

**UNITED WAY OF CHATHAM COUNTY
COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY 2009
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

4/ 27/09

The United Way of Chatham County conducted a Community Needs Survey in early 2009. Over 900 Chatham County residents responded, giving their **views on the problems facing the county as a whole**, and also reporting on the **needs actually experienced in their own households**. Survey results will be used to help the United Way focus effectively on the current priority needs in our county.

Several major issues emerged at high levels throughout Chatham County, most notably the difficulties associated with **meeting the necessities of life** and **providing a suitable environment for children and adolescents**. A substantial majority of respondents also expressed concerns about **substance abuse** and **the lack of public transportation**.

Meeting the Necessities of Life

The **lack of good jobs** was cited as a problem for the county as a whole by over 90% of the respondents. This was also perceived to be the single most serious problem facing the county. More than 80% also considered the following basic needs to be problems: **lack of affordable medical care; lack of money for medicines; hunger; and insufficient affordable, safe housing**.

While people throughout the county, of various education and income levels, identified these basic needs as problems, economic distress represents a significant struggle for many residents. When asked if they experienced **needs in their own households** during the past year over **38%** of the respondents reported that **they did not have enough money to buy food**, and **37%** said **they could not afford dental care**. **More than a third** of respondents said they **cannot find a good job, did not have enough money to buy medicine and could not afford medical care**. Over **30%** indicated that it was **hard for them to find housing that they could afford** (Table 1).

Children and Adolescents at Risk

Survey respondents in our county were very concerned about children and youth. A major issue identified in both individual households and in the community was **not enough activities for children and teenagers**. Across differences in income, education, race and ethnicity, and community of residence, **almost 80% of all respondents listed this as a problem** for the county as a whole.

Underscoring this, 37% of the individuals reporting on issues in their own households said their **children and teenagers had nothing to do after school or in summer**. This lack of activities for children and teens may also represent an underlying factor in other related problems cited by respondents, including **teen pregnancy** (identified as a major issue by **70% of the sample**) and **teenagers dropping out of school**. When respondents were asked which issues were the most serious in our county, **gangs** was identified as a major problem.

Other Significant Issues

Not enough public transportation was a major issue for most respondents throughout the county. The lack of sufficient public transportation is likely to impact other problems identified, as it limits access to jobs, health care, and activities.

Almost 75 % of respondents maintained that **alcohol and drug abuse** is a problem in Chatham County. Although there is little objective evidence that substance abuse is an increasing problem for the general public, there is continued great concern.

Other issues listed as problems by more than 70% of respondents were **literacy issues; lack of understanding between groups (racial, ethnic, cultural);** and **tobacco use by teens** (Table 2).

The Community Needs Survey was intended to include not only donors and community leaders, but also a broad spectrum of county residents. English and Spanish language versions were widely available, both in paper and on-line, linked through the website of the United Way of Chatham County. The 901 surveys were completed by residents in percentages generally representative of communities throughout the county (Table 3). Income and education distribution among the respondents indicates that the goal of inclusion was met (Tables 4, 5). Education levels reflected the larger proportion of lower income residents responding (Table 6). It is not possible to know how much the current global and local economic downturn affected the income of respondents in this survey. Further details of the survey process and demographics of respondents are included in the full report of this survey (www.nonprofitpages.com/uwcc).

