.”

“There is not enough diversity on the police force.”

For one participant, the critique was more general than specific. This person opted to highlight what they perceive to be the misplaced priorities of criminal justice officials:

“We find too many trivial reasons to lock people up in our jails. Then we find too many reasons for not locking up and keeping locked up the most dangerous amongst us.”



Theme #8: Trails and parks

One topic that drew significantly more praise than scorn from NWACS participants was the variety and quality of outdoor recreational opportunities afforded the residents of Northwest Arkansas:

“There are many parks throughout Northwest Arkansas.”

“There are beautiful parks and walking tracks.”

“We love the trails and all the parks and community based activities available.”

“We have beautiful parks, gazebos, water. Can’t get too much better. We also have walking trails

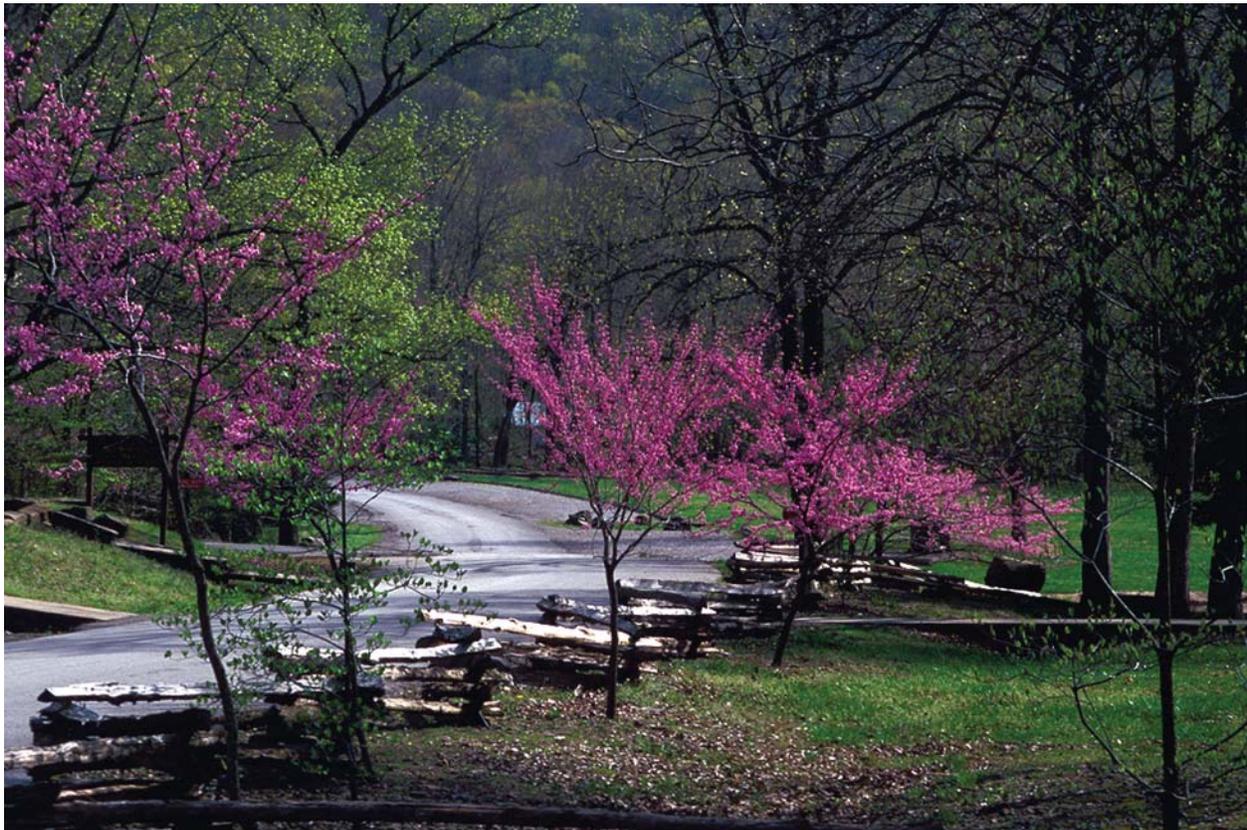
everywhere and I thank our city for this.”