Table 1a

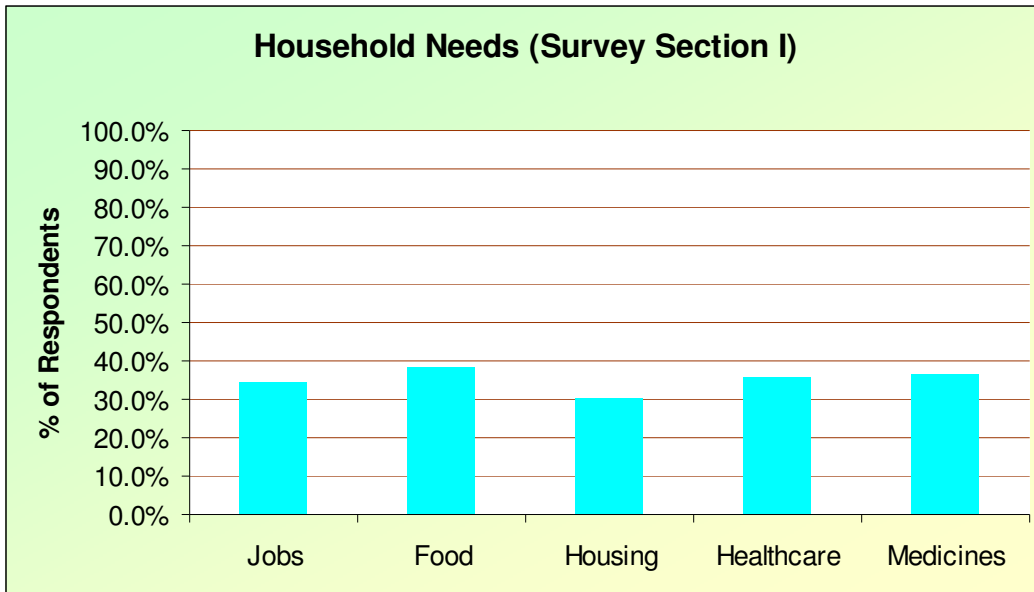


Table 1b

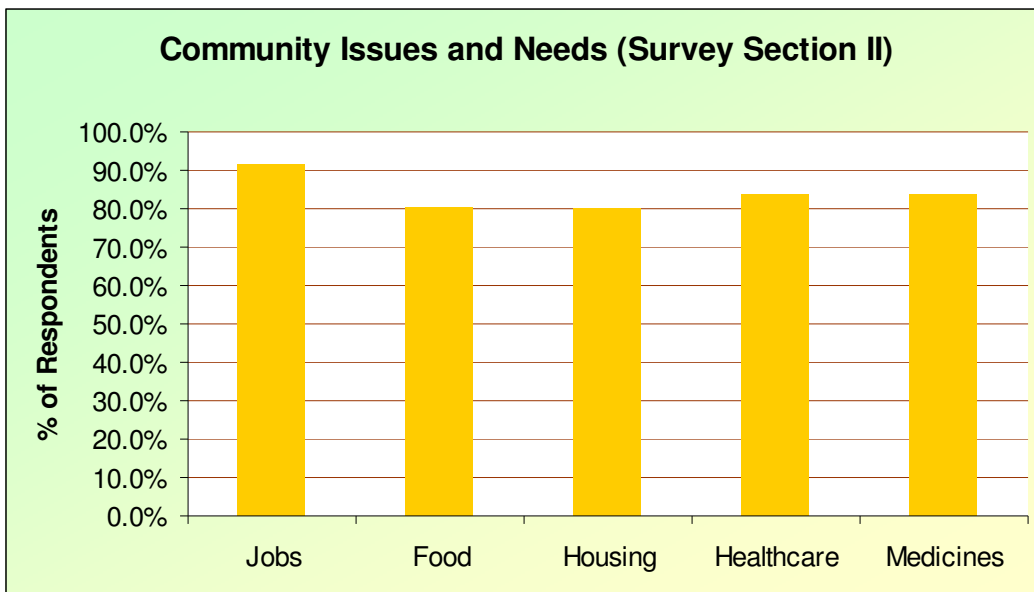


Table 2

NEEDS IN INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS*

Not enough money to buy food
Cannot afford dental care
Nothing for children and teenagers to do after school or in summer
Not enough money to buy medicine
Cannot afford medical care
Cannot find a good job
Not enough money for needed clothes/shoes
Hard to find housing that I can afford

COMMUNITY ISSUES AND NEEDS **

Lack of good jobs
Lack of affordable medical care
Lack of money for medicines
Hunger
Not enough affordable, safe housing
Not enough activities for children and teenagers
Not enough public transportation
Lack of understanding between groups (racial, ethnic, cultural)
People who can't read well
Drug or alcohol abuse
Tobacco use by teens
Teens dropping out of school
Teen pregnancy

* "Problems in household in past 12 months", identified by slightly more than 30% of survey respondents. Listed in order of frequency of response.

** Issues and Needs in our county, identified as "little problem" or "big problem" by survey respondents. List is in order of frequency of responses. All issues in list were identified as a problem by more than 70% of total of survey respondents.