“I think the concept of a unified/ connected trail system connecting each of the communities from Fayetteville to Bentonville is wonderful.”

“There are many things to do places to visit, parks, trails etc.”

“We only wish there were better community parks in Bentonville.”

“Northwest Arkansas needs more hiking/ biking trails.”



Theme #9: Libraries, arts, and entertainment

In addition to outdoor recreational opportunities, a number of NWACS participants made mention of the region's libraries, and arts and entertainment options:

"Great Library!"

"We do have a lot of musical events."

"Music once a month is one of the perks - sometimes more."

"The introduction of First Friday on the square is sensational!"

"We love the culture brought to the area through the University of Arkansas and the artists who live here."

Others were appreciative of the region's arts and entertainment options, but felt that more could be done:



"I think Northwest Arkansas needs more museums."

"Bring in more diverse cultural performers to town."

"We need more entertainment/concerts to come to town and more things to do besides eat and go see a movie."



Theme #10: Healthcare

The last topical theme mentioned by NWACS participants was healthcare. Among those who commented, there was a general level of dissatisfaction with both access to and quality of healthcare in the region:

“I find there is a shortage of doctors in Northwest Arkansas, especially those willing to take on the treatment of Medicare patients.”

“The healthcare in our area needs to be improved greatly. We do have a small clinic run by Mercy, but it needs some docs besides just one good one that you can hardly get in to see.”

“Need better medical and health care.”

“The healthcare is sub-par at best.”

“Cost of living in Northwest Arkansas for medical, dental, hospital services is far above Arkansas as a whole.”

“On par with third-world country.”



Respondents' assessments of the Northwest Arkansas Community Survey

Finally, NWACS respondents commented frequently on the content and overall quality of the Northwest Arkansas Community Survey. Many appreciated the opportunity to have their voices heard. Others found fault with certain aspects of the survey and made suggestions for its improvement in future efforts. The following are all the comments respondents made about the survey, in general.

"Thank you for doing this survey!"

"Great survey!"

"Thanks for actually caring what the little people think."

"Thank you for your time and consideration."

Several respondents felt that the experiences and/or perspectives of certain groups were not adequately addressed in the survey:

"Marshallese / Pacific Islanders?"

"Your survey failed to include 'Asians' as a racial group."

"The question about race and ethnic relations did not list Asians."

"You left out Native Americans!"

"Sexual orientation can determine one's experiences; so a category for sexual orientation."

"There was an obvious omission of gay and lesbian concerns in the survey. This under-represented

group would seem to have been a valuable addition to the community relations survey."

Others felt that the survey took too many liberties with respect to questions about race/ethnicity:

"Too many questions about race. I know one race. Humans!"

"Thanks for actually caring what the little people think."

"In regards to race, I would love to see a question ask: Does Color or race matter or can you look past the surface and judge them as a person/human? Do you think there would be room for that question?"

"You should not assume since someone has a Spanish last name, that they speak and are Spanish."

A few respondents critiqued the survey's approach to measuring attitudes and perceptions of immigration. In particular, several NWACS participants took issue with the lack of distinction made between legal immigrants and illegal immigrants:

"Do you mean legal or illegal immigrants? What do you mean by equal rights?"

"You ask a lot about race and nationality but nothing about legal status."

"The section regarding immigrants demanding their rights is out of line. It is mixing legal immigrants with illegal immigrants. Legal immigrants are due full rights under our constitution (not necessarily citizenship rights, but full protection of the law). Illegal immigrants have basic human rights, but not the protection of the law. Essentially they have the right to become legal or leave."



One respondent was particularly angry about the attempt to make the survey accessible to those for whom English is a second language:

“Stop printing duplicates in Spanish! English is the language, got it? Political correctness is what’s rotting the country from its core. You should not care what they think!”

“Stop printing duplicates in Spanish! English is the language, got it? Political correctness is what’s rotting the country from its core. You should not care what they think!”

Another respondent would like to see more questions about the role of arts and culture in Northwest Arkansas:

“I think you should have asked about the importance of art & culture to the community. Take a look at the ‘creative cities’ argument.”

And another felt that the survey left out some especially important behaviors:

“I think you should have asked: ‘How many people smoke or drink in your house?’”