Table 3

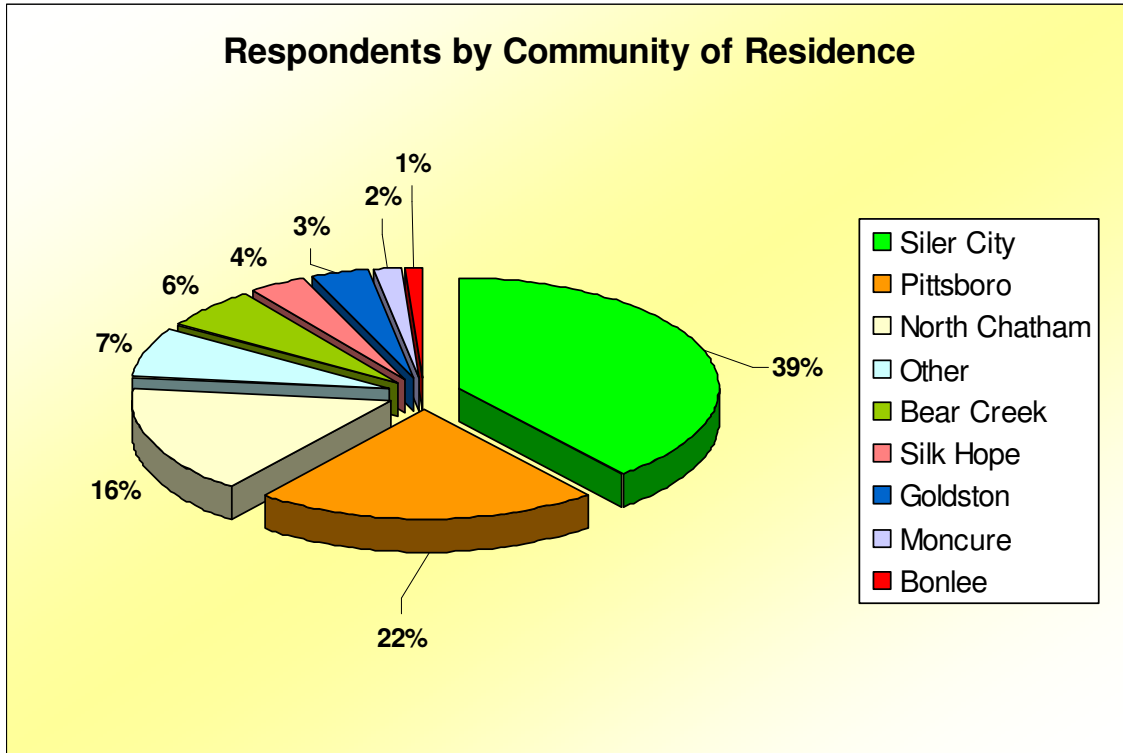
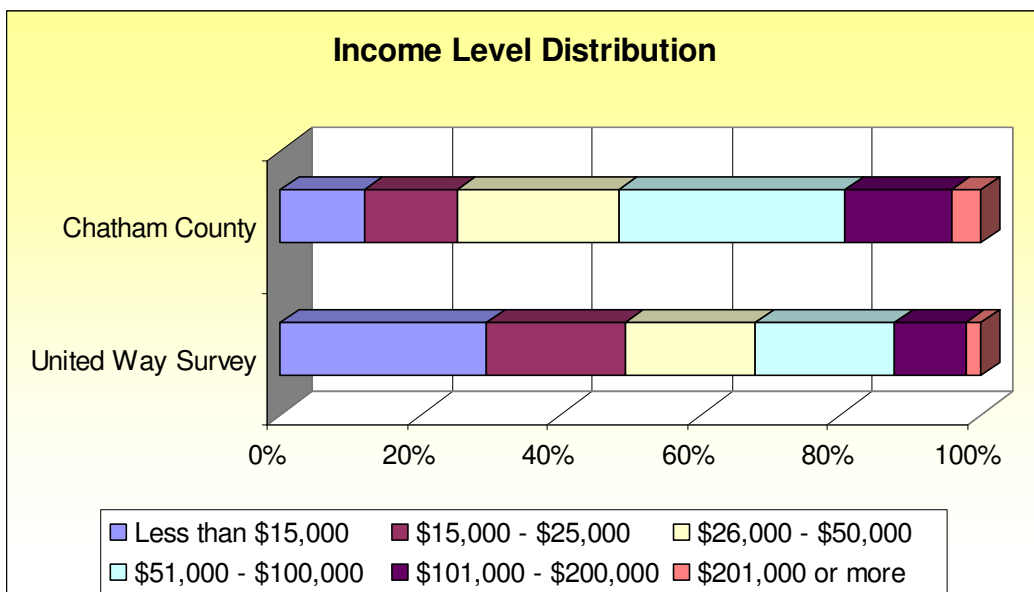


Table 4



Note: ^a Chatham County income data are based on American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates (2005-2007).