Finally, critiques by some respondents centered on the overall structure of the survey – particularly its ability to “drill down” into particular substantive issues:

“You should drill down into the ways in which the local communities could address the issues they identify.”

“My only comments are about the way the survey is written. Overall, it’s well done. In the section on Trust, I would have liked another option on the first question - I felt if I answered that one, I am either a complete cynic or completely gullible! I think I am cautious about trust. In the next group of questions, a ‘no opinion’ option would have been nice. I’ve had minimal personal contact with the local police, so I don’t have much to base my opinion of trust on.”

Part V. Respondent Comments—Spanish





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Part V: Respondent Comments—Spanish

In this section, comments provided by Spanish-speaking respondents are summarized. As with comments by English-speaking respondents, all comments by Spanish-speaking respondents were transcribed and analyzed. Comments in Spanish were translated into English by the Language Interpreter Center, Anchorage, Alaska.

A total of 37 Spanish-speaking residents provided written comments on their survey questionnaire. Like their English-speaking counterparts, many Spanish-speaking respondents are very happy with the quality of life afforded them in Northwest Arkansas. With respect to

public transportation and public safety, the same concerns were shared by both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking residents of Benton and Washington counties. However, there was a notable difference between English speakers and Spanish speakers with regard to one issue: racial/ethnic discrimination.

This section of the report presents translated comments by Spanish-speaking respondents that fall under common themes/issues: Northwest Arkansas as a place to live, discrimination/racism, police/public safety, public transportation, immigration, and education.

Northwest Arkansas as a place to live

“I love the lifestyle in Northwest Arkansas.”

“What I like the most about the Northwest of Arkansas is that it is a city with the feel of a town at the same time. Here you can experience the countryside, fishing and hunting. This is a nice place to live and to raise your children.”

“I am very grateful for the friendliness of American citizens. “

“It is the Natural State. Arkansas is an enviable place; it is free of pollution and social problems.”

“Life in Northwest Arkansas is beautiful.”

“We like living in Northwest Arkansas because it is a community that offers lots of opportunities, especially the community of Siloam Springs. It is a small community but quiet.”

Discrimination/racism

“What you forgot to ask was if we have been discriminated against because of our race. Yes we have been victimized because of our race in our jobs, in the street in stores and at clinics.”

“At my job at Wal-Mart and in many places, we Hispanics are discriminated against only for being Hispanic.”

“I am Hispanic, and my suggestion is that you ask the non-White communities if the treatment that they receive in all aspects of everyday life in Arkansas is the same as the White community gets. I assure you that the answer will surprise you.”

“You should ask if there is racism in Arkansas because there is, 50% in the schools and 70% at work.”

“Some of us have suffered verbal abuses from White people, and because we are immigrants, we don't dare denounce those abuses, or the way they treat immigrants. We are afraid of dialing 911 because of the inequality and discrimination on the part of the country's government. We have to put up with all the humiliations and injustice.”

“What I want to say about life in Northwest Arkansas is that it was a lot better in the past, you could trust our policemen, now people fear them and they are supposed to take care of the community. I totally disagree with them assuming the role of immigration agents. Because of this you feel that there is more discrimination mainly against Hispanic people.”

Police/public safety

“The police are not fair. They will stop you just for being Hispanic whether or not you are a citizen. I am a citizen. Although you haven’t done anything wrong, they will accuse you anyway.”

“In my opinion the police shouldn’t be turning in undocumented people to Immigration, that is not their job.”

“Last year, there were many robberies at the Job Center when they were giving out vaccinations to children and adults. Many people were assaulted, but because they were undocumented Latinos they were afraid to report it to the police.”

“For a year, we have been hearing that there are many robberies in certain neighborhoods.”

“What worries me is that there are a lot of robberies in houses and neighborhoods. We need the police to start patrolling in the area where the robberies happen.”

“You forgot to ask if we feel safe in the community because some of us are afraid or we don’t feel safe in our houses.”

“A good question is how can we stop the drug addicts and narcotic dealers, there’s a lot of them here.”

Public transportation

“We need more public transportation.”

“We don’t have public transportation in Rogers, and we need it.”