Table 5

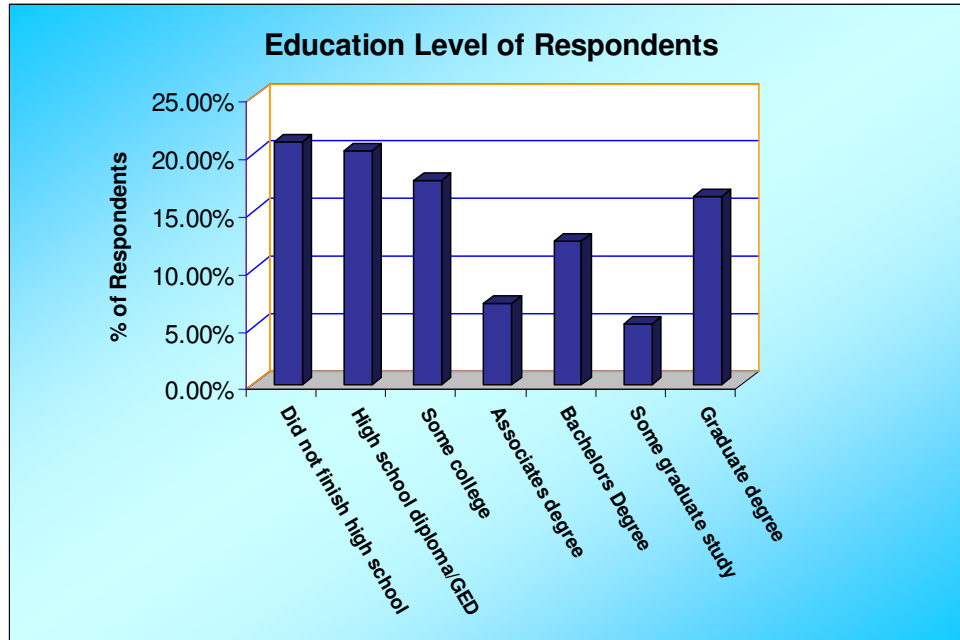
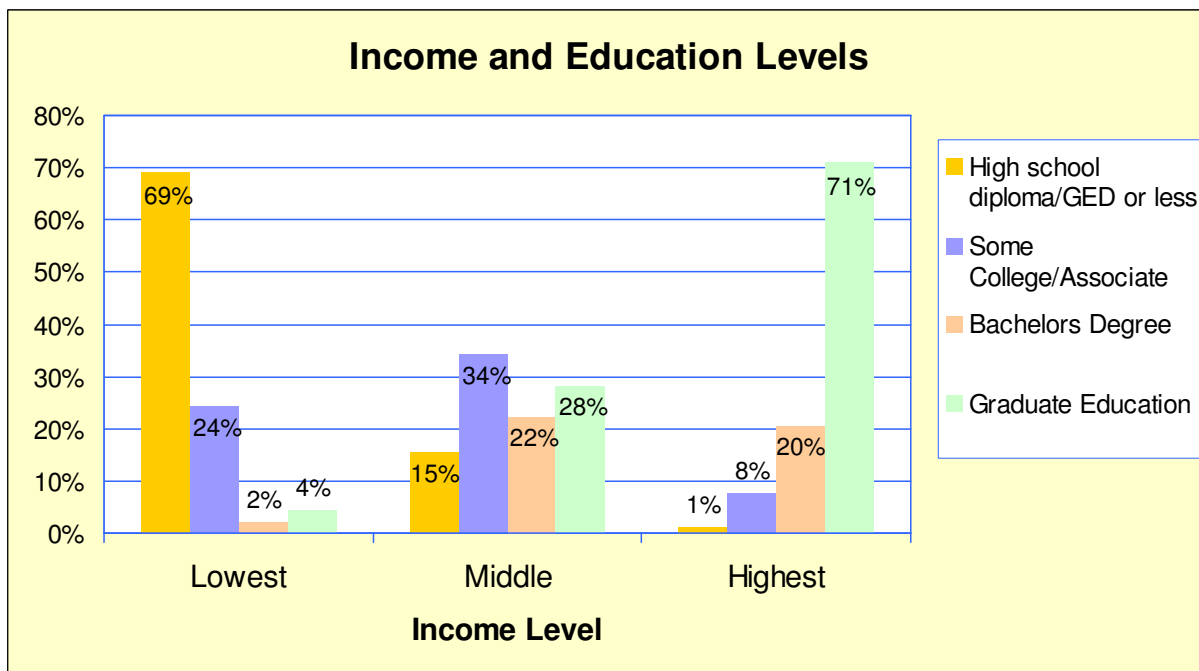


Table 6



Note: ^a Lowest= \$25,000 or less; Middle= \$25,000-\$100,000; Highest= \$100,000 or more.