“We are in great need of public transportation.”

“There needs to be more parks and more public transportation, for example buses.”

Immigration

“I would like to see immigrants get more help. If they would, the economy would grow. It would be safer, and there would be more taxpayers. Remember that immigration reform is not a question of ‘politics’; it is much more serious than that and has great economic and security consequences for the future of the U.S.”

“We need agencies that will support the Hispanic community.”

“Immigrants cannot defend themselves.”

Education

“The education level of the majority of the Hispanics that live in the USA, with the exception of college students, is not very good. Unfortunately, this contributes to a negative perception on the part of the rest of the residents, and this makes it difficult to completely fit in with the rest of the

community. Nevertheless, neither my family nor I have had any problems. Quite the opposite, we have fit in very well, but I believe this is because of the level of education we have, and we have the privilege to live in a neighborhood of Springdale that is very safe.”

Appendix: Methodology



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Methodology

Sampling design

The sampling frame for the Northwest Arkansas Community Survey was adults residing within Benton County, Arkansas and Washington County, Arkansas. For the purposes of this study, any adult with a valid mailing address – either a street address or a post office box – within Benton and Washington Counties was defined as a “resident” and was eligible for participation in the survey. More formal declarations of residency within each county (e.g., vehicle registration, voter registration, tax filing) were not required for inclusion in the sampling frame. Adults living within Benton or Washington Counties who did not have a valid mailing address when the sample was drawn were excluded from the sampling frame.

Individuals under the age of 18 years were not eligible for participation.

Sample selection proceeded through two phases. First, the entire sampling frame was stratified according to county of residence. All eligible participants with a valid mailing address located in Benton County were grouped together; similarly, all eligible participants with a valid mailing address located in Washington County were grouped together. Following stratification, 1,320 individuals were randomly selected from each county. African American and Hispanic residents of each county were oversampled to ensure sufficient representation in the final sample.

Survey administration

The information collected for the Northwest Arkansas Community Survey was collected using a mixed-mode survey methodology. Participants could respond via a paper-based or a web-based questionnaire. Hispanic participants could choose between English or Spanish versions of the questionnaire.

Survey administration proceeded through five stages. At the first stage, pre-notification letters were mailed to respondents notifying them of their eligibility and inviting their participation. Approximately seven to ten days following, each sample member was sent a cover letter detailing the purpose of the study, a questionnaire, and a pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope for returning the

questionnaire. Two weeks later, sample members who had not yet returned their questionnaire, were mailed a reminder postcard. After an additional two weeks, sample members who still had not returned their questionnaire were mailed an additional reminder postcard. Finally, two weeks following the mailing of the second postcard, sample members who had yet to return a questionnaire were mailed a replacement questionnaire and cover letter. At each contact, sample members were told about the web-based version of the questionnaire and encouraged to complete the survey on-line if that was a preferable option for them. In addition, sample members could declare their desire not to participate at each contact, either by returning

Table A1. Sample Attrition and Response Rate

(*N* = 2,640)

	Initial sample	Invalid address	Valid sample	Declined to participate	Final sample	Response rate
Benton County	1,320	109	1,211	24	634	52.4 %
Washington County	1,320	133	1,187	29	623	52.5 %
Unknown ^a	—	—	—	—	6	—

^a County of residence could not be determined because questionnaire identifier was obliterated by respondent.

a blank questionnaire or by contacting the study director via a toll-free telephone number. Once a sample member communicated their desire not to participate, all identifying information was permanently removed from the sample database and no further efforts were made to contact them. Mailings that were returned by the United States Postal Service as “undeliverable” also resulted in

the permanent removal of all personal identifying information from the database.

Data collection was initiated the first week of April, 2010 and was terminated the second week of July, 2010. A total of 1,263 sample members chose to participate in the survey and completed either paper-based or web-based questionnaires.

Table A2. Number of Respondents Who Received Each Mailing

(N = 2,640)

	Mailing #1	Mailing #2	Mailing #3	Mailing #4	Mailing #5
Benton County	1,320	1,271	822	747	694
Washington County	1,320	1,246	804	708	654

Table A3. Number of Respondents Who Completed Questionnaires, by Mode and Language

(N = 1,263)

	Paper-based Questionnaire (n = 1,174)		Web-based Questionnaire (n = 89)	
	English	Spanish	English	Spanish
Benton County	534	52	44	4
Washington County	522	60	37	4
Unknown ^a	6	0	—	—

^a County of residence could not be determined because questionnaire identifier was obliterated by respondent.

Sample characteristics

Table A4a. Respondent Background Information

	Washington County		Benton County	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age				
Minimum age	19 years		18 years	
Maximum age	91 years		92 years	
Mean age	48.0 years		50.7 years	
Gender				
Female	279	45.4 %	250	40.0 %
Male	336	54.6	375	60.0
Total	615		625	
Current marital status				
Single, never married	69	11.3 %	49	7.9 %
Married	418	68.3	453	72.9
Separated	12	2.0	7	1.1
Divorced	65	10.6	71	11.4
Widowed	48	7.8	41	6.6
Total	612		621	
Highest level of formal education				
Less than a high school diploma	59	9.7 %	52	8.5 %
High school diploma or equivalent	130	21.4	149	24.2
Some college, no degree	133	21.9	154	25.0
Associate's or other 2-year degree	42	6.9	61	9.9
Bachelor's degree	138	22.7	129	21.0
Graduate degree	106	17.4	70	11.4
Total	608		615	
Primary employment status				
Self-employed, full-time	70	11.6 %	66	10.8 %
Employed, full-time	317	52.5	310	50.7
Full-time homemaker	20	3.3	23	3.8
Full-time student	17	2.8	7	1.1
Employed, part-time	30	5.0	19	3.1
Disabled, unable to work	14	2.3	26	4.3
Unemployed, looking for work	20	3.3	14	2.3
Unemployed, not looking for work	4	0.7	4	0.7
Retired	112	18.5	142	23.2
Total	604		611	
Total household income				
Less than \$20,000	78	13.6 %	74	13.0 %
\$20,000 to \$34,999	106	18.5	92	16.2
\$35,000 to \$49,999	99	17.3	109	19.2
\$50,000 to \$74,999	120	21.0	129	22.7
\$75,000 to \$99,999	68	11.9	61	10.7
\$100,000 or more	101	17.7	103	18.1
Total	572		568	

Table A4b. Respondent Background Information

	Washington County		Benton County	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Household size				
1-person household	102	16.6 %	96	15.7 %
2-person household	216	35.1	218	35.6
3-person household	113	18.4	102	16.6
4-person household	91	14.8	105	17.1
5-person household	61	9.9	57	9.3
6-or-more-person household	32	5.2	35	5.7
Total	615		613	
Children under 18 living in household				
0 children	349	57.9 %	340	56.7 %
1 child	95	15.8	95	15.8
2 children	85	14.1	102	17.0
3 children	58	9.6	42	7.0
4 or more children	16	2.7	21	3.5
Total	603		600	
Children in household attending school in Washington or Benton Counties				
1 child	96	43.2 %	76	35.2 %
2 children	64	28.8	94	43.5
3 children	51	23.0	35	16.2
4 or more children	11	5.0	11	5.1
Total	222		216	
Home ownership				
Own	472	77.5 %	509	82.2 %
Rent	137	22.5	110	17.8
Total	609		619	
Years lived in Northwest Arkansas				
Less than one year	2	0.3 %	4	0.7 %
1 to 5 years	68	11.3	80	13.3
5 to 10 years	94	15.7	104	17.2
10 to 15 years	96	16.0	87	14.4
15 to 20 years	68	11.3	73	12.1
20 years or more	272	45.3	255	42.3
Total	600		603	
Leaving Northwest Arkansas in the near future?				
No	454	76.0 %	465	77.4 %
Yes	143	24.0	136	22.6
Total	597		601	
Additional years expected to live in Northwest Arkansas				
Less than one year	6	5.5 %	9	9.0 %
1 to 5 years	61	56.0	38	38.0
5 to 10 years	14	12.8	26	26.0
10 to 15 years	13	11.9	15	15.0
15 to 20 years	1	0.9	3	3.0
20 years or more	14	12.8	9	9.0
Total	109		100	